

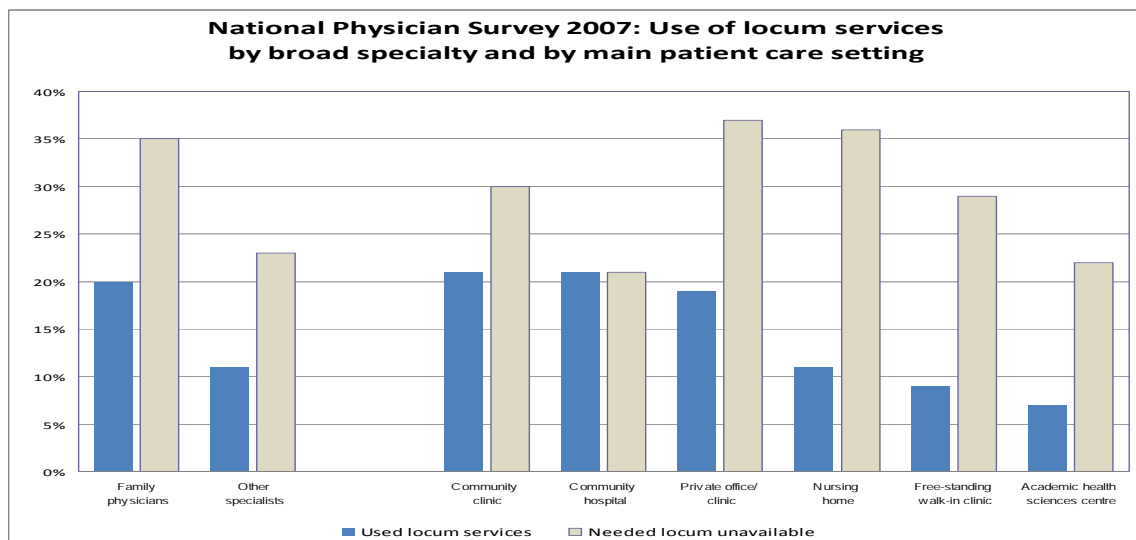
## Locums Still Hard to Find!

### Use of locum services

According to the 2007 National Physician Survey, 16% of Canadian physicians had used locum tenens services in the previous year, while (29%) indicated they would have used them had they been available. Just under half of physicians (49%) said they had not needed locum services in the past year.

Family physicians were more likely than other specialists to have used locum services (20% versus 11%), or to have needed locum services that were not available (35% compared to 23%), while other specialists were much more likely to indicate that locums had not been needed (59% compared to 40%). Physicians who worked mainly in free-standing walk-in clinics or academic health centres were the least frequent users of locum services, but still reported unavailability when they needed them. Those who work mainly in nursing homes were fairly low users of locum services (11%), but almost matched private offices when it came to unavailability of needed locum services (36% and 37%).

The size of the community in which physicians practiced had an impact on the need for locum services. Among those who worked in isolated or remote locations, only 28% reported that locums were not needed in the past year, while 42% had used locum services and an additional 20% indicated that needed locum services were unavailable. In contrast, 14% of physicians in inner city or urban/suburban practices used locum services, and 29% reported that needed locum services were unavailable.



Those working in solo practice are very similar in their need for locum services to those in group practice, but the latter are slightly more likely to have used locums (19% versus 15%), while the former are more likely to report that needed locum services were unavailable (35% versus 29%).

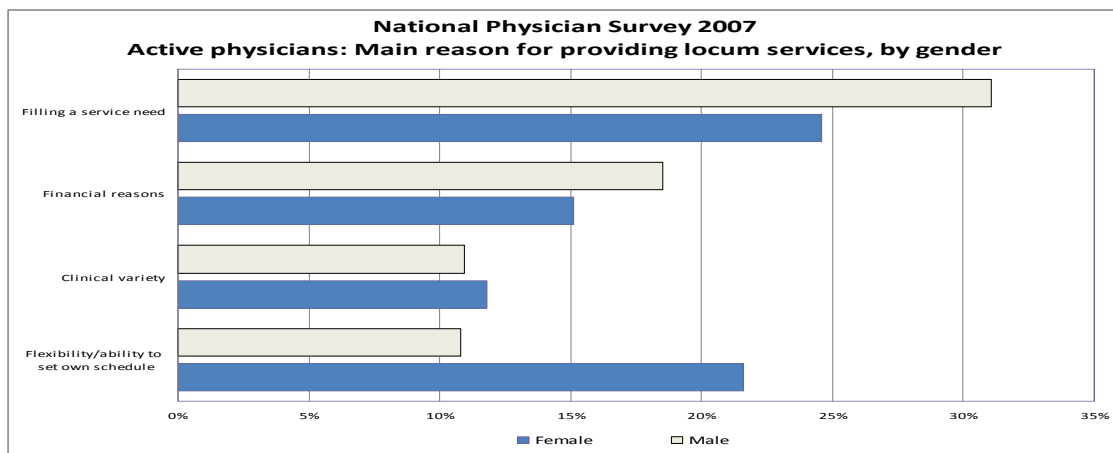
## Satisfaction with ability to find locum coverage

Among those physicians who indicated their level of satisfaction with the ability to find locum coverage (excluding those who said this question was not applicable to them), 48% were somewhat or very dissatisfied, while only one in five were somewhat or very satisfied. Although those who used locum services in the past year were more likely to be satisfied with the ability to locate coverage than those who needed coverage but couldn't find it (29% versus 11%), the level of dissatisfaction among this group was still quite high (53%). Family physicians were much more likely to be somewhat or very dissatisfied with the ability to find locum coverage than other specialists (55% compared to 37%).

## Provision of locum services

Locum services had been provided by 15% of respondents in the previous year, for 10 weeks on average although some physicians indicated that they did locums for a full 52 weeks. Family physicians were almost twice as likely as other specialists to have provided locum services (19% vs. 10%), while those under age 35 were more than twice as likely to provide locum services than those aged 35 through 65+ (32% vs. 13%). The youngest group of physicians also tended to have spent more time providing locum services than those over 35 (15 weeks compared to 9 weeks).

Among those physicians who indicated why they chose to locum, two-thirds identified two or more factors. Filling a service need was the most frequently selected (69%), and was also the top pick (29%) when physicians were asked to identify their single **most** important reason for doing locums. The older the physician, the more likely they were to choose this as the main reason and in fact, almost half of those 65 and older did so. While clinical variety was the second most frequently cited as a factor (40%), followed closely by financial reasons, it was the latter that placed second when indicating the most important reason (17%).



Some doctors cited flexibility and the ability to set their own schedule (33%) among their reasons for doing locums, while others chose to do locums as a means to assess a potential future practice location (21%). Not surprisingly, locums under 35 were much more likely to be assessing a future practice location (45%) than those in older age groups. Female physicians who did locums were more likely to be motivated by the flexibility/ability to set their own schedule (43%) than were male physicians (28%). They were also twice as likely as males to indicate that flexibility/ability to set their own schedule was their primary reason for doing locums (22% versus 11%).

## **Future locums**

Looking ahead to practising physicians of the future, we see that well over half (58%) of family medicine residents plan to practice as a locum tenens at least for the first few years. Only 22% plan to buy or set up their own practice although presumably many would join an existing practice. For family medicine, the reason cited most often (82%) for wanting to practice as a locum tenens was to assess a potential future practice location. This was followed closely by a desire for flexibility in setting their schedule (80%). Close to 60% also indicated clinical variety and financial reasons. The ordering was slightly different for non-primary care specialists who put financial reasons first (87%) followed by assessing a future practice location (64%) and schedule flexibility (56%).

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