

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

At a Glance: Jobs, Workers & the Economy



AUGUST 2013 | FOCUS: SEATTLE METRO AREA

Middle-Wage Occupations: Job Openings and Aging Workers

One of the most frequent questions asked of Seattle Jobs Initiative by partner organizations working to help low-income individuals secure better employment is simply, “Where will the good jobs be?” This *Beyond the Headlines* helps to answer that question by looking at the top **middle-wage occupations** in the Seattle Metro Areaⁱ based on **number of projected job openings** over the next decade. Further, it sheds some light on the relationship between an occupation’s projected job openings and its age demographics by examining those middle-wage occupations with relatively **large numbers of older workers** who may be approaching retirement.

First, a definition: Seattle Jobs Initiative defines “middle-wage jobs” as those paying at least \$17 per hour (\$35,360 annualized) and requiring less than a B.A. but some education and training beyond high school.ⁱⁱ These occupations provide the best opportunity for low-income/low-skill residents – typically with some additional training – to obtain a living wage. Workforce providers should specifically concentrate on providing training for middle-wage occupations within growing industries that are projected to have a substantial number of job openings.

Figure 1, on the following page, portrays the middle-wage occupations with the greatest number of projected annual openings over the next 10 years in the Seattle area.

FIGURE 1: Middle-Wage Jobs Projected Annualized Openings (2013–2023), Seattle MSA

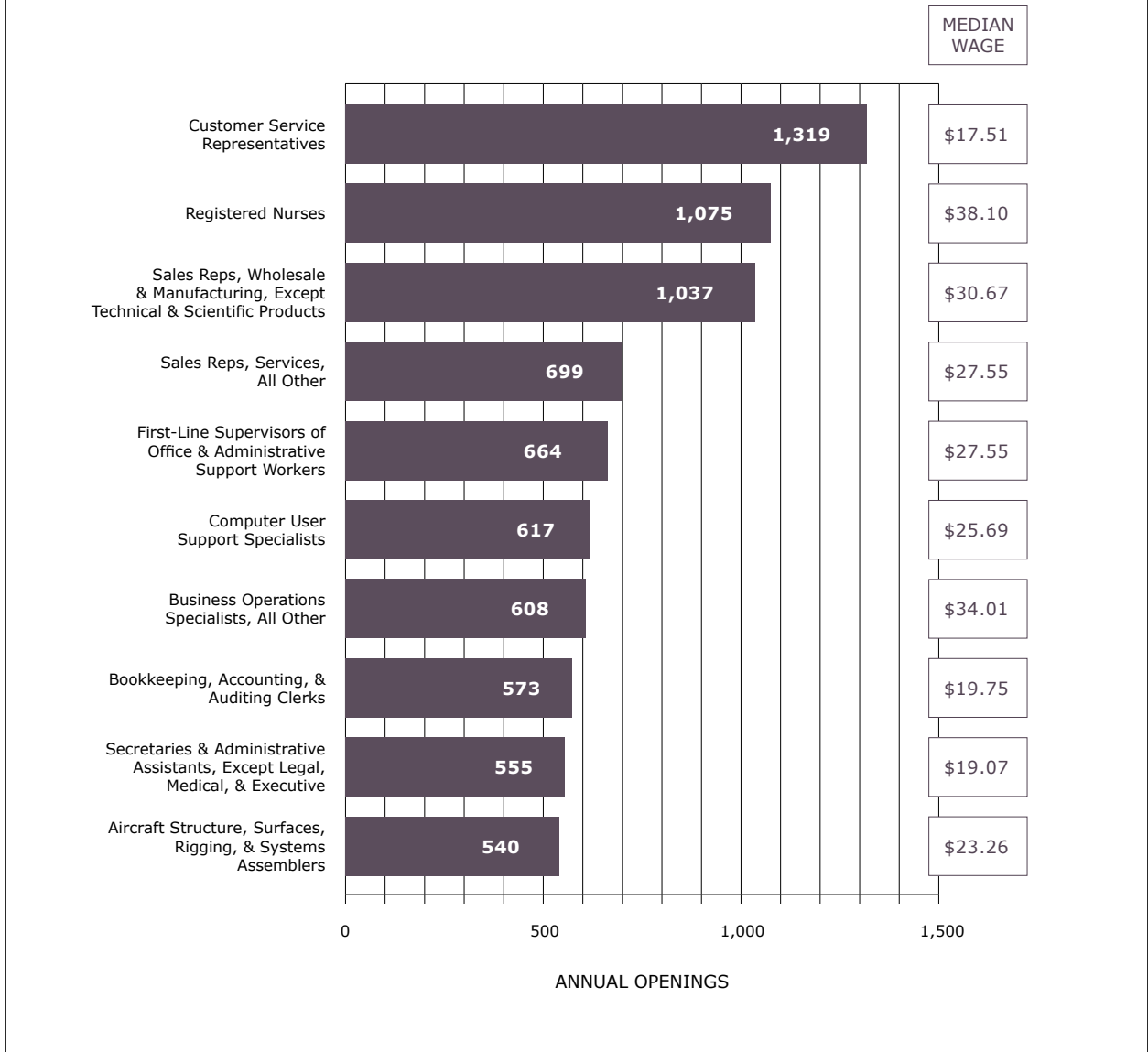


Figure 2, on the following page, portrays the **middle-wage occupations in the Seattle area with the greatest number of incumbent workers aged 45 or older**. These are the middle-wage jobs in which many current workers will be reaching retirement age during the next decade, accounting for a significant portion of projected job openings.

FIGURE 2: Middle-Wage Jobs with the Largest Number of Workers Currently Aged 45+, Seattle MSA

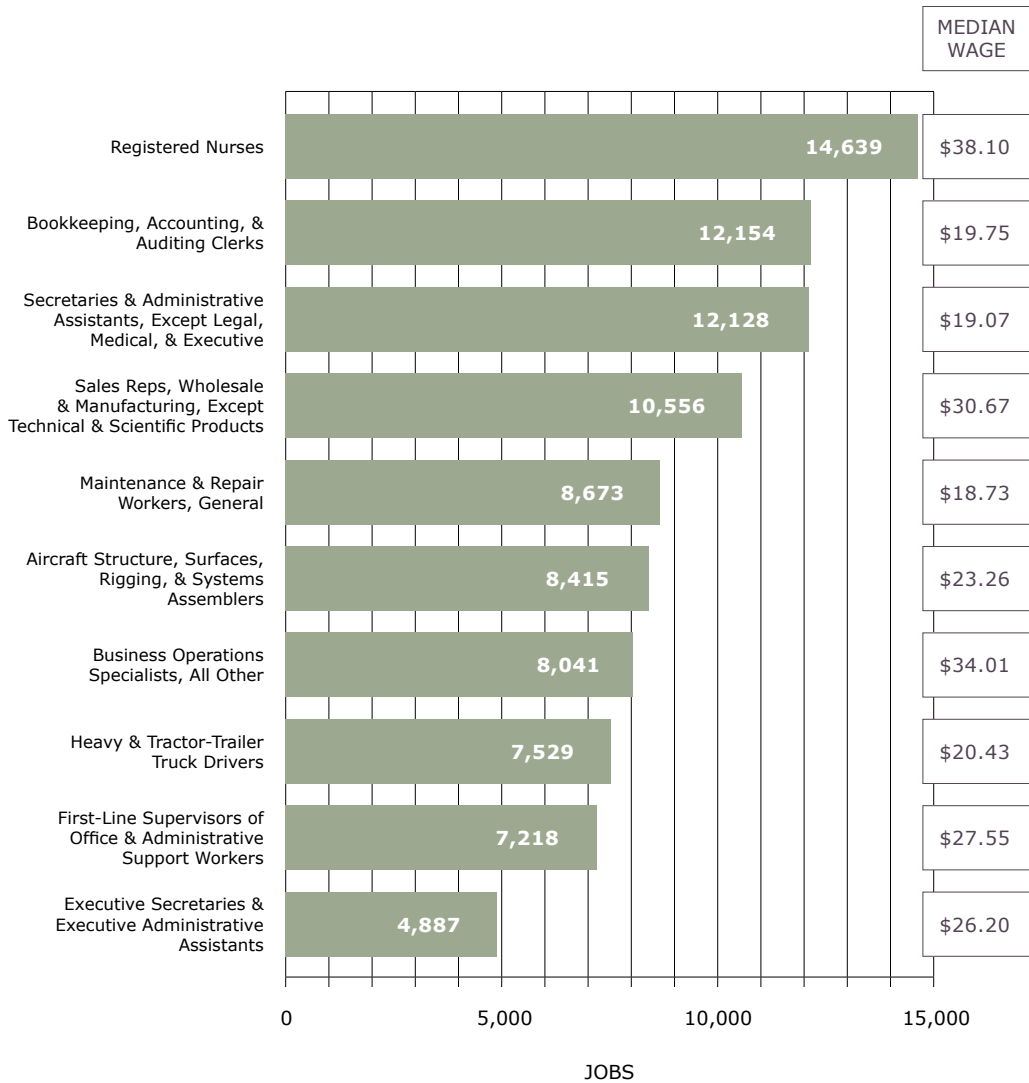
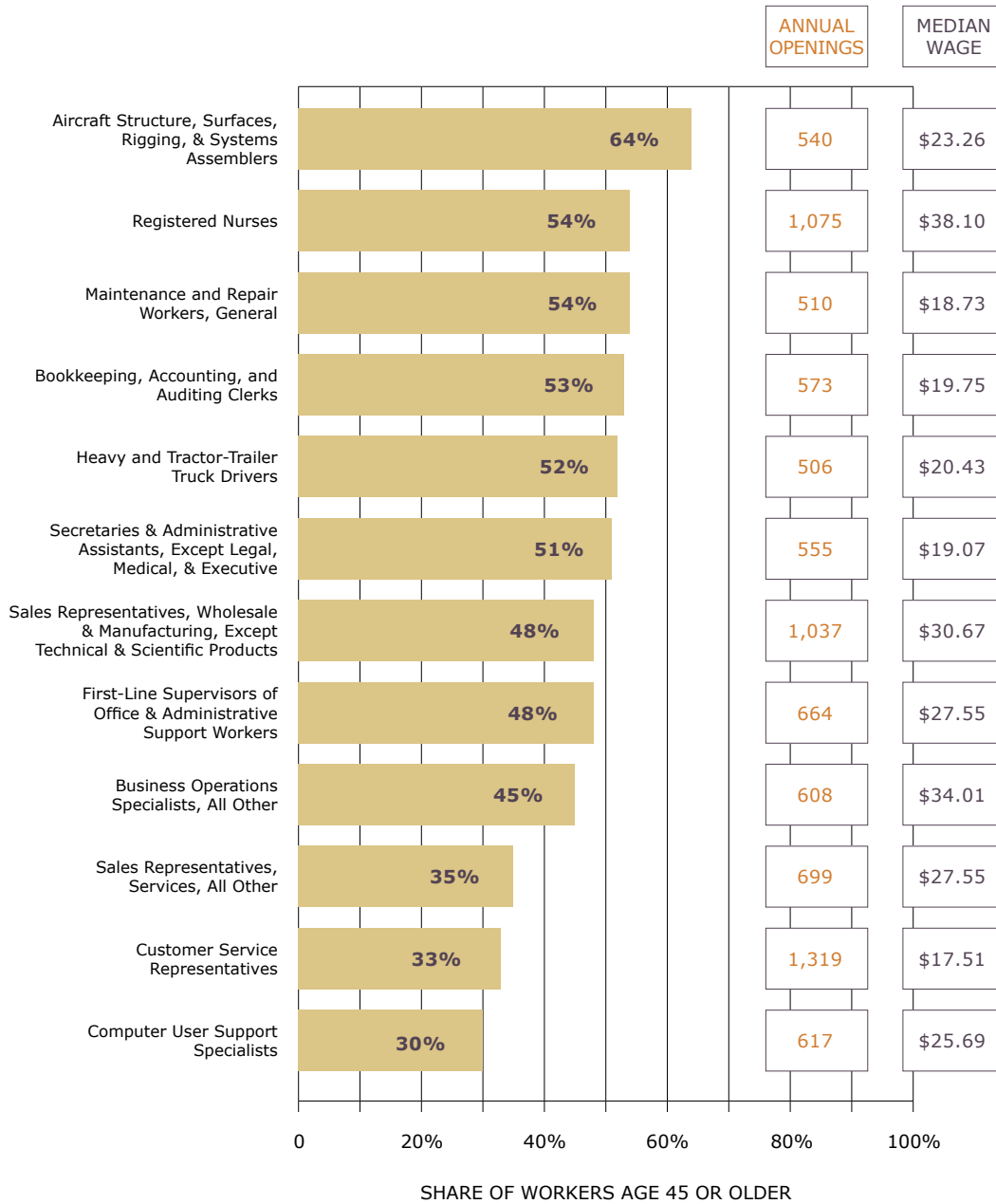


Figure 3, on the following page, essentially combines the key factors portrayed in Figures 1 and 2. It starts with middle-wage occupations in the Seattle area that are projected to have the most job openings over the next decade (in this case, at least 500 annually), and then ranks these occupations by total share of incumbent workers aged 45 or older. These are the middle-wage jobs that will have an abundance of openings, in significant part due to retirement.

FIGURE 3: Middle-Wage Jobs with High Projected Annualized Openings (2013–2023) by Share of Workers Aged 45+, Seattle MSA



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- i. Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Statistical Area, includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.
 - ii. Sommers, Paul, Gardner, Mark and Scarpa, Juliet, *Skills Required: Preparing Puget Sound for Tomorrow's Middle-Wage Jobs*, Seattle Jobs Initiative. March 2008. This and later iterations of Seattle Jobs Initiative's middle-wage jobs research can be accessed at <http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/innovations/research-publications/labor-market-economy/>. Note that middle-wage jobs are based upon *incumbent worker educational attainment* within occupations. Specifically, for a job to be a middle-wage job, at least 60% of U.S. workers in that job must have less than a B.A. but some education and training beyond high school (meaning up to 40% might have a B.A. or higher). SJI's earlier research found that about 22-23% of jobs in King County met the definition of a middle-wage job. In comparison, 30% of King County jobs meet the definition of a middle-wage job, as set out in this report.

BEYOND THE HEADLINES: Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

About Seattle Jobs Initiative

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today's marketplace.

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