

Flooding a Leaky Pipeline

By Emma Freer

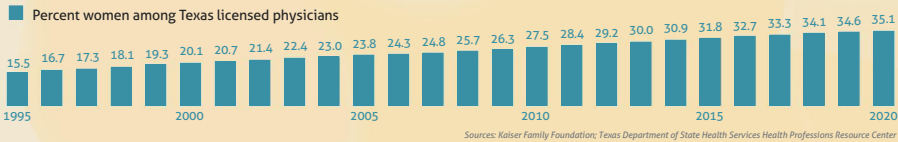
THE SHARE OF women physicians in Texas and across the country has increased dramatically in recent decades. And medicine's gender gap could narrow: Since 2017, more women than men have enrolled in Texas medical schools.

As women physicians grow in numbers, they have broken glass ceilings – May Owen, MD, was the first woman elected as president of the Texas Medical Association in 1960 – and changed the face of what was once a male-dominated profession. (See “A Texas Trailblazer,” page 4.)

But professional challenges persist, causing what some women physicians have described as a “leaky pipeline.” Although women are flooding into medical schools, female physicians are more likely than their male colleagues to scale back to part-time work or leave medicine entirely because of family demands, meaning they are less represented down the line, especially at the leadership level.

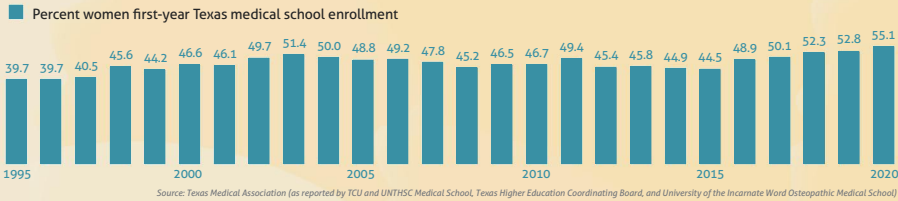
Texas Physician Workforce by Gender

THE GENDER RATIO among Texas physicians and TMA members keeps pace with the national rate – and follows the same upward trajectory. As of September, women accounted for 37% of active physicians nationally and 36% in Texas, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.



Texas Medical School First-Year Enrollment by Gender

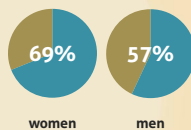
ALTHOUGH MEN OUTNUMBER women among practicing physicians, this could change in the coming decades. Since the early 2000s, women have accounted for nearly half of the students enrolling in Texas medical schools. More recently, they have made up the majority.



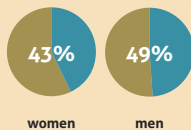
Burnout Among Women Physicians

AS A RESULT of obstacles like work-life balance, child care demands, and lack of advancement opportunities, women physicians are more likely to experience burnout and leave the profession than their male peers.

Frequent feelings of burnout



Would recommend medicine as a career



Suicide risk among physicians

Female doctors are 46% more likely to die by suicide than women in general.

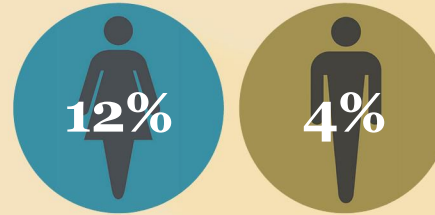
Male doctors are 33% less likely to die by suicide than men in general.



Women physicians take on 8.5 more hours of parenting and domestic duties each week, on average, than male physicians.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

WOMEN PHYSICIANS ARE more likely than their male peers to experience workplace sexual harassment from either colleagues or patients.

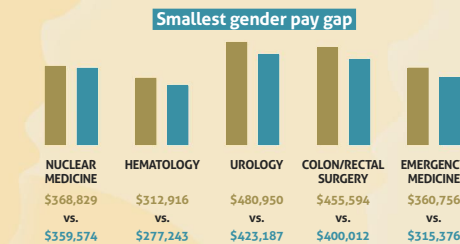
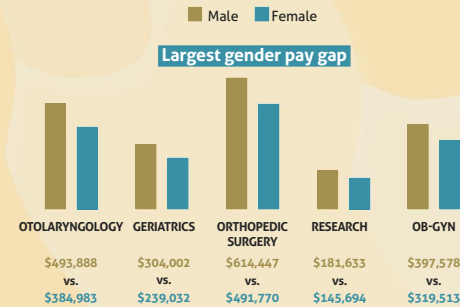


REPORTED SEXUAL ABUSE, HARASSMENT, OR MISCONDUCT

Source: Medscape Patients Sexually Harassing Physicians Report 2018 (tma.tips/MedscapePatients)

The Gender Pay Gap

NATIONALLY, THE WAGE gap between men and women physicians widened to 28%, or about \$116,000 annually, in 2020. The gender pay gap is more pronounced among specialists. There are no specialties in which women physicians earned the same or more than men in 2020.

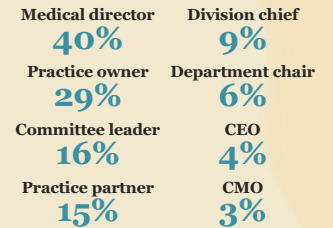


Source: Doximity 2020 Physician Compensation Report (tma.tips/Doximity2020)

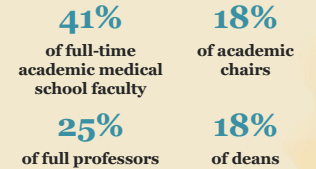
Medicine's Leadership Gap

ALTHOUGH WOMEN NOW outnumber men among Texas medical school enrollment, they remain in the minority at the upper echelons of the profession.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened this trend. Distribution among women who identify as holding a leadership position:



In academic medicine, women make up:



Studies looking at factors influencing women physicians' career decisions showed that:

Female faculty were nearly twice as likely to have considered leaving their jobs since the pandemic compared with before.

A 9.6% gender gap in full-time employment in the first year of training grew to 38.7% by six years after training.

Female faculty were nearly three times as likely to have worked or were already working part time compared with men.

Women were more likely than men to mention family as a factor influencing their work status considerations.

Female faculty were twice as likely as men to turn down leadership opportunities because of work-life balance issues before and since the pandemic.

More than 77% of women physicians currently working part time or not at all cited family as the determining factor.