

Labor Market Analysis for Program Review: 1 402.00/Paralegal (Paralegal Degree) (Paralegal Certificate) (Legal Technician)



Orange County Center of Excellence, June 2023

Program reviews are conducted by individual colleges to periodically review curriculum of their existing programs, and in the case of career technical education programs, ensure continued alignment with regional labor market needs. Because a program review evaluates an existing program, rather than establishing a new program, additional supply will not be added; therefore the endorsement criteria included in this report is determined slightly differently than it is for a new program that requires regional recommendation.

Summary

Program LMI Endorsement	Endorsed: All LMI Criteria Met <input type="checkbox"/>	Endorsed: Some LMI Criteria Met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not LMI Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/>
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Program LMI Endorsement Criteria

	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Supply Gap:	<i>Comments:</i> there is projected to be 2,359 annual job openings throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties for <i>paralegals and legal assistants</i> , which is more than the 593 awards conferred by educational institutions .	
Living Wage: (Entry-Level, 25 th)	<i>Comments:</i> Entry-level wages for paralegals and legal assistants are \$20.32, which is slightly below the OC living wage of \$20.63. These entry-level wages are only 31 cents below the living wage.	
Education:	<i>Comments:</i> The typical entry-level education for <i>paralegals and legal assistants</i> is an associate degree. Additionally, over one-third of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree as their highest level of education.	

Emerging Occupation(s)

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comments:</i> N/A	

The Orange County Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (OC COE) prepared this report to determine whether there is a supply gap in the Los Angeles/Orange County regional labor market related to one middle-skill occupation:

- Paralegals and Legal Assistants (23-2011)

Based on the available data there appears to be a supply gap for *paralegals and legal assistants* and typical education requirements for this occupation align with a community college education. However, entry-level wages are slightly below the living wage. **Therefore, due to some of the regional labor market criteria being met, the COE endorses this proposed program.**

Exhibit 1 lists the occupational demand, supply, typical entry-level education, and educational attainment for the occupations included in this report.

Exhibit 1: Occupational Demand and Supply in Los Angeles/Orange Counties

Occupation (SOC)	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (CC and Non-CC)	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Typical Entry-Level Education	Community College Educational Attainment
Paralegals and Legal Assistants (23-2011)	LA: 1,797 OC: 563	LA: 367 OC: 226	OC: \$20.32	Associate Degree	42%
LA/OC Total	2,359	593	N/A	N/A	N/A

Demand:

- The number of jobs related to *paralegals and legal assistants* is projected to increase 13% through 2026, equating to 2,359 annual job openings.
- Hourly entry-level wages for *paralegals and legal assistants* are \$20.32 in Orange County, which is slightly below the living wage of \$20.63.
- There were 7,244 online job postings for *paralegals and legal assistants* over the past 12 months. The highest number of postings were for paralegals, legal assistants, and litigation paralegals.
- The typical entry-level education for *paralegals and legal assistants* is an associate degree.
- Approximately 42% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree as their highest level of educational attainment.

Supply:

- There was an average of 541 awards conferred by 15 community colleges in Los Angeles and Orange Counties from 2018 to 2021.
- Non-community college institutions conferred an average of 52 awards from 2017-2020.
- Orange County community college students that exited paralegal programs in the 2019-2020 academic year had a median annual wage of \$46,276 after exiting the program. and 54% attained the regional living wage.
- Throughout Orange County, 81% of students that exited their program in 2018-19 reported that they are working in a job closely related to their field of study.

Demand

Occupational Projections:

Exhibit 2 shows the annual percent change in jobs for paralegals and legal assistants from 2016 through 2026. Employment for *paralegals and legal assistants* in Orange County decreased 5% from 2019 to 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is slightly lower than the 6% decline across all occupations during the same period. Employment for *paralegals and legal assistants* is projected to grow at a slightly higher rate compared to all occupations through 2026.

Exhibit 2: Annual Percent Change in Jobs for Paralegals and Legal Assistants, 2016-2026

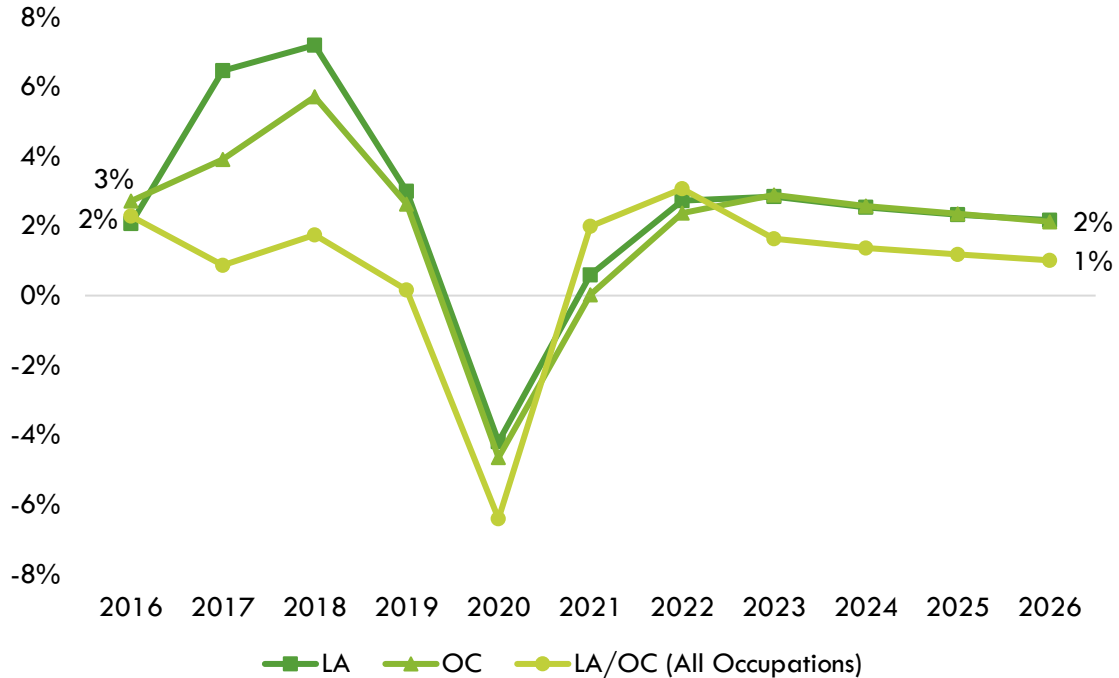


Exhibit 3 shows the five-year occupational demand projections for *paralegals and legal assistants*. In Los Angeles/Orange County, the number of jobs for *paralegals and legal assistants* is projected to increase by 13% through 2026. There is projected to be 2,359 jobs available annually.

Exhibit 3: Occupational Demand in Los Angeles and Orange Counties¹

Geography	2021 Jobs	2026 Jobs	2021-2026 Change	2021-2026 % Change	Annual Openings
Los Angeles	12,750	14,438	1,689	13%	1,797
Orange	4,030	4,551	521	13%	563
Total	16,780	18,989	2,210	13%	2,359

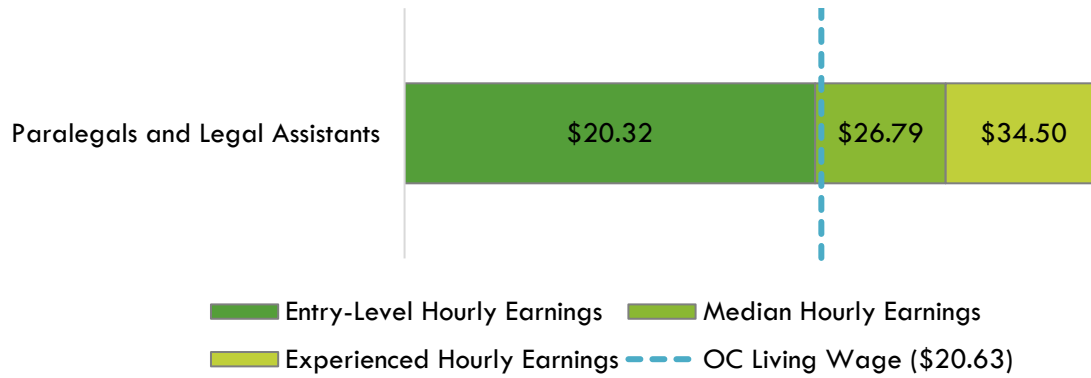
Wages:

The labor market endorsement in this report considers the entry-level hourly wages for *paralegals and legal assistants* in Orange County as they relate to the county's living wage. Los Angeles County wages are included below in order to provide a complete analysis of the LA/OC region.

The typical entry-level hourly wages for *paralegals and legal assistants* are \$20.32, which is slightly below the living wage for one adult (\$20.63 in Orange County). Median wages are \$26.79, which is above the living wage. Orange County's average wages are lower than the average statewide wage of \$33.80 for *paralegals and legal assistants*. Exhibit 4 shows the wage range for *paralegals and legal assistants* in Orange County and how it compares to the regional living wage.

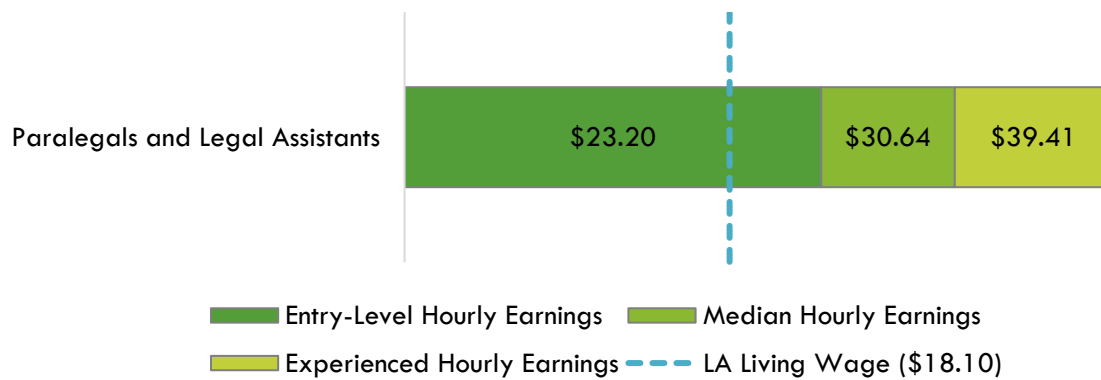
¹ Five-year change represents new job additions to the workforce. Annual openings include new jobs and replacement jobs that result from retirements and separations.

Exhibit 4: Wages by Occupation in Orange County



The typical entry-level hourly wages for *paralegals and legal assistants* are \$23.20, which is significantly above the living wage for one adult (\$18.10 in Los Angeles County). Los Angeles County’s average wages are above the average statewide wage of \$33.80 for *paralegals and legal assistants*. Exhibit 5 shows the wage range for *paralegals and legal assistants* in Los Angeles County and how it compares to the regional living wage.

Exhibit 5: Wages by Occupation in Los Angeles County



Job Postings:

Important Online Job Postings Data Note: Online job postings data is sourced from Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm that scrapes, collects, and organizes data from online job boards such as LinkedIn, Indeed, Glassdoor, Monster, GovernmentJobs.com, and thousands more. Lightcast uses natural language processing (NLP) to determine the related company, industry, occupation, and other information for each job posting. However, NLP has limitations that include understanding contextual words of phrases; determining differences in words that can be used as nouns, verbs, and/or adjectives; and misspellings or grammatical errors.² For these reasons, job postings could be assigned to the wrong employer, industry, or occupation within Lightcast’s database.

Additionally, there are several limitations when analyzing job postings. A single job posting may not represent a single job opening, as employers may be creating a pool of candidates for future openings or hiring for multiple positions with a single posting. Additionally, not all jobs are posted online, and jobs may be filled

² K. R. Chowdhary, *Fundamentals of Artificial Intelligence* (Basingstoke: Springer Nature, 2020), <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-81-322-3972-7>.

through other methods such as internal promotion, word-of-mouth advertising, physical job boards, or a variety of other channels.

There were 7,244 online job postings related to *paralegals and legal assistants* listed in the past 12 months.

Exhibit 6: Number of Job Postings by Occupation (n=7,244)

Occupation	Job Postings	Percentage of Job Postings
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	7,244	100%

The top employers in the region, by number of job postings, are shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7: Top Employers by Number of Job Postings (n=7,244)

Employer	Job Postings	Percentage of Job Postings
Robert Half	441	6%
Disney	137	2%
GPAC	136	2%
Jobot	129	2%
Baum, Hedlund, Aristei, & Goldman, A.p.c.	64	1%
Adams & Martin Group	49	1%
AppleOne	42	1%
Messner Reeves Llp	39	1%
Law Offices Of Arash Khorsandi A Professional Law Corporation	32	0.4%
Lipeles Law Group Apc	31	0.4%

The top specialized, soft, and software/computer skills listed by those most frequently mentioned in job postings (denoted in parentheses) are shown in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8: Top Skills by Number of Job Postings (n=7,244)

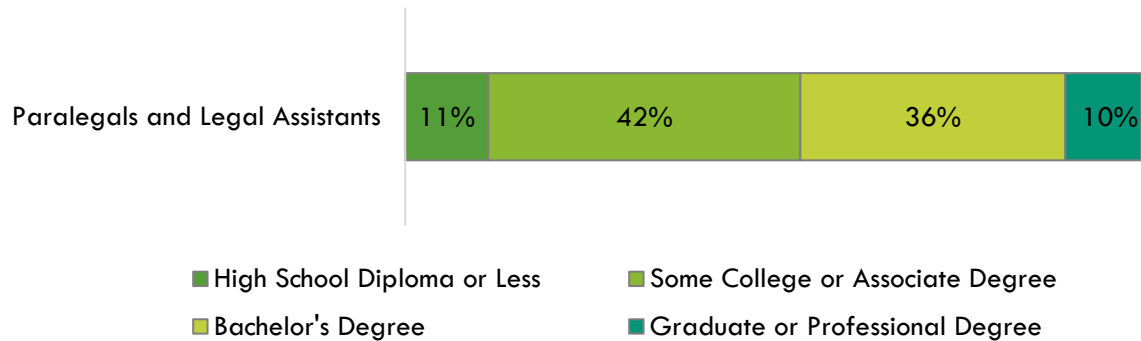
Top Specialized Skills	Top Soft Skills	Top Computer Skills
Lawsuits (2,755)	Detail Oriented (2,723)	Microsoft Office (1,544)
Legal Discovery (2,204)	Filing (2,718)	Microsoft Excel (1,463)
Legal Pleadings (1,610)	Communications (2,540)	Microsoft Outlook (1,362)
Legal Depositions (1,205)	Microsoft Office (1,544)	Microsoft Word (899)
Legal Research (999)	Writing (1,480)	Microsoft PowerPoint (718)
Trial Preparation (974)	Microsoft Excel (1,463)	Spreadsheets (287)
Personal Injury Law (862)	Research (1,415)	Westlaw (267)
Legal Hearings (778)	Organizational Skills (1,381)	Document Management Systems (262)
Proofreading (745)	Microsoft Outlook (1,362)	Law Practice Management Software (183)
Civil Law (709)	Multitasking (1,347)	Adobe Acrobat (135)

Educational Attainment:

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists an associate degree as the typical entry-level education for *paralegals and legal assistants*. Additionally, the national-level educational attainment data indicates 42% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree as their highest level of education. Exhibit 9 shows the educational attainment for *paralegals and legal assistants*.

Of the 46% of the cumulative job postings for *paralegals and legal assistants* that listed a minimum education requirement in Los Angeles/Orange County, 37% (4,653) requested a high school diploma or an associate degree and 63% (373) requested a bachelor's degree.

Exhibit 9: National-level Educational Attainment for Occupations



Though this occupation typically requires an associate degree, California Business and Professions Code states that there are four different paths to becoming a paralegal in California, only one of which requires a bachelor's degree:³

- A certificate of completion of a paralegal program approved by the American Bar Association.
- A certificate of completion of a paralegal program that requires the successful completion of at least 24 semester, or equivalent, units in law-related courses and that has been accredited or approved by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education.
- A baccalaureate degree or an advanced degree in any subject, a minimum of one year of law-related experience under the supervision of an attorney who has been an active member of the State Bar of California for at least the preceding three years,
- A high school diploma or general equivalency diploma, a minimum of three years of law-related experience under the supervision of an attorney who has been an active member of the State Bar of California for at least the preceding three years and a written declaration from this attorney stating that the person is qualified to perform paralegal tasks. This experience and training shall be completed no later than December 31, 2003.

A degree in a specific field is not required to become a paralegal in California and *paralegals and legal assistants* throughout the state come from a wide variety of fields. Of the 40% of *paralegals and legal assistants* throughout the state that have completed a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, only 5.5% completed a pre-law or legal studies baccalaureate program. Other fields of study for *paralegals and legal assistants* with a bachelor's degree include political science and government (10.2%), criminal justice and fire protection (8.3%), business management and administration (6.5%), English language and literature (6.4%), and psychology (5.8%).

³ For the full list of criteria, see [California Business and Professions Code Chapter 5.3 6450 \(c\) \(1\)-\(4\)](#)

Educational Supply

Community College Supply:

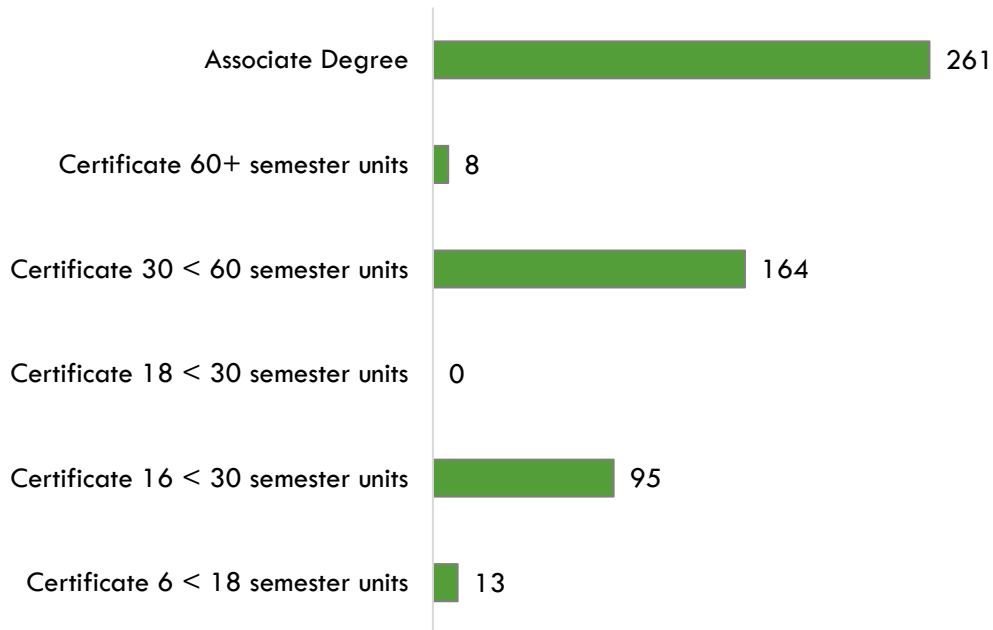
Exhibit 10 shows the three-year average number of awards conferred by community colleges in the related TOP code: Paralegal (1402.00). The colleges with the most completions in the region are Santa Ana, Pasadena, and Cerritos. Over the past 12 months, there was one other related program recommendation request from regional community colleges.

Exhibit 10: Regional Community College Awards (Certificates and Degrees), 2018-2021

TOP Code	Program	College	2018-2019 Awards	2019-2020 Awards	2020-2021 Awards	3-Year Award Average
1402.00	Paralegal	Cerritos	58	60	56	58
		Compton	2	0	0	1
		East LA	0	41	31	24
		El Camino	39	31	42	37
		LA City	25	34	43	34
		LA Mission	35	24	36	32
		LA Southwest	1	0	0	0
		LA Trade	2	7	5	5
		Mt San Antonio	43	42	63	49
		Pasadena	69	49	68	62
		West LA	30	24	38	30
		LA Subtotal	304	312	382	332
		Coastline	58	60	48	55
		Fullerton	39	49	76	55
		Irvine	16	32	26	25
		Santa Ana	62	72	86	74
		OC Subtotal	175	213	236	209
Supply Total/Average			479	525	618	541

Exhibit 11 shows the annual average community college awards by type from 2018-19 through 2020-21. Nearly half of the awards are for associate degrees, followed by certificates between 30 and less than 60 semester units.

Exhibit 11: Annual Average Community College Awards by Type, 2018-2021



Community College Student Outcomes:

Exhibit 12 shows the Strong Workforce Program (SWP) metrics for paralegal programs at Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) the Orange County Region, and California. Of the 1,316 paralegal students in the 2020-21 academic year, 40% (529) attended a RSCCD college.

RSCCD students that exited paralegal programs in the 2019-20 academic year had similar median annual earnings (\$46,098) compared to all paralegal students in Orange County (\$46,276). Both figures are higher than the median annual earnings throughout the state (\$41,738).

Exhibit 12: Paralegal (1402.00) Strong Workforce Program Metrics, 2020-21⁴

SWP Metric	RSCCD	OC Region	California
SWP Students	529	1,316	9,917
SWP Students Who Earned 9 or More Career Education Units in the District in a Single Year	38%	38%	40%
SWP Students Who Completed a Noncredit CTE or Workforce Preparation Course	Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data	80%
SWP Students Who Earned a Degree or Certificate or Attained Apprenticeship Journey Status	48	144	886
SWP Students Who Transferred to a Four-Year Postsecondary Institution (2019-20)	10	46	566
SWP Students with a Job Closely Related to Their Field of Study (2018-19)	73%	81%	74%

⁴ All SWP metrics are for 2019-20 unless otherwise noted.

SWP Metric	RSCCD	OC Region	California
Median Annual Earnings for SWP Exiting Students (2019-20)	\$46,098 (\$22.16)	\$46,276 (\$22.25)	\$41,738 (\$20.07)
Median Change in Earnings for SWP Exiting Students (2019-20)	51%	29%	21%
SWP Exiting Students Who Attained the Living Wage (2019-20)	54%	53%	53%

Non-Community College Supply:

For a comprehensive regional supply analysis, it is also important to consider the supply from other institutions in the region that provide training programs for *paralegals and legal assistants*. Exhibit 13 shows the annual and three-year average number of awards conferred by these institutions in the related Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Codes: Legal Assistant/Paralegal. Due to different data collection periods, the most recent three-year period of available data is from 2017 to 2020. Between 2017 and 2020, non-community college institutions in the region conferred an average of 52 awards annually in related training programs.

Exhibit 13: Regional Non-Community College Awards, 2017-2020

CIP Code	Program	College	2017-2018 Awards	2018-2019 Awards	2019-2020 Awards	3-Year Award Average
22.0302	Legal Assistant/ Paralegal	Abraham Lincoln University	2	5	6	4
		Brandman University	1	8	14	8
		Downey Adult School	0	6	12	6
		Fremont College	26	21	20	22
		North-West College-Van Nuys	0	0	0	0
		Platt College-Anaheim	0	0	0	0
		Platt College-Los Angeles	8	0	0	3
		South Coast College	14	4	10	9
		University of Antelope Valley	0	0	0	0
		University of La Verne	0	0	1	0
Supply Total/Average			51	44	63	52

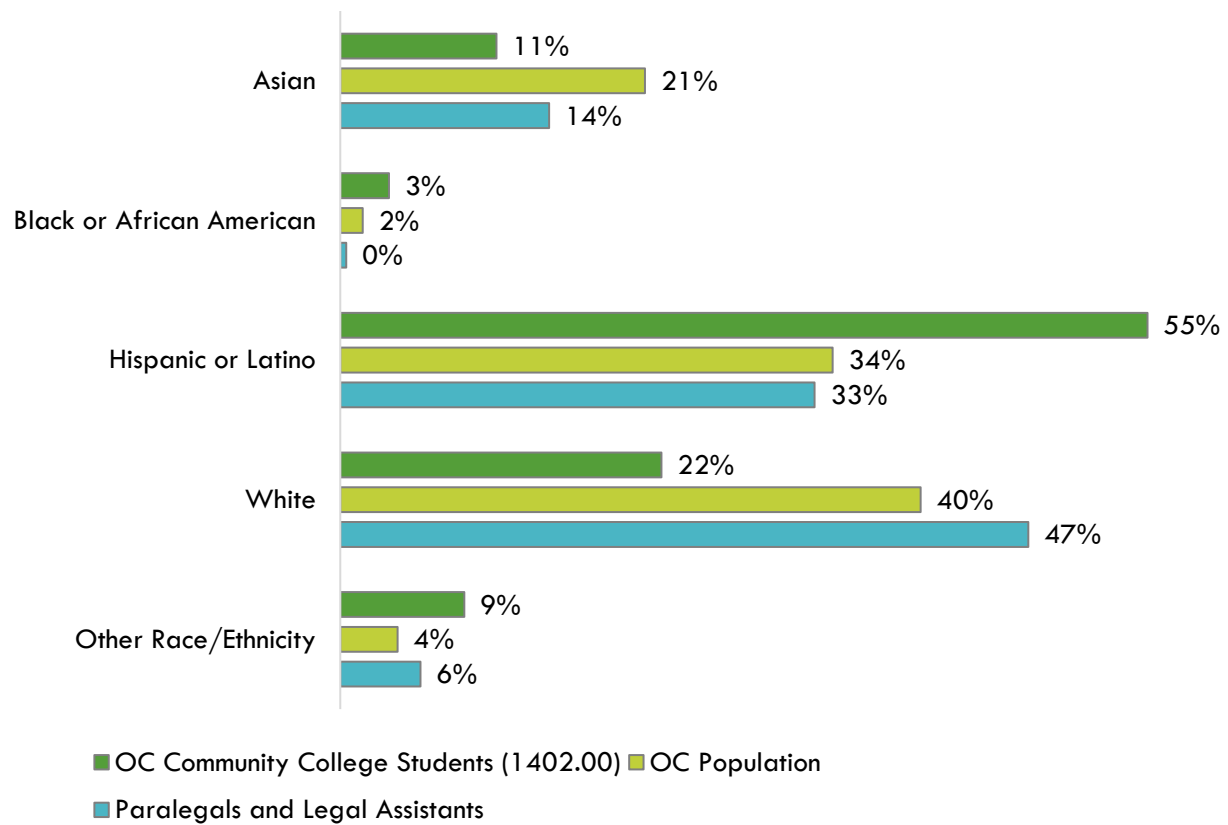
Regional Demographics

This section analyzes demographic data for Orange County community college students enrolled in paralegal programs compared to the OC population, as well occupational data, for the purpose of identifying potential diversity and equity issues that can be addressed by community college programs.

Ethnicity:

Exhibit 14 shows the ethnicity of Orange County community college students enrolled in paralegal programs compared to the overall Orange County population, as well as *paralegals and legal assistants*. Notably, 55% of paralegal students are Hispanic or Latino, which is significantly higher than the population (34%) and *paralegals and legal assistants* (33%). Conversely, 22% of paralegal students are white, which is significantly lower than the population (40%) and *paralegals and legal assistants* (47%).

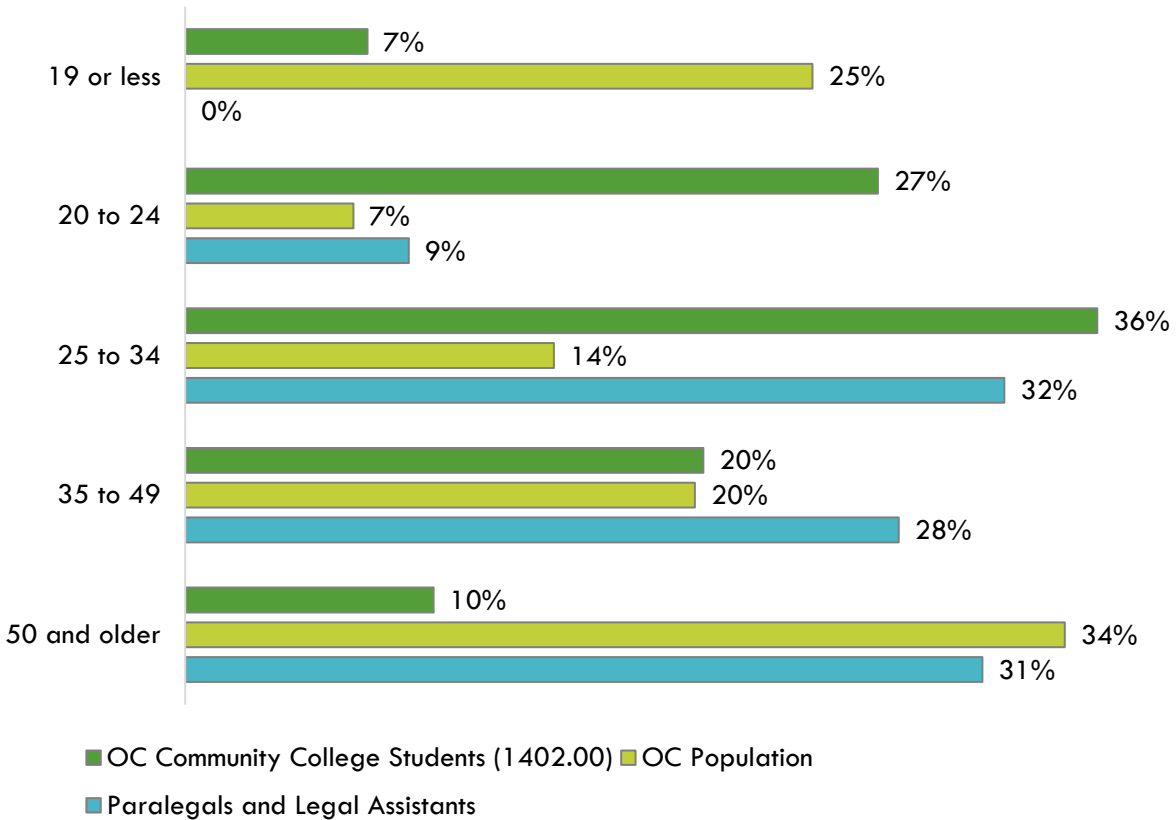
Exhibit 14: Program and County Demographics by Ethnicity



Age:

Exhibit 14 shows the age of Orange County community college students enrolled in paralegal programs compared to the overall Orange County population, as well as *paralegals and legal assistants*. Notably, 35% of community college paralegal students are 25 to 34 which is similar to *paralegals and legal assistants* (32%) but significantly higher than the population (14%). Additionally, 34% of community college paralegal students are 24 or less, which is similar to the population (32%), but significantly higher than *paralegals and legal assistants* (9%).

Exhibit 14: Program and County Demographics by Age

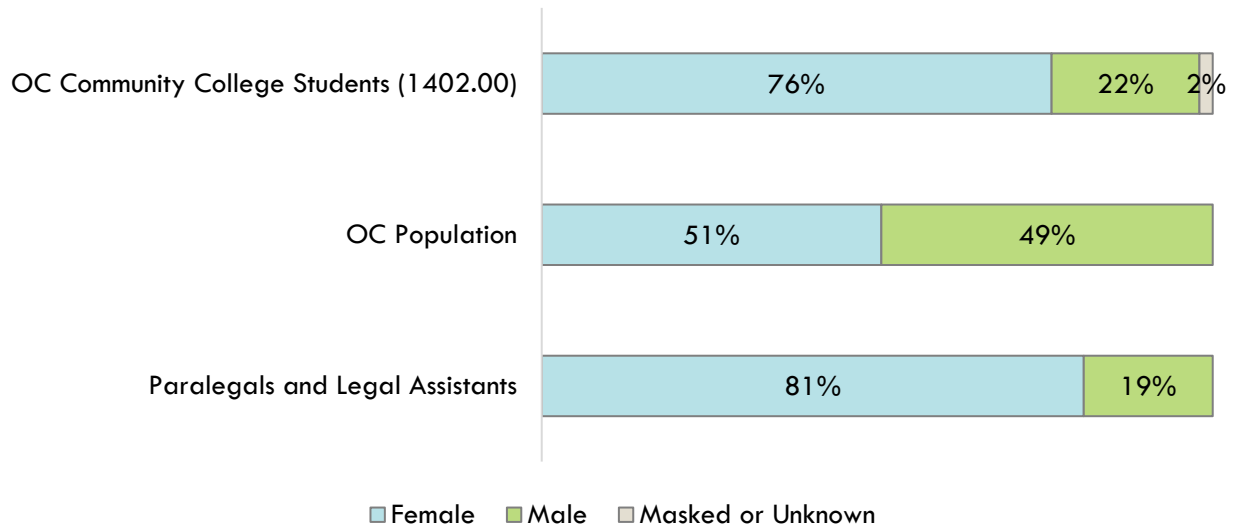


Sex:

Exhibit 15 shows the sex of Orange County community college students enrolled in paralegal programs compared to the overall Orange County population as well as *paralegals and legal assistants*.

Though the Orange County population is split nearly evenly between men and women, the overwhelming majority of paralegal students (76%) and *paralegals and legal assistants* (81%) are women.

Exhibit 15: Program and County Demographics by Sex



Appendix A: Methodology A

The OC COE prepared this report by analyzing data from occupations and education programs. Occupational data is derived from Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm that consolidates data from the California Employment Development Department (EDD), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and other government agencies. Program supply data is drawn from two systems: Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP).

Using a TOP-SOC crosswalk, the OC COE identified middle-skill jobs for which programs within these TOP codes train. Middle-skill jobs include:

- All occupations that require an educational requirement of some college, associate degree or apprenticeship;
- All occupations that require a bachelor's degree, but also have more than one-third of their existing labor force with an educational attainment of some college or associate degree; or
- All occupations that require a high school diploma or equivalent or no formal education, but also require short- to long-term on-the-job training where multiple community colleges have existing programs.

The OC COE determined labor market supply for an occupation or SOC code by analyzing the number of program completers or awards in a related TOP or CIP code. The COE developed a "supply table" with this information, which is the source of the program supply data for this report. TOP code data comes from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart (datamart.cccco.edu) and CIP code data comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data), also known as IPEDS. TOP is a system of numerical codes used at the state level to collect and report information on California community college programs and courses throughout the state that have similar outcomes. CIP codes are a taxonomy of academic disciplines at institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada. Institutions outside of the California Community College system do not use TOP codes in their reporting systems.

Data included in this analysis represent the labor market demand for relevant positions most closely related to the proposed program as expressed by the requesting college in consultation with the OC COE. Traditional labor market information was used to show current and projected employment based on data trends, as well as annual average awards granted by regional community colleges. Real-time labor market information captures job post advertisements for occupations relevant to the field of study which can signal demand and show what employers are looking for in potential employees, but is not a perfect measure of the quantity of open positions.

All representations have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. The most recent data available at the time of the analysis was examined; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.

Appendix B: Data Sources

Data Type	Source
Occupational Projections, Wages, and Job Postings	<p>Traditional labor market information data is sourced from Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm. Lightcast occupational employment data are based on final Lightcast industry data and final Lightcast staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics and the American Community Survey. For more information, see https://lightcast.io/</p>
Living Wage	<p>The living wage is derived from the Insight Center’s California Family Needs Calculator, which measures the income necessary for an individual of family to afford basic expenses. The data assesses the cost of housing, food, child care, health care, transportation, and taxes. For more information, see: https://insightced.org/family-needs-calculator/</p> <p>The living wage for one adult in Orange County is \$20.63 per hour (\$42,910.40 annually). This figure is used by the CCCCCO to calculate the percentage of students that attained the regional living wage.</p>
Typical Education and Training Requirements, and Educational Attainment	<p>The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides information about education and training requirements for hundreds of occupations. BLS uses a system to assign categories for entry-level education, work experience in a related occupation, and typical on-the-job training to each occupation for which BLS publishes projections data. For more information, see https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm</p>
Emerging Occupation Descriptions, Additional Education Requirements, and Employer Preferences	<p>The O*NET database includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities, and interests associated with occupations. For more information, see https://www.onetonline.org/help/online/</p>
Educational Supply	<p>The CCCCCO Data Mart provides information about students, courses, student services, outcomes and faculty and staff. For more information, see: https://datamart.cccco.edu</p> <p>The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Integrated Data System (IPEDS) collects data on the number of postsecondary awards earned (completions). For more information, see https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components/7/completions</p>
Student Metrics and Demographics	<p>LaunchBoard, a statewide data system supported by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and hosted by Cal-PASS Plus, provides data on progress, success, employment, and earnings outcomes for California community college students. For more information, see: https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Home.aspx</p>

Data Type	Source
Population and Occupation Demographics	<p>The Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) is the premier source for detailed population and housing information. For more information, see: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs</p> <p>Data is sourced from IPUMS USA, a database providing access to ACS and other Census Bureau data products. For more information, see: https://usa.ipums.org/usa/about.shtml</p>

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