

The Nursing and Midwifery Workforce in Australia – an overview

This document contains key information about the nursing and midwifery workforce in Australia including employment and demographic data and the number of nursing and midwifery students commencing and completing courses.

Information is also provided on the total number of nurses and midwives registered or enrolled by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). Under the National Law¹ all nurses and midwives must be registered in order to practice.

The information below includes:

1. Workforce data and demographics

- The number of nurses and midwives in the nursing workforce nationally and by State and Territory over the last 5 years
- The number of employed nurses and midwives 2016 to 2022
- The number of employed nurses and midwives including full time equivalent (FTE) numbers, average age and average hours worked, both nationally and by State and Territory, 2022
- Location of nurses and midwives across metropolitan, regional, rural, remote or very remote regions, 2022
- The work settings of employed nurses and midwives, 2022
- Demographic data, employed nurses and midwives 2022

2. Registration

- Total number of nurses and midwives registered in Australia, nationally and by State and Territory
- Total number of nurses and midwives registered in Australia, by registration type, nationally and by State and Territory

3. Students

- The number of students commencing and completing nursing/midwifery courses, (2012 to 2020) nationally and by State and Territory
- The number of students commencing and completing programs leading to registration as an enrolled nurse (2015 to 2020) nationally and by State and Territory

4. Wages data

- Nursing and midwifery wages data in the public sector, aged care and private hospitals

¹ The National Scheme is governed by a nationally consistent law passed by each state and territory parliament – the health Practitioner Regulation National Law. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/about-ahpra/what-we-do/legislation.aspx>

1. Nursing and Midwifery workforce - data and demographics

Not all nurses and midwives registered with the NMBA are in the workforce. Nurses and midwives may be temporarily out of the workforce for a range of reasons but can still be registered or enrolled if mandatory registration requirements are met.

The workforce data provides information specific to nurses and midwives in the workforce and employed in their profession. It is collected at the point of registration through a workforce survey and published by the Australian Government Department of Health.²

How many nurses and midwives are in the workforce?

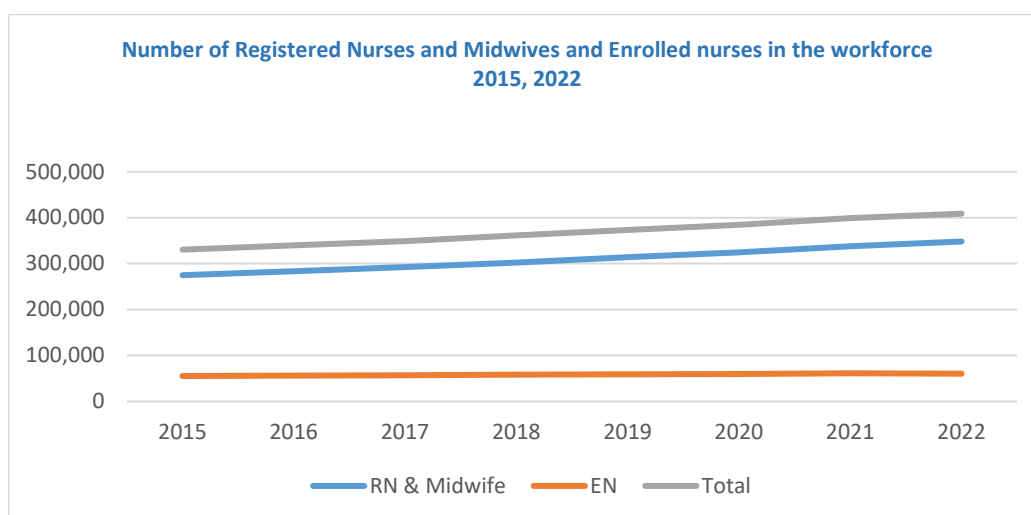
Workforce numbers include registered nurses and midwives who are:

- Employed
- On extended leave
- Looking for work in nursing/midwifery

Table 1 below provides the total number of nurses and midwives, and enrolled nurses registered and in the workforce for the years 2015 to 2022.³

Table 1: Number of registered nurses and midwives, and enrolled nurses in the workforce 2015, 2022

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
RN & Midwife	274,996	283,703	292,318	302,606	314,473	324,980	337,996	348,306
EN	55,533	56,549	56,838	58,683	59,041	59,796	61,429	60,526
Total	330,529	340,252	349,156	361,289	373,514	384,776	399,425	408,812



² Australian Government Department of Health, Health Workforce Data <https://hwd.health.gov.au/>

³ Note the number is a combined total for RNs and Midwives. Information accessed 13.07.2023

Table 2: Number of Registered Nurses, Midwives and Enrolled nurses in the workforce 2015, 2022 by State/Territory

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
New South Wales	92,597	95,273	97,505	99,970	10,3097	105,585	109,233	110,596
Victoria	89,891	92,205	94,889	98,794	10,2106	105,649	109,090	110,829
Queensland	65,763	68,978	71,780	75,093	78,220	81,175	84,838	87,963
South Australia	30,454	30,605	30,670	31,358	32,180	32,765	33,866	34,929
Western Australia	34,057	34,857	35,388	36,395	37,406	38,402	40,095	41,678
Tasmania	7,985	8,131	8,375	8,782	9,130	9,438	9,906	10,362
Northern Territory	4,143	4,306	4,423	4,610	4,685	4,754	4,947	4,731
Australian Capital Territory	5,422	5,680	5,896	6,034	6,360	6,678	7,096	7,291
Other Territories	38	38	38	41	6	30	354	433
Overseas/Unknown	179	179	192	212	324	300	NA	NA
Total	330,529	340,252	349,156	361,289	373,514	384,776	399,425	408,812

NA = Not available

How many nurses and midwives are employed?

The following Tables 3-5 providing employment and demographic data for nurses and midwives are taken directly from the Department of Health summary statistics available on the website.⁴

Table 3: Registered and Employed in Australia 2016, 2022

Profession/Division	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Registered Nurse	236,931	245,269	254,650	265,335	271,009	286,149	293,584
Enrolled Nurse only	51,454	51,478	52,944	53,219	52,342	54,193	53,612
Dual Registration	23,377	22,568	22,135	21,656	21,256	20,990	20,003
Midwife only	3,402	3,807	4,241	4,731	4,982	5,364	5,560
Total	315,164	323,122	333,970	344,941	349,589	366,696	372,759

Table 4: Registered and Employed in Australia, 2022

Profession	Headcount	Total FTE	Average Age	Average Total Hours
Registered Nurse	309,851	279,347	42.5	34.3
Enrolled Nurse	53,612	46,037	43.9	32.6
Midwifery	25,557	14,453	46.2	21.5
Total	372,759	339,883	42.6	34.6

⁴ Ibid. Summary Statistics Nursing and Midwifery Professions <https://hwd.health.gov.au/resources/data/summary-nrmw.html>

Table 5: State and Territory, Registered and Employed in Australia, 2022

State	Headcount	Total FTE	Average Age	Average Total Hours
NSW	101,061	94,518	42.9	35.5
VIC	100,933	89,668	42.1	33.8
QLD	79,854	72,921	42.6	34.7
SA	31,943	27,913	43.3	32.2
WA	38,278	35,351	43.	35.1
TAS	9,537	8,627	43.5	34.4
ACT	6,606	6,268	40.7	36.1
NT	4,300	4,370	41.3	38.6
Unknown	247	248	42.9	38.1
Australia	372,759	339,883	42.6	34.6

Table 6 below shows the geographic distribution of nurses and midwives using the Modified Monash Model (MMM) which defines whether a location is a city, rural, remote or very remote. (For more information go to: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm>)

Table 6: Modified Monash Model (MMM), Registered and Employed in Australia, 2022

Modified Monash Model	Headcount	Total FTE	Average Age	Average Total Hours
1 - Metropolitan	271,344	247,033	42.0	34.6
2 – Regional	38,627	33,310	42.9	34.7
3 – Large rural towns	28,707	26,102	44.4	34.6
4 – Medium rural towns	13,210	11,779	46.0	33.9
5 – Small rural towns	14,126	12,626	47.5	34.0
6 – Remote communities	3,990	4,001	43.5	38.1
7 – Very remote communities	2,534	2,812	45.5	42.2
Total	372,759	339,883	42.6	34.6

Approximately 60 percent of employed nurses and midwives work primarily in a Hospital setting. Table 7 below provides the number employed and average hours worked per week across the different work settings for 2022.

Table 7: Employed Nurses and Midwives by principal work setting - 2022

Principal work setting	Headcount	Average weekly hours
Hospital	221,190	35
Residential health care facility	42,691	36
Community health service	31,765	34
Other	16,182	35
General practitioner (GP) practice	13,755	30
Outpatient service	13,392	34
Other private practice	6,146	32
Independent private practice	5,749	31
Other government department or agency	4,630	37
Tertiary education facility	4,124	35
Correctional service	2,470	39
Commercial/business service	2,067	34
Aboriginal Community Controlled health service	1,605	39
Defence forces	1,465	38
School	1,755	31
Group midwifery practice/caseload	1,043	38
Hospice	1,092	34
Other educational facility	893	33
Other Aboriginal health service	625	39
Specialist (O&G) practice	120	29
TOTAL	372,759	35

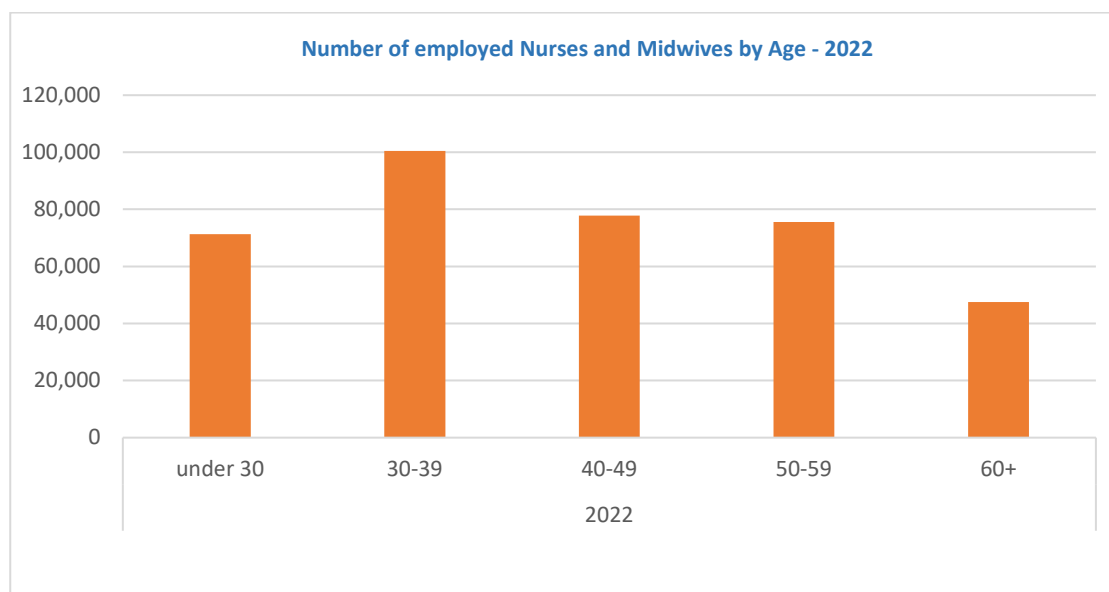
Source: Health Workforce Data Tool. National health Workforce dataset (NHWDS) 2022.

2022 demographic data – employed nurses and midwives

88.12% of employed nurses and midwives identify as female and 11.88% male.

1.48% identify as Indigenous and Australian born.

Average age nationally – 42.63 years. The number of nurses and midwives within the listed age ranges are shown below.



Sector in which clinical hours were worked - 2022

Sector	2022
Public sector only	205,516
Private sector only	130,939
Both	9,977
Not stated	26,327
Total	372,759

Source: NHWDS Nurses and Midwives, 2022

2. Registration statistics

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) provides information on the number of nurses and midwives registered to practice in Australia. Data is published quarterly and covers all nurse divisions including Registered Nurses, Enrolled Nurses, Midwives and dual registrants.

The tables below are extracted from the latest NMBA statistical report. Please go to the NMBA website for full details via the following link: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/About/Statistics.aspx>

The latest quarterly report, (1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023), states there are 480,473 nurses and midwives registered. This includes General, Non-practising and Provisional registration. Table 8 provides the total number of registrants in each State and Territory.

Table 8: Number of Registrants by State and Territory

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP*	TOTAL
8,040	123,826	5,128	99,251	38,895	11,237	125,303	47,470	21,323	480,473

*PPP is principal place of practice

Table 9: Number of nurse and midwife registrants by Registration type and by State and Territory

Profession	Registration Type	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	Total
Nurse	Total General Nurse	7,199	112,230	4,511	90,159	35,642	10,347	113,741	43,281	19,746	436,856
	Total Non-practising Nurse	182	2,862	61	2,011	803	217	2,348	871	1,046	10,401
	Total Provisional Nurse	0	50	6	43	30	4	74	25	4	236
Total Nurse		7,381	115,142	4,578	92,213	36,475	10,568	116,163	44,177	20,796	447,493
Nurse and Midwife	Total General Nurse and Midwife	389	6,550	431	5,101	1,445	577	7,311	2,682	232	24,718
	Total Non-practising Nurse and Midwife	24	254	4	116	57	12	151	51	30	699
	Total Provisional Nurse and Midwife	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Total Non-practising and Provisional Nurse and Midwife	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total Nurse and Midwife		413	6,805	435	5,218	1,503	589	7,462	2,733	262	25,420
Midwife	General	240	1,823	114	1,771	894	78	1,631	550	238	7,339
	Non-practising	6	56	1	49	23	2	45	10	27	219
	Provisional	0		0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total Midwife		246	1,879	115	1,820	917	80	1,678	560	265	7,560
TOTAL		8,040	123,826	5,128	99,251	38,895	11,237	125,303	47,470	21,323	480,473

Source Tables: Extracted from: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Registrant data, Reporting period 01 July 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The NMBA also publishes nursing and midwifery summary data as part of their Annual Report. Find the latest (2022 – 2023) summary data and spreadsheets here:

<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/Annual-report.aspx>

3. Student statistics – Courses leading to initial registration as a nurse and Enrolled nurse programs

Data available in the [ANMF Graduate Data Set - Nurses and Midwives](#)

4. Wage data

Wage rates for nurses and midwives under State/Territory public sector Agreements or Award in NSW and estimated average wage data in residential aged care and private hospitals.

[Nurses and Midwives' Paycheck](#)