

## 2020 ABNS Nursing Specialty Certification Board Survey

In May/June 2020, the **American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS)** surveyed 56 U.S.-based credentialing organizations to describe the scope of specialty certifications available to RNs and advanced practice RNs (APRNs). Forty-four (79%) responded, including 30 of ABNS's 31 members.



**Over 1 Million Specialty Certified RNs**



Over **1,013,362** RNs & APRNs hold one or more nursing specialty credentials.

*"Certification is the formal recognition of the specialized knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the achievement of standards identified by a nursing specialty to promote optimal health outcomes."*<sup>1</sup>

### Survey Fast Facts



**44** boards



**148** credentials



**53** specialties

### Credential Fast Facts



**86%** available internationally



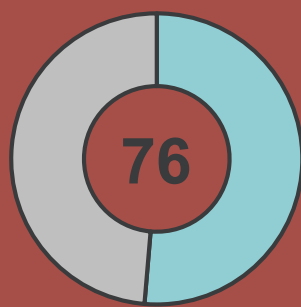
**57%** Magnet<sup>®</sup>-accepted



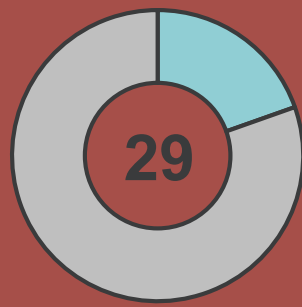
**72%** accredited

### Which RNs May Earn the Credentials?

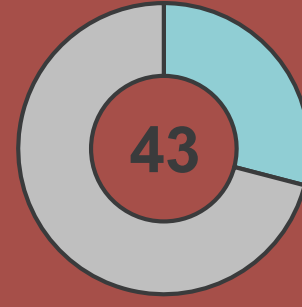
Of the 148 credentials, both RNs and APRNs are eligible to earn **76** (51%), while only RNs may earn **29** (20%) and **43** (29%) are for APRNs only.



**RNs and APRNs**



**RNs only**



**APRNs only<sup>2</sup>**

### Top Specialty Areas

For each credential they offer, respondents were asked to select up to three specialty or subspecialty areas that best describe the primary practice focus of the nurses holding that credential.

Critical Care (27)  
Pediatrics (17)  
Neonatal Care (13)  
Medical-Surgical (12)  
Wound/Ostomy/Continence (12)  
Disease-specific (11)  
Emergency (11)

Hospice/Palliative Care (10)  
Ambulatory Care (9)  
Cardiac Care (9)  
Case Management (8)  
Hematology/Oncology (8)  
Psychiatric-Mental Health (8)

*(e.g., there are 27 credentials for which Critical Care is among the top specialty areas that best describes the primary practice focus of nurses holding those credentials.)*

### What is Certification?

To become specialty certified, also known as board certified, RNs must pass a rigorous, national exam that validates their clinical and professional knowledge and judgment in a well-defined specialty practice area.

**Benefits of nursing specialty certification include:**

- Superior clinical expertise, safety and ethics
- Improved patient and organizational outcomes
- Greater nurse career success and satisfaction
- Advances in specialty practice and nursing



### More on Accreditation

Accreditation is a rigorous peer-review process that affirms an individual certification program complies with established credentialing industry standards of excellence.

Of the **106** accredited nursing specialty certification programs, **67** are ABSNC<sup>3</sup> accredited and **53** are NCCA<sup>4</sup> accredited, with **14** by both.

**Certification and accreditation** promote excellence and ethics, inspire confidence, drive better patient outcomes, and help ensure the safety, health and welfare of patients and the public at large.<sup>5</sup>

#### SOURCES & NOTES

<sup>1</sup>American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) definition of specialty certification retrieved from <http://www.nursingcertification.org/About-ABNS>.

<sup>2</sup>Of the 43 credentials for APRNs only, 24 were described as "an initial credentialing credential for APRNs" and 19 as "a specialty credential that APRNs earn after their initial APRN licensure."

<sup>3</sup>The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) focuses solely on nursing certification programs.

<sup>4</sup>The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accredits programs across a wide range of professions and occupations.

<sup>5</sup>ABSNC's "A Commitment to Quality and Care: The Importance of Accreditation for Certifying Organizations and Their Members."

#### ABOUT ABNS

ABNS is a not-for-profit, membership organization focused on improving patient outcomes and consumer protection by promoting specialty nursing certification. ABNS member boards represent over 920,000 specialty certified RNs and APRNs practicing in a variety of settings worldwide.

For more information about ABNS and this survey, please visit [nursingcertification.org](http://nursingcertification.org).