

Salary Surfer Methodology

The Salary Surfer presents wage data for California Community College students who earned an associate's degree or a credit certificate. These students are referred to as "completers." Wage data were obtained from the California Employment Development Department Unemployment Insurance (EDDUI) program. Median wages were calculated by discipline at two years before, two years after, and five years after an award was received. The median wage is the middle value of all the wages of the completers; half the wages are higher and half the wages are lower. Median wages were calculated for two award types: Associate Degrees and Chancellor's Office Approved Certificates.

The median wage is presented by [Taxonomy of Program \(TOP\)](#), a system of numerical codes used to report academic disciplines in the California Community College system.

Cohort Group:

The Salary Surfer uses the aggregated earnings of completers receiving an award during a five-year period who: 1) had not transferred to a four-year institution; 2) were not enrolled anywhere in the California Community Colleges system after receiving an award; and 3) were older than 21 at time of award. (Completers younger than 22 were excluded since they were likely to be in high school two years before they received their award.)

Completers were excluded from wage calculations if they had no wages during the calculation year. For example, if completers were reported in the EDDUI file as having no wages two years after earning an award they would be excluded from the calculation of the median for wages two years after completion of award.

Wage Calculations:

Completers are counted if they earned wages during any quarter of an academic year. For instance, if a completer earned wages in quarters one and three during a year, these wages are summed and the total is the completer's wages for that year. A student may be included in both the two-year after award group and the five-year after award group, or only one of the two groups. Award categories with fewer than 10 completers having wages were excluded to ensure confidentiality and maximize the validity of reporting. Wages were adjusted for inflation to constant dollars using the [California Consumer Price Index](#).

Wage Tracker Limitations:

Not all completers earning wages will be found in the EDDUI wage data. EDDUI data contain wages only for those employed in an occupation covered by Unemployment Insurance in California. This excludes individuals employed by the military or federal government, and those self-employed, employed out of state, unemployed, or not in the workforce after completion of an award. The EDDUI data do not indicate the occupation in which an individual was employed, how many hours an individual worked, or part time/full time status. The EDDUI wage files are matched with Social Security Number (SSN). Therefore, completers without a valid SSN were not included in the Salary Surfer.