



This report provides information on the dentist labour force in Australia based on the 2005 national dental labour force collection. Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with data drawn from the most recent collection (2003).

Main findings

- In 2005 there were an estimated 11,868 dental registrations in Australia, of whom 10,074 were estimated to be practising.
- Since the 2003 labour force collection, there had been a 4% increase in the number of practising dentists.
- The practising rate of dentists ranged from 31.2 dentists per 100,000 population in Tasmania to 75.4 in the Australian Capital Territory.
- Across remoteness regions, the number of dentists per 100,000 population was higher in major cities (58.6) than in remote areas (19.8).
- The average age of dentists was 44.5 years and just over one-quarter (28.4%) were female.
- The majority (83%) of dentists worked in the private sector.
- On average, dentists worked 38.4 hours per week with males working longer (40.3 hours) than females (33.5 hours).
- Over one-quarter (27%) of all practising dentists worked part-time (less than 35 hours per week), while almost half (43%) of all female dentists worked part-time.
- Specialists comprised 12% of all practising dentists in 2005.
- The rate of specialists per 100,000 population ranged from 3.4 in the Northern Territory to 10.4 in the Australian Capital Territory.
- Specialists were generally older (48.3 years) and worked longer weeks (40.7 hours) than dentists in general practice (44.5 years and 40.3 hours respectively).

Data collection

Data were collected in the second half of 2005. The collection was conducted in all states and territories, in conjunction with registration renewal, with the assistance of the dental boards and state health departments. For Western Australia and Tasmania data were collected by a separate direct mail out.

The questionnaire included items on demographic characteristics, practice status and practice characteristics on up to three locations for each dentist. Data on hours worked for each location were also collected and summed to give the total hours usually worked per week.

The overall response rate was 83.4%, ranging from 33.0% in the Northern Territory to 92.5% in New South Wales (Table 1). The 2005 response rate was similar to that for 2003 (85%).

For the purposes of generating estimates, it was assumed that non-respondents had the same characteristics as respondents; hence, data were weighted up to the number of dentists registered in each state/territory.

Table 1: Dental labour force collection, response rate by state/territory, 2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Total registered	4,313	2,654	2,281	1,147	914	174	97	288	11,868
Response rate (%)	92.5	82.7	78.2	72.5	85.1	71.8	33.0	57.3	83.4

Overall numbers

The total number of dental registrations in 2005 was 11,868, a 4.1% increase from 2003 (11,404). Of the total registrations, an estimated 509 dentists were registered in more than one jurisdiction and were considered duplicate registrations. An additional 90 were on extended leave for 3 months or more, 195 were retired, 433 were not working and 567 were estimated to be working overseas (Table 2).

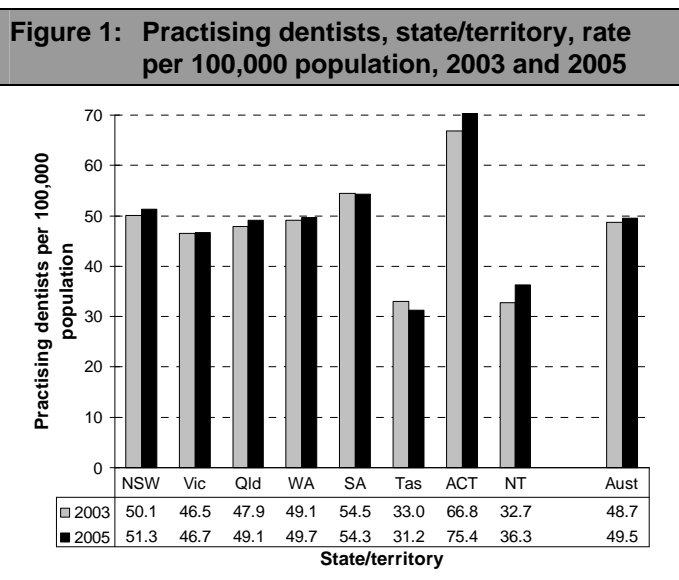
Table 2: Registered dentists, work status by state/territory, 2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Working in dentistry	3,472	2,345	1,951	999	837	151	74	246	10,074
Mainly or solely in another state	222	71	104	41	29	4	16	20	509
On leave for 3 months or more	38	17	20	9	3	—	—	4	90
Overseas	285	98	134	27	10	10	—	4	567
Not working	204	82	72	30	29	6	—	11	433
Retired	92	42	—	42	7	3	7	4	195
Total	4,313	2,654	2,281	1,147	914	174	97	288	11,868

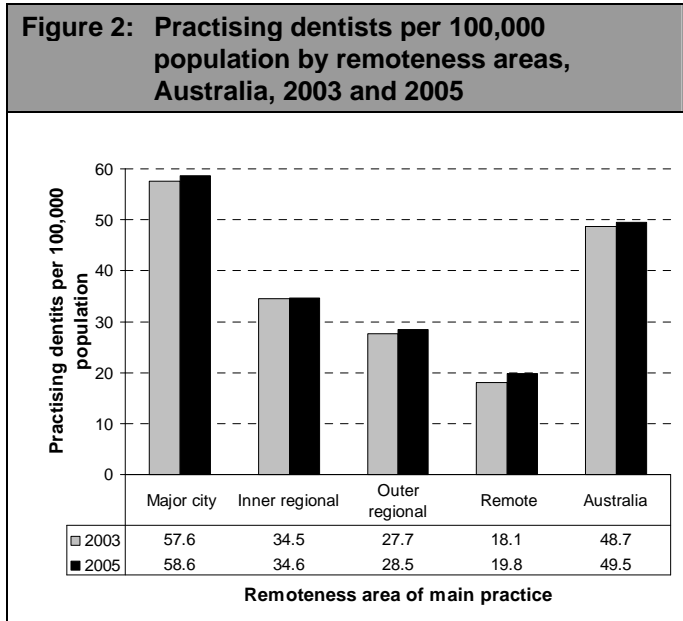
In 2005 there were an estimated 10,074 dentists working in Australia, representing a 4.1% increase from 2003. The rate of practising dentists per 100,000 population also increased by 1.6%, from 48.7 in 2003 to 49.5 in 2005.

Regional distribution

Across jurisdictions the rate of practising dentists per 100,000 population ranged from 31.2 in Tasmania to 75.4 in the Australian Capital Territory. Between 2003 and 2005, increases in practising rates were observed in the Australian Capital Territory (12.9%) and the Northern Territory (11.0%). The only jurisdiction to observe a decrease was Tasmania (5.5%). In the remaining states there was negligible change (Figure 1).

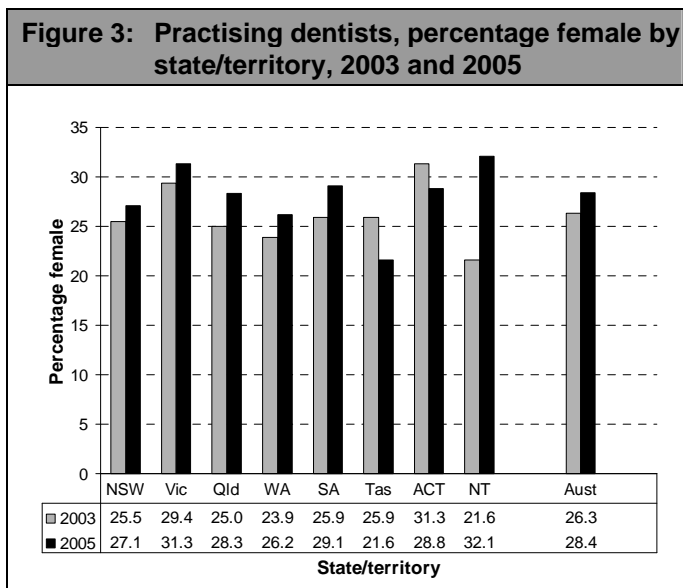


The distribution of practising dentists across remoteness regions was quite marked. In 2005 the number of practising dentists per 100,000 ranged from 19.8 in remote areas to 58.6 in major cities. Between 2003 and 2005 there was minimal change in practising rates by regions (Figure 2).



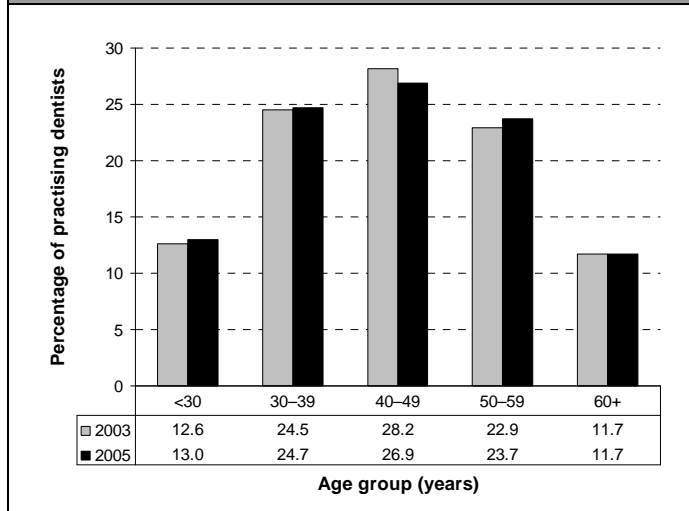
Demographic characteristics

Dentistry remains a predominantly male profession, with females comprising just over one-quarter (28.4%) of all practising dentists in 2005. This pattern was consistent across jurisdictions, ranging from 21.6% in Tasmania to 32.1% in the Northern Territory. However, the trend toward feminisation of the labour force is continuing. Between 2000 and 2003 there was a 3.4 percentage point increase in the percentage of female dentists (Teusner & Chrisopoulos 2006), and between 2003 and 2005 there was a 2.1 percentage point increase. This increase was consistent across all jurisdictions except for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory where decreases were observed (Figure 3).



In 2005 the largest proportion of dentists was in the 40–49 years age group (27%). There was only a minor change in the age distribution of dentists between 2003 and 2005, occurring in the percentage of dentists in the 40–49 to 50–59 years age groups (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage practising dentists, by age group, 2003 and 2005



The average age of dentists was also stable, at 44.5 years in 2005 compared to 44.6 years in 2003. Male dentists in the Australian Capital Territory (average age 50.0 years), Tasmania (49.7 years) and the Northern Territory (49.4 years), and female dentists working in Tasmania (41.7 years), were on average older than those working in other jurisdictions (Table 3).

Table 3: Practising dentists, average age by sex and state/territory, 2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	All
Average age (years)									
Males	47.3	47.4	46.0	45.0	47.4	49.7	49.4	50.0	46.9
Females	38.9	38.6	37.6	36.3	38.5	41.7	38.7	39.1	38.3
Persons	45.0	44.6	43.6	42.7	44.8	48.0	45.4	46.9	44.5

Practice characteristics

In 2005 the majority (83%) of practising dentists worked in the private sector and nearly 16% worked in the public sector (Table 4). Across jurisdictions the percentage employed in the public sector ranged from 11% in the Australian Capital Territory to nearly 21% in Queensland and South Australia.

Table 4: Number of practising dentists, sector of main practice by state/territory, 2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Sector									
Public	457	333	408	168	173	18	14	27	1,599
Private	2,931	1,983	1,533	825	657	130	53	219	8,332
Other	84	28	9	6	7	3	7	—	143
Total	3,472	2,345	1,951	999	837	151	74	246	10,074
% Private	84.4	84.6	78.6	82.6	78.5	86.0	71.6	89.0	82.7

Just over one-quarter (26.5%) of all practising dentists worked part-time, ranging from 23% in the Northern Territory to 32% in Western Australia. The percentage of females working part-time was double that of male dentists (43% compared to 20% respectively) (Table 5).

Table 5: Practising dentists, hours worked by state/territory, 2005

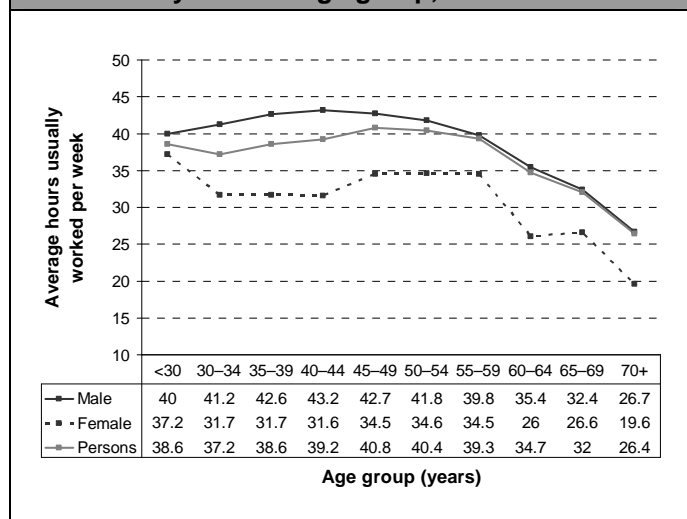
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Hours	Percentage working part-time^(a)								
Male	18.3	21.8	18.4	20.0	25.9	19.5	11.1	19.5	19.9
Female	41.6	47.5	40.4	39.6	47.1	40.9	44.6	36.1	43.1
Total	24.6	29.8	24.6	32.1	25.1	24.1	23.0	24.3	26.5
	Average hours usually worked per week								
Male	41.7	39.1	40.2	39.0	40.1	38.3	38.2	40.2	40.3
Female	35.1	31.7	33.5	31.4	33.9	35.7	35.2	34.6	33.5
Total	39.9	36.8	38.3	36.8	38.5	37.7	37.1	38.6	38.4

(a) Part-time defined as working less than 35 hours per week.

On average, dentists worked 38.4 hours per week, a slight decrease from 38.7 hours in 2003. Females worked on average fewer hours per week than males. The average worked per week for females was 33.5 hours a slight decrease from 33.8 hours in 2003. For males the average was 40.3 hours, marginally less than 40.5 hours in 2003 (Table 5).

The average hours worked per week also varied by age group. Dentists in the 45–49 years age group worked on average the longest week (40.8 hours) while those in the 70 years and over age group worked the shortest week (26.4 hours). Females worked shorter hours across age groups, most noticeably in the younger age groups. The difference in average hours between males and females increased from 9.5 in the 30–34 years age group to 11.6 in the 40–44 years age group (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Average hours usually worked per week by sex and age group, 2005



Specialists

In 2005 there were an estimated 1,184 dentists practising as specialists or in restricted practice, an increase from 1,131 in 2003. The practising rate was relatively stable, at 5.8 specialists per 100,000 population compared to 5.7 per 100,000 population in 2003. Across jurisdictions the practising rate ranged from 3.4 specialists in the Northern Territory to 10.4 in the Australian Capital Territory (Table 6).

Table 6: Practising dentists in specialist/ restricted practice by state/territory, 2005

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
Practising specialists ^(a)	355	320	213	119	116	21	7	34	1,184
Practising rate ^(b)	5.2	6.4	5.3	5.9	7.5	4.2	3.4	10.4	5.8
Percentage female	15.2	20.6	14.1	15.8	21.3	7.2	..	4.0	16.6
Average age (years)	49.1	47.6	47.6	47.5	49.4	47.3	..	49.6	48.3
Average hours per week	43.3	39.6	39.5	39.7	38.2	44.3	..	42.3	40.7

(a) Includes restricted practice.

(b) Practising number of specialists per 100,000 population.

Dental specialists represented 11.8% of the practising dentist labour force in 2005, which was similar to the proportion in 2003 (11.7%). Specialists were predominantly male, with females comprising only 16.6% of specialists. The Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion of male specialists (96.0%) while South Australia had the lowest (78.7%).

Specialists were on average nearly 4 years older (48.3 years) than the total dentist labour force (44.5 years), and worked on average 40.7 hours per week, which was just over 2 hours per week more than the average for all dentists (38.4 hours). There was some variation by jurisdiction in the average hours worked per week, with specialists practising in South Australia working shorter weeks (38.2 hours) while those in Tasmania worked longer weeks (44.3 hours).

Additional data sources

Teusner DN & Chrisopoulos S 2006. Australian dentist labour force 2003. *Australian Dental Journal* 51(3): 191-4.

Teusner DN, Chrisopoulos S & Brennan DS 2007. Geographic distribution of the Australian dental labour force, 2003. *Dental statistics and research series no. 37. Cat. no. DEN 168. Canberra: AIHW.*

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005. *Population estimates by age and sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2005. Cat no. 3201.0.*

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