

Healthcare:



Millions of jobs now and in the future

Elka Torpey

In career news, healthcare is everywhere. That's because the healthcare industry is projected to add more jobs—over 4 million—than any other industry between 2012 and 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). And it is projected to be among the fastest-growing industries in the economy.

“Without a doubt, there's a lot of opportunity in healthcare,” says Stephanie Drake, former executive director of the American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration in Chicago, Illinois.

But which areas of work are expected to have the best outlook? What are the occupations, and what do they pay? And how do you prepare for them?

This article answers those questions. The first section describes the industry and how it's growing. The second section discusses the occupations in healthcare. And the third section explains how to get started in these occupations. Sources for more information are at the end.

A growing industry

The healthcare industry provides services related to treating illness, maintaining wellness, and managing disease. For workers in healthcare, helping people is the core of their jobs.

“When you work in healthcare, you serve the public every day,” says pharmacist Jennifer Adams, a senior director at the American

Association of Colleges of Pharmacy in Alexandria, Virginia.

Job settings

For purposes of this article, healthcare jobs are grouped into five detailed industries: hospitals, offices of health practitioners, nursing and residential care facilities, home healthcare services, and outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services.

In 2013, there were more than 15.8 million jobs in these industries, according to BLS. Table 1 shows where the jobs were, by detailed industry.

The data in this section are from the BLS Current Employment Statistics survey, which cover wage and salary workers only and do not include self-employed and unpaid family workers.

Hospitals accounted for the largest number of jobs in healthcare, about 39 percent of total healthcare employment in 2013. Employers include general medical and surgical hospitals, psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals, and specialty hospitals. Most jobs are in private hospitals, but some jobs are in hospitals funded by federal, state, or local governments.

Offices of health practitioners made up about 26 percent of healthcare employment in 2013. Employers include offices of physicians, dentists, and other health practitioners, such as chiropractors and physical therapists.

Nursing and residential care facilities accounted for about 20 percent of healthcare

Table 1: Healthcare and related* employment, 2013

Industry sector	Employment	Percent
Hospitals, private, federal, state, and local	6,110,000	39%
Offices of health practitioners	4,057,000	26
Nursing and residential care facilities	3,228,000	20
Home health care services	1,238,000	8
Outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services	1,194,000	8

* Health care and related include series CEU6562000101, CEU9091622001, CEU9092262201, and CEU9093262201. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (wage and salary employment, seasonally adjusted).

Elka Torpey is an economist in the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, BLS. She can be reached at torpey.elka@bls.gov.

jobs in 2013. Skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities for the elderly, and continuing care retirement communities are included in this detailed industry. Other facilities offer housing and care for people who need help related to mental health, substance abuse, or intellectual or developmental disability.

Home healthcare services had about 8 percent of healthcare jobs in 2013. Employers include businesses that provide a variety of services in peoples' homes, such as skilled nursing care, personal care, and physical therapy.

Outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services also had about 8 percent of healthcare jobs in 2013. Employers include ambulance services, medical and diagnostic laboratories, family planning centers, and outpatient mental health and substance abuse centers.

Past and future growth

Employment in the healthcare industry has been growing steadily for years, BLS data show. (See chart 1.) This growth is due, in

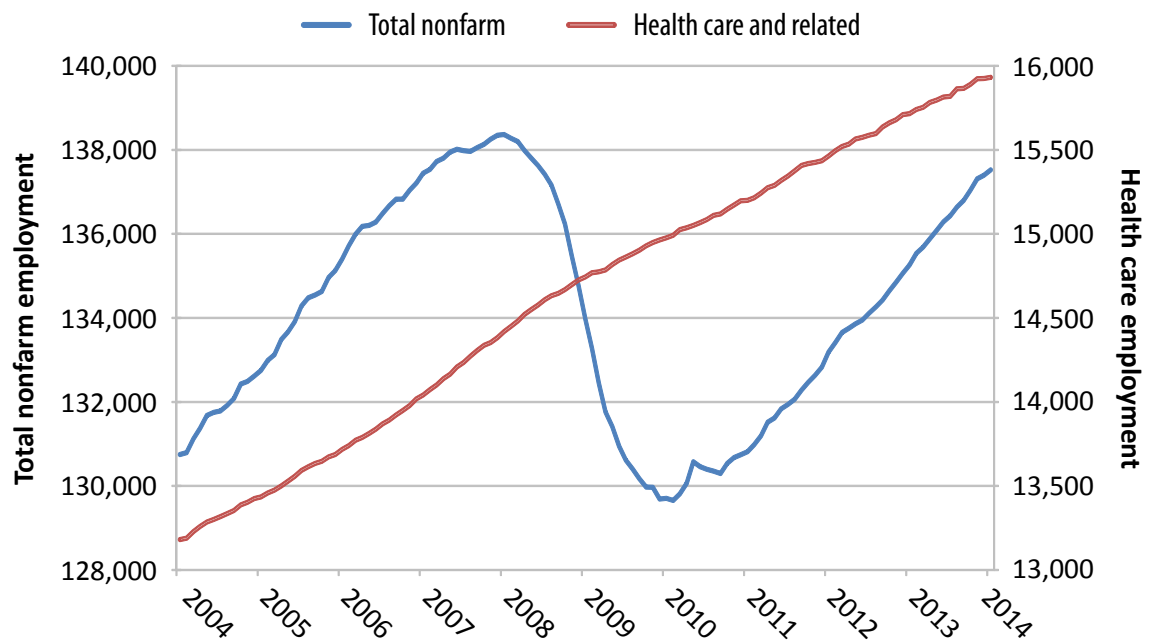
part, to people depending on health services no matter what the economic climate.

Even when total U.S. employment fell during the 2007–09 recession, for example, healthcare employment continued to rise. “Healthcare is recession-proof,” says Kim Brummett, a senior director at the American Association for Homecare in Washington, DC. “There is always a need.”

And because healthcare-related jobs often require personal interaction, they are difficult to outsource or replace with automation, as happens in some other industries. “Job stability is one of the best parts about any healthcare career,” says Adams. “We’re always going to need healthcare providers, no matter what area of healthcare you choose for a career.”

And each area of healthcare is expected to offer many career opportunities through 2022. The 2012–22 projections data are from the BLS Employment Projections program and cover wage and salary, self-employed, and unpaid family workers.

Chart 1: Total nonfarm employment and healthcare and related employment, January 2004–14 (in thousands)



Note: Health care and related include series CEU6562000101, CEU9091622001, CEU9092262201, and CEU9093262201. January 2014 data are preliminary.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (wage and salary employment, seasonally adjusted).

Hospitals are projected to continue having a large share of healthcare employment.



Healthcare growth. BLS projects healthcare employment to grow by 26 percent between 2012 and 2022, an increase of about 4.1 million jobs. Several factors are expected to lead to this growth, including the following:

- *A growing population.* Over the decade, the U.S. population is projected to increase by about 9 percent. A larger population requires more healthcare services, leading to projected job growth in the industry.
- *More people who are older.* The number of people ages 65 and older is projected to grow by about 40 percent between 2012 and 2022—the fastest of any age group. Compared with younger people, older people typically have greater healthcare needs. As a result, the healthcare industry is expected to add jobs.
- *Chronic conditions.* More people in the United States are expected to seek treatment for chronic conditions, such as diabetes and obesity. Additional workers are expected to be needed to help prevent, manage, and treat the health concerns associated with these conditions.
- *Medical advances.* Improvements in medicine and technology also are

expected to increase demand for healthcare services, creating more jobs for the workers who provide these services.

- *Health insurance reform.* As more people get health insurance coverage, the number of people seeking routine medical care is expected to grow. In turn, more jobs are projected to be added for workers who treat these people.

Growth by detailed industry. Table 2 shows the number of new jobs projected by detailed healthcare industry between 2012 and 2022.

Offices of health practitioners are projected to add more jobs—1.2 million—than any other type of healthcare employer. Some of this increase reflects expected cost-cutting efforts to shift demand for health services away from hospitals, which are relatively expensive.

Because hospitals make up a big portion of all healthcare employment, however, the number of new jobs in hospitals is still expected to be large over the decade.

Home healthcare services is projected to be the fastest growing detailed industry in the economy, with employment projected to increase by almost 60 percent between 2012 and 2022. As greater numbers of older people seek care that allows them to stay in their homes and maintain their independence, the need for workers in home healthcare services is expected to expand.

Table 2: New jobs by industry sector, projected 2012–12

Industry sector	New jobs
Offices of health practitioners	1,226,000
Hospitals, private, state, and local	826,000
Nursing and residential care facilities	761,000
Home health care services	716,000
Outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services	522,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program.

Occupations in healthcare

In addition to offering many opportunities, the healthcare industry offers plenty of career options. Workers in healthcare do tasks such as scheduling patient appointments, drawing blood for laboratory work, cleaning facilities, preparing food, diagnostic testing, and filling prescriptions.

Text and accompanying charts in this section highlight employment, wages, and projected new jobs in selected occupations for each of the detailed healthcare industries.

May 2013 employment and wage data are from the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics survey and are for wage and salary workers only. (The median wage is the point at which half of all wage and salary workers in the occupation made more than that amount, and half earned less.)

Occupations listed below by occupational group include those that had at least 50,000 jobs in May 2013. Many other occupations have jobs in these detailed industries too,

but they had fewer jobs and are not listed. The highest and lowest wages discussed are for occupations with 1,000 jobs or more in a detailed industry in May 2013. For comparison purposes, the median annual wage for wage and salary workers across all industries in May 2013 was \$35,080.

Understanding the charts

The BLS data in these charts show:

- May 2013 employment in the detailed industry
- May 2013 median annual wages in the detailed industry
- 2012–22 projected number of new jobs in the detailed industry

This information is shown in a bubble chart. The larger the bubble, the more jobs there were in the occupation. The higher a bubble is on the chart, the greater the occupation's wage. The farther to the right the bubble is, the more new jobs are projected for the occupation.

Healthcare work offers a variety of career options.



Hospitals

Occupations in hospitals are diverse. However, occupations with the most projected jobs probably include ones you'd expect to find in this setting. (See chart 2.)

Jobs in hospitals are often shift-based, with weekend and holiday work sometimes required, because hospitals provide care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Registered nurse Heather Hahn, for example, works a 12-hour shift 3 days a week, mostly 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Every 4 weeks she works nights for a week.

Employment. In May 2013, the occupations listed by group below made up about 63 percent of jobs in hospitals:

Management

- Medical and health services managers

Health diagnosing and treating practitioners

- Pharmacists
- Physical therapists

- Registered nurses
- Respiratory therapists

Health technologists and technicians

- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses
- Medical and clinical laboratory technicians
- Medical and clinical laboratory technologists
- Medical records and health information technicians
- Pharmacy technicians
- Radiologic technologists
- Surgical technologists

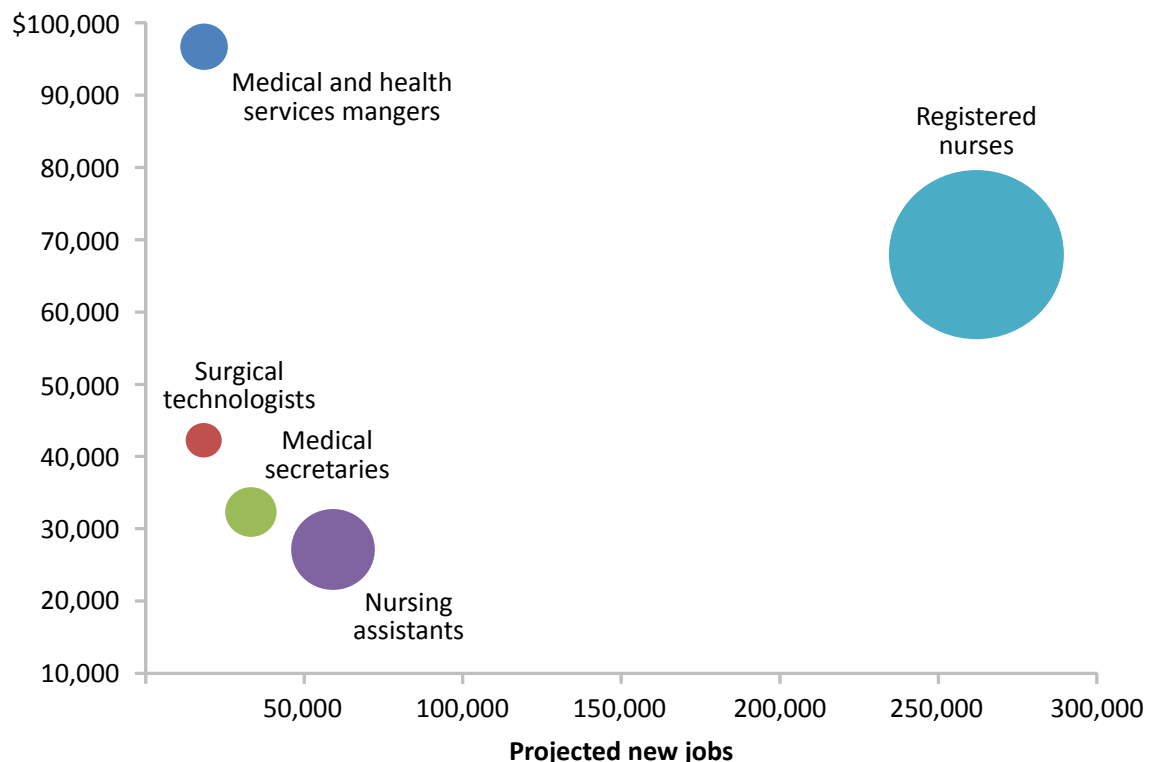
Healthcare support

- Medical assistants
- Nursing assistants

Building cleaning

- Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners
- Maids and housekeeping cleaners

Chart 2: Occupations with the most new jobs in hospitals, projected 2012–22; employment and median annual wages, May 2013



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program (projected new jobs, 2012–22) and Occupational Employment Statistics survey (employment and median annual wages, May 2013).

Office and administrative support

- General office clerks
- Interviewers, except eligibility and loan
- Medical secretaries
- Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive

Occupational wages. According to BLS, May 2013 median annual wages in hospitals ranged from \$20,850 for restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop hosts and hostesses to more than \$187,200 (the highest median annual wage published by BLS) for surgeons, chief executives, anesthesiologists, and obstetricians and gynecologists.

Food preparation and serving occupations, such as cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop counter attendants (\$22,990), had some of the lowest wages in hospitals in May 2013. But hospitals also have many high-paying occupations. At least 11 occupations in the health diagnosing and treating practitioners group, for example, had median annual wages

of more than \$100,000 in hospitals in May 2013.

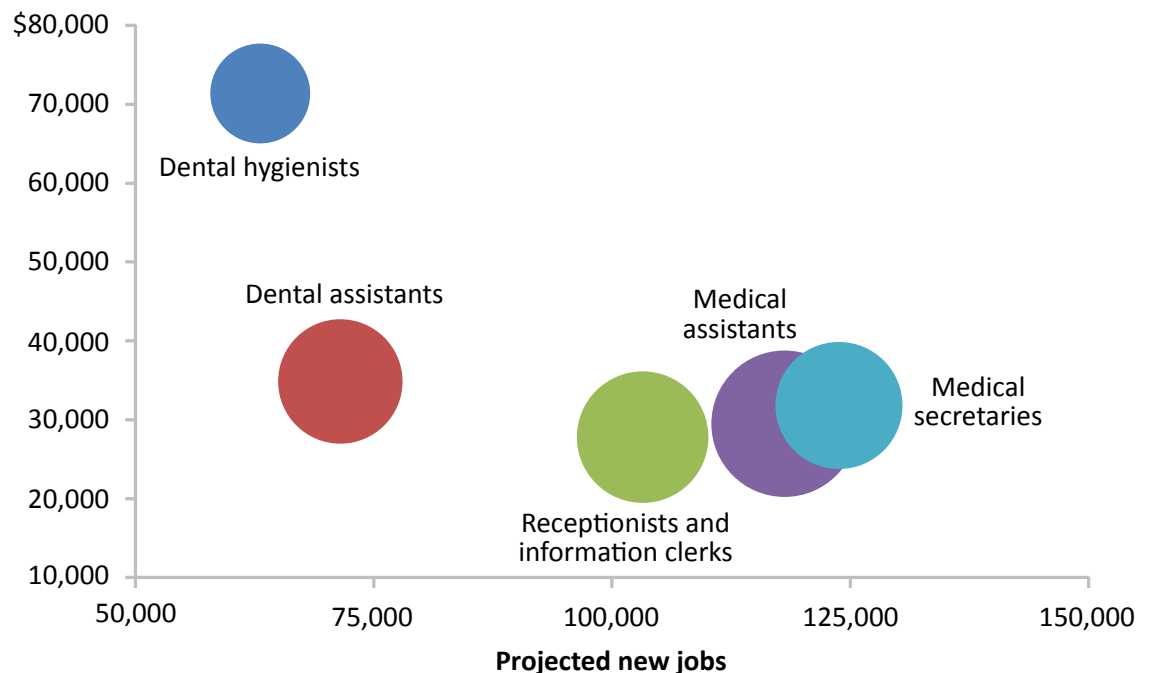
Projected new jobs. BLS projects hospitals to add about 826,000 jobs between 2012 and 2022. Nearly one-third—about 262,000 jobs—are expected to be for registered nurses.

In addition to the occupations in the chart, others that are projected to add many jobs in hospitals between 2012 and 2022 include radiologic technologists, maids and house-keeping cleaners, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and medical and clinical laboratory technicians.

Offices of health practitioners

Workers in offices of health practitioners, including those in the occupations shown in chart 3, usually work a standard 9-to-5, Monday-through-Friday schedule. Some offices, however, are also open on weekends or in the evenings to accommodate patient schedules. And workers may be on call at other times to respond to emergencies.

Chart 3: Occupations with the most new jobs in offices of health practitioners, projected 2012–22; employment and median annual wages, May 2013



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program (projected new jobs, 2012–22) and Occupational Employment Statistics survey (employment and median annual wages, May 2013).

Employment. Occupations in the following groups made up about 65 percent of total employment in offices of health practitioners in May 2013:

Health diagnosing and treating practitioners

- General dentists
- Family and general practitioners
- Physical therapists
- Physician assistants
- Nurse practitioners
- Registered nurses

Health technologists and technicians

- Dental hygienists
- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses

Healthcare support

- Dental assistants
- Medical assistants

Office and administrative support

- Billing and posting clerks
- First line supervisors of office and administrative support workers
- General office clerks
- Medical secretaries
- Receptionists and information clerks

- Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive

Occupational wages. BLS data show that May 2013 median annual wages in offices of health practitioners ranged from \$18,720 for home health aides to more than \$187,200 for surgeons, general internists, anesthesiologists, obstetricians and gynecologists, orthodontists, and oral and maxillofacial surgeons.

Office and administrative support occupations, such as general office clerks (\$27,750), accounted for many jobs and had relatively low wages in this detailed industry in May 2013. Health diagnosing and treating practitioners, including general dentists (\$148,270), also had many jobs, but these occupations had some of the highest median annual wages of any occupations.

Projected new jobs. Between 2012 and 2022, BLS projects offices of health practitioners to add about 1.2 million jobs. Medical secretaries is projected to add the most jobs in this detailed industry: 123,800 jobs over the decade.

Among occupations in offices of health practitioners, dentists had some of the highest wages in May 2013.



In addition to the occupations shown in chart 3, registered nurses, physical therapists, billing and posting clerks, and first line supervisors of office and administrative support workers also are projected to add many jobs in this detailed industry.

Nursing and residential care facilities

Occupations in nursing and residential care facilities include those shown in chart 4. Workers in this detailed industry provide care around the clock, so shifts are common. And schedules can include holidays and weekends.

Employment. The occupations listed by group here made up about 69 percent of total employment in nursing and residential care facilities in May 2013:

Community and social service

- Social and human service assistants

Health diagnosing and treating practitioners

- Registered nurses

Health technologists and technicians

- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (LPNs and LVNs)

Healthcare support

- Home health aides
- Nursing assistants

Food preparation and serving

- Institution and cafeteria cooks
- Nonrestaurant food servers

Personal care and service

- Personal care aides
- Recreation workers

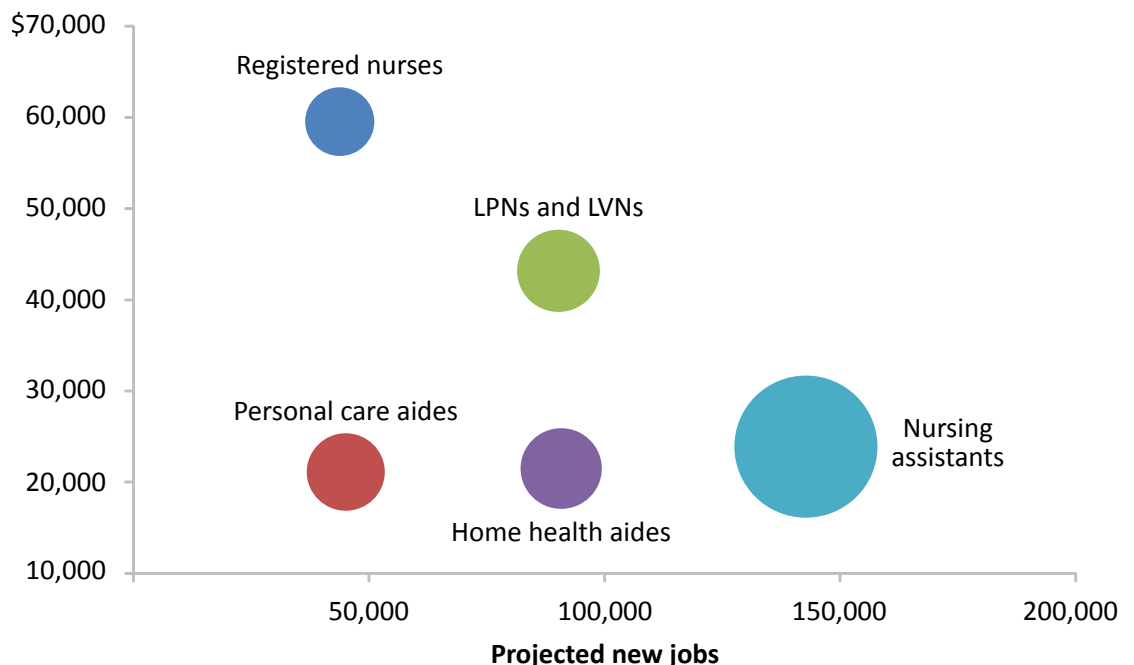
Building cleaning

- Maids and housekeeping cleaners

Occupational wages. May 2013 median annual wages in nursing and residential care facilities ranged from \$18,780 for dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers to more than \$122,450 for chief executives, BLS data show.

Many of the occupations in nursing and residential care facilities, including maids and housekeeping cleaners (\$20,240), had wages that were lower than the median for all

Chart 4: Occupations with the most new jobs in nursing and residential care facilities, projected 2012–22; employment and median annual wages, May 2013



Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program (projected new jobs, 2012–22) and Occupational Employment Statistics survey (employment and median annual wages, May 2013).

Workers in nursing and residential care facilities, like those in many healthcare settings, tend to patients around the clock.



occupations in May 2013. Among the higher paying occupations are health diagnosing and treating practitioners, such as physical therapists (\$87,140).

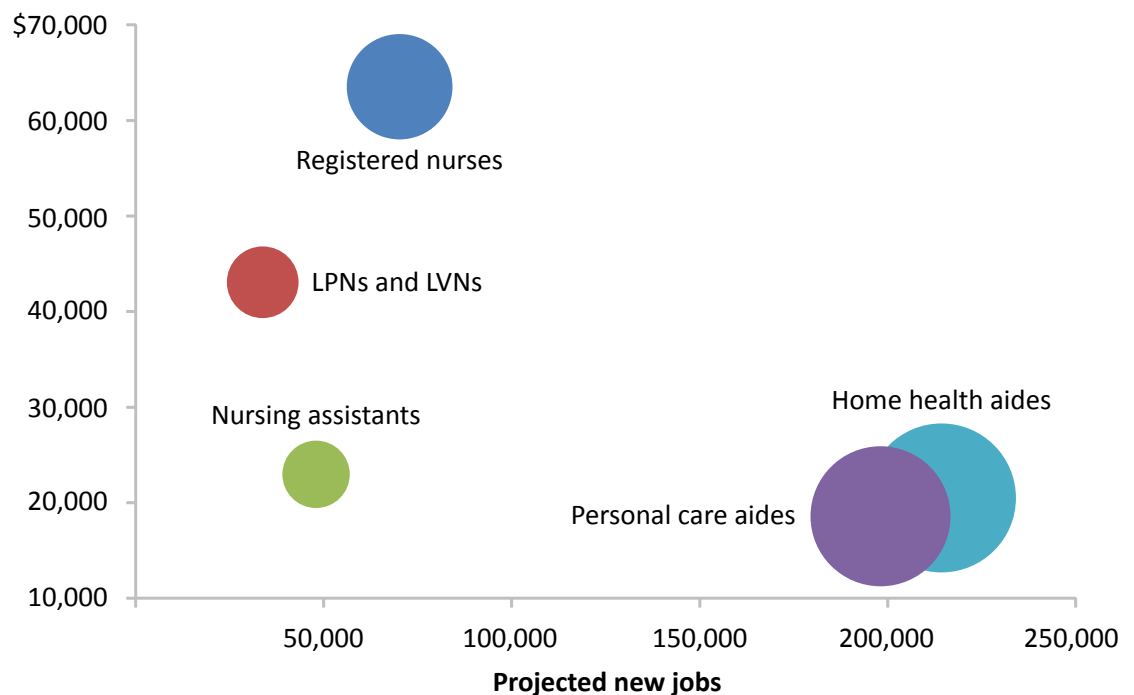
Projected new jobs. BLS projects about 760,700 new jobs to be created in nursing and residential care facilities over the 2012–22 decade. Nursing assistants is projected to add the most jobs of any occupation in this detailed industry: 142,700 jobs over the decade.

In addition to the occupations in the chart, other occupations projected to add many jobs in this detailed industry include nonrestaurant food servers, maids and housekeeping cleaners, institution and cafeteria cooks, social and human service assistants, and recreation workers.

Home healthcare services

Chart 5 shows some of the occupations in home healthcare services. Workers in this detailed industry often enjoy visiting people in

Chart 5: Occupations with the most new jobs in home healthcare services, projected 2012–22; employment and median annual wages, May 2013



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program (projected new jobs, 2012–22) and Occupational Employment Statistics survey (employment and median annual wages, May 2013).

Home healthcare services is expected to be the fastest growing detailed industry in the economy.



their residences rather than attending to them elsewhere. “When you work in home healthcare, you spend time with patients in a more natural setting,” says Brummett. “And you tend to have more control over your schedule.”

Employment. The five occupations listed in the groups below accounted for about 77 percent of home healthcare services jobs in May 2013:

Health diagnosing and treating practitioners

- Registered nurses

Health technologists and technicians

- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (LPNs and LVNs)

Healthcare support

- Home health aides
- Nursing assistants

Personal care and service

- Personal care aides

Occupational wages. May 2012 median annual wages in home healthcare services ranged from \$18,580 for personal care aides to \$137,660 for chief executives, BLS data show.

Some of the largest occupations in home healthcare services—such as home health aides (\$20,510)—pay relatively low wages.

Higher paying occupations, such as pharmacists (\$112,320), accounted for fewer jobs.

Projected new jobs. Home healthcare services is projected to add about 715,700 jobs between 2012 and 2022, according to BLS. Home health aides is projected to add nearly one-third of those new jobs—about 214,300 jobs over the decade.

Other occupations projected to add many jobs in this detailed industry, in addition to those in the chart, are general office clerks, medical and health services managers, physical therapists, healthcare social workers, and occupational therapists.

Outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services

Some of the occupations in outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services are shown in chart 6. Schedules and working conditions for occupations in this detailed industry vary. Jobs in outpatient care centers and medical and diagnostic laboratories, for example, often involve standard work hours in routine settings. In contrast, jobs in ambulance services can have unpredictable work

Work settings for some healthcare industries may vary because of the type of service provided.



hours and settings, because emergencies can happen anytime and nearly anywhere.

Employment. Only three occupations had enough employment to make the cutoff of more than 50,000 jobs each in outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services in May 2013. The occupations in these groups made up about 24 percent of total employment in this detailed industry:

Health diagnosing and treating practitioners

- Registered nurses

Health technologists and technicians

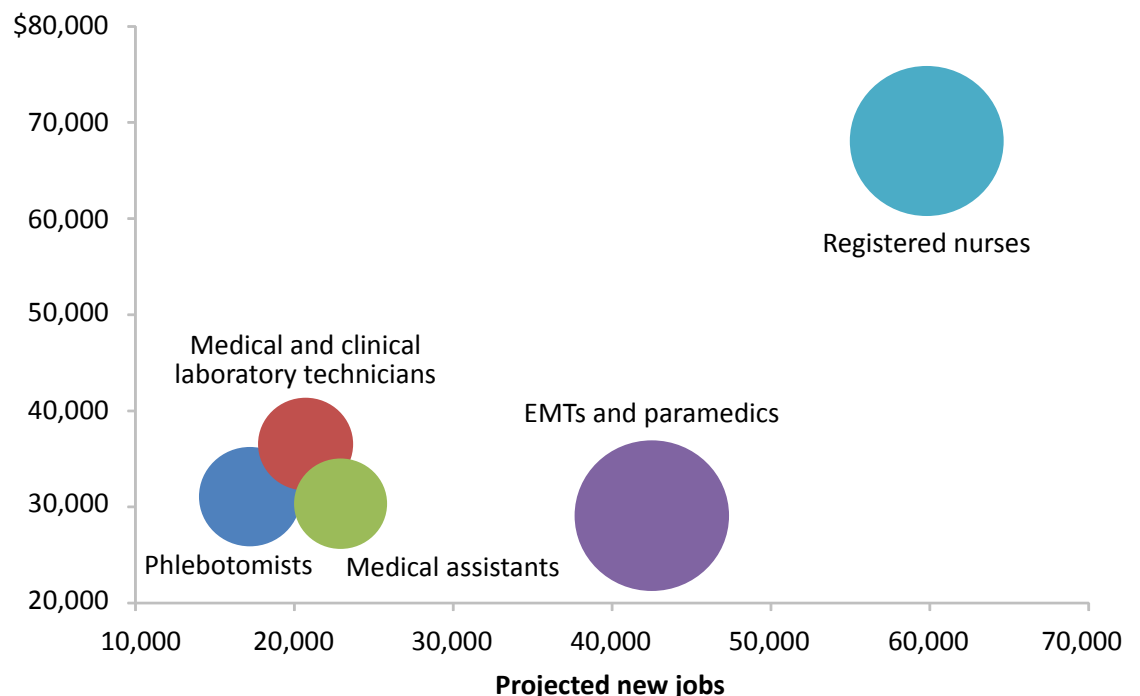
- Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics

Healthcare support

- Phlebotomists

Occupational wages. According to BLS, May 2013 median annual wages in outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services ranged from \$21,540 for personal care aides to more than \$187,200 for psychiatrists and surgeons.

Chart 6: Occupations with the most new jobs in outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services, projected 2012–22; employment and median annual wages, May 2013



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program (projected new jobs, 2012–22) and Occupational Employment Statistics survey (employment and median annual wages, May 2013).

Wages for health technologists and technicians—the occupational group with the most jobs in outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services—varied considerably. Psychiatric technicians (\$23,130), for example, had relatively low median annual wages in this detailed industry in May 2013. But nuclear medicine technologists (\$71,000) had median annual wages that were higher than the median for all occupations.

Projected new jobs. BLS projects outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services to add about 522,300 jobs between 2012 and 2022. Registered nurses are projected to add the most jobs, about 59,800, in this detailed industry over the decade.

Although not shown in the chart, medical secretaries, medical and health services managers, medical and clinical laboratory technologists, and substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors are also projected to add many jobs in this detailed industry.

Getting started in healthcare

There are lots of ways to start a career in healthcare. Specific skills, education and

training, and other preparation—such as licenses, certification, or registration—are often required.

Skills

Good people skills are essential, because workers in the healthcare industry spend a lot of time interacting with patients and colleagues. Workers also need patience and emotional stability. “You really have to care about people,” says Brummett. “It’s that compassion, that empathy, that makes people good at their jobs.”

It’s also important to be a team player, as these workers collaborate when delivering care. Being able to communicate with people of diverse backgrounds is also key.

Education and training

Building the foundation for a career in healthcare often starts long before you prepare for a specific occupation. As early as high school, you should study algebra, biology, chemistry, and related subjects. “Taking math and science classes is important to just about any health profession,” says Adams.

In addition, most occupations in healthcare require education beyond high school. But the paths people take to enter an

Communication skills are essential for healthcare workers, who are often part of a team.



occupation vary. For example, there are several ways to become a registered nurse. Many registered nurses prepare by earning an associate's degree or a bachelor's of science degree in nursing. Other registered nurses earn a diploma from an approved nursing program or a master's degree in nursing.

There are lots of education programs for careers in healthcare. Make sure a school's credentials are up to date and that their program has a good reputation before you sign up. "Do your research," says Hahn. "You don't want to pay more than you should for a degree you need, only to find out that no hospital will sponsor you for a residency."

In addition to education, some healthcare occupations require on-the-job training—such as a residency, employer-sponsored training program, or informal training combined with experience on the job. Other occupations require work experience in a related occupation.

BLS helps to clarify occupational requirements by assigning the typical level of education or training workers need to attain competency and prepare for entry-level positions in a particular occupation. Each occupation is assigned to one of the following levels of education.

Less than high school. Occupations in healthcare that require less than a high school diploma often involve basic tasks, such as cleaning rooms, dressing and bathing patients, and preparing or serving food.

- Cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop counter attendants
- Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers
- Home health aides
- Institution and cafeteria cooks
- Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners
- Maids and housekeeping cleaners
- Nonrestaurant food servers
- Personal care aides
- Restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop hosts and hostesses

Although these occupations do not have any formal education requirements, they

typically require short-term on-the-job training of 1 month or less.

High school diploma or equivalent. With a high school diploma or the equivalent, your employment options in healthcare are largely in office and administrative support.

- Billing and posting clerks
- First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers
- General office clerks
- Interviewers, except eligibility and loan
- Medical secretaries
- Pharmacy technicians
- Receptionists and information clerks
- Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive
- Social and human service assistants
- Substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors

Most of these occupations require short-term on-the-job training, but there are a few exceptions. Medical secretaries, pharmacy technicians, and substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors typically need moderate-term on-the-job training (1 to 12 months), and first-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers typically need fewer than 5 years of work experience in a related occupation.

Postsecondary non-degree award.

Some healthcare support occupations and health technologists and technicians require a postsecondary non-degree award, such as a certificate. These programs may last from a few weeks to 2 years.

- Dental assistants
- Emergency medical technicians and paramedics
- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses
- Medical assistants
- Medical records and health information technicians
- Nursing assistants
- Phlebotomists
- Psychiatric technicians
- Surgical technologists

Educational requirements vary by occupation for different types of laboratory work.



Associate's degree. Health technologists and technicians and health diagnosing and treating practitioners are among the occupations you can prepare for with an associate's degree. Associate's degree programs usually require at least 2 years of academic study beyond high school.

- Dental hygienists
- Medical and clinical laboratory technicians
- Nuclear medicine technologists
- Radiologic technologists
- Registered nurses
- Respiratory therapists

As described previously, there are multiple paths to occupational entry for registered nurses. However, BLS assigns associate's degree as the typical education workers need to prepare for entry-level jobs as a registered nurse.

Bachelor's degree. You may qualify for several types of occupations in the healthcare industry with a bachelor's degree, including those in management.

- Chief executives

- Medical and clinical laboratory technologists
- Medical and health services managers
- Recreation workers

To become a chief executive, you also typically need 5 years or more of work experience in a related occupation.

Master's degree. Health diagnosing and treating practitioners are among the occupations that require education beyond a bachelor's degree, such as a master's degree (1 or 2 years of additional study). In this list, healthcare social workers is the only occupation that is not in that occupational group.

- Healthcare social workers
- Nurse anesthetists
- Nurse practitioners
- Occupational therapists
- Physician assistants

Doctoral or professional degree. To work in many of the highest paying occupations in healthcare, you need a doctoral or professional degree. Completing a doctoral degree, such as a Ph.D., usually takes at least 3 years of full-time academic work after earning a bachelor's degree. Completing a professional degree,

such as an M.D., usually takes at least 3 years of full-time study after earning a bachelor's degree.

Of the occupations listed below, medical scientists is the only one that BLS assigns doctoral degree as the typical education for entry-level jobs. Professional degree is assigned for the other occupations.

- Anesthesiologists
- Family and general practitioners
- General dentists
- General internists
- General pediatricians
- Medical scientists, except epidemiologists
- Obstetricians and gynecologists
- Oral and maxillofacial surgeons
- Orthodontists
- Pharmacists
- Physical therapists
- Psychiatrists
- Surgeons

Many of these occupations also require a residency—on-the-job training that is often required for state licensure or certification.

Residency programs typically last from between 1 to 2 years for dental specialties and pharmacists to between 3 to 8 years for physicians and surgeons.

Other preparation

Workers in some healthcare occupations need a state-issued license, certification, or registration. Other ways to get ready for a healthcare career include gaining firsthand experience and learning more about careers.

Licenses, certifications, and registrations. To work in some healthcare occupations—especially those that treat or care for patients—workers need a license, certification, or registration. Requirements may differ by state, depending on the occupation. For example, all states require physicians and surgeons to be licensed, but states vary in their requirements for nursing assistants. In some states, nursing assistants must be on a state registry; in others, they must become certified nursing assistants.

Earning a license, certification, or registration often involves completing an approved

Gaining experience is often recommended for healthcare careers.



education or training program and passing a competency exam. Sometimes, workers must also pass a background check, and people with a criminal history might not be eligible to work in certain occupations.

Career exploration. As with most industries, getting practical experience in healthcare is usually helpful for deciding on—or against—a career. “It’s not like what you see on TV,” says Hahn. “Some people get into it and discover it’s not for them.”

Volunteering, part-time jobs, and internships are great ways to get a feel for what healthcare work is really like—and to gain knowledge and start making contacts. “Ask family members or guidance counselors if they know of anyone who works in healthcare,” says Drake. “Start to network, and ask workers for informational interviews to find out about entry-level positions.”

The more you know about the occupations in healthcare, the easier it will be to identify those that best fit your interests and skills. “Learn about what each of the health professions does,” says Adams. “A lot of times we have our own perceptions about what people do, which may not be accurate.”

Deciding on a healthcare occupation to pursue could be the starting point to a rewarding career. “Knowing that every day you’ve made someone’s life better,” says Adams, “there’s a huge value to that.”

For more information

The occupations in this article aren’t the only ones with jobs in healthcare. Many other occupations have thousands of jobs in the industry. For example, cardiovascular technologists and technicians—although not discussed in this article—are employed in settings such as hospitals, offices of health practitioners, and outpatient, laboratory, and other ambulatory care services.

In addition, jobs in the occupations mentioned in this article exist in industries outside of healthcare. For example, pharmacists work in department stores, grocery stores, and health and personal care stores as well as in

hospitals, offices of health practitioners, and other healthcare industries.

Learn more about the occupations in this article, and hundreds of others, in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. You’ll find the *OOH* online at www.bls.gov/ooq. Public libraries also have resources on careers, including those in healthcare.

For more about the BLS 2012–22 employment projections, see the winter 2013–14 issue of the *Quarterly*, online at www.bls.gov/ooq/2013/winter/home.htm. Other *Quarterly* articles on related topics include the following:

- “STEM 101: Intro to tomorrow’s jobs,” spring 2014, www.bls.gov/ooq/2014/spring/art01.pdf
- “Certificates: A fast track to careers,” winter 2012–13, www.bls.gov/ooq/2012/winter/art01.pdf
- “Medical physicists and health physicists: Radiation occupations,” summer 2011, www.bls.gov/ooq/2011/summer/art02.pdf.
- “Nursing jobs in nursing homes,” spring 2011, www.bls.gov/ooq/2011/spring/art03.pdf
- “Employment and wages in selected healthcare practitioner and technical occupations and healthcare support occupations, May 2008,” (chart) spring 2010, www.bls.gov/ooq/2010/spring/oochart.pdf

The Virtual Career Network, a website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and the American Association of Community Colleges, allows you to research healthcare careers, determine qualifications needed, find job openings, and more. Visit www.vcn.org.

ExploreHealthCareers.org also has resources to guide you when considering a healthcare career. This site is a collaboration involving, the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions, the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, and the National Association of Medicine Minority Educators. Visit explorehealthcareers.org.

