



**THE VECTOR POLL™  
CANADIAN FEDERATION OF NURSES UNIONS  
MEMBERSHIP POLL  
ON PATIENT SAFETY AND WORKING CONDITIONS**

**Summary of a poll conducted May 8-19, 2017**

# The Vector Poll™ - Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions National Membership Poll Nurses Speak Up on Patient Safety and Working Conditions

## Summary

### Work Environments

#### Violence

- Six in 10 members (61%) have had serious problems at work with at least one type of workplace violence in the previous 12 months.
- Among those under 25, 72% have been targets of one of the six types of disorderly behaviour in the past 12 months.
- Very few members report abuse: only 26% reported it to their union, 21% to security staff and 4% to police.
- Compared to other workers, nurses experienced far higher rates of serious violence: in a national Vector Poll™ conducted in January 2016, just 15% of non-health care employees said in a 24-month period they had experienced serious problems with violence.

#### Overtime

- Seven in 10 nurses worked overtime in the past 12 months (71%).
- More than a third (36%) worked five or more hours of overtime over two weeks.
- 16% of nurses worked 11 or more hours of overtime over two weeks.
- Most nurses (45%) cited insufficient staffing as the reason they worked overtime. Another form of nursing shortage – lack of replacements for nurses on leave – is the main reason 13% say they worked overtime.
- High-needs patients requiring a lot of care was the main reason for overtime for about a quarter (27%) of the nurses.

#### Patient Safety

- One third (34%) of nurses surveyed say that patient safety has declined, becoming a little or a lot worse.
- The main reason cited (33%) when patient safety has worsened is a shortage of nurses. Another 23% say poor work scheduling results in short staffing and contributes to deteriorating patient safety.

## Retention and Recruitment

- Two in every three nurses (66%) have thought about leaving their job to work for a different employer or to go into another occupation.
- The most frequently mentioned reason (71%) for considering leaving their job or changing careers was workload and amount of job-related pressure.
- Four in 10 cite a bad working environment (42%) with a lack of teamwork (38%) as the reason for considering leaving their jobs.
- Half of those considering a job switch (52%) say they thought about a change because they felt undervalued at work.
- Relatively new nurses – those under 25 – are more likely than older nurses to cite lack of recognition and feeling undervalued.
- Nurses who have been targets of violent or abusive behaviour at work in the past year are more likely to say they thought of leaving their jobs. Younger nurses are more likely to have been the targets of violence, suggesting challenges for the renewal of the nursing workforce.

## Method

The findings in this report are based on interviews conducted May 8 through 19, 2017, for the Vector Poll™ with 2,061 employees represented by seven unions in the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

To correct or balance the sample The Vector Poll™ weighted the results to each union's share of the total overall membership in the seven unions (129,550). With a pure random or probability sample of 2,061, one could say with 95% confidence that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 2.1 percentage points where opinion is evenly split. This means you can be 95% certain that the results do not vary by more than 2.1 percentage points in either direction from results that would have been obtained by interviewing all the members of the seven unions in the study.

– Analysis by Marc Zwelling, CMRP  
President, The Vector Poll™