These are the fastest-growing jobs in Iowa — and how much they pay

A college degree can be half as long as you expect, and that’s not just in Iowa. Over the last quarter, Des Moines Register reporters have tracked the fastest-growing job sectors in the state. Here are the top 10 in 2018, their expected growth rates and the average salary for new hires.

1. Nurse Practitioners: 13.2 percent
   Average salary: $86,000

2. Physician Assistants: 8.9 percent
   Average salary: $84,000

3. Optometric Technicians: 7.6 percent
   Average salary: $61,000

4. Information Security Analysts: 6.8 percent
   Average salary: $76,000

5. Laboratory Technicians: 6.1 percent
   Average salary: $53,000

6. Wind Turbine Technicians: 5.8 percent
   Average salary: $71,000

7. Air Traffic Controllers: 5.2 percent
   Average salary: $113,000

8. Home Health Aides: 4.6 percent
   Average salary: $32,000

9. Personal Care Aides: 4.3 percent
   Average salary: $25,000

10. Hospital Lobbyists: 3.5 percent
    Average salary: $58,000

The fastest-growing jobs in Iowa are driven by a variety of factors, including population growth, technological advancements and changes in the healthcare industry. These jobs not only provide employment opportunities but also contribute to the state’s economy and workforce development.
Number of Jobs breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wind Turbine Service Technician</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations Research Analyst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Security Analyst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Health Aide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Aide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Agents and Travel Clerk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Practitioner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory Therapists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician Assistants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5%

The top 10 fastest-growing jobs make up 1.5% of Iowa jobs in 2017


Jobs predictions: What do they mean?

Each state creates jobs projections to help inform policy making.

Not only is it helpful for communities to see where most growth is going to occur, but it also helps for community colleges and making sure we're not training people for jobs that don't exist," said Todd, with United Way.

While they can inform decision making, the government figures only go so far, said Rob Denson, president of Des Moines Area Community College.
"These jobs are well educated. People," he said, "but they're just projections. There's too much flexibility for certain occupations can vary across the state." Denson said employees in the Des Moines metro area mostly express need for truck drivers, nurses, information technology workers and nurses.

"These are the areas we get the largest push for all the time from DMACC careers employees," he said. "It's been consistent even through the recession. These jobs have been almost recession-proof.

While pay for some low-skilled workers remains stagnant low, particularly for direct care workers like nursing assistants, Denson said the slight labor market appears to be driving wages in many occupations.

"Supply and demand works: Iowa used to be known as a low-pay state," Denson said. "It really is as much as it Tuell to be. We've got such great companies here and there's so much demand for that people.

Fastest-growing jobs in Iowa

This chart shows the jobs in Iowa expected to add the most numbers between 2017 and 2018. Each bar represents the expected number of jobs added from 2017 to 2018.


Median hourly wage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>Median Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses (R.N.)</td>
<td>$37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Representative (Customer Service)</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers and Freight Stock, and Material Movers (Laborers and Freight)</td>
<td>$11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Health Aide (Home Health Aide)</td>
<td>$13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (Heavy and Tractor-Trailer)</td>
<td>$18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Laborers (Construction Laborers)</td>
<td>$18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Aides (Personal Care Aides)</td>
<td>$11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direct care workers: High demand, low pay

Iowa’s home care aides, licensed practical nurses and personal care assistants work between $16 and $113.50 per hour, said Dr. Fulton, executive director of Iowa Carpenters.

That’s far below the state’s median wage of $37,376.

Iowa Carpenters, an association that advocates for Carpenters and home care aides, recently held 13 listening sessions with health care employers.

Many are struggling to fill their current vacancies, one said. And the projections foresee increased need for home health aides and personal care aides through 2029. (They also expressed concern about the age of the workforce and the number of re-entrants they expected over the next few years.) Fulton said, “Employers also said that the reason they can’t find and keep people is because of the low wages and lack of benefits.”

More: How Broadway is changing lives in its north mobile-aid neighborhood

The demand for employees has driven up wages

Jessica Dunker, president and CEO of the Iowa Restaurant Association, said her industry expects net growth of 1,500 jobs per year over the next decade in Iowa.

“Since we see a lot of baby boomers retiring, we can fill those positions,” Dunker said.

Iowa’s population is increasing slowly. So why the need for more and more restaurant workers?

Dunker points to long-term trends about how consumers purchase food. In 1999, 26 percent of U.S. food dollars were spent on purchases outside the home, mostly restaurants. Now, every-day Americans spend more than half their food budget on eating away from home, Dunker said.

“It’s changing consumer habits,” she said. “And more and more of the food dollar is going to a gluten-free menu.”