

2011 sonographer employment and salary survey: overview of results

Compiled by the ASA based on the Quantitative Research developed by Di Marzio Research (2011)

In late 2010 the ASA conducted an inaugural sonographer employment and salary survey to ascertain benchmarks within the profession across a broad range of criteria. This work was well received, with over 45% of respondents to the annual Member Satisfaction Survey indicating they had used the reported outcomes and a further 27% indicating they intend to in the future.

For consistency, the 2011 survey was again conducted through Di Marzio Research, with the data collection period during October/November. By the closing date, 681 responses had been received (2010: 666 responses). Overall, the consultant reported that the results are very consistent with those observed last year, thus reinforcing the reliability of the benchmarks the 2010 and 2011 surveys have established for the profession.

The respondents

- Predominantly female – 77% (2010: 79%)
- Average age approximately 41 years (2010: 42 years)
- The majority from the eastern seaboard states: NSW and ACT – 29% (2010: 35%); Victoria – 27% (2010: 25%) and Queensland – 21% (2010: 19%). Sixty-four per cent based in metropolitan areas (2010: 64%); 30% from regional locations (2010: 28%) and 6% in rural towns (2010: 8%)
- The average length of time in the profession is 12.5 years (2010: 12.8) and most expect they will remain in the profession for six years or more (77%)
- Ninety per cent have a postgraduate qualification in sonography, with 8% having either a Master's or PhD qualification. Ninety-five per cent gained their sonographer qualifications in Australia (2010: 94%)

- Forty-three per cent obtained their entry level qualification between 2000–2010 and 31% between 1990–1999
- Eighty-three per cent are ASAR Accredited Medical Sonographers (2010: 87%).

While 63% of respondents classified themselves as clinical sonographers (2010: 65%), a further 21% are either chief or supervising sonographers. Full-time sonographers represented 51% of respondents (2010: 53%) and part-time/casual sonographers made up the balance (49%, 2010: 47%). Again, most full-time sonographers work 35 hours or more, and 63% of part-time/casual sonographers work more than 20 hours per week with the mean number of hours for this category being 20.9 hours (2010: 20.5 hrs). There were no significant differences in the workplace settings of the respondents of 2011 compared to those in 2010, nor in the number of sonographic services provided.

An additional set of questions was introduced in 2011 which indicated:

- 37% of respondents have an individual contract
- 32% work under a workplace agreement
- 27% work under a State or Federal Award structure.

Of the 27% working under a State or Federal award structure, the majority fall under the 'General Sonographer' (49%) or 'Radiographer/MIT' (31%) award classification.

Remuneration

Questions on pay arrangements elicited similar results to last year, although 73% reported being paid on an hourly rate (2010: 68%), but the average hourly rate earned remains approximately \$51.

Twenty per cent are on a base salary (2010: 24%) and amongst those we found:

- the average wage has increased to \$88,700 per annum (2010: \$85,100)
- the incidence of those who work overtime remained the same (91%)
- average overtime hours worked per month (excluding on-call hours) was consistent with 2010 results at 7 hours.

Again, only 3% of respondents get paid per scan and their average rate is approximately \$43, which is lower than last year (2010: \$49). However, because the sub-samples involved are very small, the statistical margin for error is relatively large and it appears as if this pay rate has remained steady over the last year.

There was no change in the proportion of respondents who receive a performance-based bonus at their workplace (19%), though:

- slightly fewer receive a bonus based on the number of scans performed (2010: 50%, 2011: 57%)
- seventeen per cent receive a bonus based on the overall performance of their department (2010: 12%)
- twenty-three per cent receive a personal performance bonus (no change) and 24% receive bonuses based on scans per department (2010: 22%)
- the average annual value of the bonuses was \$7,900 (2010: \$8,000) but 24% of respondents were unsure.

On-call duties

- 40% of respondents reported working on-call at some stage during 2011 (no change)
- 23% are on-call during weekdays (no change)

- 32% on weekday nights (2010: 33%)
- 38% on weekends (2010: 39%).

The average time spent on-call this year was approximately 23 hours per month (2010: 24 hours) but the majority are on-call for 30 or more hours (2011: 53%, 2010: 57%). Generally, sonographers are paid on an hourly basis when called in and for a minimum amount of time regardless of time worked. Most still receive at least three hours pay (2011: 48%, 2010: 50%) but some get paid for minimums of two (13%, 2010: 14%) or four hours (20%, 2010: 16%).

The most common pay rates for on-call duties are time-and-a-half or double time for weekdays and weekday evenings,

and double time for weekends or public holidays.

Employee benefits

Some respondents have regular salary package reviews (2011: 27%, 2010: 26%) and for most, these occur annually (2011: 74%, 2010: 72%).

An annual allowance for continuing professional development is offered to 26% of respondents (2010: 24%). The mean average CPD allowance remains at \$1,300; respondents spend an average of 27.5 hours per year undertaking CPD, and the main barriers identified to participating in more CPD were family commitments (35%) and/or cost (31%).

Conclusion

The ASA would like to acknowledge the 681 respondents who, once again, ensured that the data collected for the 2011 sonographer employment and salary survey was, for the most part, statistically relevant. We encourage all ASA members to reflect on the significance of this data and its relevance to them personally, their organisation, and the profession as a whole.

The ASA will once again utilise the collated data from this survey in its advocacy work from time to time. Future annual surveys will feature as a member benefit, with the goal of broadening the response rates and contrasting the outcomes to other allied health professions.

In due course, the full report from this survey will be further analysed and additional results will be published via www.a-s-a.com.au. If you would like to request specific results, please contact the Member Services team via services@a-s-a.com.au for assistance.

Employee Benefits Paid for by Employer				
	2011 (n=681)			2010 (n=666)
	Fully Paid for (%)	Partially Paid for (%)	Total (%)	Total (%)
Superannuation – 9% SGC	86	4	90	89
Annual Leave – 4 weeks (or pro-rata)	80	1	81	80
ASA National conference registration fees	31	32	63	67
Conference leave	42	19	61	61
Attendance at local (within your state) professional development activities	22	31	53	53
In-house seminars	42	10	52	48
ASA National Conference travel and accommodation costs	18	32	50	50
Automatic CPI increases	33	9	42	36
Salary Packaging/ Salary Sacrifice benefits	26	13	39	40
Support to present at conferences	18	20	38	34

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