

The Regulation and Supply of Nurse Practitioners in Canada: Technical Appendix



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Objective

The objective of this technical appendix is to explain the differences in the nurse practitioner (NP) statistics published by provincial and territorial Registered Nurses (RN) regulatory authorities and the NP statistics previously published by CIHI. These differences are both necessary and valuable for health human resources planning and research.

Definition of Nurse Practitioner

In this Technical Appendix, a nurse practitioner is defined as a registered nurse (RN) with additional education in health assessment, diagnosis and management of illnesses and injuries, including prescribing drugs¹ and is regulated as a nurse practitioner (NP).

Background

In response to changes in nursing practice and to increasing requests from the research and policy-making communities, CIHI began collecting NP data in the 2001 data year. This was accomplished by adding the position title 'Nurse Practitioner' to the annual registration form. CIHI first published NP statistics in the publication *Supply and Distribution of Registered Nurses in Canada, 2001*.

The CIHI data, however, only tell part of the story. This is because of an important distinction between the regulated title *nurse practitioner* and a position in a facility or organization called *Nurse Practitioner*.

Data Sources

Provincial and Territorial Statistics

NP statistics published by provincial and territorial RN regulatory authorities include all registered nurses meeting the education, training and/or experience requirements necessary for NP licensure. Each of these individuals is eligible to work in a *Nurse Practitioner* position but, for a variety of reasons, some actually work as *Managers, Educators, Researchers* or as *Staff Nurses/Community Health Nurses*.

Regardless, each of these individuals is included in the published statistics, as each person is a licensed NP.

CIHI Statistics

The NP statistics published by CIHI are taken from the Registered Nurses Database (RNDB). The source of data for the RNDB is the annual registration form that is mandatory for all registered nurses to complete. On the registration form, registrants are asked to identify their current position at the time of registration. One of these options is *Nurse Practitioner*. NP statistics published by CIHI, therefore, include all RNs who self-identify their position

1 Canadian Nurses Association, *The Nurse Practitioner* (Ottawa: CNA, 2003), [online], cited June 15, 2005, from <www.cna-aic.ca/CNA/documents/pdf/publications/PS68_Nurse_Practitioner_June_2003_e.pdf>.

title as *Nurse Practitioner*. Not all of these individuals are actually licensed NPs. In jurisdictions such as Prince Edward Island or the Yukon, there was no provincial or territorial legislation governing NP practice in 2004. But in almost all other jurisdictions, some RNs who are not licensed NPs self-identified their position as *Nurse Practitioner*.

Analysis

The result is that NP statistics typically published by provincial and territorial regulatory authorities indicate how many are eligible to practice as a licensed NP. The CIHI statistics, in contrast, indicate only how many RNs are working in a *Nurse Practitioner* position.

A comprehensive analysis of the NP workforce requires combining this information, which is what CIHI and the Canadian Nurses Association did in their collaborative report titled *The Regulation and Supply of Nurse Practitioners in Canada*.

Table A1 provides a summary of each provincial and territorial licensed NP workforce.

Table A1. Employment Analysis of Licensed NPs by Province/Territory of Registration, Canada, 2004

	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	N.W.T.		Canada
											Y.T.	Nun.	
Employed	62	–	33	14	–	568	–	37	106	–	–	12	832
NP position	62	–	17	**	–	396	–	37	81	–	–	*	604
Non-NP position	0	–	16	**	–	116	–	n/a	21	–	–	**	168
Not Stated	0	–	0	0	–	56	–	n/a	4	–	–	0	60
Not Employed/Not Stated	0	–	1	0	–	30	–	5	6	–	–	4	46
Total Number of Licensed NPs	62	–	34	14	–	598	–	42	112	–	–	16	878

Sources: CIHI/RNDB and provincial and territorial RN regulatory authorities.

Notes

– NPs not licensed separately from other registered nurses

* Data suppressed in accordance with CIHI privacy policy; cell value is from 1 to 4

** Data suppressed to protect confidentiality; cell value is 5 or greater

n/a All licensed NPs are considered to be working in NP positions in Saskatchewan

In 2004, there were 878 licensed NPs in the jurisdictions of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Of these 878 licensed NPs, 832 were employed at the time of annual registration.

Excluding Saskatchewan data, where all licensed NPs are considered to be working in NP positions, 567 self-identified their position as *Nurse Practitioner*, 168 self-identified a different position and 60 failed to state their position.

It is important to note, however, that some licensed NPs who did not identify a *Nurse Practitioner* position are still using their NP knowledge and experience: some are working as *Instructors/Professors/Educators* training nurse practitioner students, while others are working in research or management. Some licensed NPs are working as *Staff Nurses/Community Health Nurses*.

This difference between the regulated title and a self-reported position is critical for decision-makers, health planners and the public to understand, because a different definition will produce dramatically different statistics. A better understanding of the NP workforce requires both licensure information and current employment data.

