FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

ORANGE COUNTY

Part of the
2026 OC Labor Market Overview

Orange County High-Quality Occupations Sector Infographics

2026

A Strategic Resource for Career Education and Workforce Planning

POWERED BY

California Community Colleges

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Introduction

This report is a companion to two earlier Orange County Center of Excellence's (OC COE) publications: the *2026 Orange County Labor Market Overview* (2026 LMO), which scored 775 occupations on eight criteria, and the *2026 Orange County High-Quality Occupations* report, which added two job-quality measures to the 2026 LMO, hours worked and employer-sponsored health insurance. Occupations that earned six or more of 10 possible points are called High-Quality. The infographics that follow show those 177 occupations countywide and for each of the 12 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) sectors.

Key observations:

- **Where are the High-Quality occupations:** Health (49), Business & Entrepreneurship (34), and Education & Human Development (19) hold 102 of the 177 High-Quality occupations. Among the larger sectors, Education & Human Development (54%) and Health (49%) have the highest share of their own occupations rated High-Quality.
- **How much work do High-Quality occupations represent:** Together they account for 693,502 jobs (37% of the county's total) and 64,880 annual openings. Business & Entrepreneurship is largest by jobs (234,240). Health leads in annual openings (21,918) and in projected growth (14% through 2029, versus 5% for all High-Quality occupations).
- **How much training is needed:** Of the 177 High-Quality occupations, 114 are above middle-skill (require a 4-year degree or more) and 61 are middle-skill, so nearly all call for education or training beyond high school.
- **Pay, hours worked, and health insurance:** 149 occupations start at or above the 2024 Self-Sufficiency Standard ($27.13 an hour), but only 87 (49%) reach the 2026 MIT Living Wage ($36.53). Of the 90 that start below the MIT Living Wage, 73 still offer both a workweek of 30 hours or more plus employer-sponsored health insurance.
- **Higher pay, but fewer openings.** Among High-Quality occupations, the higher the entry-level wage, the fewer the annual openings. The 87 occupations that meet the MIT Living Wage average about 220 openings a year, compared with 369 annual openings for those between the two wage standards and 816 annual openings for the 28 occupations below the Self-Sufficiency Standard. As a result, 70% of High-Quality openings are in occupations that start below the MIT Living Wage.

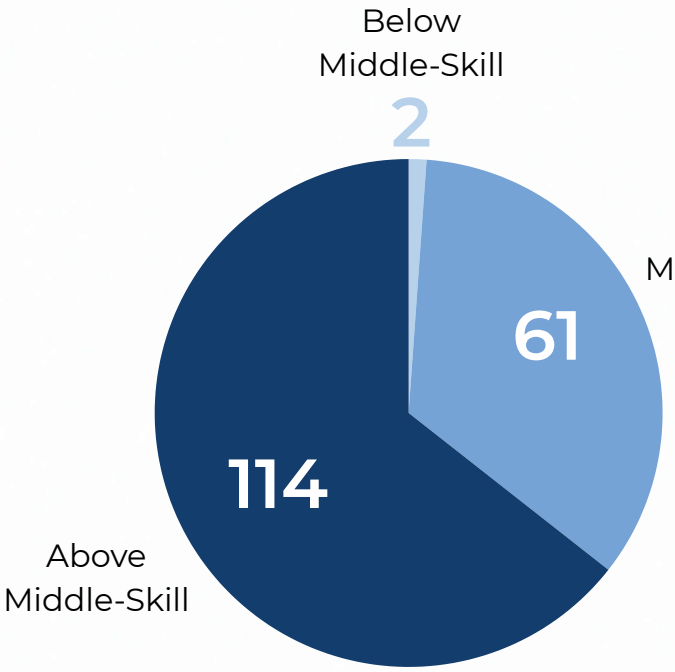
Why this matters: Most High-Quality openings are in occupations that start below the MIT Living Wage. A job search based on pay alone would pass over many of them, even though they offer full-time hours and employer health insurance. Looking at additional quality signals show which occupations with lower wages may still be good jobs.

The infographic pages that follow let colleges, workforce partners, and employers see where each type of quality signal is concentrated.

High-Quality Occupations in Orange County

775 Total Occupations

177 High-Quality Occupations



103
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

77
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

37% - 100%
Employer Sponsored Health

25 – 55
Hours Worked

149
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

87
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

693,502
Jobs in 2024

64,880
Annual Openings

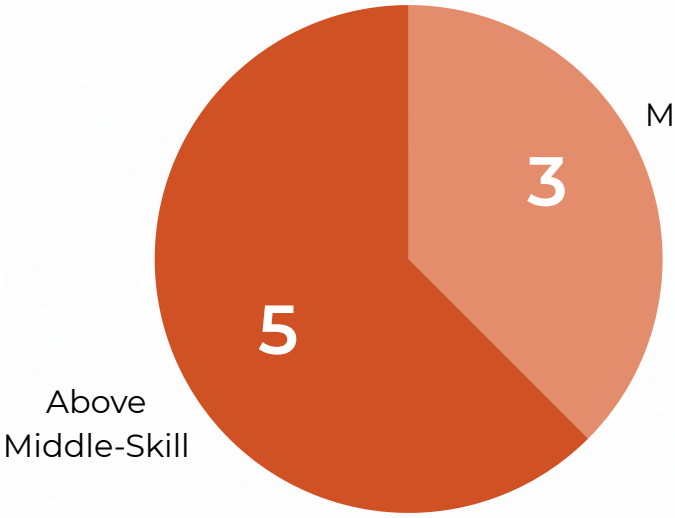
5%
5-Year % Change

$16.00 - $138.44
Entry-Level Wages

Advanced Manufacturing

103 Total Occupations

8 High-Quality Occupations



4
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

3
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

59% - 88%
Employer
Sponsored Health

31 - 39
Hours Worked

8
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

4
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

21,416
Jobs in 2024

1,743
Annual Openings

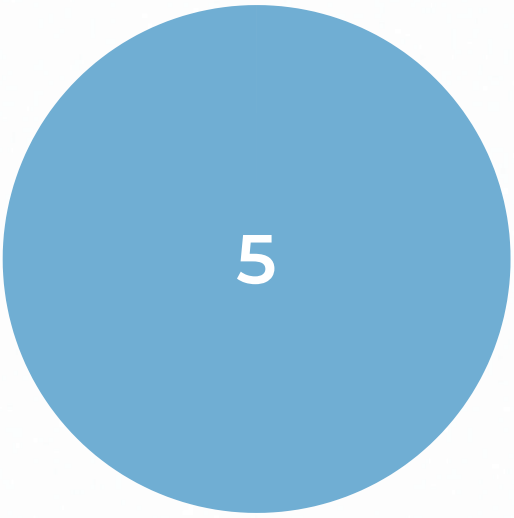
3%
5-Year % Change

$27.14 - $50.94
Entry-Level Wages

Advanced Transportation & Logistics

60 Total Occupations

5 High-Quality Occupations



Middle-Skill

3
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

2
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

63% - 81%
Employer Sponsored Health

35 - 42
Hours Worked

4
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

1
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

15,032
Jobs in 2024

1,500
Annual Openings

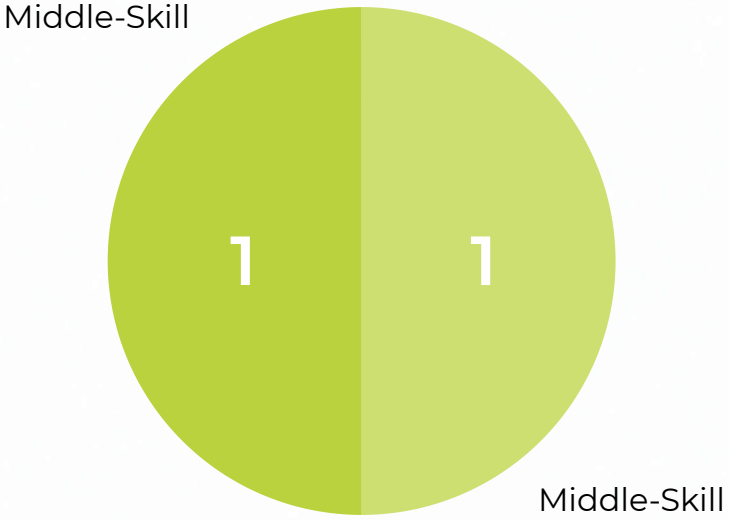
5%
5-Year % Change

$24.67 - $37.36
Entry-Level Wages

Agriculture, Water & Environmental Technologies

39 Total Occupations

2 High-Quality Occupations



0
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

2
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

69% - 71%
Employer
Sponsored Health

38 - 41
Hours Worked

1
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

1
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

2,206
Jobs in 2024

181
Annual Openings

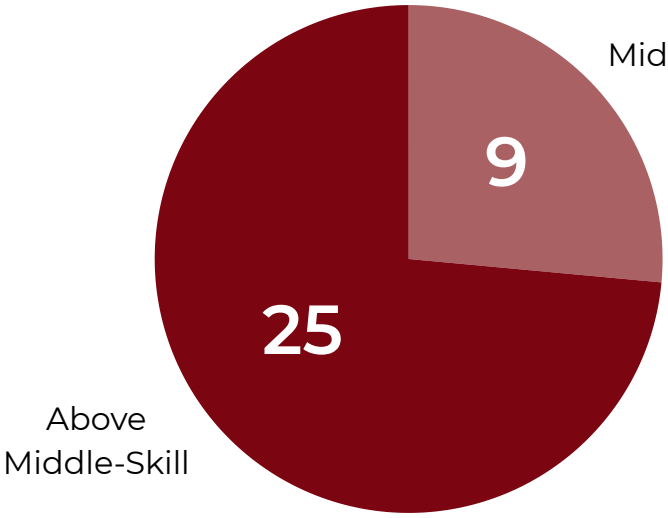
8%
5-Year % Change

$21.50 - $46.28
Entry-Level Wages

Business & Entrepreneurship

101 Total Occupations

34 High-Quality Occupations



26
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

15
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

53% - 93%
Employer
Sponsored Health

32 - 43
Hours Worked

33
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

16
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

234,240
Jobs in 2024

19,023
Annual Openings

1%
5-Year % Change

$19.71 - $60.33
Entry-Level Wages

Education & Human Development

35 Total Occupations

19 High-Quality Occupations

19

Above Middle-Skill

7
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

1
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

58% - 85%
Employer Sponsored Health

25 - 40
Hours Worked

14
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

7
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

70,018
Jobs in 2024

6,309
Annual Openings

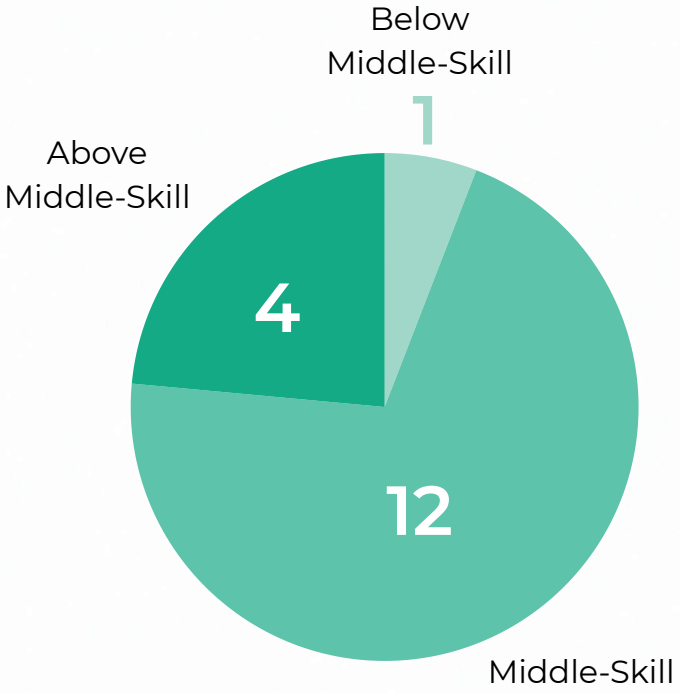
6%
5-Year % Change

$18.43 - $58.70
Entry-Level Wages

Energy, Construction & Utilities

102 Total Occupations

17 High-Quality Occupations



12
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

8
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

37% - 93%
Employer Sponsored Health

28 - 55
Hours Worked

13
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

6
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

60,556
Jobs in 2024

5,435
Annual Openings

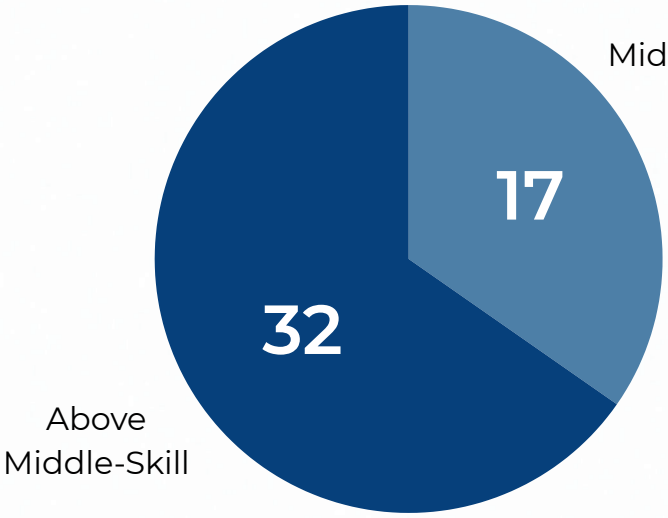
4%
5-Year % Change

$21.65 - $76.93
Entry-Level Wages

Health

100 Total Occupations

49 High-Quality Occupations



26
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

35
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

39% - 100%
Employer Sponsored Health

25 - 44
Hours Worked

39
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

30
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

166,763
Jobs in 2024

21,918
Annual Openings

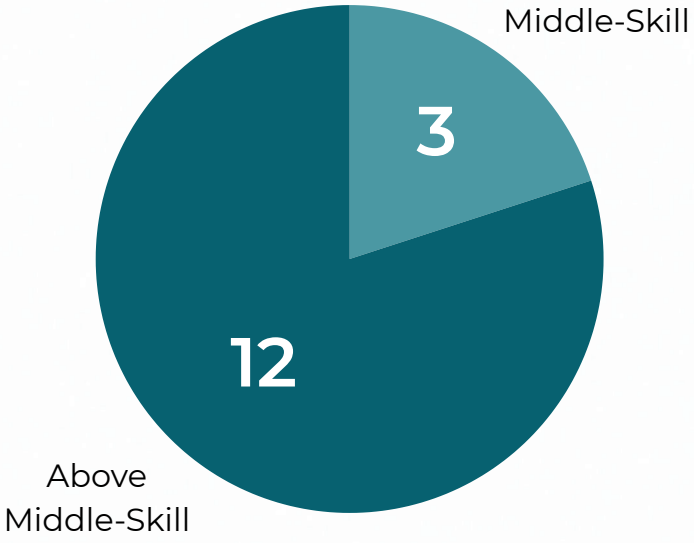
14%
5-Year % Change

$16.00 - $138.44
Entry-Level Wages

ICT/Digital Media

49 Total Occupations

15 High-Quality Occupations



9
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

7
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

59% - 94%
Employer
Sponsored Health

30 - 41
Hours Worked

14
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

8
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

67,636
Jobs in 2024

4,115
Annual Openings

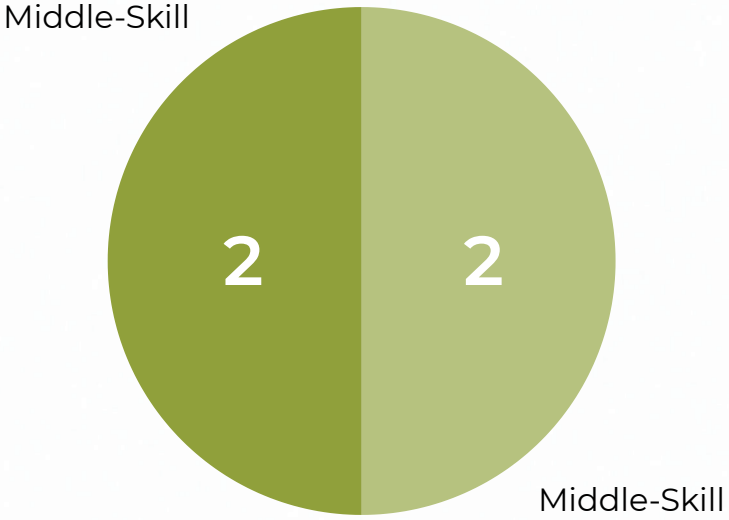
1%
5-Year % Change

$23.06 - $73.01
Entry-Level Wages

Life Science & Biotechnology

8 Total Occupations

4 High-Quality Occupations



3
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

1
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

40% - 94%
Employer
Sponsored Health

32 - 41
Hours Worked

3
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

2
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

2,711
Jobs in 2024

278
Annual Openings

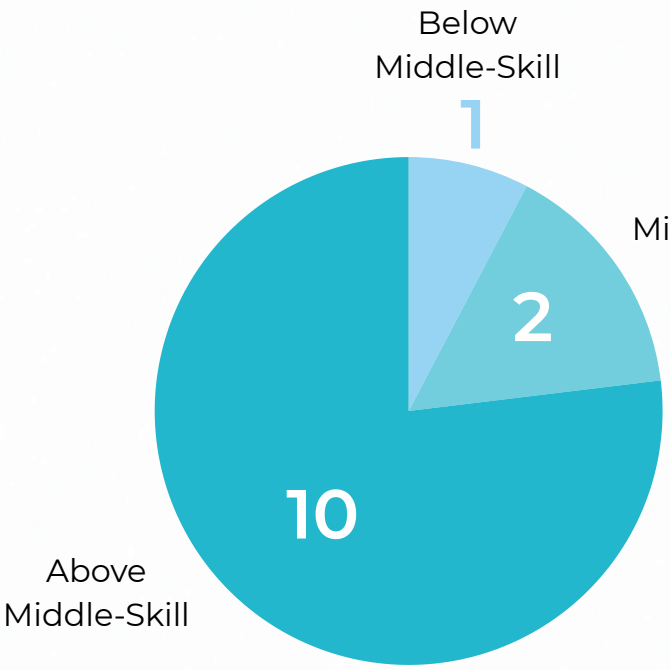
4%
5-Year % Change

$26.62 - $47.38
Entry-Level Wages

Other/Unassigned

101 Total Occupations

13 High-Quality Occupations



8
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

2
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

56% - 90%
Employer Sponsored Health

31 - 41
Hours Worked

11
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

7
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

38,145
Jobs in 2024

2,949
Annual Openings

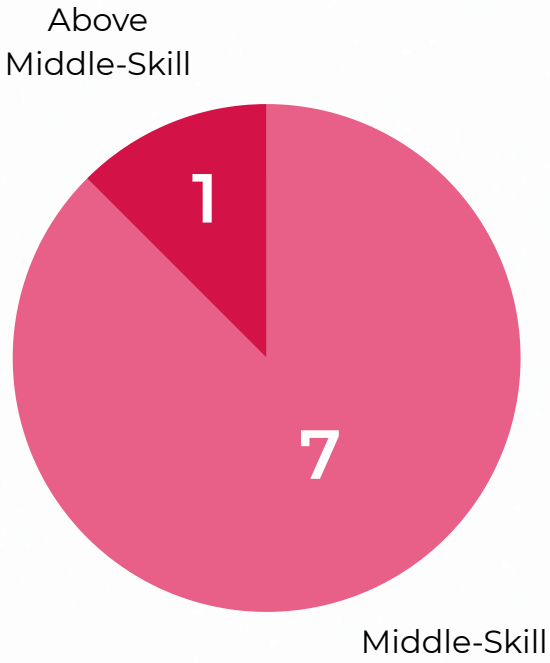
3%
5-Year % Change

$18.62 - $62.32
Entry-Level Wages

Public Safety

27 Total Occupations

8 High-Quality Occupations



2
Location Quotient
(# of Occs)

1
U.S. News&World
Report Best Job

69% - 99%
Employer
Sponsored Health

32 - 48
Hours Worked

7
Met the SSS
Living Wage
($27.13)

4
Met the MIT
Living Wage
($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

10,772
Jobs in 2024

986
Annual Openings

6%
5-Year % Change

$22.23 - $69.47
Entry-Level Wages

Retail, Hospitality & Tourism

50 Total Occupations

3 High-Quality Occupations

Above Middle-Skill

3
Location Quotient (# of Occs)

0
U.S. News&World Report Best Job

67% - 81%
Employer Sponsored Health

29 - 38
Hours Worked

2
Met the SSS Living Wage ($27.13)

1
Met the MIT Living Wage ($36.53)

High-Quality Occupations Key Figures

4,006
Jobs in 2024

444
Annual Openings

5%
5-Year % Change

$22.91 - $36.84
Entry-Level Wages

FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH

ORANGE COUNTY

The OC COE would like to thank our colleagues at the South Central Coast COE who shared their high-quality jobs approach and methodology with us and allowed us to replicate their research.

Prepared by the Orange County Center of Excellence

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