

A snapshot of the Cancer Nursing Workforce



The Cancer Nurses Society of Australia (CNSA) conducted the second cancer nursing workforce survey in 2025. It was completed by almost 1,000 cancer nurses working across all settings in Australia, providing a snapshot of shifting workforce dynamics three years on from the first nationwide cancer nursing survey.

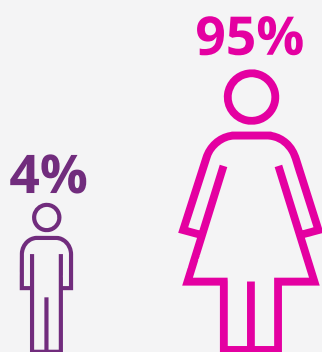
Why is this important?

The critical data collected in this survey is important in enabling CNSA to strengthen our national advocacy. It helps us understand who cancer nurses are, where they work, what pressures they are experiencing, and what they need to stay and grow in the profession. The data will help CNSA advocate with greater clarity and credibility for workforce planning, investment and recognition. It will also support our conversations about workforce sustainability, advanced practice, education, retention, succession planning, regional and rural access, equity, and the future capability of the cancer nursing workforce.

This is an opportunity to raise the profile and prioritise the needs of cancer nurses, ensuring their voice is represented in advocacy shaping the future of cancer care nursing in Australia.

What the data tells us

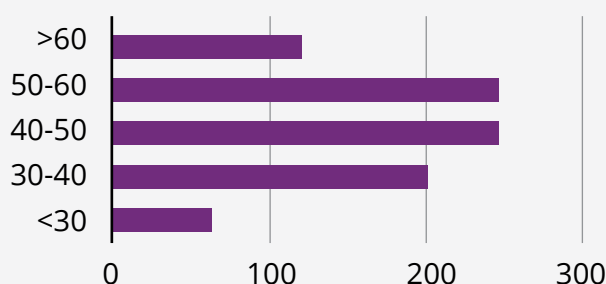
Most respondents were female with a median age of 46 years.



Non-binary n=1, prefer not to say n=6 (N=884).

Median 46 years (IQR 37.0, 55.0)

N=879.



No. of years of NURSING experience

Median 20 years (IQR 12.0, 30.0)

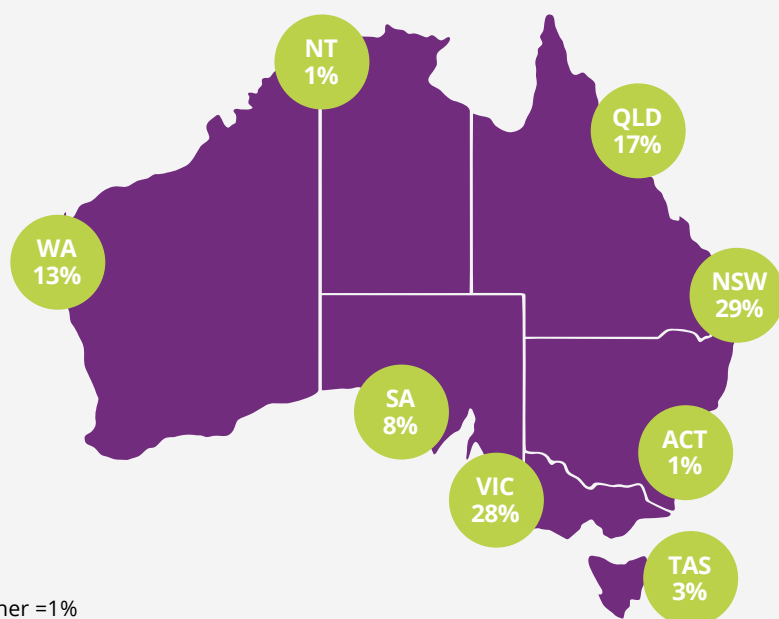
N=887

No. of years of CANCER NURSING experience

Median 14 years (IQR 7.0, 21.0)

N=887

Survey respondents had a low representation of young cancer nurses (<30 years) and overrepresentation of nurses aged 40–60 years, which aligns with the demographics of the CNSA membership. This is a highly qualified and experienced group of nurses, with a median duration of **14 years** of working in cancer nursing. Most respondents (**68%**) identify as specialist cancer nurses. Around **40%** hold postgraduate degrees, and **79%** of those are cancer-related. Most work in public (**65%**) cancer centres (**46%**) delivering general oncology services covering a broad range of tumour types and activities in patient care.



Respondents show well-balanced geographic coverage across all states and territories, with a distribution similar to the National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS).¹

Respondents had good coverage of remote, rural, and regional parts of Australia, which informs our understanding of how cancer nurses are bridging the gap between local communities and distant metropolitan cancer centres.

This survey shows the breadth of practice of cancer nurses working across different geographic and clinical environments, and models of care across diverse settings in Australia, including metropolitan and rural/regional settings, public and private health services, community-based care, telehealth, and research settings. This data is key in understanding the challenges with delivering cancer care in different communities and helps build a picture of the varied scope of practice of cancer nurses working across Australia.

What's next

A working group of the CNSA Research Standing Committee are analysing the survey data to enable a detailed understanding of what we can learn about the workforce. This analysis will be published later this year, along with a full report and series of data digests for our members. This will also contribute to CNSA's vision of building a comprehensive national Cancer Nursing Workforce dataset.

We sincerely thank the cancer nurses who shared their time and insights by completing the survey and ensuring the voice of cancer nurses is heard.

How this informs workforce planning

CNSA is encouraged by the actions and the workforce reforms outlined in the **National Nursing Workforce Strategy**, and is looking forward to working with key nursing organisations on a coordinated approach to the implementation of this strategy, with a focus on the needs of cancer nurses. In addition, CNSA will continue to advocate for the adoption of the recommendations from the national **Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce** scope of practice review, which will enable cancer nurses to work to their full potential.

Watch this space for member updates as we share more insights from the survey and outcomes from our advocacy work to improve the opportunities for cancer nurses and outcomes for the people affected by cancer in Australia.

REFERENCES

1. National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS). Available at: <https://hwd.health.gov.au/resources/information/nhwsd.html>. Accessed July 2026.