

# Communication Preferences Among Nurse Practitioners & Physician Assistants

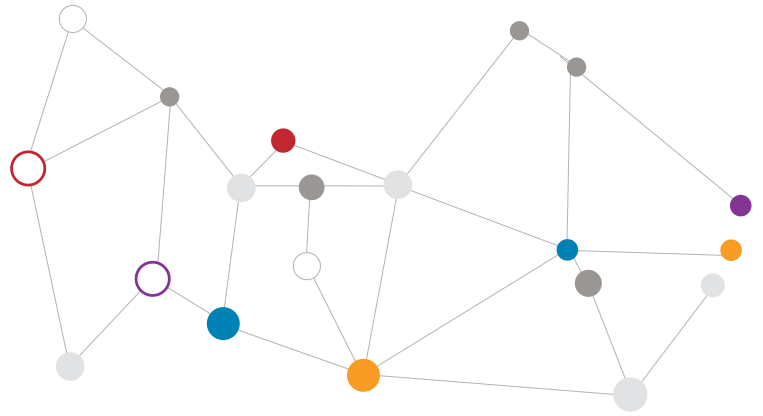
**49%**

of NPs and PAs prefer to receive info via email

Discover How NPs & PAs Prefer To Engage: Email, Social Media, Calls?

Tailored Insights for Healthcare Marketers

# Reaching Healthcare's New Decision Makers



The healthcare industry moves at breakneck speed, and one of the most visible changes in recent years has been the increasing prevalence of care delivery by professionals other than physicians. Nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs), collectively known as “physician extenders,” handle nearly every aspect of patient care, including exams, diagnoses, and prescribing medication.

Therefore, understanding their communication preferences and behaviors is vital for those enterprises that need to reach these influential decision makers on the front lines of healthcare. Healthcare communications professionals need to know where and how PAs and NPs practice, how they prefer to gather information, and which methods of communication they prefer from organizations seeking to get their attention.

In this report we will share a treasure trove of information about NPs and PAs, including valuable insights that can inform your communications plans. This report provides the background against which you can map your communications programs with greater confidence you'll be reaching NPs and PAs the way they want to be reached and with messages they value.

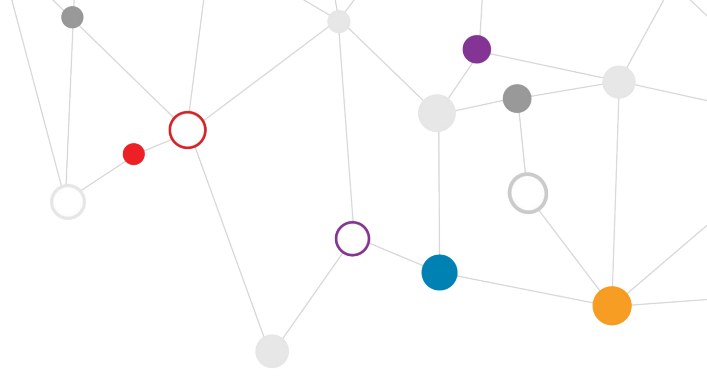
**Getting Back to Basics**  
How HCP Communications are (Somewhat) Shifting Back to Pre-Pandemic Norms

Healthlink DIMENSIONS | HCP COMMUNICATIONS REPORT 2023 | 01

**Looking for information on HCPs' communication?**

Our annual report analyzes the communication preferences of healthcare providers, highlighting what content they're more likely to read – and more.

**Access the 2023 HCP Communications Report [here](#).**



## Key Takeaways

Despite their growing numbers and unquestionable influence, few surveys have focused on NPs' and PAs' communications preferences. In this report, we surveyed this often-overlooked audience and uncovered some big themes that could potentially change how your organization targets these provider audiences.

#1

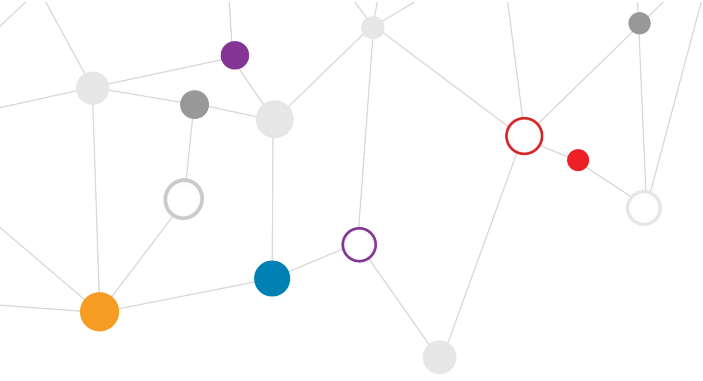
**NPs and PAs Allow In-Person Meetings.** Similar to their physician counterparts, NPs and PAs appear to have moved past pandemic-era resistance to face-to-face interaction; however, many practices still do not allow in-person sales calls.

#2

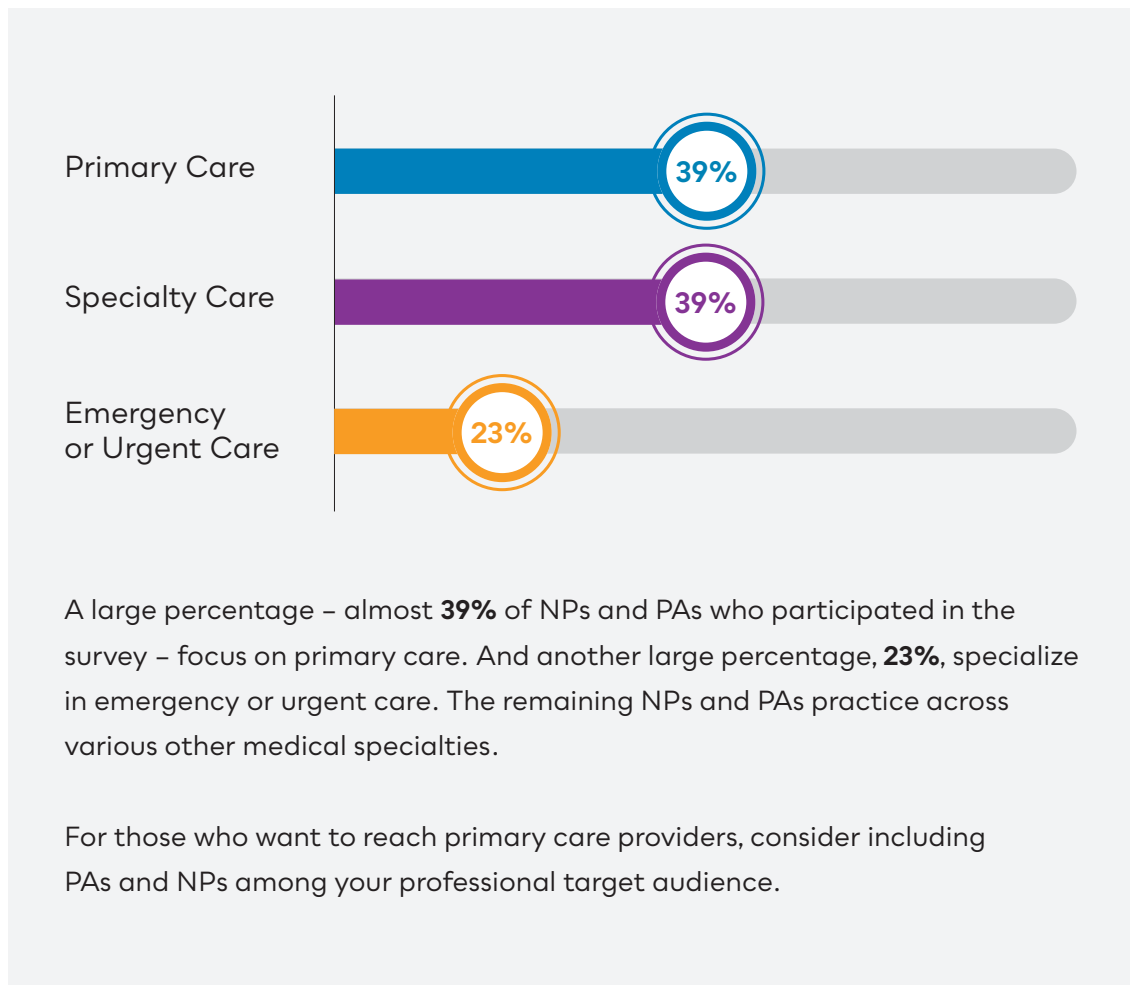
**NPs and PAs Prefer Email Over Other Types Of Communication.** For nearly every subject, from industry updates, to clinical data, to event invitations, NPs and PAs prefer email, and they report checking emails outside of office hours.

#3

**NPs and PAs Value Continuing Education Opportunities.** They prefer information with educational content over promotional messages and welcome information they see as instructive toward advancing their knowledge and skills on the job.



## Where Do NPs' And PAs' Practice?



## A Closer Look At Our Demographic

The NPs and PAs who participated in the survey represented a broad cross-section of age and income levels.



Almost 4 out of 5 respondents were women.



**94%**

completed the survey on a mobile device.

NPs and PAs are disproportionately female, so sponsors should be cognizant of gender bias in their messaging and may wish to use more women in their ads to better reflect the audience.



While many providers allow in-person sales, pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers require additional channels beyond direct, face-to-face sales to reach their full audience of NPs and PAs.

## NPs And PAs Allow In-Person Meetings

Two-thirds of NPs and PAs surveyed said medical sales representatives are allowed at their places of work.




**64%**

of NPs and PAs allow in-office visits from medical sales representatives.

# NPs And PAs Prefer Email For Unsolicited Outreach

Tactics for receiving unsolicited messages.

 **49%** of respondents identified email as their preferred way to get information.

Among NPs and PAs, email tops their list of preferred communication.

No other communication channel came close to email. **17%** of NPs and PAs identified professional conferences as their preferred communication channel. **8%** chose direct mail, with **5%** selecting mail received at their workplace and **3%** selecting mail received at home.

Somewhat surprisingly, NPs and PAs like social media as a communication channel far less than their physician counterparts. Only **1%** ranked it as their top choice compared to **9%** of physicians.

Email may be the most effective communication channel for reaching NPs and PAs, especially if you have accurate email addresses.



## Device Preferences For Emails

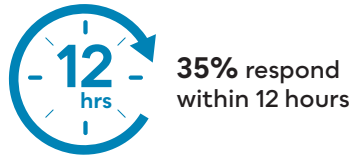
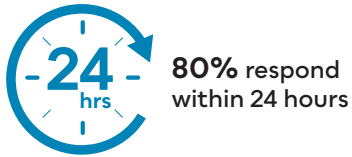
Two-thirds of respondents read most of their email on smartphones, but many also use laptops (**41%**) and desktop computers (**28%**). Around **17%** opt for tablets for added flexibility, while only **3%** favor smartwatches.

When using email marketing (or really any digital marketing), recognize that most users will engage with your message on a smartphone or tablet, not a laptop or desktop.

## NPs And PAs Reply To Email Quickly

Almost **80%** of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey say they respond to patients' or colleagues' emails within 24 hours, and almost **35%** say they respond the same day (within 12 hours).

NPs and PAs are actively engaging with their email – daily. This provides opportunities for sponsors to connect via email.



### What Is Your Device Preference?

**58%**

iPhone

**36%**

Android phones/tablets

**4%**

Windows desktops and laptops

**1%**

Mac desktops and laptops

**1%**

Other

Due to the diverse device preferences of NPs and PAs, healthcare marketers should adopt a multi-platform approach to reach their target audience more effectively.



### NPs And PAs Lean Towards iOS

NPs and PAs reported a decisive preference for iOS devices, with **58%** using iPhone phones or iPads as their primary device type. Android phones and tablets follow closely, with **36%** of NPs and PAs favoring this platform. **4%** report Windows desktops and laptops as their go-to device, while only **1%** say they use Mac desktops and laptops.

## Attitudes About Social Media

Most respondents don't use social media in a professional context. By contrast, two-thirds of respondents say they use social media to connect with friends and family or as a source of news and information. For whatever purpose, **90%** of respondents use social media in some capacity.



Social Media Usage

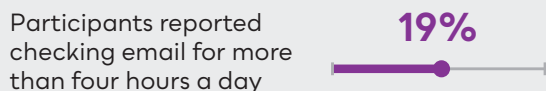
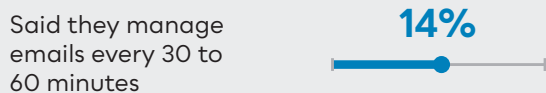
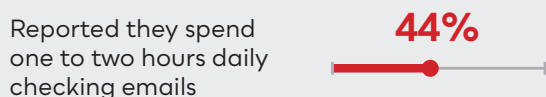
Social media use is pervasive among PAs and NPs, so social media may be an effective channel if you want to reach this audience.



### NPs And PAs Spend Up To 4+ Hours On Emails Daily

With a busy schedule, NPs and PAs stay online for professional needs, even when out of the office.

A good portion of survey participants:



Facebook is the most-used social media platform, followed by LinkedIn.

### More NPs And PAs Use Facebook Than Any Other Social Network

Facebook is the most popular social media network among respondents, with **76%** using it at least occasionally. About half use LinkedIn and Instagram at least occasionally, and more than **40%** use Doximity. This demonstrates that organizations that want to reach NPs and PAs have a variety of social media platforms available to reach this audience.

Facebook and Instagram are commonly used by NPs and PAs. However, to reach NPs and PAs in a professional manner, LinkedIn and Doximity may be more effective platforms.



## NPs And PAs Are Open To Event Invitations Delivered In Different Ways

Direct mail remains a viable method of inviting NPs and PAs to professional education opportunities – whether it’s mailed to their homes or places of work. Of course, email also ranks high as a method of inviting NPs and PAs to participate in professional education opportunities.

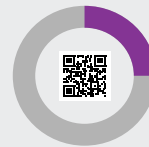
By contrast, NPs and PAs in the survey appear not to like phone calls and text messages for invitations to professional education opportunities and say they’re least likely to read these communications.



One size does not fit all. Sponsors should offer users multiple ways to respond to their messages.

## QR Codes Have Not Fully Caught On

QR codes appeal to some NPs and PAs, but not to all. **25%** prefer QR codes, while about half would choose a website link. So, when it comes to offering response mechanisms, advertisers should give NPs and PAs a variety of methods to respond, including QR codes.



25%  
QR Codes



50%  
Website Links

## NPs and PAs Use UpToDate Most

The NPs and PAs who participated in the survey use several websites to find information about medical products, healthcare products, and disease states. The clinical decision-support website, UpToDate, and WebMD were the most commonly identified, along with websites for specific medical journals.

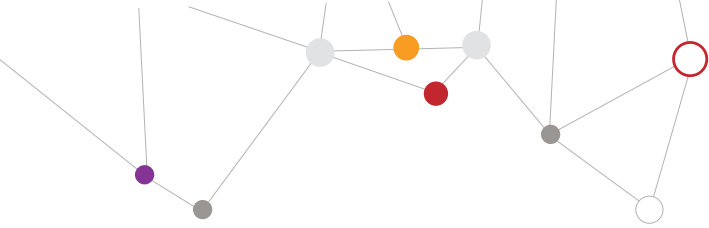
There does not appear to be a single website for reaching NPs and PAs, so advertisers may have to use alternative targeting approaches, such as programmatic advertising or advertising on social media platforms where uses can be more clearly identified.

## Nearly Half Of NPs And PAs Have Seen Clinician-Targeted Ads Online

Almost half of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey recall seeing an ad targeted to their specific clinical role while they were on the internet. Almost **34%** say they have never been targeted by advertisers based on their roles as NPs and PAs, while more than **17%** were unsure.

## NPs And PAs See Ads On Social Media Platforms

The percent of NPs and PAs who recall being targeted by advertisers based on their roles as NPs and PAs while using social media was similar to the percent who recall being targeted while on the internet in general; however, somewhat more – **42%** – **said they had never been targeted.**



## NPs & PAs Are Actively Writing Prescriptions

PAs and NPs are actively writing prescriptions. In fact, more than **63%** of the NPs and PAs participating in the survey say they write as many or more prescriptions than their physician colleagues, and less than **13%** say they don't write prescriptions at all.

## Patient Referrals Mirror Prescribing Behavior

Similar to prescribing behavior, more than **63%** of NPs and PAs participating in the survey say they refer patients to other practitioners and facilities as much or more than their physician colleagues. Less than **8%** are not involved at all in referring patients.

**Hospitals, health systems, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and their agencies are missing an important audience that can contribute to increased volume and script lift if they fail to include NPs and PAs in their marketing audiences.**

**Failure to include NPs and PAs in marketing efforts can result in missed opportunities to tap into these crucial healthcare professionals who influence treatment decisions, prescription choices, and referrals.**

## NPs And PAs Are Open To Clinical Information

The NPs and PAs participating in the survey are open to receiving clinical information. **88%** say they welcome information about new medicines, new drug delivery systems, or new uses for existing medications.

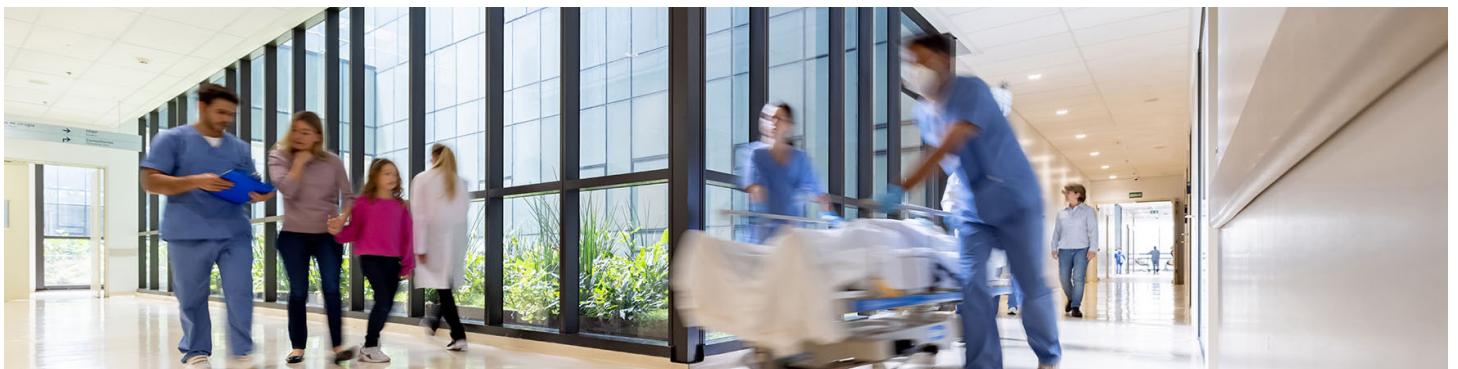
## Comparable Interest In Information About Hospitals

**73%** of NPs and PAs who participated in the survey say they want to know which hospitals offer specialized services, rank highly for certain specialties, or have unique capabilities.



NPs and PAs seem to want to know more about how hospitals and health systems rank.

More than **80%** of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey value reputation and perceived quality of care as important criteria for forming their opinions about hospitals and health systems.



When it comes to influencing NPs and PAs about which hospital or health system is best, marketing messages focusing on reputation and care quality may resonate.

## Educational Content Is A Top Priority

Across the board, educational materials consistently stand out as the favored type of information NPs and PAs want to receive. NPs and PAs did not want to receive thought leadership pieces (43%) or invitations to participate in market research (42%).

They were more comfortable receiving marketing materials that included general information on the healthcare industry, industry-sponsored webinars, and teleconferences.



In fact, **72%** of those surveyed reported that they wanted to receive CME information.

### Continuing Medical Education Programs Matter Most

Our survey results reveal that most NPs and PAs, **72%**, highly value continuing medical education programs. Likewise, they reported an interest in patient education materials, product approvals and updates, and industry-sponsored educational events.

Notably, information and updates about COVID-19 rank last on the list, at only **21%**.



**Content Curation:** Given the emphasis on educational content, healthcare businesses should focus on curating and delivering top-notch educational resources tailored to the preferences of NPs and PAs.

### Mixed Feelings About Mobile Apps for Patient Communication

About **54%** of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey are receptive to the idea of using mobile technology for patient communication; however, there's still some reluctance among a large minority – almost **23%** – who say they are unlikely to use mobile technology for patient communication.



**Engagement Strategies:** The mixed feelings about mobile apps suggest there might be room for developing more user-friendly or secure apps, or even educational campaigns about the benefits of such tools.

NPs and PAs have yet to fully accept the idea of using mobile technology for patient communication; however, more than half seem okay with the idea.

## Expressed Need for Practice Support

NPs and PAs reported prescription and medical device educational resources as the most helpful clinical support materials. In addition, they value patient education on insurance reimbursements, information about drug formulary coverage, and disease state educational materials.

Respondents reported the lowest levels of interest in patient advocacy materials and information about local transitional care resources for seniors.



### Appetite For Patient Support Information

**68%** of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey reported a similar level of interest in receiving information that can help their patients with only slight variation from topic to topic.



**Focus on Practical Resources:** Given their preference for hands-on materials, creating resources like easy-to-understand drug formulary guides, reimbursement insights, or disease state educational content could be impactful.

### NPs and PAs Have School Affinity

More than half of the NPs and PAs who participated in the survey, about **55%**, say they have high or extremely high affinity for the school where they earned their advanced degree. Less than **14%** said they have low or very low affinity.



**Leverage School Affinity:** If you can gather data on where NPs and PAs studied, it might be an effective angle for personalized marketing or engagement strategies.

# About The 2023 Nurse Practitioners And Physician Assistants Communications Preferences Survey

HealthLink Dimensions conducted the inaugural survey to complement its annual HCP communications survey. Both surveys gauge respondents' feelings about advertising and communication, and provide insights about providers' positions within the greater healthcare industry.

This year's survey was promoted via email, social media, and display advertisements to more than 250 NPs and PAs during August 2023. Respondent practice areas include primary care, emergency/urgent care, and specialty care.



**600,000+**  
NPs and PAs

Almost  
**7,000**  
Hospitals

Email Address  
For More Than  
**90%**  
Of Records

**1.2M**  
MDs and DOs



Continuously cleaned and verified  
in clinical settings daily by our  
Provider Research Center team

## Who We Are

HealthLink Dimensions has focused exclusively on healthcare data for the last 20 years. Our purpose-driven team comprises healthcare industry veterans, data analysts, and customer service partners.

HealthLink Dimensions is a trusted partner, offering clients a suite of solutions — including data verified daily in clinical settings — tailored to solve their unique healthcare data challenges.

## Additional Services

At HealthLink Dimensions, we know optimizing your reach is essential to your overall marketing strategy. That's why we offer additional solutions to partners, including:

- Optimized send times based on artificial intelligence
- Email licensing and deployment
- Programmatic advertising

## What Would You Like To Know About Your Prescribers?

Hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and their marketing partners choose HealthLink Dimensions for the size of its clients, the accuracy of its data, and the fine detail provided about the prescribers they want to reach.

In addition to more than 2.4M+ clinicians with verified email addresses, clients can get granular with detailed information, including:



Clinical Data



Contact Information



Business Information



Engagement Method



Credentialing



Affiliations

For a complimentary data analysis or list match, contact us at **404-250-3900** or visit **[healthlinkdimensions.com](https://healthlinkdimensions.com)**.