

# Importance and Impact of Physician Profiles

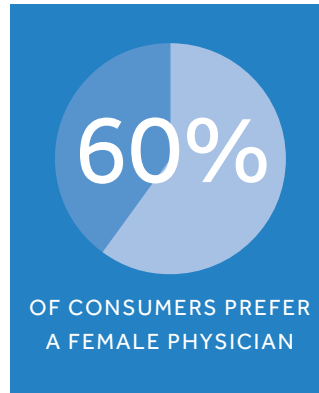
## Executive Summary

The Health Management Academy and Healthgrades conducted research into which aspects of physicians' online profiles are the most meaningful drivers of consumer engagement. Key takeaways include:

- Specific aspects of a profile cause consumers to choose one physician over another. The most influential of these are: a physician's number of ratings; their years of experience; popularity on social media; whether the profile includes a photo; and the physician's gender.
- For most consumers, shorter wait times outweigh a physician's star ratings, except when they are seeking care for a serious health issue.
- Consumers understandably have higher expectations of healthcare providers than of other businesses.

## Introduction

Given consumers' increasing utilization of user-review websites, it is becoming more and more important for physicians to carefully cultivate and craft their online profiles. Consumers heavily rely on the internet when seeking information about health issues and providers, and are using physician review websites more than ever before to decide where to seek care. Healthcare leaders must recognize the significance of physician profiles in the consumer decision-making process and need to understand how physicians can leverage specific aspects of their profiles to attract patients. It is critical not only to understand what aspects of a physician profile are most effective for engaging consumers, but also to identify which groups of consumers prefer particular components of a physician profile. Understanding the importance of physician profiles will allow healthcare leaders to better inform their physician workforce, in order to maximize opportunity and better engage with consumers.



## Physician Profiles & Consumer Preference

### Consumers are more likely to choose a female physician over a male physician

— 60% of consumers prefer a female physician over a male physician. This preference is especially true of women (71%), Millennials (64%), minorities (64%), and infrequent patients (63%). Conversely, seniors (52%) and men (54%) prefer a male over a female physician.

### The number of ratings trumps the star rating itself

— Consumers are more likely to select a physician who has a larger number of ratings than a physician with a perfect star rating.<sup>1</sup> 64% of consumers prefer a physician with 4 out of 5 stars and 25 patient responses over one with 5/5 stars and 3 responses.

<sup>1</sup> To a degree of reason — a conjoint analysis was conducted over a series of nine questions in which respondents were given a series of variables, each always coming with 4/5 stars or 5/5 stars.

**FIGURE 1.**

Suppose you have a health issue that you want to get care for. Based on what you see below, which of these doctors would you be more likely to choose?



**But...there is nearly a 40-point swing in preference when a social media component is introduced to the physician's profile**—Consumers opt for a physician with Facebook “likes” and Twitter followers, but with fewer ratings (55%), over a physician with more ratings but no social media component (45%). Consumers under 55 show the strongest shift toward profiles with social media indicators, as do consumers in urban and suburban areas and parents.

**Star ratings trump education**—62% of respondents select a physician with 5/5 stars who graduated from a more generic university (in this case, the University of Arizona) over a physician with 4/5 stars who graduated from a more elite university (in this case, Harvard). While all groups of consumers preferred the more highly rated physician, consumers over 55 (43%) and those in rural areas (47%) are more closely divided between star ratings and education.

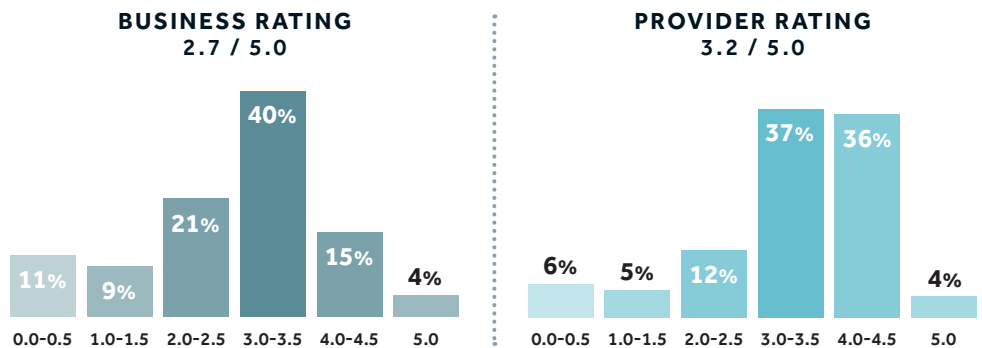
**But experience trumps star ratings**—61% of consumers prefer a physician with 4/5 stars and 20 years of experience over a physician with 5/5 stars and four years of experience. Millennials (65%) and healthy consumers (64%) prefer experienced physicians, while seniors (43%) and frequent patients (47%) are more closely divided between experience and star ratings.

**Consumer opt slightly for a physician with a picture in the profile over one with a higher star rating but no picture**—52% of consumers will select a physician with a picture and a 4/5 star rating over a physician with no picture and a 5/5 star rating. Parents (59%) and Millennials (58%) are among the groups most likely to opt for the lower-rated physician with a picture.

**Key takeaway:** There are specific aspects of a physician profile on a physician review website that cause consumers to select one physician over another. The components that most strongly draw consumers to opt for a particular physician include the actual number of ratings a physician has and his or her years of experience. However, when social media components such as Facebook “likes” and Twitter followers are introduced into the profile, consumers are swayed toward those physician profiles. Consumers prefer a physician profile displaying a picture over one without, and although men slightly prefer male physicians, women overwhelmingly prefer female physicians.

**FIGURE 2.**

Level of expectation from providers compared to other businesses.



## Preference Change in Serious vs. Minor Health Issue

**Shorter wait times matter more than higher star ratings for minor health issues, but star ratings have more importance when dealing with a serious health issue—**

When seeking care for a minor health issue, 67% of consumers opt for a physician with a 25-minute average wait and 4/5 stars over one with a 90-minute average wait and 5/5 stars. However, 53% of consumers opt for the same 4/5 star physician with a 25-minute wait time when seeking care for a serious health issue. The groups with the biggest swing from the lower-rated physician with a 25-minute wait for a non-serious health issue toward a higher-rated physician with a 90-minute wait include:

- High earners (51-point swing)
- Seniors (44-point swing)
- Consumers with a low deductible (38-point swing)

**Similarly, a shorter “get-in time” matters more than higher star ratings for minor health issues, but star ratings matter more when dealing with a serious health issue—**67% of consumers opt for a physician with a one-day appointment wait and 4/5 stars over one with a seven-day wait time and 5/5 stars when seeking care for a minor health issue. However, 53% of consumers opt for the same 4/5 star physician with a one-day appointment wait when seeking care for a serious health issue.

**Key takeaway:** Although the majority of consumers prefer shorter wait times to star ratings, preferences shift when seeking care for a serious health issue. More consumers are willing to wait for a higher-rated physician when seeking care for a serious health issue. A sway toward the higher-rated physician remains the same when wait times are extended by minutes and number of days.

## Acceptable Physician Ratings

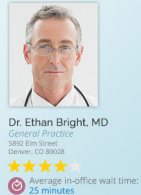
**Consumers have a higher level of expectation from providers than from other businesses—**The average lowest-acceptable rating for consumers to choose a provider is 3.2 stars, compared with a lowest-acceptable rating of 2.7 for consumers to choose a business on a user-review website.

**However, expectation differences still exist between different age and income groups—**Those with higher lowest-acceptable ratings for physicians include Millennials (4.1), high earners (4.1), consumers who have used the internet to search for information about providers (4.0), and those who utilize user-review sites (4.2).

**Key takeaway:** Predictably, consumers have a higher level of expectation from providers than from other businesses. Healthcare leaders should be aware of this discrepancy and its prevalence among specific consumer groups, particularly Millennials, high earners, and those who utilize user-review websites.

FIGURE 3.

Suppose you have a **minor health issue** that you want to get medical care for, such as cold or the flu. Based on what you see below, which of the following doctors would you be more likely to choose?

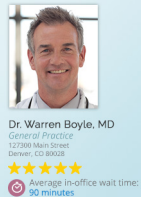


4/5 STARS  
25 MINUTE WAIT

**67%**

Dr. Ethan Bright, MD  
General Practice  
5892 Elm Street  
Denver, CO 80228

★★★★☆  
Average in-office wait time:  
25 minutes



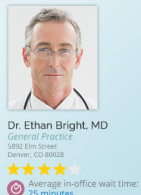
5/5 STARS  
90 MINUTE WAIT

**33%**

Dr. Warren Boyle, MD  
General Practice  
127588 Main Street  
Denver, CO 80028

★★★★★  
Average in-office wait time:  
90 minutes

Suppose you have a **serious health issue** that you want to get medical care for, such as chronic head pain. Based on what you see below, which of the following doctors would you be more likely to choose?

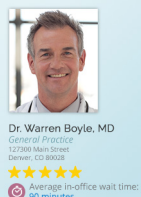


4/5 STARS  
25 MINUTE WAIT

**53%**

Dr. Ethan Bright, MD  
General Practice  
5892 Elm Street  
Denver, CO 80228

★★★★☆  
Average in-office wait time:  
25 minutes



5/5 STARS  
90 MINUTE WAIT

**47%**

Dr. Warren Boyle, MD  
General Practice  
127588 Main Street  
Denver, CO 80028

★★★★★  
Average in-office wait time:  
90 minutes

## Research Overview

The Health Management Academy and Healthgrades are delighted to release the results of a joint national survey conducted earlier this year. The survey examined how consumers receive information and make healthcare decisions. In the coming weeks, we will release four executive briefings that highlight key survey findings and what healthcare providers can take away from the data:

- **Part 1:** Internet and Social Media Usage Among Different Healthcare Consumers
- **Part 2:** Utilization of User-Generated Review Websites in Healthcare
- **Part 3:** Sources of Medical Information: The Importance of Healthcare Decision-Making
- **Part 4:** Value of Physician Profiles

## Survey Methodology

On behalf of Healthgrades, the Health Management Academy conducted a national survey from May 26 to June 2, 2016, of 1,500 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted using a blended methodology of live landline telephone interviews and web-based interviews. The data were collected using samples provided by Survey Sampling International (SSI). The data were weighted to approximate a national sample of adults based on gender, age, and ethnicity. The survey has a margin of error of  $\pm 2.19\%$  at a 95% level of confidence. Results based on smaller sample sizes of respondents — such as gender or age — have a larger margin of error.

The full data set will be made available after the final executive briefing is released.

## About Healthgrades

Healthgrades gets more than 30 million visits every month from consumers searching for the right healthcare in their community. When your health system partners with Healthgrades, we can show your practitioners how to attract and retain those prospective new patients. Operating the nation's largest healthcare-focused review site gives us a better understanding of how Americans choose providers and what your organization can do to grow demand for your services, while our strategies and solutions empower you to act on that information. To learn how Healthgrades can help you reach and acquire more patients, visit [healthgrades.com/hospitals](http://healthgrades.com/hospitals) or call 855.665.9276.

## About HMA

The Health Management Academy (the Academy) is a knowledge-based company focused exclusively on executives of the nation's largest integrated health systems and the healthcare industry's most innovative companies. The Academy provides unique, executive peer learning, complemented with rigorous and highly targeted research and advisory services. Since its inception, the Academy has built a material record of leadership development, independent research, and policy analysis, and has become the definitive trusted source for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange for the largest integrated health systems. For more information, please visit our website at [www.academy.net.com](http://www.academy.net.com).

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