

DATA CHART

Number of women entering medical school rises after decade of decline

The number of women choosing a career in medicine has begun to rise again after a decade of decline,

data from the Higher Education Funding Council for England show.

Since 1996-97, more women than men have entered medical school, the number increasing steadily between 1996-97 and 2003-04. It rose from 2582 in 1996-97, when women represented 53.4% of those entering medical school, to 4593 in 2003-04, when they represented 60.9% of entrants.

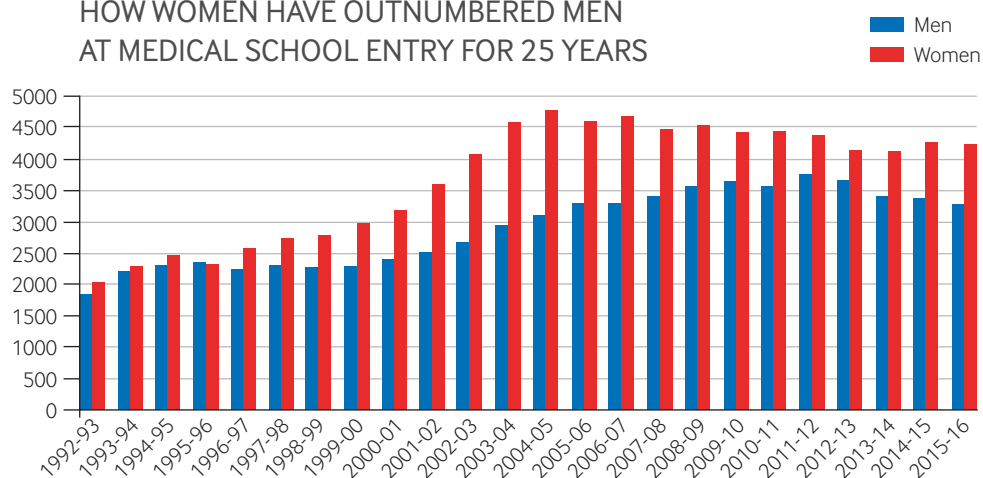
However, over the following decade, between 2003-04 and 2013-14, the number fluctuated year to year. It reached a high of 4768 in 2004-05, when women represented 60.5% of people entering medical school, before gradually declining to 4140 in 2013-14, when they represented 54.8% of entrants.

Over the two years after 2013-14, the number of women rose again, to 4240 in 2015-16, representing 56.4% of those entering medical school that year, the latest period for which these data are available.

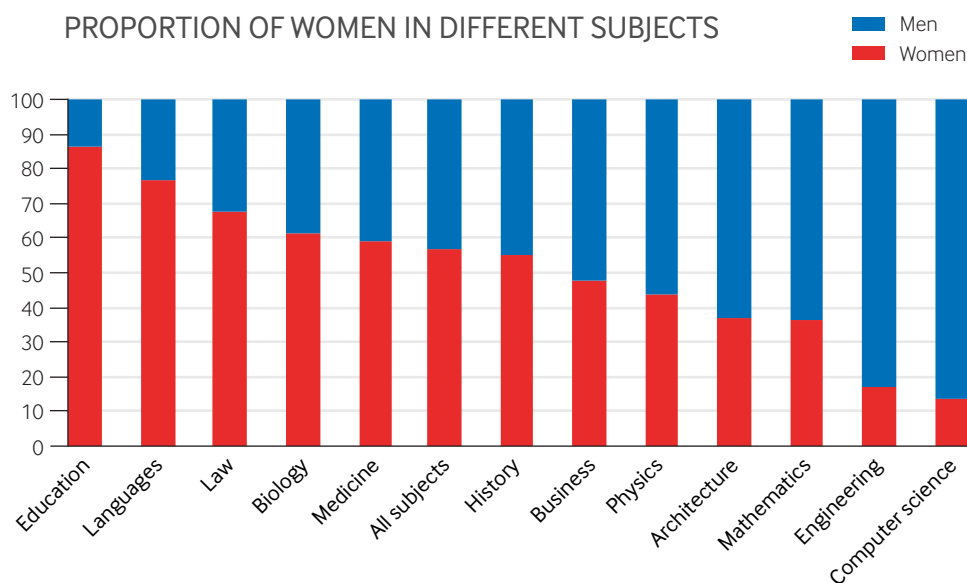
Data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service show that across the UK 59.0% of those accepted to medical school in 2017 were women, compared with 56.7% of those accepted across all subjects.

Women outnumber men on a number of other university courses, including biology, education, history, languages, and law, and as a total across all subjects. But men outnumber women among those studying architecture, business, computer science, engineering, mathematics, and physics.

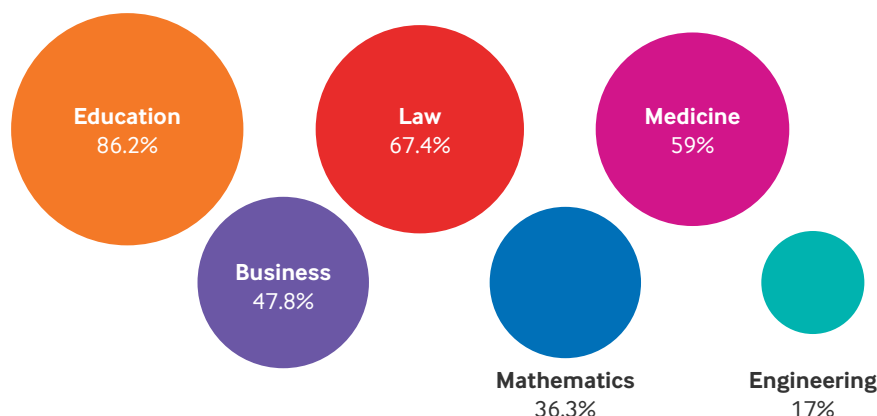
HOW WOMEN HAVE OUTNUMBERED MEN AT MEDICAL SCHOOL ENTRY FOR 25 YEARS



PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT SUBJECTS



PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE WOMEN





Michael Farquhar, 41, would like you to sleep better and is convinced that you can. Consultant in children's sleep medicine at Evelina London Children's Hospital, he argues that people have forgotten how crucial sleep is to physical and mental health. He instructs junior doctors that it may be better to rest than to act the hero—putting their own needs last and risking mistakes. He was inspired to become a paediatrician aged 8 when doctors at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, saved his sister's life from epiglottitis.

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Michael Farquhar Sleep, the best medicine

What was your earliest ambition?

I watched the Space Shuttle *Columbia*'s first launch when I was 4, and I was determined to be an astronaut.

What was your best career move?

One that felt like a disaster at the time. I didn't get a Scottish SpR (specialist registrar) post before Modernising Medical Careers came into effect, so—very reluctantly—I came to England to take up one of the last English paediatric SpR numbers. If I hadn't I probably wouldn't be where I am now.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

Not challenging an aggressive, bullying consultant more strongly, very early in my middle grade career. I was too afraid of the consequences of calling her out.

How is your work-life balance?

I'm working on it. (Practise what I preach, not what I do...)

How do you keep fit and healthy?

Sensible eating and light exercise helped me lose 20 kg in 2017.

What single change would you like to see made to the NHS?

Make it truly independent of politics, funded appropriately to its need.

What do you wish that you had known when you were younger?

That coming out wouldn't end my world: it would start it over again. It gets better.

Do doctors get paid enough?

I don't think that most people working in the NHS are valued enough at present.

What do you usually wear to work?

Shirt (often bright/loud) and trousers; and one of a number of quirky watches.

Which living doctor do you most admire, and why?

As a brand new paediatric SHO in Glasgow I worked for Layla Al-Roomi. She was a force of nature, an outstanding paediatrician, and one of the sharpest diagnosticians I've ever met, who combined empathy and compassion with frank honesty. She was a role model for the sort of paediatrician I aspired to be.

What unheralded change has made the most difference in your field?

The iPhone. It instantly transformed how we live—and affected how we sleep. Persuading people to part with them at bedtime is a regular challenge in clinic.

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?

The 2017 Nobel Prize for Medicine was awarded for work on understanding circadian physiology. Over the next decade we will increasingly realise that we have to think more about our body clocks in understanding health and illness.

What book should every doctor read?

Undying—A Love Story, by Michel Faber (“In late '88, not knowing how lucky I was, / I met a woman who would die of cancer”). Faber's poems, written after his wife's death, are beautiful, honest, insightful, and—ultimately—full of hope.

What is your pet hate?

Untempered cynicism. The world isn't perfect. Sometimes all that we can achieve are small improvements—but they can lead to something bigger.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Something simple: mince and tatties, a good beer.

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