



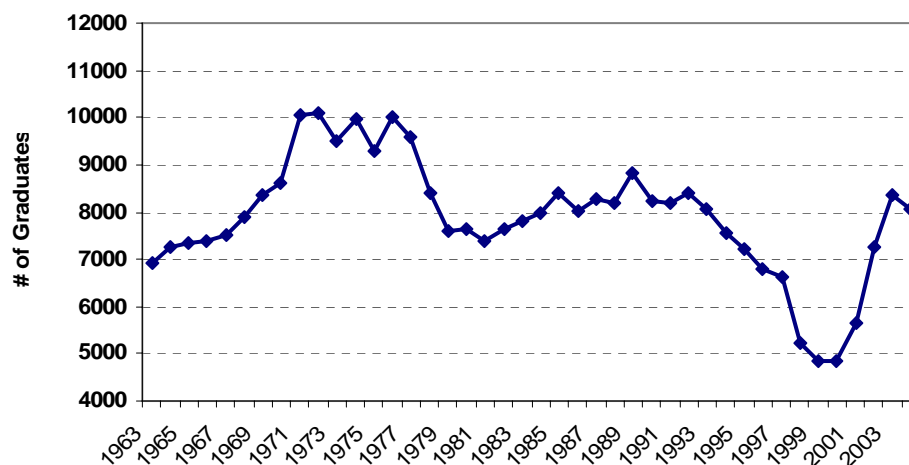
## Registered Nursing Education in Canada: 2004 Snapshot

Canada's nursing education system supplies the majority of nurses who practise in this country.<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the 2004-2005 data of the National Student and Faculty Survey of Canadian Schools of Nursing<sup>2</sup> reveals interesting statistics related to this inflow of graduates. It also highlights the potential of innovative nursing education programs.

### Nurse Supply:

- Admissions to entry-to-practice nursing programs rose to 12,361 (60%) from 1998 to 2004.
- The trend shows a peak of 13,068 admissions in 2001 with a levelling off in subsequent years.
- In 2004, 8,076 nurses graduated from entry-to-practice programs (Figure 1). This is a 76% increase in the number of graduates since 1999.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2004, nurse practitioner (NP) programs graduated 132 NPs.

Figure 1: Graduates from Entry-to-Practice Programs, 1963 to 2004



<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN). (2005). *Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance*, Ottawa: Author.

<sup>2</sup> The primary research for this data is conducted by the Canadian Nurses Association and CASN. In 2004, the survey achieved a 90% response rate. Québec results were supplemented by data provided by l'Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec to offset under-reporting of Quebec's diploma programs.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Nurses Association. (2002). *Planning for the Future: Nursing Human Resource Projections*. Ottawa: Author.

## Program Innovations:

### **Fast Tracking**

In 2004, there were 31 programs offering to fast-track the nursing educational preparation process. These include accelerated, fast track, second-degree entry and bridging programs. The number of programs offered increased by 16% in 2004.

### **Distance Education**

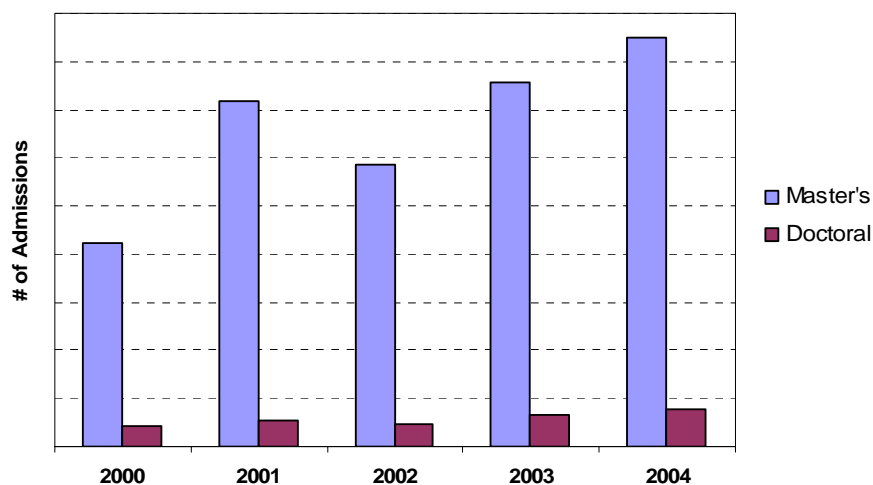
In 2004, 41 programs (20 baccalaureate, 16 master's and 5 PhD) were offered, in full or in part, electronically. This innovation facilitates access to education for students living outside urban centres and for working nurses seeking to upgrade credentials.

### **Continuing Education**

Continuing education is a significant factor influencing nurse retention.<sup>4</sup> Nurses seek continuous learning as well as credential upgrading to meet the demands of new knowledge, increasingly complex care and changing work environments.

- From 1999 to 2003 post-RN baccalaureate programs consistently graduated an average of 1,100 students per year. In 2004 that number rose to 1,338.
- In 2004, 850 students were admitted to master's programs, double the number seen in 2000 (Figure 2).
- In 2004, 76 students were admitted to doctoral programs (Figure 2), a 17% increase from 2003.

**Figure 2: Admissions to Master's and Doctoral Programs, 2000 to 2004**



- Since 2000, the number of graduates from master's and PhD programs has doubled.
- There were 25 PhD graduates in 2004 (Table 1).

<sup>4</sup> O'Brien-Pallas, L., Tomblin Murphy, G., White, S., Hayes, L., Baumann, A., Higgin, A., et al. (2004). *Building the Future: An Integrated Strategy for Nursing Human Resources in Canada Research Synthesis Report*. Ottawa: The Nursing Sector Study Corporation.

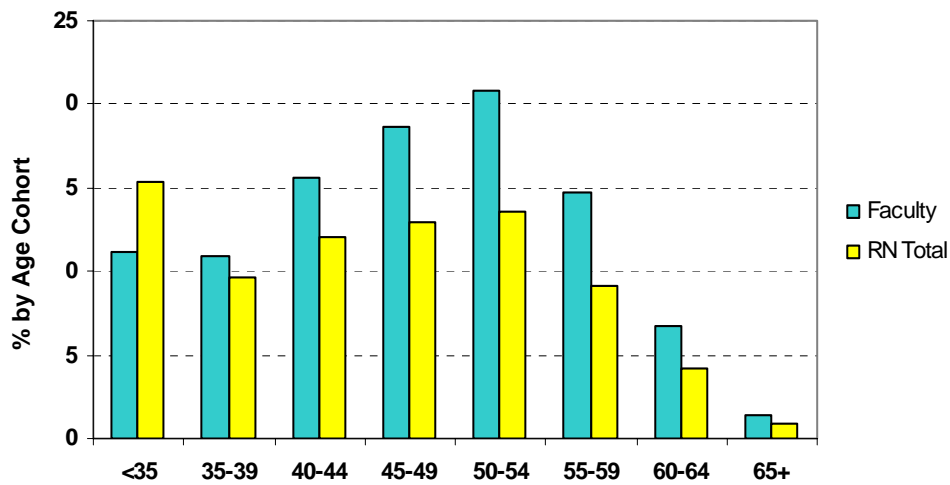
**Table 1: Graduates from Master’s and Doctoral Programs, 2000 to 2004**

Year	Graduates	
	Master’s	Doctoral
2000	218	10
2001	303	20
2002	336	18
2003	434	31
2004	418	25

**Nurse Educators:**

- In 2004, more than 400 faculty members were recruited.
- Projections showed an additional 500 faculty vacancies in 2005.
- A number of schools commented on the difficulties encountered in attracting and retaining faculty, including inequitable compensation levels.
- In common with the rest of the nurse workforce is the reality of an aging professoriate.<sup>5</sup> However, the data show that the proportion of nurse educators in the 45 to 64 years age group significantly exceeds that seen in the total nurse workforce (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Age Cohort Comparison – Nurse Educators Compared to Nurse Workforce**



- Faculty retirement projections considered in conjunction with current staffing challenges indicate a need for 3,673 master’s-prepared nurses annually.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2004). *Workforce Trends of Registered Nurses in Canada, 2004*. Ottawa: Author.

<sup>6</sup> CASN. (2005). *Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance*. Ottawa: Author.

**Summary:**

An analysis of the 2004-2005 education data reveals some positive indicators, including program innovations, a consistent level of interest in continuing education as well as increases in the number of students graduating from entry-to-practice and some post-graduate programs. At the same time, the results demonstrate the need for continued investment in programs (e.g., increases in the number of seats) and in schools of nursing (e.g., additional faculty, clinical placements and expanded infrastructure).

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