

Background/Objective

- A large proportion of the US population suffers from mental illness.
- According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), more than half of the U.S. population resides in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (MHPSA).
- To address this crisis, physician assistants/associates (PAs) have emerged as a promising solution, helping to bridge the gap in psychiatric care and improve access to mental health services.

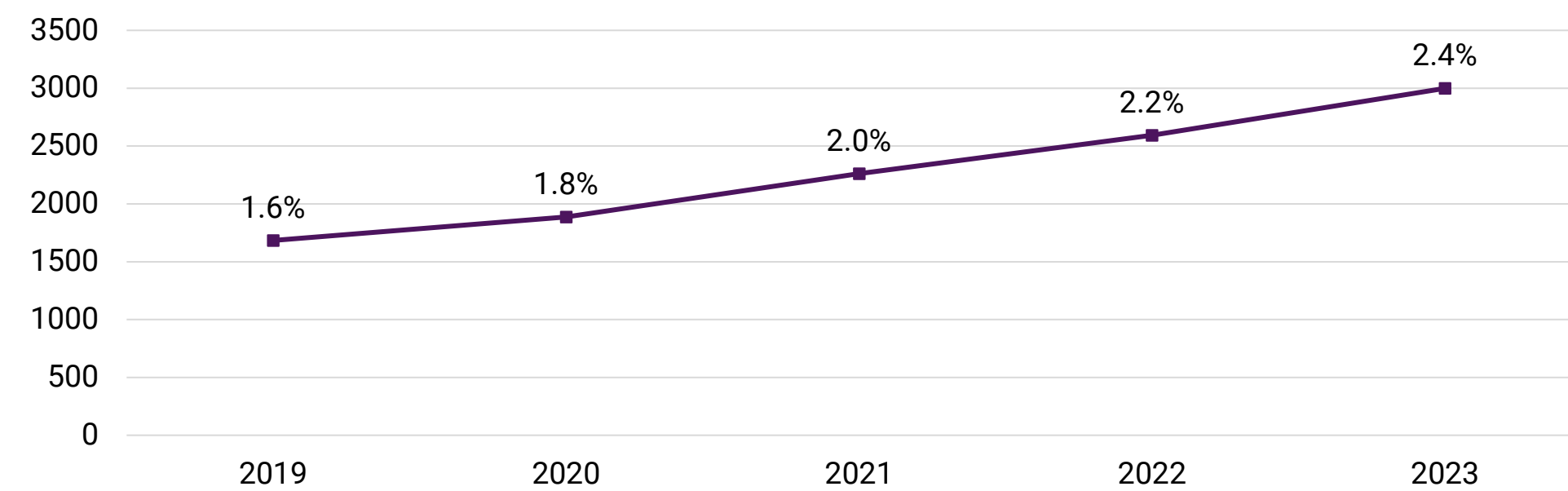
Methods

- Utilizing the 2023 workforce data from the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), we examined the demographics, practice settings, and other key attributes of board certified PAs working in psychiatry.
- NCCPA data from 2023 included responses from 126,941 PAs who provided or updated their responses to the specialty question in the *PA Professional Profile* within the past three years.
- By the end of 2023, 2,999 (2.4%) PAs reported they were clinically active in psychiatry.
- Analysis of the data consisted of descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses (Chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests) conducted using SPSS.

Email questions to Andrzej Kozikowski at andrzejk@nccpa.net

Results

Growth of Board Certified PAs in Psychiatry

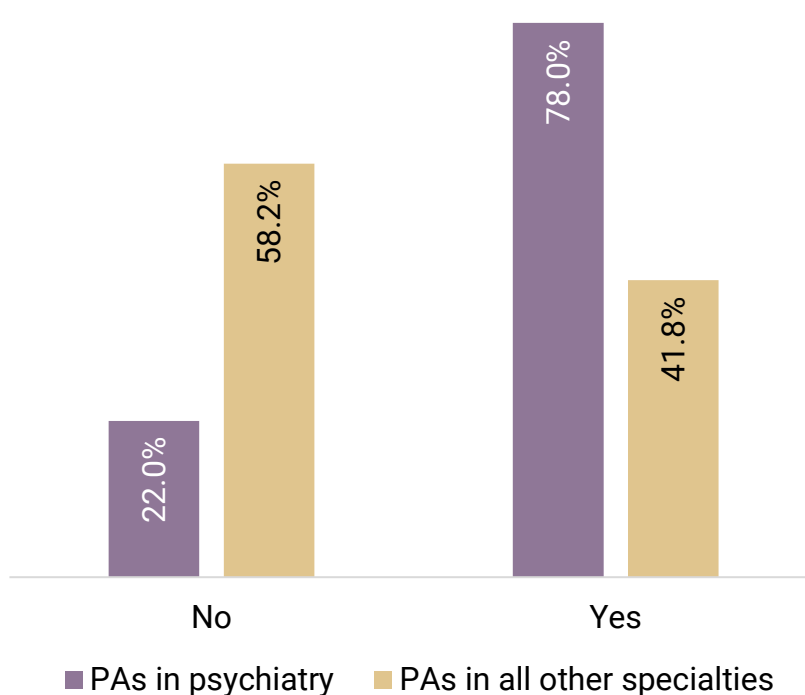


In 2023, 2,999 (2.4%) of PAs reported practicing in psychiatry, up from 1,684 (1.6%) in 2019, making psychiatry the fastest-growing specialty in the PA profession.

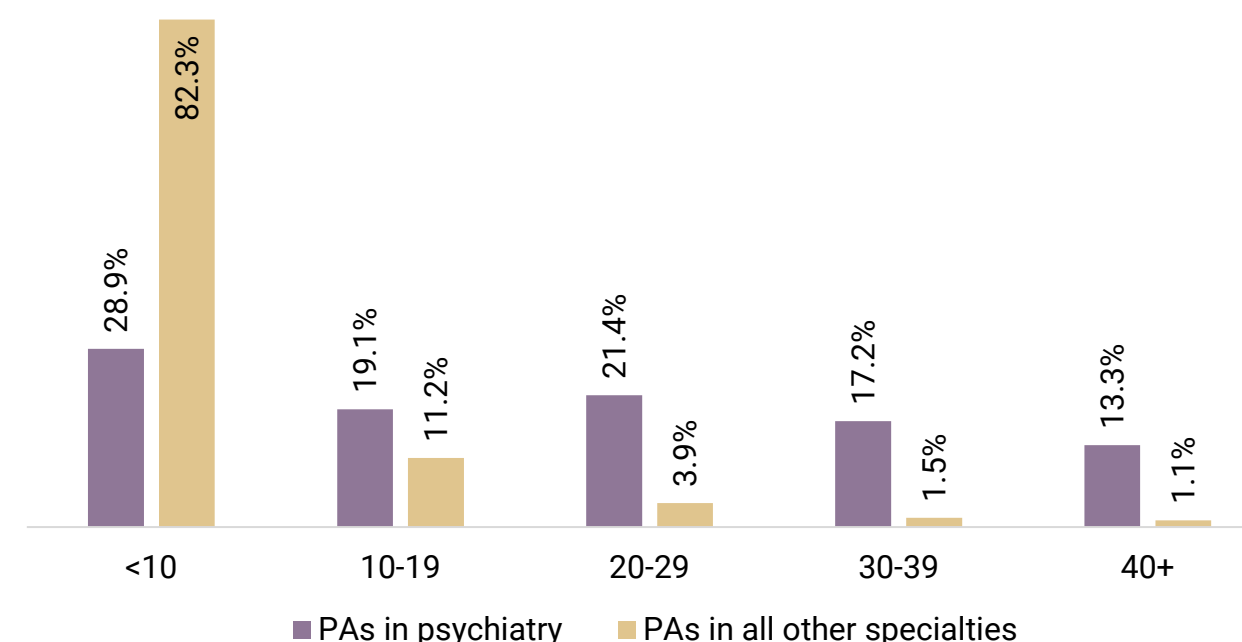
Telemedicine Functions and Modalities Used by PAs Practicing in Psychiatry vs. PAs in All Other Specialties

	PAs practicing in psychiatry (N=2,999)	PAs practicing in all other specialties (N=123,942)	P-value
Functions of telemedicine:			
Follow-up with patients	75.9%	37.4%	<0.001
Diagnosing or treating patients	73.5%	34.3%	<0.001
Managing patients with chronic disease	67.4%	27.9%	<0.001
Collaborating with another provider	45.2%	13.0%	<0.001
Modalities of telemedicine:			
Videoconferencing	76.2%	38.5%	<0.001
Remote patient monitoring	15.3%	8.0%	<0.001
Storing and forwarding data	7.7%	3.5%	<0.001

Participation in Telemedicine (p<0.001)



Hours Worked in Telemedicine Each Week (p<0.001)



Characteristics of PAs practicing in psychiatry vs. PAs in all other specialties

	PAs practicing in psychiatry (N=2,999)	PAs practicing in all other specialties (N=123,942)	P-value
Gender:			
Male	27.1%	29.9%	<0.001
Female	72.9%	70.1%	
Age:			
Mean (SD)	40.8 (11.5)	41.2 (10.9)	<0.001
Median (IQR)	38 (31-48)	39 (33-48)	
Race:			
White	80.7%	84.1%	<0.001
Asian	7.4%	6.6%	
Black/African American	5.1%	3.4%	
Multiple races	3.2%	2.4%	
Other*	3.6%	3.4%	
Ethnicity:			
Non-Hispanic/Latino	93.1%	93.0%	0.715
Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	7.0%	
Speak a language other than English:			
No	79.4%	77.5%	0.014
Yes	20.6%	22.5%	
Postgraduate training:			
No	91.9%	94.4%	<0.001
Yes	8.1%	5.6%	
Provide care in HPSA/MUA:			
No	40.6%	49.6%	<0.001
Not sure	28.2%	26.7%	
Yes	31.2%	23.7%	
Hours worked per week:			
Mean (SD)	38.7 (9.5)	39.7 (10.5)	<0.001
Median (IQR)	40 (36-40)	40 (36-45)	
Patients seen each week:			
Mean (SD)	62.0 (36.0)	66.4 (41.6)	<0.001
Median (IQR)	60 (40-80)	60 (40-85)	
Secondary position:			
No	83.0%	85.1%	0.002
Yes, non-clinical	3.5%	3.5%	
Yes, multiple clinical PA positions	13.5%	11.4%	
Income:			
Mean	\$122,903	\$124,002	0.056
Median	\$115,000	\$125,000	
Job satisfaction:			
Not satisfied:	14.9%	17.0%	0.003
Satisfied:	85.1%	83.0%	
Burnout:			
No symptoms of burnout	64.8%	65.8%	0.231
One or more symptoms of burnout	35.2%	34.2%	

*Other includes: other races, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Key Findings and Conclusion

- PAs in psychiatry tend to be slightly younger (median age 38 vs. 39), predominantly female (72.9% vs. 70.1%), and slightly more racially diverse compared to PAs in all other specialties (all p<0.001).
- PAs practicing in the psychiatry discipline are also more likely to complete a postgraduate fellowship or residency (8.1% vs. 5.6%; p<0.001), provide care in medically underserved areas (31.2% vs. 23.7%; p<0.001), and hold two or more clinical positions (13.5% vs. 11.4%; p=0.002).
- PAs in psychiatry are more likely to participate in telemedicine (78.0% vs. 41.8%; p<0.001) and use telemedicine for 40 or more hours per week (13.3% vs. 1.1%; p<0.001)
- By understanding the characteristics of PAs in psychiatry, we can better quantify their contributions to the psychiatric workforce and their impact on improving access to mental health services.

References

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