

# Addressing Arizona's Health Workforce Needs – Issues and Solutions

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Center for Rural Health

Do we have the  
healthcare  
workforce to  
meet Arizona's  
health and  
healthcare  
needs?

How are we meeting  
the challenge?



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Center for Rural Health



**Annual Report FY 2022-23**

## Mission

Improve the health and wellness of Arizona's rural and underserved populations.

[crh.arizona.edu](http://crh.arizona.edu)

# AzCRH Health Workforce Efforts



Health workforce **data and analysis** to inform grant applications, program, and policy development.



**Collaboration** with AzDHS Health Systems Development and other partners.



**Partnership** with AzDHS and Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers (AACHC) to support 3RNet a rural recruitment program for health professionals.

# Health Care Context in Rural Arizona

Definitions of rural vary

Rural communities in every county

Low population, low pop. density, large physical spaces, longer travel distance/time to metro areas

Healthcare resources concentrated in metro areas

Fewer total health care providers and lower ratios of providers per population





# Geographic Proximity

Further away = less likely to receive care, decreases the likelihood of receiving preventive care

Disproportionately affects more rural, lower income, lower literacy, older, and under-resourced communities (and consider intersections of these factors)

Costs include economic, time, social etc.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) travel standard > 30 minutes is excessively distant

# Access to Care

“The timely use of personal health services to achieve the best health outcomes” (IOM, 1993)


“**Coverage:** facilitates entry into the health care system. Uninsured people are less likely to receive medical care and more likely to have poor health.

**Services:** Having a usual source of care with the requisite resources (staff, equipment, etc.).

**Timeliness:** ability to provide health care when the need is recognized.

**Workforce:** capable, qualified, culturally competent providers.”

([AHRQ](#))



Do we have the healthcare workforce to meet Arizona's health and healthcare needs?



# Key Questions

Supply: do we have enough?

Distribution: do we have enough in all parts of the state?

Specialty or focus: do we have the providers trained in the areas of critical health needs?

And more...

# Primary Care



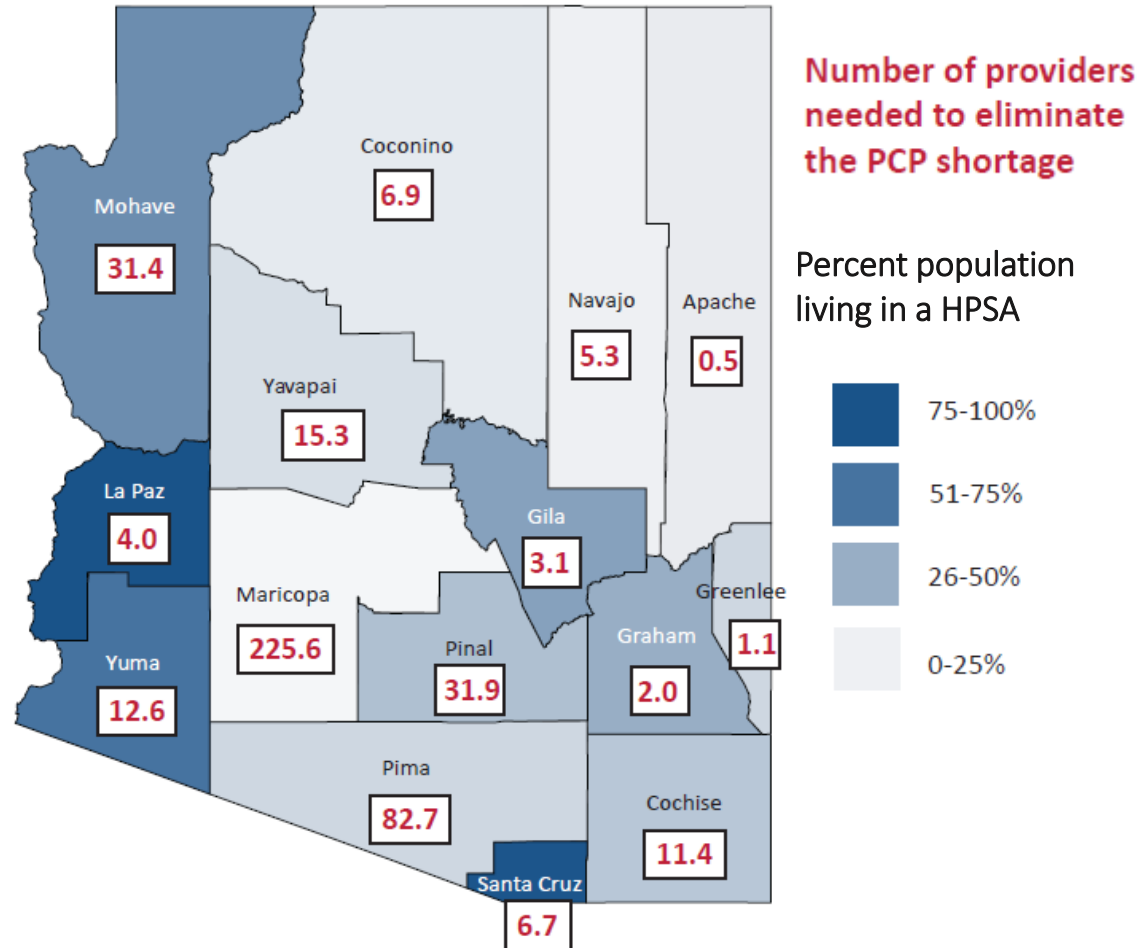
Arizona only meets 39% of its primary care needs (HHS Region 9 = 46%)

Arizona needs as many as 667 primary care physician full time equivalents (FTEs) to eliminate its current primary care shortage

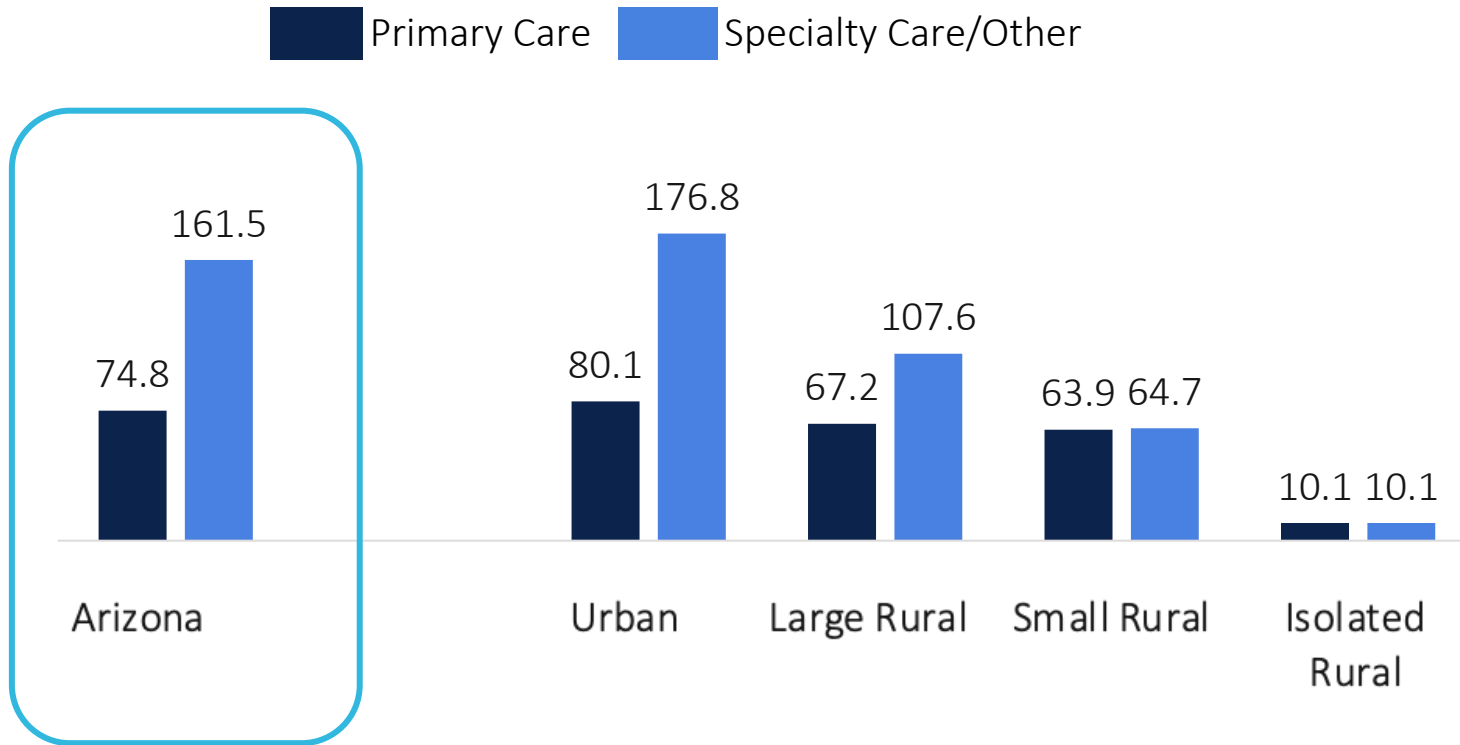
HPSA Primary Care designation threshold is a population to provider ratio of 3500:1 or 3000:1 in high needs areas

(HRSA, HPSA Quarterly [Report](#))

## Percent Living in Primary Care Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and Number of Providers Needed to Eliminate Shortage (2023)



# Rural Arizona has a lower Primary Care Provider Ratio per 100,000 (2019)



Does this supply & distribution problem exist for other health care professionals?

# Behavioral Health



Arizona only meets 9% of its mental health needs (HHS Region 9 = 21.5%)

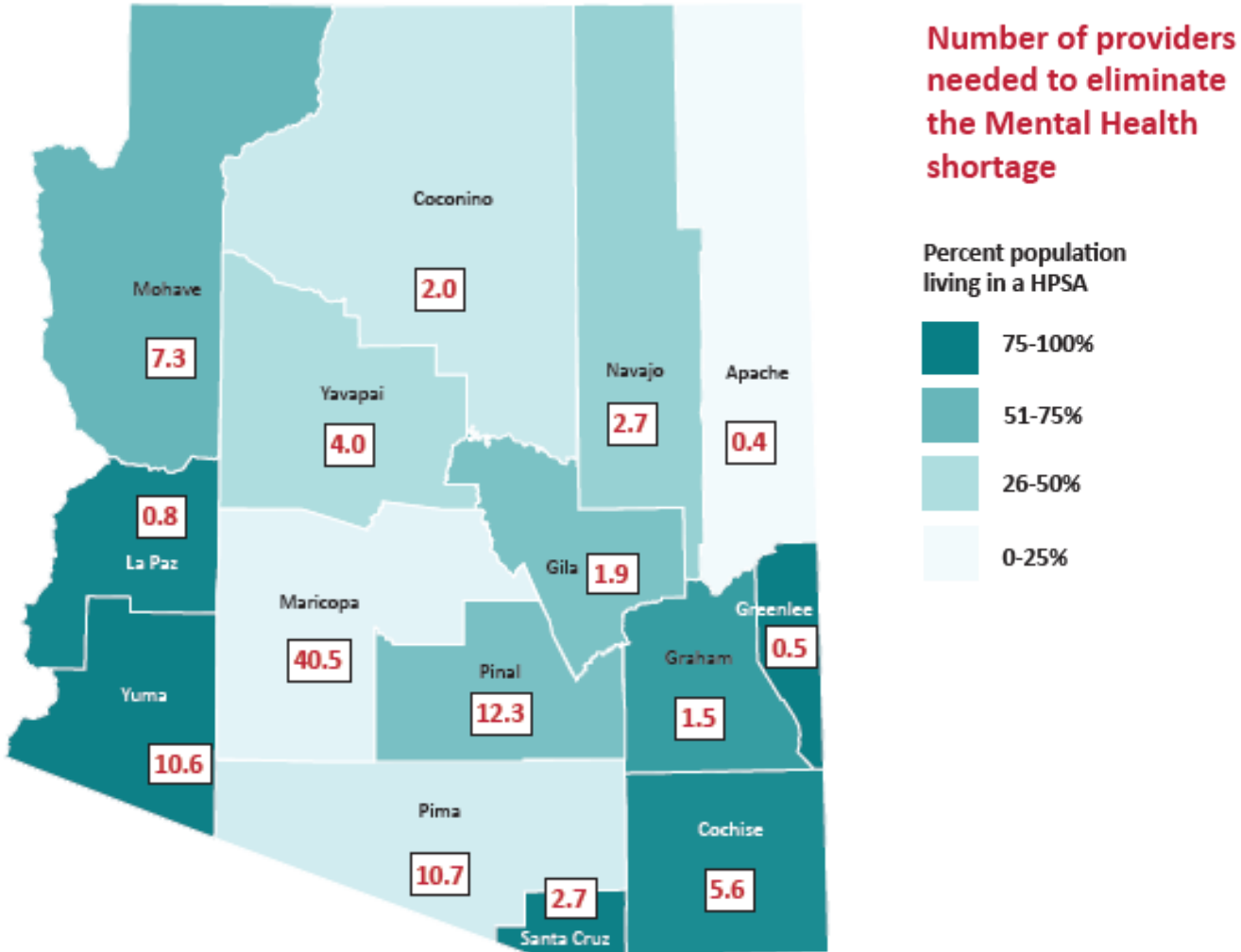
Arizona needs as many as 228 psychiatrist physician full time equivalents (FTEs) to eliminate its current mental health care shortage

HPSA Mental Health designation threshold is a population to provider ratio of 30,000:1 or 20,000:1 in high needs areas

(HRSA, HPSA Quarterly [Report](#))



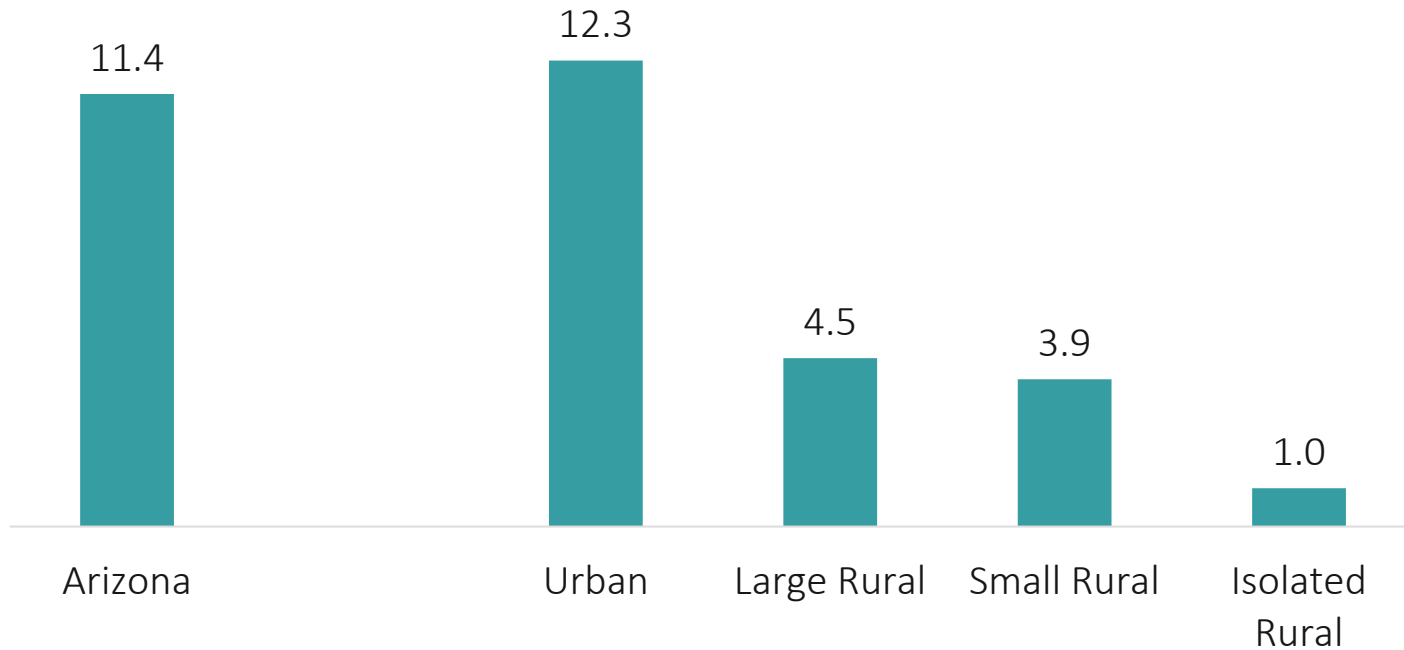
## Percent Living in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and **Number of Mental Health Providers** Needed to Eliminate Shortage (2023)



AzCRH Workforce Reports & [Briefs](#), [Direct Link](#)

Note: County FTE estimates rely on designated HPSAs only, HRSA overall FTE estimates include designated and proposed for withdrawal HPSAs

## Rural Arizona has a Lower Psychiatrist Ratio per 100,000 (2020)



This disparity also shows up for other behavioral health professionals:

Social workers

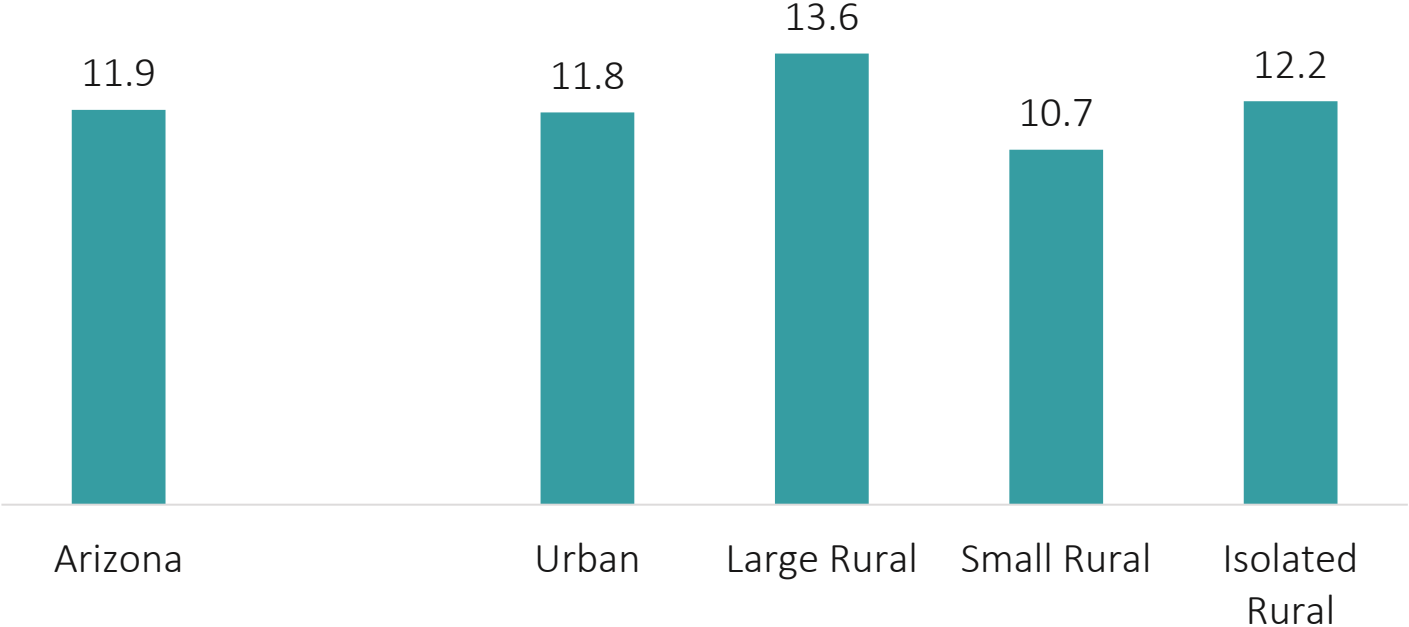
Counselors

Psychologists

Marriage and Family Therapists

# There is More Parity between Rural and Urban Arizona for Substance Abuse Counselors

Ratio per 100,000 (2020)



AzCRH Workforce Reports & [Briefs](#), [Direct Link](#)  
Based on state licensure data, rurality by USDA Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) [2013](#)




# OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

MENTAL HEALTHCARE IN RURAL AMERICA

▶ ⏩ 🔊 0:11 / 13:58



The Hidden Crisis in Rural [America](#) (2019)

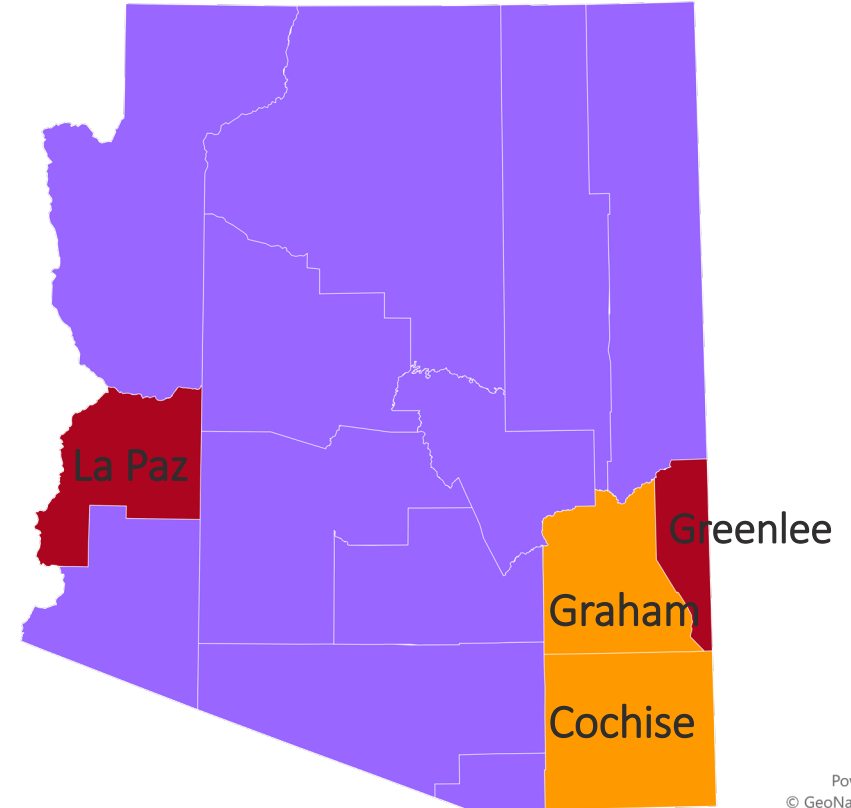


What about health care professionals meeting other important health needs?

# Maternal Health



- Maternity care deserts
- Low Access to maternity care
- Full access to maternity care



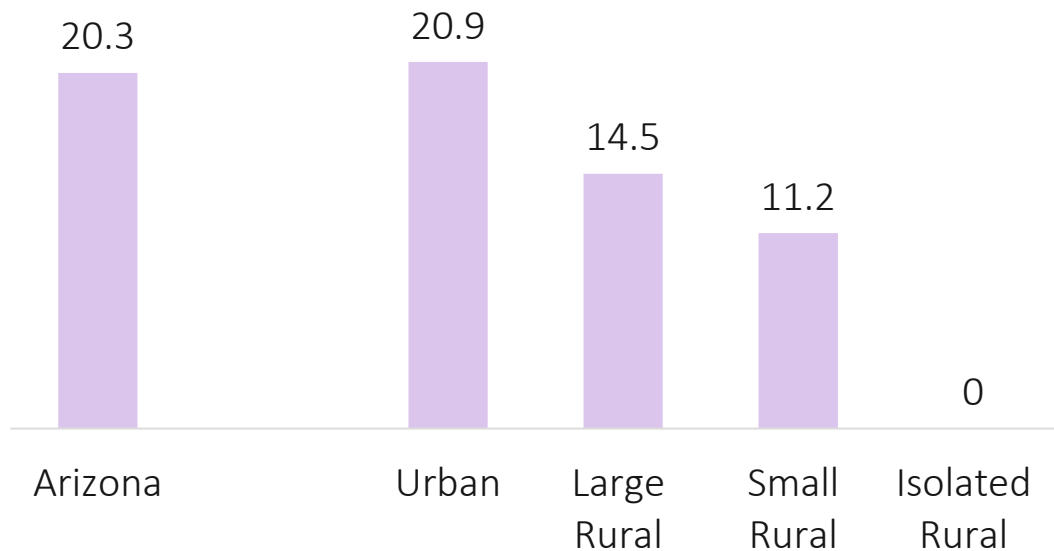
Recreated from: March of Dimes, Maternity Care [Deserts](#) (2020)



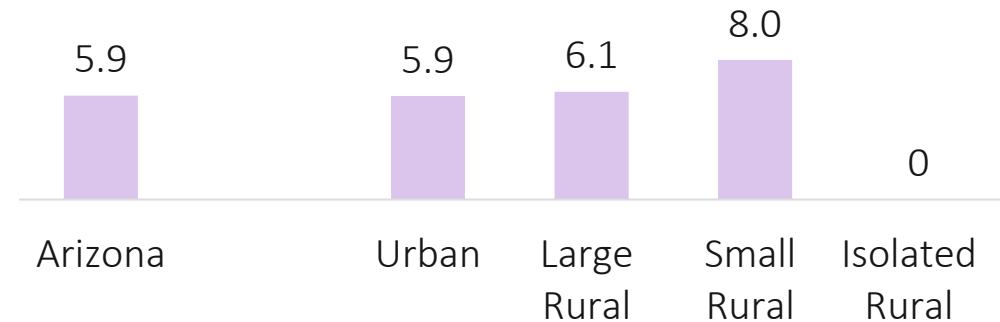
# There are no Obstetric Gynecology Physicians or Nurse Midwives (APRN-CNMs) Practicing in Isolated Rural Arizona

Ratio per 100,000 (2020)

### Ob-Gyn Physicians



### Nurse Midwives (APRN-CNM)



# Needs of an Aging Population



In Arizona, 46.3% of the population 75 and older are living with a disability

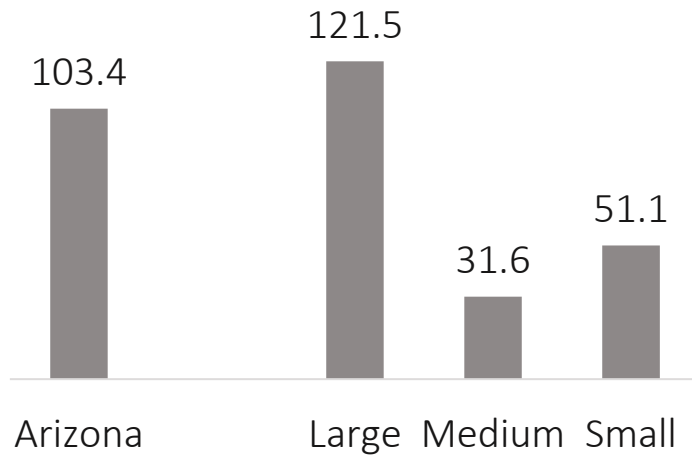
“By 2030, Arizona will need more than 190,000 new direct care workers.”

AHCCCS

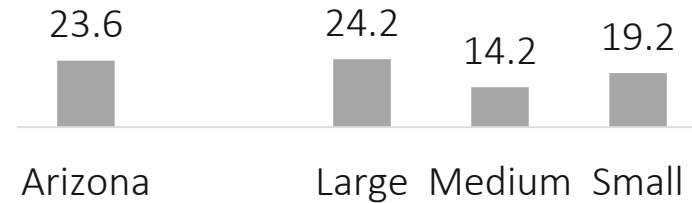
# Greater disparity between large and small counties for home health and personal care aides

Ratio per 10,000 (2022)

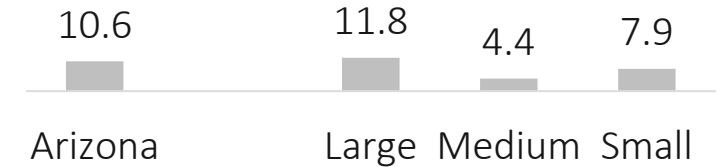
Home Health & Personal Care Aides



Nursing Assistants



Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses



Note: Small counties data only available for Apache, Gila, Navajo

AzCRH Workforce Reports & [Briefs](#), Direct [Link](#)

Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data, counties mostly grouped by CDC NCHS Urban Rural [Classification](#)



What are we doing about it?

# Supply - Education



ABOR Healthy Tomorrow initiative

Three university expansion of medical, nursing, and more through new colleges and new programs

UArizona physician assistant, nurse midwife, and physical therapy programs being established

# Supply - Education

## The Direct Care & Behavioral Health Workforce

Scholarships and training programs via AHCCCS

Training & professional development for workforce development professionals in HCBS organizations

AHCCCS also requesting a permanent implementation of a COVID flexibility to permit parents as paid caregivers for minor children





# Supply



[HOME](#) / [INDUSTRY & CAREERS](#) / [HEALTHCARE](#)

Career Exploration

AZ Healthcare Careers [Platform](#)

Pipeline AZ [Blog](#)

Curriculum improvements to in-service training programs for direct care workers, behavioral health technicians

Payment incentives to organizations to support 1) creating and implementing workforce development plans and 2) reporting a minimum workforce data set

# Distribution - Training



## UArizona College of Medicine Primary Care Scholarship Program

Tuition support for 2-4 years of primary care service in Arizona

## ADHS State Workforce Loan Repayment & Other Programs

Including recent behavioral health loan repayment

## Two FQHCs were awarded Teaching Health Center grants in 2023

Purpose is to train primary care residents in community based settings in rural and underserved areas

# Distribution - Training



Dr. Judith Hunt, physician preceptor, Payson  
Read [more](#)

Arizona Area Health Education Center

Regional centers support rural clinical rotations and other community-based experiences for health professional students in rural and underserved Arizona

Also support residency training in rural Arizona

# Distribution - Training



Rural Residency Program Support

New funding in 2023 to establish primary care residency programs at community health centers, rural health clinics, and tribal health facilities

Residency programs in family medicine, psychiatry, internal medicine

Marana, Somerton, San Luis, Flagstaff, Payson



Arizona Transition to Practice Program for New Graduate Registered Nurses

First cohort begins in March “Forty-six RN new graduates from 13 facilities, including CAH, IHS, acute care and Behavioral Health will be supported in the program for a full year.” – Vicki Buchda, Senior Vice President, Care Improvement AzHHA

# Distribution - Connecting Resources



“The Arizona Telemedicine Program is a large, multidisciplinary, university-based program that provides telemedicine services, distance learning, informatics training, and telemedicine technology assessment capabilities to communities throughout Arizona.”

<https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/about-us/home>



College of Health Solutions  
**Project ECHO**

“Specialists at our "hub" site work with primary care providers in communities across the state to train them in the delivery of specialty care services. The program increases access to specialty treatment and care in rural and underserved areas.”

<https://chs.asu.edu/project-echo>



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON  
**Arizona Perinatal  
Psychiatry Access Line**

“APAL is a statewide perinatal psychiatry access line. We assist **medical providers** in caring for their pregnant and postpartum patients with mental health and substance use disorders.”

<https://apal.arizona.edu/>



What next?



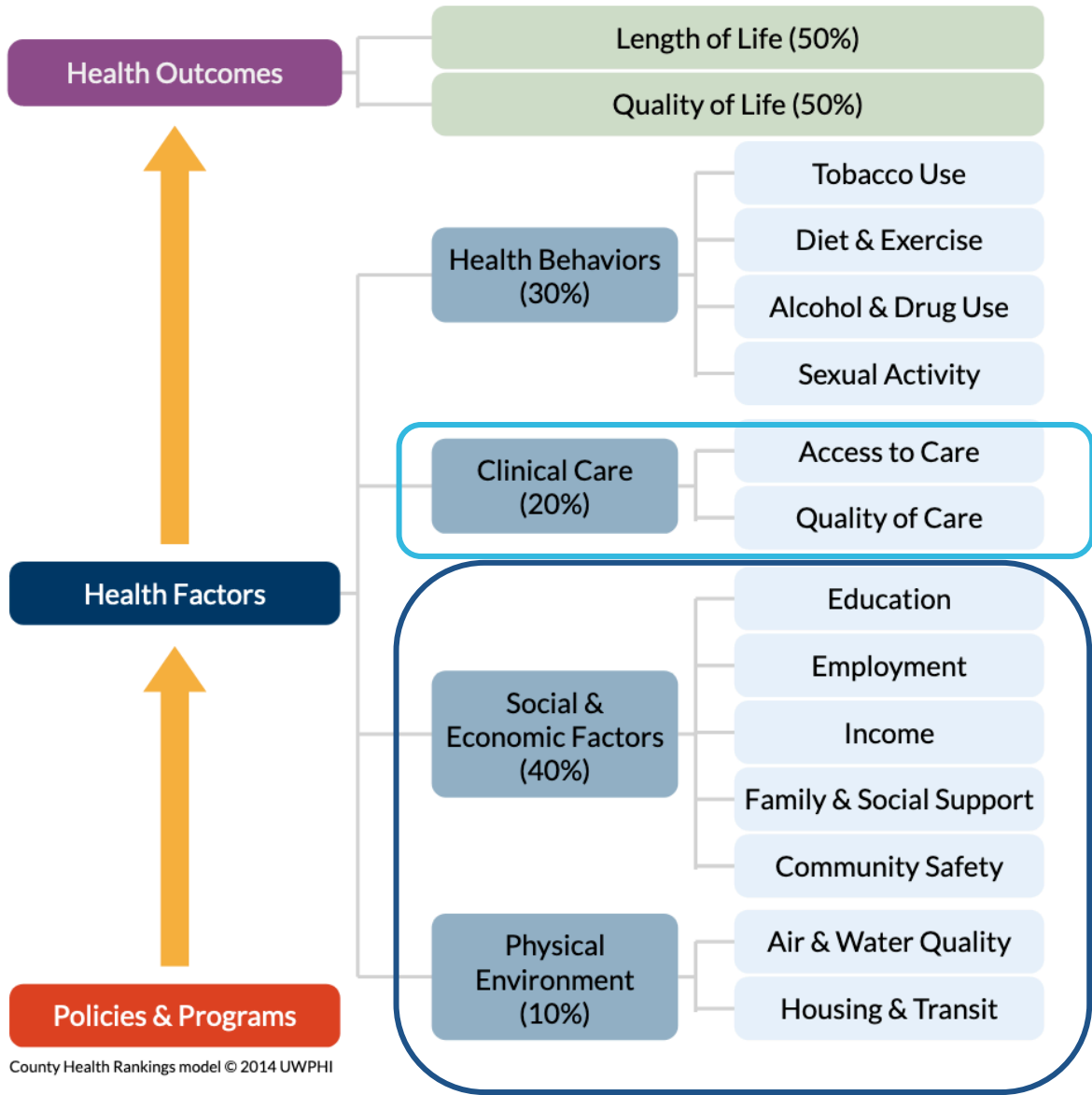
# Key Questions

Are we all working together?

Universities, community colleges, career & technical education, health care systems, state agencies

Is what we are doing, working?

What else should we consider?



20%

50%



# Health Begins Where We Live, Learn, Work, and Play

Educational quality

Economic fairness

Housing availability

Civic engagement

Community spaces

Connectedness

Environmental quality



# Workforce Data Resources

# AzCRH Workforce Data

This data can:

Use in grant applications, **make the case** for partner or external support to meet address health workforce needs

Help to **set the context or bigger picture**

# Arizona Health Workforce Profile Report



Arizona Health  
Workforce Profile  
Report

# Other AzCRH Workforce Data Resources

## Interactive Data Visualizations

Arizona Healthcare Employment, Projections, and Wage Report

Arizona Graduate Medical Education Funding Report

## Workforce Reports and Briefs

Physician Specialty

Direct Care Workers

Physical Therapists

Critical Care Workforce

## ArcGIS Maps Hub



# Data by Request

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Home > AzCRH Programs > Health Workforce Data & Analysis

Health workforce page  
on the AzCRH website  
Form to request data

## Health Workforce Data and Analysis

Given the ongoing transformation of the health and public health system in the U.S., it is essential for Arizona to collect, compile, analyze and report on the health workforce. It is important to provide data-driven solutions to address the existing maldistribution of the health workforce. This maldistribution creates workforce shortages and constrained access to care for populations based on geography, social-demographic, and other factors.



Education, training, retention and support for the rural health workforce is a core element of the mission of the Arizona Center for Rural Health (AzCRH). Workforce research is essential to making data-driven decision on health workforce policies and programs. AzCRH has published multiple reports on the health workforce since 2007.

OR:

Email

[brynak@arizona.edu](mailto:brynak@arizona.edu)

# Health Workforce Data in Action

Provided data for grant applications:

- Rural residency development

- Rural health network development

- Geriatric workforce development

Inform proposed policies (e.g., opportunities for GME support)

Health system summary data for educational program accreditation needs assessment requirements (physical therapy and physician assistant)



Thank you!

# The Team

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