

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant
Education Programs in Canada



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Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Programs - Annual Report 2017

Background

The Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program (OTA & PTA EAP) is responsible for the accreditation of occupational therapist assistant (OTA) and physiotherapist assistant (PTA) programs across Canada. As of December 31, 2017, there were 27 affiliated education programs, in five provinces, that offered OTA and PTA training. This document summarizes aggregate data from these programs and provides an overview of OTA PTA education in Canada for 2017. Data in this report is presented as frequencies and proportions or mean values and ranges. Longitudinal data from 2013 to present, is provided where appropriate.

Overview of Programs

Twenty-seven OTA PTA programs completed the annual programs' survey, representing a response rate of 100.00%. Seventeen programs (62.96%) had accreditation status whilst ten programs had candidacy status (37.04%). This is consistent with the trend over the last few years, which has seen an increase in the number of programs with accreditation status.

Program Structure

Key metrics for OTA PTA programs are provided in **Table 1**. Learners starting OTA PTA training in 2017 are anticipated to spend on average 19.81 months (15 – 26 months) in OTA PTA programs. All but two programs have months where learners will not be enrolled in courses. The mean time that learners are expected to spend on break is 2.69 months (0 – 6 months). Learners starting OTA PTA programs in 2017 were expected on average to have tuition costs of \$9,253.96 (\$3,220.00 - \$18,995.00). However, these OTA PTA programs have different funding models. Twenty-one of the 26 programs are publicly funded, with the remaining five programs being privately funded. This has a significant impact on tuition costs, as the average tuition for publicly funded programs was \$7,325.54 (\$3,220.00 - \$13,405.00) and was \$17,739.00 (\$17,035.00 - \$18,995.00) for privately funded programs (**Figure 1**). **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** provide an overview of changes in tuition costs for affiliated publicly and privately funded OTA PTA programs over the last four years. The average tuition costs varied as the number of publicly and privately funded programs changed.

With regards to the delivery of course content, some programs have adopted self-directed learning and a distance education models. No programs offered an approved distributed

education model. Five programs (18.52%) permitted some learners to complete courses at their own pace; this ranged from 5% to 66% of enrolled learners. There were nine programs that incorporated a distance education model into their course delivery approach. For three of these programs, 100% of their courses were offered in this manner whereas the remaining six programs offered 1% to 67% of their courses using a blended learning format. Often the didactic component of courses was delivered asynchronously online, and all laboratory content of courses was delivered in person.

Table 1: Program metrics for 26 OTA PTA education programs in Canada.

Program Metrics	OTA PTA Programs
Overview	
Duration, months	19.81 (15 – 26)
Break, months	2.69 (0 – 6)
Self-paced learning	
Yes (%)	5 (18.52)
No (%)	22(81.48)
Distance education	
Yes (%)	9 (33.33)
No (%)	18 (66.67)
Distributed education	
Yes (%)	0 (0.00)
No (%)	27 (100.00)
Tuition, CDN	
Publicly funded	7,325.54 ((3,220.00 – 13,405.00)
Privately funded	17,739.00 (17,035.00 – 18,995.00)
Sex	
Female (%)	1,339 (79.65)
Male (%)	340 (20.23)
Faculty and Staff Personnel	
Academic Faculty, PT (FTE)	72 (33.33)
Academic Faculty, OT (FTE)	64 (28.21)
Additional Faculty (FTE)	81 (10.67)
Other Instructors (FTE)	114 (6.22)
Clinical Fieldwork	
Clinical Placement Hours	550.28 (420 – 760)
Hours supervised by OT, lowest	172.34 (80 – 320)
Hours supervised by OT, highest	307.25 (150 – 445)
Hours supervised by a PT, lowest	275.51 (153.75 – 402.50)
Hours supervised by a PT, highest	420.58 (280 – 578)

Program Metrics	OTA PTA Programs
Applicants, Admission, and Enrolment	
Qualified Applicants	3,290 (0 – 449)
Enrolment	944 (0 – 100)
Graduation and Attrition	
Graduates (%)	546 (59.48)
Non-Graduates (%)	372 (40.52)

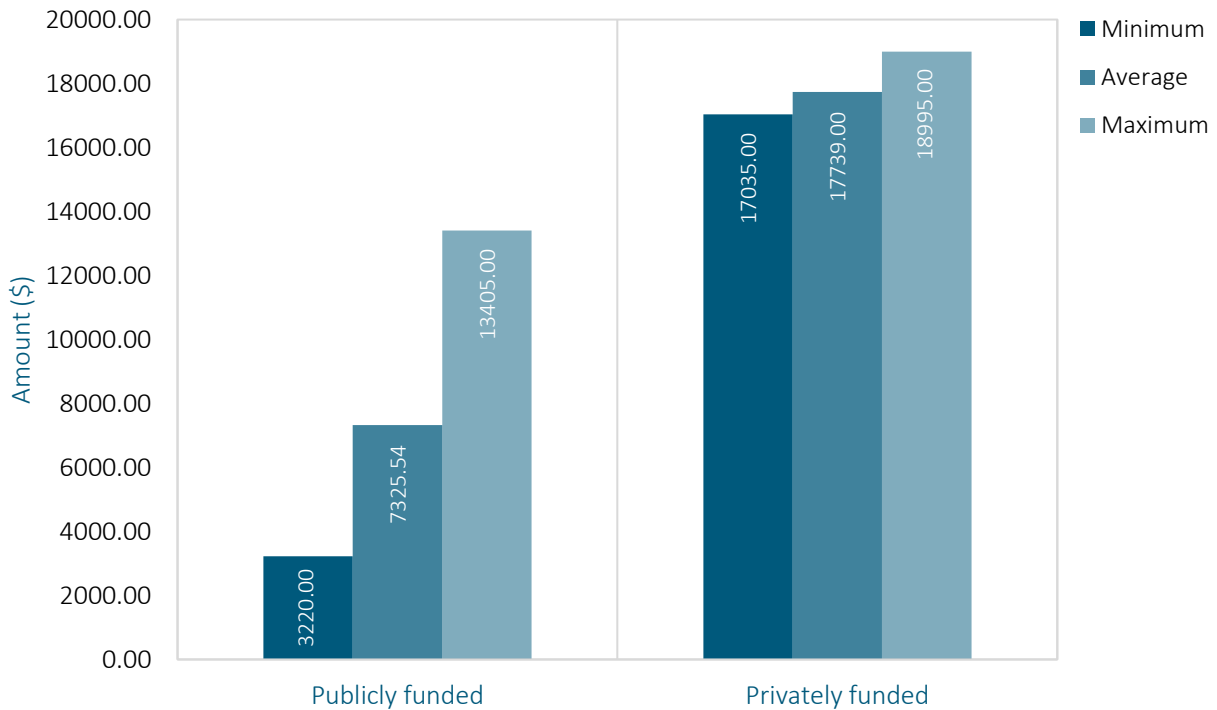


Figure 1: Total anticipated tuition costs that will be incurred by learners, commencing their studies in 2017, enrolled in publicly and privately funded OTA PTA programs.

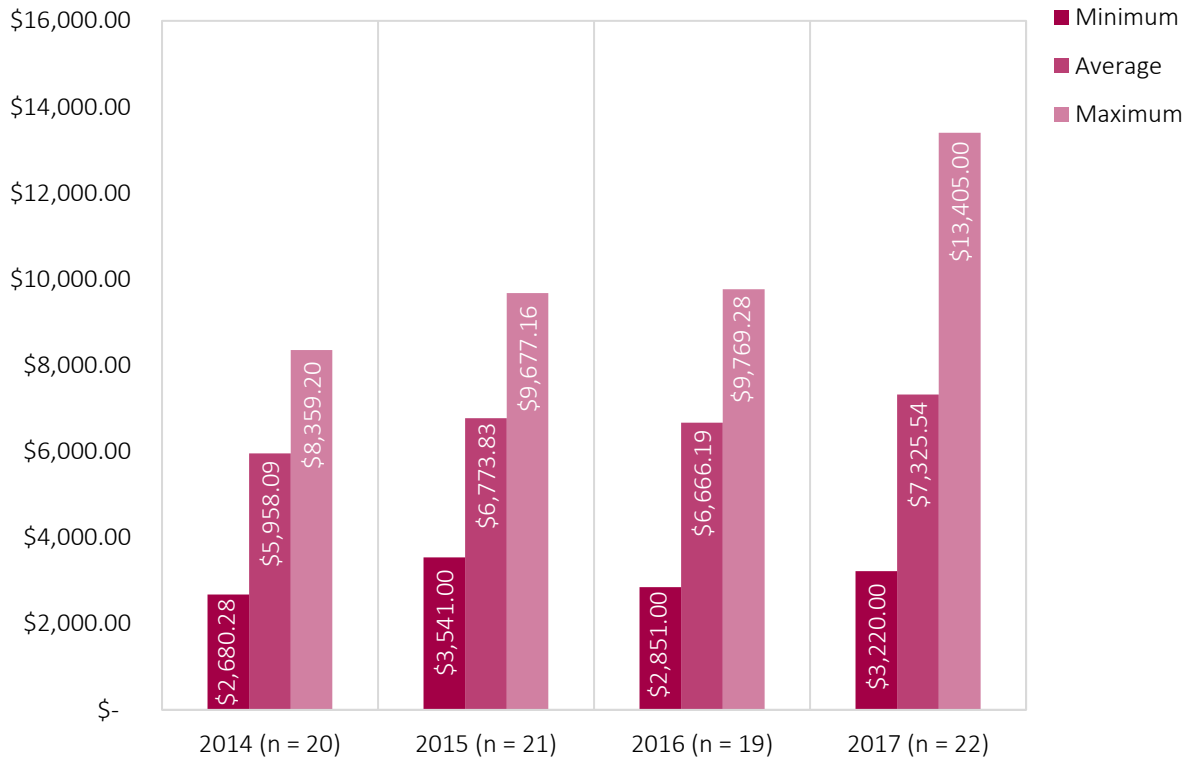


Figure 2: Total anticipated tuition costs that will be incurred by learners enrolled in publicly funded OTA PTA programs from 2014 to 2017.

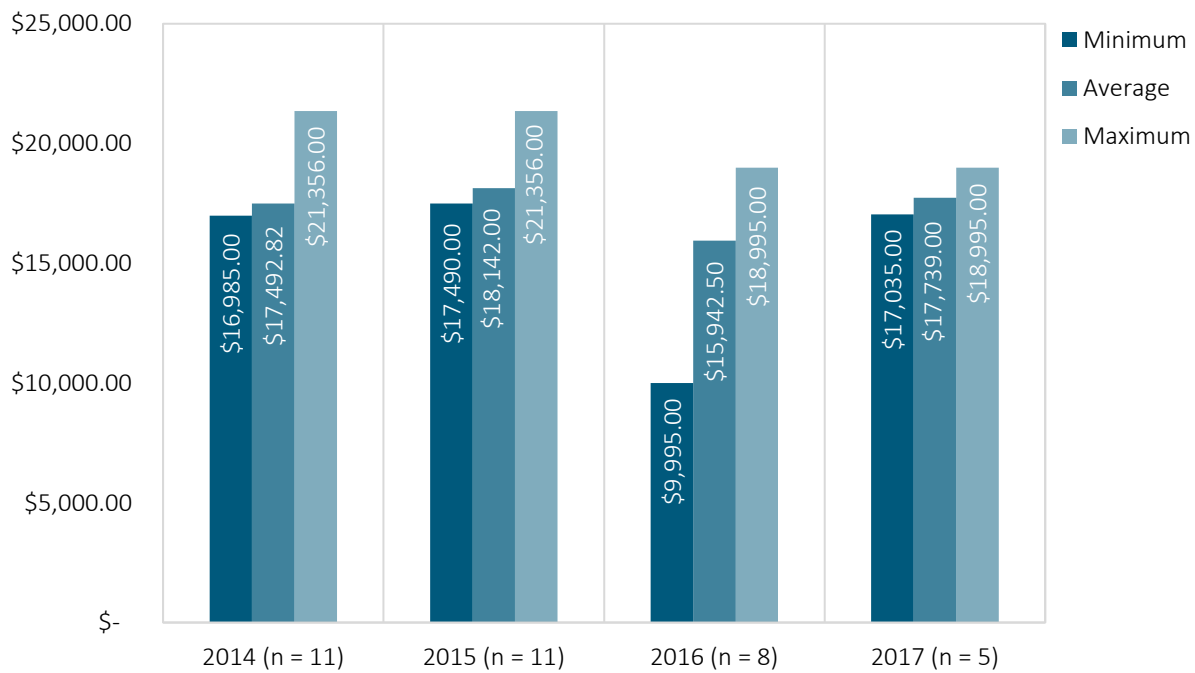


Figure 3: Total anticipated tuition costs that will be incurred by learners enrolled in privately funded OTA PTA programs from 2014 to 2017.

Program Deliverables

All OTA/PTA programs require learners to complete supervised clinical fieldwork experience prior to graduation. Supervision of clinical placements is provided by occupational therapists, physiotherapists, or by an OTA/PTA under the supervision of an occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist, depending on the nature of the program and placement. For those learners graduating in 2017, it was expected that they would have completed on average 550.28 hours (420 – 760 hours) of clinical fieldwork, as part of their training. When considering the rehabilitation professional providing supervision for clinical placements, it was found that the majority were supervised by physiotherapists. The supervision of clinical placements was dichotomized as ‘Lowest number’ and ‘Highest number’ for each professional, occupational therapists and physiotherapists (**Figure 4**). On average, the lowest number supervised by a physiotherapist was 273.51 hours (153.75 – 402.50 hours) and the highest number was 420.58 hours (280 – 578 hours). For supervision by occupational therapists, the average lowest number supervised was 172.34 (80 – 320) and the highest number supervised was 307.25 (150 – 445 hours). There was one program where supervision was provided solely by physiotherapists.

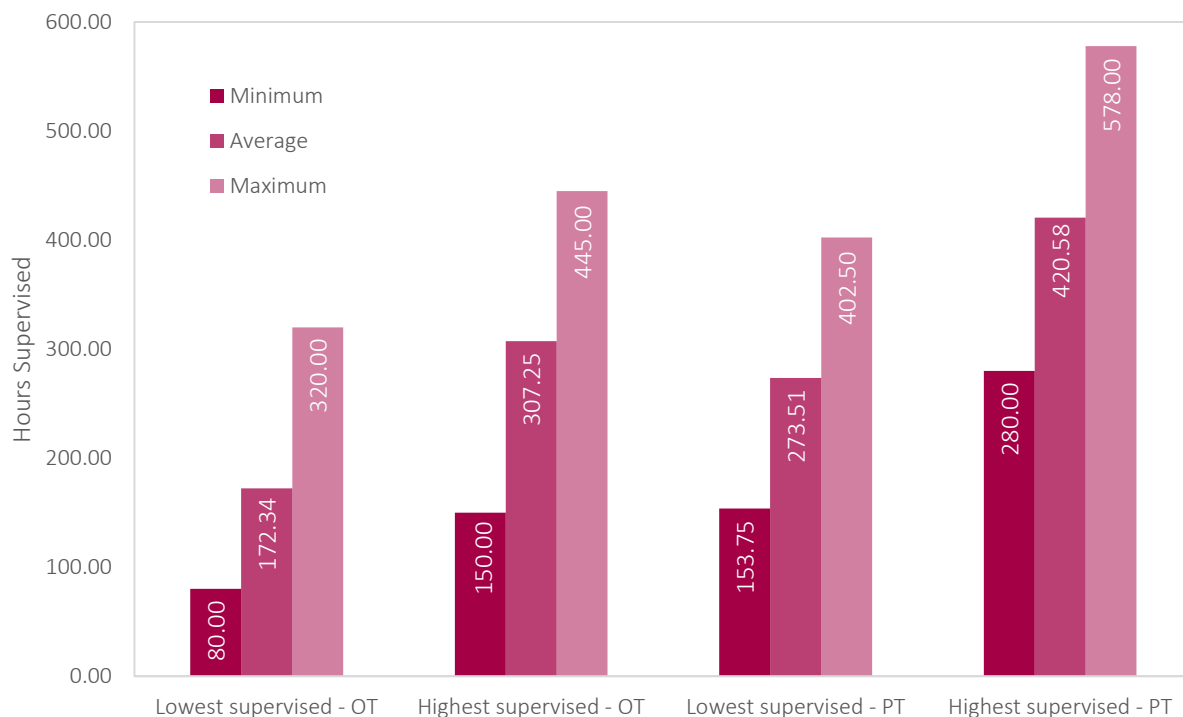


Figure 4: Number of clinical fieldwork experience hours supervised by occupational therapists and physiotherapists. Programs indicated the lowest and highest number of clinical fieldwork hours supervised by professionals from both disciplines.

Compensation was provided to clinical sites by three programs, and the source of these funds were either from provincial governments or directly from programs. There was only one program where the respective provincial government provided financial support either to the program or clinical site. An additional two programs directly compensated clinical preceptors; this occurred through the hiring of clinical instructors to supervise learners. No OTA PTA program compensated clinical facilities for providing placements for learners.

Faculty and Staff

Course instruction in OTA PTA programs was the responsibility of academic faculty (physiotherapists and occupational therapists), additional faculty, and other instructors. There were other staff affiliated with programs who provided support as laboratory assistants, administrative staff, and technical staff. An overview of faculty and staff associated full-time equivalents (FTE) for OTA PTA programs is provided in **Table 2**. Programs provided best estimates of FTE values; therefore, these may not accurately reflect the contributions of academic faculty, additional faculty, other instructors, support and technical staff.

There was a total of 331 teaching personnel associated with the delivery of course content for the 27 OTA PTA programs. This corresponded to a teaching personnel to learner ratio of 1:5.08, which is similar to the ratio reported in 2016 (1:5.5). Of the 136 academic faculty, over half were physiotherapists (n = 72) and the remaining 64 were occupational therapists. The total FTE were 33.33 PTs and 28.21 OTs. Fifteen programs had a total of 76 additional faculty members (10.67 FTE) and 18 programs had 114 other instructors (6.22 FTE). Further support was provided to programs by support staff, such as laboratory assistants, and technical staff. The total FTE for support staff of all programs was 54.95 (0.00 – 9.00 FTE) and 49.12 (0.00 – 12.00 FTE) for technical staff. These staff were shared with other departments/programs in 26 of the 27 affiliated educational institutions.

Table 2: Number of academic faculty, additional faculty, other instructors, support staff, and technical staff associated with OTA PTA programs and the accompanying FTE.

	Number of Personnel	Total FTE
Academic Faculty		
Physiotherapists	72	33.33
Occupational therapists	64	28.21
Additional faculty	81	10.67
Other instructors	114	6.22
Support Staff	-	54.95
Technical Staff	-	49.12
Total	331	182.51

Admissions and Enrolment

For the 2017 academic year, a total of 3,290 applications were received by OTA PTA programs from qualified applicants. This was a 21.98% decrease from the number of applications received in 2016 (n = 4,217). Prior to 2017, the number of applications received from qualified applicants increased steadily from 2,688 in 2013 to 4,271 in 2016 (**Figure 5**). The final number of learners enrolled each year for this time period remained fairly constant and on average, 939.80 learners were enrolled. However, it is important to note that the number of academic institutions completing the annual OTA PTA survey has differed over the past few years. On average, programs received 121.85 applications (0 – 449 applications) and there were ten programs that received more than 100 applications. A total of 944 learners were enrolled in OTA PTA programs, representing an enrolment rate of 28.69%. There were two programs that did not enrol any learners for the 2017 academic year (as they admit a cohort every second year) and there was one program that had a 100% enrolment rate. Given the current data collection tools, it is not possible to determine whether an applicant applied to more than one OTA PTA program; therefore, this enrolment rate is an estimate.

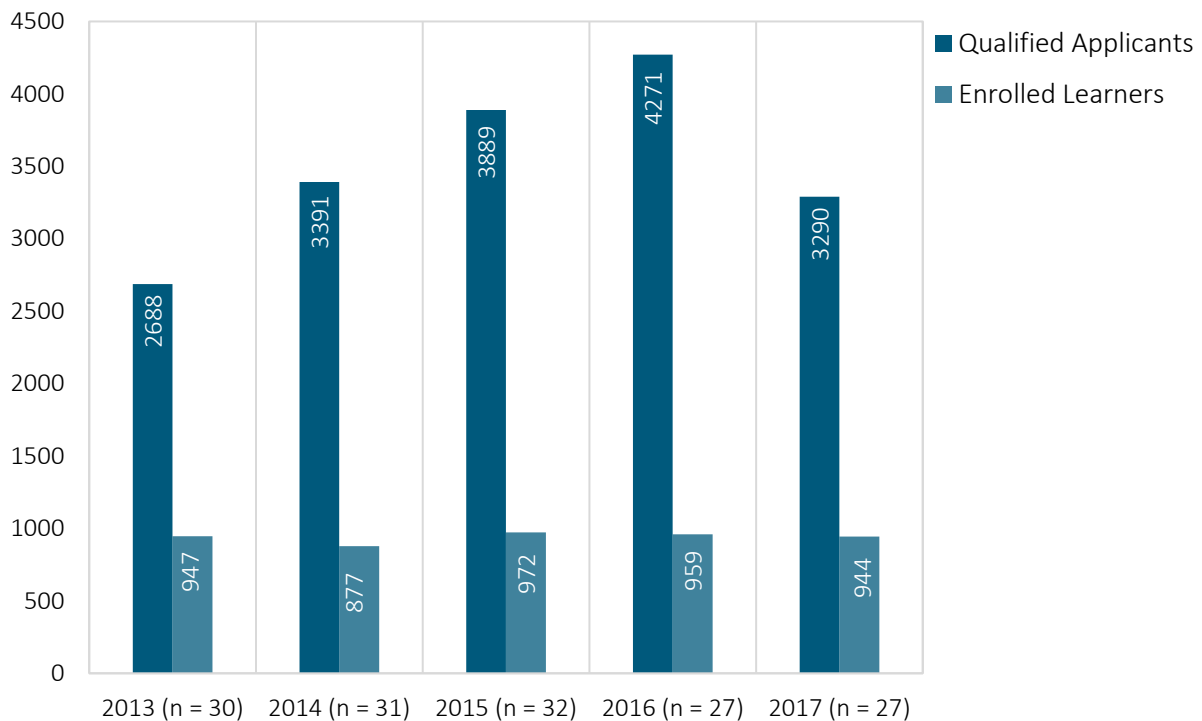


Figure 5: Admissions funnel for OTA PTA programs across Canada from 2013 to 2017.

The admissions process varied between programs, where learners were accepted: 1) as long as entrance requirements were met and until the program was full, 2) depending on the order in

which applications were received, 3) following the ranking of applications according to pre-defined criteria, and 4) based on a set number of applicants meeting selection criteria. There were 16 programs that were unable to admit qualified applicants due to a lack of seats. A number of different criteria were considered when assessing applicants' suitability for OTA PTA training. The majority of programs (n = 23) required applicants to have completed high school or have an equivalent qualification. Other commonly considered criteria were: 'Mature student status' (n = 17), 'Clear criminal record' (n = 14), and 'Negative TB test' (n = 12). Fewer programs assess applicants based on 'Reference letters' (n = 1), an 'Interview' (n = 3) or 'Volunteer hours' (n = 4). Additional considerations were identified by 14 programs, where six programs reviewed an applicant's academic performance in high school courses such as English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics, two programs required applicants to take the Health Occupations Aptitude Exam, two programs required applicants take an entrance examination, one program required a letter of intent, one program assessed applicants based on language skills, one program required a mask fit, and one program considered transfer students.

Learner Demographics

In 2017, there was a total of 1,681 learners enrolled in the 27 OTA PTA programs and on average, this was 63 (6 – 178) learners per program (**Figure 6**). As with previous years, the population of OTA PTA learners was predominately female (n = 1,339, 79.65%) and the ratio of male to female learners was 1:3.94.

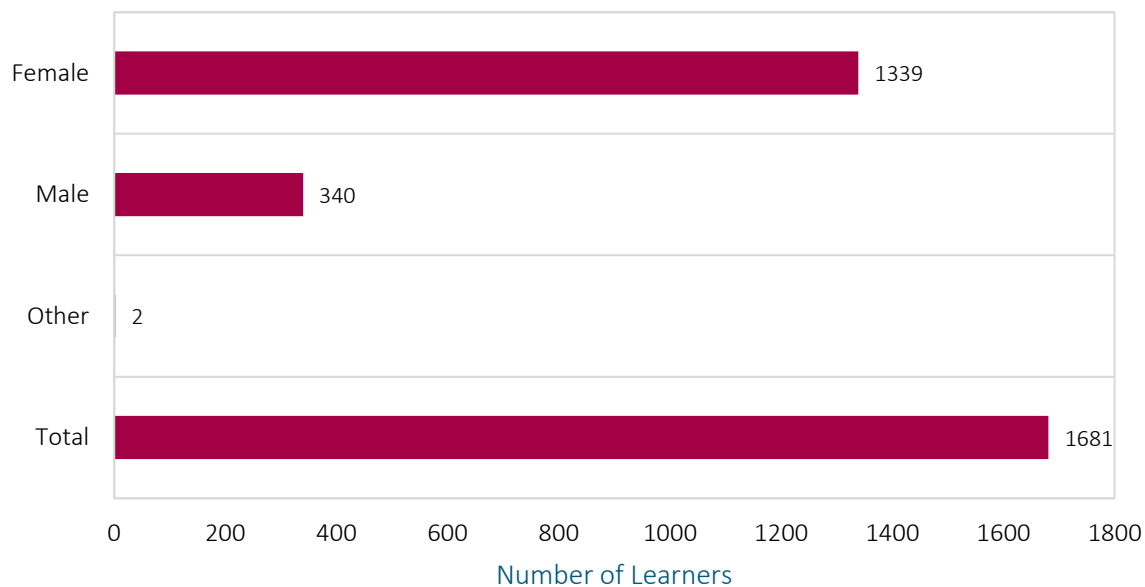


Figure 6: Demographics of learners in OTA PTA programs across Canada. There were 1,654 learners enrolled in 26 programs and learners were predominately female (n = 1,316, 79.65%).

Graduation and Attrition

Twenty-four programs graduated a cohort of learners in 2017 and the total number of graduates was 546. However, there were an additional 372 learners that began OTA PTA training with this cohort of graduates that left programs prior to their anticipated graduation date. As a result, the overall attrition rate for 2017 was 40.52%. This was similar to attrition rates of previous years, 44.61% (2016), 43.00% (2015), and 41.00% (2014).

Contact Information

For more information about the data presented in this document or about the OTA & PTA EAP, please contact Amanda Walton at amanda.walton@otapta.ca. A list of all affiliated education programs is available at the [OTA PTA EAP website](#).

