

PROJECTED FASTEST GROWING HIGH-PAYING JOBS IN MISSISSIPPI, 2024-2034



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Each year the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) releases ten-year projections of national employment by occupation. These projections include 800 occupations, and the most recent projections are for the 2024 to 2034 period. The University Research Center adjusted these data to develop projections for Mississippi for the same period, which this publication discusses.

URC adjusted the growth rates of the national projections according to the share of total employment each occupation had in Mississippi as of 2024. Not all U.S. occupations are included in the state. URC developed a list of projections for selected occupations over the next decade based on two primary criteria for inclusion. First, the projected growth rate of the occupation must equal at least 10.0%. Second, the 2024 median annual salary for the occupation in Mississippi, also obtained from BLS, must exceed \$45,000. The median annual salary for all occupations in the state in 2024 according to BLS was \$39,070. Setting these two criteria resulted in a list of twenty-four occupations out of a dataset for Mississippi of more than 700. Table I below lists these occupations by title, projected growth rate, median annual salary in 2024, and typical education requirements.

Table I. Projected increases in fastest growing high-paying occupations in Mississippi, 2024-2034.

Occupation	Projected growth	2024 median annual wage	Typical education
Nurse Practitioners	76.5%	\$119,290	Master's degree
Physical Therapist Assistants	34.7%	\$61,220	Associate's degree
Occupational Therapy Assistants	28.0%	\$62,160	Associate's degree
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	26.9%	\$57,220	High school diploma
Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary	26.9%	\$73,160	Doctoral degree
Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	26.5%	\$47,470	High school diploma
Medical and Health Services Managers	25.2%	\$89,960	Bachelor's degree
Respiratory Therapists	21.5%	\$61,320	Associate's degree
Computer and Information Research Scientists	20.1%	\$108,560	Master's degree
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	18.5%	\$132,630	Doctoral degree
Speech-Language Pathologists	17.7%	\$75,790	Master's degree
Orthotists and Prosthetists	15.4%	\$89,860	Master's degree
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	14.4%	\$73,440	Associate's degree
Financial Examiners	14.2%	\$92,590	Bachelor's degree
Occupational Therapists	14.2%	\$92,330	Master's degree
Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	13.2%	\$79,790	Bachelor's degree
Information Security Analysts	12.8%	\$84,640	Bachelor's degree
Physical Therapists	12.4%	\$97,080	Doctoral degree
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	11.3%	\$46,810	Bachelor's degree
Athletic Trainers	11.0%	\$52,260	Master's degree
Logisticians	11.0%	\$76,280	Bachelor's degree
Forensic Science Technicians	10.9%	\$54,720	Bachelor's degree
Industrial Engineers	10.4%	\$93,110	Bachelor's degree
Medical Equipment Repairers	10.0%	\$49,400	Associate's degree

Source: URC analysis of National Employment Matrix, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table I yields a number of observations about the projected fastest growing jobs in Mississippi. The 2024 median annual salary of all the jobs included exceeds the state's median annual salary of \$39,070 because of the criteria we set. However, the median annual salary of eleven of the twenty-four occupations is more than double the median annual salary for Mississippi. Note that the median salary reflects all workers in the profession and likely represents a mid-career salary, not a starting salary, and therefore attaining these salaries may require a certain number of years of experience or reaching certain milestones. Next, a majority of the occupations in Table I are in the healthcare field or a closely related field. The outsized presence of healthcare and related occupations reflects national trends as well as an aging population. BLS projects the healthcare sector will have the highest growth rate in employment among all sectors in the U.S. over the next ten years of 8.7%. As more members of the baby boom generation move into retirement age, the demand for healthcare over the next decade is expected to increase. Since 2010, jobs in the health care sector in Mississippi have increased by approximately 20.0%, a much higher rate compared to most sectors in the state over the same period. Total payroll employment in Mississippi rose by about 9.0% over the same period. Finally, over 70.0% of the jobs in Table I typically require at least a bachelor's degree. Only two of the jobs listed—Industrial Machinery Mechanics and Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians—typically require less than an associate's degree. Given the predominance of occupations in the healthcare field in Table I, these requirements are not unexpected as most healthcare jobs require at least some post-secondary education.

The remainder of this report briefly discusses each of the jobs in Table I. While Table I includes the *median* annual salary for each job listed, the discussion of each job that follows includes the *average* annual salary for added perspective. The discussion of each job includes context for Mississippi as for each occupation that typically requires a bachelor's degree or higher education, a supplemental table lists the corresponding programs offered at the eight public institutions of higher learning in the state.¹ Programs offered at the fifteen public community colleges in the state for each occupation that typically requires an associate's degree or higher education are also noted. We note that the degrees and majors listed represent *typical* pathways to the associated occupations; other pathways involving different degrees, majors, or other training and experience likely exist for many of the occupations discussed in this report.

URC uses the *CIP SOC Crosswalk* created jointly by BLS and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to link the educational programs from Mississippi's public postsecondary institutions. BLS maintains the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, which it and other federal agencies and many international agencies use to group occupations in a manner that simplifies collecting, calculating, and disseminating data regarding occupations. NCES maintains the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. Postsecondary institutions nationwide use these codes to label the programs they offer in a way that makes programs comparable across institutions. The *CIP SOC Crosswalk* maps SOC codes from BLS to the programs that typically lead to those occupations by CIP code. URC collected the CIP codes from IHL for the eight public universities and the CIP codes for the fifteen public community colleges from the Mississippi Community College Board.

¹ ASU = Alcorn State University; DSU = Delta State University; JSU = Jackson State University; MSU = Mississippi State University; MUW = Mississippi University for Women; MVSU = Mississippi Valley State University; UM/UMMC = University of Mississippi and University of Mississippi Medical Center; and USM = University of Southern Mississippi

Nurse Practitioners

According to BLS, nurse practitioners “diagnose and treat acute, episodic, or chronic illness, independently or as part of a healthcare team.” Nurse practitioners can “order, perform, or interpret diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays,” as well as prescribe medication. A nurse practitioner must be a registered nurse with graduate education. Nurse practitioner is projected to be the fastest growing occupation in Mississippi over the next decade and the third fastest growing in the U.S.; nationally, the number of positions is projected to increase by 40.1%. The largest employer of nurse practitioners is physicians’ offices, followed by general hospitals. BLS attributes the expected growth in nurse practitioners to *occupational substitution*: the “growing demand for healthcare services will not . . . be met by expected growth in physicians and surgeons,” which “will encourage the adoption of team-based healthcare provision models which increasingly utilize physician assistants and nurse practitioners.” Notably, BLS reported that Mississippi had the second highest concentration of nurse practitioners among all states in 2023 after Tennessee, with 3.49 individuals employed in the occupation per 1,000 workers. Among U.S. metropolitan areas, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, had the eighth highest concentration of nurse practitioners in 2023. The Northeast Mississippi nonmetropolitan area had the highest employment of nurse practitioners in 2023 among all nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S. The Northeast Mississippi, Southwest Mississippi, and Northwest Mississippi nonmetropolitan areas had the third, fourth, and fifth highest concentrations of nurse practitioners, respectively, among nonmetropolitan areas. The average annual salary of nurse practitioners in Mississippi in 2024 was \$122,930, less than the U.S. average annual salary of \$132,000. However, this salary was more than the average annual salaries in Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee and slightly less than the average annual salary in Louisiana. An associate’s degree with a major in Nursing is offered by Copiah-Lincoln, Delta, East Central, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Itawamba, Northeast, and Pearl River Community Colleges.

Table 2. Degrees and majors related to Nurse Practitioner.

	ASU	DSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor’s	Nursing	Nursing		Nursing		Nursing	Nursing
Master’s/Specialist	Nursing	Nursing	Nursing	Family Nurse Clinician	Family Nurse Clinician	Nursing of Adults	Nursing
Doctoral/Professional	Nursing Practice	Nursing Practice		Nursing Practice		Nursing	Nursing

Physical Therapist Assistants

As the title implies, BLS reports physical therapist assistants “assist physical therapists in providing physical therapy treatments and procedures.” The duties can include developing treatment plans for patients and monitoring the progress of treatment. Some type of formal training beyond high school is usually required, typically consisting of at least an associate’s degree. Physical therapist assistant is projected to be one of the fastest growing occupations in Mississippi and the U.S. over the next decade. The projected increase in the number of physical therapist assistants according to BLS stems from an increase in demand as “facilities increasingly attempt to leverage their physical therapy workforce” and as “physical therapy services are increasingly . . . needed to help patients rehabilitate injuries and manage chronic pain without the use of pharmaceuticals.” In 2023, Mississippi was in the top 25.0% of states in terms of the number of physical therapist assistants employed per 1,000 workers. Northeast Mississippi ranked fifth among all nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S. in 2023 for number of physical therapist assistants employed with 250. The annual average salary for physical therapist assistants in Mississippi in 2024 of \$60,570 was less than the U.S. annual average salary of \$67,160. However, this salary was

greater than the average annual salary in Louisiana and about the same as in Alabama. An associate's degree with a Physical Therapist Assistant major is available at Delta, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Holmes, Itawamba, Meridian, and Pearl River Community Colleges.

Occupational Therapy Assistants

Occupational Therapy Assistants “assist occupational therapists in providing occupational therapy treatments and procedures,” according to BLS. Their duties can include developing treatment plans and documenting the progress of treatments. BLS notes, “Demand for occupational therapy is likely to grow over the decade in response to the healthcare needs of an aging population.” However, at the same time, “restrictions in insurance reimbursement for services provided . . . may constrain demand for this occupation.” Mississippi was in the top 25.0% of states in terms of the number of occupational therapy assistants employed per 1,000 workers in 2023. The annual average salary for occupational therapy assistants in Mississippi in 2024 of \$63,520 was less than the U.S. average salary of \$68,540. The annual average salary in Mississippi was greater than the annual average salaries in Louisiana and Tennessee but considerably less than the annual average salary in Arkansas. An associate's degree with a major in occupational therapy is offered by Holmes, Itawamba, and Pearl River Community Colleges.

Industrial Machinery Mechanics

Industrial machinery mechanics “repair, install, adjust, or maintain industrial production and processing machinery or refinery and pipeline distribution systems,” according to BLS. They may also move or install machinery and heavy equipment. The occupation is projected to be one of the fastest growing in Mississippi over the next decade at a rate of almost 27%, more than double the expected rate of growth nationally. Projected increases in the number of industrial machinery mechanics over the next decade are due to an increase in demand according to BLS. Firms in the mining sector are expected to continue adopting new machinery, which will require more mechanics, and firms in multiple sectors are expected to increase automation, which will increase the demand for mechanics to maintain and repair equipment. Notably, the Northeast Mississippi nonmetropolitan area was one of the top four nonmetropolitan areas for total employment of industrial machinery mechanics in 2023 with 1,860. The annual average salary for industrial machinery mechanics in Mississippi in 2024 was \$60,860, less than the U.S. average salary of \$67,160. An associate's degree with a major in Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance is offered at Coahoma, Delta, East Mississippi, Holmes, Itawamba, Meridian, and Northeast Mississippi Community Colleges.

Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary

These teachers instruct students on patient care in both classroom and clinical settings, and include individuals engaged in primarily teaching as well as teaching and research. Postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers are mainly employed by colleges and universities, and a smaller number are employed by junior and community colleges. Employment of postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers in Mississippi is expected to increase 27% over the next ten years, a much faster rate than the overall employment of postsecondary teachers in the U.S. In 2023 Mississippi was in the top 25% of states in terms of the number of postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers employed per 1,000 workers. The Northwest Mississippi nonmetropolitan area was second among all nonmetropolitan areas in 2023 in the number of postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers employed per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary for postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers in Mississippi in 2024 was

\$75,670, well below the national average annual salary of \$87,090. The average annual salary in Mississippi in 2024 was greater than the average annual salary in Arkansas and Louisiana but was less than in Alabama and Tennessee. As noted previously in the discussion of Nurse Practitioners, an associate’s degree with a major in Nursing is offered by Copiah-Lincoln, Delta, East Central, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Itawamba, Northeast, and Pearl River Community Colleges.

Table 3. Degrees and majors related to Postsecondary Nursing Instructor.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor’s	Nursing	Healthcare Administration; Nursing	Healthcare Administration	Applied Technology	Nursing		Health Systems Administration; Nursing	Nursing
Master’s/ Specialist	Nursing	Nursing		Nursing	Family Nurse Clinician	Family Nurse Clinician	Health Systems Administration; Nursing of Adults	Nursing
Doctoral/ Professional	Nursing Practice	Nursing Practice			Nursing Practice		Health Administration; Nursing	Nursing

Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians

According to BLS, Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians “diagnose, adjust, repair, or overhaul farm machinery and vehicles, such as tractors, harvesters, dairy equipment, and irrigation systems.” Individuals typically work in a shop or in the field. Nationally, employment of Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians is expected to grow faster than average over the next ten years, and employment in Mississippi is projected to grow at a rate of 26%, well above the U.S. rate. Mississippi ranked ninth among all states in 2024 in terms of the number of Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary for Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians in Mississippi in 2024 was \$48,240, which was less than the national average annual salary of \$55,290. The average annual salary for Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians in Mississippi in 2024 was less than in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

Medical and Health Services Managers

According to BLS, Medical and Health Services Managers “plan, direct, or coordinate medical and health services in hospitals, clinics, managed care organizations, public health agencies, or similar organizations.” The occupation is expected to be among the fastest growing in the state and nation over the next ten years, increasing at rates of more than 20%. BLS attributes the expected increase in the number of medical and health services managers to an increase in demand “as healthcare providers utilize broader team structures which will require increased use of specialized management.” In 2023, Mississippi was sixth among all states in terms of the number of medical and health services managers employed per 1,000 workers. In addition, Northeast Mississippi ranked second among all nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S. in 2023 in the number of medical and health services managers employed with 950. The Southwest Mississippi nonmetropolitan area had the third highest concentration of Medical and Health Services Managers among nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S. The average annual salary in Mississippi of \$103,770 in 2024 is considerably lower than the U.S. average annual salary of \$137,730. This average salary was higher than in Alabama and Arkansas but less than in Louisiana and Tennessee.

Table 4. Degrees and majors related to Medical and Health Services Managers.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor's	Biology; Business Administration; Accounting	Biology; Business Administration; Management; General Business; Accountancy; Healthcare Administration	Biology; Business Administration; Management; Accounting; Health Care Administration; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Business Administration; Management; Accounting; Biochemistry; Microbiology; Applied Technology	Biology; Business Administration; Accounting	Biology; Business Administration; Accounting	Biological Science; Management; General Business; Accountancy; Biochemistry; Health Systems Administration; Health Informatics and Information Management	Biological Sciences; Business Administration; Management; Accounting; Organizational Leadership; Public Health; Applied Technology
Master's/ Specialist	Biology; General Business Administration	Business Administration; Accountancy	Biology; Business Administration; Accounting; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Business Administration; Accounting; Public Health	Business Administration; Public Health	Business Administration;	Health Systems Administration; Health Informatics and Information Management; Population Health Management; Biological Science; Business Administration; Accountancy; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Business Administration; Accounting; Public Health
Doctoral/ Professional	Nursing Practice	Nursing Practice	Business Administration; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Business Administration	Nursing Practice		Biological Science; Business Administration; Accountancy; Pharmacy; Cell and Molecular Biology; Health Administration; Population Health Science; Nursing	Biological Sciences; Nursing

Respiratory Therapists

According to BLS, Respiratory Therapists “assess, treat, and care for patients with breathing disorders.” They also supervise technicians and operate and maintain equipment. General hospitals are among the largest employers of respiratory therapists. Respiratory therapists are projected to grow at a higher rate in Mississippi over the next decade compared to the U.S. The projected growth in the number of respiratory therapists over the next decade will result from an increase in demand according to BLS, as “Respiratory therapists will be increasingly needed across hospital and non-hospital settings to treat a wide variety of conditions and patients.” Mississippi ranked second overall in the number of respiratory therapists employed per 1,000 workers in 2024, just ahead of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Alabama. The Jackson, Mississippi, metropolitan area ranked tenth in 2024 among all metropolitan areas in the number of respiratory therapists employed per 1,000 workers. The Northeast Mississippi nonmetropolitan area ranked third among all nonmetropolitan areas in the country in 2023 in the number of respiratory therapists employed with 320. The average annual salary for respiratory therapists in Mississippi was \$70,410 in 2024, considerably less than the national average annual salary of \$84,260. This wage was higher than the average annual salary in Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee but less than the average annual salary in Louisiana. An associate’s degree with a major in Respiratory Care Therapy is offered by Coahoma, Copiah-Lincoln, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Itawamba, Meridian, Northeast Mississippi, Northwest Mississippi, and Pearl River Community Colleges.

Computer and Information Research Scientists

Computer and Information Research Scientists “conduct research into fundamental computer and information science as theorists, designers, or inventors,” according to BLS. They also “develop solutions to problems in the field of computer hardware and software.” This occupation is expected to grow at a rate of 20% in both Mississippi and the U.S. in the next ten years. The average annual salary for computer and information research scientists in Mississippi in 2024 was \$111,360, which was well below the national average annual salary of \$152,310. However, this salary was equal to the average annual salary in Louisiana and greater than the average annual salaries in Alabama and Tennessee. BLS reports “Computer and information research scientists typically need a master’s or higher degree in computer science or a related field, such as computer engineering.” However, some federal government jobs may only require a bachelor's degree. The federal government is the largest employer of computer and information research scientists.

Table 5. Degrees and majors related to Computer and Information Research Scientists.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor's	Computer Science; Computer Networking and Information Technology	Computer Information Systems	Computer Science	Computer Science; Cybersecurity; Data Science; Business Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis	Computer Science	Computer Science; Data Science; Business Analytics & Information Systems	Computer Science; Cybersecurity
Master's/Specialist	Computer and Information Science		Computer Science	Computer Science; Cyber Security and Operations; Data Science; Information Systems			Computer Science
Doctoral/Professional			Computational and Data-Enabled Science and Engineering	Computer Science			Computer Science

Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary

Postsecondary Health Specialties Teachers teach courses in specific fields including dentistry, pharmacy, public health, and laboratory technology. BLS notes these teachers are distinct from nursing instructors and biological science teachers. Universities and colleges, and to a lesser extent junior and community colleges, are the major employers of postsecondary health specialties teachers. In Mississippi, the number of postsecondary health specialties teachers is expected to grow at a rate similar to the U.S. over the next decade. The demand for health specialty degrees is expected to increase over the next ten years according to BLS, leading to an increase in the number of postsecondary health specialties teachers. Mississippi falls near the middle of all states in terms of number of postsecondary health specialties teachers employed per 1,000 workers. According to BLS, Mississippi ranked ninth among all states in 2024 for postsecondary health specialties teachers with an average annual salary of \$152,440, well above the national average annual salary of \$137,900. Jackson, Mississippi, ranked eighth among all metropolitan areas in terms of pay in 2024 for postsecondary health specialties teachers with an average annual salary of \$179,770. The Northeast Mississippi nonmetropolitan area was tied for third with the

North Texas Region nonmetropolitan area in 2024 for the number of postsecondary health specialties teachers employed among all such areas with 260. Many degrees with majors related to postsecondary health specialties teachers are offered by public universities and community colleges in Mississippi.

Table 6. Degrees and majors related to Postsecondary Health Specialties Teachers.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor's	Applied Science; Biology; Psychology	Biology; Psychology; Speech and Hearing Sciences	Biology; Psychology; Communicative Disorders; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Psychology; Biochemistry; Veterinary Medical Technology; Microbiology; Psychology; Clinical Laboratory Sciences	Biology; Psychology; Speech Pathology; Public Health Education	Biology; Environmental Health	Biological Science; Psychology; Biochemistry; Medical Technology; Public Health and Health Science; Applied Gerontology; Biological Science; Communication Sciences and Disorders; Dietetics and Nutrition; Pharmaceutical Sciences; Dental Hygiene; Health Sciences; Histotechnology; Radiologic Sciences; Medical Laboratory Science	Biological Sciences; Psychology; Speech; Pathology and Audiology; Public Health; Medical Laboratory Science; Nutrition and Dietetics; Health Sciences; Kinesiotherapy; Recreational Therapy
Master's/ Specialist	Biology; Applied Science and Technology		Biology; Communicative Disorders; Public Health; Counseling, Rehabilitation and Psychometric Services	Biological Sciences; Psychology; Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences; Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; Physician Assistant Studies; Public Health	Speech-Language Pathology; Public Health	Environmental Health	Biological Science; Psychology; Communication Sciences and Disorders; Athletic Training; Dietary Supplement and Medical Cannabis; Pharmaceutical Sciences; Public Health; Biostatistics and Data Science; Dental Residents; Nuclear Medicine Technology; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Health Professions Education; Population Health Management; Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy Residents	Biological Sciences; Psychology; Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Speech and Hearing Sciences; Physician Assistant Studies; Athletic Training; Medical Laboratory Science; Public Health
Doctoral/ Professional	Nursing Practice	Nursing Practice	Public Health	Biological Sciences; Applied Psychology; Veterinary Medicine DVM; Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences; Environmental Toxicology; Food Science and Nutrition	Nursing Practice		Biological Science; Psychology; Nutrition Sciences; Pharmacy; Pharmaceutical Sciences; Cell and Molecular Biology; Nursing; Clinical Anatomy; Biostatistics and Data Science; Audiology; Dentistry, DMD; Experimental Therapeutics and Pharmacology; Population Health Science; Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy	Biological Sciences; Psychology; Nursing; Audiology

Table 7. Associate's degree majors related to Postsecondary Health Specialties Teachers at public community colleges in Mississippi.

Coahoma	Copiah-Lincoln	East Central	East Mississippi	Hinds	Holmes	Itawamba	Jones	Meridian	Delta	Gulf Coast	Northeast Mississippi	Northwest Mississippi	Pearl River
Biology; Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions	Biology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Radiologic Technology; Clinical Laboratory Technician	Surgical Technology	Biology; Emergency Medical Technology; Surgical Technology	Technician and Veterinary Assistant; Dental Assisting; Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology; Diagnostic Medical Sonography; Radiologic Technology	Communication Disorders; Occupational Therapist Assistant; Emergency Medical Technology; Surgical Technology; Massage Therapy	Biology; Occupational Therapist Assistant; Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology; Radiologic Technology; Public Health; Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions	Biology; Pharmacy Technician; Emergency Medical Technology; Radiologic Technology; Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Professions	Dental Assisting; Dental Hygiene; Medical/ Clinical Assistant; Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology; Radiologic Technology; Medical Laboratory Technician	Biology; Dental Hygiene; Radiologic Technology; Medical Laboratory Technician	Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology; Radiologic Technology; Medical Laboratory Technician; Massage Therapy	Dental Hygiene; Clinical Assistant; Respiratory Care Therapy; Radiologic Technology; Medical Laboratory Technic	Biology; Cardiovascular Technology; Emergency Medical Technology; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology	Dental Assisting; Dental Hygiene; Occupational Therapist Assistant; Respiratory Care Therapy; Surgical Technology; Radiologic Technology; Medical Laboratory Technician; Massage Therapy

Speech-Language Pathologists

Speech-Language Pathologists “assess and treat persons with speech, language, voice, and fluency disorders,” per BLS. This occupation is expected to grow at similar rates in Mississippi and the U.S. in the next ten years. Elementary and secondary schools tend to be one of the leading employers of speech-language pathologists. BLS attributes the projected increase to higher demand “as an aging population, higher autism-spectrum and special needs, and expanded service provision at schools increases demand for speech-language pathologists.” In 2023 Mississippi was in the middle of all states in terms of the number of speech-language pathologists employed per 1,000 workers. However, in 2023 Northeast Mississippi ranked second among all nonmetropolitan areas in the U.S. in the number of speech-language pathologists with 370. The Northwest Mississippi nonmetropolitan area ranked fifth among all nonmetropolitan areas in the number of speech-language pathologists per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary for speech-language pathologists in Mississippi in 2024 was \$78,270, which was considerably less than the national average annual salary of \$95,840. The average annual salary in Mississippi was higher than in Alabama and Louisiana, but less than in Arkansas and Tennessee. An associate’s degree with a major in Communication Disorders is offered by Holmes Community College.

Table 8. Degrees and majors related to Speech-Language Pathologists.

	DSU	JSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor’s	Speech and Hearing Sciences	Communicative Disorders	Speech Pathology	Speech-Language Pathology	Communication Sciences and Disorders	Speech Pathology and Audiology
Master’s/Specialist		Communicative Disorders	Speech-Language Pathology		Communication Sciences and Disorders	Speech-Language Pathology
Doctoral/Professional						Audiology

Orthotists and Prosthetists

According to BLS, “orthotists and prosthetists measure, design, fit, and adapt medical devices, such as supportive braces and artificial limbs, for patients who have disabling conditions.” This occupation is expected to grow at similar rates in Mississippi and the U.S. in the next ten years. Orthotists and prosthetists are employed in ambulatory healthcare services organizations such as physicians’ offices and hospital outpatient clinics, as well as firms that manufacture medical equipment and supplies. In 2024 the average annual salary for orthotists and prosthetists in Mississippi was \$92,570, above the U.S. average annual salary of \$81,330. This salary was also considerably higher than the average annual salary in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee. BLS reports that to become an orthotist and prosthetist, candidates “typically need to complete a master’s degree program and residency.” The University of Mississippi Medical Center offers an orthotics and prosthetics residency program.

Diagnostic Medical Sonographers

BLS defines diagnostic medical sonographers as workers who “produce ultrasonic recordings of internal organs for use by physicians.” Diagnostic medical sonographers are projected to grow at similar rates in Mississippi and the U.S. over the next decade. General hospitals and physicians are the primary employers of these workers. BLS reports demand for sonographers will increase as physicians and hospitals seek to save on the costs of non-invasive imaging by utilizing ultrasound imaging. Mississippi fell near the middle of all states in the number of diagnostic medical sonographers employed per 1,000 workers in 2023. The average annual salary for diagnostic medical sonographers in Mississippi in 2024 was \$71,850, well below the national average annual salary of \$92,550. The average annual salary in

Mississippi was greater than in Alabama, but less than in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee. Hinds Community College offers an associate’s degree with a major in Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

Financial Examiners

Financial examiners “enforce or ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing financial and securities institutions and financial and real estate transactions,” according to BLS. They may also “examine, verify, or authenticate records.” The number of financial examiners is expected to grow at a higher rate for the U.S. than for Mississippi in the next ten years, but both the state and nation expect considerably faster growth compared to the average for all occupations. BLS notes that “demand for these workers has risen . . . because of the need for banking institutions to comply with federal regulations.” These institutions are expected to continue hiring financial examiners to satisfy these requirements and reduce costs. In 2023 the number of financial examiners employed per 1,000 workers in Mississippi was in the bottom half of all states. The average annual salary of a financial examiner in Mississippi in 2024 was \$97,400, below the national average annual salary of \$103,650. This average annual salary was considerably above the average annual salaries in Arkansas and Alabama, slightly above the average annual salary in Tennessee, but below the average annual salary in Louisiana.

Table 9. Degrees and majors related to Financial Examiner.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor’s	Accounting	Accountancy	Accounting	Accounting	Accounting	Accounting	Accountancy	Accounting
Master’s/ Specialist		Accountancy	Accounting	Accounting; Taxation			Accountancy; Taxation	Accounting
Doctoral/ Professional							Accountancy	

Occupational Therapists

According to BLS, occupational therapists “assess, plan, and organize rehabilitative programs that help build or restore vocational, homemaking, and daily living skills, as well as general independence, to persons with disabilities or developmental delays.” The number of occupational therapists in Mississippi and the U.S. is projected to grow at approximately the same rate over the next decade. The expected increase in the number of occupational therapists over the next decade will result from an increase in demand “to help patients rehabilitate injuries and adapt daily activities that allow them to maintain their independence,” according to BLS. Health practitioners, general hospitals, and elementary and secondary schools are among the largest employers of occupational therapists. Mississippi ranked near the middle of all states in terms of the number of occupational therapists employed per 1,000 workers in 2023. Notably, Northeast Mississippi ranked fourth among all nonmetropolitan areas in terms of the number of occupational therapists employed in 2023 with 270. The average annual salary for occupational therapists in Mississippi in 2024 of \$91,120 was less than the U.S. average annual salary of \$98,2400. The average annual salary in the state was less than in Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee, but greater than in Louisiana. The University of Mississippi Medical Center offers master’s and doctoral degrees with majors in Occupational Therapy.

Occupational Health and Safety Specialists

According to BLS, occupational health and safety specialists “review, evaluate, and analyze work environments and design programs and procedures to control, eliminate, and prevent disease or injury

caused by chemical, physical, and biological agents or ergonomic factors.” The number of these specialists in Mississippi and the U.S. is expected to grow over the next decade at around the same rate. The number of specialists is projected to grow due to an increase in demand according to BLS, “as employers increasingly prioritize worker health and safety.” The primary employers of occupational health and safety specialists are consulting services and federal, state, and local governments. Many of these specialists work in the mining and oil and gas extraction sector. Mississippi falls near the middle in the number of occupational health and safety specialists employed per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary in Mississippi of \$77,910 in 2024 was less than the national average annual salary of \$88,660. This salary was greater than in Arkansas, about the same as in Alabama and Tennessee, and less than in Louisiana.

Table 10. Degrees and majors related to Occupational Health and Safety Specialist.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM/UMMC	USM
Bachelor's	Biology	Biology	Biology; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Clinical Laboratory Sciences	Biology; Public Health; Education	Biology; Environmental Health	Biological Science; Public Health and Health Science; Medical Technology; Medical Laboratory Science	Biological Sciences; Medical Laboratory Science; Public Health
Master's/ Specialist	Biology		Biology; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Public Health	Public Health	Public Health	Biological Science; Public Health	Biological Sciences; Medical Laboratory Science; Public Health
Doctoral/ Professional			Public Health	Biological Sciences			Biological Science	Biological Sciences

Information Security Analysts

Information Security Analysts “plan, implement, upgrade, or monitor security measures for the protection of computer networks and information,” according to BLS. They may also determine if systems are vulnerable to attacks and may respond to security breaches. The number of information security analysts in Mississippi is projected to grow at less than half the rate for the U.S. in the next ten years, although the occupation is expected to be one of the fastest growing in both locations. Information security analyst is projected to be the fifth fastest growing job in the U.S. over the next ten years; nationally, the number of positions is projected to increase by 28.5%. BLS projects the number of analysts will increase over the next ten years “as firms increase their IT security staffs and capabilities as a response to increasing threats of cyberattacks aimed at sensitive or financial data.” However, BLS also notes an increase in productivity may slightly offset this growth because of “increased use of automated and AI [artificial intelligence] technologies to improve security measures.” Mississippi ranked in the bottom half of all states in 2023 in terms of the number of information security analysts employed per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary for information security analysts in Mississippi in 2024 of \$89,910 was relatively low compared to the national average annual salary of \$127,730. The average annual salary for the state is also less than those of surrounding states. An associate’s degree with a major in Computer Systems Networking is offered at Copiah-Lincoln, East Central, East Mississippi, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Holmes, Itawamba, Jones, Northwest Mississippi, Pearl River, and Southwest Mississippi Community Colleges. An associate’s degree with a major in Computer Systems Networking is offered at

Copiah-Lincoln, East Central, East Mississippi, Gulf Coast, Hinds, Jones, Northwest, Pearl River, and Southwest Community Colleges. Copiah-Lincoln, East Central, East Mississippi, Hinds, Meridian, and Gulf Coast Community Colleges offer an associate’s degree with a major in Computer and Information Systems. Delta Community College offers an associate’s degree with a major in Computer Science.

Table 11. Degrees and majors related to Information Security Analyst.

	ASU	JSU	MSU	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor’s	Computer Science; Computer Networking and Information Technology	Computer Science	Computer Science; Cybersecurity	Computer Science	Computer Science	Computer Science; Information Technology; Cybersecurity
Master’s/ Specialist	Computer and Information Science	Computer Science	Computer Science; Cybersecurity and Operations			Computer Science
Doctoral/ Professional		Computational and Data-Enabled Science and Engineering	Computer Science			Computer Science

Physical Therapists

According to BLS, physical therapists “assess, plan, organize, and participate in rehabilitative programs that improve mobility, relieve pain, increase strength, and improve or correct disabling conditions resulting from disease or injury.” Physical therapists are employed by multiple industries including health practitioners, general hospitals, and home health care services. Employment of physical therapists in Mississippi is expected to grow at a similar rate as the U.S. over the next ten years. Like physical therapist assistants, the number of physical therapists is expected to rise as “physical therapy services are increasingly needed to help patients rehabilitate injuries and manage chronic pain without the use of pharmaceuticals,” according to BLS. In terms of the number of physical therapists employed per 1,000 workers, Mississippi is roughly in the middle of all states. The average annual salary for physical therapists in Mississippi in 2024 was \$95,090, less than the national average annual salary of \$102,400. The average annual salary in Mississippi was similar to the salary in Arkansas but less than the average annual salaries in Alabama, Louisiana, and Tennessee. A bachelor's degree with a major in Kinesiotherapy is offered by the University of Southern Mississippi. The University of Mississippi Medical Center offers a master’s degree for Physical Therapy Residents and a doctoral degree with a major in Physical Therapy.

Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors

“Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors advise people on a range of issues, such as those relating to alcoholism, addictions, or depression,” according to BLS. The number of counselors in Mississippi is projected to grow at a slower rate than in the U.S. over the next ten years, but both the state and nation expect faster growth compared to the average for all occupations. BLS predicts the demand for counselors will increase over the next decade “as demand rises for treatment of patients with mental and behavioral issues, including opioid addiction.” Several different types of facilities employ these counselors, including outpatient clinics, health practitioners, residential facilities for patients, and local governments. Mississippi falls in the bottom half of all states in terms of the number of counselors employed per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary for substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors in Mississippi in 2024 was \$54,120, below the national average annual salary of \$65,100. The average annual salary was higher than in Alabama, Louisiana, and Tennessee, but less than the average annual salary in Arkansas.

Table 12. Degrees and majors related to Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor's	Social Work	Social Work	Social Work	Social Work	Social Work	Social Work	Social Work
Master's/ Specialist		Counseling	Clinical Mental Health; Social Work; Counseling, Rehabilitation and Psychometric Services	Counselor Education; PK-12 Student Support		Social Work; Counselor Education	Marriage and Family Therapy; School Counseling; Social Work; Counseling Psychology
Doctoral/ Professional			Social Work	Counselor Education/Student Counseling & Guidance Services; Counselor Education		Counselor Education; Social Welfare	

Athletic Trainers

“Athletic Trainers specialize in preventing, diagnosing, and treating muscle and bone injuries and illnesses,” according to BLS. Educational institutions are among the most common employers of athletic trainers, including colleges, universities, elementary schools, and secondary schools. Other employers include doctors’ offices and sports clubs. Employment of athletic trainers in Mississippi is expected to grow at the same rate as the U.S. over the next ten years. BLS notes, “The popularity of college sports and continued participation by student athletes will increase demand for these workers to help athletes prevent and recover from injuries” In addition, an aging population that remains physically active will likely increase the demand for athletic trainers to deal with injuries. Hattiesburg, Mississippi, ranked fifth among all metropolitan areas in the U.S. in the number of athletic trainers employed per 1,000 workers in 2023. Also, in 2023 the Northeast Mississippi nonmetropolitan area was tied for first with the Kansas and North-Northeast Ohio micropolitan areas in the number of athletic trainers among all such areas with 110. Northeast Mississippi ranked second among all nonmetropolitan areas in the number of athletic trainers employed per 1,000 workers in 2023. The average annual salary of athletic trainers in Mississippi in 2024 was \$54,430, less than the U.S. average annual salary of \$63,960. This salary was about the same as the average salary in Alabama, more than the average salary in Tennessee, and less than the average salaries in Arkansas and Louisiana. In terms of degrees related to athletic trainer careers, the University of Southern Mississippi offers a bachelor's degree in Fitness and Nutrition and both the University of Mississippi and the University of Southern Mississippi offer master’s degrees with majors in Athletic Training.

Logisticians

Logisticians, according to BLS, “analyze and coordinate an organization’s supply chain, the system that moves a product from supplier to consumer. They manage a product’s entire life cycle, from design to disposal.” Numerous firms employ logisticians. Almost one fourth of logisticians in the U.S. work for manufacturing firms, and a substantial share—16%—are employed by the federal government. The number of logisticians in Mississippi is projected to grow at a slower rate than in the U.S. over the next ten years, but both the state and nation expect faster growth compared to the average for all occupations. Mississippi was in the bottom half of states in 2023 in the employment of logisticians per 1,000 workers. The average annual salary of a logistician in Mississippi in 2024 was \$79,540, less than the average annual salary for the U.S. of \$87,600. This salary was greater than the average annual salary in Tennessee, about

the same as the average annual salary in Arkansas, slightly less than the average annual salary in Louisiana, and well below the average annual salary in Alabama.

Table 13. Degrees and majors related to Logistician.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor's	Business Administration	Management	Business Administration; Supply Chain Management	Business Administration; Management; Supply Chain Logistics	Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration; Management	Business Administration; Management
Master's/ Specialist		Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration	Business Administration
Doctoral/ Professional			Business Administration	Business Administration			Business Administration	

Forensic Science Technicians

As BLS notes, “Forensic Science Technicians aid criminal investigations by collecting and analyzing evidence.” These individuals typically “specialize in either crime scene or laboratory analysis.” A majority of forensic science technicians worked for local governments in 2024 according to BLS (62%). One fourth worked for state governments. Employment of forensic science technicians in Mississippi is expected to grow at a rate similar to the U.S. over the next ten years. Advances in technology are expected to increase the demand for forensic evidence, which is likely to lead to an increase in the number of forensic science technicians. The number of forensic science technicians employed per 1,000 workers in Mississippi was near the middle of all states in 2023. The average annual salary of a forensic science technician in Mississippi in 2024 was \$57,480, considerably less than the average annual salary for the U.S. of \$75,260. This salary was more than the average annual salary in Arkansas but less than the average annual salary in Alabama and Tennessee.

Table 14. Degrees and majors related to Forensic Science Technician.

	ASU	DSU	JSU	MSU	MUW	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor's	Biology; Chemistry	Biology; Chemistry	Biology; Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry	Biology; Chemistry	Biology; Chemistry	Biological Science; Chemistry; Forensic Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry; Forensics
Master's/ Specialist			Biology; Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry			Biological Sciences; Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry
Doctoral/ Professional			Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry			Biological Sciences; Chemistry	Biological Sciences; Chemistry

Industrial Engineers

According to BLS, industrial engineers “design, develop, test, and evaluate integrated systems for managing industrial production processes, including human work factors, quality control, inventory control, logistics and material flow, cost analysis, and production coordination.” The number of industrial engineers is projected to grow at similar rates in Mississippi and the U.S. over the next decade. The number of industrial engineers is expected to increase over the next ten years according to BLS because firms will drive demand for employees to design and develop “increasingly complex manufacturing processes, logistics, and supply chains.” The aerospace manufacturing industry is one of the largest employers of industrial engineers, and the oil and gas extraction sector is one of the highest paying sectors for industrial engineers. The number of industrial engineers employed per 1,000 workers in Mississippi was in the bottom half of all states in 2023. The average annual salary of industrial engineers

in Mississippi in 2024 was \$96,060, less than the national average annual salary of \$107,900. This salary was less than in surrounding states, considerably below the average annual salary in Louisiana. Holmes Community College offers an associate’s degree with a major in Industrial Technology/Technician.

Table 15. Degrees and majors related to Industrial Engineer.

	JSU	MSU	MVSU	UM	USM
Bachelor’s	Industrial Technology	Industrial Technology; Industrial Engineering	Engineering Technology	Engineering	Industrial Engineering Technology
Master’s/ Specialist	Engineering	Engineering; Industrial and Systems Engineering			
Doctoral/ Professional	Engineering	Engineering; Industrial and Systems Engineering			

Medical Equipment Repairers

Medical Equipment Repairers “repair a wide range of electronic, electromechanical, and hydraulic equipment used in hospitals and health practitioners’ offices,” per BLS. The largest employers of medical equipment repairers are firms that sell such equipment, as well as hospitals. The number of medical equipment repairers is projected to grow at a slightly faster rate in the U.S. than in Mississippi over the next decade, but both the state and nation expect faster growth compared to the average for all occupations. The need for more medical equipment repairers is expected to increase as chronic diseases are projected to occur more frequently, requiring more equipment to monitor and diagnose these conditions. The total number of medical equipment repairers employed in Mississippi per 1,000 workers was in the bottom fourth of all states in 2023. The average annual salary of medical equipment repairers in Mississippi in 2024 was \$50,550, less than the U.S. average annual salary of \$66,810. This salary was greater than the average annual salary in Arkansas and less than the average annual salaries in Alabama, Louisiana, and Tennessee. According to BLS, “Medical equipment repairers typically need an associate’s degree or certificate in biomedical technology or a related field.” Some workers may enter the field following the completion of an apprenticeship after graduating high school.

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