



# PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSION PROFILE: KEY INSIGHTS

## Overview

Physiotherapists work with people through their lifespan to develop, maintain, or restore physical health, functional performance, and optimal mobility. Physiotherapists work with people supporting population health one-on-one, in groups and as part of interdisciplinary health care teams.

Their approach aligns with the biopsychosocial model of care and the person's lived experiences, culture, inequities, trauma, and social factors influencing their health.

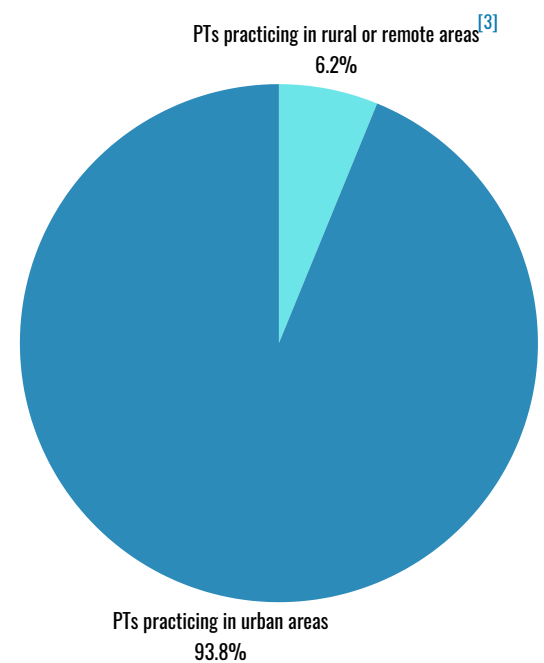
As part of the physiotherapy mandate, physiotherapists optimize quality of life through education, prevention, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, intervention, and rehabilitation of a person, ensuring that they can achieve and maintain their optimal physical well-being and functionality.

## Profession Demographics

CIHI reports that in 2020, there were 26,019 PTs licensed to practice in Canada with significant disparity between rural and urban practitioners.

The profession continues to grow at approximately 3.8% per year, which is the largest growth rate when compared with those professions (exception: nurse practitioners) currently included in the Student Loan Forgiveness Program and surpasses that of physicians (family medicine and specialists), regulated nurses and pharmacists in the same time period<sup>[1]</sup>.

See Appendix for “Physiotherapists (PTs): Supply, percentage change and rate per 100,000 population, Canada, 2020”.

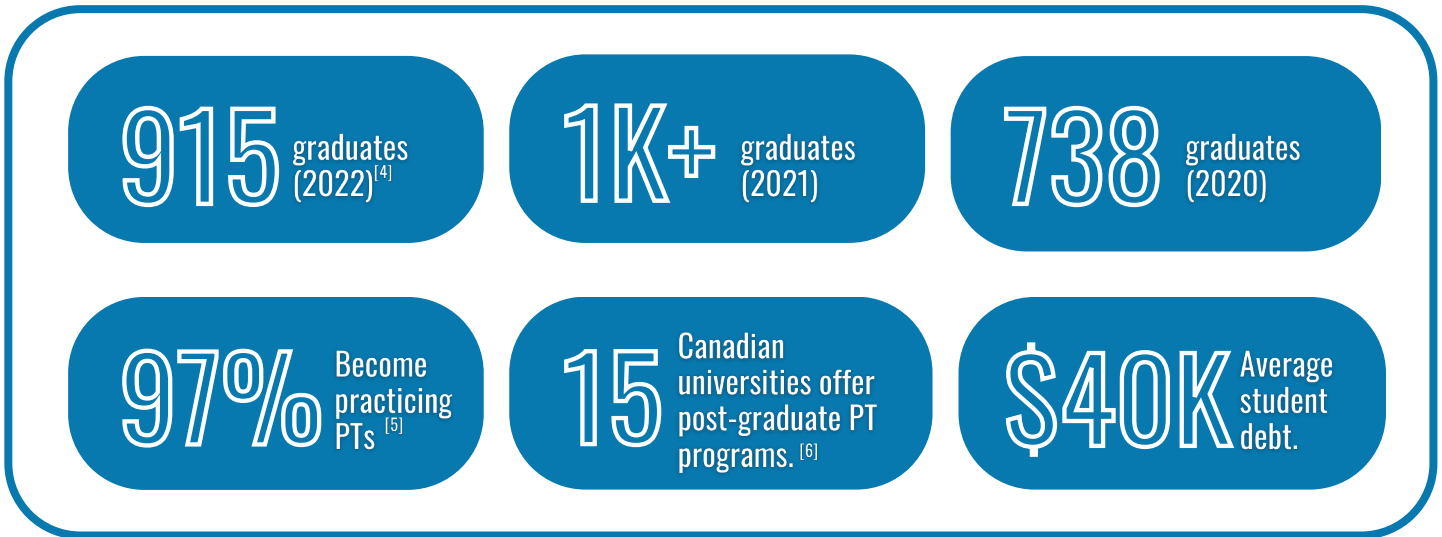


## The Educational Pathway

In Canada, the length of time to entry to practice into physiotherapy is typically 6 years; this includes a 4-year undergraduate degree followed by a 24-month Master’s degree, the completion of which leads directly to practice following passing a national exam (exception: Quebec) and the acquisition of a license from a regulatory body.

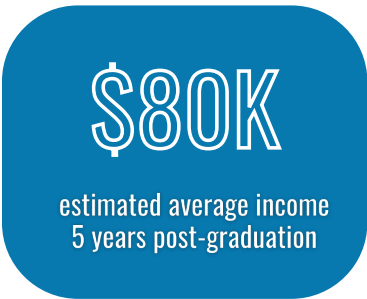


## Physiotherapy by the Numbers



## Remuneration

The Government of Canada Job Bank, indicates that the prevailing median wage for physiotherapists in Canada is \$41.63/hour. This hourly wage varies across the country when evaluating urban compared to rural and remote areas in the same province or territory, however the wages (hourly) span a range of \$25 to \$50, nationally<sup>[7]</sup>. In terms of wage distribution, Alberta and British Columbia see the highest wages for PTs in Canada, at \$43 and \$43.27 (median) per hour, respectively.

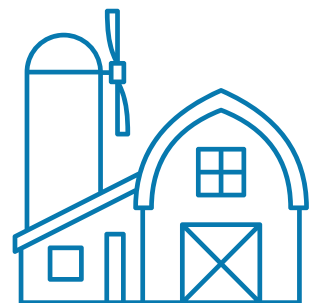


## Physiotherapy Models of Care

- **Physiotherapy care in emergency departments (ED)** can alleviate ED strain. A 2021 randomized control trial in Quebec[8] found that those patients who presented to the ED with an MSK disorder and had direct access to a physiotherapist experienced better clinical outcomes (mean difference -1.1 points on the brief pain inventory pain interference scale at 3-month follow-up) and had fewer return ED visits in the first month after discharge (difference in proportions -21.8%). These findings align with evidence from systematic reviews and an overview indicating that PTs in EDs make similar care decisions, provide effective care, and may improve efficiency by reducing the overutilization of imaging and specialist consultations.
- **Home care physiotherapy** provides an important opportunity to advance Health Canada's priority to help people age with dignity, closer to home, with access to home care or care in a safe long-term care facility. Evidence from health administrative data indicates that homecare rehabilitation therapy is associated with reduced hospital readmissions (OR 0.78) and reduce emergency department use (OR 0.73) over three months after acute care hospital stay for people with chronic health conditions compared with people receiving other homecare services[9].
- **Virtual care** saw a dramatic increase in use for physiotherapy care in 2020. While the necessity of virtual visits has declined since the onset of the pandemic, Canadian physiotherapists demonstrated a high adaptability in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the prompt and extensive deployment of virtual care and continue to deliver care virtually across the country. Virtual care has demonstrated efficacy per a growing body of research in Canada and internationally and offers advantages in improving access to care for people in rural and remote areas[10].

## Portability of Licensure

Physiotherapy is one of the professions in Canada that has endeavored to harmonize standards nationally and access to care. The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators has established a cross-border memorandum of understanding to enable access to physiotherapy care across borders, through mobility and virtual care (tele-rehabilitation)[11].



## Employment and Workforce Retention

A 2021 study that sought to describe the factors that influence the career and employment decisions of recent physiotherapy graduates, respondents reported a high employment rate, with 97% reporting working as a physiotherapist. The majority of respondents also reported being employed in their preferred practice area and many had obtained employment prior to program completion. This paints an optimistic picture for the profession, with new graduates seeing themselves remaining in the field for at least 5 years or more following entry to practice[12].

According to the Government of Canada’s job bank, “For **Physiotherapists**, over the period 2022-2031, new job openings (arising from expansion demand and replacement demand) are expected to total **14,300**, while **14,100** new job seekers (arising from school leavers, immigration and mobility) are expected to be available to fill them.” This will constitute a labour shortage that is anticipated to endure into the 2022-2031 period[13].



## Standards of Practice and Tracking Service Hours

For all physiotherapy licencing bodies (regulators) in Canada, standards of practice are in place and describe the minimum performance expectations of physiotherapists in that jurisdiction. Compliance with the standards of practice is a mandatory component of being regulated members of the profession.

- These standards are outlined by the regulatory bodies in each jurisdiction, and include rules and resources regarding record keeping, fees, billing and tracking service hours[14].
- Prior to entry to practice and obtaining a license, physiotherapy students must track and report their practice hours. Once in practice, to maintain registration, reporting on a minimum of annual practice hours (for example, 1,200 hours in Ontario) is a requirement for maintenance of registration by physiotherapy regulatory bodies[15].
- Physiotherapists must also, “Act transparently and with integrity in all professional and business practices including fees and billing; advertising of professional services; and real and/or perceived conflicts of interest”, and they must “comply with all legislation, guidelines, and regulatory requirements that pertain to the profession of physiotherapy” per the Code of Ethical Conduct which applies to all PTs registered to practice[16].

# CITATIONS

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- [14] College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. (2024). Fees, billing and accounts standard. Retrieved online <https://www.collegept.org/rules-and-resources/fees-billing-and-accounts>
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- [16] CPA and CAPR. (November 2017). Code of ethical conduct. Retrieved online <https://alliancept.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/code-of-conduct-en.pdf>

## For more information

Please review the full CPA [Pre-Budget submission](#) or contact Kayla Scott, Senior Director of Advocacy at [kscott@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:kscott@physiotherapy.ca)

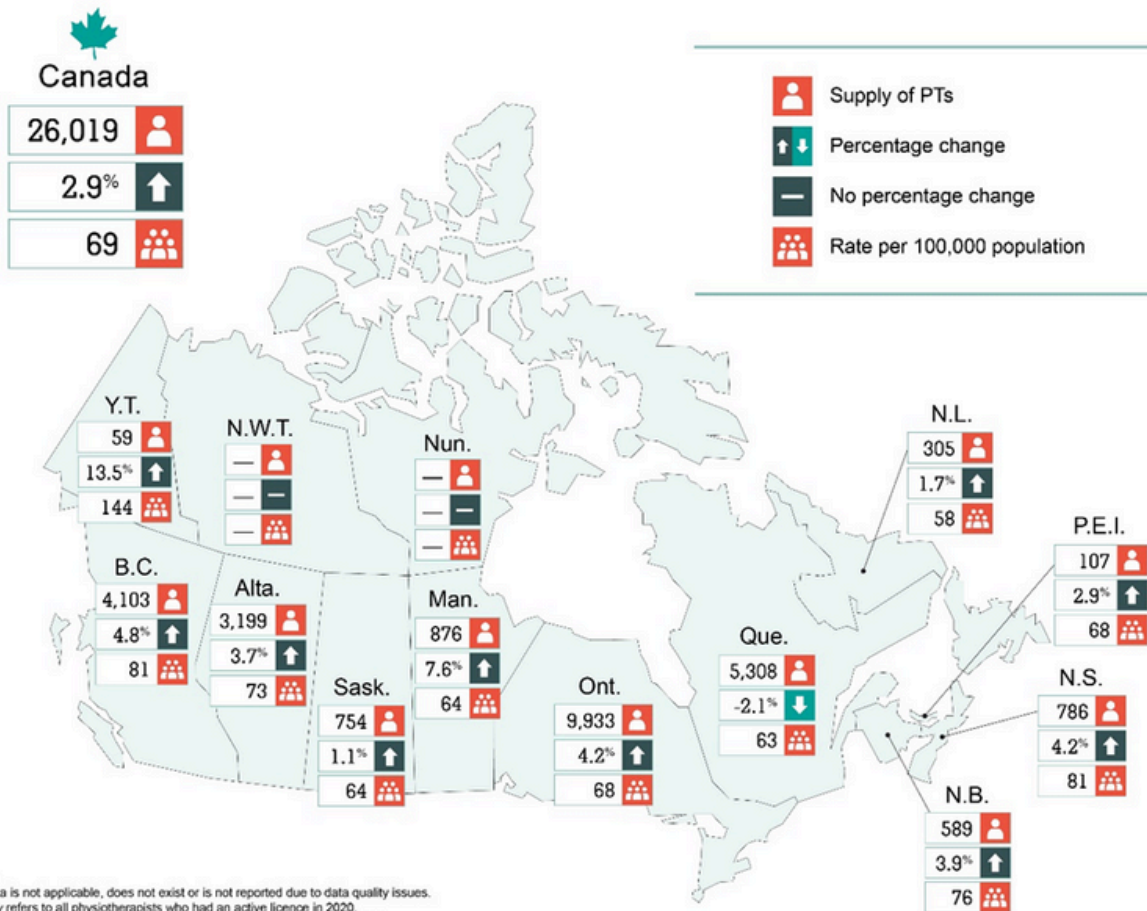
# APPENDIX

## Physiotherapists (PTs): Supply, percentage change and rate per 100,000 population, Canada, 2020

### Physiotherapists (PTs)

Supply, percentage change and rate per 100,000 population, Canada, 2020

Physiotherapists per 100,000 population provides a baseline count. It may not account for regional variations across provinces and territories. Differences in numbers of physiotherapists working full time versus part time can affect comparability between jurisdictions.



**Notes**  
 — Data is not applicable, does not exist or is not reported due to data quality issues.  
 Supply refers to all physiotherapists who had an active licence in 2020.  
 Percentage change refers to the change in supply between 2019 and 2020.  
 2019 population estimates from Statistics Canada were used.

**Sources**  
 Health Workforce Database, Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2019.