



MEI

Ideas for a
More Prosperous
Society

Ontario: 35 out of every 100 new nurses are leaving the profession before turning 35, finds new MEI report

- Across Canada, 40 young nurses left the profession for every 100 who entered it in 2022.

Montreal, September 24, 2024 – Canadian health care systems struggle to hold on to their young nurses, reveals a publication released this morning by the Montreal Economic Institute.

“For every 100 nurses we train in the country, 40 are leaving the profession before their 35th birthday,” states Emmanuelle B. Faubert, economist at the MEI and co-author of the publication. “This exodus of young nurses has been worsening for the past decade, contributing to our health care woes.”

By 2030, Canada is expected to suffer a shortage of [117,600 nurses](#).

The MEI’s study shows that for every 100 Canadian nurses who started working in the field in 2022, 40 nurses below the age of 35 quit. This figure is up 25 per cent from 2013.

Ontario ranked third, with 35.1 young nurses leaving for every 100 entering in 2022. This is 83 per cent higher than in 2013.

The province of British Columbia saw the biggest drop in the number of young nurses seeking greener pastures, going from 46.3 for every 100 new entrants, down to 31.5 over the course of the last decade.

“Ontario used to be able to retain its nurses better than most provinces, with less than one in five young nurses leaving the profession only a decade ago,” added Ms. Faubert. “Much like in the rest of the country, Ontario needs to find ways to bring back more flexibility in health care workplaces to help with retention.”

Throughout Canada, nurses below the age of 35 are more likely to leave their current job (or leave the profession altogether) than remain where they are, according to a recent [survey](#) from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

Some of the most commonly cited concerns were a lack of control over their work schedules, including mandatory overtime and a lack of shift flexibility as principal sources of workplace stress.

Nurses who expressed a desire to quit their current position were also more likely to express interest in working for an independent nursing agency.

For those desiring better working conditions with more flexibility and better pay, independent agencies are considered a preferable alternative and often a final step before leaving nursing altogether.

“It’s understandable why governments would want to reduce their reliance on nursing agencies, given their costs, but that shouldn’t be done at the expense of patient treatment,” notes Ms. Faubert. “If governments want to reduce their reliance on independent staff, they need to work on giving young nurses more flexibility to make working for the healthcare system attractive to them once more.”

* * *

The MEI is an independent public policy think tank with offices in Montreal and Calgary. Through its publications, media appearances, and advisory services to policymakers, the MEI stimulates public policy debate and reforms based on sound economics and entrepreneurship.

– 30 –

Interview requests

Renaud Brossard
Vice President, Communications
Cell: 514-743-2883
rbrossard@iedm.org

To follow the MEI’s work, subscribe to our Twitter account [@iedm_montreal](https://twitter.com/iedm_montreal).