

Analysis of Medicare data¹ shows an alarming drop off in Australians aged under 65 having initial comprehensive eye examinations.

On a calendar year basis:

- Per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations² nationally fell from 8,789 in 2017 to 7,464 in 2023, a **15.1% reduction nationally**.
- The number of Australians aged under 65 getting Medicare subsidised comprehensive eye examinations **fell from 2,190,966 in 2017 to 1,991,657 in 2023** (a 9.1% reduction)
- If the 2017 per capita rate for under 65s had been maintained in 2023, there would have been 2,369,093 comprehensive eye examinations (**an additional 317,046 eye examinations**)³

On a financial year basis:

- Per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations nationally fell from 8,898 in 2017-18 to 7,284 in 2023-24, an **18.1% reduction nationally**.
- The number of Australians aged under 65 getting Medicare subsidised initial comprehensive eye examinations **fell from 2,234,228 in 2017-18 to 1,956,402 in 2023-24** (a 12.4% reduction)
- If the 2017-18 per capita rate for under 65s had been maintained in 2023-24, there would have been 2,461,284 initial comprehensive eye examinations (**an additional 424,101 eye examinations**)⁴

The calendar year per capita drop off **between 2017 and 2023** occurred in every State and Territory:

- In Qld, there was a 20.7% per capita fall between 2017 and 2023.
- In Qld and SA, per capita eye examinations in 2023 were actually lower than in both 2020 and 2021 (during the COVID pandemic).

% Change	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
2017 to 2023	-13.9%	-13.3%	-20.7%	-17.7%	-13.4%	-14.2%	-16.4%	-12.5%

¹ MBS Item 10910: Comprehensive Initial Consultation – Patient is less than 65 years of age.

² Services/benefit per capita (i.e. per 100,000 population) is calculated by dividing the number of services/benefit processed in a month by the number of people enrolled in Medicare at the end of that month

³ The overall population increased by 8.1% from 24.6 million in June 2017 to 26.6 million in June 2023. Approx 84% of the Australian population is under 65 years.

⁴ The overall population increased by 10.2% from 24.6 million in June 2017 to 27.1 million in March 2024. Approx 84% of the Australian population is under 65 years.

The financial year per capita drop off **between 2017-18 and 2023-24** occurred in every State and Territory:

- In Qld, there was a 21.9% per capita fall between 2017-18 and 2023-24.
- In NT, there was a 17.4% per capita fall between 2017-18 and 2023-24.
- All States and Territories had lower per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations in 2023-24 than 2020-21 (during COVID).
- All States and Territories had lower per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations in 2023-24 than in 2022-23.
- In 2023-24, per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations in the NT were 19.4% lower than NSW and 20.9% lower than ACT.

% Change	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
2017-18 to 2023-24	-15.8%	-19.1%	-21.9%	-18.1%	-14.5%	-19.5%	-17.6%	-17.4%

Per capita reductions **between 2022-23 and 2023-24** indicate that the cost-of-living crisis may be impacting Australians aged under 65 getting their eyes examined. The biggest year to year reductions occurred in NSW and Victoria:

% Change	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	National
2022-23 to 2023-24	-6.3%	-11.7%	-2.6%	-3.5%	-1.3%	-3.4%	-4.6%	-5.4%	-6.2%

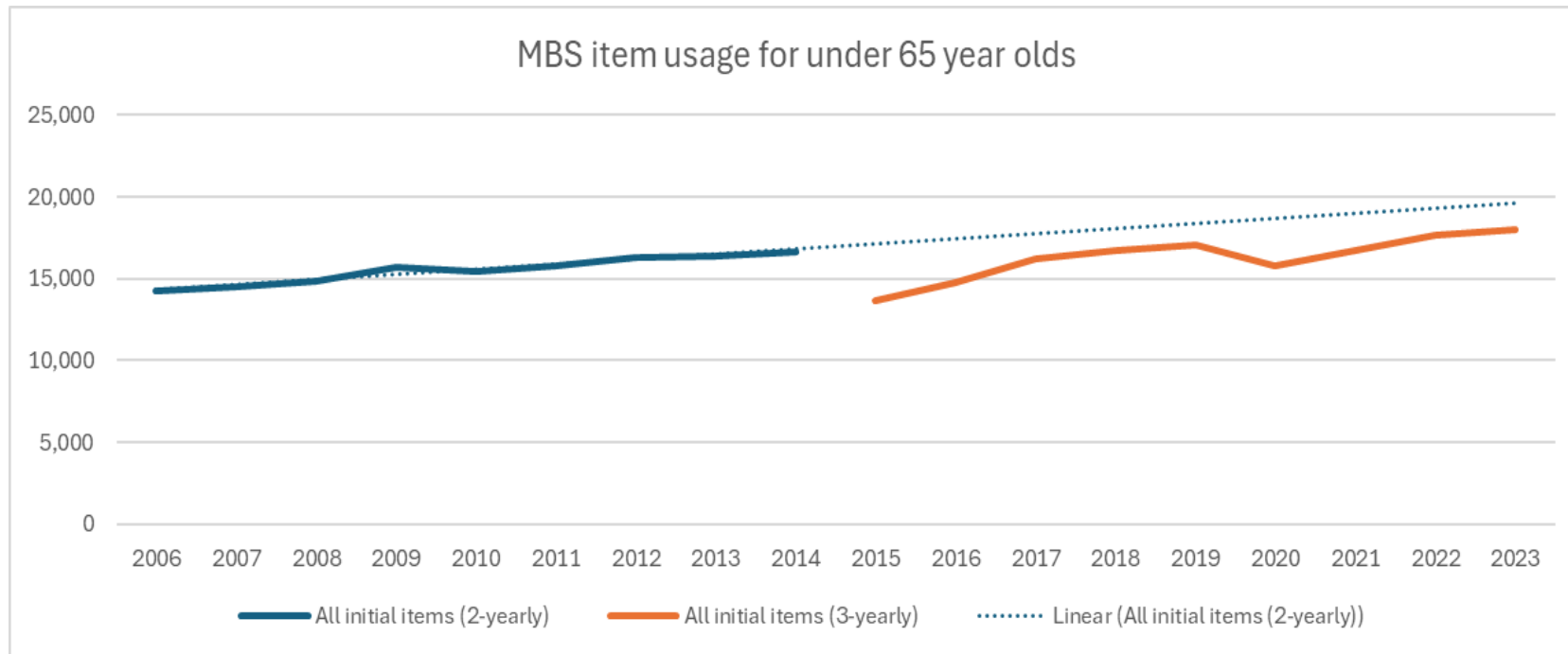
The calendar year and the financial year per capita reductions impacted both **males and females** aged under 65:

- Nationally, per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations for males 65 decreased from 7,677 in 2017 to 6,741 in 2023 (12.2% fall).
- Nationally, per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations for females decreased from 9,890 in 2017 to 8,177 in 2023 (17.3% fall).
- Nationally, per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations for males decreased from 7,791 in 2017-18 to 6,559 in 2023-24 (15.8% fall).
- Nationally, per capita initial comprehensive eye examinations for females decreased from 9,995 in 2017-18 to 8,000 in 2023-24 (20.0% fall).

The calendar year and the financial year per capita reductions impacted all age cohorts under 65 years:

	0-4	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
2017	2,339	10,783	9,589	8,936	9,999	13,807	13,053
2023	2,273	9,856	7,932	8,352	9,409	11,400	9,877
Difference (%)	-2.8%	-8.6%	-17.3%	-6.5%	-5.9%	-17.4%	25.2%
2017-18	2,316	10,774	9,651	9,175	10,227	14,002	13,223
2023-24	2,275	9,664	7,985	8,185	9,183	11,033	9,503
Difference (%)	-1.8%	-10.3%	-17.3%	-10.8%	-10.2%	-21.2%	-28.1%

It is recognised that optometrists may be making greater use of other MBS items for progressing eye conditions (particularly in older patient cohorts). However, the analysis clearly shows a reduction in per capita usage of all comprehensive eye exams since the introduction of item 10910 (three yearly Medicare subsidised initial comprehensive eye examinations for people aged under 65 years) compared to expected projections.



SOURCE TABLES

Per Capita (calendar years)		State								Total
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	
		Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population
10910	2017	8,930	8,568	8,989	8,666	8,720	8,349	9,356	7,274	8,789
	2018	8,840	8,525	8,804	8,607	8,419	8,437	9,548	7,379	8,681
	2019	8,367	7,981	8,190	8,074	7,855	7,810	8,887	6,706	8,140
	2020	7,746	6,243	7,590	7,389	7,388	6,888	7,946	6,135	7,240
	2021	7,437	7,429	7,648	7,534	7,766	7,398	7,857	6,358	7,517
	2022	8,305	8,197	7,145	7,251	7,326	6,858	8,427	6,047	7,810
	2023	7,778	7,426	7,130	7,218	7,532	7,163	7,824	6,367	7,464

SOURCE TABLES

Per Capita (financial years)		State								Total
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	
		Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population	Services per 100,000 population
10910	2017/2018	9,045	8,706	9,054	8,810	8,732	8,652	9,646	7,457	8,898
	2018/2019	8,532	8,238	8,490	8,271	8,130	8,090	9,240	6,915	8,375
	2019/2020	7,508	6,939	7,323	7,222	7,050	6,717	7,744	6,034	7,231
	2020/2021	8,618	7,361	8,177	8,086	8,058	7,761	9,004	6,768	8,084
	2021/2022	7,322	7,421	7,214	7,144	7,484	6,823	7,585	5,955	7,311
	2022/2023	8,133	7,974	7,259	7,387	7,566	7,290	8,139	6,490	7,766
	2023/2024	7,617	7,041	7,071	7,131	7,466	7,041	7,764	6,142	7,284

SOURCE TABLES

Item 10910 (services per 100,000 population)		2023-24	2017-18
Female	0-4	2,302	2,328
	5 to 14	10,208	11,513
	15-24	9,734	12,019
	25-34	9,707	11,219
	35-44	10,707	12,226
	45-54	11,596	15,159
	55-64	9,721	13,888
	Average	8,000	9,995
Male	0-4	2,249	2,304
	5 to 14	9,149	10,073
	15-24	6,315	7,379
	25-34	6,631	7,087
	35-44	7,635	8,240
	45-54	10,469	12,843
	55-64	9,282	12,541
	Average	6,559	7,791
Average	0-4	2,275	2,316
	5 to 14	9,664	10,774
	15-24	7,985	9,651
	25-34	8,185	9,175
	35-44	9,183	10,227
	45-54	11,033	14,002
	55-64	9,503	13,223
	Average	7,284	8,898

SOURCE TABLES

Item 10910 (Services per 100,000 population)			
		2023	2017
Female	0-4	2,288	2,346
	5 to 14	10,416	11,552
	15-24	9,607	11,970
	25-34	9,823	10,939
	35-44	10,965	11,962
	45-54	11,979	14,992
	55-64	10,123	13,753
	Average	8,177	9,890
Male	0-4	2,259	2,333
	5 to 14	9,325	10,053
	15-24	6,333	7,303
	25-34	6,849	6,891
	35-44	7,831	8,050
	45-54	10,819	12,621
	55-64	9,627	12,336
	Average	6,741	7,677
Average	0-4	2,273	2,339
	5 to 14	9,856	10,783
	15-24	7,932	9,589
	25-34	8,352	8,936
	35-44	9,409	9,999
	45-54	11,400	13,807
	55-64	9,877	13,053
	Average	7,464	8,789