

# Nurse Wellbeing at Risk



## A National Survey

In coordination with Nurse Wellbeing Week


SUPPORTED BY



In our survey, *Nurse Wellbeing at Risk*, we explored nurse wellbeing through the experience of the clinician. Data from 12,071 responses paint a picture of silent resilience, pervasive personal neglect, and an industry without solutions to the lifestyle challenges it creates. We present our findings with confidence healthcare leaders can harness the nurse's voice to address root challenges and support clinicians in thriving on and off the clock.



Nearly 80% of nurses surveyed believe the work they do is meaningful; a powerful sentiment regarding a laborious profession that leaves residual stress on its workers. Keeping nurses in good health is central to both positive patient outcomes and sustained professional engagement.



## Is your nurse wellness program effective?

As the work environment grows more demanding, the emotional and physical toll nurses are experiencing is deteriorating their career fulfillment. Work-related stress hinders efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The gravity of this plight has been exacerbated by the threat COVID-19 poses to frontline workers. All things considered, the responses to this survey indicate a looming crisis in an already weakened workforce.

*Nurse Wellbeing at Risk* uncovers an alarming deficiency in nurse self-care. Personal priorities are being sacrificed to care for others. Vulnerability to symptoms of burnout in nurses 18-34 is significantly higher compared to their older colleagues. On the whole, results highlight the challenges hospitals face when dealing with a fatigued workforce and growing nursing shortage.

In the midst of a global pandemic, nurses need support more than ever. Hospitals either lack wellness programs or are providing services that are falling short. The next generation of wellbeing solutions needs long-term strategies that help nurses navigate persistent work stress to invest time in effective self-care.

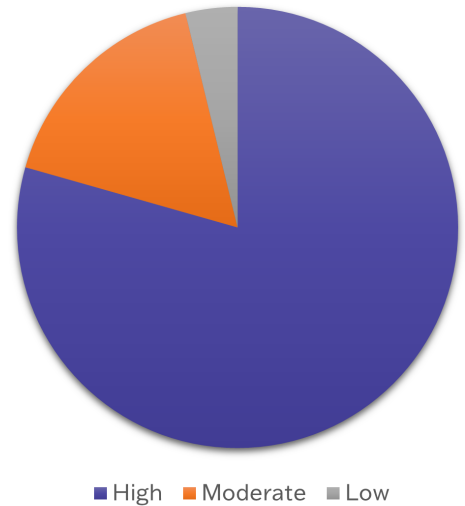
Survey results identified six indicators of wellbeing where nurses are struggling most. We believe that collaborative efforts to help nurses better care for themselves in these areas will have measurable impacts in staffing, engagement, and patient care.

In this report, we highlight factors associated with nurse resilience and vulnerability, key insights gleaned from direct comments, and conclusions leaders of healthcare can take action on.

Nurses genuinely love what they do; a quality rare in most professions. Results showed that almost eight in ten (79.4%) feel that the work they do is meaningful.

## ***“The work I do is meaningful to me.”***

High Agreement	79.4%
Moderate Agreement	16.8%
Low Agreement	3.8%



Nurses are observing signs of stress, anxiety, and burnout in their co-workers but it has little-to-no impact on their own wellbeing.

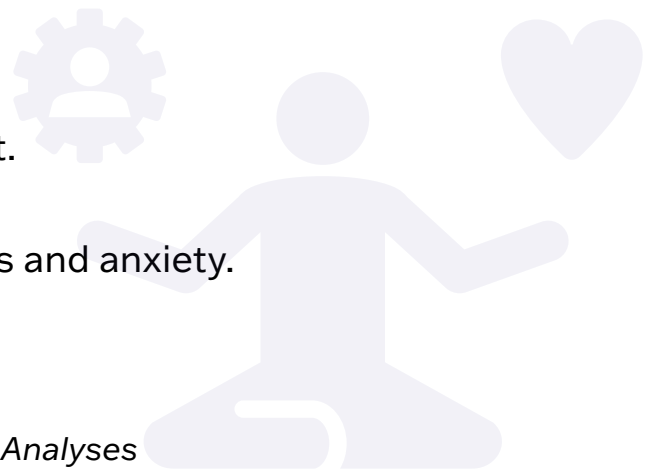
Respondents strongly agree that their fellow nurses demonstrate work-related signs of stress and anxiety (64.8%) and work-related burnout (58.1%); however, there is a weak correlation between a nurses' own well-being and what they observe in their colleagues. (Table A)

Six principal elements were identified as strong predictors of nurse wellbeing. According to our psychometrics, as nurses' ratings on these elements improve, it is highly likely that their wellbeing score will also improve. (Table A)

## **Strong Predictors of Wellbeing\***

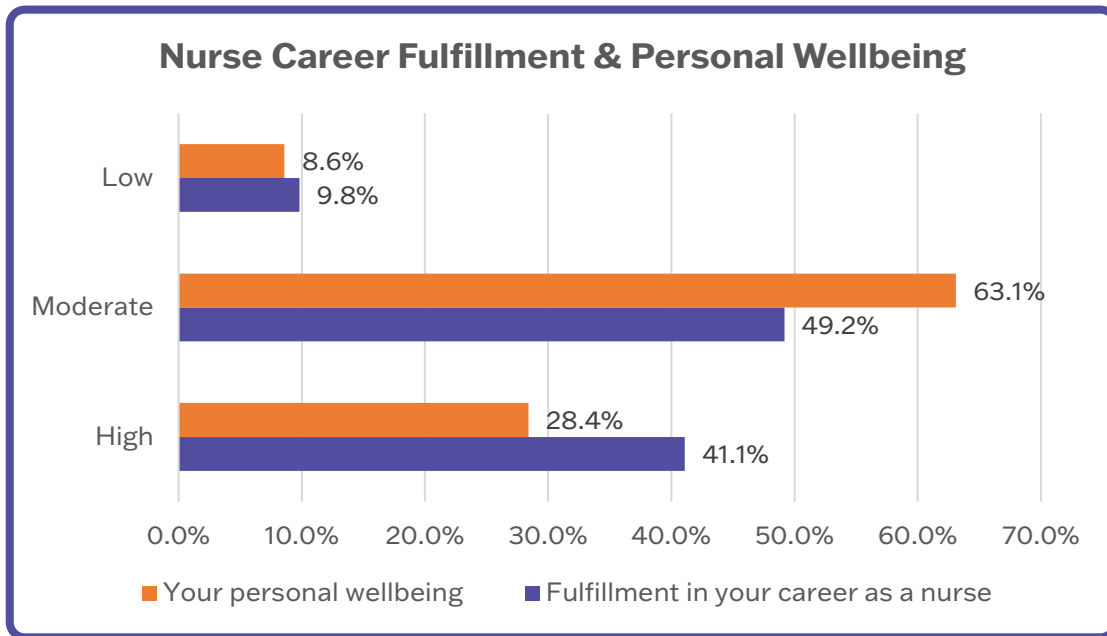
- I routinely practice self-care.
- I am able to manage feelings of burnout.
- I am able to decompress after work.
- I am able to manage work-related stress and anxiety.
- I have a healthy diet.
- I have healthy sleep habits.

*\*based on Multiple Regression and Correlation Analyses*



## Findings on Nurse Vulnerability

Data suggests that nurses may be sacrificing their own wellbeing for work they feel is meaningful and fulfilling. 41% of nurses rated their career fulfillment highly, yet just 28% scored their personal wellbeing high – an imbalance in priorities that makes quality care unlikely.



Nurses are not doing enough to care for themselves. Continued neglect presents a risk to both nurse and patient safety. Less than one-fourth expressed strong agreement with all of these statements: (Table B)

### % expressing strong agreement (8-10) with these statements...

22.1%	I am able to decompress after work.
22.0%	I have a healthy diet.
21.7%	I exercise regularly.
19.1%	I am comfortable discussing my wellbeing with my manager(s).
16.8%	I have healthy sleep habits.
14.9%	I am able to manage feelings of burnout.
13.1%	I regularly engage in mindfulness practices.

## Findings on Nurse Vulnerability

Nurses 18-34 struggle with wellbeing and self-care at two- to three-times the magnitude of older nurses.

% giving a rating of 8 – 10 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)	Age Range					
	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
COVID-19 has negatively impacted my overall wellbeing.	57.3%	57.0%	53.6%	47.9%	47.5%	36.2%
I am able to manage work-related stress and anxiety.	23.5	29.1	36.4	44.8	48.3	61.7
I routinely practice self-care.	25.7	29.7	30.2	36.6	46.0	61.7
I have a healthy diet.	17.7	19.9	24.7	28.5	36.5	46.8
I am able to decompress after work.	19.2	20.1	23.1	29.2	34.6	44.7
I am able to manage feelings of burnout.	9.2	11.0	19.5	27.3	33.2	40.4
I have healthy sleep habits.	13.6	15.1	18.0	21.6	31.2	40.4
I am comfortable discussing my wellbeing with my manager(s).	15.4	16.9	21.3	24.6	30.3	59.6
I regularly engage in mindfulness practices.	10.2	11.0	15.4	18.0	23.2	34.0

### Regarding COVID-19's impact:

Younger nurses cannot contextualize a moment as immense as a pandemic. Over the decades, older nurses have been exposed to catastrophes for which younger nurses have no frame of reference. An event this overwhelming and foreign, in a clinical setting they are adjusting to, would naturally require more support and guidance to navigate.

Core themes emerged from nurses' comments as to how they believe wellbeing can be improved.

## ***Theme 1: Short-Staffing***

The most predominant theme was the stress and exhaustion resulting from constant short-staffing. Approximately one in three nurses commented on this issue.

Some representative quotes include:

### **Q. "What is one thing that would improve your wellbeing at work?"**

"Reasonable breaks, appropriate staffing, less pile-on of others' work simply because it's well-known that nurses can and will "make it work" without harm to our patients"

"Actually being well staffed and appreciated"

"Not being short staffed. Staffing is an issue since the pandemic began."

"I cannot do my job well when I am overloaded with too many patients and not enough resources."

"Lowering stress at work. Nurse-to-patient ratios have never been so bad. Staffing is at an all-time low for this hospital."

"Being able to be honest to management about how difficult conditions are on the floor without the fear of being criticized and told that you can work somewhere else"

## ***Theme 2: Disconnection***

Another common theme was the sense of disconnection between nurses and leadership. Approximately one in five nurses made comments similar to these quotes:

### **Q. "What is one thing that would improve your wellbeing at work?"**

"Feeling more cared for by my leadership team"

"Having my opinions and ideas listened to"

"Better leadership with an idea of what current day nursing entails"

"Administration acting on nurses concerns not just taking the time to listen"

"Better pay and more appreciation shown for my work"

"Support from the higher ups during this time. It feels like we are constantly working against each other. Their priorities are much different from the priorities of those of us on the floor."



# Nurses: Take Action

*Nurse Wellbeing at Risk* assembles 12,000 clinician voices to help identify sources of work-related stress and offer wellness practices with purpose and value for both individuals and healthcare organizations.

Now is the time to establish self-care discipline that will flourish when increased bandwidth and reduced stress become the norm. Begin your journey for personal wellbeing as many have: listening to nurses speak openly about their experiences.

**You are  
not alone.**

**Nurse Wellbeing Week** was founded for nursing professionals to address common challenges in a public forum and share practical solutions for finding balance in the nursing lifestyle.

## Nurse Wellbeing Week 2020

Monday, September 28 – Available at 8:00am ET

### **Nurse Wellbeing at Risk: A National Survey**

As part of Nurse Wellbeing Week, NurseGrid, the #1 rated mobile app for nurses, surveyed more than 12,000 users on their habits, observations, and emotional wellbeing.

Tuesday, September 29 - 4:00pm ET

### **Riding the Waves of Stress and Anxiety to Prevent Burnout**

Learn how your colleagues are better controlling their stress bedside and away from it.

Wednesday, September 30 - 12:00pm ET

### **Your Body is Your Constant: Resilience Through Sleep, Nutrition, and Physical Wellness**

Panelists breakdown how to better manage your sleep, nutrition, and physical wellness as a nurse without giving up your personal life.

Wednesday, September 30 - 4:00pm ET

### **Putting Your Wellbeing First: We Must Change Our Approach to Nursing Long-Term**

Panelists will explore how COVID-19 can be a turning point for improving our approach to nurses' wellbeing long-term.

Thursday, October 1 - 12:00pm ET

### **Trauma, Exhaustion and Burnout: How to Cope With Each**

Panelists will discuss the difference between trauma, exhaustion, and burnout - and how to adopt strategies to fight back against each.

Thursday, October 1 - 4:00pm ET

### **Wellness in Action: How nurses can refresh, regroup, and reenergize**

**Keynote: Donna Cardillo, RN, MA, CSP, FAAN, *The Inspiration Nurse***

As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth, it's only fitting that we ask ourselves: What would Florence do?

# Healthcare Leaders: Take Action

A nurse's health is intrinsically tied to their performance, and our survey results show a neglect of personal wellness. Whether they struggle to make time for themselves, or lack experience in practicing mindfulness, continued neglect presents a danger to the clinician and may eventually extend to their patients.



The longer this issue goes unaddressed, the more vulnerable your staff becomes to burnout and shortened careers.

**Engage with your nurses. Acknowledge the prevalence of diminished wellbeing and unpack the work-based factors that anchor nurses down.**

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While the data indicates nurses are not taking the necessary steps to ensure their own wellbeing, this conclusion requires real-world context to be actionable. For example, a clinician's schedule may include several consecutive 12-hr shifts, forcing them to reduce and reprioritize choices between shifts. Traditional wellness solutions may prove unproductive and further damage faith in leadership.



**Seek solutions that navigate factors shaping the nursing lifestyle. Understand the challenges nurses face off the clock.**

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Current hiring initiatives can increase the overall wellbeing of your staff. When asked what single thing would improve their wellbeing at work, the most prevalent word expressed by nurses was "staffing". While low sense of wellbeing is the symptom, be aware of broader issues at your facility contributing to disrupted self-care, such as short-staffing, which itself contributes to excessive exhaustion, disconnection from leadership, and diminished quality of care.

**Be open with nurses about staffing issues. Announce solutions and keep processes transparent. Lay a foundation where trust can grow.**





# Healthcare Leaders: Take Action

## Implement a data-supported solution with a longer-term strategy to succeed.

### Start Early

Host preceptor programs that address the importance of nurse wellbeing, the effective handling of stress and work demands, and shine light on burnout.

### Fix What's Broken

Tackle 6 key areas first. Help nurses prioritize and develop skills in:

- practicing self-care
- managing feelings of burnout
- decompressing after work
- managing work-related stress and anxiety
- maintaining a healthy diet
- establishing healthy sleep habits



### Get Managers Involved

Only 19% of nurses feel comfortable discussing their wellbeing with their managers. Empower your managers to build trust within their departments. As your direct connection to clinicians, they are best positioned to help nurses adopt solutions and build in time to practice effective self-care. (Table B)



### In Closing

Nurses across the U.S. have indicated they are personally struggling with self-care while prioritizing patient health ahead of their own. Although conditions have worsened during the pandemic, they can still build and maintain healthier habits through focused wellness initiatives.

By listening to nurses' feedback and concentrating on their areas of concern, healthcare leaders can help improve the overall wellbeing of our nation's nurses.

## About the Survey

The information in this report is based on results of a NurseGrid survey conducted between September 4 – 11, 2020 through the NurseGrid mobile app. 12,071 clinicians participated in the survey.

Most respondents to the survey were RNs (93.7%) who worked in Adult ICU, MedSurg, or ER departments (56.5%). Most were in the 25 – 34 age range (50.2%).

A 1 – 10 rating scale was used for most of the questions, and for the purpose of analysis responses are grouped into categories as follows:

Weak: those giving an answer of 1 – 3

Moderate: those giving an answer of 4 – 7

Strong: those giving an answer of 8 – 10

The following three tables display the results of our specific findings. Table A contains factors that predict nurse wellbeing. Tables B and C display overall results as well as the results separated in age ranges.

### Table A

#### Predictors of Well-Being

(Based on Multiple Regression and Correlation Analyses)

- Relatively Strong Predictors of Wellbeing
  - I routinely practice self-care.
  - I am able to manage feelings of burnout.
  - I am able to decompress after work.
  - I am able to manage work-related stress and anxiety.
  - I have a healthy diet.
  - I have healthy sleep habits.
- Relatively Moderate Strong Predictors of Wellbeing
  - I exercise regularly.
  - I regularly engage in mindfulness practices.
  - I am comfortable discussing my wellbeing with my manager(s).
  - The work I do is meaningful to me.
  - COVID-19 has negatively impacted my overall wellbeing.
  - Work-related issues of stress, anxiety, and feelings of burnout negatively impact my personal life.
- Relatively Weak Predictors of Wellbeing
  - My co-workers demonstrate signs of work-related stress and anxiety.
  - My co-workers' well-being impacts my personal wellbeing.
- No Relationship with Wellbeing
  - My co-workers demonstrate signs of work-related burnout.

**Table B**

<b>SURVEY QUESTIONS</b>					
Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 10 being "strongly agree," how would you rate the following statements?					
	(n=11,544)	Mean Score	Strong Agreement 8 -10	Moderate Agreement 4 - 7	Weak Agreement 1 - 3
1.	The work I do is meaningful to me.	8.61	79.4%	16.8%	3.8%
2.	My coworkers demonstrate signs of work-related stress and anxiety.	7.99	64.8	31.2	4.0
3.	My coworkers demonstrate signs of work-related burnout.	7.74	58.1	37.6	4.3
4.	COVID-19 has negatively impacted my overall well-being.	7.41	54.9	35.8	9.3
5.	Work-related issues of stress, anxiety, and feelings of burnout negatively impact my personal life.	6.95	45.5	43.5	11.1
6.	My coworkers' wellbeing impacts my personal wellbeing.	6.47	33.8	54.5	11.8
7.	I am able to manage work-related stress and anxiety.	6.34	31.9	56.8	11.4
8.	I routinely practice self-care.	6.17	30.7	54.4	14.9
9.	I have a healthy diet.	5.65	22.0	59.4	18.6
10.	I am able to decompress after work.	5.65	22.1	58.6	19.3
11.	I am able to manage feelings of burnout.	5.15	14.9	60.8	24.2
12.	I exercise regularly.	5.13	21.7	46.6	31.7
13.	I have healthy sleep habits.	4.72	16.8	47.5	35.7
14.	I am comfortable discussing my wellbeing with my manager(s).	4.61	19.1	39.8	41.0
15.	I regularly engage in mindfulness practices.	4.40	13.1	45.7	41.1
<b>OVERALL RATINGS</b>					
Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 being high, how would you rate the following statements?					
	(n=11,544)	Mean Score	High 8 -10	Moderate 4 - 7	Low 1 - 3
16.	Your fulfillment in your career as a nurse	6.79	41.1	49.2	9.8
17.	Your personal wellbeing	6.37	28.4	63.1	8.6

**Table C**

<b>SURVEY QUESTIONS BY AGE CATEGORY</b>								
Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 10 being "strongly agree," how would you rate the following statements?								
Yellow shading indicates areas where there is a significant difference between younger and older respondents.								
	% giving a rating of 8 - 10	Mean Score	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
	# of respondents							
1.	The work I do is meaningful to me.	8.61	77.6%	78.4%	81.9%	83.0%	82.9%	89.4%
2.	My coworkers demonstrate signs of work-related stress and anxiety.	7.99	61.5	67.5	67.0	64.1	57.2	38.3
3.	My coworkers demonstrate signs of work-related burnout.	7.74	52.1	61.2	60.4	59.5	48.9	19.1
4.	COVID-19 has negatively impacted my overall wellbeing.	7.41	57.3	57.0	53.6	47.9	47.5	36.2
5.	Work related issues of stress, anxiety, and feelings of burnout negatively impact my personal life.	6.95	45.6	48.4	44.3	38.6	40.3	19.1
6.	My coworkers' wellbeing impacts my personal wellbeing.	6.47	32.5	33.0	35.5	37.8	35.6	29.8
7.	I am able to manage work-related stress and anxiety.	6.34	23.5	29.1	36.4	44.8	48.3	61.7
8.	I routinely practice self-care.	6.17	25.7	29.7	30.2	36.6	46.0	61.7
9.	I have a healthy diet.	5.65	17.7	19.9	24.7	28.5	36.5	46.8
10.	I am able to decompress after work.	5.65	19.2	20.1	23.1	29.2	34.6	44.7
11.	I am able to manage feelings of burnout.	5.15	9.2	11.0	19.5	27.3	33.2	40.4
12.	I exercise regularly.	5.13	20.3	21.4	22.8	21.8	26.1	21.3
13.	I have healthy sleep habits.	4.72	13.6	15.1	18.0	21.6	31.2	40.4
14.	I am comfortable discussing my well-being with my manager(s).	4.61	15.4	16.9	21.3	24.6	30.3	59.6
15.	I regularly engage in mindfulness practices.	4.40	10.2	11.0	15.4	18.0	23.2	34.0
<b>OVERALL RATINGS</b>								
Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 being high, how would you rate the following statements?								
	(n=11,544)	Mean Score						
16.	Your fulfillment in your career as a nurse	6.79	34.6	37.9	45.3	52.3	58.0	76.6
17.	Your personal wellbeing	6.37	23.5	26.3	30.9	35.1	44.2	40.4