

Making Sense of Occupational Projections

Utah's Star Rating System 

We get it. Whether you are trying to make a career decision or decide what kind of training to offer at an educational institution, it's difficult to ferret out what the numbers behind our occupational projections really mean. Are 50 job openings a lot? What's most important: the number of job openings or the growth rate? If an occupation has a huge number of openings, is it necessarily a good career choice?

During 2006, in an effort to help our users find some clarity while making career choices, the Utah Department of Workforce Services decided to attach star ratings to occupations based on both employment outlook and

wages. In the intervening years, we've repeatedly tweaked the methodology behind the ratings in an attempt to provide the best indicator possible for our occupational-projections customers.

As we release the most current set of projections, we've made a significant change to our ranking system. In the past, we applied star ratings according to training-level group. However, the current ratings are made irrespective of required training to clarify which occupations offer the best wages and outlook, period. It will still be possible to use the ratings to rank occupations by educational requirements. Nevertheless, it's inappropriate to compare an occupation's star rating today to its star rating in a previous projection cycle.

Ratings provide general guidance for those seeking high-demand/high-wage positions and are not the final word on the desirability of a particular occupation. Star ratings should not be used to exclude occupations for training purposes due to many factors: the nature of survey data collection, the length of the projections period, the unknown future, the variability of wages within a given occupation and the relative nature of the ratings process itself.

Here's a brief primer on our star-rating methodology:

- The star rating is based on both employment outlook and wages.
- Only occupations with employment of at least 100 in the base year are ranked. In addition, residual occupational groups, which combine similar, small occupations, are not ranked.
- Employment outlook is based 90 percent on the number of total Utah job openings projected between 2010 and 2020 and 10 percent on how fast the occupation is expected to grow over that time period.
- The most recent surveyed median annual wages are used in the wage computation.
- There may be slight adjustments to the ratings based on an economist's personal knowledge of the labor market.

Ranked occupations are rated from zero to five stars.

- Five-stars — strongest employment outlook and high wages.
- Four-stars — good employment outlook and relatively high wages.
- Three-stars — moderate-to-strong employment outlook and low-to-moderate wages.
- Two-stars — relatively high wage but a limited employment outlook.
- One-star — relatively low wage and strong employment outlook.
- Zero-stars — limited employment outlook and low wages.

For more information, visit <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoOccinfo.do>

2010–2020 Utah's Best of the Five-Star Jobs

- Biomedical Engineers
- Civil Engineers
- Computer Programmers
- Computer Systems Analysts
- Construction Managers
- Dental Hygienists
- Financial Managers
- First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers
- General and Operations Managers
- Information Security Analysts, Web Developers and Computer Network Architects
- Lawyers
- Management Analysts
- Medical and Health Services Managers
- Network and Computer Systems Administrators
- Pharmacists
- Physicians*
- Sales Managers
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products
- Software Developers, Applications
- Software Developers, Systems Software

* Includes all physician specialties
Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services

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