



Information Sheet

Health Human Resources at CIHI captures, maintains and analyzes data on 24 groups of health care professionals in Canada, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists and medical radiation technologists. We offer comprehensive national, provincial and territorial portraits of these groups—including their supply, distribution, migration and other key areas.

Who We Are

Established in 1994, CIHI is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that provides essential information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. Funded by federal, provincial and territorial governments, we are guided by a Board of Directors made up of health leaders across the country.

Our Vision

To help improve Canada's health system and the well-being of Canadians by being a leading source of unbiased, credible and comparable information that will enable health leaders to make better-informed decisions.

Health Human Resources

Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2009

Occupational therapists (OTs) are regulated health care professionals who promote health and well-being by enabling individuals, groups and communities to participate in occupations that give meaning and purpose to their lives.^{i,ii} The concept of occupation refers to “everything that people do during the course of everyday life,”ⁱⁱⁱ such as self-care, play, work, study and leisure.

The Numbers

Supply

- There are 13,122 OTs in Canada, an 11.4% increase from 2006.
- There are 39 OTs per 100,000 Canadians.

Demographics

- Like nurses, occupational therapists tend to be female—only 8% of OTs are male. The gender split varies slightly by province and combined territories, with the highest percentages of male OTs located in Saskatchewan (12.2%) and British Columbia (11.2%).
- Of the various health professions, OTs have the second-highest proportion of women in the workforce (92%). Only regulated nurses have a higher proportion (93.5%).
- Occupational therapists tend to be younger than other health care professionals, with an average age of 38.5.

i. Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, *Occupational Therapy—Definition*, accessed in fall 2009 from <<http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=1344>>.

ii. E. A. Townsend and H. J. Polatajko, *Enabling Occupation II: Advancing an Occupational Therapy Vision for Health, Well-Being and Justice Through Occupation* (Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2007).

CIHI's Definition of the OT Workforce in Canada

The OT workforce is the total number of OTs holding active registrations in Canada who are employed.

About CIHI's Occupational Therapists in Canada Report Series

Occupational Therapists in Canada is an annual report produced by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). It provides the most recent statistics on the occupational therapist workforce, including demographic, geographic, educational and employment information. Analyses are supplemented with detailed information about the data and an explanation of the analytical methods.

The entire report series can be found on our website at www.cihi.ca.

About the Occupational Therapist Database

Since 2006, the Occupational Therapist Database (OTDB) has collected information on the supply and distribution, demographics, geography, education and employment of occupational therapists in Canada.

The provincial regulatory authorities are the primary data collectors for the OTDB. Since OTs are not regulated in the territories, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists provides voluntary membership data for OTs in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Talk to Us

For more information about the database, please send an email to otdb@cihi.ca.

Geography and Mobility

- OTs are concentrated in urban areas, even more so than the general population. Almost all (94.3%) occupational therapists work in urban areas where just 73.0% of the population lives, leaving only 5.7% of OTs in rural areas and small towns to cover the remaining quarter of the population.
- Less than 10% of the OT workforce was educated outside of Canada. The top three countries of graduation are the United Kingdom, the United States and India.

Education

- Between 2006 and 2009, the number of OTs with a baccalaureate in occupational therapy decreased by 10%, while the number of OTs with master's degrees increased by 10.8%.
- Due to changes in entry-to-practice requirements, the age of OTs at graduation from basic education in occupational therapy has increased consistently.
- More than 40% of the OT workforce has additional education outside of occupational therapy. The top three fields of study for these degrees are biomedical sciences, psychology and kinesiology.

Employment

- Most OTs in Canada work for a single employer (82.2%).
- Nearly two-thirds of the OT workforce are employed on a full-time basis.
- Nearly half (45.3%) of the OT workforce work in hospitals, 32% work in the community, 11.6% work in professional practice and 11.1% work in other settings.
- Most (84.0%) OTs are employed as direct service providers, with the remaining primarily working as managers, professional leaders/coordinators, educators and researchers.