

# Systemic Racism in Nursing Education and Accreditation

*"Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." - W. Edwards Deming*

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## Abstract, Systemic Racism in Nursing Education and Accreditation

Nursing has repeatedly been called to action to diversify, as recently captured in the Future of Nursing 2020-2030 Report and the 2022 ANA Commission's Foundational Report on Racism in Nursing. However, the profession remains largely undiversified compared to the U.S. population. This presentation explores the role of upstream factors in nursing education regulation and accreditation, namely the reliance on First-Time Pass Rate (FTPR) as an outsized or even sole measure of educational quality, on the continual downstream lack of diversity in the profession.

These regulatory policies and accreditation standards have forced the downstream systems within nursing education to promote exceptionalism in admissions and pre-graduation 'wash-out', thus disproportionately precluding historically marginalized populations from entering the profession. For example, a white middle- or upper-class woman has approximately an 80% likelihood of passing NCLEX-RN® on the first attempt, while a lower socioeconomic black man has closer to only a 40% chance.

Incorporating thousands of data points across the U.S., this presentation will draw on the longitudinal study findings generated through the application of the Knowledge-to-Action Process Framework to the redesign of an educational delivery model. It will demonstrate that, in the absence of FTPR policies and standards, greater diversity is achievable through educational systems evolution and subsequent NCLEX-RN® attempts.

## The Nursing Workforce Does Not Mirror the Population it Serves

IOM, NASEM, and NAM issued the three-part series on the Future of Nursing 2011, 2016, 2021 with an increasingly urgent call-to-action to diversify nursing. As 2021 Box S-1 Achieving Health Equity Through Nursing: Desired Outcomes underscores, "Nurses [should] reflect the people and communities served throughout the nation, helping to ensure that individuals receive culturally competent, equitable health care services."\*

ANA issued a six-part Foundational Report on Racism in Nursing 2022, on how structural and systemic racism has obstructed educational and consequentially professional opportunities.\*

There has been little meaningful change to address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) in nursing education.

## NCLEX-RN® First-Time Pass Rate (FTPR) Public Policies and Accreditation Standards Create Systemic Barriers to the Diversification of the Nursing Profession

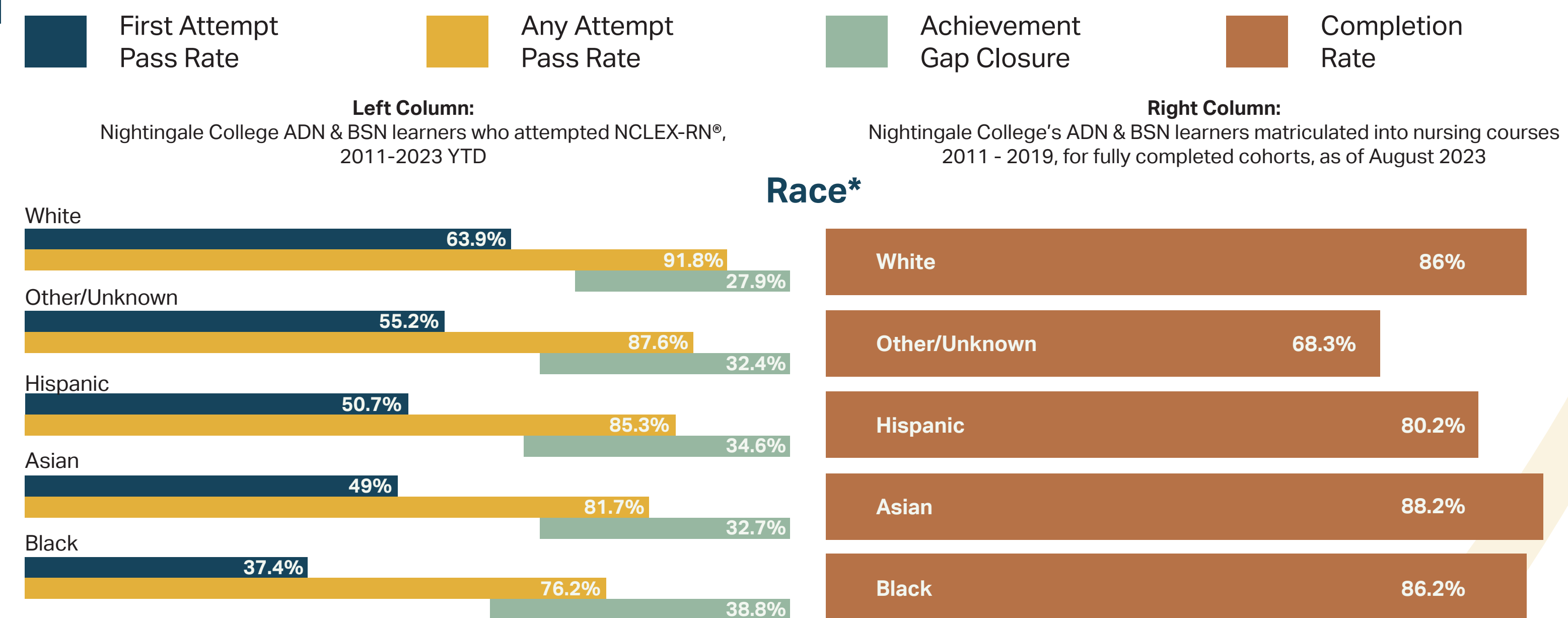
Using NCLEX-RN® FTPR as a sole or primary metric of educational quality drives elitist behaviors in the nursing educational system. Highly selective admissions policies which rely on academic achievement and standardized testing greatly limit the enrollment pool. Stringent wash-out policies lead to severe underutilization of existing educational capacity to graduate students capable of licensure. This stance favors a higher socioeconomic class that has the resources to prepare for this closed system approach.

Additionally, across the U.S., state NCLEX-RN® FTPR standards vary substantially in percentage and timeframe requirements as well as calculation methods. The variability of these metrics and methods illustrates the lack of validity for an NCLEX-RN® FTPR educational quality metric.\*

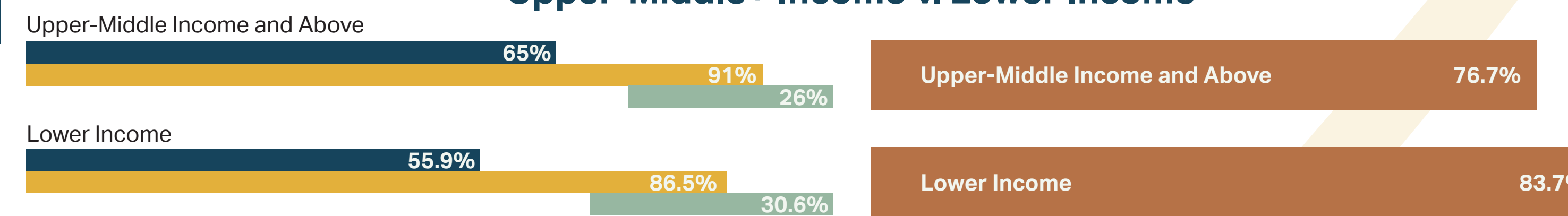
*"No evidence... that students who failed the NCLEX-RN® the first-time but passed on a subsequent attempt are less safe in practice than those who passed the first time." Taylor H., Loftin C., Reyes H.\**

*"To realize the committee's vision for nursing education, it will be necessary for nursing schools, accreditors, employers, and students to look beyond NCLEX® pass rates and include these [other] types of indicators in the assessment of a quality nursing education." National Academy of Medicine's Future of Nursing Report 2020-2030\**

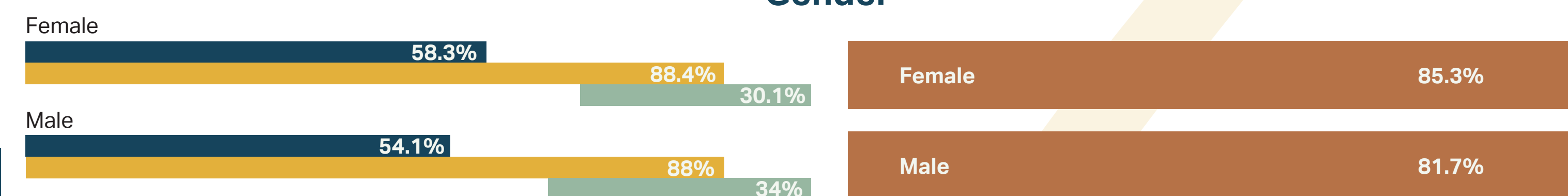
## NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates and Completion Rates



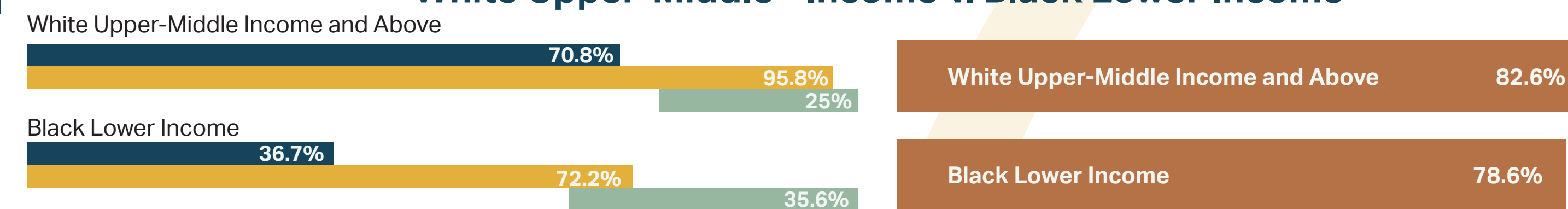
## Upper-Middle+ Income v. Lower Income\*



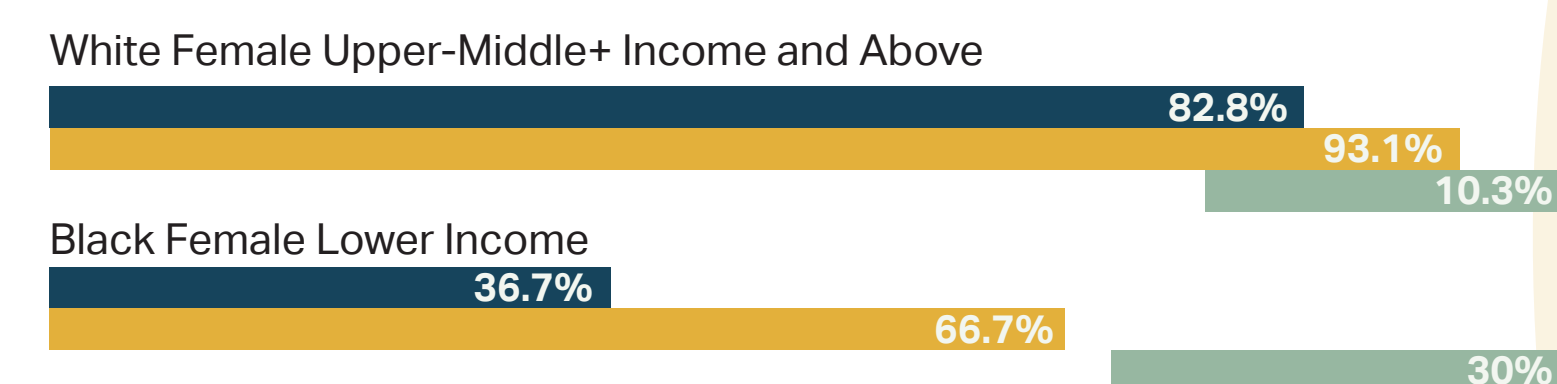
## Gender\*



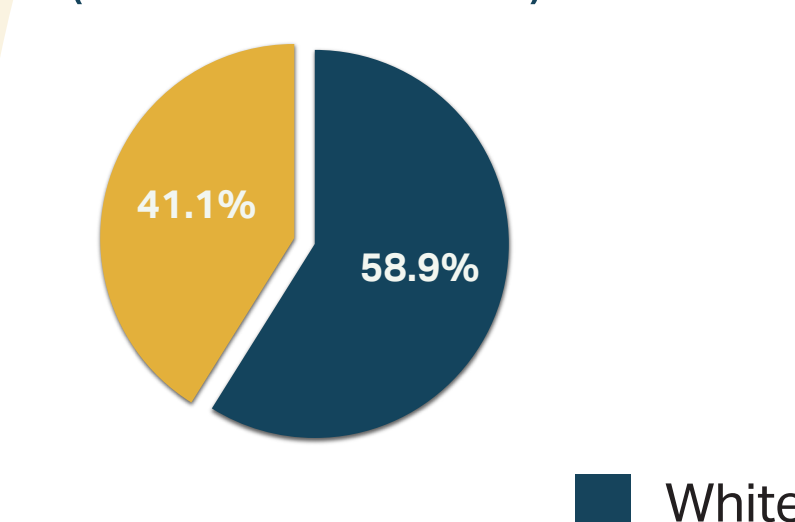
## White Upper-Middle+ Income v. Black Lower Income\*



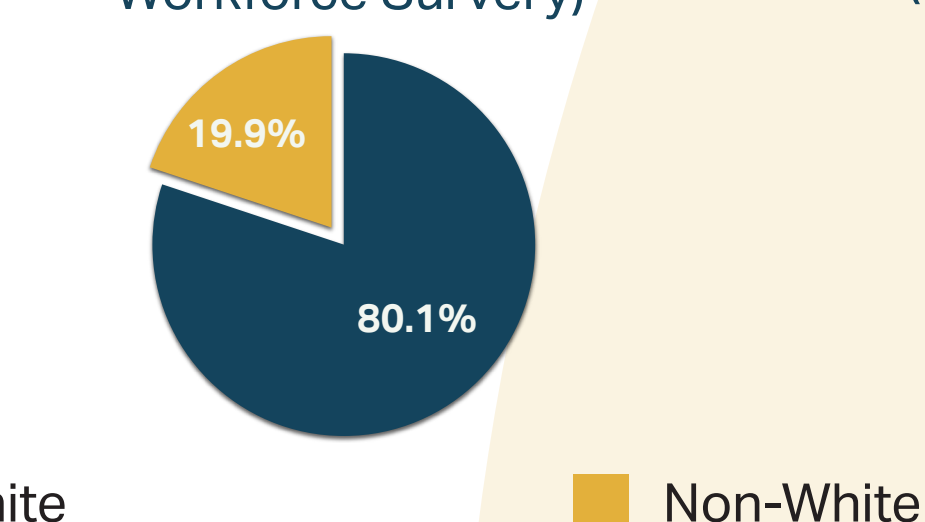
## Filtered by 900+ HESI Exit Exam Scores for White Female Upper-Middle+ Income & Black Female Lower Income\*



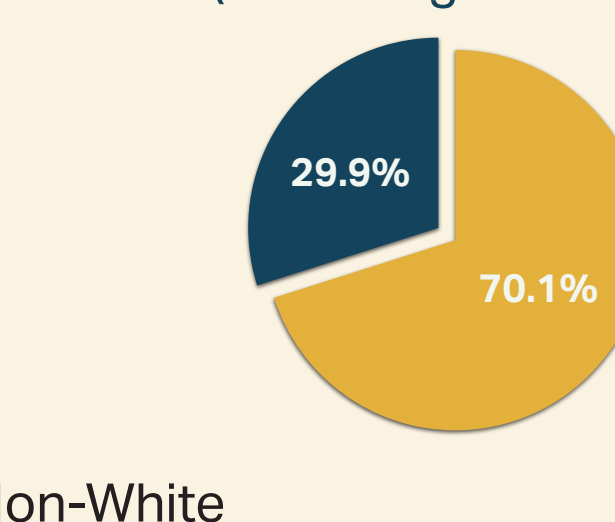
## US Population Racial Composition (2022 Census Data)



## RN Racial Composition (2022 National Nursing Workforce Survey)



## Nightingale College Learners Racial Composition (As of August 2023)



## Conclusions

The narrow focus on NCLEX-RN® FTPR policies perpetuates systemic barriers to diversity in the nursing profession and consequent lack of health equity.

Nursing programs can achieve high NCLEX-RN® FTPR by gerrymandering enrollment and graduating demographics.

Use of NCLEX-RN® FTPR to measure educational quality lacks scientific basis.

Upstream regulatory policy and accreditation standards changes are needed to produce DEI outcomes in nursing education and the nursing profession.

Eliminating NCLEX-RN® FTPR will increase the existing educational system's capacity to produce significantly more licensed nurses.

Thoughtful, individualized learner and graduate support is essential to diversifying enrollment and the nursing licensure pool.

Undiversifiable, structural societal factors affecting NCLEX-RN® FTPR could be mitigated through additional NCLEX-RN® attempts, thus significantly improving licensure among diverse populations.

## Recommendations

Eliminate NCLEX-RN® FTPR as an educational quality metric in public policy and accreditation standards.

Implement public policy and accreditation standards that foster diversity of nursing program enrollment and promote demographic and socioeconomic mirroring of the communities served.

Increase focus on program completion, while maintaining diversity from enrollment through graduation, in public policy and accreditation standards.

Invest in the development and implementation of wraparound learner and graduate support services from pre-admission through licensure, including repeated NCLEX-RN® attempts.

Eliminate reliance on the "one size fits all" approach to nursing education regulation and accreditation, thus considering the demographics and socioeconomics of learner populations served when establishing quality metrics requirements.

\*For Additional Information and Citations



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