



2020



Patient Sentiment Report

An analysis of 8.4 million provider reviews

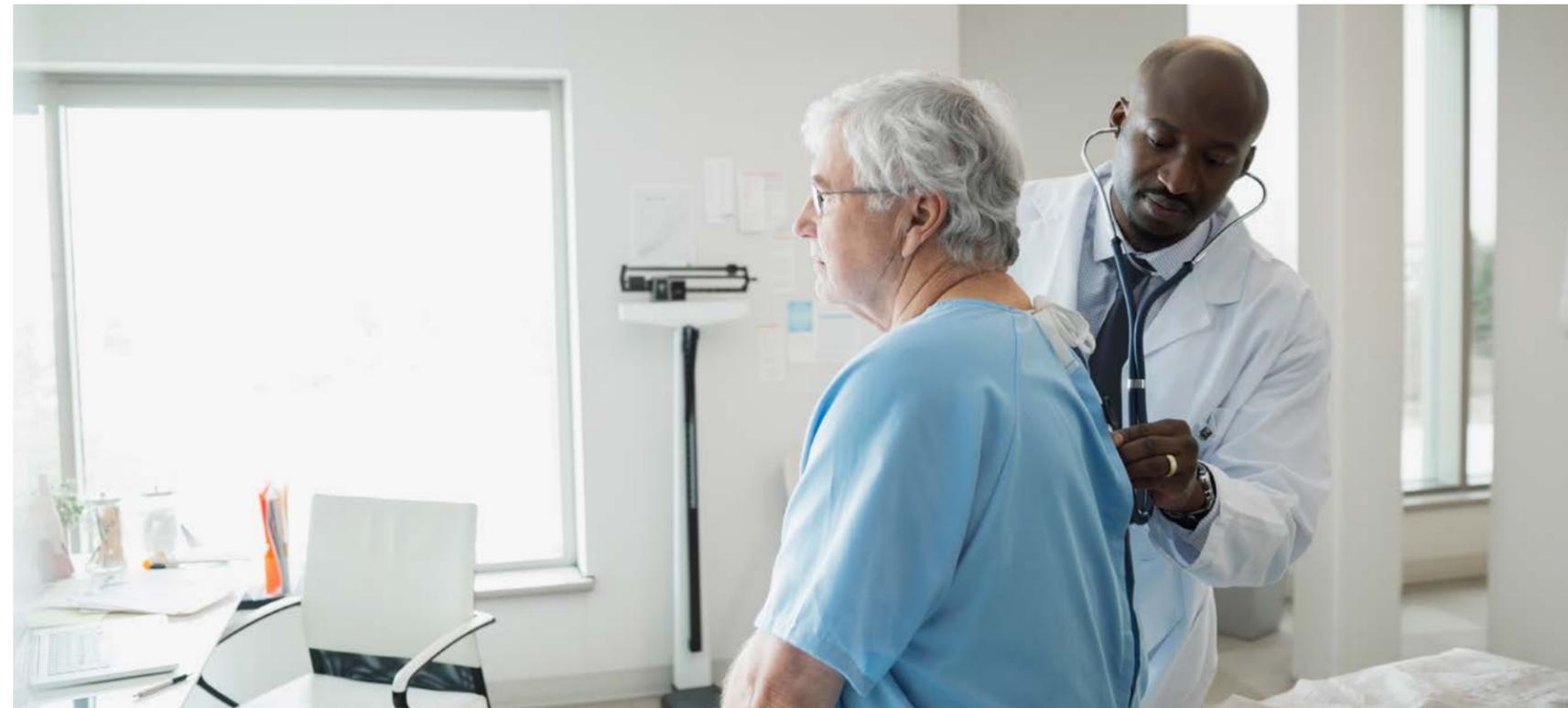


INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Patient Sentiment Report — published by Healthgrades and the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) — offers providers and health systems new insights into how patients experience healthcare and the factors that most strongly influence consumers' perceptions of care quality.

With numerous objective measures of clinical outcomes available to physicians, it can be tempting to dismiss the opinions of patients in online reviews. However, by understanding and examining the issues most important to the people they serve, healthcare providers can work to improve the overall care experience as well as identify opportunities for patient education.

Ultimately, positive interactions between patients and doctors lead to more frequent visits and more productive appointments, which collectively leads to better health. The 2020 Patient Sentiment Report captures overall trends in physician ratings—including differences in the context of gender—along with a detailed analysis of the themes present in open-comment feedback.

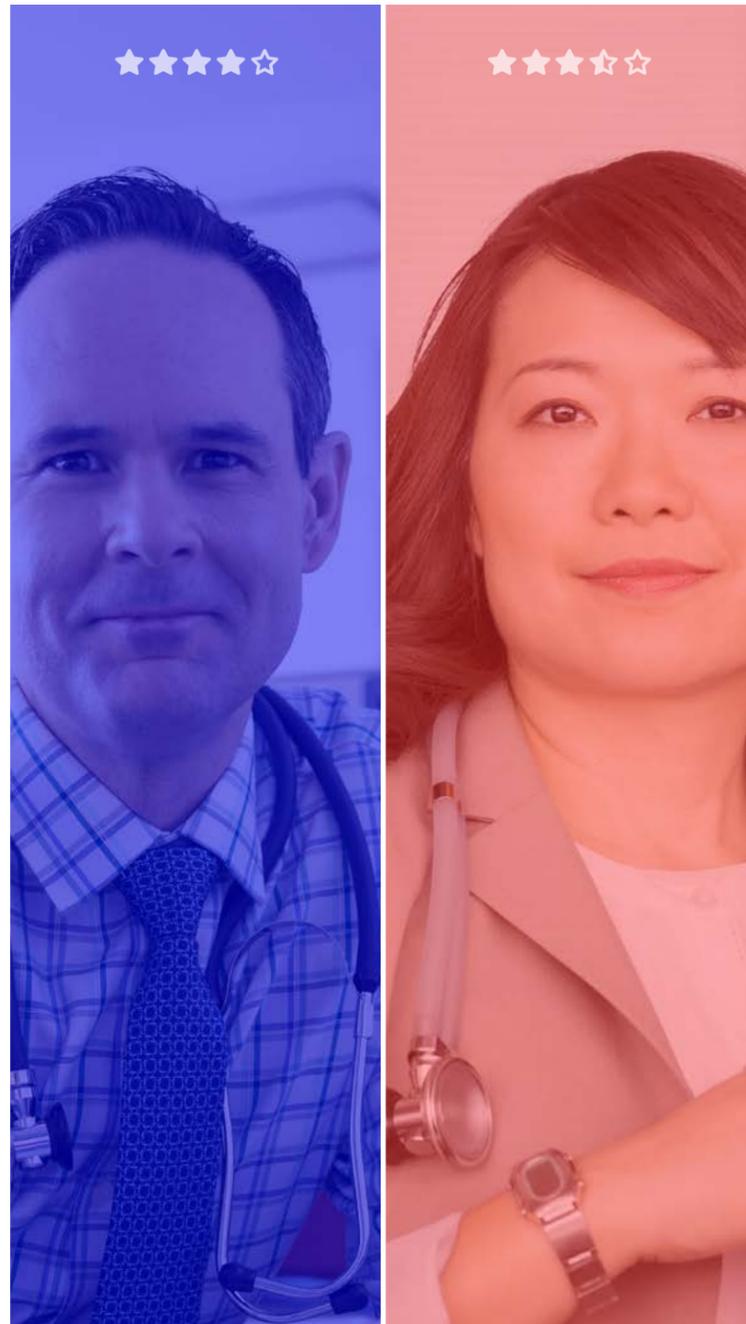


Dr. Halee Fischer-Wright, MD, MMM, FAAP, FACMPE

President and CEO, MGMA

“ *A healthier world is achievable when we in healthcare understand how to build healthier relationships among physicians, patients and staff. This data demystifies the factors that will elevate patient experience: High-quality care, operational excellence and meaningful communication together build the foundation for the way we want healthcare to work.*

KEY FINDINGS



- **Patients most often mention a doctor's skill or care quality when writing reviews.**
- **In negative reviews, patients mention the factors of wait time, visit time, and office staff up to three times more often than they do in positive reviews.**
- **Male providers receive higher average star ratings than female providers.**
- **Reviewers more often mention factors like bedside manner, communication, and visit time in feedback about female providers, while reviews of male providers more often highlight skill and care quality.**
- **Patient sentiment varies across states: New Jersey and Idaho doctors are among the most highly-rated in the country, while providers in Maine and West Virginia receive lower ratings across many factors.**

THE FACTORS THAT MATTER MOST TO PATIENTS

While the individual experience of healthcare will vary across patients, there are consistent factors patients cite most often when evaluating providers.

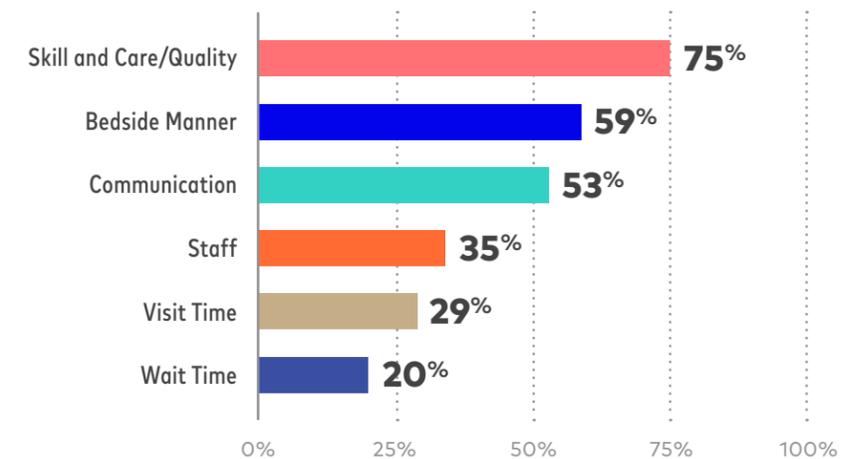
Of the 2.4 million text comments on Healthgrades as of December 1, 2019, 95% of responses touch on at least one of these six themes (defined as follows for the purposes of this analysis):

- **Bedside Manner:** The patient's comfort with a doctor and his or her personality; how the doctor makes the patient feel.
- **Communication:** Whether the patient felt a doctor listened to questions and provided clear information.
- **Skill and Care Quality:** A patient's trust in the provider's ability to provide effective treatment.
- **Staff:** A patient's interaction with medical office staff, which patients may also interpret as nurses.
- **Visit Time:** The total time spent at the doctor's office, including the appointment. For some patients, a shorter visit time is desirable, while others may value a doctor spending significant time with them.
- **Wait Time:** The time spent at the doctor's office waiting for an appointment to begin or between segments of an appointment.

Overall, patients most often mention skill and care quality in their reviews. From patients' perspectives, this often translates to whether they had improvement in symptoms or underwent a procedure with a successful outcome.

It's important to note that any patient assessment of a doctor's skill or care quality is based on personal perception, and that the doctor may have provided expert, high-quality care that did not, for whatever reason, match up with the patient's individual expectation. That said, having a knowledge of how patients evaluate their care can help physicians be more proactive in establishing clear goals upfront and agreeing on a shared vision of the expected outcome.

Percentage of All Comments That Mention Top Themes



Patients often view a doctor's skill or care quality through the lens of their own personal result or outcome.

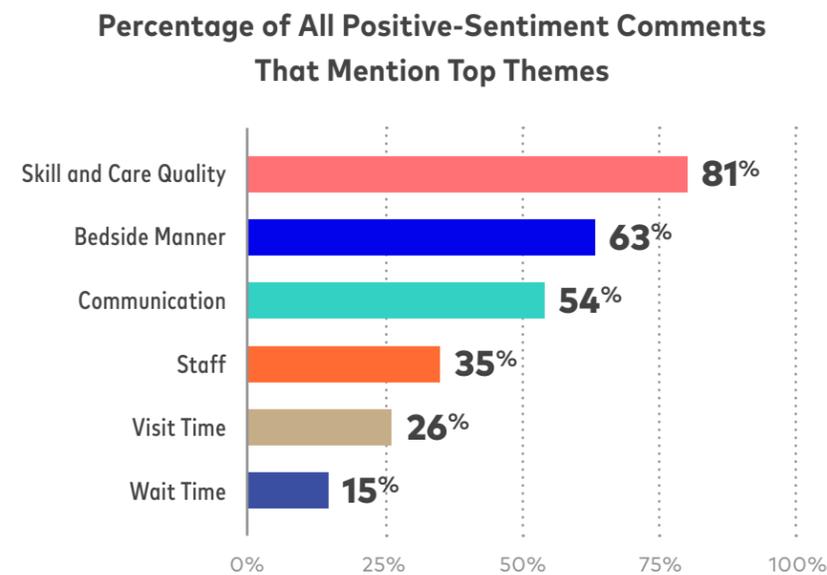
"I give this doctor 100% in his abilities, bedside manner, friendliness and follow-ups. When meeting with this doctor, all questions are answered [in a] straightforward [way]. Six weeks after surgery I was playing golf and back to normal."

"Very pleasant bedside manner for the doctor and staff. Explained clearly what my issue was, how she proposed to treat it, and what I could expect (healing process and final results). Most importantly, what she did perfectly solved my issues."

POSITIVE vs. NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS

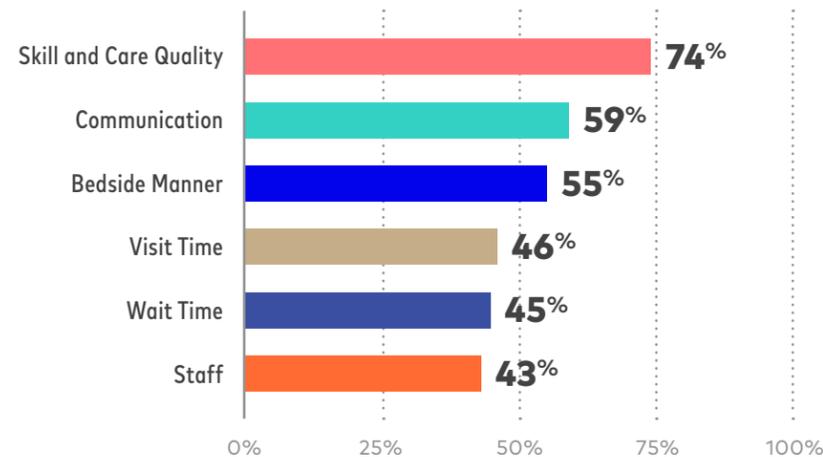
When you separate all comments into positive or negative, different themes emerge as most important to patients in relation to their overall sentiment.

Among all positive sentiments, more than 80% highlight skill and care quality, while only a third refer to office staff and just 15% reference wait times.



While skill and care quality are still the primary focus on negative-sentiment reviews, here the themes of office staff, visit time, and wait time gain more prominence.

Percentage of All Negative-Sentiment Comments That Mention Top Themes



This suggests that “no news is good news” when it comes to these specific themes: When a patient has a positive experience with office staff and time spent, these factors go unnoticed and reviews focus primarily on the doctors themselves.

However, poor interactions with office staff or long wait times are significant pain points for patients when they do occur, and reviewers are more prone to call out these themes if their experience with them is negative.

Generally speaking, if the review mentions staff, wait time, or visit time, the star rating as well as the sentiment of the review is likely negative. On the flipside, the overwhelming majority of reviews with mentions of skill and care quality or bedside manner have positive sentiment and high star ratings.

These results reflect the importance of a patient’s overall experience at a physician’s practice, not simply the appointment itself. Oftentimes, a patient may spend more time in the office environment or interacting with staff members than with the doctor he or she is reviewing. For patients with a wide choice of providers, these “customer service” components of healthcare can make the difference between staying loyal to a physician and looking for someone new.



A patient’s opinion of a doctor can be dramatically influenced by the overall experience of the visit and interactions with office staff.

“I had my annual checkup at the new facility and everything ran like a Swiss clock. The staff is polite, knowledgeable and professional.”

“If [this provider] fired his entire office staff, he might be a great doctor.”

PATIENT REVIEWS AND GENDER

A significant new finding in the 2020 analysis relates to how themes and sentiments of reviews differ by gender – of both patients and providers.

In the more than 8.4 million star ratings on Healthgrades as of December 1, 2019, patients on average rate male doctors higher than female doctors.

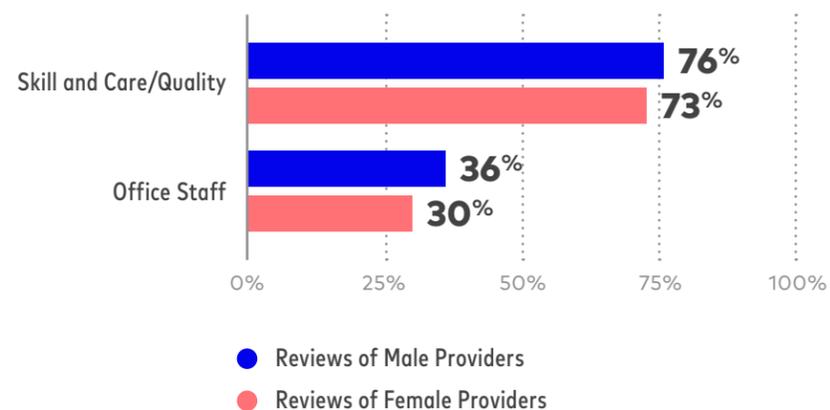
Average Star Rating by Gender of Provider



There were 1,675,345 male providers in the dataset (69%), and 754,831 female providers (31%). For comparison purposes, Healthgrades randomly selected 500,000 male providers and 500,000 female providers for this analysis.

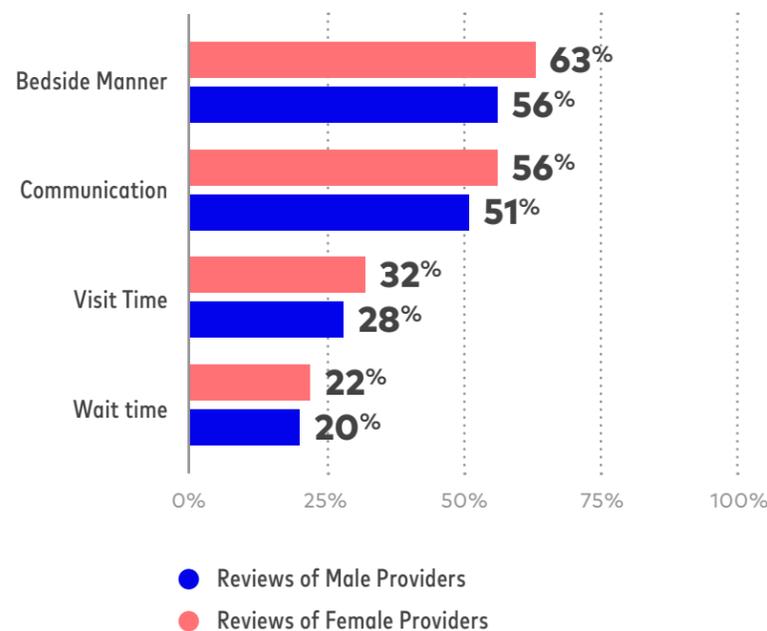
In text comments, reviewers more often mention skill and care quality and office staff when evaluating male providers than they do in comments about female providers:

Themes More Often Mentioned in Reviews of Male Providers



When evaluating female providers, patients cite the themes of bedside manner, communication, wait time, and visit time more often than they do in reviews of male providers.

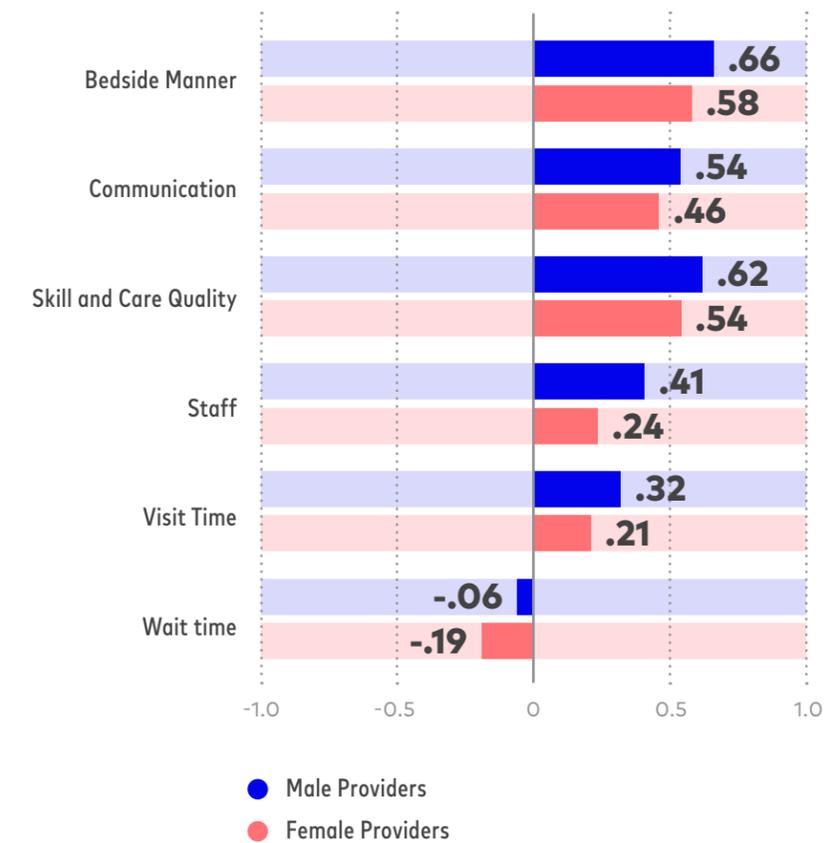
Themes More Often Mentioned in Reviews of Female Providers



Across all themes, male doctors rate more highly on average when factoring in patient sentiment. For wait times, both male and female doctors have a negative average sentiment score—but the results are more negative when the doctor is female.

Sentiment scores were rated on a scale from -1 to 1, with 0 being neutral, -1 being the most negative, and 1 being the most positive.

Average Sentiment by Theme by Provider Gender

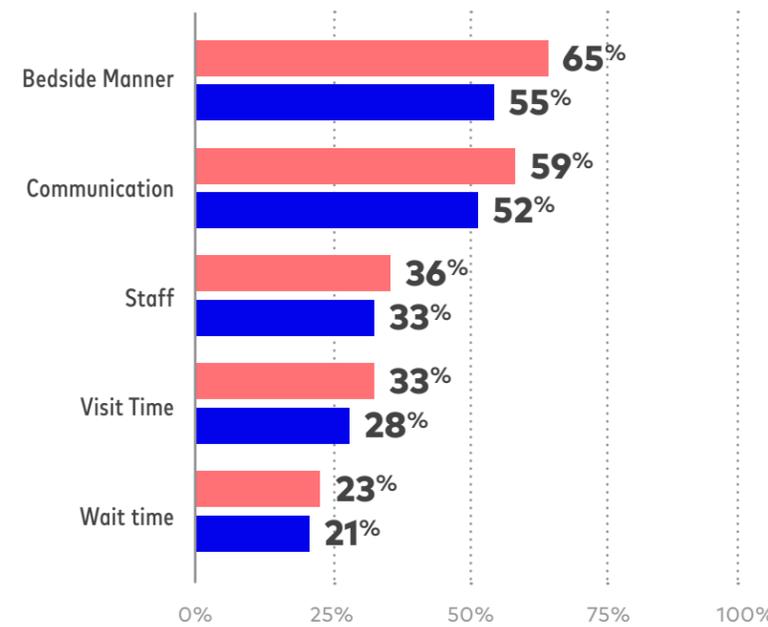




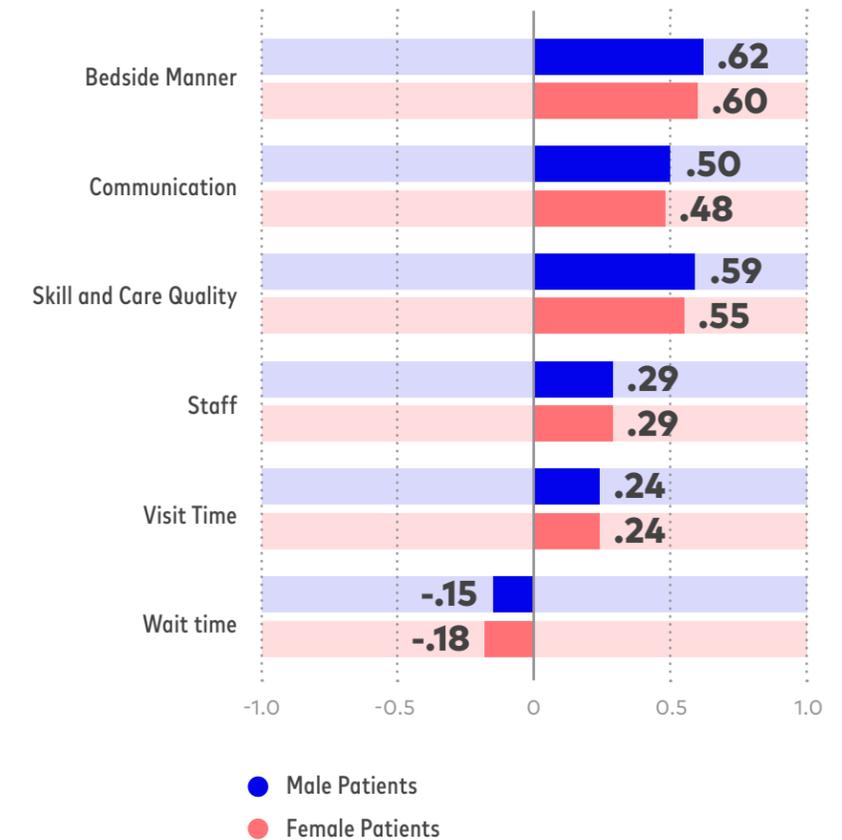
Similar trends emerge when the analysis focuses on the **patient** gender in reviews. In an analysis of 750,000 reviews split evenly between men and women, female patients tend to mention bedside manner, communication, visit time, and wait time more often than male patients do. Comments from male reviewers more often cite the theme of skill and care quality.

When looking at sentiment of reviews by patient gender, men tend to more favorably rate bedside manner, communication, skill and care quality, and wait time. Men and women were relatively even in reviewing visit time and office staff.

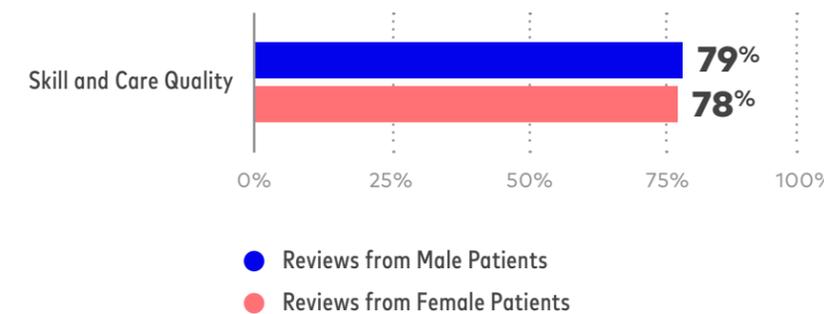
Themes More Often Mentioned in Reviews From Female Patients



Average Sentiment by Theme by Patient Gender



Themes More Often Mentioned in Reviews From Male Patients



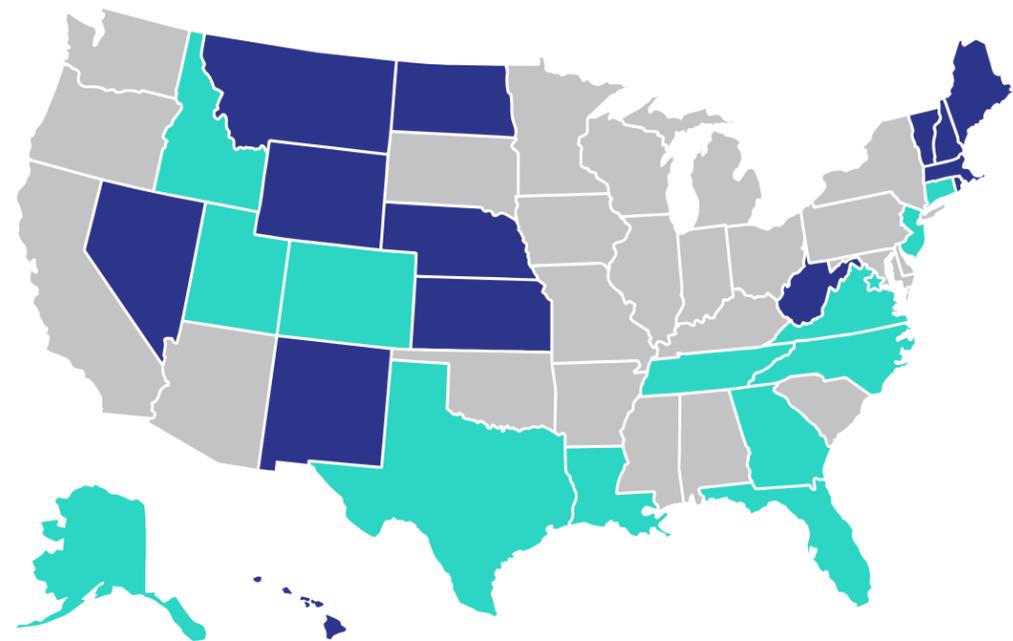
For some factors, patients may have different values that determine if their sentiment is positive or negative, even if they fall under the same theme.

*"No complaints, very professional. **In and out quickly** which is important to me."*

*"She was so helpful and **took her time with me**. I really appreciated it as I am not used to that in most offices."*

SENTIMENT BY STATE

Also new in the 2020 analysis is a breakdown of sentiment by state. Topline findings include:



Highest average rating for doctors (4.3 or higher)

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. New Jersey | 8. Alaska |
| 2. Idaho | 9. Washington, DC |
| 3. North Carolina | 10. Georgia |
| 4. Utah | 11. Connecticut |
| 5. Tennessee | 12. Louisiana |
| 6. Texas | 13. Virginia |
| 7. Colorado | 14. Florida |

Lowest average rating for doctors (4.0 or lower)

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 38. Wyoming | 45. Vermont |
| 39. New Hampshire | 46. Nevada |
| 40. Montana | 47. North Dakota |
| 41. Nebraska | 48. Rhode Island |
| 42. Hawaii | 49. West Virginia |
| 43. Kansas | 50. New Mexico |
| 44. Massachusetts | 51. Maine |



Reviews of doctors in Southern states tend to have higher average ratings than providers in other states.

The states with the highest number of patient comments (100,000 or higher) are:

- | |
|-----------------|
| 1. Florida |
| 2. New York |
| 3. Texas |
| 4. California |
| 5. Pennsylvania |
- This is likely a result of being among the country's most populous states.*

For each of the six (6) top themes in patient reviews, the three (3) most positive-sentiment and three (3) most negative-sentiment states for each were:

| | Most positively reviewed in | Most negatively reviewed in |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Bedside Manner | 1. New Jersey 2. Idaho 3. Utah | 49. West Virginia 50. Maine 51. New Mexico |
| Communication | 1. New Jersey 2. Idaho 3. Arkansas | 49. North Dakota 50. Maine 51. New Mexico |
| Skill and Care Quality | 1. New Jersey 2. Idaho 3. Texas | 49. New Mexico 50. Maine 51. North Dakota |
| Staff | 1. South Dakota 2. North Carolina 3. Idaho | 49. Rhode Island 50. West Virginia 51. Nevada |
| Visit Time | 1. Idaho 2. Arkansas 3. New Jersey | 49. North Dakota 50. West Virginia 51. New Mexico |
| Wait time | 1. North Carolina 2. Arkansas 3. Idaho | 49. New Mexico 50. West Virginia 51. Nevada |

KEY TAKEAWAYS



For Patients

Healthcare consumers have an unprecedented ability to research providers who best fit their treatment needs—and match their personality, values, and customer service expectations. However, patients also have a responsibility to supplement patient reviews with objective measures of care quality and to maintain an awareness of their own implicit biases about doctors based on factors such as gender.



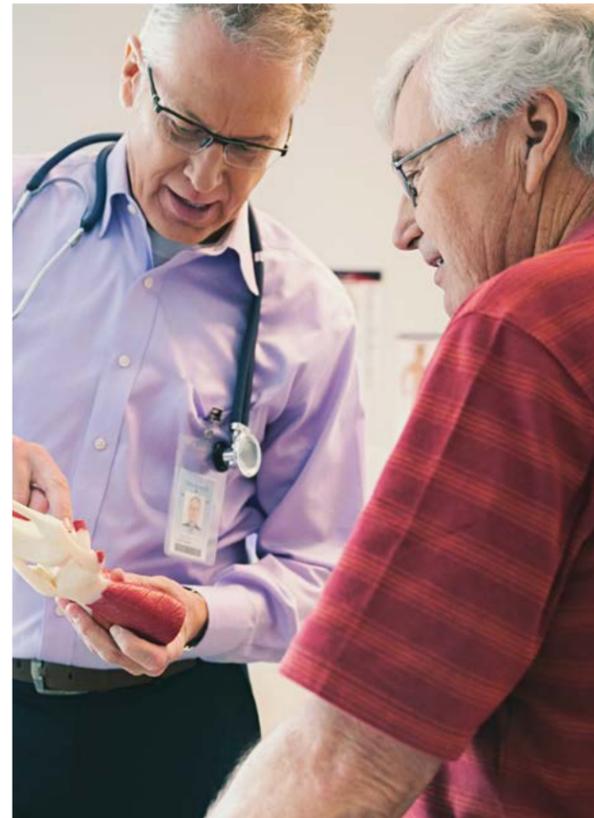
For Physicians/Practices

In reading online doctor reviews, patients gather information as they consider whom to trust with their care. In writing and posting reviews, patients look to support and guide each other toward their favorite doctors. By knowing which factors matter most to the communities they serve, physicians and their practices can work more effectively to create outstanding care experiences and cultivate office environments that attract, retain, and connect with patients in relevant ways.



For Health Systems

Across all regions, one central truth is clear: Patients are invested in the quality of their care. In studying how local consumers rate and review their doctors, health systems can identify opportunities for growth and guide their strategies toward creating cohesive, high-quality healthcare experiences that benefit consumers and physicians alike.



METHODOLOGY

For this study, Healthgrades classified reviews of healthcare providers with up to six (6) themes based on the text content of each review. These six overarching themes were initially identified by examining the most common words and phrases (n-grams) contained in the full body of 2.4 million text comments.

The results of this analysis were supplemented with and confirmed through additional statistical techniques. Samples were filtered to account for specialties with unusually disproportionate numbers of providers or patients of a specific gender, such as obstetrics-gynecology.

Once the six (6) overarching themes were identified, Healthgrades submitted 25,000 reviews to the Amazon Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing service for manual labeling. This labeled data set was used to build machine-learning classification models to predict which themes are contained in new reviews, along with the sentiment of those themes. The final result is a review that has been classified as containing 0 to 6 themes, and within each theme, a given sentiment score in the range -1 to 1. Finally, scored reviews were rolled up at the provider level and summarized across the entire set of on-site reviews.

Healthgrades does not intend for patient ratings and reviews to act as a proxy for clinical outcomes, but rather to provide insights about what type of experience a patient can expect when seeing a specific provider. The fact that patients tend to focus on personal interactions in their feedback suggests providers have an opportunity to increase transparency around their own clinical outcomes and make patients aware of the importance of physician experience or hospital quality when choosing care.

WHO WE ARE



As the nation's No. 1 site for connecting patients and doctors, Healthgrades helps millions of people each month find the right provider. We empower healthcare consumers with comprehensive data about provider experience and hospital quality so they can make informed, confident decisions about their care.

But healthcare isn't just about data—it's about people. That's why millions of Healthgrades users come back our site to provide feedback about their healthcare experiences. These ratings and reviews together represent a key factor in helping others in the Healthgrades community find the highest quality care for themselves and their families.

Healthgrades provides a unique service to healthcare consumers, giving users access to both clinical experience data and personal feedback from real patients to create a well-rounded picture of quality care.



Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) is the premier association for professionals who lead medical practices. Since 1926, through data, people, insights, and advocacy, MGMA empowers medical group practices to innovate and create meaningful change in healthcare. With a membership of more than 55,000 medical practice administrators, executives, and leaders, MGMA represents more than 15,500 organizations of all sizes, types, structures and specialties that deliver almost half of the healthcare in the United States. Learn more at www.mgma.com.