

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

Murray-Plains 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 rural towns within the Murray-Plains Division of General Practice (MPDGP).

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

Highlights²

- 45 Victorian GPs (47 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within MPDGP – which is 4% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division covers approximately 4% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,068 residents
- GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of Victorian GPs is 49.4 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- 41% of Victorian GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours within the next 5 years
- There are 12 Victorian practices within the Division of which one-third 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 MPDGP. 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.

Four percent (4%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce work principally in a location within MPDGP, and the Division covers approximately 4% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,068 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 MPDGP

	Headcount	FTE
Murray-Plains DGP	45	47

Note: Victoria only (Excludes NSW). Includes the shared postcode of 3558

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within MPDGP (N=45)

RRMA		
3		
4	22	49%
5	23	51%
7		
Gender		
Males	35	78%
Females	10	22%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	51.0	
Females	44.1	
Overall	49.4	
*Missing age data for 3 GPs (3 males)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	28	62%
International graduates	17	38%

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 the Division differs to that of rural Victoria overall. Females comprise 22% of the Victorian workforce within MPDGP, which is lower than rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce.

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

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

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 (50% compared to 44% across rural Victoria).

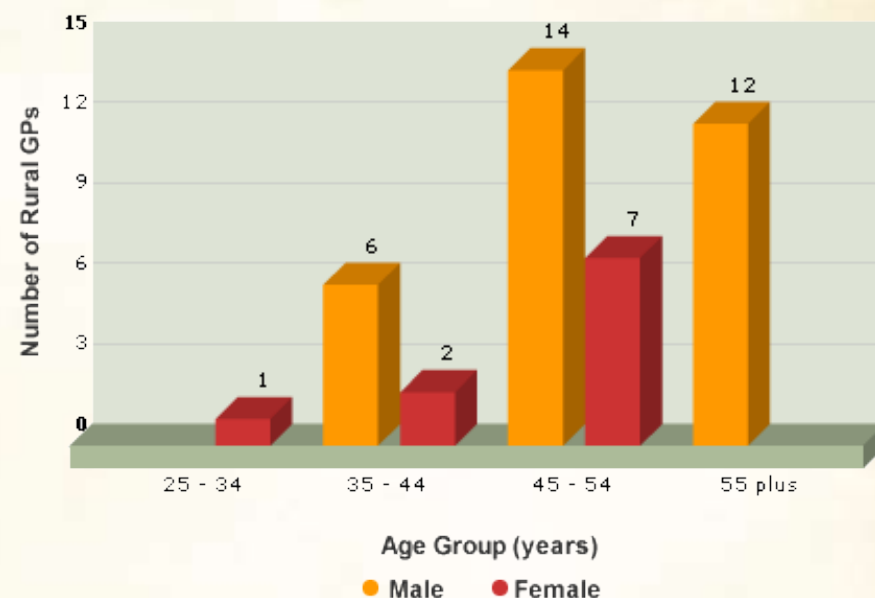
The Division has a similar proportion of GPs over the age of 55 compared to rural Victoria overall (29% compared to 27% respectively).

International Medical Graduates

Proportionally there are slightly more international medical graduates (IMGs) within MPDGP compared to rural Victoria overall. Thirty eight percent (38%) of Victorian GPs within the Division gained their basic medical qualification overseas – compared to 34% of rural GPs across rural Victoria.

The IMGs practicing in the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 13 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in Iraq (7%), the United Kingdom and Ireland (7% combined), and Egypt (4%).

Figure 1: Composition of the Victoria GP workforce within MPDGP by gender and age groups (N=42)



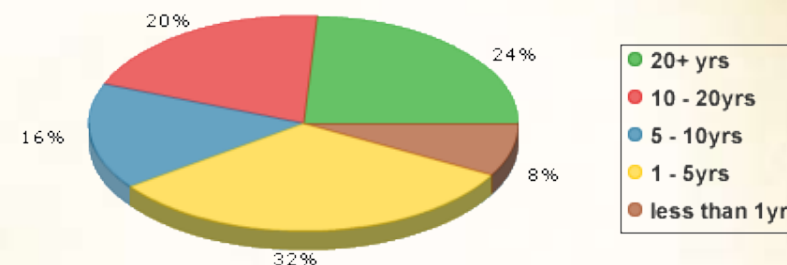
2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice is 11 years.

Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for 1 to 5 years (Figure 2). However, 44% of GPs have stayed for more than 10 years – suggesting fairly stable patterns of GP availability within the Division.

Figure 2: Length of employment – current practice (N=25)

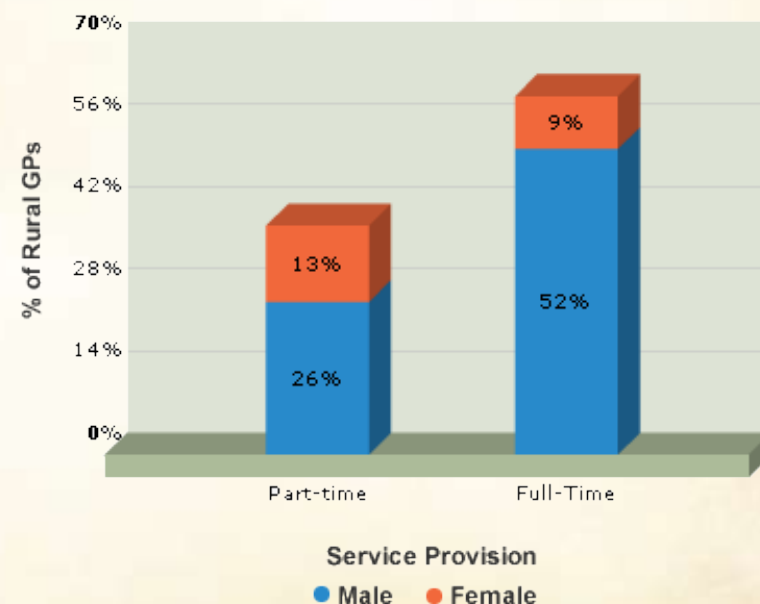


Full-time and part-time service provision

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 61% of GP respondents work full-time, and the majority (86%) of full-time practitioners are male. This compares to 65% full-time and 35% part-time for GPs across rural Victoria.

Figure 3: Full time and part-time service provision by gender (N=23)



5) This section presents information on GPs within MPDGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=25), 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 MPDGP is 45.7 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 six (76%) of GP respondents within MPDGP have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Almost half (48%) of GP respondents within MPDGP regularly undertake procedural work. The overwhelming majority (83%) 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

Eighty percent (80%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 28% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, over half (56%) of GPs within MPDGP report a period greater than 5 years. Forty four percent (44%) of GPs intend to remain in their current location for less than 5 years.

The majority (76%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years.

Of those who hope to make changes, 41% 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 12 Victorian GP practices within MPDGP. One-third (33%) are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 45 Victorian rural GPs within the Division:

- 9% work principally in solo practice
- 38% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 53% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

GPs also provide services to: 1 branch practice and 1 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as individual (33%) and partnership (33%).

Other health professionals

Half (50%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and all practice respondents 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
Murray-Plains DGP	8	4	12
% of total Victoria rural practices	4%	4%	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	3	50%
Extended consultations	3	50%
Immunisation	4	67%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	1	17%
Pathology	4	67%
Women's health	2	33%

⁷) A response to the practice survey was received from 6 rural GP practices within MPDGP