

The Transitioning Workforce - LVNs to RNs

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Background

Historically, the per capita supply of Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) in Texas has exceeded that of comparable states and the nation as a whole.¹ In Texas, a greater proportion of LVNs are employed in nursing care facilities when compared to other nursing professionals. This is particularly relevant as an aging population creates increased demand for health care services. However, since 2020, the supply of LVNs in Texas has been steadily declining.² Career transitions of LVNs to Registered Nurses (RNs) may be contributing to this decline in supply. Currently, studies describing LVN to RN career transitions in Texas are lacking. The purpose of this study is to quantify the number of LVNs who transitioned to RNs, identify characteristics of LVNs who make this transition, and understand how this transition may impact the Texas nursing workforce.

Methods

The data presented is from the 2023 Texas Board of Nursing licensure data.³ A retrospective design was used to identify LVNs who transitioned to RNs. Individuals were selected for analysis if they were identified as having both an LVN and RN license and if the initial year of RN licensure was between 2014 and 2023 (indicating an LVN to RN transition). The year they originally obtained an RN license was used to establish their last year as an LVN and first year as an RN. Data from the 2014 through 2022 licensure files were used to obtain specific information about these individuals' last year as LVNs and first-year post-RN licensure.

Results

Demographics of Career Transitioning LVNs

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of Career Transitioning LVNs, LVN Workforce, and Texas Population, 2014-2023

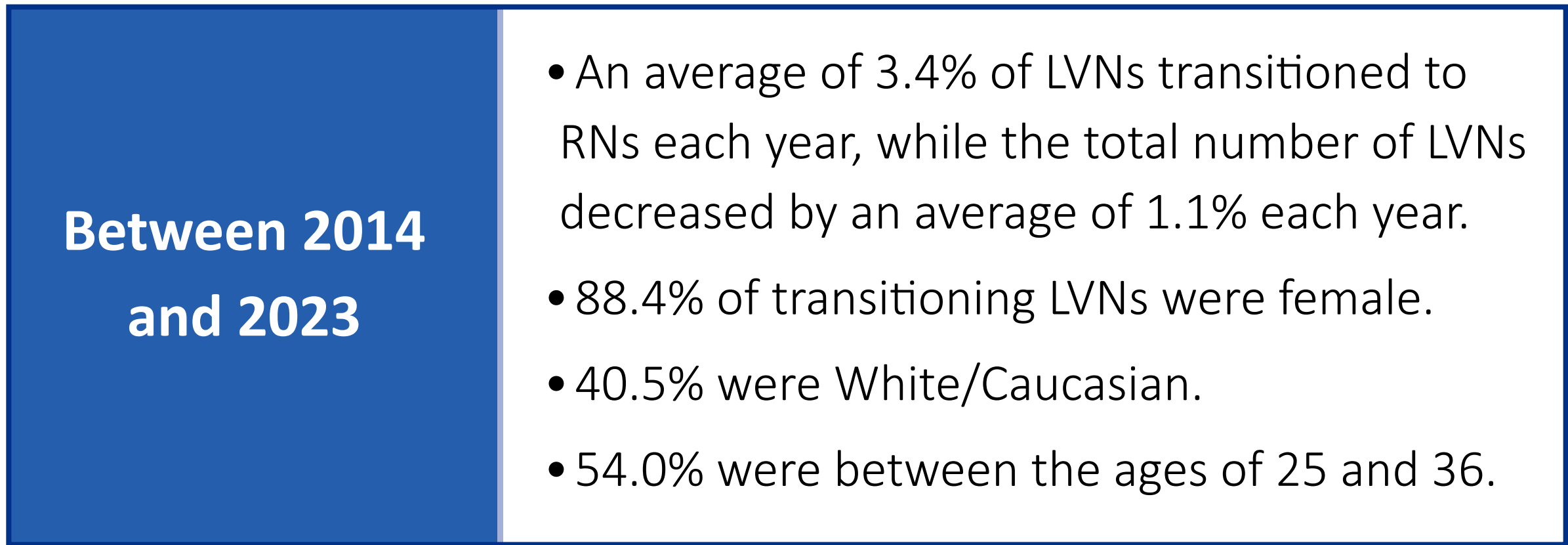
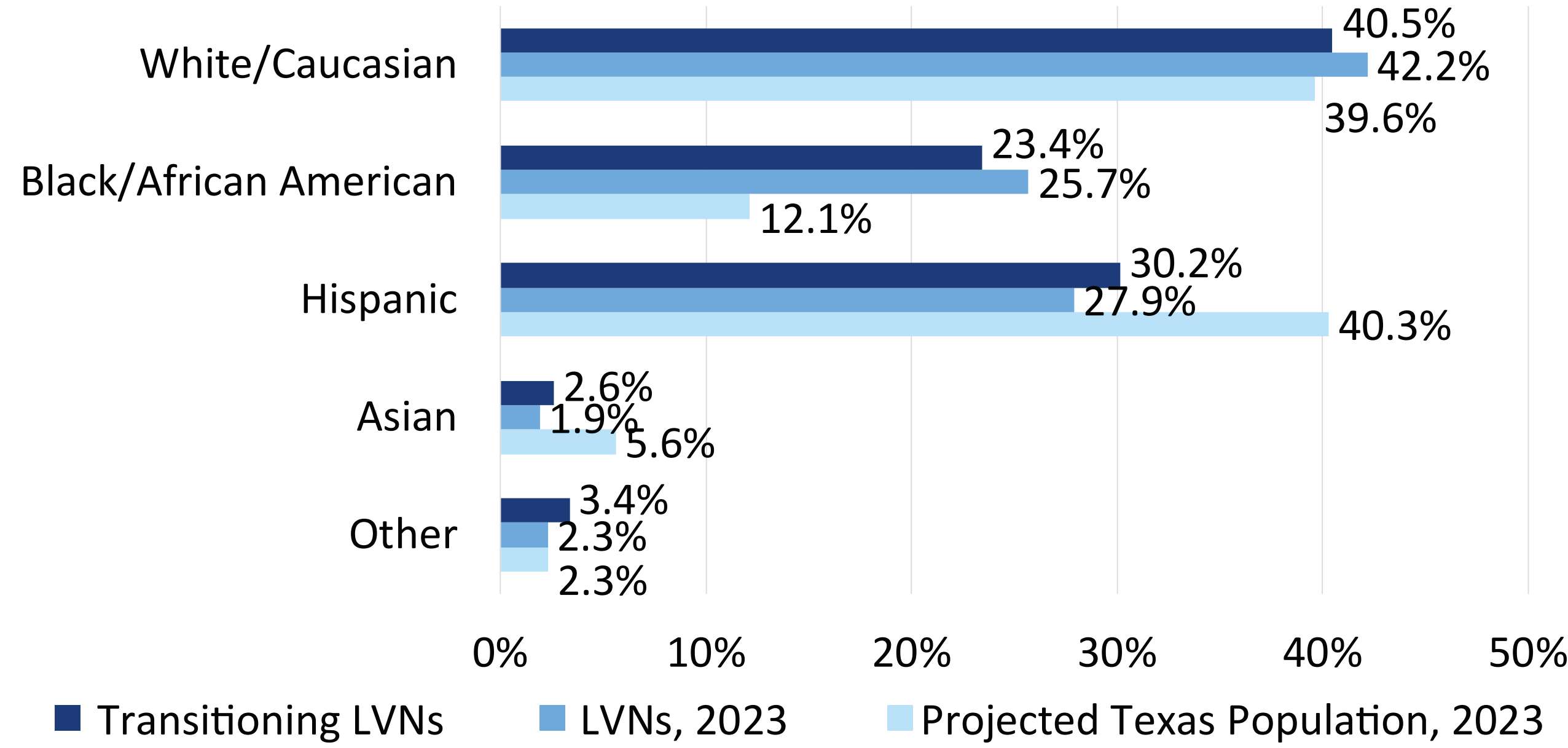
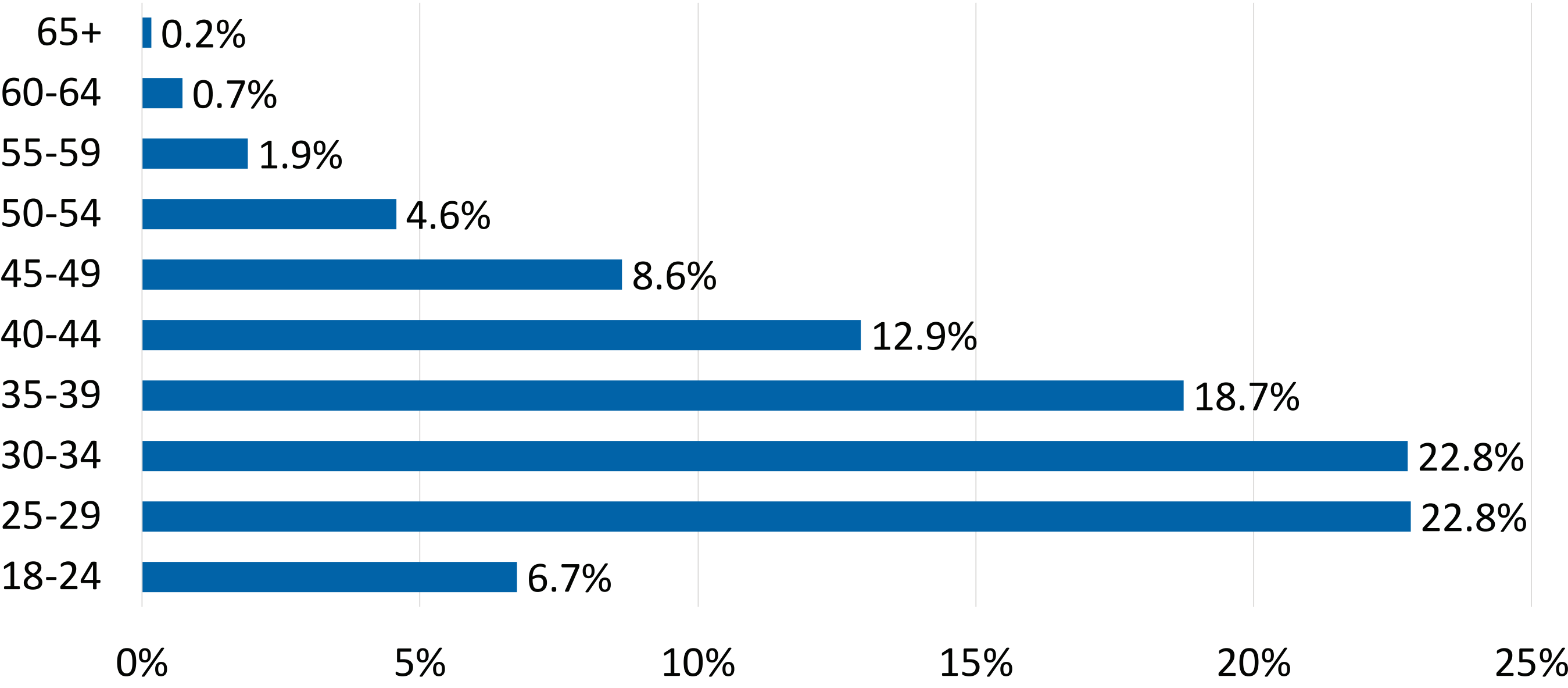


Figure 2. Age Category of LVNs When Transitioning to RNs, 2014-2023



Characteristics of Career Transitioning LVNs

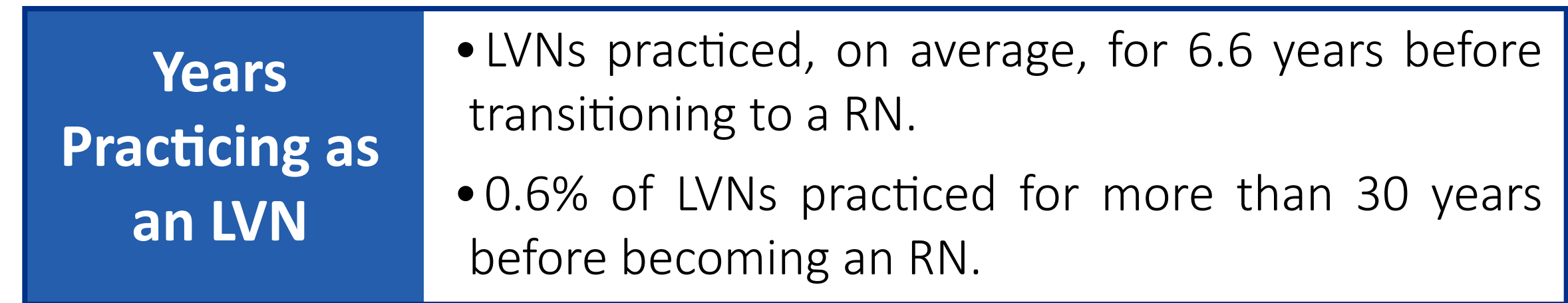


Figure 3. Years Practicing as an LVN Before Transitioning to an RN, 2014-2023

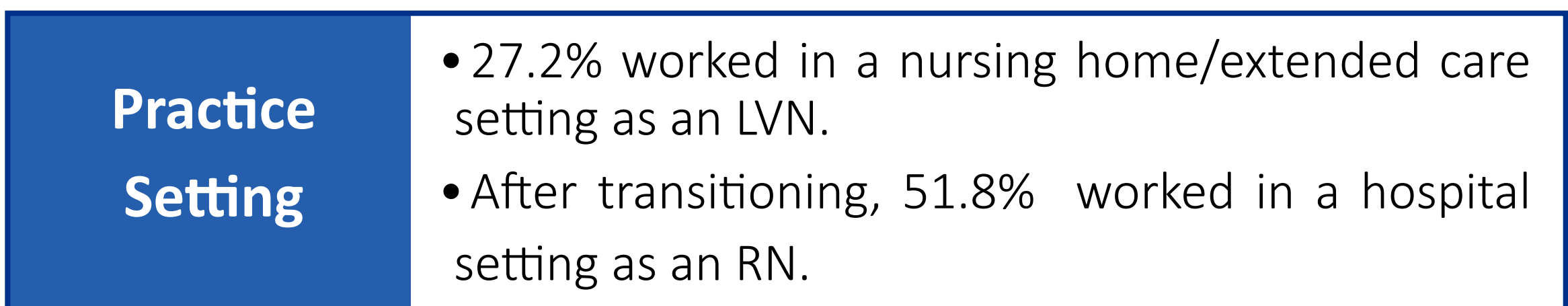
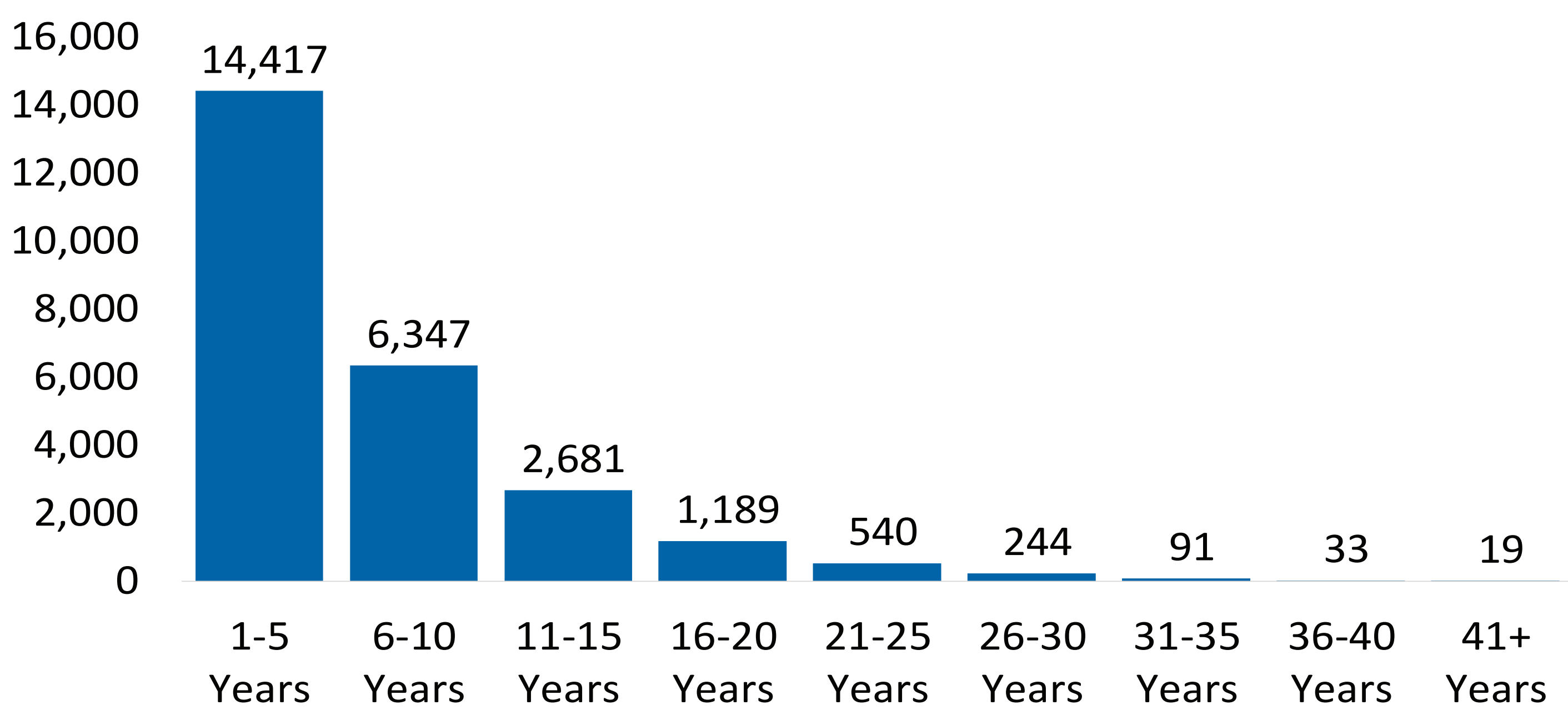


Figure 4. Practice Setting of LVNs One Year Before and After Transition, 2014-2023

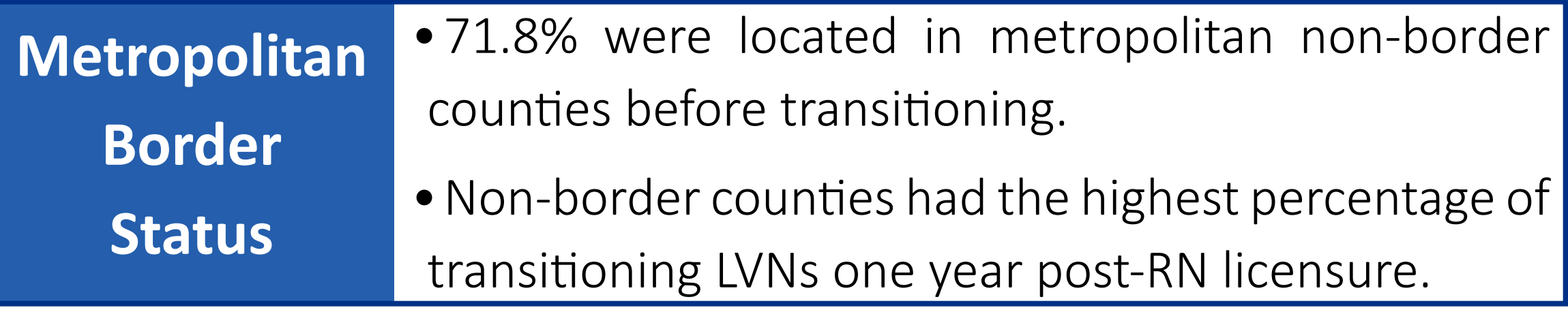
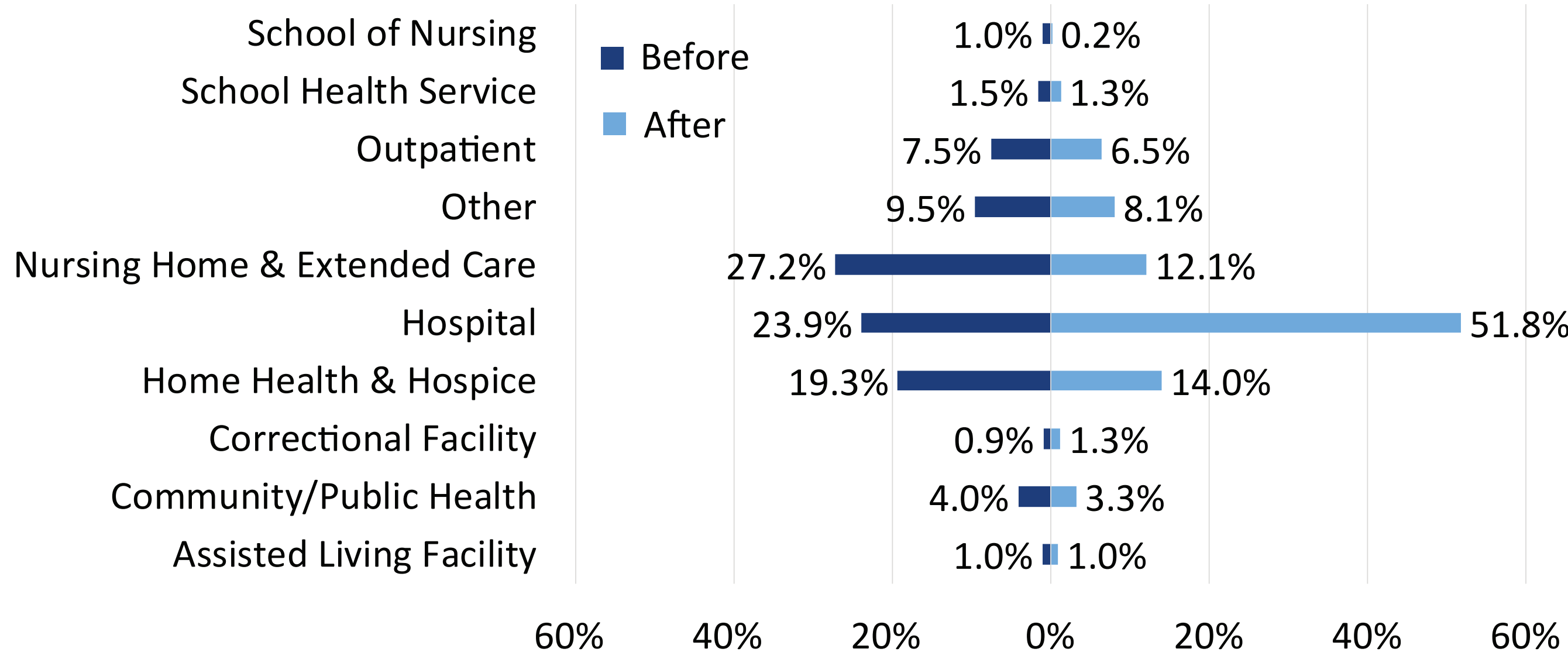


Table 1. Metropolitan and Border Status of LVNs One Year Before and After Transition, 2014-2023

	Before	After
Metro Border	9.7%	8.9%
Metro Non-Border	71.8%	75.1%
Non-Metro Border	2.0%	1.7%
Non-Metro Non-Border	16.5%	14.3%

Conclusion

This study begins to fill a knowledge gap regarding Texas LVN to RN career transitions. In terms of gender and ethnicity, those who made an LVN to RN career transition closely reflect the general LVN population in Texas. This may suggest that the opportunity to advance from LVN to RN is relatively even throughout the population. While upskilling the workforce through academic programs is important, consideration should also be given to the declining LVN workforce and its impact on health care for Texans. As LVNs transition to RNs, they may seek employment in other settings, lowering the number of LVNs in nursing home/extended care and home health and hospice settings. This could impact the services available to an aging population in Texas. Further research should be done to determine the impact this may be having on the nursing workforce in Texas. Efforts should be made to increase the number of graduates from LVN academic programs to recuperate from the already declining number of graduates and LVNs in the workforce.⁴

References

¹Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis. The U.S. Nursing Workforce: Trends in Supply and Education, October 2013. <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/nursing-workforce-trends2013.pdf>
²Texas Department of State Health Services, Health Professions Resource Center. Supply and Distribution Tables for State-Licensed Health Professions in Texas: Licensed Vocational Nurses. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/health-professions-resource-center-hprc/health-professions/licensed-vocational-nurses>
³Texas Department of State Health Services, Center for Nursing Workforce Studies. Licensure data from Texas Board of Nursing as geocoded, processed, and analyzed by CNWS, 2014-2023. www.dshs.texas.gov/nursingworkforce
⁴Texas Department of State Health Services, Center for Nursing Workforce Studies. 2023 VN Admissions, Enrollment, and Graduation Trends. Published online March 2024. https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/chs/cnws/NEPIS/2023/VN/2023%20VN%20Admission%20Enrollment%20Grad%20Trends_Final_Accessible.pdf