

# Speech Pathology Labour Force

Victoria 2003-04

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## Executive Summary

The Speech pathology Labour Force Survey was conducted in 2004. At the time of the survey there were 900 Victorian speech pathologists who were members of Speech Pathology Australia. A total of 471 surveys were completed providing a return rate of 52%.

Analysis of the survey revealed the following characteristics of the speech pathology workforce.

- The majority (92%) of respondents were working in Victoria at the time of the survey with a small number working in other States, in other fields or on extended leave.
- Of the total survey respondents, 64% worked in the public sector and 25% in the private sector.
- Speech pathology is a female dominated profession, and over 90% of the respondents were female.
- The average age for all respondents was 37.9 years. The average age for females was 37.7 years while males were older at 44.2 years.
- Respondents working in the public sector were on average 3.3 years younger than those working in the private sector.
- Of the total male respondents, 53% worked in the private sector compared with 25% of females.
- The majority of respondents work in hospitals (27%), schools (23%) and their own practice (19%).
- Females tend to work shorter hours. The average hours worked for females was 28 per week compared with males who worked 35 hours per week on average.
- The majority (78%) of speech pathologists were employed in Metropolitan Melbourne.
- On average, respondents had 16 years of practice experience, with those working in the private sector having on average 2 years more experience than those in the public sector.
- The majority (86%) of respondents obtained their initial qualifications in Victoria.
- Of the 8% of respondents who were not currently working as a speech pathologist, 43% indicated that they intended to return to work as a speech pathologist.
- The majority (89%) of respondents work in the field of clinical speech pathology.
- When asked to nominate a clinical specialty area that best describes their current work as a speech pathologist, the highest proportion of respondents nominated paediatric education. Of the total respondents, 60% nominated specialty areas related to paediatrics, 23% nominated specialty areas related to adults, and 6% nominated mixed specialty areas.
- 47% of respondents indicated they would not remain in the profession beyond 10 years. Over half (53%) of respondents aged less than 30 years expected to leave the profession within 10 years. The most common reasons were family reasons (47%), change in career (27%), overseas travel (14.5%) and postgraduate study (10%).

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In 1990, the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) commissioned the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to develop national health labour force statistics about the major allied health professions. The AIHW developed data collections based on a national minimum data set, to address the workforce planning needs of the health professions, government, service providers and educational institutions.

A Victorian Speech Pathology Labour Force Survey was conducted in 2004. The survey aimed to explore the composition of the speech pathology labour force within Victoria, and provide an understanding about the work practices of the profession.

Speech pathologists play a significant role in the provision of a range of health care interventions to a broad patient group, including those affected by acquired brain injury, autism, premature babies and childhood language disorders. Ongoing workforce data collection is required to provide an accurate picture of the speech pathology workforce and provide a Victorian evidence-base to speech pathology workforce planning. To this end, the Department of Human Services developed the Victorian Speech Pathology Labour Force Survey, which was distributed to all Speech Pathology Australia members in Victoria.

## 1.2 Scope

Speech pathologists diagnose, treat and provide management services to people of all ages with communication and swallowing disorders. Communication encompasses speech, language, voice, fluency, reading and spelling.

Speech pathologists complete a four-year degree at university and undertake a diverse range of study including the anatomy and function of the human body, causes and types of communication and swallowing disorders, along with practical skills in prevention and treatment strategies.

There is no mandatory registration of speech pathologists in Victoria. The majority of speech pathologists belong to Speech Pathology Australia, the membership body representing speech pathologists. The survey was sent to all Victorian members of Speech Pathology Australia as it was considered the most effective way of seeking data from the profession.

# 2 Methodology

## 2.1 Source of data

This report is based on the responses to a survey of speech pathologists sent to Victorian members of Speech Pathology Australia in 2004. At the time of the survey there were 900 Victorian speech pathologists who were members of Speech Pathology Australia. A total of 471 surveys were completed providing a return rate of 52%.

As a result of the relatively low response rate, no attempt was made to scale the results to the total number of speech pathologists in Victoria. It was considered that with such a high proportion of non-respondents, it could not be safely assumed that the characteristics of respondents and non-respondents were the same. Therefore, numbers and percentages provided relate only to the survey respondents, and not the total population of registered speech pathologists.

## 2.2 Report overview

This report is comprised of two components:

1. Speech Pathologists Labour Force in Victoria - data provided by speech pathologists working in Victoria are described and analysed.
2. Analysis and description of speech pathologists working in a clinical setting - the responses of speech pathologists working in clinical settings in Victoria (as based on the Labour Force Survey) are described and analysed.

## 3 Speech Pathologists Labour Force in Victoria

### 3.1 Speech pathologists working in Victoria

The majority of female respondents and all male respondents were working as speech pathologists in Victoria at the time of the survey.

- 92% of all respondents were working as speech pathologists in Victoria, representing 92% of females and 100% of males.
- 2% of female respondents were working, but not in speech pathology.
- 3% were on extended leave.
- 2% indicated they were not working.
- 1% were working in speech pathology in other states or overseas.
- The work status of 1% of survey respondents was unknown.

**Table 1. – Work Status by Gender**

Status	Female	Male	All
Working in Victoria	92%	100%	92%
Working only in other States/Country	1%	0%	1%
On Extended Leave	3%	0%	3%
Not Working in Speech Pathology	2%	0%	2%
Not Currently Working	2%	0%	2%
<b>All</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.2 Age and gender

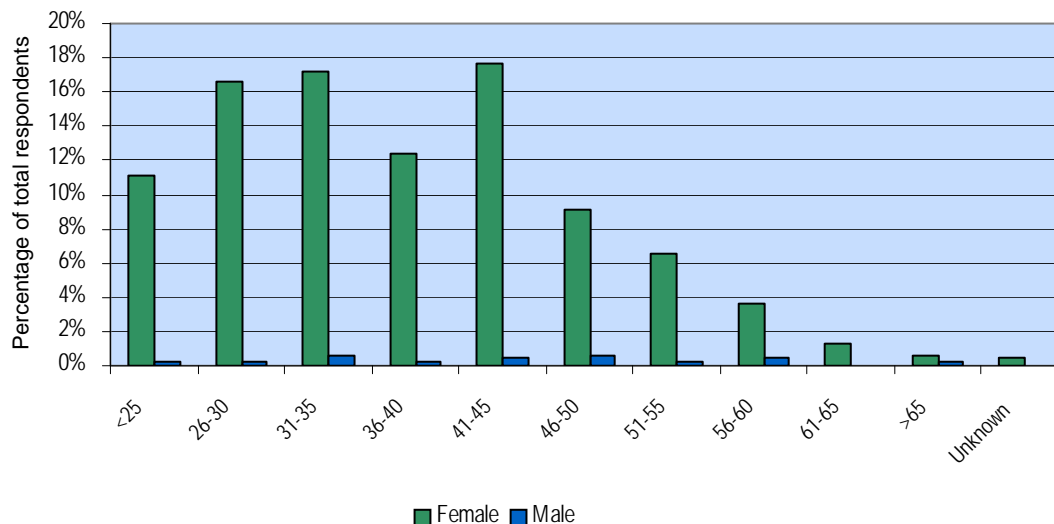
The data in this report describes a predominately female workforce, with females comprising 96.8% of respondents.

**Table 2- Speech Pathologists by gender**

	Female	Male	Total
<b>Respondents</b>	454	15	469
<b>Percentage</b>	96.8%	3.2%	100%

The average age for all respondents was 37.9 years. Males were, on average, over six years older than females. The average age for females was 37.7 years while males were older at 44.2 years.

**Figure 1 – Speech Pathologists by Age and Gender**



**Table 3. Headcount of speech pathologists by age group and gender**

Age Group	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
<25	52	11.1%	1	0.2%	53
26-30	78	16.6%	1	0.2%	79
31-35	81	17.3%	3	0.6%	84
36-40	58	12.4%	1	0.2%	59
41-45	83	17.7%	2	0.4%	85
46-50	43	9.1%	3	0.6%	47
51-55	31	6.6%	1	0.2%	32
56-60	17	3.6%	2	0.4%	19
61-65	6	1.3%	0	0.0%	6
>65	3	0.6%	1	0.2%	4
Unknown	2	0.4%	0	0.0%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>469</b>

\*Excludes respondents who did not nominate a gender.

### 3.3 Employment sector

Respondents were asked how many hours per week they had worked in various public or private work settings. This was used to identify the proportion of respondents who worked in public and private sectors.

- Of the total survey respondents, 64% work within the public sector, 25% work in the private sector, and the sector of the remainder was unknown.
- Males were more likely to work in the private sector than females. Of the total males, 53% worked in the private sector, 40% in the public sector, with the remaining 7% unknown. Of the total females, 25% worked in the private sector, 69% worked in the public sector, with the remaining 6% unknown. Because there are far more female speech pathologists than males, this results in a much greater proportion (64%) working in the public sector as shown in Table 4.

- Those respondents working in the public sector tended to be younger than those working in the private sector. The average age in the public sector was 37.0 for females and 36.0 for males. In the private sector the average age for females was 39.5, and 50.4 for males.

**Table 4 – Employment sector (main job)**

Sector	Female	Male	All
Private	23%	2%	25%
Public	63%	1%	64%
Unknown	11%	0%	11%
<b>All Sectors</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5 – Average age by employment sector**

	Female	Male	All
Private	39.5	50.4	40.2
Public	37.0	36.0	36.9
Unknown	38.0	46.0	37.9
<b>All Sectors</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>37.9</b>

### 3.4 Secondary employment

Of the total survey respondents, 114 (28%) held a second job, with the majority of second jobs (63%) being in the private sector.

Table 6 indicates that of those holding a second job, about two thirds (69%) had their main job in the public sector. Nearly half of respondents who held a second job (44%) had their main job in the public sector and their second job in the private sector. A further 25% had their main job in the public sector and their second job in the public sector, while 19% had their main job in the private sector and their second job in the private sector also. The scenario that occurred least often (12%) was a respondent who had their main job in the private sector and their second job in the public sector.

**Table 6 – Speech Pathologists holding a second job.**

	Main Job				Total	% Total
	Private	% Private	Public	% Public		
<b>Private second job</b>	22	19%	50	44%	72	63%
<b>Public second job</b>	14	12%	28	25%	42	37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100%</b>

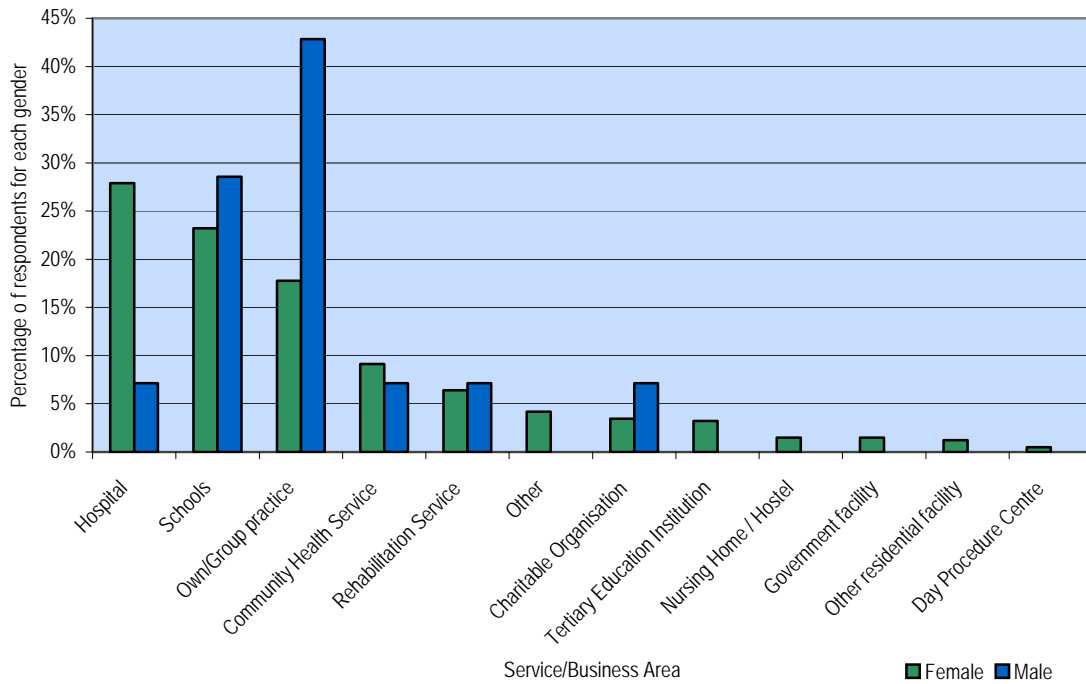
\* Excludes respondents who did not nominate a sector.

### 3.5 Workplace setting

The majority of respondents worked in hospitals, schools or in their own private practice.

- 27% of respondents worked in hospitals.
- 23% worked in schools.
- 19% worked in their own practice.

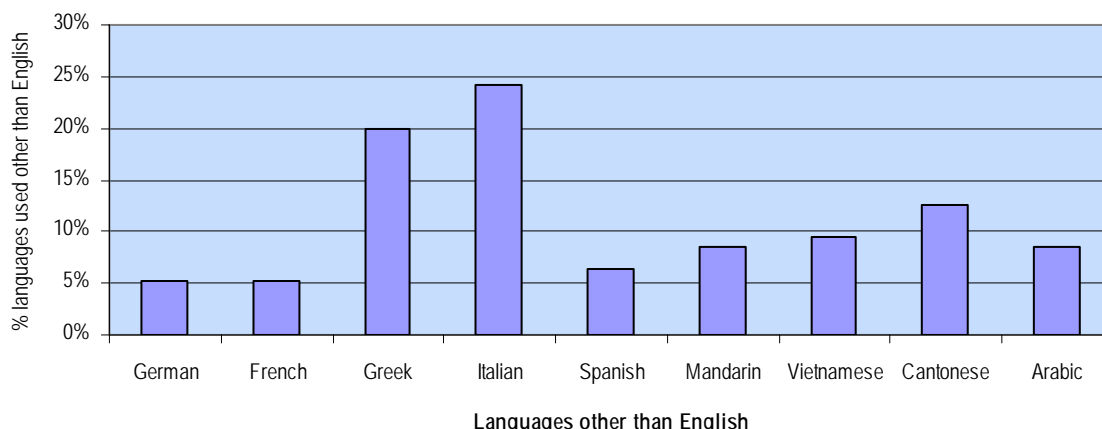
Figure 2 - Main service and business area by gender



### 3.6 Languages used professionally

Survey respondents were asked what languages were used professionally in patient/client encounters, with 96% indicating that English was the preferred language. The most common languages used professionally other than English were Greek (20%) and Italian (24%).

**Figure 3 - Languages used professionally other than English**



### 3.7 Hours worked

The respondents worked a relatively low 29 hours per week on average, compared with the standard Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 38 hours. Males worked on average 35 hours per week for all jobs compared with females, who worked 28 hours per week. Females who worked in the public sector in their main job worked longer hours than those who worked in the private sector, while the converse was true for males.

- Females worked an average of 26 hours per week compared with 34 for males in their main job.
- For their main job, respondents worked longer hours per week in the public sector (27) than in the private sector (23).
- Males work 35 hours per week within the private sector in their main job, while women work on average 22 hours per week in the private sector. In the public sector, males worked 33 hours per week in their main job compared with females who work 27 hours per week.
- On average, respondents worked 8 hours per week in their second job. Those whose second job was in the private sector worked on average 10 hours per week while those whose second job was in the public sector worked on average 7 hours per week.

**Table 7. Average total hours worked in both main and second job**

	Female	Male	All
<b>Average hours worked per week all jobs</b>	28	35	29

**Table 8. Average total hours worked by sector and gender**

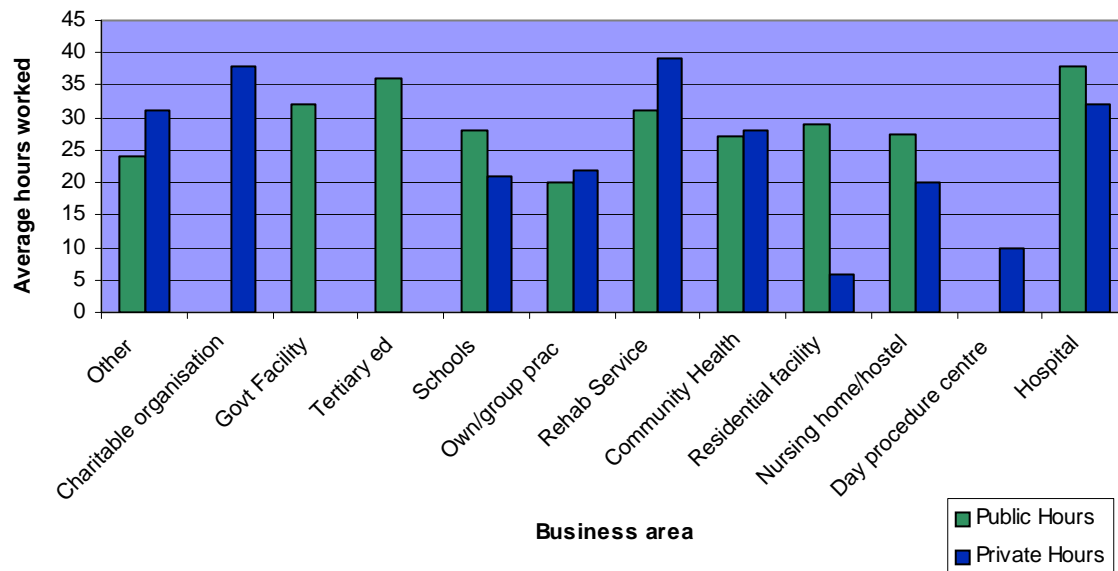
	Main Job			Second Job		
	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	All
<b>Private</b>	22	35	23	10	0	10
<b>Public</b>	27	33	27	7	10	7
<b>All</b>	26	34	26	8	10	8

\* Excludes respondents who did not nominate a sector or hours per week.

With respect to service/business area, on average the longest hours worked were in government facilities (35 hours per week) and charitable settings (34 hours per week). This compares with own/group practice with 25 hours per week, and day procedure centre with 10 hours per week. Figure 4 illustrates the

average number of hours by service/business area by sector. The highest number of average hours was worked by respondents in the private sector who worked for rehabilitation services (39 hours per week) and charitable organisations (38 hours per week), and respondents in the public sector who worked in hospitals (38 hours per week) and tertiary education institutions (36 hours per week).

**Figure 4 - Average hours worked by service/business area by sector**

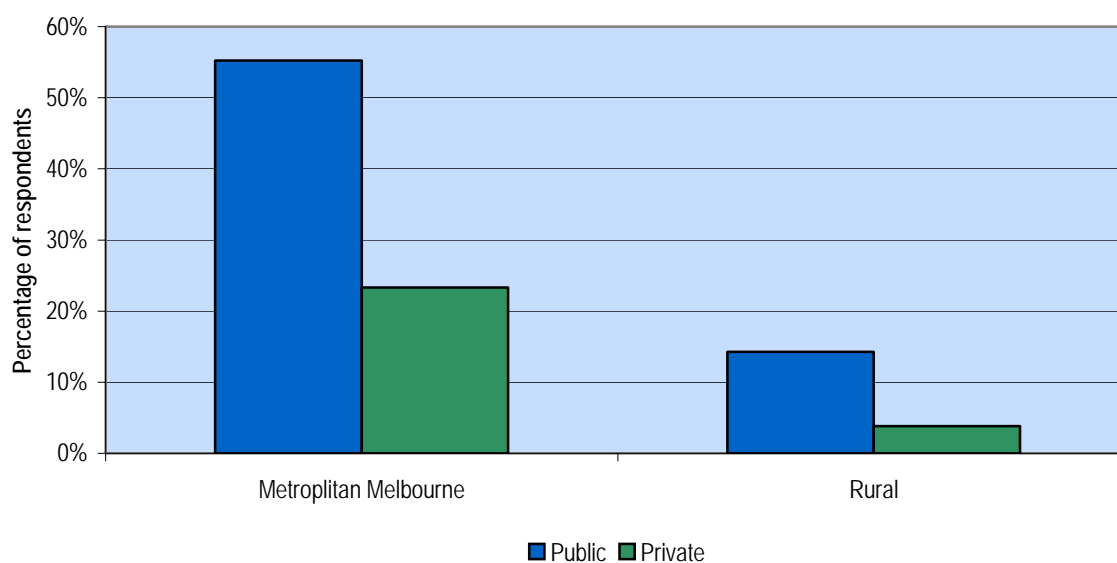


### 3.8 Location

The majority (81%) of respondents were employed in metropolitan areas. Rural Victoria was serviced by 19% of respondents, with the majority working in the public sector.

- 86% of private sector respondents were located in metropolitan Melbourne or other metropolitan areas.
- 79% of public sector respondents were located in metropolitan Melbourne or other metropolitan areas.

**Figure 5 - Location of employment**



### 3.9 Years of practice

Speech pathologists had an average of 16 years of practice, with those working in the private sector having on average 2 years more experience overall than those in the public sector.

- The average years of practice for females was 14 years compared with 11 for males.
- 58% of respondents have 16 years practice experience or less.
- 40% of respondents completed their qualification in the last 10 years.

**Table 9. Years of practice by sector and gender**

	Female	Male	All
<b>Private</b>	16	12	14
<b>Public</b>	14	12	13
<b>All</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 10. Years since first qualification**

Years since Initial Qualification	Headcount
0-5 years	82
6-10 years	87
11-15 years	60
16-20 years	58
21-25 years	56
26-30 years	34
31-35 years	15
36-40 years	9
>40 years	7
Not Specified	61
<b>All</b>	<b>469</b>

### 3.10 Location of initial qualifications

The majority (86%) of respondents obtained their initial qualifications in Victoria.

- 5% of respondents gained their qualifications in NSW.
- Overseas qualifications had been obtained by 3% of respondents, most commonly from the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States.

**Table 11. Location of initial qualification by gender**

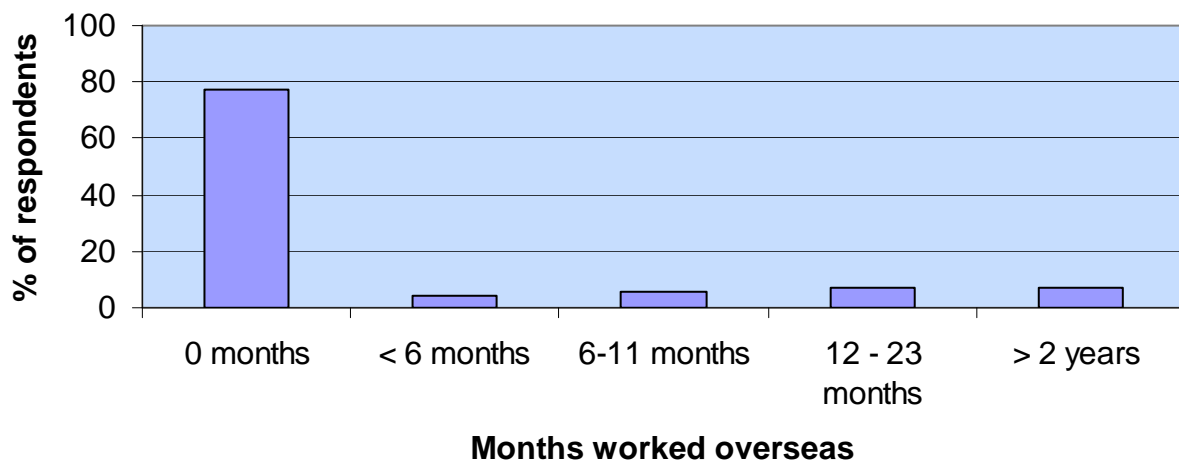
Location	Females	Males	All
Victoria	353	13	366
New South Wales	19	1	20
Queensland	11	0	11
South Australia	14	0	14
Western Australia	3	0	3
Overseas	11	1	12
<b>All</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>426</b>

\* Excludes cases where location or gender was not specified

### 3.11 Overseas work experience

Approximately one quarter (25.5%) of total respondents had worked overseas. Of those respondents who obtained their qualifications in Australia, 22.6% had worked overseas. Figure 6 indicates the length of time worked overseas by Australian-qualified respondents.

**Figure 6 - Percentage of Australian qualified respondents who have worked overseas**



### 3.12 Future work intentions of respondents

#### Non-working

Of the 8% of respondents who were not working in speech pathology, 3% were on extended leave, 2% were working in other fields and 2% were not currently working. Of those not working, 43% indicated that they did intend to return to the speech pathology workforce, 9% indicated that they did not, and the remainder did not respond.

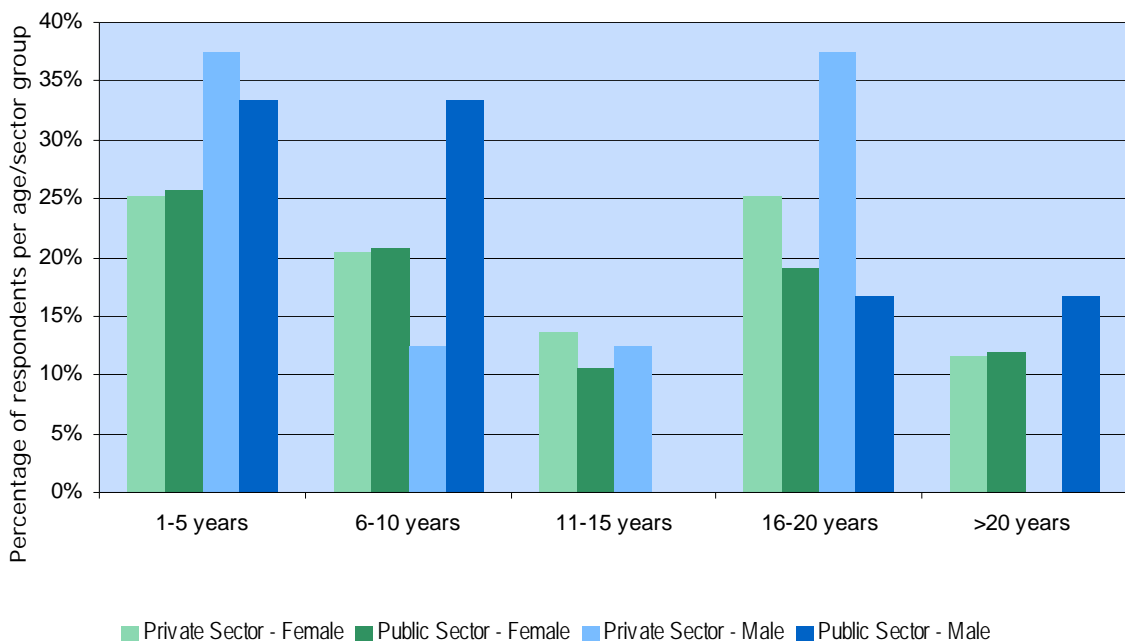
#### Currently working in speech pathology

Nearly half (47%) of the total respondents indicated that they would not be working in the speech pathology field for more than 10 years. Of female respondents, 47% indicated that they would not be working in this field beyond 10 years, compared with 57% of male speech pathologists.

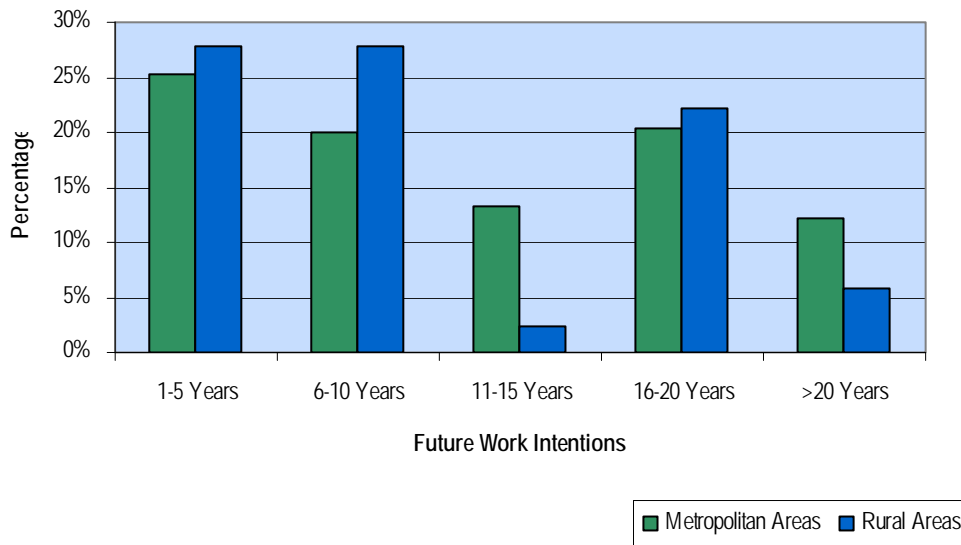
- 53% of respondents aged less than 30 years expected to leave the profession within 10 years. Nearly half of these respondents (47%) gave family responsibilities as the reason for their intended departure. Other common reasons were a change in career (27%), overseas travel (14.5%) and postgraduate study (10%). Further research would be useful to gain a more detailed understanding of the reasons for intending to leave the profession, and whether departures are likely to be permanent or temporary.
- Similar proportions of respondents working in the public (47%) and private sectors (46%) indicated that they would not be working in the field beyond 10 years.
- A higher proportion of public sector respondents (55%) indicated they would remain in the field for 16 years or more, compared with private sector respondents (37%).
- 28% of respondents working in rural areas and 25% of those working in metropolitan areas expect to leave within 5 years, and 28% of respondents working in rural areas and 20% of those working in metropolitan areas expect to leave the profession within the next 6-10 years.

It is not possible from the current survey to establish whether these will be permanent departures from the speech pathology workforce. While retirement or a career change generally implies a permanent loss to the speech pathology workforce, this is not necessarily the case where family responsibilities or postgraduate study are stated as the reason for departure from the profession.

**Figure 7 - Intention to leave speech pathology by sector and gender**



**Figure 8 - Intention to leave speech pathology by location**



\*Excludes respondents who did not indicate work intentions

## 4 Clinical Speech Pathology

### 4.1 Field of clinical practice

Clinical speech pathologists are mainly involved in the area of clinical practice, which includes the diagnosis, care, and treatment of patients and is the dominant field of work within speech pathology.

- 89% of respondents work in the field of clinical speech pathology.
- The proportion of male respondents who worked as clinical speech pathologists (80%) was slightly lower than females (89%). A higher proportion of males worked in clinical service management/administration (13%) than females (5%). However, it should be noted that the total number of males was very small.

**Table 12. Field of speech pathology by gender**

Field of Speech Pathology	Female	Female %	Male	Male%	All	All%
Clinical Speech Pathology	366	89%	12	80%	378	89%
Clinical Service Management / Administration	21	5%	2	13%	23	5%
Training / Education	12	3%	0	0%	12	3%
Research	3	1%	0	0%	3	1%
Other	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Not Specified	8	2%	1	7%	9	2%
<b>All</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 13 indicates that the highest proportion of respondents (63.5%) work in clinical speech pathology in the public sector, followed by those working in clinical speech pathology in the private sector (26.9%). While 8.5% of total respondents work in the public sector in non-clinical roles, only 1.1% of total respondents work in the private sector in non-clinical roles.

**Table 13. Field of speech pathology by sector**

Field of Speech Pathology	Public	Public %	Private	Private%	Total	Total%
Clinical Speech Pathology	250	63.5%	107	26.9%	357	90.4%
Clinical Service Management / Administration	19	4.9%	3	0.8%	22	5.7%
Training / Education	11	2.8%	1	0.3%	12	3.1 %
Research	3	0.8%	0	0%	3	0.8%
<b>All</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100%</b>

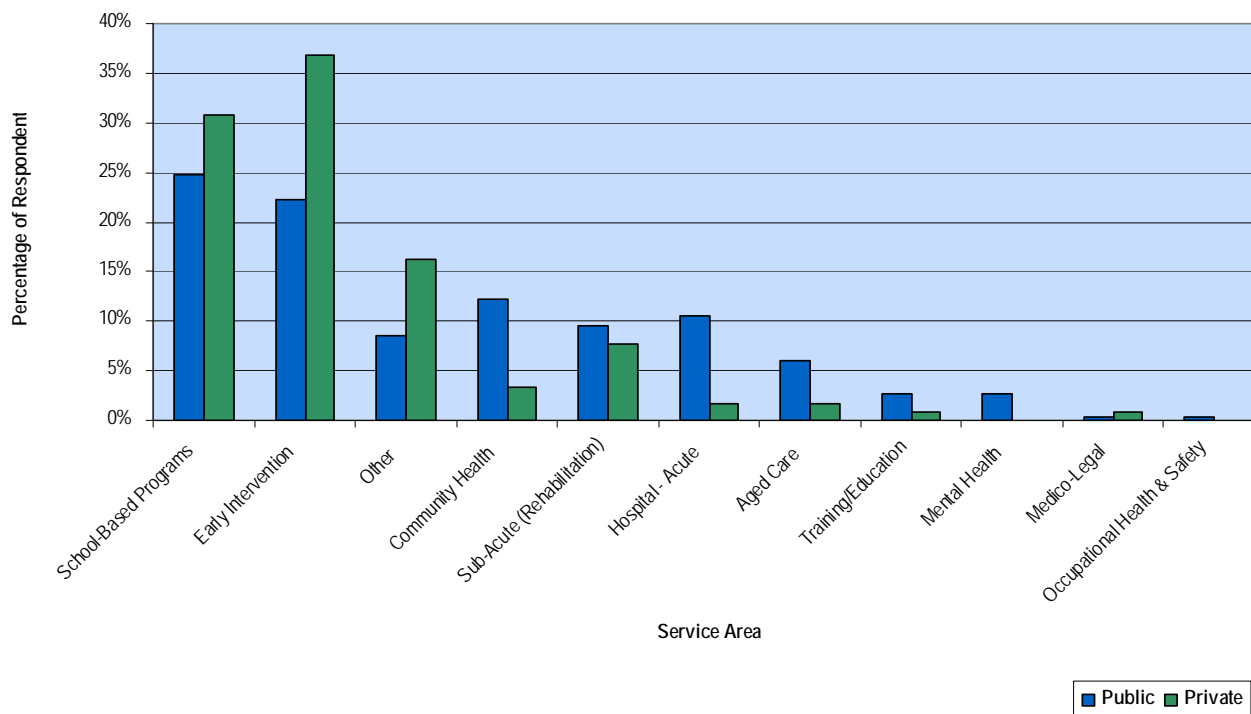
\* Excludes cases where sector or field were not specified

## 4.2 Service area

Respondents were asked to nominate which service areas best describe their current work as a speech pathologist. The results are summarised in Figure 9.

- 37% of private speech pathology is performed in the area of Early Intervention and 31% in School Based Programs, accounting for 68% of the private sector work performed.
- 47% of the public sector clinical speech pathology is conducted in the areas of School Based Programs (25%) and Early Intervention (22%).
- The following service areas had higher proportions of public sector respondents than private sector respondents: community health, sub-acute, acute hospital, aged care, training/education and mental health.
- Conversely, higher proportions of private sector than public sector respondents worked in school-based programs, early intervention and medico-legal service areas.

**Figure 9 – Service area by public/private setting**



### 4.3 Clinical specialty area

Respondents were asked to nominate a clinical specialty area which best describes their current work as a speech pathologist.

- The highest proportion of respondents nominated paediatric education as their clinical specialty area. The proportions were similar between the public (23%) and private (21%) sectors.
- The second highest proportion of respondents nominated general paediatrics as their specialty area. A far higher proportion of respondents in the private sector (36%) nominated this specialty area compared to the public sector (16%).
- Of the total respondents, 60% nominated specialty areas relating to paediatrics, 23% nominated specialty areas related to adults, and 6% nominated mixed specialty areas.
- Of those working in the public sector, 26% nominated specialty areas relating to adults, while 15% of those in the private sector nominated service areas related to adults.

**Table 14. Specialty area by sector**

Specialty Area	Public	Private	Both sectors
Paediatric - Education	23%	21%	22%
Paediatric - General	16%	36%	21%
Adult - Rehabilitation	13%	6%	11%
Paediatric - Early Intervention	13%	6%	11%
Adult and Paediatric (Mixed)	5%	10%	6%
Adult - Acute	7%	3%	6%
Paediatric - Speciality	7%	4%	6%
Adult - Mixed	6%	2%	5%
Adult - Brain Injury	0%	4%	1%
Educational Facility	1%	1%	1%
Other	9%	7%	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>