

Snap Survey 02: Rural Victoria Non-Urgent Patient Appointment Waiting Times

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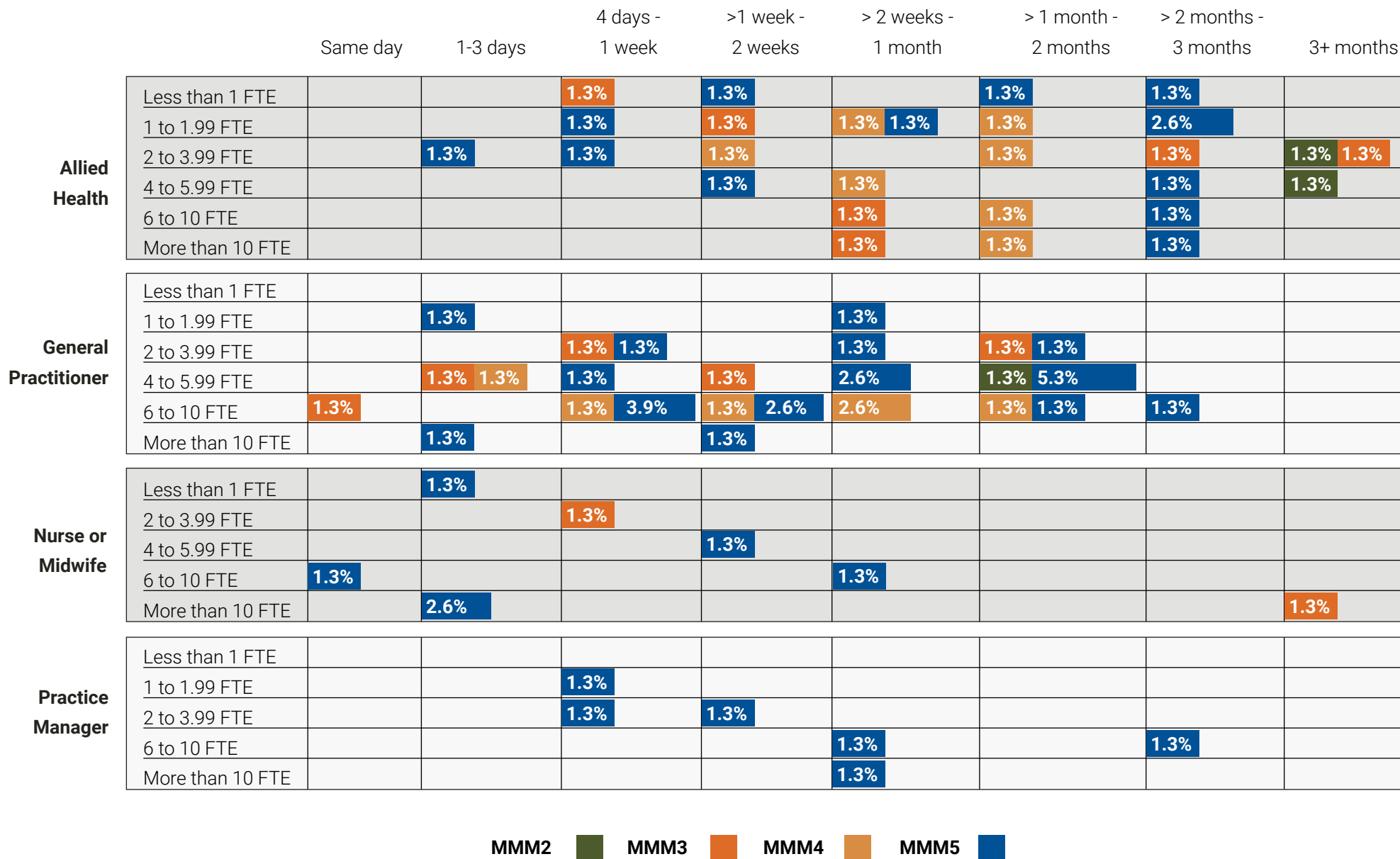
In July 2024, RWAV conducted a Snap Survey to gain a clearer picture of patient wait times for non-urgent appointments with health professionals.

Victorians with various health issues are enduring lengthy wait times to see health professionals as the state's healthcare system grapples with increased demand and workforce shortages. While official data on the scale of the problem is lacking, RWAV is actively investigating where the need is most critical and gaining insights into patient wait times for non-urgent appointments in rural regions. The survey highlighted significant access challenges, particularly in rural regions, where demand far exceeds supply.

The RWAV survey yielded 78 usable responses. Among the respondents, 50% were GPs and Practice Managers, 10% were nurses and midwives, and 35% were Allied Health practitioners. The survey revealed that 34% of respondents reported their patients faced wait times exceeding one month for appointments with health professionals. As expected, the longest wait times were observed in MMM4 and MMM5 areas across most categories. However, some patients in MMM2 and MMM3 regions experienced delays of over three months for non-urgent appointments.

Most respondents worked in MMM5 locations, and no same-day appointments were available for Allied Health services. Only one general practice in MMM3 and one primary health care nurse in MMM5 could offer same-day appointments. Additionally, the majority of GPs surveyed (MMM2-5) were unable to offer an appointment within one week, with wait times spanning from two to eight weeks and, in four cases, extending up to three months. Interestingly, appointment availability did not appear to be influenced by the number of practitioners in the practice.

Rural Victoria non-urgent patient appointment wait times





Contact details

E-mail: info@rwav.com.au

Phone: +61 3 9349 7800

About RWAV

RWAV improves access to quality primary care health services and other health services for rural, regional and First Nations communities across Victoria. We improve health outcomes through effective and customised health workforce solutions that are informed through partnerships, workforce and population health data, and collaboration with communities.