



DECEMBER 2015

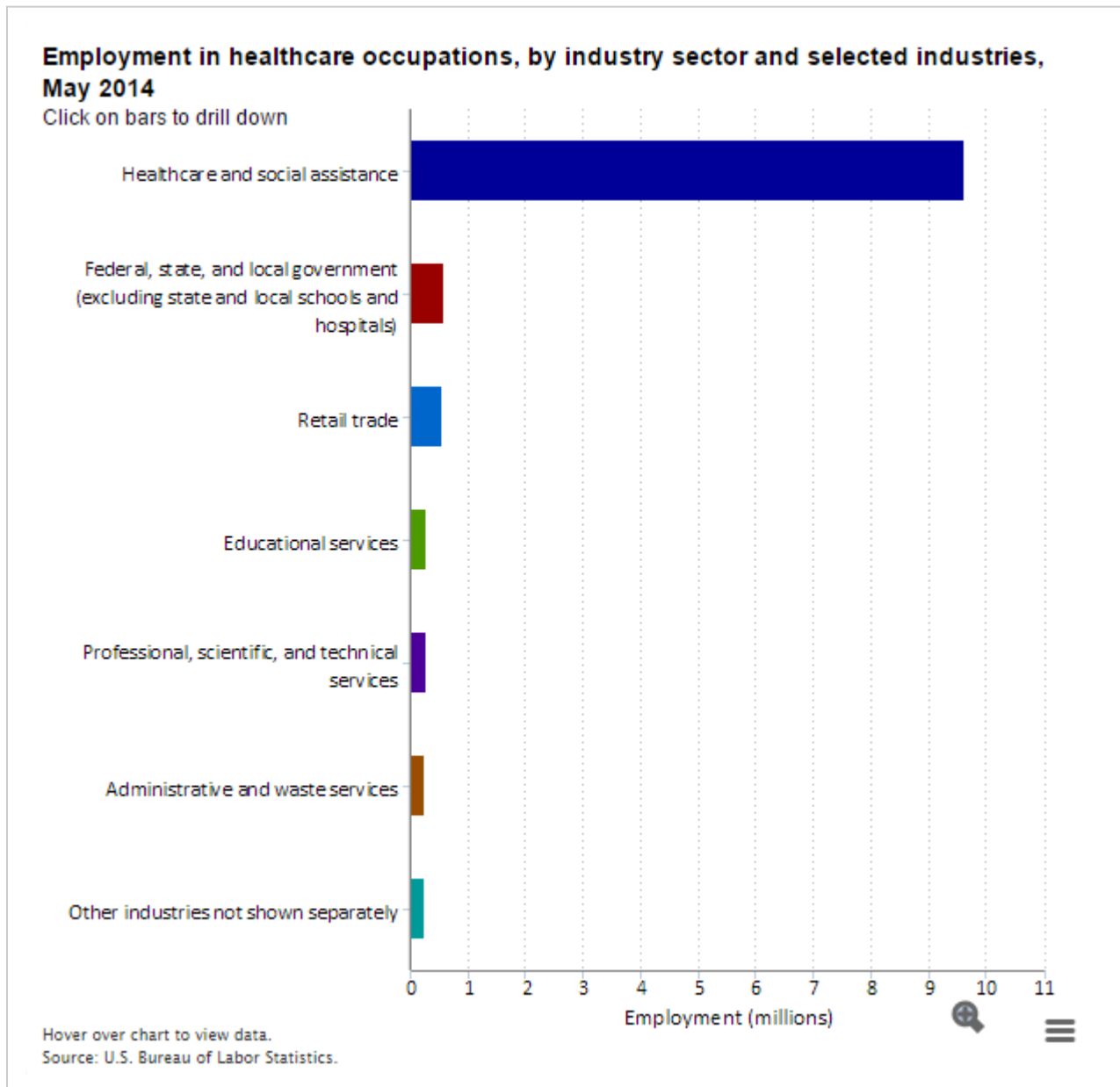
Employment And Wages In Healthcare Occupations

Stella Fayer and Audrey Watson

Whether you are filling a prescription, trying to find relief for a toothache, or looking for advice on proper nutrition, you probably will turn to a healthcare professional. Healthcare occupations represent a significant percentage of U.S. employment and are essential to the country’s economic health. Some of the largest and highest paying occupations are in healthcare fields. This Spotlight on Statistics uses May 2014 [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) data to examine employment and wages for healthcare occupations.

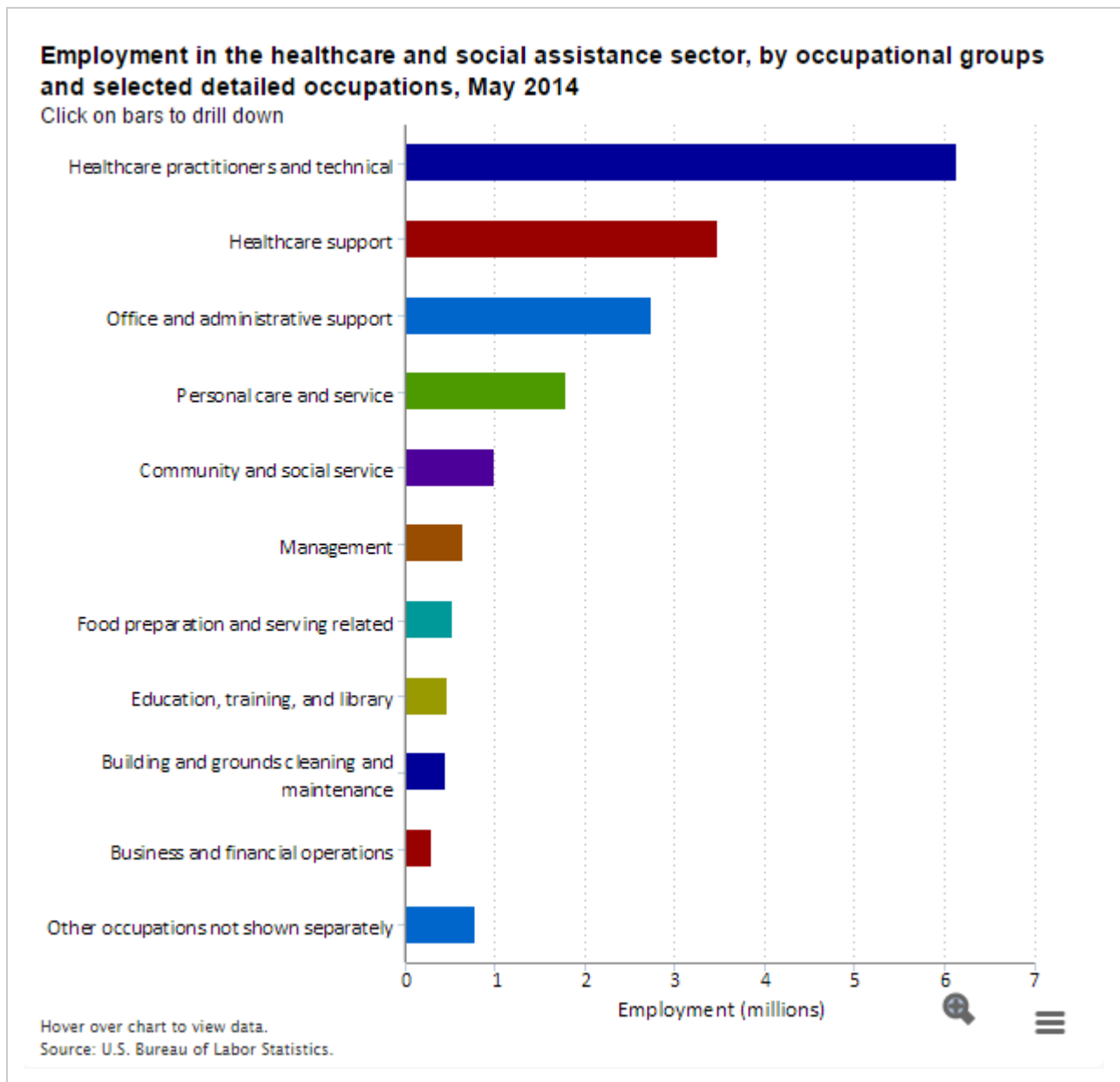
Total employment in healthcare occupations was nearly 11.8 million

There are two groups of healthcare occupations: [healthcare practitioners and technical occupations](#) had employment of 7.9 million in May 2014, and [healthcare support occupations](#) had employment of 3.9 million. Nearly 82 percent of these jobs were in the healthcare and social assistance industry. Hospitals employed 3.8 million, doctors' offices employed 1.5 million, and nursing care facilities (also called skilled nursing facilities) employed 1.1 million. Outside of healthcare and social assistance, other industries with large numbers of healthcare workers included federal, state, and local government (excluding state and local government schools and hospitals); retail trade, especially health and personal care stores; and educational services.



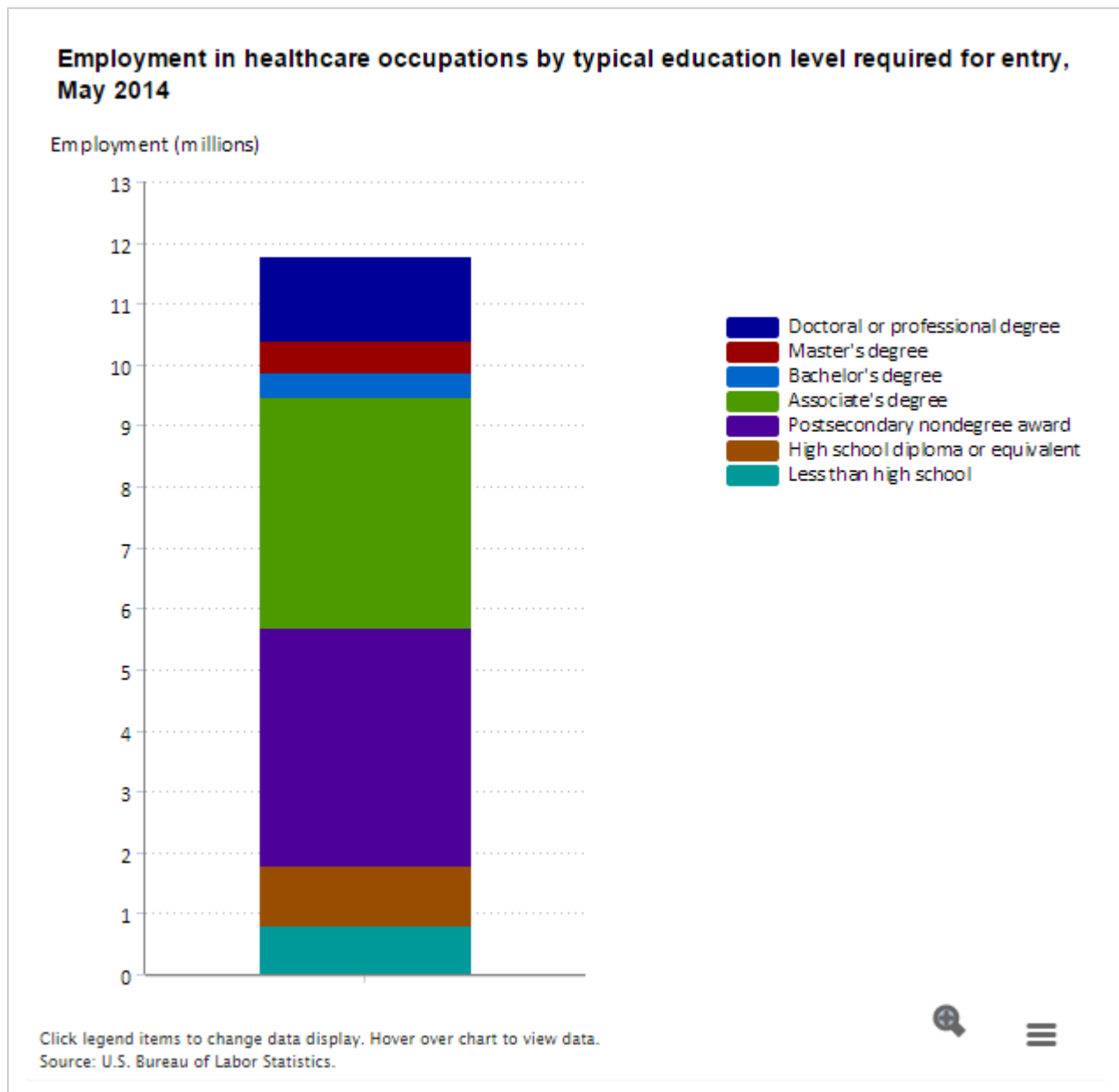
Healthcare occupations made up over half of employment in healthcare and social assistance

Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations made up nearly 34 percent of employment in healthcare and social assistance; healthcare support occupations made up another 19 percent. The largest healthcare occupation, registered nurses, had employment of 2.4 million and represented about 13 percent of industry jobs. Nursing assistants (1.3 million), home health aides (757,720), and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (596,750) also were among the largest healthcare occupations in the industry. Outside of the two healthcare groups, other large occupational groups included office and administrative support (15 percent of industry employment), personal care and service (10 percent), and community and social service (5 percent).



Most healthcare occupations require postsecondary education for entry

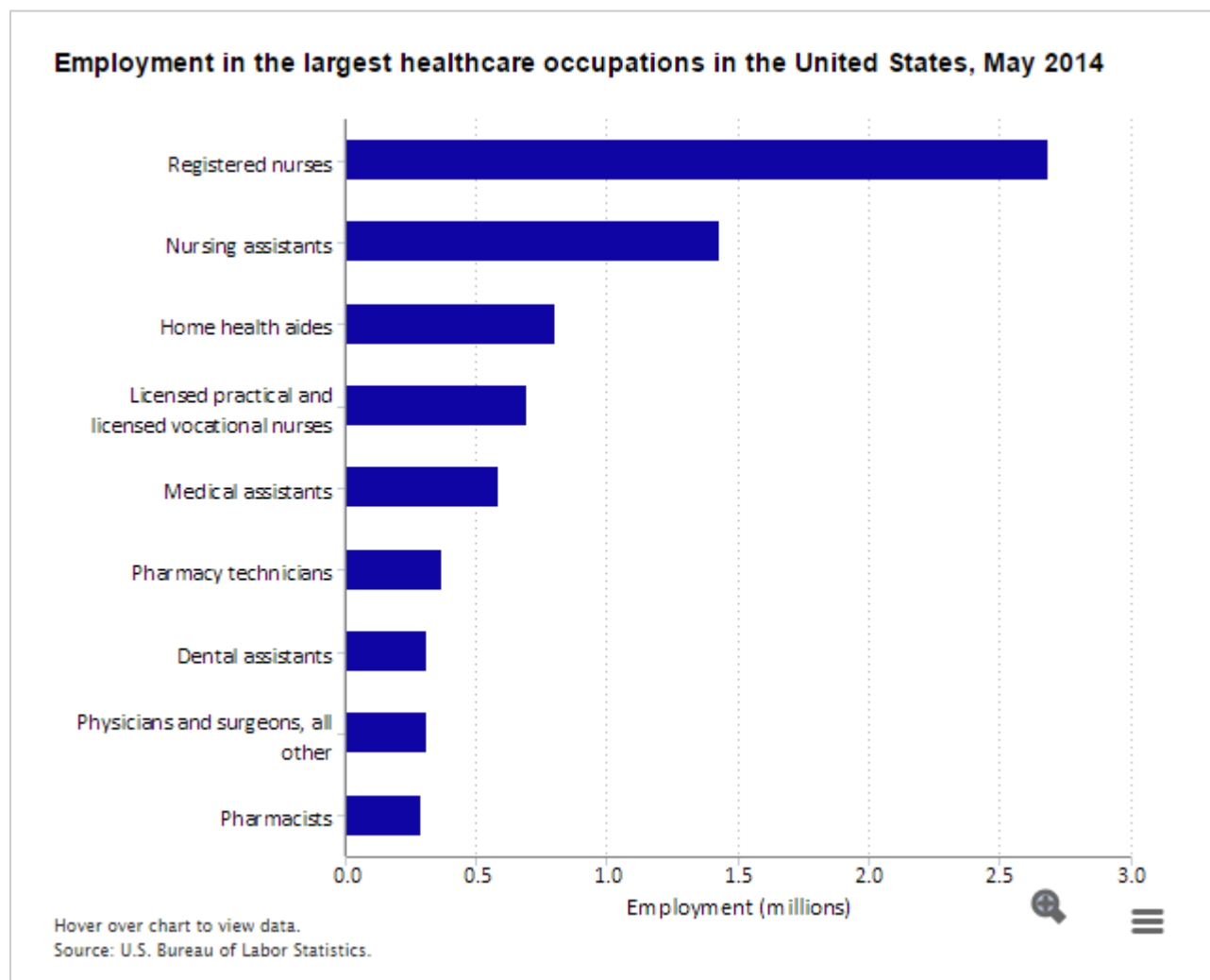
Eighty-five percent of healthcare employment was in occupations that typically require some education beyond high school for entry. Occupations that typically require training and a certificate or license beyond high school but not a college degree made up nearly one-third of healthcare employment in May 2014. [Nursing assistants](#) and [licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses](#) are examples of these occupations. Occupations that typically require an associate’s degree made up another third of healthcare employment; [registered nurses](#) represented over 71 percent of these jobs. [Pharmacy technicians](#) and [home health aides](#) were the largest healthcare occupations for which workers typically need a high school diploma or less education for entry. Education categories represent the most common education level needed for entry. These levels may differ from the educational levels of workers in the occupation.



The ten largest healthcare occupations represented 5.5 percent of national employment

Forty-two percent of employment in healthcare occupations was related to nursing, including [nursing assistants](#). Employment for [registered nurses](#) was nearly 2.7 million in May 2014, making it one of the largest occupations in the nation. The annual average wage for nurses was nearly \$70,000. The top 10 percent of nurses earned \$98,880 per year or more.

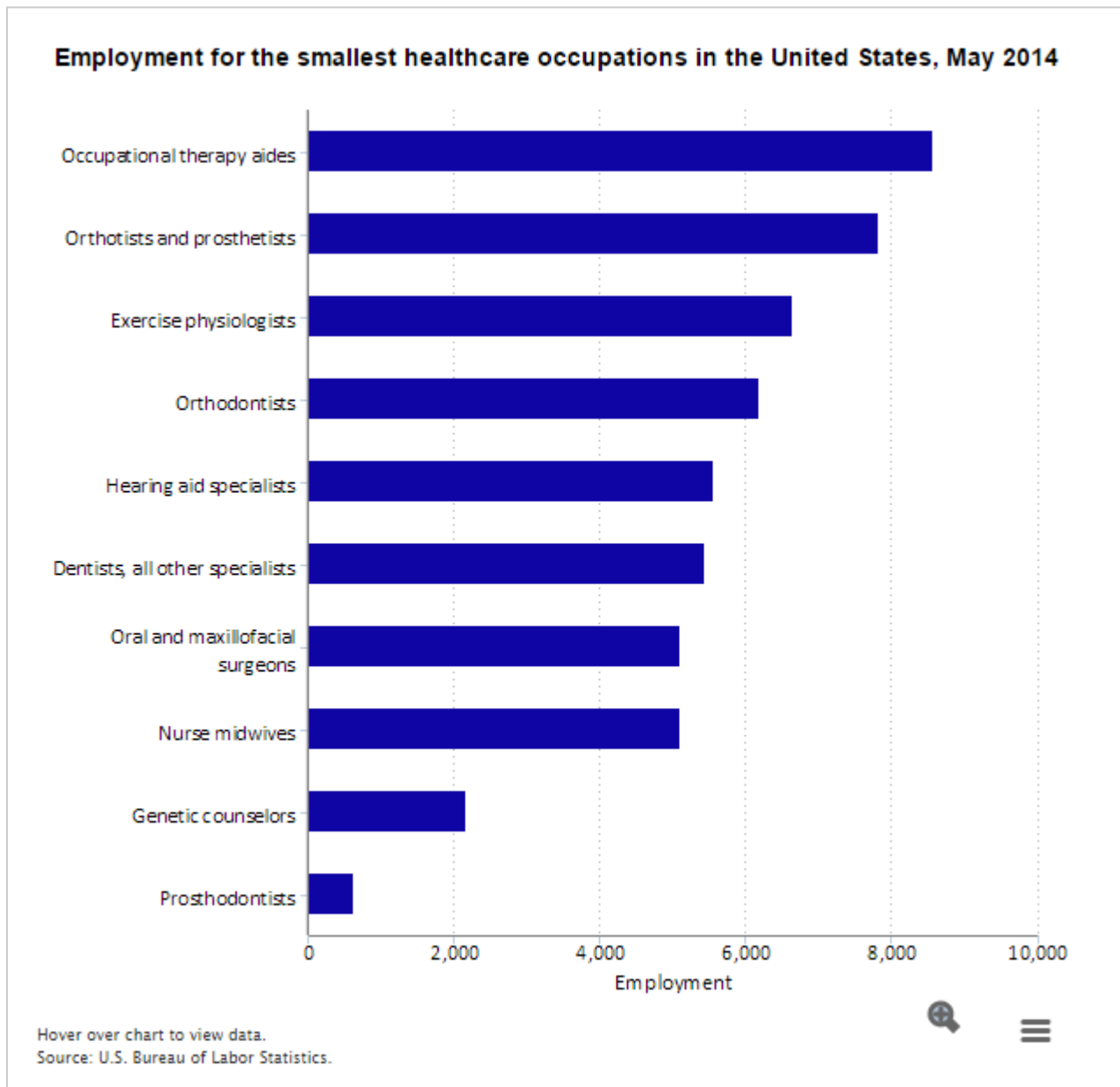
Among the ten largest healthcare occupations, the top paying was [physicians and surgeons, all other](#), with annual average wages of \$189,760. [Pharmacists](#) had the second highest annual average wages, \$118,470. Combined employment in these two occupations was slightly over 600,000.



Four of the smallest healthcare occupations were specialist dentist occupations

In May 2014, combined employment for the ten healthcare occupations shown was less than 55,000. Their annual average wages ranged from \$219,600 for [oral and maxillofacial surgeons](#) to \$29,040 for [occupational therapy aides](#). All but one occupation (occupational therapy aides) belonged to the healthcare practitioners and technical group.

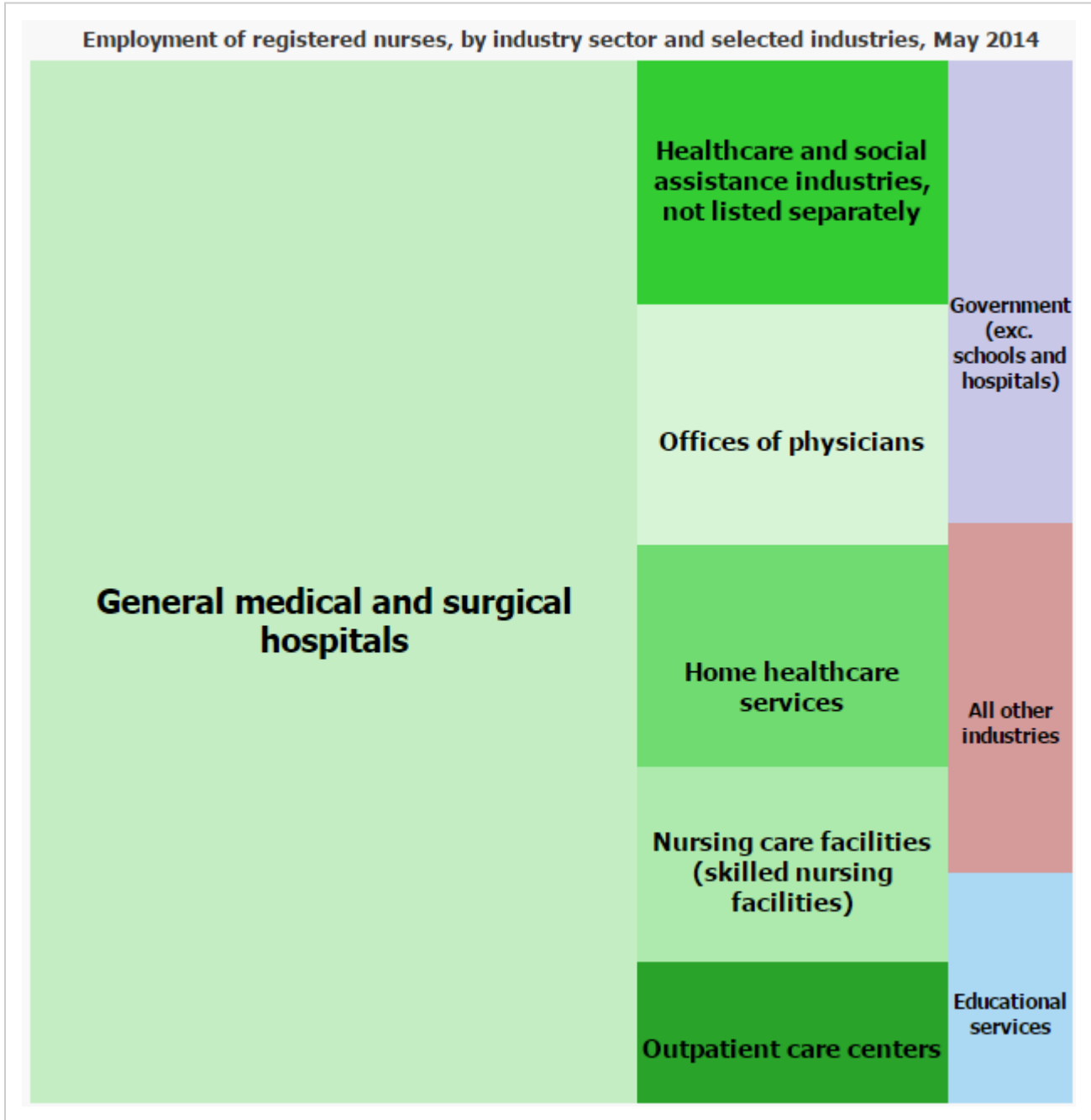
[Hearing aid specialists](#) (with employment of 5,570), [nurse midwives](#) (5,110), and [genetic counselors](#) (2,180) are occupations that recently became available in the statistics.



Over half of registered nurses worked in general medical and surgical hospitals

Eighty-eight percent of the nation's 2.7 million [registered nurses](#) worked in the healthcare and social assistance industry. About 58 percent of registered nurses worked in general medical and surgical hospitals. Outpatient care centers, nursing care facilities, home healthcare services, and doctors' offices each employed between 4 and 7 percent of registered nurses.

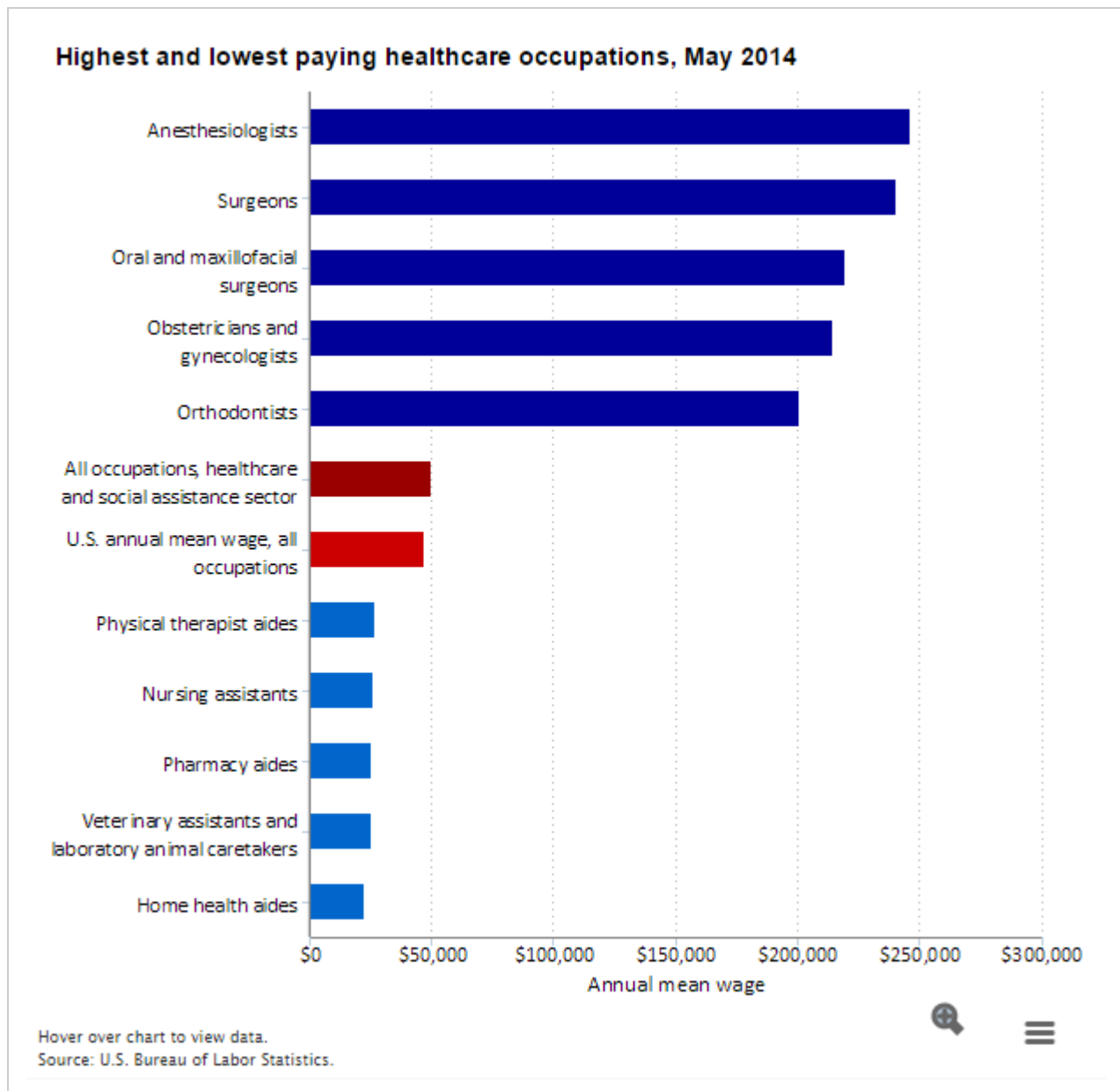
Of the 12 percent of registered nurses employed in industries other than healthcare and social assistance, most worked in federal, state, and local government (excluding state and local government schools and hospitals) or educational services.



The highest paying healthcare occupations were also the highest paying occupations overall

Two of the largest healthcare occupations, [home health aides](#) (with employment of 799,080) and [nursing assistants](#) (1,427,740), also were among the lowest paying. The annual average wage for home health aides was \$22,400, and for nursing assistants, \$26,250.

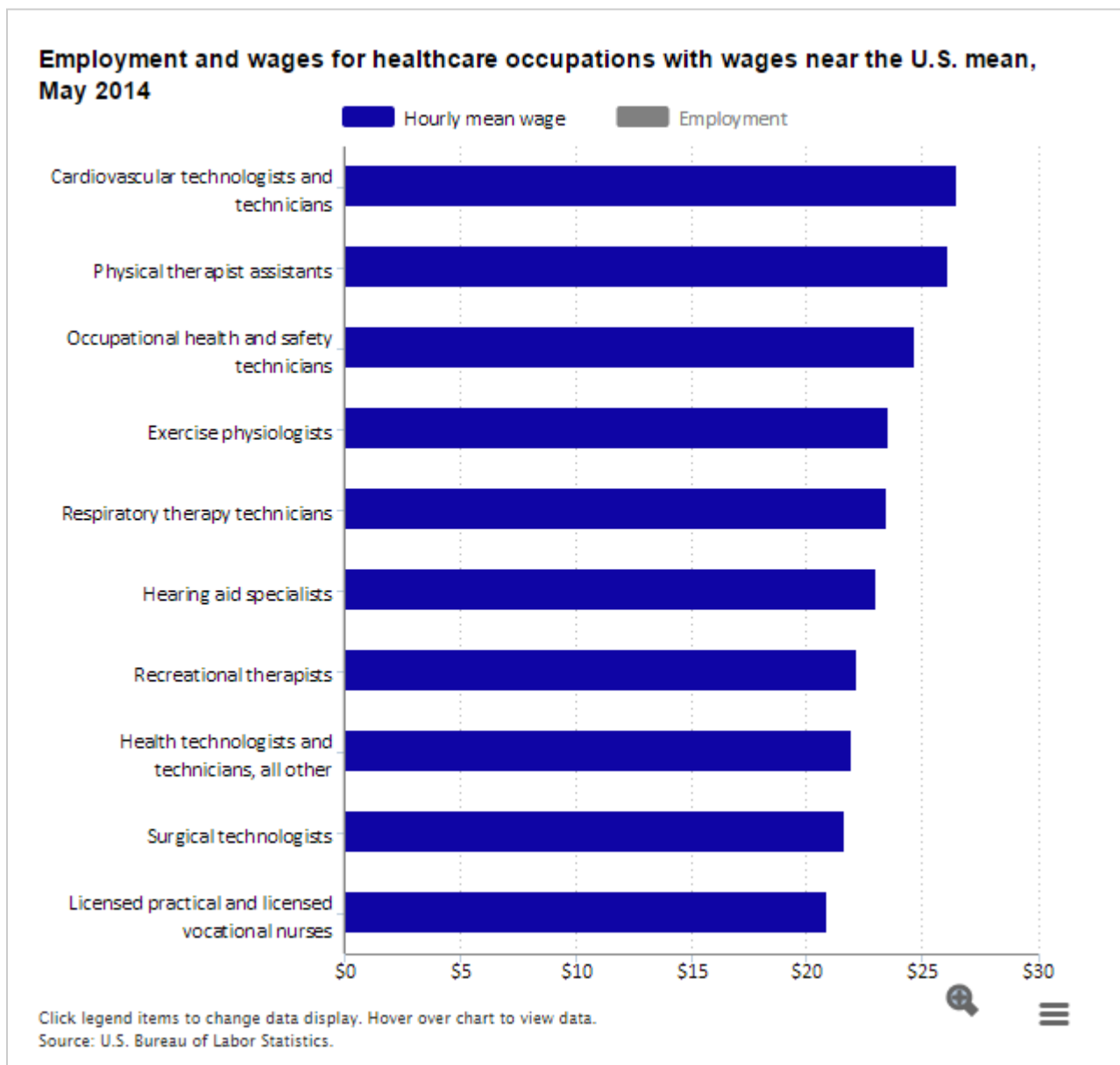
Average wages for the highest paying healthcare occupations were above \$200,000 per year, more than four times the national average wage of \$47,230. Combined employment for the five high-paying occupations shown was 104,180. [Anesthesiologists](#) earned on average \$246,320 per year and had employment of slightly over 30,000.



Several healthcare technicians and technologists had wages near the national average of \$22.71

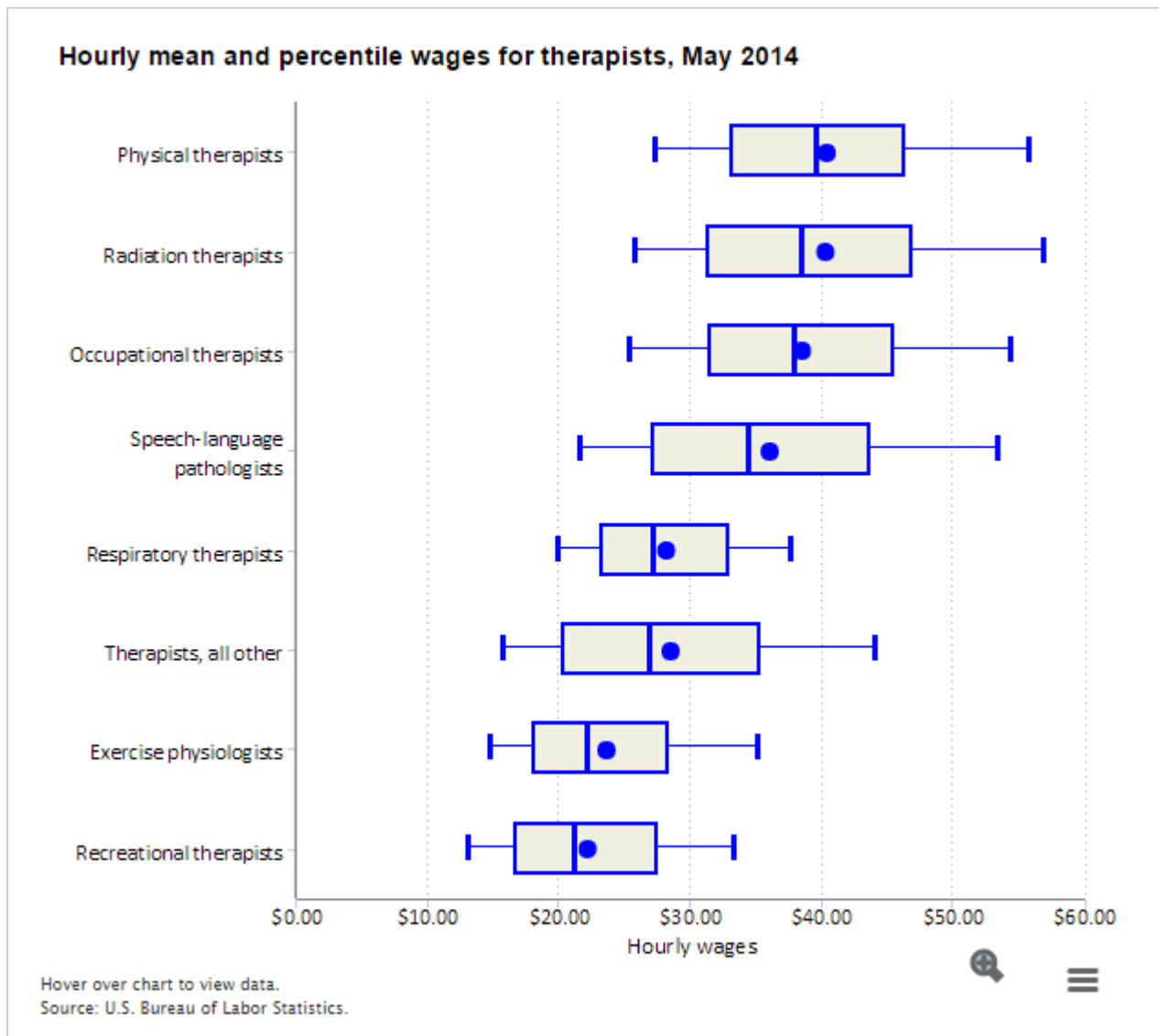
The healthcare occupations shown in the chart had average hourly wages near the national average for all occupations of \$22.71. Combined employment in these occupations was about 1 million; the largest occupation shown, [licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses](#), had employment of nearly 700,000. Their average hourly wage was \$20.87. [Surgical technologists](#) and [health technologists and technicians, all other](#) each had employment of nearly 100,000, with average wages of \$21.64 and \$21.93, respectively.

Employment in the remaining occupations ranged from 5,570 for [hearing aid specialists](#) (\$22.99 per hour) to 76,910 for [physical therapist assistants](#) (\$26.12).



Average wages for therapists ranged from \$22.14 to \$40.35 per hour

In every occupation, some workers earn more or less than the average wage. Wages vary depending on work experience, location, industry, and other reasons. [Occupational therapists](#) earned an average of \$38.46 per hour in May 2014; the highest paid 10 percent in this occupation earned \$54.30 or more, and the lowest paid 10 percent earned \$25.32 or less. [Radiation therapists](#) earned on average \$40.25 per hour, and 80 percent of workers in this occupation earned between \$25.77 and \$56.82. With an average wage of \$22.14, [recreational therapists](#) had the lowest average pay in the group. The highest paid 10 percent of recreational therapists earned \$33.28 per hour or more, and the lowest paid 10 percent earned \$13.05 or less.



Health technologists and technicians made up a quarter of employment in healthcare occupations

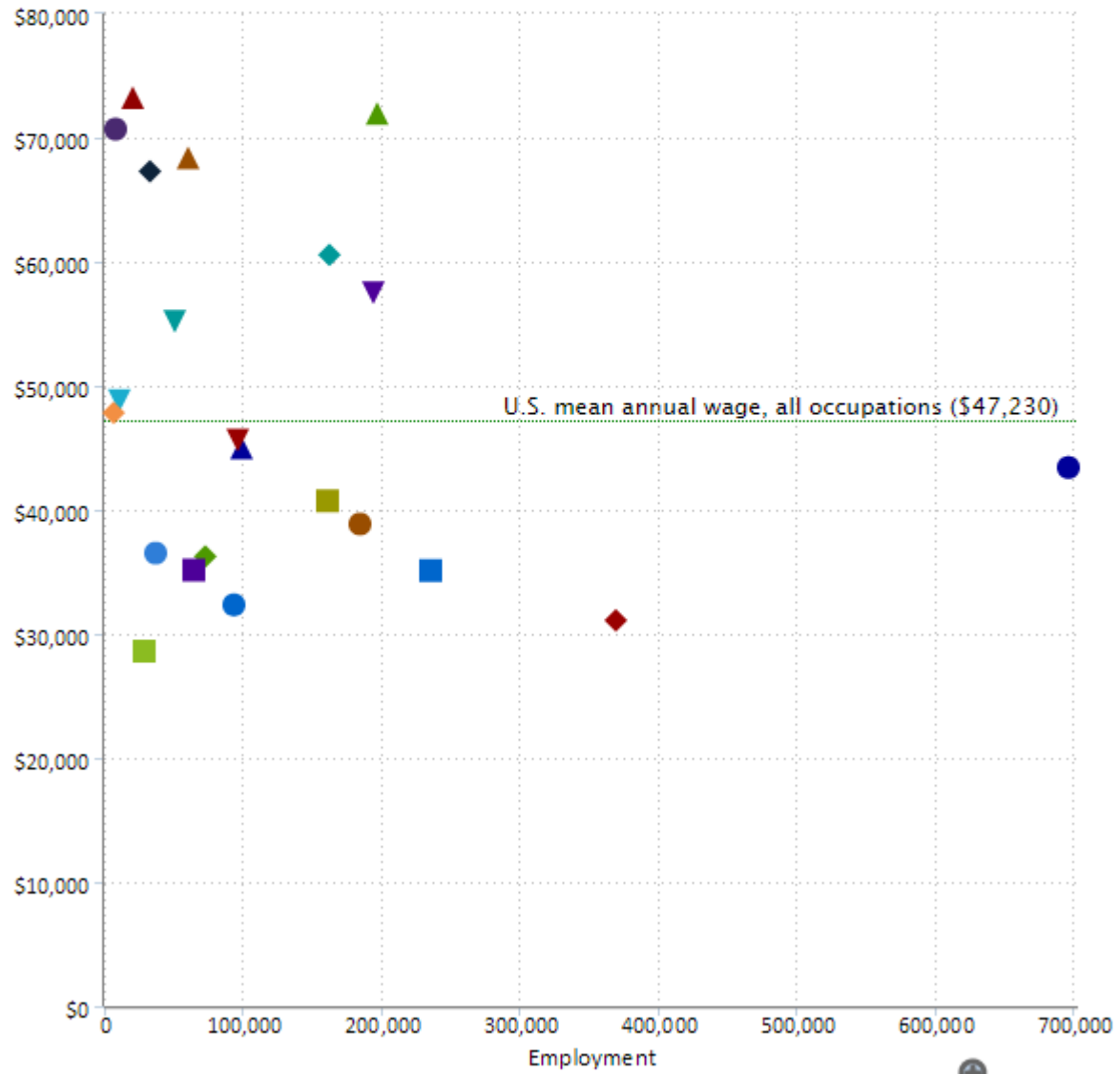
There were about 2.9 million health technologist and technician jobs in May 2014—nearly a quarter of healthcare occupations employment. The largest health technologist and technician occupations were [licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses](#) (695,610) and [pharmacy technicians](#) (368,760); the smallest were [hearing aid specialists](#) (5,570) and [orthotists and prosthetists](#) (7,830), who design artificial limbs, braces, and other medical or surgical devices and measure and fit patients for them.

The average wage for health technologist and technician occupations was \$45,060, slightly below the U.S. average of \$47,230 for all occupations. The lowest paying occupations among health technologists and technicians were [dietetic technicians](#), with average annual wages of \$28,600, and [pharmacy technicians](#), with average annual wages of \$31,090. The highest paying occupations were [orthotists and prosthetists](#), [dental hygienists](#), and [nuclear medicine technologists](#), all with average annual wages above \$70,000.

Employment and annual mean wages for health technologist and technician occupations, May 2014

- Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses
- Emergency medical technicians and paramedics
- ▼ Radiologic technologists
- ◆ Medical and clinical laboratory technologists
- ▲ Surgical technologists
- Veterinary technologists and technicians
- Psychiatric technicians
- ▼ Cardiovascular technologists and technicians
- ◆ Magnetic resonance imaging technologists
- ▲ Nuclear medicine technologists
- Orthotists and prosthetists
- ◆ Pharmacy technicians
- ▲ Dental hygienists
- Medical records and health information technicians
- Medical and clinical laboratory technicians
- ▼ Health technologists and technicians, all other
- ◆ Opticians, dispensing
- ▲ Diagnostic medical sonographers
- Ophthalmic medical technicians
- Dietetic technicians
- ▼ Respiratory therapy technicians
- ◆ Hearing aid specialists

Annual mean wage



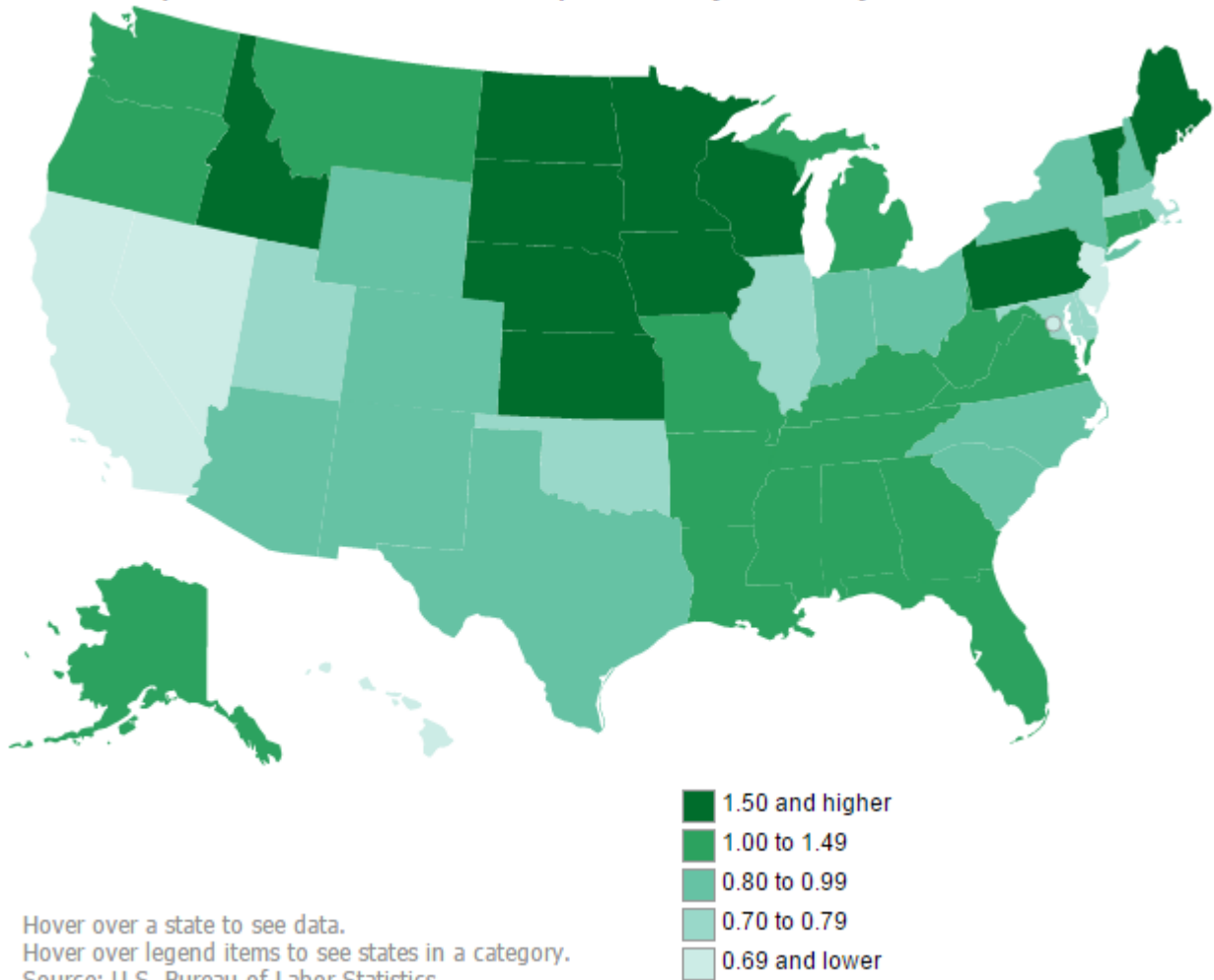
Hover over chart to view data.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Midwest had high concentrations of medical transcriptionists

Medical transcriptionists listen to voice recordings that doctors and other healthcare professionals make and convert them into written reports. Medical transcriptionists also may review and edit reports created with speech recognition technology. As a share of total employment, South Dakota had more than 3 times as many medical transcriptionists as the U.S. average. The Midwestern states of North Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Michigan also had above-average shares of medical transcriptionists, as did Vermont and Idaho. Even in states with high concentrations of medical transcriptionists, the occupation made up a small percentage of overall employment. For example, South Dakota had about 600 medical transcriptionists, representing only about 0.15 percent of state employment.

We use location quotients to measure how concentrated an occupation is in a state or area. Location quotients are the ratio of an occupation's employment share in a state or area to its national share. For example, an occupation that makes up 6 percent of state employment and 2 percent of national employment would have a location quotient in that state of $6/2 = 3$. A location quotient greater than 1 means the occupation has a higher share of state employment than the national average.

Location quotients for medical transcriptionists, by state, May 2014



One out of every 5 physician assistants worked in New York or California

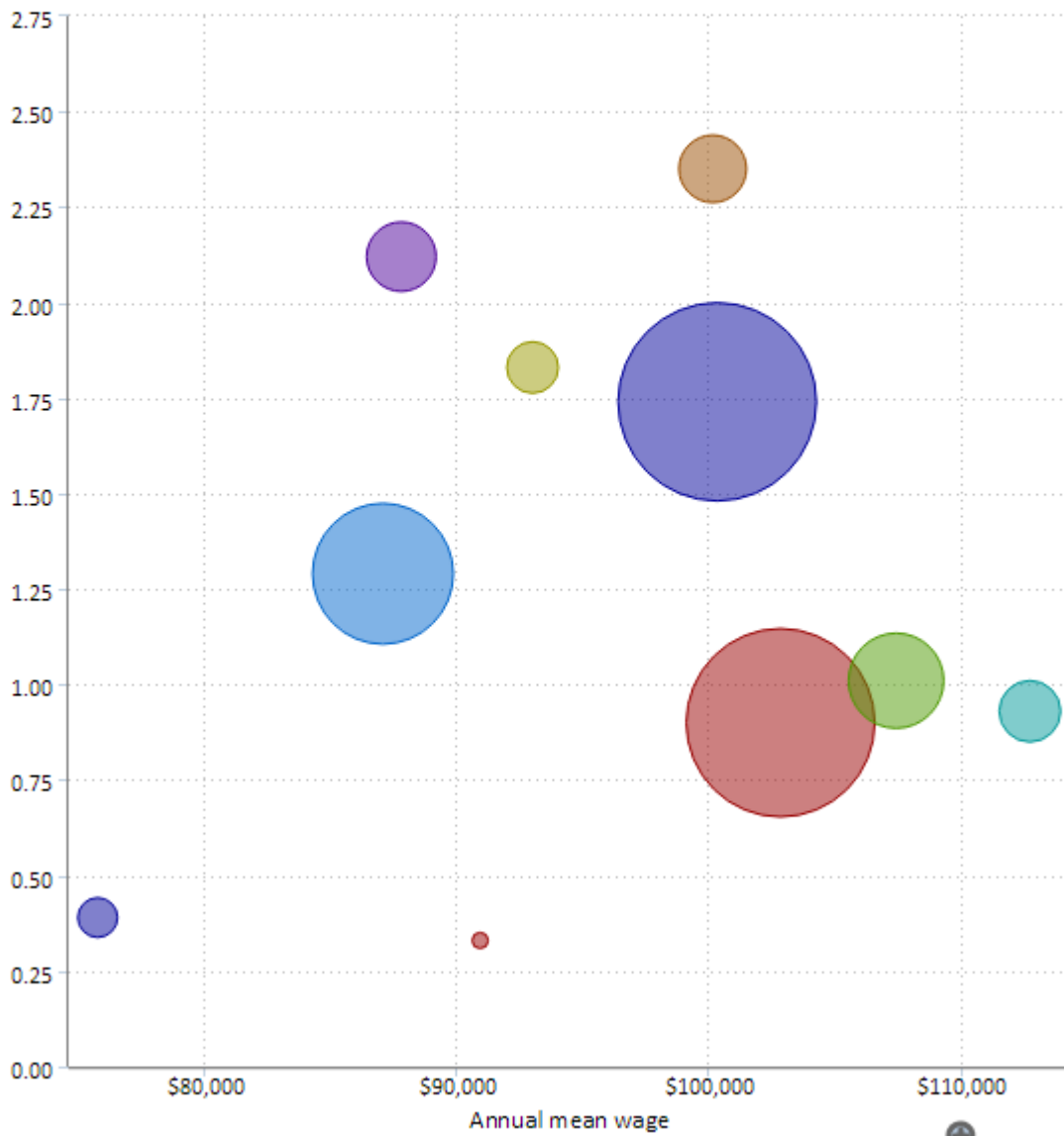
New York and California had the most [physician assistants](#), together accounting for about 21 percent of total U.S. employment in this occupation. High employment levels do not always mean high employment concentrations, however. For example, physician assistants had a similar employment share in California as the U.S. average. Maine and West Virginia had small numbers of physician assistants but concentrations of physician assistants more than double the national average. Hawaii employed among the fewest physician assistants (140) and, with Arkansas, had one of the lowest employment concentrations. Arkansas (\$75,700) also was one of the lowest paying states for physician assistants, while Nevada (\$112,700) was one of the highest paying.

Location quotient, annual mean wage, and employment of physician assistants, selected states, May 2014

Bubble size represents employment

- New York
- California
- Pennsylvania
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Maine
- Nevada
- South Dakota
- Arkansas
- Hawaii

Location quotient



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

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



The average wage for nurse practitioners was more than twice the U.S. average for all occupations

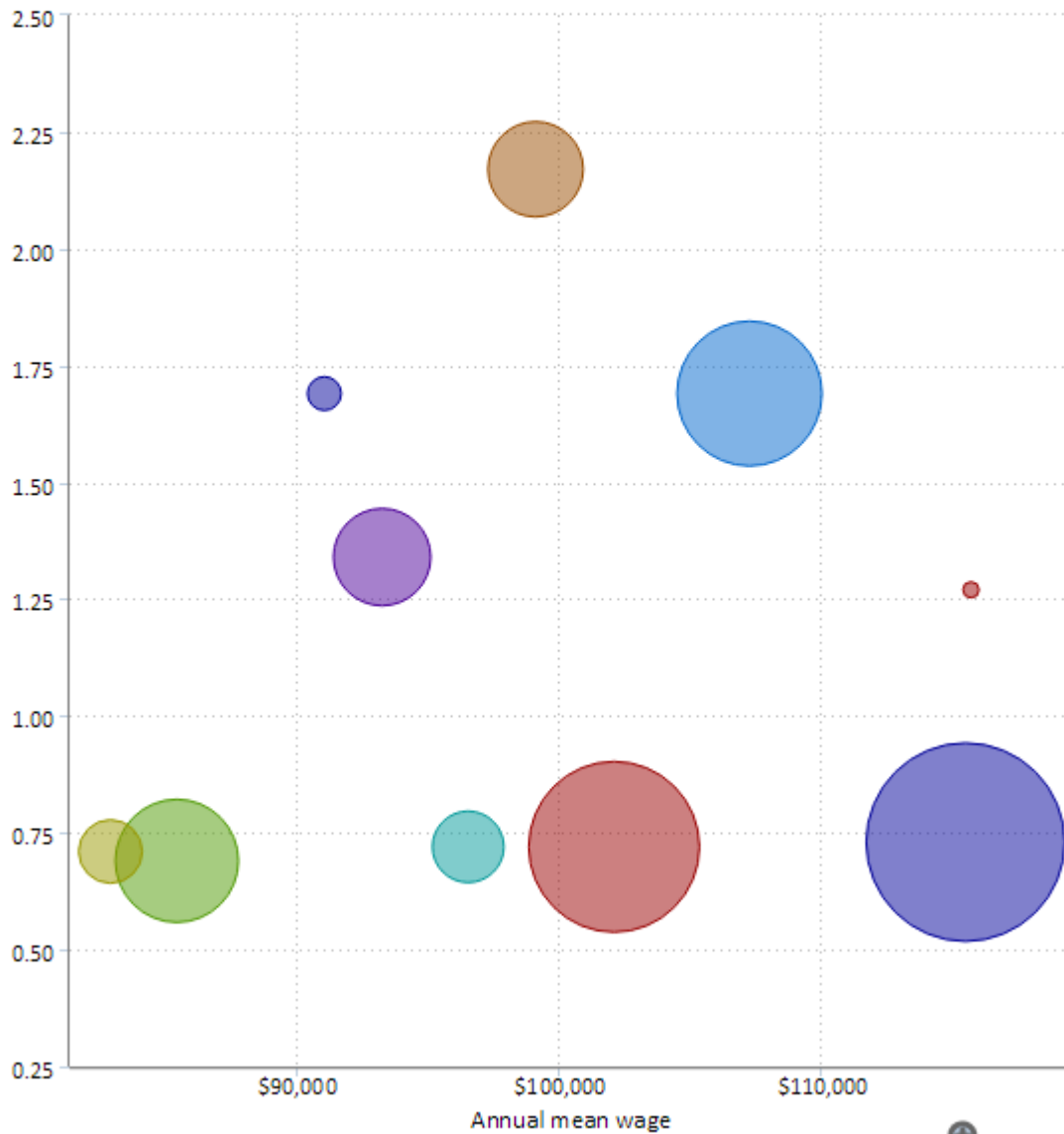
[Nurse practitioners](#) earned an annual mean wage of \$97,990 nationally, but wages for this occupation varied from \$82,880 in Oklahoma to over \$115,000 in California, Alaska, and Hawaii. Although average wages for nurse practitioners were similar in Alaska and California, California employed many more of them, 9,980 in May 2014, compared with 370 in Alaska. Mississippi had among the highest employment concentrations of nurse practitioners—more than twice the U.S. average.

Location quotient, annual mean wage, and employment of nurse practitioners, selected states, May 2014

Bubble size represents employment

- California
- Texas
- Massachusetts
- Illinois
- Kentucky
- Mississippi
- Louisiana
- Oklahoma
- Vermont
- Alaska

Location quotient



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

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Employment concentration of nursing assistants above national average in all Connecticut metro areas

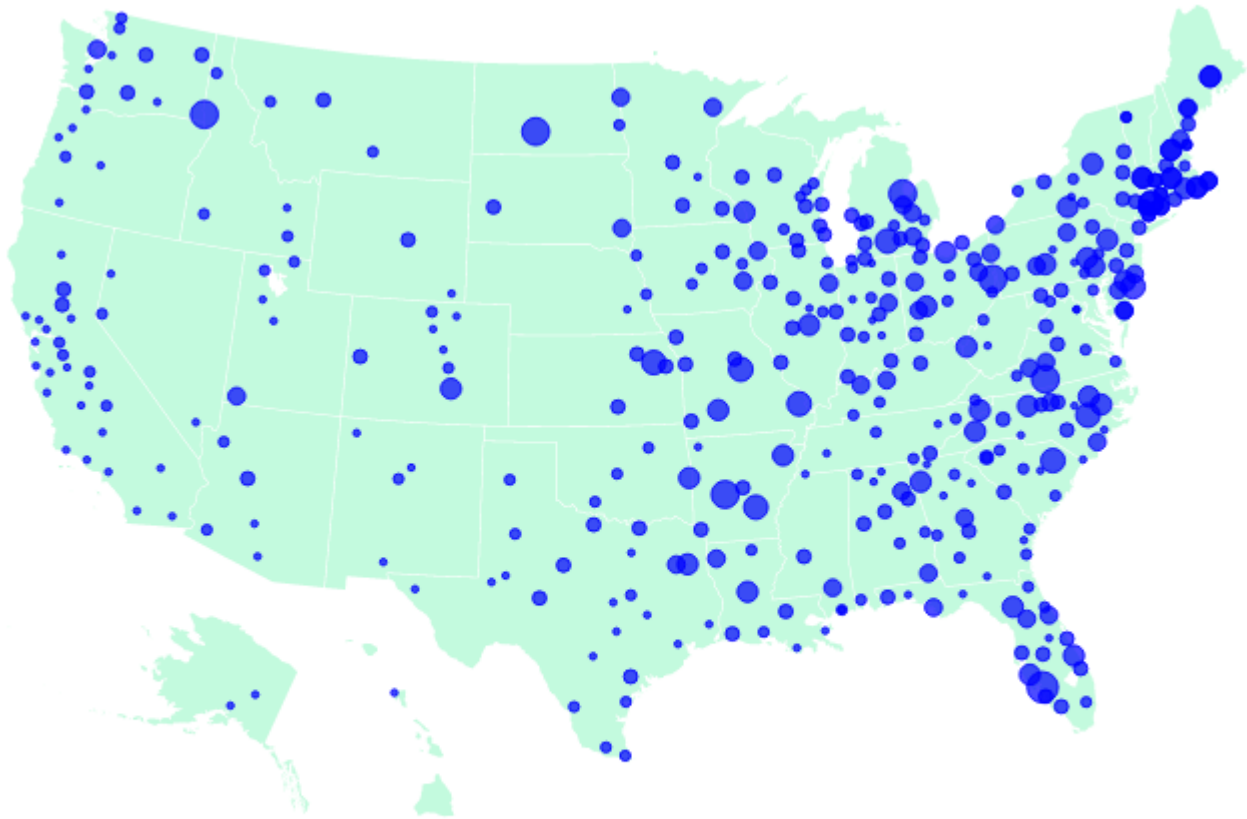
Punta Gorda, Florida; Steubenville-Weirton, Ohio-West Virginia; Bay City, Michigan; Hot Springs, Arkansas; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Danville, Virginia each had employment concentrations of [nursing assistants](#) of 2.25 or higher, over twice as large as the national average. All of Connecticut's metropolitan areas, with employment concentrations ranging from 1.14 to 1.93, had higher concentrations of nursing assistants than the nation as a whole.

Areas with employment concentrations of 1.0, the same as the national average, included Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Clarksville, Tennessee-Kentucky; Laredo, Texas; Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Washington; and Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, Massachusetts-New Hampshire. In El Centro, California (0.13), Las Vegas-Paradise, Nevada (0.37), and Boulder, Colorado (0.37), employment concentrations for nursing assistants were far below average.

San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, California (0.53), and Anchorage, Alaska (0.43), also had below-average employment concentrations of nursing assistants. However, average wages for nursing assistants in these areas were among the highest in the country at \$36,630 and \$36,920, respectively. In Dalton, Georgia (0.46), and Midland, Texas (0.49), where employment concentrations were also below the national average, annual wages were significantly lower at \$20,070 and \$25,910, respectively.

For employment concentration in nonmetropolitan areas and other data for nursing assistants, please visit the [occupational profile page](#).

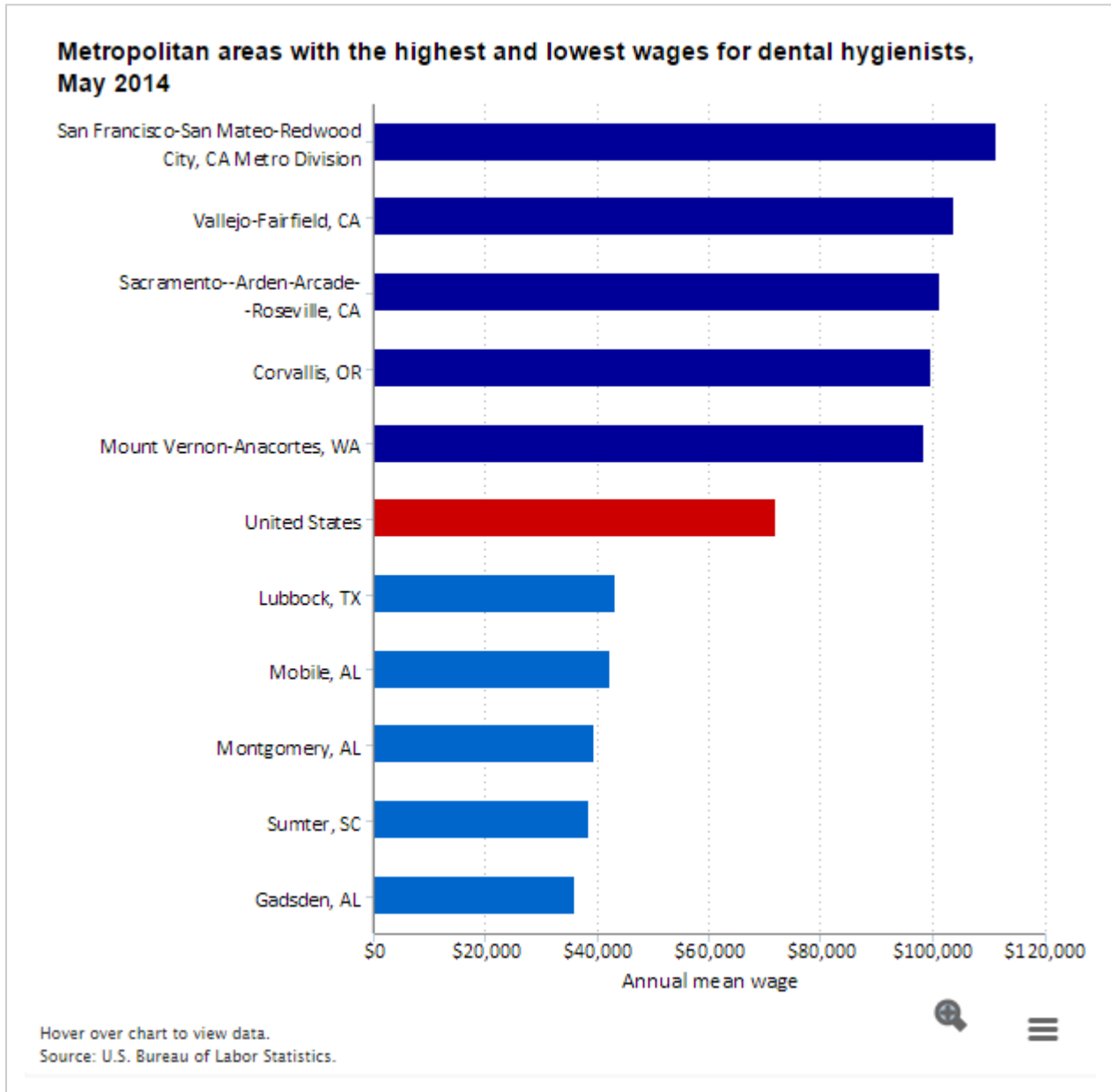
Location quotient of nursing assistants, by area, May 2014



Hover over a bubble to see data.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Dental hygienists had an average annual wage over \$100,000 in some areas

The average annual wage for dental hygienists was \$71,970 nationally but varied by metropolitan area. Several of the highest paying areas for dental hygienists were in California or the Pacific Northwest. These included San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City, California, with an average of \$111,380; Vallejo-Fairfield, California (\$103,750); and Corvallis, Oregon (\$99,870). Most of the lowest paying areas for dental hygienists were in the South, including Sumter, South Carolina (\$38,380); Lubbock, Texas (\$43,250); and several areas in Alabama.



For more information

Stella Fayer and Audrey Watson are economists in the Division of Occupational Employment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Email: fayer.stella@bls.gov and watson.audrey@bls.gov.

This Spotlight on Statistics presents May 2014 estimates from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey. Occupational Employment Statistics estimates are published annually and measure occupational employment and wage rates for wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. The survey does not include the self-employed and owners, partners, and proprietors of unincorporated businesses, such as sole practitioners and partners in unincorporated medical and dental practices. More information about the survey is available in our [frequently asked questions](#) and in the [technical documentation](#).

Estimates available include cross-industry occupational employment and wage estimates for the nation; over 600 areas, including states and the District of Columbia, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, nonmetropolitan areas, and territories; national industry-specific estimates for NAICS sectors, 3-, 4-, and selected 5- and 6-digit industries; and national estimates by ownership across all industries and for schools and hospitals. Publicly available data are at www.bls.gov/oes/.

Percentile wages represent the value of a wage below which a certain percentage of workers fall. For example, the 90th percentile is the boundary between the highest paid 10 percent and the remaining 90 percent of workers in an occupation. See [more information on percentile wages](#).

Data on employment by the typical education level needed to enter an occupation are based on education and training categories from the BLS Employment Projections program. Education and training levels assigned to each occupation are available at www.bls.gov/emp/tables/education-and-training-by-occupation.htm.

More information on healthcare occupations is also available in the following articles and publications:

- [Healthcare: Millions of jobs now and in the future](#)
- [Medical physicists and health physicists: Radiation occupations](#)
- [You're a what? Hospitalist](#)
- [Careers in hospice care](#)