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A caring nation – 15 per cent of Australia's workforce in Health Care and Social Assistance industry

Media Release

Released 12/10/2022

Source: [Income and work: Census, 2021](#)
[Education and training: Census, 2021](#)

One in seven people in the Australian workforce are working in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry, according to 2021 Census data released today.

Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician said, "Census data provides government and community groups with crucial information about essential healthcare and welfare services.

"There are now over 1.7 million people working in Health Care and Social Assistance in Australia, of which 30 per cent are working in hospitals".

Occupations that experienced strong growth include Aged and Disabled Carers (227,535 in 2021, up by 72 per cent since 2016), Occupational Therapists (19,429 in 2021, up by 57 per cent), and Audiologists and Speech Pathologists (13,613 in 2021, up by 49 per cent).

Census data also showed an increase in mental health professionals, with Psychologists and Psychiatrists both increasing over 40 per cent since 2016.

The 2021 Census counted over 260,000 Registered Nurses. The occupation grew by 19 per cent between 2016 and 2021, exceeding the 13 per cent growth of the broader workforce.

"Census data shows over 40 per cent of Registered Nurses and Aged and Disabled Carers were born overseas, with almost 40,000 arriving since 2016. A 40 per cent share born overseas is significantly higher than the average across all occupations of 32 per cent born overseas," Dr Gruen added.

Nursing has overtaken Building as the third most common non-school qualification in Australia, behind Business and Management and Teacher Education. There are an additional 96,000 people with a nursing qualification, representing 19 per cent growth since 2016. Females hold 91 per cent of Nursing qualifications.

While females make up the majority of people employed as Registered Nurses (88 per cent) and Aged and Disabled Carers (77 per cent), the share of males working in these roles has increased a little since 2016. In 2021, 12 per cent of Registered Nurses were males, compared with 11 per cent in 2016. For Aged and Disabled Carers, the percentage of males increased to 23 per cent from 20 per cent.

The median weekly income for full-time male Registered Nurses is \$1,802 compared to \$1,631 for females. For Aged and Disabled Carers, the median weekly income for full-time males is \$1,254 and \$1,114 for females.

Table 1: Health Care and Social Assistance industry by sub-division in 2021 Census

Sub-division	Employees	Proportion of Health Care and Social Assistance industry
Hospitals	549,816	31.4%
Residential Care Services	283,229	16.2%
Other Social Assistance Services	278,221	15.9%
Allied Health Services	210,003	12.0%
Medical Services	149,953	8.6%
Child Care Services	115,250	6.6%
Pathology and Diagnostic Imaging Services	53,712	3.1%
Other Health Care Services	32,025	1.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd[1](# ftn1)	28,146	1.6%
Medical and Other Health Care Services, nfd	26,173	1.5%
Social Assistance Services, nfd	25,194	1.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance total	1,751,717	100%

[1](# ftnref1) nfd – means not further defined and indicates that the Census response did not have enough detail to classify the person into a finer detailed industry group.

Table 2: Occupation change 2016 to 2021

Occupation	Employees 2016	Employees 2021	Percentage change
Registered Nurses	220,982	262,742	+18.9%
Aged and Disabled Carers	132,325	227,535	+72.0%
Occupational Therapists	12,353	19,429	+57.3%
Audiologists and Speech Pathologists	9,144	13,613	+48.9%
Psychologists	22,728	32,498	+43.0%
Psychiatrists	3,084	4,330	+40.4%

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