

BARBERS, HAIRDRESSERS, AND COSMETOLOGISTS

SUMMARY



Hairdressers provide hair styling and beauty services.

Quick Facts: Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists	
2015 Median Pay	\$24,300 per year \$11.68 per hour
Typical Entry-Level Education	Postsecondary nondegree award
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2016	673,300
Job Outlook, 2016-26	13% (Faster than average)
Employment Change, 2016-26	87,600

What Barbers, Hairdressers, and Cosmetologists Do

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists provide haircutting, hairstyling, and a range of other beauty services.

Work Environment

Barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists work mostly in a barbershop or salon. Physical stamina is important, because they are on their feet for most of their shift. Many work full time, but part-time positions are also common.

How to Become a Barber, Hairdresser, or Cosmetologist

All states require barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists to be licensed. To qualify for a license, candidates are required to graduate from a state-approved barber or cosmetology program and then pass a state exam for licensure.

Pay

The median hourly wage for barbers was \$12.38 in May 2016.

The median hourly wage for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists was \$11.66 in May 2016.

Job Outlook

Employment of barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists is projected to grow 13 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations. Population growth will lead to greater demand for hair care services.

State & Area Data

Explore resources for employment and wages by state and area for barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists.

Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists with similar occupations.

More Information, Including Links to O*NET

Learn more about barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

WHAT BARBERS, HAIRDRESSERS, AND COSMETOLOGISTS DO



Hairdressers often wash and color hair.

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists provide haircutting, hairstyling, and a range of other beauty services.

DUTIES

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists typically do the following:

- Inspect and analyze hair, skin, and scalp to recommend treatment
- Discuss hairstyle options
- Wash, color, lighten, and condition hair
- Chemically change hair textures
- Cut, dry, and style hair
- Receive payments from clients
- Clean and disinfect all tools and work areas

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists provide hair and beauty services to enhance clients' appearance. Those who operate their own barbershop or salon have managerial duties that may include hiring, supervising, and firing workers, as well as keeping business and inventory records, ordering supplies, and arranging for advertising.

Barbers cut, trim, shampoo, and style hair, mostly for male clients. They also may fit hairpieces, perform facials, and offer facial shaving. Depending on the state in which they work, some barbers are licensed to color, bleach, and highlight hair and to offer permanent-wave services. Common tools include combs, scissors, straight razors, and clippers.

Hairdressers, or *hairstylists*, offer a wide range of hair services, such as shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling. They often advise clients, both male and female, on how to care for their hair at home. They also keep records of products and services provided to clients, such as hair color, shampoo, conditioner, and hair treatment used. Tools include hairbrushes, scissors, blow dryers, and curling irons.

Cosmetologists provide scalp and facial treatments and makeup analysis. Some also clean and style wigs and hairpieces. In addition, most cosmetologists actively recommend professional hair care products or salon hair care products.

WORK ENVIRONMENT



Barbers usually work in barbershops and must stand for long periods.

Barbers held about 56,400 jobs in 2016. The largest employers of barbers were as follows:

Self-employed workers	72%
Personal care services	27

Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists held about 617,300 jobs in 2016. The largest employers of hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists were as follows:

Personal care services	52%
Self-employed workers	43
Department stores	2

Barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists work mostly in a barbershop or salon, although some work in a spa, hotel, or resort. Some lease booth space from a salon owner. Some manage salons or open their own shop after several years of experience.

Barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists usually work in pleasant surroundings with good lighting. Physical stamina is important, because they are on their feet for most of their shift. Prolonged exposure to some chemicals may cause skin irritation, so they often wear protective clothing, such as disposable gloves or aprons.

WORK SCHEDULES

Many barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists work full time, however part-time positions are also common. Those who run their own barbershop or salon may have long hours. Work schedules often include evenings and weekends—the times when barbershops and beauty salons are busiest. Those who are self-employed usually determine their own schedules.

HOW TO BECOME A BARBER, HAIRDRESSER, OR COSMETOLOGIST



Workers must obtain a license through a state-approved barber or cosmetology program.

All states require barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists to be licensed. To qualify for a license, candidates are required to graduate from a state-approved cosmetology program.

EDUCATION

A high school diploma or equivalent is required for some positions. In addition, every state requires that barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists complete a program in a state-licensed barber or cosmetology school. Programs in hairstyling, skin care, and other personal appearance services are available in postsecondary vocational schools.

Full-time programs in barbering and cosmetology usually last at least 9 months and may lead to an associate's degree. Most of these workers take advanced courses in hairstyling or in other personal appearance services to keep up with the latest trends. Those who want to open their own business also may take courses in sales and marketing.

LICENSES, CERTIFICATIONS, AND REGISTRATIONS

Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must obtain a license in order to work. Qualifications for a license vary by state, but generally, a person must fulfill the following criteria:

- Reached a minimum age of 16
- Received a high school diploma or equivalent
- Graduated from a state-licensed barber or cosmetology school

After graduating from a state-approved training program, students take a state licensing exam that includes a written test and, in some cases, a practical test of styling skills or an oral exam.

In many states, cosmetology training may be credited toward a barbering license and vice versa, and a few states combine the two licenses. A fee usually is required to apply for a license, and periodic renewals may be necessary.

Some states have reciprocity agreements that allow licensed barbers and cosmetologists to get a license in another state without needing additional formal training or state board testing, but such agreements are not common. Consequently, people who want to work in a particular state should review the laws of that state before entering a training program.

IMPORTANT QUALITIES

Creativity. Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must keep up with the latest trends and be ready to try new hairstyles for their clients.

Customer-service skills. Workers must be pleasant, friendly, and able to interact with customers in order to retain clients.

Listening skills. Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists should be good listeners. They must listen carefully to what the client wants in order to make sure that the client is happy with the result.

Physical stamina. Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists must be able to stand on their feet for long periods.

Tidiness. Workers must keep a neat personal appearance and keep their work area clean and sanitary. This requirement is necessary for the health and safety of their clients and for making clients comfortable enough so that they will want to return.

Time-management skills. Time-management skills are important in scheduling appointments and providing services. For example, routine haircuts do not require the precise timing of some other services, such as applying neutralizer after a permanent wave. Clients who receive timely hair care are more likely to return.

PAY

BARBERS, HAIRDRESSERS, AND COSMETOLOGISTS Median hourly wages, May 2015

Total, all occupations.....	\$17.81
Barbers	\$12.38
Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists	\$11.68
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	\$11.66
Personal appearance workers.....	\$11.48

*Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics*

The median hourly wage for barbers was \$12.38 in May 2016. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$8.76, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$22.79.

The median hourly wage for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists was \$11.66 in May 2016. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$8.62, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$23.58.

In May 2016, the median hourly wages for barbers in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Personal care services	\$12.36
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In May 2016, the median hourly wages for hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Personal care services	\$11.85
Department stores	9.19

Barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists may receive tips from customers. High quality work and customer service usually contribute to greater tip totals.

Many barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists work full time, however part-time positions are also common. Those who run their own barbershop or salon may have additional hours. Work schedules often include evenings and weekends—the times when beauty salons and barbershops are busiest. Those who are self-employed usually determine their own schedules.

JOB OUTLOOK

BARBERS, HAIRDRESSERS, AND COSMETOLOGISTS

Percent change in employment, projected 2016-26

Personal appearance workers	13%
Barbers.....	13%
Barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists	13%
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	13%
Total, all occupations	7%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Employment of barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists is projected to grow 13 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations. The need for barbers will stem primarily from an increasing population, which will lead to greater demand for basic hair care services. In addition, demand for hair coloring, hair straightening, and other advanced hair treatments has risen in recent years, a trend that is expected to continue over the coming decade.

JOB PROSPECTS

Overall job opportunities are expected to be good. A large number of job openings will stem from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the occupation for other reasons. However, workers should expect strong competition for jobs and clients at higher paying salons, of which there are relatively few and for which applicants must compete with a large pool of experienced hairdressers and cosmetologists.

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2014	Projected Employment, 2026	Change, 2014-24	
				Percent	Numeric
Barbers, hairdressers, hairstylists and cosmetologists	39-5010	673,700	761,400	13	87,600
Barbers	39-5011	56,400	64,000	13	7,600
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	39-5012	617,300	697,400	13	80,100

STATE & AREA DATA

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

The [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) (OES) program produces employment and wage estimates annually for over 800 occupations. These estimates are available for the nation as a whole, for individual states, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The link(s) below go to OES data maps for employment and wages by state and area.

<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes395011.htm#st>

<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes395012.htm#st>

Projections Central

Occupational employment projections are developed for all states by Labor Market Information (LMI) or individual state Employment Projections offices. All state projections data are available at www.projectionscentral.com. Information on this site allows projected employment growth for an occupation to be compared among states or to be compared within one state. In addition, states may produce projections for areas; there are links to each state's websites where these data may be retrieved.

Career InfoNet (<http://www.careerinfonet.org/>)

America's Career InfoNet includes hundreds of [occupational profiles](#) with data available by state and metro area. There are links in the left-hand side menu to compare occupational employment by state and occupational wages by local area or metro area. There is also a [salary info tool](#) to search for wages by zip code.

SIMILAR OCCUPATIONS

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists.

OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2015 MEDIAN PAY
Manicurists and Pedicurists	Manicurists and pedicurists clean, shape, and beautify fingernails and toenails.	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$22,150
Skincare Specialists	Skincare specialists cleanse and beautify the face and body to enhance a person's appearance.	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$30,270

CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists, including training, visit

American Association of Cosmetology Schools
<http://beautyschools.org/>

National Association of Barber Boards of America
<http://nationalbarberboards.com>

For information about state licensing, practice exams, and other professional links, visit

National-Interstate Council of State Boards of Cosmetology
<https://nictesting.org>

Professional Beauty Association
<https://probeauty.org>

O*NET

<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/39-5011.00>

<http://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/39-5012.00>

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Barbers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists, on the internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/barbers-hairdressers-and-cosmetologists.htm> (visited March 20, 2018).

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, PSB Suite 2135, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE Washington, DC 20212-0001

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