

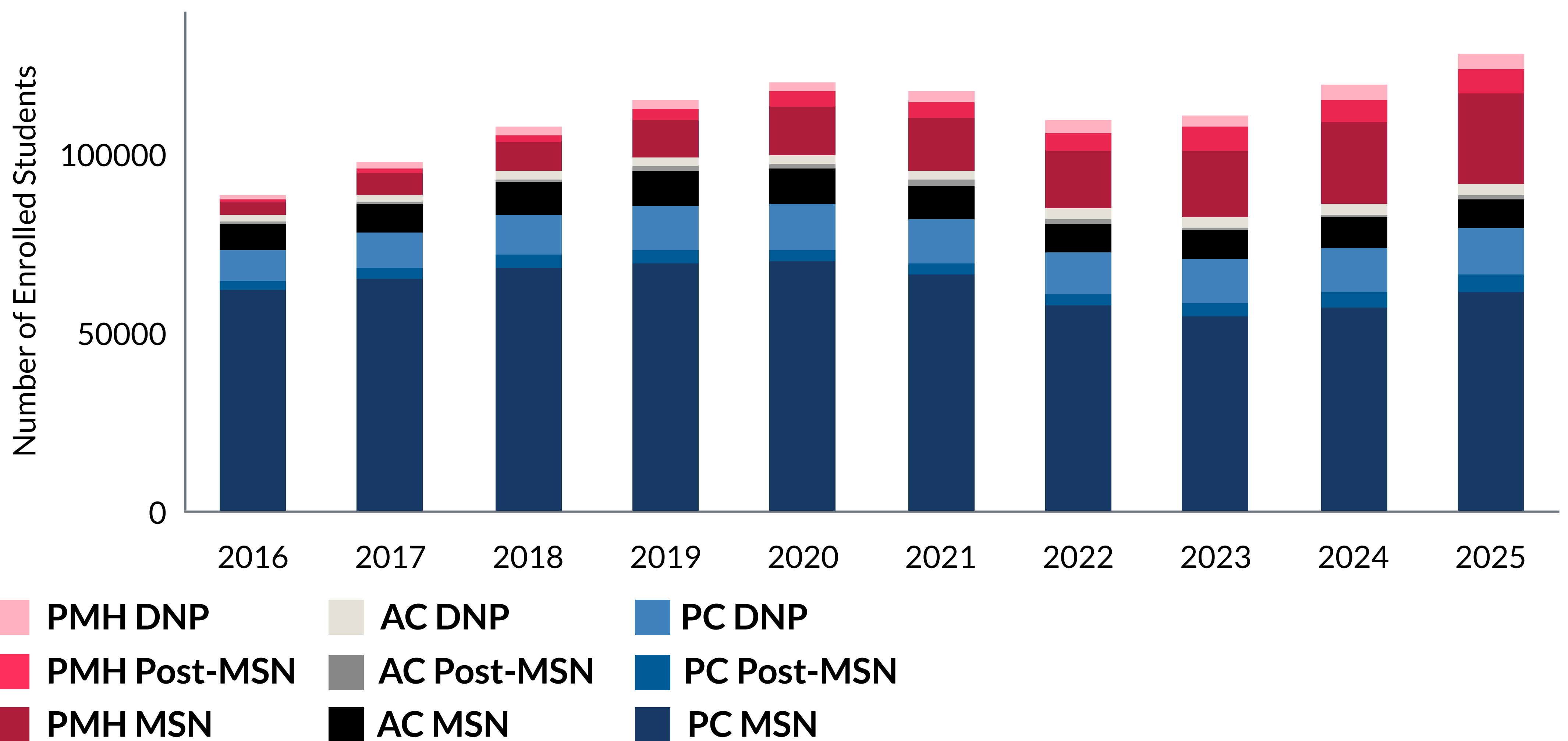
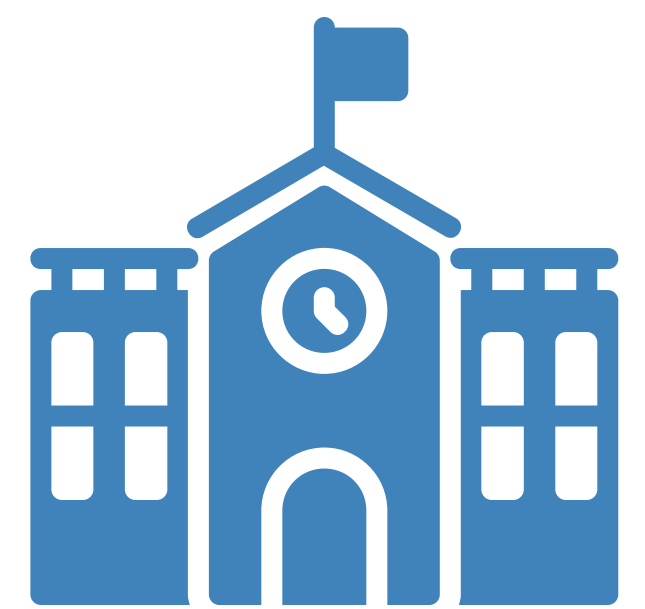
RESEARCH SNAPSHOT: NURSE PRACTITIONER (NP) STUDENT TRENDS IN PSYCH-MENTAL HEALTH (PMH), ACUTE CARE (AC) AND PRIMARY CARE (PC), 2016-2025

Introduction

Over the past several decades, an aging population and changes in disease prevalence have reshaped the health care landscape and the need for different provider skills in the U.S. The American Association of Nurse Practitioners® (AANP) analyzed data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) enrollment and graduation reports to assess changes in Master of Science in nursing (MSN), post-MSN and doctor of nursing (DNP) enrollments in and graduations from psych-mental health, acute care and primary care programs.¹⁻¹⁰ This snapshot shows that most NPs continue to focus on primary care while the NP workforce is responding to meet psych-mental health and acute care needs.

Enrollment in Psych-Mental Health, Acute Care and Primary Care Programs

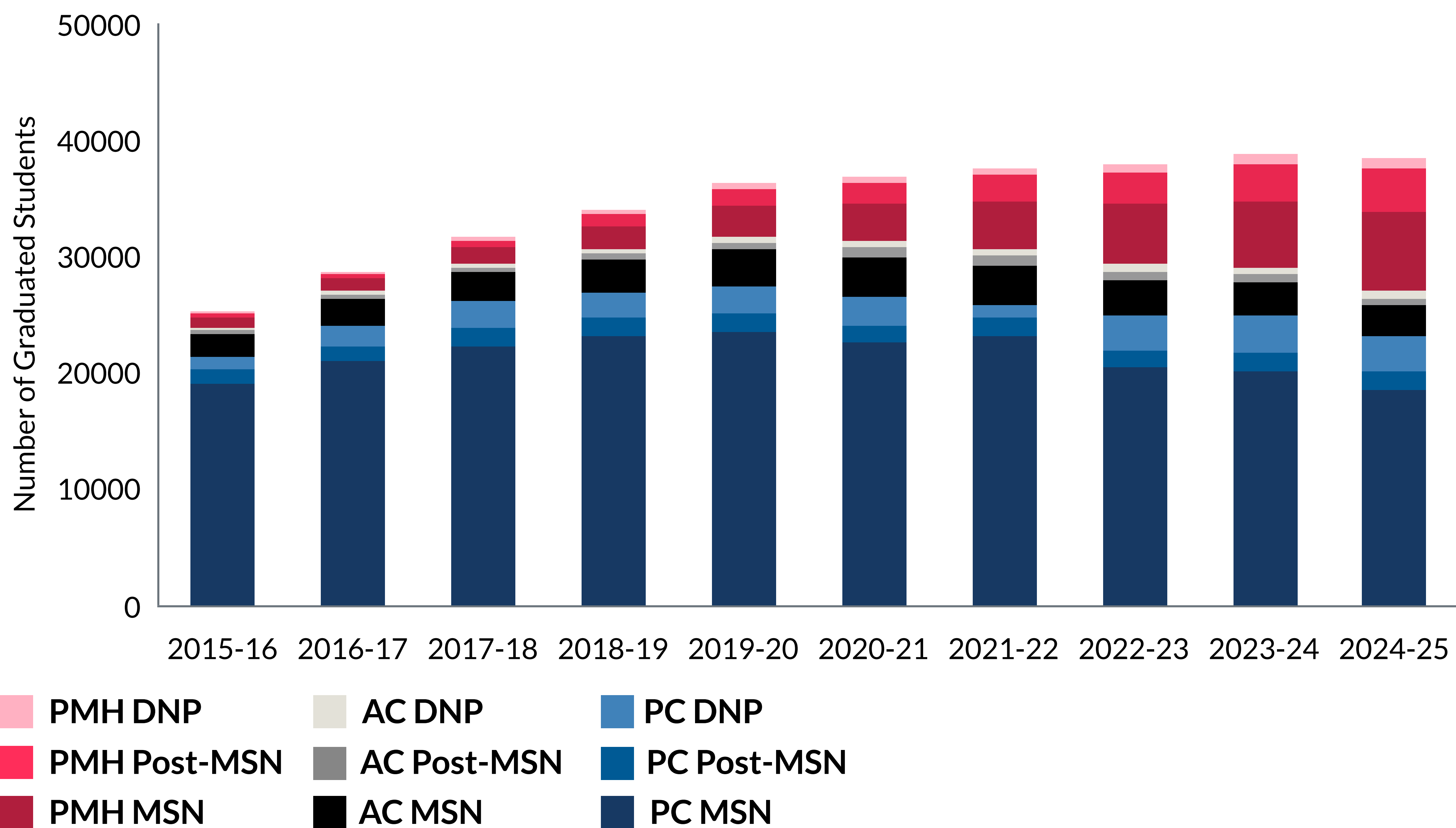
- In 2025, about 18% of NP students enrolled in psych-mental health programs, 20% enrolled in acute care and 62% enrolled in primary care.
- Over the past 10 years, psych-mental health enrollments have grown the most across all degree types (MSN 579%; post-MSN 613%; DNP 261%).
- Acute care enrollments also experienced growth across degree types, with most of the growth occurring in post-MSN (88%) and DNP (103%) enrollments.
- Primary care enrollments had modest growth in post-MSN and DNP programs (47% and 46%, respectively).



Note: AC programs include adult-gerontology AC, neonatal and pediatric AC. PC programs include adult-gerontology PC, family, pediatric PC and women's health. PMH programs only include PMH across the lifespan.

Graduation from Psych-Mental Health, Acute Care and Primary Care Programs

- In 2025, about 30% of NP students graduated from psych-mental health programs, 10% graduated in acute care and 60% graduated in primary care.
- Over the past 10 years, psych-mental health had the most growth across degree types (MSN 664%; post-MSN 999%; DNP 593%).
- Acute care also grew, with most growth concentrated in the DNP degree (233%) followed by post-MSN (70%) and MSN (33%) graduations.
- Primary care post-MSN graduations increased modestly over the past 10 years. Primary care DNP graduations substantially increased in the past three years after declining during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Note: AC programs include adult-gerontology AC, neonatal and pediatric AC. PC programs include adult-gerontology PC, family, pediatric PC and women's health. PMH programs only include PMH across the lifespan.

Limitations

- AACN reports only provide aggregate data on enrollments and graduations at the national level.
- We did not analyze data on previously certified NPs in post-Master's DNP programs and NPs in dual tracks.
- AACN reports have high response rates, but the same schools might not report their information each year.

1. AACN. (2017). 2016-2017 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
2. AACN. (2018). 2017-2018 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
3. AACN. (2019). 2018-2019 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
4. AACN. (2020). 2019-2020 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
5. AACN. (2021). 2020-2021 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
6. AACN. (2022). 2021-2022 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
7. AACN. (2023). 2022-2023 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
8. AACN. (2024). 2023-2024 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
9. AACN. (2025). 2024-2025 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.
10. AACN. (2026). 2025-2026 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.