

The 2nd Generation Insight Study

The new 2nd Generation Insight Study sought to provide a more **comprehensive current national view into the realities of nursing leadership practice**. Specifically, we aimed to **inform tactics and strategy** for both the organization and individual nurse leaders.

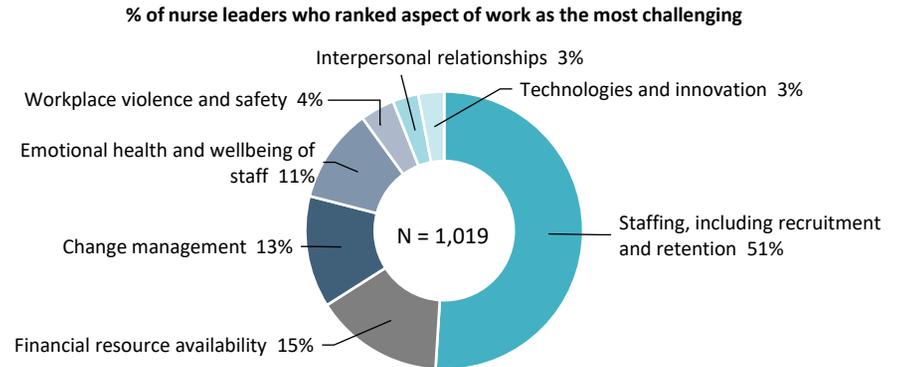
RESPONDENTS (SEPT–OCT 2025):

1,338 nurse leaders
representing **430** hospitals
& **210** health systems

2026 AONL Annual Conference
brochure edition

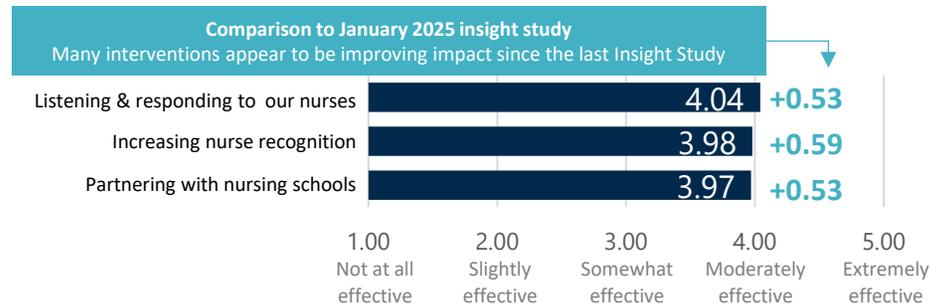
1 WORKFORCE CHALLENGES Staffing remains the top concern.

Around 50% of nurse leaders are most challenged by staffing



How effective have the following solutions been at improving the staffing situation at your organization?

CNE and CNO perception of effectiveness at improving staffing (Top 3)



Current AONL Work

- Core tools and programming that support **staffing, financial, and workforce modeling decisions**.



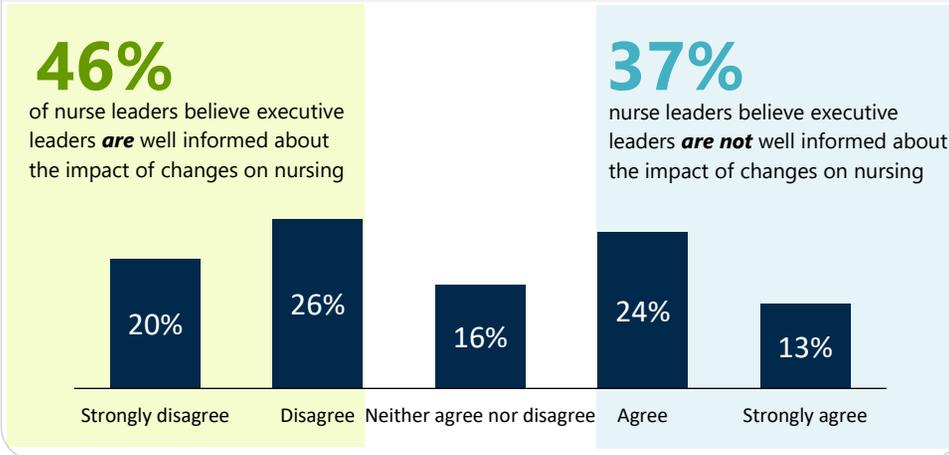
Future AONL Work

- Expand ROI analysis to virtual care and hybrid care models.
- Develop guiding principles and programming for **care model design and implementation**.

2 C-SUITE CONNECTION

Executive awareness of the impact of their decisions on nursing still varies widely.

How much do you agree with the statement *“When making decisions, I believe the executive C-suite at my organization are not well informed about the impact that changes will have on nursing”*?



Approximately **4 out of 5** CNEs are included in strategic decision making with health system executives



Current AONL Work

- Executive-level tools and programs to **elevate nursing perspectives** through structured dialogue, assessments, and leadership development.

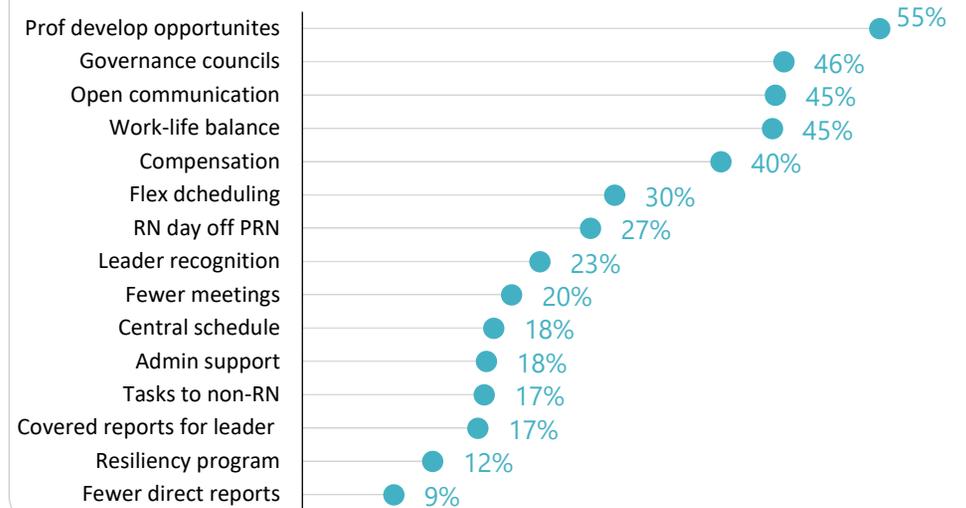
Future AONL Work

- Define **best practices for CNO–CFO partnership.**
- Provide digital and on-demand programming and resources to **strengthen executive communication, influence, and decision-making.**

3 NURSE SATISFACTION

Success at improving nurse satisfaction varies by tactic.

% indicate their system has successfully improved nursing work satisfaction using this tactic



Current AONL Work

- Leadership programs and learning communities **emphasize engagement, governance, and communication strategies** linked to nurse satisfaction.



Future AONL Work

- Enhance Learning Community sessions and refresh early-career programs with **updated evidence and skill-building content.**

4 CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE GAPS

Of new topics, confidence is lowest for addressing span of control and working in unionized environments.

% of Nurse Leaders who are confident in addressing the challenge by title

	Unions/ Bargaining	Span of control	Justifying requests
CNE (N=35)	60%	68%	83%
CNO (N=107)	50%	57%	77%
Exec or C-Suite (N=95)	35%	50%	--
Director (N=203)	28%	53%	56%
Nurse Manager (N=139)	24%	35%	36%



Current AONL Work

- Programming that builds **leader competence, confidence, and self-efficacy** across practice settings.



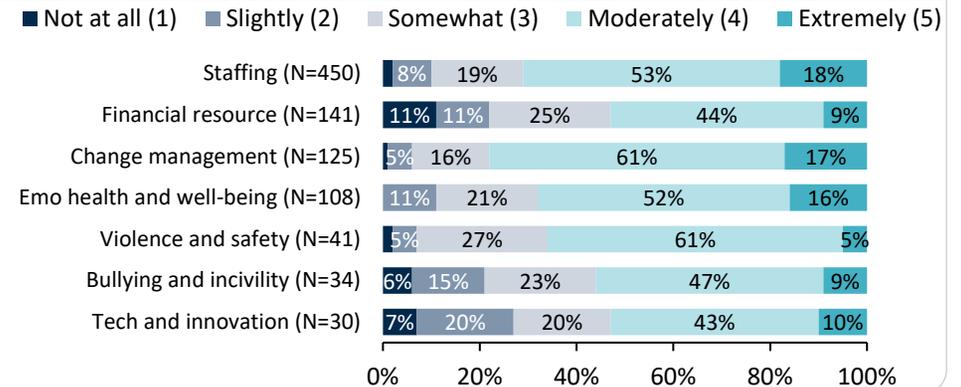
Future AONL Work

- Introduce targeted **education for leaders in unionized environments.**
- Integrate **span of accountability content** across programs beginning in 2027.

5 EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND RETENTION

Nurse leaders report increased effectiveness from Jan to Oct 2025 in addressing their top challenge.

Mean effectiveness by top challenge



Jan 25 Mean → Oct 25 Mean

- 3.3 → 3.7 Emo health & well-being
- 3.2 → 3.8 Staffing
- 2.9 → 3.6 Violence & safety
- 2.8 → 3.3 Financial resource
- 2.9 → 3.4 Bullying & incivility
- 2.3 → 3.9 Change management
- 3.2 → 3.3 Tech & innovation



Current AONL Work

- Core leadership challenges** are addressed across AONL programs with demonstrated effectiveness.



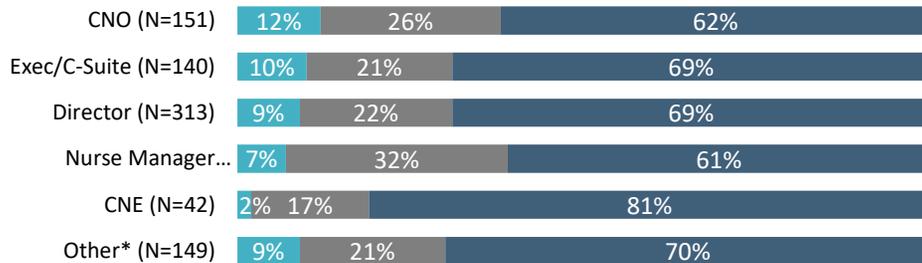
Future AONL Work

- Expand advanced content on **incivility, workplace violence, psychological and physical safety** in 2026 curricula.
- Develop content for nurses in **operational leadership roles (COO, Hospital President, etc.)**

6 TURNOVER INTENT Leaders with CNO titles had the highest turnover intent at 12%.

Low turnover intention across various nurse leader titles

■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No



*Academic rank; "Administrator," "Coordinator," "Lead," or "Supervisor" in title; APRN; Nurse Educator; RN

Fewer than

1 in 10

nurse leaders intend to leave their job in the next year.

83%

Of those intending to leave have at least one symptom of burnout



Current AONL Work

- Assessments, learning communities, coaching, and customized development to **support leader well-being and retention.**



Future AONL Work

- Increase **microlearning and digital supports.**
- Add focused content on **incivility, value alignment, and psychological safety** in leadership roles.



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Key findings at a glance

Top Challenge	Increase from Jan 25 – Oct 25
Staffing	+15%
Financial resource	+12.5%
Change management	+40%
Emo health & wellbeing	+10%
Violence & safety	+17.5%
Bullying & incivility	+12.5%
Tech & innovation	+2.5%

Nurse leaders are feeling more confident that they can address their biggest challenge.

The relationship with the C-Suite is a powerful predictor of nurse leader turnover intention.

Those who do not feel that the C-suite are well-informed about the impact that changes will have on nursing are

1.7x

more likely to leave their position

Claire Zangerle, DNP, RN | Kelsey Irish | Amy Trueblood, PhD, RN | Joni Watson, DNP, RN

American Organization for Nursing Leadership

Dan Shapiro, Ph.D. | Amanda Pearl, Ph.D. | Holly Veroneau
Chartis Center for Burnout Solutions