



2013 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants

An Annual Report of the
**National Commission on
Certification of Physician Assistants**

Message from the President/CEO

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of everyone at the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), I am proud to introduce this first annual *Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants*. Our hope is that the data presented here serves to underscore the scale on which certified PAs are impacting health care in every state, specialty and setting.

The NCCPA PA Professional Profile – the dynamic database from which much of the information in this report is drawn – was launched mid-year in 2012. The launch of the Profile was the culmination of several years of work that involved many within NCCPA and our supporting organization, the nccPA Health Foundation. There were still others outside of our organizations who reviewed early versions of the questionnaire and shaped our understanding of the potential for this data collection effort. Most importantly, the PA Professional Profile only has value thanks to the tens of thousands of PAs who have taken time from their busy schedules to answer its questions. To all involved, we say **thank you**.

Just 18 months after its launch, 80 percent of all certified PAs had contributed data to it, making it by far the most robust source of PA data in existence. As we continue to publish findings – through this report and others to follow – we hope all those concerned with the PA profession and with health care workforce issues find this to be an invaluable source of insight and information.

Regards,



Dawn Morton-Rias, EdD, PA-C
NCCPA President/CEO

July 2014

About the Data and Collection 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 less than six months. Limited data from that module has been included in this report, and more data from that module will be provided in a future report.

Data Editing and Analysis

Data reflected in this report includes responses from PAs who were certified as of December 31, 2013 and completed at least a portion of the Profile between May 2012 and December 31, 2013. In addition, some data was obtained from other NCCPA data collection strategies. As of December 31, 2013, there were 95,583 certified PAs, and 76,400 provided responses for at least a portion of the PA Professional Profile, yielding an overall response rate of 79.9%.

The data provided in this report has been aggregated from the individual response data 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. Analyses of the data consist primarily of descriptive statistics.

About NCCPA

NCCPA is the only certifying organization for physician assistants in the United States. Established as a not-for-profit organization in 1974, NCCPA is dedicated to assuring the public that certified physician assistants meet established standards of clinical knowledge and cognitive skills upon entry into practice and throughout their careers. 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 physician assistants. More than 100,000 physician assistants have been certified by NCCPA since 1975, and more than 95,000 are certified today.

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

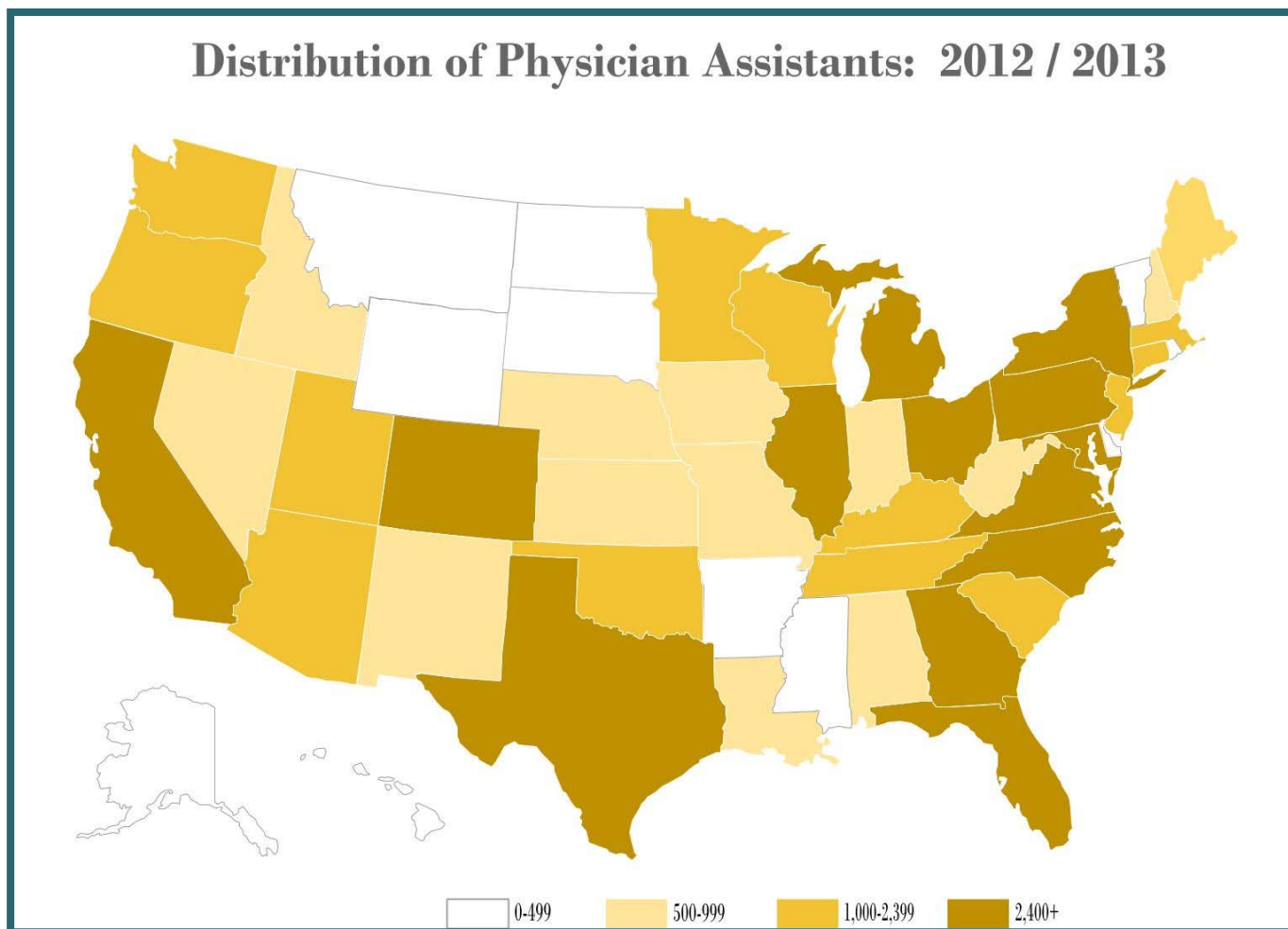
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Distribution of Certified Physician Assistants in the U.S.

Number of physician assistants by state (divided by quartiles); Rate of physician assistants per 100,000 population by state (divided by quartiles); Actual number, percentage of total population of certified physician assistants, and number per 100,000 people by state with state rankings.

Figure 1: Distribution of PAs by State (Divided by Quartiles)



Noteworthy:

There were approximately 43,500 certified PAs at the end of 2003; the profession grew 119% over the next 10 years reaching 95,583 certified PAs at the end of 2013.

Fig. 1 highlights the states with the greatest numbers of certified physician assistants based on state of residence as reported to NCCPA.

On Dec. 31, 2012, there were 90,227 certified PAs, which means the number has grown by 5.9% in the last year alone.

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) expects that the number of PA educational programs will grow from 180 today to 250 by 2018. Based on those projections, NCCPA estimates there will be more than 125,000 certified PAs before the end of 2018.

Figure 2: Distribution of PAs per 100,000 Population

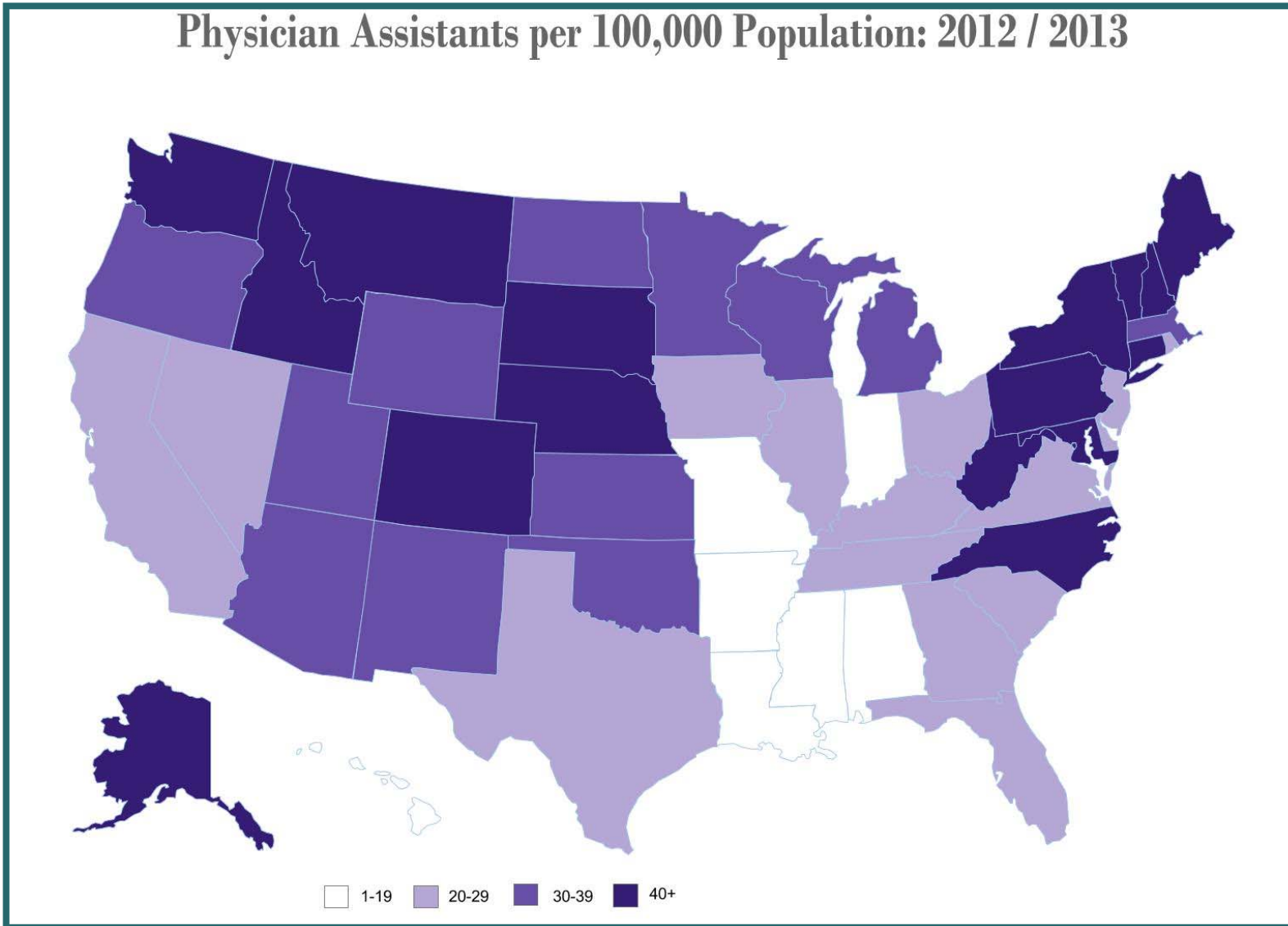


Fig. 2 depicts the number of certified physician assistants per 100,000 residents of each state (based on 2013 US Census Bureau estimates).

The heaviest concentrations of PAs by state population occurs in the Northeast, the Northwest and a few central states.

Table 1: PAs by State, Number, Percent, Rate and Rank

State	Number	Percent of Total (Rank)	Rate* (Rank)
Alabama	584	0.6 % (38)	12.1 (49)
Alaska	482	0.5% (42)	65.6 (1)
Arizona	2,093	2.2% (17)	31.6 (25)
Arkansas	242	0.3% (48)	8.2 (50)
California	7,729	8.1% (2)	20.2 (44)
Colorado	2,550	2.7% (10)	48.4 (6)
Connecticut	1,684	1.8 % (20)	46.8 (11)
Delaware	265	0.3% (47)	28.6 (34)
D.C.	188	0.2% (50)	29.1 (32)
Florida	5,855	6.1% (5)	29.9 (29)
Georgia	2,882	3.0% (8)	28.8 (33)
Hawaii	266	0.3% (46)	18.9 (45)
Idaho	745	0.8% (34)	46.2 (13)
Illinois	2,657	2.8% (9)	20.6 (43)

State	Number	Percent of Total (Rank)	Rate* (Rank)
Indiana	991	1.0% (27)	15.1 (47)
Iowa	919	1.0% (29)	29.7 (30)
Kansas	975	1.0% (28)	33.7 (24)
Kentucky	1,078	1.1% (25)	24.5 (36)
Louisiana	870	0.9% (32)	18.8 (46)
Maine	694	0.7% (35)	52.2 (3)
Maryland	2,419	2.5% (12)	40.8 (15)
Massachusetts	2,330	2.4% (15)	34.8 (20)
Michigan	3,940	4.1% (7)	39.8 (16)
Minnesota	1,896	2.0% (19)	35.0 (19)
Mississippi	116	0.1% (51)	3.9 (51)
Missouri	820	0.9% (33)	13.6 (48)
Montana	493	0.5% (40)	48.6 (5)
Nebraska	891	0.9% (30)	47.7 (9)

*Rate per 100,000 population based on 2013 US Census estimate

(continued)

Noteworthy:

Certified PAs practice medicine in all 50 states and D.C.

The top five states ranked by the number of certified PAs are:

1. New York
2. California
3. Texas
4. Pennsylvania
5. Florida

The top five states ranked by concentration per 100,000 population are:

1. Alaska
2. South Dakota
3. Maine
4. New York
5. Montana

Table 1: PAs by State, Number, Percent, Rate and Rank, *continued*

State	Number	Percent of Total (Rank)	Rate* (Rank)
Nevada	611	0.6% (37)	21.9 (41)
New Hampshire	579	0.6% (39)	43.7 (14)
New Jersey	2,094	2.2% (16)	23.5 (39)
New Mexico	645	0.7% (36)	30.9 (28)
New York	9,708	10.2% (1)	49.4 (4)
North Carolina	4,558	4.8% (6)	46.3 (12)
North Dakota	286	0.3% (44)	39.5 (17)
Ohio	2,415	2.5% (13)	20.9 (42)
Oklahoma	1,201	1.3% (23)	31.2 (27)
Oregon	1,241	1.3% (22)	31.6 (26)
Pennsylvania	6,157	6.4% (4)	48.2 (7)
Rhode Island	284	0.3% (45)	27.0 (35)
South Carolina	1,140	1.2% (24)	23.9 (38)
South Dakota	483	0.5% (41)	57.2 (2)

*Rate per 100,000 population based on 2013 US Census estimate

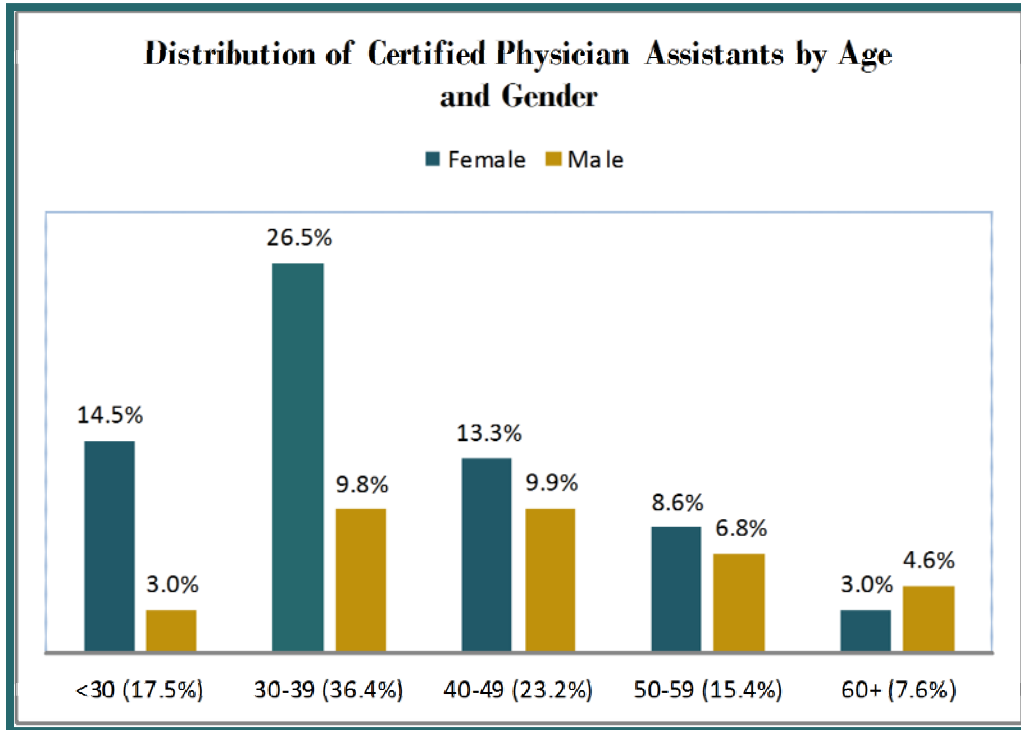
State	Number	Percent of Total (Rank)	Rate* (Rank)
Tennessee	1,425	1.5% (21)	21.9 (40)
Texas	6,427	6.7% (3)	24.3 (37)
Utah	1,007	1.1% (26)	34.7 (22)
Vermont	300	0.3% (43)	47.9 (8)
Virginia	2,448	2.6% (11)	29.6 (31)
Washington	2,370	2.5% (14)	34.0 (23)
West Virginia	873	0.9% (31)	47.1 (10)
Wisconsin	1,997	2.1% (18)	34.8 (21)
Wyoming	205	0.2% (49)	35.2 (18)
TOTAL	95,108	100%	

Noteworthy:
 An additional 475 certified PAs were living abroad in 2013, bringing the total number of certified PAs at the end of 2013 to 95,583.

Gender and Age of Certified Physician Assistants

Distribution of certified PAs by age and gender; Number by gender; Number by age group.

Figure 3: Distribution of Certified PAs by Age and Gender



Noteworthy:

There has been a significant shift in the gender distribution of certified PAs over time. Today...

- 62.2% of all female PAs are under 40 years of age
- while only 37.6% of all male PAs are under 40 years of age.

The median age of certified PAs was 38 in 2013.

Table 2: Number of PAs by Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	32,534	34.0%
Female	63,035	66.0%
Total	95,569	100.0%

In **Table 2**, the total numbers are less than the total number of certified PAs (see **Table 3**) due to the decision of some not to report a gender.

Table 3: Number of PAs by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percent
<30	16,710	17.5%
30-39	34,757	36.4%
40-49	22,173	23.2%
50-59	14,687	15.4%
60+	7,256	7.6%
TOTAL	95,583	100.0%

Race and Ethnicity of Certified Physician Assistants

Number of physician assistants by race; Number of physician assistants by ethnicity.

Table 4: Number of PAs by Race

Race	Number	Percent
White	62,309	85.6%
Black/African American	2,999	4.1%
Asian	3,783	5.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	408	0.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	583	0.8%
Other	2,739	3.7%
Total Responses	72,821	100%

In **Table 4**, respondents were able to choose multiple races, and 1,125 did so. Of the respondents that chose only one race, 85.6% indicated they were white.

Table 5: Number of PAs by Ethnicity

Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a	1,795	2.5%
Puerto Rican	618	0.9%
Cuban	357	0.5%
Other Hispanic, Latino/a, or of Spanish origin	1,834	2.5%
Total Responses	4,604	6.4%

In **Table 5**, respondents were able to choose multiple ethnicities. 115 respondents chose two, and one respondent chose three. Of those that responded, 93.6% (67,434) indicated that they were not Hispanic, Latino/a, or of Spanish origin. 3,398 indicated that they preferred not to answer the question.

Educational Profile of Certified Physician Assistants

Number of PAs by highest degree completed.

Table 6: Number of PAs by Highest Degree Completed

Degree	Number	Percent
Certificate program	1,865	2.5%
Associate's degree	1,431	1.9%
Bachelor's degree	19,962	26.5%
Master's degree	49,792	66.2%
PhD	437	0.6%
EdD	47	0.1%
Professional doctorate (e.g., MD, DO, DrPh, PsyD)	930	1.2%
Other	777	1.0%
TOTAL	75,241	100%

Noteworthy:

The average PA educational program is 26.4 months long.¹ Over time, programs have been trending towards the Master's Degree, and by 2020 all PA programs must offer at least a Master's Degree level program to be accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA).²

In 2014, *Forbes* magazine ranked the Master's Degree in Physician Assistant Studies as the number one degree for jobs, citing a 20% growth rate in the profession.

¹ PAEA *Physician Assistant Educational Programs in the United States, Twenty-Eighth Annual Report; 2011-2012.*

² ARC-PA *Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education*®, 4th edition. 2010

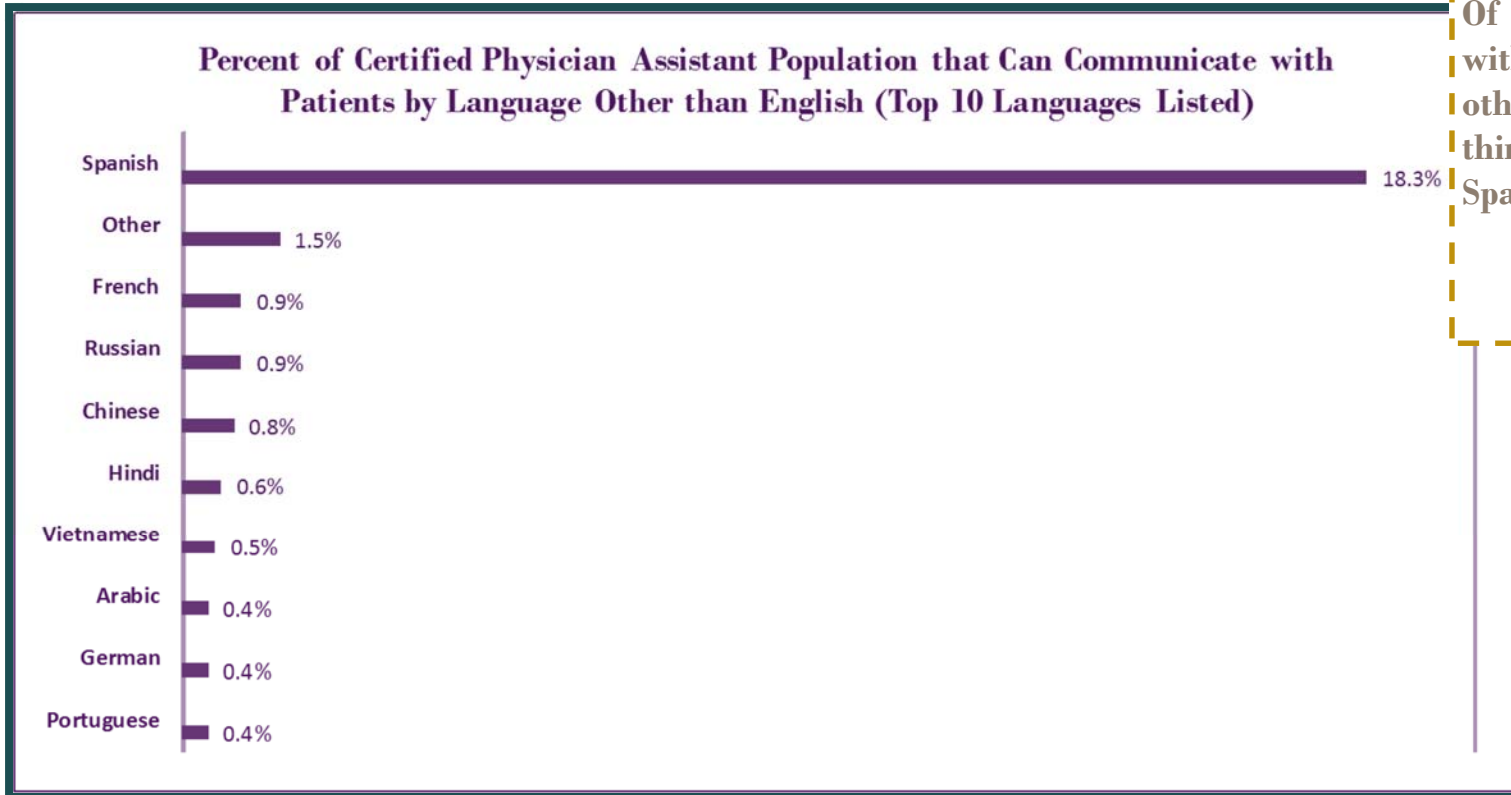
Languages Other than English Spoken with Patients

Top 10 languages other than English spoken with patients.

Noteworthy:

3.4% of certified PAs speak two or more languages other than English.

Figure 4: Percent of Certified PAs that Communicate with Patients in Other Languages



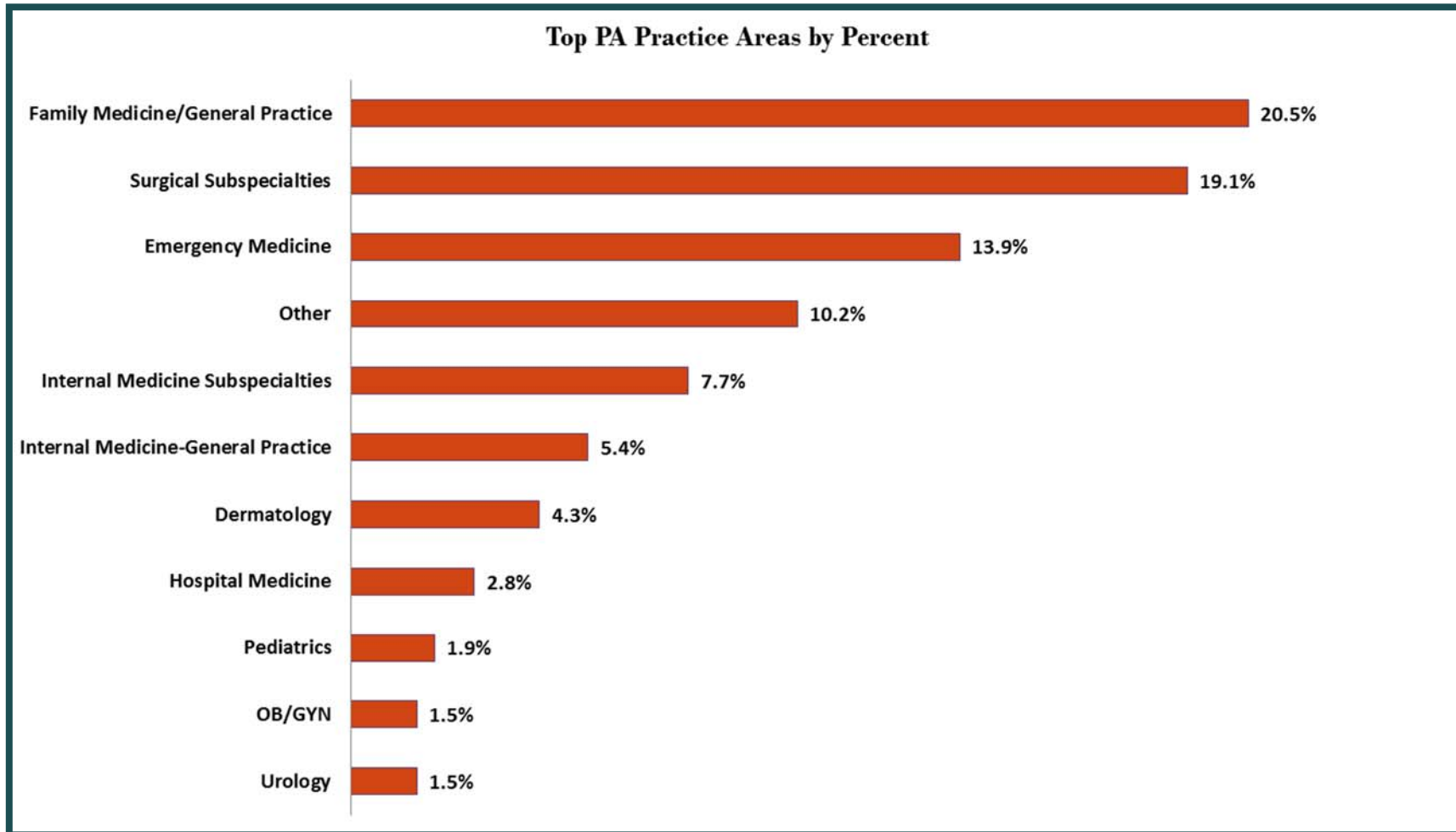
Of the PAs who communicate with patients in a language other than English, over two-thirds (68.0%) do so in Spanish.

Fig. 4 shows the percentage of certified PAs who communicate with patients in languages other than English by the top 10 most frequently identified languages. A total of 22.4% of respondents indicated they could communicate with patients in a language other than English.

Current Practice Area of Principal Clinical Position

Top 10 practice areas; All practice areas; Primary care vs non-primary care practice by state; Practice setting; Intent to leave clinical practice; PAs employed in more than one position.

Figure 5: Top PA Practice Areas by Percent



The Profile asked PAs to identify their practice area and other practice characteristics for both a principal clinical position and — for those working in more than one clinical setting — for a secondary clinical position. The data shown in this section is based only on responses to the question regarding the principal clinical position. 94.6% or 67,562 of Profile respondents indicated they practice in at least one clinical position.

Table 7: Number and Percent of PAs by Principal Clinical Position

Area of Practice	Number	Percent
Adolescent Medicine	95	0.2%
Anesthesiology	181	0.3%
Critical Care Medicine	582	1.0%
Dermatology	2,323	4.3%
Emergency Medicine	7,553	13.9%
Family Medicine / General Practice	11,159	20.5%
Gynecology	220	0.4%
Hospital Medicine	1,501	2.8%
Internal Medicine– General Practice	2,919	5.4%
Internal Medicine– Subspecialty	4,178	7.7%
Neurology	450	0.8%
Obstetrics and Gynecology	792	1.5%
Occupational Medicine	717	1.3%
Ophthalmology	41	0.1%
Otolaryngology	483	0.9%

Area of Practice	Number	Percent
Pathology	8	<.1%
Pediatrics	1,011	1.9%
Pediatrics– Subspecialties	534	1.0%
Physical Medicine / Rehabilitation	538	1.0%
Preventive Medicine / Public Health	66	0.1%
Psychiatry	630	1.1%
Radiation Oncology	122	0.2%
Radiology	384	0.7%
Surgery– General	1,213	2.2%
Surgery– Subspecialties	10,375	19.1%
Urology	793	1.4%
Other	5,529	10.2%
TOTAL	54,397	100.0%

The 2012 & 2013 Profile allowed users to select multiple principal practice areas. Responses from PAs who chose more than one practice area were not included in this table.

Noteworthy:

27.7% of certified PAs work in primary care: family medicine/general practice, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics.

Family medicine/general medicine and the surgical subspecialties each account for approximately 20% of the 54,397 PAs who answered this question.

Table 8: Number and Percent of PAs Practicing in Primary Care and Non-Primary Care by State

State	Primary Care* Number (percent)	Non-Primary Care Number (percent)	Total
Alabama	59 (17.9%)	270 (82.1%)	329
Alaska	133 (51.8%)	124 (48.2%)	257
Arizona	405 (31.4%)	883 (68.6%)	1,288
Arkansas	55 (40.7%)	80 (59.3%)	135
California	1,272 (33.8%)	2,488 (66.2%)	3,760
Colorado	580 (39.6%)	886 (60.4%)	1,466
Connecticut	141 (15.0%)	801 (85.0%)	942
Delaware	34 (16.7%)	170 (83.3%)	204
D.C.	42 (19.4%)	174 (80.6%)	216
Florida	693 (21.2%)	2,583 (78.8%)	3,276
Georgia	426 (25.0%)	1,281 (75.0%)	1,707
Hawaii	53 (37.1%)	90 (62.9%)	143
Idaho	169 (42.9%)	225 (57.1%)	394
Illinois	414 (26.2%)	1,167 (73.8%)	1,581

State	Primary Care* Number (percent)	Non-Primary Care Number (percent)	Total
Indiana	111 (18.9%)	477 (81.1%)	588
Iowa	231 (42.6%)	311 (57.4%)	542
Kansas	216 (37.9%)	354 (62.1%)	570
Kentucky	219 (31.1%)	486 (68.9%)	705
Louisiana	112 (21.5%)	410 (78.5%)	522
Maine	128 (30.3%)	294 (69.7%)	422
Maryland	244 (18.4%)	1,080 (81.6%)	1,324
Massachusetts	255 (19.5%)	1,052 (80.5%)	1,307
Michigan	622 (27.2%)	1,668 (72.8%)	2,290
Minnesota	393 (33.0%)	797 (67.0%)	1,190
Mississippi	15 (22.1%)	53 (77.9%)	68
Missouri	111 (21.8%)	399 (78.2%)	510
Montana	77 (31.4%)	168 (68.6%)	245
Nebraska	215 (39.6%)	328 (60.4%)	543

*Primary Care: Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, and General Pediatrics

Table 8: Number and Percent of PAs Practicing in Primary Care and Non-Primary Care by State (continued)

State	Primary Care* Number (percent)	Non-Primary Care Number (percent)	Total
Nevada	112 (32.9%)	228 (67.1%)	340
New Hampshire	86 (26.1%)	244 (73.9%)	330
New Jersey	164 (17.8%)	759 (82.2%)	923
New Mexico	126 (38.1%)	205 (61.9%)	331
New York	976 (19.0%)	4,172 (81.0%)	5,148
North Carolina	843 (31.8%)	1,809 (68.2%)	2,652
North Dakota	69 (36.5%)	120 (63.5%)	189
Ohio	206 (14.9%)	1,177 (85.1%)	1,383
Oklahoma	246 (34.2%)	473 (65.8%)	719
Oregon	263 (35.4%)	479 (64.6%)	742
Pennsylvania	851 (23.4%)	2,779 (76.6%)	3,630
Rhode Island	30 (16.6%)	151 (83.4%)	181
South Carolina	171 (26.6%)	471 (73.4%)	642
South Dakota	138 (47.8%)	151 (52.2%)	289

State	Primary Care* Number (percent)	Non-Primary Care Number (percent)	Total
Tennessee	222 (29.0)	544 (71.0%)	766
Texas	1,379 (37.2%)	2,324 (62.8%)	3,703
Utah	166 (32.6%)	343 (67.4%)	509
Vermont	56 (34.1%)	108 (65.9%)	164
Virginia	308 (22.7%)	1,051 (77.3%)	1,359
Washington	429 (33.2%)	862 (66.8%)	1,291
West Virginia	185 (32.6%)	383 (67.4%)	568
Wisconsin	328 (26.2%)	926 (73.8%)	1,254
Wyoming	69 (50.0%)	69 (50.0%)	138
TOTAL	14,848 (27.6%)	38,927 (72.4%)	53,775

Noteworthy:

An additional 114 (71.7%) U.S. military certified PAs were practicing primary care, and 45 (28.3%) were practicing non-primary care. For PAs practicing abroad, 127 (27.4%) were practicing primary care and 336 (72.6%) were practicing non-primary care. Overall, 27.7% of the certified PAs were practicing primary care.

*Primary Care: Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, and General Pediatrics

Table 9: Number of PAs by Practice Setting

Practice Setting	Number	Percent
Office-based private practice	24,439	40.0%
Hospital	22,252	36.5%
Other	3,802	6.2%
Federal government facility/hospital/unit	3,648	6.0%
Community health center	2,133	3.5%
Rural health clinic	1,638	2.7%
Public or community health clinic (non-federally qualified)	937	1.5%
School-based or college-based health center or school clinic	578	0.9%
Occupational health setting	572	0.9%
Extended care facility/nursing home	287	0.5%
Ambulatory surgical center	219	0.4%
Behavioral/mental health facility	211	0.3%
Rehabilitation facility	140	0.2%
Free clinic	128	0.2%
Home health care agency	57	0.1%
Hospice	2	0.0%
TOTAL	61,043	100.0%

The 2012 & 2013 Profile allowed users to select multiple practice settings for their primary clinical position. Responses from PAs who chose more than one practice setting were not included in this table.

Noteworthy:

Over three-fourths (76.5%) of PAs practice in either an office-based private practice or a hospital setting.

Average number of hours worked per week for all PAs in their principal clinical position: 40.57

Average number of patients seen per week for all PAs in their principal clinical position: 70

Table 10: Number of PAs Planning to Leave Principal Clinical Position

Factors Influencing Decision to Leave Principal Clinical Position	Number Who Indicated Factor was “Very Important”
Seeking another clinical PA position	3,504
Insufficient wages given the workload and responsibilities involved	1,887
Relocating to another geographic area	1,709
Work is not professionally challenging or satisfying	1,359
Other	1,280
Family responsibilities interfere with ability to continue working	796
Want to pursue additional education	440
Plan to retire from the active workforce	392
Want to work in a health professional training program	264
Desire a non-clinical health-related position	245
Desire a position outside of health care	172
My health does not allow me to continue working as a PA	83

Table 10 shows responses given by 5,510 PAs who first answered affirmatively to the question: “Are you planning to leave your principal clinical PA position in the next 12 months?” PAs could choose multiple factors and then rated them either “Very Important”, “Somewhat Important”, or “Not Important”.

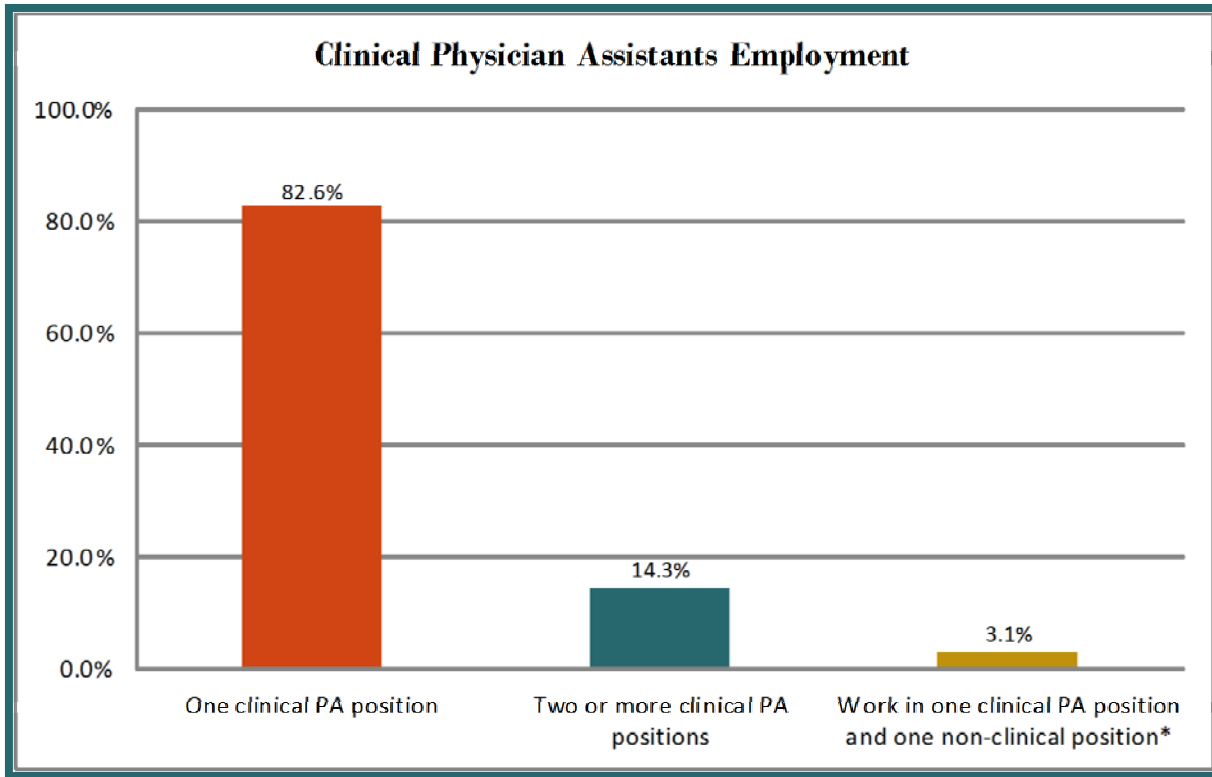
Noteworthy:

The high demand for PAs offers them a wide variety of employment options for where they work, how they work, and how long they work. Of the 5,510 PAs planning to leave their principal clinical position in the next 12 months, 7.2 % said plans to retire from the active workforce was a very important factor.

8.2% of certified, clinically-employed PAs indicated they are planning to leave their principal clinical PA position in the next 12 months.

Of those that were planning to leave their clinical position in the next 12 months, the most cited “very important” reasons were “seeking another clinical PA position” (63.6%) and “insufficient wages given the workload and responsibilities involved” (34.2%).

Figure 6: Distribution of PAs Working in More than One Position

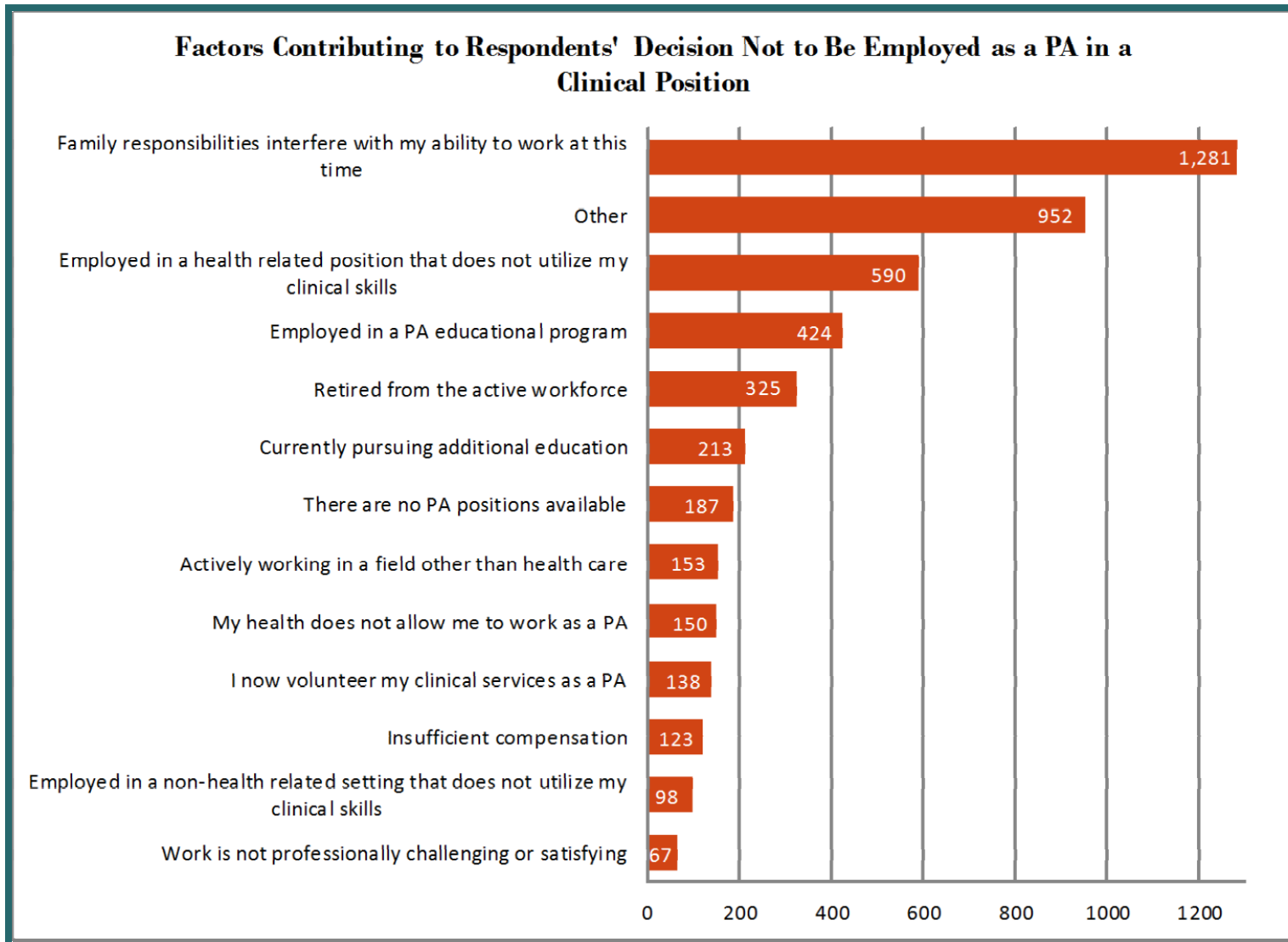


*Non-clinical position does not provide direct patient care (i.e. education, research, administration)

Noteworthy: Certified PAs are overwhelmingly employed in only one clinical position. However, while the demand for them to practice clinically increases, so does the number of PA programs that need PAs as educators. PAs are also taking on administrative and policy-making roles as their numbers and impact continue to grow.

PA's Not in Clinical Practice

Figure 7: Why PAs Do Not Practice Clinically



Noteworthy:
3,838 of the 61,043 PAs in this sample indicated they were not employed as a PA in a clinical position.

For the data shown in Fig. 7, PAs were encouraged to check all contributing factors that applied. A total of 4,701 factors were chosen by 3,785 PAs. (1.4% of PAs who indicated they do not practice clinically skipped this question and thus are not reflected in this data.)

Recently Certified Physician Assistants' Job Search

Acceptance of a job; Number of offers received.

Noteworthy:

The job market for recent graduates of PA programs is strong.

- 78.1% of recent graduates had multiple job offers
- 52.3% of recent grads had three or more job offers

Figure 8: Recent PA Graduates With Jobs

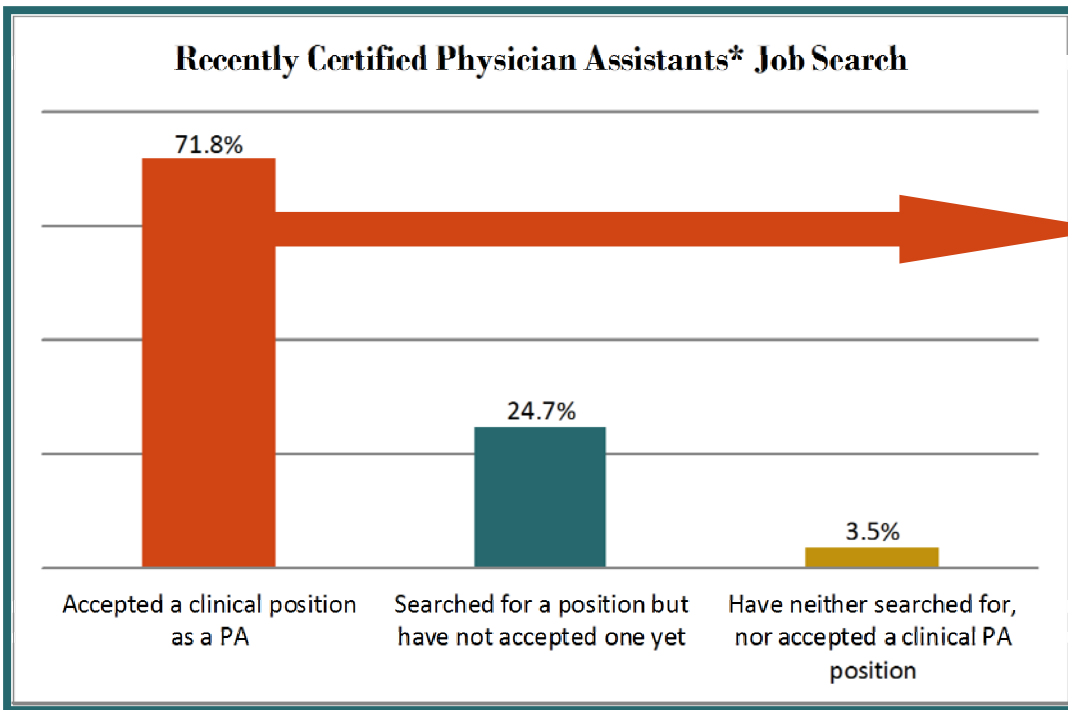
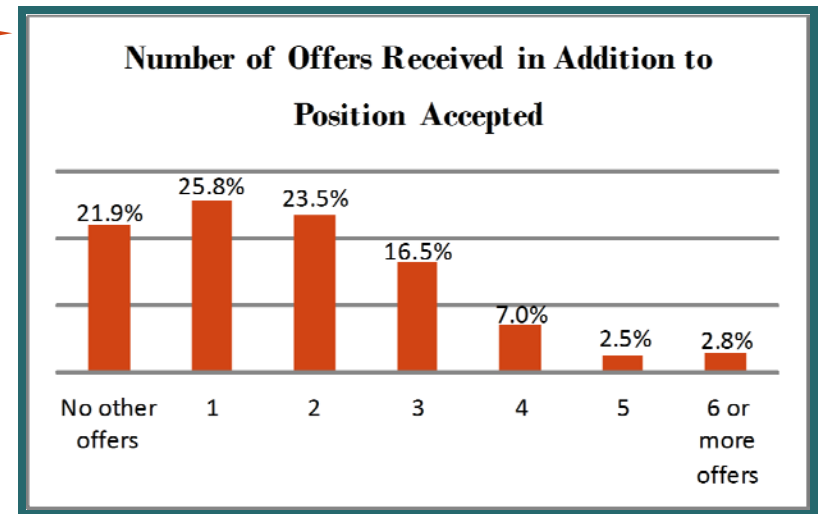


Figure 9: Number of Job Offers For Recent PA Grads



*Certified within six months of responding to the Profile

Data was collected between December 2012 and December 2013. 3,296 recent graduates responded to this section of the Profile.

2014 and Beyond

Going forward, the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants plans to expand its own research agenda with the aim of publishing this annual *Statistical Profile* as well as supplementary reports. Our first supplementary reports will focus on:

- Newly Certified Physician Assistants
- Physician Assistant State Reports
- Physician Assistant Specialty Reports

We also expect to publish in Fall 2014 new policies and procedures for those wanting to request additional data from NCCPA.

Please address questions, comments or your request to be notified when the new data request process is published to PAProfile@nccpa.net.