

Occupational and Spatial Mobility of Rural Physiotherapists: Insights for Workforce Development

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Background

- Historical Under-Supply of Physiotherapists in Rural and Remote Australia
- Workforce initiatives have been problematic in addressing this issue
- As well as being a workforce issue it is also a migration issue

Aim

To examine how occupational and residential mobility affects the supply of rural and remote physiotherapists

Method

- Data was drawn from the 2006 and 2011 census
- Census night residential location was compared with that of five years previously
- Compared were age, population ratios and migration patterns

Results: Workforce Structure

- Increases (in %) for the general population in rural and remote areas is far greater than increases in the physiotherapy workforce
- High levels of mobility within the workforce
- High workforce non-participation rate among qualified physiotherapists
- High variability especially in remote areas

Age

- Ageing physiotherapist workforce in rural areas compared to remote areas
- High entrance rate during early career 20-34 year old age group
- High exit rate during mid career 35-49 year old age group
- Some states do better than others

Age Profile of Rural and Remote Workforce

	Early (15-34 years)	Mid (35-49 years)	Late (50+ years)
NSW Rural	24.00%	34.00%	42.00%
VIC Rural	34.00%	27.00%	40.00%
QLD Rural	39.00%	27.00%	34.00%
SA Rural	26.00%	34.00%	41.00%
WA Rural	30.00%	32.00%	38.00%
TAS Rural	19.00%	29.00%	52.00%
TOTAL RURAL	31.00%	30.00%	39.00%
NSW Remote	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
QLD Remote	48.00%	23.00%	29.00%
SA Remote	52.00%	23.00%	25.00%
WA Remote	56.00%	38.00%	5.00%
NT Remote	52.00%	48.00%	0.00%
TOTAL REMOTE	55.00%	33.00%	12.00%
<i>Total Rural and Remote</i>	34.00%	30.00%	35.00%

Migration

- Over 50% of the rural and remote workforce had migrated from another region since 2006
- States rely heavily on capital cities
- Overseas migrants make up 15% of the in-migrants
- Over 70% of in-migrants are less than 35 years old

Northern Territory

- Different migration dynamic to other states
- No intra-territory migration
- Workforce is heavily reliant on other states

Summary

- Rural and remote workforce is subject to high levels of occupational and spatial mobility
- Mobility likely to be a function of the age structure of the workforce

Conclusions & Recommendations

- There will be a substantial loss in workforce numbers over the next 10 years
- An experience gap in the rural and remote workforce is likely to emerge
- Recruitment strategies will have to target mid career workers in order to alleviate an experience gap

- Retention strategies will need to target both mid career workers and late career workers past retirement age
- Other initiatives could also include programmes to support the return of non practicing physiotherapists