

# 3 The general practitioners

Characteristics of the participating GPs have been described in detail elsewhere<sup>49</sup>. A brief summary is provided below.

## 3.1 Results of recruitment

Contact was attempted with 2,977 GPs, and established with 2,678 (90%) of these. Of the 2,678 available practitioners, 1,215 (45.4%) agreed to participate but 168 (5.6%) failed to complete the study. The final participating sample consisted of 1,047 practitioners, representing 35.2% of those with whom contact was attempted (results not presented).

## 3.2 GP characteristics

Of the 1,047 participants, 69.6% were male and 59.2% were 45 years of age or older. Three-quarters of the participants (75.4%) had been in general practice for more than 10 years and 15.3% could be regarded as practising part-time, working fewer than six sessions per week. The majority (73.3%) had graduated in Australia and one in ten participants (10.6%) conducted more than half of his or her consultations in a language other than English (Table 3.1).

## 3.3 Comparison between participating and non-participating GPs

The General Practice Branch of the DHAC provided some information about each of the GPs drawn in the initial sample from HIC data. This information was used to determine the extent to which the final participating GPs were representative of the initial sample of practitioners. These data included the number of general practice Medicare items claimed in the previous year and quarter. In this analysis the number of Medicare items claimed in the previous quarter was compared and is referred to as 'activity level'.

There were no significant differences between participants and non-participants in terms of sex, place of graduation, State or Territory, and location of practice using the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) classification. The age distributions for participants and non-participants were significantly different, with GPs under the age of 35 years being under-represented in the participant population and those aged 55 years or more over-represented. The under-representation of young GPs aged under 35 years suggested by this comparison was also reflected in a comparison of participants with all GPs in the sample frame.

There was no statistically significant difference in activity level in the previous quarter (measured by the number of A1 Medicare items of service claimed) between participants and non-participants<sup>49</sup>.

Post-stratification weighting was performed according to GP age (stratified by sex) to adjust for the under-representation of young GPs, and for the activity level of each participating GP<sup>49</sup>.

**Table 3.1: Characteristics of participating GPs**

<b>GP characteristic</b>	<b>Number<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>Per cent of GPs<sup>(a)</sup> (<i>n</i> = 1,047)</b>
Male	729	69.6
Female	318	30.4
Age (missing = 4)		
< 35 years	88	8.4
35–44 years	338	32.4
45–54 years	338	32.4
55+ years	279	26.7
Years in general practice (missing = 8)		
< 5 years	90	8.7
6–10 years	166	15.9
11–19 years	331	31.9
20+ years	452	43.5
Sessions per week (missing = 6)		
< 6 per week	159	15.3
6–10 per week	691	66.0
> 10 per week	191	18.3
Size of practice (missing = 5)		
Solo	189	18.1
2–4 GPs	480	46.1
5+ GPs	373	35.8
Graduated in Australia (missing = 2)	767	73.3
More than 50% of consultations in languages other than English	105	10.6

(a) Missing data removed.