

Arizona Health Workforce Profile: Physical Therapists

The purpose of this brief is to understand the distribution of the Physical Therapist workforce in Arizona's 15 counties and compare the distribution between rural and non-rural areas.

BACKGROUND

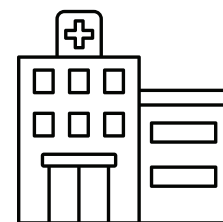
- The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) states; "Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants help people to maximize their quality of life. They work with people of all ages and abilities, and in a variety of settings. They help people rehabilitate from devastating injuries, manage chronic conditions, avoid surgery and prescription drugs, and create healthy habits."¹
- Arizona statute defines the practice of physical therapy as "Examining, evaluating and testing persons who have mechanical, physiological and developmental impairments, functional limitations and disabilities or other health and movement related conditions in order to determine a diagnosis, a prognosis and a plan of therapeutic intervention and to assess the ongoing effects of intervention."³
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the job outlook for Physical Therapists (the projected change in employment between 2019 and 2029) is 18%, which is greater than average growth outlook of 4%.⁴

NEED

- The US has a growing aging population and there is an increased focus on providing support to older adults as they experience conditions like "arthritis and stroke which benefit from physical therapy".⁵
- The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) national estimates indicate that there will be a 27% increase in the supply of PTs and a 26% increase in demand. Thus, the supply should be sufficient to meet demand in 2030.⁶
- Other research has estimated a shortage of PTs. Research by Landry et al., (2016) estimated the national demand will exceed supply by 2020. Research by Zimbelman et al., (2010) estimated that Arizona will observe a PT shortfall in 2030.^{7,8} It should be noted that this research was completed before the COVID-19 pandemic, and there has been a decline in outpatient health services, including physical therapy services since the start of the pandemic.⁹

EDUCATION AND LICENSING

- Before 2015, a master's level degree was required for entry into the physical therapy field. Currently, entry in physical therapy requires a doctoral degree, Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT).¹⁰
- Arizona has a process for Universal License Recognition for PTs who are licensed and in good standing in other states.¹¹



WORK SETTINGS






Physical Therapists work in outpatient clinics, hospitals, schools, sports settings, patient homes, and nursing homes.²

Physical therapists median annual pay in 2020 was \$91,000.

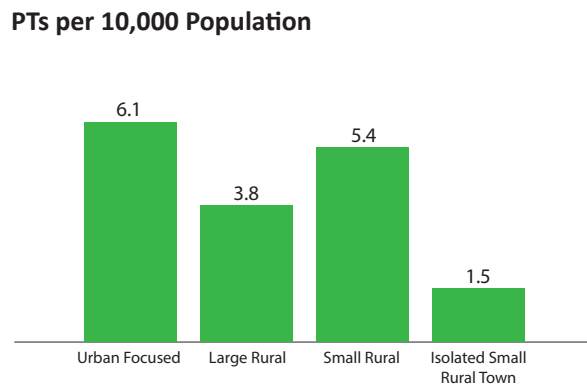
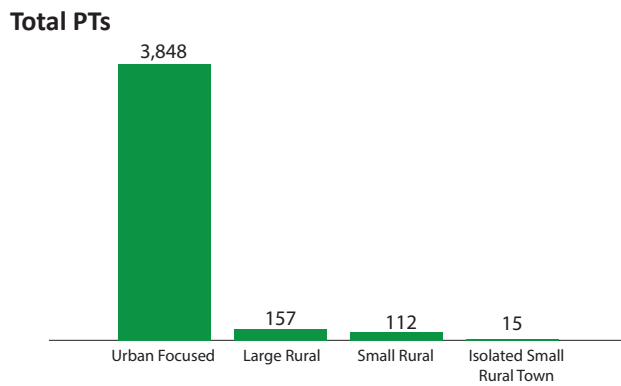


FINDINGS

- Using population data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019 we find that the distribution of PTs mirrors the population distribution in Arizona, with 93% of the workforce located in urban areas.
- While 10% of the population in Arizona lives in non-urban and rural areas, 7.4% of PTs are located in non-urban and rural areas.

	 Arizona	 Urban	 Large Rural	 Small Rural	 Isolated Small Rural
Population (%)	7,052,789	6,335,980 (90)	412,134 (6)	205,616 (3)	99,059 (1)
Total Number (%)	4,132	3,848 (93)	157 (4)	112 (3)	6 (0.4)
Ratio per 10,000	5.9	6.1	3.8	5.4	1.5

► **93%** of physical therapists work in urban areas where there are 6.1 PTs per 10,000 population.



- In Arizona there are 5.9 PTs per 10,000 compared to an estimated 6.7 PTs per 10,000 nationally.¹²
- Arizona counties are grouped into tables below based on the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) urban-rural classification for counties. We make two changes and that is to group Pima with large and Pinal County with the medium size counties.
- The majority of PTs are located in Maricopa and Pima counties. However, some more rural and less populated counties have a higher ratio of PTs per 10,000 than Maricopa and Pima County, including Coconino and Yavapai counties.

Large Counties (metro)

	% State Pop.	Total PTs	PTs Per 10,000
Maricopa	61.6	2,808	6.5
Pima	14.4	566	5.6

Medium Counties (sm. metro)

	% State Pop.	Total PTs	PTs Per 10,000
Cochise	1.8	38	3.0
Coconino	2.0	160	11.6
Mohave	2.9	67	3.2
Pinal	6.0	99	2.3
Yavapai	3.3	161	7.0
Yuma	3.0	88	4.2

Small Counties (lrg. /sm. rural)

	% State Pop.	Total PTs	PTs Per 10,000
Apache	1.0	12	6.3
Gila	0.7	8	4.1
Graham	0.6	6	3.3
Greenlee	0.1	1	1.1
La Paz	0.3	1	0.5
Navajo	1.6	17	5.4
Santa Cruz	0.7	3	0.6



METHODS & DATA

This brief relies on National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES, 2021) data to understand the distribution of the physical therapy workforce. The county categorization is based on the National Center for Health Statistics urban-rural classification for counties. We make two changes and that is to group Pima County with large counties, and Pinal County with the medium size counties. Large indicates the large central metro and medium metro counties (NHSC = 1, 3); Medium indicates the small metro counties (NHSC=4) and the large fringe metro county, and small indicates the large and small rural counties (NHSC 5,6).

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