

Background

- A large proportion of the US population suffers from mental illness and the limited access to psychiatrists significantly contributes to the underuse of mental health services
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the psychiatric workforce shortage
- Physician assistants/associates (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) can be used to address the gap between psychiatrists and access to mental health care
- Little is known about the size, practice characteristics and contributions of the psychiatry PA workforce

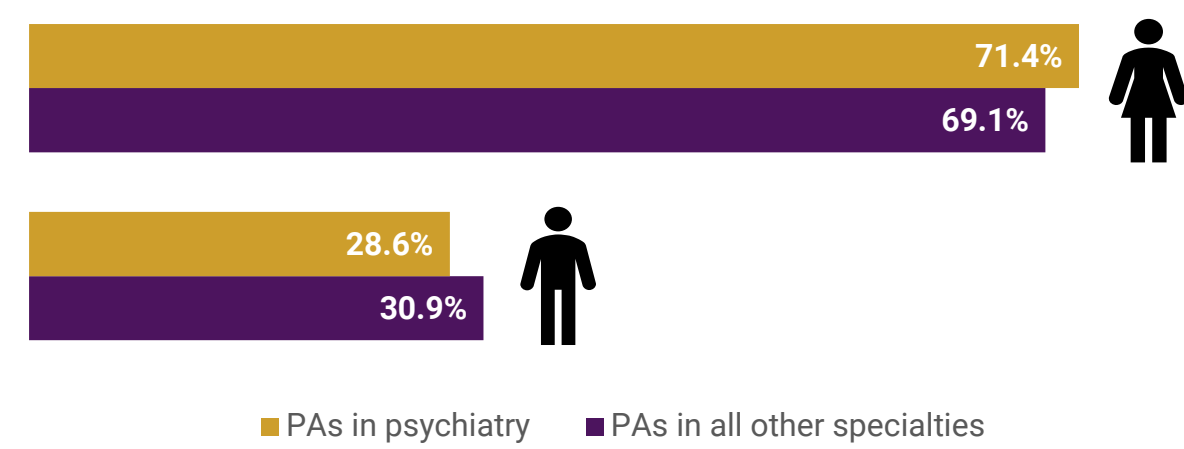
Objective & Method

- The study's objective was to quantify demographic, practice, and other important personal/professional characteristics of Board Certified PAs practicing in psychiatry
- Data derived from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) *PA Professional Profile*
- NCCPA data from 2021 included responses from 111,428 PAs who provided or updated their information or certified that their responses were up to date within the past three years
- We compared demographic and practice characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry (n=2,262) vs. PAs in all other specialties (n=109,166)
- Analysis of the data consisted of descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses (Chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests)

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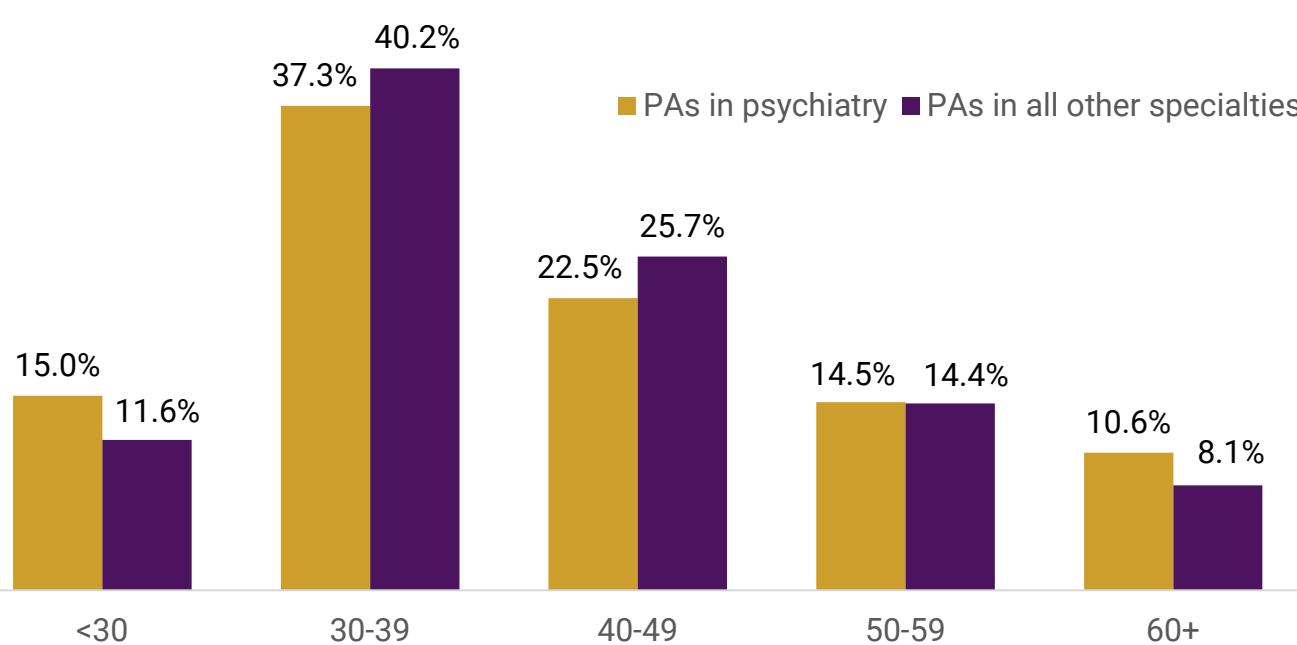
Results

Gender (p=0.015)



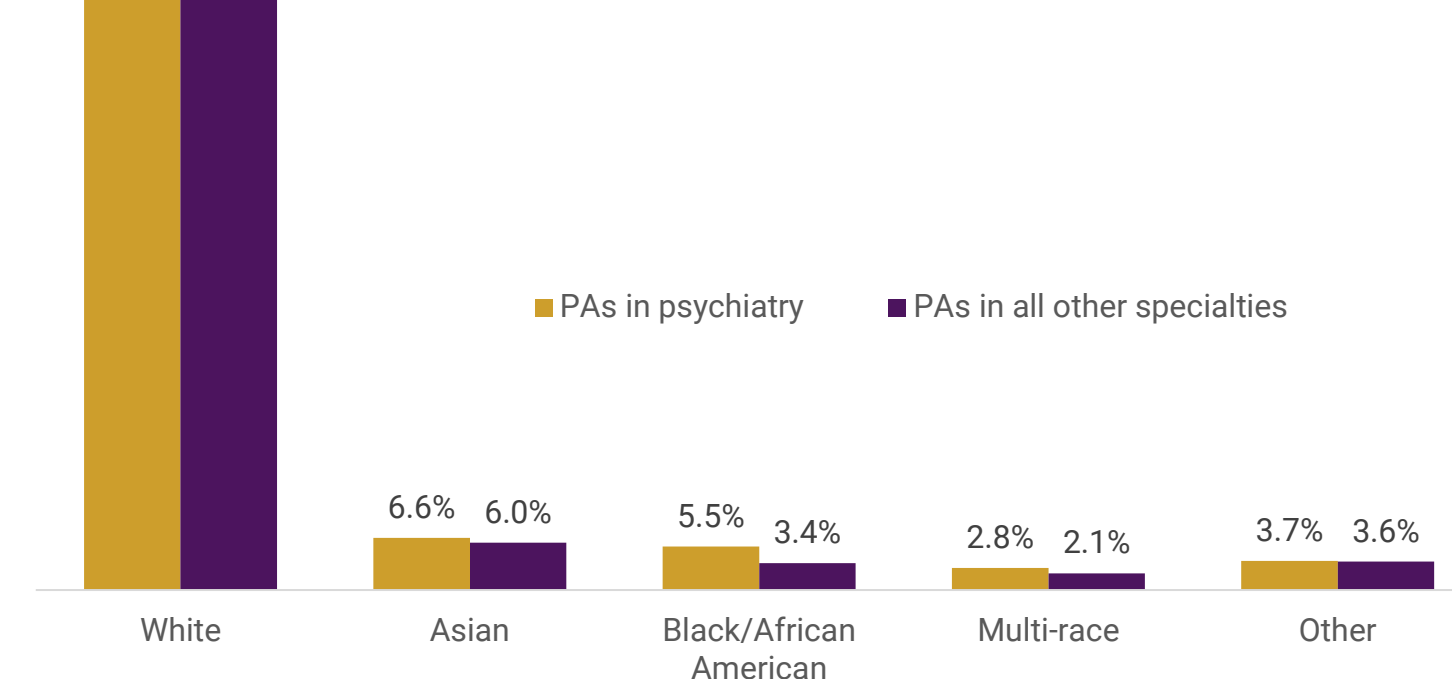
The PA psychiatry workforce is composed of 71.4% females.

Age (p<0.001)



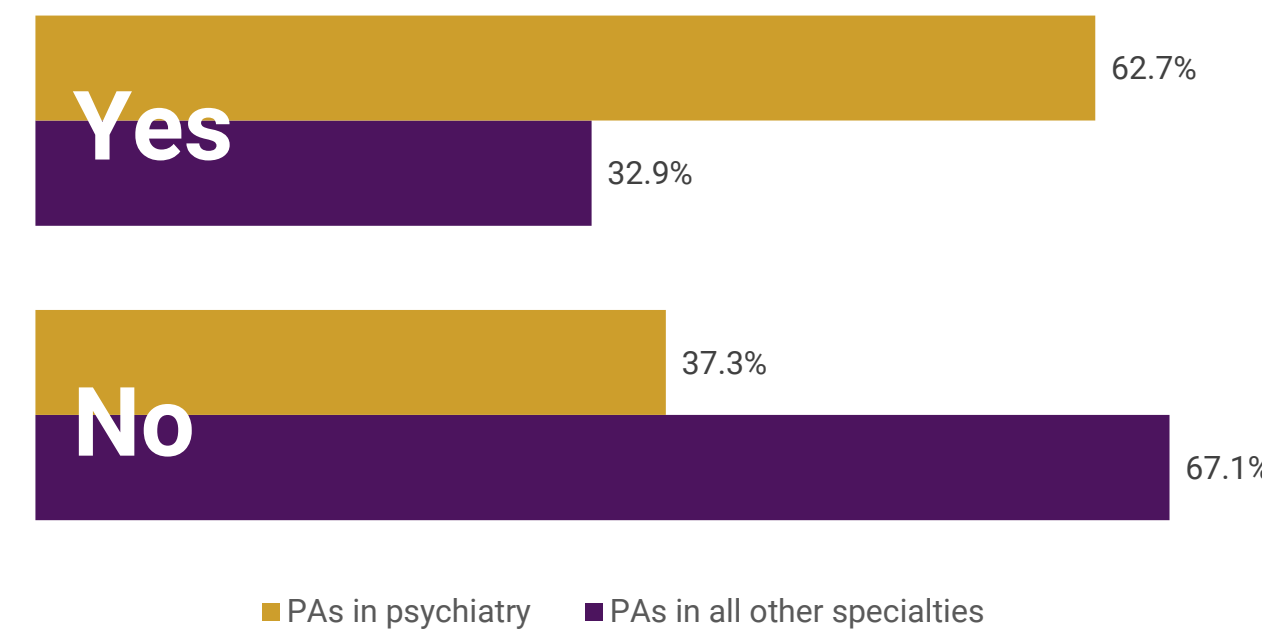
The psychiatry PA workforce and PAs practicing in all other specialties have a median age of 39; p=0.199.

Race (p<0.001)



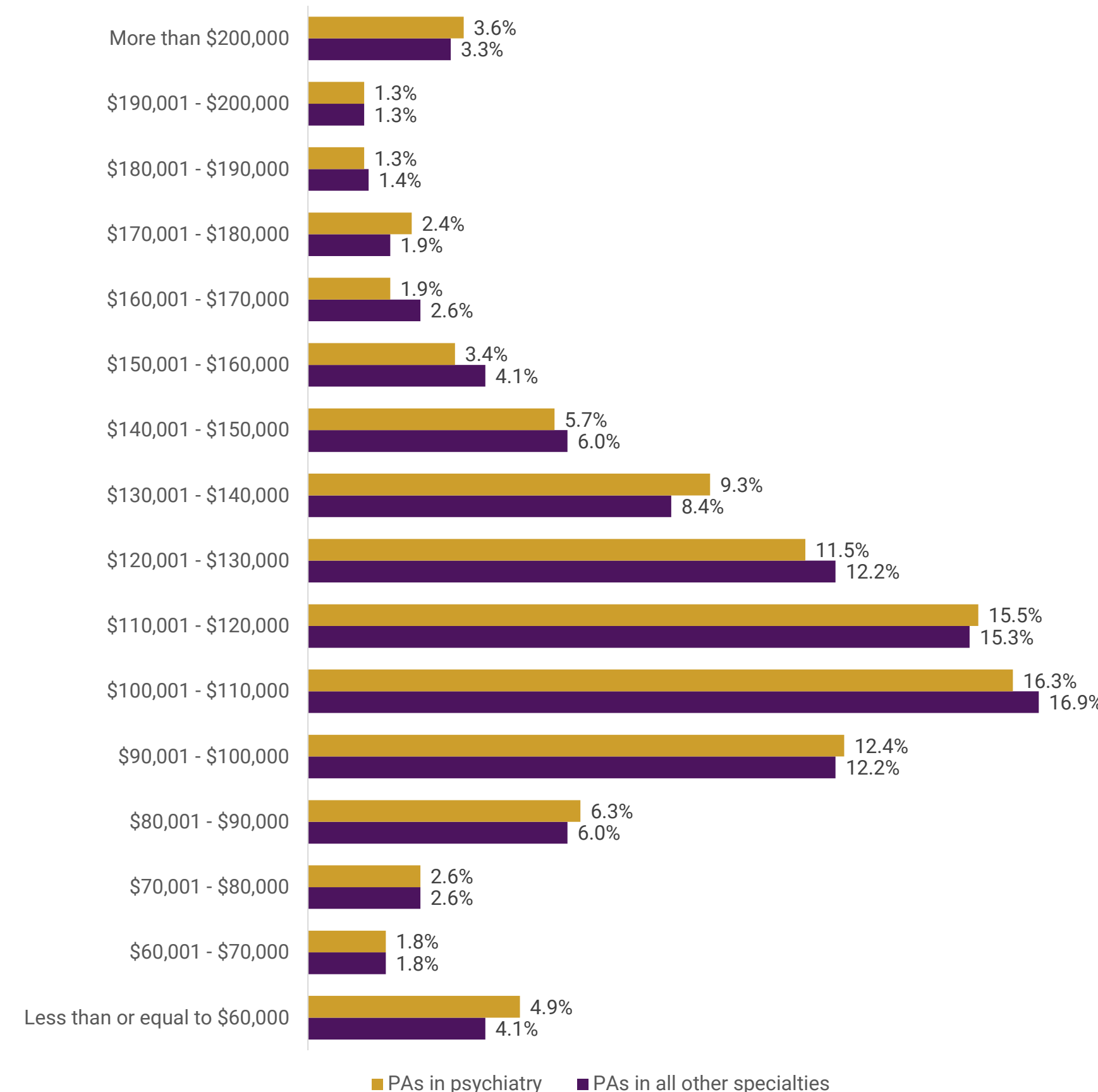
PAs in psychiatry are slightly more racially diverse than PAs in all other specialties. Other includes those who selected "other," Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native.

Use of Telemedicine (p<0.001)



The majority (62.7%) of PAs in psychiatry participate in telemedicine vs. 32.9% of PAs in all other disciplines.

Income (p=0.267)



Characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. PAs practicing in all other disciplines	PAs practicing in psychiatry	PAs practicing in all other disciplines	P-value
Ethnicity:			
Non-Hispanic/Latino	93.7%	93.4%	0.527
Hispanic/Latino	6.3%	6.6%	
Speaks language other than English:			
Yes	20.0%	22.7%	0.002
No	80.0%	77.3%	
US region:			
South	43.8%	34.1%	<0.001
Midwest	22.1%	19.8%	
Northeast	17.1%	25.0%	
West	16.9%	21.1%	
Urban-rural setting:			
Urban	93.3%	92.4%	0.181
Large rural	4.1%	4.3%	
Small rural	1.7%	1.9%	
Isolated	0.9%	1.4%	
Practice setting:			
Office-based private practice	41.6%	37.3%	<0.001
Hospital	17.7%	42.1%	
Federal government	7.5%	4.8%	
Other	33.2%	15.8%	
Years certified groups:			
Up to 10	62.2%	51.6%	<0.001
11 - 20	22.5%	31.0%	
21+	15.3%	17.4%	
Hours worked per week:			
Up to 30	12.9%	13.2%	<0.001
31-40	66.1%	56.1%	
41-50	17.2%	24.2%	
51+	3.8%	6.5%	
Patients seen per week:			
Up to 40	30.2%	28.7%	<0.001
41-60	28.6%	25.4%	
61-80	18.5%	18.9%	
81-100	14.1%	15.2%	
101+	8.6%	11.9%	
Secondary position:			
No, I work in only one clinical position	83.3%	84.8%	0.014
Yes, I also work in a position where I do not provide direct patient care (i.e. education, research, administration)	3.4%	3.8%	
Yes, I work in two or more clinical PA positions	13.2%	11.3%	
Retire in next 5 years:			
Yes	6.1%	5.4%	0.146
No	93.9%	94.6%	
Job satisfaction:			
Satisfied**	86.0%	85.2%	0.324
Not satisfied***	14.0%	14.8%	
Burnout:			
No symptoms of burnout	68.1%	69.4%	0.225
At least one symptom of burnout	31.9%	30.6%	
Hours worked in telemedicine each week:			
<10	31.4%	78.1%	<0.001
10-19	16.8%	13.2%	
20-29	17.8%	5.3%	
30-39	18.7%	2.1%	
40+	15.4%	1.3%	

**Satisfied included "completely satisfied," "mostly satisfied," and "somewhat satisfied."

***Not satisfied includes "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied," "somewhat dissatisfied," "mostly dissatisfied," and "completely dissatisfied."

Key Findings and Conclusion

- PAs in psychiatry, when compared to all other specialties, are more likely to be female (71.4% vs. 69.1%; p=0.015), less than 30 years old (15.0% vs. 11.6%; p<0.001), and reside in the South (43.8% vs. 34.1%; p<0.001)
- Majority of PAs in psychiatry (86.0%) are satisfied with their present position, and 68.1% report no symptoms of burnout
- The self-reported income distribution by PAs for 2021 is similar for those in psychiatry and all other specialties
- PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. all other disciplines are more likely to participate in telemedicine (62.7% vs. 32.9%; p<0.001) and use telemedicine for 40 or more hours per week (15.4% vs. 1.3%; p<0.001)
- Two-fifths (41.6%) of PAs in psychiatry work in office-based private practice vs. 37.3% of all other specialties; 17.7% practice in hospitals vs. 42.1% of all others (p<0.001)
- Understanding characteristics and employment settings of PAs in psychiatry are essential in medical labor supply and demand research
- Their employment represents a needed source of expertise in US mental health delivery services

References

- National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2022). 2021 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants: An Annual Report of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. Retrieved from <http://www.nccpa.net/resources/nccpa-research/>
- Terlizzi, EP and Zablotsky, B. (2020). *Mental Health Treatment Among Adults: United States, 2019* (No. 380; NCHS Data Brief, p. 8). National Center for Health Statistics; CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs.htm>.