

Occupational Therapy workforce survey 2024

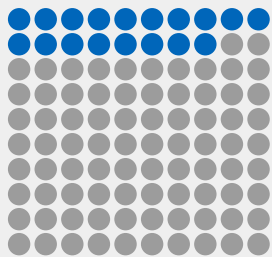
Australia's growing and ageing population has experts predicting our healthcare sector will struggle to meet increasing demand in coming years¹⁻⁶. Ahpra's Workforce Retention and Attrition Project aimed to identify factors linked to the retention and attrition of nine regulated health professions in Australia.

This research can be used by employers as they develop strategies to address the ongoing challenges of health workforce shortages in Australia.

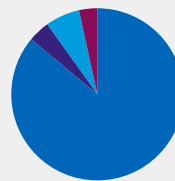
What we did

Ahpra ran an online survey and retrospective analysis of 10 years of occupational therapy registration data (1 December 2014 to 30 June 2023).

What we found



33,256 occupational therapists were contacted
6,006 occupational therapists completed the survey
18% completion rate

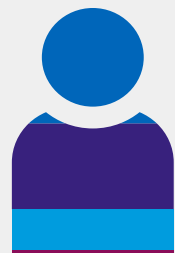


86% plan to stay
4% want to leave
6% are unsure
4% planning to retire



Top 5 reasons to stay included:

66% fulfilling work
60% enjoy the work
57% flexibility and work-life balance
55% sense of achievement
49% mentally stimulating work



47% of those planning to leave will do so immediately
35% within 1 year
16% in 1 to 5 years
2% in more than 6 years



Top 5 reasons to leave (within 5 years) included:

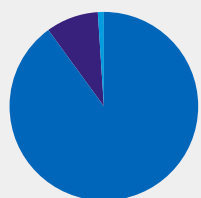
31% mental burnout
30% retirement
26% no longer professionally satisfied
24% work no longer fulfilling
22% feeling undervalued



Since 2014, the number of occupational therapists per 100,000 **increased** by 61%.

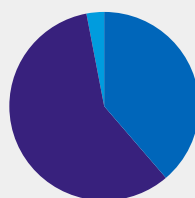
This suggests a growing workforce for occupational therapy.

Who we heard from



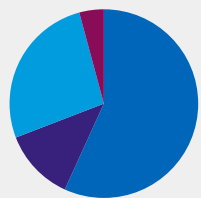
Gender

90% female
9% male
1% non-binary or other



Age

35% under 35 years of age
53% 35–60 years of age
2% over 60 years



Response location

75% metropolitan areas
9% regional
15% rural towns
1% remote



Response location

NSW, QLD, and VIC contributed to **70%** of responses

What makes an occupational therapist less likely to renew?

- Those with *less than 5 years of experience* are between **1.7** and **2.5** times more likely to *not renew* or be *unsure* about renewing their registration compared to those with 11 or more years of experience.
- Those with *further qualifications* are **1.4** times more likely to *not renew* or be *unsure* about renewing their registration compared to those without further qualifications.
- Those who are *60 years or older* are **4.6** times more likely to *not renew* or be *unsure* about renewing their registration compared to those aged 35 to 60.
- Those who are aged *35 to 60 years* are **1.5** times more likely to *not renew* or be *unsure* about renewing their registration compared to those under 35 years.
- *Males* are **1.5** times more likely to *not renew* or be *unsure* about renewing their registration compared to females.

Registration data analysis

- The number of occupational therapists per 100,000 people in Australia **increased 61%** over the ten years from 2014 to 2023.
- The replacement rate~ nearly doubled, rising from **2.0** to **4.1** during this period, and was higher for males (**6.5**) compared to females (**3.9**) in 2023.

What the findings tell us

The overall number of occupational therapists and the replacement rate for the profession increased from 2014 to 2023. This suggests a growing workforce for occupational therapy.

Retention may be improved by addressing factors such as mental burnout, satisfaction and fulfilment from work, and recognition for work.

References

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4. McPake B, Mahal A. Addressing the needs of an aging population in the health system: the Australian case. Health Systems & Reform. 2017;3(3):236–247.
5. Versace VL, Smith T, Sutton K. Beyond the black stump: rapid reviews of health research issues affecting regional, rural and remote Australia. Med J Aust. 2021;215(3):141–141.
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~ Replacement rate = estimate of how many new or returning occupational therapists enter the workforce for each one that leaves