

Report on the Academy/Commission on Dietetic Registration 2016 Needs Satisfaction Survey



AS IT HAS APPROXIMATELY every 4 years since 1999–2000, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy), in conjunction with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR), undertook a comprehensive assessment of the needs of those involved in nutrition/dietetics in 2016, and ways CDR and the Academy can best serve them: members or not, students as well as practitioners.^{1–4}

The 2016 *Needs Satisfaction Survey* highlights a growing profession, a shift in the membership offerings that professionals are finding of value, and a positive assessment of the Academy's efforts to communicate in ways that change with the times. At the same time, professionals remain concerned about aspects of the profession itself and want to see the Academy's efforts to address those concerns become even more effective.

METHOD

The study was conducted for the Academy and CDR by Readex Research of Stillwater, MN, an independent research company with broad experience in both qualitative and quantitative research for the nutrition and dietetics profession.

The 2016 assessment instrument was designed collaboratively by staff of the Academy and CDR. Sampling, data collection, analysis, and reporting were all handled by Readex Research.

Data were collected via online survey between July 28 and August 15, 2016. A stratified probability sample of 40,000 was invited to participate. The number

of usable responses received was 4,305, for an 11% response rate. If random nonresponse is assumed, the margin of error for most major subgroups analyzed is $\pm 5\%$ or less.

POPULATION OVERVIEW

Using a stratified sampling approach, the 2016 *Needs Satisfaction Survey* represents most (though not all) segments of the US population professionally involved with nutrition/dietetics:

- All RDNs (registered dietitian nutritionists and registered dietitians), whether currently Academy members or not.
- All NDTRs (nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered and dietetic technicians, registered), whether currently Academy members or not.
- Uncredentialed Persons (UPs), both Academy members and not. This segment includes currently nonregistered Academy Active and Retired category members, most of whom hold

advanced degrees in specified food/nutrition and nutrition/dietetics-related concentrations, or bachelor's degrees with didactics program in dietetics completion. It also includes currently nonregistered nonmembers who have at some point been eligible to take the RDN and/or NDTR exam, and may or may not have been registered at one time; this group also primarily comprises those with the educational attainment noted. Excluded from the survey are those nonregistered nonmembers initially eligible for registration before 2007, a group of over 45,000 believed to have long since left the profession.

- Students, which includes current *nonregistered* Student members of the Academy, plus nonregistered Student members whose memberships lapsed in the last 2 years. (A few in the Academy's Student member category achieved registration just prior to this research, and were sampled as part of

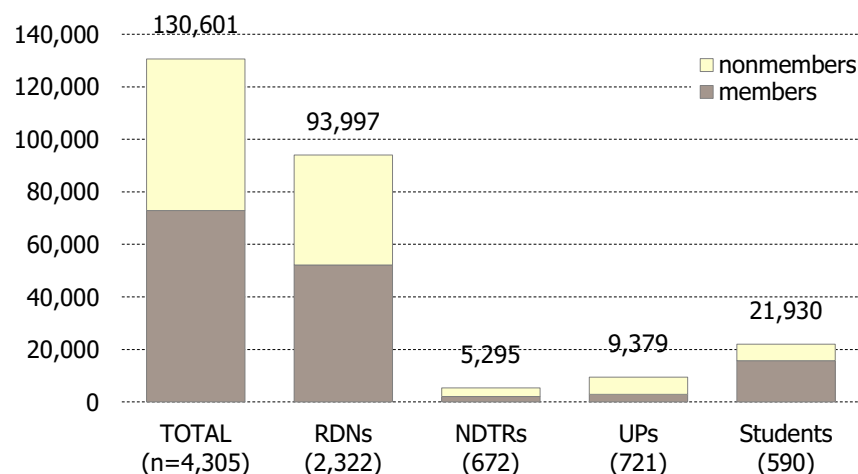


Figure 1. Population and sample sizes by Academy membership for RDNs (registered dietitian nutritionists and registered dietitians), NDTRs (nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered and dietetic technicians, registered), Uncredentialed Persons (UPs), and Students surveyed for 2016 *Needs Satisfaction Survey*.

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Table. Selected demographics of students and professionals surveyed for 2016 Needs Satisfaction Survey

	Academy Student members	Student non-members	Academy professional members	Professional non-members
Population	15,684	6,246	57,142	51,529
% Female	91	88	95	93
Mean age (y)	29.0	31.8	46.9	44.4
% 55+	2	3	38	26
% <35	80	70	29	29
% White	69	61	85	77
% Hispanic or Latino	12	10	4	7
% Black or African American	7	9	2	4
% Asian	8	9	4	7
% Other	3	8	2	2
% No answer	1	5	2	3

the RDN or NDTR cohorts, rather than as Students.)

Taken as a whole, the projected population represented by the 4,305 survey respondents is 130,601: 93,997 RDNs, 5,295 NDTRs, 9,379 UPs, and 21,930 Students (Figure 1).

Since the last needs survey in 2012, the total number of RDNs is up more than 12,000, or about 16%; the number of NDTRs, after years of decline, increased by about 1,200. There are about 1,400 more UPs than in 2012, and over 5,000 more Students (with the inclusion of recently lapsed Student

members). The number of current Student members represented is about 900 less than in 2012.

Population Demographics

Students are seen to be somewhat more diverse than the professionals they aspire to become. There has been little change since 2012 in the proportions who are female. Mean age is down a bit for professional members, but up for nonmembers. Proportions of professionals who are white are similar to 2012, and also substantially higher than for Students (Table).

RESULTS

The bulk of this summary focuses on the population of RDNs, segmented by years since registration into “novices” (less than 5 years) and “veterans” (5 years or more), plus students, the large majority of whom are working toward registration as RDNs. Together they account for nearly 110,000 individuals in the profession. About one in seven of this group (14%) are students, and 15% are novices; the remaining 71% are veterans (Figure 2).

Demographics

Ninety-four percent of RDNs are female, and 84% are white. Median age for Academy member RDNs is 47 years, compared with 44 years for nonmembers. Overall, 45% of RDNs reported holding an advanced nutrition/dietetics-related degree, with more members than nonmembers reporting that accomplishment (50% vs 40%, respectively).

Employment Status

Nearly four in five RDNs (78%) reported they are currently working in a nutrition/dietetics-related position, changed very little since 2004. Ninety percent of novice RDNs currently work in the field. Of the balance, 7% of RDNs are working in some other area, 4% raising a family, 7% retired, and 3% something else (Figure 3).

Twenty-seven percent of RDNs currently working in the field said they spend at least 20% of their time in an acute-care inpatient setting, with other clinical settings (acute/outpatient, ambulatory outpatient, long-term/extended care) also frequently named. Involvement in acute/inpatient settings is even higher for novice RDNs.

Fourteen percent of working RDNs spend at least 20% of their time in community/public health settings, 9% in government agencies, 6% in nonprofit agencies, 12% in private practice, and 9% in college/university faculty settings (Figure 4).

Exactly half of working RDNs name clinical (inpatient, outpatient, or long-term care) as their primary practice area.

As noted, 78% of RDNs are currently working in the field, and another 14% expect to work in the field at some point in the future. That leaves an estimated 7,500 RDNs who say they are retired or otherwise permanently out of the

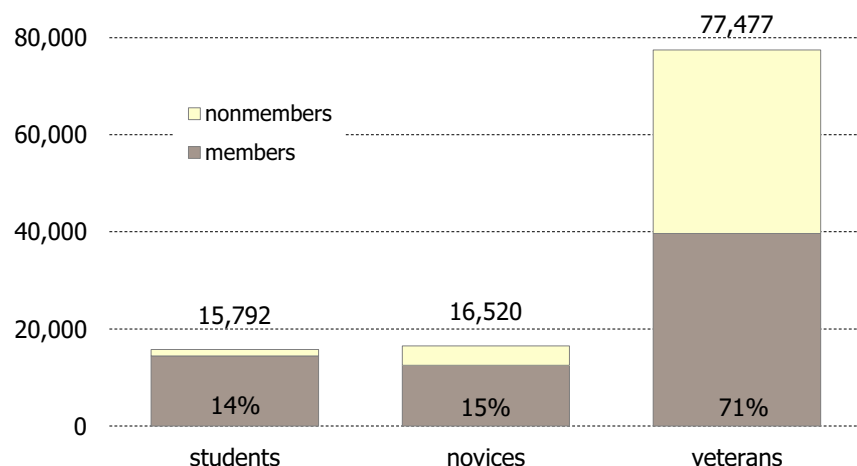


Figure 2. Career stage of Students and RDNs (registered dietitian nutritionists and registered dietitians) surveyed for 2016 Needs Satisfaction Survey.

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