

# 2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

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# Introduction

The Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) collects information on the rural GP workforce to assist with the recruitment and retention of GPs in rural practices.

Information is collected on an ongoing basis from several sources<sup>1</sup> including RWAV's annual survey of GPs and practices. Our GP and practice survey is distributed in September to all GPs and practices in Victoria within the boundaries of the rural Divisions of General Practice.

This report contains information on the demographics and workforce participation of the rural GP workforce and the composition of medical practices in rural towns within the GP Association of Geelong (GPAG).

RWAV would like to thank the rural Divisions of General Practice for their continued support and assistance with the GP and practice survey.

## Highlights<sup>2</sup>

- 55 rural GPs (57 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within the Division – which is 5% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division has approximately 6% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,278 rural residents
- The rural GP workforce is ageing – the average age of rural GPs within the Division is 46.4 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time rural GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 8.1 years
- 28% of rural GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours or retire within the next 5 years
- There are 14 rural practices within the Division of which 36% are solo practices

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1) Data sources include the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria online list of medical practitioners, Divisions of General Practice, contact with practitioners and other medical practice staff, RWAV's annual telephone survey of practices and RWAV's annual mail survey of GPs and practices.

2) The information in this report was current as at 30 November 2007.

# Rural GP workforce profile

There are 1,220 GPs practising in rural<sup>3</sup> Victoria. Of these, 140 (11%) are registrars.

This section presents information on the demographics of the permanent GP workforce within GPAG. As the placement terms of GP registrars are short term – typically ranging from six to twelve months, they are not part of the permanent workforce and thus have not been included in this section.

Five percent (5%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce works principally in a location within GPAG and the Division covers approximately 6% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,278 rural residents.

The number of rural GPs (headcount and full-time equivalent - FTE) within the Division is presented in Table 1.

FTE values were created based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of full-time work - which is 35 or more hours per week. For GPs this would equate to 9 or more sessions per week of 3.9 hours in duration<sup>4</sup>. Please note that the FTE calculation is based on clinical hours worked in GP practices only, not total hours worked in all settings.

A profile of the GP workforce within the Division, by Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA), gender, age and country of qualification, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1:** Headcount and FTE of rural GPs within GPAG

	Headcount	FTE
GPA Geelong	55	57

**Note:** Rural only (excludes RRMA 2)

**Table 2:** Profile of rural GPs within GPAG (N=55)

RRMA		
3		
4	29	53%
5	26	47%
7		
Gender		
Males	39	71%
Females	16	29%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	48.7	
Females	40.2	
Overall	46.4	
*Missing age data for 8 GPs (5 males and 3 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	46	84%
International graduates	9	16%

3) Defined as Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) three to seven classified locations.

4) Consistent with this, the average session length reported by GPs in RWAVs 2007 GP survey is 3.9 hours.

The gender composition the GP workforce within the Division is consistent with that of the GP workforce across rural Victoria (where females comprise 30%).

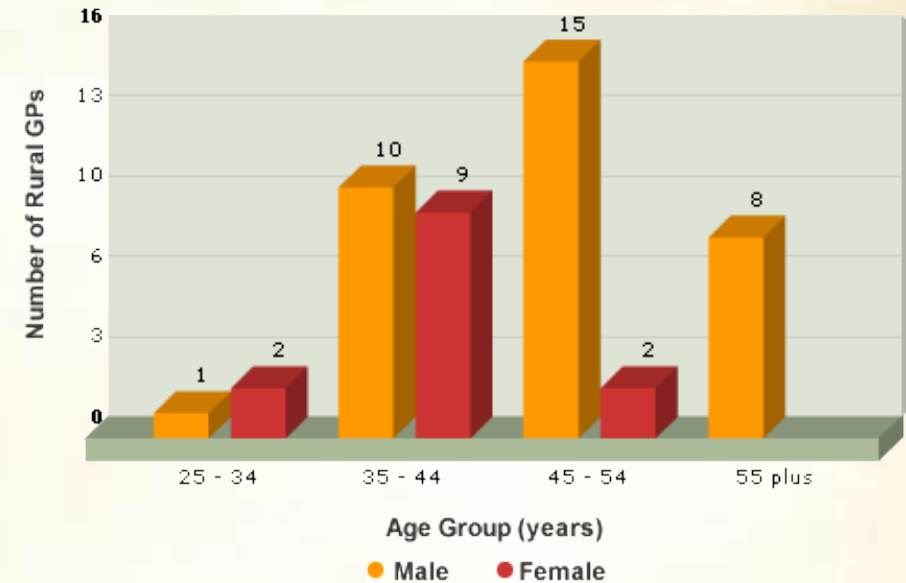
The average age of rural GPs within GPAG is younger compared to rural Victoria overall (46.4 years compared to 49.5 years respectively).

The distribution of male and female GPs within GPAG across age groups is displayed in Figure 1.

Within the Division, the highest number of rural GPs are in the 35 – 44 year age group. This differs to rural Victoria overall – where the highest number of GPs are aged 45 – 54 years.

The Division also has fewer rural GPs aged over 55 compared to rural Victoria overall (17% compared to 27% respectively).

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within GPAG by gender and age groups (N=47)



## International Medical Graduates

There are proportionally fewer international medical graduates (IMGs) within the Division compared to rural Victoria overall. IMGs comprise 16% of the rural workforce within GPAG, compared to 34% of the GP workforce across rural Victoria.

The IMGs practising within the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 8 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in the United Kingdom (4%).

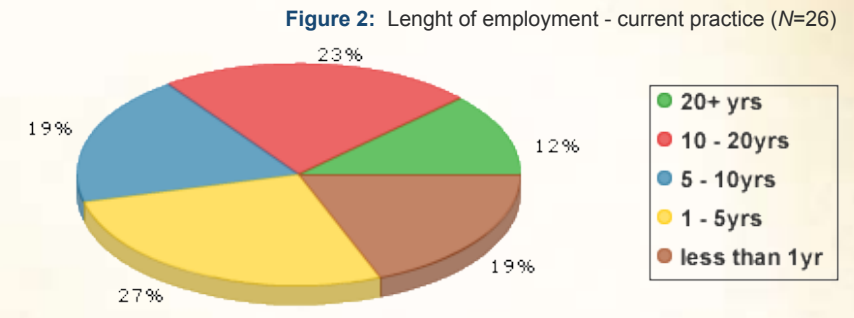
# 2007 GP survey results<sup>5</sup>

## Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within GPAG have worked at their current practice is 8.1 years.

Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for between 1 and 5 years (27%). Refer to figure 2.

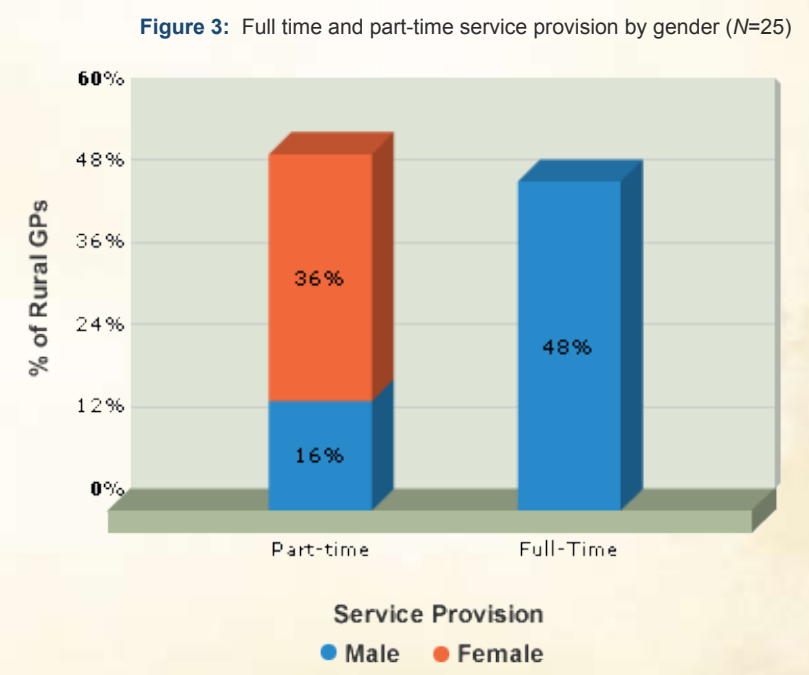
Over half (54%) of GP respondents within the Division have worked at their current practice for fewer than 5 years.



## Full-time and part-time service provision

ABS definitions of full-time work (35 or more hours per week) and part-time work (less than 35 hours per week) were used to estimate service provision, based on weekly clinical GP hours (self-reported)<sup>6</sup>. The data is presented in figure 3.

Less than half (46%) of GP respondents within GPAG work full-time. This compares to 65% full-time and 35% part-time for GPs across rural Victoria.



5) This section presents information on GPs within GPAG who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=26), excluding registrars

6) Based on clinical hours worked in practices and not total hours worked i.e. does not include time spent in other settings (e.g. hospitals) or performing other roles (e.g. teaching).

## Procedural work

Twelve percent (12%) of rural GP respondents within GPAG regularly undertake procedural work. This includes: anaesthetics - regional and general, obstetrics - normal deliveries, lower segment caesarean section (LSCS) and non-LSCS, and operative surgery.

## Emergency care

Sixty two percent (62%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care.

## Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within GPAG most commonly report a period of 10 or more years (39%). This is followed by 1 to 5 years (28%), 5 to 10 years (22%) and less than 1 year (11%).

Over half (56%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. One-third (33%) of GPs are not expecting to make any changes and 11% are unsure.

Of those who hope to make changes, half (50%) would like to reduce their hours or retire.

# Practices

There are 14 rural GP practices within GPAG. Just over one-third (36%) are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 55 rural GPs within the Division:

- 9% work principally in solo practice
- 15% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 76% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

Within the Division, GPs also provide services to 2 branch practices.

## Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey<sup>7</sup> most commonly reported practice ownership as partnership (38%) or individual (38%).

## Other health professionals

Almost two-thirds (63%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and three-quarters (75%) report that they have a nurse working at the practice.

Sites with a practice nurse were asked to indicate which services the nurse provides. Responses are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Practice types

Division of General Practice	Group	Solo	Total
GPA Geelong	9	5	14
% of total Victoria rural practices	4%	5%	4%

**Table 4:** Services provided by practice nurses (N=6)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	6	100%
Asthma education	4	67%
Diabetes education	5	83%
Extended consultations	1	17%
Immunisation	6	100%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	0	0%
Pathology	2	33%
Women's health	0	0%

<sup>7</sup>) A response to the practice survey was received from 8 rural GP practices within GPAG