

Stop Whining About Job Satisfaction

[Editor's Note: If you only read the emailed version of Monday's post on [Student Loan Management for Dual Earners](#), please go back and read the updated version on the web. I made a critical mistake in it that affected recommendations in most of the five listed scenarios. It was corrected within a few hours of publication, but not before the email was sent out.]

Today's guest post comes from [Side Hustle Scrubs](#), with whom I have no financial relationship. It reminds me of a post I read a while back about physician burnout that basically argued that doctors should shut up and quit whining about burnout. The basic gist of it was "Lots of people don't like their jobs. There's a support group for it—it meets on Friday nights at the bar." So while I am very empathetic about physician burnout, its causes, and most importantly its consequences (unhappiness, divorce, suicide, bad patient care etc), I agree with Dr. Side Hustle Scrubs that a bit of perspective really helps sometimes. Medicine is a pretty good job when you step back and take a look at it from an outside perspective.]

Many doctors live in a bubble. Their best friends are doctors. Their [spouse is a doctor](#). Their neighbors are doctors. They spend their free time reading medical journals and [doctor blogs](#). Their vacations are only pseudo-vacations because they go on travel CME or bring work with them while they're gone.

They even listen to the [White Coat Investor Podcast](#) on the drive to the airport.

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After a while in the doctor bubble, you may start to actually believe that doctors have it worse than everyone else. I can assure you as someone who is married to a teacher and has mostly non-doctor friends – their jobs suck too.

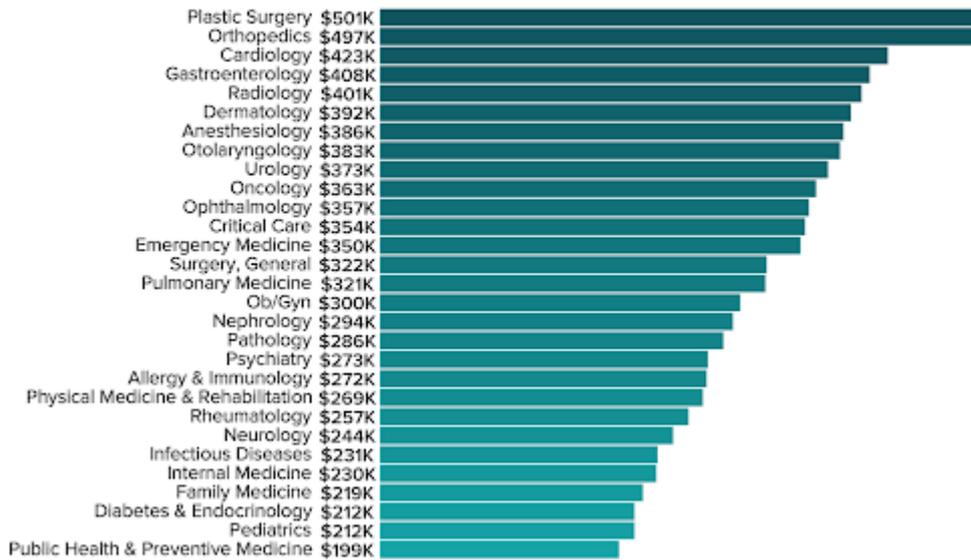
I'm not saying job satisfaction isn't important. It is important and you deserve to find your version of happiness. I'm just saying that before we start bemoaning the [sad state of medicine](#) we should look around and appreciate how good we've got it.

Do you ever find yourself fantasizing about having a different job? Wish you could go back and do it all over again? Let's look at the roads not taken.

You Make More Money Than Everyone

Although there is a [wide range of physician salaries](#), we're doing pretty good as a group. According to the [2018 Medscape Physician Compensation Survey](#), the average specialist earns \$329,000 a year and the average primary care physician earns \$223,000. Let's take a look at how that breaks down by specialty:

Average Annual Physician Compensation by Specialty



No wonder [Physician on FIRE](#) can retire!



You can argue that these figures may be skewed by a few outliers, or that your personal salary doesn't match this data, but these numbers were based on over 20,000 physicians spanning 29 specialties.

Thanks to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), we can see how our salaries compare to just about any other alternative career we may have chosen. Look at some of the things you could have done with your life – lawyer, dentist, airline pilot, engineer, teacher. They are all admirable career paths. I know a lot of doctors who would be freaking out right now if they had to settle for the salary of a sitting US Senator

(\$174,000)! Could you imagine having to scrape by like a Supreme Court Justice? Blech!



Don't whine about your salary either.

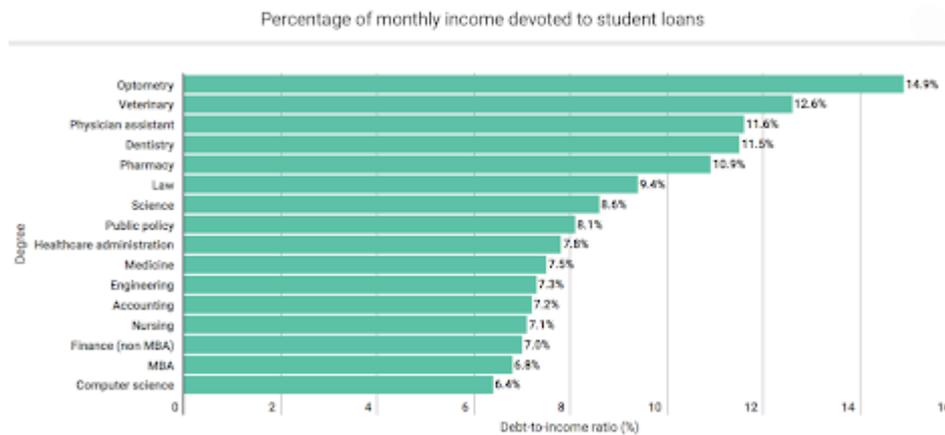
According to the [most recent IRS data](#), to be in the top 5% of incomes you need to earn \$195,778. To be considered in the top 1% of household incomes you need to earn \$480,930. Congratulations! We've made it to the mountaintop! It's all downhill from here.

Other People Have Educational Debt

Believe it or not, other people take out [school loans](#) too. Yes, our loans are a lot larger, but so are our paychecks. A [recent study by Credible.com](#) of 91,000 professionals with graduate degrees looked at what percentage of monthly income each profession had to dedicate to servicing their student loans. We didn't even crack the top half! Of course, if you take White Coat Investor's wise advice to [live like a resident](#)

you'll be dedicating more than 7.5% of your paychecks to [knock those loans out quick](#).

What's a graduate degree worth? Depends on the degree



Source: Analysis of borrowers requesting rates to refinance student loans through Credible.com

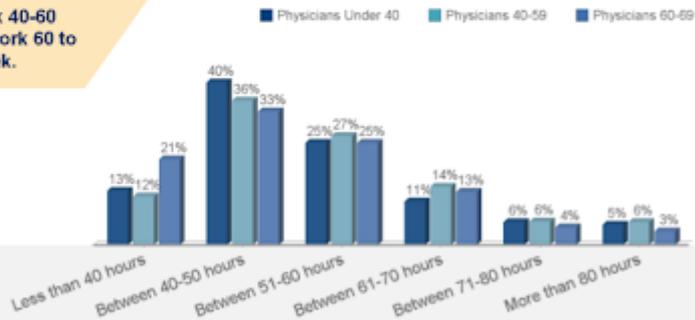
Poor optometrists. You'd think they'd see it coming.

(Most of Us) Don't Work Exorbitant Hours

On a recent podcast, Jim acknowledges that he has found the unicorn of medicine jobs. He works eight eight-hour shifts a month. Although the rest of us aren't quite that lucky, the majority of physicians have work hours similar to a lot of professions. According to the [2014 Work/Life Profiles of Today's U.S. Physician](#) published by AMA Insurance, ~75% of all physicians work less than 60 hours a week.

Which of the following best describes your working hours in a typical week?

While most physicians work 40-60 hours a week, nearly 25% work 60 to more than 80 hours per week.



25% of physicians are clinically insane.

Teachers: The [National Education Association](#) estimates the average teacher works 50 hours a week, including 12 hours of uncompensated school-related activities.

Lawyers: A recent [American Bar Association survey](#) showed that more than half of respondents work at least 50 hours a week, with ~25% working more than 60 hours a week. Does that remind you of any other profession you can think of?

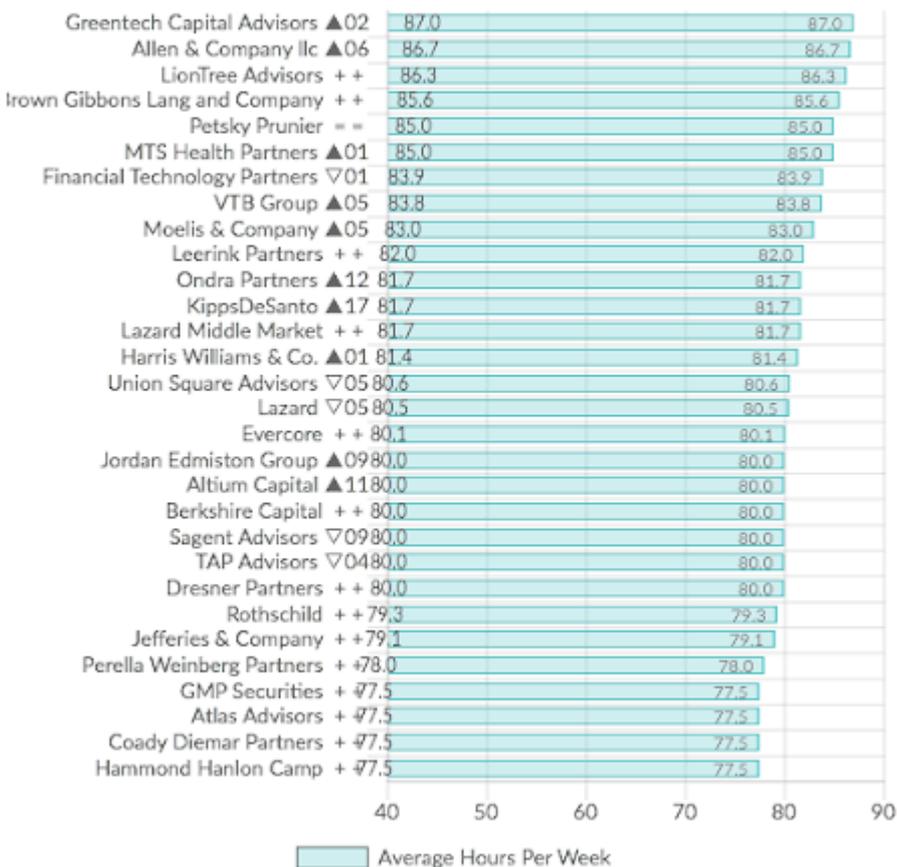
Table 12		
Average Number of Hours Devoted to Legal Work*		
	<i>Percent</i>	
<i>Average Hours / Week</i>	<i>All Respondents (N=782)</i>	<i>Private Practitioners (N=597)</i>
40 or fewer	25.3%	18.9%
41 to 49	13.8	12.7
50	26.2	28.1
51 to 59	12.2	14.1
60 or more	22.5	26.1

*Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Investment Banker: Prepare to feel nauseous or humbled, depending on how empathetic you are. Here is a [Wall Street Oasis survey](#) of average work hours for investment bankers.

MOST AVERAGE HOURS WORKED (1)

How many hours do you work an average?



The AVERAGE investment banker works between 77 and 87 hours per week.

Sure – other jobs may work similar hours, but we work the *undesirable* hours. We work nights, weekends and holidays. Many of us work in a 24/7 specialty that can't simply turn off the lights at 5PM. There's no way a police officer, firefighter, paramedic, nurse, pilot or chef would know what that's like, right?



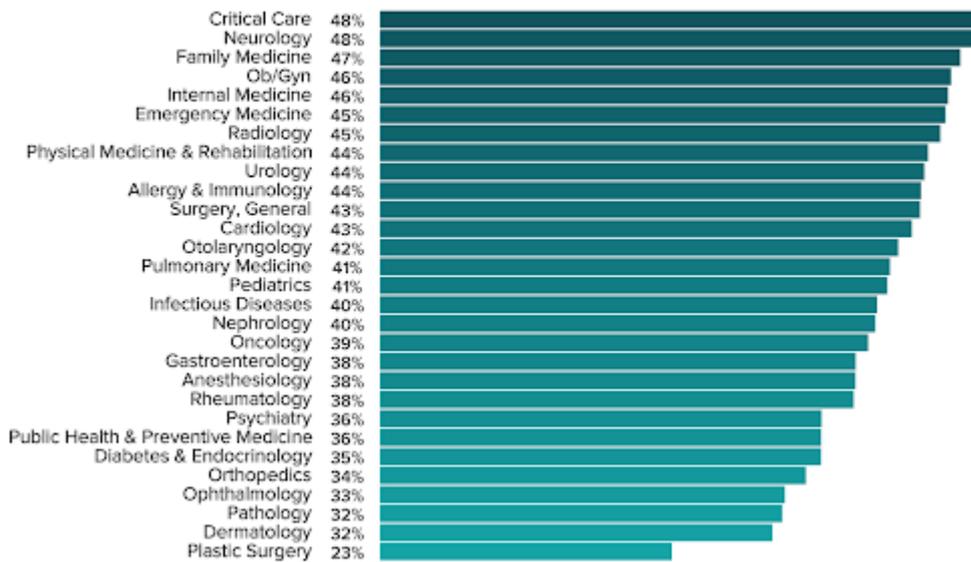
My brother, the chef, has worked some horrific hours over the years. For a while, he was working 14 hour days 6-7 days a week. He often had to show up at 4 AM to start the prep work for the day ahead. Sometimes when I was disimpacting a nursing home patient before sunrise it gave me solace to know that somewhere across town my brother was stuffing a turkey.

Everyone Experiences Burnout

“You just don’t understand. Medicine isn’t what I thought it was going to be. I just don’t have that passion anymore.” You don’t say. I’m sure that everyone else who picked a career path in their 20’s is still filled with unbridled passion.

Here’s a look at the [2018 Medscape Physician Burnout & Depression Report](#):

Which Physicians Are Most Burned Out?



Looks like [Crispy Doc](#) isn't alone.

Surely these grim burnout numbers are unique to medicine. We work way harder than everyone else, right? Let's compare our burnout rates to the rest of the American workforce and see how we stack up.

One [recent Gallop poll](#) reported that 23% of American workers feel burnout "very often" or "always" and an additional 44% feel burnout "sometimes". 67% of workers surveyed experience some degree of career burnout. Every occupation is up in arms about burnout – [teachers](#), [lawyers](#), [IT](#), even [military drone pilots](#). Is it possible that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, regardless of occupation?

Sure, other careers deal with burnout, but physician [suicide is a real problem](#). All this burnout is killing us. [A 2016 study](#) published in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report looked at suicide rates by occupation. Healthcare professionals had a suicide rate of 17.4 per 100,000. That's not good. What's more surprising is that 11 other careers had higher suicide rates than us.

TABLE 2. Rates of suicide per 100,000 population, by sex, and ranked overall by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) group – 17 states, 2012*



SOC code	Occupational group	Overall	Male	Female
45	Farming, fishing, and forestry	84.5	90.5	—1
47	Construction and extraction	53.3	52.5	—
49	Installation, maintenance, and repair	47.9	47.5	—
51	Production	34.5	39.5	10.8
17	Architecture and engineering	32.2	36.3	—
33	Protective service	30.5	34.1	14.1
27	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	24.3	32.9	12.4
15	Computer and mathematical	23.3	32.8	12.5
53	Transportation and material moving	22.3	30.2	4.8
11	Management	20.3	27.4	8.4
23	Legal	18.8	24.2	13.9
29	Healthcare practitioners and technical	17.4	31.6	13.3

Despite the fact that we should presumably be experts on how to die, we're getting shown up by a lot of people. I would expect some creative solutions from engineers, but artists?? Color me surprised.

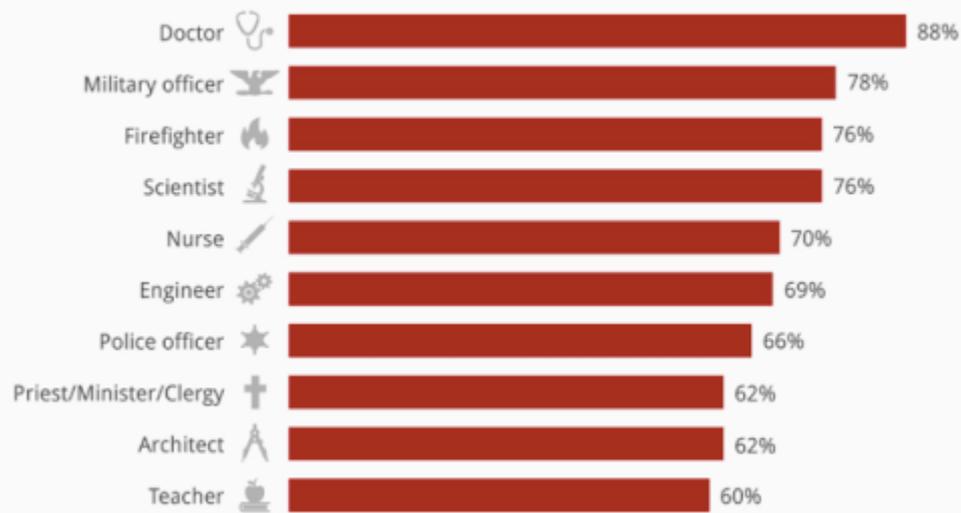
Society Respects You

Isn't it a shame how no one respects doctors anymore? We've been completely replaced by Google and all we have to show for it is that tuning fork you bought in med school and haven't used since. If only we could go back to a simpler time when our profession was held in high regard.

I've got bad news – there's only one direction to go. A [Harris poll](#) surveyed 2,537 Americans and asked them to rank jobs by prestige. Guess who's still killing it (metaphorically).

America's Most Prestigious Professions

% of people finding the following occupations prestigious



n=2,537

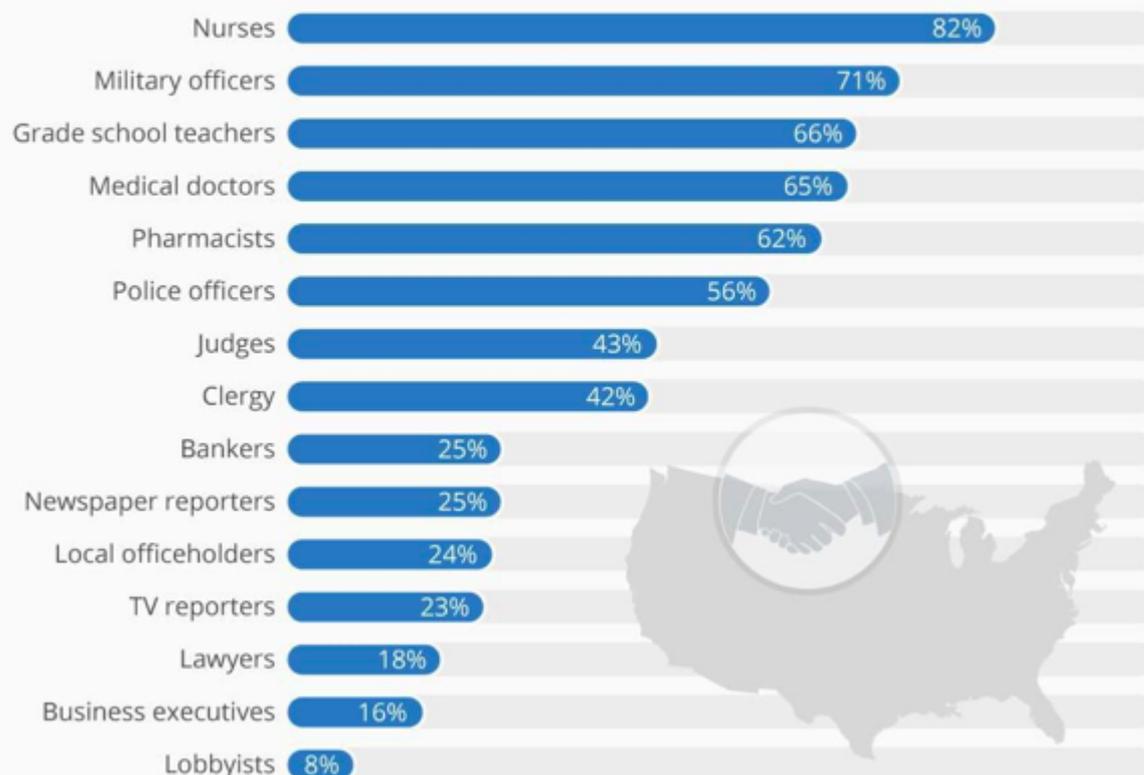
Source: Harris Interactive

statista

Prestige doesn't pay the bills. I want to be respected for my high ethical standards. No problem – a [recent Gallop poll](#) showed that we're still seen as a pretty trustworthy bunch.

America's Most And Least Trusted Professions

% of U.S. adults saying the following have high/very high honesty and ethical standards*



So we're only the 4th most trusted profession. I suppose we'll have to settle for being the highest paid, most respected profession with work hours and burnout rates similar to many Americans.

It's Called Work for a Reason

When I'm in need of inspiration, I like to reflect on the wisdom of one of the greatest minds of the 20th century: Red Foreman of [That 70's Show](#).

"That's why they call it work. If it wasn't work, they'd call it 'super wonderful crazy fun time' or 'skippedy-do'."

Sometimes adulting isn't fun. There is a reason why people get paid to work. No one would show up otherwise. Yes, we have hard jobs. Yes, we had a long road to travel before our first paycheck. Yes, the modern medical system appears to be designed to squeeze every last drop of satisfaction out of the job. This profession still beats 99.9% of the jobs you could have chosen. Good choice!

Stop Whining and Start Changing



Side Hustle Scrubs

This is not intended to be a "shut up and be happy" post. You

do not have to accept the status quo. It's OK to feel burnt out, apathetic, disillusioned or all of the above. You deserve to be happy, but whining isn't going to get you anywhere.

Need some inspiration to make a change? Go check out [10 Things More Productive than Whining About Job Satisfaction \(and the Doctors Who Did Them\)](#) on Side Hustle Scrubs.

Get inspired by physician role models who made meaningful career changes to improve their job satisfaction. *Spoiler alert – White Coat Investor is one of them.

What do you think? Do you think physicians whine more than other professions about their job dissatisfaction? If so, why do you think that is the case? Do we worry about and talk about burnout too much? Sound off below!