



American Massage Therapy Association®

# 2009

## Massage Industry

---

RESEARCH REPORT

Sponsored by



**MTstudents.com**

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
<b>Section 1. Consumers of Massage Therapy .....</b>	<b>5-10</b>
1A. Changes in the U.S. Population .....	5
1B. Consumer Use of Massage Therapy .....	6
1C. Who Gets Massage?.....	7
1D. Why Do Consumers Get Massage? .....	7-8
1E. Obstacles to Getting Massage .....	8-9
1F. Where Are They Getting Massage?.....	9
<b>Section 2. The Massage Therapy Profession .....</b>	<b>11-25</b>
2A. Demographics of Massage Therapists .....	11-15
2B. Compensation Trends for Massage Therapists .....	15-17
2C. Top Challenges Facing Massage Therapists .....	17-18
2D. Employment Trends for Massage Therapists.....	18-22
2E. Spa Industry and Massage Therapy.....	23-24
2F. National Massage Chains Continue to Expand .....	24-25
<b>Section 3. Special Look at Health Care and the Massage Industry.....</b>	<b>26-30</b>
3A. The Health Care Boom .....	26-27
3B. Health Care Providers Are Talking About Massage Therapy with Patients .....	27
3C. Health Care, CAM and Massage Therapy .....	27-29
3D. Massage and Health Insurance.....	29
3E. Integration of Massage into Health Care.....	29-30
<b>Section 4. Training and Education of Massage Therapists.....</b>	<b>31-39</b>
4A. Hours and Types of Training .....	31-32
4B. Quality of Massage Training.....	32-33
4C. Factors that Most Influence Massage School Selection.....	33
4D. Massage Schools-Trends and Demographics .....	34-36
4E. Massage Schools-Accreditation .....	36
4F. General Factors Affecting Massage Schools.....	36-37
4G. Number of Massage Students Graduating .....	37-38
4H. Massage Student Demographics .....	38-39
Appendix—List of Sources.....	40

## ***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 1 (877) 905-2700. If consent is granted, attribution to AMTA and other sources specified in the document should be made. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

We're proud to introduce the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual *Massage Industry Research Report*. The first edition was extremely well received. AMTA members said the report provided relevant and practical data, providing guidance for future decisions and goals. Some of you also told us about other topics that members need. We've developed this report in direct response to your feedback.

In the pages that follow, you'll find the **latest market data and trend information** about the massage therapy profession. It's our hope that you can use this information to:

Better prepare yourself for the current climate of the industry.

Make strong business decisions that help your practice to grow and thrive.

Certainly, 2008 brought many changes that have impacted the massage therapy profession, the most pervasive being **the current economic downturn**. In the past, massage has been fairly recession proof with consumer use of massage and enrollment in massage school increasing during poor economic times. However, this recession proposes some unique challenges, which will be discussed in each section within this report.

For ease of reading, we've divided the data into four different sections:

1. Consumers of Massage Therapy
2. The Massage Therapy Profession
3. A Special Look at Health Care and the Massage Industry
4. Training and Education of Massage Therapists

This data was gathered from a variety of resources including: U.S. government statistics, surveys of consumers, massage therapists and massage schools, as well as information found in industry and/or business publications. Although the numbers often speak for themselves, we've also added some "things to consider" at the end of each section.

The good news is that **health care continues to be a growing industry with employment opportunities for massage therapists**. However, the health care industry can present considerable barriers. In order to help you understand the unique challenges and opportunities that exist if you are looking for a career in health care, we've included a special section on health care and the massage industry.

As you peruse these pages, you may also think of information not included here that you'd like to have available in future editions. So, please let us know what we've missed. We welcome your feedback to help us continue to make this report more valuable to you and your practice.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Consumers of Massage Therapy**

The U.S. population is aging and growing. With these changes, consumer use of massage is expected to increase. However, with the current economic situation, consumer use declined in 2008. Cost remains the most important obstacle preventing respondents from getting regular massage. The main reasons for consumer use of massage are: relaxation/stress reduction, medical applications, and pampering. Most consumers replied that they received their last massage in a spa. In fact, the spa overtook the home as the preferred choice for where consumers would want to get a massage.

### **The Massage Therapy Profession**

The number of massage therapists is continuing to increase. Massage therapists are still predominantly female, with an average age of 44. On average, therapists have about six years experience in the profession. Turnover in the profession is believed to be around 20 percent a year. Sole practitioners continue to have the most experience, and spa/salon employees appear to be the least seasoned. Therapists in spas receive more tips; however, therapists in spas earn the lowest hourly rate before tip. Massage therapists are working in multiple settings and tend to have multiple streams of income, and more therapists are specializing in additional modalities. A very small percentage of massage therapists receive health benefits from their employers. The poor economy was cited as the number one individual challenge for massage therapists.

### **A Special Look at Health Care and the Massage Industry**

A great majority of massage therapists agree that massage therapy should be considered as part of the health care field. The growth in health care is providing jobs for massage therapists, but some are also transitioning from massage into other health care careers. Consumers are discussing massage with their health care providers more frequently and, in turn, physicians, chiropractors and physical therapists are recommending massage more than before. Consumers would like massage to be covered under their health care plans. There is a need for more research on the efficacy of massage in order to fully integrate massage therapy into the health care field.

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

On average, massage schools have 2.4 locations, while massage schools owned by large corporations average as high as 4.9 locations. Massage programs in corporate owned institutions require the highest number of hours and typically charge the most for an average hour. Schools graduate an average of 43.8 students per year. This number is declining, and some say the inability of students to get school loans may be one cause for the decline. Difficulty in attracting students is a top challenge for both individually owned massage schools and massage schools that are part of a larger corporation. Public institutions find the biggest challenges to be keeping in touch with graduates and difficulty in marketing the school/programs. The school's reputation, whether the school is accredited, and the school's location are the most influential factors for students selecting a massage school to attend.

## Section 1 — Consumers of Massage Therapy

In this difficult economic time, the gap between those that see value in massage and those that are willing to purchase massage is widening. In order for massage therapists to succeed in the field of massage, they will need clients convinced of the value of massage therapy and that are willing and able to pay for massage.

Since clients may be cutting back on expenditures (and since most consumers do not currently get a massage weekly), therapists need a roster of hundreds of clients in order to schedule seventeen or more massages in a given week. **Consumer use and consumer acceptance of massage is the main engine that will help grow both individual massage businesses and the profession as a whole.**

This section will explore trends that affect the demand for massage in the future, including:

- 1A. Changes in the U.S. Population
- 1B. Consumer Use of Massage Therapy
- 1C. Who Gets Massage?
- 1D. Why do Consumers Get Massage?
- 1E. Obstacles to Getting Massage
- 1F. Where are They Getting Massages?

### 1A. Changes in the U.S. Population

#### *The U.S. population is aging*

In 2000, the average age of the U.S. population was 35.3 years. The average age is expected to increase every year, reaching 36.9 in 2010, 37.7 in 2020, and 38.7 in 2030.

The largest percentage of this growth will occur within the oldest segment (ages 85 and older). In 2000, there were 4.2 million Americans age 85 and older. By 2030, this number is expected more than double, and by 2050 more than double again to 19 million.<sup>1</sup> The number of people in the 70-85 age bracket will also double between 2010 and 2050.

#### *The U.S. population is growing*

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the U.S. population will grow from approximately 282 million in 2000 to 309 million in 2010. By 2050, this population is expected to grow to 439 million, a 56 percent increase from 2000. This growth is caused by three primary forces:

As people are living longer, the **death rate is decreasing.**

The **birth rate is climbing.**

The United States has **more immigrants coming into the country** than leaving. The total foreign born population in the U.S. is now 31.1 million, a record 57 percent increase since 1990.

## 1B. Consumer Use of Massage Therapy

### *Massage use has been increasing over the past 10 years, but saw a dip in 2008*

Today, over 16 million more Americans take advantage of massage therapy than did 10 years ago. 2008 AMTA Consumer Survey results show that:

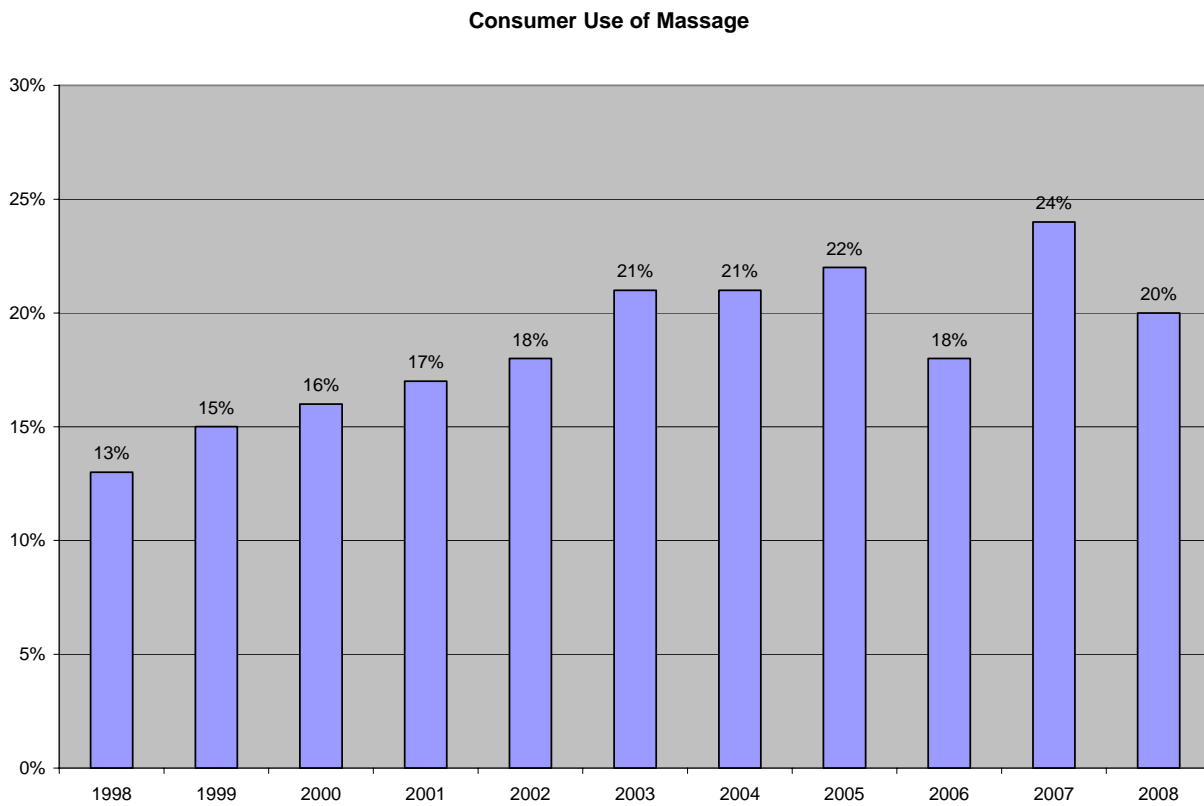
20 percent of all adult Americans had a massage at least once in the last 12 months.

A third (33 percent) have received a massage in the last five years.

Roughly 44 million people had a total of around 209 million massages in the U.S. in 2008.

Massage use dropped from 24 percent in 2007 to 20 percent in 2008.

**Overall, massage use has increased in the United States during seven out of the last ten years in which AMTA has been tracking consumer use of massage therapy (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>**



**Figure 1. Total use of massage in the past 10 years.**

## 1C. Who Gets Massage?

There are several factors that increase the likelihood of consumers using massage:

**Gender** — Women get massage at double the rate of men. In 2008, 12 percent of adult American men (down from a high of 17 percent in 2007) and 28 percent of women received a massage. This reduction in the number of men receiving massage was the main reason overall massage use dropped from 2007 to 2008.<sup>3</sup>

**Generation** — Older Baby Boomers (ages 55 to 64) have doubled their use of massage over the past 10 years, and those 65 and older have nearly tripled their use of massage. Even though massage use declined overall in 2008, use increased among those who are 55 plus.<sup>2</sup> This may indicate that as a person ages, they tend toward a greater acceptance of massage therapy.

**Education** — Consumer use of massage increases with the education of the consumer. Those that have completed college are four times (28 percent) more likely to get a massage than those that did not complete high school (7 percent).

**Household Income** — Massage use also correlates with household income. For instance, within households making \$25,000 a year or less, 7 percent of adults received a massage in the last 12 months. For households with a combined income of \$50,000 or more, that number more than tripled, at 24 percent.

## 1D. Why Do Consumers Get Massage?

While Americans are still getting massage for pampering (19 percent), massage use is on the increase for medical reasons. However, the highest numbers of consumers receive massage therapy for relaxation or stress reduction.

### *For stress reduction*

Consumers are seeking massage therapy in larger numbers for stress reduction and relaxation. This year, 36 percent of Americans that received a massage in the past 5 years said their last massage was to reduce stress or relax — up from 22 percent last year.

38 percent of consumers say they have considered a massage to manage stress.

59 percent of consumers report that they are more stressed out this year than they were a year ago.

The current economic situation or other related factors, was found to be a source of stress for 45 percent of Americans.

55 percent of those between 25-34 years of age say they are greatly stressed about the economy.

51 percent of females say they are greatly stressed about the economy.

### ***For medical reasons***

Beyond stress relief, the second most prevalent reason Americans get massage is for medical reasons, with 31 percent of massage consumers having their last massage for a medical reason. Based on consumer results:

- 44 percent of consumers over 65 years of age got their last massage for medical reasons.
- 19 percent of consumers got their last massage for either pain relief or pain management, with 34 percent of those 18-24 getting their last massage for this reason.
- 24 percent of consumers have used massage at some point to relieve pain.
- 7 percent of consumers received their last massage for injury rehabilitation, with 11 percent of those 55-64 getting their last massage for that reason.
- 88 percent of Americans feel that massage can be effective in reducing pain, and 87 percent of Americans feel that massage can be beneficial to health and wellness.

### ***For pampering***

The third most prevalent reason why consumers get massage is for pampering, a special indulgence, or just to feel good. This reason accounted for 19 percent of recent massage purchases by consumers.

Those 35 to 54 are more likely to say they received their last massage for pampering reasons than any other age group.

Those in the Northeast (28 percent) and the South (25 percent) are more likely to have received their last massage for pampering reasons.

## **1E. Obstacles to Getting Massage**

Cost is still the most-quoted obstacle preventing respondents from having regular massages. However, even with the current economy, cost declined from 37 percent in 2007 to 33 percent in 2008 as an obstacle to getting massage. Two other obstacles to receiving regular massage include:

*Don't feel I need it* (22 percent)

*Too busy* (14 percent)

Women are more likely to cite cost as their reason for not getting massage. Men are more likely to say "I don't feel I need it."

### ***Pricing of massage***

It is unknown whether the current economic situation will have an effect on the price consumers pay for massage. We do know that consumer confidence is low, and that people are looking for ways to cut their expenditures. At 2007 national averages for price of a one hour massage, it seems like many massage therapists may be charging more than the market will bear.

For insight, consider the following chart drawn from the 2007 AMTA Consumer Survey.

Price and Volume for MTs		
Price of Massage	Number of Massages at Price	Total Amount Earned per Consumer
\$80	5.6	\$448
\$70	5.6	\$392
\$61	7.9	\$482
\$50	12.7	\$635
\$40	13.7	\$548

**Figure 2. Price and Volume for MTs.**

Figure 2 demonstrates that **the price a consumer will pay for a massage is elastic**. In other words, as the price of massage increases, the average number of massages each consumer will obtain decreases. At both ends of the curve, the number of massages level off — whether you charge \$70 or \$80 dollars, consumers get the same number of massages. Likewise, whether you charge \$40 or \$50, consumers will receive almost the same number of massages. This suggests:

No matter how low the price, many consumers will only purchase 13.7 massages a year. This suggests that it would not be good business to charge less than \$50 an hour.

Even as price increases over \$80 for a massage, consumers will likely still average 5.6 massages per year.

It is interesting to note that those who do not get massage perceive the cost of massage to be higher than the actual rate. In the *2008 AMTA Consumer Survey*, those who did not receive massage thought the average massage cost over \$71 per hour. Consumers with a household income of between twenty-five and fifty thousand dollars a year thought the average cost of a massage would be \$89.50.

### **1F. Where Are They Getting Massage?**

Based on the *2008 AMTA Consumer Survey* results, when asked where they received their last massage, consumers replied:

- Spa (23 percent - up from 18 percent last year)
- Massage therapist's office (11 percent)
- Chiropractors office (10 percent)
- Your home or the home of someone you know (10 percent)

The top choices of where adult Americans would prefer to receive a massage were:

- In spas (36 percent - up from 22 percent last year)
- In their home or the home of someone they know (21 percent - down from 30 percent last year)
- In the massage therapist's office (14 percent - down from 20 percent last year)

Spas are also more likely to be the location of choice for women and for young respondents.<sup>3</sup>

***Consumers of Massage Therapy — Things to Consider:***

A steadily growing population translates into more potential clients for massage therapists.

As the population ages, consumers and health care professionals will increasingly look to massage to help relieve pain and increase wellness.

Consumers are feeling more stress than in the past, and this is leading them to seek massage.

Even though massage use stayed steady in previous recessions, this economic downturn is having a negative effect on the demand for massage.

Some pricing for massage therapy may be above what consumers are willing to pay, especially in an economic downturn.

Cost is the main factor that keeps people from getting massage, and those that do not get massage overestimate the cost by over \$10 per hour.

Spas continue to grow, both as the place where consumers receive massage, and where they prefer to receive massage.

## Section 2 — The Massage Therapy Profession

AMTA is committed to gaining continued insight into the massage therapy profession in order to provide massage therapists with necessary market information. This section will present:

- 2A. Demographics of Massage Therapists
- 2B. Compensation Trends for Massage Therapists
- 2C. Top Challenges Facing Massage Therapists
- 2D. Employment Trends for Massage Therapists
- 2E. Spa Industry and Massage Therapy
- 2F. National Massage Chains as New Industry Players

### 2A. Demographics of Massage Therapists

According to the *2008 AMTA Industry Survey*, these are the main characteristics of massage therapists in the United States (see Figures 2 - 4):

**Age** — The average age of a massage therapist is 44, an increase of two years from the year before.

**Career Choice** — In 2008, a significantly lower percentage of therapists indicated that massage therapy was their first career (82 percent with first careers in massage in 2008, as opposed to 76 percent in 2007).

**Education** — The non-massage education of therapists has stayed roughly the same as 2007.

**Gender** — Massage therapists are predominantly female (88 percent). This has increased three percent from last year.

**Longevity** — In 2008, massage therapists said they have been working in the profession for an average of 6.3 years as compared to an average of 6.5 years in 2007 (see Figure 3). The average longevity of massage therapists has declined every year this survey has been taken.

**Specific Work Settings** — When considering the years of experience of massage therapists in specific work settings, sole practitioners continue to have the most experience at 7.1 years, although this is less than year's past. Spa/salon employees appear the least seasoned, with an average 5.1 years in the industry (see Figure 4).

**A Shift to Specialization** — Therapists report specializing in an average of 7 modalities/techniques, up from 5 modalities in prior years.

Figure 2. Massage therapist's profile.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Average Age	44	44	42	44
<b><u>Education (Non-Massage)</u></b>				
High school grad or less	11	11	14	13
Some college	26	27	28	27
Associate's Degree	12	15A	14	14
Technical/vocational certificate	8	10	9	11
Bachelor's degree	31	27	25	26
Master's degree	11	9	8	8
Doctorate	2	1	2	2
<b><u>Gender</u></b>				
Male	16	15	15	12
Female	84	85	85	88

Figure 3. Average number of years in the profession.

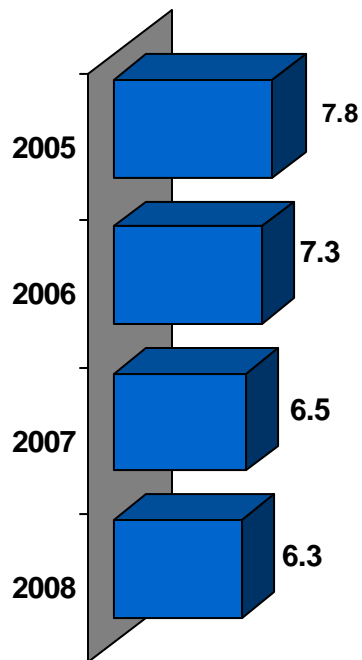
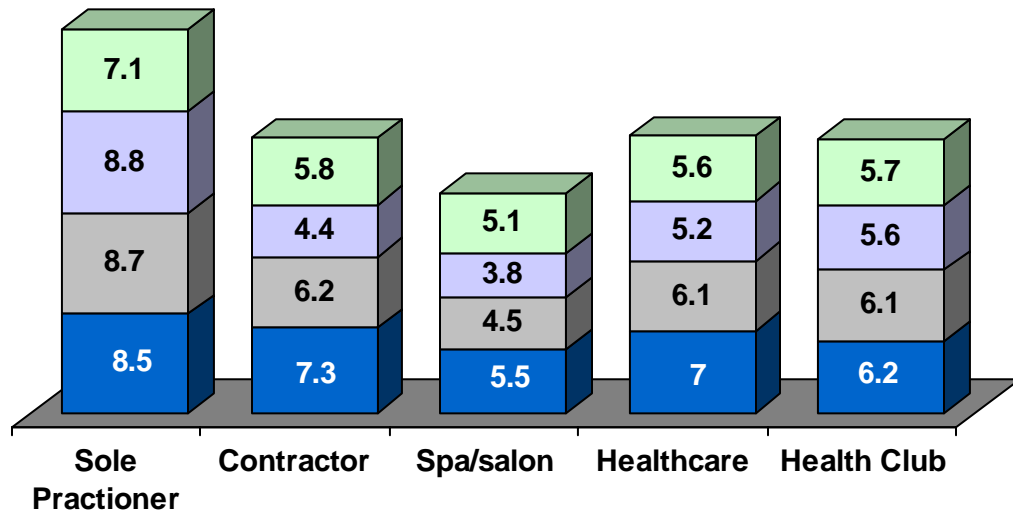


Figure 4. Average number of years in various work settings (2008 on top, 2005 on bottom)

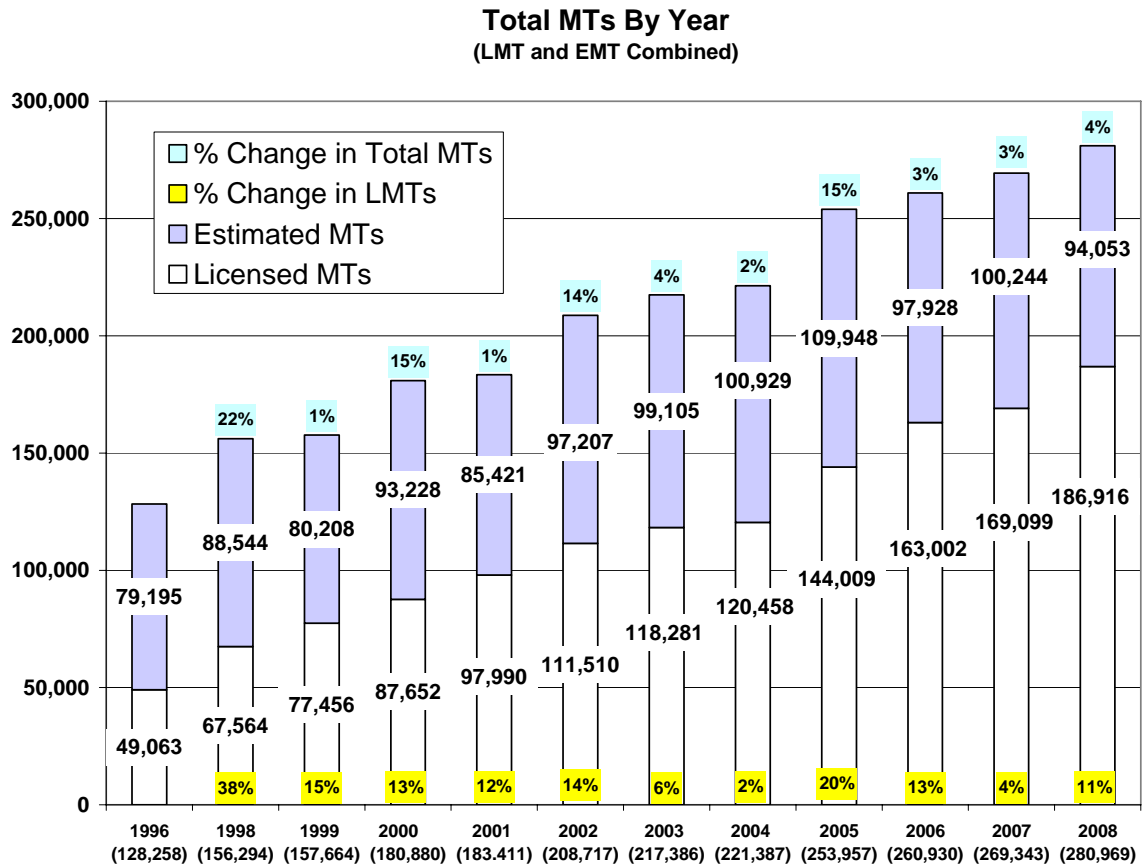


***Number of massage therapists in U.S.*** <sup>4</sup>

Data shows that the number of massage therapists in the United States continues to increase:  
 In February 2008, there were approximately 280,969 massage therapists in the United States.  
 Approximately 186,916 of them were licensed practitioners.  
 Over the last ten years, the number of practicing massage therapists has increased by around 79 percent.  
 The total growth in practicing massage therapists from the beginning of 2007 to the beginning of 2008 was 4 percent, which is similar to the previous year.

The following chart illustrates the growth of the number of total estimated massage therapists over time:

Figure 5. Growth in number of massage therapists.\*



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

#### Turnover for massage therapists<sup>4</sup>

The approximate percentage of turnover can be determined by examining a few statistics:

In February 2007, there were an estimated 269,343 massage therapists in the U.S., and another 56,916 graduating from massage therapy school and entering the profession.

This adds up to 326,259 massage therapists, but the estimated count in February 2008 was only 280,969.

That means that an estimated 45,290 massage therapists left the profession that year.

A similar trend occurred between 2006 and 2007 when over 52,000 estimated massage therapists left the profession.

While there are over 50,000 new graduates a year, the number of massage therapists only increases by roughly 10,000.

The turnover in the profession is believed to be around 20 percent of massage therapists a year, with MT's leaving the profession for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent being economic reasons.

## 2B. Compensation Trends for Massage Therapists<sup>5</sup>

According to the results of the *2008 AMTA Industry Survey*, clients pay an average of \$63 per one hour of massage, with health clubs charging the most at \$67.60, and spas/salons charging the second most at \$65.90. Note that this is a national average and individual prices for one hour of massage may vary considerably.

### *Pay, hours and benefits*

On average, massage therapists earn about \$41.50 per hour. That includes a \$31.30 average hourly rate and an average tip of \$10.20, up from an average of \$39 per hour last year.

Massage therapists employed by spas/salons tend to earn the lowest hourly rate at \$30.80 before tip, but also receive the most frequent and largest tips.

On average, massage therapists work 19.5 hours per week, with those working in spa/salon and health club settings averaging the greatest number of work hours per week.

Massage therapists are paid for about 15 of the 19.5 average hours they work per week.

A very small percentage of massage therapists receive health benefits from their employers (16 percent), no change from last year.

### *Number of clients per month*

Similar to 2007 data, massage therapists see an average of 40.9 clients each month, with over two-thirds (71 percent) being repeat clients.

As shown in Figure 6, sole practitioners and massage therapists working in health care settings are most likely to have a larger share of repeat customers (77 percent repeat clients for sole practitioners and 72 percent for health care practitioners).

Figure 6. Clients of massage therapists.

	Total Clients			% New Clients				% Repeat Clients			
	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Total</b>	42.9	41.1	40.9	28%	31%	35%	29%	72%	69%	65%	71%
<b>Sole Practitioner</b>	40.8	36.8	40.4	20%	24%	26	23	80%	76%	74	77
<b>Contractor</b>	42	39.0	39.3	35%	37%	41	33	65%	63%	59	67
<b>Spa/salon</b>	49.6	43.8	43.4	63%	57%	54	45	37%	43%	46	55
<b>Healthcare</b>	57.1	51.8	45.2	26%	27%	30	28	74%	73%	70	72
<b>Health club</b>	49.8	40.6	42.8	37%	42%	36	37	63%	58%	64	63
<b>Full-time</b>	69.3	70.4	63.6	27%	30%	51	46	73%	70%	49	54
<b>Part-time</b>	27.8	40.7	35.1	29%	32%	53	41	71%	68%	47	59

### ***Therapists are receiving more tips***

The average tip received for a massage went up almost a dollar compared to last year. Additionally, how often massage therapists receive a tip from clients increased from 51 percent of the time to 53 percent. Massage therapists working in spas/salons continue to receive tips more often than other settings and those working in health care least often.

### ***Massage therapists are bartering more***

More massage therapists (75 percent) report bartering massage services than in previous years (an increase of 8 percent from 2007), but the average dollar value of services bartered each year dropped from \$617 in 2007 to \$596 in 2008 (see Figure 7).

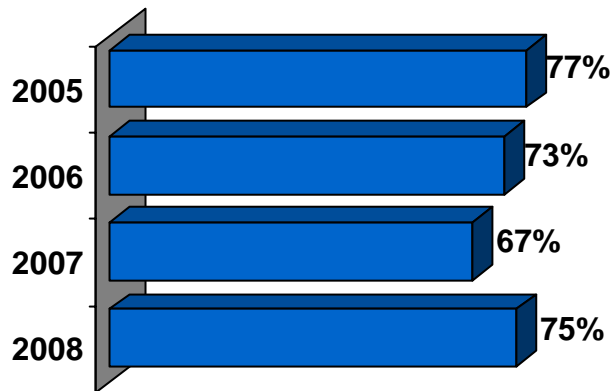


Figure 7. Percentage of massage therapists bartering services.

### ***Overall business outlook for massage therapists***

When asked whether business improved, stayed the same or declined, most massage therapists reported improvement, although less than year's past:

42 percent said business improved, vs. 56 percent in 2007.

31 percent said business stayed the same.

27 percent said business declined, vs. 17 percent in 2007.

In every work setting, less therapists cited an improvement in their business.

Overall, spa/salon employees, at 39 percent, were the least likely to report business improvement over the past year. Last year 66 percent reported improvements.

Contractors were the most likely to report improvements (52 percent).

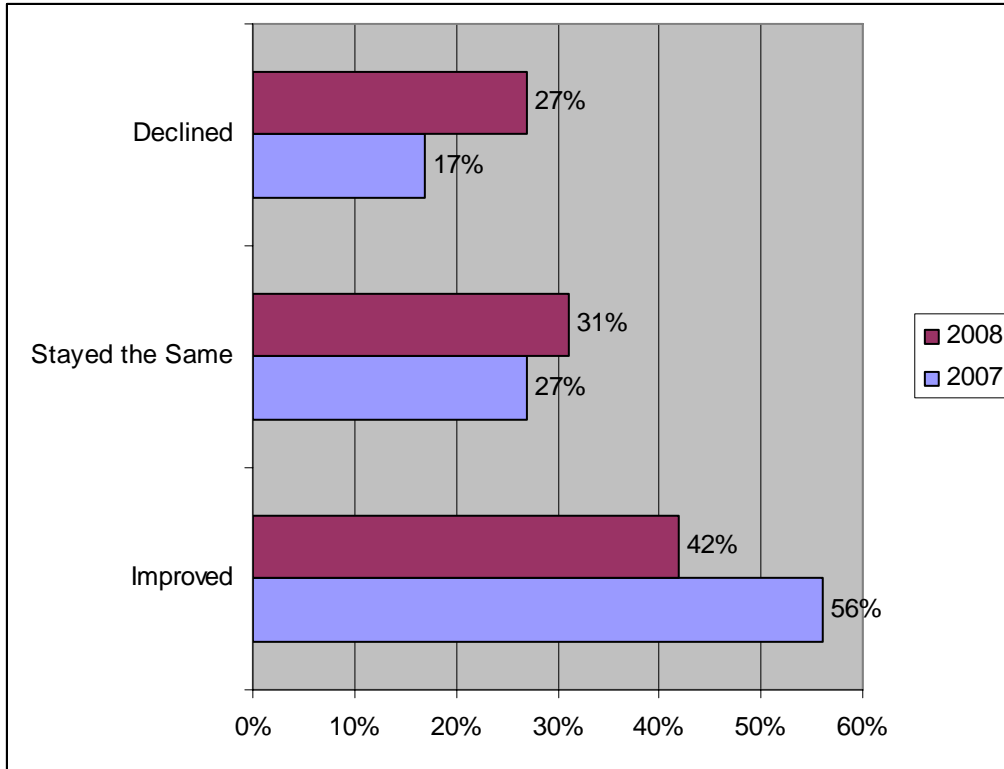


Figure 8. Overall business outlook.

## 2C. Top Challenges Facing Massage Therapists

According to the massage therapists who responded to the *2008 AMTA Industry Survey*, industry perception continues to be their biggest challenge (see chart on following page). Nine percent more massage therapists than in the previous year cited business/economic issues as being their biggest challenge. And this year, 20 percent of all respondents marked “poor economy” as the top industry challenge, making it the most prevalent response.

These results reflect fears massage therapists have about the economy, as many see their business decline. We are also seeing more therapists barter services, in order to save money in the down economy.

Figure 9 on the following page illustrates the top challenges expressed by massage therapists:

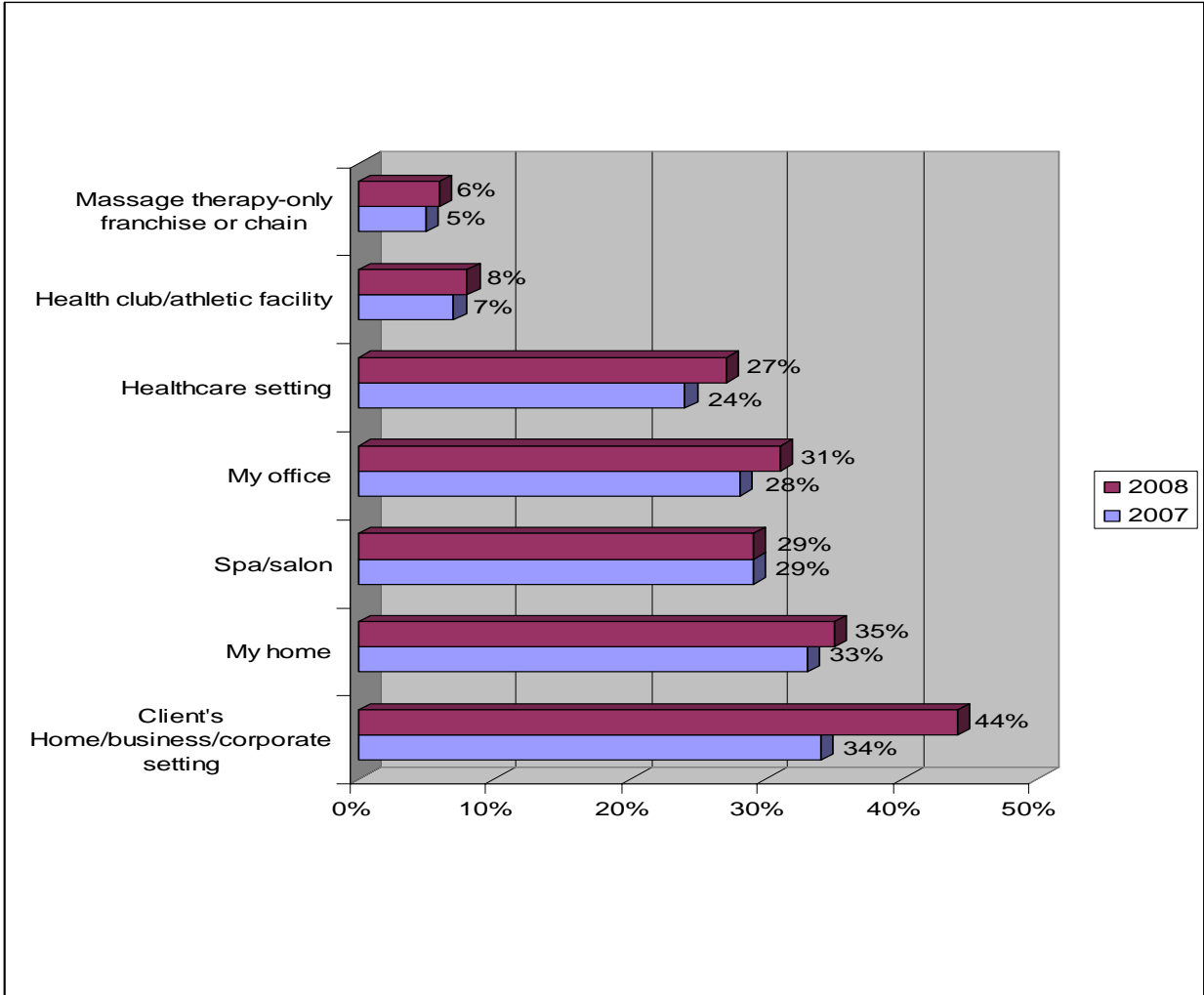
Figure 9. Top challenges facing massage therapists.

	2006	2007	2008
<b><u>Industry Perceptions (Net)</u></b>	<b><u>53%</u></b>	<b><u>52%</u></b>	<b><u>47%</u></b>
Being recognized/respected as healthcare professionals	23	17	15
Public awareness of the benefits of massage	13	10	5
Bad history/poor reputation	8	3	2
Benefits of massage therapy to public	8	9	9
Recognition from insurance companies	6	4	5
Credibility	4	4	8
Maintaining professionalism	3	*	1
Yellow pages with sexual ads for massage	1	8	8
Under qualified massage therapists	-	5	5
<b><u>Business/Economy Issues (Net)</u></b>	<b><u>30%</u></b>	<b><u>34%</u></b>	<b><u>43%</u></b>
Licensing legislation	7	5	5
Maintaining steady business/finding new clients	7	8	7
Too much competition	6	7	4
State/government regulations	6	5	3
Difficulties with insurance	2	2	1
Poor economy	2	3	20
Inadequate standards for certification	-	-	3
<b><u>Job Factors (Net)</u></b>	<b><u>28%</u></b>	<b><u>27%</u></b>	<b><u>22%</u></b>
Avoiding personal injury	6	11	8
Adequate knowledge/training	6	3	*
Low income	5	5	5
Sexual boundaries	4	1	1
No health insurance as a massage therapist	4	3	4
Full-time therapists getting burnt out	3	3	5
Finding/maintaining employment	2	2	1
<b><u>Education Issues (Net)</u></b>	<b><u>4%</u></b>	<b><u>2%</u></b>	<b><u>6%</u></b>
Finding a good school/training program	2	1	2

## 2D. Employment Trends for Massage Therapists

According to the results from the 2008 AMTA Industry Survey, when asked “In what type of massage setting do you work?” the top answer was *Client’s home/business or corporate setting*, at 44 percent. However, *my home, my office* and *health care settings* received a higher percentage of responses compared to 2007 (see Figure 10). In addition, respondents reported practicing in an average of 1.9 settings, compared to 1.6 settings in 2007.

**Figure 10. In what type of massage setting do you work?**



***Massage therapists report working in multiple setting and businesses***

In 2008, the percentage of massage therapists working in each setting increased, with the exception of spas (which stayed the same). In 2007 massage therapists worked in 1.1 different business types, and in 2008 they worked in 1.3 different types.

Taken in combination, Figures 10 and 11 show that massage therapists are working in more settings and in different types of businesses than in year's past.

**Figure 11. Massage therapists by how they would describe their business.**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Sole practitioner/partner in own business</b>	74%	68%	56%	67%
<b>Self-employed contractor to other business</b>	22%	25%	20%	25%
<b>Spa/salon employee</b>	15%	17%	29%	29%
<b>Health care setting employee</b>	10%	13%	24%	27%
<b>Health club employee</b>	3%	3%	7%	8%

***The number of hours therapists work has stayed consistent***

The average number of hours massage therapists work in their profession stayed virtually the same from 19.4 hours in 2007 to 19.5 hours in 2008. The average hours massage therapists spend actually performing (paid) massage also stayed roughly the same at 15.0 hours per week in 2008 vs. 15.1 hours in 2007.

Consistent with the 2007 findings, massage therapists consider a full-time practice in this profession to be, on average, 27 hours per week.

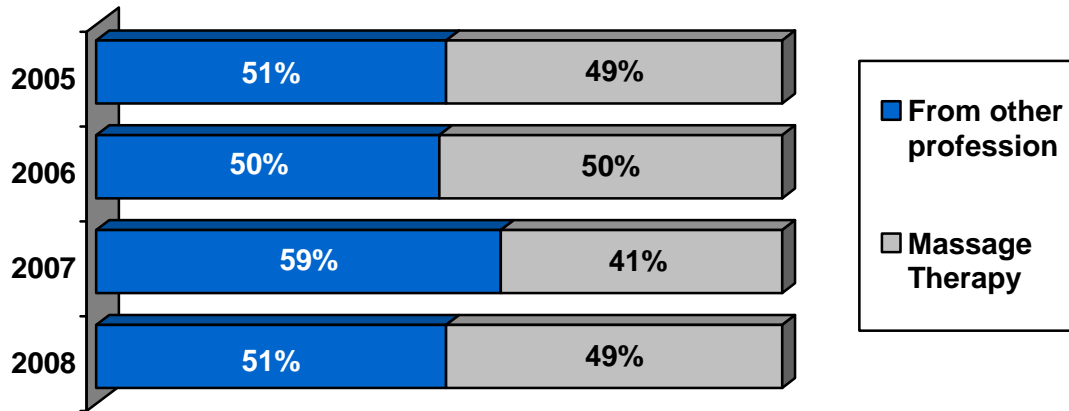
Most likely, the time therapists spend on other business tasks such as billing, bookkeeping, maintaining equipment and marketing their practice accounts for the difference between total number of hours massage therapists work and the number of hours for which they report getting paid. Massage therapists spend 28 percent of their work day on business related tasks, while approximately 72 percent of their work day is spent actually performing massages.<sup>5</sup>

***Massage therapists tend to have multiple streams of income***

As seen in Figure 12, over 50 percent of massage therapists' income is earned from jobs in professions other than massage therapy, down from nearly 60 percent in 2007. In 2008, 58 percent of massage therapists had another job besides massage therapy.

Massage therapists mention various forms of bodywork, health care, education and fitness as secondary income.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 12. Source of income.



***Swedish and deep tissue modalities are most often practiced***

Among massage modalities, Swedish (89 percent) and deep tissue (82 percent) still rank as the most frequently practiced modalities.

However, significant increases in specialization were seen among many modalities such as trigger point, sports massage and myofascial when compared to 2007 (see Figure 13). Also note that this year the number of modalities practiced increase from five to seven.

Figure 13. Top modalities.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Swedish</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>89%</b>
<b>Deep Tissue</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Trigger Point</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Sports Massage</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Neuromuscular</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Myofascial</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Reflexology</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Chair</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Hot Stone</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Prenatal/Pregnancy</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Therapeutic Touch</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>

**Employment opportunities are growing for massage therapists**

According to the most recent U.S. Department of Labor information, employment opportunities for massage therapists are expected to grow at a faster than average rate as more people become interested in alternative medicine and holistic healing. Additionally, health care providers and insurance companies are beginning to recognize massage therapy as a treatment and preventative measure for many types of injuries.

It is estimated that between 2006 and 2016 massage therapists are likely to see a **20 percent increase in job opportunities** as more people learn about the benefits of massage therapy.<sup>10</sup>

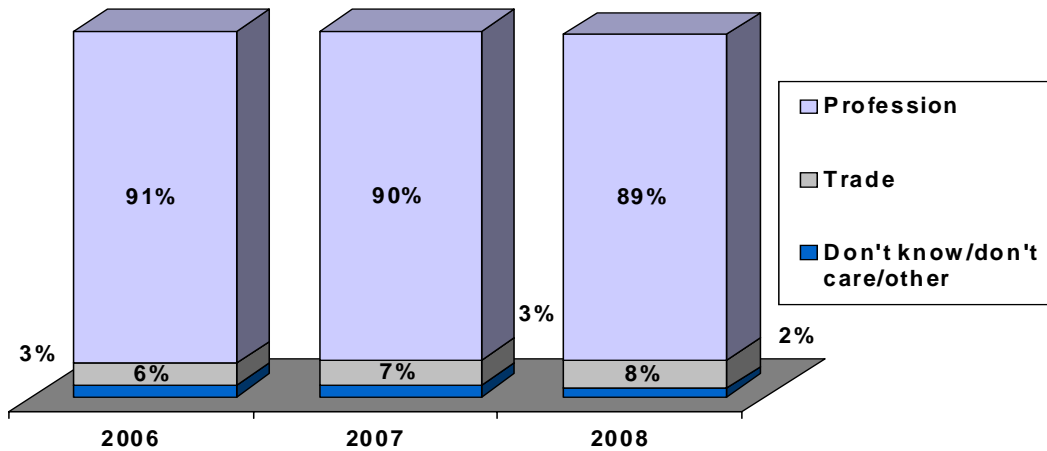
**Massage therapists view their work as a profession**

The vast majority of the **AMTA Professional members** surveyed in the **2006 AMTA Body of Knowledge Survey** consider massage therapy to be a profession. These respondents view massage therapy as a:

- Profession (89 percent)
- Trade (6 percent)
- Art (2 percent)
- Some other label or did not know<sup>8</sup> (3 percent)

The results of the **2008 AMTA Industry Survey**, surveying **massage therapists at large**, confirmed that the majority of massage therapists view the industry as a profession rather than a trade (see Figure 14). Therapists working in a health care setting are the most likely to view massage therapy as a profession, and those working in a health club setting are least likely to view massage as a profession.

**Figure 14. Perception of an industry as a profession vs. trade.**



## 2E. Spa Industry and Massage Therapy

*Spas are where most consumers receive massage and, increasingly, where massage therapists work*

According to the results of the *ISPA 2008 U.S. Spa Industry Update*:

The number of spa visits in the United States grew 25 percent from 2006 to 2007. There were:

- An estimated 111 million spa visits in 2006
- An estimated 138 million spa visits in 2007

The revenue the spa industry generates grew 16 percent from 2006 to 2007. There was:

- An estimated \$9.4 billion in spa revenue in 2006
- An estimated \$10.9 billion in spa revenue in 2007

The spa revenue per establishment dropped 3 percent from 2006 to 2007, and 41 percent since 2001. The average spa had a revenue of:

- An estimated \$1.024 million in 2001
- An estimated \$624 thousand in 2006
- An estimated \$607 thousand in 2007

*The number of spas is multiplying in the U.S.*

Between 1999 and June 2008, the number of spas in the United States grew by more than 336 percent (see Figure 15).

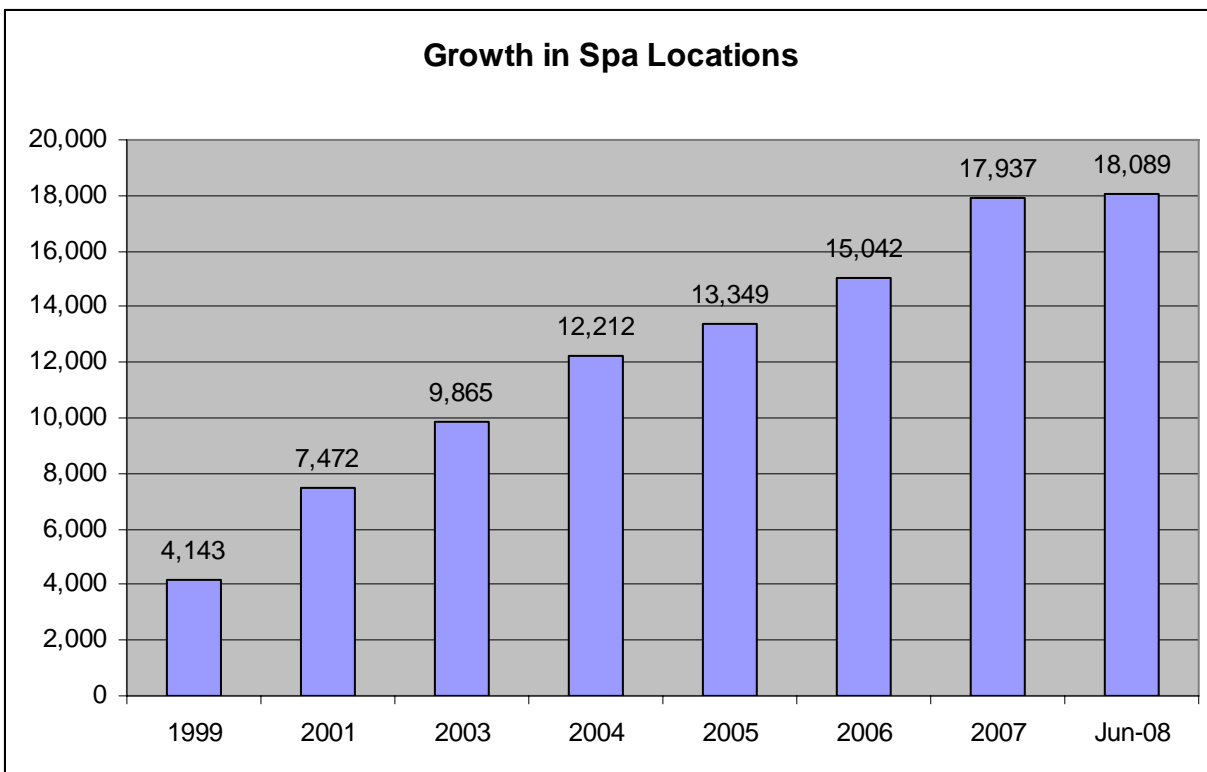


Figure 15. Growth in massage spas.

### ***More than 1 in 4 massage therapists work in spas***

Consistent with last year, 29 percent of all massage therapists work in a spa or salon<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, many sole practitioners are beginning to work in spas or salons as an additional source of income beyond their client base. Forty-seven percent of sole practitioners also work at a spa or salon part-time.

This indicates that the spa industry is becoming a major employer of massage therapists. Upon graduation, more and more massage therapists are finding it easier to become employed by spas than to build their own practice.

## **2F. National Massage Chains Continue to Expand<sup>4</sup>**

**National massage chains** are growing as new players enter this market and current chains expand into new locations. Seeing the growth of spas and the consumer acceptance of massage, these organizations have found a niche in the market — offering a branded product in numerous locations.

As opposed to spas, these companies only offer massage, although some firms are testing locations that offer more traditional spa services in addition. Some massage therapists have a poor view of national massage chains, seeing them as detrimental to the profession. But, as these chains continue to grow, many massage therapists see them as a place to get steady employment and potential benefits.

Because massage therapy is the only service on the menu, national massage chains are able to cut overhead from less profitable services and offer lower cost massage. The number of these firms and the lower prices available could have a significant impact on massage use in the future and employment opportunities.

Currently, only 1 percent of consumers report receiving their last massage at a national massage chain. This number is expected to grow as more chains open, and consumers look for a lower cost massage. Additionally, consumers may not understand the difference between a spa and a national massage chain.

Here are some of the main players in the massage chain market:

**Massage Envy**, a franchise concept that offers a subscription-based model, is fast becoming a large employer of massage therapists. Since 2002, Massage Envy has grown from one location in Arizona to over 500 clinics in November 2008. Over 300 additional locations have been sold and are expected to open in the next two years. There are currently over 8,000 massage therapists working at Massage Envy locations, making it the largest employer of massage therapists in the United States.

**XPressSpa** and **Massage Bar** have been opening in many airports throughout the country. XpressSpa is located in sixteen airport terminals in the U.S. and offers massage services, as well as some spa services. Massage Bar is currently in ten U.S. airports.

**Zen Massage Centers** has opened locations near Charlotte, North Carolina and Tampa Bay, Florida and is also offering massage therapy franchises. They offer basic massage sessions for \$40.

**Elements Therapeutic Massage** also looks to become a major franchise in the massage therapy industry. They currently have over 500 wellness studios.

Other companies expanding in the market include **The Great American Backrub**, **The Great Metropolitan Backrub** and several other regional chains.

### ***The Massage Therapy Profession — Things to Consider:***

As with most people in the United States, the economy is a major concern for massage therapists. This shows itself in increases in bartering, in an increase in the percent of therapists whose business declined in the past year, and in other concerns about the industry.

Therapists are diversifying, working more places and specializing in different techniques.

With the increase in the number of spas, and the number of national franchises, there are more opportunities for employment for massage therapists.

Health care providers and insurance companies are beginning to recognize massage therapy as a treatment and preventative measure for many types of injuries, creating new opportunities for massage therapists.

## Section 3 — A Special Look at Health Care and the Massage Industry

Health care is now a major arena that affects the demand for and acceptance of massage therapy. As massage becomes more integrated by health care providers in the United States, this will open up new opportunities for massage therapists.

Issues relating to massage therapy and health care include:

- 3A. The Health Care Boom
- 3B. Health Care Providers Discussing Massage Therapy with Patients
- 3C. Health Care, CAM and Massage Therapy
- 3D. Massage and Insurance
- 3E. Integration of Massage into Health Care

### 3A. The Health Care Boom

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>11</sup> health care is the largest industry in the United States, employing more than 14 million people. Employment in health care is expected to grow by three million jobs between 2006 and 2016. Currently, seven of the twenty fastest growing occupations are health care related. As more massage therapists work in health care settings, and more consumers look at massage therapy as a part of health care, **growth in the health care sector will significantly impact the future of massage therapy.**

#### *The growth in health care is providing jobs for massage therapists*

From 2005 to 2006, the percentage of massage therapists who worked in a health care environment increased from 10 to 13 percent. In 2008, that number increased to 27 percent. This trend is only expected to grow<sup>5</sup>.

According to the *2008 AMTA Industry Survey* results, many massage therapists currently earn additional income from jobs in health care:

58 percent of massage therapists have another job beyond massage therapy.

35 percent of those therapists work in a health care position.

This makes health care the number one profession massage therapists work in beyond massage.

#### *Some massage therapists are transitioning into other health care careers*

Even though massage is growing, the health care industry is growing at a faster rate. Because of this, massage therapists are being recruited to nursing schools, physical therapy programs, and other health care careers. In interviews with massage therapists who've left the profession, we found that some are pursuing careers in nursing or other health care professions. In fact, we have heard from many former AMTA members who were actively recruited by hospitals or nursing schools to change careers.

Because of the shortage of health care providers in many areas, hospitals sometimes offer enticements including:

- Offering to pay for the tuition for a candidate

- Giving them a substantial signing bonus

- Offering a generous salary if the candidate will sign a contract for three to five years<sup>4</sup>

### **3B. Health Care Providers Discussing Massage Therapy with Patients**

With the growth in the popularity and use of massage therapy, more people are discussing massage therapy with their doctors and health care providers. More health care professionals are recommending massage therapy as part of a patient's overall health.

#### ***Consumers are discussing massage with their health care providers***

Over twenty-eight million American adults have discussed massage therapy with their doctors or health care providers. Based on the 2008 *Consumer Survey* results:

- Women are more likely than men to have discussed massage therapy with their doctors (17 percent vs. 10 percent).

- Men are more likely to have massages for medical reasons than women (33 percent vs. 30 percent).<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Physicians, chiropractors and physical therapists are recommending massage***

More than half (57 percent) of consumers who discussed massage therapy with a doctor said their doctor strongly recommended or encouraged it, and only 6 percent discouraged it. While physicians led the way in recommending massage (50 percent), chiropractors (47 percent) and physical therapists (40 percent) also recommended massage when patients discussed massage therapy with a doctor or a health care provider.<sup>3</sup>

More than two-thirds of massage therapists (69 percent) indicate they receive referrals from health care professionals, averaging 1.5 referrals per month. By setting, the most referrals are received by massage therapists working:

- In a health care setting (2.2 per month)

- As a contractor (1.8 per month)

- As a sole practitioner (1.4 per month)<sup>5</sup>

### **3C. Health Care, CAM and Massage Therapy**

There has been growing interest in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the United States. With increasing health care costs, many consumers look to CAM for cost-effective treatment options for a variety of conditions. Here are the results of two most recent studies on CAM and massage therapy:

### ***National Health Statistics CAM Report***

In December 2008, a report entitled “*Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007*” was released. This report draws from statistics from the 2007 National Health Interview Survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The most interesting findings of the study include<sup>7</sup>:

Nearly four in ten adults (38 percent) have used one or more CAM therapies in the past 12 months.

Approximately twelve percent of children had used a CAM therapy in the past 12 months.

Between 2002 and 2007, the CAM therapies that saw increased use were deep breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, acupuncture, massage therapy and naturopathy.

Of the CAM therapies listed, the highest percentage of adults reported using:

- Non-vitamin, non-mineral, natural products (17.7 percent)
- Deep breathing exercises (12.7 percent)
- Meditation (9.4 percent)
- Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation (8.6 percent)
- Massage (8.3 percent)
- Yoga (6.1 percent)

Adults use CAM therapies for:

- Back pain or problems (17.1 percent)
- Neck pain or problems (5.9 percent)
- Joint pain or stiffness, or other joint conditions (5.2 percent)
- Arthritis (3.5 percent)

Females (42.8 percent) are more likely to use CAM therapies than males (33.5 percent).

The more education someone has completed, the more likely they are to have used CAM therapies in the past 12 months:

- Less than high school (20.8 percent)
- High School Graduate or GED recipient (31 percent)
- Some college, no degree (45 percent)
- Associate or Arts Degree (47.2 percent)
- Bachelor or Arts or Science Degree (49.6 percent)
- Masters, Doctorate, Professional Degree (55.4 percent)

### ***Results from Health Forum Survey of Hospitals***

In 2007, the American Hospital Association also conducted research on the use of CAM. In 2008, the results of the *2007 Complementary and Alternative Medicine Survey* were released. Here are some of its main findings:

The number of hospitals offering CAM has grown from 7.7 percent in 1998 to 37.3 percent in 2007.

Of those hospitals that offer CAM therapies, massage therapy is offered by 70.7 percent. For hospitals that offer CAM, 40 percent offer massage therapy services for inpatients, and 53.9 percent offer massage therapy on an outpatient basis.

Stress related issues are one of the major reasons why hospitals offer massage. 71.2 percent of hospitals that offer massage offer it for stress reduction for patients, and 69.1 percent of hospitals that offer massage offer it to staff to reduce stress.

Of the hospitals that offer massage, some of the other most prevalent populations served and/or reasons for massage include:

- 1) Pain management (66 percent)
- 2) Massage for cancer patients (57 percent)
- 3) Pregnancy massage (55 percent)
- 4) Part of physical therapy (53 percent)
- 5) For mobility/movement training (45 percent)
- 6) Palliative care (41 percent)

### **3D. Massage and Insurance**

#### ***Insurance and consumer use***

According to AMTA's 2008 Consumer Survey, 60 percent of Americans would like to have their health care insurance plan cover massage. The only group that did not have a strong reaction to whether massage is covered by insurance was those over 65 years of age.

#### ***Insurance reimbursement and massage therapists***

Fifteen percent of all massage therapists accepted insurance reimbursement in 2008, a two point drop from the previous year.<sup>5</sup> One reason for this decrease is the growth in the number of massage professionals, specifically in the spa or salon setting. The spa setting is historically the least likely to seek insurance reimbursement for massage therapy.

Massage therapists who seek insurance reimbursement have found it to be a viable business practice:

The average amount of reimbursement received for one hour of massage has increased from \$56 in 2004 to \$71 in 2008, which is more than the national average paid for one hour of massage.

Eighty-three percent of massage therapists who received insurance reimbursement indicated that it is a worthwhile practice for their business.

Of massage therapists that seek insurance reimbursement:

- 63 percent receive their billed rate
- 29 percent receive a discounted rate
- 12 percent receive a flat rate from the insurance company
- 9 percent receive some other type of reimbursement

### **3E. Integration of Massage Therapy into Health Care**

#### ***Massage therapists support integration of massage therapy into health care***

According to data from the last two years of the AMTA Industry Survey, a great majority of the respondents (92 percent in 2006 and 96 percent in 2008) agree that massage therapy should be considered as part of the health care field.

### ***Need for more research in massage***

In 2005, the Institute of Medicine released a report entitled *Complementary and Alternative Medicine in the United States*. Within this report, it was stated that, “Treatments, whether conventional medicine or CAM, should be tested according to the same general research principles and standards. However, innovative methods to test some therapies may need to be devised.”

There are several organizations, such as the Massage Therapy Foundation, that are in the process of funding or conducting scientific research. Even though there have been many studies that have shown CAM to be effective in treating certain illnesses or injuries, more research is needed to fully integrate massage therapy and other CAM therapies into health care.

### ***Health Care and the Massage Industry — Things to Consider:***

Health care is the top career therapists had before transitioning into the massage therapy industry.

The growth in health care may also be a reason therapists transition *out* of massage therapy into other health related careers.

A decreasing number of massage therapists seek reimbursement from insurance companies, largely due to the growing number of therapists who work at spas.

Massage therapists who seek insurance reimbursement find it to be a viable and worthwhile business practice.

As CAM therapies become more widely covered by insurance, CAM will become more fully integrated into health care.

## Section 4 — Training and Education of Massage Therapists

There are many things that factor into the success of massage therapy schools and their graduates. This section takes an in-depth look at demographics, challenges and opportunities that affect schools and students. These include:

- 4A. Hours and Types of Training
- 4B. Quality of Massage Training
- 4C. Factors that Most Influence Massage School Selection
- 4D. Massage Schools-Trends and Demographics
- 4E. Massage Schools-Accreditation
- 4F. General Factors Affecting Massage Schools
- 4G. Number of Massage Students Graduating
- 4H. Massage Student Demographics

### 4A. Hours and Types of Training

The average number of hours for massage therapists' initial training declined for the first time in 2008. More specifically:

The average amount of initial training was 633 hours, a decline of 55 hours from last year (see Figure 16).

Massage therapists reporting the most initial training hours, on average, were those who:

- Work as contractors (656 hours)
- Have positions in health care (647 hours)
- Practice in spa/salon settings (646 hours)

Sole practitioners, with an average of 618 hours, reported having the least amount of initial training<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 16. Hours of initial training.**

	<b>Hours of Initial Training</b>			
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Less than 500</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>500-600</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>601-700</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>701-900</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>901-1,000</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>More than 1,000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Average Number of Hours</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>633</b>

**9 out of 10 massage therapists participate in ongoing continuing education**

Ninety-two percent of massage therapists who responded to the 2008 AMTA Industry Survey took continuing education classes in 2008. Therapists reported obtaining an average of 25 hours of CE in a year.

The top continuing education courses massage therapists plan to take in the next 12 months are:

- Classes for new modalities (69 percent)
- Advanced training for specific modalities (52 percent)
- Massage training for a specific population (32 percent)
- Ethics (27 percent)
- Business skills (13 percent)<sup>5</sup>

**New massage therapists want to use their training to start a business**

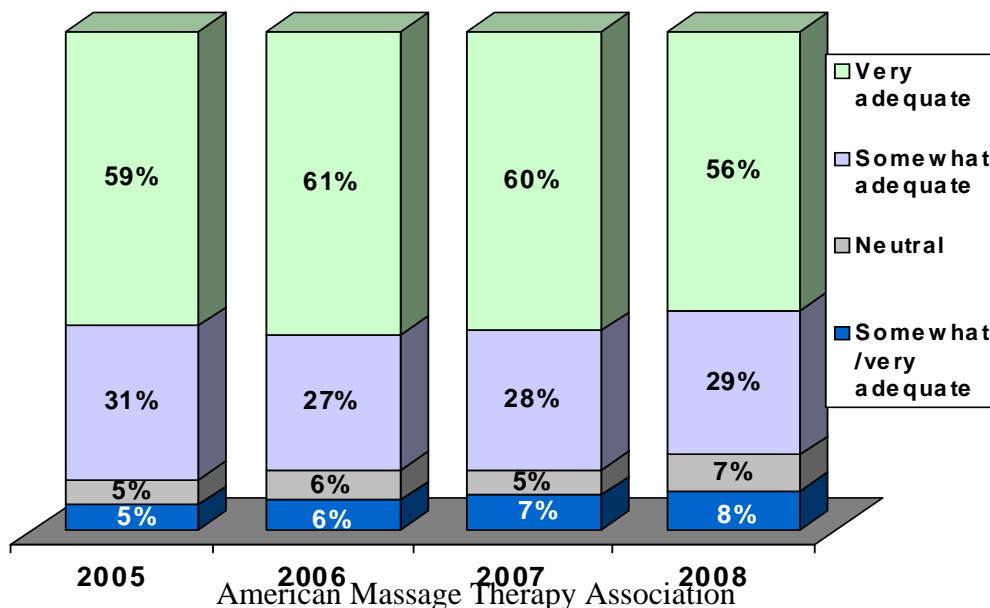
2008 saw a change (from 2007) in how new massage therapists said they planned to use their training upon graduation:

- 54 percent of massage therapists went into the massage industry with the intention of starting their own business, a decline from 62 percent in 2007.
- 38 percent went into the industry to practice part-time, up from 31 percent in 2007.
- 51 percent of massage therapists, practicing in all types of work settings, would like to work more hours, by an average of 14 more hours per week.
- Part-time massage therapists and those employed at spas/salons want the most hours — an average of 15-16 more hours per week.<sup>5</sup>

**4B. Quality of Massage Training**

According to the 2008 AMTA Industry Survey, most massage therapists continue to feel that their initial massage training was adequate for their career choice (see Figure 17). Therapists who graduated from programs with fewer than 500 hours of training were less likely to feel that their initial training prepared them adequately for practice.

**Figure 17. Perception about quality of initial massage training.**



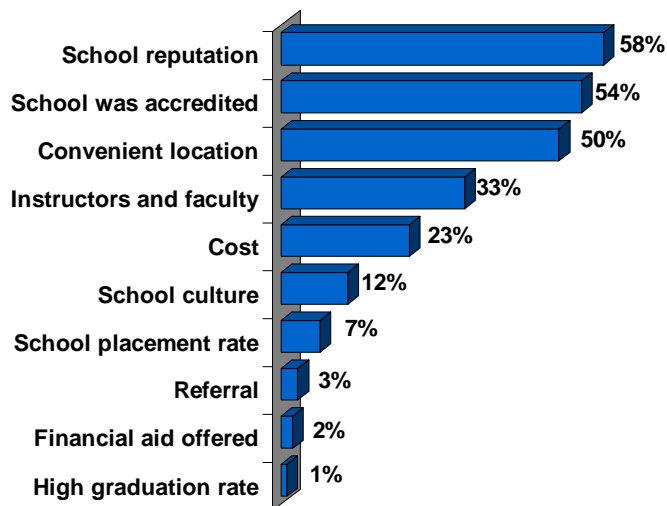
### ***Therapists wish they had more business training***

When asked what they wished they were taught in more detail in school, massage therapists most frequently mentioned business skills (57 percent). The most frequent topics requested were: building or maintaining a practice, business practices/management, marketing/advertising<sup>5</sup>. Schools might consider including more information about building and managing a business in their massage therapy programs.

## **4C. Factors that Most Influence Massage School Selection**

According to the results of the *AMTA Body of Knowledge Survey* conducted in December 2006, reputation, accreditation, and location are the most influential factors in school selection (see Figure 18). These factors should be considered by schools wishing to distinguish themselves from their competition.

**Figure 18. Top factors influencing massage school selection.**



## 4D. Massage Schools—Trends and Demographics

### *Massage schools have many differences*

The results of the 2008 AMTA School Survey show that within the school market for massage therapy training, there are many differences based on the type of school. These include:

**Age** — Sixty nine percent of the schools participating in the survey were established in year 2000 or before. Massage schools within public institutions tend to be younger than schools that are individually owned or part of a larger corporation.

**Number of locations** — On average, massage schools have 2.4 locations, while schools that are part of larger corporations average as high as 4.9 locations. In 2007 the average massage school had 2.1 locations. This average is increasing as schools open new locations or buy existing schools.

**Graduation rates** — Massage schools graduate an average of 43.8 students per year, while schools that are part of larger corporations graduate as many as 65.1 students. This is down from 2007 when massage schools graduated 49.5 students per year.

**Figure 19. School profile information.**

	School Type			Age of School		
	Total	Individually Owned	Part of Larger Corporation	Public Institution	2001 or Newer	2000 or Older
Average number of locations	2.4	1.9	4.9	1.6	2.6	2.3
Average number of graduates per year	43.8	45.3	65.1	26	36.5	47.1
Average in-class supervised hours required (entry-level program)	688	638	757	734	696	684
Average clinical hours required (entry-level program)	75	67	84	82	82	72
Average cost-per-hour of entry level program before financial aid	\$12.2	\$12.4	\$15.0	\$10.5	\$10.6	\$12.7
<u>Length of Operation</u>						
2001 or newer	31%	31%	22%	39%	100%	0%
2000 or older	69%	69%	78%	61%	0%	100%

**Length of programs** — On average, schools require 688 in-class supervised hours and 75 clinical hours in their entry programs. Corporate massage programs require the highest number of hours, while schools that are individually owned require the least.

**Cost** — The average cost per hour for entry-level massage programs is \$12.2 before any financial aid. This is up from \$11.2 last year. Schools that were part of larger corporations typically charged the most (\$15.0) and public institutions typically charged the least (\$10.5) for an average hour of entry-level study.

### ***Attrition rates***

On average, 15 percent of all students that enter an entry-level massage program will not graduate. Attrition rates vary greatly by school. Over 42 percent of schools have an attrition rate of less than 10 percent. However, over 10 percent of schools have an attrition rate of over 30 percent. Individually owned massage schools tend to have lower attrition rates, and public institutions tend to have higher rates.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Most massage instructors are part-time employees***

The average massage school employs 5.8 part-time instructors. Seventeen percent of schools don't employ any part-time instructors.

The average massage school employs 1.7 full-time massage instructors. Twenty-eight percent of massage schools don't employ any full-time instructors, and only 6 percent employ more than five full-time instructors.

The average school hires 2.7 independent contractors to teach in their massage therapy program.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Experience of instructors varies***

The average instructor in a massage therapy program has 6.5 years of teaching experience, although many have much more or much less. On average:

- 4.4 percent of instructors have less than a year
- 8.2 percent of instructors have 1-2 years
- 34.1 percent of instructors have 3-5 years
- 25.8 percent of instructors have 6-8 years
- 8.3 percent of instructors have 9-11 years
- 19.2 percent of instructors have over 11 years<sup>9</sup>

### ***Schools with 500-plus hour programs***

According to periodic AMTA reviews and inquiries into the industry, from February 2007 to February 2008 the number of schools offering a 500-plus hour program increased (see Figure 20), even though many schools are closing. This is occurring for two reasons. First, many existing schools are opening new locations. Secondly, Texas schools are beginning to offer 500-hour programs due to the recent licensing change in the state. The number of schools that require less than 500-hours is declining as these schools transition to 500 or more hours to meet state requirements.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Programs in the US with 500-plus hours</b>
2001	647
2003	867
2005	1,128
2006	1,134
2007	1,128
2008	1,167

**Figure 20. Number of 500-plus massage school programs.**

There has been huge growth in the school market between 2001 and 2006, but additional growth has not occurred since that time.

#### 4E. Massage Schools – Accreditation

The numbers of massage schools that are accredited by each of the accrediting organizations have been fairly consistent from 2006 to 2007. However, in 2008 ABHES has seen a large increase with 24 new massage institutions becoming accredited, and 13 new massage school campuses. ACCET and ACCSCT saw a notable decrease in the number of massage institutions being accredited, but a rise in the number of campuses those institutions served.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 21. Accreditation numbers.

Accrediting Organization	2005 Numbers		2006 Numbers		2007 Numbers		2008 Numbers	
	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)	Institutions	Campuses (Including Main)
ABHES	43	69	45	73	51	79	75	92
ACCET	22	84	26	97	29	90	21	118
ACCSCT	101	173	103	193	111	190	109	202
COMTA	54	72	55	78	60	84	61	92
NACCAS	37	62	47	76	62	94	53	73

#### 4F. General Factors Affecting Massage Schools<sup>9</sup>

Massage schools report facing a variety of challenges. These seem to depend largely on the type of institution, whether a public institution, an individually owned massage school or a massage school that is part of a larger corporation.

**Individually owned massage schools** — Attracting students and difficulty in marketing their schools and programs are their biggest challenges. Another challenge for individually owned schools is the high cost of products/services needed for the school. These challenges revolve around having needed resources to attract students and run their business, and may not be quite as prevalent in larger institutions.

**Massage schools as part of larger corporations** — Difficulties in attracting students and finding qualified teachers topped their list of challenges. They reported having fewer difficulties in keeping in touch with their graduates than the other two categories of massage schools, and virtually no challenges related to obtaining industry information or trends, obtaining accreditation, or having access to insurance.

**Public institutions with separate massage programs** — These programs say they struggle with keeping in touch with graduates, marketing their program and attracting students. Of these, attracting students is the least challenging since public institutions are subsidized by tax dollars and have other programs to attract students.

**Figure 22. Top challenges affecting massage schools.**

	Total	School Type		
		Individually Owned	Part of Larger Corporation	Public Institution
Difficulty in attracting students	47%	51%	50%	36%
Difficulty in marketing school/programs	43%	49%	28%	39%
Difficulty in keeping in touch with graduates	26%	22%	17%	39%
Difficulty in finding qualified teachers	23%	14%	33%	32%
High cost of products/services needed for school	17%	25%	17%	7%
Difficulty in finding employment for graduates	16%	8%	28%	18%
Difficulty in competing with other massage schools	16%	22%	17%	7%
High student drop-out rates	14%	6%	28%	21%
Lack of current information about industry trends, facts, demographics	14%	12%	0%	21%
Rising insurance costs	11%	14%	11%	7%
Difficulty in obtaining/retaining school accreditation	11%	20%	0%	4%
Lack of guidelines/hiring practices for teachers	6%	4%	11%	7%
Difficulty in evaluating students/school	4%	4%	6%	4%
Difficulty in developing curriculum	3%	2%	6%	4%
Insurance access	2%	2%	0%	4%

Note that many other challenges were also mentioned by schools. Some of the responses to the open ended questions related to issues of getting financial aid for students, the overall preparedness of students, and issues relating to state regulation.

#### **4G. Number of Massage Students Graduating**

##### ***The number of new graduates is declining***

Traditionally, in poor economic times enrollment in educational programs increases as those displaced from the workforce go back to school. During the recession of 2001-2002 schools of all types, including massage schools, saw an increasing enrollment. With the current recession, this is not the case.

One reason that schools are struggling to increase enrollments is the lack of availability of credit in the form of government loans, grants, and privately funded school loans. Over 40 percent of massage school administrators stated that it is more difficult for students to receive financial aid than in year's past.

According to the December 22, 2008 issue of *Business Week*, there has even been a 2 percent drop in graduate degrees, which increased dramatically during past recessions.

As a direct result, the number of new graduates coming out of massage therapy programs declined from 2007 to 2008. According to the *2007 AMTA Massage School Survey*, the average number of graduates of 500-plus hour massage schools was approximately 49.5 graduates per year. In 2008, that number dropped to 43.8 graduates per year. This corresponds with observations made by school administrators (in surveys and at the COS 2008 Leadership Conference) about declining enrollment and graduation numbers.

#### ***Employment for new graduates***

While getting ready to graduate, some students may find it difficult to find a job in massage therapy, or find a job that will support their practice until they can build up a client base. This is one of the major reasons why new therapists leave the profession.

Roughly 31 percent of schools have a formal placement program for graduates. In these schools, over 80 percent of graduates find employment in massage therapy after graduation. Roughly 58 percent of schools provide only a job board or book that students can use to look for jobs, and about 10 percent of schools do not offer placement services at all.<sup>8</sup>

## **4H. Massage Student Demographics**

#### ***The average student age is declining***

Nearly sixty percent (57.8 percent) of school administrators responded that the average age of students has declined at their school in the past five years, according to the *2008 AMTA Massage School Survey*. School administrators estimate that the average student is 30 years old, with 36.6 percent being 25 years old or less.

#### ***The percentage of men in massage school is higher than the percentage of male therapists***

According to school administrators, roughly 22 percent of massage students are male, compared to 12 percent of practicing massage therapists. Additionally, 24 percent of administrators reported that the percentage of males in school has increased over the past five years, yet the percentage of males practicing massage has declined during this time period.

#### ***Students are coming into massage school with different skills***

In the *2008 AMTA Massage School Survey*, school administrators were asked what skills today's students are bringing to the classroom compared to year's past. In response, most mentioned computer and technology skills. Most felt that today's students were more comfortable with technology, had more experience using technology and were better at finding information and doing research on the Internet.

When asked how students today compare to students five years ago, school administrators observed that students lack written communication skills, verbal communication skills, and the kind of life experience that would benefit them in the classroom, as well as in their career. Some administrators say that the younger students enrolling in massage school don't always have the skills needed to be successful in a massage therapy program.

***Training and Education of Massage Therapists — Things to Consider:***

Massage therapists continue to take many hours of continuing education per year.

A school's reputation, accreditation, and location are the most influential factors for students selecting massage schools.

The biggest challenge for *all* types of massage schools is attracting students. Schools must distinguish themselves.

Schools might consider including more information about building and managing a business in their massage therapy programs.

School administrators say that students today are much better at using technology to learn. But they are less effective when it comes to skills such as written and verbal communication.

## Appendix

### *List of Sources*

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.
- <sup>2</sup> From data compiled from *AMTA Consumer Surveys*.
- <sup>3</sup> *2008 AMTA Consumer Survey*.
- <sup>4</sup> *2007 AMTA Consumer Survey*.
- <sup>5</sup> From data compiled by AMTA, 2008.
- <sup>6</sup> *2008 AMTA Industry Survey*.
- <sup>7</sup> Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007. National Health Statistics Reports; No. 12.
- <sup>8</sup> *2006 AMTA Body of Knowledge Survey*.
- <sup>9</sup> *2008 AMTA Massage School Survey*.
- <sup>10</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition*, Massage Therapists.
- <sup>11</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics website, U.S. Department of Labor, *Career Guide to Industry*, Health Care.

### *About the American Massage Therapy Association*

The American Massage Therapy Association® represents more than 57,000 massage therapists. 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 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 1 (877) 905-2700. If consent is granted, attribution to AMTA and other sources specified in the document should be made. All rights reserved.

**AMTA Member Price: \$40.00; Non-Member Price: \$50.00.**

Copyright ©2008 AMTA

MTstudents.com Inc. is a leading provider of innovative visual curriculum resources for (500+ hour) Massage Therapy Programs. Their unique line of resources – which utilize TODAY’S technologies for TODAY’S students - have set a new standard in cost effective visual tools for Massage Therapy Programs.

MTstudents.com resources have provided innovative, time saving solutions Massage Therapy programs throughout Canada and the US (including Everest College, ICT Kikkawa College, and Canadian College of Health Sciences & Technology).

Visit [www.mtstudents.com](http://www.mtstudents.com) or call Dwayne directly at (416) 417-9971.

