

2014 sonographer employment & salary survey

Compiled by James Brooks-Dowsett, Policy Officer, based on the Quantitative Research Report developed by Di Marzio research (December 2014)

Overview of results

Since 2010, the Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA) has conducted the Sonographer Employment and Salary survey to benchmark and track changes within our profession. This activity informs our understanding of the trends and direction of the employment environment for sonographers in Australia and New Zealand and empowers the ASA to advocate for and support our members.

Conducted by Di Marzio Research, the 2014 survey was distributed on Monday 27 October and remained open until 5 pm on Sunday 16 November. A total of 453 responses were received. Equivalent to approximately 11% of the ASA's membership, this level of response was not as strong as in previous years (681 in 2011, 666 in 2010 and 489 in 2012); however, it is still sufficient to provide broad indicators for our profession.

Who participated?

The demographic of survey participants was generally comparable to ASA's member profile, excepting the low rate of trainee sonographer responses (1% compared to previous years (8% in 2012) or the ASA member profile (15%). This should be noted when considering the results.

Respondents to the 2014 survey were:

- predominantly female (82%), with over three-quarters located on the eastern seaboard of Australia – NSW and ACT (34%), Victoria (21%) and Queensland (24%)

- mostly (61%) located in metropolitan areas, with 30% in regional areas and 9% in rural towns
- on average, 44 years of age. This represents an increase against the previous years' average of 42; however, it is likely this result was skewed by the lack of student respondents
- mostly (70%) initially qualified as a radiographer, noting this figure has gradually decreased since 2010 (77%)
- largely (83%) ASAR Accredited Medical Sonographers.

Eighty-nine per cent obtained their entry level qualification in Australia (39% between 2000 and 2010 and 29% between 1990 and 1999), with 86 reporting their highest practising qualification to be a postgraduate in ultrasound or equivalent.

On average, respondents have worked in the industry for 14 years (up from 13 in previous years), with 72% expecting to continue working in the profession for six years or more.

Employment situation

In 2014 there was a shift in the ratio of full-time (49%) to part-time/casual sonographers (51%). Previous surveys reported marginally more full-time than part-time/casual sonographers. On average, part-time/casual sonographers worked 22 hours per week, and nearly all full-time sonographers worked 35 hours or more per week.

Notably the proportion of full-time sonographers working any non-paid hours, and the average hours worked per week, have both decreased since 2012 (from 67% to 54% and 1.7 to 1.3 hours, respectively).

Consistent with previous years:

- the majority (72%) of respondents classified themselves as clinical sonographers
- nineteen per cent held senior positions, such as chief (11%) or supervising (8%) sonographer
- four per cent were tutor sonographers
- the remaining 5% reported working in other roles, such as business manager of a department, academic/educational positions or as a corporate/trade employee.

Almost all respondents (93%) reported being directly employed, most (89%) with a single employer and many working in multiple locations (47%). The most common workplaces for sonographers continue to be:

- private practice – radiologist owned (24%)
- private practice – corporate owned (24%)
- public hospital (23%).

The average reported number of scans being performed per week has increased slightly since 2010 from 56 to 58 per week, with two-thirds of respondents performing 21–75 scans per week, a quarter doing more than 76 scans per week, and nine per cent performing 20 or less.

Remuneration

Sonographers' employment arrangements continue to be spread across three main categories: individual contract (42%); workplace agreement (32%); and state/federal award (22%). Of those employed under a state/federal award, 55% reported being classified as a 'General Sonographer', with over a quarter classified as 'Radiographer/MIT'.

- Seventy-seven per cent reported being paid an hourly rate, earning an average of \$57 per hour.
- Eighteen per cent reported earning a base salary with an average of \$98,000 per annum.
- Nearly all members on a base salary worked overtime, reporting to work an average of six overtime hours per month (excluding on-call hours).

Around one in five (19%) reported their employer offers a performance-based bonus structure with:

- sixty-five per cent receiving a bonus based on the number of scans performed
- twenty-two per cent receiving a personal performance bonus
- small numbers receiving a bonus based on the overall performance of their department (13%) or number of scans per department (13%)
- the average reported annual bonus being \$8,600, noting 31% of respondents did not report the value of their bonus.

On-call duties

Around a third of respondents reported ever working on-call. As in previous

years, the weekend is the most common time to be on-call. Those that worked on-call reported:

- fifty-two per cent were on-call for 30 or more hours per month (down from 61% in 2012, 53% in 2011 and 57% in 2010)
- the average on-call hours per month was 22 (down from 25 in 2012, 23 in 2011 and 24 in 2010)
- they tend to be paid on an hourly basis when called in, and for a minimum time (regardless of time worked)
- forty-one per cent receive at least three hours pay, with smaller groups paid for a minimum of two (13%) or four hours (16%)
- the most common pay rate continues to be time and a half or double time for weeknights and Saturday mornings, and double time for weekends (other than Saturday morning) or public holidays
- forty-two per cent claimed a minimum break is specified, which must be adhered to, and so commencement of the next shift is altered
- thirty-four per cent received an additional financial incentive if a minimum break cannot be adhered to.

Employee benefits

The top ten employee benefits received are shown in Table 1, noting there has been little variation here over time. Superannuation and four weeks' annual leave continue to be the most common (generally paid in full by their employer).

In 2014 respondents reported:

- that 24% received regular salary package reviews (down from 29% in 2012), with most (76%) of these occurring annually
- about a third received an annual allowance for continuing professional development (CPD), with a mean of \$1,400
- an average of 27.8 hours is spent per year on CPD
- the main barrier to undertaking CPD is cost (58%), closely followed by family commitments (50%) and distance (41%).

Job satisfaction

The top five influential factors when considering a new job continue to be work/life balance, personal/family needs, remuneration, interesting work and job stability.

Most respondents (82%) continue to consider their job secure, and are satisfied with many elements of their work, particularly the facilities (78%), environment (65%), their independence (61%), work load (60%) and scheduling (57%).

Quite a few reported being dissatisfied with their remuneration (27%), the support for CPD they received (26%) and career path opportunities (29%).

Reflecting on changes at their workplaces in the last year, members reported:

- forty-nine per cent have experienced increased stress levels
- forty-four per cent have noticed decreased employee morale

- twenty-eight per cent are working longer hours than last year, with almost half (49%) of this group reporting this has impacted them in a negative way
- a quarter have received an increase in their remuneration, with 71% considering this a positive change and 28% reporting it had no effect.

Conclusion

The ASA would like to acknowledge and thank all members who participated in the 2014 Sonographer Employment and

Salary survey who once again ensured the data collected was broadly reflective of our 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 results of this survey have either confirmed the previously established benchmarks or further evidenced emergent trends since 2010, reinforcing the reliability of the benchmarks this survey has established since its inception. The ASA will continue to utilise the data

collected from this and future surveys in its advocacy work, to inform our business and to support ASA members and the profession. Held biennially from 2012, the next Sonographer Employment and Salary survey will be conducted in 2016.

This summary, together with reports from the previous surveys, can be accessed by members via www.a-s-a.com.au. If you would like to request specific results or additional information on the survey, please do not hesitate to phone the ASA Office or email policy@a-s-a.com.au.

Table 1. Employee benefits paid for by the employer

Employee benefits paid for by employer					
	2014 (n = 453) %		2012 (n = 489) %	2011 (n = 681) %	2010 (n = 666) %
	paid in full	partly paid for	total	total	total
1. Superannuation – 9.5% SGC	81	5	92	90	89
2. Annual Leave – 4 weeks (or pro rata)	82	1	80	81	80
3. ASA National Conference registration fees	26	34	62	63	67
4. Conference leave	42	18	59	61	61
5. In-house seminars	43	10	52	52	48
6. Attendance at local (within your state) professional development activities	19	34	49	53	53
7. ASA National Conference travel and accommodation costs	16	33	47	50	50
8. Automatic CPI increases	29	7	40	42	36
9. Salary packaging/salary sacrifice benefits	26	9	40	39	40
10. Support to present at conferences	14	21	34	38	34

soundbite

Q. I would like to get involved in peer reviewing for the ASA journal *Sonography*. How do I register to become a reviewer? Is there any training available in how to review?

A. We encourage sonographers who would like to become peer-reviewers to apply to be a part of the peer review panel. Please email Glenda McLean at editor@a-s-a.com.au for an expression of interest document. We can provide you with some resources to guide you in reviewing articles for publication. Peer review is now eligible for CPD points under the ASAR and PD-asa CPD programs.