

Quantifying Arizona’s Mental Health Workforce Shortage Using Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Data

Updated: January 2025

Arizona needs **144 psychiatrist physician full-time equivalent (FTE)** to eliminate its current mental health workforce shortage.¹ Mental health and substance use disorders contribute to the disease burden in the US and are among the leading causes of death.^{2,3} In Arizona, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an estimated 23% of people aged 18 and older experienced any mental illness in the prior year.⁴ Prevention, early identification, screening, and access to high-quality treatment are public health priorities to promote recovery and overall health and reduce the impact psychiatric illness and addiction has on individuals, families, and the community.

This brief summarizes the FTE shortage for psychiatrist physicians by county and tribal area in Arizona. While multiple physician specialties, other health care professionals like nurse practitioners and physician assistants, and behavioral health professionals like counselors can provide mental health services, the mental health HPSAs in Arizona are based on a ratio of psychiatrist physicians to population. The target ratio for psychiatrists to population is 1 to 30,000 or 1 to 20,000 in high need areas.

►► Arizona has mental health workforce shortages in all counties.

- Arizona meets just **10% of its mental health need.**⁵
- The ratio of psychiatrist physicians to population in the US is 1: 8,347. In Arizona the ratio is 1: 10,739. ⁶
- Of the fifty states and the District of Columbia, Arizona ranks 36th in psychiatrist physicians per population.⁷
- Arizona is **one of the fastest growing states in population**, growing 1.13% per year between 2008 and 2023, compared to median growth of 0.47% in the U.S. overall.⁸

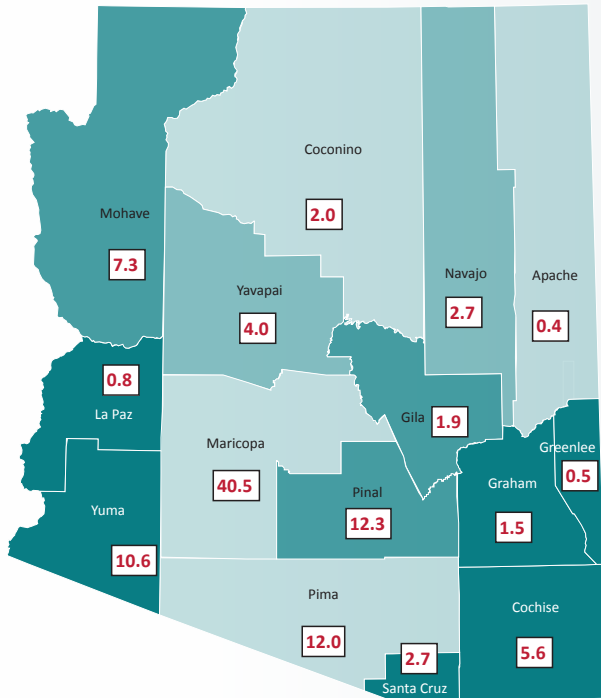
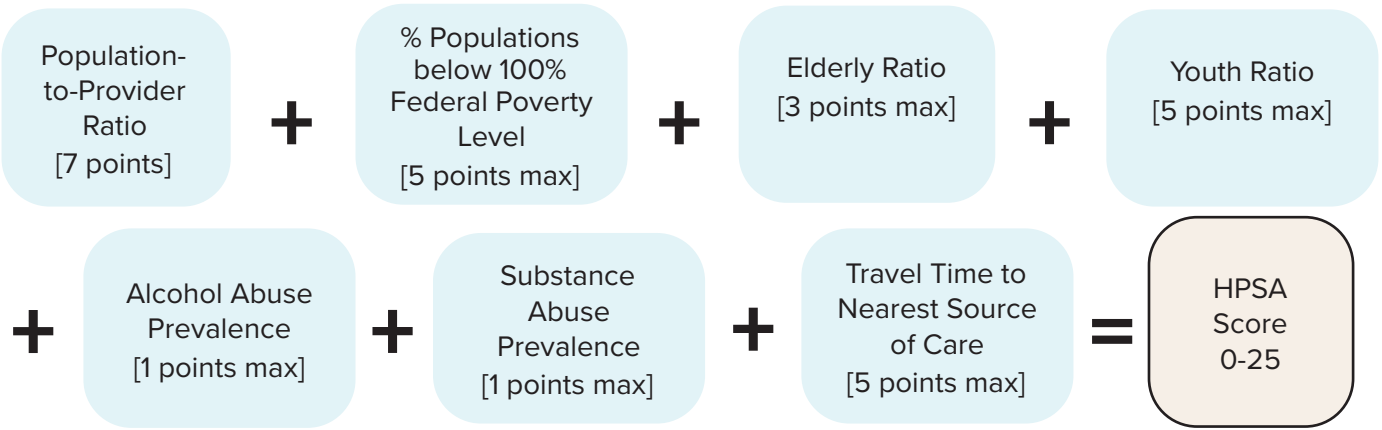
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Designated Indian Health Service, Tribal Health, and Urban Indian Health **Facility** Mental Health HPSAs

TRIBAL NATION	HIGHEST HPSA SCORE	MH FTE SHORT
Colorado River Indian Tribes	16	gi0.32
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation	12	0.07
Gila River Indian Community	17	0.49
Hopi Tribe	17	0.37
Hualapai Tribe	15	0.10
Navajo Nation	16	3.74
Pascua Yaqui Tribe	13	0.19
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community	19	0.51
San Carlos Apache Tribe	20	0.71
Tohono O’Odham Nation	18	0.64
White Mountain Apache Tribe	20	0.72

HPSAs are “geographic areas, populations, or facilities that have a shortage of primary, dental, or mental health care providers.”^{9, 10} These are Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) designations used to describe workforces needs, identify eligible locations for funding for National Health Service Corps, Nurse Corps, IHS Loan Repayment and other federal programs.

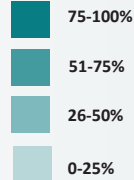
▶▶ Mental Health HPSA Score Formula



Number of providers needed to eliminate the Mental Health shortage

Percent Living in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and Number of Mental Health Providers Needed to Eliminate Shortage (2024)

Percent population living in a HPSA



Number of Designated Correctional, Federally Qualified Health Center, FQHC Look-Alikes, or Rural Health Clinic Facility Mental Health Care HPSAs

County	FQHCs & FQHC Look-Alikes	Rural Health Clinic	Correctional Facility	Correctional Facility MH FTE Short*
Apache	0	1	0	~
Cochise	1	6	1	0.73
Coconino	3	0	0	~
Gila	0	6	0	~
Graham	0	1	2	1.17
Greenlee	0	0	0	~
La Paz	0	3	0	~
Maricopa	9	0	4	9.63
Mohave	1	0	0	~
Navajo	0	0	1	0.56
Pima	4	0	2	4.49
Pinal	2	2	5	11.4
Santa Cruz	1	0	0	~
Yavapai	2	0	0	~
Yuma	1	1	1	1.45
Total	24	20	16	29.5

►► Brief Methods

This brief uses HPSA data from the HRSA. The HPSA data files can be found here <https://data.hrsa.gov/data/download> and an interactive report can be found here <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/hpsa-find> on the HPSA Find site. HRSA includes data on designated and proposed for withdrawal HPSAs to estimate the total psychiatrist physician FTEs needed to eliminate the shortage designation. This brief includes only designated HPSAs. The percentage of the population living in a HPSA area was calculated by adding the population reported in each HPSA type (geographic, geographic high needs, and population) and then dividing by the total population in the county (from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-yr estimates 2022). Some HPSAs span county boundaries, we assigned HPSAs to a single “majority” county based on population in the sub-components that composed the largest portion of the population in the HPSA.

References

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Suggested Citation: Koch, B, Drake, C, Garn, A. and Derksen, D. 2025. Quantifying Arizona’s Mental Health Workforce Shortage.

