

## 11 Medicare statistics

The Medicare Estimates and Statistics Section of the Department of Health and Family Services provided Medicare data. More detailed statistics may be found at the Department's Internet site on <http://www.health.gov.au>, while a description of Medicare and further analysis of Medicare data are included in pages 215–19 of *Australia's Health 1998* (AIHW 1998).

The main features of the Medicare data in this chapter are as follows.

- From 30 June 1996 to 30 June 1997 the population of Australia increased by 1.2% from 18,310,714 to 18,532,247. During the same period:
  - Medicare providers increased by 1.8%;
  - medical practitioner Medicare providers increased by 1.8%;
  - VRGPs increased by 2.1%, partly offset by a decrease in OMPs of 3.3%, for an overall primary care provider increase of 0.6%; and
  - recognised medical specialist Medicare providers increased by 3.4%.
- Between 1984–85 and 1996–97, the number of medical practitioners providing Medicare services increased by 50.2% from 27,372 to 41,116. The Australian population increased by 17.4% over the same period.
- Primary care providers, including VRGPs and OMPs, comprised 61.9% of medical practitioners in 1984–85 and, after rising to 62.7% in 1989–90, declined to 59.7% in 1996–97.
- The average number of services undertaken by each Medicare provider in 1996–97 was 4,437, increasing by 0.1% from the 1995–96 average. Specialist pathologists undertook most services, averaging 92,017 per provider in 1996–97; non-specialist surgeons averaged the least (365 per provider).
- Over the period 1984–85 to 1996–97, Medicare medical practitioners per 100,000 population grew from 173.4 to 221.0 – an increase of 28.0%.
- Medicare primary care providers reached a peak of 134.0 practitioners per 100,000 population in 1994–95 and declined to 131.4 per 100,000 population in 1996–97 (or from one for every 746 persons in Australia to one for every 761 persons).
- Medicare specialists and non-specialists working mainly in specialist fields have continued a long-term increase of more than 2% per year, increasing to 89.6 per 100,000 population in 1996–97 (or one for every 1,116 persons) from 66.0 per 100,000 population in 1984–85 (or one for every 1,515 persons).
- Over the period 1987–88 to 1996–97, the average number of Medicare services per person in a year increased by 35.2% from 6.40 services to 8.65 services for males, and by 28.8% from 9.91 services to 12.76 services for females. Care should be exercised in interpreting this change. Much of the increase is a result of structural change in the Medical Benefits Schedule without accompanying change in patient services. For example, early in 1992 pathology patient-episode-initiation items (to cover overheads with specimen collection) were added to the Medical Benefits Schedule and this resulted in an additional 15 million services with no change in the service to patients.

**Table 34: Medicare providers: peer group and specialty, Australia, 1989–90 to 1996–97**

Peer group/ specialty	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
General	21,647	22,152	22,746	23,088	23,587	24,206	24,376	24,526
Vocationally registered GP	5,127	7,471	10,744	14,826	16,280	17,341	17,711	18,078
Other medical practitioner	16,520	14,681	12,002	8,262	7,307	6,865	6,665	6,448
Obstetrician/gynaecologist	899	920	923	930	867	899	896	912
IVF	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	63	67	72	72
Surgeon	3,884	4,005	4,140	4,270	4,418	4,597	4,714	4,816
Specialist	3,222	3,289	3,355	3,433	3,479	3,586	3,596	3,641
Non-specialist	662	716	785	837	939	1,011	1,116	1,175
Anaesthetist	1,618	1,680	1,764	1,805	1,892	1,952	2,022	2,076
Specialist	1,534	1,589	1,652	1,702	1,781	1,814	1,859	1,900
Non-specialist	84	91	112	103	111	138	163	176
Psychiatrist	1,331	1,389	1,437	1,501	1,555	1,582	1,615	1,672
Diagnostic imagist	1,040	1,078	1,159	1,221	1,247	1,266	1,436	1,505
Specialist	958	983	1,050	1,114	1,143	1,169	1,311	1,383
Non-specialist	82	95	109	107	104	97	125	122
Radiation oncology specialist	102	100	106	104	113	119	130	131
Pathologist	644	663	670	645	616	607	586	575
Specialist	545	566	569	544	517	506	493	501
Non-specialist	99	97	101	101	99	101	93	74
Dermatologist	237	239	242	245	260	267	275	277
Physician	2,854	2,980	3,143	3,333	3,477	3,664	3,866	4,069
Other medical	246	286	271	298	356	382	438	485
<b>Total medical</b>	<b>34,502</b>	<b>35,492</b>	<b>36,601</b>	<b>37,440</b>	<b>38,451</b>	<b>39,608</b>	<b>40,428</b>	<b>41,116</b>
Optometrist	1,130	1,160	2287 <sup>(a)</sup>	2,356	2,424	2,500	2,576	2,621
Dental/orthodontist	319	339	382	382	409	420	409	457
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,951</b>	<b>36,991</b>	<b>39,270</b>	<b>40,178</b>	<b>41,284</b>	<b>42,528</b>	<b>43,413</b>	<b>44,194</b>
<b>(per cent change—year on year increase)</b>								
General	3.6	2.3	2.7	1.5	2.2	2.6	0.7	0.6
Vocationally registered GP	..	45.7	43.8	38.0	9.8	6.5	2.1	2.1
Other medical practitioner	-20.9	-11.1	-18.2	-31.2	-11.6	-6.0	-2.9	-3.3
Obstetrician/gynaecologist	2.0	2.3	0.3	0.8	-6.8	3.7	-0.3	1.8
IVF	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6.3	7.5	0.0
Surgeon	2.7	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.5	4.1	2.5	2.2
Specialist	1.0	2.1	2.0	2.3	1.3	3.1	0.3	1.2
Non-specialist	11.4	8.2	9.6	6.6	12.2	7.7	10.4	5.3
Anaesthetist	3.1	3.8	5.0	2.3	4.8	3.2	3.6	2.7
Specialist	2.7	3.6	4.0	3.0	4.6	1.9	2.5	2.2
Non-specialist	10.5	8.3	23.1	-8.0	7.8	24.3	18.1	8.0
Psychiatrist	4.8	4.4	3.5	4.5	3.6	1.7	2.1	3.5
Diagnostic imagist	-0.1	3.7	7.5	5.3	2.1	1.5	13.4	4.8
Specialist	1.5	2.6	6.8	6.1	2.6	2.3	12.1	5.5
Non-specialist	-15.5	15.9	14.7	-1.8	-2.8	-6.7	28.9	-2.4
Radiation oncology specialist	9.7	-2.0	6.0	-1.9	8.7	5.3	9.2	0.8
Pathologist	-0.2	3.0	1.1	-3.7	-4.5	-1.5	-3.5	-1.9
Specialist	-0.7	3.9	0.5	-4.4	-5.0	-2.1	-2.6	1.6
Non-specialist	3.1	-2.0	4.1	0.0	-2.0	2.0	-7.9	-20.4
Dermatologist	3.5	0.8	1.3	1.2	6.1	2.7	3.0	0.7
Physician	5.5	4.4	5.5	6.0	4.3	5.4	5.6	5.2
Other medical	-4.7	16.3	-5.2	10.0	19.5	7.3	14.7	10.7
<b>Total medical</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Optometrist	5.0	2.7	97.2 <sup>(a)</sup>	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.0	1.7
Dental/orthodontist	-0.9	6.3	12.7	0.0	7.1	2.7	-2.6	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>

(a) Prior to 1991–92, optometry services provided by a multi-practitioner practice may have been billed to Medicare under the provider number of the principal. From 1991–92, services were billed to the provider number of each practitioner.

Source: Medicare Statistics, Department of Health and Family Services.

**Table 35: Average number of Medicare services per person: service type, Australia, 1988–89 to 1996–97**

Service type	1988–89	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
GP attendances	4.76	4.99	4.91	5.08	5.27	5.41	5.45	5.58	5.53
Specialist attendances	0.81	0.84	0.86	0.89	0.92	0.94	0.97	0.99	0.98
Obstetrics	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.09
Anaesthetics	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Pathology—patient episode initiation	..	..	..	0.25	0.72	0.77	0.83	0.88	0.91
Pathology tests	1.86	1.53	1.51	1.49	1.52	1.63	1.76	1.77	1.80
Diagnostic imaging	0.42	0.45	0.48	0.49	0.52	0.53	0.55	0.57	0.56
Operations	0.22	0.24	0.26	0.27	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.29	0.29
Assist in operations	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Optometry	0.13	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.19	0.20
Radiotherapy and therapeutic nuclear medicine	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Other	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.50</b>	<b>8.48</b>	<b>8.48</b>	<b>8.95</b>	<b>9.74</b>	<b>10.10</b>	<b>10.41</b>	<b>10.70</b>	<b>10.72</b>

Source: Medicare Statistics, Department of Health and Family Services.