

Michigan Department of Community Health

Survey of Dentists 2006

January 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) asked Public Sector Consultants Inc. (PSC) to conduct a survey of licensed dentists in 2006 to gather information about their employment characteristics, education, and work environment. A total of 2,777 dentists received the survey. Responses were received online or by return mail from 697 dentists, for a response rate of 25 percent and a margin of error of ± 3.2 percent with 95 percent confidence. Key survey findings are presented below.

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- About 82 percent of respondents are active dentists in Michigan—that is, they are working as a dentist in Michigan (see Exhibit 1). *Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report are for active dentists in Michigan.*
- Of respondents who are active Michigan dentists, 96 percent are providing patient care services and 4 percent spend no time in patient care.
- About 14 percent of dentists licensed in Michigan are working as a dentist, but not in Michigan.
- Only 4 percent of licensed dentists are not working as a dentist.

Exhibit 1
Employment Characteristics of Dentists, 2006

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only
Providing patient care services in Michigan	79%	96%
Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	3	4
Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	14	--
Not working as a dentist	4	--

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

PRACTICE CHARACTERISTICS

On average, active dentists in Michigan who provide patient care spend 31 hours per week practicing dentistry. A large majority of active Michigan dentists (78 percent) spend most of their professional time practicing general dentistry. Small minorities spend most of their professional time in other dental specialties, most (6 percent) in orthodontics and the fewest (1 percent) in dental public health (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2
Primary Dental Specialties, 2006

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
General dentistry	78%
Orthodontics	6
Oral & maxillofacial surgery	4
Endodontics	3
Prosthodontics	3
Pediatric dentistry	2
Periodontics	2
Dental public health	1

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

The setting of the primary practice of most dentists (55 percent) is a private solo practice, while a little more than a third (35 percent) practice primarily in a private *group* setting. Two percent have a primary practice site in a local health department or other government agency and 1 percent practice primarily in a community-based nonprofit. About 7 percent have a primary practice site in another setting.

About 12 percent of dentists have a secondary practice site in a private group practice and 5 percent have a secondary practice site in a private solo practice. Two percent practice secondarily in a local health department or other government agency and another 2 percent have a secondary practice site in another setting (see Exhibit 3).

PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS

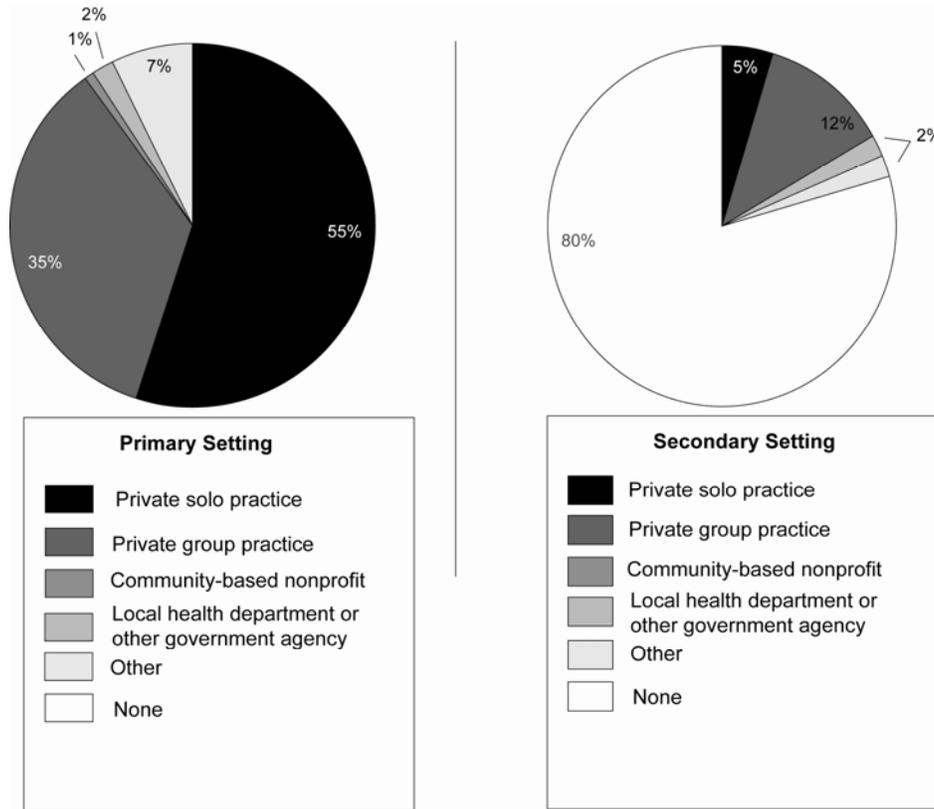
Young Children

About 73 percent of dentists who provide patient care accept children aged three or younger for routine dental care. Fifteen percent accept children as young as age one, 17 percent accept children beginning at age two, and 41 percent accept children starting at age three.

Patients with Special Needs

- About 69 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for children with special health care needs.
- About 71 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for adults with special needs.
- Approximately 63 percent of dentists who provide patient care provide care for nursing home residents in their dental practice and 16 percent provide care for nursing home residents at the nursing home.

Exhibit 3
Practice Settings of Active Dentists in Michigan, 2006



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.
NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Medicaid, Publicly Funded, and Uninsured Patients

Less than 20 percent of dentists who provide patient care services are currently providing care to Medicaid patients (18 percent) and about a quarter (26 percent) provide care to patients from other publicly funded programs. Ten percent are accepting new Medicaid patients and less than a fifth (18 percent) are accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs.

Children

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 13 of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild.
- The majority of respondents (64 percent) report that none of their patients in a typical month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild; 75 percent of respondents report seeing three or fewer of these patients each month.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 250 or more of their patients each month are children covered by Medicaid or MICHild.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, one patient in a typical month is a child paying on a sliding fee scale.

- The vast majority of respondents (89 percent) report they have no patients in a typical month who are children paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 20 or more of their patients each month are children paying on a sliding fee scale.
- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, 19 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured children.
- Twenty-five percent of respondents report that two or fewer of their patients each month are uninsured children; 50 percent report seeing seven or fewer; and 75 percent report seeing 20 or fewer of these patients each month.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 300 or more of their patients each month are uninsured children.

Adults

- Dentists who provide patient care report that, on average, four of their patients in a typical month are adults covered by Medicaid.
- The vast majority of respondents (86 percent) report that they have no adult patients in a typical month who are covered by Medicaid.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 60 or more of their patients each month are adults covered by Medicaid.
- Dentists providing patient care report that, on average, two of their patients in a typical month are adults paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The vast majority of respondents (89 percent) report that they have no adult patients each month who are paying on a sliding fee scale.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 35 or more of their patients each month are adults paying on a sliding fee scale.
- On average, dentists who provide patient care report that 38 of their patients in a typical month are uninsured adults.
- Twenty-five percent of respondents report that five or fewer of their patients each month are uninsured adults; 50 percent report seeing 16 or fewer; and 75 percent report seeing 30 or fewer of these patients each month.
- The top 1 percent of respondents report that, on average, 500 or more of their patients each month are uninsured adults.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

About 29 percent of active dentists report being involved in private practice administration. Another 19 percent are involved in teaching; 9 percent in research; 5 percent in administration in a dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home; and 3 percent in emergency room care (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4
Professional Activities of Active Dentists, 2006

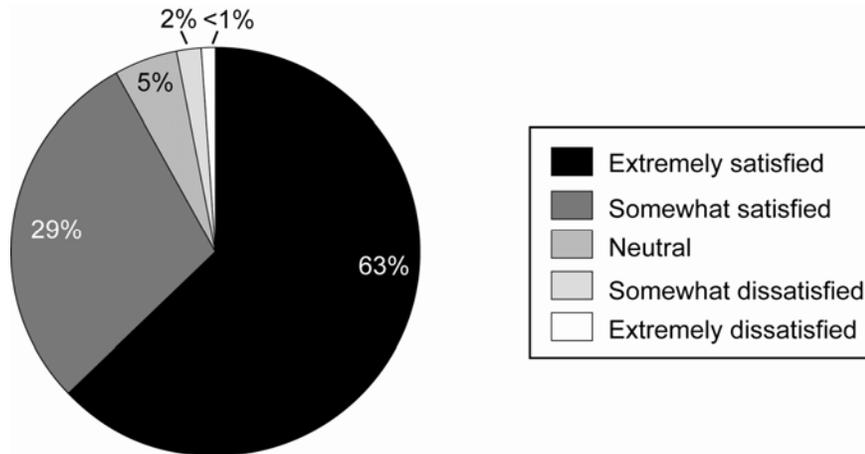
	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Research	9%
Teaching	19
Administration in private practice	29
Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	5
Emergency room care	3

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION

When asked to rate their overall professional satisfaction as a dentist, 63 percent of active dentists in Michigan report that they are extremely satisfied; another 29 percent are somewhat satisfied (see Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5
Active Dentists' Professional Satisfaction, 2006

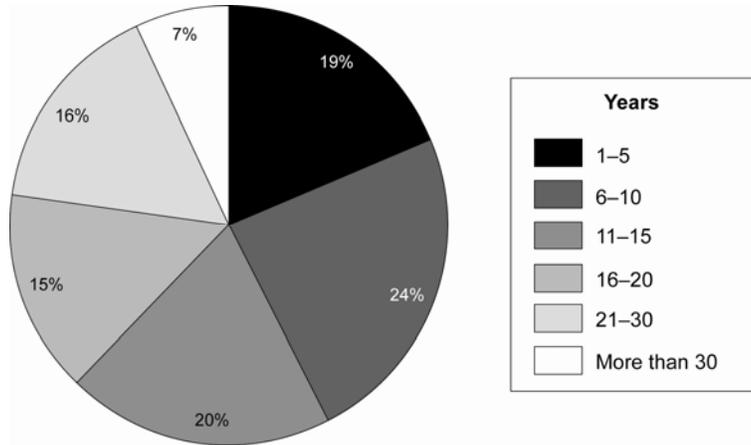


SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.
NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan. Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

PLANS TO CONTINUE PRACTICE

Forty-three percent of active dentists indicate that they plan to practice dentistry for one to ten more years (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6
Active Dentists' Plans to Continue Practicing, 2006



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan. Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

- Approximately 14 percent of active dentists plan to either retire (7 percent) or reduce patient care hours (7 percent) in the next three years (see Exhibit 7).
- About 83 percent of active dentists plan to either maintain their practice as is (67 percent) or increase patient care hours (16 percent) in the next three years.
- Nine percent of active dentists plan to move their practice in the next three years to another Michigan location (7 percent) or out of state (2 percent).

Exhibit 7
Active Dentists' Practice Plans for the Next Three Years, 2006

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan
Maintain practice as is	67%
Increase patient care hours	16
Reduce patient care hours	7
Move practice to another Michigan location	7
Move practice out of state	2
Retire	7

SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

Of dentists who plan to either retire or reduce patient care hours, 80 percent cite their age as a factor that led to the decision. About a third (32 percent) say that lifestyle changes affected their decision. Nearly one-fourth (23 percent) cite increasing administrative/regulatory burdens as factors in their decision. Only 7 percent indicate that the cost of malpractice insurance was a factor in their decision and about 4 percent attributed their decision to an employer/employee conflict (see Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8
Factors in Active Dentists' Decisions to Retire or
Reduce Patient Care Hours, 2006

Percentage of active dentists in Michigan planning to retire or reduce patient care hours	
Age	80%
General lack of job satisfaction	9
Childbearing/childrearing	10
Lifestyle changes	32
Malpractice insurance cost	7
Personal or family health concerns	16
Increasing administrative/regulatory burden	23
Employer/employee conflict	4
Inadequate reimbursement for services	16
Moved to management/consulting/teaching/research	7

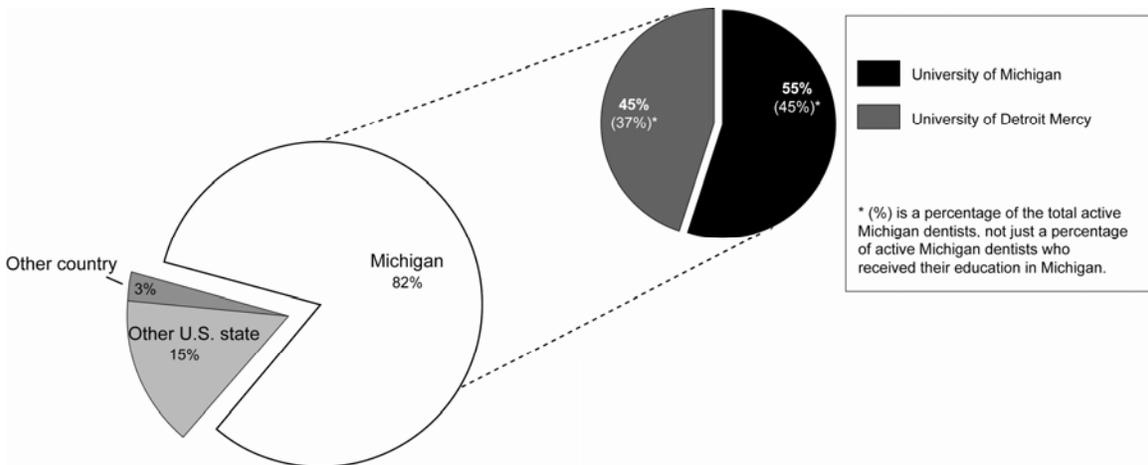
SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan planning to either retire or reduce patient care hours in the next three years.

EDUCATION

The vast majority of active dentists (82 percent) attended dental school in Michigan; 15 percent attended dental school in another state; and 3 percent in another country. Of those who received their dental degree in Michigan, 55 percent attended the University of Michigan and 45 percent attended University of Detroit Mercy (see Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9
Education Background of Dentists, 2006



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan.

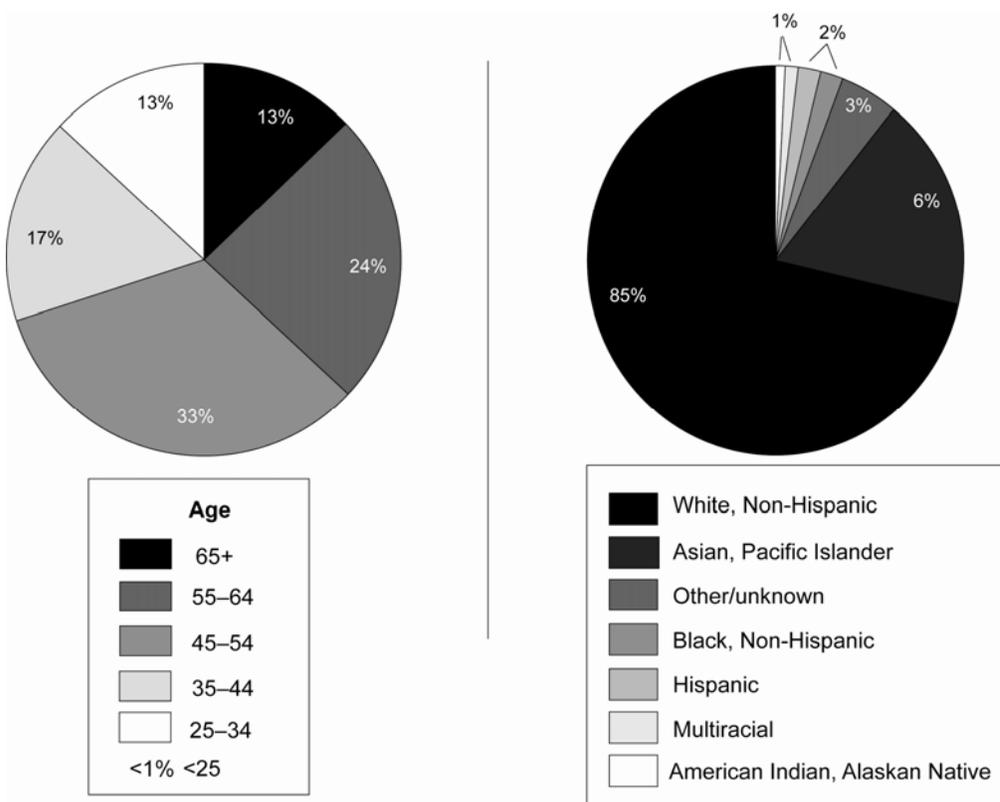
GENDER, AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Eighty-one percent of active dentists are male; 19 percent are female. This appears to bear out the prediction in a report from the American Dental Association (ADA) that the percentage of female dentists in Michigan would increase from the 14 percent it found in 2000.

The 2000 ADA report also predicted that the average age of Michigan dentists would increase and this appears to be true based on the findings in the ADA report compared with the findings of this survey. The MDCH survey found that 37 percent of active dentists are aged 55 or older, while only 26 percent of dentists in the 2000 ADA report were aged 55 or older.

According to the MDCH survey, 85 percent of active dentists are white, 6 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 2 percent are African American, 2 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1 percent are multiracial.

Exhibit 9
Age, Race, and Ethnicity of Active Dentists, 2006



SOURCE: Michigan Department of Community Health Survey of Dentists 2006.

NOTE: Data presented are for *active* licensed dentists in Michigan. Percentages do not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

METHODOLOGY

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) contracted with Public Sector Consultants Inc. (PSC) for development, implementation, and analysis of the survey of dentists. The survey was designed in collaboration with MDCH and the Michigan Dental Association. The instrument (attached in the Appendix) contained questions about employment status, education, location and setting of primary practice sites, extent to which disadvantaged patients are seen by active dentists, professional satisfaction, the length of time that the respondent intended to continue practicing, as well as a number of demographic questions (age, gender, race/ethnicity).

The sample for this survey was drawn from the Michigan licensure files maintained by MDCH. All dentists are required to renew their license every two years from the first year of licensure. Therefore, the universe of dentists is divided into two cohorts of roughly equal size. As of January 2006, a total of 7,620 dentists are licensed in Michigan. For 2006, 2,777 dentists were eligible for license renewal. The surveys were mailed to all dentists renewing their license in 2006. Dentists could either return the two-page paper version of the survey with their renewal or complete the survey online. Combining the responses from the paper version with the results from the Web survey resulted in a total of 697 returned surveys, yielding a margin of error of ± 3.2 percent with 95 percent confidence. This total includes fully and partially completed surveys (i.e., those with information missing for one or more variables); for this reason sample size for individual variables will differ and the margin of error may change slightly depending upon the amount of missing data for that particular variable.

Appendix

Survey Instrument and Response Frequencies (N=697)*

1. In what year were you born?

Age	Percentage of Active dentists in Michigan
<25	<1%
25-34	13
35-44	17
45-54	33
55-64	24
65 and older	13

2. What is your current employment status? (Mark **one**)

	Percentage of all dentists	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan only
Providing patient care services in Michigan	79%	96%
Working as a dentist in Michigan, but no time in patient care	3	4
Working as a dentist but not in Michigan	14	--
Not working as a dentist	4	--

3. In which practice specialty do you spend most of your professional time? (Mark **one**)

General dentistry	78%
Orthodontics	6
Oral & maxillofacial surgery	4
Endodontics	3
Prosthodontics	3
Pediatric dentistry	2
Periodontics	2
Dental public health	1

4. Are you involved in any of the following professional activities? (Mark **all** that apply)

Research	9%
Teaching	19
Administration in private practice	29
Administration in dental school, hospital, health plan, or nursing home	5
Emergency room care	3

*Unless otherwise noted, all frequencies are for the dentists who indicated they are "active," working as a dentist in Michigan.

5. Are you currently... (Mark **all** that apply)

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
Providing care to Medicaid patients?	18%
Accepting new Medicaid patients?	10
Providing care for patients from other publicly funded programs?	26
Accepting new patients from other publicly funded programs?	18

6. Do you provide care for...

	Percentage of dentists who provide patient care
Nursing home residents in your dental practice?	63%
Nursing home residents at the nursing home?	16
Children with special needs?	69
Adults with special needs?	71

7. What is the youngest age at which you will accept a patient for routine dental care?

1	15%
2	17
3	41
4	8
5	4
6	4
7	3
8	1
9	<1
10	2
11	<1
12	1
13	<1
14	1
15	0
16	1
17	0
18	2

8. Where is your primary practice located?

	Percentage of all licensed dentists
Michigan	84%
Other state	14
Canada	2
Other country	<1

9. What is the setting of your primary practice?

Private solo practice	55%
Private group practice	35
Community-based nonprofit	1
Local health department or other government agency	2
Other	7

10. What is the setting of your secondary practice?

Private solo practice	5%
Private group practice	12
Community-based nonprofit	0
Local health department or other government agency	2
Other	2
None	80

11. What is the zip code of your primary practice? _____

12. What is the zip code of your secondary practice? _____

13. In a typical month, how many of your patients are...

- Children insured by Medicaid or MICHild? _____
- Adults insured by Medicaid? _____
- Adults paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with patient income? _____
- Children paying on a sliding fee scale, in which the fee varies with family income? _____
- Uninsured children (no public or private insurance)? _____
- Uninsured adults (no public or private insurance)? _____

14. On average, how many hours per week do you practice dentistry? _____

15. A. Where did you attend dental school?

Michigan	82%
Another state	15
Another country	3

B. If Michigan, please specify the school

University of Michigan	45%
University of Detroit Mercy	37

16. To assist us in projecting the future supply of dentists, please tell us how much longer you plan to practice dentistry.

1-5 years	19%
6-10 years	24
11-15 years	20
16-20 years	15
21-30 years	16
More than 30 years	7

17. Overall, how would you rate your professional satisfaction as a dentist?

Extremely satisfied	63%
Somewhat satisfied	29
Neutral	5
Somewhat dissatisfied	2
Extremely dissatisfied	<1

18. In the next 3 years, I plan to... (Mark **all** that apply)

Maintain practice as is	67%
Increase patient care hours	16
Reduce patient care hours	7
Move practice to another Michigan location	7
Move practice out of state	2
Retire	7

19. If you plan to retire or reduce your patient care hours, what are the factors that led to this decision? (Mark **all** that apply)

	Percentage of active dentists in Michigan planning to retire or reduce patient care hours
Age	80%
General lack of job satisfaction	9
Childbearing/childrearing	10
Lifestyle changes	32
Malpractice insurance cost	7
Personal or family health concerns	16
Increasing administrative/regulatory burden	23
Employer/employee conflict	4
Inadequate reimbursement for services	16
Moved to management/consulting/teaching/research	7

20. What is your race/ethnicity? (Mark **one**)

American Indian, Alaskan Native	1
Asian, Pacific Islander	6
Black, Non-Hispanic	2
Hispanic	2
Multi-racial	1
White, Non-Hispanic	85%
Other/unknown	3

21. What is your gender?

Male	81%
Female	19