A Look Back: *Beyond the Headlines* 2013

During the past year, Seattle Jobs Initiative has published a series of *Beyond the Headlines* reports, intended to help workforce development stakeholders get quickly underneath the latest news, research and data on the economy, labor market and education/training, and to better understand what this information may mean for low-income residents seeking more skills and better-paying jobs. This issue of *Beyond the Headlines* takes a look back at 2013, presenting some local highlights for Washington State, King County and Seattle from our earlier reports.


In May we reported on new data from the Working Poor Families Project on the state of the working poor in Washington. The data show that Washington compares well with other states in its overall percentage of working families that are low-income, but has a comparatively high percentage of working individuals with limited educational attainment and/or limited English who are low-income.

![Figure 1: Percent of Working Families That Are Low-Income](image1)

![Figure 2: Percent of Low-Income Working Families With a Parent Without a High School Degree/GED](image2)

![Figure 3: Percent of Low-Income Working Families With a Parent With Limited English Language Ability](image3)

In addition, Washington has the highest minimum wage in the nation, but also places the largest tax burden on its low-income families among all fifty states.

Minimum wage:

Washington is one of 21 states with a minimum wage that exceeds the federal minimum wage standard.

At $9.19/hour, this is currently the highest minimum wage standard in the U.S.

While Local Unemployment Rates Have Improved, Fewer Individuals Are Participating in the Labor Market

In March we reported that an important driver of declining unemployment rates post-Recession has been individuals leaving the workforce altogether due to the challenge of finding work. This is evidenced in the employment-to-population ratio (EPOP), which measures employment as a percentage of the working-age population (16 – 64-year-olds). EPOP in the U.S. fell from 63.4 percent prior to the Recession to a low of 58.2 percent in the summer of 2011 (an 8.2 percent decline), and has remained basically flat since.

Seattle and King County have significantly higher EPOP numbers than the U.S. overall. As illustrated in Figure 5, on the following page, Seattle’s EPOP had rebounded well by the end of 2011 (down only 2.4 percent from its pre-Recession peak), while King County’s EPOP has been recovering much more slowly.
Locally, There Are Relatively High Numbers of Middle and Middle-Wage Jobs

In January we looked at “middle jobs” in King County: those requiring less than a B.A but some education beyond high school and having average minimum earnings of $35,000 or more. About 450,000 middle jobs exist in King County, representing about 30 percent of all jobs. This well exceeds the 21 percent rate of jobs nationwide that are middle jobs. Within King County, middle jobs are concentrated in key occupational groupings, as depicted in Figure 6, below.
In August we listed the top local “middle-wage jobs” (SJI’s definition for jobs requiring less than a B.A. but some education beyond high school and paying at least $17 per hour or $35,360 annually).iii Figure 7, below, portrays the middle-wage occupations in Seattle with the greatest number of projected annual openings over the next 10 years.

**FIGURE 7:**
Middle-Wage Jobs Projected Annualized Openings (2013–2023), Seattle MSA

- **Customer Service Representatives**: 1,319, $17.51
- **Registered Nurses**: 1,075, $38.10
- **Sales Reps, Wholesale & Manufacturing, Except Technical & Scientific Products**: 1,037, $30.67
- **Sales Reps, Services, All Other**: 699, $27.55
- **First-Line Supervisors of Office & Administrative Support Workers**: 664, $27.55
- **Computer User Support Specialists**: 617, $25.69
- **Business Operations Specialists, All Other**: 608, $34.01
- **Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks**: 573, $19.75
- **Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, & Executive**: 555, $19.07
- **Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, & Systems Assemblers**: 540, $23.26

**SOURCE:** Bureau of Labor Statistics

“Location Quotient” Metric Illustrates Seattle’s Diverse Economic Base

In September we listed the ten industriesv in Seattle with the highest location quotients in 2013 that also had a minimum of 10,000 jobs. These are portrayed in Figure 8, on the following page. “Location quotient” (LQ) measures how concentrated a particular industry is in a geographic area relative to other areas, including the nation as a whole, illustrating what is comparatively unique about an area’s economy. Industries with both a high LQ and high total job numbers can be said to form an area’s economic base.v
### FIGURE 8:
Seattle Industry Location Quotients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>2013 JOBS</th>
<th>2013 LQ</th>
<th>2010-13 JOB GROWTH %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aerospace Product &amp; Parts Manufacturing</td>
<td>95,107</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Publishers</td>
<td>51,955</td>
<td>13.52</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Shopping &amp; Mail-Order Houses</td>
<td>15,883</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Households (fn)</td>
<td>28,670</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government, Military</td>
<td>50,489</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>2013 JOBS</th>
<th>2013 LQ</th>
<th>2010-13 JOB GROWTH %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Finishing Contractors</td>
<td>15,684</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Systems Design &amp; Related Services</td>
<td>36,171</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Hospitals (State Government)</td>
<td>59,622</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Care Facilities for the Elderly</td>
<td>16,177</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient Care Centers</td>
<td>13,604</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development

Contact Information
For questions or suggestions, please email David Kaz, SJI Director of Policy & Communications at: dkaz@seattlejobsinit.com

We look forward to providing you with more monthly Beyond the Headlines in 2014!


iv. Industries are described at the four-digit NAICS Code level.