



OPPORTUNITY
YOUTH REPORT

2016

THE COLUMBIA-WILLAMETTE
WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE

Working together to support
and develop regional talent.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 Analysis Overview
 - 3 Who are Opportunity Youth?
 - 4 Opportunity Youth Demographics
 - 5 Nativity, Language, and Mobility
 - 6 Parenting Youth
 - 7 Opportunity Youth Households
 - 8 Health Insurance Coverage and Disability
 - 9 Education
 - 11 Poverty, Employment, and Income
 - 12 A Broader Look at Opportunity Youth
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ABOUT THE COLUMBIA-WILLAMETTE WORKFORCE COLLABORATIVE

The Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative is a partnership between the Clackamas Workforce Partnership, the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council 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.

INTRODUCTION

Youth in transition from traditional K-12 education to either the workforce or further education represent some of the greatest opportunities for growing and strengthening the local workforce. Not all youth are fully prepared to make this transition into the workforce, and those who do struggle are an important focus for local workforce development efforts. This analysis looks at characteristics of a specific group of youth who are disconnected from the workforce—youth age 16 to 24 who are not in school and are not currently employed. These individuals are known as Opportunity Youth.

Across Oregon and Washington in 2014, roughly 14 percent of youth age 16 to 24 were identified as Opportunity Youth. Of the 169,800 Opportunity Youth in Washington and Oregon, 30,157 Opportunity Youth were identified in the Portland metro region served by the Columbia Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC).

The report that follows describes the characteristics of these Opportunity Youth, including demographic, educational, and family characteristics, in order to help local stakeholders in targeting services and outreach to best support these individuals. While these are not the only important factors to workforce development agencies in understanding how Opportunity Youth may best be served, sufficient data in other key areas such as the relationship between justice system involvement and Opportunity Youth status were not available for this report. Table 1 highlights the key summary statistics of Opportunity Youth in the region in 2014. Additional statistics can be found in an Appendix following this report.

Table 1. Opportunity Youth Summary, 2014

	Total	Poverty*		Race/Ethnicity		Education		Gender	
		Living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level	Living above 200% of the Federal Poverty Level	Non-White (Hispanic or non-Hispanic)	White (non-Hispanic)	Less than a HS Diploma / Equivalent	HS Diploma / Equivalent or More	Female	Male
Age 16-19	7,463	4,182	3,139	2,099	5,364	3,161	4,302	3,771	3,692
Age 20-24	22,694	13,751	8,231	7,022	15,672	4,529	18,165	11,713	10,981
All Opportunity Youth	30,157	17,933	11,370	9,121	21,036	7,690	22,467	15,484	14,673
Share of Opportunity Youth		61%	39%	30%	70%	25%	75%	51%	49%

*Poverty status is not identified for all individuals

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

The region served by CWWC partners—Worksystems, Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, and Clackamas Workforce Partnership—includes six Oregon and Washington counties in the Portland metro region. The analysis that follows primarily relies on data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) to better understand the characteristics of Opportunity Youth, including their individual characteristics, employment, household makeup, and family data in the area served by CWWC partners. The ACS identifies geographical regions called PUMAs, which roughly align with the CWWC region. Figure 1 shows counties that are included and not included in the analysis that follows.

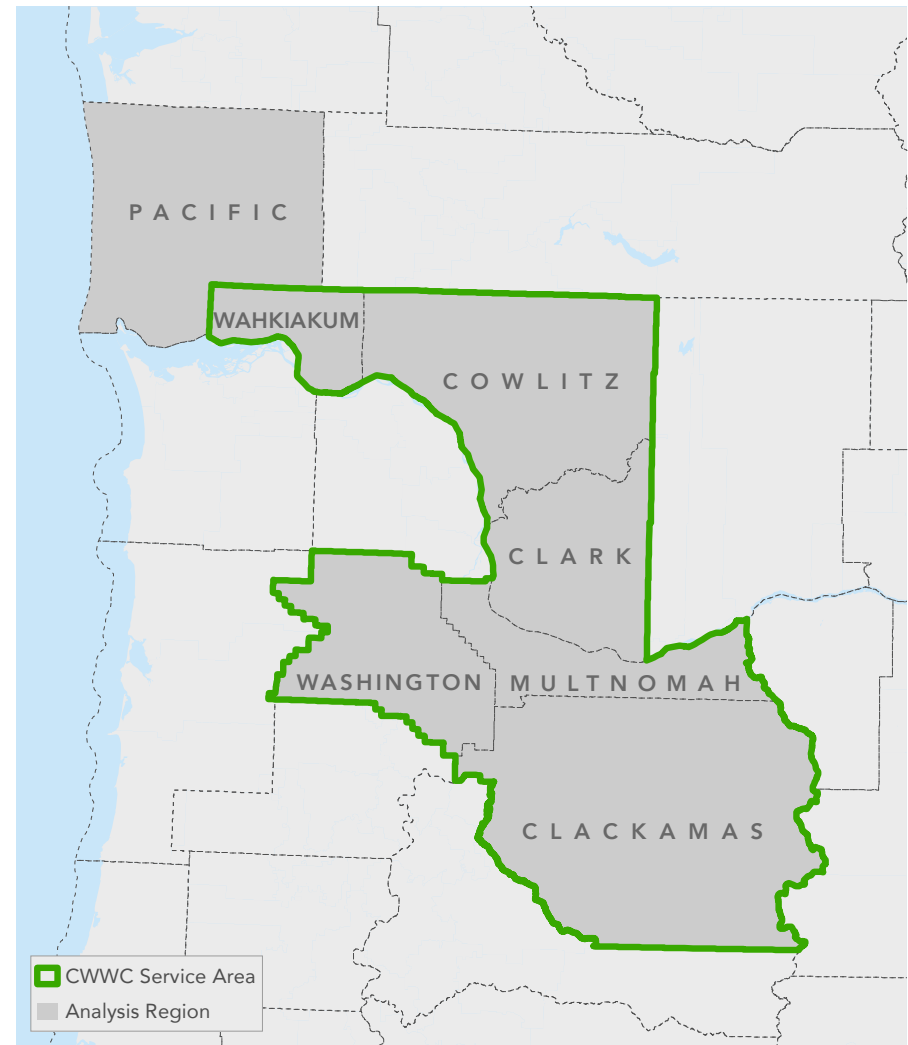
Table 2 describes the share and count of youth age 16 to 24 in each PUMA region who are Opportunity Youth. Clackamas County and the Cowlitz/Wahkiakum/Pacific County PUMAs have slightly higher shares of Opportunity Youth, while Multnomah County, Washington County, and Clark County PUMAs have slightly lower shares of Opportunity Youth than Oregon and Washington overall.

Table 2. Opportunity Youth by ACS PUMA Region

PUMA Region	Count of OY	OY Share of All Youth
Multnomah County	8,730	11%
Clackamas County	6,135	14%
Washington County	6,922	11%
Clark County	6,045	11%
Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Pacific Counties	2,325	16%
Total	30,157	14%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

Figure 1. Geographic Overview Map

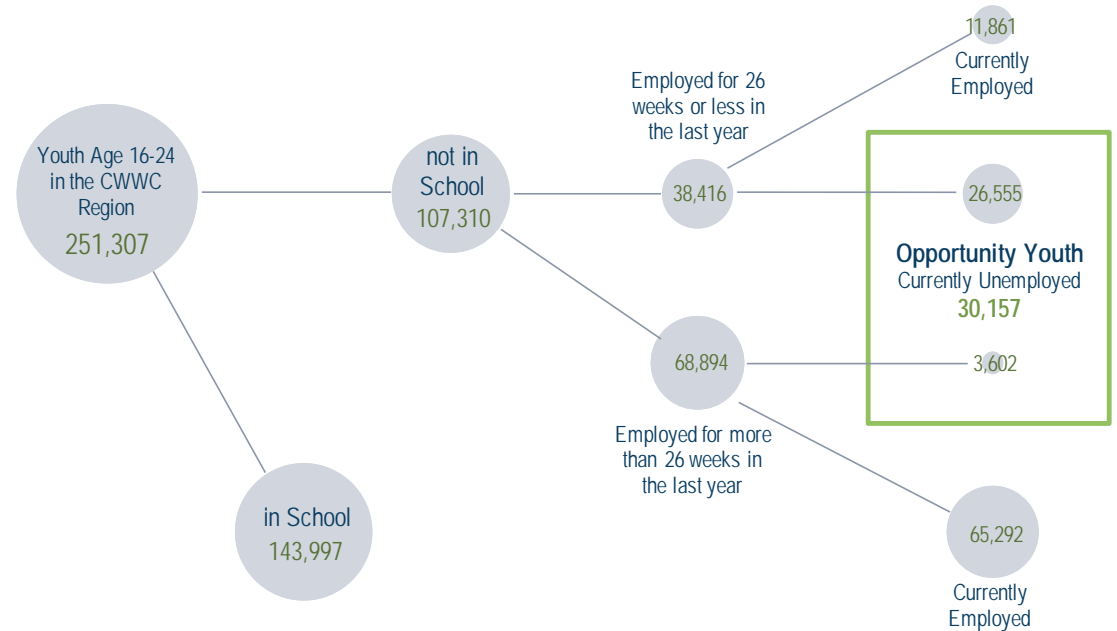


WHO ARE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?

Opportunity Youth are most basically identified based on their point-in-time employment and school enrollment status—youth age 16 to 24 who are not enrolled in school and not currently employed. This simple definition is used throughout this report and aims to provide workforce development organizations with an idea of what the Opportunity Youth may look like on any given day. This definition also includes youth with all levels of education, and youth considered both in and out of the labor force. Although youth out of the labor force may not have looked for work within the last four weeks, many may still benefit from workforce development programs that allow them to enter the labor force. This broad definition of Opportunity Youth assumes an interest in the community-at-large to support the inclusion of all youth in the workforce.

Opportunity Youth account for roughly 14 percent of all youth and 28 percent of youth not enrolled in school in the region. 26,555, or 88 percent of Opportunity Youth were employed for half or less of the last year (26 weeks). Figure 2 provides context for employment and school enrollment for youth in the region.

Figure 2. Opportunity Youth in the CWWC region, 2014

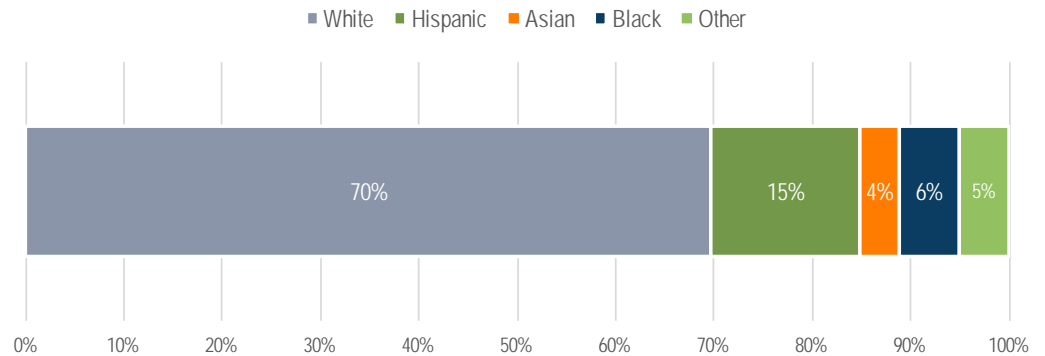


OPPORTUNITY YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

Opportunity Youth in the region are roughly as diverse as the larger population of youth age 16 to 24. Fifteen percent of the Opportunity Youth are Hispanic and non-white; non-Hispanic youth represent another 15 percent. Eleven percent of Hispanic youth in the region are Opportunity Youth. Opportunity Youth are slightly more likely to be white than all youth age 16 to 24 in the region overall.

Non-white, non-Hispanic youth are generally overrepresented among Opportunity Youth. This overrepresentation is most prominently seen among black youth. Table 3 shows the significance of this overrepresentation; although only 6 percent of Opportunity Youth are black, 23 percent of all black youth in the region are Opportunity Youth.

Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Opportunity Youth, 2014



Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

Table 3. Opportunity Youth by Race and Ethnicity, 2014

Race/Ethnicity	Count of OY	Share of OY	OY Share of All Youth
White, non-Hispanic	21,036	70%	13%
Hispanic	4,541	15%	11%
Asian, non-Hispanic	1,216	4%	8%
Black, non-Hispanic	1,823	6%	23%
Other, non-Hispanic	1,541	5%	8%
Total	30,157	100%	14%

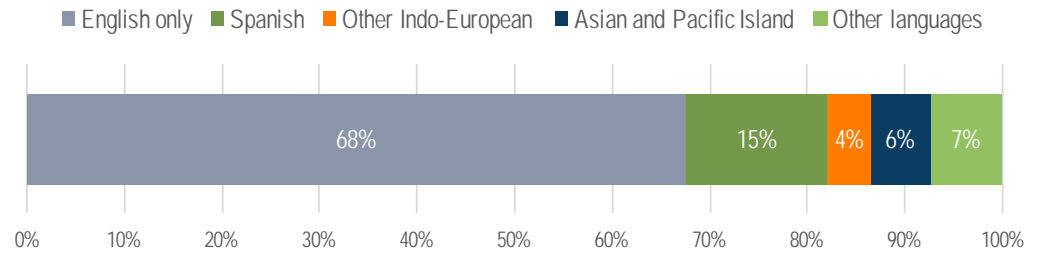
Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

NATIVITY, LANGUAGE, AND MOBILITY

Opportunity Youth are diverse. Roughly 9,400 Opportunity Youth, or just under 30 percent, primarily speak a language other than English at home. Opportunity Youth from English-speaking households are underrepresented, and Opportunity Youth from households that speak a language other than Spanish, English, Indo-European, Asian, and Pacific Island languages are overrepresented. Fifteen percent or 4,610 Opportunity Youth were born outside of the U.S. and just under half—2,037 youth—moved to the U.S. after the age of 15.

Opportunity Youth are also very mobile. Roughly 8,800 Opportunity Youth—nearly 30 percent—moved homes in the last year.

Figure 4. Primary language spoken at home among Opportunity Youth, 2014



Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

Table 4. Language spoken at home among youth, 2014

	Count of OY*	Share of OY	OY Share of All Youth
English only	19,601	68%	12%
Spanish	4,212	15%	12%
Other Indo-European	1,276	4%	8%
Asian and Pacific Island	1,749	6%	10%
Other languages	2,148	7%	38%
Total	28,986	100%	14%

*Language spoken at home is not reported for all individuals

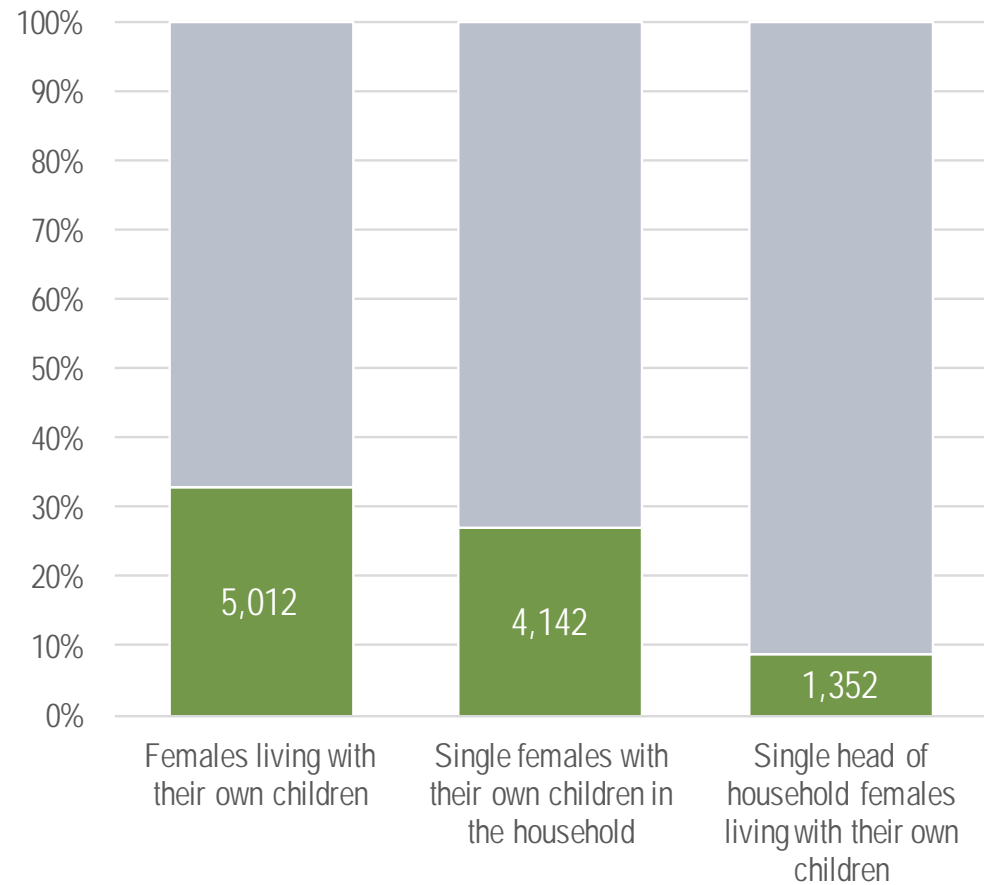
Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

PARENTING YOUTH

Many Opportunity Youth are not only supporting themselves, but also have children of their own. In 2014, roughly 5,000 or 33 percent of Opportunity Youth females lived with their own children, not including siblings or other youth under 18. Most of these women are not living with a married or unmarried partner. Some are identified through the household data as being the first or primary householder, often synonymous with the head of household. This is less meaningful in households with a married or unmarried partner, but for single females, we are able to roughly identify how many are likely the primary support for their children—just under 10 percent.

Many female Opportunity Youth also recently gave birth, which may contribute to their disconnection from the workforce and school. On average, between 2010 and 2014, roughly 1,800 women or 47 percent of female youth age 16 to 24 who gave birth within the last year are Opportunity Youth. They may constitute a small share of all Opportunity Youth, but their high representation among youth out of school and unemployed suggests that recent female parents could be a key target population for workforce development programs.

Figure 5. Opportunity Youth females by household type and own children in the household, 2014



Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-Year Data

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH HOUSEHOLDS

Opportunity Youth households are broken down by gender and household type in Table 5. Roughly 5,000 Opportunity Youth—17 percent—are living in households with a married or unmarried partner. The majority of Opportunity Youth are single and living in residential housing. Very few (less than 5 percent) of single Opportunity Youth live alone—the majority, 86 percent, live in two-to-five-person households. Less than five percent of Opportunity Youth live in group quarters, with the majority living in institutional group quarters, such as correctional facilities, nursing facilities, psychiatric hospitals, and group homes or residential treatment centers for juveniles.

One group of youth who are not included in the American Community Survey are homeless youth. Currently, the best source of information on homelessness in the local region are from annual, point-in-time counts using HUD methodology.¹ This count looks at individuals living on the street or in shelters on one day each year in January. Based on the 2015 count, there were 463 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 24, with 98 of them, or roughly 20 percent, in families with at least one child under the age of 18. Almost half of homeless youth age 18 to 24 are unsheltered. This count does not include youth who may have been temporarily living with another household or in another non-shelter, temporary sleeping arrangement.

Table 5. Count of Opportunity Youth by household type, 2014

Household Type		Count of OY	Share of all OY
Female	Married or living with unmarried partner	2,934	10%
	Single	12,334	41%
Male	Married or living with unmarried partner	2,139	7%
	Single	11,579	38%
Female & Male	Group Quarters	1,171	4%
Total		30,157	100%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

¹For details on the HUD Point-in-Time homeless count methodology: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4036/point-in-time-count-methodology-guide/>

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE AND DISABILITY

Between 2012 and 2014, health insurance coverage rates among Opportunity Youth saw significant improvements. For the larger region, the share of Opportunity Youth who are insured increased by 20 percentage points to 78 percent. There is still room for improvement here, as the non-Opportunity Youth population had 90 percent coverage in some counties in the Portland region, and 88 percent of the region overall. Among Opportunity Youth in 2014, 6,494 were still uninsured.

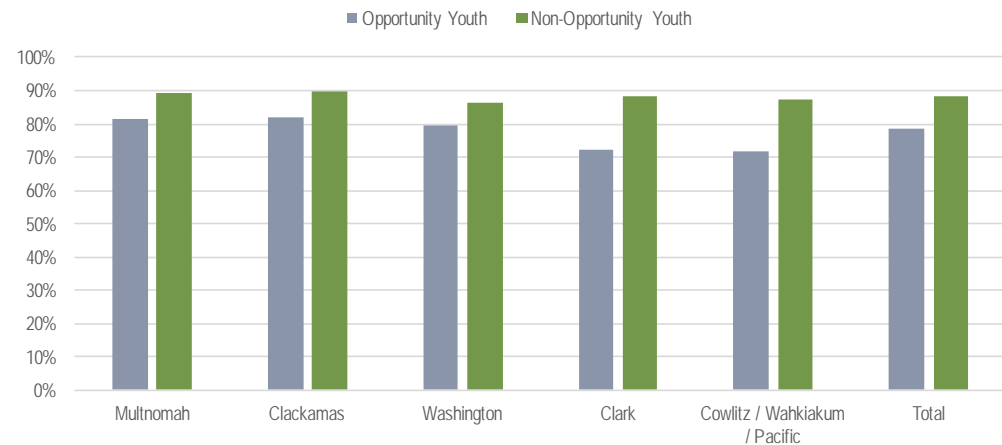
One quarter of youth living with a disability—including independent living difficulties and cognitive difficulties—are Opportunity Youth. These youth reported having cognitive or mobility difficulties due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem. These roughly 5,200 youth living with a disability represent 17 percent of all Opportunity Youth. Although a smaller share of these Opportunity Youth were considered in the labor force compared to other Opportunity Youth, just over a quarter of Opportunity Youth living with a disability were reported as being in the labor force in 2012 and 2014.

Table 6. Opportunity Youth with health insurance, by PUMA, 2012 and 2014

PUMA Region	Share of OY who are insured		Count of OY who are Uninsured, 2014
	2012	2014	
Multnomah County	58%	81%	1,636
Clackamas County	68%	82%	1,115
Washington County	56%	79%	1,422
Clark County	55%	72%	1,666
Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Pacific Counties	61%	72%	655
Total	58%	78%	6,494

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

Figure 6. Share of youth who are insured, by PUMA, 2014



Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

EDUCATION

High school completion is one of the most important factors in ensuring that youth are able to find employment when they enter the workforce. Overall, school districts on the Washington side of the region have recent four-year graduation rates above 75 percent, while most school districts in Multnomah County had four-year graduation rates below 75 percent.

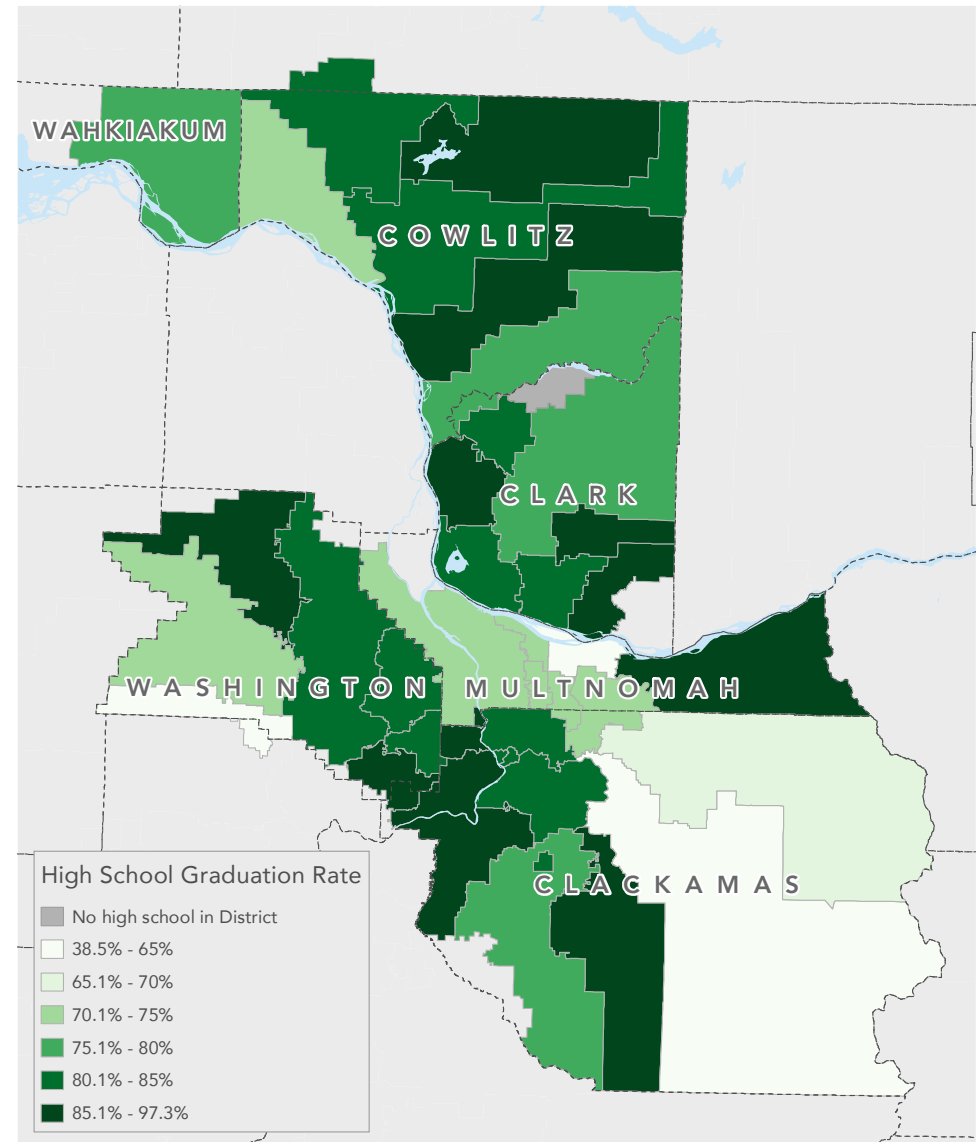
As of the 2014-15 school year, the adjusted cohort of 2010-11 ninth graders in the region had five-year graduation rates of 80 and 82 percent in Oregon and Washington, respectively. Detailed district-level outcomes are included in the attached appendix.

Table 7. 2014-15 CWWC region graduation rates, by state

	2014-15 Graduation Year	
	4-Year Graduation Rate (2011-12 9th graders)	5-Year Graduation Rate (2010-11 9th graders)
Oregon School Districts	77%	80%
Washington School Districts	82%	82%

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

Figure 7. 4-year high school graduation rate by school district, 2014-15



EDUCATION

A key element in understanding the needs of Opportunity Youth is their current level of education. Among Opportunity Youth age 16 to 19, roughly 4,300 have a high school diploma or equivalent and roughly 3,160 have less than a high school diploma. Many of the 3,160 youth without a high school diploma in this age group may still be eligible for programs through the K-12 education system.

Looking at Opportunity Youth age 20 to 24, the significance of education gaps become more apparent. 4,529 older Opportunity Youth have less than a high school diploma. Roughly 7,740 or 34 percent of older Opportunity Youth have some college education, but are no longer enrolled in school and do not have an Associate or Bachelor's degree. About 1,800 older Opportunity Youth have an Associate or Bachelor's degree or more.

Figure 8 shows the impacts of education on the level of employment among older youth age 20 to 24. Older youth with less than a high school diploma are 20 percent more likely to not have been significantly employed within the last year and are roughly twice as likely than those with more than a high school diploma to have worked 26 or fewer weeks in the last year.

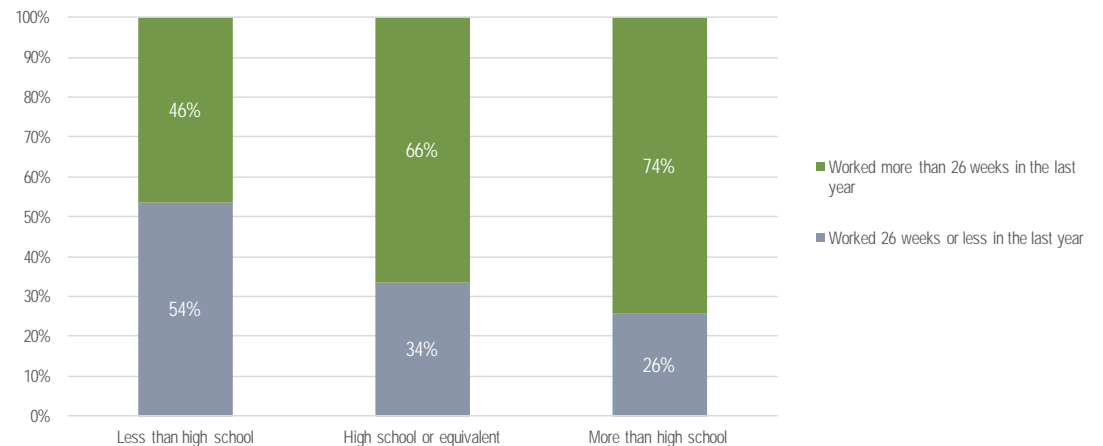
Table 8. Opportunity Youth by age group and level of education, 2014

Opportunity Youth Age 16 - 19	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	3,161	42%
High school diploma / equivalent or more	4,302	58%
Total OY Age 16-19	7,463	100%

Opportunity Youth Age 20 - 24	Count of OY	Share of OY
Less than high school diploma	4,529	20%
High school diploma / equivalent	7,598	33%
More than a high school diploma	10,567	47%
Total OY Age 20-24	22,694	100%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

Figure 8. Significant employment by education level for youth age 20-24 not in school, 2014



Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

POVERTY, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME

Tables 9 through 11 summarize the employment and poverty conditions of Opportunity Youth in the region. In 2014, roughly 18,000 Opportunity Youth, or 61 percent of youth with household data available, lived in households earning below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. For comparison, 44 percent of the larger population of youth age 16 to 24 in the region live below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The share of Opportunity Youth living below 200 percent of the poverty level does vary by household size, but not significantly. This may mean that many live in households with adults or other older youth who are unemployed, underemployed, or employed in low-wage jobs.

Roughly two-thirds of Opportunity Youth have not looked for work within the last four weeks and are not considered to be in the labor force. This may contribute to the low median and mean annual wages among Opportunity Youth. Youth not in school who worked less than 26 weeks in the last year, regardless of current employment, earned annual wages similar to Opportunity Youth. This suggests a larger group of chronically unemployed youth who could be supported by workforce development programs.

Table 9. Poverty among Opportunity Youth by household size, 2014

Household Size	200% of the Federal Poverty Level, 2014	Count Below Federal Poverty Level	Share Below Federal Poverty Level
1 Person Household	\$23,340	1,017	100%
2 Person Household	\$31,460	3,945	77%
3 Person Household	\$39,580	4,709	54%
4 Person Household	\$47,700	2,709	44%
5 Person Household	\$55,820	4,193	77%
More than 5 persons		1,360	46%
All Opportunity Youth		17,933	61%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data; US Dept. of Health and Human Services

Table 10. Labor force participation among Opportunity Youth, 2014

	Count of OY	Share of OY
In the labor force	11,884	39%
Not in the labor force	18,273	61%
All Opportunity Youth	30,157	100%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

Table 11. Annual wages for youth not in school, by level of employment and employment status (Opportunity Youth), 2014

	Count	Median Annual Wages	Mean Annual Wages
Worked 26 weeks or less	21,875	\$2,000	\$3,259
Worked more than 26 weeks in the last year	67,162	\$18,000	\$20,296
Full-year, full-time employment	31,835	\$25,000	\$27,342
Opportunity Youth	11,884	\$40	\$2,918
All Youth Not in School	89,037	\$14,000	\$16,111

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

A BROADER LOOK AT OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Although the traditional definition of Opportunity Youth provides a look at who might be in need of services on any particular day of the year, there is a broader population of youth age 16 to 24 who might benefit most from the workforce development system. The youth considered here are those who are not in school and may be chronically disconnected from work. In order to provide an understanding of this population of youth, the following factors should be considered:

- Assess the consistency of employment, rather than point-in-time employment, by looking at youth who have been employed for less than half of the weeks in the last year. About 26,600 of these youth are currently unemployed Opportunity Youth.
- Do not include youth in institutional group quarters, who may not be prepared to re-engage in the workforce.
- Do not include youth with postsecondary degrees, like Associate and Bachelor's degrees, who may be best served by the adult workforce development system.

This alternative definition includes 79 percent or 23,794 youth who were already considered under the Opportunity Youth definition. Table 12 includes a summary of characteristics of these chronically disconnected youth.

Poverty rates among this group look similar to Opportunity Youth, but they are slightly more likely to be non-white (38 percent of chronically disconnected youth compared to 30 percent of Opportunity Youth).

Table 12. Chronically unemployed youth summary, 2014

	Count	Share of Total
Age 16 -19	9,600	28%
Age 20 -24	24,804	72%
White	21,502	62%
Non-White	12,902	38%
Below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level	20,916	61%
Above 200% of the Federal Poverty Level	13,488	39%
Living with a partner or spouse	5,303	15%
Single	29,101	85%
Total	34,404	100%

Source: ECONorthwest/ACS PUMS 2014 1-year data

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