

Google Cloud

Measuring the administrative burden on U.S. healthcare workers—and how generative AI can help



Administrative work in the U.S. healthcare system

The healthcare industry is under immense strain with rising costs, staff shortages, and widespread clinician burnout. A major cause of these problems is the overwhelming burden of administrative work.

This extra work makes it hard for healthcare providers to connect with patients, cuts into their personal time, and reduces the attention they can give to patient care. Insurance companies also face challenges. Claims managers are often buried in paperwork, making it difficult to process claims quickly and accurately, and delays in claims processing can lead to financial hardship for patients and providers. Although the increase in virtual care has expanded access to healthcare, it has simultaneously introduced significant administrative burdens, complicating processes for both healthcare providers and insurance companies (payors), leading to inefficiencies and increased operational costs.

The capabilities of generative AI (gen AI) show promise in addressing these challenges.

In a consumer context, gen AI can be used to create new content, including audio, code, images, text, simulations and videos. In a business context, gen AI can also be “grounded” in an organization’s own data and used to build apps and solutions for many administrative tasks, including things like note taking, filling out forms, searching and summarizing patient records and translation into different languages. Many of these technologies can be assistive tools – with content reviewed by human experts.

Measuring the administrative burden on healthcare workers

Google Cloud partnered with Harris Poll to develop insights regarding the real cost of administrative work among those working within the U.S. healthcare system.

This research explores the ripple effect from administrative burdens across healthcare, and represents perspectives among both the provider population (C-level executives, administrators, clinicians, and medical office staff) and the payor audience (C-level executives and claims staff).

Finally, we've included the perspective of the general population of U.S. adults too, as patients face downstream effects on the quality of their care.

The results of the research confirmed the weight of the administrative burden on the healthcare industry, but also highlighted the industry's openness to using generative AI tools to relieve some of this burden, as well as the opportunity for these tools to help improve job satisfaction and patient care.



Five key takeaways from the research



01

Administrative work is a huge burden, decreasing job satisfaction and impacting the level of patient care.



02

Healthcare professionals are willing to use gen AI to relieve some of this burden in healthcare.



03

The general public are cautiously open to the use of gen AI in healthcare, especially when benefits are directly tied to improved patient care.



04

Benefits of gen AI include increased levels of patient care, job performance, and satisfaction.



05

With the right monitoring and safeguards, gen AI tools can be used for administrative tasks in healthcare in a responsible and supportive way.

1. The administrative burden adds up

Administrative work is a huge burden for healthcare professionals, decreasing job satisfaction and impacting the level of patient care.



Clinicians report spending nearly 28 hours per week on administrative tasks, including:

8.8 hours on documentation

10.1 hours on communication

Medical office staff spend 34 hours per week on administrative tasks, including:

9.2 hours on documentation

9.1 hours on communication

Payors' claims staff spend 36 hours per week on administrative tasks, including:

10.2 hours on documentation

10 hours on pre-authorization

This time is directly tied to:

Burnout and staffing shortages

Administrative work contributes to feelings of burnout for:



82%
of clinicians



77%
of claims staff



81%
of medical staff

85% of provider executives

say that excess administrative work has caused staffing shortages

78% of payor executives

Reduced time spent on patient care

8 in 10

providers say administrative tasks take away from time spent with patients

68%

say that time away has a moderate to strong impact on the quality of patient care



93%
of clinicians



94%
of claims staff



88%
of medical staff

agree that they could spend more time on patient care if they could lessen their administrative loads

96% of provider executives and 99% of payor executives agree that time spent on administrative work is time that could be spent with patients improving patient care

Increased risk of human error

2/3

of providers

89%

of payors

express significant concern about human error in administrative tasks (22% and 49%, are extremely concerned)

2. Healthcare workers are ready for gen AI



There is a willingness among healthcare professionals to use gen AI to relieve some of this burden in healthcare.

Healthcare providers and payors alike are open to gen AI to help take administrative tasks off their plates. They are also comfortable with the idea of using AI to streamline administrative tasks.

Healthcare providers and payors see potential usefulness for gen AI across all categories of administrative tasks, including documentation, billing and coding, communication, pre-authorization, scheduling, and inventory management.

Use of gen AI for administrative tasks in healthcare

	Providers	Payors
Positive	91%	97%
Strongly positive	36%	67%

Use of AI to streamline administrative tasks

	Providers	Payors
Positive	89%	98%
Strongly positive	37%	73%



The data clearly reflects the enthusiasm we're seeing at Hackensack Meridian *Health*. Our healthcare professionals are eager to embrace generative AI to alleviate administrative burdens and reclaim valuable time for patient care. By supporting tasks like documentation, billing, and communication, we're not just improving efficiency, we're empowering our teams to focus on what truly matters – delivering exceptional and compassionate care."

Bob Garrett

CEO of Hackensack Meridian *Health*

3. Patients are on board, too

The general public are cautiously open to the use of gen AI in healthcare, especially when benefits are directly tied to improved patient care.



58%

think using AI for administrative tasks in healthcare is a “good or great idea” (similar to the number that think it’s a “good or great idea” to use AI for administrative tasks in financial services (56%) or in their own jobs (59%))

85%

would prefer a healthcare provider spend more time talking to them and focusing on their care than doing administrative tasks

72%

agree that it is worth using AI tools that would help healthcare practitioners focus more on quality patient care

80%

agree that AI for administrative tasks is fine but they want transparency, and to be told it’s being used

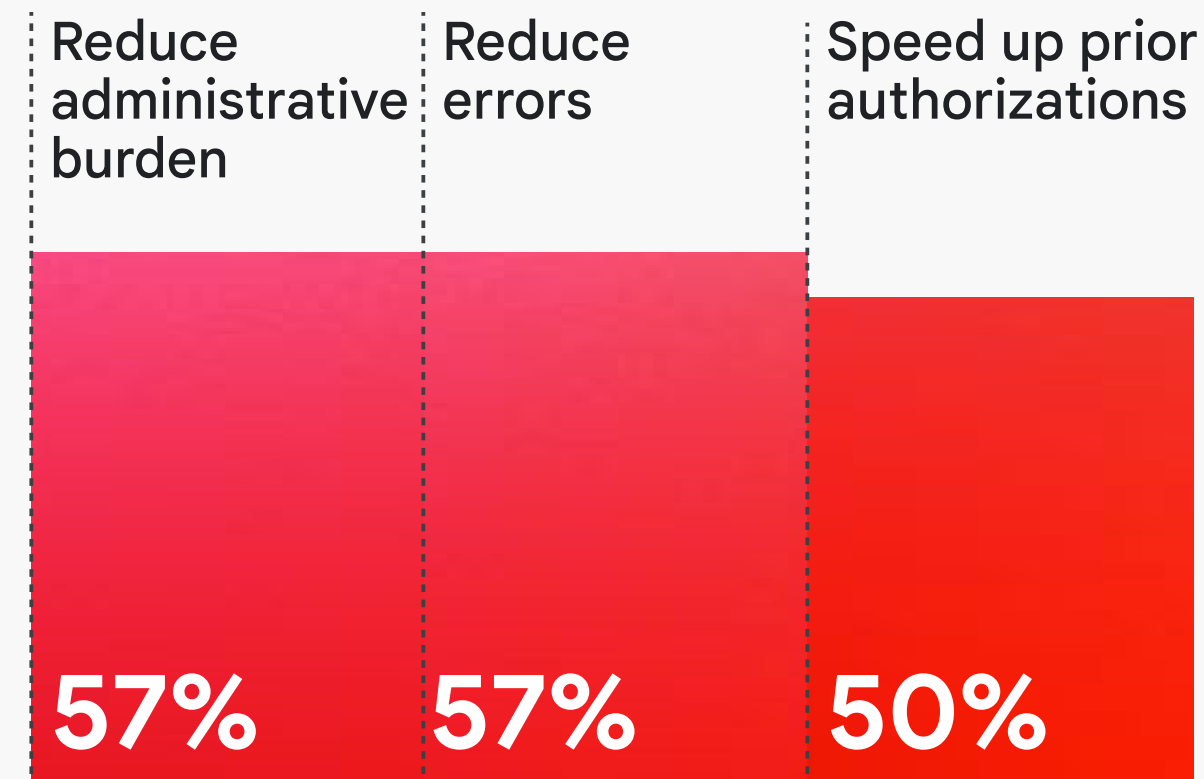
4. Gen AI delivers big benefits

Gen AI can offer benefits around an increased level of patient care and job performance and satisfaction.

AI technology, carefully and responsibly deployed, can make better use of clinicians' time and resources while simultaneously creating more access to care.



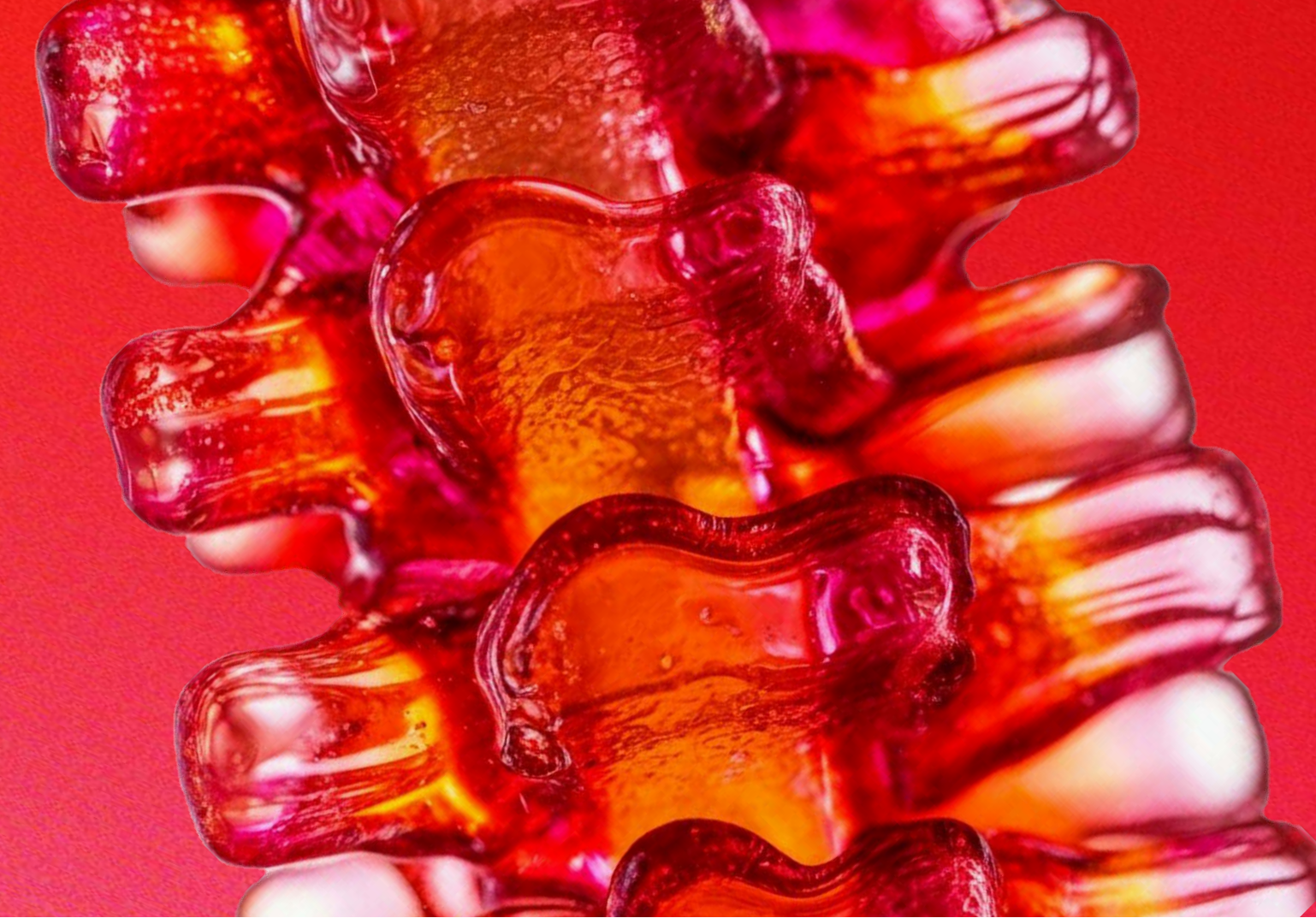
Top benefits of gen AI according to providers



Top benefits of gen AI according to payors



Google Cloud has identified potential use cases for gen AI that align with recognized benefits



Search

Gen AI can act as a powerful assistant for physicians and nurses when searching and summarizing patient information. By understanding the intent behind the search query, gen AI can surface the most relevant information from various sources within the patient record, including structured data, text, and images. This goes beyond simple keyword matching and provides more contextualized results.



Summarization

Gen AI can analyze lengthy clinical notes and create concise summaries tailored to the specific needs of the physician or nurse. These summaries can be customized for different purposes, such as quick review, referral letters, or patient education materials. By streamlining access to critical information, and providing concise summaries, gen AI empowers healthcare.



MEDITECH's successful integration of AI into our Expanse EHR is having a real-world impact, with customers like Mile Bluff Medical Center saving upwards of 7.5 minutes of preparation time per patient," said Helen Waters, Executive Vice President and COO, MEDITECH. "Our customers are able to leverage generative AI to reduce clinical and administrative burdens and improve patient outcomes by delivering more comprehensive patient care. As we continue to expand the rollout of this technology to new patients and use cases, there is no limit to the groundbreaking impact we can make on patient care."

Google Cloud has identified potential use cases for gen AI that align with recognized benefits



Clinical documentation

Gen AI can automate many of the tedious tasks associated with clinical documentation, such as discharge summaries, patient visit summaries, progress notes, discharge instructions, and referral letters, which clinicians can then review and finalize. This can free up clinicians to focus on patient care and other important tasks.



HCA Healthcare is improving how nurses share critical patient information by developing a generative AI-powered nurse handoff tool, created in partnership with frontline nurses. By streamlining this traditionally tedious and manual process, we're not only improving efficiency and communication, but also ensuring that nurses have more time to connect with patients and provide truly personalized care."

– Michael J. Schlosser, MD, MBA, FAANS, SVP, Care Transformation and Innovation, HCA Healthcare.

Google Cloud has identified potential use cases for gen AI that align with recognized benefits



Medical imaging

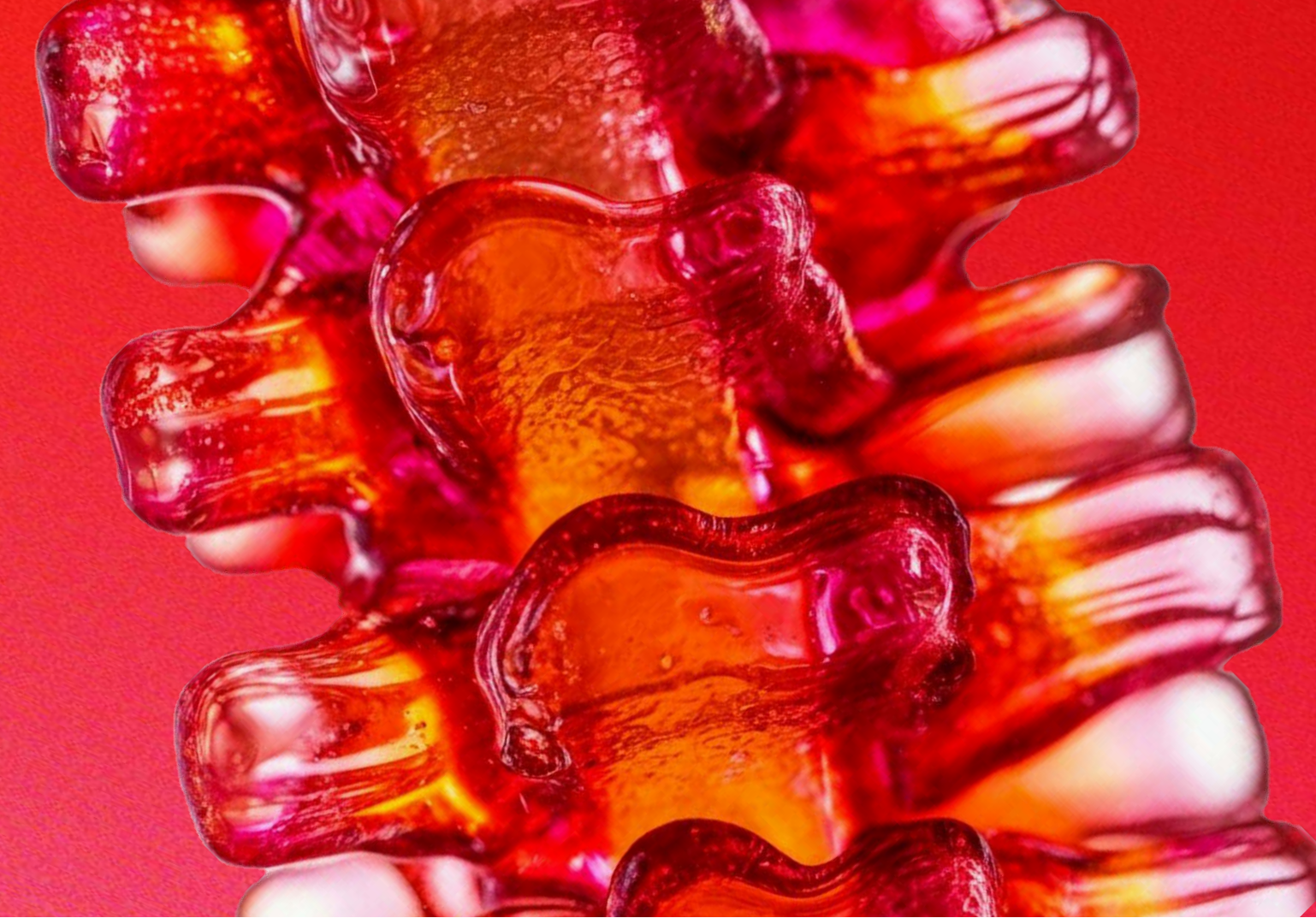
Gen AI can leverage multimodal context, drawing from various sources like medical images, patient history and other clinical data, to create more comprehensive and informative reports. By generating initial drafts of reports and streamlining documentation, AI frees up radiologists to focus on more complex cases and collaborate more effectively with other healthcare providers. This is especially valuable for high-volume imaging procedures like x-rays and MRIs, where efficient reporting and documentation are critical. This can lead to faster turnaround times for patients and more efficient workflow for the entire radiology department.



Radiology plays a vital role in healthcare, and the need to efficiently and accurately uncover insights and deliver solutions at scale that can improve patient outcomes has never been greater. Our goal is to make it easier for organizations to use AI with medical imaging to transform the growing amounts of data into valuable and impactful insights, saving radiologists time and helping them optimize their important work for the benefit of patients.”

– said Nelson Ambrogio, president Radiology at Bayer.

Google Cloud has identified potential use cases for gen AI that align with recognized benefits



Prior authorization

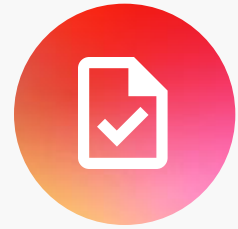
Gen AI can streamline prior authorization by acting as an intelligent assistant for healthcare providers and payors. It can pre-populate forms with patient data, reducing manual entry and minimizing errors. Furthermore, gen AI can analyze the request, flagging potential issues like missing information that could lead to denials, and suggest relevant clinical guidelines and evidence to create a strong, well-supported request. This allows staff to proactively address concerns and submit stronger prior authorization requests, leading to faster approvals and improved patient care.



Imagine: prior authorizations that take seconds instead of days, claims processing streamlined by intelligent automation, and clinicians freed from tedious administrative tasks to focus on what truly matters - patient care. Clinicians are the healthcare experts, and we want to support them with appropriate and actionable insights delivered by best-in-class technology. By harnessing the power of generative AI and collaborating with partners like Google Cloud, we're removing friction from the system for both clinicians and patients. This is the promise of Living Health, where clinical expertise and technology unite to create a simpler, more proactive and personalized healthcare experience for everyone."

– Tony Farah, MD, EVP, chief medical and clinical transformation officer, Highmark Health.

Google Cloud has identified potential use cases for gen AI that align with recognized benefits



Claims processing

Gen AI can assist with the processing of insurance claims, including verifying eligibility, reviewing medical necessity, and calculating payments.



Translation

Gen AI can assist with translation of patient communications into native languages, helping healthcare professionals better connect with underserved populations.



As healthcare providers face increasingly complex challenges, we are more optimistic than ever about technology's power to reduce administrative burdens. We've identified more than a dozen new gen AI capabilities to bring into our healthcare payments software platform to maximize reimbursements, prevent denials, and provide a strong patient financial experience. This will deliver measurable ROI for providers, solve meaningful problems, unlock valuable insights, and ensure faster, more accurate payments."

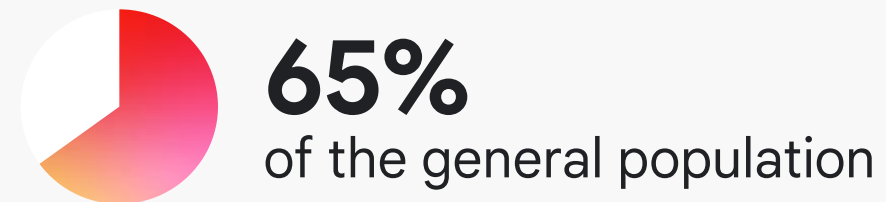
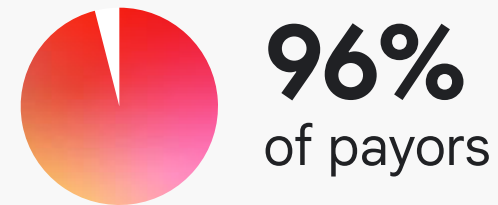
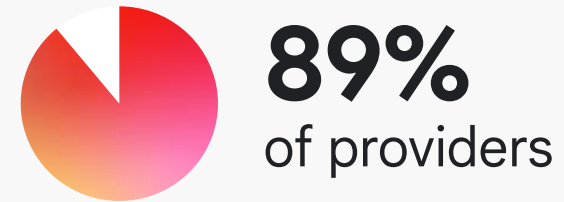
— Matt Hawkins, chief executive officer of Waystar.

5. Gen AI can help reduce the burden

With the right monitoring and safeguards, gen AI tools can be used for administrative tasks in healthcare in a responsible and supportive way.



AI can be a valuable tool to support human decision making, according to:



It's possible to leverage AI tools without compromising the security or privacy of their patient data, according to:

84%
of providers

99%
of payors

Healthcare professionals think the following guardrails are important when using AI tools for administrative tasks at work:

	Providers	Payors
Understanding the limitations of AI tools	66%	44%
Verifying accuracy and reliability of generated content	62%	45%
Being aware of potential biases	54%	47%
Clearly communicating the use of AI to patients	54%	44%
Clearly communicating the use of AI to colleagues	53%	40%
Keeping a human in the loop	54%	33%



Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Google from Aug. 26 – Sept. 9, 2024, among 821 healthcare providers, 209 payors, and 2,079 U.S. adults aged 18 and older (general population). The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the data for the healthcare sample is accurate to within ± 3.4 percentage points, the data for the payor sample is accurate to within ± 6.7 percentage points, and the data for the general population sample is accurate within ± 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. For complete survey methodology, including subgroup sample sizes, please contact allison.ewell@harrispoll.com.

*Note on how the average hours spent on administrative tasks for the healthcare and payor sample was calculated: Respondents were first shown a list of administrative tasks and asked to select the tasks that they perform on a weekly basis (C-Suite and administrators were asked to select the tasks that are performed by clinicians/medical office staff/claims workers at their facility). Next, respondents were asked to enter the number of hours spent on each individual task. Respondents that did not select a task on the initial question (indicating that it is not a weekly task for them) were assigned a value of zero hours for that task. The total number of weekly hours spent on administrative tasks was capped at 60.

Gen AI for admin support



There would be a positive impact on patient care if AI could relieve administrative burden



A top benefit of AI is personalized care



Using AI for administrative tasks would allow me to spend more time with patients/ members improving patient care



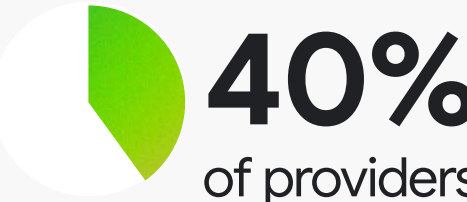
Increased ability to provide information in a native language would improve outcomes in underserved communities



Personalized care plans can improve the effectiveness of patient care



A top benefit of AI is increased patient/ member satisfaction

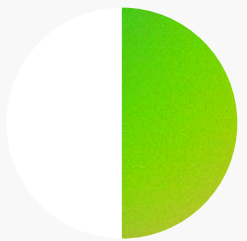


Speed up claims and pre-authorizations

A top benefit of AI is to speed up prior authorizations



36%
of payors

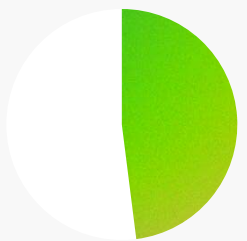


50%
of providers

A top benefit of AI is reduced time required for claims processing



34%
of payors

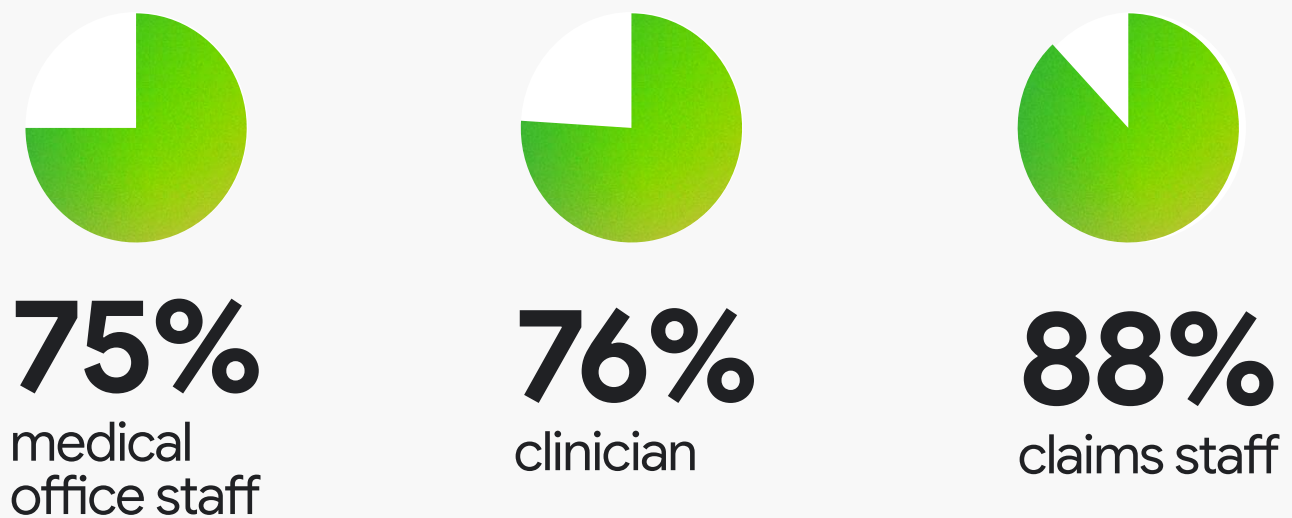


48%
of providers

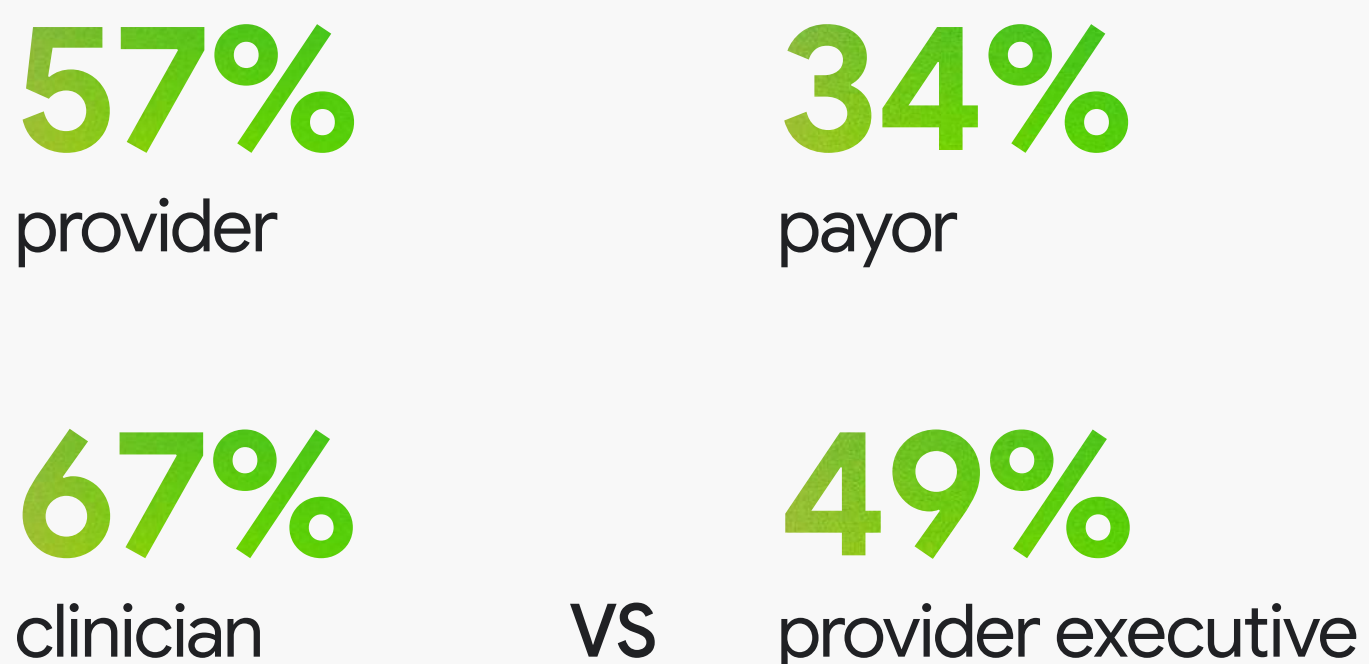
	Claims staff	Medical office staff	Clinicians
Hours spent on Pre-Authorizations per week	10	2.4 <small>(talking to insurance companies re: PA and claims)</small>	N/A
Hours spent on billing and coding per week	9.6	6.9	1.6

Increase job satisfaction and decrease staff burnout

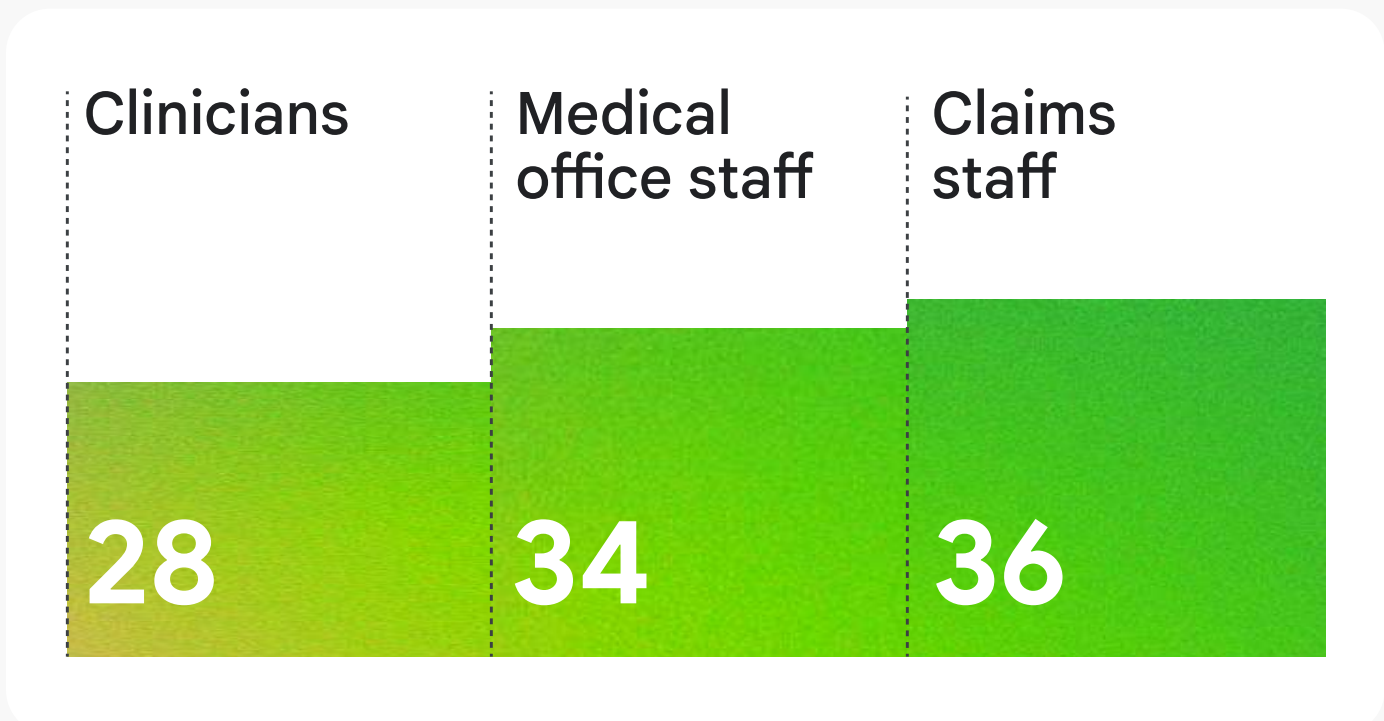
I need additional support to manage administrative tasks at work



A top benefit of AI is reduced administrative burden on staff



Hours spent on administrative tasks per week

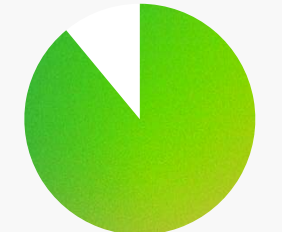


Help with clinical documentation

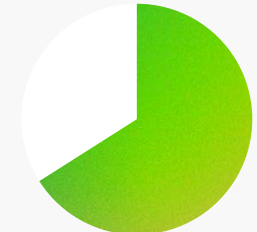
2.3 Hours/week

Time spent by claims staff compiling and organizing supporting documentation

Very or extremely concerned about human error in administrative tasks



89%
of payors



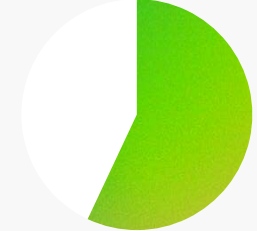
66%
of providers

	Clinicians	Medical office staff	Claims staff
Hours spent documenting procedures and treatments performed per week	2.8	1.8	N/A
Hours spent maintaining detailed and accurate patient records per week	3.8	3.6	2.4

Top benefit of AI is reduced errors in tasks such as data entry, billing, and coding



29%
of payors



57%
of providers

Providers: Usefulness of AI for each of the following administrative tasks

Executives responded from the POV of usefulness for clinicians/medical office staff in their organization.

% Extremely Useful
(Base: Task part of regular responsibilities)

Note: Top items bolded for each audience. Items in blue indicate significantly higher than both other audiences; red item indicates significantly lower than one other audience.

Documentation	Executives	Clinician	Medical Office Staff
Maintaining detailed and accurate patient records <small>(including medical histories, diagnoses, treatment plans, progress notes, and test results)</small>	42%	43%	36%
Completing insurance forms, referrals, and other necessary paperwork	38%	43%	37%
Documenting procedures and treatments performed	39%	38%	26%
Care management plans	33%	29%	20%



Scheduling	Executives	Clinician	Medical Office Staff
Scheduling patient appointments, follow-ups, and consultations	37%	36%	33%
Coordinating with other healthcare providers for referrals and consultations	36%	14%	15%
Managing my schedule for patient care, meetings, and other professional activities	41%	26%	21%

Communication	Executives	Clinician	Medical Office Staff
Working with a translator to communicate with a patient who speaks a different language	47%	50%	42%
Sending requests for patient prescription(s)	38%	32%	29%
Sending requests for patient lab work	38%	27%	20%
Communicating with insurance companies regarding pre-authorizations and claims	33%	31%	25%
Communicating with other healthcare providers, such as specialists and pharmacists, to coordinate care	31%	19%	18%
Communicating with patients - e.g., follow-up calls, drafting follow-up communication, confirming the game plan	30%	20%	25%

Note: Top items bolded for each audience. Items in blue indicate significantly higher than both other audiences; red item indicates significantly lower than one other audience.

Billing and coding	Executives	Clinician	Medical Office Staff
Assigning appropriate medical codes to diagnoses and procedures for billing purposes	41%	35%	37%
Following up on denied or unpaid claims	36%	38%	22%
Reviewing and verifying insurance claims for accuracy	35%	34%	42%

Inventory management	Executives	Clinician	Medical Office Staff
Ensuring proper storage and disposal of medications	36%	22%	31%
Ordering and maintaining supplies and medications	30%	22%	24%

Note: Top items bolded for each audience. Items in blue indicate significantly higher than both other audiences; red item indicates significantly lower than one other audience.



Payors: Usefulness of AI for each of the following administrative tasks

Executives responded from the POV of usefulness for clinicians/medical office staff in their organization.

% Extremely Useful
(Base: Task part of regular responsibilities)

Note: Top items bolded for each audience. Items in blue indicate significantly higher than both other audiences; red item indicates significantly lower than one other audience.

Documentation	Executives	Claims Staff
Maintaining detailed and accurate patient records (relevant information such as diagnoses, procedures, and dates of service)	50%	56%
Compiling and organizing supporting documentation for claims	49%	44%
Reviewing claims for accuracy and completeness	47%	49%
Ensuring compliance with insurance regulations and company policies	36%	48%

Communication	Executives	Claims Staff
Responding to inquiries from members	48%	49%
Communicating with internal departments regarding claim issues or requests	40%	63%

Pre-Authorization

Executives

Claims Staff

Recording pre-authorization information and outcomes in the claims processing system

50%

49%

Determining if the requested services are covered benefits

50%

40%

Requesting additional medical records or information from providers as needed

48%

38%

Handling denied pre-authorization requests, including providing explanation of benefits to providers

44%

55%

Determining if the requested services are medically necessary based on the provided information

37%

42%

Assessing incoming pre-authorization requests for completeness and accuracy

37%

39%

Billing and Coding

Executives

Claims Staff

Inputting member and claim information into the claims processing system

59%

40%

Verifying charges, and match them with patient records

50%

58%

Analyzing payment details, denials, and appeals

41%

51%

Determining coverage, eligibility, and reimbursement rates

38%

38%

Managing resubmissions of denied claims

37%

60%

Note: Top items bolded for each audience. Items in blue indicate significantly higher than both other audiences; red item indicates significantly lower than one other audience.