

Leadership

The Fastest-Growing Jobs For Women

Jenna Goudreau, 07.19.10, 8:00 PM ET

With the national unemployment rate stuck at a disturbing 9.5%, millions of Americans are contemplating a career change.

For the women who are looking for jobs in fields that are growing, here's a helping hand. Researcher Laurence Shatkin, author of *Best Jobs for the 21st Century*, analyzed Bureau of Labor Statistics data to determine the fastest-growing jobs for women. Using job-growth projections from 2008 to 2018, and factoring in fields that are comprised of 70% or more women, he came up with a list of the top 20 jobs that will be in demand over the next 10 years, and are particularly attractive to women interested in job flexibility.

Overall, health care jobs dominated the list, ranging from lower-paid assistant work to well-paid professionals. Topping the list are home health aides. The job market for this specialty is expected to increase by 50% through 2018, and women currently make up 88% of this job force. A home health aide visits elderly, disabled or ill patients in their homes or in medical facilities, and helps with such day-to-day tasks like housekeeping, grooming and dressing, and meal preparation. Shatkin believes it's appealing to women because it's a nurturing position and is often part time, which allows women to continue to care for their own families. Typically, there is no educational requirement except for on-the-job training and a competency test. There's a downside however: The pay is much lower than other jobs on our list. Home health aides earn a median of \$20,500 per year, and those in the top 90% of the field earn just \$29,500 yearly.

In other health-related jobs, dental hygienists (No. 5) are experiencing a 36% job growth and earn a median of \$67,500 per year. The top 90% of dental hygienists make \$93,000 yearly, and work schedules are often flexible. Similarly, occupational therapists, (No. 14), are experiencing a 26% growth and earn a median salary of \$69,500. The position made our list of [Best-Paying Jobs For Women](#) earlier this year.

However, most of the growth within the health care industry is administrative. Shatkin explains that the new [health care legislation](#) and the aging baby boomer population will contribute to the growth of a field that currently employs 14 million workers, and is expected to add another 3 million jobs by 2018.

In an effort to keep health-care costs down, Shatkin says that doctors' time-consuming clerical tasks will be performed by lower-wage workers.

At No. 8 on our list, medical assistant jobs are projected to increase by 40%. Ninety percent of these assistants are women, and the job pays a median \$28,500 yearly. These health care assistant jobs require limited education and are often flexible. Others that made our list are physical therapist aides (No. 4), dental assistants (No. 7) occupational therapist aides (No. 10) and pharmacy technicians (No. 11).

While most of the top 20 jobs on the list are low paying, there are a few others that offer higher wages but were left off the list as they are in male-dominated fields. For instance, biomedical engineering, which is projected to grow by 72% and pays a median of \$77,500 annually, did not make the list because it is a male-dominated position (87% men). The reason, says Shatkin, is because women tend to gravitate toward jobs that allow them more time with family and which are also "nurturing." That can affect the paycheck in two ways--first, it translates into fewer hours on the job, and second, "our society doesn't [economically] value nurturing jobs like [it] values technical jobs."

Outside of the health care industry, the jobs that are currently in demand and pay a median annual salary of \$40,000 or more are athletic trainers (No. 3), paralegals and legal assistants (No. 12), and instructional coordinators (No. 18)--those that assess and improve the quality of school teachers, curriculum and technology.