



ALBERTA  
MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2024

# FAMILY PRACTICE VIABILITY STUDY

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# STUDY APPROACH



## Research Methodology

- **Approach:** Branded online survey
- **Sampling:** Alberta family doctors (list provided by AMA). Survey invitations were sent by ThinkHQ
- **Margin of error:** +/- 2.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20
- **Weighting:** Weighted to reflect actual regional distribution of Alberta family doctors according to AMA membership data

### Response rate:

- **Universe:** N=5,146 valid email addresses
- **Sample size:** n=1,375 completed surveys
- **Response rate:** 27%
- **Field dates:** January 16 – 19, 2024
  - **Reminder #1:** January 17
  - **Reminder #2:** January 19

# Profile of Family Physician Respondents



## Practice Type:

Community clinic	59%
AHS/Covenant Health facility or clinic	7%
Mix of both	35%

## Specialty Type:

Family medicine (CCFP)	84%
Family medicine non-certified	16%

## Years in Practice:

Less than 5 years	11%
5 – 10 years	21%
11 – 24 years	35%
25 years or more	33%
Prefer not to say	<1%

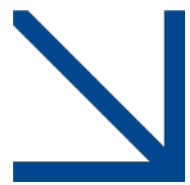
Base: All respondents (n=1,375)

## Zone of Practice:

Calgary (Zone 2)	45%
Edmonton (Zone 4)	29%
Another Zone	27%
<i>Central (Zone 3)</i>	10%
<i>South (Zone 1)</i>	9%
<i>North (Zone 5)</i>	8%

## Panel Size:

Less than 200 patients	3%
200 – 1,000 patients	38%
1,000 or more patients	43%
Prefer not to say/Not applicable	16%
MEAN	1,215
MEDIAN	1,100



# KEY FINDINGS



## Most of Alberta's Family Medical Practices are in Disastrous Financial Condition: Need for Support Urgent



Over nine-in-ten (91%) family doctors in Alberta are concerned about the continued financial viability of their practices; over one-half (52%) are very concerned

Almost six-in-ten (57%) family doctors characterize the current financial health of their medical practices as "Poor" (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale). Meanwhile, fewer than one-in-ten (8%) suggest their practices are performing well financially today (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale)

- Financial strains most common among physicians whose practices are either entirely or partially community-based (i.e., not part of AHS/Covenant Health)

**Fully 20% of family doctors believe their medical practices are unlikely to be financially viable beyond six months** – 8% say only 3 months – while another 21% feel their finances could sustain their practices for up to a year

## Serious Implications for the Health Care System and Patients if Financial Viability not Addressed Quickly



Given financial pressures on their medical practices, **fully 61% of province's Family Physicians are considering leaving the Alberta health care system**, either by early retirement (38%) and/or looking for work in another province or country (39%)

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of longer tenured physicians (practicing 25+ years) considering early retirement
- Almost one-half (48%) of newer physicians (practicing less than 10 years) considering a move out of Alberta
- Huge implications for patients (particularly in rural settings) as the average family doctor carries a patient panel of ~1100 – 1200 Albertans each

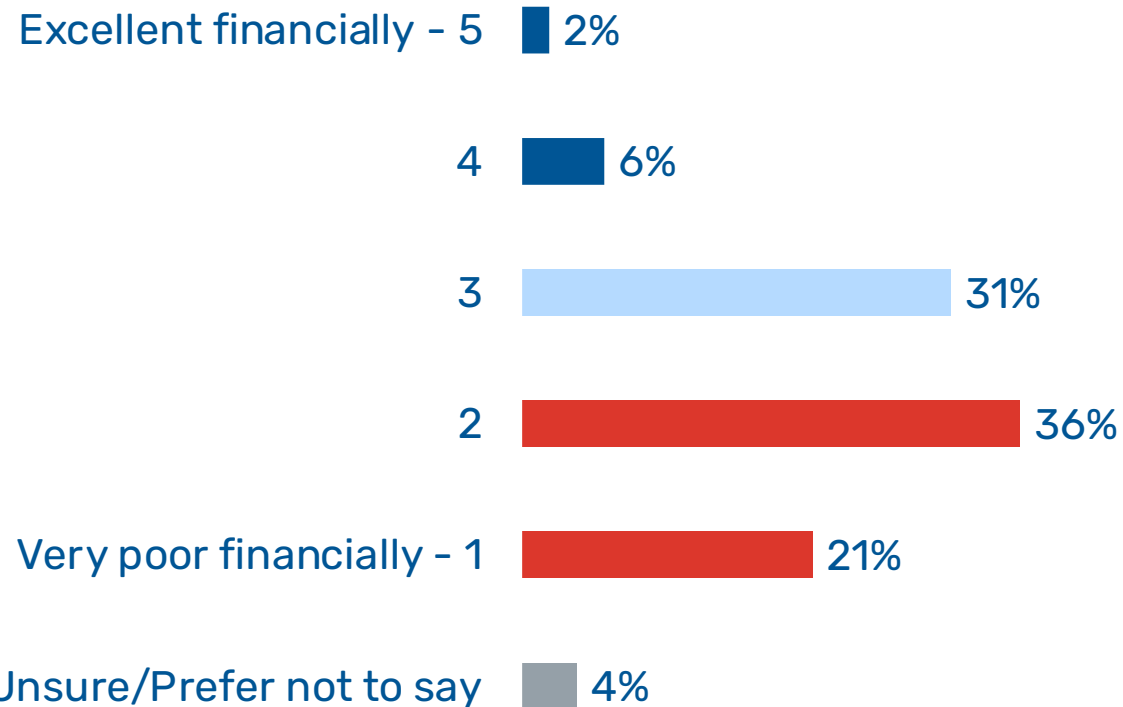
Six-in-ten (61%) family doctors also considering significant changes in service delivery with their practices, such as **54% saying they will look to eliminate/reduce comprehensive care**

Among those considering changes to their practices, almost eight-in-ten (76%) say they are likely to occur within the next 12 months

# A Majority of Alberta's Family Medical Practices in Poor Financial Condition



Overall, how would you rate the financial health of your current medical practice using a scale anywhere from 1 to 5 where 5 means "Excellent" and 1 means "Very Poor"?



## Summary:

Good	8%
Neutral/Unsure	35%
Poor	57%
NET	-49

Base: All respondents (n=1,375) | NET: Good (4 or 5) minus poor (1 or 2)



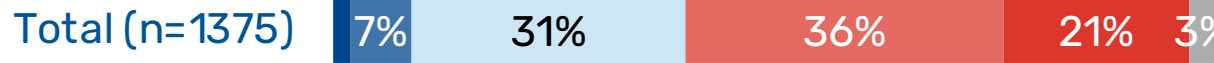
# Family Medical Practice Financial Health

## By Practice Type



How would you rate the financial health of your current medical practice?

■ 5 - Excellent ■ 4 ■ 3 ■ 2 ■ 1 - Very poor ■ Unsure/Prefer not to say



Good	Poor	NET
8%	57%	- 49

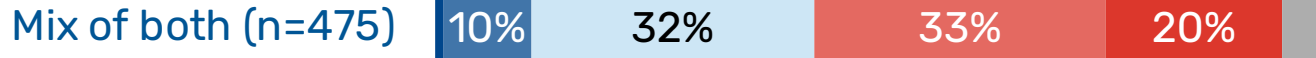
### Practice Type



5%	61%	- 56
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21%	32%	- 11
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11%	54%	- 43
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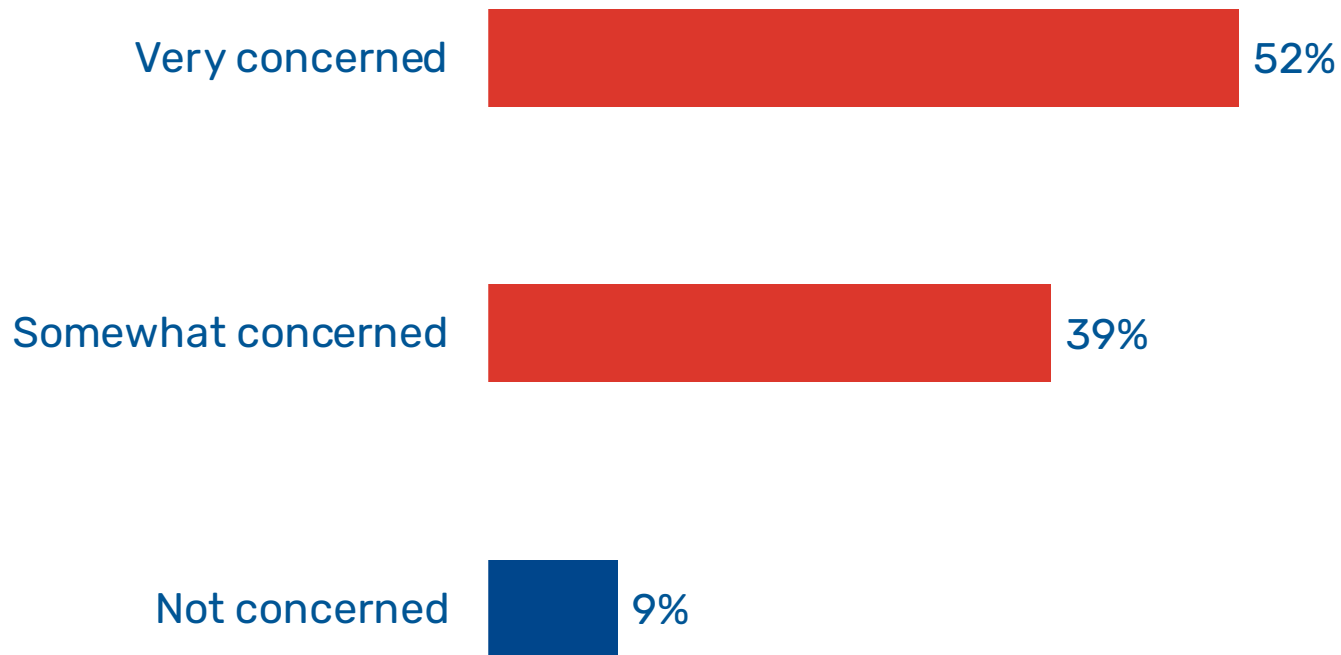
\*Caution: Small Base Size

Base: All respondents | NET: Good (4 or 5) minus poor (1 or 2)

# Extremely High Levels of Concern About Continued Viability of Family Medical Practices



*Do you have any concerns about your practice being able to remain open and viable in the future?*



### Summary:

Total concerned	91%
Not concerned	9%
<b>NET</b>	<b>+82</b>

Base: All respondents (n=1,375) | NET: Total concerned (very + somewhat) minus not concerned

# Physician Concerns About Viability of Practices

## By Practice Type



*Do you have any concerns about your practice being able to remain open and viable in the future?*

■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Not concerned



Concerned	NET
91%	+82

### Practice Type



93%	+86
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62%	+33
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91%	+82
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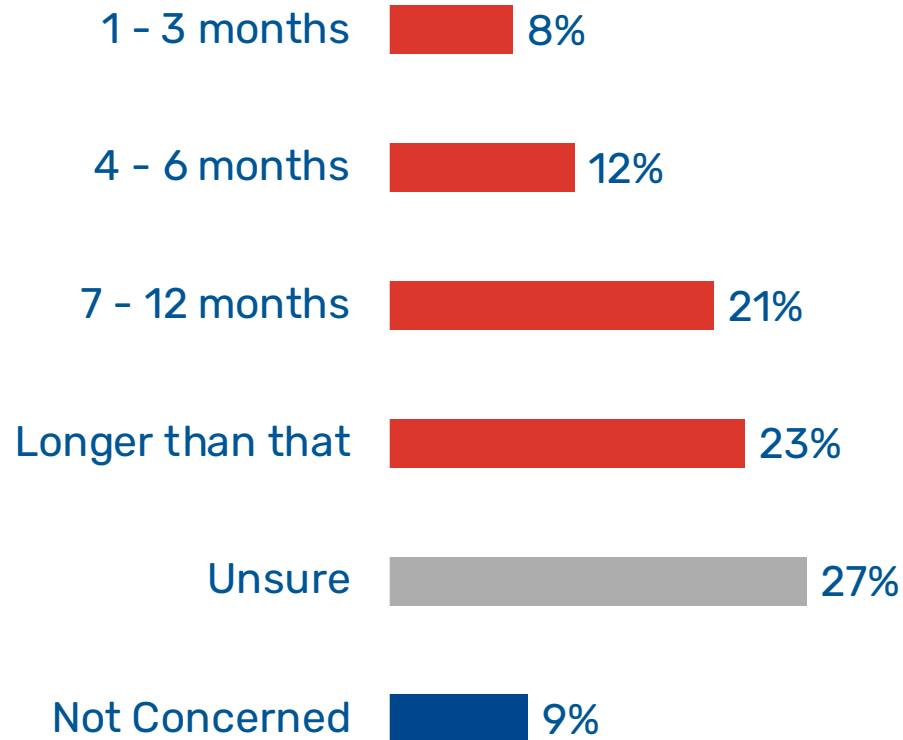
\*Caution: Small Base Size

Base: All respondents | NET: Concerned (very + somewhat) minus not concerned

# One-in-Five Family Medical Practices Unlikely to be Financially Viable Beyond Six Months



*How much longer do you feel your practice can continue under its present financial circumstances?*

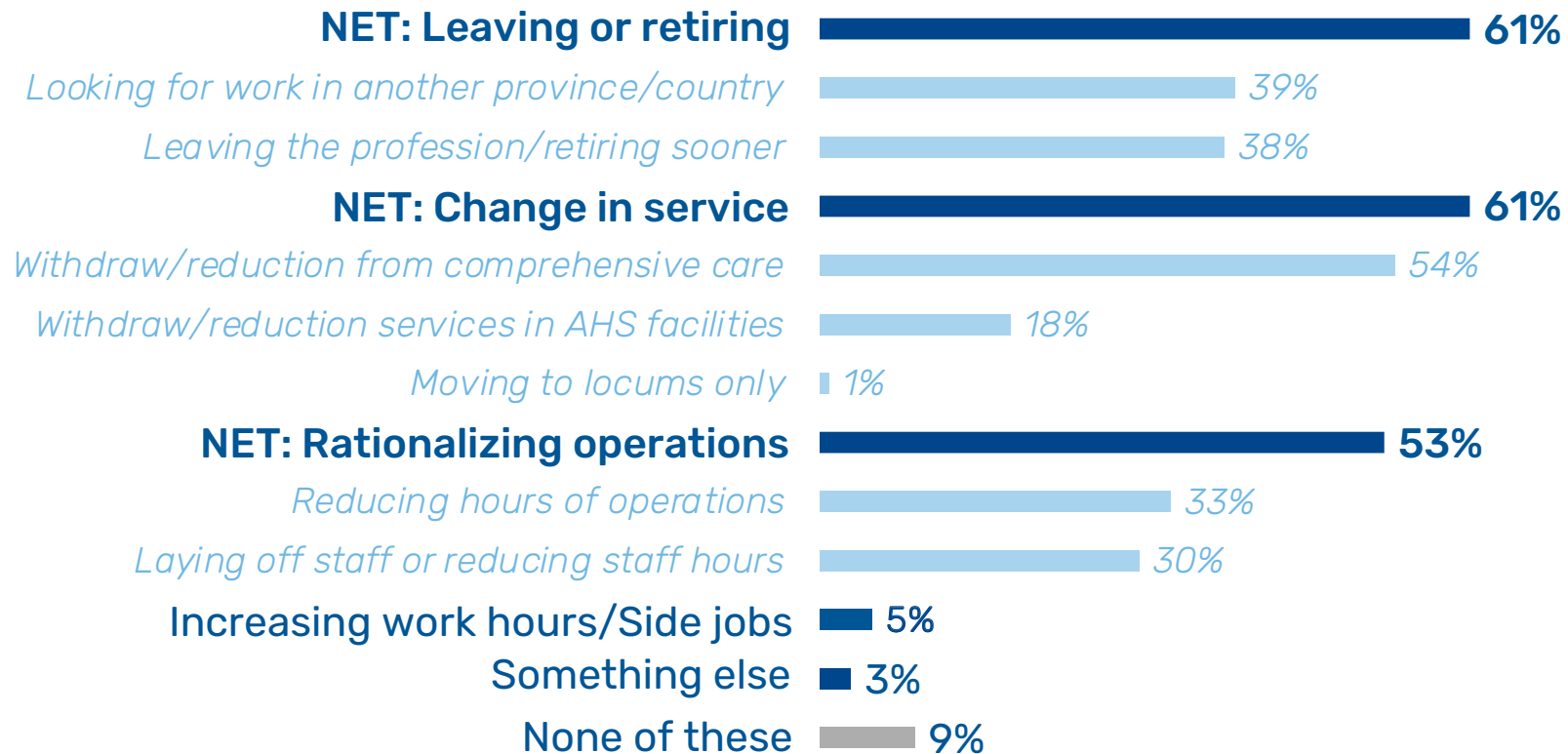


Base: All respondents (n=1,375)

# Over Six-in-Ten Family Physicians Considering Moving, Retiring or Significant Changes in Service in Practices



Which of the following, if any, are you considering (or have already done) as a result of financial pressures on your practice?



Base: All respondents (n=1,375) | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

# Impact of Financial Pressures on FM Practices

## By Zone of Practice & Years of Practice



Which of the following, if any, are you considering (or have already done) as a result of financial pressures on your practice?

	Total	Region/Zones			Years in Practice		
		Calgary	Edmon.	Other	10 & <	11-24	25+
Base: All respondents	(n=1375)	(n=613)	(n=396)	(n=366)	(n=440)	(n=485)	(n=448)
<b>NET: Leaving or retiring</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>71%</b>
Look for work - other province/country	39%	39%	39%	39%	48%	45%	23%
Leaving the profession/retiring sooner	38%	38%	41%	35%	19%	32%	64%
<b>NET: Change in service</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Withdraw/reduction – comp. care	54%	54%	54%	54%	67%	56%	39%
Withdraw/reduction from AHS facilities	18%	15%	16%	25%	17%	19%	17%
Moving to locums only	1%	--	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
<b>NET: Rationalizing Operations</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>46%</b>
Reducing hours of operations	33%	33%	34%	31%	33%	36%	30%
Laying off staff	30%	30%	30%	32%	27%	38%	25%
Working extra hours/Side jobs	5%	6%	4%	4%	4%	6%	4%
Something else	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%
None of these	9%	8%	9%	11%	9%	8%	10%

Note: Shading [blue] denotes significant differences among sub-samples

Base: All respondents | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

# Impact of Financial Pressures on FM Practices

## By Practice Type & Patient Panel Size



Which of the following, if any, are you considering (or have already done) as a result of financial pressures on your practice?

	Practice Location			Panel Size		
	Total (n=1375)	AHS (n=91*)	AHS & CC (n=475)	<200 (n=42*)	200 - 1000 (n=526)	1000+ (n=589)
<b>NET: Leaving or retiring</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>63%</b>
Look for work - other province/country	39%	38%	39%	24%	37%	43%
Leaving the profession/retiring sooner	38%	35%	29%	45%	37%	38%
<b>NET: Change in service</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>57%</b>
Withdraw/reduction - comp. care	54%	33%	62%	52%	60%	50%
Withdraw/reduction from AHS facilities	18%	34%	29%	29%	15%	16%
Moving to locums only	1%	1%	1%	--	--	1%
<b>NET: Rationalizing Operations</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>60%</b>
Reducing hours of operations	33%	24%	33%	26%	33%	35%
Laying off staff	30%	4%	33%	19%	29%	38%
Working extra hours/Side jobs	5%	1%	5%	--	6%	5%
Something else	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%
None of these	9%	21%	7%	14%	9%	8%

Note: Shading [blue] denotes significant differences among sub-samples

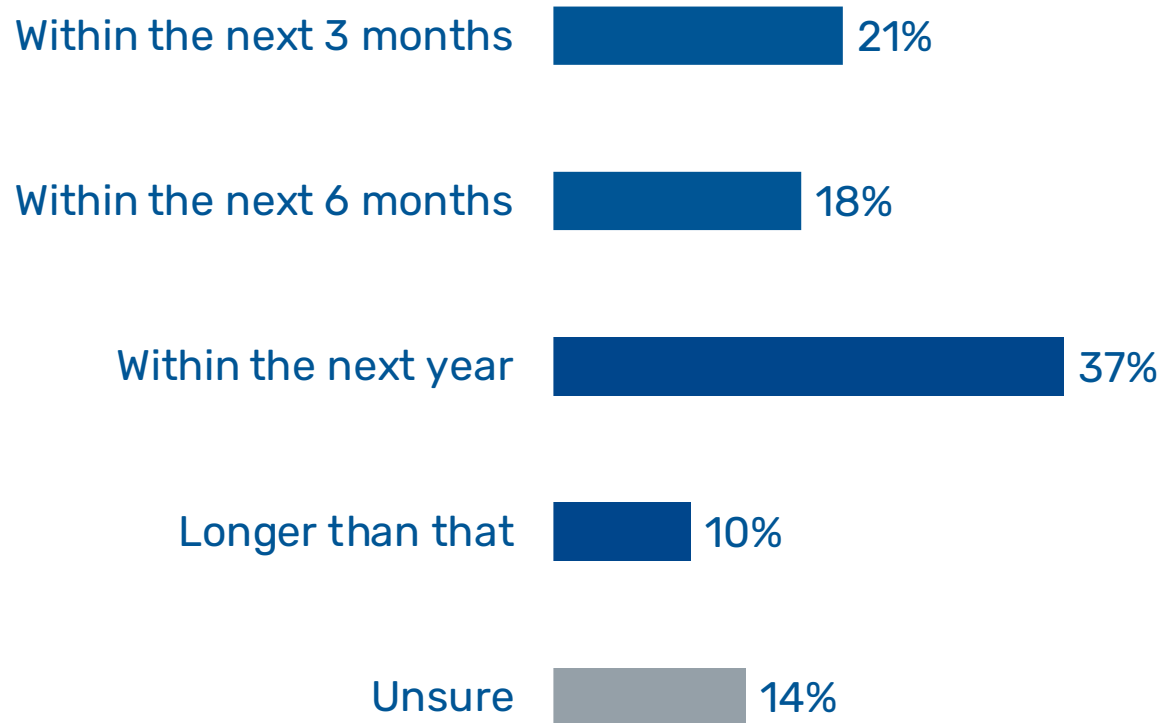
Base: All respondents | MULTIPLE MENTIONS

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# Anticipated Timeline for Changes to Practice



*Please indicate the timeline for those changes to your practice.*



Base: Made/making/considering changes to practice (n=1,253)





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