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Tuesday, 30 August 2016

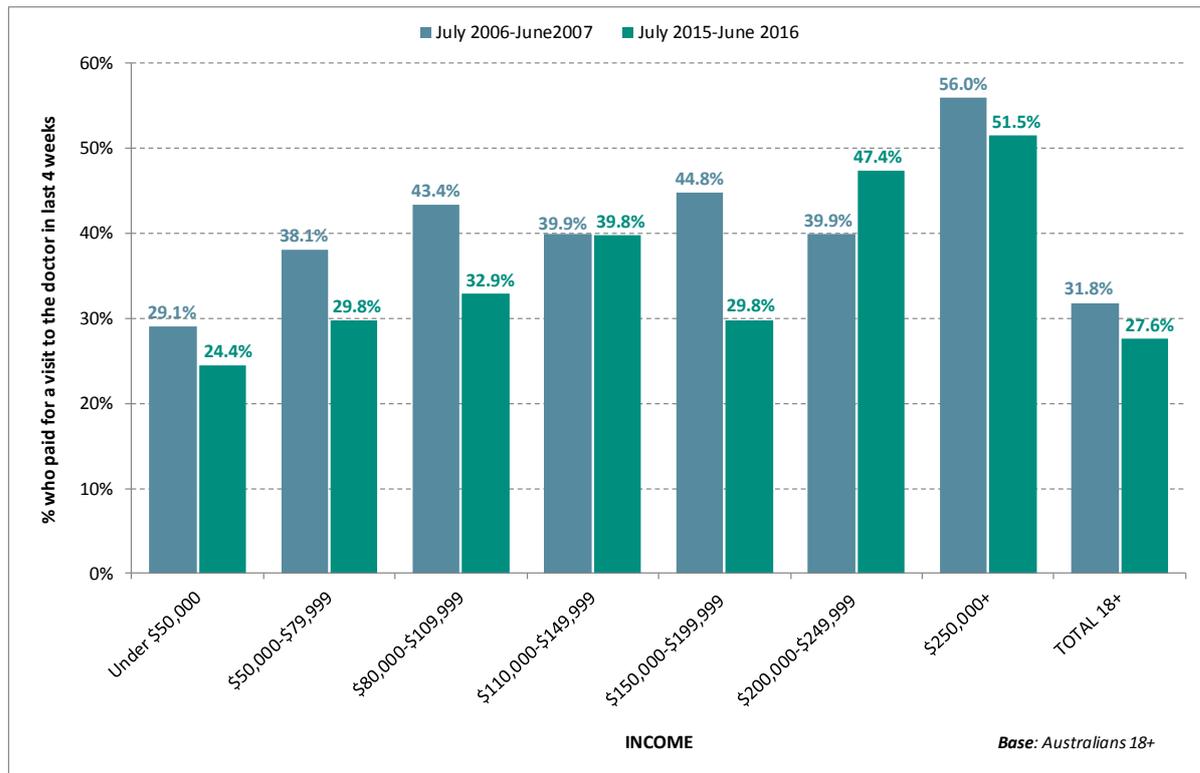
## Fewer Australians paying to see the doctor

Whether it's a trip to the GP for some antibiotics, or a visit to the specialist for a more complex health issue, going to the doctor can be a costly exercise. But the latest findings from Roy Morgan Research show that the proportion of us paying for a visit to the doctor in an average four-week period has declined over the past decade. This downturn is evident across most income brackets, including those at the higher end of the range. Despite the pre-Election 'Medi-scare', it seems bulk-billing is alive and well.

In the 12 months to June 2007, 31.8% of Aussie adults paid for a doctor's visit in an average four weeks. By March 2016, this figure had fallen to 27.6%.

Unexpectedly, Australians earning between \$150,000 and \$199,999 saw the most dramatic drop in paid doctor's visits. Between July 2006 and June 2007, nearly 45% of people in this income range paid for a doctor's visit in an average four weeks. As of June 2016, that figure had plummeted to 29.8%: a decrease of more than 30%.

### Paying for the doctor: 2007 vs 2016 by annual income



**Source:** Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2006-June 2007 (n=22,594) and July 2015-June 2016 (n=14,300).

As the chart above illustrates, there were also marked declines in paid doctor's visits among Aussies on incomes lower than \$110,000 pa, as well as among those on \$250,000 and higher.

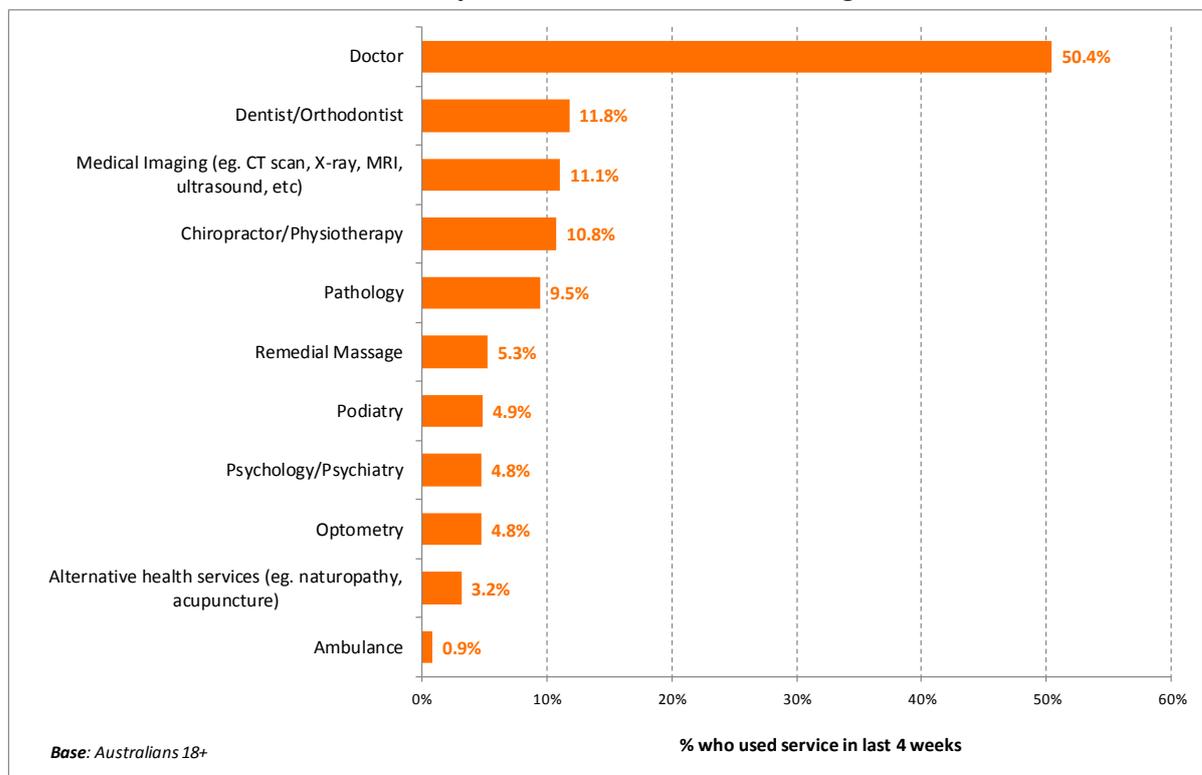
Just as they were ten years ago, people earning less than \$50,000 remain the least likely to pay for a visit to the doctor (24.4%, down from 29.1%).

Meanwhile, incidence of paid doctors' visits actually grew among Australians earning \$200,000-\$249,999, from 39.9% to 47.4% over the last decade.

Obviously, not all doctors' visits are unpaid/bulk-billed, and new data from Roy Morgan shows that just over half of all Australian adults go to the doctor (GP) in an average four weeks, well ahead of the dentist/orthodontist (11.8%) and medical imaging such as CT scans or X-rays (11.1%). Overall, 63.0% use at least one medical or health service, paid or unpaid, in that time.

A breakdown of these services (as shown in the chart below) provides a revealing snapshot of the health and medical services used in Australia.

**Medical and health services used by Australian adults in an average four weeks**



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), January-June 2016, n=14,300

**Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director, Roy Morgan Research, says:**

*“After the ALP’s Medi-scare campaign in the lead-up to the election, and general confusion regarding whether or not bulk-billing is to be scrapped for pathology services, it may come as a surprise to learn that fewer Australians are paying for doctors’ visits now than they were in the 12 months to June 2007.*

*“While it’s tempting to speculate that this is due to less of us getting sick (and therefore a lower visitation rate overall), Roy Morgan data indicates that the proportion of the population who experience at least one illness/health complaint in an average 12*

months has not changed for years. Furthermore, as shown above, more than 50% of us visit a GP in an average four weeks, with many also using other healthcare services.

*“Bearing this in mind, it seems fair to conclude that bulk-billing is being used more widely than it was 10 years ago – and by higher proportions of people from most income brackets. (Although why more people from the \$200,000-\$249,999 range are paying for visits is puzzling.)*

*“Healthcare providers and medical organisations wishing to understand trends in paid and unpaid doctors’ visits, or Australians’ health needs in general, would benefit from access to Roy Morgan’s comprehensive health data. Spanning illnesses and health conditions, healthcare services used and medication taken, the data provides invaluable insights into the population’s well-being and areas in need of improvement.”*

**For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research’s health data, please contact:**

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#### **Related research findings**

Explore Roy Morgan’s [extensive range of Health and Wellbeing profiles](#), including [Illnesses and Conditions](#), and [Health Insurance members](#).

Compiled with data from Roy Morgan’s Single Source survey (the largest of its kind in the world, with 50,000 respondents p.a), these ready-made profiles provide a broad understanding of the target audience, in terms of demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage in Australia.

#### **About Roy Morgan Research**

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

#### **Margin of Error**

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2

**Roy Morgan Research Ltd.** A.B.N. 91 007 092 944 Quality System Certified to AS/NZS ISO 9001

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