

**American Academy of
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS**

Physician Assistant Census Report:
Results from the 2010 AAPA Census

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AT A GLANCE: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2010 ANNUAL PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT CENSUS REPORT

Median Age: 38 years

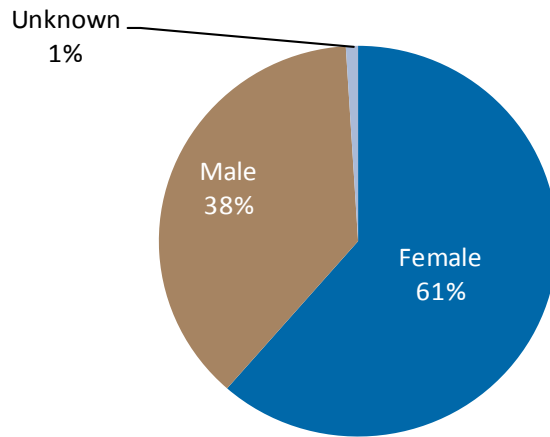
Percent in Clinical Practice: 87.7 %

Percent Who Work More than One Clinical Job Concurrently: 15.0%

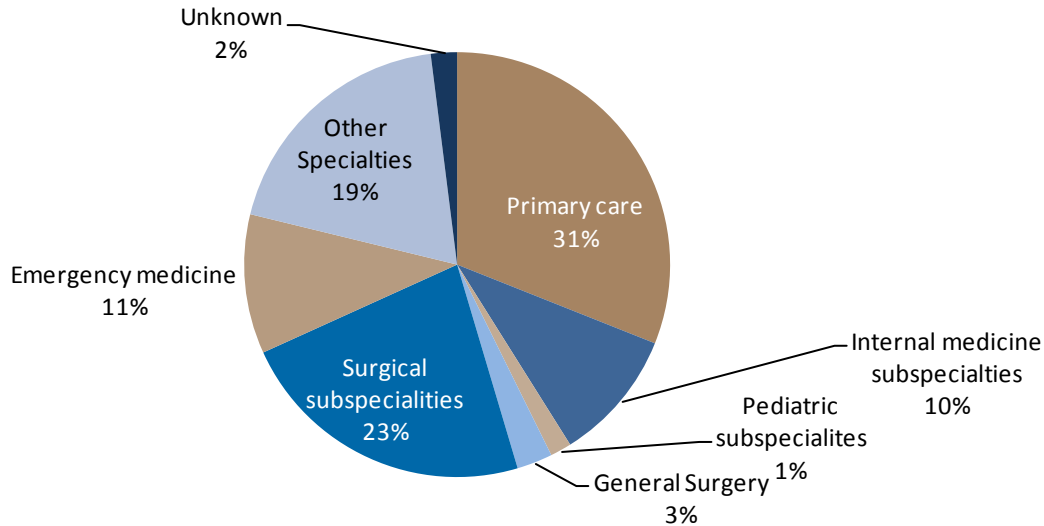
Median Number of Years in Clinical Practice: 7.0 years

Median Number of Years in Current Primary Specialty: 4.0 years

Gender



Primary Specialty



States With the Largest Number of Clinically Practicing PAs:

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

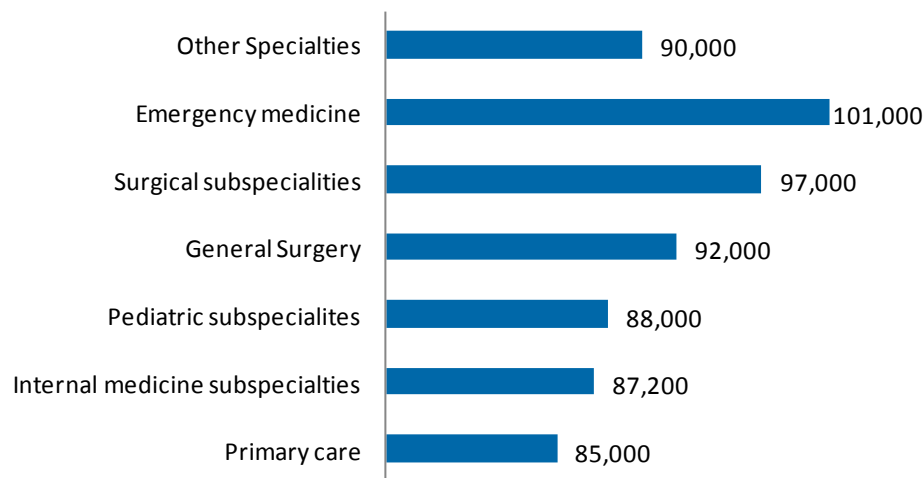
Percent Who Work for a Government Agency: 9.1%

Percent Who Work Full Time: 83.2%

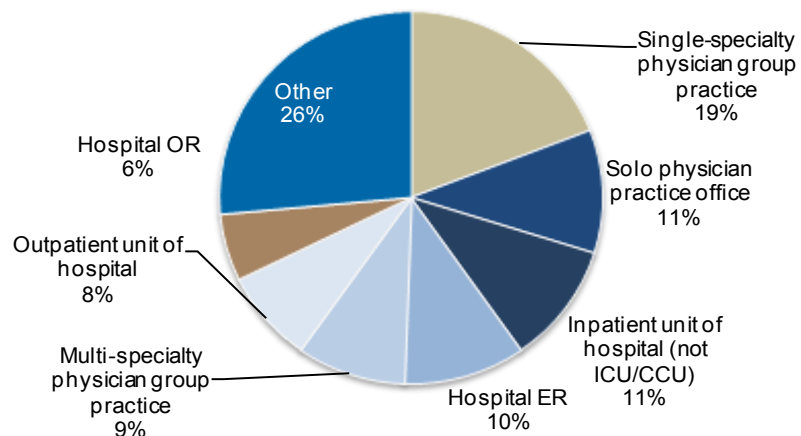
Median Hours Worked by Full Time PAs: 40.0 hours

Percent Who Take Call: 31.7%

Median Annual Compensation



Most Common Practice Settings



INTRODUCTION

The American Academy of Physician Assistants annual Physician Assistant Census is a survey of physician assistants, both AAPA members and non-members. The census data help expand the knowledge of the PA profession and its increasing role in the American health care system.

Census Data Collection

Data collection for the 2010 AAPA Physician Assistant Census was conducted between October, 2010, and April, 2011. The 2010 census survey was available online as well as on paper. The online version of the survey was available as of October, 2010. A link to the online version of the survey was posted on the homepage of AAPA's website and sent via e-mail to all PAs, both AAPA members and non-members, for whom e-mail addresses were available. Reminder e-mails were periodically sent to those who had not yet responded. In addition, ads were placed in several media venues to invite PAs to participate in the census survey.

The paper version of the survey was mailed in January, 2011, to all AAPA members who had not responded and to a random sample of non-members who had not responded. The samples consisted of people who were believed to be eligible to practice as PAs in the United States as of December 31, 2009, and for whom address information was available.

Participation in the Census

In total, 19,830 clinically practicing PAs participated in the 2010 census – accounting for 23.8 percent of the estimated 83,466 individuals in clinical practice as PAs. The response rate was affected by the fact that e-mail and mailing addresses were not available for all practicing PAs.

To ensure that responses accurately represent the entire profession, not just those who participated in the census, weight factors were applied to the data. Post-stratification weighting is used to compensate for the fact that persons with certain characteristics are not as likely to respond to the survey. Weighting requires the use of auxiliary information about the population and can take a number of different variables into account. Using multivariate logistic regression we determined that age, sex, ethnicity and certification/licensure status were the most important factors affecting census participation. We used these to calculate census weights for this report.

In the tables, the column labeled "Census" refers to just those who responded to the census. The column labeled "PA Population" refers to the weighted response. For data that represents the profession as a whole, refer to the information in the "PA Population" column for the most accurate numbers.

About AAPA

AAPA was founded in 1968 and is the only national organization representing PAs in all medical specialties. The Academy educates the general public about the PA profession, ensures competency of PAs through active involvement in the accreditation of PA programs, provides continuing education and conducts PA-related research. The Academy works to promote quality, cost-effective health care, and the professional and personal growth of PAs.

AAPA began conducting an annual survey of its members in 1990 and expanded the survey to non-members in 1996. While the survey instrument and data collection process have undergone some revisions since the inception of the census, the general approach and data elements have remained much the same.

Suggested citation: American Academy of Physician Assistants. (2011). *2010 AAPA Physician Assistant Census*. Alexandria, VA.

Table 1. Distribution of Physician Assistants by State Where Primarily Employed

State	Census	PA Population
Alaska	112	534
Alabama	108	398
Arkansas	59	260
Arizona	446	2041
California	1,383	6723
Colorado	601	2471
Connecticut	420	1692
District of Columbia	96	386
Delaware	76	295
Florida	1,041	4234
Georgia	536	2232
Hawaii	48	211
Iowa	257	965
Idaho	151	626
Illinois	661	2589
Indiana	227	973
Kansas	264	1021
Kentucky	232	936
Louisiana	173	744
Massachusetts	525	2213
Maryland	480	2127
Maine	150	649
Michigan	947	3724
Minnesota	478	2186
Missouri	195	757
Mississippi	28	113
Montana	129	617
North Carolina	970	4040
North Dakota	67	271
Nebraska	244	903
New Hampshire	144	561

**Table 1. Distribution of Physician Assistants by State Where Primarily Employed
(continued)**

State	Census	PA Population
New Jersey	287	1330
New Mexico	133	602
Nevada	132	613
New York	1,610	6989
Ohio	488	1921
Oklahoma	260	1112
Oregon	319	1288
Pennsylvania	1,216	4544
Rhode Island	68	287
South Carolina	223	896
South Dakota	130	530
Tennessee	310	1212
Texas	1,244	5518
Utah	228	927
Virginia	500	2224
Vermont	68	294
Washington	583	2621
Wisconsin	563	2147
West Virginia	156	639
Wyoming	59	231
Unknown	5	46
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 2. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Sex

Gender	Census	PA Population
Female	12,774	51,228
Male	6,934	31,420
Unknown	122	819
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 3. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Race and Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	Census	Population
Asian	753	4,000
Black	617	3,536
Hispanic	694	3,962
Native American	99	618
White	14,937	54,866
Other	70	374
Unknown	2,660	16,111
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 4. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Current Profession*

Profession	Census	PA Population
Clinically practicing PA	19,830	83,466
Clinically practicing physician or resident	31	378
Clinically practicing nurse practitioner	47	288
Other clinically practicing provider	132	826
PA educator	1,165	4,832
Dean or associate dean	22	90
Other health professions educator	257	1,187
Health care professional: administrator	359	1,764
Health care professional: researcher	167	741
Health care professional: public health	61	300
Health care professional: Other	221	1,239
Other non-health professional	84	582
PA student	20	234
PA post-graduate residency program student	66	379
Medical student	19	89
Other student	65	280
Not employed by choice	277	1,503
Employed, seeking PA job	41	443
Unemployed, seeking PA job	333	2,085
Unemployed, seeking non-PA job	24	201
Retired	367	3,545
Other	223	1,449

*Includes non-clinically practicing PAs

Table 5. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Age

Age category	Census	PA Population
< 30	4,043	14,767
30 - 34	3,929	17,093
35 - 42	4,250	19,417
43 - 52	3,733	16,444
53+	3,840	15,552
Unknown	35	193
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 6. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Age at Graduation

Age category	Census	PA Population
< 25	1,840	6,625
25 - 26	2,788	10,417
27 - 29	2,911	11,910
30 - 34	2,665	11,732
35+	2,877	12,480
Unknown	6,749	30,302
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 7. Distribution of Physician Assistants by Years Since Graduation

Years since graduation	Census	PA Population
<3	2,703	10,636
3 - 5	2,532	9,990
6 - 10	2,967	12,676
11 - 18	2,284	9,496
19+	2,416	9,922
Unknown	6,928	30,747
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 8. Age of Expected or Actual Retirement for Clinically Practicing PAs

Census	PA Population	10th	25th	Median	75th	90th
19,830	83,466	55	60	65	66	70

Table 9. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Number of Concurrent PA Jobs

Number of Jobs	Census	PA Population
One	16,276	68,382
Two	2,513	10,532
Three	380	1,586
Four or more	86	362
Self-employed with multiple contracts	124	569
Unknown	451	2,035
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 10. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Primary Employer

Employer	Census	PA Population
Self-employed	537	2,466
Solo physician practice	2,120	8,894
Single-specialty physician group	5,650	22,951
Multi-specialty physician group	2,730	11,241
University hospital	1,802	7,560
Other hospital	3,032	12,953
Freestanding urgent care center	420	1,889
Freestanding surgical center	19	74
Nursing home or LTC facility	40	191
Home health agency	6	28
Hospice	8	30
HMO	283	1,173
Community Health Center	1,126	4,989
Medical staffing agency	122	511
Physician practice management organization	340	1,480
Integrated health system	431	1,895
Corrections system	132	620
Other	619	2,632
Unknown	413	1,889
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 11. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Primary Employer's Government Affiliation

Government Affiliation	Census	PA Population
Not affiliated with the military or a government agency	17,616	73,469
Air Force	76	385
Army	237	1,093
Navy	68	330
Coast Guard	13	83
Dept. of Veterans Affairs	430	1,781
Federal Bureau of Prisons/Department of Justice	28	132
Indian Health Service	77	443
U.S. Public Health Service	75	330
Other federal government	100	431
State government	398	1,687
Local government	164	800
Other government (e.g. foreign)	22	119
Unknown	526	2,384
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 12. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Primary Practice Setting for Primary Clinical Employer

Practice Setting	Census	PA Population
Intensive/critical care unit of hospital	451	1,824
Inpatient unit of hospital (not ICU/CCU)	2,116	8,724
Outpatient unit of hospital	1,576	6,668
Hospital ER	2,012	8,587
Hospital OR	1,144	4,856
Other hospital unit	244	1,131
Certified Rural Health Clinic	512	2,204
Federally Qualified Health Center	391	1,664
Community Health Center facility	574	2,535
Freestanding urgent care facility	688	3,133
Freestanding surgical facility	68	268
Solo physician practice	2,110	8,933
Single-specialty physician group practice	3,932	15,970
Multi-specialty physician group practice	1,885	7,652
HMO facility	186	747
Nursing home or LTC facility	163	761
University/college student health facility	108	435
School-based health facility	72	320
Other freestanding outpatient health facility	406	1,797
Correctional facility	144	662
Industrial work site	94	382
Retail outlet (e.g. Wal-Mart)	66	273
Mobile health unit	15	72
Patient's homes	43	176
Other	231	1,042
Critical access hospital	21	80
Unknown	578	2,572
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 13. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by All Practice Settings Where Time is Spent for Primary Employer

Practice Setting	Census	PA Population
Intensive/critical care unit of hospital	4,345	17,833
Inpatient unit of hospital	6,818	28,212
Outpatient unit of hospital	4,545	19,051
Hospital emergency room	5,914	24,710
Hospital operating room	4,431	18,521
Other unit of hospital	1,672	6,972
Federally Qualified Rural Health Center	883	3,790
Other Federally Qualified Health Center	682	2,957
Other Community Health Center	917	4,106
Freestanding urgent care facility	1,079	4,873
Freestanding surgical facility	1,049	4,410
Solo practice physician office	2,456	10,474
Single-specialty physician group practice	5,028	20,374
Multispecialty physician group practice	2,463	9,984
HMO facility	285	1,171
Nursing home or LTC facility	905	3,748
University student health facility	226	935
School-based health facility	154	620
Other freestanding outpatient facility	705	3,054
Correctional facility	213	994
Industrial work site	156	654
Retail outlet	78	326
Mobile health unit	75	362
Patient homes	299	1,280
Other setting	458	2,165
Critical Access Hospital	298	1,265

*The total will sum to more than 83,466 because respondents were instructed to mark all that apply

Table 14. Percentage of Clinically Practicing PAs Who Work in National Committee for Quality Assurance Certified Setting

NCQA Setting	Census	PA Population
No	4,808	19,890
Yes	421	1,662
Unknown	14,601	61,915
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 15. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Specialty

Specialty type	Census	PA Population
Primary care*	6,110	25,930
Internal medicine subspecialties	2,039	8,395
Pediatric subspecialties	344	1,345
General surgery	524	2,249
Surgical subspecialties	4,556	18,989
Emergency medicine	2,097	8,890
Other specialties	3,788	16,019
Unknown	372	1,649
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

*Primary care includes family medicine with and without urgent care, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, and gynecology/obstetrics.

Table 16. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Internal Medicine Subspecialty

Subspecialty	Census	PA Population
Internal medicine: Cardiology	586	2,445
Internal medicine: Critical Care	114	456
Internal medicine: Endocrinology	107	455
Internal medicine: Gastroenterology	320	1,244
Internal medicine: Hematology	47	199
Internal medicine: Immunology	3	13
Internal medicine: Infectious Disease	98	426
Internal medicine: Nephrology	92	391
Internal medicine: Neurology	151	620
Internal medicine: Pulmonology	104	438
Internal medicine: Rheumatology	65	297
Internal medicine: Oncology	255	1,011
Internal medicine: Other	97	399
TOTAL	3,006	12,352

Table 17. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Pediatric Subspecialty

Subspecialty	Census	PA Population
Pediatrics: Adolescent medicine	26	99
Pediatrics: Allergy	5	25
Pediatrics: Cardiology	24	91
Pediatrics: Critical care	20	72
Pediatrics: Endocrinology	13	52
Pediatrics: Gastroenterology	9	36
Pediatrics: Hematology	5	18
Pediatrics: Infectious disease	3	16
Pediatrics: Neonatal-perinatal	74	280
Pediatrics: Neurology	9	32
Pediatrics: Pulmonology	7	31
Pediatrics: Rheumatology	1	4
Pediatrics: Oncology	22	81
Pediatrics: Emergency medicine	33	132
Pediatrics: Other	93	377
TOTAL	753	3,028

Table 18. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Surgical Subspecialty

Subspecialty	Census	PA Population
Surgery: Cardiovascular/cardiothoracic	496	2,031
Surgery: Colon and rectal	28	110
Surgery: Hand	63	270
Surgery: Neurological	454	1,917
Surgery: Oncology	78	308
Surgery: Orthopedics	2,068	8,688
Surgery: Otorhinolaryngology	227	907
Surgery: Pediatric	37	149
Surgery: Plastic	144	563
Surgery: Thoracic	43	169
Surgery: Transplant	53	212
Surgery: Trauma	116	480
Surgery: Urology	277	1,168
Surgery: Vascular	138	607
Surgery: Bariatric	65	284
Surgery: Spine	167	701
Surgery: Other	102	425
TOTAL	5,080	21,238

Table 19. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Primary Care Specialty*

Specialty	Census	PA Population
Family medicine	2,966	12,539
Family medicine with urgent care	1,768	7,751
General internal medicine	967	3,957
General pediatrics	409	1,683
Obstetrics/gynecology	404	1,645
TOTAL	6,514	27,575

*Primary care includes family medicine with and without urgent care, general internal medicine, general pediatrics, and gynecology/obstetrics

Table 20. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Specialty/Subspecialty (Excluding Internal Medicine, Pediatric or Surgical Subspecialties)

Specialty/subspecialty	Census	PA Population
Addiction medicine	53	304
Allergy	106	463
Anesthesiology	50	196
Dermatology	708	2,829
Emergency medicine	2,097	8,890
Genetics	5	23
Geriatrics	148	671
Occupational medicine	370	1,526
Ophthalmology	18	68
Pain management	279	1,299
Pathology	2	11
Physical medicine/rehabilitation	135	582
Psychiatry	185	856
Public health	27	114
Radiation oncology	49	200
Diagnostic radiology	38	157
Interventional radiology	171	735
Hospital medicine	467	1,958
Other	573	2,383
TOTAL	5,481	23,264

Table 21. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Years of Experience*

Years in clinical practice	Census	PA Population
< 2	2,897	15,311
2 - 4	4,039	15,126
5- 9	4,670	19,401
10 - 17	4,274	17,853
18+	3,790	15,085
Unknown	160	690
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

*Excludes PAs who have never practiced

Table 22. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Years of Experience in Current Primary Specialty*

Years in current specialty	Census	PA Population
< 1 year	2,555	14,157
1 - 2	4,078	15,545
3 - 5	4,558	18,060
6 - 10	4,048	17,072
11+	4,335	17,468
Unknown	256	1,164
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 23. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Full- and Part-time for Primary Clinical Employer*

Hours worked per week	Census	PA Population
Part-time	2,717	11,433
Full-time	16,515	69,424
Unknown	598	2,609
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

*Full-time employment is defined as working 32 hours or more per week; part-time employment is defined as working less than 32 hours per week

Table 24. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Hours Worked for Primary Clinical Employer

Hours worked per week	Census	PA Population
Zero	238	1,033
1-9	313	1,330
10-19	449	1,943
20-39	4,584	18,899
40-44	6,926	29,469
45-50	2,547	10,494
>50	4,155	17,611
Unknown	618	2,689
TOTAL	19,830	83,466

Table 25. Distribution of Hours PAs Worked Per Week in Primary Practice Setting for Primary Clinical Employer*

Practice Setting	Census	PA Population	10 th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Intensive/critical care unit of hospital	412	1,679	38	40	42	50	60
Inpatient unit of hospital (not ICU/CCU)	1,911	7,839	38	40	40	50	55
Outpatient unit of hospital	1,387	5,896	38	40	40	47	50
Hospital ER	1,644	7,035	35	36	40	40	48
Hospital OR	1,040	4,446	40	40	50	50	60
Other hospital unit	213	1,000	40	40	42	50	55
Certified rural health clinic	461	1,996	32	40	40	45	50
Federally Qualified Health Center	336	1,440	36	40	40	43	50
Community Health Center facility	465	2,099	36	40	40	45	50
Freestanding urgent care facility	541	2,517	35	36	40	42	50

Table 25. Distribution of Hours PAs Worked Per Week in Primary Practice Setting for Primary Clinical Employer (continued)*

Practice Setting	Census	PA Population	10 th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Freestanding surgical facility	53	203	35	40	40	50	50
Solo physician practice	1,639	6,856	32	36	40	45	50
Single-specialty physician group practice	3,328	13,470	32	40	40	48	50
Multi-specialty physician group practice	1,640	6,680	33	40	40	50	54
HMO facility	157	631	32	40	40	45	50
Nursing home or LTC facility	139	648	24	40	40	45	50
University/college student health facility	74	295	37	40	40	40	45
School-based health facility	50	230	32	37	40	40	46
Other freestanding outpatient health facility	324	1,452	32	40	40	45	50
Correctional facility	132	610	35	40	40	40	46

Table 25. Distribution of Hours PAs Worked Per Week in Primary Practice Setting for Primary Clinical Employer (continued)*

Practice Setting	Census	PA Population	10 th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Industrial facility worksite	77	315	39	40	40	45	50
Retail outlet (e.g. Wal-Mart)	55	230	32	36	40	40	40
Mobile health unit	11	54	10	28	40	40	50
Patient homes	34	135	32	38	40	50	55
Other	174	748	35	40	40	50	60
Critical access hospital	18	69	36	40	40	50	60
Missing	200	852	35	40	40	50	55
TOTAL	16,515	69,424	35	40	40	48	50

*Includes PAs who work at least 32 hours per week

Table 26. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Whether Call is Taken*

Call type		Census	PA Population
Takes call for primary clinical employer	No	10,723	45,216
	Yes	5,748	24,028
	Unknown	44	181
TOTAL*	All PAs	16,515	69,425

*Only includes PAs who work at least 32 hours per week

Table 27. Distribution of Clinically Practicing PAs by Types of Call Taken*

Call Type		Census	PA Population
Always on call	No	4,444	18,525
	Yes	182	811
Emergency department call	No	4,180	17,539
	Yes	446	1,797
Surgical assisting call	No	4,063	17,056
	Yes	563	2,279
In-house call	No	4,007	16,724
	Yes	619	2,611
Other call	No	3,684	15,308
	Yes	942	4,027

*Includes PAs who work at least 32 hours per week and those who indicated they take call for their primary clinical employer

Table 28. Hours on Call per Month for Clinically Practicing PAs*

Type of Call	Census	PA Population	10th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Total hours on call per month	1829	7,631	10	24	70	120	200

*Includes PAs who take call and work at least 32 hours per week

Table 29. Type of Base Pay PAs Receive From Primary Clinical Employer by Full- or Part-time Employment*

Type of Base Pay		Census	PA Population
Receives an annual salary	All	14,536	60,478
	Part-time	1,073	4,378
	Full-time	13,184	54,923
	Unknown	279	1,177
Receives hourly pay	All	4,625	20,075
	Part-time	1,487	6,388
	Full-time	3,043	13,265
	Unknown	95	422
Did not receive any type of base pay	All	393	1,681
	Part-time	146	618
	Full-time	235	1,015
	Unknown	12	47
Unknown	All	276	1,233
	Part-time	11	49
	Full-time	53	221
	Unknown	212	962
TOTAL	All	19,830	83,466

*Full-time employment is defined as working 32 hours or more per week; part-time is defined as working less than 32 hours per week.

Table 30. Distribution of PAs who Receive Relative Value Units from Their Employer* **

Receive RVUS From Employer	Census	PA Population
No	14,331	60,430
Yes	1,989	8,116
Unknown	195	879
TOTAL	16,515	69,424

*Only includes PAs who work at least 32 hours per week

Table 31. Total Earnings from Primary Clinical Employer by Full- or Part-time Employment* **

Work Status	Census	10th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Part-time	1928	\$38,000	\$48,000	\$63,000	\$85,000	\$105,000
Full-time	15,249	\$71,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$106,000	\$125,000

*Only includes clinically practicing PAs who are not self-employed

**Full-time employment is defined as working 32 hours or more per week; part-time employment is defined as working less than 32 hours per week.

Table 32. Total Earnings from Primary Clinical Employer by Full- or Part-time Employment for PAs Who Graduated in 2009

Work Status	Census	10th	25th	Median	75th	90th
Part-time	56	\$34,000	\$50,000	\$68,500	\$82,500	\$90,000
Full-time	946	\$67,000	\$74,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$100,000

*Only includes clinically practicing PAs who are not self-employed

**Full-time employment is defined as working 32 hours or more per week; part-time employment is defined as working less than 32 hours per week.

Table 33. Degree of Satisfaction with the PA Career

Satisfaction	Census	PA Population
Least satisfied	2,990	12,514
Somewhat dissatisfied	2,162	8,776
Neutral	1,388	5,901
Somewhat satisfied	5,278	22,008
Most satisfied	7,415	31,508
Unknown	597	2,759
TOTAL	19,830	83,466