

A WORKING CLASS WIN

America's Blue-Collar Revival

Contrary to popular belief, in many areas blue-collar jobs are multiplying. New Geography has compiled data from a Praxis Strategy Group study of growth rates in blue-collar industries into a convenient list, with the country's 52 largest metropolitan areas ranked from the highest levels of growth to the lowest. The data suggests an overall resurgence of blue-collar jobs with higher pay:

This blue-collar resurgence seems likely to be more than a merely cyclical phenomenon. The U.S. edge in energy and manufacturing, increasingly linked, has sparked major new investments by both domestic and foreign producers. The new energy finds have created employment in the construction and operation of such things as pipelines and refineries, and have also led manufacturers to plan new factories here due to electricity and feedstock costs that are now well below those in Europe or East Asia. [...]

At a time when the wages of college graduates have been falling, it might behoove more young people to realize that, in many cases, a degree in art is not worth as much as a certificate for machining, welding, plant management or plumbing.

The city that has seen the most growth is Houston, due to a booming energy industry that has added 23,000 jobs since 2010. The industry has been a major driver of job growth in construction, transportation, warehousing, and manufacturing. America's auto industry is also doing its part in the revival, with sales up and total production having returned to 2007 levels. As a result, the Rust Belt is seeing major upward progress in blue-collar employment, with Detroit leading the region. General Motors plans to spend more than \$1.3 billion on improvements to five factories in Ohio, Indiana, Detroit, Flint and Romulus.

We are long past the time when any able-bodied man could count on a solid, life-long job in a factory to support a family and secure a spot in the middle class. But blue-collar jobs are still crucial for diminishing inequality and improving the living standards of millions of workers. If these trends continue, the future isn't as bad for America's working-class as most people originally thought.

<http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/02/03/americas-blue-collar-revival/>