

NL vs. Tasmania: Health System Structure

Objective

To compare the health system profile in NL, a province in Canada (CAN), to that in Tasmania (TAS), a state in Australia (AUS), both islands with similar sized populations but NL having a geographic area 59% greater than that of TAS.

Practice Points

1. The island of NL has a population of 492,000 people in a land mass of 109,000 km², and Labrador has 30,000 in a land mass of 300,000 km². The urban to rural distribution of NL is 58:42. TAS has a population of 535,500 in a land mass of 68,400 km², with urban to rural distribution of 74:26.
2. AUS ranks in the top tier of 11 OECD countries for health system performance, whereas CAN ranks in the bottom tier. NL provides the worst value for health spending in CAN.
3. NL has the highest number of doctors per capita in CAN, according to data from Canadian Medical Association (CMA).

Methods

1. Data on TAS health profile was obtained from their White Paper “Delivering Safe and Sustainable Services” available at dhhs.tas.gov.au. Data on doctors in TAS was obtained from doctors registered at Medical Board of Australia and in NL from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of NL (CPSNL).

Results

Table 1. Demographics of NL and Tasmania

	NL (%)	TAS (%)
Male	48.9	48.9
Children ≤14	14.3	17.7
Seniors ≥65	19.4	19.4

Table 2. Health Care Facilities in NL and Tasmania

	NL	TAS
Number of major acute hospitals	13	4
Number of rural health centres	15	13
Number of hospital beds/1,000 population	2.5	2.6 +1.2 private
Number of residential aged care facilities	40 LTC + 87 PCH	78

- NL has substantially more acute care hospitals than TAS but has fewer beds, with the difference provided by private hospitals in TAS.
- NL has a high number of personal care homes providing 4,608 beds with 76% occupancy (30 Mar 2020).

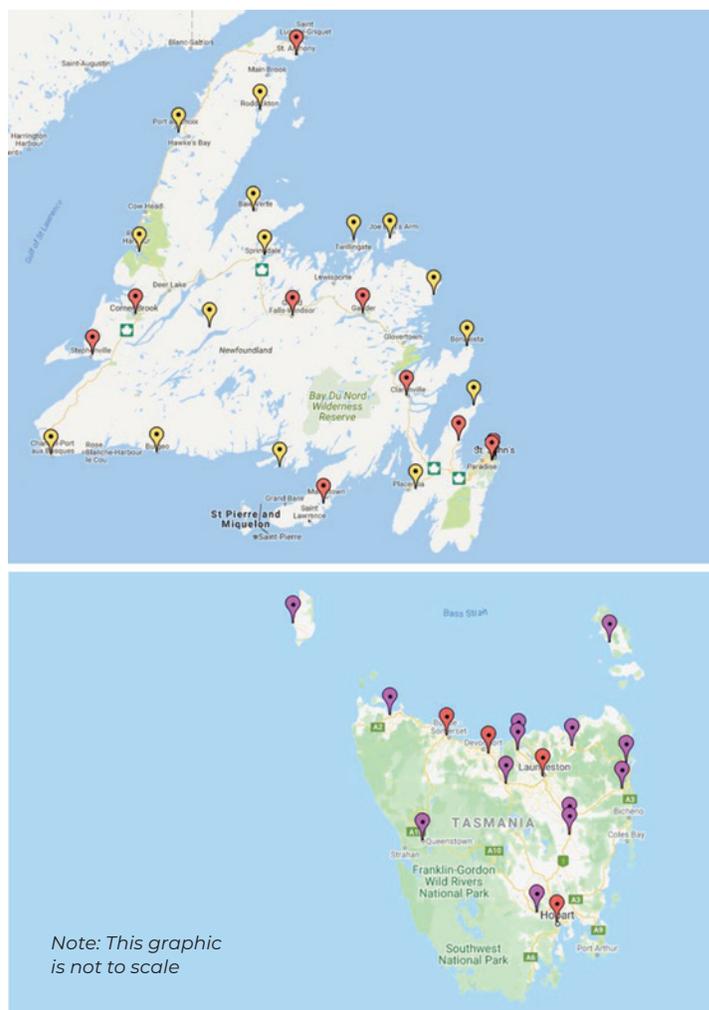


Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of Hospitals and Health Centres in NL and TAS

- NL has 13 acute care hospitals and 15 health centres which provide acute care (1,022 beds).
- TAS has 4 acute care hospitals and 13 health centres.

Table 2. Doctors and Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in NL and Tasmania

	TAS Med Board	NL CPSNL	% Difference
Total	1,583	1,384 ¹	-13
Family Physician	666	704 ²	+6
Other Specialists	917	693	-24
Nurse Practitioners	320	181	-43

¹There are 123 physicians with multiple specialties

²There are 13 Family Physicians (FP) with a specialty counted as both a FP and another Specialist

- The CMA count of 910 FPs in NL is an overestimate as CPSNL has 670 registered FPs. Our research using primary practice indicators reveals 625 FPs active in clinical practice. On the island of Newfoundland, there are 583 FPs in active practice but this amounts to 344 full-time equivalents.
- The CMA estimates 591 specialists in NL but there are 781 registered by CPSNL.
- NL has a similar number of FPs as TAS, but TAS has substantially more nurses in primary care practices (N=320). The 181 Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in NL include both nurses attached to primary care and to other organizations/hospitals.
- In NL, 136 of 181 NPs are in urban communities and likely some are attached to local hospitals. 45 are in communities without hospitals. 122 are involved in the provision of primary care.
- There are 298 physiotherapists working in NL and 214 occupational therapists.

Table 3. Number of Specialists in NL and Tasmania by Subspecialty

	TAS Med Board	NL CPSNL	% Difference
ER Doctors	65	3	-95
Radiologists/ Nuclear Medicine	58	72	+24
Medical Specialists	256	190	-26
Surgical Specialists	138	101	-27
Anesthetists	125	72	-42
Obstetrician/ Gynecologists	50	54	+8
Pediatricians	51	81	+60
Psychiatrists	78	88	+13
Laboratory Medicine Specialists	47	37	+21
Other	49	14	-71
Total	917	712 ¹	

¹There are 19 doctors counted twice among specialty groupings

- NL has 24% fewer specialists than TAS, in particular fewer specialized ER doctors, medical specialists, surgery specialists, anesthetists, laboratory medicine specialists, and 'other' specialties. NL has more radiologists and pediatricians.

Conclusions

- In TAS, the service requirements for high-level care are met by having fewer hospitals but with more beds and more specialists, whereas in NL there are more hospitals but fewer beds and fewer specialists.
- The number of privately owned Personal Care Homes (PCHs) in NL is responsible for the difference in facilities for the frail elderly comparing NL and TAS.
- The count of doctors in NL is higher than in TAS, but the number of full-time equivalent FPs in the island of NL is 59% that of the FPs registered in family practice.
- There are substantially more NPs linked to primary care in TAS compared to NL, but similar numbers of FPs.