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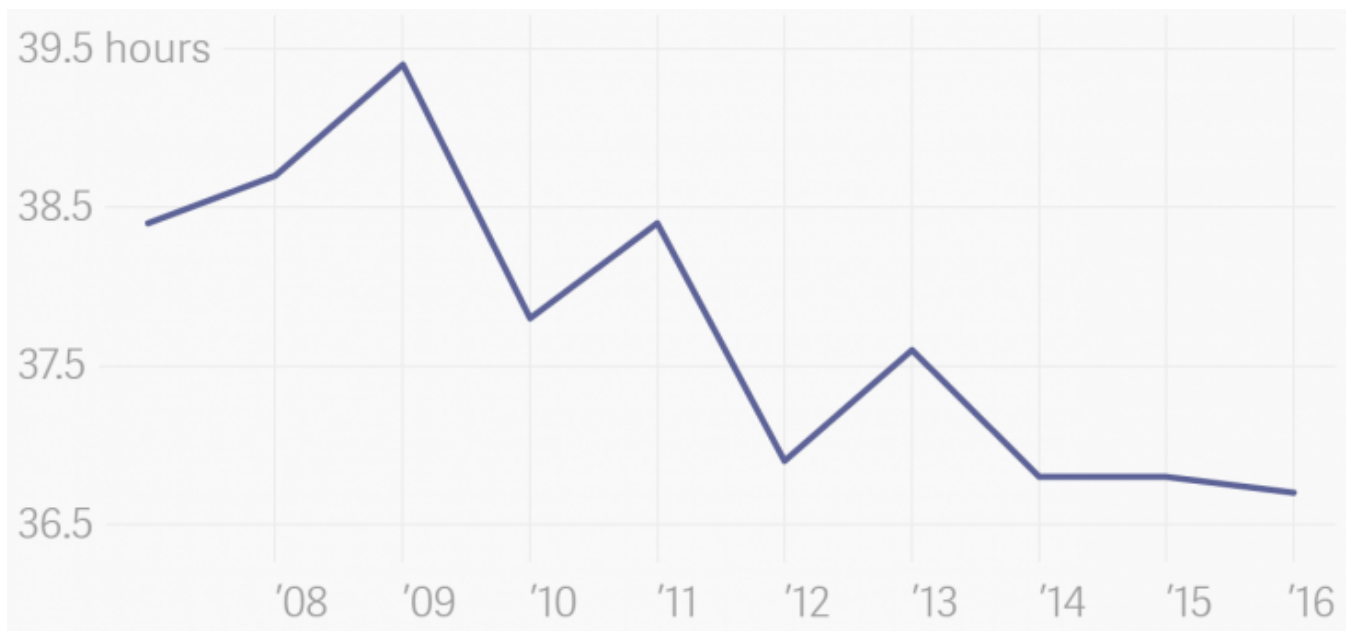
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These 8 graphs show how general practice is changing

1 September 2016



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More problems, more referrals, longer consults and larger practices.

These are just some of the key ways Australian general practice has changed over the past 10 years, according to the last ever report from the long-running BEACH program.

Every year since 1998, the researchers from the University of Sydney's Family Medicine Research Centre have randomly selected some 1000 GPs and asked them to record details of

100 consecutive encounters with consenting patients. It has provided a rich trove of information on changes in GP and practice characteristics, patients, problems managed, and the management provided.

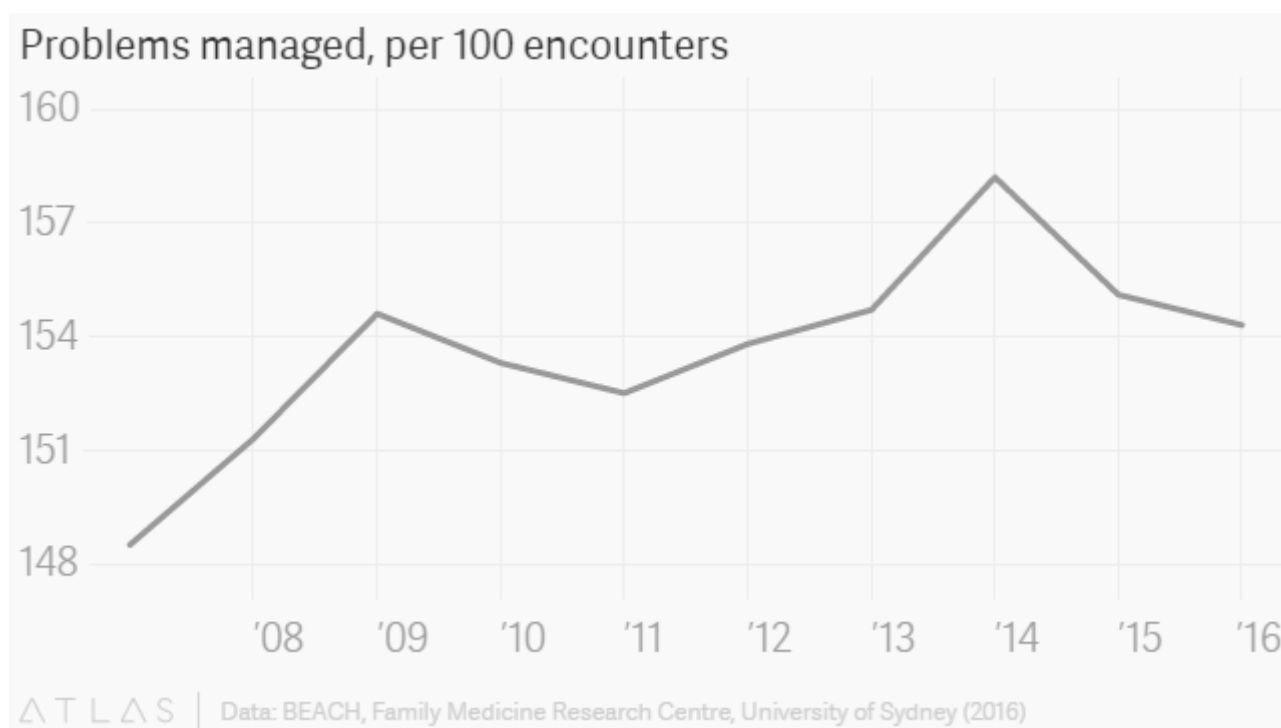
- **Comment:** [Does it feel like you're working harder? You probably are](http://www.medicalobserver.com.au/blog/the-data-confirms-it-we-gps-are-working-harder-and-harder) (<http://www.medicalobserver.com.au/blog/the-data-confirms-it-we-gps-are-working-harder-and-harder>)

The new report - [A decade of Australian general practice activity](https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/15482/5/9781743325162_ONLINE.pdf)

(https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/15482/5/9781743325162_ONLINE.pdf) - takes in details from nearly one million encounters involving close to 10,000 GPs.

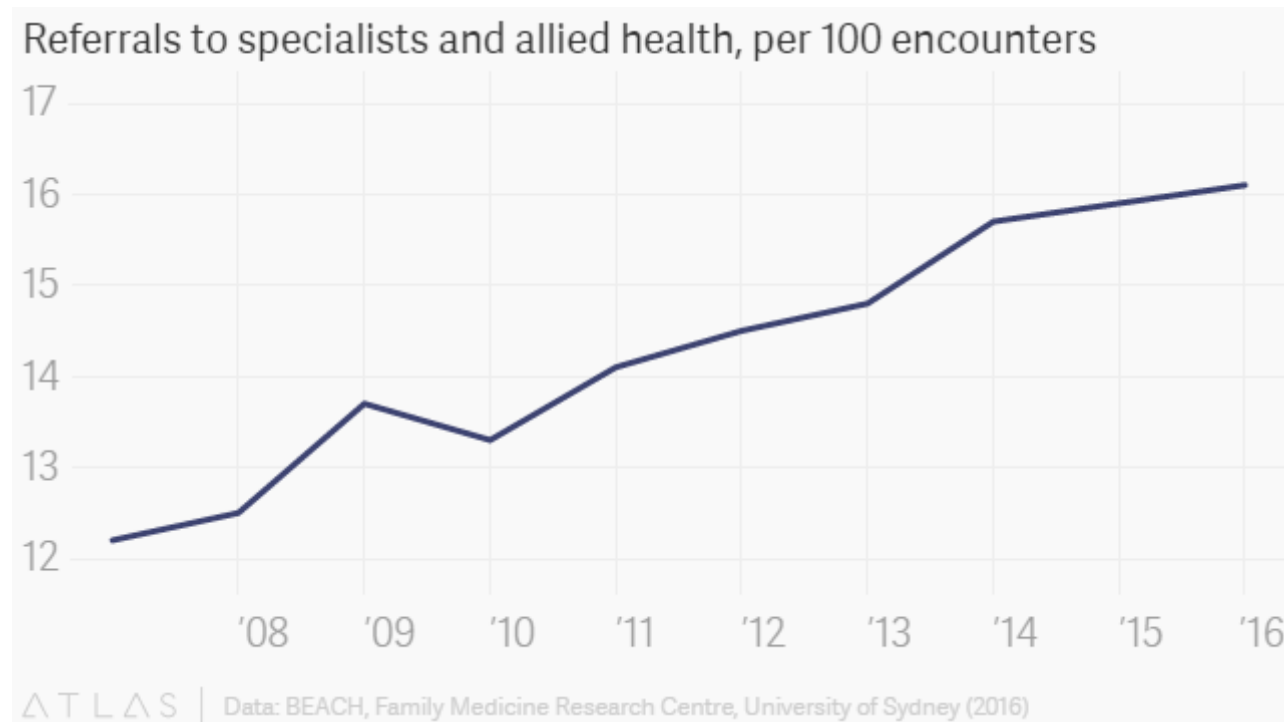
Here, in eight charts, are some the key ways general practice is changing.

1. GPs are managing more problems per encounter



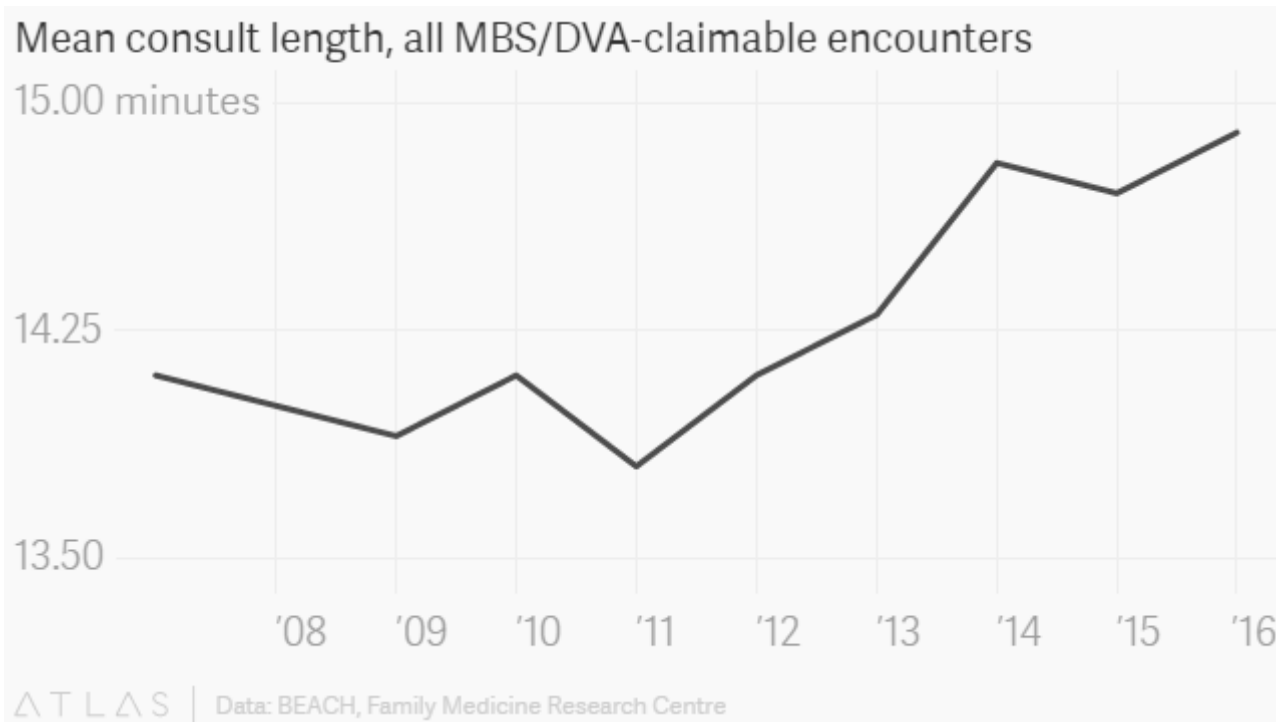
- Average annual GP visits per capita increased from five to six over the decade.
- Combined with an increase in the number of problems managed at each consult (shown above), the researchers estimate that GPs managed 67 million more problems at encounters in 2015-16 than in 2006-7. The most frequently managed problems were hypertension, general check-ups and upper respiratory tract infection.
- There were significant decreases in management rates of hypertension, oral contraception, ischaemic heart disease, cardiovascular check-up and fracture.

2. Referral rates are rising



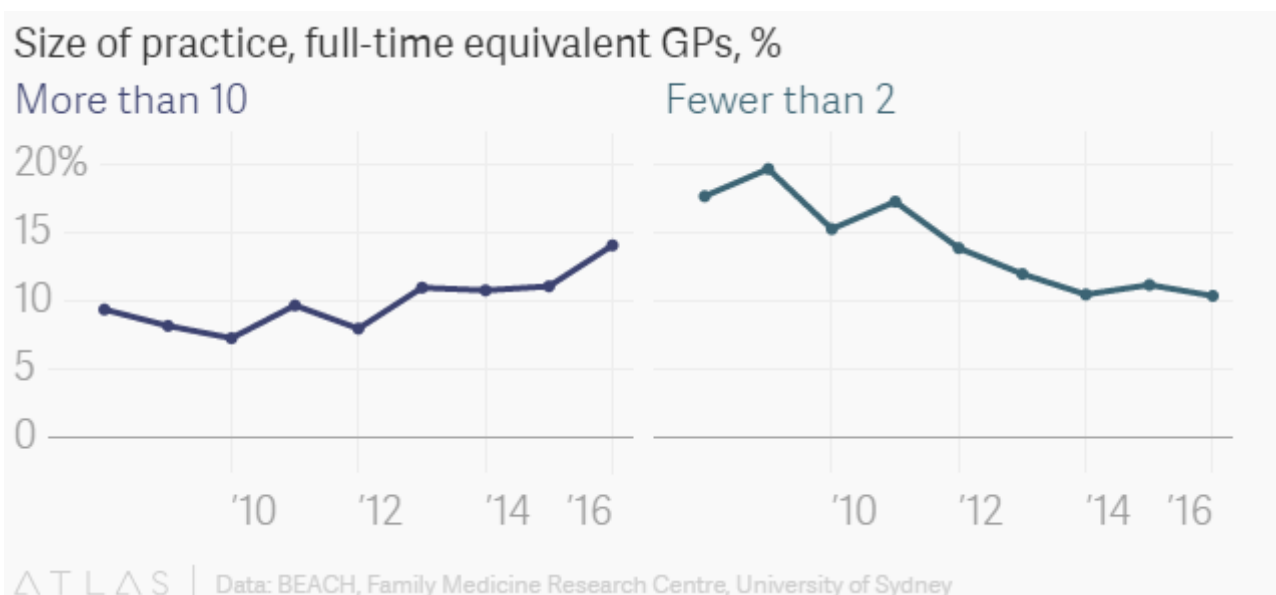
- About 10 million more GP referrals were made nationally in 2015-16 than in 2006-07, which included about 5 million more to medical specialists and 5 million more to allied health services.

3. Consultations are getting slightly longer



- Over the decade, the mean length of consultations for all MBS/DVA-claimable encounters significantly increased from 14.1 minutes to 14.9 minutes, and the median length increased from 12 to 13 minutes.
- As a proportion of all Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)/Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) claimable recorded consultations, short surgery consultations, chronic disease management items, health assessments, and GP mental health care all increased significantly while standard surgery consultations decreased significantly.

4. Larger practices are becoming the norm



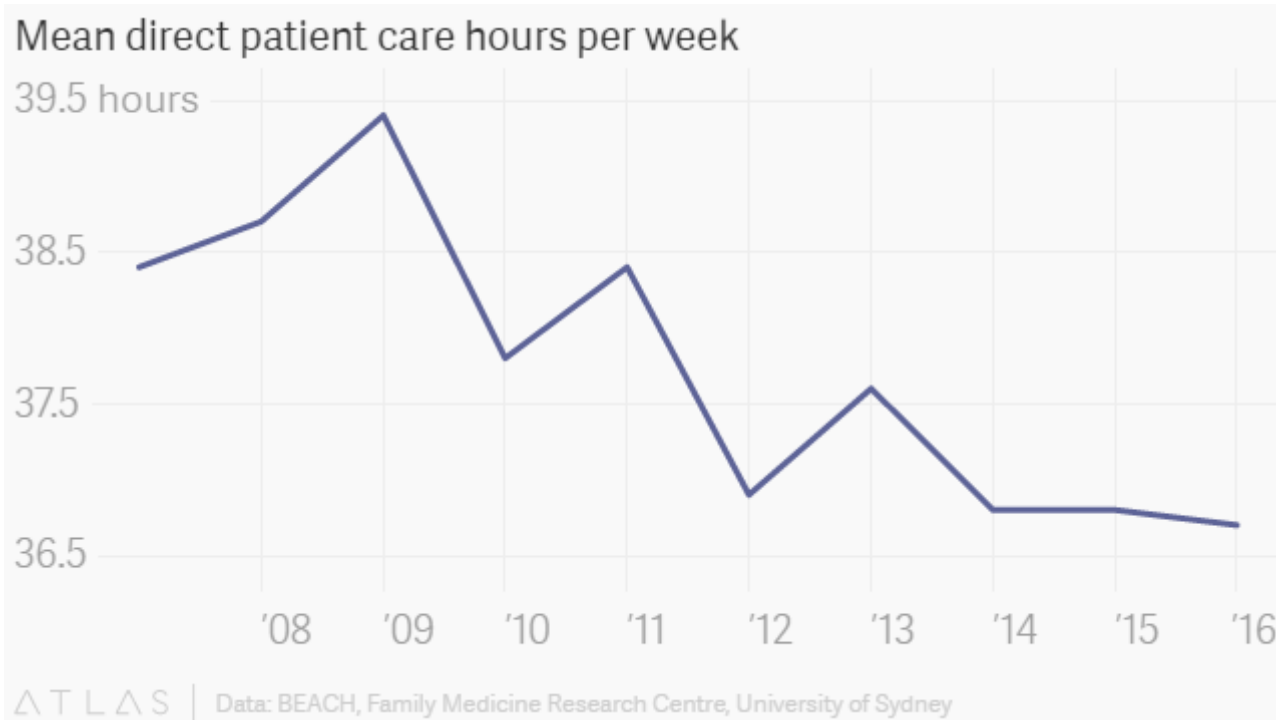
- Fewer participants are working in practices of 2–4 individual GPs (36% down to 24%), while the proportion in practices of 10 or more GPs almost doubled, from 16% to 29%. (The graph shows changes in full-time equivalent GPs by practice size).
- The proportion using deputising services for some or all of their after-hours patient care increased from 48% to 57%.

5. More GPs are fellows of the RACGP



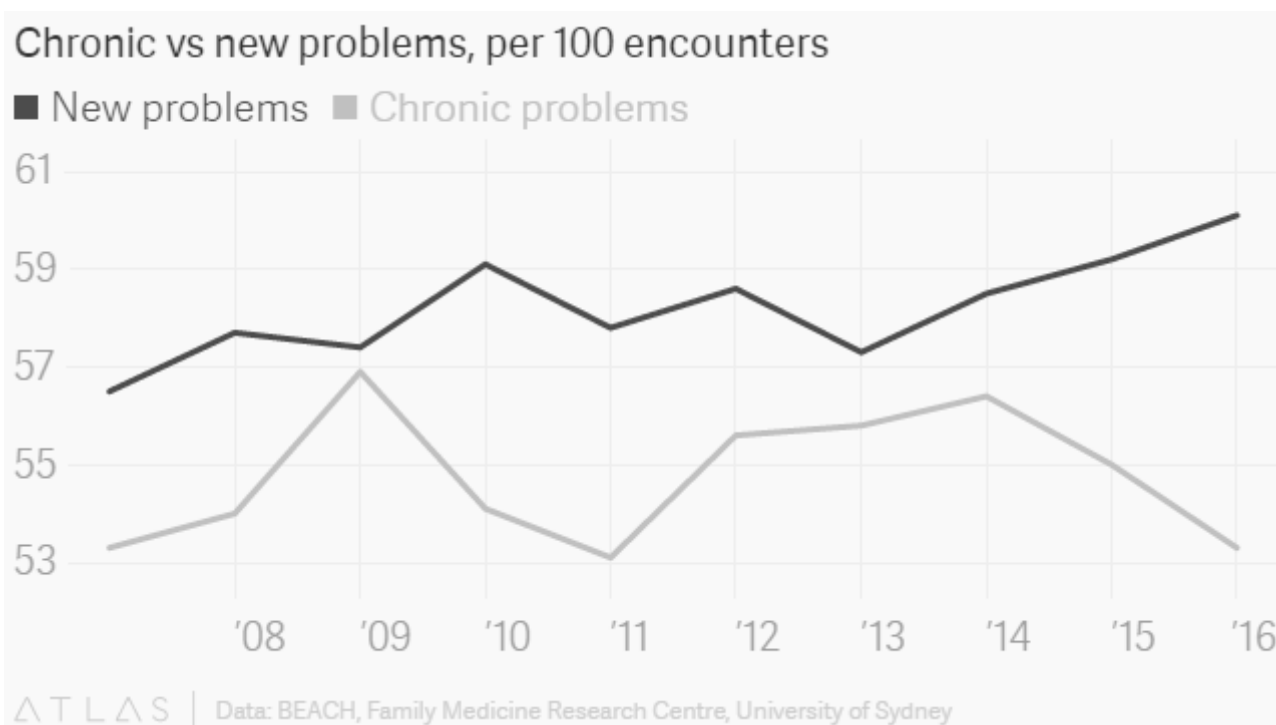
- Since 1995, FRACGP has been mandatory for new clinicians entering general practice, so this change largely reflects the inclusion of new GPs into practice who hold FRACGP.

6. Hours spent on direct patient care are decreasing



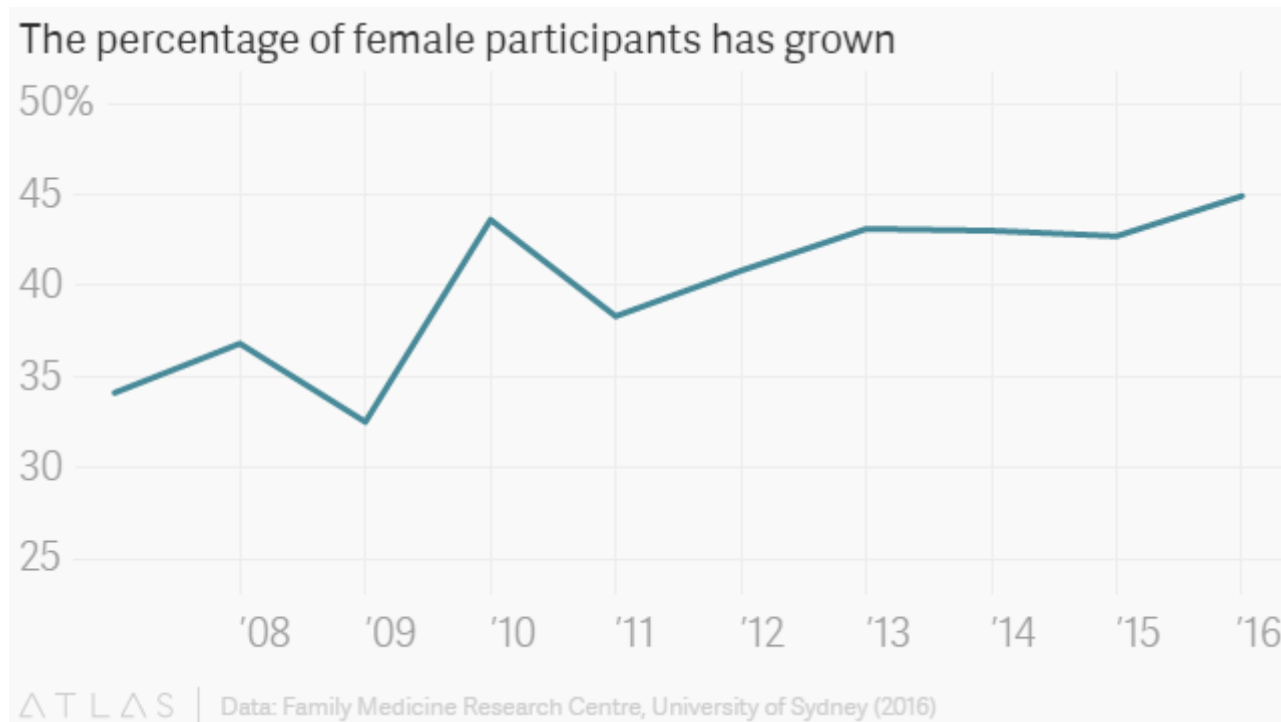
- The proportion of participants who work at least 40 hours per week in direct patient care decreased from 39.5% to 27.8% over the decade, perhaps reflecting the shifting gender balance and accompanying increase in part-time work.

7. Management of chronic problems is, strangely, declining. Management of new problems is growing.



- However, due to the increase in the number of GP visits nationally, the researchers estimate that GPs managed 21.1 million more chronic problems in 2015–16, than they did a decade earlier. The most common chronic problems managed were non-gestational hypertension, depressive disorder, non-gestational diabetes, chronic arthritis and lipid disorder.

8. More GPs are women



- The trend in BEACH participants largely reflects the changing gender balance of the GP workforce.

Is there anything we missed, or anything you'd like to know more about? Let us know below and we'll try to delve into the data and find out!

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