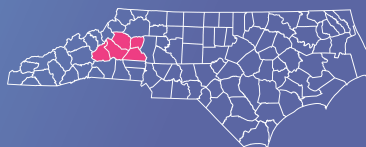


## What are Star Jobs?

North Carolina's 5-Star Jobs represent occupations with the greatest projected employment potential through 2032. Occupations were rated from 1-5 stars based on wages, projected growth rates, and projected job openings.

### HICKORY REGION



Alexander | Burke | Caldwell  
Catawba | McDowell



For a complete list of Star Jobs and explanation of the rating process, scan the QR code or visit: [www.commerce.nc.gov/data-tools-reports/labor-market-data-tools/employment-projections#StarJobs-274](http://www.commerce.nc.gov/data-tools-reports/labor-market-data-tools/employment-projections#StarJobs-274)

### Advanced Degree

#### MEDIAN WAGE

Hourly Annual

5	Nurse Practitioners	\$58.76	\$122,229
5	Physical Therapists	\$47.82	\$99,461
5	Physician Assistants	\$59.83	\$124,453
5	Speech-Language Pathologists	\$39.79	\$82,751
4	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	\$24.60	\$51,171
4	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers	\$27.89	\$58,011
4	Nurse Anesthetists	\$110.42	\$229,673
4	Veterinarians	\$57.42	\$119,443
4	Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	\$40.49	\$84,216
4	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	\$45.23	\$94,094

All wages are based on LEAD analysis of data of Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) 2024 Data released in May 2025.

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Top 10 careers with high wages and employment growth, grouped by education requirements.

**High School & Work Experience****MEDIAN WAGE****Hourly      Annual**

★5	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$29.56	\$61,487
★5	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	\$31.85	\$66,259
★5	Electricians	\$25.78	\$53,614
★5	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	\$29.51	\$61,384
★5	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	\$47.16	\$98,100
★5	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	\$37.29	\$77,568
★4	Light Truck Drivers	\$18.06	\$37,559
★4	Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	\$23.85	\$49,598
★4	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	\$19.03	\$39,582
★4	Construction Laborers	\$19.60	\$40,759

**Postsecondary Training****MEDIAN WAGE****Hourly      Annual**

★4	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	\$23.17	\$48,210
★4	Medical Assistants	\$19.36	\$40,273
★4	Emergency Medical Technicians	\$20.34	\$42,318
★4	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$24.87	\$51,737
★4	Paramedics	\$22.83	\$47,492
★4	Psychiatric Technicians	\$20.84	\$43,341
★4	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	\$26.90	\$55,942
★4	Skincare Specialists	\$20.93	\$43,528
★3	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$25.46	\$52,972
★3	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$30.13	\$62,683

**Associate's Degree****MEDIAN WAGE****Hourly      Annual**

★5	Physical Therapist Assistants	\$30.69	\$63,834
★5	Occupational Therapy Assistants	\$31.86	\$66,276
★4	Registered Nurses	\$37.98	\$78,993
★4	Dental Hygienists	\$42.70	\$88,822
★4	Respiratory Therapists	\$36.72	\$76,381
★4	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	\$39.17	\$81,470
★3	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	\$30.95	\$64,380
★3	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	\$27.47	\$57,147
★3	Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technologists and Technicians	\$37.41	\$77,824
★3	Mechanical Drafters	\$28.47	\$59,221

**Bachelor's Degree****MEDIAN WAGE****Hourly      Annual**

★5	Construction Managers	\$46.01	\$95,700
★5	Industrial Engineers	\$39.39	\$81,934
★5	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$49.32	\$102,597
★5	Financial Managers	\$62.88	\$130,792
★5	Management Analysts	\$35.85	\$74,573
★5	Mechanical Engineers	\$41.09	\$85,467
★5	Logisticians	\$29.22	\$60,776
★5	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	\$40.20	\$83,616
★5	Chemists	\$37.29	\$77,574
★5	Data Scientists	\$38.90	\$80,920

*Note: Selected occupations for each education/experience category are based on the Star Jobs Methodology. Education categories in this brochure represent the minimum level of education required for entry according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Actual market conditions may require additional education and training.*