



FLORIDA CENTER FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

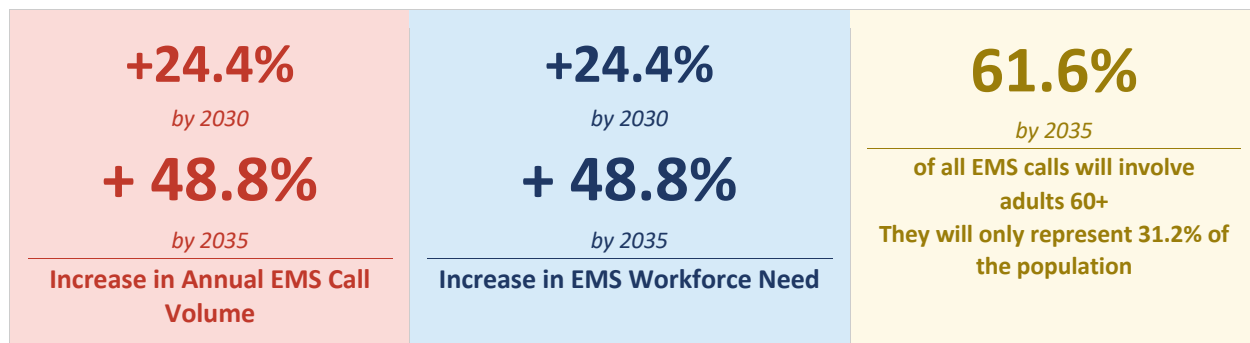
RESEARCH BRIEF

University of South Florida · Morsani College of Medicine

Florida's EMS System Faces a Growing Workforce Challenge. New Research Quantifies the Scope.

Projecting EMS Workforce Demand in an Aging State: A Florida Forecast Through 2035

The Florida Center for Emergency Medical Services (FL-CEMS) at the University of South Florida has completed a comprehensive study projecting EMS demand and clinician workforce needs across Florida through 2035. The manuscript is being prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. We wanted our key stakeholders — EMS leaders, policymakers, and health system partners — to have an early look at the findings. The findings underscore both the urgency and the opportunity for forward-looking workforce planning.



What We Did

Using nine years of statewide EMS response records from Florida's EMSTARs database (2017–2025), our team applied advanced time-series forecasting models — integrating age-specific EMS utilization patterns, Florida's official population projections, and validated operational staffing assumptions — to project EMS incident volume and EMT/paramedic workforce requirements through 2035. To our knowledge, this is the first application of this methodology to statewide EMS workforce planning in the United States.

The Findings

The projections point to several important trends:

- Florida's annual EMS incidents will grow from 5.22 million in 2025 to 6.49 million by 2030 and 7.76 million by 2035 — a 48.8% increase over the decade.
- Adults aged 60 and older will represent only 31.2% of Florida's population by 2035, yet they will account for nearly 61.6% of all EMS incidents.
- The 80+ population — the fastest-growing cohort in the state — will expand by 45.8% between 2025 and 2035, from 1.4 million to 2.1 million Floridians.
- Meeting this demand will require approximately 48.8% more EMT and paramedic capacity above today's baseline — before accounting for attrition and turnover.

By the Numbers: Population, Incidents & Workforce

Table 1. Summary of Florida population and EMS incident volume, 2017–2035

Metric	2017	2025	2030 (proj.)	2035 (proj.)
FLORIDA POPULATION				
Total population (millions)	20.5	23.3	24.6	25.8
Adults ≥60 years (millions)	5.3	6.9	7.5	8.1
Adults ≥60 as % of population	26.0%	29.7%	30.4%	31.2%
Adults ≥80 years (millions)	0.9	1.4	1.8	2.1
EMS INCIDENT VOLUME				
Total annual incidents (millions)	4.10	5.22	6.49	7.76
Change from 2025 baseline	—	Baseline	+1.27M (+24.4%)	+2.54M (+48.8%)
Incidents, adults ≥60 (millions)	—	3.08	3.92	4.78
Adults ≥60 as % of all incidents	—	59.0%	60.4%	61.6%

Note. Projected values derived from SARIMAX forecasting model with BEBR population inputs. Dashes indicate not applicable.

It’s Not Just Volume — It’s Who Is Calling

One of the most important and unexpected findings involves not the total number of EMS calls, but the pattern of who is generating them and why. The data reveal two fundamentally different demand dynamics playing out simultaneously:

Adults in their 80s and beyond — the oldest old.

For the 80+ cohort, per-capita utilization rates are essentially unchanged. These individuals are not calling 9-1-1 more often than they used to. The volume is growing because there are far more of them — a 45.8% increase in the size of this cohort between now and 2035. This is pure demographic pressure.

Adults in their 60s and 70s — the young old.

Here the picture is more complex. Adults aged 60–69 are seeing both a large cohort and rapidly rising per-capita utilization. This is a compounding dynamic: more people, each calling at higher rates. As the baby boom generation fully moves into these age ranges, this cohort is projected to drive a sustained and compounding increase in EMS demand over the projection horizon.

Table 2. Age cohort population, incident volume, and EMS utilization rates, 2025 and 2035

Age Cohort	Population 2025	Population 2035	Incidents 2025	Incidents 2035	Rate 2035 (per 1,000)
Older Adult Cohorts					
60–69 years	3.17M	2.99M	863,016	1.41M	470.5
70–79 years	2.33M	3.02M	1.00M	1.60M	528.4
80+ years	1.4M	2.1M	—	+46.5%	865.4
<i>Key insight: 80+ demand is cohort-driven — per-capita utilization is essentially stable (865.4 per 1,000 in 2035). Volume grows because the population expands by +45.8%. By contrast, the 60–69 cohort shows compounding pressure: a large cohort with sharply rising utilization (470.5 per 1,000 in 2035, up from 272.6 in 2025).</i>					

Note. Rates are annual EMS incidents per 1,000 population. Population estimates from BEBR; incident projections from SARIMAX model.

Figure 2. Annual EMS Incidents (Millions) by Age Group, 2017–2035

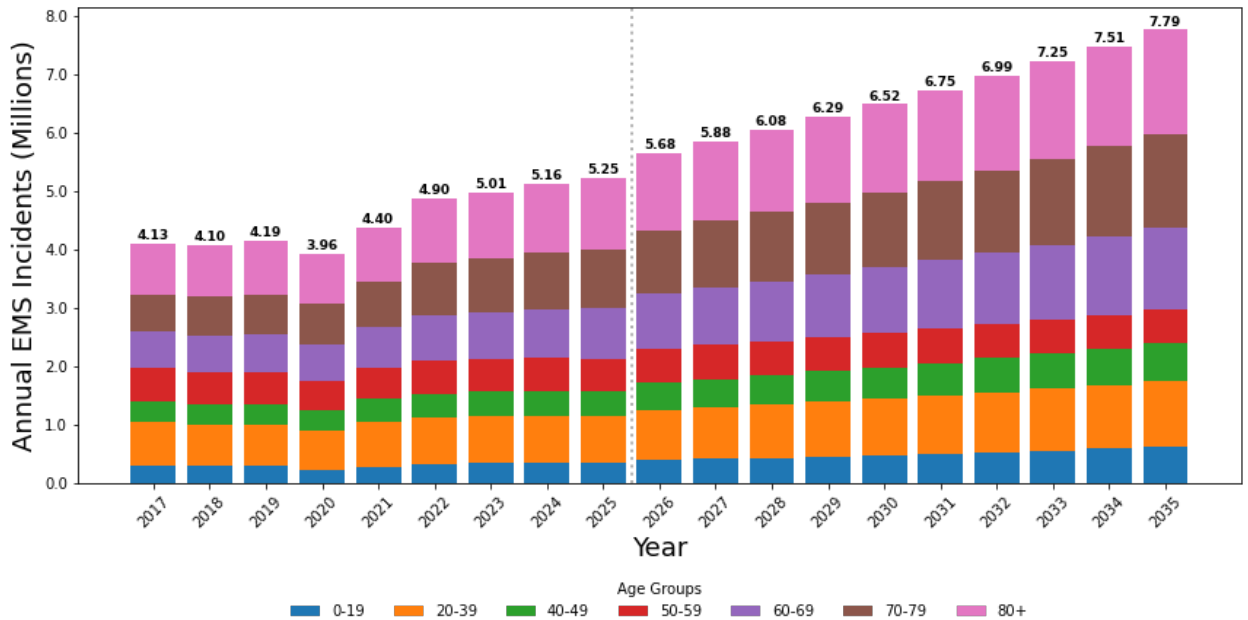
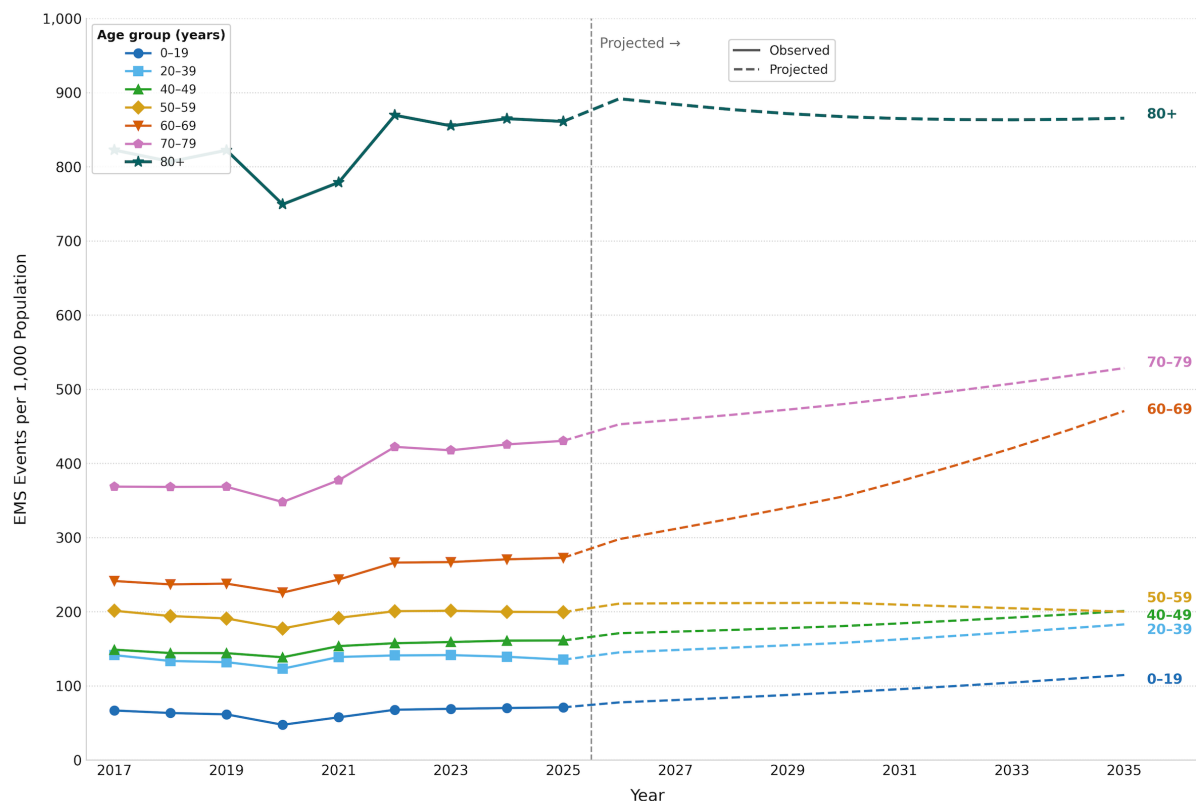


Figure 3. EMS Utilization Rates per 1,000 Population by Age Group, 2017–2035



The steep upward trajectory of adults aged 60–69 and 70–79 during the projection period (2026–2035) is the visual story of accelerating demand. The 80+ line (top) remains flat through 2035 — cohort-driven growth.

What This Means for Florida — and Every State

Florida’s experience is not unique — it is an early and high-fidelity signal of what other states will face.

With one of the nation’s largest concentrations of adults aged 80 and older, accelerating retiree in-migration, and a rapidly growing oldest-old cohort, Florida is confronting at scale what other states will face within the coming decade. The demographic forces documented in this study are national in scope. The timing will vary by state, but the direction is consistent with national demographic projections.

These projections represent demand-based requirements under current staffing assumptions and do not include attrition — the retirements, burnout exits, and career transitions already straining Florida’s EMS workforce today. When attrition is layered on top of demand growth, the total workforce need will exceed demand-based projections alone.

Proactive planning will be essential to meeting the projected demand.

Expanding EMS education pipelines, investing in recruitment and retention, and developing community paramedicine and mobile integrated health programs are not future considerations — they warrant near-term attention. The demographic forces driving demand are already in motion.

About This Research

This study was conducted by the Florida Center for Emergency Medical Services (FL-CEMS) at the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine. The research team includes faculty from USF's Departments of Emergency Medicine, Aging Studies, Industrial Engineering, and Information Science. The study was supported by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Florida Department of Health.

The full manuscript — Projecting EMS Workforce Demand in an Aging State: A Florida Forecast Through 2035 — is currently under review for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Prior FL-CEMS research reports referenced in this study are publicly available:

- Crisis on the Frontlines: Recruitment and Retention Challenges in EMS — [doi:10.5038/XDPT2458](https://doi.org/10.5038/XDPT2458)
- Vital Signs: Findings from Florida's 2024 EMS Workforce Statewide Survey — [doi:10.5038/UCID5504](https://doi.org/10.5038/UCID5504)

Florida Center for Emergency Medical Services (FL-CEMS) · University of South Florida, Morsani College of Medicine

124 South Franklin Street, Suite 390 · Tampa, Florida 33602

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