



2020 Statistical Profile of Recently Certified Physician Assistants

ANNUAL REPORT

National Commission on
Certification of Physician Assistants



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Message from the President and CEO

Dear Colleagues:

I am always excited to share the release of a new report quantifying the essential contributions Certified PAs make to delivering accessible, high quality, and equitable healthcare; however, the Statistical Profile of Recently Certified Physician Assistants is especially important to me. This report is about the 9,915 strong, newly Certified PAs who are the future leaders of our profession. The findings in this report underscore PAs' experiences and preferences in their first clinical position, as a Certified PA. The top attribute new PAs seek in their new role is to find a position where they have the opportunity to practice in a collaborative environment where interprofessional engagement is emphasized.



This report also highlights the growth, demographic and geographical distribution of newly certified PAs as well as their impact on healthcare. For example, in a five-year period from 2016-2020, the number of PAs in Rhode Island more than doubled, in South Carolina, the number increased by 86.6%, and many states had a 50% or higher increase. The top five states with the largest numbers of recently certified PAs are New York, Pennsylvania, California, Florida, and Texas, which is not surprising since these states graduate more students. In the past five years, we've seen a modest improvement in the racial and ethnic diversity of the profession, but we still have a way to go to be aligned with our country's demographic composition.

A significant factor that sets this cohort apart from others is the unprecedented crisis that took place as they were completing their clinical training, graduating and starting their careers as Certified PAs. As students, they needed to rapidly adjust to changes in their educational process, and then, as newly Certified PAs, they entered a healthcare workforce that desperately needed their input as all were dealing with a crisis plaguing the entire world. We see those challenges reflected in the data contained in this report. Although the PA profession is projected to grow at a much higher rate than other occupations and the *U.S. News and World Report* ranked the PA profession as the number one best healthcare job in 2020, some of this cohort experienced more significant challenges in finding a position. Although we have seen an increase in the number of Certified PAs who have searched for but not accepted a position (53.9% in 2020, 38.3% in 2019, and 37.1% in 2018), 11.3% of those in 2020 have turned down at least one offer. Close to half of those who have accepted a position are working in hospitals. The percent working in primary care has remained consistent during the past five years, with 24.4% in 2020 and 25.3% in 2016. It is also encouraging to see that close to half of this cohort have starting salaries over \$100,000.

We salute this special group of Certified PAs for their perseverance in overcoming the challenges of finishing their education and starting their career during an unprecedented healthcare crisis. We wish them all the best for a long and rewarding career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn Morton-Rias".

Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed.D., PA-C
President and CEO

About the Data Collection and Methodology

Introduction

Since certifying the first physician assistants (PAs) in 1975, NCCPA has collected data on the PA profession as PAs completed various processes related to obtaining initial certification and then maintaining certification by earning and logging continuing medical education credits and passing recertification examinations. In May 2012, NCCPA's data gathering efforts were significantly enhanced with the launch of the PA Professional Profile. This data gathering instrument is presented to PAs through a secure portal within NCCPA's website. The Profile was launched with two modules: "About Me" and "My Practice."

In December 2012, NCCPA added a "Recently Certified" module delivered online to PAs who have been certified (for the first time) for six months or less. This report highlights the data collected from this module

Data Editing and Analysis

Data reflected in this report includes responses from PAs who were certified for the first time in 2020. The participants included in this report answered at least a portion of the survey between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020. In addition, some data were obtained from other NCCPA data collection strategies (as noted within the report.) As of December 31, 2020, there were 7,540 recently Certified PAs who provided responses out of the 9,915 recently Certified PAs with access to the PA Professional Profile (76.0% response rate.) Data presented for age, gender and distribution include all 9,915 recently Certified PAs. All other data elements included are derived from the responses of the recently Certified PAs. In 2020, response rates varied by quarter initially certified. Response rates by quarter: 1st: 82.0%, 2nd: 78.9%, 3rd: 73.9%, and 4th: 70.7%.

The data presented in this report have been aggregated from the individual responses provided by PAs through the PA Professional Profile or other NCCPA data gathering efforts. Responses were examined for consistency and potential errors. In cases of obvious error or inconclusive data, the responses were not included in the analysis. The number of responses to individual items varies due to differing response rates or due to the data being removed for reasons previously noted. Data presented are on all recently Certified PAs (including those who have a job and those who do not have a job.) Analyses of the data consist primarily of descriptive statistics.

About NCCPA

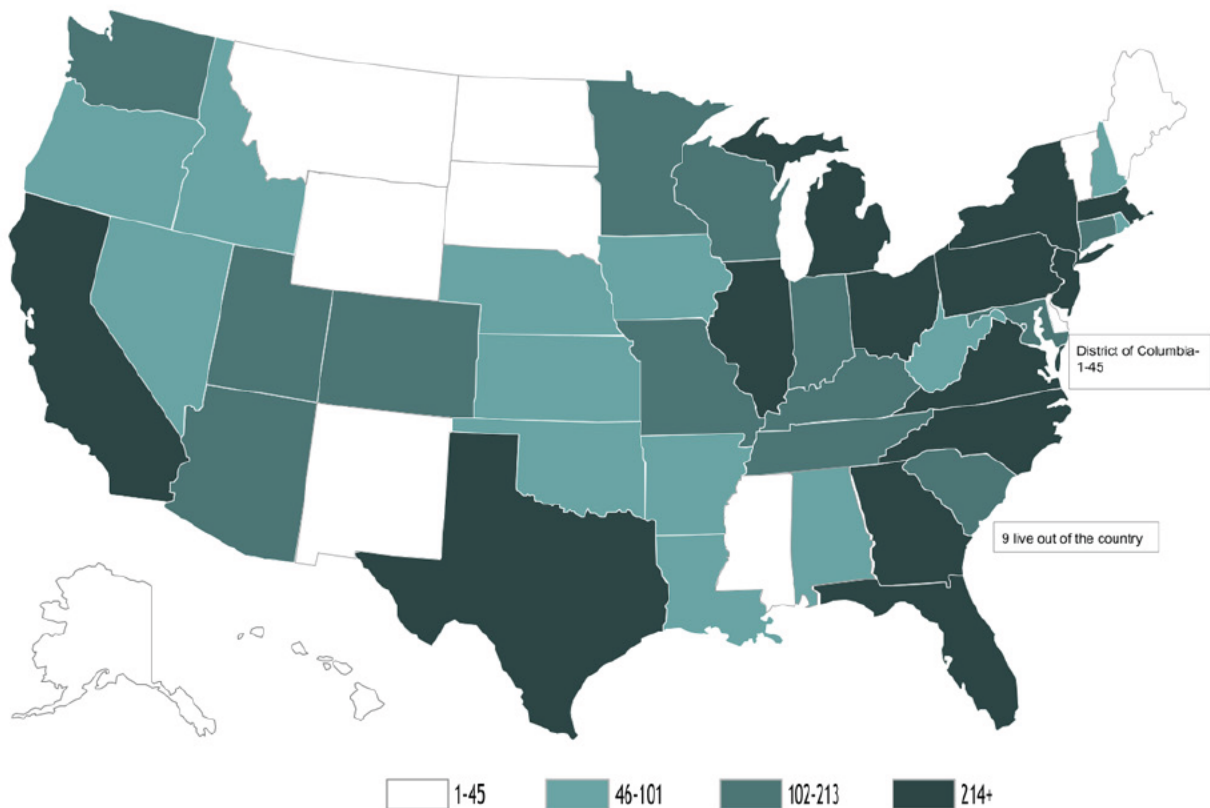
NCCPA is the only certifying organization for PAs in the United States. Established as a not-for-profit organization in 1974, NCCPA provides certification programs that reflect standards for clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning and other medical skills and professional behaviors required upon entry into practice and throughout the careers of PAs. All U.S. states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories have decided to rely on NCCPA certification as one of the criteria for licensure or regulation of PAs. More than 175,000 PAs have been certified since 1975, and over 148,000 were certified at the end of 2020.

For more information about NCCPA, visit our website at: <http://www.nccpa.net>

Distribution of Recently Certified PAs

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Distribution Of Recently Certified PAs By State (Divided By Quartiles)



Note: The map above highlights the states with the greatest number of recently Certified PAs based on state of residence as reported to NCCPA.

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) expects that the number of PA educational programs will grow from 277 (July 2021) to 313 by April 1, 2023, which would have an impact on the number of PAs seeking NCCPA certification. *Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc.*



There were 9,915 recently Certified PAs who had access to the PA Professional Profile in 2020. The map illustrates the distribution of those PAs.

Distribution of Recently Certified PAs

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

State	2020 Number	2020 Percent (Rank)	2016 Number	2016 Percent (Rank)	Percent Change 2016-2020
Alabama	97	1.0% (30)	63	0.8% (33)	54.0%
Alaska	28	0.3% (46)	26	0.3% (45)	7.7%
Arizona	213	2.1% (14)	172	2.1% (16)	23.8%
Arkansas	50	0.5% (39)	47	0.6% (37)	6.4%
California	769	7.8% (3)	494	6.2% (4)	55.7%
Colorado	187	1.9% (18)	144	1.8% (19)	29.9%
Connecticut	200	2.0% (17)	132	1.6% (21)	51.5%
Delaware	34	0.3% (45)	24	0.3% (47)	41.7%
District of Columbia	21	0.2% (47)	27	0.3% (44)	-22.2%
Florida	678	6.8% (4)	504	6.3% (3)	34.5%
Georgia	264	2.7% (12)	219	2.7% (11)	20.5%
Hawaii	16	0.2% (49)	14	0.2% (49)	14.3%
Idaho	78	0.8% (33)	80	1.0% (29)	-2.5%
Illinois	338	3.4% (9)	237	3.0% (10)	42.6%
Indiana	169	1.7% (21)	115	1.4% (22)	47.0%
Iowa	78	0.8% (33)	59	0.7% (34)	32.2%
Kansas	62	0.6% (36)	55	0.7% (35)	12.7%
Kentucky	116	1.2% (24)	87	1.1% (26)	33.3%
Louisiana	94	0.9% (31)	97	1.2% (23)	-3.1%
Maine	45	0.5% (40)	34	0.4% (40)	32.4%
Maryland	181	1.8% (19)	151	1.9% (18)	19.9%
Massachusetts	347	3.5% (8)	303	3.8% (8)	14.5%
Michigan	388	3.9% (7)	342	4.3% (7)	13.5%
Minnesota	176	1.8% (20)	211	2.6% (12)	-16.6%
Mississippi	40	0.4% (42)	36	0.4% (39)	11.1%
Missouri	110	1.1% (26)	73	0.9% (31)	50.7%
Montana	40	0.4% (42)	40	0.5% (38)	0.0%
Nebraska	100	1.0% (28)	64	0.8% (32)	56.3%
Nevada	83	0.8% (32)	54	0.7% (36)	53.7%
New Hampshire	63	0.6% (35)	74	0.9% (30)	-14.9%
New Jersey	313	3.2% (11)	197	2.5% (14)	58.9%
New Mexico	41	0.4% (41)	34	0.4% (40)	20.6%
New York	958	9.7% (1)	833	10.4% (1)	15.0%
North Carolina	466	4.7% (6)	370	4.6% (6)	25.9%
North Dakota	18	0.2% (48)	20	0.2% (48)	-10.0%
Ohio	327	3.3% (10)	272	3.4% (9)	20.2%
Oklahoma	101	1.0% (27)	85	1.1% (27)	18.8%

Distribution of Recently Certified PAs (cont.)

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

State	2020 Number	2020 Percent (Rank)	2016 Number	2016 Percent (Rank)	Percent Change 2016-2020
Oregon	100	1.0% (28)	96	1.2% (24)	4.2%
Pennsylvania	772	7.8% (2)	679	8.5% (2)	13.7%
Rhode Island	54	0.5% (37)	25	0.3% (46)	116.0%
South Carolina	153	1.5% (22)	82	1.0% (28)	86.6%
South Dakota	36	0.4% (44)	29	0.4% (43)	24.1%
Tennessee	201	2.0% (15)	179	2.2% (15)	12.3%
Texas	513	5.2% (5)	476	5.9% (5)	7.8%
Utah	114	1.1% (25)	90	1.1% (25)	26.7%
Vermont	16	0.2% (49)	13	0.2% (50)	23.1%
Virginia	252	2.5% (13)	207	2.6% (13)	21.7%
Washington	136	1.4% (23)	144	1.8% (19)	-5.6%
West Virginia	54	0.5% (37)	34	0.4% (40)	58.8%
Wisconsin	201	2.0% (15)	157	2.0% (17)	28.0%
Wyoming	15	0.2% (51)	10	0.1% (51)	50.0%
TOTAL*	9906	100.00%	8010	100.0%	23.7%

*Note: PAs who reported an address in the U.S. Additionally, nine recently Certified PAs were living abroad.

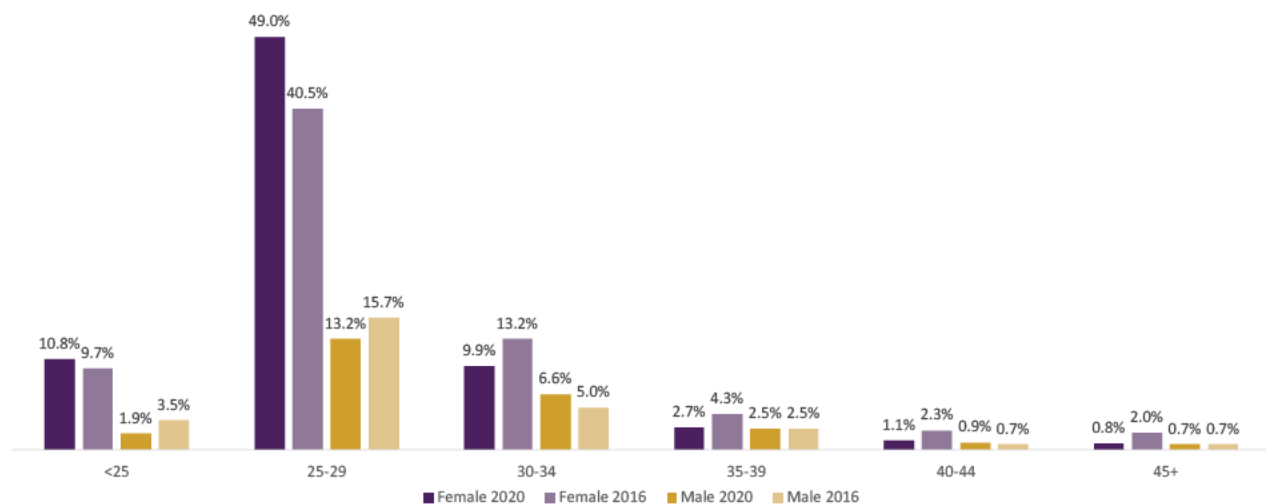
Recently Certified PAs were represented in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The states with the greatest number of recently Certified PAs include: New York, Pennsylvania, California, Florida and Texas. These five states are also the top five most populous for all Certified PAs.

All Recently Certified PAs: Gender and Age

GENDER AND AGE

Distribution Of Recently Certified PAs By Age And Gender



Number of Recently Certified PAs by Gender

Gender	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	2,556	25.8%	2,254	28.1%
Female	7,358	74.2%	5,770	71.9%

Median age of recently Certified PAs:

2020: 28 years

2016: 27 years

Median age of all Certified PAs is 38.

Recently Certified PAs by Age

Age Group	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<25	1,260	12.7%	1,059	13.2%
25-29	6,166	62.2%	4,510	56.2%
30-34	1,636	16.5%	1,458	18.2%
35-39	512	5.2%	542	6.8%
40-44	195	2.0%	237	3.0%
45+	146	1.5%	218	2.7%

Race and Ethnicity of Recently Certified PAs

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Number And Percent Of Recently Certified PAs By Race

Race	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	5,843	77.5%	4,970	80.3%
Black/African American	235	3.1%	169	2.7%
Asian	748	9.9%	429	6.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	17	0.2%	18	0.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	23	0.3%	18	0.3%
Other	159	2.1%	117	1.9%
Multi-race	275	3.6%	172	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	240	3.2%	294	4.8%
Total Responses	7,540	100.0%	6,187	100.0%

Ethnicity: Percent Who Indicated They Are Of Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish Origin

2020	8.9%
2016	6.7%



The percentage of Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin recently Certified PAs has increased steadily each year.

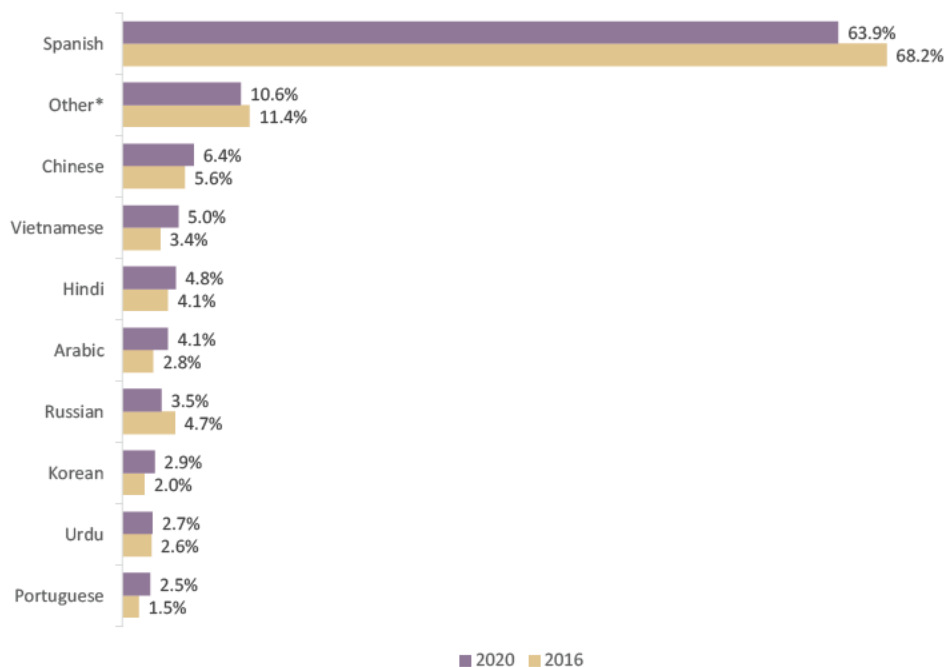
Top Languages Spoken

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH SPOKEN WITH PATIENTS

Percent Who Indicated They Can Communicate With Patients In A Language Other Than English:

2020	21.4%
2016	21.9%

Recently Certified PAs Who Communicate With Patients In Other Languages: Top Languages Spoken



Note: Percentage based on recently Certified PAs who said they communicate with patients in another language.

*Most common "other" languages noted: Punjabi, Malayalam, American Sign Language and Hebrew.

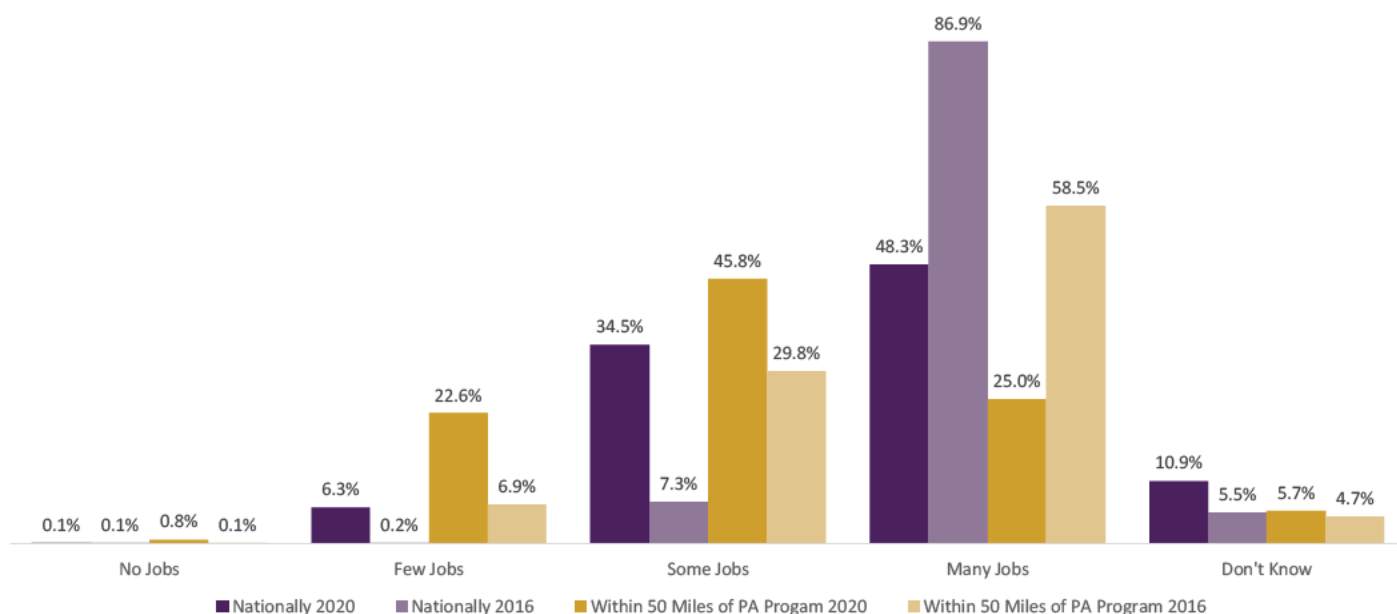
Percent Who Indicated They Can Speak Two Or More Languages In Addition To English:

2020	3.9%
2016	3.2%

Assessment of Opportunities

ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES

Assessment Of Job Opportunities



For the first time since NCCPA has been tracking job assessment, recently Certified PAs reported higher percentages of “no jobs, few jobs, and some jobs” in 2020 than in prior years.

U.S. News and World Report ranked PA first in their “100 Best Jobs,” “Best Health Care Jobs” and “Best STEM Jobs” of 2021 listing (January 12, 2020.)



The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the PA profession will grow 31% from 2020-2030 (much faster than the average for all occupations)¹. The average growth for all occupations during the same time period is 8%.

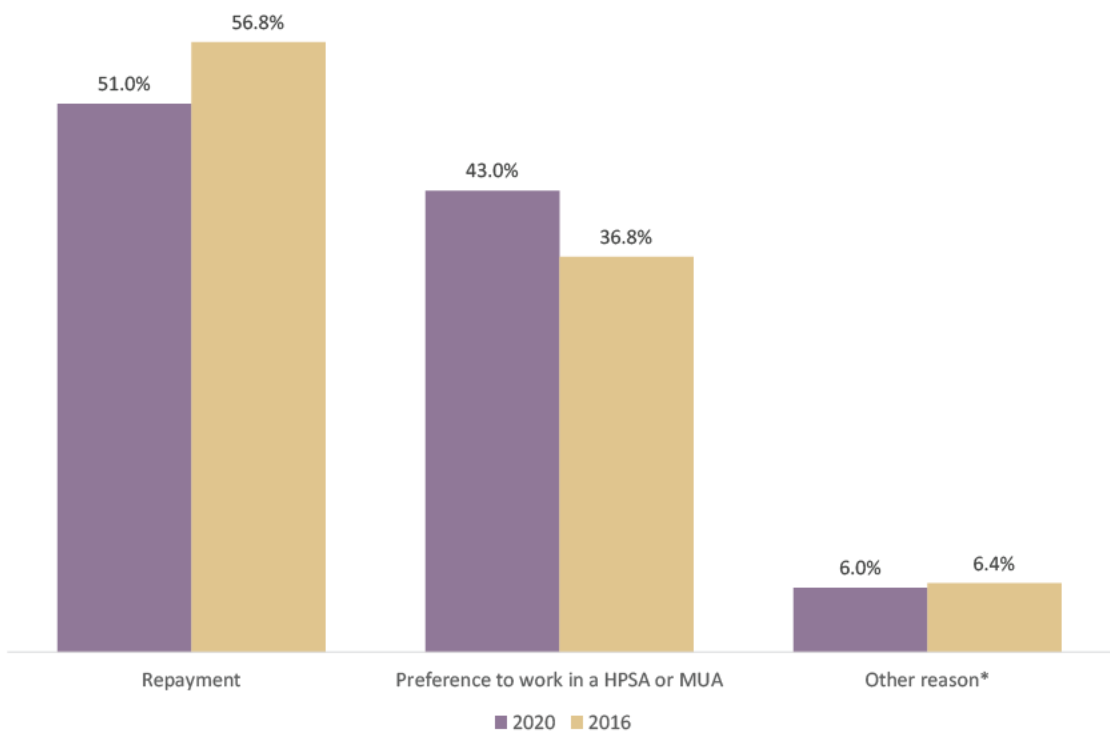
¹Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Physician Assistants*, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm> (visited September 14, 2021).

Obligation that Requires a Position in a HPSA or MUA

OBLIGATION THAT REQUIRES A POSITION IN A HPSA OR MUA

In 2020, 1.8% (2.6% in 2016) of recently Certified PAs indicated they are a National Health Service Corps Scholar or a state or federal loan repayment program participant, which requires practicing in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or Medically Underserved Area (MUA).

Motivation To Accept A Position In A Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Or Medically Underserved Area (MUA) For Recently Certified PAs Who Participated In A Loan Repayment Program



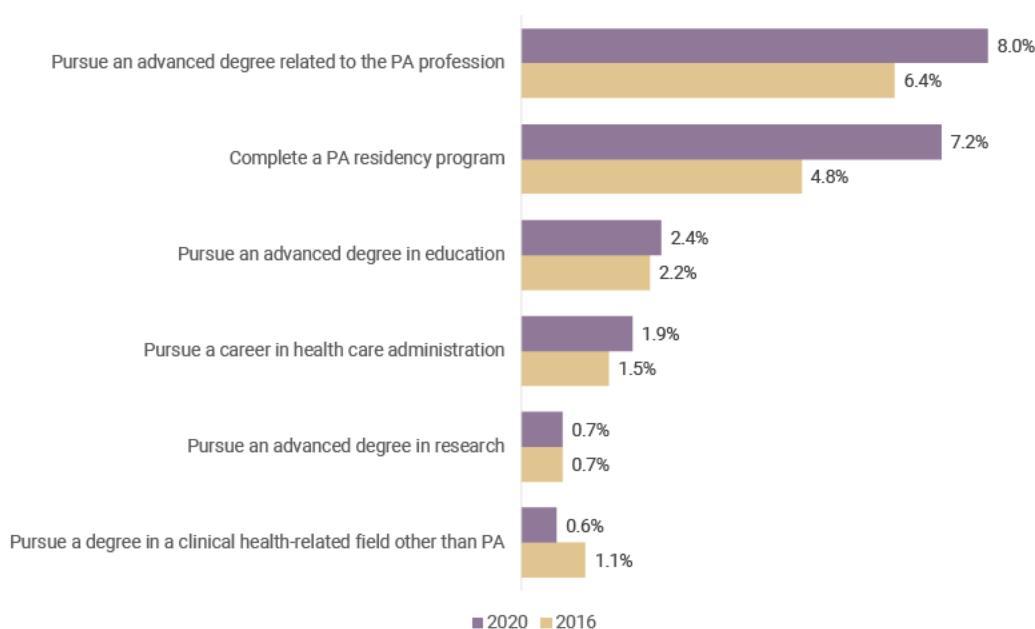
“Other” reasons cited include: already lived in a MUA, work life balance, and preferred location.

Plans to Seek Additional Education or Clinical Training

PLANS TO SEEK ADDITIONAL EDUCATION OR CLINICAL TRAINING

18.1% of recently Certified PAs indicated they plan to seek additional education or clinical training within the next three years (this does not include on-the-job training or required CME).

Reasons PAs Are Seeking Additional Education Or Clinical Training



Note: Recently Certified PAs could choose more than one reason.

Degree Planning To Pursue If Changing Health Fields

	Number 2020	Percent of Recently Certified PAs 2020	Number 2016	Percent of Recently Certified PAs 2016
Public Health	21	0.4%	24	0.5%
MD or DO	12	0.2%	21	0.4%
Other	0	0.0%	6	0.1%

Educational Debt*: Number And Percent

Debt Range	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	625	11.4%	475	10.3%
Less than \$25,000	174	3.2%	159	3.4%
\$25,000-\$49,999	208	3.8%	242	5.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	369	6.8%	434	9.4%
\$75,000-\$99,999	549	10.1%	563	12.2%
\$100,000-\$124,999	649	11.9%	704	15.2%
\$125,000-\$149,999	748	13.7%	682	14.7%
\$150,000-\$174,999	802	14.7%	612	13.2%
\$175,000-\$199,999	576	10.5%	355	7.7%
\$200,000-\$224,999	416	7.6%	223	4.8%
\$225,000 or more	345	6.3%	179	3.9%
TOTAL	5,461	100.0%	4,628	100.0%

*Educational debt upon completion of all training (undergraduate and graduate school combined.)

Note: In 2020, 231 recently Certified PAs chose "Prefer not to answer".

In 2020, 13.3% of recently Certified PAs who have accepted a position indicated that educational debt influenced their decision to seek a primary care or non-primary care position. In 2016, 19.1% were influenced. In 2020, of the PAs who had not accepted a position, 20.4% indicated their level of educational debt will influence their choice (21.8% for 2016.)

Educational Debt

Debt Range	2020	2016
Median	\$137,500	\$112,500
Mean	\$126,371	\$112,377

Practice Environment

PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

Recently Certified PAs were asked what attributes of their future practice environment were important to them.

Important Attributes of Practice Environment

Attribute of Practice Environment	2020		2016	
	Number who chose the attribute	Percent who ranked it as most important	Number who chose the attribute	Percent who ranked it as most important
Ability to practice in a collaborative environment where interprofessional engagement is emphasized	4,638	47.1%	3,384	44.3%
Ability to focus practice in area of interest	3,711	30.8%	3,020	35.4%
Ability to practice in geographic region of choice (i.e. rural, urban)	3,949	27.8%	3,210	28.6%
Ability to practice in a setting of choice (i.e. hospital, private office)	4,729	26.3%	3,741	28.9%
TOTAL	5,461	100.0%	4,628	100.0%

Note: 23 recently Certified PAs chose "Other" in 2020. Certified PAs who chose "Other" mentioned mentorship/new graduate support and working with underserved populations.

Recently Certified PAs were asked what attributes of personal/professional life balance were important to them.

Work Life Balance

Work Life Balance Attribute	2020		2016	
	Number who chose the Attribute	Percent who Ranked it as Most Important	Number who chose the Attribute	Percent who Ranked it as Most Important
Ability to maintain reasonable work hours	5,289	68.3%	4,247	70.8%
Ability to work flexible hours	2,605	16.8%	2,067	20.3%
Ability to take time off from my job	4,285	15.4%	3,259	13.0%
Ability to limit after hours responsibilities	3,719	18.3%	2,680	15.4%
Ability to pursue additional education	2,051	12.3%	1,726	16.7%

Note: Ability to maintain reasonable work hours was ranked as the number one attribute for both 2016 and 2020 that was important to their future practice environment.

Job Search for Clinical Position

JOB SEARCH

Recently Certified PAs Job Search And Status



Recently Certified PAs Job Search And Status

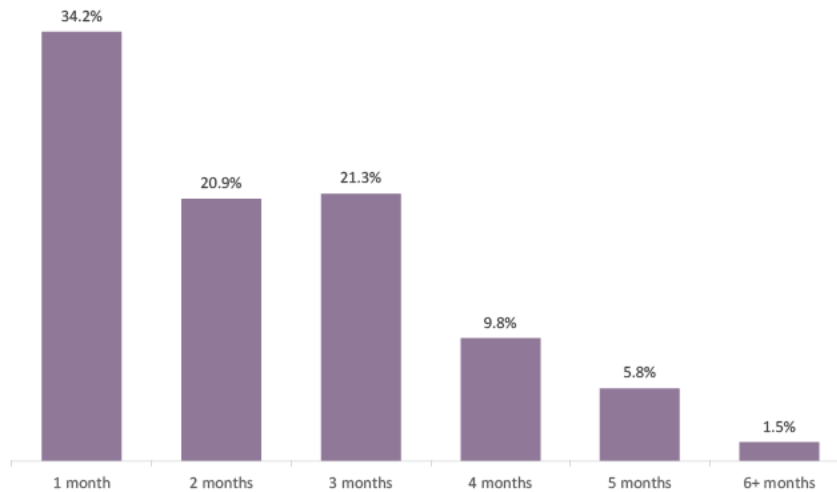
	2020 Number	2020 Percentage	2016 Number	2016 Percentage
Yes, accepted a clinical position as a PA	2,378	41.8%	3,284	68.8%
Yes, searched for a position but have not yet accepted one	3,066	53.9%	1,320	27.7%
No, have neither searched for nor accepted a clinical PA position	248	4.4%	166	3.5%

Recently Certified PAs who Accepted a Clinical Position

Amount of Time to Find a Job and Job Offers

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

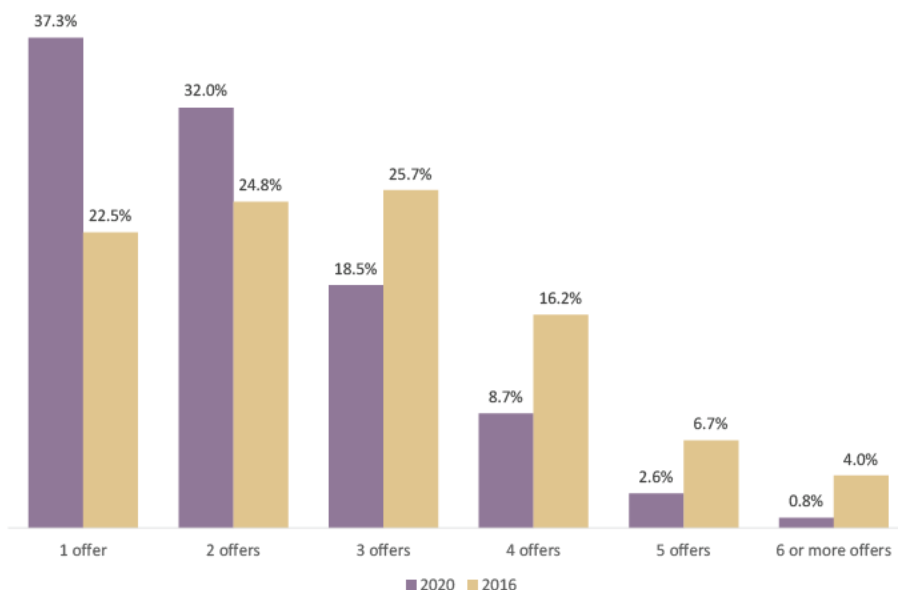
Number Of Months For Recently Certified PAs To Find And Accept A Clinical PA Position



Mean: 2.6 months

Median: 2 months

Number Of Job Offers Received By Recently Certified PAs Who Accepted A Clinical Position



62.7% of recently Certified PAs had two or more job offers in 2020 (compared to 77.5% in 2016.)

Challenges Faced When Searching for a Clinical Position

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Challenges Faced By Recently Certified PAs Who Have Searched For And Accepted A Clinical PA Position

In 2020, 40.6% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position indicated they faced challenges when searching for a job, compared to 18.5% in 2016. The following table presents the challenges that recently Certified PAs reported experiencing:

	2020	2016
Challenges	Percent	Percent
Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent grads	35.7%	13.3%
Lack of clinical PA employment opportunities	15.9%	1.5%
Abundance of PA graduates competing for same position	13.5%	3.7%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in geographic area preferred	12.7%	6.4%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in preferred specialty	12.5%	5.5%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in practice setting preferred	9.7%	4.7%
Inadequate salary and/or compensation	5.4%	2.7%
Lack of positions that meet obligations for employment (i.e. NHSC)	1.0%	0.8%
Lack of opportunities for spouse/partner	1.0%	0.5%

Note: Recently Certified PAs could choose more than one challenge.

“Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent graduates” and “lack of clinical PA employment opportunities” were the top two challenges cited for recently Certified PAs regardless of employment status in 2020.

Selection of Clinical Position Location

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Location Of Position Accepted By Recently Certified PAs

Geographical Location	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Area where grew up	914	38.4%	1,137	34.6%
Area where PA program located	771	32.4%	1,100	33.5%
Area lived in prior to attending PA program	610	25.7%	901	27.4%
Area where want to live	523	22.0%	729	22.2%
Rural area	311	13.1%	461	14.0%
Other area	247	10.4%	286	8.7%
Urban medically underserved area	213	9.0%	246	7.5%

Note: PAs could choose more than one location.

Position Accepted At A Training Site Of Clinical Rotation By Recently Certified PAs

Position at Training Site of Clinical Rotation	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	894	37.6%	1,267	38.6%
No	1,484	62.4%	2,017	61.4%

Of the recently Certified PAs who accepted a position in a rural area, 32.5% grew up in a rural area.

Of the recently Certified PAs who accepted a position in an urban medically underserved area, 24.9% grew up in an urban medically underserved area.

Hours Worked Per Week and Time Spent in Work Activities

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Hours Expected To Work Per Week By Recently Certified PAs

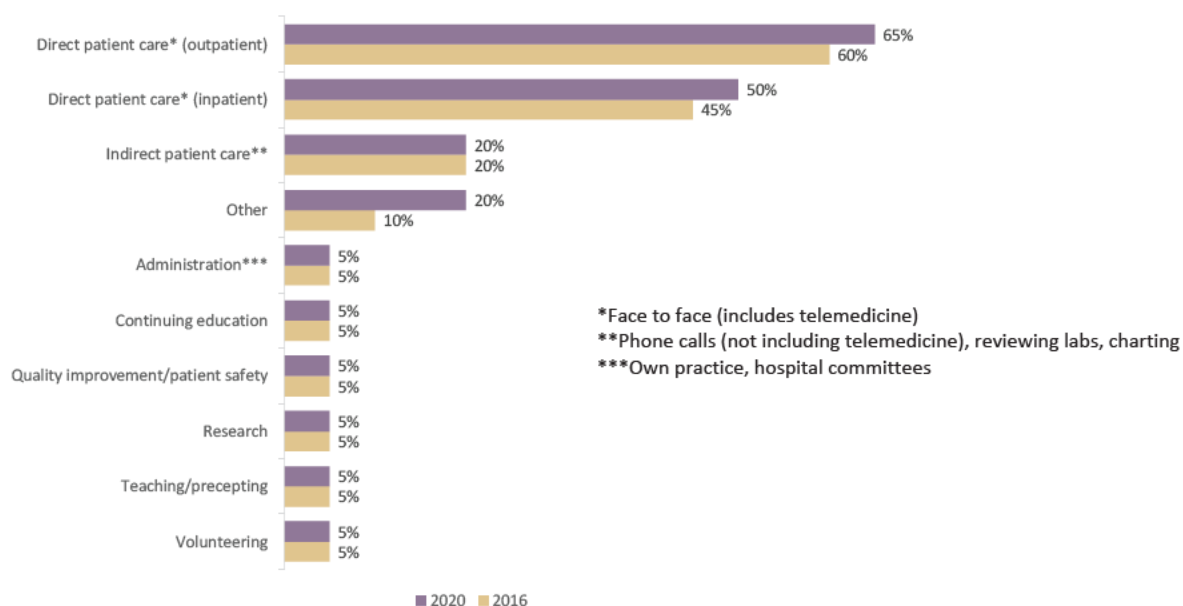
	2020		2016	
Hours	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-10 hours	6	0.3%	4	0.6%
11-20 hours	23	1.0%	21	0.6%
21-30 hours	49	2.1%	41	1.3%
31-40 hours	1,276	53.7%	1,609	49.0%
41-50 hours	866	36.4%	1,383	42.1%
More than 50 hours	158	6.7%	210	6.4%

Note: Close to half (43.1%) of recently Certified PAs who have accepted a clinical position expect to work more than 40 hours per week. That has decreased since 2016, when 48.5% expected to work more than 40 hours.

Average Hours Expected To Work Per Week

Years	Hours
2020	41.4
2016	41.8

Median Proportion Of Time Recently Certified PAs Expect To Spend In Activities



Practice Settings

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Practice Setting Of Recently Certified PAs

Practice Setting	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hospital	1,074	45.2%	1,700	51.8%
Office-based private practice	804	33.8%	1,004	30.5%
Urgent care	138	5.8%	175	5.3%
U.S. military (federal government)	80	3.4%	65	2.0%
Community health center	56	2.4%	90	2.7%
Rural health clinic	43	1.8%	76	2.3%
Other	39	1.6%	62	1.9%
Veterans Affairs (federal government)	21	0.9%	11	0.3%
Behavioral/mental health facility	20	0.8%	18	0.5%
Ambulatory surgical center	18	0.8%	13	0.4%
Extended care facility/Nursing home	13	0.5%	5	0.2%
Public or community health clinic (non-federally qualified)	13	0.5%	11	0.3%
Department of Defense (federal government)	7	0.3%	NA	NA
Rehabilitation facility	7	0.3%	4	0.1%
Public health service (federal government)	6	0.3%	7	0.2%
Indian health service (federal government)	5	0.2%	6	0.2%
School-based or college-based health center or school clinic	4	0.2%	9	0.3%
Occupational health setting	4	0.2%	3	0.1%
Home health care agency	3	0.1%	0	0.0%
Free clinic	3	0.1%	1	<0.1%
Bureau of Prisons (federal government)	2	0.1%	6	0.2%
Department of State (federal government)	2	0.1%	NA	NA
Hospice	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
Retail clinic	0	0.0%	NA	NA
Unsure/Don't know	15	0.6%	18	0.5%
TOTAL	2,378	100.0%	3,284	100.0%

NA- practice setting was not listed on the 2016 PA Professional Profile.

45.2% of recently Certified PAs who have accepted a position work in a hospital setting. Overall, 41.5% of all Certified PAs work in a hospital setting.¹

¹National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2021, July). 2020 Statistical Profile of Certified PAs: An Annual Report of the National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants.

Practice Areas

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Principal Clinical Practice Area Of Recently Certified PAs

Area of Practice	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Addiction Medicine	7	0.3%	NA	NA
Adolescent Medicine	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Anesthesiology	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Critical Care Medicine	104	4.4%	94	2.9%
Dermatology	63	2.6%	96	2.9%
Emergency Medicine	307	12.9%	633	19.3%
Family Medicine/General Practice	448	18.8%	623	19.0%
Gynecology	6	0.3%	4	0.1%
Hospice and Palliative Medicine	6	0.3%	2	0.1%
Hospital Medicine	123	5.2%	179	5.5%
Internal Medicine- General Practice	89	3.7%	146	4.4%
Internal Medicine- Subspecialties	182	7.7%	264	8.0%
Neurology	37	1.6%	24	0.7%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	39	1.6%	35	1.1%
Occupational Medicine	12	0.5%	4	0.1%
Ophthalmology	7	0.3%	0	0.0%
Otolaryngology	22	0.9%	31	0.9%
Pain Management	17	0.7%	27	0.8%
Pathology	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Pediatrics	45	1.9%	63	1.9%
Pediatrics- Subspecialties	36	1.5%	50	1.5%
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation	9	0.4%	5	0.2%
Preventive Medicine/Public Health	3	0.1%	0	0.0%
Psychiatry	68	2.9%	56	1.7%
Radiation Oncology	1	<0.1%	3	0.1%
Radiology	10	0.4%	9	0.3%
Surgery-General	95	4.0%	106	3.2%
Surgery-Subspecialties	431	18.1%	603	18.4%
Urology	22	0.9%	21	0.6%
Other	188	7.9%	206	6.3%
TOTAL	2,378	100.0%	3,284	100.0%

In 2020, 24.4% of recently Certified PAs were working in a primary care specialty (family medicine/ general practice, general internal medicine, or general pediatrics). For 2016 it was 25.3%.

Overall, 24.4% of the Certified PA workforce is practicing in primary care.

NA- practice area was not listed on the 2016 PA Professional Profile.

Salary Range Of Recently Certified PAs

Starting Salary Range	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than or equal to \$40,000	11	0.5%	4	0.1%
\$40,001-\$50,000	20	0.9%	22	0.7%
\$50,001-\$60,000	61	2.7%	51	1.6%
\$60,001-\$70,000	53	2.3%	76	2.4%
\$70,001-\$80,000	96	4.2%	307	9.6%
\$80,001-\$90,000	358	15.6%	970	30.3%
\$90,001-\$100,000	657	28.6%	1,034	32.3%
\$100,001-\$110,000	552	24.0%	433	13.5%
\$110,001-\$120,000	272	11.8%	165	5.2%
\$120,001-\$130,000	137	6.0%	84	2.6%
\$130,001-\$140,000	46	2.0%	29	0.9%
More than \$140,000	35	1.5%	24	0.8%
TOTAL	2,298	100.0%	3,199	100.0%

Note: "Prefer not to answer" was chosen by 80 recently Certified PAs in 2020. In 2016, 85 chose this response.

Annual Salary

Year	Median	Mean
2020	\$95,000	\$98,412
2016	\$95,000	\$92,293

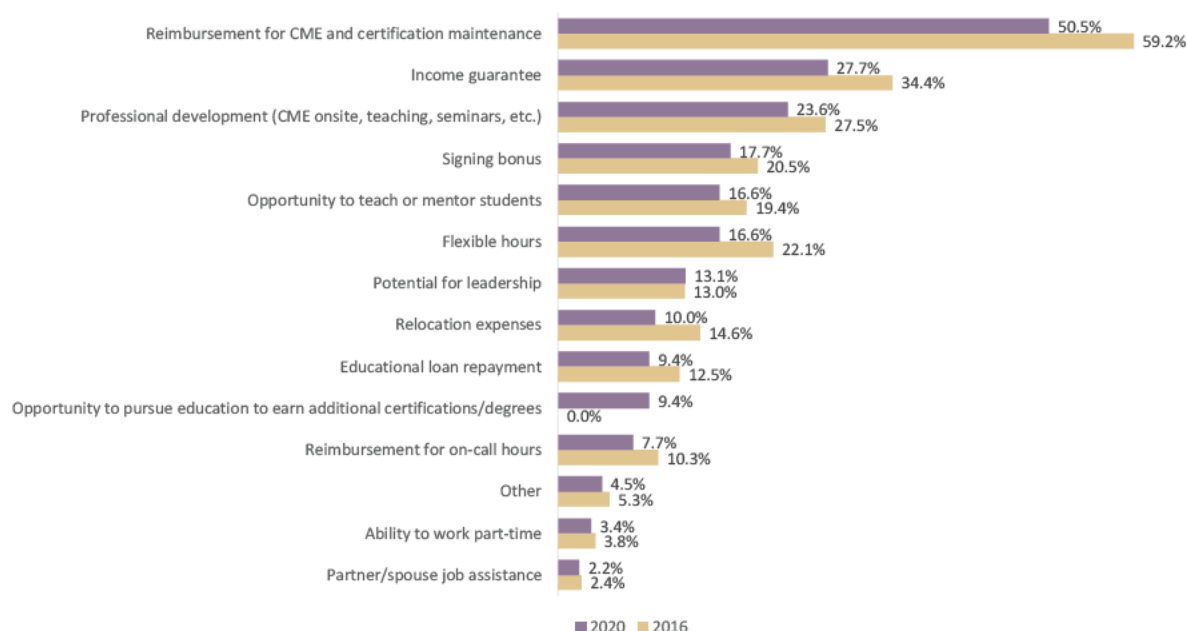
The highest mean salaries for recently Certified PAs were in Psychiatry, Gynecology, Radiology, and Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation.

Employment Incentives

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

Employment Incentives Offered To Recently Certified PAs

59.8% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position indicated they were offered employment incentives in 2020. In 2016, 68.3% were offered incentives.



Note: "Opportunity to pursue education to earn additional certifications/degrees" was not included in the 2016 PA Professional Profile.

Respondents were able to choose more than one incentive.

"Other" incentives included: bonuses, fellowship training, licensing fees, health insurance, etc.



For both 2020 and 2016, when asked to rank order the top incentives that had most influenced their decision to accept their position, the incentives most frequently selected:

1. Income guarantee
2. Reimbursement for CME and certification maintenance
3. Flexible hours

This differs from the graph above due to some incentives that were chosen, but not ranked in the top three.

Recently Certified PAs who Searched for but Have Not Accepted a Clinical Position or who Have Not Searched for a Clinical Position

Challenges Faced By Recently Certified PAs Who Have Not Accepted A Position Or Are Currently Searching For A Position

73.1% of recently Certified PAs who have searched for but not accepted a position indicated experiencing challenges. In 2016, 41.9% indicated experiencing challenges. The following table presents the challenges that PAs reported experiencing:

	2020	2016
Challenges	Percent	Percent
Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent grads	64.5%	30.1%
Lack of clinical PA employment opportunities	29.5%	4.5%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in geographic area preferred	27.5%	16.7%
Abundance of PA graduates competing for same position	24.1%	8.7%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in preferred specialty	23.3%	15.4%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in practice setting preferred	20.6%	10.2%
Inadequate salary and/or compensation	4.8%	5.1%
Lack of positions that meet obligations for employment (i.e. NHSC)	1.8%	1.4%
Lack of opportunities for spouse/partner	0.9%	1.0%

Note: PAs could choose multiple challenges.

26.9% who have searched for but have not accepted a position, indicated they have not experienced challenges when searching for a job.

In 2020, the top two challenges noted were “lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent graduates” and “lack of clinical PA employment opportunities.”

Reasons recently Certified PAs did not search for nor accept a position:

62.5% of recently Certified PAs who have not searched for nor accepted a position said they decided to take time off before they began their PA career. 37.1% cited “other” and listed reasons such as: Covid-19 pandemic, moving to a different area, and military obligation.

Reasons PAs Did Not Accept a Position Offered

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION

Reasons Recently Certified PAs Did Not Accept A Position

Reasons Cited	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not in preferred area of practice	170	5.5%	264	20.0%
Insufficient compensation	90	2.9%	142	10.8%
Other reason	76	2.5%	103	7.8%
Did not feel like it was a good personal match with potential supervisor	75	2.4%	86	6.5%
Insufficient benefits	65	2.1%	70	5.3%
Insufficient supervision onsite	36	1.2%	42	3.2%
Insufficient opportunities for continued professional growth	34	1.1%	40	3.0%
Wanted PA to assume too much responsibility for their level of experience	34	1.1%	44	3.3%
Would not allow PA to sufficiently utilize the competencies gained from education	31	1.0%	49	3.7%
Too much on-call time	21	0.7%	22	1.7%

Note: Respondents could choose multiple reasons.

"Other reasons" included: location too far, offered part-time, employer wouldn't negotiate.



11.3% of recently Certified PAs who have searched for but not yet accepted a position indicated they have turned down at least one offer.

Preferred Clinical Position Location

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Location Of Position Preferred By Recently Certified PAs Who Have Not Accepted A Position

Geographical Location	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Area where grew up	1,499	45.2%	603	40.6%
Area lived in prior to attending PA program	1,269	38.3%	486	32.7%
Area where want to live	1,190	35.9%	473	31.8%
Area where PA program located	1,179	35.6%	399	26.9%
Urban medically underserved area	496	15.0%	191	12.9%
Rural area	436	13.2%	171	11.5%
Other area	204	6.2%	110	7.4%

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one location.

“Other” responses include: close to family/spouse and where the best opportunity is located.



Males had a slightly higher percentage who chose “Area where grew up” as their preferred geographical location, 48.7% vs 44.2% for females.

38.3% indicated they would prefer an area where they lived prior to beginning their PA program.

Preferred Number of Work Hours Per Week

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

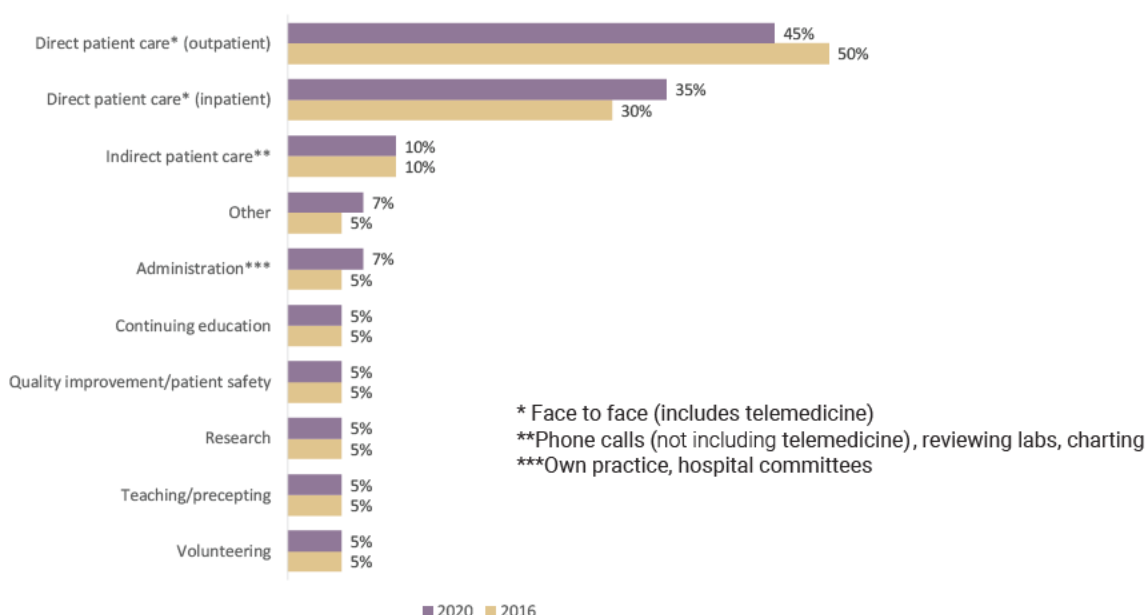
Preferred Work Hours per Week	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-10 hours	6	0.2%	5	0.3%
11-20 hours	7	0.3%	6	0.4%
21-30 hours	34	1.0%	23	1.5%
31-40 hours	2,123	64.1%	900	60.6%
41-50 hours	1,086	32.8%	512	34.4%
More than 50 hours	58	1.6%	39	2.6%

Note: 34.4% of recently Certified PAs who have not accepted a position prefer to work more than 40 hours per week when they do have a position. Of those who accepted a position, 43.1% expect to work more than 40 hours per week.

Preferred Time Spent in Work Activities

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Median Proportion of Time Recently Certified PAs Expect to Spend in the Following Activities



Preferred Practice Setting

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Preferred Practice Setting of Recently Certified PAs

Practice Setting	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Hospital	1,445	43.6%	590	39.7%
Office-based private practice	1,029	31.0%	499	33.6%
Urgent care	126	3.8%	92	6.2%
U.S. military (federal government)	14	0.5%	10	0.7%
Community health center	70	2.1%	34	2.3%
Rural health clinic	47	1.4%	20	1.3%
Other	21	0.6%	15	1.0%
Veterans Affairs (federal government)	39	1.2%	17	1.1%
Behavioral/mental health facility	16	0.5%	7	0.5%
Ambulatory surgical center	76	2.3%	19	1.3%
Extended care facility/Nursing home	3	0.1%	2	0.1%
Public or community health clinic (non-federally qualified)	21	0.6%	6	0.4%
Department of Defense (federal government)	7	0.2%	NA	NA
Rehabilitation facility	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Public health service (federal government)	4	0.1%	3	0.2%
Indian health service (federal government)	9	0.3%	3	0.2%
School-based or college-based health center or school clinic	4	0.1%	3	0.2%
Occupational health setting	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Home health care agency	1	0.1%	1	<0.1%
Free clinic	3	0.1%	1	<0.1%
Bureau of Prisons (federal government)	1	<0.1%	1	<0.1%
Department of State (federal government)	0	0.0%	NA	NA
Hospice	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
Retail clinic	1	<0.1%	NA	NA
Undecided/No preference	373	11.3%	162	10.9%
TOTAL	3,314	100.0%	1,485	100.0%

Note: NA- practice setting was not listed on the 2016 PA Professional Profile.

More recently Certified PAs who have not yet accepted nor sought a position prefer to work in a hospital setting in 2020 than in 2016 (43.6% vs 38.9%). 45.2% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position work in a hospital setting.

11.3% were undecided or had no preference.

Preferred Practice Area

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Preferred Practice Area Of Recently Certified PAs

Area of Practice	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Addiction Medicine	5	0.2%	NA	NA
Adolescent Medicine	3	0.1%	5	0.3%
Anesthesiology	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
Critical Care Medicine	105	3.2%	24	1.6%
Dermatology	163	4.9%	89	6.0%
Emergency Medicine	607	18.3%	281	18.9%
Family Medicine/General Practice	586	17.7%	304	20.5%
Gynecology	14	0.4%	8	0.5%
Hospice and Palliative Medicine	4	0.1%	1	<0.1%
Hospital Medicine	166	5.0%	53	3.6%
Internal Medicine- General Practice	146	4.4%	62	4.2%
Internal Medicine- Subspecialties	190	5.7%	88	5.9%
Neurology	13	0.4%	7	0.5%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	95	2.9%	41	2.8%
Occupational Medicine	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Ophthalmology	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Otolaryngology	13	0.4%	4	0.3%
Pain Management	5	0.2%	1	<0.1%
Pathology	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Pediatrics	111	3.3%	51	3.4%
Pediatrics- Subspecialties	81	2.4%	34	2.3%
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation	2	0.1%	1	<0.1%
Preventive Medicine/Public Health	4	0.1%	2	0.1%
Psychiatry	46	1.4%	11	0.7%
Radiation Oncology	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
Radiology	8	0.2%	2	0.1%
Surgery-General	146	4.4%	62	4.2%
Surgery-Subspecialties	448	13.5%	185	12.5%
Urology	8	0.2%	1	<0.1%
Other	55	1.7%	37	2.5%
No Preference	285	8.6%	131	8.8%

25.4% of recently Certified PAs who have not accepted nor seeking a position would prefer to work in primary care (family medicine/ general practice, general internal medicine, general pediatrics). This is a decrease from 2016, when 28.1% preferred a position in primary care.

27.7% of recently Certified female PAs who have not accepted nor seeking a position would prefer a position in primary care, compared to 18.1% of recently Certified male PAs who have not accepted a position.

Salary Desired

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Minimum Starting Salary Range Desired By Recently Certified PAs

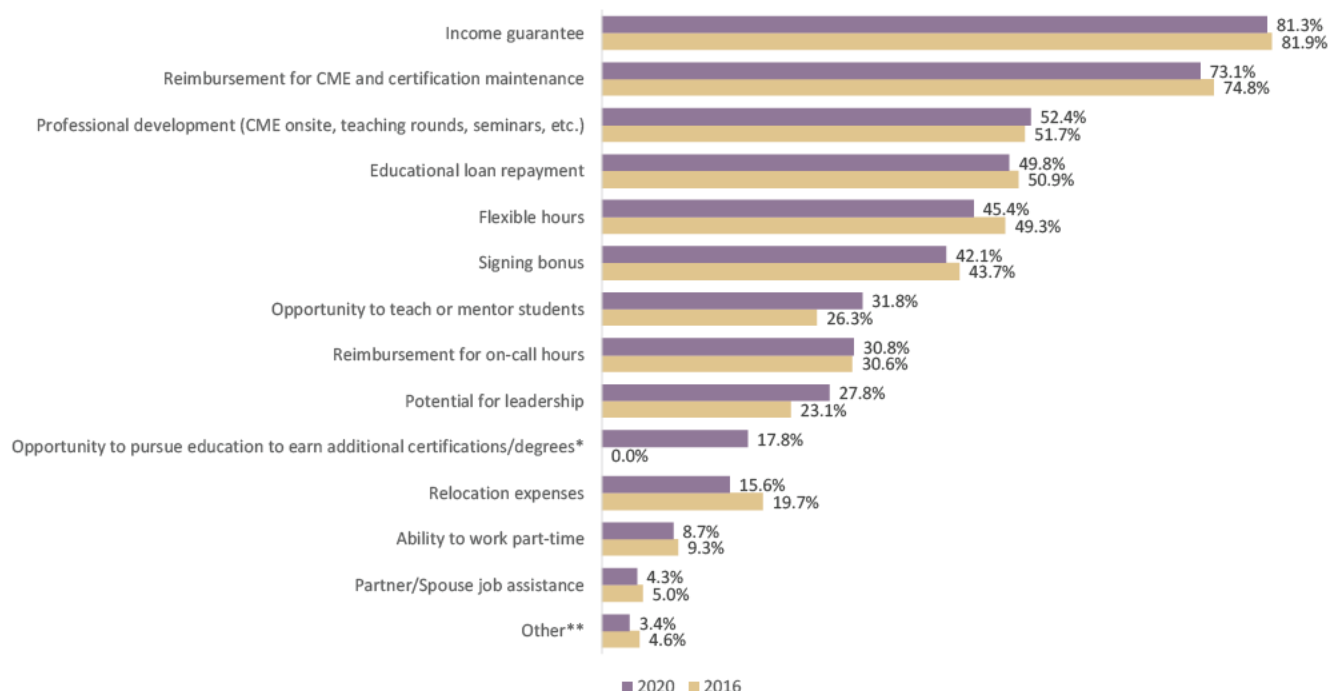
Starting Salary Range	2020		2016	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than or equal to \$40,000	1	<0.1%	0	0.0%
\$40,001-\$50,000	3	0.1%	1	0.1%
\$50,001-\$60,000	5	0.2%	0	0.0%
\$60,001-\$70,000	16	0.5%	26	1.8%
\$70,001-\$80,000	138	4.3%	190	13.2%
\$80,001-\$90,000	799	24.7%	634	44.1%
\$90,001-\$100,000	1,344	41.6%	431	30.0%
\$100,001-\$110,000	669	20.7%	121	8.4%
\$110,001-\$120,000	161	5.0%	19	1.3%
\$120,001-\$130,000	75	2.3%	13	0.9%
\$130,001-\$140,000	13	0.4%	3	0.2%
More than \$140,000	7	0.2%	1	0.1%
TOTAL	3,231	100.0%	1,439	100.0%

28.6% of recently Certified PAs who have not yet accepted nor are seeking a position indicated that the minimum salary they would accept for their first position would be over \$100,000 per year. For recently Certified PAs who have accepted a position, 45.3% are earning over \$100,000 per year.

Employment Incentives Desired

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT SEEKING A POSITION

Employment Incentives Desired By Recently Certified PAs



Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one incentive.

*"Opportunity to pursue education to earn additional certifications/degrees" was not included in the 2016 PA Professional Profile.

**"Other" responses included: health care benefits, maternity leave, time off.



When asked to rank the top incentives they are looking for in their first clinical position, the incentives that ranked number one most often were:

1. Income guarantee
2. Educational loan repayment
3. Flexible hours

This differs from the graph above due to some incentives that were chosen, but not ranked in the top three.

Future Data on Certified PAs

FUTURE DATA ON CERTIFIED PAs AND CITATION

NCCPA pursues a research agenda that focuses on its core activities and the ongoing evaluation and improvement of its exams and certification program. NCCPA is also committed to collaborating with external researchers to share data in appropriate and ethical ways to further advance the health and safety of the public or otherwise conduct useful research related to PAs. To facilitate research collaborations, NCCPA has developed *Policies for the Review of Requests for Data and External Research Collaboration* and guidelines that describe the process external researchers will need to follow for submitting requests for data and how those requests will be reviewed. The policies and guidelines are provided on NCCPA's website at <https://www.nccpa.net/resources/nccpa-research>.

This *Statistical Profile of Recently Certified Physician Assistants* will be updated and published annually. In addition, there are other reports that are currently available. Those reports include:

- *Statistical Profile of Certified PAs*
- *Statistical Profile of Certified PAs by Specialty*
- *Statistical Profile of Certified PAs by State*

Please cite this working using the following:

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This study is exempt from IRB review pursuant to the terms of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Policy for Protection of Human Research Subjects at 45 C.F.R. §46.101(b).

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