BMA quarterly tracker survey

Current views from across the medical profession
Quarter 4: November 2015
Background

– The BMA’s Health Policy and Economic Research Unit (HPERU) manages an online panel of approximately 3,000 member doctors.
– The panel is broadly representative of main areas of medical practice and is used for quarterly tracker surveys on topical health questions.
– The tracker survey also includes recurrent questions on current workload, morale, future intentions and changes in the NHS.
– The survey also allows for additional questions on other issues – if you are a health organisation interested in working with us, contact info.hperu@bma.org.uk.
Methodology

– The quarterly tracker survey was sent to a random sample of 1,016 panel members (excluding students and retired members).
– Panel members were emailed a link to the online survey between 25 November and 8 December 2015.
– 463 replies were received, of these responses, 19 were removed as they were not currently working, giving a final response rate of 43.7%.
– The following analysis includes comparisons across branches of medical practice.
Respondents: branch of medical practice

Consultants and GPs were the largest groups to respond to the survey; this reflects the composition of the UK medical workforce.

Junior doctors are under-represented in the survey compared to the workforce.

“Other” doctors includes respondents that were working in medical academia, public health or outside one of the main fields of practice. This group was aggregated due to small sample sizes.

Question: What grade is your current post?
Respondents: working pattern

Just under three in ten respondents were working less than full time.

Question: Are you working: full time, less than full time, unemployed, on a career break, on maternity leave, retired?

- Full-time: 69.8% (323)
- Less than full-time: 26.1% (121)
Current morale
How would you describe your current level of morale?

Nearly 19% of respondents reported their morale as high or very high.

Conversely, 47% reported their morale as being low or very low.

On average, morale is slightly lower than in the last two quarters.

Question: Taking everything into account, how would you describe your current level of morale?
Average morale by branch of practice

Using a 5-point scale (1 = very low, 3 = moderate, 5 = very high) the mean morale scores can be compared across branches of practice.

For all branches of practice, average morale is below moderate.

GPs continue to report the lowest morale.

Question: Taking everything into account, how would you describe your current level of morale?
Work-life balance
On average, satisfaction with work-life balance has stayed the same this quarter.

GPs again reported being least satisfied with their work-life balance.

Question: Overall, how satisfied are you with your work-life balance nowadays? (Please give your answer on a scale of nought to 10, where nought is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely satisfied’)
Current workload
Current workload by branch of practice

GPs were much more likely than other groups to report their workload as being unmanageable or unsustainable. The percentage is slightly higher than in the last quarter (was 66.0%, now 68.3%).

The proportion of consultants describing their workload as unmanageable or unsustainable is slightly lower than in the last quarter (was 50.0%, now 44.5%), with the proportion of junior doctors slightly higher (was 20.3%, now 21.2%).

Question: Overall, how do you perceive your current level of workload?
Working outside regular hours in the last month by branch of practice

Consistent with all previous editions of the Omnibus survey, this quarter shows that GPs are most likely to report “always” working outside their regular hours.

Question: In the last month, how often have you worked/trained outside your regular hours?
What was the reason for working/training outside of your regular hours?

All branches of practice cited “too much work” as the main reason for working/training outside their regular hours.

All grades reported increased working outside their regular hours due to vacancies or staff shortages compared to the last quarter.

Reports of working outside regular hours due to pressure from colleagues dropped markedly for junior doctors (from 19.2% to 6.5%) this quarter.
Perception of pay
For all grades except consultants, more respondents perceive pay as unfair rather than fair.

Compared to the last quarter, more SAS doctors perceive pay as fair (was 23.9%, now 31.4%).

This is the third survey round following the publication of the DDRB pay recommendations in March.

Question: To what extent do you think your current level of pay fairly reflects the work you do?
Job security
Job security by branch of practice

GPs were most concerned about the security of their current post.

Question: In the past month, to what extent have you felt concerned about the security of your current post?
NHS changes
Observers changes to the NHS in the last three months

Respondents continue to report seeing high levels of waiting times and breaches of A&E targets at their place of work or nearby hospital in the last three months.

Question: Has the hospital or practice where you normally work been directly impacted by any of the following in the last 3 months?

- Increased waiting times for your patients: 59.3%
- Breaches in A&E targets: 44.9%
- Major service reconfiguration: 35.3%
- Formal involvement by regulator: 21.2%
- Black alert implemented: 17.4%
- Not applicable as do not work for the NHS or have not been impacted by any of the issues listed: 16.0%
- Any qualified provider: 14.7%
- New independent sector providers: 14.2%
Raising concerns at work
Raising concerns over the standard of patient care

Consultants and SAS doctors were the most likely to have voiced concerns over patient safety.

Question: Over the last month, have you voiced concerns over the standard of patient care in your workplace?
Employers’ reaction to voiced concerns

Of those doctors who raised concerns over the standard of patient care, nearly 39% believed that no action was taken. Conversely, over 19% of respondents experienced positive action after voicing concerns. Nearly 12% of respondents felt penalised for voicing a concern. This figure has risen slightly over the last year.

Question: Over the last month, have you voiced concerns over the standard of patient care in your workplace? Was any action taken as a result?
Why concerns were not raised

The majority of respondents who did not voice concerns over the standard of care did not feel the need to do so.

Where there were concerns over the standard of patient care, the most often reported reason for these concerns not being raised was the perception that ‘the problem was widely known’.

**Question:** Over the last month, have you voiced concerns over the standard of patient care in your workplace? If no, why not?
Future intentions
In the last year have you ever considered any of the following?

Nearly half of respondents were considering retiring early.

GPs were most likely to report that they were considering retiring early.

Question: In the last year have you ever considered any of the following?
Steps taken to change work-life balance

Less than half of the respondents have made or are in the process of making changes to their work-life balance.

Question: Have you taken any steps to change your work-life balance?

- No, I am still considering my options: 51.0%
- Yes, I am in the process of making this change: 30.3%
- Yes, I have made this change: 18.7%
Influences on career considerations

Over 66% of respondents cited work conditions and changes to the NHS as the top two factors that influenced considerations about their career.

Question: Please indicate which factors influenced considerations about your career (please tick as many as apply)
Bullying and harassment
Harassment, bullying or abuse in the last three months

On average, doctors reported being harassed most frequently by patients or the public, and least frequently by other clinical professionals.

Question: In the last 3 months, how frequently have you personally experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work? (Please rank where 1 = never, 2 = infrequently and 3 = frequently)
Reporting incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse

Over one-quarter of respondents indicated they did not report an incident of harassment, bullying or abuse.

Question: In the last three months, have you reported an incident of harassment, bullying or abuse at work?
Type of abuse

The most common form of abuse was verbal, followed by psychological or emotional abuse.

Question: What form did this abuse take?

- Verbal: 48.8%
- Psychological or emotional: 34.1%
- Other: 12.2%
- Physical: 4.9%