

Photo courtesy Karen McConnell.

Workforce analysis: rural general practitioners in Western Australia



Profile of the female general practice workforce 2014

Reporting general practice trends

Rural Health West conducts an annual survey of general practitioners (GPs) working in an Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Area (RA) 2 to 5 location in Western Australia at the annual census date of 30 November.

Overall, 67.1% of the rural and remote general practice workforce responded to the 2014 survey. This high response rate, together with ongoing data collection strategies, means that Rural Health West offers contemporary valid data about trends in the rural general practice workforce to support workforce policy and planning.

This is the fifth year that Rural Health West has published fact sheets about the general practice workforce in rural and remote Western Australia. This current fact sheet builds on the earlier annual snapshots and reports on the 2014 local and national data¹, where available, for the same period.

The 2014 survey results are set out in the Minimum Data Set Report and Workforce Analysis Update 2014 which is available on the website at www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/workforcedata.

Female GP numbers

Female GP numbers continued to rise with an additional 46 female GPs, including GP registrars, working in rural and remote Western Australia at the census date of 30 November 2014 compared with 2013. At 335, this was the highest number of female GPs ever recorded. Their proportion of the total rural and remote general practice workforce in Western Australia also increased by 3.4% compared to 2013 to reach the highest recorded at 40.1%.

Female GP representation in the rural and remote Western Australian workforce at November 2014 (40.1%) was comparable to the national average female GP participation rate of 40.4% but was lower than most states and territories, with the exception of Queensland (39.1%) and South Australia (35.8%).

Numbers in Aboriginal Medical Services

2014 saw the continuation of trend for Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) practices to have a consistently greater proportion of female GPs than the overall rural and remote general practice workforce. The proportion of female GPs working in AMS practices increased by 2.4% in 2014 to 57.7% and the highest recorded.

Age

The average age of female GPs in rural and remote Western Australia decreased by 0.6 years to 43.1 years in 2013 compared to 50.4 years for males. The decrease was attributable to the higher number of female WAGPET GP registrars who formed a younger cohort. The Western Australian figure is lower than the national average age for female GPs of 46.5 years.

Full-time versus part-time

74.4% of surveyed GPs self-reported working full-time in the provision of routine GP clinical services in rural and remote Western Australia in 2014 compared to 55.4% nationally. In Western Australia, female GPs made up 31.9% of the self-reported full-time general practice workforce and 68.9% of the part-time general practice workforce in 2014. Nationally, 43.2% of female GPs self-reported as working full-time in the provision of clinical services in 2014.

Workforce turnover

Historically, the female turnover rate has been higher than that of the male workforce; however in 2014, there was minimal difference in turnover. Both the female and male GP workforce experienced similar departure rates (12.9% and 13.1%) in 2014. Consistent with the trend of increasing female GP representation in the rural and remote workforce, female GP numbers showed a greater increase (15 more GPs) and a higher proportional increase (8% higher) than the male workforce in 2014.

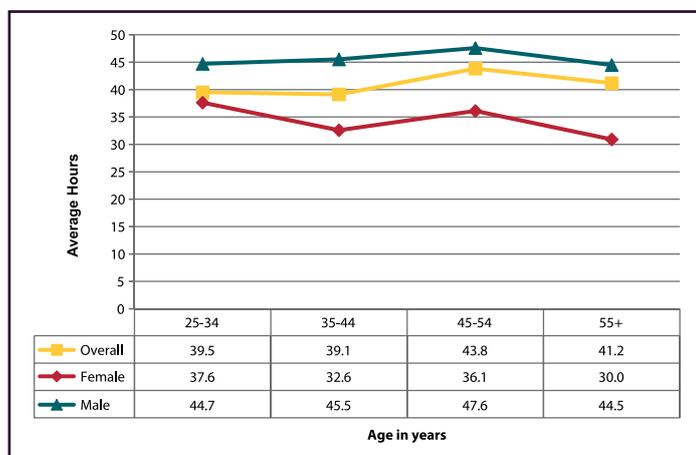
Remoteness

The representation of all female GPs, including GP registrars, across RA 2 to RA 5 locations was comparable to their overall workforce representation of 40.1%. In previous years there was a higher proportion of female GPs in RA 4 (remote) and RA5 (very remote) which reflected their higher representation in AMS practices.

Remoteness Category	Number of female GPs	% of all GPs
City-based RFDS	12	54.5
ASGC-RA 2 (inner regional)	99	40.2
ASGC-RA 3 (outer regional)	92	37.43
ASGC-RA 4 (remote)	58	36.0
ASGC-RA 5 (very remote)	28	41.2

Hours worked

Male GPs in all age groups in rural and remote Western Australia continued to work more hours than their female counterparts.



This was consistent with national trends which identified that female GPs worked less hours compared to their male counterparts. This reflected the greater proportion of the female workforce who reported working part-time.

Length of stay

The average length of stay in the current practice for all general practitioners was 7.7 years for Western Australia and

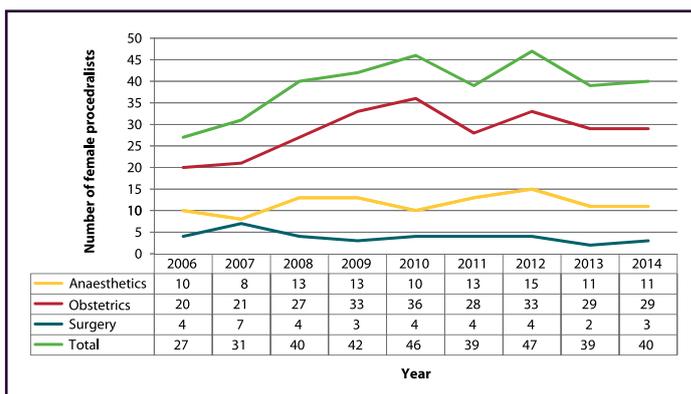
7.3 years nationally in 2014. The average length of stay in the current practice for female GPs in Western Australia in 2014 was 6.1 years, the same as in 2013.

43.5% of all female GPs in rural and remote Western Australia had been in the current principal practice for between 1 and 5 years which was slightly lower than 2013 (44.8%). 39.5% were long stay GPs (> 5 years) which was slightly higher than 2013 (37.9%).

Length of employment category	% of female GPs
< 1 year	17.0%
1-5 years	43.5%
> 5 years	39.5%

Proceduralists

At November 2014, there were 40 female GPs practising a mix of obstetrics, anaesthetics and general surgery, one more than in 2013. The most practised procedural area was obstetrics (29 of 40). Female GP proceduralists represented 21.4% of the GP procedural workforce in rural and remote Western Australia in 2013, compared to 20.9% in 2013, 23.3% in 2012 and 21.6% in 2011. These proportions were much lower than the overall female GP workforce representation of 40.1% in 2014, 36.7% in 2013, 35.8% in 2012 and 36.5% in 2011.



Other fact sheets

- Growing the future general practice workforce 2014
- General practice workforce in Aboriginal Medical Services 2014
- Profile of the GP proceduralist workforce 2014
- Profile of the general practice workforce 2014

¹ National data sourced from the *Medical Practice in Rural and Remote Australia: National Minimum Data Set (MDS) Report as at November 2014*.

