

## 4.8 Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 18–64 years

### Context

This data item examines dispensing rates of antipsychotic medicines for people aged 18 to 64. These data are sourced from the PBS and relate to the number of prescriptions dispensed per 100,000 people.

In Australia, antipsychotic medicines are primarily used to treat psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia, and the psychotic symptoms of mood disorders. They are used to reduce or sometimes eliminate the distressing and disabling symptoms of psychosis, such as paranoia, confused thinking, delusions and hallucinations.

Antipsychotic medicine is one component of treating mental illness, but is rarely considered sufficient on its own.<sup>1</sup> Effective treatment for schizophrenia and related disorders usually includes ongoing clinical support in the community; psychological therapies; education about symptoms and how to deal with them; psychosocial rehabilitation; accommodation, employment and educational support.

Concerns have been raised about prescribing antipsychotic medicines outside the intended purpose; for example, to treat sleep disorders.

# Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 18–64 years

## Magnitude of variation

In 2013–14, there were 2,582,447 PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines, representing 17,844 prescriptions per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years (the Australian rate).

The number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines across 325\* local areas (SA3s) ranged from 2,076 to 39,544 per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years. The number of prescriptions was **19.0 times higher** in the area with the highest rate compared to the area with the lowest rate. The average number of prescriptions dispensed varied across states and territories, from 9,250 per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years in the Northern Territory, to 20,863 in South Australia.

After excluding the highest and lowest results, the antipsychotic medicine prescription rate across the 302 remaining local areas was **3.2 times higher** in one local area compared to another.

Dispensing rates were similar in major cities and regional areas and were lowest in remote communities.

A relationship was noted between dispensing rates and socioeconomic status: rates were highest in areas of low socioeconomic status, and lower in areas of high socioeconomic status.

## Interpretation

Potential reasons for the variation include differences in:

- prescription practices, which may vary between states and territories, primary health providers and specialists
- the prevalence of mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, which may be higher in disadvantaged communities<sup>2</sup>
- access to psychiatric and psychological services
- location of correctional facilities in areas of higher dispensing
- private prescriptions, which are not included in this data.

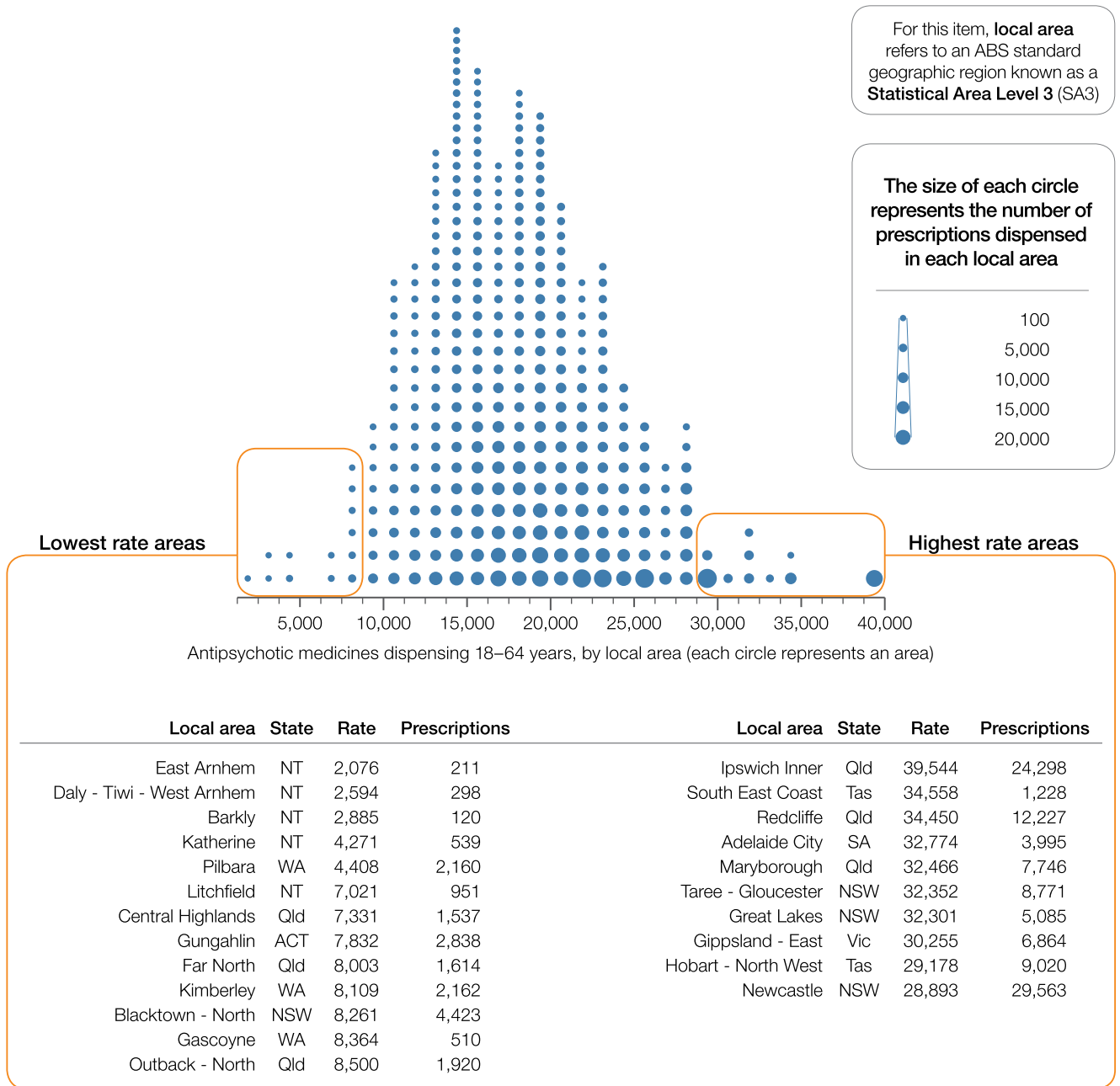
It is also important to note that the dispensing of antipsychotic medicines in remote areas by some Aboriginal Health Services is not captured in the PBS database.

To explore this variation, further analysis could focus on:

- the individual- and system-level factors that lead to unwarranted variations in the prescribing and dispensing of antipsychotic medicines to those aged 18 to 64
- the rate of variation once quetiapine has been removed from the data, as concerns have been raised about its use as a sedative.

\*There are 333 SA3s. For this item, data were suppressed for 8 SA3s. This is because of confidentiality requirements given the small numbers of prescriptions dispensed in these areas.

**Figure 91: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years, age standardised, by local area, 2013–14**



**Notes:**

Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.

State/territory and national rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the geographic area.

The term local area refers to an ABS standard geographic region known as a Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3).

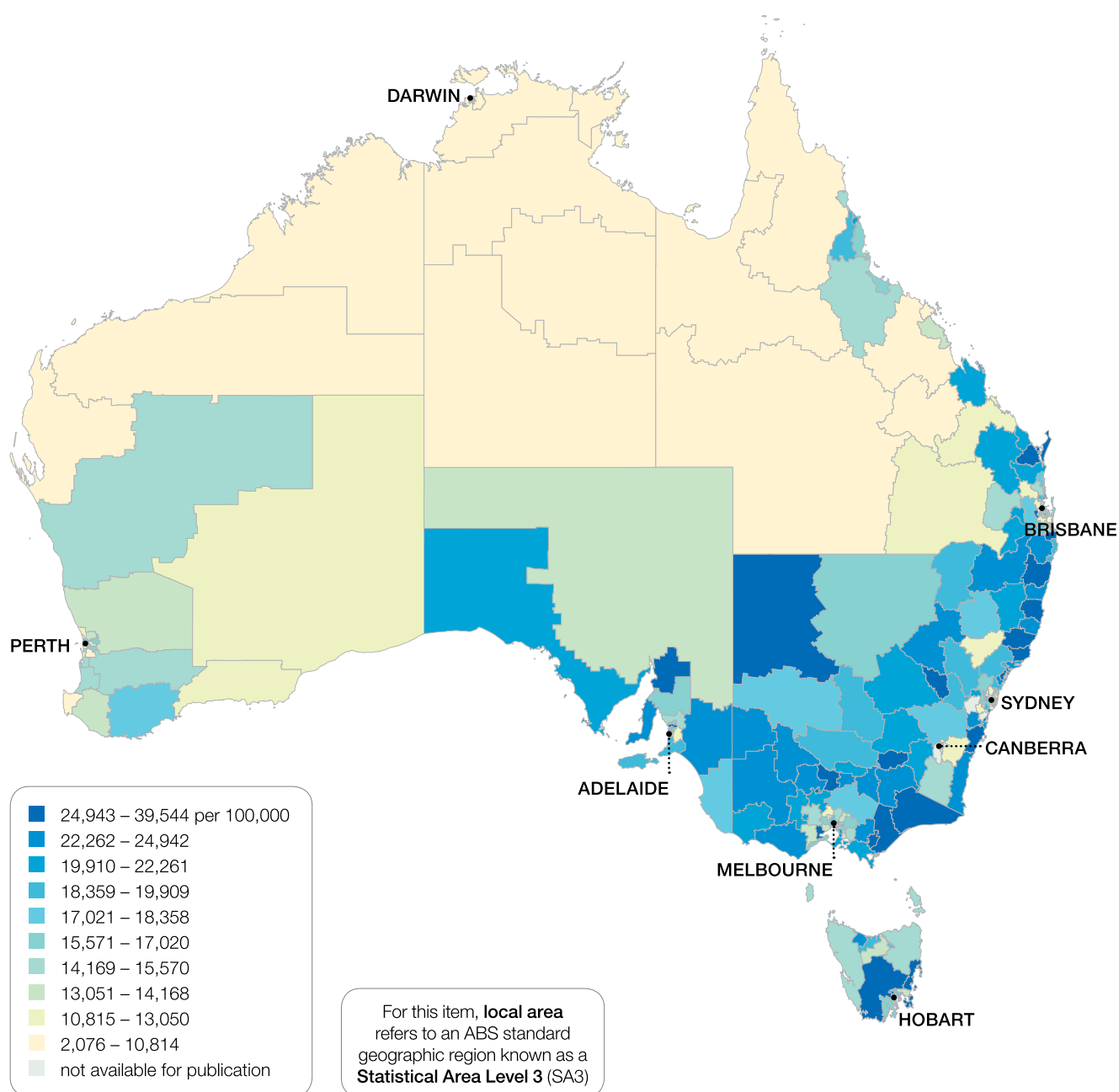
PBS prescriptions include all medicines dispensed under the PBS or RPBS, including medicines that do not receive a Commonwealth subsidy. They exclude a large proportion of public hospital drug usage, direct supply to remote Aboriginal Health Services, over-the-counter purchases and private prescriptions. SA3 analysis excludes approximately 93,450 prescriptions from GPO postcodes 2001, 2124, 3001, 4001, 5001, 6843 but these data are included in state/territory and national level analysis.

For more technical information please refer to the Technical Supplement.

**Sources:** National Health Performance Authority analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) statistics 2013–14 (data supplied 15/04/2015) and Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2013.

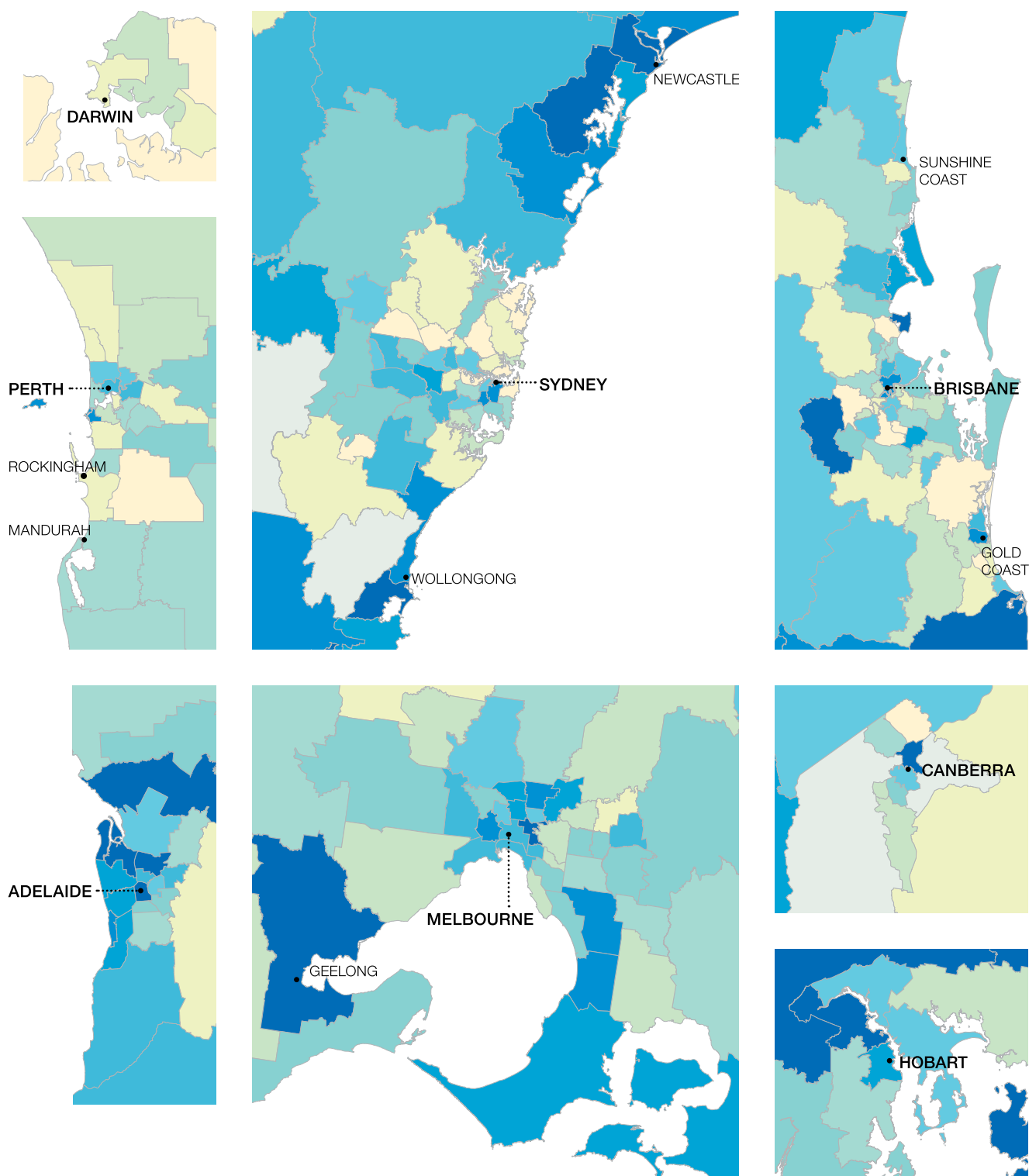
# Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 18–64 years

**Figure 92:** Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years, age standardised, by local area, 2013–14



**Sources:** National Health Performance Authority analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) statistics 2013–14 (data supplied 15/04/2015) and Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2013.

The number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines across 325 local areas (SA3s) ranged from 2,076 to 39,544 per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years. The number of prescriptions was **19.0 times higher** in the area with the highest rate compared to the area with the lowest rate.

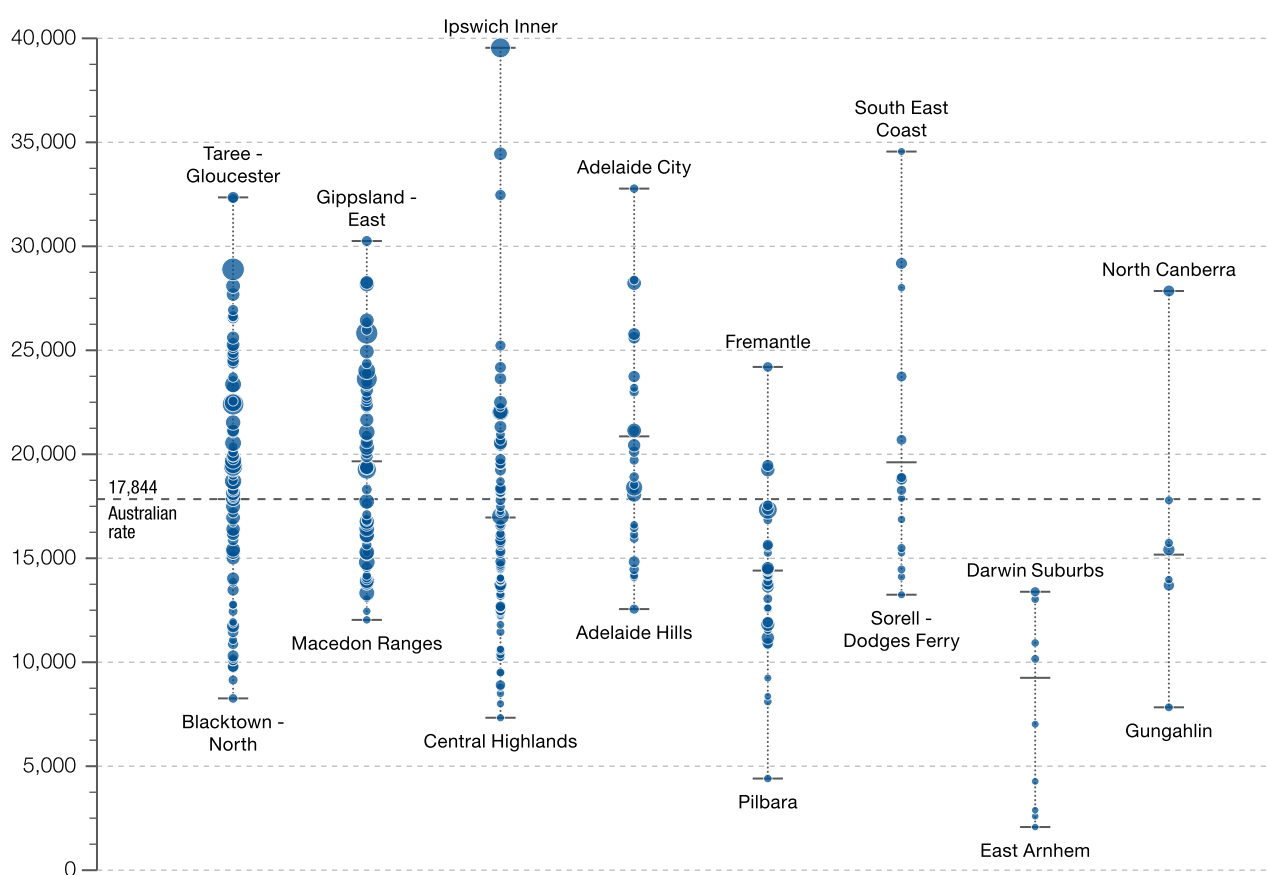


**Sources:** National Health Performance Authority analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) statistics 2013–14 (data supplied 15/04/2015) and Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2013.

# Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 18–64 years

**Figure 93: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years, age standardised, by local area, state and territory, 2013–14**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT
Highest rate	32,352	30,255	39,544	32,774	24,200	34,558	13,390	27,851
State/territory	17,842	19,663	16,961	20,863	14,409	19,616	9,250	15,176
Lowest rate	8,261	12,038	7,331	12,555	4,408	13,246	2,076	7,832
No. prescriptions	821,243	710,944	490,256	215,415	231,947	60,042	14,666	37,422



For this item, **local area** refers to an ABS standard geographic region known as a **Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3)**

The size of each circle represents the number of prescriptions dispensed in each local area

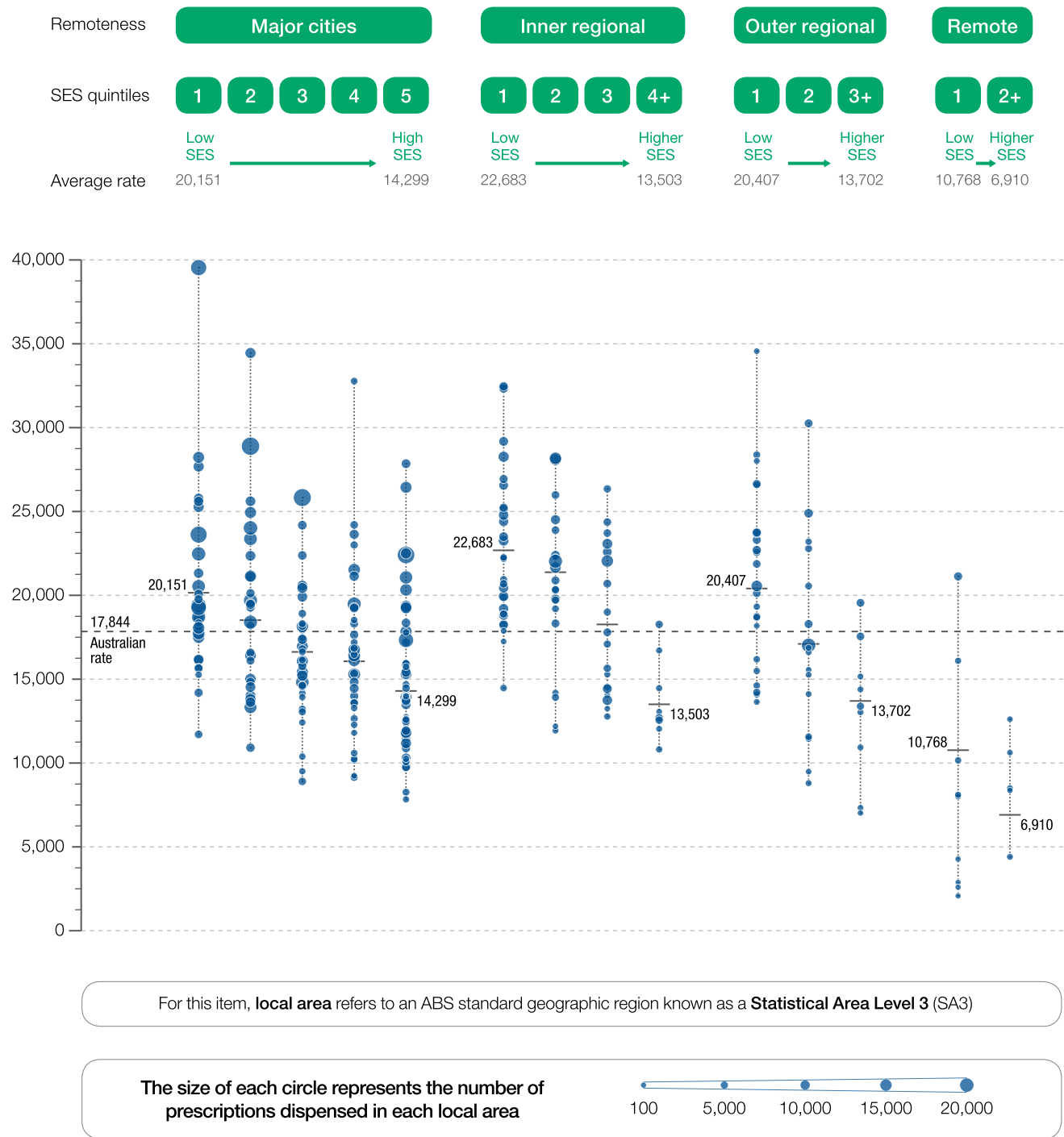


## Notes:

Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001. State/territory and national rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the geographic area.

**Sources:** National Health Performance Authority analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) statistics 2013–14 (data supplied 15/04/2015) and Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2013.

**Figure 94: Number of PBS prescriptions dispensed for antipsychotic medicines per 100,000 people aged 18 to 64 years, age standardised, by local area, remoteness and socioeconomic status (SES), 2013–14**



**Notes:**  
Rates are standardised based on the age structure of the Australian population in 2001.  
The national rate is based on the total number of prescriptions and people in Australia.  
Average rates are based on the total number of prescriptions and people in the local areas within each group.

**Sources:** National Health Performance Authority analysis of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) statistics 2013–14 (data supplied 15/04/2015) and Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2013.

# Antipsychotic medicines dispensing 18–64 years

## Resources

- Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. *Schizophrenia – Guide for the public*. 2009. Available at: [www.ranzcp.org/Mental-health-advice/guides-for-the-public/schizophrenia.aspx](http://www.ranzcp.org/Mental-health-advice/guides-for-the-public/schizophrenia.aspx).
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders*. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry. Consultation draft 2015. Available at: [www.ranzcp.org/Files/Resources/Publications/CPG/Clinician/CPG\\_Clinician\\_Full\\_Schizophrenia-pdf.aspx](http://www.ranzcp.org/Files/Resources/Publications/CPG/Clinician/CPG_Clinician_Full_Schizophrenia-pdf.aspx).
- NPS Medicinewise. *Medicines for psychotic conditions*. Available at: [www.nps.org.au/medicines/brain-and-nervous-system/medicines-for-psychotic-conditions](http://www.nps.org.au/medicines/brain-and-nervous-system/medicines-for-psychotic-conditions).
- Royal College of Psychiatrists. *Consensus statement on high-dose antipsychotic medication: Council Report CR190*. 2014. Available at: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/pdfversion/CR190.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/pdfversion/CR190.pdf)
- Drug Utilisation Subcommittee (DUSC) of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). *Antipsychotics in the middle aged. February 2013 and June 2013*. Available at: [www.pbs.gov.au/info/industry/listing/participants/public-release-docs/antipsychotics-middle-aged-2013](http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/industry/listing/participants/public-release-docs/antipsychotics-middle-aged-2013).
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. *Australian Statistics on Medicines*. 2015. Available at: [www.pbs.gov.au/info/browse/statistics](http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/browse/statistics).

1 Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders. ANZJP 2005;39:1–30.

2 Tandon R, Keshavan MS, Nasrallah HA. Schizophrenia, “just the facts” what we know in 2008. Part 2. Epidemiology and etiology. Schizophrenia research 2008;102(1–3):1–18.