The Employment Landscape of Rural Oregon
A Report from the Oregon Employment Department

Damon Runberg, Regional Economist
Oregon’s economy is currently near full employment after recovering from the recession over 4 years ago.
However, the recovery from the Great Recession has been uneven. 15 of Oregon’s 23 rural counties remain below peak.
Rural Oregon, for the purposes of our report, included any county characterized as “nonmetro” in federal data sources.

Oregon has 23 rural (nonmetro) counties and 13 urban (metro) counties.
Rural Oregon had 244,000 jobs in 2018…about 13 percent of statewide employment.

~76% private-sector jobs
~24% government jobs
12 of the top 15 highest rates of unemployment are rural
But, levels of unemployment are at or near historically low levels

Unemployment Rates in Oregon Counties
Current Rate and Max for 2007-2009 Recession, Seasonally Adjusted

Sorted by highest current unemployment rate
Job expansion most notable along the Columbia River, the Willamette Valley, and Deschutes County
Bulk of jobs lost were from high-wage industries, but early jobs gains were concentrated in lower-wage industries.

Rural Oregon Lost Many High-Wage Jobs in Recession
Nonmetro Counties Private-Sector
Job Loss and Job Growth*
*after nearly seven years of recovery

![Bar chart showing net change in number of jobs in various wage industries between 2Q2009-2Q2016 and 2Q2007-2Q2009.]

Source: Oregon unemployment insurance wage records
Job recovery in rural communities slower due to industry composition

How Does Rural Oregon Compare with Urban Oregon?

- Public sector
- Leisure and hospitality
- Trade, transportation, and utilities
- Manufacturing
- Mining, logging, and construction
- Information
- Financial activities
- Education and health services
- Professional and business services
- Private sector

Rural Percentage Point Difference from Urban Industry Employment Concentrations
An aging workforce leading to more retirements and workforce challenges

**Rural Oregon's Workforce Much Older Today**

- **55 and Older**
- **25 to 54**
- **24 and Younger**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics
Replacing retiring workers a challenge with slower population growth
Slower projected job growth in rural communities, but opportunities will abound due to retirements and churn.

### Most Job Openings Occur Due to Replacement, 2014-2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Growth Openings</th>
<th>Replacement Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Oregon</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Tri-County</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane County</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Gorge</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Valley</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogue Valley</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas County</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Oregon</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Basin</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central Oregon</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeast Oregon</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Oregon</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share of Total Regional Job Openings
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