

# WHAT WILL EMPLOYMENT LOOK LIKE POSTPANDEMIC?

ASA researchers have delved into the newly released U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projections, identifying key takeaways for staffing companies that seek to maximize their success and drive growth in 2022 and beyond. See what the data say about immediate and longer-term opportunities as the pandemic shows signs of waning and more employees return to the workplace.

*By Tim Hulley and Chandler Mouw*



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**T**he Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting economic shutdown that took place in 2020 had an unprecedented impact on employment in the U.S. In the time since the shutdown, the U.S. economy has largely reopened and an economic recovery is well underway. But what does the future of employment look like amid this nascent recovery and beyond?

This is an important question for staffing and recruiting companies. The answers can help drive strategic business decisions to fuel growth and increase margins. >>>



## Exclusive Industry Research & Data

This issue's research-focused article distills the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projections and reveals trends in job growth through 2030, including adjustments for anticipated areas of pandemic recovery.

As the industry's research and data leader, ASA reports on timely industry data in every issue of *Staffing Success*. Get up-to-the-minute data and research-related information when you follow @StaffingData on Twitter.

The following industry-focused analysis of the latest employment projections explores sector and occupational growth trends through 2030. Based on findings from a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report published in September 2021, this analysis concentrates on the staffing industry in the context of nonfarm wage and salary workers for the top job-creating sectors and fastest growing occupations, with notes on the potential impact of the pandemic on these projections.

**Employment services are projected to expand to about 3.4 million jobs**, hinting at slower growth than had been expected in previous projections. That said, **staffing companies equipped to fill in-demand occupations** can expect the need for their services to continue.



## LOOKING PAST THE LOCKDOWNS

In the latest employment projections, BLS points to two driving forces visible in growth in employment during this decade. First, the lockdowns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had a massive impact on employment in the U.S., and that impact varied by sector. While most industry sectors experienced some level of job loss, those centered on in-person interactions and experiences were most affected. However, as the economy has begun to

reopen, affected occupations are poised for fast recovery. BLS refers to this dynamic as “business cycle” factors impacting employment.

At the same time, other industries are expected to grow due to so-called “structural factors” (i.e., factors outside of the recovery from the pandemic recession). This article highlights which industry sectors and individual occupations are being impacted by these trends.




Overall, U.S. employment from 2020 to 2030 is projected to grow from 153.5 million to 165.4 million, an increase of 7.7%. However, when excluding the 9.3 million jobs gained as a result of recovering from the pandemic, employment is projected to increase by just 1.7%.

## BOUNCING BACK FROM THE PANDEMIC

Here is a look at which industries are mainly growing as they bounce back from the pandemic and which are expected to grow due to other factors.

**Leisure and hospitality.** The sector projected to expand the fastest—at a whopping 2.2% annual rate—is leisure and hospitality. The number of jobs in this sector is expected to increase by 3.2 million—reaching a total of nearly 16.6 million jobs by 2030. The top growth factor contributing to the surge in leisure and hospitality employment is restored demand for the recreational and in-person activities that were so adversely affected

## Top Sectors and Growth Factors

SECTOR	ANNUAL GROWTH RATE	2030 JOBS ('000S)	JOBS ADDED 2020-2030 ('000S)	GROWTH FACTORS
 HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	1.6%	23,093	3,316	Aging population, longer life expectancies, and growing rates of chronic conditions
 PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES (INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)	1.0%	22,266	2,020	CONTINUED DEMAND FOR COMPUTER SYSTEMS DESIGN, CONSULTING, AND STAFFING SERVICES
 LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	2.2%	16,566	3,240	Recovery from the pandemic-era closure of restaurants, hotels, and in-person establishments

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

by pandemic shutdowns in 2020. Jobs at restaurants, movie theaters, and in sports and entertainment are expected to grow rapidly.

**Health care.** This sector—called “health care and social assistance” by BLS—is projected to add the greatest number of new jobs of any sector (3.3 million)—totaling 23.1 million by 2030.

The increase in health care employment can in part be attributed to increased demand for care as the baby boomer generation ages amid longer life expectancies. In addition, increasing numbers of individuals with chronic conditions is factoring into demand for workers in this sector.

**Professional and business services.** Employment in the professional and business services sector is projected to grow 1.0% annually to nearly 22.3 million jobs in 2030. The increase of over 2.0 million jobs is expected to be driven by technological advancements spurring strong demand for occupations such as computer systems design as well as management, scientific, and technical consulting services. Amplifying this demand is the

pandemic-boosted rise in prevalence of working from home, necessitating more professionals in IT security and related occupations.

## EXAMINING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES GROWTH

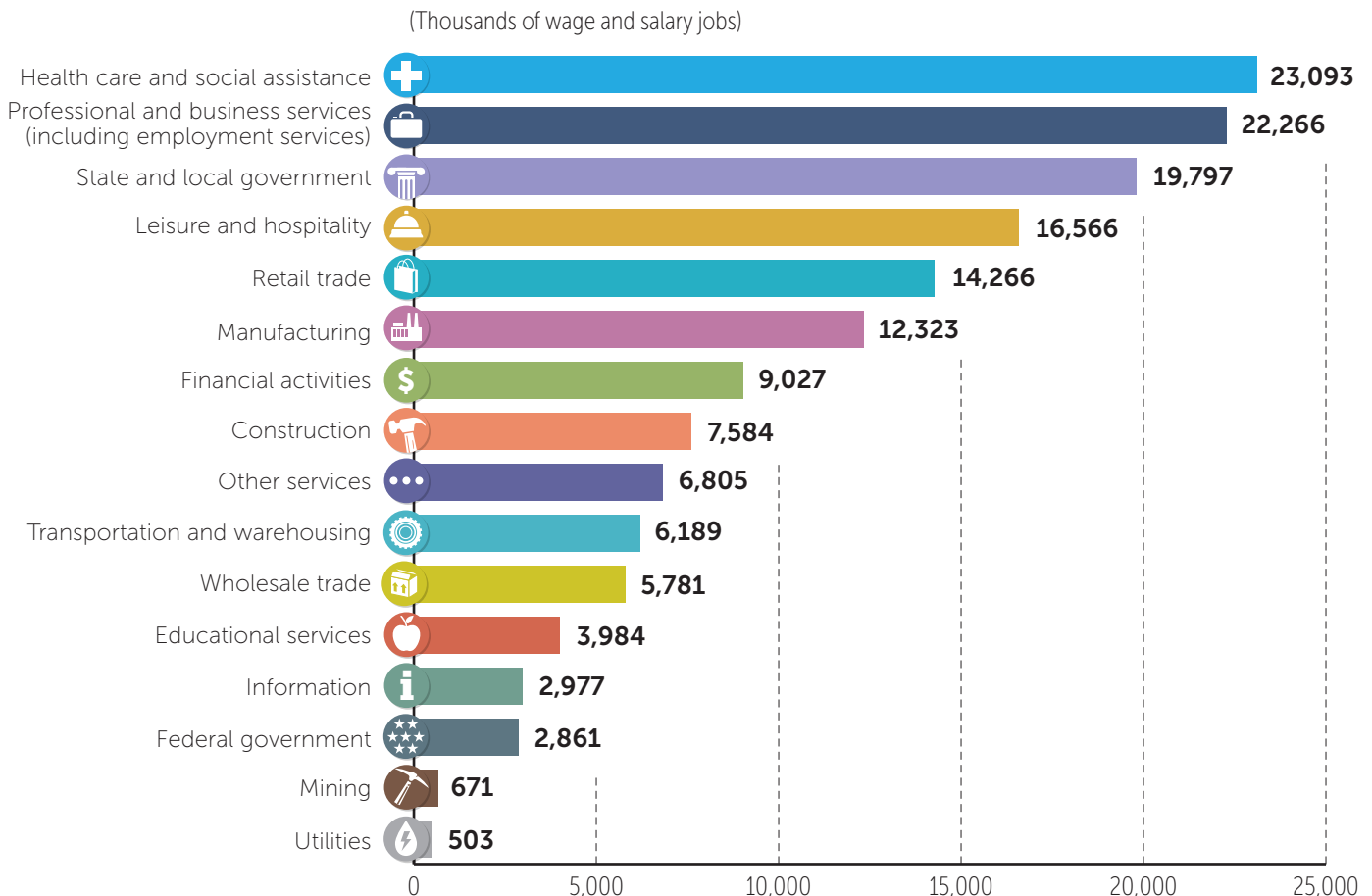
The employment services industry, which consists of employment placement agencies, temporary help services, and professional employer organizations, is contained within the professional and business services sector.

Employment services are projected to expand to about 3.4 million jobs, hinting at slower growth than had been expected in previous projections. That said, staffing companies equipped to fill in-demand occupations can expect the need for their services to continue.

## FOLLOWING THE FAST-GROWING JOBS

Now let’s look at the specific jobs that are projected to grow the fastest during this decade and

## Projected 2030 Jobs by Sector



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

where they rank when accounting for occupations recuperating losses from the pandemic.

**Occupations related to personal services, food service, or arts and culture.** Jobs involving in-person events, activities, and services were decimated by the Covid-19 shutdowns in 2020. The reopening of these businesses is the driving force behind the projected employment growth for motion picture projectionists and ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers—occupations with two of the top three projected growth rates, at 70.5% and 61.8%, respectively.

Other such occupations expected to see fast cyclical growth are restaurant cooks; agents and business managers of artists, performers, and athletes; costume attendants; and exercise trainers and group fitness instructors. These types of occupations make up six of the top 10 expanding jobs when including those recovering from the pandemic.

Fast food and counter workers, wait staff, and first-line supervisors of food preparation and service workers, though not among the fastest growing occupations, are in the top 10 occupations expected to add the most employees by 2030.

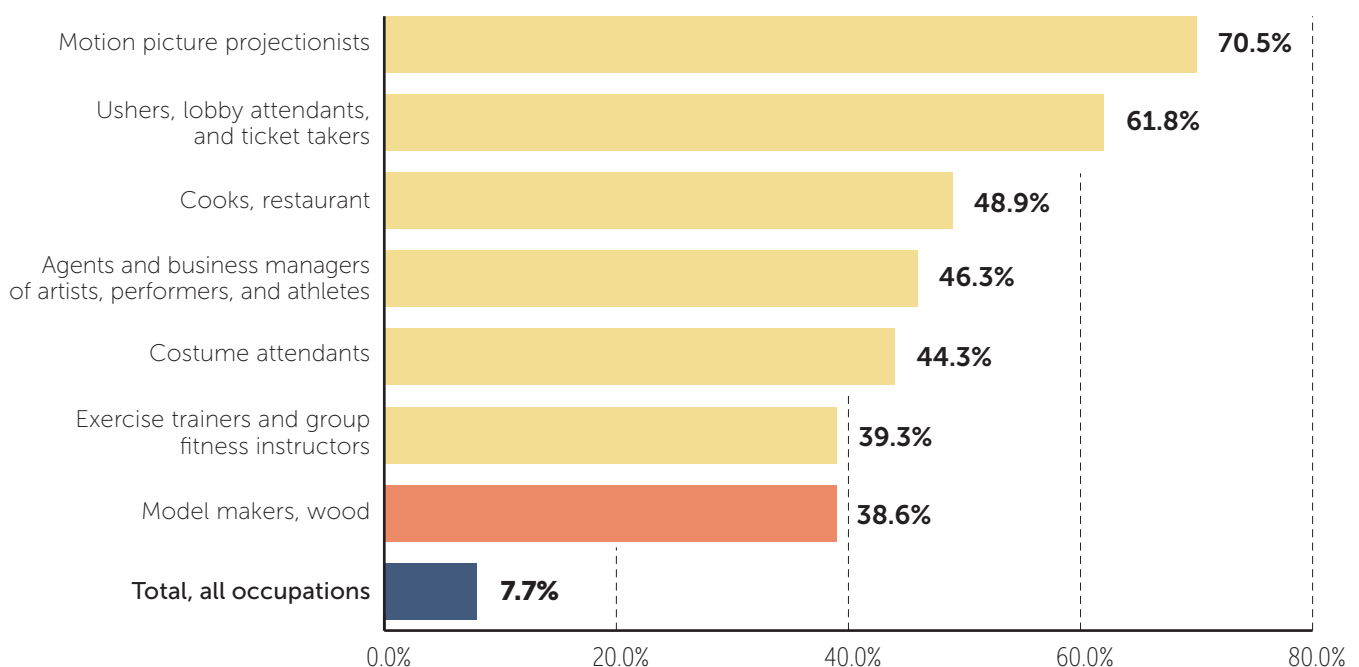
**Renewable energy occupations.** Wind turbine technicians and solar photovoltaic installers feature two of the top five projected growth rates, at 68.2% and 52.1%, respectively—with those

rankings moving up to the top three when not including occupations recovering from losses in 2020. Alternative energy demand is continuing to rise, propelling rapid growth in this sector. An emerging driver adding to demand as this industry matures is the need for workers who can service or replace aging turbines and solar panels.

**Health care occupations.** Health care and related occupations, including mental health, account for seven of the top 30 occupations with the greatest projected growth from 2020 to 2030. The fastest growing among these jobs are nurse practitioners and physical therapist assistants, with respective growth rates of 52.2% and 35.4%. Additional jobs related to the health care field projected to grow rapidly through 2030 are home health and personal aides, medical and health services managers, and physician assistants—all of which crack the top 10 when excluding occupations bouncing back from the pandemic. Demand for health care services will continue to grow as the population ages and individuals with chronic conditions require more care.

**Computer and mathematical occupations.** Due to an increase in the prevalence of working from home prompted by the pandemic, strong demand is expected for IT security and software development—boosting the projected employment growth in computer and mathematical occupa-

## Occupations That Are Bouncing Back



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

tions. Statisticians, information security analysts, and data scientists and mathematical science jobs constitute three of the 10 fastest growing jobs when omitting Covid-19 recovery—all with growth rates above 31%.

## TRACKING KEY TAKEAWAYS

As businesses navigate the nascent recovery following the pandemic recession, opportunities for staffing companies abound, and savvy business leaders in the staffing industry will incorporate the following trends into their business plan for the coming decade:

- The in-person industries that shrank during the pandemic-driven lockdowns in 2020 are coming back, and companies have jobs to fill. Demand for workers is hot and jobs are going unfilled—staffing companies stand to gain if their expertise helps fill these roles.
- The need for health care services is only going to increase in the years ahead—staffing companies will be needed to source not only health care practitioners but also support staff within the health care industry.
- Technology continues to advance, and with those advancements comes demand for tech workers. Add in the pandemic-driven shift toward remote and the need for workers to support that trend, and the labor market is

full of opportunity for companies that can aid employers in filling these roles.

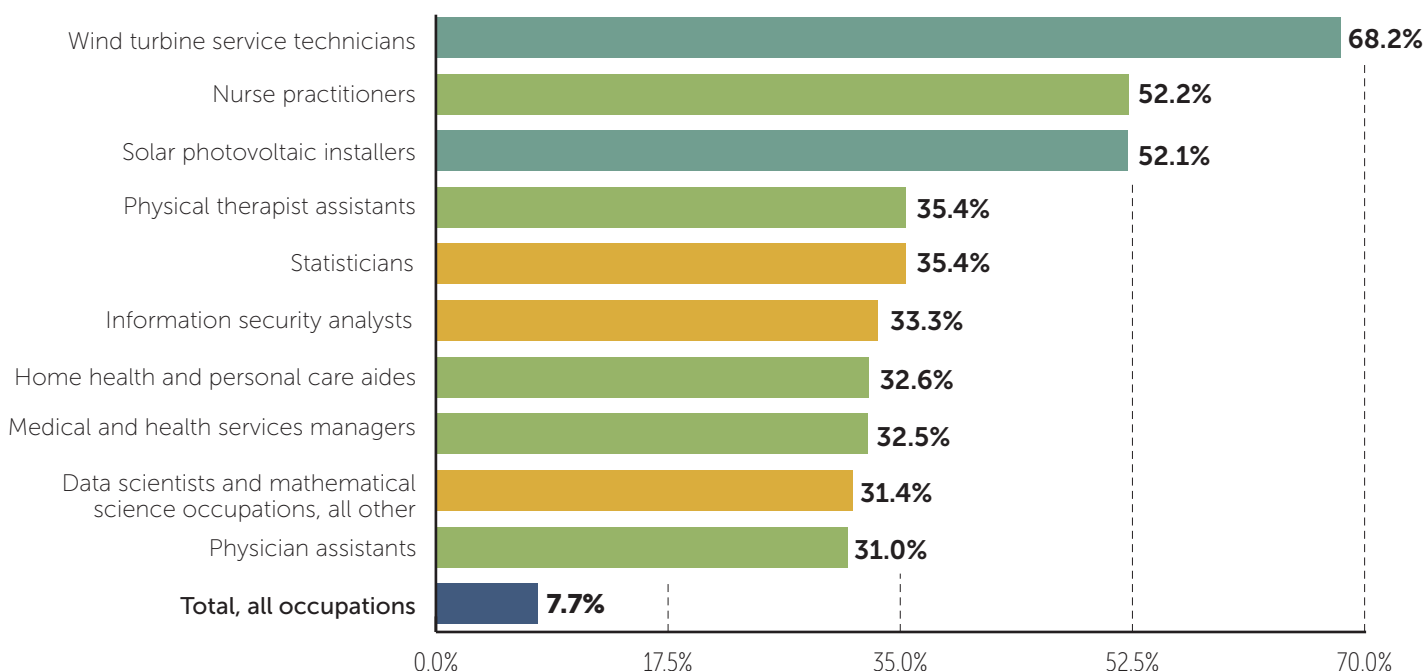
The ASA research team will continue to closely track these data and other economic and employment trends that give staffing companies the business intelligence they need to make informed and strategic decisions. Tune in to quarterly ASA State of the Industry webinars and Staffing STATS webinars—free for members and available on demand at [americanstaffing.net/webinars](http://americanstaffing.net/webinars). You can also access all the analysis, charts, and graphics from the 2021 Staffing Industry Playbook at [americanstaffing.net/playbook](http://americanstaffing.net/playbook). ■

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## CONTACT A DATA EXPERT

ASA members always are welcome to contact the research team at 703-253-2020 or [research@americanstaffing.net](mailto:research@americanstaffing.net) with questions about these findings or other ASA research. You can also tweet your questions to [@StaffingData](https://twitter.com/StaffingData).

## Fastest Growing Occupations—Excluding Pandemic Recovery



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics