

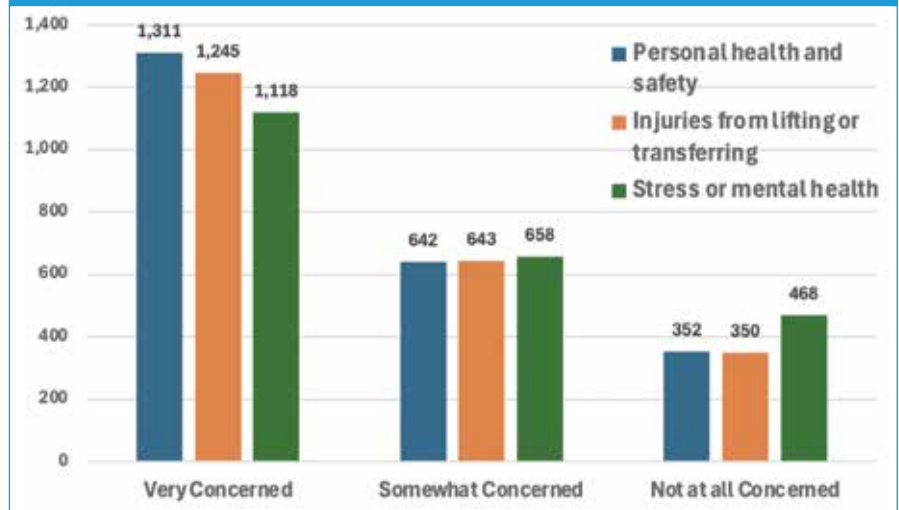
NJCCN: Certified Nursing Assistant Workforce

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Certified nursing assistants (CNA) work closely with registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to provide basic care and help patients with activities of daily living. To ensure that CNAs in New Jersey (NJ) have the basic knowledge and skills required to provide direct care services to residents in long-term care facilities, they must be certified by completing a competency evaluation (NJDOH, 1995). CNAs are required to renew their certification every two years. With the aging U.S. population, the demand for CNAs is projected to increase by 4 percent from 2023 to 2033, as fast as average for all occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

A CNA survey was developed by the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN) in collaboration with the Essential Jobs Essential Care (EJEC) data committee and PHI. Once it was developed it was then shared and funded by the New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJHHS), Division of Aging Services to ensure that we were capturing key data points to better understand the CNA workforce. In Spring 2024, NJCCN mailed a survey to the 27,603 CNAs. The survey was available in English and Spanish. A total of 2,398 valid survey responses were received, representing a 8.7% response rate. The CNA respondents were primarily female (89%), Black/African American (51%), high school graduates or GED holders (38%), with 11 to 20 years of experience as CNAs (29%). The average age of respondents was 53. The majority of CNAs (44%) worked in a nursing home (44%), with 74% working full-time. The median

Figure 1. CNA concerns regarding their personal health and safety, injuries from lifting or transferring, and stress and mental health.



hourly wage was \$20.50.

The CNA respondents indicated how concerned (very concerned, somewhat concerned, or not at all concerned) they were regarding their personal health and safety, about injuries from lifting or transferring, and their stress and mental health. As depicted in Figure 1, the majority of CNAs indicated they were very concerned about their personal health and safety (55%), about injuries from lifting or transferring (52%), and their stress and mental health (47%).

As NJCCN continues to gather information about this important workforce, NJ nurses are especially charged to continue to advocate, support, and recognize the important work of CNAs in caring for patients. NJ needs to continue to attract CNAs who are passionate about caring for the residents of NJ. One CNA shared the following when returning the survey, "I like my job because I have a

passion to help others. I see each patient as a VIP (special)." However, many others expressed feeling underpaid, unappreciated, and overworked. As nurses we must advocate for CNAs to ensure they are recognized, valued, and compensated fairly with appropriate benefits. ■

References

- NJ Department of Health (NJDOH). (1995). *New Jersey Curriculum for Nurse Aide Personnel in Long-term care Facilities*. https://www.nj.gov/health/healthfacilities/documents/rfpappendixes/appendix_c.pdf
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (2017). *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Nursing Assistants and Orderlies*. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nursing-assistants.htm>