

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HOUSEHOLDS AND WORKERS

September 2021

*Part 2 of Results from a representative sample survey
of Oregon residents*

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Who we are

Key Takeaways

- **Counties with tourism-based economies were hit hardest.**
- **Rural and frontier counties experienced lower rates of unemployment.**
- **Most workers who lost jobs are looking for employment.** More than 77 percent of Oregonians who were unemployed in June 2020 were looking for work. More than 1/3 of workers who lost jobs were unemployed for more than a year.
- **Enhanced unemployment benefits are not the primary reason unemployed workers are not looking for work.** Only three percent indicated that they were not looking because the unemployment benefits paid more than their jobs would.
- **Most employers made accommodations for their employees.**
- **Half of Oregon's labor force worked remotely or at home at some point during the pandemic.**

24% lost a job or were furloughed

285,000 Oregon jobs lost

47% of jobs lost in leisure & hospitality sector

- **Workers are not in a rush to get back to the office.** More than 70 percent of workers would prefer to work remotely at least some days.
- **More than 1/3 of Oregon workers felt that remote work improved their overall job performance, productivity, quality of work, and ability to focus.**
- **The stay-at-home orders changed spending habits most dramatically around dining, take-out, and groceries.**
- **About 13 percent of households reported missing rent or mortgage payments.**
- **The eviction moratorium has been extraordinarily beneficial to those behind on their rent.** Sixty-two percent of households with unpaid rent would have been evicted without the moratorium in place.
- **Most Oregonians used their stimulus checks to pay bills, pay off debt, or pay rent/mortgage payments.**

Introduction

*COVID-19 impacts on
workers & households in
Oregon*

About the Survey

About the Respondents

COVID-19 impacts on workers & households in Oregon

Addressing the COVID-19 public health crisis and the associated economic crisis has proven to be a big challenge for policymakers.

The leisure and hospitality sectors were hardest hit by the lockdown orders with many businesses being shuttered for months. Counties with tourism-dependent economies were particularly hard hit. Lincoln County experienced an unemployment rate of 23.3 percent in April 2020.

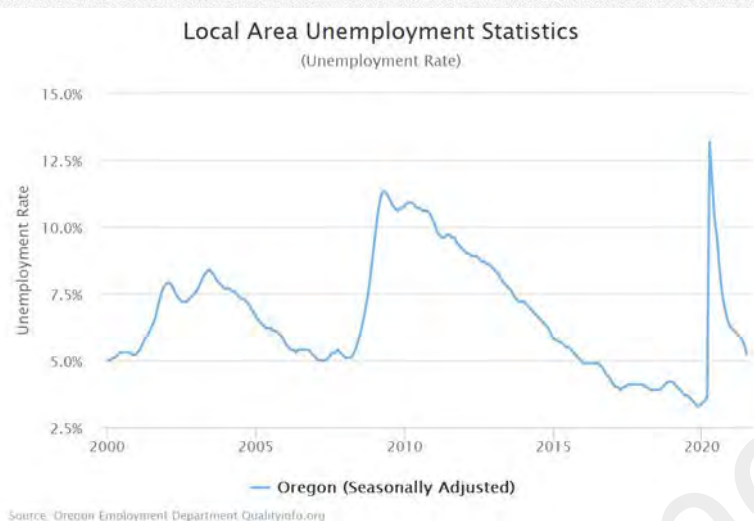
The response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders led to skyrocketing unemployment and other health and social impacts. The impacts have been felt unequally across the economy, with many sectors thriving during the pandemic while others—particularly leisure and hospitality—experiencing widespread job losses.

Multiple rounds of Federal economic support has helped to mitigate the impact of lockdown and social distancing policies. The economy is now rapidly recovering, and the state unemployment rate decreased to 5.6 percent by June 2021, but not all sectors are recovering at equal rates. Despite the heroic efforts of government agencies and community-based organizations, the pandemic daylighted some critical vulnerabilities of our economic system.

This is the second in a series of statewide surveys we are conducting. The remainder of this report presents findings from our survey with a focus on impacts to workers and households.

In January 2020, Oregon's unemployment rate stood at 3.4 percent — the lowest rate in more than 50 years. On March 8, 2020, Governor Brown signed Executive Order 20-03 declaring an emergency due to Coronavirus. Several Executive Orders followed with severe restrictions on social and work activities. By April 2020, the state unemployment rate stood at 13.2 percent.

The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were experienced unevenly across the economy.



About the Survey



686 Responses

- 351 urban (51%)
- 335 rural (49%)

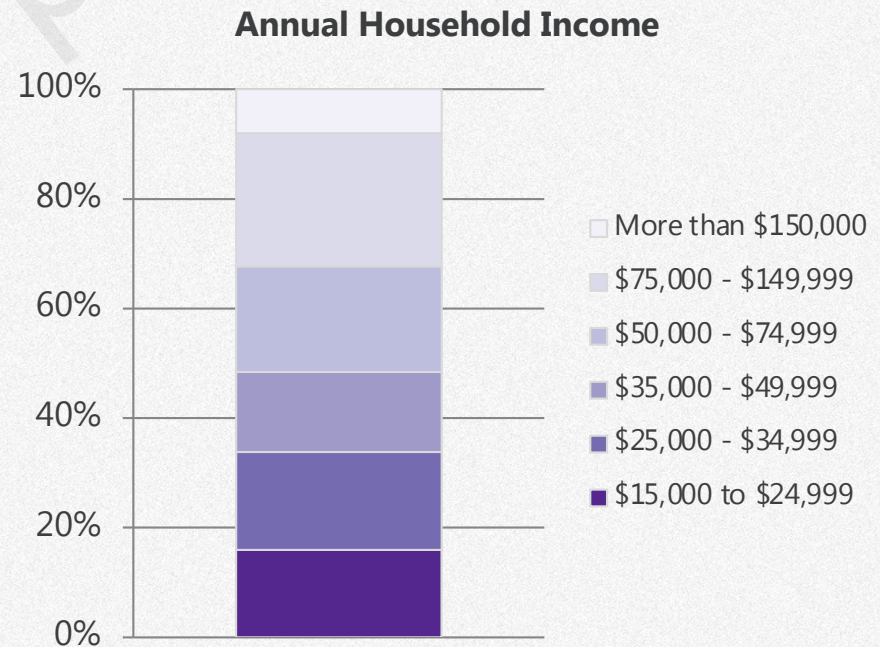
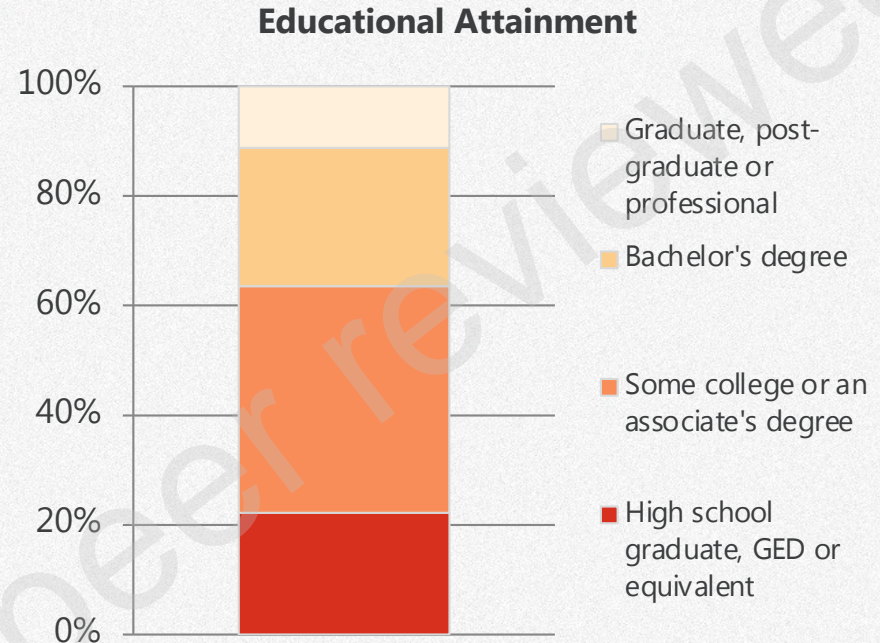
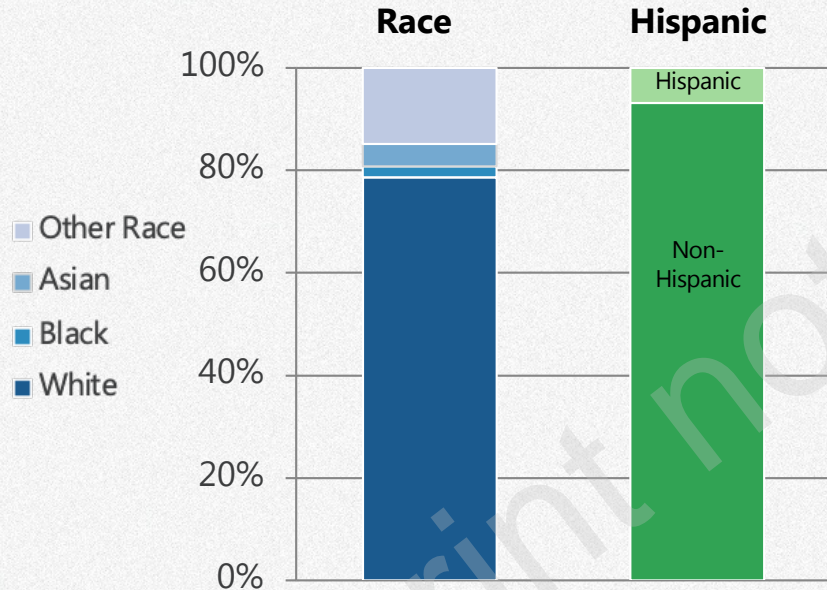
Dr. Benjamin Clark and Robert Parker from the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE) at the University of Oregon (UO) developed the survey instrument and analyzed the results. The research team started by creating a set of survey objectives in collaboration with stakeholders in the community. Key areas of inquiry included:

- Who is and is not getting vaccinated for COVID-19?
- The factors playing into vaccine hesitance.
- What supportive measures might encourage vaccination?
- The types of financial incentives that might encourage the unvaccinated to get vaccinated.
- Sources of information concerning COVID-19
- Economic impacts of COVID-19.
- The extent to which the eviction moratorium has aided people in being able to stay in their homes.

The survey research firm Centiment (<http://centiment.co>) distributed the survey to a representative sample of Oregon residents statewide, with a goal of oversampling the state's rural areas. This effort yielded a roughly 50/50 split of responses between our urban and rural responses.

Responses were collected between May 21 and June 26, 2021. Centiment collected 686 responses: 351 from urban areas and 335 from rural areas. The overall sample has a margin of error of ± 3.7 percent, and the urban/rural subsamples a margin of error of ± 5.3 percent. The *margin of error* measures the maximum amount by which the sample results are expected to differ from those of the actual population. For example, if we show that 51 percent of the population exhibits a characteristic, we are 95% confident that the true value is within ± 3.9 percent of 51 percent. In other words, the value is between 47.1 percent and 54.9 percent.

About the Respondents



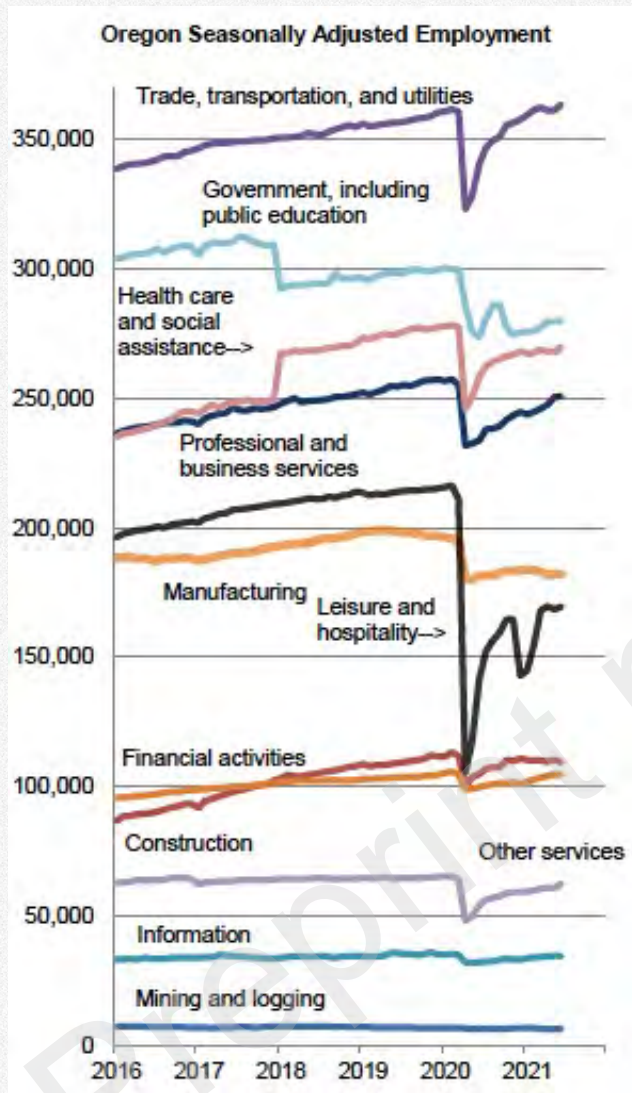
How did COVID-19 Impact Workers?

Employment Status

*Changes to
Employment Status*

*COVID-19 and
Unemployment*

Employment Status



Oregon’s economy was thriving before the pandemic. In 2019, Oregon had 1,954,200 jobs – a record high for the state. Most sectors of the economy were also experiencing record levels of employment. At 2.11 million, the Oregon labor force was the largest ever recorded.

The pandemic hit hard, with one in seven jobs either temporarily furloughed or permanently lost between March and May of 2020. Between February and April of 2020, the state lost a total of 285,000 nonfarm payroll jobs.

In July 2021, the state added more than 20,000 jobs, and the unemployment rate dropped from 5.6 percent in June to 5.2 percent in July.

The leisure and hospitality sectors experienced the most significant employment losses and have been the slowest to recover. The sector lost 45,000 jobs between February 2020 and July 2021—21 percent of jobs in the sector.

Front Line Workers

| Area | Yes | No |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Urban | 26% | 74% |
| Rural | 21% | 79% |
| Total | 23% | 77% |

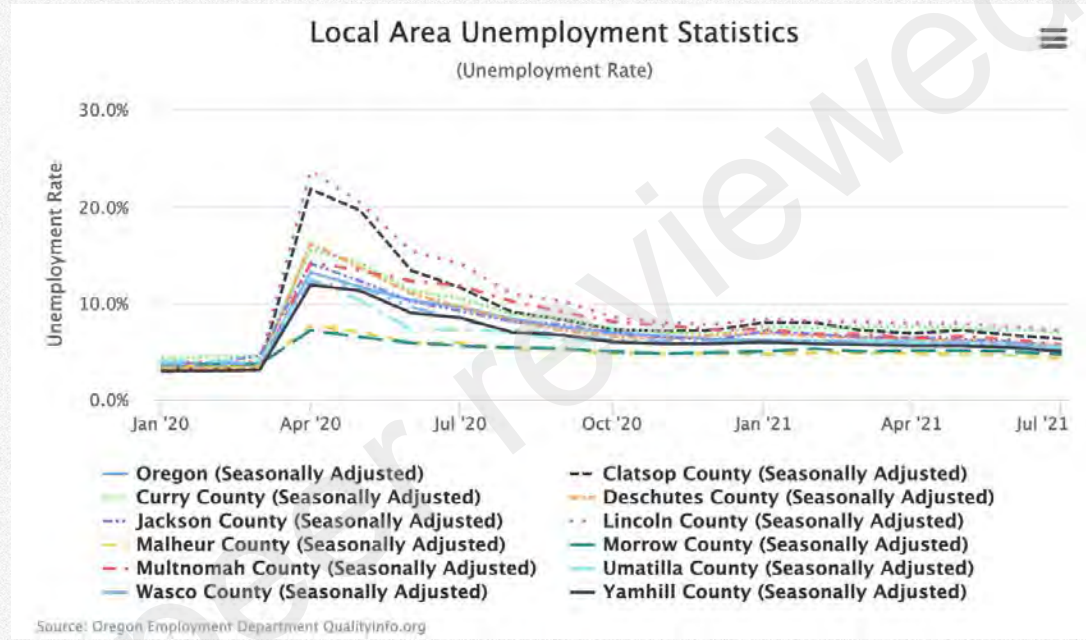
Media reports have frequently discussed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on ‘front line’ workers. The State of Oregon defines a frontline worker as someone with a job that puts them at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 because of close contact with individuals outside their household. About 23 percent of survey respondents reported they were frontline workers. This figure was slightly higher in urban areas (26 percent) than rural areas (21 percent).

The state also defined 17 employment categories of workers as essential to continued ‘infrastructure viability.’ Businesses in these industries were allowed to remain open during the lockdown orders and report to their worksites.

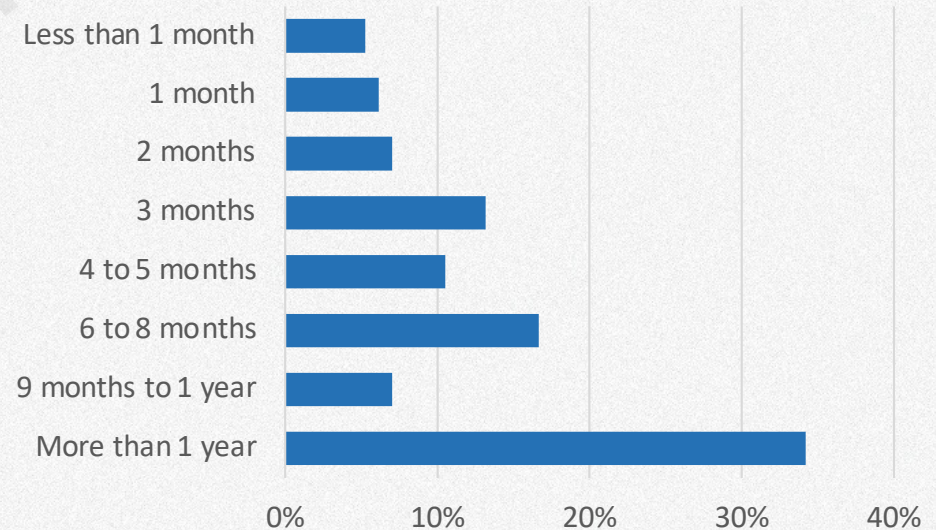
Changes to Employment Status

Unemployment spiked quickly in Oregon due to lockdown orders issued by Governor Brown and peaked at 13.2 percent in April 2020. The impacts of unemployment were felt unevenly across the state. Coastal counties (i.e., Clatsop and Lincoln) experienced the largest job losses. In contrast rural eastern counties (i.e., Morrow and Malheur) were much less impacted. Unemployment in Morrow County peaked at 7.2 percent compared to 23.1 percent in Lincoln County.

When looking at the people that reported spending time unemployed during the pandemic, the most common response (34%) was 'more than 1 year.' This figure doesn't mean that 34 percent of Oregonians were unemployed for more than a year. Instead, it demonstrates that more than one-third of those unemployed were unemployed that long. It should be noted that those who were unemployed were evenly distributed between the lowest income category and those between \$75,000 and \$150,000—no other income category had more than 3 people indicate unemployment.



Length of Time Unemployed



COVID-19 and Unemployment

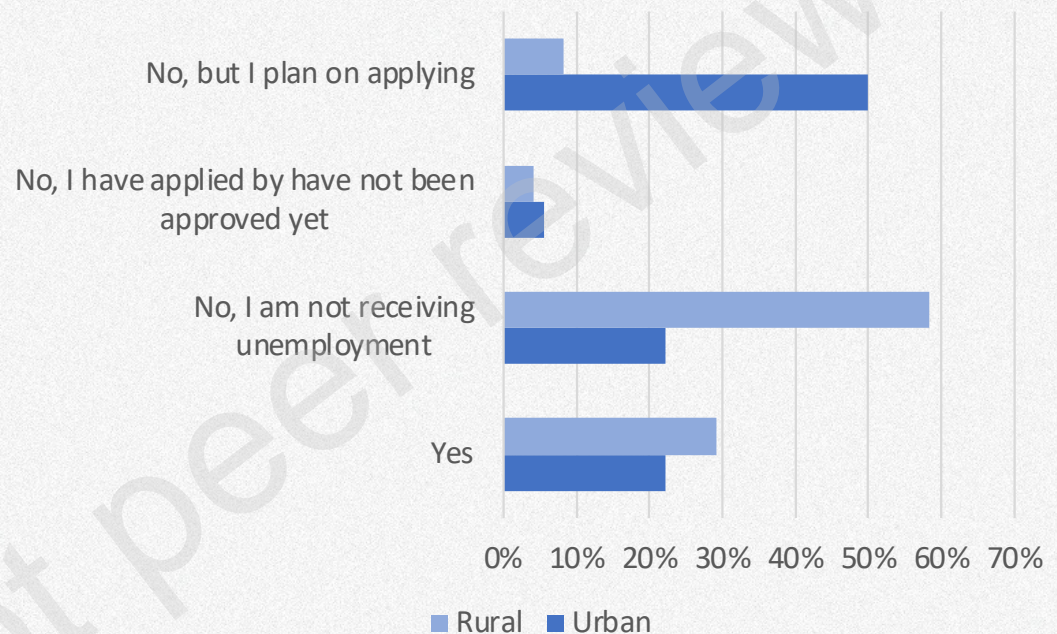
Twenty-four percent of Oregonians reported temporarily or permanently being unemployed during the pandemic. More than 77 percent of Oregonians who were unemployed in June 2020 were looking for work.

In June 2021, the state unemployment rate stood at 5.3 percent; 6.1 percent of respondents indicated they were currently unemployed, a value well within the margin of error for the survey. Of those who are not currently looking for work, most have had life changes (retired or became disabled) or are fearful of working during the pandemic. There were no differences between rural and urban areas of the state with respect to who was and was not looking for a job.

A very small share of the unemployed said they were not looking because the unemployment benefits paid more than their jobs would—it was only three percent of the unemployed survey respondents. Five percent indicated there were no suitable jobs, five percent indicated that available

jobs did not pay enough, and two percent had concerns about contracting COVID-19 on the job. Twelve percent indicated there were other reasons they were not looking for employment. These reasons included individuals who retired or were disabled, some working from home, or sufficient resources to not work for a while.

Unemployment Benefits



About ¼ of unemployed Oregonians report they were receiving unemployment benefits. Notably, nearly 60 percent of rural Oregonians reported not receiving benefits compared to 22 percent of urban Oregonians. Moreover, 50% of urban respondents who were not receiving benefits plan on applying compared to 8 percent of rural respondents.

How did COVID-19 Transform the Workplace?

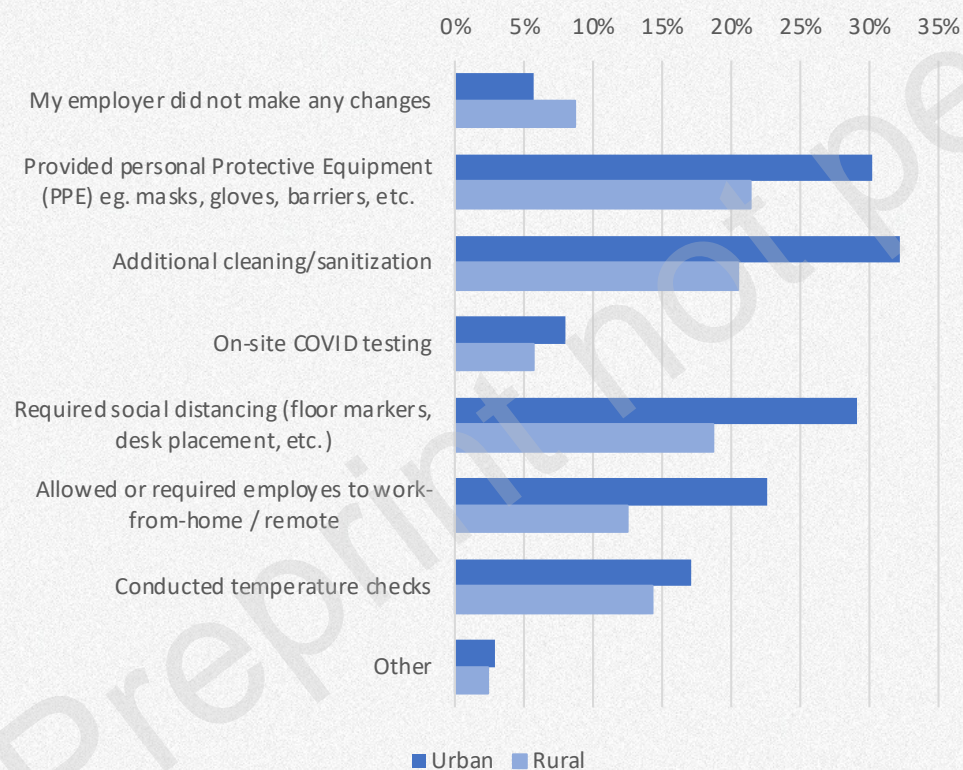
*What Steps did employers take
to accommodate employees?*

*Remote Work and Returning to
the Office*

*Productivity in the Remote
Work Environment*

What Steps did employers take to accommodate employees?

Employer Changes to Accomodate Workers



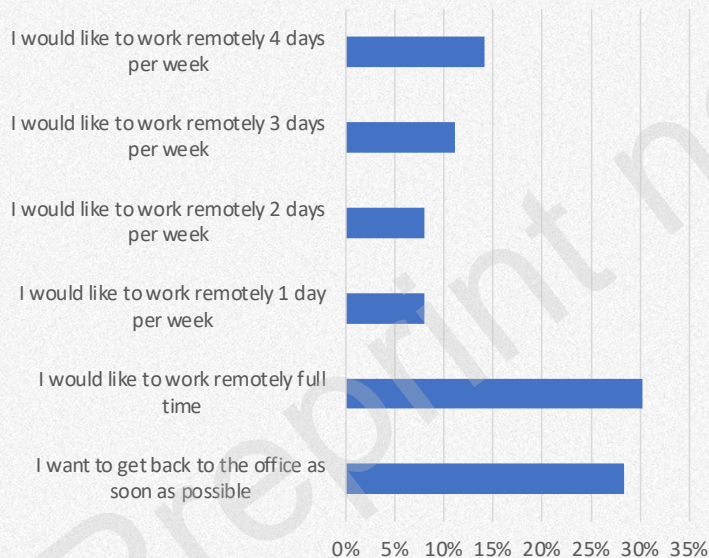
Twenty-four percent of Oregonians reported a change in employment status during the pandemic. Seven percent said they permanently lost their job and are still unemployed. Seven percent indicated a temporary furlough at some point during the pandemic. Four percent lost their job and found a new one, and four percent retired. No statistical difference existed between urban and rural workers.

Most employers made accommodations for their employees during the pandemic. Some of these were required (i.e., personal protective equipment) by state order, while employers implemented others not required. The data also clearly show that businesses in urban areas were more likely to make accommodations for workers. Nearly 30 percent of urban respondents indicated their employer required social distancing, compared to 19 percent of rural employers. Thirty-two percent of urban respondents indicated their employer took additional cleaning or sanitation measures compared to 20 percent of rural respondents. Thirty percent of urban respondents indicated their employer-provided PPE compared to 21 percent of rural respondents. Twenty-three percent of urban respondents indicated their employer allowed or required them to work remotely compared to 12 percent of rural respondents.

Remote Work and Returning to the Office

Half of Oregon's labor force worked remotely or at home at some point during the pandemic.

Worker Perspectives About Going Back to Their Place of Work



Working from home was a critical economic response to the pandemic. Governor Brown's "stay home, save lives" campaign (Executive Order. 20-25), resulted in many businesses pivoting to remote work. The American Community Survey (ACS) reported that 7.3 percent of Oregonians worked from home in 2019. Our survey shows that 50 percent of Oregonians worked from home or remotely full- or part-time at some point during the pandemic.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) started asking whether people teleworked or worked from home because of the pandemic in May 2020.* The data show that about 35 percent of workers worked remotely in May 2020, which steadily declined and was at 13 percent by July 2021. Other notable findings from the BLS data are that women were more likely to work remotely than men; workers with higher levels of

education were more likely to work remotely; and remote work varied by occupation and industry with individuals in the finance and insurance and professional and related occupations having the highest percentage of workers working remotely.

Our survey shows that 50 percent of Oregonians worked from home or remotely full- or part-time at some point during the pandemic.

Moreover, the survey results suggest that Oregon workers are not rushing to get back to the office. More than 70 percent of workers would prefer to work remotely at least some days, with 30 percent wanting to work remotely full time with an additional 15 percent wanting to work remotely four days per week.

* <https://www.bls.gov/cps/effects-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic.htm>

Productivity in the Remote Work Environment

Most workers reported minimal impacts on productivity and quality of work due to working remotely.

Worker Perspectives on Remote Work

| Measure | About the | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|-------|
| | Better | Same | Worse |
| Overall | 34% | 57% | 9% |
| Productivity | 35% | 51% | 14% |
| Quality of Work | 35% | 56% | 9% |
| Ability to Focus | 36% | 56% | 9% |
| Frequency of Collaboration | 22% | 53% | 25% |
| Support from Coworkers | 23% | 58% | 19% |
| Support from Managers | 20% | 63% | 17% |
| Trust in Leadership | 22% | 64% | 15% |

One of the historical concerns about telework has revolved around productivity. A March 2021 survey by the Harvard Business School found that 33 percent of workers felt their overall performance and quality of work was better than the year prior. Moreover, 33 percent felt they were better able to focus on work from home.

Our survey explored similar productivity issues in the remote work environment but used a slightly different approach – asking workers to indicate if they felt they did better, about the same, or worse on the various metrics.

More than 1/3 of Oregon workers felt that working remotely improved their overall job performance, productivity, quality of work, and ability to focus. More than half reported they felt they performed “about the same” on the various measures.

The Harvard survey further reported that half of the workers felt working remotely did not change collaboration with co-workers, support from co-workers or trust leadership.

A little more than 20 percent of the respondents indicated they felt remote workers performed better in terms of frequency of collaboration, support from co-workers, support from managers, and trust in leadership.

Frequency of collaboration was the area that had the largest percentage of respondents with 25 percent reporting working remotely was worse.

These results provide the workers’ perspective on remote work but do not include the perspectives or objective measures of productivity from the business perspective. Additional work is needed to understand the implications of remote work on business performance fully.

* <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/future-of-work-from-home>

How did the Pandemic Impact Household Expenditures?

*How did Household
Expenditures Change?*

*Missed Rent & Mortgage
Payments*

*How Oregonians
used their Stimulus
Checks*

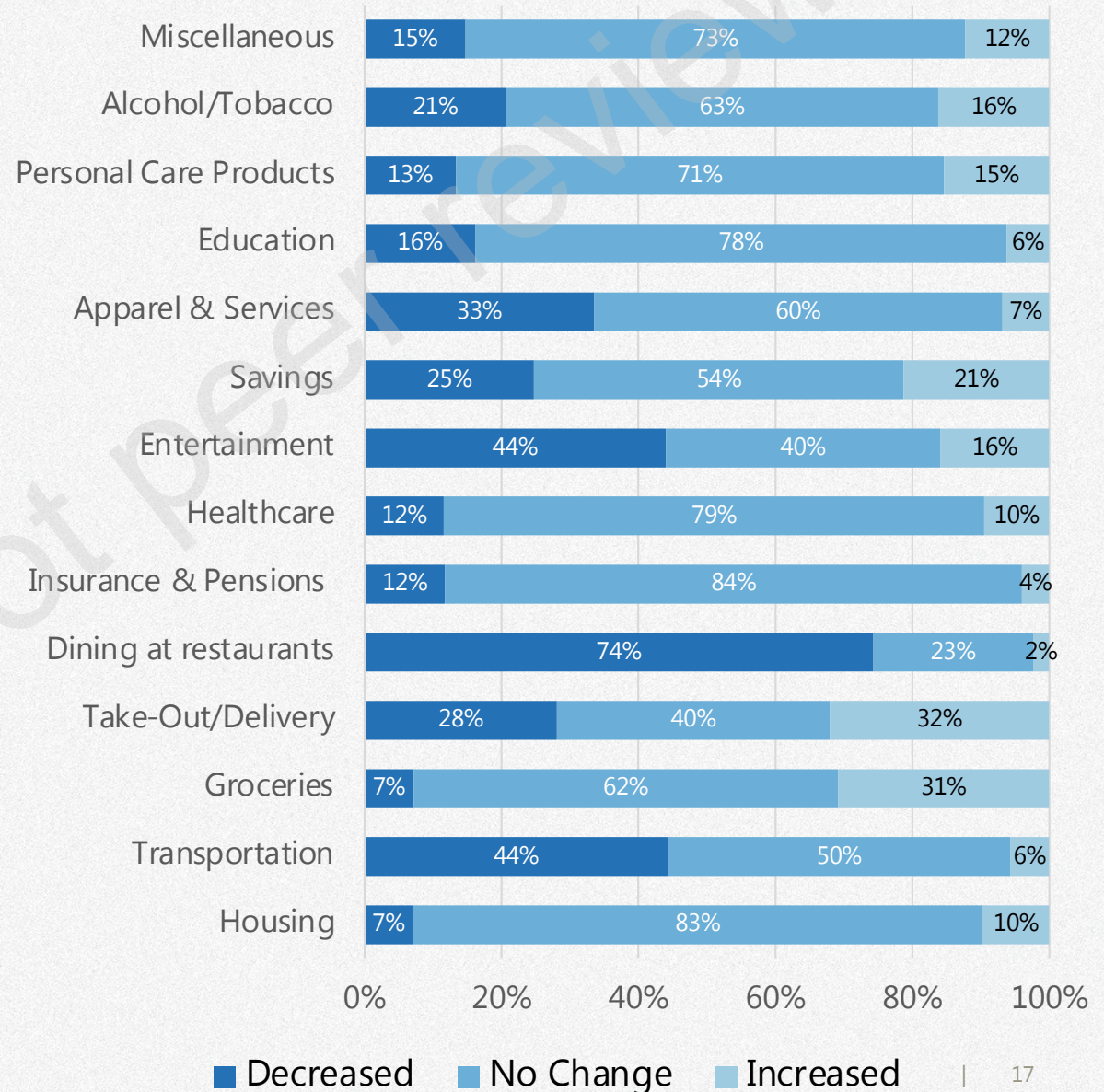
How did Household Expenditures Change?

The stay-at-home orders also influenced household expenditures. With most restaurants closed to dine-in options, restaurants and households pivoted to takeout. The changes in household expenditures generally mirrored the impacts to businesses with sectors that were closed, prohibiting families from typical spending patterns.

Spending habits changed most dramatically around dining, take-out, and groceries. Nearly three-quarters indicated a decline in restaurant spending, while about 30 percent indicated increases in take-out and groceries. Given that many eating establishments were closed for months to inside dining, this finding should come as no surprise.

Healthcare, insurance, and housing expenditures were the most stable spending categories.

How Spending Changed



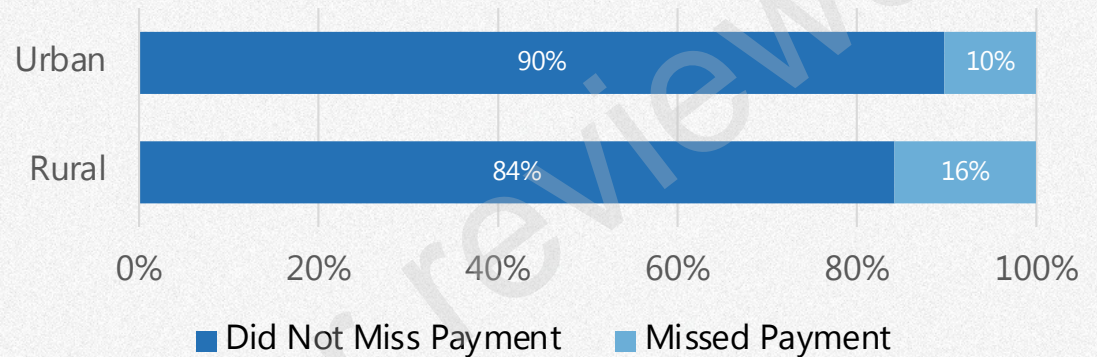
Missed Rent & Mortgage Payments

Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-25 included a moratorium on evictions. This action prevented many households that temporarily or permanently lost jobs to maintain housing. Nationally, more than 11 million households have fallen behind on rent.* An estimated 32 percent of households missed rent or mortgage payments in July 2020; this fell to less than 10 percent by May 2021.

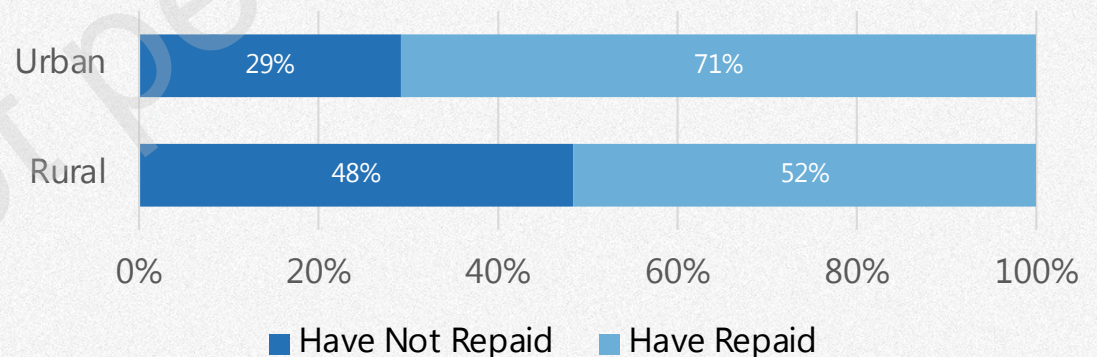
Most Oregonians did not miss any rent or mortgage payments during the pandemic. However, our findings show that rural areas of Oregon have missed rent or mortgage payments at a higher rate than urban areas—at a rate of about six points higher.

The risk to rural communities from the missed payments is higher in the long run as the eviction moratorium (expired July 31, 2021) and foreclosure moratorium (expires September 30, 2021). The rural threat is more significant because only about half of rural residents have repaid these missed payments. In contrast, more than 70 percent of urban residents have made the back payments.

Missed Payments on Rent or Mortgage



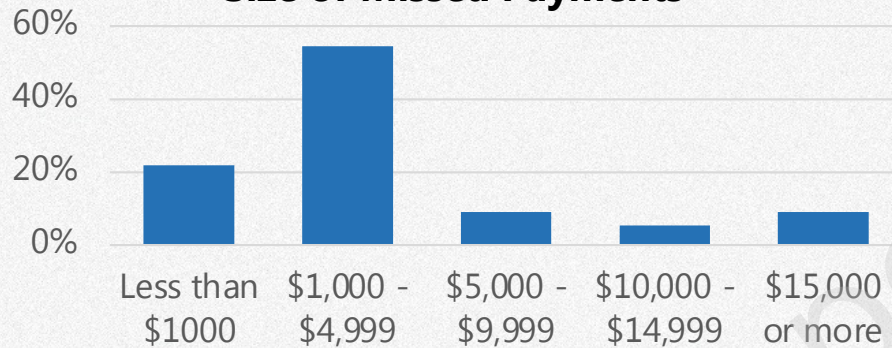
Repaid Missed Payments



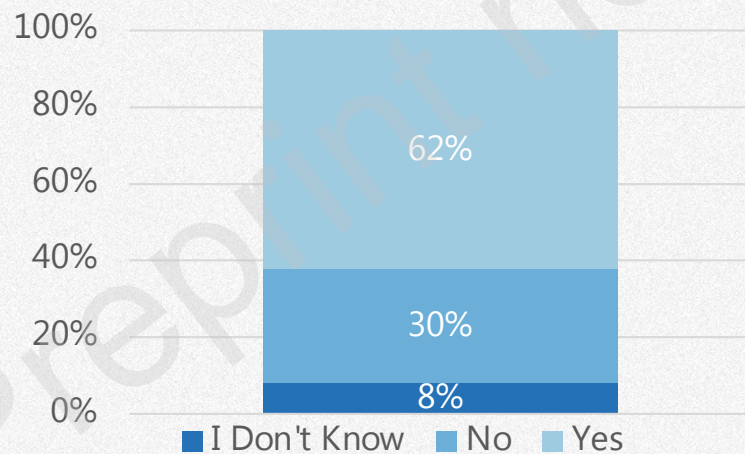
*<https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC-Testimony-to-House-Select-Subcommittee-on-Coronavirus-Crisis.pdf>

Missed Rent & Mortgage Payments

Size of Missed Payments



Would You Have Been Evicted?



For all Oregonians, missing payments and not yet being able to repay these debts puts them at risk for homelessness. According to Surgo Ventures the estimated debt per household in August 2021 was \$3,971.*

Our analysis indicates that about 75 percent of those with unpaid rent owe less than \$5,000. For people living paycheck to paycheck, this could be devastating. Still, relief programs from the state or federal government may bridge this relatively small gap somewhat easily.

Our data show that while challenging for landlords, the eviction moratorium has been extraordinarily beneficial to those behind on their rent. We find that 62 percent would have been evicted without the moratorium in place. Keeping these individuals in their homes during the pandemic has been extremely beneficial from a public health perspective.

*Source: <https://bit.ly/3zSiCYl>

How Oregonians used their Stimulus Checks

The Federal government has issued three rounds of stimulus payments to households. Nearly 87 percent of responding households indicated they received stimulus checks.

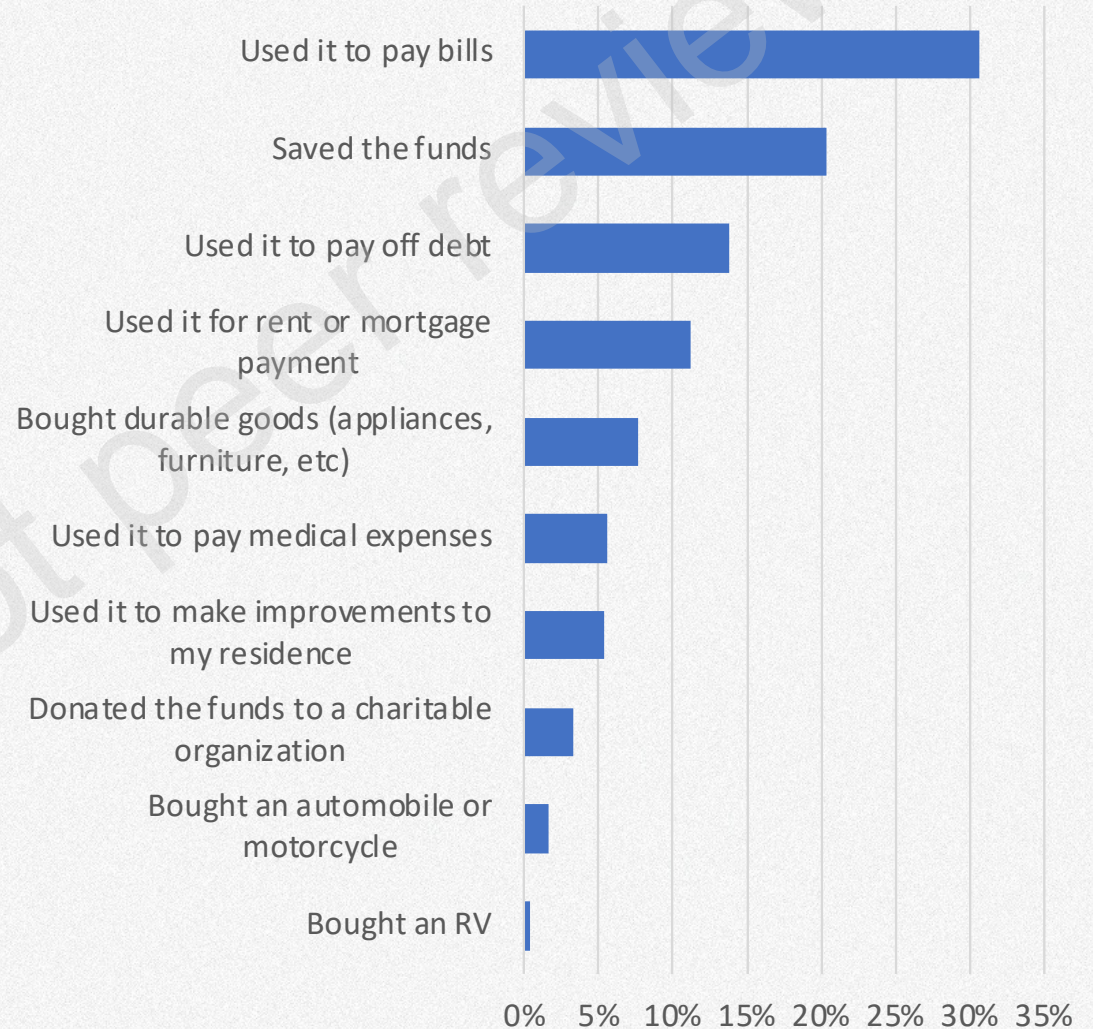
Most Oregonians used their stimulus checks to pay bills, pay off debt, or pay rent/mortgage payments. The use of the stimulus checks to purchase non-essential needs appears to be low, thus points to the vital need for many Oregonians for the stimulus checks during the uncertain economic times of the pandemic.

More than 20 percent reported saving their stimulus funds. This in part contributed to a strong savings rate during the pandemic – in December 2020, Bloomberg reported that U.S. households had accumulated \$1.4 trillion in excess savings.*

Only 40 percent of respondents who missed rent or mortgage payments noted that they had used their stimulus checks to pay for rent/mortgage.

*<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-12-01/get-ready-for-a-supercharged-economy>

Use of Federal COVID Stimulus Checks



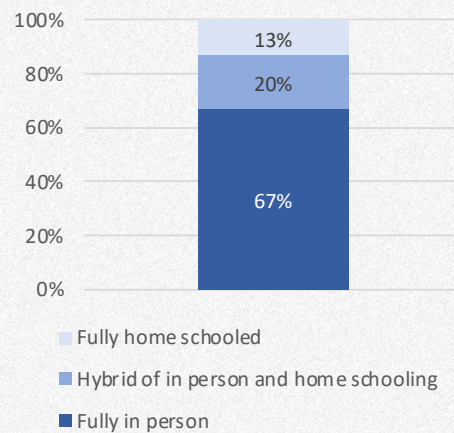
How did COVID-19 Impact Childcare and School?

*Schooling Options and
Preferences*

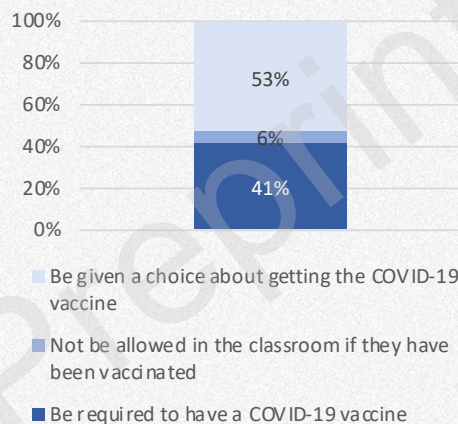
Childcare Arrangements

Schooling Options and Preferences

Desired Schooling Options for Fall 2021



Preferences for Teacher Vaccination



Debates about how to safely accommodate children in school have been ongoing since the initial lockdown orders. Oregon schools pivoted to remote teaching starting in March 2020 and continued through the entire 2020-21 academic year. Children are returning to school in fall of 2021 with contentious debates about masking requirements and safety measures occurring across the U.S. Home schooling placed tremendous burdens on educators and parents.

About 21 percent of Oregon households had children under age 18 in 2019 (ACS, 2019). Slightly more than five percent had children under age five.

As of June 2020, when our survey was fielded, two-thirds of Oregon households with school-age children expressed a preference for school to be fully in-person. Twenty percent preferred a hybrid of in-person and home schooling, while 13 percent preferred their children be fully-home schooled.

About sixty-five percent of households with school-age children reported that school officials had told them whether classes in fall of 2021 would be in-person, hybrid, or online.

Perspectives are mixed about whether teachers and staff at K-12 schools should be required to be vaccinated. Forty-one percent support a vaccination requirement, while six percent think teachers and staff should not be allowed in the classroom if they have been vaccinated, and 53 percent think teachers and staff should be given a choice about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. On August 25th, 2021, the Oregon Health Authority adopted regulations that require teachers and staff be vaccinated with some exemptions.

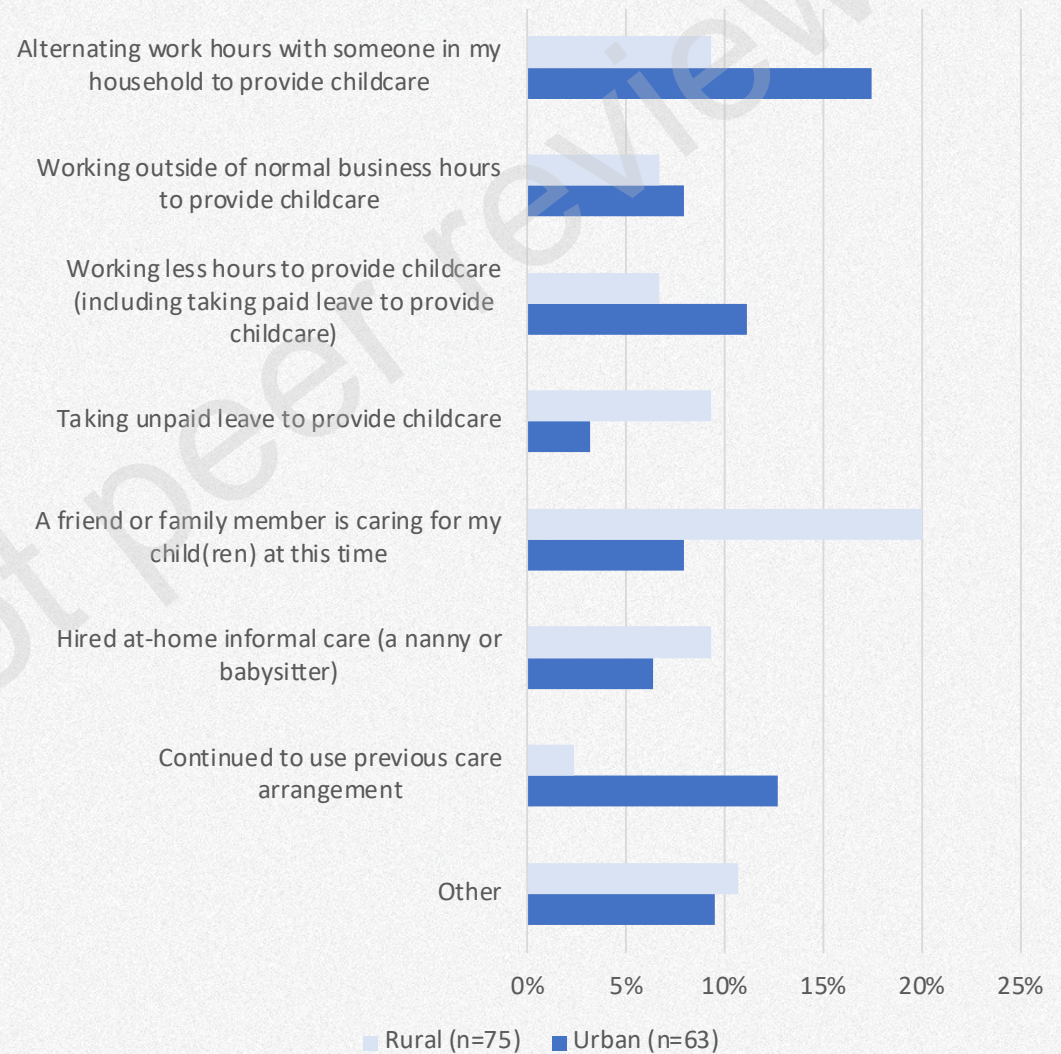
Finally, we asked parents with school-age children if they had hired a tutor to help with at-home learning. Twenty-two percent reported hiring a tutor—14 percent for their family members and 8 percent shared with other families.

Childcare Arrangements

COVID-19 has upended daycare and school systems, placing a significant burden on working parents or students with children. About 77 percent of Oregonians who reported needing childcare indicated their needs were met before the pandemic.

Households with children are taking several steps during the pandemic to keep working and address childcare needs. These range from alternating hours, to leaning on friends or family, to taking unpaid leave. Rural residents are more likely than urban residents to rely upon family and friends for childcare needs with the loss of childcare providers. Twenty percent of respondents in rural areas rely on friends and family, while only about eight percent do so in urban areas. Urban parents were more likely than rural parents to alternate work hours with someone in their household or work fewer hours to deal with the loss of childcare options during the pandemic.

Childcare Accommodations



Who we are

About the Authors



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This document was written and designed by Robert Parker and Benjamin Clark.

Robert is the Director of Strategy & Technical Solutions for the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE) at the University of Oregon. He previously served as IPRE's Executive Director.

Benjamin is the Co-Executive Director of IPRE and an Associate Professor in the School of Planning, Public Policy and Management at the University of Oregon. He has worked in the public health field for nearly 20 years.

This survey was partially funded through a grant from the Economic Development Administration.

This report has been prepared by the **Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE)**. IPRE is a research center affiliated with the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. It is an interdisciplinary organization that assists Oregon communities by providing planning and technical assistance to help solve local issues and improve the quality of life for Oregon residents. The role of IPRE is to link the skills, expertise, and innovation of higher education with the transportation, economic development, and environmental needs of communities and regions in the State of Oregon, thereby providing service to Oregon and learning opportunities to the students involved.

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Land Acknowledgement

The University of Oregon is located on Kalapuya Ilihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people. Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today, descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, and continue to make important contributions in their communities, at UO, and across the land we now refer to as Oregon.

IPRE operations and projects take place at various locations in Oregon and wishes to acknowledge and express our respect for the traditional homelands of all of the indigenous people of Oregon. This includes the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Coquille Indian Tribe, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Klamath Tribes. We also express our respect for all other displaced Indigenous peoples who call Oregon home.

Attributions

The image on page 1 of empty store shelves is a photo from Cold, Indrid on flickr. This creative commons licensed image can be found: <https://bit.ly/3BRNvNI>

The Help Wanted image on page 4 was taken by Brenda Gottsabend. This creative commons licensed image can be found: <https://flic.kr/p/9WaWEe>

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Demetria Rose from theNounProject.com created the outline of the state of Oregon on page 6.

The image on page 8 was taken by Matt York of The Associated Press. This image can be found: <https://s.yimg.com/os/creatr-images/2020-03/84bee590-6810-11ea-ac41-7ed85a030cb7>

The graph on page 9 was sourced from the Oregon Employment Department's August 17 press release. The graphic can be found: <https://www.qualityinfo.org/documents/10182/73818/Employment+in+Oregon?version=1.97>

The graph on page 10 was sourced from the Oregon Employment Department. The image and source data can be found: <https://bit.ly/2WYnrBv>

The working from home image on page 12 was taken by Trendz 4 Friend. This creative commons licensed image can be found: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Working_From_Home.jpg

The school crossing sign is a creative commons licensed photo found: <https://theburlingameb.org/3625/news/smuhsd-unsure-of-school-reopening-likelihood-state-orders-bring-setbacks/#modal-photo>

The photo on page 24 of the University of Oregon Seal was used with permission from the University Communications Office.