

# HOW DO REGIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IMPACT ON THE RATE OF GP VISITS?

Collaboration between Bond University and GCPHN  
Group research project by Bond Business School students (Applied Data Analytics Project), 2022

## Background

General practice use vary across regions and are shaped by socio-economic and sociodemographic characteristics. The Gold Coast is a rapidly growing and diverse region, with marked variation in socio-economic conditions across local areas. Understanding how regional characteristics relate to GP visit rates is essential to support equitable primary care planning and targeted resource allocation.

## Aim

Examine how regional socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics affect the rate of GP visits across Gold Coast SA3 areas.

## Methods

**Design:** Ecological analysis at SA3 level

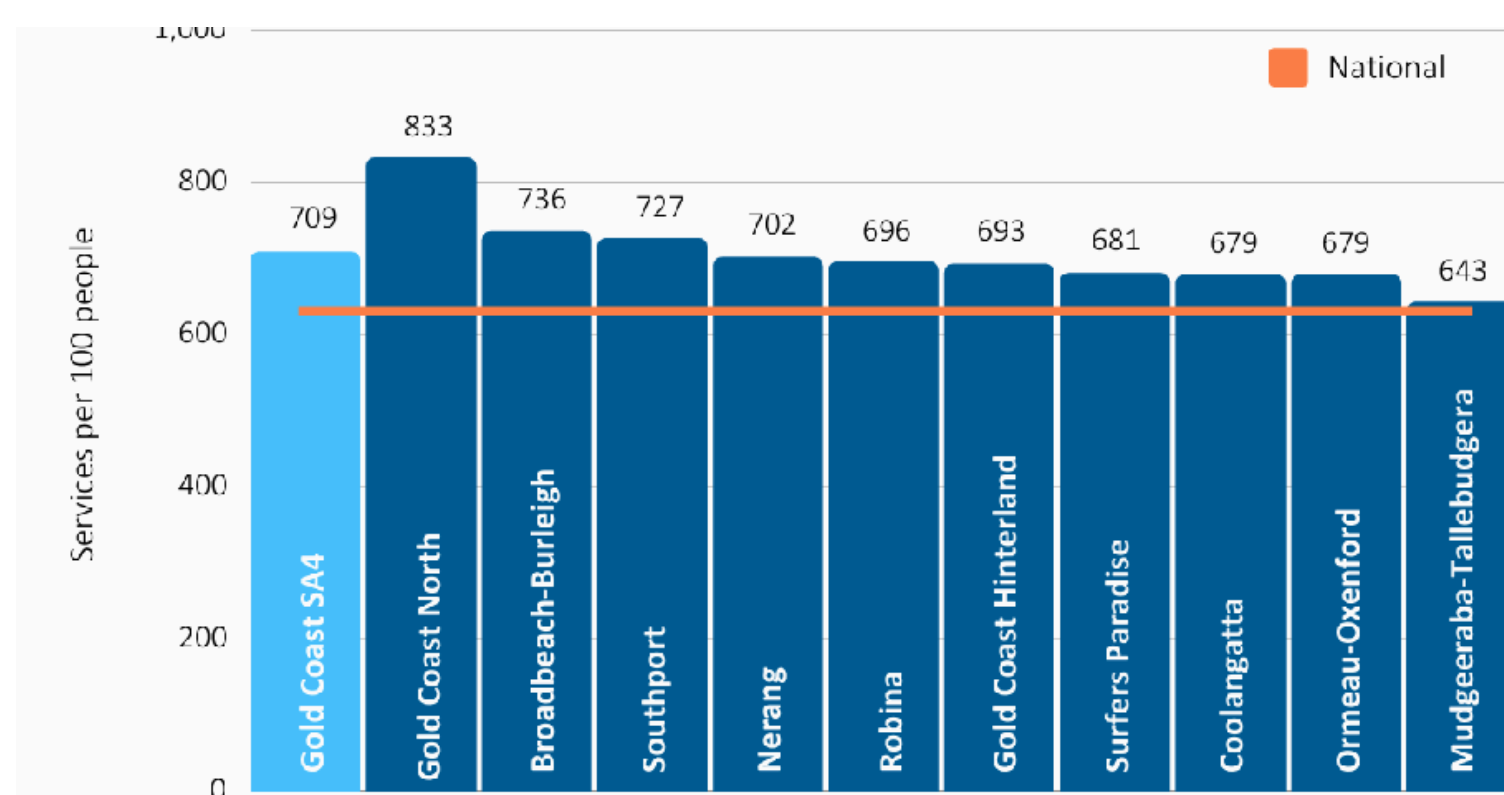
**Data sources:** Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data

**Predictors:** 82 socio-economic & demographic variables

**Outcome:** GP services per 100 people (AIHW data)

## Key Results

Gold Coast SA3 areas sit in the upper half nationally for GP visit rates. This is likely influenced by urban density, service availability, and population age structure.



Source: Medicare-subsidised GP, allied health, and specialist healthcare across local areas: 2017-18 to 2022-23, AIHW.

Regional characteristics associated with GP visit rates include:

**Household characteristics:** Areas with more persons per bedroom and larger household sizes had lower GP visit rates.

**Housing and income:** Lower-income and higher housing-cost stress areas have higher GP utilisation.

**First Nations populations:** Areas with a higher proportion of First Nations residents showed varying GP utilisation patterns. This reflects a combination of higher underlying health needs, and differences in access, service availability, and use of culturally specific services, rather than population characteristics alone.

**Age:** Older population age profiles were associated with higher GP visit rates.

## Conclusions

Regional GP utilisation is strongly shaped by income, housing, household composition, age, and ethnicity. These insights can support more efficient primary care planning and targeting of underserved populations.