

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

Central West Gippsland 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 Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice (CWGDOG).

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

Highlights²

- 104 GPs (109 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within the Division – which is just under 10% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division covers approximately 9% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,055 residents
- The rural GP workforce is ageing – the average age of GPs is within the Division is 47.9 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 6.8 years
- 28% of GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours or retire within the next 5 years
- There are 32 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.

Almost 10% of the rural Victorian GP workforce works principally in a location within the Division and the Division covers approximately 9% of the total rural Victorian population. There is an estimated 1 GP to every 1,055 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 CWGDGP

	Headcount	FTE
Central West Gippsland DGP	104	109

Note: Includes the shared postcode of 3847

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within CWGDGP (N=104)

RRMA		
3		
4	73	70%
5	31	30%
7		
Gender		
Males	70	67%
Females	34	33%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	48.7	
Females	46.2	
Overall	47.9	
*Missing age data for 7 GPs (4 males and 3 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	51	49%
International graduates	53	51%

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 consistent with that of the GP workforce across rural Victoria. Females comprise one-third (33%) of the workforce within the Division, which is only slightly higher than rural Victoria overall – where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce.

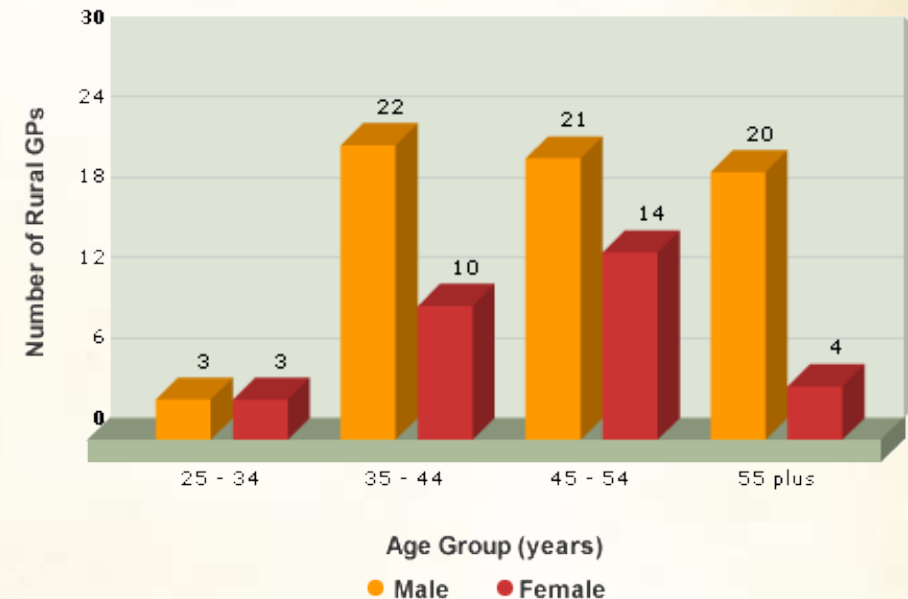
The average age of GPs within the Division is slightly younger compared to rural Victoria overall (where the average age of GPs is 49.5 years). The difference in average age is more marked for males than females. There is little difference in the average age of female GPs (46.2 years compared to 46.6 years) however the average age of male GPs is 2 years younger.

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

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 fewer GPs in this age group (36% - compared to 44% across rural Victoria).

Compared to rural Victoria overall, the Division has a higher proportion of GPs under 45 years of age (39% compared to 30% across rural Victoria).

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within CWGDGP by gender and age groups (N=97)



International Medical Graduates

There are proportionally more international medical graduates (IMGs) within the Division compared to rural Victoria overall. Just over half (51%) of rural GPs within the Division gained their basic medical qualification overseas – compared to 34% of GPs across rural Victoria.

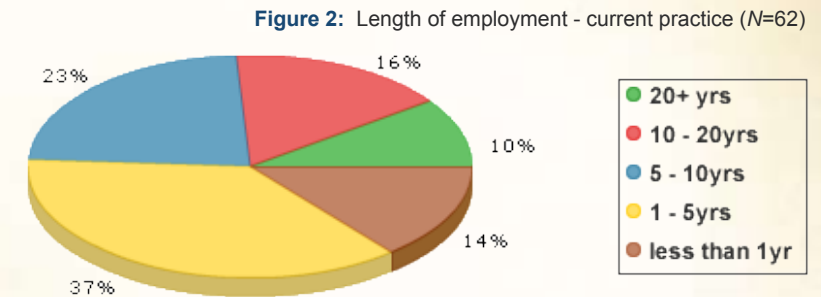
The IMGs within the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 18 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in the United Kingdom and Ireland (14% combined), India (5%) and the Philippines (5%).

2007 GP survey results⁵

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice is 6.8 years.

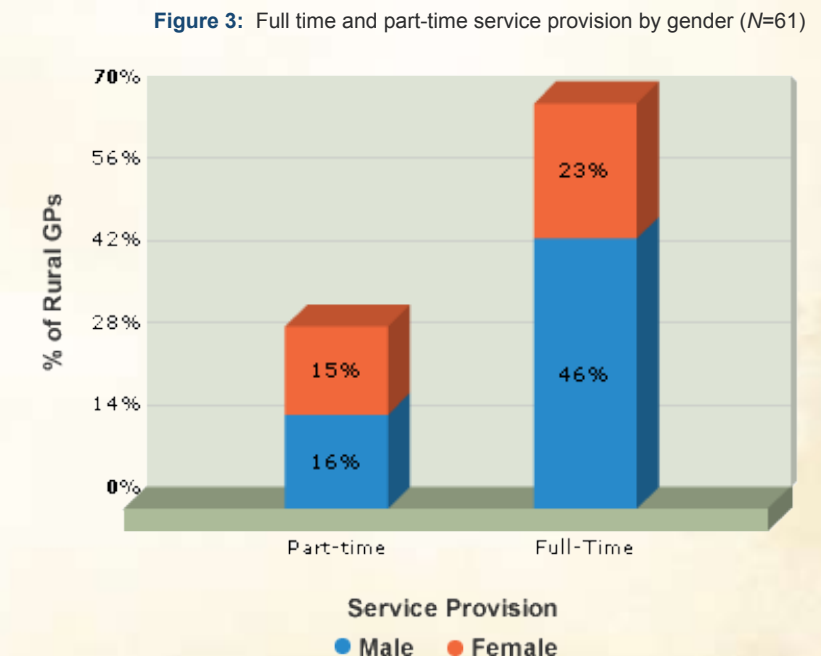
Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for between 1 and 5 years.



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.

Just over two-thirds (69%) of GP respondents within the Division work full-time, and the majority (67%) 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 CWGDGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=62), 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 the Division is 43.8 hours (compared to 44.3 hours for GPs across rural Victoria). On average, male practitioners report working longer hours than female practitioners (46.6 hours compared to 39.3 hours respectively). 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

Over half (53%) of GP respondents within the Division have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Eighteen percent (18%) of GP respondents within the Division regularly undertake procedural work. The majority (73%) 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

Almost half (47%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 11% report that they regularly practice Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within the Division predominately report a period greater than 5 years. Almost one-third (31%) of GP respondents intend to remain in their current location for 10 or more years and just over one-quarter (27%) intend to remain for 5 to 10 years.

Seventeen percent (17%) of GP respondents intend to remain in their current location for 3 to 5 years and one-quarter (25%) intend to stay for fewer than 3 years.

Almost half (47%) of GP respondents within the Division hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. Just over one-quarter (26%) are not expecting to make any changes and an equal proportion of GPs are unsure.

Of those who hope to make changes, 40% want to reduce their hours, and 20% 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 32 GP practices within the Division. One-quarter (25%) are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 104 rural GPs within CWGDOG:GP:

- 8% work principally in solo practice
- 38% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 54% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

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

Table 3: Practice types

Division of General Practice	Group	Solo	Total
Central West Gippsland DGP	24	8	32
% of total Victoria rural practices	11%	8%	10%

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁷ most commonly reported practice ownership as partnership (40%) or individual (35%).

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=18)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	17	94%
Asthma education	7	39%
Diabetes education	8	44%
Extended consultations	1	6%
Immunisation	18	100%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	5	28%
Pathology	10	56%
Women's health	7	39%

Other health professionals

Over half (55%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 90% 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 20 rural GP practices within CWGDGP