

1.1 Healthcare Professionals

The Importance

The number of physicians and nurses available to provide health care to the Region directly affects patients' ability to access quality, timely healthcare when needed. Chronic shortages of nurses willing to accept the terms of employment have been reported as a nationwide healthcare crisis. Facilities with fewer and overworked physicians and nurses will naturally provide inferior care to fewer people than facilities that are adequately staffed. With medical centers that draw many patients from outside the four-county region, the Capital District's per capita number of nurses and physicians is expected to be higher than the national rate. It should also be noted that nationally, only 58.5% of all Registered Professional Nurses (RPN) were employed full-time in 2000 while 18.3% were not employed as nurses.

About this indicator

This indicator uses data from the New York State Education Department's Division of Professional Licensing Services to track the number of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), Registered Professional Nurses, and Licensed Medical Doctors. These numbers do not include other primary care professions, such as Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants. For National comparison, the indicator uses American Medical Association data on physicians and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data on nurses.

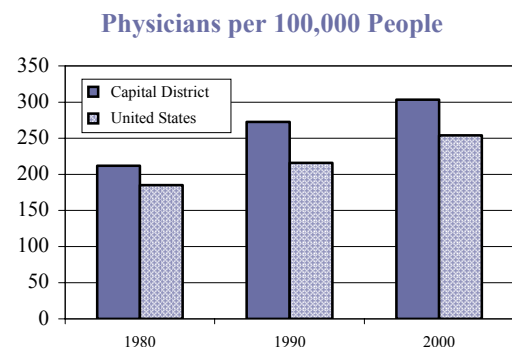
It should be noted that this data records the number of licensed professionals and not the number employed. Due to a lack of consistent data, there is no regional comparison for this indicator.

Sources for this Indicator

- New York State Education Department's Division of Professional Licensing Services
- American Medical Association, *Physician Characteristics and Distribution in the U.S.*
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration unpublished data provided to the U.S. Census Bureau for the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

Nurses and Physicians in the Capital District

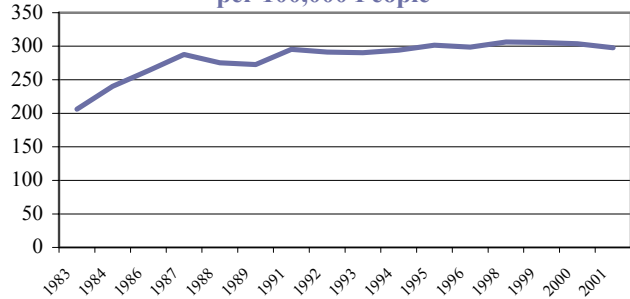
As a medical center for the larger region, the Capital District has a higher per capita number of nurses and physicians than the nation as a whole. During the 1990's, while the National per capita number of nurses and physicians climbed steadily,



1.1 HEALTH

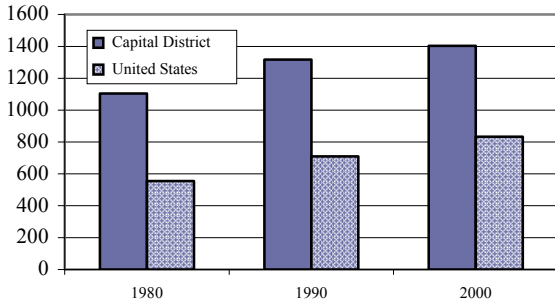
the number of nurses and physicians per Capita in the Capital District peaked and actually began to decline. The number of licensed LPNs and RPNs per 100,000 people declined from 1,830 in 1990 to 1,827 in 2000. The number of Physicians per 100,000 people in the Capital District peaked in 1998 at 306 and declined to 298 in 2001.

Capital District Number of Physicians per 100,000 People



Registered Professional Nurses have higher educational requirements than Licensed Practical Nurses. In the Capital District, the number of RPNs has continued to climb as the number of LPNs has declined, indicating a higher level of training within the nursing profession. The National 3 to 1 ratio of RPNs to LPNs is very close to the Capital District's ratio.

Registered Nurses per 100,000 People



Capital District Number of RPNs and LPN's per 100,000 People

