

# New tool evaluating 'high-quality jobs' benefits employers, employees, research finds

June 17 2024, by Cyrus Moulton

---



Using the childcare industry as a case study, research finds a new tool evaluating “high quality jobs” benefits employers and employees. Credit: Matthew MODOONO/Northeastern University

It's not just salary anymore.

In the tight post-pandemic job market, employees are looking at benefits, flexibility, career growth opportunities and more when considering what is a high-quality job.

Northeastern University labor economist Alicia Modestino says a new tool that provides a way to measure and compare such factors can help improve job quality and job recruitment—benefiting both employees and employers.

"Increasing the number of high-quality jobs—to provide individuals and families with the benefits of their labor and give them the opportunity not only to achieve [economic stability](#), but also to thrive—is crucial," said Modestino, an associate professor of economics in the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs and research director for the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern.

The Job Quality Benchmarking Index was developed by JVS, one of the largest workforce development organizations in New England. JVS helps connect workers with skills, education and high-quality jobs.

The index consists of a 35-question online employer self assessment that focuses on five job quality "pillars":

- Salary/wages
- Benefits
- Scheduling
- Access to career ladder/development opportunities
- Supportive environment

## **Case study focused on child care**

Modestino evaluated the tool in [a case study focusing on its use in the child care sector](#)—an industry that has seen major turnover and changes

over the course of the pandemic and the post-COVID recovery.

Modestino noted that the industry—which generally operates with slim profit margins—had tremendous revenue losses during the pandemic shutdown, causing many providers to close. The recovery has also been slow, as a reopening society and tight job market led to a surge in postings in the traditionally low-paying field, Modestino said.

"In seeking to build back better after the pandemic, the importance of job quality in the [child care](#) industry really can't be understated," Modestino said.

"One of my frequent mantras is that child care is infrastructure: it helps parents get to work, even more so than roads and bridges do because we found that during the pandemic, you actually don't need roads and bridges. But if you have a three-year-old running around your house, you surely need child care."

The research analyzed JVS employer data, JQBI data from these employers, JVS client data (most notably job placement data), and interviewed employers and their employees.

Modestino found that employers and employees both found the survey useful, but not always for the same reasons.

For example, regarding salary and wages, several employers reported that having data comparing their organization to peers enabled them to better advocate for higher worker wages to managing boards or directors.

Employees were pleased by the [wage increases](#) that resulted from these actions but felt that there was a way to go in achieving a livable wage. The reason for this, Modestino noted, is that the average annual salary in

the industry was just over \$20,000 in 2022 and upward of half of child care workers are on some form of public benefits.

## Employers can compare extra benefits

Regarding benefits, employers were again happy to see how their offerings compared with those of peer organizations, especially concerning benefits beyond [health care](#) such as transportation, [mental health services](#) and employee child care. Employees noted that few employers offered retirement plans, however.

Perhaps most disparate were attitudes toward scheduling.

"Employers seem fairly confident that they had kind of nailed the scheduling thing—recognizing that it's in-person work, but they had really worked a lot on putting in policies so that they can support working parents and be flexible in their schedule," Modestino said. "Employees didn't really feel like that point matched up to their lived experience."

But having the data encouraged employers to improve, Modestino said. And she sees a future for the JQBI in fields other than child care.

"Employers want to do the right thing, by and large, and they don't want to be putting policies in place that aren't effective—they don't want to be spending money on things that aren't what you need," Modestino said.

"I think the strong labor market that we're in is really an opportunity for JVS to expand the use of the JQBI and really have it serve as a diagnostic tool more broadly across different industries as well as across Greater Boston."

**More information:** Case study: [impactengines.northeastern.edu ... lity-](https://impactengines.northeastern.edu...lity-)

[policybrief-24/](#)

*This story is republished courtesy of Northeastern Global News*  
[news.northeastern.edu](https://news.northeastern.edu).

Provided by Northeastern University

Citation: New tool evaluating 'high-quality jobs' benefits employers, employees, research finds (2024, June 17) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-tool-high-quality-jobs-benefits.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.