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.

**TOP 10 OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS IN 2017**

1. **HEAVY AND TRACTOR-TRAILER TRUCK DRIVERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $39,400
   - Opportunity Employment: 12,900

2. **REGISTERED NURSES**
   - Annual Median Wage: $61,700
   - Opportunity Employment: 8,300

3. **CARPENTERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $40,900
   - Opportunity Employment: 4,100

4. **MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR WORKERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $39,300
   - Opportunity Employment: 4,000

5. **BOOKKEEPING, ACCOUNTING, AND AUDITING CLERKS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $37,500
   - Opportunity Employment: 3,800

6. **ELECTRICIANS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $48,300
   - Opportunity Employment: 2,700

7. **SUPERVISORS OF OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WORKERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $52,800
   - Opportunity Employment: 2,300

8. **GENERAL AND OPERATIONS MANAGERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $89,800
   - Opportunity Employment: 2,800

9. **SUPERVISORS OF RETAIL SALES WORKERS**
   - Annual Median Wage: $38,300
   - Opportunity Employment: 2,700

10. **PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS, AND STEAMFITTERS**
    - Annual Median Wage: $59,900
    - Opportunity Employment: 2,200

**SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION AND WAGES**

- Opportunity Employment: 26.3%
- Bachelor’s Degree Required: 26.4%
- Lower-Wage Employment: 47.3%

**RANK OUT OF 121 METRO AREAS**: 35