



JULY 2020

## Using BLS Data To Match People With Disabilities With Jobs

**McLeod Brown and Kristen Monaco**

2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the landmark civil rights legislation signed into law on July 26, 1990 that works to increase access and opportunity for people with disabilities. The Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy is commemorating this anniversary with observances centered on the theme, “Increasing Access and Opportunity.” A key component of increasing access and opportunity is ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in the nation’s labor market. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has many data products that can be used to help people with disabilities plan their career paths. This Spotlight highlights these products and demonstrates how they can be used to evaluate potential jobs, using two specific occupations as examples.

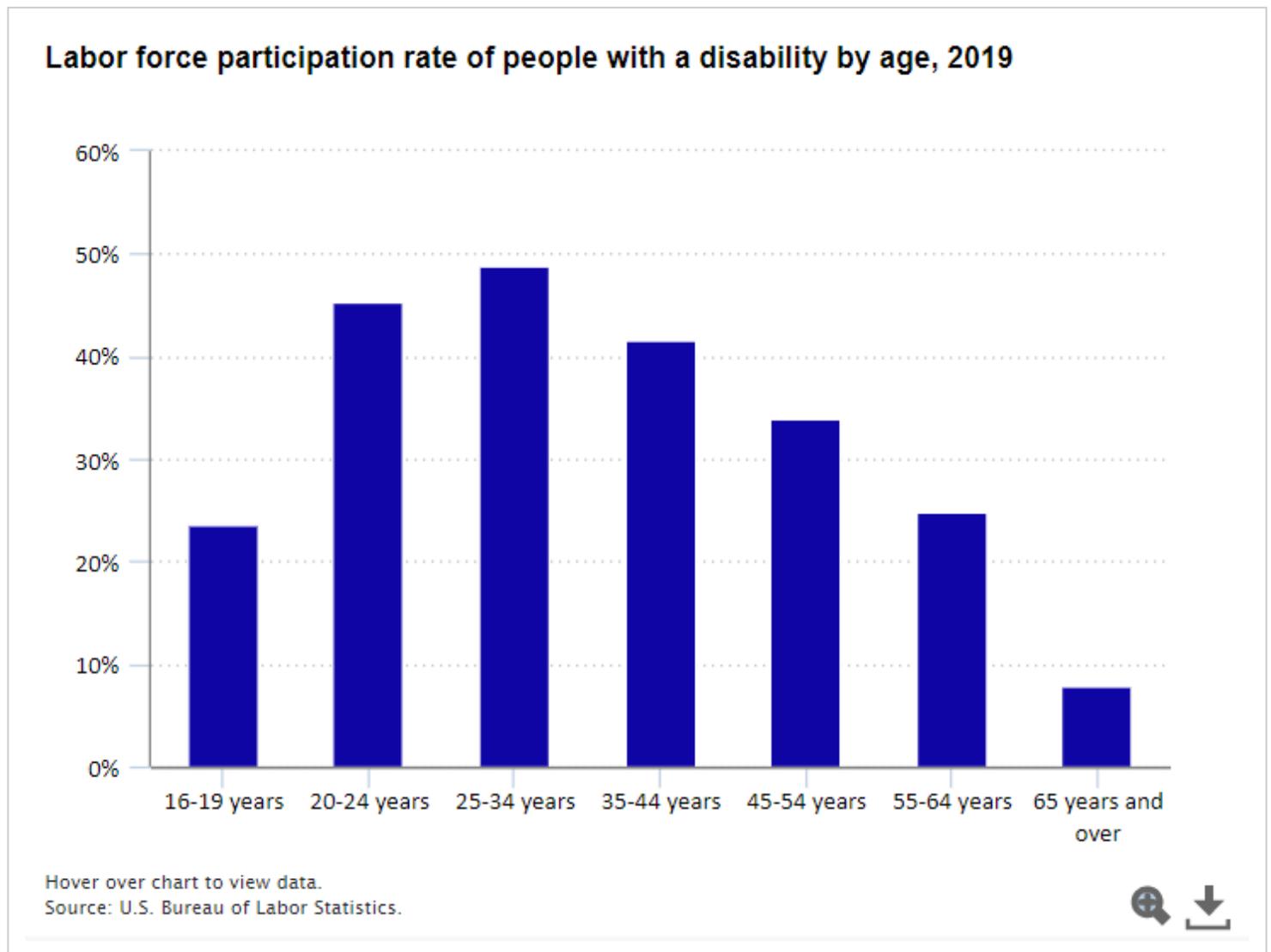
We will be focusing on all civilian workers unless otherwise noted.

## People with a disability comprised 3.9 percent of the civilian labor force in 2019

There were 30.4 million people with a disability in 2019, 5.9 million of whom were employed. About half of all people with a disability were age 65 and over.

Among people with a disability, the highest labor force participation rate was for those ages 25 to 34 years, at 48.8 percent. The labor force participation rate for those 35 to 44 years was 41.5 percent, and it generally decreased with age. Among those 65 years and older, the labor force participation rate for people with a disability (7.9 percent) was roughly one-third the rate of those without a disability (25.1 percent).

Across all age groups, labor force participation rates were much lower for people with a disability than for people without a disability—20.8 percent versus 68.7 percent.

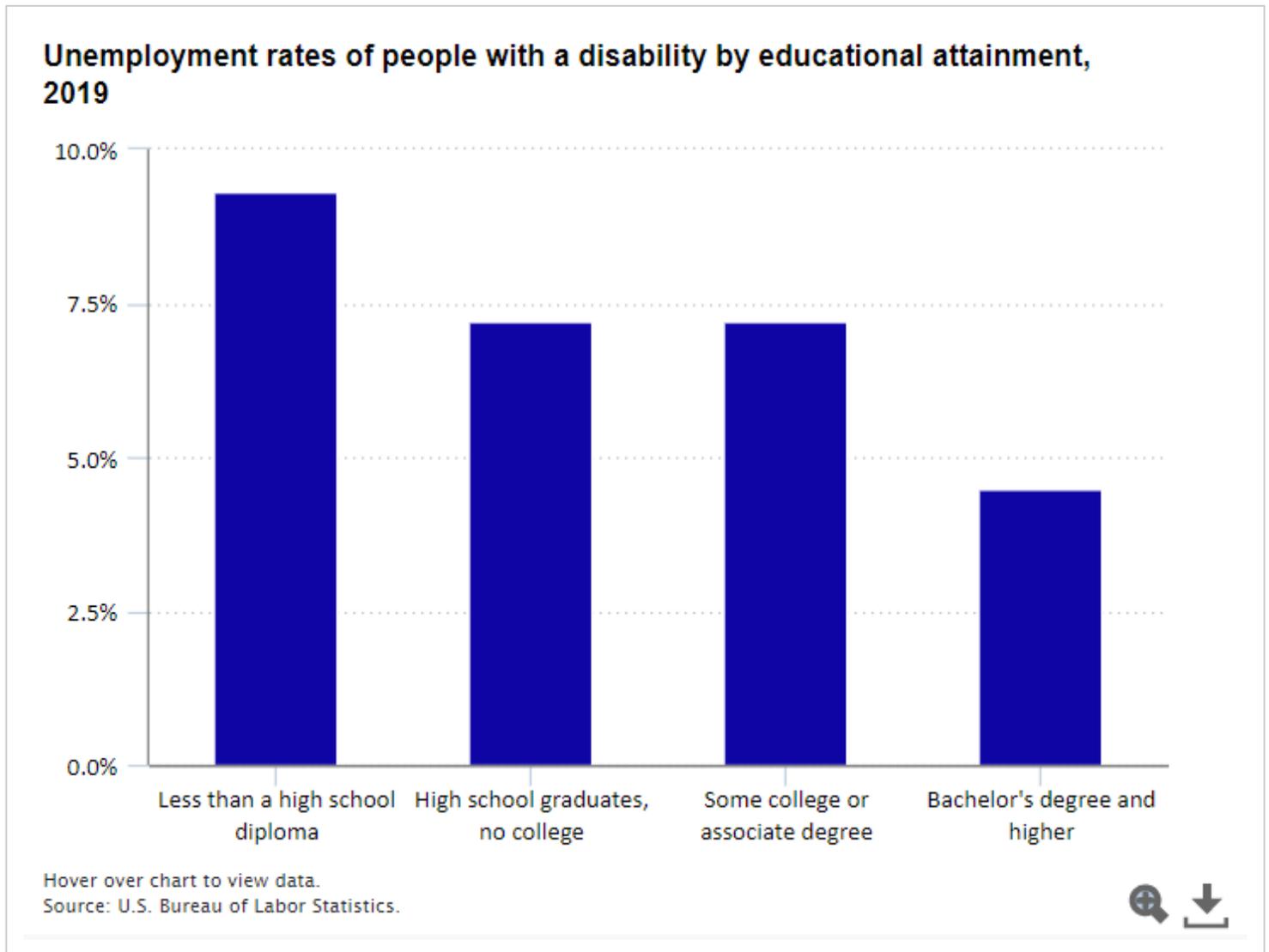


## The unemployment rate of people with a disability declines with increasing education

The unemployment rate for people with a disability was highest for those without a high school diploma, at 9.3 percent. People with a disability who were college grads had an unemployment rate of 4.5 percent in 2019. Among people age 25 and older, unemployment rates for those with a disability were higher than for those without a disability across all educational attainment groups.

The unemployment rate for people with a disability (regardless of education) was 7.3 percent in 2019, compared with 3.5 percent for people without a disability.

People with a disability were more likely to work part time: 32 percent of workers with a disability usually worked part time, compared to 17 percent of workers with no disability.



## Over half of jobs are sedentary or require light strength

How can I use BLS data to identify potential jobs?

BLS has many sources of data that can be helpful to people with a disability who want to identify potential jobs that might be right for them. This includes data on job requirements, pay, benefits, and employment outlook. Consider the following two scenarios:

Scenario 1: Susan had recently been working in light manufacturing, but developed back pain and shoulder pain and could no longer work in that job. Ten years ago, she worked for three years as a customer service rep for a mail-order clothing company. She wants to know what the prospects are for her to return to that type of job.

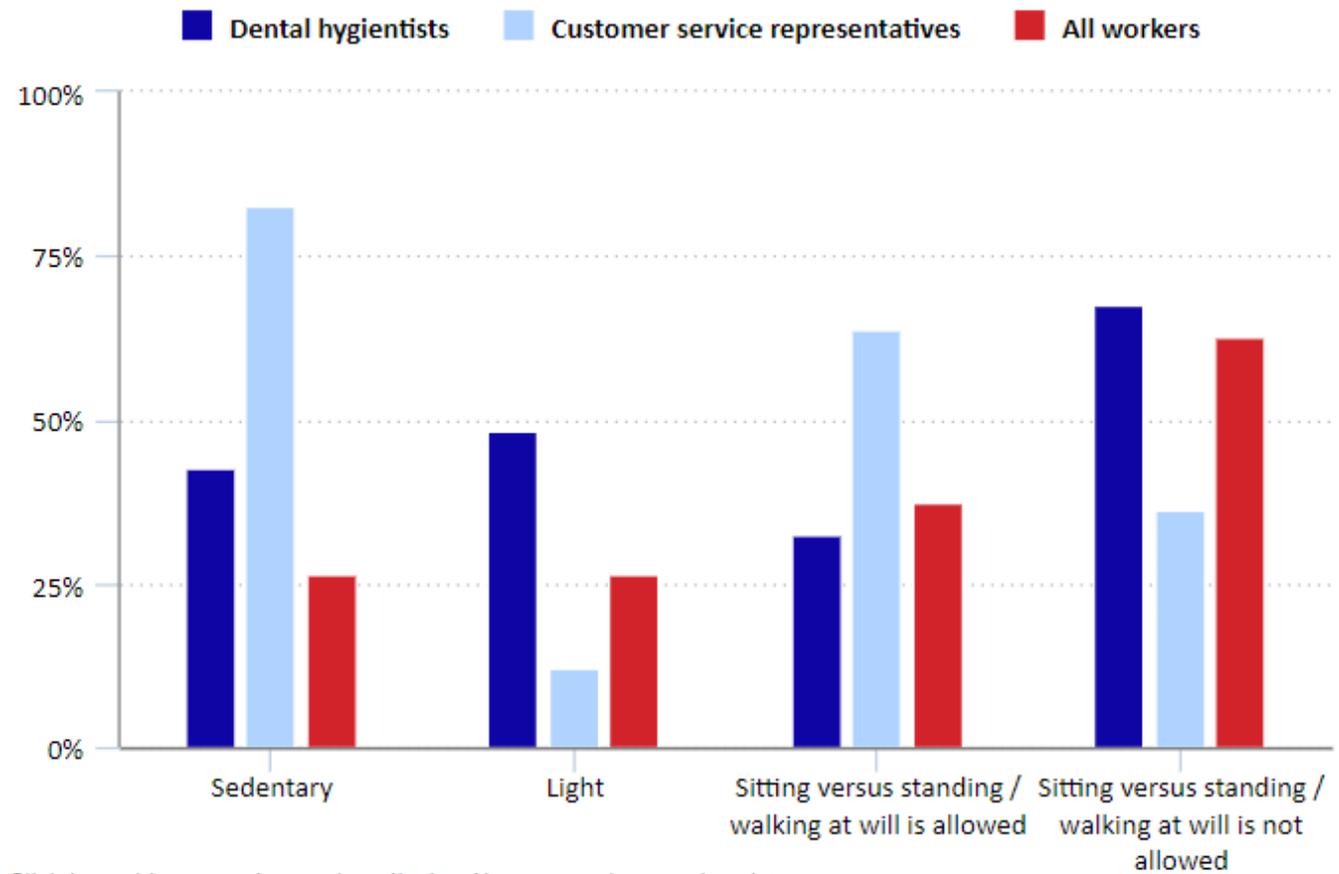
Scenario 2: Jose recently graduated high school and is planning for his future career. He is interested in the health care field, but needs a job that does not require lifting objects. He is interested in potentially becoming a dental hygienist, but wants to know what type of education and training is needed.

In both cases, BLS data can be used to understand job requirements, pay and benefits, and the future employment outlook.

Strength required to do a job is classified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, or very heavy. Roughly 90 percent dental hygienist jobs are classified as having either sedentary or light strength requirements. Because Jose is looking for a job that does not require any heavy lifting due to his disability, he can tell that dental hygienist jobs meet his requirement.

Among customer service jobs, 82.6 percent are classified as sedentary and 11.9 percent as light strength. Because Susan has back pain, she is interested in the ability to sit or stand and walk at will as she frequently needs to adjust her posture due to her back pain. The majority of customer service representative jobs allow this.

### Physical demands of work, dental hygienists and customer service representatives, 2018



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

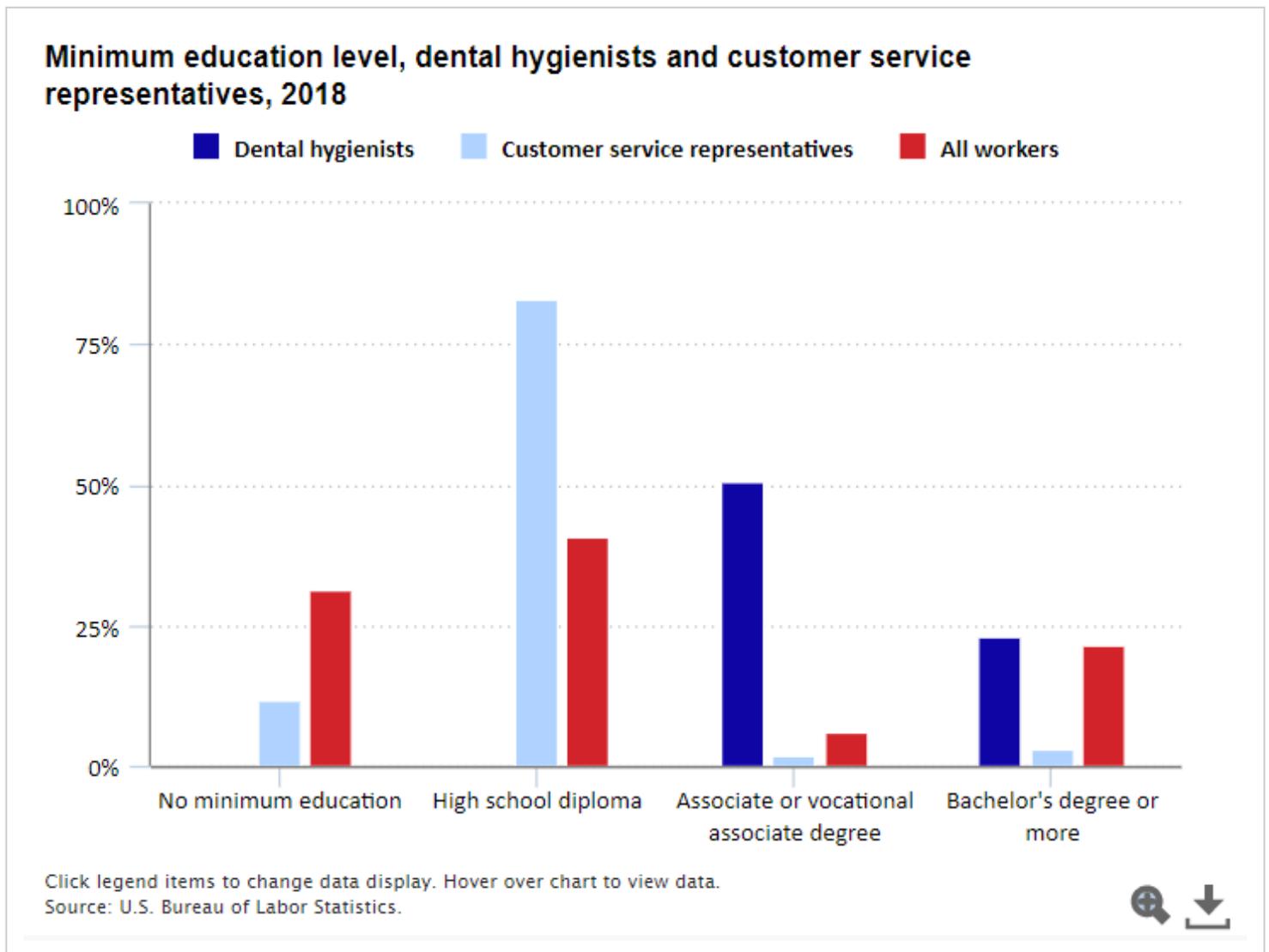


## Half of Dental Hygienist jobs require an Associate or Vocational degree

Slightly over half of all dental hygienist jobs require an Associate or Vocational degree, so Jose needs to look for schools that offer those degrees. Nearly a quarter of these jobs also require a Bachelor’s degree, so he may want to consider both 4-year colleges as well as 2-year colleges when researching additional education.

Eighty-three percent of customer service representative jobs require at least a high school diploma. About 12 percent of these jobs have no minimum education requirement. Less often required are associate or Bachelor’s degrees. Susan has a high school diploma, so she knows that most of these jobs would be available to her according to her education level.

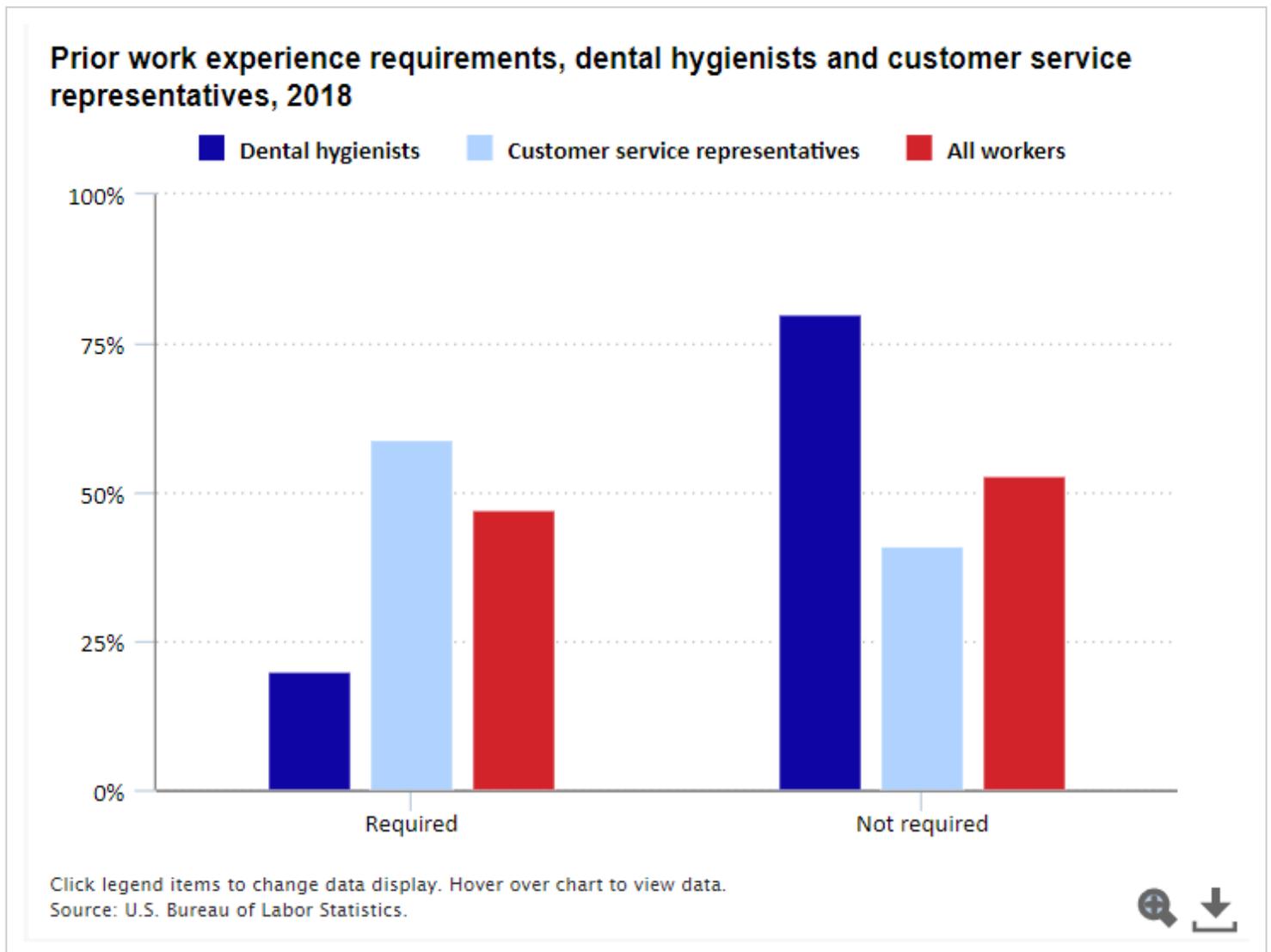
But what about experience?



## Nearly half of U.S. jobs require prior work experience

Roughly 20 percent of dental hygienist jobs require prior work experience, so Jose can be fairly confident that he can enter a job after completing his degree program.

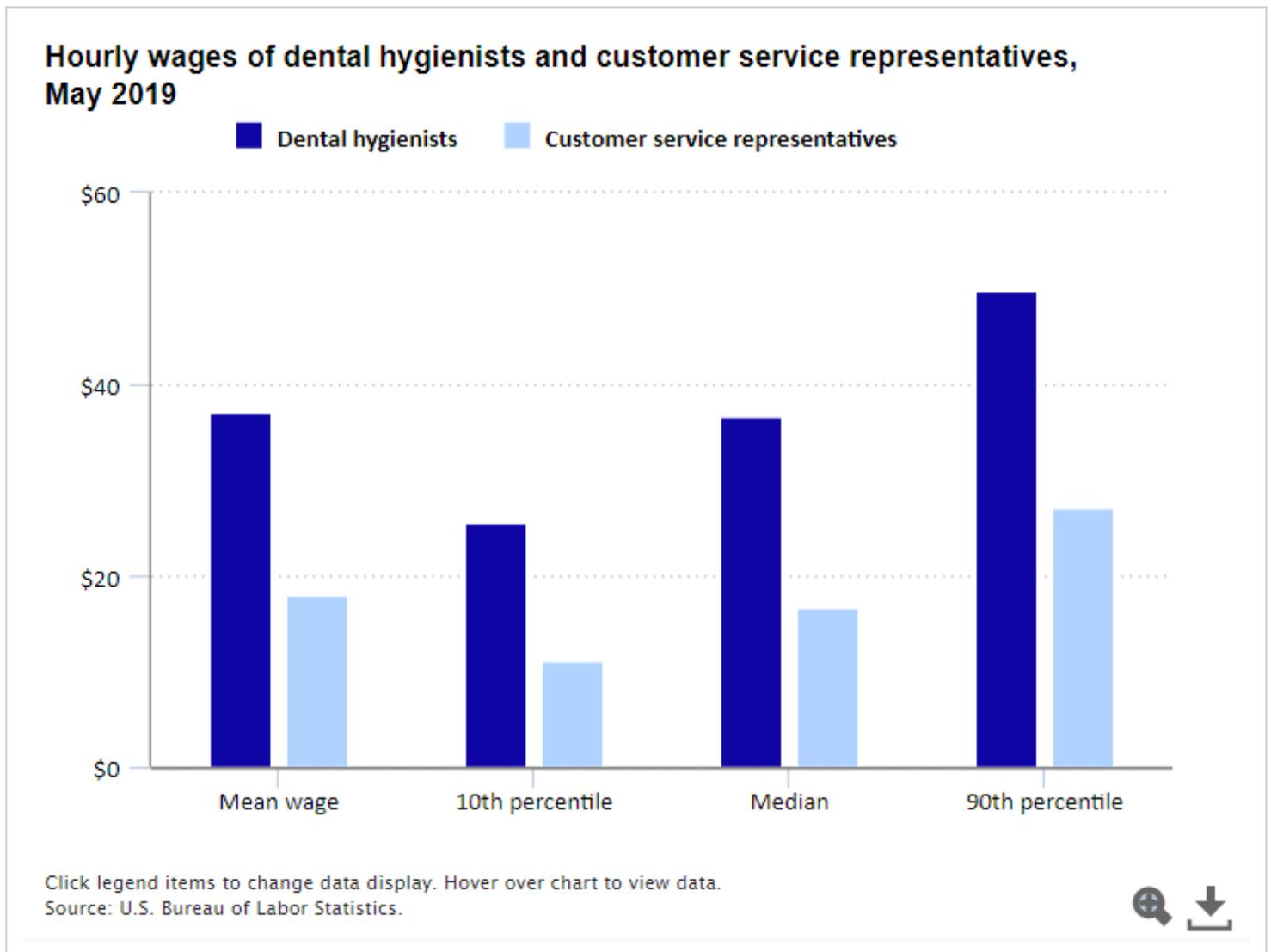
In contrast, about 59 percent of customer service representative positions require prior work experience, with an average of 533 days of prior work experience required. This is great news for Susan because she has three years of prior work experience in this field. Most of these jobs (84.2 percent) also require on-the-job training, with an average of about 29 days.



## Dental Hygienists earned an average of \$37.13 per hour in 2019

Now Jose and Susan have determined which jobs might be right for them. How much can they expect to earn? In May 2019, the 221,560 dental hygienists in the United States earned \$37.13 per hour, on average, with the lowest-paid 10 percent earning \$25.54 per hour or less and the highest 10 percent earning \$49.68 per hour or more.

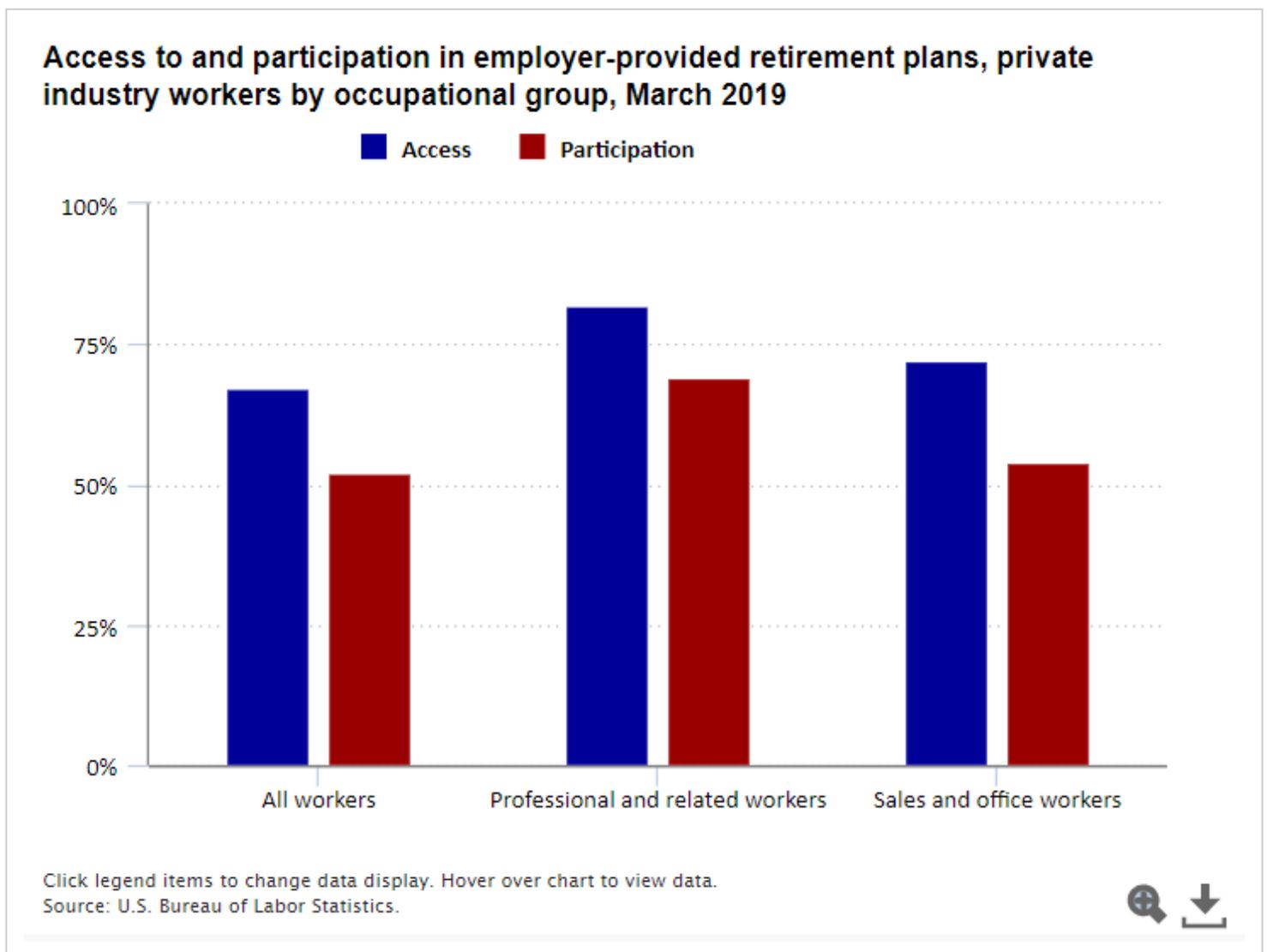
The nearly 3 million customer service representatives earned an average of \$17.94 per hour, with the lowest 10 percent earning \$11.05 or less and the highest 10 percent earning \$27.11 or more. These are the national data, but estimates for states and many local areas are also available.



## 82 percent of Professional and Related Occupations had access to Retirement Benefits in 2019

In addition to being interested in wages, Susan and Jose are interested in what types of benefits they might expect from employers. While BLS does not publish benefits information at the detailed occupation level, customer service representatives are included in the sales and office occupational group, while dental hygienists are in the professional and related occupational group.

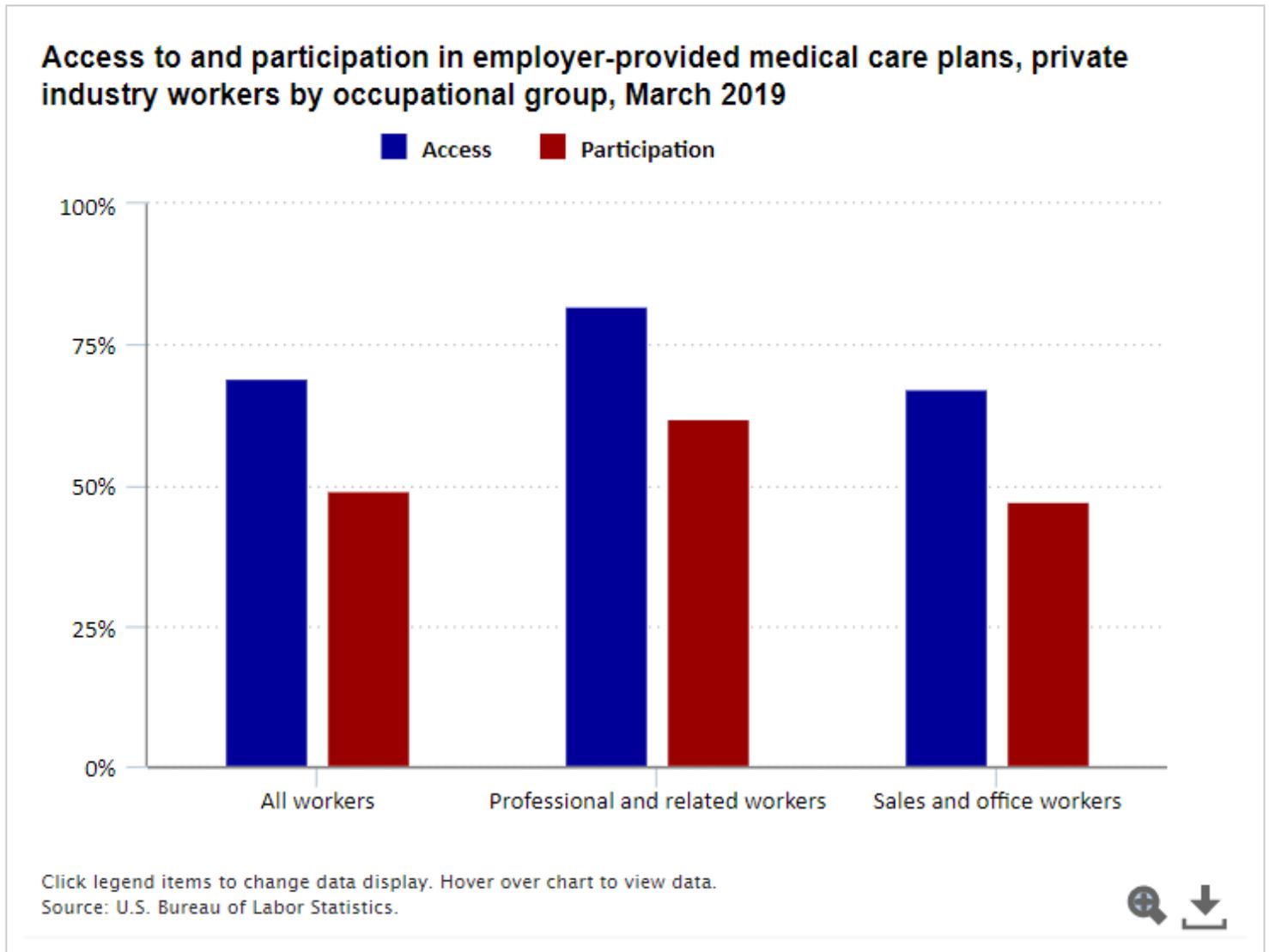
Here we see that benefits for workers in sales and office occupations closely mirror benefits for all private industry workers. In fact, access and participation rates for retirement benefits is slightly higher for sales and office workers compared to all private industry workers, with 72 percent of sales and office workers having access to retirement benefits and 54 percent participating in them. Access to and participation in these benefits is even higher for professional and related jobs.



## 82 percent of Professional and Related Occupations had access to medical benefits in 2019

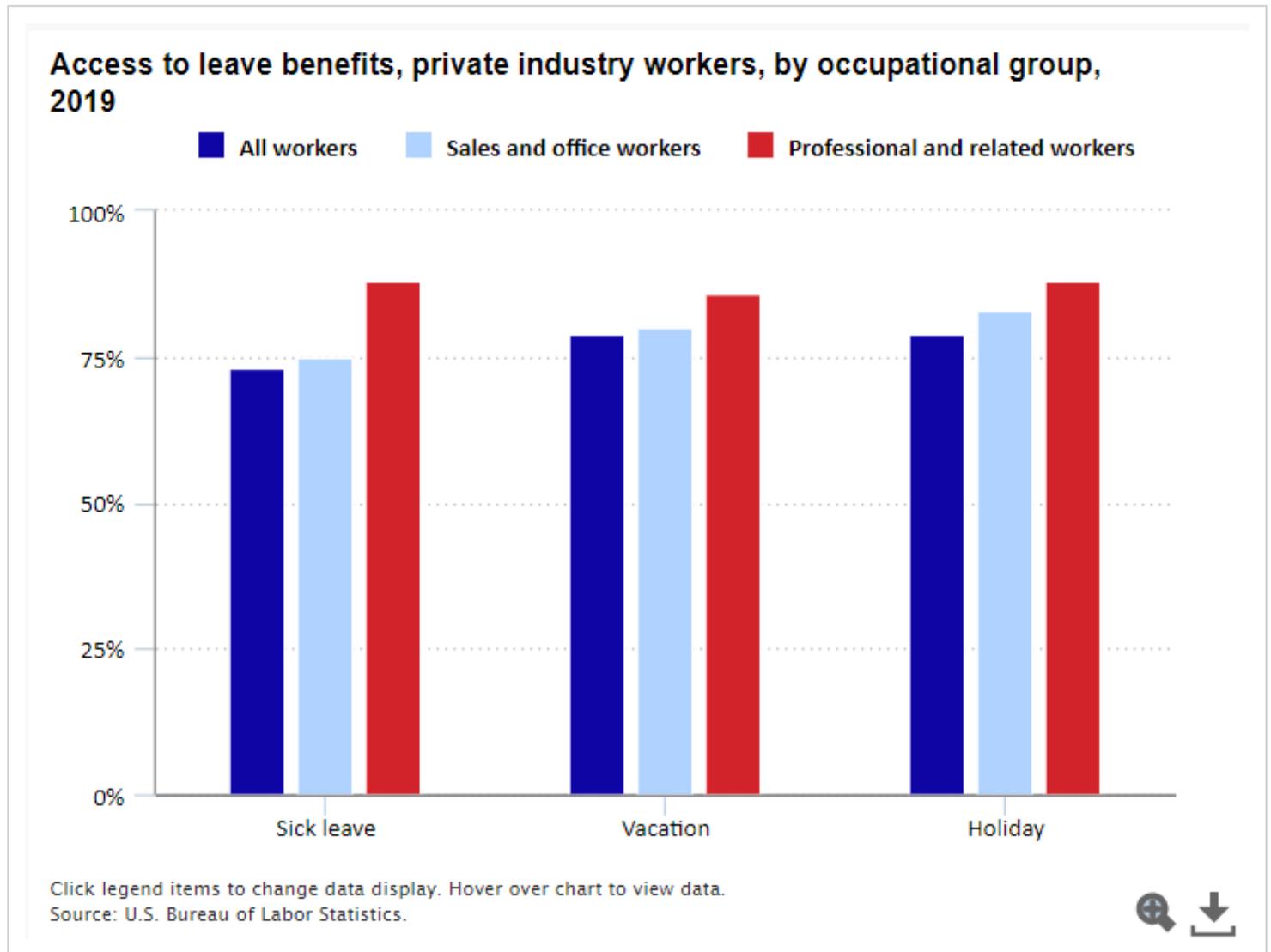
Access and participation rates for medical benefits are about the same for sales and office workers as for private industry workers in general. Among sales and office workers, 67 percent have access to employer-provided medical care plans and 47 percent participate in them. For all private industry workers, 69 percent have access and 49 percent participate.

For professional and related jobs, access to and participation in these plans are higher, 82 percent and 62 percent, respectively.



## Professional and related workers get more leave from work

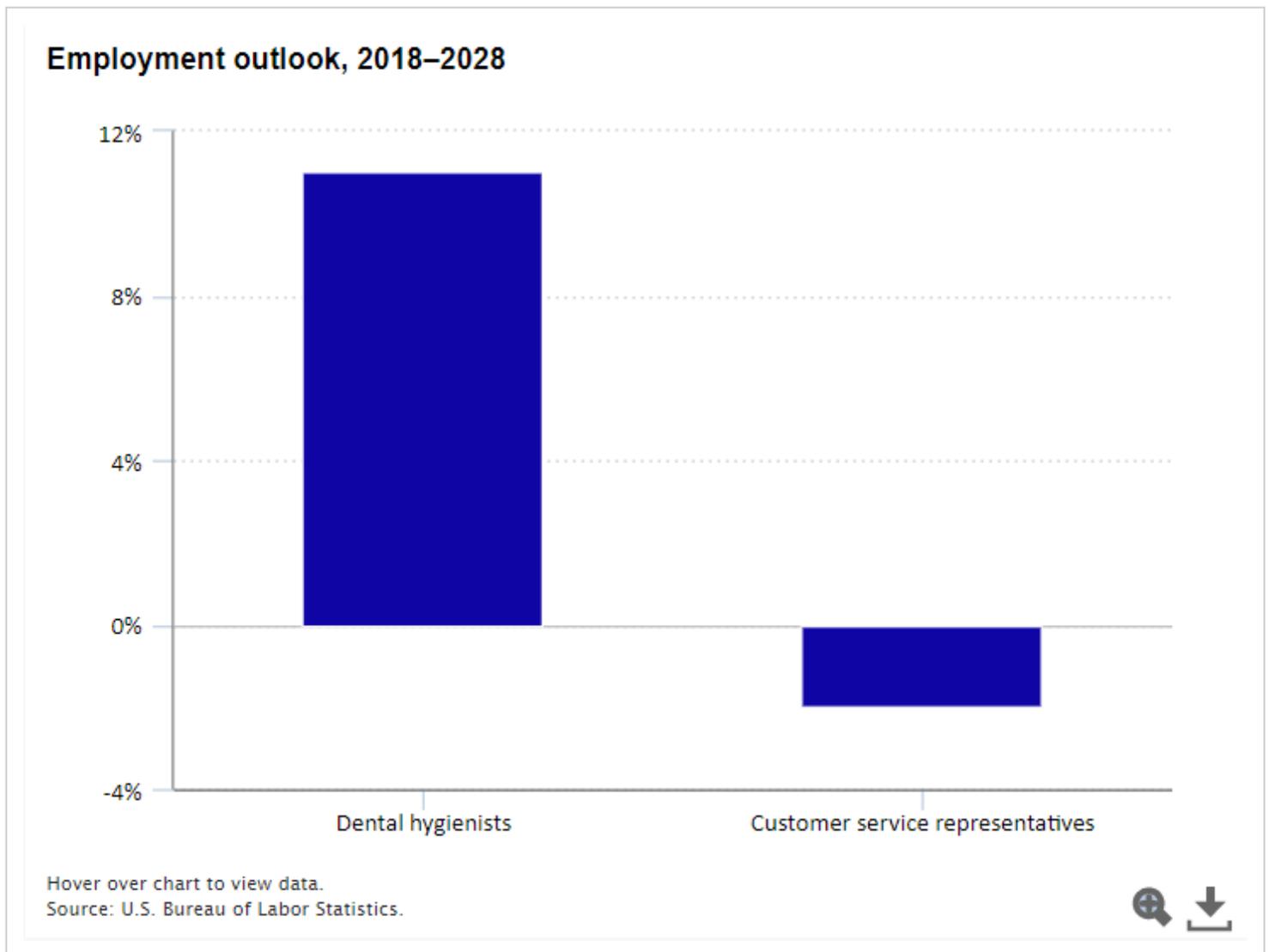
Workers in professional and related occupations were more likely to have access to sick leave, vacation leave, and holiday leave than sales and office workers, whose access-to-leave rates were closer to those of all workers.



## Dental hygienists jobs are expected to grow much faster than average

Looking forward, individuals are likely interested in whether their job has solid prospects for the future. The number of dental hygienist jobs is likely to grow faster than average, expected to increase 11 percent between 2018 and 2028.

Customer service representatives are projected to decrease by 2 percent over this period. These workers' tasks are being automated or altered by other improvements in technology. Despite the projected decline in employment, job prospects for customer service representatives are expected to be good because of the need to replace workers who leave the occupation. Looking at the big picture, there will still be a fair amount of these jobs, with a projected employment of 2,921,000 in 2028.



## For more information

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For more information, see

- [Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics](#) news release

BLS data for many occupations is presented in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#):

- [Customer service representatives](#)
- [Dental hygienists](#)

Data in this Spotlight comes from these BLS programs and publications:

- [Current Population Survey](#)  
(data on labor force, not in the labor force, employment, unemployment, hours, earnings, and other demographic characteristics)
- [Occupational Requirements Survey](#)  
(data on physical demands; environmental conditions; education, training, and experience; and cognitive and mental job requirements)
- [Occupational Employment Statistics](#)  
(estimates of employment and wages for hundreds of occupations for the nation, and by state, metropolitan area, and industry)
- [Employee Benefits Survey](#)  
(data on worker's access to and participation in employer-provided benefit plans)
- [Employment Projections](#)  
(the labor market 10 years in the future)