
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Employment of Registered Nurses in Oregon

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Richard Allgeyer, PhD, OCN Research Director
Jana Bitton, MPA, OCN Executive Director



The Oregon Center for Nursing – About Us

OCN is a nonprofit organization created by nursing leaders in 2002. Recognized by the Oregon state legislature as a state advisor for nursing workforce issues, OCN fulfills its mission and objectives with help from its dedicated leadership, staff and community partners across Oregon.

OCN facilitates research and collaboration for Oregon's nursing workforce to support informed, well-prepared, diverse and exceptional nursing professionals.

- Conduct, analyze and disseminate research
- Encourage collaboration and build partnerships with diverse stakeholders to advance nursing
- Promote nursing and healthcare in all settings in which nurses practice

Background

- On March 8, 2020, the Governor declared a state of emergency (Executive Order 20-03) due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Oregon.
- On March 17, 2020, Governor Brown issued Executive Order 20-10 with the intent to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE) and hospital beds.
- EO 20-10 ordered that all elective and non-urgent procedures across all care settings that utilize PPE be cancelled or rescheduled no earlier than June 15, 2020.
- The order (EO 20-10) also strongly encourage other industries utilizing PPE to cancel or postpone non-essential use of PPE during the ongoing state of emergency.

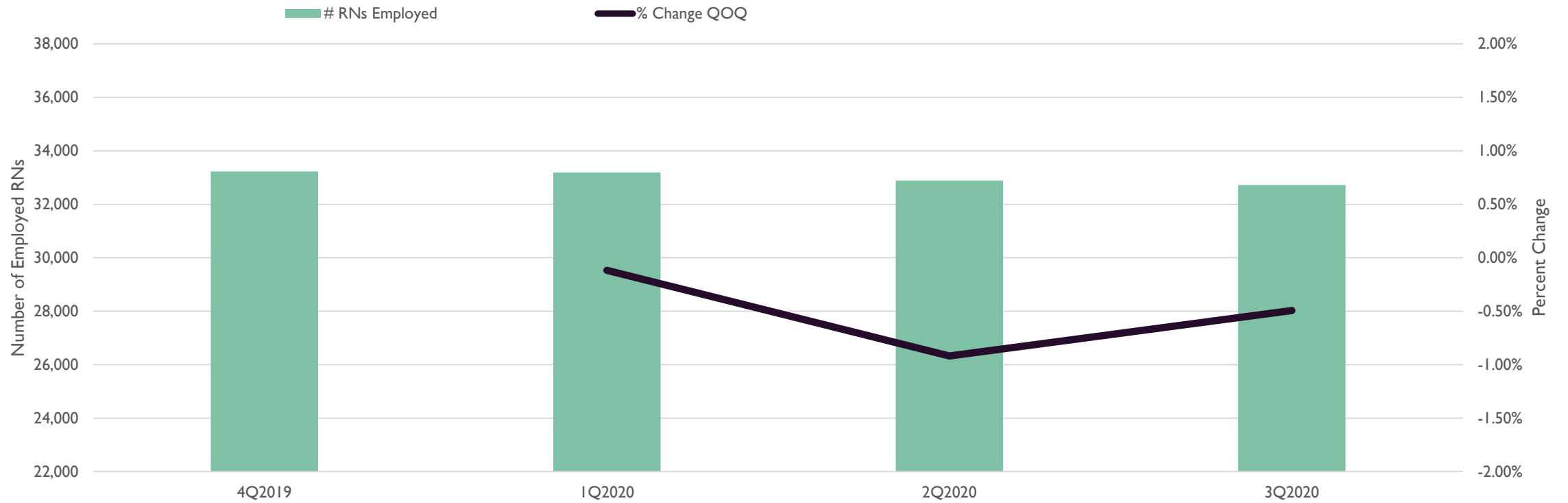
Study Question

- Due to the cessation of elective and non-urgent procedures, many health care settings severely limited care provided or closed temporarily.
- These limitations and closures likely affected the nursing workforce across Oregon, with the potential of nurses being laid-off or furloughed.
- This study sought to assess the impact of these limitations on the nursing workforce across Oregon.

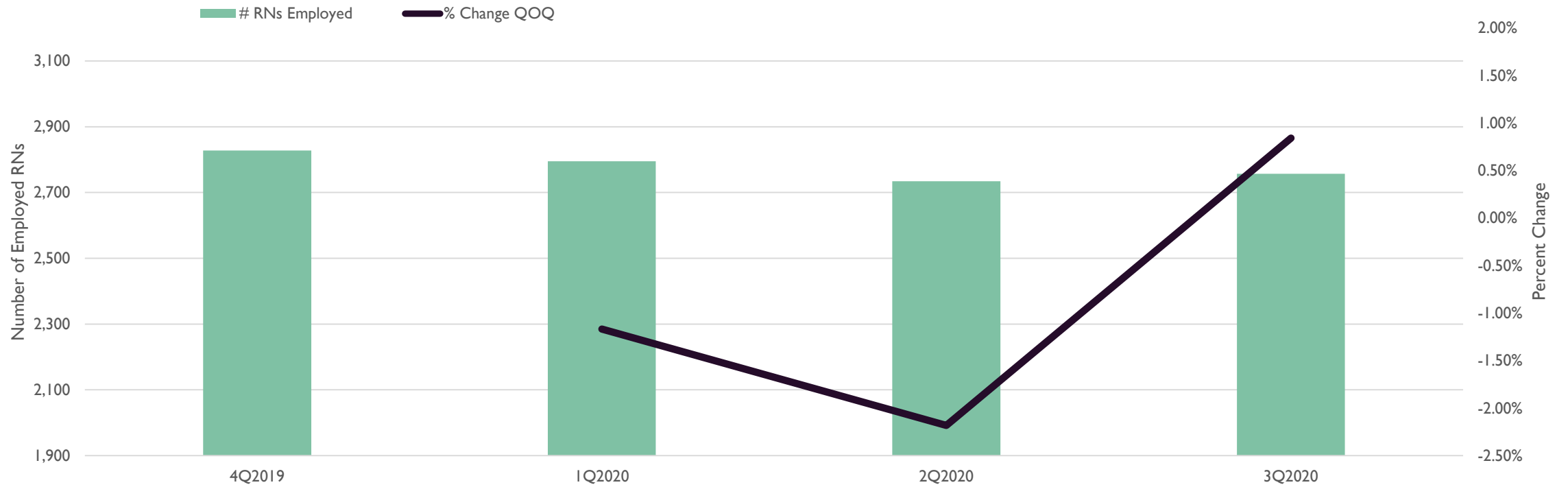
Methods

- OCN worked with the Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) and the Oregon Employment Department (OED) to examine employment department records on the employment status of registered nurses practicing in the state.
- OED pulled employment records of about 35,000 RNs practicing across various health care settings.
- Records from four quarters (4th Quarter of 2019 through 3rd Quarter of 2020) were analyzed.
- The number of RNs employed by practice setting (or setting group) for each quarter and the percent change quarter-over-quarter are reported.

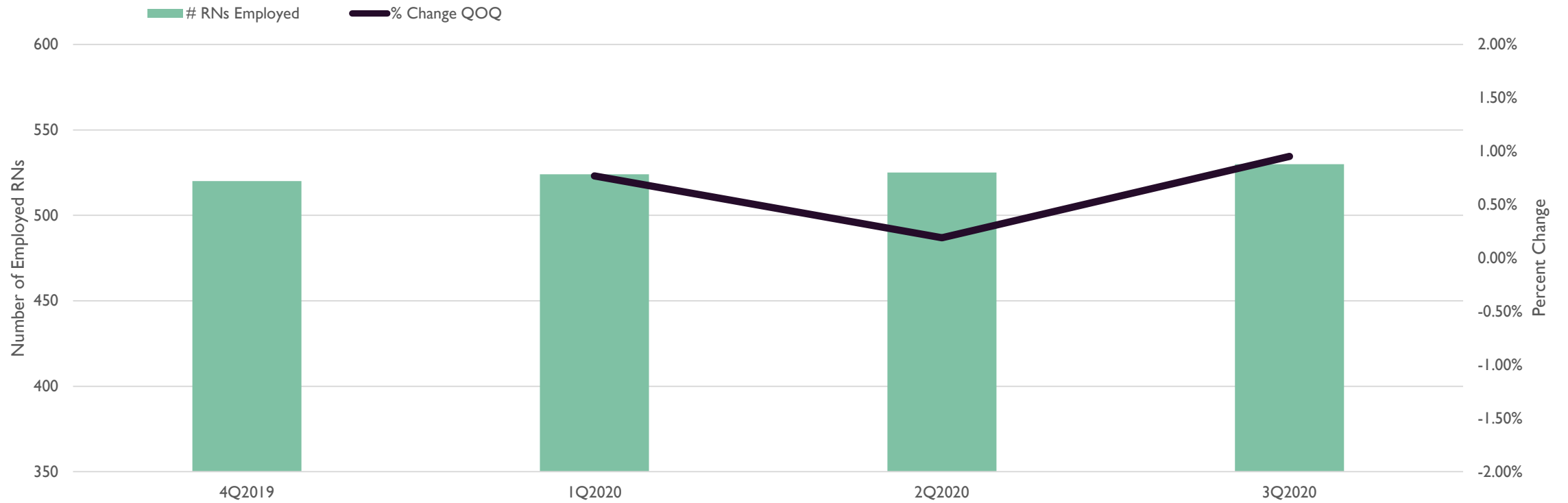
Health Care and Social Assistance



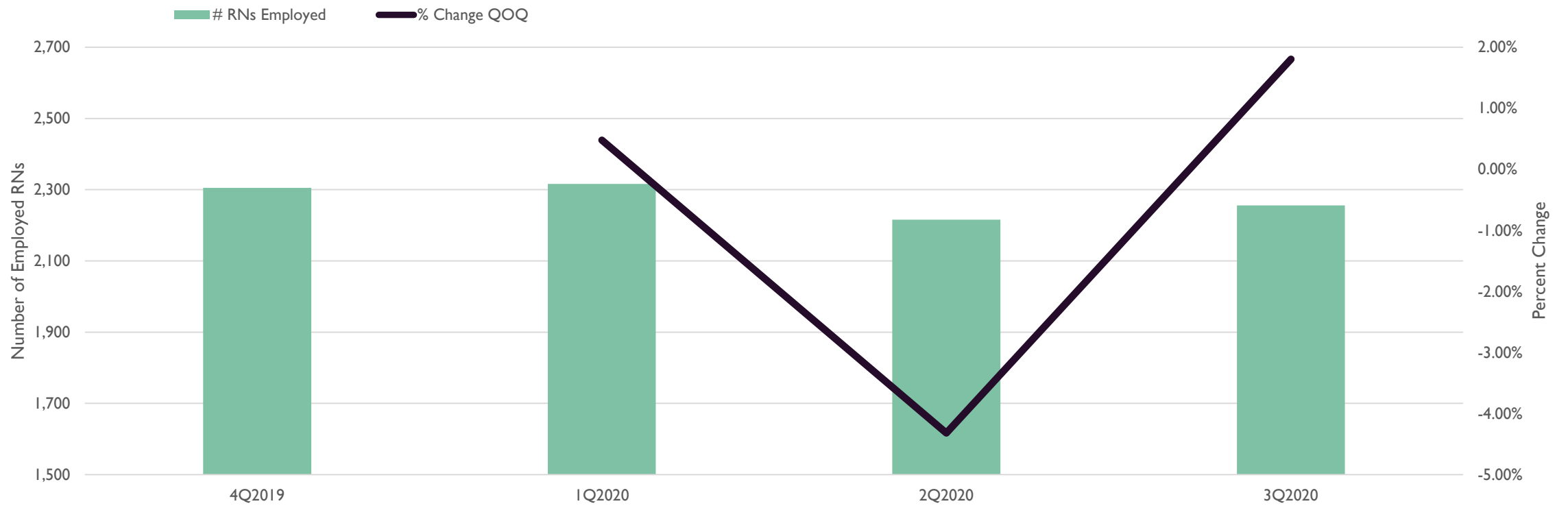
Physician Offices



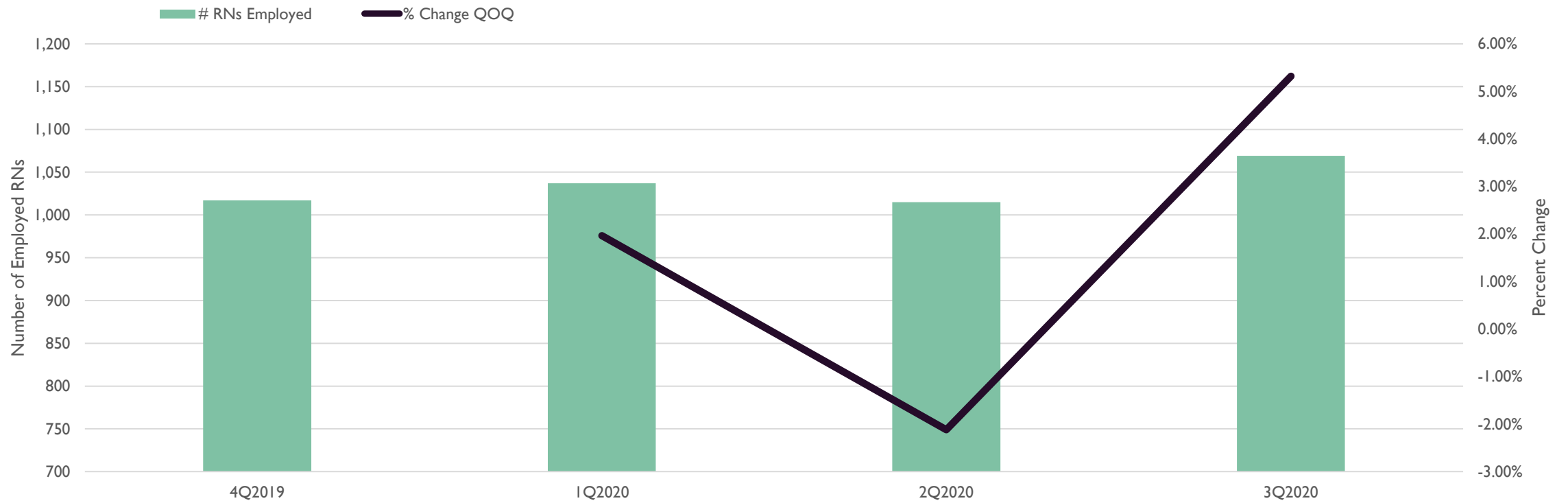
Offices of Dentists and Other Health Practitioners



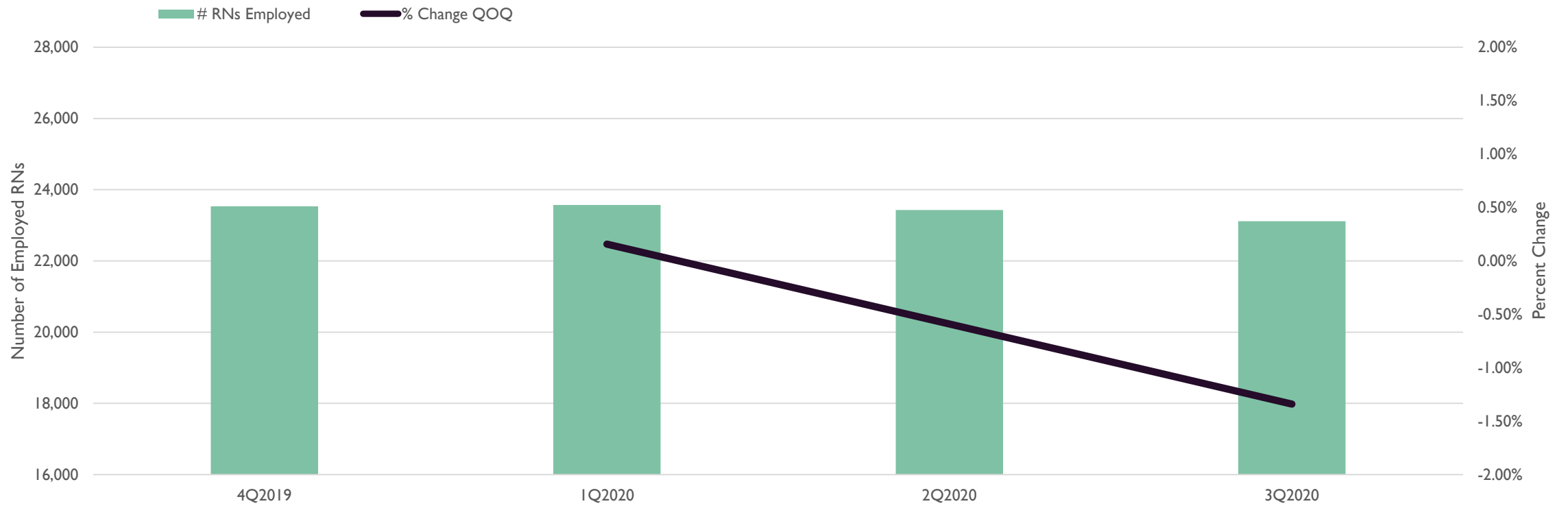
Outpatient Care Centers



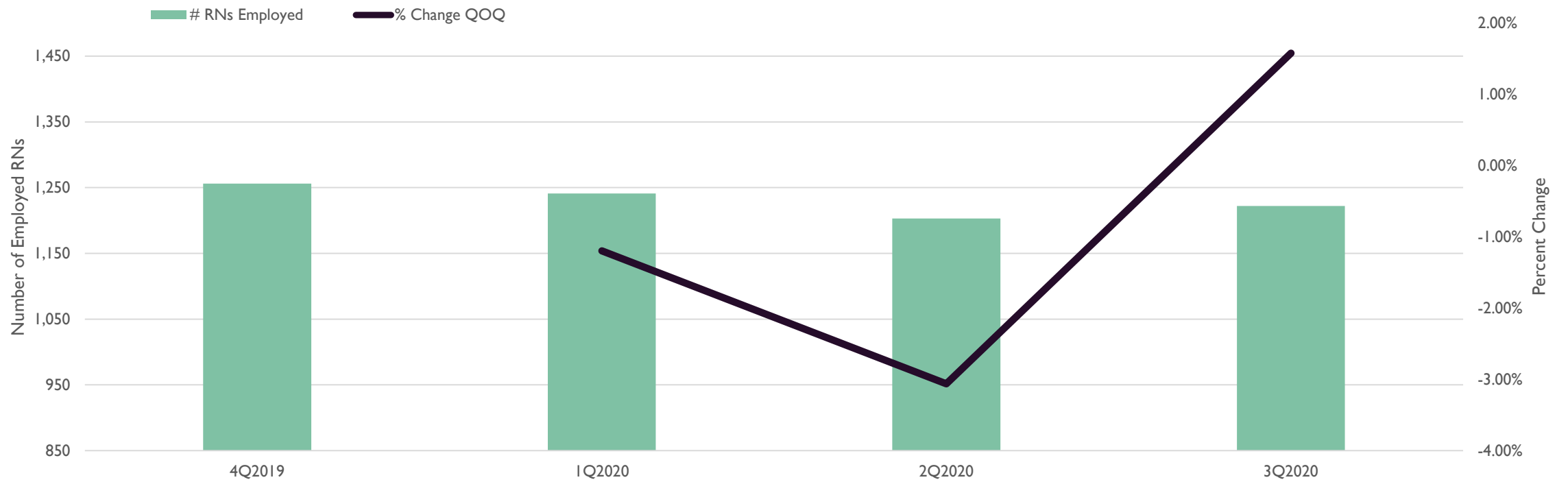
Home Health Care Centers



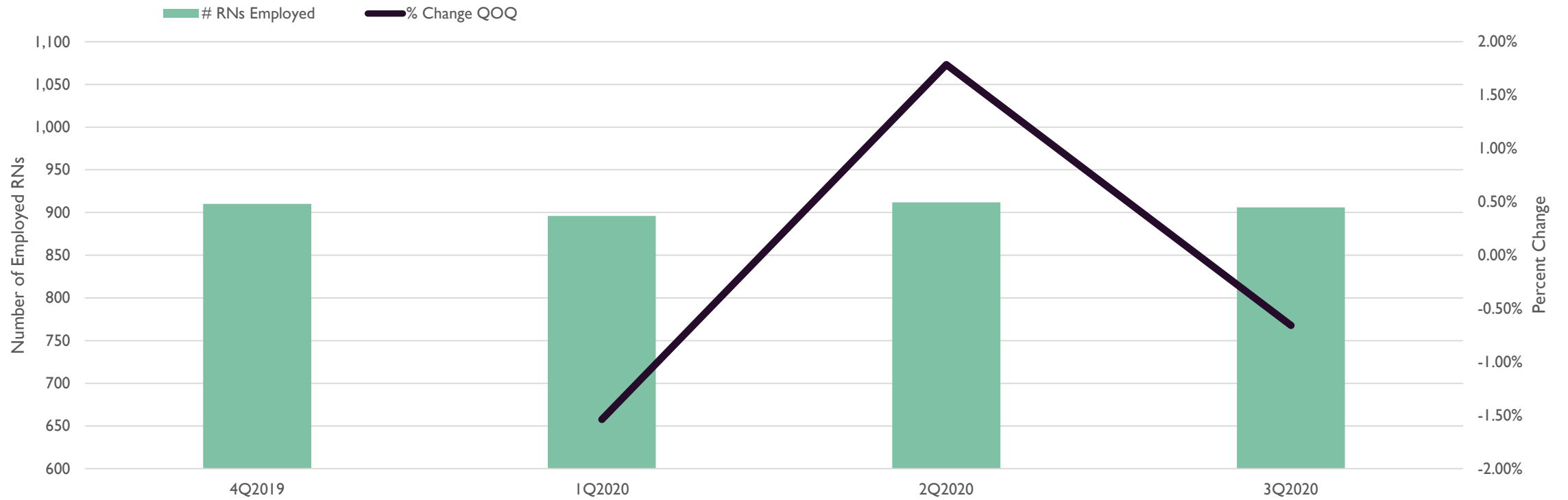
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals



Nursing Care Facilities (SNF)



Other Residential Care Facilities w/ On-Site Nursing



Summary of Results

- Overall the number of employed RNs dropped by about 1% during the 2nd Quarter.
- Physician offices, outpatient care centers, home health, and nursing care facilities saw larger declines of between 2% - 4%.
- The number of nurses employed by other types of residential care facilities showed some growth.
- With the exceptions of hospitals, most setting that saw the declines observed in the 2nd quarter recover in the 3rd quarter.
- The number of RNs practicing in hospitals declined by 0.6% in the 2nd quarter; the drop continued in the 3rd quarter (-1.3%).

Conclusions

- These results indicate efforts to conserve PPE and hospital beds by canceling or postponing elective and non-urgent procedures negatively impact the nursing workforce in Oregon.
- Findings show the magnitude of the reductions was different across settings, but most settings showed similar patterns.
- For the most part, the reduction in employment among nurses was short-lived, and many settings experienced employment growth during the 3rd quarter.
- Unlike other health care settings, employment of nurses practicing in hospitals continued to decline during the 3rd quarter, and the rate of decline appears to be increasing.
- This finding suggests some other factor is present in hospitals leading to the continued decline in nurse employment numbers.

Next Steps

- As the pandemic continues, evidence indicates hospitals and other health care settings are struggling to retain their nursing workforce.
- Many are using more travel nurses to augment their workforce.
- The processes underlying the current increase in turnover among nurses is very different than those early in the pandemic as reports show increasing level of stress and burnout among nurses, especially those practicing in hospitals.
- Some evidence suggests the pandemic was a “shock” to the system causing nurses to re-think their future employment plans.
- More research is necessary to understand the breadth of, and processes leading to this increased turnover among nurses practicing in all settings, especially hospitals.

Rick Allgeyer, PhD

Research Director

503.837.6161

allgeyer@up.edu

Oregon Center for Nursing

www.oregoncenterfornursing.org

Jana Bitton, MPA

Executive Director

503.342.4047

bitton@up.edu



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