



IDGP 2009 Workforce Survey

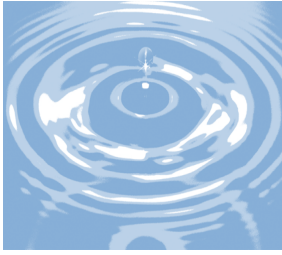


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Illawarra Division of General Practice

Suite 3, Level 1, 336 Keira Street, (PO Box 1198), Wollongong NSW 2500 •
Phone: 02 4220 7600 Fax: 02 4226 9485
idgp@idgp.org.au • www.idgp.org.au

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings:

1. There is a strong trend to part time practice impacting on patient access.
 - The total number of GPs currently working in the Illawarra is 249, an increase of 6.4% over the 2003 total of 234.
 - The full time GP workforce fell from 130 to 101 (21.8% decline) between 2003 and 2009.
 - The part time GP workforce grew from 98 to 139, an increase of 41.8%
 - As a result of the above, the number of patient hours worked per GP per week fell by 12.2% from an average of 33.6 in 2003 to 29.5 in 2009.
2. Illawarra GPs are ageing.
 - The GP workforce aged over 50 years increased from 39% to 54% of GPs between 2003 and 2009. During this period the percentage of GPs aged over 55 increased from 27% to 34%.
 - Older GPs tend to work in solo practices and younger GPs in larger practices
3. While there are less practices, practices have tended to become larger.
 - Between 2003 and 2009 the proportion of solo practices fell from 45% to 35% while the proportion of practices with 3 GPs or more increased from 34% to 41%.
 - The number of practices in the region has fallen from 92 to 87 including a fall in solo practices from 41 to 30.
4. There has been a feminisation of the workforce.
 - Female GPs comprise 30.5% of the GP workforce.
 - There are 104 Practice Nurses working in the Illawarra. Practice nursing services are utilised by 50 (57%) of Illawarra Practices compared to 17 practices in 2003.

INTRODUCTION

The information contained in this document was collected by the Illawarra Division of General Practice in March 2009. The purpose of the survey is to gain an accurate picture of our local general practice workforce.

87 practices were consulted with only two practices declining to participate.

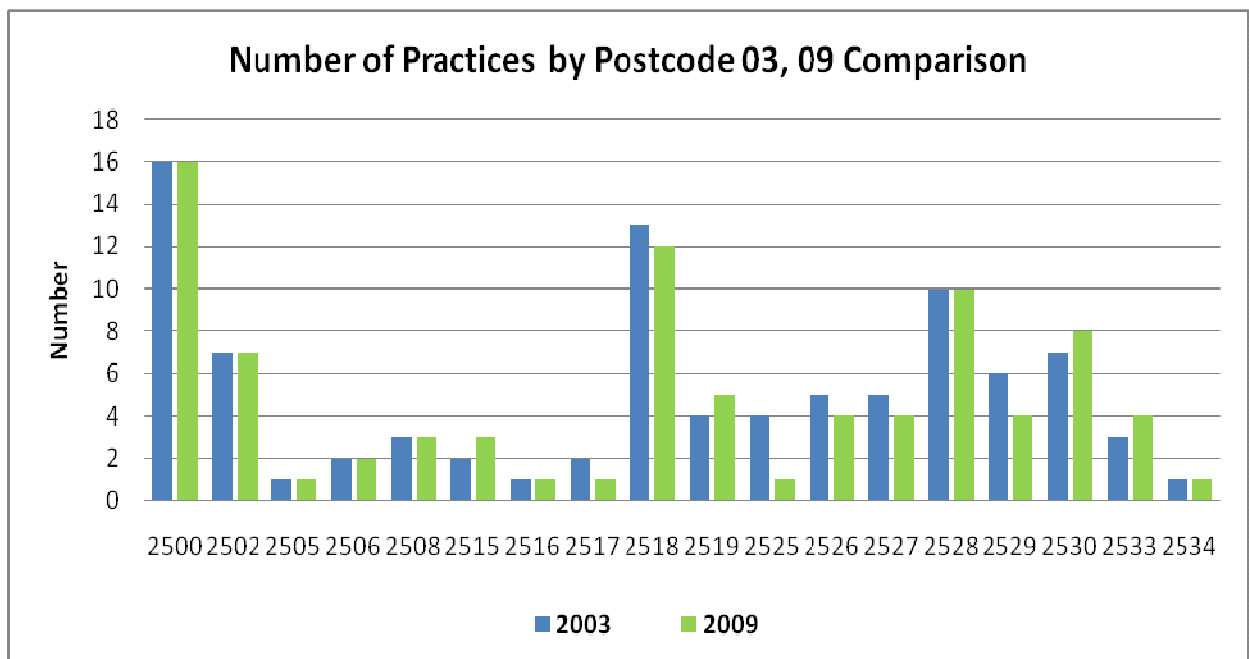
The report compares data gathered from 2009 with data from the last survey conducted in 2003. Where 2009 data are presented by *postcodes*, these are consistent with the *suburbs* used in 2003.

ILLAWARRA PRACTICES

There are currently 87 Practices operating in the Illawarra Area from Helensburgh in the north to Gerringong in the south, down from 92 in 2003. The distribution of practices in Illawarra postcodes is shown in Chart 1.

In 6 postcodes there was a total of 9 practices that closed and in 4 postcodes there were 4 practices that opened, giving a net loss of 5 practices between 2003 and 2009.

Chart 1: Number of Practices across the Illawarra by Postcode



2500; Coniston, Gwynneville, Keiraville, Mangerton, Mt Keira, Mt Saint Thomas, Wollongong **2502**; Cringila, Lake Heights, Warrawong, Primbee **2505**; Kemblawarra, Port Kembla **2506**; Berkeley **2508**; Coalcliff, Darkes Forest, Helensburgh, Otford, Stanwell Park, Stanwell Tops **2515**; Austinmer, Coledale, Clifton, Thirroul, Wombarra, Scarborough **2516**; Bulli **2517**; Russell Vale, Woonona **2518**; Bellambi, Corrimal, Tarrawanna, Towradgi **2519**; Balgownie, Fairy Meadow, Mt Ousley, Mt Pleasant **2525**; Figtree **2526**; Cordeaux Heights, Farmborough Heights, Kembla Grange, Mt Kembla, Unanderra **2527**; Albion Park, Albion Park Rail **2528**; Barrack Heights, Barrack Point, Lake Illawarra, Mt Warrigal, Warilla, Windang **2529**; Balarang, Blackbutt, Flinders, Oak Flats, Shellharbour, Shell Cove, Shellharbour Square **2530**; Brownsville, Dapto, Horsley, Kanahooka, Koonawarra, Wongawilli, Yallah **2533**; Bombo, Jamberoo, Kiama, Kiama Downs **2534**; Gerringong, Gerroa, Toolijooa, Werri Beach

There are 30 solo practices. Between 2003 and 2009 the proportion of solo practices decreased from 45% to 35% of all practices and the proportion of larger practices (3 GPs or more) increased from 34% to 41%. There was little change in the proportion of practices with 2 GPs: 21% to 24% (See table 1).

Table 1: Practice types in the Illawarra 2003-2009

| Year | No. of Practices | Solo Practices | 2 GP practices | 3 or more GP Practices |
|------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 2003 | 92 | (42) 45% | (19) 21% | (31) 34% |
| 2009 | 87 | (30) 35% | (21) 24% | (36) 41% |

GP PROFILE

The total number of GPs currently working in the Illawarra is 249, an increase of 6.4% over the 2003 total of 234. The proportion of solo GPs has fallen from 17% in 2003 to 12% in 2009.

When viewed across the Local Government Areas, GP numbers have remained stable in Shellharbour & Kiama but have increased in Wollongong (see table 2). The Practice Nurse (PN) workforce is discussed further in the last section of the report.

Table 2: GPs and PNs by Local Government Area

| Local Government Area | GPs | | PNs | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | 2003 | 2009 | 2003 | 2009 |
| Wollongong LGA | 173 | 189 | 26 | 73 |
| Shellharbour LGA | 39 | 44 | 3 | 17 |
| Kiama LGA | 17 | 16 | 7 | 14 |
| Total | 229 | 249 | 36 | 104 |

FULL TIME AND PART TIME WORK

Although the total numbers of GPs increased from 2003 to 2009, the survey results show that the availability of GPs decreased over the same period. This is demonstrated by the decrease in the fulltime GP workforce, which fell from 130 to 101 (21.8%) (See Table 3). Note that working hours data are available for only 240 of the 249 GPs.

The part time GP workforce grew from 98 to 139, an increase of 41.8%

Table 3: Full time and part time GPs 2003 – 2009

| | 2003 | 2009 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Full Time | 130 (57%) | 101 (42%) |
| Part Time | 98 (43%) | 139 (58%) |

The decline in fulltime GP numbers occurred across the Illawarra region (in 10 of 18 suburbs). Only the 2500 postcode (Wollongong and central suburbs) recorded an increase in full time GPs. (See Chart 2)

Chart 2: Full time GP positions by postcode, 2003 -2009

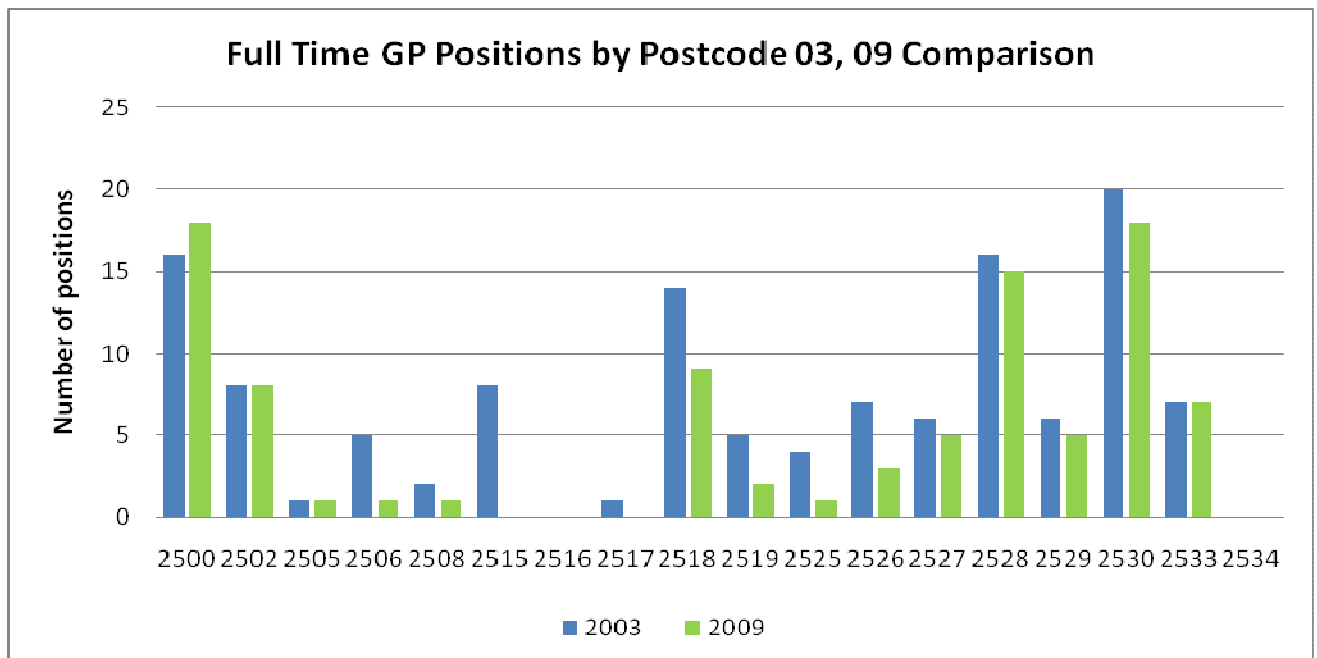


Chart 2 demonstrates that there are no full time GPs in postcodes 2515, 2516, 2517 or 2534.

GP PATIENT HOURS PER WEEK

The decline in the number of full time GPs is reflected in the number of patient hours worked per week which fell by 12.2%, from an average of 33.6 in 2003 to 29.5 in 2009. This compares to an average of 39.5 hours recorded nationally in 2006 (AIHW,2008).

The data collected on GP hours per week were based on face to face patient hours only (including in practice, home visits and nursing home visits).

As can be seen from Chart 3, the 31-40 hours per week category is the category with the largest numbers of GPs. Should this trend continue by the year 2015 the average number of hours worked by GPs will be 25.

Chart 3: GP patient hours per week

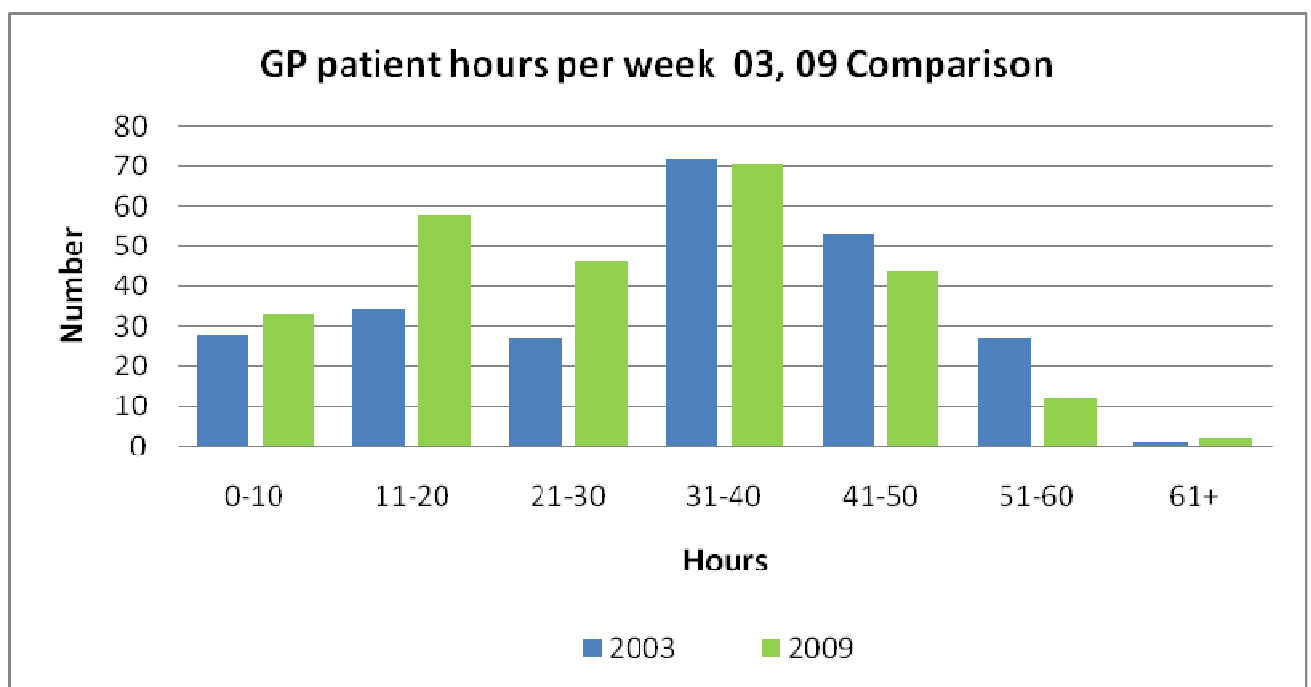


Chart 3 demonstrates the decrease in the number GPs working in the higher hour categories and the increase in GPs working in the lower hour categories.

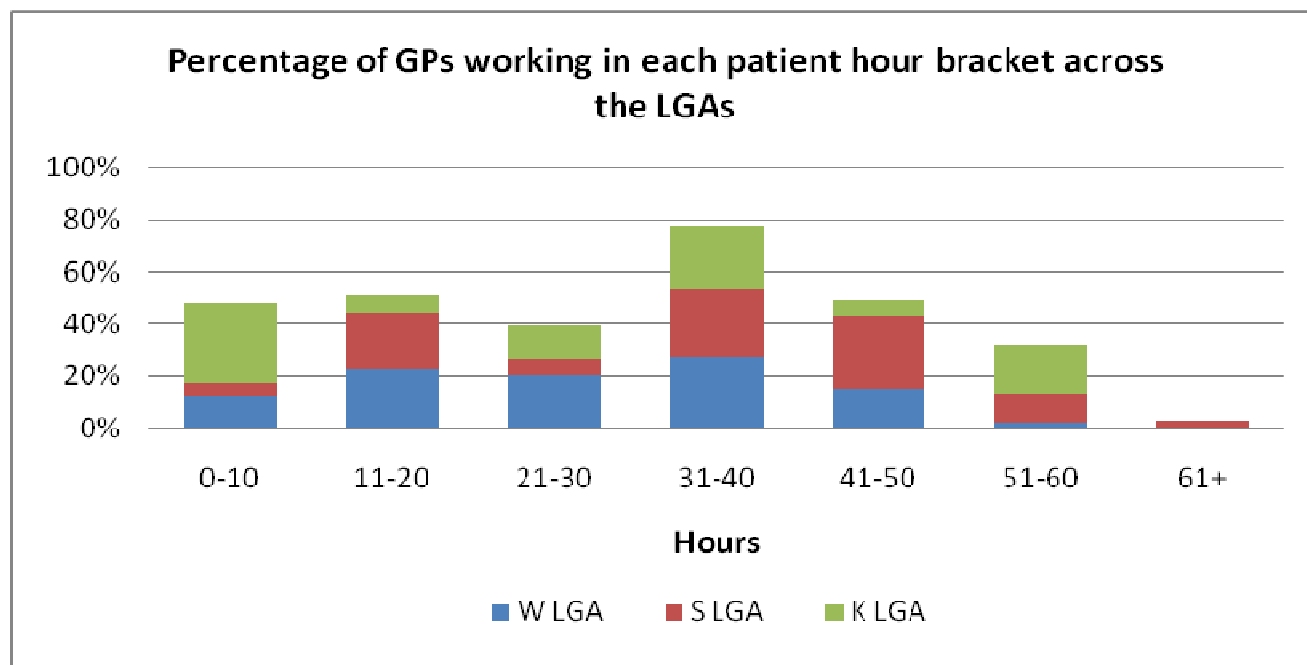
Table 4 outlines some basic statistics related to GP patient hours per week. Solo GPs worked longer hours than other GPs and tended to work full time.

Table 4: GP patient hours per week and Solo GP patient hours per week

| | Mean | Median | Range |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| 2003 GP Patient hours per week | 34 | 38 | 1-60 |
| 2003 Solo GP Patient hours per week | 42.5 | 44 | 16-60 |
| 2009 GP Patient hours per week | 29.48 | 30 | 1-68 |
| 2009 Solo GP Patient hours per week | 42.17 | 40 | 15-68 |

Chart 4 provides a breakdown of GP patient hours across the Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama LGAs. Wollongong LGA has its highest percentage of hours in the 31-40 hrs per week bracket (27%). Shellharbour LGA has its highest percentage of hours in the 41-50 hrs per week bracket (28%) and Kiama LGA has its highest percentage of GP patient hours in the 0-10 hrs per week bracket (31%).

Chart 4: Percentages of GPs working in each patient hour bracket across LGAs



FTE GPs per head of population

FTE (Full Time Equivalent hours) involves capping the full time working week at 38 hours. The figure of 38 hours was chosen to keep consistency with the 2003 survey although the AIHW uses a figure of 45 hours.

This calculation involves breaking down GPs' patient hours into 38 hour blocks, however where an individual GP works in excess of 38 per week the extra hours are not included. This gives a measurement of the actual number of GP FTE equivalent positions being worked in the Illawarra.

When looking at the total number of GPs based only on a 38 hour working week, the actual FTE number of GPs falls to 187. (The GP FTE was 193 in 1998 and 189 in 2003).

When the FTE formula is applied to the 3 local government areas within the Illawarra the following results are observed:

- The Kiama LGA continues to have the highest number of residents per FTE GP. Although 1 practice was gained since 2003, 2 FTE GPs were lost and this is reflected in a 19% increase in patients per FTE GP, from 1448 patients in 2003 to 1726 patients in 2009. (table 5)
- Wollongong LGA, had a net loss of 3 practices and 4 FTE GPs between 2003 and 2009. It has 1325 residents per FTE GP, an increase of 4% on the 2003 figure of 1270.
- Shellharbour LGA had a net loss of 3 practices overall between 2003 and 2009 but gained 4 FTE GPs. It has 1631 residents per FTE GP, a decrease of 6% on the 2003 figure of 1729.
- The overall population to FTE GP for the Illawarra region is 1414. (See table 5)

The results are shown in more detail in Table 5. Table 5 outlines the changes in the population of the three Local Government Areas in the Illawarra, changes in FTE GPs and the subsequent calculations of the GP to population ratio. These data were collected from the 1998 IDGP Needs Assessment, the May 2003 Workforce Survey and the June 2009 Workforce Survey.

Table 5: FTE Equivalent GP per head of population (IDGP Definition)

The results for 2009 are based on ABS 2006 Census data (ABS website) and FTE equivalent of 38 hours.

| | 1996 Census Pop | 2001 Census Pop | 2006 Census Pop | 2010 yr Pop. Diff | 5 yr Pop. Diff | 1998 FTE GP | 2003 FTE GP | 2009 FTE GP | 11 yr FTE Diff | 5 yr FTE Diff | 1998 Pop. Per FTE GP | 2003 Pop. Per FTE GP | 2009 Pop. Per FTE GP | 11 yr % diff. pop.per FTE GP | 5 yr % diff. pop. Per FTE GP |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Wollongong LGA | 177,009 | 181,612 | 184,212 | 7,203 | 2,600 | 149 | 143 | 139 | -10 | -4 | 1,188 | 1,270 | 1,325 | 25% | 4% |
| Shellharbour LGA | 52,080 | 57,071 | 60,337 | 8,257 | 3,266 | 33 | 33 | 37 | 4 | 4 | 1,578 | 1,729 | 1,631 | 3% | -6% |
| Kiama LGA | 17,706 | 18,827 | 18,985 | 1,279 | 158 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 0 | -2 | 1,609 | 1,448 | 1,726 | 7% | 19% |
| Total | | | 263,534 | | | | | 187 | | | | | 1,409 | | |

The *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare* uses a different formula for calculating FTE. This involves multiplying the number of clinicians by the average weekly hours worked, divided by the number of hours in a 'standard' full time week, set at 45 (AIHW, 2008). Using this formula the Illawarra has 163 FTE GPs. Results are shown in table 6 for each of the 3 LGAs.

Table 6: Benchmarking FTE (AIHW definition)

| | Illawarra AIHW FTE | GPs per 100,000 | Population per FTE GP |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Wollongong LGA | 122.84 | 66.76 | 1499.6 |
| Shellharbour LGA | 34.5 | 57.2 | 1748.9 |
| Kiama LGA | 9.2 | 48.6 | 2063.6 |
| Illawarra | 166.54 | 63.2 | 1582.4 |

The number of primary care* practitioners in Australia is 96 per 100,000.

*The term medical practitioner includes 5 types of medical clinicians, one of which is primary care practitioner. A primary care practitioner is a practitioner whose main field of clinical practice is primary or general care and includes vocationally registered GPs, RACGP trainees and 'other'. (AIHW glossary, 2008)

AGE AND GENDER

The Illawarra GP workforce has aged significantly over the past 6 years. More than half the GP workforce (54.5%) is aged over 50 years whereas in 2003 this figure was 39%. Between 2003 and 2009 the percentage of GPs aged over 55 increased from 27% to 34% and the percentage aged over 65 doubled, from 6% to 12%.

The GP workforce is comprised of 173 male GPs (69.5%) and 76 female GPs (30.5%).

Chart 5: Number of GPs by age bracket

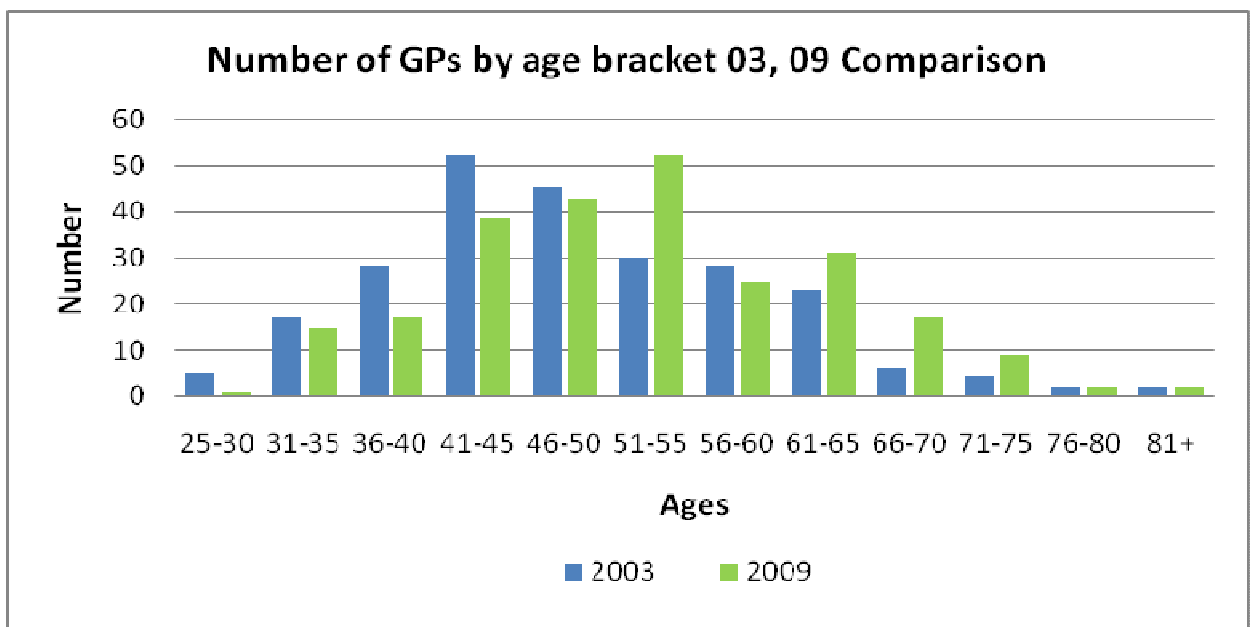


Chart 5 shows that the largest GP 5 year age cohort is 51-55 years; in 2003 the largest 5 year age cohort was 41-45 years

Between 2003 and 2009 the average GP age increased from 49 years to 52 years. The average age of solo GPs at 61, is higher than that for larger practices, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Average age of GPs across Solo GP practices, 2 GP practices and 3 or more GP practices, 2009

| | Solo GP Practices | 2 GP Practices | 3 or more GP Practices |
|------|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 2009 | 61 | 56 | 50 |

The largest 5 year age cohort for solo GPs is between the ages of 61 and 65 years. This has changed from 2003 when the largest 5 year age cohort was 56-60 years (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Solo GPs by age cohort

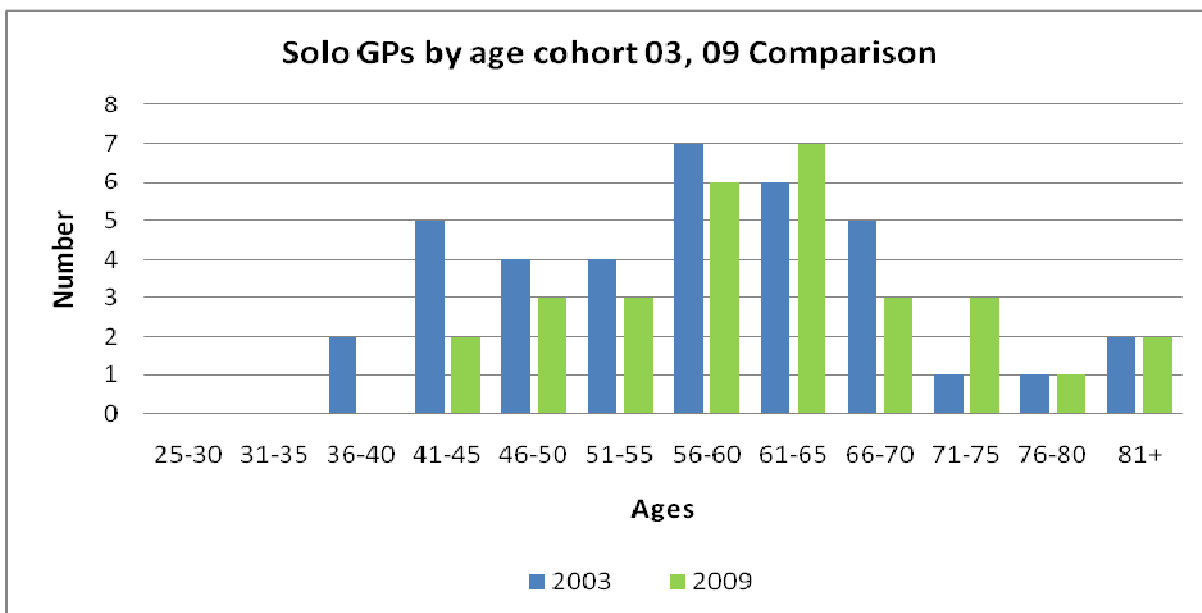
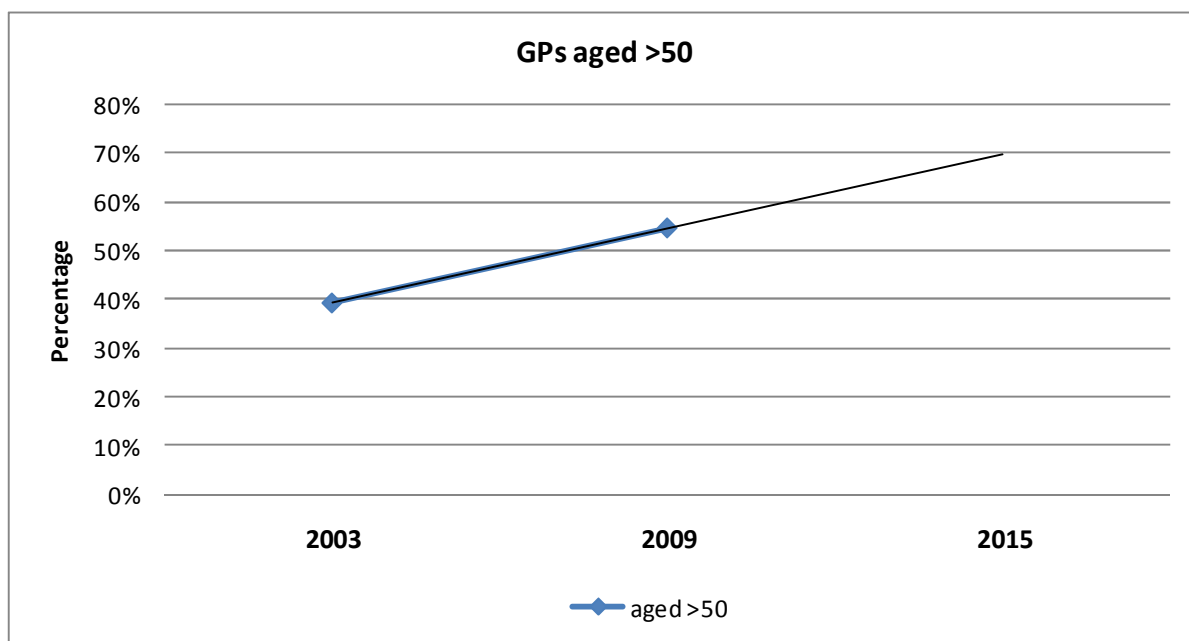


Chart 7 shows the predicted ageing of GPs to 2015. If this trend continues we will have 70% of GPs aged over 50 years in 6 years time.

Chart 7: GPs aged over 50



PRACTICE NURSING PROFILE

There are currently 104 Practice Nurses (PN) working in the Illawarra region and 108 PN 'positions' (some nurses may work at more than 1 practice therefore the number of positions exceeds the number of nurses).

Practice Nursing services are utilised by 57% of Illawarra Practices: 50 practices reporting having a practice nurse (this may include contracted nurses), 8 of them being Solo GPs (NiGP report, 2009).

The 2009 result is a significant increase over 2003, when only 17 practices utilised nurses. Practice nurse hours are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Illawarra practice nurse workforce

| Year | | Mean | Range |
|------|---|------|-------|
| 2003 | Practice Nurse hours per week per nurse | 14 | 4-38 |
| 2009 | Practice Nurse hours per week per nurse | 20 | 1-50 |

Nurses are involved in general practices in all but 2 postcodes and their numbers have increased in all Local Government areas.

REFERENCES

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008. Medical labour force 2006. National health labour force series no. 41/ Cat. No. HWL 42. Canberra: AIHW.

Illawarra Division of General Practice Workforce Survey May 2003.