



Pride at work

It's official, nurses love their work.

Adele Waters discusses the results of our reader survey

NURSES ARE proud of what they do and the reason that they carry on is simple – patients. That is what you told us in our special campaign survey conducted exclusively for *Nursing Standard* in January this year. Results from our snapshot survey of 1,338 nurses

from across the UK show that a convincing 94 per cent of you are proud to be nurses. And 74 per cent say that it is patients who have inspired or motivated you to stay in the profession.

Many of you are as enthusiastic about your work as you were when you started training – in some cases more than 40 years ago. Endorsement of the profession is clear because nearly half of respondents to our survey (49 per cent) are nurses with more than 20 years' experience.

Caring is still the number one requirement it takes to be a nurse, with just under half of you (49 per cent) selecting this as the one essential quality nurses must have. Next is the need to be able to work as part of a team. Intellectual insight accounted for just 6 per cent of votes.

Most (76 per cent) nurses who opted to respond to our survey believe that nursing is a vocation. A third of you chose a nursing career because you 'always wanted to be a nurse', while just over a quarter wanted to feel that you make a difference to people's lives. A fifth simply wanted to help care for people. Over half (56 per cent) believe that your current job allows you to achieve these aspirations.

Patients are your most popular reason for staying in nursing – 74 per cent of you say so. And this is a consistent message because 74 per cent also

Top five reasons for staying in nursing

■ Patients	74%
■ Job variety	60%
■ My colleagues	45%
■ Job security	44%
■ On-going training	31%

name patients as the most popular subject matter when you are discussing the most positive aspects of your work.

Job variety is also a key attraction to the profession, with 60 per cent of you stating that it is one of the key factors that keeps you there. Your colleagues are clearly important – 45 per cent say fellow workers are one of the reasons you stay. Job security is an important draw to 44 per cent, as well as the NHS pension, which is a significant pull for 33 per cent of our readers. On-going training is another popular reason to stay, as voted for by 32 per cent. ▶

Nursing the Future

Nursing the Future is our year-long campaign to enhance the image and reputation of nursing and midwifery in the UK. With the help of our readers, we aim to rebrand the image of nurses and midwives for the 21st century. We will encourage readers to publicise what they do and celebrate all that is dynamic, complex and challenging about the professions. We will profile excellence and highlight some of the daily success stories of modern day nursing and midwifery. We aim to make 2004 a year for nursing and midwifery. Join us in nursing the future...

Campaign aims

- To enhance the image and reputation of nursing and midwifery.
- To challenge and dispel misconceptions about nursing and midwifery.
- To empower nurses and midwives to publicise what they do.
- To encourage nurses and midwives to 'sell' or talk up their professions to future generations.
- To raise the public voice and profile of nurses and midwives.
- To encourage more respect for the professions.

What was your main reason for choosing nursing as a career?





Our survey results*

Are you female or male?

Female 91%, Male 9%

What is your age group?

18-24	8%
25-34	17%
35-44	32%
45-54	30%
55 and over	13%

In which healthcare sector do you work?

NHS hospital	51%
Community trust	14%
Nursing student	13%
Nursing/residential home	7%
Other	5%
GP surgery	4%
Agency	2%
Independent hospital	1.5%
Nurse education	1%
School	<1%
Charity	<1%
Hospice	<1%
Industry/commerce	<1%
No reply	<less than 1%

What is your current grade?

Student 15%, B <1%, C <1%, D 18%, E 23%, F 12%, G 16%, H 6%, I 1%, SMP <1%, not applicable 7%

How long have you been nursing?

Less than a year	4%
1-2 years	11%
3-5 years	10%
6-10 years	8%
11-15 years	9%
16-20 years	11%
Over 20 years	48%
No reply	<1%

Do you consider nursing to be a vocation?

Yes 76%, No 22%, No reply 2%

Are you proud to be a nurse?

Yes 94%, No 4%, No reply 1%

Do you think your current job allows you to achieve this?

Yes 56%, No 6%
Sometimes 34%, No reply 5%

Have there been any patients who have inspired or motivated you to stay in nursing?

Yes 74%, No 23%, No reply 3%

Do you think you have inspired anyone to be a nurse?

Yes 45%, No 47%, No reply 8%

Which of these factors do you talk about when you discuss the positive aspects of your job?

Patients	75%
Job variety	68%
My colleagues	44%
Job security	35%
On-going training	25%
NHS pension	22%
Good career structure	18%
Pay	9%
Status	7%
Other	7%
Other pension	1%
No reply	1%

Would you recommend nursing to your child, relative or friend?

Yes 58%, No 40%, No reply 3%

Which negative aspects do you think are most associated with nursing by people outside the profession?

Under-staffing	80%
Low pay	78%
Unsociable working	65%
Hard work	57%
Stressful work	57%
Long hours	50%
Low resources	46%
Too much paperwork	38%
Bad management	34%
Inability to change the way things are done	17%
Few employee-friendly policies	12%
Limited promotional opportunities	10%
Other	8%
Gender mix (too many women)	7%
Racism	4%
Gender mix (too many men)	<1%
No reply	<1%

Overall what do you think is the most dominant public image of nursing in the UK?

Worthwhile	81%
Not worthwhile	10%
No reply	8%
Challenging	80%
Unchallenging	12%
No reply	9%
Positive	64%
Negative	28%
No reply	8%
Rewarding	61%
Unrewarding	32%
No reply	7%
Highly regarded	55%

Poorly regarded	37%
No reply	8%
Progressive career	50%
Dead-end career	38%
No reply	12%

What three factors do you think people most associate with nurses?

Caring	90%
Women	70%
Underpaid	43%
Responsible	39%
Efficient	21%
Trustworthy	18%
Put upon	9%
Not very bright	8%
Working class	5%
Clever	4%
Bossy/domineering	4%
Sexy	3%
Not particularly caring	2%
Inefficient	2%
Middle class	2%
Matronly	2%
Young	2%
Unambitious	2%
Ambitious	1%
Posh	<1%
Old	<1%
Men	<1%

What is the most common reaction you get when you say you are a nurse?

People ask me about their ailments	40%
People ask me about my job and what I do	28%
People warm to me	16%
People are impressed	13%
Other	6%
People are not impressed	4%
People belittle me	1%

Do reactions vary depending on gender or age group?

Yes 60%, No 39%, No reply 2%

How satisfied are you with the health reforms in the UK?

Very satisfied	2%
Fairly satisfied	31%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	38%
Fairly dissatisfied	21%
Very dissatisfied	8%
No reply	1%

Do you think conditions are generally improving in your place of work?

Yes 32%, No 38%
Neither improved nor become worse 29%
No reply 2%

*For simplification all percentages have been rounded



'Every patient reminds me I am privileged to be a nurse'

Zoe Beardow became a nurse 18 months ago and loves every minute of it. She now works in neurological intensive care at Leeds General Infirmary as a grade D nurse. 'Every patient I care for and their families reminds me of how privileged I am to be a nurse,' she told *Nursing Standard*.

Even though she finds her job stressful, the fact that she is helping people makes it all worthwhile. 'It is not really the patients – because we have a 30 per cent death rate and the ones who survive are often brain-damaged – mostly it is the relatives.

'People keep in touch and tell us how former patients are doing. We have

people sending in letters and keeping us up to date.'

Ms Beardow, a single mother of three children, delayed starting her training until she was 27 because of childcare commitments. She also believed she was not academic enough to finish a nursing course. 'I applied in 1990 and did not even get an interview. But I was determined to get there and when I received my degree I felt a great sense of achievement. Sometimes I still cannot believe that I am a nurse.

'I hope one of my children goes into the profession. The youngest, Ashley, is eight and says she wants to be a nurse.'

Five worst aspects of the job

■ Under-staffing	74%
■ Stressful work	50%
■ Low resources	50%
■ Inability to change the way things are done	31%
■ Patients – rude and abusive	28%

Most of you work in an NHS hospital and mostly at grade E (23 per cent) or you are a student (15 per cent). Without doubt, the worst aspect of your job is under-staffing, as voted by 74 per cent of nurses. Stress, paperwork and low resources were also given the thumbs down by 50 per cent. Clearly many of you are frustrated in your workplaces because 31 per cent place your 'inability to change the way that things are done' as a negative aspect of your work.

When asked what single improvement would help keep nurses in nursing and attract more nurses in, most of you decided it was higher pay – for qualified nurses or at least for students. Others suggested better staffing levels or an improved media image of nursing.

You see understaffing (80 per cent) and low pay (78 per cent) as the most common negative associations with nursing by people outside the profession. Unsociable hours as well as the popular links with stressful and hard work also put people off, you think.

But despite these factors, 64 per cent of you believe that the dominant public image of nursing is a positive one. Up to 80 per cent of you believe the public view nursing as a challenging career, rather than a soft option. More than 60 per cent think nursing is viewed as rewarding rather than unrewarding; 81 per cent believe the public sees it as a worthwhile career and 55 per cent feel your work is highly regarded. Half of

'Patients inspire me everyday'

It is 32 years since Anona Clarke began her nurse training and she is still as enthusiastic about her profession today.

Now a grade E on a respiratory ward at Altnagelvin Area Hospital Londonderry, Northern Ireland, she says patients and making a difference to their lives are the factors that keep her going. 'Patients inspire me, often in simple ways, by just saying "thank you". This can be for something you don't even think about. Recently a woman said to me "I will tell you now, in case I don't survive, I love you – this is the most comfortable I have been in four days." All I did was get her a recliner chair.'

Ms Clarke is proud to be a nurse. 'I enjoy going to work. I feel that I make a difference to people's lives and it is important that I get that sort of feedback. It is what keeps me going. It is also why I am still a grade E – I want to stay working with patients.'



Esler Crawford

respondants believe the public views nursing as a progressive career as opposed to a dead-end career choice.

When we asked you what factors you think people most associate with nurses, your top selections were caring (87 per cent), female (70 per cent) and underpaid (43 per cent).

The least common associations were male, posh or old, which attracted less than 1 per cent of votes between them.

All in all the results amount to a flagrant rejection of any recent accusations that nurses in the UK have lost their ability or desire to care.

Nurse Heather Diamond's response is typical of many we received. 'I love doing this job. When I discuss positive aspects of my job I talk about how much I enjoy it and the fact that it never bores me. Every day is different, challenging and interesting.'

Ms Diamond has been a nurse for more than 20 years and is now a grade G theatre nurse at Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust, Lancashire. 'It is so nice to be able to say something positive about nursing,' she told *Nursing Standard*. 'I think it is the negative things – like politics and pressures – that drives people out of nursing and stops people coming in.'

Our survey also found nurses to be one of the best recruitment tools to the profession, with 58 per cent saying they would recommend nursing as a career to children, relatives or friends. Indeed 45 per cent of you claim that you have already inspired others to join the profession.

Margaret Pearce-Higgins has retired from full time nursing but has just re-registered for another three years to continue teaching healthcare assistants for two primary care trusts. 'At ▶



Paul Dodds



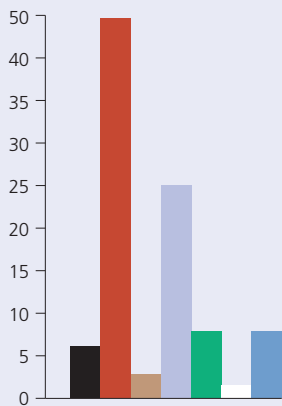
'It is obvious that I make a difference'

Moving from hospital work to general practice has re-ignited Tracy Laverty's enthusiasm for nursing. She has been in nursing for 23 years and has never worked as anything else. But last June she decided to leave hospital work and become a practice nurse and she has not looked back. 'I absolutely love it. I much prefer it to working in a hospital. It is where I belong,' she says.

Working 9am-1pm every day at Leslie Health Centre in Fife, Scotland, Ms Laverty says patients come in with 'anything from smears to ears to getting advice. I feel it is more obvious here that I am making a difference. I found hospital work frustrating and the low morale at my local hospital made the job harder.'

Ms Laverty is proud to be a nurse and believes nursing is a vocation. 'I have thought about moving but it is hard to move jobs and get the same pay. Also caring for people is a key requirement for me.'

What one quality do you consider essential to be a nurse today?



- **Caring nature** 49%
- **Ability to work as part of a team** 25%
- **Patience** 8%
- **Other** 8%
- **Intellectual insight** 6%
- **Efficient personality** 3%
- **Management skills** 2%

'I am always enthusiastic'

Janice Skelton is so enthusiastic about her work she is something of an evangelist – she has even persuaded friends to become nurses.

'When people ask me what I have been doing, I am enthusiastic about it. I have persuaded one of my ex-hairdressers to go into nursing and she is now a children's nurse. I still see her and she enjoys it – more than hairdressing.'

Ms Skelton was a late starter to nursing. She had worked in a variety of caring roles, including as a road safety warden, before she began training. Now 15 years later she is a grade F in a nurse-led minor injury unit.

Along the way she has converted many other people to the nursing cause. 'I really enjoy my work.'

'I see different things all day. We do not really use doctors – we tend to



see patients, diagnose, treat and discharge them, and give out medication under protocols. You have to think on your feet and use your initiative all the time. Patients are quite happy to see nurses – audits of our work have shown that.'

She says she always wanted to be a nurse and believes that, to be a good nurse, you need intellectual insight as well as a caring nature, efficient personality, patience, management skills and the ability to work as part of a team.

Atom

least six of my students are now registered nurses and they have told me it was my love of nursing that inspired them to go on. I feel proud that I have inspired them to pursue a nursing career,' she says. 'I have always had this buzz about nursing. I am proud to be a nurse even though I am 61 years old.'

The most common reaction reported when you tell someone you are a nurse is a query about ailments (40 per cent). Secondary to this, 28 per cent of you say people ask about your job and what you do, while 19 per cent say people automatically warm to you. Just 1 per cent says they are belittled and 4 per cent say people are unimpressed. Interestingly, up to 60 per cent of you

say age and gender makes a difference to how people react to you when you tell them your line of work. This may be a reflection on you since 61 per cent of you are between 35 and 54 years old and 91 per cent are female.

Generally you find that older people show more respect for your work and younger people are more dismissive. Some of you point out that older people tend to ask you more for your advice and younger people tend to talk about your job in terms of poor pay.

Many of you point out that women show more interest or ask you more questions about your work, whereas a common reaction from younger to middle-aged men is that they make a joke of

it, by asking you to examine the top of their legs, for example.

Joanne Wood, a final-year student at Wolverhampton University, sums it up by saying she has experienced a lot of ignorance about what nursing is all about. 'Many people think it is just about wiping bums all day and you get tired of having to explain what you do.'

'Even my own auntie cannot believe it takes three years' training to become a nurse – she keeps asking me "haven't you finished yet?"'

A common reaction she gets with outsiders is men asking for a bed bath, 'although there is nothing remotely sexy about that'

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