

Although Oregon's jobs recovery began in the latter part of 2010, employment growth gained more momentum in 2013 and intensified through 2014 and 2015. Oregon regained the jobs lost during the last recession late in 2014. Economic expansion has been accompanied by more job vacancies and fewer unemployed Oregonians. In a tighter labor market, vacancies have become increasingly difficult to fill for businesses in Oregon. In 2013, businesses reported 48 percent of all vacancies as difficult to fill. That share rose to 51 percent in 2014, and again to 59 percent in 2015.

## Key Findings

- Oregon businesses reported 48,100 job vacancies in 2015. Of these, 28,300 (59%) job vacancies were difficult to fill.
- A typical job vacancy in Oregon tends to be full-time, and permanent, and to require previous work experience.
- Seven out of 10 difficult-to-fill job vacancies require some work experience, while half (50%) of job vacancies with no reported difficulty require previous experience.
- Three-fourths (74%) of difficult-to-fill job vacancies do not require any additional education beyond high school.
- Vacancies with higher education requirements are more likely to be difficult to fill due to a lack of qualified candidates, while those with lower education requirements are more likely to lack applicants.
- Health care and social assistance reported the largest number of vacancies – both difficult-to-fill and overall – in 2015.
- Construction businesses, manufacturers, and trade, transportation, and utilities employers offered roughly \$5 per hour more for their difficult-to-fill vacancies than vacancies filled with no reported difficulty.
- Businesses in Clackamas County reported greater difficulty filling vacancies than any other area in Oregon.
- The occupations with the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies are diverse: truck drivers, personal care aides, farmworkers and laborers, retail salespersons, maids and janitors, electricians, nursing assistants, and construction laborers.
- The majority (51%) of difficult-to-fill job vacancies occurred for reasons tough to address through workforce development: a lack of applicants, unfavorable working conditions, low wages, or the location of the job. About one in 10 difficult-to-fill vacancies (13%) cited primary reasons which could potentially be helped with workforce development solutions. The remaining 37 percent fell into categories that may or may not be actionable for the workforce system.

## Characteristics of Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies

### The Majority of Job Vacancies Are Difficult to Fill

Oregon employers reported 48,100 vacancies in 2015. These vacancies offered an average wage of \$15.68. The majority of vacancies were for full-time positions (73%), permanent positions (82%), and openings that required previous work experience (61%). Relatively few vacancies required education beyond high school (22%).

### Snapshot of Oregon's Vacancies in 2015

	All	Difficult	Not Difficult
Vacancies	48,140	28,309	19,831
Average wage	\$15.68	\$16.41	\$14.40
Full-time	70%	72%	67%
Permanent	86%	86%	87%
Require education beyond high school	22%	26%	16%
Require previous experience	61%	69%	50%
Difficult to fill	59%	100%	0%

### Primary Reason Provided by Employer

	Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies	Share with Reasons Provided
Difficult-to-Fill Categories for Employer-Provided Responses	Lack of applicants	9,701 36%
	Lack of qualified candidates	5,315 20%
	Unfavorable working conditions	3,086 11%
	Lack of work experience	2,625 10%
	Other	1,889 7%
	Lack of soft skills	1,708 6%
	Lack of certification	763 3%
	Low wages	708 3%
	Lack of technical skills	682 3%
	Location	384 1%
	Lack of training	267 1%
	Reason not provided	1,181
Total with reasons provided	27,128	
Total All Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies	28,309	

Businesses reported difficulty filling 28,300 vacancies in 2015, a majority (59%) of all vacancies last year. Difficult-to-fill vacancies showed similar shares of full-time (72%) and permanent (86%) positions compared with their non-difficult counterparts.

Difficult-to-fill vacancies paid more, an average of \$16.41 per hour compared with \$14.40 for non-difficult vacancies. Seven out of 10 vacancies required previous work experience, compared with half of vacancies with no reported difficulty filling the job opening. In addition, a slightly higher share of difficult-to-fill vacancies required education beyond high school – about one-fourth (26%) compared with 16 percent of non-difficult vacancies.

### Vacancies Are Difficult to Fill for Many Reasons

For each of their difficult-to-fill vacancies, employers offered open-ended responses to identify the primary reason for the unfilled opening. These responses tended to fall into one of 10 categories.

Just three of these reasons accounted for two-thirds (67%) of all difficult-to-fill vacancies in Oregon during 2015. Businesses indicated a “lack of applicants” as the most common primary reason for difficulty, which accounted for 9,700 vacancies. They cited a “lack of qualified candidates” as the primary reason for difficulty filling 5,300 vacancies. “Unfavorable working conditions” was the third most common reason businesses provided, and accounted for 3,100 vacancies.

The characteristics differed between vacancies with a lack of applicants, a lack of qualified candidates, and unfavorable working conditions. Vacancies with a lack of applicants paid \$15.11 on average. Relatively few required education beyond high school (21%) and they were slightly less likely to require previous work experience (58%).

Vacancies with a lack of qualified candidates offered a higher average wage (\$20.37), were more likely to require education beyond high school (43%), and were more likely to require previous work experience (80%).

Difficult-to-fill vacancies with unfavorable working conditions – which included business responses such as part-time work or inconsistent work shifts – had the lowest share of full-time openings (32%) and a relatively low share of permanent positions (69%). They also offered an average wage roughly \$3 per hour below the average for all difficult-to-fill vacancies.

### Education Requirements Impact Difficult-to-Fill Reasons

Vacancies at all education requirement levels cited a lack of applicants, a lack of qualified candidates, or unfavorable working conditions as primary reasons for difficulty filling some openings. As education requirements for vacancies increased,

**Characteristics of Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies in Oregon by Primary Reason, 2015**

Primary Reason	Vacancies	Average Wage	Full time	Permanent	Require Education Beyond HS	Require Previous Experience
<b>All Reasons</b>	<b>28,309</b>	<b>\$16.41</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>69%</b>
Lack of applicants	9,701	\$15.11	69%	79%	21%	58%
Lack of qualified candidates	5,315	\$20.37	86%	93%	43%	80%
Unfavorable working conditions	3,086	\$13.33	32%	69%	12%	58%
Lack of work experience	2,625	\$22.06	93%	94%	33%	99%
Lack of soft skills	1,708	\$11.86	66%	92%	3%	61%
All other reasons	5,874	\$15.78	75%	92%	31%	72%

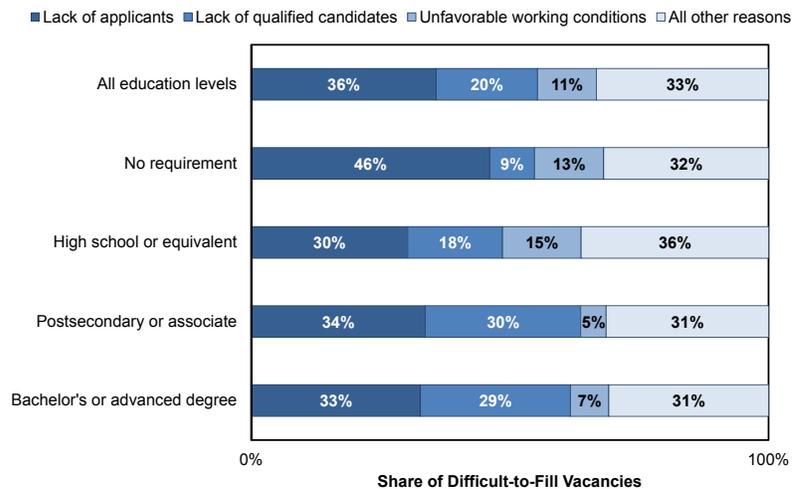
businesses faced less difficulty with a lack of applicants or unfavorable working conditions. Instead, as education requirements increased, difficulty finding qualified candidates rose.

Almost 7,900 difficult-to-fill vacancies in Oregon had no education requirement in 2015. Nearly half (46%) cited lack of applicants as the reason for difficulty, followed by unfavorable working conditions (13%), and a lack of qualified candidates (9%).

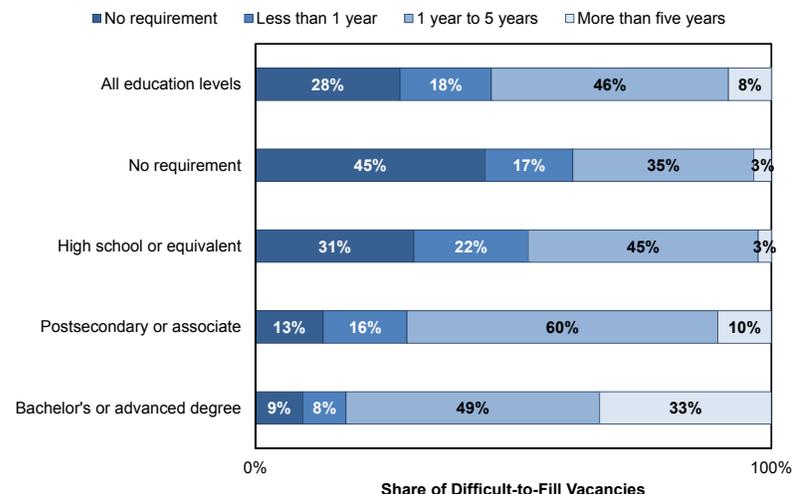
Difficult-to-fill vacancies with a high school diploma requirement reported a lower share with a lack of applicants (30%) and more with a lack of qualified candidates (18%). They included a similar share of vacancies with unfavorable working conditions (15%) as those with no education requirement.

Vacancies with postsecondary education requirements – meaning an associate degree or some specific credential beyond high school completion – lacked applicants and lacked qualified candidates in nearly equal shares. This was also the case for difficult-to-fill vacancies with bachelor’s or advanced degree requirements. The shares of difficult-to-fill vacancies with a lack of qualified candidates in the postsecondary (30%) and bachelor’s or advanced degree requirements (29%) categories sat well above the share for high school (18%), and made up more

**Reasons for Difficulty Filling Vacancies in Oregon by Education Level Requirement, 2015**



**Required Experience Increases Along with Education Requirements for Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies**



than double the share for vacancies with no education requirement (9%).

**More Education, More Experience, More Money**

Seven out of 10 difficult-to-fill vacancies in Oregon required previous work experience in 2015. The share of difficult-to-fill vacancies with prior experience requirements became even more prominent as education requirements rose. More than half

(55%) of difficult-to-fill job vacancies with no education requirement did require work experience in 2015. That rose to 70 percent for difficult-to-fill vacancies requiring a high school diploma, 86 percent of those with postsecondary training requirements, and again to 91 percent for difficult-to-fill vacancies with bachelor's or advanced degree requirements.

Average pay also rose as difficult-to-fill vacancies' education require-

ments increased. Hard-to-fill vacancies with no education requirement paid an average of \$11.99 per hour, while those requiring a high school diploma paid \$13.60 per hour. The average hourly wage continued to increase, rising to \$19.89 for difficult-to-fill vacancies with postsecondary training requirements, and \$27.57 for those requiring a bachelor's or advanced degree.

**Industry Difficulty Filling Vacancies**

**Health Care Tops Industries with Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies**

In 2015, health care and social assistance employers reported the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies (5,800), as well as the largest number of total job vacancies (10,000). Health care often tops the list of job vacancies in Oregon, as it has been a large industry with consistent job growth since at least 1990, regardless of economic conditions.

Within health care and social assistance, businesses reported the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies for personal care aides (1,300), nursing assistants (600), registered nurses (400), social and community service managers (300), and medical assistants (300). These five occupations accounted for half of all difficult-to-fill vacancies in the industry.

Health care employers cited a lack of applicants for 29 percent of their difficult-to-fill vacancies. A lack of qualified candidates accounted for 21 percent of difficult-to-fill vacancies in 2015. Unfavorable working conditions were reported for 17 percent of these vacancies. Difficult-to-fill job vacancies in the industry paid nearly the same average hourly wage (\$14.97) as vacancies filled without difficulty (\$14.74). A slightly higher share of difficult-to-fill vacancies in health care required education beyond high school (40%) in comparison with all industries (26%).

**Half of All Difficult-to-Fill Leisure and Hospitality Vacancies Lack Applicants**

Leisure and hospitality, which includes hotels and eating and drinking places among others, reported the second-largest number (3,600) of difficult-to-fill vacancies in 2015. Half of these vacancies lacked applicants, well above the 36 percent for all industries. Difficult-to-fill vacancies in leisure and hospitality paid an average hourly wage of \$10.38, compared with \$9.69 for vacancies filled without difficulty. Essentially no vacancies in leisure and hospitality reported education requirements beyond high school.

Occupations with the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies in leisure and hospitality included maids and housekeeping cleaners (600), restaurant cooks (500), combined food preparation and serving workers (400), drivers/sales workers (300), and waiters and waitresses (300).

**Lack of Work Experience and Higher Wages in Construction and Manufacturing**

The profile of difficult-to-fill vacancies in Oregon's construction and manufacturing firms showed many similarities in 2015. Each industry had roughly the same number of difficult-to-fill vacancies, 2,800 in

**Health Care and Social Assistance Vacancies in 2015**

	Difficult	Not Difficult
Vacancies	5,830	4,163
Average wage	\$14.97	\$14.74
Full-time	68%	67%
Permanent	95%	89%
Require education beyond high school	40%	27%
Require previous experience	63%	52%
Difficult to fill	100%	0%

construction and 2,700 in manufacturing. In addition, manufacturers and construction businesses were more likely to cite a lack of work experience as the primary reason for difficulty filling vacancies than other industries. Work experience was the primary challenge for one out of 10 difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide, but accounted for nearly one out of five difficult-to-fill vacancies in each of these two industries.

Construction and manufacturing employers also reported much higher average hourly wages – more than an additional \$5 per hour – for difficult-to-fill vacancies than for vacancies filled without difficulty. That differed from health care and leisure and hospitality, where difficult-to-fill vacancies showed little in terms of additional wages. This reflects the difference in occupations with vacancies among these industries. All occupations with at least 100 difficult-to-fill vacancies in leisure and hospitality paid \$11 per hour or less, while the construction occupations with at least 100 difficult-to-fill vacancies paid average wages between \$12.76 and \$33.38. The top two health care occupations with difficult-to-fill vacancies paid \$12.50 or less, while the top manufacturing occupations included high-paying computer-related occupations with average wages above \$40 per hour.

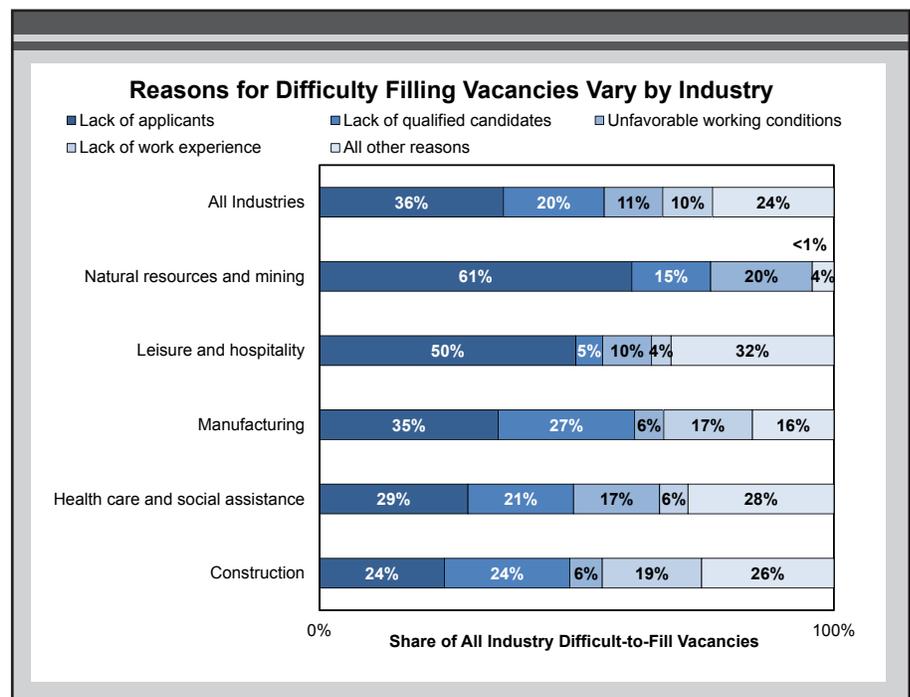
Difficult-to-fill manufacturing vacancies were more likely to be full-time, require education beyond high school, and require previous experience than difficult-to-fill vacancies for all industries. The large majority (85%) of difficult construction vacancies also required previous work experience.

**Natural Resources Faces Multiple Challenges Recruiting Workers**

Oregon’s natural resources and mining businesses include farms, plant nurseries, and logging companies,

**Leisure and Hospitality Vacancies in 2015**

	Difficult	Not Difficult
Vacancies	3,597	2,418
Average wage	\$10.38	\$9.69
Full-time	40%	40%
Permanent	92%	86%
Require education beyond high school	2%	0%
Require previous experience	54%	42%
Difficult to fill	100%	0%



**Comparison of Difficult Manufacturing and Construction Vacancies to All Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies in 2015**

	All	Manufacturing	Construction
Vacancies	28,309	2,727	2,754
Average wage	\$16.41	\$18.30	\$20.13
Full-time	72%	98%	90%
Permanent	86%	86%	83%
Require education beyond high school	26%	38%	13%
Require previous experience	69%	82%	85%

among others. They reported roughly three out of four vacancies (72%) as difficult to fill in 2015. These vacancies paid an average of \$12.68 per hour, almost \$4 below the average for all difficult-to-fill vacancies.

In addition, difficult natural resources vacancies were largely temporary or seasonal; only 19 percent were for permanent positions, compared with 80 percent of all difficult-to-fill vacancies.

Natural resources and mining businesses identified a lack of applicants as the primary reason for 61 percent of vacancies. One-fifth (20%) of vacancies cited unfavorable working conditions. Together these two reasons covered eight out of 10 difficult-to-fill vacancies in the industry. Three-fourths of difficult-to-fill job vacancies in natural resources and mining were openings for crop, nursery, and greenhouse farmworkers and laborers.

	Difficult	Not Difficult
Vacancies	1,518	596
Average wage	\$12.68	\$11.23
Full-time	54%	23%
Permanent	6%	19%
Require education beyond high school	1%	less than 1%
Require previous experience	45%	32%
Difficult to fill	100%	0%

### Difficulty Finding Drivers

Transportation, warehousing, and utilities firms reported 2,300 difficult-to-fill vacancies. A lack of applicants occurred with 20 percent of these vacancies, while 22 percent lacked qualified candidates, and 18 percent had unfavorable working conditions. Similar to manufacturing and construction, businesses reported an average wage nearly \$5 per hour higher for difficult-to-fill vacancies (\$20.00) compared with openings filled more easily (\$15.23).

Transportation firms encountered notable difficulty filling openings for drivers. Heavy tractor-trailer and truck drivers alone accounted for the

	Difficult	Not Difficult
Vacancies	2,282	700
Average wage	\$20.00	\$15.23
Full-time	65%	59%
Permanent	85%	92%
Require education beyond high school	11%	3%
Require previous experience	72%	61%

majority (1,300 or 58%) of all difficult-to-fill vacancies in the industry, and placed as the top occupation in Oregon with a total of 1,900 difficult-to-fill vacancies across all industries in 2015. Primary reasons for difficulty finding heavy tractor-trailer truck

drivers across all industries included a lack of applicants (38%), a lack of qualified candidates (20%), a lack of work experience (19%), and applicants lacking proper certification (10%).

## Reasons for Difficulty Vary Across the State

### Greater Difficulty Filling Vacancies in Clackamas County

Businesses in Clackamas County reported a greater degree of difficulty filling vacancies than elsewhere in the state. The county's employers reported 3,700 (72%) of all area vacancies as difficult to fill in 2015. The shares of difficult-to-fill vacancies for full-time (69%), permanent (82%), and those requiring previous experience (64%) looked similar to Oregon statewide. Difficult-to-fill vacancies in Clackamas County paid roughly \$1 per hour less than all difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide.

The share of difficult-to-fill vacancies in the county due to lack of applicants (28%) fell slightly below the statewide share (36%), and Clackamas County's vacancies with unfavorable working conditions (17%) sat slightly above the statewide share (11%) in 2015. The county's difficult-to-fill job vacancies were concentrated in health care and retail trade. By occupation, retail

salespersons, nursing assistants, personal care aides, and waiters and waitresses topped the list.

### Challenges Filling Vacancies Differ by Region

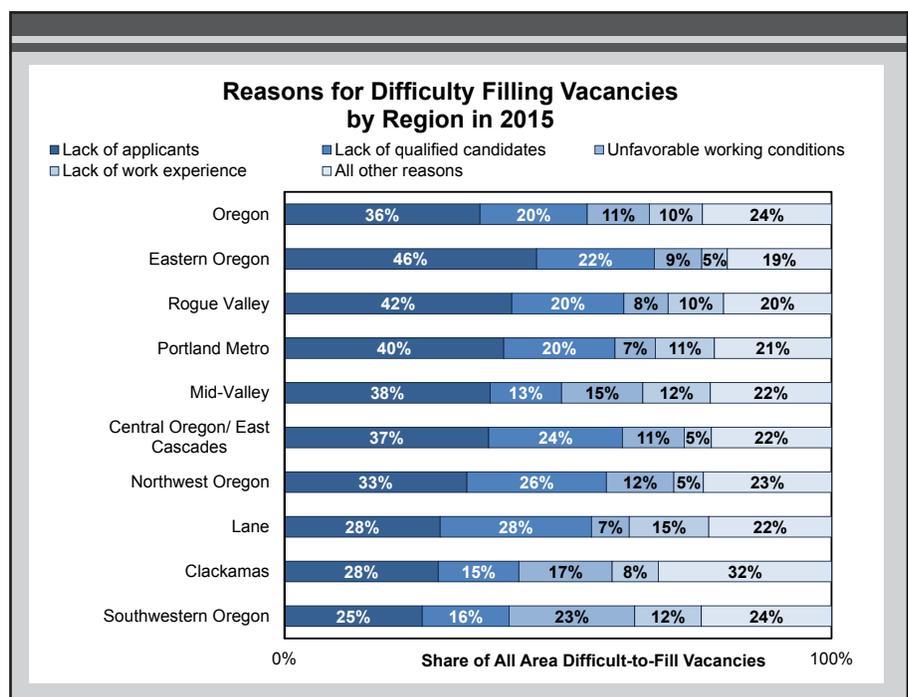
The Portland Metro area, made up of Multnomah and Washington counties, reported the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies in 2015 (10,200). Occupations with the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies included truck drivers, machinists, computer-related occupations, and electricians. Portland Metro businesses most commonly

### Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies by Area in 2015

Area	Average Vacancies	Average Wage	Full time		Require Education	Require Previous
			Permanent	Beyond HS	Experience	
<b>Oregon</b>	<b>28,309</b>	<b>\$16.41</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>69%</b>
Portland Metro	10,249	\$17.85	76%	93%	34%	78%
Clackamas	3,713	\$15.35	69%	82%	19%	64%
Mid-Valley	3,176	\$15.18	63%	68%	21%	71%
Central Oregon/East Cascades	3,130	\$13.68	63%	67%	13%	50%
Lane	2,216	\$17.88	83%	98%	27%	79%
Northwest Oregon	1,548	\$13.68	61%	91%	29%	44%
Rogue Valley	1,510	\$15.75	80%	92%	23%	69%
Southwestern Oregon	1,219	\$16.61	61%	87%	23%	65%
Eastern Oregon	1,069	\$17.69	75%	89%	36%	62%

cited a lack of applicants (40%) for difficult-to-fill vacancies.

Employers in the combined Mid-Wil-lamette Valley area reported 3,200 difficult-to-fill vacancies. Businesses noted difficulty filling a diverse set of occupations: those with the largest numbers included farmworkers and laborers; nursing assistants; personal care aides; cement masons and concrete finishers; team assemblers; and retail salespersons. A lack of applicants topped the list of reasons for difficulty at 38 percent. The Mid-Valley differed from other areas with unfavorable working conditions (15%), a lack of qualified candidates (13%), and a lack of work experience (12%) making up similar shares of difficult-to-fill vacancies.



Lane County differed from all other areas in Oregon because a lack of qualified candidates tied a lack of applicants as the most common reason for difficulty filling vacancies (28% each). In all other areas the largest share of difficult-to-fill vacancies had a lack of applicants. Lane County also offered the highest average wage (\$17.88 per hour) of any area for its 2,200 difficult-to-fill vacancies. Occupations with the largest number of difficult-to-fill vacancies in the area included truck drivers, personal care aides, and retail salespersons.

Businesses in Northwest Oregon and the 10-county swath of Central Oregon offered the lowest average hourly wage (\$13.68 in each area) for difficult-to-fill vacancies. Both areas also had lower shares of difficult-to-fill vacancies for full-time positions. In addition, Central Oregon also reported a lower share of permanent vacancies, and a relatively small portion required education beyond high school. Occupations with the largest number of difficult-to-fill openings in Central Oregon included crop, nursery, and greenhouse farmworkers

and laborers, food preparation and serving workers, firefighters (including wildland), and retail salespersons. Top occupations by difficult-to-fill vacancies in Northwest Oregon included personal care aides, maids, and truck drivers.

Eastern Oregon and the Rogue Valley reported the largest shares of difficult-to-fill vacancies with a lack of applicants; they accounted for nearly half (46%) in Eastern Oregon and 42 percent in the Rogue Valley. Occupations with the most difficult-to-fill

vacancies included personal care aides and electricians in the Rogue Valley, and truck drivers and registered nurses in Eastern Oregon.

Southwestern Oregon, which consists of Coos, Curry, and Douglas

counties, reported the smallest share of difficult-to-fill vacancies due to a lack of applicants (25%), and the largest share with unfavorable working conditions (23%). Occupations in the area with the greatest

number of difficult-to-fill vacancies included truck drivers, maids, school or special client bus drivers, and restaurant cooks.

## Addressing Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies

### Context

The state's difficult-to-fill job vacancies in 2015 did not mirror the overall mix of jobs in Oregon's economy. Difficult-to-fill job vacancies offered an average hourly wage of \$16.41 compared with nearly \$23 for all private jobs. In addition, a smaller share of hard-to-fill job vacancies in 2015 required education beyond high school (26%) compared with all jobs in 2012 (37%), the latest year with available data.

Oregon's businesses have always had some number of vacancies, and some portion of those would likely be difficult to fill at any given point in time regardless of the economic situation. That said, the question arises as to whether some business difficulty could be eased for some vacancies through training, certification, or workforce development program assistance.

### What Can Be Done?

Some employer-provided reasons for difficulty filling vacancies – such as a lack of certification, training, or soft skills – could merit new or strengthened workforce training, educational programs, or other intervention. About one out of 10 (13% or 2,700 total) difficult-to-fill vacancies in 2015 fell into these categories: lack of certification, lack of training, or lack of technical or soft skills.

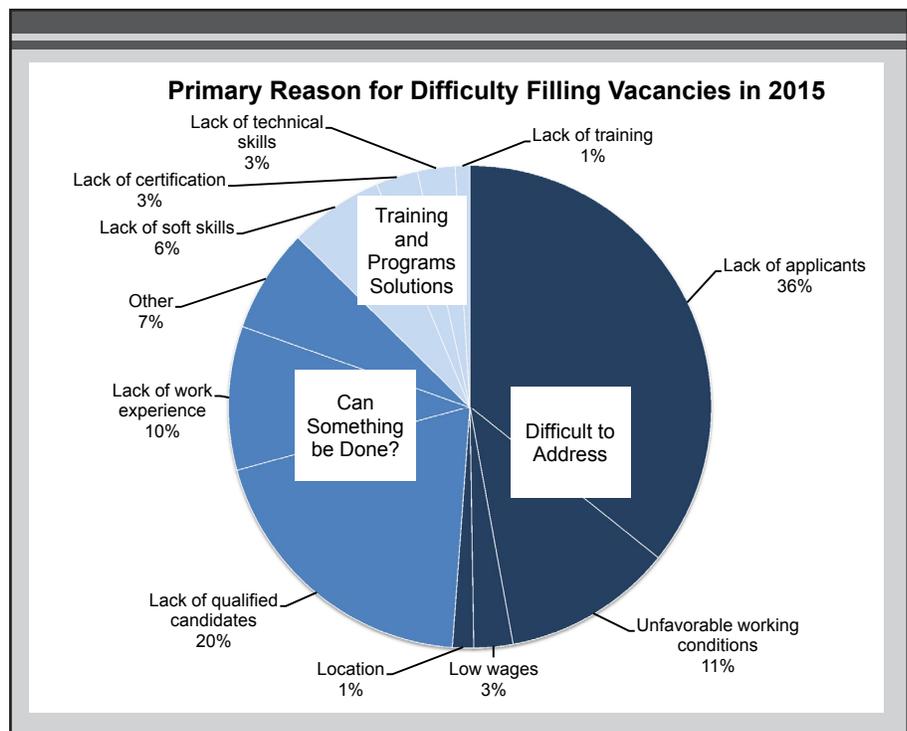
The most prominent of these reasons was a lack of soft skills, which accounted for 6 percent (1,700) of all

difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide. Examples of business hiring challenges in this area included a lack of work ethic or leadership, or the inability to pass a drug test. Four occupations reported at least 100 difficult-to-fill vacancies unfilled due to a lack of soft skills: landscaping and groundskeeping workers (200); dispatchers, except police, fire, and ambulance (100); cashiers (100); and team assemblers (100).

A lack of certification was attributed to 800 difficult-to-fill vacancies in 2015. Businesses reported at least 100 difficult-to-fill vacancies due to a lack of certification in three occupations: heavy and tractor-trailer

truck drivers (200); lifeguards, ski patrol, and other recreational protective service workers (200); and self-enrichment education teachers (200). Businesses primarily cited the lack of commercial driver's license holders for these vacancies. Other examples of certification needs cited by businesses included American Red Cross or equivalent lifeguard certifications, hazardous materials certifications, and other general references to a lack of certified applicants.

One-third (33%) of the 700 difficult-to-fill vacancies due to a lack of technical skills were for bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine



**Top Occupations with a Lack of Applicants in 2015**

<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies</b>	<b>Require Education Beyond High School</b>
Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	867	less than 1%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	742	less than 1%
Retail Salespersons	534	less than 1%
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	519	less than 1%
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	503	less than 1%
Personal Care Aides	451	less than 1%
Electricians	443	10%
Insurance Sales Agents	304	50%
Helpers--Production Workers	272	less than 1%
Machinists	234	97%
Dental Assistants	227	100%
Cooks, Fast Food	192	less than 1%
Social and Human Service Assistants	187	23%
Massage Therapists	178	less than 1%
Nursing Assistants	177	25%
Counter Attendants, Cafeteria, Food Concession, and Coffee Shop	152	less than 1%
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	138	85%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	135	less than 1%
Registered Nurses	129	86%
Funeral Attendants	117	less than 1%
Manicurists and Pedicurists	117	less than 1%
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	116	34%
Waiters and Waitresses	115	less than 1%
Cashiers	109	less than 1%

specialists. All of the roughly 200 difficult-to-fill vacancies in this occupation occurred in the Portland Metro area. The sole occupation with at least 100 vacancies due to a lack of training was veterinary technologists and technicians, all of which were also found in Portland.

**Difficult to Address Vacancies**

Other reasons for difficult-to-fill vacancies – such as a lack of applicants, unfavorable working conditions, low wages, or the job location – are tough to address through education or training programs. In 2015, Oregon businesses said the majority (51%) of difficult-to-fill job vacancies occurred due to these primary reasons.

A lack of applicants was the largest reason for difficulty filling vacancies, and accounted for 36 percent of the total. Twenty-four occupations had at least 100 difficult-to-fill vacancies due to a lack of applicants. For 15 of them, essentially no openings

required education beyond high school.

Looking more broadly at all difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide, those with a high school diploma or less requirement made up two-thirds (67%) of all difficult-to-fill job vacancies with a lack of applicants. These lower education requirement vacancies also made up 72 percent of all vacancies that cited low wages as a primary reason for difficulty, and 82 percent of those with unfavorable working conditions.

The nature of difficulty for many of these vacancies and the lack of postsecondary education, training, or additional certification needed seemingly leaves little room for educational programs or other training efforts to fill the gap. As the economy has improved, more employer responses have cited competition, a smaller labor pool, or a smaller number of job seekers (especially experienced ones). Some business-based actions such as increased

recruitment intensity or increased wages may draw more applicants to these vacancies.

**The “Blind Spot”**

Two specific categories seem to reside in a gray area in terms of whether or not anything may be done from an education or workforce training perspective to alleviate difficulty with vacancies. The largest of these categories in 2015 was a lack of qualified candidates, which accounted for 20 percent of all difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide.

Businesses reported at least 100 vacancies with a lack of qualified candidates in 13 different occupations. Rather than a lack of appropriate education or training, a large share of responses cited a “specialized skill set,” a “highly specialized role,” or even a “rare” or “unique skill set” for one job at their company. These difficulties pose a tougher challenge than if companies were looking for many employees with similar or

### Top Occupations with a Lack of Qualified Candidates in 2015

Occupational Title	Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies	Require Education Beyond High School
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	381	41%
Computer Occupations, All Other	319	48%
Managers, All Other	259	100%
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	186	58%
Firefighters	180	less than 1%
Team Assemblers	117	less than 1%
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	117	less than 1%
Medical Assistants	116	100%
Electricians	114	84%
Cooks, Restaurant	112	less than 1%
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	110	less than 1%
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	106	9%
Personal Care Aides	106	less than 1%

broader skills that could be obtained through a general field of study or course of training.

The second category was a lack of work experience, which accounted for 10 percent of all difficult-to-fill vacancies statewide in 2015. Businesses across Oregon reported more than 100 vacancies with a lack of work experience for five occupations in 2015: heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers (400), construction laborers (200), retail salespersons (200), machinists (200), and registered nurses (100).

Many employer responses for various occupations with small numbers of difficult-to-fill vacancies with a lack of work experience showed similar-

ties to responses with an identified lack of qualified candidates. Businesses noted a lack of work experience specific to their type of firm, facility, or setting as often than the need for general work experience. Again, a small number of highly focused vacancies may pose a tougher challenge in terms of education and training to meet employer needs.

There may be some room for programs to help workers gain experience with the employers who need familiarity in their specific environment or role. Those employers would likely need to partner in training and develop their pipeline of workers.

### Difficulty Likely to Persist

The share of difficult-to-fill vacancies in Oregon rose slightly from 48 percent in 2013 to 51 percent in 2014, and again to 59 percent in 2015. As economic recovery strengthened in recent years and Oregon's job growth has outpaced most states, businesses can anticipate a tighter labor market ahead. That means continued or even increasing difficulty filling vacancies, given no changes in other factors such as work experience requirements.

*More information about Oregon's job vacancies, including quarterly and annual indicators for Oregon and sub-state areas, can be found at [QualityInfo.org](http://QualityInfo.org) under the Job Vacancy Survey section of the Publications page.*



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