



saskdocs
and
Saskatchewan
Medical Association

Physician
Survey Results

June 2014

Background Summary

In April 2012 saskdocs (Physician Recruitment Agency of Saskatchewan) and the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) retained the services of Inshtrix Research to conduct a series of physician surveys.

Three surveys were established:

1. Exit Survey
2. Settlement Surveys
3. Medical Learner Survey University of Saskatchewan (U of S)

The following pages provide an overview of the surveys and their results.

Exit Survey

The exit survey was a one-time survey sent to 159 doctors who left the province between 2007 and 2011. In total, 52 physicians (34 per cent) responded to questions designed to measure their satisfaction while practicing in Saskatchewan and explore their reasons for leaving.

The survey results show (Figure 1) that the majority of the respondents practiced three to 10 years in Saskatchewan; 18 per cent left in less than three years. The majority relocated to larger, urban settings in British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta.

Thirty-five per cent of the physicians reported being very satisfied with their Saskatchewan experience. Respondents were asked to report on two key areas of satisfaction: working environment and location while they practiced in the province.

Figures 2 and 3 provide a detailed breakdown of the physicians' satisfaction with both their workplace and community.

Figure 1

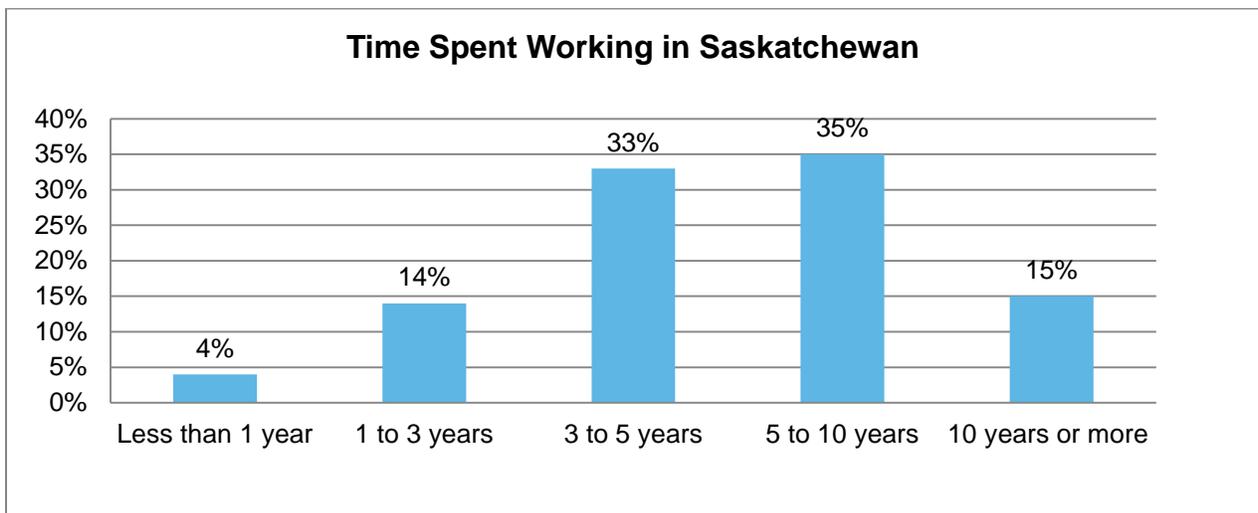


Figure 2

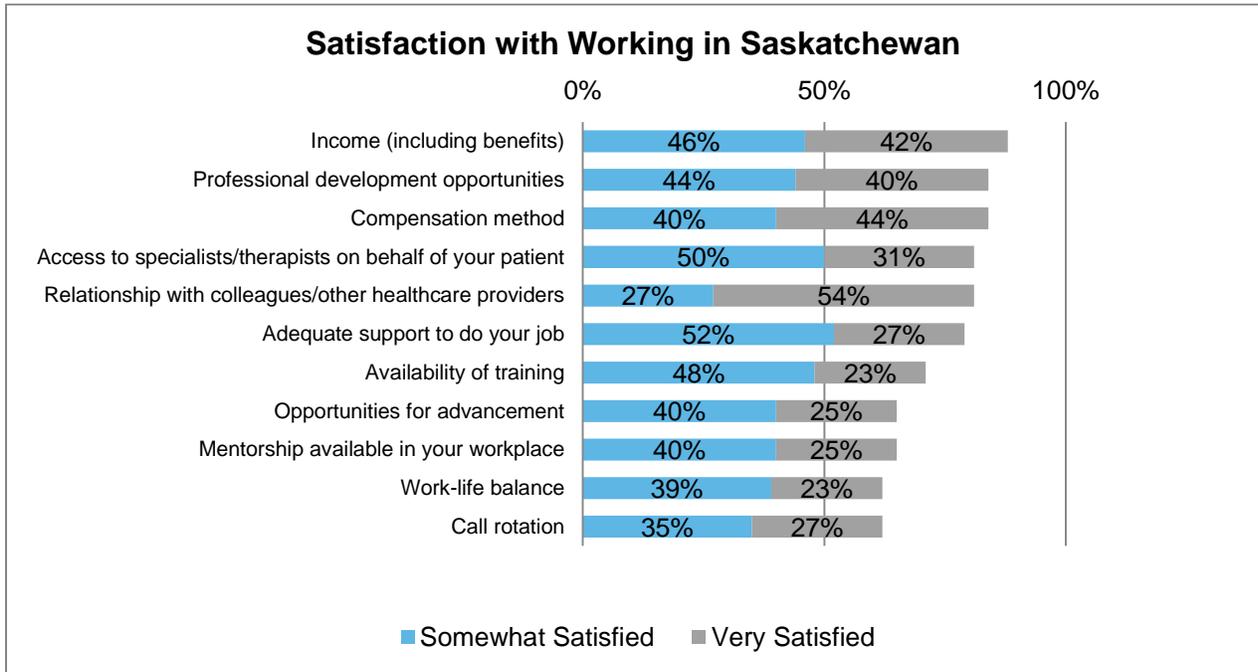
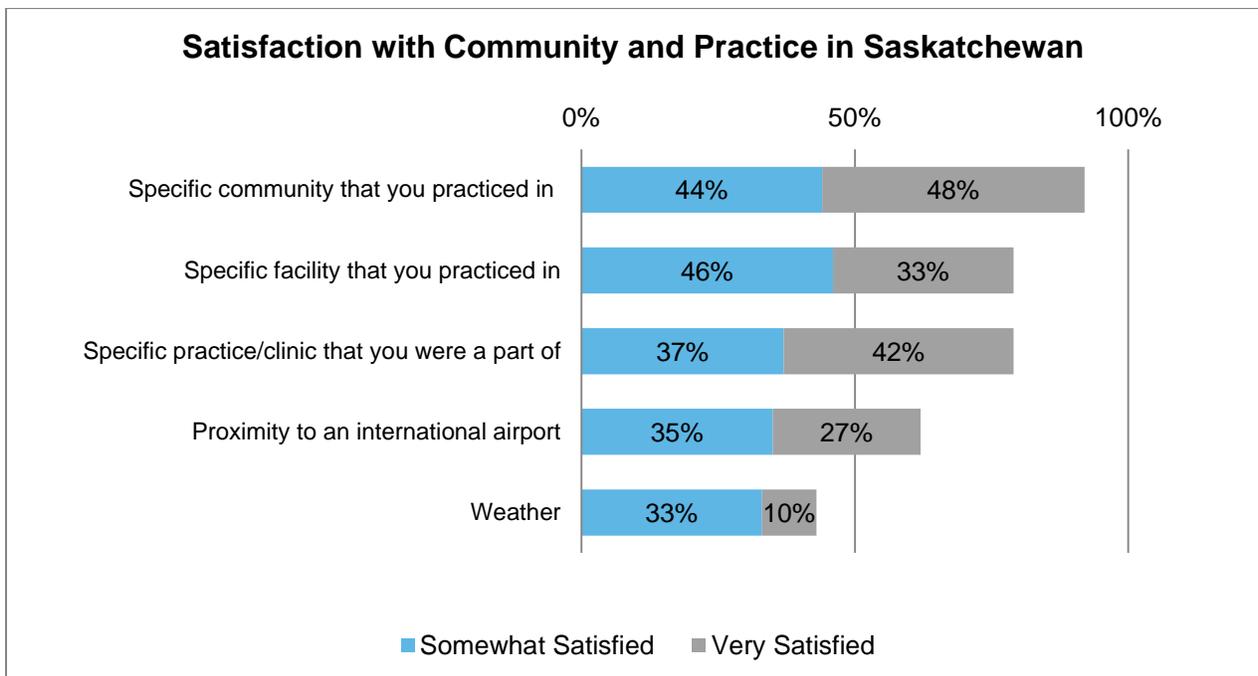


Figure 3



Settlement Surveys

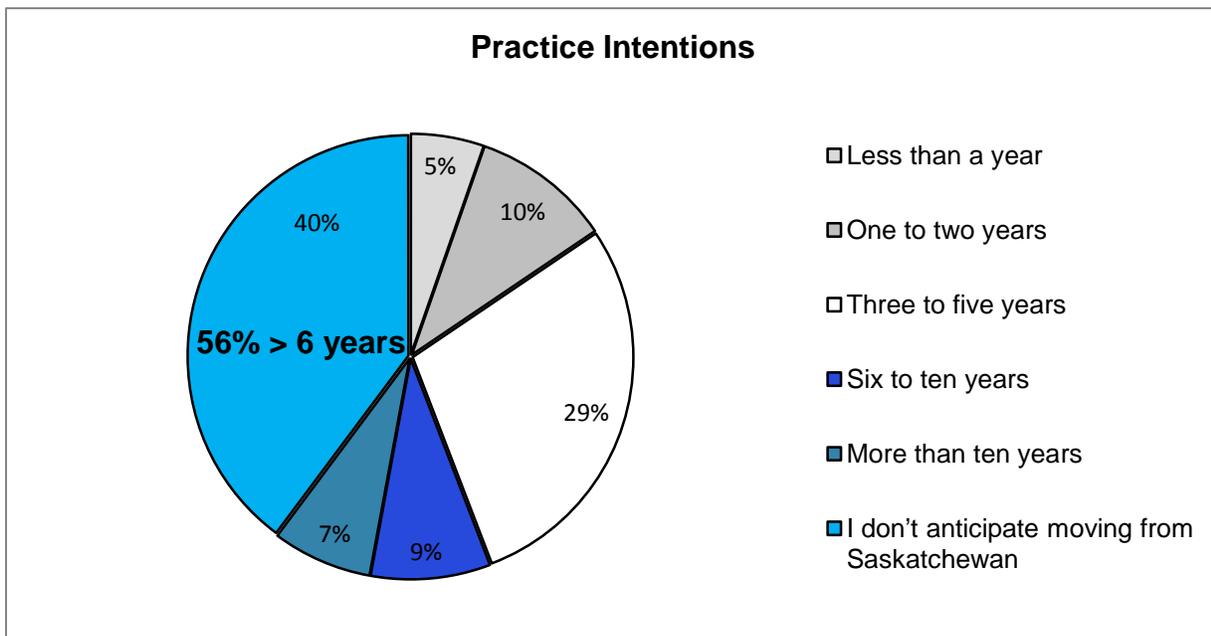
The settlement surveys have been scheduled to run three times a year over a three year period (2012-2014). The survey is sent to each newly recruited physician at six months and again at 18 months after settlement. The results of these surveys have been of great value to Saskdocs and its partners better understand recruitment and retention factors that influence physicians who choose Saskatchewan.

To date seven surveys (April 2012 – March 2014) have been collected and analyzed. Survey eight is presently in the field and the ninth is scheduled for distribution in the fall of 2014. The results of the seven surveys include:

- a total of 199 respondents; 103 specialists, 90 family physicians and six management academic physicians;
- one hundred respondents (50 percent) reported Canadian origin of which 63 were from Saskatchewan; and,
- thirty of the respondents have come through the Saskatchewan International Practice Assessment Program (SIPPA).

When asked about their practice intentions, a total of 15 per cent indicated a short term commitment of one to two years. However, a total of 56 per cent intend to be here longer than six years, of which 40 per cent indicate that they are here to stay (Figure 4). These results have been relatively consistent survey over survey – and are also consistent when you consider the responses of the family physicians vs. the specialists.

Figure 4



When asked why they may choose to leave Saskatchewan, the physician responses have consistently been to be closer to friends and family, climate, and challenges of spousal employment. Unable to influence family location and climate we chose to further examine the spousal employment factor and added several questions to the survey. As a result of the findings saskdocs has worked in collaboration with its partners to:

- research and develop a tool that will help potential candidates match. The tool, or index, takes into account candidate personal and professional preferences to ensure a “good match”; and
- expand the Saskatchewan *Physician Recruitment and Retention* and *Saskatchewan Community Retention Supports* handbooks to provide additional resources to partners to enable them to assist with spousal employment.

When asked about factors influencing a physician's decision to work in Saskatchewan, financial incentives fall well below the midpoint on the scale of importance behind factors such as: the practice and community were a good match; availability of medical support systems; resources; and, political and economic stability. The surveys report that 122 of the 199 reporting physicians (61 per cent) received financial support with relocation. The types of supports offered are highly variable (Figure 5). Although physicians indicate financial incentives are not a highly influencing factor in the selection of a practice location, we are aware of many situations where the different levels or absence of certain supports have created contention. As a result of the findings saskdocs is working in collaboration with its partners to gather regional specific information about the types and levels of supports offered to ensure all partners are aware of the landscape.

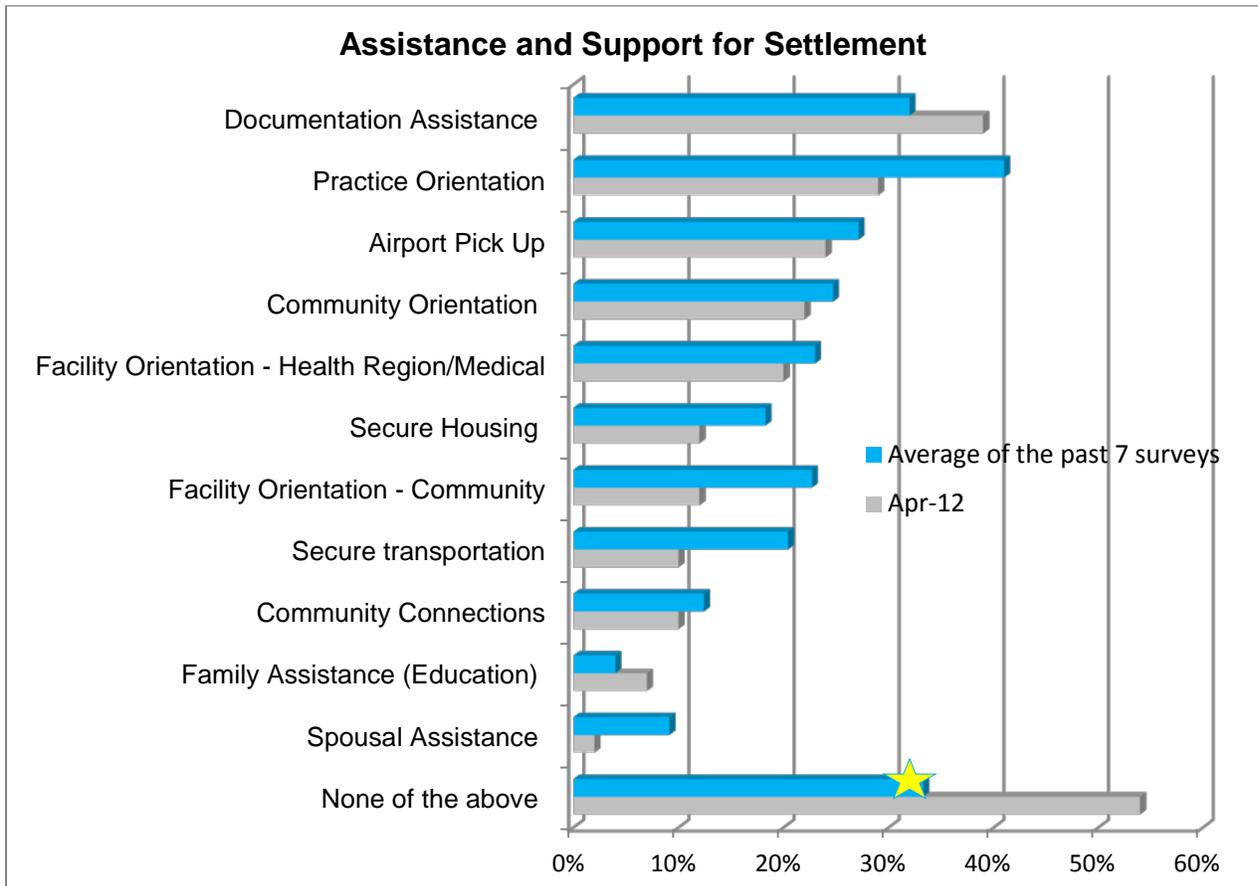
Figure 5

	Average of the last 7 surveys
Moving expenses	55%
Reimbursement of costs associated with the site visit	50%
Transportation costs of getting you/your family to Saskatchewan	49%
Temporary accommodation	41%
Saskatchewan Medical Association Practice Establishment Grant	34%
Temporary transportation	31%
Signing bonus	29%
Financial assistance to support practice overhead	14%
Financial assistance to support earnings	16%
Moving allowance	18%
Assistance in finding a home	9%
Assistance in finding a personal vehicle	2%
Other	8%

One hundred and twenty one of the 199 respondents (61 per cent) had a site visit and the average satisfaction rating is 95 per cent.

Physicians were asked about the non-financial support they received to settle into their new environment. The initial survey in 2012 reported 54 per cent of the newly recruited physicians did not receive any assistance or support to settle into their work and community. From survey to survey we have seen improvement, bringing the overall average of the past seven surveys up by 14 per cent to an overall 32 per cent (Figure 6). Work will continue in this area to ensure all partners are aware of the expectations of a new recruit.

Figure 6



U of S Medical Learners Survey

This survey was scheduled to run annually for three years 2012, 2013 and 2014 and is now complete. The survey was sent to all of the U of S second and fourth year medical learners as well as residents in either second or third year. The survey was designed to explore future plans of our medical learners and their likelihood of practicing in Saskatchewan.

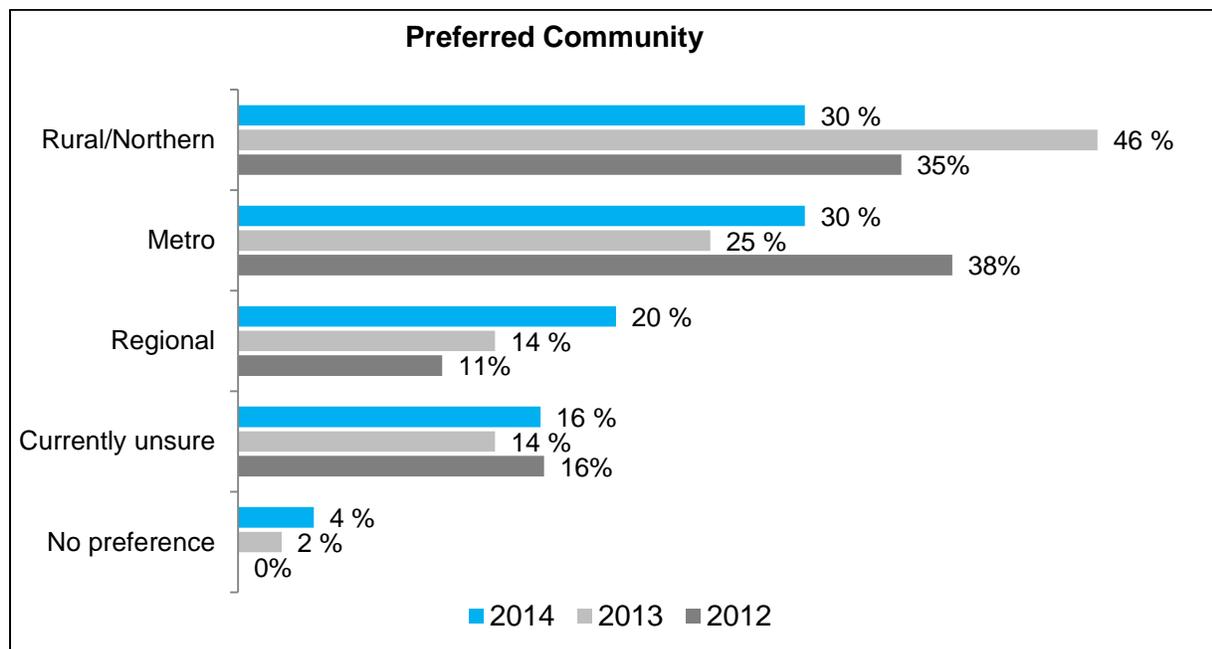
Over the three year period 364 responses were received. Average results over the three year reporting period show:

- fifty-eight per cent consider Saskatchewan as their home province;
- seventy per cent consider themselves to be from a metropolitan area;
- forty-five per cent indicated work life balance was the most critical factor in choosing a practice location;
- ninety per cent of respondents reported that being part of a group practice is important, and;
- eighty-two per cent said they are likely to stay and practice medicine in Saskatchewan. The likelihood decreases among residents. Being near family and friends is a common theme among those who say that they are not going to stay.

Respondents of the 2014 survey indicated that they would be willing to work a total of 60 hours per week including call, this is up slightly from 2013 (reported 55-60 hours per week) and 2012 (reported 50-55 hours per week). Reasonable calls remain consistent as one to two evenings a week and one weekend per month.

Once obtaining their medical license, a majority of respondents who are either currently enrolled in, or planning to attend the family medicine program, plan to either work in a metropolitan community or a rural/northern community. There has been some shift year-over-year as shown in Figure 7. Of those that confirmed interest in rural/northern practice or were undecided, only 26 per cent in the 2012 survey, compared to 44 per cent in the 2014 survey, would consider practicing in a community with a population of less than 2,000.

Figure 7



Respondents were asked to identify factors that would be important to them, but that they do not believe they will be likely to achieve by staying and practicing in Saskatchewan (relative to the other factors measured).

Results have consistently been:

- having adequate support to do your job;
- the ability to access appropriate care facilities for your patients;
- call rotation;
- flexible work hours;
- professional development opportunities; and,
- Electronic Medical Records.

Finally, all respondents were asked for suggestions as to how to increase medical graduate retention in Saskatchewan. As in previous waves of the study respondents suggest having more and better support for physicians, increasing opportunities and making compensation and incentives more competitive.