

2012 sonographer employment and salary survey: overview of results

Compiled by Holly Crain,
Policy Officer, based on the
Quantitative Research Report
developed by Di Marzio
Research (November 2012)

Since 2010 the ASA has conducted an annual sonographer employment and salary survey to ascertain benchmarks and track changes within the profession across a range of criteria. Such information is essential for understanding the trends and direction of the employment environment for sonographers.

The 2012 survey was conducted by Di Marzio research. It was distributed to Members on Tuesday 23 October and remained open until 5 pm on Sunday 11 November. By the closing date, 489 responses had been received equating to approximately 15% of the membership base. We encourage all sonographers to complete the survey whenever it is distributed, including those that have participated in the survey previously, as this is the primary means by which the ASA determines the current and changing conditions of the profession overall.

Di Marzio reported there has been very little change in the survey results across the last three years, thus reinforcing the reliability of the benchmarks the surveys have established for the profession. The main changes over the past three years have been:

- For those earning a base salary (22%), it appears the average wage has increased over the three-year period to \$93,000 per annum, compared with \$88,700 last year and \$85,100 in 2010.
- For those that are paid an hourly rate (72%), the average hourly rate earned has increased slightly from \$51 in 2010 and 2011 to \$53 this year.
- Sixty-seven per cent of those who work full time claimed they work some non-paid hours every week, which has increased significantly from 58% in 2010 and 2011.
- Thirty-six per cent of respondents worked on-call at some stage in 2012, compared with 40% in 2011 and 2010.

Although there was a small decline in the proportion of Members who did work on-call in 2012 in comparison to previous years, it appears the time spent on-call has edged up slightly, as 61% claimed they are on-call for 30 or more hours (53% in 2011), and the mean average hours spent on-call is now 25 hours (23 hours in 2011).

Other than these changes, the following results from the 2012 survey are largely consistent with the results of previous years.

The respondents from the 2012 survey are ...

- predominantly female – 77%
- approximately 42 years of age on average
- mostly from the eastern seaboard states – NSW and ACT 29%, Victoria 24% and Queensland 20%
- sixty-one per cent based in metropolitan areas, 29% from regional locations and 10% from rural towns.

The average length of time respondents have worked in the profession is 13 years and 76% expect to remain in the profession for six years or more. Eighty-six per cent have a postgraduate qualification in sonography, with 7% either having a Masters or PhD qualification. Ninety-four per cent gained their sonographer qualification in Australia. Forty per cent obtained their entry level qualification between 2000–2010 and 30% between 1990–1999. Seventy-three per cent were previously qualified as radiographers and 80% are ASAR accredited medical sonographers.

Employment situation

Sixty-two per cent of respondents classified themselves as clinical sonographers, with a further 19% holding more senior positions such as chief or supervising sonographers. The

remainder are students (8%), tutors (4%) and those in non-specific sonographic roles (6%) such as business manager of a department, academic/educational position or corporate/trade employee.

- Fifty-three per cent work full time, with 47% working as part time/casual sonographers.
- Ninety-six per cent of full-timers work 35 hours or more per week, with 67% claiming they work some non-paid hours every week (mean average: 1.7 hours)
- Sixty-eight per cent of part timers/casuals work for more than 20 hours per week and the average time worked is 21.3 hours.

The most common primary work locations are still public hospital/department (25%), private practice–radiologist owned (23%), and private practice–corporate owned (23%). On average, respondents are performing approximately 55 sonographic examinations (scans) per week. Ten per cent perform 20 or less per week, 66% conduct 21–75 scans, and 23% do more than 76.

Remuneration

Thirty-six per cent of respondents are employed under an individual contract, 31% under a workplace agreement, and 28% work under a state or federal award structure. Of the 28% working under a state or federal award structure, 50% fall under the 'General Sonographer' classification and 28% fall under the 'Radiographer/MIT' classification.

- Seventy-two per cent are paid an hourly rate, with the average hourly rate earned being \$53.
- Twenty-two per cent earn a base salary with the average wage being \$93,000 per annum.
- For those on a base salary, the incidence of those who work overtime is 91% and the average overtime hours

worked per month (excluding on-call hours) is 7 hours.

- Only 3% of respondents get paid per sonographic examination (scan) and their average rate is approximately \$41 per scan.
- Only 16% claimed their employers offer performance-based bonus structures, among which 67% receive a bonus based on the number of scans performed, 10% receive a bonus based on the overall performance of their department, and 17% receive a personal performance bonus or a bonus based on scans per department.

On-call duties

Thirty-six per cent of respondents worked on-call at some stage in 2012, with 22% on-call during weekdays, 29% on weekday nights and 35% on weekends. Sixty-one per cent claimed they were on-call for 30 or more hours per month and the mean average spent on-call is 25 hours per month.

Sonographers tend to be paid on an hourly basis when called in and for a minimum amount of time regardless of the time actually worked.

- Forty-seven per cent receive at least three hours pay, 16% get paid for a minimum of two hours and 14% get paid for a minimum of four hours.
- The most common pay rate is still time and a half or double time for weeknights and Saturday mornings and double time for weekends (other than Saturday morning) or public holidays.
- When on-call, 41% claimed a minimum break is specified, which must be adhered to and so commencement of the next shift is altered, 35% receive an additional financial incentive if a minimum break cannot be adhered to.

Employee benefits

- Twenty-nine per cent of respondents have regular salary package reviews and for 66% this occurs annually, with

22% indicating their reviews take place less often than annually.

Twenty-seven per cent of respondents receive an annual allowance for continuing professional development (CPD) and, amongst those who receive this benefit, the mean average CPD allowance is \$1,300. An average of 30.2 hours per year is spent undertaking CPD and the main barriers to conducting more CPD are cost or family commitments.

Job satisfaction

For the respondents, there are many factors which influence their choice when considering a new job role but the top five are: work/life balance, personal/family needs, remuneration, job stability, and interesting work.

- Eighty per cent of respondents believe they are secure in their current role with 36% indicating they feel 'very secure' and only 5% who feel 'insecure'.
- Forty-eight per cent claim to have experienced an increase in stress levels, 38% claim there has been a decrease in employee morale, and 26% claim they are working longer hours than last year.

Conclusion

The ASA would like to acknowledge the 489 respondents who, once again, ensured the data collected for the 2012 sonographer employment and salary survey was widely reflective of the profession. 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. We are confident that, with three consecutive annual surveys completed, a benchmark for the current state of the profession has been determined and the survey may now be conducted bi-annually. This will help sustain Member interest in participating in the survey and broaden the response. The next sonographer employment and salary survey will be conducted in 2014.

In due course, the full report from this survey will be further analysed and additional results, including result comparisons with the 2010 and 2011 surveys, will be published via www.a-s-a.com.au. If you would like to request specific results, please contact policy@a-s-a.com.au for assistance.

Table 1. Employee benefits paid for by employer

	2012 (n = 489)			2011 (n = 681)	2010 (n = 666)
	Fully paid for %	Partly paid for %	Total %	Total %	Total %
Superannuation – 9% SGC	87	5	92	90	89
Annual leave – 4 weeks (or pro rata)	79	1	80	81	80
ASA National Conference registration fees	26	36	62	63	67
Conference leave	41	18	59	61	61
In-house seminars	42	10	52	52	48
Attendance at local (within your state) professional development activities	20	29	49	53	53
ASA National Conference travel and accommodation costs	16	31	47	50	50
Automatic CPI increases	33	7	40	42	36
Salary packaging/Salary sacrifice benefits	27	13	40	39	40
Support to present at conferences	15	19	34	38	34
Study leave	23	11	34	37	33