Cross Country Healthcare and Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing Release Purpose Under Pressure: The State of Nursing in 2026

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Fifth annual survey finds nurses remain deeply committed to patient care as workforce expectations, flexibility needs and support priorities continue to evolve

BOCA RATON, Fla.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 5, 2026-- Cross Country Healthcare (NASDAQ: CCRN), a market-leading provider of workforce solutions and tech-enabled staffing, recruitment and advisory services, today released its fifth annual nursing survey, *Purpose Under Pressure: The State of Nursing in 2026,* developed in collaboration with Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20260505198241/en/

Cross Country Healthcare and Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing released Purpose Under Pressure: The State of Nursing in 2026, the fifth annual national nursing survey. Based on insights from more than 2,000 nurses and nursing students across the U.S., the report explores how nurses remain deeply committed to patient care while facing evolving workforce expectations, growing pressure and increased demand for flexibility, support and career sustainability. The findings highlight what continues to motivate nurses, where workplace challenges are intensifying and how healthcare leaders can better respond to the needs of the profession.

Based on insights from more than 2,000 nurses and nursing students across the United States, the study offers a comprehensive look at the current state of the profession, including what continues to motivate nurses, where workplace pressures are increasing and how healthcare organizations can better support the workforce at the center of patient care.

The findings point to a profession defined by resilience, purpose and change. Despite continued workforce pressures, nurses remain deeply connected to the meaning of their work. Eighty-three percent of nurses say they entered the profession to make a meaningful impact on patients' lives, up from 66% in 2022.

"Purpose remains one of the strongest forces in nursing," said Kevin Clark, Chairman and CEO of Cross Country Healthcare. "Nurses continue to choose this profession because they want to make a difference. At the same time, the data makes clear that the workforce experience is changing, and healthcare organizations have an opportunity to respond with more flexibility, better support and a renewed focus on retention."

The survey also shows that practical career considerations are playing a larger role in how nurses evaluate their future. Sixty-two percent of respondents cited flexibility and lifestyle as key drivers, while 52% cited job security. These findings reflect a workforce that remains mission-driven while also seeking greater balance, stability and long-term sustainability.

Since 2022, the data shows several areas where pressure on nurses has increased:

- Burnout rose from 39% to 67%
- Pay and benefits concerns more than doubled, from 24% to 53%
- Nearly half of nurses, 49%, report feeling undervalued, up from 26%
- Short staffing and high patient ratios increased from 53% to 61%

"These findings are more than warning signs. They are a roadmap," said Hank Drummond, PhD, RN, Enterprise Chief Nurse Executive and Divisional Senior Vice President at Cross Country Healthcare. "Nurses are telling us what they need to continue doing the work they love in a way that is sustainable. Now it is up to healthcare leaders to listen, respond and take meaningful action."

Even as current nurses report increasing pressure, the future pipeline remains strong. Ninety-nine percent of nursing students say they are excited about their future in the profession, driven by a passion for helping others, confidence in career stability and a desire to contribute to meaningful work.

"Today's nursing students are entering the profession with optimism, purpose and a realistic understanding of the challenges ahead," said Cameron Duncan, Ph.D., DNP, APRN, the Holli Rockwell Eminent Dean at Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing. "That combination matters. It gives healthcare leaders, educators and workforce partners an important opportunity to better prepare, support and retain the next generation of nurses."

The report underscores a profession at an important moment. Nurses remain committed to their calling, but the systems around them must continue to evolve. From staffing models and scheduling flexibility to career development, recognition, compensation and technology-enabled workforce planning, the findings point to clear opportunities to strengthen the nursing experience and support better outcomes across care settings.

To download the full report, visit: https://www.crosscountry.com/2026-nurses-survey

About the Study

Purpose Under Pressure: The State of Nursing in 2026 is based on responses from more than 2,000 nurses and nursing students across the United States, representing a range of roles and care settings. Cross Country Healthcare conducted the study in collaboration with Florida Atlantic University's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing.

About Cross Country Healthcare

Cross Country Healthcare, Inc. (NASDAQ: CCRN) is a technology-driven healthcare workforce solutions company, delivering an AI-powered digital platform and advisory services backed by 40 years of healthcare labor expertise to help health systems optimize and sustain their entire labor ecosystem.

Through Intellify®, its cloud-based workforce and vendor management platform designed to integrate with core hospital systems, Cross Country helps improve transparency across the labor ecosystem. Intellify® unifies workforce management across service lines, including non-clinical, nursing, allied health and locums, into a single, centralized view of internal and contingent labor. Powered by real-time analytics and AI-driven insights, the platform helps leaders forecast demand, optimize labor utilization, streamline workflows and improve cost efficiency while supporting high-quality care delivery.

About Florida Atlantic University

Florida Atlantic University serves more than 32,000 undergraduate and graduate students across six campuses along Florida's Southeast coast. Recognized as one of only 13 institutions nationwide to achieve three Carnegie Foundation designations - R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production," Opportunity College and University," and Carnegie Community Engagement Classification - FAU stands at the intersection of academic excellence and social mobility. Ranked among the Top 100 Public Universities by U.S. News & World Report, FAU is also nationally recognized as a Top 25 Best-In-Class College and cited by Washington Monthly as "one of the country's most effective engines of upward mobility." To learn more, visit www.fau.edu.

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