



**Sustaining Wisconsin's Healthcare Workforce:
A Report on Healthcare Worker Retirement and
Departure Intentions in the Fox Valley**

May 2007





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Dear Community Member,

The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) serves our communities by providing individuals an opportunity to seek their fullest potential while affording businesses an opportunity to recruit high quality employees. Since healthcare is Wisconsin's second largest employer, the Board realized how detrimental a healthcare workforce shortage could be to the state. In October 2004, the FVWDB brought educators and healthcare employers together to collaborate on the Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance (FVHCA). The FVHCA's purpose is "to ensure an abundant supply of healthcare workers in the region now and in the future by working collaboratively with all stakeholders."

One of the FVHCA's key strategies to accomplish their mission was to assess the specific healthcare labor needs of the Fox Valley region including retirement and departure intentions of the current healthcare workforce. To meet this need, a Retirement and Departure Intentions Survey tool was developed by FVHCA members. Almost 7,800 area employees answered the survey and the response rate was outstanding. The information which follows in this report is extremely valuable and will be used by educators, healthcare facilities, and many other community agencies in their strategic planning initiatives.

The FVWDB and FVHCA would like to extend a thank you to the six organizations which completed the survey as well as the key staff who helped manage the effort: Aurora Health Care Oshkosh (Vicki Strean and Linda Mingus), Affinity Health System (Sue Edminster), Agnesian HealthCare (Kathy Duchac), Fond du Lac Lutheran Home, Inc. (Gary Thorpe), ThedaCare (Stacy Carson and Heidi Naperala), and the Wisconsin Veterans Home-King, (Colleen Roemer).

FVHCA members not already mentioned also deserve a big thank you for their hard work to date: Cheryl Allen, Anne Liners Brett, Priscilla Buteyn, Sue Clark, Zoe Cujak, Jerry Disterhaft, Rosann Geiser, Mary Herman, Katie Hughes, Jim McCann, Jill Niemczyk, Maureen Pistone, Peg Raugh, Marty Schaller, Nathan Schoone, Rosemary Smith, Paula Stettbacher, Stephanie Stewart, Kris Tagliapietra, Carrie Thompson, Mary Jo Turner, Judy Warmuth, Lori Weisse, and Cathi Winters. Other individuals have helped from

time to time and we appreciate everyone's assistance even if your name isn't listed here- just know your time and efforts are valued!

The FVHCA and FVWDB wishes to express special thanks to Dr. Gayle Hytrek, President of Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC), for supporting this research project and for allowing Josh Bullock from the Institutional Research & Quality Improvement Department at MPTC to conduct the research survey. Josh also compiled the information contained within this report. His knowledge and expertise have been vital to the success of the project and we sincerely thank him for his hard work.

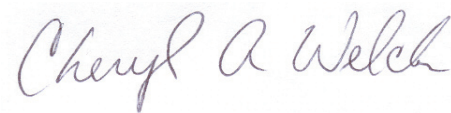
Finally, we wish to extend a big thank you to the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board members for their support and encouragement of the FVHCA and its projects. We also need to recognize Jen Meyer, FVWDB's Director of Research and Development, for assisting with the survey project as well as her role in coordinating all activities of the FVHCA.

The FVHCA is always looking for members who are interested in working on the healthcare workforce shortage. Please view our website: www.fvhca.org for further information, or contact Jen Meyer at (920) 720-5600 or jmeyer@fvwdb.com if you have any questions. We hope you enjoy the report and the wealth of information it contains!

Sincerely,



Norma Tirado
Senior VP Employee & Information Services,
Agnesian HealthCare, and
FVWDB Vice-Chair



Cheryl Welch
Executive Administrator,
Fox Valley Workforce
Development Board, Inc.

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The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board and Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance would like to extend a special thank you to the following individuals for their contributions to this research:

Cheryl Allen, Anne Liners Brett, Josh Bullock, Priscilla Buteyn, Stacy Carson, Sue Clark, Zoe Cujak, Jerry Disterhaft, Kathy Duchac, Sue Edminster, Rosann Geiser, Tim Havican, Mary Herman, Katie Hughes, Jim McCann, Jen Meyer, Linda Mingus, Heidi Naperala, Jill Niemczyk, Maureen Pistone, Margie Rankin, Peg Raugh, Colleen Roemer, Marty Schaller, Nathan Schoone, Rosemary Smith, Vicki Strean, Paula Stettbacher, Stephanie Stewart, Kris Tagliapietra, Carrie Thompson, Gary Thorpe, Norma Tirado, Mary Jo Turner, Judy Warmuth, Cheryl Welch, Lori Weisse, and Cathi Winters.

The Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance extends a special thank you to the following organizations for their participation in the research:



Lutheran Homes
and Health Services, Inc.



Thank you to the FVWDB and Norma Tirado (Vice-Chair) for their support of this project and to Cheryl Welch and Jen Meyer for their tireless support of the Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance.

The Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance would like to express special thanks to Dr. Gayle Hytrek, president of Moraine Park Technical College, for supporting this research, and to Josh Bullock for conducting the research and compiling the information contained within this report.



Introduction

The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) serves our communities by providing individuals an opportunity to seek their fullest potential while affording businesses the opportunity to recruit the highest quality employees. Given that healthcare is Wisconsin's second largest employer, the FVWDB realized a healthcare shortage could be detrimental to the citizens of Wisconsin. To address this looming need, the FVWDB brought educators and healthcare employers from the Fox Valley together to collaborate on the Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance. The FVWDB's charge was to remain a neutral facilitator and assist the Alliance in establishing goals, define outcomes, formulate and execute strategies, and assess the impact.

The current purpose of the Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance is to ensure an abundant supply of healthcare workers in our region now and in the future by working collaboratively with all stakeholders.

Key Strategies

The Fox Valley Healthcare Alliance identified four key strategies to direct its efforts:

- Market healthcare occupations in the Fox Valley through development of a website, speakers bureau and promotion of the Alliance.
- Develop standardized job shadowing applications and clinical student background check requirements for all partners.
- Seek and write for federal, state and private grant funding to support healthcare initiatives in the Fox Valley.
- Assess the specific healthcare labor needs of the Fox Valley region, including retirement and departure intentions of the current healthcare workforce.

Survey Research

Planning for the Retirement and Departures Intentions survey began in mid-2005. The project set out with the following objectives:

- Anticipate retirement plans and factors influencing the retirement decision.
- Anticipate departure plans (other than retirement) and the factors influencing the departure decision.
- Gather demographics, such as age, gender, specialty area, job function, tenure and employment status, with which to analyze the retirement and departure intentions.

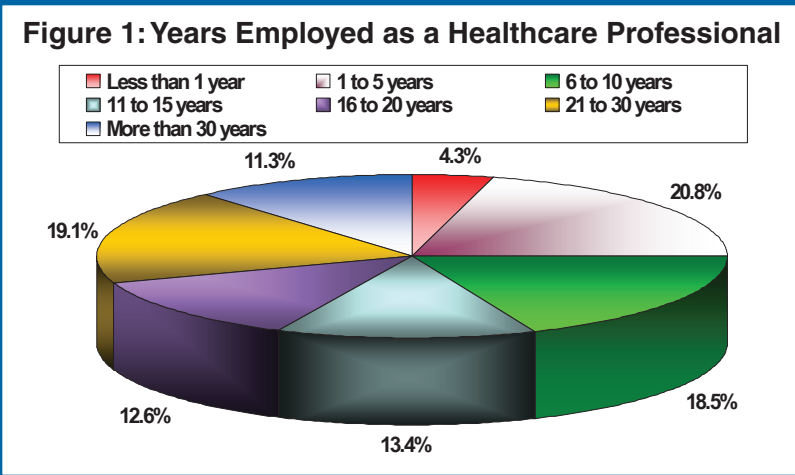
The surveying process was conducted through both paper and electronic surveys sent directly to employees with the assistance of each employer. Surveying lasted from early 2006 through early 2007, culminating in responses from 7,773 employees representing six major healthcare employers. The average employee response rate was 60%, with several organizations nearing an 80% response rate from employees. Summary results of the surveying are presented in the following report. Occupations with 10 or fewer respondents are not included in the results.

Respondent Demographics

Years Employed

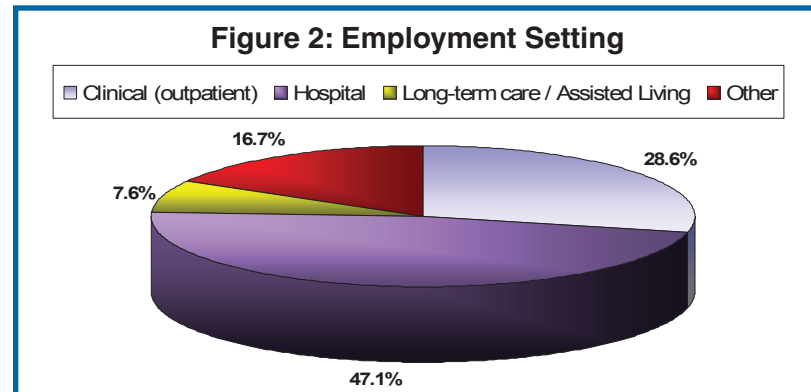
As shown in Figure 1, a quarter of all healthcare workers have been employed five years or less while just over 30% of workers have been employed 21 years or more.

Seventy percent of the respondents are employed full time in the healthcare field while 28% consider themselves part time. Only 2% of respondents describe themselves as casual employees.



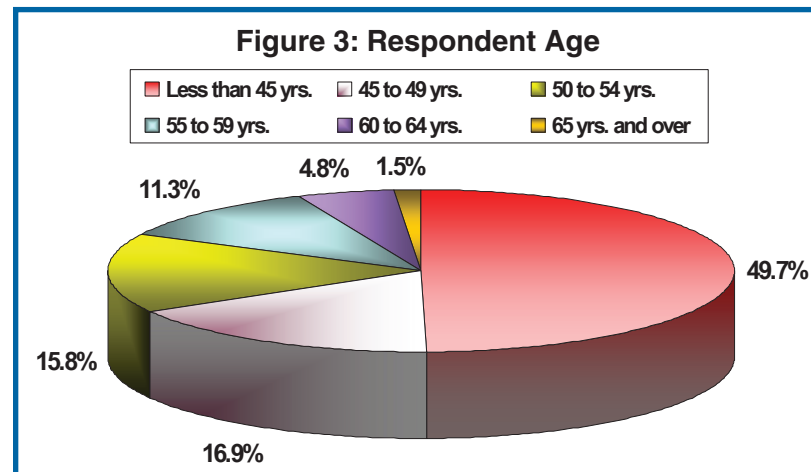
Employment Setting

More than 47% of respondents were employed in a hospital setting while nearly 29% were employed in an outpatient clinical setting (Figure 2). Just under 8% were employed in long-term care or assisted living while close to 17% were employed in other settings such as hospice, home healthcare and laboratories, among other settings.



Respondent Age

Nearly half of all respondents were less than 45 years old (Figure 3). An additional 17% were between 45 and 49 years old. Slightly over 6% of respondents were age 60 or over. The remaining 27% were between the ages of 50 and 59 years old.



Respondent Gender

Over 88% of respondents were female while just over 11% were male.

Suggestions for Retaining Healthcare Workers

The following are some key findings and recommendations not in any particular order that need to be considered in putting together a plan:

- The biggest hit to our healthcare workforce in the Fox Valley appears to be between the years 2018-2024 when we will see the largest group of RNs retiring.
- Baby boomers in this area want to work longer, but they want to “phase into” retirement by reducing the number of hours work while maintaining access to healthcare benefits.
- Employers who want to successfully attract and retain this group of healthcare workers must be willing to offer flexible and innovative work schedules while still offering healthcare benefits in particular.
- The major factor influencing the retirement decision is how well people are financially at the time they reach their desired or eligible retirement age. This is not very predictable so healthcare employers, colleges and universities will need to monitor this on a regular basis just in case they need to react quickly if we have an economic boom in this area.
- If baby boomers stay in the workforce longer, employers will have to address the physical demands of the job through the use of “no-lift” and other programs, to be able to maintain a healthy workforce.
- Technical colleges and universities have done a great job of increasing the size of nursing programs. We have to proceed cautiously as to not flood the market, if retirements will not come as quickly as anticipated. They can also look at what other professions will have shortages sooner and address those needs.
- Healthcare organizations would be smart to develop a methodology to have formal knowledge transfer from all of these experienced healthcare professionals happen in an intentional fashion. They would be wise to utilize these staff to mentor students and new graduates.
- Healthcare organizations and educational institutions have an opportunity for creatively utilizing some of the experienced healthcare professionals who want to “phase into” retirement to supervise, mentor or teach students entering the healthcare workforce.
- Stress seems to be more of a factor influencing a healthcare worker’s departing intentions than for influencing the retirement decision.
- In general, the healthcare industry must be competitive with other industries as it relates to compensation and benefits to be able to attract and retain a high quality labor pool.

Factors Influencing Departure Decisions

Respondents were asked how much of a factor each item presented in Figures 23 and 24 was in their decision to leave the healthcare field. Nearly half of those planning to leave healthcare cited insufficient salary and benefits as a major factor in their decision to leave. In addition, a desire for a career change and job stress/pressure were also major reasons.

Figure 23: Top 7 Factors Influencing Departure Intentions

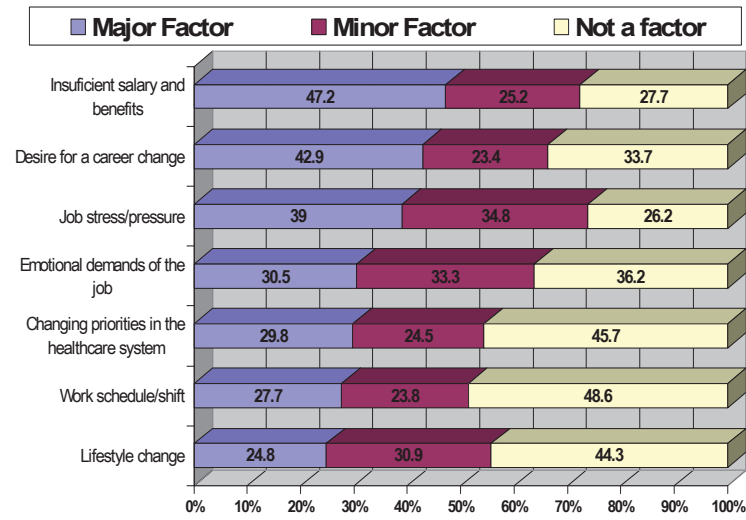
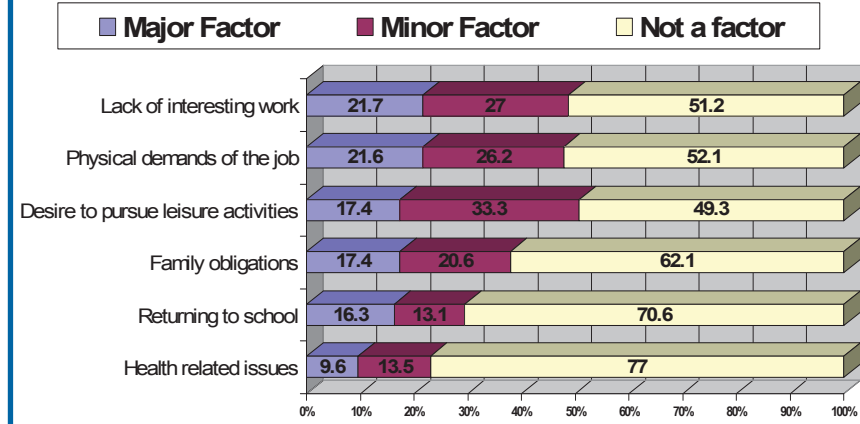


Figure 24: Bottom 6 Factors Influencing Departure Intentions



Respondent Occupation

Over 22% of respondents were registered nurses while just under 7% were engaged in reception and registration activities (Figure 4). Nursing assistants (5.8%) and practical/vocational nurses (5.1%) were also well represented.

Figure 4: Respondent Occupation

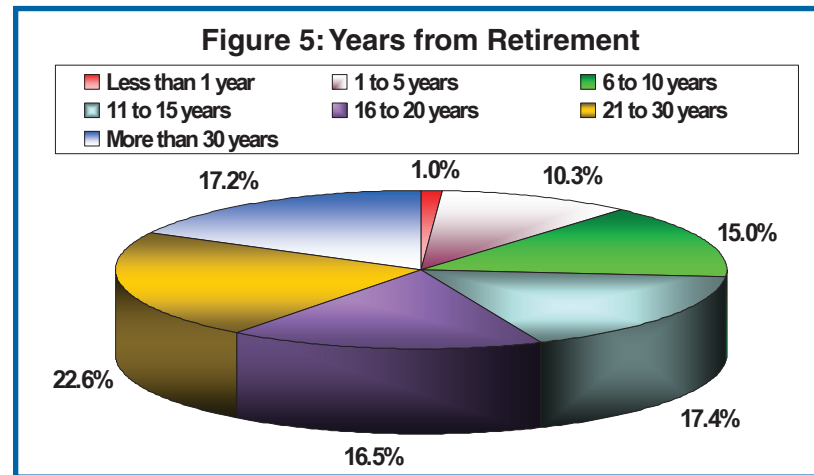
Occupation	Count	%	Occupation	Count	%	Occupation	Count	%
Registered nurse	1677	22.30%	Social worker	52	0.70%	Chaplain/Spiritual Services	14	0.20%
Reception/Registration	494	6.60%	Occupational / physical therapist assistant	51	0.70%	Certified nurse anesthetist	12	0.20%
Nursing aide / assistant / attendant	438	5.80%	Pharmacy technician	45	0.60%	Addiction Counselor	10	0.10%
Licensed practical / vocational nurse	385	5.10%	Human Resources	44	0.60%	Child care	10	0.10%
Other	279	3.70%	Scheduling	44	0.60%	Communications	10	0.10%
Medical transcription / coder	267	3.50%	Internist	38	0.50%	Sterile Processing Technician	10	0.10%
Medical records / health information technician	228	3.00%	Mammography technician	38	0.50%	Quality/Lean	9	0.10%
Medical assistant	215	2.90%	Ultrasound technician	36	0.50%	Anesthesiologist	8	0.10%
Administration	209	2.80%	Business Office	36	0.50%	Audiologist	8	0.10%
Patient Accounts	197	2.60%	Clinical Dietician	35	0.50%	Recreation therapist	8	0.10%
Radiological technician / technologist	168	2.20%	Emergency medical technician / paramedic	34	0.50%	Optician/Ophthalmology	8	0.10%
Medical technologist	149	2.00%	Other physician	34	0.50%	Psychiatrist	7	0.10%
Environmental Services (Housekeeping)	138	1.80%	Security/Loss prevention	34	0.50%	Neuro/Sleep Tech	7	0.10%
Billing/Insurance	123	1.60%	Education/Staff Development/Library	32	0.40%	Activities	7	0.10%
Administrative Assistant	123	1.60%	Physical assistant	31	0.40%	Foundation/Development/Fundraising	7	0.10%
Information Technology	121	1.60%	Marketing/PR/Corporate	30	0.40%	Behavioral Health	7	0.10%
Occupational / physical therapist	117	1.60%	CT/PET/MRO technician	26	0.30%	Health Insurance	7	0.10%
Clerical Position	117	1.60%	Athletic Trainer/Exercise	25	0.30%	Rehabilitation	7	0.10%
Finance	109	1.40%	Cardiovascular technician / technologist	23	0.30%	Volunteer Services	7	0.10%
Food Service	90	1.20%	Home health aide	21	0.30%	Cytology	6	0.10%
RN manager	89	1.20%	Nuclear medicine technologist	21	0.30%	Credentialing	6	0.10%
Materials Management	88	1.20%	Speech therapist	20	0.30%	OB Technician	6	0.10%
Medical / clinical lab technician	78	1.00%	Counselor	18	0.20%	Optometrist	4	0.10%
Phlebotomist	77	1.00%	Pediatrician	17	0.20%	Cytotechnologist	4	0.10%
Family / general practice physician	73	1.00%	Respiratory therapy technician	17	0.20%	Nurse Midwife	4	0.10%
Nurse practitioner	73	1.00%	Radiation therapist	16	0.20%	EKG Technician	4	0.10%
Plant Services	73	1.00%	Biomedical Technician	16	0.20%	Podiatrist	3	0.00%
Surgical technologist	71	0.90%	Surgeon	15	0.20%	Histotechnician/Histotechnologist	3	0.00%
Respiratory therapist	63	0.80%	Psychologist/Psychotherapist	15	0.20%	Certified Ophthalmic Technician	2	0.00%
Health Unit Coordinator/Unit Clerk	62	0.80%	Obstetrician / gynecologist	14	0.20%	Psychiatric technician	1	0.00%
Pharmacist	53	0.70%						

Retirement Intentions

Years from Retirement

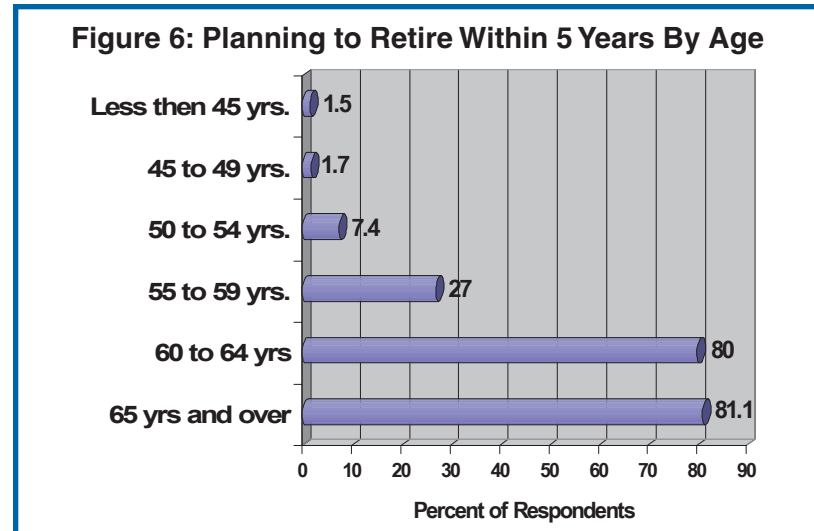
Just over 11% of surveyed healthcare employees plan to retire within the next five years (Figure 5). An additional 15% plan to retire between six and 10 years, a cumulative loss of over 26% of healthcare workers over the next 10 years.

Although a significant portion of healthcare workers will be retiring within the next 10 years, nearly 40% of workers are at least 20 years from retirement.



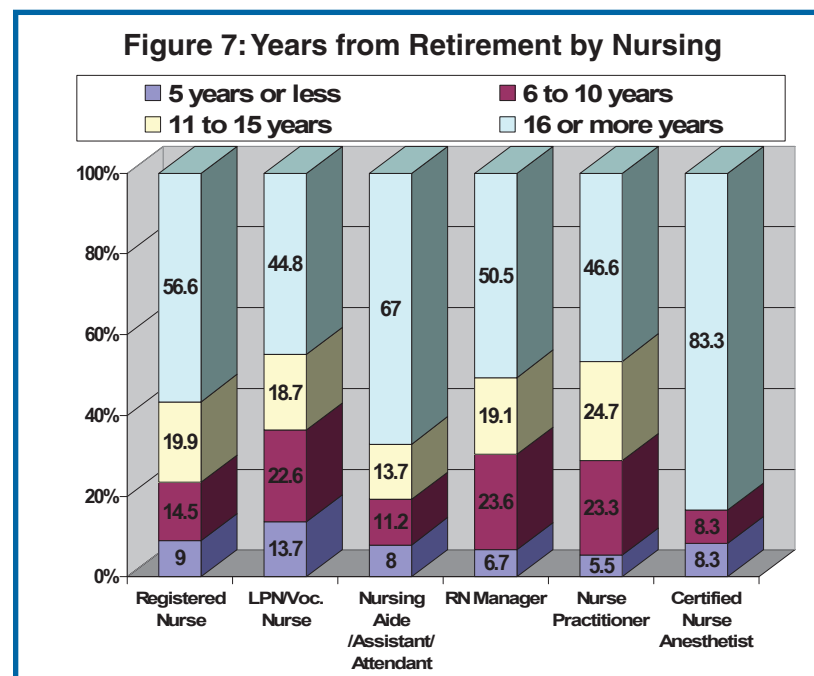
Years from Retirement by Age

As can be seen in Figure 6, the vast majority of healthcare workers planning to retire within the next five years are 60 years old, or older. Only 27% of healthcare workers between 55 and 59 years old plan to retire within the next five years, indicating plans to work well beyond traditional retirement ages.



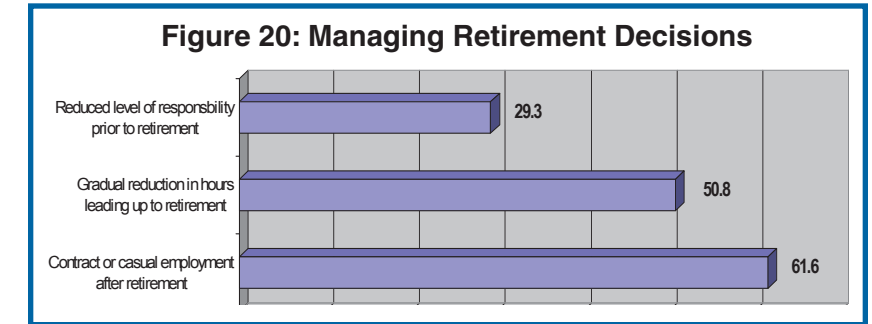
Years from Retirement by Nursing

When specifically considering nursing occupations, fewer registered nurses, nursing assistants/aides, nurse practitioners, certified nurse anesthetists and RN managers plan to retire within the next five years than the general healthcare population (Figure 7). A higher percentage than average of LPNs will be retiring within the next five years, with the trend continuing well into years six through ten. In addition, the greatest retirement of RN managers will occur within the next six to 10 years while RNs and nurse practitioners will see the largest block of retirements in 11 to 15 years. Much lower than average retirements are planned by nursing assistants/aides, with just over 19% planning to retire within the next 10 years.



Managing Retirement Decisions

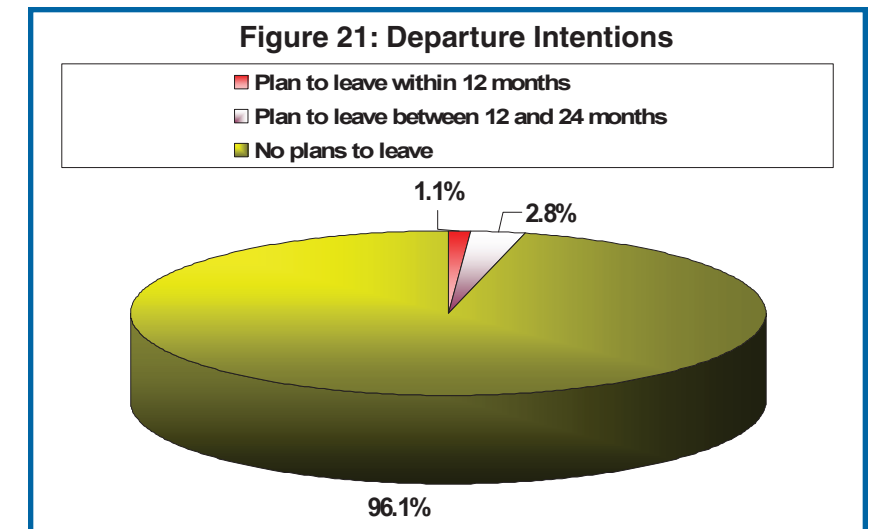
Respondents were asked if they would be interested in specified options for delaying full retirement as presented in Figure 20. Just under two thirds of respondents preferred contract or casual employment after retirement while just over half would consider a gradual reduction in hours leading up to retirement.



Departure Intentions

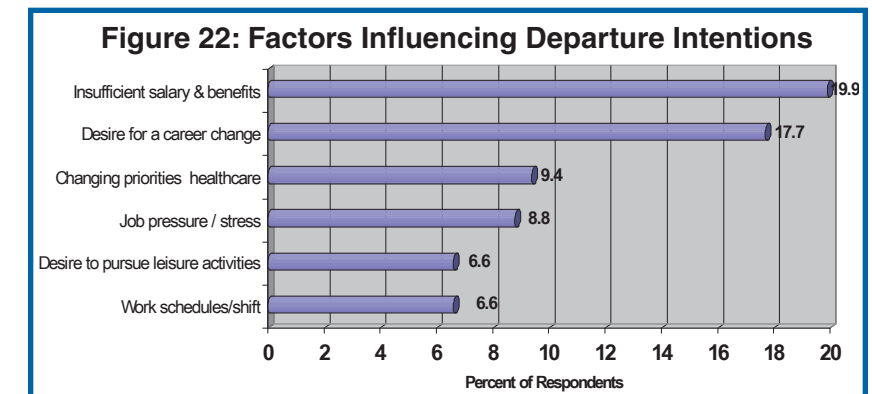
Fewer than four percent of surveyed healthcare employees, who do not plan to retire within the next five years, plan to leave the healthcare field within the next 24 months (Figure 21).

The most likely occupations to lose employees within the next 24 months include respiratory therapy technician (17.7%), pharmacy technician (11.1%), human resources (9%), cardiovascular technician/technologist (8.3%), reception/registration (8.3%) and plant services (8.2%).



Factors Influencing Departure Decisions

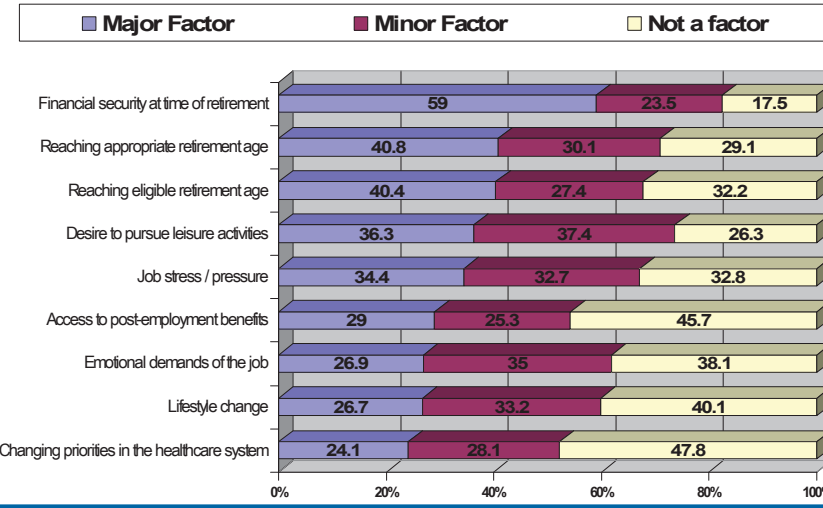
Respondents planning to depart within the next 24 months were asked to state the single most important factor driving their departure decision. Figure 22 breaks out the top six factors driving departure decisions. Insufficient salary and benefits and a desire for a career change were, by far, the most critical factors in respondents' departure decisions.



Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions

Respondents retiring within the next five years were presented a list of retirement issues and asked how much of a factor each was in their decision to retire (Figures 17 and 18). Financial security at time of retirement was the most significant driving force in respondents' retirement decision followed closely by reaching eligible retirement age and what they believed was an appropriate retirement age. A desire to pursue leisure activities and job stress/pressure were also major factors motivating the retirement decision.

Figure 17: Top 9 Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions



Respondents were also asked to state the single most important factor driving their retirement decision. The top six most important factors identified can be seen in Figure 19. Reaching what they believe to be an appropriate retirement age is the most significant factor followed at a distance by job stress/pressure, a desire to pursue leisure activities and reaching eligible retirement age.

Figure 18: Bottom 9 Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions

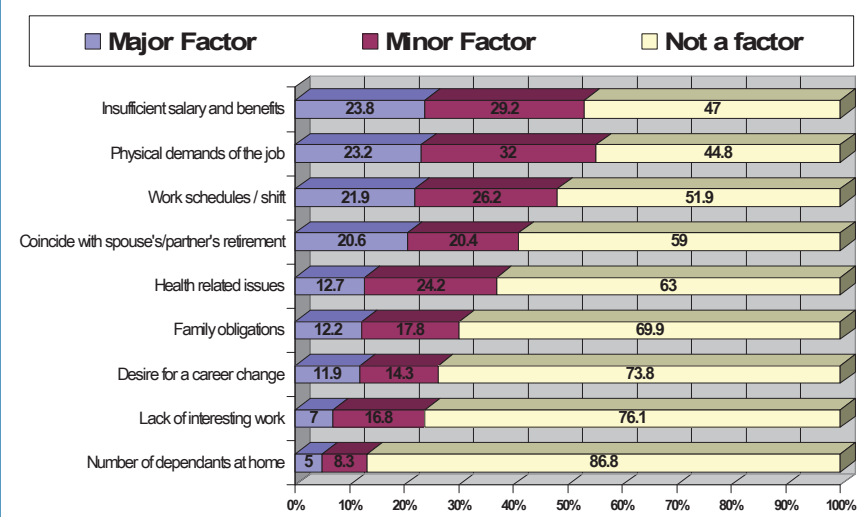
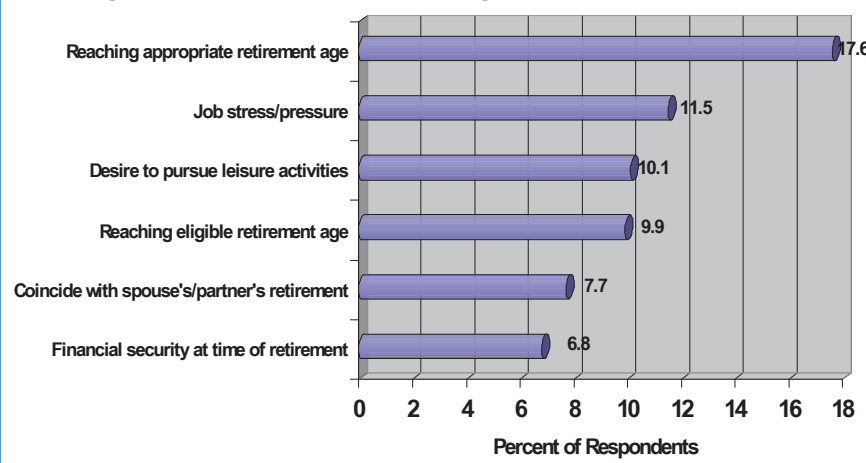


Figure 19: Factors Influencing Retirement Decisions



Years from Retirement by Health Information and Lab

Medical technologists, medical transcription/coder and medical/clinical lab techs will all see roughly 11 to 13% of the employee base retiring within the next five years (Figure 8). Phlebotomists will not see a significant need to replace retiring employees for at least 16 years. To the contrary, medical technologists will see over one third of employees retiring within 10 years and well over one half of the current employees retiring within 15 years. Medical Records/HIT will see the greatest attrition in the next 11 to 15 years.

Figure 8: Years from Retirement by Health Info & Lab

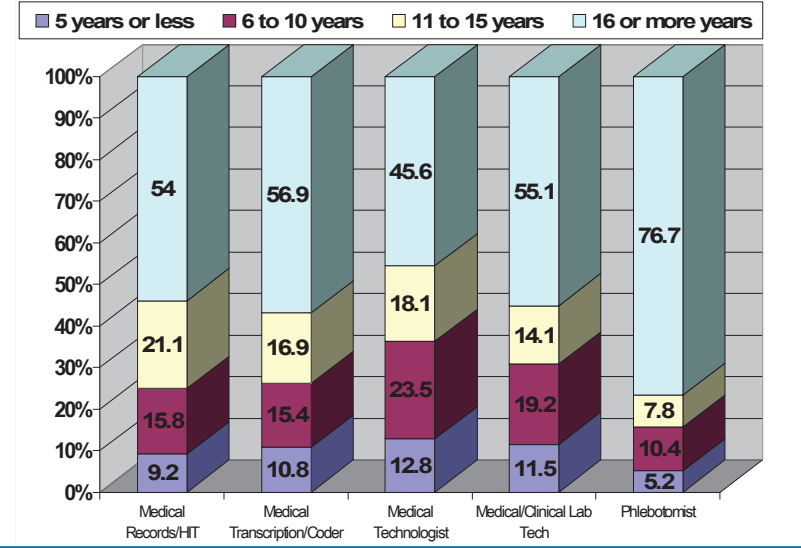
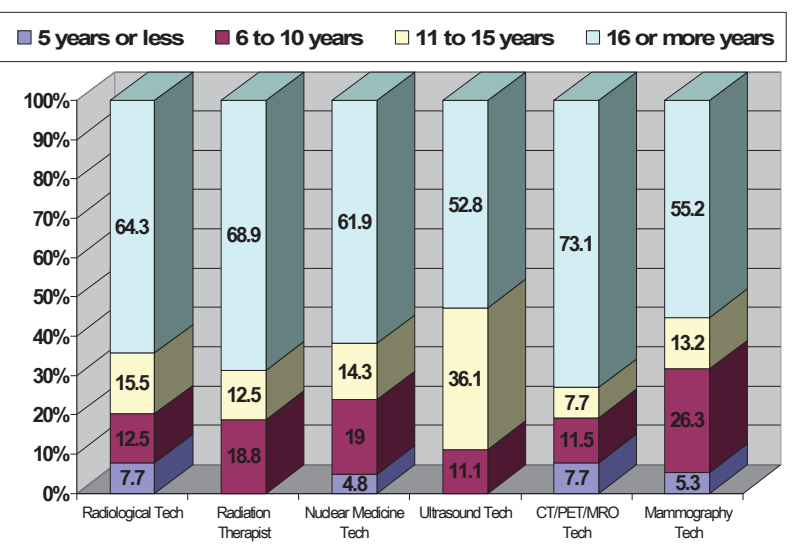


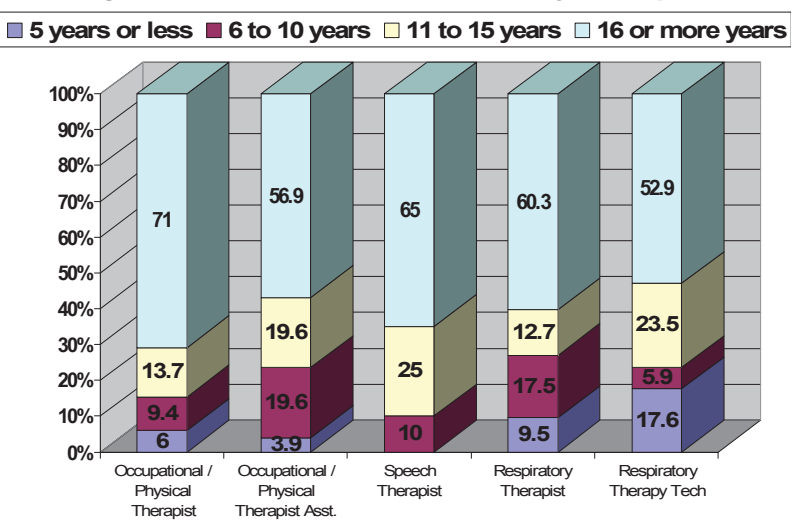
Figure 9: Years from Retirement by Imaging



Years from Retirement by Imaging

Radiation therapist and ultrasound technician occupations will see very little attrition due to retirement over the next 10 years (Figure 9). Ultrasound technicians will see over 36% of employees retiring between 11 and 16 years. Radiological techs, nuclear medicine techs, and CT/PET/MRO techs will see modest retirements over the next 10 years while mammography techs will see nearly one third of employees leaving within the next 10 years.

Figure 10: Years from Retirement by Therapist



Years from Retirement by Therapist

Occupational/physical therapists, Occupational/physical therapist assistants, speech therapists and recreation therapists will see extremely modest retirements over the next five years while respiratory therapists will see above average levels of retirements within the next five years. Occupational /physical therapist assistants and respiratory therapists will see elevated retirement levels within the next five to 10 years.

Years from Retirement by Physician

Family/general practice and internists will see elevated levels of retirement within the next 10 years at 27% and 29% of employee retirements respectively (Figure 11). Obstetricians/gynecologists and surgeons will see a peak in retirements between 11 and 15 years with nearly 29% of obstetricians/gynecologists leaving and one third of surgeons.

Years from Retirement by Miscellaneous Health

Figures 12 and 13 represents retirement intentions for numerous miscellaneous healthcare occupations derived from occupations presented, as well as categorization of "other" occupations noted by the respondents. Note that cardiovascular technicians, EMT/paramedics, home health aides, pharmacists, surgical technologists/technicians and counselors will lose over a quarter of its employees to retirement over the next 10 years. Social workers will see over a 17% drop within the next five years.

Figure 11: Years from Retirement by Physician

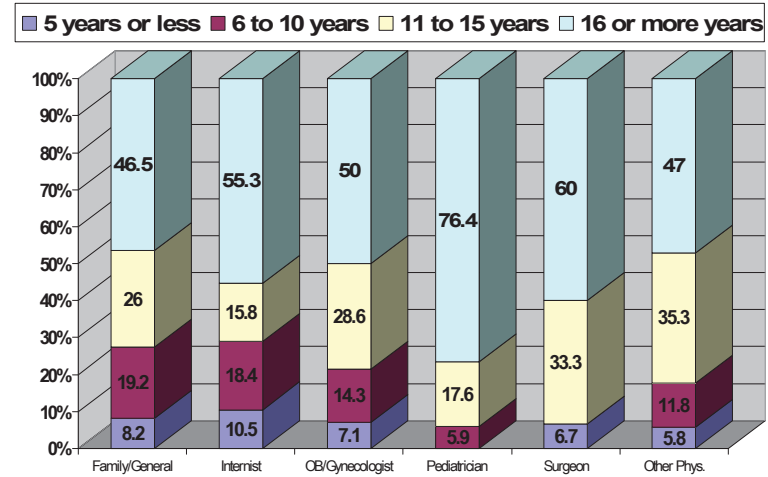


Figure 12: Years from Retirement by Miscellaneous Health

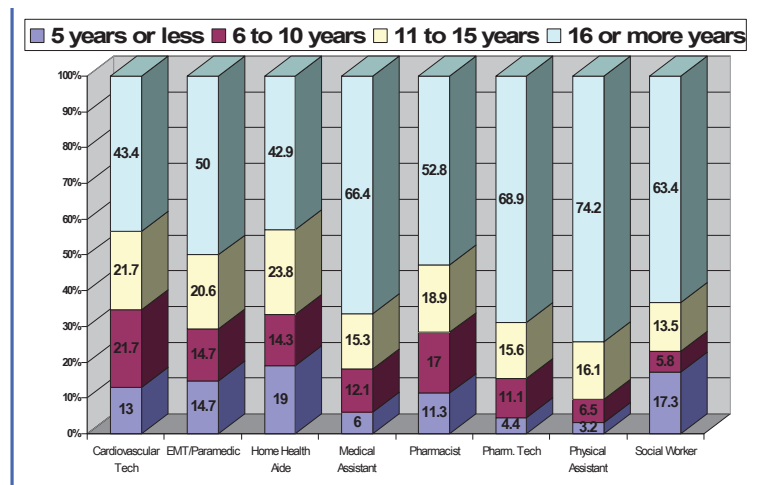
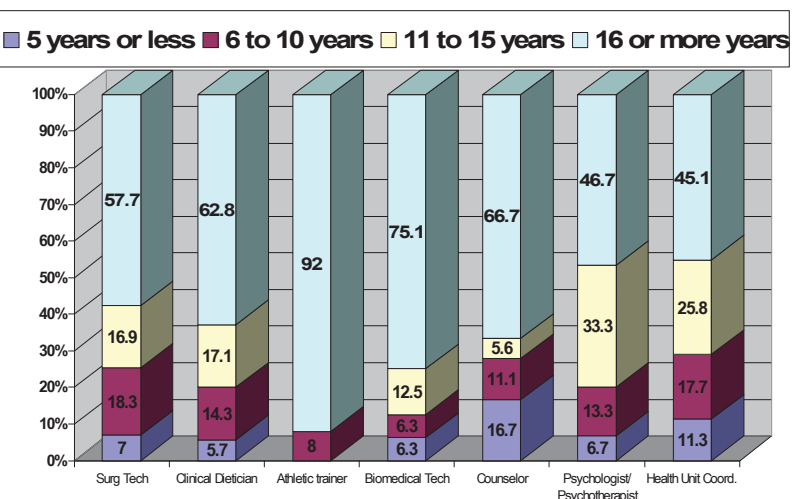


Figure 13: Years from Retirement by Miscellaneous Health



Years from Retirement by Operational

Operational occupational categories were derived from categorization of "other" occupations noted by the respondents. With the exception of information technology, each of the operational occupations identified will lose at least one quarter of their employee base to retirement within the next ten years (Figure 14). More severe losses will occur in the business office, human resources and marketing/public relations.

Years from Retirement by Support

Support occupational categories were derived from categorization of "other" occupations noted by the respondents. A large number of housekeepers, food service and general clerical staff will be retiring within the next five years (Figures 15 and 16). Within 10 years over 40% of housekeepers and roughly a third of food service, plant service, general clerical, administrative assistants and scheduling personnel will have retired. Most remaining occupations will lose a quarter of their employees to retirements over the next 10 years.

Figure 14: Years from Retirement by Operational

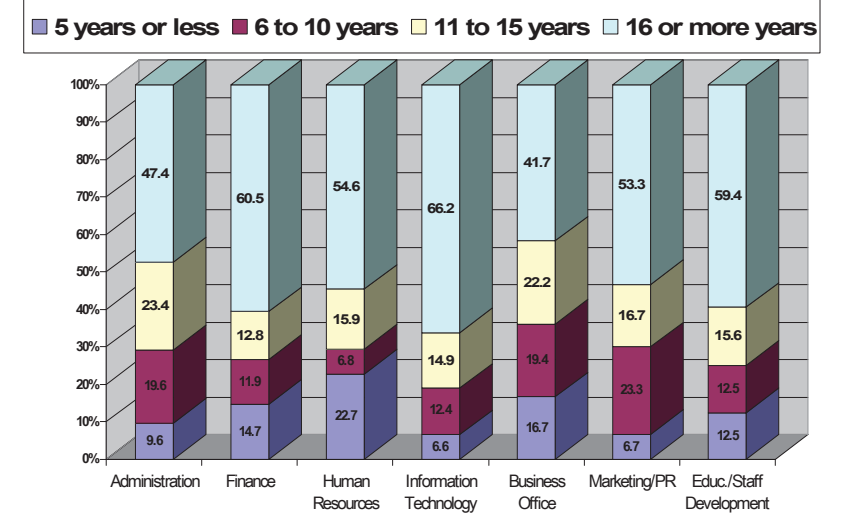


Figure 15: Years from Retirement by Support

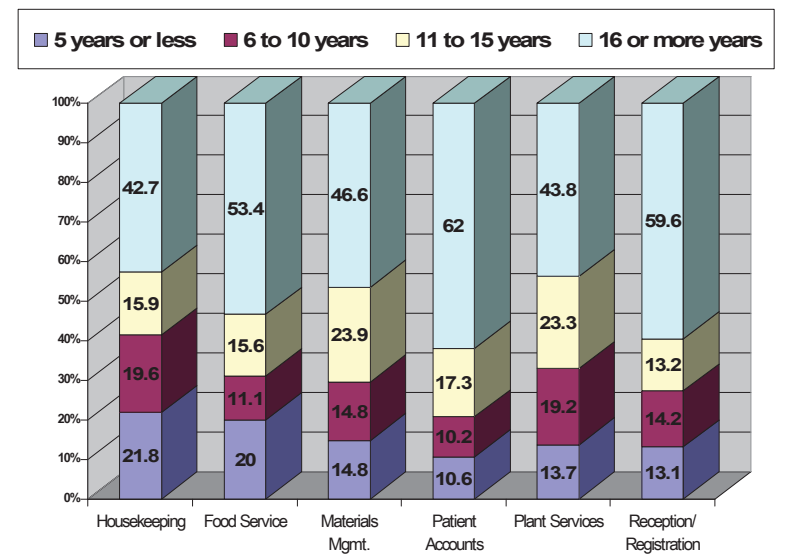


Figure 16: Years from Retirement by Support

