2026 Needs Assessment

Allied Health - Data Insights

The Adelaide Primary Health Network (PHN) conducted a Needs Assessments on Allied Health in 2025-26. Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are an integral part of primary care, with the main professions in primary care being: Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Exercise Physiology, Podiatry, Dietetics, Credentialled Diabetes Educators, Psychologists and Social Workers. Pharmacy has also been included in workforce data, except where indicated. This document presents key insights of 'what we know' from data available at 15 July 2026.

Adelaide PHN Allied Health Workforce[1,2]

17,908
Total allied health workforce

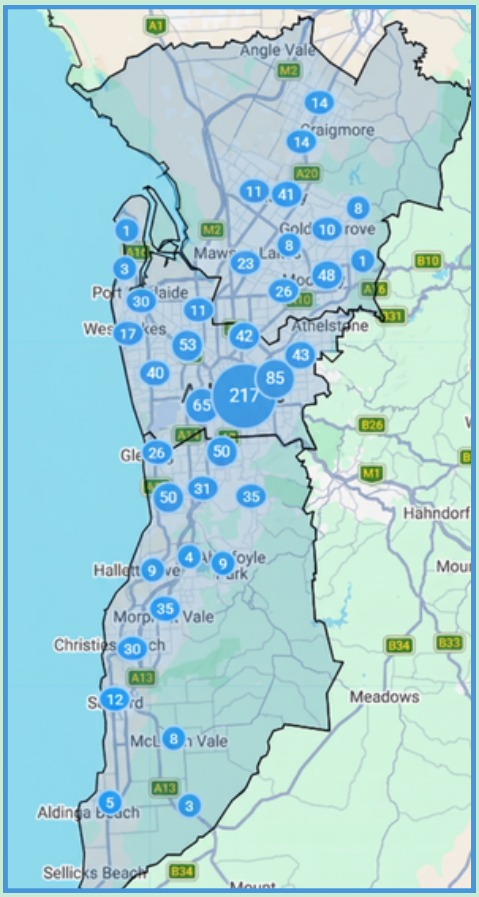
8,185
AHPRA- registered AHPs in Primary & Community Care

43%
AHPs aged 20-34 years (2015-2024), but still reliance on 45-54 year olds

64%
Identify as Female

36%
Identify as Male

Adelaide PHN Allied Health Workforce Distribution[2,3,4]



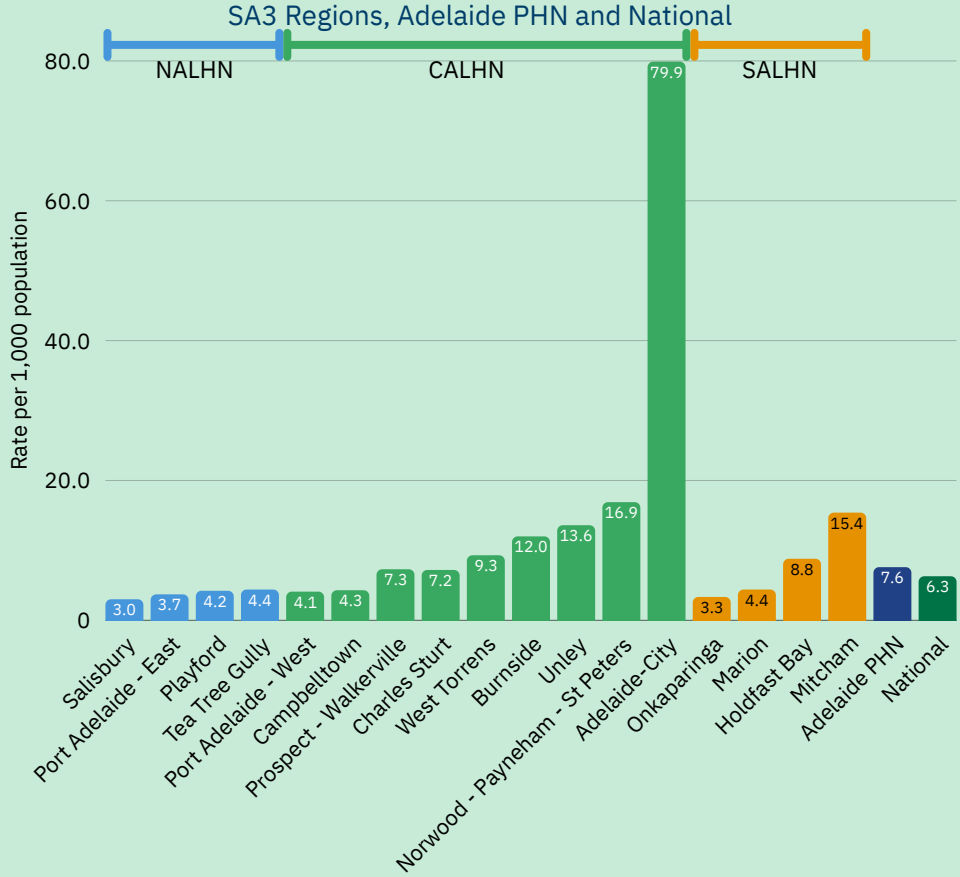
Distribution of National Health Service Directory registered AHPs (excluding Pharmacy) - Adelaide PHN region, 2026

- 2, 496 Physiotherapists
- 1,278 Speech Pathologists
- 1,813 Occupational Therapists
- 412 Podiatrists
- 1,785 Pharmacists
- 245 Exercise Physiologists*
- 1,572 Psychologists
- 168 Dieticians*
- 1,355 Social Workers
- 41 Diabetes Educators*

working in Adelaide PHN region
(2023 data aside from *estimated workforce from relevant data searches 2025)

Rate of AHPs per 1,000 population, 2023

SA3 Regions, Adelaide PHN and National



NB. Includes AHPRA-registered AHPs working across acute, sub-acute, primary and community care

Reduced rate of AHPs

In areas with:

- Lower Socioeconomic status
- Higher prevalence of chronic disease
- Higher prevalence of complex comorbidities
- Higher burden of mental and behavioural disorders

Particularly in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, pharmacy, podiatry, optometry and psychology

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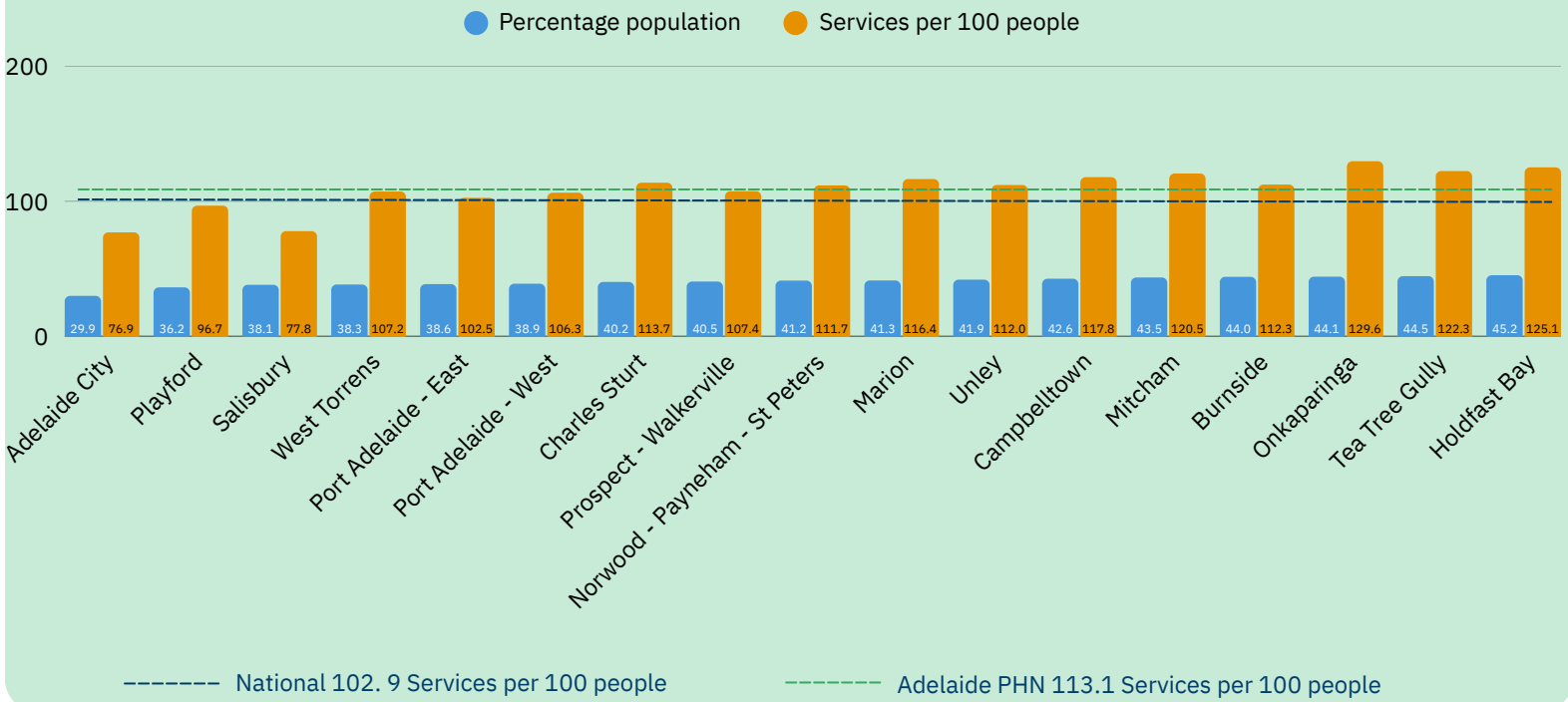
Allied Health Service Access[5]

1,517,559 Medicare-subsidised Allied Health attendances were provided to 545, 131 people (41%) living in Adelaide PHN region in 2024-25 (consistent with Australian rate 39%)

Lower percentage of population accessing allied health services in northern Adelaide and increased utilisation of allied health services in southern Adelaide

Allied Health Attendances (Medicare-subsidised), 2024-25

Percentage Population and Rate of Services per 100 population, SA3 Region, Adelaide PHN and National



-------- National 102. 9 Services per 100 people

-------- Adelaide PHN 113.1 Services per 100 people

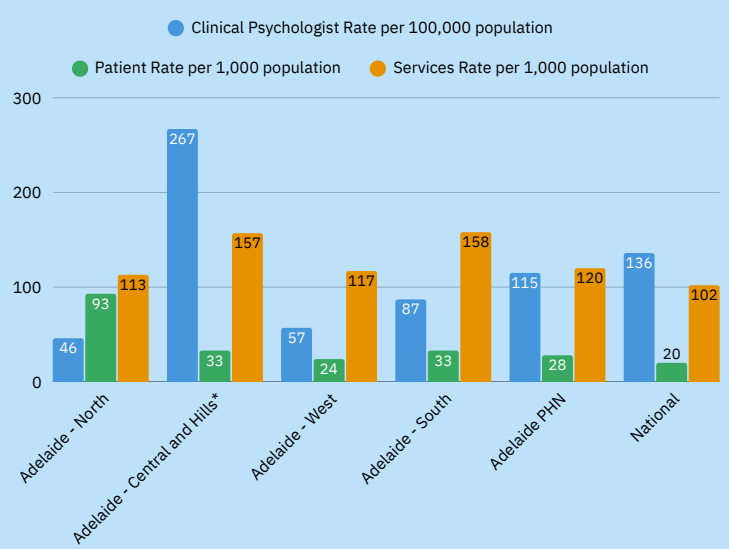
Mental Health[6]

Main professions include: Psychologist, Mental Health Social Worker, Mental Health Occupational Therapist, Counsellor & Psychotherapist. Other allied health professions also support management of mental health including Exercise Physiology, Dietetics, Physiotherapy & Pharmacy

Reduced access to mental health professionals in Adelaide - North and increased demand for mental health services in Adelaide - South, where there is higher prevalence and burden of mental health and behavioural disorders

Clinical Psychologist, Patient and Services Rates: Medicare-subsidised mental health-specific services, 2023-24

SA4 Region, Adelaide PHN and National



* Includes Adelaide Hills data which sits outside Adelaide PHN Region boundaries

Aged Care[7,8,9,10,11]

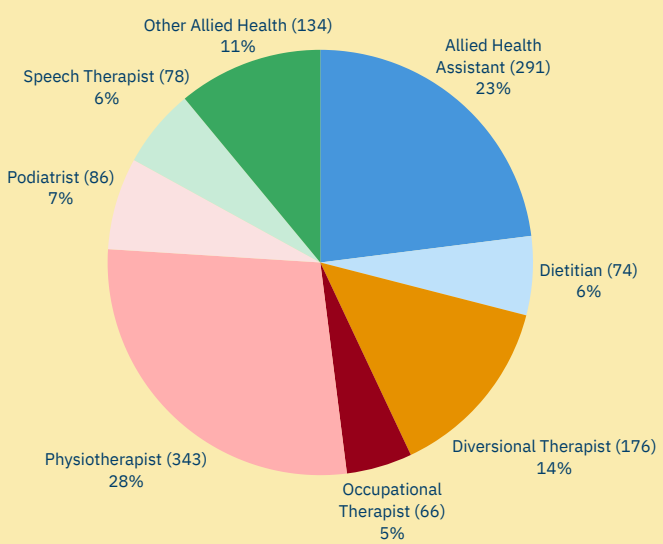
Allied Health are 2nd largest clinical workforce

1,866 (7%) Allied Health and Welfare Professionals were working in Residential Aged Care in South Australia in 2021, which was comparable to National rates

Only 25% of aged care recipients accessed Allied Health Services in Adelaide PHN in 2022-23

Allied health only providing 8 minutes out of recommended 22 minutes per resident daily in 2021

Allied Health Professions working in Residential Aged Care in SA, 2020



N.B. Counts are estimates from weighted data.

2026 Needs Assessment

Disability[12,13,14]

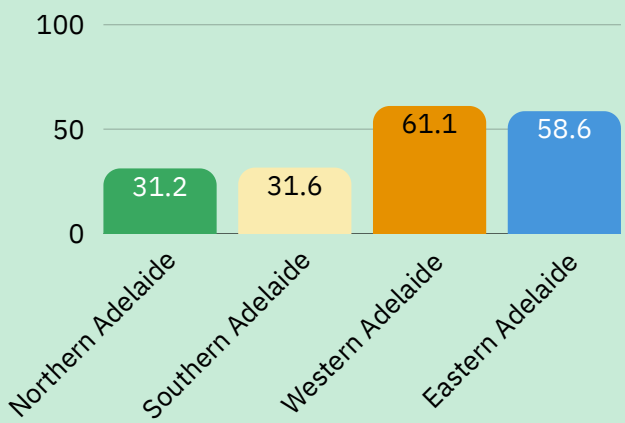
47, 293 active NDIS participants in Adelaide PHN, with a greater proportion living in Northern Adelaide (40%), in 2024

SA has 2nd lowest number of permanent staff (54%) and 2nd highest proportion of casual staff nationally (43%) in 2024 for Disability Support Workers, Allied Health Assistants and AHPs, however had lowest staff turnover rates nationally

Reduced access to disability services in Northern and Southern Adelaide.

Active NDIS providers per 1000 participants

NDIS Service Regions, South Australia, 2025



N.B. NDIS Service Region boundaries do not align neatly to Adelaide PHN boundaries

Alcohol and Other Drugs[15,16,17]

Over half (53%) of clients in South Australia were aged 30-49 years, 63% were male and 17% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in 2024

Largest proportion of South Australia's specialist AOD workforce are allied and other health roles (38%), which includes psychologists, social workers and pharmacists (2024)

AOD workforce is ageing and there is a lack of succession planning in place

Skills gaps in managing complex client needs and co-occurring mental health conditions exist

Main barriers are time, staff shortages, cost and availability of training

84 publicly funded AOD treatment agencies in SA provided

12,706 services to **8,721** clients in 2024-25

Allied Health Workforce Challenges[18,19]

Shortages in health workforce supply

82% health professions, including AHPs, experiencing shortages in health workforce suppy in 2025

Opportunity to consider how other workforce, such as allied health assistants, peer support and lived experience can support allied health with service delivery, and consider scope of practice

Burnout and workforce retention

12% More than 12% of allied health professionals were considering leaving the profession within 12 months in 2025

Disability Casualisation allied health workforce + changes to NDIS → Outflux of AHPs + frequent turnover → Increased therapy wait of 2 years + decreased care hours

Increasing demand for health workforce as people age[9,20]

35%

By 2032, number of older people aged 85 years + is predicted to increase by 35%

25,000 more AHPs needed in Aged Care by 2033

To achieve recommended 22 minutes allied health care per aged care resident per day nationally

Digital Health Technology Uptake[21]

Rapid uptake of digital health technologies, including telehealth, eHealth records and AI, requires upskilling to support safe and effective use in clinical practice

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