2024 Year-in-Review | North Central CT Labor Situation

2024 at a Glance

BEST CHANCE

In 2024, Capital Workforce Partners' BEST Chance Program continued its mission of helping justice-involved individuals gain employment through industry-specific training in manufacturing, construction, culinary arts, and most recently infrastructure through the On-ramps to Infrastructure initiative. The program celebrated multiple cohort graduations, with participants attaining credentials and securing jobs in high-demand fields. In addition to Community Project funding, BEST Chance secured significant funding to further expand job readiness services, occupational training, job placement and retention services, and support for overcoming employment barriers for returning citizens, reinforcing the program's role in reducing recidivism and creating sustainable career opportunities.

CAREER NAVIGATION

The Hartford Career Navigation System, led by CWP in partnership with the United Way of Central and Northeastern CT, the City of Hartford, and other partners, with support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Nutmeg Foundation, made significant strides in supporting Hartford youth. Monthly Career Navigation Community of Practice (CoP) meetings have engaged 25 youth-serving agencies to enhance training, resource-sharing, and professional development to optimize comprehensive service delivery for over 8,000 youth out of school or work in the City of Hartford. In March, a provider-based career navigation resource directory was launched, allowing agencies to manage and update their own listings. May saw the launch of a Navigation Hub pilot at the Artist's Collective in North Hartford, offering in-person career support twice a week, and most recently, an interagency intake-referral system is being developed to improve coordination and track outcomes, further strengthening the infrastructure for Career Navigation services for high-need Hartford Youth.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION[1]

In December 2024, youth advocates, nonprofit leaders, and elected officials in Hartford urged state leaders to increase investment in programs supporting disconnected youth, citing findings from the 119K Commission's report, which highlights the nearly 119,000 young people in Connecticut who are at-risk or disconnected from employment and education. Advocates emphasized the urgency of expanding workforce training, educational re-engagement programs, and wraparound support services to help these individuals develop career pathways and avoid long-term economic hardship. As a result, a set of 22 recommendations through were established in the Young People First Report[2] encompassing the supports, conditions, capacity, and community coalitions which need to be in place for youth to thrive, which will further guide the youth-focused work and collaboration which CWP engages in this next year.

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[1] Young People Make A Case For Greater State Investment In Reaching Disconnected Youth
[2] Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Young People First

AMERICAN JOBS CENTERS (AJC)

As the primary access point for jobseekers in need of services stewarded by CWP, the regional American Jobs Centers One-Stop System took significant action in 2024 to optimize AJC operations and further position the System as the one-stop-shop for all individuals seeking employment and career support, under a new plan known as Vision 2024. This plan includes the establishment of the One Stop System Vision, a Career Readiness Curriculum development, and integration of CWP's Business Services team on-site, with increased performance outcomes across AJC programs expected in the year ahead. As of the most previous program year, over 10,000 were effectively triaged and served, with an even greater number of jobseekers to be served with strong referrals and tangible next steps following the finalization of Vision 2024.

SECTOR-BASED TRAININGS

CWP's sector-based training initiatives, developed in response to both demonstrated industry hiring needs and the needs of CWP program participants for high-quality employment opportunities following training, expanded significantly in 2024. These initiatives, supported in large part by three regional sector partnerships (i.e. Capital Area Tech, Healthcare, and Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics Partnerships), consist primarily of Career ConneCT, the Good Jobs Challenge, H1-B, Jobs Funnel, and the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (until May 2024), through which CWP administered training to 1,151 individuals, over two-thirds of which completed training in the most recent program year.

CONNECTICUT WORKFORCE SUMMIT[3]

In April 2024, the Connecticut Workforce Summit, a collaboration between key stakeholders from business, education, community-based organizations, and the public sector including CWP, the Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy, Governor's Workforce Council, was convened to focus on building a skilled workforce, discovering hidden talent, reconnecting the 119,000 disconnected young people to opportunities in the workforce, and creating a more robust economy

GROWTH OF THE CONNECTICUT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM[4]

With support from CT DOL and the state legislature, Governor Ned Lamont expanded the Connecticut Youth Employment Program, administered through Capital Workforce Partners in the North Central Region, which connects individuals aged 14 to 24 with career exploration opportunities, job training, and paid work experience. Funding for the program was doubled from $5 million in fiscal year 2024 to $10 million in fiscal year 2025, aiming to provide more youths with valuable work experiences.

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[3] 2024 Connecticut Workforce Summit: Discovering Hidden Talent
[4] Governor Lamont Highlights Growth of the Connecticut Youth Employment Program

Who We Serve

CWP's investments in youth development, our development of sustainable career pathways for adult workers, our numerous industry and community partnerships, and the initiatives we undertake are not only guided by the current and projected labor situation, but the high-need populations we serve and understanding the barriers to education and employment they face.

Labor Force Participation Rate by Educational Attainment[5] | Capitol Planning Region, 2023
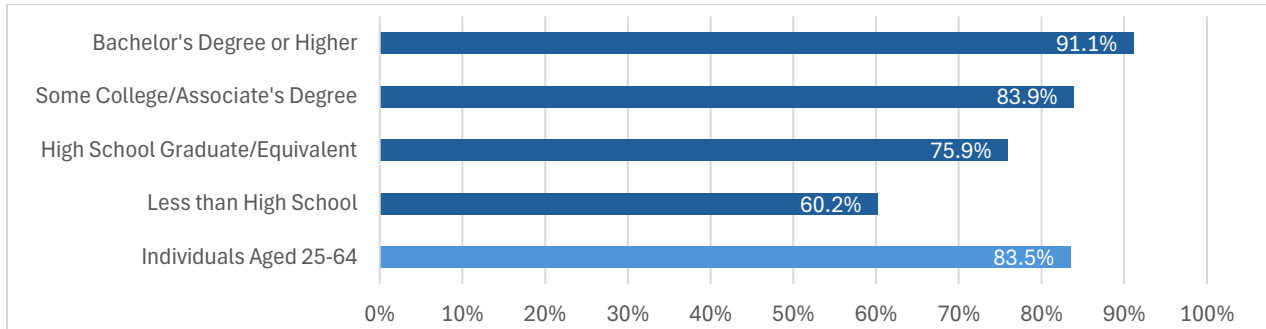

As the chart above demonstrates, only 60.2% of individuals that have less than a high school completion are in the labor force; in other words, **nearly half** of them are not employed or actively searching for formal employment in the Capitol Planning Region. As educational attainment increases, LFPR does as well, with high school graduates or equivalent participating at 75.9%, those with some college or an Associate's degree at 83.9%, and those with a Bachelor's degree or higher at 91.1%

Evidently, youth academic disconnection is a direct precursor to adult disconnection from the labor force, and now a crisis which affects both future of these youth, and the strength of our labor force; Dalio Education reports that as of 2022, **1 in 3** CT high school students are at-risk of not graduating, and **1 in 5** CT youth (14-26) are at-risk or currently disconnected[6].

The need to reengage this young population in our service area is critical. In the Capitol Planning Region alone, **35,000** youth are disconnected, and the City of Hartford exhibits the largest concentrations in the state with **53%** of students at-risk, and **42%** of 14–26-year-olds exiting high school newly disconnected.

Labor Force Participation Rate by Educational Attainment[7] | Capitol Planning Region, 2023

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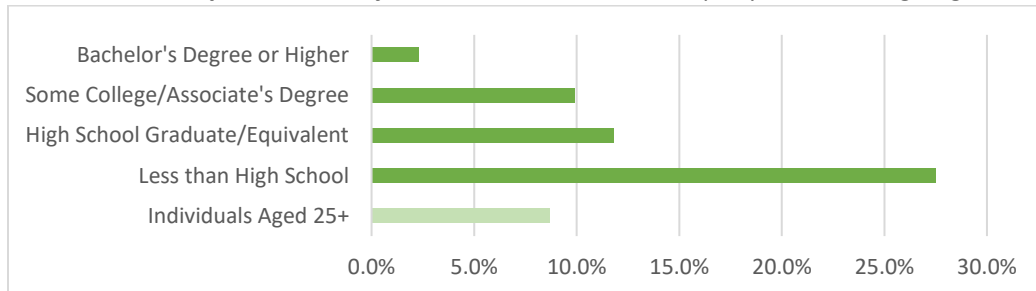
[5] American Community Survey (ACS), Employment Status (S2301), Capitol Planning Region, 2023 1-year estimates

[6] Dalio Education, Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back on Track, 2023

[7] American Community Survey (ACS), Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months (S1701), Capitol Planning Region, 2023 1-year estimates

At its core, low educational attainment is associated heavily with financial hardship, namely poverty. From the chart above, this relationship is evident as individuals with less than a high school completion experience poverty at over double the rate of those with a high school diploma, with the disparity only increasing for higher educational attainment groups. Additionally, as the 2023 ALICE report[8] demonstrates, financial hardship is not limited to poverty; while 11% of households in the Capitol Planning Region are below the poverty level, as of 2022, more than double (27%) are asset-limited, income-constrained and employed (ALICE), amounting to over 100,000 households in the region.

Poverty, the crisis of youth disconnection, and the byproducts of these indicators lead both youth and adults to a host of additional risks, including justice involvement, homelessness, and basic skills deficiency, all of which can be mitigated with an increased comprehensive focus on academic engagement, workforce training, and effective career pathways for both youth and adults.

Employment in 2024

Connecticut's total nonfarm payroll jobs increased by 1.2% (+20,100) from December 2023, reaching 1,715,900 jobs by the end of 2024[9]. In every month of 2024, Hartford LMA jobs comprised over a third of the state's total employment (34%). These jobs grew at a greater rate throughout the year in line with the state's job increases, growing by 1.9% (+11,000) from December 2023 and reaching 591,100 by the end of the year, amounting to over half of the total job growth in the state over 2024.

**Total Employment |** January-December 2024
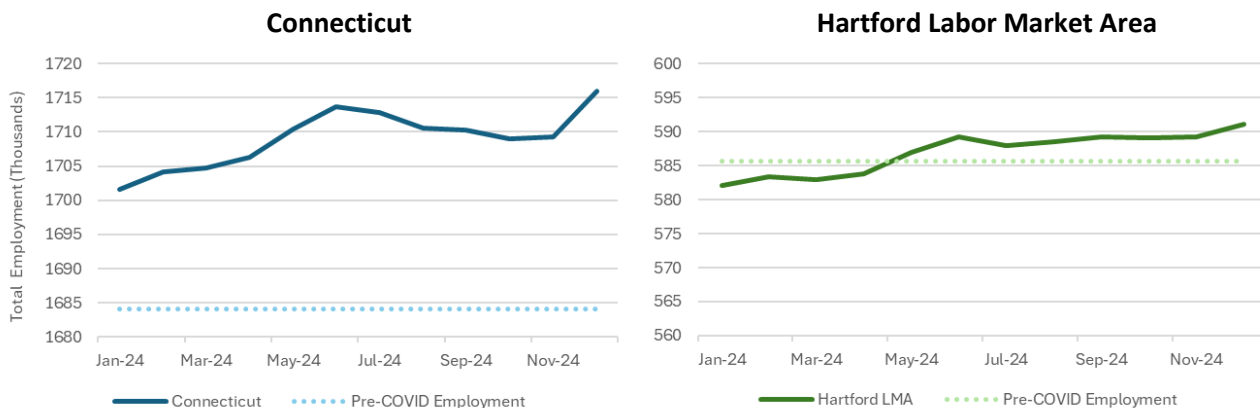
As of 2024, Connecticut now has higher employment levels than before the pandemic, having recovered 308,400 of the 291,100 jobs lost during the COVID onset period which marks a 105.9% recovery rate since April 2020. Private sector employment exceeded pre-pandemic levels at 113.2%, while the public sector remains just short of full recovery at 95.9% of lost jobs. As of May 2024, the Hartford LMA joined the state in full recovery from COVID job losses.

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[8] Connecticut ALICE Research Center, County Reports (Capitol Planning Region), 2022

[9] CT DOL Labor Situation. CT DOL Labor Situation (December 2024 data)

Unemployment

Unemployment rates from the past two years are charted below, mirroring the trends for total nonfarm employment in 2024. Connecticut's unemployment rate jumped from 4.0% in December 2023 to 5.0% in January 2024, and peaked at 5.4% in February 2024[10]. The Hartford LMA's unemployment rates followed the same pattern, likely a result of increases in the labor force and seasonal separations.

Unemployment Rate | January 2023 - December 2024
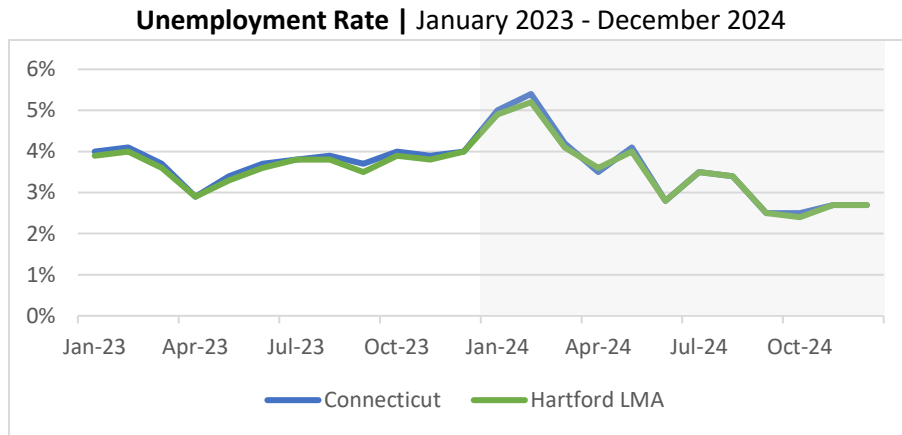
The initial jump in unemployment, however, was followed by eight consecutive months of declining unemployment, and now at the lowest rates (both state-wide and regionally) since August 2001 as we enter 2025. In these months of declining unemployment, the labor force participation rate remained steady, indicating a strong local economy with considerable job growth led by our industry growth sectors, namely Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics (TDL), the normalizing of IT/Tech, and growth Healthcare; from October 2023 to October 2024 a total of 8,300 jobs were added to employer payrolls, 7,700 of which were in Healthcare. All of this pointing towards a steady local labor situation despite a relatively turbulent national economic landscape over 2024.

Key Employment Indicators by Region | December 2024 (Y-to-Y Change)[11]

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Connecticut	1,928,362	1,876,324	52,038	2.7%
	+2.4%	+3.8%	-23,590	-1.3 percentage points
Hartford LMA	631,067	614,218	16,849	2.7%
	+2.8%	+4.1%	-7,438	-1.3 percentage points
Hartford	52,760	50,353	2,407	4.6%
	+2.2%	+4.1%	-873	-1.7 percentage points
New Britain	36,926	35,559	1,367	3.7%
	+2.3%	+4.1%	-579	-1.7 percentage points
Bristol	33,416	32,399	1,017	3.0%
	+2.6%	+4.1%	-434	-1.5 percentage points
Manchester	33,349	32,472	877	2.6%

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[10] CT DOL Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Labor Market Information - Connecticut Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) (state.ct.us)

[11] CT DOL Current Employment Statistics: Seasonally Adjusted. Labor Market Information - State of Connecticut Labor Market Area Employment. NOTE: CES does not include self-employment or agricultural and domestic positions and may show lower totals than other data sources.

	+2.6%	+4.1%	-442	-1.5 percentage points
East Hartford	27,315	26,383	932	3.4%
	+2.4%	+4.1%	-394	-1.6 percentage points
Bloomfield	11,990	11,635	355	3.0%
	+2.6%	+4.1%	-162	-1.4 percentage points

As the chart above demonstrates (along with the change in each indicator from December 2023), the economic strength of the North Central Region and the state at large over the past year, is seen when comparing the final month of 2024 to that of 2023. Significant declines in the unemployment rate in the state, region, and selected high-population and high-need towns, stem from the continued growth of our labor force and substantial increases in the number of individuals becoming employed or connected to effective career pathways.

Hiring Trends

The following hiring data- a comparison between 2022, 2023, and 2024- supplements job postings as an indicator of actual demand in our key growth sectors. In context with total employment figures, we find that while two sectors, Healthcare and Transportation, are steadily increasing hiring to keep up with increasing demand, IT/Tech and Manufacturing are stabilizing to meet actual demand.

Total Hires by Industry[12] | 2022-2024, Capitol Planning Region
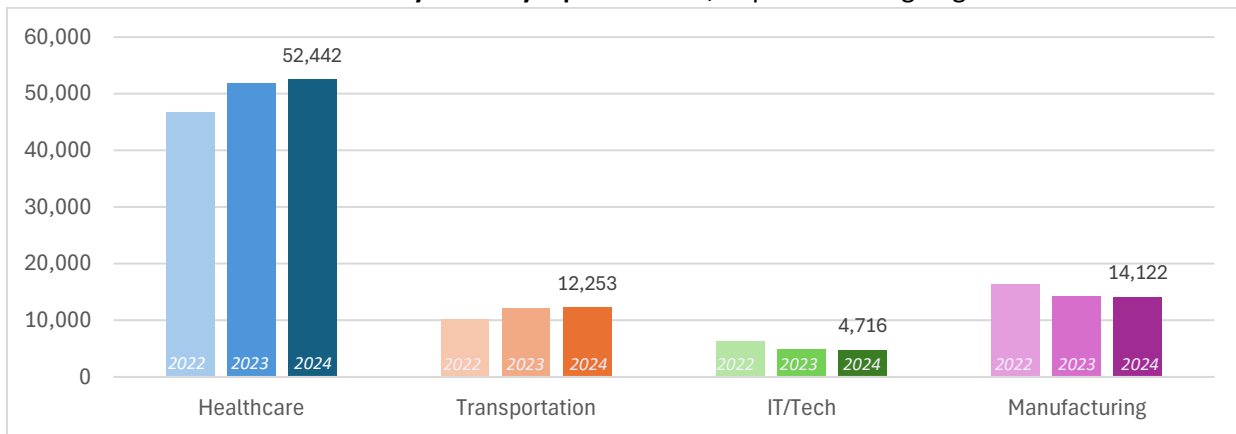
Specifically, the over-hiring in the IT/Tech industry in 2021, a result of overestimated future demand as well as several turbulent macro-economic factors, led to a steady decline in the form of layoffs and hiring stagnation to compensate. Despite this, the digital economy is certainly here to stay, and as total employment in this industry is positioned to grow steadily following this normalization both state-wide and nationally, reaching record levels by 2028. As for Manufacturing, total employment demonstrates a stable workforce over the past few years, but demographic shifts in the form of an aging, experienced workforce is expected to call for increased hiring (and associated job training) in the years ahead.

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[12] Lightcast. *Job Postings Table*, Selected NAICS Industries, Capitol Planning Region, 2022-2023

Demand and Industry Focus

The table below contains total employment numbers for several priority industries in the Hartford Labor Market Area, with data from the final month of 2024 compared to the previous month and year.[13]

Selected Industry Growth Sectors	Dec-23	Nov-24	Dec-24	Y-to-Y Change		M-to-M Change	
				#	%	#	%
Total Nonfarm Employment	585,400	596,600	596,400	11,000	1.9%	-200	0.0%
Construction, Nat. Resources, Mining	21,500	23,900	22,600	1,100	5.1%	-1,300	-5.4%
Manufacturing	55,300	55,300	55,600	300	0.5%	300	0.5%
Wholesale Trade	16,400	16,700	16,900	500	3.0%	200	1.2%
Retail Trade	52,200	50,600	51,500	-700	-1.3%	900	1.8%
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	28,300	28,200	28,700	400	1.4%	500	1.8%
Information	8,600	8,300	8,500	-100	-1.2%	200	2.4%
Financial Activities	50,700	51,500	51,900	1,200	2.4%	400	0.8%
Professional & Business Services	73,400	75,200	74,700	1,300	1.8%	-500	-0.7%
Educational Services	14,100	15,100	14,800	700	5.0%	-300	-2.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	100,500	104,300	105,300	4,800	4.8%	1,000	1.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	44,300	46,500	45,700	1,400	3.2%	-800	-1.7%
Other Services	22,400	22,400	22,400	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Government	97,700	98,600	97,800	100	0.1%	-800	-0.8%

A closer look at the industries highlighted above show the demand[14] of the region's industry growth sectors, the stabilization and continued growth in their demand following the COVID-19 pandemic, and their viability in producing effective, in-demand career pathways in the **Capitol Planning Region**.

Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics (TDL)[15] Job Postings (Total v. Entry Level) | Jan 2023-Dec 2024
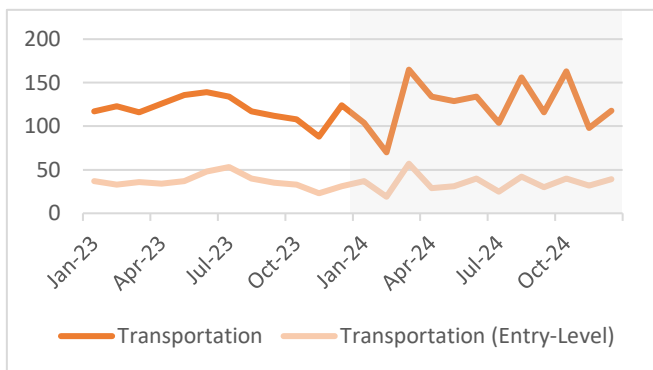
TDL demonstrates consistently seasonal demand, which has increased considerably between 2023 and 2024. Of the state's total TDL job postings in this timeframe, 68.6% came from the Capitol Planning Region. Entry-level demand specifically comprises nearly a third (29%) of all TDL job postings, the largest share of total demand of any of the region's industry growth sectors. Median advertised wages in 2024 for our primary transportation subsectors (Truck Transportation; Warehousing and Storage) were $53,376 ($25.66/hr), down 5.2% from the previous year. Narrowing to only entry-level earnings, we see a marginal decrease to $52,608 ($25.29), the lowest among all priority industries.

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[13] CT DOL Hartford LMA - Current Employment Statistics. December 2024. Hartford LMA CES December 2024

[14] Job postings are often the most quantifiable, current proxy of demand in a given industry, but additional data and observations from CWP's Business Services and Programmatic teams allow us to determine existing demand in these priority sectors with confidence

[15] Lightcast. *Job Postings Table*, NAICS 484-493, Capitol Planning Region, Jan 2023-Jan 2024

Information Technology (IT/Tech)[16] Job Postings (Total v. Entry Level) | Jan 2023-Dec 2024

Over-hiring and turbulent macro-economic factors from the start of the pandemic led to a sharp decline in demand for tech employees. In 2024, we saw the industry now stabilizing and continuing growth from the past two years. Of the state's total IT/Tech job postings in this timeframe, nearly half (46.8%) came from the Capitol Planning Region. Entry-level demand in this industry comprises only 7% of all job postings, reflecting higher requirements for most

tech occupations. Median advertised wages in 2024 for our primary IT/Tech subsectors were $114,048 ($54.83), up 5.9% from the previous year. For only entry-level earnings, we see a dramatic decrease to $53,056 ($25.51/hr), the largest among all priority industries.
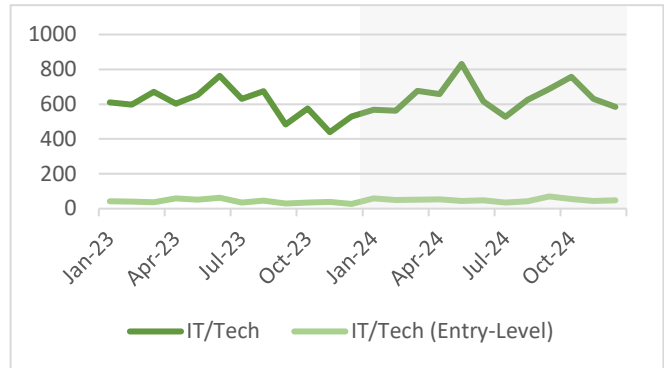
**Healthcare**[17] **Job Postings** (Total v. Entry Level) | Jan 2023-Dec 2024
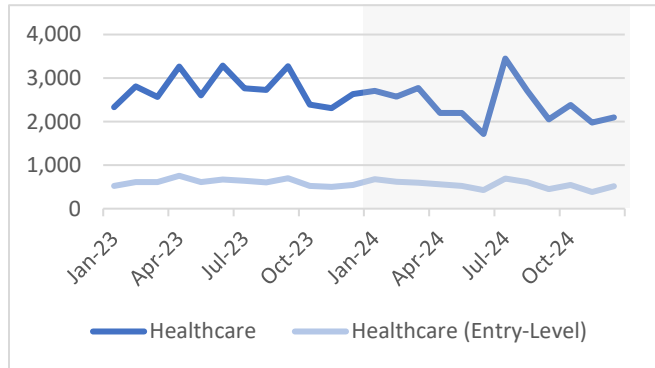
Following an initial, unprecedented spike in demand for Healthcare workers in 2021, the industry has maintained its steady growth trend long after the pandemic, with job postings reaching a 5-year high in July 2024. Of the state's total Healthcare job postings in this timeframe, about a third (32.5%) came from the Capitol Planning Region. Entry-level demand in this industry comprises nearly a quarter (23%) of total demand, and Median

advertised wages in 2024 were $45,696 ($21.97), up 3.5% from 2023. For only entry-level earnings, we see a marginal decrease to $44,672 ($21.48/hr), reflecting a significant proportion of entry-level (e.g. direct care) employment in the industry.

Manufacturing[18] **Job Postings** (Total v. Entry Level) | Jan 2023-Dec 2024

After significant growth from 2020 to the final months of 2022, demand for manufacturing employment has been on a steady downward trend for the past two years, with job postings now at their lowest level in two years. Of the state's total Healthcare job postings in this timeframe, over a third (40.1%) came from the Capitol Planning Region. Entry-level demand in this industry comprises a considerable 12%, and median advertised wages in 2024 were $72,576 ($34.89), up 20.9% (leading in earnings increases Y-to-Y) from the
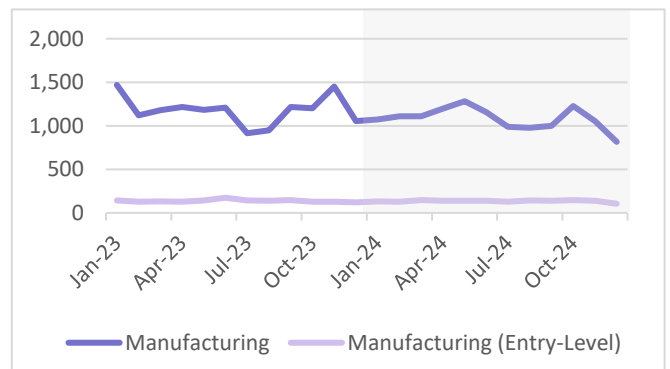
[16] Lightcast. *Job Postings Table*, NAICS 5415, 5416, Capitol Planning Region, Jan 2023-Jan 2024

[17] Lightcast. *Job Postings Table*, NAICS 62, Capitol Planning Region, Jan 2023-Jan 2024

[18] Lightcast. *Job Postings Table*, NAICS 31-33, Capitol Planning Region, Jan 2023-Jan 2024

previous year. Narrowing to only entry-level earnings, we see a sizeable decrease to $47,744 ($22.95/hr). Decreases in job postings, in addition to substantial wage increases since 2023 point to a focus on retention in the industry.

Top Entry-Level Occupations, Companies, and Specialized Skills of 2024

This section aggregates job posting analytics from each month of 2024 to demonstrate the top entry-level[19] opportunities in the Capitol Planning Region of the past year[20]. The following data are organized according to the total number of unique postings (aggregated across numerous job boards and websites through Lightcast's proprietary data scraping methodology[21]). Rows are color-coded based on their alignment with one of CWP's priority industry sectors.

Occupation	# Employers (1/24 - 1/25)	Annual Median Advertised Salary	Last 365 Days Unique Postings
Registered Nurses	249	$104,192	2,663
Customer Service Representatives	264	$41,600	810
Retail Salespersons	164	$38,528	749
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	172	$64,384	687
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	215	$46,464	632
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	82	$37,504	541
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	62	$62,976	490
Medical Assistants	82	$43,520	451
Fast Food and Counter Workers	44	$34,432	415
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	154	$41,600	411

Company	Salary Observations	Annual Median Advertised Salary	Last 365 Days Unique Postings
Hartford HealthCare	106	$62,976	1,882
UnitedHealth Group	388	$51,200	425
Echn	1	$76,308	299
Optum	280	$91,904	295
Elara Caring	48	$89,344	266
Walgreens Boots Alliance	115	$35,840	209
Trinity Health	10	$142,848	207
University of Connecticut	82	$80,640	163
Cigna	88	$54,016	157
Dattco	64	$43,648	152

Specialized Skill or Qualification	# Employers (10/24 - 1/25)	Annual Median Advertised Salary	Last 365 Days Unique Postings
Nursing	$94,976	759	127
Home Health Care	$60,160	406	49
Medication Administration	$39,680	323	65
Merchandising	$40,576	321	98
Selling Techniques	$41,600	287	97
Medical Records	$45,824	279	74

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[19] Filtered to include all full-time postings in the Capitol Planning Region with 0-2 years of experience and HS Diploma, Associates, or no educational requirement listed (staffing companies removed)

[20] *Skills* data only available for 90-day periods. The last quarter of 2024 is presented in the final table.

[21] Lightcast. Occupation Table, Hartford County (December 2024 unless otherwise noted)

Marketing	$47,744	272	130
Auditing	$54,016	271	135
Housekeeping	$38,272	260	103
Warehousing	$43,520	246	133

Total statewide job postings numbered 69,388 in December 2024, down significantly from 74,139 in 2024.[22] As in every month of 2024, the *Healthcare and Social Assistance* industry had the most postings to end the year (14,958), trailed by *Retail Trade* (7,272)*, Manufacturing* (5,189)*,* and *Professional, Scientific, & Technical Occupations* (4,612)*.* These industries have consistently demonstrated the most demand for workers state-wide over each month of 2024, with their respective occupations leading as well: *Registered Nurses* (4,315)*, Retail Salespersons* (2,647), *Home Health & Personal Care Aides* (1,776)*, and Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers* (1,402).

Of the 57% of postings listing educational requirements, 48% require a bachelor's degree or higher, 10% require an associate degree, and 42% require high school or vocational training. The top five specialized skills found in CT job postings are Nursing (5,615), Merchandising (4,428), Project Management (4,272), Marketing (4,193), and Auditing (3,847).

The North Central Workforce Development Area had 28,236 total job ads in December, led by the *Healthcare & Social Assistance* industry (4,657 ads) and the *Registered Nurse* occupation (1,292 ads). The greatest number of ads (9,043) were in Hartford, followed by West Hartford (1,186), Farmington (1,182), New Britain (1,119), and Manchester (1,105), and employers posting the greatest number of ads were Hartford Healthcare (936), CVS Health (506), Travelers (413), ECHN (371), and Cigna (356).

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CWP Priorities for 2025

As Connecticut enters 2025, its labor market is expected to experience steady yet uneven growth across industries, but even in the face of a potentially turbulent labor situation over the year ahead, CWP remains steadfast in several key priority areas, and data-informed through regular analysis of key workforce measures as demonstrated in this report.

CWP will continue to further realize the American Jobs Center Vision 2024 by enhancing system-wide alignment, building in-house capacity to deliver career readiness services in-house, and establishing improved assessment tools and processes, with a projected service increase of 15%. We also seek to strengthen our robust Regional Sector Partnerships by supporting employer-connected training programs that directly link participants to companies through internships or other work-based learning activities.

In a similar vein, we are committed to developing our service delivery to at-risk and disconnected youth through our Career Navigation Systems Development, as well as our special populations including those with gaps in basic skills and the region's returning citizens through the BEST Chance Partnership, all in our goal to build an increasingly coordinated, efficient, and responsive workforce system.

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[22] CT DOL Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL). December 2024. HWOL December 2024

Career Navigation expects to launch the Intake-Referral Platform mid-2025 for standardized and effective coordination of services between Hartford's youth serving organizations, and more broadly, CWP will continue supporting youth work-based learning opportunities through our WIOA Youth, Summer, and Year-Round Youth Employment and Learning Programs. Additionally, after the success of the pilot Youth Navigation Hub, a one-stop shop for youth seeking services in youth-friendly spaces, plans for a second hub in 2025 are underway.

BEST Chance is expected to increase service levels of returning citizens through increased capacity and programming, in large part through the execution of the On-Ramps to Infrastructure program, and a Basic Skills Remediation Pilot will be executed in partnership with local Adult Education providers, to create new sector-based contextualized skills remediation models to be shared regionally.

Through a host of state, local, and community partnerships which make this work possible, a focus on in-demand growth sectors which continue to show promise, and addressing the employment and education barriers experienced by the youth and adults we serve at the forefront of our operations, CWP maintains a strong outlook into 2025, with expanded capacity projected to increase both the volume and quality of services provided in our catalogue of programming. More information on CWP's goals and initiatives can be found on our website.