Opportunity occupations are occupations that are generally accessible to workers without a bachelor’s degree and that pay more than the national median wage ($37,690 in 2017), 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 2017

- Truck drivers: $40K, 60,350 employed
- Office & admin. supervisors: $51K, 36,400 employed
- Retail supervisors: $37K, 32,480 employed
- Maintenance & repair workers: $36K, 29,240 employed
- Bookkeeping & accounting clerks: $37K, 29,060 employed
- Licensed practical nurses: $38K, 24,000 employed
- Wholesale & manufacturing sales reps: $51K, 20,140 employed
- Production & operating supervisors: $54K, 17,950 employed
- Services sales reps: $44K, 17,060 employed
- Automotive service technicians: $38K, 13,510 employed
WHERE ARE THE JOBS?

SELECTED METROPOLITAN AREAS
TOP OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS, MEDIAN WAGE, AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYED IN 2017

NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON-MURFREESBORO-FRANKLIN

25.5% of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

- Truck drivers: $43K, 15,640
- Office & admin. supervisors: $55K, 12,980
- Bookkeeping & accounting clerks: $40K, 10,530
- Retail supervisors: $36K, 9,640
- Maintenance & repair workers: $37K, 8,570

CHATTANOOGA

26.5% of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

- Truck drivers: $35K, 8,750
- Office & admin. supervisors: $48K, 2,970
- Retail supervisors: $36K, 2,870
- Bookkeeping & accounting clerks: $36K, 2,430
- Maintenance & repair workers: $37K, 2,250

OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN TENNESSEE

DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT BY WAGES IN 2017

25.6% of workers are employed in opportunity occupations.

- 28.1% Low wage, low skill
- 0.3% Low-skill opportunity occupations
- 24.2% Middle skill, low wage
- 25.3% Middle-skill opportunity occupations
- 0.5% High skill, low wage
- 21.2% High skill, high wage
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN TENNESSEE

HOW MANY PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION?

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE OVER 25 (2017)

- 12.2% Less than high school
- 32.4% High school
- 20.8% Some college, no degree
- 7.2% Associate’s degree
- 17.2% Bachelor’s degree
- 10.1% Graduate or professional degree

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE BETWEEN 25 AND 65 (2017)

- 8.8% Less than high school
- 5.2% High school
- 3.9% Some college or associate’s degree
- 1.9% Bachelor’s degree or higher

MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE OVER 25 (2017)

- $21.8K Less than high school
- $28.6K High school
- $33.6K Some college or associate’s degree
- $46.8K Bachelor’s degree
- $60.2K Graduate or professional degree

For more information visit us at frbatlanta.org/opportunityoccupationsmonitor

Sources:
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis: Regional Price Parities (2016)
- U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey: 2017 one-year estimates