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## WHY MORE MEN ARE BECOMING NURSES

*There's more demand, yes, but as more men have finished high school, more have moved into nursing, a new paper finds*

By Sharon Nunn  
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More men are joining the nursing field than have in previous decades.

Men made up about 13 percent of the nursing field in 2015, up from just 2.2 percent in 1960, according to a new study by economics professors Elizabeth Munnich and Abigail Wozniak.

More high school-educated men and the increased demand for nurses as the U.S. expands its medical facilities has largely driven the trend.

"What positively moved men into nursing over time is the rising demand for health-care workers overall, but we also find a sizeable role for educational attainment," Ms. Wozniak said.

In previous decades, areas of the country that saw rising numbers of male nurses also saw rising numbers of men graduating from high school. In essence, when more men have a high-school degree, which is often a requirement for nursing certification and college degree programs, more men have the ability to join the nursing field, and they have.

The simultaneous expansion of health-care offerings nationwide, by way of new services in established medical facilities and new medical facilities in areas that previously lacked access, has helped drive demand for more nurses over the years. And an aging and ailing population requires more nurses, too.

"As baby boomers are aging, they're needing more health-care services. They are now the Medicare population. [And] on average, people across all ages have more chronic conditions, like kidney disease, diabetes, conditions that require more healthcare," Ms. Munnich said.

Changing views on men and women's responsibilities at home and in their careers has also contributed to the rising number of men in nursing.

"As broad perspectives on gender roles become more similar, and more nontraditional roles become more accepted, more men have joined the nursing field," Ms. Munnich said.

The growth of men in the female-dominated nursing field has not been similar in other female-dominated industries. In the previous three decades, the share of men who said they were a primary or secondary school teacher decreased, while the growth of men in other female-dominated fields has been sluggish. This shows there are likely other factors playing into men's decision to go into nursing.

Indeed, Ms. Munnich and Ms. Wozniak said, their study only accounts for 50 percent of the rising share of men in the RN occupation.