Senior Medical Officer Workforce Factsheet

July 2025

# Key Senior Medical Officer (SMO) workforce stats[[1]](#footnote-1)

* 6,419 individuals employed, with an FTE of 5,509
* Overall FTE increased by 55 FTE between March 2024 (5,454 FTE) to 5,509 at March 2025.

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| Average wage and remuneration including allowances / overtime / penal rates | |
| Ave. Base FTE Salary (excluding additional salary payments for shift work, being on-call and superannuation) | $254,500 |
| Ave. Additional Payments (salary related and non-salary related remuneration*)* | $70,500 |
| Sub Total – FTE Remuneration | **$325,000** |
| Ave. Employer Super Payment | $18,500 |
| Ave. Total FTE Salary Package | **$343,500** |

* SMOs receive a base salary that reflects their level of experience, agreed at the time of job offer. They progress up a 15-step pay scale each year.
* The SMO Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) collective agreement is a “minimum rates” document. Additional terms and conditions have been negotiated nationally, locally, by specialty or department, and/or individually.

# Wage increases over time

SMO salaries have increased significantly over time. The base mid-salary step (Step 8) for senior doctors grew by 41% between 2009 and 2024 – an increase of $66,361.

Bargaining for the Collective Agreement was settled in November 2023, resulting in average base salary for SMOs increasing by 7.29%.

# Current collective agreement negotiations

The current collective agreement expired on 31 August 2024, with discussions between Health NZ and ASMS underway since then. In late April 2025 Health NZ made an offer to ASMS in mediation. The offer was then rejected by ASMS.

The parties then entered facilitated bargaining with the assistance of the Employment Relations Authority, this has culminated in Health NZ making a further offer.

The offer aims to restore the gap between junior doctors and senior doctors’ salaries to help attract and retain our newly qualified SMOs by removing the three lowest pay steps.

The offer provides all other senior doctors increases between 3.5% to 3.8% over the 21-month term.

The offer also includes a retention fund totally $34 million over the course of the proposed settlement, to be directed to services and locations to assist in retaining senior doctors.

# How senior doctors would benefit from this offer

* We are offering our newly qualified SMOs a very substantial salary increase as follows;
  + A first-year specialist would receive a $17,700 (9.5%) increase on base salary due to removal of steps 1-3. All other salary related remuneration (e.g. KiwiSaver) would increase by 9.5% as well.
  + A second-year specialist would receive a $11,800 (6.2%) pay increase on base salary. All other salary related remuneration (e.g. KiwiSaver) would increase by 6.2%.
  + These specialists would also receive further increase of 1.5% over the course of the proposed settlement.
* For specialist currently on Step 4 and above, increases of between 3.5% or 3.8% would be applied over a 21-month period.
* Additionally, we have offered incentives totalling $34 million over the course of the proposed settlement, to services and locations to assist in retaining senior doctors.
* Senior doctors also receive annual step increase up to step 15, which over the course of the prosed settlement, would increase to $277,454.
* A retention fund totally $34 million to support retention of senior doctors in specific service and locations.

# Previous offer rejected by ASMS

* ASMS rejected an offer from Health NZ in April, following mediation.
* Under the April offer, in addition to the removal and significant increases delivered to those in Steps 1-3, senior doctors on Steps 4-15 would have gained 1% and 2% increases for Steps 4-15 in 2025 and 2026 respectively.
* They also would also have received lump sum payments totalling $8000 in 2025 and 2026.

# Further Information on pay and conditions

## Breakdown of allowances / overtime / penal rates

* There are a range of additional allowances including but not limited to:
* on-call availability and call backs
* evening, night and weekend penal rates
* recruitment and retention, and
* special contribution.
* These additional allowances are paid on top of base salary, vary by location and service, and are often not specified in the collective agreement.
* Specified in the collective agreement is:
* Continued Medical Education (CME) allowance of $16,000 allowance per year (pro-rated for part time employees).

## Leave

* Six weeks annual leave per year.
* Two weeks (10 days per year) Continued Medical Education (CME) leave.
* Unspecified sick leave.
* Long service leave (2 weeks every 10 years).
* Onerous duties leave (5 days per year).
* Fully paid sabbatical leave of three months after every six years of service.

## Other additional payments /benefits

* Up to 6% matching superannuation contribution.
* Six weeks of fully paid parental leave when taking parental leave.
* Reimbursement of actual and reasonable costs relating to annual practicing certificates, other necessary licences, Medical Protection Society membership or an agreed alternative, vocational registration fees, and college membership fees.
* Moving and transfer expenses.

1. March 2025 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)