



# Crash Course: Collision of Graduate Degree Requirement and RDN Staffing

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# Learning Objectives

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- Describe how the implementation of the graduate degree requirement for entry-level RDN practice will impact supply and demand of RDNs in the workforce.
- Recognize and support occasions to encourage enrollment and create opportunities for the future of the profession in both traditional and evolving dietetics educational pathways.
- Understand current and emerging recruitment and retention strategies to manage staffing challenges.

# Performance Indicators

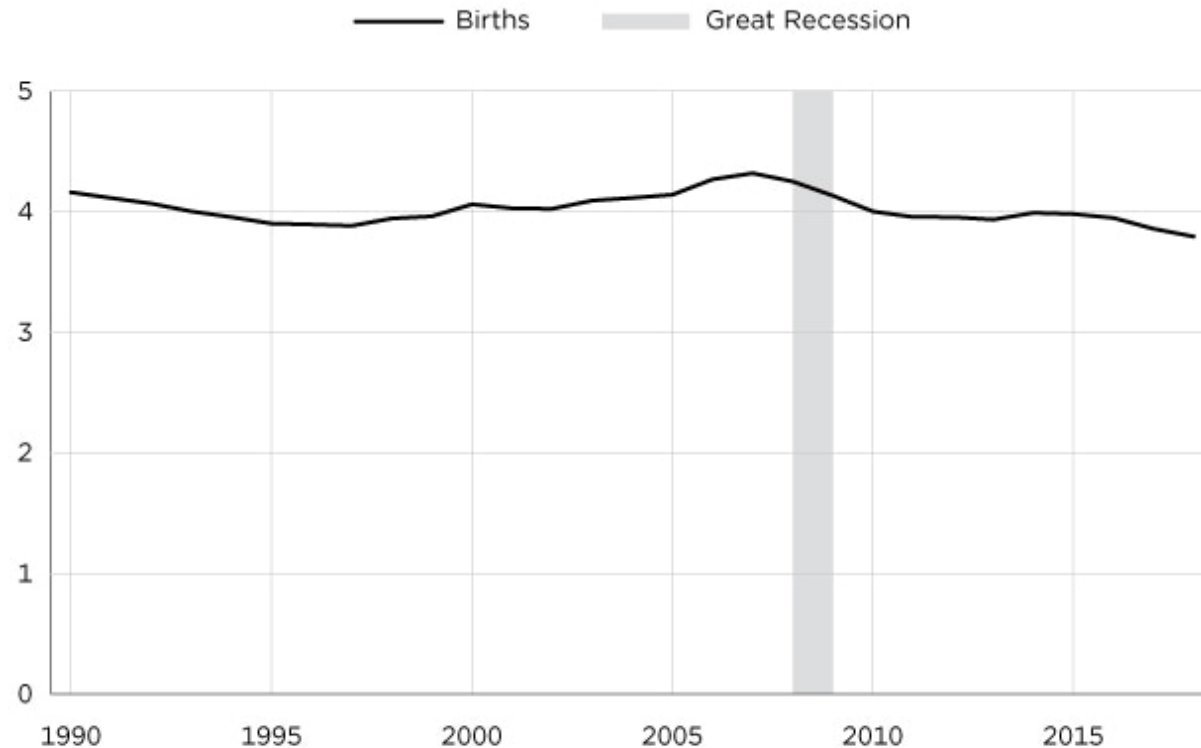
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- 3.2. Advocates for and participates in activities that support advancement of the profession.
  - (3.2.8 Challenges, encourages and supports others to take action to advance the profession.)
- 7.1 Identifies, analyzes and manages risks, adverse events, and safety to self, staff, clients and public.
- 14.4. Coordinates human resource activities, adhering to labor agreements, organizational policies and applicable legislation.

# US College Enrollment Status and Outlook

# U.S. Births – 1990-2019

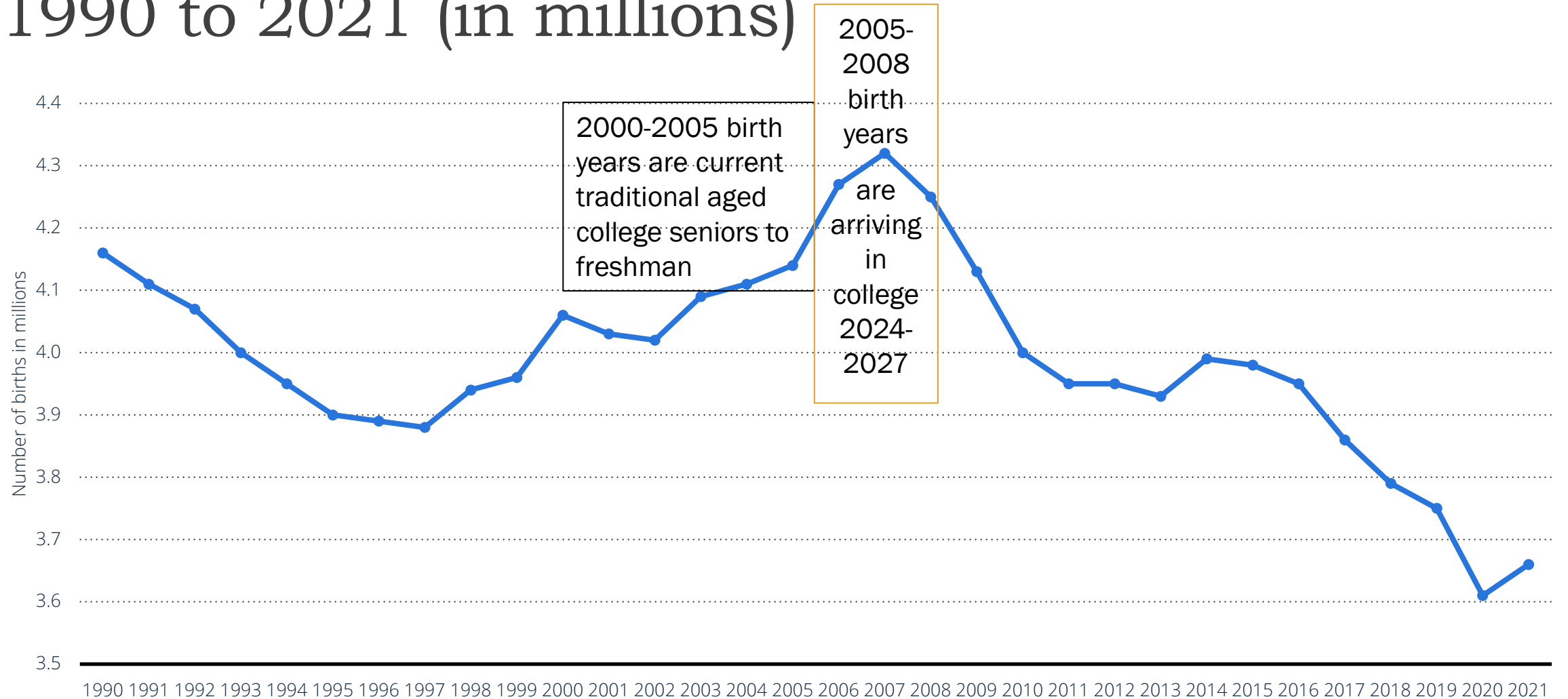
Figure 1.  
**Total U.S. Births: 1990-2019**  
(In millions)



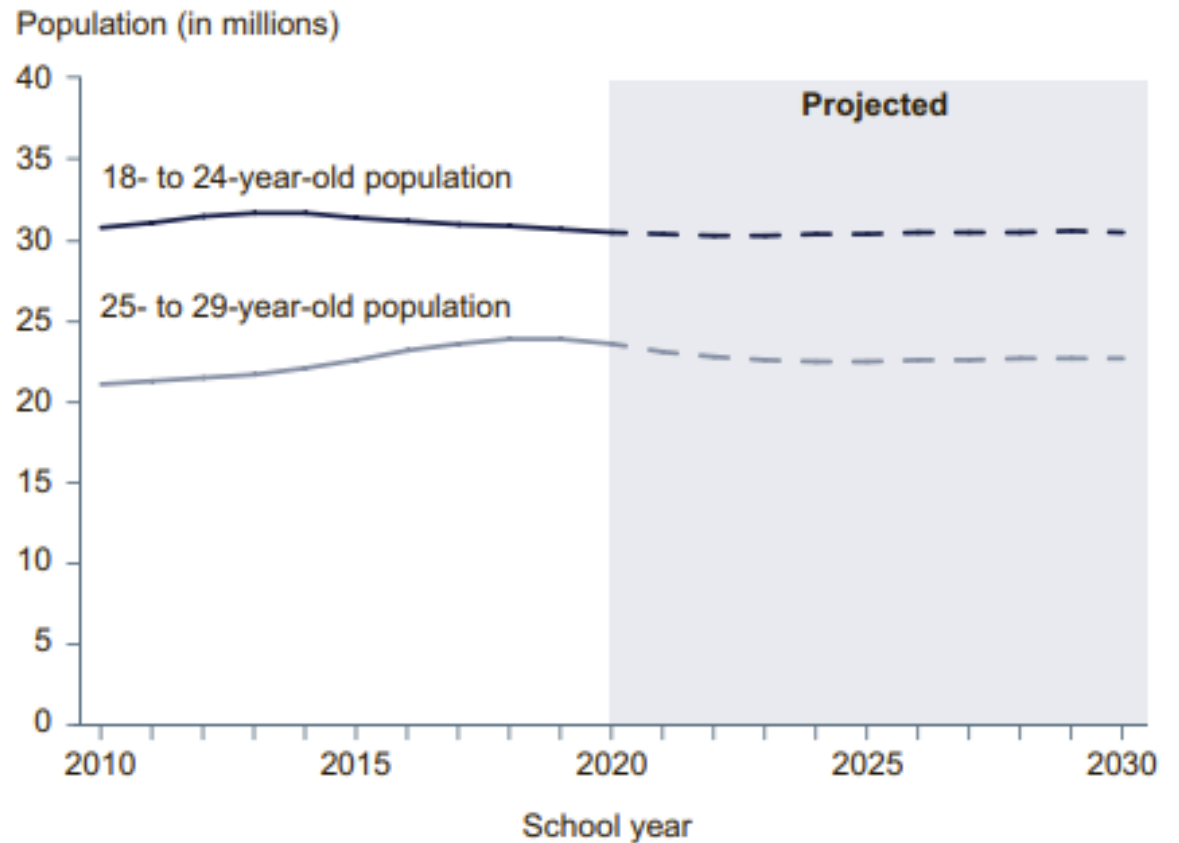
Source: National Center for Health Statistics; National Bureau of Economic Research.

Annual births in the United States declined from about 4.1 million to 3.7 million from 1990 to 2019

# Number of births in the United States from 1990 to 2021 (in millions)



# Projections on Population Numbers

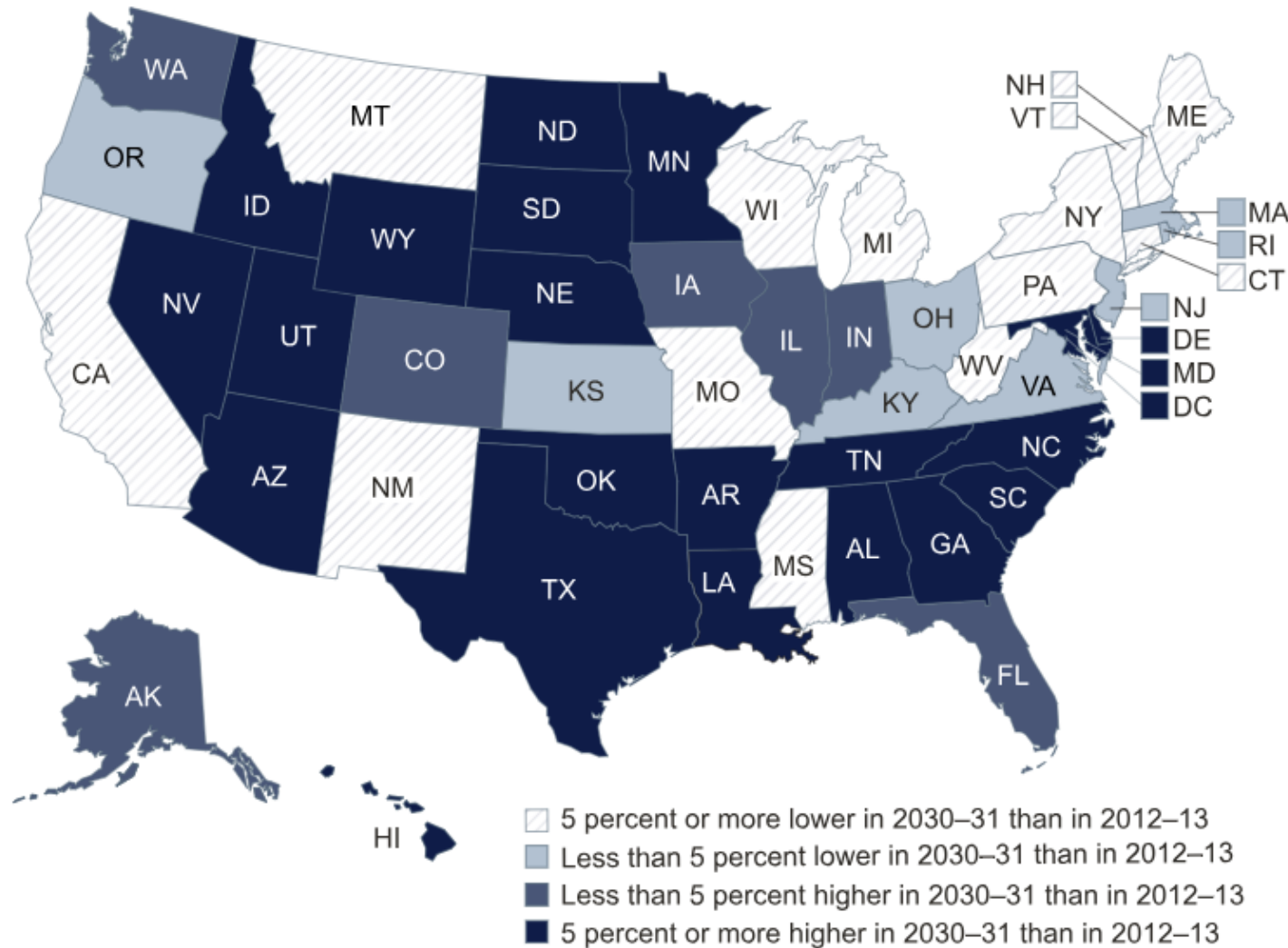


NOTE: Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Historical population data are from the U.S. Census Bureau and are estimates of the population on July 1 of the given year. National population projections are S&P Global forecasts produced in May 2021 with a cohort component model like that used by the Census Bureau. The model incorporates assumptions about fertility rates, survival rates, and net international migration from the 2020 Census Bureau projections, which were modified to take into account the demographic shocks of the previous three years.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, resident population by single year of age and sex retrieved from National Population by Characteristics: 2010–2020 (census.gov) and U.S. resident population retrieved from 2020 Census Apportionment Results; and S&P Global Inc. Population service, May 2021 release (history through 2020 and forecasts through 2030). (This table was prepared April 2022.)

Irwin, V., Bailey, T.M., Panditharatna, R., and Sadeghi, A. (2024). Projections of Education Statistics to 2030 (NCES 2024-034). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved March 3, 2024 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024034>.

# Projected percentage change in the number of public high school graduates, by state: School years 2012–13 and 2030–31



National High School graduates are projected to increase from 2012-2013 to 2030-2031:

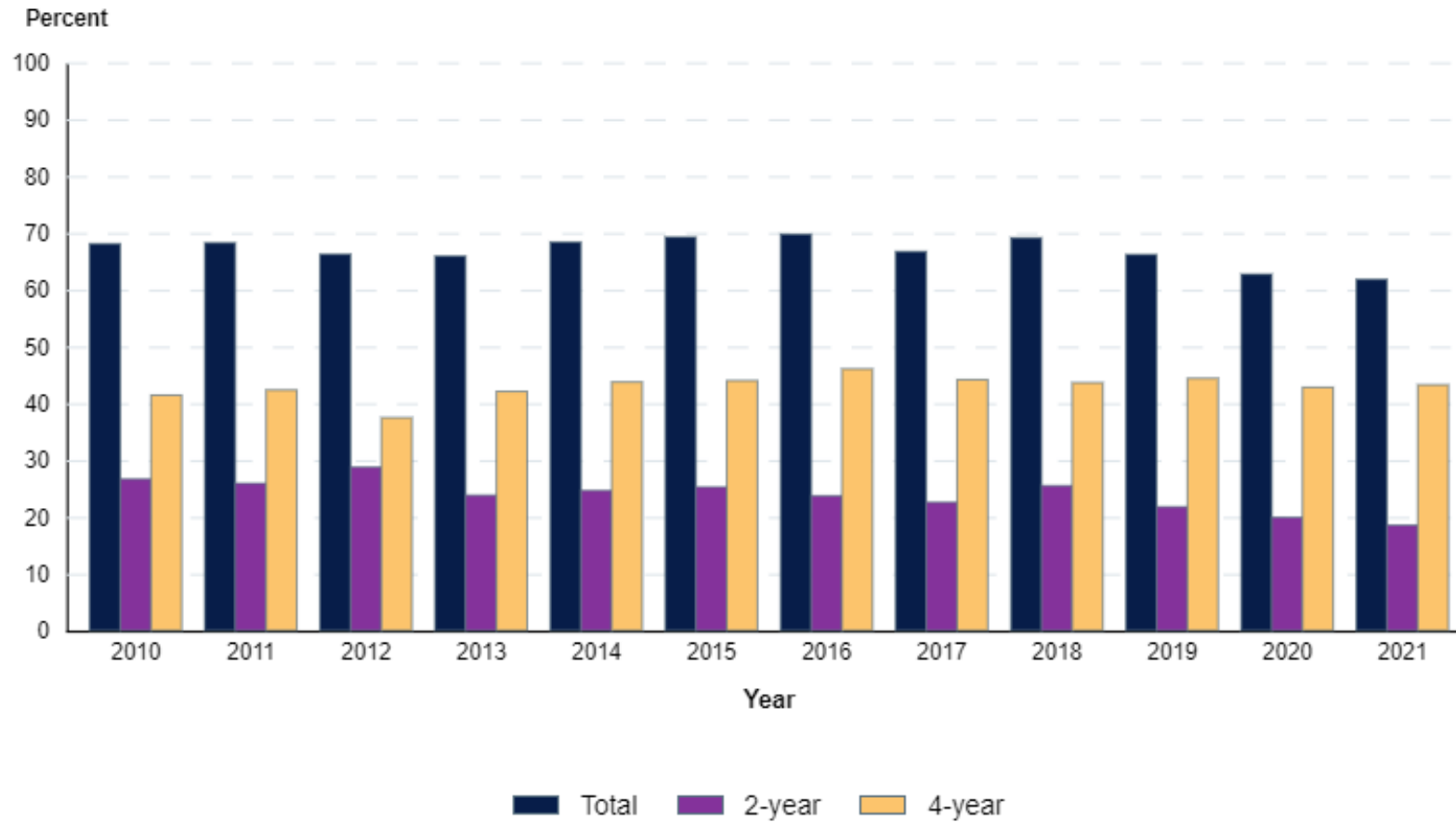
- Higher for 28 states & DC
- Lower for 22 states

NOTE: Data include regular diploma recipients, but exclude students receiving a certificate of attendance and persons receiving high school equivalency certificates. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Includes graduates of regular day school programs. Calculations are based on unrounded numbers. Mean absolute percentage errors of public high school graduates by state and region can be found in [table A-14, appendix A](#). SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Dropout and Completion Data File," 2012–13; and State Public High School Graduates Projection Model, through 2030–31. (This figure was prepared March 2022.)

Irwin, V., Bailey, T.M., Panditharatna, R., and Sadeghi, A. (2024). Projections of Education Statistics to 2030 (NCES 2024-034). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved March 3, 2024 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2024034>



Figure 1. Immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers, by level of institution: 2010 through 2021

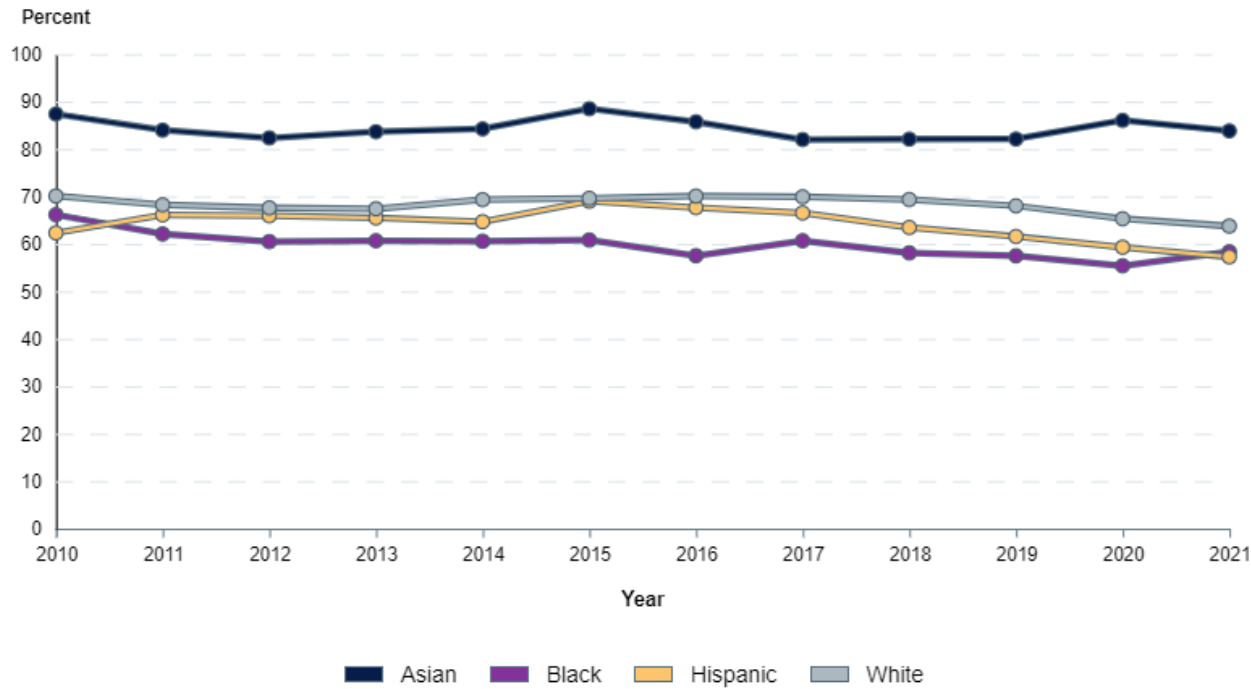


NOTE: *Immediate college enrollment rate* is defined as the annual percentage of high school completers who are enrolled in 2- or 4-year institutions in the October immediately following high school completion. High school completers include 18- to 24-year-olds who graduated with a high school diploma as well as those who completed a GED or other high school equivalency credential.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 302.10.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Immediate College Enrollment Rate. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved March 2, 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpa>.

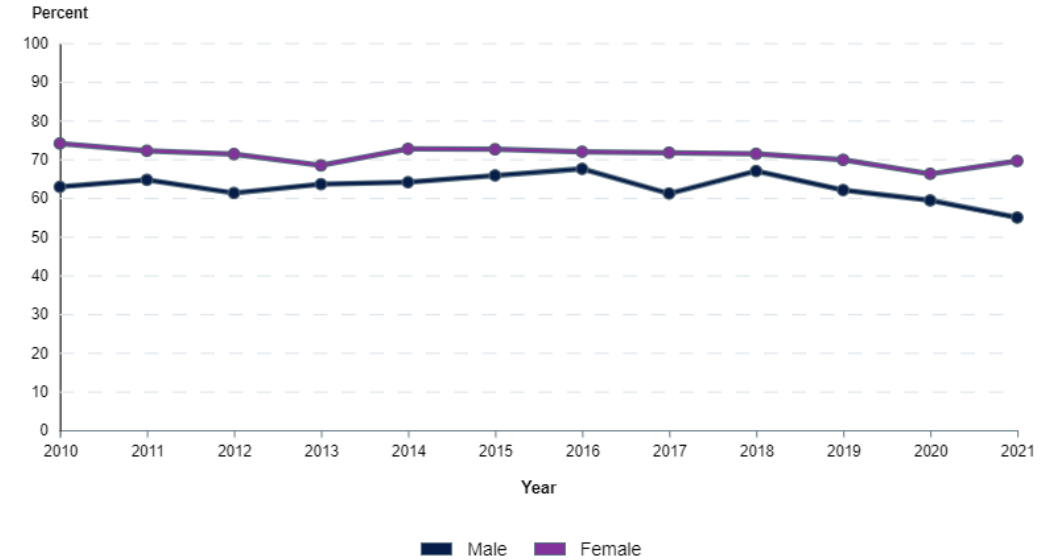
**Figure 3. Immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers, using 3-year moving averages, by race/ethnicity: 2010 through 2021**



NOTE: *Immediate college enrollment rate* is defined as the annual percentage of high school completers who are enrolled in 2- or 4-year institutions in the October immediately following high school completion. High school completers include 16- to 24-year-olds who graduated with a high school diploma as well as those who completed a GED or other high school equivalency credential. Due to some short-term data fluctuations associated with small sample sizes, percentages for racial/ethnic groups shown were calculated based on 3-year moving averages, with the following exception: the percentages for 2021 were calculated based on a 2-year moving average (an average of 2020 and 2021). A 3-year moving average is a weighted average of the year indicated, the year immediately preceding, and the year immediately following. Other racial/ethnic groups are not shown separately. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 302.20.

**Figure 2. Immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers, by sex: 2010 through 2021**



NOTE: *Immediate college enrollment rate* is defined as the annual percentage of high school completers who are enrolled in 2- or 4-year institutions in the October immediately following high school completion. High school completers include 16- to 24-year-olds who graduated with a high school diploma as well as those who completed a GED or other high school equivalency credential.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 302.10.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Immediate College Enrollment Rate. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved March 2, 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpa>.

# NCE Undergraduate Enrollment Stats

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Between fall 2010 and fall 2021:

## Enrollment **decreased for:**

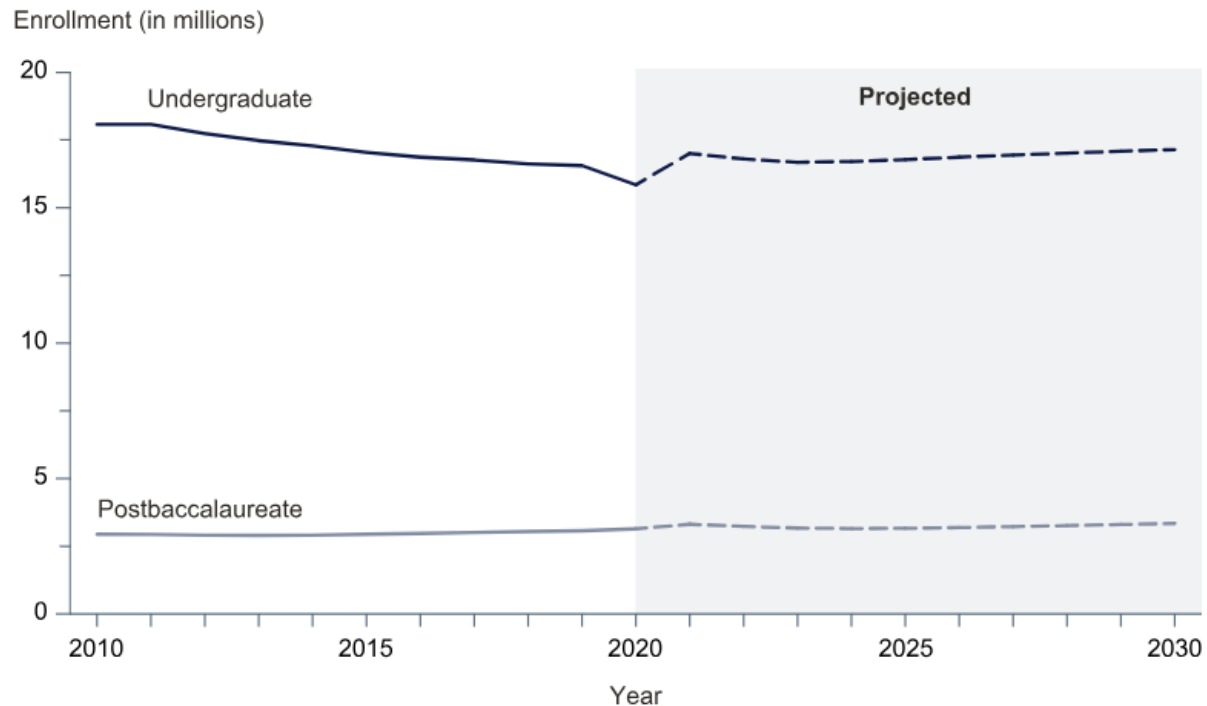
- American Indian/Alaska Native students (by 40 percent, from 179,100 to 107,000 students);
- Pacific Islander students (by 29 percent, from 57,500 to 41,000 students);
- White students (by 28 percent, from 10.9 million to 7.8 million students); and
- Black students (by 27 percent, from 2.7 million to 1.9 million students).

## Enrollment **increased for:**

- Two or more races (by 126 percent, from 293,700 to 663,100 students);
- Hispanic students (by 30 percent, from 2.6 million to 3.3 million students); and
- Asian students (by 7 percent, from 1.0 million to 1.1 million students).

# Projections on enrollment

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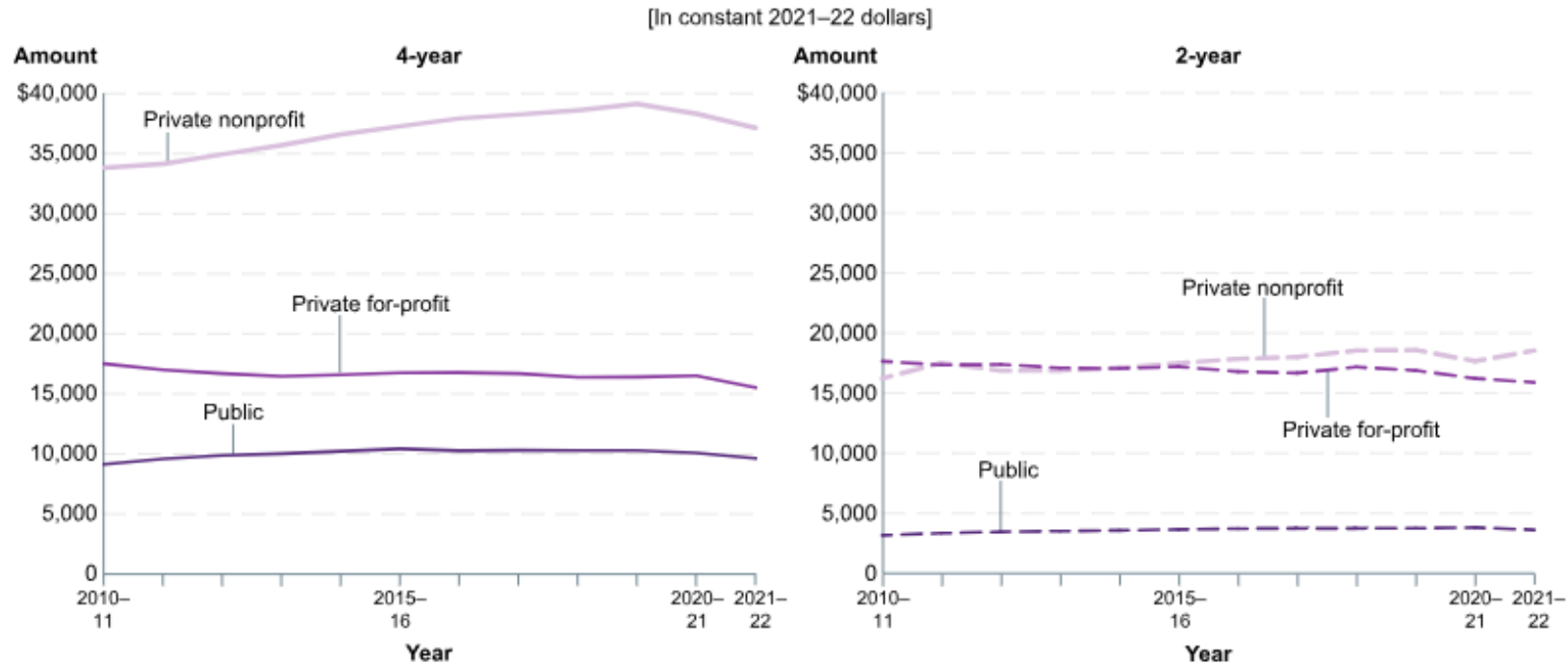
NOTE: Data represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Actual data for Fall 2020 were not included in projection models. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, through 2030. (This figure was prepared March 2022.)

## Undergraduate:

- Decreased 12% btw 2010-2020
- Projected to increase 8% btw 2020-2030
- Total change expected = 1 million
  - 18.1 million to 17.1 million

# Undergraduate Tuition and Fees

Figure 1. Average annual undergraduate tuition and fees for full-time students at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution: Academic years 2010–11 through 2021–22



NOTE: Data represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. For public institutions, in-district tuition and required fees are used. Tuition and fees are weighted by the number of full-time-equivalent undergraduates. Constant dollars are based on the Consumer Price Index, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, adjusted to an academic-year basis. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component, and Fall 2010 through Fall 2021, Institutional Characteristics component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 330.10.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved March 2, 2024 from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/tub>

RDN  
Professional  
Landscape  
Status and  
Outlook

# RDN Occupational Outlook

## Employment projections data for dietitians and nutritionists, 2022-32

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2022	Projected Employment, 2032	Change, 2022-32	
				Percent	Numeric
Dietitians and nutritionists	29-1031	78,600	83,800	7	5,200

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

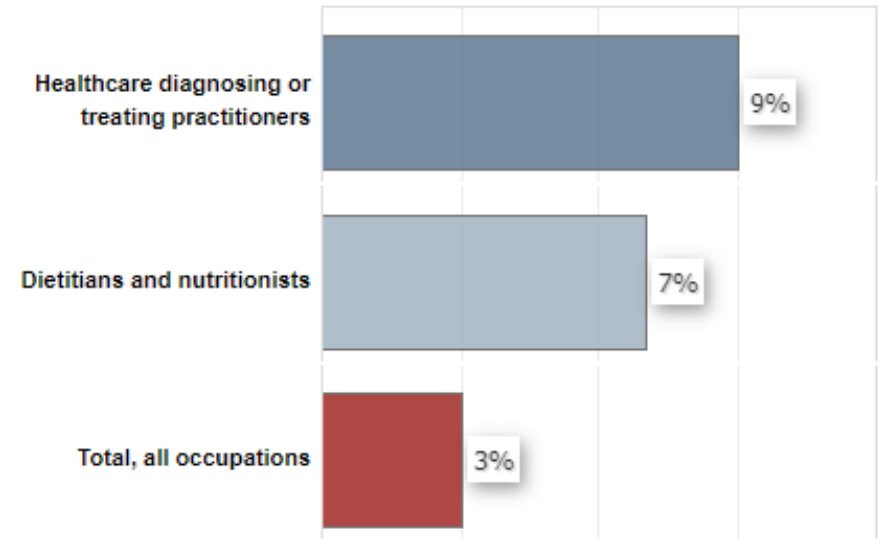
### [National Employment Matrix](#)

29-1031 Dietitians and nutritionists

Employment by industry, occupation, and percent distribution, 2022 and projected 2032.

## Dietitians and Nutritionists

Percent change in employment, projected 2022-32

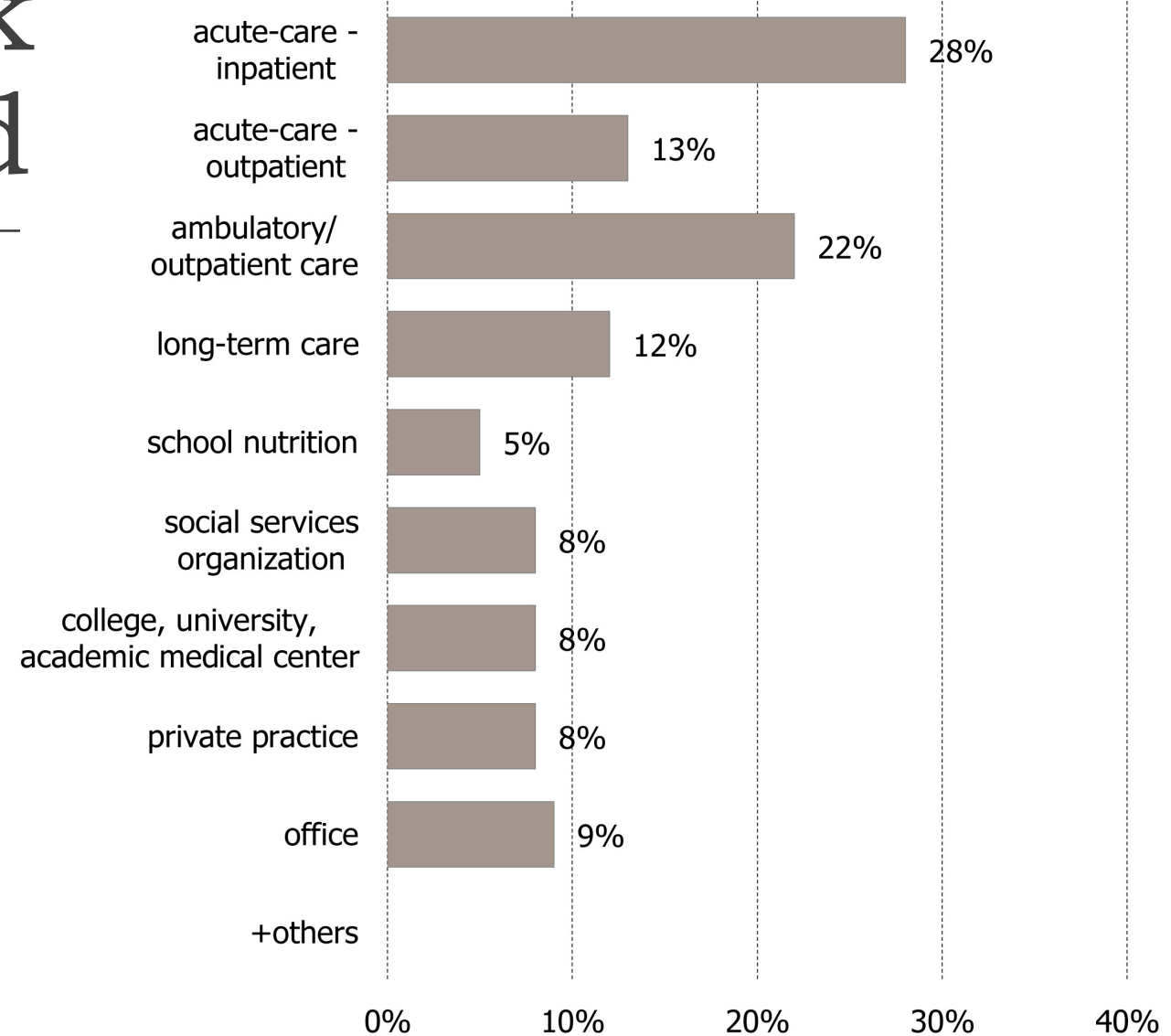


Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

# RDN Primary Work settings in the field

Report spending 20% or more of worktime-  
multiple answers selected





# RDN Profession Status

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“~5,600 openings for dietitians and nutritionists are projected each year, on average, from 2022-2032”

- Retirements
- Career Changers
- Pause from the workforce
- New positions/opportunities

# Industry Profile for Dietitians and Nutritionist

Industries with the highest levels of employment in Dietitians and Nutritionists:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
<a href="#">General Medical and Surgical Hospitals</a>	18,370	0.33	\$ 33.83	\$ 70,360
<a href="#">Outpatient Care Centers</a>	6,690	0.65	\$ 36.70	\$ 76,330
<a href="#">Offices of Other Health Practitioners</a>	6,160	0.58	\$ 32.05	\$ 66,660
<a href="#">Special Food Services</a>	5,330	0.84	\$ 32.54	\$ 67,690
<a href="#">Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)</a>	5,000	0.37	\$ 31.63	\$ 65,790

Top paying industries for Dietitians and Nutritionists:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
<a href="#">Computer Systems Design and Related Services</a>	(8)	(8)	\$ 40.15	\$ 83,510
<a href="#">Home Health Care Services</a>	940	0.06	\$ 39.83	\$ 82,850
<a href="#">Scientific Research and Development Services</a>	140	0.02	\$ 39.65	\$ 82,470
<a href="#">Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods (4242 and 4246 only)</a>	70	0.02	\$ 39.03	\$ 81,180
<a href="#">Federal Executive Branch (OEWS Designation)</a>	2,580	0.12	\$ 39.00	\$ 81,120

# Newly Credentialed RDs by Year

# Newly Credentialed RDs by Year

Commission on Dietetic  
Registration (CDR). Newly  
Credentialed RDs by Year (2012-  
2023).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2012</b>	3438
<b>2013</b>	3948
<b>2014</b>	4104
<b>2015</b>	4217
<b>2016</b>	4575
<b>2017</b>	4005
<b>2018</b>	4545
<b>2019</b>	4478
<b>2020</b>	4466
<b>2021</b>	4237
<b>2022</b>	4637
<b>2023</b>	4462

**Registered Dietitian: Registration Examination for Dietitians  
First Exam Attempt - Summary by Registration Eligibility Pathway  
January - June, 2023**

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**All ACEND Programs**

**Coordinated Program**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	256	156	<b>60.9%</b>

**Dietetic Internship**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	1,359	880	<b>64.8%</b>

**Graduate Program**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	184	143	<b>77.7%</b>

**Total (CP, DI & GP)**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,799</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>65.53%</b>

Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). Registration Examination for Dietitians First Exam Attempt –Summary by Registration Eligibility Pathway. Accessed August 23, 2023. <https://www.cdrnet.org/vault/2459/web//Examinees%20with%20One%20Year%20from%20First%20Attempt%20Period%20Ending>

**Registered Dietitian: Registration Examination for Dietitians**  
**First Exam Attempt - Summary by Registration Eligibility Pathway**  
July - December 2023

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**All ACEND Programs**

**Coordinated Program**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	486	292	<b>60.1%</b>

**Dietetic Internship**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2,061	1,291	<b>62.6%</b>

**Graduate Program**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	26	20	<b>76.9%</b>

**Total (CP, DI & GP)**

	Total Tests	Passed	Percent Passed
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,573</b>	<b>1,603</b>	<b>62.3%</b>

Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). Registration Examination for Dietitians First Exam Attempt –Summary by Registration Eligibility Pathway. Accessed March 3, 2024.

Educational  
Pathways to  
become an  
RDN

# Graduate Degree Requirement

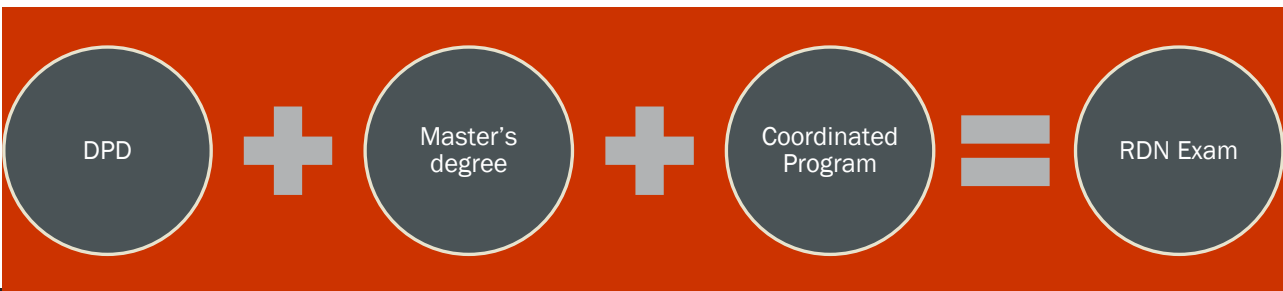
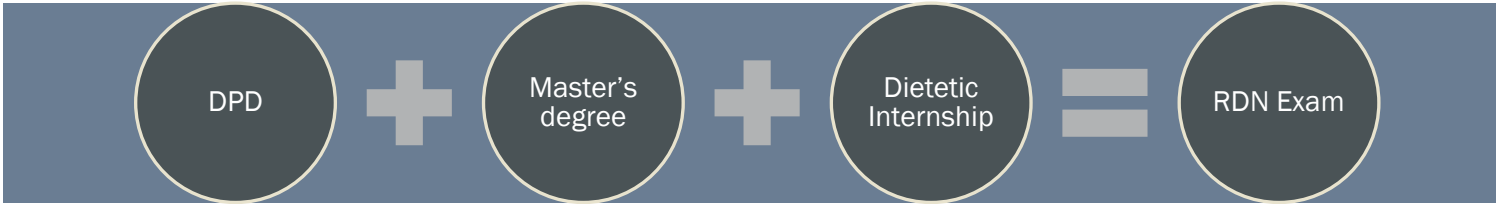
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## Beginning January 1, 2024:

- a graduate degree will be the minimum degree requirement for those seeking to become eligible for the registration examination for dietitians.
- The graduate degree does not need to be connected to an ACEND accredited program...it may be in any discipline.
- CDR voted to make the change in April 2013.
  - Rationale for degree change based on the 2012: Council on Future Practice Visioning Report.
- ACEND developed language for programs to post on websites regarding the graduate degree requirement and shared in the ACEND August 2019 Update.



# Bachelor's Prepared DPD Students- Paths to RDN

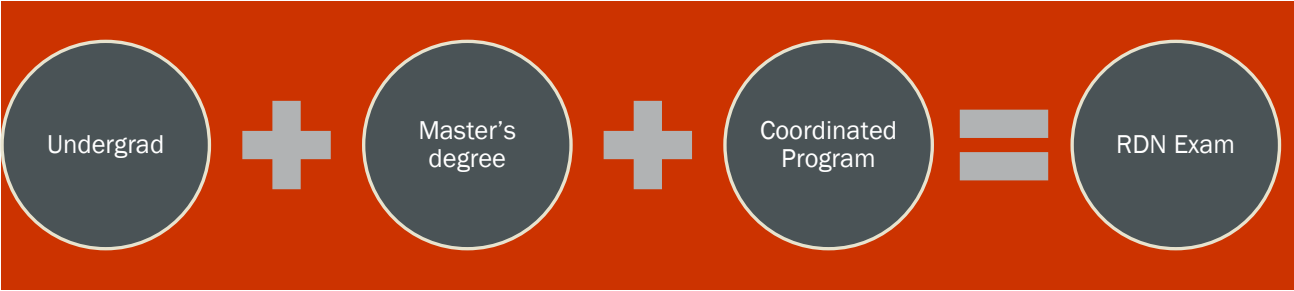


- DI= Dietetic Internship. Available as standalone, graduate credit options, or graduate degree options.
- CP= Coordinated program. Available as undergraduate or graduate. 2027 last year.
- GP= Graduate Program. Previously referred to as Future Education Model (FEM) or Future Graduate (FG) Program.

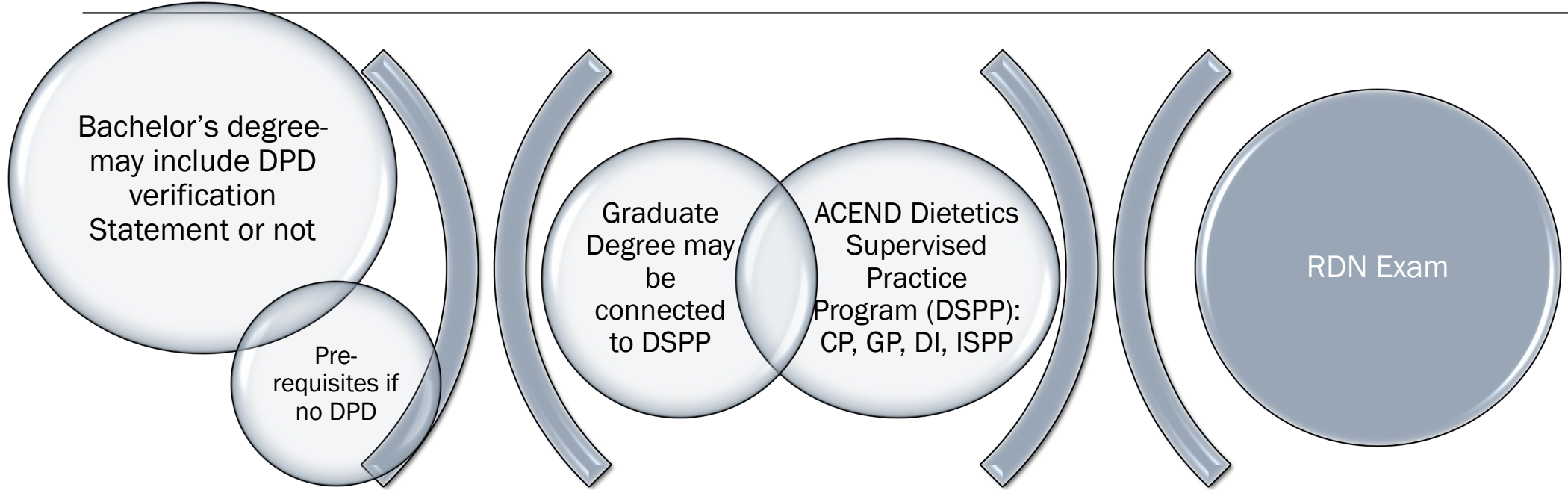
# Non-DPD Students- Paths to RDN; Dietetics Supervised Practice Program (DSPP)



- GP= Graduate Program. Previously referred to as Future Education Model (FEM) or Future Graduate (FG) Program.
- CP= Coordinated program. Available as undergraduate or graduate. 2027 final year.



# Educational Requirements for RDN exam



Undergraduate Program =  
3 to 5 years

Graduate Degree + Supervised  
Practice = 12 months to 2.5 years

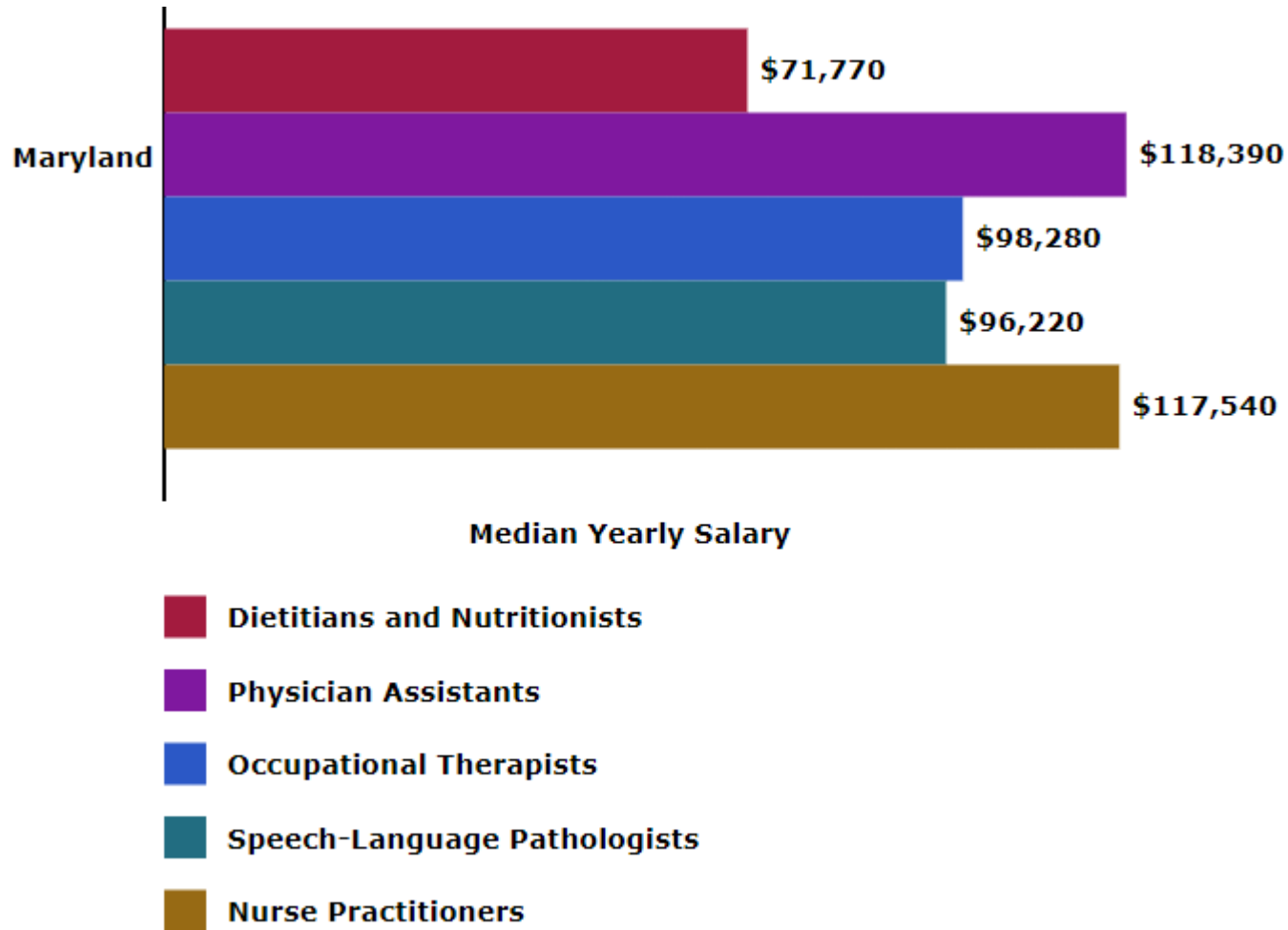
College Time to Exam =  
4.5 to 7.5 years

# Comparison of Master's prepared health professionals from Bureau of Labor Statistics

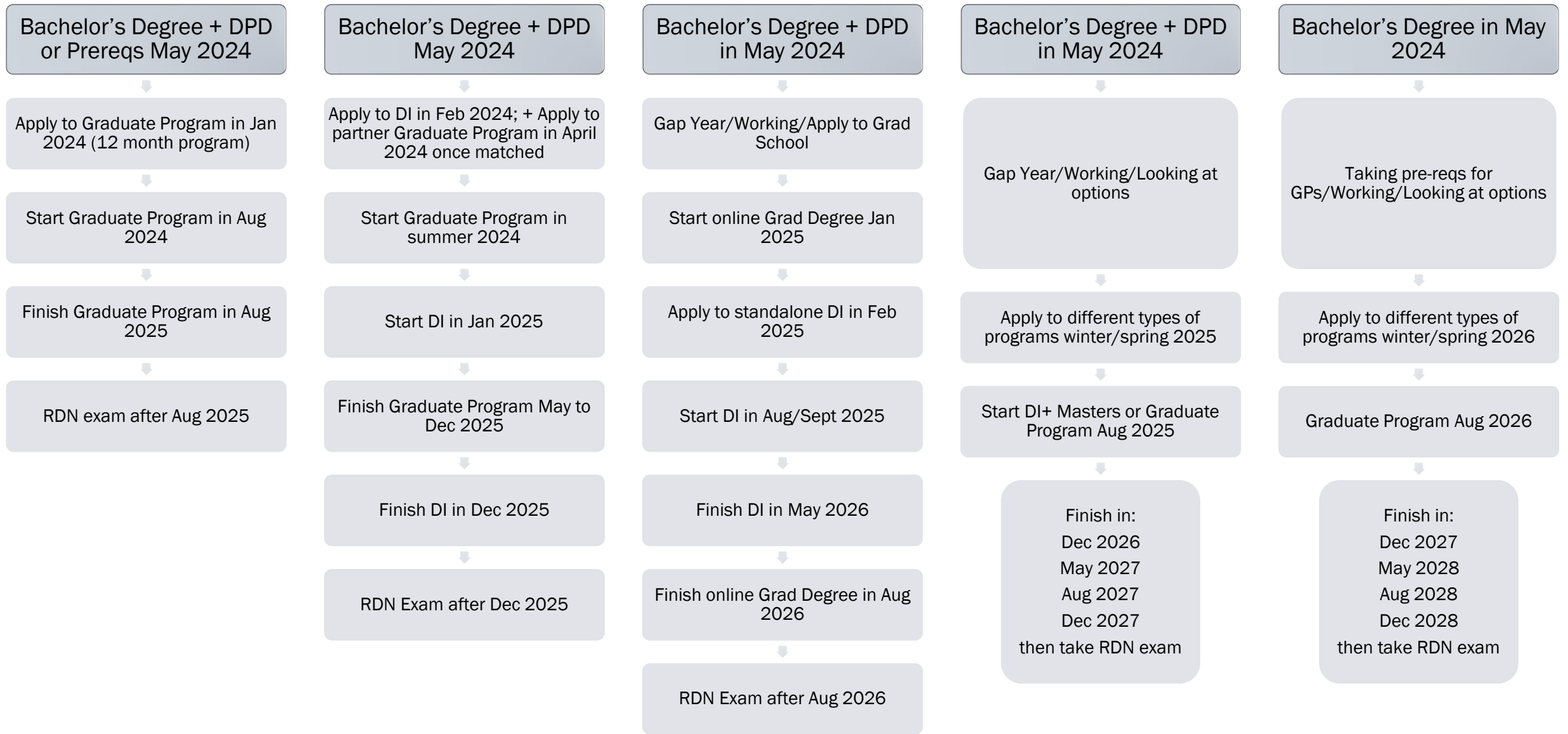
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Credential	Preparation	Annual Median Pay	# of Jobs 2022	Job Outlook 2022-2032
RDN	Master's	\$66,450	78,600	+7%
OT	Master's	\$93,180	139,600	+12%
PA	Master's	\$126,010	148,000	+27%
NP	Master's	\$125,900	323,900	+38%
SLP	Master's	\$84,140	171,400	+19%

# Comparison of Master's prepared health professionals from U.S. Department of Labor



# Example Timelines to RDN Exam Eligibility from Bachelor's Degree



# ACEND Number of Graduates by Program Type

ACEND DSPP Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Didactic Program (number of DPDs)	6,281 (n= 215)	5,574 (n= 213)	5,112 (n= 211)	4,988 (n= 214)	4,703 (n= 213)	4,248 (n= 210)	DPD grads ↓ 32.4% in 6 years
Dietetic Internship		3,796	3,741	3,443	3,472	3,209	
Coordinated Program		1,074	882	893	787	762	Will shift to GPs
Graduate Program (Future Model)		n/a	77	229	374	527	GPs will continue ↑
Total eligible for RDN exam (without ISPP or FDE)		4,870	4,700	4,565	4,633	4,498	RDN exam eligible ↓ 7.6% in 5 years

# ACEND **April DI** Match Numbers & Following Year DI Graduates

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
April Match Openings*	3609	3669	3667	3723	3736	3587	
April Match Applicants*	4724	4201	3848	3676	3482	1984	~1330
April Matched Candidates**	2940	2764	2713	2675	2575	1695	
DI Graduates		3,796	3,741	3,443	3,472	3,209	?

\*Number of openings, applicants and number of matched students includes preselects.

\*\*Percent matched includes preselect and first round matches but does not include positions filled after the match date.



# ACEND GP Enrollment & Graduates

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GP Enrollment			521	892	1235	1666	
GP Graduates			77	229	374	527	?
				44%	42%	42.7%	

# Bridging the Gap

# Direct Recruiting in High School

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- What high schools do you have connections with?
- Connect alumni from the high school via Regional Dietetics Affiliations
- STEM connections and opportunities in your places of work

# Direct Recruiting in High School

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- Career and Technical Education
  - Health and Medical Sciences courses and programs- guest speak
- Combination health profession activities: Annual Medical Conference
- Work within an AI impacted world

# Marketing to the Target Audience

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- Searchability of profession
- Social Media presence
- Flexibility- undergraduate degree options
  - Priorities
  - Incoming credits
  - Transfer credits
- Experiential Opportunities- summer opportunities at your facilities

# Advise on the profession correctly

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- Health Professions Advising (HPA) units and departments on colleges
  - Help future healthcare providers understand their options
  - RDN alumni and preceptors included in HPA events; confirm their understanding of educational pathways
- Academic Advisors
- Career Centers

# Program Partnerships

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- Biochemistry/Biology, Health Sciences, Psychology, Public Health, etc. majors.
- Research projects or other desirable experiences with other majors and departments.

# Empowering New Colleagues

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- RD Exam preparation
- Managing and Negotiating offers
- Expectations in the field
- Service to the profession
- Extreme Value of Preceptors



Retention  
and  
Recruiting  
in the  
Work Place

# Cost of Turnover

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- Advertising and Recruiting for positions
- Selection and Interviewing
  - Background checks and assessments
- Hiring Bonuses; Salary Negotiation
- Hidden costs
  - Productivity
  - Risk
  - Morale
  - Burnout

# Generational Differences

Term	Birth years	Current Ages	Possible Work Traits
Generation Z	1997 to 2010	14 to 27 ~5% of work force	Freedom, Values, Openness and Honesty, Collaboration, Autonomy, Flexibility, Development “the first global generation”
Generation Y (Millennials)	1981 to 1996	28 to 43 ~35% of work force	Personalization, Questioning, Morally responsible, Flexibility, Professional Growth & Development “work hard, play harder, but try to only work where you can see yourself play”
Generation X	1965 to 1980	44 to 59 ~33% of work force	Work-life balanced, Independent, Materialistic, Self-sufficient, Informality “work hard, play hard”
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964	60+ ~25% of work force	Work-centric, Independent, Goal-oriented, Competitive “workaholic”

# What RDNs Want

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- Flexibility
- Autonomy
- Responsiveness/attention
- Trust
- Recognition
- Empathy
- Opportunities for advancement and learning
- Positive relationships with others
- Supportive workplace culture

Meese KA, Colón-López A, Singh JA, Burkholder GA, Rogers DA. Healthcare is a Team Sport: Stress, Resilience, and Correlates of Well-Being Among Health System Employees in a Crisis. *J Healthc Manag.* 2021 Jul-Aug 01;66(4):304-322. doi: 10.1097/JHM-D-20-00288. PMID: 34228687; PMCID: PMC8274584.

Hewko, S., Oyeseun, A., Clow, S. et al. High turnover in clinical dietetics: a qualitative analysis. *BMC Health Serv Res* 21, 25 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-06008-5>

Blair M, Mitchell L, Palermo C, Gibson S. Trends, challenges, opportunities, and future needs of the dietetic workforce: a systematic scoping review. *Nutr Rev.* 2022 Apr 8;80(5):1027-1040. doi: 10.1093/nutrit/nuab071. PMID:34532738.

# Rules When Discussing Salary

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- Under the National Labor Relations Act:
  - Employees have the right to communicate with other employees at their workplace about their wages
  - Policies that prohibit the discussion of wages are unlawful
  - Also have the right not to engage in conversations or communications about your wages
- Anti-trust laws forbid:
  - Wage-fixing or no poaching agreements among employers
  - Sharing sensitive information with competitors if it could have an anticompetitive effect (i.e. could decrease compensation)

National Labor Relations Board: <https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/rights-we-protect/your-rights/your-rights-to-discuss-wages#:~:text=You%20also%20have%20the%20right,way%20for%20having%20that%20conversation.>

Antitrust Guidance for Human Resource Professionals, Department of Justice Antitrust Division, Federal Trade Commission, October 2016: <https://www.justice.gov/atr/file/903511/download>

# Pay Compression

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- Little difference between pay of employees regardless of experience, knowledge, skills, abilities.
- With shortages, starting salary may increase rapidly; what happens to current employee salaries?

# Recruitment Strategies

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- Purposeful networking
  - Earlier in career finding process
- Communication about what role has to offer
  - Tie in specifically what people are looking for
- Negotiation
  - Sign-on bonus
  - Relocation reimbursement
  - Internship fees waived/reimbursed

# Actions Beyond Compensation

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- Workload
- Autonomy
- Flexibility
- Culture



# Summary

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- National potential for enrollment in bachelor's programs is changing.
- Competition for the best future healthcare professionals is present.
- There will not be ~5,600 new RDNs in 2024 or 2025 to fill expected demand impacting preceptors, salary, retention, and recruitment efforts
- Need new efforts to sustain professional pipeline.
  - Partnerships with new programs, paid student opportunities, recruitment in high school, and positions post-bac are all potential avenues to create interest in RDN educational pathways to fill demand.

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