

Anesthesia Clinician Performance in the Last 5 Years of MIPS, including the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Financial Challenges of Participating

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BACKGROUND

- Congress passed the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) in 2015 to begin shifting from fee-for-service to value-based payments
- MIPS scores are calculated based on four performance categories, and scores affect Medicare Part B physician service payments. All clinicians must participate unless they meet a low-volume threshold (e.g., bill Part B for less than \$90,000 annually)



- MIPS participants earn between 0 and 100 total points based upon their combined scores received in these categories
- Scores above a certain threshold result in positive payment adjustments, while scores below the threshold result in negative adjustments to Part B payments
- This study analyzed anesthesia clinician performance in the MIPS program over the last five years (2018–2022), assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on reporting performance metrics, and identified predictors for receiving bonus payments

METHODS

- A retrospective analysis was conducted using publicly available data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Clinician characteristics, MIPS performance scores, practice size, and patient complexity data were analyzed for 2018-2022
- To predict the odds of receiving bonus payments, a multivariable logistic regression model was developed for each performance year

RESULTS

Characteristics of MIPS program anesthesia clinicians and their patient populations 2018—2022

	2018 (n = 61,928)	2019 (n = 59,374)	2020 (n = 43,188)	2021 (n = 35,205)	2022 (n = 32,907)
Source of Scores					
MIPS APM	13,644 (22.0%)	15,366 (25.9%)	9,493 (22.0%)	5,614 (15.9%)	5,421 (16.5%)
Group	47,507 (76.7%)	43,069 (72.5%)	32,955 (76.3%)	28,663 (81.4%)	26,923 (81.8%)
Individual	777 (1.3%)	939 (1.6%)	740 (1.7%)	928 (2.6%)	563 (1.7%)
Practice Size					
Less than 15	3,286 (5.3%)	2,971 (5.0%)	2,024 (4.7%)	1,515 (4.3%)	1,119 (3.4%)
15–49	11,350 (18.3%)	9,217 (15.5%)	5,375 (12.4%)	3,331 (9.5%)	2,864 (8.7%)
50–99	10,830 (17.5%)	8,794 (14.8%)	5,882 (13.6%)	4,137 (11.8%)	3,349 (10.2%)
100–499	21,037 (34.0%)	21,232 (35.8%)	15,301 (35.4%)	10,953 (31.1%)	12,059 (36.6%)
≥500	15,425 (24.9%)	17,160 (28.9%)	14,606 (33.8%)	15,269 (43.4%)	13,516 (41.1%)

Predictors of Receiving a Bonus Payment from 2018-2022

n = 76,321	Odds Ratio	Lower CI Bound	Upper CI Bound	p-value
Beneficiary Average Age	0.895	0.887	0.902	<0.001
Beneficiary Average HCC Risk Score	1.13	1.09	1.17	<0.001
Clinician Type				
Anesthesiologist	reference			
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist	0.960	0.925	0.997	0.032
Anesthesiologist Assistant	0.941	0.833	1.07	0.339
Source of Scores				
Group	reference			
MIPS APM	30.1	26.3	34.6	<0.001
Individual	0.226	0.201	0.254	<0.001
Practice Size				
Less than 15	reference			
15–49	1.31	1.20	1.43	<0.001
50–99	1.29	1.18	1.41	<0.001
100–499	1.42	1.31	1.54	<0.001
≥500	2.16	1.98	2.36	<0.001

Table 1. Most anesthesiologists participate in MIPS as group practices, and there is a trend toward increasing practice size

Figure 1. Both MIPS scores and the percentage of clinicians receiving a bonus increased from 2018 to 2021, then fell in 2022

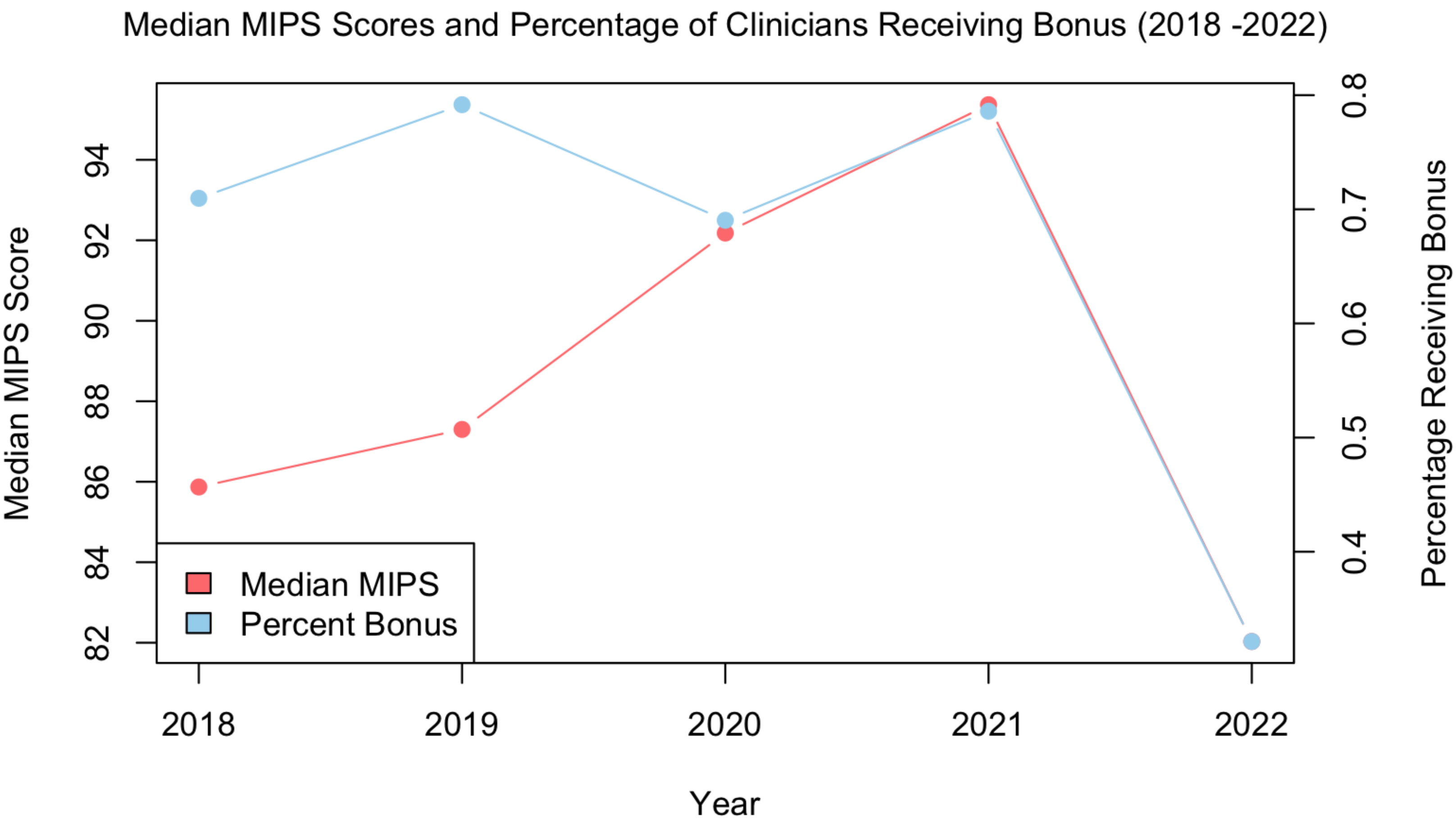


Table 2. The strongest predictors for receiving a bonus payment are participating as an Alternative Payment Model (APM) and larger practice size

DISCUSSION

- Participation in the MIPS program among anesthesia clinicians declined from 61,928 in 2018 to 32,907 in 2022
- The percentage of anesthesia clinicians receiving an exceptional performance bonus payment always exceeded 68% in the years 2018-2021 but decreased to 32.1% in 2022 (p < 0.001) due to changes in scoring thresholds, cost performance category methodology, and the expiration of COVID-19 reporting exemptions
- If the average Medicare beneficiary surgical procedure generates 12 anesthesia base plus time units for the anesthesia services, and the Medicare anesthesia conversion factor is set at \$21/unit, the anesthesiologist would generally expect to receive a Medicare allowed payment of \$252 per case. From 2018 to 2021, bonuses averaged 1.91% for a perfect MIPS score, equating to an additional \$4.81 per case. If an anesthesiologist performs 200 Medicare cases per year, the total bonus would be \$962