Opportunity occupations are occupations that are generally accessible to workers without a bachelor’s degree and that pay more than the national median wage ($41,950 in 2020), adjusted for local cost-of-living differences. They offer economic opportunity for middle-skill workers—those who have finished a high school degree but have not completed college—and for workers in certain occupations who do not have a high school degree.

**What Are Opportunity Occupations?**

Opportunity occupations are occupations that are generally accessible to workers without a bachelor’s degree and that pay more than the national median wage ($41,950 in 2020), adjusted for local cost-of-living differences. They offer economic opportunity for middle-skill workers—those who have finished a high school degree but have not completed college—and for workers in certain occupations who do not have a high school degree.

**What Are the Jobs?**

**Top 10 Opportunity Occupations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Annual Wage</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$66K</td>
<td>41,690 employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$42K</td>
<td>20,610 employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers</td>
<td>$64K</td>
<td>12,700 employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers</td>
<td>$52K</td>
<td>11,840 employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Secretaries and Admin. Assistants</td>
<td>$42K</td>
<td>11,320 employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>$46K/930 employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>$52K/10,810 employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers</td>
<td>$42K/10,700 employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers</td>
<td>$71K/9,410 employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters</td>
<td>$57K/8,710 employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where Are the Jobs?

Selected Metropolitan Areas
Top Opportunity Occupations, Median Wage, and Number of Employed in 2020

New Orleans-Metairie
26.5%

of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

- Registered Nurses: 26.5% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $70K
  - Number of Employed: 14,290

- Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers: 10.3% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $42K
  - Number of Employed: 4,300

- Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses: 8.4% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $45K
  - Number of Employed: 3,970

- Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers: 8.1% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $50K
  - Number of Employed: 3,120

- Electricians: 5.1% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $52K
  - Number of Employed: 2,610

Monroe
32.3%

of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

- Registered Nurses: 32.3% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $65K
  - Number of Employed: 2,050

- Supervisors of Office and Admin. Workers: 12.3% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $46K
  - Number of Employed: 900

- Sales Representatives: 7.8% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $50K
  - Number of Employed: 590

- Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers: 5.4% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $51K
  - Number of Employed: 420

- Industrial Machinery Mechanics: 3.5% of workers employed
  - Median Wage: $55K
  - Number of Employed: 350

Opportunity Occupations in Louisiana

Distribution of Employment by Wages in 2020

- Lower Wage Employment: 43.8%
- Opportunity Employment: 33.1%
- Higher Wage, BA Degree Required: 23.0%
Educational Attainment in Louisiana

How Many Pursue Higher Education?

Educational Attainment for People over 25 (2019)

- Less than high school: 14.8%
- High school: 34%
- Some college, no degree: 20.9%
- Associate's degree: 6.2%
- Bachelor's degree: 15.7%
- Graduate or professional degree: 8.4%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE BETWEEN 25 AND 65 (2019)

- Less than high school: 12.8%
- High school: 6.5%
- Some college or associate's degree: 4.9%
- Bachelor's degree or higher: 2.4%

MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE OVER 25 (2019)

- Less than high school: $21.9K
- High school: $30.3K
- Some college or associate's degree: $34.5K
- Bachelor's degree: $50.0K
- Graduate or professional degree: $60.7K

Sources:
- US Bureau of Economic Analysis: Regional Price Parities (2020)
- US Census Bureau: American Community Survey: 2019 one-year estimates

For more information visit us at atlantafed.org/opportunityoccupationsmonitor

Follow the @AtlantaFed