



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

Pharmacists in Canada, 2009

Pharmacists are regulated health professionals who assist their clients with medications to safely achieve desired health outcomes at home, in the community and in hospitals. They research and work collaboratively with other health care providers to deliver optimal health care solutions. By incorporating best care principles that are patient-centred, outcome-oriented and evidence-based, their professional practice emphasizes drug therapy management of diseases and symptoms and the promotion of wellness and disease prevention.

The Numbers

Supply

- There are 30,553 pharmacists in Canada, an increase of 13.9% from 2006.
- Nova Scotia has the highest supply per population, at 117 pharmacists per 100,000 population. The Northwest Territories and Ontario have the lowest supplies, at 46 and 79 pharmacists per 100,000 population, respectively.

Demographics

- Gender distribution varies by province, and most pharmacists are female (59.2%). The highest percentage of female pharmacists is in Nova Scotia (69.3%); the lowest is in Newfoundland and Labrador (51.8%).
- Almost 70% of pharmacists older than 60 are male. In contrast, over 70% of pharmacists younger than 30 are female.
- The average age of pharmacists in Canada is 43.6. Ontario has the oldest pharmacists, with an average age of 45.1; the youngest are in New Brunswick, with an average age of 41.6.
- Pharmacists tend to be younger than physicians and nurses but older than many other health professionals, including occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

CIHI's Definition of the Pharmacist Workforce in Canada

The pharmacist workforce is defined as the total number of pharmacists holding active registrations in Canada who are employed.

About CIHI's Pharmacists in Canada Report Series

Pharmacists in Canada is an annual report produced by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). It provides the most recent statistics on the pharmacist 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 Pharmacist Database

Since 2006, the Pharmacist Database (PDB) has collected information on the supply and distribution, demographics, geography, education and employment of pharmacists in Canada.

The provincial regulatory authorities and territorial governments are the primary data collectors for the PDB. In 2009, all provincial regulatory authorities and territorial governments, except those in Quebec and Nunavut, participated in the PDB.

Talk to Us

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

Education

- The majority of pharmacists have a baccalaureate degree (94.2%) as their current level of education.
- Fewer than 5% of the pharmacists in the workforce are classified as new graduates.
- Among the pharmacists in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba, 21.4% are internationally educated.
- The age at which pharmacists graduate has gone up in the last 15 years. Fifteen years ago, more than two-thirds of pharmacists graduating were younger than 25; in recent years, fewer than half were younger than 25 at graduation.
- Most new graduates (89.4%) tend to work as staff pharmacists.

Employment

- Most pharmacists work for a single employer (80.5%).
- Almost two-thirds of pharmacists work as staff pharmacists, while 30.4% work as pharmacy owners or managers.
- More than three-quarters of employed pharmacists work in a community pharmacy. Nearly 20% (18.8%) work in hospitals and other health care facilities.

Geography and Mobility

- Most (87.4%) employers of pharmacists are located in urban areas, while 12.6% are located in rural areas.
- Jurisdictions like Ontario and B.C. have more pharmacists employed in urban areas—93.3% and 92.2%, respectively.
- Less populous jurisdictions, such as the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland and Labrador, have only 43.8% and 61.6% of pharmacists in urban areas, respectively.