



Employment outlook for high school-level occupations

Elka Torpey | September 2018

In occupations that typically require a high school diploma for entry, more than 7 million openings are projected each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026. That's according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)—and it's more openings than BLS projects in occupations at any other education level.

BLS analyzes the education typically needed for entry-level workers in the 819 occupations for which it projects employment. Of those occupations, BLS designates 340 as requiring a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a GED, to enter them.

But which of these “high school-level” occupations does BLS expect to have the most openings? And how much do they pay? Keep reading to find out.



Projections by entry-level education

The BLS education designations focus on what is typical for most people entering an occupation for the first time. To qualify for some occupations that typically require a high school diploma for entry, such as supervisory ones, you also may need experience. But at every level, people who are already working in an occupation may have more or less education than what is typically required for entry.

For example, in 2015–16, about 30 percent of [retail sales worker supervisors](#) ages 25 and older reached their highest level of education with a high school diploma; however, more than half had some college education or a degree. BLS research found that a high school diploma, plus several years of related work experience, is the typical requirement for people entering this occupation. As a result, BLS counts retail sales worker supervisors among high school-level occupations.

Overall employment in high school-level occupations is projected to grow by 5 percent from 2016 to 2026, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

Openings by career field

This article features six career fields in which BLS projects many openings for high school-level occupations:

- [Construction and maintenance](#)

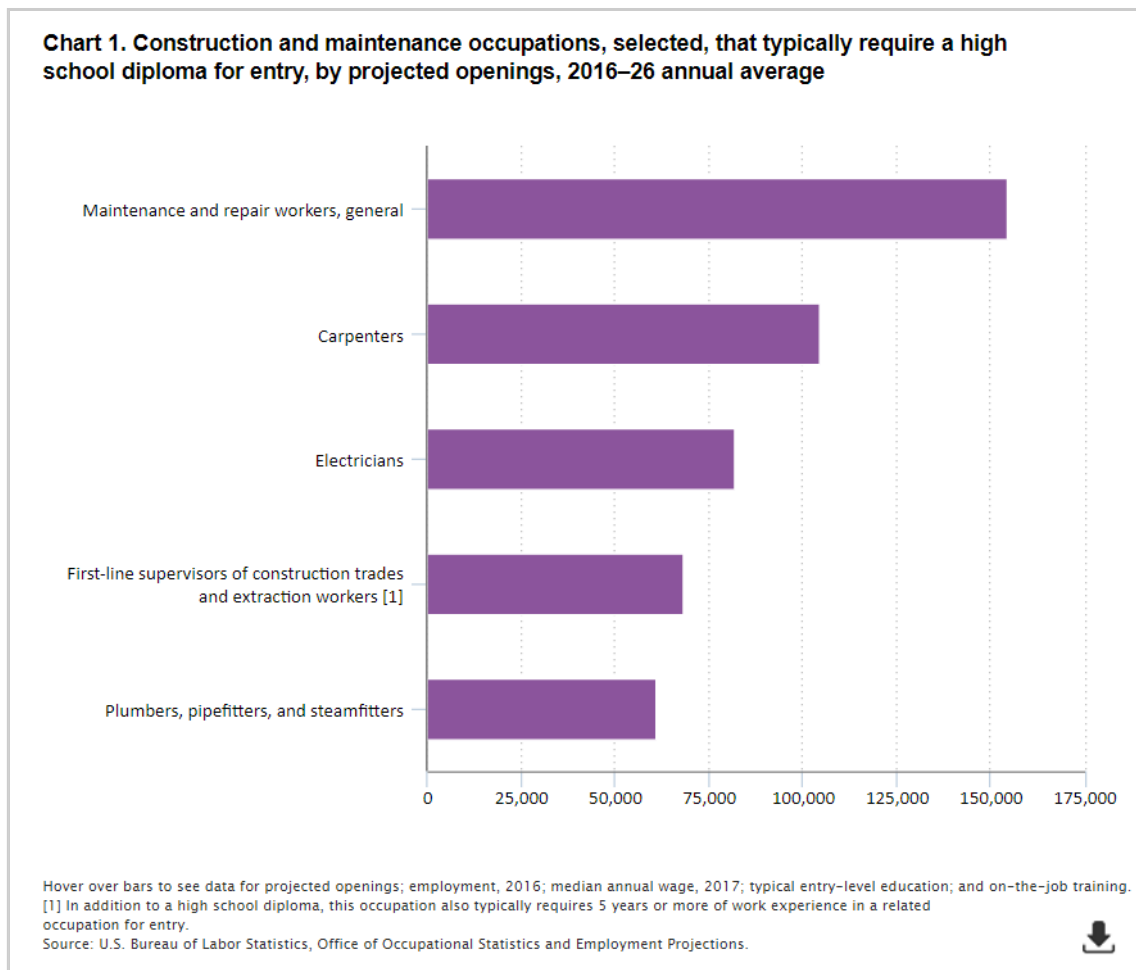
- [Healthcare and personal care](#)
- [Office and administrative support](#)
- [Production](#)
- [Sales and transportation](#)
- [Other](#)

For each career field, charts 1–6 highlight the number of openings projected to arise each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026 in selected occupations. Most of these openings will result from the need to replace workers who leave an occupation permanently. But some of them are expected to be from newly created jobs.

The charts also include information about on-the-job training and median annual wages. In more than 90 percent of high school-level occupations, workers typically need on-the-job training to become competent. And the 2017 median annual wage for high school-level occupations was \$36,100; compare this with \$37,690, the median wage for all occupations in 2017. (A median wage means that half of the workers in the occupation earned more than that amount, and half earned less.) These wage data exclude self-employed workers.

Construction and maintenance

Workers in the [construction](#) and [maintenance](#) occupations in chart 1 build, install, and fix structures and systems. Of those shown in the chart, the occupation of [general maintenance and repair workers](#) is projected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026.

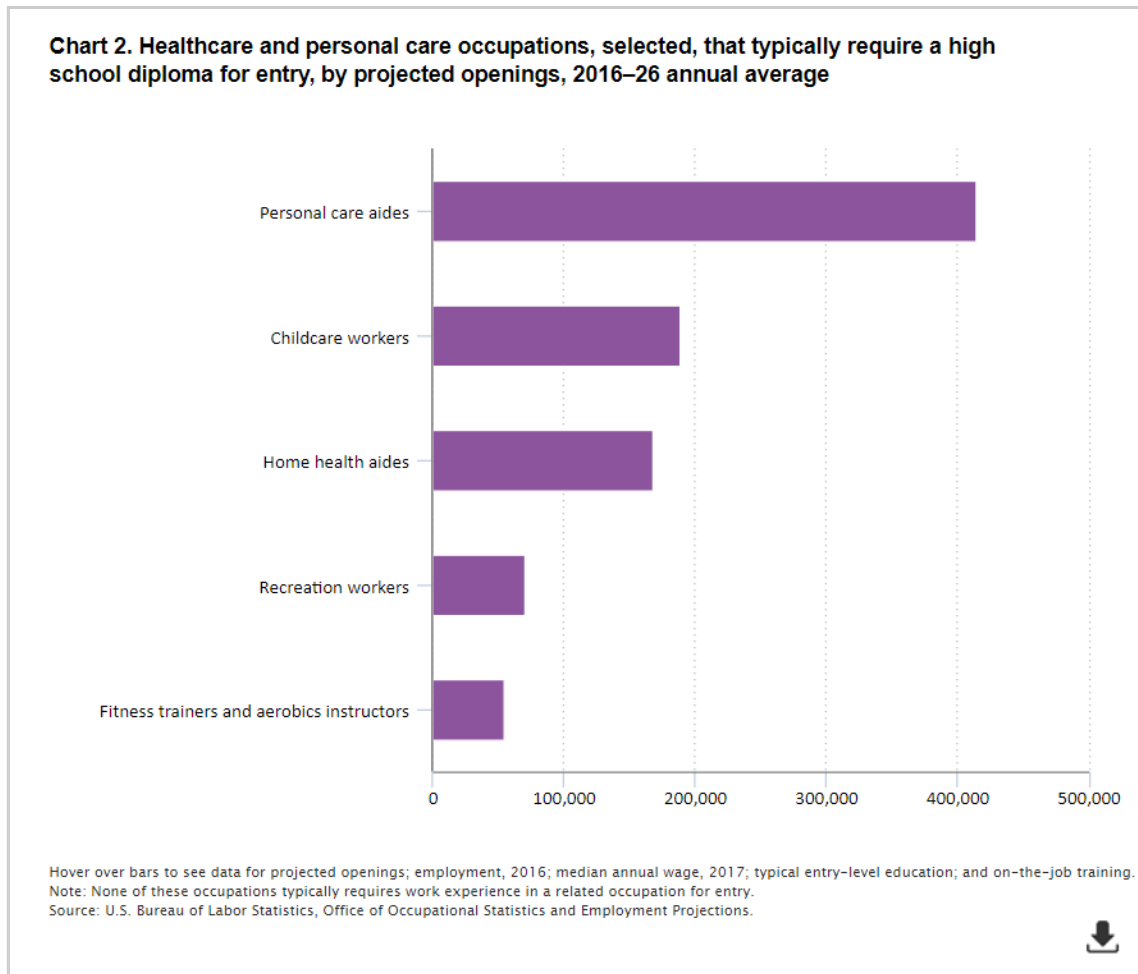


An apprenticeship or on-the-job training, in addition to a high school diploma, is typically required for most of these occupations. [Electricians](#) and [plumbers](#) also usually must be licensed.

The occupations in chart 1 were some of the highest paying of those in this article: All of them had a wage above the median for high school-level occupations.

Healthcare and personal care

Chart 2 shows selected [healthcare](#) and [personal care](#) occupations in which workers promote wellness or help people with their daily needs. With more than 400,000 occupational openings projected to arise each year, on average, [personal care aides](#) is the high school-level occupation expected to have the most openings.

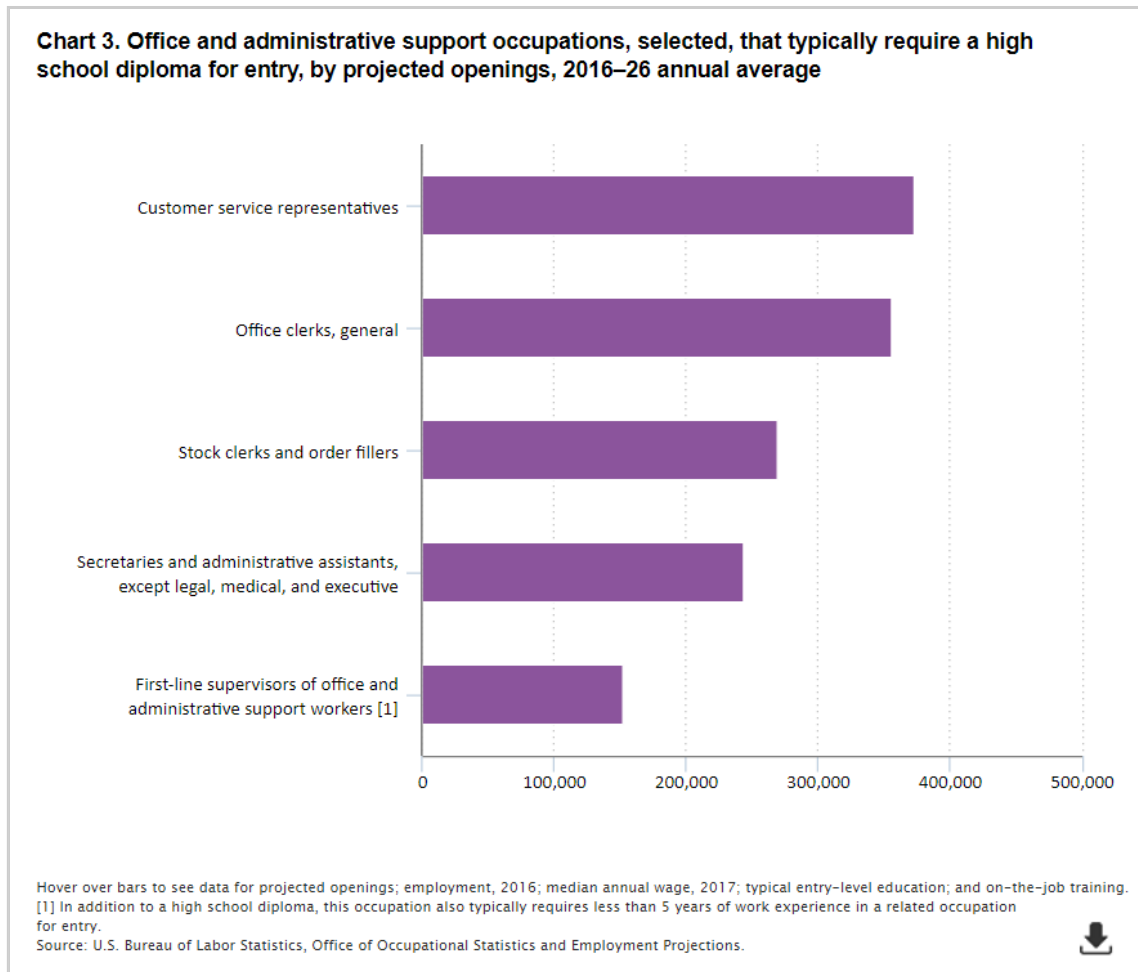


These occupations typically require on-the-job training. Some might have additional requirements, such as first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) certification.

Wages for the occupations in chart 2 were below the median for high school-level occupations. The occupation of [fitness trainers and aerobics instructors](#) (\$39,210) was the only one in the chart with a median wage greater than the median for all occupations.

Office and administrative support

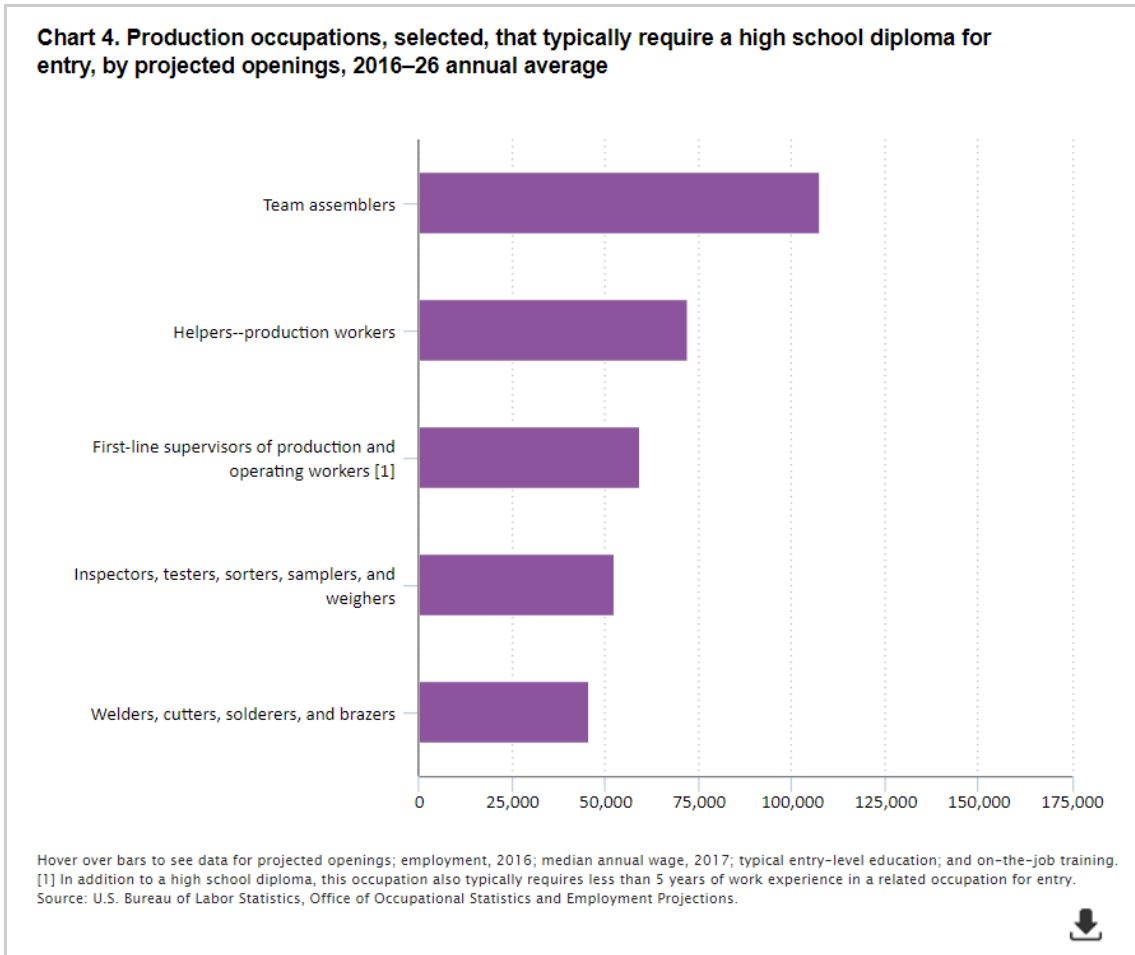
Workers do a variety of clerical tasks in the [office and administrative support](#) occupations in chart 3, which are projected to have large numbers of openings each year, on average. Among high school level-occupations, [customer service representatives](#) occupation is the one projected to have the second most openings annually, on average, in the coming decade.



All but one of the occupations in chart 3 require on-the-job training in addition to a high school diploma. The exception is [office and administrative support worker supervisors](#), which also had the highest wage, \$55,060, of the occupations in the chart.

Production

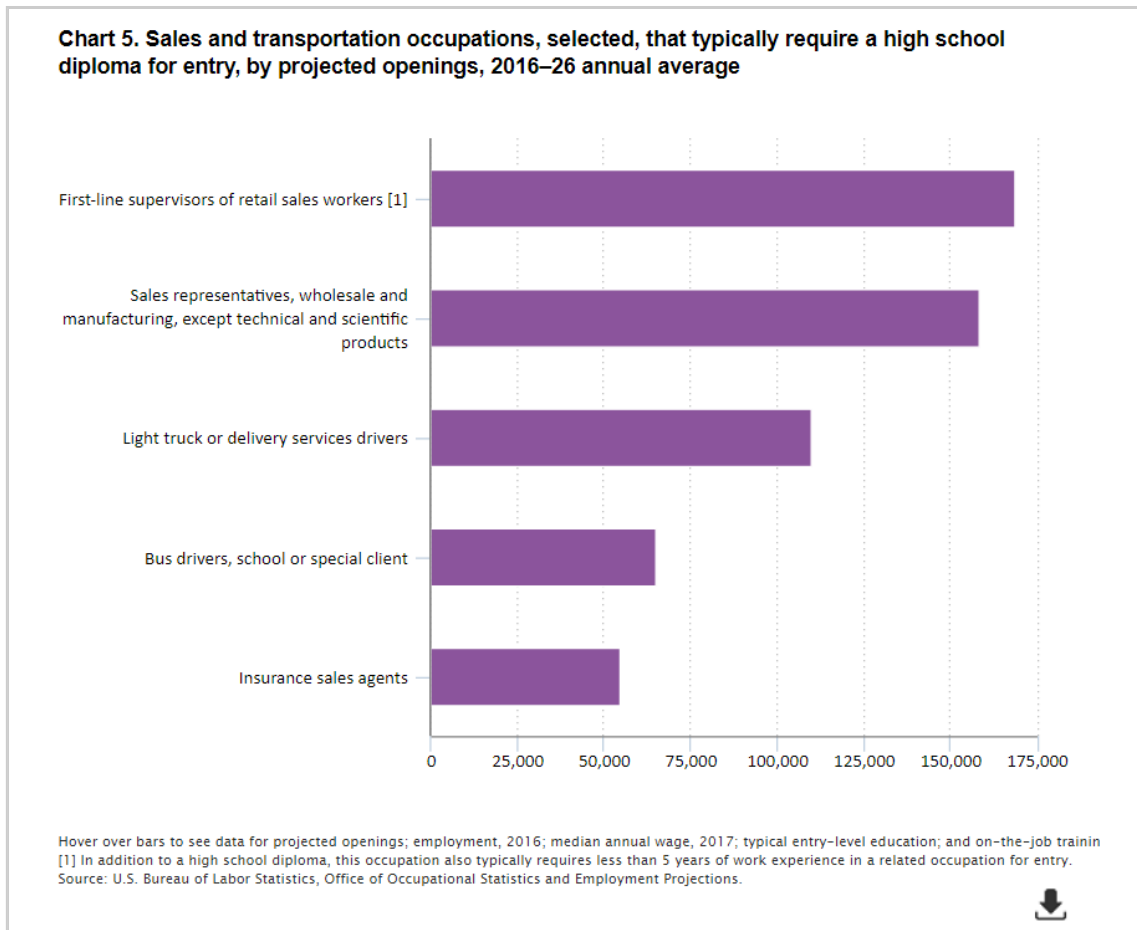
The [production](#) occupations in chart 4 are involved in manufacturing a wide range of goods. Of these, the occupation of [team assemblers](#) is projected to have the most openings.



In most of the occupations shown in the chart, workers need on-the-job training to become competent in their tasks. Three of these occupations had wages that were above the overall median for occupations that require at least a high school education.

Sales and transportation

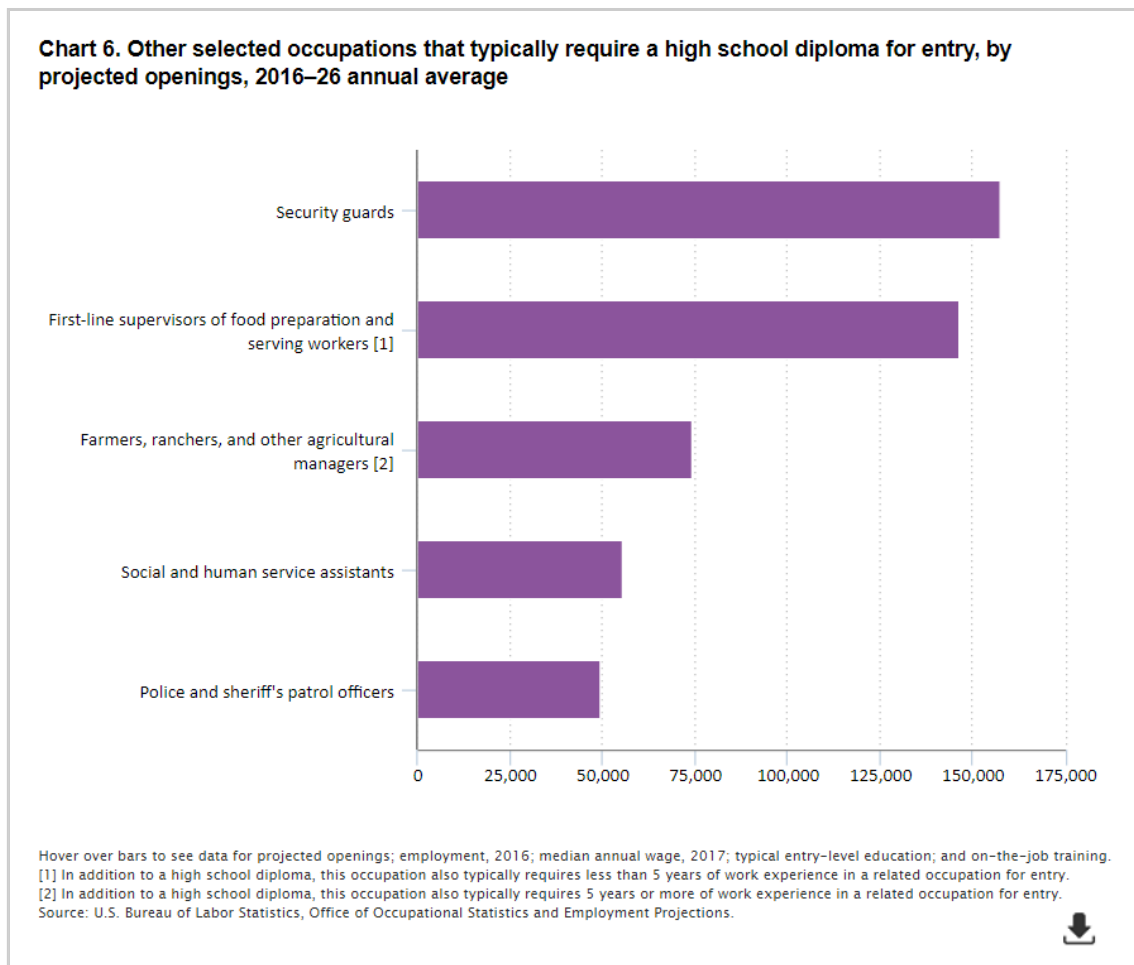
Workers in the [sales](#) and [transportation](#) occupations shown in chart 5 focus on selling goods and services or getting people or products to their destination. Of the occupations in the chart, first-line supervisors of retail sales workers is projected to have the most openings annually, on average, over the decade.



On-the-job training is typically required, in addition to a high school diploma, for all occupations in the chart except supervisors of retail sales workers. Some, such as [insurance sales agents](#), also need a license. [Sales representatives](#) who sell nontechnical goods to businesses and other organizations had the highest median wage of the occupations in the chart, \$56,970.

Other

Other high school-level occupations projected to have many openings include those related to [management](#) and to [protective](#), [social](#), and [food](#) service. (See chart 6.) With 157,500 openings each year, on average, the occupation of [security guards](#) is projected to have the most openings of those in the chart.



The occupations in the chart may require on-the-job training. [Police officers](#) usually attend a training academy; they also have requirements beyond a high school diploma, such as citizenship and certain physical and personal qualification standards. Two of the occupations in chart 6—[farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers](#) and police and sheriff’s patrol officers—had a median annual wage above the median for all occupations.

For more information

Learn more about the occupations in this article, as well as hundreds of others, in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook \(OOH\)](#). For example, the pay section of the *OOH* gives a broader look at wages by showing the top-employing industries for each occupation.

If you didn’t see an occupation you were looking for in these charts, that may be because it’s designated as typically requiring a level of education other than a high school diploma. Or it might be a high school-level occupation that is projected to have some, but not as many, openings as the other occupations chosen for the charts in this article. A full list of occupational projections that includes education typically required for entry is available from the [Employment Projections](#) program.

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