

In Brief: 2023 Rehab Provider Experience Survey

This fall, the Rehabilitative Care Alliance (RCA) launched its second annual rehab provider experience survey. The purpose of the survey was to better understand the current experience of rehab providers and include provider experience data as part of the RCA's Quintuple Aim approach to System Evaluation. The summary of the previous [2022 rehab provider experience survey summary](#) is available on the RCA website.

The 2023 survey was updated based on feedback from the first survey conducted and in consultation with professional rehab associations (Ontario Kinesiology Association, Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists, Ontario Physiotherapy Association and Speech-Language & Audiology Canada). The survey was distributed through RCA distribution lists, professional associations and snowball sampling. Respondents were asked how they received the survey and 58% (256) received it through a colleague or the organization where they worked. Another 24% (105) received it through their respective professional association (OKA, OSOT, OPA or SAC).

Survey elements included demographic information and employment profiles; indicators of equity and inclusion; and questions on stress, burnout and moral distress. This summary provides a brief overview of the survey findings and next steps.

Rehab Provider Survey Results

Five hundred and fifty-six respondents completed the survey in 2023, which is fewer than the 641 respondents in 2022. The distribution of responses was consistent with the year prior, primarily representing the southern parts of the province.



- North West: 8.2% (42)
- North East: 10% (37)
- East: 20.4% (104)
- Toronto: 23.3% (119)
- West: 25.2% (129)
- Central: 13.1% (67)
- Provincial: 2.5% (13)

Due to snowball sampling, it is difficult to calculate the response rate for the survey. As such, the survey results should be interpreted with caution as they do not represent the entire rehab workforce population.

Respondent Demographics

Of the respondents:



- 49% reported working in a hospital setting
- 90% identified as female
- 44% reported being 45 years or older
- 36% reported working in the rehab sector for 20 years or more

The majority of respondents were occupational therapists (25%), physiotherapists (22%) and speech-language pathologists (16%), followed by rehabilitation assistants [OTA/PTA/CDA] (9%), kinesiologists (7%) and nurses (7%). There were a large number of “other” disciplines identified (42) which included roles in pharmacy, therapeutic recreation, and other specialties.

Demographics/Representation

The RCA included questions about equity and inclusion to help inform future workforce planning initiatives and help facilitate a dialogue about representation within the rehab professional community.

Two percent of respondents (9) identified as being First Nation, Métis or Inuk/Inuit and 9% (50) identified as Francophone.

Seventy-six percent of respondents (419) were between the ages of 25 – 54 and 21% (121) were 55 years and older. Ninety percent (556) were trained in Canada and 80% (511) reported working in clinical roles while 14% (71) reported working in non-clinical roles such as leadership, quality improvement or education.

Employment Profile

Survey respondents primarily work at rehabilitation/complex continuing care hospitals 34% (175), acute care hospitals 22% (114), hospital-based/community clinics 19% (87), home care 8% (41) and other settings 9% (44). A small proportion of 4% (18) work remotely.

The majority of survey respondents 31% (157) have been in their current role for 1-5 years, with the second largest group 24% (123) having been in their role for > 20 years. Ten percent of respondents (50) have been in their role for less than a year.

Greater than 50% (259) reported that they plan to stay in their current role for more than five years while 32% (149) reported that they would leave for a different position in their profession. Ten percent (47) indicated they plan to leave their profession entirely.

The top reasons (respondents were asked to pick the top 3) that would prompt them to leave their job was stress/burnout 45% (231), followed by retirement 35% (178), and better career opportunities 28% (143).

The top issues impacting rehab provider experience include work-life balance 70% (359), compensation 58% (296), and support for their well-being 51% (262).

Stress and Burnout

Stress and burnout continue to be serious issues in the rehabilitative care workforce. Forty-four percent (204) reported their work life as a bit stressful, 40% (186) reported 'quite a bit stressful' and 6% (26) reported their work life to be 'extremely stressful'. These levels of stress are higher than what was reported in 2022 when 28% (181) reported 'quite a bit stressful' and 3% (18) reported 'extremely stressful'. Overall, in 2022 76% of respondents reported stress in their work life versus the 90% of respondents who reported some level of stress in their work life in 2023.



Respondents were also asked to report on burnout, 35% (161) reported one or more symptoms of burnout compared to 40% (187) who reported being under stress but not feeling burned out. These responses are also higher than last year's survey responses but there was a downward trend of 4% (17) in 2023 from 6% (36) in 2022 in the number of individuals who reported being completely burned out and needing to seek changes or help.

Based on feedback from the 2022 survey, a question about moral distress was added to the survey. The moral distress thermometer was used to calculate respondents' level of moral distress which ranges from zero – no moral distress to 10 which is the worst possible moral distress. It was found that of the 496 respondents, the average level of moral distress was 3/10, which is just below uncomfortable on the moral distress thermometer.



Moral Distress Thermometer 2010 © Lucia Wocial, PhD. All rights reserved.

Themes from Open-Ended Questions

The 2023 survey also included an open-ended question which allowed respondents to provide any additional information they felt was relevant to their experience. A total of 128 comments were collected. The comments were themed and these are some of the most commonly reported themes:

- Insufficient compensation for continually expanding demands/caseloads
- Need for work-life balance
- Lack of career advancement opportunities
- Lack of support for professional development, paid education days
- Need a system that supports providers working to their full scope – trust from colleagues to work at expanded scopes of practice
- Lack of support/engagement from leadership, organizations and government

We need more innovation of part-time roles, shared roles, and flexible hours for patients/staff to receive/deliver care. We need more transdisciplinary models and less multidisciplinary models where care is delivered in silos, under the same roof.

I am immensely satisfied in my current role. One of the things that I greatly value is having flexibility and autonomy over my scheduling. I also appreciate a hybrid model of some work in the clinic and some work from home. I really value the ability to find new passions and help shape/create my role and the services I provide.

Next Steps



The second rehab provider experience survey has highlighted some of the ongoing issues that are impacting the experience of rehabilitative care providers. Although this survey is not representative of all rehab providers in the province, it provides a glimpse into the levels of stress, burnout and moral distress that continue to be present.

As workforce issues continue to dominate conversations across provincial tables, the Rehab Care Alliance Workforce Task Group continues to identify, prioritize and outline strategies to highlight the need for action from government, professional associations, organizations and decision-makers.

Please contact info@rehabcarealliance.ca if there are any questions or comments about the content of the survey findings.