










Fashion Designers

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

February 2025

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 Proceed with Caution	 	 	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate <input 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	
 	LOW 	LOW 	

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, *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 24 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and two institutions supply 20 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is a small supply gap in the labor market. On average, entry-level wages are below the living wage. This brief recommends proceeding with caution when developing a new program but supports a program modification because 1) entry-level wages are below the living wage; 2) there is a small supply gap in San Diego County; and 3) Palomar College and San Diego Mesa college are the only institutions that provide training for this occupation.

Introduction

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

Fashion Designers (SOC 27-1022): Design clothing and accessories. Create original designs or adapt fashion trends. Sample reported job titles include:

- Apparel Designer
- Costume Designer
- Sweater Designer
- Shoe Designer
- Designer
- Dance Costume Designer
- Clothing Designer
- Product Developer
- Handbag Designer

Projected Occupational Demand

Because *Fashion Designers* often have self-employed workers, the following exhibits separate the labor market data by employee (E) and self-employed (SE). Between 2023 and 2028, businesses in San Diego County will need to hire **24** employees annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example (Exhibit 1). Prior trends suggest that there will be 11 employed and 13 self-employed *Fashion Designers* each year between 2023 and 2028.

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Fashion Designers (2023-2028)²

Occupational Title	2023 Jobs	2028 Jobs	2023 – 2028 Net Jobs Change	2023 - 2028 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
(E) Fashion Designers	128	133	5	4%	13
(SE) Fashion Designers	124	123	- 1	- 2%	11
Total	252	256	4	2%	24

¹ 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/>.

² Lightcast 2024.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Earnings

According to traditional³ labor market information (LMI), entry-level hourly earnings for *Fashion Designers* range from \$8.95 to \$29.05 (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings for *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County⁴

Occupational Title	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)
(E) Fashion Designers	\$29.05	\$36.40	\$44.93
(SE) Fashion Designers	\$8.95	\$22.72	\$41.78
Average	\$19.00	\$29.56	\$43.36

The entry-level hourly earnings for employed *Fashion Designers* are \$29.05—or \$60,424.00 annual salary⁵—and \$8.95 per hour or \$18,616.00 annual salary for self-employed *Fashion Designers*; on average *Fashion Designers* earn less than the living wage, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 3).⁶ These wages are lower than the minimum wage because labor market statistical agencies such as the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) examine wages on a yearly basis and divide the total salary reported by a full-time workload (e.g., 2,080 hours a year) to determine the hourly wage for an occupation.⁷ In other words, the data suggests that employed individuals report an annual salary of \$60,424.00 and self-employed individuals report an annual salary of \$18,616.00; dividing them by 2,080 yields the \$29.05 and \$8.95 hourly earnings, respectively.

³ 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.

⁴ Lightcast 2024.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

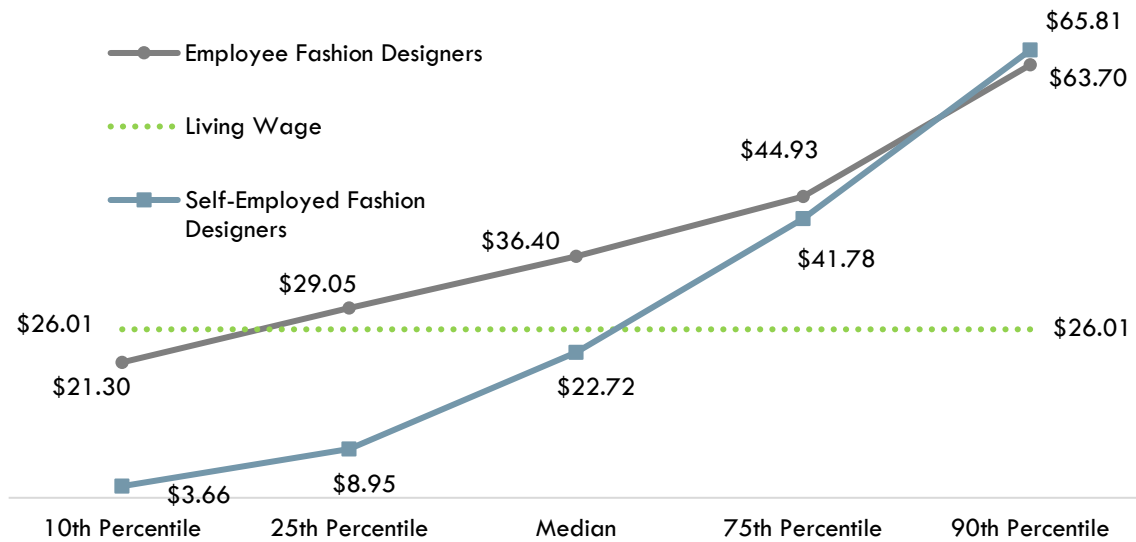
⁵ Annualized salaries assume a full-time position with 2,080 hours. Multiplying the hourly wage with 2,080 yields the annual salary.

⁶ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024.

selfsufficiencystandard.org/California.

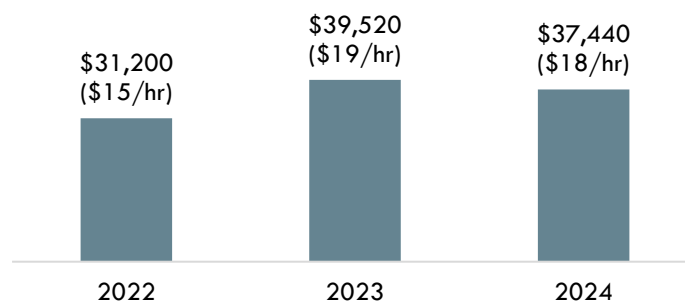
⁷ Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages methodology. bls.gov/cew/overview.htm.

Exhibit 3: Hourly Earnings⁸ for Fashion Designers in San Diego County⁹



In online job postings, however, employers advertised between \$15 to \$19 per hour between January 1, 2022 and December 30, 2024 for *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County (Exhibit 4).¹⁰ This suggests a potential difference between reported earnings across the workforce and the initial compensation offered in the job market, as demonstrated in the previous exhibit.

Exhibit 4: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for Fashion Designers in San Diego County (2022-2024)*



*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Lightcast 2024.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹⁰ Lightcast 2024.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2021-2023.

Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to EDD and BLS), *Fashion Designers* have a national educational attainment of a [bachelor's degree](#) (Exhibit 5).¹¹

Exhibit 5: National Educational Attainment for *Fashion Designers*¹²

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Fashion Designers	Bachelor's degree

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024 in San Diego County had a [bachelor's degree](#) as the most requested educational requirement for *Fashion Designers*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 6).¹³

Exhibit 6: Top Certifications for *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2022-2024)¹⁴

1. N/A

¹¹ Lightcast 2024.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹² Lightcast 2024.04; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹³ Lightcast 2024.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

¹⁴ Lightcast 2024.04; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

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 is **one** TOP code and **three** CIP codes related to *Fashion Designers* (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Fashion Designers*¹⁵

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 1303.10	Fashion Design
CIP 19.0906	Fashion and Fabric Consultant
CIP 50.0407	Fashion/Apparel Design
CIP 50.0510	Costume Design

According to TOP data, **two** community colleges supply the region with awards for this occupation: **Palomar College** and **San Diego Mesa College**. According to CIP data, **no** non-community-college institution supplies the region with awards (Exhibit 8).

**Exhibit 8: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions
(Program Year 2019-20 Through Program Year 2021-22 Average)**

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY19-20 to PY21-22)	Other Educational Institutions 2-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY19-20 to PY20-21)	Total Average Supply (PY19-20 to PY21-22)
1303.10	Fashion Design	20	0	20
	Palomar	12	0	
	• Associate Degree	5	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	7		
	San Diego Mesa	8	0	
	• Associate Degree	6	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	2	0	
Total				20

¹⁵ This brief uses a conservative estimate of program supply and only calculates awards from the TOP code listed in Exhibit 7.

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand with labor supply¹⁶ suggests that there is a **supply gap** for this occupations in San Diego County, with **24** annual openings and **20** awards. Comparatively, there are **581** annual openings in California and **600** awards, suggesting that there is an **oversupply** across the state (Exhibit 9).¹⁷

Exhibit 9: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Annual Awards)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	24	20	4
California	581	600	-19

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.

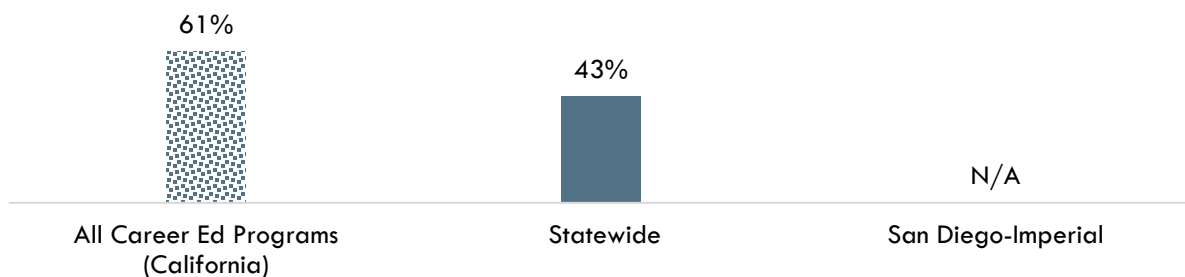
¹⁶ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁷ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coeccc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

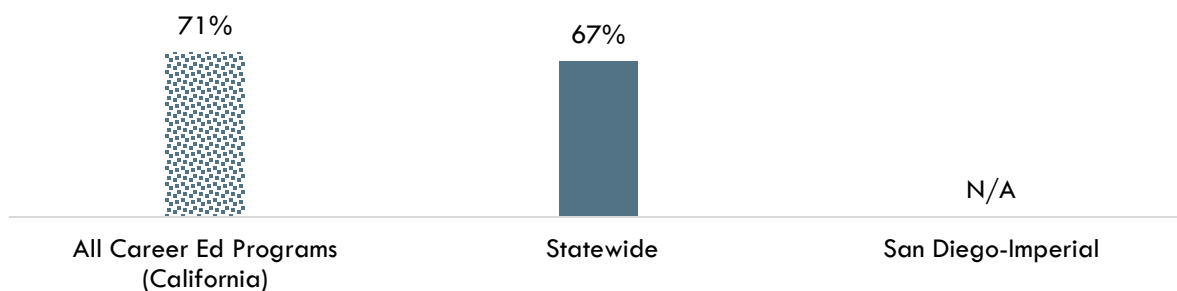
According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 43 percent of students statewide earned a living wage after completing a Fashion Design (TOP 1303.10) program, compared to 61 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).¹⁸

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage by Program, PY2021-22¹⁹



According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 67 percent of students statewide obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a Fashion Design (TOP 1303.10) program, compared to 71 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 11).²⁰

Exhibit 11: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study by Program, PY2020-21²¹



¹⁸ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹⁹ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2021-22. Among completers and skills builders who exited, the percentage of students who attained a living wage.

²⁰ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

²¹ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2020-21. 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, 2022 and December 31, 2024, the top five employers in San Diego County for *Fashion Designers* were Nordstrom, Vuori, PUMA, Seaworld Entertainment, and Columbia Sportswear based on online job postings (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12: Top Employers for *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County²²

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nordstrom• Vuori• PUMA• Seaworld Entertainment• Columbia Sportswear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• prAna• Kindred Bravely• AllSaints Limited• Williams-Sonoma• Adidas

Skills

Exhibit 13 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

Exhibit 13: Top Skills for *Fashion Designers* in San Diego County²³

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Merchandising• Product Knowledge• Selling Techniques• Price Markdowns• Order Fulfillment• New Product Development• Adobe Illustrator• Textiles• Adobe Photoshop• Sewing• Product Design• Fashion Design• Technical Design• Costume Design• Garment Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication• Sales• Self-Motivation• Prioritization• Honesty• Goal-Oriented• Innovation• Presentations• Retail Sales• Research• Management• Willingness To Learn• Lifting Ability• Detail Oriented• Interpersonal Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adobe Illustrator• Adobe Photoshop• Microsoft PowerPoint• Microsoft Excel

²² Lightcast 2024.04; “Job Posting Analytics.” 2022-2024.

²³ Lightcast 2024.04; “Job Posting Analytics.” 2022-2024.

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