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

- **$47K**
  Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
  61,090 employed
- **$62K**
  Registered Nurses
  61,040 employed
- **$43K**
  Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses
  24,610 employed
- **$57K**
  Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
  17,570 employed
- **$52K**
  Electricians
  12,610 employed
- **$47K**
  Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers
  12,630 employed
- **$46K**
  Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers
  10,190 employed
- **$46K**
  Food Service Managers
  9,050 employed
- **$63K**
  Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers
  8,970 employed
- **$44K**
  Machinists
  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

For more information visit us at atlantafed.org/opportunityoccupationsmonitor

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