
Demographic Highlights of a Study of Canadian Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

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In November 1988, the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists/L'Association canadienne des orthophonistes et audiologistes (CASLPA/ACOA) Committee on Demographics undertook a nationwide survey of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists (AUDs). Since no systematic comprehensive survey of these professionals had been done in Canada, CASLPA/ACOA had limited information available on these professionals. The present study emerged from a recognized need for accurate information on the status of these professions in Canada. The primary purpose was to gather information for a demographic profile and to establish a data base for CASLPA/ACOA for both information and future planning.

A number of questions guided the development of the survey:

- 1) How are the numbers and types of SLPs and AUDs working in Canada distributed?
- 2) What are the characteristics of these professionals?
- 3) What is the nature of the services they provide?

This article provides some highlights from the preliminary findings of the study. A comprehensive report will be available in the near future.

Methodology

The study population consisted of all SLPs and AUDs that could be located in Canada as of November 1, 1988. The assistance of provincial Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Associations and CASLPA/ACOA was obtained in identifying subjects. A survey form was designed that focused on the questions the study was addressing. The CASLPA/ACOA Executive reviewed the survey and provided feedback. A draft version was piloted with SLPs and AUDs representing both linguistic groups and residing in the geographic area in which the Demographics Committee was based. All participants were asked to respond to a final set of 26 multiple choice questions under the categories of: (1) general information; (2) education; (3) work experience; and

(4) work setting. A total of 3,079 surveys were mailed to SLPs and AUDs residing in Canada.

Results

A total of 2,129 surveys (70%) were returned from professionals in Canada. The data was entered into a computer and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. It was assumed that the returns represented an accurate cross-section of SLPs and AUDs in the country because: (1) the return rate was high; (2) there were few mistakes made by respondents in question interpretation; and (3) the differences in response rates across the country were small.

Distribution

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of SLPs, AUDs, and SLP/AUDs by province and territory. As shown, the majority (53%) reside in central Canada, followed by 38% in the west, 8% in the east, and less than 1% in the north.

Gender

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the percentage of males and females in the professions. Both fields are predominantly female; males comprised only 7% of the SLPs and 29% of the AUDs.

Age

The professionals in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology are relatively young with 25-27% under the age of 30 and less than 3-5% over 50 years of age. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate a similar age distribution for both SLPs and AUDs.

Education

Educational attainment varied substantially between SLPs and AUDs, with the former group holding fewer Masters degrees (73% versus 94%). Professionals holding doctorate degrees account for less than 3-5% of the population. Additional information regarding educational backgrounds is presented in Figures 5 and 6.

Table 1. Distribution of speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

	SLPs	AUDs	SLP/ AUDs	TOTAL
Western Canada				
BC	385	60	8	453
AB	379	33	7	419
SK	99	8	1	108
MB	<u>160</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>191</u>
TOTAL	1023	131	17	1171 (38%)
Central Canada				
ON	932	191	14	1137
PQ	<u>316</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>499</u>
TOTAL	1248	302	86	1636 (53%)
Eastern Canada				
NB	62	14	1	77
NS	107	28	2	137
PE	11	2	0	13
NF	<u>32</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>38</u>
TOTAL	212	50	3	265 (8%)
Northern Canada				
YK	2	1	1	4
NT	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	4	1	2	7 (.3%)

Job Responsibilities

The majority of Canadian SLPs and AUDs are in the labour force. As Figure 7 illustrates, 89% of SLPs are employed. Of these, 75% are in full time positions, while 25% work part time. Comparable data for AUDs is presented in Figure 8. For this group, 96% are in the labour force, with 83% in full time and 17% in part time positions.

Figures 7 and 8 further illustrate that the most frequently indicated employment activity for both professions is clinical service (79-80%), followed by administration (7-8%). Teaching, research, and other functions account for about 3% of the SLPs and 8% of the AUDs job related responsibilities.

Work Settings

The various types of work settings for SLPs and AUDs are presented in Figure 9. Schools are the major employer (38%) for SLPs, while hospitals are the major employer for AUDs (51%). Further, 14% of SLPs and 17% of AUDs indicated that they engaged in private practice in addition to their principal employment.

Age Distribution of Caseload

Age distribution of clinical caseloads varied by profession as illustrated in Figure 10. The largest groups served by SLPs were the school age and preschool populations, with 73% of SLPs indicating that they worked with these groups. Only 42% of SLPs stated that they served the adult population. The audiology respondents were quite evenly distributed across age groups with between 83-88% indicating they served each of the various age group categories.

Caseload Distribution of Clinical Service Providers

Figure 11 shows that the caseload of clinical SLPs encompass persons who exhibit a wide range of disorders. More than half of the SLPs reported that they served clients with disorders of articulation/phonology, child language, fluency, voice and/or augmentative communication, while fewer SLPs served clients with neurogenic disorders (47%), swallowing disorders (24%), and aural rehabilitation needs (12%). In contrast, nearly all AUDs (98%) provided diagnostic audiology services, and 68% of AUDs worked in the area of aural rehabilitation. Less than 50% of AUDs conducted specialized audiological testing. These findings are presented in Figure 12.

Summary

Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology are predominantly female professions in Canada with the largest segment less than 40 years of age. The majority of SLPs and AUDs live in Ontario and Quebec, and most hold a Masters degree. Providing clinical service is the most common work activity for both SLPs and AUDs, with very few professionals in research or teaching. Hospitals and schools are the most common work settings, and school age children are the largest age group overall receiving services. SLPs provide services for clients presenting with a variety of disorders. Nearly all AUDs provide diagnostic audiology services, while more than half provide aural rehabilitation.

Figure 1.

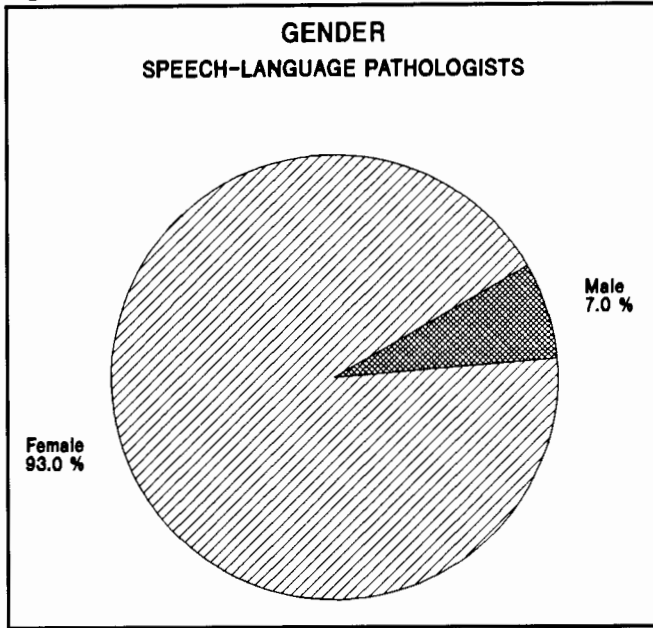


Figure 2.

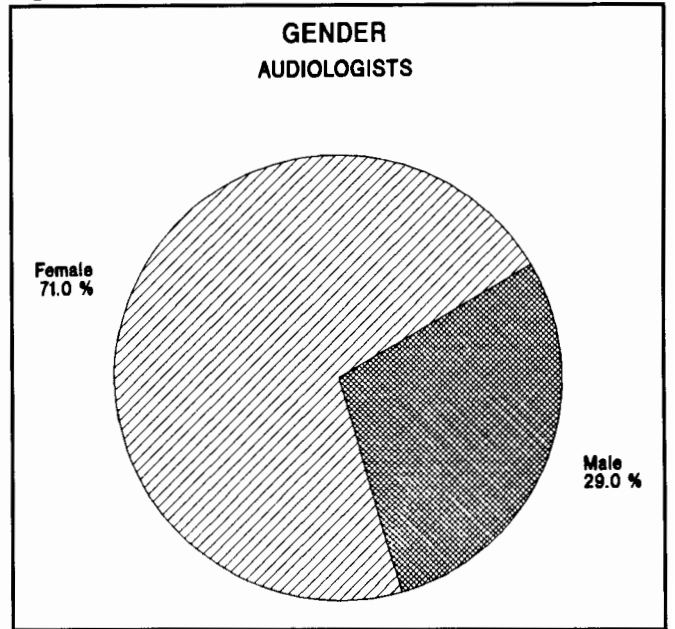


Figure 3.

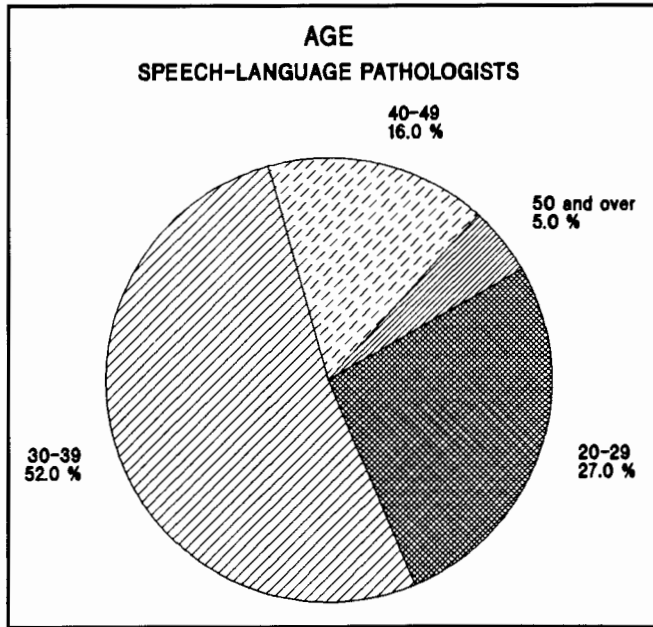


Figure 4.

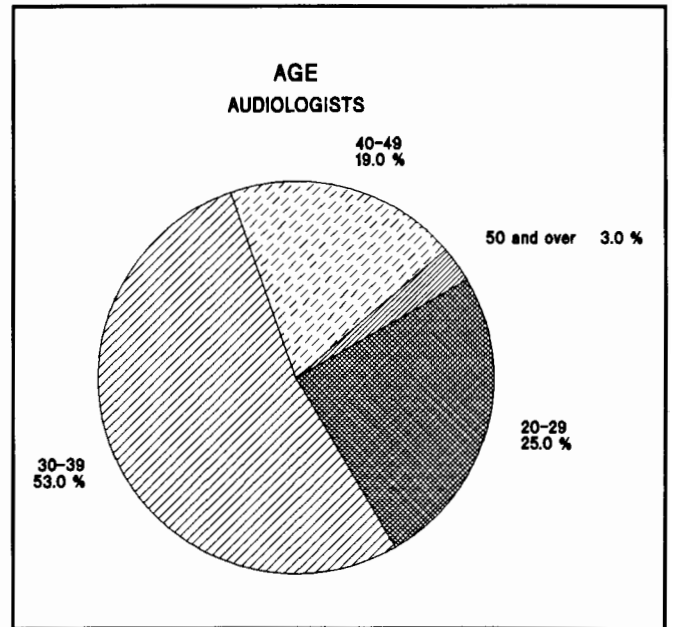


Figure 5.

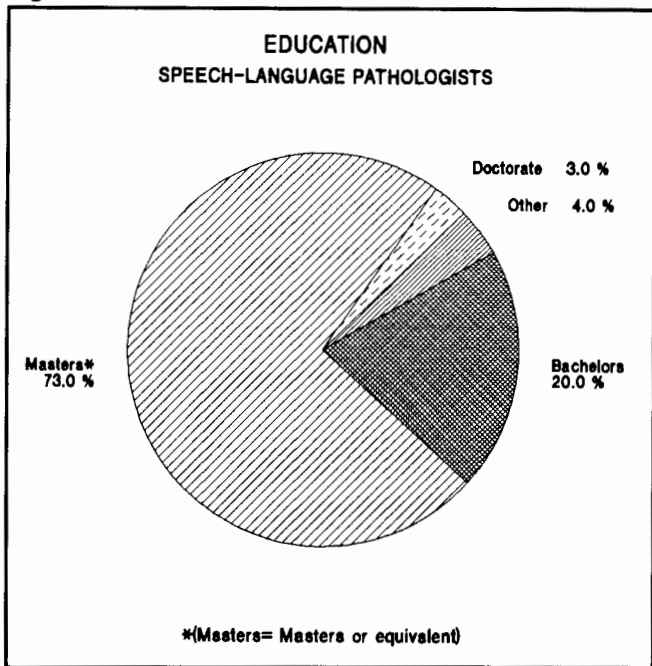


Figure 6.

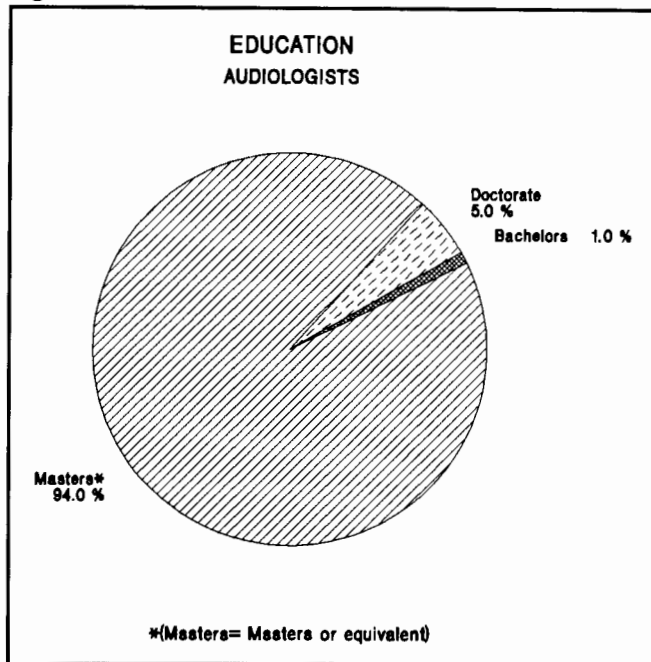


Figure 7.

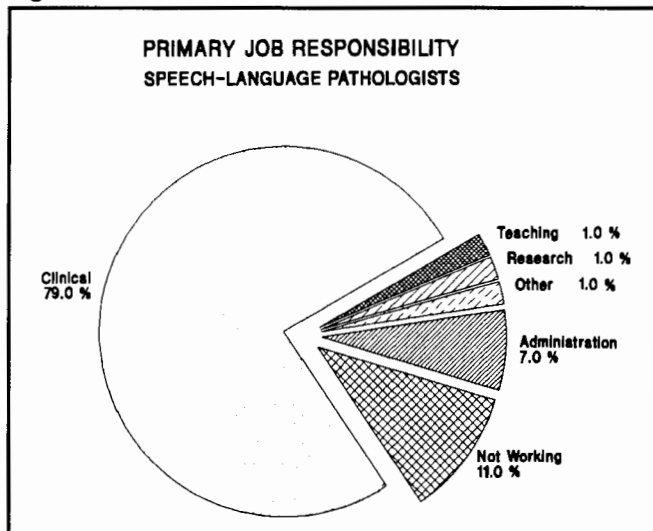


Figure 8.

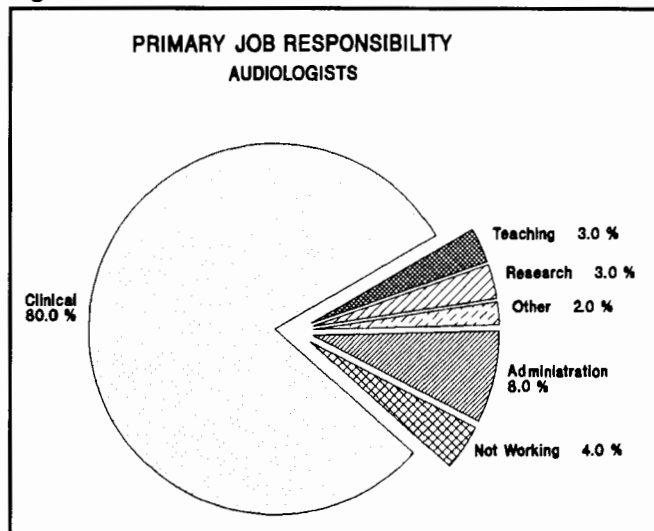


Figure 9.

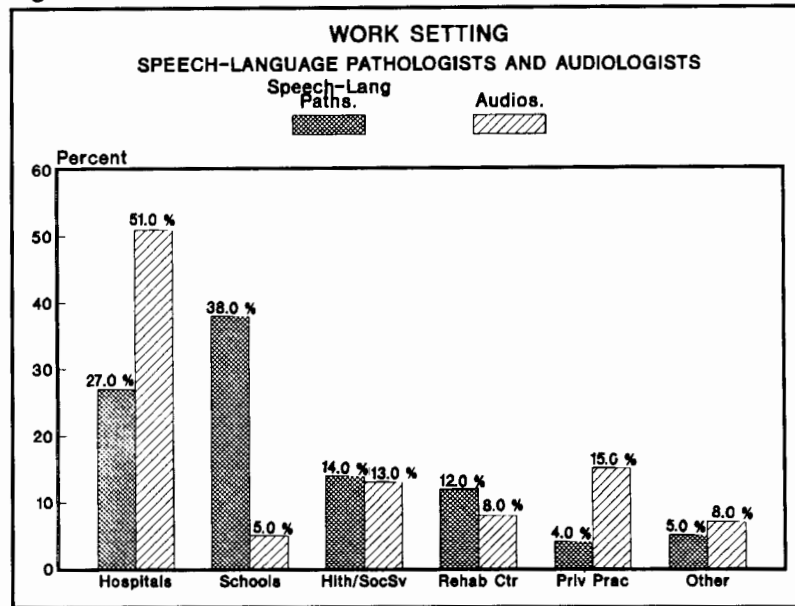


Figure 10.

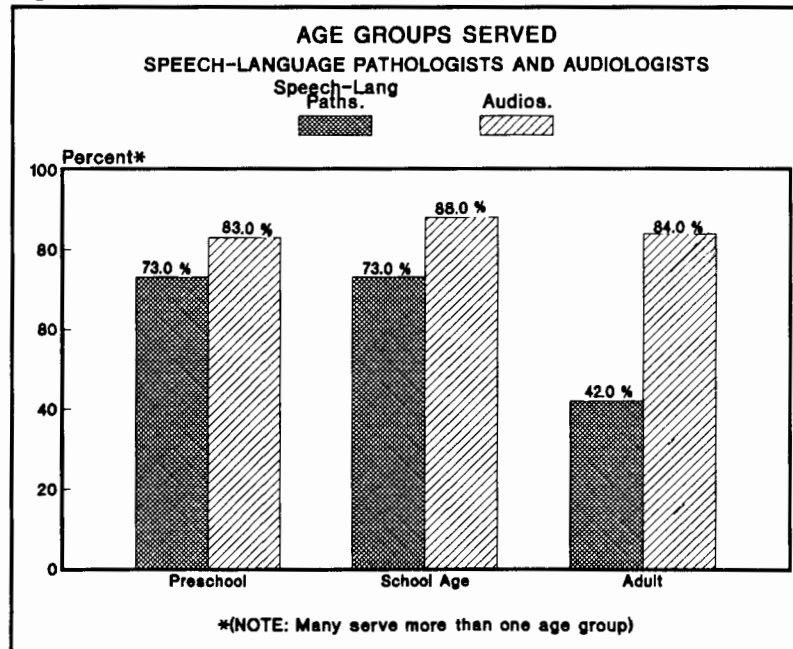


Figure 11.

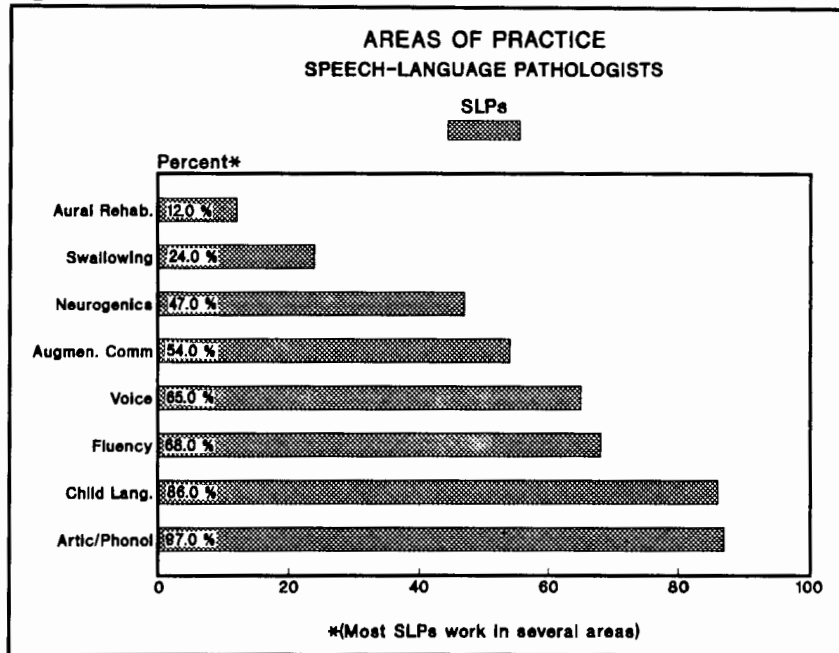


Figure 12.

