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## Welder Shortage





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Over 50% of products manufactured in the US require welding, so to say it is vitally important to the economy is an understatement.

Sadly, with an ageing workforce, the US has a big problem; an overwhelming shortage of welders. The average age of an employee in the US is 42, but in the welding industry, it is 55. Because of this, the US will need 375,000 welding professionals by 2023 to fill job openings. This shortage comes through decades of deindustrialization, overseas manufacturing, and a preference by young adults to go into knowledge-based work as they finish school, not trades. This problem will continue as the number of highly skilled professionals leaving the industry outweighs those entering.

## The Impact of The Shortage

As the US population grows, infrastructure and manufacturing power is essential to support its growth. A larger population means a greater demand for new developments. Over time, buildings depreciate, so there is a need to improve ageing infrastructure. Cars, planes, and modes of transport all depreciate, frequently needing to be repaired or replaced. With an infinite pool of work needing completion, a significant strain on the workforce results in longer lead times, production problems, and higher costs. It harms businesses as their output levels are limited, which impacts consumers as it slows down projects.

## Why Welding?

Welding has not been a first choice for school leavers for a long time, contributing to the shortage. As new industries have started, appealing job opportunities have opened, and young people perceive these as being more exciting. Additionally, over the years, there has been a lot of misinformation about welding salaries and career opportunities, placing negative light on the profession. In truth, the average salary for a welder in the US is \$40,000 (£32,023) compared to a national average wage of just \$31,000 (£24,817). Those who have undergone higher academic studies, such as a university degree, can expect to make \$55,000 (£44,031) per annum. Although higher than welders, there is a price tag with time and actual course costs.

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A 4-year university degree, completed in or out of state, can cost over \$100,000 (£80,058) compared to a welding tuition school which starts from only \$5,250 (£4203) and runs for 3-7 months. For a similar wage, welders accrue far less debt and enter the workforce faster; like any job, driven individuals can progress into higher-paying roles through work experience and further training. The perception that welding is monotonous and lacks career development could not be further from the truth.

You can weld anywhere in the world, on rigs, underwater, nuclear plants, industrial pipelines, and on military bases, with annual salaries between \$160,000 (£128,092) and \$200,000 (£160,116) on offer. In comparison, for those who have completed a bachelor's degree, approximately 53% remain unemployed or working in a role that does not require the expensive qualification they have studied for.

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**In conclusion,** because of lower training costs, the variety of work available, and a shortage of welders around the world, welding is an industry worth considering.

**Contact a local welding training academy or talk to industry professionals.**



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