

6 Medicare-subsidised psychiatrist and allied health services

This section presents the number and type of Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)-subsidised mental health-related services provided by [psychiatrists](#), [psychologists](#) and [other allied health professionals](#)—mental health nurses, occupational therapists, social workers and Aboriginal health workers. Information on the characteristics of people who received these services is also presented. For further information on the MBS and the medications covered, refer to the [data source](#) section.

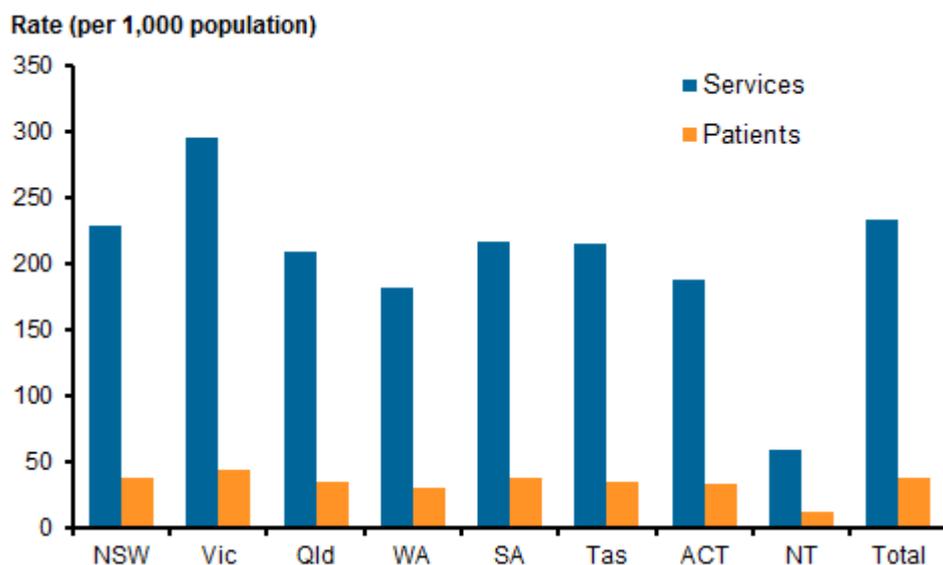
Key points

- In 2009–10, there were over 5.1 million MBS-subsidised mental health-related services provided by psychiatrists, psychologist and other allied health professionals recorded for over 830,000 patients.
- The number of patients and services per 1,000 population was higher for psychologists.
- Since 2005–06, there has been an annual average increase of over 25% in the total number of MBS-subsidised mental health-related services recorded.
- Victoria had the highest number of patients and services per 1,000 population for MBS-subsidised mental health-related services.
- Females utilised services from all three provider types to a greater extent than males.

MBS-subsidised services for states and territories

There were 5,153,457 MBS-subsidised mental health-related services reported in 2009–10 for an estimated 836,737 patients with an average of 6.2 services per patient.

Victoria had the highest number of patients and services per 1,000 population for MBS-subsidised mental health-related services (Figure 6.1). Victoria's rates, at 44.6 and 295.2 respectively, were higher than the national average of 37.8 patients and 232.6 services per 1,000 population. New South Wales was the only other jurisdiction with the patient rate (37.9) higher than the national average. The Northern Territory had the lowest rate for both services and patients.

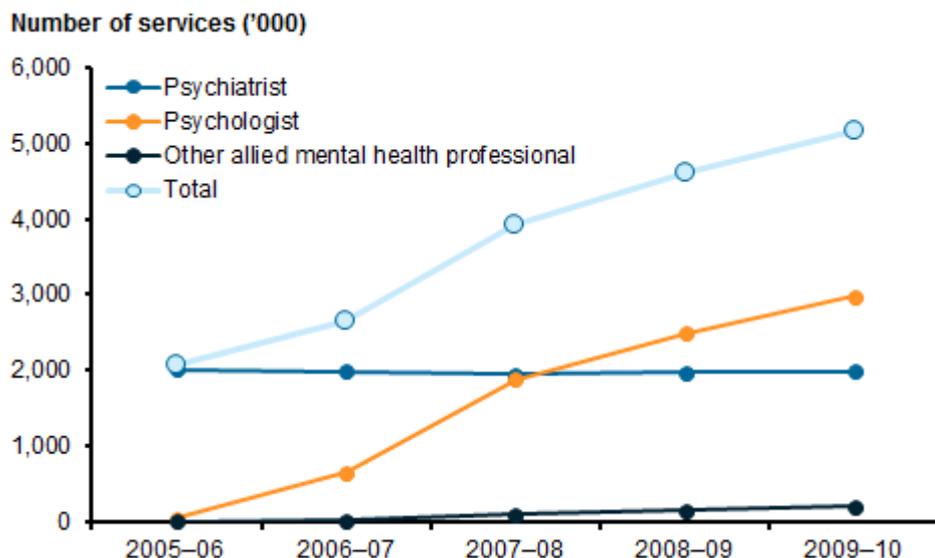


Source: MBS data (DoHA).

Figure 6.1: MBS-subsidised mental health service rates and patient rates by states and territories, 2009–10

MBS-subsidised mental health services over time

There was a steady increase in the number of MBS-subsidised mental health-related services over the 5 year period to 2009–10 (Figure 6.2). This can be mainly attributed to the implementation of the Better Access initiative in November 2006 which gave patients Medicare subsidised access to psychologists and other allied health providers. In 2009–10, there was a 19.3 % increase in psychologist services and 32.9% increase in other allied health mental health services. However, the number of psychiatrist services remained steady over the 5 year period.



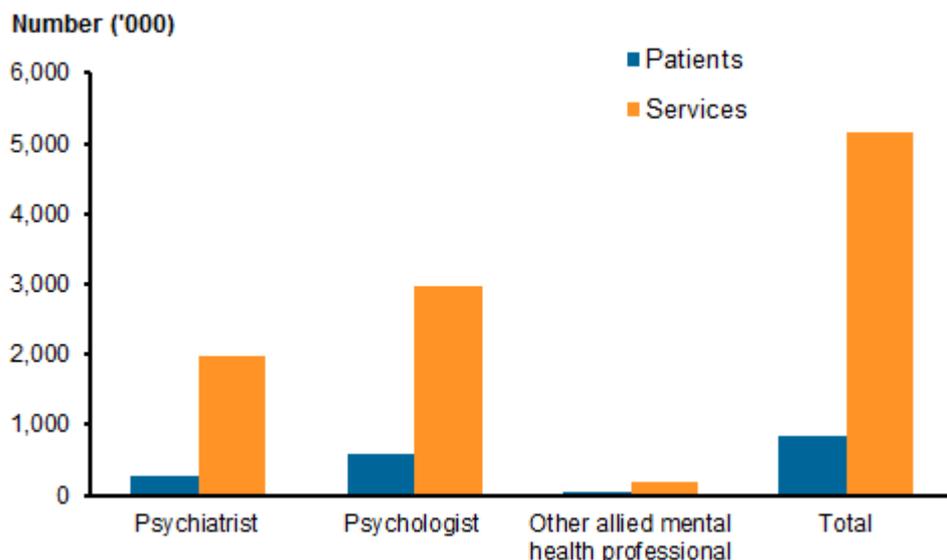
Source: MBS data (DoHA).

Figure 6.2: MBS-subsidised mental health services by item groups over time, 2005–06 to 2009–10

MBS-subsidised mental health service providers

Over two thirds (68.9%) of the MBS subsidised mental health services were provided by psychologists in 2009–10 (Figure 6.3). Of the three provider types, psychologists reported the highest number of patients and services. However, psychiatrists had the highest service to patient ratio (6.9).

Most of the MBS-subsidised psychiatrist services in 2009–10 were attendances provided in consulting rooms (77.1%), followed by consultations in hospitals (13.3%). Over 80% of the MBS-subsidised other allied health mental health services were provided by social workers.



Source: MBS data (DoHA).

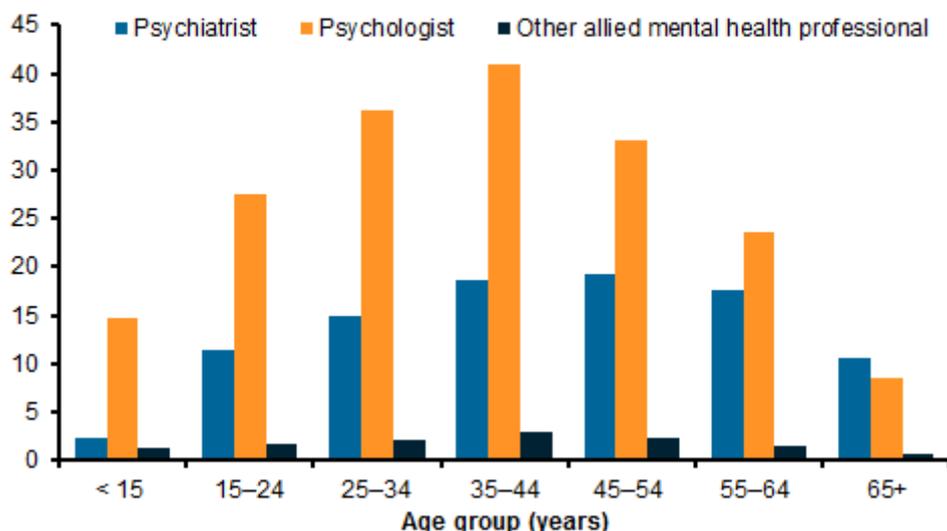
Figure 6.3: MBS-subsidised mental health services by provider type, 2009–10

Characteristics for people accessing MBS-subsidised mental health services

The number of patients accessing psychologists and other allied health services per 1,000 population was highest for those aged 35 to 44 years (Figure 6.4). The 65 years and over age group was the only age group which reported a higher patient rate for psychiatrist services compared to psychologist services.

Females utilised services from all three provider types to a greater extent than males. For other allied mental health services, females comprised almost two thirds of the patients and their utilisation rate was nearly double that for males.

Rate (per 1,000 population)



Source: MBS data (DoHA).

Figure 6.4: MBS-subsidised mental health services patient rates by age group, 2009-10

Data source

Medicare Benefits Schedule data

Medicare Australia collects data on the activity of all providers making claims through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and provides this information to DoHA. Information collected includes the type of service provided (MBS item number) and the benefit paid by Medicare Australia for the service. The item number and benefits paid by Medicare Australia are based on the *Medicare Benefits Schedule Book* (DoHA 2010). Services that are not included in the MBS are not included in the data. The table below lists all MBS items that have been defined as mental health-related.

MBS mental health-related items

Provider	Item group	MBS Group & Subgroup	MBS item numbers
Psychiatrists	Initial consultation new patient—psychiatrist ^(a)	Group A8	296, 297, 299
	Patient attendances—consulting room	Group A8	291 ^(a) , 293 ^(a) , 300, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 319
	Patient attendances—hospital	Group A8	320, 322, 324, 326, 328
	Patient attendances—other locations	Group A8	330, 332, 334, 336, 338
	Group psychotherapy	Group A8	342, 344, 346
	Interview with non-patient	Group A8	348, 350, 352
	Telepsychiatry	Group A8	353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359 ^(b) , 361 ^(b) , 364, 366, 367, 369, 370
	Case conferencing—psychiatrist		855, 857, 858, 861, 864, 866
	Electroconvulsive therapy	Group T1 Subgroup 13	14224
	Referred consultation for assessment, diagnosis and development of a treatment and management plan for autism or any other pervasive developmental disorder (PDD)—psychiatrist ^(c)	Group A8	289
General practitioners	GP Mental Health Care ^(a)	Group A20 Subgroup 1	2702, 2710, 2712, 2713
	Focussed Psychological Strategies	Group A20 Subgroup 2	2721, 2723, 2725, 2727
	Family Group Therapy	Group A6	170, 171, 172
	3 Step Mental Health Process—GP ^(d)	Group A18 Subgroup 4	2574, 2575, 2577, 2578

	3 Step Mental Health Process —OMP ^(d)	Group A19 Subgroup 4	2704, 2705, 2707, 2708
Psychologists	Enhanced Primary Care —psychologist	Group M3	10968
	Focussed Psychological Strategies (Allied Mental Health)—psychologist ^(a)	Group M7	80100, 80105, 80110, 80115, 80120
	Psychological Therapy Services —clinical psychologist ^(a)	Group M6	80000, 80005, 80010, 80015, 80020
	Assessment and treatment of PDD —psychologist ^(c)	Group A10	82000, 82015
	Follow-up allied health service for Indigenous Australians—psychologist ^(e)	Group M11	81355
Other allied health providers	Enhanced Primary Care — mental health worker	Group M3	10956
	Focussed Psychological Strategies (Allied Mental Health)—occupational therapist ^(a)	Group M7	80125, 80130, 80135, 80140, 80145
	Focussed Psychological Strategies (Allied Mental Health)—social worker ^(a)	Group M	80150, 80155, 80160, 80165, 80170
	Follow-up allied health services for Indigenous Australians— mental health worker ^(e)	Group M11	81325

(a) These items introduced 1 November 2006 except for item 2702 which was introduced 1 January 2010.

(b) These items introduced 1 November 2007.

(c) These items introduced 1 July 2008.

(d) These items were discontinued after 30 April 2007.

(e) These items were introduced 1 November 2008.

The MBS data presented in this report relate to services provided on a fee-for-service basis for which MBS benefits were paid. The year is determined from the date the service was processed by Medicare Australia, rather than the date the service was provided. The state or territory is determined according to the postcode of the patient's mailing address at the time of making the claim. In some cases, this will not be the same as the postcode of the patient's residential address.

Reference

DoHA 2010. Medicare Benefits Schedule Book, effective 1 November 2010. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.