About the 2012 National Sample Survey of Nurse Practitioners (NSSNP) Methods and Data

Since 1977, HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce has conducted the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses approximately every four years. Despite the rapid growth of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and the central role they play in assuring access to care, very little is known about their supply, distribution and contributions to the health care system. The National Center undertook a national sample survey of NPs in 2012, which collected detailed information on U.S. Nurse Practitioners to address data gaps in education, training, employment, and practice patterns of this population.

Approximately 13,000 NPs completed the 2012 NSSNP questionnaire and HRSA is pleased to offer this rich data source to the public through downloadable public-use data files. Available information about the survey and data include:

- Survey Methods
- Public-Use Files (PUFs) and Documentation (Including the Questionnaire, Variable definitions, Codebook and frequencies)
- NSSNP PUF Preparation Information
- NSSNP Restricted File

Survey Methods

In order to obtain a representative sample of NPs in the United States, HRSA obtained listings of all actively licensed NPs from each state licensing board. A single national sampling frame was created using probability matching to identify and eliminate multiple records of the same NP. A sample of NPs was selected from each state (strata) with probability proportional to size.

Data were collected from March 2012 through July 2012 in three waves of mailed paper surveys plus a reminder postcard. Approximately 13,000 NPs completed and returned surveys, signifying a response rate of 60.1 percent. Sample weights were developed to account for sampling design and non-response making the data from the survey representative at the national level and at the state-level for the larger states. Jackknife replicate weights were developed to facilitate variance estimation.

Each response was carefully reviewed for missing or inaccurate data. A stepwise data cleaning process was applied to identify and consistently clean conflicting and out of range data. In addition, upcoding procedures were applied in order to standardize specified responses and other extraneous data.

Public-Use Files (PUFs) and Documentation

The 2012 NSSNP is designed to provide nationally representative estimates of the size and characteristics of the U.S. Nurse Practitioner population. HRSA designed the questionnaire to collect detailed data on licensure, education, clinical practice characteristics, and demographics of NPs. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with national nursing stakeholder groups and nursing workforce researchers. The complete 2012 NSSNP questionnaire is provided in the PUF documentation.

The NSSNP PUFs allow researchers the opportunity to analyze the data for their individual research projects. The data are available in SAS as well as in ASCII to facilitate analysis in a format that is appropriate for individual researchers. The creation of the PUF is consistent with HRSA's goal of enhancing the dissemination of health workforce data. It is also consistent with HRSA's history of producing PUFs from its nurse surveys.

Public-Use Files and documentation for the 2012 NSSNP may be downloaded from the 2012 NSSNP Data Download page.

NSSNP PUF Preparation Information

The NSSNP codebook shows the handling of the survey variables presented in the PUF. The table included in this document lists each survey question and the resulting actions that were taken during the preparation of the data set.

NSSNP Restricted File

The restricted data file from the 2012 National Sample Survey of Nurse Practitioners (NSSNP) with state and ZIP code information and detailed personal information is available to the research community through an application process maintained by the Research Data Center at the National Center Health Statistics (NCHSS). Click here to apply and access the data: (https://www.cdc.gov/rdc/B1DataType/Dt132.htm/).