

Press release

For immediate release

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Annual membership census reveals global state of the physiotherapy profession

Responses to the latest World Physiotherapy annual membership census reveal the current state of physiotherapy around the world and gender balance within the global profession.

World Physiotherapy publishes data from its member organisations every year on a range of issues, including professional regulation, practice, education, and the number of employed physiotherapists. This data provides a comprehensive and valuable global profile of the profession.

The annual membership census also included questions about gender and leadership and the governance of World Physiotherapy's member organisations.

The annual membership census date was 30 June 2021.

The census was sent to World Physiotherapy's 125 member organisations, of which 117 responded. The high response rate, 94% (2020: 91%), demonstrates strong engagement between World Physiotherapy and its member organisations and data reliability. The data gives a global snapshot of the physiotherapy profession across the world, showing variations in the density of physiotherapists in different countries/territories and between World Physiotherapy regions. Highlights of the 2021 census include:

- 61% of respondents said membership of their organisation had increased
- 31% of respondents (2020: 27%) said there was full direct access in their country/territory and people could refer themselves to a physiotherapist without a referral, to public health systems and to private practice
- in 80% of countries/territories, physiotherapists can provide telehealth services but many of them do not have the appropriate recognition and payment for this service
- globally, 62% of physiotherapists are women and 42% of World Physiotherapy member organisations have female presidents or chairs
- globally, 687,623 physiotherapists (35% of 1,901,585 physiotherapists around the world) are members of their national physiotherapy association, an increase of 29,190 physiotherapists compared with 2020

World Physiotherapy chief executive officer Jonathon Kruger said: “The responses to the surveys from our member organisations are critical to the understanding the current state of physiotherapy around the world and how it is evolving over time. This year we have asked our member organisations about gender balance to understand more about diversity and inclusion within the global profession.”

The profile maps, which are developed from responses to the annual membership census, allow people to see how the global profession has evolved since 2013. The maps are an interactive resource that can be printed or downloaded and can be accessed [here](#).

Feedback from World Physiotherapy member organisations has been overwhelmingly positive:

“Thank you for the information and the data.

“It will be useful for us to have these maps and the data to use in future negotiations with political stakeholders.”

[Association of Physiotherapists in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

“Being a member of World Physiotherapy since January 2021 has brought us an amazing year. The increase in the number of members is a positive sign of how the Vietnam Physical Therapy Association is developing, and helps motivate us to run more activities to advance the profession.”

[Vietnam Physical Therapy Association](#)

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EDITOR'S NOTES

About physiotherapy

Physiotherapists are experts in developing and maintaining people's ability to move and function throughout their lives. With an advanced understanding of how the body moves and what keeps it from moving well, they promote wellness, mobility and independence. They treat and prevent many problems caused by pain, illness, disability and disease, sport and work related injuries, ageing and inactivity.

Physiotherapists are educated over several years, giving them a full knowledge of the body's systems and the skills to treat a wide range of problems. This education is usually university-based, at a level that allows physiotherapists to practise independently. Continuing education ensures that they keep up to date with the latest advances in research and practice. Many physiotherapists are engaged in research themselves.

About World Physiotherapy

World Physiotherapy is the profession's global body representing over 685,000 physiotherapists from member organisations in 125 countries/territories. More information: www.world.physio

