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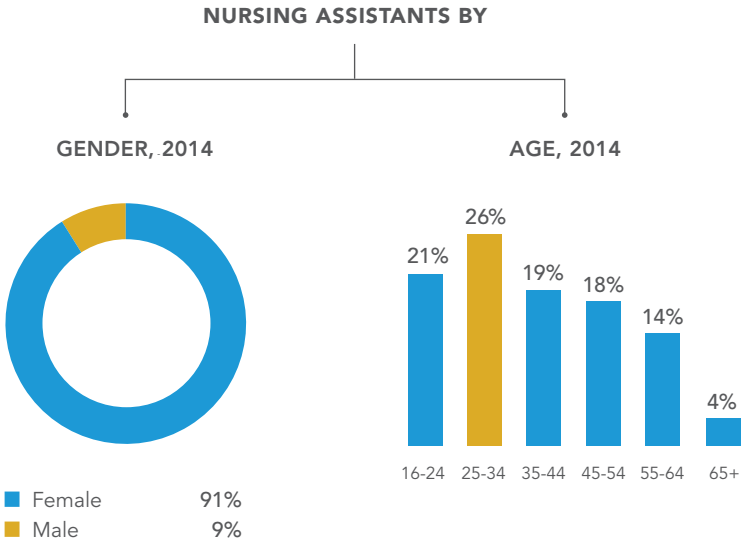
QUALITY CARE  
THROUGH  
QUALITY JOBS

# **U.S. NURSING ASSISTANTS EMPLOYED IN NURSING HOMES: KEY FACTS**

More than 600,000 nursing assistants provide personal care, assistance with daily activities, and clinical support for 1.4 million nursing home residents nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Despite a general trend toward providing care in home and community-based settings, nursing homes continue to play an integral role in the long-term services and supports system, providing 24-hour support and nursing care to those who cannot live comfortably or safely at home.

For nursing assistants, the work is often challenging while offering few extrinsic rewards. Due in part to the repeated lifting and carrying required to assist residents, they are injured 3.5 times more frequently than the typical American worker. Also, wages are low. Nursing assistants earn a median hourly wage of \$11.87, and a median annual income of \$19,000.

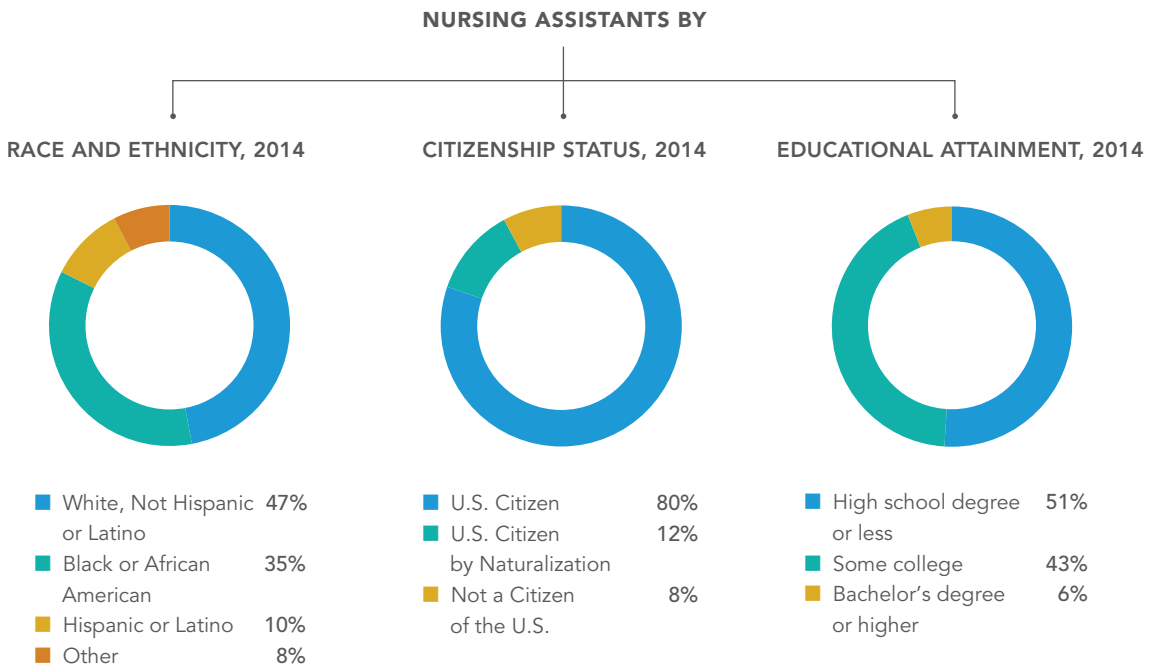
The poor quality of nursing assistant jobs makes it difficult for nursing homes to attract and retain enough workers to meet demand. Changing demographics could exacerbate these staffing challenges. Nursing homes are expected to create an estimated 59,000 new nursing assistant jobs from 2014 to 2024. In coming years, the rapidly growing population of older adults will drive demand even higher: by 2050, the population of adults over the age of 65, who comprise 85 percent of the nursing home resident population, is projected to double, from 47.8 million to 88 million.



**Chart Source:** PHI analysis of the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (2015). 2014 ACS 1-year PUMS for nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care aides employed in nursing facilities. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>

## WHO ARE NURSING ASSISTANTS?

- **More than 9 in 10 nursing assistants are women.**
- **Most nursing assistants are under age 45.** The median age is 36.
- **While people of color** make up one-quarter of the total U.S. workforce, **they comprise the majority of the nursing assistant workforce.** Over one-third of these workers are Black or African American.
- **Twenty percent of nursing assistants were born outside of the United States.** Over 90 percent are U.S. citizens.
- **Half of nursing assistants have completed no formal education beyond high school.** Because nursing assistant jobs require little education, experience, or training, it is an accessible occupation for workers who encounter educational or language barriers when seeking employment.



**Chart Source:** PHI analysis of the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (2015). 2014 ACS 1-year PUMS for nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care aides employed in nursing facilities. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>

## WHAT ARE NURSING ASSISTANT JOBS?

Nursing homes are facilities where residents receive nursing care and 24-hour personal assistance. Nursing assistants provide the majority of this assistance—for example, helping with dressing, bathing, eating, and ambulating.

Nursing assistants also support residents to participate in an array of social activities such as attending classes, guest performances, or religious services. Additionally, nursing assistants perform some clinical tasks under the supervision of licensed professionals. (See end notes for detailed industry and occupation descriptions.)

- **15,600 nursing homes house 1.4 million residents.** The number of nursing home residents has been relatively constant over the last decade.
- **Nearly all nursing home residents require some form of assistance with activities of daily living.** Nursing assistants provide most of this assistance.

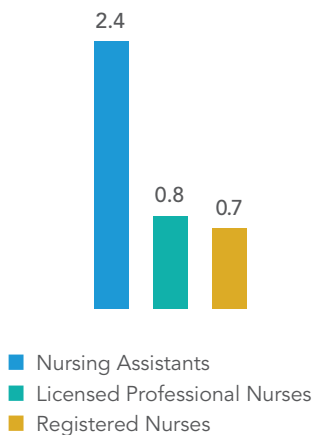
### NURSING HOME EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, 2014

Occupation	Quantity	%
Nursing Assistants	612,120	37%
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	212,980	13%
Registered Nurses	154,060	9%
Other Health Care and Personal Support Occupations	196,850	12%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	166,060	10%
Business, Administrative, and Social Services Staff	160,750	10%
All Other Workers	150,500	9%

**Table Source:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (2016, March 30). May National Employment and Wage Estimates United States, 2005 to 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/oes/#data>

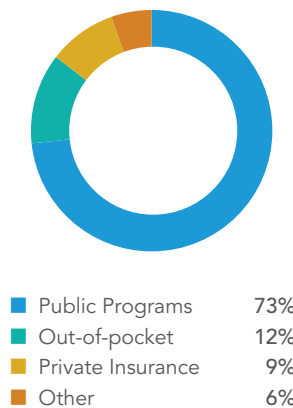
- **Nursing assistants outnumber any other occupation employed in nursing homes** by a factor of at least three to one. The number of nursing assistants, 612,000, has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years.
- Nursing assistants spend more time than any other nursing staff assisting residents, **providing a median of 2.4 hours of hands-on care per resident per day.** Their frequent interactions with residents enable them to observe changes in resident condition and report these changes to licensed nursing staff.
- Nursing assistant jobs are primarily government-funded. **Of the industry's \$116 billion in annual revenue, 73 percent is paid for by public programs,** primarily Medicare and Medicaid.

**MEDIAN NURSING STAFF HOURS  
PER RESIDENT PER DAY\*  
BY OCCUPATION, 2016**



*\* In Medicare and Medicaid-Certified  
Nursing Homes*

**NURSING HOMES REVENUE  
BY SOURCE, 2014**



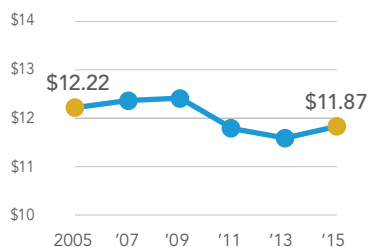
**Chart Sources:** U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Data.Medicare.gov (2016). Nursing Home Compare Datasets. Retrieved from <https://data.medicare.gov/data/nursing-home-compare>

U.S. Census Bureau (2016, January 28). 2014 Service Annual Survey, Table 4: Estimated Sources of Revenue for Employer Firms: 2010 through 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/services/index.html>

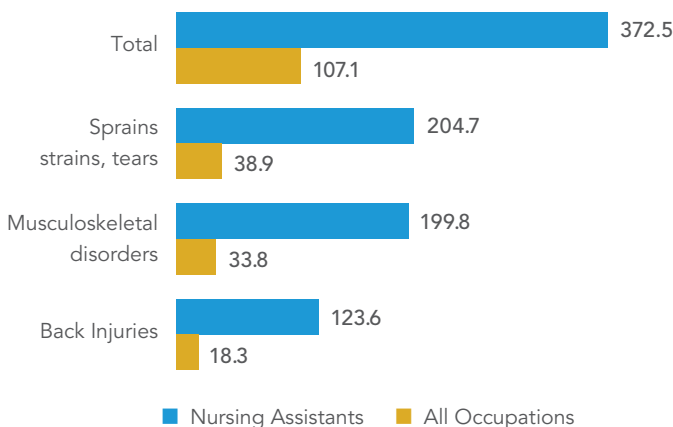
## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR THIS WORKFORCE?

- **Nursing assistants are 3.5 times more likely to be injured** on the job than the typical U.S. worker.<sup>2</sup>
- **Wages for nursing assistants have not kept up with inflation over the past 10 years:** inflation-adjusted wages remained relatively stagnant, decreasing from \$12.22 in 2005 to \$11.87 in 2015.
- **More than half of nursing assistants work part time or for part of the year.** As a result of low wages and part-time work hours, nursing assistants in this industry earn a median annual income of \$19,000 a year.

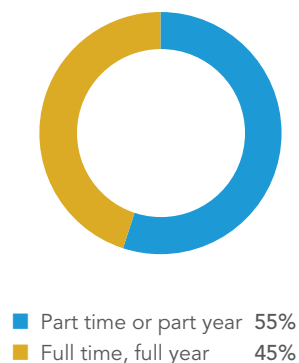
NURSING ASSISTANT  
MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES  
ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION  
2005 TO 2015



ANNUAL INJURY RATES PER 10,000 WORKERS, 2014



NURSING ASSISTANTS  
BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS, 2014



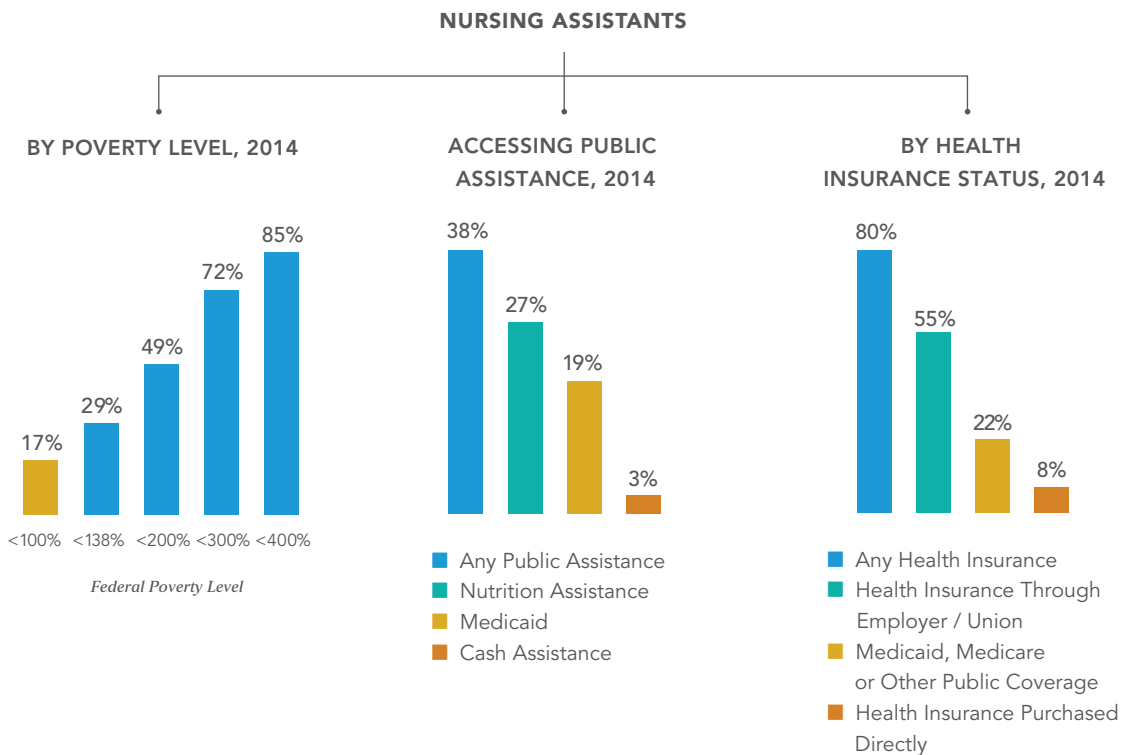
**Chart Sources:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities (IIF) Program (2015, November 19). Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Requiring Days Away from Work, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/iif/>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (2016, March 30). May National Employment and Wage Estimates United States, 2005 to 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/oes/#data>

PHI analysis of the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (2015). 2014 ACS 1-year PUMS. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>

- **Low annual earnings result in a relatively high rate of poverty among nursing assistants:** 17 percent live below the federal poverty line, compared to 9 percent of all U.S. workers.
- Because poverty rates are high among nursing assistants, **nearly 40 percent rely on some form of public assistance.**
- **The uninsured rate among nursing assistants is 20 percent.** A little more than half have employer-sponsored insurance, while one in five rely on public coverage, most often Medicaid.

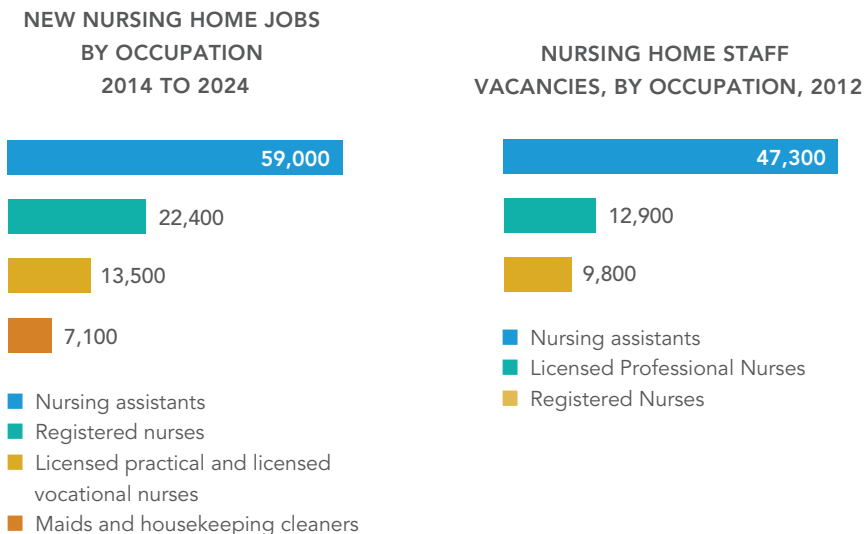
Following implementation of the Affordable Care Act, which incentivized expanded health care coverage through Medicaid, employer-sponsored plans, and individual plans, health insurance rates for nursing assistants increased by 11 percent (from 2010 and 2014). Specifically, there was a 5 percent increase in employer-provided insurance coverage and an 18 percent increase in Medicaid coverage among nursing assistants.



**Chart Source:** PHI analysis of the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (2015). 2014 ACS 1-year PUMS. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>

## WHAT IS THE FUTURE DEMAND FOR NURSING ASSISTANTS?

- **From 2014 to 2024, nursing assistants will contribute more to nursing home employment growth than any other occupation.** Of total employment growth across the industry, new nursing assistant jobs will comprise 39 percent.
- **In 2012, 47,300 open nursing assistant positions at nursing homes went unfilled,** more than double the number of vacancies for registered nurses and licensed professional nurses combined. The high number of vacancies was due in part to **52 percent turnover** among nursing assistants during the same year.



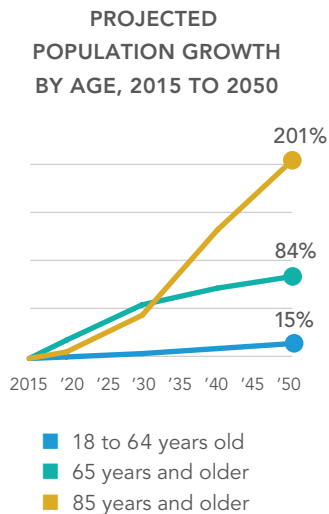
### ► DID YOU KNOW?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projection models account for recent industry and employment trends, not projected growth of the older adult population. Because future population growth among older adults is expected to increase dramatically in the coming decades and older adults are more likely than other age groups to receive care in nursing care facilities, employment projections for nursing assistants employed in this industry likely underestimate actual future employment growth.



- Employment growth in nursing homes is primarily driven by changing demographics: **by 2050, the population of adults over the age of 65—who comprise 85 percent of the nursing home resident population—is expected to double, from 47.8 million to 88 million.** The number of adults over 85—who account for nearly half (42 percent) of nursing home residents—is expected to more than triple over the same time period, from 6.3 million to 19 million.

While the population of older adults is growing rapidly, population growth among working-age adults is projected to remain relatively flat. Currently, there are 32 working-age adults for every adult over age 85. By 2050, that number will plummet to 12.



The poor quality of nursing assistant jobs and competition from other industries makes it difficult to fill these positions. Rapid growth in the population of older Americans will put even more stress on nursing homes, making it imperative to develop strategies to strengthen and stabilize the workforce.

**Chart Sources:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections Program (2015, December 8). National Employment Matrix, 2014-2024. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/emp/>

American Health Care Association (2012). Staffing Reports, 2007 to 2012. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://www.ahcancal.org/research\\_data/staffing/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ahcancal.org/research_data/staffing/Pages/default.aspx)

U.S. Census Bureau (2015, March). Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060 (USCB Publication No. P25-1143) Washington, D.C.: Colby, S., & Ortman, J. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/>

## NOTES ON OCCUPATIONAL TITLES AND INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATIONS

Nursing homes are captured by the Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Homes) industry, as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Because facilities in this industry share many characteristics, this fact sheet refers to all nursing care facilities as “nursing homes.” Industry definitions can be found at <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>

TITLE	ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES	INDUSTRY DESCRIPTION
<b>Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Homes)</b> (NAICS 623110)	Skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, rest homes with nursing care, retirement homes with nursing care, group homes for the disabled with nursing care, homes for the aged with nursing care, and inpatient hospices.	Establishments that are primarily engaged in providing inpatient nursing and rehabilitative services. The care is generally provided for an extended period of time to individuals requiring nursing care. These establishments have a permanent core staff of registered or licensed practical nurses who, along with direct care staff and other staff, provide nursing and 24-hour personal care services.

Direct care worker occupational categories are defined by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Occupation definitions can be found at: <http://www.bls.gov/SOC>

TITLE	OTHER TITLES	JOB DESCRIPTION
<b>Nursing Assistants</b> (SOC 31-1014)	Certified Nursing Assistants, Certified Nursing Aides, Nursing Attendants, Nursing Aides, Nursing Care Attendants	Nursing assistants primarily work in hospitals and long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes. They assist individuals with daily tasks and may perform some clinical tasks under the supervision of a licensed professional.

## DATA SOURCES

Wage data are from the current and archived estimates of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Program, available at: <http://www.bls.gov/oes/#data>. Data prior to 2012 refers to “Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants” (SOC code 31-1012); data from 2012 and the following years refers to the new occupational title “Nursing Assistants” (SOC code 31-1014).

To adjust wages for inflation, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban wage earners and clerical workers (1982-84=100) was used. CPI data can be found at <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/>.

Statistics relating to direct care worker demographics and income characteristics are based on PHI analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2014 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), with statistical programming and data analysis provided by Carlos Figueiredo.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control provides demographics of nursing care facility residents. The data can be found at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_03/sr03\\_038.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_03/sr03_038.pdf)

Staffing data—including turnover rates and number of vacancies—were provided by the American Health Care Association (AHCA). AHCA staffing reports can be found at [https://www.ahcancal.org/research\\_data/staffing/](https://www.ahcancal.org/research_data/staffing/)

## ENDNOTES

1. Nursing home workers are a segment of the much larger direct care workforce, which provides care in a variety of settings including nursing care facilities, assisted living facilities, group homes, intermediate care facilities, and hospitals. The total number of workers across all industries tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, plus PHI estimates of independent providers employed in Medicaid consumer-directed programs, is 4.4 million.

The number of nursing home residents is from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control. (2013). Long-Term Care Providers and Services Users in the

United States: Data from the National Study of Long-Term Care Providers, 2013–2014 (DHHS Publication No. 2016-1422). Washington, D.C.: Harris-Kojetin, L., Sengupta, M., Park-Lee, E., & Valverde, R. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_03/sr03\\_038.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_03/sr03_038.pdf)

2. The Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities (IIF) Program does not offer occupational injury data by industry. More than half of nursing assistants work in nursing homes. This data includes nursing assistants working in hospital settings.

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