

Opportunity Jobs in the Inland Empire

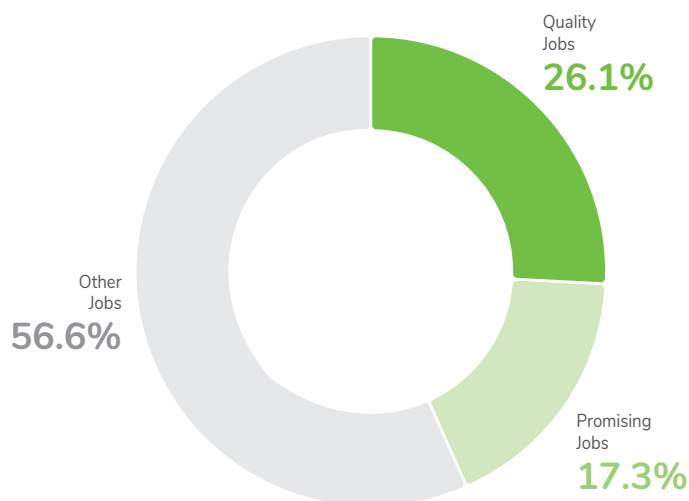
RIVERSIDE AND SAN BERNARDINO COUNTIES



Thrive Inland SoCal is a comprehensive, collaborative, and inclusive regional economic development effort working to boost quality job creation and expand access to quality jobs and wealth-building for all Inland Empire residents, especially those that have been historically disinvested and underrepresented.

Owing to its economic mix, the Inland Empire faces a fundamental gap in the number of jobs available that support financial self-sufficiency and economic mobility. Analysis shows that only slightly more than a quarter of jobs in the Inland Empire currently qualify as quality jobs, meaning that they pay a livable wage, offer employer-sponsored health insurance, and provide stability in terms of maintaining a quality job in the future. An additional 17% of jobs count as “promising jobs,” meaning that they offer a pathway to a quality job over the next decade. Closing this gap by supporting industries that offer higher proportions of quality jobs, preparing residents for those jobs, and upgrading the quality of existing positions must be the goals underpinning regional economic and workforce development strategies.

Share of “Opportunity Jobs” in the Inland Empire Region



Source: Brookings and Cities GPS analysis of Lightcast estimates and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample.

What are “Quality” and “Promising” Jobs?

A “good job” has many possible definitions based on quantitative and qualitative factors (see Labor Market Analysis), but this research employs an “Opportunity Industries” analysis developed by the Brookings Institution to identify the sectoral distributions of “quality” and “promising” jobs that enable workers to achieve financial self-sufficiency and stability for themselves and their families.

Under this methodology, a quality job must:

- Pay an annualized living wage that allows families to make ends meet, while also accumulating some savings to build wealth over time
- Offer employer-sponsored health insurance, a proxy for other worker benefits
- Provide worker stability in terms of retaining or leading to another quality job in the future

Promising jobs are positions that do not meet all these criteria, but still provide a pathway into a quality job within ten years. Together, quality and promising jobs are considered “opportunity jobs.”

This analysis relies on quantitative factors because data can be consistently assessed across different sectors, employers, and geographies. Qualitative considerations ranging from inclusive workplaces to consistent schedules are also important to workers but highly variable by employer and location, with data not collected, comparable, or reliable. As a result of inclusive economic initiatives, some regions have formed collaboratives with major employers that self-assess these characteristics.

Because industries vary in their ability to generate quality and promising jobs, economic development activities must prioritize those sectors that can offer residents greater economic mobility. Tradable industries in the Inland Empire — meaning those that sell products or services to customers outside the region — offer opportunity jobs at a higher rate than local-serving industries (44% versus 38%), despite the dominance of logistics, which typically offers lower-than-average job quality. However, the scale of the local-serving sector means that its component industries offer more total opportunity jobs. Notably, several sectors offering high rates of opportunity jobs — such as utilities, mining, and information — offer few total jobs in the region. For instance, while 85% of utilities jobs count as opportunity jobs, only 4,540 such jobs exist in the Inland Empire.

Age, education, gender, and race all impact workers' likelihood of holding a quality or promising job, elevating disparities that must be addressed through workforce programs and other efforts to improve access and spur a more inclusive economy. For instance, 78% of bachelor's degree holders can claim a quality or promising job, versus 49% of associate degree holders and 31% of high school diploma or GED holders. In terms of gender, 47% of men hold a quality or promising job, compared to 38% of women. Disparities also exist along racial and ethnic lines: 59% of white workers hold a quality or promising job, compared to 33% of Hispanic workers and 46% of Black workers.

Nearly 40% of Inland Empire residents belong to a family that struggles to make ends meet, including more than half of all children.

Despite exponential job growth in the region, nearly four in ten Inland Empire residents belong to a family that cannot afford basic living expenses, plus accumulate some savings.¹ Of this group, most belong to a struggling working family; only one-fourth of struggling residents belong to a family without a worker. These findings suggest that the region's economy does not offer enough opportunity for many workers to sustain themselves and their families, reflecting both rising costs of living and limits on availability of quality jobs. The share of workers that struggle to make ends meet varies by age, race, and education. As is typical in most regions, young workers with less experience struggle at higher rates than older workers, but 25-34 year olds in prime working age struggle at above-average rates. Hispanic workers are disproportionately impacted with 34% not able to achieve financial stability, representing 68% of the region's total struggling workers. Unsurprisingly, workers with lower educational attainment are also more likely to struggle, underscoring the importance of clear, well-supported career pathways that increase skills and develop talent.

¹ Different family combinations (e.g., more or fewer children, one or two adults) require different income levels to meet basic expenses. For instance, a family of three with two adults and three kids requires \$80,704 per year in Riverside County and \$74,367 in San Bernardino County, assuming one adult does not work and provides childcare. If both adults work, the family requires \$98,357 in Riverside County and \$95,478 in San Bernardino County.

Thrive Inland SoCal is building partnerships and growing the capacity needed to make a more prosperous future a reality. JOIN US in exploring the challenges and opportunities by attending an upcoming meeting.

For more details, meeting dates and contact info, visit

ThriveInlandSoCal.org

This factsheet covers one of seven key topics shaping our region's economic growth. While each topic has its own factsheet for clarity, sometimes we discuss multiple topics together to highlight how economic development is complex and connected in different ways.

