
Metro Washington's Opportunity Industries

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Recent economic and social trends beg questions about the future of labor market opportunity

Wage stagnation, increasing wage inequality, persistently high unemployment among some groups, and increasing economic insecurity **signal a decline of the middle class.**

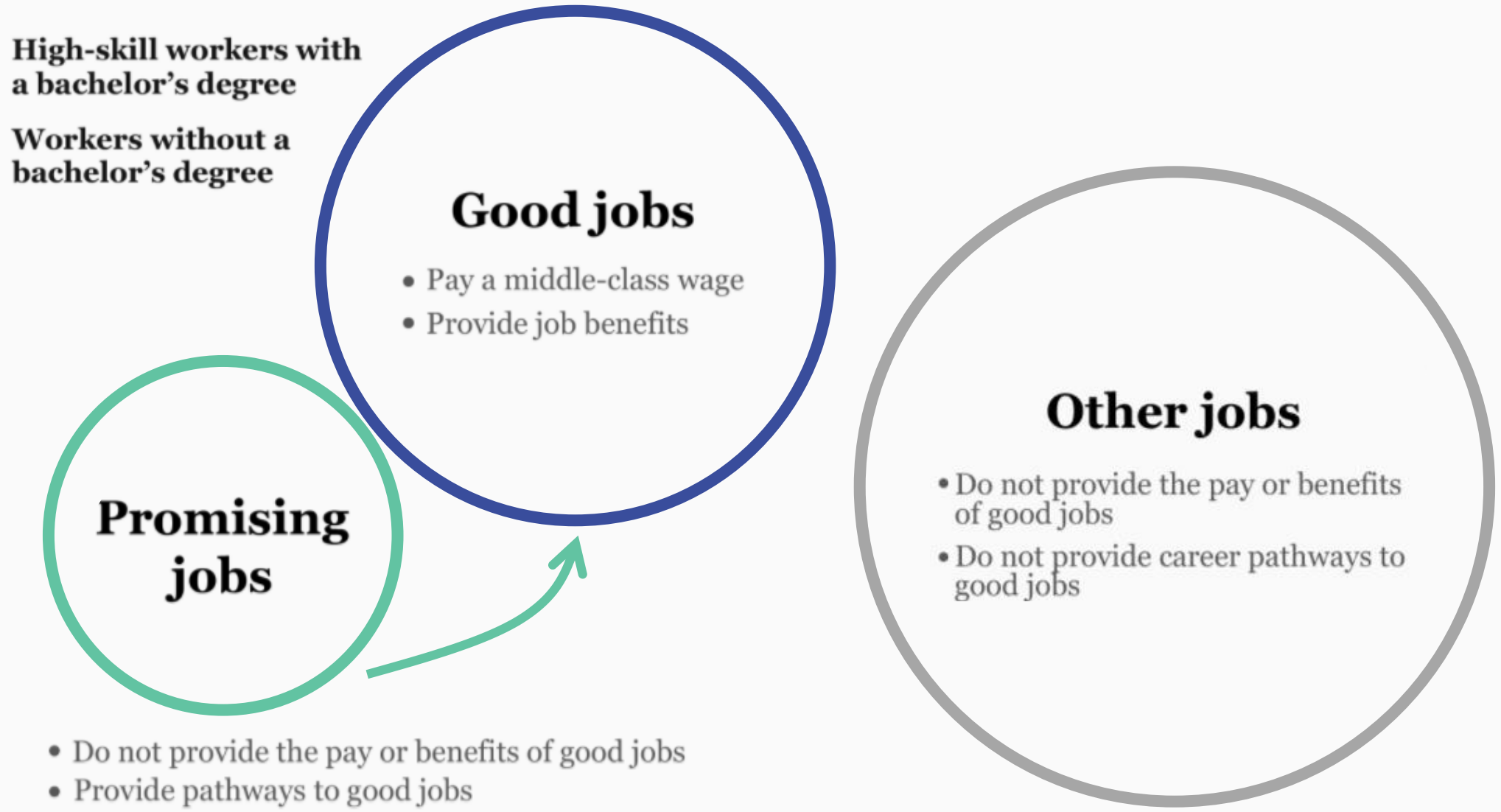
These trends also beg questions about **how access to the middle class is shrinking or shifting:** a high school diploma and hard work no longer guarantee a job that pays a family-sustaining wage.

Automation and trade competition have contributed to the shrinking number of jobs in occupations that once defined the middle class—and will no doubt continue to do so.

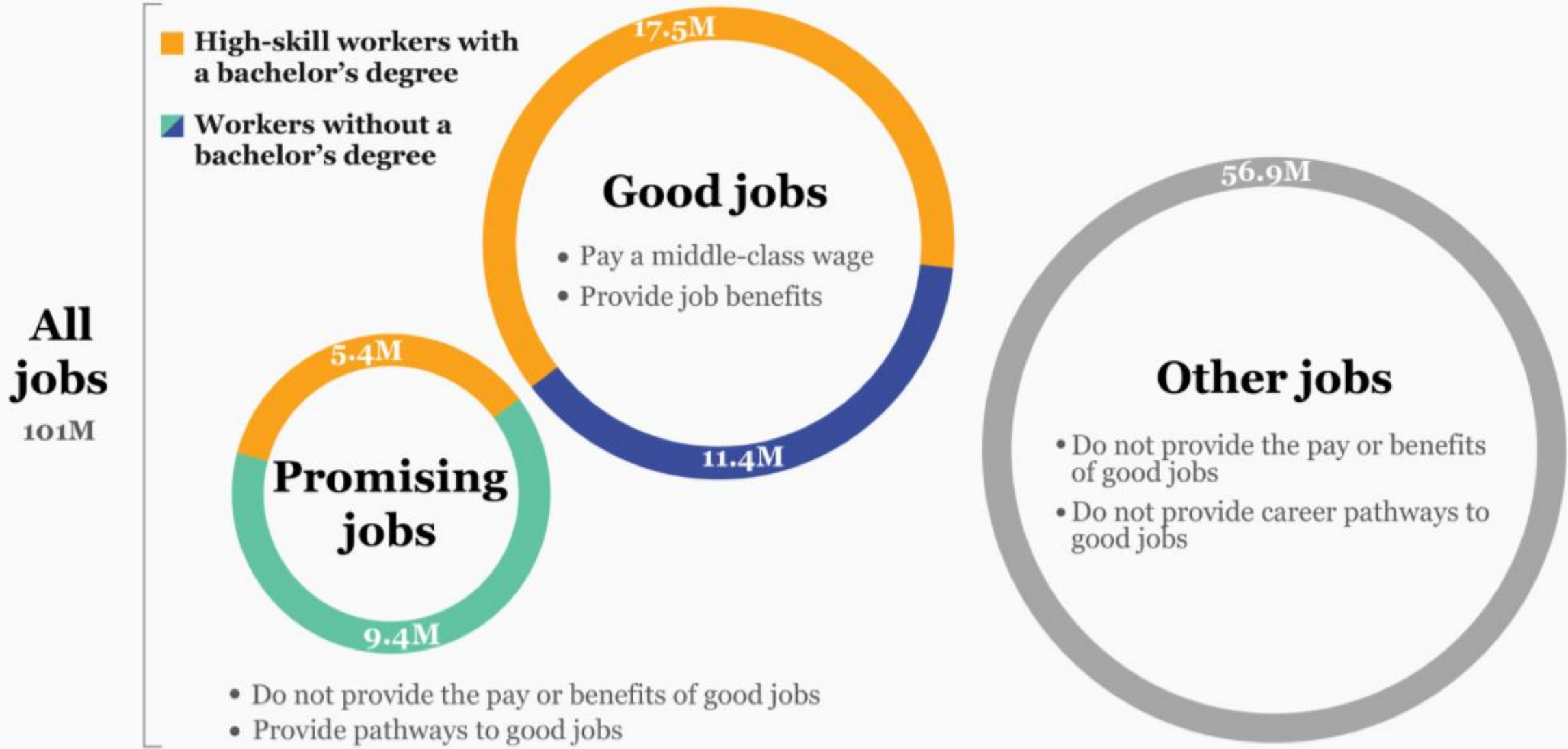
So what industries and occupations can economic and workforce development leaders in metro areas count on to provide **jobs that offer economic opportunity now and in the future?**



The report defines three types of jobs according to their wages, benefits, and career pathways



We find 43% of jobs meet our criteria for good or promising jobs in American metros

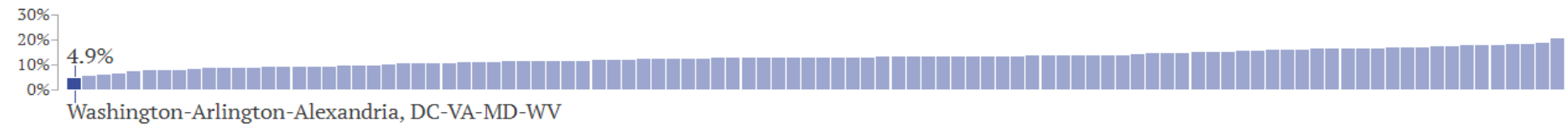


Metro Washington provides the lowest share of good or promising jobs of any large metro

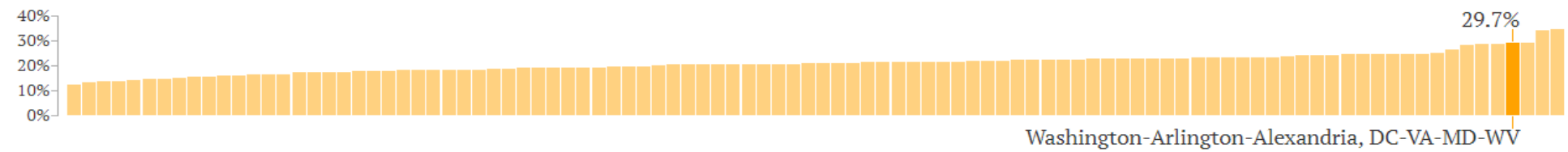
Promising jobs held by workers without a bachelor's degree



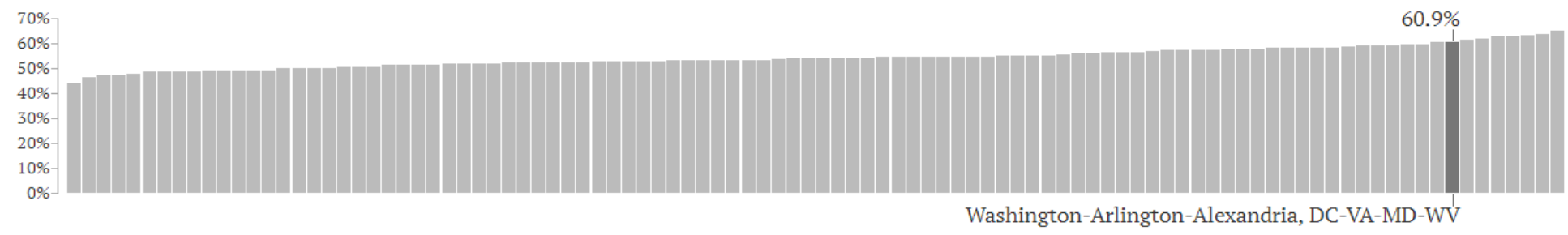
Good jobs held by workers without a bachelor's degree



Good and promising jobs held by workers with a bachelor's degree



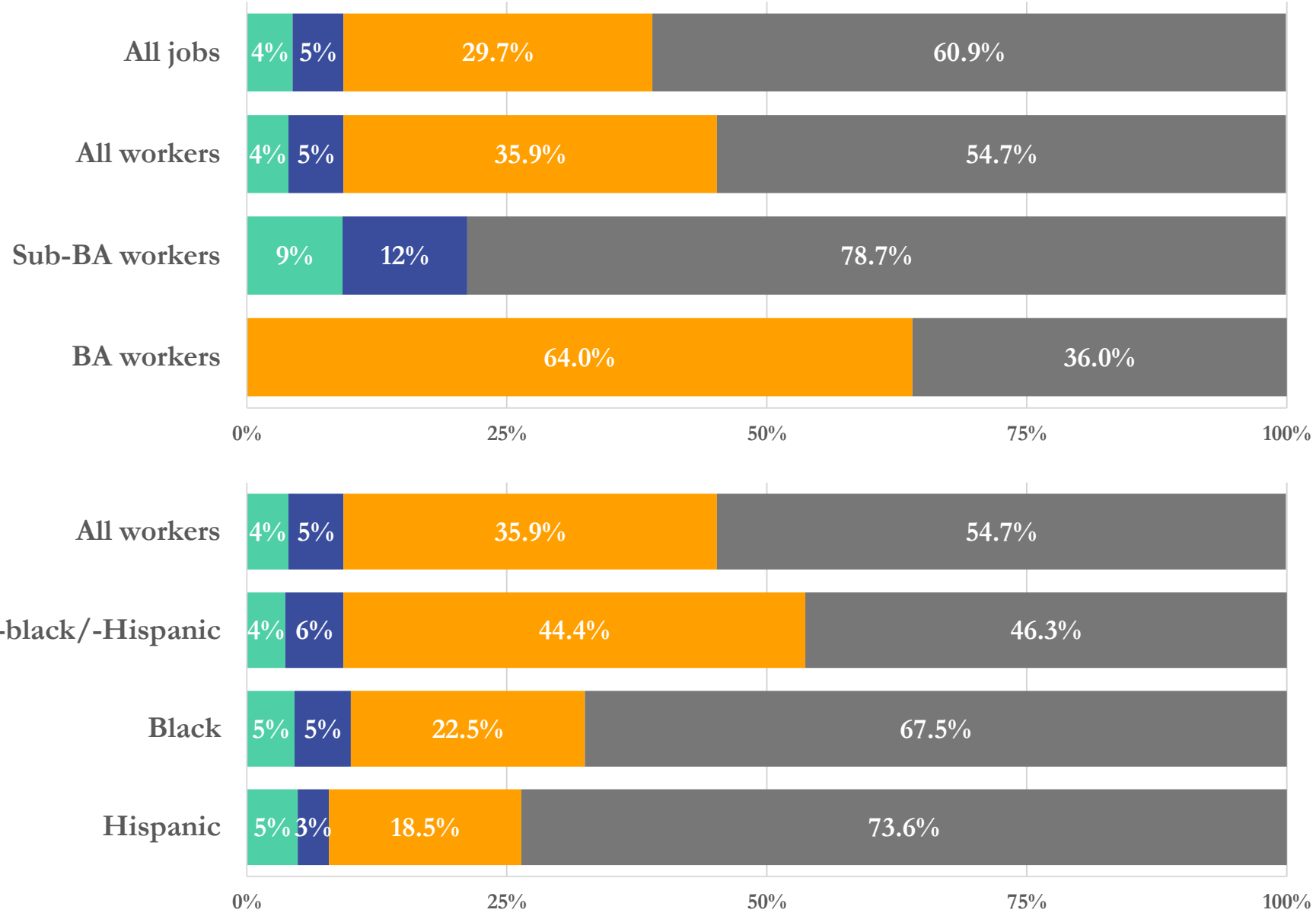
Other jobs



Metro Washington provides too few good and promising jobs for its prime-age workers

Percentage of prime-age workers who hold good, promising, high-skill, or other jobs

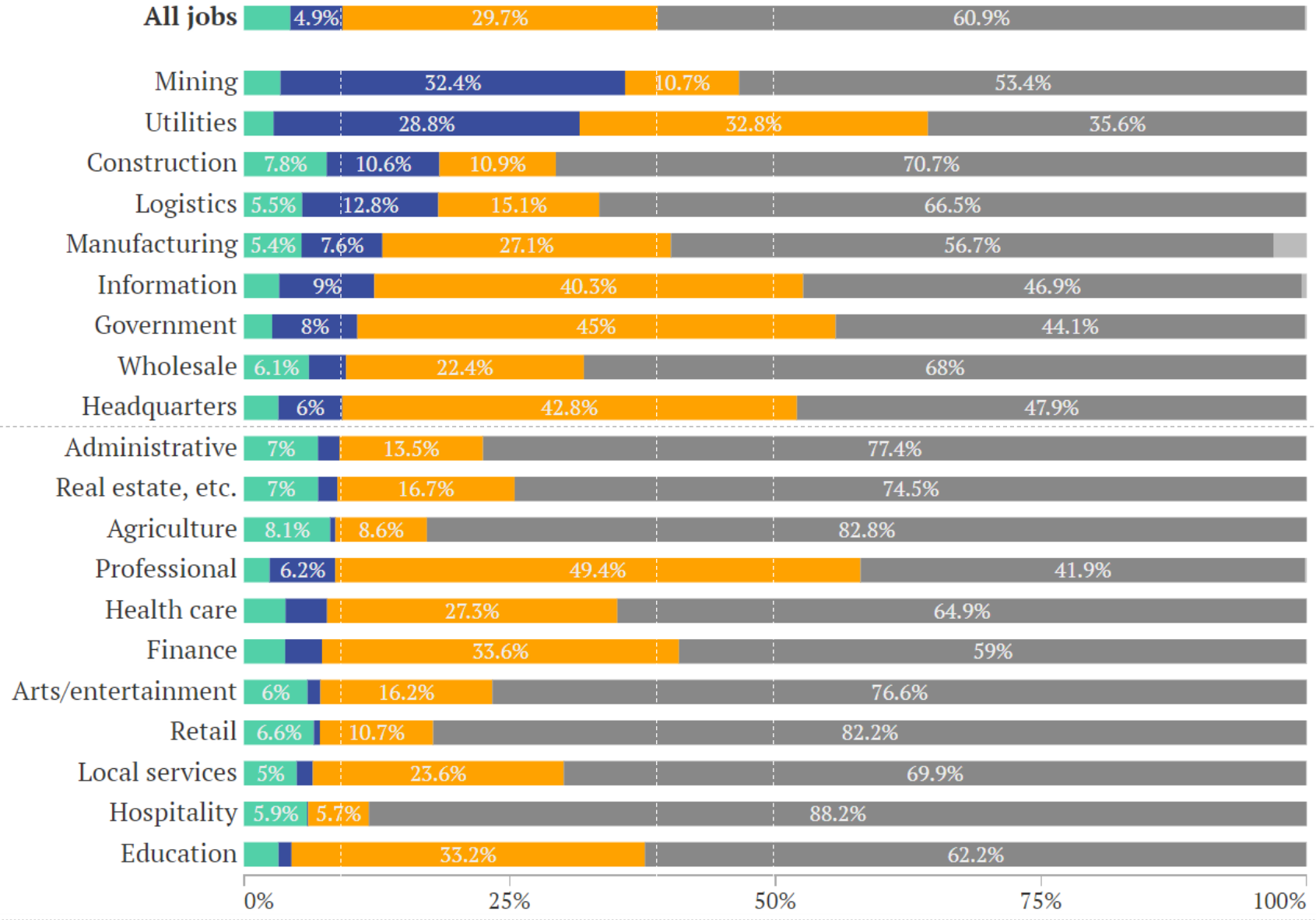
- Promising jobs
Held by workers without a bachelor's degree
- Good jobs
Held by workers without a bachelor's degree
- High-skill jobs
Good and promising jobs held by workers with a bachelor's degree
- Other jobs
All other jobs



“Opportunity Industries” concentrate jobs that offer economic opportunity in Metro Washington

Percentage of jobs in each industry that are good, promising, high-skill, or other jobs

- **Promising jobs**
Held by workers without a bachelor's degree
- **Good jobs**
Held by workers without a bachelor's degree
- **High-skill jobs**
Good and promising jobs held by workers with a bachelor's degree
- **Other jobs**
All other jobs



The report's findings lead to several key implications for metro areas' economic leaders

Refocus economic development efforts on opportunity industries. Too often, scarce public resources are spent subsidizing “other” jobs. To support the middle class and access to it, grow **good jobs**. The report finds that growing good jobs not only increases the stock of family-sustaining jobs, but also creates more pathways to such jobs from “other” jobs. Further, industries that concentrate good jobs have a greater positive impact on the local economy.

Partner between government and business to improve job quality. A growing body of research shows that improving job quality—by treating labor as an asset rather than a cost—is good for the bottom line in some sectors that provide many “other” jobs, including retail, hospitality, health care, and education. Improving job quality means not only increasing wages and benefits, but also **improving the visibility of pathways** from low-quality jobs to better ones.

Retool education and workforce development for a dynamic labor market. The constant emergence of new technologies means workers may need to switch careers more often to access opportunity. Specific knowledge and skills remain essential to getting a job, but keeping that job or finding a better one may require workers and institutions to focus more on developing abstract cognitive abilities that enable people to think and learn by themselves, and to adapt to continuous change in the labor market.