

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

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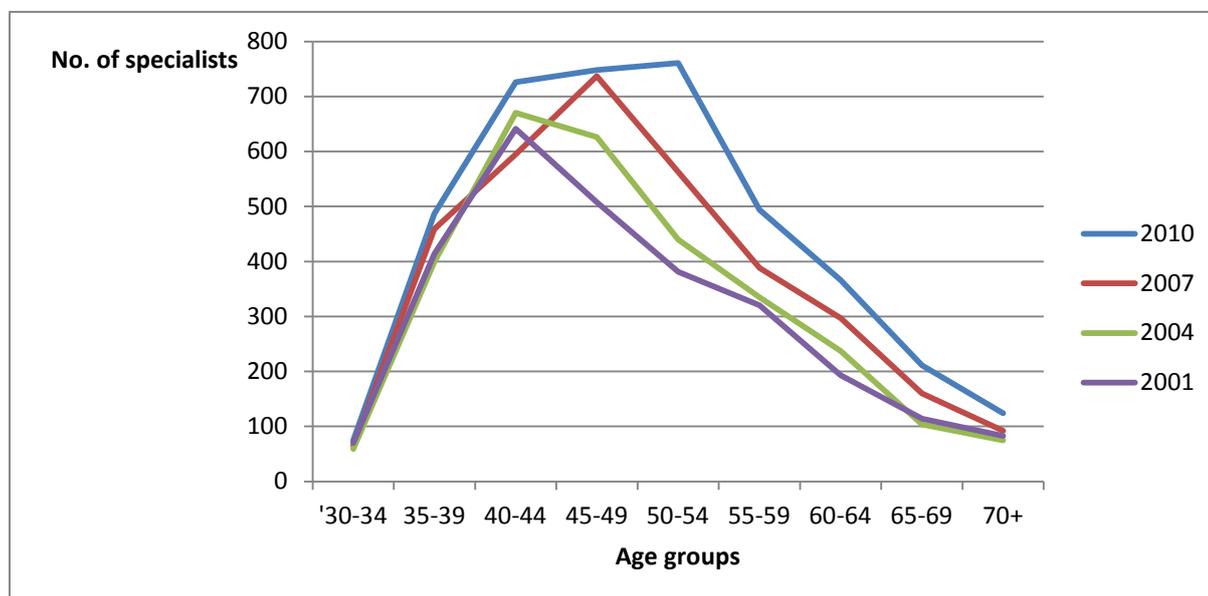
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES & SPECIALIST WORKFORCE

The impact of changing demographics on the specialist workforce

The ageing of the specialist workforce, the increasing proportion of female specialists, and the growing desire for better work-life balance across all generations will together add significant pressure on district health boards to improve recruitment and retention over the coming years.

The ageing of the specialist workforce is illustrated in Figure 1, showing how the largest group of doctors has shifted from the 40-44 age group in 2001 to the 50-54 age group in 2010. In each year there is a sharp drop-off in numbers in the age groups above the peak age group. On recent trends approximately 19% of the workforce is likely to be lost over the next five years from the effects of the drop-off of specialists from the age 55.

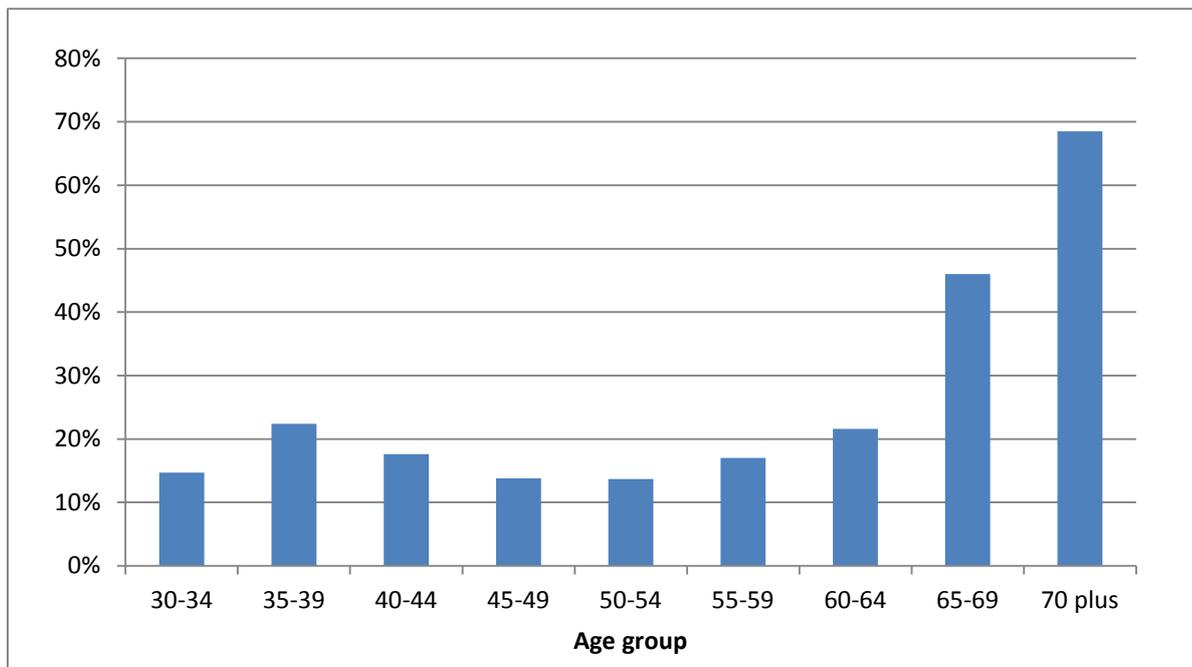
Figure 1: Number of specialists by age group, 2001, 2004, 2007 & 2010



Source: MCNZ 2012.

In addition, older specialists who remain in practice tend to reduce their work hours. In 2010, 17.6% of specialists were aged 60-plus and 37% of them worked less than 40 hours per week, including 22% of those aged 60-64 and 46% of those aged 65-69 (Figure 2). Over the next five years, despite the losses from early retirement, the proportion of specialists aged 60-plus is likely to increase to more than 20% of the workforce.

Figure 2: Proportion of specialists per age group working less than 40 hours per week as at 2010



Compiled from NZMC Workforce Survey data 2010

The increasing number of women in the workforce is another key factor. In 2011 27% of the specialist workforce were female – up from 19% in 2000 and 13% in 1990. Gender statistics for practising registrars indicate the trend is continuing: In 2011 52% of registrars were female. Because females tend to work fewer hours than males, the working life contribution for female medical practitioners, when measured in total time worked, is estimated at about 80% of that of a male medical practitioner. This must be taken into account in projected workforce requirements.

Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting growing interest in work-life balance for both male and female doctors. Reports from New Zealand and Australia indicate that work-life balance aspirations are becoming increasingly important for new generations of doctors, regardless of gender, and that this affects recruitment and retention.

Kind regards

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Ian Powell
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) represents salaried senior doctors and dentists. The large majority of our members are employed by DHBs. Outside the College of GPs we are the largest organisation representing doctors in New Zealand. Central to our existence is to promote the right of equal access for all New Zealanders to high quality public health services.

The ASMS publishes the ASMS Parliamentary Briefing to provide considered advice to MPs of issues and concerns where we believe we have the experience and expertise.

If your email address has recently changed or is about to change, will you please inform Terry Creighton at tc@asms.org.nz

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