APA Fact Sheet Series on Psychologist Supply and Demand Projections 2015-2030: Demand Scenarios for the Psychologist Workforce

Key Findings

- If current health service utilization patterns continue, the national demand for psychologists is expected to be **101,120 FTEs** in 2030, an increase of **5,940 FTEs** (**6%**) from 2015.
- Projections suggest substantial demand increase if barriers to care were removed:
  - Under a hypothetical geographic equivalence scenario, the national demand is projected to increase by **10,830 FTEs**, or **11%**, to **106,020 FTEs** in 2030.
  - Under a hypothetical racial/ethnic equivalence scenario, the national demand is projected to increase by **31,020 FTEs**, or **33%**, to **126,200 FTEs** in 2030.
  - Under a hypothetical address unmet need scenario, the national demand is projected to increase by **26,160 FTEs**, or **27%**, to **121,340 FTEs** in 2030.

Background

Workforce projections[1] examine current and future psychologist supply and demand in the United States from 2015 to 2030. Supply is determined on the basis of the number of licensed psychologists active in the workforce,[2] new entrants, and workforce participation patterns, whereas demand is determined on the basis of current patterns of service utilization and projected demographic changes in the U.S. population.

The projections examined three hypothetical scenarios. The geographic equivalence scenario projected demand if the entire U.S. population had service utilization patterns similar to the insured population in metropolitan areas. The racial/ethnic equivalence scenario projected demand if the entire U.S. population had service utilization patterns similar to the insured non-Hispanic White population in metropolitan areas. The address unmet need scenario projected demand if all population who perceived unmet need for mental health services would have received care.

The projections are described in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) psychologists. An FTE is defined as a licensed, doctoral-level psychologist who works 39 hours per week.

Findings

Between 2015 and 2030, the national demand for psychologists is projected to increase to 101,120 FTEs. That is an increase of 5,940 FTEs (6%) from the demand level in 2015. This assumes that current service utilization patterns within the population will continue. However, under the three hypothetical scenarios related to equity and unmet need, demand could increase substantially:[3]

- Geographic equivalence: the national demand is projected to increase by a *total* of 10,830 FTEs, or 11%, which is an *additional* 4,900 FTEs on top of the 5,940 FTE increase projected under the baseline scenario. In 2030, demand is projected to be 106,020 FTEs under the geographic equivalence scenario.
- Racial/ethnic equivalence: The national demand is projected to increase by a *total* of 31,020 FTEs, or 33%, which is an *additional* 25,080 FTEs on top of the 5,940 FTE increase projected under the baseline scenario. In 2030, demand is projected to be 126,200 FTEs under the racial/ethnic equivalence scenario.
- Address unmet need: The national demand is projected to increase by *a total* of 26,160 FTEs, or 27%, which is an *additional* 20,220 FTEs on top of the 5,940 FTE increase projected under the baseline scenario. In 2030, demand is projected to be 121,340 FTEs under the address unmet need scenario.

[1] IHS Markit. (2018). *Psychologist workforce projections for 2015-2030: Addressing supply and demand*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

[2] Includes licensed psychologists actively working in a position that requires a psychology license, or in a position that does not require a psychology license but uses clinical skills and/or training as a psychologist.

[3] Due to the overlap between populations within different scenarios, increases across scenarios are not additive.

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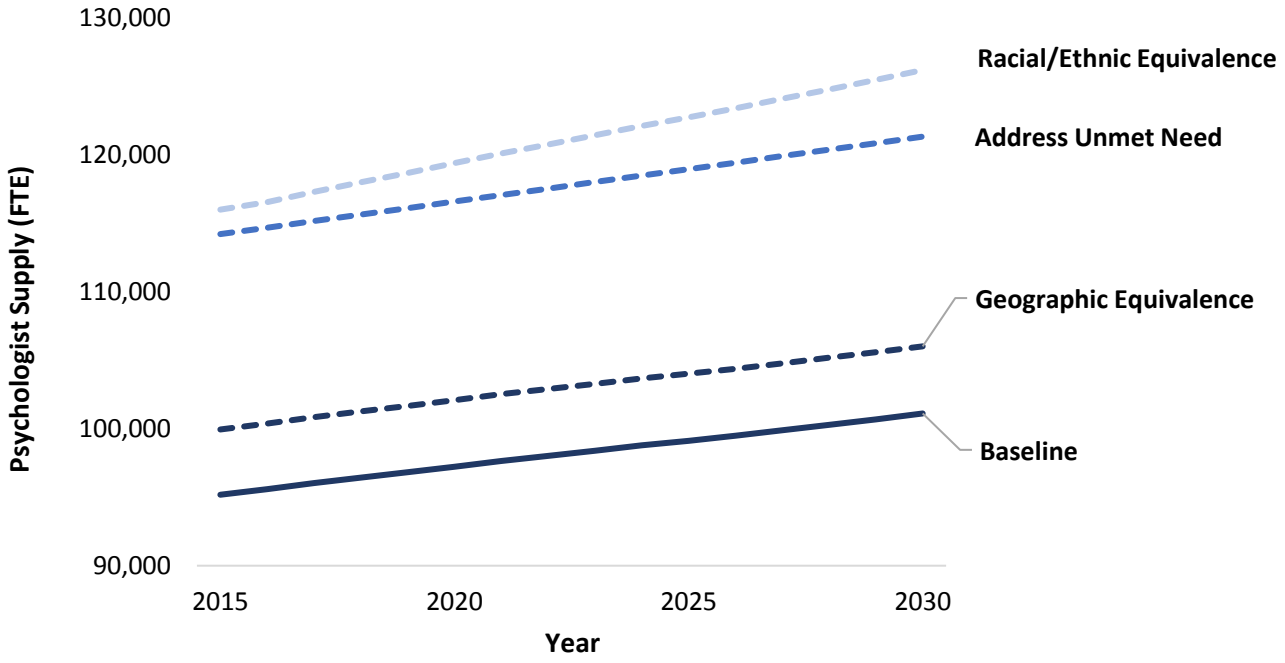
Projected Demand for Psychologists under Different Scenarios, 2015-2030

Scenario	2030 Projected Demand	Total FTE Increase	Total Percent Increase	Increase in Addition to Baseline
Baseline	101,120	5,940	6%	-
Geographic Equivalence	106,020	10,830	11%	4,900
Racial/Ethnic Equivalence	126,200	31,020	33%	25,080
Address Unmet Need	121,340	26,160	27%	20,220

Note: This table summarizes projected demand for psychologists under different scenarios. Total FTE Increase = 2030 Projected Demand – 2015 Baseline Demand (95,180 FTEs); Percent Increase = Total FTE Increase / 2015 Baseline Demand (95,180 FTEs); Increase in Addition to Baseline = Total FTE Increase – Increase under the baseline scenario (5,940 FTEs). Projected FTEs were rounded to nearest ten. Details may not sum to totals due to rounding.
Source: IHS Markit, *Psychologist workforce projections for 2015-2030: Addressing supply and demand* (2018).

Projected Demand for Psychologists under Different Scenarios, 2015-2030



Source: IHS Markit. (2018). *Psychologist workforce projections for 2015-2030: Addressing supply and demand* (2018).

Limitations

Workforce projections are based on available data that reflect current patterns. Several limitations are worth noting. Demand is based on service utilization rather than need. It is likely that the need for psychological services exceeds current utilization levels. While the projections include psychology specialties, available data do not enable separate projections by specialty. Workload definitions for psychologists in federal data sources emphasize mental health services, rather than health services more broadly. It is likely that the projections underestimate psychologists' provision of physical health-related services. Therefore, demand for health services may be higher than estimated here.