

Immigrants in New Jersey's Workforce

For decades, the state of New Jersey has attracted immigrants from around the world. Today, it is home to more than [2 million immigrants](#), making up nearly 23 percent of the state's population. Immigrants in the Garden State are more likely to be working-age than their U.S.-born counterparts (79.3 percent compared to 60.0 percent), making them more likely to be active in the labor force. It also allows them to contribute to the economy not only as consumers but also as taxpayers, helping to fund social services and programs like Medicare and Social Security.

New Americans in New Jersey are also a crucial part of the state's economy, working in some of the state's fastest-growing and most in-demand fields, including education, healthcare, and mental health.

For New Jersey to remain competitive and meet the critical workforce shortages in many of these fields, it will be crucial to implement policies that not only attract and retain immigrant talent that is complementary to the U.S.-born workforce, but that also build career pathways for the immigrants that already call the state home.

One way to achieve this goal is to expand access to occupational licenses for non-citizens. New Jersey law currently prohibits hundreds of thousands of non-citizens from obtaining occupational licenses in high-demand fields solely due to their immigration status. More than a dozen states have taken steps to remove such barriers to obtaining licenses, including Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming. By passing Assembly Bill 4225/Senate Bill 2455, New Jersey can follow suit, thereby expanding economic opportunity for all residents and helping to meet the state's pressing workforce needs.

K-12 EDUCATION

A recent report¹ found that New Jersey is facing a teacher shortage in science, math, bilingual education, English as a second language, special education, world languages, and career and technical education. But while demand continues to grow, especially in areas like bilingual education for limited English proficient students, districts are struggling to meet teacher requirements. Immigrants are already playing an outsize role in helping fill these positions, but as the gap continues to widen — with in-state preparation of teachers dropping by 18 percent between 2013 and 2016 and a growing discrepancy in educators of color compared to the student demographics — more can be done to meet the demand.

From 2014 to 2018, online job postings for K-12 teaching positions² increased by

+31.8% ● → ●

The share of immigrants in occupations that require an education certificate or license grew from 11.1% in 2014 to 13.5% in 2018.

From 2014 to 2018, participation in K-12 teaching positions increased by

+26.0% among Immigrants

+0.8% among U.S.-born

From 2014 to 2018, Middle School Teachers were the most popular job posting in education and increased by

+50.0% ● → ●

Other popular occupations include Teaching Assistants and Secondary School Teachers.

NURSING

New Jersey is also facing critical healthcare shortages and is expected to face a shortfall of 11,400 Registered Nurses (RNs) by 2030, a deficit only exceeded by California and Texas.³ It is also one of 33 states that will face a shortage of Licensed Professional Nurses (LPNs), with a projected deficit of 3,100 nurses. While immigrant nurses have helped fill many of these roles, as experienced nurses continue to retire, this gap will only become more unsustainable, especially as the need for bilingual and culturally competent care increases.

From 2014 to 2018, online job postings for Nurses⁴ increased by

+90.5% ● → ●



From 2014 to 2018, the share of immigrants in occupations that required a nursing certificate or license ranged from **33-35%**.

From 2015-2019, job postings that require a certificate or license increased by



From 2015 to 2019, Registered Nurses were the most popular job posting in nursing and increased by

+78.8% ● → ●

Licensed Practical Nurses & Licensed Vocational Nurses were also popular during that time and increased by

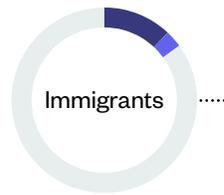
+49.3% ● → ●

SOCIAL WORK AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

As our population continues to age and the nation, states, and cities grapple with their response to homelessness, incarceration, and the opioid crisis, the demand for social workers and behavioral health experts continues to grow. Despite this growing need, New Jersey is projected to see shortages for behavioral health experts like addiction counselors and mental health counselors by 2030.⁵

From 2014 to 2018, online job postings for Social Workers & Counselors⁶ increased by

+73.5% ● → ●



From 2014 to 2018, the share of immigrants in social work and counseling occupations ranged from **12-15%**.

The most popular occupations from the social work and counseling industry include Social Workers (including Healthcare Social Workers) and Mental Health Counselors.

Immigrants across the skills spectrum play a critical role in New Jersey's economy. As in-demand fields like healthcare, education, and social work continue to face a shrinking labor pool, immigrants will continue to care for, educate, and protect the state's future.

ENDNOTES

- 1 JerseyCAN (2020). The State of the New Jersey Education Workforce. Available at: <https://jerseycan.org/ourwork/new-jerseys-educator-workforce/>
- 2 These positions listed educational certificates as a requirement.
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (2017). National and Regional Supply and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014-2030. Available at: https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/nchwa/projections/NCHWA_HRSA_Nursing_Report.pdf
- 4 These positions listed nursing certificates as a requirement.
- 5 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (2018). State-Level Projections of Supply and Demand for Behavioral Health Occupations: 2016-2030, Available at: <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/nchwa/projections/state-level-estimates-report-2018.pdf>
- 6 These positions listed social work or counseling certificates as a requirement.