Explanatory notes

Method

The labour force data in this publication were obtained from the 2001 Nursing Labour Force Survey administered by each state and territory nurses' registration board on behalf of the AIHW. Each registration board conducts an annual renewal of registrations, and a survey questionnaire is sent to all nurses as part of the registration renewal process. Each state and territory health authority then forwards a computer file of the survey data to the AIHW for aggregation into a national data set.

Scope and coverage

The scope of the Nursing Labour Force Survey is all nurses registered or enrolled with the nurses' board or nursing council in each state and territory, and eligible to practise. The coverage may exclude nurses who registered for the first time during the current year. These nurses may not be required to renew their registration at the standard renewal date if the initial registration in that state or territory had occurred during the preceding 12 months.

Response rate

The responses to the AIHW Nursing Labour Force Survey represented 77.1% of the total number of nursing registrations and enrolments in all states and territories as at 30 June 2001 (Table A.9).

Table A.9: Nursing Labour Force Survey: estimated survey response rate, states and territories, 2001

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT[a]	Total
2001 response rate	71.2	78.7	93.5	64.8	81.5	73.2	76.4	57.5	77.1

(a)   The low response rate for the Northern Territory is mainly due to the transient nature of the nursing labour force. According to the 2000/2001 Nursing Board Annual Report, approximately one-third of all nurses do not re-register each year, primarily because they no longer practise in this jurisdiction.

Source: Nursing Labour Force Survey, 2001.

The overall response rate can only be estimated, and not determined with complete accuracy. It is known that at least some nurses who were registered in more than one state or territory completed a questionnaire in just one state or territory. It is not known how often this occurred because it is not possible to match survey records between states and territories.

In addition, the technique used to produce estimates for the survey as a whole was modified in 2001. The new procedures required changes which tightened the definitions of 'responding' and 'non-responding' to the survey which, in turn, have lowered the estimated response rate for 2001. Calculated using the previous method, the estimated national response rate would have been 87.5%.

Collection timing

The labour force survey is conducted by the nurses' registration board in each state and territory in conjunction with the annual renewal of licences to practise. Therefore, the timing of the survey depends on the licence renewal procedure that operates in each jurisdiction. As the renewal of registration in New South Wales is due on the anniversary of initial registration, the survey is conducted throughout the calendar year. South Australia has four renewal periods each year, with about a quarter of nurses registered in each period. The remaining states and territories have annual renewals due by a fixed date. The collection period in each state and territory is shown schematically in Table A.10.

Table A.10: Nursing Labour Force Survey: collection period, states and territories, 2001

State/territory	Nov 2000	Dec 2000	2001 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
New South Wales			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Victoria	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓									
Queensland					▓	▓	▓	▓						
Western Australia			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
South Australia	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓				
Tasmania									▓	▓				
Australian Capital Territory				▓	▓									
Northern Territory						▓	▓	▓						

Source: State and territory registration boards.

Notes on the AIHW labour force estimates

The figures produced from the Nursing Labour Force Survey are estimates only. Not all nurses who were sent a questionnaire responded to the survey. Estimates of the whole nursing population are based on survey data from renewals that have been weighted to match the available registration information. In 2001, complete registration data (comprising total registrations/enrolments by age and sex) were available for four jurisdictions (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania). For Victoria, weighting was based on division of nursing and sex data from registrations and age data from respondents, whereas Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory were based entirely on the total numbers of registrations/enrolments and respondents' characteristics.

Additional estimation has been made for survey respondents for whom age, sex and labour force status were not known, either because some survey questions were incomplete or because nurses' board registration data were incomplete or not provided. Where registration data were not available, it was assumed in the estimation that survey non-respondents in each state/territory had the same characteristics as respondents. This process may overestimate the numbers of nurses in the labour force in each state and territory if non-respondents are more likely to be those with multiple registration or those not in the nursing labour force. This survey error will be greater in the two territories, which have a higher proportion of nurses registered in other jurisdictions, and lower proportions of nurses practising solely in the territories.

Rounding of estimates may result in numbers not adding up to totals in some tables.

Glossary

Employed nurse

A nurse who worked mainly or solely in a particular state or territory. Nurses registered in more than one state or territory are assigned to the jurisdiction in which they mainly worked (i.e. worked the most hours).

Enrolled nurse

A nurse who is on the roll maintained by the state or territory nurses' board or nursing council to practise nursing in that state or territory. The minimum educational requirement for an enrolled nurse is a 1-year diploma from a higher education institution or equivalent from a recognised hospital-based program. It is necessary for a nurse to have practised for a specified minimum period in the past 5 years to maintain enrolment. Enrolled nurses include mothercraft and dental nurses where the educational course requirements may be greater than 1 year but less than a 3-year degree course or equivalent.

Geographic classification

There are several classifications used to differentiate between various regions in Australia. The two main ones used in health labour force planning are the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification and the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC). The Remoteness Area Structure of the ASGC, produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), has been used in this publication to present regional data for nurses. Prior to 2001, the RRMA classification was used. A brief explanation of the classifications is provided below (AIHW in press).

The RRMA classification allocates each Statistical Local Area (SLA) in capital cities and metropolitan centres with a population equal to or greater than 100,000 to the Metropolitan zone and to the RRMA classes of Capital city and Other metropolitan centre respectively. All other SLAs are allocated to either the Rural or Remote zone based on the SLA's score on an index of remoteness.

The Remoteness Area Structure of the ASGC is based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), where the remoteness index value of a point is based on the physical road distance to the nearest town or service in each of five population size classes based on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing. These classes are:

- Major cities of Australia
- Inner regional Australia
- Outer regional Australia
- Remote Australia
- Very remote Australia.

Hours worked

The total number of hours worked per week is self-reported by nurses and relates to the usual number of hours worked per week in all nursing-related jobs over the 4 weeks before the survey.

Hours worked exclude time spent on travel between work locations (except travel to call-outs) and unpaid professional and/or voluntary activities. In the editing of survey responses, maximum hours worked per week were limited to 99 hours per week.

In this publication the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition has been used for the cut-off for full-time and part-time work:

- *full-time:* 35 hours or more per week
- *part-time:* less than 35 hours per week.

Nursing labour force

The nursing labour force (registered and enrolled nurses) in each state and territory includes nurses currently employed in nursing and nurses who are not employed in nursing but are looking for work in nursing.

Registered and enrolled nurses who, at the time of the survey, were on maternity or other extended leave for more than 3 months are employed, and thus part of the nursing labour force. However, in most cross-classified tables for employed nurses, those on extended leave have not been included.

Nursing role

A description of the job function within the field of nursing of a person with nursing qualifications. The occupations are:

Nurse clinician: A registered or enrolled nurse who is mainly involved in the care and treatment of patients, including nursing diagnosis and preventive action.

Clinician nurse manager: A registered or enrolled nurse who manages a hospital nursing care unit or other sub-unit of a hospital, nursing home or health care facility, or supervises nursing staff for a particular unit or shift.

Clinical nurse: A person who is either a nurse clinician or a clinician nurse manager.

Administrator: A person mainly employed in nursing administration.

Teacher/educator: A person who teaches or trains persons in nursing for their initial qualification or in advanced skills after initial qualification.

Researcher: A person engaged in nursing research.

Other: A job function in nursing which is not one of the above—for example, industrial relations or public health activities in nursing.

Registered nurse

A nurse who is on the register maintained by the state or territory nurses board or nursing council to practise nursing in that state or territory. The minimum educational requirement for a registered nurse is a 3-year degree from a tertiary education institution or equivalent from a recognised hospital-based program. To maintain registration, it is necessary for a nurse to have practised for a specified minimum period in the field of nursing in the preceding 5 years.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2002a. Australian demographic statistics
Cat. no. 3101.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2002b. Australian standard geographical classification.
Cat. no. 1216.0. Canberra: ABS.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (in press). Rural, regional and remote
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Area boundaries. Canberra: AIHW.