

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

General Practice Alliance South Gippsland

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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 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 rural towns within the General Practice Alliance - South Gippsland ("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

- 66 rural GPs (69 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within the Division – which is 6% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division has approximately 5% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,011 rural residents
- The rural GP workforce is ageing – the average age of GPs within the Division is 48.2 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 9.8 years
- 31% of GPs within the Division hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years
- There are 12 rural practices within the Division of which 25% 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 GP workforce within the Division. 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.

Six percent (6%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce work principally in a location within the Division, and the Division covers approximately 5% of the total rural Victorian population. The Division has an estimated 1 GP to every 1,011 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 GPA-SG

	Headcount	FTE
GPA South Gippsland	66	69

Note: Rural only (excludes RRMA 1)

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within GPA-SG (N=66)

RRMA		
3		
4	1	2%
5	65	98%
7		
Gender		
Males	45	68%
Females	21	32%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	49.5	
Females	45.3	
Overall	48.2	
*Missing age data for 4 GPs (2 males and 2 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	42	64%
International graduates	24	36%

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 similar to that of rural Victoria overall where females comprise 30% of the workforce.

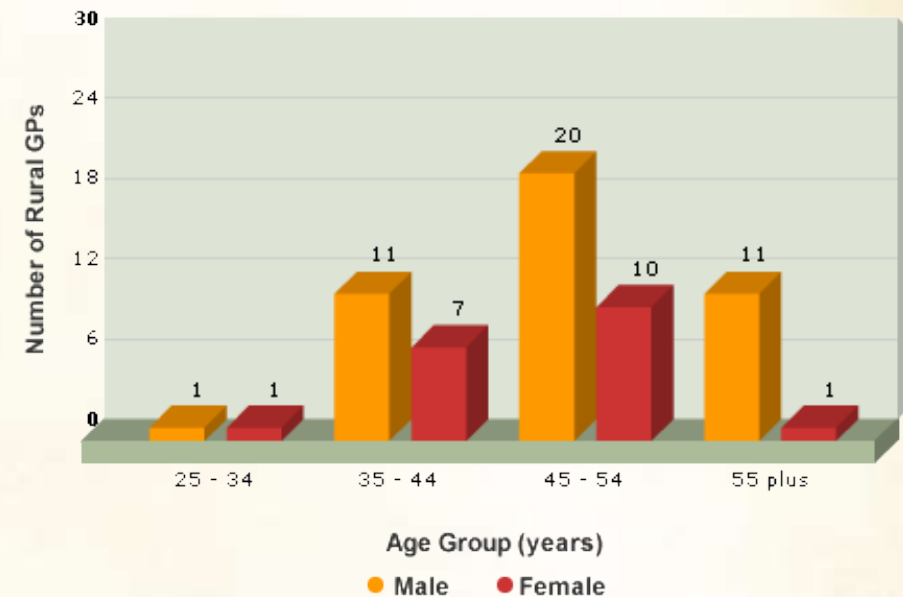
Consistent with rural Victoria overall, female GPs within the Division are, on average, younger than their male counterparts. However, the average age of GPs within the Division is slightly younger (48.2 years compared to 49.5 years for GPs across rural Victoria).

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

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 rural GPs in this age group. Almost half (48%) of rural GPs within the Division are aged 45 – 54 years, compared to 44% across rural Victoria.

Proportionally, compared to rural Victoria overall, the Division has fewer rural GPs aged over 55 (19% compared to 27% across rural Victoria).

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within GPA-SG by gender and age groups (N=62)



International Medical Graduates

The proportion of GPs within the Division who gained their qualification overseas is consistent with rural Victoria overall (where IMGs comprise 34% of the GP workforce).

The IMGs practising within the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 15 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in India (6%), followed by Iran (5%) and the United Kingdom (5%).

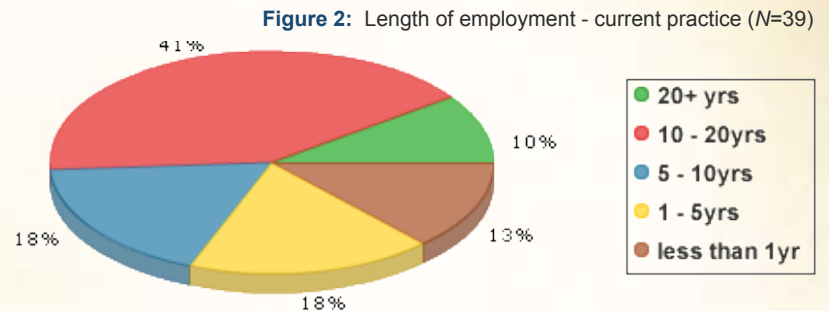
2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice is 9.8 years.

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

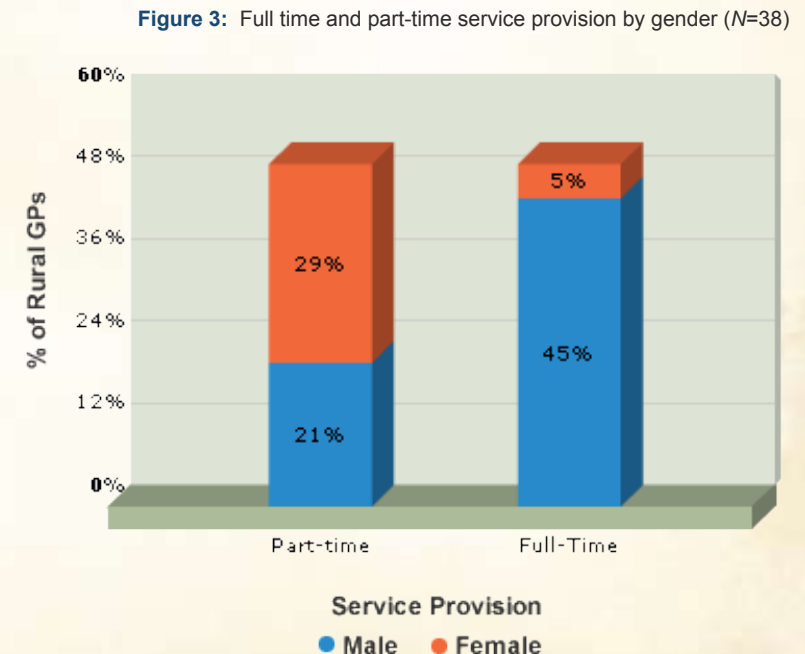
In total, 51% of GPs have been at their current practice for over 10 years – suggesting quite stable patterns of GP availability within the Division.



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, 50% of GP respondents work full-time, and the majority (89%) 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 GPA-SG who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=39), 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 GP respondents within the Division is 42.8 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

Eighty two percent (82%) of GP respondents within the Division have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Over half (54%) of GP respondents within the Division regularly undertake procedural work. The overwhelming majority (86%) 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

Seventy two percent (72%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 10% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within the Division most commonly report periods of 5 to 10 years (29%) and 10 or more years (29%). This is followed by periods of 3 to 5 years (19%), 1 to 3 years (16%) and less than 1 year (7%).

Less than one-third (31%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. Thirty eight percent (38%) of GPs are not expecting to make any changes, while 31% of GPs are unsure.

Practices

There are 12 rural GP practices within the Division. One-quarter (25%) are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 66 rural GPs within the Division:

- 4.5% work principally in solo practice
- 10.6% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 84.9% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

Within the Division, GPs also provide services to: 6 branch practices and 2 Community Health Centres.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as partnership (56%), followed by individual (33%), and associateship (11%).

Other health professionals

Twenty two percent (22%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 67% 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 South Gippsland	9	3	12
% of total Victoria rural practices	4%	3%	4%

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

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	5	83%
Asthma education	4	67%
Diabetes education	3	50%
Extended consultations	4	67%
Immunisation	6	100%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	3	50%
Pathology	3	50%
Women's health	3	50%

⁷) A response to the practice survey was received from 9 rural GP practices within GPA South Gippsland