

4 The participating GPs

This chapter describes differences that arose across RRMA and ASGC Remoteness categories. For a summary of findings in each individual RRMA category or trends with ASGC Remoteness, please refer to Chapter 11 – Summary of results.

4.1 Characteristics of the GPs

RRMA

The characteristics of participating general practitioners (GPs) across RRMA categories are compared in Table 4.1(a). Compared with the national average:

- Small Rural Centres and Other Rural Areas had a larger proportion of male GPs
- Remote Centres and Other Remote Areas had larger proportions of GPs aged less than 35 years
- Other Remote Areas had a smaller proportion of GPs in the 35–44 year and the 45–54 year age groups
- Remote Centres had a smaller proportion of older GPs (55 years and older)
- Remote Centres had a considerably larger proportion of GPs who had been working in general practice for less than 2 years
- Other Remote Areas had a larger proportion of GPs who had been working in general practice for between 2 and 5 years
- a smaller proportion of GPs in Remote Centres and Other Remote Areas worked fewer than 6 sessions per week
- a larger proportion of GPs in the rural and remote zones worked 6–10 sessions per week
- a larger proportion of GPs in Remote Centres worked 11 or more sessions per week
- Remote Centres and Other Remote Areas had larger proportions of GPs currently taking part in a vocational training program for general practice
- Large Rural Centres and Other Remote Areas had larger proportions of GPs who were Fellows of the RACGP
- the rural and remote zones had larger proportions of GPs who provided their own after-hours care.

ASGC Remoteness

In Table 4.1(b) the same GP characteristics are compared across ASGC Remoteness categories. Compared with the national average:

- Inner Regional and Outer Regional Australia had a larger proportion of male GPs
- Inner Regional Australia and Remote Australia had fewer GPs who worked 11 or more sessions per week
- Very Remote Australia had the largest proportion of GPs who held Fellowship of the RACGP

- a smaller proportion of GPs in Major Cities provided their own after-hours arrangements.

Trends with increasing remoteness are summarised below.

- There was an increasing trend in the proportion of GPs aged less than 35 years with increasing remoteness.
- The proportion of GPs who had practised for 5 years or less increased with remoteness and the proportion who had worked for 20 years or more decreased with increasing remoteness.
- The proportion of GPs who worked fewer than 6 sessions per week decreased with increasing remoteness.
- The proportion of GPs currently partaking in a general practice training program with increased with remoteness.

Table 4.1(a): Characteristics of participating GPs by RRMA

GP characteristic	Per cent of GPs, ^(a) column specific							Australia (n=6,019)
	Capital City (n=3,990)	Other Metropolitan (n=450)	Large Rural Centre (n=375)	Small Rural Centre (n=377)	Other Rural Area (n=724)	Remote Centre (n=39)	Other Remote Area (n=64)	
Per cent of sample	66.3	7.5	6.2	6.3	12.0	0.7	1.1	100.0
Sex								
Male	65.0	70.5	68.3	73.2	75.2	69.2	65.6	67.4
Female	35.0	29.5	31.7	26.8	24.8	30.8	34.4	32.6
Age (missing)	(15)	(2)	(0)	(0)	(2)	(0)	(0)	(19)
<35 years	6.7	3.8	5.1	8.8	9.1	15.4	15.6	7.0
35–44 years	28.3	28.1	36.0	30.8	31.4	35.9	25.0	29.3
45–54 years	34.8	34.4	35.2	37.1	32.6	35.9	25.0	34.6
55+ years	30.2	33.7	23.7	23.3	26.9	12.8	34.4	29.1
Years in general practice (missing)	(32)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(6)	(0)	(2)	(45)
<2 years	0.2	0.7	0.5	1.6	2.5	10.3	1.6	0.7
2–5 years	6.4	4.7	4.8	10.1	8.6	10.3	16.1	6.8
6–10 years	14.5	12.3	12.8	13.6	13.6	23.1	11.3	14.1
11–19 years	29.1	29.1	37.2	32.2	31.8	25.6	25.8	30.1
20+ years	49.8	53.2	44.7	42.6	43.5	30.8	45.2	48.3
Sessions per week (missing)	(43)	(7)	(3)	(4)	(6)	(1)	(0)	(64)
<6 per week	18.1	16.9	12.6	11.8	9.6	5.3	3.1	16.0
6–10 per week	64.1	66.8	77.4	78.6	77.7	73.7	82.8	68.0
11+ per week	17.7	16.3	9.9	9.7	12.7	21.1	14.1	16.0
State/territory ^(b)								
New South Wales	38.3	55.8	23.2	34.0	33.1	0^	20.3	37.3
Victoria	24.3	9.8	18.9	28.4	23.7	0^	3.1	22.7

(continued)

Table 4.1(a) (continued): Characteristics of participating GPs by RRMA

GP characteristic	Per cent of GPs, ^(a) column specific							
	Capital City (n=3,990)	Other Metropolitan (n=450)	Large Rural Centre (n=375)	Small Rural Centre (n=377)	Other Rural Area (n=724)	Remote Centre (n=39)	Other Remote Area (n=64)	Australia (n=6,019)
Queensland	13.8	34.2	48.5	17.2	18.8	33.3	31.3	18.6
Western Australia	9.5	0 [^]	0 [^]	9.8	7.9	51.3	20.3	8.4
South Australia	8.7	0 [^]	2.1	6.9	11.2	0 [^]	7.8	7.8
Tasmania	2.0	0 [^]	7.2	3.7	4.7	0 [^]	0 [^]	2.6
Australian Capital Territory	2.5	0.2	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	1.6
Northern Territory	1.0	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	0.7	15.4	17.2	1.0
GP training status (missing)	(133)	(21)	(10)	(19)	(34)	(1)	(4)	(222)
Currently in a vocational training program	2.2	1.4	2.5	6.1	4.6	15.8	10.0	2.9
RACGP status (missing)	(43)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(54)
Fellow of the RACGP	32.0	28.9	38.5	29.1	34.7	34.2	38.1	32.4
After-hours arrangement (n)^(c)	3,181	356	295	305	593	33	56	4,819
Own or cooperative after-hours arrangements	45.2	56.8	88.4	86.5	91.1	75.8	87.3	57.7
Missing (n)	15	2	1	1	0	0	1	20

(a) Missing data removed.

(b) State or territory of the GP's major practice address.

(c) Data collection on after-hours arrangements was commenced in the second data year (1999–2000).

[^] No postcodes in this state are classified to this RRMA group.

Note: GPs—general practitioners; RACGP—Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Table 4.1(b): Characteristics of participating GPs by ASGC Remoteness

GP characteristic	Per cent of GPs, ^(a) column specific					
	Major Cities (n=4,180)	Inner Regional Australia (n=1,157)	Outer Regional Australia (n=575)	Remote Australia (n=80)	Very Remote Australia (n=27)	Australia (n=6,019)
Per cent of sample	69.4	19.2	9.6	1.3	0.4	100.0
Sex						
Male	65.8	70.4	73.0	65.0	66.7	67.4
Female	34.2	29.6	27.0	35.0	33.3	32.6
Age (missing)	(17)	(1)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(19)
<35 years	6.4	7.6	8.5	12.5	18.5	7.0
35–44 years	27.9	32.5	32.4	31.3	29.6	29.3
45–54 years	34.9	35.9	30.5	31.3	22.2	34.6
55+ years	30.7	24.0	28.6	25.0	29.6	29.1
Years in general practice (missing)	(33)	(7)	(4)	(0)	(1)	(45)
<2 years	0.2	1.3	2.6	2.5	0	0.7
2–5 years	6.1	7.4	9.3	12.5	19.2	6.8
6–10 years	14.3	13.2	14.0	20.0	15.4	14.1
11–19 years	28.8	34.2	31.0	27.5	30.8	30.1
20+ years	50.6	43.9	43.1	37.5	34.6	48.3
Sessions per week (missing)	(49)	(10)	(5)	(0)	(0)	(64)
<6 per week	18.1	12.9	9.5	7.5	0	16.0
6–10 per week	64.1	77.0	75.1	83.8	81.5	68.0
11+ per week	17.8	10.1	15.4	8.8	18.5	16.0
State/territory ^(b)						
New South Wales	41.1	34.7	20.0	8.8	7.4	37.3
Victoria	23.9	24.4	14.4	1.3	0 [^]	22.7
Queensland	15.4	23.2	31.5	20.0	40.7	18.6
Western Australia	8.9	4.0	9.4	32.5	18.5	8.4

(continued)

Table 4.1(b) (continued): Characteristics of participating GPs by ASGC Remoteness

GP characteristic	Per cent of GPs, ^(a) column specific					
	Major Cities (n=4,180)	Inner Regional Australia (n=1,157)	Outer Regional Australia (n=575)	Remote Australia (n=80)	Very Remote Australia (n=27)	Australia (n=6,019)
South Australia	8.2	4.4	9.4	23.8	3.7	7.8
Tasmania	0 [^]	9.3	7.8	1.3	0 [^]	2.6
Australian Capital Territory	2.4	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	0 [^]	1.6
Northern Territory	0 [^]	0 [^]	7.5	12.5	29.6	1.0
GP training status (missing)	(145)	(48)	(25)	(3)	(1)	(224)
Currently in a vocational training program	2.2	3.8	4.7	6.5	15.4	2.9
RACGP status (missing)	(42)	(8)	(3)	(0)	(1)	(54)
Fellow of the RACGP	31.2	34.2	36.4	36.3	38.5	32.4
After-hours arrangement (n)^(c)	3,331	940	460	64	24	4,819
Own or cooperative after-hours arrangements	44.8	85.5	88.9	82.8	82.6	57.7
Missing (n)	17	1	1	0	1	20

(a) Missing data removed.

(b) State or territory of the GP's major practice address.

(c) Data collection on after-hours arrangements was commenced in the second data year (1999–2000).

[^] No postcodes in this state are classified to this ASGC group.

Note: GPs—general practitioners; RACGP—Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

4.2 GP computer use in the practice

RRMA

The extent of computer use at the major practice of participating GPs is compared across RRMA categories in Table 4.2(a). Compared with the national average:

- the proportion of GPs who reported not having a computer at all at their major practice was considerably lower in the rural zone; however, in Remote Centres all GPs had a computer at their major practice
- a larger proportion of GPs in the rural zone and in Remote Centres, but a smaller proportion of GPs in Other Remote Areas, were in practices where computers were used for billing purposes
- a larger proportion of GPs in the rural zone, but a somewhat smaller proportion in Capital Cities, were in practices that used computers for prescribing and for medical records
- a larger proportion of GPs in Large Rural Centres, Other Rural Areas, Remote Centres and Other Remote Areas were in practices where computers were used for other administrative purposes
- a larger proportion of GPs in the rural zone and a smaller proportion of GPs in Capital Cities were in practices that used Internet and/or email
- a considerably larger proportion of GPs in the rural zone were in practices where computers were used for all listed purposes.

ASGC Remoteness

The extent of computer use at the major practice of participating GPs is compared across ASGC categories in Table 4.2(b). Compared with the national average:

- the proportion of GPs who reported not having a computer at all at their major practice was considerably lower in Inner Regional Australia and Remote Australia
- the proportion of GPs in practices where computers were used for prescribing and for medical records was greater in Inner Regional, Outer Regional and Remote Australia
- computer use for medical records was higher in Very Remote Australia, but the use of computers for prescribing was lower
- a larger proportion of GPs in Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote Australia, and a smaller proportion of GPs in Major Cities were in practices where computers were used for other administrative work or for Internet and/or email communications
- in Inner Regional Australia and Outer Regional Australia a considerably larger proportion of GPs were in practices where computers were used for all listed purposes.

Table 4.2(a): GP computer use in practice by RRMA

Computer use in practice	Per cent of GPs, ^(a) column specific							
	Capital City (n=3,181)	Other Metropolitan (n=356)	Large Rural Centre (n=295)	Small Rural Centre (n=305)	Other Rural Area (n=593)	Remote Centre (n=33)	Other Remote Area (n=56)	Australia (n=4,819)
Not at all	11.9	9.9	5.8	6.9	7.1	0	9.1	10.4
Billing	67.4	71.3	80.3	81.6	77.7	81.8	54.5	70.6
Prescribing	66.9	76.3	83.1	85.2	81.7	69.7	72.7	71.7
Medical records	47.8	54.4	61.4	66.9	59.6	54.5	54.5	51.9
Other administrative	58.2	64.2	70.8	64.6	67.0	78.8	65.5	61.1
Internet/email	46.9	51.5	66.4	68.9	66.2	48.5	58.2	52.4
Missing (n)	11	1	0	0	2	0	1	15

Most common combinations	Per cent of GPs ^(a) with computers in practice							
	(n=2,792)	(n=320)	(n=278)	(n=284)	(n=549)	(n=33)	(n=50)	(n=4,306)
All five uses	24.5	31.6	41.0	44.7	43.7	30.3	24.0	29.9
Billing + prescribing + medical records + other admin	7.9	6.9	7.2	7.4	4.7	12.1	10.0	7.4
Billing + prescribing + other admin + internet/email	6.7	9.7	9.7	4.9	7.7	3.0	6.0	7.1
Billing + prescribing	5.4	4.7	4.0	3.9	5.1	3.0	4.0	5.1
Billing + prescribing + medical records	5.4	5.3	5.0	3.2	3.1	6.1	2.0	4.9
Billing + prescribing + other administrative	5.5	5.3	2.9	3.9	3.1	6.1	2.0	4.9
Billing + prescribing + medical records + internet/email	3.7	3.8	6.1	8.5	5.3	0	2.0	4.3
Billing + other administrative	4.8	2.2	1.8	0.7	2.4	6.1	0	3.8
Other administrative	4.1	2.8	2.9	1.4	1.8	3.0	4.0	3.5
Billing + prescribing + internet/email	3.1	1.9	2.9	6.0	4.6	0	6.0	3.4
Billing only	4.1	1.9	1.4	1.1	2.2	9.1	4.0	3.4

(a) Missing data about computer use removed.

Note: Admin—administrative.

Table 4.2(b): GP computer use in practice by ASGC Remoteness

Computer use in practice	Per cent of GPs,^(a) column specific					
	Major Cities (n=3,331)	Inner Regional Australia (n=940)	Outer Regional Australia (n=460)	Remote Australia (n=64)	Very Remote Australia (n=24)	Australia (n=4,819)
Not at all	11.8	5.8	10.4	3.1	8.7	10.4
Billing	67.5	80.6	74.6	67.2	39.1	70.6
Prescribing	67.5	83.4	77.6	78.1	65.2	71.7
Medical records	48.1	61.9	58.0	56.3	65.2	51.9
Other administrative	58.2	67.6	67.2	71.9	69.6	61.2
Internet/email	46.9	65.0	64.8	59.4	60.9	52.4
Missing (n)	12	2	0	0	1	15

Most common combinations	Per cent of GPs^(a) with computers in practice					
	(n=2,927)	(n=884)	(n=412)	(n=62)	(n=21)	(n=4,306)
All five uses	24.6	41.9	43.2	30.6	14.3	29.9
Billing + prescribing + medical records + other administrative	7.9	6.4	6.1	6.5	14.3	7.4
Billing + prescribing + other administrative + internet/email	7.0	7.7	7.3	6.5	0	7.1
Billing + prescribing	5.3	5.2	3.6	1.6	4.8	5.1
Billing + prescribing + medical records	5.3	4.1	3.6	3.2	4.8	4.9
Billing + prescribing + other administrative	5.5	3.5	3.4	4.8	0	4.9
Billing + prescribing + medical records + internet/email	3.8	6.4	4.4	3.2	0	4.3
Billing + other administrative	4.7	2.0	1.7	3.2	0	3.8
Other administrative	4.0	2.0	2.4	4.8	0	3.5
Billing + prescribing + internet/email	3.1	3.6	4.9	3.2	4.8	3.4
Billing only	4.0	1.9	1.9	4.8	0.0	3.4

(a) Missing data about computer use removed.