

3 FTE nursing staff in hospitals, 1997–98

The annual Australian public hospitals data collection by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare includes full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing numbers in nursing and various other categories. Data relating to private hospitals are taken from the ABS publication *Private Hospitals 1997–98* (ABS 1999).

Public hospitals

In public hospitals (acute and psychiatric) between 1995–96 and 1997–98 there was an increase in FTE nursing staff per available bed from 1.35 to 1.40. However, staffing per bed, per 1,000 separations and per 1,000 patient days varied significantly among the States and Territories in 1997–98. The three largest States had at or slightly below the national provision of 4.7 FTE nurses per 1,000 patient days. The five smallest States and the two Territories had a significantly higher provision—between 5.0 and 5.4 FTE nurses per 1,000 patient days.

During the period from 1995–96 to 1997–98 changes in patient statistics and staffing in Australia included the following.

- A 5.0% increase in separations and a 6.1% increase in patient days.
- A 14.4% increase in same day separations.
- A decline in overall staffing of 5.1%, including a 2.9% decline in nurse staffing from 80,570 FTE nurses to 78,239 FTE nurses.
- Separations per FTE nurse increased by 8.1% and patient days per FTE nurse increased by 9.3%.

Private hospitals

Private hospitals (acute and psychiatric) contrast with public hospitals in the trends in their patient statistics and staffing levels. During the period from 1995–96 to 1997–98 changes in patient statistics and staffing in private hospitals in Australia included the following.

- A 9.2% increase in separations and a 0.2% increase in patient days.
- An increase in overall staffing of 6.3%, including a 6.2% increase in nurse staffing from 23,136 FTE nurses to 24,567 FTE nurses.
- Separations per FTE nurse increased by 2.8% and patient days per FTE nurse declined by 5.6%.

However, in 1997–98 the staffing level of one FTE nurse per 64.5 patient separations in private hospitals was significantly lower than the public hospital staffing level of one FTE nurse per 48.2 patient separations. This is largely associated with the substantial differences in the patients treated in terms of their nursing care requirements. Detailed statistics on the demographic, diagnosis and medical procedure characteristics of patients in public and private hospitals are presented in *Australian Hospital Statistics 1997–98* (AIHW 1999).

Private fee-standing day hospitals experienced strong growth in both patient and staffing numbers from 1995–96 to 1997–98. There was a 30.1% increase in patient separations and a 39.9% increase in FTE nursing staff to 696.

Table 6: Full-time equivalent nursing staff per bed in public acute and psychiatric hospitals, States and Territories, 1995–96 to 1997–98

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
1995–96									
FTE nursing staff	30,399	18,000	13,879	6,914	7,132	2,048	1,393	805	80,570
Average available beds	21,560	13,139	11,113	5,547	5,543	1,468	780	570	59,720
FTE nursing staff per bed	1.41	1.37	1.25	1.25	1.29	1.40	1.79	1.41	1.35
1996–97									
FTE nursing staff	28,471	17,211	13,973	6,252	7,248	1,903	1,365	967	77,390
Average available beds	20,705	12,134	10,881	5,177	5,250	1,328	784	577	56,836
FTE nursing staff per bed	1.38	1.42	1.28	1.21	1.38	1.43	1.74	1.68	1.36
1997–98									
FTE nursing staff	28,517	16,714	14,246	7,598	7,371	1,520	1,329	944	78,239
Average available beds	19,705	12,337	10,809	5,263	5,198	1,078	768	577	55,735
FTE nursing staff per bed	1.45	1.35	1.32	1.44	1.42	1.41	1.73	1.64	1.40
FTE nursing staff per 1,000 separations	22.4	18.0	20.8	21.9	21.3	20.3	22.7	17.9	20.7
FTE nursing staff per 1,000 patient days	4.7	4.5	4.6	5.2	5.0	5.4	5.4	5.0	4.7
Per cent increase from 1995–96 to 1997–98									
FTE nursing staff	-6.2	-7.1	2.6	9.9	3.4	-25.8	-4.6	17.3	-2.9
Average available beds	-8.6	-6.1	-2.7	-5.1	-6.2	-26.6	-1.5	1.2	-6.7
FTE nursing staff per bed	2.6	-1.1	5.5	15.8	10.2	1.1	-3.1	15.8	4.0

Source: Australian hospital statistics, AIHW.

Table 7: Average FTE nursing staff in public acute and psychiatric hospitals: States and Territories, 1995–96 to 1997–98

Classification	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
1995–96									
Registered nurses	25,559	n.a.	11,280	n.a.	5,488	n.a.	1,194	654	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	4,142	n.a.	2,415	n.a.	1,546	n.a.	199	140	n.a.
Student nurses	—	n.a.	158	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	11	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	691	n.a.	27	n.a.	99	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Total	30,399	18,000	13,879	6,914	7,132	2,048	1,393	805	80,570
1996–97									
Registered nurses	n.a.	14,790	11,462	n.a.	5,637	n.a.	1,169	836	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	n.a.	2,421	2,396	n.a.	1,532	n.a.	195	131	n.a.
Student nurses	n.a.	n.a.	85	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	n.a.	n.a.	30	n.a.	79	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Total	28,471	17,211	13,973	6,252	7,248	1,903	1,365	967	77,390
1997–98									
Registered nurses	n.a.	14,457	11,983	6,848	5,790	n.a.	1,143	800	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	n.a.	2,257	2,263	746	1,527	n.a.	186	141	n.a.
Student nurses	n.a.	—	—	4	—	n.a.	0	3	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	n.a.	—	—	n.a.	54	n.a.	0	0	n.a.
Total	28,517	16,714	14,246	7,598	7,371	1,520	1,329	944	78,239
(per cent)									
1995–96									
Registered nurses	84.1	n.a.	81.3	n.a.	76.9	n.a.	85.7	81.2	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	13.6	n.a.	17.4	n.a.	21.7	n.a.	14.3	17.4	n.a.
Student nurses	—	n.a.	1.1	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	1.4	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	2.3	n.a.	0.2	n.a.	1.4	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1996–97									
Registered nurses	n.a.	85.9	82.0	n.a.	77.8	n.a.	85.6	86.5	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	n.a.	14.1	17.1	n.a.	21.1	n.a.	14.3	13.5	n.a.
Student nurses	n.a.	n.a.	0.6	n.a.	—	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	n.a.	1.1	n.a.	—	—	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1997–98									
Registered nurses	n.a.	86.5	84.1	90.1	78.6	n.a.	86.0	84.7	n.a.
Enrolled nurses	n.a.	13.5	15.9	9.8	20.7	n.a.	14.0	14.9	n.a.
Student nurses	n.a.	—	—	0.1	—	n.a.	0.0	0.3	n.a.
Trainee/pupil nurses	n.a.	—	—	n.a.	0.7	n.a.	0.0	0.0	n.a.
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Australian hospital statistics, AIHW.

Table 8: Patient and staffing statistics, public acute and psychiatric hospitals, Australia, 1995–96 to 1997–98

	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	% change from 1995–96
Patient statistics				
Separations (000s)	3,593	3,642	3,771	5.0
Same day separations (000s)	1,420	1,521	1,624	14.4
Patient days (000s)	15,607	16,531	16,561	6.1
Average stay (days)	4.3	4.5	4.4	1.1
FTE staffing				
Salaried medical officers	13,361	14,210	15,387	15.2
Nurses	80,570	77,390	78,239	-2.9
Other personal care staff	4,901	5,389	4,544	-7.3
Diagnostic and health professionals	24,299	22,360	22,748	-6.4
Administrative and clerical staff	26,213	24,418	24,894	-5.0
Domestic and other staff	35,159	30,927	29,212	-16.9
Total staff	184,494	174,695	175,024	-5.1
Separations per FTE				
Salaried medical officers	268.9	256.3	245.1	-8.9
Nurses	44.6	47.1	48.2	8.1
Other personal care staff	733.1	675.8	829.9	13.2
Diagnostic and health professionals	147.9	162.9	165.8	12.1
Administrative and clerical staff	137.1	149.2	151.5	10.5
Domestic and other staff	102.2	117.8	129.1	26.3
Total staff	19.5	20.8	21.5	10.6
Patient days per FTE				
Salaried medical officers	1,168.1	1,163.3	1,076.3	-7.9
Nurses	193.7	213.6	211.7	9.3
Other personal care staff	3,184.5	3,067.5	3,644.6	14.4
Diagnostic and health professionals	642.3	739.3	728.0	13.3
Administrative and clerical staff	595.4	677.0	665.3	11.7
Domestic and other staff	443.9	534.5	566.9	27.7
Total staff	84.6	94.6	94.6	11.9

Source: Australian hospital statistics, AIHW.

Table 9: Patient and staffing statistics, private acute and psychiatric hospitals, Australia, 1992–93 to 1997–98

	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	% change from 1995–96
Patient statistics							
Separations (000s)	1,202.2	1,250.7	1,346.7	1,452.3	1,539.4	1,585.3	9.2
Occupied bed days (000s)	5,006.3	5,172.4	5,421.9	5,844.2	5,853.6	5,858.8	0.2
Average stay (days)	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.7	-8.1
FTE staffing							
Salaried medical officers and other diagnostic and health professionals	1,081.1	1,310.2	1,608.9	1,652.5	1,764.5	2,055.2	24.4
Nursing staff	19,357.8	20,032.9	21,512.2	23,135.5	24,193.2	24,566.6	6.2
Registered	15,514.0	16,361.5	18,111.6	19,545.7	20,701.7	21,130.5	8.1
Other	3,843.8	3,671.5	3,400.6	3,589.7	3,491.5	3,436.1	-4.3
Administrative and clerical staff	3,882.9	4,124.6	4,593.3	5,105.9	5,225.4	5,419.2	6.1
Domestic and other staff	8,170.9	8,289.9	8,875.2	9,206.0	9,724.5	9,524.6	3.5
Total staff	32,492.6	33,757.6	36,588.6	39,099.9	40,907.5	41,565.6	6.3
Separations per FTE							
Salaried medical officers and other diagnostic and health professionals	1,112.0	954.6	837.0	878.9	872.4	771.4	-12.2
Nursing staff	62.1	62.4	62.6	62.8	63.6	64.5	2.8
Registered	77.5	76.4	74.4	74.3	74.4	75.0	1.0
Other	312.8	340.7	396.0	404.6	440.9	461.4	14.0
Administrative and clerical staff	309.6	303.2	293.2	284.4	294.6	292.5	2.8
Domestic and other staff	147.1	150.9	151.7	157.8	158.3	166.4	5.5
Total staff	37.0	37.0	36.8	37.1	37.6	38.1	2.7
Patient days per FTE							
Salaried medical officers and other diagnostic and health professionals	4,630.7	3,947.8	3,369.9	3,536.6	3,317.4	2,850.7	-19.4
Nursing staff	258.6	258.2	252.0	252.6	242.0	238.5	-5.6
Registered	322.7	316.1	299.4	299.0	282.8	277.3	-7.3
Other	1,302.4	1,408.8	1,594.4	1,628.0	1,676.5	1,705.1	4.7
Administrative and clerical staff	1,289.3	1,254.0	1,180.4	1,144.6	1,120.2	1,081.1	-5.5
Domestic and other staff	612.7	623.9	610.9	634.8	601.9	615.1	-3.1
Total staff	154.1	153.2	148.2	149.5	143.1	141.0	-5.7

Note: Percentage increases are calculated for 1995–96 to 1997–98 for comparison with Tables 8 and 10.

Source: ABS, *Private Hospitals*, Cat. No. 4390.0.

Table 10: Patient and staffing statistics, private free-standing day hospitals, 1993–94 to 1997–98

	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	% change from 1995–96
Patient statistics						
Separations	182,178	189,863	208,793	226,266	271,700	30.1
FTE staffing						
Nursing staff	359.9	409.5	497.4	571.1	695.7	39.9
Administrative and clerical staff	211.5	244.2	290.7	331.8	397.6	36.8
Other staff	81.5	101.3	101.6	107.6	126.4	24.4
Total staff	653.1	755.0	889.7	1,010.6	1,219.7	37.1
Separations per FTE						
Nursing staff	506.2	463.6	419.8	396.2	390.5	-7.0
Administrative and clerical staff	861.4	777.5	718.2	681.9	683.4	-4.9
Other staff	2,235.3	1,874.3	2,055.0	2,102.8	2,149.5	4.6
Total staff	278.9	251.5	234.7	223.9	222.8	-5.1

Note: Percentage increases are calculated for 1995–96 to 1997–98 for comparison with Tables 8 and 9.

Source: ABS, *Private Hospitals*, Cat. No. 4390.0.