



Labor Market Assessment Fashion Design Occupations

May 2026

Key Findings

In California, employment for Fashion Designers is projected to generate an average of 597 annual job openings from 2024 to 2034. Within the Bay Region, there are approximately 86 such openings annually, representing a modest but steady share of statewide demand. In the Bay Region, postsecondary institutions confer approximately 65 associate and bachelor's degree awards annually, resulting in a small undersupply of 21 graduates relative to job openings. While the overall gap is modest, most awards are concentrated at the associate degree level, and most Fashion Design occupations require a bachelor's degree. Therefore, West Valley College's proposed Fashion Design program would help strengthen the regional talent pipeline and provide students with an accessible pathway to a four-year degree aligned with industry expectations.

In California, entry-level Fashion Designers typically earn approximately \$35 per hour, which exceeds the living wage for a single adult (\$17) and exceeds the living wage for adults with one school-age child (\$31) or one preschooler (\$32). Median wages reach \$49 per hour, reflecting strong earning potential in the occupation. Wages also increase with higher levels of education. For Fashion Designers, entry-level wages increase from approximately \$25 per hour for associate degree holders to \$34 per hour for those with a bachelor's degree, with additional gains for advanced degrees. This wage progression highlights the importance of bachelor's-level education in helping workers achieve strong and sustainable earnings over time.

Introduction

This report profiles Fashion Design occupations in California and the 12-County Bay Region for a proposed bachelor's degree program. It provides student outcomes data on employment and earnings for Fashion Design (TOP 1303.10) program in the Bay Region. It is recommended that this data be reviewed to better understand how students in these programs compare to similar programs at colleges in the region.

This report evaluates labor market needs and workforce alignment for the proposed bachelor's degree program called "Fashion Design." Using state and regional data, it presents insights into educational and occupational requirements, employment trends, wage levels, and degree alignment for Fashion Designers, the primary occupation associated with this field.

The analysis shows that Fashion Designers represent a specialized but stable occupation, with moderate demand and competitive wages. The findings indicate a balanced labor market with opportunities for program development focused on advancing student outcomes through bachelor's-level training.

Occupation under Review

- **Fashion Designers (27-1022):** Design clothing and accessories. Create original designs or adapt fashion trends.

| Occupational Characteristics | |
|---|-------------------|
| Typical Entry Level Education | Bachelor's degree |
| Work Experience Required | None |
| Typical On-The-Job Training | None |
| Existing Workforce(% of individuals age 25+ with an associate degree, certificate, or some postsecondary coursework as their highest level of education attainment) | 23% |

State Level Analysis

The number of job postings that list licenses and certifications are limited. The data indicates that certifications are rarely requested and are not a significant barrier to entry in this field.

Table 1 shows the educational levels listed on job postings for Fashion Designers. Approximately 78% of job postings list a bachelor's degree as the preferred level of education, while smaller shares request associate degrees (11%) or advanced degrees (7%). Of those postings that include educational requirements, Table 1 shows that wage levels increase with more education. Entry-level wages rise from approximately \$25 per hour for associate degree holders to \$34 per hour for bachelor's degree holders, demonstrating the economic value of pursuing a four-year degree. This pattern highlights the importance of bachelor's-level education in fields where advanced education is preferred but not always required for entry, supporting the case for expanding Fashion Design bachelor's degree programs.

Table 1. Educational Level and Entry Level Wages for Fashion Designers in California

| Education Level | # of Job Postings | % of Total | 25% Hourly Advertised Wage |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| High school or GED | 29 | 3% | \$20 |
| Associate's degree | 96 | 11% | \$25 |
| Bachelor's degree | 655 | 78% | \$34 |
| Master's degree | 57 | 7% | \$33 |
| Ph.D. or professional degree | 8 | 1% | \$38 |

"Job Posting Analytics." Mar. 2025 - Feb. 2026, Source: Lightcast 2026.1

Note: 53% of records have been excluded because they do not include a degree level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

Table 2 indicates that most job postings for Fashion Designers require relatively low to moderate levels of experience. Approximately 53% of postings require 0 to 3 years of experience, while 33% require 4 to 6 years. This distribution suggests that the field offers accessible entry points for early-career workers, while also valuing candidates with applied experience. It reinforces the role of bachelor's degree programs in preparing students with practical skills that support workforce entry and career progression.

Table 2. Work Experience Requirement for Fashion Designers in California

| Working Experience Required | Job Postings | % of Total |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------------|
| 0 - 1 Years | 168 | 17% |
| 2 - 3 Years | 355 | 36% |
| 4 - 6 Years | 324 | 33% |
| 7 - 9 Years | 104 | 10% |
| 10+ Years | 40 | 4% |

"Job Posting Analytics." Mar. 2025 - Feb. 2026, Source: Lightcast 2026.1

Note: 36% of records have been excluded because they do not include a degree level. As a result, the chart above may not be representative of the full sample.

Table 3 shows that employment for Fashion Designers in California totaled 6,891 jobs in 2024 and is projected to decline slightly by 7% over the next decade. Despite this decline, the occupation is expected to generate approximately 597 annual job openings, driven primarily by replacement demand. Entry-level wages are approximately \$35 per hour, with median wages reaching \$49 per hour, indicating stable earning potential within the field.

Table 3. Employment Outlook for Fashion Design Occupations in California

| Occupation | 2024 Jobs | 2034 Jobs | 10-yr Change | 10-yr % Change | Annual Openings | Annual Replacement Rate | 25% Hourly Earning | 50% Hourly Wage |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Fashion Designers | 6,891 | 6,422 | -470 | -7% | 597 | 9% | \$35 | \$49 |
| Total | 6,891 | 6,422 | -470 | -7% | 597 | 9% | \$35 | \$49 |

Source: Lightcast 2026.1

Regional Level Analysis

Employment Historical Trend for Fashion Design

Table 4 shows that employment for Fashion Designers has grown over the past decade, with 19% growth in the Bay Region compared to 16% statewide. This indicates slightly stronger regional growth and suggests continued relevance of the occupation within the Bay Area economy.

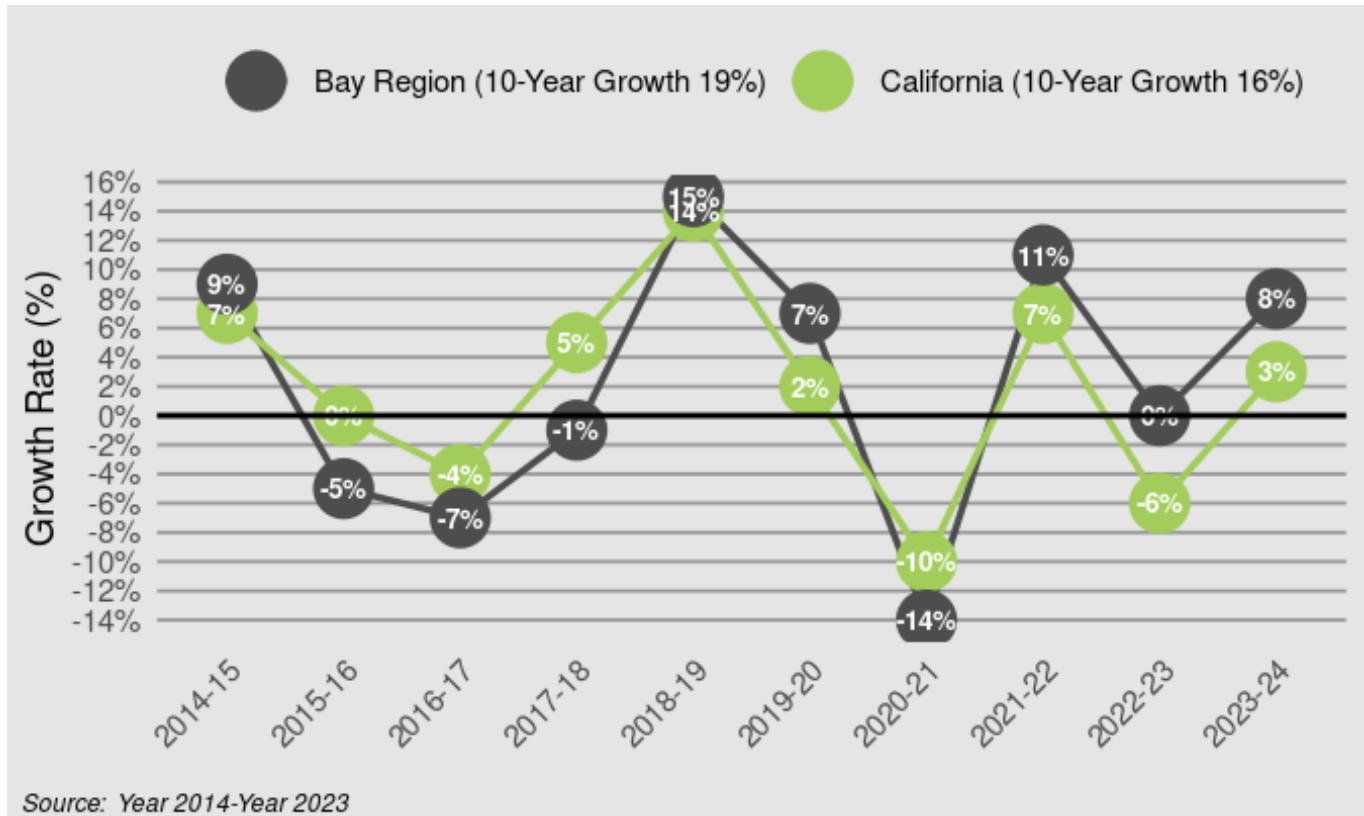
Table 4. Historical 10-Year Employment Trend for Fashion Design in the Bay Region vs. California

| SOC | Area | 2014 Jobs | 2024 Jobs | 10-yr Change | 10-yr% Change |
|---------|------|-----------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| 27-1022 | CA | 5,959 | 6,891 | 932 | 16 |
| 27-1022 | Bay | 729 | 870 | 141 | 19 |

Source: Lightcast 2026.1

Figure 1 illustrates that the Bay Region has followed a similar growth pattern to the state over time, with consistent increases in employment across the past decade.

Figure 1. Historical 10 Year to Year Present Change in Employment for Fashion Designers in the Bay Region vs. California



Occupational Demand

Table 5 shows that the Bay Region employed 870 Fashion Designers in 2024, with employment projected to grow slightly by 2% over the next decade. The region is expected to generate approximately 86 annual job openings, driven primarily by replacement demand. Entry-level wages average \$24 per hour, with median wages reaching \$36 per hour, reflecting moderate but stable earning potential in the region.

Table 5. Employment Outlook for Fashion Design Occupations in the Bay Region

| Occupation | 2024 Jobs | 2034 Jobs | 10-yr Change | 10-yr % Change | Annual Openings | Annual Replacement Rate | 25% Hourly Earning | 50% Hourly Wage |
|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Fashion Designers | 870 | 887 | 17 | 2% | 86 | 9% | \$24 | \$36 |
| Total | 870 | 887 | 17 | 2% | 86 | 9% | \$24 | \$36 |

Source: Lightcast 2026.1

The Bay Region includes: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma Counties

Educational Supply

There are five community colleges in the Bay Region issuing 21 associate degree awards on average annually (last 3 years ending 2021-23) on TOP 1303.10 - Fashion Design.

There are two other CTE educational institutions in the Bay Region issuing 1 associate degree and 53 bachelor’s degree awards on average annually (last 3 years ending 2020-22) on CIP 50.0407- Fashion/Apparel Design. However,

there are no four-year institutions in the Bay Region issuing bachelor’s degrees on average annually (last 3 years ending 2020-22) on CIP 50.0407- Fashion/Apparel Design.

Table 6a. Community College Awards on TOP 1303.10 - Fashion Design in the Bay Region

| College | Subregion | Associate Degree | Total |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------|
| Alameda | East Bay | 9 | 9 |
| Canada | Mid-Peninsula | 2 | 2 |
| San Francisco | Mid-Peninsula | 2 | 2 |
| Santa Rosa | North Bay | 3 | 3 |
| West Valley | Silicon Valley | 5 | 5 |
| Total | - | 21 | 21 |

Source: Data Mart

Note: The annual average for awards is 2021-22 to 2023-24.

Table 6b. Other CTE Institutions Awards on CIP 50.0407- Fashion/Apparel Design. in the Bay Region

| College | Subregion | Associate degree | Bachelor's degree | Total |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Academy of Art University | Mid-Peninsula | 1 | 39 | 40 |
| California College of the Arts | Mid-Peninsula | 0 | 14 | 14 |
| Total | - | 1 | 53 | 54 |

Source: Data Mart

Note: The annual average for awards is 2020-21 to 2022-23.

Gap Analysis

Based on the data included in this report, there is a labor market gap in the Bay Region with 86 annual openings for Fashion Designers and 65 annual (3-year average) awards (associate and bachelor’s degrees), resulting in an annual undersupply of approximately 21 students.

Living Wage

The Self-Sufficiency Standard Calculator estimates the income needed to meet basic living costs in the Bay Region. Table 8 shows that entry-level wages for Fashion Designers are approximately \$24 per hour, while median wages reach \$36 per hour.

These wages are below the regional living wage of \$27 per hour for a single adult, indicating that entry-level earnings are not sufficient to meet basic living needs independently. Median wages meet the living wage for a single adult but do not fully meet the living wage requirements for individuals supporting dependents, including those with children. However, wages increase with experience and higher levels of education, providing a pathway for workers to achieve greater financial stability over time. This reinforces the importance of bachelor’s-level education in helping graduates access higher-paying roles and improve long-term earning potential.

Table 8. Hourly Living Wage compared to Entry- and Mid-Level Wages for Fashion Design in the Bay Region

| Earning Wage | | Hourly Living Wage | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 25% Hourly Wage | 50% Hourly Wage | Adult Only | Adult + Infant | Adult + Preschool | Adult + School-age | Adult + teenage |
| \$24 | \$36 | \$27 | \$56 | \$53 | \$45 | \$36 |

Source: Lightcast 2026.1

Note. The Self-Sufficiency (SS) Standard for California (2024) Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. The data combines Fashion Designers.

Methodology

The occupation for this report was identified by West Valley College. Labor demand data is sourced from Lightcast occupation and job postings data. Educational supply and student outcomes data is retrieved from multiple sources, including CCCCO Data Mart.

Sources

Data and information referenced in this report were compiled from the following public and proprietary sources:

- [Lightcast](#).
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) [DataMart](#).
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [(IPEDS)].
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
- Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. [2024 California Dataset](#).

Contacts

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