

Registered Nurses

2017 Factsheet



Registered Nurse (RN) practice is person-centred and evidence-based with preventative, curative, formative, supportive, restorative and palliative elements. RNs work in therapeutic and professional relationships with individuals, as well as with families, groups and communities. The qualification requirement is a Bachelor of Nursing or Graduate Entry Masters in Nursing (where another degree is already held).

The Workforce

Between 2014 and 2017, the total number of Registered Nurses with general or provisional registration has increased by 7.9% from 286,856 to 309,489 (an average annual growth of 2.6%). The number of employed Registered Nurses working in nursing ('workforce') has increased by 8.6% from 246,606 to 267,783 over the same period (an average annual growth of 2.8%).

Table 1: Registered Nurses, 2014-2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Registered	286,856	292,874	300,997	309,489
Employed	246,606	252,587	260,265	267,786
Employed, working in nursing	246,606	252,587	260,263	267,783

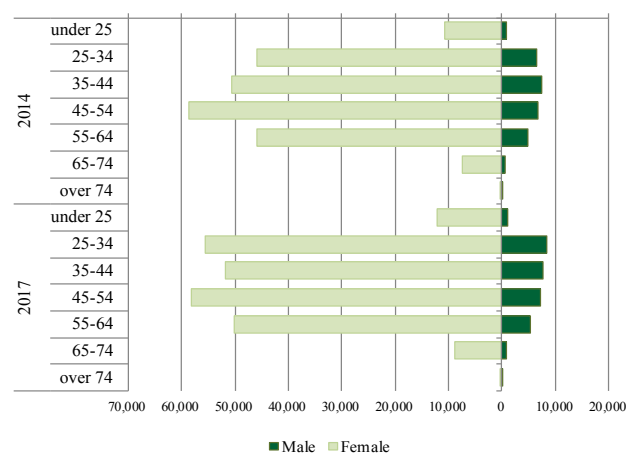
The following analysis of the Registered Nurses 'workforce' is based on the number of employed Registered Nurses working in nursing as indicated by the green shading in Figure 2 (267,783 in 2017) unless otherwise stated.

Demographics

In 2017, 88.6% of the Registered Nurse workforce were female. Since 2014, the number of male Registered Nurses has increased by 3,452 and they now comprise 11.4% of the workforce.

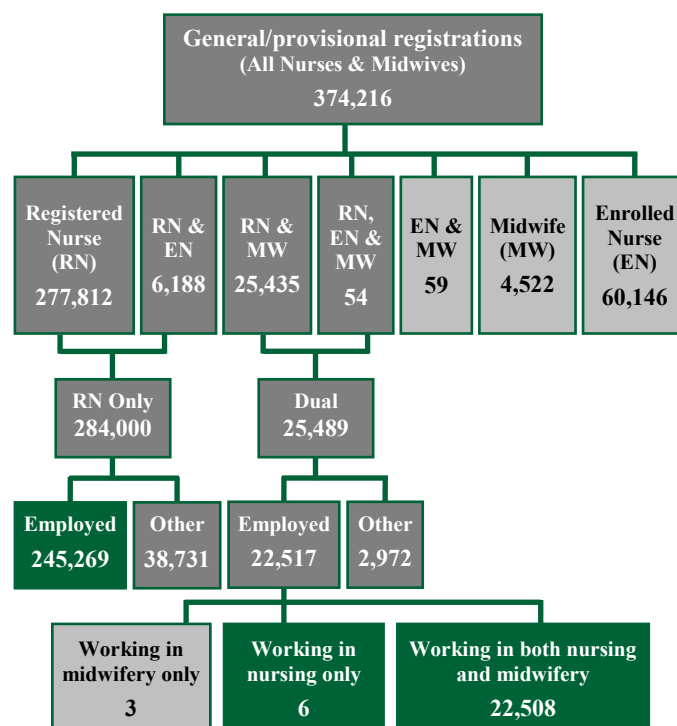
The average age of the workforce decreased from 44.2 years in 2014 to 43.9 years in 2017. The proportion of Registered nurses under 35 years has grown from 26.0% in 2014 to 28.9% in 2017.

Figure 1: Age and gender distribution 2014 and 2017



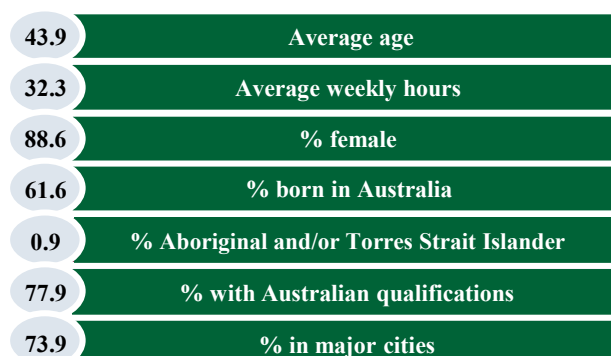
Workforce

Figure 2: Registered Nurses, 2017



Quick facts — 2017

Figure 3: Summary, 2017



Hours worked

Since 2014, the number of average hours worked per week in nursing (nursing hours) has increased by 0.1 hours to 32.3 hours in 2017. The majority of their nursing hours were worked in a clinical role (28.1 clinical nursing hours per week on average).

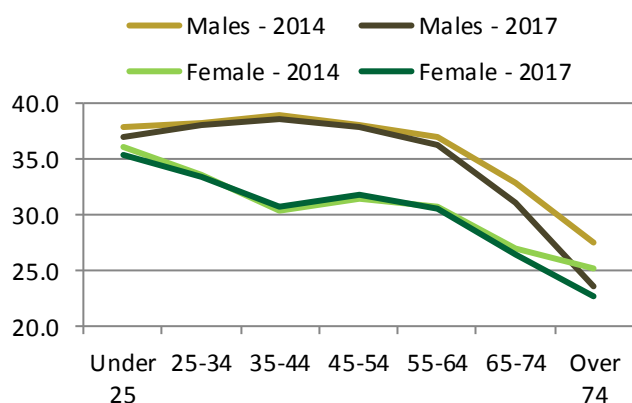
Note: the calculation of average nursing hours (total, clinical and non clinical) includes dual registrants who are employed in nursing but had not worked any nursing hours in the week prior to the survey.

Table 2: Average nursing hours per week, 2014-2017

Clinical	2014	2015	2016	2017
Clinical	27.7	27.9	28.1	28.1
Non-clinical	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.1
Total	32.2	32.2	32.2	32.3

Male Registered Nurses worked more hours per week on average than females in 2017 (37.5 hours vs 31.6 hours) and this was the case within all age groups.

Figure 4: Average hours per week by gender and age group, 2014-2017



Job Role

In 2017, 89.1% of Registered Nurses worked as clinicians - a small increase in comparison with 2014 (87.9%).

Table 3: Principal role, 2014 and 2017

Job role	2014	2017
Clinician	216,865	238,468
Administrator	13,492	13,282
Teacher or educator	9,267	9,610
Researcher	2,582	2,526
Other	4,399	3,896
Total	246,605	267,782

Note: Not stated/Unknown has been excluded

Principal work sector

In 2017, 62.1% of Registered Nurses worked only in the public sector, 34.8% only in the private sector and 3.2% in both.

Table 4: Sector in which nursing clinical hours were worked, 2014 and 2017

Employment sector	2014	2017
Public sector only	138,822	151,725
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>62.3</i>	<i>62.1</i>
Private sector only	76,868	85,006
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>34.5</i>	<i>34.8</i>
Both	6,961	7,723
<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>3.2</i>
Non response	23,955	23,329
Total	246,606	267,783

Principal area of practice

In 2017, ten principal areas of practice accounted for 75.1% of the Registered Nurse workforce. In 2014, these same 'top ten' areas of practice also accounted for 75.0% of the workforce.

Aged Care was the most common area of practice reported by Registered Nurses in 2014 (10.7%) and 2017 (10.8%). The number of Registered Nurses reporting working in the Aged care area increase by 9.5% from 26,498 in 2014 to 29,005 in 2017.

Table 5: Principal area of practice, 2014 and 2017

Principal area of practice	2014		2017		Change
	Head-count	Average Total Hours	Head-count	Average Total Hours	
Aged care	26,498	33.9	29,005	34.2	2,507
Medical	21,517	33.7	25,307	33.6	3,790
Peri-operative	21,256	33.0	24,655	33.1	3,399
Surgical	20,265	32.6	21,625	32.3	1,360
Mental health	17,513	36.7	18,948	36.4	1,435
Emergency	15,696	34.0	18,015	33.9	2,319
Mixed medical/surgical	16,898	31.7	17,906	31.9	1,008
Critical care	17,630	34.3	17,883	34.5	253
Other	16,721	32.2	16,313	32.3	-408
Community nursing	10,926	31.8	11,414	31.9	488
Practice nursing	9,872	28.2	11,215	28.2	1,343
Management	8,267	37.8	8,580	37.1	313
Maternity care	10,396	12.1	8,409	10.7	-1,987
Rehabilitation and disability	6,591	34.2	7,247	33.9	656
Paediatrics	7,210	31.3	6,781	31.8	-429
Education	6,204	32.9	6,037	32.7	-167
Child and family health	5,310	25.0	5,187	24.0	-123
Neonatal care	-	-	5,148	26.6	5,148
Palliative care	2,758	32.8	2,878	33.0	120
Research	1,991	31.5	1,969	32.0	-22
Drug and Alcohol	1,544	35.3	1,734	34.8	190
Health promotion	1,126	29.6	1,044	28.1	-82
Policy	417	33.6	483	32.5	66

Note: Not stated/Unknown has been excluded

In 2016, there was a change to the response options in the principal area of practice question in the survey ('continuum of care' was renamed 'antenatal, intra-partum and post-partum care'). Consequently, there are changes between 2014 and 2017 in the number of Registered Nurses who reported working in the Maternity care area of practice.

In 2017, Registered Nurses whose principal area of practice was Management reported the highest average hours worked per week (37.1 hours) while those working in Maternity care reported the lowest average hours per week (10.7 hours).

Principal work setting

In 2017, 63.8% of Registered Nurses worked primarily in a Hospital setting. Residential health care facilities were the next most common setting (9.8%) followed by Community health care services (7.9%). These were also the three most common principal work settings in 2014.

Table 6: Principal work setting, 2014 and 2017

Principal work setting	2014		2017	
	Head-count	Average Total Hours	Head-count	Average Total Hours
Hospital	156,398	32.3	170,861	32.4
<i>FTE Clinical hours - public*</i>	90,814.4		100,505.4	
<i>FTE Clinical hours - private*</i>	29,239.8		32,108.1	
Residential health care facility	23,976	34.0	26,321	34.4
Community health care service	20,720	32.2	21,081	32.1
General practitioner (GP) practice	8,632	27.9	9,809	28.2
Outpatient service	8,262	31.5	9,632	31.6
Other	9,113	32.5	8,320	31.9
Independent private practice	-	-	4,589	28.4
Tertiary educational facility	3,262	32.8	3,530	32.1
Other private practice	5,782	28.1	3,199	29.3
Other government department or agency	3,011	33.7	2,835	32.1
Correctional service	1,314	38.0	1,586	37.5
School	1,328	28.8	1,486	28.9
Aboriginal health service	1,284	35.6	1,371	34.9
Commercial/business service	1,335	32.9	1,208	32.5
Other educational facility	880	30.8	817	31.8
Defence forces	582	36.7	590	35.4
Hospice	569	31.3	548	31.4
Locum private practice	158	28.8	-	-

Note: Not stated/Unknown has been excluded

* The hospital setting FTE has been calculated based on clinical nursing hours worked in the private or public sector.

Between 2014 and 2017, the number of Registered Nurses working in Hospital settings increased by 9.2%, Residential health care facilities increased by 9.8% and Community health care services increased by 1.7%.

In 2017, there was a change to the response options in the principal work setting question in the survey ('independent private practice'). Consequently, there are large changes between 2014 and 2017 in the number of Registered Nurses who reported working in Other and Other private practice settings.

Working Intentions

In 2017, Registered Nurses had worked in nursing for 16 years on average and intended to stay in the workforce for another 17 years. There were gender differences: males reported having worked for fewer years than females (14 years vs 17 years).

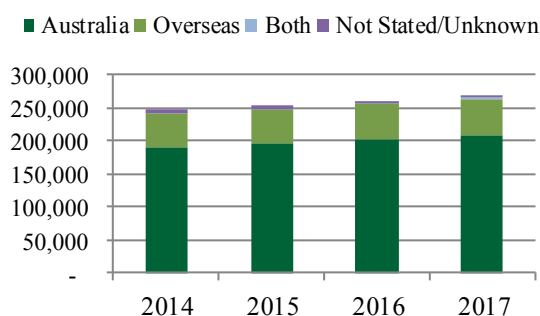
Figure 5: Workforce intentions, 2017.



Initial qualification

The workforce survey asks where nurses obtained their initial qualification. In 2017, 77.9% of Registered Nurses obtained their initial qualification(s) in Australia, 20.6% obtained their initial qualification(s) overseas, and 0.5% obtained both Australian and overseas qualifications.

Figure 6: Initial qualification, 2014 - 2017



Distribution

State and territory

In 2017, more than three quarters (76.1%) of the workforce was located in three states: NSW (29.3%), VIC (26.2%) and QLD (20.6%).

In 2017, the highest rate of Registered Nurses per 100,000 population were in the NT and TAS, while

NSW had the lowest rate. Between 2014 and 2017, QLD had the largest rate increase (93.9), followed by TAS (60.2), while the rate in SA decreased (9.8).

Table 7: Distribution by state/territory 2017

State & Territory	Headcount	Total FTE	Average total hours	² Rate per 100K population
NSW	78,507	69,193	33.5	998.6
VIC	70,014	57,267	31.1	1,107.5
QLD	55,092	47,310	32.6	1,117.7
SA	21,240	17,378	31.1	1,232.3
WA	27,849	23,205	31.7	1,081.3
TAS	6,593	5,410	31.2	1,262.7
ACT	4,731	4,175	33.5	1,149.2
NT	3,671	3,488	36.1	1,483.3
Australia	267,783	227,509	32.3	1,088.7

Note: Not stated/Unknown has been included in the Australia total.
²ABS - 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2016-2017

In 2017, Registered Nurses in the NT worked the highest average hours per week (36.1 hours) and those in VIC and SA worked the fewest hours (31.1 hours).

Remoteness area

In 2017, 73.9% of Registered Nurses worked in Major cities, 16.8% in Inner regional, 7.3% in Outer regional and 2.0% in Remote/Very remote locations.

In 2014, the proportions of the workforce across remoteness areas were very similar, with 73.5% working in Major cities, 17.0% in Inner regional, 7.4% in Outer regional and 2.1% in Remote/Very remote locations.

In 2017, the average hours worked generally increased with remoteness, from Inner Regional (31.3 hours) to Very Remote areas (38.9 hours).

Table 8: Distribution of employed registered nurses by remoteness area, 2017

Remoteness Area	Headcount	Total FTE	Average total hours	² Rate per 100K population
Major cities	197,965	168,619	32.4	1,120.6
Inner regional	44,934	36,991	31.3	1,023.5
Outer regional	19,461	16,684	32.6	950.3
Remote	3,334	3,083	35.1	1,141.5
Very remote	2,047	2,094	38.9	1,020.5
Australia	267,783	227,509	32.3	1,088.7

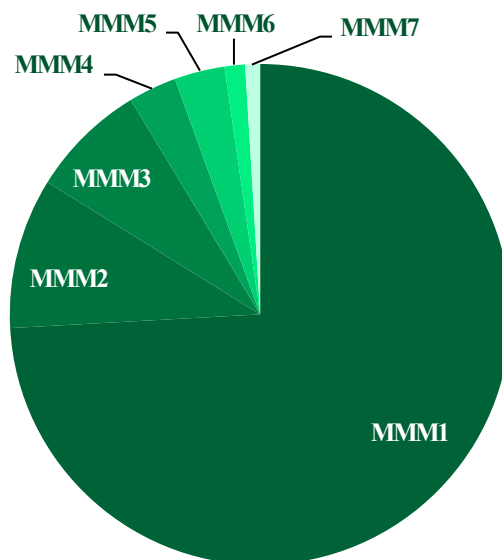
Note: Not stated/Unknown has been included in the Australia total.
²ABS - 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2016-2017

Modified Monash Model

In 2017, the majority of FTE Registered Nurses (74.1%) were located in a major city or a location considered as MMM1 under the Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification system, a small increase from 73.7% in 2014.

Note: See www.doctorconnect.gov.au for more information

Figure 8: FTE Distribution by MMM, 2017



Tele-Health

The workforce survey asks nurses to report their hours practiced via tele-health in nursing, in the previous year. Responses have been combined to provide an average for the workforce.

Note: Tele-health is defined as the use of telecommunication techniques for the purpose of providing telemedicine and education, and health education over a distance.

In 2017, 6.1% (16,427) of the workforce responded to the tele-health question. On average respondents practiced via tele-health 11.6 hours per week.

Remoteness area breakdown for the tele-health refers to the location of the Registered Nurse, not the location of the person receiving the service.

Table 9: Tele-health workforce remoteness location, 2017

Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
63.6%	17.6%	11.4%	3.7%	3.6%

Note: Not stated/Unknown has been excluded

Note: There are 5 factsheets in this series: 1 Nurses and Midwives, 2 Registered Nurses, 3 Midwives, 4 Enrolled Nurses, 5 Nurse Practitioners.

If a practitioner has a job role or worked hours in more than one profession, they will be counted in each profession's factsheet, but only once in the Nurses and Midwives factsheet. Hence, when the individual factsheets in this series are added together, the total will vary from the Nurses and Midwives factsheet.

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References

- 1) Registered and employed workforce data, National Health Workforce Dataset 2014—2017
(<http://hwd.health.gov.au/datasets.html>)
Note: These numbers have changed due to an error in the NHWDS for 2013-2016 and won't match the previous years figures in the 2016 factsheets.
- 2) ABS - 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia
(<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3218.0>), released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 31/08/2018