

13 Mental health workforce

13.1 Introduction

Information presented in this chapter describes the size and characteristics of the psychiatrist workforce providing specialised mental health care. The information has been obtained from the annual AIHW Medical Labour Force Survey, as outlined in Appendix 1. Surveys are also conducted for the psychologist and mental health nurses workforces, however, since previous *Mental health services in Australia* publications there has been no new data available for these groups. For information on mental health nurses, refer to *Mental health services in Australia 2005–06* (AIHW 2008g). For information on psychologists, refer to *Mental health services in Australia 2004–05* (AIHW 2007a). Other health care professionals providing mental health-related services, for example general practitioners (GPs), counsellors and social workers, are not covered since equivalent workforce data are not available.

The annual AIHW survey of all registered medical practitioners is conducted in consultation with the state and territory health departments, and in cooperation with the medical registration boards in each jurisdiction. For the purposes of this report, estimates of the psychiatrist workforce are based on those psychiatrist and psychiatrists-in-training who 'self-identify' and who state that they were *employed* as a medical practitioner at the time of the survey.

To enable meaningful comparison in the supply of psychiatrists across Australia over time, *full-time-equivalent* (FTE) figures are provided in addition to the number of psychiatrists and the average *total hours* worked. The FTE measures the number of 38-hour-week workloads worked by psychiatrists, regardless of how many worked full-time or part-time. Population standardised FTE figures (FTE per 100,000 population) are also reported as these take into account differences in the size of the relevant populations between regions and over time.

While the data are weighted to the overall medical practitioner registration numbers to account for non-response to the survey, not all possible non-response bias can be removed. In addition, the survey questionnaires, while generally consistent in content and design, have been modified over time and can vary by jurisdiction. As a result, care needs to be taken in interpreting changes in numbers and rates, and variations across states and territories.

Key concepts

In this report, an *employed* health professional is defined as one who:

- worked for a total of 1 hour or more, principally in the relevant profession, for pay, commission, payment in kind or profit; mainly or only in a particular state or territory during a specified period (that is, for psychiatrists, at the time of the survey); or
- usually worked but was away on leave (with some pay) for less than 3 months, on strike or locked out, or rostered off.

This includes those involved in clinical and non-clinical roles, for example education, research, and administration. 'Employed' people are referred to as the 'workforce' in this chapter. This excludes those medical practitioners practising psychiatry as a second or third speciality, and those who were on extended leave for more than 3 months or who were not employed.

Full-time-equivalent (FTE) is the number of 38-hour-week workloads worked by professionals. FTE is calculated by multiplying the number of employed professionals in a specific category by the average total hours worked by employed people in that category, and dividing by 38. The FTE per 100,000 population figures provide a standardised measure of supply of professionals. The standard of 38 hours was used in this report to provide comparable figures with previous published data. This differs from the approach used in *Mental health services in Australia* reports published prior to 2004–05, and with data on the medical and nursing labour force published by the AIHW (AIHW 2008f, 2008h). FTE numbers presented in this chapter will, therefore, not be comparable with those reports.

Total hours are the total hours worked per week in the profession, including paid and unpaid work. Average total weekly hours are calculated only for those people who reported their hours (that is, those who did not report them are excluded).

13.2 Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists (including psychiatrists-in-training) made up 5.2% of all employed medical practitioners in Australia, with an estimated 3,258 working in Australia in 2006 (Table 13.1). Psychiatrists-in-training made up 23.1% (or 753) of these psychiatrists. In 2006, 63.7% of employed psychiatrists were male. The average age of psychiatrists in 2006 was 48.8 years, remaining relatively constant since 2002, with female psychiatrists being younger, on average, than their male counterparts. The psychiatrist workforce increased by an annual average of 2.5% between 2002 and 2006, mostly due to the growth in the number of female psychiatrists (4.1% annual average increase).

Including clinical and non-clinical hours, psychiatrists worked an average of 40.5 total hours per week in 2006 (Table 13.2). The hours worked per week were, on average, lower for females than males (36.7 hours compared with 42.7 hours) and was higher for psychiatrists-in-training than for those not in training (44.1 hours compared with 39.5 hours).

Table 13.1: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, demographic characteristics, 2002–2006

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2006 Distribution (per cent)	Average annual change (per cent)
Psychiatrists	2,367	2,395	2,409	2,454	2,505	76.9	1.4
Psychiatrists-in-training	587	631	742	726	753	23.1	6.4
Sex							
Males	1,946	1,972	2,020	1,991	2,076	63.7	1.6
Females	1,008	1,054	1,131	1,189	1,182	36.3	4.1
Age and sex							
<i>Males</i>							
Less than 35 years	227	196	274	266	237	7.3	1.1
35–44 years	450	505	469	489	464	14.2	0.8
45–54 years	537	546	543	505	566	17.4	1.3
55–64 years	471	453	463	464	489	15.0	0.9
65 years and over	262	272	272	267	320	9.8	5.1
<i>Females</i>							
Less than 35 years	197	227	268	285	233	7.2	4.3
35–44 years	291	323	353	380	373	11.5	6.4
45–54 years	308	289	304	323	332	10.2	1.9
55–64 years	171	161	159	152	177	5.4	0.9
65 years and over	40	53	48	49	66	2.0	13.3
Average age (years)							
Males	50.7	50.5	49.9	49.9	50.8	..	0.0
Females	45.5	45.0	44.0	43.7	45.2	..	–0.2
<i>Total</i>	48.9	48.6	47.8	47.6	48.8	..	–0.1
Total number^(a)	2,954	3,026	3,152	3,180	3,258	100.0	2.5
All employed medical practitioners	53,991	56,207	58,211	60,252	62,425	..	3.7

(a) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

.. Not applicable.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Surveys, 2002–2006.

Table 13.2: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, average total hours worked per week, type and sex, 2002–2006

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Average annual change (per cent)
Psychiatrists	41.4	40.8	40.0	39.8	39.5	–1.2
Psychiatrists-in-training	44.0	45.4	43.8	43.4	44.1	0.1
Sex						
Males	44.2	44.3	43.3	42.8	42.7	–0.9
Females	37.5	36.9	36.6	36.9	36.7	–0.5
Total	41.9	41.8	40.9	40.6	40.5	–0.8

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Surveys, 2002–2006.

Size and distribution of the psychiatrist workforce

Nationally, there were 18 full-time-equivalent (FTE) psychiatrists per 100,000 population in 2006 (Table 13.3). The number of FTE psychiatrists per 100,000 population varied between the states and territories, ranging from 13 for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, to 23 for Victoria. The average hours worked varied across jurisdictions, ranging from 30.4 hours per week in the Australian Capital Territory to 41.5 for Queensland.

Table 13.3: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, FTE and FTE per 100,000 population, states and territories, 2006

	Number of psychiatrists	Number of psychiatrists-in-training	Total number	Average total hours worked per week	FTE	FTE per 100,000 population ^(a)
NSW	778	290	1,067	40.6	1,140	18
Vic	782	239	1021	40.8	1,096	23
Qld	407	95	502	41.5	548	15
WA	214	40	254	38.9	260	14
SA	217	54	271	39.9	285	20
Tas	58	5	62	36.8	60	13
ACT	41	11	51	30.4	41	13
NT ^(b)	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.
Total^(c)	2,505	753	3,258	40.5	3,472	18

(a) Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June 2006.

(b) Estimates for the Northern Territory for 2006 are not separately published. The data were based on responses to the 2007 Medical Labour Force Survey weighted to 2006 registration numbers and are equivalent to a response rate of 28.6%.

(c) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

n.p. Not published, however, the figures are included in the totals.

Note: FTE based on a 38-hour standard working week.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Survey, 2006.

In 2006, approximately 90% of FTE psychiatrists (for whom region was reported) worked mainly in the *Major cities* (Table 13.4). Once population sizes for each region were taken into account, the FTE psychiatrists per 100,000 population was highest for *Major cities* (21), followed by *Inner regional* (6) and *Outer regional* (4).

Table 13.4: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, FTE and FTE per 100,000 population, by region^(a), 2006

Region ^(a)	Number	Average total hours worked per week	FTE	FTE per 100,000 population ^(b)
Major cities	2,840	40.5	3,027	21
Inner regional	247	39.2	255	6
Outer regional	77	42.6	86	4
Remote and very remote	14	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.
Not reported	79	41.0	85	..
Total^(c)	3,258	40.5	3,472	17

(a) Region is derived from the postcode of the respondent's main job and is classified according to the remoteness area structure within the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ABS 2007a). See also Appendix 3. This data should be treated with caution due to the large number of *Not reported* values for region, relative to the number in *Outer regional* and *Remote and very remote* regions.

(b) Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June 2006.

(c) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

n.p. Not published.

.. Not applicable.

Note: FTE based on a 38-hour standard working week.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Survey, 2006.

Changes in the psychiatrist workforce

The size and characteristics of the psychiatrist workforce, including the hours worked, changed in the period from 2002 to 2006. During this period, the number of employed psychiatrists (and psychiatrists-in-training) increased by 10.3%, which is one-third lower than the 15.6% increase in the total number of all employed medical practitioners. These figures equate to average annual increases of 2.5% for psychiatrists and 3.7% for all employed medical practitioners (Table 13.1). The average hours worked by psychiatrists decreased over the same period, by an average of 1.2% per year (Table 13.2).

The proportion of psychiatrists in the workforce who were female increased from 34.1% in 2002 to 36.3% in 2006 (Table 13.1).

Nationally, the supply of psychiatrists and psychiatrists in training, measured as FTE and FTE per 100,000 population, increased between 2002 and 2006 (Table 13.5). The supply increased in some, but not all, jurisdictions in this period (Table 13.6). In Queensland the number of psychiatrist FTE per 100,000 population increased by an annual average of 4.9%, while in South Australia there was an annual average decrease of 0.4%.

Table 13.5: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, FTE and FTE per 100,000 population, 2002–2006

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Average annual change (per cent)
Psychiatrists	2,579	2,571	2,536	2,570	2,604	0.2
Psychiatrists-in-training	680	754	856	830	874	6.5
Total FTE^(a)	3,257	3,328	3,392	3,398	3,472	1.6
FTE per 100,000 population ^(b)	17	17	17	17	18	1.7

(a) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

(b) Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June of the reference year.

Note: FTE based on a 38-hour standard working week.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Surveys, 2002–2006.

Table 13.6: Employed psychiatrists and psychiatrists-in-training, FTE, states and territories, 2002–2006

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT ^(a)	Total ^(b)
FTE									
2002	1,094	1,047	434	233	302	63	56	29	3,257
2003	1,063	1,049	463	271	319	71	50	36	3,328
2004	1,129	1,076	474	247	335	68	44	20	3,392
2005	1,144	1,028	541	223	313	63	63	25	3,398
2006	1,140	1,096	548	260	285	60	41	n.p.	3,472
Average annual change (per cent)	1.0	1.2	6.0	2.8	–1.5	–1.2	–7.6	n.p.	1.6
FTE per 100,000 population^(c)									
Average annual change (per cent)	1.7	1.4	4.9	3.4	–0.4	0.6	–6.0	12.3	1.7

(a) Estimates for the Northern Territory for 2006 are not separately published. The data were based on responses to the 2007 Medical Labour Force Survey weighted to 2006 registration numbers and are equivalent to a response rate of 28.6%.

(b) The number for each variable may not sum to the total due to the estimation process and rounding.

(c) Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population as at 30 June of the reference year.

n.p. Not published, however, the figures are included in the totals.

Note: FTE based on a 38-hour standard working week.

Source: AIHW Medical Labour Force Surveys, 2002–2006.