

Labor Sectors

This is one of the decisions that you will need to make is what sector of work you want to work in. The primary sectors are the public and the private. The public sector is funded by taxpayer money, and so is service driven, while the private sector is funded by consumer money, and so it is profit driven.

Public Sector:

This refers to town, city, county, state or federal government. There is a very large range of roles and industries included within the public sector. There are certain advantages to working in the public sector rather than the private sector, and likewise there are certain disadvantages, although these will both vary by industry.

Public sector work is funded by taxpayer money, and so it is service, rather than profit driven. Public sector employees are also referred to as civil servants. Examples of public sector employees include public school teachers, postal workers, police officers, government employees, city planners, certain healthcare workers, firefighters, social workers, and much more.

Advantages of working in the public sector: Employees in the public sector have more job security than those in the private sector, and are shielded from the fragility of employment in times of economic instability, because the government has a steady income source. Likewise, public sector employees have steadier incomes than those in the private sector because they are less susceptible to economic conditions.

♦ Hiring processes in the public sector are often much slower than in the private sector, however this also means that firing processes are also much slower. It is much more difficult to be fired from a public sector position than a private sector one. Jobs in the public sector are more secure, although salaries do not have the same growth potential as private sector jobs.

Public sector jobs are designed within what is called a 'meritocratic system' meaning that there are clear steps for advancement, which must be available to all employees who are progressing in the role. In the public sector, employers must not only compensate the employee at a consistent wage, but they must provide employees with a stable number of hours, further ensuring a stable income for public employees.



Private Sector:

This refers to any labor which is not paid for by some level of government, and so includes almost all labor industries. There are certain advantages, as well as certain disadvantages to working in the private sector, although these will also vary by industry. Private sector work relies on revenue from the economy, which means that it is profit driven.

Advantages of working in the public sector: The private sector consists of jobs which are not paid for by taxpayer money. What this means is that jobs in the private sector are not a part of a large, and therefore very slow, bureaucratic system, and so the hiring process is much faster, as is the process of advancement.

- ♦ Because the private sector is funded by the market economy, wages can increase more rapidly than in the public sector, and are not subject to caps, because they are not limited by the annual tax budget and regulation.
- ♦ There is more flexibility in the private sector, meaning that it is easier to move in and out of jobs, to shift paths, and to work out work-hour and income arrangements with your employer, unlike in the public sector, in which bureaucratic procedure makes it more difficult to make individual adjustments, and quick changes. Private sector salaries are more negotiable.

Disadvantages of working in the public sector: The disadvantages of working in the public sector are that it is a much more flexible system, which means that it is much easier for employers to hire and to fire, and so employment is less stable.

- ♦ Likewise, the private sector is subject to the conditions of the economy, and so when the economy is struggling, private sector employers are struggling too, which means they will have to lay off employees, offer fewer work hours, and cease to offer wages until their own incomes have recovered.
- ♦ Private sector employees are less protected from the economy, and so in regions or periods of time in which the economy is struggling, private sector employment is less secure than public sector employment.



Skilled Labor in America

Things to Keep in mind about the vocational and technical education route:

Trade jobs often entail shorter training periods, and lower education costs, training programs are often paid, at a rate which increases with skill development, and result in higher wages much earlier in one's career than do many jobs through traditional degree pathways.

Likewise, by going through a structured training program through a union, such as the Carpenters Association, or through a New York State apprenticeship program, graduates of these programs are often ensured job placement at the end of their training and have access to work and clientele through their union or trade network.

For those interested in making a comfortable and reliable income without significant debt early in their career, trade schools are a viable option.

Some Historical Context:

There is a shortage of skilled laborers in America because people have been encouraged in excess to pursue the academic route for the past several generations, for various reasons. One of the historical reasons for this is the G.I. Bill. Following World War II, the G.I. Bill made it possible for otherwise working class citizens to venture into the world of academic education at minimal expense, which introduced millions of Americans to a new kind of life which was not broadly accessible before. This enabled millions to enter the white collar world, without student debt.

These new qualifications gave workers access to white collar jobs on an unprecedented scale, and coincided with growing wealth in American Society. This led Americans to believe that College and University degrees were the key to this new comfort and prosperity. This assumption has been passed on through recent generations, resulting in an enormous percentage of the population pursuing higher education, and a diminishing percentage pursuing either kinds of training.

We are living in the aftermath of this moment, and as a society are realizing that college is one route among many, and with so many pursuing such a singular idea of life, many of us find we are uncomfortable in the he norms and conventions to white collar life and work, that the level of competition for white collar jobs is untenable, and that there are far too few people with the technical skills we need to make our world run.



The Skilled Labor Shortage:

There is a shortage of skilled laborers in America, because people are not pursuing vocational skills as much as they have in the past, this means that there is great opportunity in pursuing these skills, which will be in high demand and therefore should pay well.

- ◆ 70% of contractors say they have a hard time finding qualified workers
- ◆ The average pay for a trade worker is \$23 an hour, well above minimum wage, and most positions provide wage increases with experience.
- ◆ Many trade workers, such as plumbers, electricians and carpenters, can make well over \$100,000 a year as their experience and wages increase over time.
- ◆ Boomtowns, those in which white collar industries have grown rapidly, such as Seattle, have a shortage of trade workers, therefore those with vocational and technical skills can make very high salaries fairly quickly if they come to these centers.

Middle Skills: This is a term which refers to level of education or training. If you are a middle skills professional then you have more than a high school degree and less than a bachelor's degree, with some kind of training after High School. Those in the trades and vocations would be considered middle skill workers.

This Harvard Business School report: ['Bridge the Gap: Rebuilding America's Middle Skills'](#) expands on the Middle Skills shortage in the economy and possible routes to addressing it.

Infrastructure jobs: are those for tradesmen, construction workers, material moving and transportation workers, construction and extraction, office and administrative support, installation maintenance and repair, architectural and engineering, management, production, business and financial operation, farming, fishing and forestry.



* Employment in the Public Sector:

Securing a position in the public sector is often a slow process, so it will be important to expect a long application period. The reason why securing a job in the public sector takes a long time is because these are highly sought after positions. This is because the government is able to offer robust benefits and reliable long-term employment, with a strong set of rights and privileges for employees, which are less common in the private sector.

Applying for jobs in the public sector is often a multi-step process which involves tests called *civil service exams*, which identify what your skills are and which part of the civil sector you will be best suited to work in.

Civil Service Exams, Also Called Professional Career Opportunities/PCO Exams:

These are the examinations for positions in the public workforce which most individuals who work or want to work within the state or federal government, in any position, must take. For different job openings in the state government, there are different examinations.

They are commonly referred to as the PCO exams, and are used by the government to fill entry level positions across a range of disciplines, including: human resources and training, service regulation and compliance, corrections and criminal justice, environment, natural and physical sciences, accounting, auditing and finance, health and human services, communications, marketing and public relations, transportation, administrative operations, economics, research and statistics.

♦ By entering an entry level position through a PCO exam, it will be possible to pursue a progressive career path from that initial position, meaning through incremental advancement as you develop skills and experience.

♦ Advanced positions in the public sector are often only available to those who already hold public sector positions, meaning that PCO exams and the entry level positions they enable you to access are also the way to reach for higher level positions later in your career.



[This is the list of the current government exams](#) which are open to the public, this is updated each month. While this is the list of [the examinations](#) open to those who are already state employees.

♦ The exams which are open in any given month or season reflect those positions which the government needs to fill, so it is important to keep up with these lists, as they are apt to change.

[This is a list](#) which is regularly updated of various positions currently available in the state government, including those which are entry level or require minimum education and work experience.

Once You Have Taken a PCO Exam:

- ♦ Most of the positions accessed through this exam result in two year training cycles during which the trainee acquires the necessary skills to perform the position independently.
- ♦ It will take 90 to 120 days after taking a civil service exam to find out your results and what job openings are available to you based on your performance.
- ♦ It may be necessary to study for the PCO exam if there are certain public sector positions that you are interested in accessing.
- ♦ There are online materials to study for the many types of civil service exams

Note: The reason why the process for entering the government workforce is so slow and complex is because these are very steady, very well-paying jobs with meritocratic systems of advancement. These jobs are hard to access, but also hard to lose, due to legislation regulating employee rights in the government.

[Opportunities in the Public Sector Which Do Not Require a PCO Exam:](#)

Child protective services specialist, dental hygienist, Dietitian,	licensed master social worker, medical assistant, physician assistant,	recreation therapist, among others
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Internships in the Public Sector: *If you are interested in investigating a path in the public sector/civil service, which would likely involved a PCO exam and a relatively long application process, you may want to start with an internship, which does not require any examination, and would enable you to experience the roles and work environment you are interested in.*

Opportunities for internship in the state government are posted in the following list, ['Internships in the State Government'](#) which is updated regularly.

Nonprofit Sector:

Nonprofits are a significant private sector employer and they work in an unusual way, somewhere between the private and public sector models. Nonprofits are service, rather than profit driven, and in this way they resemble public sector employers. However, they are funded by private money, and so resemble the private sector in this way.

They have a mediated relationship to the market, which means that they are funded by excess income from profit driven companies whose money comes from the market economy.

♦ Because nonprofits do not need to make money on the one hand, and are not subject to the same kind of bureaucratic systems as public sector employers are, they can often engage in work which is more exploratory, academic, or experimental in nature, and which is more tailored to the unique area or situation they are concerned with. They can provide education and assistance that the government does not have the resources to.

Nonprofit fields include:

Education: colleges and universities, elementary and secondary schools, educational support services
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Social Assistance: vocational rehabilitation services, individual and family services, emergency and relief services, child and daycare services

Healthcare: hospitals, nursing and residential care, ambulatory health care

Arts Entertainment and Recreation: museums, historical sites, zoos and parks, performing arts and spectator sports.