Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Physician Assistants (PA)

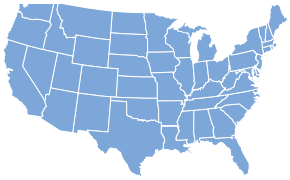
BACKGROUND

- The American PA movement began in the 1960s at a time of increasing demand for medical services and limited generalist physicians. PAs are trained in internal medicine, geriatrics, pediatrics, psychiatry and surgery. PA are graduates of accreditated PA programs and are nationally certified.[1]
- PAs contribute to the primary care workforce. Primary care also includes physicians trained in general and family medicine, general internal medicine, geriatrics, general pediatrics and NPs who trained and practice in primary care.[2]

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

The physician assistant is a health professional licensed to practice medicine. The PA is often a team member working with physicians in patient care across health conditions. PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat patients, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventative healthcare, assist in surgery, and write prescriptions.

29%
of PAs in Arizona practice in Primary Care[3]



25.8%
of PAs in the U.S. practice in Primary Care[4]

WORKFORCE

- There are 2,732 PAs licensed by the Arizona Medical Board and practicing in Arizona.
- Nationally PAs constitute 15% of the primary care workforce.[5]
- Average (mean) annual wage for PAs in Arizona in 2018 was $112,410.[6]
- Hispanic/Latino PAs increased from 3.5% in 2000 to 6.2% in 2017.[7]

Arizona PA Demographic Data (2019)

Total Workforce	Female %
2,732	62.4

Source: Arizona State Licensure Data, 2019

PAs per 100,000 (2018)

Nationally	37
Arizona	38.7

Source: National Commission on Certification of Certified Physician Assistants, 2019

National PA Demographic Data (2018)

Total Workforce	White %	Female %
122,555	86.9%	68.2%

Source: NCCCPA, 2019

PRODUCTIVITY

- PAs or Advance Practice Nurses (APNs) handle **36%** of visits in nonmetro areas compared to **6%** of visits in large metro areas.[8]
- Rural PAs average **73.8** outpatient visits per week compared to **58.3** for PAs in metro locations.[9]
- A 2001 study found that **72.3%** of PAs in nonmetro areas were generalists compared to **40.2%** in metro areas.[10]

IMPACT

Hiring a rural PA "can create between 4.4 and 18.5 local jobs and create between $280,476 and $940,892 in revenue for the employing clinic and the hospital."[11]

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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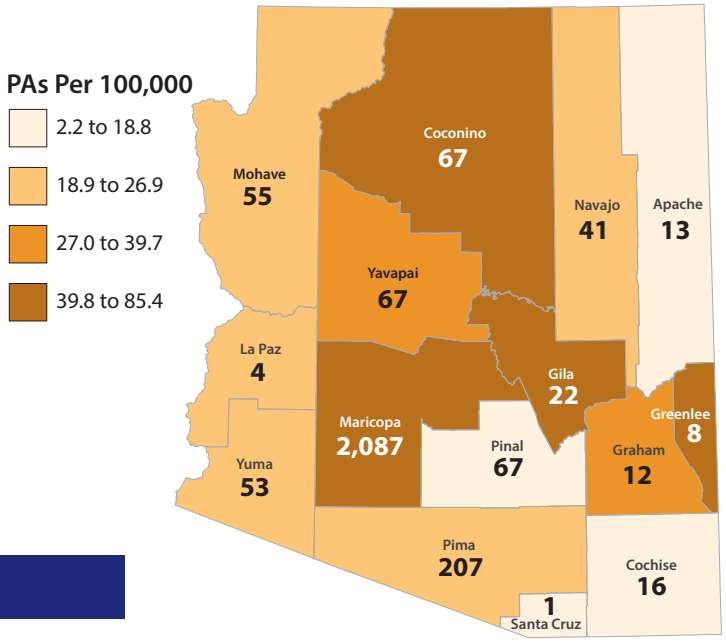
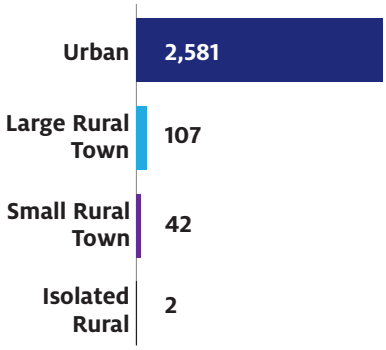
GEOGRAPHY

- The number of PAs is increasing. However, the 2013 American Academy of Physician Assistants survey reported declining percentages of PAs practicing in rural areas from 17% in 2005, to 15% in 2010, and 12% in 2013.[12]
- In Arizona, 94.5% of PA office locations are located in urban areas, whereas 92% of Arizonans live in urban areas (based on Rural Urban Commuting Areas).
- The number of PAs has been increasing and the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects PAs will grow 31% from 2018 to 2028, faster than physicians and nurse practitioners.[13]

Number of PAs by County with Active Arizona Licenses

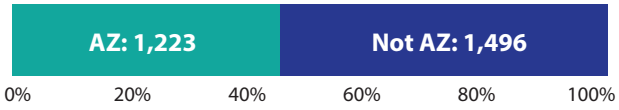


Arizona PAs by Rural Urban Commuting Areas

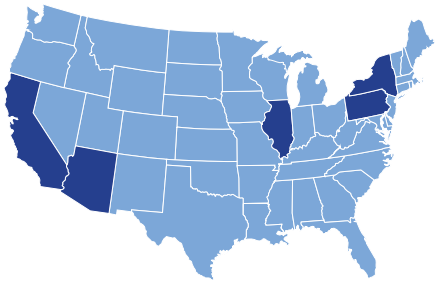


EDUCATION

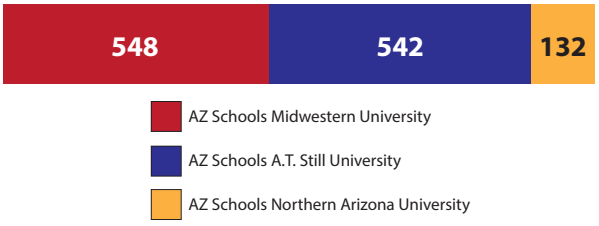
- Of the PAs in Arizona for whom we have education information, 45% completed their education in Arizona and 55% were trained outside Arizona.



- The top five states contributing to Arizona's PA workforce are:
  1. Arizona
  2. Illinois
  3. California
  4. Pennsylvania
  5. New York



- Of the Arizona PAs who graduated from an Arizona program (N=1,223), 10% graduated from NAU, 44% from A.T. Still University and 45% from Midwestern University.



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