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25 careers with a strong outlook

Growing faster than average, paying more than the typical U.S. job, and not among the jobs the government expects AI to shrink. Ranked by how many openings each has every year.

831	242	9 of 25
careers checked	pass all three tests	need no bachelor's degree

HOW A CAREER MADE THIS LIST

1. **Growing faster than average.** Jobs are projected to grow more than 3.5% from 2025 to 2035, the average for all jobs.
2. **Pays more than the typical job.** Median pay is above $50,980, the median for all U.S. workers (May 2025).
3. **Not expected to shrink because of AI.** The Bureau of Labor Statistics names AI as a reason the share of jobs falls for 44 careers. None of them are here.

Then ranked by openings per year, the jobs that come open from growth and from people retiring or changing careers.

The 25 careers

Tap any title for the full picture: pay in your state, shorter training paths, related majors, and colleges.

01 General and operations managers

Keep a business running: people, budgets, operations and priorities.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$105,770	$253,390	+5.0%	285,000	Bachelor's degree

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02 Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers

Haul freight across the country.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$58,640	$79,380	+3.8%	214,500	Postsecondary certificate + short-term on-the-job training NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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03 Registered nurses

Care for patients. Coordinate treatment. Be the constant at the bedside.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$97,550	$137,470	+5.6%	180,800	Bachelor's degree

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04 Accountants and auditors

Keep the numbers honest for businesses, governments and families, from audits to tax returns.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$83,680	$144,090	+5.0%	115,300	Bachelor's degree

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05 Software developers

Build systems. Solve problems. Create things that scale.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$135,980	$214,670	+10.2%	95,300	Bachelor's degree

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06 Management analysts

Help organizations work better, one problem at a time.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$101,860	$171,640	+10.1%	94,100	Bachelor's degree

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07 Market research analysts and marketing specialists

Study what people want and how to reach them.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$78,760	$155,480	+7.0%	82,000	Bachelor's degree

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08 Project management specialists

Keep projects on time, on budget and on track.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$102,320	$167,970	+6.7%	76,500	Bachelor's degree

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09 Human resources specialists

Recruit, hire and support the people an organization runs on.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$75,940	$128,720	+6.4%	73,700	Bachelor's degree

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10 Electricians

Power buildings, machines and the grid, one circuit at a time.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$63,190	$108,510	+9.2%	72,700	High school diploma + apprenticeship NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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11 First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers

Lead construction crews on the job site.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$79,920	$128,260	+5.0%	67,000	High school diploma NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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12 Financial managers

Guard an organization's money and plan how it grows.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$166,570	$323,270	+9.7%	65,600	Bachelor's degree

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13 Carpenters

Build and repair the wooden frameworks of buildings.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$60,580	$99,910	+3.9%	62,800	High school diploma + apprenticeship NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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14 Medical and health services managers

Run the business side of healthcare so clinicians can care for patients.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$123,860	$224,340	+24.2%	62,300	Bachelor's degree

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15 Computer and information systems managers

Lead the technology an organization runs on.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$175,140	$297,510	+15.8%	53,500	Bachelor's degree

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16 Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors

Walk with people through addiction, crisis and recovery, and help them build healthier lives.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$59,350	$97,590	+18.4%	50,500	Master's degree + internship/residency

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17 Construction managers

Turn plans into buildings, on budget and on schedule.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$114,990	$189,440	+9.1%	49,700	Bachelor's degree + moderate-term on-the-job training

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18 First-line supervisors of mechanics, installers, and repairers

Lead the mechanics and technicians who fix things.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$79,860	$126,790	+4.1%	48,900	High school diploma NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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19 Sales managers

Lead the teams that bring in the revenue.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$148,270	$290,540	+4.5%	47,300	Bachelor's degree

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20 Buyers and purchasing agents

Find, evaluate and buy what an organization needs.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$77,710	$128,870	+6.0%	47,200	Bachelor's degree + moderate-term on-the-job training

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21 Training and development specialists

Teach people the skills their jobs require.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$69,280	$123,250	+10.8%	46,000	Bachelor's degree

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22 Industrial machinery mechanics

Keep factory machinery running.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$64,520	$95,170	+17.8%	44,400	High school diploma + long-term on-the-job training NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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23 Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters

Install and repair the pipes buildings run on.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$63,800	$108,420	+6.8%	42,000	High school diploma + apprenticeship NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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24 Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers

Keep buildings warm, cool and comfortable.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$61,010	$95,210	+10.9%	40,600	Postsecondary certificate + long-term on-the-job training NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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25 Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators

Run bulldozers, excavators and other heavy equipment.

MEDIAN PAY	TOP 10% EARN	GROWTH 2025–35	OPENINGS / YEAR	TYPICAL ENTRY
$59,850	$101,090	+4.6%	39,200	High school diploma + moderate-term on-the-job training NO BACHELOR'S NEEDED

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How to use this list

Treat it as a place to start looking, not a ranking of the best careers. A career with fewer openings can still be the right one for you, and every number here is a national figure. Pay and openings vary a lot by place.

Before you commit to a path, check three things on the career's page: what it pays where you plan to live, how long the training takes and what it costs, and what the people already doing it say about the work.

What “not expected to shrink because of AI” means

In its 2025–35 projections, the Bureau of Labor Statistics lists the factors it expects to change each occupation's share of jobs. For some careers it names AI as a reason that share decreases. None of the careers on this list are among them. That is a forecast, not a guarantee: AI will likely change how most of these jobs are done, even where BLS doesn't expect it to reduce how many there are.

Where the numbers come from

Growth, openings, median pay, and typical entry. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections 2025–35 (median pay is May 2025). www.bls.gov/emp/

Top 10% earn. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2025 (90th percentile). Where BLS publishes only that pay is $239,200 or more, the guide says “at least”. www.bls.gov/oes/

AI as a factor. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections 2025–35, factors affecting occupational share. www.bls.gov/emp/

Built from the data on November 11, 2026. This guide is information, not career, financial or legal advice. Full method: vocationalindex.com/method/

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