

High Demand Occupations in Florida's Eight Westernmost Counties

Prepared for UWF President, Martha Saunders

September 2022



High Demand Occupations in Florida's Eight Westernmost Counties Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, and Jackson

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This annual report provides insights on projected growth in high demand occupations between 2022 and 2027. Researchers at the University of West Florida (UWF) Haas Center examined 22 occupational areas and compared regional performance with the state and the nation. We ranked each occupation by median earnings and growth rates spanning five years. Next, we described the top 10 occupational categories with higher-than-median earnings, as well as job growth across the eight westernmost counties in Florida. Lastly, we listed employer demand pertaining to the skills most requested in job postings.

Key Findings

- Computer and Mathematical Occupations represent the top growth areas in the nation, state, and eight westernmost counties in Florida.
- Architecture and Engineering, as well as Management roles, maintain the highest median earnings amongst the top 10 occupations.
- Regionally, earnings in legal occupations moved into the top 5, outpacing Life, Physical and Social Science Occupations.
- Year over year, median earnings changed very little among the top 10 occupations.
- Our cost of living remains slightly higher than the national average while the regional median earnings are lower than the national average.
- Our veteran population increased by approximately 8,200 individuals since July 2021.

Overview of the Regional Economy

Nearly 1.1 million people reside in Northwest Florida (NWFL). **The region's population increased by 4.4 percent since 2016, growing by 45,006**. Lightcast, a data analytics tool used by the Haas Center, predicts that our population growth will start to slow somewhat during the next five years to just 2.9 percent, adding about 30,500 people.¹ An increase in population is essential for business as well as job growth. Florida metro areas continue to add new residents; however, this is not true for all cities across the US. Our state attracts new residents for a variety of reasons: the college and universities are among the best in the nation; the state does not collect a personal income tax; and the mild climate provides us with many outdoor recreation opportunities.

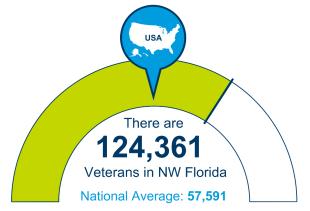
Lower density areas are not experiencing the same rate of growth as metro areas. Job growth and business opportunities are a challenge for rural communities. This is noteworthy as three of the eight counties are inland and rural: Washington, Holmes, and Jackson. At present, Lightcast predicts a decline in population for these three counties (through 2026). The inland rural counties rely heavily on employment within the occupations of Transportation and Material Moving; Protective Services; Farming; Fishing and Forestry; and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Services. The total population in 2021 was 91,235, though it has been steadily declining since 2018 and is projected to continue declining.

¹ Lightcast Labor Market Analytics, Data Run 2022.3 <u>https://www.economicmodeling.com</u>

Workforce talent in the eight-county area includes **numerous military veterans and their spouses**. Our region is home to 124,361 veterans, surpassing the national average for an area this size by 66,770 individuals. Our veteran population has increased by 8,251 since July 2021.

This is an important metric, as many veterans work full-time or part-time after leaving the military, representing a valuable part of West Florida's talented workforce.

Regarding **educational achievement**, 17.3 percent of NWFL residents possess a bachelor's degree, a value that is 3.1 percentage points below the national average. Approximately 11.5 percent of our population holds an associate's degree, which is 2.8 percentage points **above** the national average.² Limitations on educational accessibility represent a challenge among the residents of inland rural counties, as almost 60 percent of the population's highest attainment is a high school diploma or less. An estimated 8.1 percent of the rural county



population holds a bachelor's degree, which is about 12.2 percentage points lower than the nation's average.

The **cost of living** across the eight-county region (100.3) is on par with the nation's average (100). The two counties with the highest cost of living are Okaloosa (104.3) and Walton (107.3). By comparison, the cost of living in Indian River County, FL is 110.4, and in New York County, NY, it is 283.8. The cost of living index provides a standard of how regional costs of living compare to the nation and to each other. The index is comprised of six major categories: grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, healthcare, and miscellaneous goods and services. An index below 100 indicates the region has a lower cost of living, whereas above 100 means it is more expensive to live.³

Workforce Projections

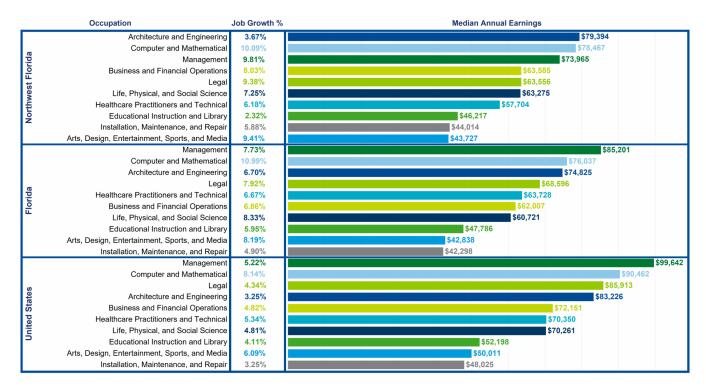
The remainder of this report projects labor demand over time as the difference between the jobs we have now and the jobs we need in five years. In the US, labor moves freely across county and state lines. Aside from moving costs, few barriers exist for skilled labor to relocate and take advantage of greater opportunity in other states or metro areas. Businesses in Florida benefit greatly from many new residents—including young talent exiting the military and/or graduating from the state's acclaimed college education system. Using secondary data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and Lightcast Labor Market Analytics, Haas Center researchers define and list the top 10 fields based on 22 Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) for the nation, state, and region.

In order to **identify which occupational areas support the greatest economic opportunity**, we first sorted by median earnings and then by the projected growth between 2022 and 2027. Unsurprisingly, the top 10 share several common attributes. First, each classification pays a wage greater than the median annual earnings of the defined geography. Second, each field requires at least some education beyond high school. Lastly, job growth for the projected timeframe is positive. While the exact rankings, earnings, and growth rate may vary between geographies, **the set of top 10 occupations are consistent at the regional, state, and national levels**. Readers will find a list of all 22 occupational areas in the appendix.

² Lightcast Labor Market Analytics, <u>Data Run 2022.3</u>.

³ The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER): <u>https://www.c2er.org</u>

Figure 1: Top Occupations by Job Growth (2022-2027) and Median Annual Earnings (2021)



Source: Lightcast, UWF Haas Center

Figure 1 provides rankings of occupational areas at each geographic level. The region is in the left-most column, followed by the occupational description. The projected job growth is in the third column, followed by the median annual earnings. Note that rankings do not compare occupations between regions, only against those within the same geographic location.

Year over Year Observations Regarding High Growth Occupations and Earnings

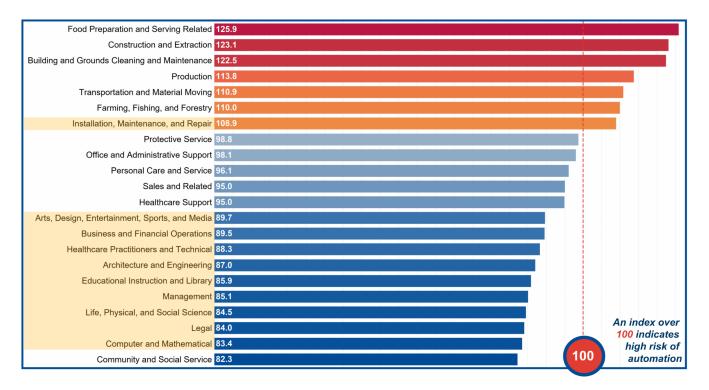
Compared to last year, earnings in legal occupations moved into the top 5, outpacing Life, Physical and Social Science Occupations.

Median earnings changed very little, and in some cases, median earnings declined slightly. Two such occupations that saw minor decreases in median earnings are Management as well as Architecture and Engineering. Perhaps, retirements and resignations among senior employees increased and they were replaced by individuals who earn slightly less.

Life, Physical, and Social Sciences did not experience as much growth in annual earnings as Legal occupations, and the profession also fell behind in job growth. It is unclear what is driving the shift in demand for the region, but occupations such as Lawyers; Paralegals and Legal Assistants; and Arbitrators, Mediators, and Conciliators all anticipate high growth in employment over the next five years.

Previously, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media occupations were at the top of Holmes and Washington's job growth. For the current timeframe, this sector was estimated to be the top growing occupation for Santa Rosa, Holmes, Washington and Jackson Counties.

Figure 2: Automation Index



Source: Lightcast

The national automation index is another noteworthy measurement for each SOC identified in Figure 2. As labor in any occupation becomes more difficult to source due to wage increases and/or hazardous conditions, automation becomes more likely. The automation index measures the threat for mechanization. Occupations with a value greater than 100 have a higher-than-average risk of automation, and those with a score below 100 have a lower-than-average risk.

We find that nine out of 10 top occupations ranked by growth and earnings are among the least likely to be automated. Healthcare workers are experiencing a great deal of innovation and automation, but this remains a human-centric occupation. Another example of automation is found in transportation. The US military relies heavily upon remotely piloted vehicles to minimize the risk to drivers and pilots in combat zones. Technological advancements, like these, increase our productivity.

Top 10 Occupational Areas

In the following sections, we share the top 10 occupations and summarize each category by earnings, job growth, available positions, and desired skills. All estimates for jobs are based on 2021 annual averages from the Quarterly Census of Employed Workers (QCEW). Note that some workers may hold multiple jobs. Therefore, employment does not represent individual people, but rather the number of jobs held in the region. Job counts include full-time and part-time employment. Any job growth projections are for the 2022-2027 timeframe based on past trends.

Architecture and Engineering Occupations

First, it is important to know that **NWFL has a much higher percentage of engineers than architects**: for every single architectural occupation, there are 14 engineering related <u>occupations</u>. Furthermore, our region has a greater supply of these positions relative to the national average for a region of this size. However, the median salary for Architecture and Engineering occupations in Florida's eight westernmost counties is \$79,394, which is \$3,832 below the national median salary. This is the top occupation within the eight counties when comparing by the highest median salary, but it has the second slowest growth of the top 10 at just 3.7 percent.

Job titles that individuals on this career path could assume are Maintenance Technicians, Electrical Engineers, Engineering Technicians, Manufacturing Engineers, and Electronics Technicians. Notable companies hiring in this field are HX5, Leonardo DRS, Oasis Systems, Lockheed Martin, and Leidos.

Like each occupation in the top 10, individuals in these fields require certificates, four-year degrees, and/or further education. The University of West Florida leads NWFL in completion of higher education programs. Across the board, engineering will most likely yield income levels above the median. However, a handful of these occupations will land below the median income level including Architect Drafters, Engineer Technicians, and Calibration Technicians.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Cybersecurity Policy Analysts Oasis Systems Inc. in Shalimar, FL
- Radio Frequency Engineering Managers Eglin Air Force Base, FL

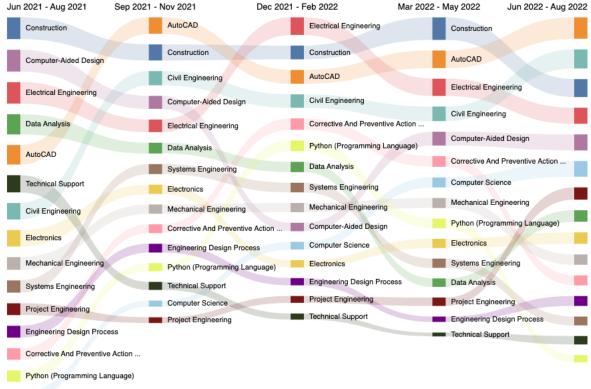


Figure 3: Top Skills for Architecture and Engineering Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Computer Science

Computer and Mathematical Occupations

This category has the highest job growth of the top 10 occupations for all three regions (local, state and national). Though these are high paying occupations, the median annual earnings for Florida's eight westernmost counties falls slightly below that of the nation for Computer and Mathematical fields.

Job titles within this occupational career are Systems Administrators, Software Engineers, Systems Engineers, Network Engineers, and Information Systems Security. Companies with the most unique job postings in this occupation are General Dynamics, Navy Federal Credit Union, Oasis Systems, HX5, and Jacobs Engineering Group.

The top three highest paying occupations in this section are computer network architects, research scientists, and actuaries; these jobs pay above the median income level. The lower tier earners in this field are jobs such as web developers and support specialists. Software developers take up most jobs in this field, while also being the most competitive and fastest growing positions.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Geospatial Engineers NANA Regional Corporation in Fort Walton Beach, FL
- Business Intelligence Developer Advisor Dell Technologies in Panama City, FL
- Predictive Modelers Navy Federal in Pensacola, FL

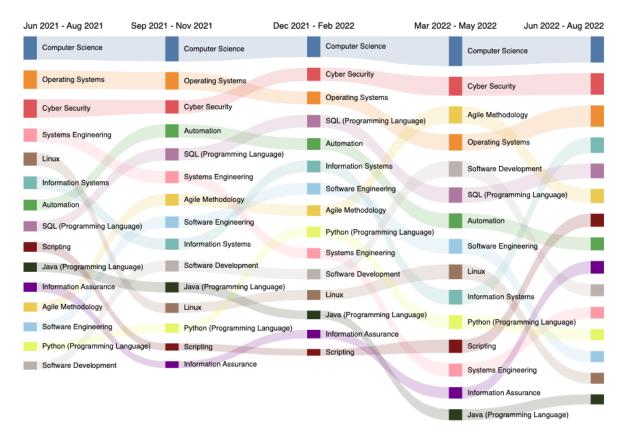


Figure 4: Computer and Mathematical Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Management Occupations

The supply of Management jobs in Florida's eight westernmost counties is 24,040. The national median salary is \$99,642 and NWFL's median salary is much lower at \$73,965. It is the third ranked occupation in the region, based on earnings, but is the top ranked occupation at the state and national levels. The growth rate in NWFL is 9.8 percent compared to the national rate of 5.2 percent.

Job titles within this occupation that individuals can hold are General Managers, Assistant Managers, Program Managers, Operations Managers, and Assistant Operations Managers. Organizations that provide unique job postings in this category are HCA Healthcare, State of Florida, Baptist Health, Arby's, and Healthcare Services Group.

The top three highest paying occupations in this field are chief executives; architectural and engineering managers; and computer and information managers. The jobs pay well above the median income level. These occupations are the highest paying because they are top-level managers who oversee many business aspects. The lower tier jobs in this field include personal service managers and social and community managers.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Inspection Supervisors State of Florida in Chipley, FL
- Government Operations Consultants State of Florida in Pensacola, FL

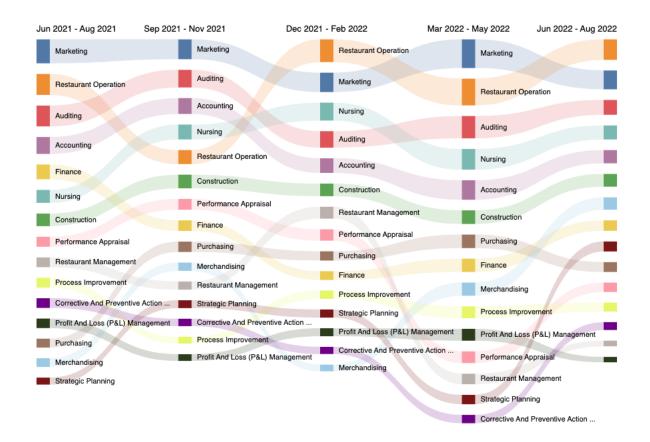


Figure 5: Top Skills for Management Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Business and Financial Operations Occupations

The supply of Business and Financial Operations positions in Florida's eight westernmost counties is slightly below the national average for a region this size. The median salary for Business and Financial Operations in NWFL is \$63,585, which is \$8,566 below the national median earnings. The job growth rate is 8.0 percent in our region, which exceeds both the Florida and national job growth rates of 6.9 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively.

Job titles that individuals could assume are Project Management Specialist, Compliance Officers, Human Resources Specialist, Labor Relations Specialist, and Logisticians. Notable companies hiring in this field are the State of Florida, Navy Federal Credit Union, Walmart, GPAC, and Cox Communications.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Revenue Cycle Coordinators Baptist Health in Pensacola, FL
- Claim Adjusters Progressive Insurance in Panama City, FL

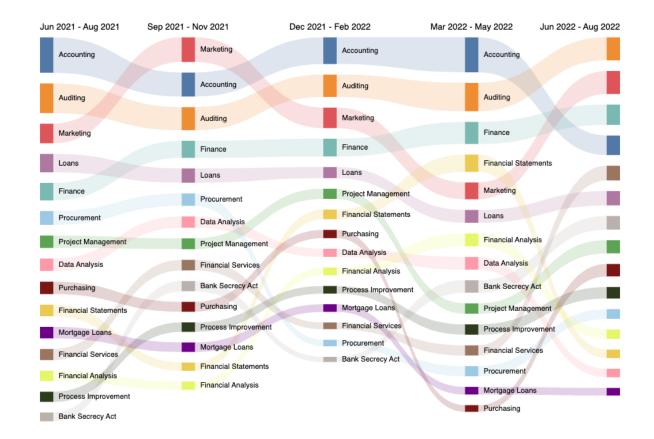


Figure 6: Top Skills for Business and Financial Operations Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations

The median salary for this field in Florida's eight westernmost counties is \$63,275, which is \$6,986 below the national median salary. The job growth rate for this occupation is 4.8 percent at the national level, while the job growth rates in NWFL and the state both exceeded that rate at 7.3 percent and 8.3 percent, respectively.

Job titles that are popular within this field include Medical Laboratory Scientists, Clinical Psychologists, Environmental Specialists, School Psychologists, and Park Rangers. Organizations hiring in this field include Ascension, State of Florida, K.A. Recruiting, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Armstrong World Industries.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Fish and Wildlife Biologist U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services in Panama City, FL
- Safety and Occupational Health Specialists YouTube in Panama City, FL
- Medical Laboratory Scientists Ascension in Panama City, FL

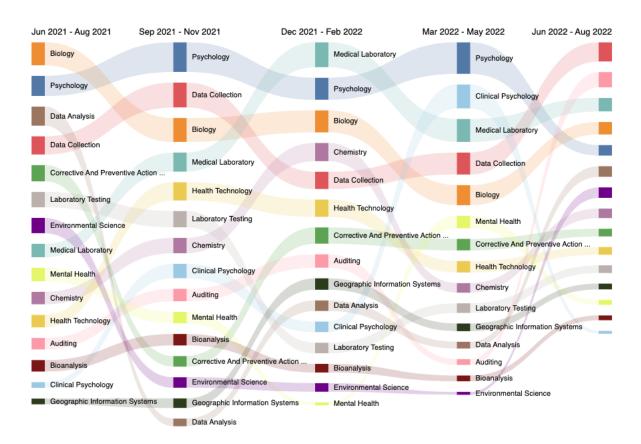


Figure 7: Top Skills for Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Legal Occupations

The national median salary is \$85,913 and the NWFL median salary is \$63,556, which is more than \$20,000 below the national median. The job growth rate is 9.4 percent in Florida's eight westernmost counties, which is substantially above the national job growth rate of 4.3 percent. Wages in this sector may need to increase substantially in order to attract talent from other regions of the country.

Jobs available within this profession include Attorney Managers, Legal Assistants, Guardian Ad Litem, and Associate Attorneys. Organizations that hire individuals within this field include Morgan and Morgan, State of Florida, Kelly Services, and Justice Administrative Commission.

Occupations such as judges, lawyers, and those who work in administrative law are among the higher paid jobs. These occupations pay more because they require many years of extra schooling, certificates, and courtroom experience. Occupations within the Legal field that pay less than the median earnings are Arbitrators, Judicial Lawyers, Paralegals, and legal support workers.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Assistant Regional Counsels State of Florida in Pensacola, FL
- Guardians Ad Litem State of Florida in Milton, FL

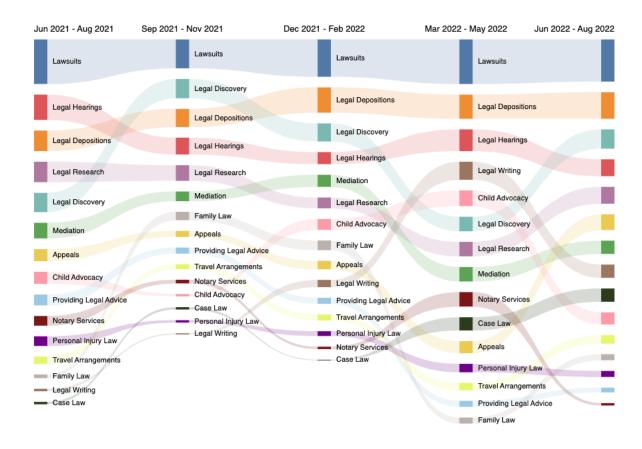


Figure 8: Top Skills for Legal Occupations (Source: Lightcast)

Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations

The median salary for Florida's eight westernmost counties is \$57,704, while the national median salary is much higher at \$70,350. The demand for jobs in this field within NWFL is about level with the national average. Our eight counties experienced a 6.2 percent job growth rate compared to the national job growth rate of 5.3 percent.

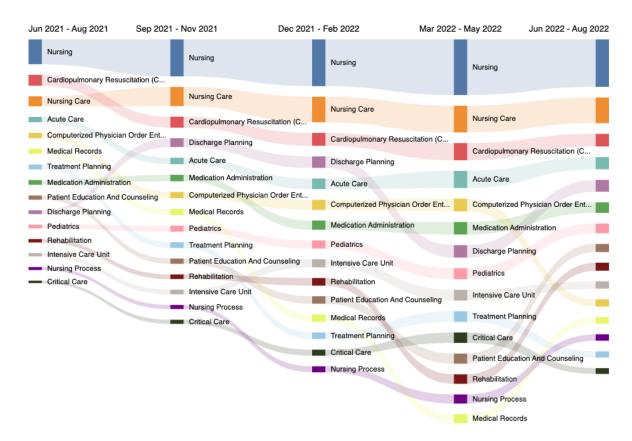
Physicians are among the occupations included in this category. The national median salary for Physicians is \$217,290, while NWFL's median is just a small amount less at \$216,111.

Other common job titles within this field are Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Pharmacy Technicians. Organizations hiring individuals in this field include Ascension, HCA Healthcare, Baptist Health, and West Florida Hospital.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Home Infusion Registered Nurses CVS Health in Fort Walton Beach, FL
- Neonatal Respiratory Therapists UF Health Shands Hospital in Pensacola, FL
- Vascular Technologists Ascension in Pensacola, FL





Educational Instruction and Library Occupations

The number of jobs within Florida's eight westernmost counties is 24,973. The median salary for jobs in this occupation is \$46,217—a value that is significantly lower than the national median salary of \$52,198. The job growth rate over the course of the next five years is 2.3 percent, which is lower than both the state and national job growth rate for this occupation.

Job titles attained in this occupation are Classroom Teacher, Adjunct Faculties, Instructors, Classroom Assistants, and Instructor Pilots. Organizations that hire in this field include Childcare Network, Pensacola State College, and OBXtek.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Instructional Designers Navy Federal in Pensacola, FL
- Organic Chemists University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL
- Life Enrichment Assistants in Pensacola, FL

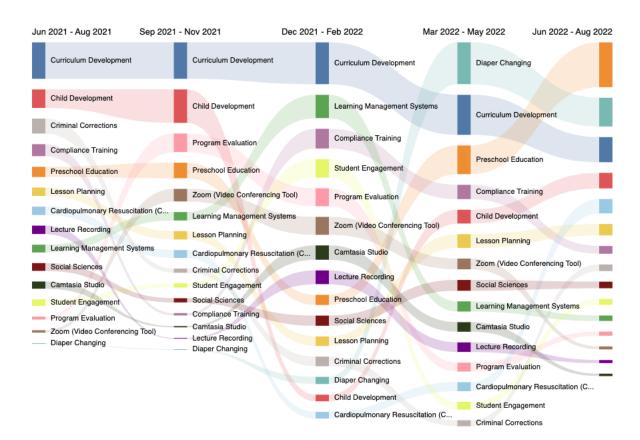


Figure 10: Top Skills for Educational Instruction and Library Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations

The median annual salary in Florida's eight westernmost counties is \$44,014, while the national median salary is \$48,025. Our region has an above average number of jobs in this sector at 23,435. The job growth rate in this occupation is 5.9 percent, which is higher than both the state and national averages for this occupation.

Job titles in this occupation are Maintenance Technician, Service Technicians, Automotive Technicians, and Field Service Technicians. Organizations that commonly hire in this field are Pep Boys, Goodyear, Mediacom, and the State of Florida.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

- Aircraft Fuelers Frontier Airlines in Panama City, FL
- Service Dispatcher Toyota Motors in Pensacola, FL
- Global Commodity Leaders General Electric in Pensacola, FL

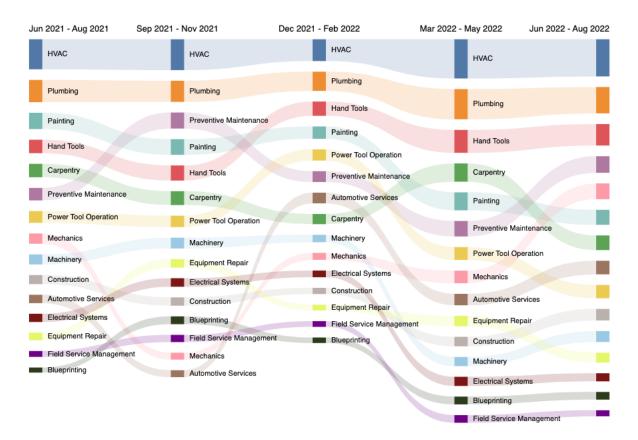


Figure 11: Top Skills for Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (Source: Lightcast)

Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations

Residents of NWFL working in these occupations have a median income of \$43,727, while the national median income is \$50,011. The expected job growth rate over the next five years is projected to be 9.4 percent.

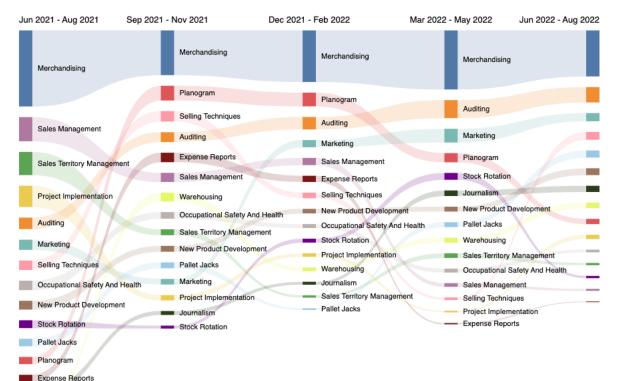
Jobs in this field include Retail Merchandisers, Merchandisers, Technical Writers, Retail Service Merchandisers, and Retail Sales Merchandisers. Organizations that will hire in this field include Anderson Merchandisers, Driveline, Acosta and Co., Crossmark, and SFS.

Sample Job Postings as of September 2, 2022:

Journalism Warehousing

- Lead Photographers Dust Extraction International Group in Ft. Walton Beach, FL
- Vehicle Photographers Cox Communications in Pensacola, FL

Figure 12: Top Skills for Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations by Quarter (Source: Lightcast)



Appendix

22 Occupations Ranked by Earnings

Rank	Location	Description	2022 - 2027 % Change	Median Annual Earnings	Automation Index
	Florida	Management	7.7%	\$85,201	85.1
1	NWFL	Architecture and Engineering	3.7%	\$79,394	87.0
	U.S.	Management	5.2%	\$99,642	85.1
	Florida	Computer and Mathematical	11.0%	\$76,037	83.4
2	NWFL	Computer and Mathematical	10.1%	\$78,467	83.4
	U.S.	Computer and Mathematical	8.1%	\$90,462	83.4
	Florida	Architecture and Engineering	6.7%	\$74,825	87.0
3	NWFL	Management	9.8%	\$73,965	85.1
	U.S.	Legal	4.3%	\$85,913	84.0
	Florida	Legal	7.9%	\$68,596	84.0
4	NWFL	Business and Financial Operations	8.0%	\$63,585	89.5
	U.S.	Architecture and Engineering	3.2%	\$83,226	87.0
	Florida	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.7%	\$63,728	88.3
5	NWFL	Legal	9.4%	\$63,556	84.0
	U.S.	Business and Financial Operations	4.8%	\$72,151	89.5
	Florida	Business and Financial Operations	6.9%	\$62,007	89.5
6	NWFL	Life, Physical, and Social Science	7.3%	\$63,275	84.5
	U.S.	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	5.3%	\$70,350	88.3
	Florida	Life, Physical, and Social Science	8.3%	\$60,721	84.5
7	NWFL	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.2%	\$57,704	88.3
	U.S.	Life, Physical, and Social Science	4.8%	\$70,261	84.5
	Florida	Educational Instruction and Library	5.9%	\$47,786	85.9
8	NWFL	Educational Instruction and Library	2.3%	\$46,217	85.9
	U.S.	Educational Instruction and Library	4.1%	\$52,198	85.9
	Florida	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	8.2%	\$42,838	89.7
9	NWFL	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	5.9%	\$44,014	108.9
	U.S.	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	6.1%	\$50,011	89.7
	Florida	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4.9%	\$42,298	108.9
10	NWFL	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	9.4%	\$43,727	89.7
	U.S.	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	3.3%	\$48,025	108.9
	Florida	Community and Social Service	7.3%	\$41,900	82.3
11	NWFL	Community and Social Service	4.9%	\$39,531	82.3
	U.S.	Community and Social Service	6.6%	\$47,662	82.3

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Rank	Location	Description	2022 - 2027 % Change	Median Annual Earnings	Automation Index
	Florida	Protective Service	4.7%	\$38,494	98.8
12	NWFL	Protective Service	2.8%	\$37,501	98.8
	U.S.	Construction and Extraction	2.7%	\$46,592	123.1
	Florida	Construction and Extraction	5.5%	\$38,433	123.1
13	NWFL	Construction and Extraction	4.1%	\$36,519	123.1
	U.S.	Protective Service	3.5%	\$43,880	98.8
	Florida	Office and Administrative Support	1.5%	\$35,831	98.1
14	NWFL	Office and Administrative Support	3.2%	\$33,796	98.1
	U.S.	Office and Administrative Support	-0.3%	\$38,831	98.1
	Florida	Production	2.5%	\$33,497	113.8
15	NWFL	Production	6.9%	\$33,424	113.8
	U.S.	Production	0.0%	\$37,190	113.8
	Florida	Transportation and Material Moving	6.6%	\$30,867	110.9
16	NWFL	Transportation and Material Moving	7.9%	\$30,582	110.9
	U.S.	Transportation and Material Moving	4.7%	\$34,244	110.9
	Florida	Sales and Related	1.2%	\$30,031	95.0
17	NWFL	Sales and Related	2.9%	\$28,675	95.0
	U.S.	Sales and Related	0.2%	\$31,997	95.0
	Florida	Healthcare Support	9.4%	\$28,744	95.0
18	NWFL	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	12.6%	\$28,085	110.0
	U.S.	Healthcare Support	10.6%	\$29,672	95.0
	Florida	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	3.9%	\$26,188	122.5
19	NWFL	Healthcare Support	8.6%	\$27,864	95.0
	U.S.	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	2.6%	\$29,414	122.5
	Florida	Personal Care and Service	10.8%	\$25,026	96.1
20	NWFL	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	10.1%	\$25,252	122.5
	U.S.	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	3.0%	\$28,023	110.0
	Florida	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	6.3%	\$24,543	110.0
21	NWFL	Personal Care and Service	13.4%	\$23,914	96.1
	U.S.	Personal Care and Service	6.8%	\$27,451	96.1
	Florida	Food Preparation and Serving Related	14.8%	\$22,771	125.9
22	NWFL	Food Preparation and Serving Related	22.0%	\$22,774	125.9
	U.S.	Food Preparation and Serving Related	7.1%	\$25,546	125.9

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About Us

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We are known for the breadth and depth of our data resources and have been for 28 years. We provide textured, meaningful analysis to an array of customers from the public and non-profit sectors to private industry, including manufacturing.

An immersive public manufacturing laboratory, Sea3D in Pensacola's Historic District, showcases what is possible when creative minds intersect with industry leaders in additive and advanced manufacturing.

To learn more about our services, please visit our website: <u>haas.uwf.edu</u>