



WORKFORCE STUDY

Inside the blueprint to scale New Castle County's high-growth industries and bridge the state's most critical talent gaps.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How we're aligning the talent behind 60% of Delaware's economy to power the future of healthcare and innovation.



BACKGROUND

New Castle County and the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce have partnered to conduct a comprehensive workforce study to better understand the county's workforce trends, emerging industries, and future talent needs. As Delaware's economic engine, New Castle County accounts for 60% of the state's population and the majority of high-growth, advanced industries.

The study identifies the county's strongest-performing sectors, the most urgent workforce challenges—particularly in healthcare—and actionable strategies to align education, training, and economic development initiatives.

KEY FINDINGS & ECONOMIC CONTEXT



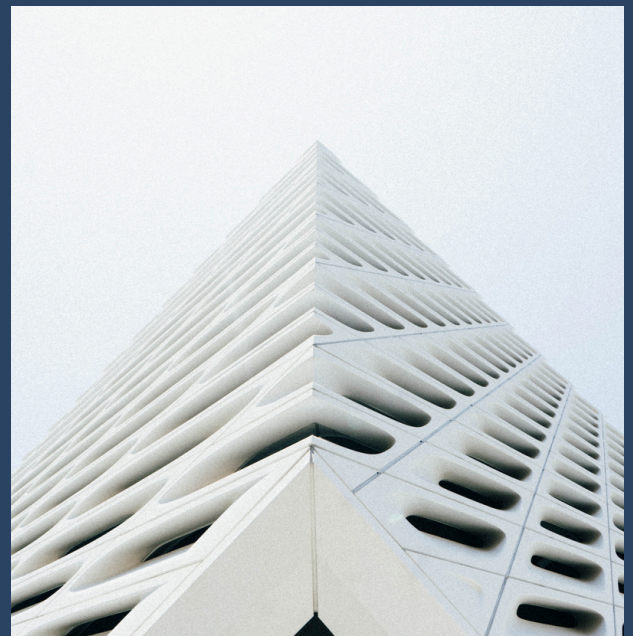
New Castle County maintains a distinct economic profile compared with Kent and Sussex Counties. While state government and tourism dominate the economies of the southern two counties, New Castle County is home to advanced industries including life sciences, finance, logistics, manufacturing, and technology. These sectors demand a highly skilled, technically trained workforce.

- Transportation & Warehousing, Health Care & Social Assistance, Manufacturing, and Finance & Insurance are among the top emerging industries.
- High-growth sectors face persistent challenges in retention and turnover, especially in health care.
- A coordinated county-level strategy is needed to expand talent pipelines, strengthen retention, and prepare residents for high-wage, high-demand careers.

KEY INDICATORS:

- Population: 578,592 (60% of Delaware)
- Labor Force: 304,445
- Unemployment: 5.3% (Aug. 2025), up from 3.8% at the start of the year
- Median Age: 39.8 (younger than Delaware overall)
- Education: 92.1% high school completion; 40.7% bachelor's degree or higher (above state and national rates)
- Median Household Income: \$86,961 (10% above Delaware; above U.S.)
- Homeownership: 70% of occupied units

While these indicators suggest a strong economic base, the increasing unemployment rate underscores the need for inclusive workforce strategies that expand access to training, career pathways, and higher-wage jobs. To guide these strategies and identify where high-wage, high-demand careers are emerging, the study analyzed New Castle County's industry performance.



EMERGING INDUSTRIES

The MPI analysis identifies 19 industries with statistically significant performance. The top eight industries exceed the all-industry average score of 50.77.

TOP EMERGING INDUSTRIES (RANKED BY MPI SCORE)

Rank	Industry (NAICS)	Weighted MPI Score (1-100)	Key Takeaways
1	Transportation & Warehousing (48-49)	72	Strongest overall growth historically (55% increase in jobs since 2019) and projected employment growth (3,110 new jobs). Moderate wages but high economic impact due to rapid expansion.
2	Health Care & Social Assistance (62)	64	Steady growth (15.91% projected job growth) with above-average wages; consistent employment growth.
3	Utilities (22)	63	High wages (average salary of \$2,491/week), stable employment growth, significant historical establishment growth.
4	Manufacturing (31-33)	58	Strongest historical sales growth (although measured over 3 years instead of 10); slightly slower projected sales.
5	Finance & Insurance (52)	56	High wages, moderate percentage growth (2,360 new jobs).
6	Wholesale Trade (42)	55	Moderate historical employment growth; strong projected sales.
7	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (54)	53	High wages; projected employment decline (-6.85%), significant establishment growth.
8	Construction (23)	51	Moderate wages; steady employment and establishment growth.

Based on its ranking, size, and critical role as a major employer, Health Care & Social Assistance warrants a deeper, stand-alone analysis to address urgent workforce challenges.

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: DETAILED ANALYSIS

Sector Overview

- Current employment: 58,600 (2025)
- Historical employment growth: 4%
- Projected employment growth: nearly 16%
- Establishment growth: 15%
- Average wages: \$77,000 (broad range across occupations)

Occupational Demand

- High-demand roles include:
- Registered Nurses (RNs) – 463 openings (434 from turnover)
- Personal Care Aides (PCAs) – 1,034 openings (90% from turnover)
- Nursing Assistants – 480 openings (almost entirely turnover-driven)
- Advanced roles showing highest percentage growth include:
- Nurse Practitioners – 4.03% growth
- Data Scientists – 2.92% growth, reflecting rising health-tech alignment

Key Workforce Challenges

- Persistent turnover in direct care roles
- Wage disparities across occupations
- High demand for both advanced practice and frontline workers
- Strong employer need for retention-focused strategies

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the county's workforce and support emerging industries—especially Health Care—New Castle County should pursue the following priorities.

1. **Employer Engagement:** Work with major healthcare and advanced-industry employers to better align training, credentialing, and hiring pipelines.
2. **Workforce Retention Strategies:** Prioritize competitive compensation, structured onboarding, career pathways, flexible scheduling, and culture and wellness initiatives—especially for direct-care roles.
3. **Pipeline Development:** Grow partnerships like NCCVT/Nemours to provide early exposure, internships, and clear career pathways, including both clinical and trades-based roles that support healthcare facilities.

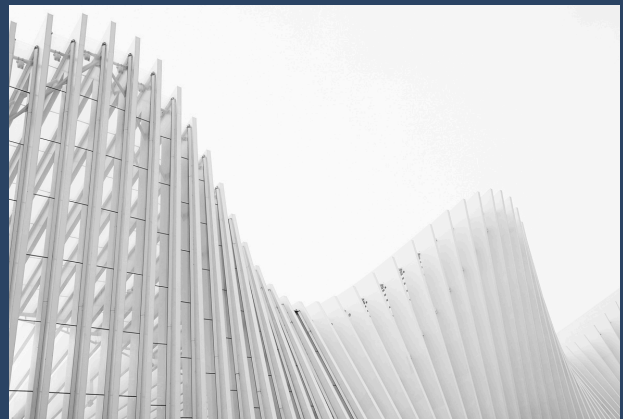
1. BACKGROUND

Recognizing the importance of public–private partnership as a driver of economic success, New Castle County and the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce have joined forces to conduct a county–centric workforce study. Strategic collaboration between local government and the business community enables the effective sharing of resources and expertise to maximize impact. Both the County and the Chamber share a longstanding commitment to ensuring that New Castle County’s workforce is prepared to meet the evolving needs of employers and to strengthening talent pipelines through education, training, and career development.

DRIVING ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Workforce readiness and skills development are essential to maintaining New Castle County’s competitiveness as a center for business growth and innovation. Both parties recognize that the County’s workforce dynamics and industry mix differ significantly from those of Kent and Sussex Counties—where state government and seasonal tourism, respectively, play larger roles in the economy. In contrast, New Castle County is home to a concentration of advanced industries including life sciences, financial services, logistics, manufacturing, and technology. These sectors demand a workforce with highly technical, evolving skills, strong educational attainment, and access to ongoing training opportunities.

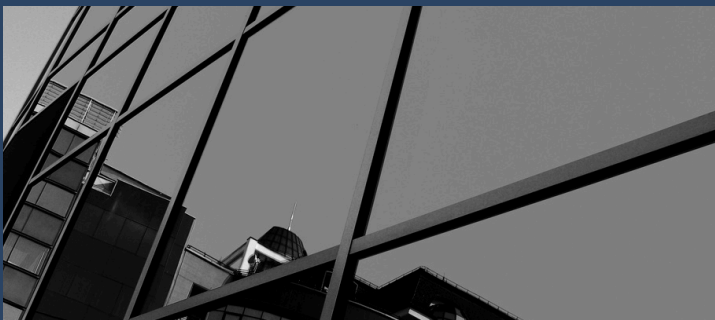
New Castle County is Delaware’s economic engine, home to approximately 60% (578,592) of the state’s residents and labor force (304,445).[1,2] The unemployment rate rose to 5.3% in August 2025, up from 3.8% at the beginning of the year.[3] It is important to note that the traditional unemployment rate does not account for individuals not actively seeking work (the discouraged workers) and those who are underemployed, which is an important consideration when planning upskilling and workforce development initiatives.



BACKGROUND CONTINUED

The county's largest sectors in 2024 included Health Care & Social Assistance (56,880 jobs) and Finance & Insurance (38,376 jobs), reflecting its advanced-industry concentration.[4] This aligns with broader state trends, where Health Care & Social Assistance is the top sector in Kent County, and a very close second in Sussex County (the difference between #1 and #2 is fewer than 200 jobs).[5] However, there are notable regional differences: in Kent County, Public Administration is the second-largest sector, while in Sussex County, Accommodation & Food Services ranks first, reflecting the county-specific economic drivers such as government services and tourism.[6]

The average commute time is 27.2 minutes, which is on par with the national average. However, thanks to the county's strategic location, it draws workforce talent from Pennsylvania, Southern New Jersey, Maryland, and other parts of Delaware, highlighting its role as a regional employment hub. Demographically, New Castle County maintains a younger, working-age population compared to the rest of the state and is on-par with the nation. The median age in New Castle County is 39.8 years, compared to 42 years in Delaware overall, and 39.2 years nationally.



Educational attainment among working-age residents in New Castle County shows that approximately 92.1% have at least a high school diploma, and 40.7% hold a bachelor's degree or higher.[7] While the high school grad rate is on par with state and national averages, the proportion of residents with a bachelor's degree is notable, exceeding both Delaware and U.S. rates of approximately 36%. This distribution highlights the need to expand upskilling and reskilling pathways, particularly in technical and STEM-related fields critical to the county's advanced industries.

Socioeconomic indicators provide further context for workforce planning. The median household income of \$86,961 is roughly 10% higher than the Delaware average and above the U.S. median, suggesting a relatively stable economic base.[8] High homeownership rates (70% of occupied units) reinforce this stability, though they also underscore the need for training programs to lead to quality, family-sustaining jobs rather than entry-level positions alone.[9] The county's poverty rate of approximately 11% highlights equity and inclusion challenges, signaling that workforce strategies must address barriers to access for residents who face economic hardship.[10] Occupational composition also points to workforce development priorities: roughly 27% of workers are in Sales & Office roles, reflecting a large segment in generalist positions, while emerging sectors such as life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and fintech will require shifts toward more technical skills.[11]

STUDY OVERVIEW

With that Background context, the Chamber, with guidance from the County, initiated, managed, and delivered a comprehensive New Castle County Workforce Study.

This study:

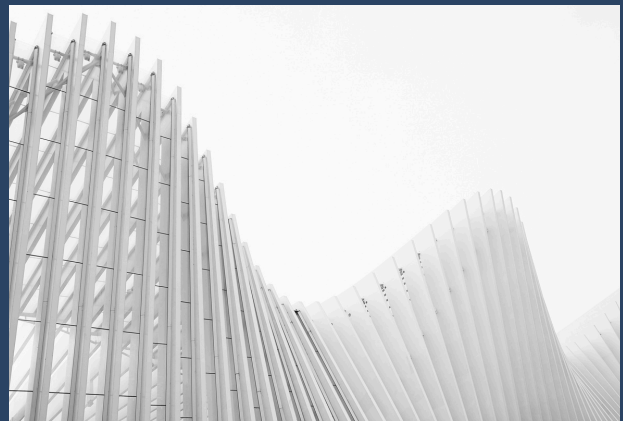
- Analyzes the current workforce composition, including demographic and industry characteristics; and
- Identifies emerging trends and future occupational requirements.

A second part of this study will:

- Recommend actionable strategies to align education, training, and economic development efforts with employer needs.

FILLING A CRITICAL GAP

While existing workforce studies produced by the Delaware Workforce Development Board provide valuable statewide insights, this County-focused analysis will fill a critical gap by addressing the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities within New Castle County. To move from this broad context to actionable priorities, the study next identifies and evaluates the county's emerging industries.



2. EMERGING INDUSTRIES

New Castle County is home to a diverse and evolving economic landscape. To identify the county's emerging industries and the opportunities they present, this study utilizes a technique adapted from the 2020–21 Kent County Industry Study Update by Rockport Analytics and analyzes historical and projected industry data using a customized Market Power Index (MPI). This analysis considers factors such as historical and projected sales growth, wages, employment trends, and establishment growth to highlight sectors that are driving economic development and workforce opportunities (See Figure 1 Next Page).



THE LOGIC

The logic behind the MPI measures is as follows:

- Historical Growth in Sales – Identifies sectors that have demonstrated strong past performance. Growing industries indicate sustained demand and stability.
- Projected Sales Growth – Evaluates expected future growth. Industries with higher projected growth are critical for planning workforce and economic development initiatives.
- Average Salary per Worker – Higher wages indicate greater economic impact and contribution to the local economy.
- Historical Employment Growth – Shows how industries have expanded their workforce locally over time.
- Projected Employment Growth – Estimates future workforce changes, highlighting sectors likely to create new job opportunities in New Castle County.

By combining these measures into a weighted index, the MPI provides a comprehensive view of which industries are most dynamic, economically impactful, and positioned for growth, guiding workforce development and strategic planning efforts across the county.

FIGURE 1: MARKET POWER INDEX (MPI) FOR NEW CASTLE COUNTY

Industry Performance Measure	Time Period	Units	Data Source	MPI Weight
Historical growth in sales	2013-2023	Compound Annual Growth (CAGR) %	U.S., Bureau of Economic Analysis, GDP by Industry	10%
Projected U.S. sector sales growth	2024-2034	Compound Annual Rate of Change, Output %	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections Program, Employment and Output by Industry	10%
Average Salary per Worker	2018	Nominal \$	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census Employment & Wages (QCEW)	20%
Historical Employment Growth	2019Q4 and 2023Q4	% Change	Delaware Department of Labor, Quarterly Census Employment & Wages (QCEW)	20%
Projected Employment Growth	2022-2032	% Change	Delaware Department of Labor, Long-Term Industry Projections	20%

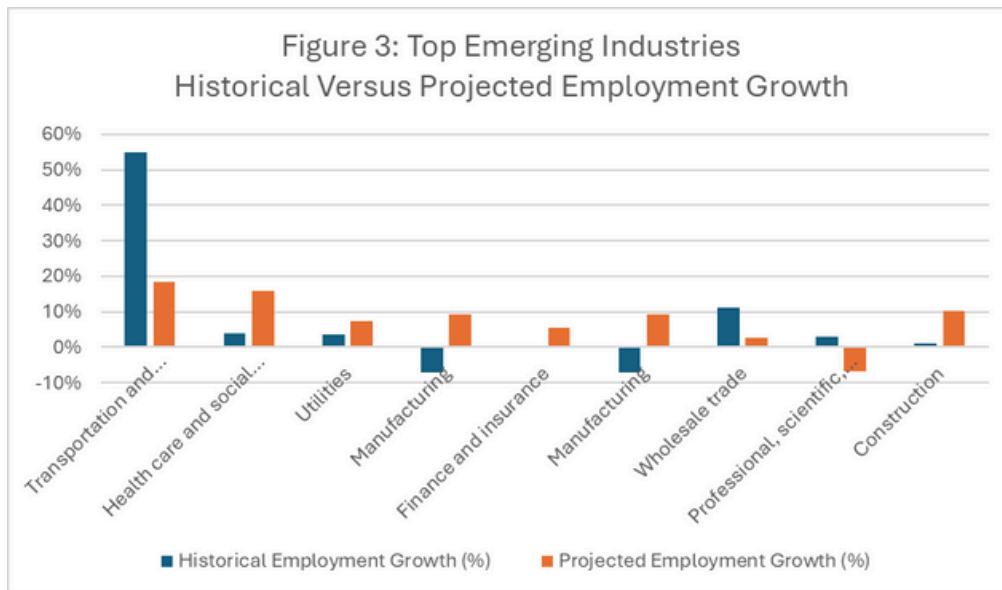
The results reveal several high-performing sectors that are key drivers of growth in New Castle County. These top eight industries score above the all-industry average of 50.77 (see Figure 2). In total, 19 industries show statistically significant performance, with scores ranging from 72 to 32.

FIGURE 2: TOP EIGHT EMERGING INDUSTRIES IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY (RANKED BY MPI SCORE)

Rank	Industry (NAICS)	Weighted MPI Score (1-100)	Key Takeaways
1	Transportation & Warehousing (48-49)	72	Strongest overall growth historically and projected employment growth. Moderate wages but high economic impact due to rapid expansion.
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An analysis of the employment metrics for these top emerging industries reveals key divergences between past performance and future needs. The historical employment growth compared to the projected employment growth for the top eight sectors is visually represented in Figure 3. These comparisons are critical for aligning workforce development programs with both current and future labor demands.

FIGURE 3: TOP EMERGING INDUSTRIES



Overall, New Castle County's emerging industries reflect a dynamic economy with a mix of high-growth, high-wage sectors and opportunities for workforce development. By focusing on the industries that combine strong growth potential with economic impact, the County and Chamber can better align training programs, talent pipelines, and business development efforts to ensure that the local workforce is prepared for the evolving demands of the regional economy. The following section provides a deep dive into the sector that demonstrates both strong projected growth and the most urgent need for strategic workforce intervention. As the second-ranked sector and the county's largest employer, Health Care & Social Assistance provides a critical case study.

- Transportation and Warehousing ranks as New Castle County's top emerging sector. Employment has surged by 55% since 2019—far surpassing the next closest sector, Manufacturing, at 16%.^[12] It is projected to grow another 18.28%, adding approximately 3,110 jobs.^[13] The sector also boasts the second-highest historical sales growth, with a CAGR of 10.8%.^[14] Average wages are moderate (\$979/week), but the sector's rapid expansion highlights its significant economic impact and workforce development potential.^[15]
- Health Care and Social Assistance is another leading industry, combining steady growth with generally competitive wages, though significant differences exist between occupations. This sector offers stable employment opportunities with a projected employment growth of 15.91% and plays a critical role in supporting the county's residents and broader economy.^[16] Compared to Transportation and Warehousing, Health Care's growth rate may be lower, though it represents a larger total of 7,780 jobs. A more detailed analysis of this sector follows in the next section.
- Utilities benefit from high wages (\$2,491/week) and stable employment trends. While the sector has experienced 4% historical growth and is projected to grow 7.43%, this percentage translates to only 110 additional jobs, reflecting the industry's smaller overall size compared with other emerging sectors.^[17]
- Manufacturing stands out for its strong historical sales growth, boasting the highest compound annual growth rate at 11.7%; however, it is important to note that the CAGR was calculated over a shorter period (3 years) due to data availability, compared with 10 years for other sectors.^[18] The sector also expects to add more than 1,000 jobs by 2031, further solidifying its importance to the county's industrial base.^[19]
- Other sectors, including Finance and Insurance, Wholesale Trade, and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, offer significant opportunities for skilled labor. While the growth rate of these industries is not as high as Transportation or Health Care, their high wages make them important contributors to the county's economic vitality. Notably, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services is the only industry among the top eight projected to lose jobs by 2032, with a decrease of about 1,440 jobs (6.85%). Wholesale Trade is expected to grow modestly at 2.75% (240 jobs), and Finance and Insurance at 5.58%.^[20] However, because Finance and Insurance is a large sector, even this relatively small percentage growth represents approximately 2,360 new jobs, highlighting its continued economic significance.^[21]
- Outside the top eight, several industries present more mixed trends. Industries such as Educational Services, Real Estate, and Public Administration fall near the midpoint, reflecting steady but unspectacular growth. These often have stable employment but lower productivity or slower sales growth. Nonetheless, they play a vital role in supporting the county's economy and contribute to the overall attractiveness of the area for the workforce.
- Information, Retail Trade, and Administrative Support exhibit declining employment patterns, suggesting the need for strategic planning to address workforce transitions. Meanwhile, industries such as Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation and Accommodation and Food Services demonstrate uneven growth and lower wage levels, highlighting potential areas for targeted workforce support or upskilling initiatives.

3. HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Overall Performance

The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector (NAICS 62) continues to demonstrate resilience and growth across nearly all measures. Due to steady historical expansion and robust future employment projections, it ranks among the top-performing service industries in the MPI Scorecard. With a weighted MPI score of 63.73, the sector ranks second in New Castle County, demonstrating both strong performance and future potential. Its strength lies in employment resilience and community importance, although sales growth and output productivity lag slightly behind high-tech or finance sectors.

Employer feedback, particularly from Nemours Children’s Health, provides detailed insight into the specific workforce issues affecting pediatric care and reinforces the broader dynamics shaping the sector.

Employment & Establishment Trends

The Health Care and Social Assistance sector in New Castle County has a large footprint, reaching approximately 58,600 workers at the beginning of 2025.[22] Historical employment growth of around 4% indicates steady expansion, while projected employment increasing to nearly 16% signals significant labor demand in the coming years.[23] Establishment growth of approximately 15% suggests new facilities and service providers are entering the market, likely potentially driven by an aging population and increasing healthcare needs.[24]

Sales & Output

Sales in the sector have historically grown at 4.9% CAGR, outpacing many service industries, though future sales growth is projected to moderate to 2.8%, implying a stabilizing but mature market.[25] Gross output averages around 3,802 index units, highlighting the industry’s significant economic contribution among Delaware industries.[26]

Wages & Productivity

Average wages in the sector are approximately \$77,000, reflecting a broad occupational mix that ranges from direct care aids to specialized medical practitioners.[27]

Productivity, measured as output per worker, appears steady but not leading, indicating that employment growth is driven more by increased service demand than efficiency gains.

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CONTINUED

Occupational Trends [28]

The backbone of the sector is formed by its largest occupations, which account for the majority of current jobs and future openings (See Figure 4 Below).

Occupation	Current Employment (Jobs)	Total 1-Year Demand	Demand from Growth (New Jobs)	Demand from Turnover (Exits & Transfers)
Registered Nurses	8,425	463	29	434
Personal Care Aides	6,369	1,034	103	931
Nursing Assistants	3,382	480	0	480

FIGURE 4: HIGH-DEMAND HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OCCUPATIONS, 1-YEAR DEMAND, 2025Q1

While demand is high, retention is a significant challenge, particularly for direct care workers. Personal Care Aides have the highest projected one-year total demand at 1,034 openings – more than double that of Registered Nurses. Crucially, 90% of the total demand (930.7 openings) is due to high turnover indicated by Exits and Transfers (495.5 and 435.2, respectively), indicating a possible retention and turnover problem. Similarly, Nursing Assistants face high turnover, with nearly all of their 480 projected openings driven by exits and transfers. These roles also have lower average wages, at \$32,200 for PCAs and \$43,300 for Nursing Assistants—further underscoring retention challenges.

At the other end of the wage spectrum, highly specialized medical practitioners command the top salaries. Dermatologists, Pediatric Surgeons, Cardiologists, Radiologists, Surgeons (all other), Orthopedic Surgeons (Except Pediatric), and Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons all earn more than \$350,000 annually. Given that New Castle County does not have a medical school, attracting these professionals requires targeted recruitment strategies.

Some of the fastest-growing roles indicate where the job market is expanding beyond simply replacing existing workers.

- Nurse Practitioners show the strongest growth at over 4.03%. This points to a clear trend toward expanding the role of advanced practice nurses in the healthcare system.
- Data Scientists have the second-highest growth at approximately 2.92%, highlighting the growing importance of data-driven decision-making and technological innovation within the Health Care and Social Assistance sector. This trend also reflects cross-sector applicability, as data analytics skills are increasingly valuable in other high-performing industries—such as Logistics, the county’s top-ranked emerging sector—amplifying their broader economic benefit to New Castle County.

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CONTINUED

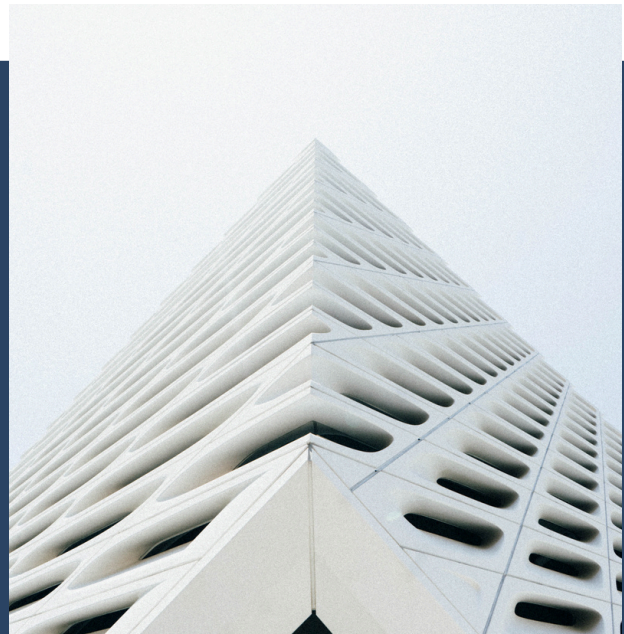
There is a notable and persistent demand for Registered Nurses (RNs) in New Castle County. Based solely on employment growth, the county requires 29 new RNs, a demand that could be easily met by the University of Delaware and Wilmington University, which annually graduate over 150 and 100 nurses, respectively. However, employers cite difficulty retaining graduates from the University of Delaware who often return to their home states if a job is not lined up out of college.

Additionally, when accounting for exits and transfers, total demand rises to 463 openings, which is likely to exceed the county's workforce capacity. As with PCAs, most RN demand (434 openings) is driven by turnover rather than growth, underscoring the critical need for retention initiatives for high-wage professionals.

The data demonstrates that turnover remains consistently high across Personal Care Aides, Nursing Assistants, and Registered Nurses. Employers consistently cite several structural challenges contributing to these shortages, including:

- Intense competition among systems for workforce development grants
- Limited capacity in LPN-to-RN (Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse) training programs
- Skill mismatches between training curriculum and employer needs

Nemours' experience mirrors these trends, offering a case example of how pediatric systems in particular face disproportionately high barriers.



PEDIATRIC EMPLOYER INSIGHTS: NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Clinical Training Misalignment

Many Medical Assistant (MA) programs are designed around adult-patient care. Nemours reports that MA students frequently lack pediatric-specific preparation, leading to attrition during clinical rotations. In response, Nemours developed an internal MA cohort model with strong outcomes:

- 50 students have completed Nemours' internal MA pathway
- 38 remain employed
- 35 have advanced into nursing programs

These results highlight the value of career-lattice models, but also the persistent inadequacy of traditional training programs, especially in preparing workers for pediatric care. Financial barriers also remain significant for MA candidates, reinforcing the importance of tuition-reimbursement pathways.

Systemwide Staffing Constraints

As a smaller health system, Nemours must compete with regional hospitals that have more robust human resources infrastructure and can attract a greater portion of workforce development funding. Shortages span nearly all roles—clinical, nonclinical, and research-support. To maintain operations amid chronic shortages, Nemours now requires departments to forecast hiring needs six months in advance.

Nonclinical and Facilities Roles

Nemours emphasized that shortages extend beyond clinical staff. High-turnover positions such as Sterile Processing Technicians, as well as critical infrastructure roles (HVAC, electrical, plumbing), often lack strong training pipelines. Nemours emphasized that shortages extend beyond clinical staff. High-turnover positions such as Sterile Processing Technicians, as well as critical infrastructure roles (HVAC, electrical, plumbing), often lack strong training pipelines. A Sterile Processing Technician is a high-turnover position requiring only a high school diploma; Nemours looking for a grant to use a Penn-credentialed trainer. Nemours collaborates with community partners to implement "train-then-retain" strategies and is exploring expansion of its existing high school co-op program to include infrastructure-focused pilot tracks.

PEDIATRIC EMPLOYER INSIGHTS: NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH CONTINUED

Nursing Pathway Barriers

Nemours emphasized that while the current LPN-to-RN bridge program at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) is strong, capacity remains far too limited. DTCC offers only 20 seats statewide, forcing many Nemours employees to seek nursing advancement opportunities across state lines. At the same time, many University of Delaware nursing graduates return to New York and New Jersey after completing their degrees, further constraining the local RN supply. Better aligning job offers with graduation timelines is critical to retaining these out-of-state students and strengthening Delaware's nursing workforce.

Recruitment Challenges

Recruiting pediatric specialists often requires aggressive incentives, including relocation packages, sign-on bonuses, and "pay-to-move" arrangements. Many nurse anesthetists train at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, creating a cross-state pipeline that does not consistently return talent to Delaware.

Youth Pipeline Innovation: Nemours High-School Healthcare Program

Nemours has developed a nationally notable high-school healthcare pipeline, which introduces students to clinical environments early to encourage long-term interest in pediatric careers.

Program strengths include:

- On-site experience in Nemours clinical settings
- Exposure to MA, nursing, and support care roles
- Reinforcing the pathway from high school to MA to nursing
- Improving readiness for pediatric practice

This approach validates the need for earlier career exposure and demonstrates a model for addressing turnover by preparing workers before they enter traditional credentialing programs.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with major healthcare employers—including ChristianaCare and Nemours—can help coordinate and scale workforce strategies across the county. Based on Nemours' insights, several countywide recommendations emerge:

1. Expand Nursing Advancement Capacity
 - a. Increase LPN-to-RN bridge seats at Delaware Technical Community College from 20 to at least 50.
 - b. Explore employer-aligned seat allocations to ensure access for incumbent workers.
2. Upskilling and Workforce Development Funding
 - a. Increase access to training dollars for both clinical and nonclinical roles.
 - b. Support and strengthen early-exposure models in high schools.
3. Nonclinical Talent Pipelines
 - a. Build pathways for healthcare facility infrastructure roles (HVAC, electrical, plumbing).
 - b. Support community-based “train-then-retain” models.
4. Retention and Career-Lattice Strategies
 - a. Promote structured career ladders from MA to LPN to RN.
 - b. Invest in onboarding, mentorship, and workplace culture initiatives to reduce turnover.

PIPELINE INITIATIVES

To address workforce challenges, New Castle County Vocational Technical District (NCCVT) has partnered with Nemours to introduce students to healthcare careers early. Notably, Nemours has broken through the typical 18-year-old age requirement, allowing younger students to participate in internships, shadowing, and skills-based training—an approach that can be adapted by other local employers facing similar age-related barriers. This partnership is also expanding to include NCCVT trades students, offering hands-on experience in healthcare facility operations such as maintenance, electrical work, plumbing, and other critical infrastructure roles. This dual-pipeline approach supports both clinical and nonclinical workforce needs, strengthens the region's talent supply, and provides students with meaningful experience in high-demand roles. Continuing to build and scale these initiatives will be essential for improving retention, increasing workforce capacity, and supporting long-term healthcare system stability across New Castle County.

RETENTION FOCUS

Reducing high turnover—particularly among Personal Care Aides, Nursing Assistants, and Registered Nurses—should be a central priority. Patient Safety and Quality Healthcare (PSQH) outlines ten retention strategies that have proven effective:[29]

- Competitive Compensation and Benefits – Offer salaries, bonuses, and benefits that reflect market rates and reward staff contributions.
- Effective Onboarding – Provide structured orientation and mentoring to ensure new hires feel prepared and supported.
- Professional Development – Offer continuing education, skills training, and clear career pathways to encourage long-term commitment.
- Flexible Scheduling – Allow staff some control over schedules to improve work-life balance and reduce burnout.
- Optimal Staffing Levels – Ensure workloads are manageable to avoid stress and fatigue, which can drive turnover.
- Recognition and Engagement – Implement programs to celebrate achievements and foster a positive work environment.
- Leadership Support – Encourage approachable, responsive leadership that listens to staff concerns.
- Feedback and Communication – Maintain open channels for staff input and respond proactively to improve retention.
- Workplace Culture – Build a culture of respect, teamwork, and shared mission to increase employee satisfaction.
- Employee Wellness Programs – Support physical and mental health initiatives to improve overall well-being and reduce turnover.

By combining financial incentives with a supportive culture, career growth opportunities, and strong leadership, retention can be significantly improved. The County can partner with healthcare organizations to explore how these strategies can be implemented locally.

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