



OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS REVISITED

Exploring Employment for Sub-Baccalaureate Workers Across Metro Areas and Over Time

DURHAM-CHAPEL HILL, NC

New research explores the economic opportunity available in 121 of the largest metro areas in the U.S. The report defines **opportunity employment** as jobs accessible to workers without a bachelor's degree and typically paying above the national annual median wage (\$37,690), adjusted up or down to reflect the local cost of living. Occupations characterized by a high level of opportunity employment are called **opportunity occupations**. Nationally, the research finds that 21.6 percent of total employment can be classified as opportunity employment — a figure that varies greatly across the metro areas analyzed. In this region and nationally, the largest opportunity occupations represent a true cross section of the jobs available in today's economy.

SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION AND WAGES



89 RANK OUT OF 121 METRO AREAS

TOP 10 OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN 2017

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| <p>1 REGISTERED NURSES
Annual Median Wage: \$64,700
Opportunity Employment: 8,000</p> | <p>2 SECRETARIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS
Annual Median Wage: \$39,600
Opportunity Employment: 4,900</p> |
| <p>3 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR WORKERS
Annual Median Wage: \$39,800
Opportunity Employment: 2,500</p> | <p>4 BOOKKEEPING, ACCOUNTING, AND AUDITING CLERKS
Annual Median Wage: \$43,300
Opportunity Employment: 1,800</p> |
| <p>5 SUPERVISORS OF RETAIL SALES WORKERS
Annual Median Wage: \$39,300
Opportunity Employment: 1,700</p> | <p>6 HEAVY AND TRACTOR-TRAILER TRUCK DRIVERS
Annual Median Wage: \$43,000
Opportunity Employment: 1,500</p> |
| <p>7 COMPUTER USER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS
Annual Median Wage: \$50,700
Opportunity Employment: 1,300</p> | <p>8 EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES AND EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS
Annual Median Wage: \$54,700
Opportunity Employment: 1,300</p> |
| <p>9 AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNICIANS AND MECHANICS
Annual Median Wage: \$39,900
Opportunity Employment: 1,100</p> | <p>10 ELECTRICIANS
Annual Median Wage: \$44,200
Opportunity Employment: 1,000</p> |

Sources: Authors' calculations using data from BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (May 2017), Burning Glass Technologies (2015–2017), BEA Regional Price Parities (2016), and American Community Survey Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (2012–2016). Values are rounded to the nearest 100. Occupations are ranked on unrounded opportunity employment values.

For more information, read "Opportunity Occupations Revisited: Exploring Employment for Sub-Baccalaureate Workers Across Metro Areas and Over Time" by Kyle Fee, Keith Wardrip, and Lisa Nelson and published by the Federal Reserve Banks of Cleveland and Philadelphia, 2019 (available at www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development/publications/special-reports). The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Federal Reserve Banks of Philadelphia, Cleveland, Atlanta, or the Federal Reserve System.



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