

Workforce analysis: Rural resident specialists in Western Australia



Profile of the rural resident specialist workforce 2013

Reporting resident specialist trends

Rural Health West maintains a database of resident specialists who work in rural and remote Western Australia in Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Areas (RA) 2 to 5.

This database is updated continuously with intelligence from rural areas and annually through the Resident Specialist Survey. A total of 91 (60.7%) of the recorded rural and remote resident specialists responded to the latest survey in October 2013.

This is the second annual snapshot Rural Health West has published about the resident specialist workforce with this report based on the 2013 survey data. Together with ongoing data collection strategies, this means that Rural Health West can offer contemporary valid evidence about trends in the resident specialist workforce.

Number and location of resident specialists

At the 2013 census date of 31 October 2013, there were 150 resident specialists identified as living and working in rural and remote Western Australia (RA 2 to RA 5). This compares to 145 in 2012. These specialists resided in RA 2 to RA 4 areas with more than half (54%) living in an RA 2 location.

ASGC RA 2	81	54%
ASGC RA 3	51	34%
ASGC RA 4	18	12%

Specialties practised

The 150 resident specialists practised across eighteen specialties. The five most practised specialties (general surgery, anaesthetics, general physician, psychiatry and obstetrics and gynaecology) accounted for 57.3% of the rural resident specialist workforce.

Ten specialties recorded an increase of 14 specialists in 2013 (anaesthetics, emergency medicine, general medicine, general surgery, geriatric medicine, ICU, oncology, orthopaedic surgery, palliative care and urology). This growth was counterbalanced by a recorded outflow of 9 specialists across 5 specialties (ophthalmology, paediatrics, psychiatry, radiology and renal medicine). There was no change in resident specialist numbers recorded across the other specialties.

Specialty	Number of resident specialists
General surgery	21
Anaesthetics	20
General physician	16
Psychiatry	15
Obstetrics and gynaecology	14
Paediatrics	13
Emergency medicine	12
Orthopaedic surgery	10
Ophthalmology	7
Radiology	7
Urology	3
Public health	3
Palliative medicine	2
ENT	2
Cardiology	2
High dependency/ICU	1
Geriatric medicine	1
Oncology	1
TOTAL	150

Age and gender

The database holds age records for 115 (76.7%) of the current resident specialist workforce. The average age of this group at 31 October 2013 was 52.6 years, with more than half the workforce aged between 35 and 54 (63.5%). 78% of the resident specialist workforce is male.

Specialist age	All	Female	Male
35-44	31	27.0%	6
45-54	42	36.5%	12
55-64	27	23.5%	1
65+	15	13.0%	1
Average Age (115 doctors)	52.6	49.2	53.3
Men (all age groups)	117	78%	
Women (all age groups)	33	22%	

Remoteness and hours worked

The database holds current working hours (excluding on-call) and length of stay information for 91 (60.7%) of the resident specialist workforce. This data shows an inverse relationship between the self-reported hours worked per week by RA location, wherein resident specialists in more remote areas reported working more hours per week on average compared to their colleagues in less remote areas.

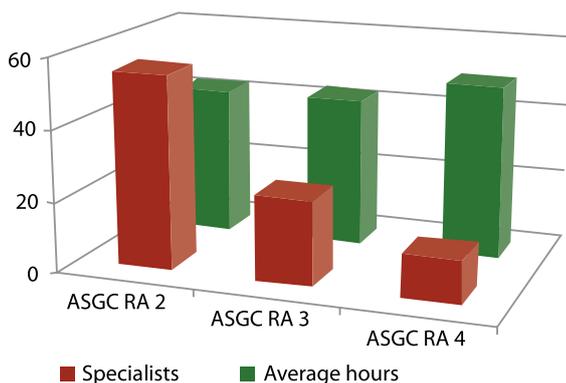


Figure 1: Number of specialists by RA and average hours worked

A similar pattern has been identified in the rural and remote general practice workforce.

Length of stay

The database holds length of stay information for 146 resident specialists. The average length of stay in the current practice was 7.2 years; there was a difference between the average length of stay for males (7.06 years) and females (7.72 years).

Length of stay <1 year	11 (7.5%)
Length of stay 1-5 years	52 (35.6%)
Length of stay >5 years	83 (56.8%)

Where specialists trained

The database records training information for 140 resident specialists. 39.3% (55) of those rural resident specialists completed their basic medical qualification at an Australian university, compared to 60.7% (85) who completed their basic medical qualification overseas. Doctors from the United Kingdom, South Africa, India and New Zealand represent the majority (67.1%) of the overseas trained resident specialists.

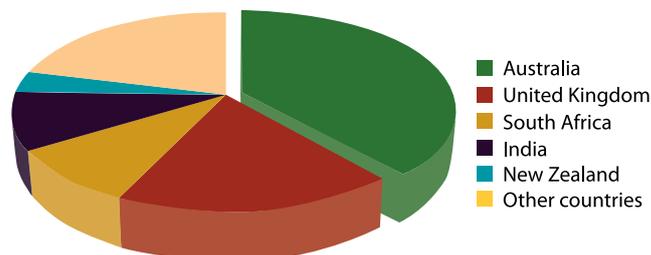


Figure 2: Country of basic medical qualification

Visiting specialists

As well as having access to resident specialists, patients in rural and remote Western Australia are supported by visiting specialists. Rural Health West has identified 239 specialists who currently provide visiting services to rural and remote locations in Western Australia. These visiting specialists include those providing services under the Outreach in the Outback programs.

Other Fact Sheets

Rural Health West publishes five fact sheets annually describing trends in the rural and remote general practice workforce and two information sheets about the nursing, dental and allied health workforce in the primary health care sector.

These are available on the Rural Health West website at www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/workforcedata.