

# Who's working in Oregon?

## Reflections on the diminishing labor pool

This year, the nation marks Labor Day with the lowest percentage of adults in the workforce in nearly 40 years. The rate is even lower in Oregon.

Experts say there are two key forces at play. First, demographics: Baby boomers are starting to retire while more young adults are choosing college or trade schools, delaying entry into the labor pool.

The economic downturn – and sluggish recovery – accelerated those trends. Some workers are being forced to retire earlier than planned, while young people are losing entry-level jobs to more experienced adults.

More women entered the workforce as men's numbers declined during the recession; male-dominated industries such as manufacturing and construction took the hardest hits.

Labor force participation may not bounce back in Oregon until the economy recoups all 147,700 jobs lost. Unemployment remains stubbornly high in the state, at 8.0 percent in July, and economists say a full job recovery could be at least two years away.

Here's how these trends are playing out in Oregon.

### Oregon's workforce, 2012

Labor force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
1.96 million	1.79 million	171,200	8.7%



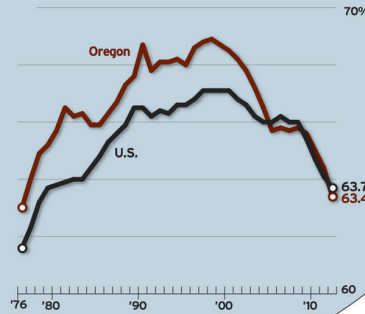
### Transitioning workforce

Baby boomers are still shaping the labor market today as they move into age groups that participate less in the workforce. Millennials, meanwhile, aren't jumping in as quickly as their predecessors.

In Oregon			How Oregon's labor market in 2012 compares with the nation		
2000	Age	Population share	Labor force participation rate		
	16 to 19 years	7.2%	56.9%		
	20 to 24 years	8.7	82.1		
	55 to 64 years	12.6	57.1		
	65 and older	14.1	11.9		
2012					
	16 to 19 years	6.3	36.5		
	20 to 24 years	8.7	73.3		
	55 to 64 years	16.9	67.0		
	65 and older	18.7	17.0		
In U.S.					
	16 to 19 years		34.3		
	20 to 24 years		70.9		
	55 to 64 years		64.5		
	65 and older		18.5		

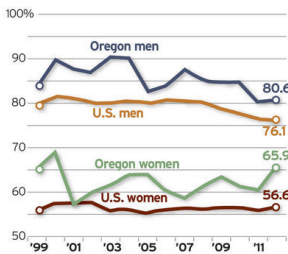
### Labor market drain

Working-age adults are participating less and less in the labor force.



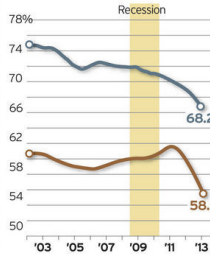
### Latinos in the workforce

Oregon's Hispanic population is younger than that of the state's overall, and its workforce participation rate exceeds the national average.



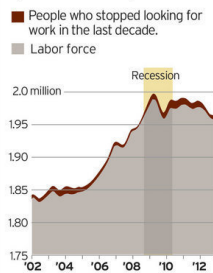
### Workforce by gender

The share of women in the labor pool climbed during the recession, but economists are unsure why the rate started dropping sharply in early 2011.



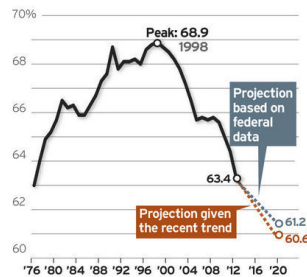
### No longer looking

Fewer people are leaving the job market out of frustration, a healthy signal for the economy.



### Downward trajectory

Analysts expect the labor pool will continue contracting through at least the end of the decade.



Source: Oregon Employment Department

Research by MOLLY YOUNG Graphic by DAN AGUAYO/THE OREGONIAN