



2022

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 (Collaborative) is a partnership between Clackamas Workforce Partnership, Workforce Southwest Washington and Worksystems: the three Workforce Development Boards covering the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area. The Collaborative 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. These nine counties, when combined, are referred to as 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 Collaborative—Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties in Southwest Washington.

Columbia, Yamhill, and Skamania counties are not a part of the Collaborative’s geography, however, 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.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Collaborative is focused on aligning and investing resources to support the workforce needs of four sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Technology, and Construction. Sectors are chosen based on factors such as their economic significance to the region, current number of openings and job growth projections, average wages that support self-sufficiency, and career ladder opportunities across the skill continuum. By examining labor market intelligence (such as the data contained in this report) and vetting the information with business partners, we are able to better understand industry trends, identify current and emergent workforce needs, and develop customized solutions for each sector.

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 34,400 16-to-24-year-olds in the Portland-Vancouver region served by the Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC) are neither in school nor working. This accounts for more than 13% of all youth in the region. Approximately 13% of all youth throughout Oregon and Washington meet this definition. These individuals who are disconnected from both educational environments and the workforce are known as opportunity youth.

Opportunity youth rates have dropped consistently after their peak in the years following the Great Recession. Throughout Washington, Oregon, and the Portland-Vancouver region, rates also trended downwards. Between 2014 and 2016, opportunity youth rates in the region dropped three percentage points, from 14 to 11%. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recession reversed this trend. In 2020, the percentage of opportunity youth in the region increased to 13%.

The percentage and the number of opportunity youth in the Portland-Vancouver region increased between 2016 and 2020.

Assisting youth that exist in a state of transition between either the workforce or post-secondary education illustrates one of the most effective approaches to strengthening the local workforce. Past failures to improve outcomes for opportunity youth have resulted in significant losses in economic activity and mounting pressure on burdened social service programs.

The region faces staggering long-term economic costs if prospects for these youth remain unchanged. For each year an opportunity youth remains out of the labor force, future earnings become reduced by 2 to 3%. Consequently, past the age of 25, opportunity youth often face higher rates of adult unemployment and poverty throughout their lives. To put this perspective into numbers—the average opportunity youth in the United States costs nearly \$16,200 in annual taxpayer burden, \$198,000 in lifetime taxpayer burden, and \$614,600 in lifetime social burden.¹ Translating these costs to the Portland-Vancouver region’s opportunity youth, this disconnection results in nearly \$23.7 billion in combined costs throughout their lifetimes.²

The analysis found in this report breaks down the over 34,400 opportunity youth in the region, including demographic, educational, and family characteristics. The local data will provide community leaders and stakeholders a basis to improve the rate of reconnection by preventing disconnection prior to it occurring. Table 1 highlights the key summary statistics of opportunity youth found in the Portland-Vancouver region in 2020. Additional tables are available in the Appendix following this report. Some of the most noticeable data points and changes in the opportunity youth population since 2016 include:

- The opportunity youth population in the Portland-Vancouver region increased by more than 8,800 between 2016 and 2020. Thirty-nine percent of this increase can be accounted for by the addition of Yamhill and Polk counties to the report geography.
- Seventy-seven percent of opportunity youth worked less than half the year or were entirely unemployed. Sixty-seven percent did not work at all in 2020.
- Opportunity youth are less diverse than they were in 2016. In 2016, 42% of opportunity youth identified as people of color, up from 30% in 2014. In 2020, 36% of opportunity youth identified as people of color.
- The largest decrease in opportunity youth was among people identifying as Hispanic. In 2020, 18% of opportunity youth identified as Hispanic, down from 27% in 2016.³
- Opportunity youth in 2020 are less likely to be foreign-born compared to 2014 or 2016—the share dropped from 22% (2016) to 8% (2020).
- Health insurance rates for opportunity youth in the region declined from 86% in 2016 to 80% in 2020.

¹ In 2016 dollars. Clive R. Bedfield, Henry M. Levin, Rachel Rosen, “The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth,” Civic Enterprises, January 2012. Social burden includes lost earnings, additional health expenditures, crime costs, and welfare and social services not included in the taxpayer burden. Taxpayer burden is composed of lost taxes, additional healthcare directly paid by taxpayers, criminal justice systems and corrections expenditures, and welfare and social service payments directly transferred from taxpayers. See paper for more detail on methodology.

² This assumes a worst-case scenario. Some opportunity youth may be between school and work, stay-at-home parents or care givers, or in between jobs. Not all will maximize the estimated social and taxpayer burden over their lifetimes.

³ It is important to note that the US Census undercounts people of color. In the 2020 survey, the Census bureau released findings that they undercounted the following populations: Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and people who identified as Some Other Race. The Census also undercounted children 0 to 17. <https://census.gov/newsroom/press-release/2022/2020-census-estimates-of-undercounted-and-overcount>

⁴ As with any survey, applying samples to represent larger populations will result in margins of error (MOE), or the range of possible values for the estimate. Please see the appendix for additional information on margins of error and detailed tables of the data found in this report with MOEs provided.

TABLE 1: Opportunity Youth Summary, CWWC, 2020 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	11,867	2,759	8,415	4,357	7,510	4,688	7,179	5,873	5,994
Age 20–24	22,616	8,233	13,396	8,573	14,043	4,758	17,858	11,350	11,266
All OY	10,992	10,992	21,811	12,930	21,553	9,446	25,037	17,223	17,260
Share of OY		34%	66%	37%	63%	27%	73%	50%	50%

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

Note: Gender other than male or female are not identified in the ACS; Poverty level data is not available for all people.



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).⁴ 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 opportunity youth estimate and ultimately their characteristics, employment, and household data. The Census releases survey data annually, with the most recent being from 2020. 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 CWWC 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 the same as the total in Oregon and Washington. Opportunity youth as a percentage of all youth were overrepresented in Clackamas, Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Pacific Counties. They were underrepresented in Multnomah and Washington Counties.

This report is the third in a series that tracks the rate of opportunity youth in the region. In this report, comparisons are made to previous years of data. 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.

TABLE 2: Opportunity Youth by ACS PUMA

PUMA REGION	Count of OY	All Youth	OY share of all youth
Multnomah	8,531	79,202	11%
Clackamas	6,518	46,638	14%
Washington	9,287	72,905	13%
Clark	8,220	55,200	15%
Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific	1,927	12,207	16%
Total	34,483	266,152	13%

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

WHO ARE THE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

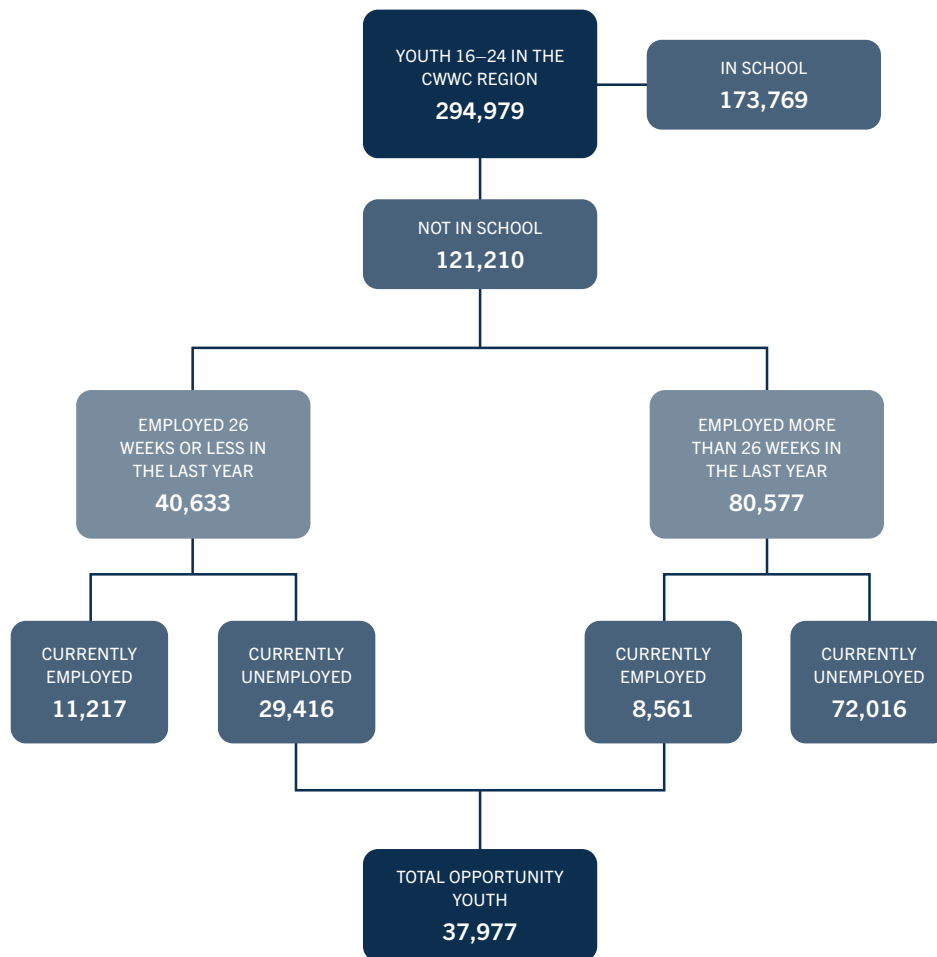
Opportunity youth are individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. Specifically, in the context of Census information, this means that:

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)

As seen previously in Table 1, opportunity youth have varying levels of education. Overall, nearly 30% 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 13% of all youth in the region and 31% of all youth not enrolled in school throughout the region. Over 29,400 (77%) of opportunity youth were employed for half or less of the last year (26 weeks) or were never employed. Of these 29,400, 19,800 (67%) did not work at all in 2020. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 1: Opportunity Youth, CWWC, 2020



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

COVID & OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

The data in this report are from 2020. Nine months of data and the lives they capture were impacted by COVID-19 and the resulting effects on the economy. The impacts are not always straightforward. Changes in the availability and delivery of education likely increased the number of youth who were disconnected from school. At the same time, relaxed graduation and advancement requirements at the beginning of the pandemic likely increased graduation rates and prevented some youth who might have dropped out from leaving school. In the early months of the pandemic, youth unemployment, like unemployment for all ages, was at the highest rate in recorded history. A year later, youth employment and labor force participation rates were rising.⁵

Youth Labor Force Participation and Unemployment

In recent years, youth participation in the labor force was marked by low levels of participation and high rates of unemployment. Although the regional economy was strong prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the benefits were not transferring to young workers.

Youth participation in the labor force has been declining for decades. In Oregon, the labor force participation rate (LFPR) for young adults (16 to 19) peaked at 64% in 1989. By 2015, it had fallen to a low of 34%.⁶ The national LFPR peaked a decade before Oregon's, hitting 58% in 1979. It reached a low point of 34% in 2014. In Washington State, the youth labor force participation rate was 59% as recently as 2000. By 2020, it has declined to 25%.⁷

FIGURE 2: Decline in Community College Enrollment, Fall 2019–Fall 2020



Source: Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council, Washington Student Achievement Council

⁵ Oregon Employment Department

⁶ Oregon Employment Department

⁷ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Expanded State Employment Demographics, 2020, analyzed by the Washington Workforce Board.

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics

¹⁰ Oregon Employment Department

Youth who do participate in the labor force experience higher rates of unemployment compared with other age groups. In May 2020, the national unemployment rate for 16 to 19-year-olds was 30%.⁸ A year earlier it was just under 13%. For white workers, the unemployment rate was 28%, for Black workers it was 35%, and for Latino workers it was 37%.⁹

At the beginning of the pandemic, youth were one of the hardest hit groups when it came to job losses and unemployment.¹⁰ The official unemployment rate is likely an undercount of youth who lost their jobs. Workers are required to be at their jobs for a period of time before they are eligible to file for unemployment. Youth who are living with their parents might not be aware they are eligible to file for unemployment benefits.

The sectors with high rates of youth employment have gained back jobs but are still far from pre-pandemic employment levels. In the Portland MSA, there were 48% fewer Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation jobs in August 2020 compared to August 2019. Accommodations and Food Service jobs declined 33% during the same period. Jobs in Retail are doing better, down just 5% during the year. Overall, there were 84,100 fewer jobs in these sectors August 2020 than in August 2019.¹¹

During the pandemic, high school and college classes were shifted online. Many students or potential students delayed returning to school. Enrollment at colleges and universities across Oregon and Washington decreased in Fall 2020. Community colleges were hardest hit, declining 23% in

Oregon and 19% in Washington from fall 2019.¹² In the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area, enrollment in community college decreased between 17% and 29%.

(Figure 2). Together, there were more than 14,500 fewer students enrolled in those Portland Metro Community Colleges in 2020 than in 2019.¹³ Other students took advantage of a more flexible schedule to help parents who were laid off or facing reduced work hours.

¹¹ Oregon Employment Department, Current Employer Statistics

¹² Kwakye, Issac, Emma Kibort-Crocker, Mark Lundgren, and Sarah Paison. Fall Enrollment Report: Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on Postsecondary Enrollment in Washington. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01-12-Fall-Enrollment-Report.pdf>. Washington Student Achievement Council, 2021.

¹³ Oregon Employment Department and Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission

¹⁴ H-2B Employer Data Hub | USCIS

A potential boon to youth employment is the decrease in H2B visas issued in 2021. H2B Visas allow employers to temporarily hire nonimmigrants to work in nonagricultural jobs. Many seasonal employers, including carnivals and amusement parks, rely on H2B visa holders. When foreign workers were not available, some of these jobs were filled with local youth.

Long Term Impact?

It's unclear whether the current increase in youth employment is the beginning of a new trend. As schools reopen and the economy continues to rebound, it is possible youth will drop out of the labor force. Youth who have had the opportunity to earn money might be reluctant to leave the labor force.



SUCCESS STORIES

IRCO

BH is an immigrant from Burma who enrolled in a Youth Workforce Program in December 2020. Despite the challenges of doing this during the Covid pandemic, BH has made the most of the program by participating fully.

BH has worked at the Holgate Center as a caretaker since January 2019 and provides major support for her family through her employment. As she gained skills in this job, she also realized that she needed more training. In January 2021, BH worked with her coach to prepare a scholarship application for CNA1 training. Her application was approved, and she has completed the classroom portion of the training. She is currently taking her clinical training three days a week while continuing to work 32 hours a week at the Holgate Center.

In the process of preparing for the CNA training, BH realized that she needed to get her driver's license to make her busy schedule work. For this, BH received support services for a driver's training class that helped her pass the Oregon driver's license exam, which she had previously failed. BH is becoming a strong problem solver. She now reaches out when she needs support and is thoughtful about how to fit her current training and paid work into her future plans to become a registered nurse.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

FIGURE 3: Opportunity Youth, Race and Ethnicity, CWWC, 2020



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

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. In 2020, however, the combined Hispanic and non-white race populations accounts for 36% of opportunity youth, compared to 37% in total youth population. In 2016, 42% of opportunity youth were people of color. (Figure 3)

TABLE 3: Opportunity Youth, Race and Ethnicity, CWWC, 2020

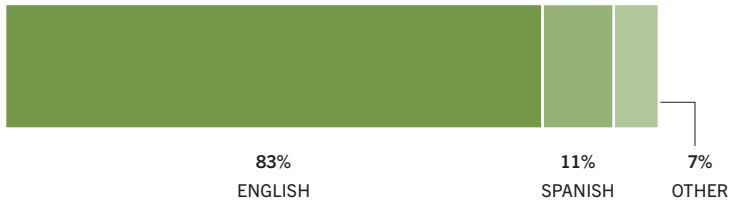
RACE/ETHNICITY	Count of OY	Share of OY	Count of all Youth	OY Share of all Youth
White (NH)	24,357	64%	184,503	13%
Hispanic	6,916	18%	54,765	13%
AIAN (NH)	393	1%	2,762	14%
Asian (NH)	1,957	5%	19,222	10%
Black (NH)	1,103	3%	8,508	13%
Other (NH)	3,251	9%	25,219	13%
Total	37,977	100%	294,979	13%

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

Since 2016, the Hispanic opportunity youth population decreased its share of all opportunity youth in the region by 9% points, from 27 to 18%. The share of opportunity youth who are white, non-Hispanic (NH) increased from 58% in 2016 to 64% in 2020. (Table 3)

NATIVITY, LANGUAGE, AND MOBILITY

FIGURE 4: Primary Language Spoken at Home Among Opportunity Youth, CWWC, 2020



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

Approximately 6,500 opportunity youth (18%) 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 (18%). (Figure 4)

TABLE 4: Language Spoken at Home Among Opportunity Youth, CWWC, 2020

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	Count of OY	Share of OY	OY Share of all Youth
English Only	31,382	83%	13%
Spanish	3,989	11%	12%
Other languages	2,606	7%	11%
Total	37,977	100%	13%

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

Eight percent of opportunity youth were born outside the United States. This is a significant drop from the 15% (2014) and 22% (2016) who were born outside the United States. The largest groups of opportunity youth born outside the United States were from Mexico (36%), Russia (19%), and China (19%).

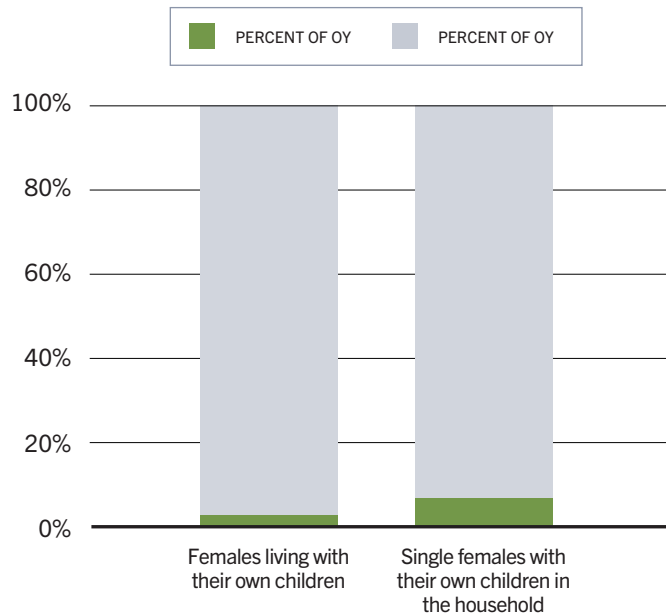
PARENTING YOUTH

About 2,700, or 14% of opportunity youth females lived with their own children in 2020. This represents a decrease from 24% (3,600) in 2016 and the 33% (5,000) in 2014. Of those 2,700, an estimated 1,300 were single females living with their children. Additionally, about 2,200 or 57% of female youth aged 16 to 24 who gave birth in the last year were opportunity youth. (Figure 5)

The decrease in parenting opportunity youth is consistent with declining teen birth rates in the overall population. In 2012, 5% of babies born in the Portland-Vancouver region were born to mothers aged 19 and younger. In 2016, it was 4%. In 2020, just 3% of babies born in the region had mothers younger than age 19.¹⁵

Based on Self-Sufficiency Standard and Census data, an estimated 60% of single mother households in Oregon 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: 92% of Black and 65% of Latina headed households with children lack adequate income.¹⁶ 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.

FIGURE 5: Opportunity Youth Females by Household Type and Own Children in the Household, CWWC, 2020



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS



¹⁵ Oregon and Washington Vital Statistics

¹⁶ Overlooked and Overcounted, 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in Oregon. Center for Women's Welfare. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is available for Washington State but household demographics of families not meeting is the standard are not available. https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WA2020_SSS.pdf

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH HOUSEHOLDS

A vast 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 3,800 (10%) of opportunity youth were householders in 2020, 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, 85% (32,200) of opportunity youth live in housing with someone else representing the householder status. The remaining 5% 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 on homelessness come from point-in-time counts provided annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Based on the 2019 count, there were more than 630 homeless youth aged 18 to 24.

TABLE 5: County of Opportunity Youth by Household Type, CWWC, 2020

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	Count of OY	Share of OY
Householder	3,826	10%
Non-householder	32,242	85%
Group Quarters	1,909	5%
Total	37,977	100%

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

SUCCESS STORIES

NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH

When J.H. first came to New Avenues, he was houseless, unemployed, and lacking hope and confidence. His career coach met with him regularly and encouraged him to look for friends and peers that inspire him to be himself. They also talked to him about Bridge programs, connecting him with PYB the moment he showed interest in construction. J.H. not only successfully completed the NextGen Construction Bridge, earning BOLI-certification, he was also promoted to Lead in his apprenticeship. He is now making \$37/hr. Due to this J.H. earned enough security to sign his own lease for the first time. J.H. is now gainfully employed, living independently, and has a bright future filled with hope.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE AND DISABILITY

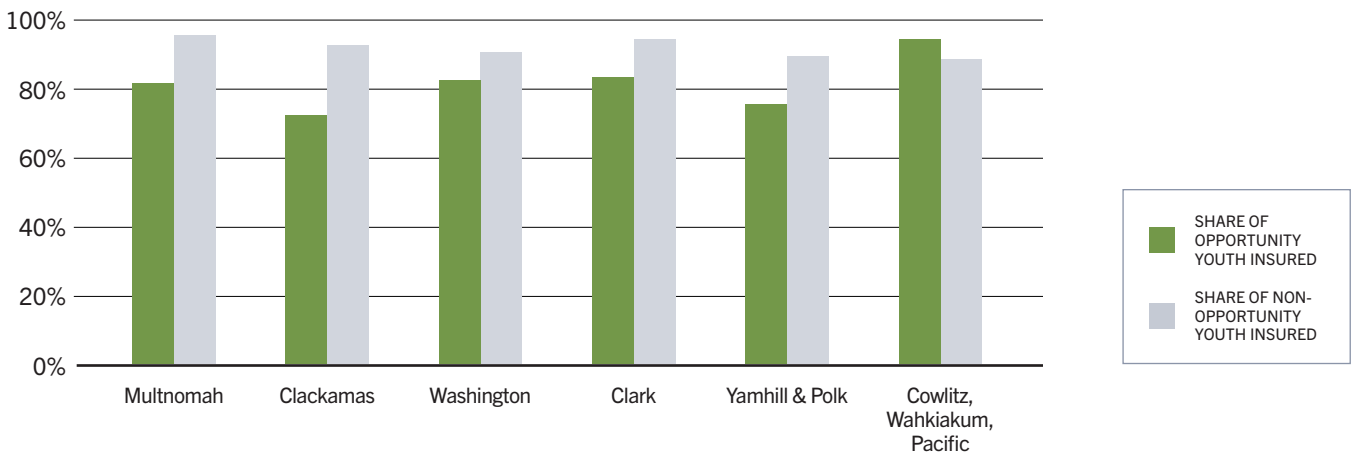
Health insurance coverage rates for opportunity youth, while significantly higher than 2014 rates, have declined since 2016. An estimated 80% of opportunity youth now have health insurance—22 percentage points higher than the 58% in 2012. Coverage rates were higher, however, in 2016 when 86% of opportunity youth had some form of health insurance coverage. (Table 6)

TABLE 6: Share of Youth who are Insured, by PUMA, CWWC, 2020

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

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

FIGURE 6: Opportunity Youth with Health Insurance, CWWC, 2020



Source: US Census, American Community Survey, PUMS

A persistent gap between opportunity youth and all youth continues to exist. An estimated 92% of all youth in the region had health insurance in 2020, indicating a twelve-percentage point gap. (Figure 6)

In Multnomah and Clackamas Counties, the percentage of opportunity youth with health insurance coverage is lower today than it was in 2016. (Figure 6)

It's not clear how closely the decrease in health insurance coverage was tied to the COVID-19 recession. Many people rely on health insurance linked to employment (theirs, or, in the case of youth, their parents'). The massive loss of jobs in 2020 likely increased the number of youths who lost access to health insurance.

An estimated 30% of youth with disabling conditions (physical, mental, emotional) in the region are considered opportunity youth—a slight decrease from 2016. These approximately 7,800 youth with disabilities now represent 21% of all opportunity youth, compared to 6,900 (24%) in 2016. Just 12% of opportunity youth with disabling conditions reported being in the labor force, indicating that nine in ten were neither in school nor looking for work in 2020. Comparatively, roughly three in four opportunity youth without a disabling condition reported the same.

EDUCATION

WITH AUTOMATION THREATENING low-skill workers and increasing demand for an educated, well-trained workforce in jobs that provide living wages, ensuring that youth complete high school is imperative in preparing them for future success. Regional school districts located in the state of Washington had four-year graduation rates at or above 89%, on average. (Table 7) District rates varied from 75% in the Battle Ground School District (Clark County) to 95% in the Hockinson School District (Clark County). On the Oregon side, the average graduation rate was 86%. However, rates varied dramatically from 66% in the Reynolds School District (Multnomah County) to 97% in the Sherwood District (Washington County).

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

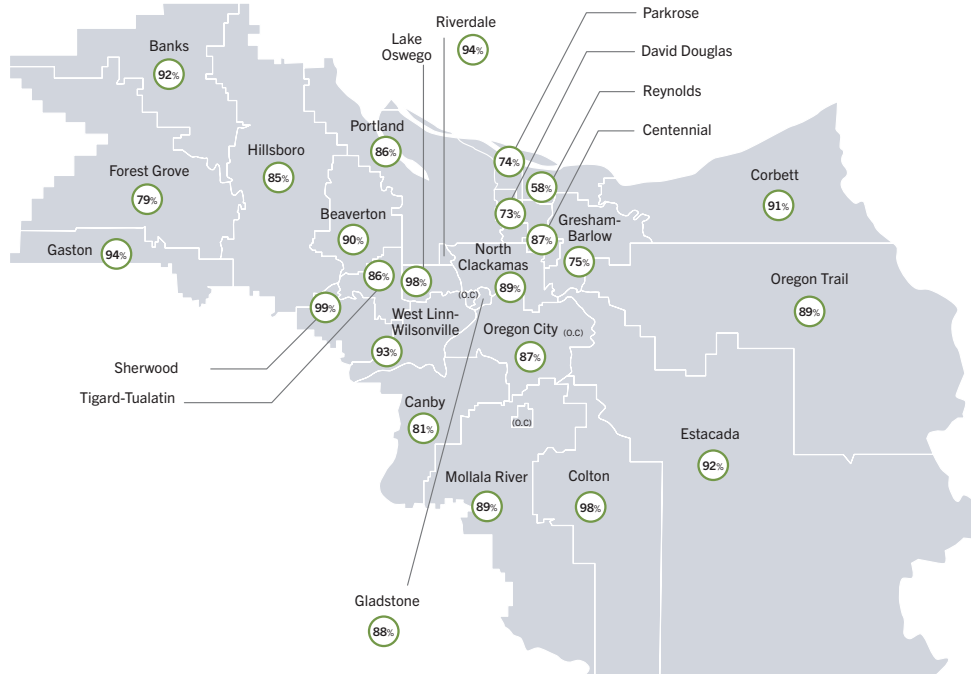
2019–2020 GRADUATION YEAR	4-year graduation rate	5-year graduation rate
Oregon	86%	87%
Washington school districts	89%	89%

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

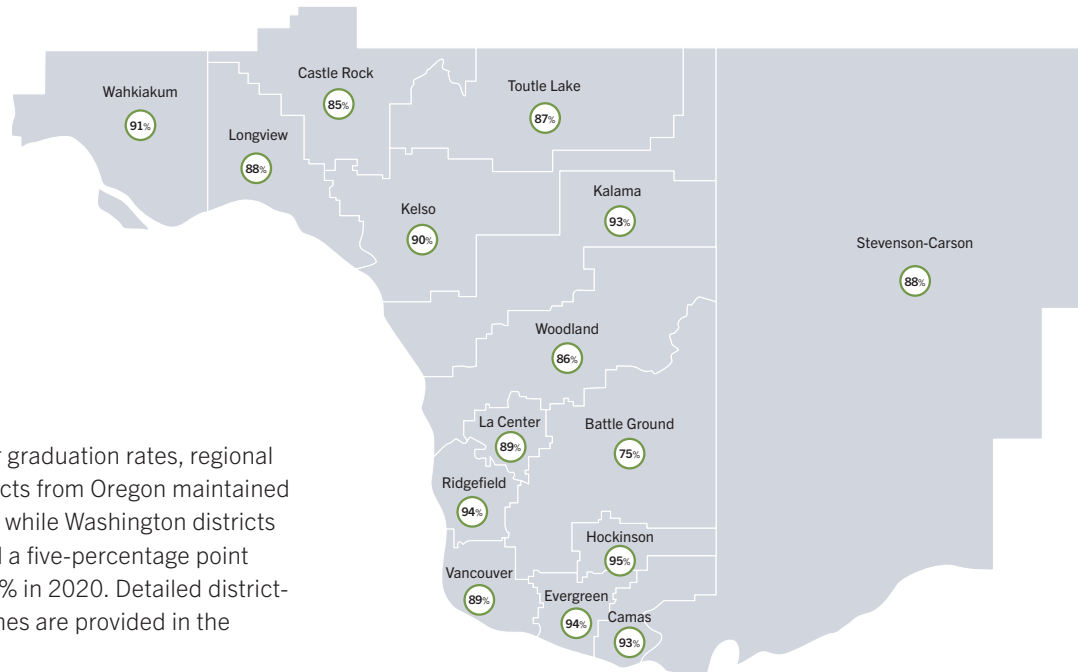


FIGURE 7: Four-year High School Graduation Rates, CWWC, 2019-2020

OREGON SCHOOL DISTRICTS



WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICTS



For five-year graduation rates, regional school districts from Oregon maintained an 87% rate while Washington districts experienced a five-percentage point uptick to 89% in 2020. Detailed district-level outcomes are provided in the appendix.

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

Note: Maps not to scale.

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 5,990 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 57% 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 21% 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 Associates degree or higher. This is a decrease of 40% from 2016. (Table 8)

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

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH AGE 16-19	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	5,990	43%
High school diploma/equivalent or more	8,077	57%
Total OY age 16-19	14,067	100%

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH AGE 20-24	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	5,070	21%
High school diploma/equivalent or more	10,512	44%
More than a high school diploma	8,328	35%
Total OY age 20-24	23,910	100%

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

FIGURE 8: Significant Employment by Education Level for Youth Age 20-24, Not in School

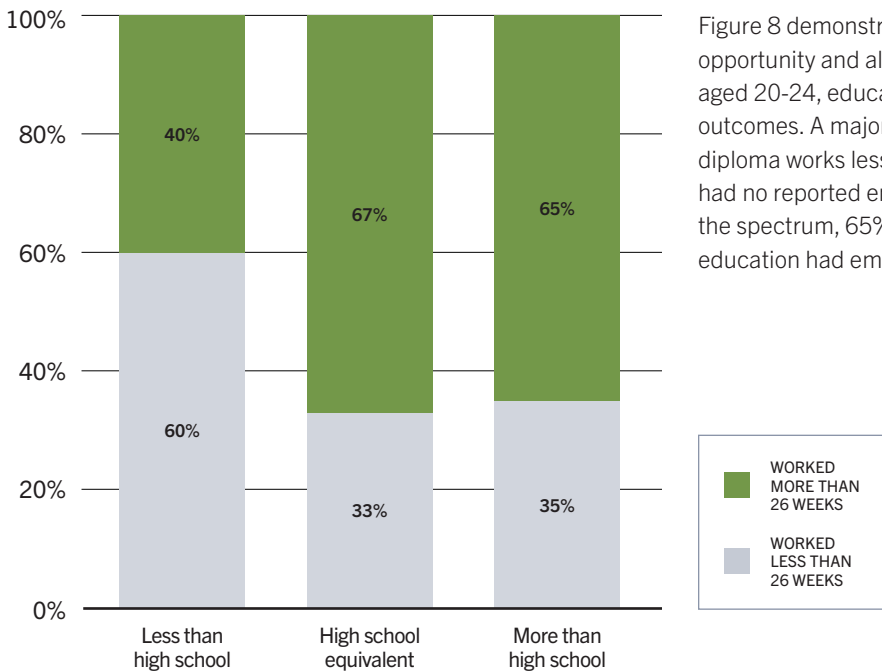


Figure 8 demonstrates how crucial education can be for both opportunity and all youth. For all older youth in the region aged 20-24, education is a strong indicator of employment outcomes. A majority of those with less than a high school diploma works less than 26 weeks in 2016. Forty-seven percent had 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 2020.

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

POVERTY, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME

TABLE 9: Labor Force Participation Among Opportunity Youth, 2020

PARTICIPATION	Count of OY	Share of OY
In the labor force	9,886	26%
Not in the labor force	28,091	74%
All opportunity youth	37,977	100%

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

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)



TABLE 10: Annual Wages for Youth not in School, by Level of Employment and Employment Status, 2020

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Count of OY	Average Annual Wage
Worked 26 weeks or less in the last year	42,904	\$6,107
Worked more than 26 weeks in the last year	78,306	\$28,156
Full year, full-time employment	56,344	\$30,003
Opportunity youth in the labor force	9,886	\$14,266
All youth not in school	121,210	\$20,351

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

When examining the 26% of opportunity youth who did participate in the labor force at some point in 2020, it becomes clear that their work opportunities were not equivalent to the broader youth population. The estimated 9,800 opportunity youth that worked at some point in 2020 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)

It's not yet clear whether the increase in labor force participation rates in 2021 included an increase for opportunity youth.

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 2020 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, WWC, 2020

	Count	Share of Total
Age 16–19	15,252	45%
Age 20–24	18,655	55%
White	24,683	73%
People of Color	9,327	27%
Below 200% of FPL	12,043	35%
Above 200% of FPL	21,967	65%
Total	34,010	100%

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

SUCCESS STORIES

POIC

JM is a Portland native who has been working hard to become a carpenter. In his life, he has faced some struggles such as growing up around gangs and poverty with a single parent and struggling with ADHD. Even with these barriers, he did not let them discourage him from trying to become a carpenter. For the past twelve weeks, he has been working hard with the POIC Pre-Apprenticeship program, where he is getting one-on-one instruction on becoming a carpenter. Besides learning about carpentry, he has further developed his communication, listening, time management, and leadership skills.

JM has shown that he is capable of making an impact in whatever field he decides to enter. He has taken the time and energy to accomplish the goals he has set forth for himself. He also wants to encourage those who have faced the same limitations as him to never give up on their dreams. He said, “Anyone can do anything they put their mind to, just like me.” JM finished the pre-apprenticeship program April 2021, and he plans to enroll in an apprenticeship school where he can get his license and start supporting his family.

SERVING YOUTH DURING COVID

In response to the challenges posed by COVID-19, providers spent much of PY20 Q1 establishing robust virtual services. Thanks to platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangout, Microsoft Teams and Skype, providers have been successful in staying connected to their participants. Some providers have been pleasantly surprised that participation in these virtual offerings has been at a higher level than when in-person services were offered, with many believing that not having the added barrier of transportation and childcare to limit participation as the reason. Here are some of the creative ways they are providing virtual services:

- Finding industry professionals to virtually join career classes as guest speakers, highlighting many of the opportunities that still exist even during these unprecedented times.
- Running a series of Zoom workshops that hone in on professional skills.
- Providing virtual EverFi financial literacy trainings and New World of Work job readiness training weekly or on a rotation.
- Connecting participants to trainings on LinkedIn, Google Suite and Lynda (online trainings through the library system).
- Establishing an e-zine. Not only has this been a very effective way to demonstrate real world applicability of the skills participants are learning in their vocational track, but it has helped to foster the sense of connection and community that can easily get lost during remote and virtual life. This sense of community and purpose is essential to keeping participants engaged and motivated.

Providers continued to spend a lot of time and effort in PY20 Q2 providing robust virtual services. Not being able to meet in person is still a challenge for NextGen staff with their participants who have technology or social barriers.

During this period where there have been fewer work experience opportunities, the implementation of stipend payments for milestone attainment has given a significant number of youth money to support themselves and their families. This has been a great program evolution and has created an opportunity to support youth in more diverse learning and training.



SERVING YOUTH HOLISTICALLY

As the workforce of the future, education and training young adults is vitally important. The CWWC 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 is all over 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 with youth 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 other people and places 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.

SUCCESS STORIES

WSW

Eden enrolled at Next in June 2021 and began working hard immediately. She was motivated, optimistic and ambitious about reaching her goals. At only 16, Eden took all of her GED practice tests, with extremely high GED scores. In fact, the talent development specialist had not seen a score in Social Studies as high as Eden's—200. By September, Eden had completed her GED, passed all four official tests, began attending Clark College full time to get her associates degree, and also started a paid internship.

TABLE 12: Five-year High School Graduation Rates, CWWC, 2019–2020

SCHOOL DISTRICT (OR)	5-year graduation rate	SCHOOL DISTRICT (WA)	5-year graduation rate
Banks School District	97%	Battle Ground School District	79.7%
Beaverton School District	92%	Camas School District	93.6%
Canby School District	91%	Castle Rock School District	89.6%
Centennial School District	80%	Evergreen School District (Clark)	93.6%
Colton School District	98%	Hockinson School District	95.3%
Corbett School District	92%	Kalama School District	88.9%
David Douglas School District	86%	Kelso School District	90.7%
Estacada School District	86%	La Center School District	89.5%
Forest Grove School District	88%	Longview School District	89.9%
Gaston School District	98%	Ridgefield School District	93.6%
Gladstone School District	93%	Stevenson-Carson School District	82.7%
Gresham-Barlow School District	82%	Toutle Lake School District	NA
Hillsboro School District	93%	Vancouver School District	89.1%
Lake Oswego School District	98%	Wahkiakum School District	88.6%
Molalla River School District	89%	Washougal School District	90.4%
North Clackamas School District	90%	Woodland School District	82.7%
Oregon City School District	89%		
Oregon Trail School District	90%		
Parkrose School District	84%		
Portland School District	88%		
Reynolds School District	78%		
Riverdale School District	93%		
Sherwood School District	99%		
Tigard-Tualatin School District	93%		
West Linn-Wilsonville School District	97%		

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



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