

# ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CENSUS

## 2023



World  
Physiotherapy



## GLOBAL REPORT



In this year's annual membership census (AMC), 127 World Physiotherapy member organisations were sent an online survey, which included questions about:

- number of
  - individual members for the World Physiotherapy member organisation
  - practicing physiotherapists
  - entry level and physiotherapy programmes
- professional name used
- leadership roles by gender
- special interest groups
- publications and conferences
- how they communicate with their membership
- professional practice
- telehealth
- direct access and its limitations
- sources of funding
- regulation
- governance
- health emergency preparedness and response
- perception of the physiotherapy profession

**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  
2023

**603,343**

physiotherapists were represented  
by World Physiotherapy through its member  
organisations.

**1,962,741**

is the **global number of physiotherapists**,

**31%**

of these **physiotherapists** are **members of a  
World Physiotherapy member organisation**.

## SIZE OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

**S**

**SMALL:**

<100 members

**30**

representing

**24%**

of total member  
organisations

**M**

**MEDIUM:**

100-1,000 members

**52**

representing

**41%**

of total member  
organisations

**L**

**LARGE:**

1,000-10,000 members

**31**

representing

**24%**

of total member  
organisations

**XL**

**VERY LARGE:**

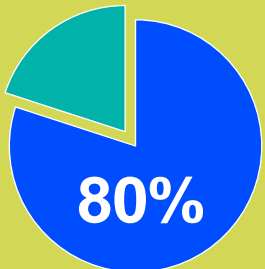
>10,000 members

**14**

representing

**11%**

of total member  
organisations



of the **total membership  
globally** is collectively  
**represented by the  
very large member  
organisations**



The number of medium, large and very large  
member organisations has **increased from last  
year**, demonstrating the great work done by many of  
our member organisations in recruiting and  
maintaining their membership.



3.6

physiotherapists, on average, for every 10,000 people across the world.

However, this varies widely across World Physiotherapy's five regions:

13.5

Europe

7.9

South America

6.4

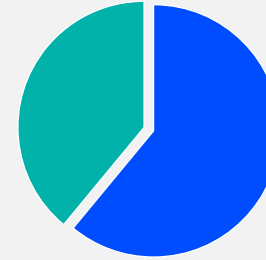
North America  
Caribbean

1.6

Asia  
Western Pacific

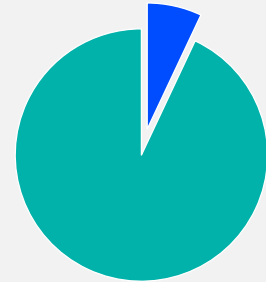
0.3

Africa



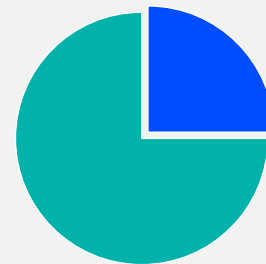
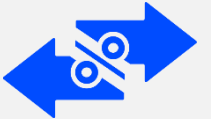
61%

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



7%

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

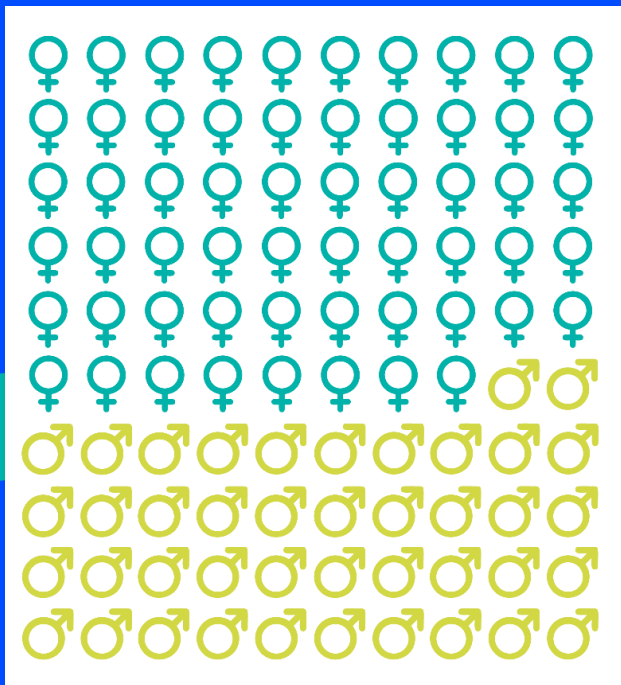


25%

of member organisations reported a **decrease** in the number of their individual members

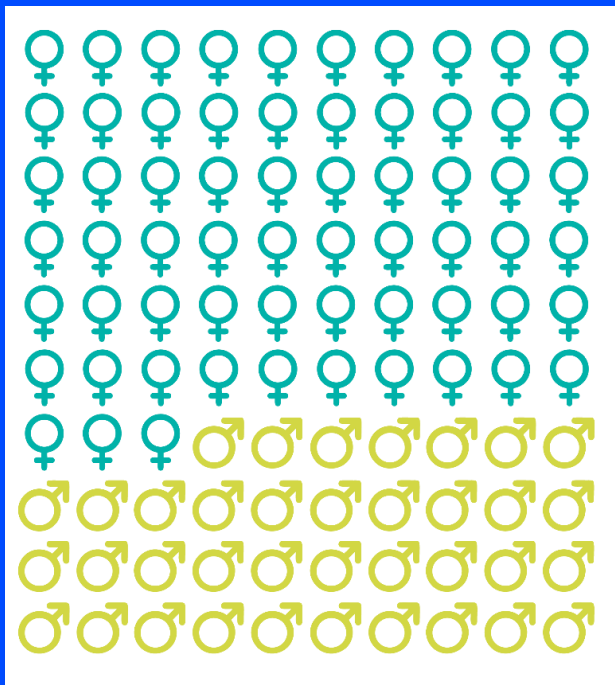


# GLOBAL | GENDER AND LEADERSHIP



**58%**

of the individual **members of World Physiotherapy member organisations** are female



**63%**

of the **global physiotherapy workforce** is female

However, in relation to the physiotherapy workforce, there are variations between the five regions ranging from **70% female members** of World Physiotherapy member organisations in the **Africa region** to **53%** in the **Asia Western Pacific region**.

Although there are more women than men in the global physiotherapy workforce and in member organisations:

**48%**

of **board members** with World Physiotherapy member organisations are **female**



**43%**

of World Physiotherapy member organisations globally have **female presidents or chairs**



Only **14%** of member organisations state having specific **policies** or programmes to support **women in leadership** roles.



**>3,900**

physiotherapist **entry level education** programmes globally



**126,000**

is the estimated number of **physiotherapy students** **graduated** worldwide during the last academic year

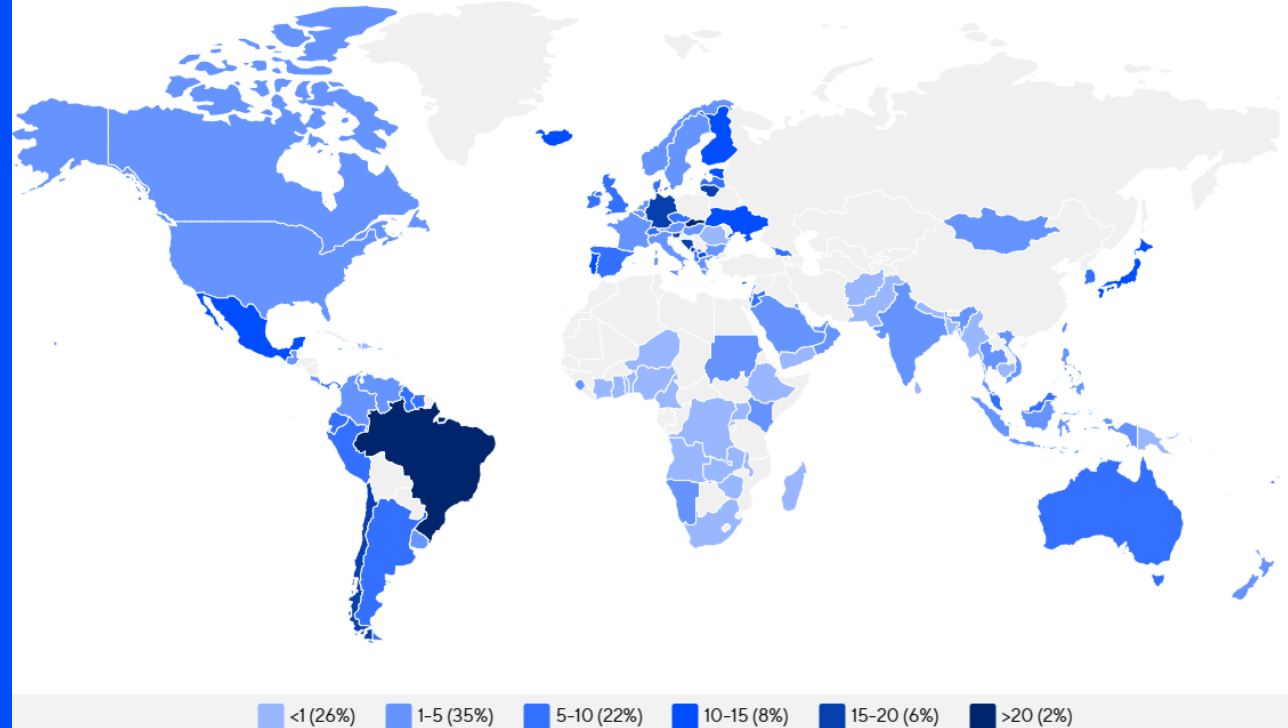
Access to a **PhD programme** is one way of **assessing the development of the profession** at a national level, specifically in academic fields.



Of the respondents, **46%** said there was **access to PhD programmes in their country/territory**, although this varies across the world ranging from 76% of countries/territories with access to PhD programmes in the Europe region to 17% in the Africa region.

**Europe and NAC regions** have **increased** the number of countries/territories with access to PhD programmes by **4%** since 2020.

## NUMBER OF ENTRY LEVEL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES PER 5,000,000 POPULATION



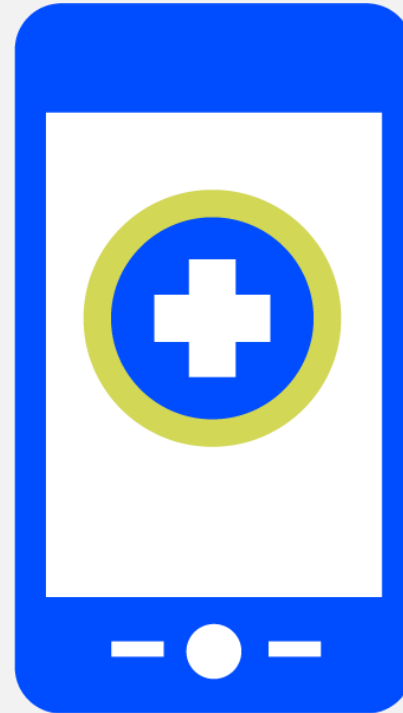
Entry level education programmes are the **foundations of every healthcare profession** and can offer insights into the development of a profession in a particular location.





99%

of AMC respondents reported physiotherapists are **allowed to provide services via telehealth.**



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

24%

**increase** in the last four years (since 2020), in the **number of countries/territories** where physiotherapists are allowed to **provide services via telehealth.**





Direct access and patient self-referral are the circumstances where patients/clients can access physiotherapy services without having to see another health provider first. **Direct access is a key advocacy goal** for many World Physiotherapy member organisations who consider this a critical pathway to achieving **professional independence and recognition** in a country/territory.

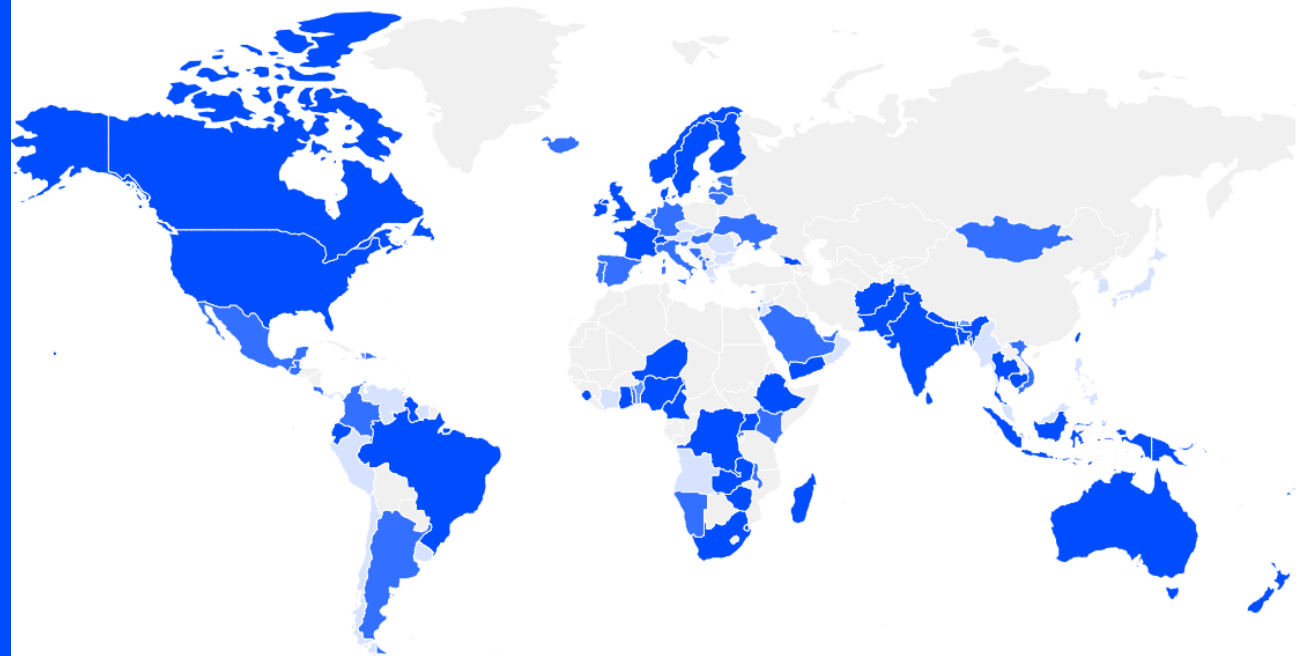
A growing body of evidence suggests that **direct access** to physiotherapy services is **safe and cost-effective for public health systems**, especially in primary care and related to musculoskeletal conditions. Early access to physiotherapy services through direct access can **reduce the likelihood of acute conditions becoming chronic** and leading to disability.

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



## COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES



■ Yes (37%) ■ Private only (34%) ■ Public only (2%) ■ No (27%)



Direct access remains a **priority advocacy issue** for the global profession. 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.





**35%** of AMC respondents have **full direct access**  
(2022: 33%)



**32%** of AMC respondents have direct access **only in private practice**  
(2022: 37%)



**25%** of AMC respondents reported **no direct access**  
(2022: 28%)



Since 2019, the number of countries/territories reporting **full direct access** to physiotherapy services has **increased from 32 to 44.**

## LIMITATIONS REPORTED TO DIRECT ACCESS

While some countries/territories may have a form of direct access in public or private practice settings, limitations exist around how direct access is implemented.



**44%** of AMC respondents reported that direct access is limited to the setting where the physiotherapy services are provided

**27%** reported limitations related to payment of the physiotherapy services

**17%** reported limitations on the population or health condition that may be treated in a direct access model

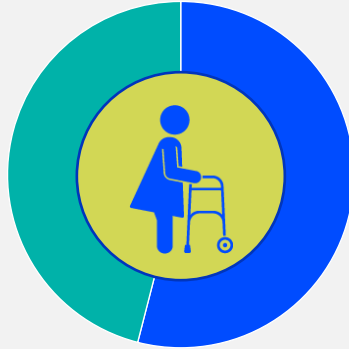
**16%** reported limitations related to physiotherapist training and competencies

**13%** reported limitations around the length of time they are permitted to treat via direct access



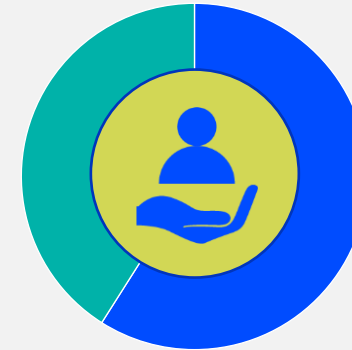
54%

of respondents reported having at least one **special interest group** recognised by World Physiotherapy



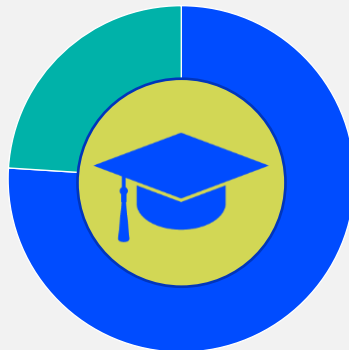
59%

of respondents said **support personnel** worked with physiotherapists in their country/territory



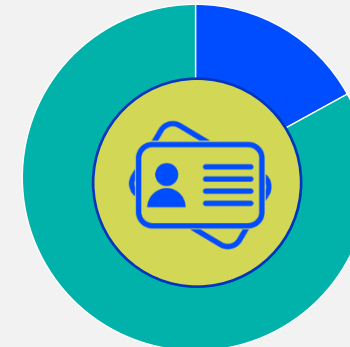
76%

of respondents reported having **postgraduate programmes** as a training option for physiotherapists in their country



17%

of respondents said being a **member of their national association** is mandatory to practice in their country/territory



# GLOBAL | RESPONSE TO SURVEY



The AMC was sent to **127 member organisations**, of which 119 responded, representing a **93.7% response rate**.

This is consistent with previous years' response rates and demonstrates strong engagement between World Physiotherapy and its member organisations. The census date was 30 June 2023.

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



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## DISCLAIMER

- The data in this report is based on responses to the annual membership census (AMC) sent to World Physiotherapy's member organisations.
- The AMC was sent to 127 member organisations, of which 119 responded, representing a 93.7% response rate. This is consistent with previous years' response rates and demonstrates strong engagement between World Physiotherapy and its member organisations. The census date was 30 June 2023.
- 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](mailto:membershipcensus@world.physio).