

# massage profession

## research report



Official Sponsor



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3-5</b>
<b>Section 1. Consumers of Massage Therapy</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1A. What changes are taking place in the U.S. Population?.....	7
1B. What is the current state of the U.S. Economy? .....	8
1C. What drives consumer use of massage therapy?.....	8-9
1D. Who gets massage? .....	10-13
1E. Why do consumers get massage? .....	14-17
1F. Where are consumers getting massage?.....	18-21
<b>Section 2. The Massage Therapy Profession</b> .....	<b>22</b>
2A. Who is practicing massage therapy?.....	23-26
2B. How much are massage therapists compensated for their work?.....	27-33
2C. What are some of the benefits available to massage therapists? .....	34-35
2D. Where are massage therapists practicing?.....	36-38
2E. How are therapists using technology in their practice?.....	39-43
2F. What’s the latest on the spa industry and massage therapy?.....	44-46
2G. What impact are national massage chains having on the profession?.....	47-48
<b>Section 3. Health Care and the Massage Profession</b> .....	<b>49</b>
3A. Is the health care industry growing?.....	50-51
3B. How are consumers using massage as part of an integrated approach to health care? .....	52-55
3C. Where are consumers getting massage for health and wellness?.....	56
3D. What changes are occurring with massage and insurance? .....	57-58
<b>Section 4. Training and Education of Massage Therapists</b> .....	<b>59</b>
4A. What changes are occurring in length of programs and types of training? .....	60-63
4B. What are the recent school trends and demographics? .....	64-65
4C. What challenges are schools facing?.....	66-67
4D. How many schools are accredited? .....	68
4E. What trends are happening with teachers?. .....	69-73
4F. What is occurring with new graduates? .....	74
4G. Who are today’s students? .....	75-77
<b>Appendix—List of Sources</b> .....	<b>78-80</b>

## Introduction

### Current landscape of the massage therapy profession

*The 2017 Massage Profession Research Report*

Welcome to the 10th annual *Massage Profession Research Report*, AMTA's collection and analysis of current market data and trends that impact the massage therapy environment.

AMTA, as the most trusted name in the massage profession, publishes this report to provide massage therapy practitioners with current information and research to help them better run their practices and make informed business decisions. This report is a major AMTA Member benefit that helps you scan the current market, including consumers, therapists and schools, without a large investment of resources and time.

### Four Annual Research Studies

In the pages that follow, you'll find results of four benchmark surveys that track the state of the profession through 2016:

- The **AMTA Consumer Survey** was commissioned by AMTA to poll American adults on their use of massage therapy.
- The **AMTA Industry Survey** asked working massage therapists about everything from compensation, to hours, to type of work environment.
- The **AMTA Technology Survey** obtained input from massage therapists about their use of digital technology for individual and professional purposes.
- The **AMTA Massage School Survey** acquired feedback from massage school administrators about students, faculty, the job landscape for new graduates, and more.

This report provides timely and relevant data on the state of the massage profession, compiled from the results of these surveys and supplemented by U.S. government statistics and information found in industry and/or business publications. For methodology and confidence intervals of these surveys, see the Appendix. AMTA is pleased to conduct the research detailed above, compile the results, and provide this report for the betterment of the entire massage profession.

**We'd love to hear from you.**

If you have suggestions or need additional information, please contact us anytime at [research@amtamassage.org](mailto:research@amtamassage.org).

## Executive Summary

The massage profession saw several positive metrics in the past year. Consumer use of massage saw an increase in this past year. As more consumers received massage, therapists also reported that they saw increases in their annual income from massage therapy. There was extensive growth in the spa and massage franchise or chain industry, as well as new developments in outcall massage apps.

Here is a summary of key findings for each section of this report.

### Consumers of Massage Therapy

- The percentage of adult American consumers who received a massage increased from 18% in 2015 to 19% in 2016.
- The average number of massages consumers obtained was 3.8 in 2016, down from 5.0 in 2015.
- Approximately 43.8 million people had a total of 166.4 million massages in 2016, a 15% decrease from the 196 million massages received by 39.1 million Americans in 2015.

Consumers continued to believe in the efficacy of massage as 89% considered massage to be effective in reducing pain and 88% believed massage can be beneficial to health and wellness. Only 27% of consumers considered massage to just be a form of pampering.

The primary reason consumers obtained massage continued to be for medical, health and wellness purposes – pain relief, soreness/stiffness and recovery from injury - with 50% of massage consumers getting massage for these reasons, down slightly from 52% in 2015.

### The Massage Therapy Profession

On average, massage therapists worked 24.3 hours per week in 2016, a slight decrease from the 25.3 hours per week they worked in 2015. Massage therapists saw an average of 44 clients each month in 2016, similar to 2015 numbers. Over the past few years, the gross annual income from massage therapy has increased. The average therapist has a gross income of \$25,539 from massage in a given year, up from previous years.

Between 2015 and 2016, the estimated number of massage therapists grew by 2% to 352,661. The number of massage therapists increased 31% over the past ten years, with an increase of 70% in licensed states. Most massage therapists were female (89%), had a different profession prior to becoming a therapist (82%), had formal education beyond a high school diploma (90%) and were sole practitioners at least part of the time (58%).

## **Health Care and the Massage Industry**

The health care industry continued to offer employment opportunities for massage therapists in a variety of settings. The health care industry is projected to become the largest employment sector of the US economy by 2024, surpassing even government employment.

Massage therapists supported the integration into healthcare, but how that integration looks varied greatly. Therapists saw healthcare integration by having massage prescribed by healthcare providers, or by having massage therapists work on a team with other complementary practitioners.

Seventy-one percent of Americans believed that massage should be considered a form of healthcare. Fifty percent of American massage consumers got their last massage for a medical or health reason last year, versus 52% in 2015.

More consumers were talking with their health care providers about massage, and those providers were increasingly recommending massage to their patients, especially physicians, chiropractors, and physical therapists.

Consumers went to many locations for massage for medical and health reasons, but tended to go to traditional healthcare locations for massage for more intricate health issues.

The growing number of referrals from health care professionals as cited by both massage therapists and consumers indicated increased integration of massage therapy in health care environments.

### **Training and Education of Massage Therapists**

Massage therapists reported increasingly higher number of program hours for entry-level education with the average therapist having 673 hours of in-class training.

Across all schools, the average number of graduates was 61 per year. Individually owned schools cited an average of 74 graduates per year.

Massage therapy schools reported their top challenges as difficulty in marketing their programs or school, closely followed by difficulty in attracting students. Seventy-four percent of schools reported in 2016 being accredited, up from 73% in 2015.

Seventy-two percent of schools offered financial aid to their students in 2016, up from 67% in 2015. To address the difficulty that some graduates may have in obtaining employment after graduation, 94% of schools offered some form of job placement services to students in 2016, up slightly from 93% in 2015.

The average massage teaching experience of instructors in entry level programs was 12 years, with only 21% of teachers having 5 years or less of experience.

The attrition rate of students stayed similar to last year at an average of 10-20% of student not graduating from a given class.

## Section 1 — Consumers of Massage Therapy<sup>1</sup>

*Consumer use of massage therapy is one of the most important metrics to determine the health of the massage profession. How frequently, for what purpose, and at what type of locations consumers get massage affects the number of massage therapists, as well as the earning potential of existing therapists.*

This section provides information on the latest data and trends in the U.S. population, economy and consumer use of massage therapy.

### **Key Concerns:**

How will the economy and slow population growth affect massage therapists and the programs that train them?

How can you market your skills to the demographic groups who are seeking massage?

How can you gear your massage practice towards the markets most likely to grow?

How are the effects of massage franchises felt throughout the massage industry?

How can this information help make a massage practice more attractive to prospective clients?

### **Key Findings:**

- Nineteen percent of American adults received a massage in 2016.
- Overall population growth is small in the U.S., and the economy has recovered from the last recession.
- Consumers continue to believe in the efficacy of massage, and are recommending massage to friends and family.
- Use of massage by woman increased to the highest percentage since 2012.
- Use of massage for health and medical reasons decreased slightly in 2016, but is still the most prevalent reason why consumers get massage.
- Consumers with higher household incomes tend to get massage at a higher rate than those with lower household incomes.

### **These questions will be answered:**

1A. What changes are taking place in the overall U.S. population?

1B. What is the current state of the U.S. economy?

1C. What drives consumer use of massage therapy?

1D. Who gets massage?

1E. Why do consumers get massage?

1F. Where are consumers getting massage?

## 1A. What changes are taking place in the overall U.S. population?<sup>2</sup>

*Consumers drive growth in the profession. Overall population growth has been low the past several years.*

### ***According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. population is growing, but at a relatively slow rate***

The U.S. population grew to an estimated 323.1 million in 2016, up from 319.4 million in 2015. That's a population growth of one percent. The population is projected to grow slowly over the next several decades as the number of births and international migrations are expected to be lower than in previous years.

### ***The U.S. population continued to age***

The median age of the U.S. population increased slightly to 37.8 years in 2015, up from 37.7 years in 2014. The increase in median age was driven by the aging baby boomer population, those born between 1946 and 1964. As shown in the table below, the median age is expected to steadily increase over the next several decades.

---

Year	Median age of U.S. population
2000	35.3
2015	37.8
2020	39.6
2040	40.8
2060	42.2

Figure 1. Median current and projected age of U.S. population

---

### **Highlights from Figure 1**

The U.S. population is projected to continue aging at a steady rate over the next several decades.

---

For more information on U.S. population and economic trends, refer to the U.S. Census Bureau data at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

### **Apply the Research:**

1. The US population is growing at an extremely slow rate. Consider the impact this will have on the market for massage therapy.
2. How will the aging population affect the techniques and equipment needs of your massage practice?



## **1B. What is the current state of the U.S. economy?**

The economy has recovered substantially since the economic recession beginning in 2008. The unemployment rate in November 2016 was 4.6 percent, less than half of the peak unemployment rate of 10 percent in October 2009. Since 2010, the economy has created over 13 million jobs.<sup>3</sup> Nine states saw a decrease in unemployment in the past year, thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia remained steady, and only two states saw an increase in unemployment from December 2015 through November 2016.<sup>4</sup> Over the past year, average hourly earnings for all employees have risen by 0.5%.<sup>5</sup> With decreased unemployment and increased wages, that is a positive sign for consumer spending.

The Federal Reserve increased interest rates for the second time in 10 years in 2016.<sup>6</sup> This is an indicator of a stable and growing economy. The Consumer Price Index grew by 1.7 percent over the 12 month period ending November 30, 2016, meaning that consumer incomes have continued to rise enough to afford higher prices for goods and services provided by retailers.<sup>7</sup>

As incomes continue to increase, consumers will be better able to afford massage and this could lead to increased use of massage by consumers.

### ***Health Care revenue rising***

In the five years from 2011-2015, revenue from alternative healthcare providers, which includes massage therapists and chiropractors, increased 14 percent, and employment increased 19 percent. Revenue growth is projected to continue at an average rate of 3.6 percent per year through 2020.<sup>8</sup>

## **1C. What drives consumer use of massage therapy?**

*The percent of Americans getting a massage increased for the second year in a row.*

***The 2016 AMTA Consumer Survey results show that:***

- Nineteen percent of all adult Americans had at least one massage in 2016, up from 18% in 2015.
- Forty-one percent of adults reported that they have had a professional massage in their life.
- Consumers who received massage in the past year received an average of 3.8 massages in 2016, down from 5 massages in 2015.
- Roughly 43.8 million people had a total of 166.4 million massages in the U.S. in 2016, compared to 39.1 million people having a total of 196 million massages in 2015.
- The change in the total number of massages represents a 15 percent decrease from 2015 to 2016.
- As the economy has improved, this has correlated to an increase in massage use by consumers.

During the past ten years, consumer usage moved from 18% in 2006 to a high of 24% in 2007 and then to 19% in 2016 (See Figure 2 below).

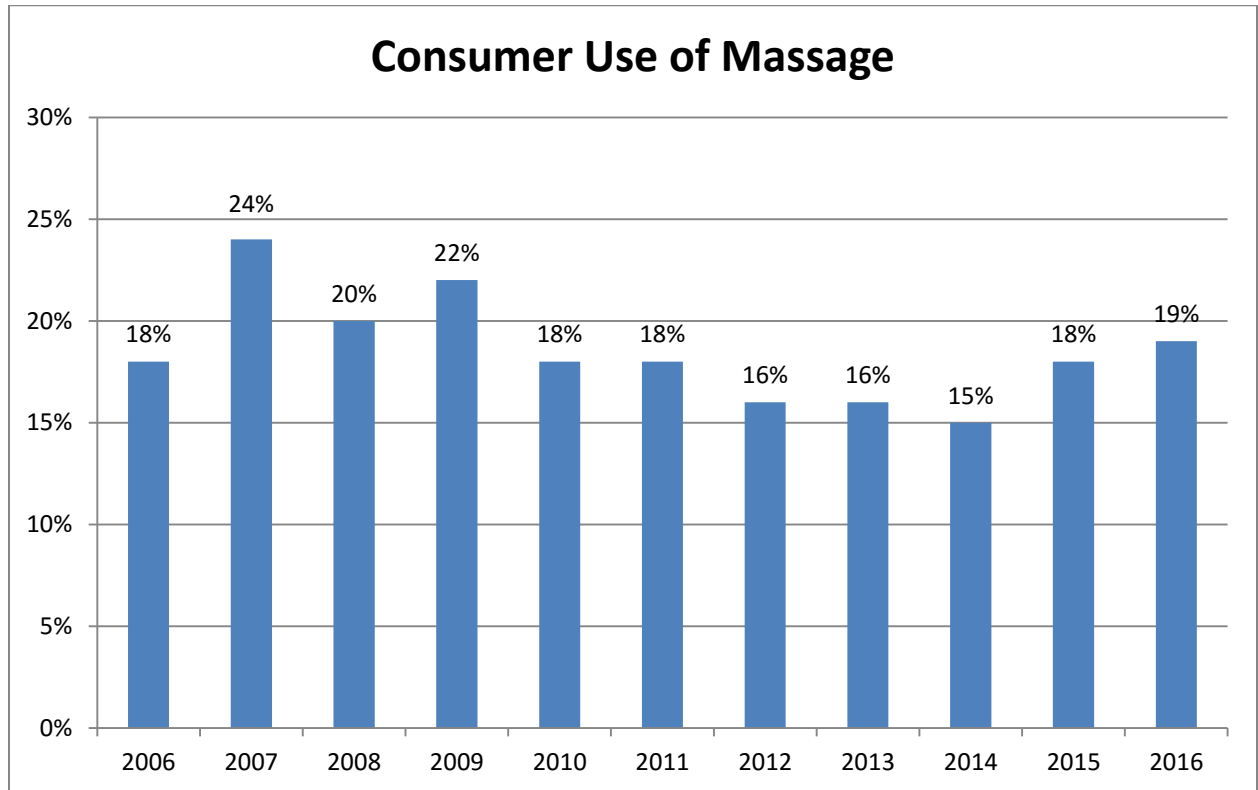


Figure 2. Total use of massage among adult U.S. population

#### Highlights from Figure 2

The recession caused by the housing crisis saw massage use among consumers drop drastically, and has been rebounding slowly but steadily since 2014.

#### ***Consumers continued to believe in the efficacy of massage:***

- Eighty-nine percent of consumers agreed that “Massage can be effective in reducing pain.”
- Eighty-eight percent of consumers agreed that “Massage can be beneficial to your health and wellness.”
- Seventy-one percent of consumers agreed that “Massage therapy should be considered a form of health care.”
- Sixty-nine percent of all consumers said they have or would recommend massage to a relative or to someone they knew in 2016.
- Thirty percent of consumers expected to get a massage in the next 12 months.

## **1D. Who gets massage?**

*Gender, generation, education and income all affect the likelihood of consumers using massage. The average massage consumer was female, had a household income over \$50,000 and did not have children under 18 in the household, a description that has not changed in several years.*

### **Of those consumers who received massage in 2016:**

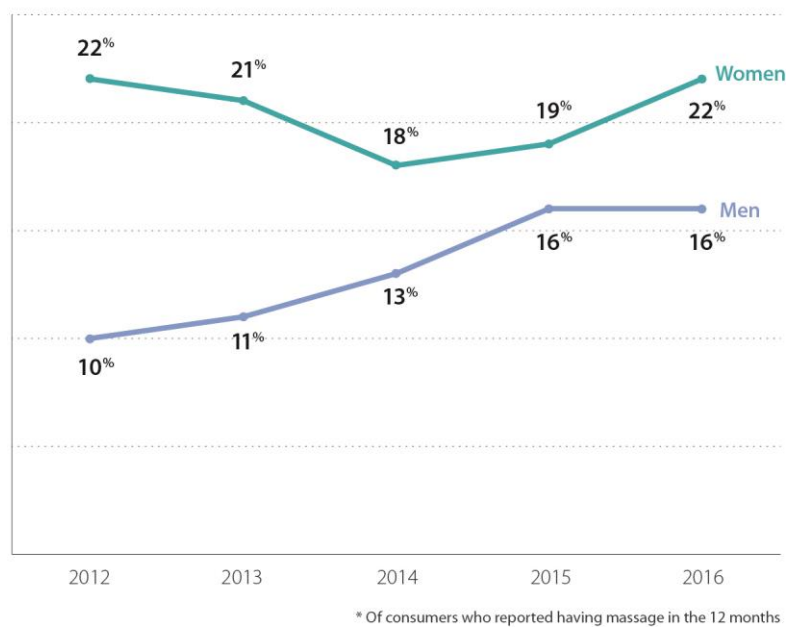
- Sixty percent were women.
- Thirty-seven percent had a child under 18 living in their household.
- Sixty percent earned more than \$50,000 per year.
- Fifty-one percent were college graduates.
- Fifty-nine percent were 44 years of age or younger.

**Women** – Sixty percent of all massages in 2016 were received by women, up from 56% in 2015.

- Twenty-two percent of adult women got at least one massage in 2016, the highest number since 2012.
- Female massage consumers received an average of 4 massages in 2016, down from 4.9 massages in 2015.
- Male massage consumers received an average of 3.5 massages in 2016, down from 5.2 massages received in 2015.
- Sixteen percent of men got a massage in 2016, the same as in 2015.

---

### Total use of massage among U.S. population by gender



**Figure 3. Total use of massage among U.S. population by gender**

---

#### Highlights from Figure 3

Women increased their use of massage in 2016

Men used massage at the same rate in 2016 as they did in 2015

---

**Households with children** - Thirty-seven percent of all massage consumers had a child under 18 in their home in 2016.

- Usage among households with no children increased to 18% in 2016, from 17% in 2015.

**Household Income** – Thirty-one percent of all massage consumers had a household income of \$100,000 or more in 2016, and 34% of consumers in households with an income of \$100,000 or more had a massage in 2016.

- Thirty percent of Americans that had a household income between \$75,000 and \$100,000 received a massage in 2016, up from 24% in 2015 and 16% in 2014.
- Twenty-three percent of Americans that had a household income between \$50,000 and \$75,000 received a massage in 2016, up from 21% in 2015 and 17% in 2014.
- Seventeen percent of Americans that had a household income between \$35,000 and \$50,000 got a massage in 2016, unchanged from 2015 but down from 22% in 2014.
- Eight percent of Americans that had a household income of less than \$35,000 got a massage in 2016, up from 7% in 2015 and consistent with 2014 data.

**College graduates** – Fifty-one percent of consumers who got a massage in 2016 were college graduates.

- Thirty-one percent of all college graduates received a massage in 2016, up from 30% in 2015. College graduates received an average of 3.3 massages in 2016, down from the 4.6 massages they received in 2015.

---

Level of consumer education	Massage use in 2011	Massage use in 2012	Massage use in 2013	Massage use in 2014	Massage use in 2015	Massage use in 2016
Completed college	30%	22%	24%	22%	30%	31%

**Figure 4. Total use of massage among college graduates from 2011 to 2016**

---

**Highlights from Figure 4**

After a decline in use of massage among college graduates in 2012, massage use among this demographic surpassed 2011 levels in 2016.

---

**Those 18 to 34 years old** – Thirty-three percent of massage consumers were between 18 and 34 years old.

- Twenty-one percent of all Americans 18 to 34 received a massage in 2016 compared to 17% in 2015.
- On average, this group received 2.3 massages in 2016, down from 4.8 massages in 2014.

**Those 35 to 44 years old** – Twenty-six percent of massage consumers were between 35 and 44 years old.

- Thirty-one percent of all Americans between 35 and 44 years old received a massage in 2016, the highest of any age group. Last year, 22% of this age group received a massage.
- This age group received an average of 4.1 massages in 2016, up from 3.9 massages in 2015.

**Those 45 to 64 years old** – Thirty-one percent of all massage consumers were between 45 and 64 years old.

- Seventeen percent of all those 45 to 64 received a massage in 2016, down from 20% in 2015.
- Nineteen percent of those 45 to 54 years old received a massage in 2016 compared to 23% in 2015. Massage consumers in this age group received an average of 4.7 massages in 2016.
- Fifteen percent of those 55 to 64 years old received a massage in 2016, down from 17% in 2015. Massage consumers aged 55 to 64 received an average of 5.4 massages in 2016, up from 4.4 massages in 2015, and the highest of any age group.

**Those aged 65 plus** – Nine percent of all massage consumers were 65 years or older.

- Nine percent of all Americans aged 65 or older received a massage in 2016, down from 10% in 2015.
- On average, the massage consumers in this group received an average of 4.9 massages in 2016, down from 6 massages in 2015.

### **Apply the Research:**

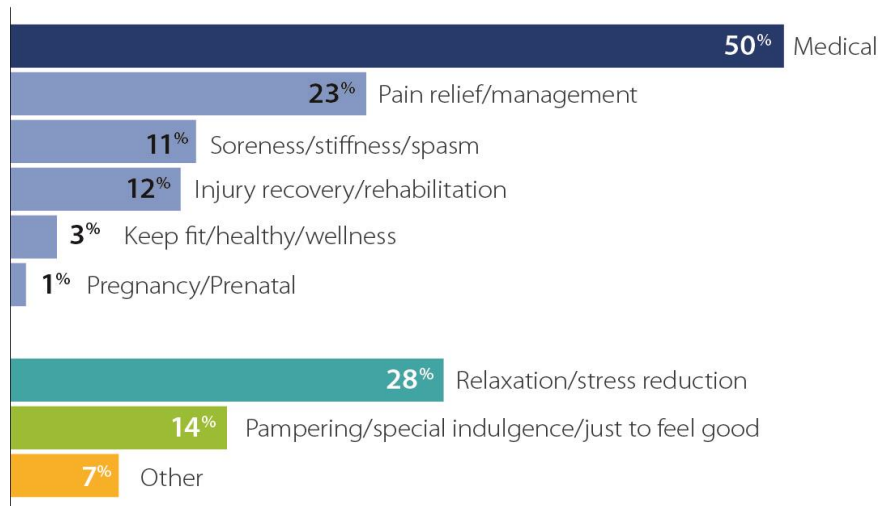
1. Male and female massage consumers use massage at different rates. How does this affect a massage practice?
2. How can you effectively market the benefits of massage to different age groups of consumers to maximize your client base?

## 1E. Why do consumers get massage?

*The primary reason consumers got massage continued to be for medical or health reasons – pain relief, soreness/stiffness and recovery from injury.*

---

### Primary reasons for receiving last massage



\*Received massage within past 12 months

**Figure 5. Primary reasons for receiving last massage in 2016**

---

#### Highlights from Figure 5

Half of all consumers received their last massage for a medical or health reason  
28% of consumers received their last massage for relaxation and stress reduction  
Only 14% of consumers received their last massage for pampering

---

**Medical or health care reasons** – Use of massage for medical or health reasons decreased in 2016- 50% of massage consumers say they got their last massage for medical or health reasons, down from 52% in 2015.

- Forty-six percent of men and 53% of woman received their last massage for a medical or health reasons.
- Fifty-nine percent of massage consumers who had a high school degree or less got their last massage for a medical or health reason in 2016.
- Seventy-four percent of massage consumers who earn less than \$35,000 per year got their last massage for a medical or health reason in 2016.
- Fifty-three percent of massage consumers 65 or older got their last massage for a medical or health reason in 2016.

- Of consumers who got a massage for medical or health reasons in 2016, 31% stated that the massage was part of a treatment plan put together by a doctor or medical provider, up from 21% last year.

***The top medical or health care reasons for getting their last massage in 2016 were:***

**Pain relief/pain management** - Twenty-three percent of massage consumers got their last massage in 2016 for pain relief/pain management, up from 19% in 2015.

- Twenty-nine percent of massage consumers 18 to 34 years of age got their last massage for pain relief/management, down from 31% in 2015. Of those 65 years plus, 28% got their last massage for pain relief/management.
- Men increased their use of massage for pain relief/management with 25% getting their last massage for this reason in 2016, up from 23% in 2015. Women also increased their use of massage for pain relief/management in 2016. Twenty-two percent of women said they got their last massage for pain relief or management in 2016, up from 17% in 2015.
- The number of Americans who had ever used massage therapy for pain relief was 28% in 2016, unchanged from 2015.

**Injury recovery/rehabilitation** – Twelve percent of massage consumers got a massage for injury recovery/rehabilitation, up from 11% in 2015.

- Seven percent of consumers aged 18 to 34 got a massage for injury recovery or rehabilitation in 2016, unchanged from 2015.
- Fifteen percent of consumers aged 45 to 54 got a massage for injury recovery in 2016, unchanged from 2015.

**For soreness/stiffness/spasms** – Eleven percent of massage consumers got their last massage for soreness/stiffness/spasms in 2016, compared to 15% in 2015.

- Eleven percent of male consumers received their last massage for soreness/stiffness/spasms in 2016, down from 21% in 2015.
- Fifteen percent of seniors (65+) who received a massage in 2016 got their last massage for soreness/stiffness/spasms, down from 16% in 2015.



Americans' beliefs about medical applications of massage	2013	2014	2015	2016
Massage can be effective in reducing pain.	88%	92%	91%	89%
Massage can be beneficial to health and wellness.	88%	91%	90%	88%

Figure 6. Americans' belief about massage from 2013 to 2016

### Highlights from Figure 6

Consumers' beliefs about medical applications of massage have remained steadily high over the past four years

**Relaxation/stress reduction** – Twenty-eight percent of massage consumers got their last massage for relaxation/stress reduction in 2016, down from 33% in 2015.\*

- Thirty-five percent of massage consumers who were college graduates got their last massage for relaxation/stress in 2016, up from 32% a year ago.
- Twenty-two percent of massage consumers in households with three or more people had their last massage for relaxation/stress reduction, down from 32% in 2015.
- Thirty-seven percent of massage consumers with household incomes over \$100,000 got their last massage for relaxation or stress reduction in 2016, up from 35% in 2015.
- Twenty-seven percent of male massage consumers got their last massage for relaxation or stress reduction in 2016, up from 18% in 2015.
- Twenty-eight percent of female massage consumers got their last massage for relaxation/stress reduction in 2016, down from 45% in 2015.

\*For purposes of this report, relaxation and stress relief were not included under medical or health reasons for massage.

**Pampering/just to feel good/special occasion** - Fourteen percent of massage consumers received their last massage for pampering/just to feel good/special occasion in 2016, up from 10% in 2015.

- Thirteen percent of male massage consumers received their last massage for pampering reasons in 2016, up from 9% in 2015.
- Fifteen percent of female massage consumers received their last massage for pampering reasons in 2016, up from 10% in 2015.
- Just five percent of those 65 years or older who received massage did so for pampering reasons, down from 15% last year.

**Apply the Research:**

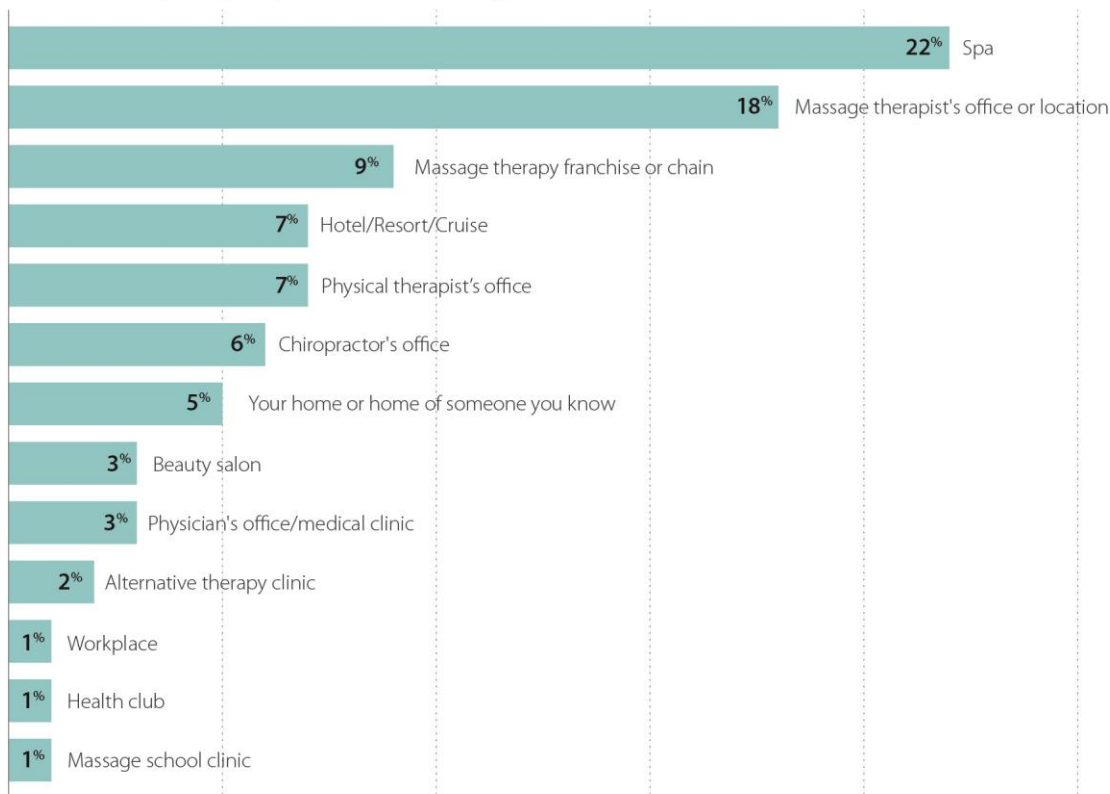
1. Many consumers are using massage for medical and health reasons. How can you use this information to help advance your career?
2. Massage for special indulgence increased in 2016. What are some ways you can work to build relationships with and retain clients you may only see a few times per year?

## 1F. Where are consumers getting massage?

Consumers went to an average of over 2.5 different locations for massage in a given year.

Forty-three percent of massage consumers got a massage at a spa in 2016, and 22% got their last massage at a spa. Eighteen percent of massage consumers reported receiving their last massage at a massage therapist's office or location in 2016, but 48% of massage consumers visited a massage therapist's office in 2016. The next most popular locations to receive massage were massage chain, physical therapist's office, and hotel/resort/cruise. Note that some consumers may not see the distinction between a spa, franchise, or often a massage therapist's office. (See Figures 7 and 8 to show where consumers got their last massage, and where they received any massage in the past year.)

### Where did you get your last massage?



\* Of consumers who reported having massage in the 12 months

Figure 7. Where did you get your last massage in 2016?

#### Highlights from Figure 7

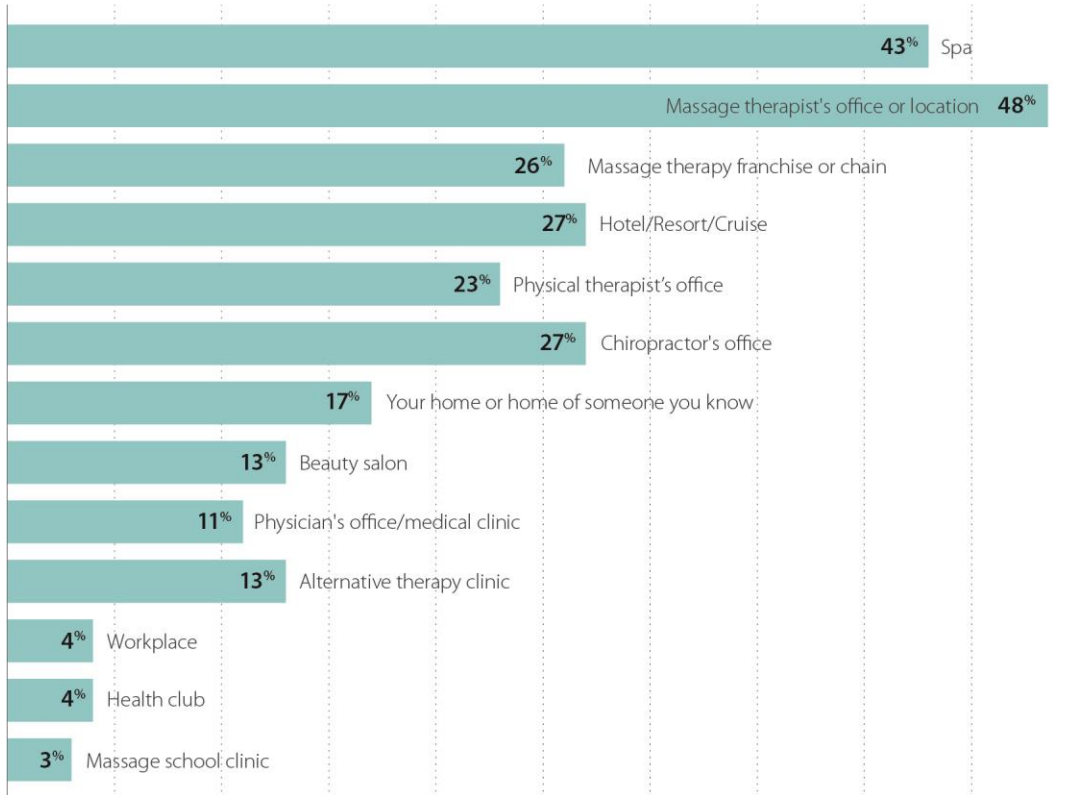
22% of consumers got their last massage at a spa in 2016

18% of consumers got their last massage at a massage therapists office or location

The following chart shows where consumers got a massage at any point in the past 12 months, not just the last location where they received a massage.

---

### Where did you get any massage in 2016?



**Figure 8. Where did you get any massage in 2016?**

---

#### Highlights from Figure 8

48% of consumers got a massage at a therapist's office or location in 2016

43% of consumers got a massage at a spa in 2016

23% of consumers got a massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016

---

**Spas** – Twenty-two percent of all massage consumers received their last massage at a spa in 2016, up from 17% in 2015.

- Twenty-three percent of female massage consumers got their last massage at a spa in 2016 compared to 19% in 2015. Forty-five percent of female massage consumers got a massage at a spa in 2016.
- Men have increased their use of spas for massage over time: 21% of men got their last massage at a spa in 2016, up from 15% in 2015, and up from just 2% in 2012. Thirty-eight percent of male massage consumers got a massage at a spa in 2016.

**Massage Therapist's office/location** - Forty-eight percent of massage consumers got a massage at a massage therapist's office/location in 2016, yet only 18% received their last massage at this practice type.

- Twenty-seven percent of massage consumers with a household income between \$50,000 and \$75,000 got their last massage at a massage therapist's location or office in 2016. Thirteen percent of massage consumers with a household income between \$35,000 and \$50,000 got their last massage at a massage therapist's office in 2016. Twenty percent of consumers with household income below \$35,000 got their last massage at a massage therapist's office in 2016.
- Eighteen percent of men who got a massage in 2016 got their last massage at a massage therapist's office/location, up from 16% last year.
- Seventeen percent of women massage recipients in 2016 received their last massage at a massage therapist's office, down from 19% in 2015.

**Massage Therapy Franchise or Chain** – Nine percent of massage consumers received their last massage at a name brand chain in 2016, down from 13% in 2015. But, 26% of massage consumers visited a massage franchise or chain in 2016.

- Nine percent of female massage consumers got their last massage at a name brand chain in 2016, down from 10% last year and 17% in 2014.
- Ten percent of men got their last massage at a name brand chain in 2016, down from 16% in 2015 but up from 7% in 2014.
- Twenty percent of massage consumers aged 35 to 44 got their last massage at a name brand chain in 2016.
- Note that some consumers may not be able to differentiate between a spa and a massage franchise or chain.

**Physical Therapist's Office** – Seven percent of massage consumers received their last massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016, up from just 2% last year. Overall, 23% of massage consumers had a massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016.

- Nine percent of female consumers got their last massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016, up from just 1% last year.
- Four percent of men got their last massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016, as compared to 3% last year.

- Fourteen percent of consumers aged 45 to 54 got their last massage at a physical therapist's office in 2016.

**Hotel/Resort/Cruise** – Seven percent of massage consumers got their last massage at a hotel, resort, or cruise in 2016, up from 3% in 2015. But, 27% of massage consumers got a massage at a hotel/resort/cruise in 2016.

- Twelve percent of male consumers received their last massage at a hotel, resort, or cruise in 2016, up from 6% in 2015.
- Four percent of women received their last massage at a hotel, resort, or cruise in 2016.
- Thirteen percent of consumers with household income between \$50,000 and \$75,000 got their last massage at a hotel, resort, or cruise in 2016.

### **Apply the Research:**

1. Spas continue to be a prominent location for receiving a massage. Consider how the spa experience sets the standard for consumer expectations, and how you can use this to your advantage.
2. Think creatively about how a work setting can affect the clientele you attract, and how to market your practice to new demographics. Visit [amtamassage.org/consumersurvey](http://amtamassage.org/consumersurvey) to access the full AMTA Consumer Survey results.

## Section 2 — The Massage Therapy Profession<sup>9</sup>

*Knowing the latest trends in the massage profession helps schools give students the most current information on which to make decisions regarding their massage therapy careers.*

This section covers information regarding the massage therapy industry including employment, income and work settings.

### **Key Concerns:**

How can you prepare to respond to changes occurring in the massage profession due to economic, demographic and lifestyle shifts affecting those who receive massage?  
Are you informed about compensation, hours and requirements of various work settings, etc.?

### **Key Findings:**

- Most massage therapists are women, have some college experience and previously worked in another profession.
- Average hourly earnings vary greatly based on massage setting. Therapists working in their clients' homes earned the most at \$76.28 per hour.
- Gross annual income from massage therapy has continued to slowly increase the past several years.
- Referrals from current clients continue to be the most prevalent way consumers find massage therapists.
- The spa industry as well as national massage chains has seen above average location and revenue growth for several years.

### **These questions will be answered:**

2A. Who is practicing massage therapy?

2B. How much are massage therapists compensated for their work?

2C. What are some of the biggest challenges facing massage therapists?

2D. Where are massage therapists practicing?

2E. How are therapists using technology in their practice?

2F. What's the latest on the spa industry and massage therapy?

2G. What impact are national massage chains having on the profession?

## 2A. Who is practicing massage therapy?

Over the last decade, the number of massage therapists increased by 31%.

According to the 2016 AMTA Industry Survey, massage therapists in the U.S. are:

- **Mostly female** — Eighty-nine percent of massage therapists are women, up slightly from previous years.
- **Have a median age of 45 years old**— The median age of a massage therapist has remained constant since 2014, although there have been some slight shifts in the percent of therapists in each age range. This year saw slight increases in the percent of therapists under 45 and leveling off of the percentage of therapists over 55.

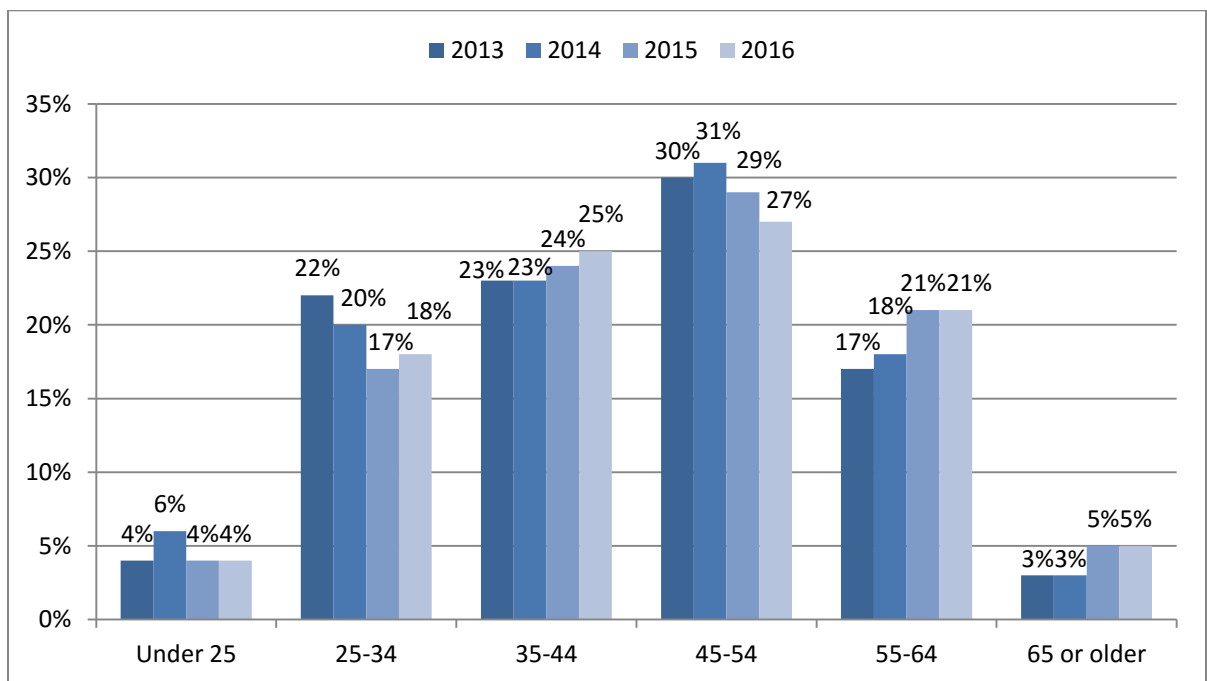


Figure 9 Age of Massage Therapists

### Highlights from Figure 9

The number of therapists aged 25-44 increased from 2015 to 2016

The number of therapists over 55 remained steady from 2015 to 2016



- **Educated** — Thirty-seven percent of massage therapists have obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher and 90 percent have achieved formal education levels above a high school diploma or GED. This has been fairly consistent over the past several years. (See Figure 10)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Education (Non-Massage)</b>						
High school grad or less	12%	10%	12%	12%	9%	10%
Some college	27	22	26	25	25	24
Associate’s Degree	16	19	20	18	19	19
Technical/vocational certificate	8	14	11	10	11	10
Bachelor’s degree	27	29	24	26	27	28
Master’s degree	9	6	7	7	8	8
Doctorate	2	1	1	1	2	1

Figure 10. Massage therapists’ education

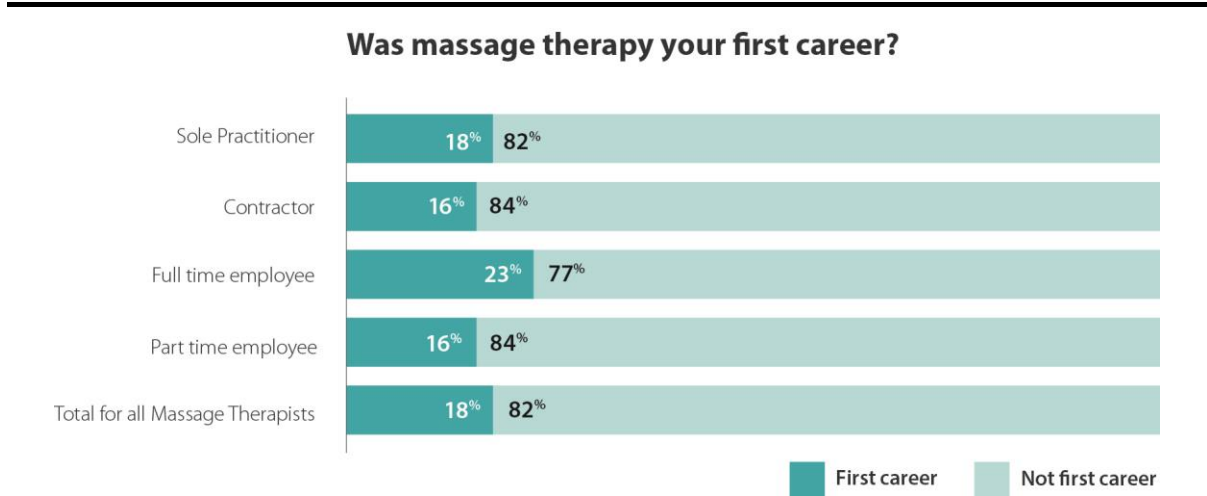
#### Highlights from Figure 10

28% of massage therapists have completed a bachelor’s degree

90% of massage therapists have formal education beyond the high school level

**Most massage therapists are coming from another profession**

- **Independent contractors and part-time employees are most likely to have had a different occupation** prior to becoming a massage therapist. (See Figure 11 for more information).
- Therapists working as full-time employees are slightly **more likely to enter massage therapy as their first profession.**



**Figure 11. Was massage therapy your first career choice?**

**Highlights from Figure 11**

- 23% of full time employees are working in massage therapy as a first career
- Part time employees and contractors are the most likely groups to have had another career prior to massage therapy

**The number of massage therapists in the U.S. grew over the last decade<sup>10</sup>**

Over the past ten years, the estimated number of massage therapists increased 31%.

Between 2015 and 2016, the number of estimated massage therapists grew by 2% to 352,661. The majority of growth in the profession continued to originate in licensed states. Note that even though a massage therapist is licensed to practice, many therapists drop out of the profession, retire, or are temporarily not practicing. These therapists may still be registered as a licensed therapist with their state. This group of licensed but inactive therapists may account for up to twelve percent of all licensed massage therapists.

Figure 12 illustrates the growth of the total estimated number of massage therapists over time.

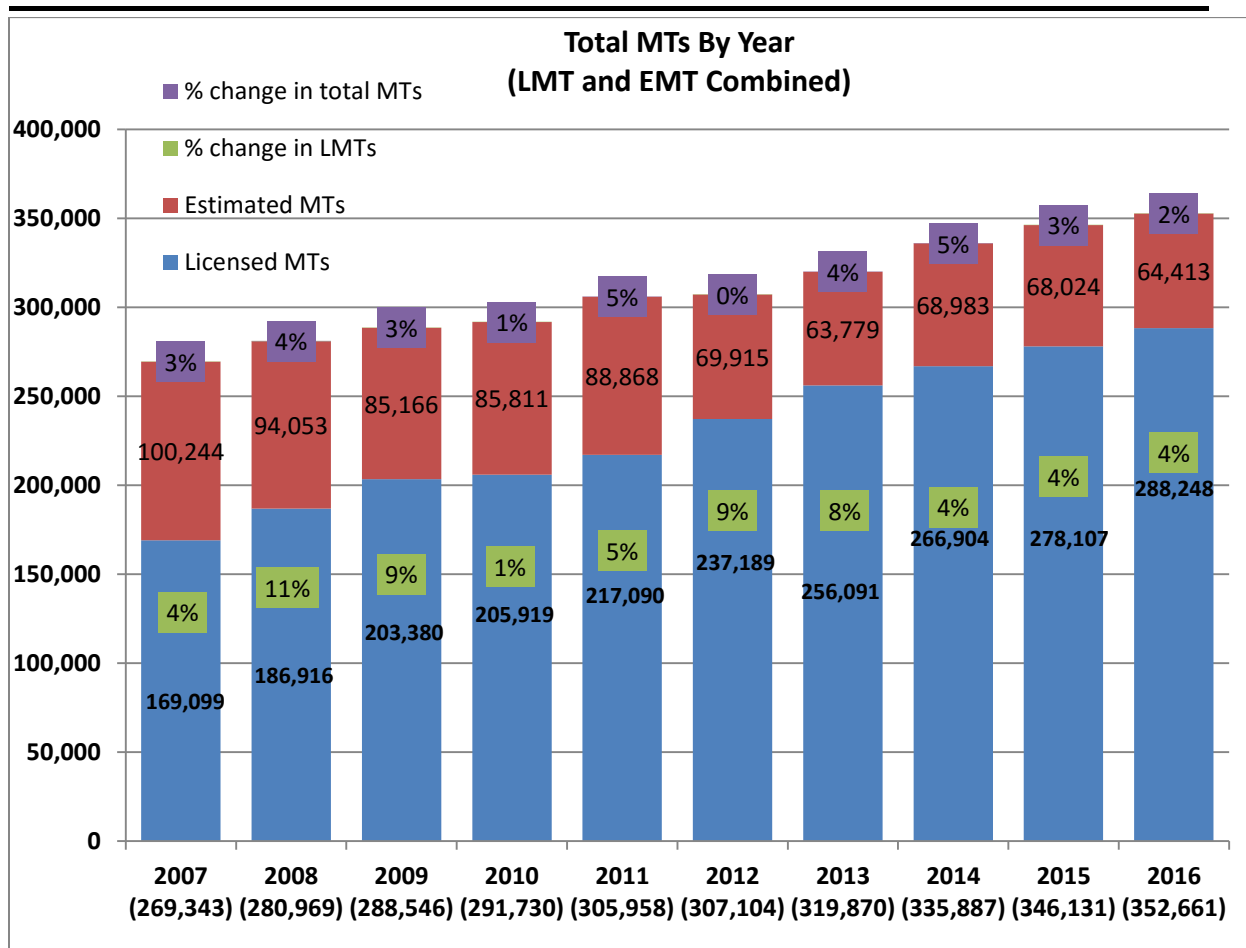


Figure 12. Total number of massage therapists in the U.S.

### Highlights from Figure 12

In 2016 there were approximately 352,661 massage therapists in the United States, which is up from 346,131 therapists in 2015.

*\*LMT: licensed massage therapists, MT: massage therapists from non-licensing states*

### Apply the Research:

1. How does the increase in licensed massage therapists benefit schools, current and future massage therapists, and the entire profession?
2. How can your education and previous career experiences can benefit you in your massage practice, regardless of work setting?

## 2B. How much are massage therapists compensated for their work?

*Massage therapists' compensation per hour had increased.*

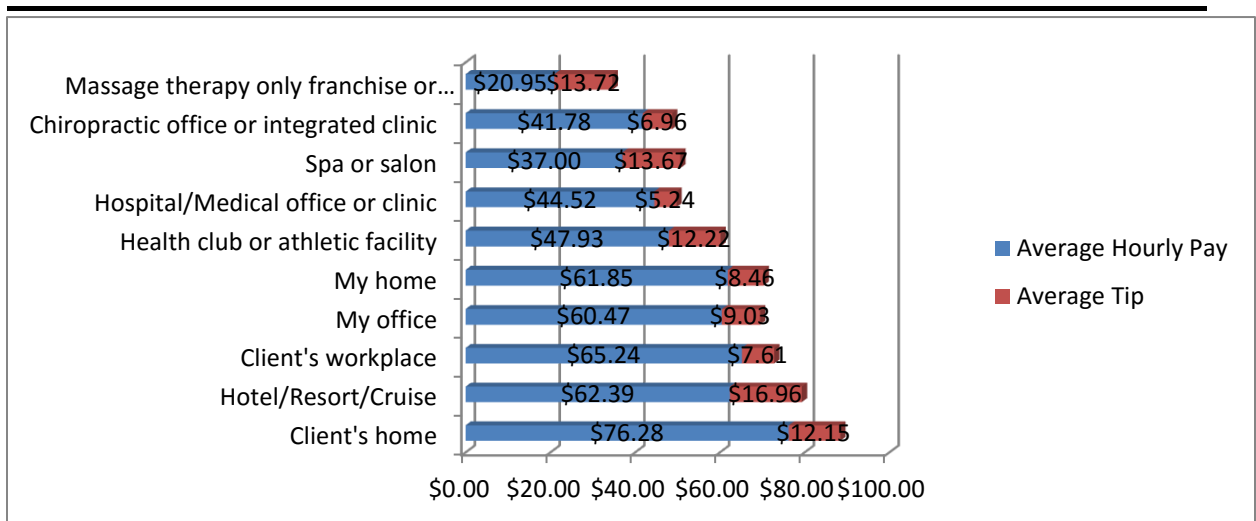
### **How much are clients paying for massage?**

- In 2016, clients paid an average of \$71.64 for one hour of massage, an increase of \$3.99 from 2015.
- Hotels, resorts and cruises charged clients the most, an average of \$104.02 per hour.
- Therapists working out of their home charged the least, an average of \$62.09 per hour.

### **Average hourly earnings of massage therapists increased in the past year**

Therapists working in their client's homes made the most, an average of \$76.28 per hour. Those working in massage only franchises and chains made the least, an average of \$20.95 per hour. Note that those therapists that have their own practice have higher expenses from those therapists that are employed. Expenses are not covered in these numbers.

Massage therapists earned tips at the same frequency in 2015 as in 2014. Sixty percent of therapists reported receiving tips over 60% of the time in 2015 and 2014 versus 56% in 2013.



**Figure 13 Average 2015 hourly pay and tips for massage therapists by work setting.**

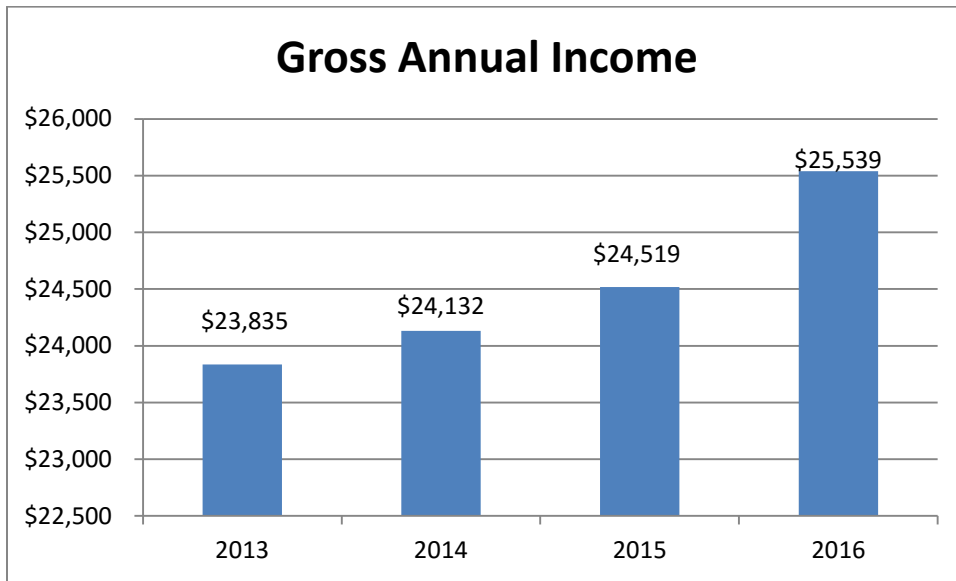
### **Highlights from Figure 13**

Therapists who worked in their clients' homes made the highest hourly wage in 2015

Therapists who worked in hotels, resorts, and cruises made the highest tips in 2015

**Average income from massage therapy continues to increase**

Massage therapists are making more income year over year from massage as can be seen in the table below. Note that income varies greatly by type of practice, years in the profession as well as geographic region and other factors. Depending on their work setting or other factors, therapists will have to pay varying levels of taxes on their income. This is particularly important for therapists practicing as sole practitioners, who are responsible for deducting their own taxes out of their pay, for purchasing all supplies, and for potentially renting space. Gross annual income does not include deductions for expenses.



**Figure 14 Gross annual income from massage therapy for therapists making at least \$100 from massage in a given year**

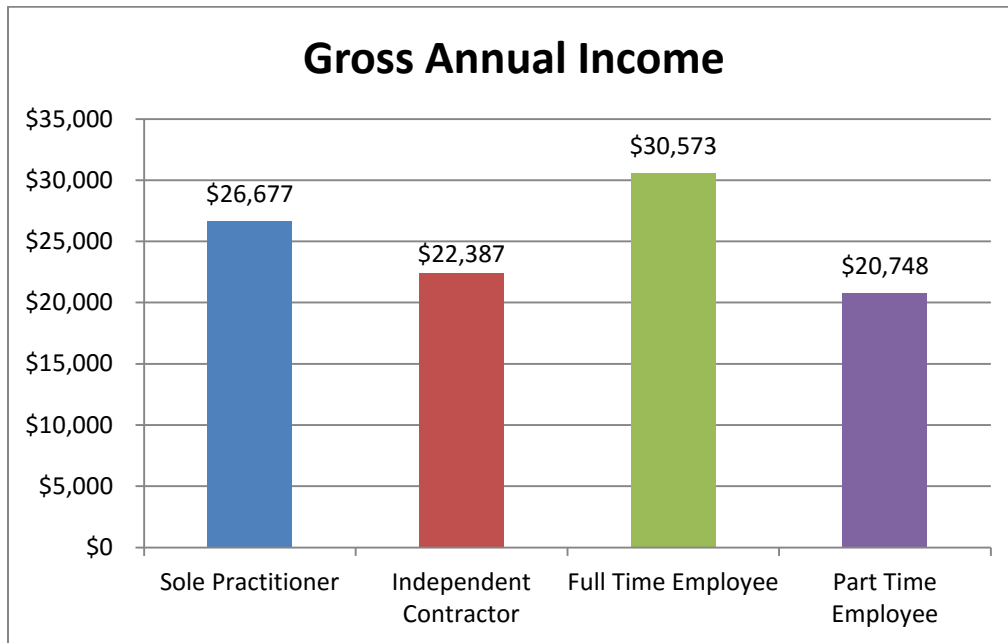
**Highlights from Figure 14**

Gross annual income from massage therapy increased 4% from 2015 to 2016

Massage therapy accounted for nearly 80% of the typical therapist’s household income for 2016.

Sixty-two percent of therapists earned all of their annual income from practicing massage therapy, down from 68% in 2015.

Annual income also varied by work setting, as outlined in the chart below. Note that these are national averages encompassing a wide range of different work settings. Also note that this is gross income, as opposed to net income as reported by individual massage therapists.



**Figure 15. Gross Annual Income of massage therapists in different work settings**

**Highlights from Figure 15**

Full time employees earned the highest annual income, followed by sole practitioners

Most work settings involve some form of overhead, or costs that are incurred on the part of the employer or business owner. Therefore, when a client pays for a massage, part of the rate the client pays goes to covering facility rent, marketing, supply costs, and various other business expenses and profit. The rest goes to the therapist providing the service. In Figure 16, therapist pay is shown as a percentage of the rate the client is charged.

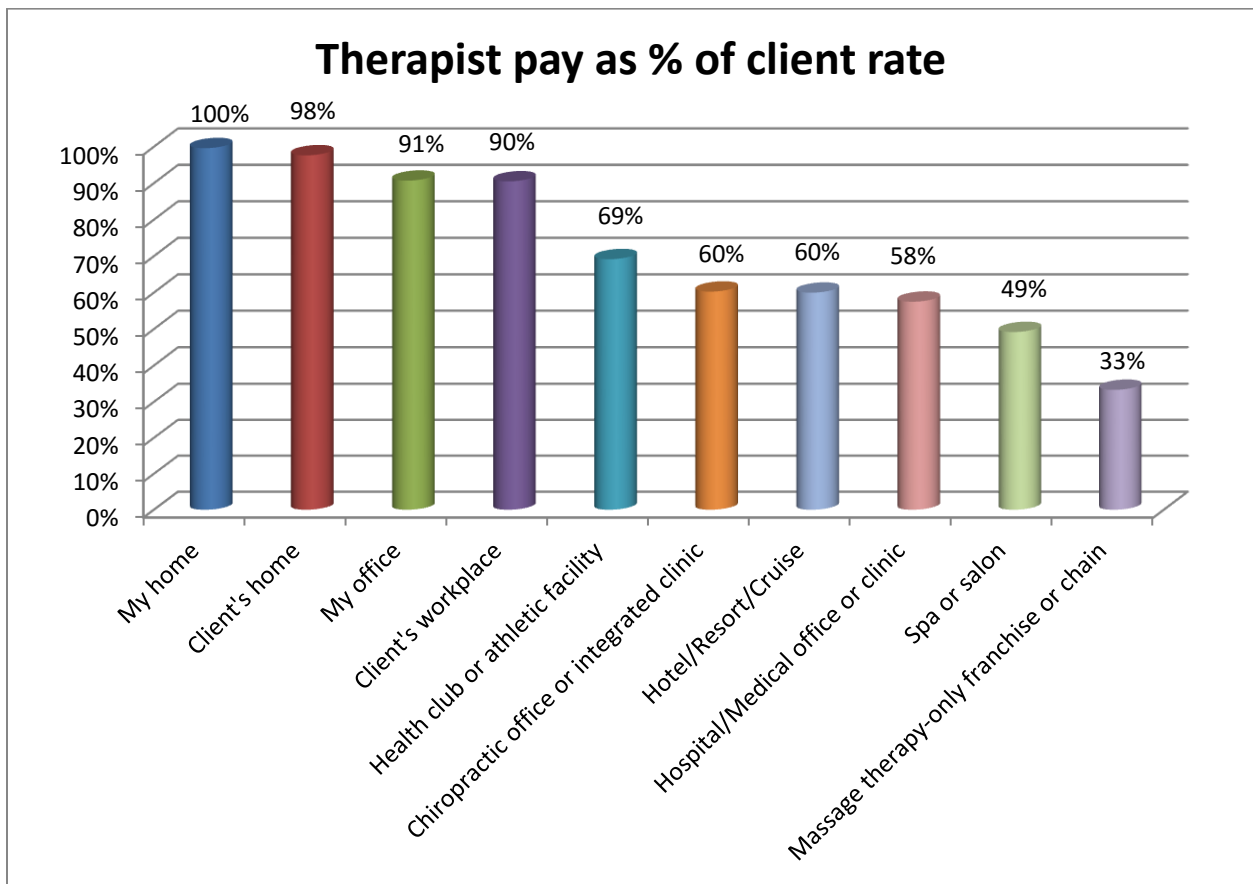


Figure 16. Therapist pay as percentage of client rate in different work settings

### Highlights from Figure 16

As more fixed and variable costs are introduced into a therapist's work setting, more of the client rate goes to covering those costs

### ***Massage therapists are working slightly fewer hours than last year***

On average, **massage therapists worked 24.3 hours per week in 2016**, consistent with 2014 figures, and down from 25.3 hours reported in 2015. Forty-seven percent of massage therapists said they would like to work more hours, down slightly from 48% last year.

Massage therapists were paid for 18 of the 24.3 average hours they worked per week in 2016, or 74% of the time they spent at work. This is consistent with 2014 data, and down from the 78% of work time paid in 2015.

**Massage therapists continued to depend heavily on repeat clients**

In 2016, massage therapists saw an average of 44 clients each month, similar previous years. Repeat clients made up 71% of massage therapists’ appointments in 2016 with new clients comprising the remaining 29%, a slight increase in new clients over last year.

---

	<b>Total Clients (#)</b>	<b>% New Clients</b>	<b>% Repeat Clients</b>
Total	44	29%	71%
Sole Practitioner	42	25%	75%
Contractor	46	34%	66%
Full time employee	70	36%	64%
Part time employee	45	38%	62%

Figure 17 New and repeat clients seen by massage therapists

---

**Highlights from Figure 17**

The majority of clients that massage therapists saw in a month were repeat clients (71%).

Full time employees saw the most clients of all work settings over the course of a month (70 clients per month).

---

**Where consumers find massage therapists and therapists find clients**

Massage therapists obtain clients from many sources. In 2016, both massage therapists and their clients cited referrals as the primary method they used to locate each other. Massage therapists have promoted their practices less through community/local events than in previous years. Of particular note, the use of locator services increased significantly from 2015 to 2016 on both the part of the therapist and client. See Figure 18 on the following page.



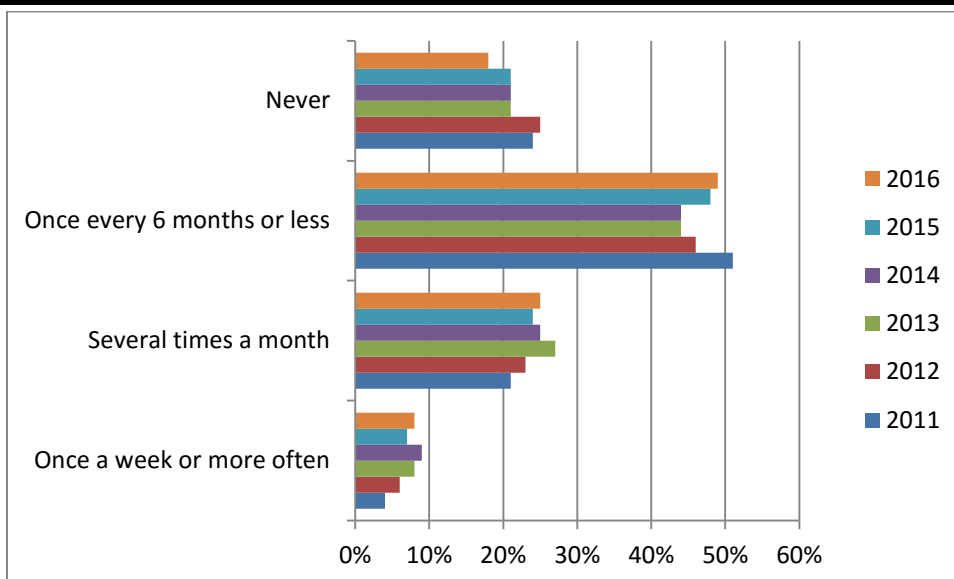
	<i>% of consumers find therapists via this medium</i>	<i>% of therapists who promote via this medium</i>
Referrals by clients	88%	85%
Internet/websites	46	59
Social media	31	55
Community/local events	23	42
Locator service	20	30

**Figure 18** Where consumers found therapists and where therapists promoted their services.

**Highlights from Figure 18**

Client referrals continue to be the biggest source of new clients for massage therapists.

As shown in Figure 19, massage therapists were active in referring clients to each other.



**Figure 19** Frequency of receiving referrals from other massage therapists

**Highlights from Figure 19**

More massage therapists received referrals from other massage therapist several times a month or more frequently in 2016 than in 2015

***Massage business continued to improve for sole practitioners and independent contractors***

Sixty percent of sole practitioners and independent contractors indicated that their business improved in 2016, up 4% from 2015. Nine percent of sole practitioners and contractors reported that business declined over the past year, compared to 12% in 2015 and 11% in 2014.

**Apply the Research:**

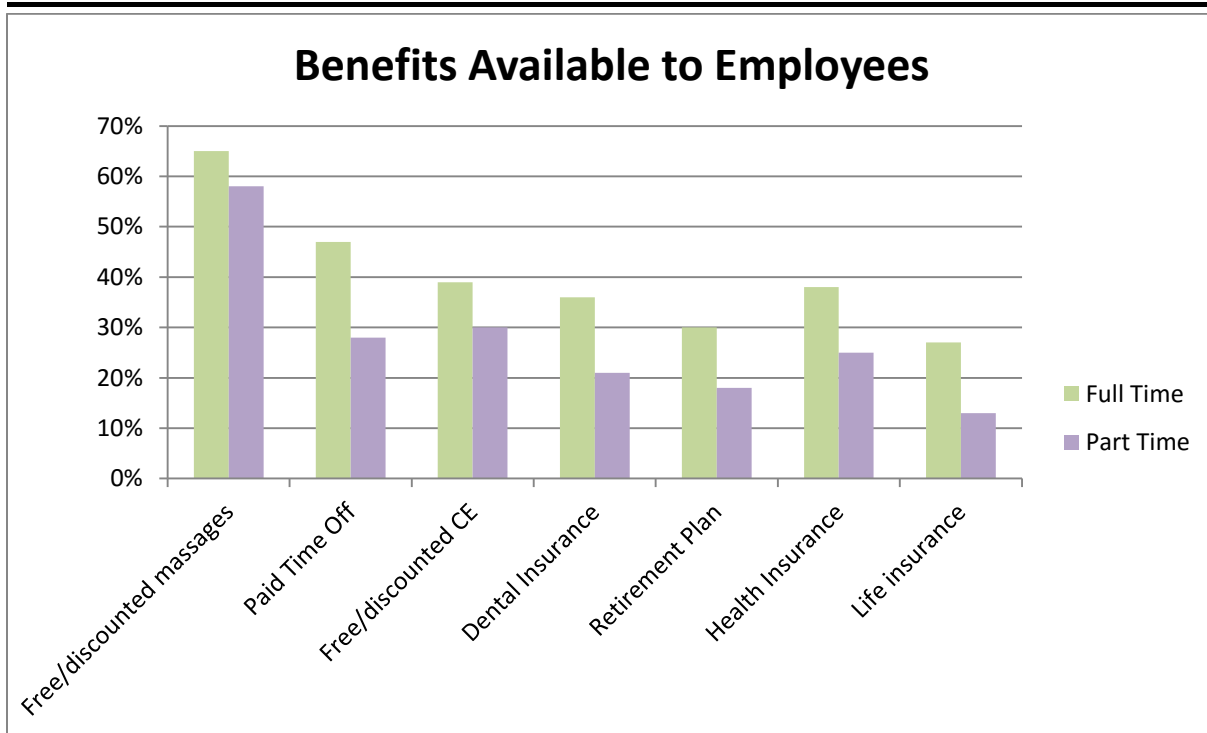
1. Staying on top of pay trends in different work settings can help you negotiate pay in the massage profession.
2. Due to the unique work schedule most massage therapists have, understand that the hourly and annual pay do not reflect a “typical” 9-5, 40 hour work week.
3. Make a plan to obtain and retain core repeat clients, whose appointments make up about 71% of a typical massage therapist’s work schedule.
4. Massage therapists frequently referrer clients to one another. Network with other massage therapists to increase your contacts within the industry.

## 2C. What are some of the benefits available to massage therapists?

*When working as full or part time employees, massage therapists may have several benefits available to them.*

***Massage therapists have many benefits available to them through their employers***

- The most frequently offered benefit to both full and part time employees in 2016 was free or discounted massages.
- Life insurance was the least offered benefit to both full and part time employees. Figure 20 below shows the different benefits available to full and part time employees.



**Figure 20. Benefits available to employees through their employers**

---

### Highlights from Figure 20

Paid time off is much more prevalent among full time employees.

Full time employees generally have a wider range of benefits available to them.

---

**Apply the Research:**

1. Spend time researching all benefits available to you through your employer, and plan for how to obtain any needed benefits or insurance not provided by an employer.
2. Remember the costs that might be incurred by an employer to provide these benefits to employees, and how this is an additional form of compensation to your salary or wages and tips.

## 2D. Where are massage therapists practicing?

*The percentage of massage therapists who say they are sole practitioners declined from 2016.*

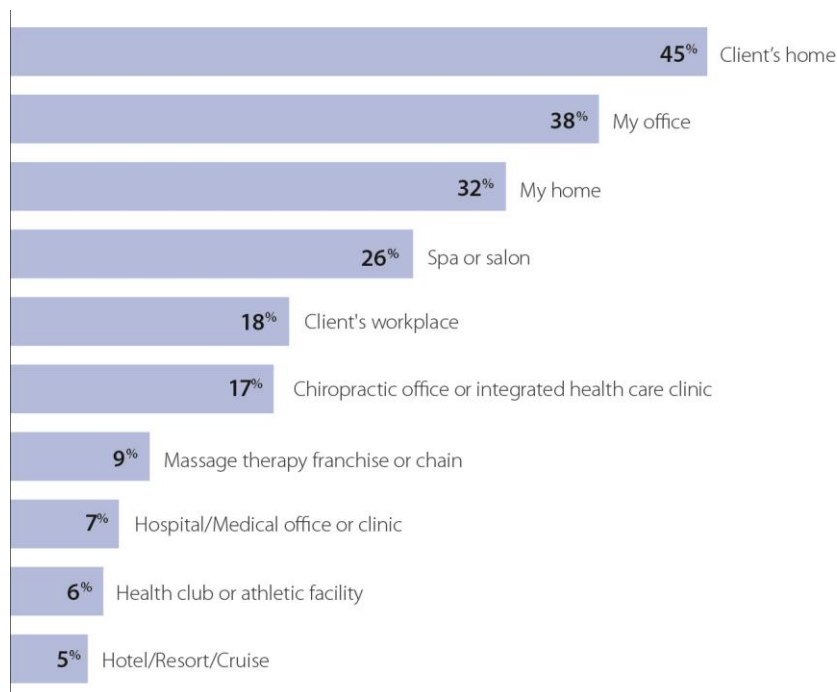
### **AMTA's research on the massage industry in 2016 shows that massage therapists:**

- Continued to travel to their clients' homes to provide massage. Providing massage in the client's home stayed constant from 2015 to 2016 at 45%.
- Provided massage in their offices more often, at 38% in 2016 as compared to 35% in 2015.
- Provided massage in their homes less often. Massage provided in therapists' homes decreased to 32% in 2016 from 35% in 2015.

See Figure 21 for the visual representation of this data.

---

### **In what type of massage setting do you work?**



**Figure 21. Massage therapists' work settings in 2016**

---

### **Highlights from Figure 21**

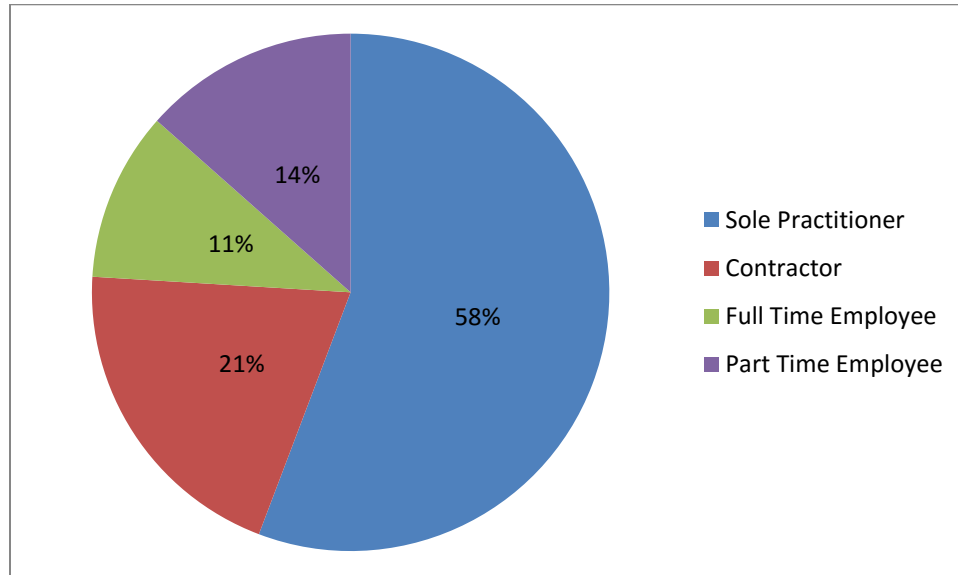
The average therapist works in at least two settings.

---

Massage therapists worked in many different employment/practice arrangements. Figure 22 below shows the most common types of employment/practice.

---

### Type of Massage Therapist



**Figure 22 Massage therapists' self-described employment/practice arrangements**

---

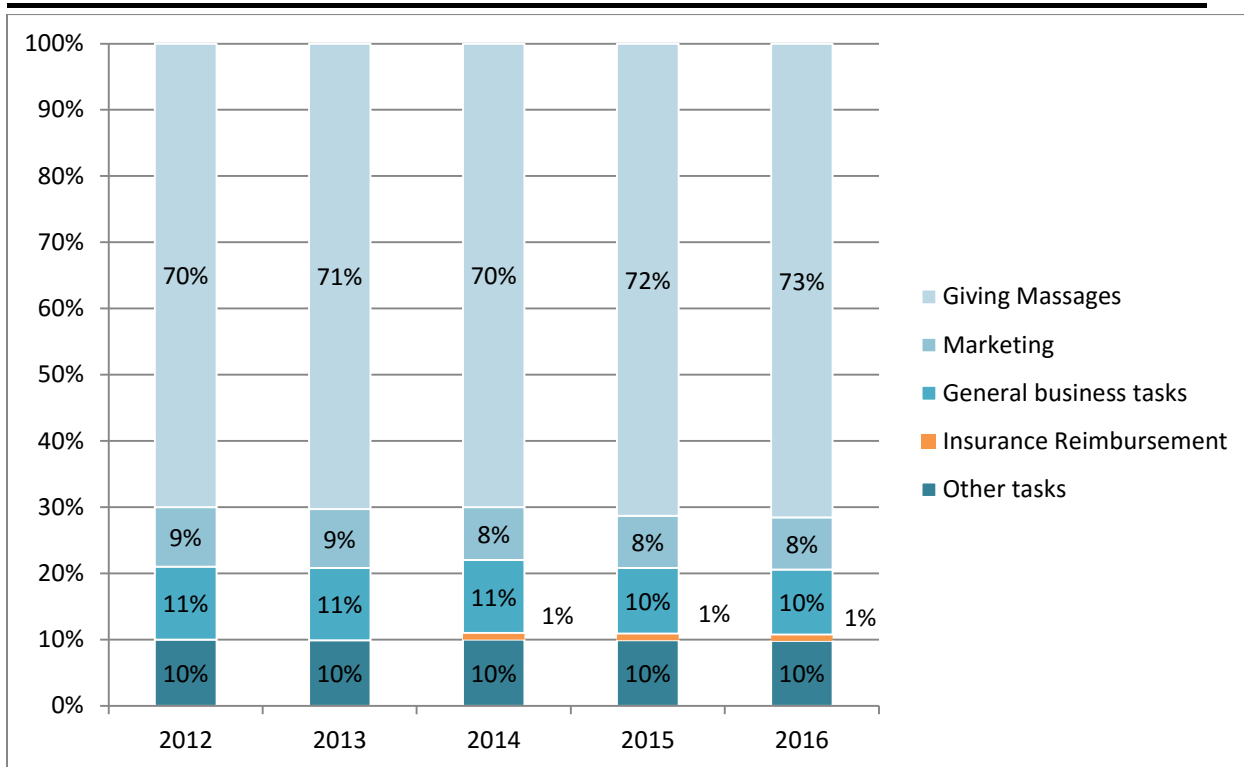
**Highlights of Figure 22:** Fifty-eight percent of massage therapists described themselves as sole practitioners, a number that had been decreasing over the past few years. Full and part-time employees, meanwhile, have been relatively consistent as compared to last year. Note that 4% of therapists worked in more than one practice arrangement.

---

### ***Massage therapists worked slightly fewer hours in 2016 than in 2015***

The average work week of massage therapists was 24.3 hours in 2016, a decrease from the 25.3 hours reported in 2015. Seventy-three percent of those hours were spent performing massage. The other time was spent on marketing, performing general business tasks, filing for insurance reimbursement and other tasks. See Figure 23 for more details.

Massage therapists said their ideal work week would be 36 hours, an increase of 11 hours from their current work week.



**Figure 23. An average work week of a massage therapist**  
 (Note: because of rounding, totals may equal more than 100%)

### Highlights from Figure 23

Insurance reimbursement has comprised a very small percentage of a massage therapist's workweek for the past several years (1%).

In 2016, massage therapists spent 73% of their workweek providing massage, the highest percentage in the past five years.

### Apply the Research:

1. Massage therapists work in many different settings. How do you prepare to work in several different environments?
2. Look at your work schedule for the week to see how much time you spend on marketing and business related tasks, and compare it to the average.

## 2E. How are therapists using technology in their practice?<sup>11</sup>

Over the past several years, massage therapists have integrated various components of technology into their massage practices. The frequency and degree of integration has increased over time.

Some massage therapists used technology for nearly every aspect of their practice, including appointment scheduling, processing payments, playing music during massage sessions, running a massage practice website, using social media for communicating with clients and other therapists, taking online continuing education courses and many other uses.

Some massage therapists only used technology for one or two aspects of their practice. However, many are realizing how much easier technology can make managing their practice. Note that therapists used over 2.5 devices on average for their practice.

---

### Devices used by massage therapists in their practices

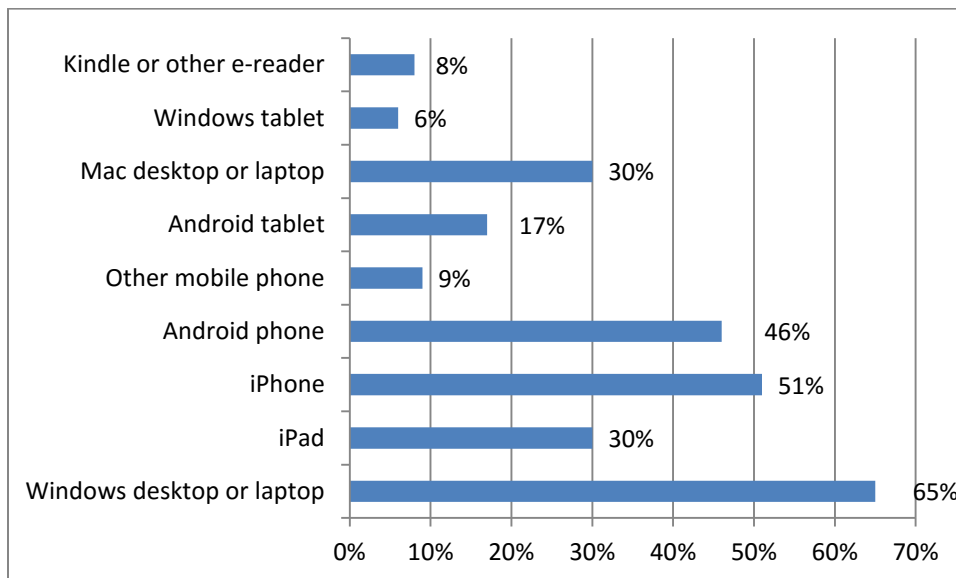


Figure 24 Technology used by massage therapists for their practice

---

#### Highlights from Figure 24

Massage therapists used desktop or laptop computers and smartphones most often to manage their practices in 2016.

---

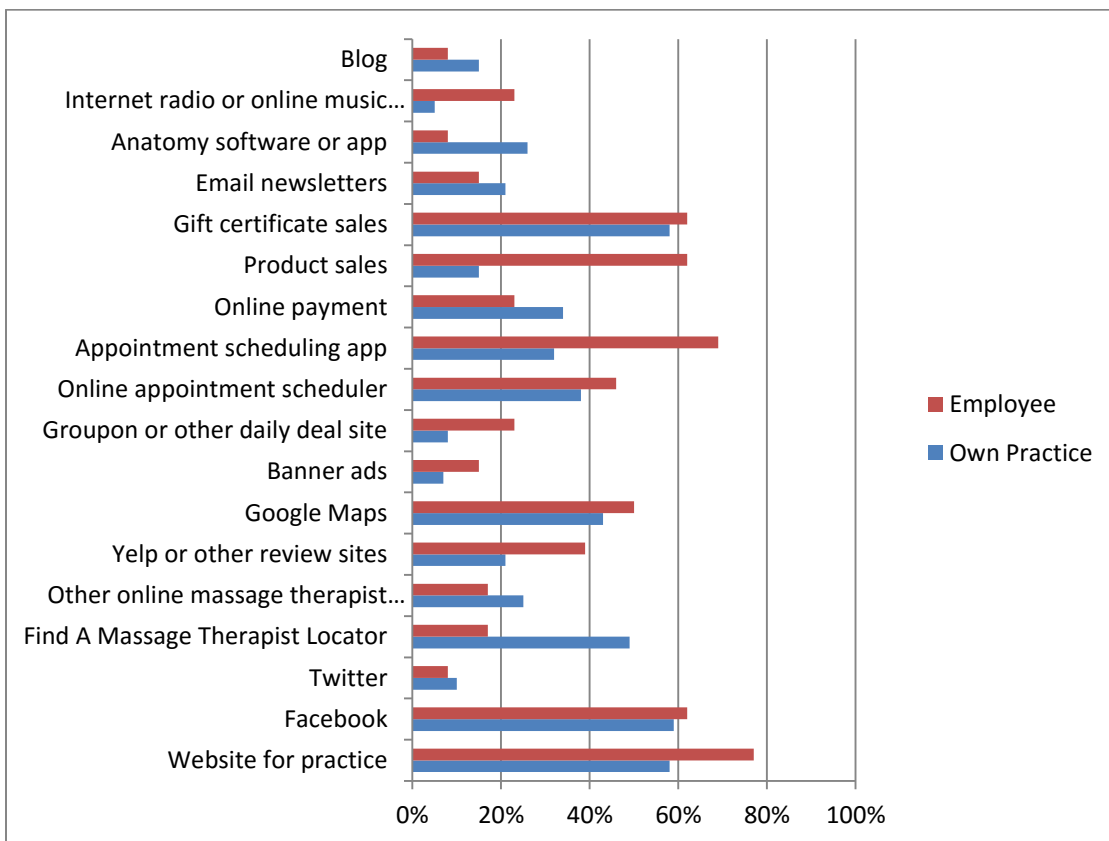
**Fifty-eight percent** of massage therapists had websites for their practices, and an additional 15% planned to start one within the next six months. This represents a 4% increase in therapists who had websites for their practice, and a 2% decrease for those planning to



start one within six months from 2015 data. For those therapists that were employees, 77% of employers had a website for the business.

**Online tools for promotion and management of practice**

Massage therapists used a variety of tools to promote and manage their practices. We asked both massage therapists who have their own practices and those who are employees to tell us how they or their employers used technology to manage their business. See Figure 25 below for more details.



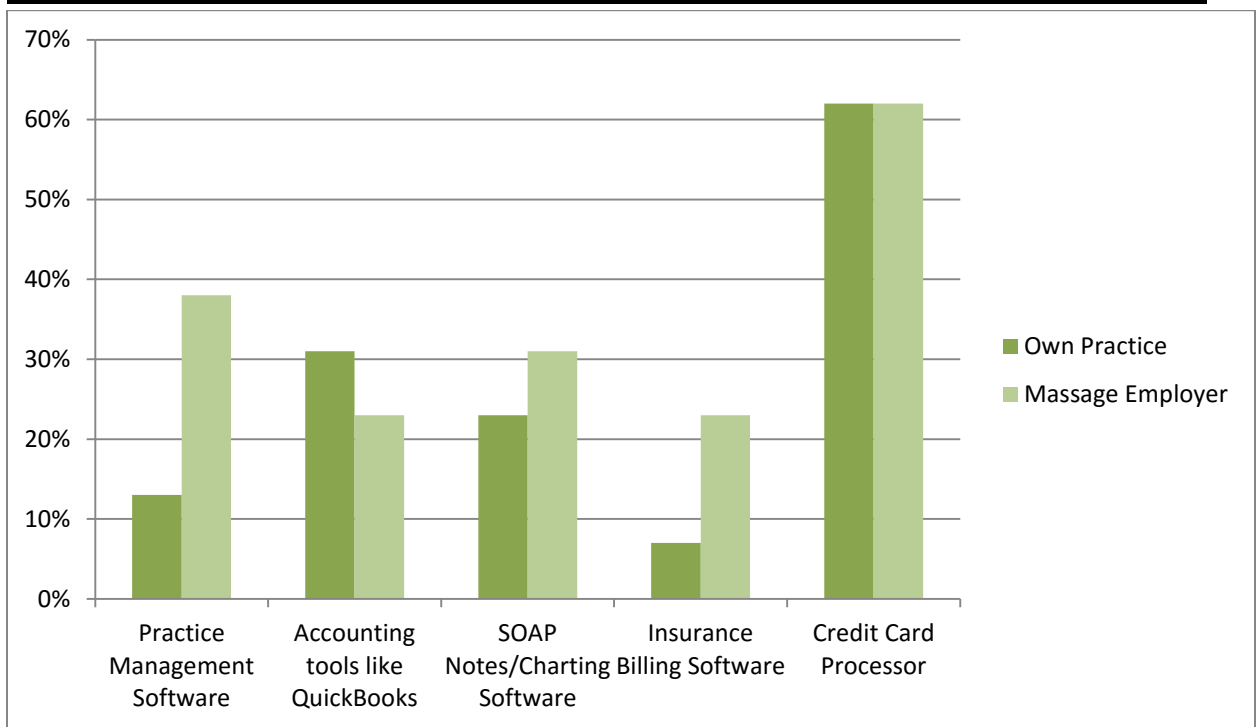
**Figure 25 Online promotion tools used by employers of massage therapists**

**Highlights from Figure 25**

Therapists working as employees said their employers most used practice websites, appointment scheduling apps, Facebook, and product and gift certificate sales to promote the practice.

Therapists who owned their own practice most used gift certificate sales, Facebook, and a website for their practice to promote their practice.

Massage therapists also used other digital tools to facilitate the management of their practices. See Figure 26 below.



**Figure 26 Digital tools to facilitate practice management**

**Highlights from Figure 26**

Credit card processors saw equal adoption among therapists running their own practice and those working as employees as a practice management tool

Employers of massage therapists were more likely to use practice management software than therapists running their own practice

Therapists running their own practice were more likely to use an accounting tool like QuickBooks to manage their practice than employers of massage therapists

**Eighty-eight** percent of massage therapists owned a web-enabled smartphone. Therapists use their phone for a variety of functions, with texting being the most widely used among therapists, followed by phone calls, and then browsing the internet.

### **Social Media Use by Massage Therapists**

Massage therapists used a variety of social media for both professional and personal reasons. The table below shows which sites are used for which purposes. Facebook continues to be the most used social media outlet for therapists, with Snapchat and Vine being the least used. Although 63% of massage therapists did not use Instagram, this platform had had the largest year over year increase in use by therapists since 2014.

---

#### **Where and Why Massage Therapists Use Social Media**

	Mostly for Practice Use	Mostly for Personal Use	Use for Both	Plan to Use in Future for Massage Practice	Plan to Use in Future for Personal	Do not Use
Facebook	4%	23%	53%	5%	0%	15%
Twitter	6%	7%	6%	5%	0%	76%
LinkedIn	22%	9%	20%	9%	1%	39%
Pinterest	3%	29%	8%	2%	1%	57%
Instagram	4%	19%	8%	4%	2%	63%
Google+	14%	14%	21%	4%	1%	46%
Snapchat	0%	15%	0%	1%	0%	84%
Vine	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	97%
YouTube	9%	23%	21%	8%	1%	39%

**Figure 27 Social media used by massage therapists**

---

#### **Highlights from Figure 27**

Massage therapists used Pinterest, Facebook, and YouTube mostly for personal use. LinkedIn and Google+ were the most commonly used for professional purposes only. Facebook, Google+, and YouTube were most used for both professional and personal reasons.

---

Massage therapists used social media sites for a variety of different reasons, both professional and personal. Figure 28 shows the main reasons.

---

## Why Massage Therapists use Social Media

---

Keep in touch with friends and family	88%
Find old friends or coworkers	40%
Keep in touch with clients	40%
Network with other massage therapists	40%
Promote massage practice	55%
Follow businesses or causes I care about	59%
Catch up on news	43%
Research trends in the massage therapy industry	45%

---

**Figure 28 Reasons massage therapists use social media**

---

### Highlights from Figure 28

Massage therapists used social media primarily for keeping in touch with friends and family.

Social media were not used as frequently for finding old friends or coworkers, keeping in touch with clients, or networking with other massage therapists.

---

---

### Apply the Research:

1. More massage therapists are integrating technology into their practices in new and innovative ways. How do you use technology in your everyday work?
2. A website is a crucial marketing tool that contributes heavily to the success of massage businesses. Have some trusted clients review and critique your site on both desktop and mobile devices.
3. Social media resources are increasingly important in everyday business as well as in personal life. How do you use social media to make new professional contacts or keep in touch with clients?

## 2F. What's the latest on the spa industry and massage therapy?<sup>12</sup>

*According to the ISPA 2016 U.S. Industry Big Five Study, covering 2015 activity, spa visits and revenue increased over 2014 showing a continued rebound in the spa industry that started in 2010.*

### **Spa visits increased in 2015**

- Spa visits increased 2.1% from 2014 to 2015.
- Spa industry revenue reached \$16.3 billion in 2015.
- Revenue per spa establishment has increased over the past several years but is still below 2001 numbers, when the revenue was \$1.024 million per establishment.

---

<b>Year</b>	<b>Estimated spa visits</b>	<b>Estimated spa industry revenue</b>	<b>Spa revenue per establishment</b>
2009	143 million	\$ 12.3 billion	\$ 594,000
2010	150 million	\$ 12.8 billion	\$ 642,000
2011	156 million	\$ 13.4 billion	\$ 673,000
2012	160 million	\$ 14.0 billion	\$ 701,000
2013	164 million	\$ 14.7 billion	\$ 728,000
2014	176 million	\$ 15.5 billion	\$ 750,000
2015	179 million	\$ 16.3 billion	\$ 775,000

---

**Figure 29. Information on spa revenue and visits**

---

### **Highlights from Figure 29**

Spa visits increased 25% from 2009 to 2015.

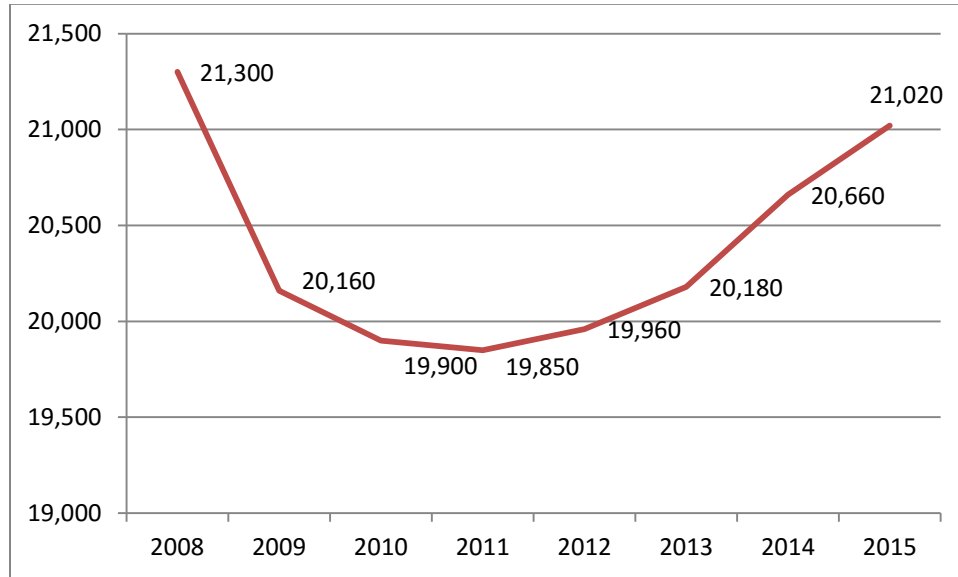
Estimated revenue for the spa industry increased 33% from 2009 to 2015.

Spa revenue per establishment increased 30% from 2009 to 2015.

---

### ***The number of spa locations continues to increase***

The number of spa locations increased by 360 locations from 2014 to 2015. (See Figure 30).



**Figure 30. Growth in Spa Locations (US)**

#### **Highlights from Figure 30**

The change in the number of spa locations from 2014 to 2015 represents a 1.7% increase

#### **Other findings regarding the spa industry:**

- Eighty-eight percent of spas were confident that revenue would continue to increase in 2016.
- Revenue growth is expected to be 1.7% per year from 2016 to 2021 for the spa industry.
- Average revenue per spa visit increased 2.9% to \$91 per visit in 2015.
- Total employment in the spa industry as a whole decreased 0.2% to 359,300 in May 2016, from 360,000 in May 2015. The number of full-time employees increased 5.3% over this time period to 162,000. Part-time employment decreased 4.1% to 157,800. Note that at any given time, there are upwards of 40,000 open positions within the spa industry.
- Massage therapy is the highest revenue generating spa service, comprising an average of 35.6% of annual revenue for a typical spa. Skin care treatments and hair and nail treatments were the second and third highest revenue generators for spas.<sup>13</sup>

- Female clients provided 52.7% of spa industry revenue, and comprised 77% of the client base for spas. In the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of male clients at spas, largely due to increased marketing to men.

***Massage therapists' employment in spas is down slightly***

- AMTA research shows that 26% of massage therapists worked in spas or salons in 2016, down from 29% in 2015.<sup>9</sup>

**Apply the Research:**

1. The spa industry continues to expand. Consider how this upward trend in activity is beneficial for all massage therapists, not just those working in spas.
2. How does your client base compare to that of an average spa?

## **2G. What impact are national massage chains having on the profession?**

*Results of the 2016 AMTA Industry Survey indicate national chains continued to expand and provide steady employment and work experience for many massage therapists.*

### ***National massage chains continued to expand and diversify their services***

National massage chains have been growing for the past several years. In 2016, this growth continued, with most major massage chains opening new locations as well as new competitors entering the market. In 2014, revenue for massage franchises was \$2.7 billion, and franchises had 1,831 locations open nationwide. Annual growth is predicted at 3.5% per year over the next five years, as doctors continue to refer consumers to receive massage, and both consumer use and demand increase.<sup>14</sup>

Per the 2016 AMTA Consumer study, 26% of massage consumers had a massage at a franchise or chain in the previous 12 months, and 9% of massage consumers stated they had their last massage in a franchise or chain. Note that some consumers may not differentiate between a spa and a national massage chain.<sup>1</sup>

Nine percent of massage therapists worked at national massage chains in 2016, up slightly from 2015 numbers. Here again, some therapists may report that they work in a spa as opposed to a franchise or chain.

### ***The main players in the massage chain market include:***

**Massage Envy** was established in Arizona in 2002 and has over 1,150 locations in 49 states. Franchises sell a membership model where individuals can sign up to get massages every month. Massage Envy is the largest employer of massage therapists in the country, with more than 25,000 massage therapists and estheticians employed by the company. Massage Envy offers an annual membership for \$59 per month at most locations which includes a 50-minute massage. Currently, there are more than 1.65 million members that have signed up for this program. Massage Envy Spa locations also offer therapeutic facials for just \$10 more than a massage session. Massage Envy is estimated to have over 67.5% market share in the massage franchise industry, and bring in roughly \$800 million in revenue.<sup>14</sup>

**Elements Therapeutic Massage** employs over 3,000 massage therapists at their 230 locations in 36 states plus Canada. Elements' Wellness Program carries a monthly fee of \$59 at most locations, which includes one hour-long Swedish or deep tissue massage, and members receive discounts of at least \$20 on each additional massage. Other Wellness Program benefits include the ability to roll-over unused massage sessions, the ability to pass on monthly massages to a family member or significant other, and online members-only specials. Non-member pricing for a one-hour massage is approximately \$89. The company has an estimated 8.4% market share (up from 3.5% last year) and revenues of approximately \$99 million by the end of 2016.<sup>14</sup>



**Massage Heights** originated in San Antonio, Texas in 2004. The company has 142 locations in twenty-two states and Canada, and has aggressive growth planned for the United States and internationally in the next five years. The company has a membership model where members pay a rate of \$49.99 per month at most locations for one 50-minute massage, which includes a complimentary aromatherapy treatment. Additional massages can be purchased for \$39.99, which is half off the non-member rate. The company has an estimated market share of 4.7% and revenue of over \$55 million.<sup>14</sup>

**Hand and Stone** has over 250 locations in 26 states plus Canada. The company is headquartered in Pennsylvania, was founded in 2004, and began franchising in 2006. Hand and Stone offers monthly memberships which include an hour massage or signature facial for \$49.95. Additional sessions can be purchased at discounted rates, and members are able to roll over unused sessions from month to month. The company has an estimated market share of 15.1%, and revenue of \$178 million.<sup>14</sup>

Outcall massage services managed through companies like **Soothe** and **Zeel** allow consumers to request massage at their homes or hotels. The companies vet the therapists, consumers, and process the payments. Consumers can schedule a massage in advance or get a therapist within an hour via a mobile app. These companies are new players to the massage market, and as they grow and become more established, more therapists and consumers will likely use them with greater frequency.<sup>15</sup>

There are dozens of other franchise concepts in the massage market that have developed over the past several years.

### **Apply the Research:**

1. Massage chains strive to offer a consistent consumer experience regardless of where the franchise is located. Consider the benefits of this approach to a massage practice for the owner, the employee, and the consumer.
2. Massage franchises are able to get consumers to sign up for multiple sessions using their membership model. What are the pros and cons of this approach to a massage practice?

If you have suggestions or need additional information, contact us at [research@amtamassage.org](mailto:research@amtamassage.org).

## Section 3 — Health Care and the Massage Profession

*Consumers continue to seek massage for medical and health reasons. As the health care industry continues to grow, health care providers are more commonly viewing massage therapy as a legitimate option to address health concerns.*

This section discusses dynamics of the health care industry and the participation of massage therapists in this sector.

### **Key Concerns:**

- How is massage therapy being affected by the growth of the health care industry?
- How much are insurance companies reimbursing massage therapists?
- Where are consumers going for massage for health related issues?
- In what ways is massage therapy being integrated into various health care environments?

### **Key Findings:**

- The healthcare industry is projected to become the largest employment sector of the US economy within the next decade.
- Ninety-seven percent of massage therapists think that massage should be considered a part of healthcare.
- Fifty percent of Americans who got a massage in the last year got their last massage for a health or medical reason.
- Consumers are going to many different sorts of locations, even spas or massage chains for pain relief/pain management issues.
- Consumers report that healthcare providers are encouraging them to get massage.
- Sixty-four percent of Americans would like their healthcare plan to cover massage.

### **These questions will be answered:**

- 3A. Is the health care industry growing?
- 3B. How are consumers using massage as part of an integrated approach to health care?
- 3C. Where are consumers getting massage for health and wellness?
- 3D. What changes are occurring with massage and insurance?

### **3A. Is the health care industry growing?<sup>16</sup>**

*Health care continues to be the fastest growing segment of the U.S. economy.*

- Healthcare positions are expected to have the fastest job growth and add the most job growth between 2014 and 2024. Healthcare will surpass state and local government during the decade as the largest employment sector of the US economy.
- Between 2014 and 2024, nearly 1 in 4 new jobs will be in healthcare support occupations, healthcare practitioners, or technical occupations around healthcare. These sectors will add an estimated 2.3 million jobs to the economy in the coming decade.
- Continued increases in both the overall size of the healthcare industry and in consumer spending on health care demonstrate increased demand for health care related products and services. These trends are expected to continue as the U.S. population ages. Increases in the number of individuals with access to healthcare through insurance will also impact the growth of the industry.

**Massage therapists have supported the integration of massage in health care. This integration continues to grow and more scientific research is being conducted on the efficacy of massage.**

#### ***Massage therapists continue to support integration of massage therapy into health care<sup>9</sup>***

Ninety-seven percent of massage therapists think their profession should be considered part of health care, up from 96% in each of the last three years. Therapists indicated the following as the most important ways to accomplish this integration. Percentages are of respondents listing item as their top choice:

- Massage prescribed by health care provider (27%)
- Massage therapists working as part of a health care team alongside other complementary practitioners (25%)
- Massage referred by health care providers (13%)
- Massage therapists working as part of a health care team within a hospital or clinic (12%)
- Making massage available in hospitals (12%)
- Having massage billed to third party insurance (8%)
- Making massage available in integrated clinics (5%)
- Having massage therapists supervised by healthcare providers (1%)

Additionally, 59% of therapists believe that the massage therapy profession is respected by traditional healthcare providers, versus 19% who feel it is not respected.

### ***Clinical studies on the efficacy of massage are ongoing***

AMTA continues to leverage its existing relationships within the health care industry to forge new partnerships with major organizations to conduct research studies on the efficacy of massage. The results of these studies will provide more evidence-based research about massage therapy. Increasing the base of clinical knowledge and research about massage therapy will further enhance the integration of massage therapy into health care and will increase its use by patients.

Some examples of this initiative are the funding of research studies. This past year saw a meta-analysis of massage therapy for pain conducted by the Samueli Institute, with support from the AMTA and the Massage Therapy Foundation. The results of this study show that massage therapy can provide significant improvement for pain, anxiety and health-related quality of life for those looking to manage their pain.

AMTA has also partnered with Team Roger C. Peace to co-sponsor the paracycling team and fund the gathering of data on the impact of massage therapy on the conditioning and performance of these professional athletes.

The Massage Therapy Foundation promotes research literacy and capacity in the profession by granting funds for research and educational initiatives related to massage therapy, by providing direct consultation to the medical and research communities, and by educating massage therapists about the world of research.

There are many resources you can use to access current and past studies on the efficacy of massage:

[amtamassage.org/research](http://amtamassage.org/research)  
[massagetherapyfoundation.org](http://massagetherapyfoundation.org)  
[wellnessevidence.com](http://wellnessevidence.com)  
[pubmed.gov](http://pubmed.gov)  
[nccih.nih.gov](http://nccih.nih.gov)  
[biomedcentral.com](http://biomedcentral.com)

### **Apply the Research:**

1. Brush up on how to read and interpret clinical research studies, and how to use research results to market your massage practice to consumers.
2. It is vital for massage therapists to be knowledgeable about the latest research on the efficacy of their work. In addition to the information in this report, visit [massagetherapyfoundation.org](http://massagetherapyfoundation.org) for the latest information on clinical research on massage.
3. Visit [amtamassage.org/research](http://amtamassage.org/research) for resources you can share with potential clients on ways massage can be effective for a variety of health conditions. AMTA offers client resources explaining massage research at [amtamassage.org/clientresources](http://amtamassage.org/clientresources).

### **3B. How are consumers using massage as part of an integrated approach to health care? <sup>1</sup>**

*Consumers maintained their use of massage for medical and health reasons in 2016. Americans solidly believe in the benefits of massage.*

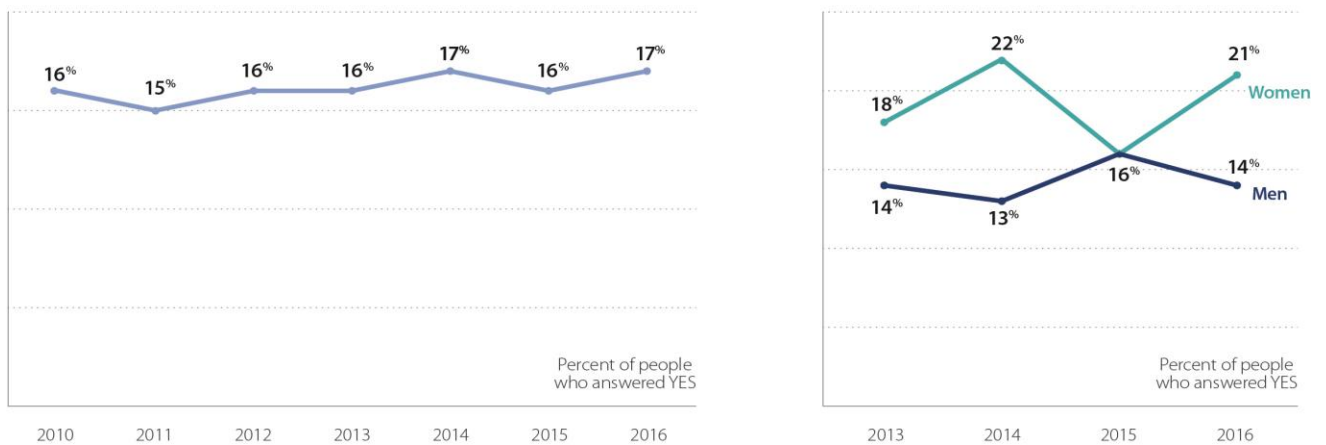
#### ***Consumer use of massage for medical and health reasons remained relatively steady from 2015 to 2016***

Fifty percent of American massage consumers got their last massage for medical or health reasons per the *2016 AMTA Consumer Survey*, statistically unchanged from 52% in 2015.

- **Overall, 89% of Americans believed that massage can be effective in reducing pain and 88% believed that massage can be beneficial to health and wellness.** These numbers were similar to the past several years.
- **Seventy-one percent of Americans believe that massage should be considered a form of healthcare.** Females and younger Americans were more likely to consider massage as a form of healthcare than males or older Americans, a trend that has not changed in several years.
- **More female consumers got massage for medical and health reasons in 2016, overtaking male consumers.** Women increased their use of massage for medical and health reasons in 2016, with 53% getting their last massage for medical or health reasons compared to 39% in 2015. Forty-six percent of male consumers got their last massage for a medical or health reason in 2016, down from 69% in 2015.
- **Consumers aged 45-54 increased their use of massage for medical and health reasons in 2016.** Forty-one percent of massage consumers aged 18-34 got their last massage for a medical or health reason in 2016, down from 46% in 2015. Fifty-six percent of massage consumers aged 35-44 got their last massage for medical or health reasons in 2016, unchanged from 2015 data. The 45-54 age bracket experienced a large increase in use of massage for medical or health reasons, to 63% in 2016 as compared to 54% in 2015. Forty-four percent of consumers in the 55-64 age bracket and 53% of consumer that are 65+ got their last massage for a medical or health reason.
- **Consumers of all ages are using massage as a form of pain relief.** In 2016, 23% of massage consumers had their last massage for pain relief, up from 19% in 2015 but still down from 29% in 2014. Male consumers (25%) were more likely than female consumers (22%) to have had their last massage for pain relief. Massage consumers aged 18-34 were the most likely of all age brackets to use massage for pain relief, at 29%, closely followed by consumers 65 and older, at 28%. Conversely, consumers aged 35-44 were least likely to have their last massage for pain relief, at 17%.

- **Seventeen percent of all consumers surveyed discussed massage therapy with their doctor** or health care provider in 2016, up from 16% in 2015.
- **Women were more likely than men to discuss massage therapy with their doctor or healthcare provider.** In 2016, more women and fewer men reported discussing massage therapy with their healthcare provider. (See Figure 31 for more information). The conditions most likely to lead consumers to talk to their doctor or healthcare provider about massage included pain relief or pain management (37%), injury recovery or rehabilitation (26%) and soreness, stiffness or spasm (16%).

**Have you ever discussed massage therapy with your doctor or other healthcare provider?**



**Figure 31. Consumers who discussed massage therapy with their health care providers**

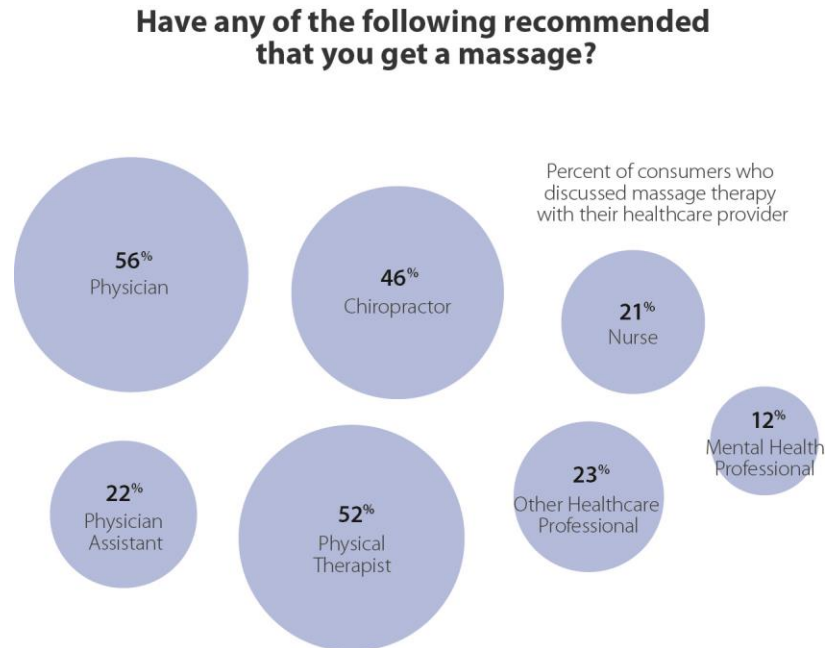
**Highlights from Figure 31**

- 17% of consumers discussed massage therapy with their doctor or healthcare provider
- More women than men discussed massage therapy with their doctor or healthcare provider

**Consumers are being encouraged by medical professionals to get massage.**

AMTA’s consumer research showed that of adult Americans who discussed massage therapy with their doctor or healthcare provider, 12% were referred to a massage therapist (down from 14% in 2015), 21% were strongly recommended to get a massage by their healthcare provider (25% in 2015), and 30% were encouraged to get a massage (unchanged from 2015). Only 5% of those surveyed reported that their healthcare provider discouraged them from getting a massage.

For those consumers that talked with their doctor or healthcare professionals about massage, different groups recommended massage at varying rates. Figure 32 shows the percentage of American adults who received recommendations for massage by the type of health care professional.



**Figure 32 Health care professionals who recommended massage.**

---

### Highlights from Figure 32

Physicians were the most likely healthcare professionals to recommend massage, with 56% of physicians recommending massage to their patients when discussing massage therapy with a patient

---

**Massage therapists continued to receive referrals from health care professionals<sup>9</sup>**

In the previous section, consumers were asked about medical professionals referring them to massage therapists. This data is reported by practicing massage therapists, and trends the percent of therapists who received referrals from different healthcare providers.

<b>Type of Health care Professional</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Hospitals and Medical Offices	53%	52%	56%	55%
Chiropractors and Integrated Health Clinics	70%	71%	71%	70%
Other Health Care Professionals	73%	71%	75%	73%
<b>Other Massage Therapists</b>	79%	77%	79%	82%

**Figure 33. Percentage of massage therapists who received referral at least once every 6 months by category of referring health care professional**

**Highlights from Figure 33**

Massage therapists reported an increase in referrals from other massage therapists from 2015 to 2016

Other categories of healthcare professionals referred clients at the same or a slightly decreased rate

**Apply the Research:**

1. The number of consumers who discuss massage therapy with their doctor or healthcare professional has remained constant over the past few years. How can you leverage relationships with healthcare professionals and consumers in your area to include massage therapy as part of a discussion about healthcare?
2. Attend an event with healthcare professionals to grow your network of contacts in that industry. Find resources at [www.amtamassage.org/careerguidance](http://www.amtamassage.org/careerguidance).



### **3C. Where are consumers getting massage for health and wellness?<sup>1</sup>**

*When seeking massage therapy for general medical or health reasons, consumers went to a variety of massage business locations. When confronted with higher level medical needs such as injury recovery or rehabilitation, consumers were more likely to go to a medical office or establishment for massage therapy.*

#### **Consumers go to many settings for medical and health reasons**

Physician's offices, medical clinics and chiropractor's offices are not the only places consumers go for massage for medical or health reasons.

#### **Overall, 50 percent of Americans got their last massage for a medical or health reason.**

- 36 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **beauty salon** said they did so for medical or health reasons.
- 92 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **chiropractor's office** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 100 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **physician's office or medical clinic** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 45 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **massage therapist's office or location** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 84 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **physical therapist's office** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 45 percent of consumers who got their last massage at a **spa** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 36 percent of consumers who got their last massage at **their home or a home of someone they know** did so for medical or health reasons.
- 48 percent of consumers who got their last massage at **massage franchise or chain** did so for medical or health reasons.

### **3D. What changes are occurring with massage and insurance?**

*The number of massage therapists receiving insurance reimbursement was down in 2016*

Twenty percent of massage therapists were reimbursed by insurance for massage, a four percent decrease from last year. Insurance reimbursement includes multiple types of insurance, not only health insurance.

For practicing massage therapists, 7% were reimbursed by health insurance (either private payer or public system), 10% by auto insurance, 6% were reimbursed through worker's compensation and 4% accepted other insurance reimbursement.<sup>9</sup>

#### ***Americans would like their health care plans to cover massage***

According to AMTA's 2016 Consumer Survey, 64% of adult Americans would like to have their health insurance plan cover massage, down slightly from 65% in 2015.

Eighty-three percent of Americans aged 35-44 would like to have their health insurance plan cover massage, significantly higher than all other age brackets. At 46%, the 65 and older age bracket was significantly less likely than all other age brackets to want their health insurance to cover massage. Of those wanting their healthcare plan to cover massage, 59% would be willing to pay higher premiums for massage coverage.

Five percent of consumers surveyed indicated that the payment for their last massage was covered by insurance (health, auto, or worker's compensation insurance), a 1% increase from 2015.

#### ***Massage therapists who use insurance reimbursement find it worthwhile for their business***

The 2016 AMTA Industry Survey provides information on insurance reimbursement for auto, medical, worker's compensation and other insurance.

- Insurance reimbursement makes up 30% or less of the revenue for the average therapist that accepts insurance.
- Depending on the type of insurance, the average amount of reimbursement received varied widely.

The average amount of reimbursement increased for worker's compensation and other insurance, and remained steady for auto insurance from 2015 to 2016. Insurance reimbursement is determined by each state and healthcare policy and not all states permit insurance reimbursement for massage provided by a massage therapist. 2016 was the first year where private payer and public system health insurance were broken out into separate categories.

	Average Reimbursement for One Hour of Massage			Worthwhile for Business		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
<b>Auto Insurance</b>	\$73	\$87	\$87	87%	85%	94%
<b>Health Insurance</b>	\$58	\$51	See Below	84%	77%	See Below
<b>Private Payer Health</b>	N/A	N/A	\$70	N/A	N/A	82%
<b>Public System Health</b>	N/A	N/A	\$56	N/A	N/A	67%
<b>Worker's Compensation Insurance</b>	\$69	\$67	\$82	80%	76%	84%
<b>Other Insurance</b>	\$54	\$60	\$65	70%	80%	57%

**Figure 34. Insurance reimbursement by type of insurance**

Note that in 2016 "Health Insurance" was broken up into private insurance vs. public system insurance

**Highlights from Figure 34**

94% of massage therapists accepting auto insurance reimbursement in 2016 found it worthwhile for their business, up nearly 10% from 2015

***Studies show that patients are paying out of pocket for massage in health care settings and insurance companies are covering a comparatively small portion of massage.***

**AMTA's 2016 Industry Study shows that:**

- Massage therapists working in a hospital, medical office or clinic were paid by patients 35% of the time, by insurance 5% of the time, and by the facility 61% of the time. Payment by the facility increased significantly over 2015 data.
- Therapists employed in a chiropractic office or integrated health care clinic were paid by patients 36% of the time, by insurance 6% of the time and by the facility 59% of the time.

**Apply the Research:**

1. While the percent of therapists using of insurance reimbursement has decreased, more massage therapists say it is worthwhile for their practice. Consider the pros and cons of insurance reimbursement for your massage practice.
2. State insurance reimbursement policies change from year to year. Research your state's rules regarding insurance reimbursement.

If you have suggestions or need additional information, contact [research@amtamassage.org](mailto:research@amtamassage.org).

## Section 4 — Training and Education of Massage Therapists<sup>17</sup>

*Over the past few years, massage schools have been diversifying their course offerings to include continuing education and online classes.*

This section takes an in-depth look at demographics, challenges and opportunities that affect massage therapy schools, teachers, graduates and students.

### **Key Concerns:**

- How can schools attract more students?
- What kinds of financial aid are schools offering to students?
- How can schools support new teachers?
- What benefits do schools provide to teachers?

### **Key Findings:**

- The average number of graduates reported per school across all campuses was 61.
- The average amount of initial in-class education that therapists have is 673 hours.
- Sixty-three percent of schools had difficulty in attracting students.
- Forty-seven percent of schools have a student attrition rate over 10%.
- Seventy-two percent of schools offer some form of financial aid to students.

### **These questions will be answered:**

- 4A. What changes are occurring in length of programs and types of training?
- 4B. What are recent school trends and demographics?
- 4C. What challenges are schools facing?
- 4D. How many schools are accredited?
- 4E. What trends are happening with teachers?
- 4F. What is occurring with new graduates?
- 4G. Who are today's students?

**4A. What changes are occurring in length of programs and types of training?**  
*In 2016 the average massage therapist reported having received more hours of initial training than was reported in 2015.*

***Most massage therapists graduated from an individually owned, private, for profit massage therapy school***

Sixty-eight percent of massage therapists reported in 2016 having graduated from an individually owned, private, for-profit massage therapy school, down slightly from 69% in 2015.<sup>9</sup>

In 2016, 14% of therapists reported graduating from a corporate school compared to 15% the previous year and 18% reported graduating from a public institution (community college, city college, state college/university), up from 17% last year.<sup>9</sup>

***The total hours of massage therapists' initial training increased in 2016***

The average amount of initial training reported by massage therapists on the 2016 AMTA Industry Survey was 673 hours, an increase of 2 hours from 2015. The reported average of training hours has gone up each of the past three years. Below is a breakdown of hours of initial training. (See Figure 35 below.)

Hours of Initial Training	Percentage of Massage Therapists						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Less than 500	13%	20%	20%	15%	12%	10%	13%
500-600	32	32	30	36	34	35	30
601-700	16	14	12	12	13	15	14
701-900	23	21	24	24	26	25	28
901-1,000	8	8	7	8	9	10	9
More than 1,000	6	6	7	6	6	5	7
Average Number of Hours	660	619	632	642	661	671	673

Figure 35. Hours of initial training.

**Highlights from Figure 35**

2016 saw the highest average number of hours of initial training for massage therapists  
 Only 13% of massage therapists have less than 500 hours of initial training

See Figure 36 for initial training hours by work setting. Massage therapists working in franchises as well as spas and salons reported the highest average initial training hours.

	Average initial training hours
Sole Practitioner	670
Independent Contractor	675
Full Time Employee	733
Part Time Employee	663
My home	672
My office	656
Client's home	688
Client's workplace	682
Massage therapy only franchise or chain	700
Spa/salon	693
Health club/athletic facility	691
Hospital/medical clinic/office	609
Chiropractic office/integrated health clinic with other CAM providers	640
Hotel/resort/cruise	684

Figure 36. Hours of initial training by therapists working in different work settings.

#### Highlights from Figure 36

All work settings had average initial training hours well above the 500 required by most states for licensure

#### *Schools are diverse in the type of massage therapy programs they offer*

- Ninety-five percent of surveyed schools offer a basic certificate/diploma in massage therapy, up from 87% last year.
- Twenty-one percent offer an associate degree in massage therapy, down from 24% last year.
- More schools are offering continuing education in massage therapy than in years past. (For more information refer to Figure 37)

---

**What type of massage therapy program(s) or education does your school/program currently offer?**



**Figure 37. Type of massage therapy program(s) or education schools offer (Respondents could select multiple answers; numbers do not add to 100%)**

---

**Highlights from Figure 37**

More than half of schools offered continuing education in massage therapy, a number that has been increasing over the past several years

---

---

***Courses geared to work settings***

Ninety-five percent of schools offer at least one course that is specific to a massage therapy work setting.

- Eighty-seven percent of schools offered a class about massage therapy as a sole practitioner.
- Eighty-four percent of schools offered a course on providing massage therapy in medical locations, up from 78% last year.
- Seventy-four percent of schools offered a course on massage therapy provided in spas.

***Distance learning***

According to the *2016 AMTA School Survey*, 20% of schools offer online courses for their entry level program, consistent with previous data. Of schools that offer online courses for their entry level program:

- The average number of courses offered online was 5.25.
- No schools are solely using online learning in their entry level programs.
- Only 9% of schools use online learning for continuing education programs, down from 15% in 2015.

### ***Curriculum changes***

According to the 2016 AMTA School Survey, schools are very aware of industry reports that may impact their current or future curriculum:

- Forty-five percent of school administrators have read the *Entry-Level Analysis Project (ELAP) Report*
- Forty percent of school administrators have read the *Entry-Level Massage Education Blueprint*
- Thirty-eight percent of school administrators have read the *FSMTB Model Practice Act*
- Forty-five percent of schools have either changed their curriculum, or plan to change their curriculum based on these documents



#### 4B. What are recent school trends and demographics?

*There is a wide variety of massage schools in the United States.*

The results of the 2016 AMTA School Survey show variations across schools in massage therapy training. These include:

- Number of locations
- Graduates per year
- Program hours
- Cost
- Year established

	Overall Average	School Type			Age of School	
		Individually Owned	Part of Larger Corporation	Public Institution	2001 or Newer	2000 or Older
Average number of locations	2.5	2	5	1	2	2
Average number of graduates per year for all locations	61	74	60	27	29	70
Average in-class supervised hours required (entry-level program)	601-700	601-700	601-700	601-700	601-700	601-700
Average clinical hours required (entry-level program)	81-100	81-100	81-100	81-100	81-100	81-100
Average cost-per-hour of entry level program before financial aid	\$11-\$13	\$11-\$13	\$14-\$16	\$5-\$7	\$8-\$10	\$11-\$13
<b>Length of Operation</b>						
2001 or newer	31%	20%	37%	50%	100%	0%
2000 or older	69%	80%	63%	50%	0%	100%

Figure 38. School profile information from 2016 AMTA School Survey

#### Highlights from Figure 38

Schools established in 2000 or before have much higher numbers of graduates than schools that were established more recently.

#### Number of locations

Most massage schools had between two and three locations in 2016. Schools that are part of a larger corporation had an average of five locations.

#### Graduates per year

The average number of graduates was 61 per school. Schools reported from four to 400 graduates per year in 2016.

**Program hours**

Schools required an average of 601-700 in-class, supervised hours, and an additional 81-100 clinical hours on top of that. Massage therapists cited an average of 673 hours of entry-level training.

**Cost**

The average cost for a massage program was between \$11 and \$13 per hour before factoring in financial aid, unchanged from last year.

- Schools that are part of a larger corporation charged the most, an average of \$14-\$16 per hour. Public institutions charged the least at \$5-\$7 per hour.
- Newer schools charged the same as older schools.

**Year Established**

Thirty-one percent of the schools participating in the *2016 AMTA School Survey* were established in the year 2001 or after, compared to 40% last year. Of those schools:

- Fifty-seven percent are individually owned schools.
- Public institutions/community colleges make up 23% of the respondent base.
- Schools that are part of a larger corporation make up 20% of the respondent base.

#### **4C. What challenges are schools facing?**

*Difficulty attracting students and marketing their school/programs remain the biggest challenges for schools.*

##### **All Schools**

Across all three categories of massage schools, the top challenges cited were difficulty marketing the school or program and difficulty in attracting students. These challenges have not changed over the past several years.

##### **Individually-owned massage schools**

The biggest challenges for these schools are **attracting students** and **marketing their schools or program**. Fifty-nine percent of individually-owned schools said they had difficulty attracting students compared to 50% last year. Forty-nine percent said they had difficulty in marketing their school or program, up from 43% last year.

##### **Massage schools as part of larger corporations**

Their biggest challenge remains attracting students, as has been the main challenge for the past several years. Their next biggest challenge was marketing their school/program.

##### **Public institutions with separate massage programs**

Fifty-three percent of public schools said marketing their program was challenging in 2016, compared to 70% in 2015 and more in line with 2014 data at 58%. Sixty percent of public schools said they had difficulty attracting students to their programs in 2016, up from 43% reported in 2015.

### What are the biggest challenges affecting your school?

TOP CHALLENGES AFFECTING MASSAGE SCHOOLS	TOTAL	School Type		
		1	2	3
Difficulty in marketing school and programs	53%	49%	67%	53%
Difficulty in attracting students	63%	59%	75%	60%
Difficulty in competing with other massage schools	16%	16%	17%	13%
Difficulty keeping in touch with alumni	19%	11%	25%	33%
Difficulty in finding qualified teachers	19%	11%	33%	27%
Difficulty in offering financial aid	9%	16%	0%	0%
High cost of products and services needed for my school	13%	14%	25%	0%
Difficulty teaching students with diverse needs	11%	11%	8%	13%
High student dropout rates	8%	8%	17%	0%
Difficulty in obtaining/retaining school accreditation	5%	5%	8%	0%
Lack of guidelines/hiring practices for teachers	5%	3%	8%	7%
Difficulty in retaining qualified teachers	13%	11%	17%	13%
Rising insurance costs	8%	11%	8%	0%
Difficulty in developing my curriculum	2%	0%	8%	0%
Lack of current information about industry trends, facts, demographics	8%	8%	17%	0%
Difficulties in finding employment for graduating students	5%	3%	0%	13%
Difficulty in evaluating students and/or the entire school	5%	5%	0%	7%
Insurance access	2%	3%	0%	0%
Difficulty providing training to students	3%	0%	8%	7%

1. Individually Owned  
 2. Part of Larger Corporation  
 3. Public Institution

**Figure 39. Top challenges affecting massage schools**

#### Interpreting Figure 39

Schools mentioned many other challenges beyond those listed on the previous chart. Most open-ended responses encompass a wide variety of topics, but include student funding, accreditation issues, and faculty and staffing shortages.

#### 4D. How many schools are accredited?<sup>18</sup>

*Seventy-four percent of schools report being accredited.*<sup>17</sup>

Between 2013 and 2016, the total number of massage schools accredited by nationally-recognized accrediting organizations declined 20% while the number of campuses in these accredited institutions declined 22%. Note that this only includes those national accrediting agencies that list programs including massage therapy. There are many other national or regional accrediting bodies that have schools that may have massage programs. Note that schools that have programmatic accreditation through agencies such as COMTA will oftentimes also have institutional accreditation from another accrediting body.

In the past year many schools have either gone out of business or ceased their massage program as the government is being more strict with schools that allow federal funding, especially for-profit institutions, which could lead to a decline in the number of accredited schools listed below. (See Figure 40.)

Accrediting Organization	2013 Numbers		2014 Numbers		2015 Numbers		2016 Numbers	
	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)
ABHES	68	71	39	65	36	57	32	43
ACICS	65	225	56	197	57	182	49	156
ACCET	25	63	23	73	22	73	23	75
ACCSC	85	154	77	142	71	119	71	117
COMTA	57	81	49	68	49	57	48	60
NACCAS	62	109	72	122	66	115	68	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>548</b>

**Figure 40. Accreditation numbers**

#### Highlights from Figure 40

This chart shows changes in accredited institutions and campuses from 2013 to 2016.

Three percent fewer institutions were accredited in 2016 than in 2015.

Nine percent fewer campuses were accredited in 2016 than in 2015.

#### 4E. What trends are happening with teachers?<sup>17</sup>

*Schools continued to rely on part-time instructors.*

Fewer schools have full-time instructors than in the past.

---

---

<b>8</b>	Average number of <b>part-time instructors</b> currently employed
<b>4</b>	Average number of <b>independent contractors</b> currently employed
<b>2</b>	Average number of <b>full-time instructors</b> currently employed
<b>84%</b>	Have part-time instructors (up from 80% in 2015).
<b>64%</b>	Have full-time instructors (down from 74% in 2015).
<b>49%</b>	Have independent contractors (up from 47% in 2015).

---

**Figure 41. Number of instructors in massage therapy schools**

---

#### **Highlights from Figure 41**

Schools relied more heavily on part time and independent contractor instructors in 2016.

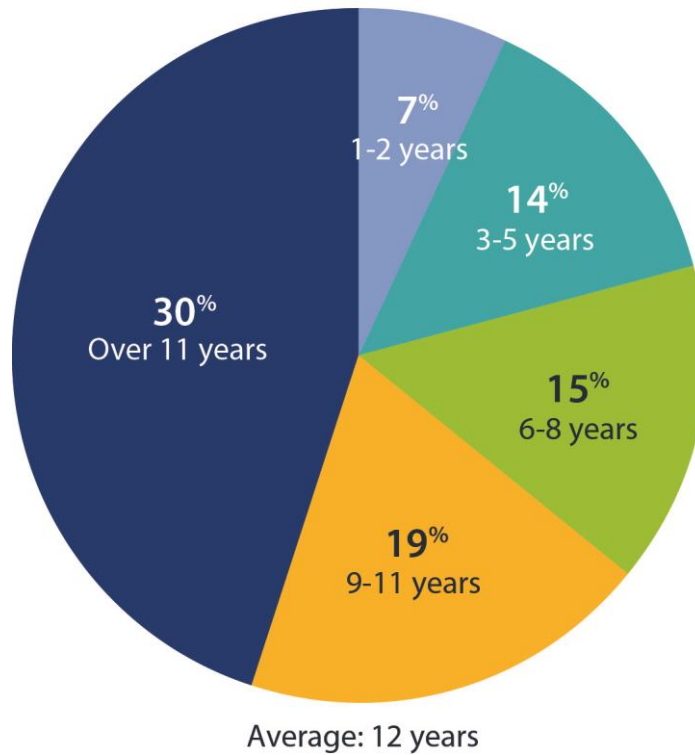
---

#### ***Instructor teaching experience***

Massage instructors had an average of 12 years of teaching experience within massage therapy, up from 10 years cited in 2015.

---

**Experience of massage therapy instructors related to massage therapy**



**Figure 42. Experience of massage therapy instructors related to massage therapy**

---

**Highlights from Figure 42**

Nearly a third of massage therapy instructors have more than 11 years of teaching experience related to massage

---

Average teaching experience unrelated to massage remained steady at 8 years in 2016 and 2015, up from 7 years in 2014. Schools may want to consider providing massage therapy teacher training for new instructors without experience in massage therapy instruction.

***What qualifications do massage schools look for in instructors?***

In their instructor hiring requirements, massage schools focus on massage therapy experience first. Figure 43 provides more detail regarding hiring requirements for instructors.

---

<b>General Hiring Requirements by School Type</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b><u>Individually Owned</u></b>	<b><u>Part of Larger Corporation</u></b>	<b><u>Public Institution</u></b>
Experience as a practicing massage therapist	88%	84%	100%	88%
<b>Current status as a practicing massage therapist</b>	68%	63%	73%	75%
Teaching experience	51%	53%	40%	56%
<b>Experience in specific modalities</b>	48%	43%	60%	50%
Require massage instructor training	35%	43%	27%	19%
<b>Bachelors degree</b>	19%	12%	13%	44%
<b>Associate degree</b>	14%	12%	13%	19%

**Figure 43. General hiring requirements by school type**

---

**Highlights from Figure 43**

Across all school types, 68% require instructors to be a practicing massage therapist

---

***Hiring requirements shifted in 2016***

More schools are requiring current status as a practicing massage therapist in 2016 than in 2015. Fewer schools are requiring bachelors or associates degrees of their instructors.

***Hiring challenges***

Twenty-six percent of schools said they had trouble hiring instructors for their program compared to 29% last year. Of those schools that had difficulty hiring instructors:

- Eighty percent of schools said they found instructor candidates lacking in teaching experience, compared to 78% last year.
- Eighty-five percent said they found instructor candidates lacking in classroom management skills, up from 74% last year.
- Seventy-five percent said they found instructor candidates lacking curriculum development skills.



### **Teacher Training**

Eighty-four percent of all schools surveyed provided teacher training in 2016, up from 77% in 2015. Of those schools that provided teacher training:

- Ninety-eight percent provided in-service training, up from 93% last year.
- Seventy-four percent provided a peer/monitor relationship compared to 81% last year.
- Forty-four percent provided reimbursement for continuing education compared to 50% last year.
- Twenty-three percent provided other support and resources in order to help improve teacher's skills.

### **How much are instructors paid?**

According to the *2016 AMTA Massage School Survey*, which surveyed instructor pay for 2015, average hourly pay for schools was \$28 per hour, with public institutions paying more than individually owned and corporate schools. The average annual salary of teachers was \$40,225 per year. Schools vary in how they pay instructors, with some paying per year, some per class, and some per hour. Here is more information on the breakdown of massage therapy instructor pay in 2015:

---

	<u>All Schools</u>	<u>Individually Owned</u>	<u>Part of Larger Corporation</u>	<u>Public Institution</u>
<b>Average Annual Instructor Salary</b>	\$40,225	\$39,429	\$32,500	\$42,561
<b>Average Instructor hourly wage</b>	\$28	\$25	\$25	\$36
<b>Average Instructor pay per class</b>	\$794	\$284	\$2,000	\$1,750

**Figure 44. 2015 Average instructor pay**

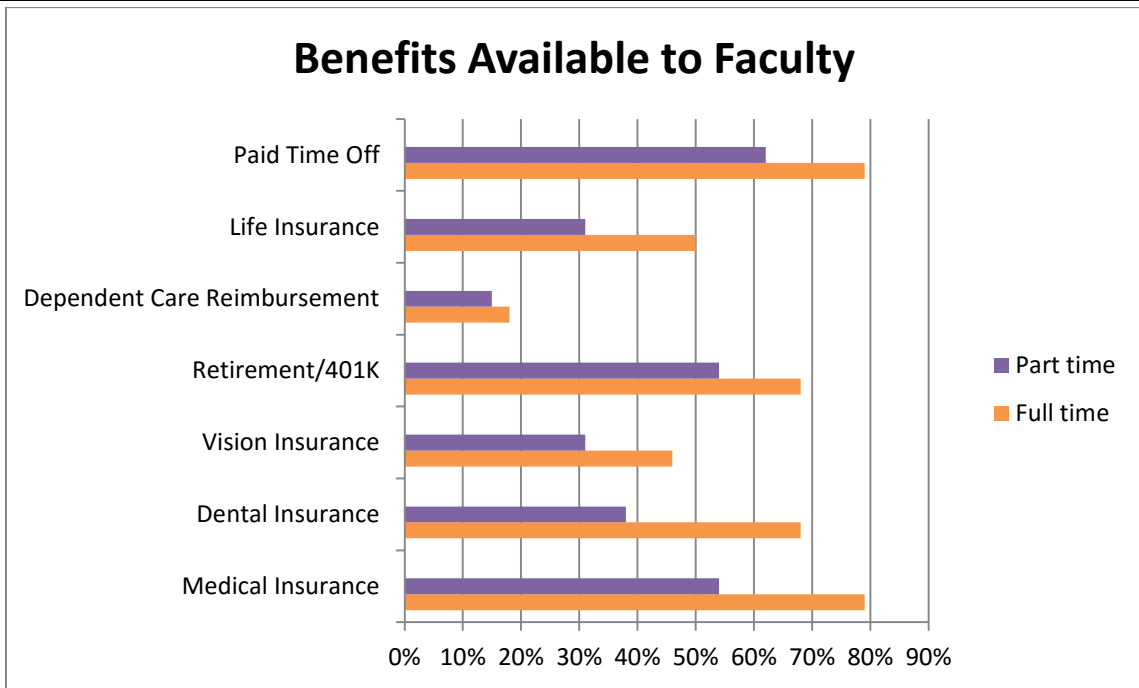
---

### **What percentage of schools provide benefits to instructors?**

Forty-two percent of schools provided benefits to their instructors in 2016 compared to 37% last year. Public institutions are much more likely to offer benefits than other types of schools. Thirty-six percent of independently owned and corporate schools offer benefits to instructors. Of those schools that provided benefits to instructors:

- Seventy-seven percent provided medical insurance compared to 85% last year.
- Sixty-three percent provided retirement services compared to 76% last year.
- Sixty-three percent provided dental insurance, down from 73% last year.
- Forty-three percent provided vision insurance and 47% provided life insurance.

See Figure 45 for more information about benefits available to full and part time faculty.



**Figure 45. Benefits available to full and part time faculty.**  
Independent contractors are not shown in this graph due to small sample size.

**Highlights from Figure 45**

Part time faculty were equally likely to have medical insurance and retirement benefits available in 2016

#### **4F. What is occurring with new graduates?**

*Some recent graduates may find it difficult to find a job in massage therapy as they begin their career. Schools with a formal placement program continue to see a large percentage of students finding employment.*

##### ***Number of graduates per school***

According to the *2016 AMTA Massage School Survey*, massage schools had an average of 61 students graduate from their school across all campuses in a given year.

##### ***Schools continue to help new graduates find jobs***

While getting ready to graduate, some students may find it difficult to obtain employment in massage therapy or to start their own practice. This is one of the major reasons why new therapists leave the profession. In light of this, 94% of schools now offer some kind of job placement service to their students:

- Sixty-five percent of schools provided a **job board or bank** that students can use to look for jobs in 2016, up from 64% last year.
- Twenty-nine percent of schools offered a **formal placement program** for graduates in 2016, the same as in 2015.
- Sixty-seven percent of schools have a placement rate of over 81%.

Some of the specific job placement services schools provided to students include assistance with resume writing, cover letter writing and interviewing skills. Additionally, many schools with a formal job placement program have a career services department that establishes relationships with massage therapy businesses, provides externships and holds job fairs for students at their school. Overall, schools work hard to ensure their graduates have good massage therapy positions available to them upon graduation.

#### **4G. Who are today's students?**

*Student demographics and attrition rates remained steady in the last year.*

##### ***Schools use a variety of factors in the admission process***

- Massage schools use many factors to determine if they are going to admit a student into the program. On average, 90% of applicants are admitted to a massage therapy program.
- Ninety-two percent of massage programs require a high-school diploma from incoming students.
- Sixty-eight percent of schools require that prospective students be interviewed prior to admittance to the program.
- Fourteen percent of schools look at standardized test scores for applicants to the program.
- Twenty-one percent of schools require applicants to provide a written essay with their application materials.

##### ***Massage students are more evenly distributed in age***

The median age of massage students is 26-30 years old, similar to years past. Sixty-four percent of students are under 30 years old. There are slightly fewer students above 46 years old than in the previous year. The age distribution of massage students is shown in figure 46. Most schools report the highest percentage of massage students are between 26 and 30 years of age.

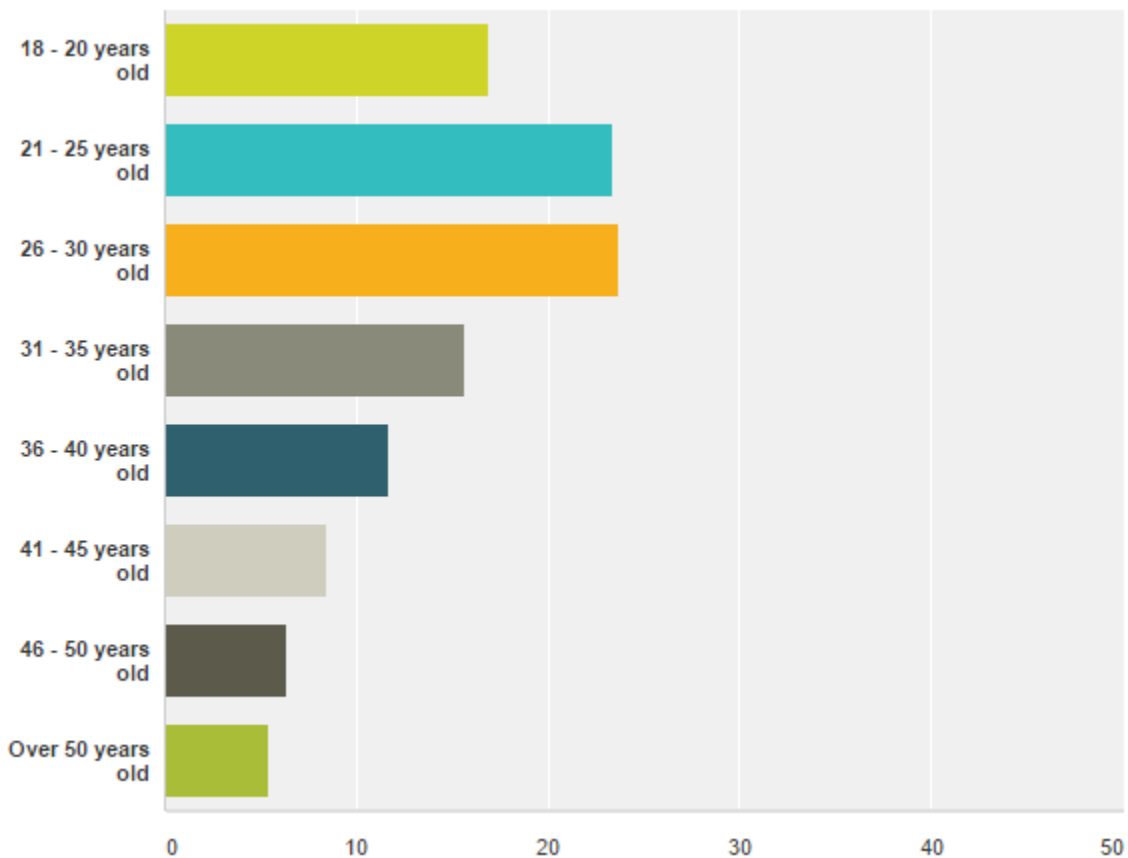


Figure 46. Age of massage students

---

**Highlights from Figure 46**

Almost two-thirds of massage students were 30 or under in 2016

---

***Massage therapy students are mostly female***

Seventy-seven percent of massage therapy students are female with male students making up 23% of the student body. This reflects a slight shift from the 80% female, 20% male split that has been seen over the past several years.

***Student attrition rates remained steady***

Few students drop out of massage programs prior to graduation.

- Forty percent of schools said their attrition rate was less than 10% in 2016, down from 55% in 2015.
- Thirty-five percent of schools cited attrition rates between 10 and 20% in 2016.
- Six percent of schools had an attrition rate above 30%, unchanged from last year.
- Forty-seven percent of individually owned massage schools had attrition rates of less than 10% in 2016. Twenty-five percent of public institutions and 33% of corporate schools had attrition rates of less than 10% in 2016.

The most prevalent reason why students do not complete their massage program is personal reasons. Other reasons include not being able to meet academic rigor, financial issues and students determining that massage is not for them.

### ***Schools are offering financial aid to students***

The 2016 *AMTA Schools Survey* indicated that the percentage of schools offering financial aid to students has increased to 72%, from 67% in 2015. An additional 3% of schools said they intend to offer financial aid in the future but do not do so at this time. Of schools that offered financial aid:

- Ninety percent offered federal programs, unchanged from 2015.
- Eighty-three percent offered payment plans, up from 81% in 2015.
- Sixty percent offered loans, up from 59% in 2015.
- Forty-six percent offered scholarships, down from 71% in 2015.
- The most commonly mentioned other form of financial aid was VA or military aid, followed by other bursary and work/study programs.

### ***Apply the Research***

1. Encourage local massage students to apply for AMTA scholarships. Find out about the latest offerings by emailing [scholarships@amtamassage.org](mailto:scholarships@amtamassage.org)
2. Pass the MBLEx with ease with the free AMTA study app for the exam. Email [research@amtamassage.org](mailto:research@amtamassage.org) for the link.

## Appendix

### *List of Sources*

1. All data in “Section 1 – Consumers of Massage Therapy” and “Section 3C – Consumer use of massage as part of an integrated approach to health care,” and where otherwise specified, are from the **2016 AMTA Consumer Survey** and previous years’ **AMTA Consumer Survey**, unless otherwise noted.

**2016 AMTA Consumer Survey.** CARAVAN® Opinion Research Corporation International conducted the annual consumer survey during July 14-17, 2016, among a combined national probability sample of 1,005 adults (504 men and 501 women), aged 18 and older, living in private households in the continental United States. The survey has indicated margins of error at the 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus three percent. Commissioned by AMTA, this is the twentieth annual massage therapy survey of American consumers.

2. All data in Section 1A are from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division and American Fact Finder
3. The Federal Reserve, “Janet Yellen Testimony, December 2015.” Released December 3, 2015
4. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Regional and State Employment and Unemployment Summary” Released December 16, 2016
5. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Real Earnings Summary” Released December 15, 2016
6. The Federal Reserve, “Minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee.” December 15, 2016
7. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI News Release,” Published December 15, 2016
8. IBIS World, “Alternative Healthcare Providers in the U.S.,” Published September 2016
9. All data in “Section 2 - The Massage Therapy Profession” and “Section 3 - Health Care and the Massage Profession,” and where otherwise specified, are from the **2016 AMTA Industry Survey** and previous years’ **AMTA Industry Survey**, unless otherwise noted.

**2016 AMTA Industry Survey.** Association Metrics conducted the annual AMTA Industry Survey during September 2016. A total of 755 qualified surveys were received. The survey has indicated margins of error at the 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus three percent. The objectives of the *AMTA Industry Survey* are to gain insight into the profession in order to provide AMTA members, consumers and other professionals with “state-of-the-industry” information by tracking and benchmarking, among other trends: information on massage therapists working in different work settings, their income, compensation, requirements, practices, training, education, demographics, and more. The *2016 AMTA Industry Survey* is the twelfth annual survey on the massage therapy profession.

10. Data compiled from state licensing boards and estimates of massage therapists in unlicensed states.

11. All data in "Technology and the Massage Practice," and where otherwise specified, are from the **2016 AMTA Technology Survey**, unless otherwise noted

**2016 AMTA Technology Survey.** AMTA staff conducted the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Technology Survey in October 2016. An electronic survey was emailed to 10,000 professional and graduate massage therapists. A total of 213 responses were received. The survey has indicated margins of error at the 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus seven percent.

12. ISPA, "2016 U.S. Spa Industry Study." Released August 4, 2016
13. IBIS World, "Health & Wellness Spas in the U.S.," published August 2016
14. IBIS World, "Massage Franchises in the U.S.," published June 2016
15. Bloomberg-Businessweek, "On-Demand Massage Apps Are Thriving," published March 2016
16. Bureau of Labor Statistics website, U.S. Department of Labor, **Career Guide to Industry**, Healthcare, Employment Situation Summary and Employment Projections: 2014-2024, December 27, 2016
17. All data in "Section 4 – Training and Education of Massage Therapists" are from the **2016 AMTA Massage School Survey**, unless otherwise noted.

**2016 AMTA Massage School Survey.** AMTA staff conducted an annual Massage School Survey in August 2016. An electronic survey was emailed to 734 massage school contacts. A total of 105 surveys were received. The survey has indicated margins of error at the 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus 9 percent. This is the tenth annual survey conducted by AMTA on the trends and information pertaining to massage therapy schools in the United States.

18. **Accrediting Organizations:**

ABHES: Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools  
ACICS: Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools  
ACCET: Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training  
ACCSC: Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges  
COMTA: Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation  
NACCAS: National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Art



*About the American Massage Therapy Association*

The American Massage Therapy Association® is the largest non-profit massage association in the United States. AMTA works to establish massage therapy as integral to the maintenance of good health and complementary to other therapeutic processes; to advance the profession through ethics and standards, continuing education, professional publications, legislative efforts, public education, and fostering the development of its professional, graduate, student, and school members.

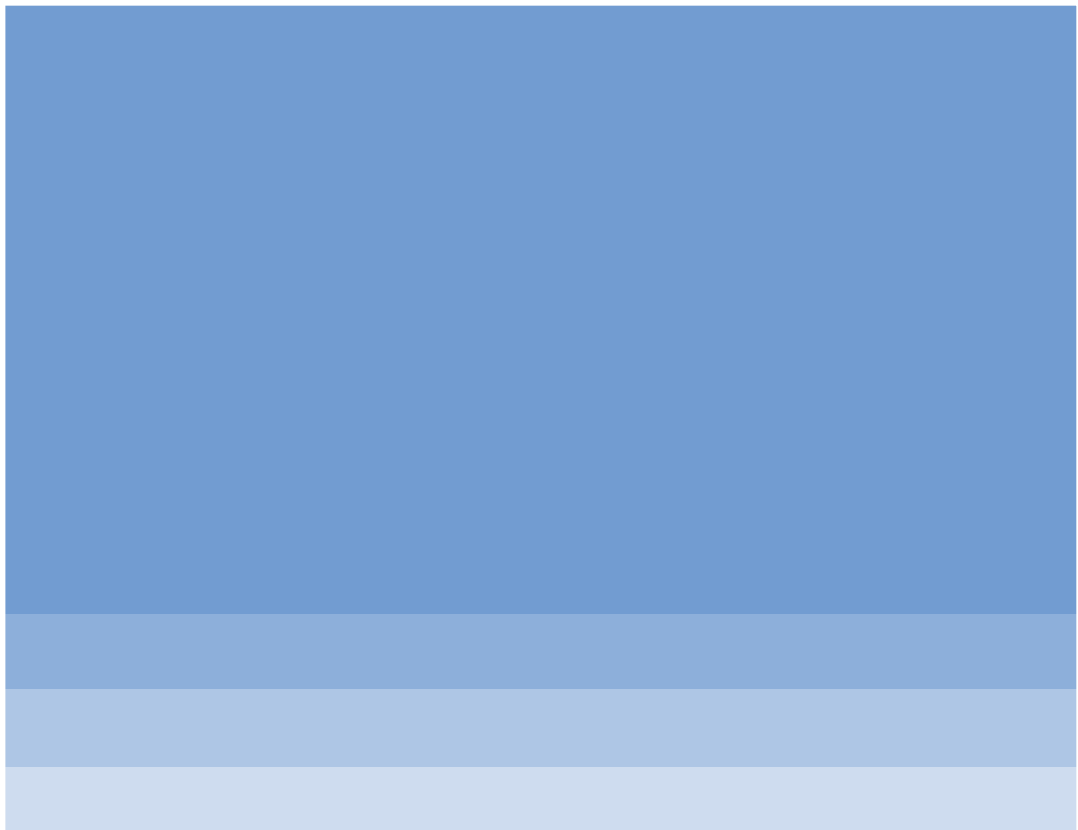
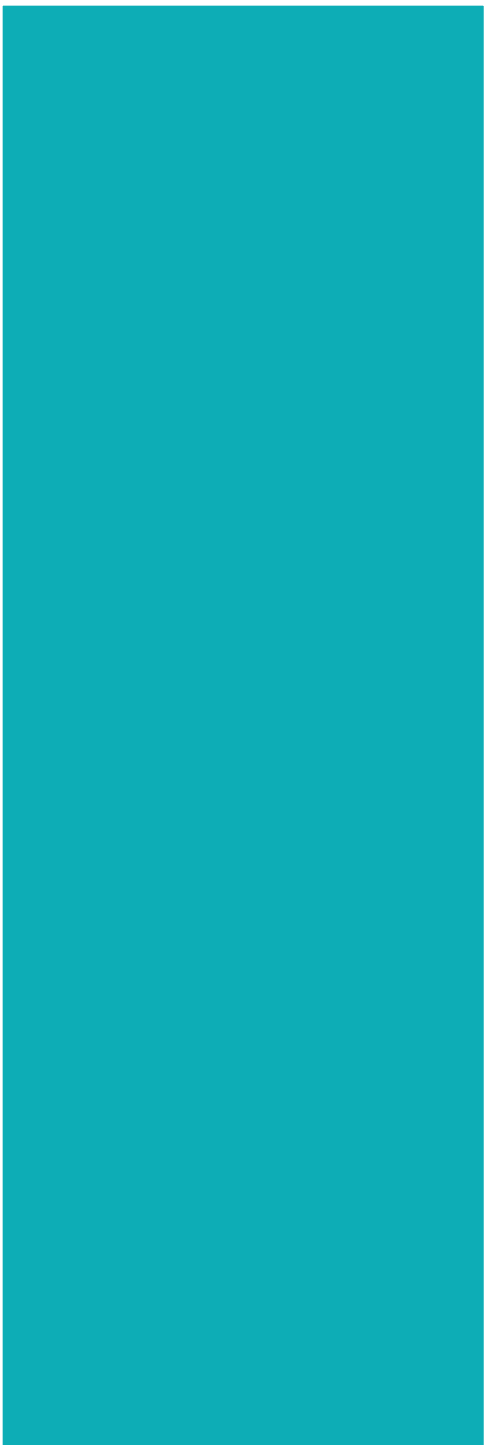
*Copyright Disclaimer*

This document contains proprietary information of the American Massage Therapy Association, as well as other organizations. If you wish to reproduce these materials or use them in any other way, you must request permission from AMTA or other owners of the original materials. For permission to reproduce any AMTA data contained in this report, please call 877.905.2700. If consent is granted, attribution to AMTA and other sources specified in this document should be made. *All rights reserved.*

AMTA School Members: FREE

Non-member: \$79.99

Copyright ©2017 American Massage Therapy Association



[amtamassage.org](http://amtamassage.org)

500 davis street, suite 900 | evanston, il 60201-4695 | 877.905.2700