



## Employment outlook for occupations requiring an associate's degree, certificate, or some college

*Elka Torpey | November 2018*

You can boost your wages with education—even if it's not a bachelor's degree. A variety of programs or coursework after high school can help you qualify for occupations that are expected to be in demand.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) designates 99 occupations as typically requiring some postsecondary education less than a bachelor's degree. Most of these occupations require an associate's degree or a postsecondary nondegree award, such as a certificate. A few of them require some college courses but not a degree.



Occupations that typically require workers to have an associate’s degree for entry had a median annual wage of \$52,830 in 2017. That’s higher than the \$36,100 median for workers in high school-level occupations. Occupations that typically require workers to have a certificate or other postsecondary nondegree award had a median annual wage of \$37,670; those that typically require workers to have some college but no degree had a median annual wage of \$35,250. (A median wage means that half of workers in the occupation earned more than that amount, and half earned less.)

Keep reading to learn more about wages and projected openings in selected occupations that typically require an associate’s degree, postsecondary nondegree award, or some college but no degree.

## Projections by entry-level education

BLS makes employment projections for more than 800 occupations. As part of this analysis, BLS also assesses the education that is typically needed for most people entering an occupation.

However, the education typically required for people at the entry level may differ from that of people who are already working in the occupation. For example, in 2016–17, about 42 percent of all [teacher assistants](#) ages 25 and older had an associate’s, bachelor’s, or graduate degree. But because BLS economists have determined, as part of their projections analysis, that people usually can enter the occupation without having a degree, BLS designates teacher assistants as typically needing some college education but not a degree for entry into the occupation.

Employment in associate's and postsecondary nondegree-level occupations is projected to grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the 7-percent average projected for all occupations. In occupations typically requiring some college but no degree, employment is projected to grow 4 percent.

## Openings by career field

This article features six career fields in which BLS projects numerous openings for postsecondary-level occupations that typically don't require a 4-year degree:

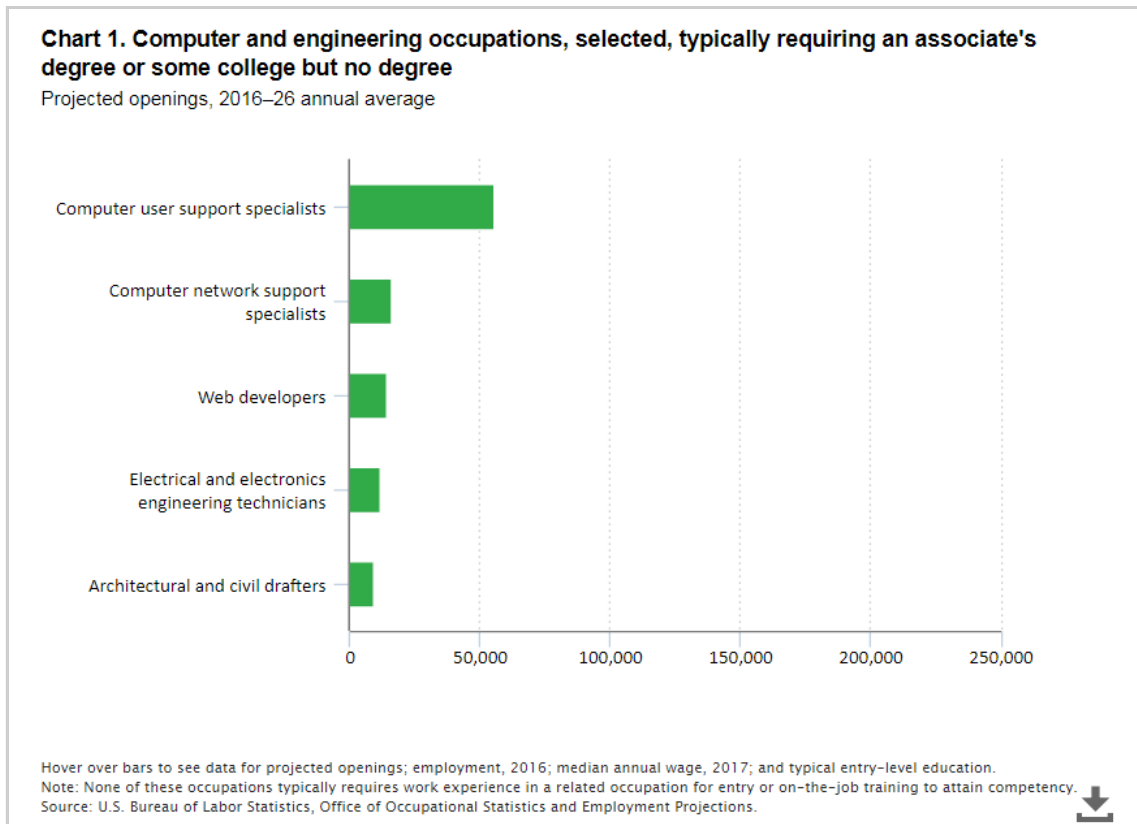
- [Computer and engineering](#)
- [Education, legal, and office support](#)
- [Healthcare support](#)
- [Healthcare technical](#)
- [Transportation and repair](#)
- [Other](#)

For each career field, the accompanying chart highlights the projected number of openings each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026 in the selected occupations. Large numbers of openings will result from the need to replace workers who retire or leave an occupation permanently, but others are expected to be from newly created jobs.

The charts also include information about 2017 median annual wages. These wage data exclude self-employed workers.

### Computer and engineering

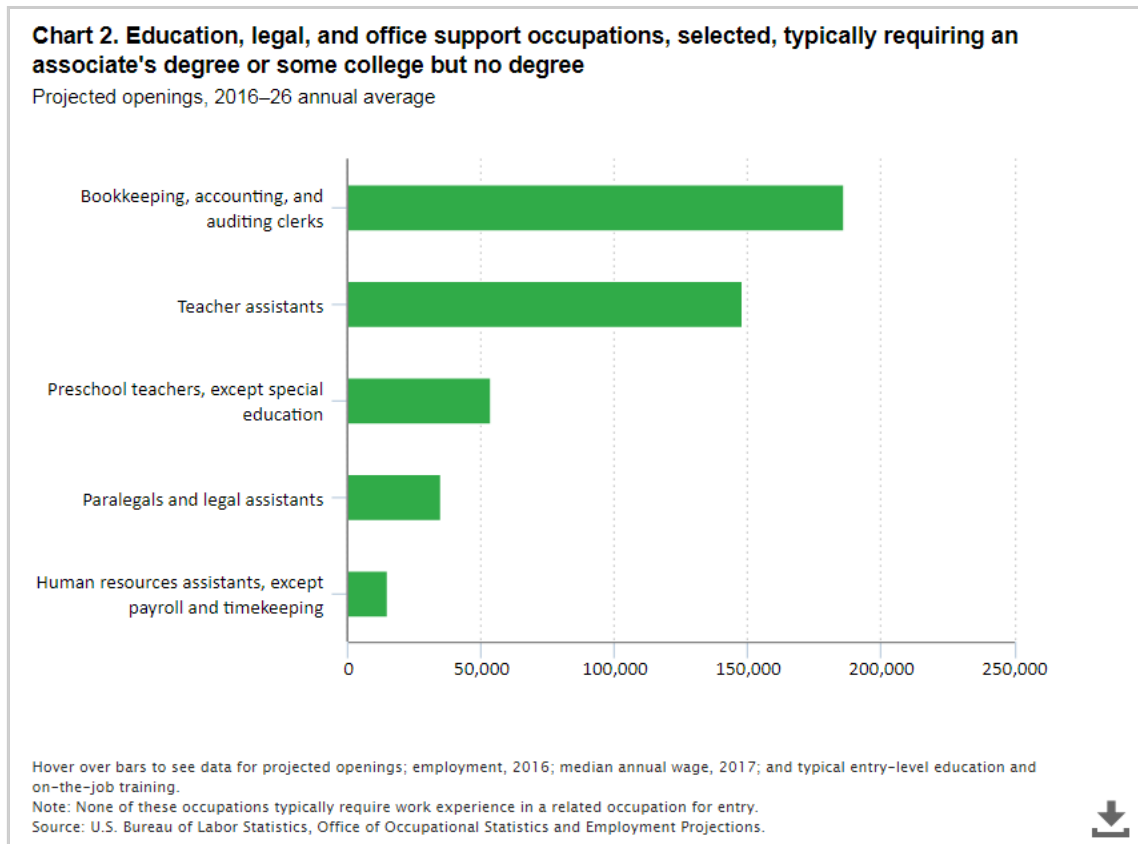
Workers in the [computer](#) and [engineering](#) occupations in chart 1 use technical skills to solve problems and create products. Of the occupations in the chart, [computer user support specialists](#) is the one projected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026.



All of the occupations in chart 1 typically require an associate’s degree for entry, except for computer user support specialists, which typically needs some college education but not a degree. Wages for the occupations in this chart topped \$50,000 per year, making them among the highest of those in this article.

**Education, legal, and office support**

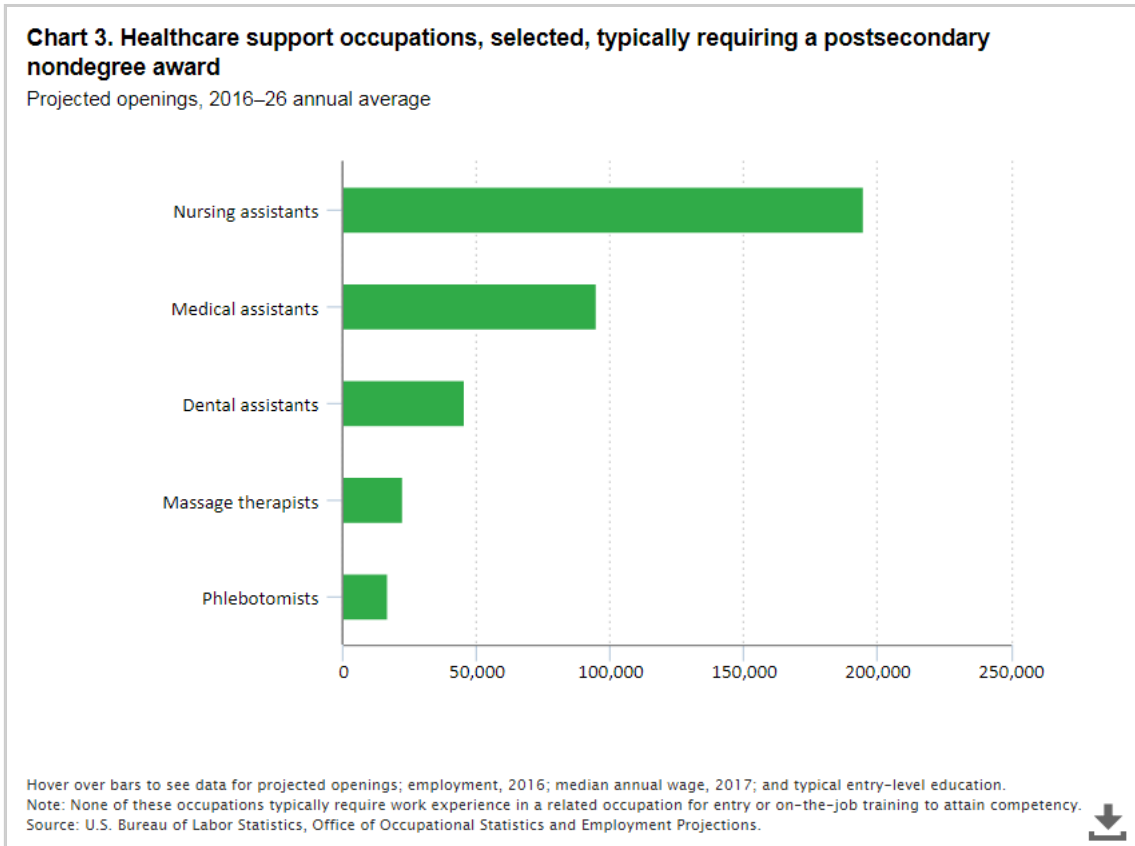
Chart 2 shows selected [education](#), [legal](#), and [office support](#) occupations in which workers help to teach students or to assist lawyers or businesses with research and administrative tasks. [Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks](#) is the occupation projected to have the most openings of the ones in this chart: more than 180,000 each year, on average.



The clerks and teacher assistants shown in chart 2 typically require some college but no degree; the other occupations in the chart typically require an associate’s degree. Although BLS identifies [preschool teachers](#) as typically needing an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree and a state-issued license are generally required to work in public schools. [Paralegals and legal assistants](#) had the highest median annual wage, \$50,410, of the occupations in the chart.

### Healthcare support

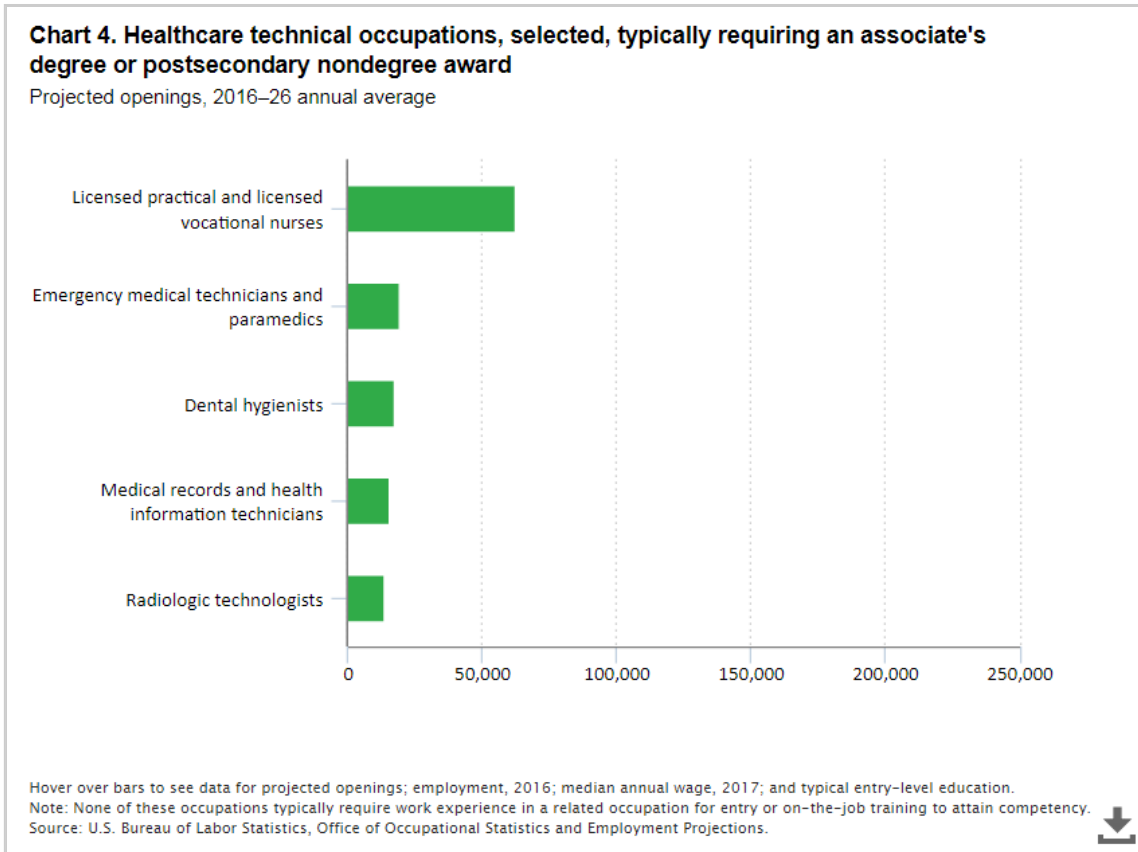
Workers in the [healthcare support](#) occupations in chart 3 assist healthcare practitioners, often by providing patients or clients with hands-on care. The occupation of [nursing assistants](#) is projected to have at least twice as many openings each year, on average, as any other occupation in the chart.



All of the occupations in chart 3 typically require some type of postsecondary nondegree award for entry. In addition, employers may require or prefer candidates who have a license or certification. [Massage therapists](#) had a wage that was above the median for occupations typically requiring a postsecondary nondegree award.

### Healthcare technical

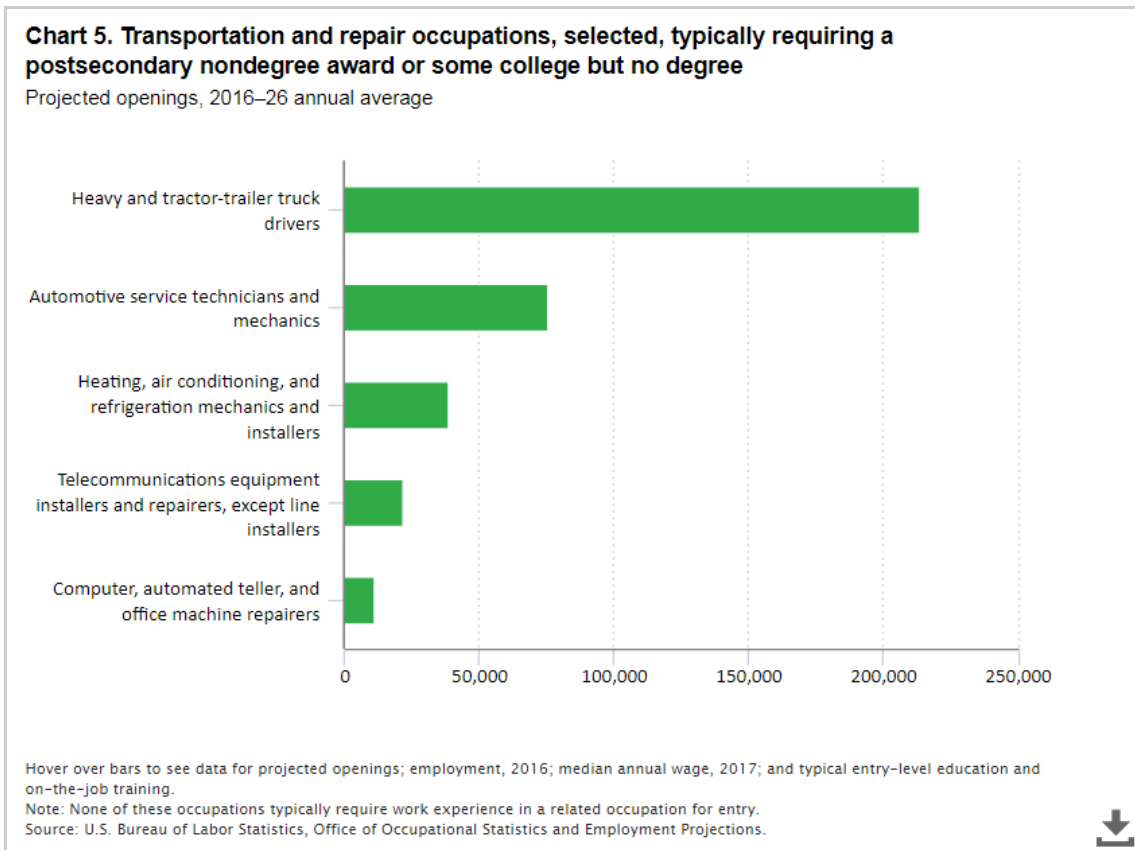
In the [health technologist and technician](#) occupations in chart 4, workers specialize in medical tasks. [Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses](#) is the occupation in the chart projected to have the most openings each year, on average.



Three of the occupations in the chart typically require a postsecondary nondegree award; [dental hygienists](#) and [radiologic technologists](#) typically require an associate’s degree. In addition, these occupations may require licensure or certification. And all but [emergency medical technicians and paramedics](#) had wages above the median for occupations typically requiring a postsecondary nondegree award.

### Transportation and repair

All but one of the occupations in chart 5 involve [installing or repairing](#) equipment. The exception, [heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers](#), is related to [transportation](#)—and it’s projected to have the largest number of openings of the occupations in the chart.

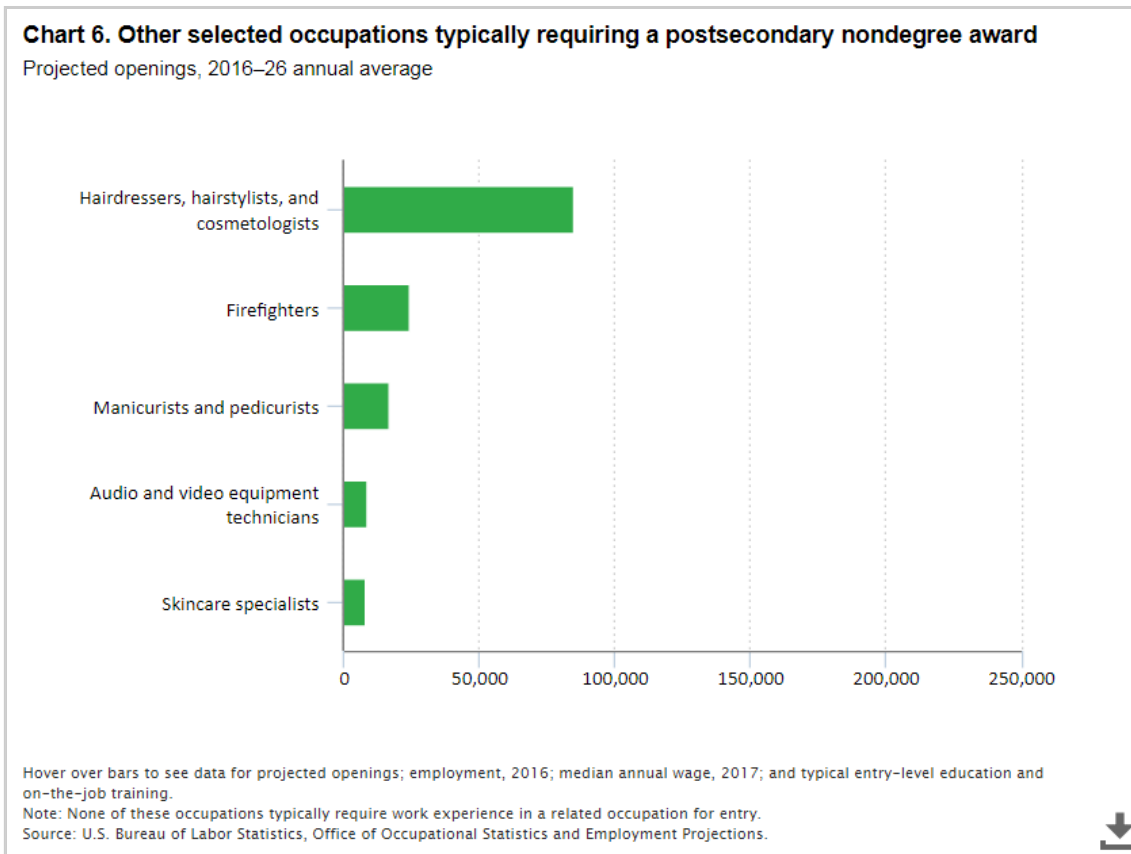


[Computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers](#) is the only occupation in chart 5 that typically requires some college but no degree for entry; the other occupations in the chart typically require a postsecondary nondegree award. And all of them require on-the-job training for workers to become competent in their tasks. [Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers](#) had the highest wage of these occupations: \$53,380. But each had a median annual wage that surpassed \$37,690, the median wage for all occupations.

## Other

Chart 6 includes [personal care and service](#), [protective service](#), and [media and communication](#) occupations. [Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists](#) is the occupation projected to have the most job openings each year, on average, of those in the chart.





All of the occupations in chart 6 typically require a postsecondary nondegree award for entry. A state-issued license is usually required to work in the occupations that focus on hair, skin, and nail care. [Firefighters](#) and [audio and video equipment technicians](#) typically need on-the-job training for competency; certifications may be helpful or required. These latter two occupations also had the highest median annual wages of those in the chart: \$49,080 and \$42,190, respectively.

## For more information

To learn more about the occupations in this article, along with hundreds of others, see the [Occupational Outlook Handbook \(OOH\)](#). For example, the OOH “What they do” section describes some of the tasks common to workers in an occupation.

This article highlights selected occupations that typically require an associate’s degree, postsecondary nondegree award, or some college but not a degree. Projections for all occupations by typical entry-level education are available from the [Employment Projections](#) program.

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