

# Drop seen in physician work hours during COVID-19 pandemic

June 30 2021

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Physicians' working hours and full-time status declined significantly

during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published online June 23 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Xiaochu Hu, Ph.D., and Michael J. Dill, both from the Association of American Medical Colleges in Washington, D.C., analyzed the Current Population Survey basic monthly data from January 2019 to December 2020 to examine changes in U.S. [physician](#) work hours and activities before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis included 8,853 observations of 2,563 unique physicians.

The researchers found that in March 2020, mean weekly work hours began to decrease (49.2 hours per week) and reached the lowest point in May 2020 (47.5 hours per week), stabilizing in the summer and reaching another low in November. In December 2020, mean weekly work hours were 47.8, a 6 percent decrease from January 2019. Full-time work status among physicians declined from 84.17 percent before COVID-19 to 80.65 percent during the pandemic. The percentage of physicians reporting being laid off, while rare, increased from 0.05 to 0.45 percent during COVID-19. Among female physicians, the percentage of parents of preschool-aged children working [full-time](#) decreased from 17.98 to 14.10 percent, but this change was not seen among male physicians.

"This study found that physicians' work hours have significantly decreased since the start of the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) in the United States, accelerating an existing, gradual decline," the authors write.

"These observed changes may reflect the decrease in health care utilization and the increased flexibilities instigated by COVID-19-driven regulations."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

Citation: Drop seen in physician work hours during COVID-19 pandemic (2021, June 30)  
retrieved 2 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-physician-hours-covid-pandemic.html>

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