



Fair Work
Commission

Data profile—Pharmacists and the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020*

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1. Introduction

This data profile uses microdata from the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) (May 2023) and data from the ABS Census (August 2021) to provide information on pharmacists and employees whose pay is set by the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020* (Pharmacy Award).

Under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), the unit group 'Pharmacists' falls under the major group 'Professionals'. Under the ANZSCO, pharmacists "ensure safe and quality use of medicines, and optimise health outcomes by contributing to selecting, prescribing, monitoring and evaluating medicine therapy, and researching, testing and developing pharmaceuticals and medical products".¹

Within this unit group are three occupations: hospital pharmacists; industrial pharmacists; and retail pharmacists. These occupations are classified as:²

- **Hospital Pharmacist:** prepares and dispenses pharmaceuticals, drugs and medicines in a hospital pharmacy. Registration or licensing is required.
- **Industrial Pharmacist:** undertakes research, testing and analysis related to the development, production, storage, quality control and distribution of drugs and related supplies. Registration or licensing is required.
- **Retail Pharmacist (also known as Community Pharmacist):** dispenses prescribed pharmaceuticals to the public, educates customers on health promotion, disease prevention and the proper use of medicines, and sells non-prescription medicines and related goods in a community pharmacy. Registration or licensing is required.

Data from the Census are presented for retail pharmacists as this is the most relevant occupation to the coverage of the Pharmacy Award. The Census is the only survey that can provide data at this detailed level. Microdata from the EEH are based on a smaller number of observations and do not allow for this level of detail. Such data can be subject to high sampling error where results should be interpreted with caution.

¹ ABS, ANZSCO – *Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations*, 2022.

² ABS, [*2515 Pharmacists: Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations*](#), 2022.

2. Retail Pharmacists

According to the ABS Census, there are 23 390 pharmacists who are employees (0.2 per cent of all employees), of which the majority (16 850 or 72.0 per cent) are retail pharmacists. Table 1 shows that retail pharmacists are:

- more often female (68.4 per cent) than male;
- typically engaged full time, rather than part time (3 in 5);
- more likely to hold a Bachelor's degree or higher as their highest level of educational attainment (92 per cent)

Compared to all employees, retail pharmacists are more likely to be female, to be working part time, to be younger, and to hold a higher level of education. However, when compared with all pharmacists, retail pharmacists are:

- less likely to be female;
- more likely to be employed part-time; and
- less likely to hold a postgraduate degree.

Table 1: Characteristics of Retail Pharmacists and all Pharmacists (2021 Census)

| | Retail Pharmacists | All Pharmacists | All Employees |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Total (No.) | 16 850 | 23 390 | 10 143 435 |
| Sex (%) | | | |
| Male | 31.6 | 29.8 | 49.1 |
| Female | 68.4 | 70.1 | 50.9 |
| Average age (years) | 36.2 | 36.4 | 39.5 |
| Age group (%) | | | |
| Up to 20 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 7.9 |
| 21 to 30 | 34.5 | 34.5 | 23.1 |
| 31 to 50 | 49.8 | 50.7 | 44.2 |
| 51 or older | 13.0 | 12.9 | 24.8 |
| Full-time/part-time status (%) | | | |
| Full-time | 59.8 | 63.6 | 65.2 |
| Part-time | 40.2 | 36.4 | 34.8 |
| Average hours worked | 31.4 | 32.1 | 32.6 |
| Total hours worked (%) | | | |
| Less than 10 hours | 9.6 | 9.2 | 11.9 |
| 10 to 19 hours | 10.6 | 9.2 | 8.3 |
| 20 to 34 hours | 22.6 | 21.2 | 19.0 |
| 35 or more hours | 57.2 | 60.4 | 60.8 |
| Highest educational attainment (%) | | | |
| Postgraduate study | 19.8 | 25.1 | 13.0 |
| Bachelor's degree | 72.2 | 68.5 | 24.7 |
| Cert III & IV, diploma or advanced diploma | 1.8 | 1.6 | 30.7 |
| Year 12 and below | 6.2 | 4.9 | 31.6 |

Note: The relevant ANZSCO codes are 2515 for (All) Pharmacists, and 251513 for Retail (Community) Pharmacist. Data includes only those who are listed as employees. Total pharmacists include not further defined (nfd) pharmacists (0.2% of total).

Source: ABS, *Microdata and TableBuilder*: Census, August 2021.

The majority of pharmacists work in Retail trade (63.7 per cent), while an even larger proportion of retail pharmacists work in this industry trade (84.5 per cent) (Table 2). The industry includes businesses whose primary activities include pharmacy retail operation and prescription medicine dispensing.³

Table 2: Most common industries of Retail Pharmacists and all Pharmacists (2021 Census)

| | Retail Pharmacists | All Pharmacists | All Employees |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| | (%) | (%) | (%) |
| Manufacturing | 0.8 | 3.3 | 6.5 |
| Retail trade | 84.5 | 63.7 [^] | 10.1 |
| Health care and social assistance | 10.7 | 27.4 | 16.3 |
| All other industries | 4.0 | 5.6 | 67.2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: The relevant ANZSCO codes are 2515 for (All) Pharmacists, and 251513 for Retail (Community) Pharmacist. Data includes only those who are listed as employees. Total pharmacists include not further defined (nfd) pharmacists (0.2% of total). [^]Almost all of the pharmacists working in Retail trade are retail pharmacists (95.7 per cent).

Source: ABS, *Microdata and TableBuilder: Census, August 2021*.

Information on the method of setting pay for pharmacists is only available in the EEH microdata, with the unit group ‘Pharmacists’ being the most detailed ANZSCO level available in this dataset.⁴ Information from the EEH survey indicates that 12.7 per cent of pharmacists have their pay set by an award (Table 3).

Table 3: Method of setting pay, pharmacists (2023 EEH)

| | (No.) | (%) |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|
| All Pharmacists | 23 208* | 100 |
| Method of setting pay | | |
| Award only [^] | 2938* | 12.7* |
| Registered collective agreement | 6068* | 26.1* |
| Individual agreement | 14 202* | 61.2* |

Note: * Estimate has a RSE of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be interpreted with caution. [^]The award only category includes both those on modern awards and other awards. Pharmacists account for 0.2 per cent of all employees in the EEH survey.

Source: ABS, *Microdata: Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2023*.

The EEH does not allow for detailed analysis of the pharmacists who are award reliant. In the next section, data are presented on the characteristics of employees paid classification rates in the Pharmacy Award.

³ ABS, *4271 Pharmaceutical, Cosmetic and Toiletry Goods Retailing*, June 2013.

⁴ Analysis of the EEH microdata similarly finds that around 7 in 10 pharmacists are female.

3. Employees on the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020*

Table 4 presents the characteristics of all employees on the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020* (Pharmacy Award) alongside the characteristics of all employees that have their pay set by a modern award. The table shows that employees paid classification rates in the Pharmacy Award are:

- far more commonly female (93.4 per cent) than male (6.6 per cent);
- typically engaged part time (86.2 per cent), than full time;
- younger, with almost half aged 20 years or under;
- less commonly employed on a casual basis (just over 1 in 3);
- working fewer hours, on average; and
- most commonly Sales workers (82.4 per cent).

Compared to all modern award-reliant employees, employees paid by the Pharmacy Industry Award are, on average:

- less often receiving an adult rate of pay;
- receiving lower hourly earnings; and
- more commonly low paid (3 in 5).

A large majority of employees on the Pharmacy Award are Sales workers (82.5 per cent). The majority of the remaining employees work in higher-skilled occupations Manager, Professionals, and Technicians and trades workers.⁵

⁵ Note the high relative standard error means we are not able to state this in more precise terms.

Table 4: Characteristics of employees reliant on *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020*, (2023 EEH)

| | <i>Pharmacy Industry Award 2020</i> | Average across all modern award-reliant employees |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Sex (%) | | |
| Male | 6.6** | 41.4 |
| Female | 93.4 | 58.6 |
| Average Age (years) | 28.1 | 33.9 |
| Age group (%) | | |
| Up to 20 years | 46.4 | 19.4 |
| 21 to 30 years | 19.3 | 30.4 |
| 31 to 50 years | 20.7** | 30.8 |
| 51 years or older | 13.7** | 19.4 |
| Rate of pay (ROP) (%) | | |
| Adult | 63.9 | 83.4 |
| Other rates of pay (junior, apprentice/trainee or disability) | 36.1 | 16.6 |
| Full-time/part-time status (%) | | |
| Full time | 13.8** | 30.4 |
| Part time | 86.2 | 69.6 |
| Average total working hours paid for (hours per week) | 21.6 | 24.5 |
| Hours paid for per week (total hours, including overtime) (%) | | |
| up to 10 | 22.1 | 19.7 |
| >10 and up to 20 | 21.8* | 22.7 |
| >20 and less than 35 | 39.5 | 24.8 |
| 35 or more | 16.6** | 32.7 |
| Employment type (%) | | |
| Casual | 36.6* | 52.8 |
| Permanent/fixed-term | 63.4 | 47.2 |
| Hourly earnings, total time (includes overtime) (\$) | | |
| Average hourly earnings, total earnings, all employees | 25.8 | 30.7 |
| Average hourly earnings, total earnings, adult ROP | 28.5 | 33.3 |
| Ordinary-time hourly earnings (\$) | | |
| Average hourly earnings, adult ROP, adjusted for casual loading | 27.5 | 29.5 |
| Average hourly earnings, adult ROP | 28.5 | 33.0 |
| Proportion of low-paid employees based on ordinary-time earnings (%)[^] | | |
| Based on unadjusted earnings | 52.0* | 15.3 |
| Adjusted for casual loading | 60.9 | 35.6 |
| Occupations (%) | | |
| Sales workers | 82.4 | 19.8 |
| Managers | | 1.3 |
| Professionals | 11.8** | 5.2 |
| Technicians and trades workers | | 10.5 |
| All other occupations [#] | 5.9** | 63.3 |

Note: * Estimate has a RSE of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be interpreted with caution. ** Estimate has a RSE of greater than 50 per cent and is considered too unreliable for general use. [^] Low paid is defined as those earning less than two-thirds of median, ordinary-time hourly earnings for all employees on an adult rate of pay. [#]All other occupations include Community and personal services workers, Clerical and administrative workers, Machinery operators and drivers, and Labourers.

Source: ABS, *Microdata: Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia*, May 2023.

Compared to the average across all modern awards, employees on the Pharmacy Award are more commonly working in (Table 2):

- smaller businesses (up to 19 employees); and
- Retail Trade (81.5 per cent compared to 16.8 per cent).

Table 5: Employer characteristics of employees reliant on the *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020* (2023 EEH)

| Employer | <i>Pharmacy Industry Award 2020</i> | Average across all modern award-reliant employees |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Business size (%) | | |
| Micro (1-4 employees) | 65.0* | 8.5 |
| Small (5–19) | | 25.1 |
| Medium (20–199) | 35.0** | 39.3 |
| Large (200+) | | 27.1 |
| Industry (%) | | |
| Retail trade | 81.5 | 16.8 |
| Professional, scientific and technical services | 18.5** | 3.4 |
| Administrative and support services | | 10.9 |
| Rental, hiring and real estate services | | 1.6 |
| All other industries | 0 | 67.3 |

Note: * Estimate has a RSE of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be interpreted with caution. ** Estimate has a RSE of greater than 50 per cent and is considered too unreliable for general use. Proportions for industry may not sum to 100 for each column due to data not being published for some industries.

Source: ABS, *Microdata: Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia*, May 2023.