



ASCP BOARD OF CERTIFICATION

Advancing Careers: Preferences and Priorities of Credentialed Medical Laboratory Technicians Who Pursue Additional Credentials

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Objective/Hypothesis

This study examines how ASCP Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) Medical Laboratory Technicians (MLT(ASCP)) attain additional credentials, including Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS(ASCP)) credentials, facilitating career advancement, increased compensation, and expanded responsibilities. Exploration of attaining additional credentials beyond MLT(ASCP) provides potential for greater mobility, higher wages, and enhanced roles. This is particularly relevant in addressing the ongoing workforce shortage and improving retention, as opportunities for professional growth through credential stacking (i.e., attaining multiple credentials) help attract individuals to the field, support career longevity, and reduce turnover by incentivizing continued employment and development within the profession.

Description of Methods

Examination volume trends and credential stacking data from ASCP BOC were analyzed alongside wage surveys.

Figure A: MLS(ASCP) & MLT(ASCP) Examination Volumes 2014-2024

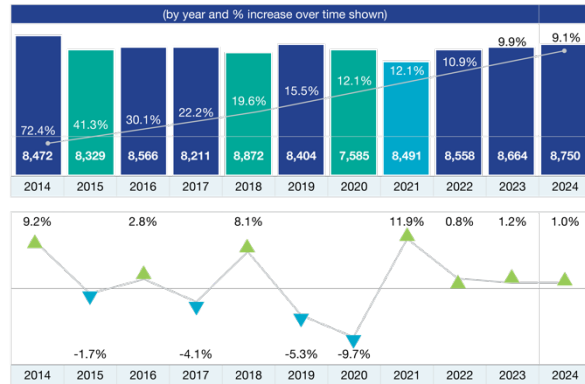
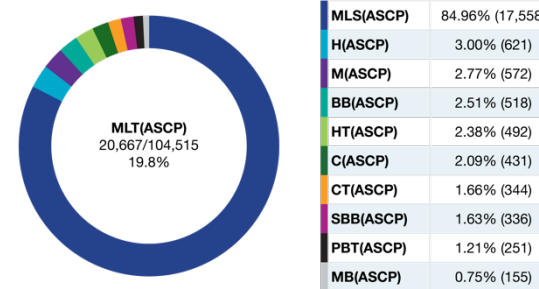


Figure B: MLT(ASCP) - Initial Credential & Additional Credentials Attained



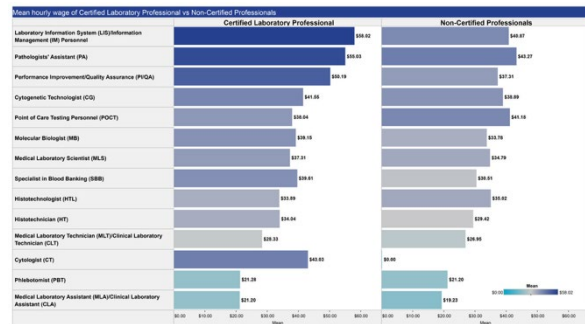
Results/Discussion

From 2019 to 2020, examination volumes declined by 15% (see Figure A), reflecting the impact of COVID-19. However, 2021 saw an 11.9% increase, demonstrating renewed interest. This trend continued into 2024, indicating a sustained drive toward credentialing. Among initial MLT(ASCP) holders, 19.8% pursued another ASCP BOC credential, with 84.96% (of that 19.8% cohort) attaining MLS(ASCP) (See Figure B).

The findings highlight career progression benefits. Credentialed MLTs earn a mean hourly wage of \$37.31, compared to \$28.33 for MLTs (see Figure C). Beyond salary, professionals seek MLS(ASCP) credentials to expand skillsets and advance into supervisory and specialized roles, aligning with workforce trends emphasizing education and development.

This pathway from MLT to MLS is particularly relevant given persistent workforce shortages and the need to bolster advanced practice capacity. Studies indicate that each additional credential significantly increases the odds of career advancement, with Chiou & Jia (2022) reporting a 70% average increase in advancement odds per added credential. Moreover, the progression from MLT to MLS often provides access to graduate-level education and specialty credentials—essential competencies as laboratory roles become more complex and interprofessional. However, the transition is not without challenges. A qualitative study by Anderson (2016) revealed systemic barriers for MLTs pursuing baccalaureate degrees, including credit transfer issues, financial hardship, lack of employer support, and insufficient articulation pathways. Despite these obstacles, MLTs who overcome such barriers report improved employment flexibility, greater leadership opportunities, and enhanced professional recognition—all of which are critical for retention and for sustaining a competent and patient-centric laboratory workforce.

Figure C: Mean Hourly Wage by Occupational Title & Certification Status (2023 ASCP Wage Survey)



- 641,000+ credentials attained worldwide since 1928
- 29,000+ ASCPⁱ credentials attained since 2006
- 55,000+ credential holders with >= 2 credentials attained
- Over 113,000 MLT(ASCP) credentials earned since 1969

Conclusion

These results affirm the value of ASCP BOC credentials, supported by ANAB (ANSI National Accreditation Board) based on ISO17024 standards, as a powerful agent of workforce advancement. ANAB accreditation ensures that ASCP BOC's credentialing processes meet the highest standards of quality, fairness, and global recognition, strengthening trust among employers, regulators, and the public.

Credential stacking fosters specialization, equipping laboratory professionals with the expertise needed for high-quality patient care and provides an avenue to keep abreast of advancing technologies. Additionally, ASCP BOC actively engages in workforce advocacy and disseminates knowledge through publications, reinforcing its industry leadership. Recognized as the preferred credentialing body, ASCP BOC credentials provide professionals with career credibility and instill patient trust in laboratory services. Future research should explore strategies to reduce barriers and enhance support systems that promote the educational advancement of MLTs.



Learn More About ANAB (ANSI National Accreditation Board) Accreditation

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