Opportunity Occupations: Tennessee
Exploring Economic Opportunity for Workers in the Southeast

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
Median Annual Wage and Number of Employed in 2020

- **Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers** - $47K / 61,090 employed
- **Registered Nurses** - $62K / 61,040 employed
- **Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses** - $43K / 24,610 employed
- **Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers** - $57K / 17,570 employed
- **Electricians** - $52K / 12,610 employed
- **Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers** - $47K / 12,330 employed
- **Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers** - $47K / 10,190 employed
- **Food Service Managers** - $46K / 9,050 employed
- **Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers** - $63K / 8,970 employed
- **Machinists** - $44K / 8,910 employed
## Where Are the Jobs?

### Selected Metropolitan Areas

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

### Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin

28.1% of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Wage</th>
<th>Number of Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$65K</td>
<td>18,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$50K</td>
<td>17,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks</td>
<td>$43K</td>
<td>12,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers</td>
<td>$44K</td>
<td>8,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed and Practical Vocational Nurses</td>
<td>$46K</td>
<td>7,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chattanooga

33.1% of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Wage</th>
<th>Number of Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</td>
<td>$47K</td>
<td>7,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>$60K</td>
<td>6,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers</td>
<td>$58K</td>
<td>1,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics</td>
<td>$42K</td>
<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed and Practical Vocational Nurses</td>
<td>$44K</td>
<td>1,540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Opportunity Occupations in Tennessee

Distribution of Employment by Wages in 2020

- **44.4%** Lower Wage Employment
- **31.5%** Opportunity Employment
- **24.1%** Higher Wage, BA Degree Required
Educational Attainment in Tennessee

How Many Pursue Higher Education?

Educational Attainment for People over 25 (2019)

- Less than high school: 12.5%
- High school: 32.1%
- Some college, no degree: 20.7%
- Associate’s degree: 7.3%
- Bachelor’s degree: 17.2%
- Graduate or professional degree: 10.1%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE between 25 and 65 (2019)

- Less than high school: 9.1%
- High school: 5.8%
- Some college or associate’s degree: 4.2%
- Bachelor’s degree or higher: 2.2%

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

- Less than high school: $22.4K
- High school: $29.7K
- Some college or associate’s degree: $34.6K
- Bachelor’s degree: $49.2K
- Graduate or professional degree: $62.2K

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

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