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## Projected Job Growth by 2031 in the Mountain West

Madison Dwyer  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Annie Vong  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Kristian Thymianos  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Caitlin J. Saladino  
*Brookings Mountain West & The Lincy Institute*

William E. Brown Jr.  
*Brookings Mountain West*

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## PROJECTED JOB GROWTH BY 2031 IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

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Prepared by: Madison Dwyer, Annie Vong, Kristian Thymianos, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

### PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines job growth projections from 2021 to 2031 for the Mountain West states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.<sup>1</sup> This fact sheet also presents projected job growth data by educational level, and across selected occupational sectors. Data are sourced from the report, “After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031,” published by the McCourt School of Public Policy’s Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) at Georgetown University.

### ABOUT THE DATA:

The Georgetown report includes job growth projection data for the U.S., as well as individual state reports for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-level reports present the education composition of jobs in 2021 (the chosen base year) with projected 2031 job rates, as well as a breakdown of projected job growth by both education levels and occupational sectors. Researchers measured educational demand by predicting (1) the distribution of education within current jobs, (2) long-term job growth and creation, and (3) changes in occupational structure.<sup>2</sup>

### KEY FINDINGS:

1. Three Mountain West states rank within the top five U.S. states for the projected share of jobs requiring “less than a high school diploma” by 2031 (Nevada, 2<sup>nd</sup>; New Mexico, 4<sup>th</sup>; and Arizona, 5<sup>th</sup>).
2. Colorado ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for the project share of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree, and 50<sup>th</sup> for the projected share of jobs requiring a high school diploma by 2031.
3. Nevada ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the projected share of jobs requiring a graduate degree, and 48<sup>th</sup> for the projected share of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree by 2031.
4. In all Mountain West states, the jobs with the highest predicted growth rates between 2021 and 2031 will be jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree or higher; in Utah, jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree or higher are projected to grow 24.16% from 2021 to 2031.
5. In Nevada, jobs that will require an associate’s degree by 2031 (142,000 jobs) make up the smallest share of projected jobs (9%).
6. Healthcare is predicted among the top four job sectors for projected growth in all Mountain West states except Utah, with growth rates of 20% or more (Arizona, 29%; Colorado, 21%; Nevada, 31%; and New Mexico, 20%).

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<sup>1</sup> “After Everything, State Report” (2023). *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. Retrieved from [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> “Technical Appendix: After Everything” (2023). *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. Retrieved from [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-Technical\\_Appendix.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-Technical_Appendix.pdf)

Table 1 displays the national ranks for the projected share of jobs in the Mountain West by 2031 by education level. The Mountain West state reporting the highest national ranking for each education level is shaded in gray.

Three Mountain West states rank among the top five U.S. states for the projected share of 2031 jobs requiring “less than a high school diploma” (Nevada, 2<sup>nd</sup>; New Mexico, 4<sup>th</sup>; and Arizona, 5<sup>th</sup>). Three Mountain West states rank among the top five U.S. states for the projected share of jobs requiring “some college, no degree” by 2031 (Arizona, 2<sup>nd</sup>; Nevada, 4<sup>th</sup>; and Utah, 5<sup>th</sup>). Nevada ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation for projected share of jobs requiring a graduate degree, and 48<sup>th</sup> for the projected share of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree by 2031. Colorado ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for the project share of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree, and 50<sup>th</sup> for the projected share of jobs requiring a high school diploma by 2031.

**Table 1: National Rank of 2031 Projected Share of Jobs by Education Level in the Mountain West**

Mountain West State	Less than a high school diploma	High school diploma	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree
Arizona	5 <sup>th</sup>	37 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	32 <sup>nd</sup>	39 <sup>th</sup>	33 <sup>rd</sup>
Colorado	29 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>	37 <sup>th</sup>	41 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
Nevada	2 <sup>nd</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	38 <sup>th</sup>	48 <sup>th</sup>	49 <sup>th</sup>
New Mexico	4 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	49 <sup>th</sup>	32 <sup>nd</sup>
Utah	32 <sup>nd</sup>	40 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	37 <sup>th</sup>

\* Adapted from “After Everything, State Report”. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

Table 2 shows the projected change in net new jobs and percentage change between 2021 and 2031 by education level in the Mountain West. Educational levels for job skills provided in Table 3 include high school or less, middle skills, and bachelor’s degree or higher. “Middle-skills” jobs are defined as jobs that require some education such as associate’s degrees, postsecondary vocational certificates, test-based licenses, industry certifications, or some college but no degree.<sup>3</sup> The “bachelor’s degree or higher” category includes both bachelor’s degrees and graduate degrees.

Arizona reported the largest projected net increases for each education level by 2031 (181,000 new jobs for high school or less, 196,000 new jobs for middle skills, and 176,000 new jobs for bachelor’s degree or higher). Utah was predicted to experience the largest percent increase for each educational level from 2021 to 2031, with high school diploma or less at 23.27%, middle skills at 23.01%, and bachelor’s degree or higher at 24.16%.

<sup>3</sup> “Research: Middle Skills.” *Harvard Business School*. Retrieved from <https://www.hbs.edu/competitiveness/research/Pages/middle-skills.aspx>

**Table 2: Projected Change in New Jobs by Education Level from 2021 to 2031 in the Mountain West**

State	Education Level	2021 Jobs	2031 Jobs	Percent Increase
Arizona	High school diploma or less	995,000	1,176,000	18.19%
	Middle skills	1,069,000	1,265,000	18.33%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	905,000	1,081,000	19.45%
Colorado	High school diploma or less	758,000	838,000	10.55%
	Middle skills	805,000	898,000	11.55%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	1,182,000	1,335,000	12.94%
Nevada	High school diploma or less	515,000	596,000	15.73%
	Middle skills	453,000	533,000	17.66%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	340,000	407,000	19.71%
Utah	High school diploma or less	477,000	588,000	23.27%
	Middle skills	578,000	711,000	23.01%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	567,000	704,000	24.16%
New Mexico	High school diploma or less	294,000	320,000	8.84%
	Middle skills	289,000	315,000	9.00%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	228,000	249,000	9.21%

\* Adapted from “After Everything, State Report”. *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

Table 3 shows the level of education that jobs will require in 2031 along with the projected number and share of jobs that will require a specific education level for each Mountain West state.

Jobs that will require a high school diploma comprise the largest share of jobs in Nevada (27%, 412,000 jobs) and in New Mexico (25%, 223,000 jobs). Jobs that will require some college, no degree comprise the largest share of jobs in Arizona (26%, 920,000 jobs). In Colorado, 892,000 jobs will require a bachelor’s degree by 2031—the highest percentage share (28%) for that degree type in the Mountain West. Jobs requiring less than a high school diploma in 2031 represented the smallest share of jobs in Arizona (10%, 366,000 jobs), Colorado (7%, 220,000 jobs), and Utah (7%, 133,000 jobs). In Nevada, jobs that will require an associate’s degree by 2031 (142,000 jobs) make up the smallest share of projected jobs (9%).

**Table 3: Percent Share and Projected Number of 2031 Jobs by Education Level in the Mountain West<sup>4</sup>**

Mountain West State		Less than a high school diploma	High school diploma	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree
<b>National Average</b>	Projected Share	6%	22%	16%	13%	26%	16%
<b>Arizona</b>	Projected Number	366,000	810,000	920,000	345,000	715,000	366,000
	Projected Share	10%	23%	26%	10%	20%	10%
<b>Colorado</b>	Projected Number	220,000	618,000	626,000	272,000	892,000	443,000
	Projected Share	7%	20%	20%	9%	28%	14%
<b>Nevada</b>	Projected Number	184,000	412,000	391,000	142,000	273,000	134,000
	Projected Share	12%	27%	25%	9%	18%	9%
<b>New Mexico</b>	Projected Number	97,000	223,000	215,000	100,000	157,000	92,000
	Projected Share	11%	25%	24%	11%	18%	10%
<b>Utah</b>	Projected Number	133,000	455,000	507,000	204,000	498,000	206,000
	Projected Share	7%	23%	25%	10%	25%	10%

\* Adapted from “After Everything, State Report”. *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

Table 4 depicts the top four job sectors for predicted growth by 2031 in each Mountain West state. In four of the five Mountain West states (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah), “blue-collar services” is the job sector with the largest projected job growth. Only New Mexico differs from this pattern, with healthcare (+20,000) predicted to grow slightly more jobs than blue-collar services (+19,000) by 2031. Healthcare appears among the top four job sectors for forecasted growth in all Mountain West states except Utah, with growth rates of 20% or more (Arizona, 29%; Colorado, 21%; Nevada, 31%; and New Mexico, 20%). “Food and professional services” appears among the top four job sectors for predicted growth by 2031 for all five Mountain West states.

<sup>4</sup> “Projected share of jobs” percentages by state do not add up to 100% in all cases, due to rounding decisions by the authors of the original report: “After Everything, State Report” (2023). *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. Retrieved from [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf)

**Table 4: Top Four Job Sectors for Predicted Growth by 2031, by Mountain West State**

State	Top Four Job Sectors of Predicted Growth	Job Growth (Raw)	Job Growth (%)
Arizona	Blue-Collar Services	+114,000	18%
	Healthcare	+94,000	29%
	Food and Professional Services	+94,000	20%
	Sales and Office Support	+89,000	12%
Colorado	Food and Professional Services	+55,000	13%
	Blue-Collar Services	+55,000	10%
	Healthcare	+54,000	21%
	Managerial and Professional Office	+51,000	14%
Nevada	Blue-Collar Services	+60,000	19%
	Sales and Office Support	+41,000	13%
	Healthcare	+36,000	31%
	Food and Professional Services	+31,000	11%
New Mexico	Healthcare	+20,000	20%
	Blue-Collar Services	+19,000	11%
	Managerial and Professional Office	+10,000	12%
	Food and Professional Services	+10,000	7%
Utah	Blue-Collar Services	+85,000	22%
	Food and Personal Services	+68,000	31%
	Sales and Office Support	+63,000	17%
	Managerial and Professional Office	+57,000	25%

\* Adapted from “After Everything, State Report”. *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce*. [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections\\_2031-State-Report](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report).