



Healthy practices, healthy patients

Regional General Practices in Focus

The latest GP Insights Report¹ arrives at a turning point for the practice and the patient experience. Patient demand has increased as the cost and capacity to deliver care remain under pressure. Comparing the responses between practices in regional and metropolitan locations reveals different impacts and strategies for each.

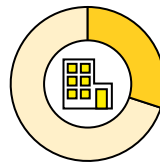
Patient satisfaction

High satisfaction levels with the practice experience have held up well in regional areas compared to metropolitan locations. A slight moderation was led by fewer patients very satisfied with practice opening hours and access to GPs with expertise across conditions and therapies.



40%

of regional patients are very satisfied with their practice experience compared to 44% in 2021.



30%

of metro patients are very satisfied with their practice experience compared to 42% in 2021.

Top challenges

Regional GPs' top challenge is navigating Medicare schedule fees running behind costs, but far less prominent than in metropolitan locations. Rising costs are a uniform challenge, while talent shortages are being felt more in regional areas.



59%

of regional practices see the Medicare² schedule fee lagging running costs as a challenge, 13% less than in metro locations.



59%

of regional practices see increasing costs as a challenge, the same number as in metro locations.



57%

of regional practices see attracting and retaining qualified GPs as a challenge, 9% more than in metro locations.

Top priorities for the next 12 months

There is little difference in the focus of practices' strategic priorities for the year ahead, with reviewing billing models and increasing capacity similar across the country. More regional practices are closely looking at costs and debt compared to their metropolitan peers.



59%

of regional practices are prioritising shifts in billing models to reduce bulk billing, **2%** less than in metro locations.



45%

of regional practices are prioritising increases in the number of healthcare professionals, **3%** more than in metro locations.



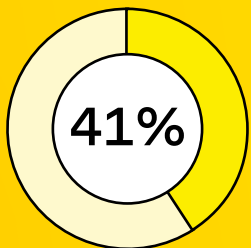
41%

of regional practices are prioritising the reduction or restructuring of operational costs and debt, **8%** more than in metro locations.

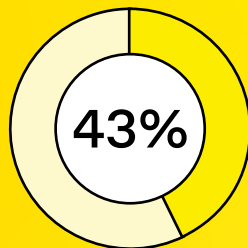


Practice economics

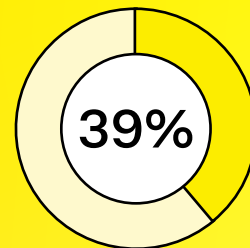
While all practices experienced similar patient visits in the past year, significantly rising costs for more regional practices are weighing on margins. This is bringing practice economics under pressure for more regional practices, likely leading to lower confidence levels for many practices.



of regional practices report increased operating costs year-on-year, **14%** more than in metro locations.



of regional practices report decreased profits year-on-year, **10%** more than in metro locations.



of regional practices say they are not very confident about business conditions in the year ahead, **19%** more than in metro locations.

Reviewing billing models

The industry-wide shift in billing models, particularly to manage increasing costs, has been faster among regional practices to date. The research shows that metropolitan practices will catch up over the next 12 months. Potentially due to lower competition, more regional patients say they would stay with their preferred GP despite any billing changes.



61%

of regional practices have already reduced the proportion of bulk billing, **6%** more than in metro locations.



-6%

of regional practices expectations for further reduction in the proportion of bulk billing in the next year, slower than in metro locations.



44%

of regional patients say if their preferred GP stopped bulk billing they would not switch practices, **17%** more than in metro locations.

Strategies for attracting and retaining staff

Regional practices are more likely to report that access to suitably skilled staff is limiting their operating capacity and growth potential. This divide appears to be linked to the availability of overseas-trained GPs and medical students. As a result, regional practices are more likely to offer higher salaries and career development opportunities to attract talent.



84%

of regional practices cite skills shortages as a barrier to growth and capacity, **12%** more than in metro locations.



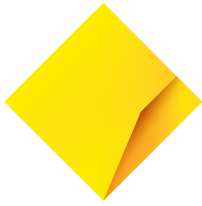
64%

of regional practices say access to overseas doctors and students is a barrier to growth and capacity, **24%** more than in metro locations.



49%

of regional practices are offering higher salaries to attract and retain talent, **24%** more than in metro locations.



Find out more information

To view more insights from regional practices and the tactics the broader industry is using to navigate emerging challenges and opportunities, visit [GP Insights webpage](#).



Request a call back

Additionally you can click [here](#) to request a call back from a Health Accredited banker to find out how CommBank Health can help you.

About the 2023 CommBank GP Insights Report

- 1 The 2023 CommBank Insights Report is based on a quantitative survey of 204 decision-makers and influencers at general practices across Australia and 1,020 patients who consulted a practice within three months of completing the study. The practice survey was conducted by a mix of practising physicians, business owners and senior decision-makers, with 75% located in capital cities and 25% in other regions. ACA Research conducted the general practice and patients surveys on behalf of CommBank Health in October 2022. The surveys were designed to track perspectives on topical issues and practice priorities. All references to patients and general practices in this report refer to those participating in the surveys unless stated otherwise.
- 2 Medicare is the claiming channel that helps practices lodged Medicare bulk bill and patient claims

Things you should know

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