Social work
Workforce modelling factsheet

NSW GOVERNMENT

Social workers employed within health services provide direct intervention to patient's/client's and their families/ carers aiming to minimise the impacts of illness, injury, biopsychosocial severity, complexity and treatment. A social worker's role within health is to enhance biopsychosocial and emotional functioning through targeted evidenced based, patient centred interventions. Social workers are essential members of the multidisciplinary team. They identify, educate, and provide therapeutic interventions and consultation on presenting biopsychosocial and emotional complexity and risks that impact on wellbeing. These interventions significantly influence the patients/ clients care plan to be more reflective of their needs, directly influencing positive outcomes, reducing the need for health service demand.

Workforce characteristics for NSW Health social work workforce in 2040

4090 Headcount	**87.6%** Female	**30.7** Work hours per week	**43.3** Years average age	**11.6%** Future 60+	**3.4%** Aboriginal workforce target

Demand is expected to grow **1.9%** (low demand scenario) to **2.2%** (high demand scenario).

Workforce modelling indicates the need to grow the NSW social work workforce by around **20** to **34** new professionals per annum to meet community need in 2040 across both demand scenarios.

REASONABLE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Notes

- Data source: NSW Health. Vacancy data is excluded from the workforce model. Excludes affiliated health organisations.
- 2040 workforce characteristics reflect the high demand scenario.
- Data included is limited to the workforce employed under the relevant health professional award.
- Specialty health networks are not displayed geographically in the workforce distribution maps.
- LHD/SHN may engage in sessional arrangements in selected circumstances.
- Workforce that cannot be aligned to a physical location have been attributed to a pre-determined facility within each LHD/N. This may impact on Headcount shown at these facilities within the distribution map.
- NSW Health does not make any representations or warranties whether expressed or implied with respect to the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in the fact sheet.

Projected FTE growth for NSW Health social work workforce to 2040
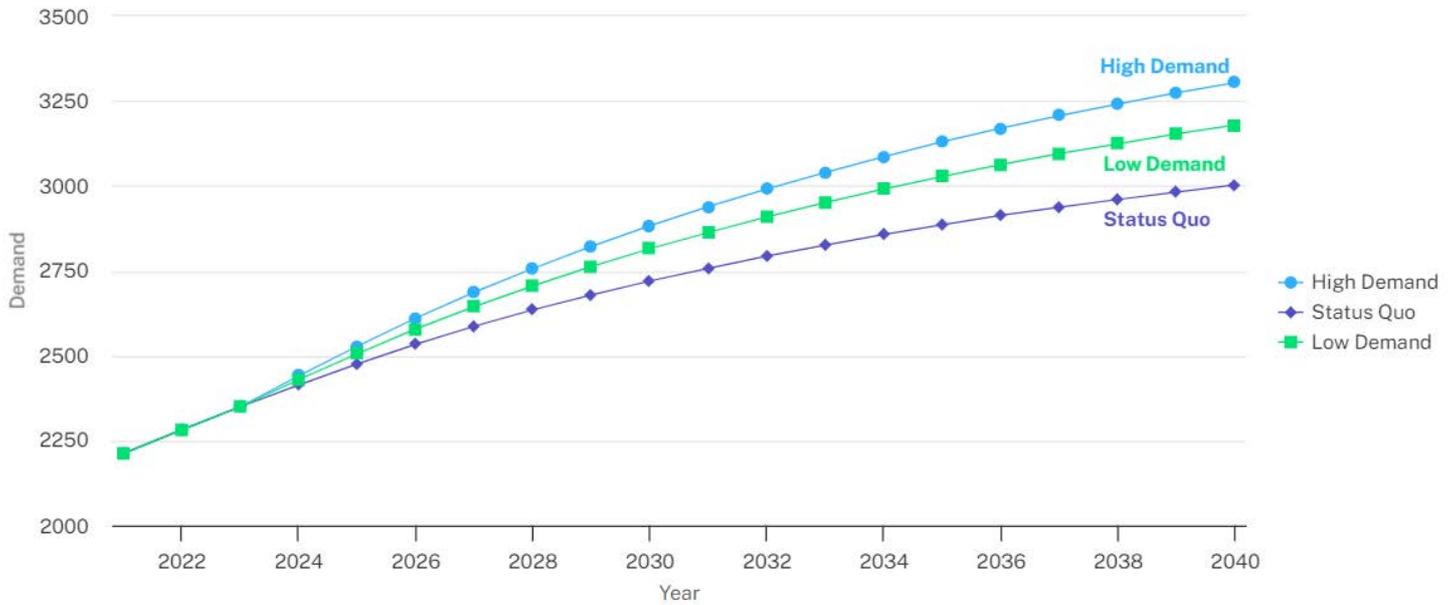
Workforce characteristics for NSW Health social work workforce in 2021

2769	**30.9**	**43.4**	**87.6%**	**2%**	**1.5%**
Headcount	Work hours per week	Years average age	Female	Aged 60+	Aboriginal

Metropolitan Sydney

1540	**31.6**	**42.3**	**0.9%**
Headcount	Work hours per week	Years average age	Aged 60+

Non-Metropolitan Sydney

1204	**30**	**44.8**	**1.1%**
Headcount	Work hours per week	Years average age	Aged 60+

Social work junior entrant positions into NSW Health

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	139	129	149	170	183

Workforce distribution for NSW Health social work workforce in 2021

The geographic distribution of the public workforce by local health district/network, by facility and per 100,000 population.
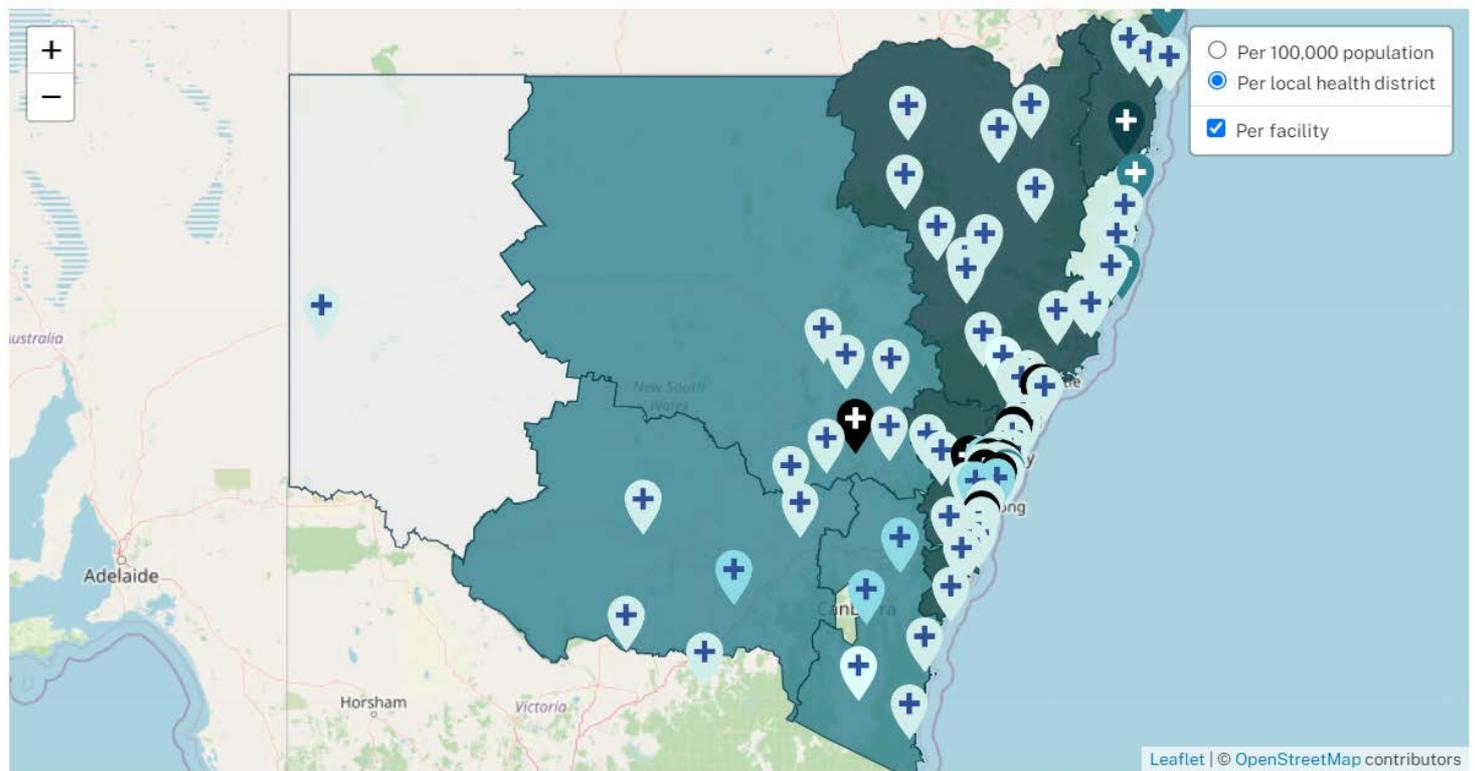
Legends

Per local health district

	0		1-25		26-50		51-75		76-100	

100+

Per 100,000 population

	0		1-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		20+

Per facility

✚ 0 ✚ 1-25 ✚ 26-50 ✚ 51-75 ✚ 76-100 ✚ 100+
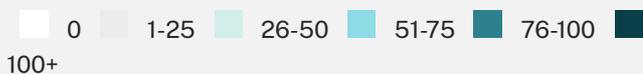
Other networks

- Sydney Children's Hospitals: 100 to 200 | 16 to 20 per 100,000
- Enable NSW: 0 to 10 | 0 per 100,000
- Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health: 1 to 50 | 11 to 15 per 100,000

Workforce considerations

- Population demographics and increasing complex health and social needs which includes our older Australians; people with histories of psycho-social distress or trauma; people with disability; and people at risk of violence and harm has increased demand for social work workforce.
- New government funding initiatives, services, and policy reforms are influencing demand, the role of social work, the way social work models of care are delivered in NSW Health (i.e. National Disability Insurance Scheme, My Aged Care, Guardianship) and a divergence in workforce.
- The COVID-19 pandemic environment has contributed to a redistribution of the social work workforce. Drivers impacting this have included but are not limited to staff wellbeing, flexible working arrangements, demand for service delivery and a competitive employment market.
- Natural disasters and pandemics increase psychosocial issues in the community and demand for the social work workforce, influencing workforce, wellbeing and turnover.
- Educator positions and continuing professional development opportunities influence wellbeing and retention of the existing workforce and an emerging junior entrant social work workforce further supporting patient safety and wellbeing.
- Improvements in data capture and demand (met and unmet) is a prioritised need for the workforce.