

Burnout benchmark: 28% unhappy with current health care job

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With the COVID-19 pandemic came an extraordinary amount of stress for physicians and other health professionals.

The 2022 National Burnout Benchmarking report from the AMA offers data on burnout, stress and job satisfaction from January 2020 to December 2021. The report, updated annually, also looks at other key drivers of burnout that have emerged during the pandemic. Over 100 surveys were completed by doctors and other clinicians—nurses and medical assistants—from nearly 100 institutions.

Of the 11,000 physicians and other health professionals who responded, 72% were satisfied with their current job—a 4% decrease from the previous benchmark (2019–2020) and the first time there was a drop in overall job satisfaction.

“Overall, 52% of respondents were experiencing a great deal of stress. This is also a 4% increase from our previous benchmark,” Kyra Cappelucci Ng, a program manager for AMA Practice Transformation, said during an AMA STEPS Forward[®] webinar on fostering clinician well-being and important insights from the 2022 National Burnout Benchmarking report.

Stress on the job was “almost 11% higher in our female respondents than our male respondents. This was particularly true in females who were six-to-10 years post training,” she said, noting job that stress was also “highest in our oncology respondents, at 64%, and family medicine at 61%.”

Committed to making physician burnout a thing of the past, the AMA has studied, and is currently addressing issues causing and fueling physician burnout—including time constraints, technology and regulations—to better understand and reduce the challenges physicians face. By focusing on factors causing burnout at the system-level, the AMA assesses an organization’s well-being and offers guidance and targeted solutions to support physician well-being and satisfaction.

Burnout is on the rise

Just over half of respondents are experiencing burnout, which is a 4% increase compared with the previous benchmark. The highest rate was seen in respondents six-to-10 years in full-time practice after training, with 58% feeling burned out.

Younger women who were earlier in their careers also experienced high rates of burnout because they have had to shoulder an enormous burden throughout the pandemic, with child care and adjusting to remote school, Cappelucci said.

She added that, from a specialty perspective, “almost 70% of oncology respondents were burnt out. This was followed by family medicine at 59% and critical care medicine at 57%.”

Find out more about how the AMA is fighting the key causes of physician burnout.

A rise in “pajama time”

“Overall, in our benchmark, 46% of respondents note that their time on the EHR outside of normal scheduled work hours is excessive and moderately high,” Cappelucci said. “This is highest in our physician respondents, unsurprisingly, at 51%. Also, in oncology at 64%, and in family medicine at 61%.”

Additionally, “30% of our respondents did note that they spend more than six hours per week—almost a full workday per week—on the EHR outside of normal scheduled work time,” she said. “On average, respondents spend 4.3 hours outside of normal work time, which is 1% greater than the previous benchmark.”

Access key steps, best practices, and resources to save time and reduce the burden of EHR work with the AMA taming the EHR playbook.

Results spark drop-the-mic moments

Previous research shows “individuals who feel valued by their organization have almost 60% lower odds of experiencing burnout, self-reported anxiety or depression, and likelihood to leave,” Cappelucci said, noting that “just under 50% of individuals feel valued by their organization.”

“A lot of times this can serve as a kind of drop-the-mic moment for organizations doing survey work to see that so many people may not feel valued by the organization,” she said. This is “a really good opportunity for organizations to find some low-hanging-fruit strategies to help people feel valued.”

Unless such action is taken, some physicians will move on, with 37% of respondents saying they intended to leave their organization within the next two years—up 3% from the previous benchmark.

Learn more about research on medicine’s great resignation.

The AMA offers no-cost assessment services to health systems from around the country interested in assessing organizational well-being. Learn more about the practice transformation journey (PDF) or email Practice.Transformation@ama-assn.org.