

Perspectives on Today's Healthcare: Adults Diagnosed with Obesity Summary

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 adults who have been diagnosed with obesity.

View of the System

- Two-thirds of adults diagnosed with obesity (66%) grade the U.S. healthcare system poorly, with 31% giving it a C, another 26% giving it a D, and 9% saying it deserves an F. [Q100]
- More than three-quarters of adults diagnosed with obesity (77%) say the healthcare system does not meet all their needs. [Q125]
- The most common ways adults with obesity say the system is not meeting their needs are: it takes too long to get an appointment (35%), insurance doesn't cover the cost of enough services (30%), and the system focuses on treatment not on prevention (26%). Another 24% say healthcare costs strain their/their family's finances. [Q125]
- More than 4 in 5 adults diagnosed with obesity (83%) fear healthcare quality will suffer as care increasingly becomes focused on profit. [Q130]

Barriers to Care

- Affordability is believed to be the primary barrier to accessing healthcare in the U.S. among those diagnosed with obesity (64%). [Q105]
- Additionally, those diagnosed with obesity say the fact that the healthcare system is too focused on profit (43%) along with insurance issues, like having access to insurance (29%), and not understanding what is covered (29%) are the biggest barriers to access to healthcare. A larger proportion of those 18-34 (46%) compared to those 50-64 (27%) or 65+ (24%) cite the latter. [Q105]
- More than a third of adults diagnosed with obesity say their own health would be improved if healthcare didn't cost so much (37%), while more than a quarter say their health would improve if: their provider had more time to spend with them (27%), there

was more focus on preventative care (27%), or if their insurance coverage was easier to understand (26%). [Q305]

Impact of the System

- When it comes to getting an appointment, those who cannot get one within a week, end up waiting a little less than a month, on average, to see a healthcare provider (3.6 weeks). [Q150]
- Over the past 2 years, more than half of adults diagnosed with obesity (52%) have delayed or skipped needed care. Women (44%) are more likely than men (27%) to say they have delayed care. [Q135]
- The most common reason for doing so was concern about the cost (40%), followed by taking too long to get an appointment (29%), and not being able to take time away (e.g., work/other obligations) (27%). [Q140]
- As a result of skipping or delaying care, about a third of those with obesity said their overall health declined (34%), their condition worsened (33%), and/or their mental health was negatively impacted (33%). [Q145]

Views of Providers

- About 7 in 10 adults diagnosed with obesity (74%) are concerned that the demands on healthcare providers are too great and about two-thirds say providers seem more rushed than they have in the past (63%). [Q310]
- When asked about interactions with healthcare providers, about 2 in 5 adults diagnosed with obesity say have felt rushed (38%) and about a third say a provider dismissed a concern they had (33%) or they felt their provider wasn't really listening to them (32%). [Q175]
- Around two-thirds of adults diagnosed with obesity (67%) wish their healthcare providers took more time to understand them. [Q180]

Views of PAs

- More than 4 in 5 adults diagnosed with obesity (82%) have seen a PA. [Q500]
 - Among those who have seen one:
 - 76% rate the care they received in the past 12 months from the PA as excellent (40%) or good (36%). [Q532]
 - 92% believe PA's provide safe and effective healthcare. [Q550]
 - 92% say having a PA at a practice makes it easier for patients to get an appointment. [Q551]

- More than 3 in 5 adults diagnosed with obesity (62%) say they would trust a PA to be their primary healthcare provider. [Q565]
- A large majority of adults diagnosed with obesity (92%) believe PAs should be allowed to provide care to the fullest extent of their education, training, and experience. [Q605]
- Additionally, 91% say PA practice laws should be updated to allow states and healthcare systems to fully utilize their healthcare workforce. [Q605]

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+ including n=446 adults who have been diagnosed with obesity. The survey was conducted from February 23 – March 9, 2023.

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.