

Under the new system, the Not Classified category was introduced as a contingency category for physicians for whom no information is available. Physicians are temporarily assigned to this category until additional follow-up information can be obtained that can ensure proper classification. Also in 1968, as part of the reclassification effort, Fellows were classified in Research rather than in Residency programs to reflect the assessment that a majority of Fellows were engaged in medical research at that time. In 1986, a separate category was added for Clinical Fellows, which previously had been included in Research. (See the “Definitions” section in the Introduction for more information on physician classifications.) In 1994, the separate category of Fellows was discontinued; Fellows were tabulated as Residents/Fellows.

Total US Physicians

Major Categories

Table K demonstrates the total population of physicians in the US, with a numeric distribution of physicians in such major categories as Patient Care, the primary care specialties, school of graduation,

and sex from 1970 to 2010. An analysis of the table reveals that the vast majority of US physicians have remained in Patient Care: 83.4% (1970), 80.5% (1980), and 76.4 (2010). The proportion of female physicians to total physicians has nearly quadrupled between 1970 and 2010, from 7.6% to 30.1%.

Although physicians in the primary care specialties showed a fairly steady decline as a percentage of the total physician population in the 39-year period — 40.2% (1970), 36.5% (1980), 34.7% (1990), 30.9% (2010) — they demonstrated a percentage growth of 126.8% from 134,354 physicians in 1970 to 304,687 physicians in 2010.

Table K also suggests some striking distribution patterns for international and US medical graduates. International Medical Graduates (IMGs), for example, comprised 17.1% of total physicians in 1970, but in 2010, they constituted 25.8%. US medical graduates accounted for 81.0% of all physicians in 1970 and 73.0% four decades later.

Activity

The major professional activity classification of physicians indicates whether a physician is engaged

Table K

Total US Physicians by Major Categories, 1970-2010

Category	1970	1980	1990	2010
Total Physicians*	334,028	467,679	615,421	985,375
Patient Care	278,535	376,512	503,870	752,572
Non-patient Care	32,310	38,404	43,440	42,290
Primary Care†	134,354	170,705	213,514	304,687
Primary Care Subspecialties‡	25,401	16,642	30,911	76,122
Male	308,627	413,395	511,227	688,468
Female	25,401	54,284	104,194	296,907
US Graduates§	270,637	362,307	475,394	719,122
International Med. Graduates	57,217	97,726	131,764	254,396
Canadian Graduates	6,174	7,646	8,263	11,857

*Address Unknown is excluded from all Federal/Nonfederal categories, and Not-Classified, Inactive, and Address Unknown are excluded from Patient Care/Non-patient Care categories.

†Includes General Specialties of Family Practice, General Practice, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics/Gynecology, and Pediatrics.

‡Includes primary care subspecialties as listed in footnote for Family Practice, General Practice, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics/Gynecology, and Pediatrics on Table 4.7.

§Includes graduates from Inactive Schools.

Source: Tables 1.1 and 1.17, and Table 4.1