








# Tax Preparers

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

March 2026

## Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 <b>Do Not Proceed with New Program</b>	 	 	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma or Equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than a HS Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	
<b>The COE defers to the region</b>	<div style="text-align: center;">HIGH</div> 	<div style="text-align: center;">HIGH</div> 	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region's community colleges with strategic planning and program development. According to available data, *Tax Preparers* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 138 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and 10 institutions supply 694 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is an oversupply in the labor market. Entry-level and median wages are below the living wage. This brief recommends that the colleges do not proceed with developing a new program for this occupation and defers to the region for a program modification because 1) there is an estimated oversupply in San Diego; 2) this occupation's entry-level and median wages are below the living wage.

## Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational code in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)<sup>1</sup> system:

**Tax Preparers (SOC 13-2082):** Prepare tax returns for individuals or small businesses. May specialize in a particular field, style, or phase of interior design. Sample reported job titles include:

- Tax Consultant
- Tax Specialist
- Income Tax Preparer
- Enrolled Agent
- Tax Professional
- Tax Associate
- Corporate Tax Preparer
- Tax Advisor
- Tax Accountant

## Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2024 and 2029, *Tax Preparers* are projected to decrease by **one net job** or **zero percent** (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire **138** workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.

**Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Tax Preparers (2024-2029)<sup>2</sup>**

Occupational Title	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	2024 - 2029 Net Jobs Change	2024 - 2029 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Tax Preparers	1,215	1,214	-1	0%	138

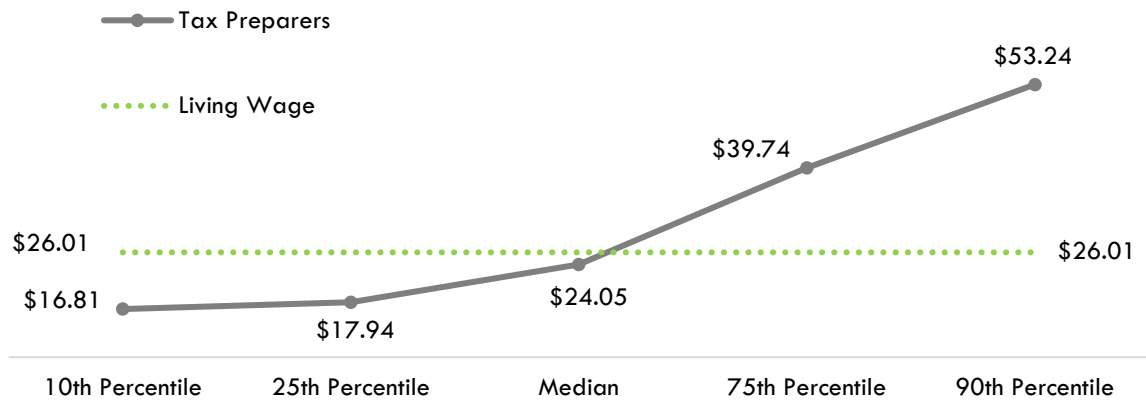
<sup>1</sup> The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>.

<sup>2</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

## Earnings

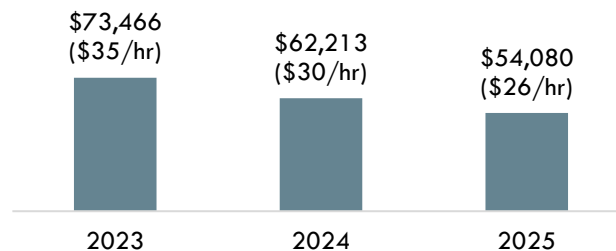
According to traditional<sup>3</sup> labor market information (LMI), *Tax Preparers* had entry-level hourly earnings of \$17.94—or \$37,315.20 annual salary<sup>4</sup>; this is less than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 2).<sup>5</sup>

**Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings<sup>6</sup> for Tax Preparers in San Diego County<sup>7</sup>**



In online job postings, employers advertised between \$26 to \$35 per hour between January 1, 2023 and December 30, 2025 for *Tax Preparers* in San Diego County (Exhibit 3).<sup>8</sup> This suggests that, while employer-advertised wages in online job postings were initially higher than entry-level wages reported in traditional labor market information, they declined over the period analyzed.

**Exhibit 3: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings  
for Tax Preparers in San Diego County (2023-2025)\***



\*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

<sup>3</sup> Traditional LMI is generally historical data captured by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) or the California Employment Development Department (EDD). It does not account for recent technological, economic, or legislative changes that may affect labor market demand and wages.

<sup>4</sup> Annualized salaries assume a full-time position with 2,080 hours. Multiplying the hourly wage with 2,080 yields the annual salary.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. [selfsufficiencystandard.org/California](https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California).

<sup>6</sup> 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>8</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

## Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to EDD and BLS), *Tax Preparers* have a national educational attainment of a [high school diploma or equivalent](#) (Exhibit 4).<sup>9</sup>

**Exhibit 4: National Educational Attainment for Tax Preparers<sup>10</sup>**

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Tax Preparers	High school diploma or equivalent

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 in San Diego County had a [bachelor's degree](#) as the most requested educational requirement for *Tax Preparers*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 5).<sup>11</sup>

**Exhibit 5: Top Certifications for Tax Preparers in San Diego County  
in Online Job Postings (2023-2025)<sup>12</sup>**

1. Certified Public Accountant
2. Enrolled Agent (EA)

## Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. There are [two](#) TOP codes and [two](#) CIP codes related to *Tax Preparers* (Exhibit 6).

**Exhibit 6: Related TOP and CIP Codes for Tax Preparers<sup>13</sup>**

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 0502.00	Accounting
TOP 0502.10	Tax Studies
CIP 52.0301	Accounting
CIP 52.0302	Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping
CIP 52.1601	Taxation

<sup>9</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>10</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>11</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

<sup>12</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

<sup>13</sup> This brief uses a conservative estimate of program supply and only calculates awards from the TOP code listed in Exhibit 6.

According to TOP data, eight community colleges supply the region with awards for this occupation: Cuyamaca College, MiraCosta College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa College, San Diego Miramar College, and Southwestern College. According to CIP data, two non-community-college institutions supply the region with awards, Escondido Adult School and Poway Adult School (Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions (Program Year 2020-21 Through Program Year 2023-24 Average)**

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
0502.00	Accounting	<b>615</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>615</b>
	Cuyamaca	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	8	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	2	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	2	0	
	MiraCosta	<b>101</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	32	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	29	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	11	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	29	0	
	Palomar	<b>64</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	19	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	22	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	5	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	18	0	
	SD City	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	10	0	

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
	<b>SD College of Cont. Ed.</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Noncredit 288 < 480 hrs	42	0	
	• Noncredit 288 < 480 hrs	253	0	
	<b>SD Mesa</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	20	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	5	0	
	<b>SD Miramar</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	16	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	7	0	
	<b>Southwestern</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	42	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	16	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	3	0	
<b>0502.10</b>	<b>Tax Studies</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>MiraCosta</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	9	0	
<b>52.0301</b>	<b>Accounting</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Escondido Adult School</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	
	• Certificate < 1 yr	0	15	
	<b>Poway Adult School</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	
	• Certificate < 1 yr	0	23	
<b>52.0302</b>	<b>Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>Escondido Adult School</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	
	• Certificate < 1 yr	0	9	

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
	Poway Adult School	0	23	
	• Certificate < 1 yr	0	23	
			<b>Total</b>	<b>694</b>

## Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply<sup>14</sup> suggests that there is an **oversupply** for this occupation in San Diego County, with **138** annual openings and **694** awards. Comparatively, there are **1,802** annual openings in California and **6,103** awards, suggesting that there is an oversupply across the state<sup>15</sup> (Exhibit 8).

### Exhibit 8: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	138	694	<b>-556</b>
California	1,802	6,103	<b>-4,301</b>

**Please note:** This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

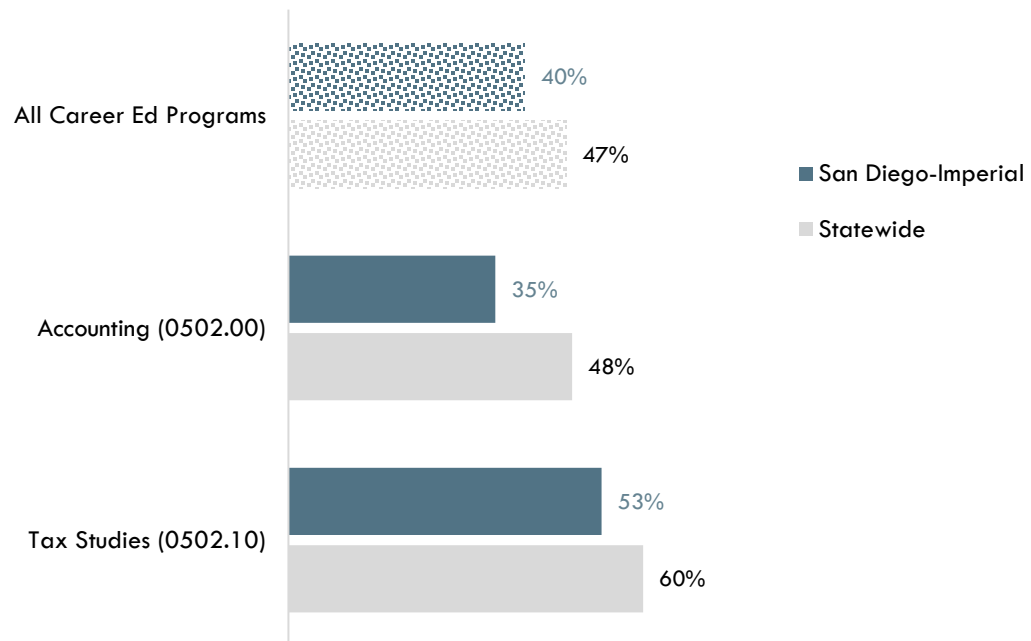
<sup>14</sup> Labor supply can be found from two different sources: EMSI or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. EMSI uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

<sup>15</sup> "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, [coecc.net/our-resources](http://coecc.net/our-resources).

## Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 35 to 53% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Tax Preparers*, compared to 48 to 60% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 9).<sup>16</sup>

**Exhibit 9: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage by Program, PY2022-23<sup>17</sup>**

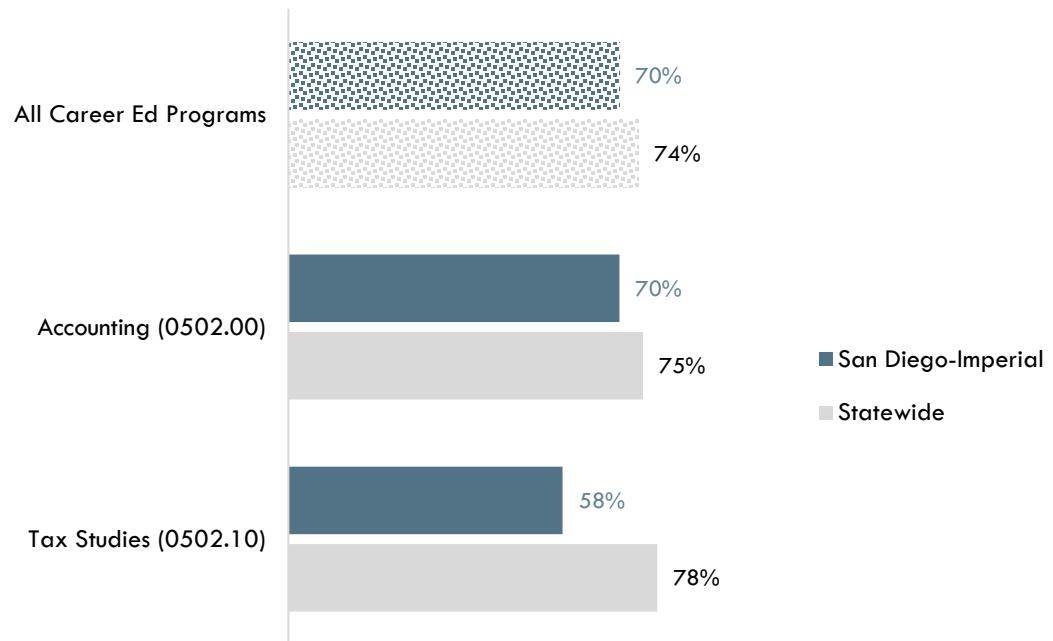


<sup>16</sup> "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, [calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx](http://calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx).

<sup>17</sup> Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2020-21. Among completers and skills builders who exited, the percentage of students who attained a living wage.

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 58 to 70% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a program related to *Tax Preparers*, compared to 75 to 78% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).<sup>18</sup>

**Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study by Program, PY2021-22<sup>19</sup>**



<sup>18</sup> "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, [calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx](http://calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx).

<sup>19</sup> Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2019-20. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

## Employers

Between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025, the top five employers in San Diego County for *Tax Preparers* were *Intuit*, *H&R Block*, *JDA TSG*, *Robert Half*, and *Jackson Hewitt* based on online job postings (Exhibit 11).

**Exhibit 4: Top Employers for Tax Preparers in San Diego County<sup>20</sup>**

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intuit</li> <li>• H&amp;R Block</li> <li>• JDA TSG</li> <li>• Robert Half</li> <li>• Jackson Hewitt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPAC</li> <li>• CyberCoders</li> <li>• KPMG</li> <li>• Baker Tilly</li> <li>• Moss Adams</li> </ul>

## Skills

Exhibit 12 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.

**Exhibit 5: Top Skills for Tax Preparers in San Diego County<sup>21</sup>**

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax Returns</li> <li>• Tax Preparation</li> <li>• Accounting</li> <li>• Tax Laws</li> <li>• Tax Planning</li> <li>• Tax Consulting</li> <li>• Preparer Tax Identification Number</li> <li>• Circular 230</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Auditing</li> <li>• Bookkeeping</li> <li>• Corporate Tax</li> <li>• Income Tax</li> <li>• Public Accounting</li> <li>• Marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Customer Service</li> <li>• Filing</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• Detail Oriented</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Problem Solving</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Organizational Skills</li> <li>• Critical Thinking</li> <li>• Computer Literacy</li> <li>• Interpersonal Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TurboTax</li> <li>• Tax Compliance Software</li> <li>• Tax Software</li> <li>• Microsoft Excel</li> <li>• Microsoft Outlook</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

<sup>21</sup> Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

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