

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

West Vic 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 towns within the West Vic Division of General Practice (WVDGP).

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

Highlights²

- 73 GPs (76 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within WVDGP – which is 7% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division has approx 7% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,148 residents
- GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of GPs is 51.0 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 9.5 years
- 37% of GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours and 42% would like to relocate within the next 5 years
- There are 25 practices within the Division of which 36% 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 WVDGP. 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.

Seven percent (7%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce works principally in a location within WVDGP and the Division covers approximately 7% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,148 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 WVDGP

	Headcount	FTE
West Vic DGP	73	76

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within WVDGP (N=73)

RRMA		
3		
4	14	19%
5	58	80%
7	1	1%
Gender		
Males	59	81%
Females	14	19%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	51.0	
Females	46.8	
Overall	50.1	
*Missing age data for 9 GPs (8 males and 1 female)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	31	42%
International graduates	42	58%

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 WVDGP differs to that of rural Victoria overall. Females comprise 19% of the workforce within the Division, which is considerably lower compared to rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce.

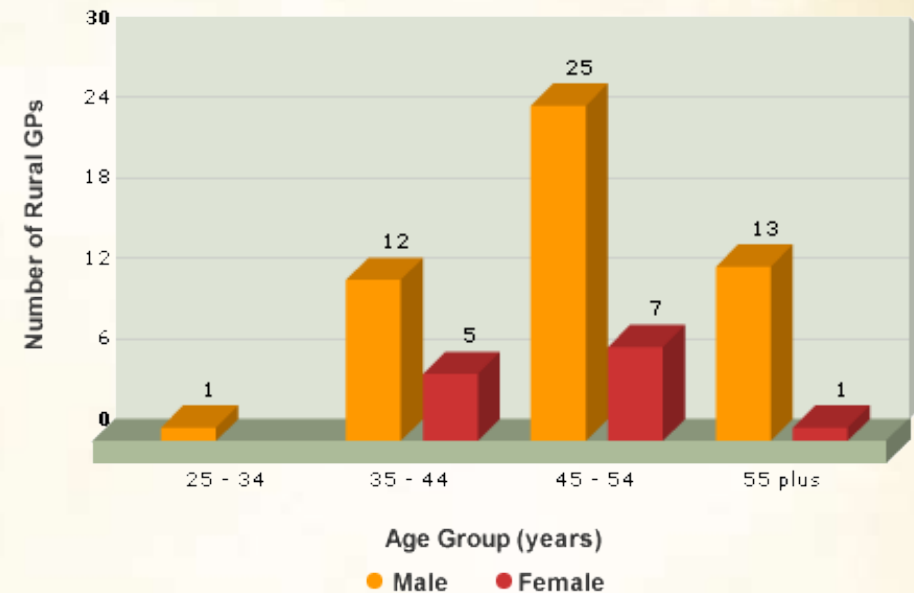
The average age of GPs within the Division is similar to rural Victoria overall (50.1 years and 49.5 years respectively), and female GPs are, on average, younger than their male counterparts.

The distribution of male and female GPs within WVDGP 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 GPs in this age group (50% compared to 44% across rural Victoria).

Compared to rural Victoria overall, the Division has proportionally fewer rural GPs aged over 55 (22% compared to 27% across rural Victoria).

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within WVDGP by gender and age groups (N=64)



International Medical Graduates

There are proportionally more international medical graduates (IMGs) within WVDGP compared to rural Victoria overall. Over half (58%) of GPs within the Division gained their basic medical qualification overseas – compared to 34% of GPs across rural Victoria.

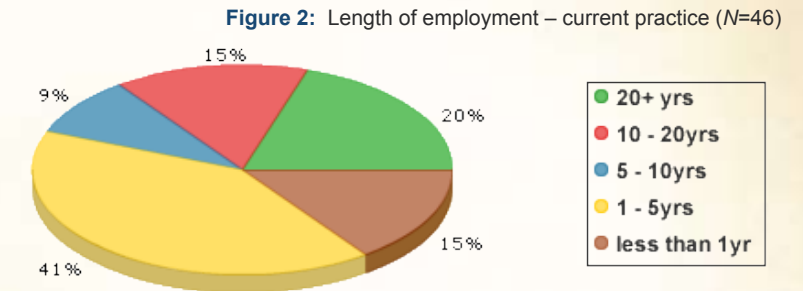
The IMGs practicing in the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 17 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in India (12%), followed by South Africa (10%), the United Kingdom and Ireland (7% combined).

2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs have worked at their current practice is 9.5 years.

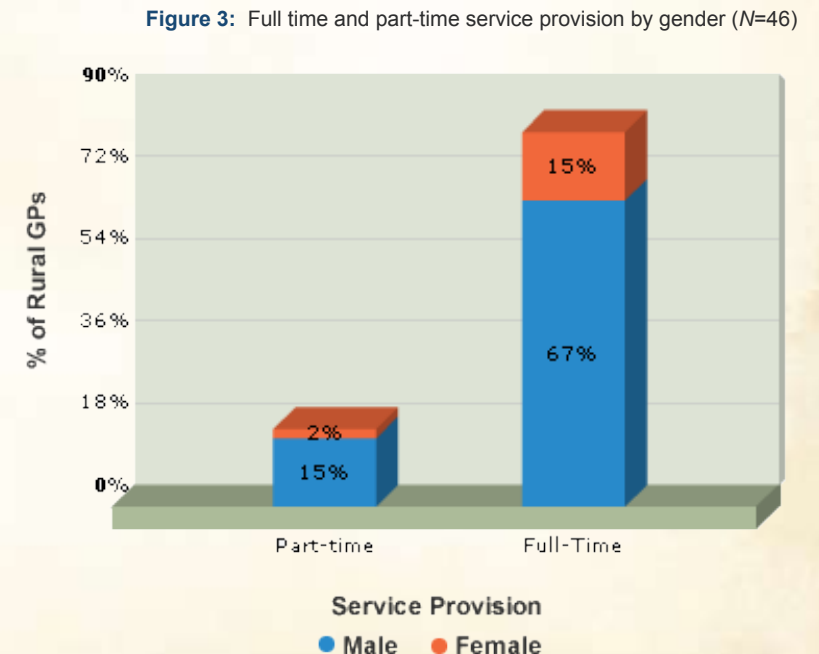
Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for 1 – 5 years (Figure 2).



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.

Within the Division 83% of GP respondents work full-time, and the overwhelming majority (82%) 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 WVDGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=46), 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 WVDGP is 49.6 hours (compared to 44.3 hours for 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 percent (76%) of GP respondents within WVDGP have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Thirty five percent (35%) of GP respondents within WVDGP regularly undertake procedural work. The overwhelming majority (94%) 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 20% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within WVDGP most commonly report a period of 3 to 5 years (32%). This is followed by 5 to 10 years (29%), less than 1 year (17%), 10 or more years (11%) and 1 to 3 years (11%).

Over half (53%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. The remaining GPs are either not expecting to make any changes (30%) or are unsure (17%).

Of those who hope to make changes, 42% would like to relocate (21% to another rural location and 21% to an urban location) and 37% would like to reduce their hours.

This information places a high need for aggressive recruitment and retention strategies for this Division.

Practices

There are 25 GP practices within WVDGP. Thirty six percent (36%) of these are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 73 rural GPs within the Division:

- 14% work principally in solo practice
- 45% work principally in a group practice with 4 or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 41% work principally in a group practice with 5 or more (principally based) GPs.

GPs also provide services to: 6 branch practices, 1 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service and 1 Community Health Centre.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as partnership (29%), individual (21%) or associateship (14%).

Other health professionals

Forty three percent (43%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 79% 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
West Vic DGP	16	9	25
% of total Victoria rural practices	7%	9%	8%

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=11)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	9	82%
Asthma education	8	73%
Diabetes education	7	64%
Extended consultations	2	18%
Immunisation	8	73%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	2	18%
Pathology	4	36%
Women's health	7	64%

7) A response to the practice survey was received from 14 rural GP practices within WVDGP