

Medical practitioners



Figure 1: Medical practitioners per 100,000 population, 1995

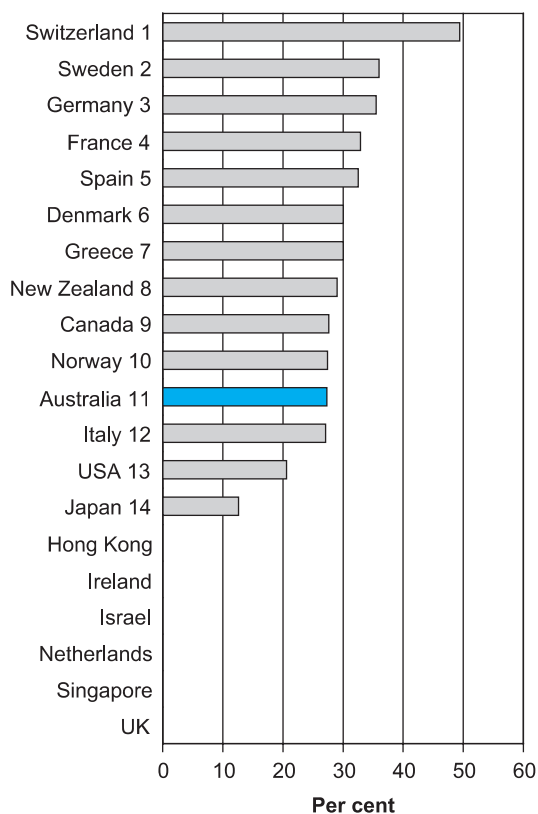


Figure 2: Proportion of medical practitioners who are female, 1995

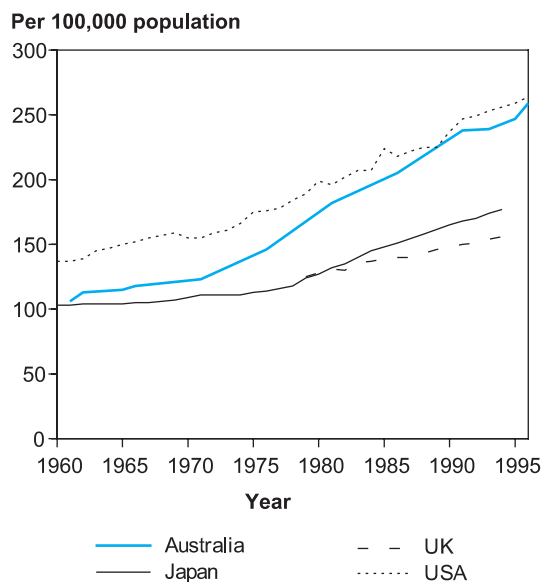


Figure 3: Trends in physician availability, 1960 to 1996

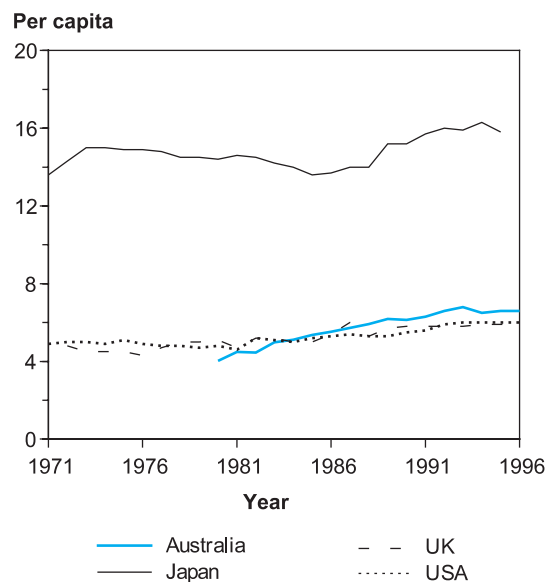


Figure 4: Trends in medical practitioner consultations, 1970 to 1996

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Numbers and proportions of practising medical practitioners, and medical services per capita^(a)

| Country | Year | Estimated number | Per 100,000 population | Per cent specialists | Per cent female | Medical services per capita |
|-------------|------|------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Australia | 1996 | 47,700 | 259 | 33 | 28 | 1996–97 6.5 |
| Canada | 1996 | 63,100 | 211 | 42 | 29 | 1993 6.8 |
| Denmark | 1994 | 15,100 | 290 | 5 | 30 | 1996 5.3 |
| France | 1996 | 171,800 | 294 | 50 | 34 | 1993 6.3 |
| Germany | 1996 | 279,300 | 341 | 63 | 36 | 1995 6.4 |
| Greece | 1995 | 41,100 | 393 | 56 | 31 | — — |
| Hong Kong | 1993 | 7,600 | 127 | — | — | — — |
| Ireland | 1996 | 7,600 | 210 | 15 | — | 1988 6.6 |
| Israel | — | — | — | — | — | — — |
| Italy | 1996 | 313,700 | 546 | — | 28 | 1988 11.0 |
| Japan | 1994 | 221,700 | 177 | — | 13 | 1995 15.8 |
| Netherlands | 1991 | 39,100 | 261 | 36 | 23 | 1996 5.4 |
| New Zealand | 1996 | 7,600 | 210 | 30 | 29 | — — |
| Norway | 1997 | 12,900 | 276 | 64 | 29 | 1991 3.8 |
| Singapore | 1994 | 4,300 | 147 | — | — | — — |
| Spain | 1996 | 165,700 | 422 | — | 32 | 1989 6.2 |
| Sweden | 1996 | 27,300 | 309 | 71 | 36 | 1996 2.9 |
| Switzerland | 1996 | 22,900 | 322 | 36 | 49 | 1992 11.0 |
| UK | 1994 | 91,200 | 156 | — | ^(b) 26 | 1996 5.9 |
| USA | 1996 | 701,200 | 264 | ^(b) 51 | 21 | 1996 6.0 |

(a) Definitions and concepts may vary between countries.

(b) 1990 data.

Sources: OECD 1998; United Nations 1996b.

- In 1996, there were 47,700 employed medical practitioners in Australia, or 259 per 100,000 population. The countries that are most similar to Australia in terms of their population age structure and their health systems are Canada and New Zealand. Both have approximately 18% fewer medical practitioners per 100,000 population than does Australia (Figure 1). Most countries have seen a marked increase in the doctor-to-population ratio since 1960, well in excess of population growth (Figure 3).
- The medical workforce is predominantly male, although the percentage of female medical practitioners is increasing in most developed countries. Women comprise a substantial proportion of the medical workforce in Switzerland, Germany and Sweden (Figure 2). Women are under-represented in Japan and the United States. In 1971, women comprised 13% of the Australian medical workforce; in 1996 this had risen to 28%.
- On average, each Australian person received 6.5 medical services in 1996–97, comprising visits to general practitioners and specialists. Each Australian also received 4.2 other services in 1996–97, mainly comprising pathology tests and diagnostic imaging services.
- International comparisons for medical services per person are complicated by differing

definitions between countries—what is counted as a ‘physician contact’ can vary widely. Many countries include telephone consultations or contacts with hospital in-patients, but others do not.

- Australians receive, on average, around the same number of medical services per capita as most other OECD countries for which data are available. Data for Italy, Japan and Switzerland may include additional items. The Australian rate continues to increase steadily, possibly related to a 40% increase in GPs and specialists between 1984 and 1993. A number of other countries, such as Japan, the United Kingdom and United States, have shown little increase in the rate since 1980 (Figure 4).

For more information, see:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1998. Medical labour force 1996. Canberra: AIHW.