

8.3: Employment Projections

Total employment is projected to grow from 153.5 million to 165.4 million over the 2020–30 decade, an increase of 11.9 million jobs, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. This increase reflects an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent, which is higher than recent projections cycles and accounts for recovery from low base-year employment for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated recession. Employment in the leisure and hospitality sector is projected to increase the fastest, largely driven by recovery growth, while the healthcare and social assistance sector is projected to add the most new jobs. Among occupational groups, healthcare support occupations are projected for the fastest job growth. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to grow 2.3 percent annually from 2020 to 2030, relatively quickly compared to the prior two decades, when GDP grew 1.7 percent annually. Meanwhile, labor productivity also is projected to increase, from 1.1 percent annually over the 2010–2020 decade to 1.7 percent annually from 2020 to 2030.

OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK HANDBOOK

The BLS projections are the foundation of the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), one of the nation's most widely used career information resources. The OOH reflects BLS employment projections for the 2020–30 decade. The updated OOH is available online at www.bls.gov/ooh.

EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE 2020-30 PROJECTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an economic recession from February to April 2020, which led to substantial and immediate declines in output and employment. Because 2020 serves as the base year for the 2020–30 projections, these recession impacts translate to lower base-year values than seen in recent projections and, therefore, higher projected employment growth.

Many industries are expected to experience cyclical recoveries in the earlier part of the projections decade as industry output and employment normalize, returning to their long-term growth patterns. Projected robust growth for industries in which employment fell in 2020 also is projected to result in strong growth for the occupations employed by those industries.

In addition, some industries and occupations are projected to have altered long-term structural demand arising from economic changes spurred by the pandemic (see Technical Note for discussion of the difference between cyclical and structural changes). For example, many computer-related occupations are expected to have elevated long-term demand, in part due to demands for telework computing infrastructure and IT security. Conversely, retail trade is projected to experience an amplification of its long-term decline, because brick-and-mortar retail is projected to lose employment to e-commerce as those spending habits from the pandemic persist long-term.

Fast growth rates in this projections set generally can be categorized as either predominantly cyclically driven, long-term structurally driven, or a combination of a recovery from a low base point and additional growth due to long-run structural drivers.

BLS developed alternate employment projections scenarios for the 2019–29 projections decade that encompassed possible impacts from the pandemic. An analysis of these scenarios is available in the Monthly Labor Review (MLR) article "Employment projections in a pandemic environment." BLS will publish a follow-up analysis comparing the alternate projections to the 2020–30 projections in a Fall 2021 MLR article.

Highlights of the BLS projections for the labor force, macroeconomy, industry employment, and occupational employment are included below.

Population and Labor Force

- The civilian non-institutional population growth rate is projected to decline slightly, from 0.9 percent annually in 2010–20 to 0.8 percent annually in 2020–30. This declining growth rate nonetheless results in an increase of 20.8 million over the 2020–30 projections decade, to a level of 281.1 million. By comparison, the population increased by 22.5 million from 2010 to 2020.
- The labor force is expected to increase by 8.9 million, from 160.7 million in 2020 to 169.6 million in 2030. The labor force participation rate is projected to decline, from 61.7 percent in 2020 to 60.4 percent in 2030. The decline in labor force participation is due to the aging of the baby-boom generation, a continuation of the declining trend in men's participation, and a slight decline in women's participation.

- By 2030, all baby boomers will be at least 65 years old. The increasing share of people ages 65 and older contributes to a projected labor force growth rate that is slower than much of recent history, as well as a continued decline in the labor force participation rate, because older people have lower participation rates compared with younger age groups.

Macroeconomy

- Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to continue growing during the 2020–30 decade at 2.3 percent annually compounded through the projections decade, reflecting recovery growth from the low 2020 base-year GDP.
- Due in part to a projected increase in the capital-to-labor ratio, productivity is expected to grow at an annual rate of 1.7 percent from 2020 to 2030. This projected growth is faster than the 1.1 percent historical growth that occurred from 2010 to 2020. This rebound in productivity over the projections decade represents a growth rate more in line with the long-term historical pattern.

Industry Employment

- Total employment is projected to grow 7.7 percent over the 2020–30 projections decade, in part reflecting recovery growth from the low 2020 base-year employment.
- Employment in leisure and hospitality is projected to grow the fastest among all sectors over the 2020–30 decade, accounting for 7 of the 20 fastest growing industries (employment change for industries references wage and salary employment). This growth is largely driven by recovery from the pandemic, as restaurants, hotels, and arts, cultural, and recreational related establishments with low 2020 base-year employment levels see restored demand from the public resuming recreational and in-person activities.
- Employment in healthcare and social assistance is projected to add the most jobs of all industry sectors, about 3.3 million jobs over 2020–30. Within healthcare, employment in the individual and family services industry is projected to increase the fastest, with an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent. Factors that are expected to contribute to the large increase include rising demand for the care of an aging baby-boom population, longer life expectancies, and continued growth in the number of patients with chronic conditions.
- Technological advancements are expected to support strong employment growth in professional, business, and scientific services industries, including computer systems design and related services (2.1 percent projected annual employment growth from 2020–30) as well as management, scientific, and technical consulting services (2.0 percent).
- Retail trade is projected to lose 586,800 jobs over the 2020–30 decade, the most of any sector. As e-commerce continues to grow in popularity, accelerated by spending patterns in the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for brick-and-mortar retail establishments is expected to decline.
- While the manufacturing sector as a whole is projected to have some recovery-driven employment growth, it also contains 11 of the 20 industries projected to have the most rapid employment declines. Factors contributing to the loss of manufacturing jobs include continued global competition and adoption of productivity-enhancing technologies, such as robotics.

Occupational Employment

- Healthcare support occupations are projected for the fastest employment growth among all occupational groups. Personal care and service occupations and food preparation and serving related occupations are also projected for rapid employment growth, mainly due to recovery growth following low 2020 base-year employment.
- Healthcare occupations and those associated with healthcare (including mental health) account for 7 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations from 2020 to 2030. Demand for healthcare services, from both aging baby boomers and from people who have chronic conditions, will drive the projected employment growth.
- Motion picture projectionists; ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers; and restaurant cooks are among the fastest-growing occupations due to their expected cyclical recovery. Employment of these occupations is concentrated in industries that saw substantial employment losses in 2020 and are projected for large recovery growth over the projections decade.
- Several of the fastest-growing healthcare occupations—including nurse practitioners, physical therapist assistants, and physician assistants—are projected to see strong demand as team-based healthcare models are increasingly used to deliver healthcare services.
- Computer and mathematical occupations are expected to see fast employment growth as strong demand is expected for IT security and software development, in part due to increased prevalence of telework spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. Demand for new products associated with the Internet of Things (IoT), and for analyzing and interpreting large datasets are also expected to contribute to fast employment growth for these occupations, which include statisticians, information security analysts, and data scientists.

- Technological changes facilitating increased automation are expected to result in declining employment for office and administrative support occupations, sales occupations, and production occupations.

More Information

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) includes information about more than 500 detailed occupations in over 300 occupational profiles, covering about 4 out of 5 jobs in the economy.

Each profile features the 2020–30 projections, along with assessments of the job outlook, work activities, wages, education and training requirements, and more.

- The OOH is available online at www.bls.gov/ooh.
- New field of degree pages are available online at www.bls.gov/ooh/field-of-degree/home.htm.
- Detailed information on the 2020–30 projections will appear in the Monthly Labor Review in Fall 2021.
- Tables with detailed, comprehensive statistics used in preparing the projections are available online at www.bls.gov/emp/tables.htm.
- Definitions for terms used in this news release are available in the BLS Glossary at www.bls.gov/bls/glossary.htm.

Information from this news release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Services: 1 (800) 877-8339.

8.3: Employment Projections is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.