

# New Workforce Projections Forecast Physical Therapist Shortages Through 2037



As America ages, physical therapy supply may struggle to meet growing demand.

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**Contact: Sara E. Shannon**  
[sarashannon@apta.org](mailto:sarashannon@apta.org)

**Alexandria, Va.** — The American Physical Therapy Association has released a new workforce report highlighting the potential for ongoing shortages in the physical therapist workforce through 2037. The “[APTA Supply and Demand Forecast 2022-2037](#)” outlines research findings that reveal that these shortages could significantly affect patient access to timely care without strategic interventions.

APTA’s report published alongside a study in PTJ: Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Journal, “[Current and Projected Future Supply and Demand for Physical Therapists from 2022 to 2037: A New Approach Using Microsimulation](#)” forecasts a fluctuating shortfall in physical therapist supply relative to demand for the next 12 years. APTA worked with leading health care workforce researchers to generate these estimates, providing valuable insights into the current and future state of the physical therapist workforce.

“APTA’s report of these findings underlines the urgent need for action to prevent future care disruptions,” said APTA Senior Vice President of Scientific Affairs Tara Jo Manal PT, DPT, FAPTA. “The growing demand for physical therapist services, coupled with an aging workforce, underscore the necessity for targeted interventions to expand our workforce and ensure patients receive timely care. APTA is focused on ensuring that a robust number of graduates enters the profession to reduce attrition and improve provider health and work conditions, and fostering policy changes to support PTs nationwide.”

Key findings from the forecast include:

- In 2022, the U.S. had an estimated 233,890 full-time equivalent physical therapists, but demand required 245,960 FTEs — a shortfall of 12,070 physical therapists.
- The growing demand for physical therapist services is expected to outpace population growth, with a 14.7% increase in demand compared with 8% population growth by 2037.
- The shortage is forecasted to fluctuate over time, depending on assumptions tested in the research.
- 72% of PTs report being unable to meet local demand or are at the limit of their capacity, which could lead to longer wait times and reduced patient access.

APTA’s report also explores the need for policies to address workforce shortages, calling for action to reduce barriers to PT care, increase payment rates, and address student debt to attract more individuals to the profession.



For more information about APTA's report and to access the full findings in PTJ, visit "[APTA Supply and Demand Forecast 2022-2037](#)."

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The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students nationwide. Visit [apta.org](http://apta.org) to learn more.