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Insight: Measuring Queens' Creative Workforce

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Key Takeaways
- **Creative Class.** With nearly 141,000 workers, the Creative Class makes up 24.5 percent of Queens' workforce.

- **Projected Growth.** Queens' Creative Class is projected to grow approximately 15 percent by 2025.

- **Healthcare Focus.** Healthcare occupations account for 21 percent of Queens' Creative Class (36,448 workers), a share that is 13 percent larger than the national average.

- **Management Skills.** 79,000 (23.5 percent) of the creative professionals who live in the borough work in Management.

Although Brooklyn and Manhattan take the lion's share of New York City's creative talent (82 percent), Queens' Creative Class (meaning professionals with skills in technology, arts and culture, professional services, and education), though still small, is belatedly rising. With its bustling downtown and convenient access to Manhattan, Astoria has transformed from an enclave for middle-class immigrants to a lively neighborhood for young working professionals. Long Island City has attracted established corporations like Citibank, which occupies a 50-story skyscraper in its midst, and up-and-coming companies like JetBlue, Lyft, and Uber, which have opened offices in the neighborhood.

Nearly 141,000 Creative Class members work in Queens, earning an average of $79,000 (13 percent below the national average) and accounting for 24.5 percent of the borough's workforce. Its concentration in the borough is also below the national average (LQ 0.87). In the coming decade, Queens' creative economy is anticipated to grow by 14.5 percent.

Queens' workforce is dominated by the Service Class, who work in routine jobs in food preparation and service, retail trade, personal care, clerical and administrative positions, and more, earning an average of $31,000 per year, just 40 percent of what the Creative Class earns. With over 285,000 employees and an LQ of 1.27, Queens' Service Class accounts for 49.6 percent of the borough's workforce, which is nearly 30 percent larger than the national average. Although Queens' Working Class—made up of blue-collar jobs in production, construction, transportation, cleaning, and building and grounds maintenance—is the smallest of all three occupational clusters, the borough accounts for a significant portion of New York's limited blue-collar jobs. In total, 149,000 Queens workers or 25.9 percent of the borough's workforce, are employed in blue-collar jobs (nearly 22 percent more than the U.S. average), and they earn an average of $44,000, nearly a third more than the Service Class does but just a little over half of what the Creative Class makes.

Figure 1: Queens Occupational Payroll Clusters

Cluster	LQ	Employment	Share of Employment	Annual Salary
Creative Class	0.87	140,754	24.5%	$79,248
Service Class	1.27	285,079	49.6%	$30,722
Working Class	1.22	148,729	25.9%	$43,846

Source: QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees - EMSI 2015.2 Class of Worker

Queens' Creative Class

Despite its abundance of Service Class jobs, Queens' skill base is becoming more diversified. Figure 2 (below) breaks out each creative cluster by category and salary, and Figure 3 (below) graphs the location quotient, total employment and employment growth of each cluster to showcase those that are competitive strengths, and those that are declining and emerging.

Figure 2: Queens Creative Occupational Payroll Clusters

Occupational Cluster	LQ 2015	2015 Employment	2011-2015 5-Year Growth	2025 Employment	10-Year Projection	Annual Salary
Healthcare Practitioners	1.13	36,448	20.9%	43,933	20.5 %	$79,940
Community and Social Service	1.10	10,601	14.4 %	12,900	21.7 %	$44,265
Management	0.93	26,389	10.9 %	29,294	11.0 %	$123,549
Arts, Design, and Media	0.84	6,531	9.4 %	7,250	11.0 %	$56,417
Business and Financial Operations	0.79	22,483	7.7 %	24,524	9.1 %	$70,540
Legal	0.72	3,064	19.2 %	3,453	12.7 %	$114,249
Education	0.61	20,790	8.7 %	23,901	15.0 %	$53,219
Science	0.57	2,704	9.4 %	2,957	9.4 %	$64,857
Computer and Mathematical	0.50	8,061	9.1 %	8,864	10.0 %	$81,231
Architecture and Engineering	0.37	3,683	7.0 %	4,060	10.2 %	$72,886

Source: QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees - EMSI 2015.2 Class of Worker

Following the pattern of the other outer boroughs, Queens' Creative Class is dominated by healthcare and education occupations, or so-called "eds and meds." With over 36,000 employees, Healthcare Practitioners is the largest creative cluster in Queens. It exceeds the national average by 13 (LQ 1.13) percent, has grown more than 20 percent between 2011 and 2015, and is anticipated to grow another 20.5 percent by 2025. With an annual salary of nearly $80,000, Queens' Healthcare Practitioners earn slightly more than their Brooklyn counterparts.

Queens' second largest creative cluster, Management, consists of just over 26,000 employees. With an LQ of .93, the cluster is slightly smaller than the national average. From 2011 to 2015, Management has grown by 10.9 percent and will likely grow another 11 percent over the next decade. Management boasts the highest salaries of all ten creative clusters in the borough—an average of $124,000 per year.

Business and Financial Operations accounts for more than 22,000 employees, but has seen relatively slow growth (7.7 percent between 2011 and 2015) compared to other sectors and is anticipated to experience the slowest growth of all ten creative clusters (a mere 9.1 percent) over the next decade. Its professionals earn a middle-of-the-road salary of around $70,500 a year.

With less than 21,000 employees, Queens' Education cluster is much smaller than the national average (LQ 0.61), though this will be subject to change when the Cornell Tech campus opens on Roosevelt Island. Although Education has seen slow growth from 2011 to 2015 (around 8.7 percent), it is expected to grow by 15 percent in the coming decade. With an annual salary of around $53,000 a year, Education workers in Queens earn a relatively low wage compared to other creative occupations.

Community and Social Service has the lowest salary of all ten creative clusters—an average of $44,000 per year. Despite these low wages, the cluster has experienced extraordinary growth, 14.4 percent between 2011 and 2015, and the cluster is anticipated to grow at a faster rate (21.7 percent) than any other creative occupation in the borough. With nearly 11,000 employees and an LQ of 1.10, the concentration of Queens' Community and Social Service cluster exceeds the national average.

Although a competitive arts scene has emerged in Queens, the borough's Arts, Design, and Media cluster is relatively small. With a little more than 6,500 employees, Arts, Design, and Media falls below the U.S. average (LQ 0.84). The same goes for the borough's Computer and Mathematics cluster, which accounts for just over 8,000 workers, and is about half as concentrated as the national average (LQ .50). With just 2,700 workers, Queens' Science cluster is the smallest of all. The borough's Architecture and Engineering cluster is also 63 percent smaller than the national average.

Figure 3: Queens Occupational Payroll Clusters
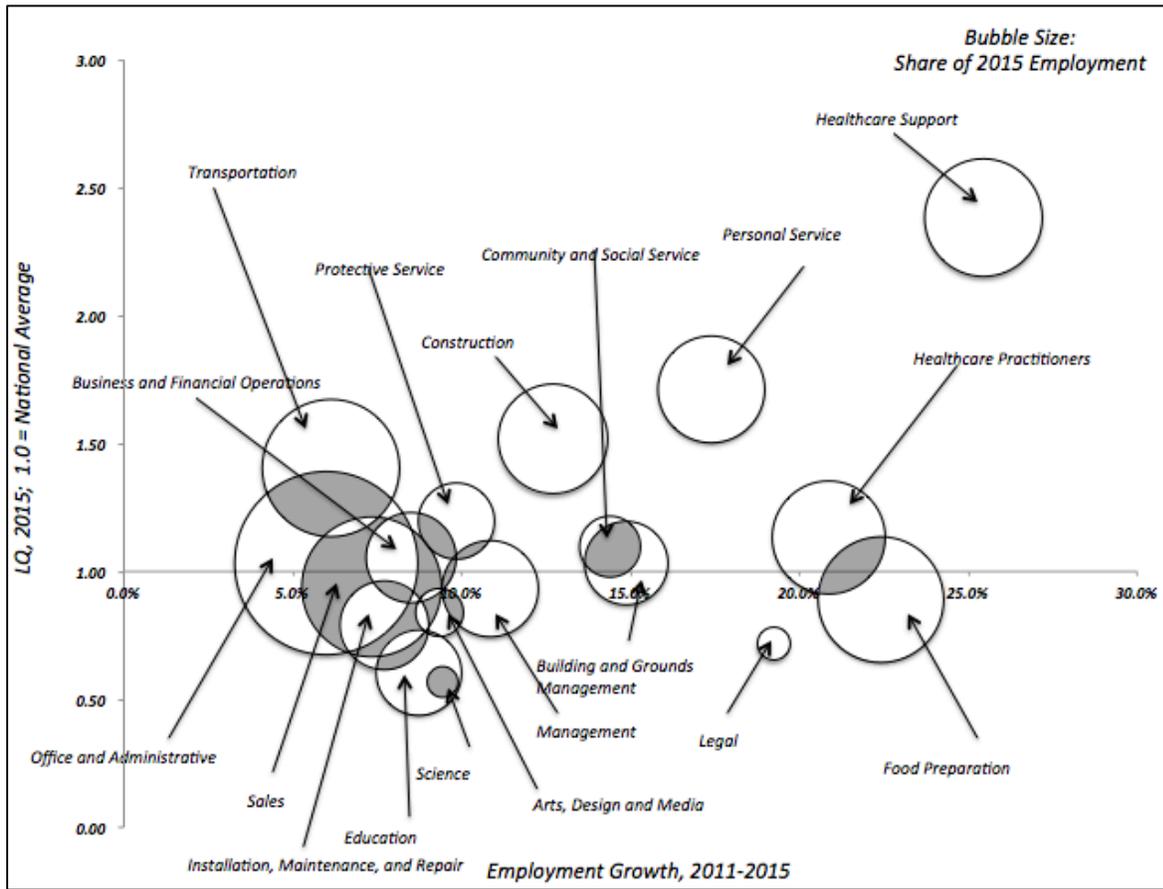
Source: QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees - EMSI 2015.2 Class of Worker

Self-Employment

In addition to the nearly 141,000 Creative Class workers that are employed full-time in Queens, another 26,000 Creative Class Workers are self-employed, which accounts for about a third (32 percent) of self-employed workers in the borough, but falls two percent short of the national average for Creative Class self-employment (LQ 0.98). With more than 7,300 employees, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media jobs have by far the highest concentration of self-employed workers. Management is close behind, with around 6,8000 self-employed professionals, followed by Healthcare Practitioners with over 2,700.

Figure 4: Queens Creative Occupational Self-Employment Clusters

Cluster	LQ	Employment	Share of Employment	Annual Salary
Creative Class	0.65	8,811	20.50%	$35,152
Service Class	1.12	22,606	28.1%	$21,341
Working Class	1.74	31,973	39.7%	$21,341

Source: QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees - EMSI 2015.2 Class of Worker

While some creative clusters have seen a rise in self-employment, others have experienced slight declines. Queens' share of self-employed Computer and Mathematical professionals, for instance, has declined by 1.4 percent from 2011 and 2015, and is projected to shrink by 21.7 percent over the next decade. Meanwhile, the borough's share of self-employed Education professionals has increased by 19.4 percent from 2011 to 2015 and will likely grow another 24.3 percent by 2025.

Interestingly enough, the majority of Queens' self-employed professionals (nearly 40 percent) hail from the Working Class. Most of these employees work in Transportation (LQ 3.21) and Construction (LQ 1.09), which together make up nearly 30 percent of self-employment in Queens. The high concentration of freelancers in Transportation can primarily be attributed to the number of cab, livery, and other drivers who serve New York's two international airports, JFK and LaGuardia (both located in Queens).

Queens' Service Class
The majority of the people who work in Queens (285,000 people, nearly half of the borough's workforce) belong to the Service Class, which grew 13 percent between 2011 and 2015 and is projected to grow by another 14 percent over the next decade.

With nearly 96,000 employees, Queens' Office and Administrative Support cluster is by far the largest in the borough, exceeding the national average by about three percent. Although the borough's Food Preparation and Sales job cluster falls below the U.S. average for its concentration, it is still quite large, accounting for about 56,000 employees. Sales and Related Occupation employs another 45,000. The borough's Healthcare Support cluster has less than 40,000 employees, but exceeds the national average for concentration by a very substantial 238 percent.

Queens' Working Class
Queens' Working Class employs 149,000 in the borough, has grown 9 percent from 2011 to 2015, and will increase by 11.9 percent in the next decade. The majority of these jobs are tied to Transportation and Construction, while only four percent are production-oriented.

Who Lives in Queens
Approximately 44 percent of Queens' working residents (472,000) work in service class jobs. Nearly 263,000 residents, or 24.5 percent of the borough's working population, are members of the Working Class. By comparison, around 31.4 percent (338,000 working residents) are members of the Creative Class.

The majority of the borough's Creative Class (79,000 or 23.5 percent of the creative professionals who live in the borough) work in the Management cluster. Close behind is the Education sector, which accounts for another 16.8 percent of Creative Class residents, or 57,000 residents in total. With nearly 51,000 residents, Business and Financial Operations contributes another 15.1 percent—a share that is on par with the national average.

Figure 5: Queens Residents by Occupational Cluster

Cluster	LQ	Residents	Share of Residents
Creative Class	0.87	337,152	31.4%
Service Class	1.14	471,476	44.0%
Working Class	1.01	262,548	24.5%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015

With over 18,000 residents, the Community and Social Service cluster in Queens exceeds the national average by 3 percent. Although Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media occupations make up only 7.8 percent of Creative Class residents in Queens, this share also exceeds the national average by 30 percent.

Occupational groups with the lowest shares of residents include Life, Physical, and Social Science; Architecture and Engineering; and Legal. With less than 1.9 percent of Creative Class residents (6,300 all told), Queens' Life, Physical, and Social Science cluster has the smallest share of all. Meanwhile, Architecture and Engineering and Legal make up 2.8 percent and 3.6 percent of Creative Class residents, respectively.

Overall, the vast majority of Queens residents are employed in service sector clusters like Sales and Office and Administrative Support, which together employ nearly 267,000 residents. Working Class clusters like Transportation and Construction employ another 139,000. When it comes to those who live in Queens, the Creative Class is underrepresented compared to its Service and Working Class. But as Brooklyn becomes increasingly unaffordable, Queens' share of young Creative Class professionals is likely to grow.

About the Authors

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