



Family Building Blocks



2024 Community Needs Assessment
Head Start and Early Head Start Programs
Marion County and Polk County, Oregon



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Introduction

Purpose and Requirements

A community needs assessment is one of several tools Head Start programs use for annual planning. This process supports program staff, agency leaders, the board, and Policy Council in identifying community needs and resources for children and families. These assessments also support recruitment efforts by showing where eligible families live.

Federally-funded Head Start and Early Head Start programs must undertake a comprehensive community needs assessment every five years. (*45 CFR Part 1302.11*)

Head Start programs must complete an annual update of the community assessment to include:

- Total number of eligible children and families living in the service area
- Significant changes, including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten
- An assessment of how the pre-kindergarten available in the community meets the needs of the parents and children served by the program, and whether full-day programs are offered
- Rates of family and child homelessness
- Significant shift in community demographics and resources

The last comprehensive five-year study for these programs was undertaken by leadership staff at each agency/school district in 2019. Program staff completed extensive annual updates, which informed this assessment.

Family Building Blocks, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, and Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action hired Upward Development to complete the 2024 five-year assessment.

Methodology

Research

This community needs assessment was data-driven. Upward Development reviewed more than 50 publicly-available sources. This information was used to create a detailed demographic study of the service area - Marion and Polk Counties in western Oregon.

We used Census data for 2018-2022. There was limited data from the 2020 Census, because the full results are not ready. American Community Surveys (ACS) provide one-year and five-year estimates. We used both for population data, while being aware of the limitations – the ACS surveys small population groups and applies the results to larger populations.

For race and ethnicity, we used the most inclusive measure available – people who list one or more race and ethnicity on demographic forms, as opposed to “race alone”. This follows guidance from the Coalition of Communities of Color and PSU, but it is not often used by government offices.

It was somewhat challenging to find recent data for Oregon counties. Many state and local offices have not updated annual reports for 3-7 years. There has been significant turnover in the public sector due to a wave of retirements and long-COVID, but agencies are slow to ramp up recruiting efforts. Staffing issues compound the lack of accountability related to making data accessible.

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Andi contacted county, state, and regional offices to obtain more current and custom data for the service area. Many responded but some did not, including Marion Polk Early Learning Hub and DHS. For each program studied, Andi reviewed organizational charts, annual reports, custom reports from ChildPlus, and Program Information Reports (PIRs) for currently enrolled children and families in Head Start and Early Head Start. We asked clarifying questions of staff before publishing this report.

The Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center (ECKLC) offers guidance and checklists for completing a community needs assessment. Several ECKLC tools were used for this report, including “Data Collection Sources by Topic Worksheet” and “Community Assessment Matrix”.

Interviews and Surveys

Andi met with program leaders three times to inquire about community-level needs and resources, families’ current needs, and the breadth and depth of family services and program resources.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs typically gather qualitative feedback as well (stories and surveys) from parents, guardians, caregivers, and staff. When it was available, we summarized their insights in the report.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

The Head Start and Early Head Start leadership staff in these programs offered valuable, nuanced information about services available to children and families, as well as the needs in their surrounding community. Their engagement helped us develop a more comprehensive, thoughtful study.

Consultant Partners

Andi Kemp, principal consultant for [Upward Development](#), has 20 years’ experience working with more than 60 community-based nonprofits. They (Andi) have a successful track record of undertaking assessments of communities and organizations, developing grant proposals, and facilitating strategic planning with nonprofits and school districts.

This project and the resulting report benefited from the insight of three additional consultants:

- Mary Twitty (Lexington, KY) has more than 30 years’ experience with Head Start and Early Head Start programs around the country. Mary met with program staff and inquired about family services and parent surveys. She offered recommendations to staff and summarized parent survey data.
- Robin Scott (Eugene, OR) has an extensive background in early childhood education, housing and workforce programs. Robin helped with research and offered some guidance on report development.
- Carl Swart (Eugene, OR) has more than a decade of experience in nonprofit fundraising and leadership. Carl helped with research and report formatting.

Introduction

The 2024 Community Needs Assessment for Marion Polk

- ✓ Addresses regulatory requirements in the Code of Federal Regulations for Head Start programs.
- ✓ Paints a demographic picture of the service area, with a particular focus on children’s health, family and community well-being, poverty, mental health, housing, homelessness, and child care access.
- ✓ Offers detailed maps with data for Salem/Keizer, Marion County, and Polk County.
- ✓ Includes data at the census tract level on a variety of topics, including childhood poverty, household income, and SNAP recipients.
- ✓ Features custom WIC data and COVID-19 vaccination rates at the zip code level.
- ✓ Summarizes current data (2021-2022) from OSU’s Child Care Research Partnership on child care access, early learning providers, and the early learning workforce in Marion Polk.
- ✓ Includes Marion Polk EL Hub data publicly available on their website.
- ✓ Summarizes detailed reports from Oregon state offices, including DHS.
- ✓ Offers a snapshot of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and families, including vaccination rates across the service area and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic in communities of color.
- ✓ Includes links for 20+ tools and resources program leaders can use to create future community needs assessments.
- ✓ Summarizes the impact for children & families served in these programs last year.
- ✓ List tables and figures from the report for easy reference – *Appendix A and B*
- ✓ Includes other appendices with more information and relevant resources.

Highlights and recommendations tailored to this region and/or these three early learning providers are in bold orange text throughout the report.

Eleven *Equity Lenses* highlight relevant issues for communities of color, women, children, migrant, seasonal, and Indigenous farmworkers, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Headers for each one are in bold green text.

Executive Summary

Overview

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action delivers Head Start (HS) & Early Head Start (EHS) in Marion and Polk Counties. Salem-Keizer Head Start delivers Head Start at elementary schools in the Salem-Keizer school district, primarily in South Salem. Family Building Blocks delivers Early Head Start in Salem. They offer home-based Early Head Start in Polk, and family respite in both counties.

Combining all programs, there were 1,519 students age 0-5 enrolled last year.

Eligible Children and Families

We used six current data sources to estimate at least 1,500 children age 0-5 are automatically eligible for HS and EHS in Marion County. Using SNAP eligibility, up to 5,000 children would be eligible. In Polk County, about 1,000 children are automatically eligible for these programs.

At most, these programs can serve 60% of eligible children age 0-5 in the service area.

Using priority factors for disabilities and moderate income, about 4,300 additional children could be eligible for HS/EHS, plus other affordable early learning options like Preschool Promise and ERDC.

Population Demographics

There are 350,000 people in Marion County and 90,000 in Polk County. Population growth has stalled in Marion, but remains significant in Polk, where small cities have doubled in size since 2000.

The Salem-Keizer school district had 4,175 kindergarteners last year. 54% of students in the district are students of color (44% are Latine). Class sizes for all grades grew from 16 to 25 during the pandemic. In the Salem-Keizer Head Start program, they are 17-19.

There are more than 9,300 households in the service area with children under age six. There are 21,500 children age 0-5 in Marion and 4,850 young children in Polk.

In Marion, 42% of children under 18 are Hispanic or Latine. In Polk, 24% of children under 18 are. This report outlines racial and ethnic diversity using “race alone or in combination with other factors”, a more inclusive measure recommended by PSU and the Coalition of Communities of Color.

There is a higher percentage of Latine, Black, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students enrolled in these programs than the region’s population, but Asian, Native Alaskan, and Native American students are under-represented.

Spanish is the most common language spoken in the service area besides English, with nearly 30,000 speakers. Russian and Chinese are next, with 1,500 and 850 speakers respectively. About 37,000 people (age 5+) have limited English proficiency (10% in Marion; 5% in Polk).

About 25% of households in Marion County speak a language other than English at home. Among HS & EHS families, between 25% and 45% are dual language learners.

There are more than 35,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers, plus family members, in the region. Twice as many are experiencing poverty compared to the percentage of the region’s total population. Section 2 includes a detailed summary using data from USDA, OHA, and OHDC.

A higher percentage of adults in Marion County did not complete high school (15%) compared to Polk County and Oregon (8-9%). In Marion, 26% of adults have obtained a bachelor degree or graduate degree. In Polk and Oregon, 33-34% of adults have a bachelor degree. The percentage of adults with some college (24-27%) and an associate degree (9-10%) is about the same.

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Income and Poverty

According to Census ACS data for 2022, the poverty rate for individuals was 13% in Marion and 15% in Polk. Median household income is \$68,000 to \$77,000 across the service area. However, these figures mask the extent of financial distress for adults, children, and families.

**In Marion County, 1 in 3 households have income below \$50,000 annually (42,750)
1 in 6 households have income below \$25,000 annually (21,375).
In Polk County, 1 in 4 households with children 0-5 are experiencing poverty (550).**

Rates of childhood poverty in the region have declined over the past decade, but children in Marion Polk are still 20-30% more likely than adults to experience poverty. Independence and West Salem have reduced their rates. Section 3 includes maps showing where children experiencing poverty live.

Dallas, South/SE Salem, and NE Salem have some of the highest rates of childhood poverty in Oregon. Rural Marion and Polk have lower rates of poverty than urban areas.

There are disparities in how people experience poverty. Far more Black and Indigenous people in Oregon experience poverty than white residents. According to recent data, poverty is most pronounced among migrant farmworkers, young people, and communities of color in Oregon.

Housing and Homelessness

High rent costs and annual rent increases are driving an increase in homelessness across Oregon and the U.S. This is a top concern for Head Start staff, teachers, parents, guardians, and caregivers.

In 2022, median rent* in the service area was \$1,275 to \$1,300 a month. A higher percentage of renters in Marion Polk are cost-burdened than renters in Oregon and the U.S. From 2022-2023, median rent in Oregon increased \$300/month. Section 5 contains more detail.

**Median is the midpoint., not the average. It is a more accurate measure because it excludes outliers (very high/low).*

None of the affordable housing wait lists in Marion Polk were open as of March 2024. A list for rural Marion was open for 30 days recently, the first time in 18 months. Two other housing authorities had no status updates on wait list openings. There is a severe shortage of housing vouchers (Section 8).

Oregon has the highest rate of unsheltered families with children in the U.S.

In 2021-2022, Salem-Keizer ranked fourth among school districts in Oregon for the number of unhoused K-12 students, with 826 students total, including 60-65 kindergartners.

Coordinated Entry data (2023) shows 385 children age 0-5 in unhoused families in Marion Polk, more than 3x the number counted in the annual Point-in-Time in January.

There is a severe shortage of shelter beds and transitional housing for families, especially in Polk.

In calendar year 2023, there were 1,100 evictions filed in Marion County and 308 filed in Polk. Eviction rates are high in the region, especially Dallas/Rickreall, which had a 9.5% eviction rate in 2022-2023. In Oregon, eviction rates are higher in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Eviction rates are about the same regardless of monthly rent amounts.

In both counties, about 1 in 3 households with children are led by single parents. This percentage grew in Polk during the pandemic and was relatively steady in Marion.

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Early Childhood Education

Fewer young children are enrolled in preschool in Marion (38% of 3 and 4-year olds) and Polk (41%) than Oregon as a whole (44-46%). Despite an investment in publicly-funded preschool slots in the Willamette Valley during the pandemic, preschool enrollment declined in Polk County.

ODE's 2019 Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (the most recent available) and At-A-Glance district profiles (21-22) indicate some challenges for early learners. Fewer Grade 3 students in Salem-Keizer schools are regular attenders compared to Oregon (52% vs 60%). Significantly fewer are proficient in English Language Arts (25% vs. 40%). Kindergarteners across the Marion Polk Hub scored lower than state averages on every measure assessed by the OKA, though some schools scored much higher.

This report includes key priorities for families with children across Oregon, gathered during the 2020 Preschool Development Grant needs assessment. They include parents wanting more culturally-specific and responsive care, and for providers to connect families with community resources.

Community Well-Being

In 2021, the industries employing the most people in Marion were health care/social assistance and public administration/educational services (15% of workers each). Manufacturing, construction, and farm labor were significant industries as well. In Polk, 12% of workers were in office and administrative support, with about 10% of workers in sales and related occupations.

There is an alarming trend of underemployment (not enough hours) and job instability – especially in farmwork, food service, hospitality, and retail. Higher hourly wages do not make up for the lack of full-time (32-40 hours/week) positions with health insurance and paid leave.

Unemployment rates in the region follow seasonal trends for construction and farms (less work in winter months). Historically, regional rates of unemployment are a little higher than Oregon rates.

In Marion, 76% of households had earnings from a job, and 62% of the population was in the labor force. In Polk, a lower percentage of the population was in the labor force (57%). Overall, the percentage of Oregon moms working is at a record high.

The regional transportation service – Cherriots – is more robust and affordable than other metro systems in western Oregon. However, South Salem and West Salem have fewer routes and more low-income households. Eligible families here cannot use public transit for half-day programs.

In positive news, the rate of food insecurity among children under 18 has steadily decreased in Marion Polk in recent years – from 18-19% in 2017 to 9-10% in 2021.

79-83% of children under 18 are eligible for food assistance in Marion Polk. Despite recent improvements, children are still 21-30% more likely to be food insecure than adults.

Section 7 offers a map with SNAP recipients by census tract. The highest percentage of SNAP recipient households are in Willamina, Salem, Independence, Stayton, and Woodburn (22-26%).

Nationwide, only 85% of children who are eligible actually receive SNAP benefits.

About 2 in 3 Marion residents and 1 in 2 Polk residents have fluoridated water. The report includes a regional map with high-risk areas for lead exposure, plus tips to reduce lead contamination in water.

Uptake of the bivalent COVID-19 booster in 2023 was low across the U.S. However, Polk has the highest rate in Oregon (23%), more than twice the Marion uptake (12%). We've included a summary of vaccination rates by geography and race/ethnicity, plus a few notes on the disparate impact of the virus in communities of color and the pandemic's impact on early childhood education.

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Children's Health

Marion County's childhood health indicators are similar to Oregon's. Slightly more pregnant people in the county are receiving first trimester prenatal care (83% vs 82%), but more than one in ten young people have unmet mental health needs. About 1 in 4 residents are enrolled in OHP/Medicaid.

In Polk, many childhood health indicators are better than Marion and Oregon. Very few children are uninsured (1.5%), and 9 in 10 pregnant people receive first trimester prenatal care. Fewer children report unmet mental health needs, but one in three children have unmet dental health needs.

Oregon's birth rate has steadily declined for 15+ years, and families are waiting longer to have children. In 2022, there was a 1-2% increase in the birth rate, with 4,800 births in the service area.

The rate of births to teen parents in Marion is much higher than the state and regional average - 28 per 1,000 births. In Polk it is about half the state average (12/1,000 vs. 18), among the lowest three counties in Oregon. In 2022, there were 194 births to teen parents in Marion and just 25 in Polk.

In 2021, there were 235 low birth-weight newborns in Marion and 33 in Polk. The rate slightly increased in Polk and slightly decreased in Marion, compared to 2014-2020 CDC data. Latine parents in the region have about the same percentage of low birth-weight babies as white parents, but Black and African-American parents still face disparities in this realm.

Since 2018, infant and toddler vaccination rates have improved in Polk from 68% to 70%. Rates among the 0-2 age group remained steady in Marion at 71%. Oregon's rate is 69%.

The Early Head Start program at Family Building Blocks had a 58% rate last year – somewhat low. Both counties have slightly higher rates for kindergarten immunizations (89-90%) than Oregon (88%). These Head Start programs have higher immunization rates than the region, with fewer exemptions.

[Boost Oregon](#) offers educational videos and information, along with training and coaching for physicians on how to have conversations with patients and parents to make decisions about vaccinations that are informed by science.

OHA reports suggested a sharp decrease in the routine immunization of children early in the pandemic with nearly all (95%) surveyed clinics reporting changes to their immunization practices. Plus, 65% of clinics accepting OHP reduced or limited their well-child visits in 2020-2021.

These changes were a factor in reduced access to care in the region - in Polk, just 52% of children age 3-6 who were enrolled in Medicaid received a well-child visit in 2021. In Marion, just 60% did.

In these programs, virtually all enrolled children had health insurance last year – primarily through the Oregon Health Plan. OHP recently expanded coverage for children and teens with undocumented status, but this is not widely known among immigrant, refugee, and migrant families.

In Marion, there are more dentists and dental hygienists per 1,000 people than most Oregon counties. Polk has far fewer oral health professionals and troubling dental health indicators.

Head Start staff noted the most common barrier to children receiving dental treatment is the lack of providers accepting OHP – only about 40% of dentists in Oregon accept OHP. Long wait lists are an issue, too. About 50-60% of Medicaid-enrolled children in the region had access to any dental service before the pandemic. In these programs last year, 65-75% did.

Marion and Polk have one-third as many mental health professionals per capita as other urban areas in western Oregon - just 300-400 providers for every 100,000 people.

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Significantly more children and adults are experiencing depression and anxiety during the pandemic, and about 1 in 5 adults in the region reported having poor mental health in 2021.

This is an urgent need for communities, and an important opportunity for Head Start and Early Head Start programs to hire more professional staff and strengthen partnerships to support families.

The types of disabilities most common in early learning programs are speech and language impairments and non-categorical developmental delays. Last year, there were 325 children age 0-5 in Marion served by Oregon's IDD office. In Polk, 53 were served. These numbers have more than tripled since 2019. The region saw a much larger increase than Oregon as a whole, which grew 15%.

In these two Head Start programs, 12-13% of enrolled children had an IEP last year – Individualized Education Plan to support their education.

Family Well-Being

Oregon leads the nation in maternal health, including high WIC coverage rates – especially for infants. The report outlines WIC utilization rates by zip code, using custom data from Oregon WIC.

Despite high coverage rates overall, only 40% of preschoolers in Oregon who are eligible for WIC actually receive benefits. Virtually all Head Start students and families should be eligible.

Following a quiet period in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic, teachers, children's advocates, and law enforcement agencies across Oregon reported increased rates of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and foster care placements. Section 9 offers more detail for each county.

According to Family Justice Center of Washington County, 40% of women, 36% of men and 66% of children in Oregon experience violence and abuse during their lifetime.

It was challenging to find current data, or even a comprehensive list of DV/IPV service providers. This patchwork approach is creating barriers for survivors trying to escape violence and avoid harm.

In 2021, there were 3,261 incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault reported to law enforcement in Marion and Polk, but the Center for Hope and Safety receives nearly 20,000 requests annually for support – more than 6x the number of incidents reported.

In 2021, domestic violence was a factor in 33% of child abuse and neglect cases in Oregon. Alcohol and drug abuse among parents and caregivers was a factor in 42% of cases. Domestic violence is a leading factor in women and children becoming unhoused.

Recent DHS Child Welfare reports indicate 1,400 children in Marion Polk experience abuse and neglect annually. Of all child abuse victims in Oregon, 42% are under age five.

In 2022, there were 460 children ages 0-5 in Marion and Polk experiencing one or more days in foster care. In Polk, the rate of maltreatment in foster care is 4x the target metric for Oregon. The rate of re-entry to foster care within 12 months of discharge is also very high.

In Polk, confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect have increased nearly 60% since 2020.

Lincoln County also had a sharp increase in rates of child abuse, while Multnomah and Clackamas rates declined. Marion is seeing more reports but about the same number of confirmed cases.

We counted nine relief nursery sites in the service area – among the highest concentration in Oregon. This uniquely Oregon model provides free respite care for parents and caregivers of

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children ages 0-5, plus therapeutic classrooms for infants and toddlers. Family Building Blocks is the main provider in the region.

Types of Child Care Providers and Workforce

There are a range of child care options for preschoolers in Oregon – center-based care, family care homes, recorded programs, and informal care with family and friends.

In 2022, the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership counted 254 infant and toddler providers and 346 preschool providers in Marion County (not including informal care.) In Polk, there were 62 infant and toddler providers and 77 preschool providers.

From 2020-2022, there was a net loss of 89 child care providers (11%) in the region.

The number of regulated home-based providers declined in Marion Polk, while the number of center-based providers slightly increased.

Typically, 1 in 4 people leave the child care workforce in the first year.

In 2021, turnover in early learning and child care increased in Oregon - one in three employees left the workforce. Reasons cited included low wages, challenging student behaviors, and lack of administrative support. Wages for early learning teachers in Polk are lower than most surrounding counties. The low end of Marion’s wages is quite low, despite a high cost of living.

Access to Child Care

Marion and Polk meet the definition of child care deserts. Just 1 in 10 infants and toddlers in Marion and 1 in 7 in Polk have access to a regulated child care slot. 1 in 4 preschoolers in Marion have access to regulated slots. About 1 in 5 preschoolers in Polk do.

In addition to Head Start and Early Head Start, OCDC offers Migrant and Seasonal Head Start at six sites (1,829 children served last year). The Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde offers Tribal HS and EHS, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians offers Head Start in Salem. About 100 students enrolled in Tribal HS and EHS in the region last year.

More than 2,100 families at 26 sites in Marion Polk used Employment Related Day Care subsidies from DHS last year. However, new applications are being placed on hold as of 11/1/23, after a surge in demand following a statewide funding increase. Families may have to wait up to 18 months.

There are 45 Preschool Promise sites for moderate-income families (household income up to 200% of Federal Poverty Level). The Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub lists 70 private preschools.

December 2022	Marion	Polk	Total
Infant and toddler slots	1,451	471	1,922
Preschool slots	3,862	644	4,506

In Marion, 16% of infant and toddler slots are publicly-funded, a decline from 18% in 2019. In Polk, publicly-funded slots for infants and toddlers increased from 13-21% during the pandemic. In Marion, 34% of preschool slots are publicly-funded. In Polk, 45% are.

More than 40% of parents responding to a PSU survey last year said they or their partner quit, declined, or changed jobs due to child care challenges.

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Enrolled Children and Families

Head Start and Early Head Start sites are well-placed throughout the Salem-Keizer region, but there is not much coverage in rural Marion and Polk. Dallas and Willamina in Polk County, and NE Salem, SE Salem, and Keizer in Marion County would benefit from more HS and EHS classrooms.

Salem-Keizer Head Start enrolled 394 children age 3-5 last year in 22 classrooms (17 sites in Salem).

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action enrolled 294 children age 0-2 in EHS and 571 children age 3-5 in HS last year. They have 23 HS sites in Salem-Keizer, plus 11 EHS classrooms. There are 3 EHS classrooms in Polk County plus a home-based option for EHS in rural Marion and Polk.

Family Building Blocks enrolled 231 children age 0-2 last year in Marion and Polk Counties. They offer home visiting, home-based services, and a classroom/home visiting option.

About three-quarters (75%) of children enrolled in these programs in 2022-2023 were deemed eligible based on household income <100% FPL or public assistance. 15-20% of families were unhoused at some point (175 students). About 2-3% of enrolled children were in foster care (38).

These programs are doing well at enrolling unhoused families. There are still many more children in foster care who would benefit from these programs, and some children of color are under-represented.

Small groups of Head Start students (10-15 in each program) do not have enough staff speaking their language, including Pacific Islander languages, African languages, Slavic languages, and languages from Central and South America, Mexico, the Middle East, East Asia, and South Asia.

The vast majority of children enrolled in Head Start have health insurance and a medical home. However, access to care and immunizations rates slightly declined during the pandemic, both statewide and in these programs.

Pre-pandemic, 96% to 99% of children met vaccination benchmarks. Last year, 92% did at Salem-Keizer HS, 58% at Family Building Blocks, and 95% at Community Action. For all programs combined, 65-81% of children were up-to-date on primary care visits in June 2023.

Given the challenges in accessing dental care for people enrolled in Medicaid, these programs are doing very well. At Salem-Keizer, 100% of Head Start students received a professional dental exam. 75% of students enrolled in other programs did. (County averages for this group are 50-65%.)

Last year, 80% of families at FBB received an additional program or service to strengthen their family. At Community Action, 40% of families did. At Salem-Keizer, 30% did.

These programs are making fewer mental health referrals than expected (~15 each last year), considering the level of need among children and families. There is only one full-time mental health consultant in each program. This appears to be an under-resourced area for all three programs.

At Salem-Keizer Head Start, 77% to 90% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in all six areas of kindergarten readiness by Spring 2023. There was steady growth across the school year. Early literacy had the largest gains (46% to 87%). The program has remained fully enrolled during the pandemic, an unusual accomplishment among Head Start programs.

The focus for Community Action Head Start teachers in fall 2022 was establishing a positive social-emotional climate in the classroom, because children's skills have diminished during the pandemic. TS Gold scores in this area increased from 49% of children meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in October, to 94% by spring! Mathematics remained a challenge. The program converted some Head Start slots to Early Head Start in response to enrollment challenges.

Executive Summary

Brief summary of parent feedback - Salem-Keizer and Community Action - 2023

- Communication is good and staff at Salem-Keizer HS are respectful of families and their values
- Children's academic and social-emotional growth were highly regarded by 219 SK parents
- Virtually all parents at Community Action felt supported and said the Head Start and Early Head Start programs were effective in supporting their child at school (*200 parents responded*)

Similar responses in both programs

High regard for staff
Positive impact on the parent-child relationship (strengthening families)
Assistance with community resources

Most urgent family and community needs

- Affordable housing, low wages, under-employment, and families experiencing homelessness
- Transportation and fuel costs, food, and assistance with utilities/bills
- Access to mental health and affordable child care
- Education (children and adults) and employment services for adults

Top unmet service needs

Gas money
Homeless motel vouchers
Rent payment assistance

Suggestions from Salem-Keizer families for program leadership to explore

- Rethink the number and timing of home visits, given the demands of work for Family Advocates and life scheduling for family members. *Caseloads are high (34-38); 25 is ideal.*
- Provide more specific information on what my child needs to improve (behavior, math, etc.)
- Seek more support for transportation costs (gas cards)
- More opportunities for families to gather and connect

Note: About 1 in 4 parents at Community Action and 1 in 2 parents at Salem-Keizer responded to the survey.

Brief summary of Head Start and Early Head Start staff feedback – 2022-2023

Salem-Keizer staff had several suggestions for improving these programs

- Expand the Behavior Team and support for staff in this area
- Reduce class size
- More flexibility for home visits

In terms of meeting the needs of families, staff at Family Building Blocks suggested

- More bilingual staff speaking Spanish
- More staff training on community resources available
- For families - more mental health services, transportation, and help finding affordable housing
- More rent assistance for families, more affordable housing

Self-assessment reports contain more detail for each area, along with additional comments from FBB staff.

Executive Summary

Conclusions

Parents in the Marion Polk region need more affordable housing options, housing assistance, affordable child care in extended-day programs, and better employment opportunities.

Children under age five in low-income households need more stable housing and better access to food, quality child care programs, primary care, dentists, and mental health services. They also need more support in reaching academic and development milestones, and attending school regularly.

These programs appear to be very effective in reaching communities of color, providing robust health services and family support services, and improving children's social and emotional skills.

Staff are highly qualified, linguistically diverse, and mostly representative of children and families served. They are making consistent progress in preparing children for preschool and kindergarten, especially considering a high percentage of young students in Marion Polk begin the school year scoring well below readiness benchmarks.

National, state, and local data confirms there are many more eligible children <5 in Marion Polk than there are regulated child care slots available to serve them.

The struggle for Head Start programs to fill slots is a result of a complex set of issues. These include: the ability of programs to 1) hire and retain early learning teachers, family advocates, child care contractors, and bus drivers, 2) expand program options and transportation to fit working families' needs, and 3) adapt outreach efforts to more effectively recruit and enroll eligible families.

Recommendations

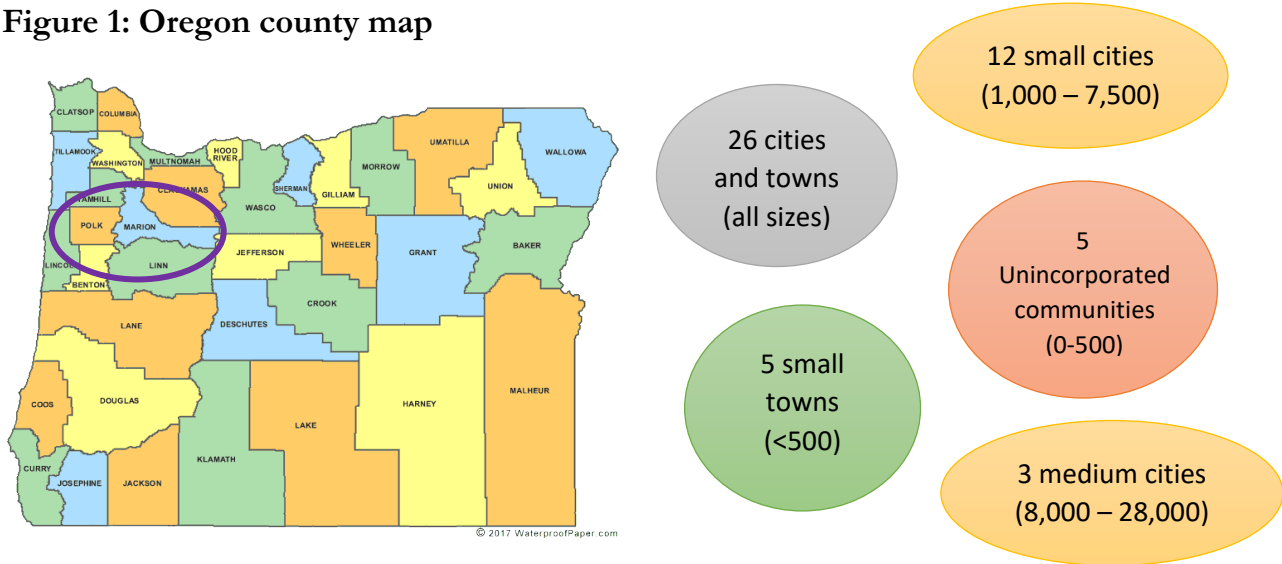
1. Invest more resources in the timely hiring and retention of Head Start teachers, family advocates, contractors, and bus drivers.
2. Expand mental health services - hire more mental health contractors, strengthen community mental health partnerships, make more referrals, and track outcomes for families.
3. Secure more funds for rent assistance and eviction prevention. Advocate with property owners, business associations, and legislators for lower rent and eviction prevention strategies.
4. Focus recruitment efforts in areas where children experiencing poverty live: South/SE Salem, NE Salem, West Salem, Keizer, and Dallas.
5. Provide more support for early mathematics, literacy, and language arts. This can include more one-on-one and/or small groups in classrooms (with reduced workloads for teachers to accommodate the extra work), after-school tutoring with community partners and volunteers, and worksheets and videos for families.
6. Review this report for specific areas of need by race, ethnicity, and geographic area. Incorporate those findings into ERSEA efforts, health services, and family support services to design more responsive programs.

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

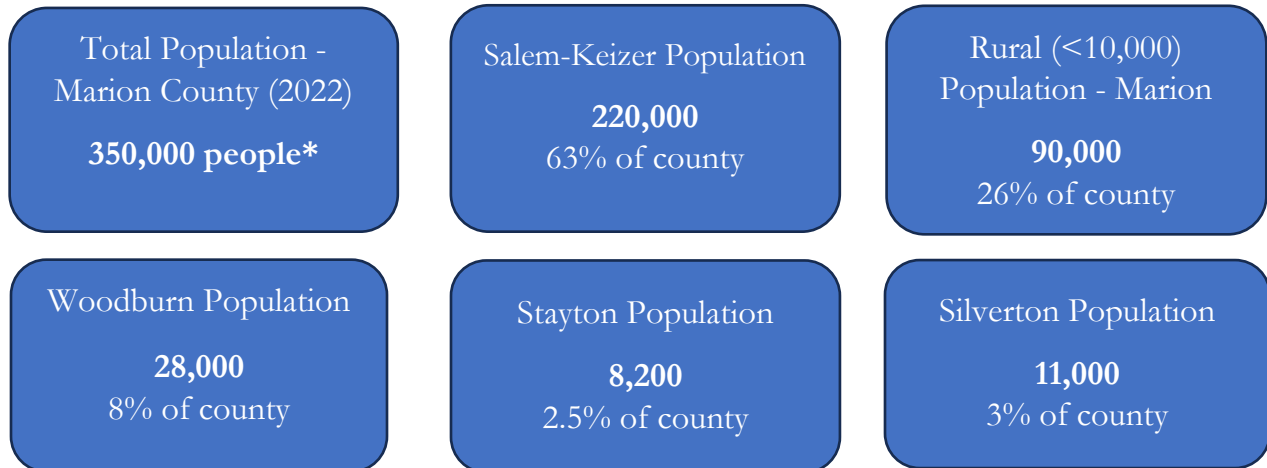
Marion County

Marion County is located in the mid-Willamette Valley about one hour’s drive south of the Portland metro. Its boundaries stretch from the Willamette River and I-5 corridor eastward to the Cascade Mountains and Warm Springs Reservation. Marion County encompasses nearly 1,200 square miles.

Figure 1: Oregon county map



2 in 3 Marion County residents live in urban Salem and Keizer
1 in 8 residents live in suburban areas
1 in 4 residents live in rural areas



** Rounded numbers are not statistically different than the exact data, and still within a reasonable margin of error.
 Sources: Portland State University, 2023 Certified Population Estimates (352,249) and 2020 U.S. Census (345,920).*

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

Figure 2: Marion County map

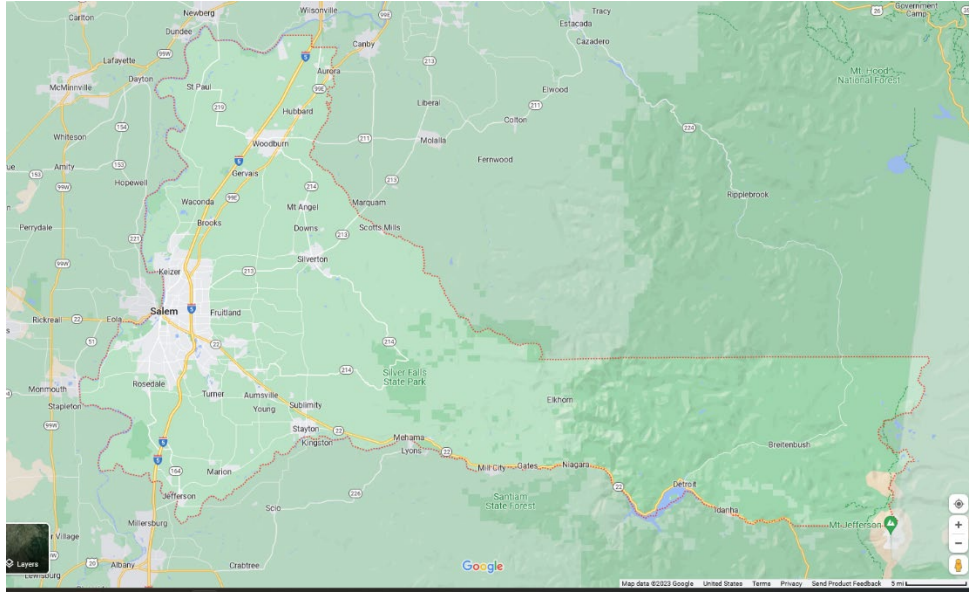


Figure 3: Salem neighborhood map

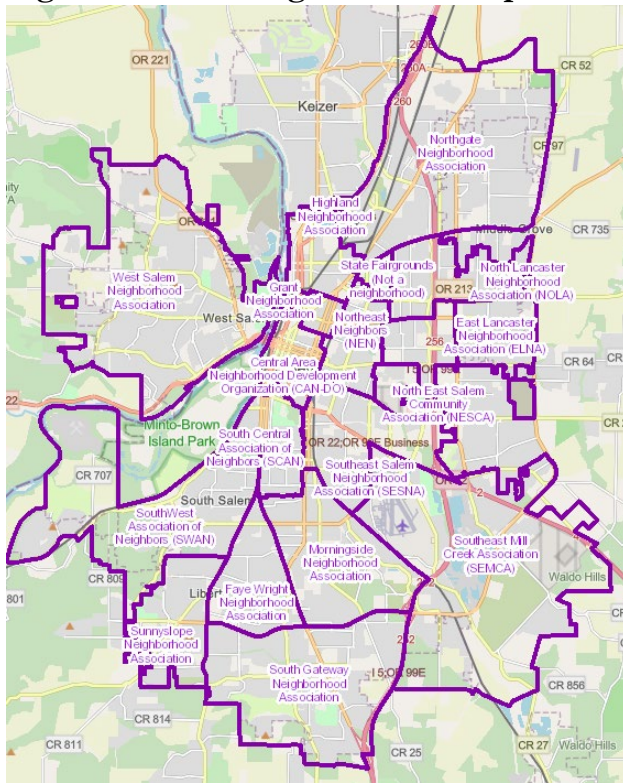


Figure 4: Salem-Keizer boundary map

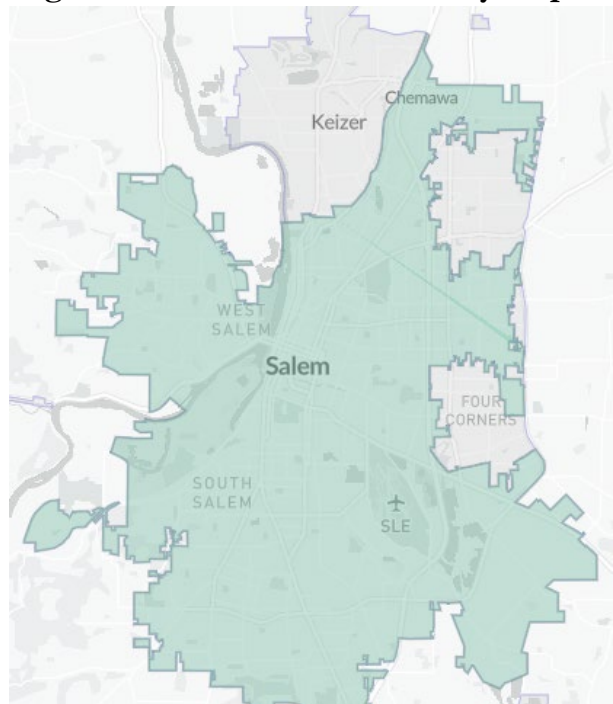


Figure 1 Source: [Google Maps](#)

Figure 3 Source: <https://data.cityofsalem.net/maps/salem::neighborhoods/about>
Interactive maps at this link also feature fire stations, parks, schools, boundaries, and city limits.

Figure 4 Source: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US4164900-salem-or/>

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

Polk County

Located west of Marion County and the I-5 corridor, Polk’s boundaries stretch from the Willamette River in the east to within 15 miles of the Oregon Coast. Geographically, Polk County is primarily made up of small towns and rural areas.

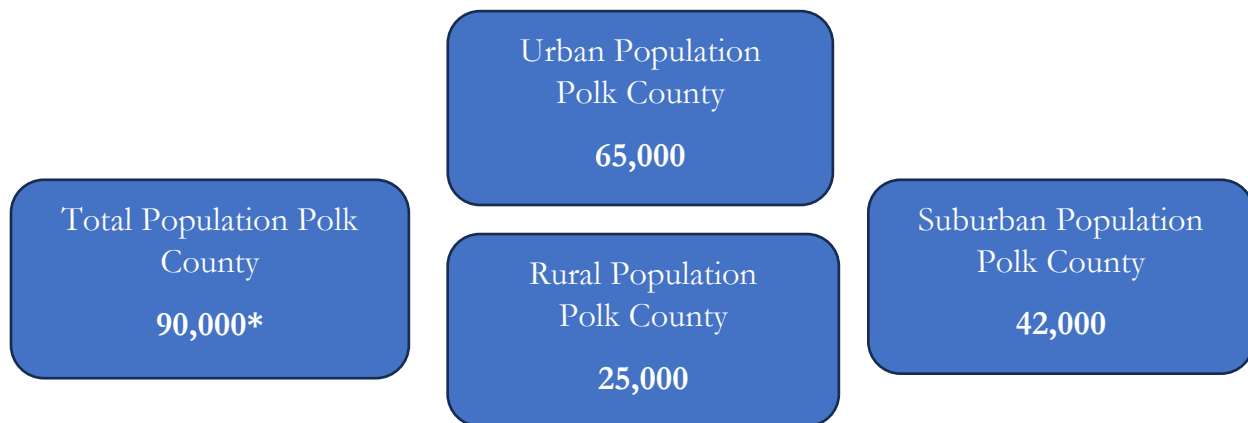
The most densely populated area is the eastern border – West Salem, with 30,000 people – about one-third of the county’s population.

Dallas (the county seat) and Monmouth are medium-size cities with about 10,000 people each.

Small cities (<2,000 pop.) include Independence, Falls City, and Grand Ronde (Polk and Yamhill). Together with Monmouth and Dallas, they make up almost half the county’s population.

The rural western portion of Polk County has 15-17 logging and farming communities with 100-1,000 people, plus unincorporated areas and public lands in the Coast Range.

About one-quarter of the county’s population lives in rural and unincorporated western Polk.



Sources: Portland State University, 2023 Certified Population Estimates (90,553) and 2020 U.S. Census (87,433).
 * These rounded numbers are not statistically different than the exact data, and still within a reasonable margin of error.

Table 1: Cities by population in Polk County, Oregon (rounded)

West Salem (Polk)	30,000*	Monmouth	11,000
Dallas	17,000	Independence	10,000
Falls City	1,064	Grand Ronde	1,600^

Source: Census American Community Survey (ACS), 2022 five-year estimates
 *PSU 2021 Annual Population Report, ^U.S. Census, 2000 Decennial Census

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

Figure 5: Polk County map

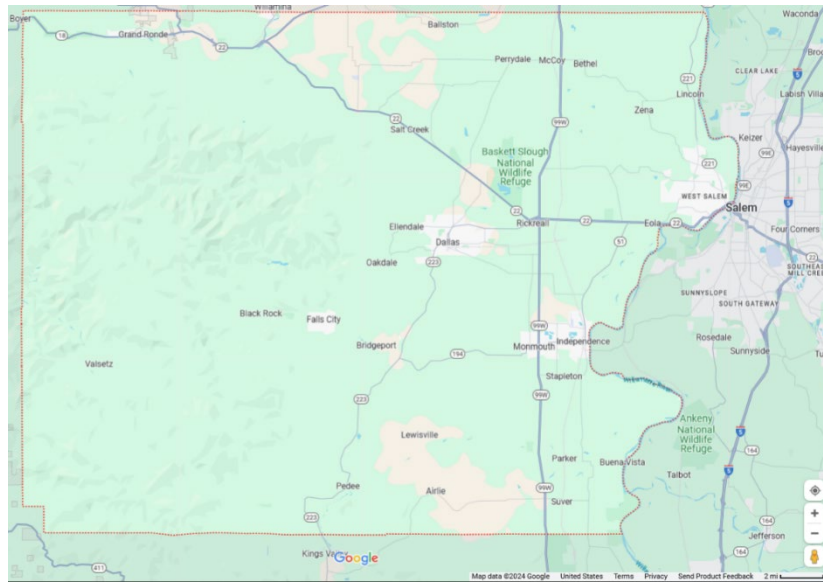
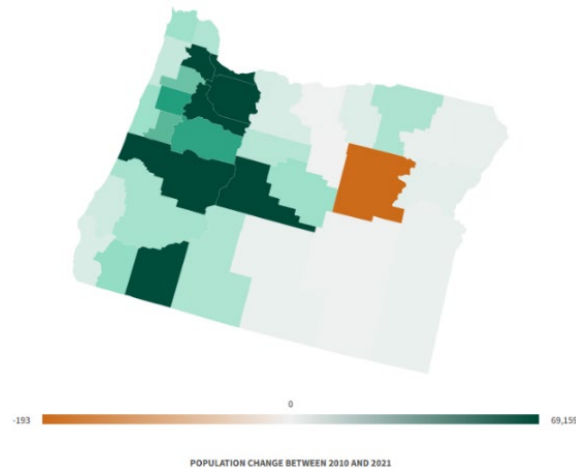


Figure 6: Oregon population growth by county, 2010 to 2020



Multnomah County experienced 11% population growth from 2010 to 2020, adding 77,502 residents.

This was the highest rate in Oregon, although many communities in the western corridor grew rapidly in those years, including Marion and Polk.

According to PSU’s Population Research Center, population increases stalled from 2021-2023 in Multnomah and Marion Counties.

In contrast to recent downward trends in Marion and Multnomah, Polk County’s population has grown steadily over the past 20+ years.

Growth since 2000

The City of Dallas - 36%

Independence - 67%

Monmouth - 44%



West Salem nearly doubled in size – from 18,000 to 30,000 people

Source: <https://usafacts.org>

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

Service Areas

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action (CAHS) delivers Head Start & Early Head Start in Marion and Polk Counties.

Salem-Keizer Head Start (SKHS) delivers Head Start at elementary schools in the Salem-Keizer school district, primarily in South Salem.

Family Building Blocks (FBB-EHS) delivers Early Head Start in Salem. They also offer home-based Early Head Start in Polk County, and family respite care in both counties.

Figure 7: Marion Polk Head Start and Early Head Start providers by city/town

City or Town	School District	HS/EHS Provider
Salem	Salem-Keizer	CAHS, SKHS, OCDC, FBB-EHS
Keizer	Salem-Keizer	CAHS, OCDC
Woodburn	Woodburn	CAHS, OCDC
Stayton	North Santiam	CAHS
Sublimity	North Santiam	CAHS
Aumsville	Cascade	CAHS
Turner	Cascade	CAHS
Gates	Santiam Canyon	CAHS
Lyons	Santiam Canyon	CAHS
Mehama	Santiam Canyon	CAHS
Mill City	Santiam Canyon	CAHS
Aurora	North Marion	OCDC
Donald	North Marion	OCDC
Detroit	Santiam Canyon	KIDCO, CAHS
Idanha	Santiam Canyon	KIDCO
Jefferson	Jefferson	KIDCO
Brooks	Gervais	OCDC
Gervais	Gervais	OCDC
Hubbard	North Marion	OCDC
Mt. Angel	Mt. Angel	OCDC
Silverton	Silver Falls	OCDC
Scotts Mills	Silver Falls	OCDC
Dallas	Dallas	CAHS
Independence	Central	CAHS, OCDC
Monmouth	Central	CAHS, OCDC
Falls City	Falls City	CAHS
Rickreall	Dallas	CAHS
Grand Ronde	Willamina	Grand Ronde Tribal

1. Geographic Area Overview – Marion County and Polk County, Oregon

Family Building Blocks Early Head Start catchment area (Salem elementary schools)

Four Corner	Pringle	Battle Creek
Salem Heights	Bush	Schirle
Auburn	Sumpter	Lee
Washington	Liberty	Wright
Mary Eyre	Candalaria	McKinley
Miller	Morningside	

2. Demographic Study

This section contains an overview of individuals, families, and households. We detail the children’s population (birth to age 2 and age 3 to 5), languages spoken, household types, and educational attainment. There is some data at the census tract level.

We used the more expansive definition of “race alone or in combination with other factors” to paint a more accurate picture of racial diversity in Marion Polk. (Except where noted.)

Readers will find some rounded numbers for ease of reading. The changes are not statistically significant.

Children’s Population

Young children under age five make up 5% of Oregon’s population. In Marion County, they are about 6% of the total population. In Polk County, they are about 5.5%.

There are 4,850 children under age five in Polk County.

There are 21,500 children under age five in Marion County.

We used Census ACS data (2018-2022) and PSU’s Population Research Center data (2021) to create estimates for the number of children under age five in the service area.

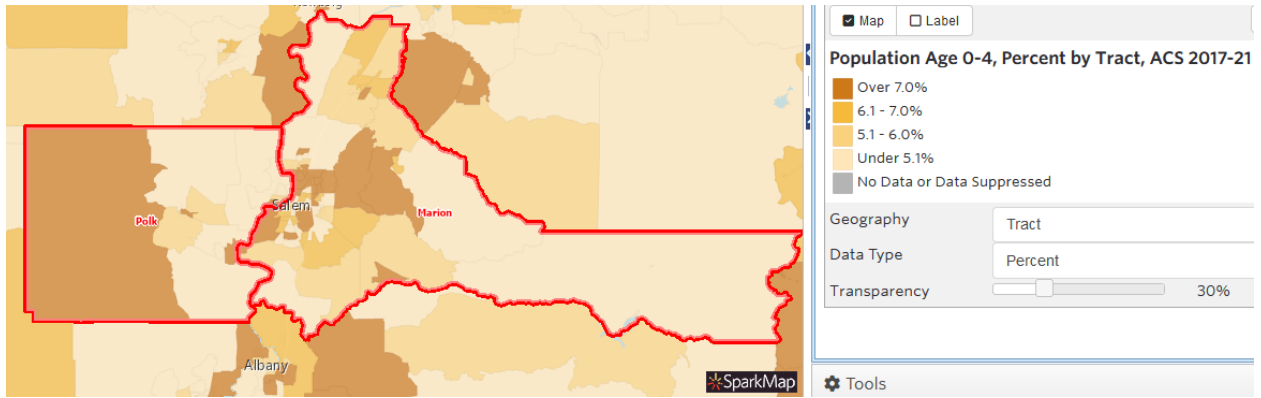
Table 2: Population estimates for children age 0-2 and 3-5 in the service area, 2021-2022

Young Children’s Population	Marion County	Polk County
Infants and toddlers (0-2)	10,500	2,300
3 and 4-year olds	11,000	2,550
Total population (age 0-5)	21,500	4,850

U.S. Census offers data by zip-code and census tract in detailed Excel reports <https://data.census.gov>

2. Demographic Study

Figure 8: Map of the percentage of children age 0-4 in Marion Polk by census tract, 2017-2021



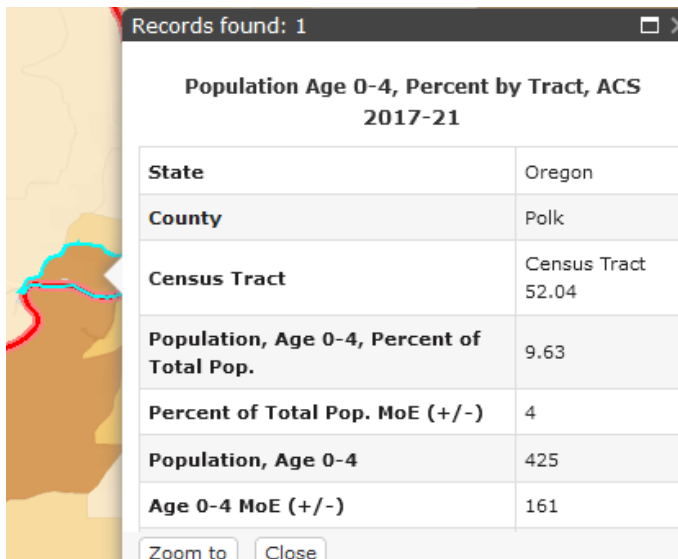
Areas with the highest percentage of children 0-5

Marion County (urban) - Keizer, NE Salem, Four Corners, and South Salem

Marion County (rural) - Stayton, Silverton, Bethany, Fruitland, and Pratum

Polk County – West Salem, Independence, and Dallas

With a SparkMap Pro subscription (free for community action agencies), Head Start staff can gain insight for school districts and/or census tracts to support recruitment. You can also search by race, ethnicity, and other factors. We’ve included an example below for West Salem.



In Polk County, there are approximately 10,000 people in one census tract in south West Salem, along the Willamette River (52.04).

There are about 500 children under age five living in this census tract. They make up 9.63% of the population, nearly double the region’s average.

2. Demographic Study

Marion-Polk School District Population

Last fall, there were 65,900 K-12 students enrolled in Marion Polk school districts. According to [district enrollment reports](#), there were 4,175 kindergarteners enrolled in all schools.

Enrollment in the Salem-Keizer district has declined during the pandemic. In 2021, the median class size in the district was 16, among the lowest in Oregon metro districts.

The Oregon Department of Education [class size report](#) for 2022-2023 shows median (midpoint) class size has grown to 25 (all grades). Class sizes in kindergarten were 21.5, and the recent self-assessment from Salem-Keizer Head Start noted larger class sizes (17-19) are an issue for teachers and classroom staff.

A [Statesman Journal report](#) in fall 2021 highlighted recent changes in school district populations and employment, according to [statewide report cards](#).

They reported a gradually slowing increase in public school enrollment in the Salem-Keizer district between 2016-17 and 2019-20. Beginning in spring 2020, pandemic conditions led to a drop in enrollment with a total decrease of 18,030 students – about 3.1% over five years.

Marion-Polk K-12 Demographics Students of Color

Hispanic or Latine - 44%
Black and African American - 1.3%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander - 2%
Asian – 1.6%
Native American and Alaska Native – 0.8%
Multi-Racial – 5%

Marion-Polk K-12 Demographics Students of Color

Hispanic or Latine – 28,777
Black and African American - 827
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander – 1,327
Asian – 1,062
American Indian, Alaska Native – 543
Multi-Racial – 3,338

Total – 35,874
54% of enrollment

Source: [District enrollment reports*](#), 2023-2024

**District enrollment reports contain detailed information about school districts and individual schools.*

One in two students enrolled in the Salem-Keizer school district are students of color.

2. Demographic Study

Total Population – Sex

Population by age is almost evenly divided between male and female, based on sex assigned at birth. Census data does not include intersex, nonbinary, and transgender people, because these options are not listed on current Census forms. The lack of inclusion diminishes responses from these groups. More gender identity options are planned for future Census surveys.

See the Equity Lens in this section for estimated numbers of transgender and nonbinary parents in Oregon.

Race and Ethnicity – Marion County

Marion County is more ethnically diverse than Oregon and the U.S, with a large Latine population. There are higher percentages of Indigenous people here (Native Alaskans, American Indians), plus more Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders as a percentage of the population. More than twice as many people identify with some other race compared to Oregon. Marion has fewer Asian residents than Oregon, as a percentage of the population.

Observations for Marion using “Race alone or in combination with other factors”

- There is a larger Latine community in Marion (29% of the total population) than in Oregon (14%) and the U.S. (19%).
- **In Marion, 42% of children under 18 are Hispanic or Latine.**
- There are about the same percentage of Black, African, and African-Americans residents here as in Oregon (~3%). In the United States, Black people represent 14.5% of the population.
- There are fewer Asian Americans (4% of the population) than in Oregon (7%).
- There are about twice the percentage of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islander residents (2%) than in Oregon (1%).
- There are more American Indian and Alaska Native residents as a percentage of the population (6%) when compared to Oregon (4%).
- More than twice as many people identify with some other race here (25%) than Oregon (12%).

Race and Ethnicity – Polk County

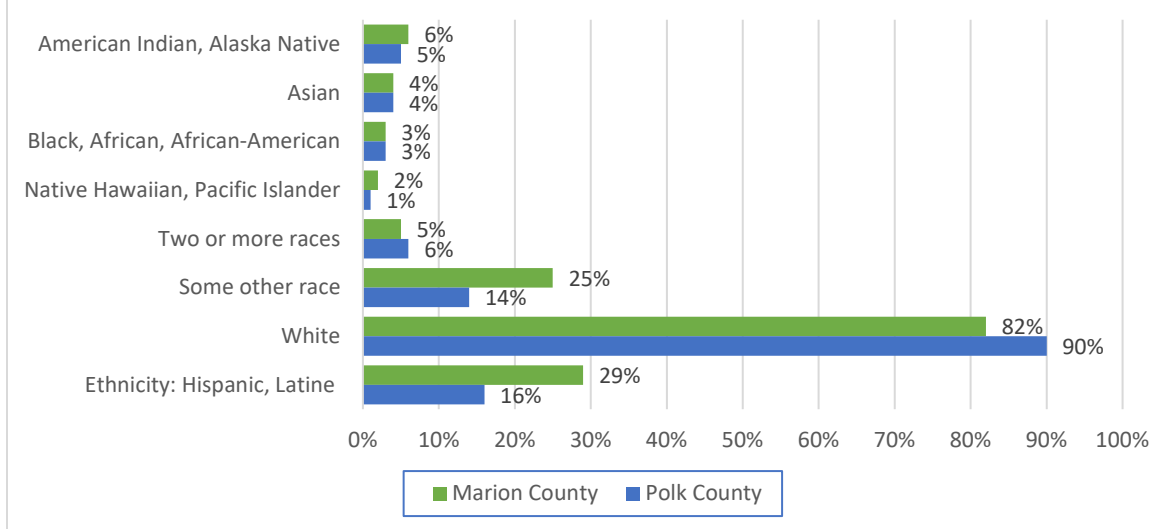
Polk County has a similar racial demographic profile to Marion County. It is less ethnically diverse, with a much smaller Latine population.

Observations for Polk using “Race alone or in combination with other factors”

- The Latine community in Polk (16%) is slightly larger than Oregon (14%) as a percentage of the population, but about half the percentage of the Marion community (29%).
- **In Polk, 24% of children under 18 are Hispanic or Latine.**
- There are fewer Asian Americans here (4% of the population) than in Oregon (7%).
- There are about the same percentage of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents (1%).
- There are slightly more American Indian and Alaska Native residents in Polk as a percentage of the population (5%) when compared to Oregon (4%).
- About half as many people identify with two or more races (6% vs. 12%) than in Oregon.

2. Demographic Study

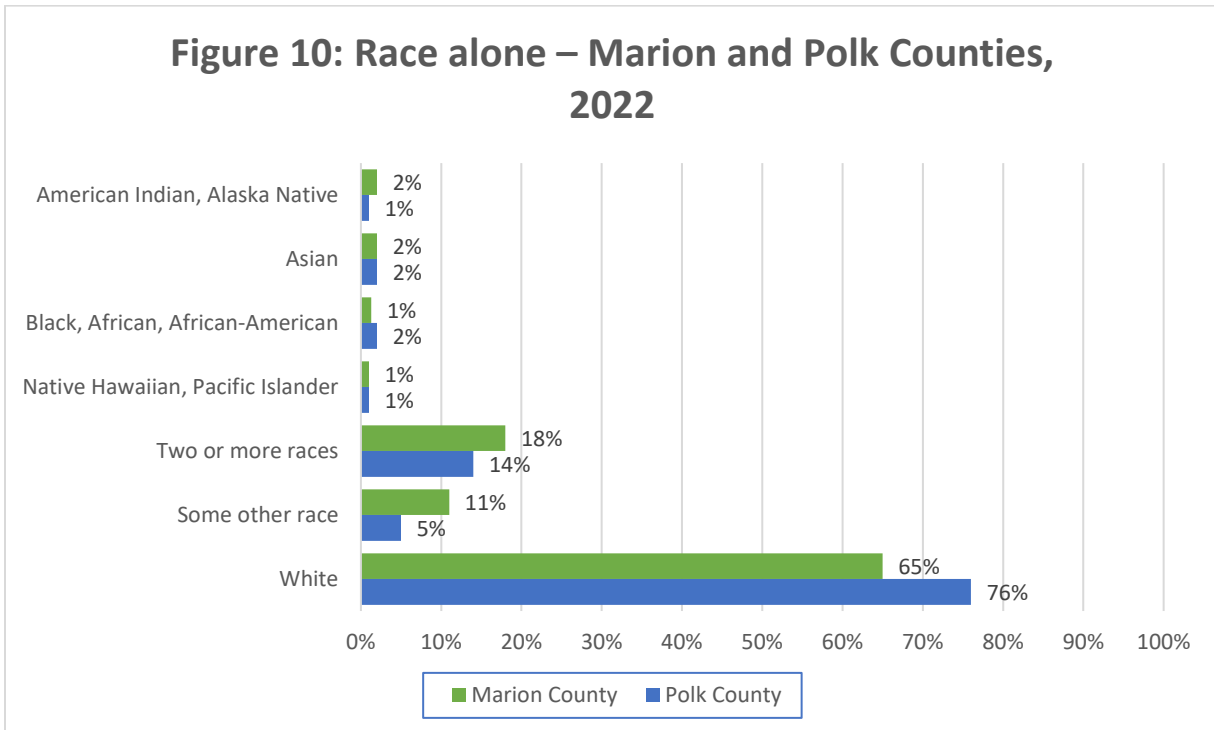
Figure 9: Race alone or in combination with other factors, and ethnicity – Marion and Polk Counties, 2022



Notes

- We used rounded numbers within the margin of error, changes are not statistically significant.
- Categories do not equal 100 because numbers are rounded and some people identify with more than one race.

Figure 10: Race alone – Marion and Polk Counties, 2022



Notes

- This reflects U.S. Census ACS data (DP05) for “Total Population - Race alone”. PSU’s Population Research Center notes this is a simpler, less inclusive representation of bi-racial and multi-racial people. It is how race and ethnicity are typically presented by public agencies and school districts, so we’ve included it.

2. Demographic Study

Head Start and Early Head Start students in all three programs are more ethnically diverse than the region's population, indicating these programs have prioritized enrollment for many students of color.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

The success of the agricultural industry in Oregon is dependent on migrant and seasonal farmworkers. In 2018, (the most recent year available), the Oregon Health Authority estimated 86,400 migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Oregon, with an additional 87,600 family members.

State and national data for these groups is only updated every five years. Additionally, migrant and seasonal farmworkers often move between counties in search of work, so it is difficult to get accurate estimates at the county level.

The [2017 Census of Agriculture Report \(USDA\)](#) estimated 13,500 farmworkers in Marion County. About 86% were employed by farms with 10+ workers that operated less than half the year. Payroll for 864 farms with paid labor was \$196 million.

**122 farms in Marion County reported 4,500 migrant farm workers in 2017.
More than 1,300 farms reported more than 3,000 unpaid workers.**

In Polk County, the 2017 Census estimated 2,400 farmworkers on 350+ farms. More workers were employed by small farms in Polk than in Marion. Payroll was \$20.3 million for farms with paid labor. A higher percentage of farms in Polk reported using unpaid workers.

**Nearly 30 farms in Polk County reported 520 migrant farm workers in 2017.
Nearly 650 farms reported more than 1,500 unpaid workers.**

The Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division has conducted just three enumeration studies (counts and estimates) for migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the past 25 years.

[The most recent study](#), in 2018, was similar to the USDA 2017 Census for Marion. OHA estimated 4,000 non-farm workers in migrant households and 9,000 in seasonal households, **for a total of nearly 27,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers and family members in Marion County.**

Polk County's estimates were significantly higher in OHA's 2018 update – 3,300 total farm workers, including about 1,100 migrant farm workers. They estimated 1,000 non-farm worker household members in migrant households, and 2,300 in seasonal households, **for a total of 6,650 migrant and seasonal farm workers and family members in Polk County.**

OHA assumes 1/3 of farm workers are migrant workers and 2/3 are seasonal workers.

Pages 13 to 15 of the OHA's 2018 study outline several limitations to estimating the migrant and seasonal farm worker populations.

2. Demographic Study

Indigenous Farmworkers

Staff at the Oregon Human Development Corporation estimate between 30-45% of farmworkers in Marion County are Indigenous. ([2022 needs assessment](#))

Combined with OHA's 2018 data, we can reasonably estimate there are **1,350 to 2,000 Indigenous children under age five in migrant farmworker families in Marion County.**

The most frequently requested Indigenous languages were Mam and Mixteco Bajo.

Children and Youth in Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Families

OHA estimates there are 21,000 children and youth in migrant and seasonal farmworker households throughout Oregon.

According to 2018 estimates from OHA, there were more than 3,000 children under age five in migrant farmworker households in Oregon, and 6,000 children and youth in seasonal farmworker households. We did not find county-level data.

Challenges faced by migrant and seasonal farmworker communities

Farmworkers face exposure to the elements, long days outdoors, and physically demanding work in unstable jobs. Additionally, they endure exposure to pesticides, risks from operating heavy machinery, exploitation from employers, and sub-standard housing on many farms.

Historically, migrant and seasonal farmworkers are paid less than other workers and have little access to community resources, including SNAP, health insurance, and disaster assistance.

[A recent study](#) conducted by Portland State University (PSU) in partnership with the Northwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety found many farmworkers had been injured on the job due to overwork, equipment, pesticides, and COVID.

Many of the 41 farmworkers interviewed said they face daily stress over finances. Farmworkers often rely on family support and their faith to continue working.

PSU's study recommended several interventions:

1. Create space where migrant and seasonal farmworker voices are heard and listened to.
2. Work with organizations and lawmakers to advocate for worker protections.
3. Intervene at the community level to support and empower these populations.

2. Demographic Study

Equity Lens – Migrant, Seasonal, and Indigenous Farmworkers

The Oregon Human Development Corporation completed a [farmworker needs assessment in 2022](#) which includes Marion County. We've included several highlights from this report below. The full report includes data sources. Appendix C of this report contains a Marion County profile from the OHDC report.

Farmworkers are some of the lowest paid workers in the country, with families earning around \$20,000 to \$25,000 in 2018. Average wages in Oregon and Washington ranged from \$16-\$18/hour for crop and animal workers in 2021.

27% of farmworkers in Oregon are experiencing poverty and 28% are experiencing food insecurity – twice the rates of the overall population.

Poverty rates are much higher than Oregon's total population (13%), and higher than the broader Latinx population (20-21%). But there is no public data that can tell us which age groups, genders or ethnicities are most affected by poverty in farmworker communities.

An estimated three quarters of farmworkers have dependents. OHDC staff shared they often lack access to childcare due to costs and long work hours. As a result, children are sometimes left home alone, or taken to work to sit on the edge of fields or in vehicles while parents work.

Nearly three quarters of farmworker survey participants said they could use help finding affordable childcare.

Farmworker surveys from 2020 showed that women were responsible for child care most of the time. Women reported greater mental health challenges than men, like frustration, headaches and depression. **More than 35% said they were depressed and only 7% had access to mental health support.**

While men may not experience as much stress as women, over 20% were depressed and only 4% had access to supports. This is concerning, since recent studies suggest farmworkers have a significantly higher rate of suicide than other workers.

Stigma around mental health is common among Mexican immigrant communities, and culturally aware therapists, especially those who speak Spanish or Indigenous languages, are limited. At the same time, farmworkers do physically intense jobs with long hours. This leaves little time for family or self-care - important elements of mental health.

Stress and worry related to providing for the family, deportation raids, discrimination and harassment were commonly shared at farmworker forums, all of which are mental health factors.

46% of survey participants said they need a lot of help accessing healthcare or dentists; another 32% need some help with this. OHP's expanded coverage (which took effect July 1, 2023) is not yet well-known by farmworkers.

The full report contains many insightful quotes from farmworkers in Marion County.

2. Demographic Study

Tribal Nations

The Native American tribes and bands who first stewarded the land in this region were the [Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde](#) and [Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians](#), the Clackamas, Santiam, Kalapuya (including Tsimikiti/Chemeketa), Yamhill, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Molalla, Luckiamute, Ahantchuyuk, Yakina, and Chepenfa.

To learn more about Native lands, visit <https://native-land.ca>.

Today, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians are the most active tribal nations in the region. As sovereign nations, they have their own laws and systems of government. Both are federally recognized Native American tribes.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has more than 5,400 enrolled tribal members from 30 tribes and bands in Oregon, Washington, and California. Their ancestral tribal lands include several non-contiguous sections of northern Polk County and southwestern Yamhill County.

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians are the most diverse confederation of Tribes and Bands on a single reservation in the United States. Their ancestors spoke 10 completely different languages, each of which had multiple dialects.

The Siletz Indians have connections to more than 20 million acres of ancestral territory combined, including all of Western Oregon from the summit of the Cascade mountains to the Pacific Ocean, extending into what is now southwestern Washington and northern California.

We could not find a community-verified count of American Indians and Alaska Natives living in the service area. According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 20,295 Indigenous people living in Marion and 4,005 people living in Polk.

Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and American Indians make up 6% of the population in Marion and 4.5% of the population in Polk.

Source: American Community Survey, 2022 one-year estimates, Report DP05 using race alone or in combination with other factors

2. Demographic Study

Equity Lens – Counting 2SLGBTQIA+ People

Oregon ranks second in the nation for the number of lesbian, gay, queer, bisexual, and gender-diverse individuals, who represent about 6% of the adult population. This means about 240,000 Oregonians identify with one or more of the 2SLGBTQIA+ dimensions* and/or communities.

Source: [LGBTQ Map, UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, using data from 2010-2017](#)

**The 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym includes multiple dimensions of gender and sexuality – Two-Spirit (Native American nonbinary individuals), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual individuals. The + sign is meant to include different gender identities and sexual orientations across these spectra.*

23% of 2SLGBTQIA+ adults in Oregon are parents – nearly 50,000 people.

In 2016-2018, a [UCLA Williams Institute study](#) counted 1.2 million nonbinary people living in the U.S.

In 2019, a third gender identity option was added to the Oregon Healthy Teens (OHT) survey by the Oregon Health Authority – “non-binary/gender non-conforming”. That year, 6.1% of eighth graders and 5.5% of high school juniors identified as gender non-conforming and/or non-binary.

There were 30-50 intersex students in each grade throughout the state.

The OHT is now called the Student Health Survey (SHS). In 2022, about 3% of sixth graders in Marion and 4% of sixth graders in Polk who completed the survey chose a gender identity outside the male/female binary. This is significantly lower than the state average of 5.7%.

[2022 SHS results for Marion County](#) indicate a lower percentage of sixth grade students identified as transgender (1.8%) than the state average (2.2%), but nearly 3x times as many students answered “I’m not sure” or “I don’t know what this question is asking”. Responses from Polk County sixth graders on gender identity questions were more closely aligned with state averages.

For sexual orientation, about 60% of middle-school and high-school students surveyed in Marion, Polk, and Oregon identified as straight or heterosexual in recent years. About 12% in Marion and 18% in Polk chose a different orientation. Twice as many students in Marion (vs. Polk and Oregon) didn’t know what this question was asking in 2022, and a higher percentage chose “I prefer not to answer”.

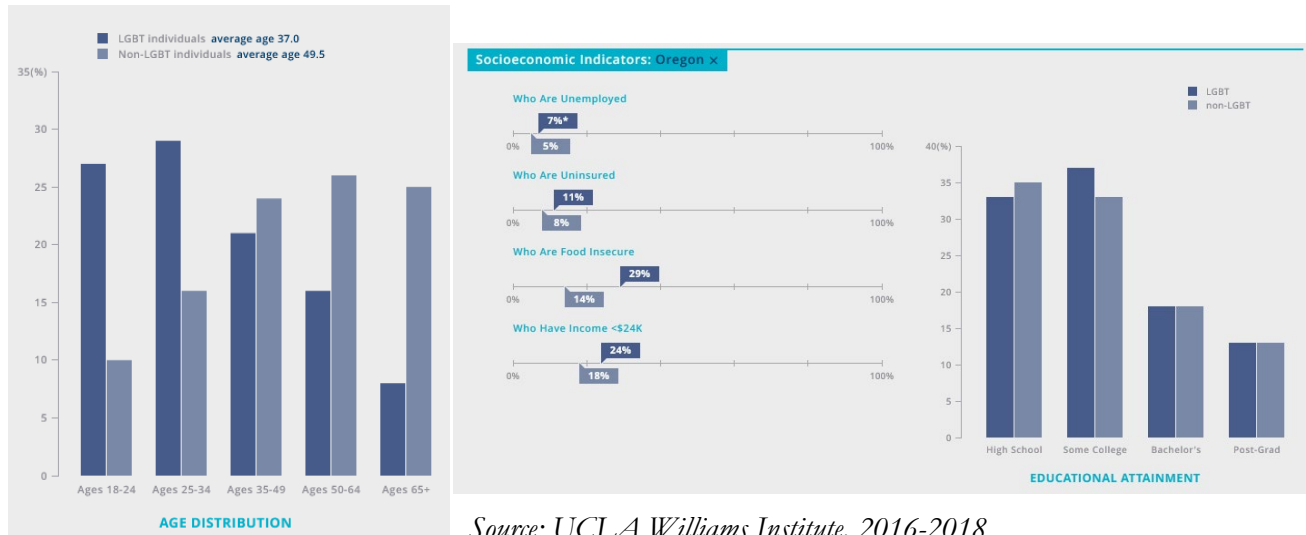
The “I don’t know what this question is asking” responses may indicate a need for more comprehensive sex education in Marion elementary and middle schools. There may also be cultural factors at play in the Latinx community, where the gender binary and heterosexual norms are more rigidly enforced. There may be language barriers for Spanish-speaking students.

According to the 2022 SHS, a higher percentage of 8th grade and 11th grade students were bullied about their gender identity or sexual orientation in Polk County and Oregon than in Marion County.

Multiple surveys have shown that a significantly higher percentage of youth (10-20%) identify as transgender or gender diverse than adults (<5%). The actual numbers are likely higher, due to the risks of being openly trans for people of all ages. *See Figure 11 for a similar trend among LGBTQ+ people.*

2. Demographic Study

Figure 11: Age distribution and socioeconomic indicators for LGBTQ+ individuals in the U.S.



2SLGBTQIA+ people have higher rates of educational attainment at all stages except high school, yet a higher percentage of adults are unemployed, uninsured, food insecure, and have low-income than cisgender, heterosexual people. This data reflects discrimination in employment and housing. Research shows it is linked to higher suicide rates and more self-harm among 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

In 2024, UCLA released a report with the National Center for Transgender Equality summarizing the results of the 2022 US Trans Survey. It is the largest survey of transgender people age 16+ to date in the U.S. and its territories, with nearly 90,000 responses. State-level data is not yet available, but we expect Oregon's results to align with national findings.

Key Findings from the US Trans Survey

- More than one-third (34%) of respondents were experiencing poverty.
- The unemployment rate among respondents was 18%.
- Nearly one-third (30%) of respondents had experienced homelessness in their lifetime.
- More than three-quarters of adult respondents (80%) and nearly two-thirds of 16- and 17-year-old respondents (60%) who were out or perceived as transgender in K-12 experienced one or more form of mistreatment or negative experience - including verbal harassment, physical attacks, online bullying, being denied the ability to dress according to their gender identity/expression, teachers or staff refusing to use chosen name or pronouns, or being denied the use of restrooms or locker rooms matching their gender identity.
- Nearly one-quarter of respondents (24%) did not see a doctor when they needed to in the last 12 months due to fear of mistreatment.
- Of those who saw a health care provider within the last 12 months, nearly one-half (48%) reported having at least one negative experience because they were transgender, such as being refused health care, being misgendered, and/or having a provider be harsh or abusive.
- More than one in ten (11%) adult respondents who grew up in the same household with family, guardians, or foster parents said that a family member was violent towards them because they were transgender, and 8% were kicked out of the house.

2. Demographic Study

Languages Spoken

In Marion, the most common language spoken besides English is Spanish, with more than 27,000 Spanish speakers across the county. In Polk, there are 2,100 Spanish speakers, according to the most recent American Community Survey data.

Table 3: Most common languages spoken in Marion County, Oregon

Language	Estimated Number of Speakers
Spanish	27,000
Russian	1,250
Chinese	650
Vietnamese	350
Marshallese	350

Source: [Oregon Translation Advisory Council website](#)

Report Area	Spanish	Other Indo-European Languages	Asian and Pacific Island Languages	Other Languages
Marion County, OR	28,476	1,555	2,721	578

**In Marion, 10% of residents age 5+ have limited English proficiency – 33,300 people.
26% speak a language other than English at home.**

Table 4: Most common languages spoken in Polk County, Oregon

Language	Estimated Number of Speakers
Spanish	2,100
Chinese	180
Russian	150
Marshallese	150
Vietnamese	140

Source: [Oregon Translation Advisory Council website](#)

Report Area	Spanish	Other Indo-European Languages	Asian and Pacific Island Languages	Other Languages
Polk County, OR	2,102	561	374	14

**In Polk, about 5% of residents age 5+ have limited English proficiency – 3,500 people.
11% speak a language other than English at home.**

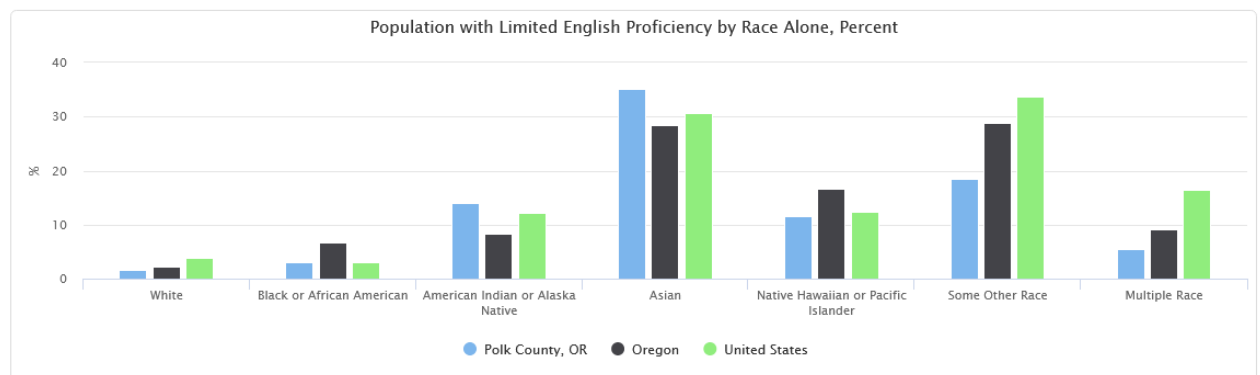
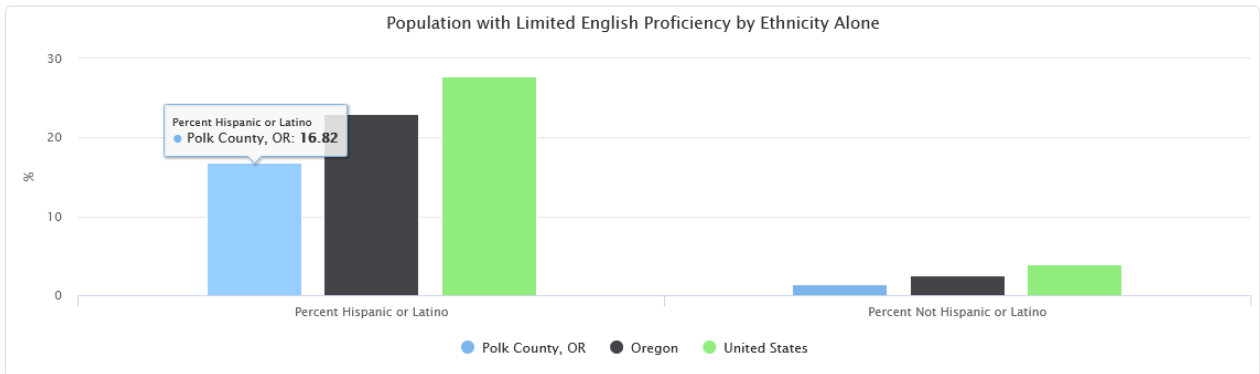
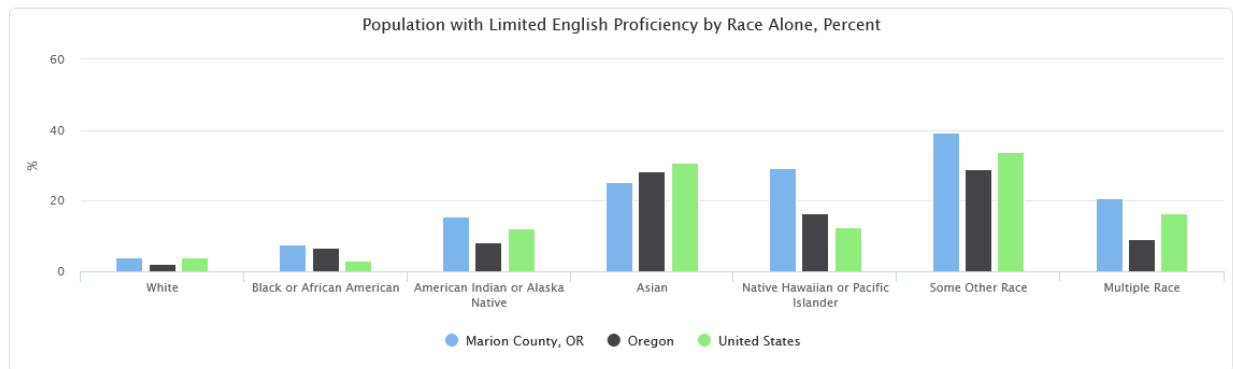
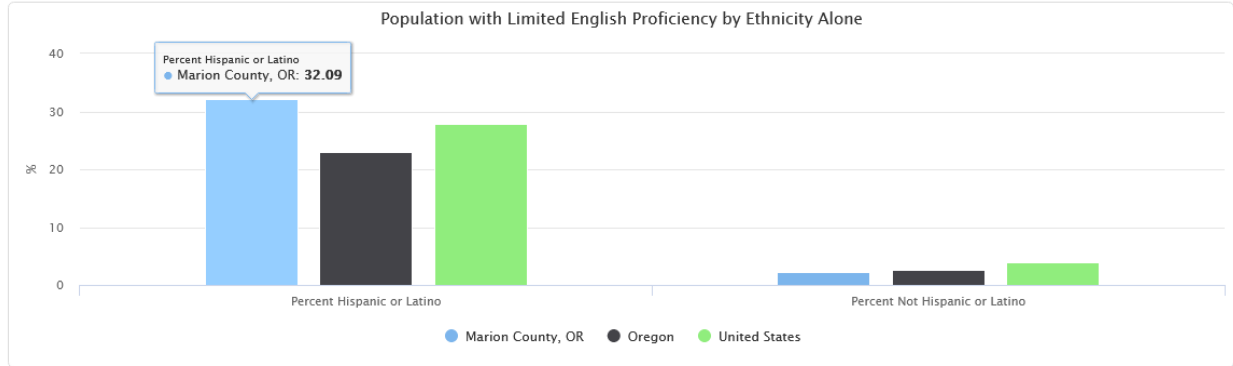
Source: *Census ACS data, 2018-2022*

Note: Despite using the same data source, the Translation Advisory Council estimates a lower number of Asian and Pacific Island language speakers, compared to Census ACS data from SparkMap.

2. Demographic Study

The percentage values in Figure 12 could be interpreted as follows: "Of all the Hispanic and Latine people in Marion County, the percentage of population with limited English proficiency is 32.09%. In Polk County, 16.82% of the Hispanic or Latine population has limited English proficiency."

Figure 12: Communities of color with limited English Proficiency in the service area, 2018-2022



2. Demographic Study

U.S. Citizenship and Residency Status

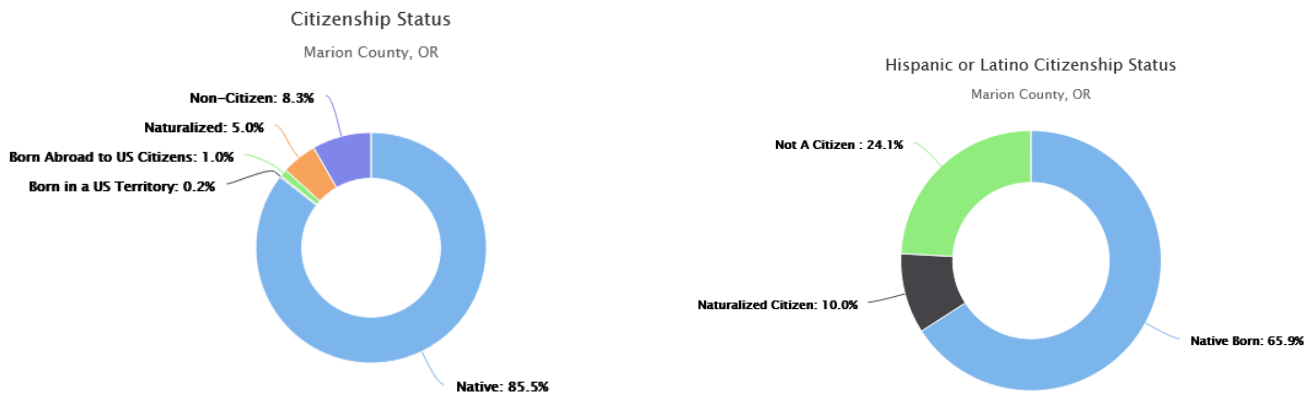
There are approximately 31,500 residents in Marion Polk who are non-citizens.

The state average for non-citizens is 5.0% of the total population in Oregon. The national average is 6.5% of the population.

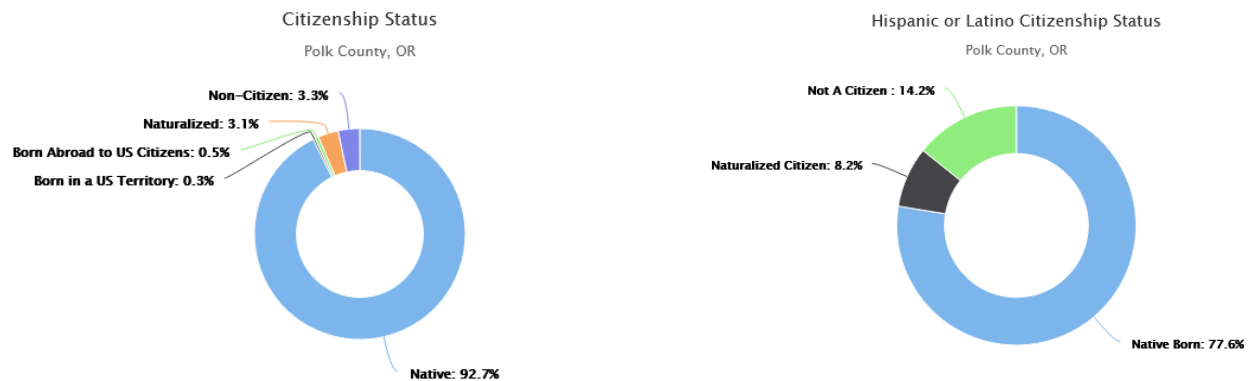
Source: Census ACS, 2018-2022

Figure 13: Citizenship status for all groups and by ethnicity, Marion and Polk Counties, 2018-2022

According to the latest American Community Survey (ACS), Marion County has 28,614 non-citizens - 8.3% of the total population. Of the total Latine population, 24.1% are non-citizens.



According to the latest American Community Survey (ACS) data, Polk County has 2,887 non-citizens - 3.3% of the total population. Of the total Latine population, 14.2% are non-citizens.



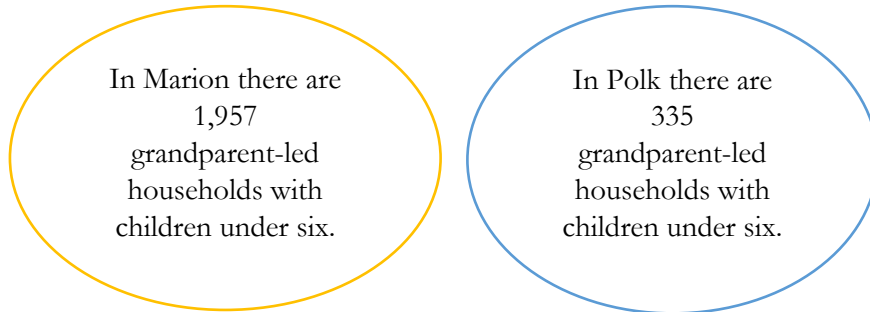
2. Demographic Study

Household Characteristics

Households in the service area are slightly larger (2.7 persons per household) than households in Oregon (2.5). There are more than 9,300 households in the service area with children under age six.

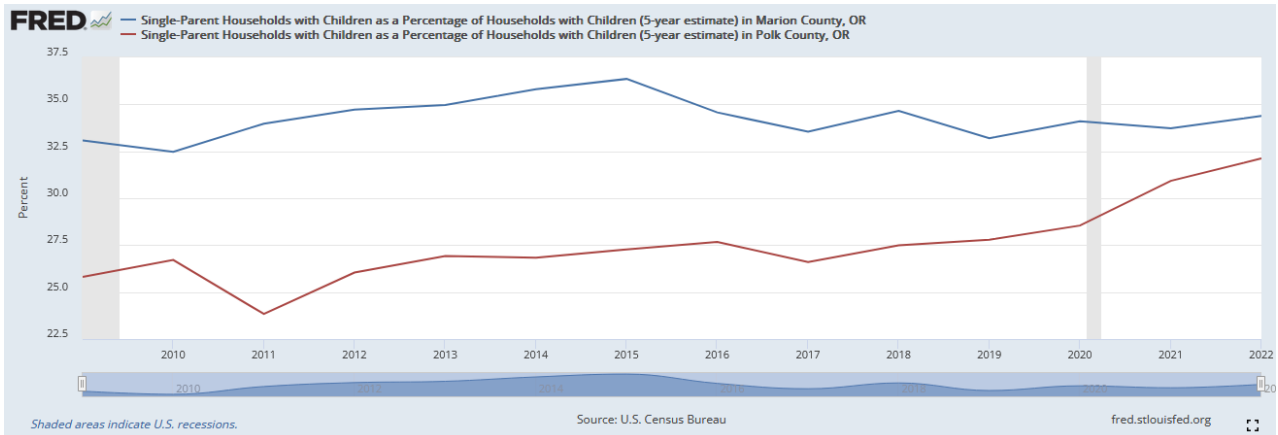
Table 5: Marion and Polk – Select household characteristics

	Marion	Polk
# of households	128,254	33,130
Average household size	2.71	2.67
Households with children under six	7,135	2,186



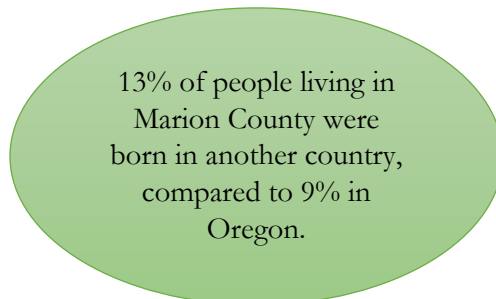
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022 one-year estimates

Figure 14: Single parent households as a percentage of households with children, Marion and Polk Counties, Oregon, 2010-2022



Source: Retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

From 2010 to 2020, there was a higher percentage of single-parent households in Marion than Polk. From 2020-2022, the percentage grew in Polk and remained steady in Marion. Now, about one in three households with children in the region are led by single parents.



2. Demographic Study

Educational Attainment for Adults

A higher percentage of adults in Marion County did not complete high school (15%) compared to Polk County and Oregon (8-9%). About the same percentage of adults in both counties have some college or have obtained an associate degree.

**In Marion County, about 1 in 4 adults have obtained a bachelor degree or higher.
In Polk County and Oregon, about 1 in 3 adults have obtained a bachelor degree or higher.**

Table 6: Regional attainment of bachelor degrees, Marion and Polk Counties

Population age 25+	Marion	Polk	Oregon
Less than HS graduate	15%	9%	8%
HS graduate or GED only	26%	21%	23%
Some college	25%	27%	24%
Associate degree	9%	10%	9%
HS graduate, GED, or higher	86%	91%	92%
Bachelor degree or higher	26%	34%	36%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 2022 one-year estimates, Report S1501, rounded

Private universities in the service area include Willamette University, Corban University, and the Institute of Technology. There are four universities and two community colleges within a 30-mile radius.

Public colleges and universities include Chemeketa Community College (Salem main campus) and Western Oregon University (Monmouth). There are two beauty colleges and a seminary in the area.

Nearby colleges and universities include Oregon State University in Corvallis (public), George Fox University in Newberg (private, Christian), and Linn-Benton Community College in Albany (public).

At OSU, Open Campus and Juntos offer local programming and educational support for Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade students, university and community college students, adult learners, and members of the Marion County community.

From 2010-2019, the percentage of people in the United States and Oregon age 25+ with a bachelor or graduate degree increased from 30% to 36%. Gains were made across all racial/ethnic groups.

The most notable increases were among Black students – 35% more have attained bachelor degrees since 2010. Among Latine students, 21% more students obtained a college degree in the past decade, and 20% more white students graduated college than in 2000-2010*.

Significant disparities still exist for BIPOC students obtaining university degrees, when compared to white students. However, the difference shrinks to less than 5% for associates degrees, and Native American and Alaska Native people have closed the gap.^

*Source: [Census Bureau, 2019 Table Package highlights, Educational Attainment in the U.S.](#)

^Source: [The Education Trust, Degree Attainment for Native American Adults, 2018](#)

3. Income and Poverty

This section outlines current poverty standards in the U.S. and sources of household income, followed by county profiles with median household income and rates of poverty for children, individuals, and families. There are maps with poverty rates by census tract.

The section closes with a summary of internet access and an equity lens highlighting disparities in how communities of color experience poverty.

Poverty Standards

Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is the standard used by Head Start programs for automatic eligibility. It is also used by many federal, state, and local assistance programs to define “low-income household”. FPL is based on household size, but it is not adjusted by geography in the lower 48 states, despite very different costs of living in each area. The most recent FPL standards can be found [here](#).

Federal Poverty Level for two people is just \$20,440 a year, and \$31,200 for four people.

**With increased costs for housing, health care, groceries, and household goods,
100% FPL does not approach a self-sufficiency standard in the U.S.
200-250% FPL is a more accurate definition of a self-sufficiency standard.**

ALICE Households

The financial situation in about half of Oregon households can be described as:

ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

These households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford the basics where they live. ALICE workers were celebrated as essential heroes during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they still are not paid enough to support their families.

ALICE households are forced to make tough choices, such as deciding between quality child care or paying the rent — choices that have long-term consequences for all.

Source: www.unitedforalice.org

In 2021, 44% of households in Oregon were ALICE households - the same as 2018.

In 2019 and 2021, nearly 1 in 3 households in Marion County (31%) had annual income below the threshold needed to avoid financial hardship.

Almost 1 in 4 households in Polk County (23%) had annual income below this threshold. This reflects an improvement in Polk since 2019.

2023 ALICE report

3. Income and Poverty

Using the FPL guidelines, just 13% of households in Marion had income below 100% of Federal Poverty Level last year (versus 12% in Oregon and 31% using ALICE standards).

The difference between FPL and ALICE shows the limitations of FPL in measuring poverty. ALICE is a more accurate measure of the percentage of households experiencing financial strain.



Source: Oregon Child Development Coalition, 2022 Community Needs Assessment

Appendix D contains a “Facts and Demographics” handout from the OCDC report.

Sources of Income

In several regions of Oregon Upward Development has studied, about three out of every four Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) parents, guardians, and caregivers are employed.

The same is true for parents in Salem-Keizer Head Start. However, 50-60% of parents with children enrolled in Community Action and Family Building Blocks programs last year were employed.

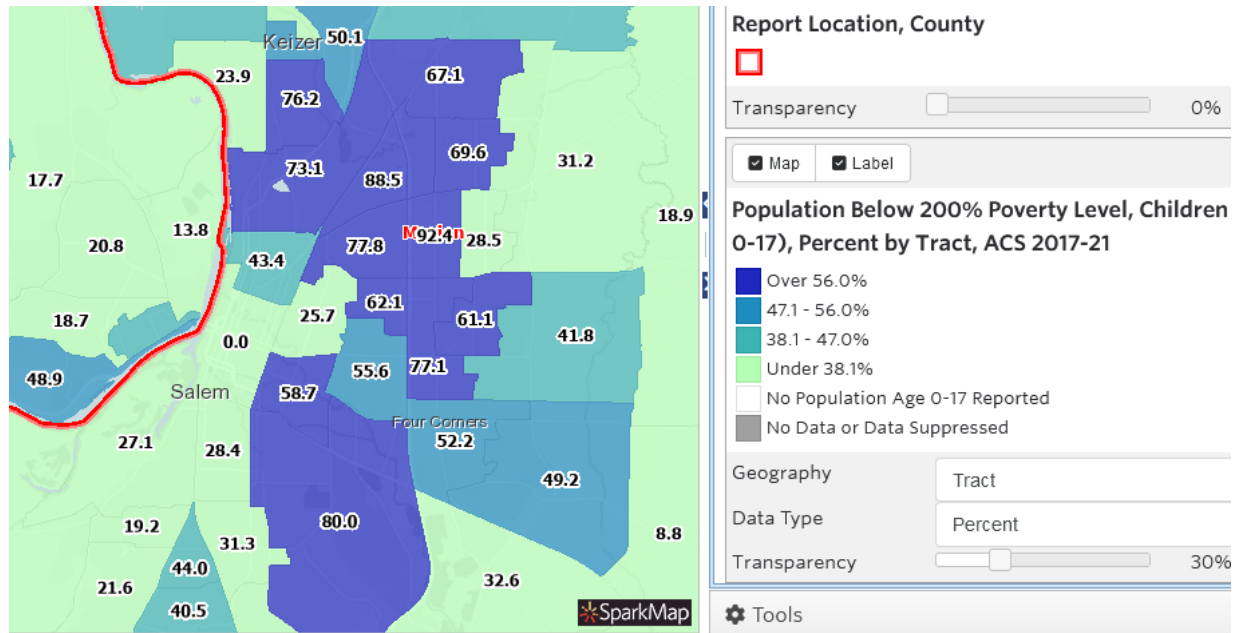
This likely reflects the high number of agricultural jobs in the region and farmworkers who are seasonally employed. Data from Family Building Blocks supports this observation – almost 75% of parents were employed by the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Other sources of household income for eligible families may include cash benefits like TANF, TA-DVS (TANF for domestic violence survivors), WIC, SNAP, foster care payments, Social Security Disability (SSD) payments and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Grandparents and older guardians with children eligible for Head Start may have modest income from Social Security, pensions and/or private retirement funds.

3. Income and Poverty

Figure 15: Map of Salem metro census tracts with percentage of children age 0-17 in moderate-income households (below 200% of Federal Poverty Level)



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

As noted in Figure 15, a majority of children in South Salem, NE Salem, Four Corners, and Keizer live in households with income below 200% of Federal Poverty Level.

In some census tracts in South Salem and NE Salem, more than 8 in 10 households have low-to-moderate income.

In Polk County, one in two children in West Salem live in households with low-to-moderate income.

Additional Resource: Community Action Agencies can use SparkMap to gather detailed data for census tracts and zip codes. There is no cost.

3. Income and Poverty

Median Household Income – Marion County

If we only look at median (midpoint) household income, the picture looks positive. In 2022, median household income in urban Marion was \$69,000 to \$70,000.

However, one in three households have far less income – below \$50,000 annually. One in six households in Marion County have income below \$25,000 annually. This is similar to Oregon and the U.S.

<https://censusreporter.org>

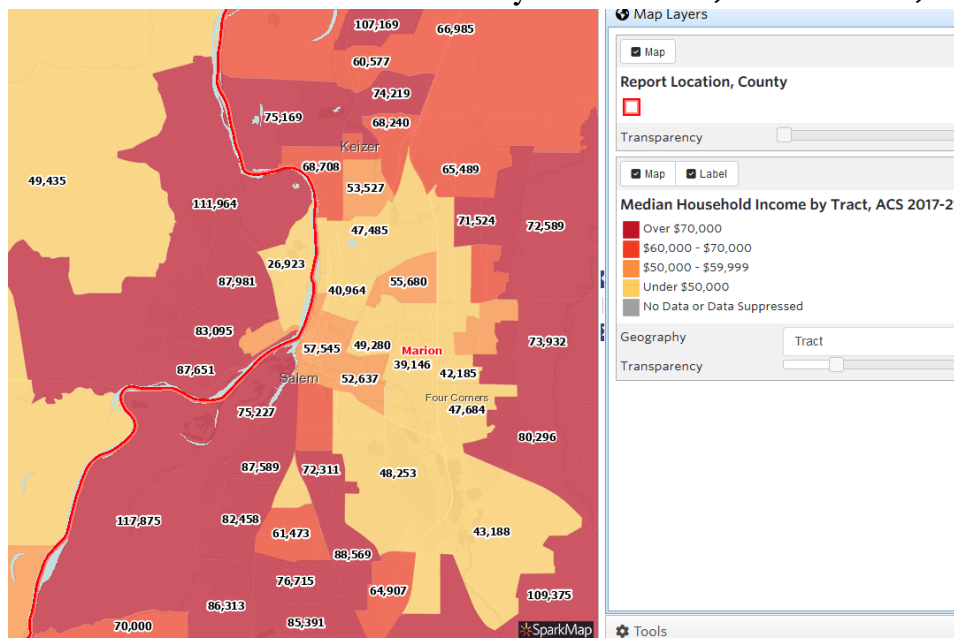
Table 7: Median household income and population experiencing poverty, Marion County and select urban areas, 2022

City or Urban Area	Median Household Income	% of population below poverty level (<100% FPL)
Salem-Keizer	\$69,951	15%
South Salem and Four Corners	\$69,219	15%
Salem City	\$70,220	15%
Marion County	\$71,022	13-14%
Oregon	\$75,567	12%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2022, one-year and five-year data, inflation-adjusted, Reports S1903 and S1701

Figure 16 reflects median household income by census tract in the Salem metro area. This supports 2015 DHS/OHA data showing more low-income households in inner NE, outer NE, and outer SE.

Figure 16: Median household income by census tract, Salem metro, 2017-2021



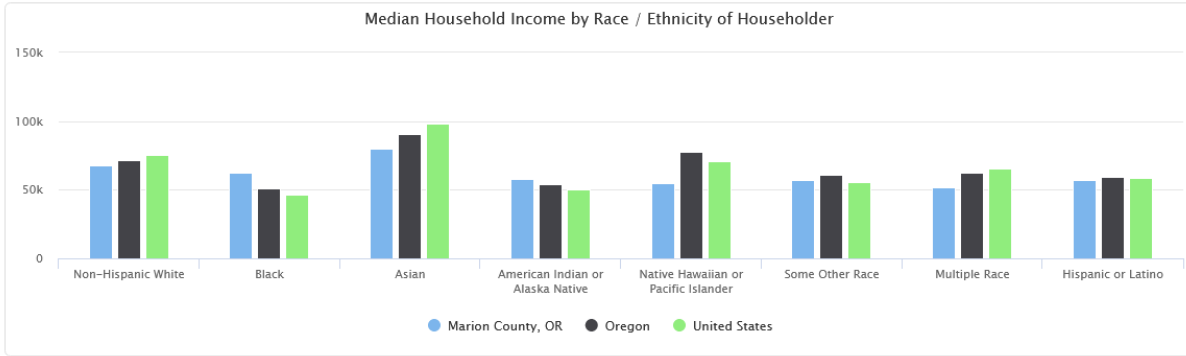
Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

3. Income and Poverty

Equity Lens - Income Inequality in Marion County

There are persistent disparities in household income by race and ethnicity. Generally, people of color have lower household income than white households. This pattern is consistent across the U.S., as shown in Figure 19. Here we offer a brief overview of income inequality in Marion and the U.S.

Figure 17: Median household income by race and ethnicity of householder, Marion County, Oregon, U.S., 2017-2021



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

Figure 17 shows Black and Indigenous households in Marion closed some of the household income gap during 2017-2021, compared to Oregon and the U.S.

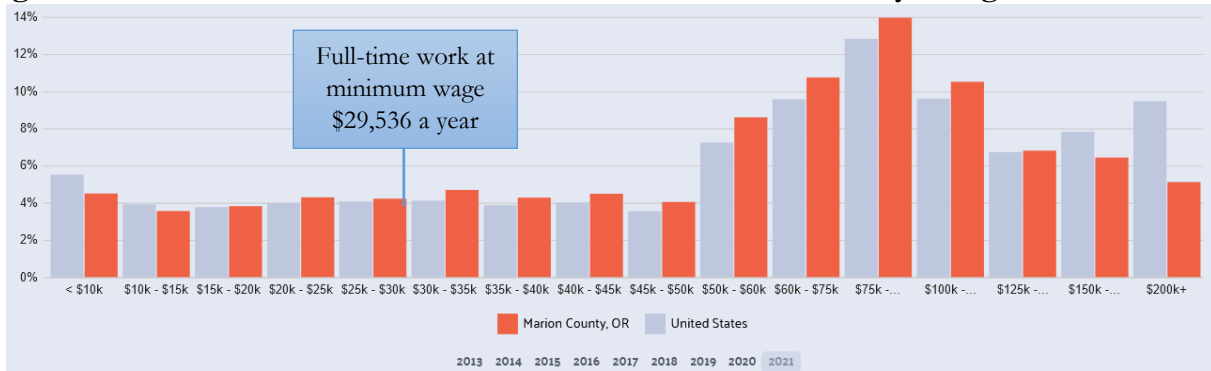
People who identify as some other race, or Hispanic or Latine, were on par with state and national household income for those racial and ethnic groups.

Other communities of color in Marion had lower household income than in Oregon and the U.S.

In Marion, all people of color except Asian Americans had lower household income than white households. This aligns with state and national income disparities experienced by most people of color.

Figure 18 reveals income inequality in Marion is slightly worse than the U.S. In 2021, there was a higher percentage of low-income households in Marion (\$20,000 to \$45,000) than in the U.S..

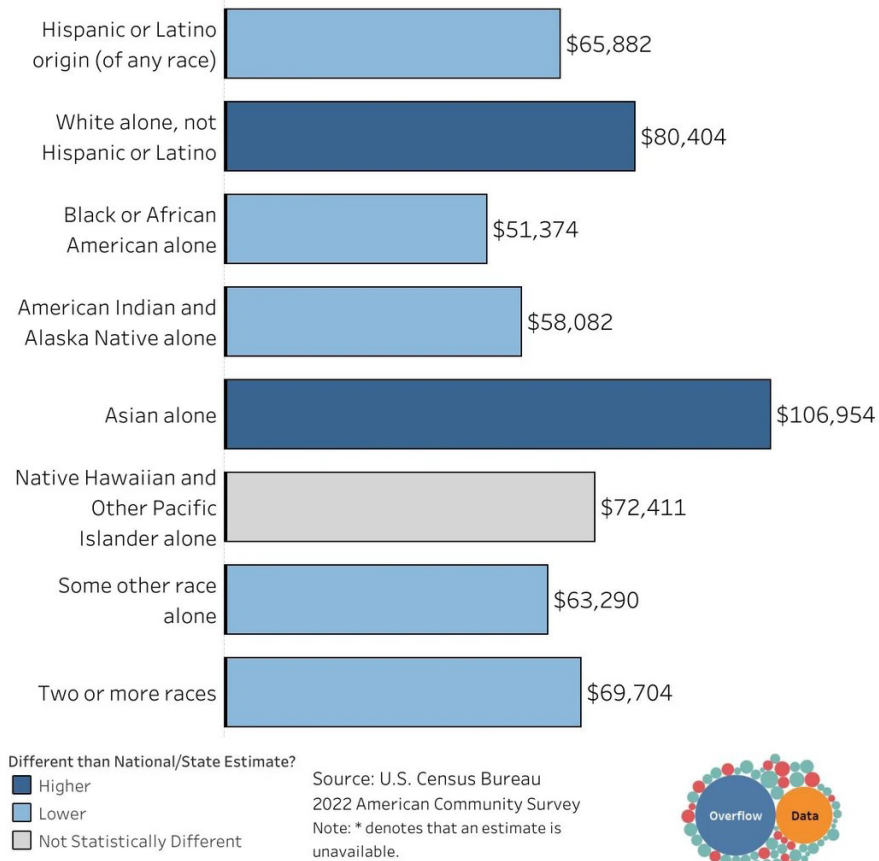
Figure 18: Median household income distribution, Marion County, Oregon and U.S., 2021



Source: <https://datausa.io/>, 2021

3. Income and Poverty

Figure 19: Median household income by race and ethnicity of householder, U.S., 2022



A range of personal factors can affect earnings and benefits, including language barriers, immigration status, child care needs, illness, disability, and literacy.

External factors may also create barriers to job security, advancement at work, and a person’s ability to qualify for benefits. These include poor workplace conditions, unlawful employment practices, transportation challenges, debt collection, credit issues, and discrimination – including racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia.

Groups that are historically marginalized due to their race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, national origin, disability status, and other protected factors experience external barriers more frequently and persistently. These conditions disproportionately affect their household income, family stability, health, and well-being.

Additional Resource: For a deep dive, the Census Bureau offers a report with median household income by race, ethnicity, and age of the householder. (Report S1903)

3. Income and Poverty

Poverty Profile – Marion County

In 2021-2022, Oregon DHS and the Oregon Health Authority estimated 13.4% of Marion County households were experiencing poverty. This tracks closely with the most recent ACS estimate of 13.7% of households.

ACS estimates show 7,213 families in Marion County with related children under five years. Of those, 13.4% had household income below 100% FPL. (Margin of error is high - 7.2%.)

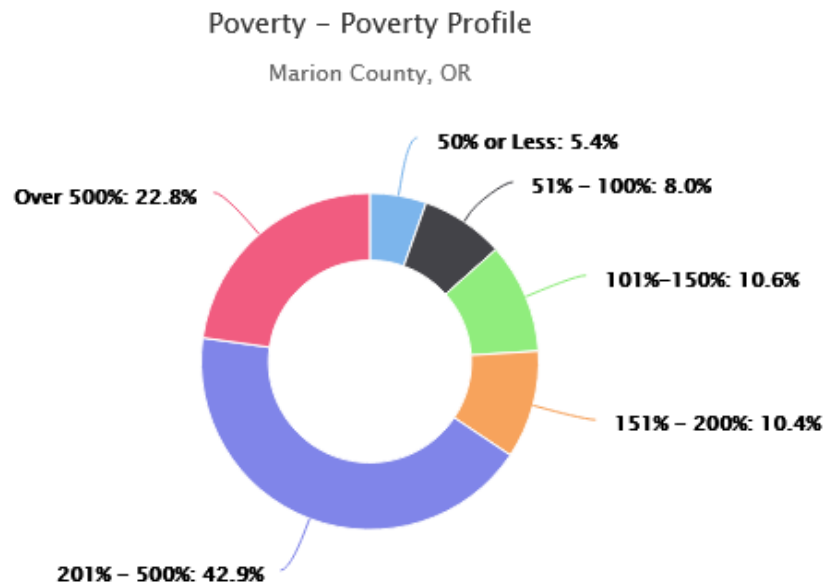
Recent ACS and DHS data indicates 850-1,450 families with children in Marion are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start based on household income.

According to the most recent ACS, nearly 75,000 people in Marion County had household income below 150% of Federal Poverty Level.

There are more than 3,000 children age 0-5 in low-to-moderate-income households in Marion (100-150% FPL) who may be eligible.

*Sources: ODHS/OHA Regional Forecasting Report, 2022-2023
U.S. Census reports S1701 and S1702, <https://data.census.gov>
Portland State University, Population Research Center, Annual Population Report Tables, 2021*

Figure 20: Pie chart with poverty profile, Marion County, Oregon, 2017-2021



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2021

About 25% of Marion County households have income below 150% FPL.

3. Income and Poverty

Poverty Hotspots – Marion County

We discovered older data (2008-2013) for poverty hotspots in Marion and Polk. Unfortunately, DHS and OHA no longer produce these reports, but the findings are still mostly relevant according to staff, especially in Northgate and Four Corners.

Table 8: High-poverty hotspots, Marion County, 2015

19.a	Marion – Salem Inner NE	Grant Highland	Englewood	Northgate	
b	Marion – Salem Outer NE SE	Hayesville	NE Lancaster	Four Corners SE Mill Creek	Airport Area
c	Marion – Woodburn Gervais	Woodburn NE	Woodburn SE	Woodburn W	Gervais

Source: Oregon Department of Human Services, OHA Office of Forecasting, Research, & Analysis, 2015.

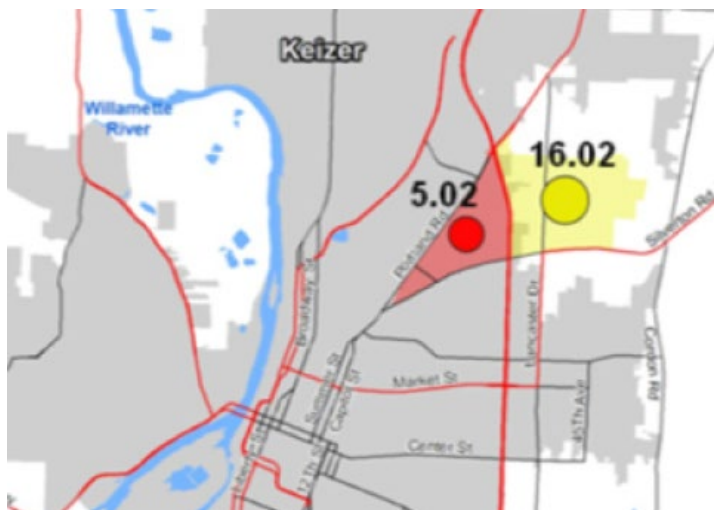
Definitions

The Census Bureau’s definition of a *high poverty area* is a tract with a poverty rate of 20% or more. DHS and OHA define a *high poverty hotspot* as a census tract or contiguous group of tracts with poverty rates of 20% or more for two consecutive measurements.

DHS and OHA data for Northeast Salem - 2014

The area of Northeast Salem containing census tracts 5.02 and 16.02 are among the most densely populated and highest poverty areas in the state.

- Both tracts have a large number of residents earning \$10,000 or less (19% and 21% respectively).
- They have a lot of single-parent households – 25% or more of all households.
- Almost 50% of households in tract 5.02 contain children – the second highest rate in Oregon.
- About 50% of residents in these tracts speak a language other than English.



According to this map’s legend, there were 4,600 to 6,700 people experiencing poverty in these two census tracts combined.

Source: [Fall 2014 Regional Forecast by District](#)

3. Income and Poverty

Childhood Poverty – Marion County

According to the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment for Marion and Polk Counties, about 20% of children are experiencing poverty in Marion, compared to 17% in Oregon.

Source: 2023 update to 2019 assessment

One in five children in Marion County are experiencing the condition of poverty. Current Census data (2022) shows 15% of children under age five are experiencing poverty.

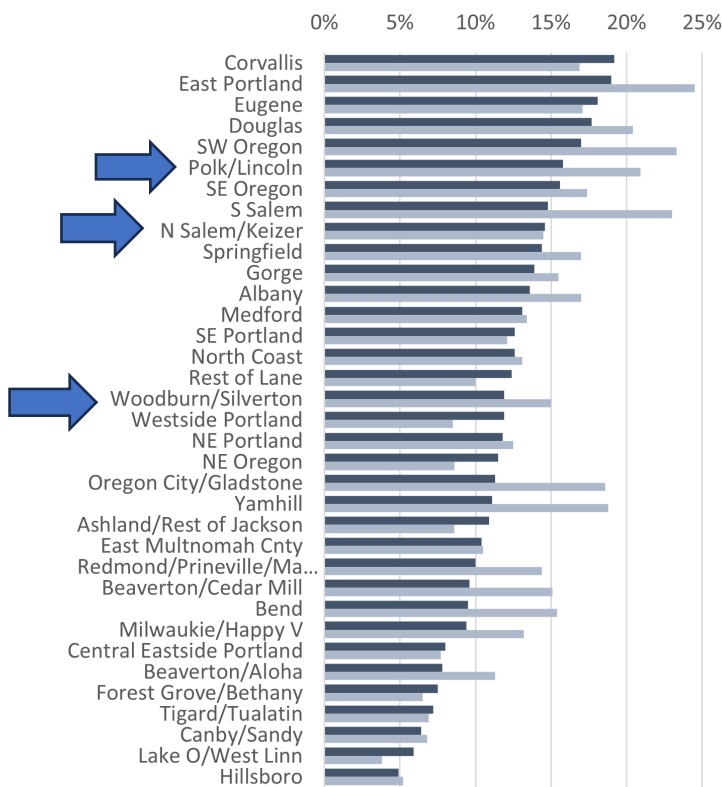
On a related note, single parent households are about three times as likely to be headed by women.

Across all age groups, measured poverty rates have declined in Oregon since 2010. This is due to improving economic conditions and increases in the state minimum wage.

Figure 21: Percentage of total population and children experiencing poverty by Oregon city, 2022

Poverty Across Oregon

Total Population and Children under the poverty threshold



Data: 2022 ACS | Source: Census, Oregon Office of Economic Analysis

In the service area:

23% of children in South Salem are experiencing poverty – the third highest rate in Oregon.

Children in South Salem are almost twice as likely as adults to experience poverty.

Woodburn and Silverton have moderate rates of childhood poverty – 15%.

21% of children in Polk County are experiencing poverty – the fourth highest rate in Oregon.

Despite declining poverty rates in Oregon and the service area, children in Marion Polk are much more likely than adults to experience poverty.

3. Income and Poverty

Where households and children under 18 in the service area experience poverty

The following maps are from SparkMap (January 2024). Unless otherwise noted, the data source is the 2017-2021 Census American Community Survey.

Figure 22: Percentage of the population experiencing poverty below 100% FPL in Marion Polk, by census tract, 2017-2021

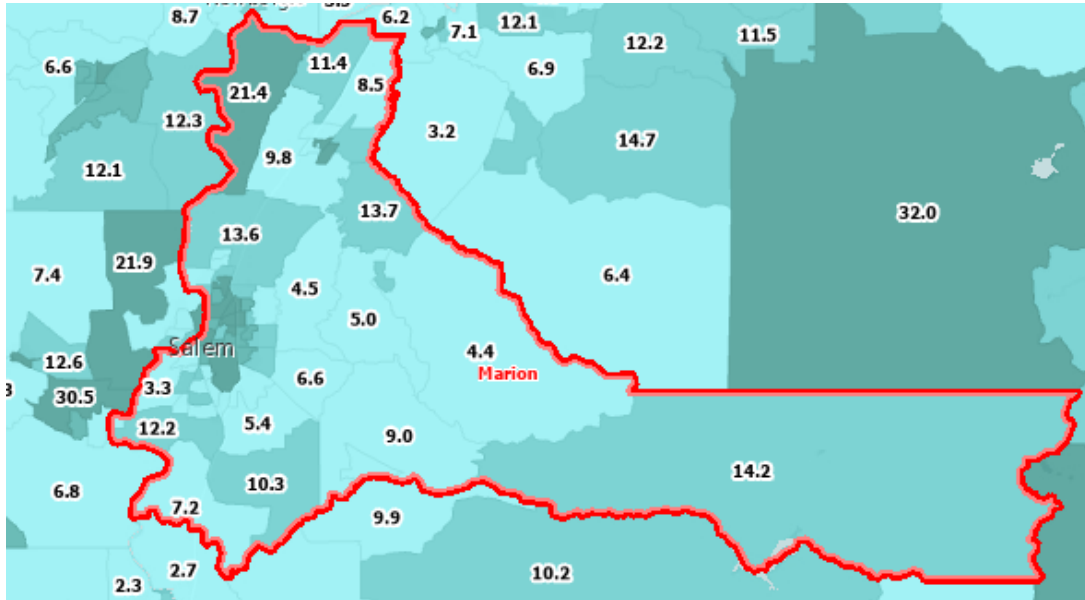
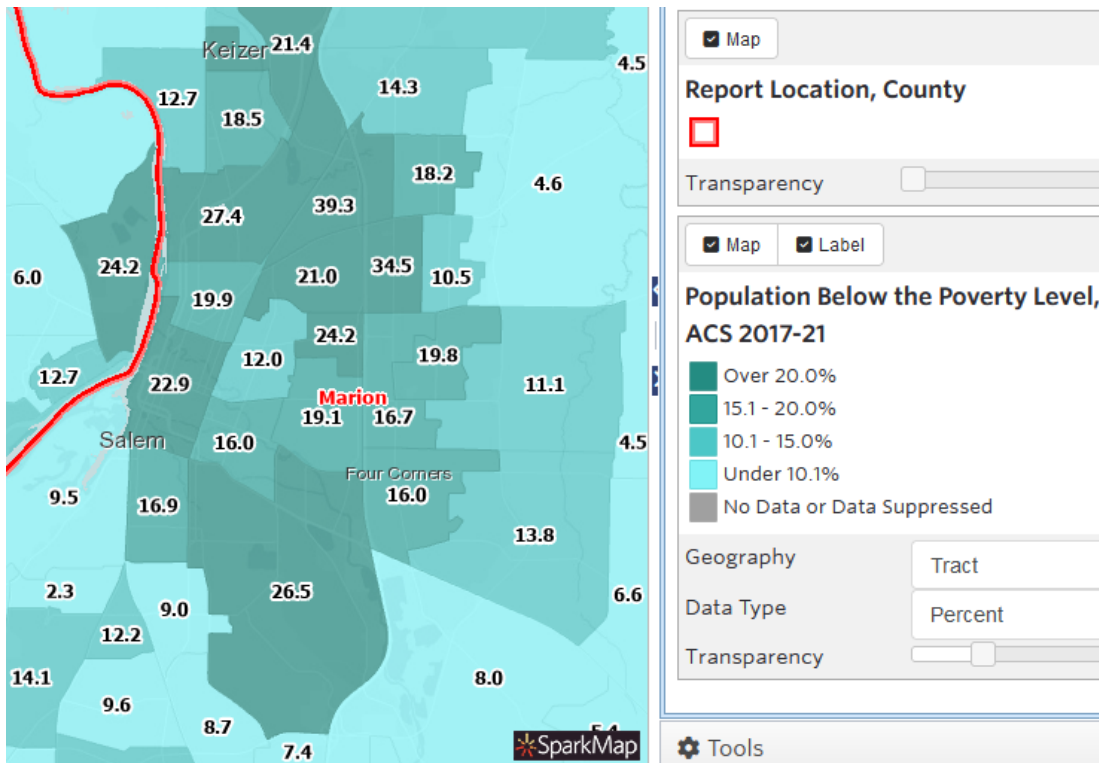


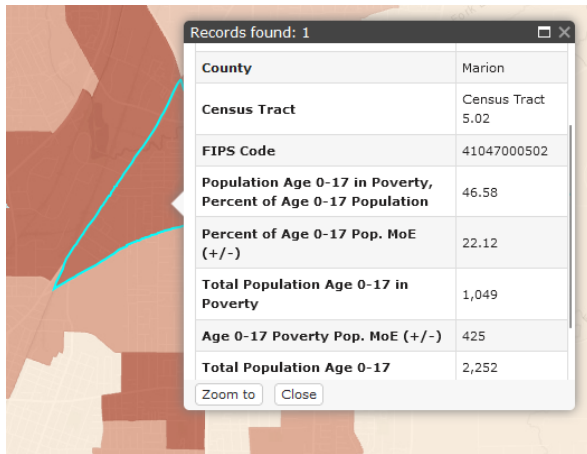
Figure 23: Population experiencing poverty below 100% FPL in Salem, by census tract, 2017-2021



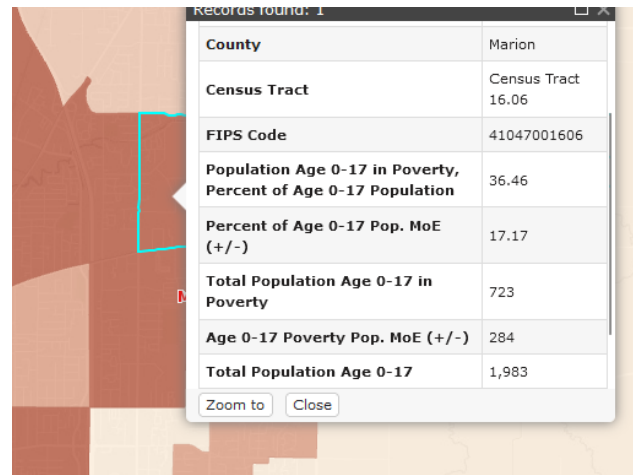
3. Income and Poverty

Figure 24: Number and percentage of children under 18 in select Marion-Polk census tracts with the highest poverty rates, 2017-2021

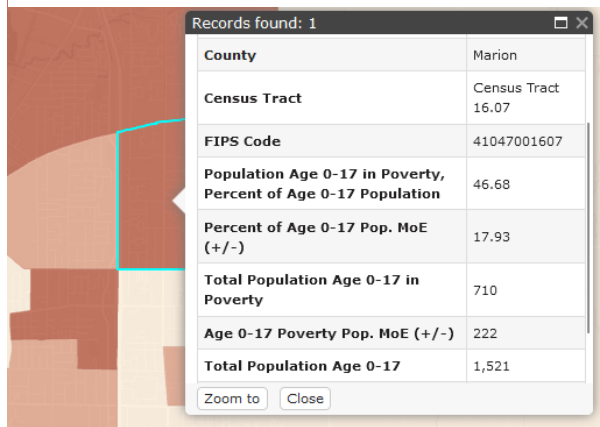
Inner NE Salem, Tract 5.02



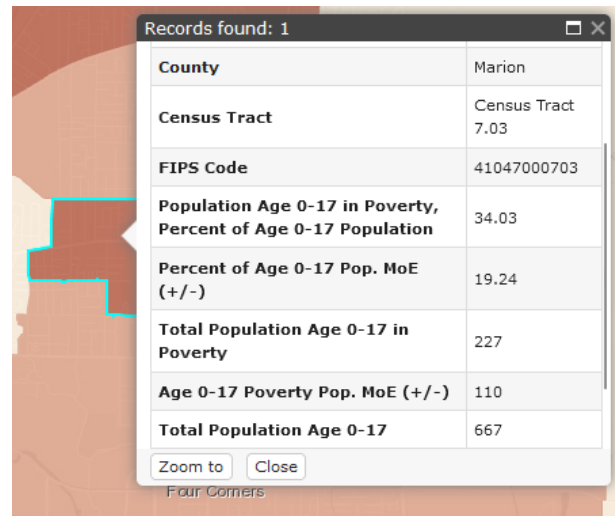
Outer NE Salem, Tract 16.06



East Salem, Tract 16.07



Southeast Salem, Tract 7.03

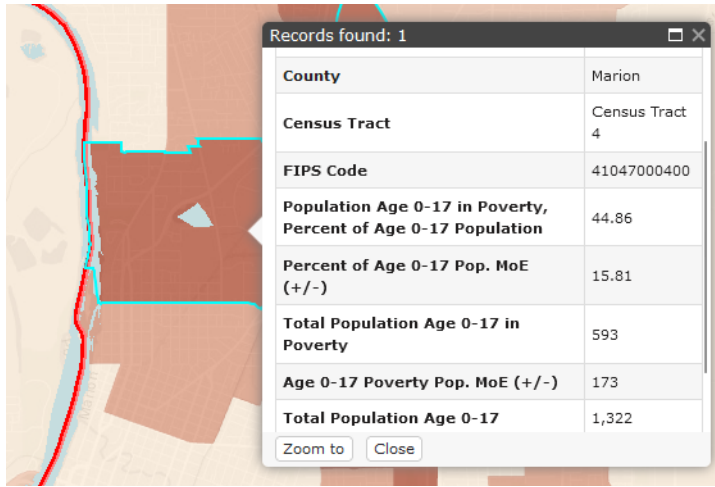


In NE and SE Salem, between 34% and 47% of children are experiencing poverty.

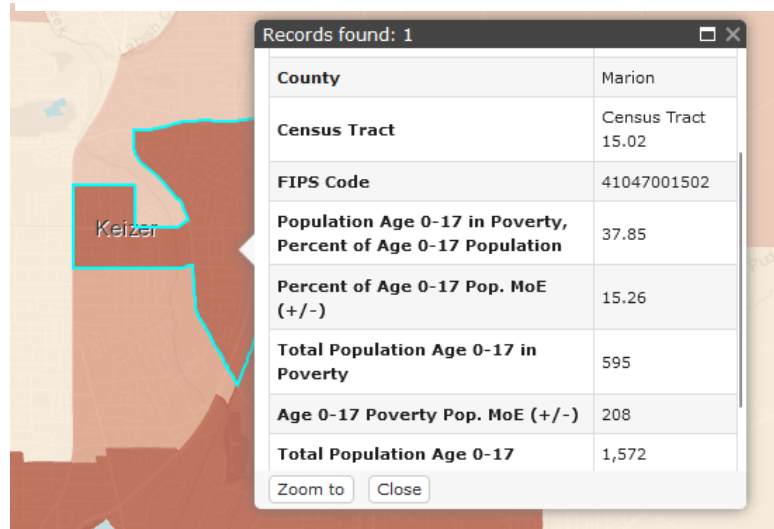
Poverty affects 3,800 to 4,200 children under age 18 in these neighborhoods.

3. Income and Poverty

North Central Salem, Tract 4



Keizer, Tract 15.02



In Keizer and North/Central Salem, between 38% and 45% of children are experiencing poverty. Poverty affects 1,200 to 1,400 children under age 18 in these neighborhoods.

The highest rates of poverty in the service area are in urban Marion - South Salem, Inner NE Salem, Outer NE Salem, and West Salem.

Rural areas of Marion (Woodburn, Silverton, and east county) have slightly higher rates of poverty than the Oregon average, but much lower rates than Salem-Keizer.

3. Income and Poverty

Median Household Income – Polk County

Median household income in Polk County is higher than in Oregon as a whole, but more children experience poverty as a percentage of the population, especially in Dallas.

Table 9: Median household income, Polk County, Oregon and select towns, 2022

City or Urban Area	Median Household Income
Dallas	\$67,935
Independence	\$73,361
Polk County	\$77,368
Oregon	\$75,567

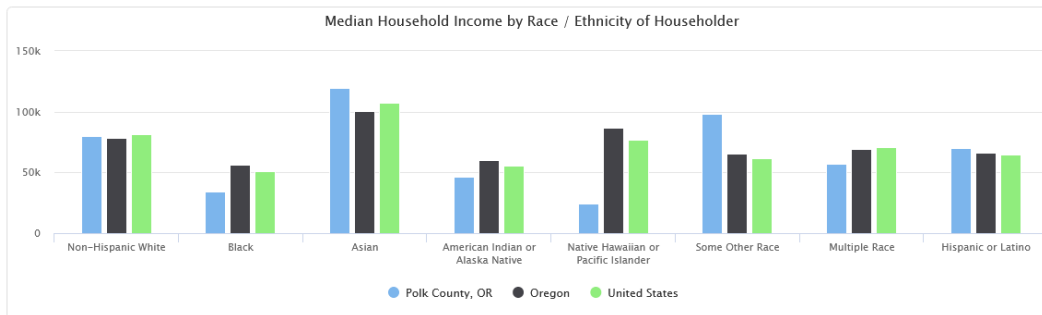
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2022, one-year and five-year data, inflation adjusted

Note: West Salem is not available in these Census reports. It is part of the Salem metro area.

Equity Lens – Income Inequality in Polk County

There is a significant income disparity for Black, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander households in Polk County. Hispanic and Latine households have closed the income gap, compared to this group in Oregon and the U.S. Only Asian households and those identifying with some other race exceed the median income for white households in Polk.

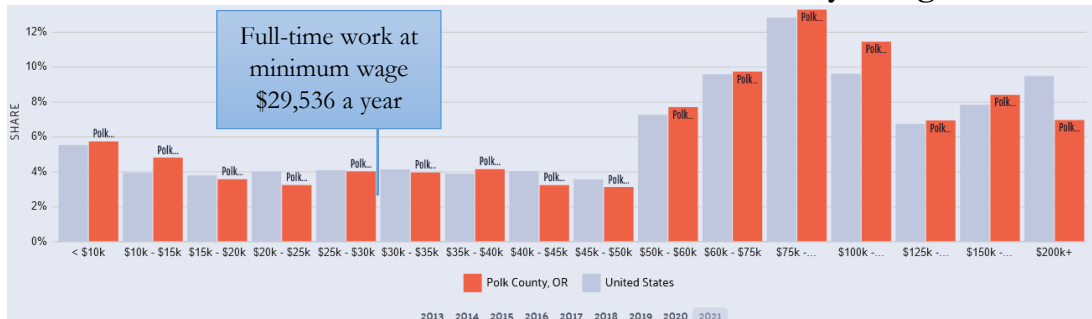
Figure 25: Median household income by race and ethnicity of householder, Polk County, Oregon and U.S., 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2018-2022, via SparkMap

There are more very low-income households in Polk than in the U.S. (<\$15,000). There are fewer low-to-moderate-income (\$40-50k) and fewer high-income households than the U.S. (\$75-150k).

Figure 26: Median household income distribution, Polk County, Oregon and U.S., 2021



Source: <https://datausa.io/>, 2021

3. Income and Poverty

Poverty Profile – Polk County

From 2017-2022, American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for Polk County show an increase in the poverty rate from 12.1% to 15.4% (all ages).

From 2012-2020, West Salem and Independence were identified as poverty hotspots in Polk County.

Table 10: Population and children experiencing poverty, Polk County and select towns, 2022

City or Urban Area	% of population below poverty level (<100% FPL)	% of population under five years below poverty level
Dallas	15%	25%
Independence	10%	18%
Polk County	15%	26%
Oregon	12%	17%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2022, one-year and five-year data, inflation adjusted, S1701

Compared to Oregon, there is a higher percentage of married couple families in Dallas and West Salem experiencing poverty – 9% and 12% respectively. This group typically has lower rates of poverty than other types of households.

More than 20,000 people in Polk County have household income below 150% FPL.

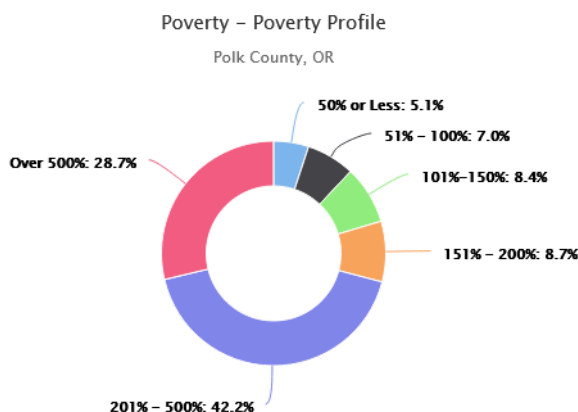
There are 1,000 children age 0-5 in low-to-moderate-income households in Polk County (<150% FPL) who may be eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start.

Sources: ODHS/OHA Regional Forecasting Report, 2022-2023

U.S. Census reports S1701 and S1702, <https://data.census.gov>

Portland State University, Population Research Center, Annual Population Report Tables, 2021

Figure 27: Pie chart with poverty profile, Polk County, Oregon, 2017-2021



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2021

3. Income and Poverty

Childhood Poverty – Polk County

In 2022, more than one in four children under age five in Polk County were experiencing poverty, a higher percentage than children under 18. They are also much more likely than adults to experience poverty. (See Figure 21.)

Approximately 1,200 children under 18 live in West Salem in Polk County. The poverty rate is 21%. Using this data, we can estimate 100-150 children under age five in West Salem are experiencing poverty below 100% FPL.

We estimate 100-120 children under age five in Independence and Monmouth are experiencing poverty.

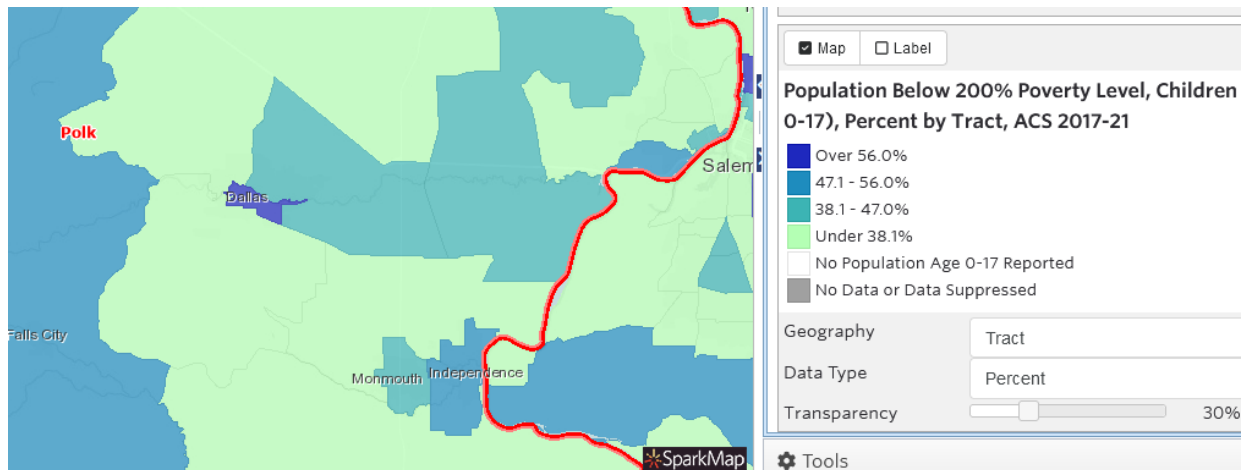
More recent ACS data (2022) shows West Salem and Independence have reduced poverty among children age 0-17. Now, Dallas has the highest rates of childhood poverty in Polk.

In Dallas, 200-400 children under age five are experiencing poverty <100% FPL. Nearly 600 children under age five in Dallas could be eligible for affordable early childhood education programs based on household income of 200% FPL.

Note: The margin of error is high for the 0-5 age group – 13% to 17%. It is not possible to get an exact figure using Census data.

Rural areas of Polk (Falls City and the Oregon Coast Range) have lower rates of childhood poverty – about 15%.

Figure 28: Map of Polk County census tracts with the percentage of children age 0-17 in households with income below 200% of Federal Poverty Level



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

3. Income and Poverty

Internet and computer access – Marion and Polk Counties

Compared to Oregon as a whole, households in the service area have good access to the internet. In Marion County, 96% of households have access to 100+ Mbps (Megabytes per second) broadband. In Polk County, 92% of households do. Polk is similar to Oregon. Marion is more well-connected.

Demographic groups with the lowest access to the internet include Latine and Black individuals, households with income below \$20,000 annually, and people with less than a high school education.

Source: <https://broadbandnow.com/Oregon>

According to the 2022 American Community Survey, there are 4,443 households in Marion without a computer (including smartphones), and 9,814 households without internet.

In Polk, there are 1,781 households without a computer and 2,870 households without internet.

In Marion Polk, about half of those without internet subscriptions had household income below \$20,000 a year.

Low-Cost and Free Internet Programs

The federal [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) was designed to help moderate-income families access discount internet service (\$10-30 a month) and purchase a laptop or tablet at discounted rates. Unfortunately, the program [stopped accepting applications](#) in February 2024. New broadband investments from the federal Infrastructure Act are expected to provide longer-term solutions.

A second program, [T-Mobile Project 10 Million](#), provides free hotspots and internet access. Families must have a student in a Title 1 or CEP school, and they need a synergy student ID number.

Households with students attending Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools should be eligible for T-Mobile’s free internet program.

Figure 29: Schools participating in Community Eligibility Provision that are eligible for low-cost internet programs, Marion & Polk Counties, 2023-2024

Marion	Polk
Salem-Keizer School District (All)	Central School District (All)
Aumsville Elementary	Falls City School District (All)
Cascade Opportunity Center	Lyle Elementary (Dallas)
Cloverdale Elementary	Oakdale Elementary (Dallas)
Jefferson Elementary & Middle	Whitworth Elementary (Dallas)
Mari-Linn Elementary	Dallas High (Morrison Campus)
Stayton Elementary and Middle	Polk Adolescent Day Treatment Center
Woodburn School District (All)	
Gervais School District (All)	

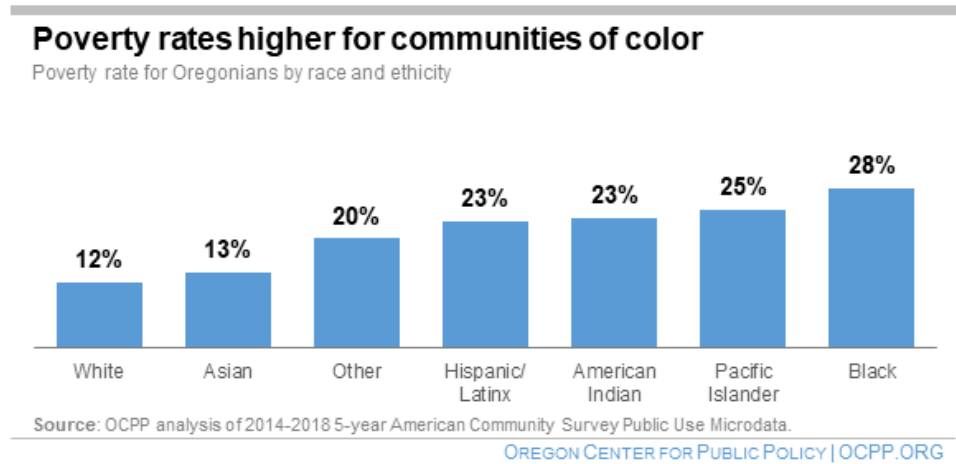
Source: [Oregon Department of Education, CEP Annual Notification Report](#)

3. Income and Poverty

Equity Lens – How people of color experience poverty in Oregon and regionally

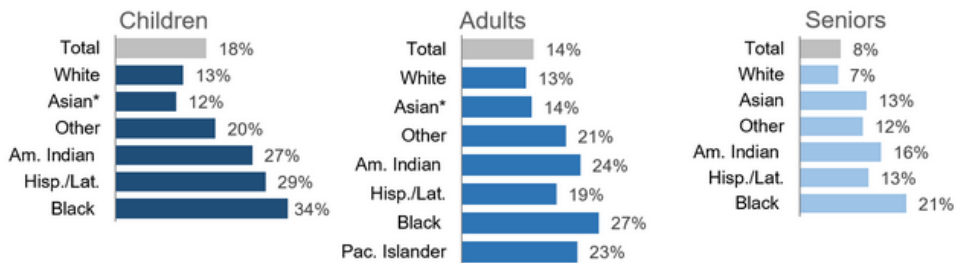
There are significant disparities in how people experience poverty statewide. Far more Latine, Black, and Indigenous people in Oregon experience poverty than white residents. Rates of childhood poverty in most communities of color are double or triple the rates of white children. For Oregonians of all ages, poverty is most pronounced in young people and communities of color.

Figure 30: Poverty rates by age, race, and ethnicity in Oregon, 2014-2018



Poverty hits hardest among youth, most communities of color

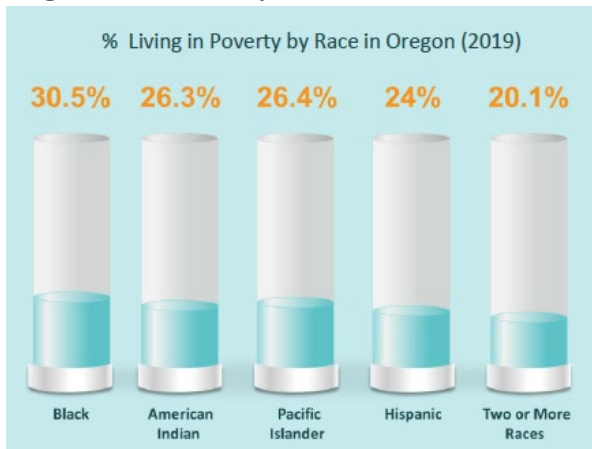
Poverty rate for 2014-2018 by age group and race and ethnicity in Oregon



* Not significantly different from white, non-Hispanic Oregonians in the same age category.
Note: Data for the Pacific Islander population was included in the "Other" category for children and seniors due to insufficient sample sizes.
Source: OCPP analysis of 2014-2018 5-year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata.

OREGON CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY | OCPP.ORG

Figure 31: Poverty rates for individuals (all ages), by race and ethnicity, Oregon, 2019

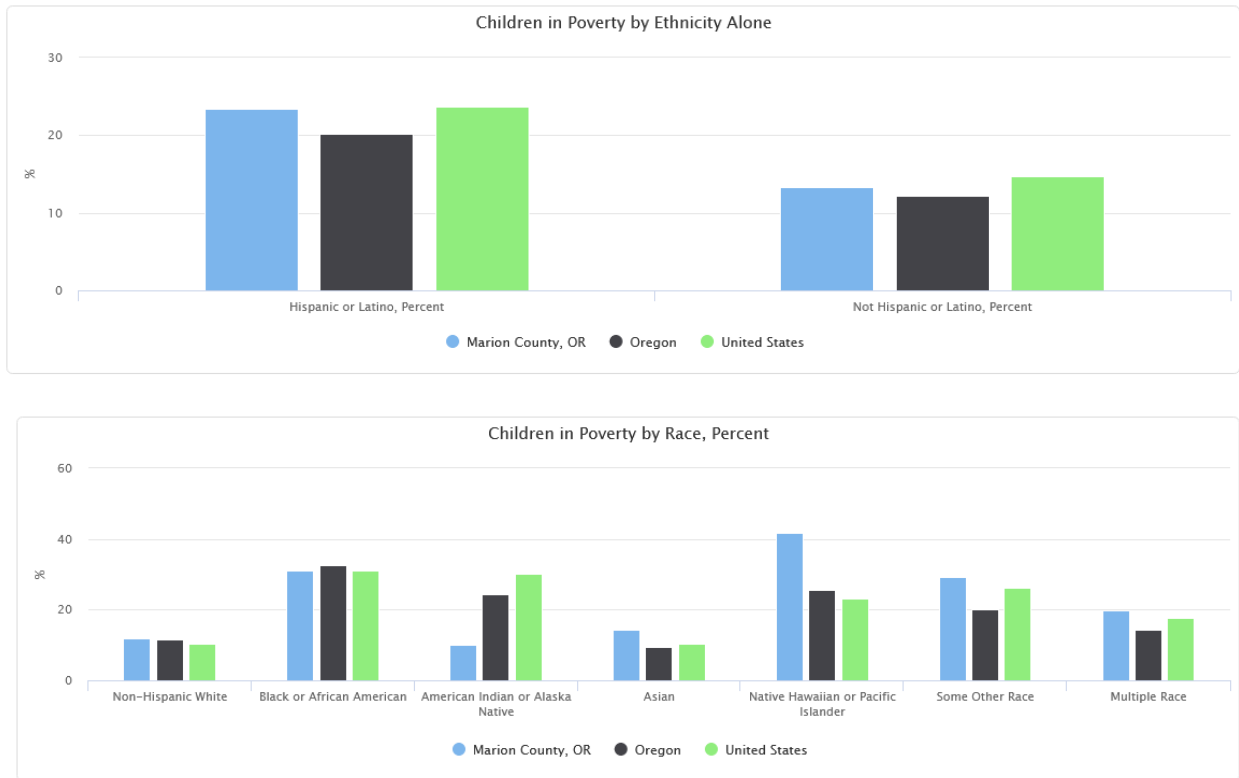


Source: Oregon Child Development Coalition, 2022
Community Needs Assessment

Note: The original source excluded Asian Americans in this infographic, and Native Hawaiians are included with Pacific Islanders.

3. Income and Poverty

Figure 32: Children experiencing poverty by race and ethnicity, Marion County, 2017-2021



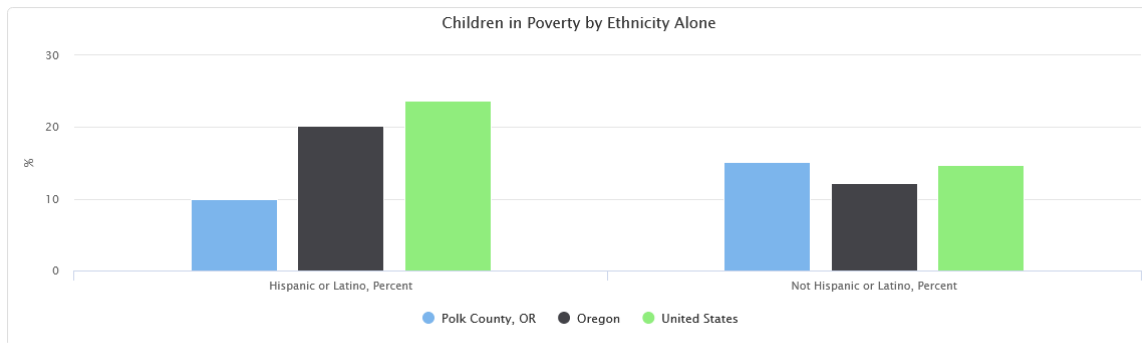
Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

Notably, Marion has made significant progress in reducing childhood poverty among Native American and Native Alaskan children.

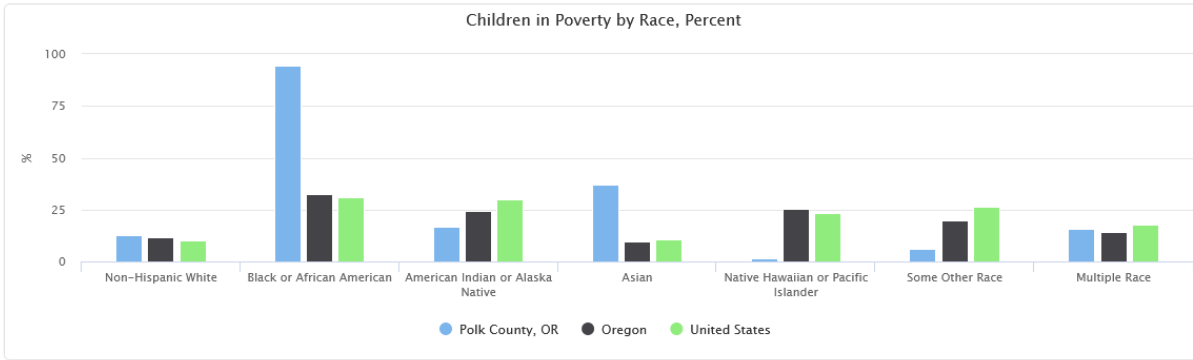
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children in Marion County experience poverty at nearly three times the rate of white children – a striking disparity.

All children of color in Marion - except Indigenous children - experience poverty at higher rates than white children (20-42% vs. 14-15%). About 18% of Asian children experience poverty, more than state and national rates for this group.

Figure 33: Children experiencing poverty by race and ethnicity, Polk County, 2017-2021



3. Income and Poverty



This indicator reports the total children aged 0-17 living in households with income below the federal poverty level by race alone.

Report Area	Non-Hispanic White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Polk County, OR	1,546	114	72	146	2	54	299

In a reversal of the usual trend, Latine children in Polk County experience lower rates of poverty (10%) than any other community of color (15-95%) or white children (13%).

Unfortunately, almost all Black and African American children in the county are experiencing poverty, more than 100 children.

Polk County has closed some of the gap for children who identify with some other race and more than one race, plus American Indian children.

More than one in three Asian American children in Polk County are experiencing poverty, a very high rate for this demographic group compared to state and national data.

Regional comparison of childhood poverty rates by race and ethnicity

Linn County has closed the gap for Latine children, Native American children, and children who identify with more than one race. They experience poverty at almost the same rate as white children (11-13%). Children of some other race still experience poverty at higher rates – about 22%.

It’s worth asking Linn County leaders how the community achieved this progress!

While the overall rate of childhood poverty is much lower in Multnomah County (about 7%), there are significant disparities by race. The percentage of white children who experience poverty in Multnomah County is 6%, compared to 40% of Black, African, and African-American children!

All children of color in Multnomah County experience significantly higher rates of poverty than white children. Latine children experience poverty at more than twice the rate of white children.

4. Estimated number of children in the service area eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start

The following estimates are for students in the service area (age 0-5) who are categorically (automatically) eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start are based on data throughout this report.

Table 11: Estimated number of children automatically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start in Marion County, 2022-2023

Eligibility Factor	Number	Population	Source
Household Income <100% FPL	850 to 1,450	Children age 0-5	ACS 2022 one-year estimates
Foster care	140 to 150	Children age 0-5 (at least one day)	DHS Child Welfare Data Book, 2022 county data
Unhoused	275 to 300	Children age 0-5	Coordinated Entry Count 2023
TANF	1,250 to 1,300	Families with children (estimate under age 6)	KIDS COUNT Data Book, 2020
Food Stamps (SNAP)	5,300 to 5,500	Households with children under age six	ACS 2022 one-year estimates

Table 12: Estimated number of children automatically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start in Polk County, 2022-2023

Eligibility Factor	Number	Population	Source
Household Income <100% FPL	900 to 1,000	Children age 0-5	ACS 2022 one-year estimates
Foster care	40 to 50	Children age 0-5	DHS Child Welfare Data Book, 2022 county data
Unhoused	100 to 125	Children age 0-5	Coordinated Entry Count 2023
TANF	300 to 350	Families with children (estimate under age 6)	KIDS COUNT Data Book, 2020
Food Stamps (SNAP)	950 to 1,000	Households with children under age six	ACS 2022 one-year estimates

Notes: Where the data is provided for children under 18, we estimated about one-third for children under age six. We estimated 40% for foster care, because children 0-5 represent about 40% of child abuse cases.

These categories cannot be combined to determine the total number of eligible children, because there will be some overlap. For example, children participating in SNAP may also be in foster care, and/or unhoused.

Children age 0-5 who are automatically eligible for Head Start & Early Head Start

Marion – 1,500 to 5,000 children

Polk – 900 to 1,000 children

4. Estimated number of children in the service area eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start

In Marion Polk, between 30% and 60% of automatically eligible children can be served by these Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

(30% is based on 1,421 funded slots between three providers, divided by an estimated 5,000 households with SNAP and children under age six. The 60% estimate does not count SNAP households with young children separately. It assumes they are included in other categories.)

Table 13: Estimated number of children with priority for Head Start and Early Head Start, Marion County, 2022-2023

Additional Priority Factors for Head Start Eligibility	Estimated number of 0-5 year olds	Source
Children with disabilities and developmental delays	325	DHS Children’s System of Care Dashboard, 2022-23
Moderate income (100-200% FPL)	3,000+ children 1 in 3 households	DHS, Census ACS ALICE data, 2023

Table 14: Estimated number of children with priority for Head Start and Early Head Start, Polk County, 2022-2023

Additional Priority Factors for Head Start Eligibility	Estimated number of 0-5 year olds	Source
Children with disabilities and developmental delays	53	DHS Children’s System of Care Dashboard, 2022-23
Moderate income (100-200% FPL)	1,000+ children 1 in 4 households	DHS, Census ACS ALICE data, 2023

4,300 additional children age 0-5 in Marion Polk could be eligible for affordable early learning programs using priority factors.

Disabilities – County-level EI/ECSE data and the Oregon IDD dashboard is more accurate than Census data for the number of young children with disabilities. Census figures are undercounts.

Moderate income - Children in households with moderate income (100%-200% of federal poverty level) can make up 20% of enrollment (up from 10% following a change in 2021-2022 at the federal level for HS/EHS programs).

4. Estimated number of children in the service area eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start

Enrollment highlights from national research

According to a [2022 report](#) on equity in Head Start and Early Head Start from the National Institute for Early Education Research, Head Start and Early Head Start programs nationwide do not reach even half of children in poverty (<100% FPL).

Moreover, despite a decade long decline in the number of children living in poverty, the percent of children in poverty enrolled in Head Start has not changed, moving from an estimated 40% in 2011-2012 to an estimated 41% in 2018-2019.

Early Head Start enrollment did increase from an estimated 5% of children in poverty in 2011-2012 to an estimated 9% in 2018-2019, but this is still less than 10% of infants and toddlers experiencing poverty nationwide.

See Methodology on page [294](#).

National, state, and local data confirms there are many more eligible children and families in the Marion-Polk region than early learning slots available to serve them.

The issue with under-enrollment is not whether eligible children are “out there”.

The struggle for programs to fill slots is a complex set of issues related to the ability of HS and EHS programs to:

- Hire and retain early learning teachers, family advocates, and bus drivers
- Offer more program options that fit working families’ needs
- Adapt their outreach efforts to more effectively recruit and enroll eligible families.

There are additional complicating factors related to family and cultural dynamics. According to a family advocate in these programs, sometimes parents are not willing to let go and send their child to center-based Head Start. Sometimes programs cannot offer education in their child’s primary language at sites near them. Not every eligible child will be served, but there are many more who could benefit from these programs.

5. Housing and Homelessness

This section summarizes key points related to housing availability, rent costs, inventories of shelter beds, and affordable housing options in the service area. It addresses housing mobility and homelessness for children and families, includes eviction maps by census tract, and feedback from local partners.

Housing Availability

Similar to other communities across Oregon and the U.S., housing costs in the service area have risen sharply in the past 10 years. There is a catastrophic lack of investment by the public and private sectors in affordable housing development, preservation, and subsidies. This is compounded by homeowners taking rental properties off the market for short-term rentals through AirBnB, and increasing monthly rent for tenants in an unsustainable manner.

Data shows this is a longstanding issue in western Oregon, where vacancy rates have been very low (<3%) for more than a decade. There is very little available housing of any type.

Oregon's HB 2003: [Regional Housing Needs Analysis \(RHNA\)](#) reports that 146,589 housing units are needed in the Willamette Valley by 2040, including 8,972 affordable housing units for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

During the pandemic, affordability worsened, resulting in very low vacancy rates and rising rents. Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians struggle with high housing costs relative to their incomes.

- 44% of rental households spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent each month.
- 54% of renters do not have enough income left over after paying rent to afford the basics.
- 63% of rental households have incomes below MIT's Living Wage calculation for Oregon.

Source: [Oregon Office of Economic Analysis News](#), Josh Lebner, January 25, 2023

The hourly wage needed to afford a one-bedroom at fair market rent in Marion Polk is \$17/hour. For a two-bedroom apartment, it is \$24 an hour.

Source: 2022 and 2023 Census American Community Survey, one-year estimates

The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports there are only 23 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income* renters in Oregon.

**Households with income below 50% of Federal Poverty Level*

Source: <https://nlibc.org/gap>

5. Housing and Homelessness

Housing Affordability - Rental Costs

Median rent in the service area is only 5% lower than Portland (\$1,300 vs. \$1,370). A higher percentage of renters in Marion Polk are cost-burdened than renters in Oregon and the U.S.

Table 15: Service area rental housing characteristics, 2022

Region	Renter-Occupied Housing Units	% of population renting	Median Rent (midpoint)	Renters paying 35%+ monthly income toward rent
Marion County	47,135	37%	\$1,275	43-50%
Salem	30,061	44%	\$1,304	43-50%
Polk County	11,450	35%	\$1,294	47-48%
Oregon	641,554	37%	\$1,370	44%

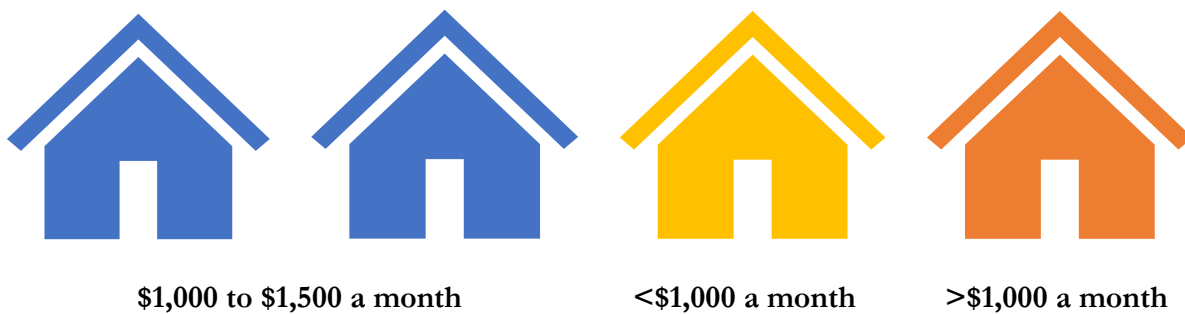
Source: U.S. Census, Selected Housing Characteristics, 2022, Report DP04, ACS 2018-2022

Interestingly, more renters in Polk (as a percentage of the population) are cost-burdened* than Marion County and Salem. In prior decades, rural areas had lower rent than urban areas.

**Cost-burdened in this context means paying more than 35% of monthly income toward housing costs.*

From 2022-2023, median rent in Oregon increased \$300.

Figure 34: Monthly median rent in Marion & Polk Counties, 2022



Each house represents 25% of renters in the service area. Half of renters are paying \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month. Only 1 in 4 renters are paying less than \$1,000 a month.

Additional Resource for Housing Data

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action could use SparkMap's advanced features to map severely cost-burdened households (paying 50%+ of monthly income toward housing) by census tract.

5. Housing and Homelessness

Housing Mobility

Since 2018, nearly 20% of households (renters and owners) in the service area moved every 2-3 years. This is almost double the rate of housing mobility estimated by the Census in 2010-2017. Increased housing costs are driving this trend.

Table 16: Housing mobility in Marion and Polk Counties, 2010-2022

Geographic Area	Households moved in 2021-2022 (2 years)	Households moved in 2018-2020 (3 years)	Households moved in 2010-2017 (7 years)
Marion County	23,000	33,000	33,000
Polk County	6,500	7,000	9,000

Source: ACS 2022 estimates, Report DP04, Selected Housing Characteristics, rounded numbers

Feedback from local partners

3.1.2. In January 2023 the Salem Reporter surveyed local leaders to gauge the year ahead for the local economy. Housing availability and affordability were mentioned as concerns for a thriving local economy.¹⁵

- Jimmy Jones, executive director, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency commented that for people in poverty, 2023 looks to be a tough year. Rising cost of living, increasing rental burden, limited access to childcare, public health, and medical services, especially mental health services, remain considerable barriers for people in poverty.
- Kim Parker-Leiranas, executive director, Willamette Workforce Partnership, commented that housing continues to be a huge struggle, whether it’s no housing, affordable housing, or access to housing. The market is softening, and that may lead to more availability, but housing (just like childcare) has a direct impact on the workforce. If people can’t afford a place to live, they have a tough time working regular jobs.
- Tony Schacher, general manager, Salem Electric, said that housing affordability and homelessness will go hand in hand. The market is still very tight and with interest rates increasing or even flattening the monthly mortgage payment is quickly getting out of reach for an average household if it wasn’t already.

3.1.3. A January 2023 survey of the Alliance’s Collaborative Committee members indicates that affordable housing is one of the top three (third) concerns that creates an immediate and major barrier to the Alliance’s efforts to support people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in regaining housing, safety, and stability.¹⁶ Mental health care and services, and emergency shelter shortage were the number one and number two concerns respectively. See the [survey](#) for a full list of local needs that are immediate and major barriers to the Alliance’s efforts to support people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in regaining housing, safety, and stability.



Source: Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance, 2023 [annual gap analysis report](#)

5. Housing and Homelessness

Affordable Housing

There are three public housing authorities (HAs) in the service area:

- [Salem Housing Authority](#) (Salem & Keizer) – Serves approximately 9,000 residents. There are currently no wait list openings. A status tool on the website shows current applicants their estimated wait time.
- [Marion County Housing Authority](#) (rural Marion) - Wait lists for Housing Choice Voucher, Colonial, and Twilight Court programs opened in January 2024 for less than 30 days. The wait list for senior-owned housing properties opened in January as well.
- [West Valley Housing Authority](#) (Polk County) – 349 apartment units throughout the county. Two affordable housing options available. There was no information on wait lists online.

See the 2023 Community Needs Assessment for a more detailed discussion of vouchers, public housing, and affordable housing sites in the service area.

“It’s not rocket science,” said Marisa Zapata, an urban planning professor at Portland State University. Zapata is also the director of PSU’s Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative, which studies the factors that lead to homelessness. “It doesn’t really matter what lens you look at it through,” she said. “Escalation of housing values and rising rents is what causes homelessness.”

According to state analysts, Oregon’s current housing supply is short roughly 140,000 homes to meet the demands of its population size. This places the state fourth in the country in terms of under-producing housing. This shortage has taken a toll on low-income Oregonian renters. Because of the limited housing inventory, landlords are able to keep rents high. This has allowed Oregon to become one of the states with the lowest supply of rentals affordable to people at or below poverty levels.

Source: Oregon Public Broadcasting, How homelessness in Oregon started, grew and became a statewide issue, Oct. 9, 2023

Continuum of Care – Homelessness Service Providers

The [Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance](#) is Marion and Polk’s Continuum of Care (CoC). They coordinate, plan, leverage, and align efforts and resources to prevent and end homelessness.

There are more than 100 individuals and 70 organizations involved in the Alliance. The board has 15 voting members (two with lived experience of homelessness, as of 2023) and seven non-voting members.

Some Community Action housing programs are represented on the CoC Collaborative Committee and the Early Learning Alliance.

The Alliance’s Strategic Plan identifies nine regional goals to end and prevent homelessness. They developed local performance targets (metrics) for each goal in 2023.

MWVHA Staff Consultants Jan Calvin and Lisa Trauernicht completed the CoC’s [annual gap analysis report](#) in November 2023. It contains valuable information to support homelessness service planning. We’ve included some highlights here.

5. Housing and Homelessness

Housing Inventory

The Alliance’s 2023 Housing Inventory Count identified 1,405 year-round beds in two counties, a slight increase (6%) from the 1,330 beds in 2022.

According to the 2023 Housing Inventory Count, there were 1,524 total beds* in Marion and Polk last year. On the night of the most recent homelessness count in January 2023, all but five beds were in use and nearly 1,700 people were counted. At minimum, this represents a shortage of 159 beds.

**Includes emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and long-term affordable housing beds - not housing units.*

Table 17: Number of shelter beds and characteristics in Marion and Polk Counties, 2023

	Marion County	Polk County
Urban area sites (Salem-Keizer)	40	N/A
Salem-Keizer year-round beds <i>(all target populations)</i>	1,116	N/A
Total urban area beds	1,419	N/A
Rural area sites	4	5
Rural year-round beds <i>(all types)</i>	18 (Vets)	33 (DV) 18 (Vets)
Rural seasonal beds <i>(all target populations)</i>	36	0
Total rural area beds	54	51
Family shelter beds	75	10
Family transitional housing beds	35	0
Family rapid re-housing beds	27	3

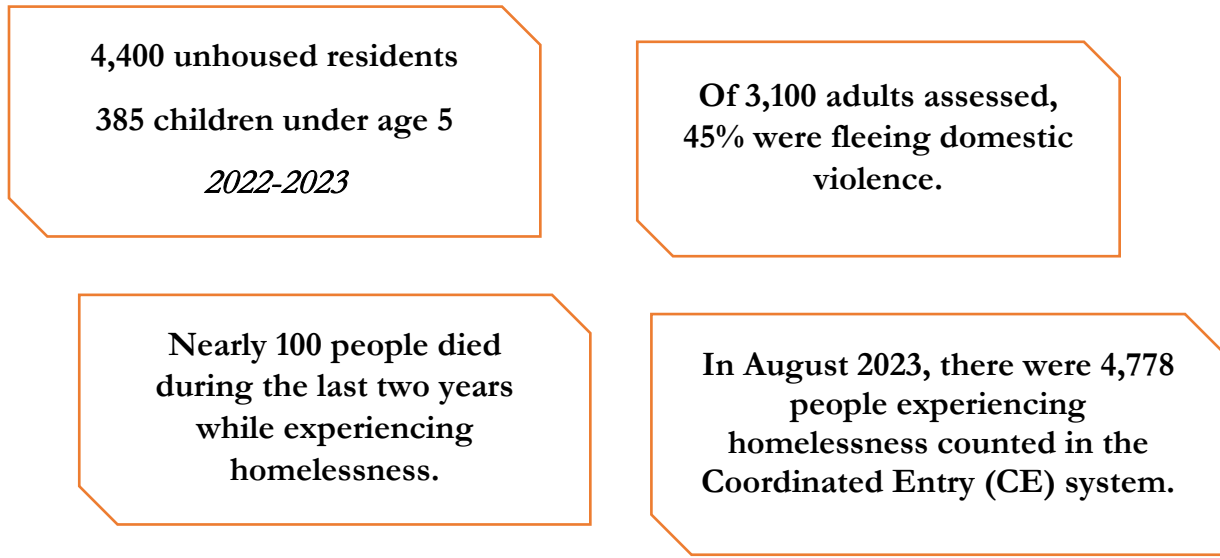
Source: 2023 Housing Inventory Count, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

Key Takeaways from 2023 Housing Inventory Count

1. Only 7% of shelter and affordable housing beds are located in rural areas of Marion and Polk Counties, but 15-30% of the population lives in rural areas.
2. There are zero transitional housing beds set aside for families in Polk County, and just three rapid re-housing beds for families – enough to serve one family experiencing homelessness.
3. Only 150 beds are prioritized for families (both counties combined).
4. In 2018, culturally specific and low-barrier emergency shelters were identified to be an urgent need, specifically for women, youth, families, and non-sobriety required eligibility.

5. Housing and Homelessness

Figure 35: Key Takeaways from the 2023 Annual Gap Analysis Report - Marion Polk



Coordinated Entry (CE) data is a more accurate measure of the number of people experiencing homelessness than annual Point-In-Time counts.

CE data about families and their needs is collected by homeless service providers as people seek housing assistance.

Household data is entered in a national HUD database called HMIS (Homeless Management Information System).

According to 2022-2023 Coordinated Entry data, there are 3x more children under 18 experiencing homelessness in Marion Polk than the 2023 PIT counted.

Marion and Polk need to triple shelter beds and transitional housing options to meet the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Unfortunately, on October 27, 2023, the [Statesman Journal](#) reported “a drastic cut in one-time funding has left the Salem Warming Network for homeless people scrambling” and has decreased the supply of warming shelter beds from about 150 to about 30 emergency warming shelter beds.

A. System infrastructure gaps from the perspective of partners with lived experience

- Shelters needed outside of Salem. (This was noted in several interviews.)
- Permanent affordable housing is needed. (This was noted in several interviews.)
- Prevention services are lacking. Sometimes people don't know what resources are available and sometimes there are not resources to help keep people from losing their housing. People need support and resources to break the generational patterns of homelessness.
- Community unity is needed so everyone has a sense of belonging.
- Pro bono legal services are needed, and legal guidance and advocacy.
- Need to focus on wellness. Using a tool like the [Wellness Wheel](#), the Alliance can look at its programs/services, to determine how it is doing in serving the community, and it can help others understand where they are in their journey and what they need for moving forward.

5. Housing and Homelessness

Children and Students Experiencing Homelessness

Oregon has the highest rate of unsheltered families with children in the U.S., and the population surged by 27% between 2020 and 2022.

State	All People in Families Experiencing Homelessness	Unsheltered (#)	Unsheltered (%)
Highest Rates			
Oregon	3,373	1,991	59.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 2022

Figure 36: Number of families with children experiencing homelessness in Salem-Keizer school district, 2021-2022

Districts with the Highest Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness

District	K-12 Total Homeless 2021-22	Percent of enrollment 2021-22
Beaverton SD 48J	1,221	3.1%
Medford SD 549C	1,039	7.4%
Salem-Keizer SD 24J	826	2.1%
Portland SD 1J	785	1.7%
Eugene SD 4J	660	4.0%
Lincoln County SD	630	12.1%
Reynolds SD 7	517	5.2%
Bend-LaPine Administrative SD 1	498	2.9%
Hillsboro SD 1J	455	2.4%
Phoenix-Talent SD 4	448	20.0%

Salem-Keizer ranks third among Oregon school districts for the number of unsheltered K-12 students. 826 students experienced homelessness in 2021-2022, including 60-65 kindergarteners.

In 2021-2022, the Oregon Department of Education counted 54 Head Start students in the Salem-Keizer school district who were unsheltered. Of those, 46 were doubled up with a friend or family member.

Source: Oregon Department of Education, McKinney-Vento reports, 2021-2022

In 2016-17, the number of unsheltered K-12 students across Oregon reached an all-time high. It briefly declined, then increased by 2% in 2018-2019, when 22,215 students in Oregon lacked "a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

Following the wildfires in 2020, the number of unsheltered students increased sharply in Jackson, Lane, and Marion Counties, reaching 30% in some school districts.

In 2019-2020, Falls City SD had one of the highest percentages of unsheltered students in Oregon at 23%. There were 44 unsheltered students out of 190 total.

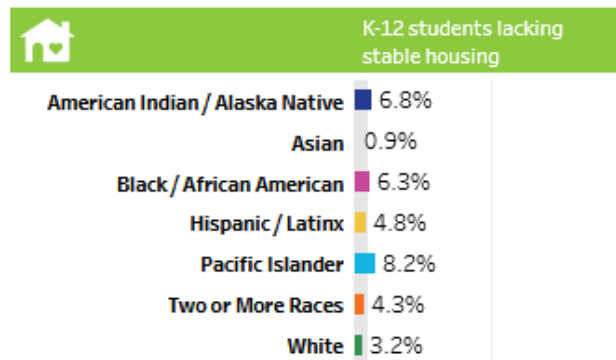
More recent data at the district level is still being developed by the Oregon Department of Education. Like many state and federal offices, the McKinney-Vento office has been impacted by retirements and turnover. In spring 2023, new leadership staff reported the office is developing better systems for data collection and reporting.



5. Housing and Homelessness

Equity Lens – People of Color Experiencing Homelessness

Figure 37: Oregon K-12 Students lacking stable housing by race, 2018-2019



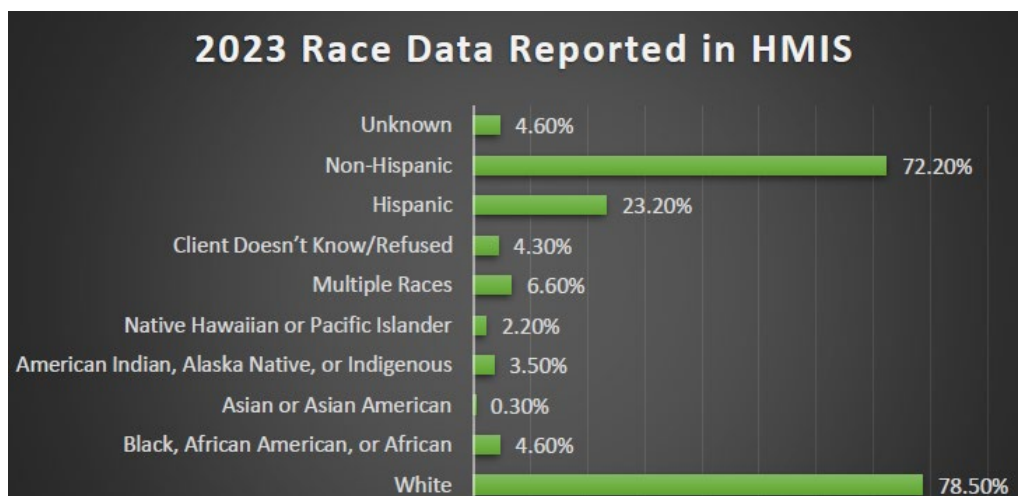
Source: Department of Education, 2018-2019 Homeless Students

Three times as many Native American and Black students experienced homelessness in Oregon before the pandemic began, compared to their percentage of the total population.

Fifteen times as many Native Hawai’ian and Pacific Islander students experienced homelessness in Oregon in 2018-2019, compared to how they are represented in the total population.

Figure 38: 2023 Point-In-Time Count for Marion and Polk Counties, People of Color

- 3-4 times as many Black and African-American residents in Marion Polk were counted, compared to their percentage of the total population.
- 2-3 times as many Native Hawai’ian, Pacific Islander, and Native American residents were unhoused.
- Hispanic and Latine residents were represented in the unhoused population at about the same rate as their total population in Marion Polk (no disparity).



Source: 2023 Gaps Analysis Report, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

5. Housing and Homelessness

Counting people who are currently unhoused – Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Survey

The Point-in-Time (PIT) is a nationwide count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. HUD requires Continuums of Care to conduct annual counts of people experiencing homelessness at emergency shelters, in transitional housing, and Safe Havens. Every other year, they also count people experiencing street homelessness.

Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally. The results help the federal government decide how to distribute funds for homeless services. *Source: [HUD Exchange](#)*

In the service area, the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance coordinates and administers the annual Point-in-Time survey using mobile volunteer outreach teams and stationary sites throughout the two counties.

The Point-In-Time counts people living on the street and shelters only. The true numbers of people experiencing homelessness are much higher than PIT indicators, and it is not possible to get an exact count for a number of reasons:

- 1) Most people who are unhoused are invisible, staying with family or friends (couch surfing).
- 2) When a person is afraid of immigration officials and deportation, they are more likely to avoid all government officials, including social workers.
- 3) People who are unsheltered and sleeping rough often avoid outreach workers, police, and other unhoused people, due to safety concerns and prior trauma.

On average, nearly 13,000
Oregonians experience
homelessness every day.

5. Housing and Homelessness

Highlights from the 2023 Point-in-Time count – Marion & Polk Counties

In 2022, there was a 15% increase in the number of unhoused people counted in the Marion-Polk region, compared to 2021. The count was slightly smaller in 2023. The demographic breakdown of people experiencing homelessness was about the same.

According to the Marion Polk Coordinated Entry data from 2021, which surveys people applying for housing and homeless services, there were 1,318 adult homeless women, compared to 1,239 men. This contradicts nationwide trends, which typically show 2-3 unhoused men for each unhoused woman.

Source: [Oregon Statesman Journal](#), June 2022

In Marion Polk there were 1,683 unhoused people counted in 1,488 households. *January 23-25, 2023 Point in Time Count*

- 531 people in emergency shelter
- 259 people in transitional housing
- 878 unsheltered people
- 21% were Latine
- One in three people counted were experiencing long-term homelessness – they were unhoused more than 12 months out of the last 36 months

Figure 39

Families Counted in the 2023 Point-In-Time Homeless Count Marion and Polk Counties

44 households with children under 18

102 children experiencing homelessness

6 children unsheltered

21 children in transitional housing

18 households with children who were unhoused more than a year

47 adults and 75 children in emergency shelter

21% of people in unhoused families were Latine

Black, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander families were over-represented

5. Housing and Homelessness

Evictions

Since August 2022, eviction filing counts are at the highest level in Oregon's history, particularly for Black households. Between the end of the CDC moratorium in June 2021 and the first peak in October 2022, eviction filings increased by 533%.

In calendar year 2023, there were 1,100 evictions filed in Marion County and 308 filed in Polk County. The filing rate in Polk County is relatively high, at 3.9%. The rate approaches 10% around Dallas and Rickreall. More than 2,000 evictions have been filed in Polk since 2017.

Eviction rates are higher in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Eviction rates are about the same regardless of the amount of rent paid by renters.

Source: [Eviction Research Network, Oregon](#)

*Note: [The Eviction Research Network](#) publishes mapping data down to census tract level for all eviction cases filed in Oregon. This includes no-cause evictions, but does **not** include cases which were overturned or dismissed.*

“Evictions across Oregon plummeted from 1,550 each month with the moratorium in 2020, and stayed below 1,000 per month through 2021.”

Source: [Oregon Capital Chronicle, January 2023](#)

[Evicted in Oregon](#) is a resource and a research project. It aims to reframe issues of displacement and support tenant organizing by using a research justice approach to studying eviction.

The data in this section only includes eviction filings filed at a circuit court in Oregon. It does not capture Notices of Termination served to tenants that don't result in a court case, or eviction court cases filed at a municipal or justice court. **These numbers represent low estimates of evictions in Oregon.**

Polk County files evictions at the Circuit Court and Marion County uses multiple court-systems for processing eviction cases, so Marion data is an undercount.

Source: 2023 Gaps Analysis Report, Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance

5. Housing and Homelessness

Figure 40: Eviction filings and reasons for evictions in service area, 2023

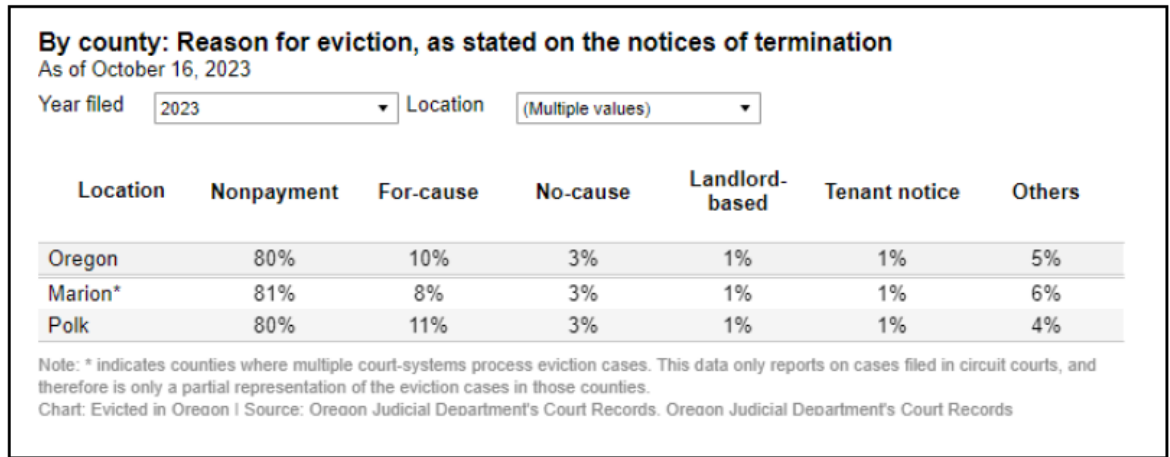
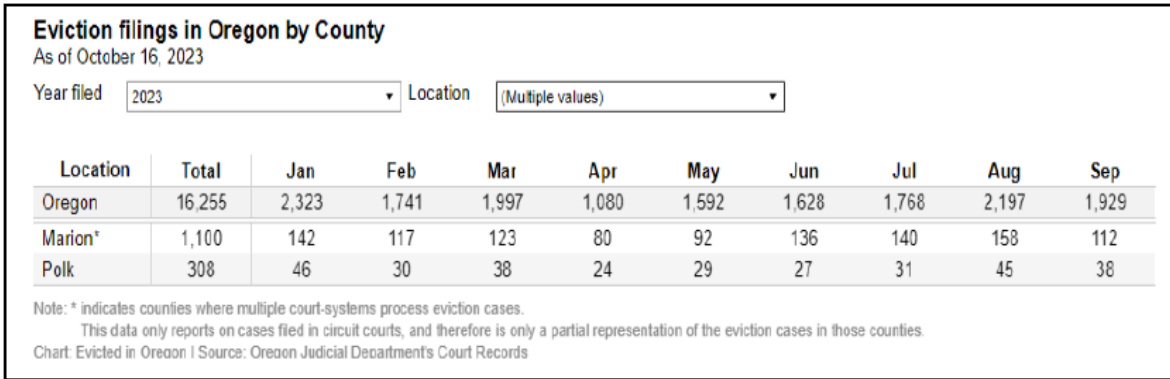
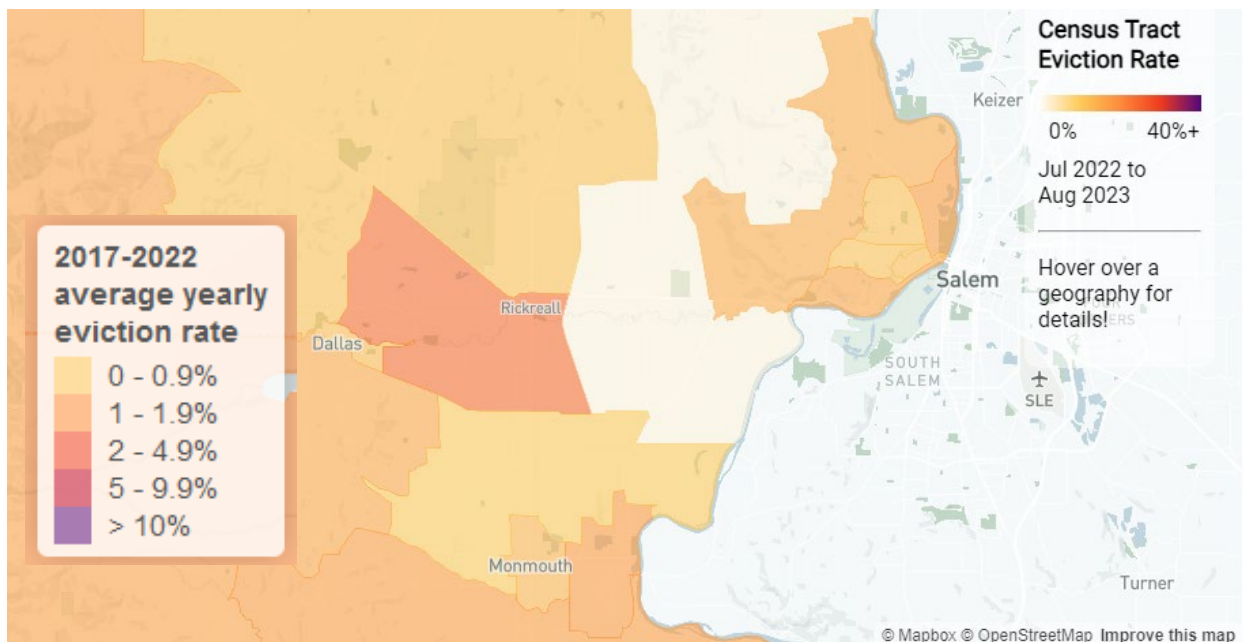


Figure 41 from the Eviction Research Network shows eviction rates in 2022-2023 were highest near Dallas – 72 filings in a single year, a 9.5% eviction rate.

Figure 41: Evictions in central Polk, July 2022 to August 2023



6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

This section covers preschool enrollment and educational outcomes for kindergarteners and Grade 3 students in the service area, using the most current data available.

It closes with an equity lens for culturally-specific preschool programs, and includes key takeaways from parents of Oregon preschoolers, which were gathered in 2018-2019 by the Oregon Preschool Development Grant.

Preschool enrollment in the service area

Marion and Polk have lower preschool enrollment than Oregon as a whole. Recent data from *Our Children Oregon* shows the Portland metro area has the highest pre-K enrollment in Oregon (52%).

Figure 42: Preschool Enrollment in Marion & Polk, 2017-2021

In Marion County, 38% of 3 and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool. In Polk County, 41% of children are enrolled.*

Statewide, 46% of young children are enrolled in preschool.

U.S. Census ACS, 2022 one-year estimates, Table S1401

** U.S. Census ACS, 2017-2021 five year estimates*

About 3,200 children annually are enrolled in preschool in the service area.

In 2022, there were more than 2,500 children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in preschool in Marion County and 700 children enrolled in preschool in Polk County.

From 2017-2022, preschool enrollment increased 21% in Marion (31% to 38%). Statewide during that period, enrollment increased 7% (43% to 46%).

Source: <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/>, Oregon Kids Count Data Cards, 2022

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

Early Learning Outcomes in Oregon

The Annie E. Casey Foundation developed the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) to better understand how U.S. children are faring in economic well-being, education, health and family and community factors. Each year, the *KIDS COUNT Data Book* presents data from 16 indicators across four domains. Metrics in the 2022 and 2023 reports are a mix of pre-pandemic data and 2021-2022 data.

From 2017-2021, Oregon ultimately saw improvement across 12 of 16 children’s health indicators. The state ranks highly in children’s health and family & community.



Oregon continues to rank in the bottom half of U.S. states in education and economic well-being. From 2022-2023, Oregon’s education rank declined from 41 to 44.

	UNITED STATES			OREGON		
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	30					
EDUCATION	44					
Young children (ages 3 and 4) not in school <small>US 4,380,000 OR 54,000</small>	53% <small>2012-16</small>	54% <small>2017-21</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>	57% <small>2012-16</small>	58% <small>2017-21</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>
Fourth-graders not proficient in reading <small>US N.A. OR N.A.</small>	66% <small>2019</small>	68% <small>2022</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>	66% <small>2019</small>	72% <small>2022</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>
Eighth-graders not proficient in math <small>US N.A. OR N.A.</small>	67% <small>2019</small>	74% <small>2022</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>	69% <small>2019</small>	78% <small>2022</small>	↑ <small>WORSE</small>
High school students not graduating on time* <small>US N.A. OR N.A.</small>	14% <small>2018-19</small>	14% <small>2019-20</small>	= <small>SAME</small>	20% <small>2018-19</small>	17% <small>2019-20</small>	↓ <small>BETTER</small>

N.A.: Not available *Graduation data may not be comparable across time due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Explore data on children and families at datacenter.aecf.org.

“Newer data is not yet available to show how K-12 literacy proficiency was impacted by the pandemic. In 2019, Oregon mirrored the national average – 66% of fourth-graders were not proficient in reading.”

Source: [Our Children Oregon, Kids Count and Child Well-Being Press Release, August 2022](#)

By 2022, nearly 3 in 4 fourth-graders in Oregon (72%) were not proficient in reading.

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

Figure 43: Oregon early education highlights and historical trends

KIDS COUNT Data Book, 2023

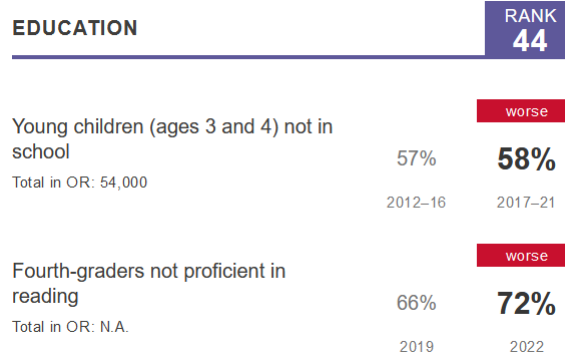
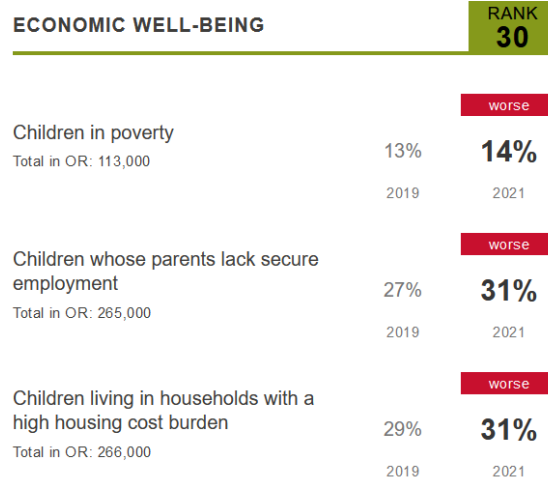


Figure 44: Economic well-being trends in Oregon, *KIDS COUNT Data Book, 2023*



From 2010 to 2020, just 43% of Oregon children ages 3 and 4 attended preschool. By 2022, about 46% of Oregon children attended preschool.

Beyond [At-A-Glance District Profile](#) reports and the pre-pandemic [Oregon Kindergarten Assessment](#) (OKA), child outcomes data from the Oregon Department of Education is largely inaccessible to the public. ODE’s [Accountability Data Briefs](#) page was last updated in June 2018; the [Annual Performance Progress Reports](#) page was last updated in 2015. It redirects to the Oregon legislature, where the Department of Early Learning and Care has published [recent reports](#) with statewide data. DELC’s website only contains [ERDC data](#).

The [Oregon Child Integrated Dataset](#) is a relatively new tool that is highly useful, with county-level data for many child welfare and health-related data sets. Unfortunately, the OKA map did not work in March 2024. (It is usually interactive.)

ODE’s Legislative Reports page offers detailed demographic breakdowns for students in K-12 – statewide and by district, [here](#), plus a 2021-2022 report of English Language Learners by district. These reports may be helpful for ERSEA specialists and program leaders.

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

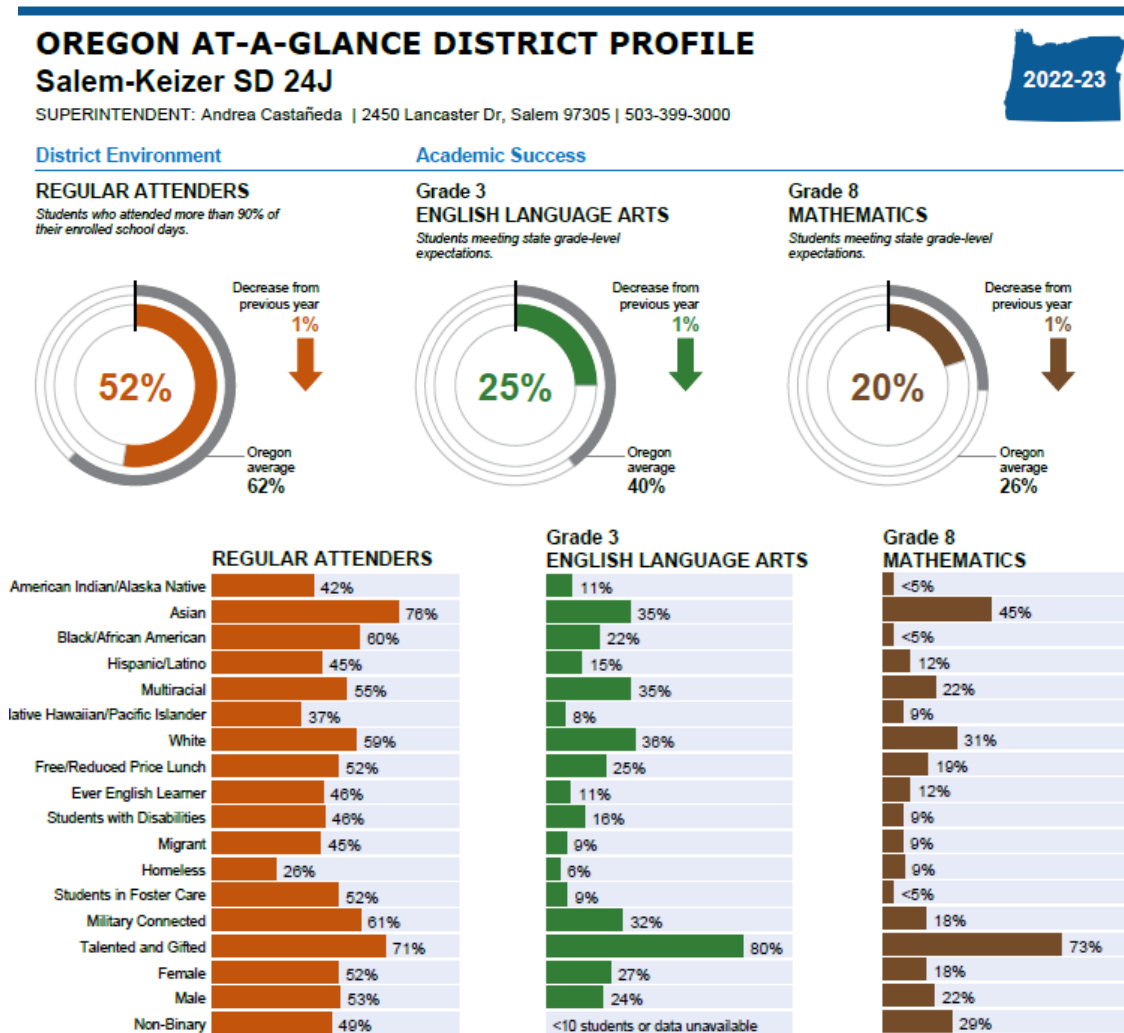
Early Learning Outcomes in Marion & Polk Public Schools – K to 3

Compared to Oregon, a lower percentage of students in the Salem-Keizer School district are regular attenders (52% vs. 60%). Significantly fewer Grade 3 students in the district are proficient in English Language Arts (25% vs. 40%).

There are disparities by race and ethnicity for both measures – Latine, Indigenous, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students at SKD schools scored significantly lower than other racial and ethnic groups in these areas.

Grade 3 students with additional barriers need more support in reaching English Language Arts benchmarks (children in foster care, with disabilities, migrant, ELL, and unhoused.)

Figure 45: Early learning outcomes, Salem-Keizer School District, 2022-2023



Readers can find annual school profiles and district profiles on the Oregon Department of Education website:

<https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/ReportCard/Reports/Index>

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

Oregon Kindergarden Assessments (OKA) – 2018-2019 Snapshot

From 2013-2020, the Oregon Department of Education conducted annual Oregon Kindergarten Assessments. OKAs were performed by teachers at the beginning of the school year with incoming students. Three main areas were assessed: approaches to learning, early math, and early literacy.

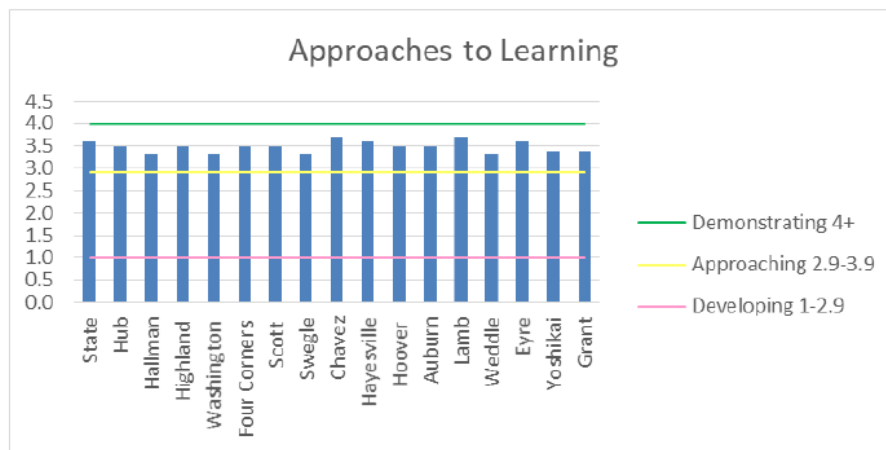
The Marion/Polk Early Learning Hub created an [OKA summary report in August 2019](#), highlighting assessment data for the 2018-2019 school year. The information is broken down by school districts and elementary schools. We did not find a summary report for the 2019-20 OKA.

We've included a few key takeaways and an example of the report's charts for the Salem-Keizer district. The full report (40 pages) contains profiles for each elementary school and district, including easy-to-read bar charts like this one.

Key Takeaways

- Kindergarten students assessed in the Marion Polk Hub scored lower than state averages on every measure assessed by the OKA.
- Kindergarteners in Marion and Polk Counties who completed the OKA in fall 2018 scored highest in approaches to learning and lowest in early literacy measures.
 - Letter sounds had the lowest scores.
 - Only two schools in the Salem-Keizer district reached the “approaching” threshold.
- In the Salem-Keizer School District:
 - Grant Elementary students scored higher than other SKD students on all measures.
 - Hoover Elementary students scored lower than other SKD students on all measures.
- At Lyle Elementary in Dallas, 99 kindergarten students who were assessed scored higher than the Hub on every measure, approaching the state average.
- At four elementary schools in the Woodburn School District, 383 students scored higher than the state average in approaches to learning, but much lower than state averages in early literacy. Early math scores were comparable to the Hub average, but lower than the state.
- In the Central School District, 76 students at Ash Creek Elementary in Monmouth scored significantly higher than the Hub average in early literacy measures.

Figure 46: Salem-Keizer School District Results, 2018-2019 Oregon Kindergarten Assessment



There were no OKAs in 2021-22 or 2022-23.

The OKA is being re-tooled by the Oregon Department of Education.

ODE staff estimate the next OKA will be ready in 2025-2026.

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

Equity Lens - Additional Resource for Equity and Inclusion Efforts IRCO Preschool Research Project Report

In 2018, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization in Portland (IRCO) undertook a preschool research project, funded by a grant from Social Venture Partners.

Their goals were to assess the needs and priorities of immigrant and refugee families, and identify gaps in their access to culturally and linguistically-responsive preschool programs in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties.

[The resulting community-driven study](#) combines focus groups with interviews and surveys. Although it is focused on early learning programs and the needs of families in the tri-county area, many of the insights apply to Marion and Polk County early learning programs.

Executive summary – Barriers faced by immigrant and refugee families

- Navigating available resources because of cultural and language barriers
- Lack of affordable preschool opportunities and teachers who speak their languages and understand their cultures
- Learning environments that do not teach their children about their country of origin
- Unfamiliar systems and educational expectations in the U.S.

Recommendation for Marion and Polk

The Hub and early learning providers could use the lessons from the IRCO 2018 Preschool Research Project to:

- 1) Invite conversations with immigrant and refugee families about their unique strengths and family needs.
- 2) Improve support for immigrant and refugee families to empower them in identifying the best early learning programs for their children.
- 3) Facilitate the development of more culturally and linguistically-responsive preschool programming with families and community partners.
- 4) Secure more support from translators with less commonly-spoken languages.

A recent provider survey published by the Marion Polk Hub mentions a few successful programs already in place for Spanish-speaking and Russian-speaking children and families.

6. Preschool Enrollment and Early Learning Outcomes

Preschool Development Grant – Key Takeaways from 2020 Community Needs Assessment

The following key takeaways are taken from interviews with 81 families across Oregon, in listening sessions conducted by Preschool Development Grant staff in the Oregon Early Learning Division (ELD). The full resource is available at the [ELD website's PDG page](#). Appendix E provides a full summary for each section below, plus important messages from parents.

Key priorities for all families

Ideal Care Needs and Desires Vary

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. An effective system has diverse providers, settings, and strategies.

Families are Currently Compromising for Affordability

The lack of available, affordable care led families to compromise other factors, including quality, to secure affordable early learning programs that allowed parents to work.

Oregon Needs More Culturally-Specific and Responsive Care Options

This should not be considered optional, but rather a core part of Oregon’s early learning system.

Families with Children with Special Needs Require Providers with More Specialized Training.

Enhancing the availability of training, as well as increasing the incentives for providers to engage in training and successfully provide inclusive settings, is a priority. These families also expressed the need for better integration of EI/ECSE services into existing settings, and more on-site support.

Families also need providers to help them connect with community resources to help with family stability (housing, food, etc.)

Important priorities for families of color and those in rural areas

Families want to be informed consumers, and need access to multi-lingual child care info. systems

The importance of finding a child care provider they can trust, especially for parents of nonverbal children, cannot be understated.

Families define quality with an emphasis on having a provider who speaks their language and shares their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural background, but struggle to find providers who do.

The lack of high quality, affordable, available, and culturally appropriate care takes a significant toll on families' economic and emotional well-being.

Important priorities for LGBTQIA+ families

LGBTQIA+ families prioritize ensuring that their children are in safe, welcoming settings that value sexual and gender diversity and inclusion.

Many parents/caregivers relied on family and friends for care, knowing their families would be accepted and supported.

The state early learning system needs to be more intentional in creating a system that is inclusive of LGBTQIA+ families, starting with investing in more training, resources, and supports for providers on how to do this.

7. Community Well-Being

This section covers factors related to community well-being, including employment, the workforce, transportation, food insecurity, and water quality. We also address some relevant factors of the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccination rates by zip code, race, and ethnicity, and the disparate impact of the pandemic in communities of color.

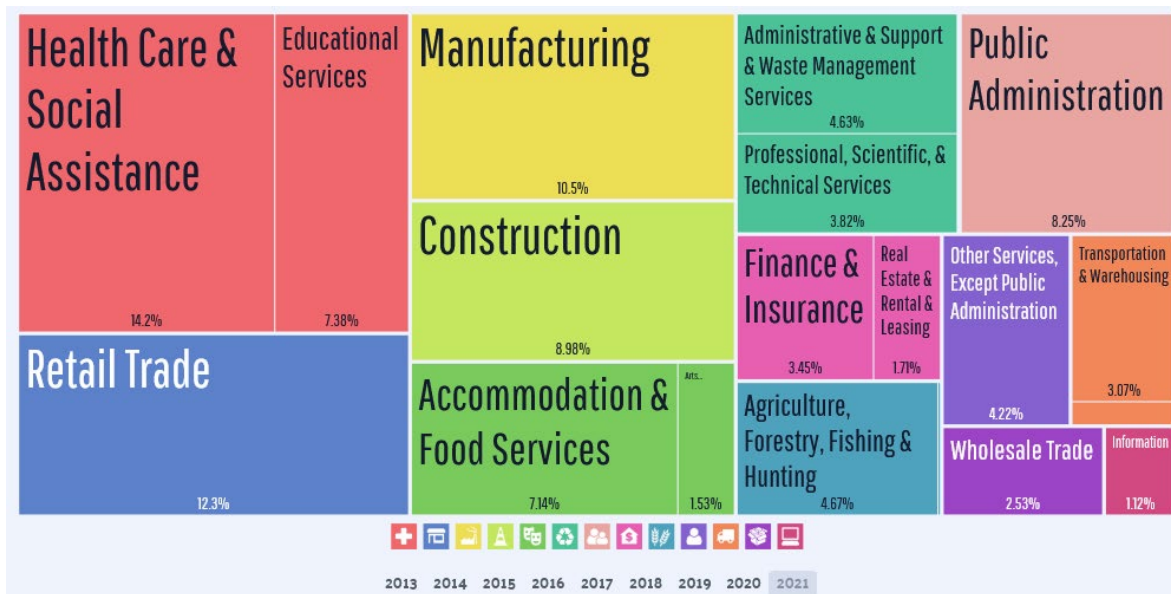
Employment and Workforce

The economy of Marion County, Oregon employs 156,000 people. The highest paying industries are utilities, public administration, and finance & insurance. The lowest-paying industries are food service, farming, fishing, and forestry, personal care and support, and building & grounds cleaning and maintenance. Together, they make up 9% of the workforce.

Largest industries in Marion County

- Health care and social assistance (14% of workers)
- Public administration, educational services (14% of workers)
- Retail trade (12% of workers)
- Manufacturing (11% of workers)
- Construction (9% of workers)

Figure 47: Marion County industries and percentage of workers in each one, 2021



Source: <https://datansa.io/>

Workforce Characteristics – Marion County

- 62% of the total population age 16+ were in the labor force (58% of women were)
- 76% of all households had earnings from a job
- 8,600 families were estimated to have household income below \$25,000
- About 34% of households had Social Security benefit income

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022 1-year estimates, DP03 – Select Economic Characteristics

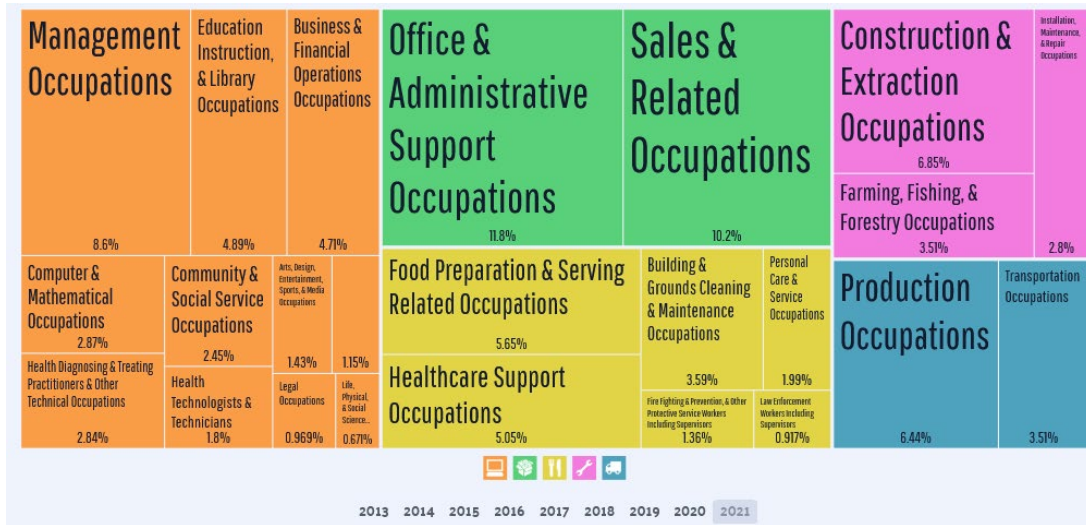
See the [2023 Community Needs Assessment for regional industry projections through 2030](#)

7. Community Well-Being

Largest industries in Polk County

- Office and administrative support (12% of workers) – *Mostly Western Oregon University*
- Sales and related occupations (10% of workers)
- Management occupations (9% of workers)
- Health care and social assistance (7.5% of workers)

Figure 48: Polk County industries and percentage of workers in each one, 2021



Source: <https://datausa.io/>

Workforce Characteristics – Polk County

- 57% of the total population age 16+ were in the labor force (54% of women were)
- 72% of all households had earnings from a job
- 2,636 families were estimated to have household income below \$25,000
- About 33% of households had Social Security benefit income

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022 1-year estimates, DP03 – Select Economic Characteristics

Figure 49: Unemployment rates, Marion and Polk County, Oregon, 2018-2023



Sources: [St. Louis Federal Reserve](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/), FRED Economic Data and Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Polk County was nearly identical to Marion County.

7. Community Well-Being

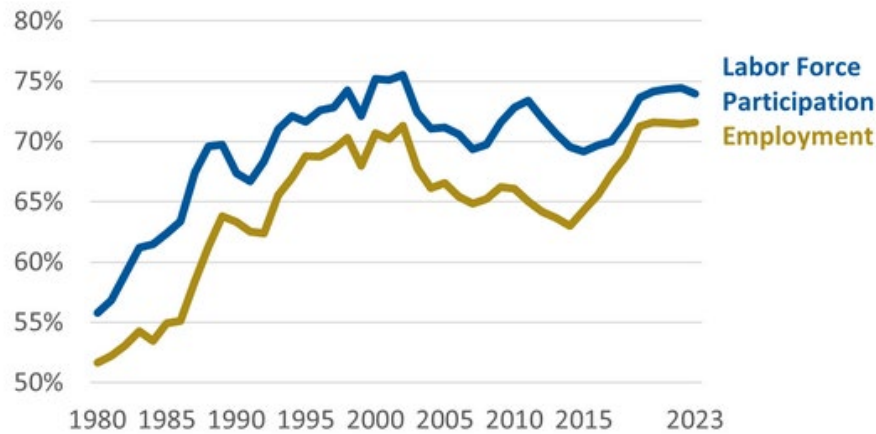
While unemployment rates the region briefly returned to pre-pandemic levels (4%) in January 2022, they increased to ~5% in July 2022, and did not fall again for 9-10 months.

This pattern generally follows Oregon and U.S. trends, although there is more unemployment in this region during the winter. This is likely related to seasonal fluctuations for farms, manufacturing, and construction.

There is an alarming trend of underemployment (employers not scheduling enough hours) and job instability in agriculture, food service, hospitality, and retail. This contributes to economic instability, educational disruption, and homelessness for children and families.

Oregon Moms Working at Record High

Labor force status of women with children (0-17 yrs old) at home



Data: ASEC | Latest: 2023 | Source: IPUMS-CPS, Oregon Office of Economic Analysis

[Notes from source](#) - At least in this dataset, the total number of moms with children living at home in Oregon is holding steady (2020-2023), not showing the same declines as the national figures. Much of the increase is among mothers who are college graduates.

Moms without a college degree are now at their highest labor force participation rate in more than a decade. However, while 80% of mothers who are college graduates are in the labor force, less than 60% of mothers who are not college graduates are.

Earnings/Wages

Oregon has made significant progress toward a living minimum wage since 2019. However, many adults in Oregon work full-time (or near) while still not earning enough to pay expenses, due to price gouging and inflation in housing, transportation, food, household essentials, and child care.

[Oregon is among the top five states in the U.S. for the minimum wage.](#)

On July 1, 2023, the minimum wage increased to \$15.45 per hour inside the Portland urban growth boundary, \$13.20 per hour in rural counties, and \$14.20 in other areas (including the Willamette Valley).

7. Community Well-Being

Figure 50: Growth in Oregon minimum wage - 2019, 2022, 2023



Source: Molly Hendrickson at the Oregon Employment Department
<https://www.qualityinfo.org/-/oregon-s-minimum-wage-increases-on-july-1-2023>

[Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\) Living Wage Calculator](#)

One adult with two children in Marion Polk needs to earn \$50/hour (full-time) to comfortably afford living expenses. Two adults with one child both need to earn \$22/hour to have a living wage.



Factors affecting wages

While public sector employers offer living wages and robust benefits, they make up about 20% of workers in the service area. There is a stark disparity for workers in agriculture, retail, food, hospitality, education, health care, small businesses, and nonprofits. Most earn \$14 to \$18/hour, often with no benefits and part-time schedules.

Wage disparities affect communities of color the most; they are paid significantly less than white employees, even when performing similar roles with more skill and experience.

As the state minimum wage increases, low-income households can lose benefits like subsidized housing, child care, SNAP, and TANF, but still not earn enough income to cover basic monthly living expenses. As a result, some will experience deeper poverty.

Paid family and medical leave are new in Oregon. In September 2023, Paid Leave Oregon began accepting claims. Employers and employees share contribution costs, which total 1% of gross wages. The program is flexible, offering paid leave to farmworkers and people without an SSN. There is no waiting week like unemployment. However, it is reported to have technical problems and is slow to pay benefits, with some employees not receiving payments until after their leave has ended. Immigrants, migrants, and refugees experience serious pay disparities from employers who exploit workers. They cannot access (and often choose not to access) public benefits and assistance programs.

For more information, please see ALICE data in Section 2: Demographic Study.

7. Community Well-Being

Transportation

Marion Polk has a well-developed transit system compared to most urban/rural counties in Oregon.

[Cherriots](#) is a public agency providing bus service to a 76-square-mile area in Salem, Keizer, and the mid-Willamette Valley. Cherriots operates 28 local and regional routes, Monday-Saturday, with paratransit bus services for people with disabilities.

There are a variety of 15-minute routes in Salem-Keizer, and 30-minute routes to outer urban areas.

There are seven regional express routes connecting small cities in both counties to the urban core. Silverton, Woodburn, Dallas, Monmouth, Independence, Stayton, and Mill City are served every 60-90 minutes. There is also an express route to Wilsonville (Clackamas County). These routes run more often (4-10 times a day) than outlying areas for LTD in Lane County (typically 3 runs a day).

South Salem and West Salem have fewer transit routes and less coverage with Cherriots. Head Start and Early Head Start program staff noted it is not possible for parents in these areas to transport children to half-day programs using the bus.

Community Action offers transportation to all sites. Salem-Keizer has three classrooms without transportation. They offer some passes.

Cheerriots has more affordable and robust transit service than any urban area in Oregon.

Daily fares are almost half TriMet's rate in Portland, and slightly less than LTD in Eugene. Albany Transit System has been providing free rides during the pandemic (within Albany and to Corvallis). But there are fewer routes compared to Marion Polk, and the free option ends this summer.

The [Cherriots website](#) is extremely user-friendly, with an interactive system map, easy to read font, and one or two clicks to get to routes, services, and maps. One click translates the site into Spanish.

Partner testimonial – OMBU Web Development

Salem Area Mass Transit District engaged OMBU to design and launch a [new website for Cherriots](#). Their website needed to better support the region's multilingual residents and visitors with up-to-date information about transit services available, and help them plan trips. Cherriots is a technology-forward agency and made significant investments on transit planning technologies prior to engaging OMBU. Accessibility was a critical goal, so OMBU designed and built the website in alignment with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 AA guidelines.

See Appendix F for a Cherriots regional system map

7. Community Well-Being

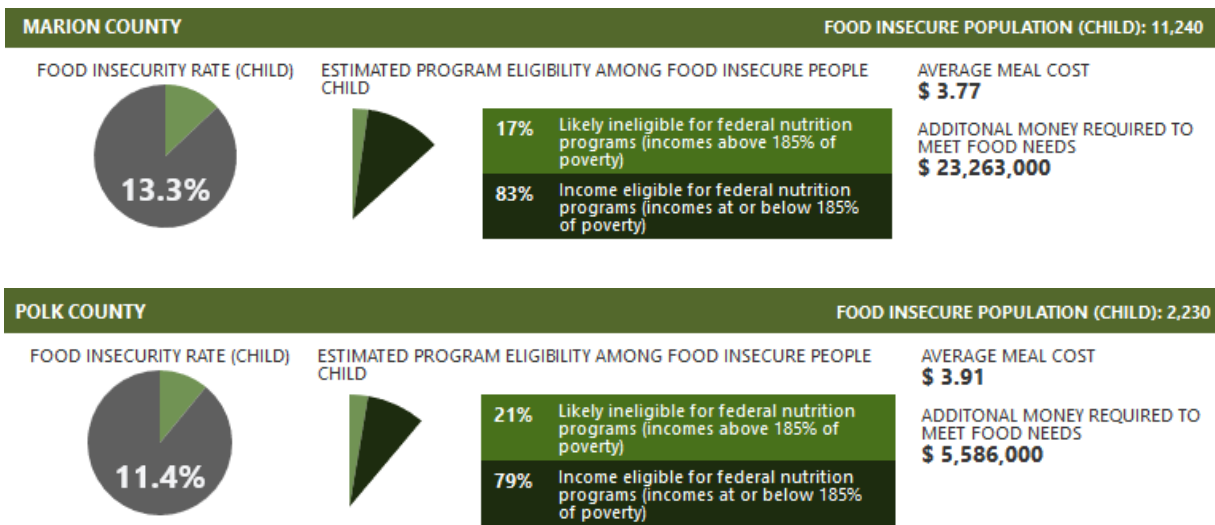
Food Insecurity

In positive news, the rate of food insecurity among children has steadily decreased in Marion Polk in recent years – from 18-19% in 2017, to 9-10% in 2021.

However, the rate of food insecurity for children under 18 in Marion County is 30% higher than adults. In Polk County, the childhood food insecurity rate is 21% higher than the rate for adults.

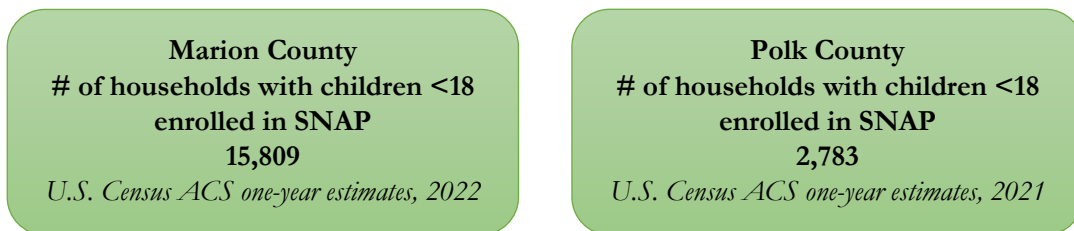
In the service area, 13,500 children experienced food insecurity in 2021. 79% to 83% of children in Marion/Polk are eligible for federal nutrition programs.

Figure 51: Childhood food insecurity, Marion and Polk Counties, Oregon, 2021



Source: [Feeding America](#)

The Oregon Food Bank [FoodFinder](#) lists 40 locations for free food in central Marion/Polk, plus 16 locations accepting SNAP Double Up Food Bucks. Staff reported there are a lot of food banks, but they are stretched thin.



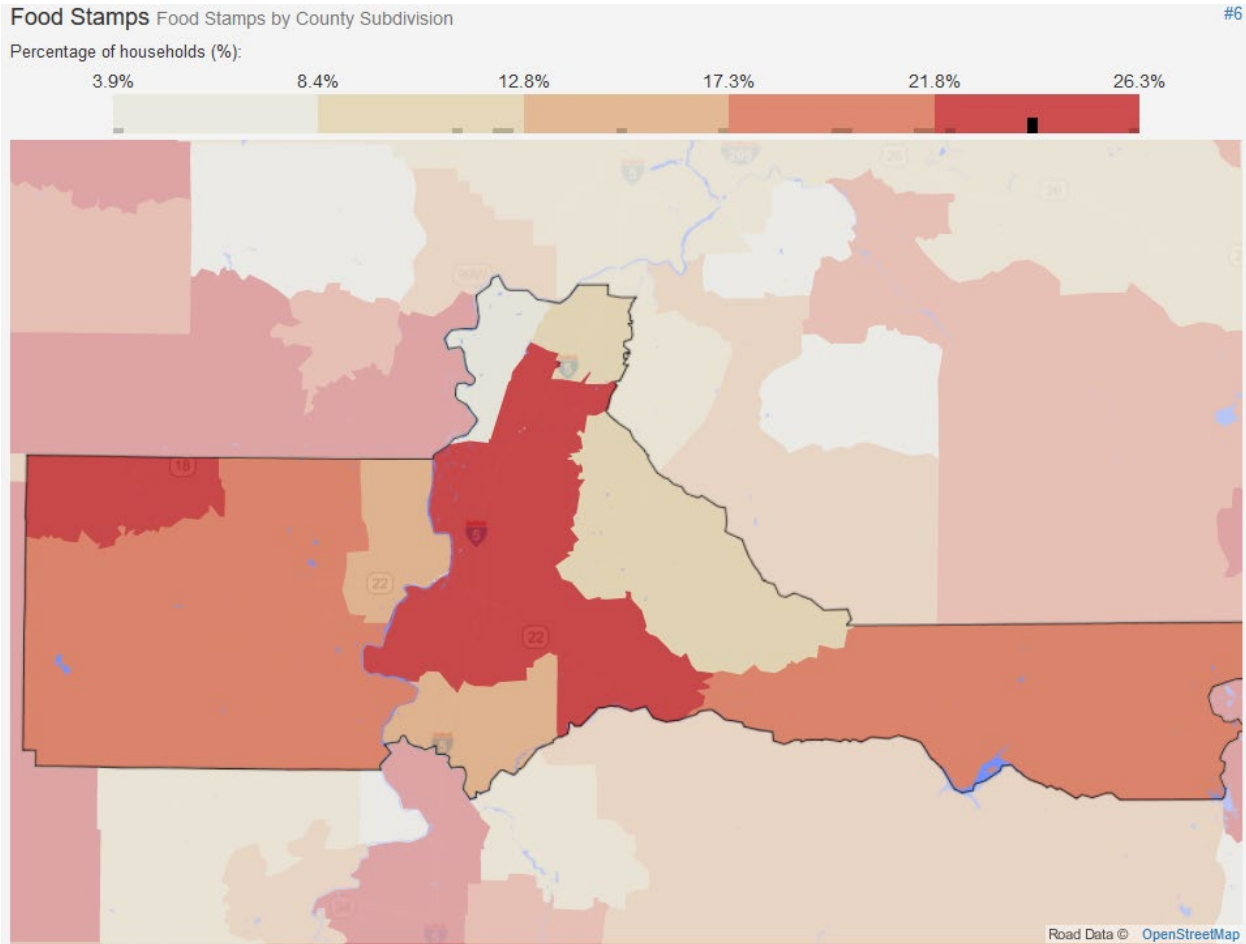
About 1 in 3 households in Marion/Polk with SNAP benefits have children. Half the households in the service area had 2+ workers in the last 12 months.

From 2016-2020, about 13% of the U.S. population had food stamps (SNAP). In Marion and Polk, participation in the SNAP federal nutrition program ranged from 13% to 26%. There are higher refusal rates in Marion due to fear of public charge among immigrants.

7. Community Well-Being

Darker colors (orange and red) on the map in Figure 52 indicate more food stamp recipients in those areas. The data is pre-pandemic. The source map at Statistical Atlas is interactive.

Figure 52: Food stamp recipients by county subdivision, Marion/Polk, 2016-2020



Source: StatisticalAtlas.com

Willamina – 26%

Falls City – 21%

Dallas – 20%

West Salem – 15%

Independence/Monmouth – 22%

Jefferson – 17%

Salem – 24%

Stayton – 24%

East Marion – 20%

Woodburn – 22%

Silverton/Mt. Angel – 12%

Hubbard – 13%

Only 85% of U.S. children (0-17) who were eligible for SNAP actually received benefits.

Source: Census ACS & USDA data, 2017-2019

7. Community Well-Being

More than 720,000 Oregonians rely on the federal food SNAP program to eat. In April 2020, after the pandemic hit and many people lost wages and jobs, federal authorities increased monthly SNAP benefits by nearly 70% to an average of nearly \$450 per household a month. But in March 2023, those monthly emergency funds will end, reducing the average benefit to nearly \$270 a month for about 410,000 households.

With food inflation soaring to 10%, about 1.5 million relied on Oregon Food Bank's network in 2022. Although food prices have come down somewhat, it still costs much more to feed a family than in 2020.

“For every meal that Oregon Food Bank provides through the food assistance system, SNAP provides at least 10 times as many meals,” said Susannah Morgan, CEO of the Oregon Food Bank. “It’s important to understand how much larger a program SNAP is.”

Source: [Oregon Capitol Chronicle, January 26, 2023](#)

End of pandemic supports



“Rent is so high; I can’t afford to continue pay [it] and I’m **about to be homeless.**”

“I would like to have my own place, but I **cannot afford rent** in my area, so I am living with a family member.”

“[We] applied for Section 8 and **have been waiting three years.** Can’t cover rent and utilities.”

“I hope you don’t take away the [Emergency Assistance (EA)] payments for SNAP. Cost of living increases are making it to where food expenses are... high and **the thought of the EA going away is scary.** The \$20 match at the farmers market is really helpful and I love it’.

“While programs have been helpful, specifically the COVID pandemic “bonus” payments, unfortunately, **factoring in inflation food assistance is still not going far enough.**”

Source: *Oregon Department of Human Services, SNAP participants’ survey, 2022*

Every child enrolled in these Head Start and Early Head Start programs receives free breakfast and lunch – about 1,500 children a year across the region.

The Salem-Keizer district offers Spring/Winter/Summer meal services in various locations during school breaks to meet the needs of Head Start students.

Community Action partners with the Marion Polk Food Share, mostly referring families to local pantries directly. Staff sometimes do food deliveries when families cannot pick up food. The Food Share supports community gardens, including a few at Head Start locations. Community Action is on the list for Salem Gleaners, who pick after harvests. They usually receive several hundred pounds of seasonal local produce to distribute among families, often in September and October.

See the 2023 Community Needs Assessment for reports of the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch at each school in the region.

See Appendix I for a list of community resources available to address basic needs.

7. Community Well-Being

Water Quality

Water quality is good in communities along the North Santiam River. River water flows into the Geren Island Water Treatment Facility in Stayton, where it is filtered through slow sand filters and disinfected with chlorine.

The City of Salem adds fluoride and soda ash (to reduce the leaching of lead from household plumbing). Per the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the City routinely monitors conditions in the watershed and [collects water quality samples](#) from treated water.

During algae season (April to October), additional monitoring and water quality sampling occurs within the North Santiam River watershed. In 2021, an ozone treatment system was added to improve protection against cyanotoxins, in response to changes in the watershed.

Lead Risks

[The City of Salem](#) is not aware of lead service lines in its water system. The city tests fewer than 100 homes a year in a reduced-monitoring plan. In 2016, two percent of samples had elevated lead.

The Salem-Keizer district has a plan for testing all schools (including our Head Start Classrooms). The district tests its owned and leased buildings on a six-year cycle. There is not lead blood testing done in the Head Start program.




[The main factor behind the presence of lead in Oregon](#) is not lead pipes, but the corrosive character of “soft” water – water with lower levels of calcium and magnesium. When soft water comes into contact with lead soldering or leaded brass fixtures, it causes lead to dissolve and run through the faucets. That’s especially true when water sits in the pipes for some time.

Oregon has soft water with a state average hardness of 29 PPM. Portland, the most populous city, has a water hardness level of 12 PPM. Salem has 18 PPM which is very soft according to USGS water hardness measures.

Sources: <https://waterdefense.org/water/tap/portland/>
[HydroFLOW USA](#)

Lead can build up in blood and cause serious health problems, including damage to the brain and kidneys. Infants, pregnant people, and young children are most at risk.

Children in low-income households are disproportionately impacted by lead contamination, because they often live in older housing with

-  Lead paint (built before 1980)
-  Lead solder joining pipes (banned in Oregon in 1985)
-  Leaded brass fixtures

7. Community Well-Being

Tips to reduce lead contamination in water

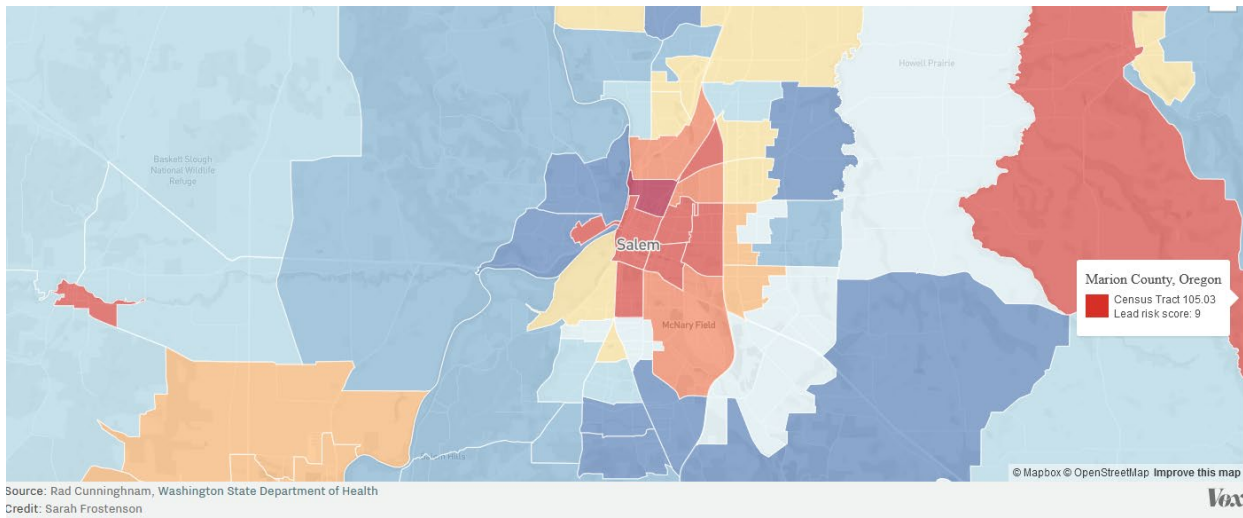
- Replace the faucet (some older faucets have leaded brass fittings).
- Flush out lead by running the water for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using it.
- Use cold water for cooking and making baby formula.
 - o Lead dissolves easier in hot water than cold.
- **Boiling water will not get rid of lead.**

Source: Portland Water Bureau

Salem residents can request lead testing from the City of Salem

Call the water quality hotline
503-588-6323

Figure 53: High-risk areas for lead exposure, Marion and Polk Counties, 2021



Areas with high risk of lead exposure based on older housing stock:

Dallas, Keizer, Inner NE Salem, West Salem (along the river), Central/South Salem, Four Corners

Areas with moderately elevated risks of lead exposure:

East Salem, SW Salem, Labish Village

7. Community Well-Being

COVID-19 Pandemic

Cases and Deaths

Fortunately, deaths and hospitalizations from COVID-19 declined significantly in 2023. But OHA is no longer tracking cases as of May 2023, so it is not possible to know the number of cases.

Wastewater treatment samples indicate high levels of COVID-19 circulating in 2023-2024.

According to the CDC, approximately 8,500 Oregonians died as a direct result of the COVID-19 virus in 2020-2023. This is one of the lowest rates in the U.S. due to strong public health measures and higher vaccine uptake, but it still represents too many avoidable deaths.

Vaccines

Uptake for the initial two-series vaccine was significantly different across the service area. Polk achieved an 80% uptake, while just 59% of Marion residents were fully vaccinated.

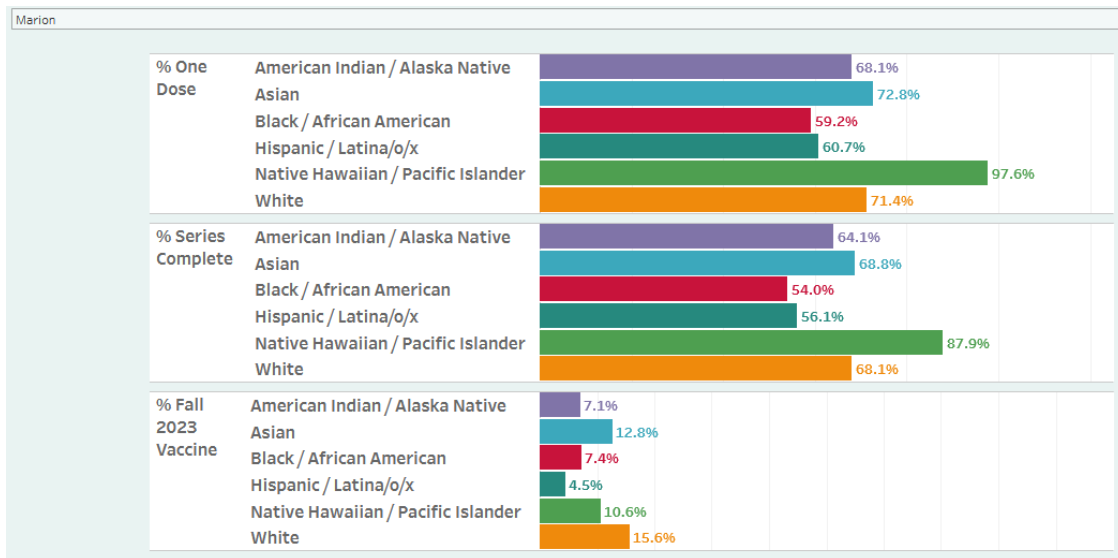
OHA’s dashboard offers data for uptake of all COVID-19 vaccines by zip code. Two zip codes in Marion (97342 and 97137) had 90%+ rates for the initial series. One zip code (97373) was only 34%. In Polk, most zip codes had a 64-78% vaccination rate. Just one (97344) had a very low rate of 34%.

Uptake of the bivalent booster in 2023 was low across the U.S. (17%). Polk County has the highest uptake in Oregon (23%), more than twice the Marion uptake (12%).

Considering race and ethnicity for the initial vaccines, Black individuals in Marion had lower rates, with 54% of residents completing the series. Latine individuals in Marion and Polk had lower rates of vaccination on the initial series (53-61%) and the bivalent booster (4-6%) than remaining residents.

Virtually all Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents in both counties received initial vaccinations.

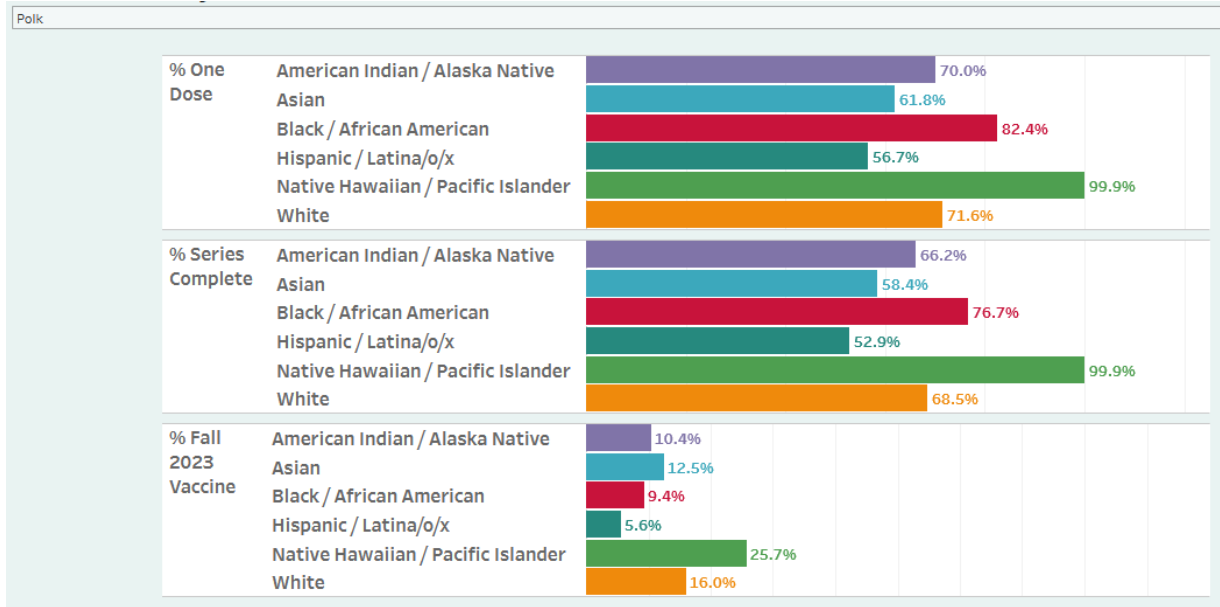
Figure 54: COVID-19 vaccine uptake by race and ethnicity, Marion County, Oregon



Source: [Oregon Health Authority Covid-19 Vaccination Metrics Dashboard](#)

7. Community Well-Being

Figure 55: COVID-19 vaccine uptake by race and ethnicity, Polk County, Oregon



Health impact on historically marginalized populations

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on historically marginalized groups. These communities have suffered more due to systemic health issues related to poverty, limited access to healthcare, discrimination, and underlying health conditions. Social inequities resulted in higher rates of illness, death, and long COVID among people of color and in low-income families.

Additionally, the pandemic made economic disparities worse. People of color experienced more job loss and financial insecurity. The pandemic disrupted access to essential services, such as child care, education, primary care, dental care, and mental health services. People of color are more likely to engage in public-facing work, so they were (and are) affected more deeply.

In Oregon, Latine people make up 13% of Oregon’s population but were diagnosed with 27% of COVID-19 cases in 2020.

Workers in public-facing service industries like food service, agriculture, hospitality, and retail do not receive paid time off and sick leave at the same rate as workers in white collar industries. Work-from-home options are rare in blue-collar industries. Parents who work in these lower-paying industries are more likely to have children eligible for Head Start.

- Black, Indigenous and other people of color represented 40 percent of COVID-19 cases in Multnomah County in 2020, but only 30 percent of residents.
- Latine and Asian American residents appear more likely to be hospitalized from the virus, and many of those residents reported underlying health conditions.
- Most residents who have died of COVID-19 lived with chronic health conditions — conditions that occur at far higher rates among Black and African American individuals.

Source: [Multnomah County website, 2020](#)

7. Community Well-Being

Impact on early childhood education

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on early childhood education. Disruptions in learning in 2020-2021 harmed young children and added stress to families. The lack of in-person interaction with teachers and peers had a negative impact on children's social and emotional growth.

According to a [2022 report](#) on equity in Head Start and Early Head Start from the National Institute for Early Education Research, data from 2021-2022 suggest enrollment is rebounding, though not yet entirely back to pre-pandemic levels.

To ensure a continued return of children to Head Start and Early Head Start, the report recommends funding be used to improve facilities (e.g., air purification and ventilation), recruit and retain staff, and for outreach to families on the benefits of Head Start and Early Head Start and how children can safely return. (For more information see pages [12-15](#).)

Declining mental health during the pandemic is well-documented but still rarely quantified at the community level. We encourage programs to speak with families, their teachers, consultants, and family advocates to better understand the needs of enrolled families.

Additionally, many families have faced continual financial hardship due to repeated unpaid sick leave for COVID-19, while at the same time the end of pandemic aid is pushing some families back into poverty. These impacts are most keenly felt in communities of color.

The incidence of long COVID is about 18% for U.S. adults, and as high as 30% in some regions (CDC). In Oregon, about 1 in 5 adults report having symptoms 1-3 months following an infection, often unrelated to the initial infection. Long-COVID may have minor, moderate, or severe impacts on a person's health and well-being, and the duration varies by individual.

Beyond physical health and economic security, the effects on mental health for children and families cannot be underestimated. Parents, teachers, and social workers report significantly more behavioral issues in children and declining mental health for families since the onset of the pandemic.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for more funding and staffing support for early childhood education. It has brought more attention to the essential role that early childhood education programs and educators play in children's lives.

Notes

- ❖ The pandemic continues to evolve; this information is a snapshot of available data.
- ❖ Rates of disability from long COVID will not show up in Social Security data for years.
- ❖ Excess deaths due to COVID-19 were only available at the state level.
- ❖ The economic impact of the pandemic is still challenging to measure.

Additional resource for COVID-19 reading

[“The Effects of COVID-19 on Oregon’s Early Care and Education Workforce and Programs”](#), Partnership for Preschool Improvement Project, 2021 survey

8. Children’s Health

This section offers a profile of health and wellness for children in Marion Polk. It addresses physical health, mental health, oral/dental health, disabilities, and special needs. Where there was county-level data available for children age 0-5, it is included. Data generally covers the period from 2018 to 2021.

Physical Health

Overall, Oregon ranks in the middle of U.S. states for children’s well-being. Oregon’s statewide ranking for children’s health improved from 12 to 7 in the most recent Kids Count survey.*

**Completed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2023, using data from 2021.*

Figure 56: Oregon children’s health rankings, *KIDS COUNT Data Book, 2023*

HEALTH	UNITED STATES			OREGON		
	2019	2021	TREND	2019	2021	TREND
Low birth-weight babies <small>US 311,932 OR 2,827</small>	8.3%	8.5%	↑ WORSE	6.7%	6.9%	↑ WORSE
Children without health insurance <small>US 4,165,000 OR 31,000</small>	6%	5%	↓ BETTER	4%	3%	↓ BETTER
Child and teen deaths per 100,000 <small>US 23,198 OR 192</small>	25	30	↑ WORSE	20	21	↑ WORSE

Since 2010, Oregon has improved health insurance coverage for children and teens. Fifteen years ago, 93% of children had health insurance. By 2021, 97% of kids were covered. However, the percentage of low birth-weight babies and children who are overweight has increased.

Source: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/>



In 2021, the statewide rate for newborns with low birth-weight was 68/1,000 births (6.8%). Babies born to parents with lower household income had low birth-weights more often.

Parents in Marion had fewer low birth weight babies (5.6% of births) than parents across Oregon. This represents a slight improvement over 2014-2020 data from the CDC.

In Polk, 6.8% of newborns weighed less than 5.5 lbs in 2021. This rate is slightly higher (worse) than CDC vital statistics data from 2014-2020, which show a rate of 6.0%.

In 2021, there were 33 low birth-weight newborns in Polk County and 235 in Marion.

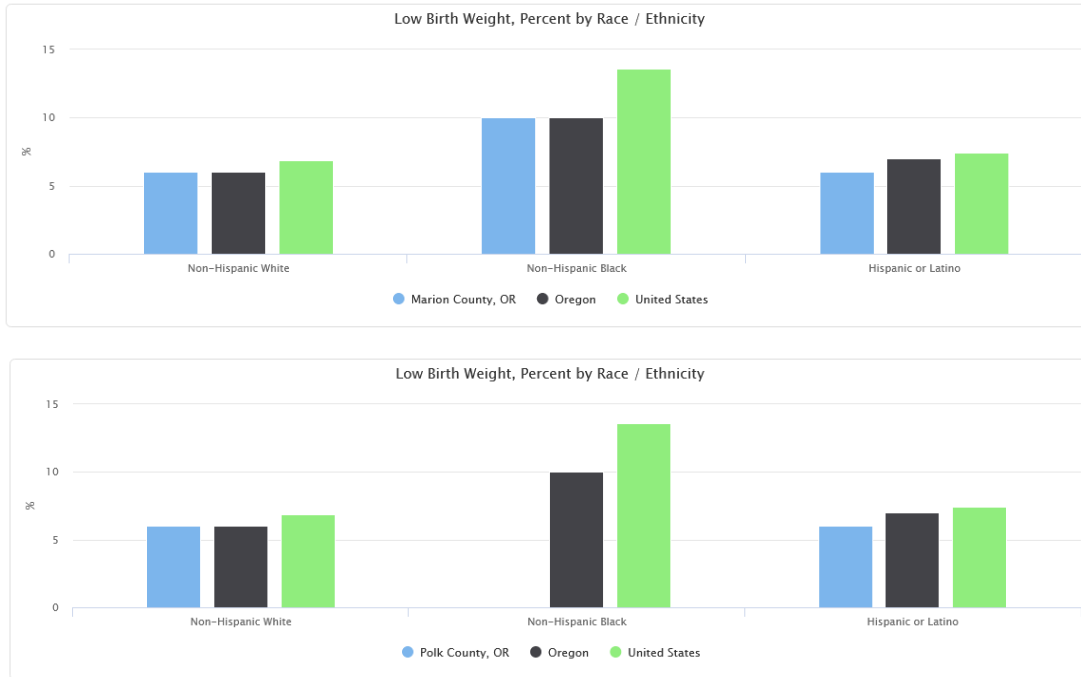
Source: [*Oregon Child Integrated Dataset*](#)

8. Children’s Health

Like many health indicators where systemic racism plays a role, communities of color are disproportionately affected. According to 2014-2020 Census ACS data, Black and African-American parents have significantly more low birth-weight babies than non-Hispanic white parents. *See Figure 57.*

Latine parents in Marion Polk have low birth-weight newborns at the same rate as white parents in the service area, and fewer low birth-weight newborns than Latine parents in Oregon and the U.S. Black parents in the region still face disparities and have low birth-weight babies more often.

Figure 57: Low birth-weight percentages by ethnicity, Marion and Polk Counties, Oregon, and the U.S., 2014-2020



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2014-2020

Figure 58: Service area & Oregon child health profiles, 2023 *KIDS COUNT*

Marion County				
Pregnancies with 1st trimester prenatal care 83.1% 2021 82.3% 2020	Children without health insurance 2.9% 2021 3.8% 2020	Children up-to-date with immunizations 71.0% 2022 74.0% 2020	Youth with past dental needs 28.7% 2020 Prior Year N/A	Youth with unmet mental health needs 14.3% 2020 Prior Year N/A

Polk County				
Pregnancies with 1st trimester prenatal care 86.7% 2021 84.2% 2020	Children without health insurance 1.5% 2021 3.0% 2020	Children up-to-date with immunizations 70.0% 2022 70.0% 2020	Youth with past dental needs 33.2% 2020 Prior Year N/A	Youth with unmet mental health needs 10.9% 2020 Prior Year N/A

8. Children’s Health

Marion County’s childhood health indicators are similar to Oregon’s. Slightly more pregnant people in the county are receiving first trimester prenatal care (83% vs 82%), but more than one in ten young people have unmet mental health needs.

In Polk County, most childhood health indicators are better than Marion County and Oregon. Very few children are uninsured (1.5%), and 9 in 10 pregnant people are receiving first trimester prenatal care. Fewer children have unmet mental health needs. However, one in three youth have unmet dental health needs.

Current indicators for childhood health in the service area are positive, but serious challenges remain for 12-15% of children and families who are experiencing poverty.

Many children and teens in both counties have unmet mental health and dental health needs. Plus, early childhood immunization rates decreased during the pandemic, leaving more children exposed to serious disease and illness.

According to Healthy People 2030, the social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environment that affect our overall health and quality of life.

Figure 59: What are Social Determinants of Health?

What Are the Social Determinants of Health?



Social Determinants of Health
Copyright-free

Healthy People 2030

Retrieved April 26, 2022, from the Healthy People 2030 website, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Social determinants of health related to Head Start

- ✓ Lack of affordable child care
- ✓ Income inequality (different access to well-paying jobs)
- ✓ Severe housing cost burden (50%+ of monthly income goes toward rent)
- ✓ Unstable work schedules, not enough hours
- ✓ Environmental factors (air and water quality)

These factors disproportionately affect the health of low-income households where children are most likely to be eligible for Head Start.

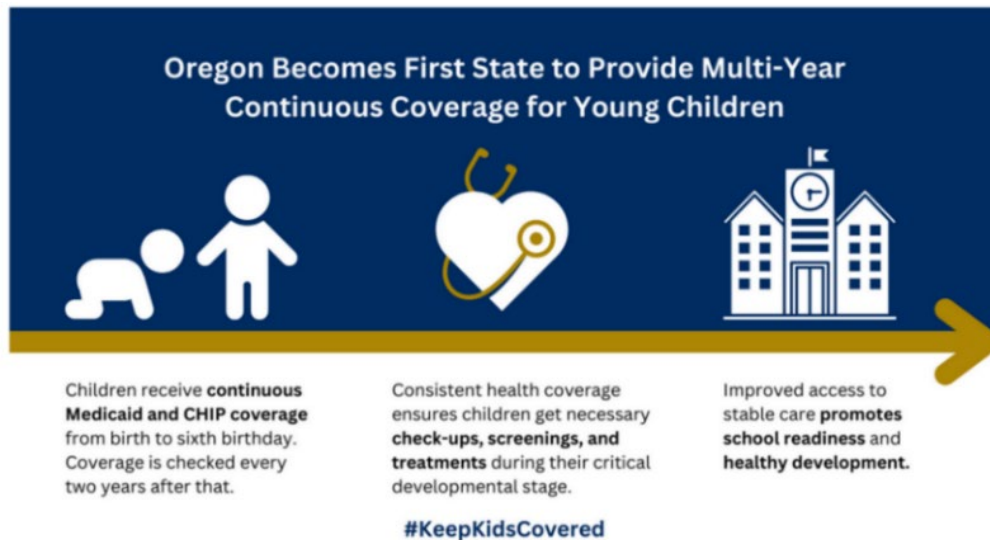
8. Children’s Health

Medicaid – Oregon Health Plan (OHP)

Following the passage of the Affordable Care Act, Oregon’s 2014 Medicaid expansion (eligibility increased to 138% FPL), there was unprecedented growth in enrollment. The number of Oregonians covered by OHP grew 59%, more than any other state except Kentucky. More than 400,000 additional people were covered, nearly 10% of Oregon’s population.

Source: Center for Health Systems Effectiveness, Issue Brief, November 2018

The Oregon Health Plan has income and eligibility requirements based on household size. Please see CareOregon.org for more information about OHP eligibility and how to enroll.



Since 2018, the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) has been open to all children and teens younger than 19 who meet income and other criteria – regardless of immigration status.

This change impacts more than 15,000 children and teens.

“Cover All Kids” includes children and teens with undocumented status and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, plus children in families with household income up to 305% of the federal poverty level.

Source: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/hsd/ohp/pages/ohpcoversme.aspx>

8. Children's Health

All types of health insurance

From 2013-2021, employer-sponsored health insurance coverage in Marion County remained steady at 42-44%. This is similar to Lane and Linn, but lower than Multnomah (50-54%).

Due to expanded OHP eligibility and the lack of employer-sponsored health insurance, Marion County's Medicaid enrollment grew from covering 16% of county residents to 23%.

In Polk County, employer coverage rates are higher (50%) and fewer people are uninsured. Medicaid enrollment grew from 13-19% of county residents over the past decade.

Oregon's Medicaid/OHP expansion improved health insurance coverage for children and adults. The Affordable Care Act (also called Obamacare) led to nationwide improvements in coverage for adults. As a result, there are fewer uninsured children and adults in Oregon than most U.S. states.

To see historical charts comparing all types of health insurance coverage by state and county, visit <https://datausa.io/>

Medicaid Well-Child Visits

In 2021 in Marion County, about 6 in 10 children age 3-6 who were enrolled in Medicaid received a well-child visit.

Latine children and those who identify with some other race in Marion County had the highest rate of Medicaid well-child visits (69% and 75%). Children who are Black, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and white had the lowest rate of visits (52-54%).

In Polk County, just 52% of children age 3-6 who were enrolled in Medicaid received a well-child visit in 2021. The statewide average was 59%. **This is an area for improvement in Polk County.**

Note: Most of the race/ethnicity data for Polk County was suppressed due to a small sample size and need to protect privacy. Readers can follow the link below to access complete data sets.

Source: [Oregon Child Integrated Dataset](#)

8. Children’s Health

Childhood Immunizations

Marion and Polk Counties are similar to Oregon in early childhood vaccination rates. Respectively, 71% and 70% of two-year olds were current for the 4:3:1:3:3:1:4 series, compared to 69% in OR.

Since 2018, infant and toddler vaccination rates have improved in Polk from 68% to 70%. Vaccination rates among this age group remained steady in Marion, around 71%.

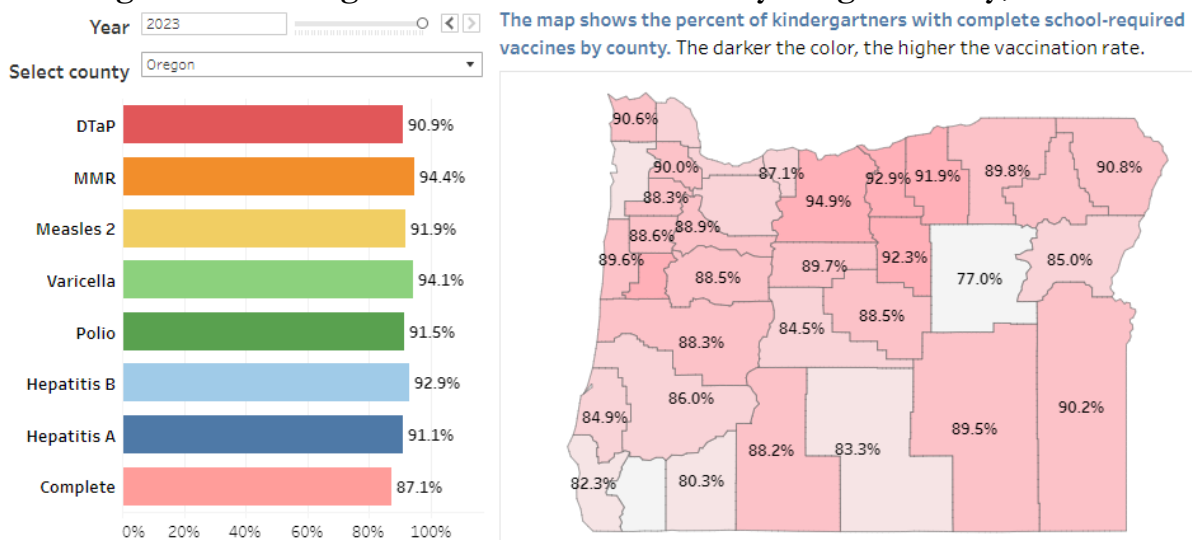
Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reporting suggested a sharp decrease in the routine immunization of children early in the pandemic with nearly all (95%) surveyed clinics reporting changes to their immunization practices and 65% reduced or limited their well-child visits.

Source: [Oregon Immunization Program, Early Childhood Immunization Rates](#)

There was a 1% reduction in OR kindergarten immunization rates from 2022 to 2023.

Both counties have slightly higher rates for kindergarten immunizations than Oregon as a whole, and these Head Start programs typically have higher immunization rates than the region, with very few exemptions.

Figure 60: Kindergarten immunization rates by Oregon county, 2023



Source: [Oregon Health Authority Tableau Data](#)

Oregon has one of the highest rates of non-medical exemption from required vaccines in the country (on the basis of philosophical or religious beliefs). Since 2019, the rate of non-medical exemptions among Oregon kindergarteners has steadily risen from 6% to 8%, increasing exposure to vaccine-preventable diseases among medically vulnerable students.

Source: [Our Children Oregon, Childhood Immunizations Fact Sheet and OPB, 2023](#)

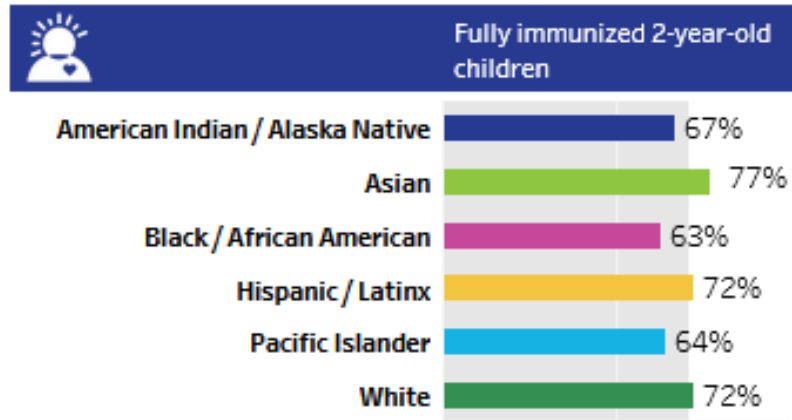
[Boost Oregon](#) offers educational videos and information, along with training and coaching for physicians on how to have conversations with patients and parents to make decisions about vaccinations that are informed by science.

8. Children’s Health

Equity Lens: Childhood immunizations in communities of color in Oregon

For infants and toddlers across the state, Asian, Latine, and white children met or exceeded the Oregon benchmarks for immunizations in 2020.

Figure 61: Immunization rates by race for children age 0-2 in Oregon, 2020



Source: Oregon Kids Count Data Book, 2022

From 2019-2020, immunization rates for this age group increased among Black and Asian children. Immunization rates slightly decreased among Latine, NHPI, and Indigenous children.

Immunization rates among children of color in Oregon have steadily improved since 2014.

The largest gains in childhood immunization were in Latinx and Asian communities.

The smallest gains were in African American, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander communities.

Key Takeaways

There are some disparities for infants and toddlers of color in receiving early childhood immunizations in Oregon – Black, Indigenous, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander children under age 3 are immunized slightly less often than the state average of 72%.

This data indicates a need for more outreach, access, and culturally-responsive health care related to childhood immunization, designed and delivered in partnership with these communities.

About 3 in 10 children in the service area are not current on immunizations by age 3.

8. Children’s Health

Mental Health

Polk County is in the bottom 25% of U.S. counties for access to mental health providers. Marion County is only slightly better in terms of access to a provider. *Source: Center for Medicaid Services, 2023.*

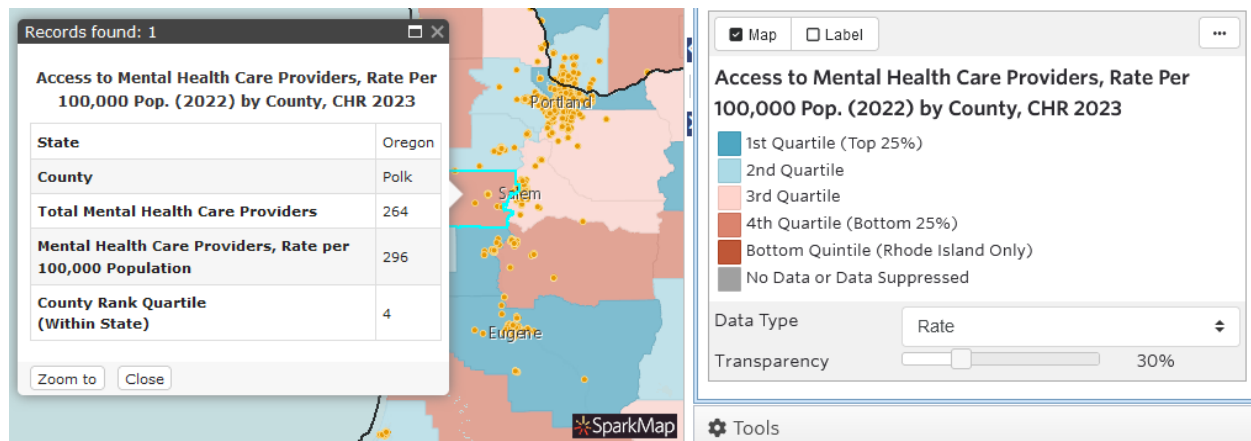
Marion Polk has one-third the number of mental health professionals per capita than other urban areas in western Oregon.

Marion & Polk Counties: 300-400 providers for every 100,000 people

Benton, Lane, and Multnomah Counties: more than 1,000 providers for every 100,000 people

Jackson and Josephine Counties: 1,300 and 800 providers for every 100,000 people

Figure 62: Access to mental health care providers, rate per 100,000 people, Marion and Polk Counties, 2022



Access to Mental Health Care Providers, Rate Per 100,000 Pop. (2022) by County, CHR 2023

State	Oregon
County	Marion
Total Mental Health Care Providers	1,431
Mental Health Care Providers, Rate per 100,000 Population	412
County Rank Quartile (Within State)	3

Source: SparkMap data from Center for Medicaid Services, accessed via County Health Rankings, 2022

The number of providers in an area is not the only factor related to health care access. Two significant barriers are providers not accepting new patients, and a small pool to choose from - the majority of providers don’t accept OHP due to low reimbursement rates.

8. Children’s Health

Anxiety, Depression, and Mental Distress

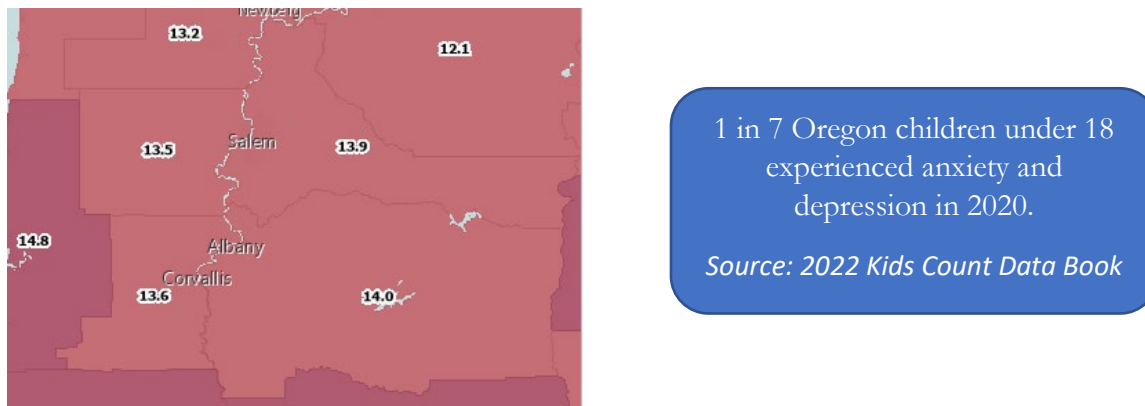
The 2022 *KIDS COUNT* reports what is apparent - children in the U.S. were more likely to experience anxiety and depression in 2020-2021 than before the pandemic.

The most current state-level data we found shows 34,000 more Oregon children experienced anxiety or depression in 2020 than in 2019.

Using current population estimates for counties and assuming a relatively even distribution across Oregon counties, we can estimate 2,600 to 3,000 more children in Marion were experiencing anxiety and/or depression. In Polk, 700 to 850 more children were affected by anxiety and/or depression during the early pandemic.

Surveys from the Oregon Health Authority in 2016 show adults in lower-income households report frequent mental distress at more than twice the rate of adults in moderate-income households.

Figure 63: Adults reporting frequent mental distress, central Willamette Valley, 2021



According to the CDC, between 18 and 20% of adults age 18+ in Polk County and Marion County reported having poor mental health in 2021.

Source: CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System PLACES Project 2021

This is a clarion call for Head Start programs to invest more resources in hiring mental health professionals and connecting families with mental health services.

Last spring, Andi Kemp reached out to the Oregon Head Start Association for more information about how families enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start used mental health services in recent years. The program officer advised the Region 10 Head Start office and OHSA do not aggregate this information for public reporting, and rarely provide it to funded programs.

The OHSA recommended Head Start and Early Head Start programs to reach out to other programs in the area and request this information, and/or to review publicly available Program Information Reports and create their own summaries.

8. Children’s Health

Publicly-Funded Health Clinics and Programs

In Marion County, the [public health division](#) provides care through 20+ programs related to WIC, immunizations, STI testing, early childhood nursing, vital records, and communicable diseases. A variety of specialists operate a public health clinic and offer prevention services in Salem. They have bilingual speakers in English and Spanish, and offer translation for other languages.

The behavioral health division includes health and human services, addictions treatment services, children’s behavioral health, and a psychiatric crisis center.

[Behavioral Health](#) also includes a Youth & Family Services team, providing a variety of therapeutic and emotional wellness services. Their programs consist of the Early Assessment and Support Alliance (EASA), peer-delivered services, and wraparound services. An experienced Latino team is available to provide bilingual-bicultural Spanish services to the Latino community.

There was no publicly-available information on the public health or behavioral health websites about eligibility for services, available appointments, wait times, or how many services were delivered in recent years. The [Marion County GIS](#) did not have any data related to health services, so it is difficult to measure the impact of these public health programs.

The best way to contact most of Marion County’s public health and behavioral health programs appears to be by phone. [WIC](#) offers texting and email options.

[Polk County’s Public Health](#) division has clinic hours in Dallas, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Relevant programs they offer for children and families include reproductive health, [WIC](#), communicable diseases, immunizations, and tobacco prevention and education.

Polk County also offers home visiting programs for parents with children age 0-5 (Babies First), pregnant people, and families with children through age 20 with complex medical conditions (CaCoon). Families can self-refer for either program.

Polk County’s public health programs are accepting new patients and offering telephone visits. We could not find any publicly-available data on the impact of their programs.

The [Family and Community Outreach](#) department is now located behind Roth’s Market on Independence Hwy in Monmouth. Programs within the department include Drug, Alcohol, Problem Gambling & Suicide Prevention, Early Learning & Family Engagement, Family Resource Navigation, Polk County Resource Center, School Based Mental Health, Service Integration, and Veteran Services Office.

[Early Learning and Family Engagement](#) partners with [Mid-Valley Parenting](#) to offer free workshops and parenting classes, with incentives for all participants.

MVP also hosts Dallas Jumpstart - a free two-week summer camp to help incoming kindergarteners to prepare for the new year.

8. Children’s Health

The Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) serving Marion and Polk Counties is PacificSource.

PacificSource has a provider directory for doctors and dentists who accept Medicaid:

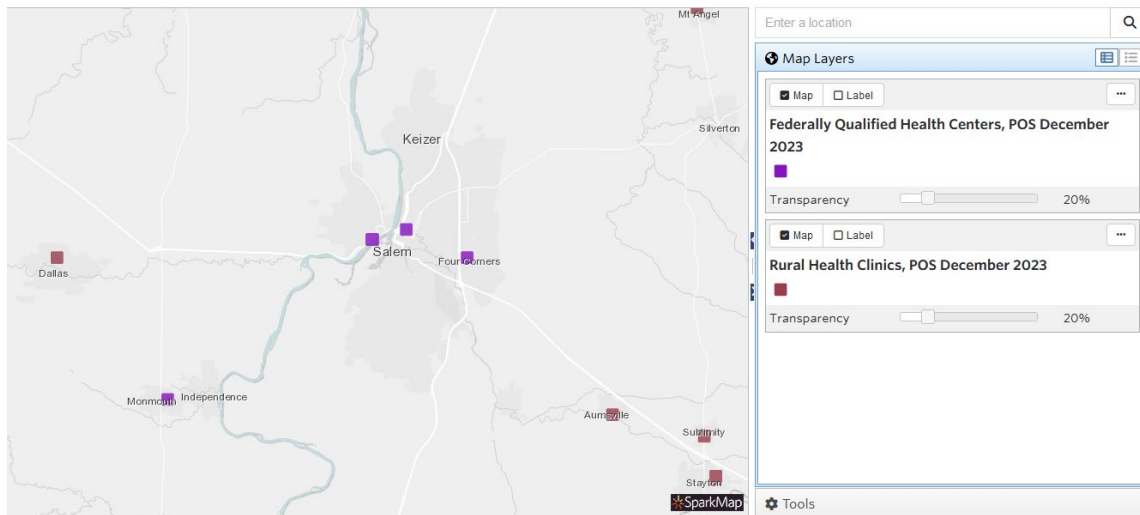
<https://providerdirectory.pacificsource.com/medicaid>

Oregon Medicaid online provider directory:

<https://www.or-medicaid.gov/ProdPortal/Directory%20Search/tabId/50/Default.aspx>

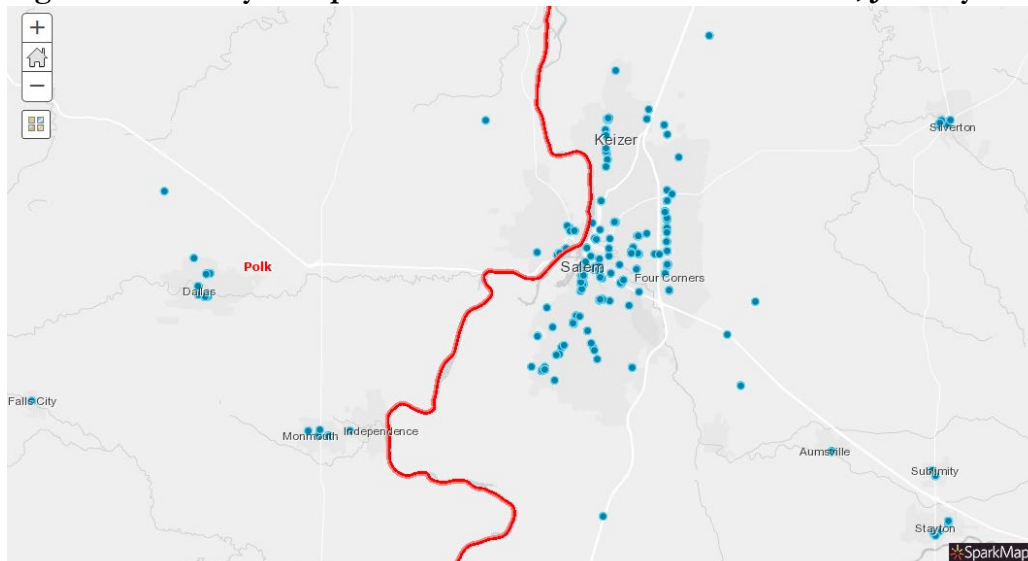
SparkMap features maps of primary care providers and mental health providers who are established with Medicaid and Medicare, with detail for each provider listing. We’ve included overview maps below.

Figure 64: Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics in Marion & Polk Counties, December 2023



Source: SparkMap, using data from US Department of Health & Human Services, Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, [Provider of Services File](#); December 2023

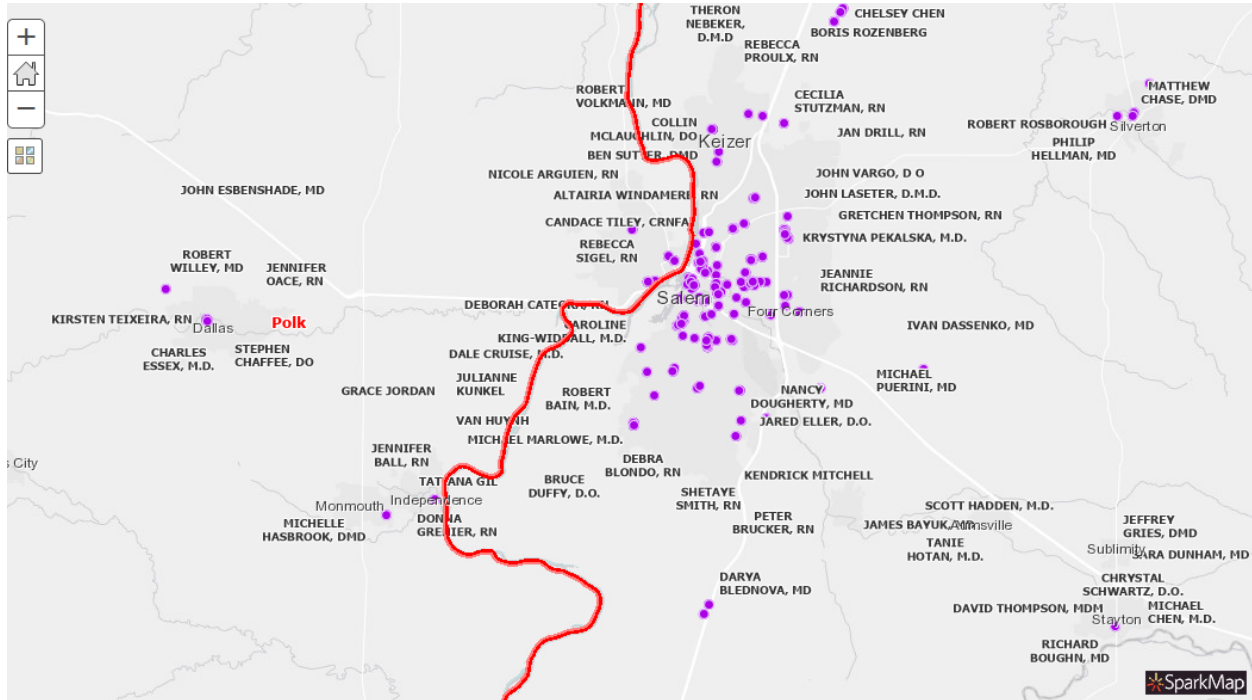
Figure 65: Primary care providers in Marion and Polk Counties, January 2024



Source: SparkMap data from CMS (Medicaid) NPPEs system

8. Children's Health

Figure 66: Mental health providers in Marion and Polk Counties, January 2024



Source: SparkMap data from CMS (Medicaid) NPPEs system

In SparkMap you can find details for each health care provider listed.

8. Children’s Health

Oral Health/Dental Health

The reasons children lack oral health care and dental care are varied, and often include systemic barriers related to family circumstances, like cost, language barrier, fear of dentists, difficulty getting time off work, lack of child care for other children, and lack of transportation.

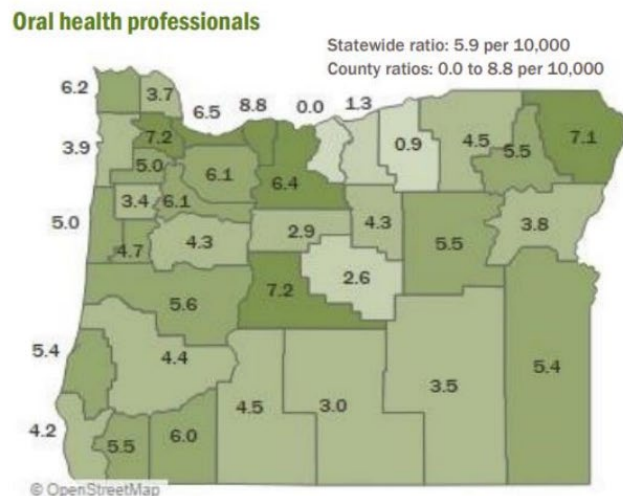
Comparing data from 2012 and 2017 reveals some notable improvements in children’s oral health: the prevalence of cavities and rates of rampant decay declined for young children in Oregon. For children from low-income families, Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) also report a steady increase in the number of OHP enrollees with sealants, with all CCOs exceeding the 20% benchmark set by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in 2016.

However, the lack of up-to-date, comprehensive oral health data at the state level makes it difficult to evaluate progress, identify disparities, and understand the scope of the issues in play. This reflects the lack of resources and prioritization for dental health within public health, and the under-resourcing of preventive health measures more broadly.

Source: Oregon Community Foundation, Children’s Dental Health Initiative: Progress and Lessons Learned 2021

Figure 67: Where are Oregon’s oral health providers located?

- Statewide OHA estimates 5.9 Oral Health providers per 10,000 Oregonians.
- The average in urban areas is 5.8 and in both rural and frontier areas is 3.2.
- The fewest providers are in Sherman, Gilliam and Marrow counties.



Source: OHA Dental Program Update, 2022



In Marion County, there are twice as many oral health professionals per 10,000 people as Polk County (6.1 vs. 3.4). There are 9.2 dentists per 10,000 people.

Polk has the lowest provider-to-population ratio of oral health professionals in western Oregon. There are only 5.6 dentists per 10,000 people.

Head Start staff noted another barrier for young children in accessing dental care - many pediatric dentists do not want to see children until age 4 or 5.

8. Children’s Health

Fluoride

Only 41 water systems in Oregon (serving about 22% of the state’s population) add fluoride to their drinking water¹. Portland is the largest city in the U.S. without fluoride in the drinking water.

In Marion County, Salem, Keizer, Silverton, Sublimity, East Salem, and Turner add fluoride to their community water systems. This covers 65% of the county’s population, which means 1 in 3 people living in Marion County’s rural areas do not have fluoridated drinking water.

In Polk County, Dallas, Independence, and Monmouth add fluoride to their drinking water. Fluoridated water systems serve fewer than 1 in 2 Polk County residents.

According to dentists, publicly available data, and peer-reviewed studies, the lack of fluoride is correlated with higher rates of tooth decay in children². The vast majority of studies do not show negative health effects from low levels of fluoride. Fluoride rinses can help address this gap.

Dental Health Indicators for Oregon Children

Poor oral health has a detrimental effect on children’s quality of life, their performance at school, and their success later in life.³ According to data from the 2016-2018 Oregon Oral Health Survey:

- 20% of first and second-graders statewide have untreated tooth decay.
- 50% of children in first and second grade have experienced tooth decay (treated or untreated).
- 25% of first-graders in Oregon have dental sealants, and nearly 50% of second-graders do.

As of 2016-2018, nearly half of third-graders in Oregon had experienced dental decay (treated or untreated), and one in five students had untreated tooth decay.⁴

Sources:

¹ Oregon Health Authority, [Drinking Water Data Online, Community Water Systems Adjusting Fluoride](#)

² <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/01/681368165/research-supports-claims-that-teeth-worsen-without-fluoridated-water>

³ Kwan SY, Petersen PE, Pine CM, Borutta A. 2005. Health-promoting schools: An opportunity for oral health promotion. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 83(9):677-685.

⁴ [CDC and Oregon Oral Health Survey](#) (No data for Head Start and kindergarten. 2016-2018 was most recent.)

Figure 68: Oregon dental health indicators for children and adolescents, Oregon Oral Health Surveillance System, 2019

Description of Indicator	2016	2017	2018
Any dental visit among children aged 1-17 years	82.5%	85.2%	84.8%
Preventive dental visit among children aged 1-17 years	79.6%	82.1%	80.2%
Children aged 0-5 with any dental visit in the past year	55.6% ⁷		60.7%
Percent of parents reporting condition of child’s teeth as good, very good, or excellent (aged 1-17 years)	92.5%	94.3%	93.4%
Children (aged 1-17 years) with one or more oral health			

⁷ National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) <https://census.gov/programs-surveys/nsch.html>

The NSCH is a national survey that provides rich data on multiple, intersecting aspects of children’s health and well-being – including physical and mental health, access to and quality of health care, and the child’s family, neighborhood, school, and social context. The survey underwent a redesign in 2016 and is conducted annually by the US Census Bureau.

8. Children’s Health

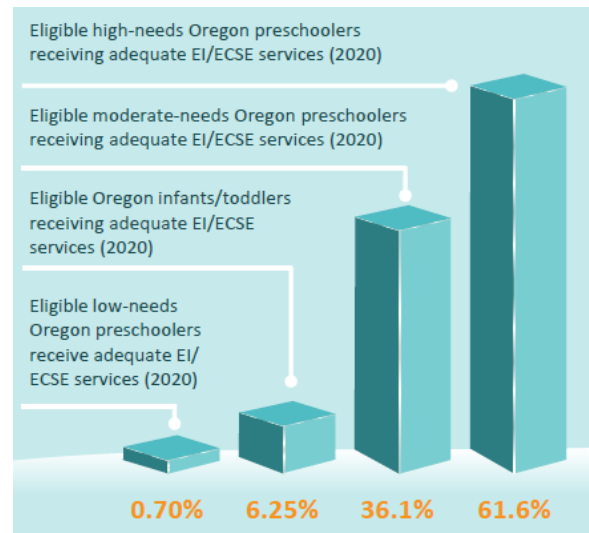
Disabilities and Special Needs

The types of disabilities most common in early childhood education are speech and language delays, social/emotional needs, and non-categorical developmental delay. Less common differences include children on the autism spectrum, and hearing and vision disorders.

In the adult population with disabilities, hearing disorders and cognitive disabilities are common. These are often congenital conditions (present at birth).

Figure 71: Profile of Oregon preschoolers receiving EI/ECSE services, 2020

*Source: Oregon Child Development Coalition, 2020
Community Needs Assessment*



Children served by Oregon DHS - Intellectual and Developmental Disability Division

According to 2022-2023 data from the [Children’s System of Care Dashboard](#), there were 325 children age 0-5 in Marion County served by IDD. The vast majority (97%) were served at home.

That number has nearly tripled in recent years, from 117 youth in August 2019. Marion County ranks among the top five Oregon counties with youth served by IDD.

Demographics for race and ethnicity of children served by IDD roughly correspond to the population of Marion County. About two-thirds of children served were male.

In Polk County, 53 children age 0-5 were served by the IDD Division last school year. The vast majority (96%) were served at home.

There was a sharp one-year increase in the number of children in Polk served in 2023, and a 500% increase from 2019, when only 10 children were served by IDD.

About half of children served were male. This is a lower percentage than many counties in Oregon.

Demographics for race and ethnicity were similar to the service area, although Asian, Black, African, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander children were unrepresented in the data. This may indicate families of color in these communities are not accessing IDD services.

The number of children age 0-5 served by IDD across Oregon has increased 15% since 2019.

8. Children’s Health

Equity Lens – Disabilities diagnosed in children and communities of color

As shown in Figure 83, there are more children under 5 in Oregon diagnosed with disabilities in Latine communities than Latine children are represented in the state’s population (23% vs. 14%).

Native American and Alaska Native children under five are over-represented in these statistics as well, 6.1% diagnosed with a disability compared to this group’s share of the state population - 4.2%.

Compared to how they are represented in the state’s population, fewer Asian children under age five have been diagnosed with disabilities in recent years.

Figure 72: Oregon Kids Count Statewide Data Card, 2022

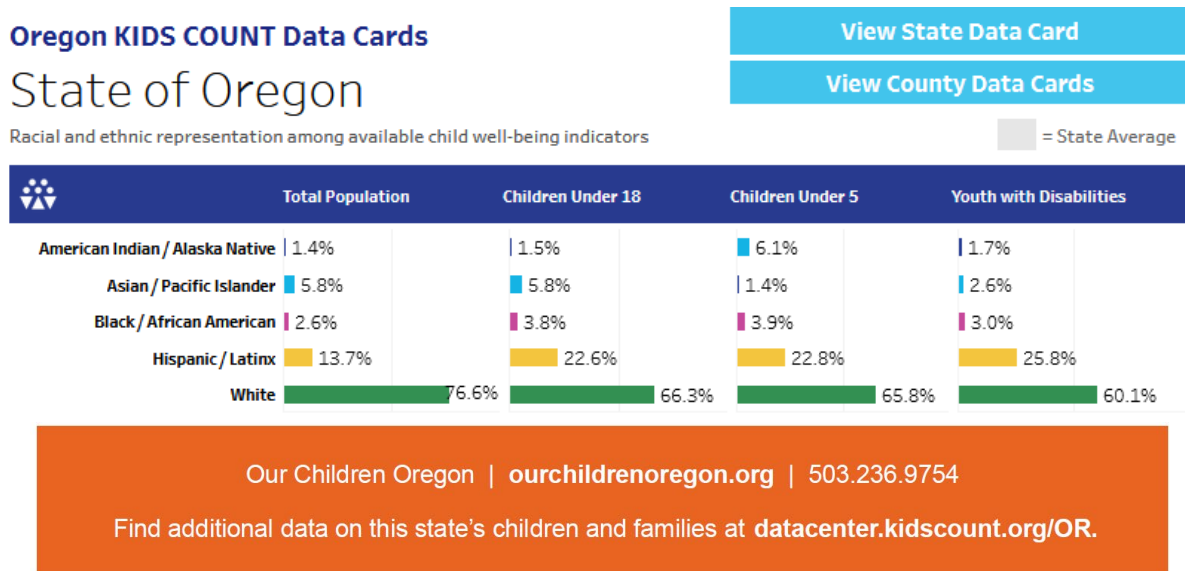
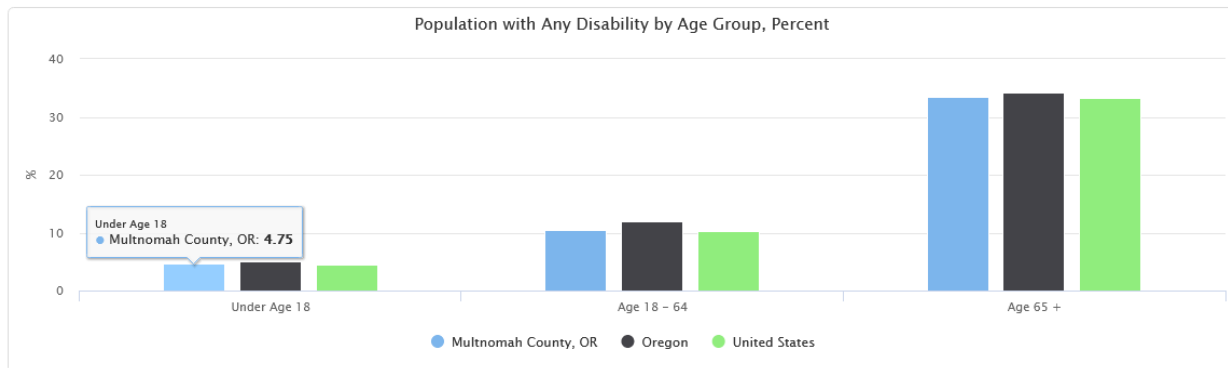


Figure 73: Population with any disability by age group, Multnomah County, Oregon, and the U.S., 2017-2021



Source: SparkMap data from U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2017-2021

Upward Development encourages caution when interpreting this data. It could indicate communities of color, especially Latine families, are proactive in seeking support for children’s developmental needs. It may not mean the prevalence of disabilities is higher in some communities of color.

8. Children’s Health

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Profiles – Marion and Polk

Oregon Department of Education creates [annual profiles](#) for schools and districts (including EI/ECSE districts), available in English & Spanish. Reports for 2022-2023 should be released in May 2024. There is an additional page with links to ODE special education data and reports [here](#).

Marion

The 2021-2022 report shows **647** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers served in Marion EI/ECSE programs received services that year. 100% received timely services and 90% of parents thought the ECSE program facilitated parent involvement.

The EI program in Marion had very high marks for infants and toddlers. All children exited with IFSP transition steps, a conference, and were eligible for ECSE.

In preparing infants and toddlers for preschool, Marion’s EI program lagged behind Oregon benchmarks in all three outcome areas at the time students exited the program. **However, children age 0-2 who entered below age expectations made substantial progress while enrolled.**

In preparing preschoolers for kindergarten, the ECSE program made good progress in helping children who were behind age expectations to acquire and use knowledge and skills, but **only about half of children were functioning within age expectations by age six.**

Kindergarten readiness outcome areas

1. Developing positive social-emotional skills
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs

Polk

The 2021-2022 report shows that only 60% of the **116** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers served in Polk IE/ECSE programs that year received timely services. 67% of parents thought EI services helped them know their rights, and 83% thought the services helped them to effectively communicate their child’s needs.

The majority of infants and toddlers in Polk who were below age expectations at entry made substantial progress while enrolled in EI services.

In terms of toddlers’ readiness for preschool, children enrolled in EI services were functioning almost within age expectations for positive social-emotional skills. However, they lagged far behind Oregon targets for knowledge and skills acquisition, and use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs.

Most preschoolers in Polk who entered ECSE services below age expectations made substantial progress, but **only 30% were meeting Oregon targets in kindergarten readiness measures.** The state benchmark is 60%. Head Start programs could follow their students through kindergarten and compare progress with students who did not attend Head Start.

See Appendix G for complete EI/ECSE profiles for Marion and Polk from 2021-2022.
Updated reports will be available in May 2024.

The 2023 Community Needs Assessment has a detailed summary of diagnosed disabilities by program, plus site placement for enrolled children with disabilities.

9. Family Well-Being

This section addresses key factors that affect the well-being of children and families who are likely to be eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. Topics include maternal health, birth rates, and cash public assistance - the WIC program, TANF, refugee services, and TA-DVS for survivors.

It includes information about child welfare (abuse, neglect, foster care), domestic violence and intimate partner violence, plus mental health services and respite care for families.

Maternal Health

Oregon leads the nation in maternal health, with fewer low-birth weight babies, lower infant mortality rates, and higher coverage rates for WIC than most U.S. states.

In 2020, Oregon ranked first nationwide with the lowest percentage of low-birth weight babies (6.5% of all births), compared to a national average of 8.2%. In 2021, Oregon's rate increased slightly.

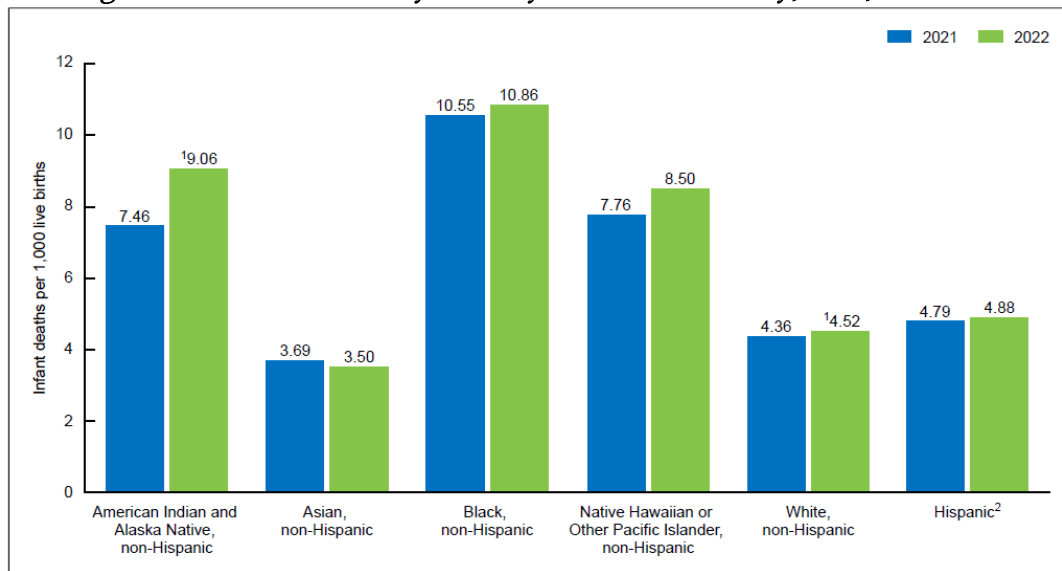
Beginning in the late 90s, there was a nationwide decline in infant mortality. In 2019, the U.S. posted the lowest rate in history, at 5.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. The rate increased slightly from 2021-2022.

Source: [CDC Vital Statistics Surveillance Report, November 2023](#)

Unfortunately, Black, African, and African American children are almost twice as likely to have low birth weights compared to white infants. *Source: [Our Children's Health press release, Aug. 2022](#)*

Infant mortality rates for Black parents are double the rates of white, Asian, and Latine child-bearing parents. Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Alaska Native parents have significantly higher infant mortality rates as well. These are startling inequities in communities of color.

Figure 74: Infant mortality rates by race and ethnicity, U.S., 2021-2022



¹Significantly different from 2021.

²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, linked birth/infant death file.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • National Center for Health Statistics • National Vital Statistics System

9. Family Well-Being

Birth rates and age of parents

In the U.S., birth rates have declined steadily over the past 15 years.

70 births per 1,000 women and female-bodied people – 2008

56 births per 1,000 women and female-bodied people – 2021

Over the same period, the birth rate for unmarried parents in the U.S. has also declined.

52 births per 1,000 unmarried people who give birth – 2008

28 births per 1,000 unmarried people who give birth – 2021

Births to parents in their 30s and 40s have increased 2-3% a year in recent years.

Source: CDC National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 72, No. 1, January 31, 2023

In addition to declining birth rates, parents in Oregon are waiting longer to start families. Births to parents younger than 24 have declined sharply. By 2021, the average age of parents giving birth for the first time was 31. Five years earlier, the average age of first-time parents was 27.5.

Oregon’s birth rate is among the lowest for U.S. states and territories.

There was a 1-2% increase in Oregon’s birth rate in 2021.

*Source: Oregon Vital Statistics Annual Report
County-level data was not available.*

Key Findings for Marion and Polk County – 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment

1. Birth rates have declined in the community and the state in recent years. A higher percentage of births in Marion were paid for with Medicaid (OHP) than in Polk, and the birth rate overall was higher in Marion.
2. The percent of women who smoked during pregnancy has decreased in recent years. However, 1 in 10 women are still smoking during their pregnancy, which is far short of the Healthy People 2020 goal of 1.4%. Maternal smoking prevalence differed by age, race, ethnicity, and type of insurance.

Parents with inadequate prenatal care

Marion County – 246

Polk County – 24

Source: OR Center for Health Statistics, 2022

Total Resident Births - 2022

Marion County – 3,916

Polk County – 886

Source: OR Center for Health Statistics

9. Family Well-Being

Teen pregnancies and births

For the past few years, about 3% of births in Oregon are to parents age 15-19. That number has declined from 5% in 2015.

Teen births in Oregon have declined by two-thirds since 2010. The Oregon rate is now half the U.S. rate.

In recent years, there have been 150-200 teen births a year in Marion, and 20-30 teen births annually in Polk. This number has declined from ~250 and ~40 annually from 2015-2019.

2022 births in teens age 15-19

Marion County – 194

Polk County – 25

Source: Oregon Center for Health Statistics

In 2021, Marion County's teen pregnancy rate (28/1,000) was 55% higher than Oregon's rate (18/1,000)

**In 2021, Polk County had the third-lowest teen pregnancy rate in Oregon - 12 pregnancies per 1,000 female-bodied people
Only Benton and Deschutes Counties' rates were lower**

Key factors in declining births to teen parents in Oregon

- In 2016, Oregon became the first state to allow pharmacists to independently prescribe birth control over-the-counter, including Plan B and other emergency contraception.
- Oregon has mandated comprehensive sex education in public schools, although it is an unfunded mandate and not consistently delivered across districts.
- Oregon's Medicaid program – the Oregon Health Plan – covers a wide range of reproductive health care, including long-acting reversible contraception (implants, IUDs).

Emergency Contraception

NO point of sale restrictions:

- NO age restrictions
- NO prescription required
- NO sex/gender restrictions

For more county-level data on births and pregnancies, including demographics of parents, maternal conditions, and prenatal risk, see new data dashboards from the [Oregon Center for Health Statistics](#).

9. Family Well-Being

Publicly-funded births – Oregon Health Plan (OHP)

In 2023, there were 4,675 births in the service area, 112 fewer births than the prior year.

About half of children born in Marion and Polk last year were covered by Oregon Health Plan.

In 2022-2023, there were 2,375 births in the service area annually using OHP.

WIC – Women, Infants, and Children program

The Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC) provides breastfeeding support, nutritious foods, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care to pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, people who are the primary caregivers for children, and children from birth to age five.

Applicants must meet four criteria to be eligible for WIC

1. Live in Oregon.
2. Be a pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding woman, an infant or a child under age 5.
3. Have a nutritional need or risk.
4. Have a household income less than 185% of the federal poverty level.
 - a. Automatically eligible if participating in Medicaid/OHP, TANF, SNAP/Food Stamps or FDPIR.

Source: [Oregon Health Authority website, June 2023](#)

Oregon has chosen the highest possible household income for WIC eligibility – 185%. As a result, Oregon has a high WIC coverage rate, especially for infants (85% of infants eligible for WIC are enrolled.)

Vermont, California, Minnesota, and Puerto Rico also have high WIC coverage rates.

Some U.S. states and territories have 95%+ participation rates for infants – Kentucky, Maine, Vermont, and Puerto Rico.

Despite high coverage rates overall, only 62% of adults and 40% of preschoolers in Oregon who were eligible for WIC actually received benefits.

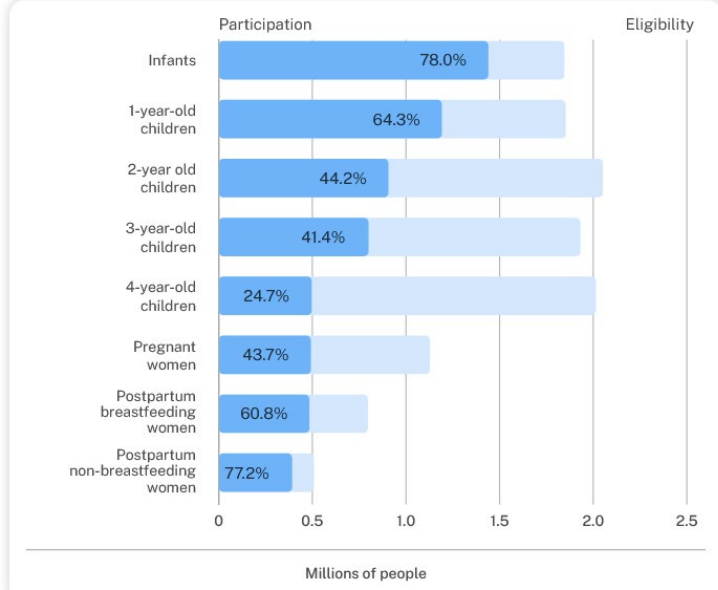
Nearly 48,000 Oregonians who were eligible for WIC did not participate.

Source: [USDA National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility & Program Reach, 2021](#)

Virtually all Head Start students and their families should be eligible for WIC.

9. Family Well-Being

Figure 75: WIC eligibility vs. participation by group, U.S., 2021



WIC participation rates in the U.S. declined in 2021, compared to 2019.

The rate of decline in Oregon (67% to 61%) was steeper than the U.S. decline (54% to 51%).

Sources: [America's Health Rankings](#); [United Health Foundation](#); [USDA Food and Nutrition Service, National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2021](#); [USDA, 2017–2022 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement \(CPS ASEC\)](#)

There are six WIC clinic sites in Marion County with monthly clinics – Salem (3), Santiam, Silverton, and Woodburn.

There are two WIC clinic sites in Polk County with monthly clinics – Dallas and Monmouth/Independence.

Table 18: WIC and OHP births in Marion and Polk, 2023

2023 Births	Marion	Polk
Total births	3,855	820
% using WIC	41%	27%
% using OHP	53%	41%

In 2023, there was a moderate decline in the percentage of births using WIC and OHP in Marion County. There was a moderate decline in the percentage of births using OHP in Polk.

Marion has a higher WIC enrollment rate for births (41%) than Oregon (28%). Polk's rate is on par with Oregon.

9. Family Well-Being

Table 19: Births using WIC and OHP in Marion and Polk, by ZIP code, 2023

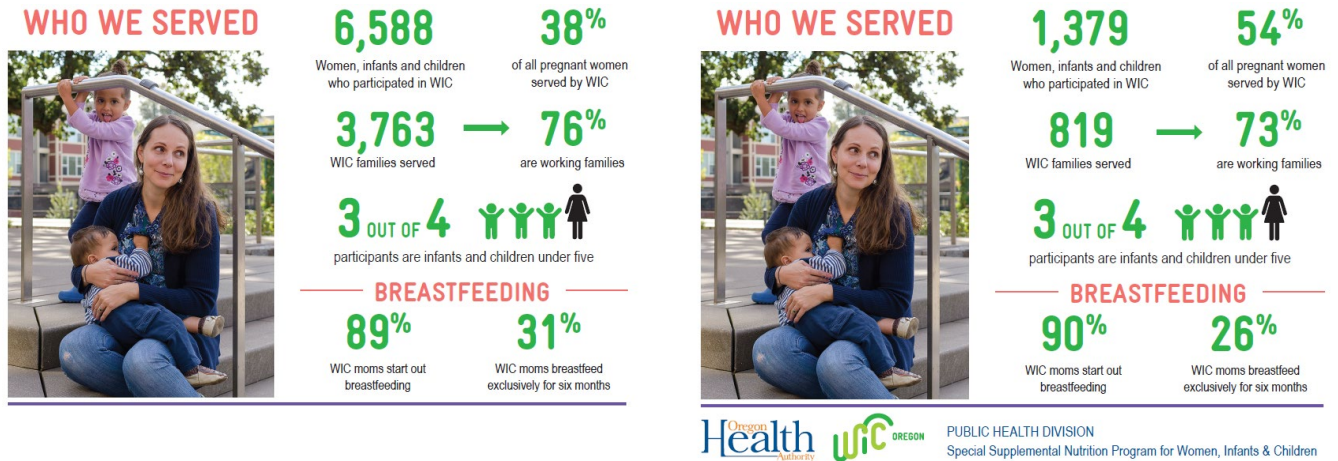
Marion County - ZIP	Total births 2023	Births using WIC	OHP births	
97071	417	260	291	
97301	645	340	411	
97302	339	88	138	In Marion County, the highest WIC utilization rates were in 97071 (Woodburn) and 97305 (NE Salem).
97303	450	152	208	
97305	655	347	431	
97306	347	94	117	
97317	270	118	152	
97325	78	26	32	In Marion zip codes with 75 or more births last year, the WIC utilization rate was lowest in 97381 (Silverton area) and 97383 (Stayton).
97381	159	32	56	
97383	105	23	45	
97352	59	17	24	
97362	48	14	21	
97385	34	4	6	In zip codes with 11-75 births last year, the WIC utilization rate was lowest in 97385 (Sublimity) and 97392 (Turner).
97002	39	13	17	
97026	56	25	32	
97032	55	20	29	
97392	52	8	9	
Totals	3,808	1,581	2,019	

Not included: 21 zip codes with fewer than ten births (45 births total)

Polk County ZIP Code	Total births 2023	Births using WIC	OHP births		
97304	291	72	105		
97338	203	33	72		
97344	7	4	5	In Polk County last year, the WIC utilization rate was significantly lower in 97338 (Dallas) and the five rural zip codes combined here (Rickreall and north-central Polk), despite high rates of childhood poverty in these areas.	
97347	12	5	8		
97351	128	48	60		
97361	130	44	55		
97378	9	2	5		
97396	25	11	17		
97101, 301, 303, 314, 371	12	1	5		
Totals	817	220	332		

9. Family Well-Being

Figure 76: WIC impact in Marion and Polk Counties, 2022



Across Marion County, there are 50 participating farmers and 38 local stores accepting WIC. In Polk County, there are 23 farmers and 7 local stores accepting WIC (2022)

Positive outcomes for Oregon families participating in WIC

“WIC participants consistently say that the connections and support they receive from other parents and WIC staff are an important reason they stay with the program.”

“Children who consistently participate in WIC through their fifth birthday have better overall diet quality, on average, than children who only participated through age three.”

Source: [2022 Oregon WIC Annual Report](#)

The most recent national WIC participation data does not yet include pandemic-era benefit bump for fruits and vegetables, which went from \$9 per month per child to \$24. Families love this benefit and it is highly redeemed. It is flexible for a variety of cultures, preferences, and shopping patterns, and includes fresh, frozen, and canned food options.

Oregon Health Authority staff in the WIC program, May 2023

9. Family Well-Being

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Upward Development did not find current data on TANF participation in the service area. [Oregon DHS](#) has not published data dashboards for its self-sufficiency programs since 2016, and we could not find any publications with data newer than 2019 on their website.

We requested more current data from the DHS Self-Sufficiency office, twice, but they did not provide any. The federal Administration for Children and Families office only reports statewide data.

The most current county-level data available with the number of TANF participants appears to be the [Kids Count Data Book \(2020\)](#). There was no age breakdown.

Figure 77: Historical TANF participation rates in Marion and Polk, 2013-2020

Location	Data Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Marion	Number	8,354	7,571	6,000	5,248	4,063	3,900	3,850	3,748
Polk	Number	1,113	1,010	901	830	895	856	623	863

Additional Resource

DHS offers a [TANF State Plan \(2022\)](#) with detailed descriptions of the various types of TANF-related public assistance programs, including offices they work with to deliver services.

This report does **not** contain information on participation rates, but it is a good guide for learning about 20 different Oregon Assistance Programs.

TA-DSV (Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors)

Oregon offers assistance to families experiencing domestic violence (moving costs and items to stay safe.) Survivors need to meet TANF income limits (have little to no income), have a minor child or are pregnant, and be at risk of domestic violence now or in the future.

DHS encourages survivors to contact their nearest Self-Sufficiency office to apply.

Five locations in Marion and one Polk

<https://www.oregon.gov/odhs/pages/office-finder.aspx?county=Marion>

9. Family Well-Being

Oregon Refugee Services

Local branch offices work with statewide resettlement agencies and community organizations to provide resources and referrals to refugee families. Beyond the initial 90-day resettlement period, refugees are eligible for financial and medical benefits through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for their first eight months in the country.

[Oregon DHS Refugee Services link](#)

Oregon's resettlement agencies

- [Catholic Charities](#)
- [Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees](#)
- [Salem For Refugees](#)

Regional Services for Immigrant and Refugee Families

[Salem For Refugees](#) brings people & resources together to empower refugees to thrive. They offer reception and placement, cultural orientation, extended case management, and direct assistance for refugees, including rent and utility assistance. There is a donation center with household goods and a welcome center at their site in NE Salem. Case management includes navigating public transportation, finding housing and employment, and applying for TANF benefits and health care.

Last year, 22 staff members speaking 12 languages assisted 362 refugees (age breakdown was not available). In February, they hosted a Ready-for-Kinder workshop for families and district staff. School Coordinator Sara Zaccari is the contact. They refer families to Salem-Keizer Head Start.

History - Due to the rising costs of housing in Portland, the Resettlement Agency Catholic Charities expanded resettlement to Salem in 2015, and Salem for Refugees was founded.

In 2021, Salem For Refugees became a 501c3 nonprofit and an official Refugee Resettlement Agency as an affiliate of an international organization called World Relief. SFR is contracted with World Relief to do direct Reception and Placement of new refugee arrivals that are designated through the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Salem For Refugees has welcomed hundreds of refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Sudan, South Sudan, Ukraine & Venezuela.

Every month, Salem For Refugees hosts a community partner meeting - SFR Connects.

They meet the first Monday of every month at noon (September - June). Quarterly meetings are in person at Broadway Commons (lunch is provided). Others are on Zoom. More information [here](#).

Resource for Community Partners

[Trauma-informed care training links and other resources](#)

Immigration Legal Assistance - <https://www.immigrationhelp.org/>

9. Family Well-Being

Child Welfare

The overall volume of reports of abuse and neglect decreased in 2020, then increased in 2021 back to baseline levels. In 2022, reports began increasing again, with a slight increase in threat of harm reports. *Source: [Recent report](#) from Effective System Innovations on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ODHS Child Serving system.*

The [DHS Child Welfare Data Book](#) reflects 8,115 reports of suspected child abuse in Marion County in 2022. This represents a 9% increase in reports over 2021. However, the rate of child abuse (confirmed cases) in Marion County declined overall from 2020 to 2023. In Polk, there were 1,896 reports of suspected child abuse in 2022, a 15% increase over 2021.

The rate of confirmed child abuse in Polk County has also increased notably during the pandemic – from 10.3 to 16.1 confirmed cases per 1,000 children.

Child Abuse Rates - 2022

12 to 14 per 1,000 – Marion
14 to 16 per 1,000 – Polk
7 to 20 per 1,000 – WV Region

Of all child abuse victims in Oregon, 42% were 5 years old and younger; 16% were under age 2.

Stress factors present in Oregon child abuse and neglect cases

- Alcohol and drug abuse among parents and caregivers - 42%
- Domestic violence - 33%
- Parents/caregivers involved with law enforcement agencies – 20%

2021 Child Welfare Data Book (DHS)

Each year, about 1,150 children in Marion and 250 children in Polk experience child abuse. Rate increases appear to correspond with higher unemployment rates.

About half of child abuse reports are referred for assessment. Roughly 20% of reports are confirmed.

Just half of CPS assessments in Polk County were completed on time last year. Only one-quarter in Marion were.

6

Every six minutes there is a report of child abuse or neglect in Oregon.

Source: Lifeworks NW

9. Family Well-Being

Liberty House is the children's advocacy center for Marion Polk. They provide child abuse assessment, hope and wellness services, and prevention education.



Effective System Innovations reported the most common challenges reported by ODHS agency leaders and provider/program staff in 2021-2022 were staffing issues (e.g., recruiting and retaining staff), and the significant decrease in the availability of services provided to children, young adults, and families (resulting in decreased skill development; increased in acting out behaviors; etc.).

Agency managers and staff in all three ODHS divisions reported these as great challenges during the pandemic, noting the significant impact on children and young adults' morale, health, and well-being.

Figure 78: Child welfare characteristics, Our Children Oregon Kids Count, Marion and Polk

	Children who were victims of abuse/neglect	Children in foster care	Youth feeling connected and belonging	Youth feeling safe at school	Youth referred to juvenile justice
Marion	1.4% 2020 1.4% 2019	783 2020 840 2019	84.3% 2020 Prior Year N/A	90.8% 2020 Prior Year N/A	908 2021 1,362 2020
Polk	1.4% 2020 1.0% 2019	146 2020 119 2019	85.6% 2020 Prior Year N/A	94.1% 2020 Prior Year N/A	255 2021 225 2020

Regional Child Welfare Trends

Multnomah and Clackamas Counties' rates of child abuse have steadily declined over the past 7-10 years. Clackamas County has the lowest rate of child abuse in the region. Lincoln County's rate of child abuse sharply increased during the pandemic.

9. Family Well-Being

Foster care

The [ORRAI System of Care Dashboard](#) shows 304 young children in Marion (age 0-5) and 93 young children in Polk were served by the children’s system of care in 2022-2023.

Table 20: Number of children under 18 with at least one day in foster care during the COVID-19 pandemic, Marion and Polk Counties

Foster care placements (<18)	2020	2021	2022
Marion	475	459	361
Polk	101	92	99

Note: There was no meaningful change from 2019 in the race and ethnicity of children who entered foster care.

In Polk, the rate of maltreatment in foster care is four times the target metric for Oregon. The rate of re-entry to foster care within 12 months of discharge is also very high – 27%.

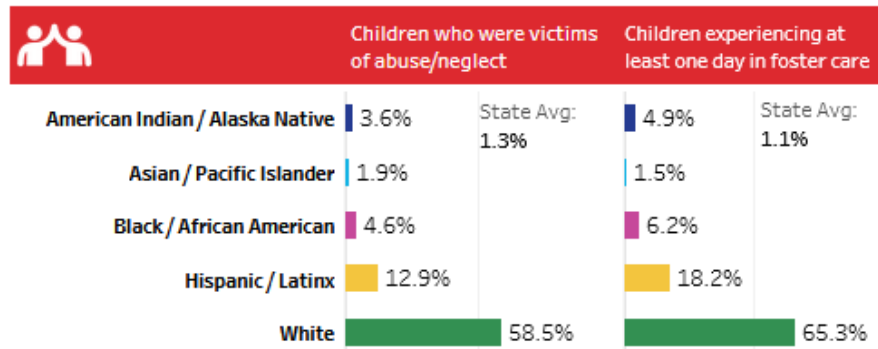
Source: Oregon DHS Public Reports Page

The median length of stay in foster care statewide is 21 months. In Marion, the median length of stay in foster care has increased from 20 to 30 months over the past two years. In Polk, it steadily increased from 14 to 26 months. The increase in length of stay coincides with a decrease in the number of certified homes.

Equity Lens – Child welfare in communities of color

Among children of color in foster care in 2018-2019, there were few Asian children in comparison to Oregon’s population. Latine children experienced confirmed child abuse and neglect at about the same rates as the total population. Black, African, African American, American Indian, and Alaska Native children were over-represented in Oregon child abuse/neglect and foster care cases.

Figure 79: Child abuse and neglect and foster care among children by race and ethnicity, Oregon, 2018-2019



Source: Our Children Oregon, Kids Count data

9. Family Well-Being

Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (DV and IPV)

According to Family Justice Center of Washington County, 40% of women, 36% of men and 66% of children in Oregon experience violence and abuse during their lifetime. A recent nationwide CDC study reported similar rates for women.

Domestic violence is more than physical violence. It is a pattern of behavior that results in emotional and/or sexual violence, financial abuse, isolation, coercion, fear, and blame. Power and control, rather than rage and anger, are at the core of domestic violence relationships.

DV/IPV Services Available

[The Center for Hope and Safety](#) in Salem is the largest regional organization supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. They have been in operation since 1973. Programs and services inform survivors of their options and support them in their choices.

The Center offers a 24-hour hotline, safety planning, shelter, advocacy and support. They also offer housing placement and court support. Most services are delivered Monday through Friday from 9 to 5, when many people work. The [website](#) is available in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

Hope Plaza will open this spring, a mixed-use site in downtown Salem with 20 units of affordable housing for survivors of DV, plus onsite job training and wraparound support services.

In 2020-2021, the Center for Hope and Safety provided 3,681 safe nights for 229 survivors. About 45% of survivors they connected with housing were from BIPOC communities. The Center receives approximately 20,000 requests for support annually – more than 6x times the number of DV/SA crimes reported to law enforcement in 2021.

24-hour bilingual hotline – Marion & Polk

503-399-7722

[SABLE House](#) offers confidential shelter, safety planning, referrals, support groups, and legal advocacy services for residents in Polk County. They began offering direct support in 1999.

24-hour crisis hotline - Polk

503-623-4033 or 1-866-518-0284

Senior Manager Alix Sanchez at [Multnomah County's Gateway Center for Domestic Violence Services](#) was interviewed by KOIN news. "We really are seeing not necessarily an uptick in the prevalence of domestic violence but more people reaching out for support around domestic violence because their situations feel unmanageable," Sanchez said. "As some of the supports for folks that were related to COVID start to go away, that stress starts to tick up." *Source: [KOIN news article, Jan. 1, 2023](#)*

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of women and children becoming unhoused.

9. Family Well-Being

Identifying DV service providers was challenging, because the Marion County website only lists the Center for Hope and Safety and Salem Police Department as resources, and DV service providers do not typically offer links to other providers on their websites.

[The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence](#) (OCADSV) has a more comprehensive list of service providers by county, including the two identified previously, plus [Disability Rights Oregon](#) and [Canyon Crisis and Resource Center](#) in Mill City.

[211info.org](#) includes The Center for Hope and Safety, SABLE House, and Oregon Human Development Corporation's housing assistance program for farmworkers. They also offer a link to [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#) for Indigenous survivors of domestic violence.

[DomesticViolence.org](#) lists five faith-based options in Marion County that are not listed elsewhere. While these options may not work for everyone, it's disturbing they aren't more widely known for survivors trying to escape abuse.

- [Simonka Place for Women and Children in Keizer](#)
- [Benedictine Foundation of Oregon in Mount Angel](#)
- [Family Promise in West Salem](#)
- [St. Francis Shelter in Salem](#)
- [Grace House in Salem](#)

[This patchwork approach to publishing DV resources in Marion Polk is creating more barriers for survivors of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.](#)

Figure 80: Domestic violence and sexual assault reported in Marion County, 2021

- 15 rapes were reported. Only 5 arrests were made.
- 35 other sex crimes were reported. 17 arrests were made.
- 61 intimidation and criminal threat incidents were reported. 29 arrests were made.
- 246 aggravated assaults were reported. 195 arrests were made.
- 678 simple assaults were reported. 380 arrests were made.
- 175 restraining orders were created. 95 arrests were made based on violations.
- 1 homicide was reported. 1 arrest was made.
- **2,626 DV/SA crimes were reported. Just 997 arrests were made.**

Figure 81: Domestic violence and sexual assault reported in Polk County, 2021

- 2 rapes were reported. 2 arrests were made.
- 7 other sex crimes were reported. 4 arrests were made.
- 23 intimidation and criminal threat incidents were reported. 6 arrests were made.
- 52 aggravated assaults were reported. 38 arrests were made.
- 165 simple assaults were reported. 99 arrests were made.
- 22 restraining orders were created. 13 arrests were made based on violations.
- 2 homicides were reported. 1 arrest was made.
- **635 DV/SA crimes were reported. Just 222 arrests were made.**

9. Family Well-Being

Finding current data on domestic violence incidents to estimate community need was also difficult. The [most recent OSP data](#) we found for incidents reported to law enforcement was 2021. Advocates and survivors know most incidents are not reported to law enforcement.

There are eleven agencies in Marion County and five in Polk County that manage domestic violence reports and investigations. Knowing who to call can be a challenge.

Each county's District Attorney's office has a victim assistance program. [Marion County Victim Assistance](#) provides advocacy services that benefit survivors of domestic violence. They strive to promote public awareness and support direct service providers. Their website has [resources](#) for survivors. [Polk County Victim Assistance](#) offers some direct services as well.

The Oregon Department of Justice offers a [Crime Victim's Compensation Program](#) with counseling, medical benefits, and other financial support.

[The Salem Police Department](#) has a Domestic Violence Response Team which is designed to provide 24-hour on-scene crisis intervention to victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and stalking in Salem.

The SPD victim advocate program is run by a coordinator and more than 20 highly trained volunteer advocates from the community. The team also includes approximately 15 officers trained in domestic violence investigations and the dynamics of domestic abuse.

81% of people served by the Multnomah County DV/SA office identify as women of color, in line with national statistics.

Women and female-bodied people in the U.S. are more likely to be murdered during pregnancy or soon after childbirth than to die from one of the leading obstetric causes of maternal death (high blood pressure, hemorrhage, or sepsis).

Source: [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2022](#)

9. Family Well-Being

Relief Nurseries

Relief nurseries are a nationally-recognized, comprehensive model of respite care, positive intervention, and therapeutic support for families with young children (age 0-5). Relief nurseries have been proven to reduce rates of child abuse and neglect, and to lower instances of foster care by helping children stay safely with their families in their own homes. Services are provided at no cost to families.

The relief nursery model was developed in Eugene in the 1980s. By 2024, there were 40 relief nurseries in Oregon.

There was a rapid expansion of relief nursery sites during the pandemic.

Regionally, three new sites appear to have opened in Polk County since 2018-1029, but they are not listed on the OARN website and map.

Relief Nurseries provide an estimated return of \$8 for every \$1 spent, due to improved educational outcomes, increased future taxes paid by participants, and reductions in child abuse, neglect, crime, and the need for public services.

Source: Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries



Relief Nursery Outcomes

- Improved parent-child interaction
- Improved family functioning and stability
- Increased frequency of reading to children
- Increased parental employment
- Reduced use of emergency services
- Overall reduction of family risk factors

There are nine relief nurseries in the Marion/Polk service area.

Learn more about each one [here](#).

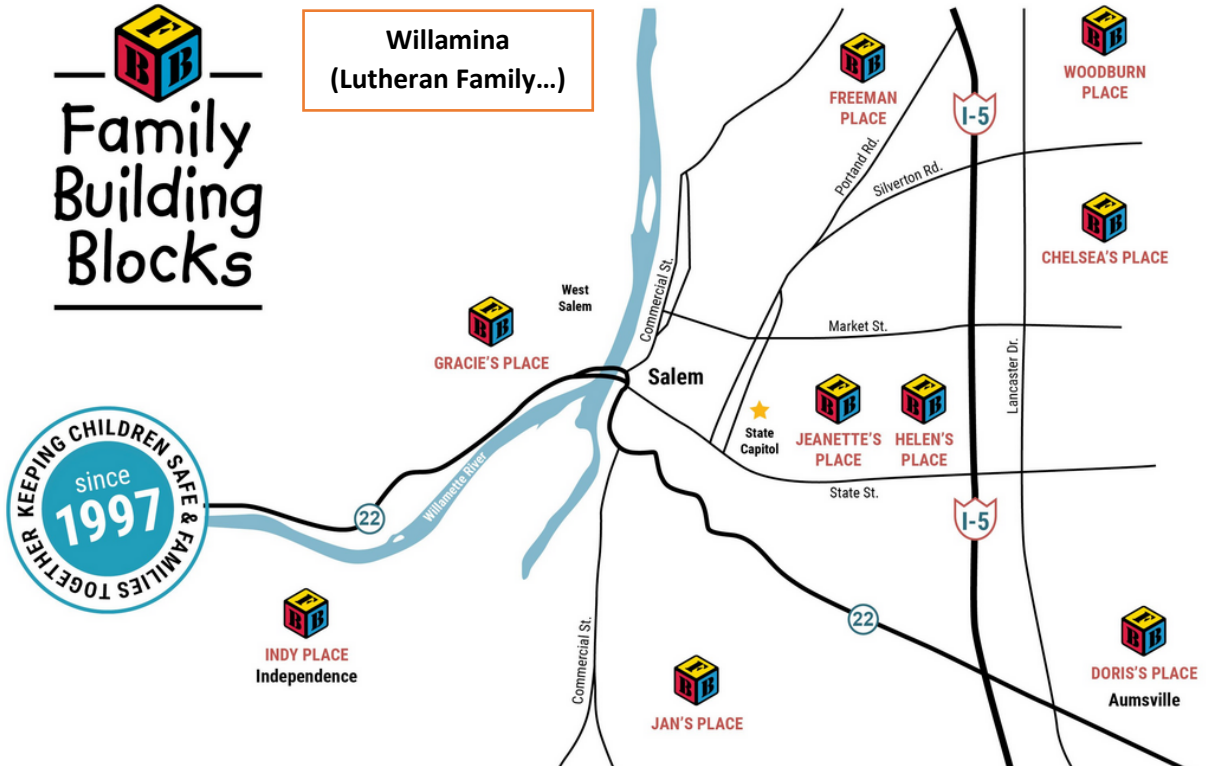
Family Building Blocks operates eight relief nurseries in Marion/Polk. They are also the sole provider for home visiting through Healthy Families Oregon, and offer Family Mental Health services with licensed therapists.

In north Polk, [Lutheran Community Services NW](#) operates a relief nursery serving Willamina. [The Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde](#) offers Emergency / Respite Foster Care for tribal members for a short period of time. Respite care is also offered to current foster care parents.

Upward Development could not find information on the number of children and families served last year, beyond what was available on the Family Building Blocks website (next page).

9. Family Well-Being

Figure 82: Map of Relief Nurseries, Marion and Polk Counties, 2023



WE PROVIDED 8,717 HOME VISITS IN 2021!

COMMUNITY IMPACT

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
The images below illustrate the stunted growth of a three-year-old's brain when impacted by abuse and neglect, compared with a healthy brain.
- Child Trauma Academy, 1997

EXTREME NEGLECT **HEALTHY**

COMMON STRESSORS REDUCED IN THE FIRST 18 MONTHS

BY 36%

HOMELESSNESS, ISOLATION, ADDICTION, ABUSE, TRANSPORTATION, STRESS, OVERTY, PRESSION

RESULTS

99%

of the children enrolled in our prevention programs are able to remain living safely with their parents, avoiding foster care and the devastation of abuse and neglect.

OUTCOMES

- INCREASED GRADUATION RATES
- IMPROVED LIFE-LONG HEALTH
- ENHANCED JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Learn more on the [Family Building Blocks website](#)

10. Publicly-funded early learning programs

Publicly-funded early Learning programs are evidence-based programs designed to support children from age birth to five in preparing for kindergarten.

These programs address academic development and social-emotional growth in children, as well as the holistic health and well-being of children and families.

A. Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start is a federally-funded program that provides the most comprehensive, evidence-based child development services. Most children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start have household income below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.

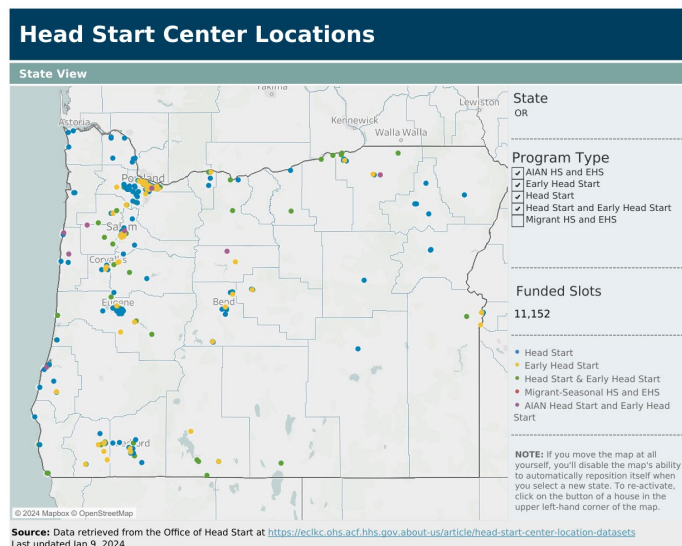
Head Start prioritizes the enrollment of children with the highest needs, including children in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and from families receiving public assistance. Head Start also serves children with incarcerated parents, and children with special medical and developmental needs.



In 2021-2023, there were six Head Start and Early Head Start providers in the Marion Polk region.

- Family Building Blocks
- Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency
- Salem-Keizer Head Start
- Grand Ronde Head Start
- Siletz Tribal Head Start
- OCDC Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

Figure 83: Oregon Head Start and Early Head Start Center Locations, 2024



10. Publicly-funded early learning programs

B. Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)

[Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten](#) was established in 1987. It serves children ages 0-5 and their families by funding certified Head Start, Early Head Start, and other early learning providers.

In Marion and Polk County there are two OPK grantees – Community Action Head Start and Salem-Keizer Head Start/Prekindergarten.

“OPK” is state-funded Head Start and “OEPK” is Early Head Start. The Department of Early Learning and Care (formerly the Oregon Early Learning Division) manages these grant funds and builds relationships with providers who offer quality infant and toddler and PreK programs to children in families with household income below 100% FPL. There is no cost for families.

Children enrolled in OPK have consistently shown progress toward reaching and surpassing these widely held expectations for child development.

Source: Oregon Head Start Association Annual Report, 2019

In 2022, the National Institute for Early Education Research in New Jersey published an [excellent summary](#) of state-funded preschool options in Oregon.

C. Preschool Promise

Preschool Promise (PSP) is a statewide preschool program funded by the Oregon Department of Education. PSP offers free, high-quality preschool to Oregon families with children age 3 to 5 in a mixed delivery model. Preschool Promise has a higher income threshold than Head Start – 200% of the Federal Poverty Level – but the wraparound services are not as comprehensive.

PSP complements early learning programs like Head Start and Oregon Pre-K. It expands access to culturally responsive early learning for children in low-to-moderate-income households.

Statewide, there are 233 Preschool Promise grants with 5,344 slots. ([Oregon Early Learning Division, spring 2023](#)) The connection point for Preschool Promise in this region is [The Preschool Hub](#). There are 45 Preschool Promise sites in Marion Polk.

Approximately 3,750 children were enrolled in Preschool Promise programs in Oregon during the 2022-2023 school year. The state is adding more than 2,500 preschool slots for eligible families.

D. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, Migrant Education

The Oregon Child Development Coalition (OCDC) offers Migrant and Seasonal Head Start in 15 counties in Oregon. There are four service centers in Marion County – two in North Marion (Silverton and Settlemier) and two in South Marion (Concordia and Brooks), plus an administration center in Woodburn. There is a service center and administration office in Independence.

According to recent Program Information Reports, these six centers served 1,829 children in 2023.

E. Tribal Head Start

There is one Native American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start program in Polk County, managed by the [Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde](#). They offer extended-day Head Start in Grande Ronde, with 20 federally-funded slots. Last year, 22 children (all 3-year olds) were enrolled.

10. Publicly-funded early learning programs

The tribe also has Early Head Start. Last year, there were 44 funded slots (30 home-based and 14 extended-day in the Grande Ronde center). Fifty-six infants and toddlers and seven pregnant people enrolled. About 20% of the children served in Tribal HS and EHS last year experienced homelessness.

There is another Tribal Head Start site in Marion County (Salem), managed by the [Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians](#). The tribe also operates Head Start sites in Siletz and Lincoln City (coastal city south of Polk County).

In total, there are 112 slots at four funded sites, but recent enrollment was 59-60. The site in Portland (17 slots) has been closed since 2020. The Head Start Director cited ongoing staffing issues.

F. Private Preschools

Private child care sites include regulated and certified home-based providers. These are smaller operations than center-based providers. Private preschools are certified and regulated by the Department of Early Learning and Care, but most do not receive public funding like other ECE programs outlined here.

Staff in private preschools are required to have fewer qualifications but are more likely to be bilingual.

Based on a search of the [Marion Polk Preschool Hub](#) in February 2024, there were 70 private preschools in Marion and Polk. Of those, 38 were in Salem.

These options are typically not affordable for low-income families because most private preschools do not accept subsidies.

Child Care Subsidy Programs

A. DHS Employment Related Day Care Subsidy (ERDC)

The ERDC is a statewide program that helps families with household income below 200% of Federal Poverty Level. ERDC subsidies pay a portion of their child care costs.

The amount of the monthly subsidy depends on the family's income, size, and the cost of child care. Copays for families range from \$0 to \$130 a month.

Until the program was expanded during the pandemic, the number of families enrolled in ERDC had steadily declined since 2013. The application is reported to be difficult, which creates a barrier to enrollment, and not all child care providers accept ERDC.

There were 26 providers in the service area accepting ERDC as of March 2024. Marion has a higher number of ERDC claims than most Oregon Counties. Lane and Multnomah have the highest.

Unfortunately, new applications (after Nov. 1, 2023) are being placed on a wait list that could exceed 18 months. *Source: [OregonLive](#), September 21, 2023*

Another barrier for families - ERDC rates increased in January 2024, and providers must charge private pay families the same rate as ERDC-reimbursement, which leads to subpar placements and less access to care.

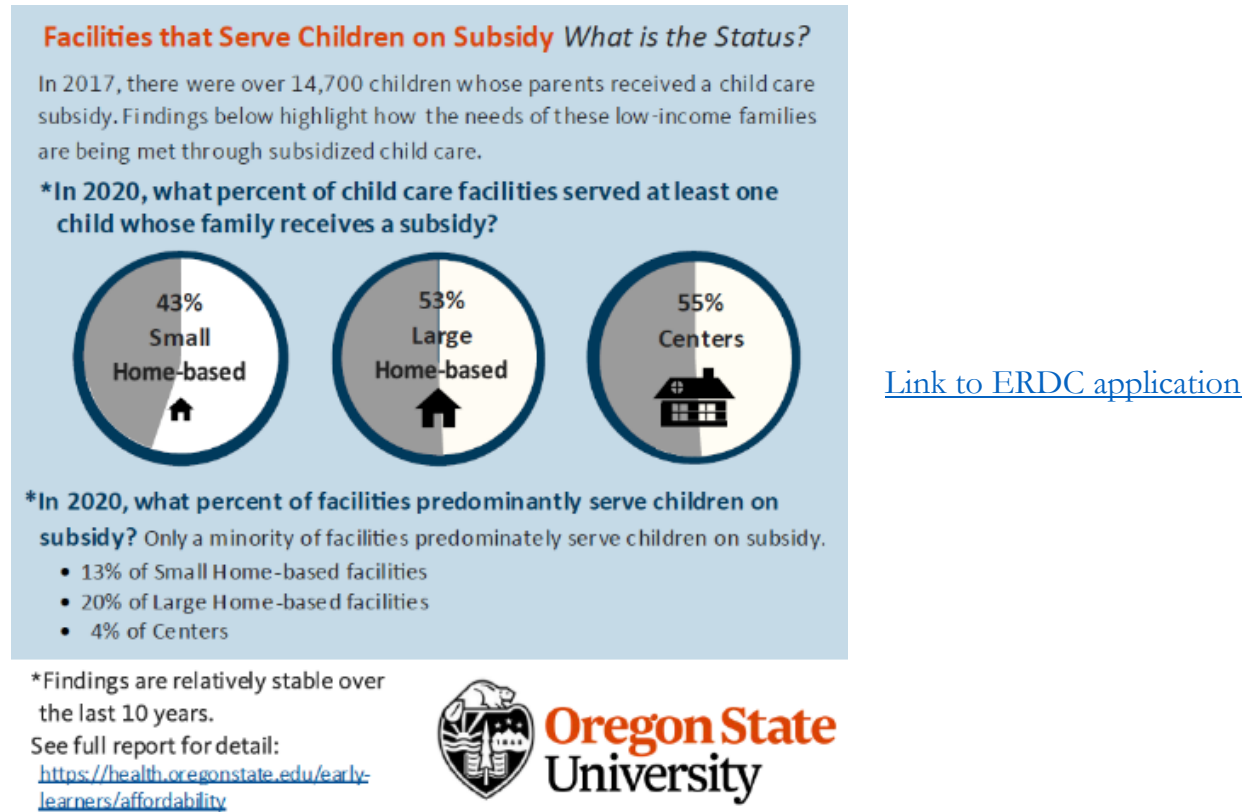
10. Publicly-funded early learning programs

1,735 families in Marion use ERDC for child care in 2023-2024

390 families in Polk use ERDC for child care in 2023-2024

Source: oregon.gov, as of February 2024

Figure 84: Oregon Child Care Subsidy (ERDC) child care provider profile, 2017-2020



11. Early learning providers and workforce

This section was developed using recently published reports from Oregon State University’s Child Care Research Partnership. It summarizes the number and type of early childhood education providers in Marion Polk, closing with a brief profile of the early learning workforce in the region.

Types of Early Learning Providers by Age Group

As of December 2022, there were 254 infant and toddler care providers in Marion and 62 in Polk.

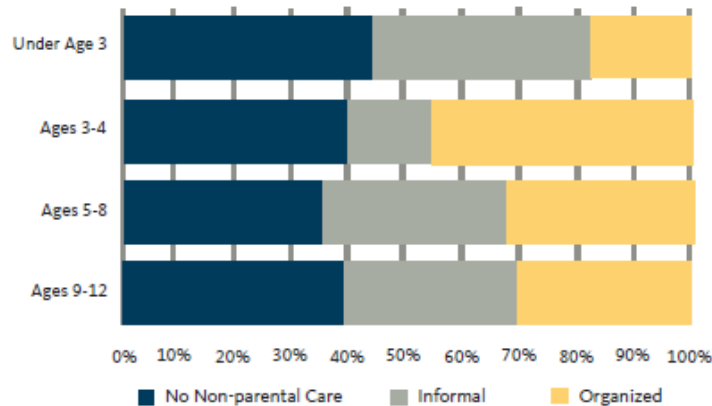
There were 346 preschool providers in Marion and 77 preschool providers in Polk.

This represents all types of care, including regulated, recorded, and exempt programs. It does not include informal programs which are unregistered and unregulated.

Preschool for 3 and 4-year olds in Oregon is most often delivered in organized settings - about 55% of children statewide were enrolled in center-based care and regulated child care homes in 2019.

Pre-pandemic, about 15% of children were enrolled in informal child care settings (family and friends).

Figure 85: Child care options by type and age group, Oregon, 2019



Source: *Early Care and Education Profile – State of Oregon, Oregon State University, 2020*

Table 21: Number of regulated early learning providers by type, Marion and Polk, 2022

Provider Type	Marion County	Polk County
Certified Centers and Exempt Centers (like public school HS/EHS)	123	28
Regulated Family Child Care Homes	237	53
Recorded Programs*	45	7
Total Providers	405	88

Source: [2022 estimated Supply of Child Care and Early Education Programs in Oregon](#), “Number of Providers and Slots in County by Type of Care”, Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, 2023

Since 2020, the number of regulated family care homes decreased by 43 in Marion and 13 in Polk. The number of certified and exempt centers, and recorded programs, increased in Marion. Child care centers were the only type of EL providers to expand in Polk; others declined in number.

11. Early learning providers and workforce

See the **2023 Community Needs Assessment and OSU reports for a summary of Spark-rated child care programs in the region.**

Early Learning Workforce

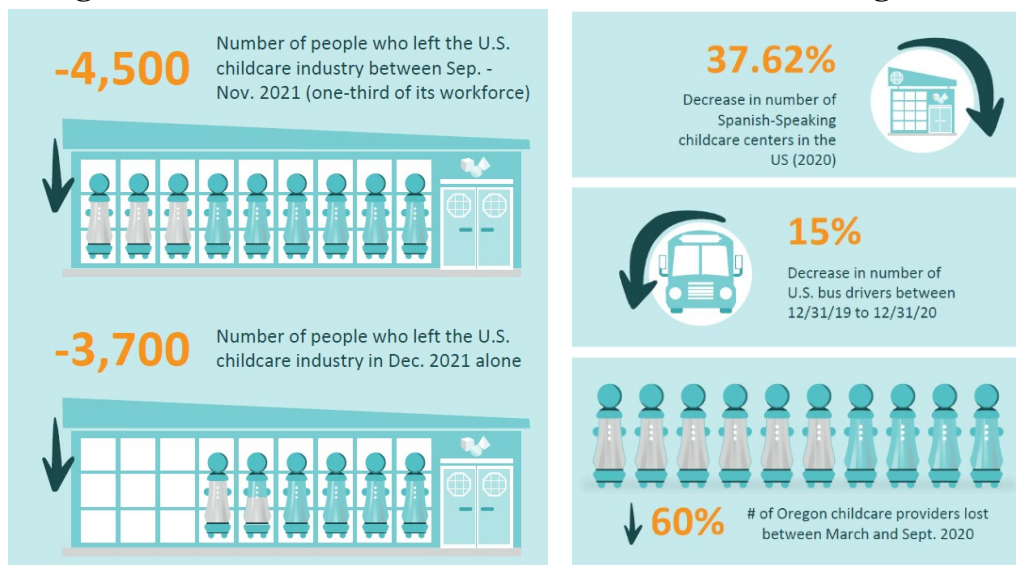
Wages for most early care and education head teachers are low in this region - \$13 to \$15/hour on the median low end. **Many early learning teachers in Marion Polk are paid among the lowest wages in Oregon, despite being in one the highest cost-of-living areas.**

In 2022, ninety-six centers reported wages to OSU for Marion Polk. The data covers 83% of regional early learning centers. In Marion, the median high-end wage is \$25/hour, among the top quarter of counties in Oregon. There was a significant outlier at \$65/hour, the highest in Oregon.

In Polk, the range for teachers was \$13-29/hour, and the median high end was \$21/hour.

According to the Center for American Progress [2021 fact sheet](#), Oregon child care workers and preschool teachers are paid less than half what kindergarten teachers earn.

Figure 86: Child care workforce turnover in U.S. and Oregon, 2021



Source: Oregon Child Development Coalition 2022 Community Needs Assessment

The child care workforce in Oregon grew 17% between 2012-2019. However, the turnover rate is historically high. 1 in 4 people leave the child care workforce in the first year.

11. Early learning providers and workforce

Head Start staff noted slow background checks from the state of Oregon have led to several candidates choosing to accept other positions.

Early education teachers typically earn bachelor degrees and invest significant time in continuing education. Low pay and student loan debt are two key factors affecting recruitment and retention.

Other challenges cited by teachers and classroom staff include worsening behavioral issues among students, too little time to complete reports and other paperwork, and the lack of meaningful support from administration and program management in addressing issues.

According to leaders at a statewide Head Start meeting in late 2023, there was a shortage of 400 teachers in Oregon Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Most early learning employees work in center-based settings (72-73% in Marion Polk). However, there is more language diversity in home-based child care than in center-based care.

This may lead some parents to choose home-based providers over Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

See Appendix H for Marion and Polk Early Learning Workforce Profiles from Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, 2021

The full report can be found at <https://health.oregonstate.edu/early-learners/workforce>

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

This section addresses access to child care and enrollment in early learning programs. It begins with statewide trends and reviews access for each age group (0-2 and 3-4). To close, we highlight the cost of child care and early education profiles from OSU’s Child Care Research Partnership. There was county-level data available for most measures.

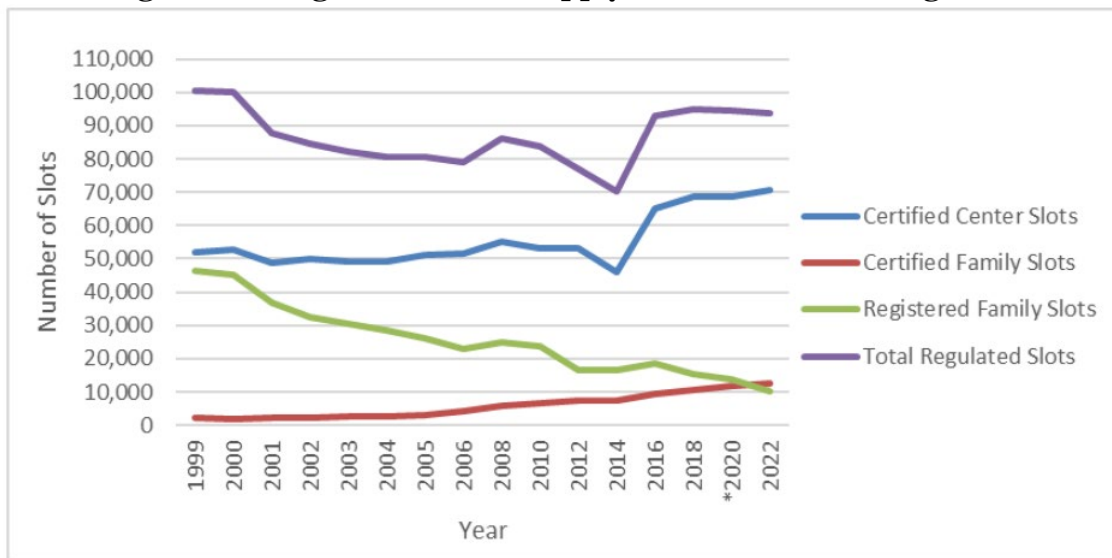
Trends in Regulated Child Care Supply Statewide

In spite of the urgent and persistent need for child care in Oregon, the number of regulated slots has steadily declined for the last 25 years. Much of the trend follows uneven federal funding patterns – cuts during years Republican priorities were implemented, with restoration and expansion when there are Democratic majorities in Congress.

Nationwide, there was a \$1 billion surge of investment in center-based slots in 2014-2015, funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act. This funding restored previous cuts from [sequestration](#) in 2013. The sequester order had canceled \$405 million in Head Start funding, which led to 57,000 children losing access to HS and EHS. The growth in center-based slots plateaued from 2016-2020.

There are 71,000 center-based child care slots in Oregon and nearly 22,000 regulated family slots. Center-based slots trended upward during 2021-2022.

Figure 87: Regulated Oregon child care supply for children under age 13: 1999-2022



*2020 is pre-COVID

Source: [Oregon’s Child Care Deserts 2022: Mapping Supply by Age Group and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots](#), Oregon Early Learning Division

The number of regulated child care slots is nearing a 25-year peak in Oregon, but there are still not enough regulated slots to serve 1 in 2 children (age 0-5) across the state.

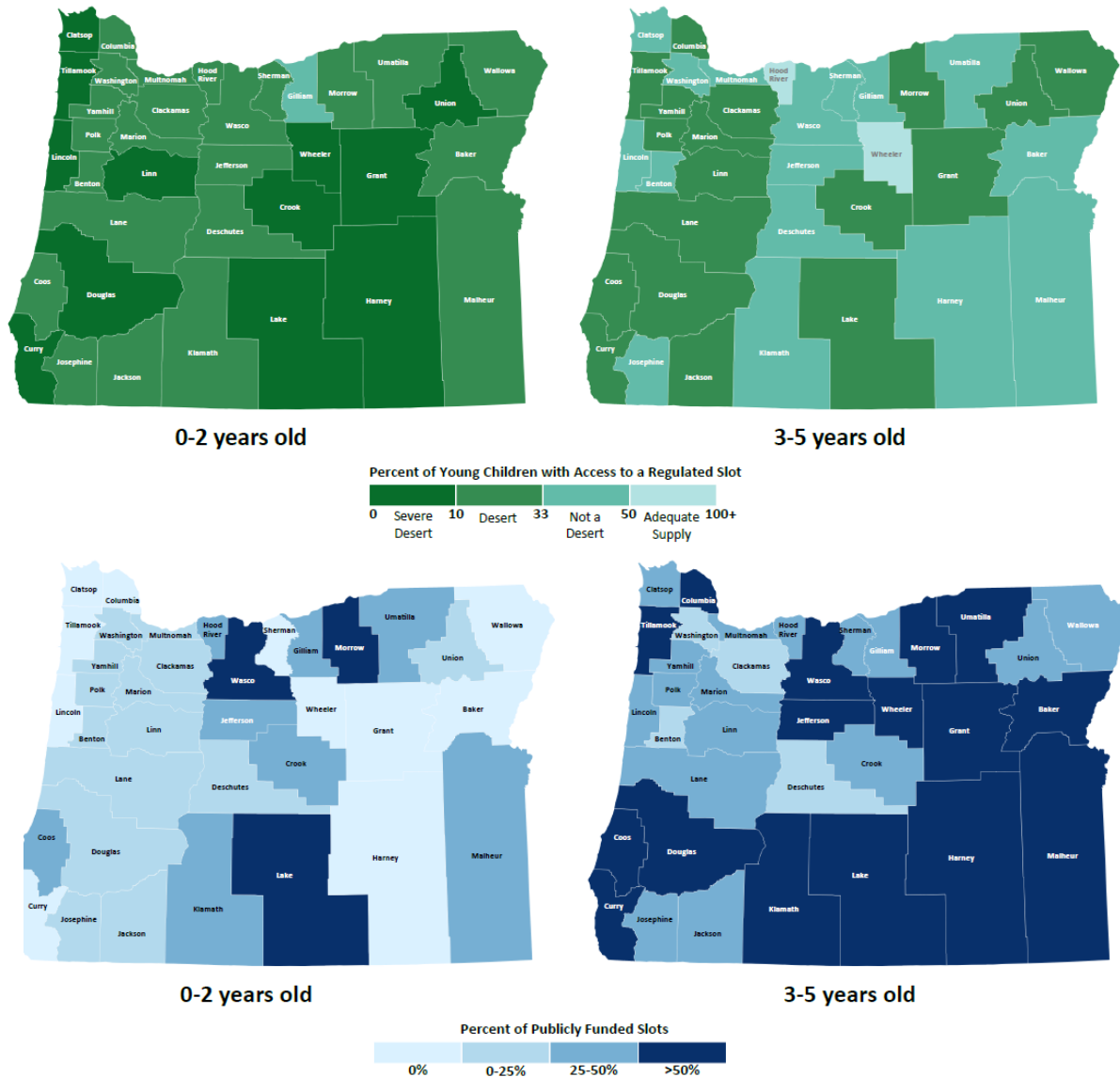
12. Access to child care and early learning programs

Access to Child Care in Oregon

In 2022, all but one county in Oregon were child care deserts for infants and toddlers, and half were child care deserts for preschoolers. A “child care desert” means fewer than 33% of children have access to a regulated child care slot.

Child care access for children age 0-5 improved slightly in Oregon from 2018-2022. Still, there are six families with infants and toddlers competing for every regulated child care slot.

Figure 88: Child Care Deserts in Oregon, Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, 2022



Sources: Analysis by Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, Oregon State University, using data collected by the Child Care Resource and Referral System.

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

Recent Growth in Publicly-Funded Slots

From 2020-2022, there were significant investments in publicly-funded preschool in western Oregon.

Douglas and Coos Counties in southwestern Oregon, and Lane, Benton, and Multnomah in the Willamette Valley notably improved access to publicly-funded preschool during the early pandemic.

In northwestern Oregon, Tillamook and Columbia Counties are no longer child care deserts for preschool-age children; more than half of children have access to a publicly-funded slot.

For infants and toddlers, Lake County quickly shifted from child care desert status to a community with public funding for more than 50% of child care slots.

Coos and Curry significantly improved access to child care for infants and toddlers in recent years.

During this period, Marion County achieved gains in publicly-funded slots for preschoolers (27% to 34%), but there was a decline in public funding for infant and toddler slots (18% to 16%).

Polk County increased the percentage of publicly-funded slots for infants and toddlers from 13% to 21%.

However, Polk County saw a small decline in slots for children age 3-5, and affordable preschool is an urgent need - just 1 in 5 preschool-age children in Polk have access to a regulated slot.

According to 2023 reports from the Child Care Research Partnership, there is a much higher percentage of publicly-funded slots in rural Oregon (33%-58%) than in urban areas (8%-25%).

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

Access to Child Care – Marion and Polk

In Marion and Polk combined, only 1 in 3 preschoolers and 1 in 10 infants and toddlers have access to any type of child care. These counties meet the definition of a child care desert.

There is a higher percentage of publicly-funded slots in this region than in most areas of the state (especially in Polk County for preschool), but there are still not enough regulated slots in the region to serve even half of eligible children, much less publicly-funded slots for affordable child care.

In Marion County, there are only enough regulated child care slots to serve about 1 in 10 infants and toddlers, and 1 in 4 children of preschool age.

About 1 in 7 families in Polk County have access to regulated infant and toddler care, and only 1 in 5 families with preschoolers have access to regulated child care.

Table 22: Percent of children with access to a regulated slot by age group, Marion, Polk, and Oregon, March 2020

Area	0-2 year olds	3-5 year olds
Marion County	10%	22%
Polk County	11%	17%
State of Oregon	14%	32%

Table 23: Percent of children with access to a regulated slot by age group, Marion, Polk, and Oregon, December 2022

Area	0-2 year olds	3-5 year olds
Marion County	11%	25%
Polk County	15%	18%
State of Oregon	17%	33%

Note: Regulated slots include Certified Centers, Certified Family, Registered Family Providers, and Exempt Providers who have publicly-funded slots.

Positive news in the Marion Polk region

In positive news, the percentage of 3-5 year olds in Marion County with access to any child care slot grew from 29% to 35% during the first two years of the pandemic.

From 2020-2022 in Polk County, infant and toddler child care access increased from 12% to 16%.

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

Table 24: Number of regulated and publicly-funded slots for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers Marion/Polk, 2022

Children 0-2	Regulated 0-2 Slots	Public Slots
Marion County	1,451	232
Polk County	471	101

Children age 3-5	Regulated 3-5 Slots	Public Slots
Marion County	3,862	1,328
Polk County	644	293

Data sources: The percentage of slots that are publicly funded is calculated by dividing the number of public slots in the programs listed above by the total number of regulated slots (Estimated Supply of Child Care in Oregon as of March 2020 (pre-COVID); Analysis by Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, Oregon State University using data collected by the R&R system)

Decline in Child Care Providers Locally

From March 2020 to December 2022, there was a net loss of 89 registered child care providers for children age 0-5 in Marion and Polk (an 11% reduction in providers for all types of care).

There were slightly more reductions in infant and toddler care than preschool providers.

Note: Unregistered (informal) family care is not included. We could not find estimates for these figures.

Child Care Providers in Polk County - 2022

62 infant and toddler providers

77 preschool-age providers

Loss of 22 providers since 2020

Child Care Providers in Marion County 2022

254 infant and toddler providers

346 preschool-age providers

Loss of 67 providers since 2020

Source: [Estimated Supply of Child Care and Early Education Programs](#), March 2020 and December 2022

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

Equity Lens – Workforce Challenges in Early Learning Programs

One factor affecting access to child care for families nationwide is the challenge for child care programs in hiring and retaining early education staff. Staffing vacancies have forced most programs to cut the number of classrooms, and many Head Start programs in Oregon have voluntarily reduced the number of funded slots, despite more families becoming eligible for these services.

This issue is beyond the scope of the community needs assessment to evaluate, but staff at Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action, Family Building Blocks, and Salem-Keizer Head Start report turnover from resignations and vacancies from slow hiring are impacting their programs as well.

The [Center for American Progress](#) developed a thoughtful article about this issue in Sept. 2022:

“More than two years after the start of the pandemic, the child care workforce—mostly employing women and, disproportionately, women of color—continues to operate below pre-pandemic levels. This not only harms the sector but also precludes workers with caregiving responsibilities, primarily mothers, from fully participating in the labor force.

The pandemic and economic recovery exposed a critical workforce issue plaguing the sector: a lack of good jobs. Child care workers—which include both teachers and aides/assistant teachers—are some of the lowest-paid workers in the United States and are less likely than other workers to have access to benefits through their employer. Additionally, workers of color experience very large pay gaps.

It is simple: Child care teachers are not coming back without better-quality jobs that pay better wages.”

100%

Share of nonfarm jobs lost during the pandemic that have since been recovered

103%

Share of private sector jobs lost during the pandemic that have since been recovered

76%

Share of child care services jobs lost during the pandemic that have since been recovered

In December 2023, the [Oregon Capital Chronicle](#) highlighted challenges for parents seeking child care.

Barriers for parents seeking child care - PSU survey

- Limited spots
- Few options with hours that fit parents’ work schedules
- High prices
- Languages spoken by teachers and staff are not representative of those spoken by families
- Finding care for children of color

“Parents of color are among those most likely to experience those negative impacts on employment, too,” said Katherine Pears, research scientist at the nonprofit Oregon Social Learning Center, which partnered with Portland State on the study. “So, you’re really talking then about the most vulnerable families getting kind of a double whammy there.”

Pears said improving child care access and affordability will require expanding the workforce through professional training and development, and paying child care staff statewide livable wages.

More than 40% of parents responding to a PSU survey last year said they or their partner quit, declined, or changed jobs due to child care challenges.

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

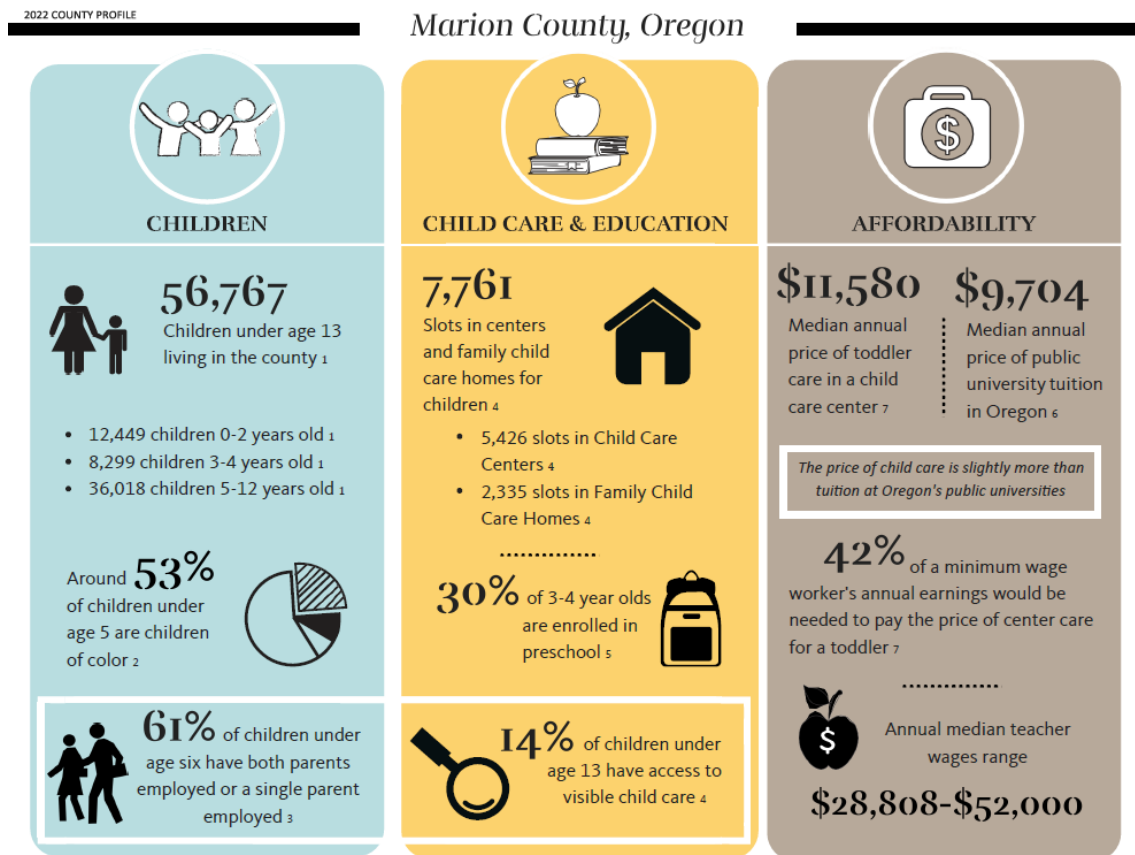
Early Education Profiles from OSU – Marion and Polk

The cost of child care in the region is more than the annual tuition for an in-state student at a public university. Unfortunately, child care is not an optional investment for families with children.

Almost 13,000 children age 0-5 in Marion do not have access to a child care slot.

In Marion County, there are 12,450 infants and toddlers, and 8,300 preschoolers (PSU, 2022). About half are children of color. There are about 8,800 slots in centers and family child care homes, and 30% of 3 and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool.

Figure 89: Marion County early education profile with child care access and affordability, 2022



Source: [Early Care and Education Profiles: 2022](#), Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, Oregon State University. Click the link for more detailed information on data sources.

2022 compared to 2020 – Marion County

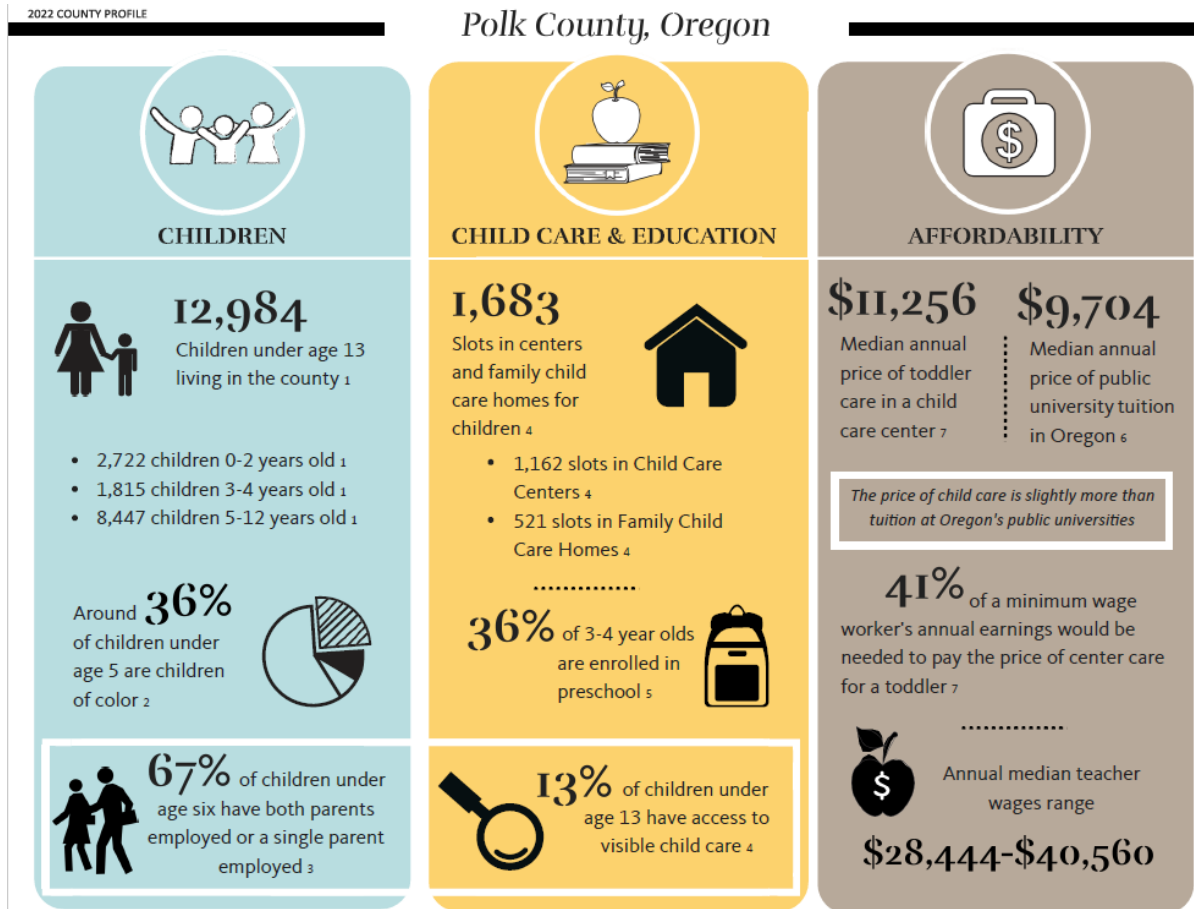
- Costs for toddler care have increased from \$9,060 to \$11,580
- Slight increase in the percent of a minimum wage worker's annual salary needed to pay the price of center care for a toddler (37% to 42%)
- The number of children <13 have slightly decreased from 62,000 to 56,000
- There are 10% fewer children under age 13 in Marion County
 - o About the same percentage (53%) are children of color
- Fewer 3-4 year-olds are enrolled in school (36% to 30%)

12. Access to child care and early learning programs

In Polk County, there are 2,725 infants and toddlers, and 1,800 preschoolers (PSU, 2022). About one in three are children of color. There are almost 1,700 slots in centers and family child care homes, and 36% of 3 and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool. The top end of annual wages for teachers is significantly lower in Polk County than in Marion County (\$40k vs. \$52k).

About 2,800 children age 0-5 in Polk do not have access to a child care slot.

Figure 90: Polk County early education profile with child care access and affordability, 2022



Source: [Early Care and Education Profiles: 2022](#), Oregon Child Care Research Partnership, Oregon State University.
Click the link for more detailed information on data sources.

2022 compared to 2020 – Polk County

- Costs for toddler care have increased from \$7,080 to \$11,256
- Significant increase in the percent of a minimum wage worker's annual salary needed to pay the price of center care for a toddler (29% to 41%)
- The number of children <13 in Polk has slightly decreased from 14,000 to 13,000
- There are 7% fewer children under age 13 in Polk County
 - o About the same percentage (36%) are children of color
 - o Fewer 3-4 year-olds are enrolled in school (42% to 36%)

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

This section summarizes the Early Head Start program at Family Building Blocks, Salem-Keizer Public Schools Head Start, and Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action HS/EHS.

It does not include the agencies’ other early education programs, like Preschool Promise, Parenting Program, before and after school child care, and/or Child Care Partnerships. Following is a profile of children and families enrolled last year, plus staff and parent feedback.

We used publicly-available information including Program Information Reports and annual reports from 2022-2023, plus select details from self-assessments and ChildPlus reports, provided by staff. The 2023 Community Needs Assessment contains a more detailed program analysis.

Head Start & Early Head Start sites in Marion Polk

Salem-Keizer Public Schools has 17 sites for Head Start with 22 total classes. The majority of sites (11) are in South Salem. Four sites are in Four Corners (SE Salem), with one each in central Salem and NE Salem. All sites are located in Salem-Keizer elementary schools.

Community Action has 23 Head Start sites in central Salem, NE Salem, and Keizer. They offer Early Head Start in Salem-Keizer, Woodburn, and the Santiam Canyon area, with 11 EHS classrooms in Salem-Keizer, 1 in Dallas and 2 in Independence, plus a home-based option for EHS.

Family Building Blocks offers Early Head Start through a Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, home-based services, and classroom services combined with home visiting. During the pandemic they used Recovery Act funds to open a new site at Morningside Methodist Church in Salem – Jan’s Place.




Capacity and Enrollment

Head Start and Early Head Start slots at Salem-Keizer Public Schools, MWVCAA, and Family Building Blocks - 2022-2023

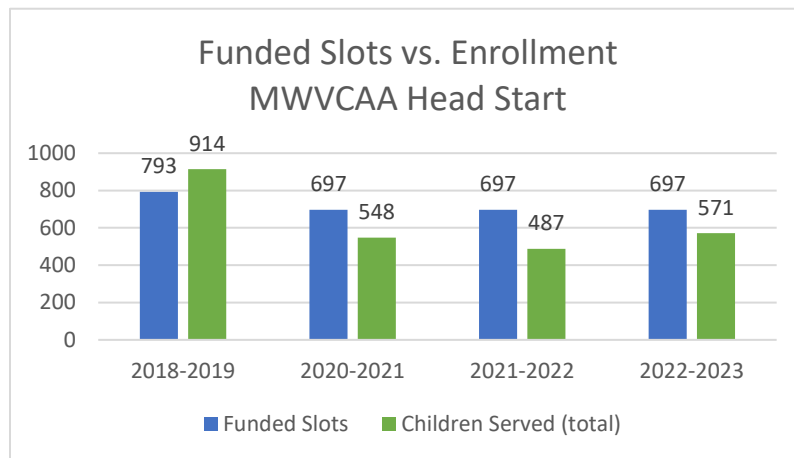
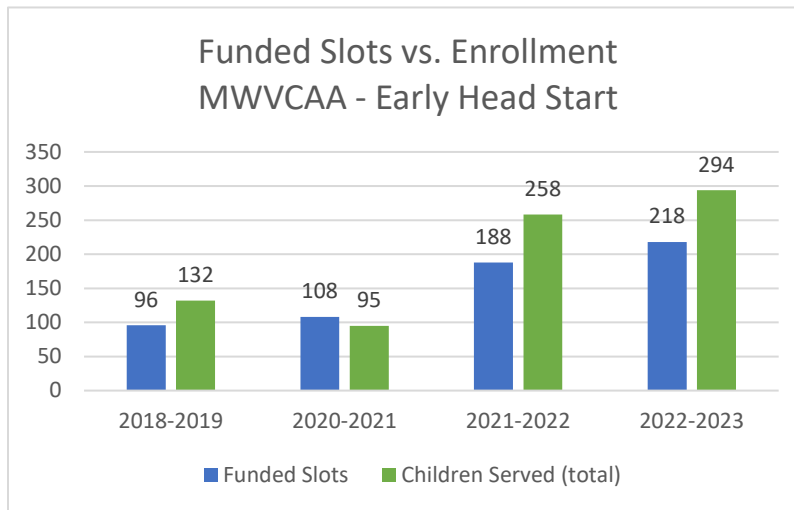
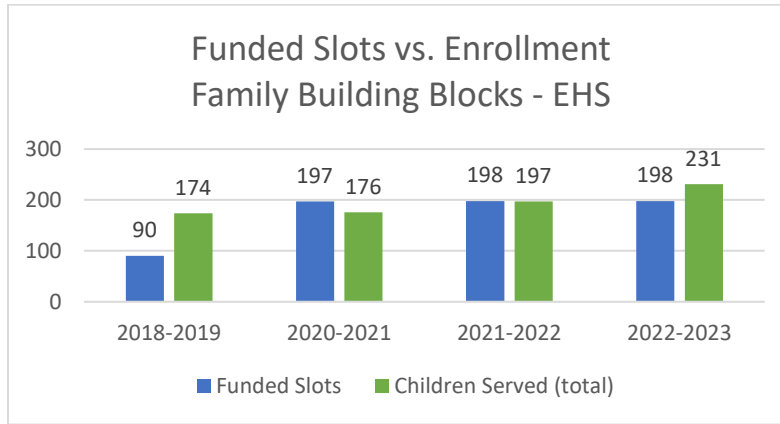
Type of program	Family Building Blocks	Salem-Keizer Public Schools	MWV Community Action
Infant and Toddler classroom slots (age 0-3)	80	N/A	112
Home-based Early Head Start slots (age 0-3)	118	N/A	20
Head Start classroom slots (age 3-5)	N/A	394	697
Totals	198	394	829

These providers offer 1,421 Head Start and Early Head Start slots in Marion Polk.

2022-2023 Enrollment – 1,519 students

-  260 infants and toddlers and 15 prenatal mothers participated in EHS - FBB
-  394 preschool-age children in Head Start - Salem-Keizer Public Schools
-  571 enrolled in Head Start + 294 in EHS – Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

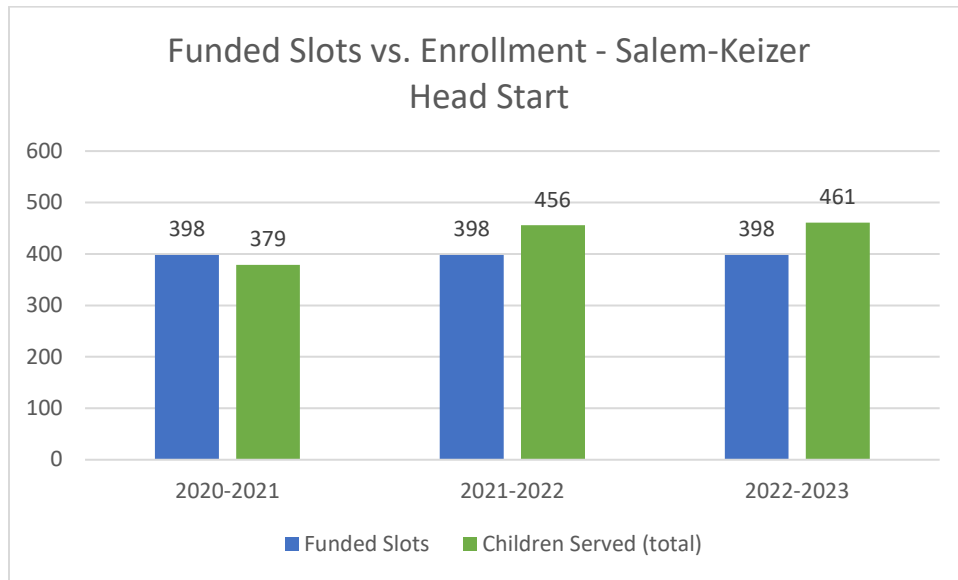


Source: Program Information Reports (PIRs)

Family Building Blocks and MWVCAA expanded their Early Head Start programs during the pandemic. According to recent Program Information Reports, both programs have been over-enrolled (serving more students than they have funded slots) since at least 2016-2017.

The Salem-Keizer Head Start program has remained fully enrolled during the pandemic, an unusual accomplishment for Head Start programs. They receive state OPK funding.

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served



Wait Lists

Family Building Blocks

There were 142 children on wait lists as of 10/1/23. 80% of families on the wait list are homeless or SNAP recipients.

Salem-Keizer Public Schools

There were 28 children on wait lists as of 10/1/23. The NE Salem area has the longest wait list, which is consistent with last year. Wait list openings are not always in the same area where eligible families live.

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action

As of 10/1/23, there were 6 children on the CCP wait list, 11 on EHS and 28 on HS waitlists.

Demographics and Language Fluency – Early learning teachers and staff

Family Building Blocks

Race/Ethnicity: White – 48%, Hispanic/Latino – 59%, Asian – 7%, Unspecified – 14%, Other – 26%, Multi-Racial – 3%.

Language Spoken: English speaking only – 33%, Spanish and English – 67%.

Salem-Keizer Public Schools

Race/Ethnicity: White – 57%, Hispanic – 41%, Biracial – <1%

Languages Spoken: English – 58%, Spanish – 43%, Russian - <1%

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action

Race/Ethnicity: White – 53%, Hispanic – 37%, Asian – 3%,

Black, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, American Indian, biracial – <1% each
Unspecified – 2%

Languages Spoken: English – 68%, Spanish – 28%

Arabic, American Sign Language, Tagalog, Hmong, Indonesian, Hiligaynon, Khmer, Chuukese, Punjabi, Hindi, Russian, Czech - <1% each

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Demographics and Language Fluency – Early learning teachers and staff (cont.)

- Two of three programs could recruit more bilingual staff (Spanish/English).
- Salem-Keizer Head Start and FBB have recruited Latine staff reasonably well.
- Asian-American staff are represented at FBB and MWVCAA, but not Salem-Keizer HS.
- All programs could improve recruitment of Latine, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Black, African, and African-American staff, plus Russian speakers.

Educators and family advocates are highly qualified, linguistically diverse, and mostly representative of children and families served. They are making good progress in preparing children for kindergarten, especially considering many students begin the school year scoring well below readiness benchmarks.

Medical and Dental Screenings and Care – 2022-2023

Family Building Blocks

- 58% of enrolled students were up-to-date on all immunizations (or exempt)
- 65% of children up-to-date on preventive and primary health care
- 75% of students received a professional dental exam
- 100% of students received a vision screening
- 3-5% of students had an IFSP

Salem-Keizer Public Schools – Head Start

- 92% of enrolled students were up-to-date on all immunizations (or exempt)
- 81% of children up-to-date on preventive and primary health care
- 100% of students received a professional dental exam
- 99% of students received a vision screening
- 14% of students had an IFSP

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action – Head Start

- 97% of enrolled students were up-to-date on all immunizations (or exempt)
- 70% of children up-to-date on preventive and primary health care
- 81% of students received a professional dental exam
- 72% of students received a vision screening
- 12% of students had an IEP
- 15 referrals for mental health services last year; building up services since 2017-2018

Note: Metrics are as of spring 2023. Virtually all children had health insurance in these programs.

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Transitions to Head Start and Kindergarten

In terms of school readiness, 68% of children at FBB made progress in all 7 domains last year, with the most progress in the Adaptive and Social Emotional areas. The least progress was in Literacy.

At Family Building Blocks last year, just 10% of the three-year olds who completed the EHS program transitioned to Salem-Keizer Head Start or MWVCAA Head Start. Almost 33% (11 families) said they would apply for a Head Start program, and another 15% were on a waiting list.

The number of “will apply” responses indicate an opportunity for all three programs - to better support FBB families in applying for an area Head Start program by April 1.

At Salem-Keizer Head Start, 77% to 90% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in all six areas of kindergarten readiness by Spring 2023. There was steady growth across the school year. Early literacy had the largest gains (46% to 87%).

The focus for Community Action Head Start teachers in fall 2022 was establishing a positive social-emotional climate in the classroom, because children’s skills have diminished during the pandemic. TS Gold scores in this area increased from 49% of children meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in October, to 94% by spring!

Kindergarten readiness scores increased significantly in five other domains as well. By spring 2023, 80% to 96% of children in Community Action Head Start were meeting or exceeding expectations. Mathematics had the lowest rating, and staff have developed and implemented strategies to address.

Enrollment by eligibility factor

At Family Building Blocks, children in families experiencing homelessness, extreme poverty, and in families where parents/guardians have concerns over the child’s development are prioritized for enrollment.

At Salem-Keizer, children with a diagnosed disability or other high needs may be prioritized for enrollment.

At MWVCAA, children experiencing homelessness or foster care are prioritized. WIC is not a priority factor for enrollment, although programs share information with families about WIC.

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Eligibility type in order of frequency, Marion Polk HS and EHS – 2022-2023

Family Building Blocks - EHS	Percentage	Number of students
Household income below 100% FPL	34%	67
Experiencing homelessness	34%	65
Household income 100-130% FPL	12%	24
Some other (including children with disabilities and developmental delays, over income)	5%	8
Public assistance such as SNAP, TANF, or SSI	33%	64
Child in foster care	2%	3

Salem-Keizer Public Schools - HS	Percentage	Number of students
Household income below 100% FPL	42%	165
Experiencing homelessness	17%	67
Household income 100-130% FPL	8%	32
Some other (including children with disabilities and developmental delays, over income)	12%	47
Public assistance such as SNAP, TANF, or SSI	37%	146
Child in foster care	1%	4

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - HS	Percentage	Number of students
Household income below 100% FPL	21%	118
Experiencing homelessness	11%	64
Household income 100-130% FPL	8%	47
Some other (including children with disabilities and developmental delays, over income)	7%	39
Public assistance such as SNAP, TANF, or SSI	51%	289
Child in foster care	3%	14

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - EHS	Percentage	Number of students
Household income below 100% FPL	25%	45
Experiencing homelessness	11%	20
Household income 100-130% FPL	5%	9
Some other (including children with disabilities and developmental delays, over income)	2%	3
Public assistance such as SNAP, TANF, or SSI	53%	97
Child in foster care	4%	8

Note: There is some overlap in the categories above; they do not total 100%.

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Types of assistance received by percentage of HS/EHS families served

Family Building Blocks EHS – 2022-2023

	# of families	% of families
Emergency or Crisis Intervention	134	71.3%
Housing Assistance	49	26.1%
Asset Building Services	15	8.0%
Mental Health Services	69	36.7%
Substance Misuse Prevention	9	4.8%
Substance Misuse Treatment	11	5.9%
English as a Second Language (ESL) Training	21	11.2%
Assistance in enrolling into an education or job training program	38	20.2%
Research-based parenting curriculum	138	73.4%
Involvement in discussing their child's screening and assessment results and their child's progress	138	73.4%
Supporting transitions between programs	69	36.7%
Education on preventive medical and oral health	119	63.3%
Education on health and developmental consequences of tobacco product use	39	20.7%
Education on nutrition	134	71.3%
Education on postpartum care	41	21.8%
Education on relationship/marriage	14	7.4%
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	5	2.7%

80% of families at Family Building Blocks EHS received at least one family service

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - EHS – 2022-2023

	# of families	% of families
Emergency or Crisis Intervention	25	9.9%
Housing Assistance	14	5.5%
Asset Building Services	1	0.4%
Mental Health Services	14	5.5%
Substance Misuse Prevention	0	0%
Substance Misuse Treatment	0	0%
English as a Second Language (ESL) Training	4	1.6%
Assistance in enrolling into an education or job training program	6	2.4%
Research-based parenting curriculum	8	3.2%
Involvement in discussing their child's screening and assessment results and their child's progress	6	2.4%
Supporting transitions between programs	8	3.2%
Education on preventive medical and oral health	7	2.8%
Education on health and developmental consequences of tobacco product use	3	1.2%
Education on nutrition	17	6.7%
Education on postpartum care	3	1.2%
Education on relationship/marriage	1	0.4%
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	2	0.8%

Just 26% of families at Community Action EHS received at least one family service

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - HS – 2022-2023

	# of families	% of families
Emergency or Crisis Intervention	135	25.0%
Housing Assistance	53	9.8%
Asset Building Services	17	3.1%
Mental Health Services	29	5.4%
Substance Misuse Prevention	0	0%
Substance Misuse Treatment	0	0%
English as a Second Language (ESL) Training	19	3.5%
Assistance in enrolling into an education or job training program	39	7.2%
Research-based parenting curriculum	46	8.5%
Involvement in discussing their child's screening and assessment results and their child's progress	38	7.0%
Supporting transitions between programs	42	7.8%
Education on preventive medical and oral health	41	7.6%
Education on health and developmental consequences of tobacco product use	4	0.7%
Education on nutrition	79	14.6%
Education on postpartum care	0	0%
Education on relationship/marriage	5	0.9%
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	3	0.6%

44% of families at Community Action Head Start received at least one family service

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Race and ethnicity of students enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start

Family Building Blocks – EHS

- ✓ Hispanic or Latine – 73%
- ✓ Fewer Asian children, Native Alaskan, and Native American children are enrolled in Head Start compared to the population of Marion Polk.
- ✓ The HS program is reaching Black, African-American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial children well, compared to how they are represented in the population.

Salem-Keizer Public Schools – HS

- ✓ Hispanic or Latine – 66%
- ✓ Children in all other communities of color are under-represented in this program – Asian, Black, Native Alaskan, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action – HS

- ✓ Hispanic or Latine – 64%
 - In Marion, 42% of children under 18 are Latine; in Polk, 24% of children are
- ✓ Fewer Asian children, Native Alaskan, and Native American children are enrolled in Head Start compared to the population of Marion Polk.
- ✓ The HS program is reaching Black, African-American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial children reasonably well, compared to how they are represented in the population.

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action – EHS

- ✓ Hispanic or Latine – 68%
- ✓ Fewer Asian children, Native Alaskan, and Native American children are enrolled in Early Head Start, compared to the population.
- ✓ The EHS program is reaching Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial children reasonably well, compared to how they are represented in the population.
- ✓ Black and African-American children are slightly over-represented in enrollment, which may point to intentional recruitment and enrollment efforts with these communities.

The programs are doing an excellent job of recruiting and enrolling Latine families – In Marion, 42% of children under 18 are Latine; in Polk, 24% of children are.

Support provided to Spanish-speaking students in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, Marion and Polk Counties, 2023-2024

	Family Building Blocks	MWV Community Action	Salem-Keizer Public Schools
Spanish-language classrooms (#)	5	all 30 EHS and HS classrooms are bilingual English Spanish	2
Spanish language materials in all classrooms (Y/N)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Translation services readily available (Y/N)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bilingual classroom staff in 65%+ classrooms (Y/N)	Yes	Yes	Yes

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Primary language spoken at home for students enrolled in Head Start and EHS

Family Building Blocks - EHS

- 30% Dual Language Learners (34)
- 46% spoke Spanish (106)
- 2.6% spoke Pacific Island languages (6)
- <1% spoke Middle Eastern and South Asian languages (1), Central/South American or Mexican languages (1), East Asian languages (1), and African languages (1)

Salem-Keizer Public Schools - HS

- 12% Dual Language Learners
- 26% spoke Spanish
- < 1% spoke Pacific Island Languages (7), African Language, East Asian Languages (5), Middle Eastern Languages (7)

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - HS

- 25% Dual Language Learners (94)
- 31% spoke Spanish (177)
- 1.4% spoke Middle Eastern and South Asian languages (8)
- <1% spoke Pacific Island languages (5), African languages (4), American Sign Language (2), East Asian languages (2), and Central/South American or Mexican languages (1)

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - EHS

- 34% Dual Language Learners (63)
- 33% spoke Spanish (98)
- 1.4% spoke Middle Eastern and South Asian languages (4)
- 1% spoke European or Slavic languages (3)
- <1% spoke Pacific Island languages (1), American Sign Language (1), or other languages (1)

Source: Program Information Reports

Spanish was the most commonly spoken language at home besides English for early learning students enrolled in these programs. Middle Eastern and South Asian languages were next, followed closely by Pacific Island languages.

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Family Characteristics – 2022-2023

Family Building Blocks - EHS

188 families

- 38 children experienced homelessness during the year
- 8 children were in foster care
- 118 families participated in the home-based program
- 80 families participated in the locally-designed option (2 days a week, 3 hours each day)

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action - EHS

253 families

- 35 children experienced homelessness during the year
- 13 children were in foster care
- 20 families participated in the home-based program
- 54 families participated in family child care
- 32 families participated in center-based services
- 112 families participated in the locally-designed option

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action – HS

540 families

- 3 out of 4 families participated in part-day Head Start
 - 1 out of 4 took part in an extended-day program
- 62 children experienced homelessness during the year
- 15 children were in foster care
- 70 children had an IEP

Salem-Keizer Public Schools – HS

394 families

- 204 students were enrolled in part-day Head Start
- 190 students were enrolled in a full-day program
- 40 children experienced homelessness during the year
- 2 children were in foster care
- 57 children had an IFSP

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

Strengths and Needs Identified in Program Self Assessment – 2022-2023

Family Building Blocks EHS

Strengths

- ✚ Extensive partnerships with community services that are deep and lasting
- ✚ Health services training for all new staff
- ✚ Changes to health and referral tracking, plus income and coaching in ChildPlus
- ✚ Enrollment team has a strong understanding of the communities served, enabling them to engage in respectful and knowledgeable resources to meet needs of the families.
- ✚ Adjusted attendance expectations, policies, and practices
- ✚ Additional training on data literacy for leadership staff

Salem-Keizer Head Start

Families of children enrolled in SKPS Early Learning are highly satisfied with academic and social and emotional growth they see in their children. They are also happy with family education/events and connections with community resources.

Families and staff offered a few suggestions for program leadership and teachers to explore:

- Rethinking the number and timing of home visits
Family advocates need lower caseloads – 25 is more closely aligned with national standards.
- Providing more information on what child need to improve
- Seeking more support for transportation costs (gas cards)
- More opportunities for families to gather and connect with each other

Three key themes emerged from a series of conversations held with staff:

1. Behavior Team engagement. Program staff were very positive about recent changes involving a restructured Behavior Team. They called for more staff on this team and more time for team members to work with specific children in the classroom.
2. Reducing class size. Continues to be a primary staff recommendation particularly in light of increased prevalence of children exhibiting challenging behaviors. Currently the class size is 17 for half day and 19 for full day. District level planning is essential to reducing the average class sizes.
3. Flexibility on home visits. Although the program needs to meet Head Start requirements, there were a number of recommendations from staff to rethink the number and timing of home visits.

Community School Outreach Coordinators and Family Advocates shared what they observe

- More rental assistance needed (increases, more late fees)
- More families doubled up
- More food need because COVID resources are more limited
- More follow up regarding vision and dental due to COVID
- Due to inflation, both parents working but still struggling—not qualified for food stamps
- More participation from parents and excited to do things in person

Participants shared that families are raising the following issues

- ✚ Many are struggling to pay their bills
- ✚ Relationships have changed as a result of COVID changes and the world opening up again

13. Program descriptions, self-assessment, and profile of children and families served

- ✚ Some children are not wanting to come to school
- ✚ Parents want to know strategies around behavior, especially if they have only child
- ✚ Although a child may have a minor illnesses, parents seem more worried about sending them to school and concerns about younger siblings getting sick

Policy Council members suggested providing families with more opportunities to gather and connect.

After lower than desired participation rates on the 2022 family survey, the 2023 Family Survey response rate tripled. 60% of the respondents identified as Hispanic/Latino with another 15% identifying as Multiracial, so it was a good representation of enrolled families.

The self assessment report included many other suggestions and questions from staff, who appear to be highly attuned to the program and family needs.

Community Action Head Start and Early Head Start

Strengths identified

- ✚ Health and safety compliance in classrooms
- ✚ Helping families find stable housing and exit homelessness
- ✚ Nutrition team doing a great job of adapting to food shortages and lack of availability from vendors; transitioning back to family-style meals.

Parent Satisfaction - approximately 200 respondents in spring 2023

- 99.5% - felt supported or well supported by their Family Educator or Early Head Start Teacher/Home Visitors.
- 98% - the program did well addressing their concerns and making individualized plans to support their child at school.
- 97% - the program had a positive impact on parents' relationship with their child.
- The largest barrier to receiving Health was finding appointment times available (19%).
- How Head Start helped their family this past year - Sharing Community Resources (63%), Strengthening Your Family (47%), Emotional Support (39%), Food (35%), and Continue Parent's Education (25%).

Top three areas of concern

- ✚ Understaffed: At the end of the school year, there were 45 positions still vacant. Fewer applications from qualified candidates is a factor, but another level includes candidates who were selected, but ultimately not onboarding due to factors in the hiring process, such as the length of time to complete background checks and references.
- ✚ Under-Enrolled: Head Start has struggled to fill slots for several years. COVID is clearly a major factor, but even prior to COVID, Head Start was challenging to fill. Early learning opportunities for families have shifted with the introduction of Preschool Promise and other publicly funded options. The field is more competitive.
- ✚ Educational outcomes for students: There was some improvement from 2021-2022 in math scores following diligent effort from classroom staff, but 25% of Head Start children remained at the emerging level by spring 2023. Plus, 23% of children remained emerging in language and 19% in literacy.

Head Start and Early Head Start – Community Needs Assessment

Conclusions

Parents in the Marion Polk region need more affordable housing options, housing assistance, affordable child care in extended-day programs, and better employment opportunities.

Children under age five in low-income households need more stable housing and better access to food, quality child care programs, primary care, dentists, and mental health services. They also need more support in reaching academic and development milestones, and attending school regularly.

These programs appear to be very effective in reaching communities of color, providing robust health services and family support services, and improving children’s social and emotional skills.

Staff are highly qualified, linguistically diverse, and mostly representative of children and families served. They are making consistent progress in preparing children for preschool and kindergarten, especially considering a high percentage of young students in Marion Polk begin the school year scoring well below readiness benchmarks.

National, state, and local data confirms there are many more eligible children <5 in Marion Polk than there are regulated child care slots available to serve them.

The struggle for Head Start programs to fill slots is a result of a complex set of issues. These include: the ability of programs to 1) hire and retain early learning teachers, family advocates, child care contractors, and bus drivers, 2) expand program options and transportation to fit working families’ needs, and 3) adapt outreach efforts to more effectively recruit and enroll eligible families.

Recommendations

1. Invest more resources in the timely hiring and retention of Head Start teachers, family advocates, contractors, and bus drivers.
2. Expand mental health services - hire more mental health contractors, strengthen community mental health partnerships, make more referrals, and track outcomes for families.
3. Secure more funds for rent assistance and eviction prevention. Advocate with property owners, business associations, and legislators for lower rent and eviction prevention strategies.
4. Focus recruitment efforts in areas where children experiencing poverty live: South/SE Salem, NE Salem, West Salem, Keizer, and Dallas.
5. Provide more support for early mathematics, literacy, and language arts. This can include more one-on-one and/or small groups in classrooms (with reduced workloads for teachers to accommodate the extra work), after-school tutoring with community partners and volunteers, and worksheets and videos for families.
6. Review this report for specific areas of need by race, ethnicity, and geographic area. Incorporate those findings into ERSEA efforts, health services, and family support services to design more responsive programs.