



For release 10:00 a.m. (ET) Tuesday, December 22, 2020

USDL-20-2307

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OCCUPATIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES – 2020

On average, civilian workers spent 4.25 hours of the workday standing in 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Workers stood for 57.3 percent of the workday and spent the rest of the workday sitting. The choice to sit or stand to perform critical tasks in support of critical job functions was available to 42.5 percent of civilian workers. (See table 1.)

Chart 1. Percentage of workday spent sitting and standing by occupation, 2020

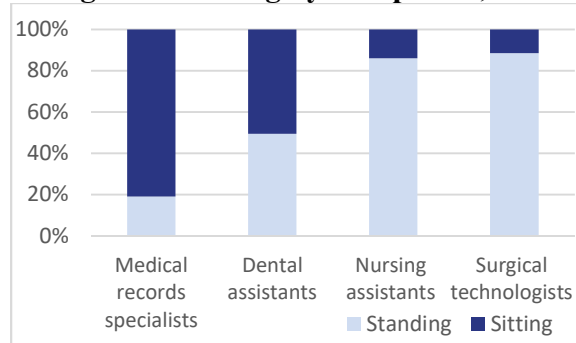
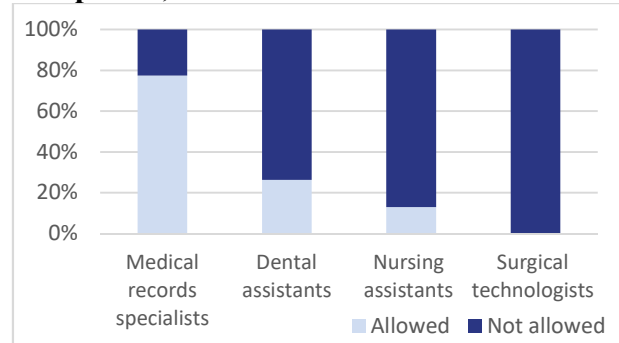


Chart 2. Ability to choose to sit or stand by occupation, 2020



Workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations spent 64.5 percent of the workday standing. These workers stood an average of 5.47 hours a day. Within this occupational group, medical records specialists spent 1.50 hours, or 19.1 percent, of the workday standing and surgical technologists stood for 8.02 hours, or 88.6 percent, of the workday. (See chart 1 and table 1.)

Seventy-one percent of the workday was spent standing for workers in healthcare support occupations with 5.04 hours standing. Within this occupational group, dental assistants spent 3.95 hours, or 49.5 percent, of the workday standing and nursing assistants stood for 7.29 hours, or 86.0 percent, of the workday. (See chart 1 and table 1.)

The choice to sit or stand was available to 32.2 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. Within this occupational group, no surgical technologists and 77.4 percent of medical records specialists had the choice between sitting and standing. (See chart 2 and table 1.)

The choice to sit or stand was available to 17.8 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations. Within this occupational group, a choice between sitting and standing was available to 13.0 percent of nursing assistants and to 26.3 percent of dental assistants. (See chart 2.)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on the 2020 Occupational Requirements Survey

The collection period for the ORS 2020 data was August 2019 through July 31, 2020. Information related to the impact of COVID-19 on the ORS is available at www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-on-workplace-injuries-and-illnesses-compensation-and-occupational-requirements.htm#ORS.

Sixteen percent of civilian workers were required to problem solve more than once per day and 58.1 percent were required to problem solve less often than monthly, including never. (See table 2.) In order to separate routine decisions from problem solving, workers must be faced with new or different problems that have no obvious solution and require time, at least 5 minutes, to consider the best solution. Situations where workers are trained to respond quickly, such as a medical emergency, do not meet the threshold for problem solving.

Thirty-five percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations were required to problem solve more than once per day. Within this occupational group, 76.5 percent of occupational therapists were required to problem solve more than once per day. (See chart 3 and table 2.)

Chart 3. With requirement to problem solve more than once per day, 2020

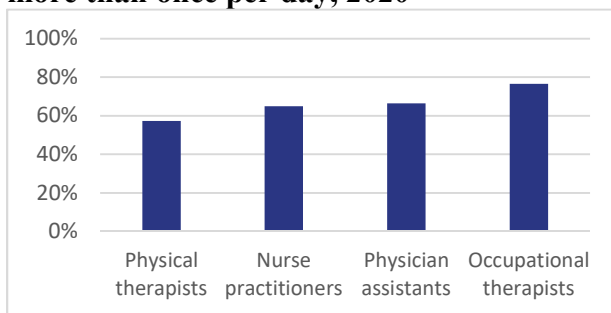
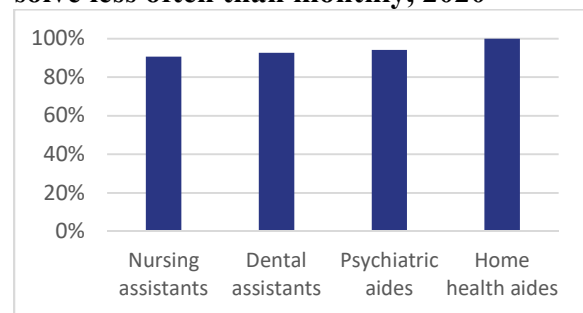


Chart 4. With requirement to problem solve less often than monthly, 2020



Ninety percent of workers in healthcare support occupations were required to problem solve less often than monthly, including never. Within this occupational group, 94.2 percent of psychiatric aides were required to problem solve less often than monthly, including never. (See chart 4 and table 2.)

Constant verbal interactions, every few minutes were present for 28.8 percent of civilian workers. (See table 3.) Occupations with this requirement include:

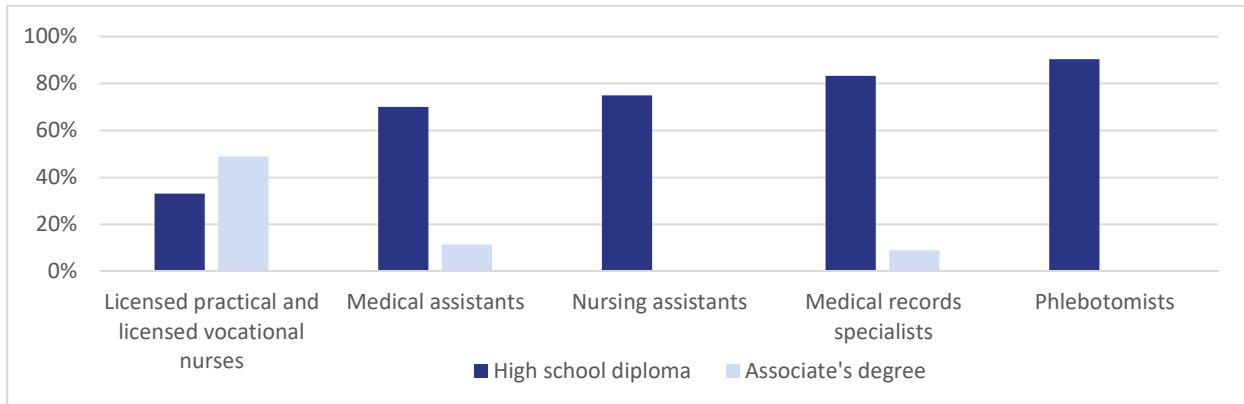
- 34.8 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations
 - 36.0 percent of nurse practitioners
 - 46.9 percent of physician assistants
- 39.1 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations
 - 22.7 percent of dental assistants
 - 56.6 percent of nursing assistants

Fifty percent of civilian workers were required to perform verbal interactions not constantly, but more than once per hour. (See table 3.) Occupations with this requirement include:

- 61.0 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations
 - 53.1 percent of physician assistants
 - 63.9 percent of nurse practitioners
- 54.1 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations
 - 42.2 percent of nursing assistants
 - 77.2 percent of dental assistants

A high school diploma was the minimum formal education required for 40.4 percent of civilian workers and an associate’s degree was required for 4.3 percent of civilian workers. A high school diploma was the minimum education required for 18.0 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations and 17.9 percent required an associate’s degree. Within this occupational group, 83.2 percent of medical records specialists needed a high school diploma to fulfill minimum formal education requirements. An associate’s degree was required for 49.0 percent of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses. (See chart 5 and table 4.)

Chart 5. Minimum formal education requirements by occupation, 2020



A high school diploma was the minimum education required for 65.3 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations and 5.4 percent required an associate’s degree. Within the occupational group, 90.3 percent of phlebotomists required a high school diploma to fulfill minimum formal education requirements. (See chart 5 and table 4.)

Exposure to wetness was present for 34.2 percent of civilian workers. (See table 5.)

- Wetness was present for 76.7 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. Within this occupational group, 89.0 percent of dental hygienists and 90.0 percent of emergency medical technicians were exposed to wetness.
- Wetness was present for 86.1 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations. Within this occupational group, 94.8 percent of psychiatric aides and 96.1 percent of nursing assistants were exposed to wetness.

Outdoor exposure was present for 33.8 percent of civilian workers. The other 66.2 percent of civilian workers were not exposed to the outdoors. (See table 5.)

- Exposure to the outdoors was required for 8.7 percent of workers in healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. Within this occupational group, 88.7 percent of emergency medical technicians were exposed to the outdoors and 98.2 percent of pharmacy technicians were not exposed to the outdoors.
- Outdoor exposure was present for 35.8 percent of workers in healthcare support occupations. Within this occupational group, 74.0 percent of home health aides were exposed to the outdoors and 100.0 percent of dental assistants were not exposed to the outdoors.

Technical Note

The Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) provides job-related information about the physical demands; environmental conditions; education, training, and experience; as well as cognitive and mental requirements in the U.S. economy.

Additional job requirement estimates are available at www.bls.gov/web/ors/ors-complete-dataset.xlsx and www.bls.gov/ors/data.htm. For information on estimation concepts and methods see the Handbook of Methods at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/ors/home.htm and www.bls.gov/ors/questions-and-answers.htm.

Sample size: The ORS is a nationally representative establishment-based survey. Estimates are produced from a probability sample of 20,000 establishments. There were 10,400 private industry and 2,300 state and local government responding establishments that provided approximately 59,700 occupational observations. The 2020 estimates represent 128,529,000 civilian workers.

These estimates are from two of five sample groups and are considered preliminary. Data from all five sample groups collected between September 2018 and July 2023 will be aggregated to produce the final estimates with an expected reference year of 2023.

Standard errors: To assist users in ascertaining the reliability of ORS estimates, standard errors are made available with the release. Standard errors provide users a measure of the precision of an estimate to ensure that it is within an acceptable range for their intended purpose.

Collected and imputed data are included in the standard error calculation. For further information and how to use the standard errors see www.bls.gov/ors/se.htm.

Major terms: Additional terminology and concepts are explained in the collection manual at www.bls.gov/ors/information-for-survey-participants/pdf/occupational-requirements-survey-collection-manual-082019.pdf and the Handbook of Methods at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/ors/home.htm.

Critical job function - This is the main purpose and the primary pay factor for the job. It consists of critical tasks that are integral to the job.

Critical tasks - Activities workers must perform to carry out their critical job function(s).

Sitting is present when workers remain in a seated position or are lying down. When workers may choose between sitting and standing, that work time is included in sitting for the hours and percent of workday estimates.

Standing is present when workers are walking or in low postures.

Choice of sitting or standing is present when workers can alternate between positions, and three conditions exist: (1) workers typically have the flexibility to choose between sitting and standing throughout the workday; (2) there are no assigned periods during the workday to sit or stand; and (3) no external factors determine whether workers must sit or stand.

Table 1. Percentage of workers with sitting and standing requirements, 2020

Occupation and occupational group	Average hours of sitting		Average percent of workday spent sitting		Average hours of standing		Average percent of workday spent standing		Choice of sitting or standing		
	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error	Allowed	Not allowed	Standard error
All workers	3.37	[1]	42.7	0.5	4.25	[1]	57.3	0.5	42.5	57.5	0.6
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	2.95	0.09	35.5	1.1	5.47	0.12	64.5	1.1	32.2	67.8	1.8
Pharmacists	1.62	0.13	24.8	3.4	5.73	0.37	75.2	3.4	45.2	54.8	7.5
Physician assistants	3.38	0.29	36.4	2.5	5.64	0.23	63.6	2.5	64.8	35.2	10.3
Physical therapists	1.70	0.21	23.2	2.8	5.69	0.30	76.8	2.8	42.7	57.3	10.6
Respiratory therapists	2.80	0.34	30.9	4.3	6.55	0.56	69.1	4.3	-	-	-
Registered nurses	2.61	0.18	30.3	1.8	6.24	0.12	69.7	1.8	22.5	77.5	4.6
Nurse midwives	3.04	0.48	37.4	5.9	5.17	0.56	62.6	5.9	-	-	-
Nurse practitioners	2.97	0.60	37.3	7.2	4.99	0.51	62.7	7.2	40.4	59.6	13.1
Dental hygienists	5.42	0.40	70.3	3.7	2.29	0.27	29.7	3.7	-	-	-
Medical and clinical laboratory technicians	3.56	0.36	43.1	4.0	4.45	0.34	56.9	4.0	45.6	54.4	10.8
Magnetic resonance imaging technologists	-	-	35.0	6.9	4.90	0.39	65.0	6.9	-	-	-
Emergency medical technicians	5.34	1.26	46.2	7.4	5.99	0.91	53.8	7.4	-	100.0	[2]
Pharmacy technicians	1.01	0.37	12.7	4.6	6.36	0.42	87.3	4.6	32.2	67.8	9.5
Surgical technologists	1.01	0.2	11.4	2.6	8.02	0.69	88.6	2.6	-	100	[2]
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	2.42	0.25	27.9	2.8	6.17	0.24	72.1	2.8	15.5	84.5	3.5
Medical records specialists	6.42	0.21	80.9	2.4	1.50	0.18	19.1	2.4	77.4	22.6	9.3
Opticians, dispensing	4.40	0.89	58.6	13.0	3.23	1.04	41.4	13.0	-	-	-
Healthcare support occupations	2.08	0.09	29.0	1.1	5.04	0.08	71.0	1.1	17.8	82.2	3.9
Personal care aides	1.68	0.07	25.4	2.1	4.68	0.23	74.6	2.1	14.5	85.5	6.5
Nursing assistants	1.20	0.09	14.0	0.9	7.29	0.31	86.0	0.9	13.0	87.0	4.5
Psychiatric aides	1.85	0.40	23.4	5.0	6.08	0.41	76.6	5.0	-	-	-
Occupational therapy assistants	2.66	0.47	33.5	5.8	5.26	0.46	66.5	5.8	-	-	-
Physical therapist assistants	2.16	0.27	27.0	3.3	5.97	0.40	73.0	3.3	-	-	-
Dental assistants	4.04	0.20	50.5	2.4	3.95	0.22	49.5	2.4	26.3	73.7	9.0
Phlebotomists	2.63	0.62	33.2	7.2	5.16	0.50	66.8	7.2	-	-	-

[1] Standard error is less than 0.05.

[2] Standard error is less than 0.5.

Note: Dashes indicate that estimate was not publishable or there are no workers with the requirement. Due to rounding, sum of estimates may not equal 100 percent.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Table 2. Percentage of workers with problem solving requirements, 2020

Occupational group and detailed occupation by frequency	Required	Standard error
More than once per day		
All workers	16.0	0.5
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	35.0	2.7
Physician assistants	66.5	8.3
Occupational therapists	76.5	8.0
Physical therapists	57.3	7.9
Nurse practitioners	65.0	10.3
Obstetricians and gynecologists	68.2	16.4
Emergency medical technicians	27.7	8.9
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	15.0	4.0
Medical records specialists	9.6	3.2
Less often than monthly, including never		
All workers	58.1	[1]
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	30.4	2.0
Dental hygienists	68.8	6.5
Emergency medical technicians	49.6	13.2
Pharmacy technicians	92.1	5.0
Surgical technologists	94.7	4.2
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	57.3	3.5
Medical records specialists	61.5	6.8
Healthcare support occupations	90.0	1.2
Home health aides	100.0	[1]
Personal care aides	92.6	1.0
Nursing assistants	90.7	5.9
Psychiatric aides	94.2	3.8
Physical therapist assistants	72.6	14.3
Dental assistants	92.6	3.5
Medical assistants	76.9	5.0
Medical equipment preparers	92.7	3.3
Phlebotomists	84.7	9.1

[1] Standard error is less than 0.5.

Note: This table does not include all categories of problem solving frequency

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Table 3. Percentage of workers with verbal interaction requirements, 2020

Occupational group and detailed occupation	Required constantly, every few minutes		Required not constantly, but more than once per hour	
	Estimate	Standard error	Estimate	Standard error
All workers	28.8	0.6	50.0	0.6
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	34.8	2.0	61.0	1.8
Pharmacists	58.8	8.3	32.8	6.7
Physician assistants	46.9	10.9	53.1	10.9
Occupational therapists	34.0	13.2	65.9	13.2
Physical therapists	48.6	10.8	48.2	10.8
Recreational therapists	36.3	7.1	61.1	8.0
Respiratory therapists	-	-	73.0	12.0
Speech-language pathologists	59.1	11.5	40.7	11.4
Registered nurses	35.6	4.2	62.7	4.0
Nurse midwives	-	-	87.4	9.0
Nurse practitioners	36.0	9.3	63.9	9.3
Obstetricians and gynecologists	-	-	77.9	8.9
Dental hygienists	-	-	78.1	5.4
Medical and clinical laboratory technicians	-	-	65.6	10.5
Cardiovascular technologists and technicians	-	-	81.7	10.6
Diagnostic medical sonographers	-	-	88.4	6.2
Nuclear medicine technologists	24.5	7.1	69.9	7.6
Emergency medical technicians	28.9	6.3	59.8	8.0
Pharmacy technicians	44.8	7.1	55.1	7.2
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	47.8	5.1	51.1	4.9
Medical records specialists	-	-	53.0	6.5
Opticians, dispensing	-	-	88.3	7.2
Genetic counselors	-	-	57.4	9.9
Healthcare support occupations	39.1	2.5	54.1	1.8
Home health aides	-	-	66.0	15.4
Personal care aides	39.1	5.3	50.8	7.6
Nursing assistants	56.6	9.3	42.2	9.0
Psychiatric aides	-	-	77.4	13
Physical therapist assistants	75.0	13.9	-	-
Dental assistants	22.7	4.9	77.2	4.9
Medical assistants	53.6	6.8	46.1	6.7
Phlebotomists	65.9	14.1	34.1	14.1

Note: Dashes indicate that estimate was not publishable or there are no workers with the requirement. This table does not include all categories of verbal interaction frequency

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Table 4. Percentage of workers with minimum formal education requirements, 2020

Occupational group and detailed occupation by minimum formal education	Required	Standard error
High school diploma		
All workers	40.4	0.7
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	18.0	1.7
Recreational therapists	12.6	4.8
Medical and clinical laboratory technicians	45.3	12.0
Nuclear medicine technologists	7.0	3.1
Emergency medical technicians	81.1	7.5
Pharmacy technicians	85.8	6.0
Surgical technologists	58.1	16.6
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	33.1	8.3
Medical records specialists	83.2	5.2
Healthcare support occupations	65.3	3.1
Home health aides	58.7	13.7
Personal care aides	62.0	7.5
Nursing assistants	74.9	6.7
Psychiatric aides	83.8	8.8
Dental assistants	62.3	8.4
Medical assistants	70.1	7.1
Medical equipment preparers	100.0	[1]
Phlebotomists	90.3	9.1
Associate's degree		
All workers	4.3	[1]
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	17.9	1.3
Radiation therapists	13.7	5.5
Respiratory therapists	40.0	13.7
Registered nurses	24.9	2.8
Diagnostic medical sonographers	16.5	5.2
Nuclear medicine technologists	26.5	6.6
Radiologic technologists and technicians	29.6	8.2
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	49.0	6.1
Medical records specialists	9.1	2.4
Healthcare support occupations	5.4	1.0
Occupational therapy assistants	62.6	14.6
Physical therapist assistants	65.6	11.2
Medical assistants	11.5	4.1

[1] Standard error is less than 0.5.

Note: Dashes indicate that estimate was not publishable or there are no workers with the requirement. This table does not include all categories of minimum formal

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey

Table 5. Percentage of workers with environmental exposure requirements, 2020

Occupation and occupational group	Exposure to wetness			Exposure to the outdoors		
	Required	Not required	Standard error	Required	Not required	Standard error
All workers	34.2	65.8	0.6	33.8	66.2	0.5
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	76.7	23.3	1.6	8.7	91.3	0.7
Pharmacists	63.9	36.1	8.9	-	100.0	[1]
Physician assistants	90.2	-	4.7	-	100.0	[1]
Occupational therapists	83.6	16.4	7.9	-	90.3	[1]
Physical therapists	67.5	32.5	10.7	-	85.5	9.0
Radiation therapists	57.8	-	15.6	-	99.2	0.9
Recreational therapists	54.0	46.0	7.9	63.9	36.1	8.8
Respiratory therapists	74.0	-	13.1	-	100.0	[1]
Speech-language pathologists	26.0	74.0	9.3	-	96.0	3.5
Exercise physiologists	63.3	36.7	10.8	-	97.5	1.0
Registered nurses	87.2	12.8	3.3	3.6	96.4	1.0
Nurse midwives	97.9	-	2.7	-	100.0	[1]
Nurse practitioners	81.9	-	10.2	-	100.0	[1]
Obstetricians and gynecologists	89.1	-	8.8	-	100.0	[1]
Dental hygienists	89.0	-	9.8	-	100.0	[1]
Medical and clinical laboratory technologists	85.1	-	9.8	-	100.0	[1]
Medical and clinical laboratory technicians	84.7	-	4.6	-	100.0	[1]
Cardiovascular technologists and technicians	78.1	-	10.4	-	100.0	[1]
Diagnostic medical sonographers	83.7	-	3.4	-	100.0	[1]
Nuclear medicine technologists	76.1	-	5.4	-	100.0	[1]
Emergency medical technicians	90.0	-	3.7	88.7	-	2.1
Pharmacy technicians	38.6	61.4	8.5	-	98.2	1.7
Surgical technologists	98.6	-	1.2	-	100.0	[1]
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	87.0	13	3.4	21.9	78.1	4.2
Opticians, dispensing	66.0	-	16	-	100.0	[1]
Healthcare support occupations	86.1	13.9	1.9	35.8	64.2	2.0
Home health aides	91.1	-	2.7	74.0	26.0	8.2
Personal care aides	84.1	15.9	3.9	54.9	45.1	6.3
Nursing assistants	96.1	-	1.8	21.9	78.1	3.8
Psychiatric aides	94.8	-	4.1	-	-	-
Occupational therapy assistants	95.7	-	1.5	-	87.2	5.4
Physical therapist assistants	88.7	11.3	4.4	-	76.2	7.9
Dental assistants	89.9	-	5.7	-	100.0	[1]
Medical assistants	82.9	-	8.8	-	99.7	[1]
Medical equipment preparers	91.1	-	8.5	-	100.0	[1]
Phlebotomists	90.4	-	8.3	-	100.0	[1]

[1] Standard error is less than 0.5.

Note: Dashes indicate that estimate was not publishable or there are no workers with the requirement. Due to rounding, sum of estimates may not equal 100 percent.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Requirements Survey