



World Physiotherapy

**A GLOBAL
REPORT**

**ANNUAL
MEMBERSHIP
CENSUS**

2021

World Physiotherapy collects data and information from its member organisations.

Since 2017, the data collection has taken place on an annual basis, providing comparisons at a national, regional and global level. World Physiotherapy and its member organisations use this data to influence policy decisions around health, health service delivery, human resource planning, and education – and to show variations in the density of physiotherapists in different parts of the world and across World Physiotherapy regions.

In this year's census, 125 World Physiotherapy member organisations were sent an online survey, which included questions about:

- number of
 - individual members for the World Physiotherapy member organisation
 - practising physiotherapists
 - entry level and physiotherapy programmes
- professional name used
- special interest groups
- publications and conferences
- how they communicate with their membership
- professional practice
- telehealth
- direct access
- sources of funding
- regulation
- governance



687,623

physiotherapists were represented by World Physiotherapy in 2021 through its member organisations.

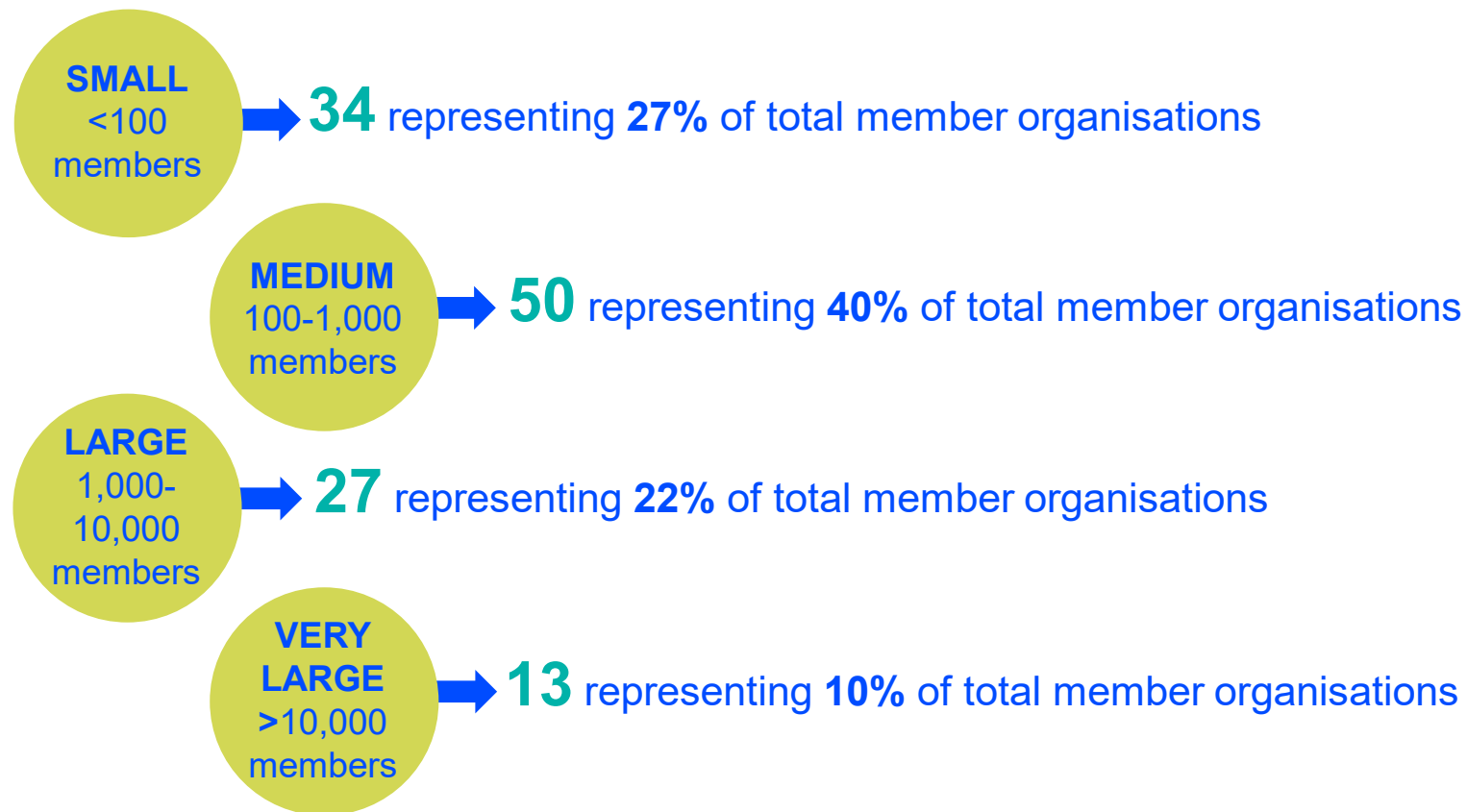
This is an **increase of 29,190** physiotherapists compared with 2020.

35%

of the global number of **physiotherapists** were a **member of a World Physiotherapy** member organisation in 2021.

The global number of physiotherapists was **1,901,585**.

SIZE OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS



82% of the total membership globally is represented by the very large member organisations

61%



of member organisations reported an **increase** in the number of their individual members

9%



of member organisations reported **no change** in the number of their individual members

27%



of member organisations reported a **decrease** in the number of their individual members, most of them have 1,000 members or less. Only one of the very large member organisations reported a decrease (5%) in the number of their individual members

There are, on **average, 3.9 physiotherapists for every 10,000 people across the world**. However, this varies widely across World Physiotherapy's five regions: 12.8 in Europe, 8.6 in North America Caribbean, 7.3 in South America, 1.6 in Asia Western Pacific, 0.2 in Africa. This highlights the unmet need for the physiotherapy workforce globally, which is more significant in low and middle income countries/territories.

Despite the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of member organisations **reported significant growth** in their individual members. Some of the factors that influenced this increase included:

- fostering **relationships with physiotherapy entry level education students** to show the added value of membership, so they look to become members on graduation
- using **digital communications and social media** to promote the activities of the member organisation and highlighting advocacy and campaign successes
- **addressing membership needs** in different fields (for example, economic, education), creating resources or adapting existing materials
- advocating for the physiotherapy profession during the COVID-19 pandemic (for example, access to vaccination programmes and recognition as frontline workers)

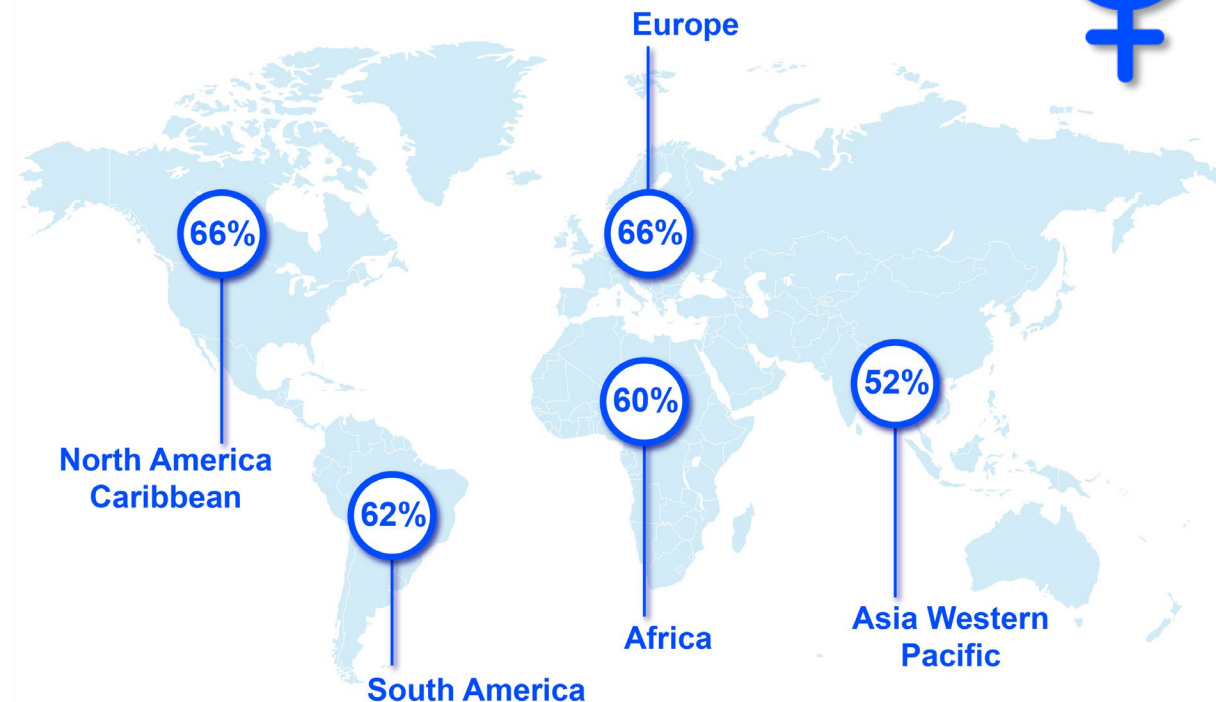
59%

of the individual
members of World
Physiotherapy member
organisations are
female

62%

of practising
physiotherapists
globally are female

PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE PHYSIOTHERAPISTS GLOBALLY BY REGION



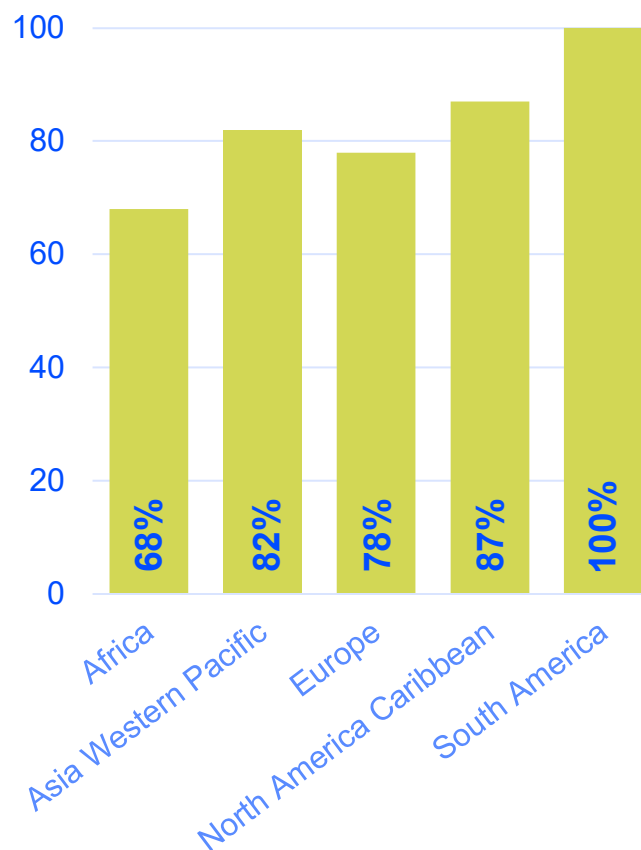
There are **more women than men** employed as physiotherapists around the world. However, **48% of board members** with World Physiotherapy member organisations are female and, globally, **42% of World Physiotherapy member organisations have female presidents or chairs.**

One of the **impacts of the COVID-19** pandemic has been a change in the delivery of physiotherapy services, for example, the provision of **telehealth**.

The ability of health systems to facilitate access to telehealth has been of critical importance. A growing body of evidence suggests telehealth can be **safe, cost-effective**, and, in some cases, provide **better outcomes than face-to-face care**.

A number of member organisations have advocated for telehealth services, and for their inclusion within the scope of practice for physiotherapists.

PERCENTAGE OF COUNTRIES/ TERRITORIES THAT ALLOW PHYSIOTHERAPISTS TO PROVIDE TELEHEALTH SERVICES BY REGION



The number of countries/territories where physiotherapists are allowed to provide telehealth services has increased by **12%** in the last year (2021: 94, 2020: 78).

This has been especially relevant in the Asia Western Pacific region where this has increased by **19%**.

Direct access and patient self-referral refer to the circumstances where physiotherapy services are available to patients/clients without needing a referral. **Direct access is a key advocacy goal** for many World Physiotherapy member organisations who consider this a key pathway to achieving **professional independence and recognition** in a country/territory.

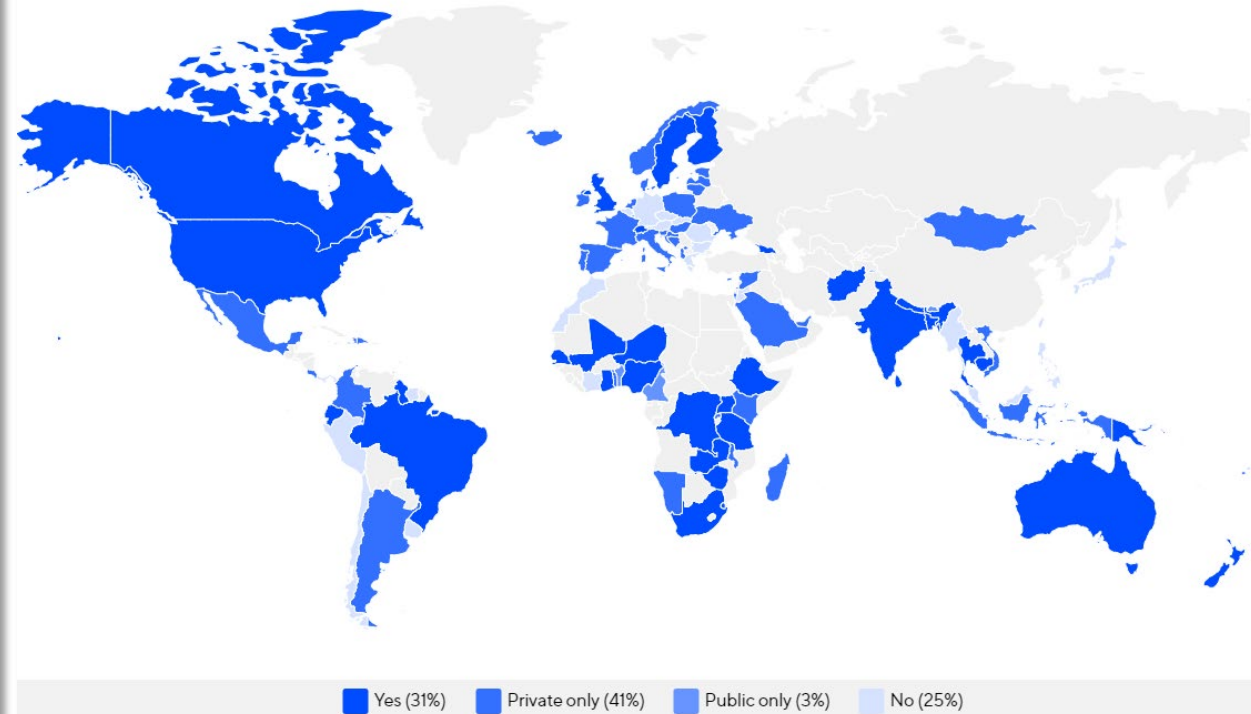
According to a WHO report on disability, “international, regional, and national policy and legislation can help meet the health care needs of people with disabilities where political will, funding, and technical support accompany implementation”. A growing body of evidence suggests that **direct access to physiotherapy treatment is cost-effective for public health systems**, especially in primary care and related to musculoskeletal conditions.

There are different categories in which the type of direct access can be analysed:

- no direct access at all
- direct access only in public health system
- direct access only in private practice
- full direct access

World Physiotherapy **advocates for the right of those seeking physiotherapy services to self-refer to a physiotherapist** if they so desire, and believes that this right promotes the autonomy of users of physiotherapy services and enables fair and equitable access to such services.

COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

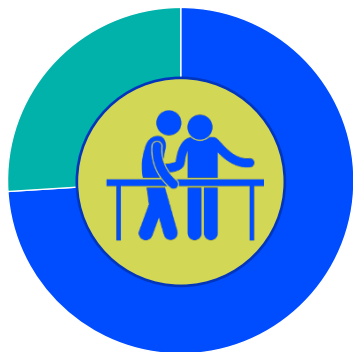


Across the globe, **31%** of countries/territories have **full direct access** (28% in 2020) and **41%** have direct access only in **private practice**. Since 2019, the number of countries/territories reporting full direct access to physiotherapy services has increased from 32 to 36.

In contrast, **25%** of World Physiotherapy member organisations reported **no direct access** (27% in 2020).

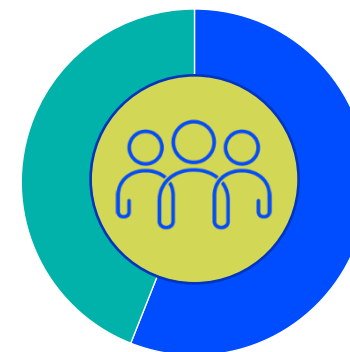
74%

of respondents said **special interest groups** were recognised in their country/territory interest groups are recognised



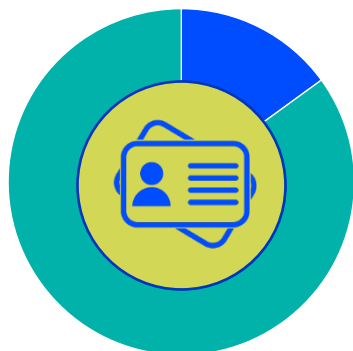
56%

of respondents said there was **support personnel** working with physiotherapists in their country/territory



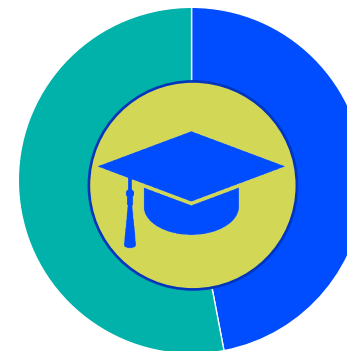
15%

of respondents said a physiotherapist has to be a **member of their national association** to practice in their country/territory



47%

of respondents said physiotherapist have access to **PhD programmes** in their country/territory



Africa region		Asia Western Pacific region		Europe region		North America Caribbean region	South America region
Benin	Uganda	Afghanistan	Saudi Arabia	Albania	Kosovo	Bahamas	Argentina
Cameroon	Zambia	Australia	Singapore	Austria	Latvia	Barbados	Brazil
Congo (Democratic Republic)	Zimbabwe	Bahrain	Sri Lanka	Belgium	Lebanon	Bermuda	Chile
Eswatini		Bangladesh	Taiwan	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lithuania	Canada	Colombia
Ethiopia		Bhutan	Thailand	Bulgaria	Luxembourg	Curaçao	Costa Rica
Ghana		Cambodia	United Arab Emirates	Croatia	Malta	Dominican Republic	Ecuador
Ivory Coast		Fiji	Vietnam	Cyprus	Netherlands	Guyana	Mexico
Kenya		Hong Kong		Czech Republic	Norway	Haiti	Peru
Madagascar		India		Denmark	Palestine	Jamaica	Uruguay
Malawi		Indonesia		Estonia	Poland	Panama	
Mali		Japan		Finland	Portugal	Puerto Rico	
Mauritius		Korea (Republic of)		France	Romania	St Lucia	
Morocco		Kuwait		Georgia	Slovakia	Suriname	
Namibia		Macau		Germany	Slovenia	Trinidad and Tobago	
Niger		Malaysia		Greece	Spain	United States	
Nigeria		Mongolia		Hungary	Sweden		
Rwanda		Myanmar		Iceland	Switzerland		
Senegal		Nepal		Ireland	Syria		
South Africa		New Zealand		Israel	Ukraine		
Tanzania		Papua New Guinea		Italy	United Kingdom		
Togo		Philippines		Jordan			

The annual membership census was sent to 125 member organisations, of which 117 responded, representing a **94% response rate**, up from 92% in 2020.

This increased response rate demonstrates strong engagement between World Physiotherapy and its member organisations.



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DISCLAIMER

- The data in this report is based on responses to the annual membership census sent to World Physiotherapy's member organisations.
- In 2021 the annual membership census was sent to 125 member organisations, of which 117 responded, representing a 94% response rate. The census date was 30 June 2021.
- Some data in this report has been collated from other sources available to World Physiotherapy.
- If you have any questions or concerns, or want to make changes to your country's data, please contact membershipcensus@world.physio.