



2024

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH LABOR REPORT

THE COLUMBIA-WILLAMETTE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE
Working together to develop and support regional talent



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ABOUT THE COLUMBIA-WILLAMETTE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE

The Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC) is a partnership between Clackamas Workforce Partnership, Workforce Southwest Washington and Worksystems: the three Workforce Development Boards covering the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area. The CWWC delivers a unified approach to serving industry, supporting economic development, and guiding public workforce training investments to better address the needs of our combined labor shed. We know that people are willing to travel throughout the region for the best opportunities and that employers need the most qualified workers regardless of where they live. By working together, we can cultivate our regional talent pool and build the foundation for a strong economy.

ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHIES

Throughout this report, data is often provided for all nine counties found on the map at right. The nine counties, when combined, are called the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area (PVMA). The PVMA is a combination of the seven-county Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro Metro Statistical Area (MSA) and two additional counties served by the CWWC—Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties in Southwest Washington.

Columbia, Yamhill, and Skamania counties are not a part of the CWWC'S geography; however, they remain an important part of this report as they are included with the Portland MSA. In instances where data is not available for the nine-county region combined, data instead is provided for the seven-county MSA.



INTRODUCTION

An estimated 27,200 16-to-24-year-olds in the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area (PVMA) are neither in school nor working. These opportunity youth represent 11% of youth in the region.

The number of opportunity youth in the region decreased 21% between 2020 and 2022. The decline in the number of youths reflects a decrease in population. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of 16–24-year-olds in the region decreased by 15%. This decrease is a combination of multiple factors, including a decrease in the birth rate, changes in regional migration and population patterns, and a decrease in international immigration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opportunity youth are more likely to experience a range of challenges in adulthood, including being low income, and experiencing poor physical and mental health.

The analysis found in this report breaks down the over 27,200 opportunity youth in the region, including demographic, educational, and family characteristics. The regional data provides community leaders and stakeholders a basis to improve the rate of youth reconnecting with school and work and preventing disconnection prior to it occurring. Table 1 highlights the key summary statistics of opportunity youth

found in the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area (PVMA) in 2022. Some of the most noticeable data points and changes in the opportunity youth population since 2020 include:

- Opportunity youth account for approximately 11% of all youth and 23% of all youth not enrolled in school throughout the region. Over 24,200 (89%) opportunity youth were employed for half or less of the last year (26 weeks) or were never employed. Of these 17,969 (66%) did not work at all in 2021.
- The share of male opportunity youth increased 7 percentage points between 2020 and 2022, while the share of female opportunity youth decreased by the same amount.
- Twenty-three percent of female opportunity youth (2,700) lived with their own children in 2022. (Figure 4) The number of female opportunity youth living with their own child is virtually unchanged from 2020. However, they represent a larger share of all female opportunity youth in 2022.
- In 2022, just 86% of opportunity youth had health insurance coverage, down from 94% in 2020. This is nearly ten percentage points lower than for the total youth population.

TABLE 1: Opportunity Youth Summary, CWWC, 2022 1 Year Estimate

GROUP	TOTAL	POVERTY		RACE/ETHNICITY		EDUCATION		GENDER	
		LIVING BELOW 200% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL	LIVING ABOVE 200% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL	PEOPLE OF COLOR	WHITE	LESS THAN A HS DIPLOMA/ EQUIVALENT	HS DIPLOMA/ EQUIVALENT OR MORE	FEMALE	MALE
Age 16–19	7,137	2,240	4,818	3,234	3,903	1,489	5,648	2,827	4,310
Age 20–24	20,090	7,270	12,539	7,429	12,661	3,131	16,959	8,780	11,310
All OY	27,227	9,510	17,357	10,663	16,564	4,620	22,607	11,607	15,620
Share of OY		35%	64%	39%	61%	17%	83%	43%	57%

Source: US Census, American Community Census, PUMS, 1 year data

Note: Income data not available for 360 Opportunity Youth

ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

A vast majority of the analysis provided in this report stems from data available through the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). Extractable versions of the survey samples from the ACS allow researchers to break down demographics data beyond traditional tables provided by the Census, including determining an estimate of the number of opportunity youth and their characteristics, employment, and household data. The Census releases survey data annually, with the most recent being from 2022. The Census created statistical geographic areas called Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) for disseminating ACS data. The seven counties highlighted in Table 2 reveal the counties within the PVMA that align with PUMAs. These six, along with Pacific County in Washington, were the counties used to perform the analysis seen throughout this report.

Table 2 shows the share and count of opportunity youth found in each PUMA region. The percentage of opportunity youth in the Portland Region is consistent with the rate in Washington State (11%) and slightly higher than the statewide rate in Oregon (12%).

Opportunity youth as a percentage of all youth were overrepresented in Clark (13%), Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Pacific Counties (24%). They were underrepresented in Multnomah and Washington Counties. The greatest numbers of opportunity youth live in Multnomah (7,057) and Clark (6,963) Counties.

TABLE 2: Opportunity Youth by ACS PUMA, 2022

PUMA REGION	Count of OY	All Youth	% of Youth who are Opportunity Youth	OY share of all youth
Clackamas	4,808	40,745	11%	16%
Multnomah	7,057	78,340	9%	26%
Washington	5,574	64,844	9%	20%
Clark	6,963	54,761	13%	26%
Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific	3,225	13,296	24%	12%
Total	27,227	251,986	11%	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 1-year estimate

This report is the latest in a series that tracks the rate of opportunity youth in the region. In this report, comparisons are made to previous years of data.² It should be noted, however, that the comparisons are not exact. The Census made methodical changes to the way survey data was weighted between the 2019 and 2020 ACS.

SUCCESS STORIES

NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH

RW started working with the New Avenues for Youth NextGen program, Providing Avenues to Employment (PAVE), when their housing insecurity caused them to drop out of college. RW exceeded expectations at their internship while working with staff to meet their goal of returning to school. When RW enrolled in Portland Community College, they received housing assistance through Affordable Rent for College Students (ARCS). In school they struggled to maintain employment on top of education. With the support of their career coach, RW was able to identify core needs in a job and narrow down their job search. RW found a role that met their schedule needs, provided a calm work environment, and was accessible by public transportation.

¹ US Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2022. IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

² Opportunity Youth Report, 2018. Worksystems. Opportunity Youth Report, 2022. Worksystems.

WHO ARE THE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?

Opportunity youth are individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. Specifically, in the context of Census information, this means that:

1. Individuals who have not attended school in the last three months AND
2. Individuals who are not working, but are looking for work (unemployed) OR
3. Individuals who are not working, nor are they looking for work (not in the labor force)

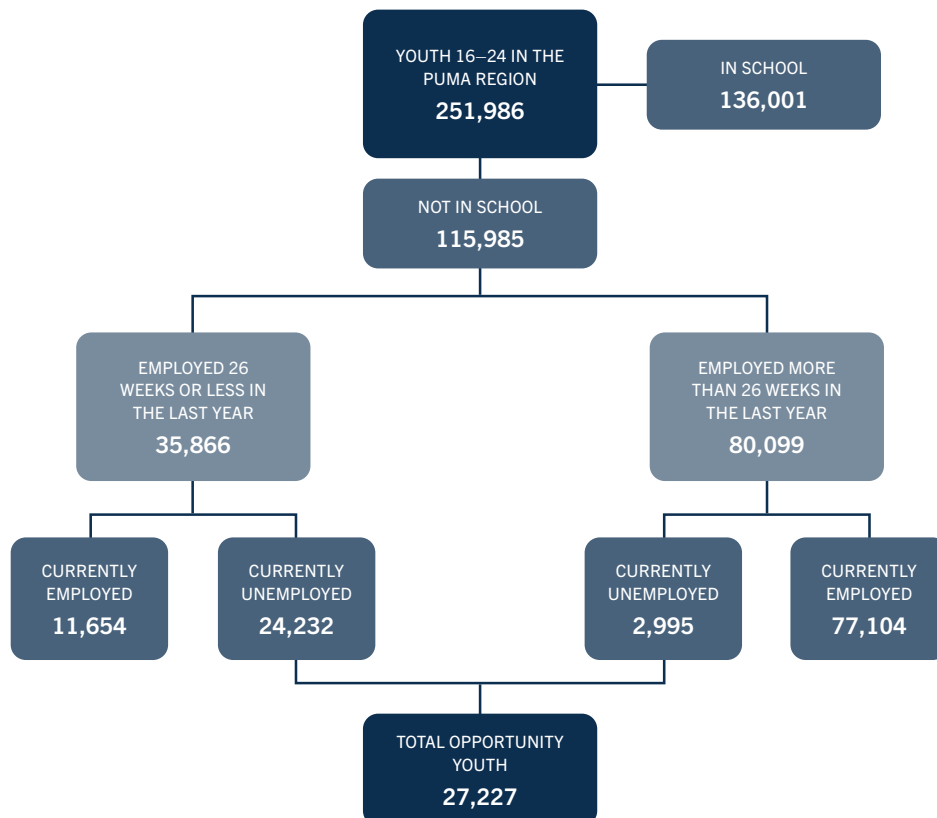
In 2022, there were more than 27,000 opportunity youth in the region (Table 1). This represents a decrease of 21% from 2020. The decline in the number of youths reflects a decrease in population. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of 16–24-year-olds in the region decreased by 15%. This decrease is a combination of multiple factors, including a

decrease in the birth rate, changes in regional migration and population patterns, and a decrease in international immigration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As seen in Table 1, opportunity youth have varying levels of education. Overall, 17% of opportunity youth in the region do not have a high school degree or equivalent, severely limiting their employment prospects. Many would benefit immensely from workforce development programs that propel them into the labor force or advance their education.

Opportunity youth account for approximately 11% of all youth in the region and 23% of all youth not enrolled in school throughout the region. Over 24,200 (89%) opportunity youth were employed for half or less of the last year (26 weeks) or were never employed. Of these 17,969 (66%) did not work at all in 2021. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1: Opportunity Youth, PVMA, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 1-year estimate

YOUTH LABOR FORCE & UNEMPLOYMENT

In recent years, youth participation in the labor force was marked by low levels of participation and high rates of unemployment. Youth ages 16 to 19 participate in the labor force in lower numbers than their slightly older peers. In 2022, the national Labor Force Participation Rate for youth ages 16 to 19 was 36.8% while the rate for youth ages 20-24 was 62.2%.³

After peaking at 64% in 1989, Oregon's teen LFPR was down to just 34% in 2015. After a decades long decline, a gradual increase in labor force participation started in 2016. The rate began to rise as a tight labor market encouraged more teens to enter the labor force. By 2023, Oregon's teen LFPR was 43%, higher than the national rate of 37%.⁴

In Washington State, the youth labor force participation rate was 59% as recently as 2000. By 2020, it has declined to 25%.⁵

The change in LFPR reflects a changing job market, disruptions to education and economic instability during the COVID-19 pandemic and recession, immigration patterns, and changing beliefs in the value and accessibility of higher education.

Youth who do participate in the labor force experience higher rates of unemployment compared with other age groups. In July 2022, the national unemployment rate for 16- to 19-year-olds was 9.8%. A year earlier it was just 9.2%. For white workers, the unemployment rate was 8.4%, for Black workers it was 15.6%, and for Latino workers it was 10.7%.

The sectors that traditionally have high rates of youth employment have gained back jobs but are still below pre-pandemic employment levels. In the Portland MSA, there were 5% fewer Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation jobs in 2022 compared to 2019. Accommodation and Food Services declined 6% during the same period. Jobs in retail fared better but are still 2% lower than in 2019. Overall, there were 9,700 fewer jobs in these sectors in 2022 than in 2019.⁶



SUCCESS STORIES

NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH

Determined to establish a stable career and housing after years of couch surfing, RN found New Avenues for Youth in 2023. With the guidance of Career Coaches from New Avenues NextGen program, PAVE, RN explored various career paths and secured a paid internship at the Lan Su Chinese Gardens. Upon completing the internship, RN's passion for video game design led them to continue their journey finding opportunities to explore this passion as a career.

With the support of their Career Coach and a peer from within the program, RN began to carve out a path while honing their self-advocacy skills. RN seized a new opportunity with an internship at Portland Parks & Recreation in the IT department, aligning perfectly with their aspirations of becoming a video game designer. This opportunity marks RN's first significant step towards their career goals, showcasing their resilience and determination.

³ Labor Force Participation Rate. Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

⁴ Oregon Youth in the Labor Force, 2024. The State of Oregon Employment Department. <https://www.qualityinfo.org>

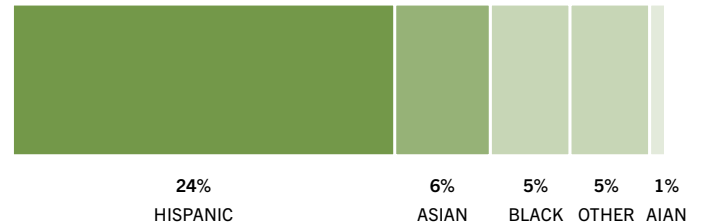
⁵ 2022 Youth Employment Report. Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board. <https://www.wtb.wa.gov>

⁶ Current Employment Statistics, Oregon Employment Department. <https://www.qualityinfo.org>

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

In past years, an opportunity youth in the region was more likely to be a person of color compared to the overall population of youth aged 16 to 24. The racial discrepancies are lessening. In 2022, 43% of opportunity youth identified as Hispanic or a race other than white. This is slightly higher than the total population in which 41% of youth identify as Hispanic or a race other than white. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2: Opportunity Youth, Race and Ethnicity, PVMA, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

TABLE 3: Opportunity Youth, Race and Ethnicity, PVMA, 2022

RACE/ETHNICITY	Count of OY	Share of OY	Count of all Youth	OY Share of all Youth
White (NH)	15,638	57%	149,142	10%
Hispanic	6,645	24%	54,076	12%
AIAN (NH)	378	1%	1,628	23%
Asian (NH)	1,687	6%	17,147	10%
Black (NH)	1,402	5%	8,794	16%
Other (NH)	1,477	5%	21,199	7%
Total	27,227	100%	251,986	11%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

SUCCESS STORIES

PORTLAND OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER (POIC) + ROSEMARY ANDERSON

LJ came to POIC-RAHS to finish high school. She was accepted into the Student Crew Leader Training program where she earned school credit and a wage while developing transferable skills. During her senior year, LJ enrolled in NextGen. Her Career Coach supported her through graduation, applying for scholarships, and enrolling in college. During college, her Career Coach provided references for an apartment and NextGen support services helped to pay for books.

Faced with increased expenses while living on her own and attending college, LJ had to pivot away from college to find employment. Her Career Coach continued to support her throughout this change. LJ enrolled in cosmetology school, which allowed for the flexibility to work a full-time job. LJ has obtained her certification and is proud to be living on her own. She is currently working towards obtaining a business license so she can open her own cosmetology business and put her certification to work.

NATIVITY, LANGUAGE, AND MOBILITY

Approximately 5,900 opportunity youth (22%) speak a language other than English at home. This is roughly the same as the percentage of all youth 16-24 who speak a language other than English at home (20%). (Figure 4)

More than 800 opportunity youth (3%) report speaking English “but not well.”

Eight percent of opportunity youth were born outside the United States. This is a significant drop from previous years: 15% (2014) and 22% (2016). This likely reflects a decrease in immigration caused by restrictive federal policies, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession. The largest groups of opportunity youth born outside the United States are from Mexico (36%), Russia (19%), and China (19%).

FIGURE 3: Primary Language Spoken at Home Among Opportunity Youth, CWWC, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

TABLE 4: Language Spoken at Home Among Opportunity Youth, PVMA, 2022

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	Count of OY	Share of OY	Share of all Youth
English Only	21,222	78%	80%
Spanish	4,005	15%	12%
Other languages	2,000	7%	8%
Total	27,227	100%	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

SUCCESS STORIES

PORTLAND OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER (POIC) + ROSEMARY ANDERSON

ET came to POIC’s NextGen program concerned that he would not graduate on time after falling behind in his high school credits. A Career Coach, guidance counselor, and teachers helped ET to develop a successful graduation plan and he received his diploma following his senior year.

After graduation, ET was faced with the new challenge of entering the workforce. He earned a summer internship with the City of Portland as an Athletic Field Service Intern at Delta Park. His supervisor stated that “ET met and or exceeded expectations in every facet of the internship.” ET showed exceptional professionalism and a great ability to quickly learn which helped him excel in this position.

ET is applying what he learned during his internship to POIC’s Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program.

PARENTING YOUTH

Domestic responsibilities, including caring for children, can be difficult to balance with education and paid labor. Youth who become parents during their teen years face significant challenges when it comes to completing their education and finding career track employment.

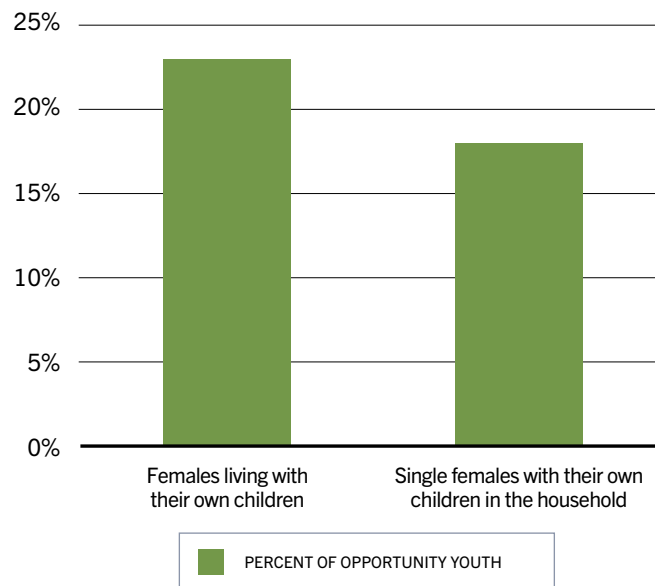
Twenty-three percent of female opportunity youth (2,700) lived with their own children in 2022. (Figure 4) The number of female opportunity youth living with their own child is virtually unchanged from 2020. However, they represent a larger share of all female opportunity youth in 2022.

Teen birth rates in the region are declining. In 2012, 5% of babies born in the PVMA were born to teen mothers ages 19 and younger. By 2022, just 3% of babies born in the region had mother younger than 19. This is consistent with a national drop in teen birth rates.⁷

Based on Self-Sufficiency Standard and Census data, an estimated 60% of single mother households in Oregon and 80% of single mother households in Washington do not earn enough to make ends meet, compared to one-third of all households. The rates are particularly high for single mothers of color. In Oregon 92% of Black and 65% of Latina headed households with children lack adequate income. In Washington, 81% of Latina headed and 80% of households headed by a Black single mother lack adequate income. Targeting resources towards this population alleviates common burdens preventing single parents from re-entering the workforce or education system, such as limited childcare options and extended gaps in employment or education.⁸

For teens who do become parents, the chance of becoming an opportunity youth is high. Fifty-seven percent (2,200) of the female youth ages 16 to 24 who gave birth during the past year, were opportunity youth.⁹

FIGURE 5: Opportunity Youth Females by Household Type and Own Children in the Household, PVMA, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS, 1 yr estimate



⁷ Oregon Vital Statistics, Oregon Health Authority. <https://www.oregon.gov>; Vital Records, Washington State Department of Health. <https://doh.wa.gov>

⁸ The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Oregon 2021. The Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Washington State. The Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. http://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WA2021_Demo_SSS.pdf

⁹ US Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS), One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2022. IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH HOUSEHOLDS

A majority of opportunity youth live in residential housing but do not rent or own their place of residence, as indicated by the lack of householders present in the population. An estimated 2,900 (11%) of opportunity youth were householders in 2022, meaning they were the person (or one of the people) in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented. Intuitively this makes sense, since this population is neither working, and therefore unable to maintain regular, adequate income necessary to pay rent or mortgage, nor in school where potential grants or loans would subsidize the ability to live on their own. Consequently, 86% (23,400) of opportunity youth live in housing with someone else representing the householder status. The remaining 3% live in group quarters, with the majority living in institutional group quarters (correctional facilities, nursing facilities, psychiatric hospitals, and group homes or residential treatment centers for juveniles).

Homeless youth are another important population in the region to consider. Unfortunately, Census survey data does not cover this segment of the population. The most reliable source of estimates of people experiencing homelessness come from point-in-time counts provided annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and data collected by the K-12 school systems.¹⁰

TABLE 5: County of Opportunity Youth by Household Type, CWWC, 2022

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Count of OY	Share of OY
Householder	2,949	11%
Non-householder	23,462	86%
Group Quarters	816	3%
Total	27,227	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

The 2022 Point-in-Time Homeless County identified 415 homeless youth aged 18 to 24 living in Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah, and Washington Counties.¹¹ Data for Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Pacific is not available. The Oregon Department of Education identified an additional 1,121 unaccompanied minors enrolled in public schools in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. As they are enrolled in school, these youth are not opportunity youth. However, their precarious housing situation may place them at higher risk of becoming opportunity youth.

SUCCESS STORIES

GOODWILL'S OPEN DOORS

Karma is a determined 17-year-old who joined NEXT from Goodwill's Open Doors program in Cowlitz County to find a job while working on her GED. Dreaming of Cosmetology school, she landed a paid work experience (WEX) at BEX hair salon in Longview through our WEX program. Though not yet licensed to work on clients, she's learning the ropes of salon life, from scheduling to techniques and "salon speak." NEXT helped fund essentials like a manikin head for hands-on training, and also supported her commute from Kalama, fueling both her car and her dreams. Recently, Karma was invited by her former high school's theater department to showcase her design and makeup skills; was able to play a lead role in a recent production, and achieved her GED! The principal contacted her Career Coach at NEXT and said that she had never seen Karma so happy.

¹⁰ <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/esea/mckinney-vento/pages/default.aspx>

¹¹ Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 2022. HUD. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2022-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Health insurance reduces medical costs, facilitates access to care, and results in better healthcare outcomes. The Affordable Care Act resulted in a sharp increase in the rate of health insurance coverage across the country. Despite the increase, nearly 6% of people in the Portland MSA did not have health insurance coverage in 2022.¹²

Rates of coverage vary by educational attainment, employment status, race, ethnicity, and age. People who do not have a high school diploma, were unemployed, BIPOC, and aged 19 to 34 years were significantly less likely to have coverage than their peers. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that rates of health insurance are lower for opportunity youth. In 2022, just 86% of opportunity youth had health insurance coverage. This is nearly ten percentage points lower than for the total population.

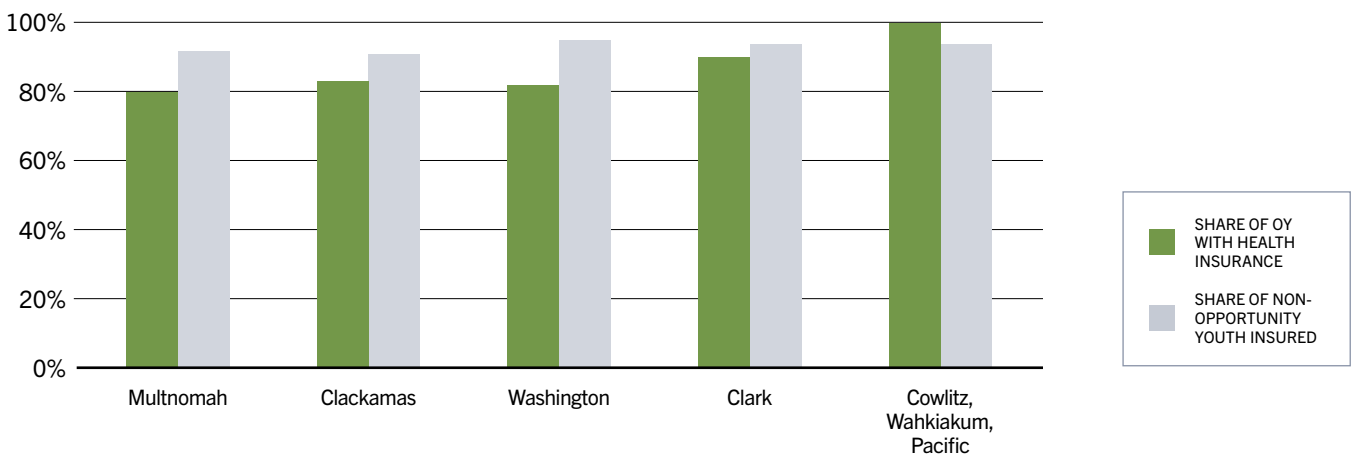
Health insurance coverage rates for opportunity youth have declined steadily since 2018. An estimated 86% of opportunity youth had health insurance coverage in 2022, a full ten percentage points below the 2018 coverage rate of 96%. (Table 6)

TABLE 6: Share of Youth who are Insured, by PUMA, 2022

PUMA REGION	2016	2018	2020	2022
Multnomah	90%	77%	81%	80%
Clackamas	94%	71%	72%	83%
Washington	87%	80%	82%	82%
Clark	75%	91%	83%	90%
Total	91%	96%	94%	86%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

FIGURE 5: Opportunity Youth with Health Insurance, CWWC, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS

¹² US Census, American Community Survey, Table S2701, 1yr. estimate

A persistent gap in health insurance coverage exists between opportunity youth and all youth persists. An estimated 92% of all youth in the region had health insurance in 2020, indicating a twelve-percentage point gap. (Figure 5)

In Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties, the percentage of opportunity youth with health insurance coverage is lower today than it was in 2016. The rates of coverage in Clark County, however, increased from 75% in 2016 to 90% in 2022. (Figure 5)

Opportunity youth in the Washington portion of the PVMA are more likely to have health insurance than their peers in Oregon. Multnomah County is home to the highest number of opportunity youth and is the county where those youth have the lowest health insurance coverage rates (80%). (Figure 5)

Health insurance plans offer varying levels of coverage. Just having health insurance does not guarantee access to care. In 2023, more than 8% of youth in Oregon and Washington had private insurance that did not cover mental or emotional health.¹³

In 2023, the US Surgeon General declared youth mental health to be a national crisis. Good mental health is an important element of youth development. When youth have “good mental health – and the support to foster healthy relationships and social connections – they are better equipped to thrive in adolescents and adulthood.”

Youth ages 16-24 were in their early to late teens when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in spring 2020. They experienced the social and academic disruptions and related stress at a time when peer interaction plays an outsized role in identity formation. Interruptions to in person schooling, which lasted longer in Oregon and Washington than most other states, compounded the stress caused by the pandemic and resulting recession. Youth were also faced with escalating levels of violence in their schools, their communities, and on their screens. The result was an increase in the prevalence and severity of mood disorders.

The pandemic was not the start of the adolescent mental health crisis. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that persistent sadness and hopelessness as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors increased 40% in the ten years before the pandemic. The increase was a result of factors including environmental/structural issues, social media/online bullying, increased exposure to mass violence, and earlier puberty development.¹⁴

In 2023, Oregon ranked 50th in the nation for youth mental health. Washington ranked 39th, with 14% of youth reporting poor mental health. Nineteen percent of youth in Oregon and 15% of youth in Washington say they’ve experienced a major depressive episode. Eight percent of youth in Oregon and 6% of youth in Washington have substance use disorder. Sixty-four percent of youth who experienced a major depressive episode did not receive mental healthcare.¹⁵

The severity of the mental health crisis is varies across populations. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and female youth are more likely to be impacted by poor mental health, as are youth who have experienced adverse childhood experiences of violence, exploitation, discrimination, abuse or neglect.¹⁶

SUCCESS STORIES

NEXT SUCCESS

After losing his apartment when his roommates moved, Kaden found himself struggling to regain housing and independence. Despite his background in mechanical and graphic design, he faced challenges getting past A.I. application screenings. Kaden came to NEXT hoping to find a paid internship that would enhance his resume and provide valuable experience in marketing, social media design, and website videography. With the support of his career coach and our business navigator, Kaden secured a position at PAX Learning center where he is now thriving! He has contributed to events, fundraising efforts, social media posts and flyers, and is currently creating videos showcasing GED participants’ own success stories. He will continue working part-time for PAX after his internship is completed.

¹³ State of Mental Health in America, 2023. Mental Health America. www.mhanational.org

¹⁴ Youth Mental Health, Adolescent and School Health. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov>

¹⁵ State of Mental Health in America, 2023. Mental Health America. www.mhanational.org

¹⁶ Youth Mental Health, Adolescent and School Health. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov>

EDUCATION

Ensuring that youth complete high school is imperative in preparing them for future success. A high school diploma or GED is a requirement for higher education, a registered apprenticeship, and nearly all jobs that pay a family supporting wage.

Adults without a high school diploma are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty as those with a diploma or equivalent (21% v 12%).¹⁷

Regional school districts located in the state of Washington had four-year graduation rates at or above 87%, on average. (Table 7) District rates varied from 77% in the La Center School District (Clark County) to 98% in the Hockinson School District (Clark County). On the Oregon side, the average four-year graduation rate was 85%. However, rates varied dramatically from 66% in the Reynolds School District (Multnomah County) to 99% in the Riverdale School District (Multnomah County).

For five-year graduation rates, regional school districts from Oregon maintained an 87% rate while Washington districts held steady at 89%. Detailed district level outcomes are provided in Appendix A.

Graduation rates vary across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. In 2022, the four-year graduation rate for all students in PVMA was 85%. The rate for low-income students was 83%. The rate for BIPOC students was 77%.

Knowing the current level of education for opportunity youth can provide insight into what extent schooling will be the priority focus on re-engagement assistance. Among teenage opportunity youth, an estimated 1,500 have less than a high school diploma. This specific sub-population of opportunity youth likely meet the necessary qualifications to re-integrate into the K-12 education system. The other 79% of opportunity youth aged 16-19 have a high school degree or equivalent. (Table 8)

Older opportunity youth, those aged 20-24, are more likely to have at least a high school degree. Just 16% have less than a high school degree or equivalent. Thirty-five percent of older opportunity youth have education beyond high school, a number that has been steadily decreasing since 2014. Roughly 4,000 older opportunity youth have some college education but have not formally completed an associate degree or higher. This is a decrease of 40% from 2016. (Table 8)

¹⁷ US Census, American Community Survey, Table S1701, 2023 1yr. estimate.

TABLE 7: Portland-Vancouver Region Graduation Rates, by State, 2022–2023

2019–2020 GRADUATION YEAR	4-year graduation rate	5-year graduation rate
Oregon	81.3%	83.8%
CWWC Counties in Oregon	85.0%	87.2%
Washington	83.6%	86.0%
CWWC Counties in Washington	87.0%	89.9%

Source: Oregon Department of Education and Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

TABLE 8: Significant Employment by Education Level Youth Age 16-24, Not in School, 2022

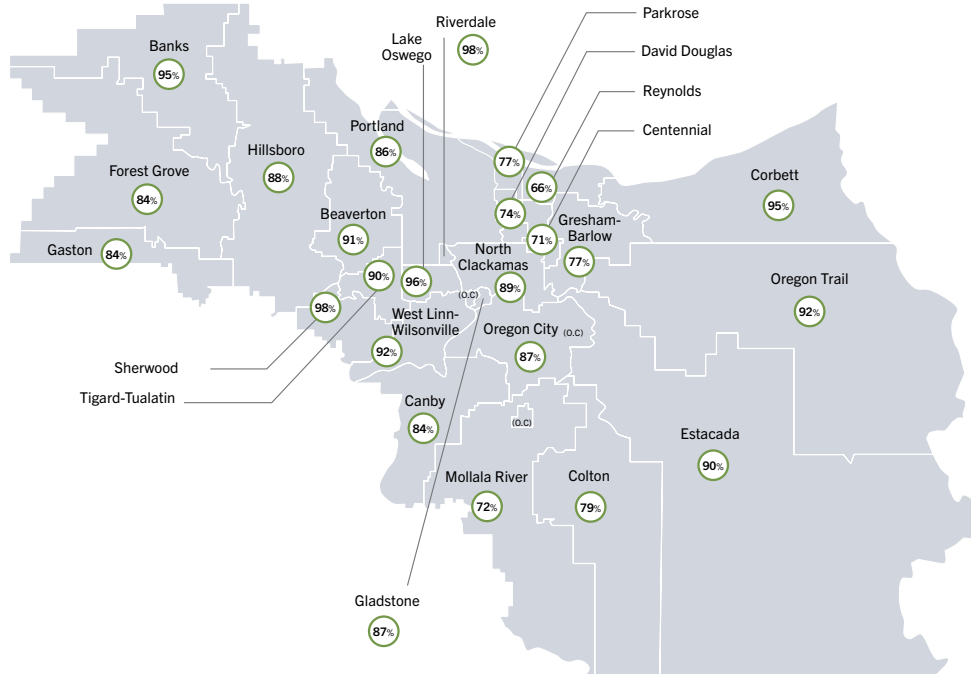
OPPORTUNITY YOUTH AGE 16–19	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	1,489	21%
High school diploma/equivalent or more	5,648	79%
Total OY age 16–19	7,137	100%

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH AGE 20–24	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	3,131	16%
High school diploma/equivalent or more	16,959	84%
Total OY age 20–24	20,090	100%

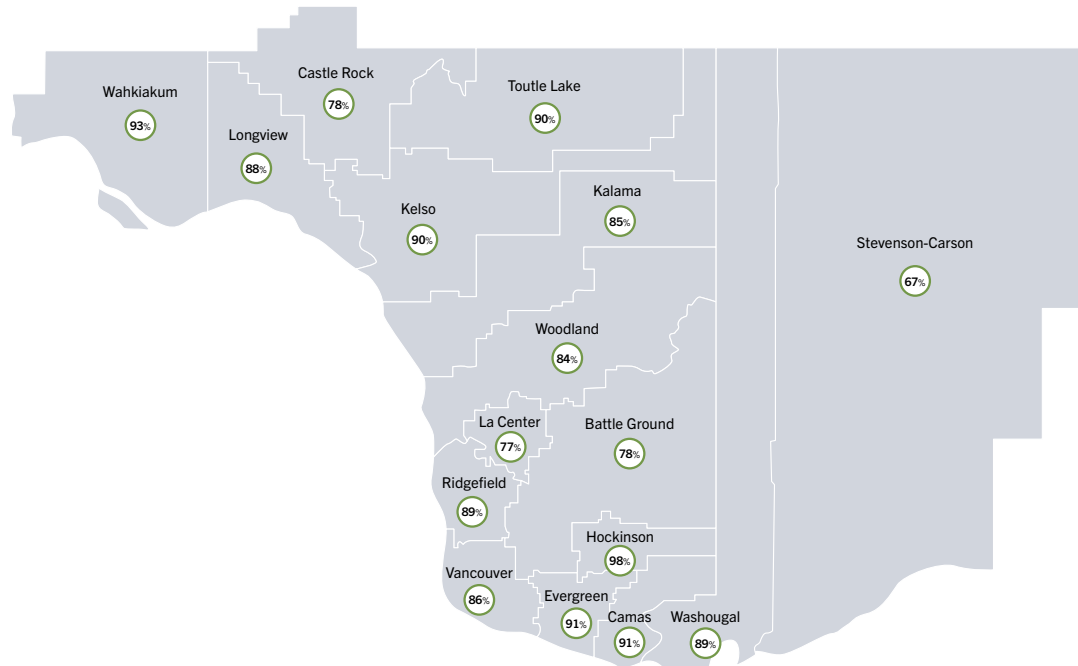
Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1yr. estimate

FIGURE 6: Four-year High School Graduation Rates, PVMA, 2022-2023

OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICTS



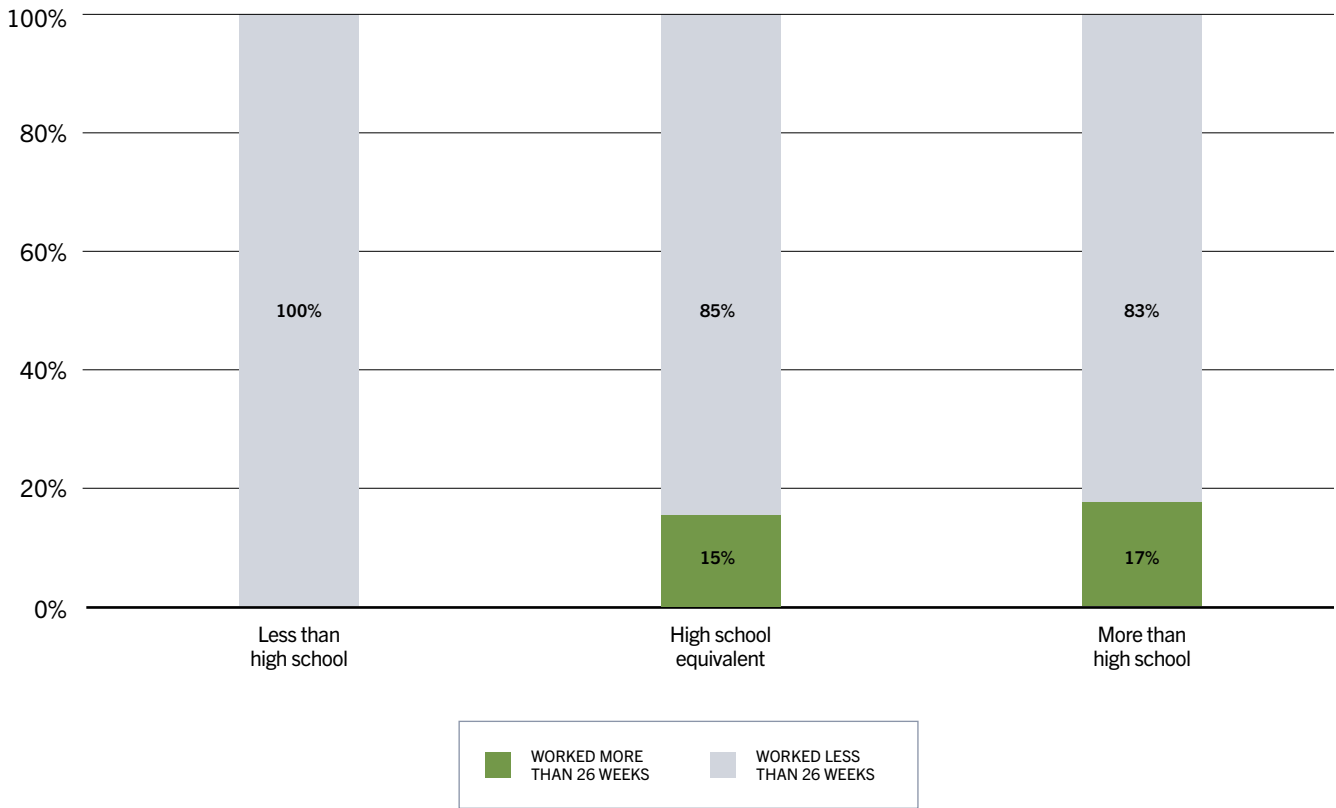
WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Source: Oregon Department of Education and Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Note: Maps not to scale.

FIGURE 7: Significant Employment by Education Level for Youth Aged 20-24, Not In School, PVMA, 2022



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 2020 1-year estimate

SUCCESS STORIES

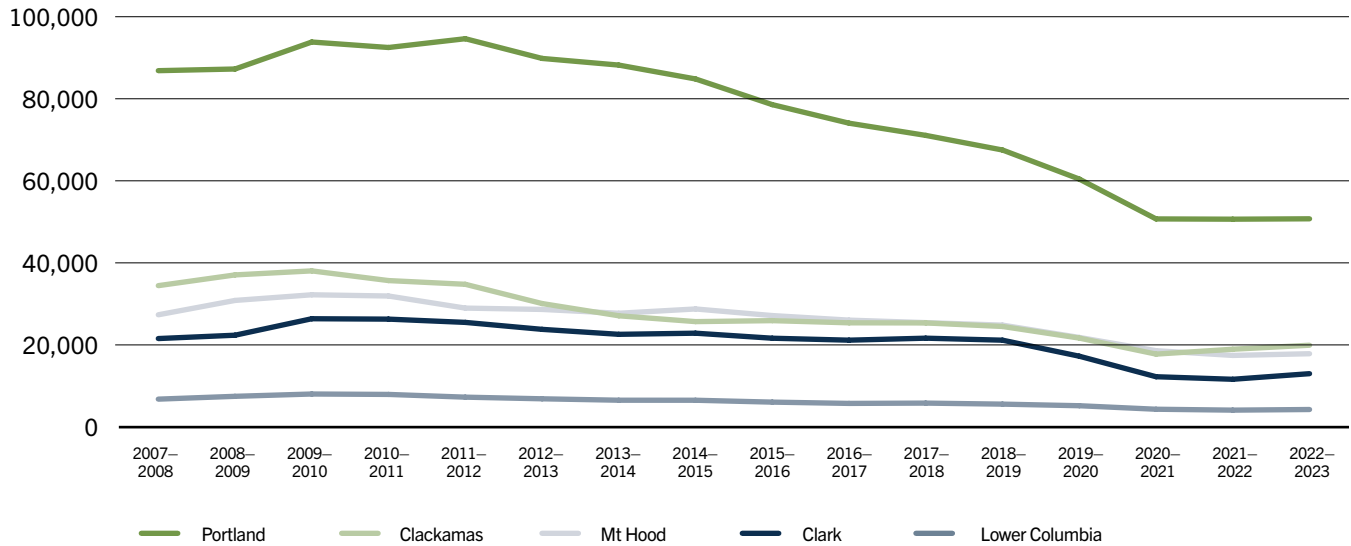
NEXT SUCCESS

Sayvionne enrolled with NEXT looking for community resources and support to find work. She quickly became engaged in our center with social media and started a Work Experience (WEX) at Delish Farm, where she has been learning new skills. In addition to her WEX, Sayvionne secured a part-time job, demonstrating her commitment to expanding her work experiences. Recognizing her dedication, NEXT provided support with gas expenses, ensuring she could attend her WEX and part-time job. Sayvionne also took advantage of resources like NEXT Thread, our participant clothing closet, where she found work and interview attire. Her bright personality and determination to improve herself have been instrumental in gaining new experiences, insight, and resources needed for success. We're proud of Sayvionne's journey and excited to see her continue to grow!

Figure 8 demonstrates how crucial education can be for both opportunity and all youth. For youth aged 20-24, education is a strong indicator of employment outcomes. A majority of those with less than a high school diploma works fewer than 26 weeks in 2022. Forty-seven percent had no reported employment during 2020. On the other end of the spectrum, 65% of those with some form of post-secondary education had employment for at least half of 2022.

The five community colleges in the PVMA have seen a marked decline in enrollment. Overall, 48% fewer students enrolled in community colleges in 2022-2023 from the peak of enrollment in 2009-2010. Portland Community College experienced the largest decline. Enrollment stabilized over the past year.¹⁸

FIGURE 8: Community College Enrollment, PVMA, 2007-2023

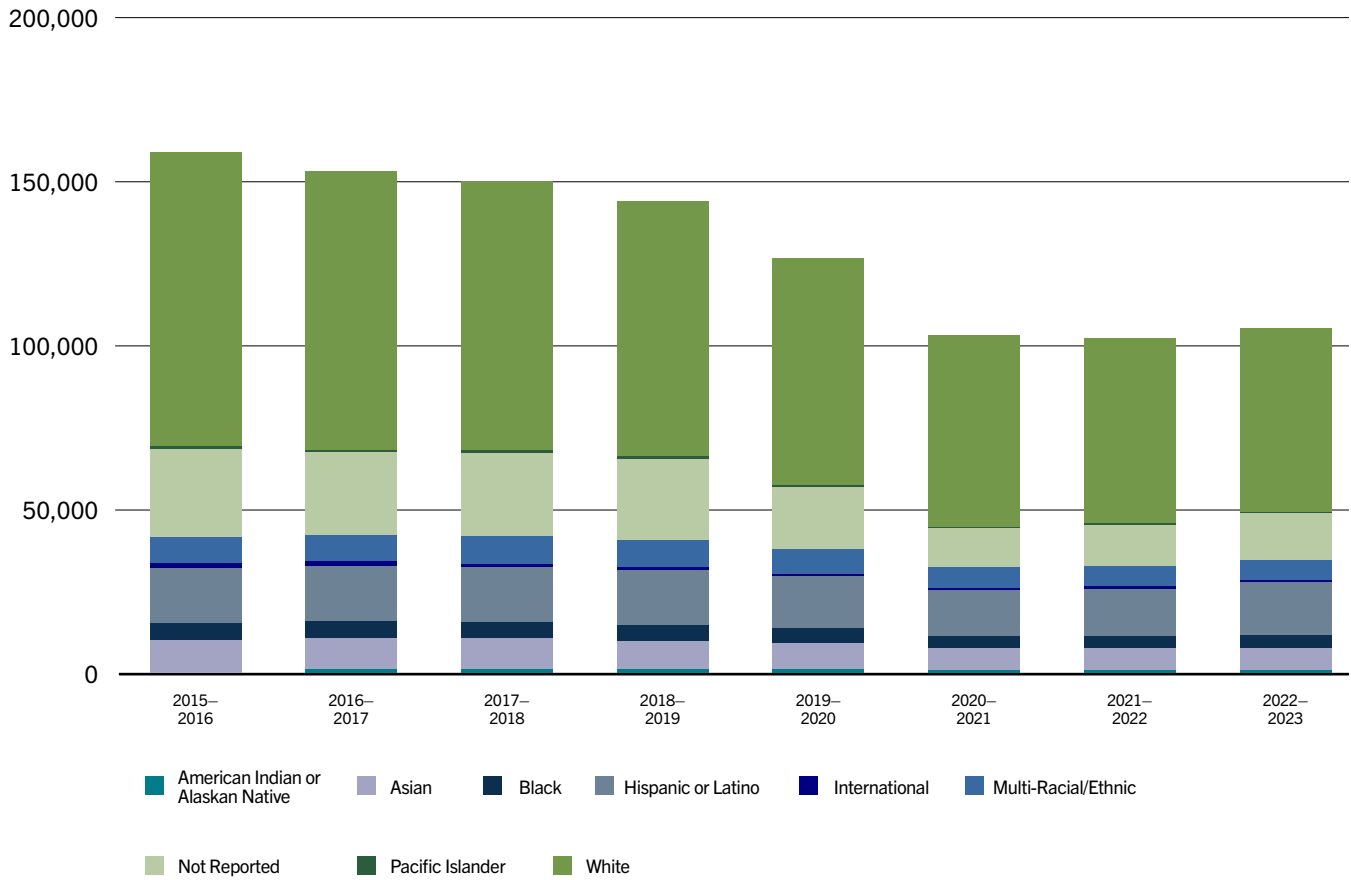


Source: Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges



¹⁸ Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council; Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

FIGURE 8A: Community College Enrollment by Race, PVMA, 2015-2023



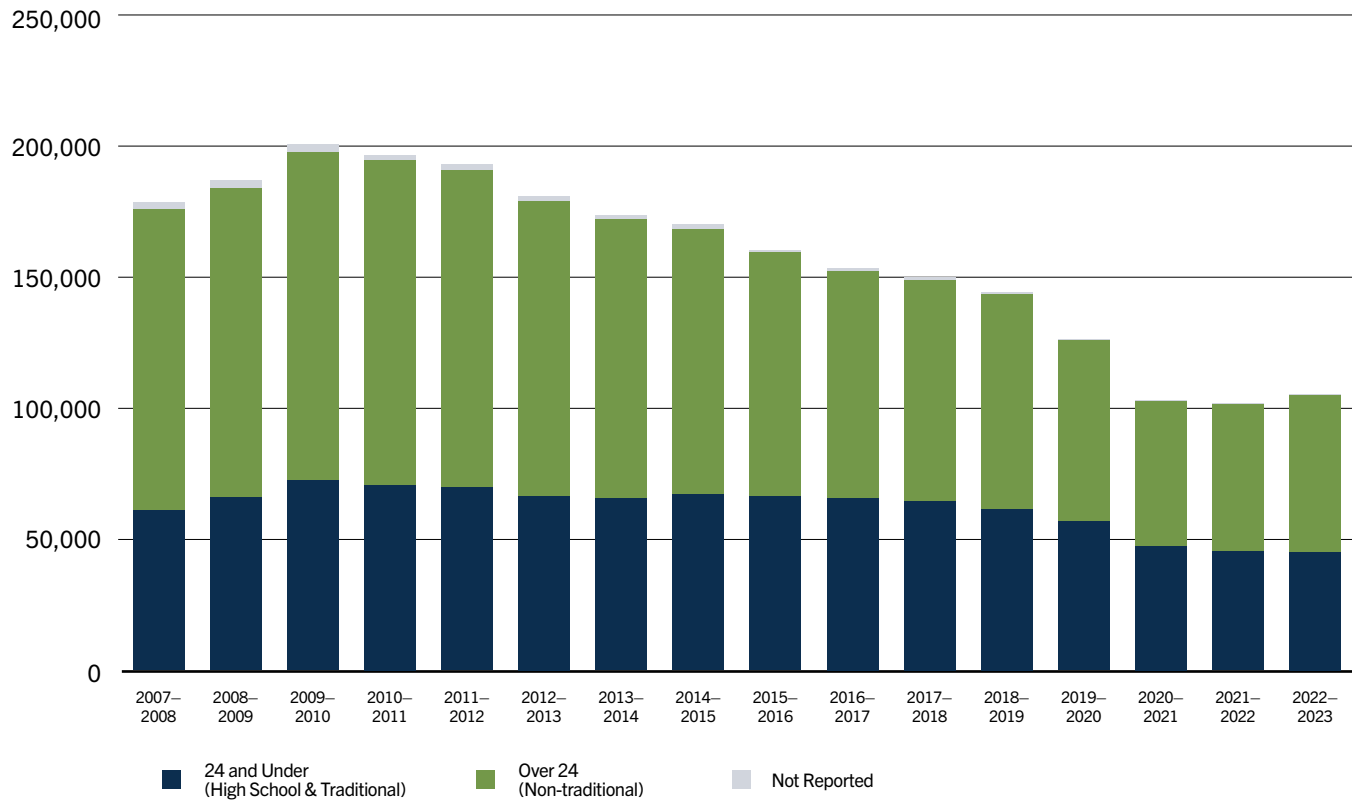
Source: Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Board for Community and Technical Colleges

The number of BIPOC students enrolled in regional community colleges peaked at 44,101 during the 2013-2013 academic year. By the 2022-2023 academic year, BIPOC enrollment had declined by 22% (9,769 students). During the same period, the share of BIPOC students steadily increased. Twenty-four percent of enrolled students (35,661) during the 2007-2008 academic year identified as BIPOC. By the 2022-2023 academic year, the share of students identifying as BIPOC has increased to 38% (34,332 students).¹⁹

¹⁹ Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Note: Race and ethnicity data is not available for all students. During this period, the percentage of students who did not report their race varied from 11% (11,589 students) in 2020-2021 to 19% (38,126 students) in 2009-2010.

FIGURE 8B: Community College Enrollment by Age, PVMA, 2015-2023



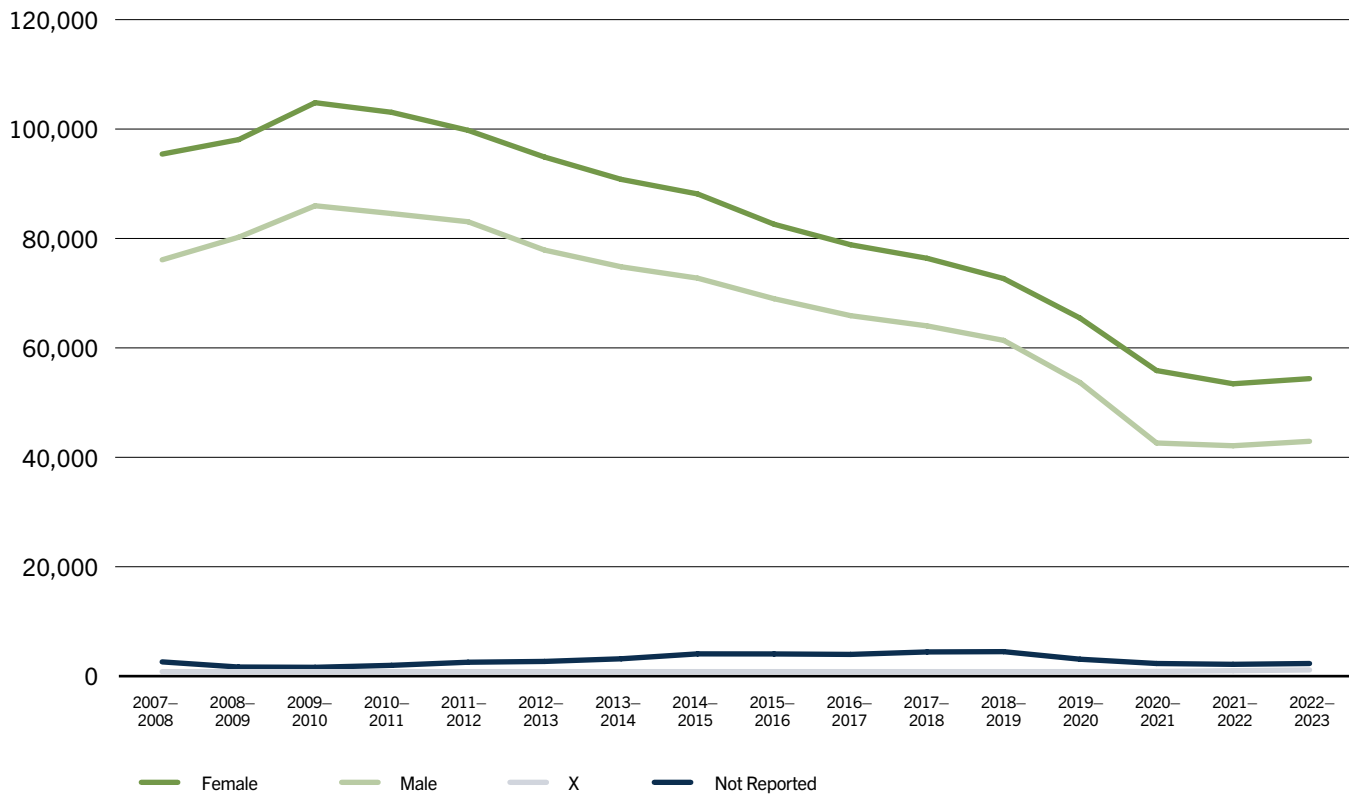
Source: Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Board for Community and Technical Colleges

The number of students 24 years or younger enrolled in regional community colleges declined 26% between the 2007-2008 academic year and the 2022-2023 academic year. While the total number of students declined, the share of students in the 24 and under age group steadily increased. During the 2007-2008 academic year, 34% (60,706) enrolled students were 24 and under. By academic year 2022-2023, the share had increased to 43% (44,962 students).²⁰

²⁰ Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Note: Data is not available for all students. During this time period, 1%-2% of students did not identify their age each year.

FIGURE 8C: Community College Enrollment by Sex, PVMA, 2007-2023



Source: Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Enrollment for both male and female community college students peaked during the 2009-2010 academic year. By the 2022-2023 academic year, enrollment of female students had declined by 49% (51,175 students) and enrollment of male students had declined by 51% (43,740 students). The ratio of male to female students has remained largely consistent at 56% female to 44% male.²¹

²¹ Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Note: Data is not available for all students. During this time period, 1%-3% of students did not identify their gender each year. A third category, X, was added in 2019-2020. The number of students who identify as X has increase each year from one (0.001%) in the 2019-2020 academic school year to 96 (0.098%) in the 2022-2023 academic year.

POVERTY, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME

Wages from employment is the primary source of income for most Americans. Unemployment and underemployment are strongly correlated with poverty.²² In 2022, 4.3% of employed adults in the Portland MSA lived below the poverty line, compared to 27% of unemployed adults.²³

An estimated 74% of all opportunity youth had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to the survey and therefore were considered to be out of the labor force. This represented a three-point increase from 2016 and a thirteen-percentage point increase in share compared to 2014, where 61% of opportunity youth were estimated to be out of the labor force. This could indicate a concerning trend that the influence of chronic unemployment has expanded its reach in the opportunity youth population of the region. (Table 9)

When examining the 29% of opportunity youth who did participate in the labor force at some point in 2022, it becomes clear that their work opportunities were not equivalent to the broader youth population. The estimated 7,789 opportunity youth that worked at some point in 2021 had wages on par with the subset of all youth that worked 26 weeks or less. This indicates that a more broadly defined group of youth struggling with employment likely requires support from the workforce development system. (Table 10)

TABLE 9: Labor Force Participation Among Opportunity Youth, PVMA, 2022

PARTICIPATION	Count of OY	Share of OY
In the labor force	7,789	29%
Not in the labor force	19,438	71%
All opportunity youth	27,227	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate

TABLE 10: Annual Wages for Youth Not in School, by Level of Employment and Employment Status, PVMA, 2022

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Count of OY	Average Annual Wage
Worked 26 weeks or less in the last year	35,886	\$6,920
Worked more than 26 weeks in the last year	80,099	\$31,526
Full year, full-time employment	41,636	\$36,523
Opportunity youth in the labor force	7,789	\$8,604
All youth not in school	115,985	\$23,913

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1-year estimate



²² Sources of Personal Income, Tax Year, 2021. Tax Foundation <https://taxfoundation.org>

²³ American Community Survey, United States Census. Table S1701, 1yr. estimate

A BROADER LOOK AT OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Table 11 provides information on a broader population of youth aged 16 to 24 that would likely equally benefit from support from the workforce development system. These youth, while not all defined in the traditional sense of opportunity youth, are not in school and potentially struggle with chronic unemployment and/or are unemployed. This broader population includes all youth that were employed less than half of 2021 rather than just those who happened to be unemployed at the point-in-time of the survey. About 26,300 of these youth fit the standard definition of currently unemployed opportunity youth.

This population also has some important exclusions. The numbers in Table 11 do not include youth with post-secondary degrees because the adult workforce development system would better suit their employment preparation needs. Additionally, youth living in institutional group quarters are excluded since they likely require other steps before preparing to re-engage with the labor force.

The standard and alternative opportunity youth definitions have similar rates regarding race/ethnicity makeup and poverty rates. The alternative definition skews younger, with 45% of the population aged 16-19, while the standard definition has roughly 25% in the younger age group.

TABLE 11: Chronically Unemployed Youth Summary, PVMA, 2022

	Count	Share of Total
Age 16–19	10,443	34%
Age 20–24	20,232	66%
White	18,134	59%
People of Color	12,541	41%
Below 200% of FPL	11,006	64%
Above 200% of FPL	19,660	36%
Total	30,675	100%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS 1yr estimate



SERVING YOUTH HOLISTICALLY

As the workforce of the future, education and training for young adults is vitally important. The Collaborative partners with youth-serving organizations to support youth through career planning, work experience, education, and job placement.

Many youths, though, need additional support beyond education and training. Holistic Youth Development includes activities that strengthen the whole young person. More people today understand that youth development does not happen in a straight line. Instead, it varies for different young people, and is driven by the ecology surrounding youth and young adults. That ecology includes the adults, other young people, the environment, social and economic realities, culture, and many more parts.

Holistic Youth Development provides an opportunity to expand and deepen our work by seeing all young people as complete, whole people who are young and evolving. It does this by acknowledging, respecting, and embracing who children and youth are as individuals, including the unique ecology surrounding them.

There are many different components in the lives of children and youth. They include:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Familial
- Social
- Spiritual
- Ethical
- Educational
- Cultural

All together, these components (and more) make up the worlds of young people today. They show that no matter what their ages, youth live complex lives.

The pandemic and its impact brought the need for those working with young people to learn this reality, acknowledge it, and weave it throughout programs and activities that are meant to promote youth development. Holistic Youth Development is not a linear, sequential process that relies on any one component specifically. Instead, it strengthens the whole young person. It also acknowledges and strengthens the broad world around young people by bringing together the families, friends, communities, schools, NGOs, faith places, and others throughout the lives of youth, too. Instead of seeing them as adults-in-the-making, Holistic Youth Development actively treats youth as uniquely important people right now, just because they are young people.



TABLE A1: Five-year High School Graduation Rates, PVMA, 2022–2023

STATE	DISTRICT NAME	2022-23 FIVE-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE
OR	Banks School District	91%
WA	Battle Ground School District	83%
OR	Beaverton School District	91%
WA	Camas School District	92%
OR	Canby School District	86%
WA	Castle Rock School District	86%
OR	Centennial School District	77%
OR	Corbett School District	92%
OR	David Douglas School District	82%
OR	Estacada School District	90%
WA	Evergreen School District (Clark)	94%
OR	Forest Grove School District	83%
OR	Gaston School District	89%
OR	Gladstone School District	90%
OR	Gresham-Barlow School District	77%
OR	Hillsboro School District	89%
WA	Hockinson School District	96%
WA	Kalama School District	87%
WA	Kelso School District	91%
WA	La Center School District	85%
OR	Lake Oswego School District	96%
WA	Longview School District	88%
OR	Molalla River School District	80%
OR	North Clackamas School District	89%
OR	Oregon City School District	88%
OR	Oregon Trail School District	87%
OR	Parkrose School District	73%
OR	Portland School District	88%
OR	Reynolds School District	69%
WA	Ridgefield School District	93%
OR	Riverdale School District	93%
WA	Stevenson-Carson School District	67%
OR	Sherwood School District	97%
OR	Tigard-Tualatin School District	89%
WA	Vancouver School District	89%
WA	Wahkiakum School District	92%
WA	Washougal School District	90%
OR	West Linn-Wilsonville School District	94%
WA	Woodland School District	85%

Source: Oregon Department of Education and Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



WSW's PY24 WIOA Youth program is supported by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. \$1,428,921 (100% of total) is financed by Federal funds. We are equal opportunity employers/programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Oregon and Washington Relay 711.