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# Workforce Snapshot

# 2025

# Contents

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1. Overview	3
1.1. Scope	3
1.2. Data Sources	3
1.3. Limitations & Accuracy	3
2. Workforce Snapshot	4
2.1. Active General Surgeons by Population	4
2.2. Active General Surgeon Distribution by MMM	5
MMM 1: Metropolitan Areas	6
MMM 2: Regional Centres	6
MMM 3-5: Rural Towns	7
MMM 6-7: Remote Communities	7
2.3. Active General Surgeons by Gender	8
2.4. Active General Surgeons by Years of Practice & Age	9
MMM breakdown: 0 - 10 years post FRACS	10
MMM breakdown: 11 - 34 years post FRACS	10
MMM breakdown: 35+ years post FRACS	11
3. Sub-Specialty Practice	12
3.1. Active GSA Membership by Sub-Specialty	12

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# I. Overview

## 1.1. SCOPE

General Surgeons Australia (GSA) has produced the following Workforce Snapshot to present an overview of current trends, challenges, and opportunities within Australia's General Surgery workforce.

This report includes key insights into the demographic composition and geographic distribution of General Surgeons, serving as a resource to inform workforce planning and policy development.

It is important to note that this report does not include projections of future service demand and is not intended to serve as a comprehensive workforce modelling tool.

## 1.2. DATA SOURCES

This Workforce Snapshot was developed using data collected between March and June 2025.

Population figures are drawn from Estimated Resident Population data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). As of 30 September 2024, Australia's population was 27,305,702, reflecting quarterly growth of 115,027 people (0.4%) and annual growth of 484,000 people (1.8%)<sup>1</sup>.

Data on active General Surgeons was sourced from the Medical Board of Australia's National Register, accessed via the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), and reflects the status as of March 2025. The dataset includes individuals holding active Specialist Registration in General Surgery in Australia.

To enrich the analysis, AHPRA data was supplemented with GSA membership information, including age, years post-Fellowship, and reported sub-specialty interests.

## 1.3. LIMITATIONS & ACCURACY

The data presented in this report may contain inaccuracies and should be interpreted with caution. It may include individuals who retain medical registration as General Surgeons in Australia, but who are no longer in active practice.

While the AHPRA dataset identifies a single principal place of practice for each surgeon, it does not account for those working across multiple locations; this limitation is also acknowledged.

GSA does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the data provided.

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025, April 30). National, state and territory population: September 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release>

# 2. Workforce Snapshot

## 2.1. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY POPULATION

-  Estimated Resident Population: 27,305,702
-  Total General Surgeons: 2,136
-  Ratio: 7.82 surgeons per 100,000 population
-  Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

According to the ABS, Australia's Estimated Resident Population was 27,305,702 as at September 2024. The total number of active General Surgeons recorded nationally in March 2025 was 2,136, which equates to approximately 7.82 General Surgeons per 100,000 population.

The breakdown by state or territory is as follows:

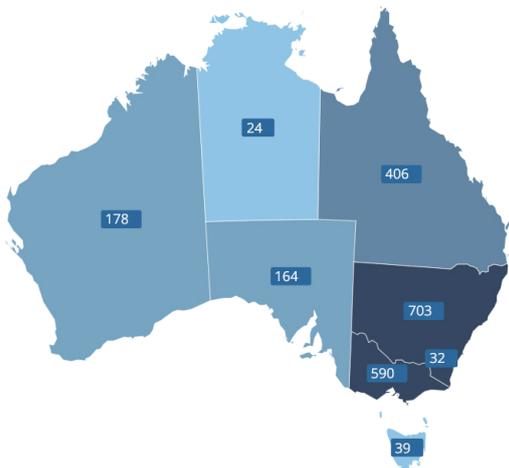


Figure 2.1.1. Illustration of Number of General Surgeons by Region

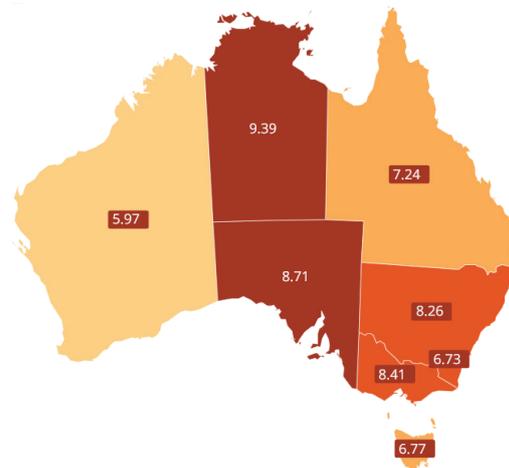


Figure 2.1.2. Illustration of Ratio of General Surgeons per 100,000 of population by Region

State / Territory	Active General Surgeons	Estimated Resident Population	Ratio per 100,000
ACT	32	475,483	6.73
NSW	703	8,510,896	8.26
NT	24	255,591	9.39
QLD	406	5,607,735	7.24
SA	164	1,882,893	8.71
TAS	39	576,071	6.77
VIC	590	7,015,458	8.41
WA	178	2,981,575	5.97
<b>AU Total</b>	<b>2,136</b>	<b>27,305,702</b>	<b>7.82</b>

These figures provide a national benchmark for assessing workforce distribution and informing future planning needs. A ratio of around 7:1 General Surgeons per 100,000 population is seen across most states and territories. The highest ratio of 9.39 General Surgeons per 100,000 population is seen in the Northern Territory, while Western Australia has the lowest ratio of 5.97 General Surgeons per 100,000 population.

## 2.1. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY POPULATION (CONT.)

No states or territories are identified as statistical outliers. All ratios fall within 1.5 standard deviations of the mean of 7.69, indicating a relatively consistent distribution of General Surgeons across jurisdictions. However, maldistribution between major metropolitan, regional, and rural/remote centres is explored later in this report.

For comparison purposes, the most recent estimates of General Surgeons per 100,000 population ratios for other high-income nations include Canada (~6.8<sup>2</sup>), the United Kingdom (~5.5<sup>3</sup>), and the United States (~7.5<sup>4</sup>). These figures are approximations based on available national workforce reports and may vary slightly depending on definitions and reporting methods.

## 2.2. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEON DISTRIBUTION BY MMM

For Australian health workforce classifications, the Modified Monash Model (MMM) defines whether a location is metropolitan, rural, remote, or very remote. MMM classifications are based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard - Remoteness Areas (ASGS-RA) framework, and measure remoteness and population size on a scale from MM1 (major city) to MM7 (very remote).

MMM <sup>5</sup> Category	Inclusions
MM1	Metropolitan areas: Major cities accounting for 70% of Australia's population. All areas categorised ASGS-RA1.
MM2	Regional centres: Areas categorised ASGS-RA 2 and ASGS-RA 3 that are in, or within 20km road distance, of a town with a population greater than 50,000.
MM3	Large rural towns: Areas categorised ASGS-RA 2 and ASGS-RA 3 that are not in MM2 and are in, or within 15km road distance, of a town with a population between 15,000 and 50,000.
MM4	Medium rural towns: Areas categorised ASGS-RA 2 and ASGS-RA 3 that are not in MM2 or MM3 and are in, or within 10km road distance, of a town with a population between 5,000 and 15,000.
MM5	Small rural towns: All other areas in ASGS-RA 2 and 3.
MM6	Remote communities: All areas categorised ASGS-RA 4 and islands that are separated from the mainland in the ABS geography and are less than 5km offshore.
MM7	Very remote communities: All other areas that are categorised ASGS-RA 5 and populated islands separated from the mainland in the ABS geography that are more than 5km offshore.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated from Canadian Medical Association data using General Surgeons as a subset of total physicians. Canadian Institute for Health Information. [A profile of physicians in Canada](#). Accessed August 2, 2025

<sup>3</sup> Estimated from NHS workforce statistics based on number of General Surgery Consultants. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/articles/thehealthcareworkforceacrosstheuk/2024>

<sup>4</sup> American College of Surgeons (ACS), 2022 <https://www.facs.org/for-medical-professionals/news-publications/news-and-articles/bulletin/2022/02/data-reveal-the-details-about-the-surgeon-workforce-shortage/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm>

## 2.2. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEON DISTRIBUTION BY MMM (CONT.)

The breakdown of active General Surgeons by MMM category and state or territory, is as follows:

### MM 1: Metropolitan Areas

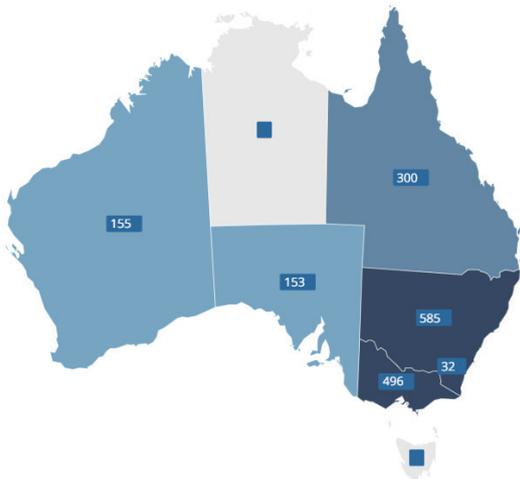


Figure 2.2.1. Illustration of Number of General Surgeons by MM1

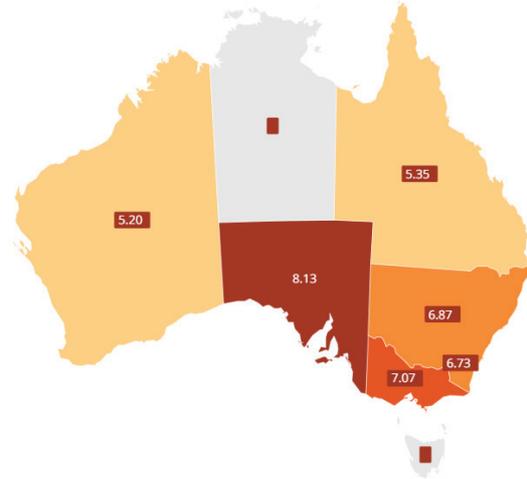


Figure 2.2.2. Illustration of Ratio of General Surgeons per 100,000 of population by MM1

MMM Category	State / Territory	Active General Surgeons	Ratio per 100,000
MM 1 Metropolitan Areas	ACT	32	6.73
	NSW	585	6.87
	QLD	300	5.35
	SA	153	8.13
	VIC	496	7.07
	WA	155	5.20

### MM 2: Regional Centres

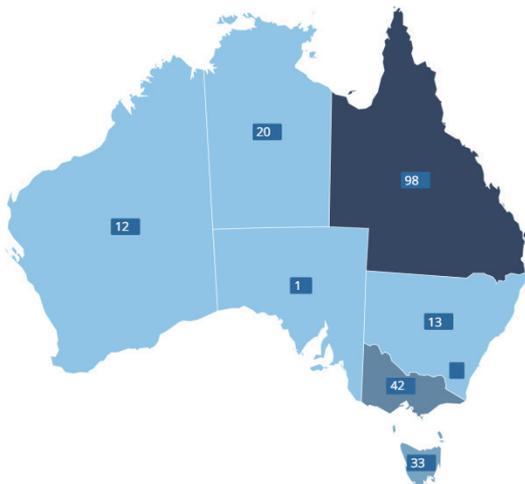


Figure 2.2.3. Illustration of Number of General Surgeons by MM2

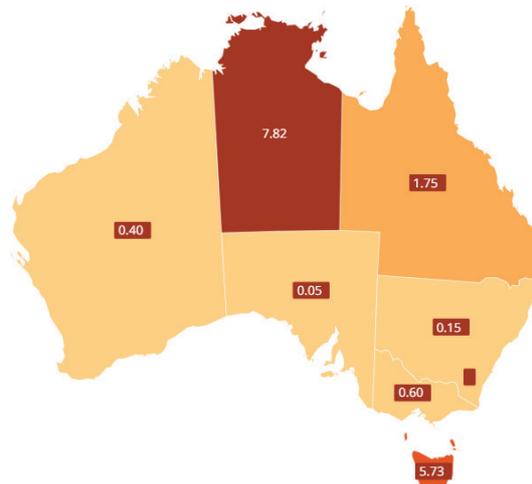


Figure 2.2.4. Illustration of Ratio of General Surgeons per 100,000 of population by MM2

MMM Category	State / Territory	Active General Surgeons	Ratio per 100,000
MM 2 Regional Centres	NSW	13	0.15
	NT	20	7.82
	QLD	98	1.75
	SA	1	0.05
	TAS	33	5.73
	VIC	42	0.60
	WA	12	0.40

## 2.2. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEON DISTRIBUTION BY MMM (CONT.)

### MM 3-5: Rural Towns

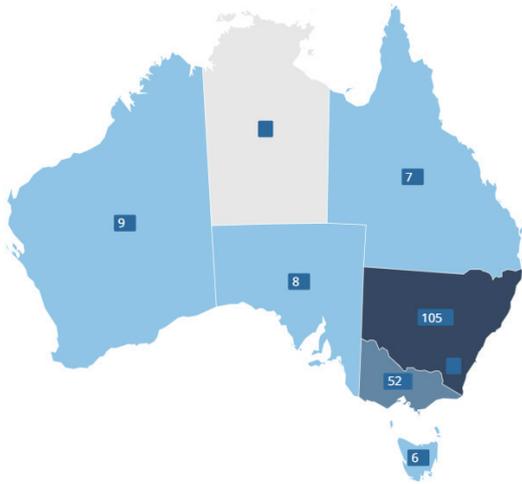


Figure 2.2.5. Illustration of Number of General Surgeons by MM3-5

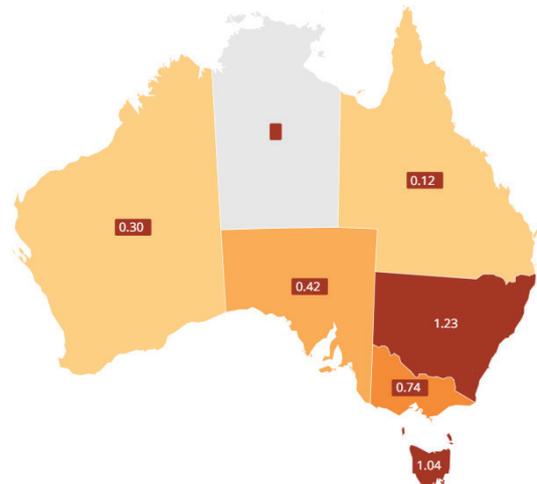


Figure 2.2.6. Illustration of Ratio of General Surgeons per 100,000 of population by MM3-5

MMM Category	State / Territory	Active General Surgeons	Ratio per 100,000
MM 3-5 Rural Towns	NSW	105	1.23
	QLD	7	0.12
	SA	8	0.42
	TAS	6	1.04
	VIC	52	0.74
	WA	9	0.30

### MM 6-7: Remote Communities

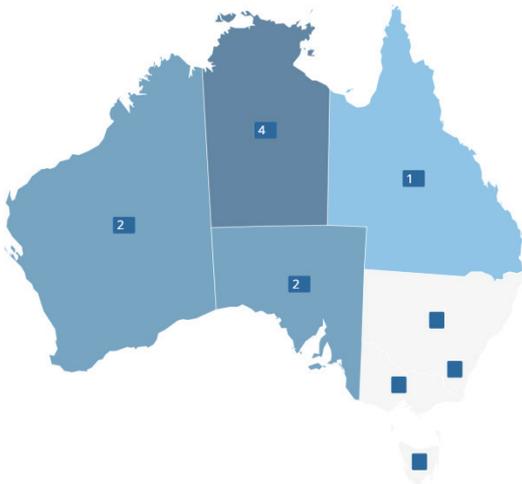


Figure 2.2.7. Illustration of Number of General Surgeons by MM6-7

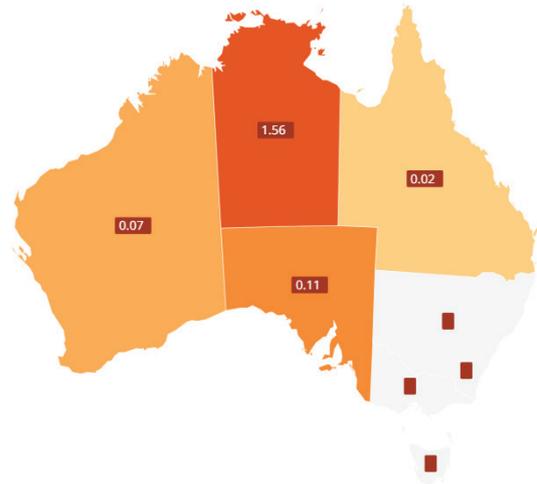


Figure 2.2.8. Illustration of Ratio of General Surgeons per 100,000 of population by MM6-7

MMM Category	State / Territory	Active General Surgeons	Ratio per 100,000
MM 6-7 Remote Communities	NT	4	1.56
	QLD	1	0.02
	SA	2	0.11
	WA	2	0.07

## 2.2. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEON DISTRIBUTION BY MMM (CONT.)

The majority of General Surgeons (1,721; 80.57%) are in metropolitan areas, with 10.25% (219) located in regional centres. Only 8.75% (187) report their primary place of practice in small, medium, or large rural towns, and only 0.42% (9) are in remote or very remote communities.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 72% of Australians live in major cities, with around 28% of the population (7 million people) living in rural and remote areas.

*“These Australians face unique challenges due to their geographic location and often have poorer health outcomes than people living in metropolitan areas. Data show that people living in rural and remote areas have higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths and injury and also have poorer access to, and use of, primary health care services, than people living in Major cities”<sup>6</sup>*

While Australia maintains a comparatively strong national ratio of General Surgeons to population, variation across states and territories, and maldistribution between major metropolitan, regional, and rural/remote centres, highlights the need for targeted workforce strategies. Addressing these disparities is essential to ensure equitable access to General Surgical services nationwide.

## 2.3. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY GENDER

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) *Women in Surgery Section Strategic Plan 2022-2026*<sup>7</sup> outlines a vision to create an equitable surgical workforce, which reflects and represents the Australian community. According to the RACS *2023 Activities Report*<sup>8</sup>, the breakdown of gender for active Australian RACS Fellows by Specialty was as follows:

Gender	CAR	GEN	NEU	ORT	OTO	PAE	PLA	URO	VAS	TOTAL
Male	174	1563	241	1376	422	67	411	420	193	4867
Female	11	469	44	80	99	33	93	66	42	937
Unspecified	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>2032</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>1457</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>5805</b>
% Female	5.95	23.08	15.44	5.49	19.00	33.00	18.45	13.58	17.87	16.14
% Male	94.05	76.92	84.56	94.44	81.00	67.00	81.55	86.42	82.13	83.84

In 2025, 25.28% (540) of all active General Surgeons in Australia identify as female, and 74.72% as male. As a percentage of total workforce in that jurisdiction, the highest female General Surgeon representation is in the ACT (31.25%), followed by TAS (28.21%) and VIC (28.14%), with the lowest female representation seen in WA (21.91%) and the NT (20.83%).

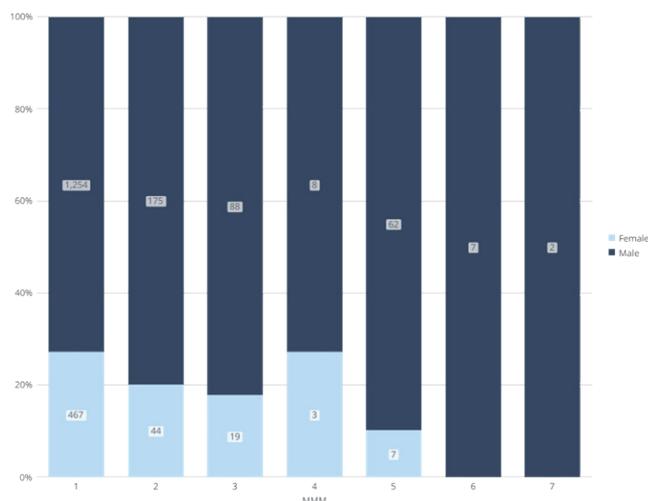
State / Territory	Female	% of Total	Male	% of Total
ACT	10	31.25%	22	68.75%
NSW	180	25.60%	523	74.40%
NT	5	20.83%	19	79.17%
QLD	90	22.17%	316	77.83%
SA	39	23.78%	125	76.22%
TAS	11	28.21%	28	71.79%
VIC	166	28.14%	424	71.86%
WA	39	21.91%	139	78.09%
<b>AU Total</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>25.28%</b>	<b>1,596</b>	<b>74.72%</b>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-and-remote-health>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.surgeons.org/-/media/Project/RACS/surgeons-org/files/interest-groups-sections/wis/wis-business-plan.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.surgeons.org/-/media/Project/RACS/surgeons-org/files/reports-guidelines-publications/workforce-activities-census-reports/2023\\_RACS\\_ActivitiesReport\\_2023\\_V3\\_Final.pdf](https://www.surgeons.org/-/media/Project/RACS/surgeons-org/files/reports-guidelines-publications/workforce-activities-census-reports/2023_RACS_ActivitiesReport_2023_V3_Final.pdf)

## 2.3. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY GENDER (CONT.)



MMM Category	Female	Male	Total
MM1	467	1,254	1,721
MM2	44	175	219
MM3	19	88	107
MM4	3	8	11
MM5	7	62	69
MM6	-	7	7
MM7	-	2	2
<b>AU Total</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>1,596</b>	<b>2,136</b>

Figure 2.3.1. Illustration of Number of Active General Surgeons by Gender and MMM

The majority of female General Surgeons (467; 86.48%) are in metropolitan areas, with 8.15% (44) located in regional centres. Only 3.52% (29) report their primary place of practice in small, medium, or large rural towns, with no female General Surgeons located in remote or very remote communities.

For global comparison, 22.6% of active General Surgeons in the United States are female, according to 2025 data from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)<sup>9</sup>, whereas 2024 data from NHS Digital, published by the Royal College of Surgeons, indicates the percentage of female General Surgeons in the United Kingdom is 22.2%<sup>10</sup>.

## 2.4. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY YEARS OF PRACTICE & AGE

Currently, 8.43% (180) active General Surgeons in Australia are 35+ years post-FRACS, with an average age of 75.11 years. The cohort 11 - 34 years post-FRACS represents 46.49% (993) of active General Surgeons, with an average age of 58.25 years. Younger fellows (0-10 years post-FRACS) represent 45.08% (963) of active General Surgeons, with an average age of 46.65 years.

According to the RACS 2011 report *Surgical Workforce Projection to 2025*<sup>11</sup>, the average rate of retirement between 2005 and 2010 was 3.9%; while a percentage of surgeons continue to practice into their 70s and 80s, surgeons typically retire before 70 years of age.

Years post-FRACS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
0 - 10 years	17	310	17	186	67	17	263	86	963
11 - 34 years	15	318	6	197	81	19	271	86	993
35+ years	-	75	1	23	16	3	56	6	180
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>2,136</b>
% 0 - 10 years	53.13	44.10	70.83	45.81	40.85	43.59	44.58	48.31	45.08
% 11 - 34 years	46.88	45.23	25.00	48.52	49.39	48.72	45.93	48.31	46.49
% 35+ years	-	10.67	4.17	5.67	9.76	7.69	9.49	3.37	8.43

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/report/us-physician-workforce-data-dashboard>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/careers-in-surgery/women-in-surgery/statistics/>

<sup>11</sup> [RACS 2011: Surgical Workforce Projection to 2025 \(for Australia\).](#)

## 2.4. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY YEARS OF PRACTICE & AGE (CONT.)

The breakdown of active General Surgeons by years of practice and MMM category is as follows:

MMM Category	0 - 10 years post FRACS	11 - 34 years post FRACS	35+ years post FRACS	Active General Surgeons
MM1	778	793	150	1,721
MM2	102	103	14	219
MM3	49	54	4	107
MM4	4	5	2	11
MM5	23	37	9	69
MM6	5	1	1	7
MM7	2	0	0	2
<b>AU Total</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>2,136</b>

### MMM Breakdown: 0 - 10 Years Post-FRACS

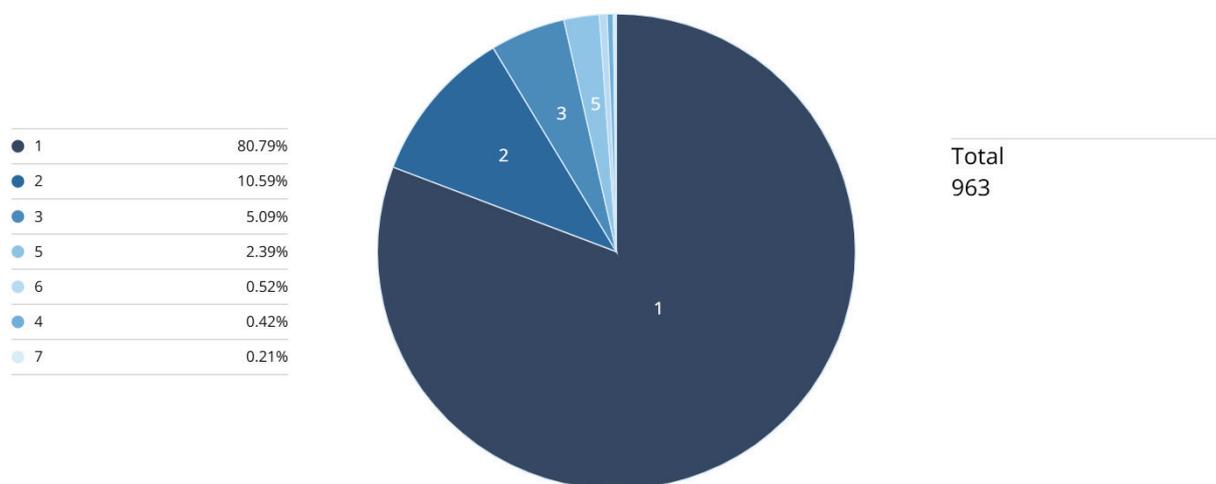


Figure 2.4.1. Illustration of Number of active General Surgeons by 0-10 years of practice and MMM

### MMM Breakdown: 11 - 34 Years Post- FRACS

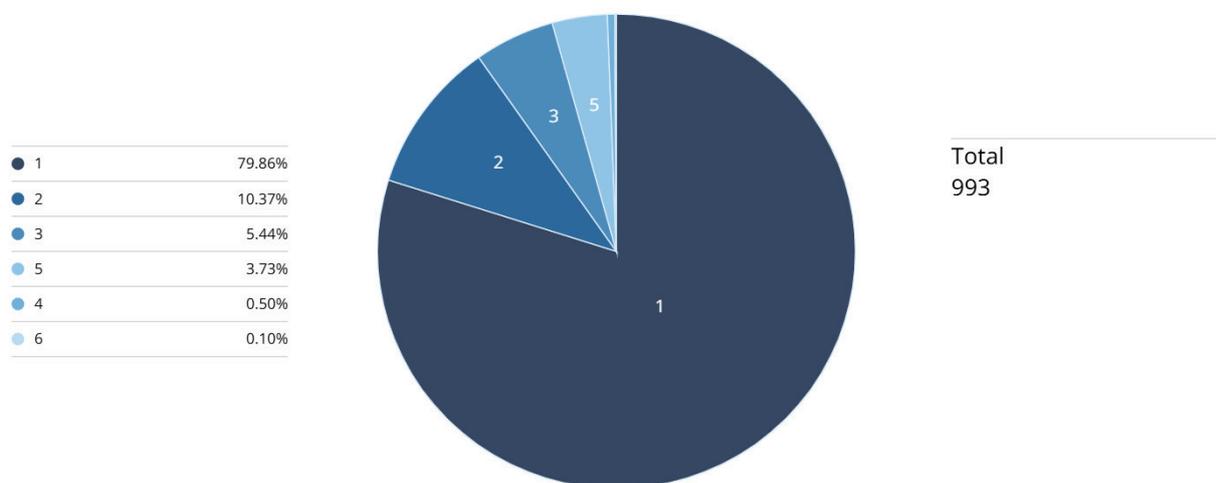


Figure 2.4.1. Illustration of Number of active General Surgeons by 11-34 years of practice and MMM

## 2.4. ACTIVE GENERAL SURGEONS BY YEARS OF PRACTICE & AGE (CONT.)

### MMM Breakdown: 35+ Years Post- FRACS

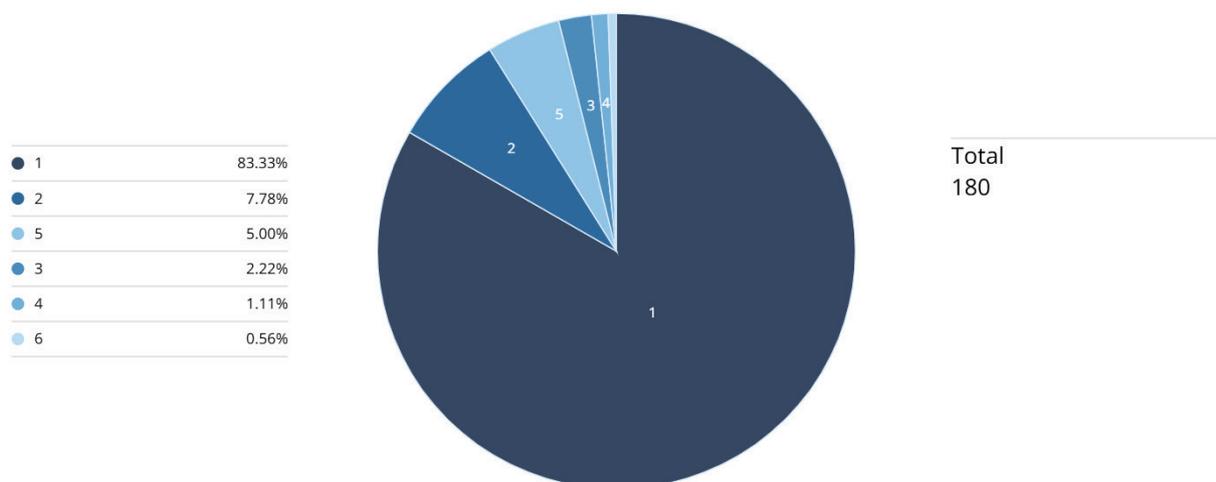


Figure 2.4.1. Illustration of Number of active General Surgeons by 35+ years of practice and MMM

The average age of active General Surgeons across the various states and territories in Australia ranges from 49 to 62.5 years, with an overall average age of 56 years.

The breakdown of average age by years of practice and state or territory is as follows:

State / Territory	Average Age			Active General Surgeons
	0 - 10 years post FRACS	11 - 34 years post FRACS	35+ years post FRACS	
ACT	42.00	58.00	-	49.00
NSW	42.80	56.75	77.00	50.60
NT	47.50	59.00	76.00	53.00
QLD	51.50	56.67	74.67	59.80
SA	50.33	59.00	73.67	62.50
TAS	39.50	59.33	78.00	55.33
VIC	47.00	58.20	73.50	54.80
WA	47.75	59.67	73.00	53.50
<b>AU Total</b>	<b>46.65</b>	<b>58.25</b>	<b>75.11</b>	<b>56.00</b>

# 3. Sub-Specialty Practice

## 3.1. ACTIVE GSA MEMBERSHIP BY SUB-SPECIALTY

As part of data maintained for active GSA members, sub-specialty practice is self-recorded for the following areas:

- Breast
- Colonoscopy
- Colorectal
- Endocrine
- Endoscopy
- General Surgery
- Head & Neck
- Hepato-Biliary
- Hernia
- Laparoscopic Surgery
- Melanoma
- Obesity / Bariatric
- Surgical Oncology
- Transplant
- Trauma / Acute Care
- Upper Gastrointestinal
- Vascular

The percentage of members with self-recorded interest in the major sub-specialty areas of practice, by MMM category, is as follows:

MMM Category	Bariatric	Breast	Colonoscopy / Endoscopy	Colorectal	Endocrine
MM1	72.73%	63.78%	59.01%	61.79%	69.86%
MM2	16.16%	12.24%	18.57%	18.87%	13.70%
MM3	5.05%	12.76%	11.58%	8.49%	7.53%
MM4	-	2.04%	1.84%	0.94%	2.05%
MM5	6.06%	9.18%	8.27%	9.43%	6.16%
MM6	-	-	0.37%	0.47%	0.68%
MM7	-	-	0.37%	-	-

MMM Category	Hernia	Melanoma	Oncology	Trauma	Upper GI / HPB
MM1	66.77%	58.12%	70.59%	61.14%	76.21%
MM2	15.67%	17.09%	14.38%	17.62%	13.50%
MM3	10.03%	12.82%	7.84%	12.44%	5.79%
MM4	0.94%	0.85%	0.65%	1.55%	-
MM5	5.96%	10.26%	5.88%	6.22%	4.18%
MM6	0.31%	0.85%	0.65%	0.52%	0.32%
MM7	0.31%	-	-	0.52%	-

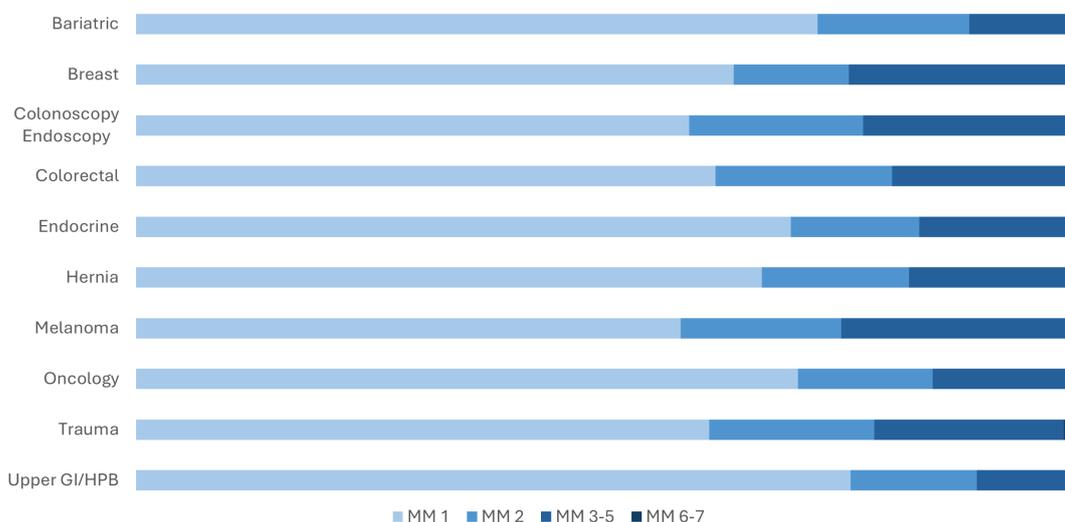


Figure 31.1. Illustration of Percentage of active General Surgeons by self-declared sub-specialty and MMM