



VITAL WORK FORCE STATISTICS

The Changing World of Work

- Between 1900 and 2003, the percentage of the work force that is white collar grew from less than 18% of the work force to 60.5%.¹
- While manual workers comprised 41% of the work force in 1950, by 2003, their proportion had shrunk to less than 23% of the work force.²
- The work force is more equally comprised of men and women. In 2003, women accounted for almost 47% of the work force, up from 29% in 1950.³
- Women are the majority of professional, technical, and administrative support workers.⁴

Unions Reflect Changes in the Work Force

- White collar workers account for 50.5% of all union members.⁵
- There are more union members among professionals than any other occupational group.⁶
- In 2003, 4.6 million professional and related workers were union members; 5.2 million were represented by unions.⁷
- Union representation among professionals and related workers was about 21% in 2003, while union representation was less than 14.3% among the total work force.⁸
- Significant numbers of administrative support workers are represented by unions, 2,375,000, or 12.5% of all such workers.⁹
- Women comprised 44% of the labor movement in 2003, up from 19% in 1962.¹⁰
- Women are forming and joining unions at a faster rate than men. Fifty-five percent of all newly organized workers are women.¹¹

Rapid Growth in Professional and Related Occupations

- Employment in professional and related occupations is projected to grow faster and to add more workers (6.5 million) than any other major occupational group. This amounts to a 23.3% increase in employment for professional and technical workers between 2002 and 2012. (Total U.S. employment is projected to increase by less than 15% over this period.)¹²
- Three-tenths of the growth in these occupations is projected to take place in healthcare and social services, one-quarter in government, and one-seventh in professional, scientific and technical services.¹³
- Of the eight subgroups in the professional and related occupations category, three subgroups—education, training and library occupations; healthcare practitioners and

technicians; and computer and mathematical occupations—should account for 75% of the job growth in this category.¹⁴

- A 6.1% increase is projected for self-employed professional and related occupations. Most growth among self-employed is projected for two groups—arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations; and computer and mathematical occupations.¹⁵
- Health care practitioners and technical occupations are projected to add more than 1.7 million jobs between 2002 and 2012. Registered nurses will account for more than one-third of these jobs. Registered nurse is the occupation projected to experience the largest job growth between 2002 and 2012, increasing from 2.3 million–2.9 million.¹⁶
- Education, training and library occupations are projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations, adding 2.1 million jobs.¹⁷
- Seven out of the 10 fastest-growing occupations are healthcare support occupations, such as physician’s assistants. These occupations are expected to add almost 800,000 jobs by 2012.
- In the previous Bureau of Labor Statistics’ projection period, 2000–2010, eight of the fastest-growing occupations were computer-related, or information technology (IT), occupations. In the updated projections only three IT occupations remain, which together are expected to add some 400,000 jobs between 2002 and 2012.¹⁸
- Almost 28 million Americans (20.3%) of the work force were employed in the professions and as highly skilled technicians in 2003. By 2012, more than 34.1 million (almost 21% of the work force) are expected to be employed in these occupations.¹⁹

The Service Sector: More Jobs and Degrees

- The service sector will continue to be the dominant employment generator in the economy, adding 20.8 million jobs by 2012. Over half of all new jobs created in the U.S. between 2002 and 2012 are expected to be in the service and professional and related occupations.²⁰
- While employment in the service sector increases by 20.1%, manufacturing is expected to increase by only 3% between 2002 and 2012.²¹
- Six of the 10 fastest-growing occupations require a Bachelor’s or Associate Degree, and 21 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations requires a postsecondary award. The two occupations expected to add the largest number of new jobs by 2012—registered nurses and postsecondary teachers, which together are expected to add more than 1.2 million new jobs—both require degrees.²²
- The number of bachelor’s degrees expected to be conferred in 2012 is 21% greater than in 2000; the number of master’s degrees, 19% greater; first-professional, 20% greater; and PhDs, 5% greater.²³

Women: More Degrees and Still Unequal Pay

- Women have been earning more bachelor’s degrees than men since 1982, and more master’s degrees than men since 1981. In 2003 (the most recent data), women were expected to earn 55% of all bachelor’s degrees, 59% of all master’s, 43% of all doctorates, and 46% of all first professional degrees. These trends are expected to continue and the gap between men and women earning professional and doctoral degrees will narrow.²⁴

- Women are the majority of service sector workers. Equal pay remains a problem in every occupational category, despite the number of degrees earned by women. In 2003, professional and technical women earned almost 27% less than their male counterparts; women in office and administrative support occupations earned more than 12% less than their male counterparts; women in sales occupations earned 38% less than similarly employed men, while women in service occupations earned almost 16% less than men in service occupations.²⁵

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the U.S., Colonial Times to 1970*, 1975; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*, 2004, www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Perspectives on Working Women*, Bulletin 2080; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*, 2003.

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey*, 2003.

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *News*, “Union Members in 2004”, USDL 04-148, 2004.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bronfenbrenner, K., “Organizing Women Workers in the Global Economy: Findings from NLRB Certification Elections—1998–1999”, 2001.

¹² Hecker, Daniel, “Occupational Employment Projections to 2012”, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 127, No. 2, Feb. 2004.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2002*.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2001*.

²⁵ *Current Population Survey*, op. cit.

For further information on professional workers, check out DPE’s Web site: www.dpeaflcio.org.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 25 AFL-CIO unions representing four million people working in professional, technical and administrative support occupations. DPE-affiliated unions represent: teachers, college professors and school administrators; library workers; nurses, doctors and other health care professionals; engineers, scientists and IT workers; journalists and writers, broadcast technicians and communications specialists; performing and visual artists; professional athletes; professional firefighters; psychologists, social workers and many others. DPE was chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1977 in recognition of the rapidly-growing professional and technical occupations.

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