

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

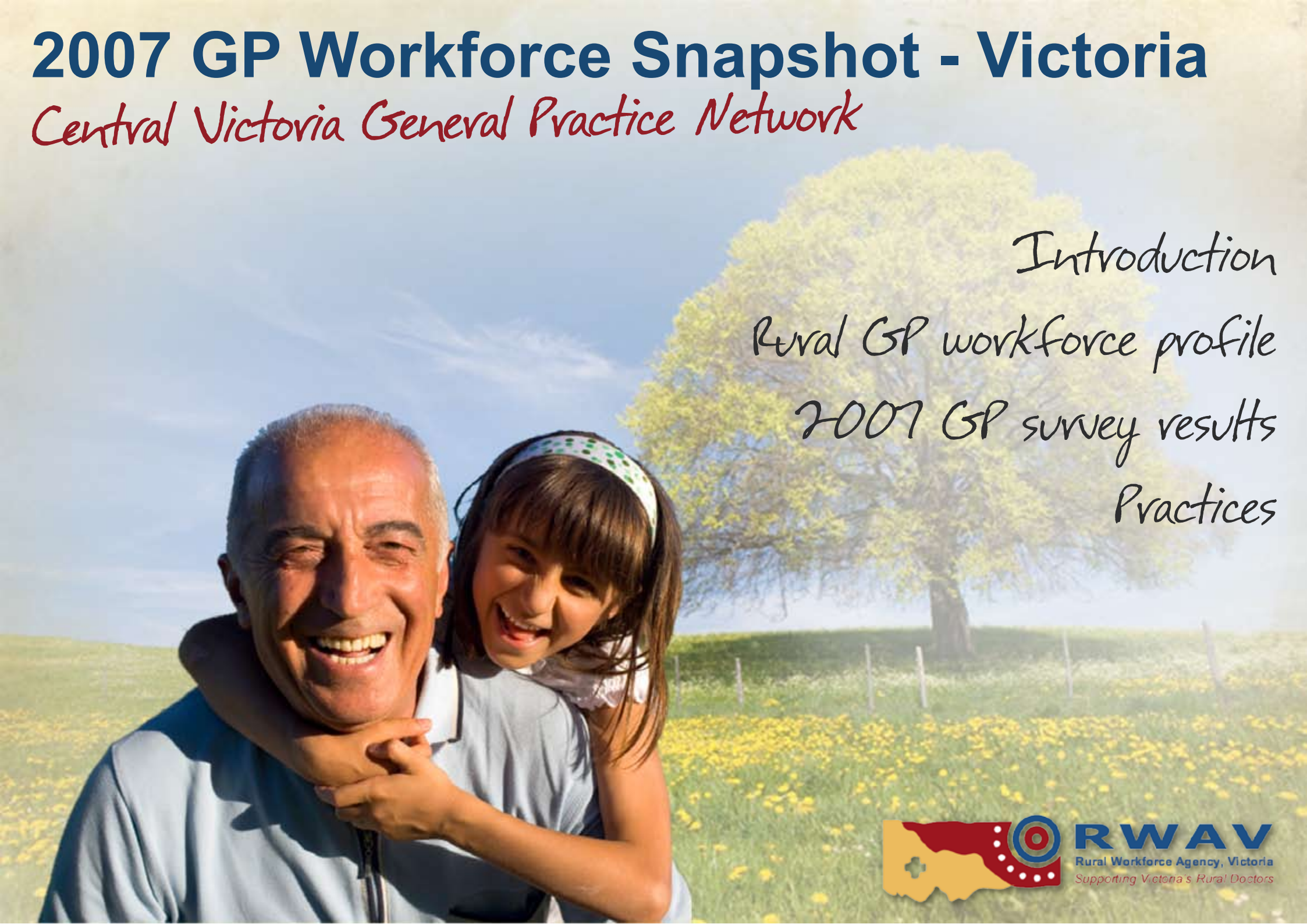
Central Victoria General Practice Network

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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 towns within the Central Victoria General Practice Network (CVGPN).

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

Highlights²

- 90 GPs (94 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within CVGPN – which is 8% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division has approx 9% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,218 residents
- GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of GPs is 51.3 (rural Victorian average is 49.5)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 10.7 years
- Almost one-third of GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours within the next 5 years
- There are 34 practices within the Division of which half 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 CVGPN. 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.

Eight percent (8%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce work principally in a location within CVGPN, and the Division covers approximately 9% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,218 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 CVGPN

	Headcount	FTE
Central Victoria GPN	90	94

Note: Includes the shared postcodes of 3450 and 3523

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within CVGPN (N=90)

RRMA		
3	69	77%
4		
5	21	23%
7		
Gender		
Males	63	70%
Females	27	30%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	52.6	
Females	48.2	
Overall	51.3	
*Missing age data for 11 GPs (7 males and 4 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	63	70%
International graduates	27	30%

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 CVGPN matches that of rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce.

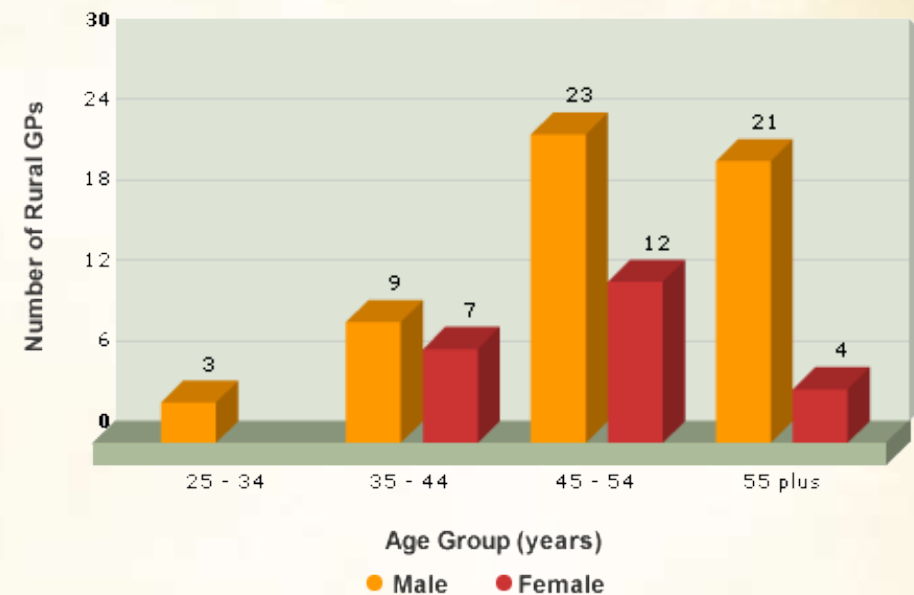
Consistent with rural Victoria, female GPs within the Division are, on average, younger than their male counterparts. However, the average age of GPs within the Division is 1 ½ to 2 years older than in rural Victoria overall.

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.

However, proportionally the Division has more GPs over the age of 55, compared to rural Victoria overall. Almost one-third (32%) of GPs within the Division are aged over 55, compared to 27% across rural Victoria.

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within CVGPN by gender and age groups (N=79)



International Medical Graduates

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

The IMGs practising within the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 11 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in the United Kingdom (8%), followed by Egypt and India (both 4%).

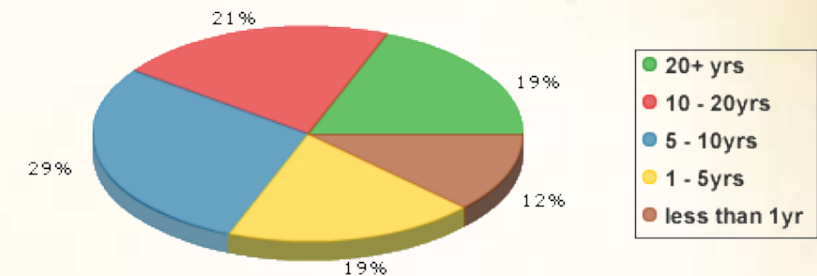
2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for 5 to 10 years, followed by 10 to 20 years (refer to Figure 2).

The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice is 10.7 years

Figure 2: Length of employment – current practice (N=42)

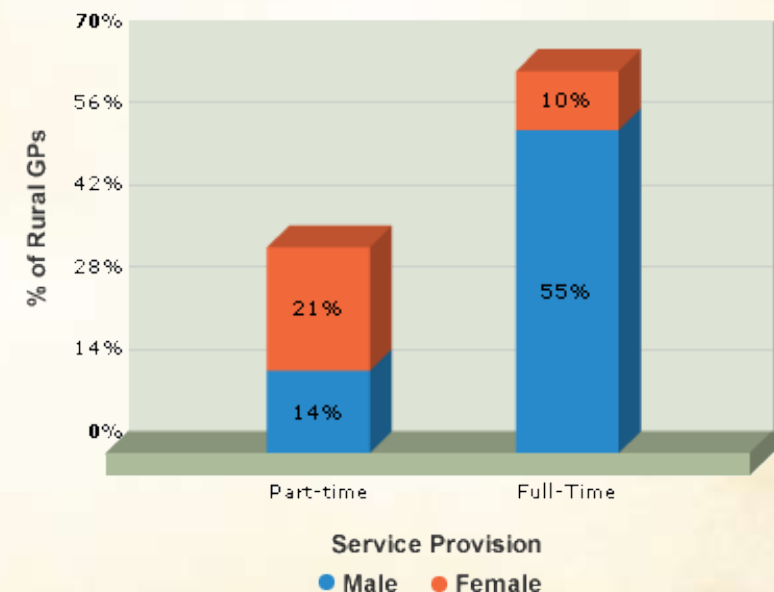


Full-time and part-time service provision

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, 65% of GP respondents work full-time, and the overwhelming majority (89%) of full-time GPs are male. This is consistent with 65% full-time and 35% part-time for GPs across rural Victoria.

Figure 3: Full time and part-time service provision by gender (N=42)



5) This section presents information on GPs within CVGPN who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=42), 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 CVGPN is 44.3 hours (which is consistent with rural Victoria overall). 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 one percent (71%) of GP respondents within CVGPN have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Twenty four percent (24%) of GP respondents within CVGPN regularly undertake procedural work. The majority (70%) 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

Forty eight percent (48%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 19% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within CVGPN most commonly report a period of 10 or more years (44%). This is followed by 5 to 10 years (37%), 3 to 5 years (13%), and 1 to 3 years (6%).

Thirty nine percent (39%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. Just over half (52%) do not expect to make any changes, while the remaining 9% are unsure.

Of those who hope to make changes, the majority (77%) would like 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 34 GP practices within CVGPN. Half (50%) of these are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 90 rural GPs within the Division:

- 20% work principally in solo practice
- 34% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 46% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

Table 3: Practice types

Division of General Practice	Group	Solo	Total
Central Victoria GPN	17	17	34
% of total Victoria rural practices	8%	17%	11%

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as individual (35%), or partnership (35%).

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=16)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%%
Assistance with procedures	13	81%
Asthma education	8	50%
Diabetes education	13	81%
Extended consultations	3	19%
Immunisation	15	94%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	6	38%
Pathology	8	50%
Women's health	4	25%

Other health professionals

Forty three percent (43%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 76% 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.

⁷) A response to the practice survey was received from 21 rural GP practices within CVGPN