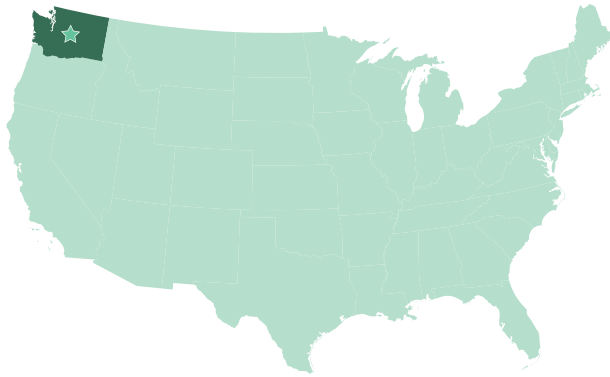


# The Patient Experience Perspectives on Today's Healthcare



## Background

The American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA) advocates for the physician associate/assistant (PA) profession and provides tools to improve the PA practice and patient care. Earlier this year, AAPA approached The Harris Poll to revisit work that had been conducted in 2014. Unlike the past survey, AAPA wanted to take a wider look at the state of the U.S. healthcare system and capture the issues patients are encountering within today's system. Additionally, the research seeks to understand attitudes toward PAs to reinforce the need for this group of expertly trained, high-quality, compassionate providers. This summary includes research findings from the national sample collected as well as the oversample of adults living in Washington.

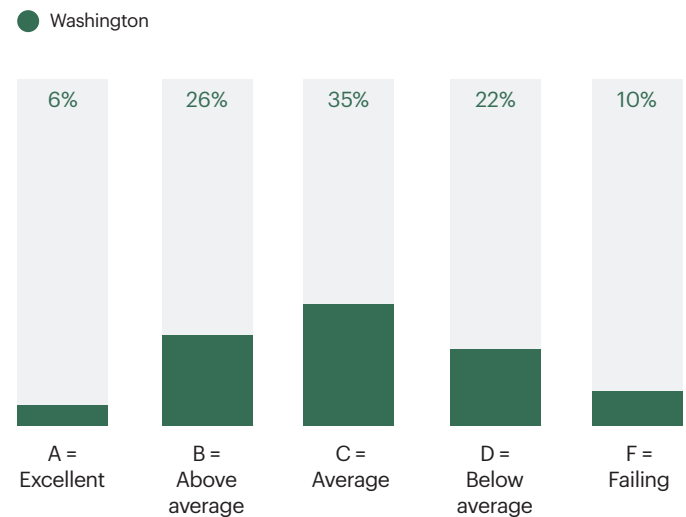
The research revealed that the U.S. healthcare system is stretched thin – a reality that was both illuminated during and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to healthcare provider burnout and staffing shortages, many feel that not everyone has equal access to care, and simply navigating the system can be overwhelming and time-consuming. This may contribute to the general lack of confidence that the U.S. healthcare system will be able to support the care they need in the future. Beyond the need to reduce the cost of healthcare, adults agree that having stronger relationships with providers – especially those whom they trust – has the potential to improve their health. This is where PAs, working to the full extent of their education and ability, have an opportunity to elevate healthcare within the U.S.

## Views of the System

Nearly one-third of adults in Washington give the U.S. system a failing grade, and a substantial proportion of Washington adults are concerned about their community having the resources they need to keep people healthy.

- Dissatisfaction with healthcare system:** Nearly one-third of adults in Washington grade the healthcare system as poor (32% give it a D or F). Nationally, about one-quarter of adults agree that, at a high level, the system is poor: 26% give the U.S. healthcare system a D (18%) or an F (8%) grade.
- Impact of workforce shortages:** Significantly more adults in Washington are concerned that healthcare workforce shortages will impact them, compared to adults nationally (77% vs. 68% nationally).
- Concern about community resources:** Two-fifths (40%) of adults in Washington feel that their community does not have the resources needed to keep people healthy. A similar proportion of U.S. adults nationally report feeling the same about their community (42%).
- Further, adults in Washington (74%) are significantly less likely than the national average (80%) to say they have choice when it comes to selecting a healthcare provider. And, fewer than a quarter of adults in Washington (24%) agree that the U.S. healthcare system serves all people equally (significantly less than the national average, 39%).

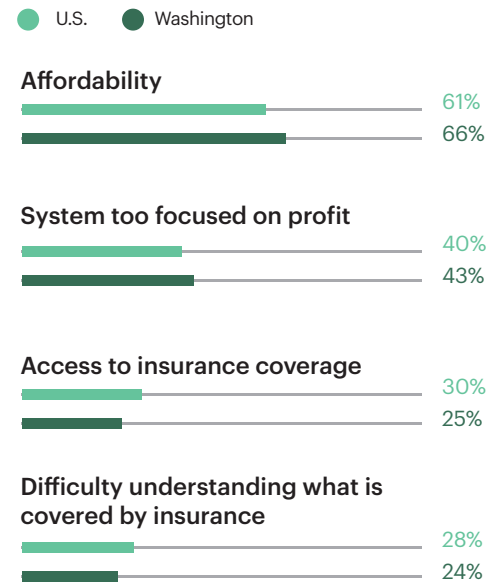
## Healthcare Grades: U.S. Healthcare System



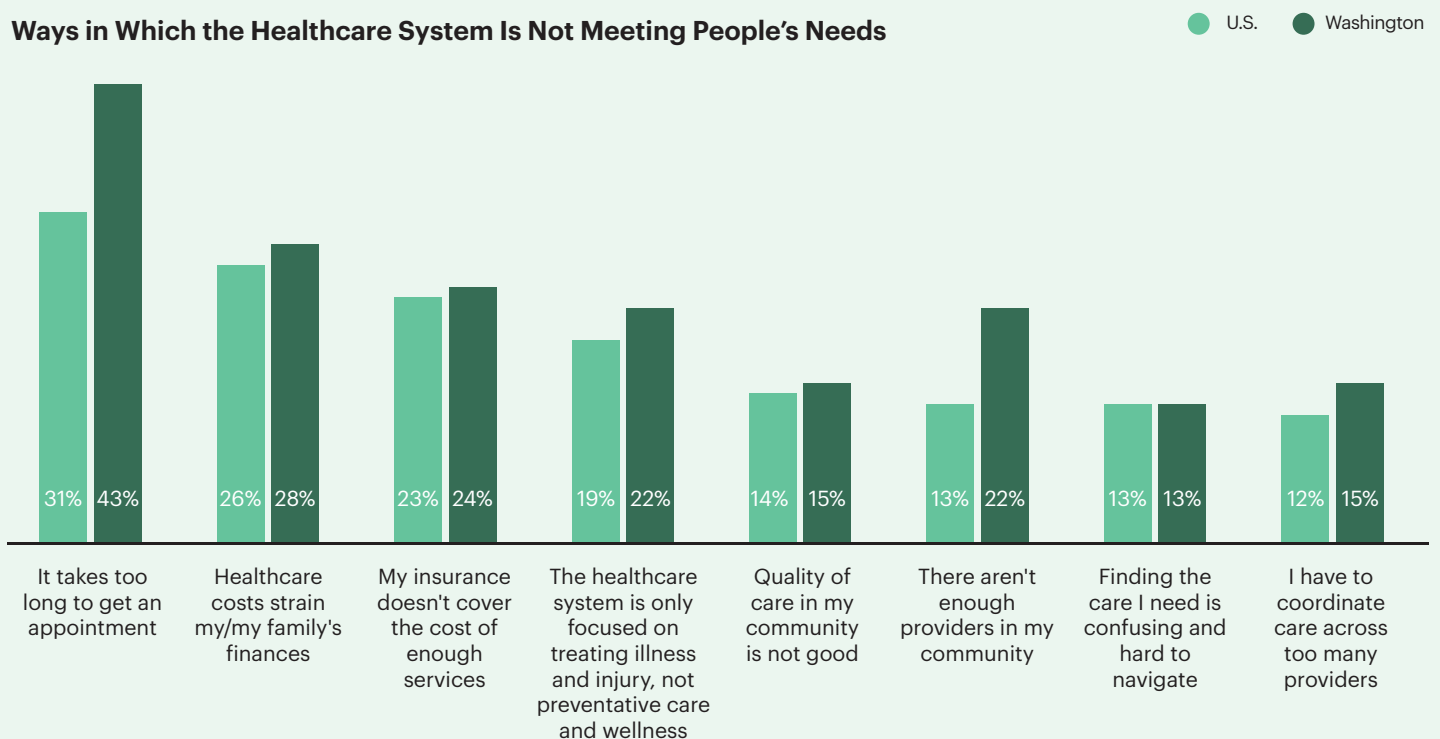
The healthcare system falls short in addressing people’s needs in Washington and nationally. Adults in Washington identify affordability as a top barrier to access.

- **Deterring care:** Affordability stands as a primary hurdle, with two-thirds of Washington adults (66%) saying that affordability is among the biggest barriers to healthcare access in the U.S. Nationally, more than six in ten adults (61%) say the same.
- **Financial strain:** Nearly three in ten in Washington (28%) and roughly one-quarter of adults nationally (26%) say healthcare costs strain their (and/or their families' finances).

**Biggest Barriers to Accessing Healthcare**



**Ways in Which the Healthcare System Is Not Meeting People’s Needs**

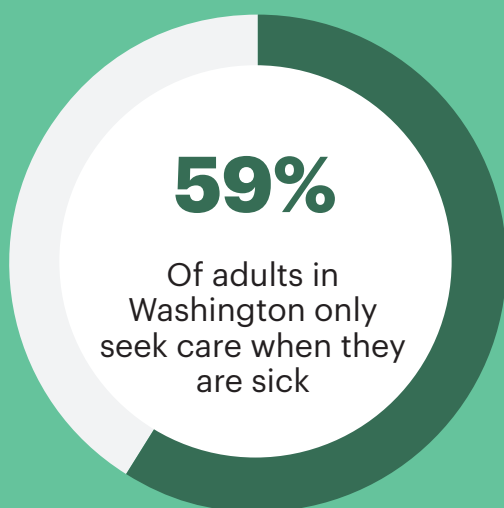


## Coordinating care burdens patients and informal caregivers assisting family and friends navigating the healthcare system.

- **Coordinating care:** More than seven in ten adults in Washington (71%) and two-thirds nationally (65%) say that coordinating and managing healthcare is overwhelming and time-consuming.
- **Long wait times:** On average, whether nationally or in Washington, it takes nearly a month to get a needed appointment with a healthcare provider. For those who do not get an appointment within a week, it takes an average of 3.9 weeks (national) and 4.4 weeks (Washington). Adults in Washington report spending an average of 2.1 hours a week coordinating care for themselves or their families and an average of 4.5 hours if they are helping someone else navigate care. Nationally, adults spend an average of 2.0 hours coordinating care for themselves or their families and an average of 3.3 hours helping someone else.
- Compared to adults nationally, adults in Washington are significantly more likely to cite that their health would improve if it wasn't so difficult to get an appointment (33% vs. 23% nationally).

## Cost worries, access barriers, care coordination challenges, and resulting frustration significantly influence behavior and, ultimately, shape health outcomes.

- **Skipping care:** More than half (54%) say they have delayed or skipped care. Nationally, more than two-fifths of adults (44%) say they have either delayed or entirely skipped healthcare services within the past two years.
- **Cost of care:** Financial cost is the top reason adults delayed or skipped care in Washington and nationally (41% vs. 40% respectively).
- **Impact of skipping care:** About six in ten adults in Washington (58%) and nationally (60%) who delayed or skipped care within the past two years experienced some kind of impact as a result, including worsening condition (28% vs. 25%, respectively), loss of faith in the healthcare system (24% vs. 21%), and/or negative impact on mental health (23% vs. 25%).



**54%** OF ADULTS IN WASHINGTON

**Have either skipped or delayed healthcare services within the past two years**

While many adults provide positive assessments of their personal interactions with providers, nearly half observe that their healthcare provider(s) appear burned out or overburdened which may lead to patients feeling rushed during appointments.

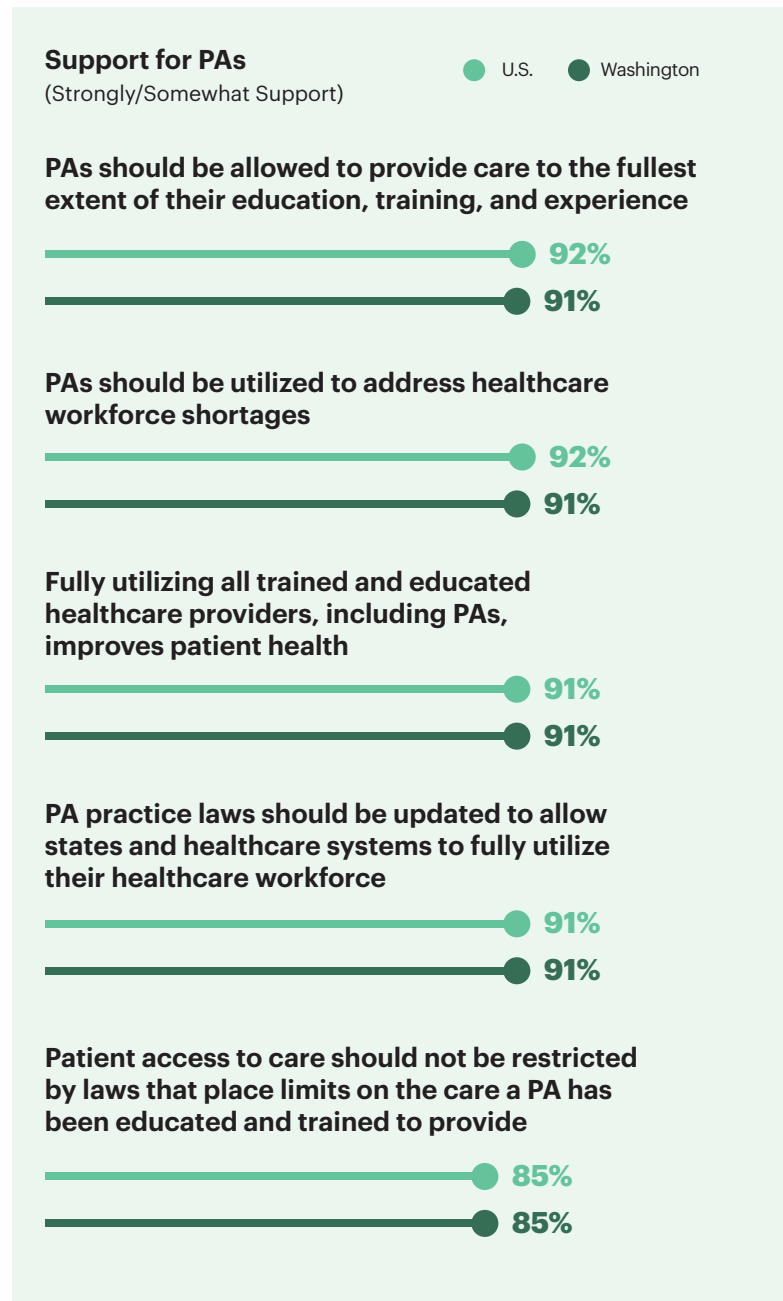
- **Demands on healthcare providers:** Over seven in ten adults in Washington (72%) and two-thirds nationally (66%) agree that healthcare providers seem more rushed than they have been in the past.
- More than half of adults in Washington (56%) worry their healthcare providers appear to be burned out/overburdened, and nearly eight in ten in Washington (78%) worry that the demands on providers are too great.
- **Patient sentiment:** Nearly four in ten adults in Washington (38%) say that they personally have felt rushed during a healthcare appointment (significantly higher than the 30% seen nationally) and half acknowledge that they don't always feel listened to by healthcare providers (52%). Washingtonians are significantly more likely than adults at a national level to confirm that providers have dismissed concerns they had (32% vs. 23% nationally).

### The Value of Physician Associates/Assistants

Positive patient-provider relationships are crucial to keeping people active within the healthcare system, bolstering faith in the system, and improving health outcomes overall.

- **Primary care:** At a national level, more than four-fifths of adults (86%) have a primary care provider, while 14% do not. Adults in Washington are more likely to have a primary care provider (91%). Nationally, those who have a primary care provider are two times more likely than those who do not to give healthcare they received in the past 12 months an A or B grade.

- **Navigating the system:** More than six in ten adults nationally who have a primary care provider (63%) say that healthcare providers help them navigate the healthcare system – compared with less than half of those who do not have a primary care provider (48%).
- **Preventing health conditions:** Nationally, more than two-fifths of care coordinators (45%) agree that better primary or preventative healthcare could have prevented a health condition, injury, or major illness for the patient.



Physician associates/assistants are well-positioned to be part of the solution to the healthcare crisis in the U.S. Having an ongoing relationship with a PA further establishes and enhances these positive feelings.

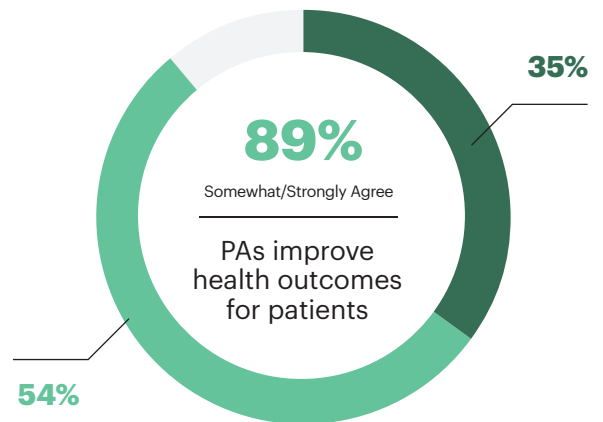
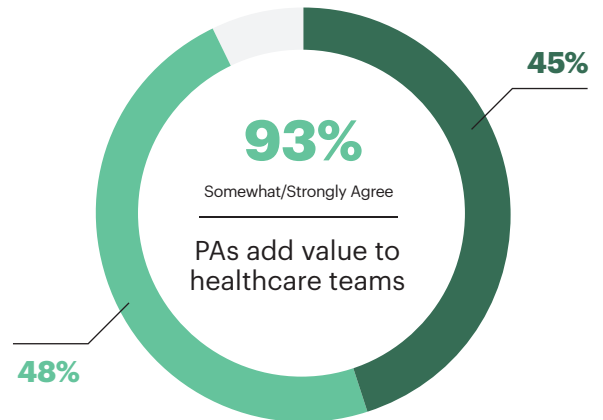
- PA trust:** About two-thirds of adults (64%) nationally and 68% of adults in Washington say that they would trust a PA to serve as their primary care provider.
- High marks for PA care:** Nearly eight in ten (79% both nationally and in Washington) who have seen a PA rate the medical care they received in the past twelve months as either good or excellent. Nationally, those who consider themselves to have an ongoing relationship with a PA rate the care from a PA even higher (89%).

The public supports better utilizing PAs to improve the healthcare system and better address an aging population, the rise in chronic disease, and a significant healthcare workforce shortage.

- Maximizing PA care:** Large majorities agree that PAs should be allowed to provide care to the fullest extent of their education, training, and experience (92%, nationally and 91% in Washington, are in support).
- Updating PA practice laws:** Majorities also support PA practice laws being updated to allow states and healthcare systems to fully utilize their healthcare workforce (91%, both nationally and in Washington).

**Agreement with Statements about PAs**  
(Among U.S. Adults)

● Somewhat Support ● Strongly Support



**Unlocking the potential of all trained healthcare providers, including PAs, holds the key to enhancing patient well-being. However, maximizing this approach mandates updating PA practice laws, enabling states and healthcare systems to fully harness their workforce.**

# Research Method

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of The American Academy of Physician Associates among n=2,519 adults age 18+. In addition to the national sample, oversamples were collected in six states including Washington (n=518). The survey was conducted from February 23 – March 9, 2023. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Data from the national sample was weighted by race where necessary and by gender, region, education, marital status, household size, employment, household income, language proficiency (for Hispanic respondents only), and propensity to be online to bring respondents in line with their actual proportions in the population, and then combined using a post-weight.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, as subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the national sample data is accurate to within +2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

