



## Health care services

Australia's health system is a complex network of public and private providers, settings and services.

All up, it costs about \$155 billion a year—the vast majority of which (\$145 billion) is recurrent spending (that is, payments for goods and services, including wages and salaries).

The health sector employs more than 385,000 nurses, midwives and medical practitioners and, on an average day, there are 381,000 visits to a general practitioner (GP), 79,000 visits to a specialist, 27,000 hospitalisations, and 20,000 presentations to public hospital emergency departments.

## Who is in the health workforce?

Nurses and midwives are the largest group in the registered health workforce, with about 353,000 registered and almost 301,000 nurses and midwives employed in 2014. This is almost 3 times that of the next largest health profession, medical practitioners (86,000 employed). Psychologists (24,000 employed), pharmacists (22,500) and physiotherapists (22,400) round out the top five.

## What is primary health care?

Primary health care is typically the first contact a person has with the health system, and includes visits to GPs, allied health professionals, midwives, dentists and Aboriginal health workers. Broadly, it encompasses health care that is not related to a hospital visit.

In 2013–14, the primary health care sector accounted for 38% (or \$55 billion) of recurrent health expenditure—just behind hospitals at 40% (\$59 billion). The remaining 22% was spent on other health goods and services (\$32 billion), which includes medical services provided by specialists, and administration and research.

## Our hospitals

Australia has more than 1,300 public and private hospitals that provide emergency department care, outpatient clinic care and care for admitted patients. Public hospitals provide the majority of emergency department care (94%) and outpatient care (96%), while private hospitals deliver 67% of all elective surgery.

About \$5 billion of hospital spending on admitted patients is for cardiovascular diseases—this was the most expensive disease group, followed by injuries (\$4 billion) and reproductive and maternal conditions (\$3.5 billion).





## Quick facts

In 2014–15, **335 million** out-of-hospital services were claimed through Medicare.

On average, **616,000** subsidised prescriptions are dispensed each day.

In 2014–15, about **30%** of emergency department presentations ended in admission to the hospital.

**62%** of the 34 million prescriptions for mental health-related medications dispensed in 2013–14 were for antidepressants.

	Public hospitals 747	Private hospitals 612
 Hospitals		
 Beds	58,568 (up by an annual average of 0.7% since 2009–10)	30,920 (up by an annual average of 2.7% since 2009–10)
Beds per 1,000 population	2.5 (similar to the rate of 2.6 in 2009–10)	1.3 (the same as in 2009–10)
 Number of hospitalisations	5.7 million (up by an annual average of 3.0% since 2009–10)	4.0 million (up by an annual average of 3.6% since 2009–10)
 Days of patient care provided	18.8 million (up by an annual average of 1.0% since 2009–10)	9.1 million (up by an annual average of 2.3% since 2009–10)

**Characteristics of Australia's hospitals, 2013–14**



## Mental health services

A substantial number of support services are provided to people with a mental illness each year, including in 2013–14:

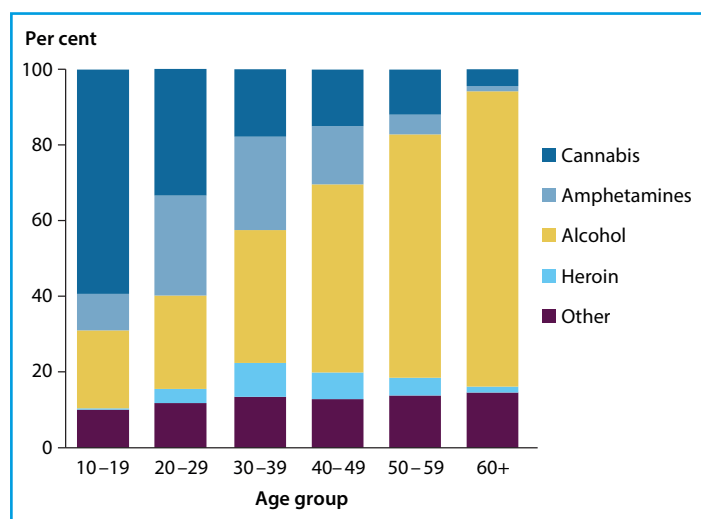
- 9 million Medicare-subsidised mental health-related services (29% of which were provided by GPs)
- 8.7 million contacts with community mental health care services
- 280,000 emergency department services
- 240,000 hospitalisations.

An estimated 34 million prescriptions for mental health-related medications were dispensed in 2013–14, of which 15 million (62%) were for antidepressants.

## Alcohol and other drug treatment services

Around 115,000 clients —1 in every 200 people in the general population—received treatment and support services from publicly funded alcohol and other drug treatment services in 2014–15. The top four drugs that led clients to seek treatment were alcohol (38%), cannabis (24%), amphetamines (20%) and heroin (6%). The proportion of clients receiving treatment for alcohol increased with age, whereas the opposite was true for cannabis.

Just over 2 in 3 clients (67%) were male and more than half (54%) were aged 20–39.



Clients by principal drug of concern and age group, Australia, 2014–15

## Dental visits

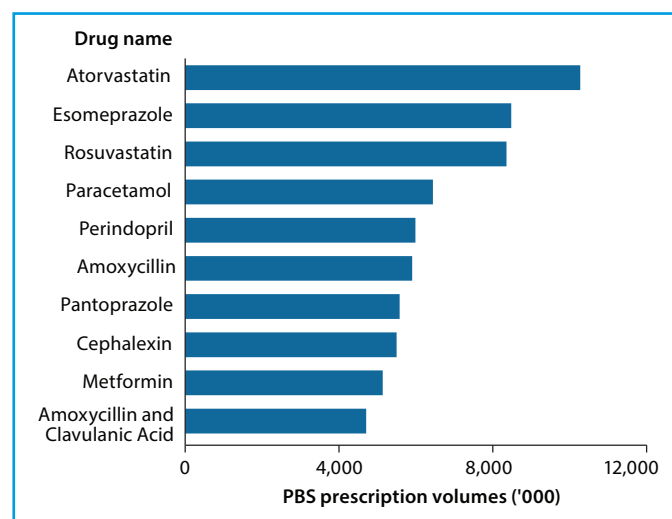
In 2013, about two-thirds (64%) of people aged 5 and over had visited a dentist or dental professional in the previous year. Children aged 5–14 were the most likely to have made a visit, with 79% visiting in the previous year, and 91% visiting in the previous 2 years. The age group with the lowest proportion of dental visits was adults aged 25–44 (55% and 75%, respectively).

About one-third (32%) of people delayed or avoided a visit to the dentist due to cost. Of people who did visit a dentist in the previous 12 months, 20% did not receive the recommended treatment because of cost.

## Medicines dispensed

In 2014–15, nearly 225 million subsidised prescriptions were dispensed under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) that were priced over the maximum copayment limit. This equates to about 616,000 subsidised prescriptions dispensed every day.

In 2013–14, of all drugs dispensed under the PBS or RPBS, including those where there was no subsidy from the Government, the most commonly dispensed groups of drugs were cholesterol-lowering drugs (atorvastatin and rosuvastatin); drugs treating gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (esomeprazole and pantoprazole); and antibiotics (amoxicillin, cephalaxin, and amoxicillin with clavulanic acid).



PBS and RPBS dispensed drug volumes, including under- and over-copayment prescriptions, 2013–14

### Where can I find out more in Australia's health 2016?

Chapter 2 Australia's health system  
[www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/health-system/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/health-system/)  
 Chapter 3.14 Oral health  
[www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/ill-health/#t15](http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/ill-health/#t15)  
 Chapter 6 Preventing and treating ill health  
[www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/preventing-ill-health/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/australias-health/2016/preventing-ill-health/)



A copy of the full report is available on the AIHW website.

### For more information

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