

# Continuing to Build More Diverse Workforce in the Highway Trades: 2018 Evaluation of the ODOT/BOLI Highway Construction Workforce Development Program

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) have partnered in a statewide effort—the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program—to recruit, train, and employ a diverse workforce for highway construction jobs throughout the state. This program, begun in 2010, supports a variety of initiatives designed to improve the recruitment and retention of women and people of color in Oregon’s highway construction trades. The programs evaluated in this report include the following: pre-apprenticeship programs, supportive services providing financial assistance (i.e., fuel assistance; support for overnight travel; childcare; and work clothes, tools, and protective equipment) and supportive services providing non-financial assistance (i.e., counseling, formal mentoring, social support). This report provides findings based on data from the Oregon Apprenticeship System (OAS) and a phone survey, conducted in March of 2018, of current and recently active apprentices. Overall, the current study provides findings regarding the effectiveness of the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program at improving recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce:

**Finding 1:** *The Oregon highway construction workforce is continuing to become more diverse, with increased integration of women and people of color in apprenticeships. As shown in Figure 1, in 2017 the percentage of new apprentices who were white men dropped to 69% (OAS data). As a result of increased recruitment, women and people of color comprise a growing proportion of those completing apprenticeships (Figure 2)*

Figure 1. New Apprentices in Oregon Heavy Highway Construction Trades by Race and Gender, 2005-2017 Cohorts (OAS Data)

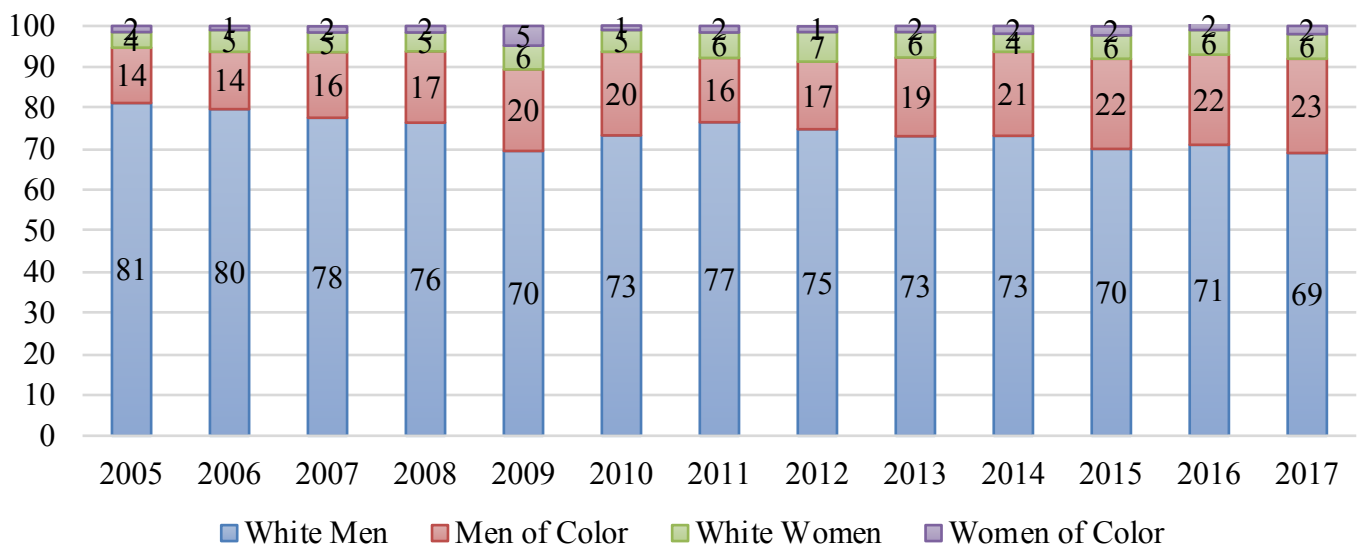
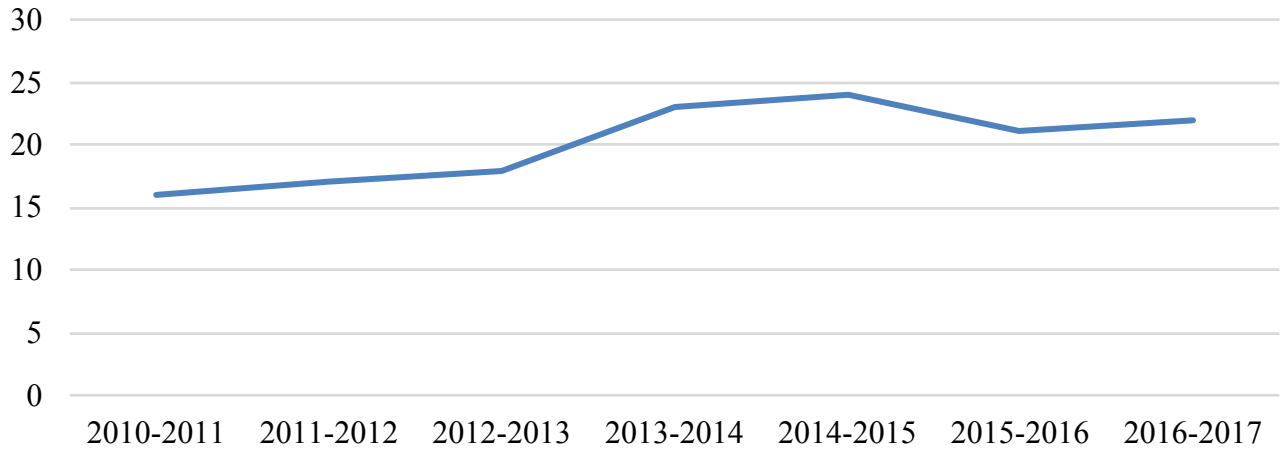
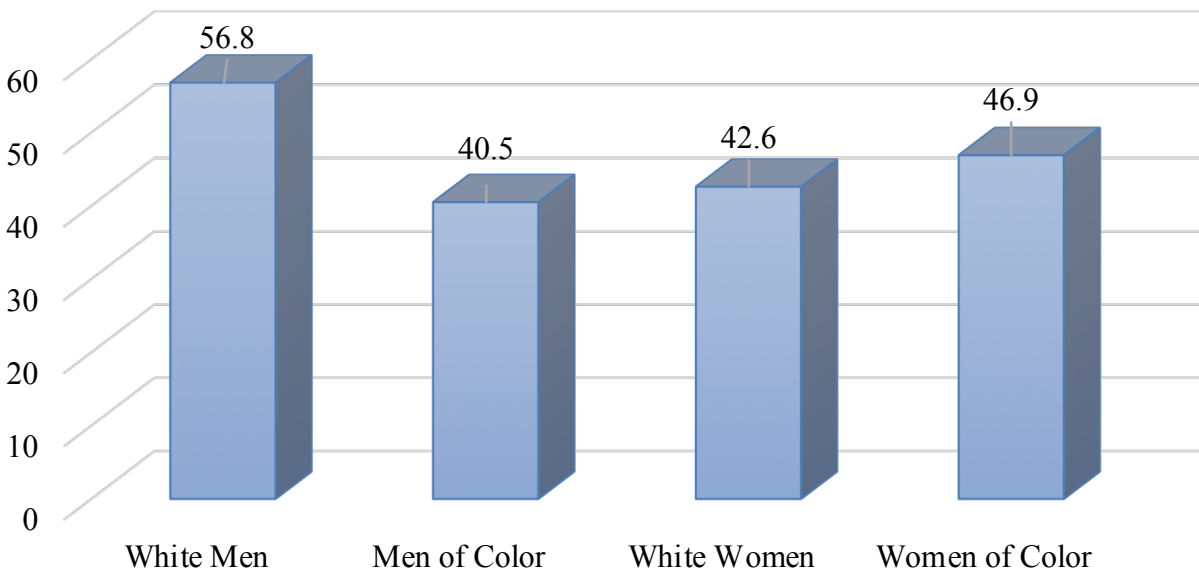


Figure 2. Percentage Completing Who are Women or People of Color, by Year (OAS Data)



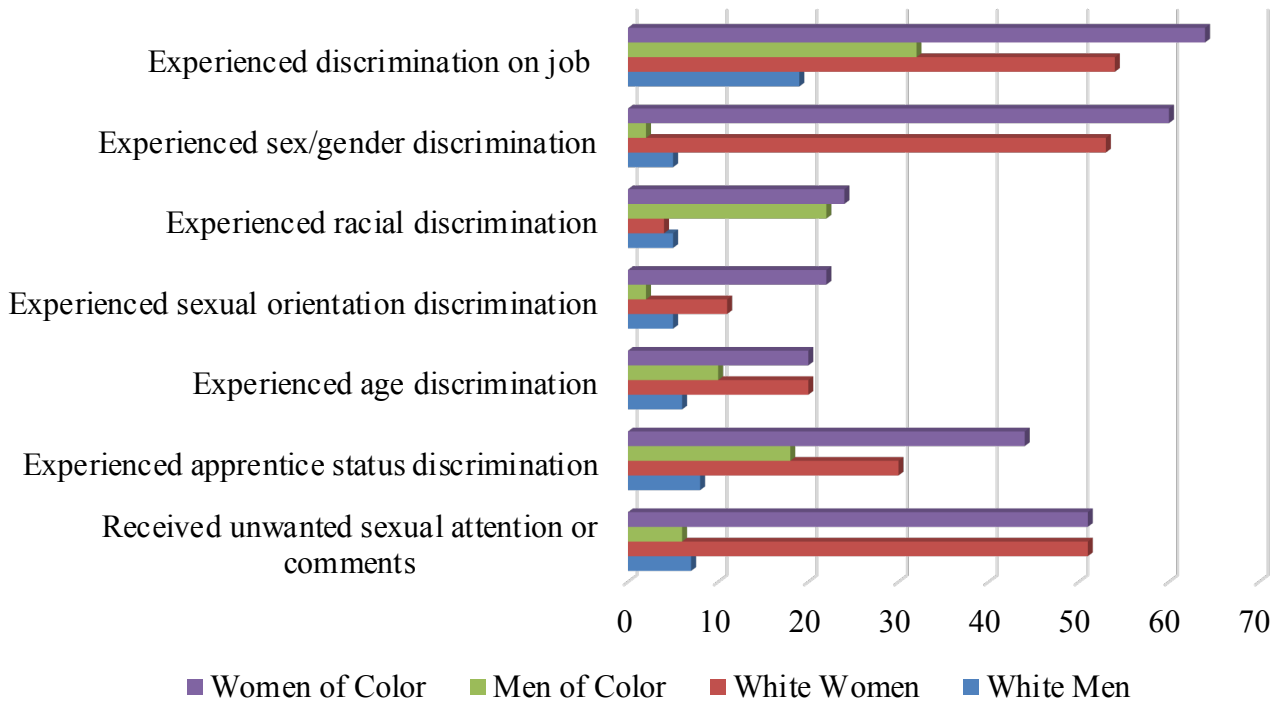
***Finding 2:** Female and racial/ethnic minority apprentices have lower completion rates than white men, yet progress continues to be made. Among apprentices active in 2016-17, women and men of color were less likely than white men to complete rather than terminate their apprenticeships by the end of 2017 (Figure 3).*

Figure 3. Completion Rates of Recently Active (2016-17) Apprentices, by Race and Gender (OAS Data)



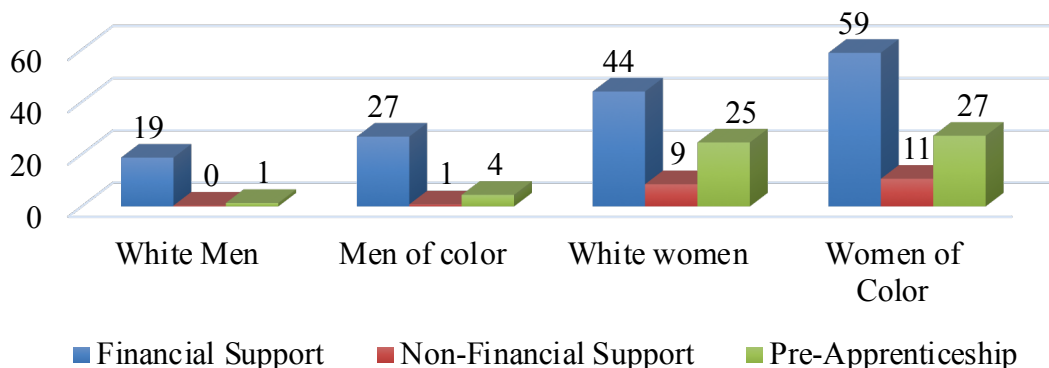
**Finding 3:** Hostile workplaces continue to be an issue in the trades. Figure 4 indicates that all race-gender groups experience discrimination on the job site, with women and people of color reporting high rates of discrimination due to their gender and/or race/ethnicity. Rates of reporting discrimination on the job site due to race/ethnicity and gender, however, have declined slightly since 2016.

Figure 4. Percentage of Apprentices Experiencing Discrimination or Harassment, by Race and Gender (2018 Survey Data)



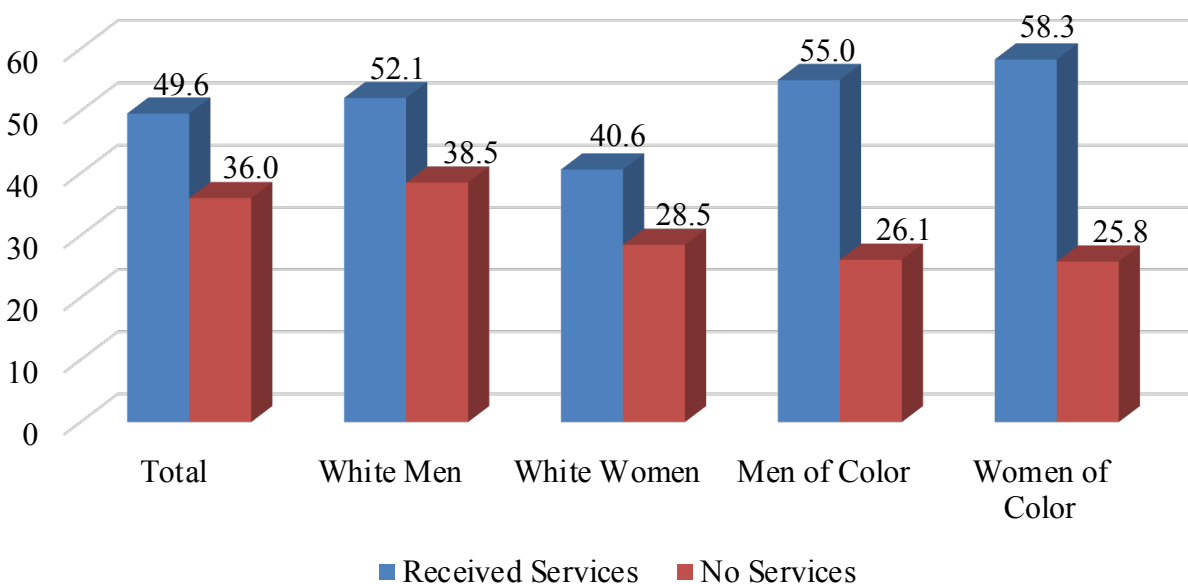
**Finding 4:** The Highway Construction Workforce Development Program reaches a diverse group of apprentices. While race/ethnicity and gender are not criteria for receiving services, the program has been successful in reaching disadvantaged apprentices, as shown in Figure 5. The percentage of women and people of color receiving financial supportive services increased between 2016 and 2018, and the percentage of women receiving non-financial supportive services also increased between 2016 and 2018.

Figure 5. Percentage of Apprentices in Eligible Trades Active in 2016-17 Served by ODOT-BOLI Services, by Race and Gender (OAS Data)



**Finding 5:** *The Highway Construction Workforce Development Program continues to improve completion rates for apprentices in eligible trades who receive services. As shown in Figure 6, apprentices in eligible trades who received ODOT-BOLI supportive services were more likely to complete an apprenticeship than those who did not receive services.*

Figure 6. Completion Rates among Apprentices in Eligible Trades by Receipt of ODOT-BOLI Services, by Race and Gender (OAS Data, 2005-2017 Cohorts)



The report concludes with an update on the 2016 recommendations for creating a more diverse workforce in the highway trades. These recommendations include:

- Continue efforts to recruit diverse workers into apprenticeships
- Strengthen and expand pre-apprenticeship programs and retention services throughout the state
- Improve engagement with the broader community and with youth
- Promote respectful workplaces
- Ensure equal opportunities for employment during apprenticeship
- Improve quality of on-the-job training during apprenticeship
- Continue financial supportive services; expand non-financial supportive services
- Continue efforts to promote awareness of ODOT-BOLI supportive services

The full 2018 report and other Portland State research on the construction trades available at <https://www.pdx.edu/sociology/maura-kelly>