

Workforce Wins: Solving Rural Health Care Access with Bold, Local Solutions

Stephanie Hooper, BA, AGE+
Veronica Irvin, PhD, MPH, Oregon State University

WORKFORCE WINS: SOLVING RURAL HEALTHCARE ACCESS WITH BOLD, LOCAL SOLUTIONS



Today's Discussion

- Economic trends and workforce barriers from a healthcare lens
- The demographic shift and rural oregon
- A solution: older adults in the workforce by changing the nature of the work
- Becoming an age-friendly university: Oregon State University (OSU)
- Call to action: give us your input

Stephanie Hooper
President & CEO, AGE+

Veronica Irvin
Associate Professor, Oregon State University

Veronica Irvin, PhD, MPH, FSBM

Associate Professor in Public Health, Health Promotion Health Behavior
Celia Strickland Austin & G. Kenneth Austin III Endowed Professor in Public Health
Member & Past Chair, Oregon Public Health Advisory Board
Member, Center for Healthy Aging (CHAR), Oregon State University

Research supported by Oregon Health Authority to Tao Li, "Health care work force needs assessment."

Disclosures: I have financial interests in, IZ Translational Sciences, a company which commercializes the technology related to this research. The conduct, outcomes, or reporting of this research could benefit IZ Translational Sciences, and could potentially benefit me.

TWO PUBLICLY-AVAILABLE STATE REPORTS

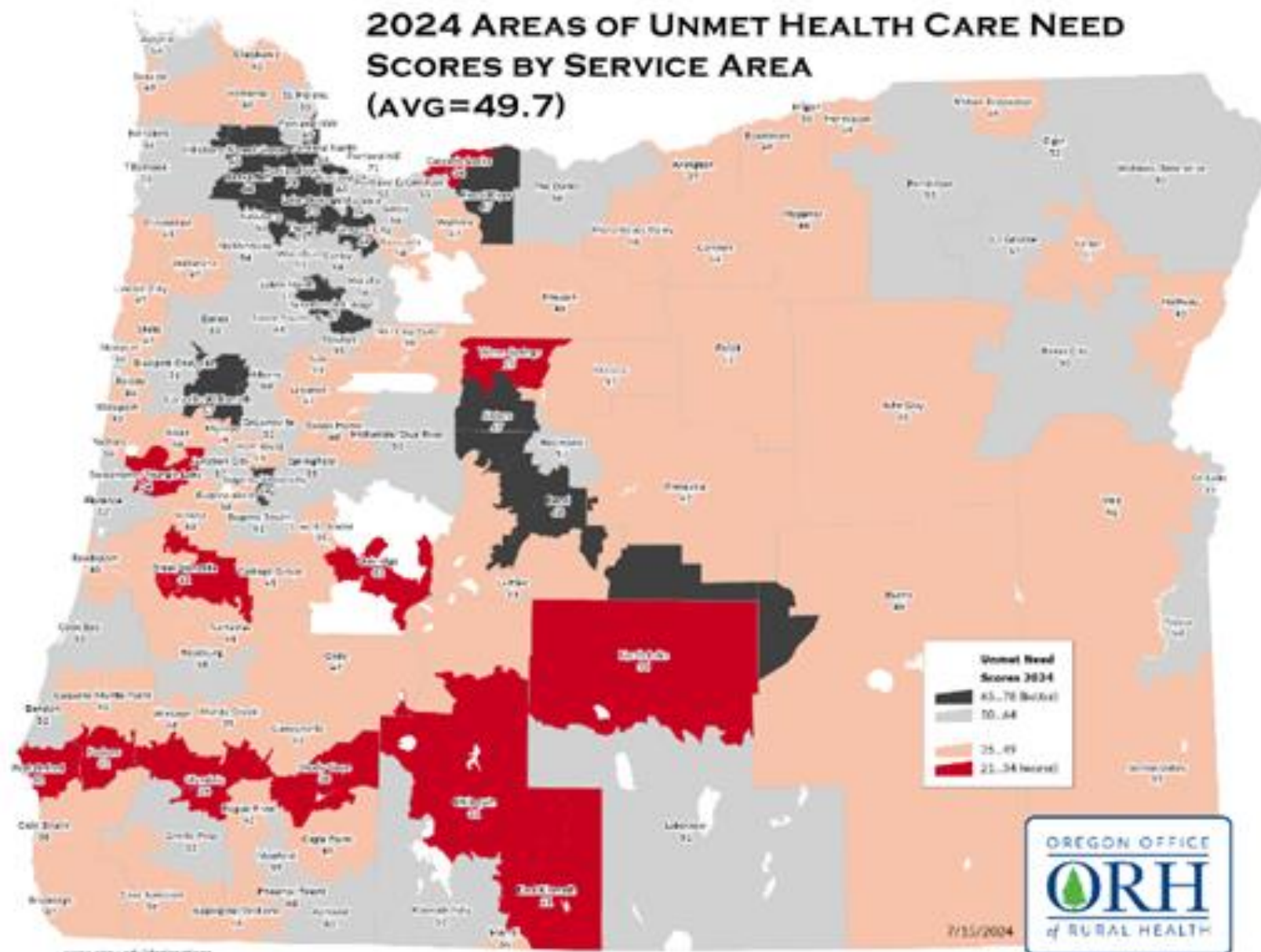


Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2025. Prepared for Oregon State University for Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Health Policy Board. Li T, Irvin V, Luck J, Bahl, A. Oregon's Health Care Workforce Needs Assessment 2025. Prepared for Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Health Policy Board.



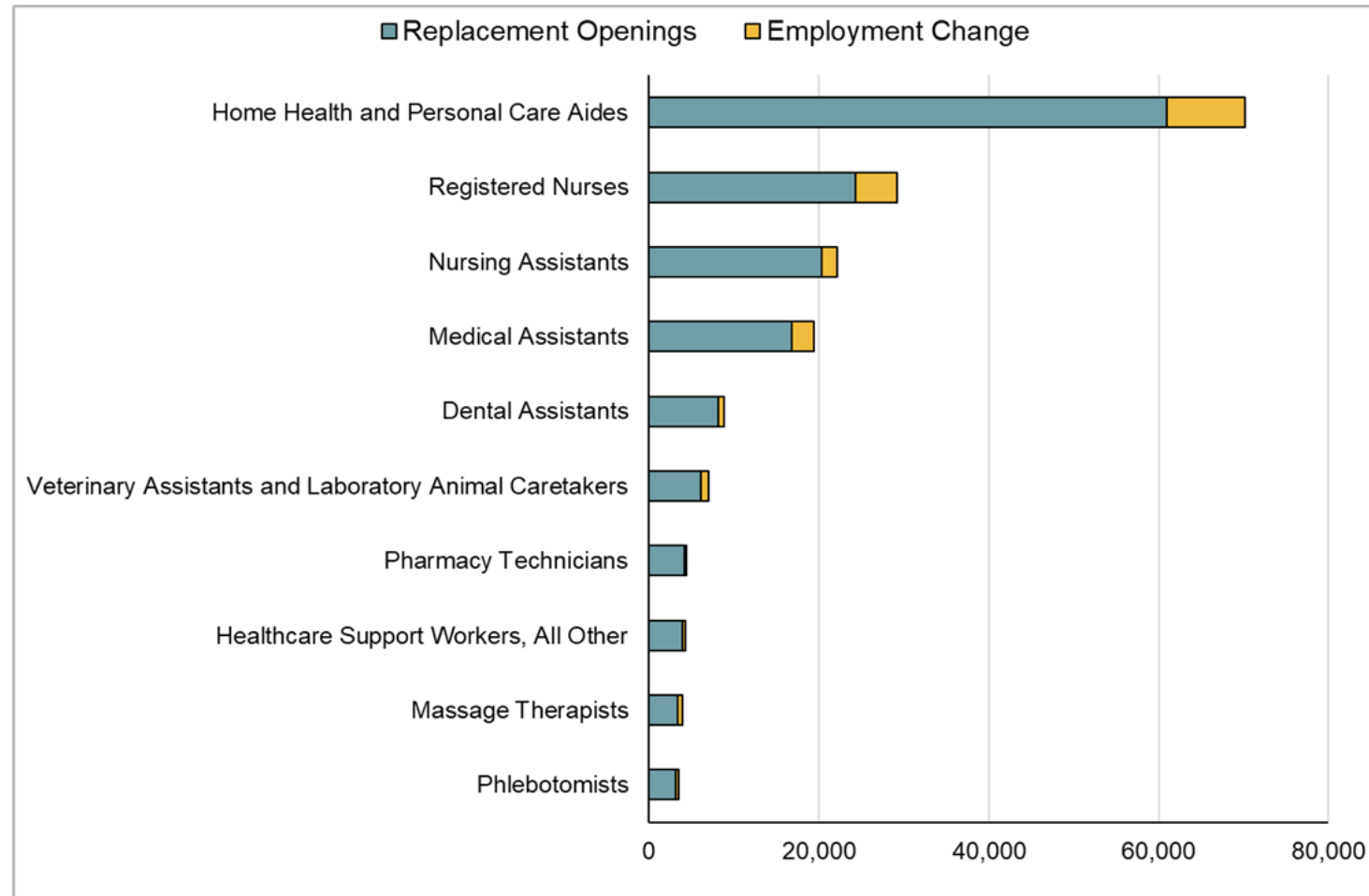
Oregon Public Health Advisory Board. The Public Health System Workforce Plan





HEALTH CARE OCCUPATIONS WITH MOST OPENINGS OF EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

2022-2032, OREGON



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WORK



Job Flexibility

Paid time off, paid family medical leave, flexible schedule, remote work



Childcare

Affordable and accessible, extended coverage options



Sustained Education

Career development opportunities; time to pursue education; tuition assistance, English language learning



Broadband Access

Reliable internet; necessary device for work and education



Health care

Lower premiums for employer-provided insurance, increased access to telehealth



Transportation

Reliable and safe; affordable; flexibility to address issues



Home and Community Health

Stable housing; safe environment; access to quality food, healthcare, and mental health services



Access to Justice

Fair interactions with legal system; legal counsel when needed; opportunities post-conviction

Examples of Recommendations:

- Childcare subsidies or work-affiliated childcare reduces stress
- Housing and other stipends for frontline workers

Who we are:

AGE+ is an Oregon-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works to empower communities of all ages to value and care for older adults through innovative solutions.

Our proven model:

We follow an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach, recognizing that older adults are a vital part of the solution to many community challenges.

What we do:

Policy: Shared Future Oregon: A Statewide Multi-Sector Plan for Aging (MPA)

Innovative Programs: Modular affordable housing, digital equity, and anti-ageism education

Direct Service Local care network capacity building initiatives

Our goal:

We want to increase collaboration to ensure all Oregonians have equitable opportunities to age and thrive in their communities.

WHY WE DO THIS WORK

Overall Population Growth

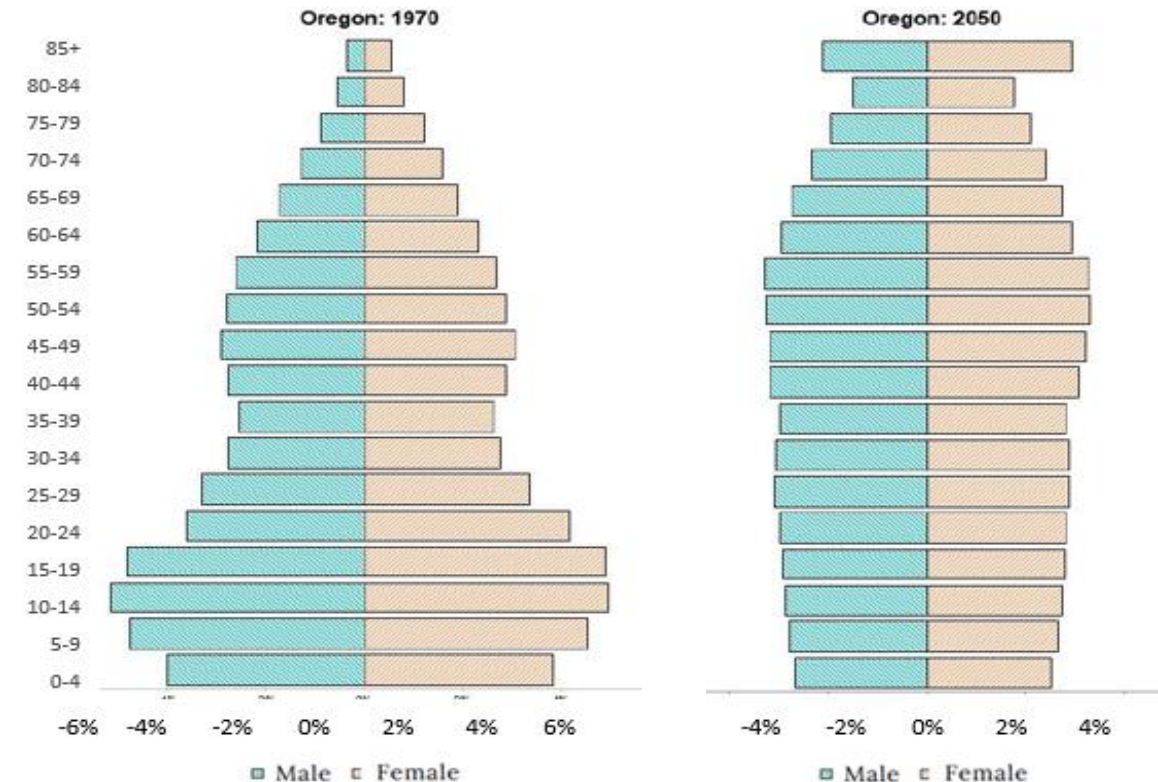
Oregon's population grew by 40% between 1993 and 2023, compared with 30% for the U.S.

Negative Net Migration

In 2021, Oregon's population decreased for the first time in nearly 40 years because more people left the state than moved in.

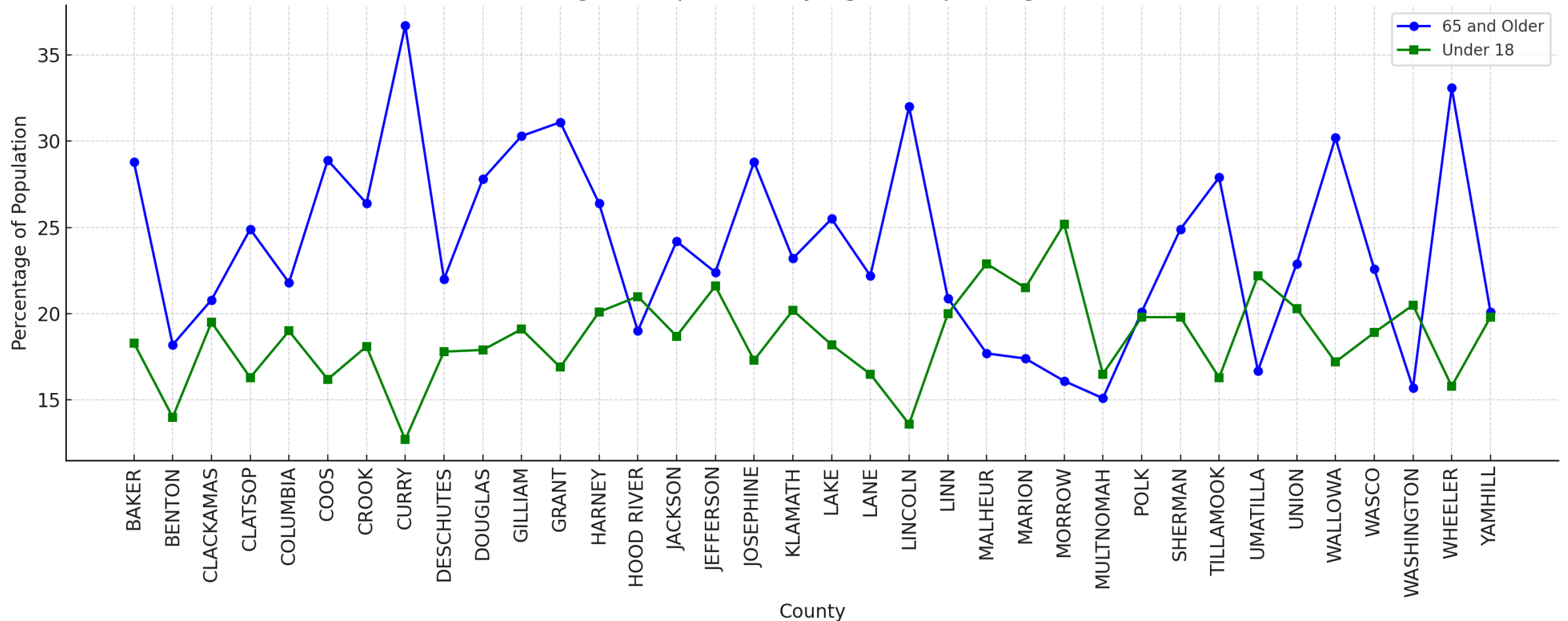
Permanent Change

In 2023, Oregon had as many adults 65 or older as children under 18 (19%). Going forward, there will be more people 65+ than <18.

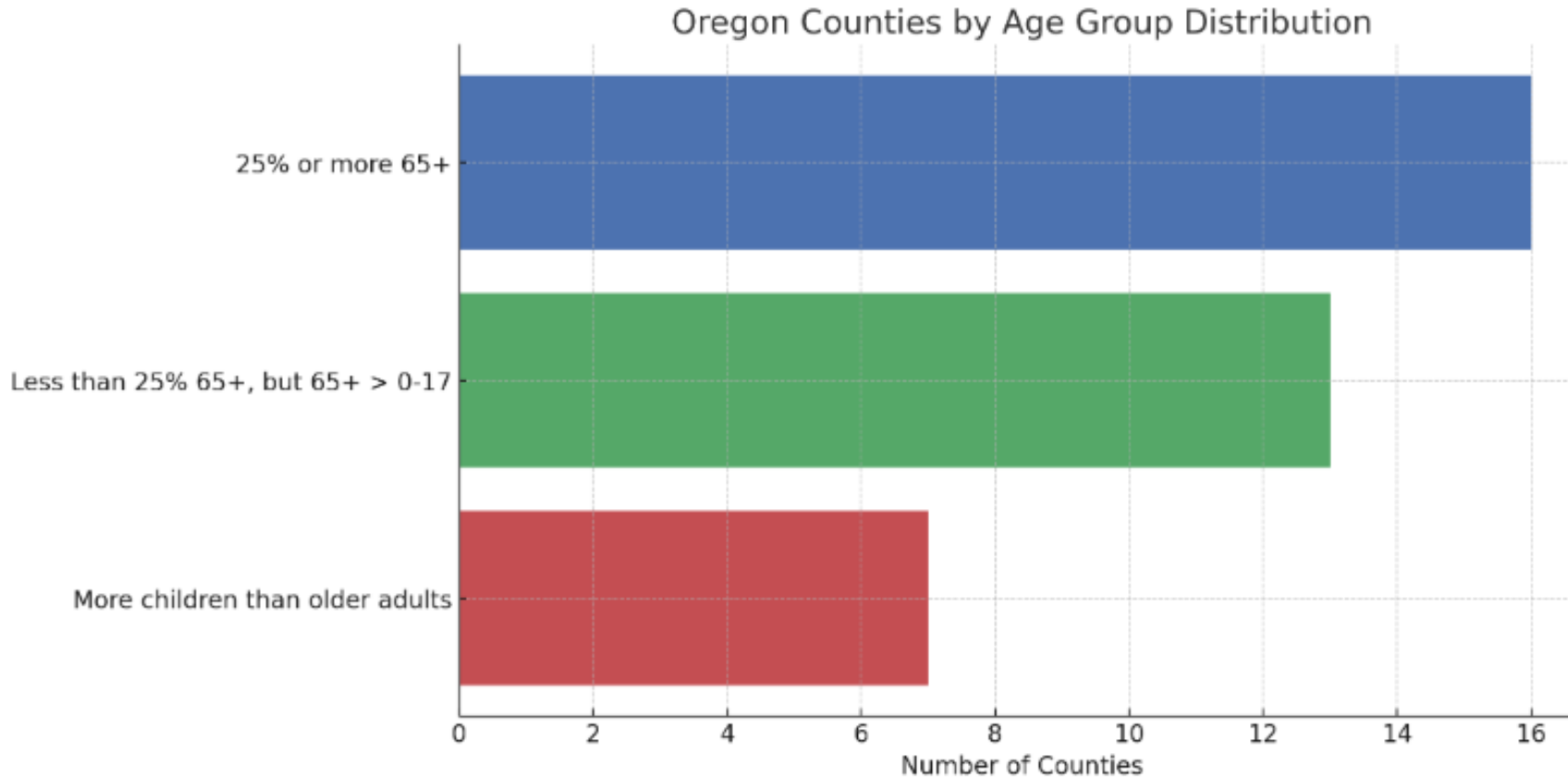


OREGON IS THE OLDEST STATE IN THE WEST

Percentage of Population by Age Group (Oregon, 2024)



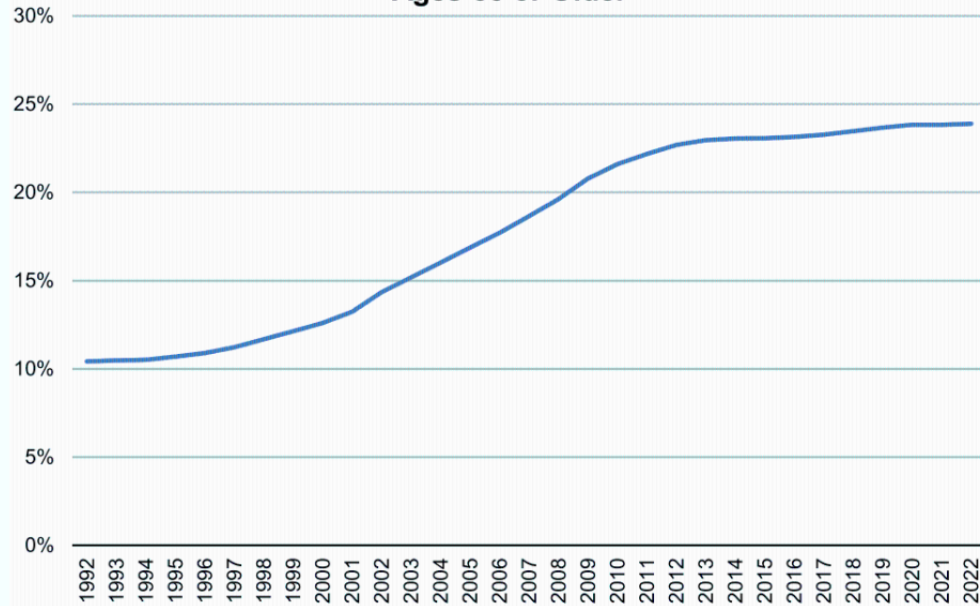
THE SHIFT IS ACROSS THE STATE



ONE IN FIVE WORKERS ARE 55+

HOW WE RESPOND WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE FOR ALL GENERATIONS

**Nearly One out of Four Oregon Jobs Held by Workers
Ages 55 or Older**



Source: Oregon Employment Department and U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators



IMPACT OF WORKFORCE: BY COUNTY

Larger Shares of Jobs Held by Workers Ages 55+ in Rural Areas, 2022 Oregon = 24%

Area	Ages 55+	% Ages 55+	Area	Ages 55+	% Ages 55+
Wheeler	111	34%	Sherman	211	27%
Grant	668	32%	Klamath	5,781	26%
Lake	703	31%	Yamhill	9,381	26%
Wallowa	903	31%	Marion	42,614	26%
Gilliam	241	31%	Columbia	2,845	26%
Curry	1,907	31%	Jackson	22,345	25%
Lincoln	4,869	30%	Linn	11,804	25%
Coos	6,355	29%	Crook	1,684	25%
Harney	703	29%	Umatilla	7,903	25%
Jefferson	1,701	29%	Lane	37,649	25%
Baker	1,616	28%	Benton	9,086	25%
Tillamook	2,493	28%	Morrow	1,406	25%
Clatsop	4,591	27%	Clackamas	42,539	24%
Wasco	2,770	27%	Polk	5,168	24%
Josephine	7,772	27%	Union	2,341	24%
Douglas	9,640	27%	Deschutes	19,414	23%
Hood River	3,577	27%	Washington	69,020	22%
Malheur	3,541	27%	Multnomah	110,549	22%

Source: Oregon Employment Department and U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators

IMPACT OF WORKFORCE: BY INDUSTRY

Workers Ages 55+ at or Likely Within a Decade of Retirement

Oregon Jobs in 2022	All Workers	Age 55+	% Age 55+
All Sectors	1,908,164	455,792	24%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	52,269	17,026	33%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,787	574	32%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	30,756	8,795	29%
Utilities	8,025	2,230	28%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	65,394	17,780	27%
Public Administration	75,343	20,117	27%
Wholesale Trade	77,229	20,205	26%
Educational Services	144,633	37,806	26%
Manufacturing	188,469	49,178	26%
Transportation and Warehousing	80,059	20,392	25%
Finance and Insurance	55,032	13,480	24%
Health Care and Social Assistance	284,182	69,324	24%
Retail Trade	209,208	47,907	23%
Administrative and Waste Services	108,487	24,775	23%
Construction	122,998	28,005	23%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	111,361	24,248	22%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	29,817	6,345	21%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	51,883	10,705	21%
Information	41,014	7,684	19%
Accommodation and Food Services	170,218	29,216	17%

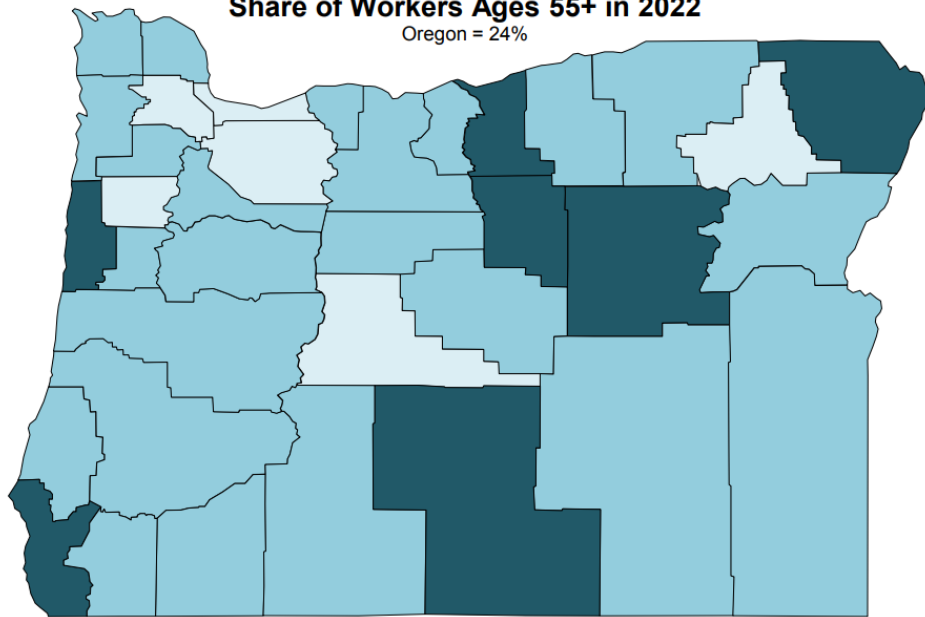
Sources: Oregon Employment and Quarterly Workforce Indicators, U.S. Census Bureau



A FORMIDABLE POPULATION

Share of Workers Ages 55+ in 2022

Oregon = 24%



22% to 24% 25% to 29% 30% to 34%

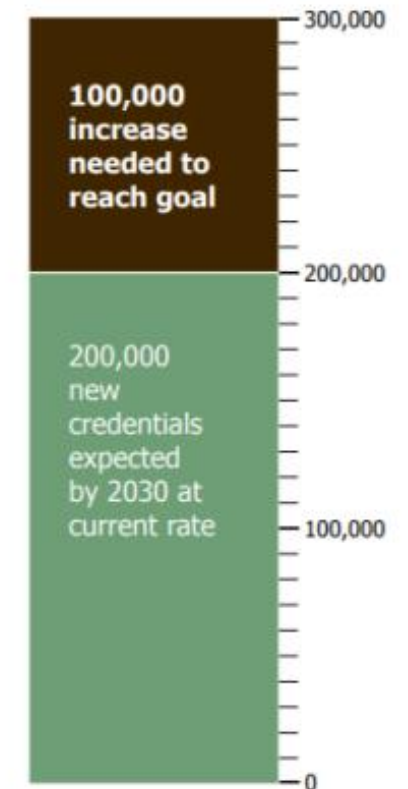
Source: Oregon Employment Department and U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Oregon Labor Force by Age, 1993 and 2023

	1993		2023	
	Labor Force	Share	Labor Force	Share
16 to 19 years	79,000	5.0%	90,000	4.2%
20 to 24 years	155,000	9.7%	191,000	8.9%
25 to 34 years	372,000	23.3%	479,000	22.4%
35 to 44 years	494,000	31.0%	506,000	23.6%
45 to 54 years	321,000	20.1%	448,000	20.9%
55 to 64 years	134,000	8.4%	275,000	12.9%
65 years and over	40,000	2.5%	151,000	7.1%
Prime Age 25-54	1,187,000	74.4%	1,433,000	67.0%

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

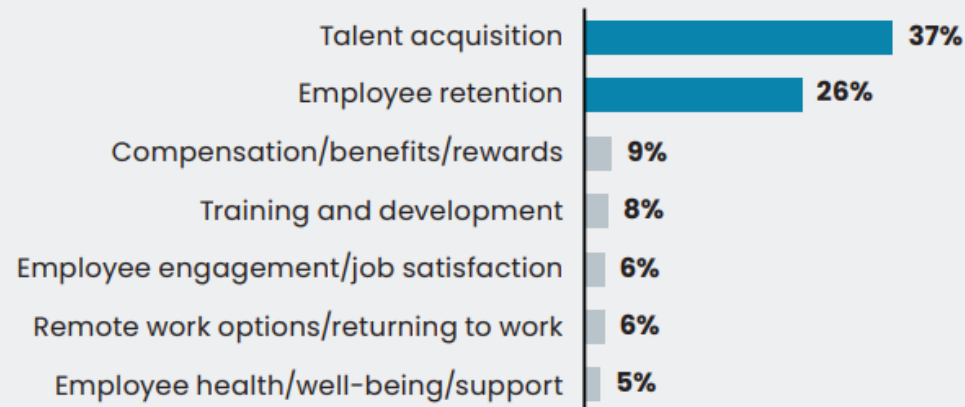
OREGON AIMS FOR 300,000 CREDENTIALS BY 2030



WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SEEK?

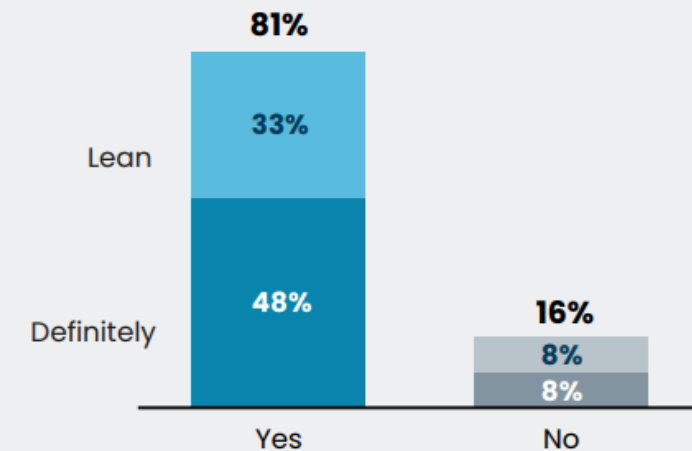
Staffing Tops HR Issues

HR professionals are focused on staffing right now, listing hiring and retention as the top two most critical issues.



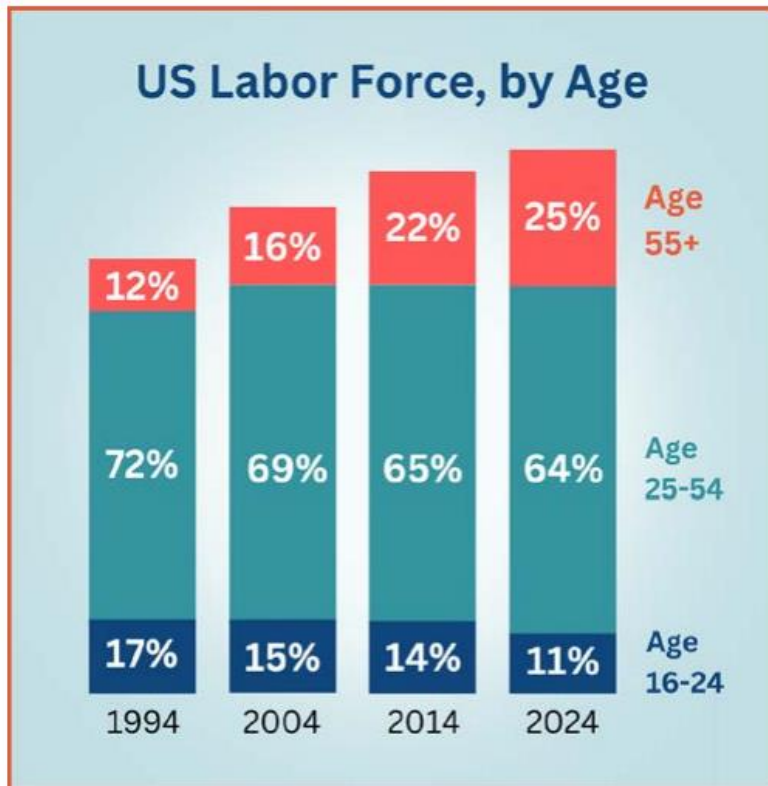
Hybrid Work Trends

More than 8 out of 10 expect organizations to allow remote work long-term.



RE-THINKING HIRING

The fastest growing population and labor force segment is people over 55.



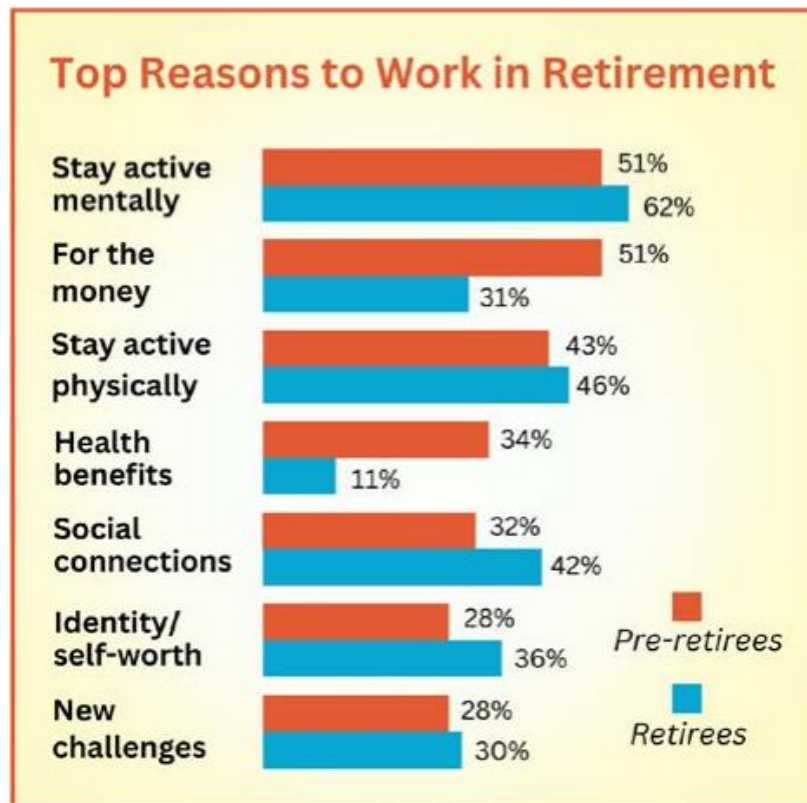
SOURCE: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employers can:

- Train recruiters and hiring managers to avoid age-biased assumptions about ability, salary requirements, and tenure.
- Identify talent sources that include older workers and remove hidden barriers to attracting older candidates.
- Consider offering age-neutral apprenticeships, sometimes called *midternships* or *returnships*.
- Offer flexible work options, including flexible hours, part-time work and phased retirement. Adjust benefits to fit flexible options. This retains the knowledge of older workers while creating organized transitions and removing the cliff effect of retirement decisions.

RE-THINKING JOB DESIGN

With longer lives, many people keep working to stay engaged, active and contributing.



SOURCE: [Age Wave & Merrill Lynch](#)

Employers can:

- Remove obstacles and respond to the needs and preferences of older workers by tweaking expectations about how they do their jobs.
- Redesign jobs and the work environment, where appropriate, to reduce the physical toll on employees. Small investments can prolong careers.
- Update roles to include more coaching opportunities for older workers to build the confidence and expertise of less experienced employees, transfer knowledge and connections in an orderly way, and create cross-generational rapport that builds engagement and morale.



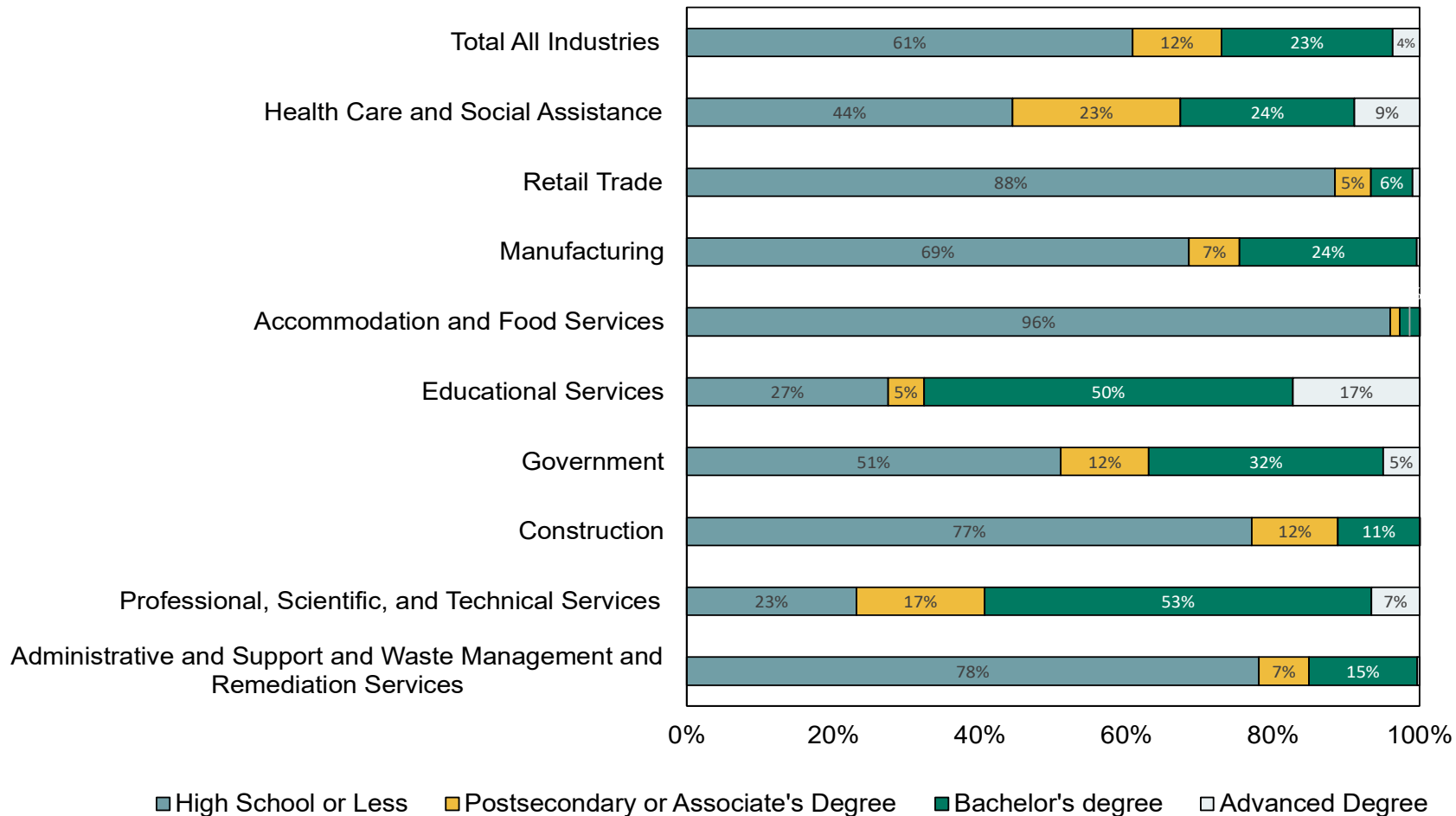
**Ideas for
multi-pronged
solutions**

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Increase training opportunities to improve recruitment and retention of healthcare workers from rural areas and communities experiencing inequities, which should include offering apprenticeships and stackable credentials
- Increase compensation and benefits and offer housing, childcare, and/or transportation stipends or assistance in rural areas.
- Increase compensation, incentives, and bonuses for working in rural areas
- Increase remote work and telehealth opportunities
- Increase training slots, internship opportunities, preceptors
- Initiate and promote visible role models, affinity groups, and leadership and advancement opportunities for providers of color
- Opportunities to support education pathway programs in K-12 schools to attract more students into health care professions
- Include actionable strategies from real-world examples for integrating older adults into workforce initiatives, fostering innovation, and building resilient communities (retaining, retraining, re-hiring)

EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS

HEALTH CARE RELIES ON A HIGHLY EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE



More than half of jobs in healthcare require some form of postsecondary education, compared to 40% for all industries in Oregon and more than 70% of “difficult-to-fill” healthcare job vacancies required education beyond high school.

AGE+

Communities + Generations + Innovations



Oregon State University

DISTANCE LEARNING: OSU E-CAMPUS

- Asynchronous, learning anywhere in the world
- Same curriculum, mentorship, belonging, and support as on-campus programs
- Increases access to people not near a university
- On average, distance learning students are older than on-campus students
- OSU E-campus began in 2002 and currently has 125 bachelor's and graduate programs as well as certificates and micro-credentials including biology, chemistry, public health



THE AGE-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY

- Part of the Age Friendly Ecosystem
- 10 AFU principles, including: To encourage the participation of older adults in all the **core activities** of the University, including educational and research programs
- To promote **intergenerational learning** to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages
- <https://www.afugn.org/apply>
- Member institutions include Southern Oregon, Western Oregon, and Portland State



IS K-12 THE ONLY PATHWAY TO DEGREES AND LICENSURES?

- Intentional partnerships with K-12 and post-secondary education
- Increase pathway for middle and high-school prioritized in workforce reports
- Oregon has invested in education pathways to attract students into health care professions and supporting training to offer career ladders.
- The K-12 pathway cannot be the only pathway because:
 - Dependent on high school graduation rates
 - Length of time to go from middle school to a trained healthcare worker
 - Existing workforce that could be retained, retrained, or re-think job design

What are training and educational pathways to reach, recruit, and train persons of all ages? What type of pathway programs would be inviting?

COLLABORATIVE CALL TO ACTION

SHARE WITH US

- What works?
- What can be done better?
- Engage us!



Stephanie Hooper
President & CEO, AGE+
shooper@ageplus.org

Dr. Veronica Irvin
Associate Professor, Oregon State University
veronica.irvin@oregonstate.edu



AGING IS LIVING



Thank You!



Championing a new vision for healthy and equitable aging for all Oregonians by empowering communities, linking generations and stimulating innovation to make longer life an opportunity, not a burden.

ageplus.org

shooper@ageplus.org



Lifelong health and well-being for every person, family and community in Oregon, the nation and world

health.oregonstate.edu

veronica.irvin@oregonstate.edu
