

# UTAH'S NEW OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

GUIDANCE FOR CAREER CHOICES

Every two years, like clockwork, the Utah Department of Workforce Services releases occupational projections for the next decade. Here we are, right on schedule with our most recent update. Our goal is to provide guidance to both the educational community who prepares our workforce and those who are making career choices. These projections also provide valuable insight into the current and future nature of Utah's labor force.

These projections cover the years 2010 to 2020. Don't be fooled into thinking that they are old because the base year is 2010: projections follow federal timing requirements and use the most current data available. Other things to keep in mind?

- Job growth, as well as replacement needs, generate total job openings.
- Occupations with a large employment base (such as cashiers) will also generate large numbers of job openings.
- The projected number of openings is the most important piece of employment outlook information (although the rate of expansion is also enlightening).
- Many more individuals may be trained in a particular occupation than the economy requires.

The most recent two sets of occupational projections have been com-

“PREDICTION is very difficult,  
especially if it’s about the future.”

—Nils Bohr, Nobel Laureate in physics

plicated by economic boom, recession and recovery. Growth rates for some large occupational groups have changed dramatically between the 2008 to 2018 projection set and the 2010 to 2020 set. Moreover, in an effort to improve our projections, we used newly available data sources to estimate employment for certain occupations outside the normal scope of our survey process. In other words, ardent followers of occupational data may notice larger-than-average differences in the two sets for certain occupations.

Characteristically, most broad trends remain unchanged. We’re continually monitoring and projecting trends that encompass all employed persons. It takes countless individual changes to alter the shape of the entire labor market, so the general configuration of the labor market changes quite slowly. It should be comforting to realize that the same general patterns emerge with each new set of projections. Projections do catch current trends and provide reliable information for policy makers’ future decision-making.

The final change of note in this particular projection set results from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ modifications to the training/preparation classification structure for occupations. Instead of a single, catchall training designation, each detailed occupation is categorized by typical entry-level education, typical work experience in a related occupation and typical on-the-

## UTAH MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS PROJECTED ANNUAL AVERAGE GROWTH



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

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## OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS CONT.

job training needed for competency. Because a picture (or economist's graph) is worth a thousand words, I'll let my charts do most of the occupational-projection talking. However, here are a few trends to note:

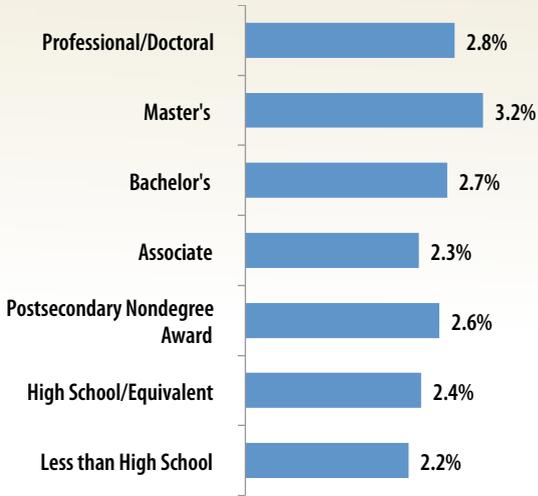
- Projections indicate that overall Utah employment will expand by an average of 2.4 percent in each year of the decade — slightly higher than the rate of growth in the last projections set. Overall, the economy should generate 61,000 job openings (growth and replacements) each year between 2010 and 2020.
- Growth is expected to create just slightly more employment openings than replacement needs.
- Healthcare-related occupations continue to rank among the fastest-growing careers and provide numerous openings. However, many of the most rapidly expanding occupations appear in the “support” classification and pay lower-than-average wages.
- Occupations in computer-related fields still provide good employment opportunities and wages.
- Construction and extraction (mining) occupations show particularly strong growth rates in the current projections. Why? In the case of construction, employment levels registered at short-term lows in 2010. As the recovery continues, there's nowhere to go but up. The current boom in energy-related fields is also expected to continue to buoy up mining-related employment.
- Anticipated expansionary gains should also pump up employment growth rates in production, transportation/material moving and installation/maintenance/repair occupations from relatively low 2010 levels.
- Even declining occupations will show job openings due to the need to replace retiring workers.
- Despite some rather dramatic changes in growth rates, the annual number of projected job openings by major occupational group remained remarkably stable between the most recent two projection sets. This reflects the relationship between the current size of the occupation and the openings it will eventually produce. Again, large occupational groups create large numbers of openings.
- The new entry-level educational-requirement groupings suggest that occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree will show the fastest growth over the next decade.
- More than 40 percent of jobs in 2020 will require just a high school degree, almost 30 percent will require less than a high school education, 20 percent will require a bachelor's degree or higher and just more than 10 percent will require post-secondary training less than a bachelor's degree. With slight changes, this reflects the current employment structure. ●

APPROXIMATELY  
20 percent of  
jobs in 2020  
will require a  
bachelor's degree  
or higher. Overall  
the economy  
should generate  
61,000 jobs  
between 2010  
and 2020.



*For more information on our occupational projections, visit <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoOccinfo.do>*

UTAH PROJECTED 2010–2020 ANNUAL  
**EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATE**  
 BY TYPICAL ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT



UTAH MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS  
**ANNUAL AVERAGE OPENINGS** 2010–2020



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

