



A National Analysis of Characteristics of PAs Completing a Postgraduate Fellowship/Residency

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Introduction

PA postgraduate (PG) fellowship/residency programs enable PAs to gain enhanced knowledge, skills, and specialized expertise in various medical disciplines.

As of 2026, there are 166 PG PA or joint PA/NP programs in the U.S.

This study aimed to examine the characteristics of PAs completing a PG fellowship/residency, focusing on their demographic, practice, and professional characteristics.

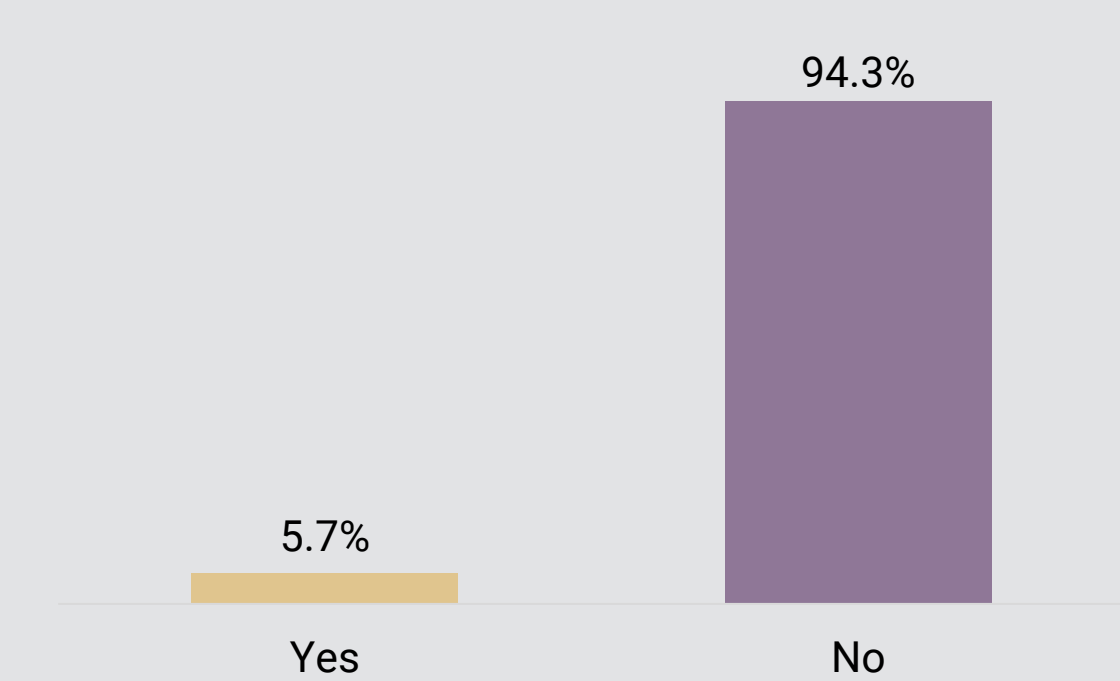
Methodology

This cross-sectional analysis utilized quantitative data from the 2024 NCCPA PA Professional Profile, focusing on PAs who reported whether they had completed a PA PG fellowship/residency program (N=144,011).

Analyses included descriptive statistics and bivariate comparisons of PAs who completed a PG fellowship/residency vs. those who did not.

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Completion of a PG fellowship/residency program

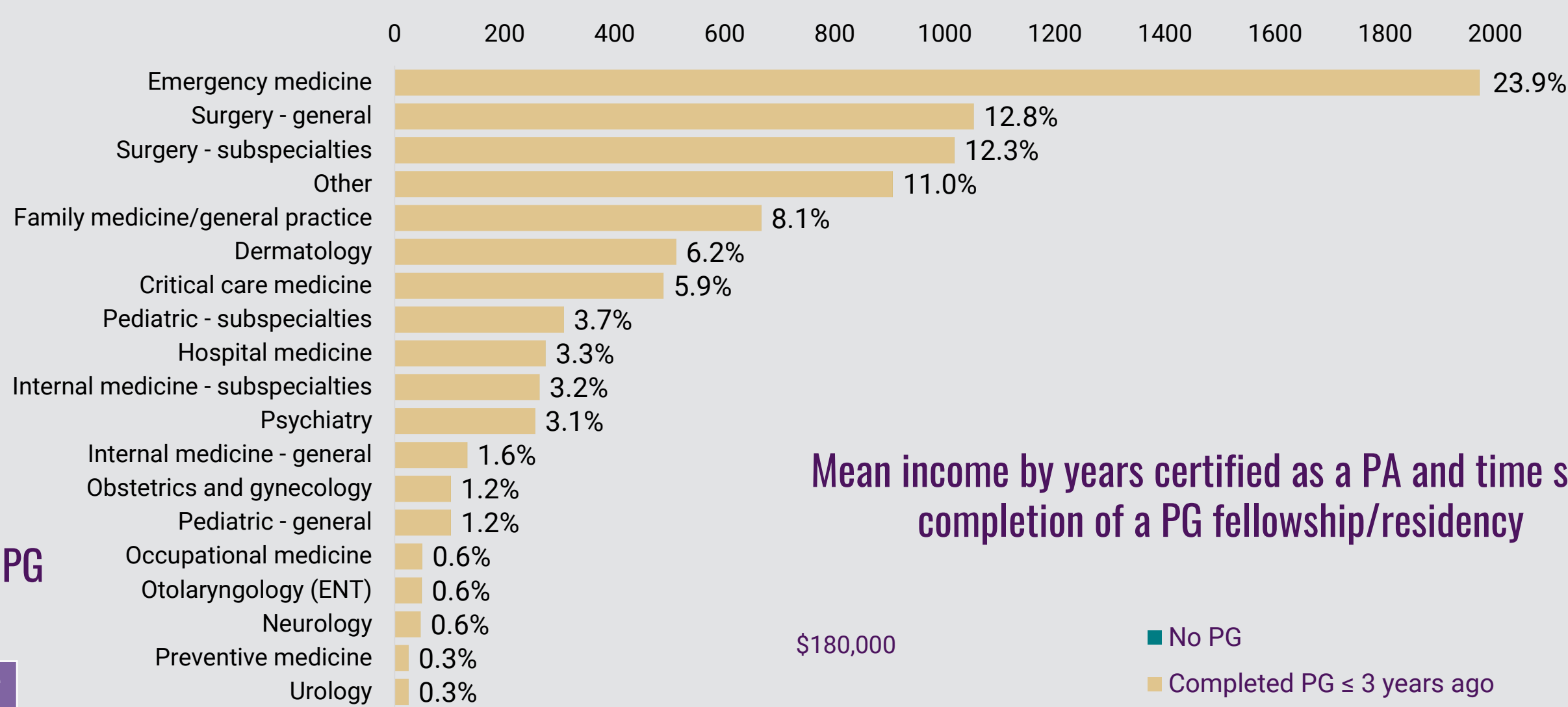


Demographic characteristics of PAs who completed a PG fellowship/residency vs. those who did not

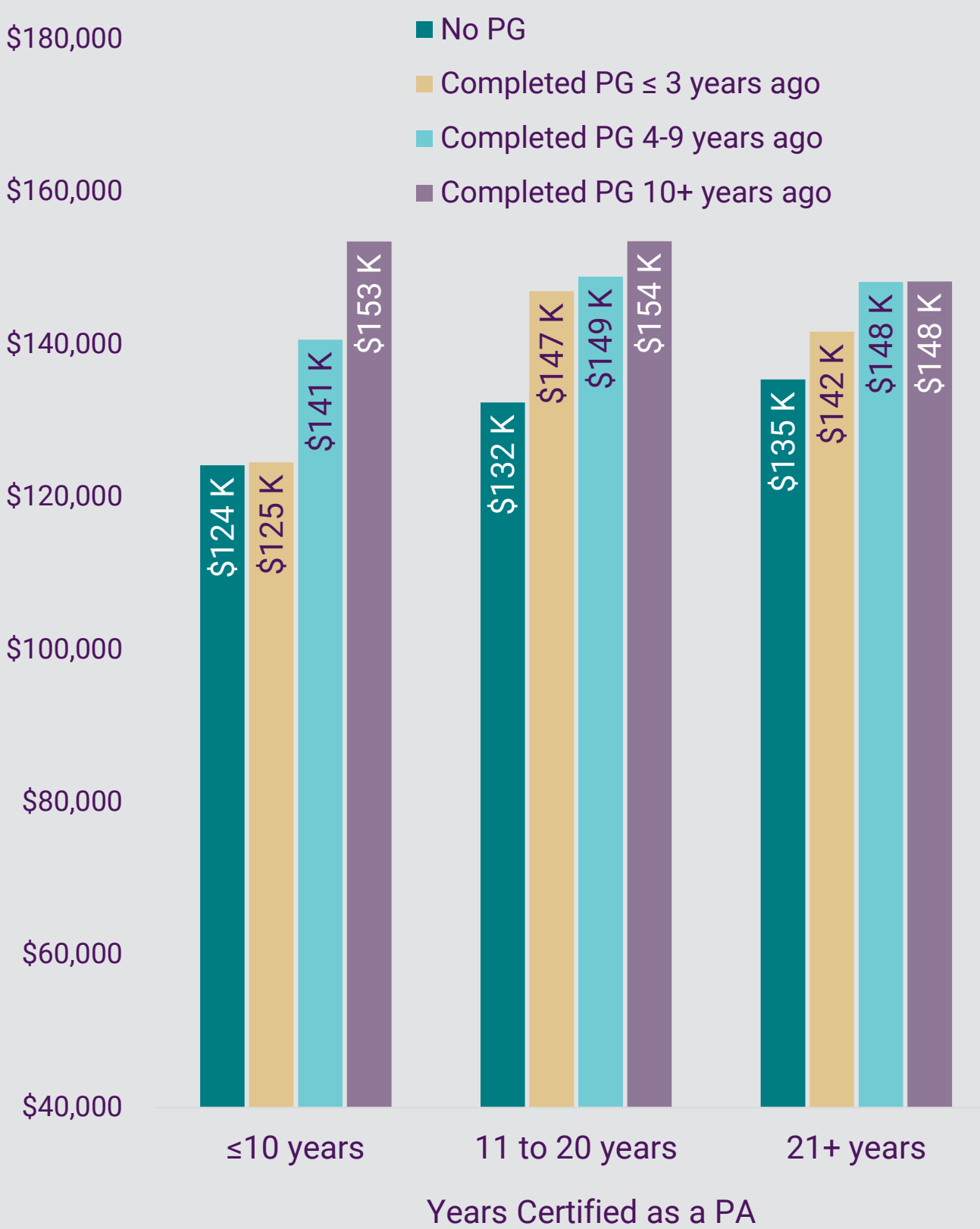
	PAs with a PG fellowship/residency (n=8,275; 5.7%)	PAs without a PG fellowship/residency (n=135,736; 94.3%)	P-value
Age			
Mean (SD)	43.4 (13.1)	41.5 (11.1)	<0.001
Median (IQR)	40 (32-54)	39 (33-48)	
Gender			
Female	5,100 (61.6%)	97,424 (71.8%)	<0.001
Male	3,174 (38.4%)	38,232 (28.2%)	
Race			
White	6,346 (81.0%)	108,984 (83.8%)	<0.001
Asian	502 (6.4%)	9,100 (7.0%)	
Black/African American	406 (5.2%)	4,342 (3.3%)	
Multiple races	270 (3.4%)	3,252 (2.5%)	
Other*	309 (3.9%)	4,329 (3.3%)	
Ethnicity			
Hispanic/Latino(a/x)	656 (8.3%)	9,179 (7.0%)	<0.001
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino(a/x)	7,225 (91.7%)	121,551 (93.0%)	
Urban/Rural setting			
Urban	7,720 (94.1%)	125,195 (92.8%)	<0.001
Rural/Isolated	486 (5.9%)	9,729 (7.2%)	
Highest degree completed			
Bachelor's degree	616 (7.4%)	17,658 (13.0%)	<0.001
Master's degree	6,579 (79.6%)	111,992 (82.6%)	
Doctorate degree	817 (9.9%)	3,303 (2.4%)	
Other (other, certificate, associate's degree)	258 (3.1%)	2,694 (2.0%)	

*Other includes those who selected "other," Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native

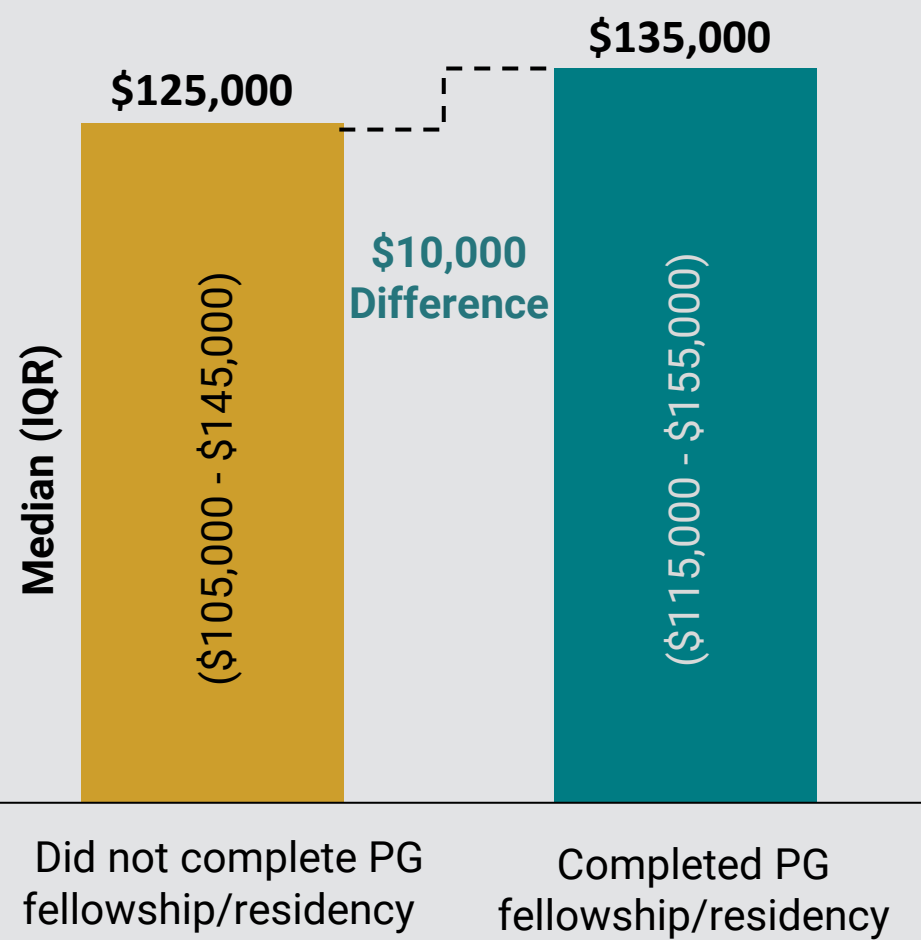
Top medical specialties in which PAs completed a PG fellowship/residency



Mean income by years certified as a PA and time since completion of a PG fellowship/residency



Median income difference of PAs with PG fellowship/residency vs. those without (p<0.001)



Unadjusted bivariate analysis revealed that PAs who had completed a PG fellowship/residency earned a median income of \$10,000 more than those without (p<0.001).

Practice characteristics of PAs who completed a PG fellowship/residency vs. those who did not

	PAs with a PG fellowship/residency (n=8,275; 5.7%)	PAs without a PG fellowship/residency (n=135,736; 94.3%)	P-value
Years certified as a PA/Career stage			
Less than 10 (early career)	4,236 (51.2%)	67,919 (50.0%)	<0.001
11 to 20 (mid-career)	1,634 (19.7%)	40,676 (30.0%)	
21+ (late career)	2,405 (29.1%)	27,141 (20.0%)	
Primary practice setting/location			
Hospital	3,985 (52.7%)	52,397 (41.6%)	<0.001
Office-based private practice	1,808 (23.9%)	46,762 (37.2%)	
Urgent care	367 (4.9%)	7,129 (5.7%)	
Federal government	724 (9.6%)	5,317 (4.2%)	
Other	671 (8.9%)	14,202 (11.3%)	
Hours worked weekly at principal clinical position			
<30	929 (12.2%)	17,744 (14.0%)	<0.001
31-40	4,415 (57.9%)	75,561 (59.5%)	
41-50	1,669 (21.9%)	26,776 (21.1%)	
51+	611 (8.0%)	6,846 (5.4%)	
Patients seen weekly at principal clinical position			
Mean (SD)	63.1 (42.1)	65.4 (40.1)	<0.001
Median (IQR)	54 (30-80)	60 (40-85)	
Hold a secondary PA position			
No	6,009 (80.8%)	107,079 (86.3%)	<0.001
Yes	1,427 (19.2%)	16,940 (13.7%)	
Hold a leadership position			
No	3,593 (77.2%)	65,939 (83.5%)	<0.001
Yes	1,064 (22.8%)	13,059 (16.5%)	
Burnout symptoms			
No symptoms of burnout	4,978 (67.3%)	83,169 (67.4%)	0.856
One or more symptoms of burnout	2,424 (32.7%)	40,312 (32.6%)	
Total education debt			
None/Not sure	3,630 (48.5%)	56,103 (45.4%)	<0.001
Less than \$49,999	713 (9.5%)	13,691 (11.1%)	
\$50,000 - \$99,999	752 (10.0%)	14,692 (11.9%)	
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,011 (13.5%)	17,739 (14.3%)	
\$150,000 - \$199,999	825 (11.0%)	12,762 (10.3%)	
\$200,000 or more	561 (7.5%)	8,660 (7.0%)	

Key Findings & Conclusion

PAs who completed a PG fellowship/residency vs. those who did not were more likely to be older (median: 40 vs. 39 years), identify as male (38.4% vs. 28.2%), Hispanic/Latino(a/x) (8.3% vs. 7.0%), and hold a doctorate (9.9% vs. 2.4%).

PAs who completed a PG fellowship/residency vs. those who did not were more likely to hold a secondary position (19.2% vs.13.7%), a leadership role (22.8% vs. 16.5%), and have no educational debt (48.5% vs. 45.4%).

When examined by career stage and years since completion of a PG fellowship/residency, mean income increased rapidly early in PAs’ careers, peaked during mid-career, and then plateaued later in their careers.

These findings are important for both individual PAs considering postgraduate training and postgraduate programs seeking to provide relevant, high-value training that supports optimal patient care.

Furthermore, the findings may assist in compensation policy discussions and guide career development pathways.

References

- National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (2025, April). 2024 Statistical Profile of Board Certified PAs: An Annual Report of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. <https://doi.org/10.64936/ALCP2120>
- Bruza-Augatis M, Hooker R, Kozikowski A, Puckett K. Economic Implications of Postgraduate Training for Physician Assistants/Associates: A Comparative Analysis. *J Allied Health*. 2025;54(3):e429-e436. Accessed December 7, 2025. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40910836/>