

U.S. NURSING ASSISTANTS EMPLOYED IN NURSING HOMES

KEY FACTS

The number of nursing assistants employed in nursing homes in the United States declined slightly in the past decade—from just over 599,000 in 2008 to 581,000 in 2018—as the balance of service delivery shifted more toward home and community-based settings.¹ Despite this trend, nursing homes still provide critical support for 1.5 million residents who require 24-hour care.²

The work of nursing assistants is challenging and offers few material rewards. On average, nursing assistants support 12 residents at a time, typically for long hours.³ Due in part to their demanding work conditions and the physical nature of the job, nursing assistants are injured more than three times more frequently than the typical American worker.⁴ These risks are insufficiently compensated: nursing assistants earn a median hourly wage of \$13.38 and a median annual income of \$22,200.⁵

The poor quality and inadequate compensation of nursing assistant jobs make it difficult for nursing homes to attract and retain enough workers to fully staff all shifts. To fill vacancies, a third of nursing homes contract with short-term staffing agencies,⁶ which disrupts care continuity for residents. In other cases, nursing assistants must work short-staffed and/or complete mandatory overtime hours, which can lead to stress and burnout.⁷

Looking ahead, nursing homes will have to fill nearly 680,000 nursing assistant job openings between 2016 and 2026,⁸ primarily as workers leave the field. As the rapidly expanding population of older adults creates new demand for nursing home care, even more nursing assistants will be needed. Filling these job openings—and ensuring consistent, high-quality care for nursing home residents—will hinge on improving nursing assistant jobs.

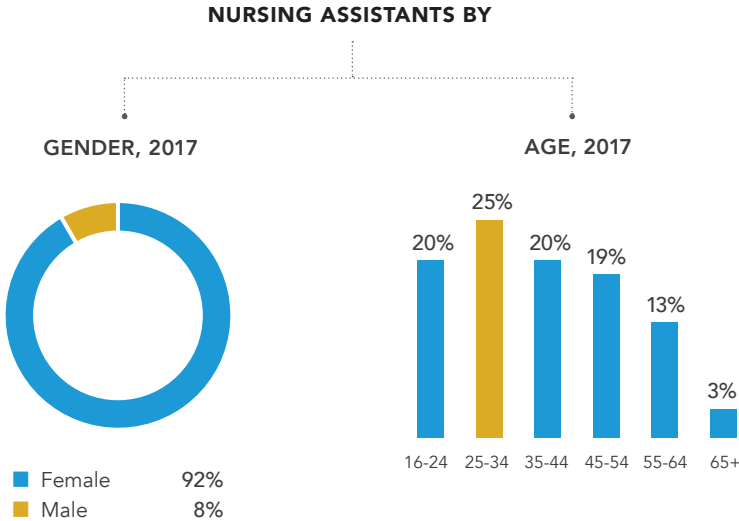


Chart Source: Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. 2019. *IPUMS USA: Version 9.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>; analysis by PHI (July 8, 2019).

WHO ARE NURSING ASSISTANTS?

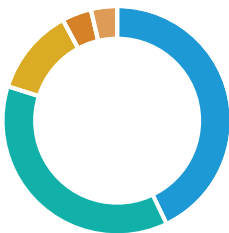
- **More than 9 in 10 nursing assistants are women, and their median age is 37.**

Nursing assistant jobs generally have minimal legal and employer-based requirements with regards to education, experience, and training. As a result, workers who typically encounter educational or discriminatory barriers in the labor market may be more successful in obtaining nursing assistant jobs.

- **While people of color make up just over one-third of the total U.S. workforce,⁹ they comprise more than half of the nursing assistant workforce.** Thirty-seven percent of nursing assistants are Black or African American.
- **Twenty-one percent of nursing assistants were born outside the United States, compared to 17 percent of all U.S. workers.¹⁰**
- **Less than half of nursing assistants have completed any formal education beyond high school.**

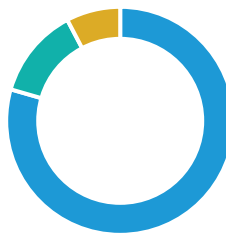
NURSING ASSISTANTS BY

RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2017



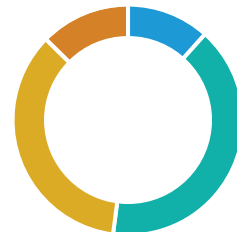
White	43%
Black or African American	37%
Hispanic or Latino (Any Race)	12%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4%
Other	4%

CITIZENSHIP STATUS, 2017



U.S. Citizen by Birth	79%
U.S. Citizen by Naturalization	13%
Not a Citizen of the U.S.	8%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2017



Less Than High School	12%
High School Graduate	40%
Some College, No Degree	35%
Associate's Degree or Higher	13%

Chart Source: Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. 2019. *IPUMS USA: Version 9.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>; analysis by PHI (July 8, 2019). "Hispanic or Latino" refers to people of any race who identify as Hispanic or Latino; these individuals are excluded from all other race/ethnicity categories.

THE NURSING ASSISTANT ROLE IN NURSING HOMES

More than 18,000 nursing homes across the United States provide 24-hour nursing care and personal assistance to older adults and people with disabilities.¹¹ The number of nursing home residents has declined in the past decade, from 1.8 million in 2007 to 1.5 million in 2017.¹²

Nursing assistants provide intensive assistance to nursing home residents with daily tasks such as dressing, bathing, eating, and mobility.¹³ They also help residents participate in a range of social activities such as classes, guest performances, and religious services. Further, nursing assistants perform certain clinical tasks under the supervision of licensed professionals.

(See Notes on Occupational Titles and Industry Classifications, page 10, for more details.)

- **Nursing assistants comprise over one-third of the nursing home workforce**, outnumbering every other occupational group in this workforce. However, **the number of nursing assistants in nursing homes declined from 599,350 in 2008 to 581,140 in 2018.**¹⁴

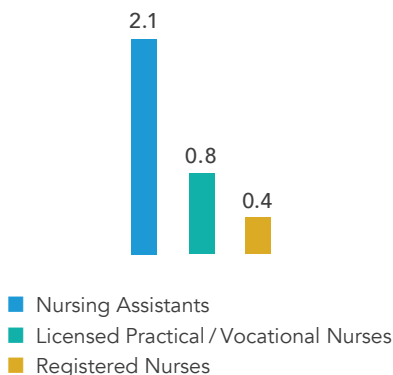
NURSING HOME EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, 2018

Occupation	Employment	% of Industry Employment
Nursing Assistants	581,140	36%
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses	210,850	13%
Registered Nurses	153,120	10%
Other Health Care and Personal Support Occupations	209,810	13%
Business, Administrative, and Social Services Staff	161,800	10%
Food Preparation and Serving-Related Occupations	150,740	9%
All Other Workers	143,190	9%

Table Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Division of Occupational Employment Statistics. 2019. *May 2018 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrci.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 2, 2019). "All Other Workers" comprises a range of occupations including Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance occupations and Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media occupations.

- **Nursing assistants in nursing homes constitute 13 percent of the total direct care workforce**, which also includes workers who are employed in home care and a range of other settings.¹⁵ The total number of direct care workers across all industries tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is **4.5 million workers**.
- Among all nursing staff, nursing assistants spend the most time assisting residents, **providing a median of 2.1 hours of direct care per resident per day**. Because of their frequent interactions with residents, nursing assistants are well-positioned to observe changes in resident condition and report these changes to licensed nursing staff.
- **On average, nursing assistants support 12 residents during a typical shift.**¹⁶ One in 10 nursing assistants typically assists 16 or more residents.
- **One-third (32 percent) of nursing homes employ medication aides**, which are nursing assistants that have been trained to administer medications under the supervision of a licensed professional.¹⁷
- Nursing assistant jobs are predominantly government funded. **Payments from public programs (primarily Medicare and Medicaid) constituted 68 percent of the industry’s more than \$123 billion annual revenue in 2017.**

MEDIAN STAFF HOURS PER RESIDENT PER DAY BY OCCUPATION, 2018



NURSING HOMES REVENUE BY SOURCE, 2017

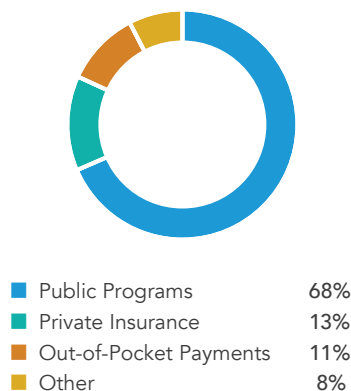
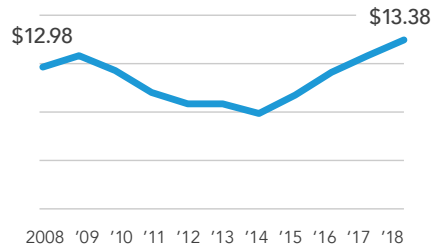


Chart Sources: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. 2019. *PBJ Daily Nurse Staffing CY 2018*. <https://data.cms.gov/Special-Programs-Initiatives-Long-Term-Care-Facili/PBJ-Daily-Nurse-Staffing-CY-2018Q4/kiqr-gzba>; U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. *Service Annual Survey, Table 4: Estimated Sources of Revenue for Employer Firms: 2013 through 2017*. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/econ/services/sas-naics.html>; analysis by PHI (July 17, 2019).

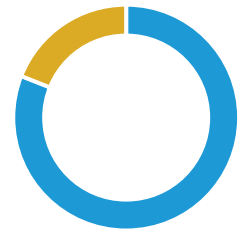
THE CHALLENGES FOR THIS WORKFORCE

- **Inflation-adjusted wages for nursing assistants were \$13.38 in 2018, compared to \$12.98 in 2008.** This means that the purchasing power of nursing assistant wages improved slightly over the past decade.
- **Four in five nursing assistants work full time**, defined as 35 hours or more per week.
- Due to low wages, **nursing assistants working in nursing homes earn a median income of \$22,200 per year.**¹⁸
- Given their low annual earnings, nursing assistants experience a high rate of poverty. **Thirteen percent live below the federal poverty line and nearly half (44 percent) live in low-income households.**¹⁹

NURSING ASSISTANT MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES, ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION, 2008 TO 2018



NURSING ASSISTANTS BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS, 2018



NURSING ASSISTANTS BY POVERTY LEVEL, 2017

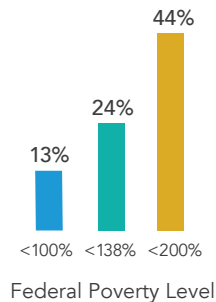
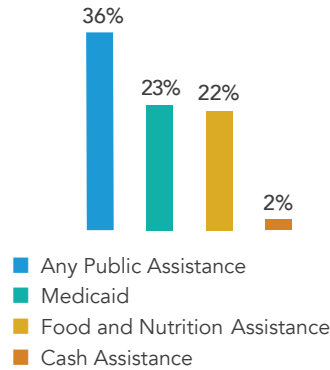


Chart Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Division of Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). 2019. *May 2008 to May 2018 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 2, 2019); Flood, Sarah, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren. 2019. *IPUMS, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V6.0>; Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. 2019. *IPUMS USA: Version 9.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>; analysis by PHI (July 8, 2019).

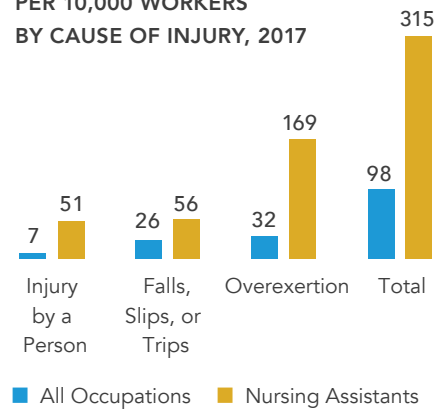
- Because poverty rates are high among nursing assistants, **36 percent rely on some form of public assistance.**
- **One in three nursing homes (36 percent) hired temporary nursing assistants from staffing agencies in 2018 to fill staffing vacancies.**²⁰
Nursing homes that brought in contracted nursing assistants relied on these temporary workers for a median of 117 days during the year.
- **Nursing assistants are more than three times more likely to experience workplace injuries than the typical U.S. worker.** The nursing assistant injury rate per 10,000 workers has declined in recent years, however, from 416 in 2012 to 315 in 2017.²¹
- **The uninsured rate among nursing assistants is 11 percent.** Sixty percent of nursing assistants have employer-sponsored insurance, while 25 percent rely on public coverage, particularly Medicaid.

Chart Sources: Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. 2019. *IPUMS USA: Version 9.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>; analysis by PHI (July 8, 2019); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities. 2018. *Occupational Injuries and Illnesses and Fatal Injuries Profiles*. <https://www.bls.gov/iif/>; analysis by PHI (July 23, 2019).

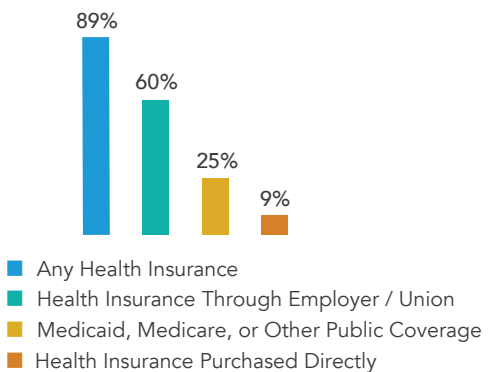
NURSING ASSISTANTS ACCESSING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, 2017



ANNUAL INJURY RATES PER 10,000 WORKERS BY CAUSE OF INJURY, 2017



NURSING ASSISTANTS BY HEALTH INSURANCE STATUS, 2017



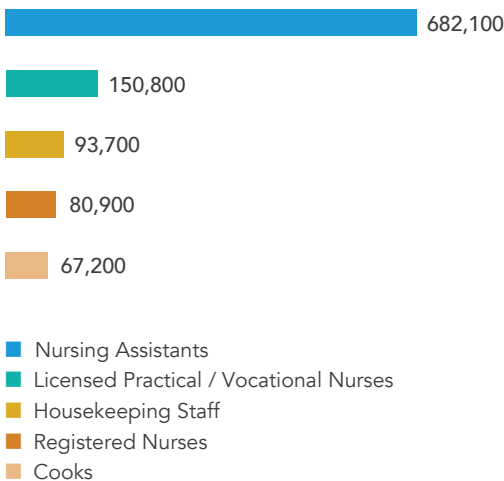
THE FUTURE DEMAND FOR NURSING ASSISTANTS

- From 2016 to 2026, there will be **678,300 nursing assistant job openings in nursing homes: 368,000 workers will leave the labor force, 306,100 workers will move into other occupations, and 4,200 new positions will be created.**²²

There will be more job openings for nursing assistants than for any other occupation in the nursing home industry.

- From 2016 to 2060, the population of adults aged 65 and older—who comprise **83 percent of the nursing home resident population**²³—will nearly double, from **49.2 million to 94.7 million**. The number of adults aged 85 and older—who account for 39 percent of nursing home residents—is expected to nearly triple over the same period, from 6.4 million to 19 million.

OCCUPATIONS WITH THE MOST JOB OPENINGS IN NURSING HOMES, 2016 TO 2026



PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP, 2016 TO 2060

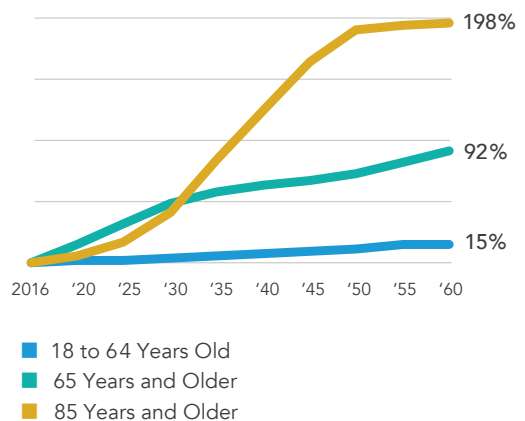
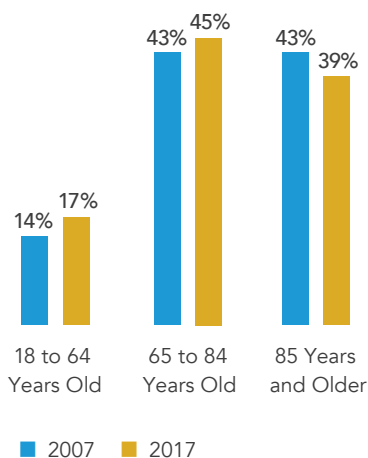


Chart Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Projections Program (EPP). 2017. *Employment Projections: 2016–26, National Employment Matrix - Industry*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/industry-occupation-matrix-industry.htm>; BLS, EPP. 2017. *Occupational Separations and Openings*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/occupational-separations-and-openings.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 24, 2019); U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. *National Population Projections Tables, Table 2. Projected Age and Sex Composition of the Population*. <https://census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html>; analysis by PHI (July 10, 2019). The values in the Job Openings chart reflect all job openings, including openings due to growth, labor force exits, and occupational transfers, which refer to workers who are likely to leave their current occupations for new ones.

- **Nearly half (49 percent) of nursing home residents have Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia.**²⁴ There are 5.8 million people aged 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of dementia, and this population is projected to more than double to 14 million by 2050.²⁵ This trend is expected to drive up demand for nursing home care in the years ahead.
- **While most nursing home residents are older adults, the proportion of nursing home residents aged 18 to 64 years old increased from 14 percent in 2007 to 17 percent in 2017.**²⁶ This trend primarily reflects the expanding role of nursing homes as providers of short-term, post-acute care services, versus long-term care.²⁷

**NURSING HOME RESIDENTS
BY AGE, 2007 TO 2017**



Even though nursing assistant employment has declined in recent years, widespread job vacancies in nursing homes persist—due to the poor quality of nursing assistant jobs and competition from other industries, especially at a time of low unemployment. Rapid growth in the population of older adults and people with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, coupled with a shift toward providing post-acute care in nursing homes, will continue to generate a need for nursing homes, even as home and community-based alternatives become available. Taken together, these trends make it imperative to develop strategies that strengthen and stabilize this workforce.

Chart Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2008. *American Community Survey (ACS) 2007 1-year Estimates, Characteristics of the Group Quarters Population by Group Quarters Type*. https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/07_1YR/S2601B; U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. *ACS 2017 1-year Estimates, Characteristics of the Group Quarters Population by Group Quarters Type (3 Types)*. https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_1YR/S2602; analysis by PHI (July 18, 2019).

NOTES ON OCCUPATIONAL TITLES AND INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATIONS

The analyses in this fact sheet include nursing assistants who are employed in the **Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Homes)** industry category according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Industry definitions can be found at <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>.

TITLE	EXAMPLES	INDUSTRY DESCRIPTION
Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Homes) (NAICS 623110)	Skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, rest homes with nursing care, retirement homes with nursing care, group homes for the disabled with nursing care, homes for the aged with nursing care, and inpatient hospice.	This industry comprises establishments that are primarily engaged in providing inpatient, 24-hour nursing, rehabilitative, and personal care services. The care is generally provided for an extended period. These establishments have a permanent core staff of registered and licensed practical/vocational nurses who provide care along with nursing assistants and other staff.

Nursing assistants are defined by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Occupation definitions can be found at <http://www.bls.gov/SOC>.

TITLE	OTHER TITLES	JOB DESCRIPTION
Nursing Assistants (SOC 31-1014)	Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Nursing Aide, Nursing Attendant, Nursing Aide, Nursing Care Attendant, Medication Aide	Nursing assistants assist individuals with daily tasks such as eating, dressing, and bathing. They may also perform certain clinical tasks under the supervision of a licensed professional.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

Nursing assistant employment projections were sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Projections program, and hourly wage and employment trends were sourced from the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program. The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (Current Series) was used to adjust wages for inflation to 2018 dollars.

Home health aides were necessarily included along with nursing assistants in analyses of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and Current Population Survey (CPS) because the Census Bureau's occupational classification system is less precise than the BLS Standard Occupational Classification system. The ACS and CPS were used to calculate workforce demographics, median annual earnings, poverty status, use of public assistance, health insurance status, and full-time/part-time status.

Payroll-Based Journal data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services were used to analyze nursing home staffing, including hours per resident day, residents per nursing assistant, and medication aide employment. To estimate the ratio of residents to nursing assistants, we divided the number of residents in each nursing home by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) nursing assistants. We estimated the number of FTE positions by dividing total daily nursing assistant hours by three (the typical number of shifts in a day) and eight (the number of hours in a full-time shift).

NOTES

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Division of Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). 2019a. *May 2008 to May 2018 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 2, 2019).
2. U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. *American Community Survey (ACS) 2017 1-year Estimates, Characteristics of the Group Quarters Population by Group Quarters Type (3 Types)*. https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/07_1YR/S2601B; U.S. Census Bureau. 2018; analysis by PHI (July 18, 2019).
3. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). 2019. *PBJ Daily Nurse Staffing CY 2018*. <https://data.cms.gov/Special-Programs-Initiatives-Long-Term-Care-Facili/PBJ-Daily-Nurse-Staffing-CY-2018Q4/kiqr-gzba>; analysis by PHI (July 17, 2019).
4. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities. 2018. *Occupational Injuries and Illnesses and Fatal Injuries Profiles*. <https://www.bls.gov/iif/>; analysis by PHI (July 23, 2019).
5. BLS OES, 2019a; Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. 2019. *IPUMS USA: Version 9.0*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>.
6. CMS, 2019.
7. Bishop, Christine E., Marie R. Squillace, Jennifer Meagher, Wayne L. Anderson, and Joshua M. Wiener. 2009. "Nursing Home Work Practices and Nursing Assistants' Job Satisfaction." *The Gerontologist* 49(5): 611-622. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnp040.
8. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Projections Program (EPP). 2017. *Employment Projections: 2016-26, National Employment Matrix - Industry*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/industry-occupation-matrix-industry.htm>; BLS, EPP. 2017. *Occupational Separations and Openings*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/occupational-separations-and-openings.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 24, 2019). This figure includes job openings due to growth, labor force exits, and occupational transfers, which refer to workers who are likely to leave their current occupations for new ones.
9. Ruggles et al., 2019.
10. Ruggles et al., 2019.
11. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages: Number of Establishments. 2017. *State and County Wages*. <https://www.bls.gov/cew/>; analysis by PHI (July 21, 2018).
12. U.S. Census Bureau. 2008. *American Community Survey (ACS) 2007 1-year Estimates, Characteristics of the Group Quarters Population by Group Quarters Type*. https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/07_1YR/S2601B; U.S. Census Bureau. 2018; analysis by PHI (July 18, 2019).
13. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2019. *Long-Term Care Providers and Services Users in the United States: Data from the National Study of Long-Term Care Providers, 2015-2016*. Hyattsville, MD: CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_03/sr03_43-508.pdf.
14. BLS OES, 2019a.
15. BLS OES, 2019a; BLS, OES. 2019b. *May 2018 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm>; analysis by PHI (July 2, 2019). Other industries employing direct care workers include (but are not limited to) continuing care retirement communities, assisted living facilities, residential facilities, employment services, and vocational rehabilitation services.
16. CMS, 2019.
17. CMS, 2019.
18. Ruggles et al., 2019.
19. Federal poverty thresholds, which are updated each year, can be accessed here: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>.
20. CMS, 2019.
21. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities. 2018. *Nonfatal Cases Involving Days Away from Work: Selected Characteristics (2011 Forward)*. <https://www.bls.gov/iif/>; analysis by PHI (July 23, 2019).
22. BLS EPP, 2017.
23. U.S. Census Bureau, 2018.
24. CDC, 2019.
25. Alzheimer's Association. 2019. *Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*. Washington, D.C.: Alzheimer's Association. <https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures-2019-r.pdf>.
26. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018.
27. Lepore, Michael and Natalie E. Leland. 2015. "Nursing Homes That Increased The Proportion Of Medicare Days Achieved Gains In Quality." *Health Affairs* 34(12): 2121-2128. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0303.

PHI works to transform eldercare and disability services. We foster dignity, respect, and independence for all who receive care, and all who provide it. As the nation's leading authority on the direct care workforce, PHI promotes quality direct care jobs as the foundation for quality care.

Drawing on 25 years of experience working side-by-side with direct care workers and their clients in cities, suburbs, and small towns across America, PHI offers all the tools necessary to create quality jobs and provide quality care. PHI's trainers, researchers, and policy experts work together to:

- Learn what works and what doesn't in meeting the needs of direct care workers and their clients, in a variety of long-term care settings;
- Implement best practices through hands-on coaching, training, and consulting, to help long-term care providers deliver high-quality care;
- Support policymakers and advocates in crafting evidence-based policies to advance quality care.

For more information, visit PHI at PHInational.org and 60CaregiverIssues.org.



400 East Fordham Road, 11th Floor
Bronx, NY 10458
Phone: 718.402.7766
Fax: 718.585.6852
Email: info@PHInational.org

