



Examining Gender Equity

A Snapshot of New Jersey's High-Growth Occupations

>>> Introduction

Over the past several decades, the United States has undergone a profound structural transformation in its workforce, with employment steadily shifting from goods-producing occupations toward service-based roles. This transition, partially driven by automation and occupation-specific technological advancements, carries significant implications for labor market policies, workforce training, and economic inequality.¹ In particular, it raises urgent questions about gender equity in New Jersey and whether women are being equitably represented and compensated in the state's fastest-growing, high-wage occupations.

Previous research has already hinted at a troubling pattern of occupational polarization, where middle-skill routine jobs such as payroll and file clerks, as well as data entry keyers and administrative assistants—many of which were historically accessible to women—are disappearing, while job growth becomes concentrated at both the high and low ends of the skill and wage spectrum.² In addition, there is increasing evidence that the gender composition of an occupation influences not only who enters it but also the wages it offers, resulting in the devaluation of roles as they become female-dominated.³ These evolving labor market structures call for renewed scrutiny of whether women are gaining access to newly created, higher-paying positions or being disproportionately absorbed into lower-wage service work.

According to the Projections Managing Partnership, New Jersey is expected to see a 4.8% increase in total employment between 2022 and 2032—nearly double the national projected growth rate of

1 Duernecker, G., & Herrendorf, B. (2022). Structural transformation of occupation employment. *Economica*, 89(356), 789–814.

2 David H. Autor, & Dorn, D. (2009). *Inequality and specialization: the growth of low-skill service jobs in the United States*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

3 Harris, J. (2022). Do wages fall when women enter an occupation?. *Labour Economics*, 74, 102102.

2.8%. While the U.S. anticipates adding approximately 4.7 million jobs over this period, New Jersey is projected to add more than 216,000 jobs.⁴ However, consistent with national trends, this growth is not evenly distributed across occupations and may reinforce existing gendered inequalities.

Given the urgency of aligning workforce development with gender equity goals, this brief takes a two-part approach. First, it examines the overall composition of occupations in New Jersey using data from the 2019–2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Sample, providing a comprehensive overview of employment and wage patterns across sectors and by gender. The analysis draws on weighted ACS data collected between 2018 and 2022.

For the purposes of this brief, all employed women aged 16 and older—whether working full-time or part-time, year-round or part-year—are included in the analytic sample, as long as they worked at least one week in the previous year. Given that our primary variable of interest is earnings—defined as total pre-tax wage and salary income received from employment, including tips, bonuses, and commissions—we exclude self-employed individuals from the analysis. Therefore, we use the term “workers” to refer specifically to wage and salary employees.

Second, it draws on the 2024 Labor Demand Occupations List from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Office of Research and Information to evaluate gender equity within high-growth occupations.⁵ This evaluation is framed through an equity matrix that identifies four distinct categories:

- **Equity Bright Spots:** high representation of women, high pay
- **Equity Gaps:** low representation of women, high pay
- **Care Economy Traps:** high representation of women, low pay
- **Vulnerable and Overlooked:** low representation of women, low pay

1. Overview of Occupational Composition and Earnings in New Jersey

In New Jersey, there are currently over 3.88 million workers, including nearly 1.86 million women, who make up approximately 47.84% of the workforce. As shown in Table 1, the largest occupational groups in the state are management, office and administrative support, education, training, and library, sales and related, and business and financial operations, employing approximately 13.22%, 11.31%, 7.96%, 7.78%, and 7.57% of the workforce, respectively. Together, these five occupations account for nearly half (47.84%) of the state’s total workforce. Within these occupations, women are highly represented in office and administrative support (75.12%) and education, training, and library occupations (74.30%). They are slightly underrepresented in management (42.72%) and sales and related occupations (45.09%), and moderately represented in business and financial operations (49.99%).

4 Projections Managing Partnership. (n.d.). *Long-term occupational projections (2022–2032)*. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. <https://projectionscentral.org/longterm>

5 The 2024 Labor Demand Occupations List was provided directly to the authors by staff at the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Office of Research and Information.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Workers and Gender Composition by Major Occupation Group in New Jersey (2019–2023)

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Percentage of Total Workforce	Percentage of Workers Who Are Women
11	Management	13.22	42.72
43	Office and Administrative Support	11.31	75.12
25	Education, Training, and Library	7.96	74.30
41	Sales and Related	7.78	45.09
13	Business and Financial Operations	7.57	49.99
53	Transportation and Material Moving	7.53	24.19
29	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	6.55	75.12
15	Computer and Mathematical	5.04	25.29
47	Construction and Extraction	4.10	2.87
51	Production	4.09	33.82
35	Food Preparation and Serving Related	3.00	51.22
31	Healthcare Support	2.98	85.73
37	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	2.88	39.52
33	Protective Service	2.59	18.20
49	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	2.55	2.49
17	Architecture and Engineering	2.07	14.51
21	Community and Social Service	1.96	68.18
39	Personal Care and Service	1.89	73.72
27	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1.85	50.02
23	Legal	1.51	54.08
19	Life, Physical, and Social Science	1.34	49.02
45	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.14	28.65
55	Military Specific	0.10	8.58
Total n		100.00 3,875,731	100.00 1,864,642

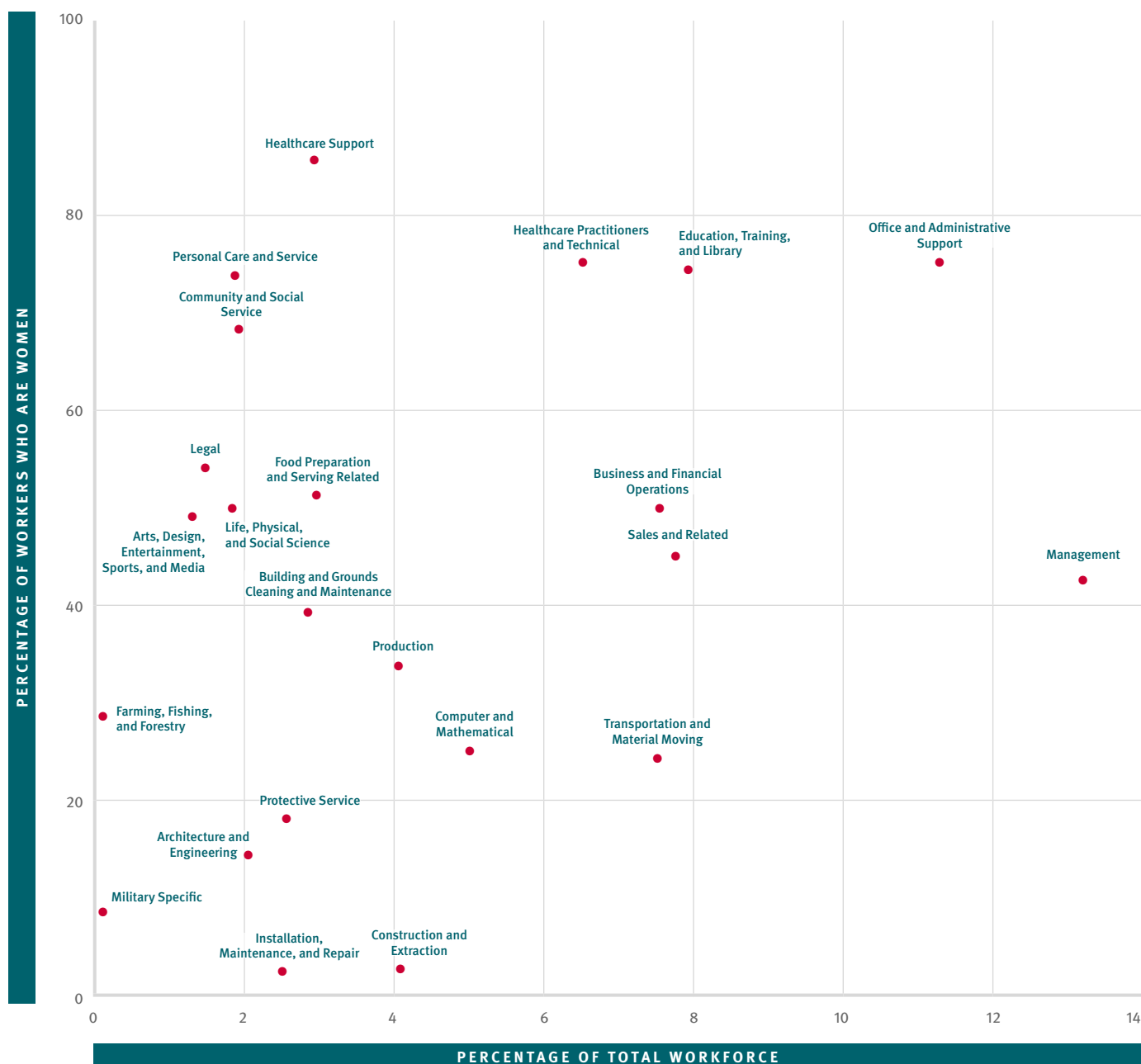
Source: Author’s calculations based on the 2019–2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Sample (IPUMS USA). “Percentage of Total Workforce” represents each occupation’s share of New Jersey’s civilian employed population aged 16 and older. “Percentage of Workers Who Are Women” reflects the weighted share of women within each occupation group.

This relationship between occupational distribution and gender composition is better exemplified in Figure 1. Occupations within the left-upper quadrant, such as healthcare support, personal care and service, and community and social service, are characterized by relatively low overall employment shares but very high concentrations of women, often exceeding 70%. In contrast, occupations located in the lower-right quadrant, such as management and transportation and material moving, represent larger shares of the total workforce but are male-dominated, with women comprising less than 50%,

and in some cases, less than 10% of workers. Occupations falling near the center of the chart, such as business and financial operations and sales and related, tend to have a more even distribution of men and women.

In New Jersey, the median earnings across all occupations is \$60,000. However, as Table 2 highlights, median earnings vary widely across occupations. Occupations with median earnings well above the state median, such as computer and mathematical (87.58 percentage points higher), management (82.22), legal (77.01), and architecture and engineering (67.15), tend to have disproportionately

FIGURE 1: Distribution of Women and Overall Employment Across Major Occupations in New Jersey (2019–2023)



low shares of women workers, with the exception of legal occupations. In particular, architecture and engineering and computer and mathematical occupations have among the lowest female representation among high-earning fields, with shares of women 33.33 and 22.55 percentage points below the statewide average, respectively.

TABLE 2: Median Occupational Earnings Compared to Statewide Median and Gender Representation in New Jersey (2018–2022)

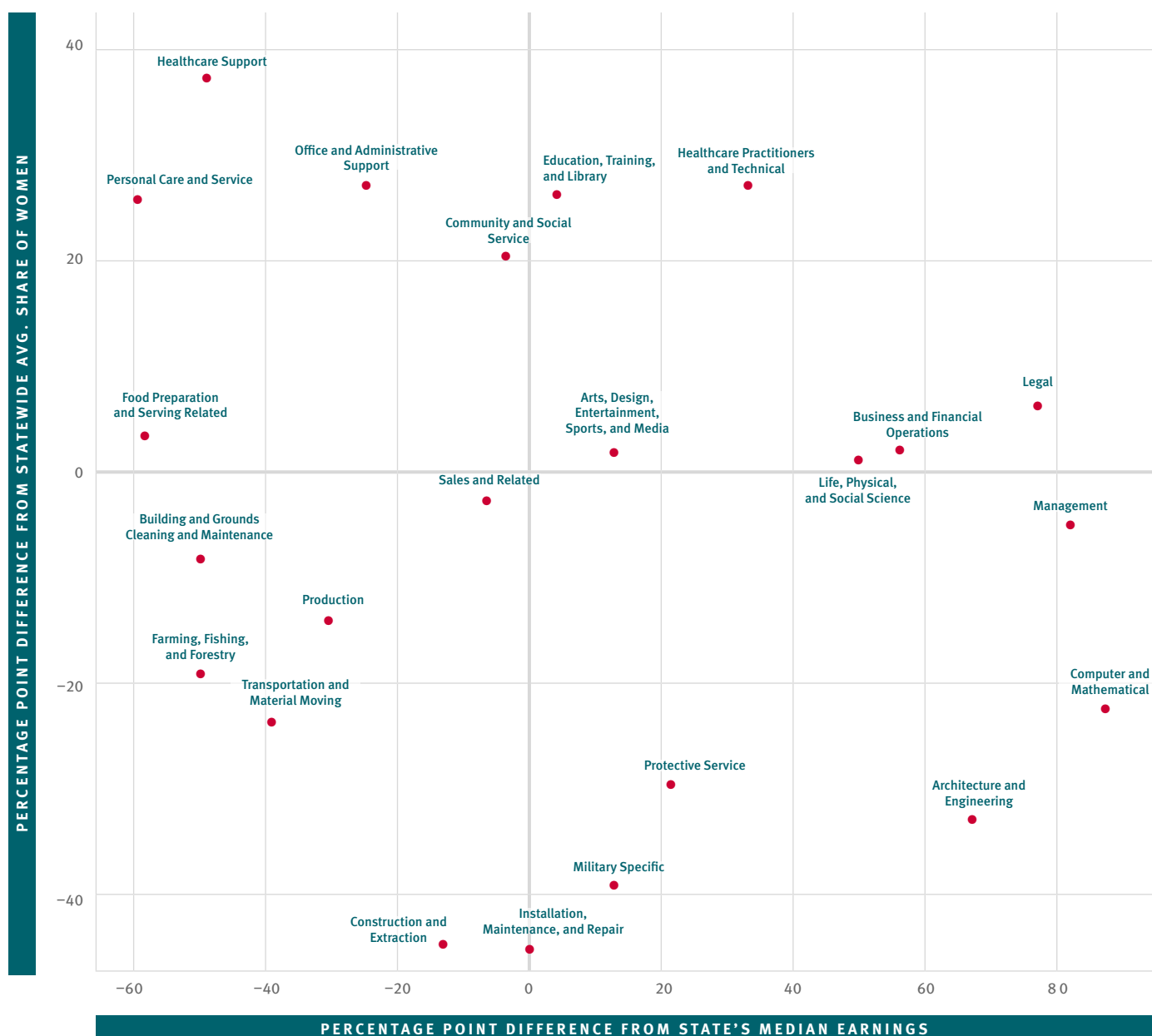
SOC Code	Occupation Title	Percentage Difference from State's Median Earnings	Percentage Point Difference from Statewide Average Share of Women in Workforce
15	Computer and Mathematical	87.58	–22.55
11	Management	82.22	–5.12
23	Legal	77.01	6.24
17	Architecture and Engineering	67.15	–33.33
13	Business and Financial Operation	56.19	2.15
19	Life, Physical, and Social Science	50.00	1.18
29	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	33.33	27.28
33	Protective Service	21.48	–29.64
27	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	12.80	2.18
55	Military Specific	12.55	–39.26
25	Education, Training, and Library	4.12	26.46
49	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	0.00	–45.35
21	Community and Social Service	–3.33	20.34
41	Sales and Related	–6.21	–2.75
47	Construction and Extraction	–13.23	–44.97
43	Office and Administrative Support	–24.97	27.28
51	Production	–30.58	–14.02
53	Transportation and Material Moving	–39.26	–23.65
31	Healthcare Support	–49.26	37.39
37	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	–50.00	–8.32
45	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	–50.00	–19.19
35	Food Preparation and Serving Related	–58.33	3.38
39	Personal Care and Service	–59.48	25.88
Statewide Median (all occupations)		60,000	47.84

Source: Author's calculations based on 2019–2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Sample. Percentage difference from the state median labor income (\$60,000). Percentage point difference in women's representation based on the statewide average of 47.87%.

To better illustrate disparities in pay and representation, and following the gender equity matrix outlined in the introduction, Figure 2 visually shows the relationship between occupational median earnings and female representation across occupations.

Occupations in the upper-left quadrant, such as healthcare support, office and administrative support, and personal care and service, represent care economy traps, where women are highly concentrated in low-wage jobs. Those in the upper-right quadrant, including education, training, and library and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations, are equity bright spots, combining above-average female representation with moderate to high earnings. Occupations in the lower-left quadrant, such as building and grounds cleaning, farming, fishing, and forestry, and transportation and material moving, fall into a vulnerable and overlooked category, offering both low earnings and low female representation. However, many of these jobs are also male-dominated low-wage occupations, underscoring the need to address inequities for both women and men in undervalued

FIGURE 2: Comparison of Occupational Median Earnings and Female Representation Relative to Statewide Medians in New Jersey



sectors. Finally, the lower-right quadrant includes computer and mathematical, architecture and engineering, and management—high-paying fields that represent persistent equity gaps, where women remain significantly underrepresented despite the promise of economic mobility.

2. Gender Distribution and Earnings Gaps in High-Growth Occupations by Educational Attainment

This section applies the gender equity matrix framework to occupations identified in the 2024 Labor Demand Occupations List from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Office of Research and Information. To focus the analysis, occupations are classified as “high-paying” if their median annual earnings fall within the top quartile ($\geq \$101,295$), and as “low-paying” if they fall within the bottom quartile ($\leq \$33,037$) of all employed workers in New Jersey aged 16 and over. Gender representation is categorized using 48%, the approximate share of women in New Jersey’s overall workforce, as a threshold. Occupations with 48% or more women are classified as “high % women,” while those with less than 48% are considered “low % women.”

TABLE 3: Gender Equity Matrix of High-Growth Occupations in New Jersey: Projected Growth, Pay, and Women’s Representation

Equity bright spots (high pay, high % women)		Equity gaps (high pay, low % women)	
Occupation	Projected Growth Rate for 2024*	Occupation	Projected Growth Rate for 2024*
Physician Assistants	34.1%	Information Security Analysts	24.4%
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	15.1%	Software Developers	19.2%
Financial Managers	12.8%	Industrial Engineers	13.0%
Natural Sciences Managers	5.9%	Computer and Information Systems Managers	10.2%
		Dentists, General	8.9%
		Personal Financial Advisors	8.3%
		Management Analysts	6.7%
		Project Management Specialists	6.0%
		Physicians, All Other	5.4%
		Electrical Engineers	4.9%
Care economy traps (low pay, high % women)		Vulnerable and overlooked (low pay, low % women)	
Occupation	Projected Growth Rate for 2024*	Occupation	Projected Growth Rate for 2024*
Physical Therapist Assistants	33.9%	Motor Vehicle Operators, All Other	14.4%
Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	24.8%	Coaches and Scouts	13.2%
Massage Therapists	23.6%	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	12.8%
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	22.2%	Stockers and Order Fillers	9.9%
Animal Caretakers	19.3%	Bakers	9.5%
Packers and Packers, Hand	17.3%	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	6.4%
Manicurists and Pedicurists	15.2%	Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	6.0%

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TABLE 3 *continued*

Care economy traps (low pay, high % women)	
Occupation	Projected Growth Rate for 2024*
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	14.5%
Food Batchmakers	11.5%
Dental Assistants	11.3%
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	11.0%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other	9.5%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	9.2%
Tutors	8.2%
Pharmacy Technicians	8.1%
Bartenders	7.6%
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	7.2%
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	7.0%
Physical Therapist Aides	6.9%
“Electrical, electronic, and electromechanical assemblers, except coil winders, tapers, and finishers”	6.2%
Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers	5.7%
Food Servers, Non-restaurant	5.6%
Recreation Workers	5.6%
Counter and Rental Clerks	5.3%
Receptionists and Information Clerks	5.3%

*Percentages based on data from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Labor Demand Occupations List.

Conclusion

As New Jersey prepares for significant employment growth over the next decade, aligning education and workforce development with gender equity goals is more urgent than ever. This brief has highlighted the persistent gender differences in occupational representation and earnings. While some occupations, particularly in health care, education, and certain management roles, offer meaningful opportunities for women to advance in both earnings and workforce presence, others remain deeply male-dominated and structurally resistant to gender integration or are low-paying overall. As state policymakers, education leaders, and workforce agencies continue to shape the future of workforce development, it is essential not only to maintain progress in existing equity bright spots but also to address the barriers found in equity gaps, care economy traps, and vulnerable and overlooked occupations. Particular attention should be given to targeted investments in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and higher education pathways that expand women’s access to high-

wage, high-growth fields, especially in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), finance, and technical trades. This includes addressing the systemic biases in recruitment, training, and credentialing that often channel women into lower paying roles or limit their mobility within male-dominated sectors.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Beltran Figueroa, L. Examining Gender Equity: A Snapshot of New Jersey's High-Growth Occupations. June, 2025. Center for Women and Work. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This issue brief was authored by the Rutgers Center for Women and Work with funding support from the State of Employment and Training Commission's Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education, State of New Jersey.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR WOMEN AND WORK

The Center for Women and Work (CWW) engages in research, education and programming that promotes economic and social equity for women workers, their families, and communities. CWW's work focuses on addressing women's advancement in the workplace; providing technical assistance and designing programming for educators, industry, and government; and, engaging in issues that directly affect the living standards of working families in New Jersey and around the world.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL ON GENDER PARITY

The Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education's mission is to recommend policies, strategies and programs that address gender-based barriers and encourage equal participation of students and workers in education, training, and employment. The Council on Gender Parity in Labor and Education is housed within the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission and funded through the New Jersey State Budget.