

Senior Medical Officer Workforce Factsheet

September 2025

Key Senior Medical Officer (SMO) workforce stats¹

- 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.

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.

Settlement of the SMO collective agreement in November 2023, saw the average salary package for SMOs increase by 7.29%.

Current ASMS collective agreement negotiations

The current ASMS 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.

Under the April offer, in addition to the 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.

¹ March 2025

They also would also have received lump sum payments totalling \$8000 in 2025 and 2026. The April offer was then rejected by ASMS.

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

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

The offer also included a retention fund totalling \$34 million over the course of the proposed settlement, to be directed to services and locations to assist in retaining senior doctors. This offer was also rejected by ASMS, with members voting to strike for 48 hours on September 23 and 24.

Bargaining resumed on September 12 and 16, seeking to reach agreement and avert the strike. Health NZ presented an improved package to ASMS on 18 September. ASMS would not agree to call off the strike to continue negotiations.

How senior doctors would have benefitted from the September 2025 offer

- The latest package represents an investment in excess of \$160 million for the more than 5,500 senior doctors covered by the collective agreement.
- The package would have cost taxpayers an additional \$31 million over four years when compared to the offer made to senior doctors at the end of July.
- A salary increase of 5% over the 16-month term of the offer, with the ability to provide an additional increase for first-year specialists who would receive a \$15,578 (8.4%) increase on base salary and all other salary related remuneration (e.g. KiwiSaver).
- These increases are additional to the \$5,900 annual step increase senior doctors receive until they reach the top of the 15-step pay scale.
- A \$40 million fund for distribution to senior doctors in recognition of the value of their work and to support the workforce.

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.