

Female doctors experience frustration, sexual harassment, at work

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A new paper in *Family Practice*, published by Oxford University Press, finds that women working as doctors in 49 countries reported high overall career satisfaction but lower satisfaction with some aspects of

their career, such as pay, administrative tasks, and personal time. They also reported extensive sexual harassment in their jobs.

As the proportion of [women](#) in family medicine increases, their well-being and job satisfaction is important, particularly given the scarcity of doctors practicing family medicine. This study aimed to uncover the [working conditions](#) and career satisfaction of women family physicians across multiple countries.

The share of women in family medicine continues to rise (some 54% of US residents in family medicine in 2019 were women). Women physicians in primary care earn 18% less than their men counterparts, however. Women also report higher rates of burnout and face more obstacles to promotion, leadership opportunities, sponsorships, and mentorships.

In this study researchers, working through the WONCA Working Party on Women and Family Medicine listserv, surveyed 315 women working in [family practice](#) across 49 countries. Most women (75%) said they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their current work conditions and their career. However, more than half of the respondents (56%) reported that it was difficult or very difficult to advance in their careers.

When women physicians were asked to compare their work conditions and career satisfaction to their men colleagues, only 39% reported a sense of similar satisfaction. When asked about [career advancement](#), only 30% of female physicians reported that male colleagues would have similar possibilities to advance their careers. Some 151 participants (74%) reported experiencing general sexist remarks and behaviors in their training or work, 45% of respondents reported inappropriate sexual advances, and 22% reported coercive advances.

Researchers involved in the study found no variation in the overall

satisfaction of women family physicians at the country or [income level](#).

"Despite all obstacles in the work environment, especially regarding the pay and administrative burden and lack of personal time, women family physicians are satisfied with their careers," said the paper's lead author, Jumana Antoun. "It is possible that they pursued this specialty for intrinsic qualities of the [family medicine](#) specialty and connection with patients rather than reasons of money and status. Nevertheless, this does not mean that employers should not work on improving their [work environment](#) and make it safer and equitable with men doctors."

More information: "Women family physicians' working conditions and career satisfaction: a multi-national study," *Family Practice* (2021). DOI: [10.1093/fampra/cmab119](https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmab119)

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