

# Job Vacancies

The number of job vacancies in a given area is a measure of the labor market's health. A comparison of the number of unemployed individuals to the number of vacant jobs indicates the tightness of an area's labor market. The number of job openings provides a snapshot of the current demand for workers in an area. The Kansas Department of Labor conducts an annual Job Vacancy Survey to collect this data. It surveys employers across the state in order to measure labor demand by area, industry and occupation. The most recent survey was conducted during the second quarter of 2014.

There were 44,886 job vacancies in Kansas during the second quarter of 2014, an 18.2 percent increase from 2013. The statewide job vacancy rate was 3.2 percent, indicating that for every 100 positions in Kansas, 3.2 were vacant and 96.8 were filled. Both the number of job vacancies and the job vacancy rate are the highest recorded in Kansas since 2008.

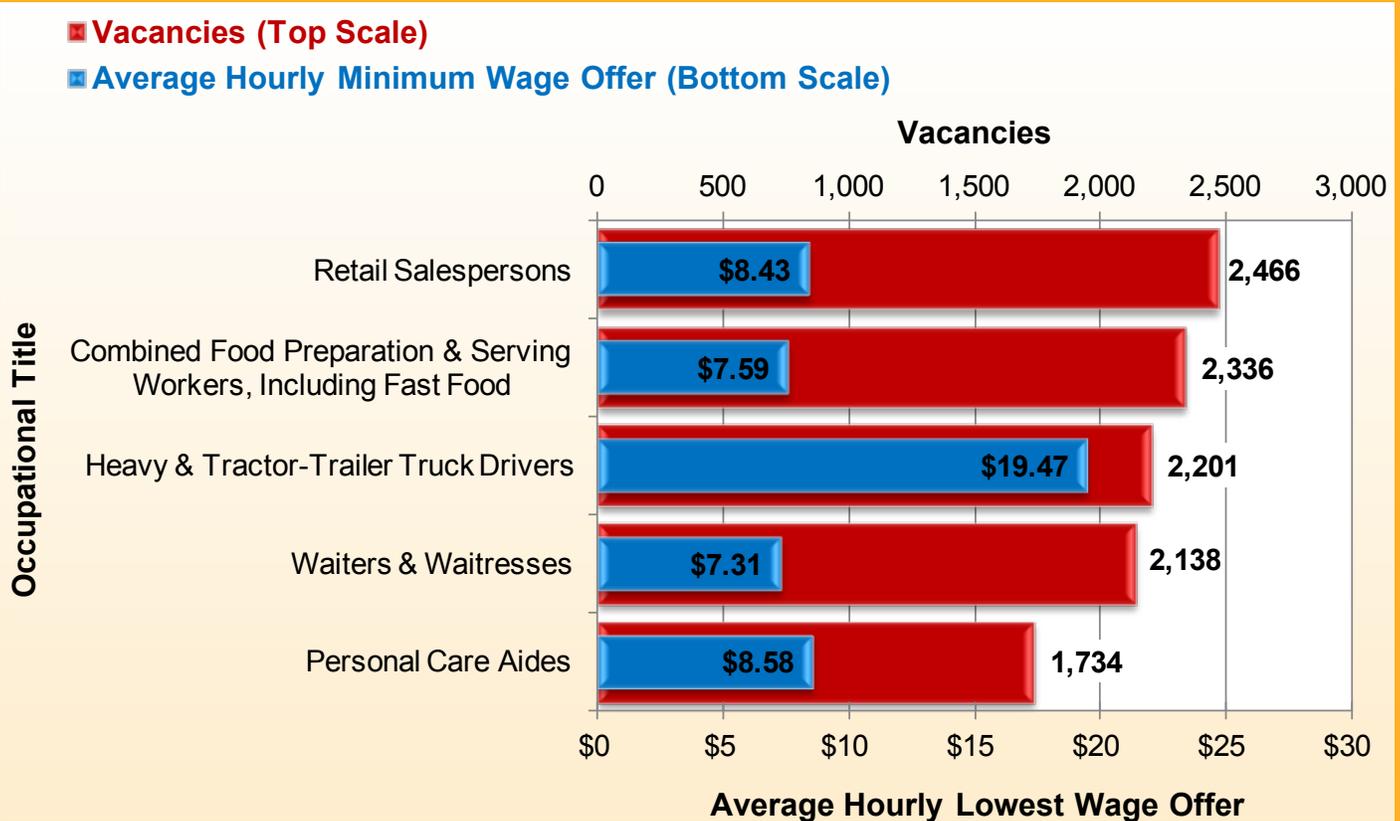
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There were 1.6 unemployed people for every vacancy in Kansas, a significant improvement from 2013 where there were 2.1 unemployed people per vacancy. This is the first time that there have been fewer than two unemployed people per vacancy since 2008. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were two unemployed people per job opening nationally, and 1.9 in the Midwest region in May 2014. Both recorded improvements from May 2013, when nationally there were 2.9 unemployed people per opening and 2.7 in the Midwest. Since there are more job seekers than vacancies, the labor market remains soft. However, conditions are improving and the labor market in Kansas is better off than in the Midwest and the nation.

The top five occupations in Kansas with the most vacancies are shown in *Chart 10* below, along with the average lowest hourly wage offered for each position. The top five most vacant jobs in Kansas accounted for 24.2 percent of the job vacancies in the state.

Retail salespersons were the most vacant positions in Kansas with 2,466 job vacancies in the second quarter of 2014. With three of the top five jobs in retail and food service, this shows a possible increase in consumer spending leading to more people needed in those fields. The third highest ranked occupation, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, is a fairly high paying profession and is vital to commercial transportation and delivery traffic, a leading indicator of economic growth for the state. Personal care aides being in the top five reflects an increased need for help caring for aging family members.

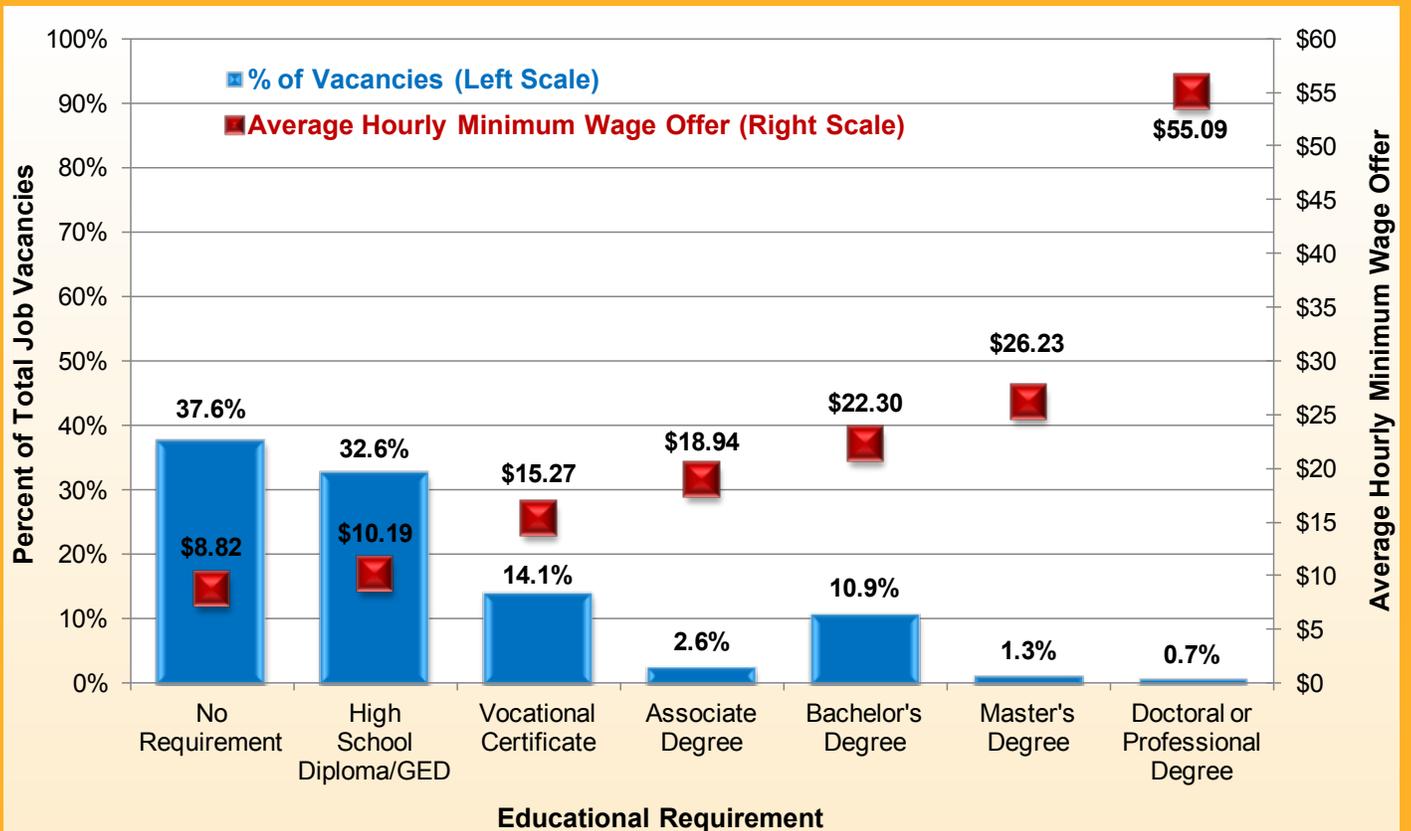
## Chart 10 Most Vacant Occupations, 2nd Qtr 2014



Source: Kansas Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Services

Chart 11 shows that the average lowest hourly wage offered increases with the educational requirements of the position. Openings with no educational requirement had an average lowest hourly wage offer of \$8.82 while those requiring a doctoral or professional degree were offered, on average, a minimum of \$55.09 per hour. The average lowest hourly wage offer for all vacancies was \$11.77. The chart also shows the majority of job openings, 70.2 percent, have no requirement or require a high school diploma or GED. Only 12.9 percent of job openings require a bachelor's degree or higher. This may indicate a shortage of workers for positions with lower educational requirements or a higher turnover for those type of jobs.

## Chart 11 Job Vacancies by Educational Requirement 2nd Qtr 2014



Source: Kansas Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Services