

## ***Medscape's 2020 Physician Burnout Report Finds Main Causes and Coping Mechanisms Differ by Generation***

***Gen X physicians more likely to suffer from burnout and depression, particularly women***

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: JANUARY 15, 2020 – The issue of burnout and depression continues to have a significant impact on physicians' personal and professional lives, and Generation X physicians are more likely to experience it than their older and younger colleagues, according to the results of the ***Medscape National Physician Burnout, Depression & Suicide Report 2020: The Generational Divide***.

Although this year's report finds that overall burnout rates have dipped slightly, from 46% in 2015 to 42% this year, the issue continues to have an impact on physicians' happiness, personal relationships, and career satisfaction. When viewed by generation, 48% of all Gen X physicians report burnout, as compared with 38% of millennials and 39% of baby boomer physicians. Female physicians overall are 25% more likely to report burnout (48%, vs. 37% of men), and one in five Gen X women report depression.

**Click here to view full report:** <https://www.medscape.com/2020-lifestyle-burnout>

Burnout is described as long-term, unresolved, job-related stress leading to exhaustion, cynicism, detachment from job responsibilities, and lacking a sense of personal accomplishment.

More than 15,000 physicians across 29 specialties responded to the survey. Millennials were defined as physicians ages 25-39; Gen Xers, ages 40-54; and boomers, ages 55-73.

Burnout was highest among urologists (54%), neurologists (50%), and nephrologists (49%). Lowest levels of burnout were reported by orthopedists (34%), ophthalmologists (30%), and public health and preventive medicine specialists (29%).

### **Generations Differ on Reasons for Burnout, and How Best to Cope**

While the bureaucratic demands of medical practice, such as charting and paperwork, topped the list of reasons for burnout for all generations, followed by long hours, the electronic health record (EHR), often cited as a primary culprit for professional dissatisfaction and burnout, was a factor only for boomers. More than 40% of boomers said the EHR was a primary reason for burnout, but millennial physicians ranked it close to the bottom of their concerns.

Physicians' coping mechanisms differ by generation as well, with millennials far more likely to sleep (56%) and talk to close friends or family (53%). Conversely, Gen X physicians and boomers reported isolating themselves from others (45% and 44%, respectively) and exercising (46% and 45%).

## **Impact on Relationships Pervasive; Depression and Suicidal Thoughts Persist**

More than two-thirds of all physicians said their personal relationships have been negatively affected by burnout, and nearly one in five say they are depressed, with the highest rate (18%) reported by Gen X physicians.

Nearly 40% of all physicians who report depression say it leads them to be easily exasperated with patients, and 16% in all age groups said depression results in them making errors they would otherwise not make.

The report found that one in five Gen X physicians who said they were depressed have had thoughts of suicide, with rates slightly lower for millennials and boomers who reported feeling depressed, although very few said they had attempted. Around 40% sought help from a therapist, but about the same percentages reported their suicidal thoughts to no one.

Half of all physicians said they would take a salary reduction of up to \$20,000 per year for reduced hours and more work-life balance, including millennials who are among the lowest earners.

“Our 2020 report shows that while dropping slightly over time, the levels of burnout, and related depression and suicidal thoughts among all physicians remains a concern,” said Leslie Kane, MA, senior director, Medscape Business of Medicine. “However, this year’s report finds that there are generational differences in the rates, severity, and factors contributing to the problem. Perhaps these findings can help inform the development of programs that speak to generational and gender differences with respect to burnout, so that we can help drive meaningful change.”

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### **Medscape Survey Methods**

The 2020 Medscape National Physician Burnout, Depression & Suicide Report was completed by 15,181 physicians representing more than 29 specialty areas, including Medscape members and nonmembers. Respondents were invited to respond to the online survey. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 0.80% at a 95% confidence level.

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