

Montana Employment Projections:

Job Growth from 2021 to 2031

State of Montana

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Executive Summary

The Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MTDLI) seeks to empower Montanans through work and opportunity. In pursuit of this mission, the department produces employment projections to gain understanding of the occupational skills that will be required by the workforce of the future. These projections are used by employers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations to align training and educational programs with labor market needs and prevent labor shortages. Additionally, students and job seekers can use the projections to explore promising career options. Highlights of employment projections for 2021-2031 include:

- Through 2031, Montana is expected to add 5,530 jobs annually.
- Employment growth slows after 2022 due to a constrained worker supply.
- All regions in Montana are expected to have growth over the next 10 years, with the Southwest and Northwest regions growing faster than the rest of the state. Figure 1 shows a summary of statewide and regional employment growth.

Figure 1: Statewide and Regional Projections Summary, 2021-2031

Region	Annual Change	Annual Growth Rate
Northwest	2,070	1.2%
Southwest	2,430	1.4%
North Central	60	0.1%
South Central	910	0.8%
Eastern	10	0.0%
Montana	5,530	1.0%

Source: Montana Department of Labor and Industry Employment Projections. 2021-2031.

- Total job openings from 2021-2031 are projected to be just over 67,800 openings each year.
- Over the next ten years, annual job growth is projected to be highest for healthcare (1,170 jobs per year), construction (840), accommodation and food service (830), and professional and technical services (650).
- The most in-demand occupations paying an annual median wage of \$45,000-\$65,000 include truck drivers (890 annual job openings), carpenters (840), and sales representatives in wholesale and manufacturing (500). Top occupations with a median wage of over \$65,000 include registered nurses (700), general and operations managers (670), and accountants and auditors (420).

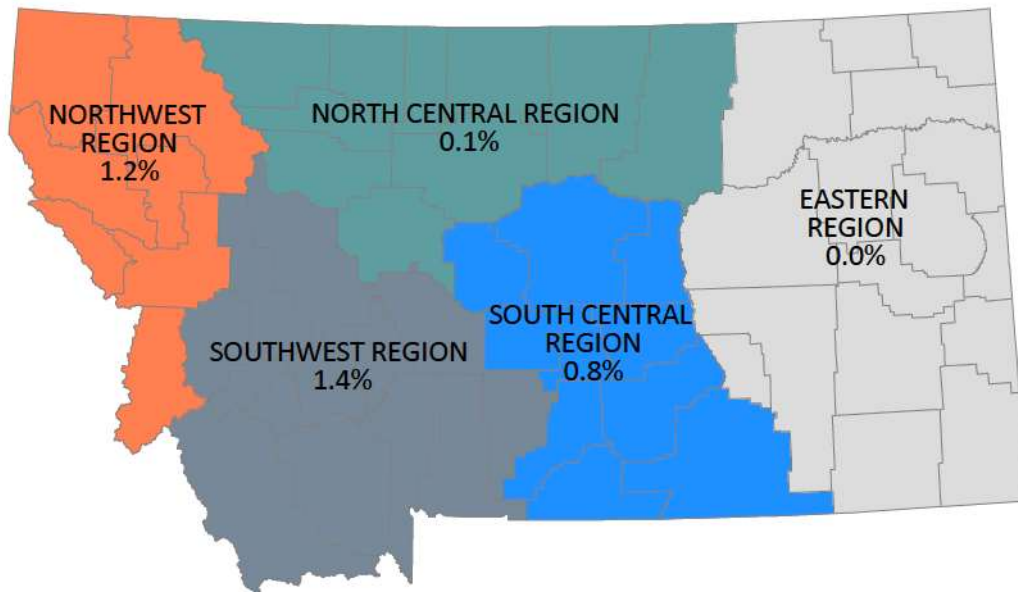
About Employment Projections

Every year, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MTDLI) produces employment projections in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor. Employment projections are produced over a two-year and ten-year time frame, by industry and occupation, as well as for the state and five sub-state regions. Employment projections are used by a variety of groups and individuals to help plan workforce development.

Employment forecasts are an estimate of the future demand for workers based on historical employment data and the knowledge that is available at the time of the forecast. Because the economy is constantly changing, the forecasts are not going to be exactly right. Instead, projections should be viewed as the most likely employment growth outcome given the current knowledge and information about the economy. Additionally, projections focus on long-term employment growth, rather than short-term and temporary fluctuations in the business cycle. Therefore, employment forecasts are published as a linear average over the two-year and ten-year period, even though the underlying forecast may include variations from that trend.

This report provides a broad overview of this year’s statewide and regional projections along with commonly requested tables of high-demand jobs by specific categories (such as jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree, jobs that pay higher than \$65,000, and apprenticeable jobs). For detailed information on methodology, see Appendix A. For information of past forecast accuracy, see Appendix B.

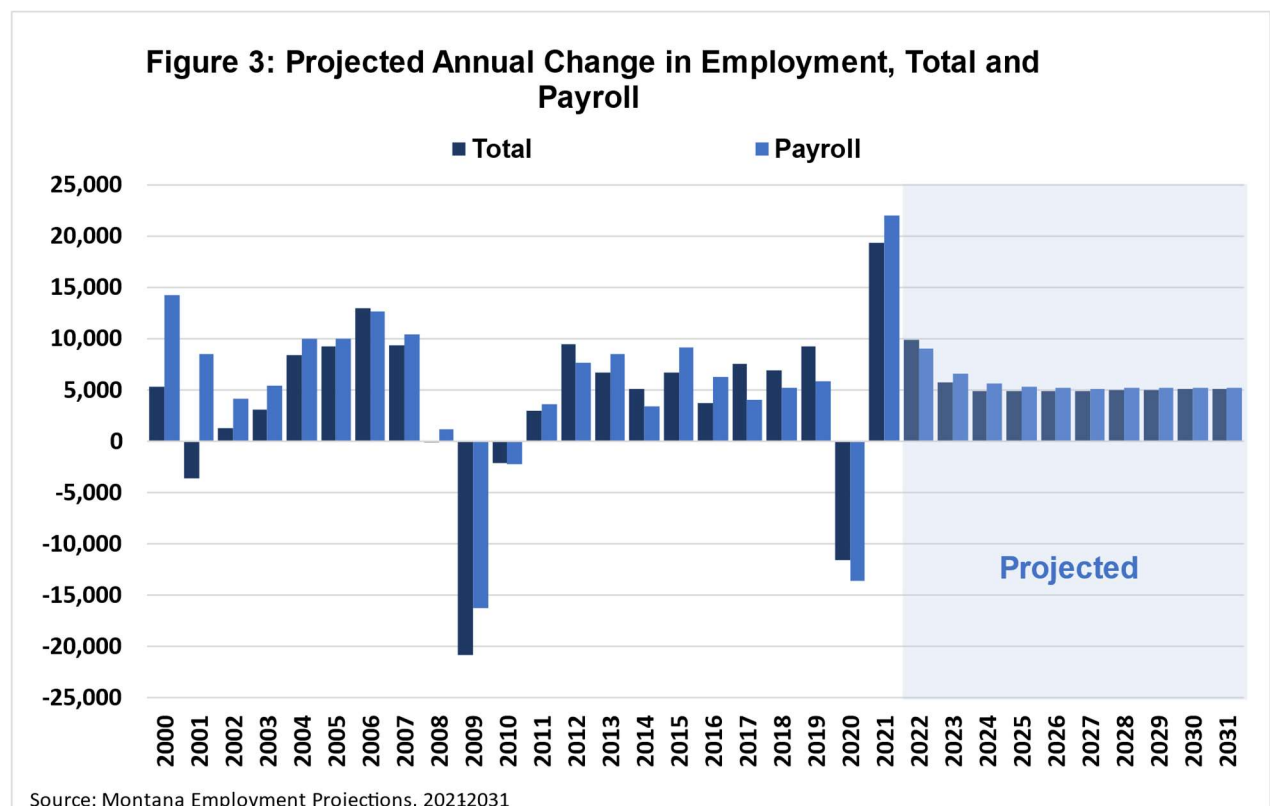
Figure 2: Annual Growth Rate by Region



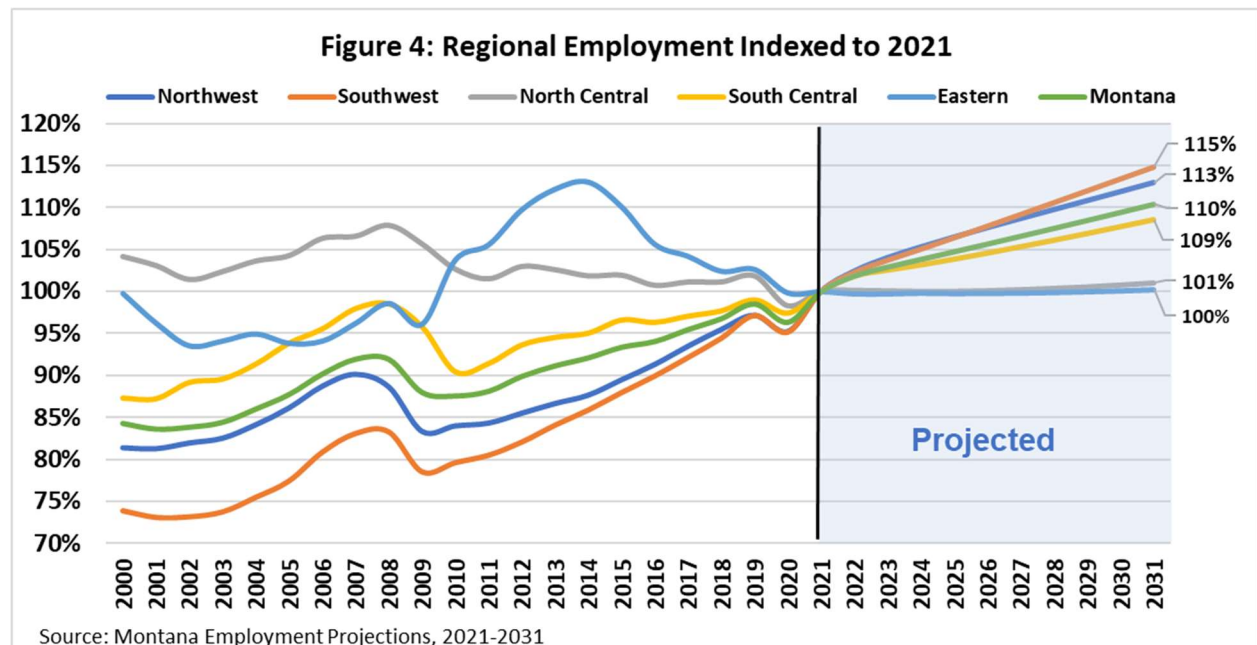
Source: MT DLI, Occupational Employment Projections

Overview of Montana’s 2021-2031 Projections

In 2022 and 2023, Montana is predicted to add 7,800 jobs annually. Figure 3 illustrates the historical and projected employment growth from 2000 to 2031. In 2022, employment growth is forecasted to be slightly above average at 9,900 jobs, due to the comparison to the base year of 2021, in which Montana did not regain its pre-pandemic peak until mid-2021. After 2022, employment growth is predicted to decrease to around 5,000 jobs annually. The long-term projection of growth is lower due to limited labor force growth potential, as more of Montana's population enters retirement. Tight labor markets are the main constraint on future employment growth. As more workers retire and fewer workers are available to fill the vacancies, employers will have difficulty finding workers. However, Montana's recent high population growth will provide some support for employment growth.



All regions of Montana are projected to have employment growth in the next decade, although growth in the eastern and north central regions will be relatively small (see Figures 1, 2, and 4). The southwest region, which includes Bozeman, Helena, and Butte, is forecasted to have the highest annual growth in employment at 2,430 jobs compared to the pre-period growth of around 2,040 jobs. Total employment is projected to grow by 15% by 2031 compared to 2021 levels. The northwest region, which includes Missoula and Kalispell, is expected to have the second-highest growth rate with an annual increase of 2,070 jobs compared to pre-period growth of roughly 1,420 jobs. Both regions have had strong employment growth driven in part by an influx in population that facilitated growth in a broad set of industries including construction, retail trade, accommodation and food service, professional services, and healthcare.



Employment in the south-central region, which includes Billings, is forecasted to grow by 9% by 2031 compared to 2021. South-central is expected to have an annual average growth rate of 0.8% over the next decade, resulting in 910 added jobs per year. The retirement of Colstrip units 1 and 2 in January 2021 and a decrease in wages from the mining and utilities industry are the main contributors to slower growth in the region. Despite these challenges, the region is expected to see growth in industries such as healthcare, construction, and leisure activities.

Over the past 20 years, employment in the eastern region boomed and busted with activity in the Bakken oilfields. The Bakken oil boom increased employment in 2010 at a time when much of the state was having losses due to the 2009 recession. Employment peaked in eastern Montana in 2014 at a level 13% higher than its current level. With oil prices falling in 2015 activity in the Bakken slowed, leaving Eastern Montana at nearly the same employment level today as it was at in 2000. The current economic forecast for the region predicts no significant changes in employment over the next decade, with only slight growth of 10 jobs per year.

The north central region is also expected to have only moderate growth. The region had slower growth over the previous 10 years with a net loss in employment from 2001 to 2021 of roughly 130 jobs per year. Average growth over the next ten years is expected to be roughly 60 jobs per year.

Industry Growth

Figure 5 shows Montana’s long-term and projected employment growth rates by industry and for payroll and self-employed workers.¹ Total employment is projected to grow slower than payroll

¹ The healthcare and social assistance industry and the educational services industry include both private and public employment. All other public employment is included in federal, state, or local government.

Montana Employment Projections 2021-2031

employment as a tight labor market raises wages, drawing some self-employed workers into payroll jobs. Montana’s largest industry, health care and social assistance, is also expected to add the most jobs per year over the next ten years, adding 1,170 jobs per year. This is despite projected growth in 2022 and 2023 being lower than some industries including construction, accommodation and food, and professional and technical services.

Some industries, such as accommodation and food service and arts and entertainment, may experience a temporary increase in growth in 2022 and 2023 because of a base period effect, having not completely recovered from pandemic job losses into late 2021. Accommodation and food service, one of Montana’s lowest paid industries, will likely struggle to grow at the rate of the previous decade due to workforce constraints, growing at a rate of 1.4% compared to 1.7% during the decade of expansion out of the great recession.

Figure 5: Montana Compounding Annual Employment Growth by Industry

Industry	2019-2021 Growth Rate	2021-2023 Growth Rate	2021-2023 Annual Job Growth	2011-2021 Growth Rate	2021-2031 Growth Rate	2021-2031 Annual Job Growth
Healthcare	0.4%	1.3%	990	1.6%	1.5%	1,170
Construction	5.1%	3.4%	1,140	3.8%	2.3%	840
Accommodation and Food	-0.6%	2.0%	1,070	1.7%	1.4%	830
Professional and Technical	4.4%	4.0%	1,040	2.9%	2.3%	650
Manufacturing	0.8%	3.3%	700	2.4%	1.8%	410
Retail Trade	1.7%	0.7%	410	0.9%	0.5%	280
Admin and Support Services	3.4%	1.9%	370	1.0%	1.4%	280
Other	-2.0%	1.3%	240	1.1%	1.2%	220
Local Government	0.7%	1.0%	210	0.9%	1.0%	210
Arts and Entertainment	-1.1%	2.6%	320	1.3%	1.5%	190
Agriculture	3.7%	2.2%	140	3.7%	2.2%	160
Finance	0.9%	1.6%	270	1.1%	0.9%	150
Transportation & Warehousing	1.3%	1.3%	220	1.5%	0.7%	130
Wholesale Trade	0.7%	2.1%	370	1.1%	0.7%	120
Real Estate	2.5%	1.6%	100	2.3%	1.4%	100
Education	-1.6%	0.5%	200	-0.1%	0.2%	90
Management	4.7%	1.9%	40	1.2%	0.9%	20
State Government	1.6%	0.4%	50	0.1%	0.1%	20
Mining	-4.2%	0.3%	20	-2.0%	0.1%	0
Utilities	-0.7%	0.1%	0	-1.1%	0.0%	0
Postal Service	-0.6%	-0.9%	-20	-0.7%	-0.2%	0
Information	-5.0%	-0.9%	-50	-2.5%	-0.8%	-40
Federal Government	0.5%	-0.9%	-90	-0.5%	-0.9%	-90
Payroll Employment	0.9%	1.6%	7,840	1.3%	1.1%	5,750
Total Employment	0.7%	1.5%	7,800	1.3%	1.0%	5,530

Source: MTDLI Industry Projections 2021-2031

Note: The healthcare and education industries include both private and public employment. All other public employment is included in government. Long-term growth for state government and management is from 2000 to 2021.

In contrast, the construction sector has been less affected by the pandemic. Factors such as population growth and rising demand for construction have contributed to increased economic activity and employment in construction. Montana is experiencing high demand for residential construction, especially in the northwest and southwest regions of the state. It is expected that employment in this sector will grow by approximately 1,140 jobs per year in 2021 and 2023, and then taper off to an average of 840 jobs per year through 2031. Additionally, it is expected that government spending on infrastructure will increase, as the state directs federal stimulus funds towards infrastructure initiatives. These factors are likely to accelerate employment growth in the construction sector in the short-term, with the growth rate is expected to slow over the long-term as the stimulus funds are depleted.

Professional and technical services is expected to be Montana's most rapidly growing industry by growth rate. This industry generally requires higher levels of education and training and provides services that include accounting, legal, consulting, research, and other professional services. The northwest, southwest, and south-central regions of Montana are expected to have the fastest growth due to large educational institutions providing trained workers and spurring research efforts.

Occupational Demand

In the next decade, Montana is projected to have an annual total of 67,800 job openings, with new jobs accounting for 8% of the total. The majority of projected job openings, 55% or roughly 37,530, are due to workers transferring to a new occupation, while another 37% of job openings will be due to workers exiting the labor force.

The largest occupational group in terms of total openings is food-preparation and serving-related occupations, reflecting the large size of the group and the higher turnover experienced by lower-wage jobs (Figure 6). This occupation group also has a high level of turnover due to lower wages.

New Jobs refer to jobs from growth in employment.

Exits refer to people who leave their job and exit the labor force, such as to retire or to enroll in school.

Transfers are workers who leave one occupation for a different occupation, like a career change or promotion.

Total Openings are the number of annual job openings from any of the above sources (turnover, or new jobs).

This methodology changed in 2016, see bls.gov for more information.

Figure 6: Annual Projected Occupational Demand by Large Occupation Group, 2021-2031

Large Occupational Group	Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1 Food Preparation and Serving Related	800	4,150	5,880	10,840	\$23,370
2 Sales and Related	180	2,940	4,340	7,460	\$29,680
3 Office and Administrative Support	160	3,210	4,000	7,370	\$37,000
4 Transportation and Material Moving	470	2,010	3,210	5,680	\$37,670
5 Construction and Extraction	650	1,230	2,810	4,690	\$48,060
6 Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	190	1,410	1,840	3,440	\$29,970
7 Healthcare Support	420	1,300	1,360	3,080	\$29,530
8 Personal Care and Service	260	1,080	1,390	2,730	\$28,350
9 Management	270	900	1,530	2,700	\$79,840
10 Education, Training, and Library	120	1,220	1,320	2,670	\$46,920
11 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	240	750	1,570	2,560	\$47,420
12 Business and Financial Operations	320	710	1,520	2,540	\$61,990
13 Production	240	800	1,500	2,540	\$37,750
14 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	410	880	1,020	2,300	\$74,440
15 Community and Social Service	140	340	660	1,140	\$45,770
16 Protective Service	80	440	570	1,100	\$47,810
17 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	80	370	610	1,070	\$38,420
18 Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	100	250	670	1,010	\$37,200
19 Computer and Mathematical	160	200	490	860	\$62,690
20 Life, Physical, and Social Science	60	180	600	830	\$53,870
21 Architecture and Engineering	120	220	440	770	\$75,230
22 Legal	70	140	200	420	\$63,050
Total	5,530	24,750	37,530	67,810	\$38,050

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031.

Certain occupation groups have a higher proportion of job openings due to growth than due to turnover suggesting growth in demand for relevant skills. These include computer and mathematical occupations (19% of openings due to growth), healthcare practitioners (18%), legal (17%), architecture and engineering (16%), construction and extraction (14%), healthcare support (14%).

The top 10 detailed occupations with the most job openings are shown in Figure 7. These occupations include fast food and counter workers (2,980 annual openings), cashiers (2,520), retail salespersons (2,320), waiters and waitresses (2,260), and office clerks (1,600). These occupations generally employ many people in Montana but have high turnover due to their lower wages and skill requirements. All the top occupations require a high school

The education and work experience listed is the minimum required to enter the profession as determined by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. For occupations without a clear path to entry, the BLS determines the typical path based on the current minimum qualifications of workers filling those positions. At these minimums, the worker will likely be earning less than the average wage for the industry.

education or less and on-the-job training of less than a year. Office clerk is the highest-paying occupation among the top ten with a median annual wage of \$36,890. However, all of Montana's top ten occupations with the most job openings have median wages below the state's median wage of \$38,050.

Figure 7: Top Ten Detailed Occupations with the Most Job Openings, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Fast Food and Counter Workers	<HS	ST OJT	130	1,360	1,490	2,980	\$23,070
2	Cashiers	<HS	ST OJT	-40	1,210	1,360	2,520	\$23,300
3	Retail Salespersons	<HS	ST OJT	100	900	1,320	2,320	\$28,870
4	Waiters and Waitresses	<HS	ST OJT	130	810	1,320	2,260	\$20,200
5	Office Clerks, General	HSE	ST OJT	50	740	800	1,600	\$36,890
6	Cooks, Restaurant	<HS	MT OJT	240	440	640	1,320	\$29,170
7	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	HSE	ST OJT	250	550	480	1,280	\$28,760
8	Janitors and Cleaners	<HS	ST OJT	60	530	590	1,170	\$29,920
9	Stockers and Order Fillers	HSE	ST OJT	70	370	640	1,080	\$29,940
10	Bartenders	<HS	ST OJT	120	250	680	1,050	\$22,080

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master's degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Occupational Demand – High Wage Jobs

Many Montanans are interested in high-paying occupations, whether they are planning for their first career or considering a career change. Figure 8 shows the occupations that pay between \$45,000 and \$65,000 with the most openings, while Figure 9 shows the most in-demand occupations paying over \$65,000. Most high-wage occupations require more work experience and/or some post-secondary education. The most in-demand job in this wage bracket is truck drivers with 890 job openings annually. Other high-paying occupations include many trades such as carpenters, electricians, and plumbers, which require completion of an apprenticeship. Of the top occupations earning \$45,000-\$65,000, only one requires a bachelor's degree.

Figure 8: Jobs Earning \$45,000-\$65,000 with the Most Job Openings, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS ND	ST OJT	50	320	520	890	\$48,180
2	Carpenters	HSE	Appren	100	240	500	840	\$47,530
3	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	HSE	MT OJT	40	140	320	500	\$49,590
4	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	HSE	5+ yrs	70	120	270	470	\$63,390
5	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	HSE	<5 yrs	20	170	280	460	\$48,720
6	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	HSE	MT OJT	60	120	270	450	\$48,450
7	Electricians	HSE	Appren	70	90	240	400	\$61,170
8	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	HSE	Appren	60	90	220	370	\$62,320
9	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	PS ND	ST OJT	10	100	230	340	\$47,120
10	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bach		10	140	180	320	\$49,480

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Figure 9 shows occupations paying a median wage of over \$65,000. The most in-demand occupations in this wage range require a bachelor’s degree or higher. At the top of the list are registered nurses (700 annual openings), followed by general and operations managers (670), accountants and auditors (420), medical and health services managers (200), lawyers (180), and civil engineers (150).

Figure 9: Jobs Earning Over \$65,000 with the Most Job Openings, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings			2021 MT Median Annual Wage	
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers		Total Openings
1	Registered Nurses	Bach		110	300	290	700	\$75,000
2	General and Operations Managers	Bach	5+ yrs	100	140	440	670	\$79,870
3	Accountants and Auditors	Bach		60	120	250	420	\$65,500
4	Medical and Health Services Managers	Bach	<5 yrs	60	50	100	210	\$92,700
5	Lawyers	Phd or Prof		40	70	80	180	\$80,750
6	Civil Engineers	Bach		30	40	90	150	\$76,650
7	Construction Managers	Bach	MT OJT	30	30	80	140	\$95,190
8	Physical Therapists	Phd or Prof		30	30	30	90	\$78,950
9	Financial Managers	Bach	5+ yrs	20	20	50	90	\$102,620
10	Nurse Practitioners	Master		40	20	30	80	\$122,100

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; Phd/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Occupational Demand – Education Level

In Montana, most job openings are in occupations that do not require post-secondary education. These lower-paying jobs often have high turnover rates as workers gain skills and advance in their careers to longer-term, more stable employment. As shown in Figure 10, worker demand and average wages vary based on the minimum education required for the occupation. Over the next decade, it is projected that 73% of all job openings (49,670 per year) will be in jobs that require a high school education or less. Another 24% of annual openings (16,510 per year) will be in occupations that require some college or a bachelor's degree. Only 2.4% of annual job openings will be in occupations that require a degree beyond a bachelor’s degree.

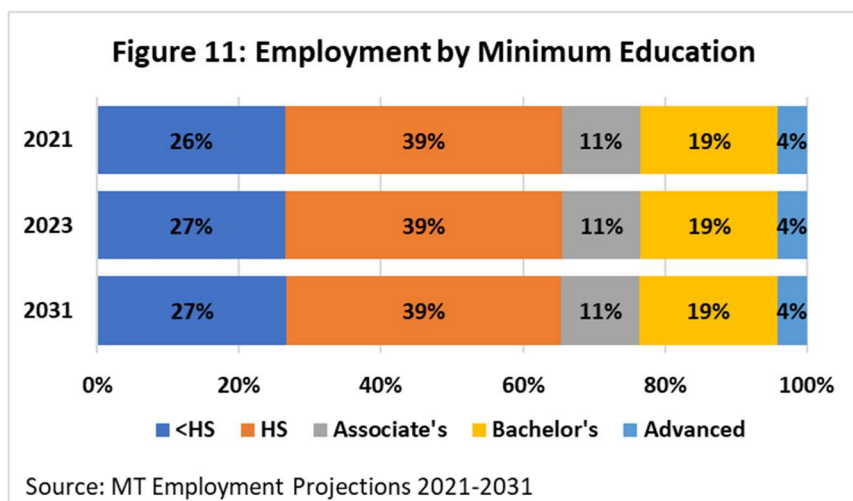
Wages increase with education level, with the average wage of occupations requiring a high school education at \$43,803 compared to \$59,595 for occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree. Occupations requiring a master’s degree, or a professional/doctoral degree pay average wages of \$67,770 and \$90,298 respectively.

Figure 10: Worker Demand by Education Level, 2021-2031

Education Level	Annual Openings, 2021-2023				Annual Openings, 2021-2031				2021 MT Average Annual Wage
	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
Less than High School	2,210	9,050	12,530	23,800	1,590	9,380	13,040	24,010	\$28,577
HS Diploma or Equivalent	3,000	8,830	14,060	25,890	1,980	9,120	14,550	25,660	\$43,803
Some College to Assoc	730	2,490	3,460	6,690	540	2,570	3,570	6,680	\$41,220
Bachelor's degree	1,570	2,960	5,360	9,890	1,170	3,070	5,590	9,830	\$59,595
Master degree	120	220	350	690	120	230	370	730	\$67,770
Doctoral or Prof. degree	170	370	390	930	130	380	400	910	\$90,298

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections 2021-2031

Montana's occupational distribution by minimum education is expected to remain consistent over time. Jobs requiring a high school education or less are expected to make up approximately 66% of employment in 2021, 2023, and 2031. There is more turnover in lower-wage, lower-education occupations, which accounts for the larger share of openings (73%) compared to employment (65%). In 2031, it is expected that more than 34% of workers will require some post-secondary education.



Using minimum education requirements for workforce planning should be approached with caution. While they may indicate the lowest level of training needed to enter an occupation, additional education and training is often necessary to progress in a career and achieve mastery of job duties. A survey of the typical education of workers in many occupations shows that workers tend to have higher levels of education than the minimum requirements suggest.² Employers who hire workers at the minimum level should expect to provide further training to bring these employees up to the productivity levels of the current and previous workforce. Minimum education requirements suggest that only 34% of jobs

² Based on occupational employment and O*NET Typical Education Survey.

require education beyond a high school degree, though 59% of workers who fill occupations have an education beyond a high school degree.

Workforce planners pay a lot of attention to jobs that require postsecondary education because they require more preparation and training. Furthermore, higher education levels tend to result in higher wages and improve productivity which can benefit Montana's economy. The most in-demand occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher in Montana (Figure 12) include registered nurses, which have an annual average of 700 openings and pay a median wage of \$75,000, as well as general and operations managers (670 openings, median wage of \$79,870), substitute teachers (420 openings, median wage of \$23,430), and accountants and auditors (250 annual openings, median wage of \$65,500).

Figure 12: Jobs that Require a Bachelor's Degree or Higher with the Most Openings, 2021-2031

Occupation	Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
	Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1 Registered Nurses	Bach		110	300	290	700	\$75,000
2 General and Operations Managers	Bach	5+ yrs	100	140	440	670	\$79,870
3 Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	Bach		30	290	260	570	\$23,430
4 Accountants and Auditors	Bach		60	120	250	420	\$65,500
5 Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other	Bach		40	100	200	340	.
6 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bach		10	140	180	320	\$49,480
7 Coaches and Scouts	Bach		30	100	140	270	\$30,020
8 Personal Service Managers; Entertainment & Recreation Managers, Except Gambling; and Managers, All Other	Bach	<5 yrs	0	80	180	260	.
9 Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	Bach		80	50	110	250	.
10 Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	Bach		50	70	130	240	\$46,790

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master's degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience. Some OEWS wages are suppressed.

For individuals who are willing to pursue some post-secondary education, but do not want to commit to the four years typically required for a bachelor's degree, there are many occupations that require some post-secondary education but less than a bachelor's degree (Figure 13). The most in-demand occupation

in this category are bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, which need a minimum of a year of on-the-job training and pay a median wage of \$37,370. The top three occupations in this category by median wage are truck drivers (890 openings, median wage of \$48,180), computer user support specialists (220 openings, median wage of \$47,330) and automotive service technicians and mechanics (220 openings, median wage of \$47,120).

Figure 13: Jobs Requiring Some Postsecondary Education, but Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree, 2021-2031

	Occupation	Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	SC ND	MT OJT	20	520	450	1,000	\$37,370
2	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS ND	ST OJT	50	320	520	890	\$48,180
3	Nursing Assistants	PS ND		60	420	370	850	\$29,690
4	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	SC ND		10	160	170	350	\$29,030
5	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	PS ND	ST OJT	10	100	230	340	\$47,120
6	Computer User Support Specialists	SC ND		30	50	140	220	\$47,330
7	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	PS ND		30	80	100	210	\$47,000
8	Dental Assistants	PS ND		20	70	110	190	\$37,220
9	Medical Assistants	PS ND		30	60	110	190	\$37,660
10	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	PS ND	LT OJT	30	40	100	160	\$47,850

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience. Some OEWS wages are suppressed

Many in-demand occupations require less than a bachelor’s degree yet pay high wages. Figure 14 illustrates the top occupations that earn \$45,000 or more and require a high school diploma or less. These types of positions generally require some level of prior work experience, one month to one year of on-the-job training, or a registered apprenticeship credential. Three of the top ten occupations are in sales, with roles in wholesale and manufacturing, services, and insurance. Another two out of the ten top occupations are supervisory roles. Carpenters, electricians, and plumbers are part of Montana’s registered apprentice program, are projected to have a high number of job openings, and pay a median wage of \$47,530, \$61,170, and \$62,320, respectively.

Figure 14: Jobs Earning Over \$45,000 that Require a High School Diploma, but Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Carpenters	HSE	Appren	100	240	500	840	\$47,530
2	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	HSE	MT OJT	40	140	320	500	\$49,590
3	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	HSE	5+ yrs	70	120	270	470	\$63,390
4	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	HSE	<5 yrs	20	170	280	460	\$48,720
5	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	HSE	MT OJT	60	120	270	450	\$48,450
6	Electricians	HSE	Appren	70	90	240	400	\$61,170
7	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	HSE	Appren	60	90	220	370	\$62,320
8	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	HSE	MT OJT	20	50	180	260	\$48,830
9	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	HSE	MT OJT	30	50	140	220	\$46,640
10	Insurance Sales Agents	HSE	MT OJT	30	70	120	210	\$48,430

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience. Some OEWS wages are suppressed.

Figure 15 highlights in-demand occupations that pay \$45,000 or more and require some form of post-secondary degree. Notable occupations include heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers, with 160 annual openings and a median wage of \$47,850, paralegals and legal assistants (150 openings, median wage of \$46,980), firefighters (80 openings, median wage of \$51,220), and radiological technologists (70 openings, median wage of \$60,360).

Figure 15: Occupations Earning Over \$45,000 that Require Some Postsecondary Education, but Less Than a Bachelor's Degree, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS ND	ST OJT	50	320	520	890	\$48,180
2	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	PS ND	ST OJT	10	100	230	340	\$47,120
3	Computer User Support Specialists	SC ND		30	50	140	220	\$47,330
4	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	PS ND		30	80	100	210	\$47,000
5	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	PS ND	LT OJT	30	40	100	160	\$47,850
6	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Assoc		30	50	80	150	\$46,980
7	Firefighters	PS ND	LT OJT	10	20	50	80	\$51,220
8	Radiologic Technologists	Assoc		10	30	40	70	\$60,360
9	Massage Therapists	PS ND		10	30	30	70	\$59,380
10	Dental Hygienists	Assoc		10	30	20	60	\$77,920

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master's degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience. Some OEWS wages are suppressed.

Healthcare Occupations in High Demand

Making up 15% of payroll employment, Montana’s largest industry by employment, healthcare and social assistance, is expected to see the most growth in Montana from 2021 to 2031. The two factors driving the increased demand for healthcare workers are Montana's aging population and continued immigration. The healthcare industry in the state is projected to add 1,170 jobs per year, on average, over the next decade. Figure 16 illustrates the top 20 healthcare occupations by the number of annual openings. The occupation with the most openings is home health and personal care aides, which requires a high school education and short-term on-the-job training and pays around \$28,760. Most of the top healthcare occupations at least require some post-secondary education, but many do not require a bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 16: Top 20 Healthcare Occupations with the Most Annual Openings, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	HSE	ST OJT	250	550	480	1,280	\$28,760
2	Nursing Assistants	PS ND		60	420	370	850	\$29,690
3	Registered Nurses	Bach		110	300	290	700	\$75,000
4	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	PS ND		30	80	100	210	\$47,000
5	Dental Assistants	PS ND		20	70	110	190	\$37,220
6	Medical Assistants	PS ND		30	60	110	190	\$37,660
7	Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	HSE	ST OJT	20	30	70	110	\$28,900
8	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	PS ND		10	40	60	110	.
9	Pharmacy Technicians	HSE	MT OJT	10	40	60	100	\$36,880
10	Physical Therapists	Phd or Prof		30	30	30	90	\$78,950
11	Phlebotomists	PS ND		10	30	40	80	\$37,070
12	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	Bach		10	30	40	80	\$60,050
13	Nurse Practitioners	Master		40	20	30	80	\$122,100
14	Radiologic Technologists	Assoc		10	30	40	70	\$60,360
15	Massage Therapists	PS ND		10	30	30	70	\$59,380
16	Physician Assistants	Master		20	10	30	70	\$128,190
17	Dental Hygienists	Assoc		10	30	20	60	\$77,920
18	Pharmacists	Phd or Prof		0	30	30	60	\$127,870
19	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	Assoc		20	20	30	60	\$36,210
20	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	PS ND		10	10	30	60	.

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; Phd/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Occupational Demand – STEM

The STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field is one of the most rapidly growing, highest paying, and most innovative areas of the economy. Jobs in STEM will be vital to Montana’s economic growth. Projected openings are shown by discipline, domain, and occupation type (Figure 17). STEM jobs typically pay higher wages and require post-secondary education. Every discipline has an average wage that is above \$70,000. By total job openings, math is the number one discipline by total openings (3,201 annual openings, average wage of \$73,272), followed by computer science (2,847

openings, average wage of \$78,503), and biology (1,821 openings, average wage of \$79,153). Health is the most in-demand domain with 2,157 annual openings and pays an average wage of \$74,056. Research and development, design, or practitioner is the most in-demand occupation type in the STEM field with 2,202 annual openings and pays an average wage of \$77,024.

Figure 17: Worker Demand for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Jobs, 2021-2031

	Career Field	Annual Openings, 2021-2021				Annual Openings, 2021-2031				2021 MT Average Annual Wage
		New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
Discipline	Math	604	974	1,605	3,183	497	1,022	1,683	3,201	\$73,272
	Computer Science	538	847	1,442	2,826	448	887	1,512	2,847	\$78,503
	Biology	322	599	838	1,758	315	627	879	1,821	\$79,153
	Chemistry	244	323	615	1,182	201	340	646	1,188	\$79,067
	Engineering	259	280	649	1,187	158	292	677	1,126	\$74,392
	Physics	215	246	496	957	154	259	520	933	\$74,921
	Economics & Accounting	132	135	254	521	109	145	274	528	\$86,254
Domain	Health	400	742	891	2,033	423	786	949	2,157	\$74,056
	Life & Physical Science, Engineering, Math, and IT	280	348	878	1,505	170	360	911	1,441	\$72,420
	Architecture	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$71,722
	Social Science	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$27,008
Occupation Type	R&D, Design, or Practitioner	442	674	1,055	2,171	389	707	1,106	2,202	\$77,024
	Technologist and Technician	164	320	553	1,036	129	336	576	1,041	\$47,301
	Managerial	79	66	161	305	74	73	176	323	\$97,304
	Sales	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$80,870
	Postsecondary Teaching	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$80,754

Source: Montana Department of Labor and Industry Employment Projections. 2021-2031. Some data aggregations are suppressed in cases that would allow identification of a suppressed occupation.

Occupational Demand - Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship has been key to building a skilled workforce in Montana. Montana’s apprenticeship program continues to train workers into skilled, high-wage jobs. Partnerships with business sponsors around the state help to fill openings for jobs that are most in demand. Figure 18 shows the top ten apprenticeable occupations in Montana earning over \$45,000 by job opening. Top occupations include truck drivers (890 annual openings and a median wage of \$48,180), carpenters (840 openings, median wage of \$47,530), and registered nurses (700 openings, median wage of \$75,000).

Figure 18: Top Occupations Apprenticed in Montana and Earning Over \$45,000, 2021-2031

Occupation		Min Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS ND	ST OJT	50	320	520	890	\$48,180
2	Carpenters	HSE	Appren	100	240	500	840	\$47,530
3	Registered Nurses	Bach		110	300	290	700	\$75,000
4	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	HSE	MT OJT	60	120	270	450	\$48,450
5	Electricians	HSE	Appren	70	90	240	400	\$61,170
6	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	HSE	Appren	60	90	220	370	\$62,320
7	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	PS ND	ST OJT	10	100	230	340	\$47,120
8	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	HSE	MT OJT	30	50	140	220	\$46,640
9	Computer User Support Specialists	SC ND		30	50	140	220	\$47,330
10	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	PS ND		30	80	100	210	\$47,000

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master’s degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Apprenticeship continues to grow in popularity in Montana. There is still room for apprenticeship to grow into other high-wage, high-demand occupations that currently don’t have programs. Figure 19 shows the top apprenticeable occupations not yet apprenticed in Montana that pay a median wage of more than \$45,000. The most in-demand occupation is general and operations managers (670 openings and a median wage of \$79,870), followed by accountants (420 openings, median wage of \$65,500) and market research analysts (240 openings, median wage of \$55,490).

Figure 19: Top U.S. Apprenticeable Occupations Earning Over \$45,000 and Not Yet Apprenticed in MT, 2021-2031

Occupation		Minimum Requirements		Annual Openings				2021 MT Median Annual Wage
		Edu.	Work Exp.	New Jobs	Exits	Transfers	Total Openings	
1	General and Operations Managers	Bach	5+ yrs	100	140	440	670	\$79,870
2	Accountants and Auditors	Bach		60	120	250	420	\$65,500
3	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	Bach		50	50	140	240	\$55,490
4	Human Resources Specialists	Bach		20	50	130	200	\$49,490
5	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	HSE	MT OJT	20	50	90	160	\$61,190
6	Compliance Officers	Bach	MT OJT	10	30	60	100	\$62,750
7	Graphic Designers	Bach		0	30	60	90	\$47,040
8	Food Service Managers	HSE	<5 yrs	10	20	60	90	\$59,020
9	Financial Managers	Bach	5+ yrs	20	20	50	90	\$102,620
10	Massage Therapists	PS ND		10	30	30	70	\$59,380

Source: MTDLI Employment Projections, 2021-2031. Notes: <HS = less than high school diploma; HSE = High school diploma or equivalent; SC ND = Some college no degree; PS ND = Postsecondary no degree; Appren = Apprenticeship; Assoc = Assoc degree; Bach = Bach degree; Master = Master's degree; PhD/Prof = Doctoral or professional degree; ST OJT = short-term on-the-job training; MT OJT = medium-term on-the-job training; 5+ yrs = five or more years of experience; <5 yrs = less than five years of experience.

Conclusion

Montana has been experiencing a fast recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic. However, long-term growth is expected to slow down due to a labor market restrained by demographics and other persistent challenges such as childcare shortages. This publication by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry highlights key occupations that are expected to be in high demand and focus areas for training workers. It also serves as a valuable resource for individuals either looking to make a career change or just starting out, by providing information to make informed decisions and discover pathways to well-paying and in-demand careers. For more information, visit our projections dashboard at <https://lmi.mt.gov/Projections>.

Appendix A - Methodology

The Data and Operations Bureau of the Montana Department of Labor & Industry produces projections of employment growth by industry and occupation. The Department uses the methodologies recommended by the U.S. Department of Labor, ensuring accurate and consistent methodology across timelines and the most updated practices used among states.

Employment Projections

The employment projections are produced as a part of a contract with the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor using the nationally recommended methodology for employment forecasts and the programs provided by the Projections Managing Partnership. The employment projections are published on the state labor market information website at www.lmi.mt.gov, and are also published nationally on the Employment and Training Administration's website at www.projectionscentral.com.

The projections are based on historic employment data from January 1990 to December 2021. The primary data source for the Montana industry employment projections is the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), which is published jointly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. The QCEW covers payroll employment in Montana and is considered the most accurate data source because it is an actual count of employment from the wage records reported to Unemployment Insurance. The QCEW data is aggregated into the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) industries. For Montana's statewide and regional forecasts industry employment projections, two-digit NAICS industries are used.

All industries include only private employment except for the healthcare and education industries, which includes both public and private employment. Therefore, the government industry includes all public employment except for workers in the healthcare and education industries. The treatment of public healthcare and education employment is consistent with national recommendations from the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Industry forecasts are developed by comparing various functional forms of time series models, which use past employment trends to predict employment in the future, with fit and analyst insight determining the appropriate model. Fit is determined using historic data. Industry projections are compared against the Montana forecasts developed by S&P Global and against other publicly available employment forecasts.

The total employment level is also estimated using a time series model. Data from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) is used to produce the total employment projection. The LAUS data is a model-based estimate that utilizes the national Current Population Survey to calculate the labor force and employment in Montana. Conceptually, the difference between the LAUS total employment estimate and the QCEW payroll employment number is the level of self-employment in Montana. Therefore, the difference between the two forecasts becomes the forecast for self-employment in Montana. The total employment and payroll employment forecasts are estimated using both a top-down and bottom-up approach with manual adjustment for internal consistency of forecasts.

Once industry forecasts are finalized, the industry employment is disaggregated into occupations using a third data source, the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). The OES is a survey-based employment estimate that categorizes employment by occupation. The OES provides staffing patterns for each industry, which are used to disaggregate the industry projections into each occupation. For example, if registered nurses are currently 12% of the healthcare industry and 3% of the education industry, the forecast for the occupation of registered nurses would sum 12% of the expected employment in healthcare and 3% of the expected employment in education.

However, this process is complicated by change factors, which adjust the staffing patterns for expected changes in occupational mix in the upcoming ten years. The change factors are calculated at the national level by the Bureau of Labor Statistics with some occupations edited at the state level to adapt to Montana's economic conditions. Change factors adjust the current staffing patterns for predicted changes in future business practices. For example, if registered nurses comprise 12% of the healthcare industry in the current timeframe but are expected to comprise 14% of the healthcare industry in future years, the change factor would slowly change the amount of projected healthcare employment dedicated to registered nurses over the ten-year time frame.

The self-employed staffing pattern is developed following the averages of the state and national occupational data adjusted for the likelihood of the occupation being self-employed. The staffing pattern is automatically generated using national and state level data but is also manually adjusted using analyst insight. Analysts base those adjustments on self-employed occupation data from the Current Population Survey, data on farmers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis's personal income accounts.

Forecast Error

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry does not produce error ranges for the employment forecasts, although greater consistency is one of the criteria used when selecting the appropriate time series model for each industry. Some industries and occupations have fairly stable growth paths that can be predicted with a great deal of certainty, while other industries are more susceptible to changing economic conditions. Employment growth in healthcare has continued a very steady pace over the last twenty years as Montana's population has aged and consumers have continued to demand more healthcare services. The constant steady growth gives greater confidence in the forecasted employment levels. In contrast, employment in the mining industry varies considerably with changing global prices for oil, energy, and commodities. Price changes at the global level are often difficult to predict, making the employment forecast for this industry uncertain.

Knowing about forecast uncertainty helps to interpret the employment forecasts more appropriately. As an example, the 2021-2031 employment forecasts suggested there will be about 700 openings annually for registered nurses. In comparison, we expect only 192 openings per year for dental assistants. While neither figure is likely to be correct, it is clear that there is a greater demand for nurses than dental assistants (although both occupations are growing). The greater demand for nurses will persist even if the economy undergoes a structural shift or experiences a large recession. The relative demand of occupations is more stable and of greater certainty than the numerical demand.

Montana Employment Projections 2021-2031

Additional caveats are important to understand the projections as well. The employment projections do not account for current unfilled positions, but for the new job openings that are expected in the future. For example, if there were currently 500 unfilled openings for welders in Montana, and roughly 60 openings are expected next year, the worker demand here only presents the 60 openings expected, not the total 520 openings available for workers in the next year. In general, occupations with longer training times and faster expected growth will also be the occupations with current unfilled demand.

Appendix B – Accuracy of Past Forecasts

The uncertainty of the COVID pandemic led to a larger error in forecasts from 2020 to 2021. Under normal conditions, Montana’s total employment projections have been off by less than 1% while the 2020 forecast for 2021 was off by 2.47%. The recovery in 2021 was stronger than was expected in 2020. Notable industries that overperformed include agriculture, arts, entertainment, and recreation, manufacturing, retail trade, real estate, professional services, and management. One industry that underperformed is healthcare and social assistance, which struggled from staffing shortages.

Figure 20: Accuracy of 2020-2030 One Year After Forecast

Industry	2020-2030 Projections for 2021	Actual 2021	Difference	% Difference
Agriculture & Forestry	6,308	6,542	-234	3.71%
Mining	6,159	6,194	-35	0.57%
Utilities	2,770	2,785	-15	0.57%
Construction	32,713	33,036	-323	0.99%
Manufacturing	20,570	21,315	-745	3.62%
Wholesale Trade	17,036	17,442	-406	2.38%
Retail Trade	58,661	60,171	-1,510	2.58%
Transportation	16,277	16,615	-338	2.08%
Information	5,786	5,608	178	-3.09%
Finance & Insurance	16,099	16,410	-311	1.93%
Real Estate	6,132	6,410	-278	4.54%
Professional Services	24,264	25,228	-964	3.97%
Management	2,109	2,267	-158	7.49%
Admin & Waste Services	18,568	19,422	-854	4.60%
Educational Services	38,936	39,234	-298	0.76%
Healthcare & Social Assistance	75,164	73,851	1,313	-1.75%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	11,049	12,122	-1,073	9.71%
Accommodation & Food Services	53,689	53,985	-296	0.55%
Other Services	18,085	17,737	348	-1.92%
Local Government	20,853	20,907	-54	0.26%
State Government	12,719	12,730	-11	0.09%
Federal Government	9,582	9,627	-45	0.47%
Postal Service	2,096	2,093	3	-0.17%
Payroll Employment	476,212	482,541	-6,329	1.33%
Total Employment	517,969	530,738	-12,769	2.47%

Source: MT DLI. QCEW and 2020-2030 Employment Projections