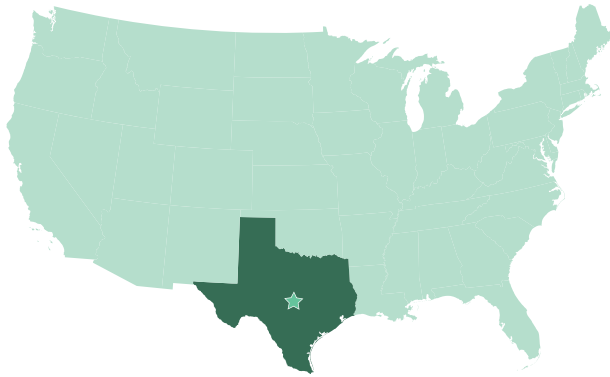


# The Patient Experience

## 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 Texas.

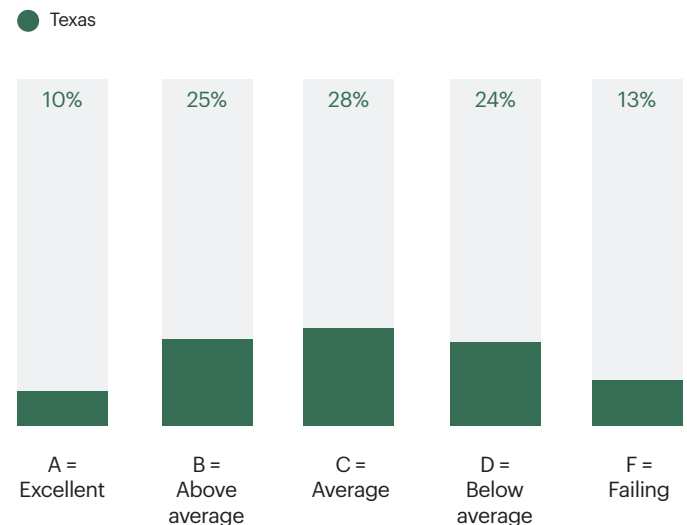
The research revealed that the U.S. healthcare system is stretched thin – a reality that was both illuminated during and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to healthcare provider burnout and staffing shortages, many feel that not everyone has equal access to care, and simply navigating 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 two in five Texans rate the U.S. healthcare system poorly. Concerns about workforce shortages and community resources for health are significant in Texas.

- Dissatisfaction with healthcare system:** Nearly two in five Texas residents grade the healthcare system as poor (37% give it a D or F). Nationally, about one-quarter of adults rate, at a high level, the system as poor: 26% give the U.S. healthcare system a D (18%) or an F (8%) grade, while only one in ten (10%) give it an A. Ten percent of Texans also give the U.S. healthcare system an A rating. Nearly a quarter of Texans (23%) give the healthcare available where they live a D or F grade compared to 14% nationwide.
- Impact of workforce shortages:** Seven in ten adults in Texas and nationally worry that healthcare workforce shortages will impact their families (70% vs. 68%, respectively). Further, nearly three in four are concerned that healthcare workforce shortages will impact them as a patient (73% vs. 68%, nationally).
- Concern about community resources:** Further, nearly half (45%) of adults in Texas feel that their community does not have the resources needed to keep people healthy, in line with what U.S. adults nationally report about their community (42%).

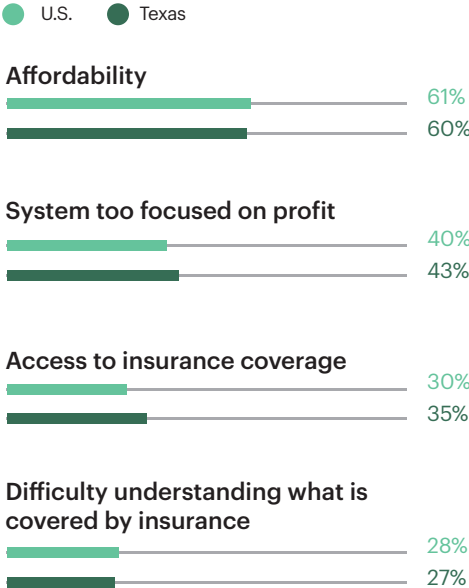
### Healthcare Grades: U.S. Healthcare System



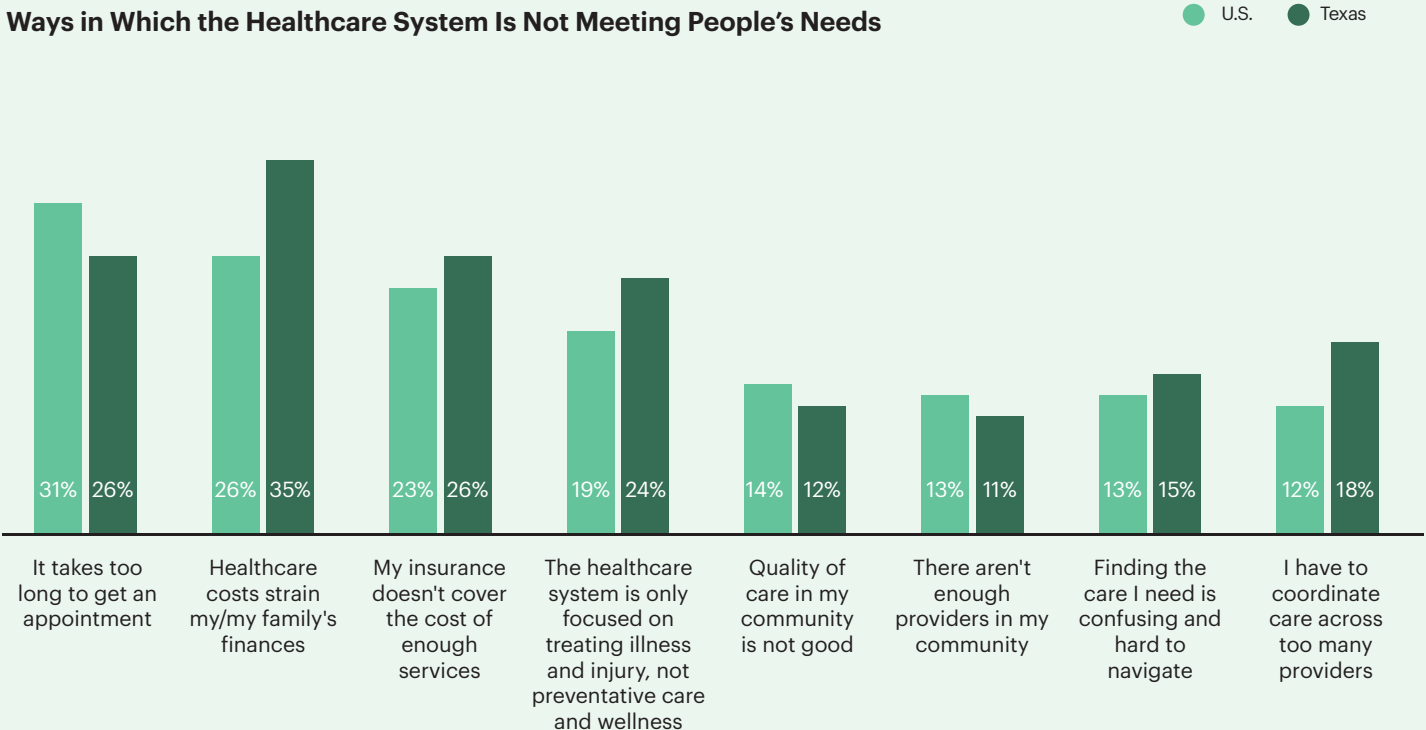
The healthcare system falls short in addressing patient needs in Texas. Affordability is a top barrier for care and is causing strain for a substantial amount of people and their families and is likely impacting their health.

- Unmet Needs:** Texas residents are less likely than adults on a national level to say that the healthcare system is meeting all of their needs (21% in Texas compared to 27% of adults nationally).
- Deterring care:** Affordability stands as a primary hurdle, with one in six adults in Texas (60%) and nationally (61%) identifying it as a top barrier to healthcare access. U.S. adults also rate the system's outsized focus on profit, insurance coverage availability, and ability to understand coverage options as other factors that contribute to accessibility challenges.
- Financial strain:** One in three (35%) in Texas say healthcare costs strain their (and/or their families) finances which is significantly higher than what is seen nationwide (26%). Nearly half of Texans (45%) also say their health would improve if healthcare didn't cost so much.

**Biggest Barriers to Accessing Healthcare**

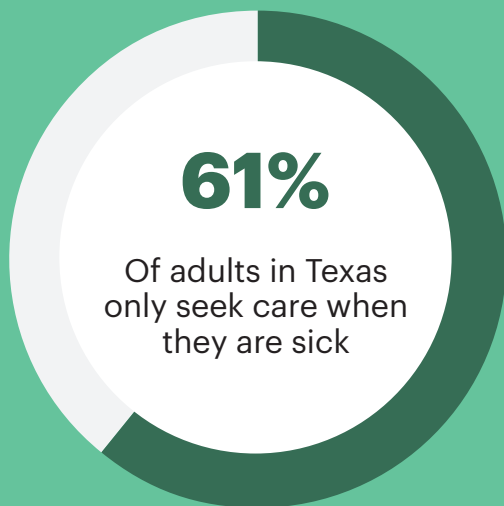


**Ways in Which the Healthcare System Is Not Meeting People's Needs**



**Coordinating care burdens patients and informal caregivers assisting family and friends navigate the healthcare system. Coordinating care between providers is particularly burdensome in Texas.**

- **Coordinating care:** Seven in ten (71%) as well as two-thirds nationally (65%) say that coordinating and managing healthcare for themselves is overwhelming and time-consuming. When it comes to family members and loved ones, Texans are more likely than those nationally to say that managing their care as overwhelming and time-consuming (61% in Texas vs. 51% nationally).
- **Navigating the system:** Adults in Texas are more likely than their peers nationally to say having to coordinate care across too many providers is a way the system is not meeting their needs (18% vs. 12%). Three-fifths of adults in Texas (62%) agree that their health would improve if their healthcare providers helped them figure out the healthcare system, which is significantly higher than the national sentiment (54%).



**Cost worries and care coordination challenges significantly influence behavior and, ultimately, shape health outcomes.**

- **Skipping care:** In Texas, half (50%) of adults say they have delayed or skipped care within the past two years, which is higher than what is reported nationally (44%).
- **Cost of care:** Among those who have delayed or skipped care, the top reason in Texas for doing so was concern about cost to themselves or their family (49%), which is significantly higher than the proportion of U.S. adults nationally who said the same (40%). In addition, more than half of Texans (53%) say there are often times they cannot afford care for themselves or their families. This is significantly higher than what is seen nationally (43%).
- **Impact of skipping care:** Six in ten adults in Texas (63%) and nationally (60%) who delayed or skipped care within the past two years experienced some kind of impact as a result, including worsening condition (27% vs. 25%, respectively), negative impact on mental health (24% vs. 25%), and/or losing faith in the healthcare system (22% vs. 21%).

**50%** OF ADULTS IN TEXAS

**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. This can lead to patients feeling rushed during appointments.

- Demands on healthcare providers:** More than half of adults in Texas (56%) worry their healthcare providers appear to be burned out/overburdened, and seven in ten (70%) worry that the demands on providers are too great.
- Patient sentiment:** One in three adults in Texas (33%) say that they personally have felt rushed during a healthcare appointment and nearly three-quarters (74%) in Texas agree that healthcare providers seem more rushed than they have been in the past, an even higher proportion than adults nationally (66%).
- Rushing exacerbates inequities:** Nearly a third of Texans say provider dismissed a concern they had (30% vs. 23% nationally). Texans are also more likely to than adults nationally to say they felt healthcare provider made assumptions based on their race, age, gender, income, health status, etc. (19% vs. 14%).

### 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. Texas adults are less likely to have a primary care provider (79%). Texans 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.

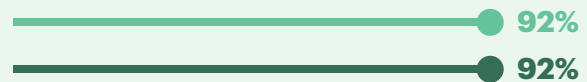
- Navigating the system:** Nationally, those who have a primary care provider are more likely to say that healthcare providers help them navigate the healthcare system – compared with those who do not have a primary care provider (63% vs. 48%).
- Preventing health conditions:** More than two-fifths of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

#### Support for PAs

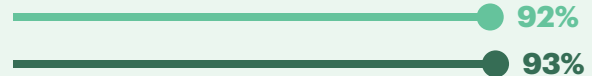
(Strongly/Somewhat Support)

● U.S. ● Texas

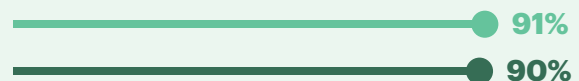
**PAs should be allowed to provide care to the fullest extent of their education, training, and experience**



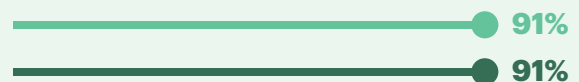
**PAs should be utilized to address healthcare workforce shortages**



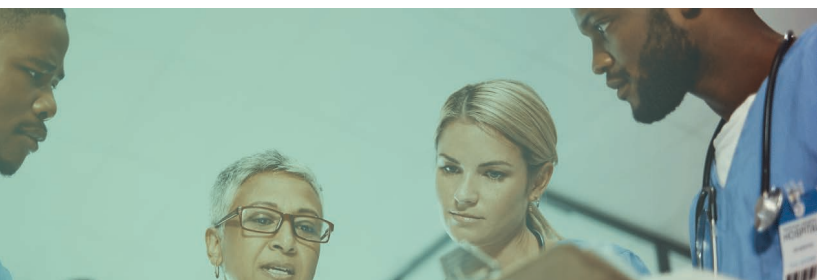
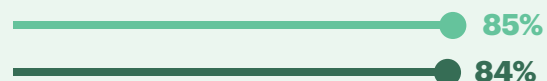
**Fully utilizing all trained and educated healthcare providers, including PAs, improves patient health**



**PA practice laws should be updated to allow states and healthcare systems to fully utilize their healthcare workforce**



**Patient access to care should not be restricted by laws that place limits on the care a PA has been educated and trained to provide**



Patients with an ongoing relationship with a PA report feeling valued because the PA takes the time to listen, understand their unique needs, communicate clearly, and empower them to take control of their health.

- PA trust:** Notably, nearly two-thirds of adults nationally (64%) and in Texas (64%) say that they would trust a PA to serve as their primary care provider.
- High marks for PA care:** Around eight in ten adults (79%) nationally and three-quarters of adults (74%) in Texas who have seen a PA rate the medical care they received from a PA in the past 12 months as either good or excellent. Nationally, those who consider themselves as having an ongoing relationship with a PA are more likely to grade their recent healthcare as an A or B (89% compared with 76% who have seen a PA but do not have an ongoing relationship).

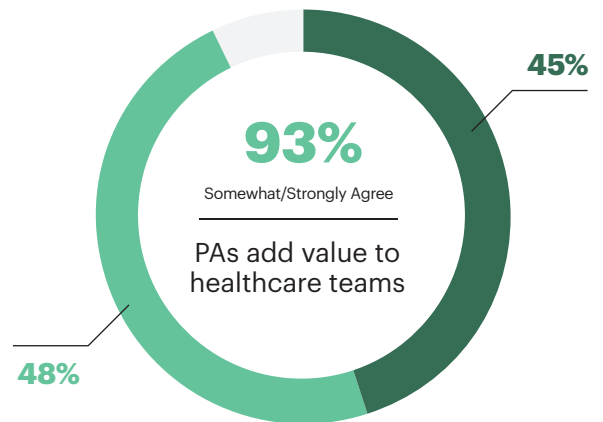
The public supports better utilizing PAs to improve the healthcare system and better address an aging population, the rise in chronic disease, and a significant healthcare workforce shortage.

- 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 in Texas).
- 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% nationally and in Texas).

### 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+. The survey was conducted from February 23 – March 9, 2023. The survey among those living in Texas (n=508) was fielded from July 26 – August 13, 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.

