

香港運動治療師總會
SPORTS THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG

Annual Survey Report 2023/24

Executive Committee
Sports Therapists Association of Hong Kong
July 2024

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I. Introduction

1.1 Sports Therapists Association of Hong Kong conducted its annual survey for 2023/24, focusing on various aspects of the profession, including work profiles, salary, work experience, work environment, job satisfaction, professional autonomy, and employers' understanding of sports therapy professionals in the HKSAR.

1.2 Target of survey is Category A - Registered Member, which means graduated sports therapists actively practicing in HKSAR. Other equivalent professionals such as athletic trainers/therapists and students studying sports therapy programmes are excluded in this survey.

1.3 The objective of the survey is to sketch the picture of the landscape of sport therapy professionals in terms of work profile, salary, environment, satisfactions and professional autonomy. With the overall landscape sketches, we can further investigate into more specific factors that affect the professional development of sports therapists in the future.

II. Definition and Method

2.1 Work Profile - included service targets, types of organizations, types of employment, monthly salary, salary structure and work experience. The format of this part of the survey is picking suitable choices by single or multiple way.

2.2 Work environment and satisfaction - included mode of work environment, professional autonomy, and employers' understanding of roles of sports therapist. The format of the survey is picking suitable choices by single or multiple way and scoring with comments given(optional).

III. Results and Analysis

3.1 Work Profile(Chart 1)

In the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), private practice(51.4%) continues to have a significant impact within the field of sports therapy.

A noticeable trend among sports therapists is the rise of freelance or "slasher" roles(16.2%), appealing to those who seek work-life balance and flexible working schedules.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Hong Kong Sports Institute maintain a stable and full-time sector market share, with numerous contracts being sourced from sports teams, National Sports Associations (NSAs), and NGOs(32.4% in total).

3.2 Service Target Analysis(Chart 2)

The service targets for sports therapy professionals span a diverse range of populations, each with specific needs and requirements. Below is an elaboration of the identified service targets based on the provided data:

3.2.1. Primary Health Sector (20.2%) - this group primarily includes general population individuals accessing healthcare for various physical ailments and preventive health measures. The focus here is on addressing common musculoskeletal issues, promoting overall wellness, and preventing injuries through regular assessments and tailored exercise programs.

3.2.2. Sedentary Individuals (15.2%) - sedentary individuals often experience health challenges due to lack of physical activity, such as postural issues, muscle weakness, and reduced cardiovascular fitness. Sports therapists aim to engage this group in active lifestyles through customized exercise plans and ergonomic advice to improve their physical health and prevent lifestyle-related diseases.

3.2.3 Elderly (12%) - the elderly population benefits from sports therapy through interventions designed to enhance mobility, balance, and strength, which are crucial in preventing falls and maintaining independence. Programs often include low-impact exercises and education on safe movement practices.

3.2.4. Children (4%) - services for children focus on developing proper movement patterns, enhancing motor skills, and preventing injuries during growth spurts and physical activities. This includes working with young sports participants to ensure healthy development and participation in sports safely.

3.2.5. Amateur Athletes (18.2%) - amateur athletes require support to improve performance, recover from injuries, and prevent future injuries. Sports therapists provide training programs, rehabilitation exercises, and guidance tailored to individual sports to help these athletes achieve their personal best.

3.2.6. Elite Athletes (10.1%) - elite athletes benefit from specialized services that focus on peak performance, quick recovery, and injury prevention. This involves advanced techniques, focused rehabilitation, and comprehensive fitness assessments to maintain the high physical demands of their sports.

3.2.7. Community Sports (19.2%) - community sports efforts aim to enhance public participation in sports and physical activities. Services include promoting healthy lifestyles through sports events, workshops, and fitness programs tailored for community engagement. These initiatives encourage an active society, fostering physical health and social connections.

Together, these service targets reflect the comprehensive approach sports therapists take in addressing the needs of varied populations, from those seeking general health

improvements to athletes striving for elite performance. This broad spectrum highlights the adaptability and expertise of sports therapy professionals in catering to different segments of the community.

3.3 Employment Type Analysis (Chart 3)

Sports therapy professionals can choose from a variety of employment types, each offering different levels of security and flexibility:

3.3.1. Full Time (48.2%) - it offers stability and benefits like healthcare and paid leave. Sports therapists in full-time roles work regularly in hospitals, clinics, sports teams, or fitness centers, allowing them to focus on career growth within a stable environment.

3.3.2. Part Time (6.9%) - part-time roles provide work flexibility, which is great for balancing other commitments such as education or family. These therapists may work fewer hours or at multiple locations, making it a good option for gradual transitions to full-time work or maintaining diverse interests.

3.3.3. Self-Employed (38%) - self-employed therapists run their own practices or offer client-based services. This option offers independence and schedule flexibility but requires managing business tasks like marketing and finances. It suits those who enjoy entrepreneurship.

3.3.4. Slasher/Contractor (6.9%) - slasher or contractor roles are ideal for dynamic work environments and variety. These therapists work on short-term contracts across different projects, enjoying flexibility but needing to secure ongoing work opportunities.

These employment types showcase the adaptability of sports therapy professionals, allowing them to align their work with personal and career goals while responding to the evolving workforce landscape.

3.4 Salary(Chart 4, 5 and 6)

The survey results reveal that salaried positions constitute 51.7% of the member population, encompassing both those with a fixed salary and hybrid salary structures. On the other hand, commission-based or contract-based employment accounts for 48.3% of the members. Approximately 33.4% of the members reported earning HKD 50,000 or more per month.

3.4.1 Salary Median of Sports Therapists

Due to the questionnaire design not sufficiently reflecting the accurate salary median during the year 2023/24, we decided to use the data collected from the underwriting questionnaire for registered sports therapists that is required by the insurer in the year 2024/25. We have put this data for calculating the median and result as \$216,000 in annualized salary(\$18,000 monthly), and ruled out the highest and lowest salary.

The highest annual income reported from our registered sports therapist is \$1,500,000 whereas the lowest salary reported is \$180,000.

Overall, these insights suggest a diverse economic landscape for sports therapists, characterized by variability due to different employment models and market demands. In addition, this data reflects a growing acceptance among sports therapists of more flexible employment forms. Further investigation into factors affecting these income ranges could provide more targeted strategies for professional and personal financial growth.

3.5 Work Experience (Chart 7)

Regarding work experience, 55.1% of sports therapists have over 5 years of experience, with 10.3% having exceeded 10 years. Those with 2-5 years of experience comprise 41.4% of the population, while new graduates with less than 1 year represent only 3.4%. This indicates a well-established foundation for sports therapy professionals in HKSAR.

Regarding new graduate sports therapists, the Association's member profile does not significantly reflect the percentage of fresh graduates engaging in the industry yet. A further study is required to examine the percentage of fresh graduates' engagement.

3.6 Work Environment and Satisfaction

The overall satisfaction within the clinic work environment received an average score of 4.8 out of 5.

Positive feedback highlighted the good vibe and morale, a diversity of treatment apparatus, spacious areas for treatment and rehabilitation exercises, and excellent mentorship from senior clinicians.

However, some drawbacks were noted, such as a focus on profit over quality by clinic owners, a lack of internal training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, and heavy caseloads.

The on-field environment received an average score of 4.6 out of 5.

Positive feedback included the availability of mini-gym facilities for team rehab, team-owned treatment facilities within sports centers, and a high level of autonomy for team lead sports therapists.

Drawbacks such as irregular working hours, adverse weather and hygiene conditions, and limited space for treatments.

3.7 Professional Autonomy

The results indicate a significant level of professional autonomy among sports therapists in HKSAR, with a majority (51.7%) considering themselves fully independent in handling patients. This suggests a strong confidence and capability among these professionals to manage cases on their own, reflecting positively on their training and experience.

Meanwhile, 41.4% of sports therapists work with minimal supervision from senior clinicians. This implies a supportive work environment where therapists are trusted to make independent decisions, yet still have access to guidance when needed. Such a setup likely encourages professional growth while ensuring quality patient care through collaboration.

The 6.9% of therapists working in an "execution only" capacity indicates a small segment of the workforce primarily focused on implementing specific treatment plans, possibly due to less experience or preference for structured environments. This could highlight areas for potential growth or the need for more comprehensive training and development opportunities to increase confidence and independence among these therapists.

Overall, these findings reflect a profession that balances autonomy and collaboration, with opportunities to enhance independence through support and development for those less confident in their skills.

3.8 Employers' Understanding of Sports Therapy Professionals

This category scored an average of 4.8 out of 5. Pros cited by respondents included employers' familiarity and positive past experiences working with sports therapists, leading to a high degree of trust and effective communication due to shared clinical language. However, some employers struggle to differentiate the unique features of sports therapy from other healthcare professions.

IV. Conclusion

The survey findings indicate that the sports therapy profession in HKSAR is thriving, with a solid foundational base and growing acceptance of flexible work arrangements. While there are many areas of satisfaction among professionals, addressing concerns related to work environment, training opportunities, and professional autonomy, further exploration and development might enhance the profession's landscape. Continued dialogue and collaboration between sports therapists and their employers could help clarify the distinct roles and contributions within the broader healthcare context.

Chart 1. Market sectors of sports therapists

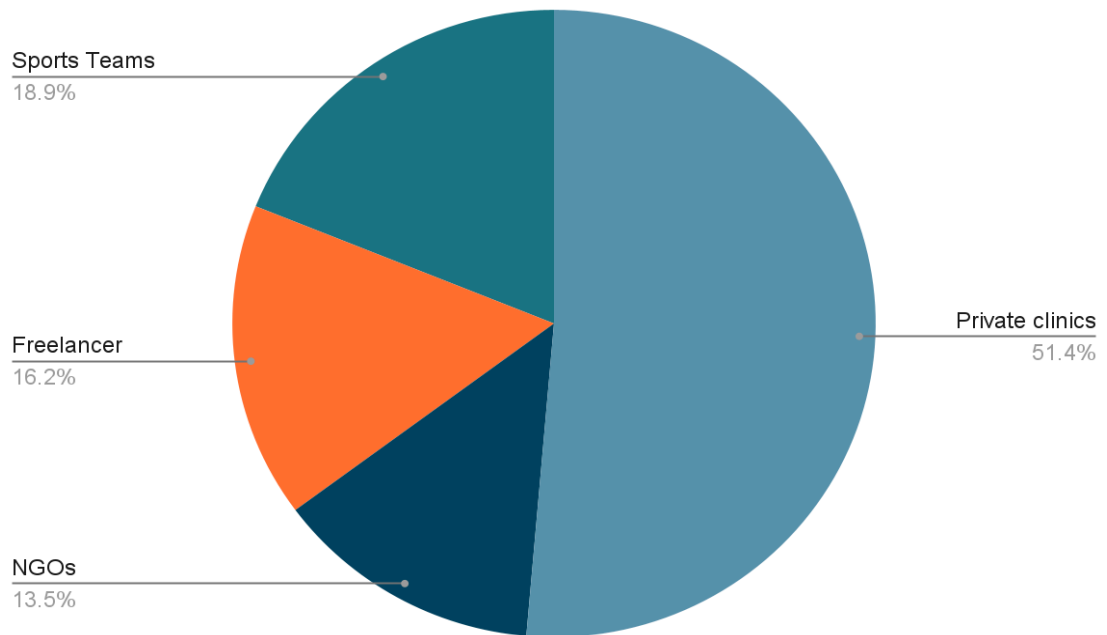


Chart 2. Major service targets in HKSAR

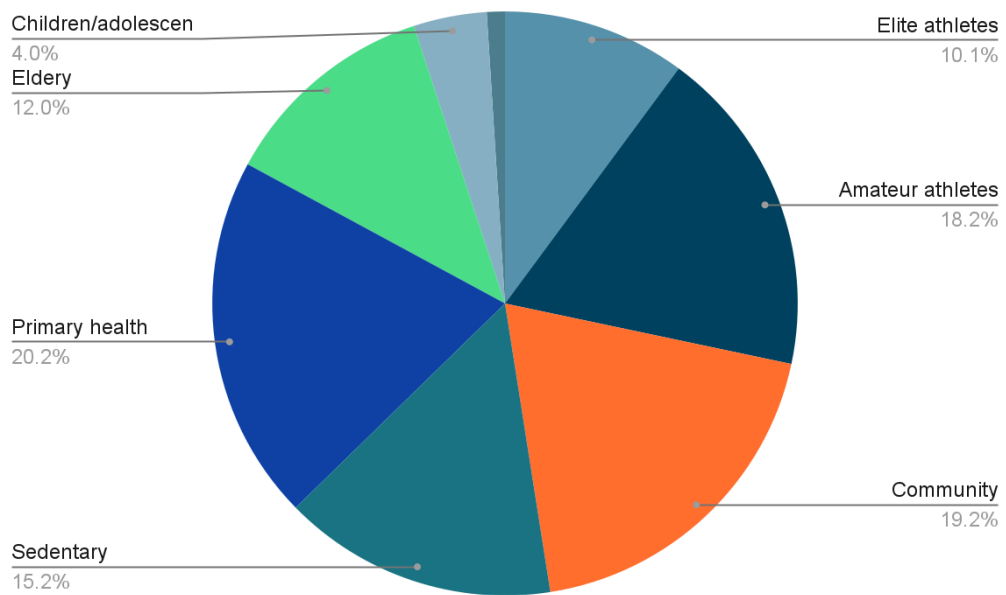


Chart 3. Employment type in 2023

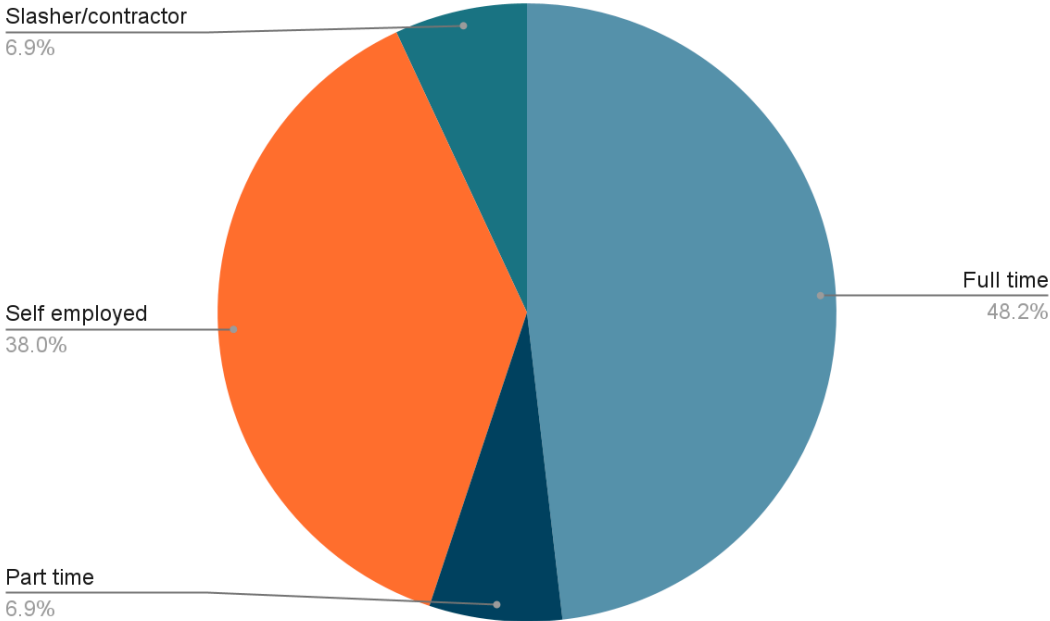


Chart 4. Salary structure

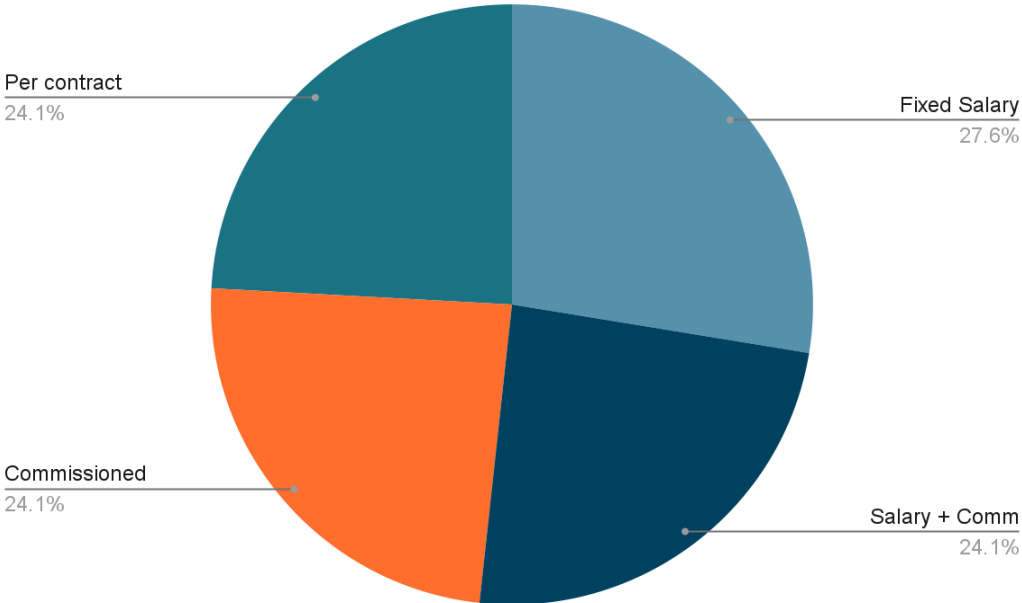


Chart 5. Non-commissioned based salary of sports therapists - 2023

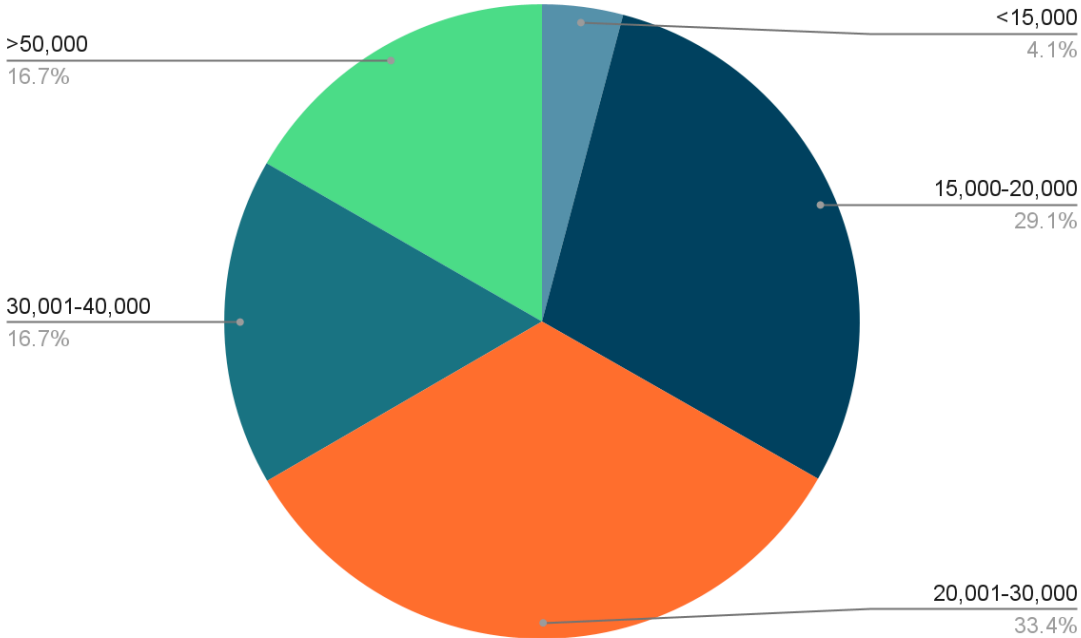


Chart 6. Commission-based salary of sports therapists 2023

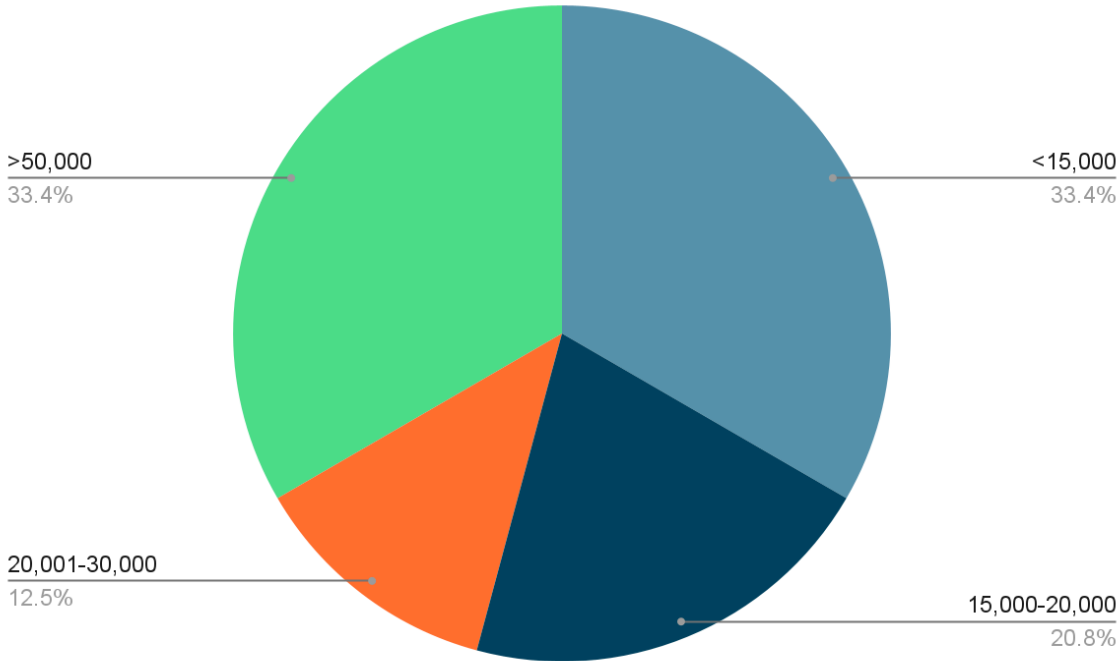


Chart 7. Years of work experience - overall

