



Nursing and midwifery labour force 2009

Highlights

This bulletin presents summary findings on the nursing and midwifery labour force based on data from the 2009 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey. This survey collected information on the demographic and employment characteristics of nurses who were registered or enrolled in Australia at the time of the survey. The survey was done annually until 2009 by state and territory health authorities, with the questionnaire administered by the registration boards (or councils) in each jurisdiction, usually in conjunction with the registration renewal process.

The main findings of the report are as follows:

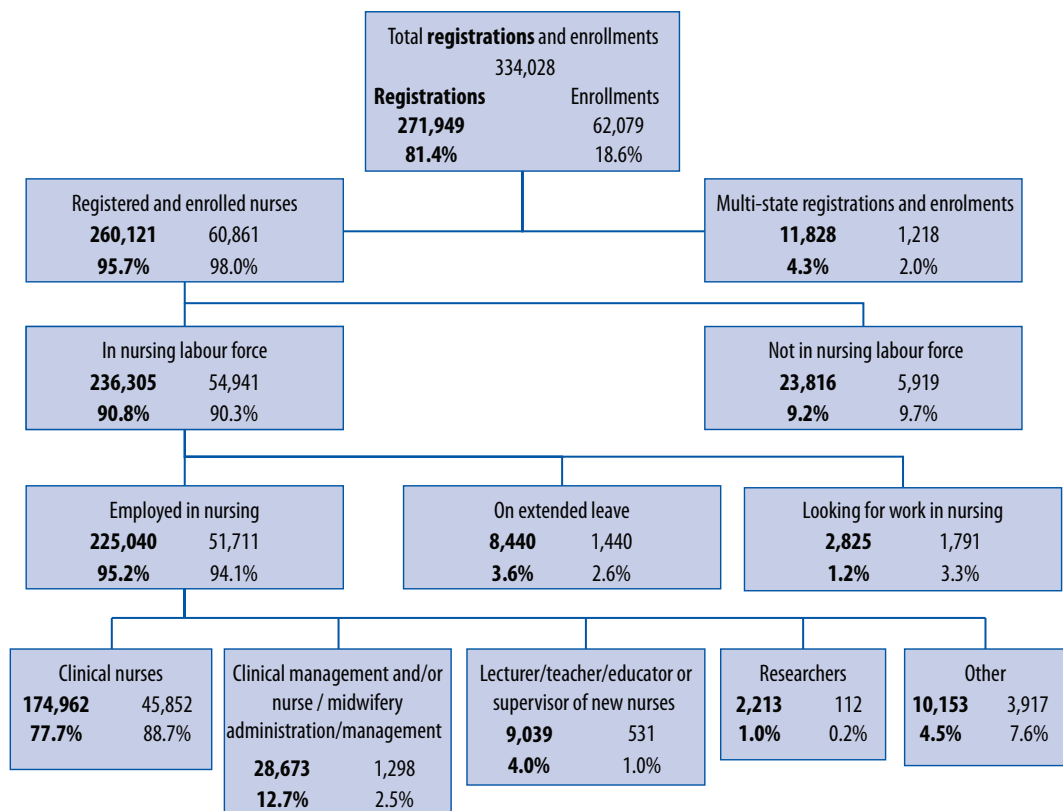
- ♦ In 2009, the total number of nurses identified by the Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey (after adjusting for multiple registrations) was estimated to be 320,982, comprising 260,121 registered nurses and 60,861 enrolled nurses.
- ♦ The number of registered and enrolled nurses in the labour force (that is, employed in or looking for work in nursing in Australia) increased by 14.2% between 2005 and 2009, from 254,956 to 291,246.
- ♦ Between 2005 and 2009, the number of nurses actually employed in nursing increased by 13.3%, from 244,360 to 276,751.
- ♦ The average weekly hours worked by employed nurses and midwives increased slightly from 33.0 hours in 2005 to 33.3 hours in 2009. Over the same period, the proportion of nurses working part time (less than 35 hours per week) declined slightly from 49.8% to 47.7%.

(highlights continued overleaf)

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- Overall, nursing supply increased by 6.2% between 2005 and 2009, from 1,040 full-time equivalent (FTE) nurses per 100,000 population to 1,105 full-time equivalent nurses, based on a 38-hour week. This was mainly a result of both a 13.3% increase in the number of employed nurses, and a 0.9% increase in the average hours they worked over this period.
- Nursing supply across regions ranged from 997 full-time equivalent nurses per 100,000 population in *Major cities* to 1,240 in *Very remote* areas.
- Between 2005 and 2009, the proportion of employed nurses aged 50 years and over increased from 35.8% to 36.3%. The average age of nurses decreased from 45.1 years in 2005 to 44.3 years in 2009.
- Nursing continued to be a female dominated profession, with females comprising 90.4% of employed nurses in 2009 (down slightly from 92.1% in 2005).



Note: Numbers in bold print relate to registered nurses and plain to enrolled nurses. Nursing role is based on main nursing job.
Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey 2009.

Figure 1: Registered and enrolled nurses, by labour force status, 2009

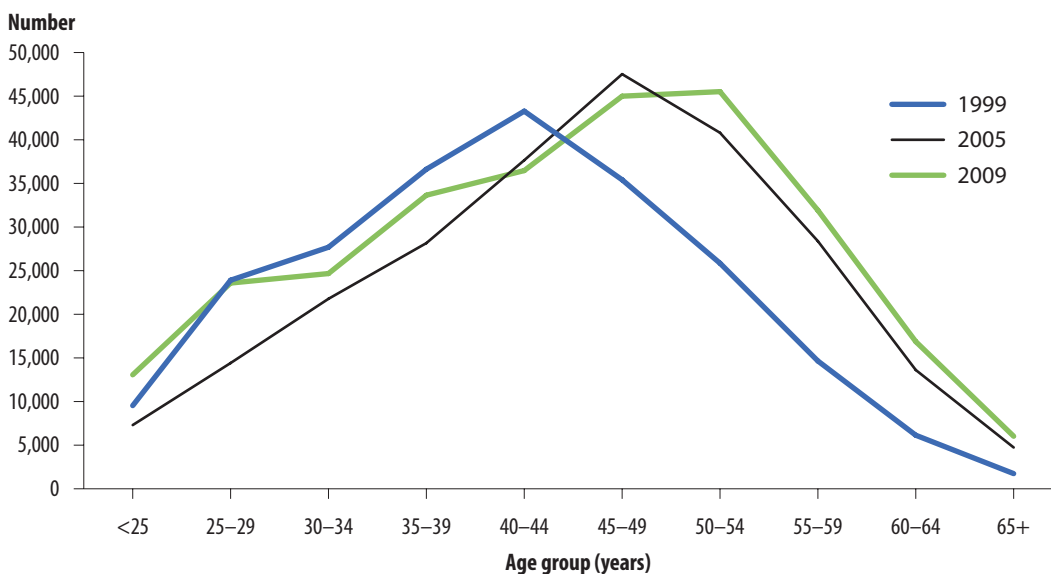
Demographic characteristics

In 2009, there were 320,982 registered and enrolled nurses, of whom 86.2% were employed in nursing (Figure 1).

The average age of employed nurses was 44.3 years (43.1 years for males and 44.5 years for females). Non-clinicians were, on average, slightly older than clinicians (46.4 and 44.1 years, respectively) (Table 1). Nursing continued to be a female dominated profession, with only 9.6% of nurses being male in 2009, up from 7.9% in 2005.

The age profile of the nursing population has shifted toward older age groups over recent years (Figure 2). In 1999, the 40–44 years age group included the greatest number of nurses of all the age groups. By 2009, it was the 50–54 years age group that included the most nurses.

In 2009, 38,975 employed registered and enrolled nurses (14.9% of those who answered the question) reported obtaining their first qualification in a country other than Australia.



Sources: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 1999, 2005 and 2009.

Figure 2: Number of employed registered and enrolled nurses, by age, 1999, 2005 and 2009

Work characteristics

Most nurses (90.6% or 250,786) were employed mainly as clinicians. Clinicians were most likely to report working in medical and surgical areas (32.6%), followed by critical care (17.3%) and aged care (10.6%). Of the non-clinical workforce, about 36.9% reported working in lecturing, education and/or supervision of new nurses, and 9.0% reported working as researchers.

Clinicians worked an average of 33.2 hours per week, and non-clinicians, 33.9 hours.

Overall, 52,273 nurses were authorised as midwives. Of these, there were 2,049 were direct entry midwives (qualified through direct entry midwifery undergraduate programs, and not required to first qualify as a registered nurse).

Table 1: Employed registered and enrolled nurses, selected statistics, by nursing field, 1999, 2005 and 2009

Field of nursing	Number	Average age (years)	Percentage aged 50 years or over	Average hours worked per week	FTE number ^(a)	FTE rate ^(b)
1999						
Clinician	200,219	40.8	20.3	30.2	159,121	841
Clinician	191,405	40.6	20.0	30.0	151,109	798
Nurse manager	8,814	43.8	26.7	35.6	8,257	44
Non-clinician	24,603	44.9	31.1	33.9	21,948	116
Administrator	12,497	46.1	34.6	36.1	11,872	63
Researcher	1,763	41.7	20.7	31.6	1,466	8
Teacher/educator	5,949	43.3	25.9	32.7	5,119	27
Other	4,394	44.8	32.4	30.2	3,492	18
Total	224,822	41.2	21.5	30.6	181,041	957
2005						
Clinician	222,974	44.9	35.4	32.9	193,049	947
Clinical management and or administration/management of clinical nurses	25,976	47.5	42.9	39.6	27,070	133
Clinical nursing	196,998	44.6	34.4	32.1	166,411	816
Non-clinician	21,386	46.9	40.2	33.6	18,909	93
Lecturing, education and or supervision of new nurses	7,226	45.3	45.2	31.9	6,066	30
Researcher	1,976	45.5	33.6	34.3	1,784	9
Other	12,183	45.1	35.8	33.0	10,580	52
Total	244,360	45.1	35.8	33.0	212,207	1,040
2009						
Clinician	250,786	44.1	35.7	33.2	219,108	998
Clinical management and or administration/management of clinical nurses	29,971	47.3	44.1	39.2	30,917	141
Clinical nursing	220,815	43.7	34.6	32.4	188,274	858
Non-clinician	25,965	46.4	41.3	33.9	23,164	106
Lecturing, education and or supervision of new nurses	9,570	45.0	34.6	36.7	9,243	42
Research	2,325	45.1	33.9	34.2	2,093	10
Other	14,070	47.6	47.0	32.0	11,848	54
Total	276,751	44.3	36.3	33.3	242,521	1,105

(a) Based on a 38-hour week, hours across all jobs.

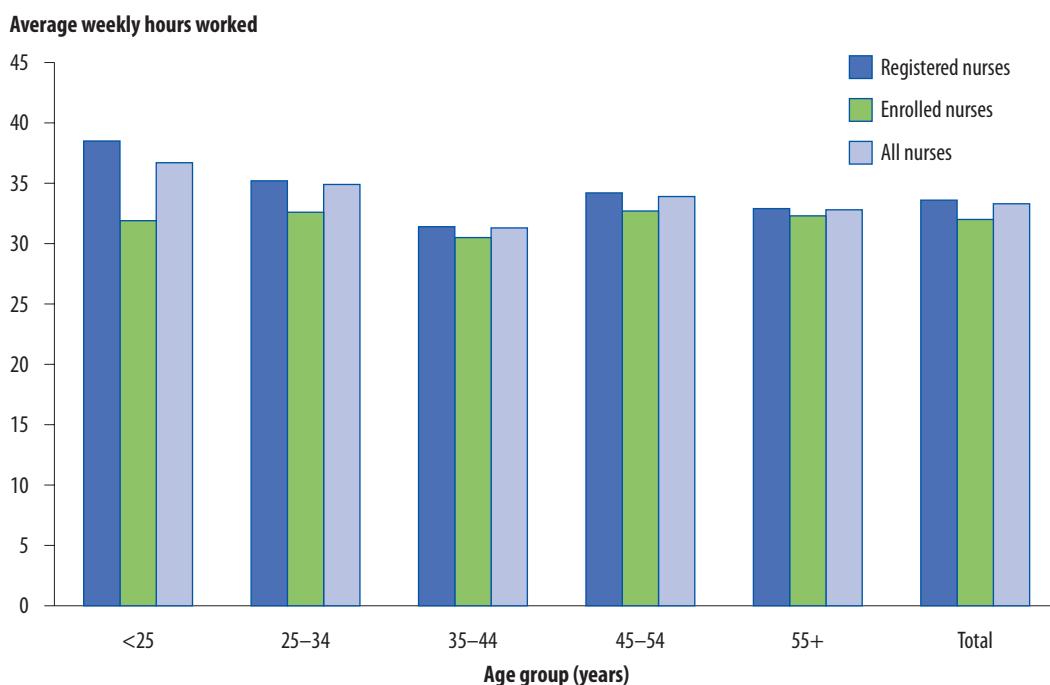
(b) Number per 100,000 population.

Sources: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 1999, 2005 and 2009.

In their main job, nurses worked 32.8 hours on average in the public sector and 30.2 hours on average in the private sector. The 30,688 nurses with a second job reported working an average of 12.6 hours in the second job.

The majority of employed nurses (62.2%) reported working in a hospital in their main job (not including psychiatric/mental health hospitals). The next largest work setting for employed nurses was residential aged care centres (10.9%).

Registered nurses tended to work more hours than enrolled nurses (33.6 and 32.0 hours, respectively). Nurses aged less than 25 years worked the most hours (36.7 hours) and nurses aged 35–44 years, the fewest (31.3 hours) (Figure 3).



Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey 2009.

Figure 3: Employed registered and enrolled nurses, average total weekly hours, by age group, 2009

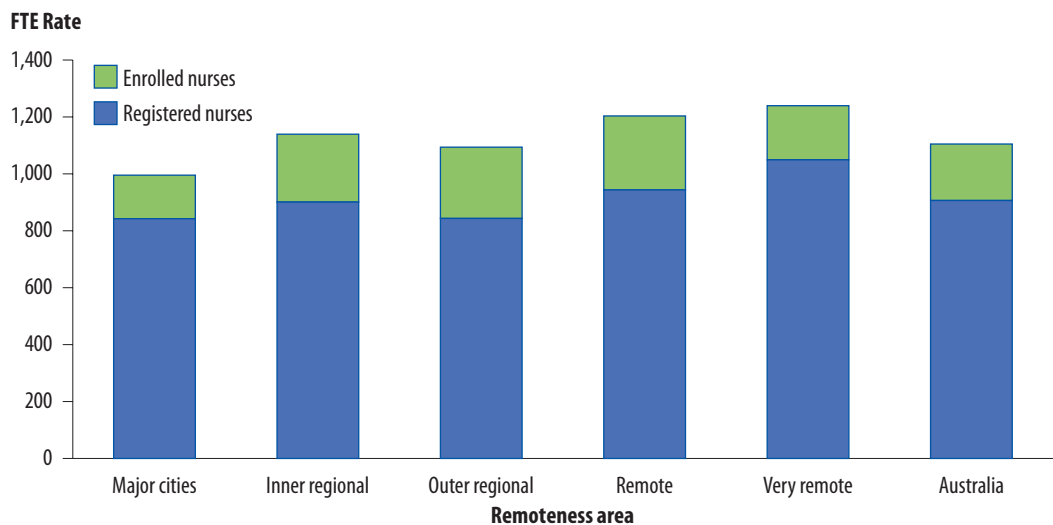
Regional distribution

Remoteness areas

With 1,240 full-time equivalent nurses per 100,000 population, *Very remote* areas had the highest supply of employed nurses. *Major cities* had the lowest supply at 997 full-time equivalent nurses per 100,000 population).

Nurses working in *Very remote* and *Remote* areas worked, on average, more than the national average (4.5 hours and 2.3 hours per week more than the national average, respectively).

On average, nurses working in *Inner regional* areas were 1.8 years older than those working in *Major cities* (45.5 and 43.7 years, respectively).



Note: Based on a 38-hour working week.
Sources: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey 2009; unpublished ABS data.

Figure 4: Employed registered and enrolled nurses, FTE per 100,000 population, by remoteness area, 2009.

States and territories

The highest full-time equivalent rate of employed nurses across the states and territories was in the Northern Territory (1,800 full-time equivalent nurses per 100,000 population), and the lowest in New South Wales (1,005). Employed nurses in the Northern Territory also worked the highest average hours per week (37.7 hours). The jurisdiction with the lowest average hours per week was Victoria (32.0 hours). Comparisons between states and territories should be interpreted with caution, due to the relatively low response rates to the survey in some jurisdictions (see data sources section).

Employed nurses were youngest, on average, in the Northern Territory (42.4 years), and oldest in Tasmania (46.5 years). The Northern Territory had the highest percentage of male employed nurses (11.5%) compared with the national average of 9.6%.

Indigenous participation in the nursing workforce

In 2009, there were 1,605 employed nurses who identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, representing about 0.6% of nurses for whom Indigenous status was provided.

Indigenous nurses were, on average, about 2.4 years younger than non-Indigenous nurses (41.9 years and 44.3 years, respectively). A higher proportion of Indigenous nurses were male than for non-Indigenous nurses (13.4% and 9.6%, respectively).

Data sources

The source of these data is the AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey. This survey collected information on the demographic and employment characteristics of nurses who were registered or enrolled in Australia at the time of the survey. Until 2009 this survey was done annually by state and territory health authorities, with the questionnaire administered by the registration boards (or councils) in each jurisdiction, usually in conjunction with the registration renewal process. Future reports will be based on the similar survey being run through the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, which is implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in partnership with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

The overall response rate to the 2009 survey was estimated to be 44.4%. The national rate has declined over time, from the 77.3% response rate achieved in 1997. Estimates for some jurisdictions for some years should be interpreted with caution, due to the relatively low response rate to the survey. In particular Western Australia and the Northern Territory had very low response rates in 2005 (26.9% and 13.7%, respectively). Estimates for the Northern Territory for 2005 are not separately published, due to the very low response rate to the survey in that jurisdiction (13.7%). Because survey data for Victoria were not available in 2005, the 2006 Victorian survey responses were weighted to 2005 benchmarks.

Interpretation of responses for the Northern Territory is made difficult, due to the high turnover of nurses moving to and from that jurisdiction.

For more information on the data collection method and other relevant data issues, see the explanatory notes section at: <www.aihw.gov.au/workforce/>. This site also contains supplementary data tables that contain the source data quoted in this bulletin.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Unpublished Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population data are used for the calculation of medical practitioner rates and full-time equivalent rates.

Further information

More detailed data about the nursing and midwifery labour force and other registered health professionals are available at: <www.aihw.gov.au/workforce/index.cfm>.

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