

Your Career: What's Data Got to Do With It?

You've probably seen tables that show occupational data like wages, growth rate and education requirements. Some of this information is straightforward, but connecting these factors to what you want in a job can be a bit trickier. Take a look at a sample table, learn what its data means, and review how your career priorities relate to the data.

The table below includes data from North Carolina's 2012-22 occupational projections estimates, as well as education and wage information for six occupations that are similar to some military careers. (If you decide you'd like to find out more about these careers, just click the MyNextMove for Veterans hyperlink in the Occupational Title column.)

Occupational Titles	10-Year Percent Change	Average Annual Openings	Education	Work Experience	On-the-Job Training (OJT)	Entry Annual Wage	Median Annual Wage	Experienced Annual Wage
Social and Community Service Managers	36.7	155	Bachelor's degree	5 years or more	Not usually required	\$40,700	\$58,700	\$72,130
Social and Human Service Assistants	30.8	449	High school diploma or equivalent	Not usually required	Short-term OJT	\$20,260	\$27,020	\$31,710
First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	6.2	165	High school diploma or equivalent	Less than 5 years	Moderate-term OJT	\$44,200	\$59,340	\$69,410
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	6.4	732	High school diploma or equivalent	Not usually required	Moderate-term OJT	\$30,440	\$39,050	\$46,090
Emergency Management Directors	10	5	Bachelor's degree	5 years or more	None	\$46,320	\$62,970	\$78,650
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	22	482	Postsecondary non-degree award	None	None	\$23,090	\$31,190	\$36,710

Source: Labor & Economic Analysis Division, North Carolina Department of Commerce

Let's walk through the factors included in this table:

10-Year Percent Change: Estimated percent job growth or loss between 2012 and 2022. Occupations with 8 percent or greater growth typically have at least average growth, while jobs that show changes below 8 percent usually show less growth than average.*

Average Annual Openings: Estimated number of job openings, including new positions as well as replacements.

Education, Work Experience, and Job Training: Usual amount of learning required for specific occupations.

Entry, Median, and Experienced Wages: Entry level = lowest 10 percent of earners. Median wages = half the people in the occupation earn more, half earn less. Experienced wages = highest 10 percent of earners.

So, how do you use this data to make career decisions? One way is to focus on your priorities. What's most important to you? Here are several factors that people consider when thinking about a career move:

If **job security** is your priority, keep in mind that the higher the 10-year percent change, the greater the likelihood that jobs will be available. You may also want to look for occupations that have larger numbers of openings. For example, the occupations in the table above that have an 8 percent or higher 10-year percent change AND at least 150 average annual openings include Social and Community Service Managers, Social and Human Service Assistants, and EMTs. Within this small group, these jobs appear to be more secure than the others.

If your main focus is **education**, check out each type of learning and decide how well the usual requirements match your existing education, work experience, and job training. Do you want to gain additional training? If so, you may want to look at [Is College in Your Future?](#) Also, notice that in this table, each management career has an associated staff career. Several staff occupations require some on-the-job training and the potential for gaining the experience needed for moving to higher-level positions in an organization. Veterans should also talk to their employers about establishing an [apprenticeship program](#), which can help them learn new skills as they continue to draw benefits from the GI Bill.

If **income** is most important to you, then look at the wage columns. Compare Social and Community Service Managers and First-line Supervisors of Police and Detectives. Notice that while a higher level of education frequently means higher wages, experience occasionally connects with a larger salary. These two occupations are leadership positions, which typically yield higher incomes.

While occupational data provide specific information for making career decisions, other factors also affect choosing a good career. Interests, family considerations, and preferred locations are just a few of these influences. If you want to explore additional occupations, [NCWorks Online](#) and [MyNextMove for Veterans](#) are great resources.

*Since occupations can actually show negative growth, the closer an occupation's 10-year percent change is to 8 percent, the closer it is to average growth. This factor is an estimated change. If unexpected situations like Hurricane Sandy or a drastic modification in an industry occur, they are likely to affect the estimated 10-year percent change and number of annual openings.