

Growing Demand and Workforce Needs in Oregon's Health Care and Social Assistance Sector

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Questions?

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Executive Summary

Health care and social assistance is a large and steadily growing sector of Oregon's economy. Although overall job growth slowed recently in Oregon, growth has accelerated in the health care and social assistance sector.

- In 2024, Oregon employers added 5,700 jobs (+0.3%) to nonfarm payrolls. By comparison, private health care and social assistance added 16,100 jobs (+5.7%) from 2023 to 2024, to reach an all-time high of 301,000 jobs.
- Oregon's public sector employed an additional 39,000 health care and social assistance jobs in 2024.
- Private employment services companies focused on providing workers in health care settings have grown in recent years and averaged 3,900 jobs in 2024.
- From 2001 to 2024, total nonfarm employment in Oregon grew by 24%. By comparison, private health care and social assistance grew by 92%.

As a large and consistently growing sector of the economy, private health care and social assistance employers reported the largest number of job openings among all private sectors in Oregon for most of the past 12 years. As job growth has accelerated, so has the sector's share of all job vacancies in Oregon.

- Prior to the pandemic recession, health care and social assistance generally accounted for about 20% of private-sector job openings in Oregon.
- The industry's share of private-sector openings rose to 27% in 2023 and 32% in 2024 (18,200 of Oregon's 57,800 vacancies).
- Personal care aides and registered nurses had the largest number of job openings in health care at any given time in 2024. They also had the largest number of vacancies reported by employers as hard to fill.

Health care and social assistance also leads future job growth in Oregon. While Oregon employment is expected to grow 8% between 2023 and 2033 (+170,000 jobs), health care and social assistance is expected to grow 13% and add more than 37,000 jobs.

- One out of every five new jobs added in Oregon by 2033 will be in health care and social assistance.

- Seven of the 15 fastest-growing occupations in Oregon are related to health care. They include nurse practitioners, physician assistants, medical health and services managers, veterinarians, and veterinary assistants and technicians.

In addition to new jobs, employers will also need to replace workers who retire or otherwise leave the labor force or make major occupational changes. Factoring in these replacement openings, health care and social assistance will average a total of nearly 38,000 job openings annually through 2033. Growth expectations in future years could be hindered by increasing retirements, or an insufficient pipeline of workers into the sector.

- In 2023, nearly 73,000 Oregon workers in health care and social assistance were at least 55 years old – 24% of the industry's workforce.
- A larger share of health care and social assistance job openings (55%) by 2033 will require some type of education beyond high school than the typical postsecondary requirements for all job openings (39%).



Health Care Hiring Stands Out

Health care and social assistance has been a large and consistently growing sector of Oregon's economy for decades. Although overall job growth has slowed in Oregon in recent years, growth has accelerated in the health care and social assistance sector.

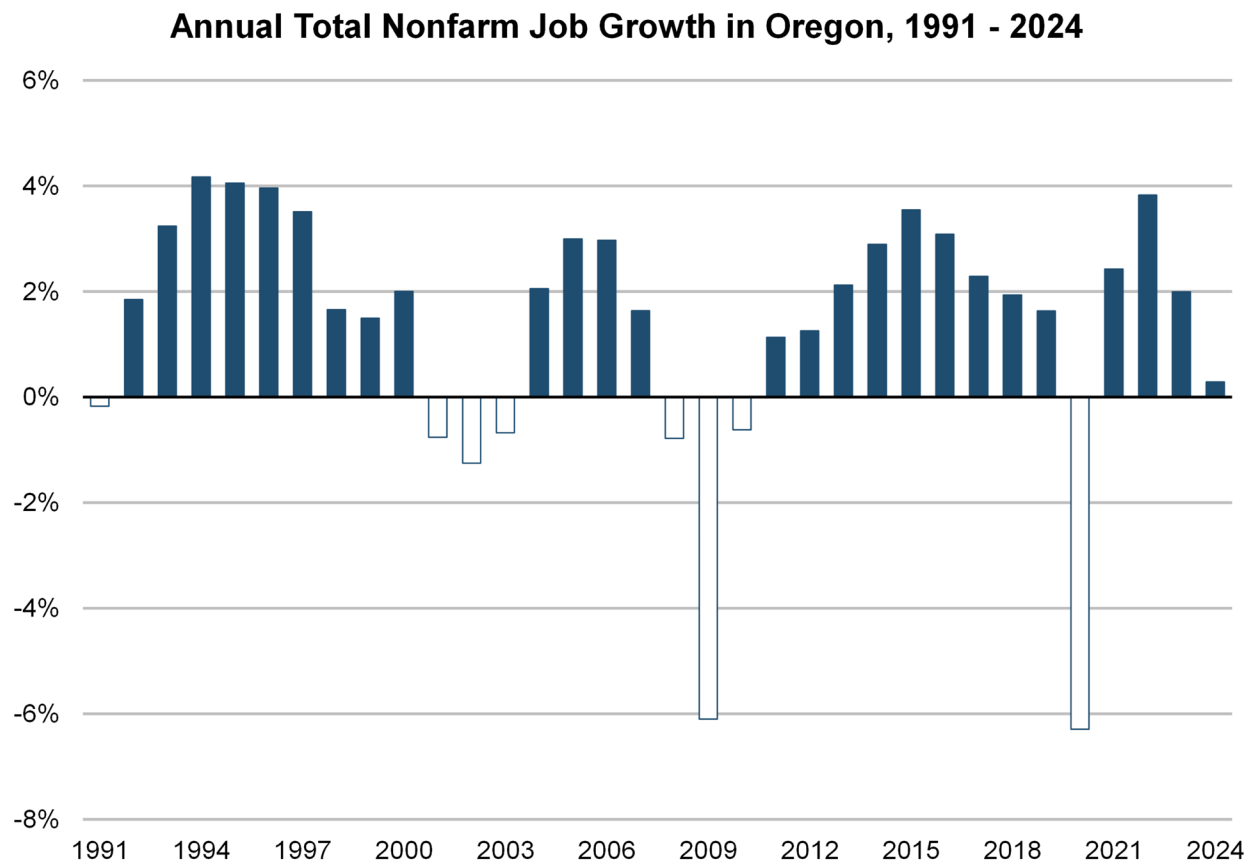
The sector has strong demand from employers hiring workers, now and into the future. Private health care and social assistance accounted for one-third of all private-sector job openings in 2024. With an estimated total of nearly 38,000 job openings annually, one out of every five new jobs created by 2033 will be in health care and social assistance.

Expected future growth could be slowed in the sector due to anticipated retirements in the coming years and fewer health care-related program graduates in recent years according to U.S. Department of Education data. Given ongoing demographic shifts in Oregon and the U.S., growing demand and the importance of health care and social assistance services will continue over at least the next decade.



Slow Overall Job Growth

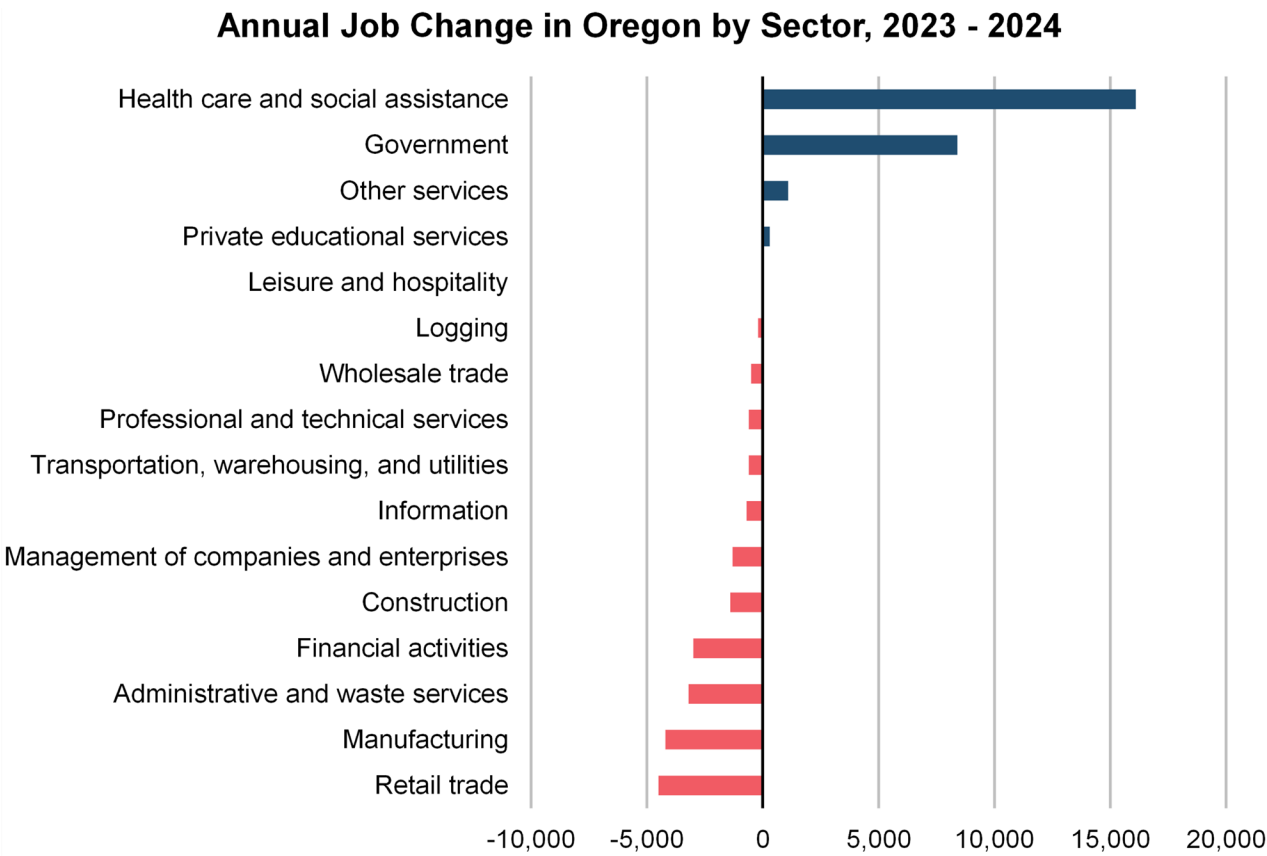
In 2024, Oregon employers added 5,700 jobs (+0.3%) to nonfarm payrolls. That's the smallest annual total nonfarm job gain in at least three decades. The only weaker years for job growth since 1990 were those with recession-related losses.



Concentrated Gains

Job growth was not only slow, but also highly concentrated in private health care and social assistance. This one sector alone added 16,100 jobs (+5.7%) from 2023 to 2024, to reach an all-time high of 301,000. The next largest gain occurred in government, which added 8,400 jobs (+2.7%) in 2024. More than half of public-sector gains (65%) occurred in local government, which includes public health care, along with K-12 education, community colleges, and public universities, as well as city, county, and regional public services.

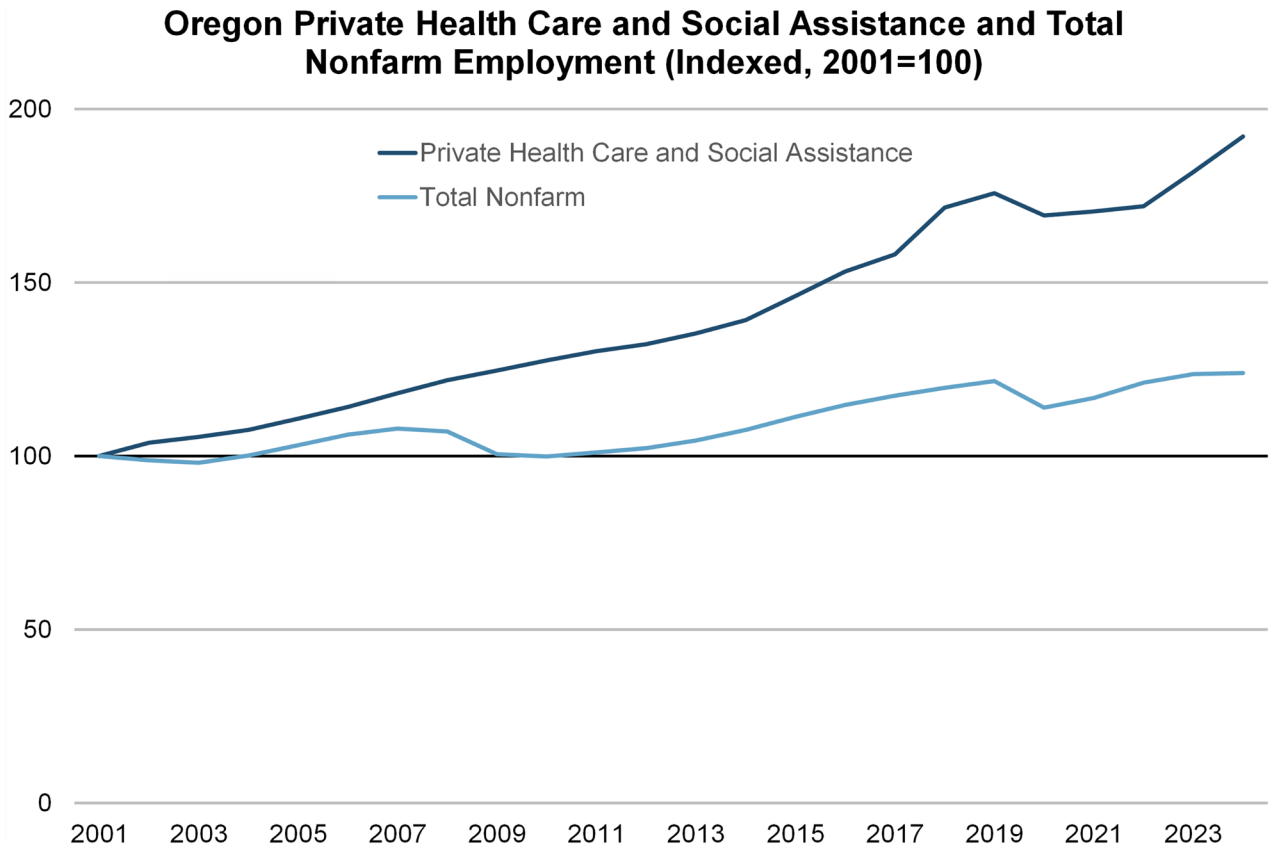
The sectors with private and some public health care-related employment combined for a larger job gain than overall total nonfarm job growth in 2024. That's because some sectors of Oregon's economy had notable job losses in 2024. They included retail trade, which lost 4,300 jobs (-2.2%) between 2023 and 2024, and manufacturing (-4,200 jobs or -2.2%). Administrative and waste services lost 3,200 jobs (-3.1%) on an annual basis from 2023 to 2024. Financial activities declined by 3,000 jobs, which was a loss of 2.9%. All other broad sectors of Oregon's economy saw relatively little change in 2024.



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics

Health Care: Long-Term Growth and Recent Momentum

While private health care and social assistance stood out for robust job growth in 2024, the sector has a decades-long history of fairly consistent growth. From 2001 to 2024, total nonfarm employment in Oregon grew by 24%. By comparison, private health care and social assistance grew by 92%.



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics

As in Oregon, U.S. job gains were also concentrated in private health care and social assistance in 2024. Between 2023 and 2024, U.S. employers added nearly 2.1 million jobs (+1.3%) to nonfarm payrolls. Private health care and social assistance added an annual average of 987,000 jobs over the year. That was a growth rate of 4.6% and accounted for nearly half (47%) of all net job gains.

Nationally, private health care and social assistance also has stronger long-run job growth than overall employment trends. Looking back to 2001, U.S. total nonfarm employment grew by 20%. During that same time, private health care and social assistance grew by 69%.

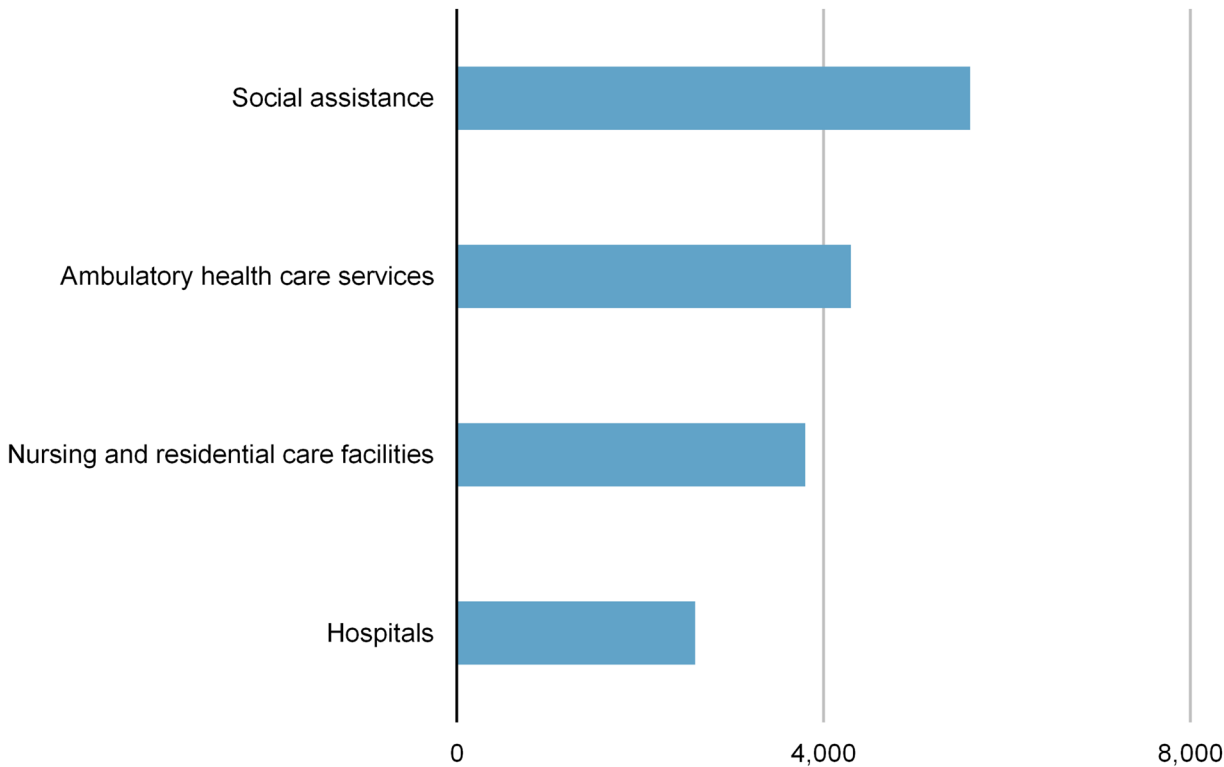
Growth in All Areas of Health Care

Health care and social assistance consists of four subsectors: ambulatory health care services, hospitals, residential and nursing care facilities, and social assistance. Each of these components had strong job growth in Oregon between 2023 and 2024.

Within private health care and social assistance, the largest gains between 2023 and 2024 occurred in social assistance. This includes individual and family services, including those for the elderly or disabled. Social assistance also includes businesses primarily engaged in community food and housing, child day care services, and vocational rehabilitation. Oregon's private social assistance employers added 5,700 jobs in 2024, a gain of 7.8%.

Nursing and residential care facilities, including those for the elderly, establishments providing mental health and substance use services, and other care facilities added a total of 3,700 jobs (+7.0%) between 2023 and 2024. Ambulatory care services had a similar job gain in 2024, adding 4,200 jobs (+4.2%). Oregon's private hospitals gained an annual average of 2,600 jobs in 2024, an increase of 4.4%.

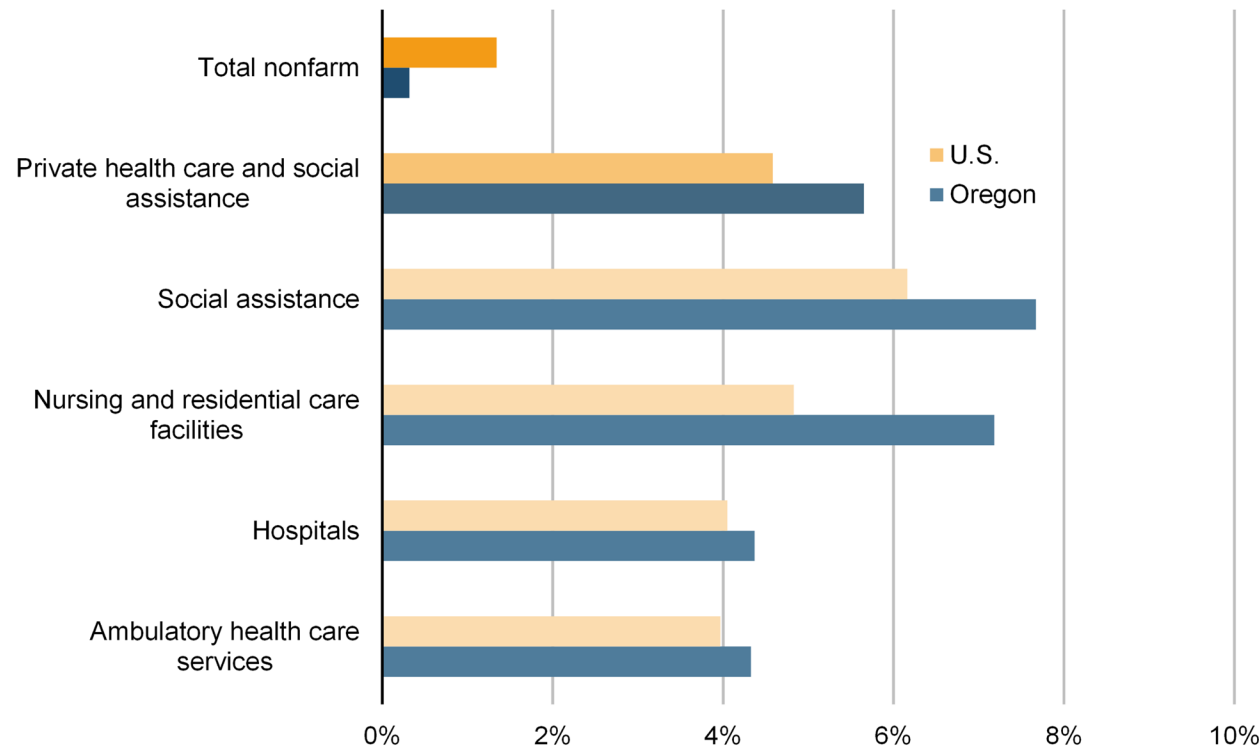
Oregon Job Growth by Subsector, Private Health Care and Social Assistance, 2023-2024



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics

By subsector, Oregon’s health care and social assistance job growth rates looked similar to the U.S. as well. Social assistance had the fastest rate of growth between 2023 and 2024, followed by nursing and residential facilities, private hospitals, and then ambulatory health care services. All subsectors of private health care and social assistance grew much faster in 2024 than total employment for both Oregon and the U.S.

U.S. and Oregon Job Growth Rates 2023-2024
Total Nonfarm and Private Health Care and Social Assistance

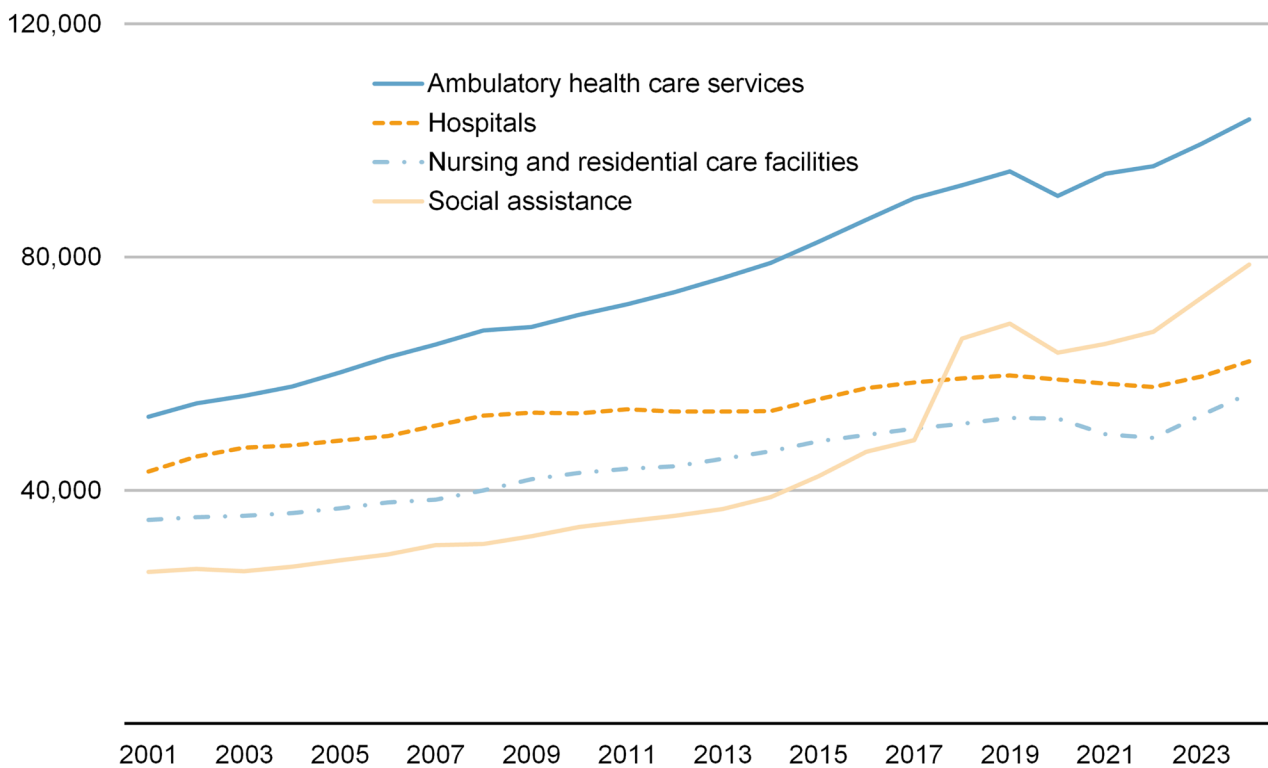


Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics



All major subsectors of private health care and social assistance in Oregon have also shown strong employment growth over the longer term. The highest rate of growth occurred in social assistance, where employment increased from 26,000 in 2001 to 78,600 by 2024, partially driven by a legislative reclassification of 16,700 home health workers from state government into the private sector. Ambulatory health care employment nearly doubled its employment, growing from 52,600 jobs in 2001 to 103,700 in 2024. Even the relatively slower-growing nursing residential care facilities (+63%) and private hospitals (+44%) still outpaced the state's total nonfarm gains (+24%).

Oregon Had Strong Employment Growth in All Private-Sector Health Care and Social Assistance Subsectors, 2001-2024



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics

Public Health Care and Social Assistance

Health care and social assistance services also occur in federal, state, local government, and university settings in Oregon. While the bulk of the sector's employment – slightly more than 300,000 jobs – is at privately owned firms, an additional 39,000 jobs are found in public-sector health care and social assistance.

The majority of public-sector health care jobs (60%) were found in federal, state, local government, or university hospitals. Another 10,700 public-sector health care and social assistance jobs (27%) were found in social assistance. That differs from the private sector, where the largest share of health care and social assistance jobs – one out of every three (34%) – was found in ambulatory health care services. Overall though, private health care and social assistance makes up a similar share of all private-sector employment (15%) as public health care and social assistance does for all government jobs (13%).

Oregon Government Health Care and Social Assistance Jobs, 2024

Subsector	Jobs	Percent
Hospitals	23,400	60%
Social Assistance	10,700	27%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	3,800	10%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	1,300	3%
All Public Health Care and Social Assistance	39,200	100%

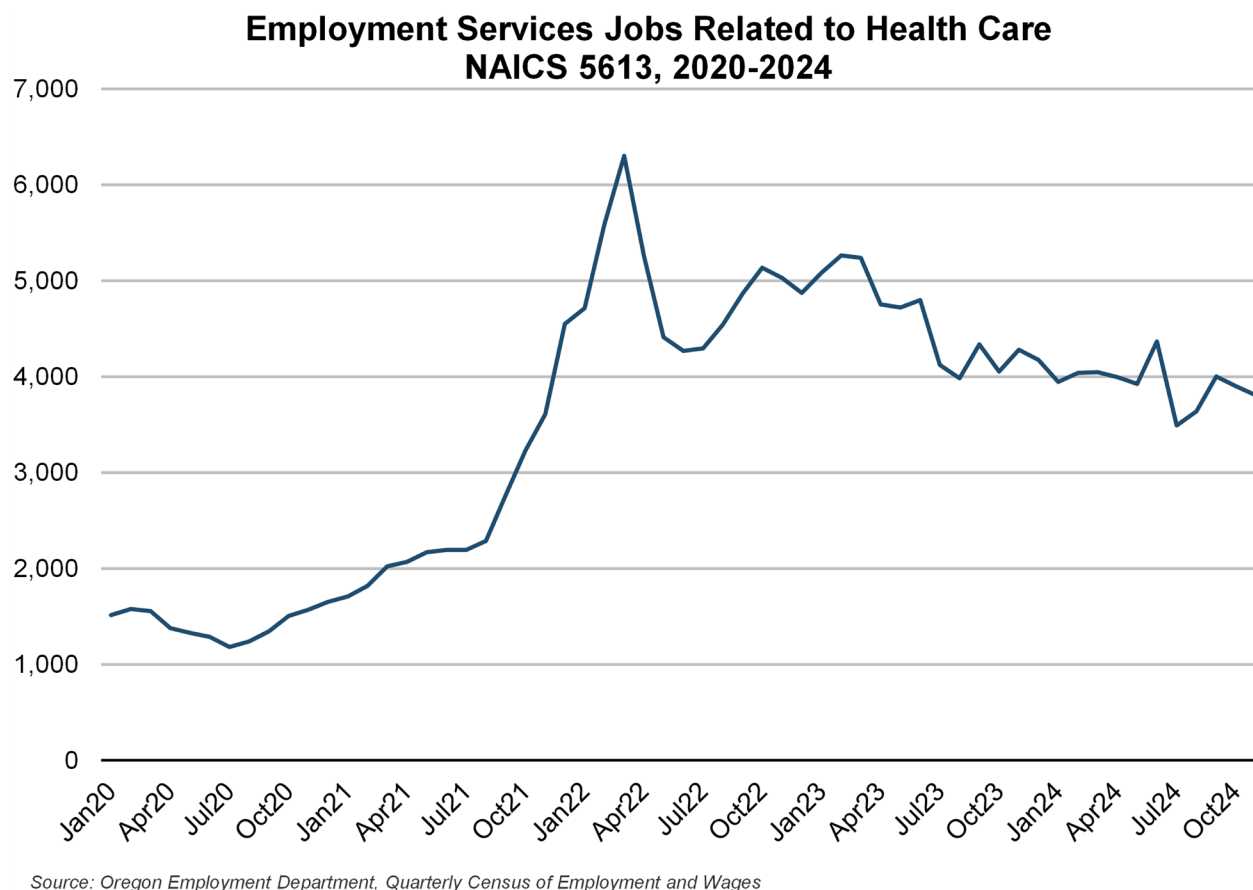
Source: Oregon Employment Department, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Temp Help in Health Care

In addition to jobs found on health care and social assistance payrolls, a notable number of employment services agencies also contribute to the health care workforce. Oregon has an estimated 141 employment services firms with names containing health care related terms (e.g. "Nurse", "Medical", and "Health") or that are otherwise known to specialize in providing health care workers. While this may not be a comprehensive count of all temp help jobs of this type, employment at the identified companies totaled about 1,500 jobs in January 2020.

In the wake of the pandemic recession, health care-related temp help services grew rapidly. In March 2022, health-specific temp help employment reached 6,300 jobs. While levels have generally declined since then, the employment services industry still had 3,700 jobs in Oregon at companies focused on health care settings at the end of 2024. Annual average employment at these companies shifted down from 4,600 jobs in 2023 to 3,900 jobs in 2024.

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Wages Vary Across Health Care Settings

In 2024, the average annual wage for all jobs covered by unemployment insurance in Oregon was \$71,300. Wages for all private health care and social assistance jobs averaged \$66,600. That was almost 7% below the average for all jobs in Oregon.

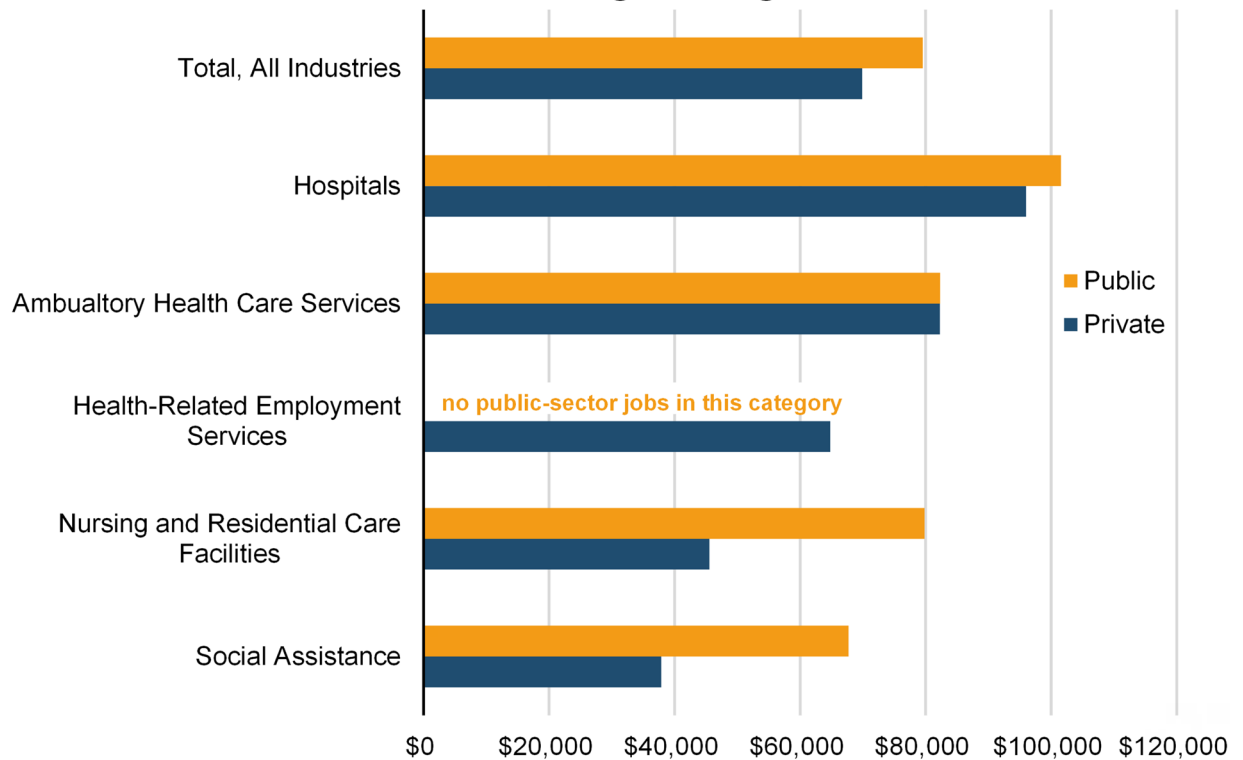
Wages vary significantly by health care and social assistance subsector. In the private sector, hospitals had the highest annual average wage (\$96,000) in 2024, followed by ambulatory health care services (\$82,300). In contrast, annual wages averaged \$45,500 at private nursing and residential care facilities, and \$37,900 in private social assistance.

Public-sector health care and social assistance showed a similar split, but at higher wage levels. Hospitals (\$101,600) and ambulatory care services (\$82,300) paid higher annual average wages than public nursing and residential care facilities (\$79,800) and public jobs providing social assistance services (\$67,700).

The private-sector employment services companies focused on health care had an annual average wage of \$64,800 in 2024. That includes wages for the staff at employment agencies

helping to place workers, as well as the actual temp employees working in health care services as well.

Average Annual Wages Vary Across Health Care and Social Assistance Settings in Oregon, 2024



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
Note: Public-sector hospitals does not include local government higher education wages

Occupational Mix Drives Industry Wage Differences

The mix of different types of jobs in each subsector of health care and social assistance influences the large variation in average annual wages across care settings. The Oregon Wage Information (OWI) data series provides occupational breakouts of employment in each part of health care and social assistance as of 2023. OWI estimates also include average annual earnings by occupation across all industries in 2024.

Looking at each major area of health care and social assistance, the types and concentration of different occupations vary notably. In private hospitals – the highest-paying of the subsectors – nearly one-third (31%) of all jobs in 2023 were classified as registered nurses. The average annual wages for registered nurses across all industries neared \$117,000 in 2024.

Nursing and residential care facilities employ many home health and personal care aides; they accounted for 35% of all jobs in 2023. They earned an average of \$41,300 in 2024.

Similarly, personal care and service workers accounted for nearly one-third (31%) of all jobs in social assistance. Home health and personal care aides were the next-largest occupation, and both pre-school teachers and teaching assistants were also prominent jobs within the child care day services portion of social assistance. All of the top occupations in these two subsectors pay less than \$50,000 across all industries in Oregon.

In contrast to the others, ambulatory health care services has less concentrated employment in any one occupation. Yet the subsector has many high-paying jobs in the list of top occupations. Five of the 12 largest occupations in Oregon's hospitals had annual average wages above \$100,000 per year in 2024.

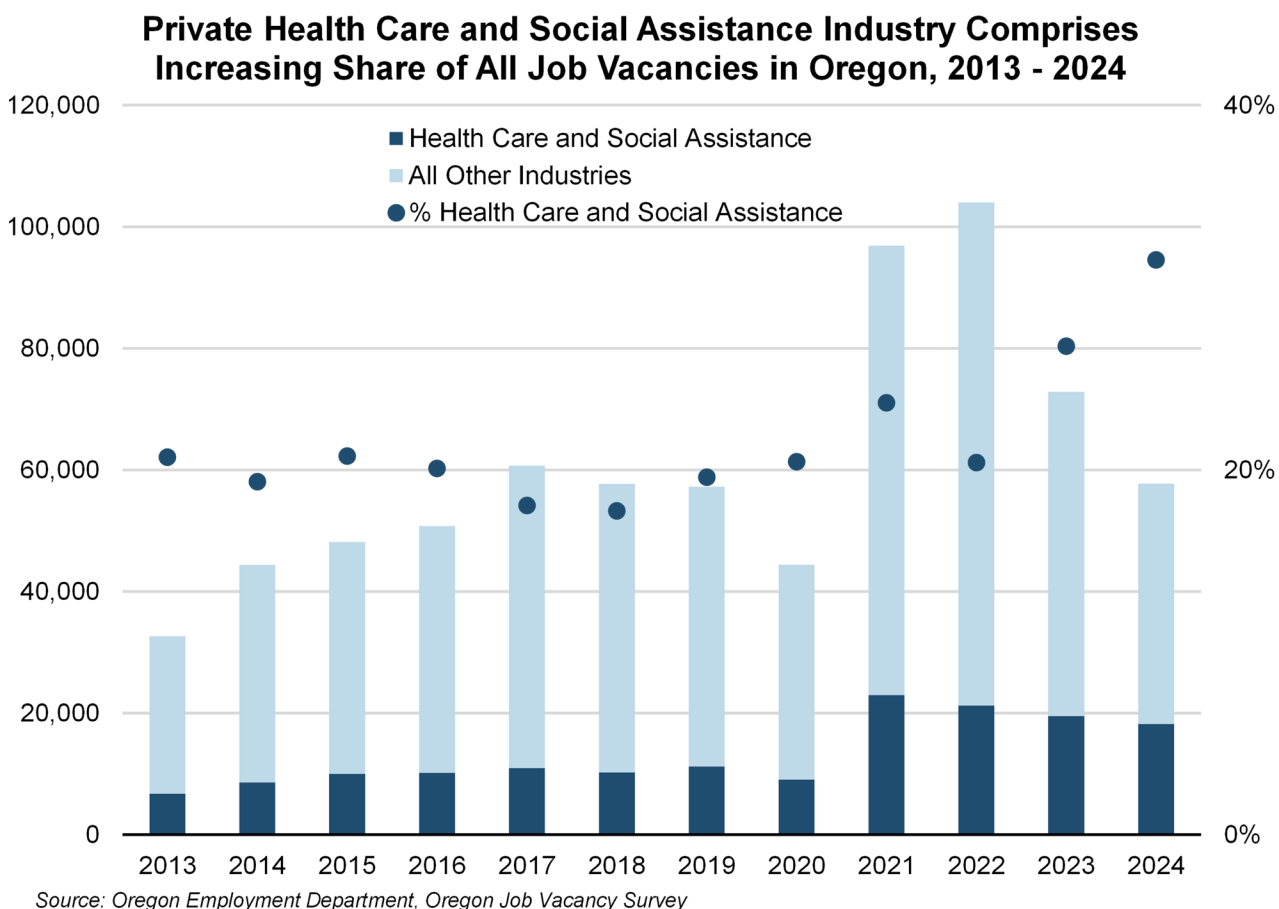
Top Occupations by Health Care and Social Assistance Subsector in 2023
2024 Average Wages by Occupation (All Sectors = \$68,780)

	2023 Jobs	2024 Annual Average Wage
- All Occupations in Ambulatory Health Care Services	98,755	
43-6013 Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	9,540	\$50,249
31-9092 Medical Assistants	8,386	\$50,907
29-1141 Registered Nurses	5,467	\$116,871
43-4171 Receptionists and Information Clerks	5,221	\$40,225
31-9091 Dental Assistants	4,957	\$57,684
- All Occupations in Hospitals	81,458	
29-1141 Registered Nurses	25,483	\$116,871
31-1131 Nursing Assistants	5,248	\$48,420
43-6013 Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	2,478	\$50,249
37-2012 Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,277	\$37,420
31-9092 Medical Assistants	2,215	\$50,907
- All Occupations in Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	52,810	
31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides	18,669	\$41,294
31-1131 Nursing Assistants	7,506	\$48,420
35-3041 Food Servers, Nonrestaurant	2,635	\$37,349
35-2012 Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	2,074	\$42,897
29-1141 Registered Nurses	1,833	\$116,871
- All Occupations in Social Assistance	72,762	
39-9099 Personal Care and Service Workers, All Other	22,212	\$38,816
31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides	10,862	\$41,294
21-1093 Social and Human Service Assistants	5,854	\$49,127
25-2011 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	5,017	\$43,280
25-9045 Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	2,225	\$42,238

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Employment and Wages Survey

Health Care Hiring Demand: Employers' Current Needs

Throughout the year, the Oregon Employment Department surveys private employers from all industries and areas of the state to ask about job vacancies they are actively trying to fill. For each vacancy, the employer provides the job title, starting wage, and education and experience requirements for the job. They also specify whether their vacancies were for full- or part-time positions, and permanent or seasonal jobs. If they face challenges with vacancies, employers also write in the primary reason for difficulty filling their job openings.



Since the beginning of the annual Oregon Job Vacancy Survey in 2013, the health care and social assistance industry has consistently been the top-hiring sector. On average from 2013 to 2022, job vacancies from the health care and social assistance industry made up about 20% of all vacancies.

In the last two years, Oregon private-sector job vacancies have become more concentrated in health care and social assistance. The sector accounted for 27% or 19,500 of all private job openings in 2023. In 2024 that share increased to 32%. Health care made up 18,200 of Oregon's 57,800 private-sector job openings. This coincides with health care and social assistance leading current job growth among all sectors of the economy.

Current Hiring Demand by Occupation

The typical job vacancy in Oregon tends to be for a full-time, permanent position. This was also the case in private health care and social assistance. In 2024, four out of five job openings were full-time positions, and essentially all (97%) vacancies were for permanent jobs.

Yet in some ways, job vacancies in the health care and social assistance industry looked a little different than the average vacancy found across all industries. Average starting wages paid over a dollar (or 6%) more: \$26.83 compared with \$25.37 on average for all vacancies.

Private health care and social assistance vacancies are also more likely to require some sort of education or credential beyond a high school degree. Whereas two out of five (39%) private-sector job openings required education beyond high school in 2024, more than half (55%) of private health care and social assistance sector vacancies required something beyond a high school degree. At the same time, health care vacancies in 2024 were less likely to require previous experience. Despite these differing requirements, health care and social assistance industry job vacancies were only slightly less likely to be considered difficult to fill.

Characteristics of Private Health Care and Social Assistance Job Vacancies in Oregon, 2024

Occupation Title	Vacancies	Average Starting Wage	% Require Experience	% Require Education Beyond HS	% Difficult to Fill
All Private-Sector Job Vacancies	57,767	\$25.37	55%	39%	55%
All Private Health Care and Social Assistance	18,203	\$26.83	42%	55%	53%
Personal Care Aides	2,398	\$18.68	17%	less than 1%	57%
Registered Nurses	1,189	\$46.31	41%	99%	62%
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	864	\$21.03	83%	38%	73%
Medical Assistants	816	\$20.28	57%	56%	68%
Nursing Assistants	809	\$21.45	19%	76%	66%
Teaching Assistants, Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School, Except Special Education	674	\$18.06	30%	24%	46%
Dental Hygienists	662	\$55.32	30%	100%	76%
Dental Assistants	662	\$26.62	36%	91%	60%
Mental Health Counselors	599	\$31.45	60%	99%	59%
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	575	\$23.59	61%	51%	44%

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Job Vacancy Survey

Within health care and social assistance, the types of occupations with large numbers of job vacancies differed from prior years. Both before the pandemic, in 2019, and again in 2022 and 2023, the top occupations in health care by total vacancies were personal care aides, nursing assistants, and registered nurses. They remained among the top occupations in 2024, but other occupations such as preschool teachers and teaching assistants, dental hygienists and assistants, and mental health counselors were in higher demand too.

There are also distinct differences in the characteristics of health care and social assistance vacancies that are considered difficult to fill and not difficult to fill in 2024. Health care and social assistance vacancies that are considered not difficult to fill by employers paid an average of \$7 less per hour than those considered hard to fill.

Oregon Private Health Care and Social Assistance Job Vacancies, 2024

	Not Difficult to Fill	Difficult to Fill
Vacancies	8,592	9,611
Average wage	\$22.03	\$29.15
Full time	76%	77%
Permanent	95%	98%
Require education beyond high school	47%	61%
Require previous experience	24%	59%

Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Job Vacancy Survey

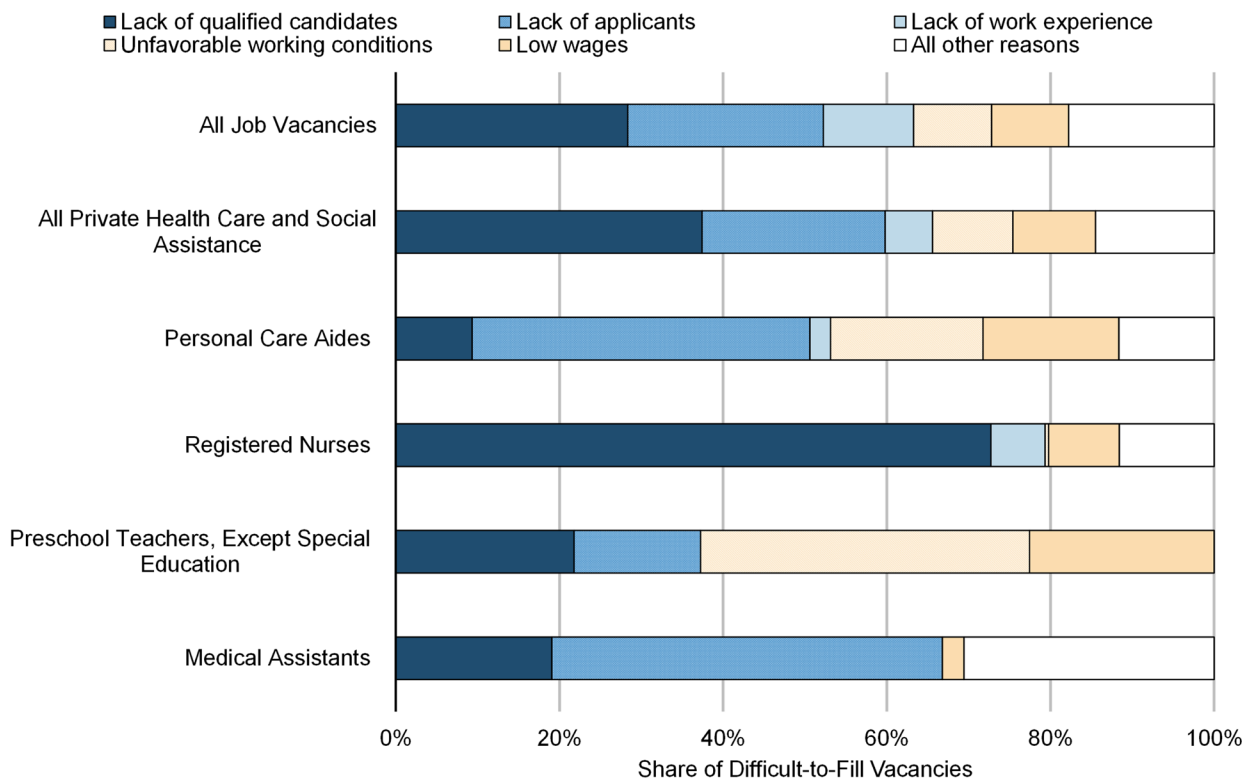
This higher wage and difficulty filling job openings could be for a couple of reasons. While both vacancies filled with and without difficulty in health care and social assistance were mostly full-time and permanent positions, the difficult-to-fill vacancies were more likely to require education beyond high school and previous experience. In a time of rapid health care hiring and relatively low unemployment, the pool of available workers with more education and experience may be limited.

Hard-to-Fill Health Care Jobs

For each vacancy that employers identify as difficult to fill, they provide open-ended responses in the Oregon Job Vacancy Survey to identify the primary challenge for the unfilled opening. Their responses were then sorted into 12 categories (see Appendix A for definitions and illustrative examples).

About 26,200 (or 55%) of all private job vacancies in Oregon were identified by employers as difficult to fill. Private health care and social assistance was similar, with 9,600 (or 53%) of all job openings reported as hard to fill. For all private-sector job openings, and for those in health care and social assistance, more than four out of five difficult-to-fill job vacancies could be attributed to five hiring challenges: a lack of qualified candidates; a lack of applicants; a lack of work experience; unfavorable working conditions; or low wages.

Most Common Challenges Oregon Employer Cited for Filling Job Vacancies in 2024



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Oregon Job Vacancy Survey

Across all sectors, employers cited a lack of qualified candidates as their most common challenge, and the primary reason for difficulty filling 28% of hard-to-fill job vacancies in 2024. A lack of qualified candidates means employers note too few applicants with an adequate mix of education, experience, and knowledge required for the job. A lack of qualified candidates

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was even more prominent in health care and social assistance, accounting for 37% of all difficult-to-fill job openings. Registered nurses played prominently into this; nearly three-fourths (73%) of hard-to-fill registered nurse vacancies were identified as having a lack of qualified candidates.

The second most-cited reason for difficulty filling job openings across all sectors in 2024 was a lack of applicants. In these cases, employers report too few or no applicants for their job vacancies. A lack of applicants was the primary challenge for 24% of all difficult-to-fill job openings, and for 22% of all health care and social assistance vacancies in 2024. An outsized share of personal care aide vacancies that were hard to fill had a lack of applicants, at 41%.

Health Care and Social Assistance Leads Future Job Growth

There were nearly 2.2 million jobs in Oregon in 2023. By 2033, Oregon is expected to add another 170,000 jobs. That’s an increase of 8%. Health care and social assistance is expected to add the most jobs by 2033, with the 13% growth rate equating to an additional 37,000 jobs. One out of every five new jobs added in Oregon by 2033 will be in health care and social assistance.

Within private health care and social assistance, nearly half (17,000, or 45%) of all job gains by 2033 are expected in ambulatory health care services. Nursing and residential care facilities are expected to add a total of 7,400 new jobs, a gain of 14%. Although growth rates are projected to be a bit slower in hospitals and social assistance (10% each), they are still projected to outpace overall job growth in Oregon by 2033.

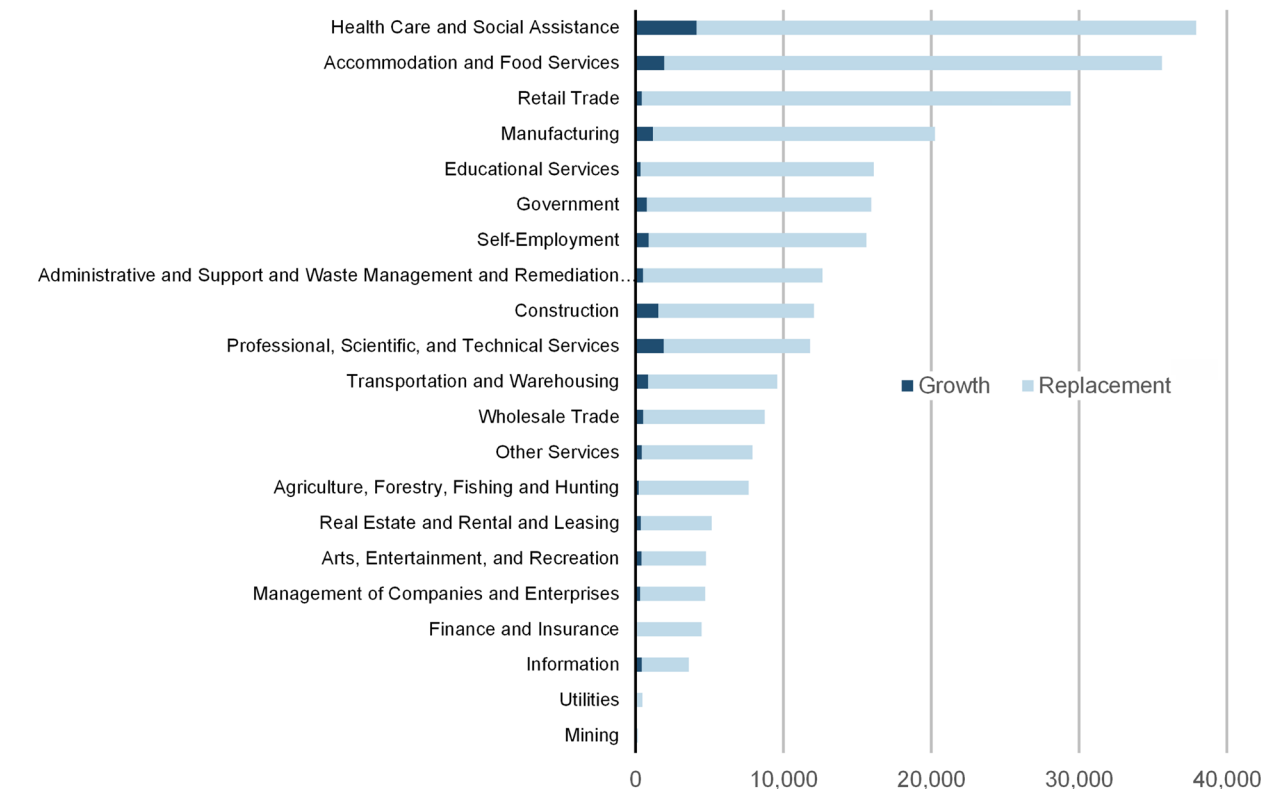
Relatively Strong Projected Gains in Oregon Private Health Care and Social Assistance by 2033

	2023	2033	Change	% Change
Total employment	2,186,100	2,356,100	170,000	8%
Health care and social assistance	283,700	320,900	37,200	13%
Ambulatory health care services	98,800	115,800	17,000	17%
Hospitals	59,300	65,000	5,700	10%
Nursing and residential care facilities	52,800	60,200	7,400	14%
Social assistance	72,800	79,900	7,100	10%

Source: Oregon Employment Department, 2023-2033 Employment Projections

In addition to jobs due to net growth in the industry, the vast majority of projected job openings by 2033 will be to replace those health care workers across the private and public sectors who are retiring, otherwise leaving the labor force, or making major occupational changes. When we add these replacement openings to the growth openings, Oregon’s health care and social assistance sector will have 379,000 total openings over the decade. That’s an average of nearly 38,000 total job openings each year.

**Projected Annual Job Openings by Industry in Oregon
Private and Public Ownerships, 2023 - 2033**



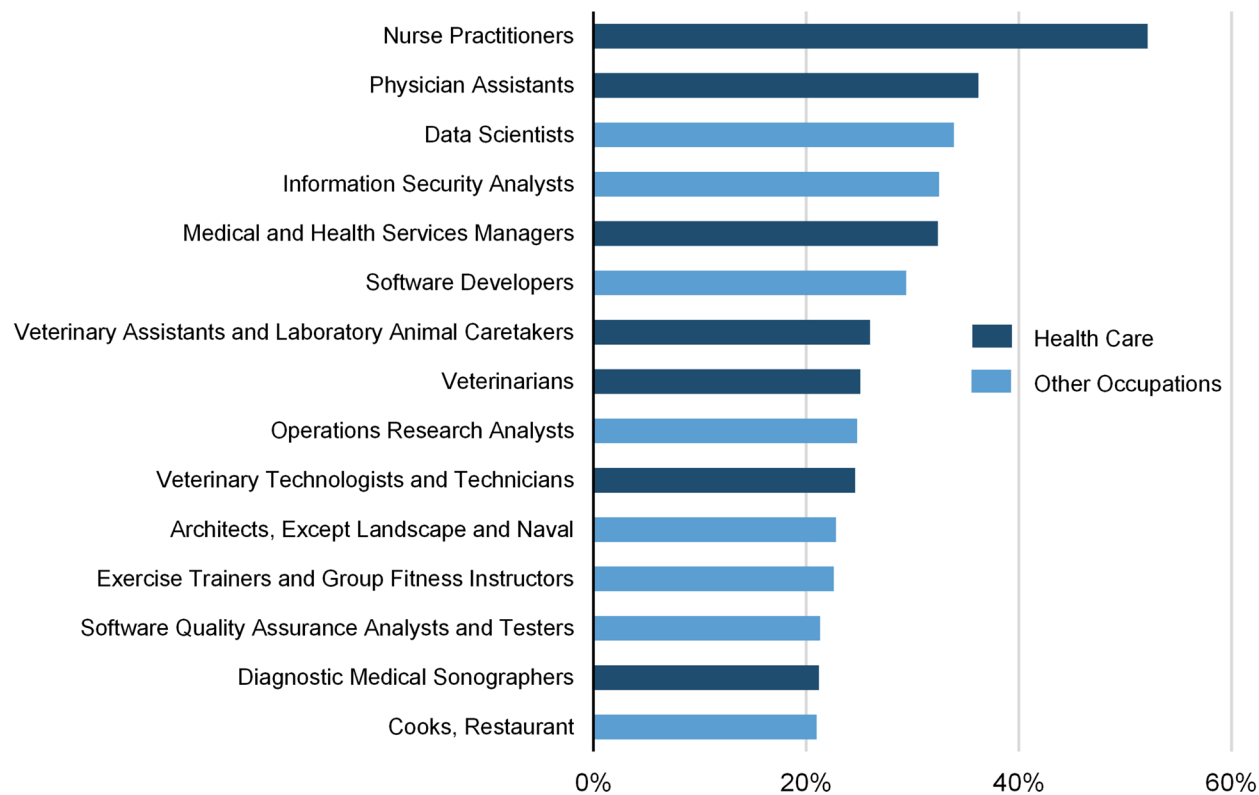
Source: Oregon Employment Department, 2023-2033 Employment Projections



Fast-Growing Health Care Occupations

Seven of the 15 fastest-growing occupations in Oregon over the next decade are related to health care. They include nurse practitioners, physician assistants, medical health and services managers, veterinarians, and veterinary assistants and technicians.

Fastest-Growing Occupations, 2023-2033



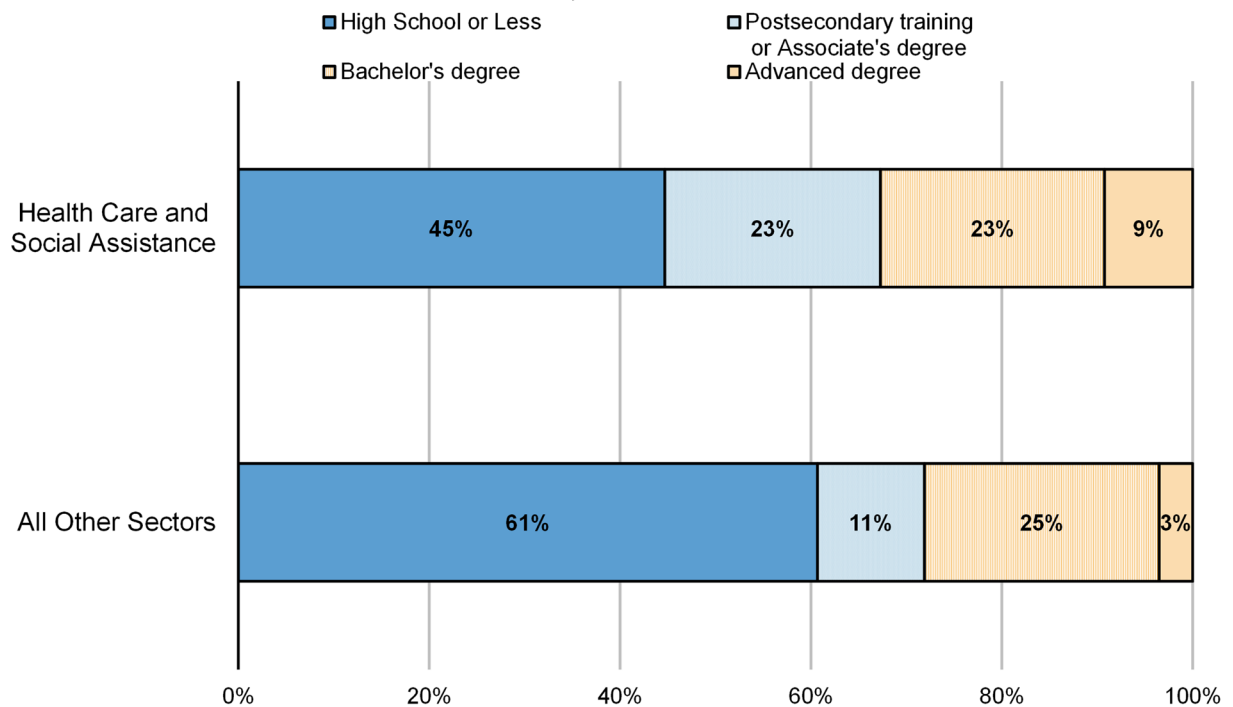
Source: Oregon Employment Department, 2023-2033 Employment Projections



Higher Share with Higher Education

The health care and social assistance sector relies on a highly skilled, talented workforce. A higher share of health care and social assistance job openings from 2023 to 2033 require some form of postsecondary training (55%) than what we generally see for all other industries in Oregon (39%). The current workforce reflects this as well. According to recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates, over 80% of workers in Oregon's health care and social assistance sector have some form of postsecondary education.

Projected Openings in Private Health Care and Social Assistance Rely More on an Educated Workforce than Other Sectors, 2023 - 2033



Source: Oregon Employment Department, 2023-2033 Employment Projections

Note: Chart based on the distribution of 2023 sector employment by typical entry-level education

Headwinds to Future Growth

Job growth – in health care and social assistance and overall – may not be as fast in the future as we've come to expect in the last twenty years. Looking at the current workforce as of 2023, one out of every four jobs (24%) in Oregon is held by a worker age 55 or older. The share of health care and social assistance workers ages 55 and older matches the state. However, that yields the largest number of workers (72,800) who may be nearing retirement of any sector in Oregon's economy.

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

Oregon Jobs in 2023	All Workers	Age 55+	% Age 55+
All Sectors	1,937,646	466,892	24%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	51,599	17,129	33%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,782	571	32%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	31,310	8,982	29%
Transportation and Warehousing	75,268	20,177	27%
Utilities	8,198	2,189	27%
Public Administration	76,045	20,216	27%
Manufacturing	187,188	49,612	27%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	67,927	17,976	26%
Wholesale Trade	79,239	20,715	26%
Educational Services	147,653	38,323	26%
Finance and Insurance	55,456	13,844	25%
Health Care and Social Assistance	300,237	72,783	24%
Administrative and Waste Services	105,222	24,966	24%
Retail Trade	208,358	49,131	24%
Construction	124,024	28,640	23%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	113,276	24,722	22%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	33,491	7,042	21%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	53,138	10,926	21%
Information	41,478	7,697	19%
Accommodation and Food Services	176,757	31,251	18%

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

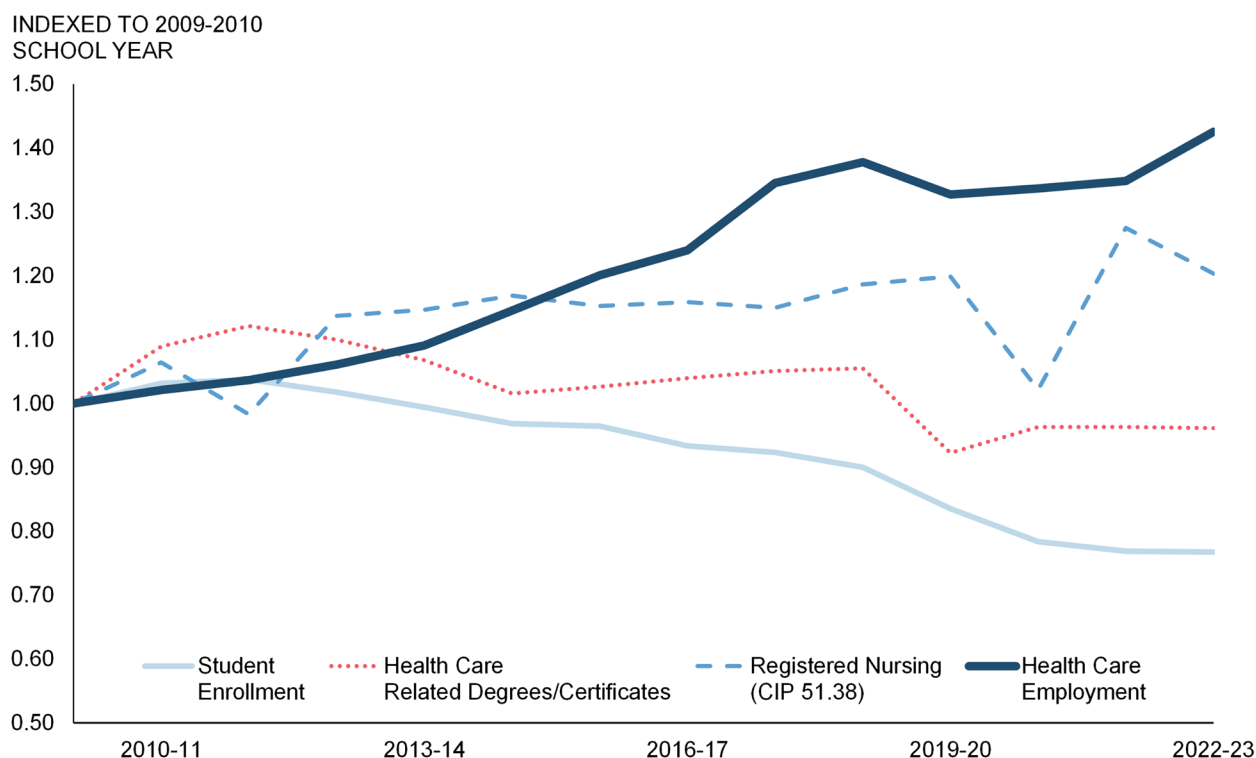
Replacing retiring workers and expanding the health care sector to meet the increasing demands of an aging population is possible with a sufficient pipeline of qualified workers in the coming years. However, since the 2009-2010 school year, enrollment has declined 23% at Oregon public and private institutions offering certifications and degrees beyond high school. The number of institutions offering higher education has declined from 88 in the 2009-2010 academic year to 73 in the 2022-2023 academic year.

The number of health care-related degrees and certificates awarded fared better, remaining at 96% of the same level in 2022-2023 as at the beginning of the 2010s. Registered nursing enrollments in Oregon increased 20%. Yet, this has not kept pace with the fast growth in total health care employment or the anticipated replacement of health care workers in coming years due to increased retirements.

Health care is a sector that requires higher education for many of its jobs, and the training that workers need to be either licensed or appropriately trained tends to be longer-term than for

many roles across the economy. This underlines the importance of ensuring enough students enter training to result in qualified workers in two, four, or even eight years after enrollment.

Health Care-Related Degrees Outperform Overall Student Enrollment But Lag Sector Employment Trends



Source: Oregon Employment Department, Current Employment Statistics, and U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS Education Database

Higher education in Oregon only paints a partial picture, as Oregon tends to gain health care workers moving in from other states. There are also plenty of roles within the health care industry that don't require health care-related degrees, such as administrative support, business and financial, and cleaning and food service support functions, in addition to the health care practitioners and support workers providing direct care to patients.

Even so, data from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows that by 2033, Oregon may experience ongoing shortfalls meeting health care needs within the population.

The HRSA projected future supply for many health care-related occupations is expected to fall short of adequacy. By 2033, these projections show registered nurses at 88% of adequate supply. Adequacy rates are projected at 65% for general surgery physicians, and 65% for mental health counselors. Licensed practical nurses are projected to be at 35% of the level adequate to meet demand. For more information, visit <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/workforce-projections>.

Appendix A: Examples of Employer Survey Responses

Categorized Reasons for Difficulty Filling Job Vacancies with Illustrative Examples from Survey Responses

Lack of applicants: too few or no applicants for a vacancy

- Competition for limited supply
- Everyone is looking for help
- Narrow candidate pool
- No applicants
- Shortage of workers

Lack of qualified candidates: lacking necessary education or specific job requirements

- No well-qualified applicants
- Position with specific industry knowledge needed
- Specialized qualifications required
- Specific background and skill set required
- Unique experience

Unfavorable working conditions: inconsistent or part-time shifts, physical job demands

- Hard physical work in a variety of elements
- Night on-call shift
- Seasonal, part-time position
- Travel out of town 90% of the time
- Unable to guarantee hours

Low wages: low pay for job requirements or market conditions

- Budgeted pay scale may be too low
- Can't afford to pay a higher salary, so employee pool is small
- Job requirements are often hard to find for the hourly wage
- Offered pay rate is too low

- Want higher hourly wage than we can pay for the level of expertise

Lack of work experience: previous experience required

- Can't find anyone with experience
- Few trained applicants
- Finding someone with experience to limit training
- Lack of experienced applicants
- Those that have experience are already employed

Lack of soft skills: communication, interpersonal, or social norms for job

- Applicants lack work ethic
- Attention to detail
- Lack of commitment
- Many applicants lack transportation
- Unable to pass drug test

Other: miscellaneous; not able to be categorized elsewhere

- Cost of living
- No affordable housing in our community
- Obscure industry
- New recruitment
- Union only

Lack of certification: applicants lack necessary license or certification

- Commercial Driver's License needed
- Insurance certification required
- Not enough licensed people
- Plumber needs to be licensed
- Too few certified workers

Location: the geographic area of the job

- Can't compete with Eugene, Portland; not enough activities

- Hard to recruit to rural city
- Location of office in small rural town
- Our clinic is in a remote area of Oregon
- Rural location; few applicants

Lack of technical skills: measureable or tangible abilities or knowledge used on the job

- Difficult technical skill set
- Lack of technical skills
- Technical skill set is hard to find
- Unskilled applicants

Right fit: specific personality or personal qualities

- Blend of personality and skill set
- Culture, education, and experience
- Experience and team fit
- Not a “fit” for company
- Want the right person

Lack of training: few or no educational or vocational programs related to the job

- Lack of vocationally trained candidates
- No school in area
- Training in this area is sparse
- Very steep learning curve and no local training programs

Source: Oregon Employment Department

Appendix B: References

Health Resources and Services Administration. 2023. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/workforce-projections>

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Quarterly Workforce Indicators. 2024. Center for Economic Studies, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://qwexplorer.ces.census.gov/>



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