AOTA Member Participation Survey

Overview Report
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Prepared for:
The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

Prepared by:
AWP Research
www.awpresearch.com

Executive Summary

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA) is striving to understand and improve member participation patterns within the Association. Accordingly, the Association has launched a comprehensive program to examine member participation motivations, barriers, and desired outcomes to ensure AOTA actions are driven by member needs. One component of this process is a member survey.

Full details on the survey research methodology are provided in Appendix A. In brief, the survey was fielded among the full AOTA membership as an online form. Members responded very well — a total of 2,724 usable responses were collected, yielding a solid statistical examination of the issues explored in the survey.

The purpose of this Overview Report is to provide a "big picture" summary of the data collected. As such, the report concentrates on overarching issues and patterns in the data rather than the detailed nuances of comparing specific member segments with one another. More detailed analyses will follow once these overall data have been examined and discussed by AOTA. In addition to being more cost effective, this type of phased analysis ensures the Association is examining targeted, useful survey results rather than an overwhelming mass of statistical data.

The report is divided into the following topical areas:

- **Respondent Profile** — this section provides a brief synopsis of the types of members who participated in the survey. More detailed statistics on their demographic profile are provided in Appendix B.

- **Activity Level** — this section examines issues such as the members' satisfaction with their current participation level, what they see as their primary barriers for increasing their participation, and what they are seeking to accomplish through their AOTA activity.

- **Volunteer Role Participation Feedback** — this section explores feedback from those who have served in a volunteer role in AOTA in the past two years, with specific insight into their suggestions on how the process could be improved.

- **Communication Issues** — this section explores how members perceive AOTA communication methods, with a particular emphasis on email communication.

- **Strategic Service Direction** — these section examines the relative importance of six key service areas, how the present distribution compares with measurements taken a few years ago, and which topics/issues are most appealing to the members.

- **Publications** — this section is focused on two specific publications (*OT Practice* and the *SIS Quarterlies*) to determine baseline member reactions to moving the publications online.

- **Challenges and AOTA Actions** — this section centers on what the members perceive as the single greatest challenge facing them as they provide occupational therapy services to their clients. More significantly, it ties these challenges to ratings of how AOTA is addressing these issues, and outlines how members would like AOTA to react on a service level.

- **Continuing Education** — the report concludes by examining specific continuing education topics of interest among the members, and how AOTA can best address these educational needs.

Two of the topical areas — **Challenges and AOTA Actions** and **Continuing Education** — are accompanied by a sortable/searchable database in Excel. Details on the contents and uses of these databases are provided in the respective sections.

As stated previously, this report concentrates on overarching issues. For best results, notes should be made within each section as to areas where greater "drill down" analyses would prove helpful. These notes can then serve as the basis for a subsequent analysis plan to ensure follow-up work (if needed) is targeted specifically to AOTA's strategic data needs.

I. Respondent Profile

The Role of Demographic Data

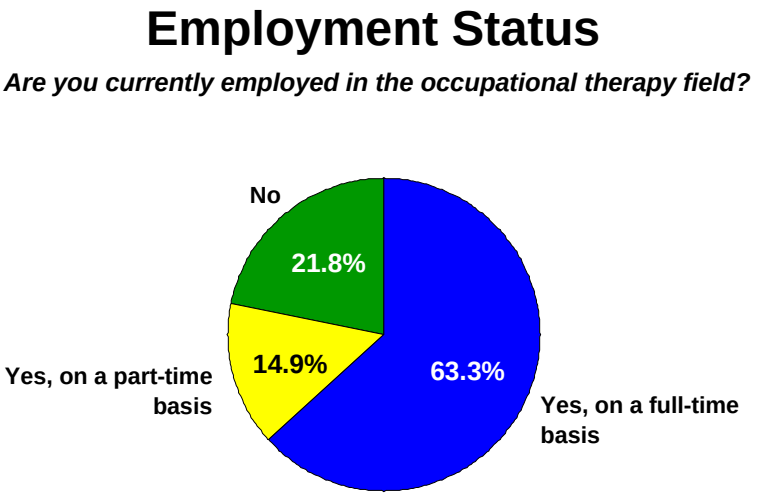
The quality and applicability of survey data rests squarely on the premise that the respondents accurately reflect the population at large (in this case, the AOTA membership). Demographic data ensure this premise can be supported with "hard" numbers.

Also, and equally significant, demographic data serve the critical function of allowing the remaining survey information to be segmented by key groups to explore, for example, how the opinions of the recent members may or may not differ from the opinions of the long-term members. The feasibility of such breakouts is driven by data quantity — there must be sufficient representation (i.e., subsample sizes) within each category to support statistically-viable breakouts.

Despite the significant importance of demographic data, a recitation of demographic findings is, at best, somewhat dry. Thus, only the most significant issues are outlined in this section. More detailed results, including subsample sizes, are provided in Appendix B.

Employment Profile

Most (78.2%) of the respondents are employed in the OT field, either on a part-time or full-time basis. The great majority (80.5%) of those who are not currently employed in the field are students.



The students are a significant component of the survey sample, consisting of 478 individuals. These respondents are excluded from some sections of the survey since their inclusion would skew the data (i.e., in sections such as those dealing with continuing education or the single most significant challenge facing the respondent's OT practice). Sections where the students are excluded are noted as such throughout the report.

Unless specifically noted to the contrary, all remaining demographic statistics in this section are limited to individuals who are currently employed in the occupational therapy field (total of 2,130 respondents).

Most (86.9%) of the respondents are OTs. Experience levels span a wide range, with the sample encompassing individuals with fewer than one year to greater than three decades of experience. Highly experienced individuals tend to be best represented — 43.2% of the respondents report 21 or more years of professional experience.

Work Setting and Activities

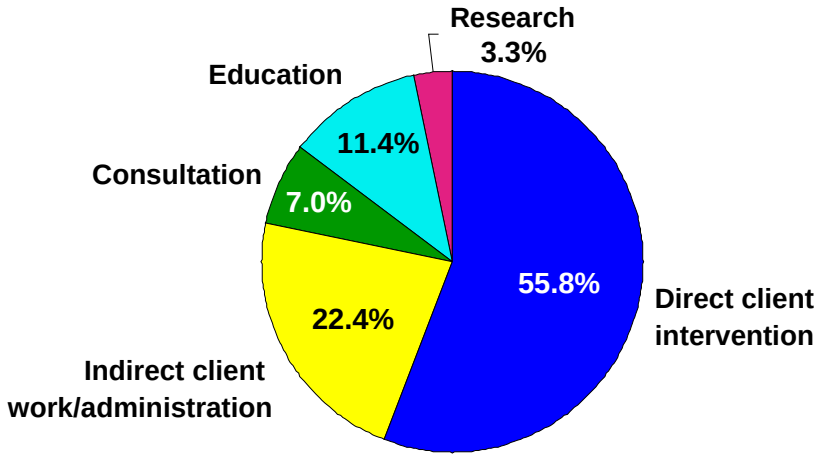
Although all work settings are represented in the sample, three settings are especially well-represented: schools/EI, hospital (non-mental health) and long-term care/SNF, with each comprising between 18.7% and 24.7% of the sample. Academia is the only other setting that receives at least a 10% response. Note that all work setting data refer to the primary setting — individuals employed in multiple settings were asked to indicate the one setting where they spend the greatest share of their time.

Primary Work Setting

Schools/early intervention	24.7%
Hospital (non-mental health)	21.2%
Long-term care/ skilled nursing facility	18.7%
Academia	11.2%
Freestanding outpatient	9.6%
Home health	5.7%
Mental health	3.0%
Community	2.6%
Other	3.3%

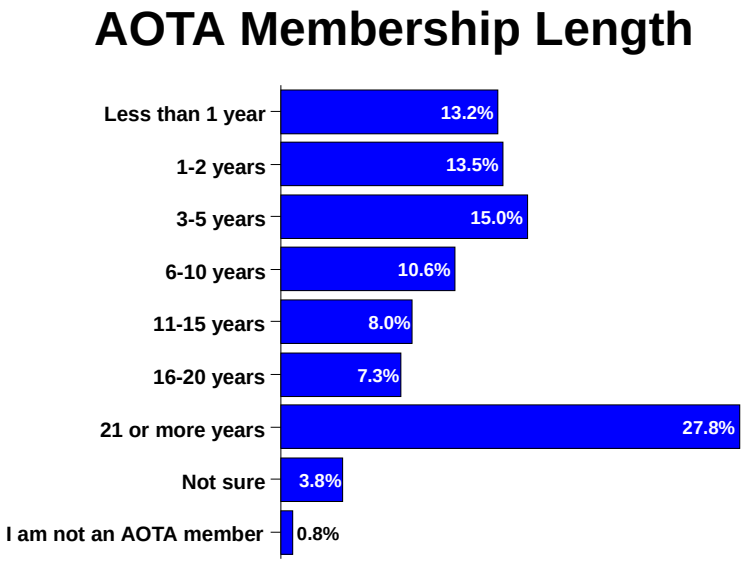
The respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of their work time in a typical week that is spent performing five key OT functions. The results show that the typical respondent spends the most time (average of 55.8%) on direct client intervention, followed by indirect client work/administration (22.4%). The most significant deviation from this pattern is seen, as expected, among those in the academia setting, with those individuals spending most (average of 66.4%) of their time on education.

Work Time Allocation



Membership Parameters

The sample[1] shows good diversity regarding AOTA membership length, with significant representation from the full range of membership length cycles[2]. The single most prevalent membership length is 21 or more years, indicated by 27.8% of the respondents.



Only 21 individuals (0.8% of the sample) are not AOTA members. Most of these individuals (18 of the 21) are former members; the remaining three have never been members. One-third of the former members say they plan to rejoin AOTA sometime in the future.

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1 The membership length data are based upon the full sample (including students).

2 The "classic" segmentation method for membership length is to group the members into the following four categories:

- "Just Joined" — those who have been members for two years or less. These are the members who are most at risk for non-renewal if their expectations are not met.
- "Early Cycle" — those who have been members for 3 to 5 years. While less at risk than the Just Joined members, these members often have lower familiarity with membership products and services. Their insights are especially significant when examining if member communications are being received, and if the communication goals are being met.
- "Mid Cycle" — these who have been members for 6 to 15 years. These individuals are usually committed to their AOTA membership. They are an important group to examine for trends, since they are often the bellwether of the overall viability and utility of membership offerings.
- "Mature Cycle" — those who have been members for more than 15 years. These individuals have clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to the Association. Their insights are critical to better understand long-range trends since Mature Cycle members have experienced the AOTA environment for a considerable number of years.

II. Activity Level

Perceived Activity Level

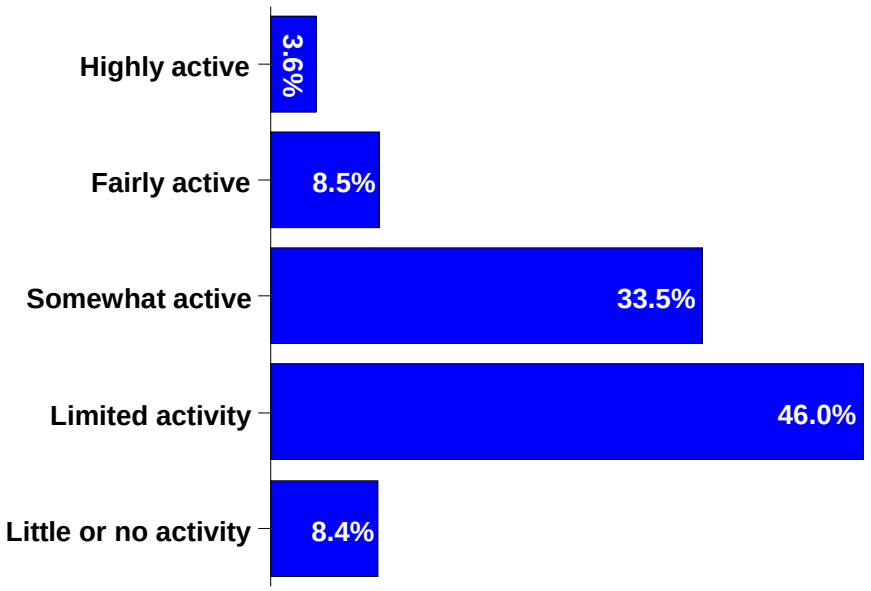
The questions in this section of the survey cut to the core factors driving this research — how active do members perceive themselves to be in AOTA and, more importantly, what barriers are hindering an increase in their activity level?

The respondents were first asked to self-classify themselves into one of the following five activity/involvement categories:

- I consider myself to be **highly active** in AOTA. I regularly take the initiative to be directly involved through meetings, discussions, and other opportunities for interaction.
- I consider myself to be **fairly active** in AOTA. I sometimes take the initiative to be involved when there is an issue that interests me.
- I consider myself to be **somewhat active** in AOTA. While I don't usually take the initiative, I will provide my opinions and feedback when asked.
- I have **limited activity** with AOTA. But, I maintain a connection with AOTA by reading materials and using other similar "indirect" methods to stay engaged.
- I have very **little or no involvement** with AOTA on any level.

Most respondents (46%) classify themselves into the "limited activity" category; about one-third (33.5%) are in the "somewhat active" category. Relatively few are at the upper or lower ranges.

Perceived Activity Level



Actual Activity Level

A self-classification system is important to examine since how a member "feels" regarding his/her activity level is just as important as the more tangible benchmarks of actual activity. But, the latter should also be measured to determine if perceived activity perceptions correlate with tangible actions.

The members were presented with a list of eight key activity measurements, and asked to indicate how often they engage in these activities. As summarized below, reading emails and print publications are the most common mechanisms for member engagement, with 64.7% or more of the members saying they read these "frequently." The AOTA web site is a prime engagement mechanism, with 30.3% using it "frequently" and 50.5% using it "occasionally." Solid levels are also seen for AOTA continuing education courses/materials, with nearly 40% participating in CE "occasionally."

More direct engagement mechanisms, such as the Annual Conference, are used less often, with a plurality of members saying they "never" attend the Conference. Interestingly, participation in electronic discussions also receives very low usage levels. This is surprising given the strong emphasis members place on indirect engagement, and an area AOTA should more closely evaluate to determine if this mechanism is not being used by choice, or if members are not satisfied with how it has been implemented.

Voting in AOTA elections receives reasonably strong activity levels. While the most popular response is "never," a sizable number (23.4%) say they vote "frequently." This results in voting being the fourth most popular involvement action that is done on a frequent basis. Serving in a volunteer role is the least commonly used mechanism, with nearly 81% of the members saying they "never" do this.

Actual Activity/Involvement Levels

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	No response
Read emails sent to me by AOTA	**69.0%**	25.3%	3.7%	0.7%	1.3%
Read printed publications sent to me by AOTA	**64.7%**	29.5%	3.8%	1.0%	1.0%
Visit the AOTA web site	30.3%	**50.5%**	16.9%	1.7%	0.7%
Vote in AOTA elections for leadership positions	23.4%	20.6%	22.1%	**32.9%**	1.0%
Attend the AOTA Annual Conference	12.2%	15.5%	29.6%	**41.6%**	1.0%
Participate in continuing education courses/materials offered by or through AOTA	11.9%	**39.8%**	24.8%	22.6%	0.9%
Serve in a volunteer role for AOTA (e.g., serve on a committee, task force, Board, etc.)	3.9%	4.3%	9.8%	**80.9%**	1.1%
Participate in electronic discussions/interchanges via the AOTA web site	3.8%	11.8%	25.3%	**57.8%**	1.3%

To relate the actual and perceived activity levels, the eight mechanisms were scored using a 0 to 3 point system. A response of "frequently" was assigned 3 points; "occasional" was assigned 2 points; "rarely" was assigned 1 point; and "never" was assigned no points. This was done for each of the eight mechanisms, and the scores were then totaled. The result is an activity index ranging from zero (cases where the member never participates in any of the eight areas) to 24 (cases where the member frequently participates in all of the eight areas).

Overall, the average participation index is 11.9 (on a 0 to 24 scale). This measurement of actual activity level closely tracks the perceived activity level — average scores increase from a low of 8.5 among those who classify themselves as having "little or no" activity with AOTA, to 20.2 to those who classify themselves as being "highly" active. Still, there is a great deal of diversity within each of the perceived activity levels — the high scores are very similar across all activity level segments. This indicates that AOTA needs to take into account both perceived and actual participation levels when it begins to benchmark the results of its efforts to bolster member participation.

Actual versus Perceived Activity/Involvement Levels

Data are activity level scores which range from 0 to 24.		Low	Median	High	Average	Number of responses
	Overall	**0.0**	**12.0**	**24.0**	**11.9**	**2,694**
Perceived activity level	Highly active	13.0	21.0	24.0	20.2	96
	Fairly active	7.0	16.5	24.0	16.1	230
	Somewhat active	4.0	13.0	22.0	12.7	904
	Limited activity	0.0	11.0	20.0	10.5	1,236
	Little or no activity	0.0	8.0	20.0	8.5	228

Activity Barriers

While these data provide some insight, of far greater interest are the reasons why members do not have a higher activity/involvement level. Thus, all respondents, except for those who placed themselves in the "highly active" category, were asked two key follow-up questions: what are all major reasons you are not more active in AOTA, and what is the single most significant reason?

As can be seen in the response distribution illustrated on the following page, there are several stumbling blocks — the following are identified by at least one in five of the respondents as a main reason why they do not have a high activity/involvement level with AOTA:

- I do not have the time to do so.
- I do not have the funds to pay for participation (i.e., travel costs, time away from work, etc.).
- I'm not sure if I have the skills and expertise to get more involved.
- I don't know how to become more active/involved.
- I was never asked/invited to do so.

Some of these leading barriers are fully-controllable — the solutions to a lack of knowledge as to how to become involved, and never being asked are both within AOTA's direct sphere of influence.

The primary issue for AOTA to address is time constraints. It leads all other barriers by a wide margin when the members are asked to narrow their focus and identify the single most significant barrier to their increased participation — it is selected by 36.7%, with the other leading barriers each selected by fewer than 10%. This is a more challenging issue to address since it consists of both real and perceived components (i.e., a harried work schedule can make one feel they have no time for anything other than the tasks at hand, which may or may not be the actual situation). Thus, addressing this issue also requires both real and perceived components. The "real" components should center on facilitating participation methods that are time and cost efficient (such as electronic/indirect methods). The "perceived" components should center on a continual acknowledgment of members' time constraints in the messaging and positioning of participation opportunities.

While a discussion of barriers is understandably negative by nature, there are also some positive signs. Few see a lack of value in participating, feel AOTA does not value their opinions, or disagree with AOTA's overall direction. These are highly positive findings since countering such sentiments is an enormous challenge for any association.

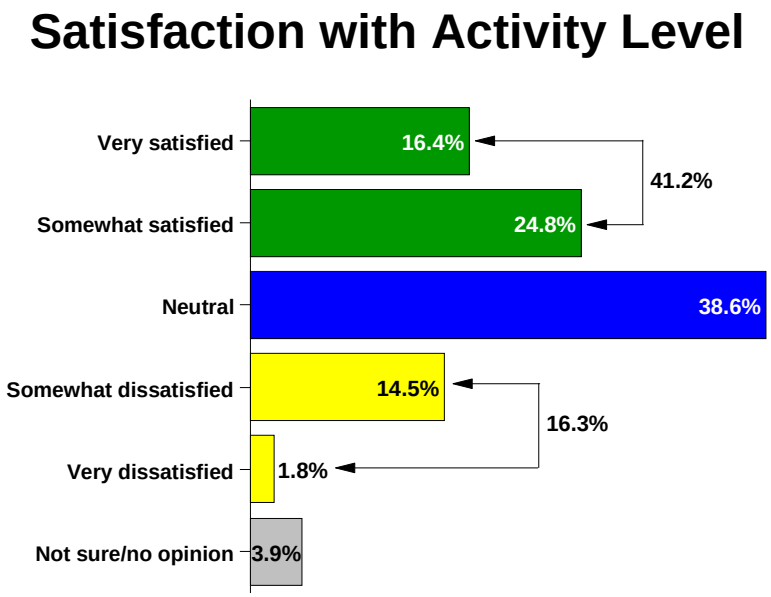
Also, AOTA must keep in mind that not all members want a higher activity/involvement level — nearly 13% say their lack of desire for greater activity is a leading barrier to their increased participation. Not participating is an active choice for some members.

Activity/Involvement Barriers

	All main reasons	Single most significant reason
I do not have the time to do so	59.0%	36.7%
I do not have the funds to pay for participation (i.e., travel costs, time away from work, etc.)	46.5%	9.3%
I'm not sure if I have the skills and expertise to get more involved	32.1%	8.7%
I don't know how to become more active/involved	30.2%	9.9%
I was never asked/invited to do so	23.0%	4.2%
I don't want to have a higher activity/involvement level	12.9%	7.4%
I find it more valuable to be involved with other associations/organizations I belong to	8.5%	2.6%
My employer does not support my having a high activity/involvement level with AOTA	8.1%	0.7%
I don't feel AOTA offers me a way to get involved that meets my needs	7.2%	1.7%
I don't feel AOTA encourages me to be more active or involved with the Association	7.1%	1.0%
I don't see much value to increasing my activity level	5.0%	0.8%
I don't feel AOTA values my opinion or insights	2.8%	0.7%
I don't agree with the overall direction AOTA is taking	2.0%	0.8%
Other	14.5%	7.6%
No response	0.2%	8.1%

Activity Satisfaction

Of equal importance to examining participation barriers is to determine if the members are satisfied with their present activity/involvement level. It appears there is relatively high satisfaction overall — 41.2% are either "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with their present activity/involvement with the Association; only 16.3% are either "very" or "somewhat" dissatisfied. However, a large number of members are straddling the fence — 38.6% are neutral on this issue. The overall average satisfaction index is 3.4 out of a possible 5.0.



Is satisfaction related to activity level? To a certain extent, yes. Those who classify themselves as "highly active" are highly satisfied with their situation — 90.6% are satisfied, with an average satisfaction index of 4.4. Satisfaction levels drop as activity levels drop, but not at a precipitous rate. Even those who are only "somewhat" active or less post reasonably strong satisfaction feedback, with indices of 3.3 to 3.4. Thus, while facilitating activity/involvement levels among the members is clearly a desirable strategy for AOTA to purse, it is not a "do or die" proposition — many members who are not highly active in the Association are satisfied with this situation.

Activity/Involvement Satisfaction

		Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Not sure/no opinion	Average satisfaction index
	Overall	**41.2%**	38.6%	16.3%	3.9%	3.4
Perceived activity level	Highly active	**90.6%**	2.1%	6.3%	1.0%	4.4
	Fairly active	**67.4%**	20.9%	11.3%	0.4%	3.8
	Somewhat active	**42.1%**	39.3%	16.9%	1.7%	3.4
	Limited activity	34.2%	**44.1%**	17.8%	3.8%	3.3
	Little or no activity	28.5%	**38.6%**	15.4%	17.5%	3.3

The average satisfaction index is based on a 1 to 5 scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied." Those selecting not sure/no opinion are excluded from average score calculations.

Activity Goals

Terms such as "activity," "participation," and "involvement" can mean different things to different members. It is important to determine what the members are looking to accomplish through their AOTA involvement to ensure Association actions to bolster activity are appropriately targeted.

The survey results show that the members equate AOTA involvement with building skills and knowledge that they can use in their practice. Nearly 60% select this as their primary goal, leading all other options by a wide margin. Of next highest appeal is the opportunity to network with other OT professionals, with 40.1% selecting this as their second most important goal.

The traditional goals of impacting the profession and the association garner far less support. Of the two, impacting the direction of the OT profession is more appealing — it receives a notable number of votes as the second most appealing goal, and is the most often selected choice as the third most important goal. Of least interest is having an impact on the governance and direction of AOTA, with a majority (60%) selecting this as the least appealing of the four options.

Activity/Involvement Goals

	% selecting as primary goal	% selecting as second goal	% selecting as third goal	% selecting as fourth goal	No response
Gain skills/knowledge I can use in my practice	**59.1%**	17.5%	9.5%	12.1%	1.8%
Network with other OT professionals	13.6%	**40.1%**	26.1%	16.7%	3.5%
Have an impact on the direction of the OT profession	22.4%	29.3%	**38.8%**	6.4%	3.1%
Have an impact on the governance and direction of AOTA	4.0%	10.5%	21.8%	**60.0%**	3.7%

Thus, activity/involvement is mainly seen among most members as self-serving — a way to help themselves by building their skills and knowledge. This should be taken into account when AOTA is building mechanisms for increased activity, as the message of "help yourself" will resonate far better among the members than the more traditional activity/involvement messages of "shape the profession" or "help direct the association."

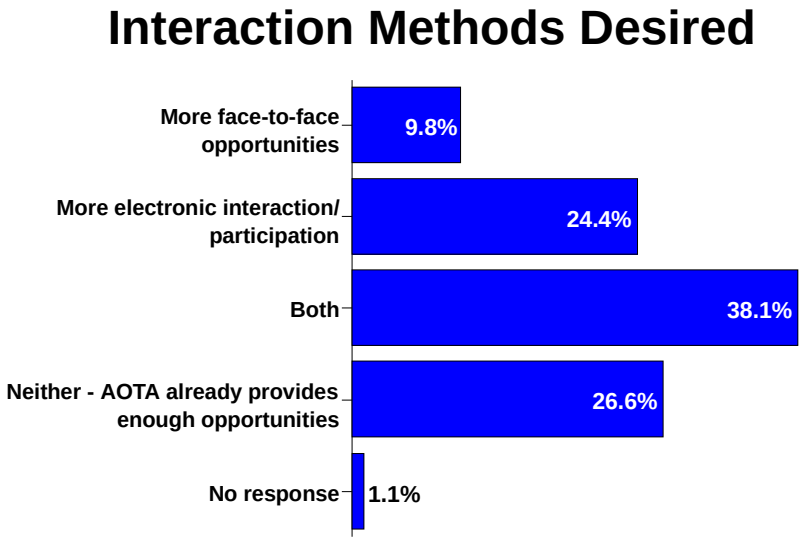
This finding is further reinforced with the responses to the open-ended question of "what could AOTA do or provide that would make it easier for you to reach our desired level of activity/involvement with the Association?" Many of the 1,700+ responses to this question do not offer specific suggestions, but rather say AOTA is already providing ample opportunities and/or that the member cannot devote any additional time. Those

who do provide suggestions tend to center more so on product/service oriented issues, such as continuing education, publications, information access, etc. rather than ways to facilitate traditional volunteer leadership or other more "direct" participation.

Additional insight into what members are seeking from AOTA is provided in Section V: Strategic Service Directions beginning on page 20.

Interaction Methods

This focus on products/services as an interaction mode does not mean, however, that members do not want AOTA to provide them with the opportunity to interact with one another. A strong majority want more interaction/participation opportunities, especially those that are electronically-based. Face-to-face interaction/ participation is of interest as well, but significantly trails electronic methods. The most popular response is, as expected, both methods. But given that only 9.8% select only face-to-face and 24.4% select only electronic indicates that while 38.1% may want AOTA to stress both methods, electronic methods are clearly the more favored approach. And, a significant number — 26.6% — want neither, stating that AOTA already provides sufficient opportunities for interaction/participation.



When asked to describe how AOTA should arrange face-to-face interaction, most of the 1,000+ responses center on combining the face-to-face interaction with educational opportunities, such as conferences, seminars and workshops. Some stretch the definition of face-to-face to encompass any type of live interaction, such as webinars, teleconferences, and other such methods. Having AOTA coordinate and work with state OT associations is also a common theme, with some suggesting that states be grouped into small regions to realize economies of scale.

Given the importance of electronic interaction/participation, AOTA should investigate the reasons why there is such poor utilization at present of web-based discussion/ interchanges via the AOTA web site (see page 7). This may be a case where barriers need to be removed and/or improvements made to the overall AOTA web structure to satisfy the need for cost and time-efficient interaction among the members.

III. Volunteer Role Participation Feedback

Past Roles Served

The respondents were asked to indicate if they are currently serving, or have served in the past 24 months, in a volunteer role with the Association. Nearly nine of every ten respondents have not but, given the large sample size, this still leaves a notable number of respondents (282) who are serving or did serve. As summarized below, serving as a state OT association officer is the most common role, cited by 5.6%. Least common are board-level positions, held by only three individuals (AOTA Board) or one individual (AOTF Board).

Volunteer Positions Held

	% served	Number of responses
AOTA Board of Directors	0.1%	3
AOTF Board of Directors	0.1%	1
AOTA Standing Committee or Commissions (COP, SISSC, COE, Ethics, CCCPD)	1.1%	31
AOTA Ad-Hoc Committee	1.7%	47
Special Interest Section Standing Committee	1.1%	31
AOTA Representative Assembly Member	1.4%	38
State OT association officer	5.6%	152
Member of the Assembly of Student Delegates	1.8%	50
None of the above	89.6%	2,421

Responses do not sum to 100% since individuals could indicate serving in more than one role over the past 24 months.

Volunteer Feedback

Since some respondents have held more than one position over the past 24 months, those who have served were asked to indicate the one position that they have most recently held, and then answer a variety of questions concerning their impressions regarding their service. A majority report that their experience was highly positive — 53.2% feel their involvement made them feel they had a significant impact on the future of AOTA and the profession. Some were less positive but remain upbeat, with 29.1% reporting that while it was a positive experience, it did not have as much impact as they had hoped. Most of the remaining respondents feel their experience was mixed, with some positive and some negative aspects. Only three individuals report that their experience was not positive nor was a good use of their time.

Volunteer Feedback

	% served	Number of responses
My involvement made me feel I had a significant impact on the future of AOTA and the profession	53.2%	150
My experience was positive, but did not have as much impact as I had hoped	29.1%	82
My experience had some positive aspects, but also had some negative ones as well	13.1%	37
My experience was not positive, and I do not feel it was a good use of my time	1.1%	3
No response	3.5%	10

It is difficult to tie the ratings back to all specific roles with any degree of statistical confidence given the small subsample sizes. But there are sufficient data upon which to base general trends for several roles. As summarized below, the most positive experiences are seen among the Board-level positions and those who were/are AOTA Representative Assembly members. In contrast, it appears that those serving in a SIS Standing Committee or as a State OT Officer are least likely to report a fully positive experience (although a sizeable number do).

Volunteer Positions Held

	Fully positive	Mostly positive	Mix of positive and negative	Negative	No response	Number of responses
AOTF Board of Directors	**100.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
AOTA Board of Directors	**100.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3
AOTA Representative Assembly Member	**70.0%**	16.7%	10.0%	0.0%	3.3%	30
AOTA Ad-Hoc Committee	**66.7%**	26.7%	3.3%	0.0%	3.3%	30
AOTA Standing Committee or Commissions (COP, SISSC, COE, Ethics, CCCPD)	**63.6%**	27.3%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	22
Member of the Assembly of Student Delegates	**60.5%**	30.2%	2.3%	2.3%	4.7%	43
State OT association officer	**43.0%**	31.3%	21.1%	1.6%	3.1%	128
Special Interest Section Standing Committee	**40.0%**	**40.0%**	12.0%	0.0%	8.0%	25

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Project Approach

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA) has made the strategic decision to target member participation issues. One component of this effort involves collecting statistically-sound data from the membership concerning their participation barriers, goals, requirements and preferences.

The survey development process was highly interactive, with input gained from several AOTA staff and departments. Working with AWP Research, the survey instrument underwent several review/revision cycles to ensure the information collected would meet the Association's needs and address the following major issues:

- What are the perceptions of individuals who have held volunteer positions with AOTA in the recent past? If problems were encountered, what could AOTA do to improve the situation?
- What is the perceived participation level of the general membership?
- What are the barriers preventing members from increasing their participation level?
- What do members wish to accomplish through their AOTA participation?
- How well is AOTA addressing the single most significant challenge members face in providing occupational therapy services to their clients? What could AOTA be doing better?
- What strategic service directions do the members want to see AOTA undertake?
- What are the optimal communication strategies (with a particular emphasis on email communication) for AOTA?
- What information topics are most desired by the members?
- What would be the impact of migrating *OT Practice* and the *SIS Quarterlies* to an online format?
- What educational topics and formats have the greatest appeal among the members?

The survey also collected a variety of demographic data to ensure the sample was an accurate reflection of the AOTA membership, plus support the ability to segment responses by a wide range of criteria (e.g., membership length, member type, experience level, work setting, etc.).

The survey was fielded as an online instrument. In addition to offering a strong cost-benefit value, the online approach allowed the survey to include branch points (i.e., some questions were only seen by certain individuals, based on their answers to previous questions) and screening questions (i.e., questions to ensure that certain survey sections were only answered by members). This type of structure helps keep completion times low and ensures more accurate sample composition.

AOTA distributed a link to the survey form to the entire membership via its regularly scheduled member emails. Follow-up emails were also sent to encourage as many responses as possible. As an additional response incentive, respondents could enter their name into a drawing for a series of prizes. All drawing information was kept separate from the survey responses to maintain full respondent anonymity. The survey was open from April 13 to May 1, 2009.

All responses were received "blind" — the respondents were not asked to provide any direct identifying information (such as their name, employer, etc.), nor were any tracking codes used to identify those who had accessed the form. While this method eliminates the ability to track who has, or has not completed the survey, the confidentiality and anonymity encourages a frank and open dialog with the membership, which is essential to ensure the responses are a true reflection of members' opinions.

Survey Sample

A total of 2,866 individuals accessed the survey form. Not all of these responses, however, were usable — some individuals completed only a small number of questions or, in a few cases, no questions at all. All responses were reviewed for completeness prior to analysis, and those who did not answer a sizeable number of the survey questions (at least 40%) were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in an analysis sample of 2,724 individuals.

It is important in any research program to determine how well the response pool reflects the membership as a whole. The two metrics most commonly used to determine this are the "margin of error" and the "confidence interval." The 2,724 responses analyzed have an overall margin of sampling error of plus or minus 1.9% at a 95% confidence interval. This means that if this study were repeated 100 times, the overall results would be within 1.9% of the values listed in this report 95 times out of 100. Since survey research typically strives to attain a margin of sampling error of plus/minus 3% (and usually does not achieve this mark), this sample is a robust depiction of the AOTA membership. Note that the margin of sampling error will be greater for questions or segments that are not based upon the full sample of 2,724 individuals.

Analytical Techniques

Overall survey results are valuable illustrations of overarching trends and issues. Examining overarching results is an essential first step to understanding data meaning and implications, as well as a method to plan more detailed analyses. Accordingly, this report is limited to overall results, with segmentation limited to specialized criteria necessary to explore baseline issues.

Future analyses can incorporate additional segmentation criteria, with the most valuable one being membership length. This is a classic segmentation criterion used in needs assessment investigations, and will allow AOTA to explore the similarities and

differences between the "new" members, the "mid-term" members, and the "long-term" members.

Other potential segmentation points are:

- Experience level — this is a potentially valuable criterion especially for educational services and needs.

- Work setting — while essential in workforce and compensation studies, work setting plays a far less significant role in general needs assessments. Still, it has value for selected questions, especially when the data are isolated to just one setting (e.g., determine the communications preferences for just those in academic settings, etc.).

- OT employment — again, while essential in other studies, employment classifications (i.e., full-time versus part-time or OT versus OTA) are less significant in this type of broad-based needs assessment. The most appropriate areas for use are with educational services and needs.

Of course, virtually any demographic variable can be used as a segmentation criterion. It is essential to select only the most salient criteria in any analysis — too many segmentation points will only yield data overload and will obfuscate, rather than clarify, survey results.

Numeric Data

Some numeric data were collected using ranges (i.e., rather than ask the members to indicate their specific years of experience, they were asked if they fell into the "less than 1 year," "1 to 2 year," etc. brackets, etc.). This method speeds survey completion times and improves response rates. Averages for these data, however, must be computed using range mid-points. While accurate, it is less precise than working directly with a discrete value. Averages that rely on range mid-points are noted as such throughout the report.

Full-text Responses

The survey included several open-ended questions to allow the respondents to write in their comments. These responses were not edited other than for basic formatting and spelling.

A few of the full-text responses are provided in list format in Appendix C. Most, however, are provided in one of the following sortable/searchable databases in Excel format: