

# Healthcare Employment and Wages

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The public and media have been paying increased attention to the healthcare industry in recent years. A population that is growing older and living longer, along with innovations in medical technology, have led to growing employment and higher pay in healthcare-related occupations. In the past 5 years, the number of workers in this sector has increased by 11 percent.<sup>1</sup> This article discusses the employment and wages for healthcare workers as shown in table 2 of this publication. It also discusses where healthcare-related occupations are concentrated or receive the highest wages. In addition, this article examines the healthcare industry at the national level. The employment and wage figures listed are estimates calculated from the 1999 Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey. The dollar amounts listed are mean hourly wages.

The healthcare industry is defined as Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 80—healthcare services. This includes offices of doctors of medicine (SIC 801), offices of dentists (SIC 802), nursing and personal care facilities (SIC 805), hospitals (SIC 806), medical and dental laboratories (SIC 807), and home healthcare services (SIC 808). Healthcare occupations are those occupations that are included in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major groups 29-0000 and 31-0000—healthcare practitioner and technical occupations and healthcare support occupations, respectively. In addition, there are a few occupations outside of these two major groups that also are discussed in this article. These include medical and health services managers (SOC 11-9111), medical secretaries (SOC 43-6013), and dental laboratory technicians (SOC 51-9081).

## Healthcare occupations

Text tables 1 and 3 show national employment and wage estimates for the top 10 occupations in terms of numbers of workers; text tables 2 and 4 show national estimates based on the highest wages. Text tables 1 and 2 show only healthcare occupations across all industries, while text tables

3 and 4 show only the healthcare industry but include both healthcare occupations and nonhealthcare-related occupation.

**Registered nurses.** In regards solely to healthcare establishments at the national level, the occupation with the most employment by far is registered nurses. There are more than 1.8 million registered nurses in the United States in the healthcare industry alone. (See text table 3). There are 2.2 million in the Nation across all industries, accounting for 1.73 percent of total national employment. (See text table 1.) The area or State with the largest concentration of registered nurses is Washington, DC, where 2.78 percent of the workers are employed as registered nurses. West Virginia and Rhode Island have the second- and third-highest concentration of registered nurses in their workforces—2.58 percent and 2.48 percent, respectively. Columbia, MO, is the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with the largest percent of its workers employed as registered nurses (4.66 percent), followed by Missoula, MT (4.14 percent), and Wheeling, WV-OH (4.07 percent). Registered nurses in Hawaii earn the highest wages at \$27.37 an hour, followed by California and New York with \$26.00 and \$24.46 an hour, respectively. Registered nurses in Santa Cruz-Watsonville, CA (\$29.67), Oakland, CA (\$29.65), and San Francisco, CA (\$29.54), receive the highest mean wages.

**Nursing aides, orderlies, and assistants.** The next-largest healthcare occupation is nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants, with just over one million in the healthcare industries and 1.3 million in all industries combined. The employment of nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants accounts for 1.03 percent of the national cross-industry employment. North Dakota had 2.10 percent of its workers employed as nursing aides, orderlies, and assistants—the largest concentration in the United States. South Dakota and Oklahoma followed with 1.84 percent and 1.73 percent, respectively. Alexandria, LA (4.11 percent), Corpus Christi, TX (3.50 percent), and Texarkana, TX-AR (3.15 percent), are the MSAs with the largest percent of workers employed as nursing aides, orderlies, and assistants. Alaska (\$11.92), Connecticut (\$11.20),

<sup>1</sup> This figure is calculated from data produced by the Covered Employment and Wages, or ES-202, program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Text table 1. **Healthcare occupations (cross-industry) by largest employment<sup>1</sup>**

Occupational title	Employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage	Employment rank among 61 healthcare occupations	Wage rank among 61 healthcare occupations
Registered nurses .....	2,205,430	\$21.38	\$44,470	1	23
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants .....	1,308,740	8.59	17,860	2	60
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses .....	688,510	13.95	29,020	3	39
Home health aides .....	577,530	9.04	18,810	4	59
Medical assistants .....	281,480	10.89	22,650	5	50
Medical and health services managers .....	230,640	27.93	58,090	7	16
Pharmacists .....	226,300	30.31	63,030	8	14
Pharmacy technicians .....	196,430	9.64	20,050	10	57
Radiologic technologists and technicians .....	177,850	17.07	35,510	11	31
Dental assistants .....	175,160	11.60	24,130	12	45

<sup>1</sup> Residual ("all other. . .") occupations are not listed.

Text table 2. **Healthcare occupations (cross-industry) by highest wages**

Occupational title	Employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage	Employment rank among 61 healthcare occupations	Wage rank among 61 healthcare occupations
Surgeons .....	48,450	\$65.22	\$135,660	34	1
Obstetricians and gynecologists .....	18,780	65.11	135,430	51	2
Anesthesiologists .....	25,910	59.51	123,780	47	3
Internists, general .....	48,740	59.27	123,280	32	4
Pediatricians, general .....	18,940	54.21	112,760	50	5
Dentists .....	69,360	51.03	106,130	25	6
Family and general practitioners .....	134,490	50.04	104,090	18	7
Psychiatrists .....	17,870	49.84	103,660	53	8
Podiatrists .....	4,470	48.12	100,090	60	9
Optometrists .....	21,400	37.38	77,750	49	10

Text table 3. **Occupations in the healthcare industry (SIC 80) by largest employment**

Occupational title	Employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage	Employment rank of 355	Wage rank of 355
Registered nurses .....	1,846,810	\$21.43	\$44,580	1	82
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants .....	1,089,900	8.52	17,720	2	332
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses .....	559,140	13.80	28,710	3	211
Home health aides .....	273,790	9.25	19,240	4	319
Receptionists and information clerks .....	272,870	10.04	20,880	5	298
Medical assistants .....	264,020	10.84	22,540	6	275
Office clerks, general .....	253,330	10.03	20,870	7	299
Maids and housekeeping cleaners .....	241,270	7.85	16,320	8	347
Medical secretaries .....	232,400	11.53	23,990	9	253
Billing and posting clerks and machine operators ...	176,300	11.20	23,300	10	263

Text table 4. **Occupations in the healthcare industry (SIC 80) by highest mean wage**

Occupational title	Employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage	Employment rank of 355	Wage rank of 355
Obstetricians and gynecologists .....	18,000	\$65.83	\$136,920	89	1
Surgeons .....	46,750	65.50	136,250	49	2
Internists, general .....	46,910	59.89	124,580	48	3
Anesthesiologists .....	25,570	59.65	124,060	78	4
Family and general practitioners .....	96,280	54.92	114,230	25	5
Pediatricians, general .....	18,630	54.51	113,380	88	6
Dentists .....	65,810	51.65	107,440	36	7
Podiatrists .....	3,890	50.42	104,880	165	8
Psychiatrists .....	12,690	50.11	104,230	108	9
Chief executives .....	23,650	46.49	96,690	82	10

New York State (\$10.71), Nassau-Suffolk, NY (\$12.89), New York, NY (\$11.58), and Hartford, CT (\$11.52), are the States and MSAs with highest mean wages for this occupation.

**Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses.** The third-largest occupation both for cross-industry healthcare-related occupations and for all occupations in the healthcare industries is licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. Nationally, there are 559,140 such nurses employed in the healthcare industries and 688,510 employed across all industries. The largest concentration of workers employed as licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses is found in Arkansas (1.16 percent). Other States with large concentrations of these workers include Louisiana (0.97 percent) and Oklahoma (0.95 percent). The States with the highest average wages for this occupation are Connecticut (\$18.95), California (\$17.18), and Massachusetts (\$17.13). Sherman-Denison, TX (1.98 percent), and Alexandria, LA (1.88 percent), are the MSAs with the largest shares of employment accounted for by licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. This occupation earns its highest wages in San Francisco, CA (\$20.40), New Haven-Meriden, CT (\$19.75), and Bridgeport, CT (\$19.47).

**Home health aides.** Home health aides is the fourth-largest occupation among the healthcare-related occupations and is also the fourth-largest occupation among all occupations found in the healthcare industries. The States with the largest percent of workers employed as home health aides are New York (1.49 percent), Texas (0.92 percent), and Minnesota (0.78 percent). Connecticut (\$11.93), Alaska (\$11.35), and Texas (\$11.22) are the States in which home health aides earn the highest wages. The MSA with the largest percent of its workers employed as home health aides is Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX (2.50 percent). New York, NY (2.00 percent), and Elmira, NY (1.26 percent), follow. Santa Rosa, CA, has the highest mean wage for home health aides (\$13.69 an hour). New London-Norwich, CT, and San Antonio, TX, are second and third at \$13.02 and \$13.00, respectively.

**Medical assistants.** Medical assistants is the fifth-largest occupation among cross-industry healthcare-related occupations; there are 281,480 of them in the United States. This is the sixth-largest occupation in the healthcare industries (SIC 80), with 264,020 workers employed throughout the Nation. The States with the largest shares of medical assistants in total employment are Hawaii (0.92 percent), Utah (0.45 percent), and Michigan (0.39 percent). The highest mean hourly wages for medical assistants are found in Alaska (\$16.37), Connecticut (\$12.93), and California (\$12.73). The MSAs with the highest relative employment of medical assistants are Jackson, TN (1.15 percent), Greenville, NC (1.11 percent), and Gainesville, FL (1.05 percent). Anchorage, AK (\$16.67 an hour), Stamford-Norwalk, CT (\$16.29 an hour), and Reno, NV (\$15.46 an hour), are the MSAs in which these workers receive the highest wages.

**Medical and health service managers.** Medical and health service managers is the sixth-largest healthcare-related occupation in the Nation. There are 230,640 medical and health service managers across all industries and 170,160 in healthcare industries alone. The areas or States with the largest relative employment of these workers are Washington, DC (0.39 percent), Maryland (0.37 percent), and Alaska (0.35 percent). The States in which these workers receive the highest mean hourly wages are New Jersey (\$35.12), Connecticut (\$33.51), and Oregon (\$32.53). The MSAs that have the highest relative employment are Alexandria, LA (0.76 percent), Topeka, KS (0.59 percent), and Bangor, ME (0.57 percent). The MSAs in which medical and health service managers earn the highest mean wages are Waterbury, CT (\$45.60), Fresno, CA (\$42.12), and Joplin, MO (\$41.74).

**Pharmacists.** The seventh-largest healthcare-related occupation across all industries is pharmacists. In the healthcare industries alone there are 57,970 pharmacists but, across all industries, there are 226,300. Many pharmacists are found in miscellaneous retail establishments (SIC 59) and foodstores (SIC 54). Hawaii (0.29 percent), West Virginia (0.285 percent), and Maryland (0.284 percent) have the largest percentages of workers employed as pharmacists. Pharmacists in California (\$33.54), Alaska (\$32.33), and Hawaii (\$32.49) earn the highest average wages. At the MSA level, Taxarkana, TX-AR (0.42 percent), followed closely by Tyler, TX (0.41 percent), have the largest share of their workers employed as pharmacists. Modesto, CA (\$35.47), Naples, FL (\$35.19), and Oakland, CA (\$34.81), have pharmacists with the highest average wages.

### Highest wages

When it comes to wages among healthcare-related occupations, it is no surprise that physicians and surgeons earn the most. Across all industries, surgeons earn \$65.22 an hour. Obstetricians and gynecologists are a close second, with earnings of \$65.11 an hour. Anesthesiologists are third at \$59.51 an hour. Within the healthcare industries (SIC 80), obstetricians and gynecologists are at the top, earning \$65.83 an hour. Surgeons are second with \$65.50 an hour, and internists, general, are third with \$59.89 an hour. Pediatricians, dentists, family and general practitioners, psychiatrists, podiatrists, and optometrists are also top earners.

### Nonhealthcare occupations

There are several nonhealthcare occupations that are prevalent in the healthcare industries (SIC 80). In terms of employment, there are 4 occupations in the top 10 that can be classified as nonhealthcare related, three of which are clerical in nature. The four occupations are receptionists and information clerks; office clerks; maids and housekeeping cleaners; and billing and posting clerks. On the list of top wage earners in the healthcare industries, only one nonhealthcare oc-

cupation ranks among the top 10: chief executives, who earn \$46.49 an hour.

### **Conclusions**

This article has highlighted some of the occupations with the largest employment found in the healthcare industries,

showcasing both the areas that have the highest concentration of those workers and the areas in which healthcare workers receive the highest wages. Additional data for healthcare occupations, as well as additional industry data, can be obtained from the OES Web site at <http://stats.bls.gov/oeshome.htm>.