



Fact File

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

**Australian Pathologist Workforce 2018
Forensic Pathology**

AUSTRALIAN PATHOLOGIST WORKFORCE – FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Forensic Pathology is the subspecialty of Pathology that focuses on medicolegal investigations of sudden or unexpected death.

A Forensic Pathologist is primarily involved identifying the cause of death and reconstructing the circumstances by which the death occurred. This is performed in a meticulous, painstaking manner. A major component of the role involves the performance of autopsy examinations to both the external and internal body organs to discover cause of death. They also look at tissue sample from bodies under the microscope to assist in establishing the underlying pathological basis for the cause of death. Forensic Pathologists are occasionally required to visit crime scenes or accidents or to testify in court.

Workforce profile and trends

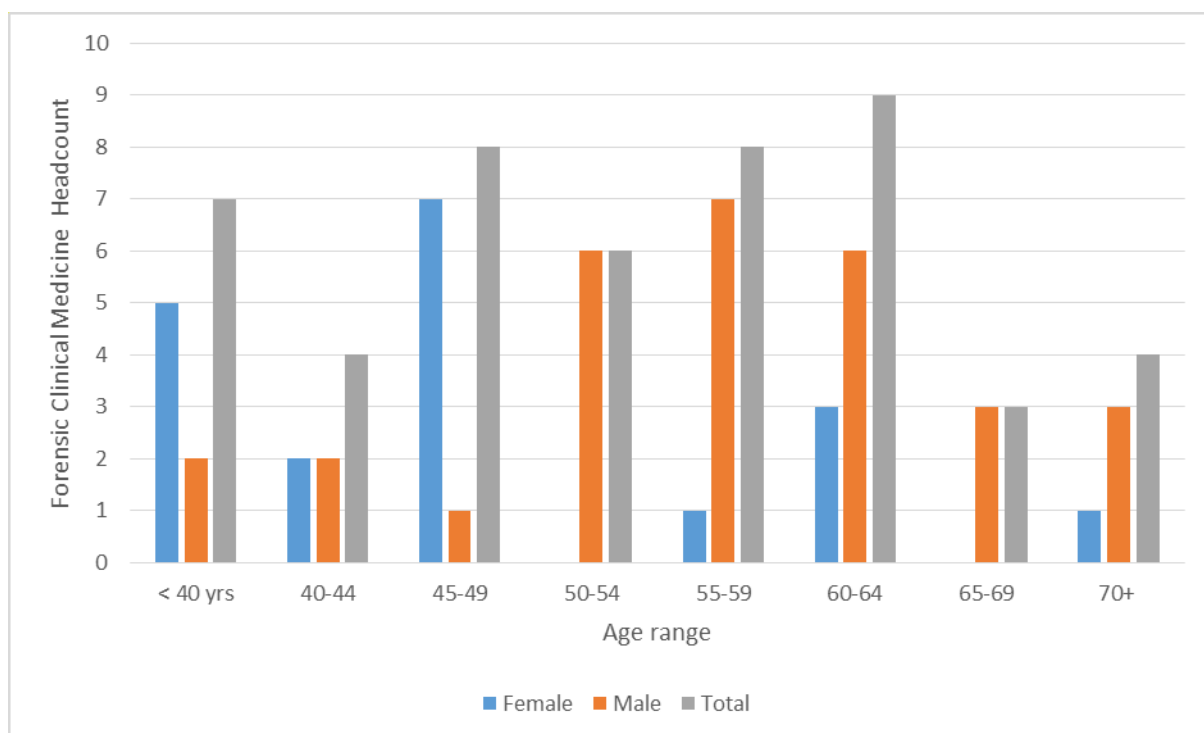
In 2011, the Forensic Pathologist workforce was a headcount of 37, representing 2.3% of the total national Pathologist workforce. In 2016 the headcount was 49 practitioners (2.5% of the national Pathologist workforce). The increase in workforce size was 6.5% per annum on average.

Table 1: Forensic Pathologist Workforce, 2016, Age and Sex Profile

Age Group	Headcount			Percentage	Percentage
	Female	Male	Total	by Age	Female by Age
30-34	2	0	2	4.1%	100.0%
35-39	3	2	5	10.2%	60.0%
40-44	2	2	4	8.2%	50.0%
45-49	7	1	8	16.3%	87.5%
50-54	0	6	6	12.2%	0.0%
55-59	1	7	8	16.3%	12.5%
60-64	3	6	9	18.4%	33.3%
65-69	0	3	3	6.1%	0.0%
70+	1	3	4	8.2%	25.0%
Total	19	30	49	100.0%	38.8%
55 years and older	5	19	24		
% 55 years and older	26.3%	63.3%	49.0%		

Source: RCPA data base, 2016

Figure 1: Forensic Pathologist Workforce, 2016, Age and Sex Profile



Source: RCPA data base, 2016

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the modal age range for the workforce is 60 to 64 years, for the female workforce is 45 to 49 years, and for the male workforce is 55 to 59 years. Females are in the majority in each age cohort up to 49 years, apart from those aged 35 to 39 years. Males are in the majority for all age cohorts 50 years and over.

Trends in trainee numbers

Forensic Pathologist trainees increased from four to eleven trainees over the period 2011 to 2016. This was a very high growth of 175% over the period.

Workforce demand and supply

Forensic Pathology is a small workforce, thus maintaining a balance of trainees is difficult. The consequences of factors, such as Coronial demand and changes in approach to the post-mortem process with increased use of CT scanning, are difficult to predict. The Forensic Pathology Workforce Survey 2016, identified that there were 5-7 unfilled vacancies, and between 8-16 extra appointments required across Australia and New Zealand.

Results of analysis

No quantitative modelling was undertaken for the Forensic Pathology workforce due to the small workforce size. Given the higher proportion of practitioners older than 55% (49.0%) and older than 65 (14.3%) as well as the higher average age of males (57 years) there will be a loss of at least seven practitioners within five years. Therefore, there should be an additional number of trainees funded for this discipline.