
Who is Participating in Alabama's Nursing Registered Apprenticeship and Why It Matters

September 2026 | Julie Kornegay



Executive Summary

Demographic Snapshot of Combined LPN and RN Registered Apprenticeship Pathways, 2022 - 2025

Alabama's Nursing Registered Apprenticeship Program launched in May 2022 with 20 registered apprentices and grew to 1,038 by April 2025. This brief examines who participated during the program's first three years and what those patterns show about participation in nursing education and workforce pathways. The analysis includes 873 Registered Nurse (RN) apprentices and 165 Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) apprentices.

Participation spans multiple age groups and demographic backgrounds. Overall, 53.2% of apprentices entered at age 25 or older, while 46.8% entered between ages 18 and 24. These combined figures, however, mask substantial differences by pathway. RN participation is nearly evenly divided between younger and adult learners, while 77% of LPN apprentices entered at age 25 or older. Racial composition also differs substantially between the RN and LPN pathways.

These findings show that Alabama's nursing apprenticeship is engaging participants across different age groups and that the RN and LPN pathways have distinct demographic profiles. Both younger and adult apprentices are represented in the program, while examining the RN and LPN pathways separately reveals substantial differences in age and racial composition. This demographic profile establishes a baseline for examining whether participation patterns are also reflected in retention, progression, credential completion, and other program outcomes.

AT A GLANCE

 **1,038** registered apprentices across combined RN and LPN pathways

 **873** RN apprentices
165 LPN apprentices

 **87.2%** female
9.1% male
3.8% not reported

 **65.8%** White
25.1% Black or African American

 **53.2%** age 25 or older
46.8% age 18 to 24

 **77%** of LPN apprentices are age 25 or older



Why These Findings Matter

Multiple entry points can broaden the potential nursing labor pool.

The program is engaging both younger apprentices and adults, connecting more than one age group to nursing education and employment.

RN and LPN pathways should be examined separately.

The pathways differ substantially in size, age profile, and racial composition. Combined averages can hide important differences.

Representation matters for workforce planning.

Black or African American apprentices represent 25.1% of participants overall, with substantially different representation across the RN and LPN pathways. These patterns establish an important baseline for understanding which populations each pathway is reaching.

Source: Administrative records from RAPIDS, May 2022 to April 2025

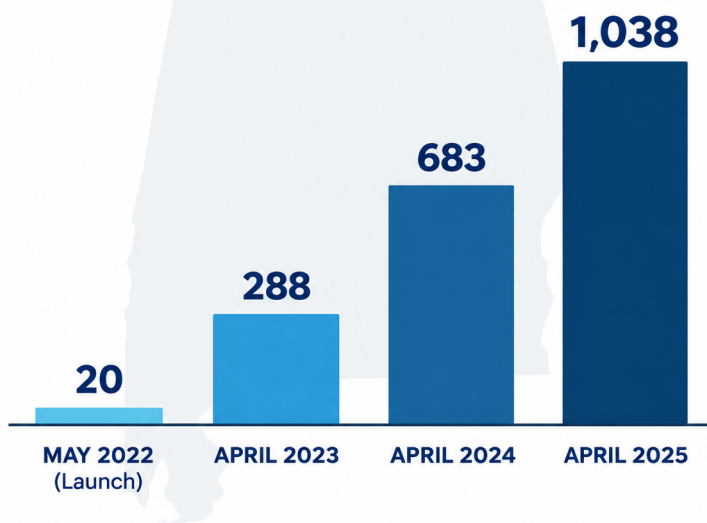
Program Context

From Pilot to Scale

Alabama's Nursing Registered Apprenticeship Program launched in May 2022 with 20 registered apprentices. By April 2025, participation had grown to 1,038 apprentices across RN and LPN pathways, 21 participating higher education institutions, and a broader statewide network of more than 70 healthcare employers. This expansion across apprentices, education partners, and healthcare employers provides important context for the participation patterns examined in the pages that follow.

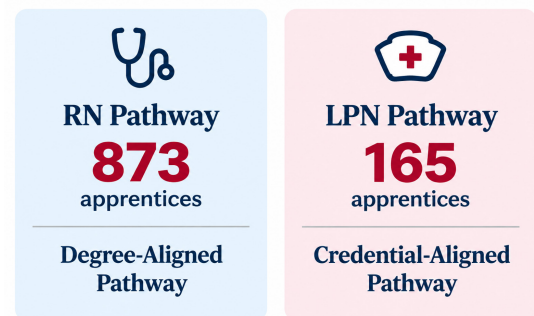
PROGRAM GROWTH

Registered Apprentices in Alabama,
May 2022 – April 2025



TWO PATHWAYS, ONE PROGRAM

Alabama's Nursing Registered Apprenticeship includes Registered Nurse (RN) and Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) pathways, connecting apprentices to nursing education and employment through two distinct occupational pathways.



Understanding the LPN count: In some nursing programs, practical nursing preparation occurs as part of progression through a longer RN pathway. Separate LPN registrations therefore do not necessarily represent every apprentice receiving practical nursing preparation.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY



Source. Administrative records from the U.S. Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS), May 2022 through April 2025.



Analytic population. Each registered apprentice is represented once in the dataset. RN and LPN participants are combined for overall demographic analyses and examined separately when pathway differences are important to interpretation.

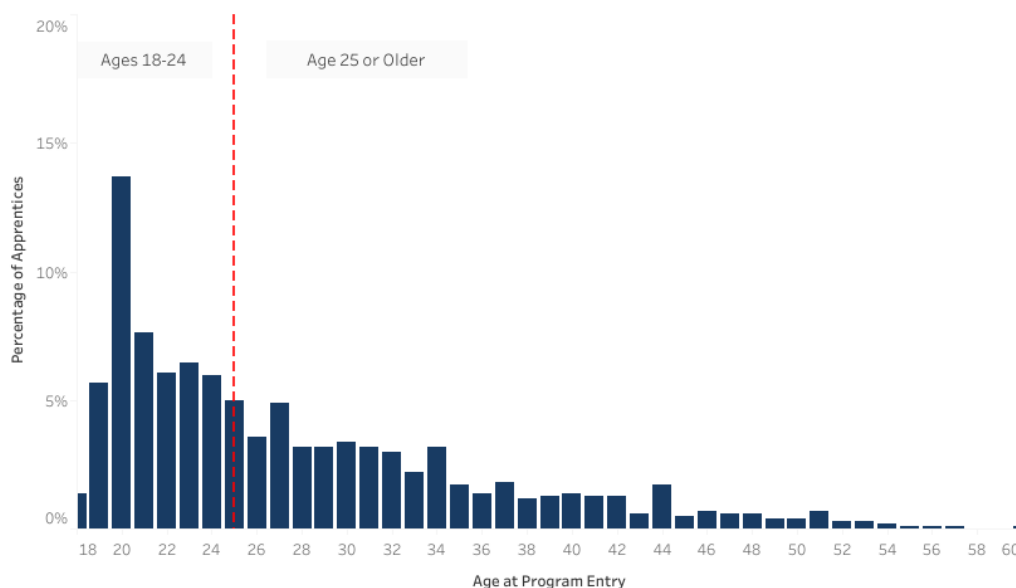


Approach. The analysis is quantitative and descriptive. Findings establish a baseline of program participation and do not assess access, causal relationships, or program effectiveness.

AGE AT PROGRAM ENTRY

Alabama's Nursing Registered Apprenticeship includes participants across a broad age range, with apprentices entering the program between ages 18 and 60. Apprentices entered the program between ages 18 and 60. Overall, 46.8% entered between ages 18 and 24, while 53.2% entered at age 25 or older. These combined figures, however, mask substantial differences between the RN and LPN pathways.

COMBINED AGE DISTRIBUTION: RN AND LPN APPRENTICES (N = 1,038)



RN PATHWAYS

873 apprentices
Age range: 18 to 57
Mean age: 27
Median age: 24
Mode age: 20
51.3% ages 18 to 24
48.7% age 25+

LPN PATHWAYS

165 apprentices
Age range: 18 to 60
Mean age: 32
Median age: 30
Mode age: 22
23% ages 18 to 24
77% age 25+

WHAT THE PATHWAY AGE PROFILES SHOW

RN and LPN apprenticeships have distinctly different age profiles. RN participation is nearly evenly divided between apprentices ages 18 to 24 and those age 25 or older, while 77% of LPN apprentices entered at age 25 or older. At the younger end of the distribution, 73 apprentices entered the apprenticeship at ages 18 and 19. These apprentices had already met the admission requirements for their nursing programs, including completion of the required general education coursework.

Reaching this point at such a young age suggests that some students may have completed required classes through dual enrollment or other advanced coursework while still in high school. The available data do not identify the specific educational route taken by each apprentice.



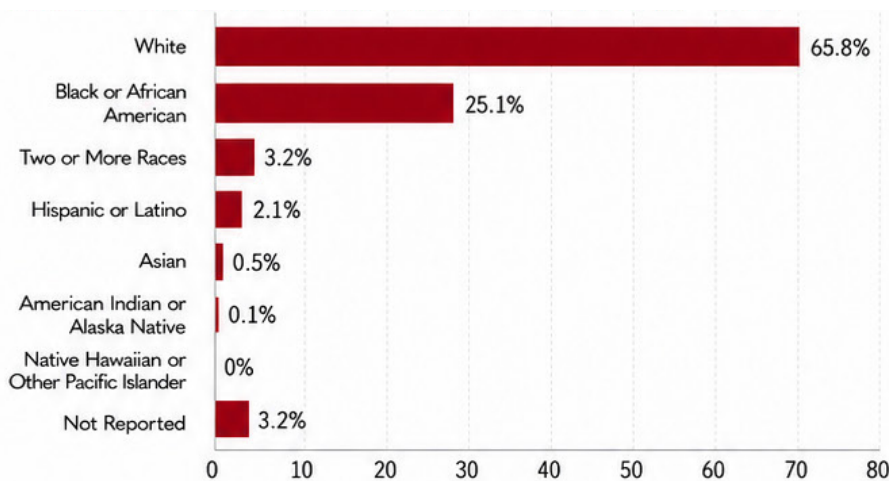
Why It Matters

The age distribution shows that nursing apprenticeship is connecting more than one age group to nursing education and employment. Younger participation demonstrates the potential for earlier entry into the nursing workforce, while substantial participation among adults shows that apprenticeship is also engaging workers beyond the traditional college age population.

RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER PARTICIPATION

Race, ethnicity, and gender add another dimension to understanding who Alabama's nursing apprenticeship is engaging. Overall, 65.8% of registered apprentices are White and 25.1% are Black or African American. Racial composition differs substantially between the RN and LPN pathways, while gender composition remains comparatively similar across both.

RACE AND ETHNICITY (ALL REGISTERED APPRENTICES, N = 1,038)



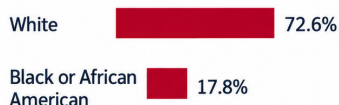
WHAT THE PATHWAY DIFFERENCES SHOW

The racial composition of the RN and LPN pathways differs substantially. Black or African American apprentices comprise 64.2% of LPN participants compared with 17.8% of RN participants, while White apprentices comprise 72.6% of the RN pathway and 29.7% of the LPN pathway. These data describe the differences but do not identify why they occur.

RN AND LPN PATHWAY COMPARISON



RN PATHWAY (N = 873)



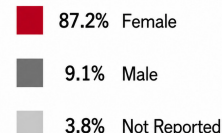
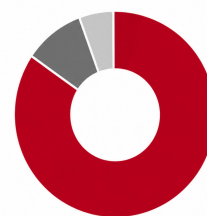
LPN PATHWAY (N = 165)



The RN pathway enrolls a higher proportion of White apprentices (72.6%) compared with the LPN pathway (29.7%). The LPN pathway also has a higher proportion of Black or African American apprentices (64.2%) compared with the RN pathway (17.8%).

Note. The pathway comparison highlights the two largest racial groups. Other race and ethnicity categories are not shown because subgroup counts were small.

GENDER COMPOSITION



Overall, 87.2% of apprentices are female and 9.1% are male. Nursing apprenticeship remains predominantly female, suggesting that lower male participation may represent additional potential labor supply.



Why It Matters

The RN and LPN pathways are engaging demographically different participant populations. Examining the pathways separately shows how each may connect different segments of the potential labor pool to nursing education and employment, while gender patterns point to continued underrepresentation of men.

WHAT PARTICIPATION PATTERNS MEAN

The demographic findings establish who is participating and show that potential nursing labor supply is not drawn from a single age group or demographic population. These patterns provide a foundation for examining whether differences in participation are also reflected in retention, progression, and completion as the model continues to grow.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Multiple entry points can broaden the potential labor pool.

RN and LPN pathways connect younger and adult participants to nursing education and employment. Expanding participation alone does not increase licensed nursing supply, but early evidence from one pilot institution suggests apprenticeship may also help programs accommodate more students within existing instructional resources. The January 2027 higher education brief will examine whether similar patterns are emerging across participating institutions.

Pathway differences matter for workforce planning.

The RN and LPN pathways differ substantially in size, age profile, and racial composition. Examining them separately provides a clearer picture of the different populations being connected to nursing education and employment.

Representation provides an important workforce baseline.

Black or African American apprentices account for 25.1% of participants overall, with substantially different representation across the RN and LPN pathways. These patterns show that the two pathways are engaging different demographic populations, although the data do not explain why those differences occur.



LOOKING AHEAD

The next analysis moves from who participates to who remains in the program. It examines the characteristics of apprentices who are retained and identifies patterns associated with continued participation, providing a clearer picture of persistence across Alabama's nursing registered apprenticeship.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Do the demographic patterns reflect who applies or who ultimately participates?

The findings describe registered apprentices in RAPIDS, not the full applicant pool. They tell us who entered the program, not who expressed interest or applied.

2. How should differences between RN and LPN participants be interpreted?

RN and LPN pathways operate within different educational and employment contexts and prepare participants for different nursing roles. Differences in age, race and ethnicity, or other characteristics should not automatically be interpreted as differences in access.

3. Does higher representation of certain demographic groups indicate targeted recruitment or self-selection?

No conclusion can be drawn from these data about why particular groups are more highly represented. The findings describe participation patterns, not recruitment intent or the reasons individuals chose apprenticeship.

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The Apprenticeship series examines how education, employers, and workforce systems can create stronger pathways into careers. It considers apprenticeship's role in addressing labor-market challenges, expanding opportunity in rural communities, and improving alignment between education and workforce demand.

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