

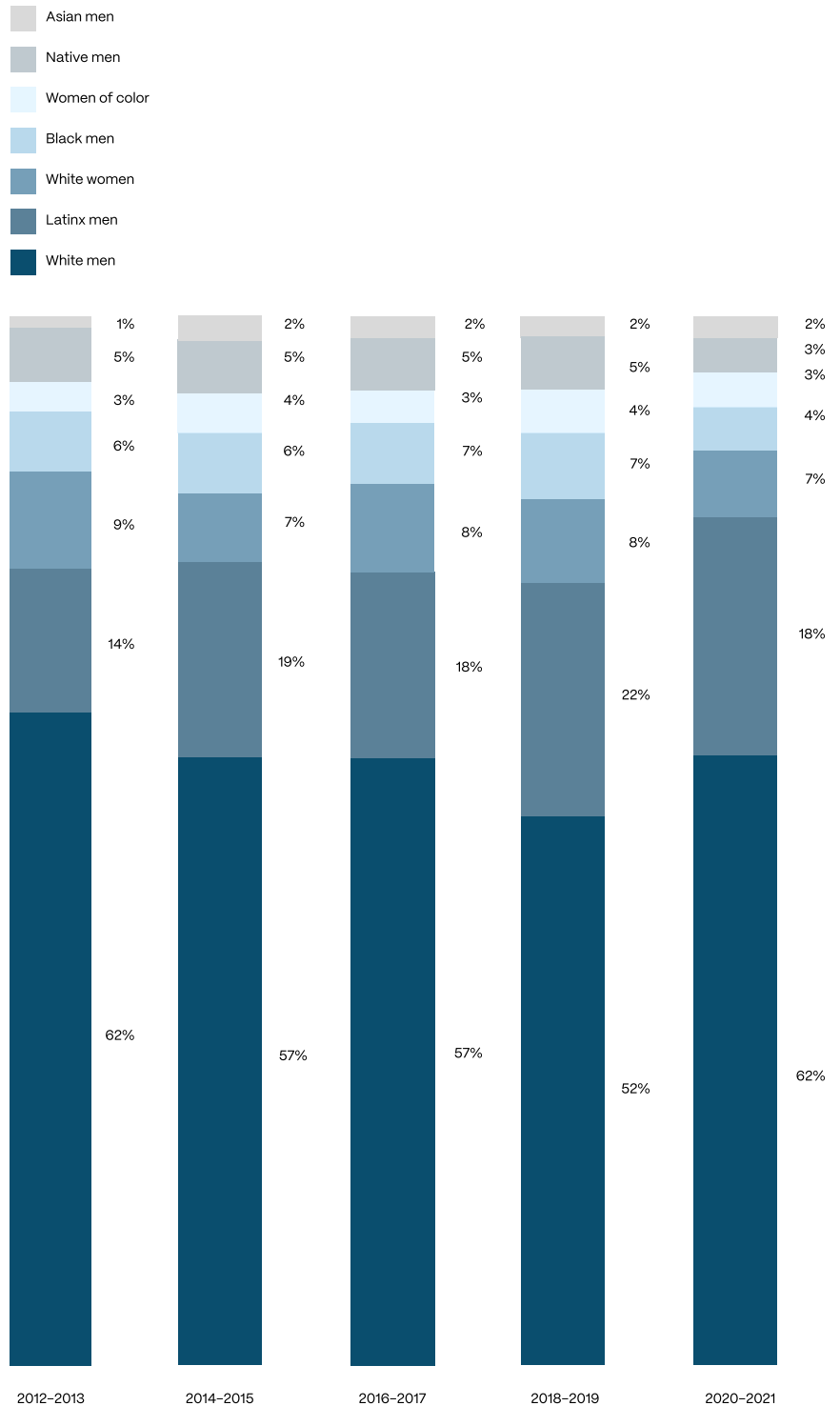
Recruitment and retention in the highway trades

Dr. Maura Kelly, Portland State University
December 2022

The Oregon highway trades workforce continues to significantly overrepresent white men, relative to the population of Oregon. In 2020–2021, there was a decrease in the percent of new apprentices who are women and people of color (38%), compared to 2018–2019 (48%). It is critical to note that this time period included the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted recruitment and retention in both known and unknown ways. For example, recruitment was impacted by reduced pre-apprenticeship opportunities and retention was impacted by issues of unemployment, lack of childcare, and remote learning in K–12 schools. These issues disproportionately impacted women and people of color.

The average age for all apprentices starting an apprenticeship in 2020–2021 was 28 years old.

Pre-apprenticeship remains, to date, the only approach that has been empirically documented to increase the recruitment of women into the trades in Oregon.



New apprentices in highway trades by race and gender, 2012–2021 (OAS data)

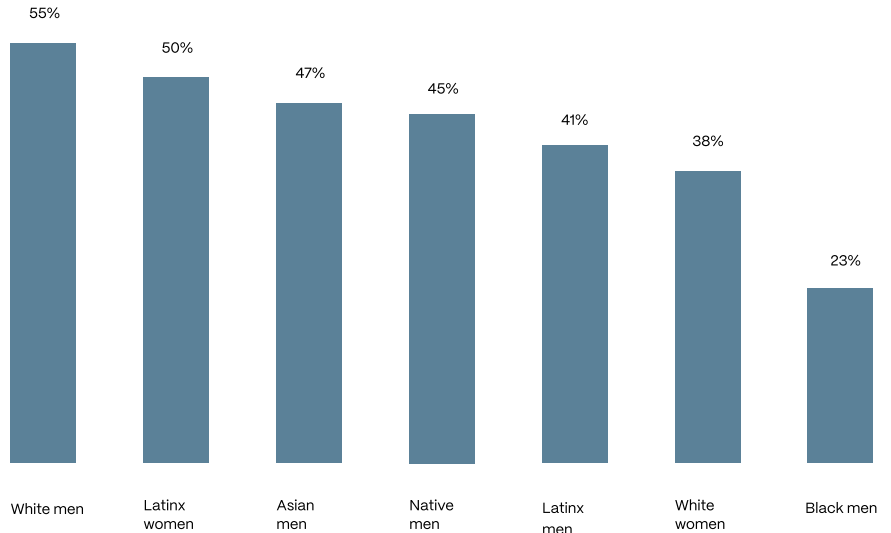
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The most common reasons why apprentices did not complete were: (1) leaving for another opportunity; (2) financial challenges of accessing OJT hours or receiving low pay; (3) problematic jobsite culture; (4) illness, injury, or concerns about safety (not explicitly related to Covid-19); and (5) poor-quality training.

Recommendations

- Increase efforts to recruit a diverse construction workforce through expanding pre-apprenticeship and partnering with community organizations.
- Revise current processes for assigning work to ensure equitable access to on-the-job hours for women and people of color.
- Promote respectful workplaces through employer policies and worker trainings.
- Create a system for reporting harassment and discrimination across jobsites.
- Ensure teaching and mentorship on the job through worker training, employer policies, and public agency oversight.
- Provide opportunities for apprentices to rotate out of jobs where they are not learning the skills of the trade.
- Provide additional flexibility in work schedules and provide opportunities for apprentices to rotate out of jobs that are not a good fit because of the schedule or location of the jobsite.



Percent of apprentices in highway trades completing by race and gender, 2014-2015 (OAS data)

Full 2022 report available at <http://maura-kelly.com/>

