

November 2009

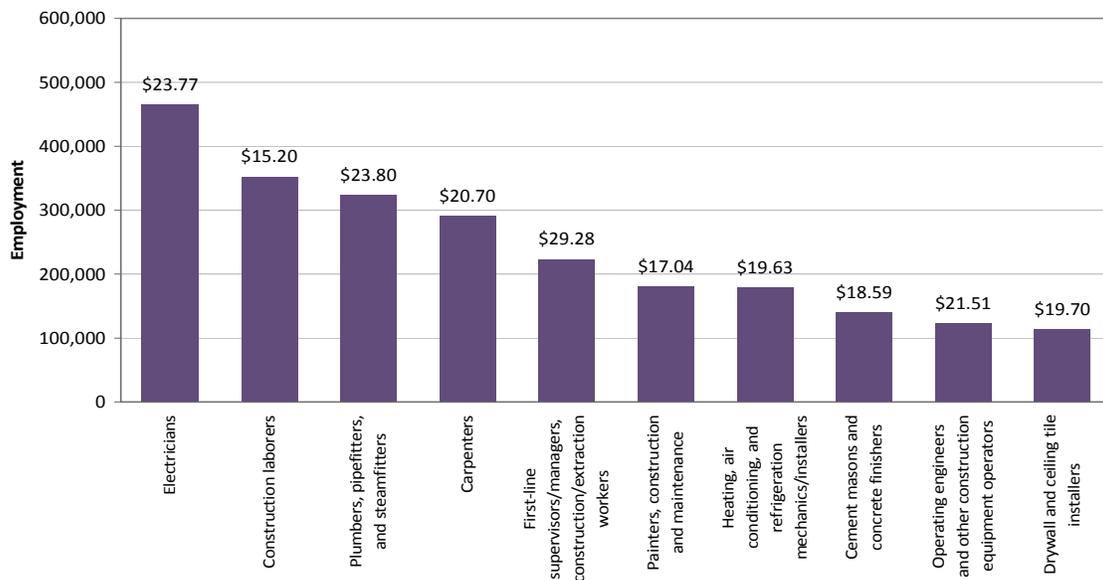
Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Highlights



An Occupational Analysis of Industries with the Most Job Losses

Three industry sectors have accounted for nearly two-thirds of total job losses in the current recession: construction, manufacturing, and administrative and support services. This highlight looks at the occupational composition of these sectors as of May 2008, several months into the recession. Although not all occupations in an industry may be equally affected by job losses, this analysis illustrates the types of occupations that are prevalent in each industry and therefore may be at risk during an economic downturn.

Chart 1: Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in specialty trade contractors, May 2008



(See page 7 to view these data in table format.)

Between December 2007 and October 2009, employment in the construction sector fell by almost 21 percent, or over 1.5 million jobs. Approximately 65 percent of jobs lost in this sector were among specialty trade contractors, which perform specific activities associated with construction projects, such as plumbing, masonry, or electrical work.

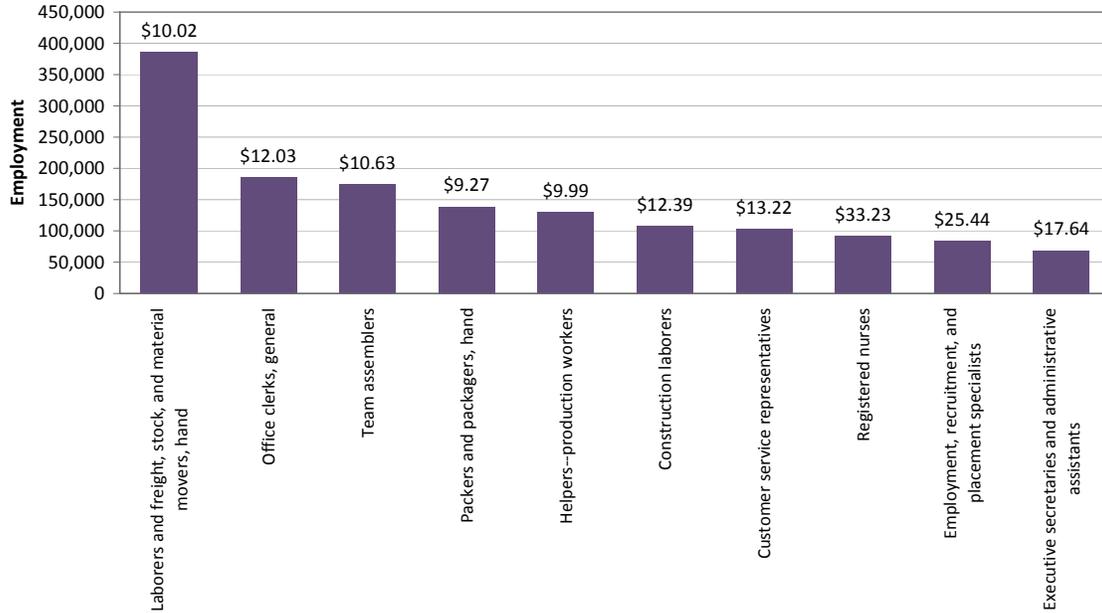
Chart 1 shows the largest occupations in specialty trade contractors, representing about half of employment in this industry. Specialty trade contractors were the primary employer of nearly all of these occupations, and accounted for more than two-thirds of total employment in 6 of the 10 occupations. Construction laborers, who perform general physical labor for construction projects, were the second-largest occupation in the industry, with employment of 352,300. Most of the remaining large occupations were associated with specific construction trades, including electricians, the largest occupation, with employment of 465,090; plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (323,760); and carpenters (290,950). General office clerks and secretaries, except legal, medical, and executive (not shown) were the two largest support occupations in this industry, with employment of 102,150 and 96,850, respectively.

The largest occupations in this industry tended to have wages within a few dollars of the U.S. average wage. For example, the mean wage for carpenters was \$20.70, very close to the U.S. mean wage for all occupations of \$20.32. Electricians (\$23.77) and plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (\$23.80) had mean wages somewhat above the U.S. average, while wages for cement masons and concrete finishers (\$18.59) and drywall and ceiling tile installers (\$19.70) were somewhat below the U.S. mean. The highest paid of the occupations shown, first-line supervisors/managers of construction trades and extraction workers, had a mean hourly wage of \$29.28, while construction laborers, the lowest-paid occupation shown, had a mean hourly wage of \$15.20.

Of the over 1.1 million jobs lost since December 2007 in the administrative and support services sector, nearly 83 percent were in employment services, which include temporary help services. Employment in the temporary help services industry

may be particularly volatile in response to the business cycle—because employers may view these workers as a flexible source of labor, they may be the first to be hired during expansions, and the first to be laid off during recessions.¹

Chart 2: Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in employment services, May 2008

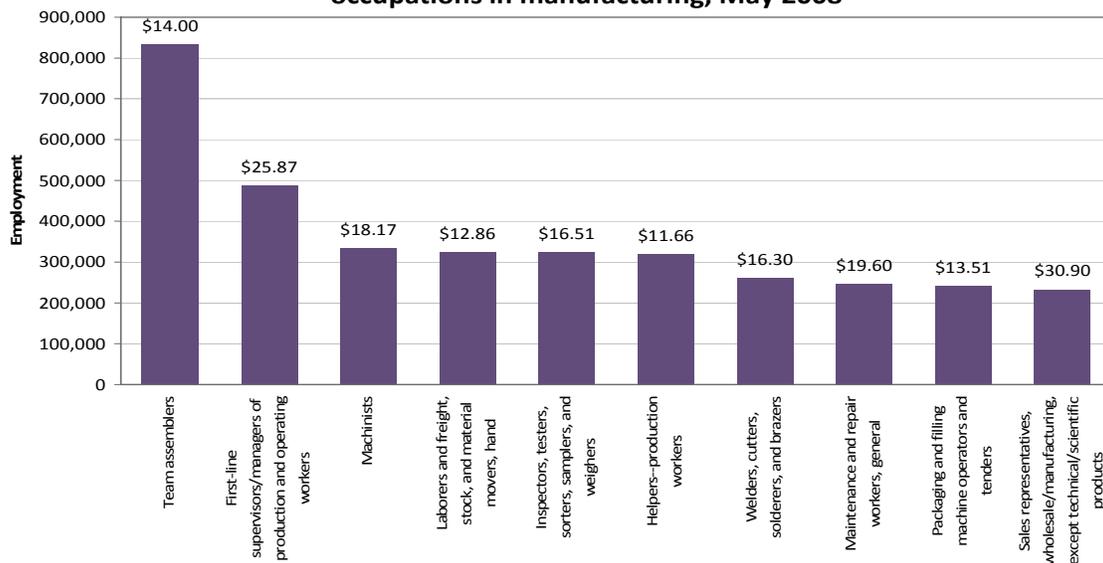


(See page 7 to view these data in table format.)

Chart 2 shows some of the largest occupations in employment services. While most of the largest jobs in specialty trade contractors were directly associated with performing construction tasks, the occupational composition of the employment services industry was more varied. The largest occupation in the industry—laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand—was from the transportation and material moving group, as was a second occupation, hand packers and packagers. Among the other large occupations in this industry were two production occupations (team assemblers and production worker helpers); three office and administrative support occupations (general office clerks, customer service representatives, and executive secretaries and administrative assistants); and one occupation each from the business and financial operations, healthcare practitioner and technical, and construction and extraction groups.

Most of the largest occupations in the employment services industry had mean hourly wages considerably below the U.S. average, and with few exceptions, lower than their counterparts in other industries. Seven of the 10 occupations shown in the chart had mean wages below \$15.00 per hour, and three of them had mean hourly wages of approximately \$10.00 or less: laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand (\$10.02); hand packers and packagers (\$9.27); and production worker helpers (\$9.99). However, the employment services industry also contained several large occupations with moderate or relatively high wages. Executive secretaries and administrative assistants had a mean hourly wage of \$17.64, similar to the wages for several of the construction trades occupations. Employment, recruitment, and placement specialists had a mean hourly wage of \$25.44, while registered nurses were the highest paid of the occupations shown, with a mean hourly wage of \$33.23.

Chart 3: Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in manufacturing, May 2008



(See page 8 to view these data in table format.)

Unlike the two sectors discussed above, in which the majority of job losses were concentrated in specific industries, job losses in the manufacturing sector were spread across a variety of industries. While the greatest number of manufacturing jobs lost were in fabricated metal product manufacturing, machinery manufacturing,

and transportation equipment manufacturing, these three industries combined accounted for only about 41 percent of over 2.1 million jobs lost in manufacturing since the beginning of the recession. For this reason, chart 3 shows the largest occupations in the manufacturing sector as a whole, rather than for a specific manufacturing industry.

Of the 10 large occupations shown in the chart, all but 3 are production occupations directly associated with the performance of manufacturing tasks. The largest of these occupations was team assemblers, with employment of 833,870. The largest occupations in manufacturing also included one transportation and material moving occupation (laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand); one installation, maintenance, and repair occupation (general maintenance and repair workers); and one sales and related occupation (sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products).

While the mean hourly wage in manufacturing of \$20.80 was close to the U.S. average of \$20.32, several of the largest manufacturing occupations were relatively low paying. For example, production worker helpers earned a mean hourly wage of \$11.66, while packaging and filling machine operators earned an average of \$13.51. Although team assemblers (\$14.00) and laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand (\$12.86) had wages below the U.S. average, both occupations had higher wages in manufacturing than in employment services, where they were also among the largest occupations. Of the occupations shown, only two—first-line supervisors/managers of production and operating workers and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products—had above-average wages, with mean hourly wages of \$25.87 and \$30.90, respectively.

Employment changes by industry are based on seasonally adjusted data from the Current Employment Statistics program (www.bls.gov/ces/); data for October 2009 are preliminary. Detailed occupational employment and wage data, including complete data for the industries featured in this highlight, are available from the OES

web site at www.bls.gov/oes/. This highlight was prepared by Audrey Watson and Fatemeh Hajiha; for more information, please contact the OES program at www.bls.gov/oes/home.htm#contact.

¹ Kilcoyne, Patrick, "Occupations in the Temporary Help Services Industry," *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2004*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2005, Bulletin 2575, pp. 8-9. Available online at www.bls.gov/oes/2004/may/temp.pdf.

Table 1. Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in specialty trade contractors, May 2008

Occupation	Employment	Percent of total industry employment	Mean hourly wage
Electricians	465,090	9.8	\$23.77
Construction laborers	352,300	7.4	15.20
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	323,760	6.8	23.80
Carpenters	290,950	6.1	20.70
First-line supervisors/managers of construction trades and extraction workers	223,250	4.7	29.28
Painters, construction and maintenance	180,430	3.8	17.04
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	178,740	3.8	19.63
Cement masons and concrete finishers	140,170	3.0	18.59
Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators	122,940	2.6	21.51
Drywall and ceiling tile installers	113,740	2.4	19.70
Industry total	4,736,940		20.99

Table 2. Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in employment services, May 2008

Occupation	Employment	Percent of total industry employment	Mean hourly wage
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	386,000	11.3	\$10.02
Office clerks, general	185,100	5.4	12.03
Team assemblers	174,220	5.1	10.63
Packers and packagers, hand	138,980	4.1	9.27
Helpers—production workers	130,270	3.8	9.99
Construction laborers	108,110	3.2	12.39
Customer service representatives	103,050	3.0	13.22
Registered nurses	91,980	2.7	33.23
Employment, recruitment, and placement specialists	83,530	2.5	25.44
Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	69,050	2.0	17.64
Industry total	3,408,230		15.64

Table 3. Employment and mean hourly wages for the largest occupations in manufacturing, May 2008

Occupation	Employment	Percent of total industry employment	Mean hourly wage
Team assemblers	833,870	6.1	\$14.00
First-line supervisors/managers of production and operating workers	487,880	3.6	25.87
Machinists	334,020	2.4	18.17
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	325,310	2.4	12.86
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	324,910	2.4	16.51
Helpers—production workers	320,240	2.3	11.66
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	261,070	1.9	16.30
Maintenance and repair workers, general	246,180	1.8	19.60
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	242,090	1.8	13.51
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	233,010	1.7	30.90
Industry total	13,655,340		20.80