



American Academy of
Physician Associates

Survey Data Report: PA Perspectives on Student Loan Borrowing

JANUARY 2026

Key Takeaways

Widespread Concern Among PAs Over Federal Student Loan Caps

An overwhelming majority of PAs, PA students, and aspiring PAs report being very or extremely concerned about new federal student loan restrictions.

Federal Student Loans Are the Backbone of PA Education Financing

Federal student loans far outpace private loans or other funding sources for tuition, fees, and living expenses.

Student Loan Caps Threaten the PA Workforce Pipeline

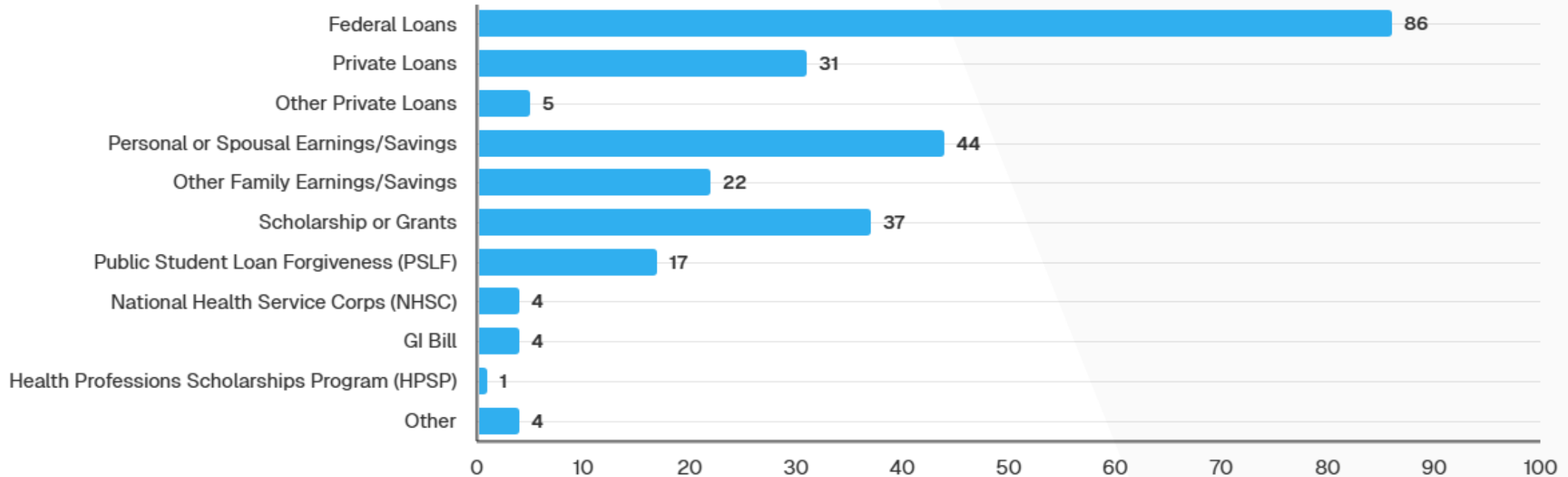
8 in 10 PAs and PA students say a \$20,500 federal loan cap would reduce PA school applicants and the number of PAs practicing in rural areas.

One in Three PAs & PA Students Would Have Left Healthcare

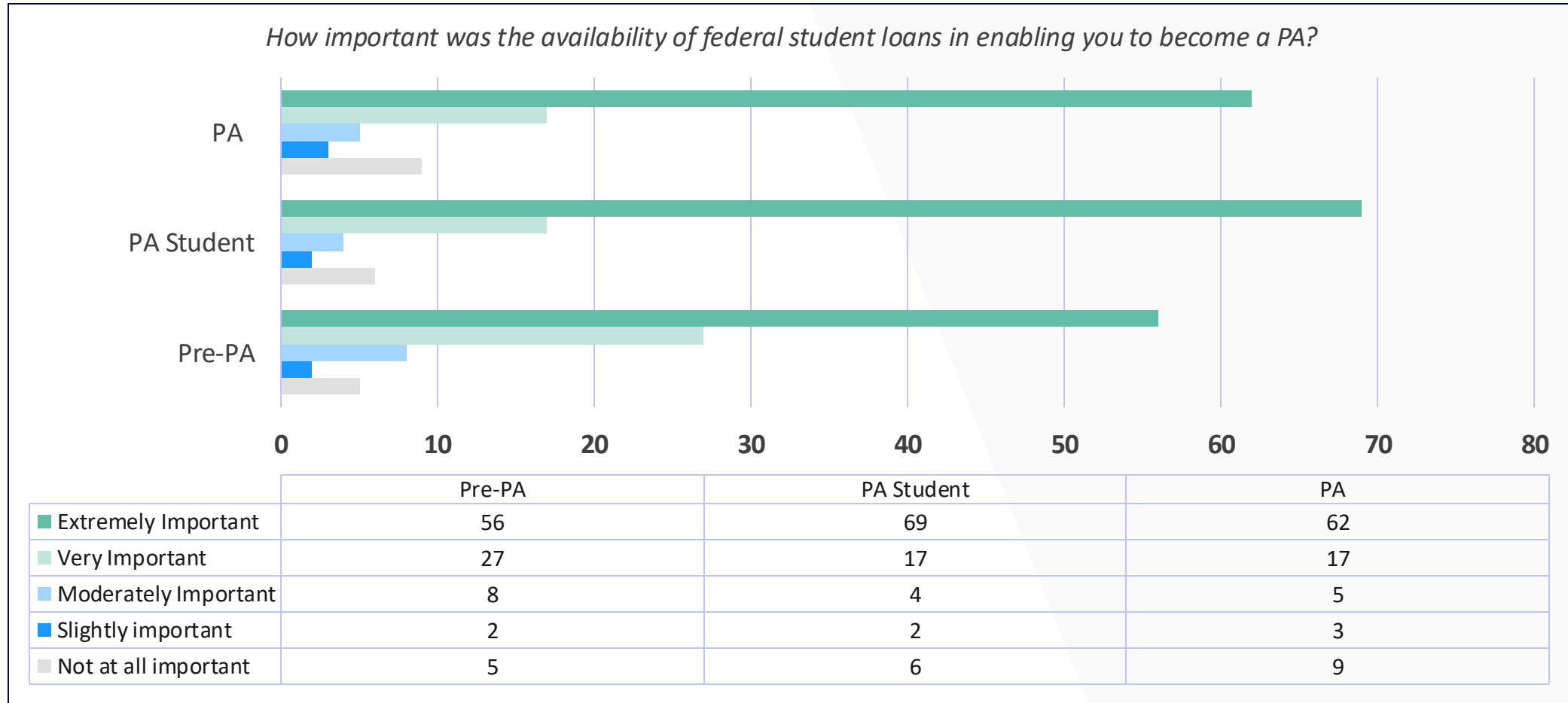
If federal student loan borrowing for PA education had been capped at \$20,500, more than one-third of respondents say they would have no longer pursued a healthcare career.

Federal student loans are leading source of financial support for PA school

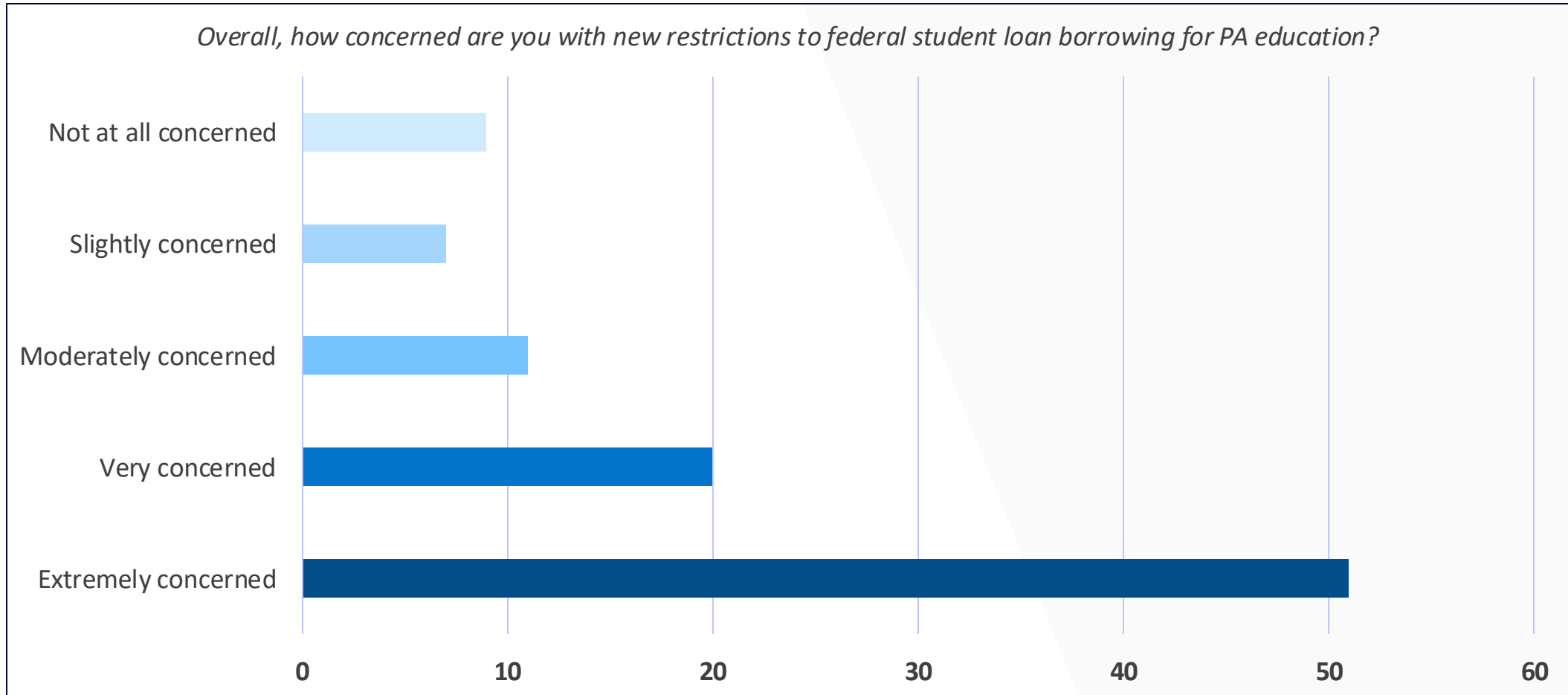
Which of the following sources of financial support for PA school did you use, do you use, or expect to use, to pay for your tuition, fees, and living expenses? Select all that apply.



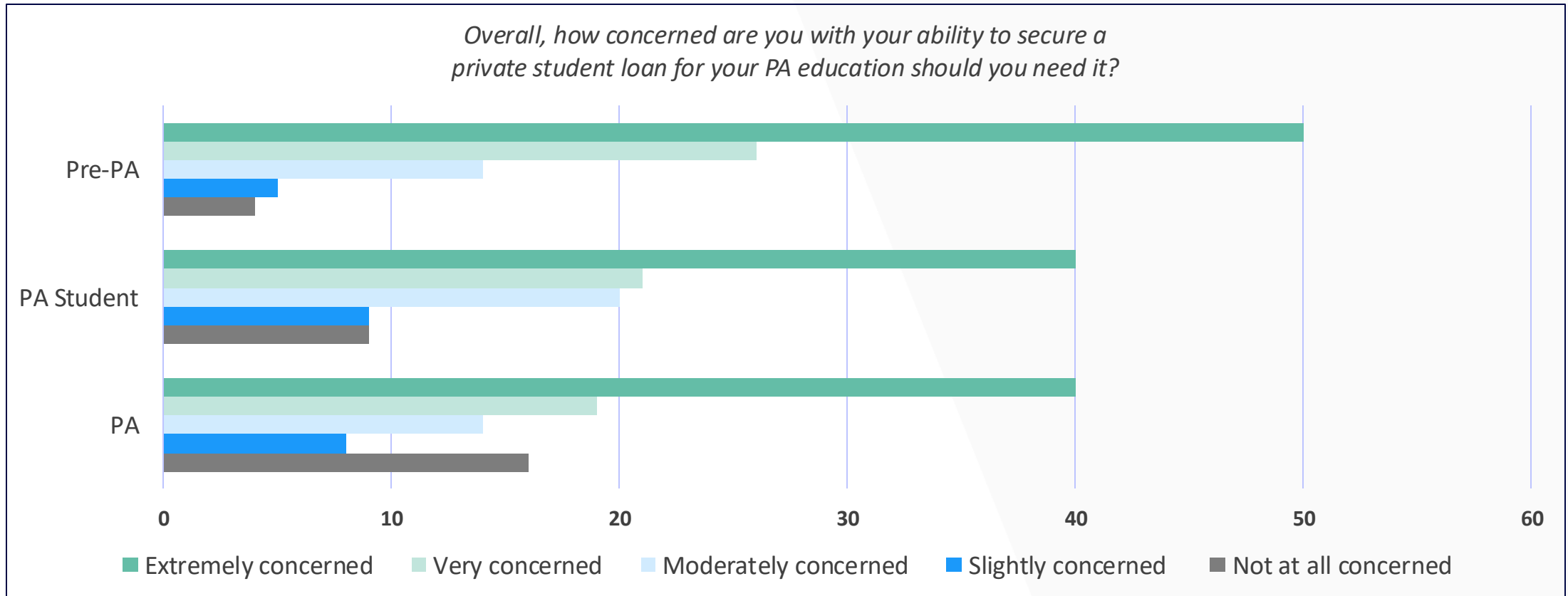
Federal student loans reported as extremely important to enabling PA workforce



Overwhelming majority is concerned with new restrictions on federal student loans

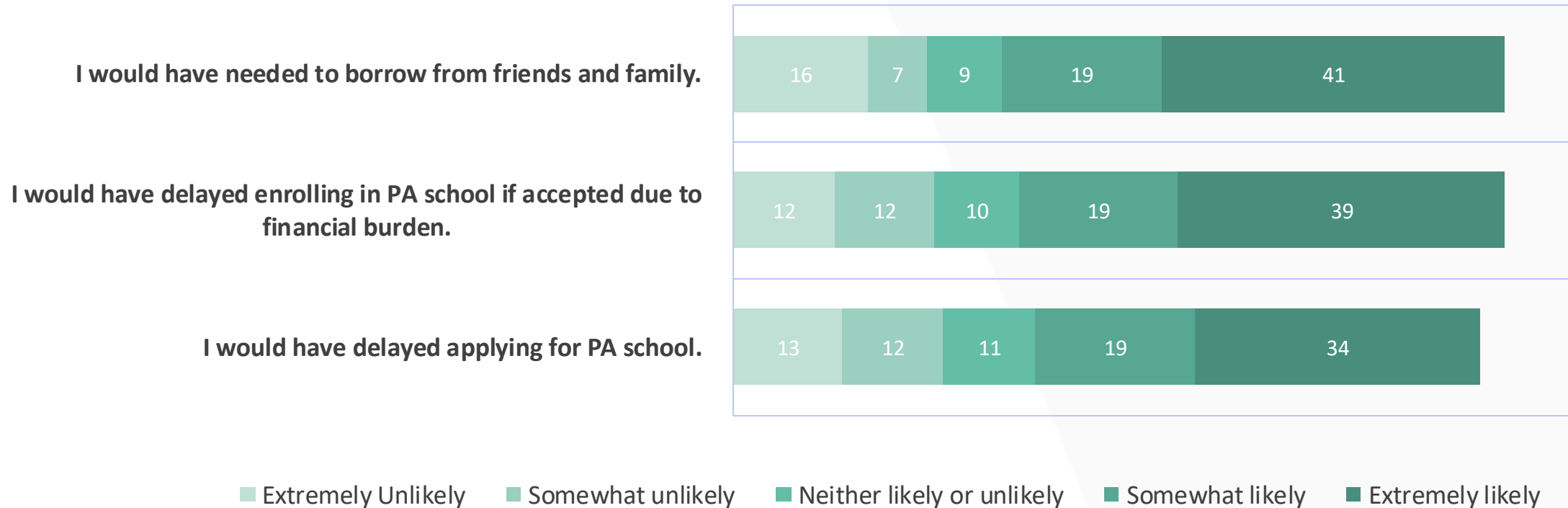


Extreme concern expressed over securing private student loans



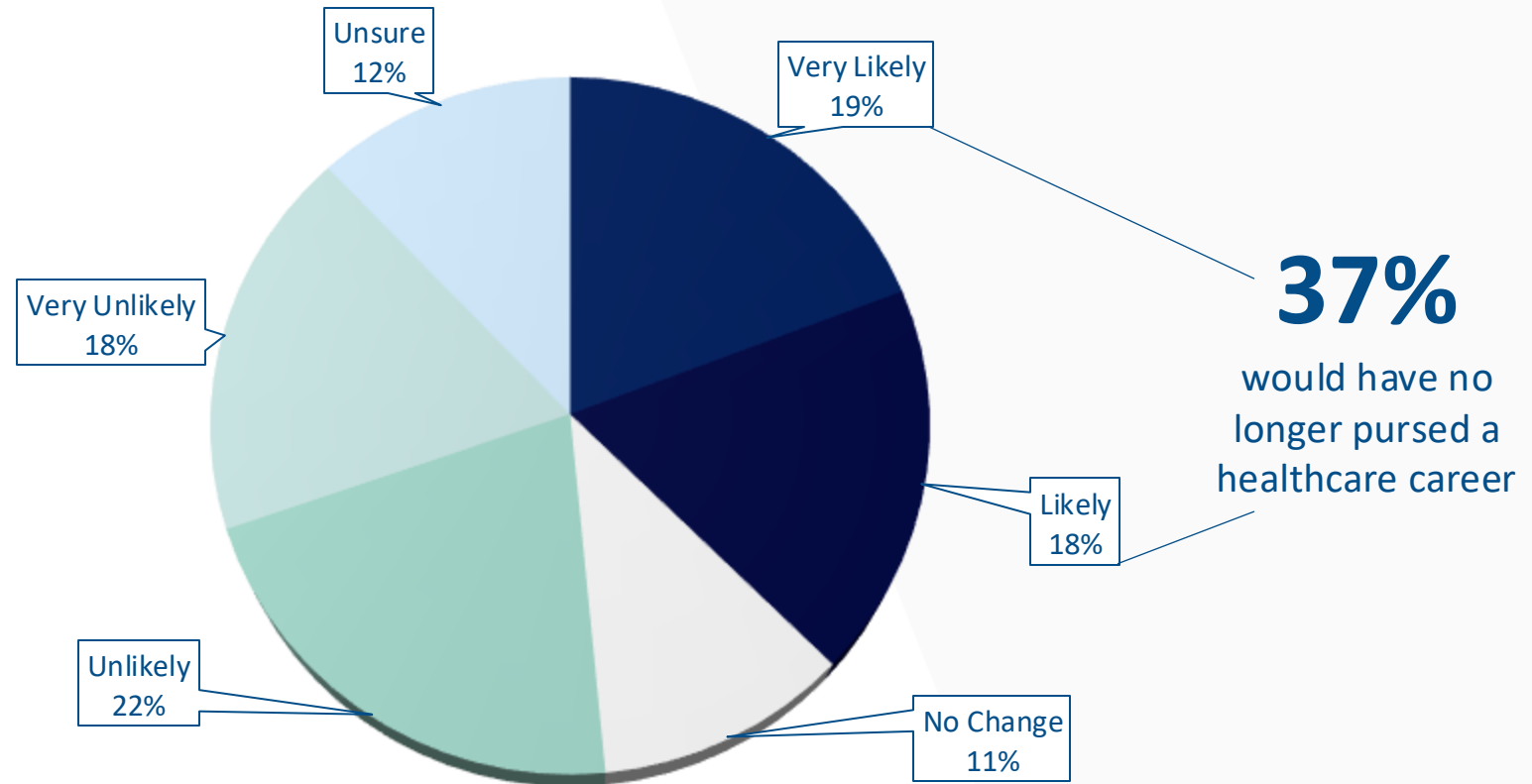
Federal loan caps would result in delayed plans and added family borrowing

If federal student loan borrowing for PA education is capped at \$20,500 per academic year, how likely would the following impact your path to becoming a PA?



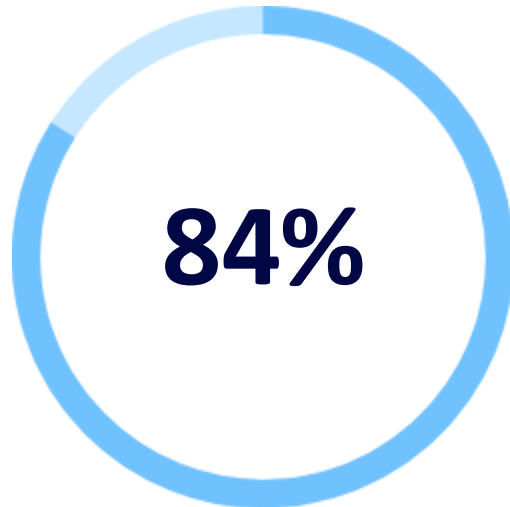
More than 1 and 3 PAs and PA Students Would Have Left Healthcare

If federal student loan borrowing for PA education had been capped at \$20,500, I would have changed my career plans and would no longer pursue a healthcare career.

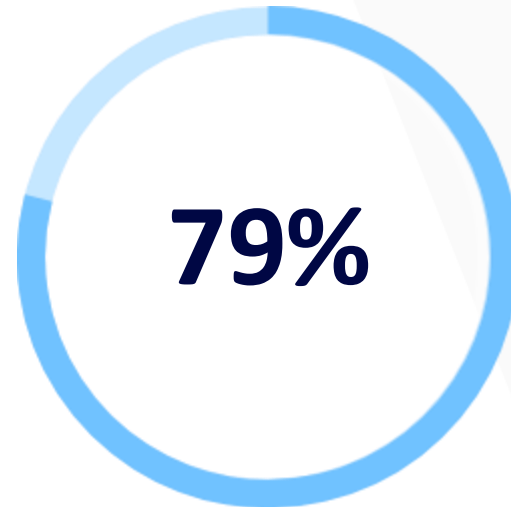


8 in 10 expect decreasing numbers of PA school applicants

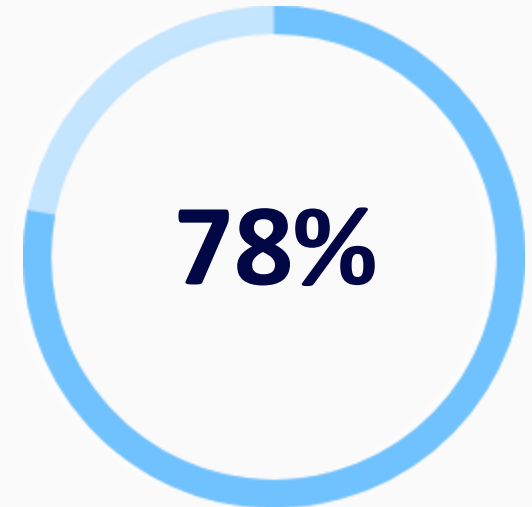
If federal student loan borrowing for PA education is capped at \$20,500 per academic year, what impact do you think it will have on the following aspects of the PA profession?



Decrease the number of applicants to PA school



Reduce the number of PAs practicing in rural areas



Reduce the number of PAs practicing in medically underserved communities

Roughly two-thirds are uncomfortable using private student loans

How comfortable are, or were you, with use private student loans to fill funding gaps for your PA educations

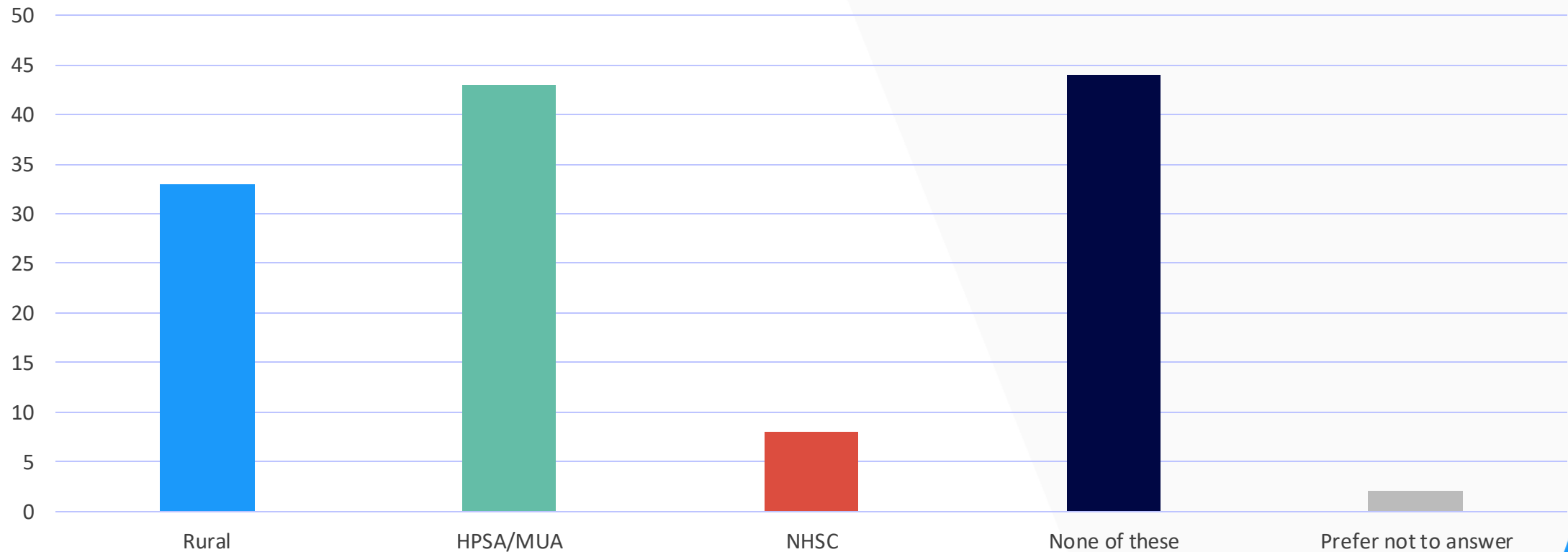
63% are very uncomfortable or uncomfortable



■ Very Uncomfortable
 ■ Uncomfortable
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Comfortable
 ■ Very Comfortable
 ■ Unsure

PA population plans to serve rural and medically underserved communities

Have you worked in any of the following during your career? If you are not yet a PA, are you interested in work in, or for, any of the following? Select all that apply.



Methodology

AAPA conducted online interviews among a national sample of the PA population.

- Survey was fielded between December 9, 2025 and January 26, 2026.
- 4,545 interviews yielded a margin of error of +/- 1.35%
- Sample is composed of practicing PAs, PA students, and aspiring PAs (pre-PAs).
- MOE is greater for subgroup analysis.

