

# Fashion Merchandising

*Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)*

---

*This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data developed before the economic impact of COVID-19. The COE is monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Please consult with local employers to understand their current employment needs.*

---

## Summary

- Community college fashion merchandising programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to three community college-level fashion merchandising occupations.
- These occupations are projected to have 1,741 annual job openings through 2024, despite decreasing employment by 2% over this timeframe.
- The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile hourly earnings for these occupations are between \$15.92 and \$28.62 per hour. The median hourly earnings for buyers and purchasing agents and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products are above the regional \$21.78 per hour self-sustainable wage standard for a single adult with one child.
- Regional community colleges offering fashion merchandising programs have issued eight awards annually over the last three academic years.
- The Centers of Excellence recommends developing a fashion merchandising program to meet the regional demand for community college-level occupations in this field. See the [recommendation section](#) for further detail.

## Introduction

California Community College fashion merchandising (TOP 1303.20) programs prepare students for employment through training related to the merchandising of fashion and related articles in retail and wholesale establishments (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The occupations described in this report are relevant to fashion merchandising programs and are collectively referred to as the fashion merchandising occupational group in this report. The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by fashion merchandising programs may lead to the following occupations:

- Buyers and Purchasing Agents (SOC 13-1028)\*
- Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers (27-1026)
- Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (41-4012)

\*While buyers and purchasing agents typically require workers to obtain a bachelor’s degree before employment, this occupation is considered community college-level because approximately one-third of workers in the field have a community college-level award as their highest level of educational attainment.

## Job Counts and Projections

In 2019, there were 18,506 combined fashion merchandising jobs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. Over the next five years, these occupations are expected to have 1,741 annual job openings, despite decreasing employment by 2%. Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers age 55 years and greater working in the fashion merchandising occupational group.

*Exhibit 1: Five-year projections for the fashion merchandising occupational group, 2019-2024*

Occupation	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	5-Yr % Change (New Jobs)	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	13,457	13,012	(3%)	7,606	1,268	30%
Buyers and Purchasing Agents	3,543	3,528	(0%)	1,929	321	31%
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	1,506	1,595	6%	913	152	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,506</b>	<b>18,135</b>	<b>(2%)</b>	<b>10,448</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>29%</b>

Source: Emsi 2021.2

Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted during the last 12 months, as well as the regional and statewide average time filling each occupation. Job ads have been limited to the industries classified in the apparel and retail industry clusters, according to the California Labor Market Information Division (Regional Economic Analysis Profile Industry Cluster Definitions, 2021).

Over the last 12 months, there were 409 advertisements for the fashion merchandising occupational group in the apparel and retail industries. Apparel and retail industry-specific advertisements accounted for 3% of the 12,402 total advertisements for this occupational group in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. There were no advertisements for buyers and purchasing agents in the apparel and retail industries listed in the region. The job advertisement search for buyers and purchasing agents was expanded to the state level to provide insight into employer demand for this occupation in the apparel and retail industries.

On average, regional employers fill online job advertisements for the fashion merchandising occupational group within 33 days. The regional time to fill is two days shorter than the statewide average, indicating that regional employers face similar challenges filling open positions as other employers in the state.

*Exhibit 2: Job ads and time to fill*

Occupation	Job Ads	Regional Average Time to Fill (Days)	Statewide Average Time to Fill (Days)
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	282	31	32
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	127	37	40
Buyers and Purchasing Agents*	136	-	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

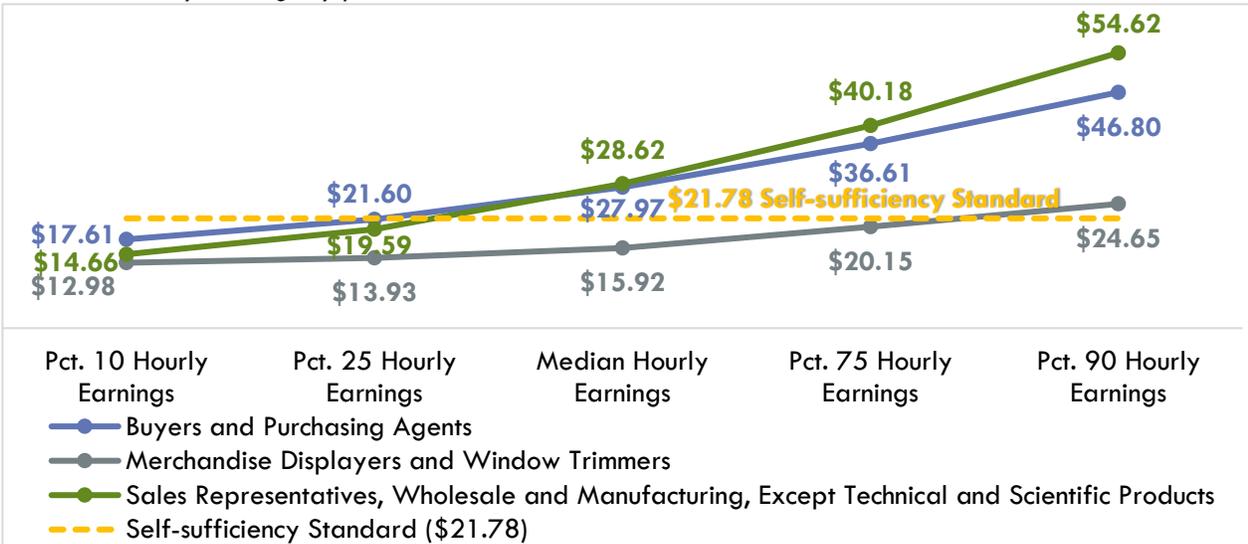
\*Displaying statewide job advertisements

## Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide self-sustainable income. The University of Washington estimates that a self-sufficient hourly rate for a single adult with one school-age child is \$21.78 per hour or \$45,992 annually in Riverside County; \$21.24 per hour or \$44,867 annually in San Bernardino County (Pearce, 2020). For this study, the higher hourly earnings requirement in Riverside County is adopted as the self-sufficiency standard for the two-county region.

The median hourly earnings for buyers and purchasing agents and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products exceeds the self-sustainability rate. The hourly earnings for merchandise displayers and window trimmers do not surpass the self-sustainability rate until the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, indicating that only the top 25% of workers in the field earn a self-sustainable wage. Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for the fashion merchandising occupational group.

Exhibit 3: Hourly earnings by percentile



Source: Emsi 2021.2

According to the California Labor Market Information Division's occupational guides, benefits for sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products may include medical, dental, vacation, and sick leave benefits. Benefits information is not available for buyers and purchasing agents and merchandise displayers and window trimmers (Detailed Occupational Guides, 2021).

### Advertised Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays online job ad salary data for the fashion merchandising occupational group over the last 12 months. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay this occupational group between \$40,000 and \$53,000 annually. The advertised annual earnings for sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products and buyers and purchasing agents are above the \$45,992 annual (\$21.78 hourly) self-sufficiency standard for the region. Consider the salary information with caution since only 10% (54 out of 545) online job postings for these occupations provided salary information. The salary figures are prorated to reflect full-time, annual wage status.

Exhibit 4: Advertised salary information

Occupations	Real-Time Salary Information					Average Annual Salary
	Number of job postings	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$74,999	More than \$75,000	
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	15	67%	13%	13%	7%	\$40,000
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	17	53%	18%	6%	23%	\$46,000

Occupations	Real-Time Salary Information					Average Annual Salary
	Number of job postings	Less than \$35,000	\$35,000 to \$49,999	\$50,000 to \$74,999	More than \$75,000	
Buyers and Purchasing Agents*	22	27%	23%	36%	14%	\$53,000

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights  
 \*Displaying statewide job advertisements

## Employers, Skills, Education, and Work Experience

Exhibit 5 displays the employers posting the most job ads during the last 12 months. Displaying employer names provides some insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. TJX Companies, Inc, the parent company of TJ Maxx, Marshalls, and HomeGoods, is the employer posting the most advertisements for the fashion merchandising occupational group in the Inland Empire/Desert Region.

Exhibit 5: Employers posting the most job ads for the fashion merchandising occupational group

Occupation	Top Employers	
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers (n=282)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TJX Companies, Inc.</li> <li>Macy's</li> <li>Target</li> <li>JCPenny</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rue21</li> <li>H&amp;M</li> <li>Old Navy</li> </ul>
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (n=127)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macy's</li> <li>Sears</li> <li>Rue21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unifirst Corporation</li> <li>Kohl's</li> <li>Levi Strauss</li> </ul>
Buyers and Purchasing Agents* (n=136)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gap, Inc.</li> <li>Ross Stores</li> <li>Old Navy</li> <li>Forever 21</li> <li>Guess Inc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sketchers USA</li> <li>Hot Topic</li> <li>Buffalo Exchange</li> <li>Levi Strauss</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights  
 \*Displaying statewide job advertisements

Exhibit 6 lists a sample of specialized and employability skills employers seek when looking for workers to fill fashion merchandising positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Employability skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job postings may be utilized to guide curriculum development.

Exhibit 6: Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads

Occupation	Specialized skills	Employability skills
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers (n=278)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retail Industry Knowledge</li> <li>Description and Demonstration of Products</li> <li>Customer Contact</li> <li>Shrinkage Reduction</li> <li>Visual Merchandising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Organizational Skills</li> <li>Detail-Oriented</li> <li>Teamwork/Collaboration</li> <li>Creativity</li> </ul>
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (n=126)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Service</li> <li>Basic Mathematics</li> <li>Scheduling</li> <li>Retail Industry Knowledge</li> <li>Description and Demonstration of Products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical Abilities</li> <li>Writing</li> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Time Management</li> <li>Multi-Tasking</li> </ul>
Buyers and Purchasing Agents* (n=132)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merchandising</li> <li>Business Acumen</li> <li>Retail Industry Knowledge</li> <li>Sales Trend Analysis</li> <li>Pricing Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning</li> <li>Teamwork/Collaboration</li> <li>Communication Skills</li> <li>Presentation Skills</li> <li>Problem Solving</li> </ul>

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

\*Displaying statewide job advertisements

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately (30%-34%) of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree" and an "associate degree." Online job advertisements indicate that most employers seeking merchandise displayers and window trimmers and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products sought candidates with a high school diploma or vocational training. The majority of online advertisements for buyers and purchasing agents sought candidates with a bachelor's degree. Exhibit 7 displays the typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements for the fashion merchandising occupational group.

Exhibit 7: Typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements

Occupation	Typical Entry-Level Education Requirement	CC-Level Educational Attainment*	Number of Job Ads	Real-Time Minimum Advertised Education Requirement		
				High school or vocational training	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	High school diploma or equivalent	30%	27	78%	4%	18%
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	High school diploma or equivalent	32%	84	92%	3%	5%
Buyers and Purchasing Agents**	Bachelor's degree	34%	118	6%	4%	90%

Source: Emsi 2021.2, Burning Glass – Labor Insights

\*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework

\*\*Displaying statewide job advertisements

Exhibit 8 displays the work experience typically required to enter each occupation and the real-time work experience requirements from employer job ads. Job advertisements indicate that the majority of employers seeking fashion merchandising workers sought candidates with zero to two years of work experience.

*Exhibit 8: Work experience required and real-time work experience requirements*

Occupation	Work Experience Typically Required	Real-Time Work Experience			
		Number of job postings	0 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	6+ years
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	None	46	94%	6%	-
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	None	38	63%	37%	-
Buyers and Purchasing Agents*	None	119	50%	48%	2%

Source: Emsi 2021.2, Burning Glass – Labor Insights

\*Displaying statewide job advertisements

## Student Completions for Programs

Exhibit 9 displays completion data for California Community College fashion merchandising (TOP 1303.20) programs between 2017 and 2020. Over the last three academic years, regional community colleges issued eight awards annually in fashion merchandising programs. The student completion and outcome methodology are available on page 11.

*Exhibit 9: 2017-20, Annual average community college awards for the fashion merchandising programs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region*

TOP 1303.20 – Fashion Merchandising (Local Program Title)	Associate Degree	Certificate requiring 30 to <60 semester units	Total CC Annual Average Awards, Academic Years 2017-20
Chaffey (Fashion Merchandising)	4	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: MIS Data Mart

California program outcome data may provide a useful insight into the likelihood of success for the proposed program. Community college student outcome information based on the selected TOP code and region is provided in Exhibit 10. The outcome methodology is available in the appendix section of this report.

*Exhibit 10: 1303.20 – Fashion merchandising strong workforce program outcomes*

<b>Strong Workforce Program Metrics: 1303.20 – Fashion Merchandising Academic Year 2017-18, unless noted otherwise</b>	<b>Inland Empire/Desert Region</b>	<b>California</b>
Unduplicated count of enrolled students (2018-19)	104	1,288
Completed 9+ career education units in one year (2018-19)	47%	42%
Perkins Economically disadvantaged students (2018-19)	95%	75%
Students who earned a degree, certificate, or attained apprenticeship (2018-19)	-	131
Transferred to a four-year institution (transfers)	-	47
Job closely related to the field of study (2016-17)	-	56%
Median annual earnings (all exiters)	\$27,220	\$24,108
Median change in earnings (all exiters)	-	33%
Attained a living wage (completers and skills-builders)	-	24%

Sources: LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline and Strong Workforce Program Metrics

## Recommendation for Fashion Merchandising Programs

The fashion merchandising occupations are expected to have 1,741 annual job openings over the next five years, despite decreasing employment by 2%. The median hourly earnings for buyers and purchasing agents and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products surpass the \$21.78 per hour self-sustainable wage standard. In contrast, earnings for merchandise displayers and window trimmers do not surpass this standard until the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Community college fashion merchandising (1303.20) programs have issued eight awards annually over the last three academic years. The median annual earnings for fashion merchandising program completers in the region is \$27,220.

The Centers of Excellence recommends developing a fashion merchandising program focused on training buyer and purchasing agents and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products. These occupations have significant annual job openings in the region and median hourly earnings above the self-sustainability rate. Colleges considering this program should partner with applicable employers to document their demand for more workers in this field and ensure that students earn a self-sustainable wage after program completion.

### Contact

Michael Goss & Paul Vaccher  
Centers of Excellence, Inland Empire/Desert Region  
[michael.goss@chaffey.edu](mailto:michael.goss@chaffey.edu)  
June 2021

## References

Burning Glass Technologies. (2021). *Labor Insights/Jobs*. Retrieved from <https://www.burning-glass.com/>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. LaunchBoard. (2021). *California Community Colleges LaunchBoard*. Retrieved from <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Home.aspx>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. LaunchBoard. (2021a). *Strong Workforce Program Metrics Data Element Dictionary*. Pg. 3. Retrieved from <https://www.calpassplus.org/MediaLibrary/calpassplus/launchboard/Documents/SWP-DED.PDF>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2021). *Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI), version 3.0*. Retrieved from <https://coci2.ccctechcenter.org/programs>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. (2021). *Data Mart*. Retrieved from <https://datamart.cccco.edu/datamart.aspx>

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Curriculum and Instructional Unit, Academic Affairs Division. (2012). *Taxonomy of Programs, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Corrected Version*. Retrieved from <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/About-Us/Divisions/Digital-Innovation-and-Infrastructure/Research/Files/TOPmanual6200909corrected12513.ashx?la=en&hash=94C709CA83C0380828415579395A5F536736C7C1>

Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Repnikov, D. (n.d.). *Understanding Online Job Ads Data*. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/OCLM.Tech.Web.pdf>

Economic Modeling Specialists International (Emsi). (2021). *Datarun 2021.2*. Retrieved from <https://www.economicmodeling.com/>

Labor Market Information Division. Employment Development Department of California. (2021). *Detailed Occupational Guides*. Retrieved from <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/OccGuides/Search.aspx>

Labor Market Information Division. Employment Development Department of California. (CA LMID). (2021). *Regional Economic Analysis Profile Industry Cluster Definitions*. Industry Cluster Definitions. Retrieved from <https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/Publications/REA-Reports/Industry-Cluster-Definitions.pdf>

National Center for O\*NET Development. (2021). *O\*NET OnLine*. Retrieved from <https://www.onetonline.org/>

Pearce, D. University of Washington. (2020). *Self Sufficiency Standard – California*. Retrieved from <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/california>

## Appendix: Occupation definitions, sample job titles, five-year projections, and earnings for fashion merchandising occupations

### **Occupation Definitions (SOC code), Education and Training Requirement, Community College Education Attainment**

#### **Buyers and Purchasing Agents (13-1028)**

May negotiate contracts. Buy merchandise or commodities for resale to consumers at the wholesale or retail level, including both durable and nondurable goods. Analyze past buying trends, sales records, price, and quality of merchandise to determine value and yield. Select, order, and authorize payment for merchandise according to contractual agreements. May conduct meetings with sales personnel and introduce new products. Purchase machinery, equipment, tools, parts, supplies, or services necessary for the operation of an establishment.

**Sample job titles:** Buyer, Grocery Buyer, Procurement Specialist, Purchaser, Purchasing Coordinator, Retail Buyer, Trader, Procurement Official, Procurement Specialist, Purchasing Administrator, Purchasing Agent

*Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Bachelor's degree*

*Training Requirement: Between one and twelve months on-the-job training*

*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 34%*

#### **Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers (27-1026)**

Plan and erect commercial displays, such as those in windows and interiors of retail stores and at trade exhibitions.

**Sample job titles:** Decorator, Display Associate, Display Decorator, Display Specialist, In-Store Marketing Associate, Merchandiser, Visual Merchandiser (VM), Visual Merchandising Specialist

*Entry-Level Educational Requirement: High school diploma or equivalent*

*Training Requirement: Less than one month on-the-job training*

*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 30%*

#### **Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (41-4012)**

Sell goods for wholesalers or manufacturers to businesses or groups of individuals. Work requires substantial knowledge of items sold.

**Sample job titles:** Account Representative, Customer Account Technician, Inside Sales Person, Outside Sales Representative, Route Sales Representative, Sales Consultant, Sales Professional, Sales Representative (Sales Rep), Salesman, Salesperson

*Entry-Level Educational Requirement: High school diploma or equivalent*

*Training Requirement: Between one and twelve months on-the-job training*

*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 32%*

## Appendix: Methodology

Exhibit 9 displays the average annual California Community College (CCC) awards conferred during the three academic years between 2017 and 2020, from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. Awards are the combined total of associate degrees and certificates issued during the timeframe, divided by three in this case to calculate an annual average. This is done to minimize the effect of atypical variation that might be present in a single year.

Community college student outcome information is from LaunchBoard and based on the selected TOP code and region. These metrics are based on records submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) by community colleges, which come from self-reported student information from CCC Apply and the National Student Clearinghouse. Employment and earnings metrics are sourced from records provided by California's Employment Development Department's Unemployment Insurance database. When available, outcomes for completers are reported to demonstrate the impact that earning a degree or certificate can have on employment and earnings. For more information on the types of students included for each metric, please see the web link for LaunchBoard's Strong Workforce Program Metrics Data Element Dictionary in the References section (LaunchBoard, 2021 a). Finally, employment in a job closely related to the field of study comes from self-reported student responses on the CTE Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS), administered by Santa Rosa Junior College (LaunchBoard, 2021 a).

Job advertisement data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job advertisements often do not reveal employers' hiring intentions; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job ad or collect resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job ad may not be the result of a hired worker.

Table 1. 2019 to 2024 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for the fashion merchandising occupational group

Occupation (SOC)	2019 Jobs	5-Year Change (New Jobs)	5-Year % Change (New Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10 <sup>th</sup> to 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (41-4012)	13,457	(445)	(3%)	1,268	\$14.66 to \$54.62	\$28.62	\$71,200	High school diploma or equivalent & 1-12 months	None
Buyers and Purchasing Agents (13-1028)	3,543	(15)	(0%)	321	\$17.61 to \$46.80	\$27.97	\$62,700	Bachelor's degree & 1-12 months	None
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers (27-1026)	1,506	89	6%	152	\$12.98 to \$24.65	\$15.92	\$37,100	High school diploma or equivalent & 1 month	None
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,506</b>	<b>(371)</b>	<b>(2%)</b>	<b>1,741</b>	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Emsi 2021.2