### Opportunity Occupations Revisited

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

**Akron, OH**

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.

### Top 10 Opportunity Occupations in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Annual Median Wage</th>
<th>Opportunity Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$69,200</td>
<td>5,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>$34,300</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$42,600</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maintenance and Repair Workers</td>
<td>$40,300</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses</td>
<td>$40,700</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>$37,100</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Construction Laborers</td>
<td>$45,800</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing</td>
<td>$63,300</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>$38,400</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>General and Operations Managers</td>
<td>$103,200</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Share of Employment by Education and Wages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Employment Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Employment</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree Required</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-Wage Employment</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rank Out of 121 Metro Areas:** 16

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**Sources:** Authors’ calculations using data from BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (May 2017), Burning Glass Technologies (2015–2017), BLS 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.

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**TOP 10 OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN 2017**

1. **REGISTERED NURSES**
   - Annual Median Wage: $64,100
   - Opportunity Employment: 16,400

2. **HEAVY AND TRACTOR-TRAILER TRUCK DRIVERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $43,200
   - Opportunity Employment: 12,700

3. **SECRETARIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $36,200
   - Opportunity Employment: 10,900

4. **MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR WORKERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $40,200
   - Opportunity Employment: 10,500

5. **BOOKKEEPING, ACCOUNTING, AND AUDITING CLERKS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $39,100
   - Opportunity Employment: 8,000

6. **LICENSED PRACTICAL AND LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSES**
   - Annual Median Wage: $45,100
   - Opportunity Employment: 6,900

7. **SUPERVISORS OF RETAIL SALES WORKERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $36,600
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,200

8. **SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WHOLESALE AND MANUFACTURING**
   - Annual Median Wage: $62,700
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,600

9. **ELECTRICIANS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $47,300
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,100

10. **CONSTRUCTION LABORERS**
    - Annual Median Wage: $38,300
    - Opportunity Employment: 6,900

11. **SALES REPRESENTATIVES, CASH AND ORDERS**
    - Annual Median Wage: $44,600
    - Opportunity Employment: 6,600

12. **HOSPITAL ORDERLY**
    - Annual Median Wage: $33,100
    - Opportunity Employment: 6,500

13. **HEALTH CARE Supporting Service Worker**
    - Annual Median Wage: $33,100
    - Opportunity Employment: 6,500

**SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION AND WAGES**

- 29.1% Opportunity Employment
- 26.3% Bachelor’s Degree Required
- 44.6% Lower-Wage Employment

**OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS REVISITED**

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

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Top 10 Opportunity Occupations in 2017

1. Registered Nurses
   - Annual Median Wage: $67,400
   - Opportunity Employment: 17,400

2. Customer Service Representatives
   - Annual Median Wage: $34,500
   - Opportunity Employment: 13,300

3. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
   - Annual Median Wage: $35,700
   - Opportunity Employment: 13,000

4. Maintenance and Repair Workers
   - Annual Median Wage: $39,400
   - Opportunity Employment: 10,000

5. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
   - Annual Median Wage: $41,600
   - Opportunity Employment: 9,800

6. Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks
   - Annual Median Wage: $38,600
   - Opportunity Employment: 8,200

7. Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
   - Annual Median Wage: $45,700
   - Opportunity Employment: 6,900

8. Construction Laborers
   - Annual Median Wage: $47,900
   - Opportunity Employment: 6,600

9. Machinists
   - Annual Median Wage: $40,100
   - Opportunity Employment: 6,200

10. Medical Secretaries
    - Annual Median Wage: $34,600
    - Opportunity Employment: 5,700

Sources: Authors’ calculations using data from BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (May 2017), Burning Glass Technologies (2015–2017), BIE 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 by unrounded opportunity employment values.

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### Columbus, OH

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<td>8</td>
<td>Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers</td>
<td>$36,800</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>$44,800</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers</td>
<td>$72,900</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Share of Employment by Education and Wages

- Opportunity Employment: 25.3%
- Bachelor’s Degree Required: 28.8%
- Lower-Wage Employment: 45.9%

### Rank

47 out of 121 metro areas

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<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>$38,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinists</td>
<td>$45,400</td>
<td>2,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers</td>
<td>$34,400</td>
<td>2,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>$39,200</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics</td>
<td>$35,100</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
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**LEXINGTON-FAYETTE, KY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Annual Median Wage</th>
<th>Opportunity Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assemblers and Fabricators</td>
<td>$45,800</td>
<td>14,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$61,400</td>
<td>5,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$41,300</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>$36,500</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>$37,100</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing</td>
<td>$47,000</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>$45,300</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP 10 OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN 2017**

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### Top 10 Opportunity Occupations in 2017

1. **Registered Nurses**
   - Annual Median Wage: $63,200
   - Opportunity Employment: 18,100

2. **Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers**
   - Annual Median Wage: $45,000
   - Opportunity Employment: 14,200

3. **Maintenance and Repair Workers**
   - Annual Median Wage: $37,100
   - Opportunity Employment: 10,600

4. **Construction Laborers**
   - Annual Median Wage: $38,600
   - Opportunity Employment: 9,700

5. **Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks**
   - Annual Median Wage: $36,700
   - Opportunity Employment: 7,700

6. **Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses**
   - Annual Median Wage: $44,600
   - Opportunity Employment: 6,000

7. **Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers**
   - Annual Median Wage: $38,000
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,700

8. **Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics**
   - Annual Median Wage: $37,200
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,800

9. **Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing**
   - Annual Median Wage: $63,000
   - Opportunity Employment: 5,100

10. **Maintenance and Repair Workers**
    - Annual Median Wage: $37,100
    - Opportunity Employment: 10,600

### Share of Employment by Education and Wages

- **25.0%** Opportunity Employment
- **27.1%** Bachelor’s Degree Required
- **47.9%** Lower-Wage Employment

**55** Rank out of 121 Metro Areas

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<td>Machinists</td>
<td>$55,900</td>
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<td>1,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Laborers</td>
<td>$35,800</td>
<td>1,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpers--Production Workers</td>
<td>$34,400</td>
<td>1,800</td>
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