








Photographers

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

March 2025

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 Do Not Proceed with New Program	 	 	<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	
The COE defers to the region	<div style="background-color: #4a7c9c; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">MEDIUM</div> 	<div style="background-color: #4a7c9c; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">LOW</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, *Photographers* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 20 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and four institutions supply 33 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 the region and 2) this occupations' entry-level 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)¹ system:

Photographers (SOC 27-4021): Photograph people, landscapes, merchandise, or other subjects. May use lighting equipment to enhance a subject's appearance. May use editing software to produce finished images and prints. Sample reported job titles include:

- Advertising Photographer
- Commercial Photographer
- Graduation Photographer
- Newspaper Photographer
- Photo Editor
- Photojournalist
- Portrait Photographer
- Sports Photographer
- Studio Photographer

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2024 and 2029, *Photographers* are projected to increase by 12 net jobs or five percent (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire 20 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 Photographers (2024-2029)²

Occupational Title	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	2024 – 2029 Net Jobs Change	2024 - 2029 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Photographers	258	270	12	5%	20

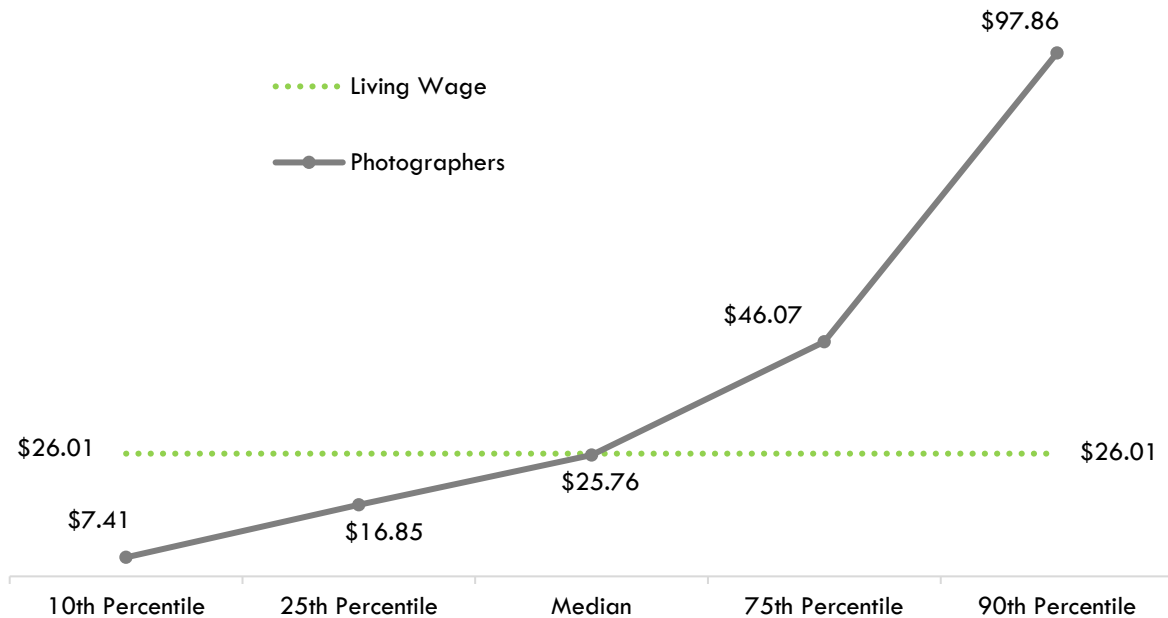
¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>.

² Lightcast 2025.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Earnings

According to traditional³ labor market information (LMI), entry-level hourly earnings for *Photographers* were \$16.85—or \$35,048.00 annual salary⁴; this is less than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 2).⁵

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings⁶ for Photographers in San Diego County⁷



In online job postings, however, employers advertised between \$18 to \$19 per hour between January 1, 2022 and December 30, 2024 for *Photographers* in San Diego County (Exhibit 3).⁸ 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.

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

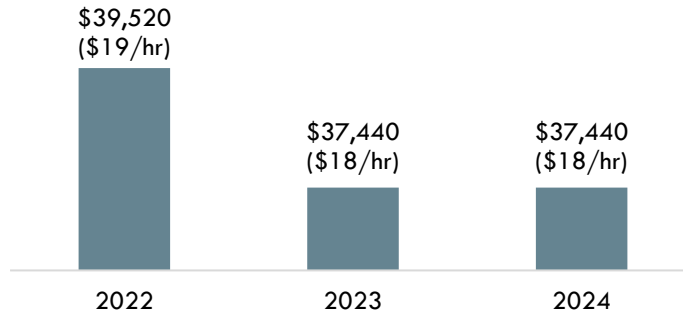
⁵ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. selfsufficiencystandard.org/California.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Lightcast 2025.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

⁸ Lightcast 2025.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

Exhibit 3: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for Photographers in San Diego County (2022-2024)*



*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

Expected Level of Education

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

Exhibit 4: National Educational Attainment for Photographers¹⁰

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

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024 in San Diego County had a [high school or GED](#) as the most requested educational requirement for *Photographers*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 5).¹¹

Exhibit 5: Top Certifications for Photographers in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2022-2024)¹²

1. N/A

⁹ Lightcast 2025.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.
¹⁰ Lightcast 2025.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.
¹¹ Lightcast 2025.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.
¹² Lightcast 2025.01; "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 **two** CIP codes related to *Photographers* (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Related TOP and CIP Codes for Photographers¹³

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 1012.00	Applied Photography
CIP 50.0406	Commercial Photography
CIP 50.0605	Photography

According to TOP data, **four** community colleges supply the region with awards for this occupation: *MiraCosta College, Palomar College, San Diego City College, and Southwestern College*. According to CIP data, **no** non-community-college institution supplies the region with awards (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions (Program Year 2020-21 Through Program Year 2022-23 Average)

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Other Educational Institutions 2-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-23)
1012.00	Applied Photography	33	0	33
	MiraCosta	10	0	
	• Associate Degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	6	0	
	Palomar	11	0	
	• Associate Degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 18 units	3	0	

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

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Other Educational Institutions 2-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-23)
	San Diego City	3	0	
	• Associate Degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	1	0	
	Southwestern	9	0	
	• Associate Degree	5	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	4	0	
			Total	33

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand with labor supply¹⁴ suggests that there is an **oversupply** for this occupation in San Diego County, with 20 annual openings and 33 awards. Comparatively, there are 2,281 annual openings in California and 627 awards, suggesting that there is a **supply gap** across the state (Exhibit 8).¹⁵

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

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Annual Awards)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	20	33	-13
California	2,281	627	1,654

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.

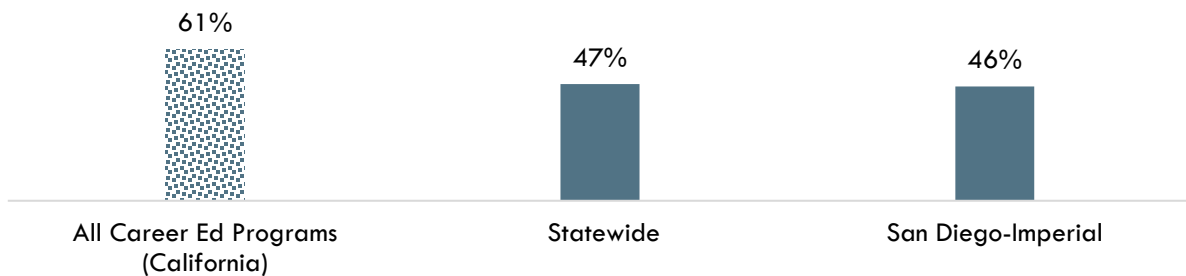
¹⁴ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁵ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coecc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

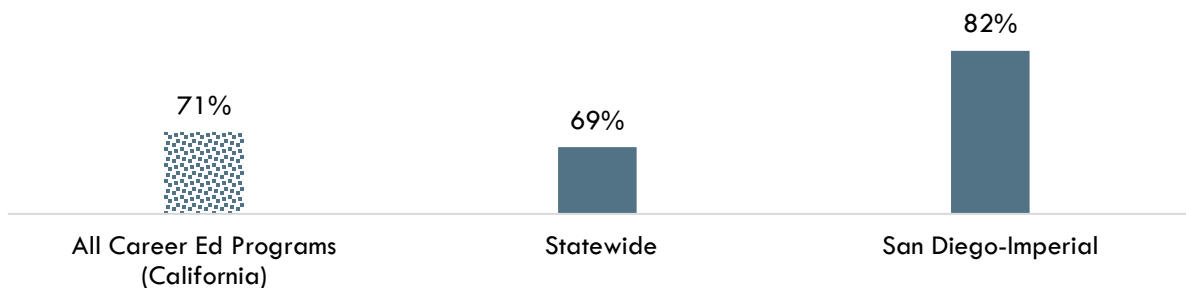
According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 46 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a Photographers (TOP 1012.00) program, compared to 47 percent statewide and 61 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 9).¹⁶

Exhibit 9: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage by Program, PY2021-22¹⁷



According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 69 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a Photographers (TOP 1012.00) program, compared to 69 percent statewide and 71 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).¹⁸

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study by Program, PY2020-21¹⁹



¹⁶ "California Community Colleges Strong Workforce Program," California Community Colleges, calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/SWP.aspx.

¹⁷ 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.

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 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 Photographers were *Shutterfly*, *Balfour*, *Cherry Hill Programs*, *Jostens*, and *Pro-Motionpix* based on online job postings (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11: Top Employers for Photographers in San Diego County²⁰

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shutterfly • Balfour • Cherry Hill Programs • Jostens • Pro-Motionpix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deluxe Photo • Pro Motion Pix • Gerardy Photography • Nexstar Media Group • NBC

Skills

Exhibit 12 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

Exhibit 12: Top Skills for Photographers in San Diego County²¹

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography • Marketing • Videography • Cash Handling • Post-Production • Journalism • Data Entry • Linear Video Editing • Merchandising • Sales Process • Selling Techniques • Photo Editing • Social Media • Sales Training • Workflow Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Communication • Editing • Sales • Lifting Ability • Detail Oriented • Operations • Time Management • Self-Motivation • Interpersonal Communications • Strong Work Ethic • Problem Solving • Multitasking • Management • Cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

²⁰ Lightcast 2025.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

²¹ Lightcast 2025.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

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