

A Snapshot of Occupational Licensing in Mississippi

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1: Knee Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation, West Virginia University

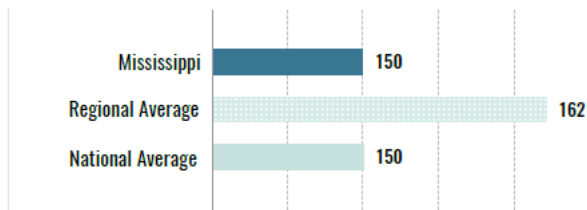
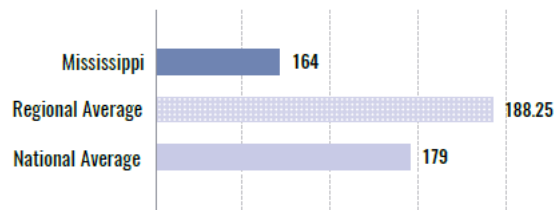
2: Troy University, Alabama

Occupational licensing makes it illegal to work in an occupation before meeting state-mandated entry requirements that often include minimum levels of education and training, paying fees to the state, and passing exams. Nationally, 21% of workers are licensed.¹

Licensing requirements for the same profession vary significantly across states. The 2023 State Occupational Licensing Index (SOLI) ranks states by the number of occupations that are licensed.² The SOLI database focuses on 331 occupations that are available in the Knee Center licensing database.³

Mississippi's SOLI ranking

In the 2023 SOLI, Mississippi ranks 41st nationally (with 1st being the most burdensome). Mississippi makes it illegal to work in 164 of the 331 occupations examined. This is 15 less occupations than the national average of 179, but 17 more than Kansas—the state with the fewest legal barriers (147) to working nationally.



Uniquely licensed occupations in Mississippi

Among the 164 occupations that Mississippi establishes minimum entry requirements to begin working, there are 14 occupations that are licensed in 20 states or fewer nationally. Table 1

¹ Data on certifications and licenses (CPS), Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/certifications-and-licenses.htm>, January 25, 2023.

² Noah Trudeau and Edward Timmons. State Occupational Licensing Index 2023. Archbridge Institute, <https://www.archbridgeinstitute.org/state-occupational-licensing-index-2023/>, March 20, 2023.

³ <https://csorwvu.com/>

provides a full list of these occupations and there is also a separate excel file with full details for interested readers.

Mississippi is one of only 9 states in the country to issue a separate license for four occupations: certified sewage/septic evaluator, home improvement contractors, hypnotists, and art therapists. Mississippi is also one of only 13 states to license soil testers and one of 15 to license foresters.

Table 1: Uniquely licensed occupations in Mississippi

Occupation	Total States
Certified Sewage/Septic Evaluator	9
Home Improvement Contractor	9
Psychotherapy/Hypnotherapist/Hypnotist	9
Art Therapist	9
General Commercial Contractor	10
Soil Tester/Classifier	13
Dialysis Technician	14
Chiropractor Assistant	15
Forester	15
Geologist in Training	15
Medical Clinical Laboratory Technician	15
Professional Wrestler	15
Polygraph Examiner Intern/Trainee	17
Behavior Analyst Assistant	20

Sources: State Occupational Licensing Index 2023 Master File and Knee Center Occupational Licensing Database.

Why Licensing Reform is Important

By making it illegal to work in 164 occupations, and uniquely licensing at least 14 occupations, Mississippi is imposing significant cost on its citizens.

Existing economic research suggests that occupational licensing raises prices by as much as 16%.⁴ Licensing also reduces employment by as much as 27% by making it more difficult to begin working in licensed professions.⁵ Nationally, it is estimated that occupational licensing results in 2 million fewer jobs being created each year.⁶

⁴ President Obama White House, Occupational Licensing: A Framework for Policymakers, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/licensing_report_final_nonembargo.pdf, July 2015.

⁵ Peter Blair and Bobby Chung, (2019), How Much of Barrier to Entry is Occupational Licensing?. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 57: 919-943

⁶ Evgeny Vorotnikov and Morris Kleiner, (2018), At What Cost? State and National Estimates of the Economic Costs of Occupational Licensing., Institute for Justice, <https://ij.org/report/at-what-cost/#:~:text=By%20a%20conservative%20measure%20of,reach%20%24184%20billion%20or%20more.>

Although licensing may have historically resulted in some benefits to consumers⁷, there is little evidence that it is helping consumers in the present. Recent work finds little evidence that occupational licensing is improving the quality of services provided to consumers in the US and Europe.⁸

In summary, Mississippi currently places unique restrictions on its citizens to begin working. These restrictions are very costly and generate little to no measurable benefits for consumers. Following the lead of the majority of other states and choosing less restrictive ways to regulate and protect consumers would be in the best interest of Mississippi citizens.

⁷ D. Mark Anderson, Ryan Brown, Kerwin Kofi Charles, and Daniel I. Rees, (2020), Occupational Licensing and Maternal Health: Evidence from Early Midwifery Laws., *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(11): 4337-4383.

⁸ Morris Kleiner and Maria Koumenta (Eds.). (2022). *Grease or grit? International case studies of occupational licensing and its effects on efficiency and quality*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.