

Health and community services labour force 1996

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NATIONAL HEALTH LABOUR FORCE SERIES

Number 19

Health and community services labour force 1996

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

AIHW cat. no. HWL 19

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This publication is part of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Labour Force Series. A complete list of the Institute's publications is available from the Publications Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, GPO Box 570, Canberra ACT 2601, or via the Institute's web site (<http://www.aihw.gov.au>).

ISSN 1327-4309
ISBN 1 74024 104 5

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2001. Health and community services labour force 1996. AIHW cat. no. HWL 19. Canberra: AIHW (National Health Labour Force Series no. 19).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair
Professor Janice Reid

Director
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Labour Force and Rural Health Unit
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
GPO Box 570
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6244 1153
E-mail: labourforce@aihw.gov.au

Published by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Printed by Canberra Publishing and Printing

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Preface

This publication is compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing 1996 data. As such it continues and expands the health occupation data that the ABS published in *Characteristics of Persons Employed in Health Occupations, Australia* (Cat. No. 4346.0) following the 1981, 1986 and 1991 censuses. To complement the picture of the health and community service workforce in Australia, the Institute also includes in this report statistics from national immigration and education databases.

One in every thirteen employed Australians is in a health or community service occupation and an overview of the main characteristics of these people is presented here. The data show that:

- females comprised 73% of persons employed in health occupations and 87% of those in community service occupations;
- nurses and personal care workers comprise 57% of those in health occupations and children's care workers comprise 37% of those in community service occupations;
- relative to population, capital cities have 19% more workers in health occupations than other regions; and
- relative to population, people in community service occupations are more evenly distributed among all regions than those in health occupations.

The requirements of an ageing population and the need for equitable access to health and community service supply among major cities and rural and remote centres and regions has been a major policy concern for a number of years. The data presented here will inform discussion of the issues involved. Interpretation of the data is complex and the Institute would welcome feedback on the information presented.

Richard Madden
Director
March 2001

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ASCO	Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
excl	excluding
GP	general practice
incl	including
nec	not elsewhere classified
nfd	not further defined

Variations in numbers

All data in this publication are the raw counts from the ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing. There are no adjustments for under-enumeration and non-response to particular questions, the level of which is unknown for individual occupations.

Counts of persons in a given occupation or occupational group may vary significantly from one table to the next, for a number of reasons, as follows.

- The actual occupations included in each table change from one table to the next, so category totals also vary somewhat—smaller occupations (e.g. weight loss consultancy or massage therapy) are not always included.
- Varying response rates to individual questions in the census may result in some persons being excluded from the analysis of a given variable.
- The ABS routinely rounds up small numbers in its census data in order to protect the confidentiality of individuals: a single person in a table cell may be reported as three persons. This leads to small discrepancies in total values between tables. Unfortunately, this process may have significantly altered the accuracy of data regarding Indigenous participation in health and community services occupations: where participation is low, the small estimates reported for many occupations might actually exaggerate participation.

Comparability with previous data

There were significant problems comparing changes in the number of these workers between the 1991 and 1996 censuses due to changes made between the first and second editions of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 1990; ABS 1997). Although the classification of health occupations remained largely unchanged, most community services occupations were reclassified so that direct matching of data was not possible.

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