Decreasing Weekly Practice Hours Among Urologists of All Career Stages and Implications for Future Workforce Capacity

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BACKGROUND

- The urologic workforce is undergoing substantial demographic and practice-related changes
- Physician headcount may not fully reflect available clinical capacity.
- Practice hours can change across career stages before formal retirement.
- Longitudinal patterns in weekly practice hours are relevant to workforce planning.

OBJECTIVE

Characterize annual trends in average weekly practice hours among urologists at 0, 10, 20, 30, and 40 years in practice using American Board of Urology (ABU) workforce data.

METHODS

- A descriptive longitudinal analysis of ABU workforce data was performed to evaluate average weekly practice hours among urologists.
- Years in practice were stratified (0, 10, 20, 30, and 40 years) from 2018–2026 based upon information submitted by candidates at initial certification and subsequent recertification.
- Annual trends were assessed to characterize changes in workload and clinical participation across career stages.

Changes in Practice Hours by Career Stage 2018-2026

Career Stage	First available observation average	Last available observation average	Approximate Change
0 years out	47 hrs (2019)	52 hrs (2024)	11%
10 years out	64 hrs (2018)	46 hrs (2026)	-28%
20 years out	56 hrs (2018)	47 hrs (2026)	-17%
30 years out	54 hrs (2018)	41 hrs (2026)	-24%
40 years out	42 hrs (2021)	33 hrs (2026)	-21%

Table 1. Changes in average weekly practice hours among urologists by years in practice, 2018–2026.

KEY FINDING

Practice hours fell from 2018 to 2026 across every established career-stage group, and no group returned to its 2018 level during the subsequent observation period.

CAREER-STAGE SUMMARIES

0 YEARS	10 YEARS	20 YEARS	30 YEARS	40 YEARS
47 → 52	64 → 46	56 → 47	54 → 41	42 → 33
hours/week	hours/week	hours/week	hours/week	hours/week
2019 → 2024	2018 → 2026	2018 → 2026	2018 → 2026	2021 → 2026
+11%	−28%	−17%	−24%	−21%

Note: Values are approximate and reflect the supplied abstract. The 40-year group comparison begins in 2021; the newly certified group comparison spans 2019–2024. These comparisons do not imply that the largest changes occurred after 2019.

Average Hours of Practice in Urology 2018-2026

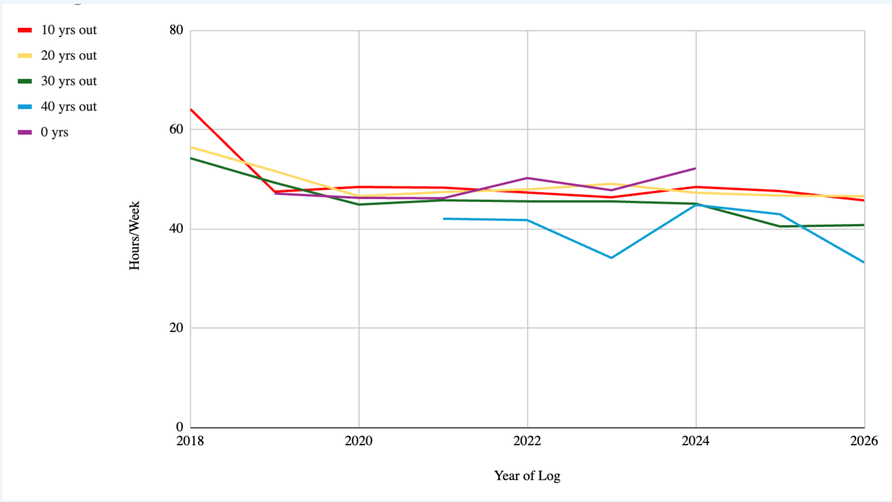

Figure 1. Average weekly practice hours among urologists by years in practice, 2018–2026. Trends in average weekly practice hours are shown for urologists stratified by career stage (0, 10, 20, 30, and 40 years in practice).

WHAT THE DATA SUGGEST

- The sustained shift began before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Established career-stage groups remained below their 2018 practice-hour levels.
- Newly certified urologists showed a different pattern, with hours increasing from approximately 47/week in 2019 to 52/week in 2024.
- An overall cohort estimate is still needed to quantify the aggregate change across the workforce.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- The greatest sustained reductions were observed among urologists with 30 or more years of experience.
- Urologists 10 years into practice experienced the most pronounced initial reduction, from approximately 64 hours/week in 2018 to 46 hours/week in 2026 (−28%), with relative stabilization after 2019.
- Those 20 years into practice demonstrated a decline from 56 to approximately 47 hours/week (−17%), with relatively consistent workloads after 2020.
- Urologists 30 years into practice experienced a progressive reduction from 54 to 41 hours/week (−24%), with a more pronounced decline after 2024.
- Among urologists 40 years into practice, average weekly hours decreased from approximately 42 hours/week in 2021 to 33 hours/week in 2026 (−21%), with substantial intervening variability.
- In contrast, newly practicing urologists maintained comparatively stable workloads, increasing from approximately 47 hours/week in 2019 to 52 hours/week in 2024 (+11%).
- Despite initial differences, practice hours converged toward approximately 45–50 hours/week across most career stages during the middle of the observation period.

CONCLUSION

- ABU data demonstrate sustained reductions in weekly practice hours among established urologists, with substantial declines and greater variability among those with 30–40 years of experience.
- These findings suggest that workforce capacity may decline before formal retirement, highlighting a potential gap between physician headcount and effective clinical participation.
- Workforce planning should account for career-stage-specific practice patterns and consider strategies to expand residency training capacity, strengthen recruitment and retention, and support succession planning to maintain access to urologic care.

ADVOCACY TAKEAWAY

- Plan for effective workforce capacity, including practice hours rather than headcount alone.
- Evaluate residency training capacity and strategies that support recruitment, retention, and succession planning.

DISCLOSURES / REFERENCES

We thankthe American Borard of Urology for providing this data.