



2.3 Who is in the health workforce?

The health workforce in Australia is large and diverse, covering many occupations, and ranging from highly qualified professionals to support staff and volunteers. Health workforce occupations comprise workers who diagnose and treat physical and mental illnesses and conditions, or recommend, administer and dispense medications and treatment to promote or restore good health.

Many health practitioners must register through the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) to work in the health system. The information presented here focuses on this registered workforce, which includes medical practitioners, nurses and midwives and other health professionals such as dentists, physiotherapists and psychologists.

Nurses and midwives are the largest group in the registered health workforce, with about 353,000 registered and almost 301,000 nurses and midwives employed in 2014 (Table 2.3.1). The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) nurses and midwives employed for every 100,000 people is almost 3 times that of the next largest health profession, medical practitioners (Figure 2.3.1). In 2014, there were 1,134 full-time equivalent nurses and midwives (or 1 in 88 people was an employed nurse or midwife), 387 medical practitioners and 508 other health professionals employed for every 100,000 people.

More female health practitioners are entering the workforce. For example, in 2014, over 53% of medical practitioners in the youngest age group (20 to 34 years) were women. Women made up half (50.4%) of all specialists-in-training in 2014, which was far greater than 28.7% of women who were practising specialists in 2014.



Table 2.3.1: Key workforce statistics and full-time equivalent rates for selected health professions

| | Two largest professions | | Two selected professions | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| |  Nurses and midwives |  Medical practitioners ^(a) |  Dentists |  Optometrists |
| Employed | 300,979 employed in 2014, up 5.0% from 286,706 in 2011 | 85,510 employed in 2014, up 7.4% from 79,653 in 2012 | 13,979 employed in 2014, up 11.0% from 12,599 in 2011 | 4,337 employed in 2014, up 7.5% from 4,034 in 2011 |
| FTE per 100,000 people | 1,134 in 2014, up 2.4% from 1,107 in 2011 | 387 in 2014, up 3.6% from 374 in 2012 | 56 in 2014, about the same as in 2011—55 | 17.4 in 2014, about the same as in 2011—17.1 |
| Percentage of women | 89% in 2014, about the same as in 2011—90% | 39% in 2014, about the same as in 2012—38% | 39% in 2014, up from 35% in 2011 | 50% in 2014, up from 46% in 2011 |

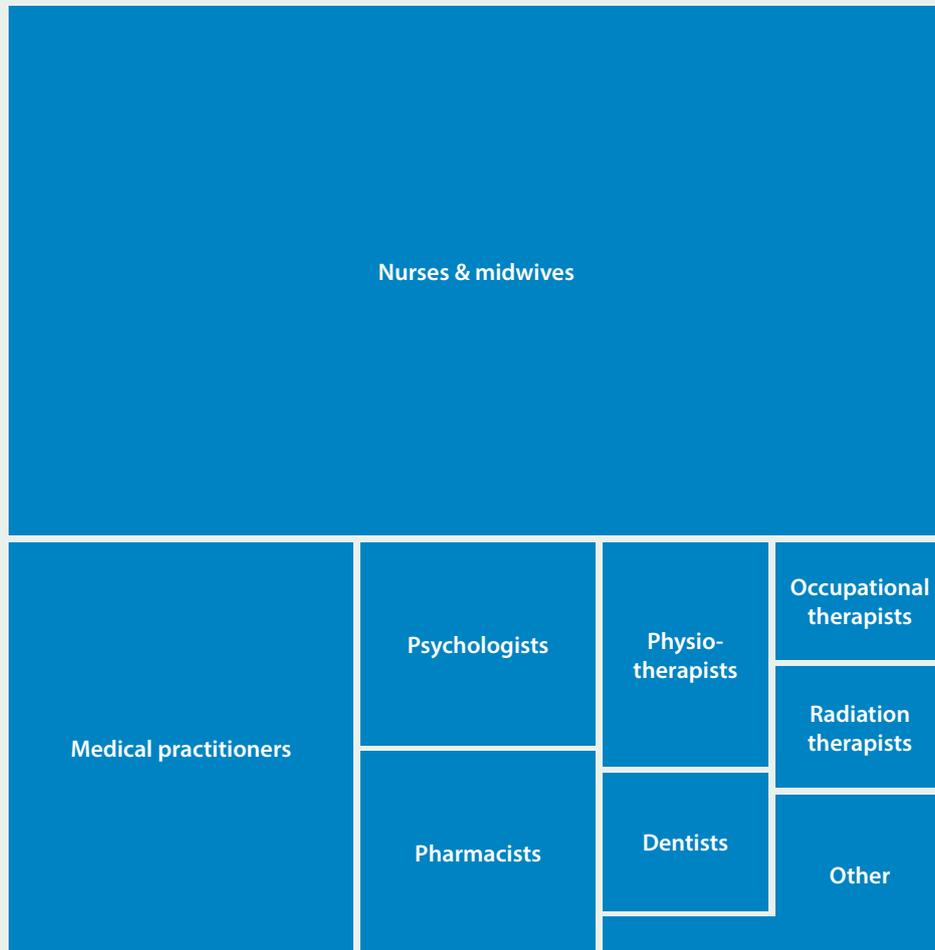
Full-time equivalent per 100,000 people in 2014

| | Nurses and midwives | Medical practitioners ^(a) | Dentists | Optometrists |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
|  Major cities | 1,145 | 437 | 63 | 19 |
|  Inner regional areas | 1,096 | 292 | 43 | 15 |
|  Outer regional areas | 1,077 | 272 | 38 | 12 |
|  Remote areas | 1,239 | 264 | 25 | 8 |
|  Very remote areas | 1,233 | 264 | 25 | 8 |

(a) Comparison is based on 2012 data due to the inclusion of provisional registrants prior to that year.



Figure 2.3.1: Total number of employed registered health practitioners, 2014



Note: 'Other' includes Optometrists, Chiropractors, Podiatrists, Chinese medicine practitioners, Osteopaths, Dental hygienists, Dental practitioners, Oral health therapists, Dental therapists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander health practitioners.

Source: AIHW National Health Workforce Data Set 2014.

What is missing from the picture?

The information on health practitioners who register through the NRAS through the mandatory national registration process does not include all health professionals. There are several categories of health professions, such as dieticians, sonographers and speech therapists, that are not required to register with NRAS and for whom limited data are available.

Where do I go for more information?

More information on the health workforce is available via the AIHW web pages at www.aihw.gov.au/workforce.



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