

# The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the 2021 PA Student Cohort's Search for Employment

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## Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic presented numerous challenges to PA education. Although the short-term impacts of the pandemic are more readily visible (e.g., the cancellation of in-person courses in spring 2020), the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may still be undetermined. Researchers noted the uncertainty of job prospects<sup>1</sup>, the instability of the PA education workforce<sup>2</sup> and faculty exhaustion<sup>3</sup> as possible long-term impacts. Nonetheless, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 28.0% employment growth for PAs between 2021 & 2031 (+38,400 jobs).<sup>4</sup> This poster explores the experiences of 2021 graduates as they search for employment.



## Methods:

PAEA conducts two annual student surveys: Matriculating Student Survey (MSS) and End of Program Survey (EOP).

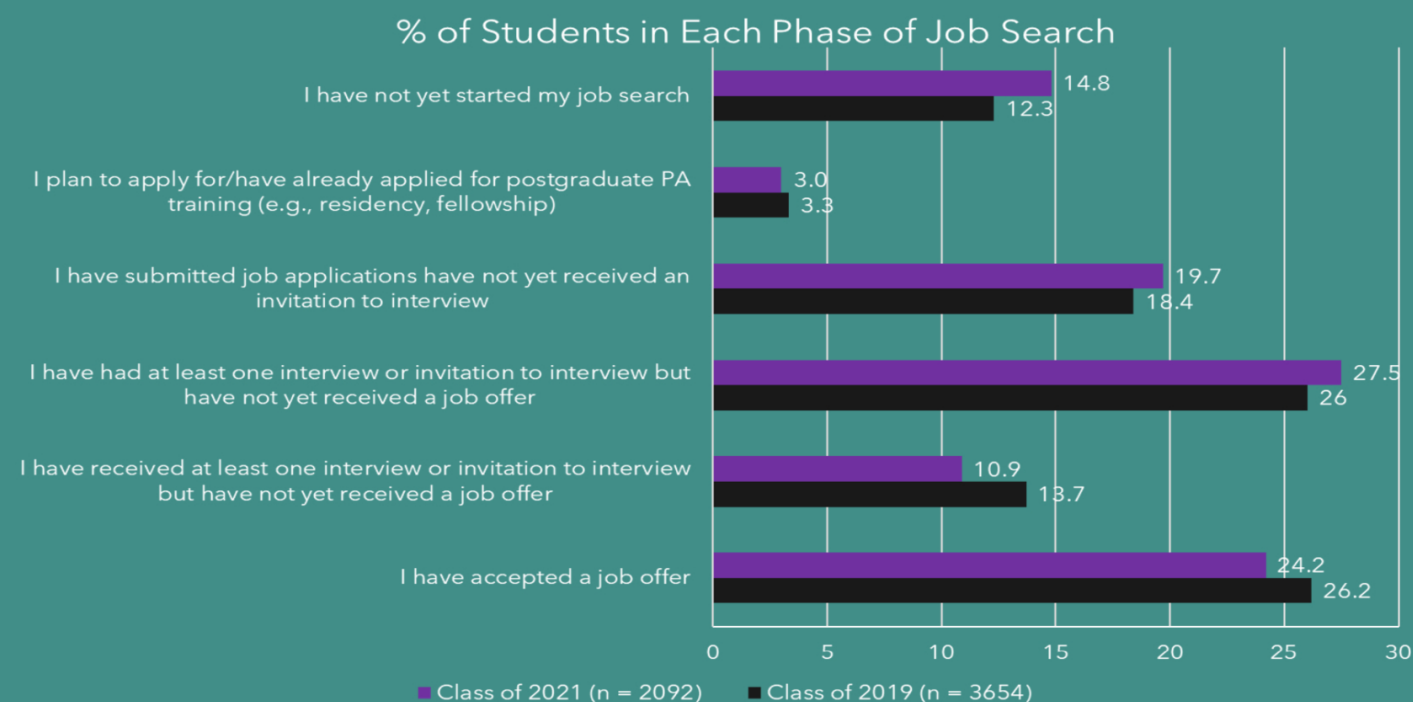
- EOP - N = 2,164 responses
- 131 PA Programs represented

Specific COVID-19 pandemic-related question

- **What obstacles are you currently facing specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic?**
- Employment Status
- **% of Graduates in Each Phase of Job Search**

## Results:

- Finding a job was not a choice in the obstacle list; however, nearly 1/3 of students who chose other (n=37) indicated finding a job was an obstacle.
- Compared to students in the 2019 EOP, both students still on the job search and those who had accepted positions had submitted a higher mean number of applications.



## Conclusion

- BLS<sup>10</sup> did note an obvious increase in the unemployment rate for healthcare workers in non-hospital settings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020 (Apr-Jun) which remained above average until 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2022 (>2.5%).
- AAMC<sup>9</sup> also noted the pandemic's impact on the population, particularly older adults, might impact provider projections. Still, burnout, early retirements, career change, and population migration may mitigate any decreases.
- Timing of survey may have impacted responses.
  - Low response rate
  - Delta variant