

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

Mallee Division of General Practice

Introduction

Rural GP workforce profile

2007 GP survey results

Practices



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 sources¹ 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 Victorian towns within the Mallee Division of General Practice (MDGP or "the Division").

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

Highlights²

- 52 Victorian GPs (54 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within MDGP – which is 5% of the Victorian rural GP workforce
- The Division covers approximately 6% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1465 residents
- Victorian GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of GPs is 50.1 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time Victorian GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 10.5 years
- 25% of Victorian GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours within the next 5 years
- There are 20 Victorian practices within the Division of which 70% are solo practices

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 rural³ Victoria. Of these, 140 (11%) are registrars.

This section presents information on the demographics of the permanent Victorian GP workforce within MDGP. 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 work principally in a location within MDGP, and the Division covers approximately 6% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1465 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 duration⁴. 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 MDGP

	Headcount	FTE
Mallee DGP	52	54

Note: Victoria only (Excludes NSW)

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within MDGP (N=52)

RRMA		
3		
4	34	65%
5	17	33%
7	1	2%
Gender		
Males	44	85%
Females	8	15%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	50.6	
Females	47.9	
Overall	50.1	
*Missing age data for 5 GPs (4 males and 1 female)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	24	46%
International graduates	28	54%

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 of the GP workforce within MDGP differs to that of rural Victoria overall. Females comprise 15% of the workforce within the Division, which is a considerably lower proportion compared to rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce.

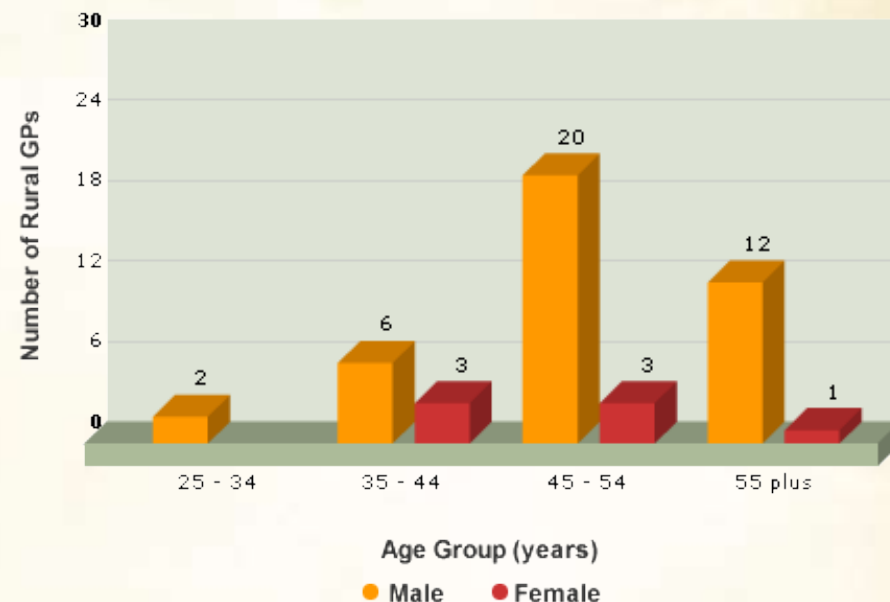
The age profile of Victorian GPs within the Division is consistent with the age profile of the rural Victorian GP workforce overall - where the average age is 49.5 and females, on average, are younger than their male counterparts.

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

Within the Division, the highest number of GPs is in the 45 to 54 year age group. This is consistent with rural Victoria overall, however, proportionally the Division has more GPs in this age group. Almost half (49%) of GPs within the Division are aged 45 to 54 years, compared to 44% across rural Victoria.

Over one-quarter (28%) of GPs within the Division are aged over 55.

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



International Medical Graduates

There are proportionally more international medical graduates (IMGs) within MDGP compared to rural Victoria overall. Over half (54%) of Victorian GPs within the Division gained their basic medical qualification overseas – compared to 34% of rural GPs across Victoria.

The IMGs practicing in MDGP gained their basic medical qualification from 16 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in Iraq (13%), followed by the United Kingdom and Ireland (12% combined), India (4%) and Pakistan (4%).

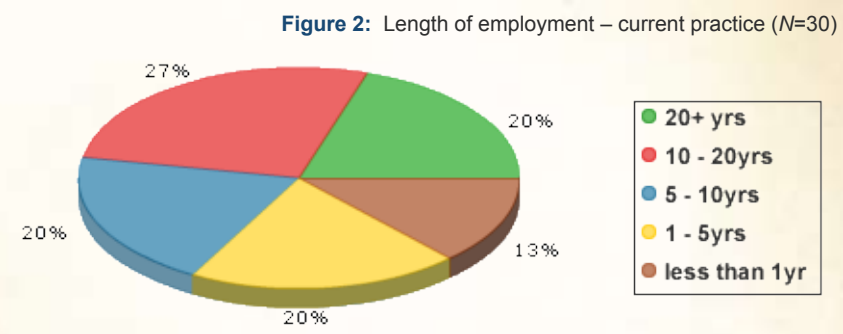
2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice is 10.5 years.

Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for 10 to 20 years (Figure 2).

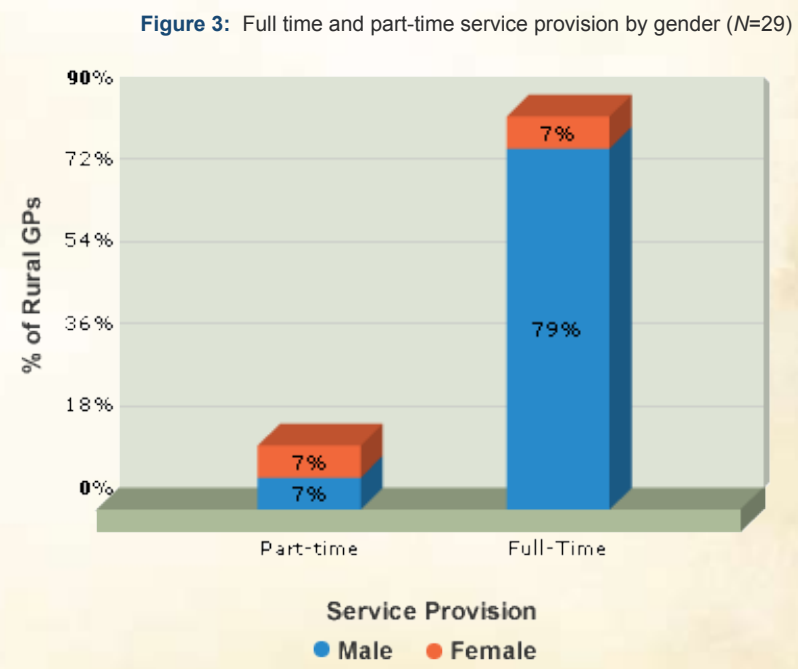
Almost half (47%) of GPs have worked at their current practice for more than 10 years – suggesting fairly stable patterns of GP availability within the Division.



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)⁶. The data is presented in Figure 3.

Within the Division 86% of GP respondents work full-time, and the majority (92%) of full-time practitioners are male. This compares to 65% full-time and 35% part-time for GPs across rural Victoria.



⁵) This section presents information on GPs within MDGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=30), 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).

Hours worked

The average total hours worked per week by GPs within MDGP is 50.1 hours (compared to 44.3 hours for GPs across rural Victoria). Total hours includes: clinical GP work, routine hospital work, teaching and supervising, GP representative work, travelling between practices and any other medical roles and activities, but does not include on call work.

Hospital VMO rights

Seventy seven (77%) of GP respondents within the Division have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

One-third (33%) of GP respondents within MDGP regularly undertake procedural work. The overwhelming majority (90%) of these are male. This includes: anaesthetics - regional and general, obstetrics - normal deliveries, lower segment caesarean section (LSCS) and non-LSCS, and operative surgery.

Emergency care and Aboriginal health

Sixty percent (60%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 40% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, almost two-thirds (65%) of GPs within MDGP report a period greater than 5 years. Forty three percent (43%) report a period of 5 to 10 years and 22% report a period of more than 10 years.

Just over one-third (35%) GPs intend to remain in their current location for less than 5 years.

Almost half (46%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. Forty two percent (42%) are not expecting to make any changes, while 12% are unsure.

Of those who hope to make changes, over half (55%) want to reduce their hours.

This information places a high need for aggressive recruitment strategies for this Division to ensure that those GPs reducing their hours are adequately replaced.

Practices

There are 20 Victorian GP practices within MDGP. Seventy percent (70%) of these are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 52 Victorian rural GPs within the Division:

- 29% work principally in solo practice
- 13% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 58% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

Within MDGP GPs also provide services to: 1 branch practice, 3 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and 4 Community Health Centres.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as individual (54%) or associateship (23%).

Other health professionals

Almost one-third (31%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 69% 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
Mallee DGP	6	14	20
% of total Victoria rural practices	3%	14%	6%

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=9)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	6	67%
Asthma education	2	22%
Diabetes education	3	33%
Extended consultations	3	33%
Immunisation	6	67%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	1	11%
Pathology	3	33%
Women's health	4	44%

⁷) A response to the practice survey was received from 13 rural GP practices within MDGP