What Is the Difference Between Industries and Occupations?

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Occupations identify categories of skills, whereas industries are categories of companies and businesses.

An occupation is what you do, and what skills and tasks are associated with that position. For example, someone who monitors a patient's stats and all aspects of patient care, interprets diagnostic tests, and consults with members of the healthcare team is most likely in a nursing occupation. An industry is the type of place where you do your job, and this is defined based on the firm's final product or service. A hospital would be coded in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry sector as opposed to medical research laboratory, which would be coded in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry sector.

The relationship between industry and occupation becomes more complicated when occupations can be found across industries. For example, in New Mexico 58 percent of registered nurses work in hospitals, 19 percent in ambulatory health care services, 6 percent in federal government and 5 percent in educational services. The occupation is the same; however, the place of work or industry is different.

Receptionists are found in almost every industry sector since most businesses require this type of administrative support to run their daily operations, regardless of the type of product or service the firm produces. Construction companies, real estate offices, computer repair stores, doctor offices, government agencies, and many more all hire receptionists.

When looking at labor market data and information, just keep in mind that an occupation is what you do and an industry is the type of place where you work.

Workforce Information Tip

To review industries that include a particular occupation, see below:

2. Click on "Occupation."
3. Click on "Occupational Employment by Industry."
4. In step 1, select "New Mexico" or a "Workforce Development Region."
5. In step 2, select a time frame.
6. In step 3, select "Registered Nurse" and click on "Search."
7. This screen shows which industries hire Registered Nurses and how many!

You can sort the table low to high by clicking on "Estimated Employment" or "% of Total Estimated Employment."

By clicking the title again, the table will sort high to low.

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