



## 2021 Statistical Profile of Recently Certified PAs

### ANNUAL REPORT

National Commission on  
Certification of PAs

# Table of Contents

<b>Message from the President &amp; CEO</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About the Data Collection &amp; Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
• Introduction	
• Data Editing and Analysis	
• About NCCPA	
<b>Geographic Distribution</b>	<b>6-8</b>
• Distribution of Recently Certified PAs by State	
• Recently Certified PAs by State (Number, Percent of Total and Rank)	
<b>Gender and Age</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Language Other than English Spoken with Patients</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Assessment of Opportunities</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Obligation that Requires a Position in a HPSA or MUA</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Plans to Seek Additional Education or Clinical Training</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Educational Debt</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Practice Environment and Work Life Balance</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Job Search</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Recently Certified PAs Who Have Accepted a Position</b>	<b>18-26</b>
• Time to Find a Job and Job Offers	
• Challenges Faced in Job Search	
• Selection of Clinical Position Location	
• Hours Worked Per Week and Time Spent in Work Activities	
• Practice Setting	
• Practice Area	
• Salary	
• Employment Incentives	





## **Recently Certified PAs Who Have Searched for But Have Not Accepted a Clinical Position or Have Not Searched for a Clinical Position**

**27-35**

- Challenges Faced in Job Search
- Reasons PAs Did Not Accept a Position Offered
- Selection of Preferred Clinical Position Location
- Hours Worked and Time Spent in Preferred Work Activities
- Practice Setting Preferred
  - Practice Area Preferred
  - Salary Desired
  - Employment Incentives Desired

## **Future Data on Certified PAs and Citation**

**36**



# Message from the President and CEO

Dear Colleagues:

I am always excited when we release the Statistical Profile of Recently Certified PAs because this report focuses on the next generation of PAs and the future of the PA profession. We are pleased to announce another record-breaking year, with almost 11,000 PAs earning NCCPA certification in 2021. This cohort was represented in every state and the District of Columbia. The data shared in this report highlights what's important to this group as they embark on their job search and in their first clinical position. When available, data from 2017 are provided to show the five-year trends.



Over 75% of this cohort is less than 30 years old. While the diversity is slightly better than the entire population of PAs, there is still much work to be done for the PA profession to be representative of the patient population. We continue to see a slight but steady decline in the number of PAs choosing to start their careers in a primary care role. When looking at the data from the 2017, 2020, and 2021 cohorts, there is a gradual decrease in educational debt's impact on deciding whether to seek a primary care position. Of those who accepted a position, 22.1% reported working in primary care. Similarly, 23.1% of those still searching for a position were interested in primary care. Almost half (46.8%) of those who have found a job are working in a hospital setting, and 42.1% of those searching for a job hope to work in this setting.

Our report on the 2020 cohort reflected some of the challenges that recently Certified PAs faced as they were beginning their careers in the midst of the pandemic. We were pleased to see improvements for this 2021 group. In 2020, of those who accepted a position, 40.6% reported challenges when searching for a position, and that dropped to 35.6% for 2021. For those who have not accepted a position, 73.1% of the 2020 cohort reported challenges, compared to 60.6% of the 2021 group. Almost one-third (32.2%) of the 2021 cohort accepted a position within one month of starting their search, and 65.1% had two or more offers. This most recent cohort also saw a starting salary increase, with over 50% earning \$100,000 or more.

We hope you find this report interesting and useful. On behalf of NCCPA, we appreciate the PAs in this 2021 cohort for taking the time to provide this important data, and we wish them all the very best as they embark on an exciting and rewarding career.

Sincerely,

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

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

# About the Data Collection and Methodology

## Introduction

Since certifying the first 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 2021. The participants included in this report answered at least a portion of the survey between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021. In addition, some data were obtained from other NCCPA data collection strategies (as noted within the report.) As of December 31, 2021, 7,446 recently Certified PAs provided responses out of the 10,950 recently Certified PAs with access to the PA Professional Profile (overall 68.0% response rate.) In 2021, response rates varied by quarter: 1st: 70.6%, 2nd: 67.3%, 3rd: 64.3%, and 4th: 62.4%. Data for age, gender, and geographic distribution include all 10,950 recently Certified PAs. All other data elements included were derived from the responses of the recently Certified PAs.

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 accepted a position and those who have not yet accepted one.) Analyses of the data consist primarily of descriptive statistics.

## About NCCPA

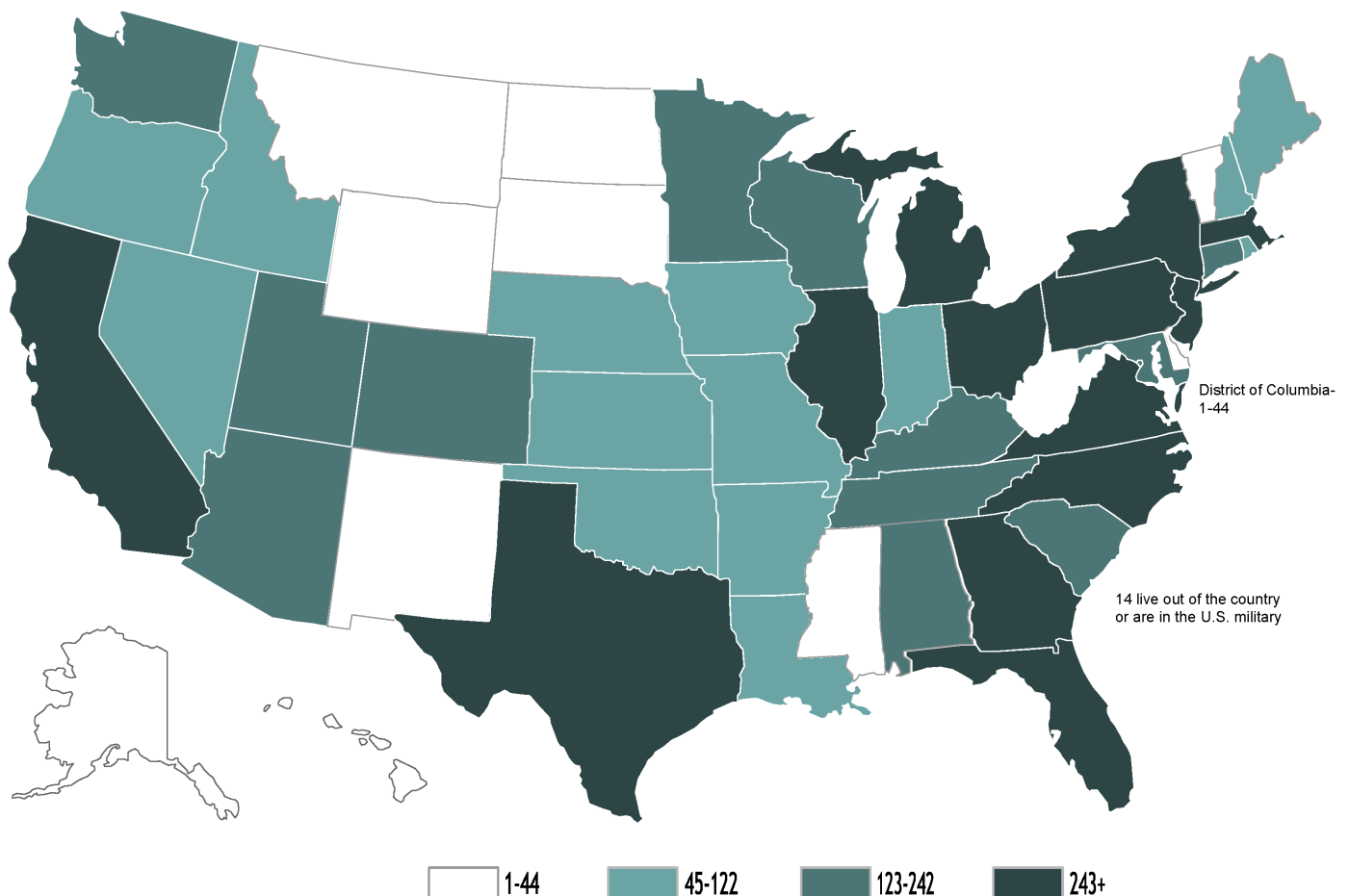
NCCPA is the only certifying organization for PAs in the U.S. Established as a not-for-profit organization in 1974, NCCPA provides certification programs that reflect standards for clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning, and other medical skills and professional behaviors required upon entry into practice and throughout the careers of PAs. All U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories have decided to rely on NCCPA certification as one of the criteria for licensure or regulation of PAs. More than 185,000 PAs have been certified since 1975, and over 158,000 were certified at the end of 2021.

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 293 (July 2022) to 325 by 2024, 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 10,950 recently Certified PAs who had access to the PA Professional Profile in 2021. The map illustrates the distribution of those PAs.

# Distribution of Recently Certified PAs

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

State	2021 Number	2021 Percent (Rank)	2017 Number	2017 Percent (Rank)	Percent Change 2017-2021
Alabama	124	1.1% (26)	81	0.9% (30)	53.1%
Alaska	22	0.2% (47)	21	0.2% (47)	4.8%
Arizona	213	1.9% (18)	205	2.3% (16)	3.9%
Arkansas	54	0.5% (36)	51	0.6% (38)	5.9%
<b>California</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>8.0% (2)</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>6.2% (4)</b>	<b>58.8%</b>
Colorado	237	2.2% (15)	160	1.8% (19)	48.1%
Connecticut	206	1.9% (19)	148	1.7% (20)	39.2%
Delaware	32	0.3% (44)	24	0.3% (45)	33.3%
District of Columbia	19	0.2% (50)	23	0.3% (46)	-17.4%
<b>Florida</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>6.9% (3)</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>6.5% (3)</b>	<b>33.7%</b>
Georgia	290	2.7% (13)	215	2.5% (14)	34.9%
Hawaii	28	0.3% (46)	9	0.1% (50)	211.1%
Idaho	73	0.7% (35)	76	0.9% (32)	-3.9%
Illinois	332	3.0% (11)	268	3.1% (10)	23.9%
Indiana	216	2.0% (17)	138	1.6% (22)	56.5%
Iowa	98	0.9% (29)	85	1.0% (29)	15.3%
Kansas	78	0.7% (34)	54	0.6% (37)	44.4%
Kentucky	144	1.3% (25)	96	1.1% (26)	50.0%
Louisiana	95	0.9% (31)	91	1.0% (27)	4.4%
Maine	46	0.4% (39)	43	0.5% (39)	7.0%
Maryland	197	1.8% (20)	176	2.0% (18)	11.9%
Massachusetts	400	3.7% (7)	314	3.6% (9)	27.4%
Michigan	399	3.6% (8)	369	4.2% (7)	8.1%
Minnesota	223	2.0% (16)	189	2.2% (17)	18.0%
Mississippi	30	0.3% (45)	35	0.4% (42)	-14.3%
Missouri	122	1.1% (27)	88	1.0% (28)	38.6%
Montana	43	0.4% (41)	32	0.4% (43)	34.4%
Nebraska	95	0.9% (31)	59	0.7% (34)	61.0%
Nevada	90	0.8% (33)	65	0.7% (33)	38.5%
New Hampshire	49	0.4% (38)	56	0.6% (35)	-12.5%
New Jersey	318	2.9% (12)	231	2.6% (12)	37.7%
New Mexico	43	0.4% (42)	39	0.4% (41)	10.3%
<b>New York</b>	<b>1,017</b>	<b>9.3% (1)</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>10.3% (1)</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
North Carolina	514	4.7% (6)	440	5.0% (5)	16.8%
North Dakota	21	0.2% (48)	18	0.2% (48)	16.7%
Ohio	374	3.4% (9)	357	4.1% (8)	4.8%
Oklahoma	96	0.9% (27)	81	0.9% (31)	18.5%

# Distribution of Recently Certified PAs (cont.)

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

State	2021 Number	2021 Percent (Rank)	2017 Number	2017 Percent (Rank)	Percent Change 2017-2021
Oregon	110	1.0% (28)	99	1.1% (25)	11.1%
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>6.8% (4)</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>8.0% (2)</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
Rhode Island	53	0.5% (37)	42	0.5% (40)	26.2%
South Carolina	171	1.6% (23)	105	1.2% (24)	62.9%
South Dakota	36	0.3% (43)	32	0.4% (44)	12.5%
Tennessee	242	2.2% (14)	223	2.5% (13)	8.5%
<b>Texas</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>6.3% (5)</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>5.0% (6)</b>	<b>55.5%</b>
Utah	152	1.4% (24)	109	1.2% (23)	39.4%
Vermont	20	0.2% (49)	18	0.2% (49)	11.1%
Virginia	339	3.1% (10)	235	2.7% (11)	44.3%
Washington	181	1.7% (22)	142	1.6% (21)	26.5%
West Virginia	44	0.4% (40)	55	0.6% (36)	-20.0%
Wisconsin	194	1.8% (21)	208	2.4% (15)	-6.7%
Wyoming	5	<0.1% (51)	9	0.1% (51)	-44.4%
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>10,936</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>8,770</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>24.7%</b>

\*Note: PAs who reported an address in the U.S. Additionally, 14 recently Certified PAs were living abroad.

Percent change reflects count change in number of recently Certified PAs in each state from 2017 to 2021.

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

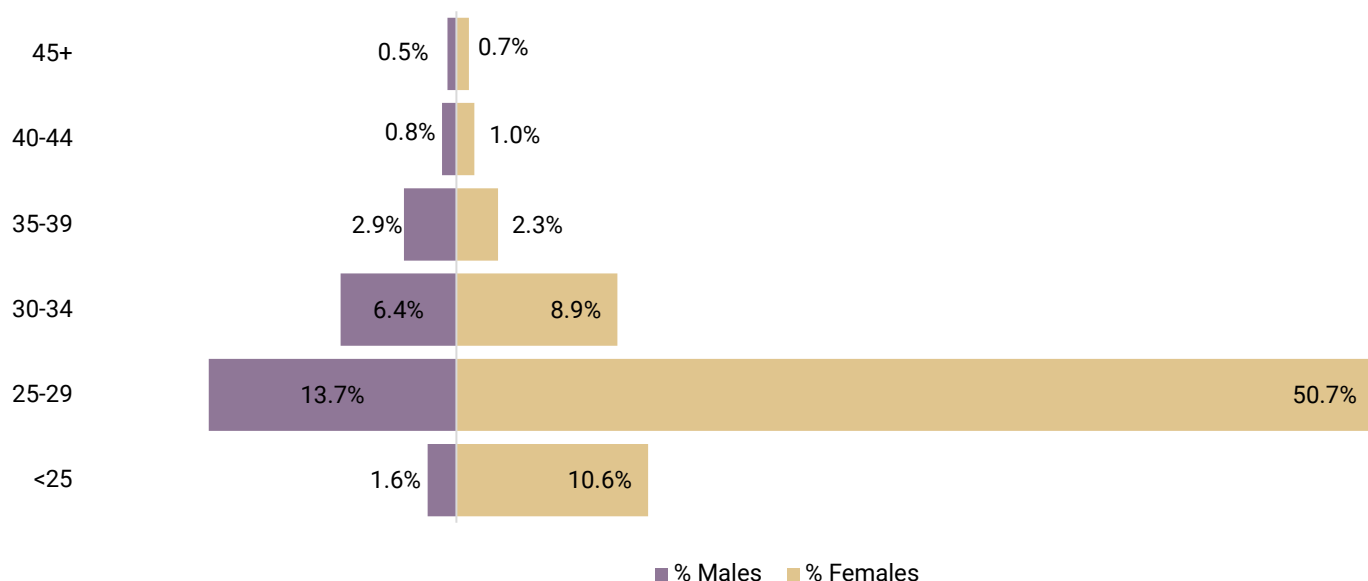
The states with the greatest number of recently Certified PAs include: New York, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Texas. These five states are also the top five most populous for all Certified PAs.



# 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	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Male	25.9%	-1.8%
Female	74.1%	1.8%
Non-binary	<0.1%	NA
Prefer not to answer	<0.1%	NA

Median age of recently Certified PAs:

2021: 27 years

2017: 27 years

Median age of all Certified PAs is 38.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.  
NA- Gender identity choice first included in 2021.

### Recently Certified PAs by Age

Age Group	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
<25	12.2%	-1.2%
25-29	64.3%	6.8%
30-34	15.3%	2.5%
35-39	5.2%	-1.2%
40-44	1.8%	-0.9%
45+	1.2%	-1.0%

# Race and Ethnicity of Recently Certified PAs

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

### Number and Percent of Recently Certified PAs by Race

Race	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
White	76.7%	-4.0%
Asian	10.3%	2.9%
Multi-race	4.1%	1.5%
Black/African American	3.3%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.3%	0.0%
Other	1.7%	-0.4%
Prefer not to answer	3.2%	-0.9%

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

### Ethnicity: Percent Who Indicated They are of Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish Origin

2021	8.9%
2017	6.9%

The percentage of recently Certified PAs of Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin has steadily increased since NCCPA started gathering this data in 2012.

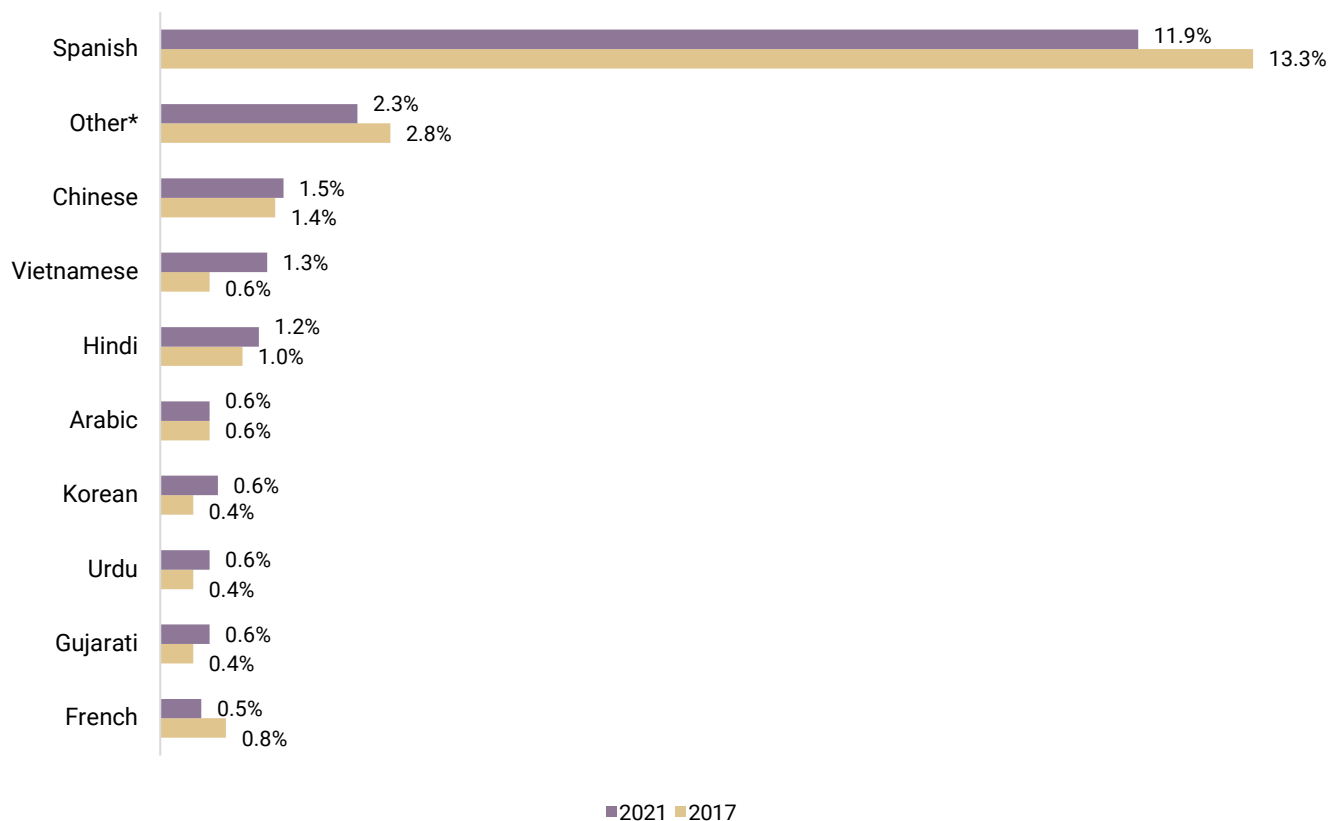
# Top Languages Spoken

## LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH SPOKEN WITH PATIENTS

### Percent of Recently Certified PAs Who Can Communicate with Patients in a Language Other Than English

2021	19.8%
2017	20.8%

### Top 10 Languages Other Than English that Recently Certified PAs Use to Communicate with Patients



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

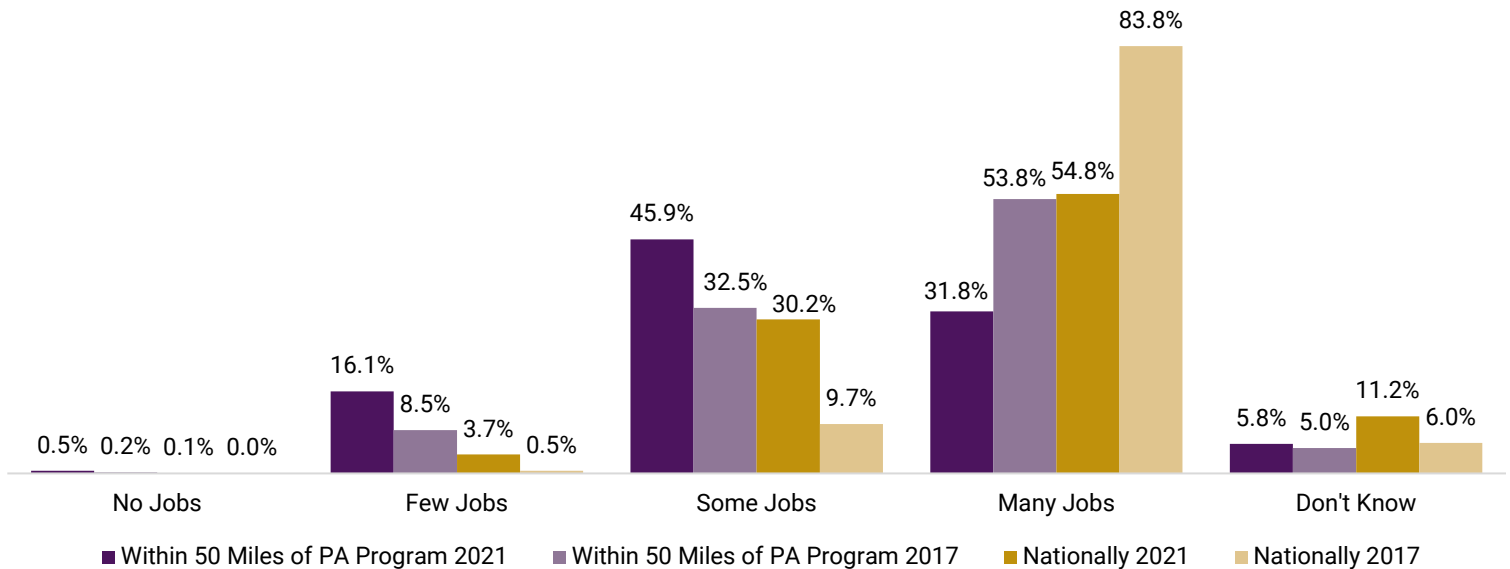
### Percent Who Indicated They Can Speak Two Or More Languages in Addition to English:

2021	3.9%
2017	3.8%

# Assessment of Opportunities

## ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES

### Assessment of Job Opportunities



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

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the PA profession will grow 28% from 2021-2031 (much faster than the average for all occupations)<sup>1</sup>. The average growth for all occupations during the same time period is 5%.

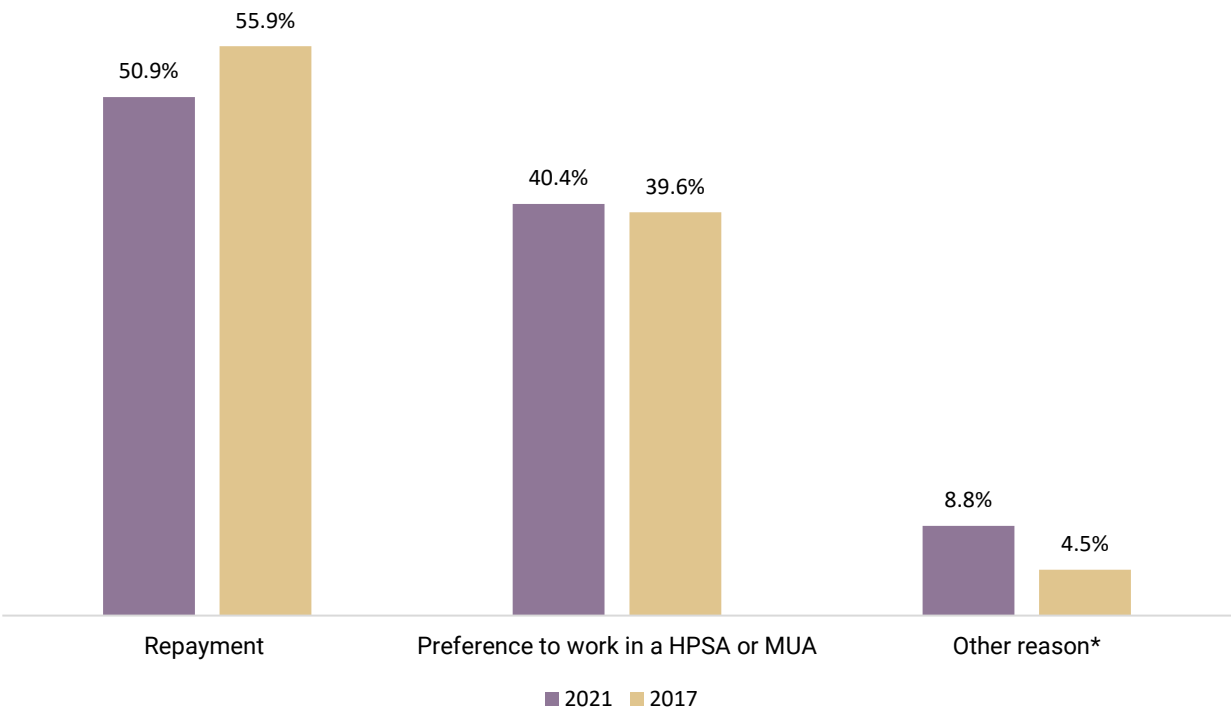
<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Physician Assistants*, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm> (visited September 19, 2022).

# Obligation that Requires a Position in a HPSA or MUA

## OBLIGATION THAT REQUIRES A POSITION IN A HPSA OR MUA

In 2021, 1.9% (2.6% in 2017) 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: preferred location, working in hometown, which is a MUA, and doing a residency in a MUA.

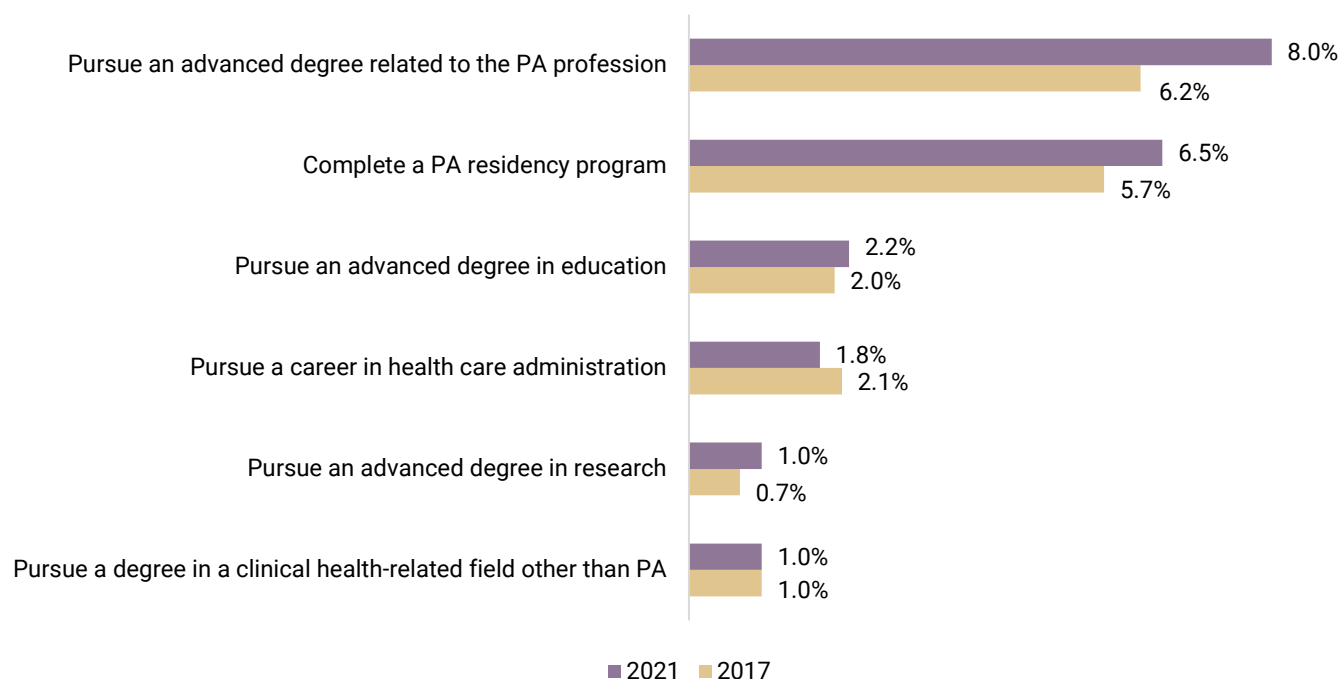


# Plans to Seek Additional Education or Clinical Training

## PLANS TO SEEK ADDITIONAL EDUCATION OR CLINICAL TRAINING

19.6% 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 select more than one reason.

### Degree Planning to Pursue if Changing Health Fields

Degree	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Public Health	0.6%	0.1%
MD or DO	0.3%	-0.1%

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

### Educational Debt\*

Debt Range	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
None	11.7%	1.9%
Less than \$25,000	3.5%	0.2%
\$25,000-\$49,999	4.4%	-0.7%
\$50,000-\$74,999	8.2%	-0.1%
\$75,000-\$99,999	10.9%	-0.9%
\$100,000-\$124,999	13.7%	-1.6%
\$125,000-\$149,999	13.0%	-1.7%
\$150,000-\$174,999	14.3%	0.5%
\$175,000-\$199,999	9.0%	-0.3%
\$200,000-\$224,999	6.3%	1.6%
\$225,000 or more	5.0%	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>NA</b>

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

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

Note: In 2021, 240 recently Certified PAs chose "Prefer not to answer".

In 2021, 11.6% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position indicated that educational debt influenced their decision to seek a primary care or non-primary care position. In 2017, 15.1% said educational debt influenced their choice. In 2021, of the PAs who had not accepted a position, 18.5% indicated their level of educational debt will influence their choice (24.4% in 2017.)

### Educational Debt

Debt Range	2021	2017
Median	\$112,500	\$112,500
Mean	\$128,803	\$114,706

# 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	2021 Percent who Ranked it as Most Important	Percent Change 2017-2021
Ability to practice in a collaborative environment where interprofessional engagement is emphasized	46.7%	1.0%
Ability to focus practice in area of interest	30.8%	-2.2%
Ability to practice in geographic region of choice (i.e., rural, urban)	23.8%	-3.8%
Ability to practice in a setting of choice (i.e., hospital, private office)	22.9%	-6.6%

Note: 14 recently Certified PAs chose “other” in 2021. Certified PAs who chose “other” mentioned teamwork, having a physician willing to teach/mentor/support them, and working virtually.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

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

### Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance Attribute	2021 Percent who Ranked it as Most Important	Percent change 2017-2021
Ability to maintain reasonable work hours	62.6%	-6.6%
Ability to work flexible hours	16.5%	-4.1%
Ability to take time off from my job	14.8%	0.8%
Ability to limit after hours responsibilities	18.2%	1.6%
Ability to pursue additional education	11.2%	-5.3%

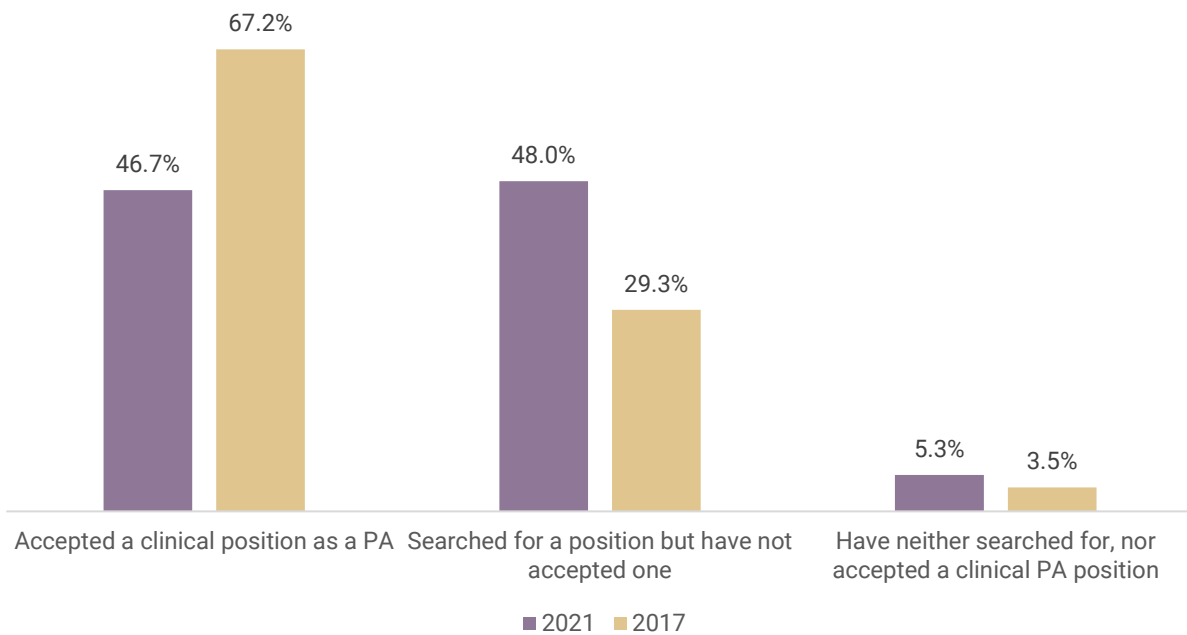
Note: Recently Certified PAs ranked the ability to maintain reasonable work hours as the most important attribute of their future practice environment in 2017 and 2021.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

# Job Search for Clinical Position

## JOB SEARCH

### Recently Certified PAs Job Search and Status



### Recently Certified PAs Job Search and Status

Job Status	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Yes, accepted a clinical position as a PA	46.7%	-20.5%
Yes, searched for a position but have not yet accepted one	48.0%	18.7%
No, have neither searched for nor accepted a clinical PA position	5.3%	1.8%

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

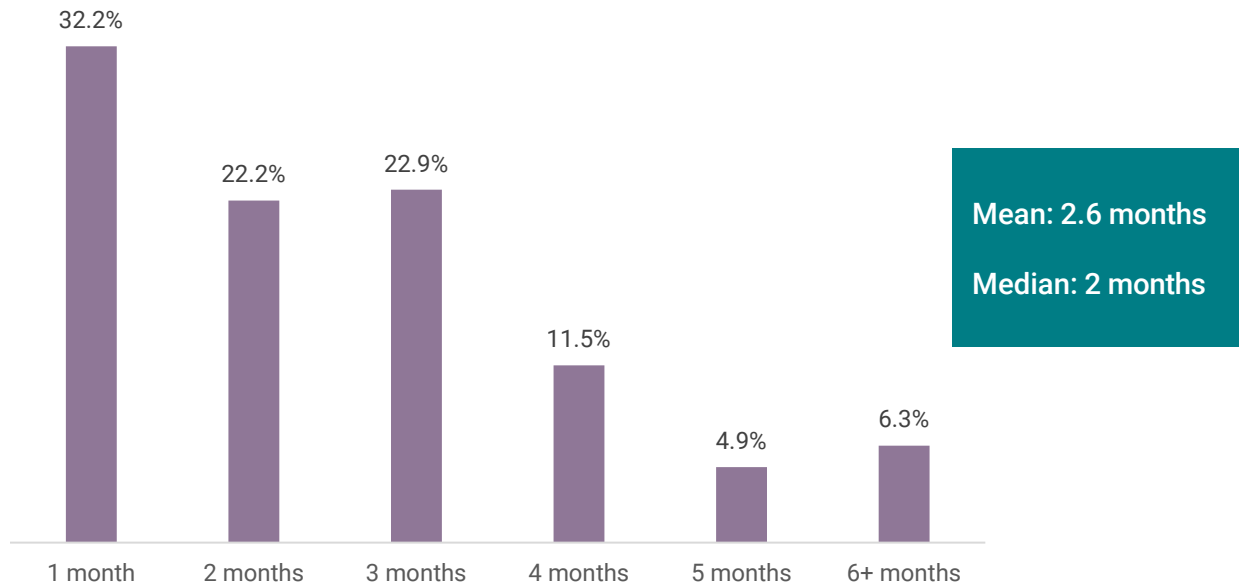
# Recently Certified PAs Who Accepted a Clinical Position



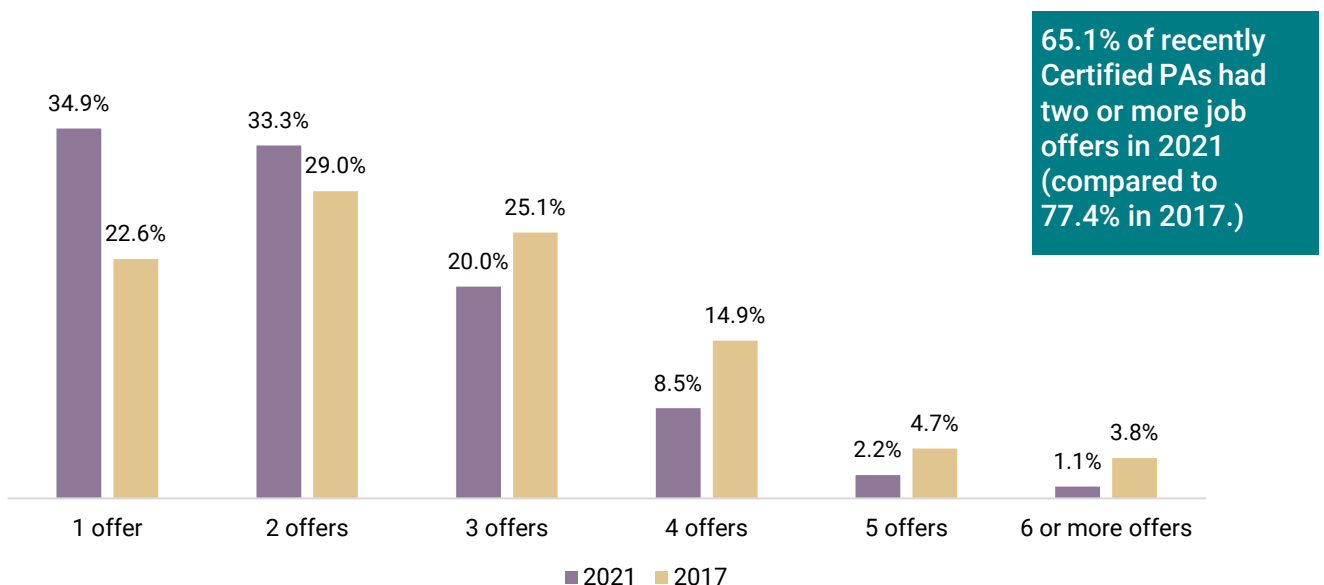
# Amount of Time to Find a Job and Job Offers

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

## Number of Months for Recently Certified PAs to Find and Accept a Clinical PA Position



## Number of Job Offers Received by Recently Certified PAs Who Accepted a Clinical Position



# 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 2021, 35.6% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position indicated they faced challenges when searching for a job, compared to 20.7% in 2017. The following table presents the challenges that recently Certified PAs reported experiencing:

Challenges	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent grads	31.0%	15.1%
Abundance of PA graduates competing for same position	12.8%	7.8%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in preferred specialty	11.0%	4.6%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in geographic area preferred	10.7%	3.6%
Lack of clinical PA employment opportunities	8.5%	6.3%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in practice setting preferred	8.4%	3.9%
Inadequate salary and/or compensation	5.7%	1.6%
Lack of positions that meet obligations for employment (i.e., NHSC)	1.0%	-1.0%
Lack of opportunities for spouse/partner	1.0%	0.3%

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

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

"Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent graduates" and "Abundance of PA graduates competing for same position" were the top two challenges cited by recently Certified PAs regardless of employment status in 2021.

# Selection of Clinical Position Location

## RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

### Location of Position Accepted by Recently Certified PAs

Geographical Location	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Area where PA program located	36.8%	3.9%
Area where grew up	36.3%	0.4%
Area lived in prior to attending PA program	27.8%	1.1%
Area where want to live	23.6%	2.7%
Rural area	11.5%	-1.8%
Other area	9.6%	0.3%
Urban medically underserved area	8.2%	0.7%

Note: PAs could choose more than one location.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

The most common "other area" responses include: active military location, where my spouse is working, and moving for PA fellowship/residency.

Of the recently Certified PAs who accepted a position in a rural area, 31.6% grew up in a rural area.

Of the recently Certified PAs who accepted a position in an urban medically underserved area, 22.5% grew up in an urban medically underserved area.

### Position Accepted at a Training Site of Clinical Rotation by Recently Certified PAs

Position at Training Site of Clinical Rotation	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Yes	38.0%	0.3%
No	62.0%	-0.7%

# 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

Hours	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
1-10 hours	0.3%	-0.1%
11-20 hours	0.3%	-0.3%
21-30 hours	1.2%	0.4%
31-40 hours	56.9%	5.5%
41-50 hours	34.6%	-5.1%
More than 50 hours	6.7%	-0.5%

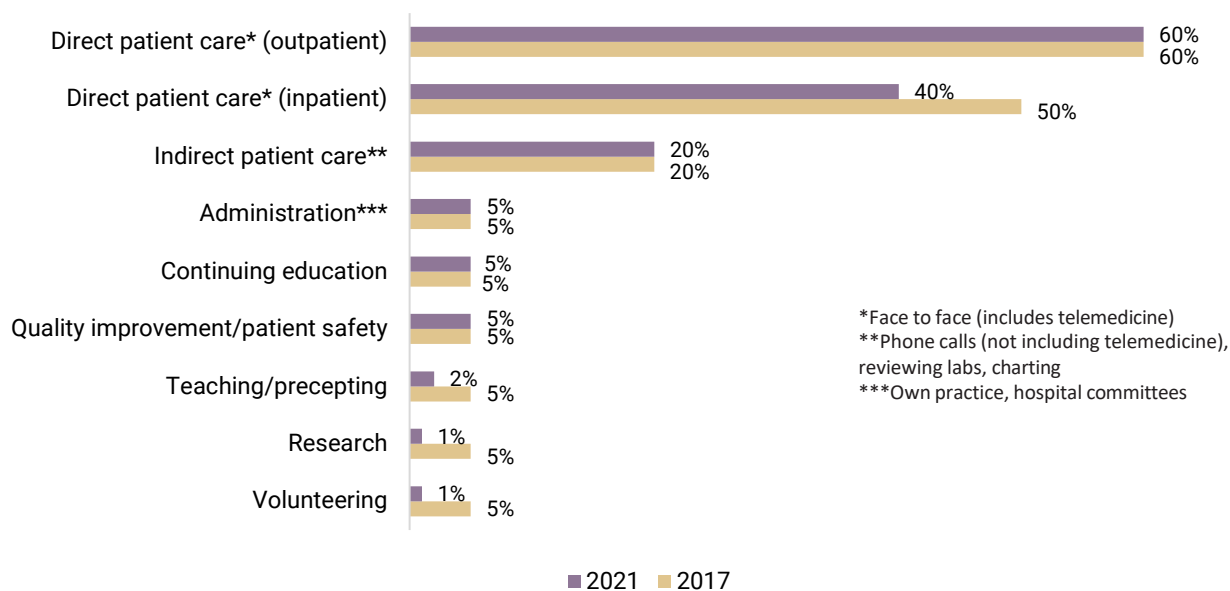
Note: 41.3% of recently Certified PAs who have accepted a clinical position expect to work more than 40 hours per week. That has decreased since 2017 when 46.9% expected to work more than 40 hours.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

## Average Hours Expected to Work Per Week

Years	Hours
2021	41.5
2017	42.0

## Median Proportion of Time Recently Certified PAs Expect to Spend on Activities



# Practice Settings

## RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

### Practice Setting of Recently Certified PAs

Practice Setting	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Hospital	46.8%	-6.0%
Office-based private practice	33.7%	3.8%
Urgent care	4.9%	-0.5%
U.S. military (federal government)	3.0%	1.1%
Community health center	2.2%	-0.7%
Rural health clinic	1.6%	-0.2%
Other	1.6%	-0.3%
Veterans Affairs (federal government)	1.0%	0.5%
Behavioral/mental health facility	0.9%	0.2%
Ambulatory surgical center	0.8%	0.2%
Public health service (federal government)	0.1%	0.0%
Public or community health clinic (non-federally qualified)	0.5%	-0.1%
Department of Defense (federal government)	0.4%	NA
School-based or college-based health center or school clinic	0.4%	0.2%
Extended care facility/Nursing home	0.3%	0.0%
Rehabilitation facility	0.3%	0.2%
Occupational health setting	0.3%	0.1%
Home health care agency	0.2%	0.1%
Department of State (federal government)	0.1%	NA
Indian Health Service (federal government)	0.1%	0.0%
Bureau of Prisons (federal government)	<0.1%	0.0%
Free clinic	0.0%	-0.1%
Hospice	0.0%	0.0%
Retail clinic	0.0%	-0.1%
Unsure/Don't know	0.7%	0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

NA- practice setting was not listed on the 2017 PA Professional Profile.  
Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

46.8% of recently Certified PAs who have accepted a position work in a hospital setting. Overall, 41.6% of all Certified PAs work in a hospital setting. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2022, July). 2021 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	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Addiction Medicine	0.3%	0.2%
Adolescent Medicine	0.0%	<0.1%
Anesthesiology	0.1%	0.0%
Critical Care Medicine	4.5%	1.4%
Dermatology	3.3%	0.6%
Emergency Medicine	13.3%	-5.8%
Family Medicine/General Practice	17.0%	-0.2%
Gynecology	0.2%	0.0%
Hospice and Palliative Medicine	<0.1%	0.0%
Hospital Medicine	4.1%	-2.1%
Internal Medicine-General Practice	3.7%	-0.4%
Internal Medicine-Subspecialties	9.8%	1.7%
Neurology	1.4%	0.4%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	1.7%	0.6%
Occupational Medicine	0.4%	0.1%
Ophthalmology	<0.1%	0.0%
Otolaryngology	1.0%	0.2%
Pain Medicine	1.3%	0.6%
Pathology	0.0%	0.0%
Pediatrics	1.4%	0.0%
Pediatrics- Subspecialties	1.5%	0.2%
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation	0.3%	0.2%
Preventive Medicine/Public Health	0.1%	0.0%
Psychiatry	3.2%	1.2%
Radiation Oncology	0.1%	0.0%
Radiology	0.4%	-0.2%
Surgery-General	4.6%	0.9%
Surgery-Subspecialties	17.6%	-1.7%
Urology	1.3%	0.6%
Other	7.4%	-1.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>NA</b>

In 2021, 22.1% of recently Certified PAs were working in a primary care specialty (family medicine/ general practice, general internal medicine, or general pediatrics). For 2017 it was 22.7%.

Overall, 23.8% of the Certified PA workforce is practicing in primary care.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

### Salary Range of Recently Certified PAs

Starting Salary Range	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Less than or equal to \$40,000	0.2%	0.0%
\$40,001-\$50,000	0.6%	0.1%
\$50,001-\$60,000	1.8%	-0.3%
\$60,001-\$70,000	2.9%	0.8%
\$70,001-\$80,000	3.8%	-2.9%
\$80,001-\$90,000	12.7%	-11.4%
\$90,001-\$100,000	26.6%	-7.0%
\$100,001-\$110,000	25.8%	7.7%
\$110,001-\$120,000	13.3%	6.2%
\$120,001-\$130,000	7.7%	4.4%
\$130,001-\$140,000	2.6%	1.7%
More than \$140,000	2.3%	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: "Prefer not to answer" was chosen by 78 recently Certified PAs in 2021. In 2017, 118 chose this response.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

### Annual Salary

Year	Median	Mean
2021	\$105,000	\$100,961
2017	\$95,000	\$94,643

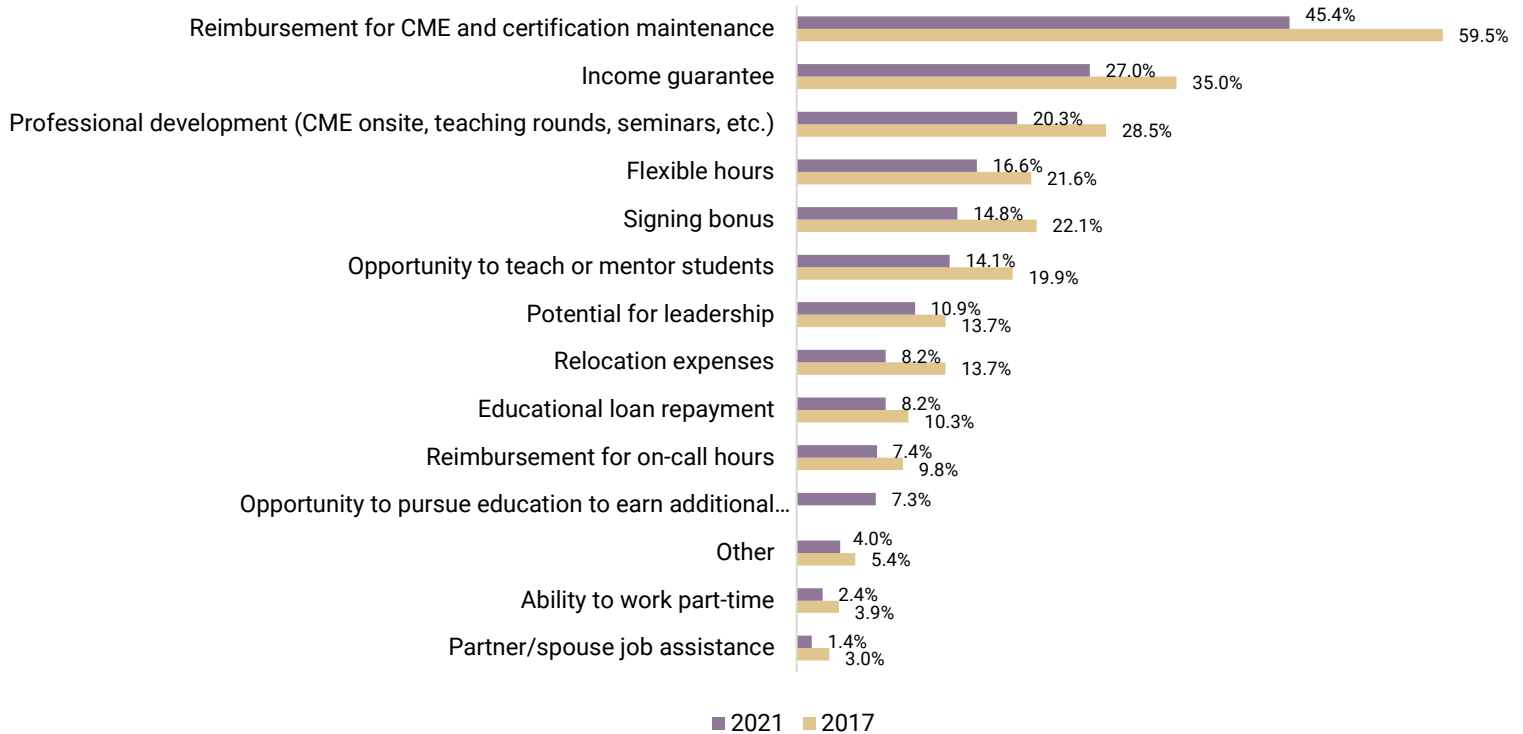
The highest mean salaries for recently Certified PAs were in cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, occupational medicine, and psychiatry.

# Employment Incentives

## RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO ACCEPTED A CLINICAL POSITION

59.5% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position indicated they were offered employment incentives in 2021. In 2017, 68.5% were offered incentives.

### Employment Incentives Offered to Recently Certified PAs



Note: "Opportunity to pursue education to earn additional certifications/degrees" was not included in the 2017 Profile.

Respondents were able to choose more than one incentive.

"Other" incentives include: bonuses (performance and productivity), fellowship training, licensing fees, health insurance, and research opportunities.

For both 2021 and 2017, 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 Yet**

# Challenges

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

60.6% of recently Certified PAs who have searched for but not accepted a position indicated experiencing challenges. In 2017, 48.2% indicated experiencing challenges. The following table presents the challenges that PAs reported experiencing:

### Challenges Faced by Recently Certified PAs Who Have Not Accepted a Position or Are Currently Searching for a Position

Challenges	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Lack of clinical PA opportunities for recent grads	54.0%	19.8%
Abundance of PA graduates competing for same position	21.2%	10.4%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in geographic area preferred	19.8%	4.7%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in preferred specialty	18.7%	5.0%
Lack of clinical PA opportunities in practice setting preferred	15.2%	3.6%
Lack of clinical PA employment opportunities	12.4%	8.1%
Inadequate salary and/or compensation	5.4%	1.2%
Lack of positions that meet obligations for employment (i.e., NHSC)	1.6%	-0.2%
Lack of opportunities for spouse/partner	0.8%	0.1%

Note: PAs could choose multiple challenges.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

39.4% who have searched for but have not accepted a position indicated they have not experienced challenges when searching for a job.

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

72.2% 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. 26.6% cited "other" and listed reasons such as military obligation, moving to another area, and waiting on state license.



# 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	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Not in preferred area of practice	6.9%	-8.8%
Insufficient compensation	4.4%	-4.5%
Other reason	3.1%	-3.4%
Insufficient benefits	2.6%	-2.5%
Did not feel like it was a good personal match with potential supervisor	2.2%	-3.6%
Wanted PA to assume too much responsibility for their level of experience	1.9%	-0.8%
Insufficient supervision onsite	1.8%	-1.4%
Would not allow PA to sufficiently utilize the competencies gained from education	1.3%	-0.8%
Insufficient opportunities for continued professional growth	1.2%	-1.0%
Too much on-call time	0.7%	-0.8%

Note: Respondents could choose multiple reasons.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

"Other reasons" included: not in a location desired, too much on-call expected or on-call unpaid, overnight shift, and no set role for PAs.

15.2% 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	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Area where grew up	45.4%	4.1%
Area lived in prior to attending PA program	35.0%	1.1%
Area where want to live	35.0%	2.6%
Area where PA program located	34.2%	2.7%
Urban medically underserved area	13.8%	2.4%
Rural area	13.4%	3.1%
Other area	6.7%	-2.4%

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

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

"Other" responses include: close to family/spouse, area where PA or spouse can fulfill a military obligation, and an area where I have never lived.

"Area where grew up" has been the top location preferred by PAs who have not yet accepted a position since NCCPA began gathering this data in 2013.

Over one-third (35.0%) 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 YET SEEKING A POSITION

## Hours Preferred to Work Per Week by Recently Certified PAs

Preferred Work Hours per Week	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
1-10 hours	0.4%	0.3%
11-20 hours	0.3%	-0.3%
21-30 hours	0.9%	0.0%
31-40 hours	69.0%	5.2%
41-50 hours	28.2%	-4.8%
More than 50 hours	1.3%	-0.3%

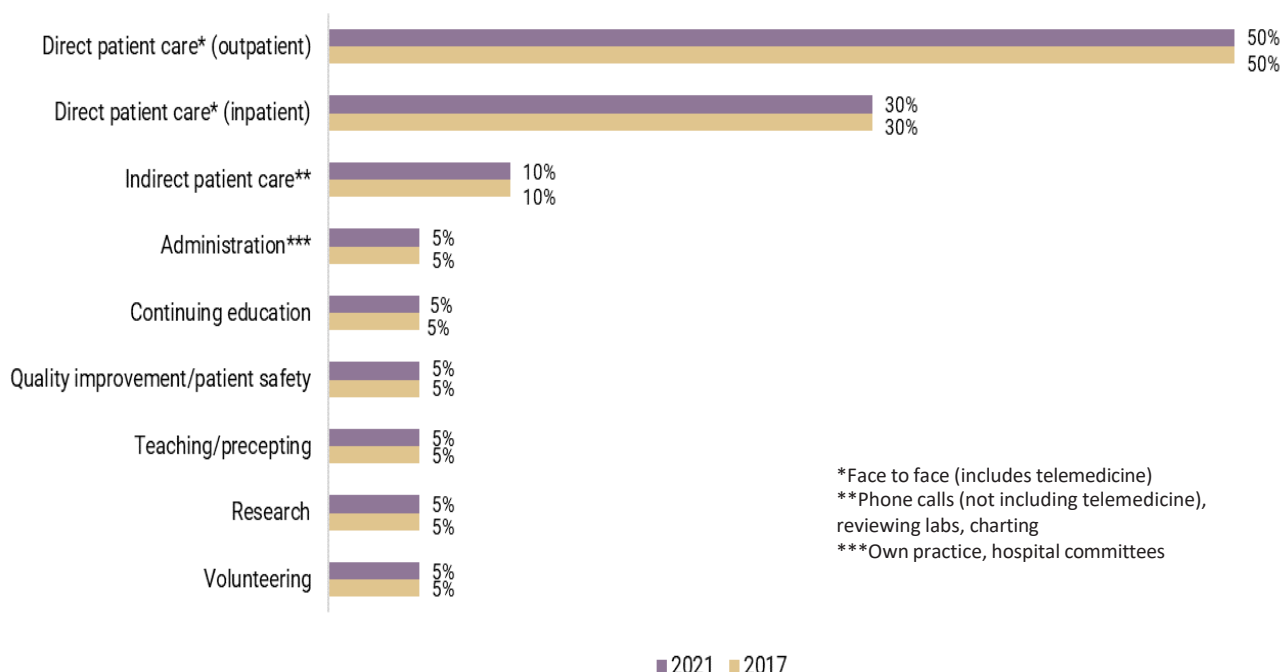
Note: 29.5% of recently Certified PAs who have not accepted a position prefer to work more than 40 hours per week when they do have a position. Of those who accepted a position, 41.4% expect to work more than 40 hours per week.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

# Preferred Time Spent in Work Activities

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

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



# Preferred Practice Setting

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

## Preferred Practice Setting of Recently Certified PAs

Practice Setting	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Hospital	42.1%	-0.8%
Office-based private practice	32.8%	-0.1%
Urgent care	3.4%	-1.3%
Community health center	2.5%	0.7%
Ambulatory surgical center	1.8%	0.5%
Rural health clinic	1.6%	0.5%
Veterans Affairs (federal government)	1.3%	0.7%
Other	0.8%	-0.3%
Behavioral/mental health facility	0.6%	0.0%
U.S. military (federal government)	0.5%	0.0%
Public or community health clinic (non-federally qualified)	0.4%	-0.3%
Public health service (federal government)	0.1%	0.1%
Department of Defense (federal government)	0.2%	NA
Bureau of Prisons (federal government)	0.1%	<0.1%
Department of State (federal government)	0.1%	0.1%
Free clinic	0.1%	0.0%
Rehabilitation facility	0.1%	0.0%
School-based or college-based health center or school clinic	0.1%	-0.1%
Extended care facility/Nursing home	<0.1%	<0.1%
Indian Health Service (federal government)	<0.1%	-0.2%
Occupational health setting	<0.1%	<0.1%
Home health care agency	0.0%	<-0.1%
Hospice	0.0%	<-0.1%
Retail clinic	0.0%	0.0%
Undecided/No preference	11.2%	0.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>--</b>

Note: NA- practice setting was not listed on the 2017 PA Professional Profile.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

Hospital setting has been the most preferred setting desired among recently Certified PAs who have not yet started a job. 46.8% of recently Certified PAs who accepted a position work in a hospital setting.

# Preferred Practice Area

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

## Preferred Practice Area of Recently Certified PAs

Area of Practice	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Addiction Medicine	0.2%	0.0%
Adolescent Medicine	0.2%	0.0%
Anesthesiology	0.0%	0.0%
Critical Care Medicine	2.2%	0.4%
Dermatology	6.8%	0.9%
Emergency Medicine	17.3%	-1.0%
Family Medicine/General Practice	16.6%	-2.1%
Gynecology	0.5%	0.3%
Hospice and Palliative Medicine	0.1%	0.0%
Hospital Medicine	4.8%	0.2%
Internal Medicine- General Practice	3.4%	-1.7%
Internal Medicine- Subspecialties	6.6%	0.7%
Neurology	0.4%	0.0%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	3.4%	0.2%
Occupational Medicine	0.0%	0.0%
Ophthalmology	0.1%	0.0%
Otolaryngology	0.2%	-0.1%
Pain Management	0.1%	0.1%
Pathology	0.0%	0.0%
Pediatrics	3.1%	-0.4%
Pediatrics- Subspecialties	2.6%	0.0%
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation	0.2%	0.1%
Preventive Medicine/Public Health	0.1%	-0.1%
Psychiatry	1.3%	0.3%
Radiation Oncology	0.1%	0.0%
Radiology	0.4%	0.1%
Surgery-General	4.2%	-0.4%
Surgery-Subspecialties	13.8%	1.6%
Urology	0.4%	0.3%
Other	2.2%	0.4%
No Preference	8.7%	0.2%

23.1% of recently Certified PAs who have not accepted nor are seeking a position would prefer to work in primary care (family medicine/ general practice, general internal medicine, general pediatrics). This is a decrease from 2017, when 27.3% preferred a position in primary care.

Surgical subspecialties and dermatology had the greatest percent increase in recently Certified PAs, who prefer these specialties when they do accept a position.

Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

# Salary Desired

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

## Minimum Starting Salary Range Desired by Recently Certified PAs

Starting Salary Range	2021 Percent	Percent Change 2017-2021
Less than or equal to \$40,000	0.0%	0.0%
\$40,001-\$50,000	<0.1%	0.0%
\$50,001-\$60,000	0.2%	0.0%
\$60,001-\$70,000	0.4%	-0.9%
\$70,001-\$80,000	3.5%	-4.7%
\$80,001-\$90,000	20.0%	-17.0%
\$90,001-\$100,000	40.3%	3.3%
\$100,001-\$110,000	25.3%	13.1%
\$110,001-\$120,000	6.6%	3.9%
\$120,001-\$130,000	2.5%	1.7%
\$130,001-\$140,000	0.7%	0.4%
More than \$140,000	0.5%	0.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>--</b>

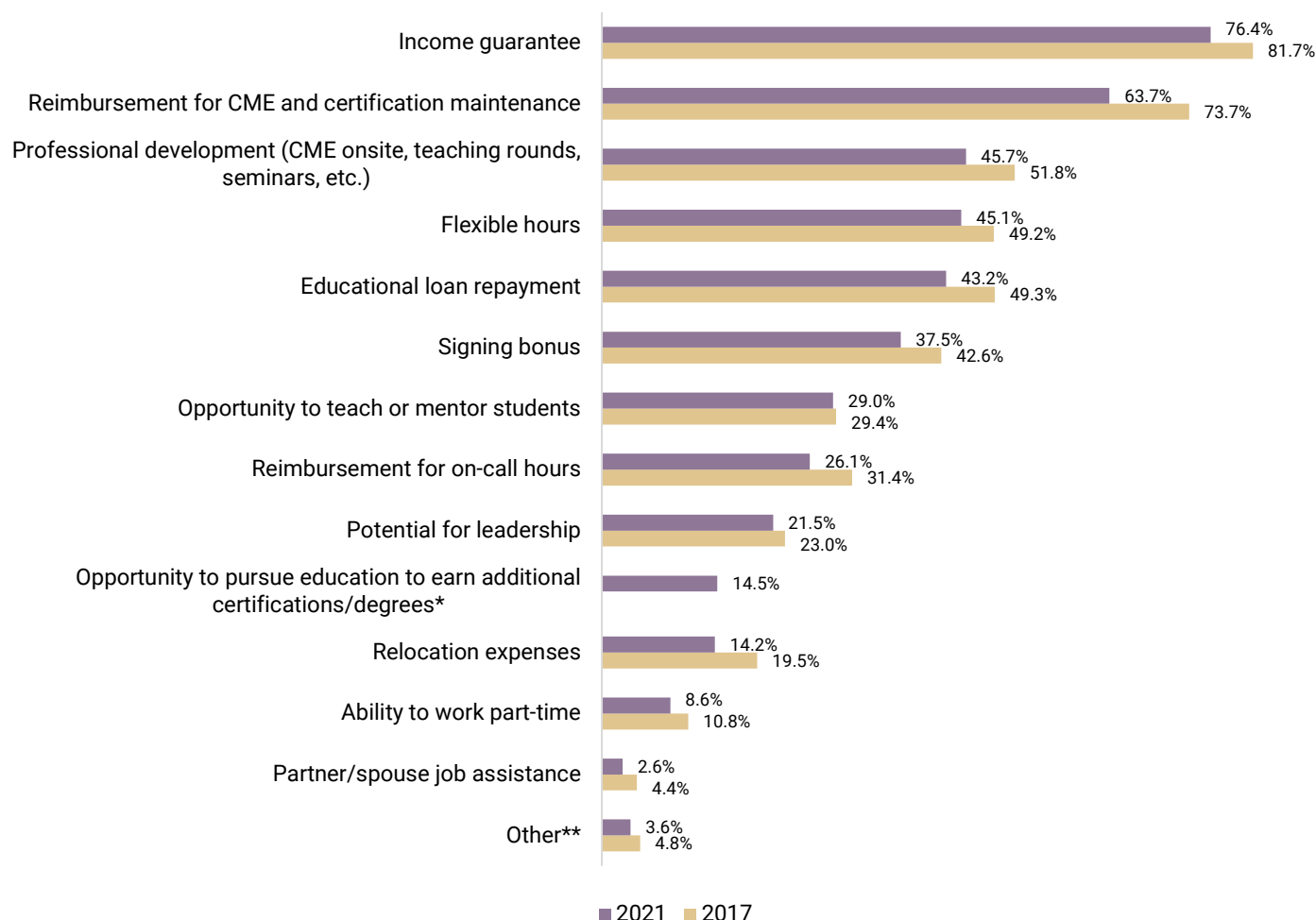
Percent change reflects proportional change from 2017 to 2021.

35.6% 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, 51.7% are earning over \$100,000 per year.

# Employment Incentives Desired

RECENTLY CERTIFIED PAs WHO HAVE SEARCHED FOR BUT NOT ACCEPTED A POSITION OR NOT YET 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 2017 PA Professional Profile.

\*\*"Other" responses include: health care benefits, mentoring, research opportunities, and a supportive team environment.

When asked to rank the top incentives when looking for in their first clinical position, the incentives that recently Certified PAs ranked number one most often were:

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

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, NCCPA provides 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

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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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Please address questions, comments, or your request to be notified when the new data reports are published to: [PAProfile@nccpa.net](mailto:PAProfile@nccpa.net)