

Middle-Wage Jobs Industry Data Series: SUMMARY



MIDDLE-WAGE JOB: Occupations requiring some training or education beyond high school, but not necessarily a 4-year degree, and paying a living wage.ⁱ

As a workforce intermediary seeking to better connect low-income individuals to living wage jobs, Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) has focused its labor market research on identifying middle-wage jobs in our local economy. These jobs provide an opportunity to meet the greatest skills shortage facing local employers while helping low-income and low-skill individuals advance into good paying careers. SJI's March 2008 report showed that middle-skill jobs – those requiring some education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree – are and will continue to be abundant, making up roughly half of currently available jobs in the U.S.ⁱⁱ and in Washington State.ⁱⁱⁱ

This report drilled deeper to consider those middle-skill opportunities that can provide a middle-class income – what we term “middle-wage” jobs – while supporting Puget Sound economic growth in key industry sectors. SJI's findings confirmed that middle-wage jobs are a vital part of a healthy labor market, comprising **20 to 25 percent** of all jobs in the Puget Sound region and providing opportunities for many low-income and low- to middle-skilled workers to find employment and a pathway to a livable wage.

Following the success of SJI's research and publication on Middle-Wage Jobs in the Puget Sound Region, SJI has come up with a suite of one-page fact sheets which update some of the industry-specific occupations identified as middle-wage jobs, taking into consideration the far-reaching effects of the Great Recession. These fact sheets highlight definitions of industries and occupations, as well as identify current employment, future projections, and potential employers supporting these industries in Seattle-King County region.

SJI hopes these quick reference tools can serve as sources of labor market information for a variety of consumers – job seekers, employment and training practitioners, and various workforce and economic development stakeholders – to support activities and strategies aimed at those sectors and occupations with the greatest potential for living-wage careers.

The fact sheets accompanying this summary detail the following industries and the middle-wage occupations that support them: *(bullets below are live links in Acrobat)*

i. Accessible middle-wage jobs are identified as those paying at least \$21 per hour in 2008 and requiring some education beyond high school but not necessarily a 4-year degree. An hourly wage of \$21 - assuming two full-time earners, is equivalent to annual earnings of \$43,680 per person, \$87,903 for two earners - which is roughly the median family income for King County in 2008 (American Community Survey).

ii. Harry Holzer & Robert Lerman. November 2007. "America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond." The Workforce Alliance: Washington, D.C.

iii. October 2009. "Washington's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: 2009 - An Updated Look at Employment and Education Patterns in Washington." The Workforce Alliance: Washington, D.C.

iv. Demand occupations are defined by the 2010 Demand/Decline list for Seattle/King County Workforce Development Area.

The following table details the full spectrum of middle-wage occupations in demand^{iv} in Seattle-King County.

Occupation	2010 Jobs	Current Median Hourly Earnings	Education Level
Registered nurses	12,925	\$37.45	Associate's degree
Computer support specialists	3,145	\$24.14	Associate's degree
Paralegals and legal assistants	2,668	\$25.11	Associate's degree
Computer specialists, all other	2,342	\$39.48	Associate's degree
Radiologic technologists and technicians	921	\$32.00	Associate's degree
Dental hygienists	694	\$46.33	Associate's degree
Respiratory therapists	378	\$31.54	Associate's degree
Electrical and electronic engineering technicians	365	\$27.01	Associate's degree
Diagnostic medical sonographers	306	\$38.79	Associate's degree
Medical equipment repairers	262	\$25.41	Associate's degree
Physical therapist assistants	137	\$25.09	Associate's degree
Cardiovascular technologists and technicians	121	\$33.64	Associate's degree
Nuclear medicine technologists	103	\$40.03	Associate's degree
Environmental engineering technicians	80	\$27.08	Associate's degree
Radiation therapists	76	\$45.97	Associate's degree
Occupational therapist assistants	56	\$25.82	Associate's degree
Legal secretaries	2,013	\$23.51	Postsecondary vocational award
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	1,703	\$22.17	Postsecondary vocational award
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	1,582	\$22.80	Postsecondary vocational award
Bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists	1,070	\$24.81	Postsecondary vocational award
Health care technologists and technicians, all other	789	\$22.16	Postsecondary vocational award
Massage therapists	646	\$27.66	Postsecondary vocational award
Surgical technologists	394	\$23.90	Postsecondary vocational award
Avionics technicians	41	\$22.00	Postsecondary vocational award
Nonfarm animal caretakers	1,587	\$22.38	Short-term on-the-job training
Production, planning, and expediting clerks	1,143	\$21.61	Short-term on-the-job training
Postal service mail carriers	1,063	\$25.66	Short-term on-the-job training
Refuse and recyclable material collectors	441	\$24.24	Short-term on-the-job training
Credit authorizers, checkers, and clerks	264	\$22.04	Short-term on-the-job training
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	6,619	\$26.95	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	5,441	\$22.64	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Sales representatives, services, all other	4,257	\$25.88	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer	4,072	\$21.54	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products	3,011	\$35.99	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Cargo and freight agents	1,134	\$22.14	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	814	\$21.01	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Computer operators	395	\$21.50	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Claims adjusters, examiners, and investigators	1,579	\$29.17	Long-term on-the-job training
Media and communication workers, all other	1,345	\$21.64	Long-term on-the-job training
Machinists	406	\$22.72	Long-term on-the-job training
Stationary engineers and boiler operators	106	\$27.05	Long-term on-the-job training
Managers, all other	8,488	\$24.89	Work experience in a related field
First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative support workers	6,764	\$25.62	Work experience in a related field
First-line supervisors/managers of non-retail sales workers	4,474	\$30.15	Work experience in a related field
Purchasing agents, except wholesale, retail, and farm products	1,358	\$30.61	Work experience in a related field
First-line supervisors/managers of mechanics, installers, and repairers	1,332	\$33.31	Work experience in a related field
First-line supervisors/managers of transportation and material-moving machine and vehicle operators	1,050	\$30.10	Work experience in a related field
Lodging managers	652	\$25.00	Work experience in a related field
First-line supervisors/managers, protective service workers, all other	291	\$25.53	Work experience in a related field

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI)