

ONLINE MASTER'S EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2026

Outcomes, Salary Data & Career Impact

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesizes federal labor-market statistics, workforce projections, employer surveys, and institutional outcome reports to evaluate employment stability, salary progression, employer acceptance, career advancement, and long-term demand after graduate education.

HEADLINE OUTCOMES

19.3%

**Median weekly earnings
premium**

\$1,840/week for master's holders vs.
\$1,543 for bachelor's holders.

2.0%

Master's unemployment rate

Among the lowest unemployment rates
across major education levels.

61%

Promoted within five years

Approximately 61% of online master's
graduates report promotion or increased
responsibility.

72-79%

Employer acceptance

Employers considering accredited online
master's degrees comparable to
on-campus degrees.

34%

Successfully changed careers

Approximately one-third report moving
into a different career field.

86.8%

Overall employment rate

Aggregate employment rate reported for
master's degree holders in the canonical
source.

OMC EMPLOYMENT SECURITY INDEX

The OMC Employment Security Index is a comparative framework for long-term employment strength. It evaluates: employment rate, unemployment rate, long-term workforce demand, career advancement potential, employer acceptance of online master's degrees, professional credential/licensure requirements, and career mobility/leadership opportunities.

Transparency note: The canonical 2026 source supplied for this build defines the index dimensions but does not publish numeric weights or score thresholds. To preserve data integrity, this PDF does not invent weighting or thresholds.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES BY DEGREE SUBJECT

Subject Area	Employment Rate	Median Salary	Unemployment	10-Year Growth
Nursing (MSN)	93.2%	\$84,460	1.1%	+6% (BLS)
Computer Science / IT	91.5%	\$109,020	1.9%	+15% (BLS)
Healthcare Administration	90.1%	\$91,580	1.6%	+28% (BLS)
Engineering	89.7%	\$101,340	1.7%	+4% (BLS)
Business / MBA	88.4%	\$89,740	2.1%	+6% (BLS)
Data Science / Analytics	90.8%	\$96,710	1.5%	+35% (BLS)
Public Health (MPH)	87.3%	\$62,360	2.4%	+12% (BLS)
Education (Teaching/Curriculum)	85.9%	\$62,770	2.6%	+1% (BLS)
Social Work (MSW)	84.7%	\$65,280	2.8%	+7% (BLS)
Psychology (Clinical/Counseling)	82.3%	\$73,810	3.2%	+6% (BLS)
Criminal Justice	83.1%	\$56,870	3.0%	+3% (BLS)

EMPLOYER ACCEPTANCE OF ONLINE MASTER'S DEGREES

Perception Metric	Finding	Source
Consider online master's from accredited institution equivalent to on-campus	72-79% of employers	SHRM Hiring Manager Surveys, 2022-2023
Have hired an online master's graduate in past 3 years	61% of employers	SHRM Workplace Credential Survey, 2023
Satisfied with performance of online master's hires	83% of employers who hired online graduates	SHRM Workplace Credential Survey, 2023
Primary factor in evaluating an online degree	Accreditation status and institutional reputation	SHRM, NACE Employer Surveys
Industry with highest acceptance of online credentials	Technology	SHRM, employer panel data
Industry with lowest acceptance of online credentials	Academic hiring (tenure-track faculty)	NACE, institutional hiring data
Considered online degree format a negative factor in hiring	11-15% of employers	Pew Research Center, 2023
Shift in acceptance since 2012	From ~42% acceptance to 72-79% acceptance	SHRM longitudinal survey comparison

CAREER ADVANCEMENT METRICS

Metric	Online Master's Graduates	Bachelor's-Only Holders	Difference
Promoted within 5 years of degree	~61%	~38%	+23 percentage points
Median time to first post-degree promotion	2.4 years	4.1 years	1.7 years faster
Transitioned to management-level role	~47%	~29%	+18 percentage points
Successfully changed career fields	~34%	~18%	+16 percentage points
Report increased job satisfaction post-degree	~68%	N/A	-
Report salary increase within 2 years of graduation	~72%	N/A	-

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

Industry Sector	Demand	Median Salary With Master's	Projected Growth	Top Subjects
Healthcare and Nursing	Very High	\$89,000-\$120,000+	+13% average	Nursing (MSN), Healthcare Administration, Public Health
Technology and Data	Very High	\$100,000-\$130,000+	+15-35%	Computer Science, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Engineering
Business and Finance	High	\$80,000-\$110,000	+7% average	MBA, Finance, Accounting, Management
Education and Public Sector	Moderate	\$58,000-\$85,000	+2-5% average	Education (M.Ed.), Public Administration, Social Work
Engineering and STEM	High	\$95,000-\$120,000	+4-8%	Engineering, Computer Science, Data Science

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

Primary sources: BLS Current Population Survey and OEWS; NCES/IPEDS and Baccalaureate and Beyond; Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; SHRM, NACE, Pew Research Center; and published institutional graduate outcome reports.

Analysis: OMC synthesizes these sources to produce subject- and industry-level comparisons. Aggregate educational-attainment earnings use the most recent finalized BLS weekly earnings data available for the 2026 research series. Field-level salary benchmarks use OMC's standardized Graduate Outcomes dataset.

Limitations: Federal data does not consistently distinguish online from on-campus graduates; selection effects may influence observed outcomes; field-level data depth varies; and federal datasets are released with publication lags. Findings are directional, not guarantees.

HOW TO CITE THIS REPORT

OnlineMastersColleges.com. (2026). Online Master's Employment Report 2026: Outcomes, Salary Data & Career Impact. OnlineMastersColleges.com.

Canonical URL: <https://www.onlinemasterscolleges.com/online-masters-employment-report/>

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