

# Surveying the Profession

## 2010 AOTA Workforce Study Points to Rising Demand for and Commitment to Occupational Therapy

The 2010 AOTA Workforce Study, the latest analysis by AOTA of salary trends, practice areas, higher education plans, and much more about occupational therapy, points to continuing strong demand for the profession. Conducted entirely online, the study collected responses from a total of 9,910 individuals employed in the profession in 2009, compared with more than 3,000 responses received through the mail in 2006, when AOTA last surveyed the profession. Compensation data are based on 2009 to accurately reflect a full year. Presented below are highlights from the survey, an expanded version of which—including detailed demographic data on specific areas of practice, educational background, and compensation data segmented according to multiple criteria—will be available free online to AOTA members in the coming weeks. For more information about the survey, visit the AOTA Web site at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org).

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Occupational therapists (OTs) accounted for 86% of the 2010 respondents, while occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) totaled 14%. Including both OTs and OTAs, 91.6% of 2010 respondents were women, compared with 95.7% in 2006, the last time AOTA conducted a similar survey, and 93.8% in AOTA's 2000 survey. The median age averaged 41 for OTs and 43 for OTAs, down from 42 and 45, respectively, in 2006, suggesting a modest reversal in what had been an aging trend within occupational therapy given that the average age of survey respondents in 2000 was 39 for OTs and 40 for

Primary Work Setting Trends	Occupational Therapists		Occupational Therapy Assistants	
	2010	2006	2010	2006
Academia	5.8%	6.1%	1.8%	1.7%
Community	1.8%	1.6%	3.1%	2.1%
Early Intervention	5.2%	*	1.8%	*
Freestanding Outpatient	10.2%	11.2%	4.3%	3.3%
Home Health	5.9%	7.2%	4.8%	3.3%
Hospital (non-mental health)	28.1%	23.5%	14.4%	17.5%
Long-Term Care/SNF	15.8%	15.4%	45.0%	36.3%
Mental Health	3.0%	3.6%	2.4%	4.2%
Schools	21.7%	29.6%	21.4%	29.6%
Other	2.5%	1.9%	1.1%	2.1%
<i>*Included with Schools for 2006</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%

OTAs. As for the ethnic diversity of the respondents, 88.2% of the overall 2010 sample was white compared with 86.2% in 2006; 3.9% Hispanic versus 1.7% in 2006; and 2.2% black compared with 1.6% previously.

### PRACTICE SETTINGS

More than two thirds of respondents worked at one of three primary settings: 26.2% worked at hospitals (non-mental health) according to the 2010 results, compared with 23% in 2006; 21.6% worked at schools, down from 29.6% in 2006; and 19.9% worked at long-term-care/skilled nursing facilities (LTC/SNFs), up from 17% in 2006. Primary work settings in the 2010 survey also included freestanding outpatient facilities, at 9.3%; home health, at 5.8%; academia, at 5.2%; early inter-

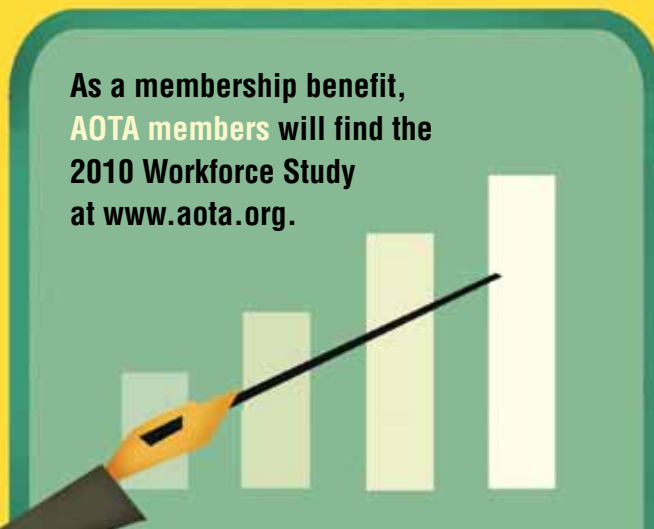
vention, at 4.8%; mental health at 2.9%, and community, at 2%.

For occupational therapists specifically, the top primary work setting was the hospital (non-mental health) category, accounting for 28.1% of respondents, up from 23.5% in 2006; followed by schools at 21.7%, down from 29.6% in 2006; and LTC/SNFs, essentially unchanged at 15.8%. In contrast, LTC/SNFs remained the top primary work setting for occupational therapy assistants at 45%, up from 36.3% in 2006; followed by schools at 21.4%, down from 29.6%; hospitals (non-mental health) at 14.4%, down from 17.5%; and home health at 4.8%, up from 3.3%.

Who controls or owns the settings in which occupational therapy practitioners work today? Overall, private



As a membership benefit,  
AOTA members will find the  
2010 Workforce Study  
at [www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org).



## Median Annual Salary Comparison by Practice Setting

Practice Setting	Occupational Therapists			Occupational Therapy Assistants		
	2010	2006	% increase	2010	2006	% increase
Academia	\$70,060	\$66,000	6.2%	\$52,000	\$46,000	13.0%
Community	\$68,000	\$58,250	16.7%	\$44,000	\$35,000	25.7%
Early Intervention	\$59,850	*		\$35,000	*	
Freestanding Outpatient	\$64,000	\$57,000	12.3%	\$41,800	\$32,000	30.6%
Home Health	\$68,000	\$55,000	23.6%	\$52,000	\$45,000	15.6%
Hospital (non-mental health)	\$64,480	\$58,000	11.2%	\$42,000	\$41,000	2.4%
Long-Term Care/SNF	\$70,000	\$58,000	20.7%	\$48,942	\$40,000	22.4%
Mental Health	\$65,000	\$53,750	20.9%	\$43,500	\$39,000	11.5%
Schools	\$58,201	\$50,500	15.3%	\$34,000	\$31,075	9.4%
Other	\$67,122	\$62,000	8.3%	\$41,592	\$41,500	0.2%

\*Included with Schools for 2006

for-profit organizations employed 38.1% of respondents, followed by private nonprofit organizations, at 34%, and the government, at 25.6%. The government as an employer continued to decline for both OTs, at 26.5% in 2010 compared with 29.4% in 2006, and OTAs, at 20% in 2010 versus 23.8% in 2006. For OTAs, the most significant change in employers was private for-profit organizations, which employed 51.1% of OTA respondents in 2010, up from 40.2% in the 2006 study.

### CLIENT INTERVENTIONS

Overall, adults age 65 years of age or older were the primary age group seen by 35.9% of 2010 respondents, up from 29.6% in 2006. Children age 3 to 21 years were the second most prevalent primary age group treated, at 32.2% of

respondents, down slightly from 35.1% previously. This was followed by adults 21 to 64 years, at 15.7%, down from 16.7%, and infants up to 3 years, at 4.4%, down from 5.6%. Children 3 to 21 years were the top primary age group treated by occupational therapists, at 33.2%, followed by adults 65 years or older, at 32.5%, and adults 21 to 64 years, at 17.1%. For occupational therapy assistants, 55.2% primarily treated adults age 65 or older, 26% treated children 3 to 21 years, and 7.9% primarily treated adults 21 to 64 years.

### COMPENSATION TRENDS

For full-time occupational therapists, the median annual salary was \$64,722, though annual salaries ranged from a median of as high as \$90,000 within the 90th percentile to as low as \$45,000

within the 10th percentile. For full-time occupational therapy assistants, the median annual salary was \$44,000, with the 90th percentile reporting a median salary of \$63,000 annually and the 10th percentile reporting \$27,429 a year. Occupational therapists working a standard part-time schedule received a median hourly wage of \$34, while occupational therapy assistants on a standard part-time schedule received a median hourly wage of \$22.60. From 2006 to 2010, compensation for full-time occupational therapists rose 16%, from a median base salary of \$55,800 to \$64,722. For full-time occupational therapy assistants, the median base salary rose 15.8%, from \$38,000 to \$44,000.

Not surprisingly, compensation for the 2010 survey respondents varied

according to total years in the profession, region of the country and location type (urban, suburban, or rural), highest degree held within the profession, primary work setting, AOTA membership status, and more. For example, occupational therapists reported the highest median annual salary in academia, at \$70,060, followed by LTC/SNF settings, at \$70,000, and home health and community settings, tied at \$68,000. For occupational therapy assistants, the most lucrative practice settings were academia and home health settings, at \$52,000, followed by LTC/SNF settings at \$48,942, and community settings, at \$44,000 a year.

Occupational therapists in home health settings recorded the highest percentage increase in median annual salary from 2006 to 2010, at 23.6%, while those in academia encountered the lowest, at 6.2%. For occupational therapy assistants, freestanding outpatient settings accounted for the fastest increase in annual salary, at 30.6%, while the hospitals (non-mental health)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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category provided the lowest average increase, 2.4%.

Experience appears to lead to fairly modest increases in pay, with occupational therapists with more than 25 years of experience reporting a median annual salary of \$73,226 in the 2010 survey; those with 14.1 to 20 years of experience reporting \$69,000; those with 4.1 to 6 years \$60,000; and those with 0 to 1 years of experience \$52,000. OTA median salaries ranged from \$49,650 for those with more than 25 years of experience to \$45,000 for those with 4.1 to 6 years of experience to \$34,298 for those with less than 1 year of experience.

Occupational therapists with a certificate received a median annual salary of \$70,410, while a bachelor's degree correlated with a \$68,450 median annual salary, a master's with \$60,000, an OTD with \$69,750, and a PhD with \$76,000. Occupational therapy assistants with a certificate reported a median annual salary of \$49,000, while those with an associate's degree earned \$43,680, with a bachelor's \$44,500, and with a master's \$65,000. Occupational therapists who were AOTA members reported a median annual salary of \$66,000 compared with \$60,000 for nonmembers. Occupational therapy assistants with AOTA membership earned a median annual salary of \$45,139 compared with \$41,800 for nonmembers.

Which states average the highest wages? Occupational therapists in California and Mississippi tied for first, with a median annual salary of \$75,000; followed by Nevada at \$71,902; New Jersey at \$71,000; and Connecticut and Texas at \$70,000. For occupational therapy assistants, Delaware was tops,

## Median Salaries by Region and Percent Increase Since 2006

### Mountain

**OT** Median Salary: **\$61,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +22.0%

**OTA** Median Salary: **\$43,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +50.4%

### North Central

**OT** Median Salary: **\$60,497**

Percent Change Since 2006: +14.1%

**OTA** Median Salary: **\$41,350**

Percent Change Since 2006: +6.0%

### Northeast

**OT** Median Salary: **\$64,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +16.4%

**OTA** Median Salary: **\$41,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +15.5%

### Pacific

**OT** Median Salary: **\$70,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +16.5%

**OTA** Median Salary: **\$48,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +20.0%

### South Central

**OT** Median Salary: **\$66,800**

Percent Change Since 2006: +11.3%

**OTA** Median Salary: **\$49,764**

Percent Change Since 2006: +24.4%

### South Atlantic

**OT** Median Salary: **\$66,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +12.7%

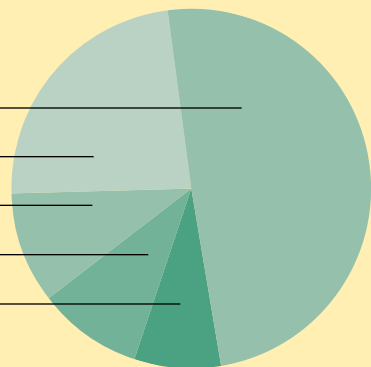
**OTA** Median Salary: **\$48,000**

Percent Change Since 2006: +14.3%

## Time Allocation

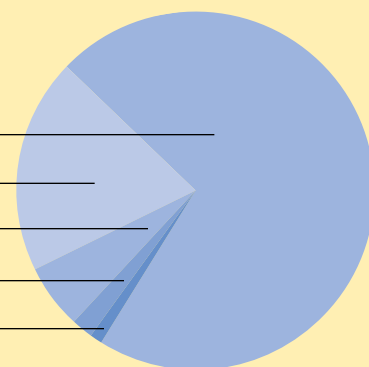
### Academia

Teaching	49.5%
Other	23.4%
Research	10.1%
Service	9.4%
Scholarship	7.6%



### All Other Settings

Direct client intervention/treatment	71.6%
Indirect/administration	19.3%
Consultation	6.0%
Other	1.8%
Research	1.3%



at \$58,240, followed by California at \$55,000, New Jersey at \$54,236, and Texas at \$54,000.

### PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT

Notable given the protracted downturn in the economy was the particularly strong perception by 2010 survey respondents of the health of the OT job market, with 87.8% of respondents overall labeling it either “strong” or “good,” 10.7% classifying it as “fair,” and just

1.5% of respondents declaring the job market either “weak” or “critical.” Unemployment rates in the 2010 study versus 2006 study were little changed, with 7% of occupational therapists in 2010 reporting unemployment at some point in 2009 compared with 7.8% in 2005, and with 10.8% of occupational therapy assistants unemployed at some point in 2005 compared with 10.2% in 2005.

Lastly, the commitment to remaining in the profession appeared to be higher

than ever, with 92.2% of respondents stating they have no plans to leave occupational therapy, compared with 87.4% in 2006. For those seeking to switch jobs with the field, the top reason continued to be the wish to work in a more desirable/flexible employment setting, at 42.8% in 2010 compared with 46.9% in 2006, followed by better salary/benefits, at 31.7% in 2010 compared with 29.8% in 2006. ■

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