

Opportunity Occupations

A regional analysis of well-paying occupations
with a bright outlook and lesser educational
barriers for entry

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This report includes regional occupational employment and wage analysis from:

- New Jersey
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Maryland
- Connecticut



What are opportunity occupations?



Typically require less than a bachelor's degree



Earn a median wage higher than the statewide average



Projected to experience long-term job growth

Key Regional Findings

- 43 total opportunity occupations in all 5 states
 - 18 classified as skilled and manual trades
 - Construction
 - Repair & maintenance
 - Production
 - Transportation & material moving

Key Regional Findings

- 12 in healthcare related fields
 - Technicians and therapeutic assistants
- Remaining 13 in management, protective services, food, and sales

New Jersey Highlights

- 165 unique occupations
- Combined employment – 540,070 (13.7% of all employment)
- 27 occupations with a median annual salary exceeding \$100,000
- 93 in skilled and manual trades
- 18 in healthcare



Highest Earning



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Supervisors of Police and Detectives	7,420	\$144,160	100	+1.2%
Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	1,650	\$137,650	50	+1.4%
Radiation Therapists	750	\$124,820	50	+4.4%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	8,230	\$123,390	950	+16.4%
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	1,270	\$116,280	150	+12.7%

Most Employment



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	49,450	\$64,720	5,200	+9.6%
Sales Representatives of Services	43,030	\$78,380	1,150	+2.8%
Wholesale Sales Representatives	35,600	\$78,870	1,550	+4.2%
Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers	22,940	\$65,860	2,400	+10.4%
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	21,620	\$89,030	300	+1.4%

Fastest Growing



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Physical Therapist Assistants	1,350	\$74,780	600	+33.9%
Solar Photovoltaic Installers	1,280	\$64,670	300	+27.3%
Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	10,080	\$60,620	2,650	+24.7%
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	3,160	\$99,940	650	+17.4%
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	9,110	\$73,000	1,800	+16.8%

Skilled Tradespeople



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	49,450	\$64,720	5,200	+9.6%
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	16,820	\$57,290	450	+2.8%
Electricians	15,230	\$73,090	1,700	+9.9%
Carpenters	12,930	\$61,880	700	+3.4%
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	10,680	\$69,800	750	+7.3%

Healthcare Related



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	15,210	\$71,180	1,050	+6.3%
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	6,210	\$85,520	450	+7.5%
Dental Hygienists	6,030	\$102,600	750	+11.5%
Respiratory Therapists	3,200	\$98,020	400	+12.9%
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	3,160	\$99,940	650	+17.4%

Pennsylvania Highlights

- 136 unique occupations
- Combined employment – 922,760 (15.3% of all employment)
- 8 occupations with a median annual salary exceeding \$100,000
- 64 in skilled and manual trades
- 15 in healthcare



Highest Earning



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	3,910	\$103,750	220	+5.5%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	7,740	\$103,530	400	+7.7%
Supervisors of Police and Detectives	5,310	\$102,420	160	+3.5%
Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	1,360	\$102,240	40	+3.2%
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	3,390	\$98,740	100	+2.5%

Most Employment



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	90,160	\$58,540	3,370	+3.6%
Maintenance and Repair Workers	60,060	\$48,950	2,310	+3.8%
Wholesale Sales Representatives	53,290	\$65,490	950	+1.6%
Sales Representatives of Services	38,760	\$61,030	1,150	+3.4%
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	31,140	\$62,010	2,150	+6.2%

Fastest Growing



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Physical Therapist Assistants	4,410	\$61,610	1,290	+25.9%
Occupational Therapy Assistants	2,010	\$61,430	520	+23.9%
Massage Therapists	2,700	\$57,660	730	+17.8%
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	920	\$61,990	170	+17.3%
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	18,500	\$63,830	3,220	+17.2%

Skilled Tradespeople



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	90,160	\$58,540	3,370	+3.6%
Maintenance and Repair Workers	60,060	\$48,950	2,310	+3.8%
Carpenters	29,900	\$59,240	500	+1.3%
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	29,020	\$49,790	810	+2.3%
Electricians	21,860	\$65,400	1,580	+7.0%

Healthcare Related



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	31,140	\$62,010	2,150	+6.2%
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	8,790	\$68,010	330	+3.4%
Dental Hygienists	8,640	\$81,510	300	+3.5%
Respiratory Therapists	5,850	\$76,160	630	+12.2%
Surgical Technologists	4,710	\$61,770	140	+3.7%

New York Highlights

- 136 unique occupations
- Combined employment – 1,422,630 (14.9% of all employment)
- 23 occupations with a median annual salary exceeding \$100,000
- 59 in skilled and manual trades
- 17 in healthcare



Highest Earning



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Commercial Pilots	1,070	\$172,500	30	+2.9%
Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	4,130	\$131,060	690	+20.4%
Elevator and Escalator Installers and Repairers	3,710	\$124,530	220	+4.7%
Supervisors of Police and Detectives	12,470	\$122,720	2,190	+20.5%
Radiation Therapists	1,140	\$122,500	340	+27.9%

Most Employment



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	88,830	\$80,490	9,360	+10.1%
Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	82,420	\$77,230	7,070	+7.8%
Sales Representatives of Services	78,510	\$85,350	6,140	+8.0%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	61,410	\$60,520	90	+0.1%
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	54,360	\$93,050	10,900	+20.5%

Fastest Growing



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Lodging Managers	3,130	\$76,740	1,180	+31.7%
Physical Therapist Assistants	3,850	\$64,660	1,210	+28.4%
Radiation Therapists	1,140	\$122,500	340	+27.9%
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	3,200	\$86,050	1,000	+27.4%
Surgical Technologists	5,910	\$75,250	1,690	+27.3%

Skilled Tradespeople



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	61,410	\$60,520	90	+0.1%
Carpenters	44,500	\$63,660	580	+0.9%
Electricians	40,380	\$77,460	1,980	+4.6%
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	22,710	\$66,670	1,490	+6.5%
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	22,630	\$78,460	1,230	+4.1%

Healthcare Related



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	40,720	\$64,030	11,060	+24.1%
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	14,370	\$91,520	4,060	+26.8%
Dental Hygienists	10,350	\$95,560	2,530	+22.0%
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	7,080	\$101,930	1,760	+27.0%
Respiratory Therapists	6,780	\$103,820	1,830	+25.7%

Maryland Highlights

- 140 unique occupations
- Combined employment – 321,520 (11.7% of all employment)
- 15 occupations with a median annual salary exceeding \$100,000
- 67 in skilled and manual trades
- 19 in healthcare



Highest Earning



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	960	\$125,630	40	+4.4%
Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	2,460	\$121,950	190	+9.5%
Supervisors of Police and Detectives	7,550	\$119,290	660	+8.8%
Elevator and Escalator Installers and Repairers	1,200	\$119,200	50	+5.1%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	3,440	\$107,050	410	+10.9%

Most Employment



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Sales Representatives of Services	20,750	\$60,000	1,230	+5.0%
Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	15,850	\$76,800	1,290	+7.2%
Electricians	14,750	\$65,650	1,520	+10.8%
Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers	11,960	\$65,020	990	+8.1%
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	11,490	\$63,270	740	+6.0%

Fastest Growing



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Physical Therapist Assistants	1,740	\$71,770	570	+30.1%
Massage Therapists	1,330	\$58,390	450	+23.7%
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	3,070	\$64,080	720	+21.6%
Health Information Technologists and Medical Registrars	1,380	\$79,100	350	+20.2%
Medical Equipment Repairers	1,330	\$72,610	250	+15.7%

Skilled Tradespeople



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Electricians	14,750	\$65,650	1,520	+10.8%
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	11,490	\$63,270	740	+6.0%
Carpenters	10,460	\$60,130	840	+6.1%
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	6,470	\$60,620	480	+7.5%
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics	6,380	\$65,000	720	+9.7%

Healthcare Related



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	9,510	\$69,870	480	+6.3%
Dental Hygienists	3,780	\$105,140	330	+9.1%
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	3,560	\$79,630	230	+7.4%
Medical Records Specialists	2,810	\$59,140	330	+10.7%
Surgical Technologists	2,130	\$66,550	170	+7.9%

Connecticut Highlights

- 118 unique occupations
- Combined employment – 214,060 (12.7% of all employment)
- 3 occupations with a median annual salary exceeding \$100,000
- 55 in skilled and manual trades
- 15 in healthcare



Highest Earning



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Supervisors of Police and Detectives	2,130	\$110,460	160	+10.2%
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	2,440	\$103,500	370	+17.1%
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,030	\$102,850	180	+17.1%
Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	1,260	\$97,460	100	+10.7%
Dental Hygienists	3,320	\$96,270	760	+25.0%

Most Employment



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	15,860	\$58,700	1,940	+11.5%
WholesaleSales Representatives	13,060	\$77,540	870	+6.6%
Sales Representatives of Services	10,190	\$70,770	780	+8.8%
Computer User Support Specialists	9,220	\$68,800	520	+5.4%
Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	9,110	\$82,800	580	+6.2%

Fastest Growing



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	3,040	\$65,790	1,400	+27.9%
Bus Drivers, School	6,980	\$59,340	1,410	+27.9%
Dental Hygienists	3,320	\$96,270	760	+24.9%
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	2,980	\$73,530	640	+21.1%
Chefs and Head Cooks	3,600	\$62,540	910	+20.1%

Skilled Tradespeople



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	15,860	\$58,700	1,940	+11.5%
Electricians	7,570	\$76,790	1,070	+13.6%
Bus Drivers, School	6,980	\$59,340	1,410	+27.9%
Machinists	6,070	\$61,090	740	+9.9%
Carpenters	5,680	\$63,510	1,260	+12.8%

Healthcare Related



Occupation	Employment	Median Annual Salary	New Jobs	Projected Change
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	8,890	\$69,130	380	+4.2%
Dental Hygienists	3,320	\$96,270	760	+25.0%
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	2,680	\$85,370	240	+8.9%
Respiratory Therapists	1,540	\$83,250	250	+18.1%
Surgical Technologists	1,220	\$80,590	140	+11.1%

Takeaways

- Approximately one in seven jobs in the region are considered an Opportunity Occupation
- Many are linked as either healthcare-related or skilled tradespeople with others in protective services
- With lower educational barriers for entry, workers can earn higher wages without significant student costs

Takeaways

- Through experience, many of these occupations have paths to earn in excess of \$100,000
- Sub-baccalaureate instructional programs and certification courses can be promoted to educate the pipeline
 - In New Jersey, there are 231 unique instructional programs related to the 165 Opportunity Occupations

Appendix

- Data sources
- Occupational definitions



Data Sources

- Employment and wage estimates
 - Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey, May 2025 annual averages
- Projected growth rate
 - Occupational employment projections, 2022-2032
- Minimum educational requirements
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics designations

Occupational Definitions Using Standard Occupational Codes (SOCs)

- Healthcare Related
 - SOC 29 – Healthcare Practitioners
 - SOC 31 – Healthcare Support
- Skilled Tradespeople
 - SOC 47 – Construction
 - SOC 49 – Repair & Maintenance
 - SOC 51 – Production
 - SOC 53 – Transportation & Material Moving

2025-2026 NJDOL PUBLICATIONS

- [Real-Time Insights: Analysis of Job Posting Data in New Jersey for Q1 2026](#) (April 2026)
- [Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses \(SOII\)](#) (April 2026)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Celebrating the Accomplishments of Women](#) (Issue No. 31, Volume 4: March 2026)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Celebrating Black History Month: A Profile of New Jersey's Black or African American Residents](#) (Issue No. 30, Volume 4: February 2026)
- [County Brief: Labor Market Facts](#)
- [Middlesex County Reports](#) (February 2026)
- [NJ Fortune 500 Companies Landscape](#) (January 2026)
- [New Jersey's Construction Sector](#) (Winter 2026)
- [New Jersey's Leisure and Hospitality Sector](#) (Winter 2026)
- [New Jersey's Retail Trade Sector](#) (Winter 2026)
- [New Jersey's Technology Sector](#) (Winter 2026)
- [New Jersey's Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics \(TDL\) Sector](#) (Winter 2026)
- [Identifying and Tracking Emerging Occupations in New Jersey's Key Sectors](#) (January 2026)
- [New Jersey's Manufacturing Sector](#) (Winter 2025)
- [County Brief: Labor Market Facts](#) (December 2025)
- [New Jersey Building Permits](#) (December 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Postsecondary Instructors Vs. Related Occupations: How Do They Compare?](#) (Issue No. 29, Volume 3: December 2025)
- [Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey \(JOLTS\)](#) (November 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Celebrating New Jersey's Veterans](#) (Issue No. 28, Volume 3: November 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - New Jersey's Waterways Help Keep the Economy Flowing](#) (Issue No. 27, Volume 3: October 2025)
- [New Jersey Employment Situation](#) (September 2025)
- [New Jersey's Life Sciences Sector](#) (Fall 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - The Industries Powering New Jersey's Special Moments](#) (Issue No. 26, Volume 3: August 2025)
- [New Jersey's Health Care Sector](#) (June 2025)
- [New Jersey Business Employment Dynamics](#) (May 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Fortune 500 Companies](#) (Issue No. 25, Volume 3: March 2025)
- [Labor Market Spotlight - Young Adult Workforce](#) (Issue No. 24, Volume 3: January 2025)



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