

# **Medical labour force 1997**

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NATIONAL HEALTH LABOUR FORCE SERIES

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
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## Foreword

In recent years, the size and distribution of Australia's medical labour force has received substantial policy attention, and there have been numerous policy changes to influence it. The Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council has therefore considered that regular statistical monitoring of the medical labour force is a high priority. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in conjunction with State and Territory health authorities and medical boards, conducts an annual survey of the medical labour force. To provide a comprehensive picture of the supply and distribution of the medical workforce in Australia, the Institute also includes in this report statistics from national immigration, education, Medicare and hospital databases.

Collectively these portray a dynamic workforce:

- the female proportion of new medical students exceeding 50% for the first time;
- the proportion of female doctors in the workforce continuing to steadily increase, with the employment characteristics of these doctors significantly different to those of male doctors;
- State and Territory health authorities employing increasing numbers of temporary resident, overseas-trained doctors;
- strong growth (8.3%) in employment of salaried medical officers in public hospitals during 1997-98;
- an increase of more than 4% in the numbers of specialist physicians during 1997-98;
- much lower growth in the numbers of doctors in other sectors of the medical workforce;
- an increase in the numbers of doctors per 100,000 population working in rural areas, from 142.8 in 1996 to 144.0 in 1997, but the increase is less than in metropolitan areas.

During the last 12 months, there has been a major increase in the numbers of organisations seeking data to assist in medical workforce planning activities. Rural workforce agencies, State workforce agencies and the General Practice Partnership Advisory Committee are among the new organisations engaged in strategic planning and workforce management.

The Institute relies on the cooperation of State and Territory medical boards to conduct its medical labour force survey, and greatly appreciates the cooperation of doctors throughout Australia in providing this valuable resource. Principal authors of the report were Warwick Conn and John Harding with Kathy Southgate the data manager. Our thanks to all.

Richard Madden  
Director,  
July 1999



# Contents

- Foreword..... v
- Abbreviations ..... viii
- List of figures and tables ..... ix
- List of supplementary tables..... xi
- 1 Main features ..... 1
- 2 Primary care practitioners .....19
- 3 Specialists and specialists-in-training.....30
  - 3.1 Specialists ..... 31
  - 3.2 Specialists-in-training..... 35
- 4 Hospital non-specialists.....38
- 5 Medical workforce in hospitals .....43
  - 5.1 Public hospitals..... 43
  - 5.2 Private hospitals ..... 46
- 6 Rural and remote medical workforce.....48
- 7 Aboriginal health service employment .....52
- 8 Migration of medical practitioners to and from Australia .....55
  - 8.1 Overseas-trained Australian citizen or permanent resident medical practitioners..... 55
  - 8.2 International migration by medical practitioners ..... 59
- 9 Medical education and training .....67
- 10 Medicare statistics .....70
- Explanatory notes .....73
- Glossary .....76
- References .....83
- Related publications.....84

## Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHMAC	Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AMC	Australian Medical Council
AMWAC	Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee
CMO	career medical officer
DHAC	Department of Health and Aged Care
ENT	ear, nose and throat
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GP	general practitioner
HMO	hospital medical officer
metro	metropolitan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMP	other medical practitioner
OTD	overseas-trained doctor
RACGP	Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
RMO	resident medical officer
TRD	temporary resident doctor
VRGP	vocationally registered general practitioner

## List of figures and tables

Figure 1: All registered medical practitioners, Australia, 1997 .....	9
Table 1: Employed clinician medical practitioners: States and Territories, 1993-97.....	10
Table 2: Employed clinician medical practitioners: occupation and sex, Australia, 1993-97.....	10
Table 3: Employed medical practitioners: occupation and sex, States and Territories, 1997.....	11
Table 4: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, States and Territories, 1997.....	12
Table 5: Employed medical practitioners: occupation and region of main job, 1997 .....	13
Table 6: All registered medical practitioners: employment status and sex, States and Territories, 1997 .....	14
Table 7: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Australia, 1997 .....	15
Table 8: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, total hours worked per week and sex, Australia, 1997.....	16
Table 9: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, total hours worked per week and geographic location of main job, Australia, 1997.....	17
Table 10: Primary care practitioners: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997 ....	25
Table 11: Primary care practitioners: selected characteristics, region of main job, Australia, 1997 .....	26
Table 12: Primary care practitioners: sex, qualification and main field of practice, States and Territories, 1997.....	27
Table 13: Primary care practitioners: number of practitioners in practice, sex, States and Territories, 1997 .....	28
Table 14: Estimated number of primary care practices: size of practice, States and Territories, 1997 .....	28
Table 15: Specialists: main specialty of practice, States and Territories, 1997.....	32
Table 16: All medical specialists practising in each specialty, sex, Australia, 1997.....	33
Table 17: Specialists: total hours worked per week, age and sex, Australia, 1997 .....	34
Table 18: Specialists-in-training: total hours worked per week, age and sex, Australia, 1997.....	36
Table 19: Specialists-in-training: specialty of training, States and Territories, 1997.....	37
Table 20: Hospital non-specialists: classification, age and sex, States and Territories, 1997 ..	40
Table 21: Hospital non-specialists: classification and sector of employment, States and Territories, 1997 .....	41
Table 22: Interns and RMOs: total hours worked per week, sex, States and Territories, 1997.....	41
Table 23: Other hospital medical practitioners: total hours worked per week, sex, States and Territories, 1997.....	42
Table 24: All medical practitioners working in public hospitals: occupation of main job and region, Australia, 1997.....	45

Table 25: All medical practitioners working in private hospitals: occupation of main job and region, Australia, 1997.....	47
Table 26: Medical practitioners: selected characteristics and region of main job, Australia, 1997.....	50
Table 27: Per cent of clinician practitioners who were female: occupation, region of main job and age, Australia, 1997.....	51
Table 28: Medical practitioners employed in an Aboriginal health service <sup>(a)</sup> : selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997.....	54
Table 29: Employed medical practitioners: occupation and country of initial qualification, States and Territories, 1997.....	57
Table 30: Permanent resident overseas-trained medical practitioners: occupation, country of initial qualification and region, Australia, 1997 .....	58
Table 31: Permanent migration of medical practitioners to and from Australia, 1992-93 to 1997-98.....	61
Table 32: Australian Medical Council examination results: 1992-98.....	62
Table 33: Temporary migration of non-Australian medical practitioners to and from Australia for employment: type of migration and country of previous or future residence, 1992-93 to 1997-98 .....	63
Table 34: Medical practitioners temporarily migrating to Australia for employment: type of visa and intended duration of stay, States and Territories, 1997-98 .....	64
Table 35: Migration of Australian medical practitioners to and from Australia, 1992-93 to 1997-98 .....	65
Table 36: Temporary resident overseas-trained medical practitioners: occupation, country of initial qualification and region, Australia, 1997 .....	66
Table 37: Medical student course completions: citizenship and level of course, Australia, 1988-97 .....	68
Table 38: Australian citizens and permanent residents commencing undergraduate medicine courses: university and sex, Australia, 1990-98.....	69
Table 39: Medicare providers: peer group and specialty, Australia, 1990-91 to 1997-98.....	71
Table 40: Average number of Medicare services per head of population: service type, Australia, 1989-90 to 1997-98.....	72
Table 41: Medical labour force survey: estimated survey response rate, States and Territories, 1997 .....	74

## List of supplementary tables

These tables are on the Internet at <http://www.aihw.gov.au> or may be purchased on disk from the Institute for \$20 (phone (02) 6244 1032 or fax (02) 6244 1044).

- Table 42: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, New South Wales, 1997
- Table 43: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Victoria, 1997
- Table 44: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Queensland, 1997
- Table 45: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, South Australia, 1997
- Table 46: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Western Australia, 1997
- Table 47: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Tasmania, 1997
- Table 48: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Northern Territory, 1997
- Table 49: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, age and sex, Australian Capital Territory, 1997
- Table 50: Vocationally registered general practitioners: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 51: General practitioner trainees: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 52: Other medical practitioners: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 53: Vocationally registered general practitioners: selected characteristics and region of main job, Australia, 1997
- Table 54: General practitioner trainees: selected characteristics and region of main job, Australia, 1997
- Table 55: Other medical practitioners: selected characteristics and region of main job, Australia, 1997
- Table 56: Primary care locums: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 57: Primary care deputising service practitioners: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 58: Both locum and primary care deputising service practitioners: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 59: Primary care practitioners mainly practising in a special interest area: special interest area, sex and qualification, Australia, 1997
- Table 60: Primary care practitioners: selected characteristics, size of practice, Qld, SA, WA, Tas, NT, ACT, 1997
- Table 61: Primary care practitioners: practice size, hours worked, age and sex, Qld, SA, WA, Tas, NT, ACT, 1997
- Table 62: Specialists per 100,000 population: main specialty of practice, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 63: Specialists: main specialty of practice, sex and age, 1997
- Table 64: Specialists: main speciality of practice, sex and total hours worked per week, Australia, 1997
- Table 65: Specialists: main specialty of practice and region of main job, 1997
- Table 66: All specialist services: specialty of practice and sex, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 67: Specialists: main specialty of qualification and sex, States and Territories, 1997

- Table 68: Specialists: main specialty of qualification, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 69: All specialist qualifications: specialty of qualification and sex, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 70: Specialists-in-training: specialty and sex, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 71: Interns and Resident Medical Officers: training status, age and sex, Australia, 1997
- Table 72: Salaried career medical officers: training status, age and sex, Australia, 1997
- Table 73: Resident medical officers and interns: average hours worked, sex and age, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 74: Other salaried hospital career practitioners: average hours worked, sex and age, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 75: All medical practitioners working in public hospitals: occupation and sex, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 76: All medical practitioners working in public hospitals: country of initial qualification and citizenship/residency status, Australia, 1997
- Table 77: Patient and staffing statistics, public and repatriation hospitals, 1985-86 and 1993-94 to 1997-98
- Table 78: All medical practitioners working in private hospitals: occupation and sex, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 79: All medical practitioners working in private hospitals: country of initial qualification and citizenship/residency status, Australia, 1997
- Table 80: Patient and staffing statistics, private acute and psychiatric hospitals, 1991-92 to 1996-97
- Table 81: Medical practitioners whose main job is in a rural area: region, occupation, age and sex, Australia, 1997
- Table 82: All medical practitioners: region of main job and age, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 83: Employed medical practitioners per 100,000 population: region of main job, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 84: Hours worked characteristics: occupation and region of main job, Australia, 1997
- Table 85: Employed medical practitioners: sex, occupation and region of main job, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 86: Primary care practitioners: geographic location of main job, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 87: Hospital non-specialists: geographic location of main job, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 88: Specialists: geographic location of main job, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 89: Specialists-in-training: geographic location of main job, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 90: All clinicians: geographic location of main job, sex and age, Australia, 1997
- Table 91: Medical practitioners with main job in Aboriginal health services: selected characteristics, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 92: Employed medical practitioners: occupation, country of initial qualification, citizenship and residency status and sex, Australia, 1997

- Table 93: Average age of employed medical practitioners: occupation, country of initial qualification, citizenship/residency status and sex, Australia, 1997
- Table 94: Persons holding medical qualifications permanently migrating to Australia, by category of visa, 1991-92 to 1997-98
- Table 95: Persons holding medical qualifications permanently migrating to Australia, by country of residence and category of visa, 1997-98
- Table 96: Medical practitioners temporarily migrating to Australia for employment: type of visa and occupation, States and Territories, 1997-98
- Table 97: Temporary resident medical practitioners: occupation and country of initial qualification, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 98: Temporary resident overseas-trained medical practitioners: work setting, and region of main job, States and Territories, 1997
- Table 99: Australian citizen or permanent resident students completing medicine courses: university and level of course, 1988-97
- Table 100: Australian citizen or permanent resident bachelor course completions: country of birth, Australia, 1993-97
- Table 101: Australian citizens or permanent residents completing medicine courses: average age, level of course and sex, 1988-97
- Table 102: Australian citizens or permanent residents commencing bachelor medicine courses: university and State of home residence, 1998
- Table 103: Australian citizens or permanent residents commencing bachelor medicine courses: university and State of home residence, 1989-98
- Table 104: Australian citizens or permanent residents commencing bachelor medicine courses: State and region of home residence, 1989-98
- Table 105: Australian citizens or permanent residents commencing bachelor medicine courses, sex and age, Australia, 1989-1998
- Table 106: Australian citizens or permanent residents commencing bachelor medicine courses: average age, university and sex, 1989-98
- Table 107: Australian citizens and permanent residents commencing undergraduate medical courses: country of birth, Australia, 1989-98
- Table 108: Australian citizen or permanent resident medicine students: level of course and sex, 1989-98
- Table 109: Australian citizens or permanent resident undergraduate medical students: country of birth and sex, 1989-98
- Table 110: Indigenous medical students: selected characteristics and sex, Australia, 1998
- Table 111: Medicare providers: occupation, 1984-85 to 1996-97
- Table 112: Medicare providers per 100,000 population, 1984-85 to 1997-98
- Table 113: Mean number of Medicare services per Medicare provider, 1984-85 to 1997-98
- Table 114: Average number of Medicare services per person: age and sex, 1987-88 to 1997-98