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Occupational therapy labour force 2002–2003

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More comprehensive statistics from the 2002–2003 Occupational Therapy Labour Force Survey and earlier surveys are also available from the Institute's web site.

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Symbols and other usages

Throughout this publication percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Where tables contain a ‘not stated’ category, percentage calculations exclude these figures.

Italics within a table denote a subtotal.

- Nil or rounded to zero
- .. Not applicable
- n.a. Not available
- n.p. Not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality concerns, or other concerns about the quality of the data

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Most importantly we also thank the occupational therapists who took the time to complete the survey.

Main findings

- There are various estimates of the size of the occupational therapy labour force in Australia. The 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing recorded 5,331 employed occupational therapists, while the 2005 ABS Labour Force Survey estimated 7,800. In 2003, membership of the Australian Association of Occupational Therapists (OT Australia) was 4,918. National figures on occupational therapist registrations are unavailable as registration is required in only four states and territories.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), in cooperation with three of the registration boards and OT Australia, surveyed occupational therapists in 2002–2003. A total of 3,769 valid responses were received, of which 3,107 were from persons employed as occupational therapists in Australia.
- As there is no measure of the true size of the occupational therapy labour force and because the scope of the occupational therapy survey varied across jurisdictions (with registered occupational therapists surveyed in three jurisdictions and members of OT Australia in the other five) it is not feasible to weight survey responses. All of the numbers from the AIHW surveys cited in this report refer to respondents only, rather than of all occupational therapists.
- Occupational therapy appears to be predominantly a female occupation, with only 6.4% of the 3,107 employed respondents in 2002–2003 being male.
- The average age of employed occupational therapist respondents in 2002–2003 was 37.0 years.
- Most (86.4%) of the employed respondents worked as clinicians. The other main non-clinical occupational therapy fields were administration/management (6.5%) and training/education (3.9%).
- Employed occupational therapy respondents mainly worked in the public sector (72.0%), with the remainder (28.0%) in the private sector.
- About one-third (31.8%) of employed occupational therapy respondents worked in hospitals. Other main work settings included community health services (21.2%), rehabilitation services (14.0%) and private practice (9.6%).
- Employed occupational therapy respondents reported working an average of 36.2 hours per week, including 3.5 hours per week of unpaid work.
- Part-time working arrangements (less than 35 hours per week) were reported by 35.9% of the respondents, while 11.0% reported working 50 or more hours per week.
- Of employed occupational therapy respondents, 91.1% worked in metropolitan areas (Major city and Inner regional areas). This was a higher figure than the 87.2% of the national population living in those areas at that time.
- The main areas of specialty for the 2,684 respondents classified as occupational therapy clinicians were general rehabilitation (27.9%), developmental disability (18.6%) and general diagnostics (11.7%).
- Four-fifths (79.8%) of the clinician respondents were in salaried positions. The main work settings for this group were hospitals, community health services and rehabilitation services. The other main type of employment was self-employed (10.2%), with most of these respondents working in their own or group practice.