

Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: an updated

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Global Health Workforce Shortage

The *Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 (GSHRH)* outlines the international policy framework aimed at ensuring a sufficient, well-trained, and effective health workforce to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The strategy provided estimates of the global health workforce in 2013 and projections through 2030, highlighting **a potential global shortage of approximately 18 million health workers by 2030**

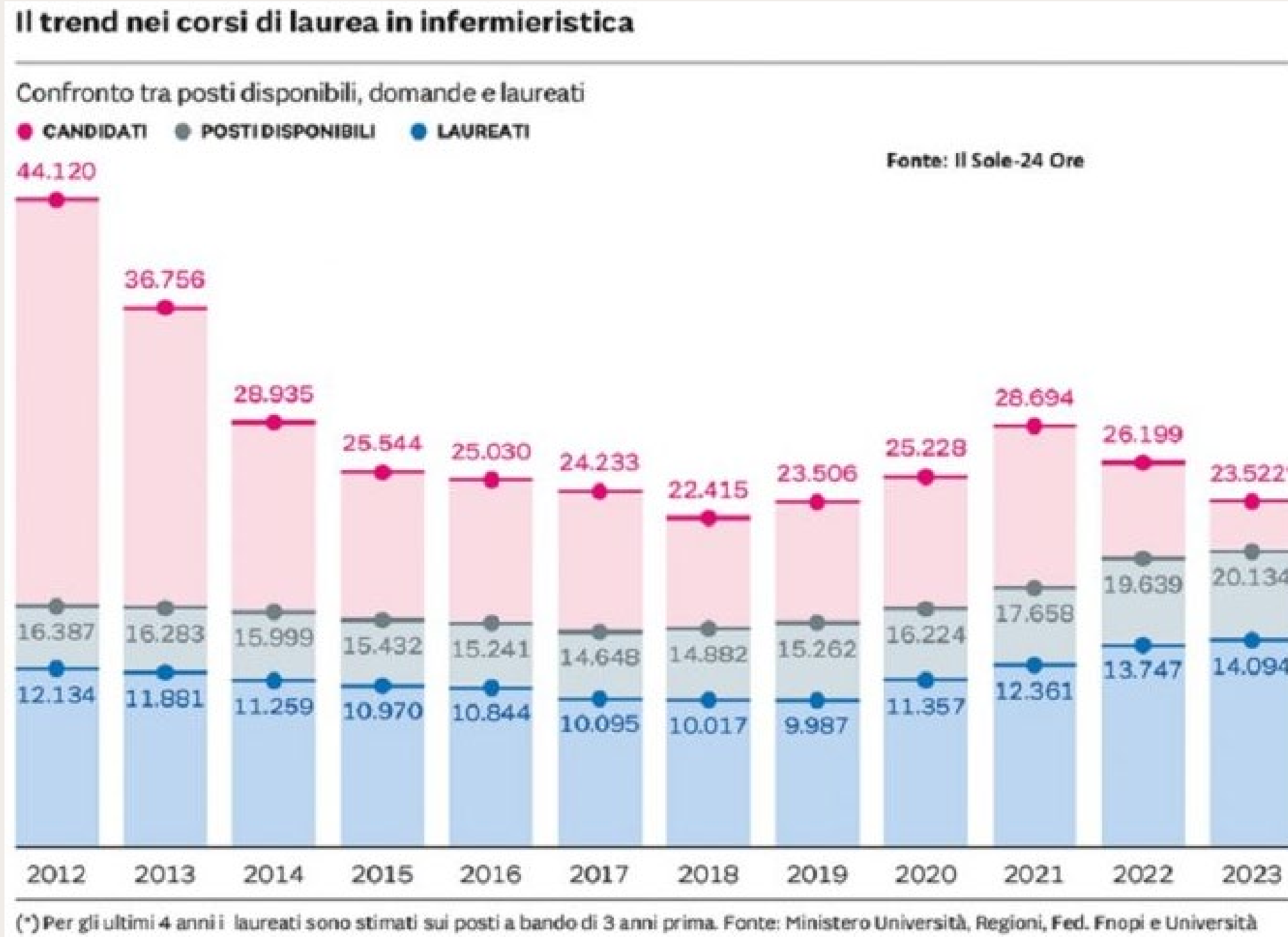
Estimation of the global health workforce shortage (in millions) in 2013, 2020 and projected in 2030 by occupation

	2013	2020	2030 (projected)
Dentists	0.49	0.26	0.22
Medical doctors	3.05	2.66	1.94
Midwifery personnel	0.36	0.41	0.31
Nursing personnel	9.89	7.07	4.50
Pharmacists	0.33	0.29	0.19
Other occupations	6.02	4.69	3.08
Total	20.15	15.37	10.23

The largest deficits are projected among nursing personnel and other health professions

• WHO. Global strategy on human resources for health: workforce 2030. Geneva, World Health Organization 2016;
• M. Boniol, T. Kunjumen, T.S. Nair, A. Siyam, J. Campbell, K. Diallo. The global health workforce stock and distribution in 2020 and 2030: a threat to equity and 'universal' health coverage? *BMJ Glob. Health*, 7 (6) (2022), Article e009316, [10.1136/bmjgh-2022-009316](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-009316)

Declining Interest in Nursing Degree Programs



In Italy, applications to nursing **degree programs continue to decrease**
In several universities, the number of applicants has, for the first time, fallen below the number of available places.



Compared with the previous academic year, applications **dropped by around 10% on average**, resulting in the lowest applicant-to-seat ratio ever recorded nationwide.

• Federazione Nazionale Ordini Professioni Infermieristiche (FNOPI) 2023. Available at: <https://www.fnopi.it/2023/09/12/domande-iscrizioni-universita/>

Why Staff Well-being Matters?

Workforce shortages and declining interest in nursing education make staff well-being an increasingly critical factor for the sustainability of healthcare systems

A growing body of research shows that **staff well-being is closely associated with the quality of care delivered to patients**

Findings from large international projects, such as RN4CAST, highlight how working conditions and professional well-being influence patient outcomes and safety

In addition, staff well-being is linked to key organizational indicators that affect the overall efficiency of healthcare systems, including turnover rates and staff absenteeism.



• FNOPI (2025). Rapporto professioni infermieristiche. Available at: <https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Rapporto-FNOPI-S.ANNA-ok.pdf>

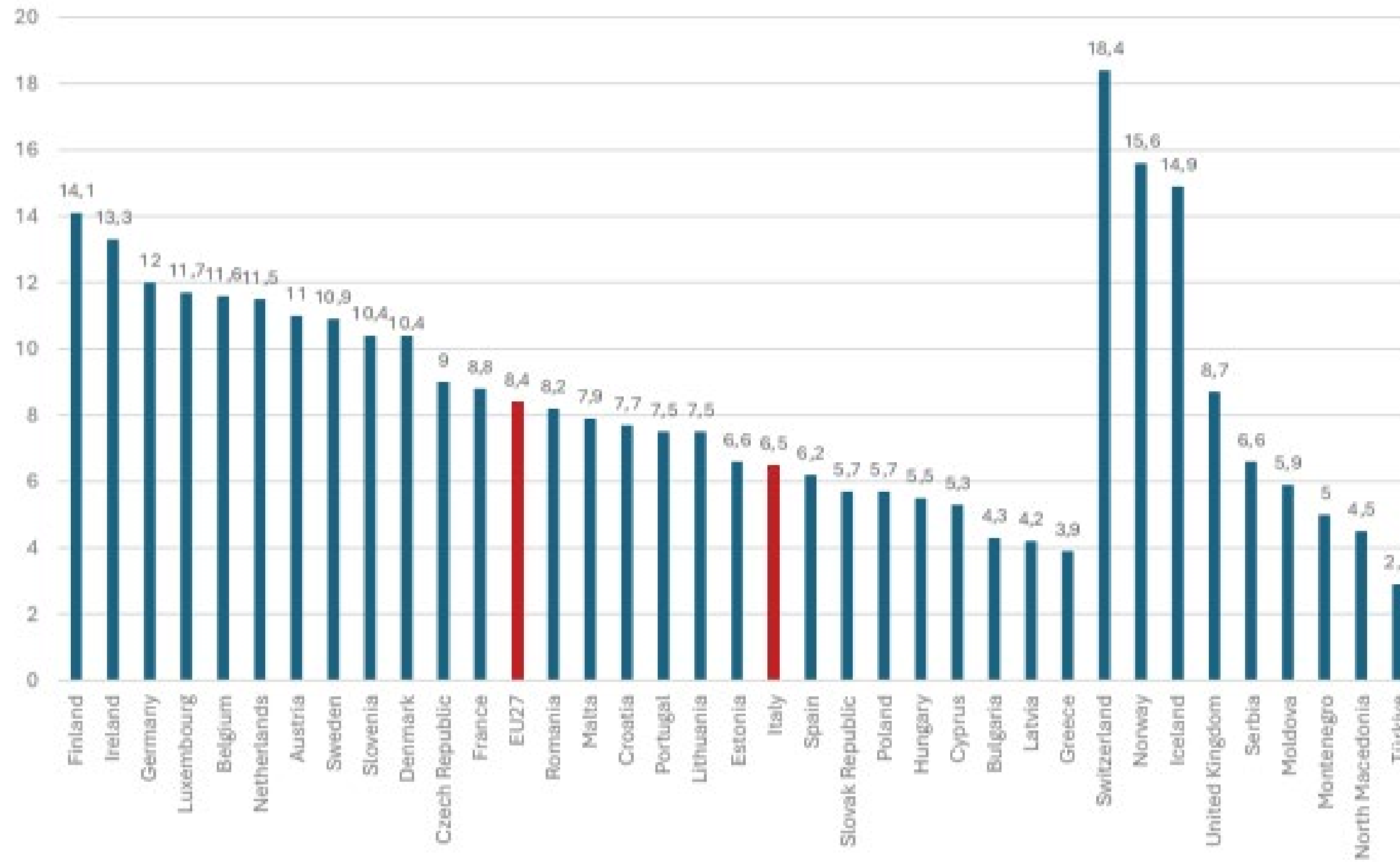
Key points

- Healthcare workers' well-being is closely linked to the quality and safety of patient care.
- Evidence from international studies (e.g., RN4CAST) shows that better working conditions are associated with improved patient outcomes.
- Staff well-being influences important organizational indicators, including turnover rates.
- Higher levels of distress and job dissatisfaction are also related to increased absenteeism.
- Overall, workforce well-being has a significant impact on the efficiency and sustainability of healthcare systems.

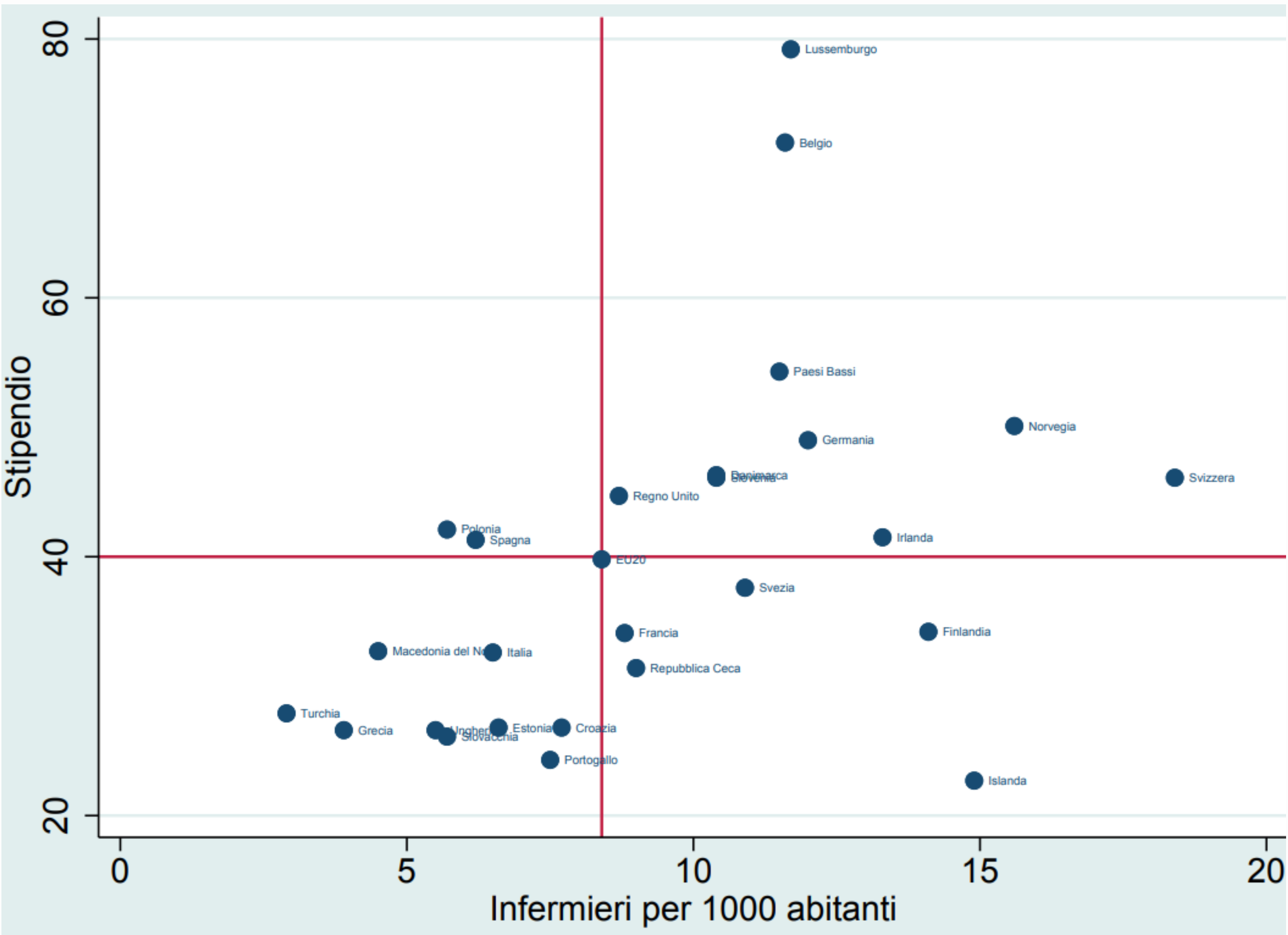


• FNOPI (2025). Rapporto professioni infermieristiche. Available at: <https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Rapporto-FNOPI-S.ANNA-ok.pdf>

Revised average number of nurses per 1,000 inhabitants, based on OECD Health Statistics 2024 data



- FNOPI (2025). Rapporto professioni infermieristiche. Available at: <https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Rapporto-FNOPI-S.ANNA-ok.pdf>
- OECD/European Commission (2024), Health at a Glance: Europe 2024: State of Health in the EU Cycle, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b3704e14-en>



Matrix Ratio of nurses per 1000 inhabitants - Salary, data from the 2022 Annual Staff Report

Workforce retention and early-career nurses

Nurse shortages are being exacerbated by a growing number of professionals considering leaving the profession or seeking opportunities in other regions or abroad.

Improving working conditions for those already in the **system is essential to reduce turnover and make the profession more sustainable and attractive.**

Monitoring job satisfaction, intention to leave the organization, and intention to leave the profession is crucial to inform workforce policies and support effective nursing management in Italy



Newly qualified nurses (NQNs), defined as nurses with less than one year of professional experience after registration, **represent a particularly vulnerable group** and show a **higher risk of leaving their job or the profession.**

- FNOPI (2025). Rapporto professioni infermieristiche. Available at: <https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Rapporto-FNOPI-S.ANNA-ok.pdf>
- Xu, F., Ma, L., Wang, Y., Yu, J., Li, D., Zhou, G., Xu, Y., Zhang, H., Cao, Y., 2021. Effects of an innovative training programme for new graduate registered nurses: a comparison study. *SAGE Open* 11 (1), 1–7.
- Brook, J., Aitken, L., Webb, R., MacLaren, J., Salmon, D., 2019. Characteristics of successful interventions to reduce turnover and increase retention of early career nurses: a systematic review. *Int. J. Nurs. Stud.* 91, 47–59

Introduction

Background und

Methods

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Where we started

Nurse Education Today 98 (2021) 104651

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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/nedt

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Review

Approaches used to enhance transition and retention for newly qualified nurses (NQNS): A rapid evidence assessment

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Newly qualified nurse
Rapid evidence assessment
Retention
Transition

ABSTRACT

Aim: To undertake a rapid evidence assessment of approaches used to enhance nurse transition and retention for newly qualified nurses and to evaluate the strength of the evidence for specific approaches to nurse transition and retention.

Design: A rapid evidence assessment was undertaken. Electronic databases were searched, and the full texts of relevant papers were retrieved. Studies were appraised using relevant Critical Appraisal Skills Programme and Mixed Methods Assessment Tools and a single descriptor of quality: high; medium; or low was assigned to each output. Given the disparity in methods, the lack of randomised trials, results could not be combined; therefore, a descriptive approach was used to synthesise and present the data.

Data sources: The search was undertaken using: specific database searching; and secondary searching of relevant websites. Electronic databases (CINAHL complete, Academic search premier, Open Grey, ERIC^{*} (Education), Web of Science–Social Science Citation Index and PubMed) were searched during February 2018.

Results: Orientation and creating supportive environments were frequently reported as being effective in enhancing transition across a range of studies. A range of methods: quasi-experimental, survey and qualitative were used. Generally, the quality of most studies was poor.

Conclusions: Despite decades of research into the experiences of newly qualified nurses and development of schemes and frameworks to support them during this period, there is little substantive or robust evidence in terms of impact on retention. Further research into the longer-term retention of newly qualified nurses is recommended. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial in assessing the efficacy of approaches to enhancing retention.



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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Nurse Education in Practice

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/issn/14715953

ELSEVIER

Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Newly qualified nurse
Nurse
Rapid evidence assessment
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Turnover
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ABSTRACT

Aim: To update the rapid evidence assessment by Wray et al. (2021), identify specific approaches used to enhance newly qualified nurses' (NQNs) transition and retention, and evaluate the strength of evidence.

Background: Nursing shortages threaten care quality, making the recruitment and retention of newly qualified nurses (NQNs) essential. Recruitment and retention of NQNs is crucial, as their successful transition, helps address staff shortages. Wray et al. (2021) highlighted this connection, and the present study builds on their work by providing updated insights.

Design: Rapid Evidence Assessment, a structured and time-efficient method for reviewing literature using systematic and transparent procedures.

Methods: A Rapid Evidence Assessment was conducted until February 2024 using CINAHL, Academic search premier, Open Grey, ERIC, Web of Science and PubMed searching for articles using keywords related to nursing transition and retention. For this review, NQHs were nurses with a maximum of 12 months of work experience. Different quality appraisal tools were used according to the type of study.

Results: Our findings supported those of Wray et al. (2021) and provided additional evidence that a supportive work environment, one-to-one mentoring, supportive programmes, a well-structured final clinical practicum, and positive team experiences are key to enhancing the transition and retention of NQNs. Overall, quality appraisal of studies included in our review was medium-high.

Conclusions: Given the global relevance of the topic, more higher quality studies will be needed to investigate the transition experience of NQNs' and explore the long-term effects of the programmes implemented to enhance both transition and retention.

- Wray, J., Watson, R., Gibson, H., Barrett, D., 2021. Approaches used to enhance transition and retention for newly qualified nurses (NQNS): a rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse Educ. Today* 98, 104651. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104651>
- Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

Introduction Background und Methods Results

NQNs were defined as nurses with 12 months or less of work experience, in line with previous research examining the early transition period into professional practice.

Aim

To update the rapid evidence review conducted by Wray et al. (2021) on approaches used to support the transition and retention of newly qualified nurses (NQNs), and to assess the strength of the evidence for specific interventions aimed at improving early-career transition and retention

Research Questions

- What approaches are used to enhance the transition of newly qualified nurses?
- What approaches are used to enhance the retention of newly qualified nurses?
- What is the strength of evidence for specific approaches to nurse transition and retention?

Design

A rapid evidence assessment (REA)

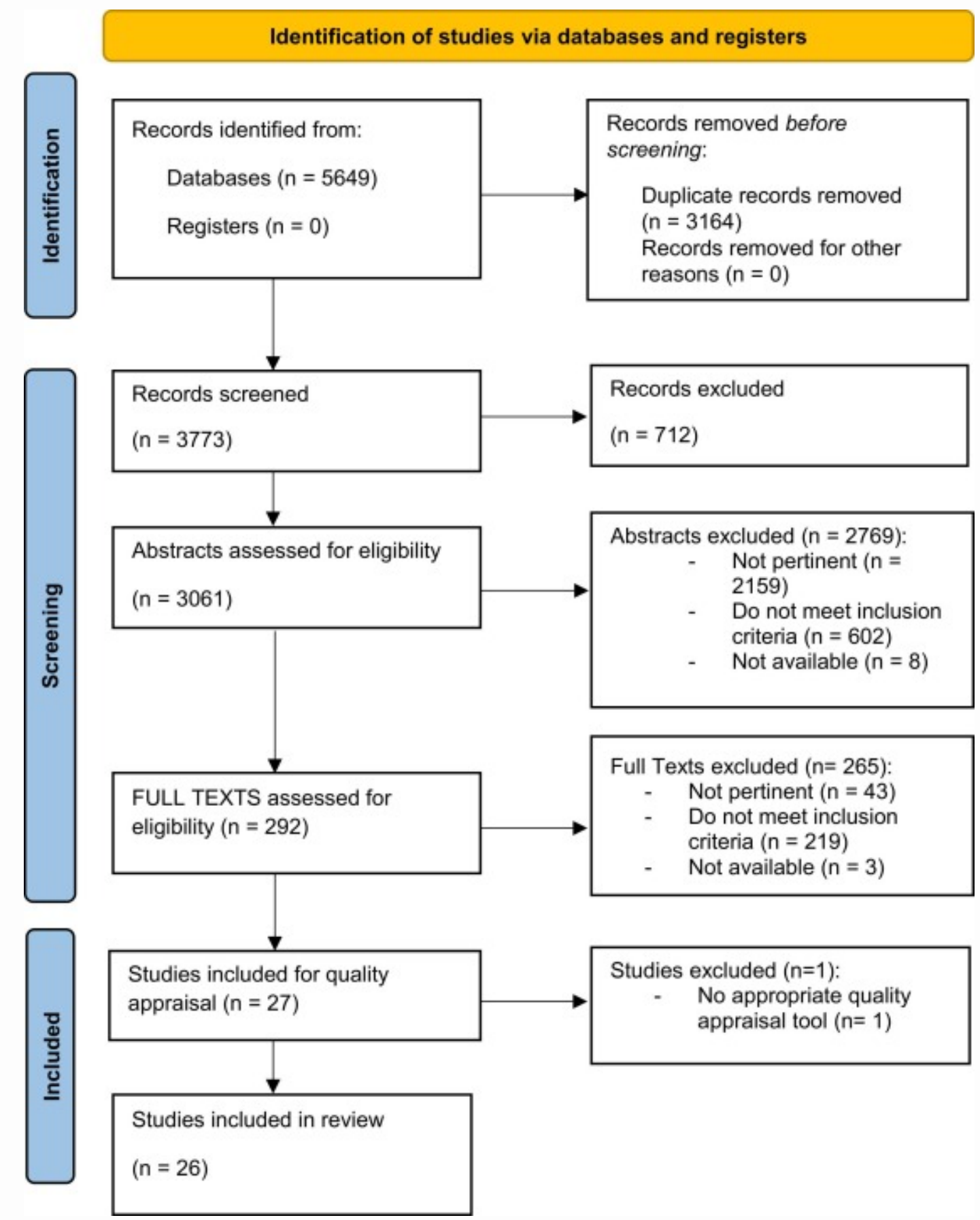
A rapid evidence assessment (REA) was selected to generate findings within a limited timeframe while preserving the methodological rigor typical of systematic reviews.

This approach allows the review process to be streamlined by focusing on a narrower set of questions and by simplifying some steps. Since there is no universally accepted definition of a rapid review, we adopted a working description in which a rapid review is considered a **form of knowledge synthesis where certain elements of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted in order to produce evidence more quickly.**

- Tricco, A. C., Antony, J., Zarin, W., Striffler, L., Ghassemi, M., Ivory, J., Perrier, L., Hutton, B., Moher, D., & Straus, S. E. (2015). A scoping review of rapid review methods. BMC medicine, 13, 224. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-015-0465-6>
- Khangura S, Konnyu K, Cushman R, Grimshaw J, Moher D. Evidence summaries: the evolution of a rapid review approach. Syst Rev. 2012;1:10. doi: 10.1186/2046-4053-1-10

Inclusion	Exclusion
Primary	Theoretical or conceptual papers, commentaries, secondary research
Published between February 2018 and February 2024	
English language	
NQNs	Nurses in practice longer than 12 months Not about NQN transition Not about NQN retention

Database name	Number of references
Academic Search Premier	38
CINAHL	1035
ERIC	7
PubMed	2190
Web of Science	2379
Subtotal	5649
Duplicates	3164
Total	3061

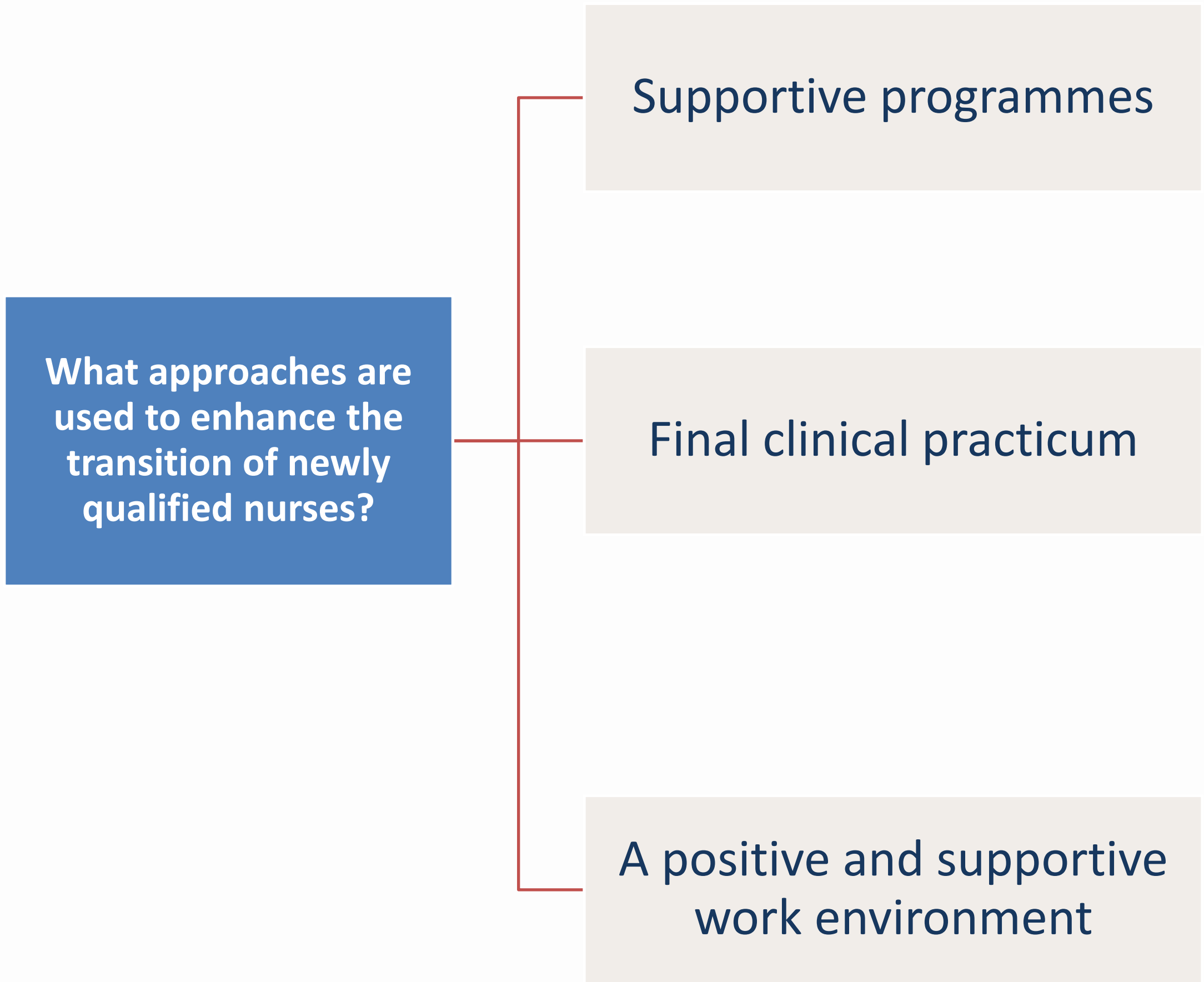


• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

Assessment of the quality of studies

Study first name (date)	Design	Study quality
Austin et al. (2021)	Qualitative	CASP - LOW
Baldwin et al. (2021)	Qualitative	CASP - MEDIUM
Berglund M. et al., (2022)	Qualitative study	CASP - MEDIUM/HIGH
Brown et al. (2018)	Qualitative	CASP - MEDIUM
Cantrell F., et al. (2024)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - LOW
Charette M. et al. (2023)	Mixed Method	MMAT - HIGH
Chen et al. (2021)	Descriptive	Survey Assessment Tool - HIGH
Choi E. et al. (2022)	Descriptive	Survey Assessment Tool - MEDIUM/HIGH
Doughty et al. (2018)	Qualitative	CASP - MEDIUM
Feltrin et al. (2019)	Qualitative	CASP - HIGH
Hassan A. E. et al. (2024)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - MEDIUM
Ho et al. (2021)	Qualitative	CASP - HIGH
Hu F., et al. (2023)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - LOW
Kaihlanen et al. (2021)	Descriptive	Survey Assessment Tool - HIGH
Kim & Shin (2020)	Mixed Method	MMAT - LOW
Kim E. A., et al.(2024)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - MEDIUM
Kim E., et al. (2022)	Descriptive	Survey Assessment Tool - MEDIUM/HIGH
Kim J. et al. (2023)	Descriptive	Survey Assessment Tool - HIGH
Lindfors K. et al (2022)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - MEDIUM
Miller C. M. et al. (2023)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - LOW
Moon S.H. et al. (2024)	Mixed Method	MMAT - MEDIUM
Song J. et al. (2024)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - LOW
Tseng & Hwang (2021)	Quasi-experimental	STROBE - MEDIUM
Wildermuth et al. (2020)	Qualitative	CASP - HIGH
Xu B., et al. (2022)	Quasi-sperimental	STROBE - LOW
Zhang et al. (2019)	Non-randomised trial	CONSORT non-randomised studies - MEDIUM

• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>



• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

What approaches are used to enhance the transition of newly qualified nurses?

Supportive programmes

Final clinical practicum

A positive and supportive work environment

Structured transition programmes for newly qualified nurses—often combining mentorship or preceptorship, clinical training, peer support, and psychological guidance—are the most commonly used strategies to address early-career challenges. Evidence shows that these programmes support clinical competence, confidence, and emotional adjustment, strengthen professional identity and self-efficacy, and can improve retention, particularly when consistent support from trained preceptors or mentors is provided

• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

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Structured final clinical placements that integrate students into the healthcare team and prepare them for real nursing responsibilities can ease the transition from student to newly qualified nurse

- Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

What approaches are used to enhance the transition of newly qualified nurses?

Supportive programmes

Final clinical practicum

A positive and supportive work environment

A positive and supportive work environment—characterized by effective communication, mutual trust within the team, supportive leadership, and initial supernumerary status—plays a crucial role in facilitating newly qualified nurses' transition and confidence in clinical practice

• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

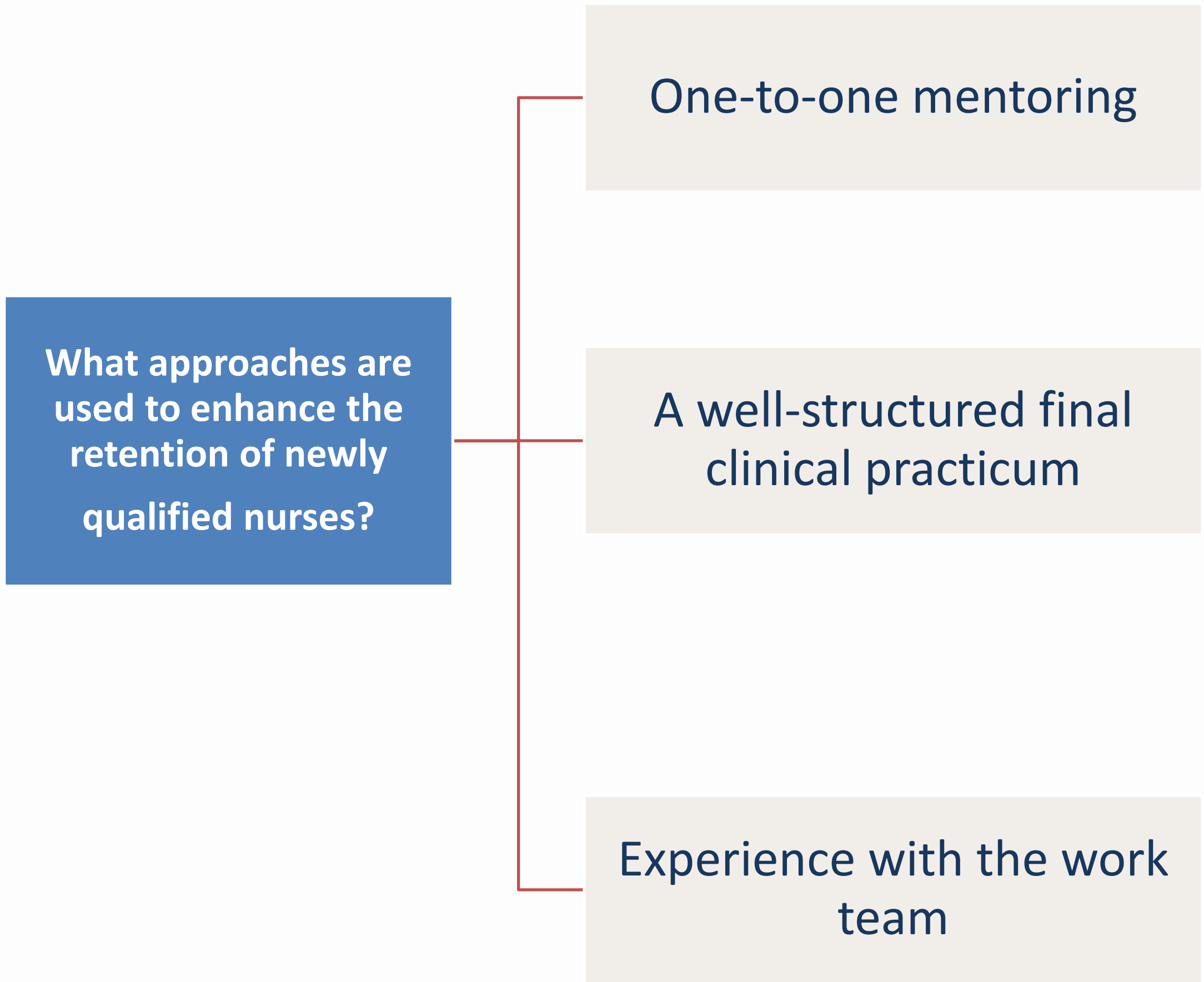
Another key element from the results

Instruments to evaluate transition

Most quantitative studies used **instruments specifically designed to assess different dimensions of newly qualified nurses' transition experience**, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, confidence, skills performance, and work environment.

Several validated tools were employed—such as the Casey-Fink Graduate Nurse Experience Survey and scales measuring transition shock, resilience, learning environment, preceptorship experience, and intention to stay—highlighting the multidimensional nature of early-career transition and retention

- Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>



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What approaches are used to enhance the retention of newly qualified nurses?

One-to-one mentoring

A well-structured final clinical practicum

Experience with the work team

Only a few studies directly measured retention or turnover among newly qualified nurses, but evidence suggests that one-to-one mentoring, supportive transition programmes, and positive preceptor relationships can strengthen resilience, improve adaptation, and increase intentions to stay. Early departures were mainly linked to heavy workloads, difficulties integrating into the work environment, stress, and lack of team belonging, highlighting the importance of structured support during the first year of practice.

• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

What approaches are used to enhance the retention of newly qualified nurses?

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A well-structured final clinical practicum

Experience with the work team

Another strategy identified was the introduction of a structured final clinical placement before entering the profession, which can ease the transition into practice and strengthen newly qualified nurses' commitment to their role, thereby supporting retention.

A supportive learning environment, strong supervision, and effective ward leadership were also associated with a smoother transition and higher levels of professional commitment, factors that are closely linked to long-term retention.

• Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

Introduction

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What approaches are used to enhance the retention of newly qualified nurses?

One-to-one mentoring

A well-structured final clinical practicum

Experience with the work team

Two qualitative studies explored retention indirectly, showing that positive experiences within the work team can encourage newly qualified nurses to remain in their roles, whereas insufficient support and the negative impact of work on personal life may lead many early-career nurses to leave their job or even the profession.

- Gammone, M., Calzolari, M., Moro, A., Wray, J., Watson, R., Aleo, G., Catania, G., Zanini, M., Sasso, L., & Bagnasco, A. (2025). Evaluating approaches to enhance transition and retention in newly qualified nurses: An updated rapid evidence assessment. *Nurse education in practice*, 87, 104484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2025.104484>

Introduction

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Approaches to enhance the **transition** of newly qualified nurses

Preceptorship remains the most widely implemented strategy to support transition

Assigning preceptors or mentors

Structured support strategies—especially mentorship and preceptorship programmes—are essential to ease this transition, strengthen confidence and competencies, and promote retention in the early stages of their careers

Work environment and workload

Across the reviewed studies, work environment and workload consistently emerged as key factors influencing the effectiveness of transition programmes, with negative settings undermining learning, support, and overall adjustment. Poor workplace relationships and limited managerial support were associated with transition shock and adverse patient outcomes, highlighting the crucial role of nurse managers in fostering a positive and supportive learning environment.

Evaluation of the transition programmes and experience

A key issue identified was how to evaluate transition programmes and newly qualified nurses' transition experiences. While qualitative methods are commonly used, adopting standardized measures and regular assessments could help compare programmes, identify influencing factors, and detect early challenges affecting their success.

Discussion

*Approaches used to enhance **retention** of newly qualified nurses*

Studies suggest that **transition programmes and mentorship**, particularly within **supportive work environments**, are key strategies to improve retention among newly qualified nurses.

Although some quantitative studies found no significant differences in retention rates between nurses who participated in transition programmes and those who did not, evidence suggests that clinical preparedness, supportive relationships, and favourable work environments can strengthen adaptation, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment, all of which are linked to **higher intentions to stay and improved retention**.

Strength of evidence for specific approaches to nurse transition and retention

The methodological quality of the included studies **ranged from fair to high, with most meeting acceptable standards across different appraisal tools**. Overall, the evidence was considered of medium-to-high quality, supporting the relevance of the findings, although future research with stronger designs is needed to better investigate newly qualified nurses' transition experiences.

Next steps

Registration



The Experience Of Transition And The Retention Of Newly Qualified Nurses: The Star-ITA Project

[Gianluca Catania](#), [Mark Hayter](#), [Roger Watson](#), [Francesca Ginogi](#) and 8 more

Date registered: December 19, 2024 | Date modified: December 19, 2024

Context: Description: Using surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the project gathers longitudinal data on employment status; Tag: Nurse Retention; Description: By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, the project aims to identify effective strategies; Tag: Newly Qualified Nurses (NQNs); Tag: Transition Period; Tag: STaR project-ITA; Description: and retention metrics.; Title: The experience of transition and the retention of newly qualified nurses: the Star-ITA project; Description: development, transition experiences, and organizational strategies for retention.; Description: The STaR-ITA project investigates the transition and retention of newly qualified nurses (NQNs) during



Data



Analytic Code



Materials



Papers



Supplements

Registration DOI:10.17605/OSF.IO/URMKS