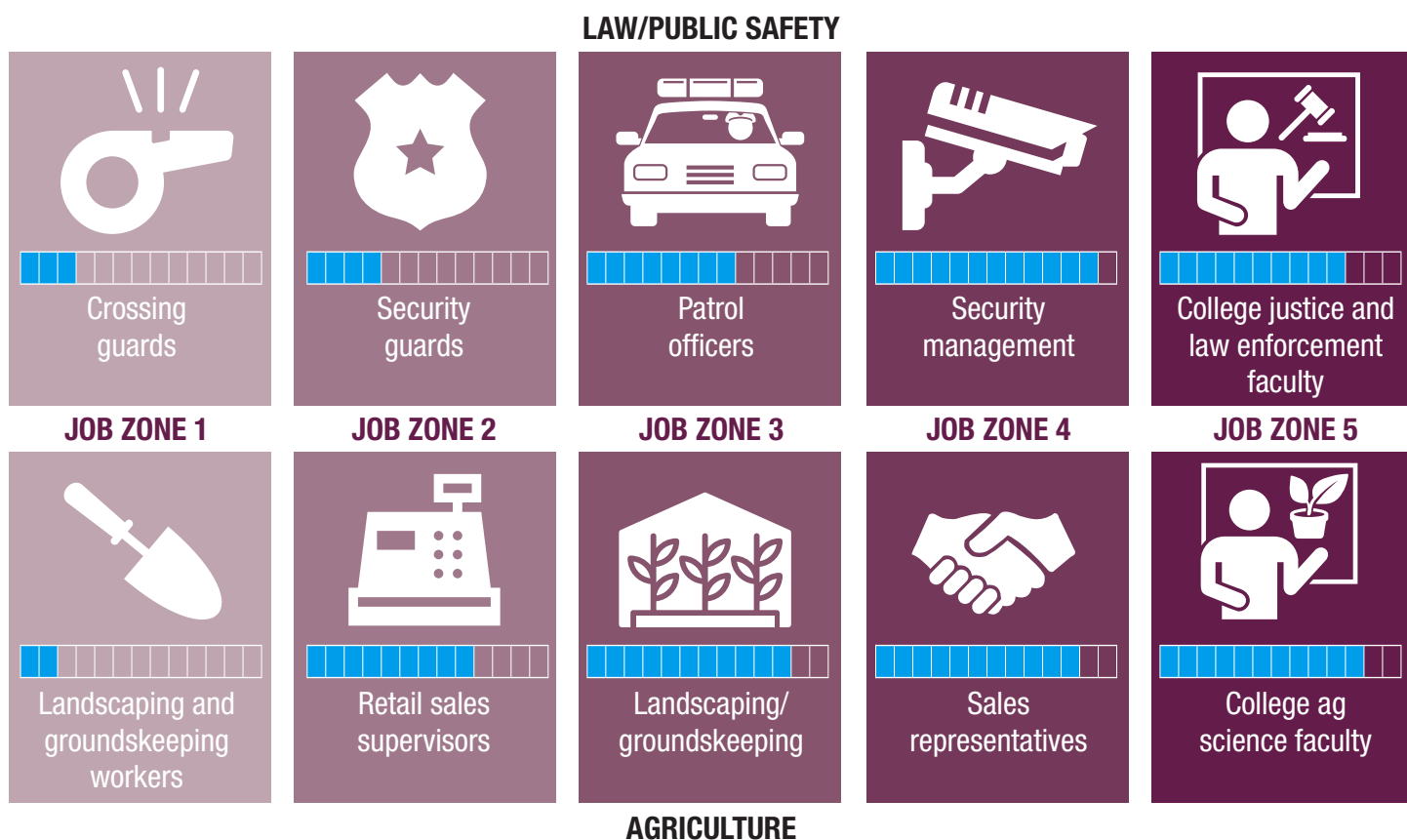


Being Able to Think Critically and Solve Complex Problems Is Especially Important for Higher-Level Jobs

Researchers from the Center on Education Policy identified 13 knowledge areas, skills, abilities, and work styles (KSAWs) from the Department of Labor’s O*NET database that could be linked with the deeper learning competency *think critically and solve complex problems*. In general, a greater share of these 13 KSAWs are important for occupations requiring higher levels of education, experience, and training (O*NET job zones 3, 4, and 5) than for those requiring lower levels (zones 1 and 2).

For example, someone pursuing a career in law and public safety might start out as a crossing guard, a zone 1 job for which just 3 of the 13 KSAWs linked to critical thinking and complex problem solving are important. If, after gaining more experience and training, this hypothetical employee eventually took a zone 4 job in security management, 12 of these 13 KSAWs would become important.

Number of KSAWs linked to thinking critically and solving complex problems that are important for occupations in two hypothetical career paths



As another example, just 2 of the 13 KSAWs linked to the deeper learning competency *thinking critically and solving complex problems* would be important for an entry-level worker in landscaping and groundskeeping. But if that employee followed an increasingly demanding career path that included positions as a nursery and greenhouse manager or a college teacher of agricultural science, 11 of the 13 KSAWs would become important.