

MASTER'S DEGREES WITH THE HIGHEST EMPLOYMENT RATES

Employment Outcomes, Workforce Demand, and Employment Security by Field

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Ranked by employment rate — not salary, not prestige. This report identifies which master's degree fields consistently lead to jobs after graduation using federal labor data and field-specific placement outcomes.

~98.5%

**Highest estimated field
employment rate**

Nursing (MSN)

A+

**Top Employment Security
Score**

Nursing, Physician Assistant Studies,
Cybersecurity

74%

**Programs with required
experiential learning**

Clinical, practicum, or internship
experiences

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment rate is a distinct measure of graduate degree value. A field can pay exceptionally well yet have a saturated labor market, while licensed professions with moderate salary ceilings may offer near-universal employment because demand exceeds supply. OMC's analysis therefore evaluates employment rate alongside salary potential, workforce demand, credential requirements, and return on investment.

OMC Finding: Employment rate and salary are not the same measure of graduate degree value. Several fields with the highest employment rates do not produce the highest salaries, while some high-paying graduate fields rank lower for employment security.

HOW OMC EVALUATES EMPLOYMENT RATES

There is no single national database reporting field-specific employment rates for master's graduates across every discipline. OMC combines publicly available labor-market data and field-specific workforce information to create a consistent comparison.

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) — occupation-level unemployment, projected employment growth, and median wages.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) — graduate employment outcomes, field-of-study data, and postsecondary statistics.
- Professional associations and licensing organizations — including AACN, NCCPA, AICPA, ASHA, AOTA, and other credentialing bodies.

Where direct degree-level outcomes are unavailable, occupation-level data is used as the primary proxy and supplemented with licensure statistics, accreditation requirements, workforce shortages, and field-specific placement information. Federal data can lag current conditions by one to two years, and outcomes vary by specialization, geography, prior experience, and local demand.

OMC EMPLOYMENT SECURITY FRAMEWORK

The framework considers estimated field employment rate, long-term employment growth projections, workforce demand and labor shortages, licensure or credential requirements, time-to-employment following graduation,

and employment stability across economic cycles. It is a comparative decision-support framework, not a prediction of individual outcomes.

Degree Field	Employment Security Score
Nursing (MSN)	A+
Physician Assistant Studies	A+
Cybersecurity	A+
Computer Science	A
Accounting	A
Speech-Language Pathology	A
Occupational Therapy	A
Data Science / Analytics	A
Social Work (MSW)	B+
Education (Licensure Track)	B+
Engineering	B+
Healthcare Administration	B+

Framework finding: Licensed healthcare professions earn the strongest scores because they combine exceptionally high employment with persistent workforce shortages and clear credential-to-employment pathways. Technology fields also perform well, driven by sustained employer demand rather than licensure requirements.

OMC GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT TRANSPARENCY CENSUS

OMC reviewed employment transparency across graduate programs in its internal university and program database, focusing on the employment information universities publicly disclose to prospective students.

Finding	Result
Graduate Programs Reviewed	122
Universities Represented	61
Programs Publishing Graduate Employment Outcomes	39%
Programs Publishing Placement Rates	24%
Programs Highlighting Employer Partnerships	67%
Programs Including Required Clinical, Practicum, or Internship Experiences	74%
Programs Publishing Licensure or Certification Pass Rates (where applicable)	36%

OMC Finding: Employment transparency remains inconsistent across graduate education. Many universities promote career success, but relatively few publish standardized employment outcomes, placement rates, or licensure results that allow direct comparison.

QUICK PICKS: MASTER'S DEGREES BY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME

Highest Overall Employment Rate

Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) — Structural workforce shortages and licensure requirements create one of the tightest labor markets in graduate education.

Fastest to Employment After Graduation

Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies — Clinical rotations and standardized certification often connect graduates directly to employers.

Most Recession-Resistant

Master of Science in Cybersecurity / Information Security — Cybersecurity demand remains resilient because threats and compliance requirements persist across economic cycles.

Best for Career Switchers Seeking Employment Security

Master of Education (with Licensure Track) — Licensure programs create a direct credential-to-employment pipeline in persistent teacher-shortage areas.

Best Employment Rate Among Online Formats

Master of Science in Accounting — CPA-aligned online programs closely track on-campus employment outcomes because credential value matters more than delivery format.

EMPLOYMENT RATE VS. SALARY: WHICH DEGREES DELIVER BOTH?

Degree Field	Employment Strength	Salary Strength
Nursing (MSN)	Excellent	Very Strong
Physician Assistant Studies	Excellent	Excellent
Computer Science	Excellent	Excellent
Cybersecurity	Excellent	Very Strong
Accounting	Very Strong	Moderate
Speech-Language Pathology	Very Strong	Moderate
Occupational Therapy	Very Strong	Strong
Data Science / Analytics	Strong	Excellent
Social Work (MSW)	Very Strong	Lower
Education (Licensure Track)	Very Strong	Lower
Engineering (Select Fields)	Strong	Excellent
Healthcare Administration (MHA)	Strong	Strong

OMC Finding: High salary and high employment do not always occur together. Nursing, physician assistant studies, computer science, and cybersecurity combine both; education and social work prioritize employment security over salary; and data science and some engineering specialties pair exceptional salary potential with greater employment variability.

MASTER'S DEGREES WITH THE HIGHEST EMPLOYMENT RATES — FULL RANKINGS

1. Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) — ~98.5%

Median salary: \$125,900 (NPs) Typical time to employment: Immediate–3 months Licensure: Yes

Typical roles: Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nurse Educator, Nurse Administrator

Why employment is high: Structural nursing shortages, broad geographic demand, and licensure barriers keep employment exceptionally tight.

2. Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies — ~98%

Median salary: \$130,020 Typical time to employment: Immediate–3 months Licensure: Yes

Typical roles: Physician Assistant

Why employment is high: Selective training, extensive clinical rotations, and 27% projected growth support near-immediate placement.

3. Master of Science in Computer Science — ~97.5%

Median salary: \$136,620 Typical time to employment: 1–3 months Licensure: No

Typical roles: Software Engineer, Machine Learning Engineer, Systems Architect, Research Engineer

Why employment is high: Demand spans technology, finance, healthcare, government, defense, logistics, and manufacturing.

4. Master of Science in Cybersecurity / Information Security — ~97%

Median salary: \$120,360 Typical time to employment: 1–3 months Licensure: No (certifications preferred)

Typical roles: Information Security Analyst, Cybersecurity Engineer, Security Architect, CISO

Why employment is high: Persistent talent shortages plus non-discretionary security and compliance needs sustain demand.

5. Master of Science in Accounting — ~96.5%

Median salary: \$79,880 Typical time to employment: 1–6 months Licensure: CPA preferred/required

Typical roles: CPA, Auditor, Tax Manager, Forensic Accountant, Controller

Why employment is high: CPA education requirements and a documented accounting pipeline support reliable placement.

6. Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology — ~96.5%

Median salary: \$89,290 Typical time to employment: 1–3 months Licensure: Yes

Typical roles: Speech-Language Pathologist

Why employment is high: A required graduate credential and persistent demand across schools, hospitals, rehabilitation, and private practice support employment.

7. Master of Science in Occupational Therapy — ~96%

Median salary: \$96,370 Typical time to employment: 1–3 months Licensure: Yes

Typical roles: Occupational Therapist

Why employment is high: Required fieldwork and growing demand from aging demographics, pediatric services, and rehabilitation create strong pipelines.

8. Master of Science in Data Science / Analytics — ~95.5%

Median salary: \$108,020 Typical time to employment: 1–4 months Licensure: No

Typical roles: Data Scientist, Data Engineer, Machine Learning Engineer, BI Analyst

Why employment is high: Rapid employer demand and 35% projected growth support strong placement, though outcomes vary by program quality and experience.

9. Master of Social Work (MSW) — ~95%

Median salary: \$58,380 Typical time to employment: 1–6 months Licensure: Yes (for LCSW)

Typical roles: LCSW, School Social Worker, Healthcare Social Worker, Mental Health Counselor

Why employment is high: Licensure requirements plus nationwide mental-health provider shortages create a durable employment pipeline.

10. Master of Education (with Licensure Track) — ~94.5%

Median salary: \$62,360 Typical time to employment: 1–3 months Licensure: Yes

Typical roles: Licensed K–12 Teacher, Curriculum Specialist, Instructional Coordinator

Why employment is high: Shortage areas such as math, science, special education, and ESL support strong employment where licensure is embedded.

11. Master of Science in Engineering (Select Fields) — ~94%

Median salary: \$104,600 Typical time to employment: 1–4 months Licensure: PE optional

Typical roles: Senior Engineer, Engineering Manager, Systems Engineer, R&D; Engineer

Why employment is high: Demand is strong across several subfields, though opportunities can be more geographically and industry concentrated.

12. Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA) — ~93.5%

Median salary: \$110,680 Typical time to employment: 1–6 months Licensure: No

Typical roles: Hospital Administrator, Health Services Manager, Operations Director

Why employment is high: Healthcare sector growth and management demand support stable employment, though outcomes vary more without a licensure barrier.

EMPLOYMENT RATE COMPARISON TABLE

Degree Field	Est. Employment Rate	Median Salary	Time to Employment	Licensure	Online Availability
Nursing (MSN)	~98.5%	\$125,900 (NPs)	Immediate–3 months	Yes	Widely available (hybrid clinical)
Physician Assistant Studies	~98%	\$130,020	Immediate–3 months	Yes	Limited (hybrid only)
Computer Science	~97.5%	\$136,620	1–3 months	No	Widely available
Cybersecurity / Information Security	~97%	\$120,360	1–3 months	No (certifications preferred)	Widely available
Accounting	~96.5%	\$79,880	1–6 months	CPA preferred/required	Widely available
Speech-Language Pathology	~96.5%	\$89,290	1–3 months	Yes	Limited (hybrid only)
Occupational Therapy	~96%	\$96,370	1–3 months	Yes	Limited (hybrid only)
Data Science / Analytics	~95.5%	\$108,020	1–4 months	No	Widely available
Social Work (MSW)	~95%	\$58,380	1–6 months	Yes (for LCSW)	Widely available
Education (with Licensure)	~94.5%	\$62,360	1–3 months	Yes	Widely available
Engineering (Select Fields)	~94%	\$104,600	1–4 months	PE optional	Available (select programs)
Healthcare Administration (MHA)	~93.5%	\$110,680	1–6 months	No	Widely available

Source note: Salary figures are based primarily on BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics. Estimated employment rates are field-level proxies derived from BLS occupation-level unemployment data, NCES field-of-study outcomes, and professional association or licensure data where available. Time-to-employment ranges reflect available program outcomes, professional association surveys, licensure pathways, and OMC's comparative employment-security analysis.

TRADEOFFS AND DECISION GUIDANCE

High Employment + High Burnout

Nursing and social work have strong demand, but staffing pressure, high caseloads, and emotionally intensive work can affect long-term career sustainability.

High Employment + Licensure Lock-In

PA, speech-language pathology, and occupational therapy offer exceptional employment security, but the training is highly specific and career pivots are more difficult.

High Employment + Geographic Concentration

Engineering employment is strong nationally, but certain subfields are concentrated in specific regions and industries.

High Employment + Moderate Salary Ceiling

Education and some healthcare administration roles can offer strong security while compensation grows more slowly than in technical or clinical specialties.

HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR EMPLOYMENT CHANCES

1. Choose an accredited program: Verify institutional accreditation and the field-specific accreditation employers or licensing boards expect.
2. Prioritize practicum, clinical, or internship components: Hands-on experiences create employer relationships and often become direct hiring pipelines.

3. Use career services early: Ask about employer partnerships, recruiting, alumni networks, and recent placement data before enrolling, then engage career services before the final semester.
4. Target programs with employer partnerships: Formal employer relationships can materially improve access to internships, clinical sites, and recruiting channels.
5. Align completion with market demand: Use current and projected demand to time entry into the labor market, especially in cyclical or rapidly changing fields.

METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS, AND SOURCES

OMC combines Bureau of Labor Statistics employment projections and occupational data, National Center for Education Statistics graduate outcomes and field-of-study data, and professional association or licensing data. Because comprehensive degree-level employment rates are not consistently available across all master's disciplines, occupation-level employment data serves as the primary benchmark and is supplemented with field-specific information where available.

Limitations: Federal employment data generally lags current conditions by one to two years; occupational categories do not always map perfectly to academic degree titles; and individual outcomes vary by specialization, geography, prior experience, employer network, and local labor demand. Estimated rates are comparative field-level proxies, not guaranteed placement rates for every program or graduate.

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