



# OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS REVISITED

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

## WASHINGTON-ARLINGTON-ALEXANDRIA, DC-VA-MD-WV

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



**121** RANK OUT OF 121 METRO AREAS

### TOP 10 OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN 2017

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1 REGISTERED NURSES</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$78,300</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>26,900</b></p>   | <p><b>2 GENERAL AND OPERATIONS MANAGERS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$155,400</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>13,900</b></p>                         |
| <p><b>3 CARPENTERS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$47,200</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>13,300</b></p>  | <p><b>4 POLICE AND SHERIFF'S PATROL OFFICERS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$70,400</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>12,600</b></p>                     |
| <p><b>5 AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNICIANS AND MECHANICS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$49,500</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>12,600</b></p>              | <p><b>6 ELECTRICIANS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$57,000</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>10,900</b></p>   |
| <p><b>7 SUPERVISORS OF CONSTRUCTION TRADES AND EXTRACTION WORKERS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$70,900</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>10,600</b></p> | <p><b>8 LICENSED PRACTICAL AND LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSES</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$49,700</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>10,500</b></p>        |
| <p><b>9 BOOKKEEPING, ACCOUNTING, AND AUDITING CLERKS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$48,700</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>10,000</b></p>              | <p><b>10 SUPERVISORS OF OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WORKERS</b><br/>Annual Median Wage: <b>\$62,900</b><br/>Opportunity Employment: <b>9,600</b></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](http://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.



FEDERAL RESERVE BANK  
of CLEVELAND

