Australian Government
**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

Nursing and midwifery workforce 2015

Citation
AIHW

Nursing and midwifery workforce 2015

There were over 360,000 nurses and midwives registered in Australia in 2015. Of this total, over 305,000 were employed in nursing or midwifery, working an average of 33.5 hours per week. Among those employed, 9 in every 10 nurses and midwives were women; 2 in every 5 were aged 50 or over.

Cat. no: WEB 141

Findings from this report:

- In 2015, there were 360,008 nurses and midwives registered, with 331,015 employed in nursing and midwifery

- About 2 in 5 nurses and midwives were aged 50 and over in 2015 (39.0%). Their average age was 44.4 years

- 9 in 10 employed nurses and midwives were women (90.3%). Among midwives, almost all were women (98.6%)

Last updated 21/08/2017 v2.0

Who are nurses and midwives?

Age and sex

Nurses and midwives are more likely to be women, with women making up 89.3% of all employed nurses and midwives in 2015, around the same as in 2014 (89.4%).

The average age of employed nurses and midwives in both 2011 and 2015 was 44.4 years. The proportion aged 50 and over grew from 38.3% to 39.0%, although this was less than in 2014 (39.4%).

**Table 1: Employed[a] nurses and midwives: division, age and sex, 2011 and 2015**

Nursing and midwifery category	Number	Men (per cent)	Average age (years)	Aged 50 and over (per cent)
2011				
Registered nurses[b]	234,052	10.2	44.2	37.2
Registered midwives[c]	*36,827*	*1.9*	*50.1*	*59.1*
Enrolled nurses	52,654	9.0	45.5	43.3
Total nurses and midwives	**286,706**	**10.0**	**44.4**	**38.3**
2015				
Registered nurses[b]	256,034	10.9	44.1	37.3
Registered midwives[c]	*28,211*	*1.6*	*48.8*	*55.6*
Enrolled nurses	51,070	9.4	46.3	47.7
Total nurses and midwives	**307,104**	**10.7**	**44.4**	**39.0**

a. Employed is defined as working any hours in either nursing or midwifery in the week before the survey.
b. Data for registered nurses include people with dual registrations and those who were registered as a 'midwife only'.
c. Employed registered midwives who worked any hours as either a midwife or a nurse.

Sources: AIHW NHWDS.

Between 2011 and 2015, increases occurred in the number of employed nurses and midwives in both the 25 to 34 age group (51,686 to 65,099) and the 55 and over group (63,170 to 77,608). Between 2011 and 2015, there were more employed nurses and midwives in the 50–54 year age group than any other age group.

**Figure 1: Employed nurses and midwives: age group, 2011 to 2015**
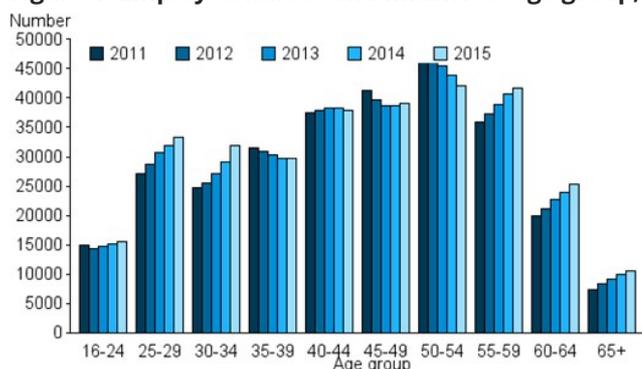
Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives

In 2015, there were 3,187 nurses and midwives employed in Australia who identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This represents 1.1% of all employed nurses and midwives who provided their Indigenous status. The Northern Territory (2.4%) and

Tasmania (2.2%) had the highest proportion of nurses and midwives who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while Victoria had the lowest (0.5%).

Figure 2: Employed nurses and midwives: Indigenous proportion, states and territories, 2015
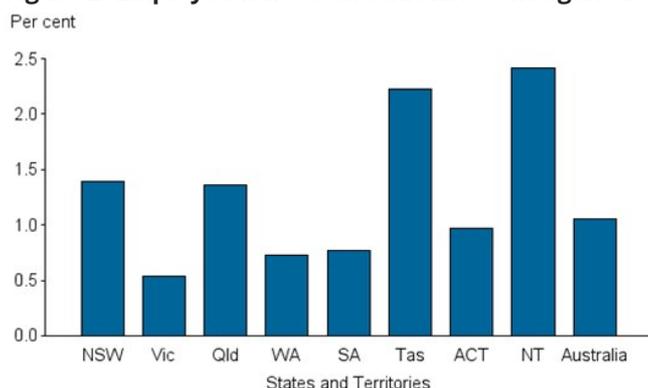
Note:

Derived from 'state and territory of main job' where available; otherwise, 'state and territory of principal practice' is used as a proxy. If principal practice details were unavailable, 'state and territory of residence' is used. Records with no information on all three locations are coded to 'not stated'.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Country of first nursing and midwifery qualification

Of all employed nurses and midwives, 79.6% (244,421) received their initial nursing and midwifery qualification in Australia, followed by England (14,421 or (4.7%) and India (8,703 or 2.8%).Those employed nurses and midwives who received their initial qualification in Malaysia reported the highest average age (55.7 years) and the highest proportion aged 50 and over (74.5%), while those with initial qualifications from India reported the lowest average age (36.5 years) and the lowest proportion aged 50 and over (5.8%).

Role in nursing and midwifery

In 2015, 90% of employed nurses and midwives in Australia were working as clinicians (277,667). Of those in non-clinical roles, 'administrator' was the largest group (14,797), followed by 'teacher/educator' (9,847). Administrators reported working the highest average weekly hours (38.5).

Table 2: Employed nurses and midwives[a]: principal role of main job, selected characteristics, 2015

Principal role	Number	Enrolled (per cent)	Average age (years)	Aged 50 and over (per cent)	Average weekly hours
Clinician[b]	277,667	17.6	43.9	37.5	33.2
Administrator	14,797	7.8	50.2	57.4	38.5
Teacher/educator	9,847	5.7	47.9	46.4	34.5
Researcher	2,700	4.9	47.9	49.3	33.6
Other	2,093	21.8	49.7	56.9	32.6
Total	**307,104**	**16.6**	**44.4**	**39.0**	**33.5**

a. Employed is defined as working any hours in either nursing or midwifery in the week before the survey.
b. A clinician is a person who spends the majority of his or her time working in the area of clinical practice.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

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How many nurses and midwives are there?

In Australia, nurses and midwives can register as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse, midwife, or some combination of these. Nurses and midwives need to be registered to be employed in Australia, however not all those who are registered are employed.

In 2015, the total number of nurses and midwives registered in Australia was 360,008. Of these, 263,209 were registered as a registered nurse only, 59,429 were registered as an enrolled nurse only and 3,591 were registered as a midwife only.

Table 1: Nurses and midwives: registration category 2015

Registration category	Number	Average age	Men (per cent)
Registered nurse only	263,209	43.4	11.8
Enrolled nurse only	59,429	45.9	9.4
Midwife only	3,591	38.5	0.4
Registered and enrolled nurse	4,719	37.6	14.4
Registered nurse and midwife	28,954	50.1	1.8
Enrolled nurse and midwife	55	36.7	1.8
Registered and enrolled nurse and midwife	51	35.6	2.0
Total nurse registrations	356,417	44.3	10.6
Total midwife registrations	32,651	48.8	1.6
Total registrations	389,068	44.7	9.9
Total people registered	360,008	44.2	10.5

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

The total number of all nurses and midwives registered in Australia increased from 330,680 in 2011 to 360,008 in 2015 (8.9%). While the number of registered nurses increased, there was a large decrease in registered midwives of 21.2% between 2011 and 2015. This is related to the introduction of new 'recency of practice' standards that mean midwives must be actively working in midwifery to maintain their registration.

The number of registered nurses increased by 11.0% between 2011 and 2015, while the number of enrolled nurses decreased by 0.8%.

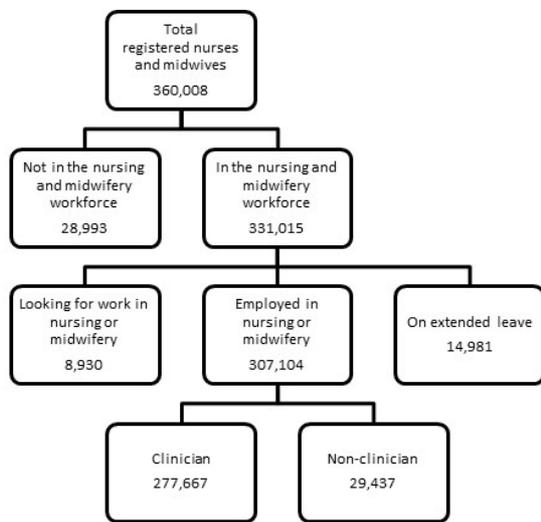**Table 2: Nurses and midwives: registered and enrolled, 2011 to 2015**

Nursing and midwifery category	2011	2012[a]	2013[a]	2014[a]	2015[a]	Change 2011 to 2015 (per cent)
Registered nurses	270,746	275,678	285,698	293,678	300,524	11.0
Registered midwives	41,432	35,632	33,969	33,114	32,651	−21.2
Enrolled nurses	59,934	58,400	58,492	59,160	59,484	−0.8
Total nurses and midwives	**330,680**	**334,078**	**334,190**	**352,838**	**360,008**	**8.9**

a. Data for registered nurses also include people with dual registrations and those who were registered as a 'midwife only'.

Sources: AIHW NHWDS.

In 2015, 92.0% of all registered nurses and midwives were in the nursing and midwifery workforce (331,015). Of these, 8,930 were looking for work in nursing and midwifery, compared to around the same number as in 2014 (9,110).

Figure 1: Registered nurses and midwives: workforce status, 2015

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                    Total
                registered nurses
                and midwives
                    360,008
                        │
            ┌───────────┴───────────┐
    Not in the nursing        In the nursing and
    and midwifery                  midwifery
    workforce                      workforce
      28,993                        331,015
                                        │
                    ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
            Looking for work in    Employed in         On extended leave
                nursing or          nursing or             14,981
                midwifery           midwifery
                  8,930              307,104
                                        │
                        ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
                    Clinician                        Non-clinician
                     277,667                            29,437
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Note: A clinician is a person who spends the majority of his or her time working in the area of clinical practice.
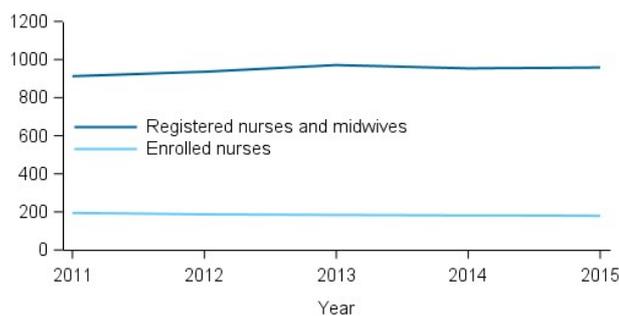
Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Supply of employed nurses and midwives

In 2015, the overall supply of employed nurses and midwives was 1,138 FTE per 100,000 population, up from 1,107 in 2011 and around the same as in 2014 (1,135).

Between 2011 and 2015, the supply of registered (Division 1) nurses and midwives increased (912 to 958 FTE per 100,000 population). The supply of enrolled (Division 2) nurses decreased (195 to 179 FTE per 100,000 population).

Figure 2: Employed nurses and midwives: FTE rate, 2011 to 2015

FTE per 100,000 population

Notes

1. In 2012, the survey design changed so that the hours reported were split by nursing and midwifery.
2. From 2011 to 2015, data for registered nurses include people with dual registrations and those who were registered as a 'midwife only'.
3. In 2010, due to the transition to the NRAS, no workforce survey was conducted.
4. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked.

Sources: AIHW NHWDS.

States and territories

In 2015, the overall supply of employed nurses and midwives varied across the states and territories, from 1,036 FTE per 100,000 population in New South Wales to a high of 1,534 in the Northern Territory. Comparatively, supply in 2011 ranged from 993 FTE nurses and midwives per 100,000 population in New South Wales to 1,504 in the Northern Territory.

Table 3: Employed nurses and midwives: FTE rate, states and territories, 2011 to 2015

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
2011	993	1,182	1,091	1,037	1,388	1,239	1,164	1,504	1,107
2012	1,013	1,188	1,107	1,062	1,416	1,179	1,182	1,610	1,123
2013	1,062	1,211	1,122	1,094	1,443	1,257	1,213	1,633	1,155
2014	1,045	1,189	1,112	1,067	1,401	1,239	1,208	1,618	1,135
2015	1,036	1,191	1,144	1,070	1,386	1,261	1,193	1,534	1,138

Remoteness areas

In 2015, the overall supply of employed nurses and midwives varied across remoteness areas, from 1,083 FTE per 100,000 population in *Outer regional* areas to over 1,219 FTE per 100,000 population in *Remote* areas. While the average proportion of enrolled nurses in Australia was 15.8 per cent, it was above 20 per cent in both *Inner* and *Outer regional* areas. The proportion of enrolled nurses was lowest in *Very remote* areas where it was 12.1 per cent.

Figure 3: Employed nurses and midwives: FTE rate, remoteness area, 2015
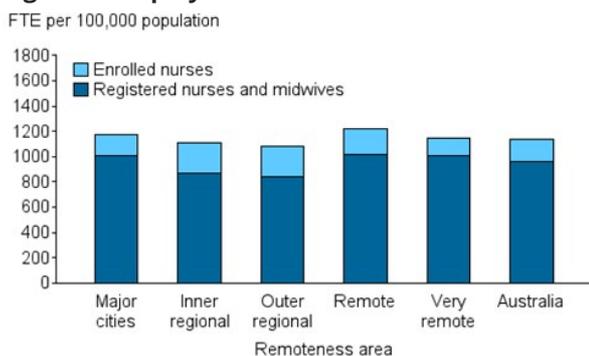
Notes

1. In 2012 the survey design changed so that the hours reported were split by nursing and midwifery. This coincides with an increase in the FTE rate in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Care should be taken when comparing the FTE data across years.
2. Derived from 'remoteness area of main job' where available; otherwise, 'remoteness area of principal practice' is used as a proxy. If remoteness area details are unavailable, 'remoteness area of residence' is used. Records with no information on all three locations are coded to 'not stated'.
3. *Very remote* areas includes *Migratory* areas.
4. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

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Work characteristics of nurses and midwives

Area of nursing and midwifery

Respondents to the workforce survey are asked to indicate their 'principal area of main job', which relates to the type of work that they do. The area that had the greatest supply of nurses and midwives was aged care (159 FTE per 100,000 population).

Figure 1: Employed nurses and midwives in Australia: principal area of main job, FTE rate, 2015
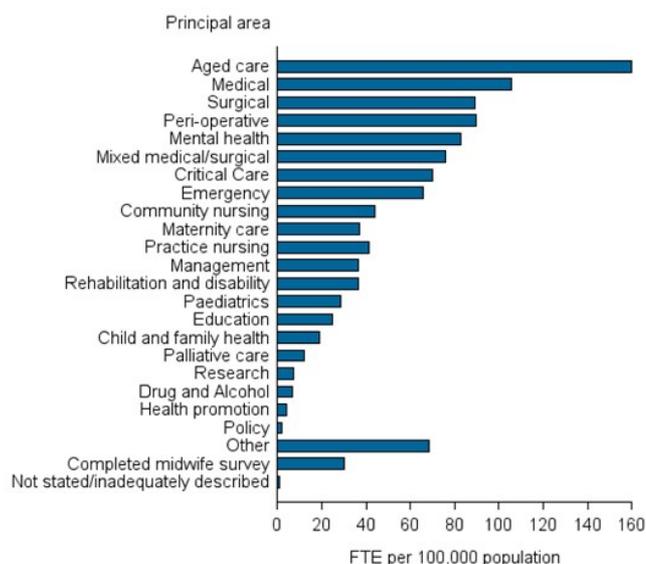
Notes

1. 5,090 out of 23,801 respondents stated that they worked identical nursing and midwifery hours. This indicates that a significant number of respondents who filled in the combined nursing and midwifery form may have misinterpreted the wording of the 'hours' questions. Consequently, the FTE rate for maternity care is likely to be overstated.
2. 'Completed midwife survey' refers to those midwives who completed a midwife survey form instead of a nurse survey form. The midwife survey consists of different categories of 'principal area of main job', and their responses have been grouped together here. For midwife survey categories of 'principal area of main job', please refer to Focus on midwives.
3. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Nurses and midwives working in child and family health had the highest average age (49.9 years). Nurses and midwives working in emergency had the lowest average, at 39.4 years. The highest proportion of male nurses was in the area of mental health, where men comprised 30.9% of the workforce.

Working hours

On average, employed nurses and midwives worked 33.5 hours per week in 2015.

Almost half (149,867 or 48.8%) worked less than 35 hours per week.

Across the jurisdictions, there was some variation in average weekly hours worked by nurses and midwives. Nurses and midwives in the Northern Territory worked the most weekly hours on average (38.4 hours), followed by those working in the Australian Capital Territory (35.0 hours). Nurses and midwives in South Australia reported working the least weekly hours on average (31.8).

Nurses and midwives in *Very remote* areas worked the greatest number of hours, 40.1 hours per week compared with the national average of 33.5. Nurses and midwives in *Inner regional* areas reported working the least hours (32.5). This was consistent with reported working hours in 2014.

Type of work setting

In 2015, the work setting of employed nurses and midwives with the highest FTE rate was hospitals (excluding outpatient services) (673 FTE per 100,000 population).

Figure 2: Employed nurses and midwives: work setting of main job, FTE rate, 2015

Work setting

FTE per 100,000 population
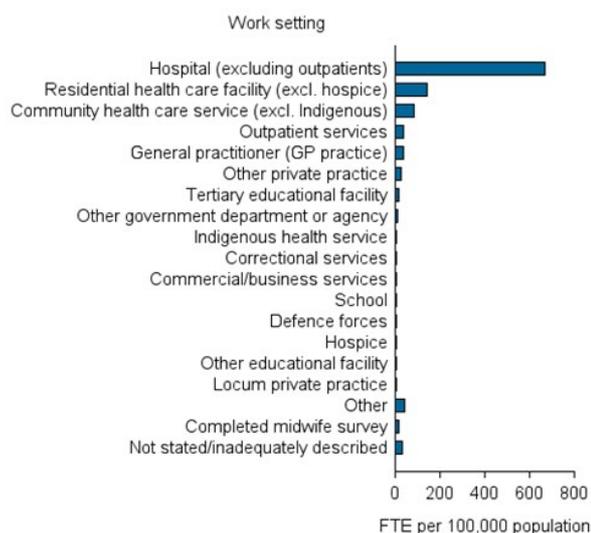
Notes

1. 'Completed midwife survey' refers to those midwives who completed a midwife survey form instead of a nurse survey form. The midwife survey consists of different categories of 'principal area of main job', and their responses have been grouped together here. For midwife survey categories of 'principal area of main job', please refer to Focus on midwives.
2. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Employment sector

In 2015, the total number of nurses and midwives who reported working some hours in the private sector was 113,732. The total number of nurses and midwives who reported working some hours in the public sector was 182,268.

The number of registered nurses working in the public sector was 77% higher than that of the private sector (156,528 compared to 88,675). This was also seen with midwives, with nearly triple the number reporting working in the public sector compared to the private sector (20,011 compared to 7,462).

Among enrolled nurses the difference in number between sectors in 2015 was 683 (25,740 in the public sector compared to 25,057 in the private sector).

Table 1: Employed nurses and midwives[a]: employment sector of main job, 2015

Nursing & midwifery category	Some clinical hours in private sector	Some clinical hours in public sector	Some clinical hours in both sectors	Non-clinical hours only	Total
Registered nurses[b]	88,675	156,528	8,068	18,899	256,034
Registered midwives[c]	*7,462*	*20,011*	*1,549*	*2,287*	*28,211*
Enrolled nurses	25,057	25,740	1,239	1,512	51,070
Total nurses and midwives	**113,732**	**182,268**	**9,307**	**20,411**	**307,104**

a. 'Employed' is defined as working any hours in either nursing or midwifery in the week before the survey.
b. Data for registered nurses also include people with dual registrations and those who were registered as a 'midwife only'.
c. Employed registered midwives who worked any hours as either a midwife or a nurse.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Last updated 17/08/2017 v5.0

Focus on midwives

Midwives need to be registered to be employed in Australia, however not all those who are registered are employed. There has been a large decrease in the number of registered midwives in Australia, falling from 52,273 in 2009 to 32,651 in 2015. This is related to the introduction of new 'recency of practice' standards that mean midwives must be actively working in midwifery to maintain their registration. To ensure this doesn't confound the data, the data presented here focuses only on those registered midwives who reported working in midwifery (referred to as 'employed midwives'). For more information about this and other changes in the workforce data see the Data quality statement.

In 2015, there were 28,211 registered midwives who reported working some hours in either midwifery or nursing in the week prior to completing the workforce survey, down slightly from 28,756 in 2014. Of these, 23,801 reported having worked hours in midwifery, about the same as in 2014. On average, employed midwives worked 21.9 hours per week in midwifery. This excluded hours that they may have worked in nursing. This equated to a full time equivalent (FTE) rate of 57.6 employed midwives per 100,000 people, down from 61.0 in 2014.

In 2015, almost all of employed midwives were female (98.6%) and 88.5% held a registered nurse registration. The average age of employed midwives was 47.9 years and 52.3% were aged 50 and over.

Attendance at births

Of the 28,211 registered midwives employed in midwifery or nursing in 2015, 10,960 (38.8%) reported attending a birth as the primary midwife in the past 12 months. Of these:

- 10,714 (97.8%) indicated they attended a birth in a hospital as the primary midwife.
- 548 (5.0%) indicated they attended a birth in a birth centre as the primary midwife.
- 241 (2.2%) indicated they attended a birth in a home as the primary midwife.
- 156 (1.4%) indicated they attended a birth in another location as the primary midwife.

States and territories

In 2015, the overall supply of employed midwives varied across the states and territories, from 48.4 FTE per 100,000 population in New South Wales to a high of 113.2 in the Northern Territory.

The average age of midwives varied little between jurisdictions, from 47.2 years in Victoria to 48.8 years in South Australia.

Employed midwives working in midwifery in the Australian Capital Territory worked the most average weekly hours (23.0). South Australia reported working the least average weekly hours (20.5).

Figure 1: Employed midwives: states and territories, FTE rate, 2015
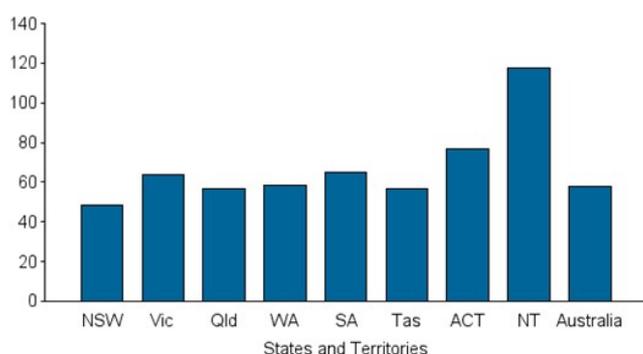
Notes

1. 'Employed midwives' is defined as registered midwives who reported working any hours in midwifery in the week before the survey.
2. Derived from 'state and territory of main job' where available; otherwise, 'state and territory of principal practice' is used as a proxy. If principal practice details unavailable, 'state and territory of residence' is used. Records with no information on all three locations are coded to 'not stated'.
3. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked in midwifery.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Remoteness areas

In 2015, the overall supply of employed midwives varied across remoteness areas, from 51.9 FTE per 100,000 population in *Inner regional* areas to a high of 74.4 in *Remote* areas.

In 2015 the average age of employed midwives who reported working in a remoteness area was greatest in *Very remote* areas (51.7 years) and lowest in *Major cities* (47.6 years). *Very remote* areas also had the greatest proportion of midwives aged 50 and over (68.4%). Employed midwives in *Major cities* reported working the most average weekly hours (22.8). *Very remote* areas reported working the least average weekly hours (18.0).

Figure 2: Employed midwives: remoteness area, FTE rate, 2015
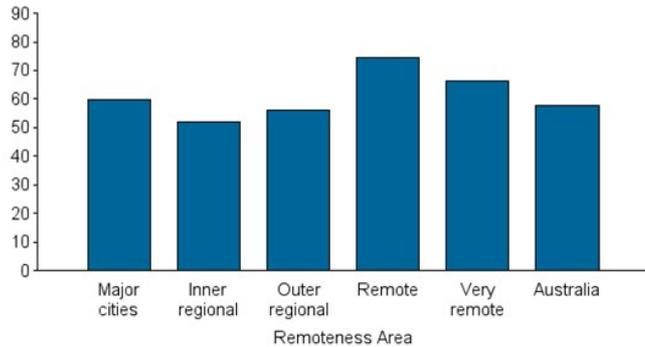
Notes

1. 'Employed midwives' is defined as registered midwives who reported working any hours in midwifery in the week before the survey.
2. Derived from 'remoteness area of main job' where available; otherwise, 'remoteness area of principal practice' is used as a proxy. If principal practice details unavailable, 'remoteness area of residence' is used. Records with no information on all three locations are coded to 'not stated'.
3. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked in midwifery.
4. *Very remote* areas includes Migratory areas.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Role in midwifery

In 2015, 88.4% of employed midwives in Australia were working as clinicians (21,050). Of the non-clinical workforce, 'administrator' was the largest group (1,216 or 5.1%), followed by 'teacher/educator' (1,092 or 4.6%). Clinicians reported working the most average weekly hours in midwifery (22.3).

Table 1: Employed midwives[a]: principal role of main job, selected characteristics, 2015

| Principal role	Number	Male(per cent)	Average age (years)	Aged 50 and over (per cent)	Average weekly midwifery hours[b]
Clinician[c]	21,050	1.2	47.4	50.3	22.3
Administrator	1,216	3.9	53.4	74.8	18.2
Teacher/educator	1,092	2.3	50.5	60.7	19.0
Researcher	300	1.0	51.5	65.3	21.7
Other	143	4.2	51.9	68.5	20.0
Total	**23,801**	**1.4**	**47.9**	**52.3**	**21.9**

a. 'Employed midwives' is defined as registered midwives who reported working any hours in midwifery in the week before the survey.
b. Hours worked as a midwife only.
c. A clinician is a person who spends the majority of his or her time working in the area of clinical practice.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Area of midwifery

In 2015, the 'principal area of main job' of employed midwives with the highest FTE rate was postnatal care (15.2 FTE per 100,000 population).

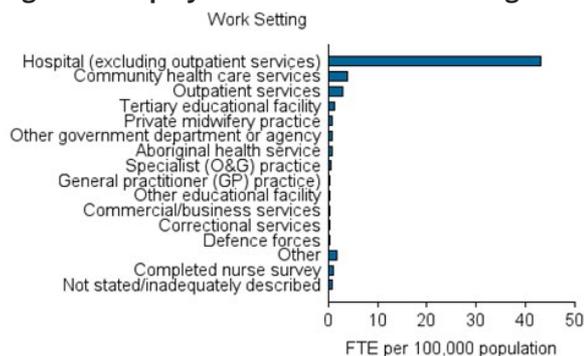**Figure 3: Employed midwives: principal area of main job, FTE rate, 2015**
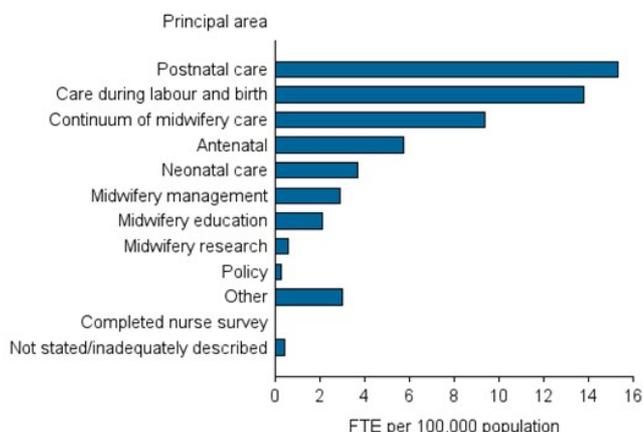
Notes

1. 'Employed midwives' is defined as registered midwives who reported working any hours in midwifery in the week before the survey.
2. 'Completed nurse survey' refers to those nurses who completed a nurse survey form instead of a midwife survey form. The nurse survey consists of different categories of 'principal area of main job', and their responses have been grouped together here. For nurse survey categories of 'principal area of main job', please refer to Work characteristics of nurses and midwives.
3. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked in midwifery.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Type of work setting

In 2015, by far the work setting of employed midwives with the highest FTE rate was hospitals (excluding outpatient services) (43.1 FTE per 100,000 population).

Figure 4: Employed midwives: work setting of main job, FTE rate, 2015

Notes

1. 'Employed midwives' is defined as registered midwives who reported working any hours in midwifery in the week before the survey.
2. 'Completed nurse survey' refers to those nurses who completed a nurse survey form instead of a midwife survey form. The nurse survey consists of different categories of 'principal area of main job', and their responses have been grouped together here. For nurse survey categories of 'principal area of main job', please refer to Work characteristics of nurses and midwives.
3. Full-time equivalent (FTE) per 100,000 population. FTE is based on total weekly hours worked in midwifery.

Source: AIHW NHWDS.

Country of initial qualification

Of employed midwives, 20,409 received their initial midwifery qualification in Australia (85.7%). England was the next most common country of initial qualification (1,714 or 7.2%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwives

In 2015, there were 230 midwives employed in Australia who identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This represents 1.0% of all employed midwives who provided their Indigenous status.

Last updated 17/08/2017 v6.0

Notes

Notes

The work survey data were provided by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Data quality statement

- National Health Workforce Data Set 2015: nurses and midwives

Last updated 17/08/2017 v5.0

Data

Data

Data tables: Nurses and midwives, overview tables 1-25
Nursing and midwifery workforce 2015 data tables
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