

# Population health profile of the Hunter Rural

## Division of General Practice

Population Profile Series: No. 17

PHIDU

November 2005



© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

This work may be reproduced and used subject to acknowledgement of the source of any material so reproduced.

## National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication entry

---

Population health profile of the Hunter Rural Division of General Practice.

Bibliography.

ISBN 0 7308 9424 X.

1. Public health - New South Wales - Hunter River Region - Statistics. 2. Health status indicators - New South Wales - Hunter River Region - Statistics. 3. Health service areas - New South Wales - Hunter River Region. 4. Hunter River Region (N.S.W.) - Statistics, Medical. I. Public Health Information Development Unit (Australia). II. Australia. Dept. of Health and Ageing. III. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (Series : Population profile series, 1833-0452 ; no. 17).

362.1099442

ISSN 1833-0452 Population Profile Series

**Public Health Information Development Unit, The University of Adelaide**  
***A Collaborating Unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare***

---

This profile was produced by PHIDU, the Public Health Information Development Unit at The University of Adelaide, South Australia. The work was funded under a grant from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The views expressed in this profile are solely those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Department of Health and Ageing or the Minister for Health and Ageing.

The data in this report are designed to be used for needs assessment and planning purposes: while they are based on the best available data and analytic processes, data available by postcode or Statistical Local Area, as used in this report, cannot be precisely translated to Division. Division totals in the report should, therefore, be seen as estimates. Interpretation of differences between data in this profile and similar data from other sources needs to be undertaken with care as such differences may be due to the use of different methodology to produce the data.

Suggested citation:

PHIDU. (2005) *Population health profile of the Hunter Rural Division of General Practice*. Population Profile Series: No. 17. Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU), Adelaide.

Enquiries about or comments on this publication should be addressed to:

PHIDU, The University of Adelaide, South Australia 5005

Phone: 08-8303 6237 or e-mail: [PHIDU@publichealth.gov.au](mailto:PHIDU@publichealth.gov.au)

This publication, the maps and supporting data, together with other publications on population health, are available from the PHIDU website ([www.publichealth.gov.au](http://www.publichealth.gov.au)).

Published by Public Health Information Development Unit, The University of Adelaide

Contributors: Anthea Page, Sarah Ambrose, Liz Fisher, Kristin Leahy and John Glover

# Population health profile of the *Hunter Rural Division of General Practice*

## Introduction

This profile has been designed to provide a description of the population of the Hunter Rural Division of General Practice, and aspects of their health. Its purpose is to provide information to support a population health approach, which aims to improve the health of the entire population and to reduce health inequalities among population groups: a more detailed discussion of a population health approach is provided in the supporting information, page 17.

## Contents

The profile includes a number of tables, maps and graphs to profile population health in the Division and provides comparisons with other areas (eg. country New South Wales and Australia). Specific topics covered include:

- a socio-demographic profile (pages 2-6);
- GP workforce data (page 7);
- immunisation rates (page 7);
- rates of premature death (page 8); and
- estimates of the prevalence of chronic disease and selected risk factors (pages 9-13).

## Key indicators

**Location:** New South Wales

**Division number:** 218

Population‡:	No.	%
Total	205,411	
65+	33,741	16.4%
<25	66,426	32.3%
Indigenous	6,135	3.1%

**Disadvantage score<sup>1</sup>:** 957

**GP services per head of population:**

Division‡	4.2
Australia	4.7

**Population per FTE GP:**

Division‡	1,482
Australia	1,403

**Premature death rate<sup>2</sup>:**

Division‡	327.8
Australia	290.4

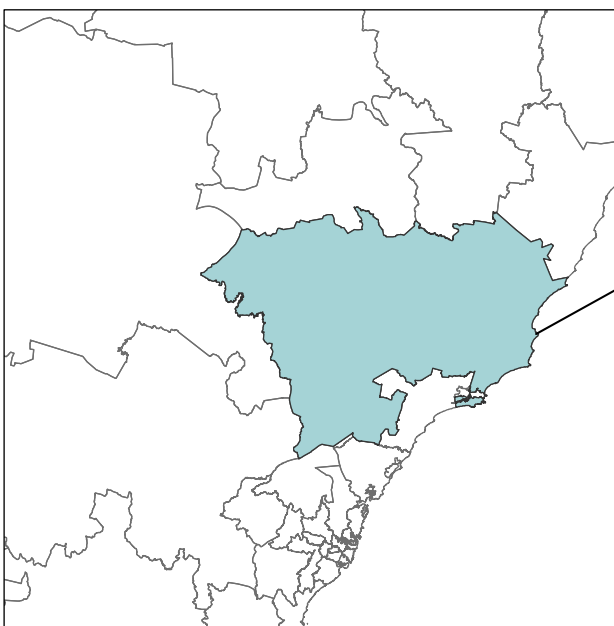
<sup>1</sup> Numbers below 1000 (the index score for Australia) indicate the Division is relatively disadvantaged

<sup>2</sup> Deaths at ages 0 to 74 years per 100,000 population

‡ See note "Data converters and mapping" re calculation of Division Total

## Hunter Rural Division of General Practice

*NSW Divisions of General Practice*



*Hunter Rural DGP by SLA*

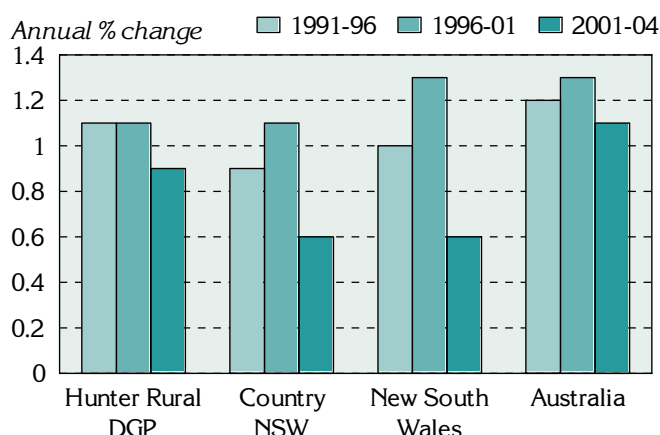


# Socio-demographic profile

## Population

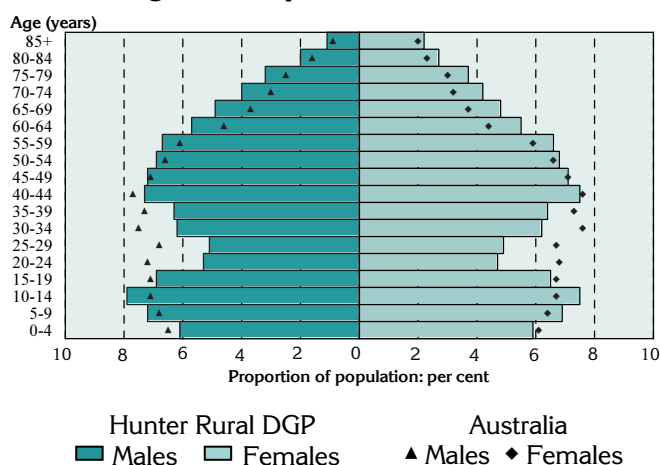
The Hunter Rural DGP had an Estimated Resident Population of 205,411 at 30 June 2004.

**Figure 1: Annual population change, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales<sup>1</sup>, New South Wales and Australia, 1991 to 1996, 1996 to 2001 and 2001 to 2004**



Over the five years from 1991 to 1996, the Division's population increased by 1.1% on average each year, higher than in country New South Wales (0.9%) and New South Wales (1.0%). From 1996 to 2001, the annual percentage increase in the Division was 1.1%, equal to country New South Wales, and lower than New South Wales (1.3%). The growth rate of 0.9% per year from 2001 to 2004 was higher than for country New South Wales and New South Wales (0.6%).

**Figure 2: Population in Hunter Rural DGP‡ and Australia, by age and sex, 2004**



The most notable differences in the age distribution of the Division's population (when compared to Australia overall) are:

- at younger ages – a lower proportion of male children aged 0 to 4 years, and higher proportions of males and female children aged 5 to 14 years;
- from 20 to 39 years – markedly lower proportions of both males and females; and
- at older ages – higher proportions of both males and females at age 55 years and over.

**Table 1: Population by age, Hunter Rural DGP‡ and Australia, 2003**

Age group (years)	Hunter Rural DGP		Australia	
	No.	%	No.	%
0-14	42,574	20.7	3,978,751	19.8
15-24	23,852	11.6	2,762,769	13.8
25-44	51,288	25.0	5,881,048	29.3
45-64	53,956	26.3	4,864,037	24.2
65-74	18,521	9.0	1,374,792	6.8
75-84	11,853	5.8	934,505	4.7
85+	3,367	1.6	295,602	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>205,411</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20,091,504</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in the age-sex pyramid above, Hunter Rural DGP had a higher proportion of children aged 0 to 14 years (20.7%) compared to Australia (19.8%) (Table 1). There were lower proportions aged 15 to 24 years (11.6%) and 25 to 44 years (25.0%), compared to Australia (13.8%, and 29.3%). The 45 years and over age groups had higher proportions compared to Australia, in particular the 65 to 74 year age group (9.0%, compared to 6.8%).

The Hunter Rural DGP comprised 2.3% of people born in predominantly non-English speaking countries and resident in Australia for five years or more (Table 2), compared to 4.1% in country New South Wales. Recent arrivals (resident in Australia for less than five years) from non-English speaking countries comprised 0.2% of the Division's population (compared to 0.5% in country New South Wales).

<sup>1</sup>References to 'country New South Wales' relate to New South Wales excluding the Sydney Statistical Division.

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals on this page

Of these residents, 0.1% had poor proficiency in English (determined when people aged five years and over born overseas in predominantly non-English speaking countries reported in the Census speaking another language and speaking English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’), less than the proportion in country New South Wales (0.6%), and notably less than New South Wales (3.2%) and Australia (2.4%).

**Table 2: Non-English speaking born, Hunter Rural DGP, Country New South Wales, New South Wales and Australia, 2001**

People born in predominantly non-English speaking countries	Hunter Rural DGP		Country NSW		New South Wales		Australia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Resident in Australia for five years or more	4,336	2.3	97,983	4.1	803,824	12.7	2,019,410	10.8
Resident in Australia for less than five years	373	0.2	12,392	0.5	182,972	2.9	408,074	2.2
Poor proficiency in English <sup>1</sup>	240	0.1	13,587	0.6	189,874	3.2	425,399	2.4

<sup>1</sup> Calculated on persons aged 5 years and over who reported speaking another language and speaking English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’

### Major non-English speaking birthplaces, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001

Australian-born people comprised 92.5% of the Division’s population, well above the Australian figure of 72.6%. Of the 4.7% of people from English speaking countries, 3.5% were from the UK and Eire. The major birthplaces of the non-English speaking population include Germany (0.4%), The Netherlands (0.3%) and the Philippines (0.2%); all other birthplaces of non-English speaking populations represented 0.1% or less of the Division’s population.

### Socioeconomic status

*The indicators presented in this section describe geographic variations in the distribution of the population for a number of key socioeconomic influences, which impact on the health and wellbeing of populations.*

The Hunter Rural DGP had a similar proportion of single parent families (11.3%) to that for country New South Wales as a whole (11.3%), and fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (3.1%, compared to 3.7% for country New South Wales) (Figure 3, Table 3).

Full-time secondary school education participation of 16 year olds living in the Division was marginally lower (71.8%) than for country New South Wales (73.4%).

A similar proportion of the Division’s households received rent assistance from Centrelink (18.7%), compared to country New South Wales (18.3%), but there were fewer dwellings rented from the State housing authority (3.5%, compared to 4.6%). The proportion of dwellings with no access to a motor vehicle (19.5%) was notably higher than that for country New South Wales (10.2%).

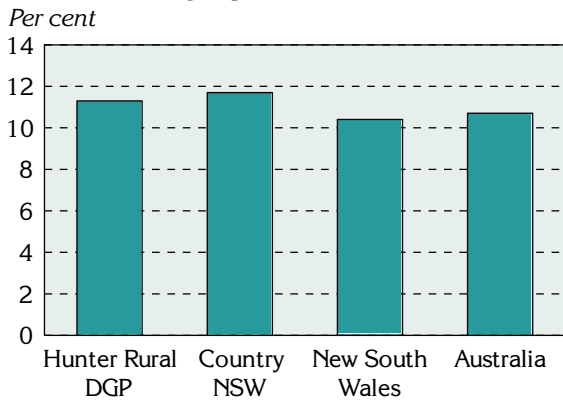
The Division had lower proportions of the population who reported using, at home, a computer (34.1%) and the Internet (19.5%), compared to country New South Wales (37.0% and 22.2%).

These socioeconomic indicators show the Division to comprise a population of average socioeconomic status: see also the note on page 5 (Summary of socioeconomic ranking).

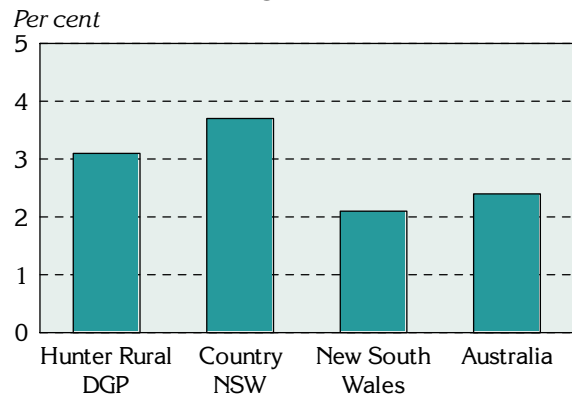
**Figure 3: Socio-demographic indicators, Hunter Rural DGP, country New South Wales, New South Wales and Australia, 2001**

*Note the different scales*

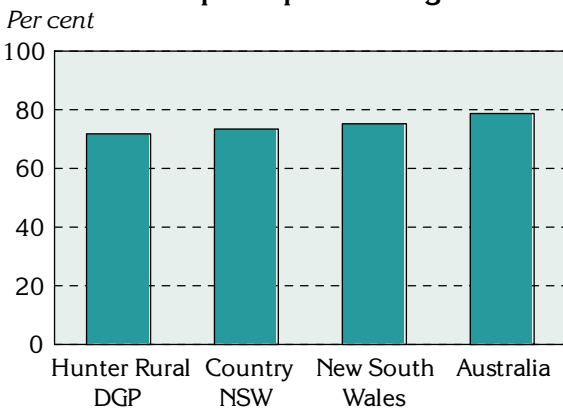
**Single parent families**



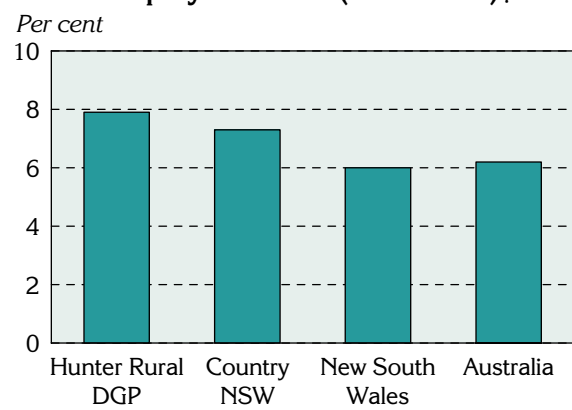
**Indigenous‡**



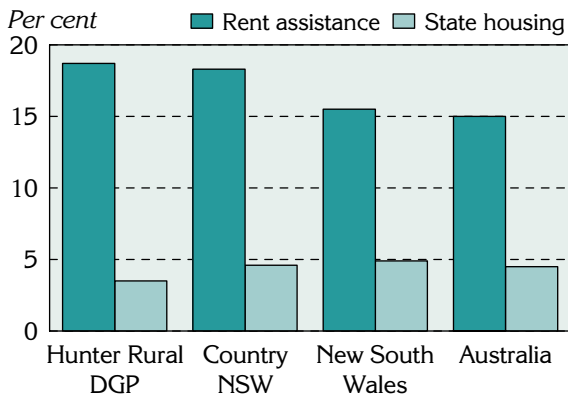
**Education participation at age 16‡**



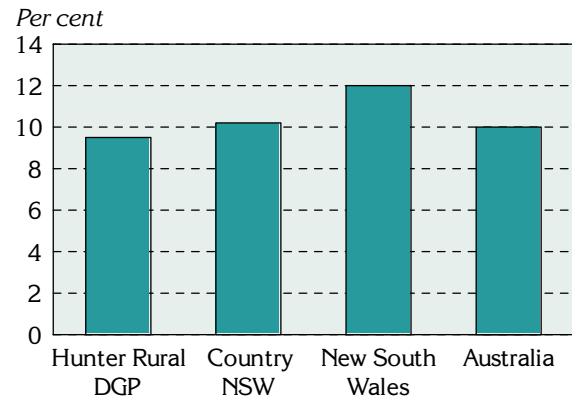
**Unemployment rate (June 2003)‡**



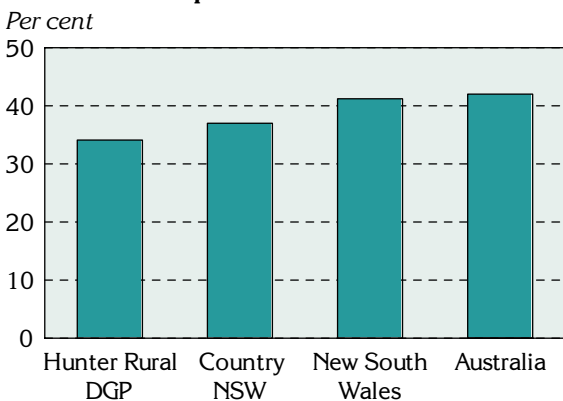
**Households receiving rent assistance & Dwellings rented from State housing authority**



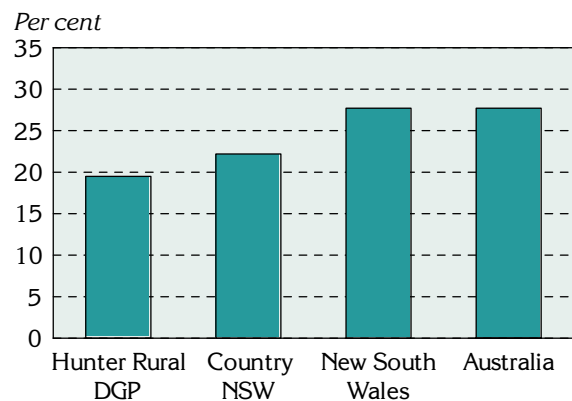
**Dwellings with no motor vehicle**



**Computer use at home**



**Internet use at home**



‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

**Table 3: Socio-demographic indicators, Hunter Rural DGP, country New South Wales, New South Wales and Australia, 2001**

Indicator	Hunter Rural DGP		Country NSW		New South Wales		Australia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single parent families	5,902	11.3	73,805	11.7	172,199	10.4	529,969	10.7
Indigenous‡	6,135	3.1	91,036	3.7	134,886	2.1	458,261	2.4
Full-time secondary school education at age 16‡	2,058	71.8	24,254	73.4	65,205	75.2	130,198	78.7
Households: rent assistance	13,233	18.7	156,074	18.3	343,540	15.5	1,006,599	15.0
Dwellings rented from the State housing authority	2,630	3.5	41,406	4.6	114,130	4.9	317,171	4.5
Dwellings: no motor vehicle	7,035	9.5	92,576	10.2	280,434	12.0	708,073	10.0
Computer use at home	65,431	34.1	874,207	37.0	2,600,257	41.2	7,881,983	42.0
Internet use at home	37,455	19.5	523,994	22.2	1,751,626	27.7	2,019,410	27.7

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division total

The unemployment rate of 7.9% in Hunter Rural DGP was marginally above that of country New South Wales (7.3%) and higher than for New South Wales (6.0%) (Figure 3, Table 4). The labour force participation rate (65.2%) and the female labour force participation rate (63.1%) were both lower than the rates for country New South Wales (72.3% and 66.8%) and New South Wales (76.3% and 69.2%).

**Table 4: Unemployment and labour force, Hunter Rural DGP, country NSW, New South Wales and Australia, 2003**

Labour force indicators	Hunter Rural DGP		Country NSW		New South Wales		Australia	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Unemployment rate ‡	6,608	7.9	83,231	7.3	198,946	6.0	623,791	6.2
Labour force participation‡	83,359	65.2	1,142,496	72.3	3,331,064	74.6	10,038,147	75.2
Female labour force participation (2001)	26,518	63.1	361,345	66.8	1,093,243	69.0	3,306,521	69.7

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division total

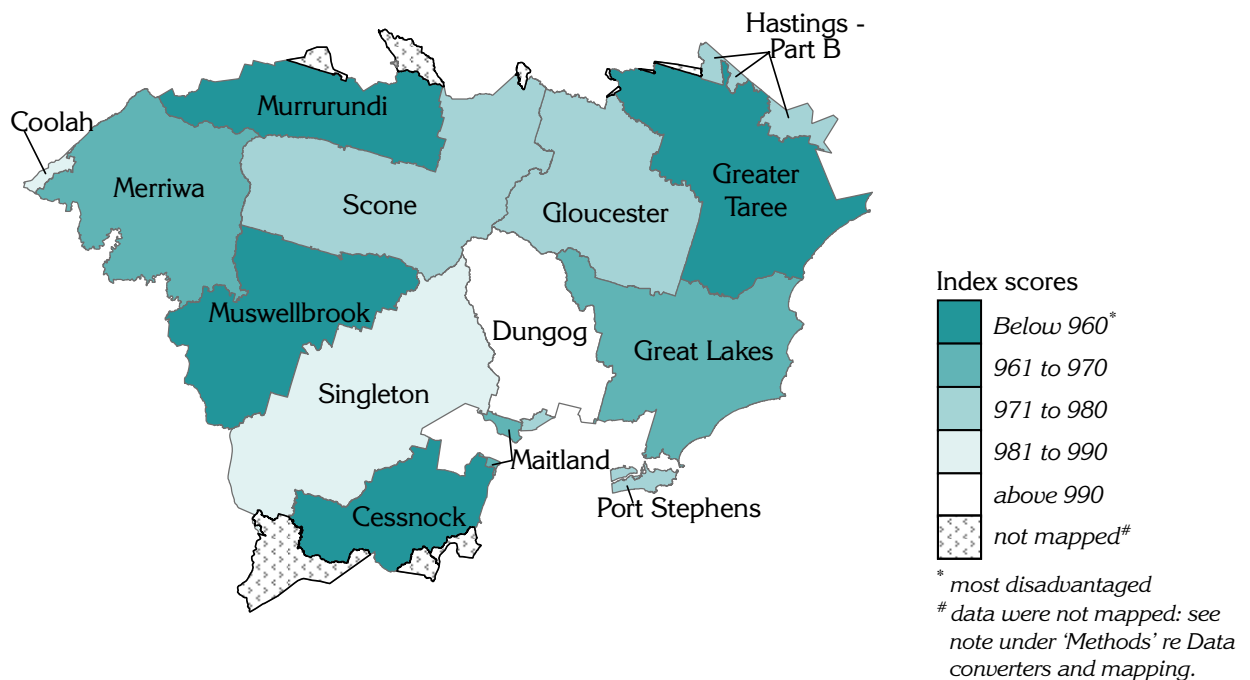
## Summary of the socioeconomic ranking of the Hunter Rural DGP

Following the 2001 Census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produced four socioeconomic indexes for areas (SEIFA) which describe various aspects of the socioeconomic profile of populations in areas. The scores for these indexes for each Statistical Local Area (SLA) or part SLA in Hunter Rural DGP are shown in the supporting information in Table 9, page 17: SLAs are described on page 19.

The Hunter Rural DGP area's SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score is 975, just (2.5%) below the average score for Australia (1000), but above that for country New South Wales (973); this highlights the near-average socioeconomic status profile of the Hunter Rural DGP population. Variations in the IRSD at the SLA level are shown in Map 1.

**Map 1: Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage by SLA, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001**

*See note under 'Methods' re Data converters and mapping concerning SLAs mapped to the Division. This is of particular relevance where part of an SLA is mapped to the Division.*





## General medical practitioner (GP) supply

A total of 138.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) GPs and 163.1 full-time workload equivalent (FWE<sup>2</sup>) GPs worked in the Division in 2003/04 (Table 5). Of the FWE GPs, 15.0% were female, and 30.4% were over 55 years of age (compared to 26.4% and 33.4%, respectively, for New South Wales).

Apart from the estimated day-time population, the rates of population per FTE GP varied, depending on the population measure used, from a high of 1,482 per GP (calculated on the average Estimated Resident Population (ERP) as at 30 June 2003 and 30 June 2004), to a low of 1,415 people per GP (calculated on the 1 August 2001 Census count – all people counted in the Division on Census night, including visitors from Australia and overseas). The rates of population per FWE were lower, ranging from 1,198 (calculated on the Census count) to 1,255 (calculated on the ERP). The rates of population per GP in the Division, when calculated on the estimated day-time population, were 3.3% below the Usual Resident Population (usual residents of the Division counted in Australia on Census night).

Based on the ERP, the rates of population per GP were slightly higher than the rates for New South Wales and Australia, indicating a marginally lower level of provision of GP services in the Division.

**Table 5: Population per GP in Hunter Rural DGP, New South Wales and Australia, 2003/04**

Population measure	Population	GPs		Population per GP	
		FTE	FWE	FTE	FWE
<b>Hunter Rural DGP</b>					
Census count (adjusted)*	195,390	138.1	163.1	1,415	1,198
Usual Resident Population (URP) (adjusted)*	196,548	..	..	1,424	1,205
Estimated Resident Population (ERP)	204,646	..	..	1,482	1,255
Day-time population (estimated on URP)* ‡	189,967	..	..	1,376	1,165
<b>New South Wales (ERP)</b>	<b>6,706,674</b>	<b>4,819</b>	<b>5,969</b>	<b>1,392</b>	<b>1,124</b>
<b>Australia (ERP)</b>	<b>19,989,303</b>	<b>14,246</b>	<b>16,872</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>1,185</b>

\* The Census count, Usual Resident Population and Day-time population were adjusted to reflect population change between 2001 and 2003/2004, as measured by the ERP

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

## Immunisation

Data from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register show that 94.8% of children in the Division in 2002 were fully immunised at age one, consistent with the Australian proportion of 94.2%.

Immunisation by provider type for children between the ages of 0 to 6 is shown in Table 6. The proportion of children in the Division who were immunised by a general practitioner was 86.9%, compared to 70.0% for Australia, with 12.3% immunised at a community health centre or by a community health worker.

**Table 6: Childhood immunisation at ages 0 to 6 by provider type, Hunter Rural DGP and Australia, 2003/04**

Provider	Hunter Rural DGP	Australia
	%	%
General practitioner	86.9	70.0
Local government council	0.5	16.6
Community health centre/ worker	12.3	9.8
Public hospital	0.0	2.1
Aboriginal health service/ worker	0.3	0.9
Other*	0.0	0.6
<b>Total: Per cent</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>36,226</b>	<b>3,843,610</b>

\* Includes immunisations in/ by State Health Departments, RFDS and private hospitals

<sup>2</sup>The FWE value is calculated for each GP location by dividing the GP's total Medicare billing (Schedule fee value of services provided during the reference period) by the mean billing of full-time doctors in that derived major speciality for the reference period. Thus, a GP earning 20% more than the mean billing of full-time doctors is shown as 1.2 FWE: this differs from full-time equivalent (FTE) counts, where the FTE value of any GP cannot exceed 1.0.

## Premature mortality

Deaths at ages below 75 years are used as an indicator of health status, as they largely reflect premature deaths, given the current levels of life expectancy in Australia.

The 'all causes' death rate in the Division at ages 0 to 74 years (327.8 deaths per 100,000 population) is higher than for country New South Wales (318.3) and Australia (290.4): the rates have been age standardised to allow for comparisons between areas, regardless of differences in age profiles between the Division and Australia.

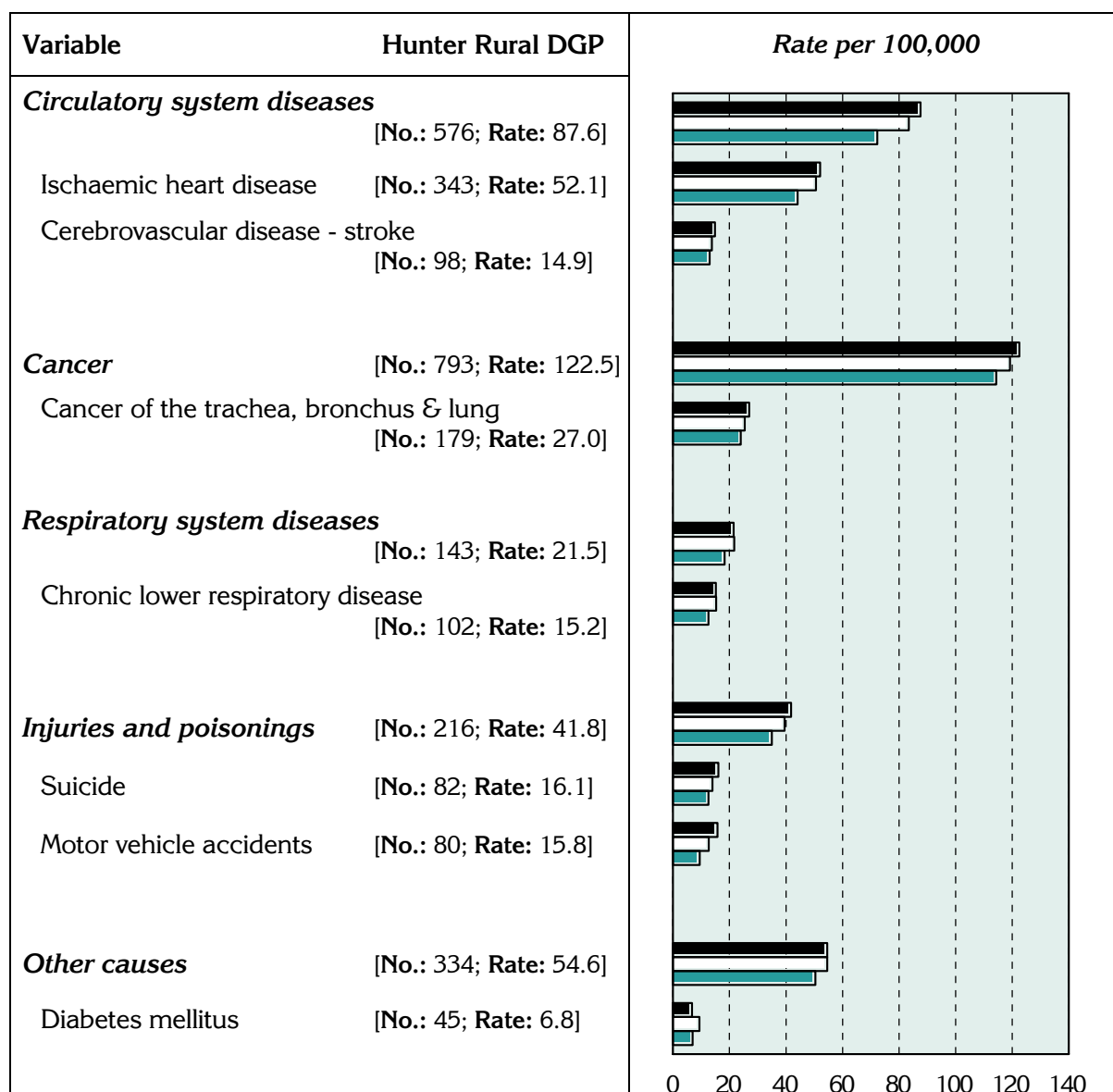
The major causes of premature mortality in the Division, as for country New South Wales and Australia as a whole, are cancer and diseases of the circulatory system followed by the 'other causes' group (Figure 4). The death rates in the Division for circulatory diseases, cancer, and injuries and poisoning were higher than for country New South Wales and Australia, while the death rates for respiratory diseases and other causes were similar.

The data on which the following chart is based are in Table 12.

**Figure 4: Deaths before 75 years of age by major condition group and selected cause, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2000-02\***

*Indirectly age standardised rate per 100,000 population*

■ Hunter Rural DGP      □ Country NSW      ■ Australia



\* 'No.' is the total number of deaths for the 2000-02 period; 'Rate' is an annual rate, based on the 3 year average

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

## Chronic diseases and risk factors

*The term “chronic disease” describes health problems that persist across time and require some degree of health care management (WHO 2002). Chronic diseases tend to have complex causes, are often long lasting and persistent in their effects, and can produce a range of complications (Thacker et al. 1995). They are responsible for a significant proportion of the burden of disease and illness in Australia and other westernised countries. Given the ageing of the population, this trend is likely to continue.*

*At different life stages, risk factors for chronic diseases and their determinants include genetic predisposition; poor diet and lack of exercise; alcohol misuse and tobacco smoking; poor intra-uterine conditions; stress, violence and traumatic experiences; and inadequate living environments that fail to promote healthy lifestyles (NPHP 2001). Risk factors are also more prevalent in areas of low socioeconomic status, and in communities characterised by low levels of educational attainment; high levels of unemployment; substantial levels of discrimination, interpersonal violence and exclusion; and poverty. There is a higher prevalence of risk factors among Indigenous communities, and other socioeconomically disadvantaged Australians (NPHP 2001).*

### Background

In this section, estimates of the prevalence of selected chronic diseases and risk factors, and two summary measures of health, are shown for the Division‡, and for SLAs within the Division: note that the estimates have been predicted from self-reported data, and are not based on clinical records or physical measures. The chronic diseases and risk factors are those for which sufficiently reliable estimates can be made for the Division from national survey data. The process by which the estimates have been made, and details of their limitations, are described in the Notes section, pages 15-16. The data on which the following charts are based are in Table 13.

The estimates provide information of relevance to a number of the National Health Priority Areas (NHPAs – asthma; cardiovascular health; diabetes mellitus; injury prevention and control; mental health; and arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions: estimates have not been made for cancer control, the other NHPA). The risk factors for which estimates have been made are those which are accepted as being associated with these important chronic conditions. They are overweight (not obese), obesity, smoking, lack of exercise and high risk alcohol use.

*The numbers are estimates for an area, not measured events as are death statistics: they should be used as indicators of likely levels (and not actual levels) of a condition or risk factor in an area.*

### Prevalence estimates: chronic disease‡

It is estimated that, with the exceptions of diabetes type 2 and musculoskeletal system diseases, slightly more people in Hunter Rural DGP reported having any of the selected chronic conditions than in Australia as a whole (Figure 5): that is, the prevalence rates per 1,000 population were higher.

### Prevalence estimates: self-reported health‡

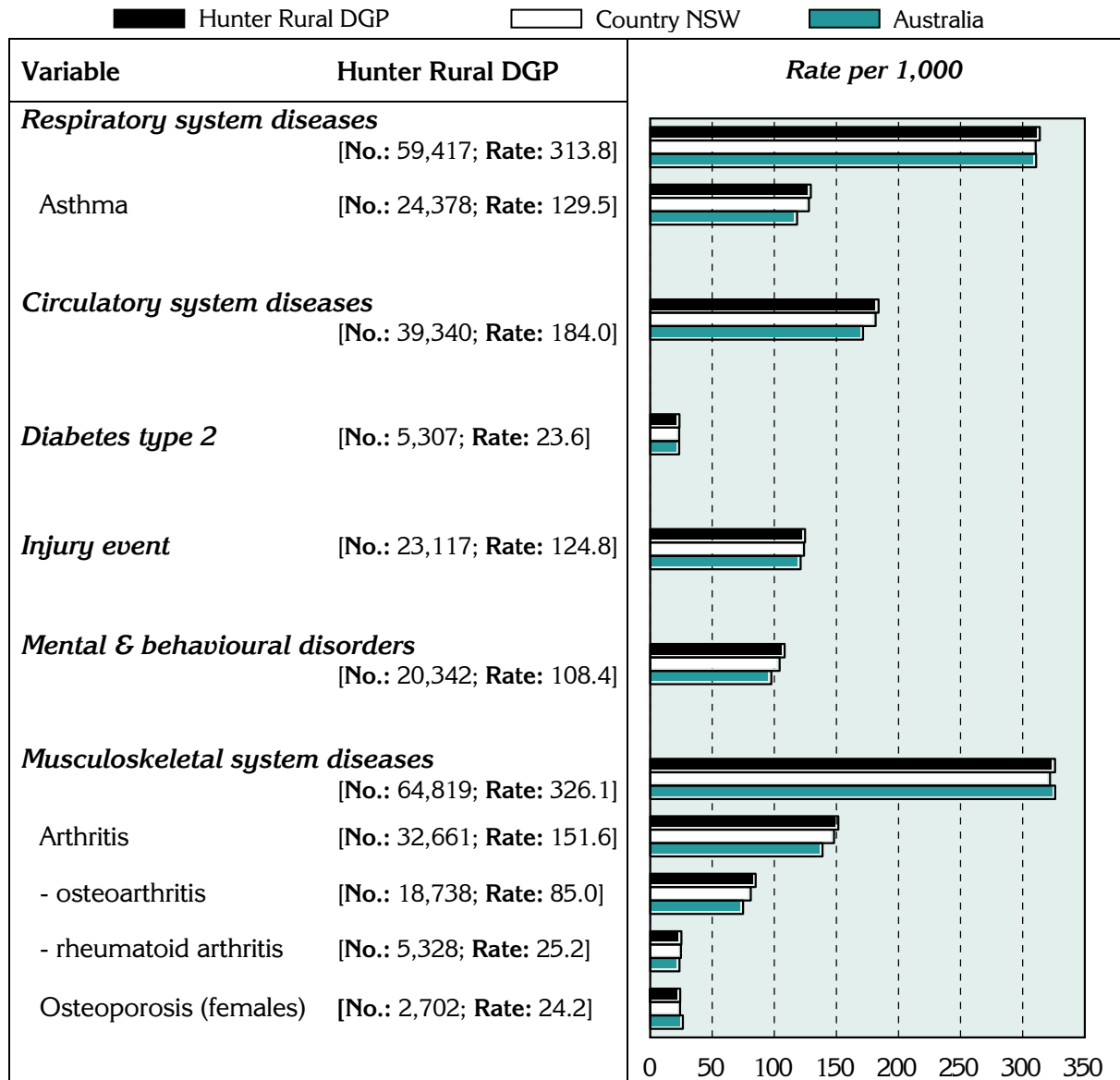
The NHS includes two measures of self-reported health. One is the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale–10 items (K–10). This is a scale of non-specific psychological distress based on 10 questions about negative emotional states in the four weeks prior to interview, asked of respondents 18 years and over (ABS 2002). The other asks respondents aged 15 years and over to rate their health on a scale from ‘excellent’, through ‘very good’, ‘good’ and ‘fair’, to ‘poor’ health.

The population of the Division aged 18 years and over is estimated to have relatively more people with very high psychological distress levels as measured by the K–10 (Figure 6) compared to Australia. The proportion of the population aged 15 years and over estimated to have reported their health as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ is also marginally above the national average.

‡ See note under ‘Data converters and mapping’ re calculation of Division totals

Figure 5: Estimates\* of chronic disease and injury, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2001

Indirectly age standardised rate per 1,000 population

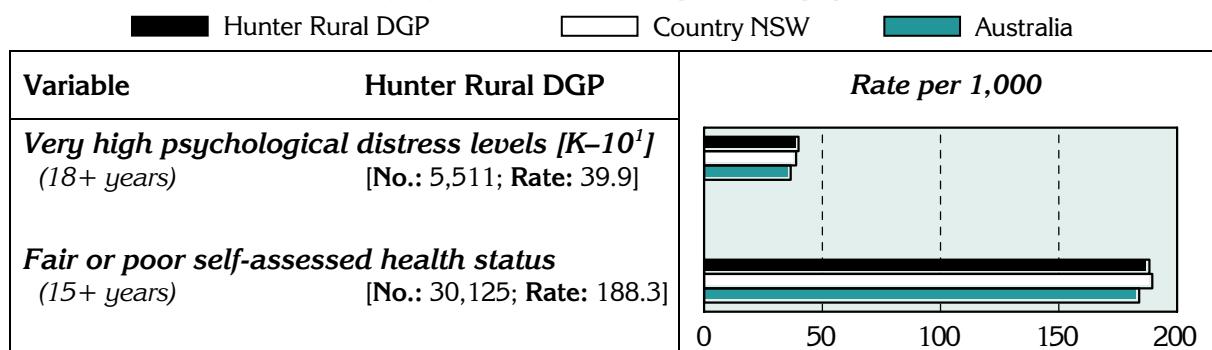


\* 'No.' is a weighted estimate of the number of people in Hunter Rural DGP reporting each chronic condition and is derived from synthetic predictions from the 2001 NHS

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

Figure 6: Estimates\* of measures of self-reported health, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2001

Indirectly age standardised rate per 1,000 population



\* 'No.' is a weighted estimate of the number of people in Hunter Rural DGP reporting under these measures and is derived from synthetic predictions from the 2001 NHS

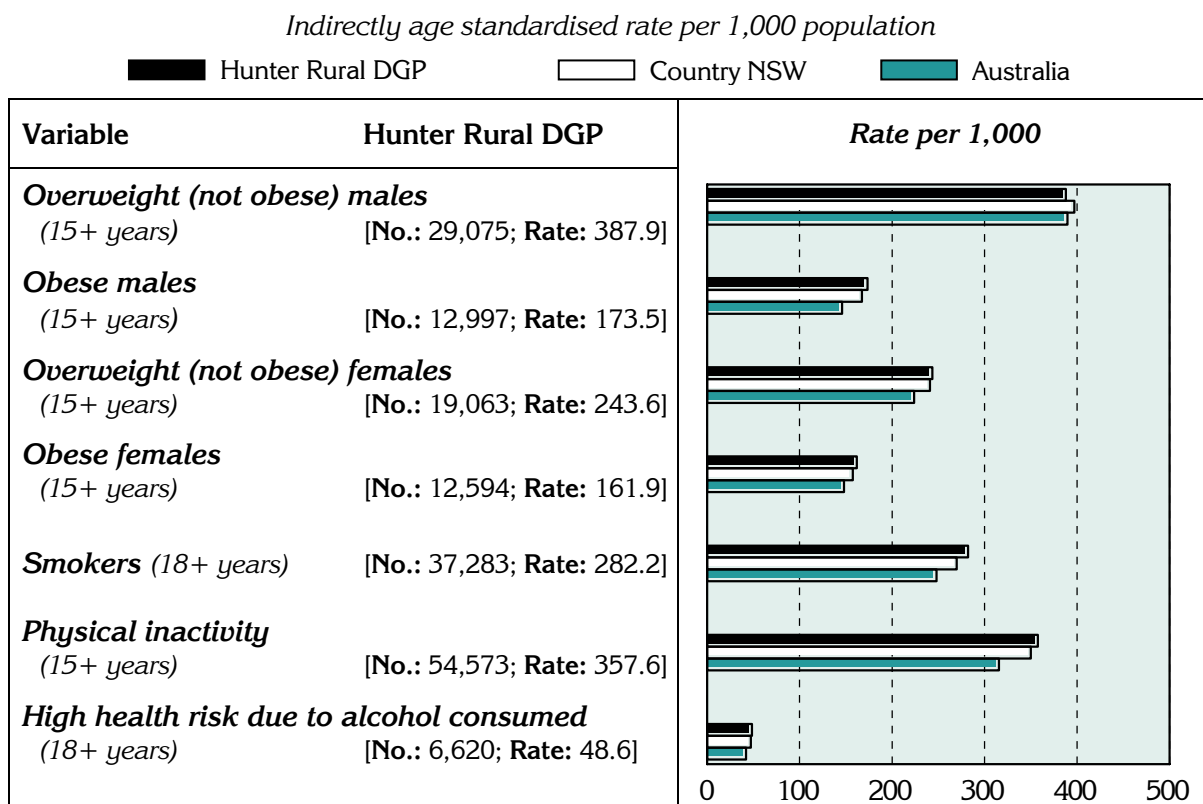
<sup>1</sup> Kessler 10

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

## Prevalence estimates: risk factors‡

The Hunter Rural DGP had relatively higher rates (when compared with the Australian population) for all of the selected risk factors except overweight in males (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Estimates\* of selected risk factors, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2001**



\* 'No.' is a weighted estimate of the number of people in Hunter Rural DGP with these risk factors and has been predicted using data from the 2001 NHS and known data for the Division

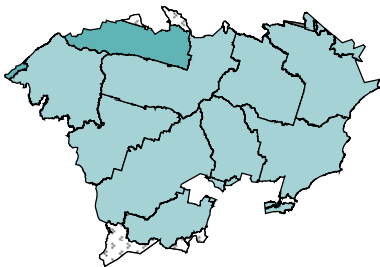
‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

The following maps provide details of the geographic distribution, at the SLA level, of the estimated prevalence of chronic disease (Map 2), self-reported health (Map 3) risk factors associated with chronic disease (Map 4).

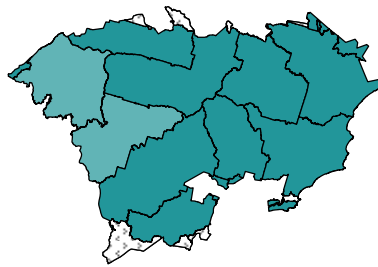
In the following maps, users should note that the estimates shown for part SLAs in the Division (see Table 11, page 19, for the per cent of SLA population in the Division) represent the estimates for the whole SLA, and not just the part shown. However, SLAs with only a small proportion of their population in the Division are likely to have little influence on the total estimates for the Division, which have been based on the percentage of the SLA population in the Division.

Map 2: Estimates\* of chronic disease and injury by SLA, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001

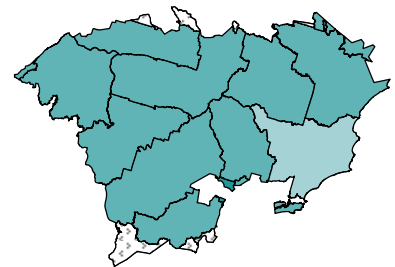
Respiratory system diseases



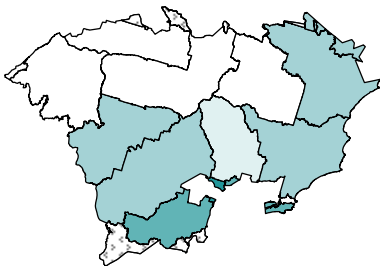
Respiratory system diseases: Asthma



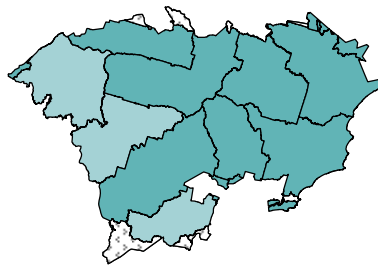
Circulatory system diseases



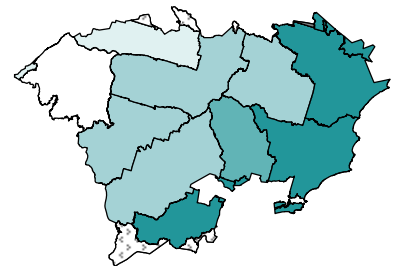
Diabetes Type 2



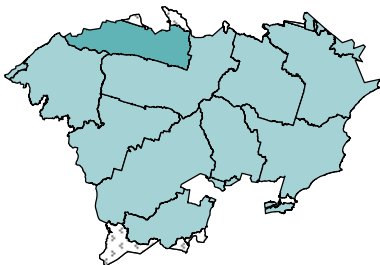
Injury event



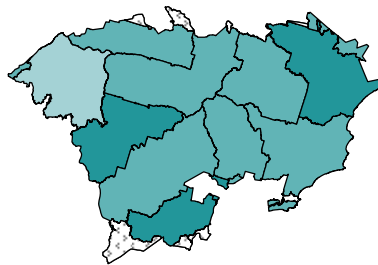
Mental & behavioural disorders



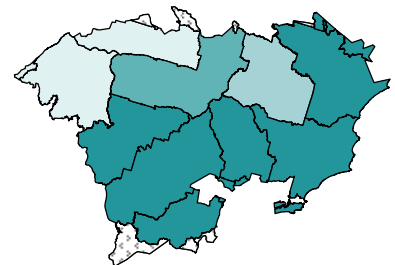
Musculoskeletal system diseases



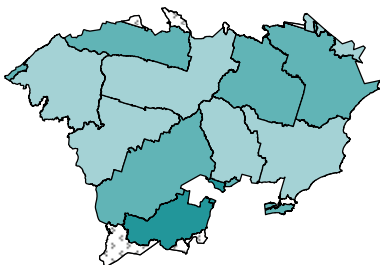
Musculoskeletal system diseases: Arthritis



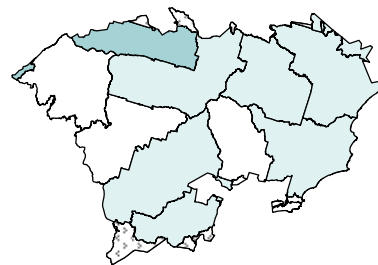
Arthritis: Osteoarthritis



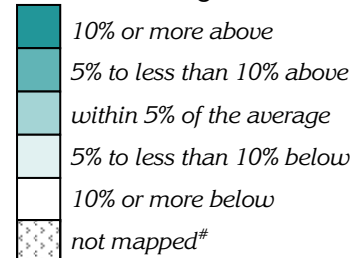
Arthritis: Rheumatoid arthritis



Osteoporosis (females)



Per cent difference from Australian average



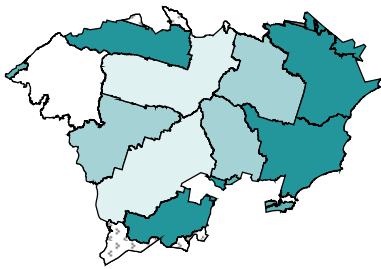
\* The estimates are synthetic predictions of the prevalence of these conditions: see Notes on the data.

# Data not mapped: see Notes on the data.



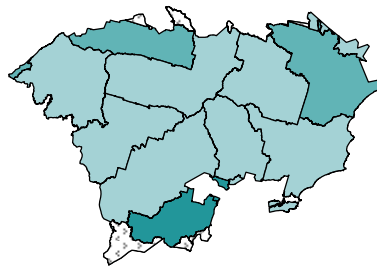
**Map 3: Estimates\* of measures of self-reported health by SLA, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001**

**Very high psychological distress levels [K-10<sup>1</sup>] (18+ years)**

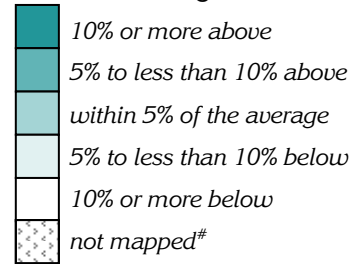


<sup>1</sup> Kessler 10

**Fair or poor self-assessed health status (15+ years)**



Per cent difference from Australian average

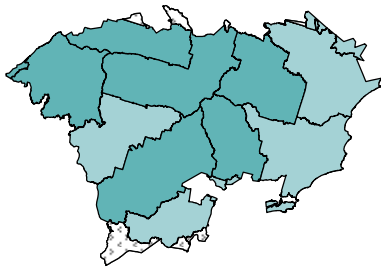


\* The estimates are synthetic predictions of the prevalence of these conditions: see Notes on the data.

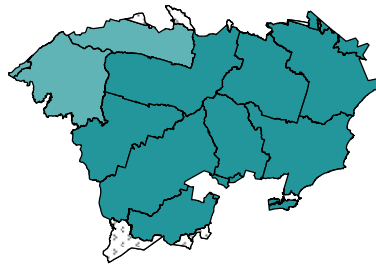
<sup>#</sup> Data not mapped: see Notes on the data.

**Map 4: Estimates\* of selected risk factors by SLA, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001**

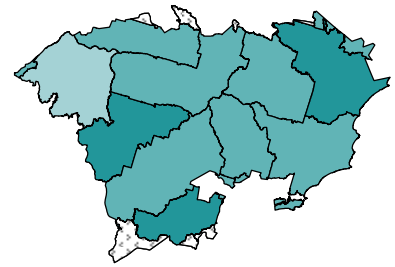
**Overweight (not obese) males (15+ years)**



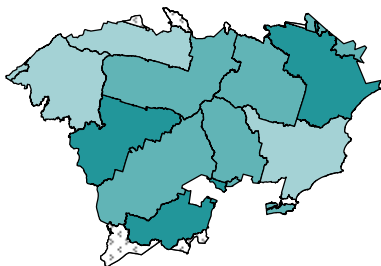
**Obese males (15+ years)**



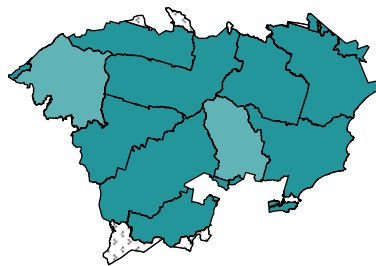
**Overweight (not obese) females (15+ years)**



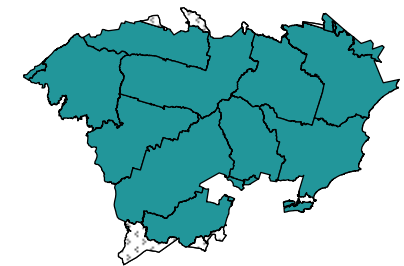
**Obese females (15+ years)**



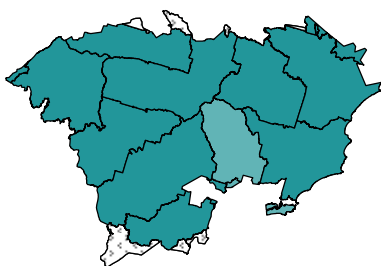
**Smokers (18+ years)**



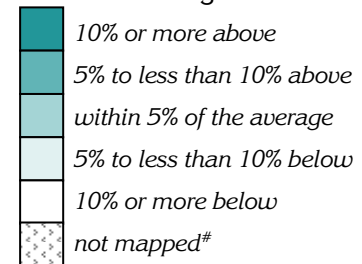
**Physical inactivity (15+ years)**



**High health risk due to alcohol consumed (18+ years)**



Per cent difference from Australian average



\* The estimates are synthetic predictions of the prevalence of these conditions: see Notes on the data.

<sup>#</sup> Data not mapped: see Notes on the data.

# Notes on the data

## Data sources and limitations

### General

References to 'country New South Wales' relate to New South Wales excluding the Sydney Statistical Division.

### Data sources

Table 7 details the data sources for the material presented in this profile.

**Table 7: Data sources**

Section	Source
<b>Key indicators</b>	
GP services per head of population	GP services data supplied by Department of Health and Ageing, 2003/04 Population data: Estimated Resident Population, ABS, mean of 30 June 2003 and 30 June 2004 populations
<b>Socio-demographic profile</b>	
Figures 1 and 2; Table 1	Estimated Resident Population, ABS, 30 June for the periods shown
Tables 2, 3 and 4; Figure 3	Data were extracted by postal area from the ABS Population Census 2001 <sup>1</sup> , except for the following indicators: - <i>Indigenous</i> – Experimental estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ABS 2001 (unpublished) - <i>Full-time secondary education participation at age 16</i> – Census 2001 (unpublished) - <i>Households receiving rent assistance</i> – Centrelink, December Quarter 2001 (unpublished) - <i>Unemployment rate / Labour force participation</i> – extracted from <i>Small Area Labour Markets Australia</i> , June Quarter 2003, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Map 1; Table 9	ABS SEIFA package, Census 2001
<b>General medical practitioner (GP) supply</b>	
Table 5	GP data supplied by Department of Health and Ageing, 2003/04 Population estimates used in calculating the population per GP rates are the: - Census count <sup>2</sup> , ABS Population Census 2001, scaled to 2003/04 - Usual Resident Population <sup>3</sup> , ABS Population Census 2001, scaled to 2003/04 - Day-time population: calculated from journey to work data, ABS Population Census (URP) 2001 (unpublished); and 2001 Census URP, scaled to 2003/04 - Estimated Resident Population, ABS, June 2003/2004
<b>Immunisation</b>	
Text comment: 1 year olds	National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 2002
Table 6	Australian Childhood Immunisation Register, Health Insurance Commission, 2003/04 (unpublished)
<b>Premature mortality</b>	
Figure 4; Table 12	ABS Deaths, 2000 to 2002
<b>Chronic diseases and associated risk factors<sup>4</sup></b>	
Figures 5, 6 and 7; Maps 2, 3 and ; Table 13	Estimated from 2001 National Health Survey (NHS), ABS (unpublished)

<sup>1</sup> All data extracted from Usual Residents Profile, except for data variables only released in the Basic Community Profile

<sup>2</sup> *Census count* - those counted in the Division on Census night, including tourists, business people and other visitors

<sup>3</sup> *Usual Resident Population* - those who usually live there and who were in Australia at the time and would have provided details in the Census at the address where they were counted

<sup>4</sup> See notes below



## Chronic diseases and associated risk factors

The data for chronic conditions and risk factors for SLAs have been estimated from the 2001 National Health Survey (NHS), conducted by the ABS: see note below on synthetic estimates. The NHS sample includes the majority of people living in private households, but excludes the most remote areas of Australia. These areas cover 86.4% of Australia's land mass and comprise just 3% of the total population, however, 28% of Australia's Indigenous population live in these areas. Thus it has not been possible to produce these estimates for Divisions with relatively high proportions of their population in the most remote areas of Australia.

The data for chronic conditions and risk factors are self-reported data, reported to interviewers in the 2001 NHS. Table 8 includes notes relevant to this data.

**Table 8: Notes on estimates of chronic diseases and associated risk factors**

Indicator	Notes on the data
<b>Estimates of chronic disease and injury</b> (Figure 5 and Map 2)	
Long term conditions	- Respondents were asked whether they had been diagnosed with any long term health condition (a condition which has lasted or is expected to last for 6 months or more), and were also asked whether they had been told by a doctor or nurse that they had asthma, cancer, heart and circulatory conditions, and/or diabetes
Injury event	- Injuries which occurred in the four weeks prior to interview
<b>Estimates of measures of self-reported health</b> (Figure 6 and Map 3)	
Very high psychological distress levels (K10)	- Derived from the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale-10 items (K-10), which is a scale of non-specific psychological distress based on 10 questions about negative emotional states in the 4 weeks prior to interview. 'Very high' distress is the highest level of distress category (of a total of four categories)
Fair or poor self-assessed health status	- Respondent's general assessment of their own health, against a five point scale from excellent through to poor – 'fair' or 'poor' being the two lowest in the scale
<b>Estimates of selected risk factors</b> (Figure 7 and Map 4)	
Overweight (not obese)	- Based on self-reported height and weight; BMI calculated and grouped into categories (to allow reporting against both WHO and NHMRC guidelines) - overweight: 25.0 to less than 30.0
Obese	- Based on self-reported height and weight; BMI calculated and grouped into categories (to allow reporting against both WHO and NHMRC guidelines) – obese: 30.0 and greater
Smokers	- Respondent's undertaking regular (or daily) smoking at the time of interview
Physical inactivity	- Did not exercise in the two weeks prior to interview through sport, recreation or fitness (including walking) – excludes incidental exercise undertaken for other reasons, such as for work or while engaged in domestic duties
High health risk due to alcohol consumed	- Respondent's estimated average daily alcohol consumption in the seven days prior to interview (based on number of days and quantity consumed). Alcohol risk levels were grouped according to NHMRC risk levels for harm in the long term, with 'high risk' defined as a daily consumption of more than 75 ml for males and 50 ml for females

**Note:** For a full description, refer to *ABS 2001 National Health Survey, Cat. No. 4364.0* and *ABS 2001 Health Risk Factors, Cat. No. 4812.0*

## Methods

### Synthetic estimates

The estimates of the prevalence of chronic disease and associated risk factors have been predicted for a majority of SLAs across Australia, using modelled survey data collected in the 2001 ABS National Health Survey (NHS) and known characteristics of the area. A synthetic prediction can be interpreted as the likely value for a 'typical' area with those characteristics: the SLA is the area level of interest for this project (where SLAs had small populations they were grouped to larger areas). This work was undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as they hold the NHS unit record files: the small area data were compiled by PHIDU.

The approach used is to undertake an analysis of the survey data for Australia to identify associations in the NHS data between the variables that we wish to predict at the area level (eg. prevalence of chronic conditions and risk factors) and the data we have at the area level (eg. socioeconomic status, use of health services). The relationship between these variables for which we have area level data (the predictors) and the reporting of chronic conditions in the NHS is also a part of the model that is developed by the ABS. For example, such associations might be between the number of people reporting specified chronic conditions in the NHS and:

- the number of hospital admissions (in total, to public and to private hospitals, by age, sex and diagnosis),
- socioeconomic status (as indicated by Census data, or for recipients of government pensions and benefits), and
- the number of visits to a general medical practitioner.

The results of the modelling exercise are then applied to the SLA counts of the predictors. The prediction is, effectively, the likely value for a typical area with those characteristics. The raw numbers were then age-standardised, to control for the effects of differences in the age profiles of areas.

*The numbers are estimates for an area, not measured events as are death statistics: they should be used as indicators of likely levels of a condition or risk factor in an area.*

### Premature deaths

Details of deaths by SLA were purchased from the ABS. The raw numbers were then age-standardised, by the indirect method, to control for the effects of differences in the age profiles of areas.

### Data converters and mapping

#### Conversion to Division of data available by postcode

The allocation of postcodes to Divisions was undertaken using information from the Department of Health and Ageing's web site, which shows the proportion of a postcode in a Division (Table 10).

#### Conversion to Division of data available by SLA

(marked in this profile as ‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division total)

Where the data presented in these profiles were only available by SLA they have been converted to Division of General Practice areas using a concordance based on data at the 2001 Census. A copy of the concordance is included in the Population data: A Guide for Divisions of General Practice: it is also available from the Divisions' data area on PHIDU web site.

In brief, the concordance splits the data (eg number of deaths) for each SLA across one or more Divisions. The proportion of an SLA's data that is allocated to each Division was calculated from (a) CD level Census 2001 data that splits SLAs across approximations to postcodes (referred to as postal areas) and (b) data on the DoHA website that splits postcodes across Divisions. This concordance can be adjusted to meet any new configuration of Division boundaries based on the 2001 Collection Districts, or combinations thereof.

The estimated population of each SLA in this Division is shown in Table 11.

#### Mapping

In some Divisions the maps may include a very small part of an SLA which has not been allocated any population, or either has a population of less than 100 or has less than 1% of the SLA's total population: these areas are mapped with a pattern.

## Supporting information

This and other information is also available at [www.publichealth.gov.au](http://www.publichealth.gov.au)

### A definition of population health

Population health, in the context of general practice, has been defined<sup>1</sup> as:

*“The prevention of illness, injury and disability, reduction in the burden of illness and rehabilitation of those with a chronic disease. This recognises the social, cultural and political determinants of health. This is achieved through the organised and systematic responses to improve, protect and restore the health of populations and individuals. This includes both opportunistic and planned interventions in the general practice setting.”*

The key determinants of health are social support networks, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, geographical isolation, personal health practices, healthy child development, ageing and disability, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender and culture.

In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context this means that a population health approach to health services will assist in ensuring “that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy a healthy life equal to that of the general population, that is enshrined by a strong living culture, dignity and justice”.<sup>2</sup> This recognises the importance of achieving improvements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and respects the particular health issues facing Indigenous people.

<sup>1</sup> “The role of general practice in population health – A Joint Consensus Statement of the General Practice Partnership Advisory Council and the National Public Health Partnership Group” (Joint Advisory Group on General Practice and Population Health 2001)

<sup>2</sup> As defined in the Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

### SEIFA scores

Following the 2001 Census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produced four socioeconomic indexes for areas (SEIFA). The indexes describe various aspects of the socioeconomic make-up of populations in areas, using data collected in the 2001 Census.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (labelled ‘Disadvantage’ in Table 9) includes all variables that either reflect or measure disadvantage. The Index of Advantage/Disadvantage is used to rank areas in terms of both advantage and disadvantage: any information on advantaged persons in an area will offset information on disadvantaged persons in the area. The Index of Economic Resources and the Index of Education and Occupation were targeted towards specific aspects of advantage/disadvantage.

For further information on the composition and calculation of these indexes see the ABS Information Paper ABS Cat No. 2039.0 available on the ABS web site [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au). The scores for these indexes for each Statistical Local Area (SLA) or part SLA in Hunter Rural DGP are shown in Table 9.

In using this table, users should note that the index score shown for SLAs with less than 100 per cent in the Division represents the score for the whole SLA, and not just the part shown. However, SLAs with small proportions may have little influence on the average index score for the Division which has been based on the postcodes in the Division.

Table 9: SEIFA scores by SLA, Hunter Rural DGP, 2001

SLA code	SLA name (% per cent of SLA in the Division)	Index score				
		Disadvantage	Advantage	Economic Resources	Education & Occupation	
11720	Cessnock	(86.3)	926	904	932	890
11950	Coolah	(2.6)	988	924	891	944
12700	Dungog	(81.8)	991	948	936	956
13050	Gloucester	(100.0)	972	921	907	928
13350	Greater Taree	(97.5)	946	913	901	933
13400	Great Lakes	(89.7)	967	918	906	940
13754	Hastings - Part B	(2.1)	971	921	901	943
15050	Maitland	(1.4)	962	958	974	944
15250	Merriwa	(94.6)	963	905	885	915
15600	Murrurundi	(100.0)	953	903	910	907
15650	Muswellbrook	(98.7)	945	949	995	910
16400	Port Stephens	(40.3)	974	952	960	948
16800	Scone	(100.0)	976	955	977	933
17000	Singleton	(93.9)	986	985	1030	938

\* Proportions are approximate and are known to be incorrect in some cases, due to errors in the concordance used to allocate CDs to form postal areas

### Statistical geography of the Hunter Rural DGP

The Hunter Rural DGP covers 31,499 square kilometres, based on 2001 SLA data.

The postcodes in the Division (as per the Department of Health and Ageing web site) are shown below (Table 10).

Table 10: Postcodes in Hunter Rural DGP, 2004

Postcode	Per cent of postcode population in the Division*	Postcode	Per cent of postcode population in the Division*	Postcode	Per cent of postcode population in the Division*
2301	33	2327	100	2415	100
2309	100	2328	100	2420	100
2311	100	2329	100	2421	100
2312	100	2330	98	2422	100
2315	100	2331	100	2423	100
2316	100	2333	100	2424	100
2317	100	2334	16	2425	100
2321	15	2335	49	2426	100
2323	1	2336	100	2427	100
2324	22	2337	100	2428	100
2325	98	2338	100	2429	100
2326	95	2339	100	2430	100

\* Proportions are approximate

Source: Department of Health and Ageing web site (accessed online version as at February 2005):

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pcd-programs-divisions-divspc.htm>

Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) are defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to produce areas for the presentation and analysis of data. In country New South Wales, SLAs are of the same size or smaller than local government areas (LGAs). In this Division, the very small (one per cent) part of Hastings LGA (Hastings - Part B) is the only SLA not equivalent to an LGA. Hastings - Part B and all or parts of the other SLAs that comprise the Division are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: SLAs in Hunter Rural DGP by 2001 boundaries**

SLA code	SLA name	Per cent of the SLA's population in the Division*	Estimate of the SLA's 2004 population in the Division
11720	Cessnock	86.3	41,487
11950	Coolah	2.6	101
12700	Dungog	81.8	6,846
13050	Gloucester	100.0	4,894
13350	Greater Taree	97.5	45,219
13400	Great Lakes	89.7	30,614
13754	Hastings - Part B	2.1	607
15050	Maitland	1.4	838
15250	Merriwa	94.6	2,183
15600	Murrurundi	100.0	2,162
15650	Muswellbrook	98.7	14,971
16400	Port Stephens	40.3	25,139
16800	Scone	100.0	9,804
17000	Singleton	93.9	20,547

\* Proportions are approximate and are known to be incorrect in some cases, due to errors in the concordance used to allocate CDs to form postal areas

## Supporting data

The data used in Figure 4 to illustrate the rates of premature mortality in the Division are shown below in Table 12.

**Table 12: Deaths before 75 years of age by major condition group and selected cause, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2000-02\***

*Indirectly age standardised rate per 100,000 population*

Variable	Hunter Rural DGP‡		Country NSW		Australia	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
<b>Circulatory system diseases</b>	576	87.6	6,468	83.4	38,357	72.3
Ischaemic heart disease	343	52.1	3,929	50.6	23,364	44.1
Cerebrovascular disease – stroke	98	14.9	1,080	13.8	6,920	13.0
<b>Cancer</b>	793	122.5	9,113	119.2	60,603	114.3
Cancer of the trachea, bronchus & lung	179	27.0	1,980	25.4	12,715	24.0
<b>Respiratory system diseases</b>	143	21.5	1,700	21.7	9,726	18.3
Chronic lower respiratory disease	102	15.2	1,209	15.3	6,657	12.6
<b>Injuries and poisonings</b>	216	41.8	2,541	39.5	18,573	35.0
Suicide	82	16.1	888	14.0	6,706	12.6
Motor vehicle accidents	80	15.8	809	12.7	5,014	9.5
<b>Other causes</b>	334	54.6	3,998	54.6	26,735	50.4
Diabetes mellitus	45	6.8	442	9.4	3,734	7.0

\* 'No.' is the total number of deaths for the 2000-02 period; 'Rate' is an annual rate, based on the 3 year average

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

The rates used to illustrate the prevalence estimates of chronic disease and injury (Figure 5), measures of self-reported health (Figure 6), and selected risk factors (Figure 7), are shown in Table 13 below.

**Table 13: Estimates of chronic diseases and associated risk factors, Hunter Rural DGP‡, country New South Wales and Australia, 2001**

*Indirectly age standardised rate per 1,000 population*

Variable	Hunter Rural DGP‡	Country NSW	Australia
<b>Chronic disease and injury</b> (Figure 5)			
Respiratory system diseases	313.8	310.4	310.8
Asthma	129.5	127.9	118.3
Circulatory system diseases	184.0	181.6	171.5
Diabetes type 2	23.6	23.4	23.4
Injury event	124.8	124.0	121.2
Mental & behavioural disorders	108.4	104.3	97.6
Musculoskeletal system diseases	326.1	322.0	326.2
Arthritis	151.6	148.1	138.8
- Osteoarthritis	85.0	81.1	74.9
- Rheumatoid arthritis	25.2	24.8	23.6
Osteoporosis (females)	24.2	24.1	26.4
<b>Measures of self-reported health</b> (Figure 6)			
Very high psychological distress levels (18+ years)	39.9	38.9	36.6
Fair or poor self-assessed health status (15+ years)	188.3	189.5	184.0
<b>Risk factors</b> (Figure 7)			
Overweight (not obese) males (15+ years)	387.9	397.0	389.7
Obese males (15+ years)	173.5	167.5	145.9
Overweight (not obese) females (15+ years)	243.6	240.9	223.9
Obese females (15+ years)	161.9	157.5	148.0
Smokers (18+ years)	282.2	269.8	248.0
Physical inactivity (15+ years)	357.6	349.9	315.5
High health risk due to alcohol consumed (18+ years)	48.6	47.4	42.1

‡ See note under 'Data converters and mapping' re calculation of Division totals

## References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2002). *2001 National Health Survey: summary of results*. Australia. (ABS Cat. No. 4364.0). Canberra: ABS.

National Public Health Partnership (NPHP) (2001). *Preventing Chronic Disease: A Strategic Framework*. Melbourne, Victoria.

Thacker S, Stroup D & Rothenberg R (1995). Public health surveillance for chronic conditions: a scientific basis for decisions. *Statistics in Medicine* 14: 629-641.

World Health Organization (2002). *The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

## Acknowledgements

Funding for these profiles was provided by the Population Health Division of the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA). Assistance, by way of comment on the profiles and assistance in obtaining some datasets, has also been received from the Primary Care Division of the DoHA, the ABS and the ACIR.

## Further developments and updates

Subject to agreement and funding, a number of developments could be undertaken:

- Details of hospitalisations potentially avoidable through ambulatory care interventions are currently being prepared and will be forwarded to Divisions (and posted on the PHIDU web site) when they are available. Other enhancements will be considered as appropriate datasets become available.

The profiles could be updated as the data are updated. For example:

- Population estimates, avoidable hospitalisations, immunisation, and GP activity and workforce data – annually;
- Chronic disease estimates – three-yearly;
- Census data – five-yearly.

Any developments would be informed by consultation, including with Divisions.

## PHIDU contact details

**For general comments, data issues or enquiries re information on the web site, please contact PHIDU:**

Phone: 08-8303 6236 or e-mail: [PHIDU@publichealth.gov.au](mailto:PHIDU@publichealth.gov.au)