In May/June 2020, the American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) surveyed 56 U.S.-based credentialing organizations to describe the scope of specialty certifications available to RNs and advanced practice RNs (APRNs). Forty-four (79%) responded, including 30 of ABNS’s 31 members.

Over 1 Million Specialty Certified RNs
Over 1,013,362 RNs & APRNs hold one or more nursing specialty credentials.

Top Specialty Areas
For each credential they offer, respondents were asked to select up to three specialty or subspecialty areas that best describe the primary practice focus of the nurses holding that credential.

What is Certification?
To become specialty certified, also known as board certified, RNs must pass a rigorous, national exam that validates their clinical and professional knowledge and judgment in a well-defined specialty practice area.

Benefits of nursing specialty certification include:
- Superior clinical expertise, safety and ethics
- Improved patient and organizational outcomes
- Greater nurse career success and satisfaction
- Advances in specialty practice and nursing

Credentialed specialty certification programs are validated by national review processes that ensure they meet established standards and have a commitment to providing the highest quality education and services.

More on Accreditation
Accreditation is a rigorous peer-review process that affirms an individual certification program complies with established credentialing industry standards of excellence.

Of the 106 accredited nursing specialty certification programs, 67 are ABSNC\(^2\) accredited and 53 are NCCA\(^3\) accredited, with 14 by both.

Certification and accreditation promote excellence and ethics, inspire confidence, drive better patient outcomes, and help ensure the safety, health and welfare of patients and the public at large.

Sources & Notes
1. American Board of Nursing Specialties (ABNS) definition of specialty certification retrieved from http://www.nursingcertification.org/About-ABNS.
2. Of the 43 credentials for APRNs only, 24 were described as “an initial licensing credential for APRNs” and 19 as “a specialty credential that APRNs earn after their initial APRN licensure.”
3. The Accreditation Board for Specialty Nursing Certification (ABSNC) focuses solely on nursing certification programs.
4. NCCA accredits programs across a wide range of professions and vocations.
5. ABSNC’s “A Commitment to Quality and Care: The Importance of Accreditation for Certifying Organizations and Their Members.”

About ABNS
ABNS is a not-for-profit, membership organization focused on improving patient outcomes and consumer protection by promoting specialty nursing certification. ABNS works to bring together over 50,000 specialty certified RNs and APRNs practicing in a variety of settings worldwide.

For more information about ABNS and this survey, please visit nursingcertification.org.