

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

Ballarat & District 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 Ballarat and District Division of General Practice (BDDGP).

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

Highlights²

- 105 GPs (110 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within BDDGP – which is almost 10% of the Victorian rural GP workforce
- The Division covers approximately 10% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,151 residents
- GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of GPs is 49.9 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 11.1 years
- One-third of GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours or retire within the next 5 years
- There are 27 GP practices within the Division of which 22% 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 BDDGP. 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.

Almost 10% of the rural Victorian GP workforce work principally in a location within BDDGP and the Division covers approximately 10% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,151 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 BDDGP

	Headcount	FTE
Ballarat & District DGP	105	110

Note: Includes the shared postcode of 3460

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within BDDGP (N=105)

RRMA		
3	90	86%
4		
5	15	14%
7		
Gender		
Males	76	72%
Females	29	28%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	51.4	
Females	46.1	
Overall	49.9	
*Missing age data for 11 GPs (8 males and 3 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	85	81%
International graduates	20	19%

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 and average age of the GP workforce within the Division is similar to that of rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce and the average age of GPs is 49.5 years.

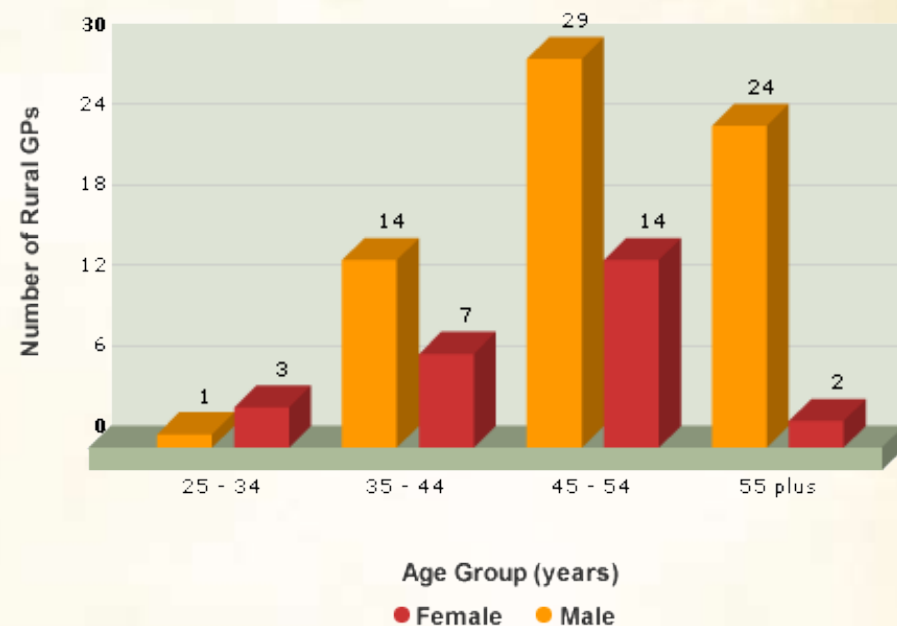
The distribution of male and female GPs within the Division across age groups is displayed in Figure 1.

Consistent with rural Victoria overall, the highest number of GPs is in the 45 to 54 year age group.

Twenty eight percent (28%) of GPs within the Division are aged over 55 – which is also consistent with rural Victoria overall (where 27% of GPs are aged over 55).

The relative proportion of males to female practitioners is higher in all age groups except for the youngest (25 - 34) age group. This is a pattern seen across rural Victoria, with male doctors predominating in older age groups and female doctors in the majority in the youngest age group - reflecting higher female intakes into Medical Schools over recent years⁵.

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within BDDGP by gender and age groups (N=94)



International Medical Graduates

There are proportionally fewer international medical graduates (IMGs) within BDDGP compared to rural Victoria overall (where IMGs comprise 34% of the GP workforce).

The IMGs practising in the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 11 different countries, with the largest proportion trained in the United Kingdom and Ireland (9% combined), followed by India (4%).

⁵ Females comprised 55.2% of domestic medical students in 2000, 57.3% in 2004 and 55.7% in 2006.
SOURCE: Medical Training Review Panel (2007) Eleventh report. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing.

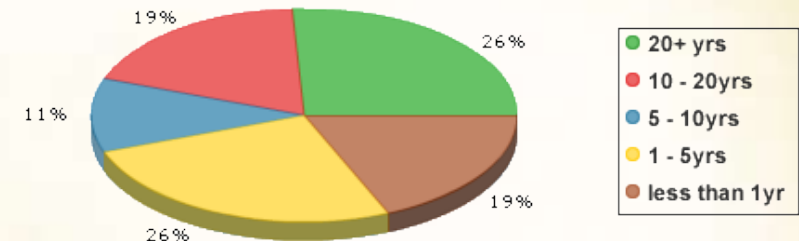
2007 GP survey results⁶

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within BDDGP have worked at their current practice is 11.1 years.

Forty four percent (44%) of GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice for more than 10 years (Figure 2) – suggesting fairly stable patterns of GP availability within the Division.

Figure 2: Length of employment - current practice (N=54)

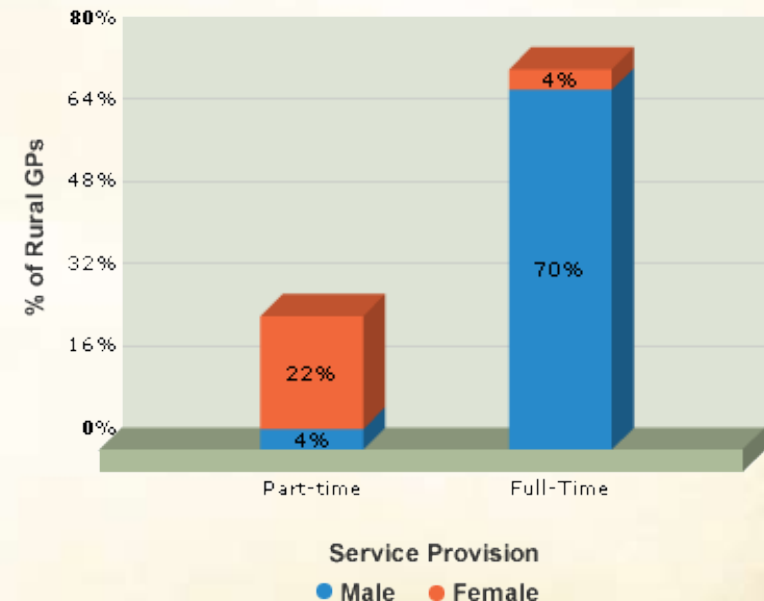


Full-time and part-time service provision

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-reported⁷). The data is presented in Figure 3.

Within the Division, 74% of GP respondents work full-time, and the majority (95%) of full-time practitioners are male. This compares to 65% full-time and 35% part-time for the rural Victorian GP workforce overall.

Figure 3: Full time and part-time service provision by gender (N=54)



6) This section presents information on GPs within BDDGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=54), excluding registrars

7) 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 BDDGP is 41.7 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

Fifty nine percent (59%) of GP respondents within BDDGP have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Fifteen percent (15%) of GP respondents within BDDGP regularly undertake procedural work. This includes: anaesthetics - regional and general, obstetrics - normal deliveries, lower segment caesarean section (LSCS) and non-LSCS, and operative surgery. The overwhelming majority (95%) of GP proceduralists are male.

Emergency care and Aboriginal health

Thirty five percent (35%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 15% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within BDDGP most commonly report a period of 10 or more years (34%). This is followed by 3 to 5 years (22%), 5 to 10 years (20%), 1 to 3 years (13%) and less than 1 year (11%).

Over half (54%) 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 (31%) or are unsure (15%).

Of those who hope to make changes, just over one-third (36%) want to reduce their hours, and almost one-quarter (24%) hope to retire.

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

Practices

There are 27 GP practices within BDDGP. Twenty two percent (22%) of these are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 105 rural GPs within the Division:

- 6% work principally in solo practice
- 41% 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.

Within the Division GPs also provide services to: 2 branch practices and 1 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey most commonly reported practice ownership as individual (37%), partnership (21%) or associateship (21%).

Other health professionals

Almost one-third (32%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 68% 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
Ballarant & District DGP	21	6	27
% of total Victoria rural practices	10%	6%	9%

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=13)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	11	85%
Asthma education	9	69%
Diabetes education	7	54%
Extended consultations	4	31%
Immunisation	11	85%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	5	38%
Pathology	7	54%
Women's health	3	23%

8) A response to the practice survey was received from 19 rural GP practices within BDDGP.