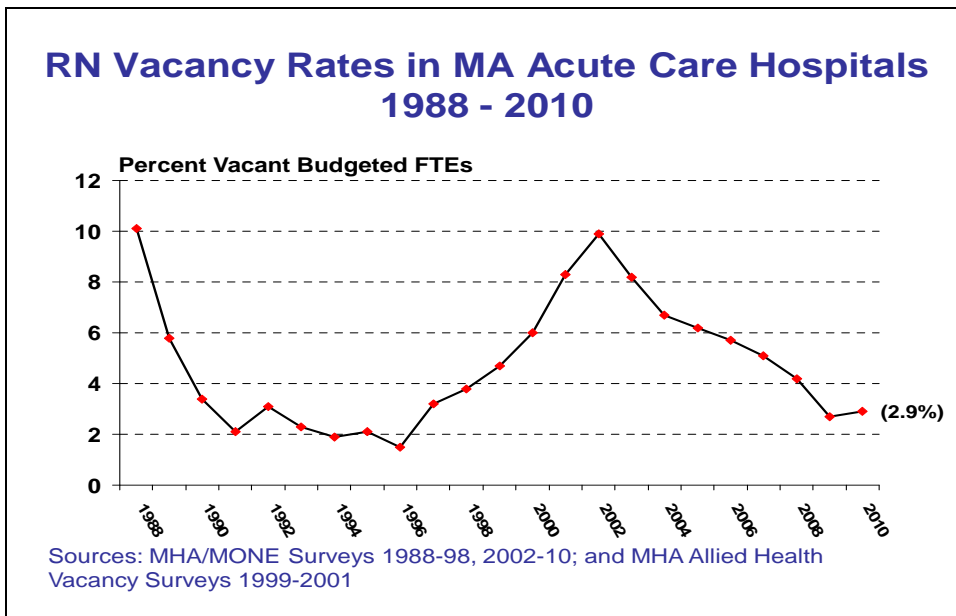
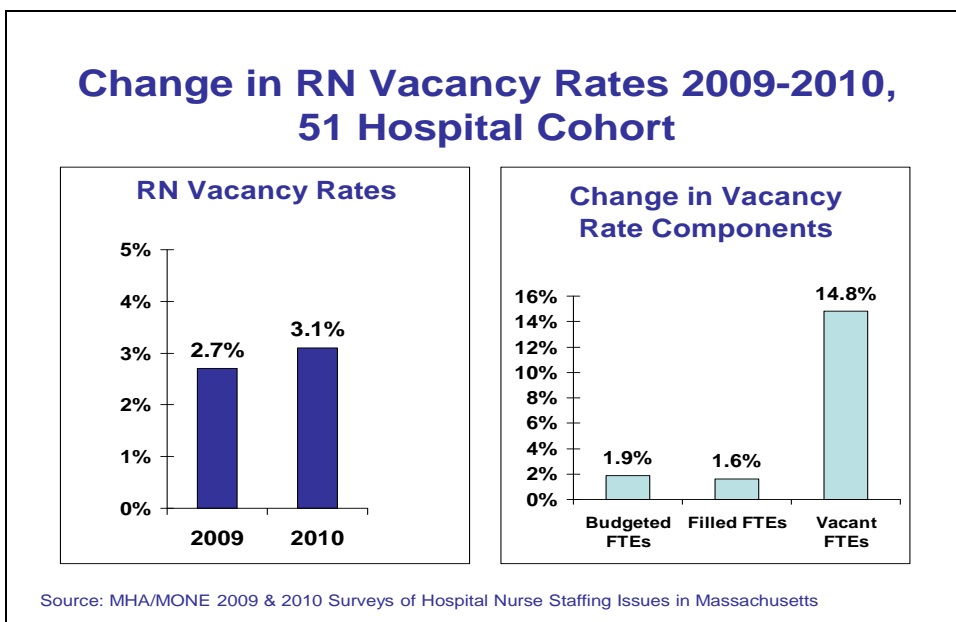


**Massachusetts Hospital Association & Massachusetts Organization of Nurse Executives
Survey of Hospital Nurse Staffing Issues in Massachusetts, 2011
Highlights**

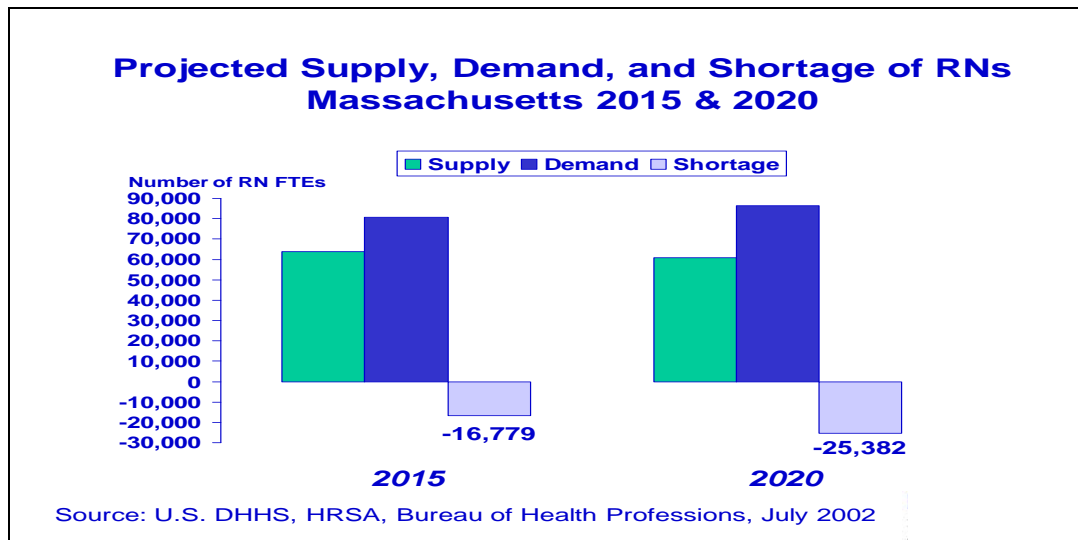
- The vacancy rate for Registered Nurses (RNs) in all survey hospitals was 3.0 percent. Acute care hospitals reported a 2.9 percent vacancy rate, and specialty hospitals reported a 3.6 percent rate.
- The acute care hospital RN vacancy rate stopped declining for the first time in seven years, and is now well below the median rate of 4.2 percent over the 23 years of data collection. Vacant positions are covered by per diem nurses, staffing pools, on-call staff, overtime, and agency or traveler nurses.



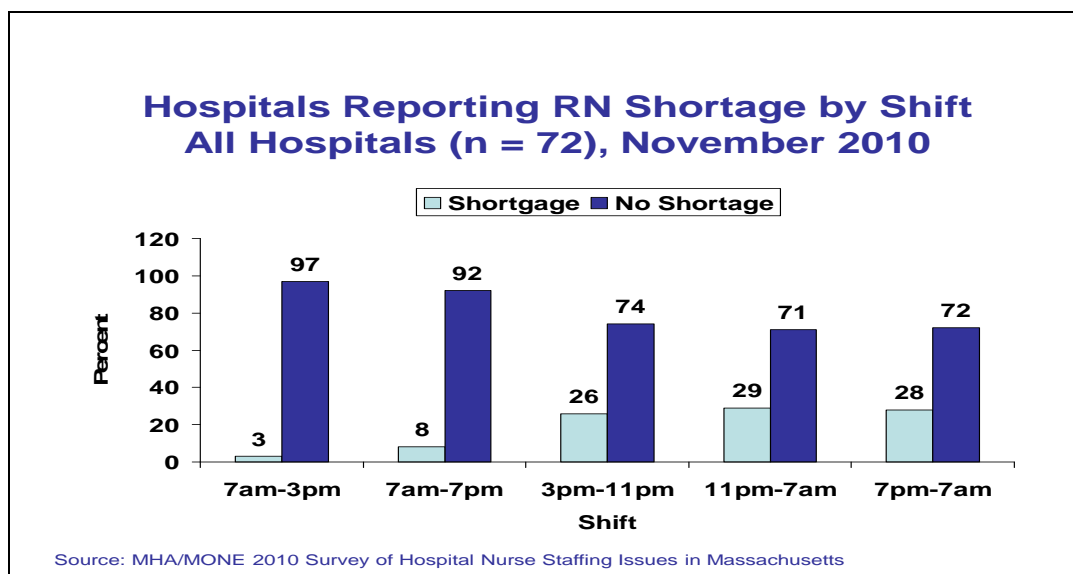
- Among 51 hospitals that responded to both the 2009 and 2010 surveys, the number of filled RN positions grew 1.6 percent, the product of a 14.8 percent increase in vacant positions and 3.4 percent growth in budgeted positions.



- National studies (Buerhaus *JAMA*, Nov. 26, 2008) suggest that the drop in vacancy rates observed since 2002 was caused by the reentry to the workforce of older, married nurses responding to increasing RN earnings and the toll of relatively high unemployment rates on their families following the 2001 recession. The recession that began in December 2007 and drove the state unemployment rate to 9.3 percent in December 2009 appears to have reinforced the trend. At the time of the 2010 survey, Massachusetts unemployment stood at 8.3 percent. Improvements in the hospital workplace and widespread private-sector initiatives aimed at increasing the supply of new nurses have also been cited as affecting the trend. ***For now, however, the forecast of a long-term, structural shortage of RNs is unchanged. Large numbers of baby-boomer nurses will soon begin to reach retirement age, and nursing education capacity is currently insufficient to replace them.***



- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services projected in 2002 that the deficit of registered nurses in Massachusetts would reach almost 17,000 in 2015 and grow to more than 25,000 by 2020. Note, however, that the age of the forecasts and developments since they were issued makes them more useful as general indicators of the magnitude of the challenge than as precise forecasts.
- Hospital nursing is a 24-hour, 7-day a week service. As reported in past years, the RN vacancies typically are concentrated in evening and night shifts. The 2010 survey found that 26 to 29 percent of hospitals reported shortages on “off-shifts,” several times the share that reported day-shift shortages. Nonetheless, these reported perceptions of “off-shift” shortages are far below levels in previous years.



- RN vacancy rates were highest in emergency departments, ambulatory care services, inpatient oncology units, and pediatric critical care units. The lowest vacancy rates were in maternal & child health services, pediatrics, and telemetry services.
- Hospitals reported that emergency departments, adult critical care units, operating rooms, and neonatal ICUs were the services that took longest to fill open RN positions, measured by the share reporting 60 or more days to fill open positions. Thirty-two (32) percent of hospitals that offered emergency department services reported that it took 60 or more days to fill open RN positions, with 8 percent reporting greater than 90 days to fill those positions. For all-positions combined, 47 percent of hospitals reported that they were able to fill positions in under 30 days (versus 22 percent in 2002 at the height of the shortage) and 4 percent reported that it took more than 90 days to fill positions (versus 27 percent in 2002).
- Vacancy rates were 3.8 percent for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and 7.4 percent for certified nurse assistants (CNAs), both down from 2009 levels. Specialty hospital (non-acute care) vacancy rates for LPNs dropped slightly to 7.0 percent. CNA vacancy rates were slightly lower in specialty hospitals (6.5 percent) than in acute care hospitals (7.6).

**Vacancy Rates by Hospital and Nurse Type,
November 2010**

Nurse Type	Acute Care Hospitals (n = 50)	Specialty Hospitals (n = 21)	All Hospitals (n = 65)
RNs	2.9%	3.4%	3.0%
LPNs	0%	7.9%	3.8%
CNAs	7.6%	6.9%	7.4%

Note: Vacancy rate = (vacant FTEs / budgeted FTEs) x 100

Source: MHA/MONE 2010 Survey of Hospital Nurse Staffing Issues in Massachusetts

- There were net declines across hospitals in the use of RN overtime and agency/traveler RNs. Forty-three (43) percent of hospitals reported that RN overtime use dropped in comparison to the prior year, while 20 percent reported increased RN overtime (37 percent unchanged). Fifty-two (52) percent of hospitals reported using fewer agency or traveler RNs in 2010 versus 19 percent reporting more use (29 percent unchanged).

The survey results are based on the responses of 76 of 94 hospitals that received the survey in November 2010. The respondents included 61 acute care hospitals and 15 specialty hospitals. The acute care hospital respondents account for 90 percent of the state's acute care hospital beds. Response rates for specific survey questions may be fewer than 76.
