

## **MEDIA BACKGROUND**



# **Employment Patterns of Canada's Newly Certified Medical Specialists:** Findings from the Royal College Employment Study

On May 1, 2019, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada released findings from their annual Royal College Employment Study based on a survey of medical specialists newly certified in 2017 about their job prospects. The Royal College has been administering surveys since 2011.

### **Highlights**

**Almost one in five newly certified specialists reported that they could not find work after certification in 2017**

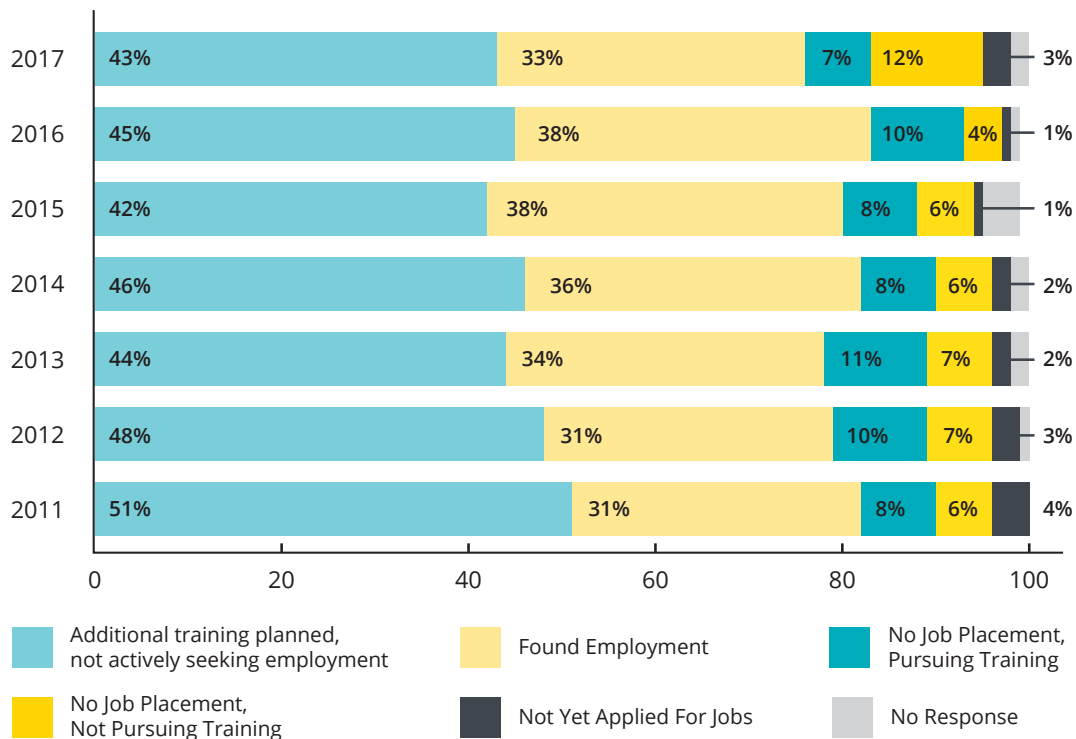
- In 2017, 19% of new specialists who responded to the Employment Survey reported that they did not have work as a specialist at the time of their certification. This is the highest percentage of reported employment challenges since the inception of the Royal College Employment Study in 2011.
- Since the Royal College began gathering this data in 2011, between 14% and 19% of new specialists have reported problems finding employment right after they have been certified.



## FIGURE 1

Overall employment status (percentage) 2011-2017, specialists and subspecialists combined, Canada.

Source: Royal College Employment Survey

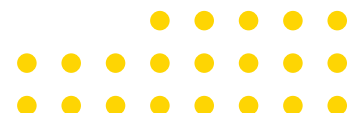


### Many newly certified specialists pursue additional training to make themselves more employable

Findings from the 2011 to 2017 surveys revealed that between 42% and 51% (see blue tile in Figure 1) of all survey respondents were not actively seeking work and planned to continue training post certification (e.g., fellowships or sub-specialization). Although these physicians were not actively planning to enter the medical workforce at the time of the survey, a high proportion of these respondents noted that their decision was strongly influenced by their perception of job market — they believe they will be more employable with additional training.

### Specialists in surgery and other resource-intensive disciplines have the greatest employment challenges

- Survey data continues to show that employment challenges are most pronounced in surgical and more resource-intensive specialties.
- Neurosurgeons and radiation oncologists reported difficulty finding employment in all seven years of data collection.
- Orthopedic surgeons and nuclear medicine specialists reported difficulty finding employment in six of the seven years of data collection.

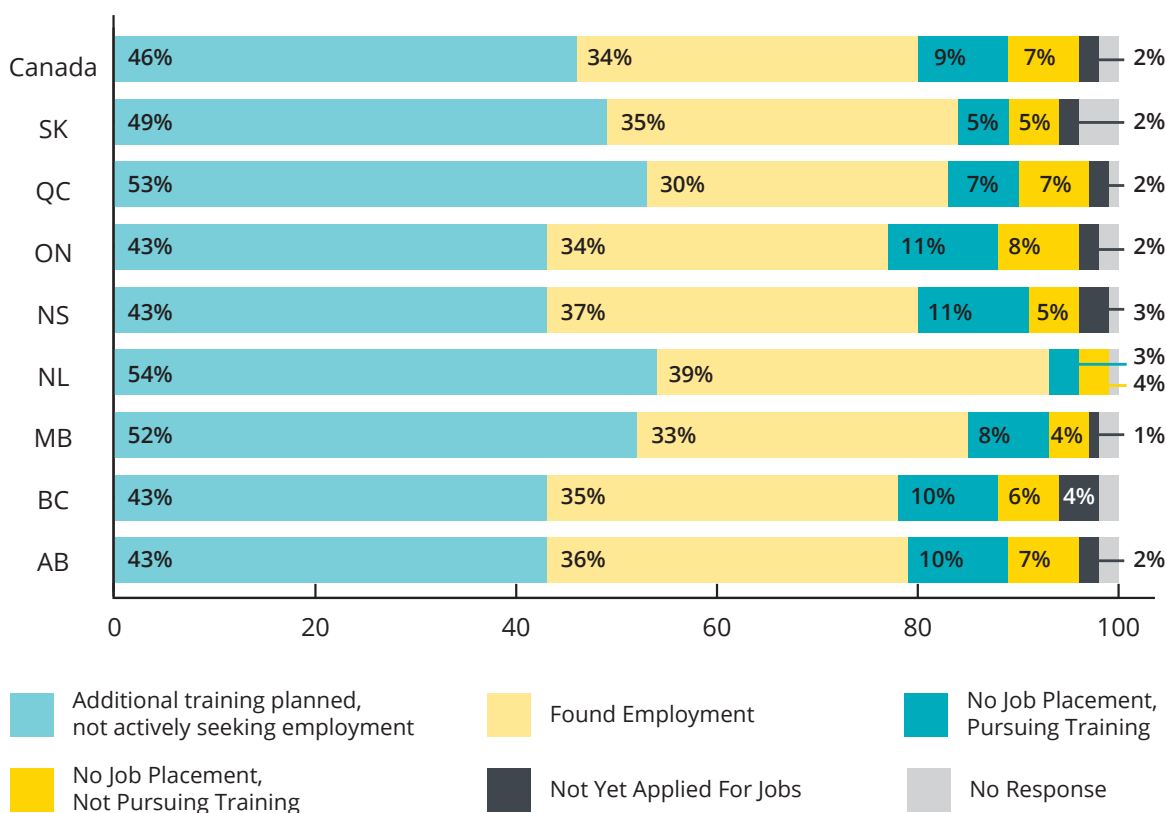


## Physician employment patterns vary province to province

- Looking at the seven-year average of data collected between 2011 and 2017, only 7% of surveyed specialists who completed their residency training in Newfoundland and Labrador reported that they had not yet secured a clinical post at the time of certification.
- In comparison to Newfoundland and Labrador, percentages more than doubled among survey respondents who completed their training in other provinces, notably Ontario (19%), Alberta (17%), Nova Scotia (16%) and British Columbia (16%). Employment challenges were also reported, albeit to a lesser degree, by new specialists who completed their training in Manitoba (12%), Saskatchewan (10%) and Quebec (14%).

**FIGURE 2**

Overall employment status of newly certified specialists and subspecialists, by province of residency training (percentage) 2011-2017, specialists and subspecialists combined. *Source: Royal College Employment Survey*



*Note: The data collected on employment status by province is based on the location of postgraduate (residency) training. It should not be assumed that newly certified specialists are seeking employment in the same province.*

## Factors affecting employability post certification

- The majority of respondents in the Royal College Employment Survey (82%) and Royal College Follow-Up Survey (93%) felt that there was a shortage of full-time job opportunities for newly certified specialists.
- The second most reported barrier to employment was poor access to job listings (Employment Survey: 37%; Follow-Up Survey: 40%). Similarly, the Resident Doctors of Canada found in their 2018 National Resident Survey that less than one in five residents “definitely knew where to locate job opportunities in their medical specialty.”

1 Too few available positions in their specialty in Canada

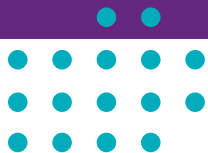
2 Poor access to job listings

3 Desire or need to stay near family

4 The need for spousal employment

5 Lack of available health care resources (e.g. funding, operating room time)

6 The delayed retirement of established physicians and surgeons (and their general reluctance to share resources)



## Majority eventually find jobs

- The Royal College Employment Study was expanded in 2014 to include a Follow-Up Survey for those who reported that they did not have a clinical post upon certification.
- Four years of Follow-Up Survey data shows that, overall, 61% of new specialists and subspecialists who reported employment challenges at the time of certification had secured a clinical position by the time they received the Follow-Up Survey (12-17 months post-certification).

## Better workforce and health-care planning needed

Physician employment challenges do not simply mean there’s an oversupply of specialists. The Royal College Employment Study shows that physician employment challenges are complex, multifactorial and ultimately a byproduct of shortcomings in workforce and health-care planning.

- Workforce planning is currently focused on aligning physician supply with the health care needs of society; it is missing a number of important elements, especially the link between practice resources, including personnel and infrastructure, and employability. Other factors also come into play when looking at employment patterns, like family obligations and access to/ transparency of job postings.

## Future reports will look deeper into the data

- Additional reports, to be released in 2019 by the Royal College, will explore persistent medical workforce questions such as whether working as a locum (i.e., temporary replacement) is a deliberate career choice or a stopgap until a permanent post is secured, and if employment patterns are the same for men and women.

*The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is the national professional association that oversees the medical education of specialists in Canada. We accredit the university programs that train resident physicians for their specialty practices, and we write and administer the examinations that residents must pass to become certified as specialists. In collaboration with health organizations and government agencies, the Royal College also plays a role in developing sound health policy in Canada.*