



Oklahoma

# WorkTrends



CENTER FOR THE  
FUTURE OF WORK  
Spears School of Business



# WorkTrends

---

A comprehensive overview of  
workforce development and  
trends in Oklahoma.

---

PRESENTED BY

Center for the Future of Work

Spears School of Business

Oklahoma State University

# Research Team

---



**Abbey Davis, Ph.D.**  
Principal Investigator



**Stephanie Phipps, Ph.D.**  
Research Faculty



**Maci Inselman**  
Project Manager



**Lisa Schurer Lambert, Ph. D.**  
Methodological Advisor



**Kyler Baldwin**  
Student Researcher



**Oliver Homann**  
Student Researcher



**Grayson Isaac**  
Student Researcher



**Evelyn Larson**  
Student Researcher



**Danielle Nester**  
Student Researcher

# Table of Contents

---

<b><u>DEFINING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</u></b>	<b><u>01</u></b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	
<u>Workforce Overview</u>	<b><u>03</u></b>
<u>Study Overview</u>	<b><u>04</u></b>
<b>OKLAHOMA'S WORKFORCE</b>	
<u>General Population</u>	<b><u>05</u></b>
<u>2023 Labor Market</u>	<b><u>06</u></b>
<u>Workforce Demographics</u>	<b><u>08</u></b>
<u>Poverty</u>	<b><u>10</u></b>
<u>Untapped Talent Populations</u>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<u>Individuals with Disabilities</u>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<u>Individuals with justice-involved backgrounds</u>	<b><u>15</u></b>
<u>Veterans</u>	<b><u>17</u></b>
<u>Homelessness</u>	<b><u>17</u></b>
<b><u>2023 VOICE OF THE WORKFORCE</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>
<b><u>EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS</u></b>	<b><u>36</u></b>
<b><u>EMPLOYER-DRIVEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>
<b><u>EMPLOYER-DRIVEN WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS</u></b>	<b><u>42</u></b>
<b><u>CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK</u></b>	<b><u>44</u></b>
<b><u>REFERENCES</u></b>	<b><u>45</u></b>

# Defining Workforce Development

From worker shortages to skill gaps, workforce development has become a popular topic of discussion in the state of Oklahoma. It is difficult to attend any chamber luncheon or business roundtable without the topic of talent attraction, retention or development being mentioned. Most people can agree that Oklahoma needs to develop its workforce and that finding good talent is difficult, but ‘workforce development’ is often used as a catch-all term. The goal of this report is to unpack workforce development by identifying what it specifically looks like, how to do it and who is responsible for it.

In 2009, two scholars proposed a definition of workforce development to best capture the breadth of the concept (Jacobs & Hawley, 2009, p. 2543):

**“Workforce development is the coordination of public and private sector policies and programs that provide individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context.”**

This definition highlights that workforce development is a shared responsibility between both government and employers. Along with this definition, Jacobs and Hawley discuss four specific focus areas within the scope of workforce development including:

1. How schools and agencies prepare individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce.
  - a. This includes traditional forms of education (vocational and tech programs, apprenticeships, professional degree programs, etc.) and other forms of education targeted toward adult learners and disadvantaged populations.
2. How organizations provide learning opportunities to enhance employee development and improve workplace performance.
  - a. This includes ways that workers can gain access to lifelong learning opportunities whether that be from internal training at an organization or financial support for external training and education.
3. How organizations respond to changes that impact workforce effectiveness.
  - a. This can include the adoption of new technologies and organizational development strategies beyond training and development.
4. How individuals are supported as they undergo life transitions related to workforce participation.
  - a. This relates to the needs that workers may have at various stages of life, from childcare needs to accommodations needed to support an aging workforce.

The goal of this report is to evaluate how Oklahoma as a state is performing in these categories and define areas of opportunity for policymakers and employers to develop solutions. There are many valuable workforce reports already established that we do not intend to replicate. We made every effort to utilize and cite local sources of information. The focus of this report is to go beyond traditional measures of workforce readiness and provide a comprehensive look at the variables impacting workforce development in the state of Oklahoma.

# Defining Workforce Development

---

The following pages are structured around the four specific focus areas highlighted by Jacobs and Hawley, beginning with the focus area that taps workforce demographics:

## **1. Oklahoma's Workforce: How individual circumstances and life stages relate to participation**

- a. The current state of our workforce
- b. Childcare as a workforce development strategy
- c. Supporting specialized populations in our workforce
  - i. Individuals with disabilities
  - ii. Individuals with justice-involved backgrounds
  - iii. Veterans
- d. 2023 Voice of the Workforce
  - i. Results of a study conducted last year that taps into the current state of full-time employees and reflects on their employment experience in our state.

## **2. Education and Workforce Readiness: How schools and agencies prepare individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce and help individuals advance their careers**

- a. The state of education in Oklahoma
- b. How curriculum supports industry needs

## **3. Employer-Driven Workforce Development: How organizations provide learning opportunities to improve workplace performance**

- a. Internal training development efforts of employers
- b. Continued education support provided by employers
- c. Accessibility of both for-credit and non-credit learning and development

## **4. Employer-Driven Workforce Innovations: How organizations respond to changes that impact workforce effectiveness**

- a. Adoption of emerging technologies advancing workforce development
- b. Adoption of new work practices advancing workforce development (hybrid/virtual work)
- c. Career development efforts by employers



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# Executive Summary - Workforce Overview

In this report, areas of strength and focus are identified as they pertain to workforce development in the state of Oklahoma. These are summarized below as areas of progress, continued focus and improvement.

## Areas of progress in Oklahoma:

- **Population growth:** In 2023, Oklahoma experienced its highest population gain in a single year (0.85%) in more than a decade, with much of the growth attributed to domestic in-migration from other states (p. 5).
- **Labor force participation rate:** With a continued focus on re-engaging individuals back into the workforce, Oklahoma's labor force participation rate (62.5% in Q3 of 2023) is now higher than pre-pandemic levels and nearly meets the national rate (62.7%) (p. 6).
- **Veteran workforce participation:** Veterans make up 8.7% of adults in Oklahoma and veterans between the ages of 18-64 have an estimated labor force participation rate of 73.5%. In addition, veterans have higher median household incomes and 78.1% own their home. Veterans also experience lower poverty rates (7.6%) compared to the state average (15.7%) (p. 17).
- **Post-secondary education:** High school graduation rates increased by 1.2% between 2017 and 2022, while those with no diploma (highest educational attainment varying from ninth to 12th grade) decreased by 10.1%. Post-secondary education increased for all levels including associate's (7.2%), bachelor's (13.3%) and graduate or professional degrees (18%) (p. 36).

## Areas needing continued focus in Oklahoma:

- **Accessibility to affordable childcare:** Access to childcare continues to be a popular topic with state officials and across communities. While Oklahoma lost approximately 492 childcare facilities between 2017 and 2021, a total of 283 facilities have since been added and capacity has increased by 10,826. Even with these additions, access to affordable childcare continues to be a challenge and should be an area of ongoing focus for legislators, employers and communities (p. 9-10).
- **Incarceration rates:** In 2017 and 2018, Oklahoma ranked No. 2 in the nation for total incarcerations and No. 1 for female incarceration. In 2022, Oklahoma dropped to No. 4 in both categories. Several state initiatives have worked to make progress in this area (SQ 780 and 781, HB 3316) and several are still pending (SB 1077 and HB 1792) (p. 15-17).

## Areas needing improvement in Oklahoma:

- **Poverty:** 15.7% of individuals in Oklahoma have an income below the poverty level compared to the national rate of 11.5%. Families with a female householder and no spouse experienced the largest rate of poverty for families at 29.1%. Children under the age of five experience the highest levels of poverty by age category (21.6%) and Black or African American had the highest rate of poverty by race (25.3%) (p. 10-11).
- **Individuals with disabilities:** Out of all working-age Oklahomans, 15.8% report having a disability and have an employment rate of 43.9% compared to the national average of 45%. Individuals with a disability pursue a bachelor's degree or higher at a rate of half (15.4%) of what those without a disability do (30.6%) (p. 12-13).
- **Affordable housing:** In 2022, 24% of all renters in the state paid rent more than half their income (p. 11).
- **College readiness:** For the 2022 graduating class, only 10% of students met the four ACT college readiness benchmarks and only 6% were ready to pursue STEM majors (p. 38).



# Executive Summary - Study Overview

This section provides a summary of the Voice of the Workforce study conducted in 2023 by the Center for the Future of Work at the Oklahoma State University Spears School of Business. The goal of this study was to better understand the needs and experiences of Oklahoma's workforce. These findings are summarized as they relate to employers as areas of progress, continued focus and opportunity.

## Areas of progress for employers in Oklahoma:

- **Autonomy in work:** Many respondents indicated that they can determine how their work gets done and make their own decisions at work (p. 23).
- **Flexible work:** Many respondents indicated that their company offers flexible work schedules (21.7%) and an additional 30.6% of respondents said flexibility is offered based on position (p. 32).
- **Talent retention:** 30.2% of respondents stated they are extremely unlikely to leave their current position in the next six months, while only 12.1% stated they were extremely likely which may indicate that 'the great resignation' has slowed in Oklahoma (p. 33).

## Areas of continued focus for employers in Oklahoma:

- **Pay and rewards:** When it comes to compensation and benefits, in general, most respondents were somewhat satisfied with their pay and rewards and felt that it was in line with their skills and experience. (p. 21).
- **Meaningful work:** Most respondents indicated that they find their work meaningful and interesting, and it challenges them to do their best. An area of opportunity is helping employees find and pursue work where their interests are better aligned with their tasks (p. 26).
- **Career development:** Most respondents somewhat agreed that they have a clear career path or development opportunities at their company (p. 22).

## Areas of opportunity for employers in Oklahoma:

- **Psychological safety:** In general, respondents somewhat agreed with items related to psychological safety, which is when employees can speak up or share ideas without fear of being punished or embarrassed. Some indicated that mistakes may be held against them or it's not safe for them to take risks at work, which is an area of opportunity (p. 29).
- **Work-related Stress:** Many respondents somewhat agreed that they experience stress often at work and that stress has impacted their ability to perform their job well at times (p. 31).
- **Effective feedback and supervisor support:** Most respondents indicated that, while their job responsibilities were clearly defined, many were not receiving regular feedback or communication about job performance. In addition, while workers feel that their supervisors have the skills and experience needed to lead, results were mixed if workers receive the support they need from their supervisors (p. 27, 28).



# OKLAHOMA'S WORKFORCE

# Oklahoma's Workforce

---

## General Population

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that as of July 2023, Oklahoma had a population of 4,053,824. Based on the [2023 Oklahoma Workforce Briefing](#), published by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the state population grew 1.9% between 2017 and 2022.

The following counties experienced the highest total change in population from 2017-2022:

- Tulsa County (4.8%: +30,921)
- Canadian County (20.8%: + 29,148)
- Cleveland County (7.2%: +20,045)
- Oklahoma County (2.1%: +16,491)

The following counties experienced the lowest total change in population from 2017-2022:

- Caddo County (-10.8%: -3,518)
- Muskogee County (-3.9%: -2,673)
- Adair County (-11.5%: -2,543)
- Garvin County (-7.7%: -2,114)

Domestic In-Migration: Oklahoma has experienced a rise in domestic migration over the past few years, which has assisted the growing population trends in the state. Oklahoma's population grew at the fastest rate in a decade in 2023 (0.85%), according to a January 2023 edition of the [Oklahoma Economist from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City](#). Between 2022 and 2023 Oklahoma added 50,000 residents from other U.S. states. For a national comparison, Oklahoma had the No. 12 highest level of domestic migration in 2023. According to the New York Fed's Consumer Credit Panel (CCP), domestic migration is primarily driven by residents moving from Texas and California.

## Changes in population age from 2017 to 2022

According to the [2023 Oklahoma Workforce Briefing](#), which utilized data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the 65 and older age category grew the most from 2017-2022 with a 12.4% increase in the 65-74 years category and 8.9% increase in the 75-84 years category. Children under the age of 5 years experienced the biggest decrease at -6.7% followed by the 45-54 years category at -5.7%.

## Changes in racial makeup from 2017 to 2022

From the same sources cited above, Oklahoma's population was more diverse in 2022 compared to 2017. After 'two or more races' or 'some other race,' the biggest percent increases for any given demographic were as follows:

- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (20.4%: 1,052)
- Hispanic Ethnicity with Any Race (16.2%: 63,807)
- Asian (14.3%: 11,350)

# Oklahoma's Workforce

## 2023 Labor Market

Labor force participation rate as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics is the percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis utilizing the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, in the third quarter of 2023, Oklahoma had a workforce participation rate of 62.5% compared to the national average of 62.7%. In addition, based on an [interim study](#) conducted in October 2023 by the Oklahoma Senate, of all the people not participating in the workforce, 57.2% are 55 and older and only 25% are in the prime working years of ages 25-54.

Figure 1 provides a visual comparison of labor force participation nationwide.

2023 Q3 Labor Force Participation Rate by State (Percent)

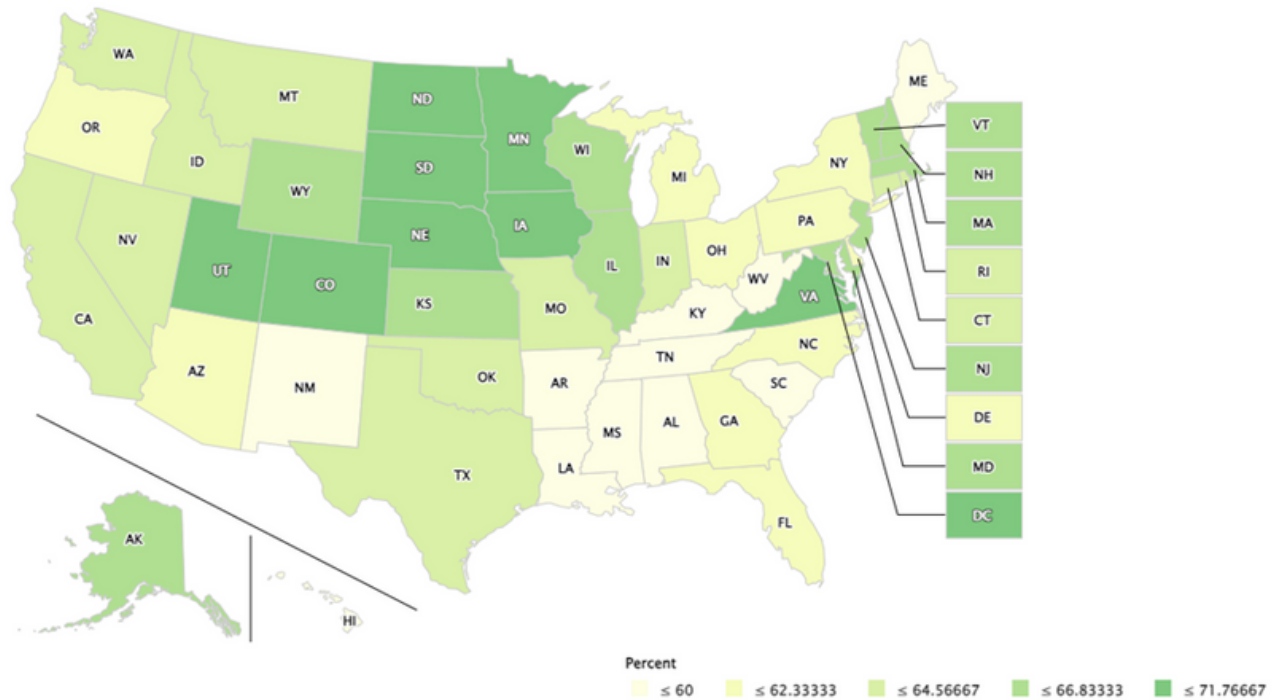


Figure 1. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Oklahoma's Workforce

Post-pandemic there was a lot of conversation and efforts made to increase labor force participation in Oklahoma. The third quarter of 2023 was the first time the state almost matched the national average and Figure 2 below highlights that labor force participation is now higher than what it was pre-pandemic.

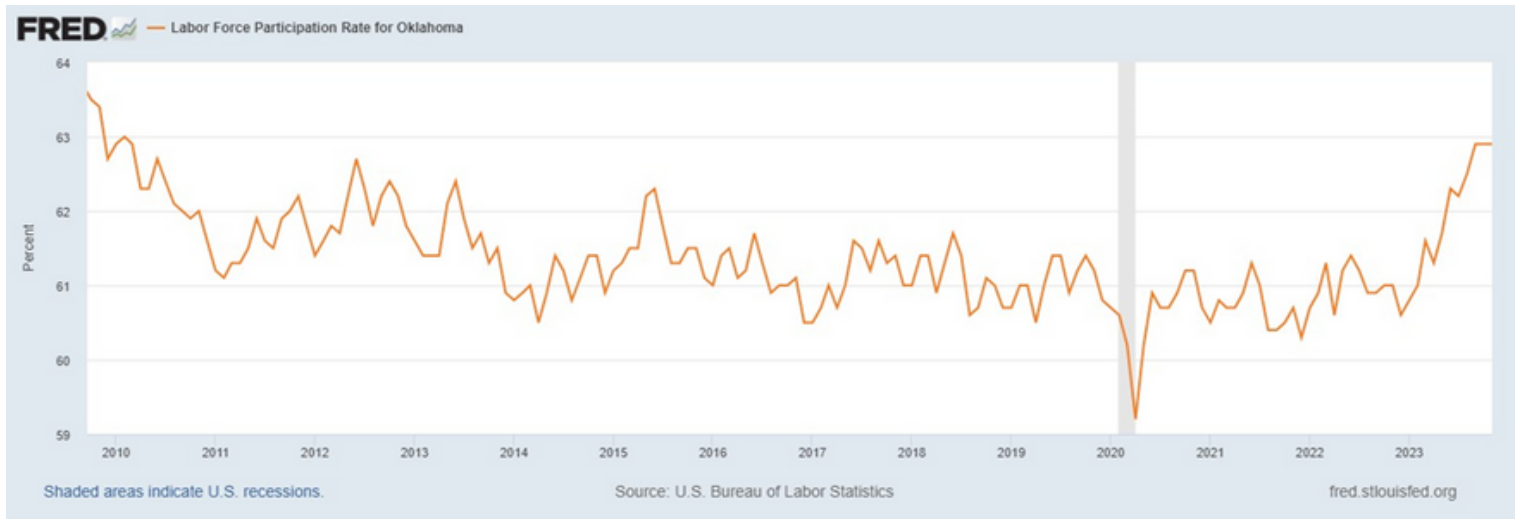


Figure 2. Source: [#https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=LBSNSA40,#](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=LBSNSA40)

Oklahoma's unemployment rate continued to be low in 2023 with a third quarter rate of 2.83% compared to the national rate of 3.7%.

2023 Q3 Unemployment Rate by State (Percent)

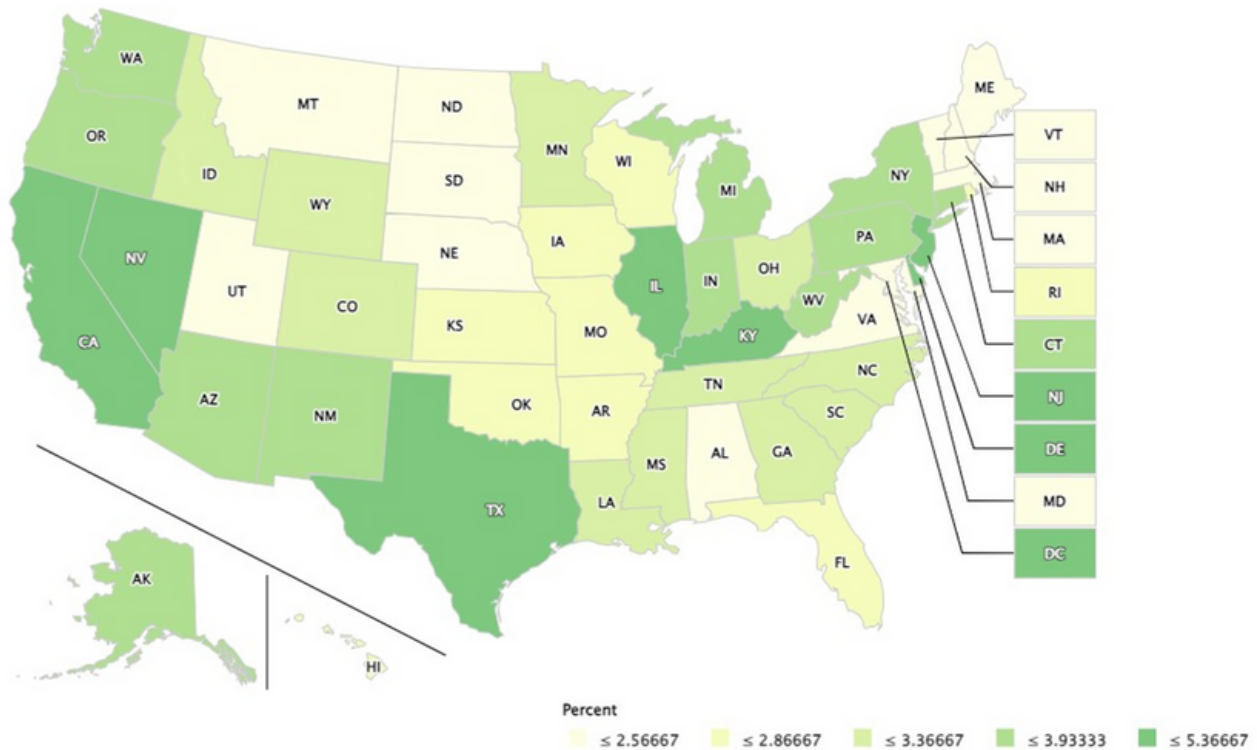


Figure 3. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Oklahoma's Workforce

## Workforce Demographics

In 2022, the [U.S. Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov) estimated that 1,940,528 of Oklahoma's 3,178,852 people aged 16 or older participated in the workforce (61%). Women in the labor force were estimated at 895,284, which makes up 55.8% of women over the age of 16.

While age demographics were unavailable for Oklahoma's workforce in 2022-2023, we were able to obtain age information for 2021 from Data USA. Figure 4 provides a breakdown for number of workers by age and gender and similar to what was cited previously by the Oklahoma Senate's interim study, a dramatic drop begins after age 59.

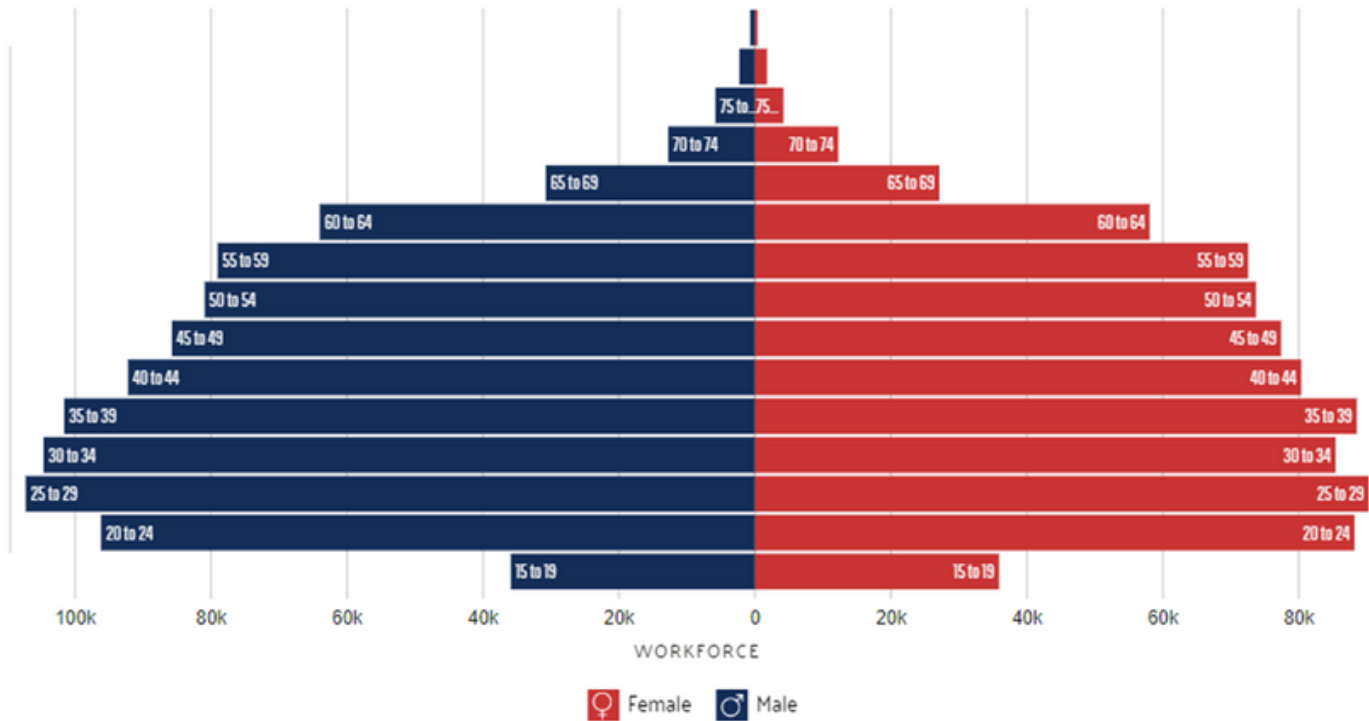


Figure 4. Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/oklahoma>

Of those commuting to work, 77.8% drove themselves and 9.4% carpooled, while 9.4% reported working from home.

# Oklahoma's Workforce

---

## Households with children

According to the [U.S. Census American Community Survey](#), in 2022 it was estimated that out of a total of 276,038 children under the age of 6 years, 177,967 (64.5%) had all parents in the workforce. This number increased to 70.7% for children aged 6-17 years. The Center for American progress estimates that 55% of Oklahomans live in a [childcare desert](#) with that number increasing to 57% for Hispanic/Latino families and 68% for rural families. A childcare desert is defined as:

**Any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots. – Center for American Progress**

Utilizing data from the Department of Oklahoma Human Services, Table 1 outlines the changes in childcare facilities and capacity from 2017-2023.

Table 1

Year	Total Facilities	Total all capacity
2017	3,317	122,253
2018	3,185	120,930
2019	3,038	117,031
2020	2,986	115,771
2021	2,825	113,360
2022	2,841	116,591
2023	3,108	124,186

Table 1. Source: <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/?state=OK>

# Oklahoma's Workforce

The [2023 Child Care and Early Education in Oklahoma Fact Sheet](#) from the First Five Years Fund Center noted that of the 307,164 children under the age of 5 in Oklahoma, 23% were living in poverty and 60% had all available parents currently in the workforce. Families typically spend about 9% of their income on childcare expenses. Based on the data on childcare facility capacity in Table 1, there were more than 60,000 spots that weren't available in 2023.

While the total number of facilities decreased over time, the capacity of those facilities has started to increase. The pandemic impacted some facility closures, but labor costs and regulations continue to be significant barriers for operators. While facilities and capacities are on the rise in Oklahoma, that increase could be affected by the expiration of federal aid packages that were granted by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) during the pandemic to assist low-income families as well as facility operations. The aid, totaling \$24 billion, expired in September 2023. Another \$15 billion in federal funds is expected to expire in September 2024.

The state has made efforts to address the shortage of childcare services with House Bill 2452. The bill aims to ease restrictions for in-home daycare centers by increasing the number of available spots. Senate Bill 1063 was proposed to provide employers and childcare workers with tax incentives but died in conference last May. However in March of 2024 House Bill 4147 passed which would offer tax credits to employers for 30% of cost assistance, operation or contracting of child care for employees. Qualifying child care workers could also be eligible for a \$1,000 income tax credit. The bill has an April 25th deadline to pass the senate.

Several of the Native Nations in Oklahoma have also taken steps to assist communities with childcare needs. The Chickasaw Nation [announced opening three new facilities in Ada, Tishomingo and Purcell](#). The Caddo Nation also [announced the groundbreaking of a new facility in Hinton](#).

## Poverty

According to [U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey](#), the percentage of all individuals whose income in the past 12 months was below the poverty level was 15.7% compared to the national rate of 11.5%. The percentage of families whose income in the past 12 months was below the poverty level was 11.4% for all families. Families with a female householder and no spouse present represented the largest category at 29.1% compared to married couples at 6.2%. The median household income in Oklahoma is estimated at \$61,364 compared to the national median of \$75,149.

### Poverty by Gender

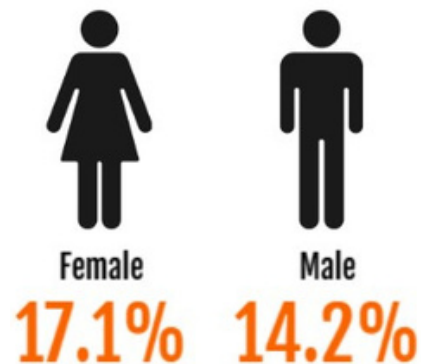


Figure 5. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study



# Oklahoma's Workforce

## Poverty by Age

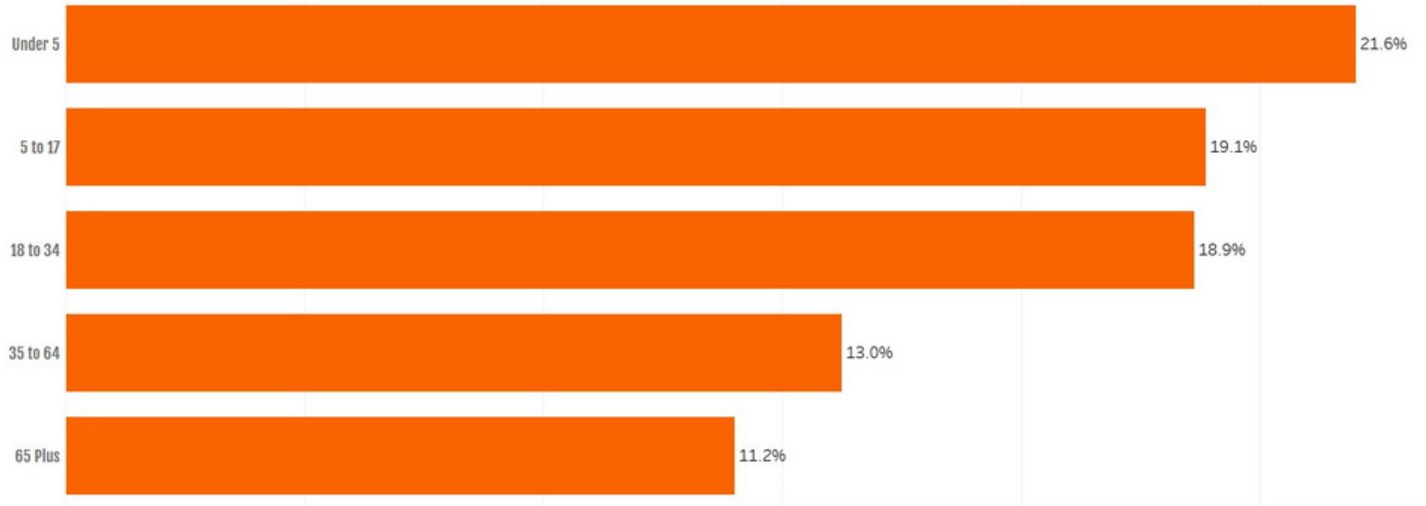


Figure 6. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

## Poverty by Race

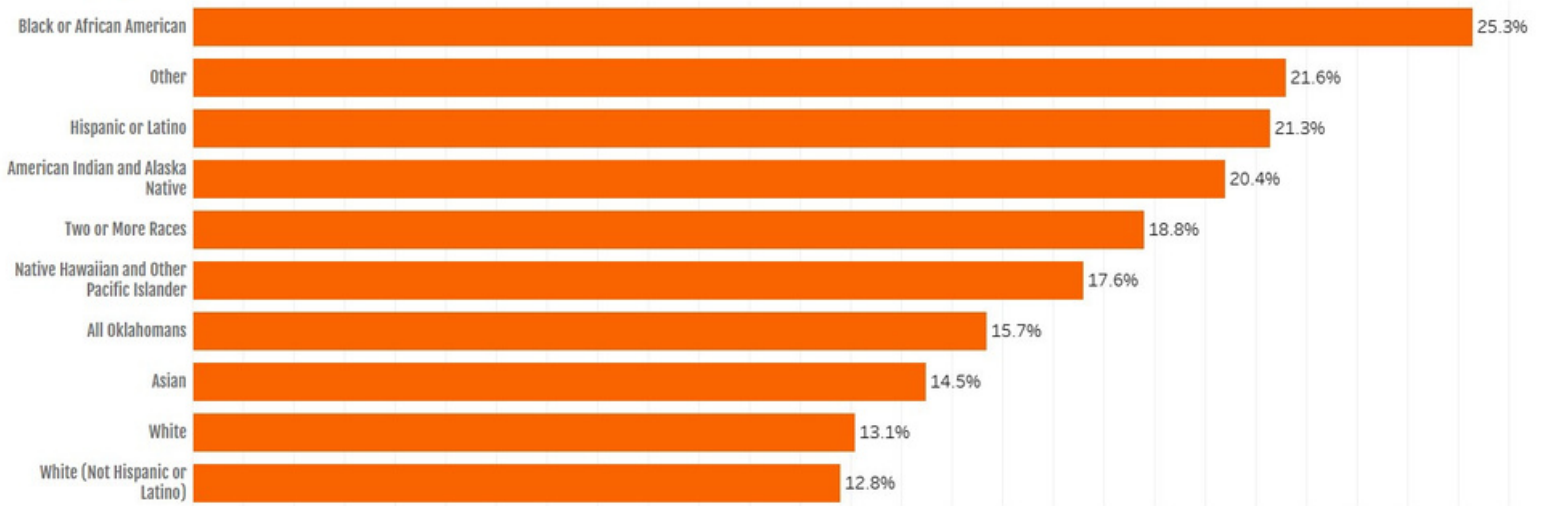


Figure 7. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

Individuals facing poverty often face additional barriers to employment like illness, disability, affordable housing or caring for other family members. With children under the age of 5 experiencing the highest rate of poverty in our state, a focus on access to affordable childcare should remain a high priority. In addition, marginalized populations as a percentage experience poverty significantly more than white or all Oklahomans combined.

Oklahoma has a [homeownership rate](#) of approximately 65.4%, which is right in line with the national rate of 65.2%. However, rent affordability is a current challenge that can impact poverty levels. According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), 34% percent of households in Oklahoma are renters with 41% of renter households earning below 50% of the area median income and 25% of households earning below 30% of the area median income. The snapshot report also indicated that in 2022, 24% of all renters in the state paid rent which was more than half of their income.

# Oklahoma's Workforce

## Untapped Talent Populations

A growing topic in workforce development conversations is how to engage individuals who have experienced barriers entering the workforce, or untapped talent. These populations can include anyone from military spouses to people aged 60 years and older. For this report, we focus on three populations including individuals with disabilities, individuals with justice-involved backgrounds, and veterans. Summary data is also provided for rates of homelessness.

### Individuals with disabilities

Based on research conducted by Cornell University in the [2022 Disability Status Report for Oklahoma](#), 17.5% of all Oklahomans reported having a disability. Of those who are of working age (21-64 years), 15.8% have a disability compared to the national rate of 11.1%. The employment rate (both part-time and full-time work) for individuals with disabilities in Oklahoma is 43.9% compared to the national average of 45%.

In addition, the difference between full-time employment for working-age people was 31.8% lower for individuals with a disability compared to those working full-time without a disability. Veterans with a service-connected disability make up 42.6% of working-age veterans in Oklahoma. Individuals with disabilities in Oklahoma experience a poverty rate of 26% compared to all individuals at 15.7%. Figure 8 outlines the percentage of individuals with disabilities in Oklahoma by gender and age.

### Disabilities by Age and Gender

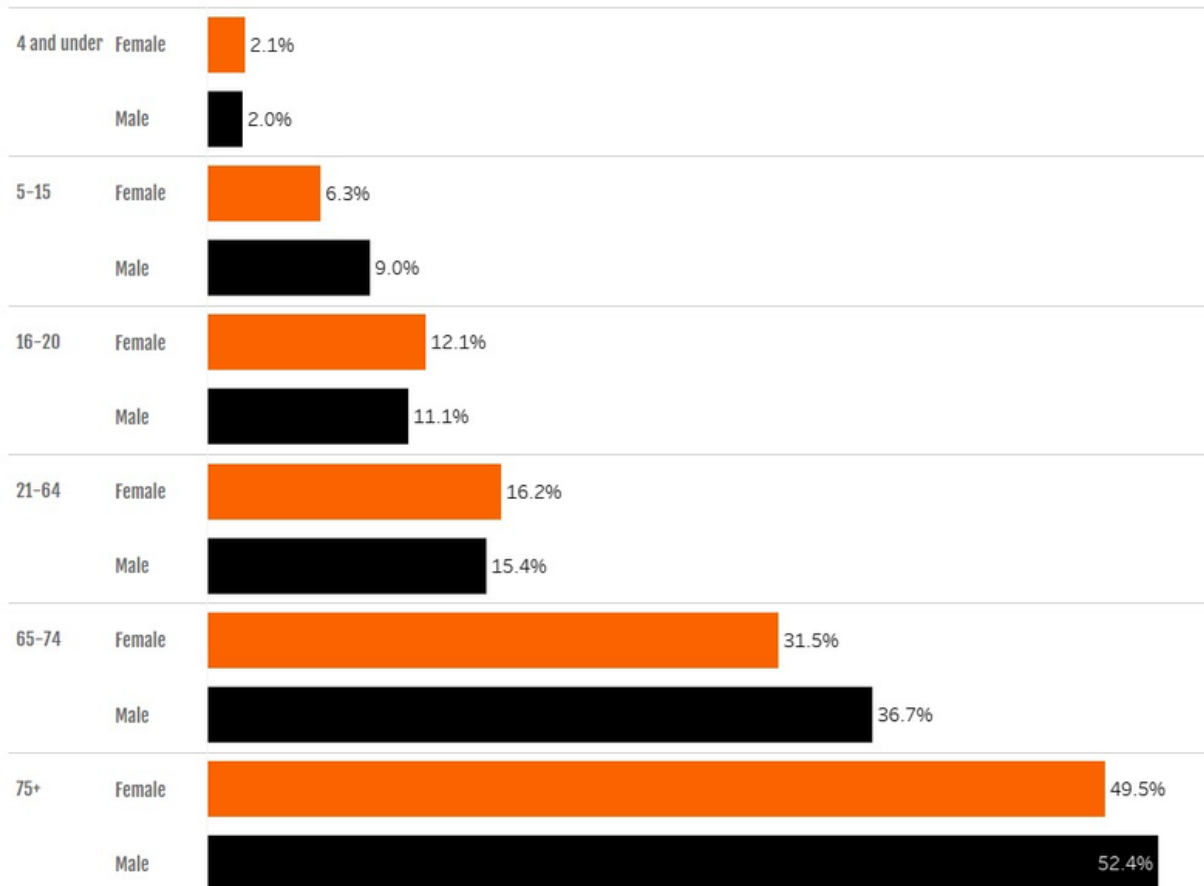


Figure 8. Source: 2022 Disability Status Report for Oklahoma

# Oklahoma's Workforce

Figure 9 highlights disability by race, which shows that Black/African American and American Indian or Alaska Native hold the highest percentages of the population.

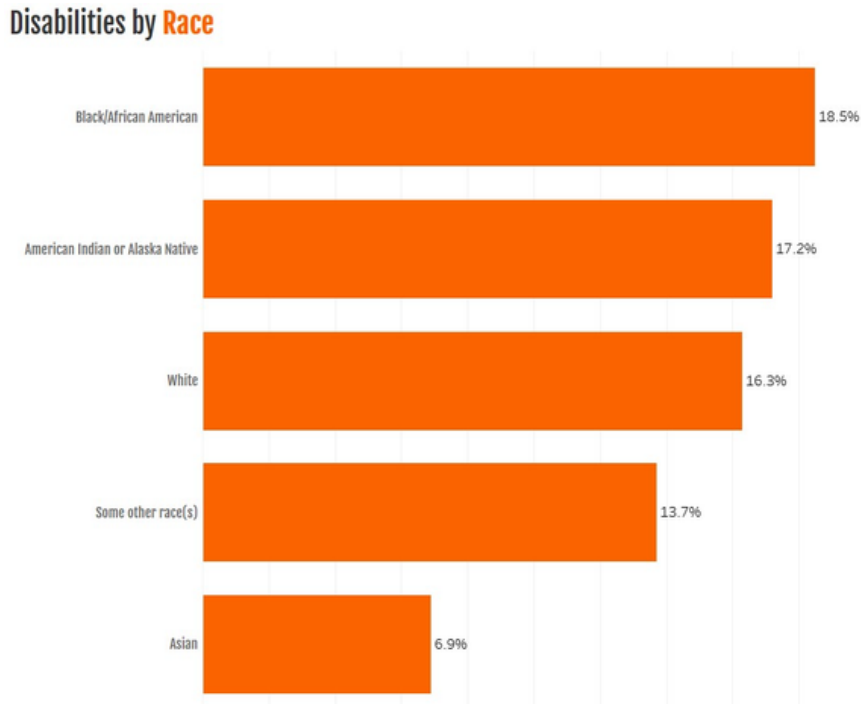


Figure 9. Source: 2022 Disability Status Report for Oklahoma

Disability status also impacts educational attainment level as outlined in Table 2. This table shows educational attainment with or without disability for working-age adults, which this report defines as 21-64 years of age. The widest gap exists with bachelor's degree attainment, which may indicate an area of focus for higher education institutions.

Table 2

Education Level	With Disability	Without Disability
Only high school diploma or equivalent	37.9%	29.6%
Some college/associate's degree	33.4%	30.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	15.4%	30.6%

Table 2. Source: 2022 Disability Status Report for Oklahoma

# Oklahoma's Workforce

For those employed with a disability, hearing and visual disabilities had the highest occurrence followed by cognitive.

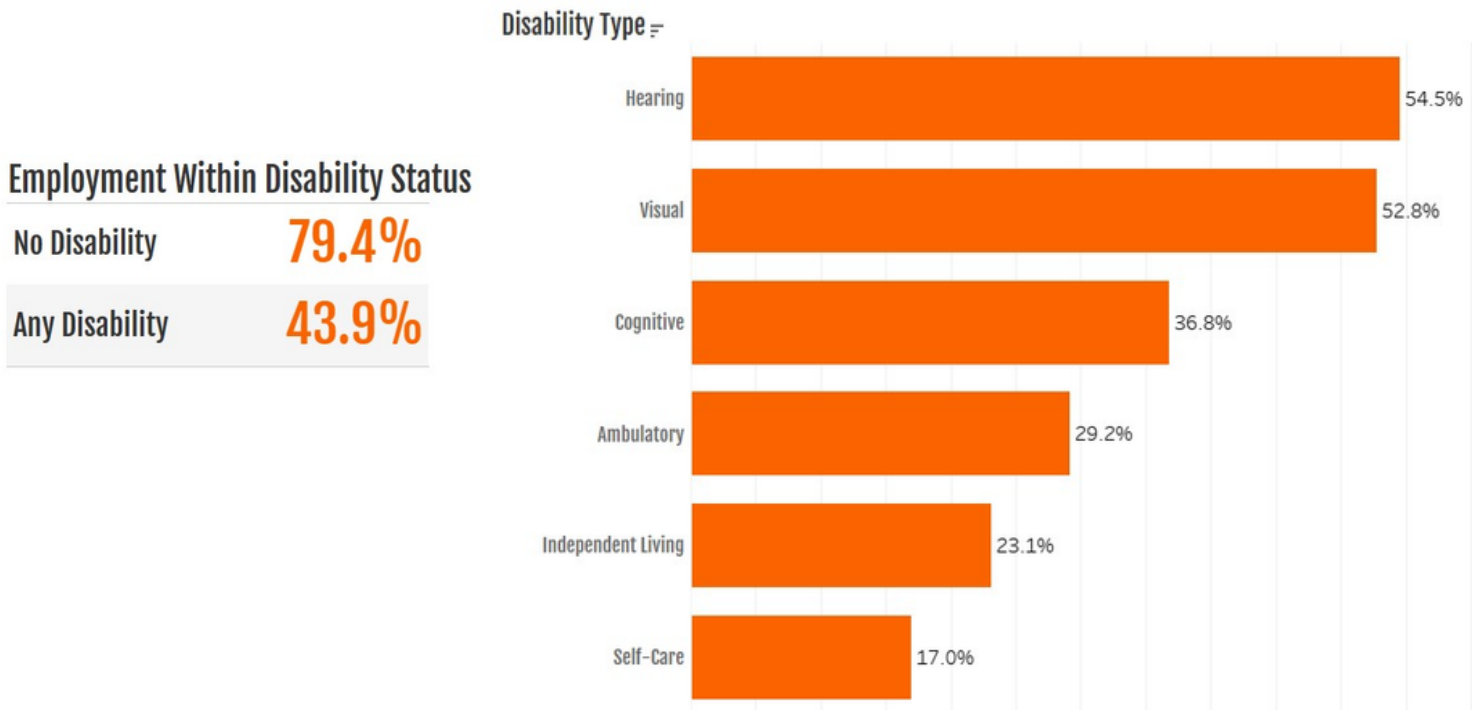


Figure 10. Source: 2022 Disability Status Report for Oklahoma

When it comes to annual earnings, individuals with a disability had median earnings of \$41,700 per year compared to those without a disability at \$50,000 per year. Those with a cognitive disability had the lowest median earnings at \$36,500 per year. Similarly, the median household income of those with disabilities was \$49,100 compared to \$70,900 without; those with a cognitive disability had the lowest median household income at \$43,300.

Determining how to engage and support individuals with disabilities is an opportunity for our state. Individuals with disabilities experience poverty rates 10% higher than the state average and secure full-time employment at a 31.8% lower rate than individuals without a disability.

# Oklahoma's Workforce

## Individuals with justice-involved backgrounds

Oklahoma currently has one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation. According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), Oklahoma's annual incarceration rate in 2022 was 563 individuals per 100,000 people compared to a rate of 355 at the national level. Oklahoma has made headlines over the years due to incarceration rates, but Table 3 outlines that the state is experiencing a downward trend likely due to several initiatives enacted by policymakers.

Table 3

Year	OK Incarceration Rate	National Incarceration Rate	Incarceration State Rank	OK Female Incarceration Rate	OK Female Incarceration State Rank
2017	704	441	2	157	1
2018	693	432	2	155	1
2019	693	432	2	129	2
2020	559	358	3	106	2
2021	555	350	4	106	3
2022	563	355	4	108	4

Table 3. Source: U.S. Department of Justice Prisoner Report 2018-2022

# Oklahoma's Workforce

While violent and non-violent crimes have been on the decline, Oklahoma ranks No. 12 in the nation for property crime and No. 16 for violent crime according to the [December 2023 Oklahoma Criminal Justice Data Snapshot](#). Figure 11a outlines violent crime trends from 2012-2022 and Figure 11b includes property crime trends.

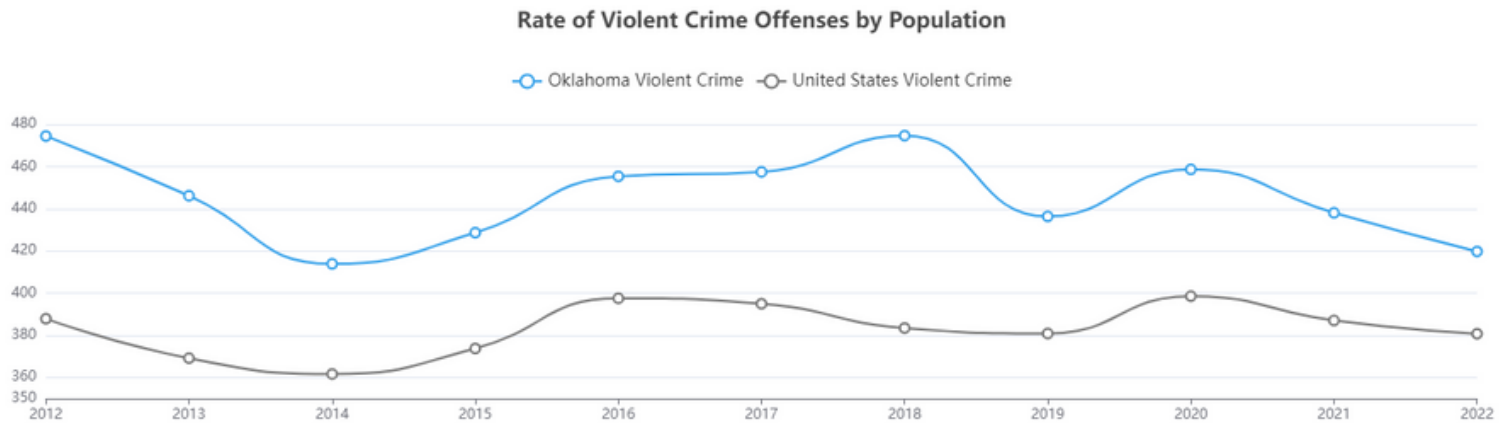


Figure 11a. Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer - FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program SRS

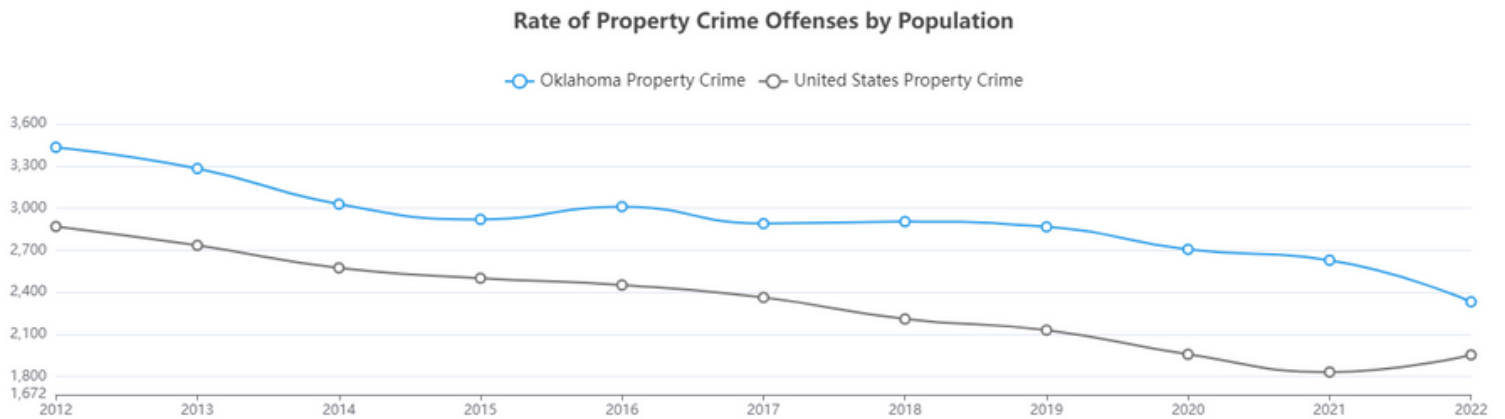


Figure 11b. Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer - FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program SRS

When analyzing arrest records for 2022, drug and alcohol offenses were in the top five.

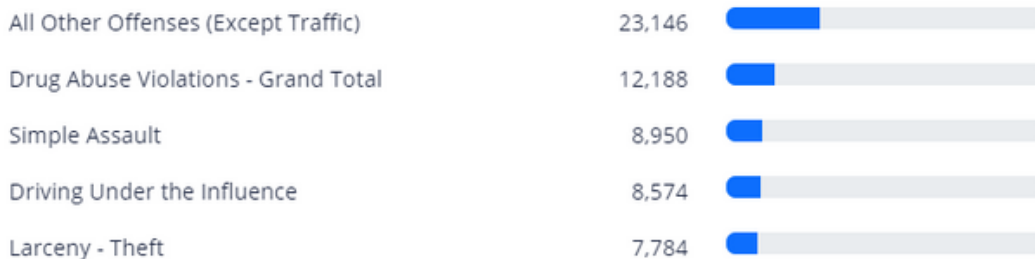


Figure 11c. Source: FBI Crime Data Explorer - FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program SRS

# Oklahoma's Workforce

---

According to the [December 2023 Oklahoma Criminal Justice Data Snapshot](#), more than 90% of incarcerated individuals are released into the community. Many convictions come with collateral consequences which can impact occupational licensing. Employment-related issues account for 74% of collateral consequences which create another barrier for workforce re-entry.

There have been several state initiatives focusing on helping justice-involved individuals:

- Passage of Oklahoma state question 780 that reclassified some drug and property felonies as misdemeanors.
  - State Question 781 directed imprisonment savings based on changes from SQ 780 to county governments to fund substance abuse and mental health services.
- House Bill 3316 was signed into law in May 2022, which aims to simplify the process of expunging a criminal record for certain situations.

The following initiatives are still pending:

- SB 1077 'ban the box' bill would prohibit employers from asking a candidate if they had a felony during the application and interview process.
- House Bill 1792 aimed to create consistency with Oklahoma's sentencing laws and alignment with other conservative states.

## Veterans

According to [Veterans Data Central](#), 8.7% of Oklahoma's adult population are veterans, with largest portion of that population being veterans of the Vietnam War (36.3%) followed by the Iraq and Afghanistan War (24.5%). Veterans experience lower poverty rates in Oklahoma (7.6%) than non-veterans and also have median household incomes (\$65,083) higher than non-veterans (\$56,106). In addition, 78.1% of veterans own their home in Oklahoma with an median home value of \$150,000. The labor force participation rate for veterans age 18-64 was estimated at 73.5% and unemployment was 3.7% according to the [U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey](#). In summary, Oklahoma appears to be leading the way in actively engaging our veterans.

## Homelessness

There are many barriers to employment that individuals can experience beyond what is mentioned in this report. Mental health and homelessness continue to be challenges in the state and nation. In January 2022, Oklahoma had 3,754 people experiencing homelessness and the No. 6 highest homelessness rate in the nation according to the [December 2023 Oklahoma Criminal Justice Data Snapshot](#) report. Many factors contribute to homelessness, one being the affordability of housing.



**2023**

**VOICE OF THE  
WORKFORCE**



# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

---

## Study Overview

In the summer of 2023, the Center for the Future of Work at the Oklahoma State University Spears School of Business conducted a study to better understand the experiences and needs of Oklahoma's workforce. Data was collected between June 8 and Sept. 9, 2023. A total of 1,106 complete responses were collected with 734 retained after responses were screened and analyzed. To ensure reliability of the data, responses were screened using best practices to ensure potential bot responses or responses intended to skew results were identified and removed.

While the study aimed to collect feedback from a variety of work statuses, 71% of the sample were employed full-time and 11% were employed part-time, with all remaining populations under 10%. To complete the survey, respondents had to confirm that they were Oklahoma residents, however, county-level data was not collected so results should be interpreted with broad and high-level application. Future studies will collect county-specific information.

While all anonymous quantitative data that was collected is available upon request, it's important to note the results may not be generalizable to smaller sample sizes including retirees (4%), unemployed (4%), full-time students (9%), disabled (1%), and not employed/not looking for work (1%). We believe that low unemployment rates (2.7% - 3.0%) during the time of our data collection likely led to our difficulty in reaching these populations. For most of this section, we will focus on the results from the employed samples.

## Participant Demographics

For respondents who reported gender, 50% were male, followed by 49% female, less than 1% non-binary, and less than 1% preferred not to say.

For ethnicity:

- 75% identified as white
- 9% identified as black or African American
- 7% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native
- 3% identified as two or more races
- 2% identified as Asian
- Less than 1% identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and other

Of those who responded, 5% identified that they had a justice-involved background, 7% identified as veterans, approximately 3% were current active military and 3% identified as disabled veterans.

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

Figure 12 represents age demographics for respondents.

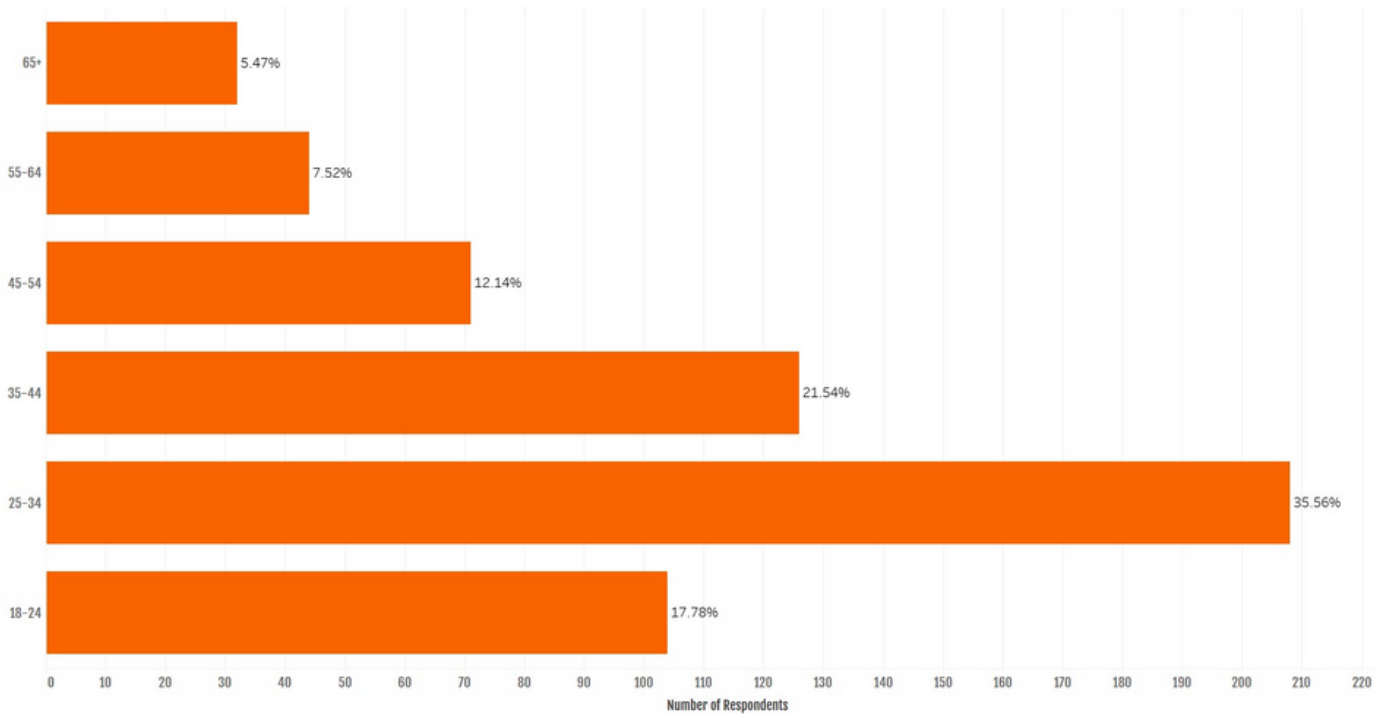


Figure 12. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

Figure 13 represents highest education attainment for respondents.

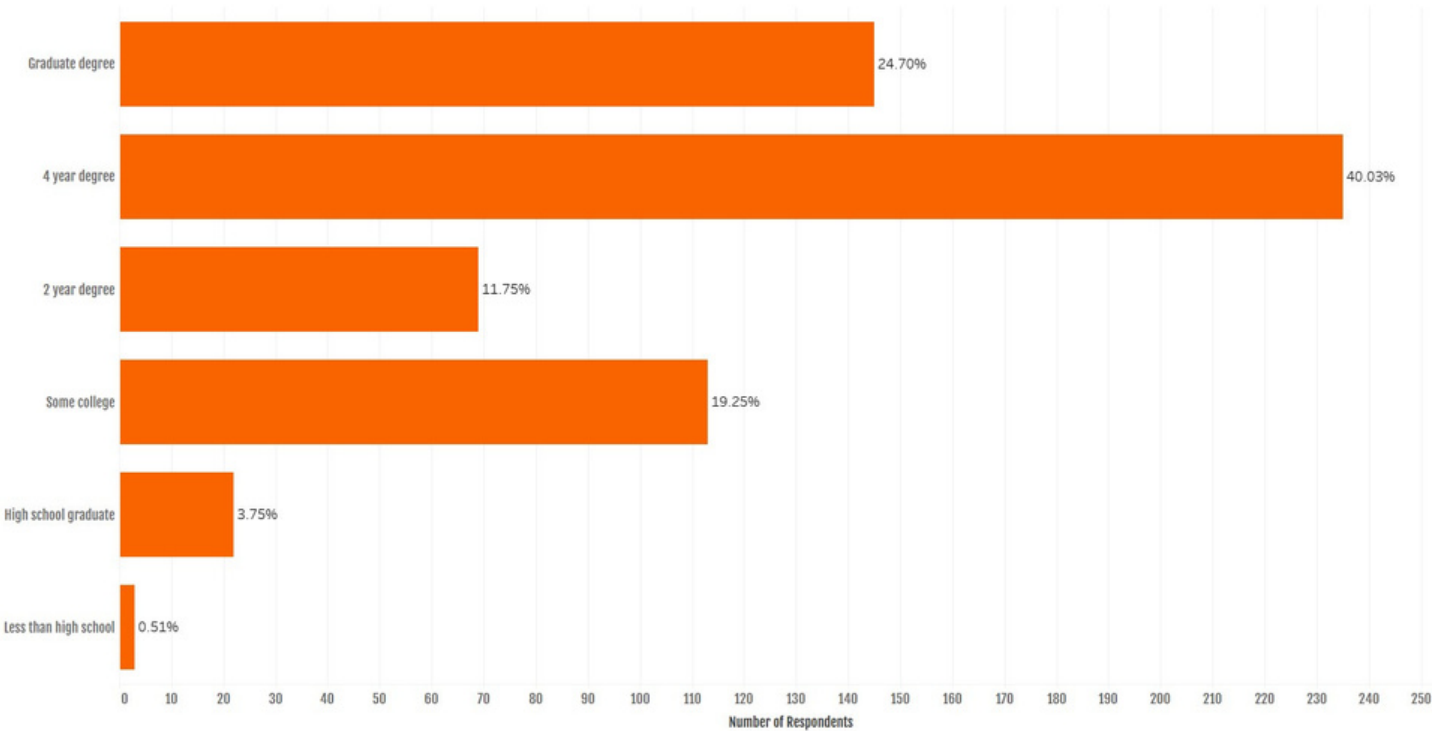


Figure 13. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Experiences of Full-Time Workers

We were interested in exploring workers' experiences and needs at their jobs. To do this, we asked respondents questions related to the following categories: job satisfaction, pay and rewards, career development, self-development, autonomy, resources to perform the job, meaningful work, feedback received, supervisor support, psychological safety, diversity and inclusion, burnout and work-related stress, work schedule flexibility, and intentions to quit.

### Job Satisfaction

Measures of job satisfaction can give us a pulse on employees' general feelings about their jobs. Many factors can influence job satisfaction, but this first set of questions helped us understand general feelings of job satisfaction for our sample of workers in Oklahoma. On a five-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), respondents had an average score of 3.84 for job satisfaction.

When looking at job satisfaction for those who reported education level, we can see a trend that job satisfaction increases as educational attainment increases.

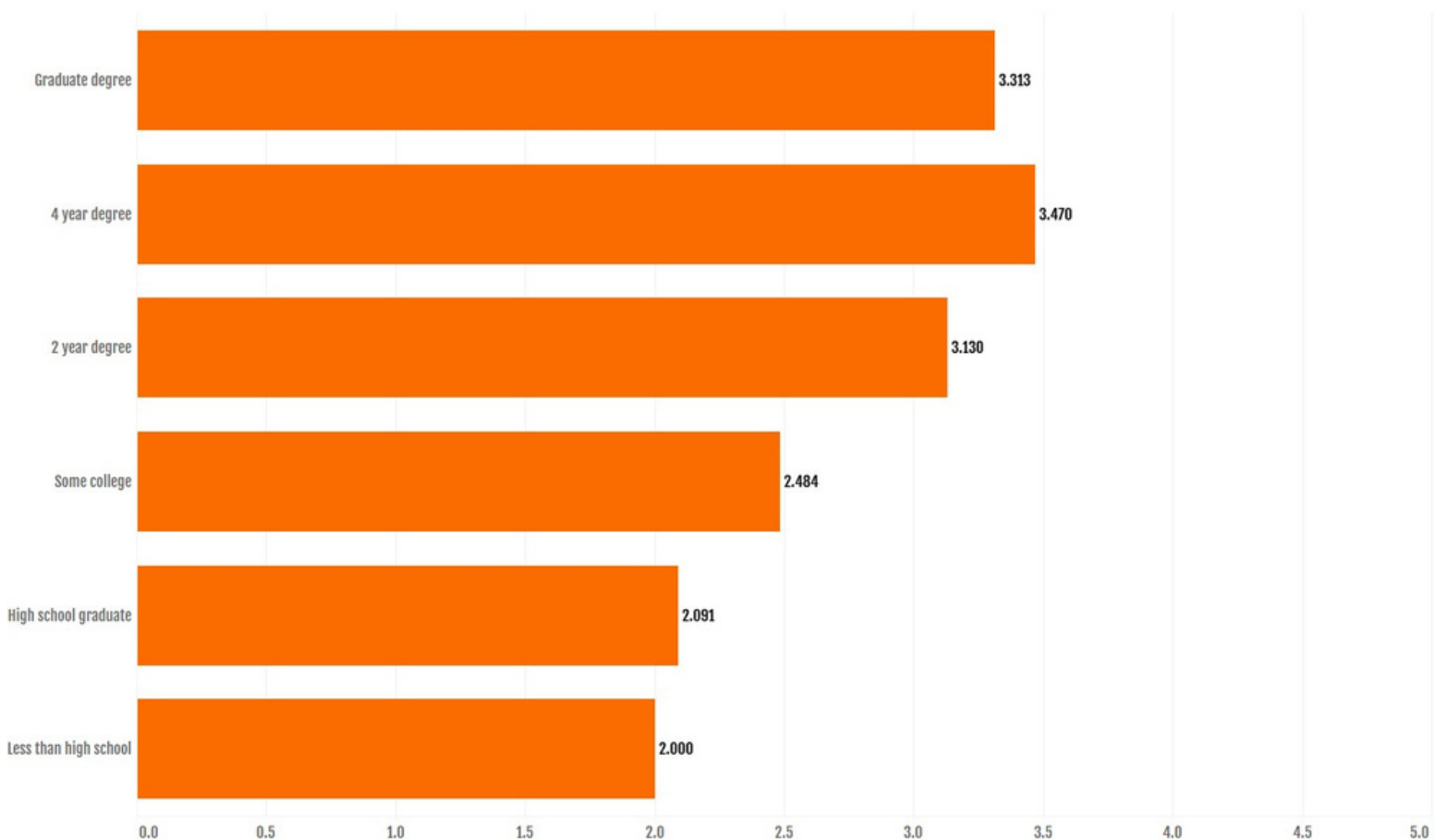


Figure 14. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Pay and Rewards

When it comes to compensation and benefits, in general, most respondents were somewhat satisfied with their pay and rewards and felt that it was in line with their skills and experience. During 2022 and 2023, employers continued to compete for talent and work to offset inflation costs for workers. National wages from Q2 2022-Q2 2023 rose 3.2% while both Tulsa and Cleveland counties reported wage changes [above the national average](#).

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the pay and rewards my company offers.	22.37%	35.41%	19.84%	14.79%	7.59%
I believe my pay is appropriate for my skills and experience.	23.50%	37.09%	17.67%	14.37%	7.38%
I believe that my pay and rewards are competitive with similar jobs in our industry.	22.57%	35.41%	22.76%	14.01%	5.25%

Figure 15. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Career Development

Employers can create programs and processes to support employee career development, which encourages employees to develop and achieve professional objectives. When employees feel they have clear career development paths and opportunities, they're more engaged and have lower turnover intentions according to the LinkedIn [2023 Workplace Learning Report](#). While many respondents strongly or somewhat agreed with the the statements around Career development, it should still be an area of focus for organizations in Oklahoma based on feedback from respondents.

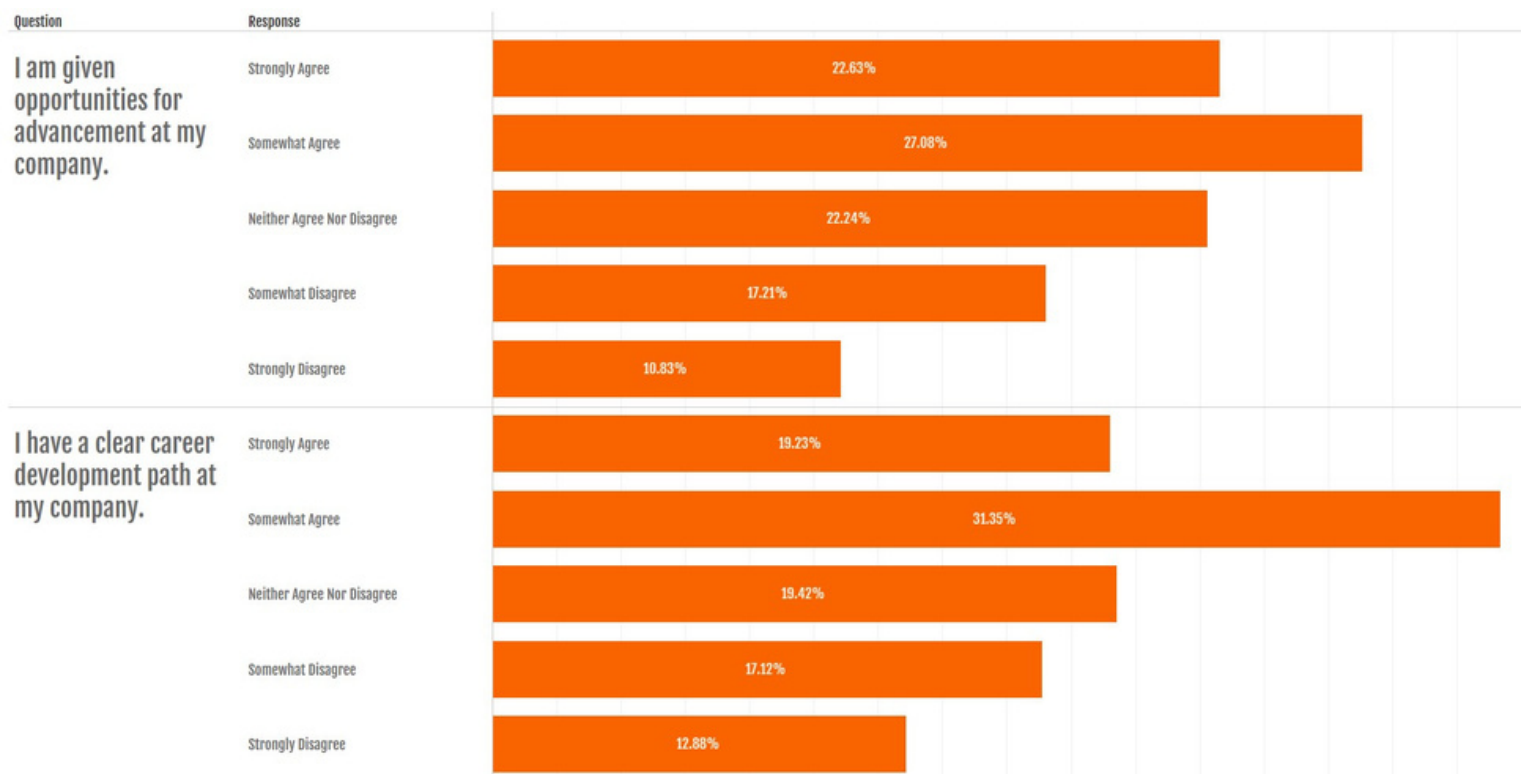


Figure 16. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Autonomy

Autonomy helps us understand how much say employees have in how their work gets done. In general, higher levels of autonomy in our work can lead to higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction as it relates to [self-determination theory](#). Self-determination theory suggests that humans have an intrinsic desire for personal growth. Most respondents indicated that they can determine how their work is done, they can do their work in their own way, and can make decisions about their work.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am able to determine the way my work is done	30.16%	41.83%	16.73%	7.98%	3.31%
I am allowed to do my work in my own way.	31.13%	37.16%	15.76%	12.65%	3.31%
I can make my own decisions at work.	29.18%	39.88%	16.93%	10.51%	3.50%

Figure 17. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Autonomy and Education Attainment

When looking at responses based on educational attainment, higher scores with autonomy appear to be associated with higher educational attainment, with the exception at the highest level. As education increases, job competence is also likely to increase, which in turn can be related to levels of autonomy. If managers are confident in the abilities of an employee, they may be likely to offer more discretion in how the employee carries out his/her duties.

While work flexibility has been highlighted as a desire by employees since the pandemic, in the Harvard Business Review article [Forget Flexibility, Your Employees Want Autonomy](#) two researchers argue that work flexibility can be facilitated through increased autonomy. With a focus on helping employees develop competence in their roles (through either formal or informal education) along with creating a workplace focused on connectedness and belonging, organizations can help facilitate higher levels of worker autonomy.

Figure 18 shows autonomy by educational attainment.

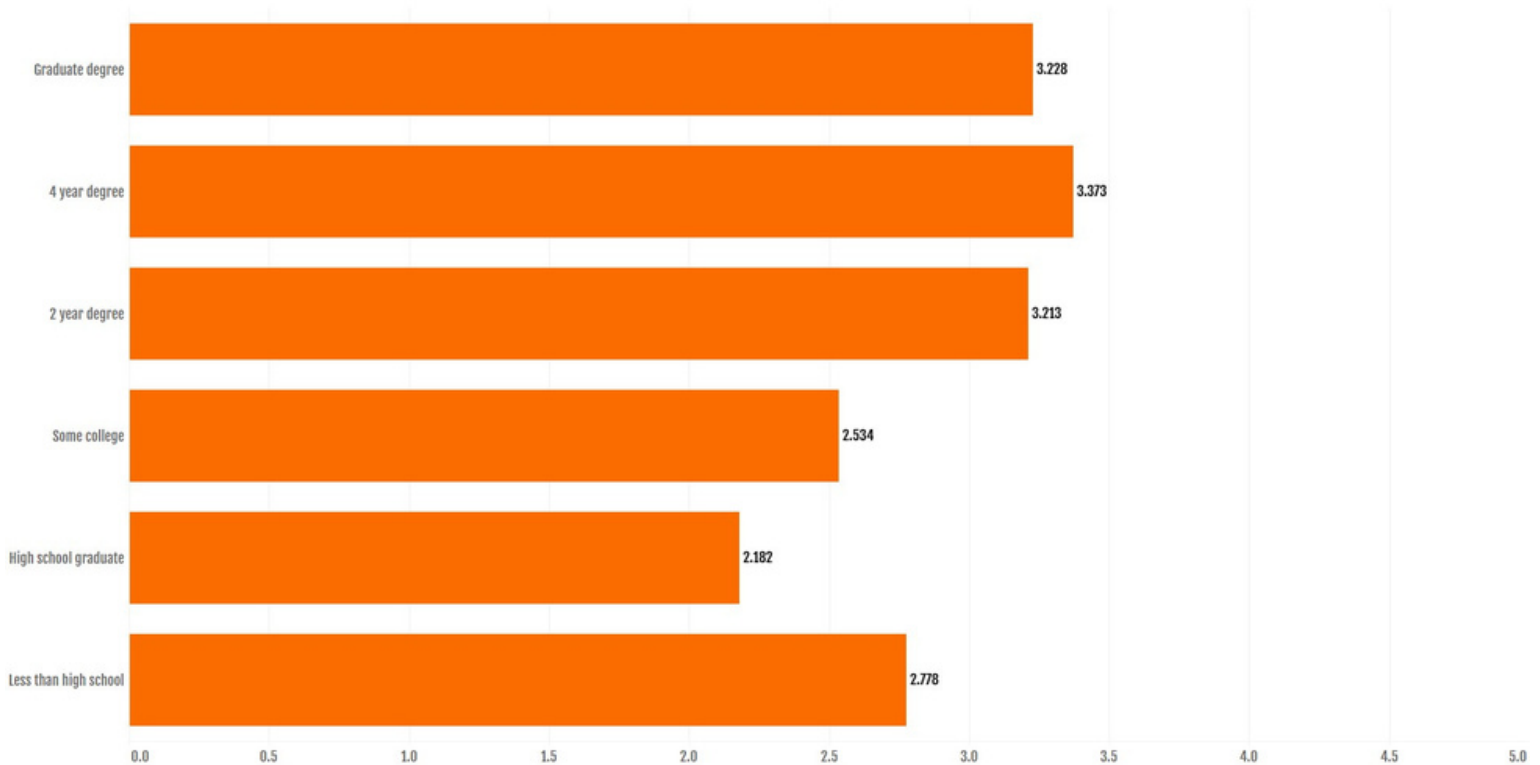


Figure 18. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Resources

Three questions were asked to explore if respondents have access to the resources they need to perform their job well. In general, participants agreed that they had access to the data, technology and tools they needed to perform their job well. Based on [research from Gallup](#), having access to necessary resources is a basic need of workers and can either drive or limit engagement.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have access to the data or information I need to do my job well.	34.01%	37.04%	15.38%	11.34%	2.23%
I have access to the technology needed to do my job well.	39.07%	38.06%	10.32%	9.31%	3.24%
I have the tools and resources needed to do my job well.	32.59%	40.69%	13.56%	10.53%	2.63%

Figure 19. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study



# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Meaningful Work

Another driver of job satisfaction and engagement is [meaningful work](#). When employees feel like their work matters and contributes to the “bigger picture,” they may experience higher organizational commitment. In general, most respondents found their work meaningful and felt challenged to do their best. An area of opportunity is helping employees find and pursue work where their interests are better aligned with their tasks. These are positive results and organizations should continue to focus on building dialogues around meaningful work.

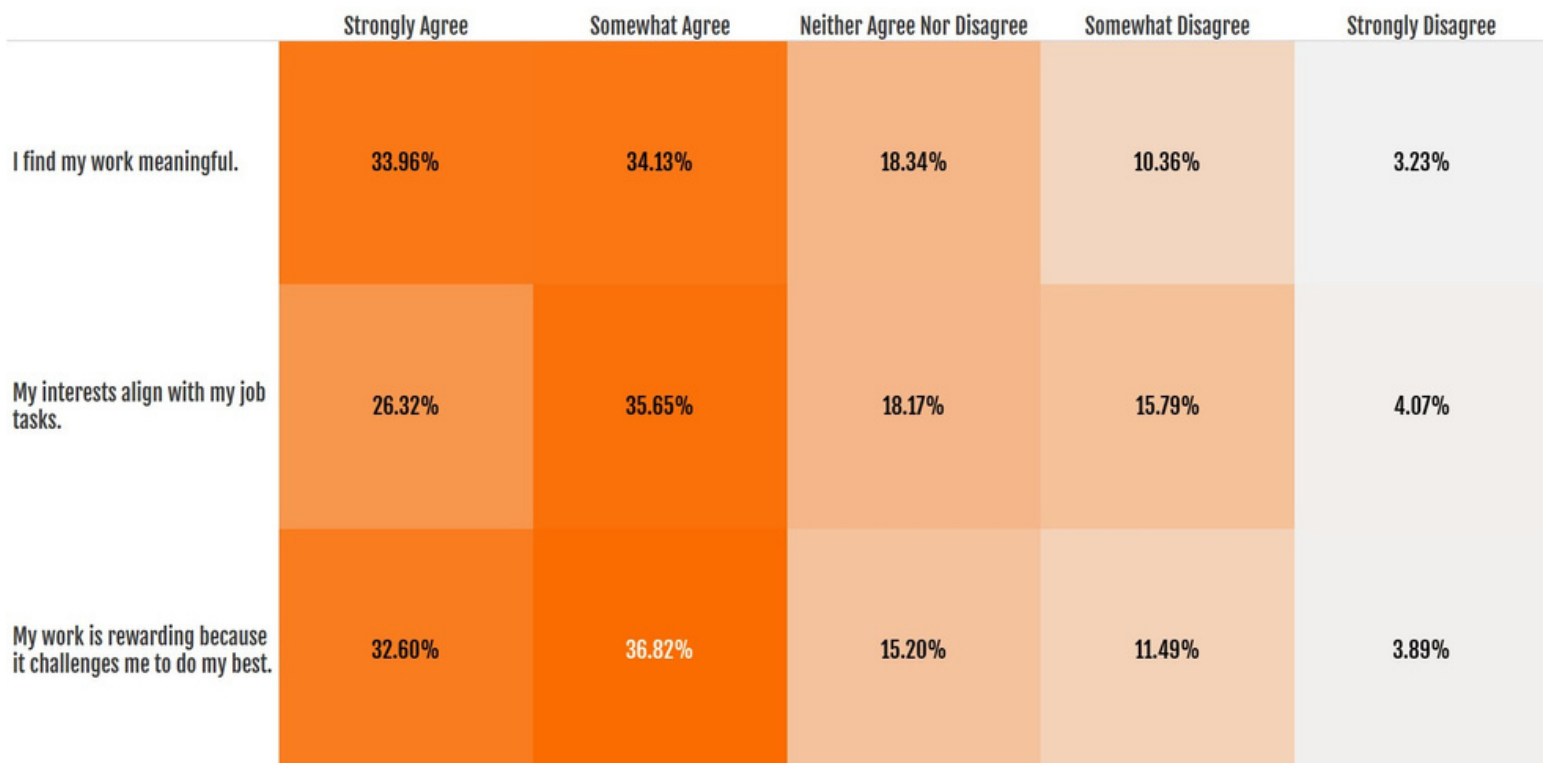


Figure 20. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

The next two variables, effective feedback and supervisor support, helped to explore how employees receive feedback and support from their supervisors. To perform well in a job, employees need to understand what is expected of them and receive feedback on their progress.

## Effective Feedback

Three questions were asked to explore how workers receive feedback. Most respondents indicated that, while their job responsibilities were clearly defined, many were not receiving regular feedback or communication about job performance. Responses were very mixed with this set of items. This is an area of opportunity for organizations in Oklahoma; implementing structured leadership development training can help equip managers with the necessary skills to provide effective feedback to their employees.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I receive actionable feedback from my supervisor on a regular basis.	22.43%	35.11%	16.54%	20.59%	5.33%
My job responsibilities are clearly defined.	30.71%	39.12%	14.63%	12.43%	3.11%
My supervisor communicates with me about my job performance regularly.	25.59%	31.26%	17.00%	20.84%	5.30%

Figure 21. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Supervisor Support

Intentions to quit have been linked to satisfaction with supervisor support (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007). We often hear the phrase “you don’t quit your job, you quit your boss.” We predicted that many employees may fall victim to what we call an “unintentional bad boss,” which is a supervisor who may have been recently promoted into his/her first managerial position but hasn’t had the development and coaching, or experience needed to be an effective leader.

In Figure 22, we see that most respondents indicated they believe their supervisor strives to be a good leader and believe they have the skills needed to lead. When it comes to providing workers what they need in order to do their job well, results were mixed indicating that this may be an area of opportunity.

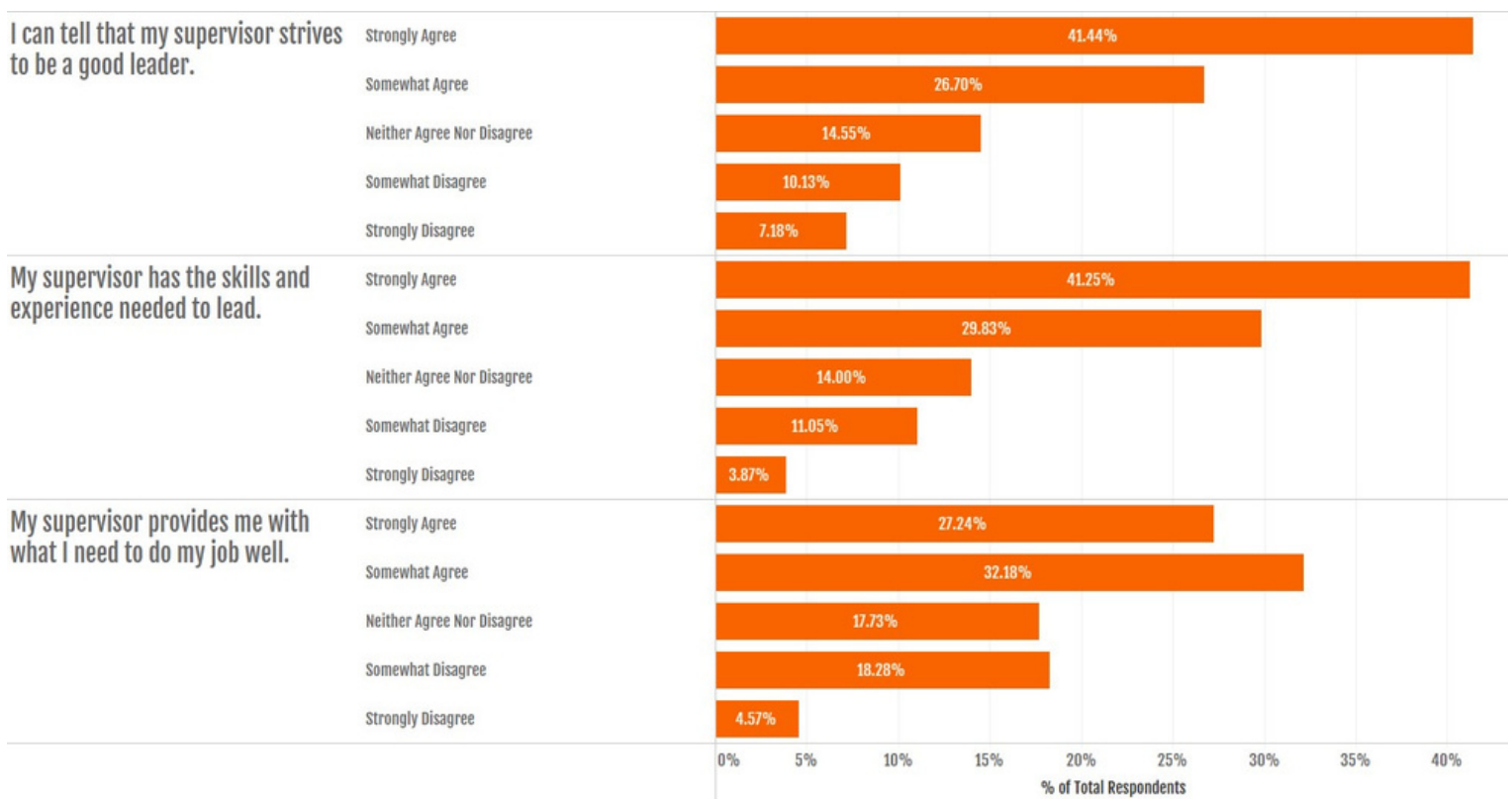


Figure 22. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

FOOTNOTE FOR ACCADEMIC PAPER NEEDED

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Psychological Safety

Psychological safety, as defined by researcher Amy Edmondson, exists when people feel their workplace is an environment where they can speak up, offer ideas, and ask questions without fear of being punished or embarrassed (Edmondson, 2019). Employees may have good ideas about how to improve work processes or products but won't speak up and offer suggestions unless they feel psychologically safe. We used an adapted version of Edmondson's scale of psychological safety and two items were added "I feel comfortable speaking up at work if something is wrong" and "my company provides a positive and supportive work environment." Overall, respondents agreed somewhat with the statements. The two areas where respondents tended to disagree were "making a mistake isn't held against me" and "it is safe for me to take risks at work."

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am accepted for who I am at work.	35.82%	33.69%	17.73%	8.51%	4.26%
I can bring up problems and tough issues at work.	26.77%	40.43%	13.65%	12.77%	6.38%
I feel comfortable speaking up at work if something is wrong.	33.09%	36.67%	14.67%	11.27%	4.29%
If I make a mistake at work, it isn't held against me.	21.03%	29.41%	17.47%	24.24%	7.84%
It is easy for me to ask others for help at work.	30.71%	35.00%	16.25%	13.93%	4.11%
It is safe for me to take risks at work.	16.84%	32.80%	24.47%	17.91%	7.98%
My company provides a positive and supportive work environment.	33.57%	31.96%	18.39%	10.36%	5.71%
My unique skills and talents are valued at work.	36.25%	30.71%	17.14%	11.79%	4.11%
No one undermines my efforts at work.	27.14%	33.75%	18.93%	14.64%	5.54%

Figure 23. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Diversity and Inclusion

When workers feel excluded in the workplace, their tenure can be short-lived. Job policies and practices that promote diverse and inclusive environments are useful in attracting and retaining talent. When it comes to organizations' efforts to promote diversity and foster an inclusive work environment for employees, many respondents somewhat disagreed that their company values having a diverse workforce. On the other hand, most respondents agreed that their company works to ensure that all employees feel included. When it comes to accommodation of individual employee needs, respondents had mixed responses with many neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

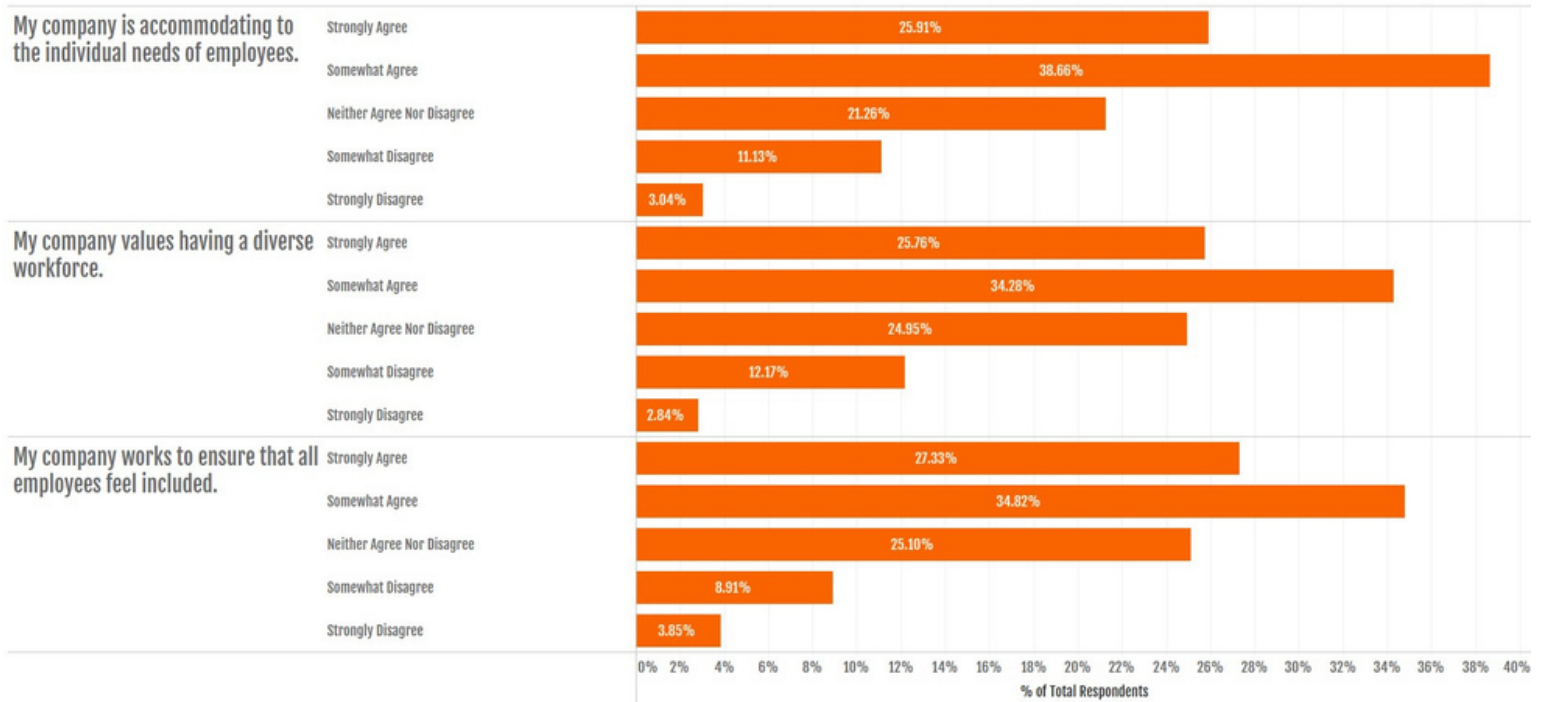


Figure 24. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Burnout and Work-Related Stress

Stress and burnout are two variables that are increasingly discussed when it comes to work. The World Health Organization defines [burnout](#) as a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. In addition, [work-related stress](#) is described as the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. Participants were asked three questions to gauge their level of burnout, stress and the impact of stress on work.

Respondents indicated that they have experienced feelings of burnout recently, but most didn't indicate that they feel stress at work or that it has impacted their ability to perform their job well.

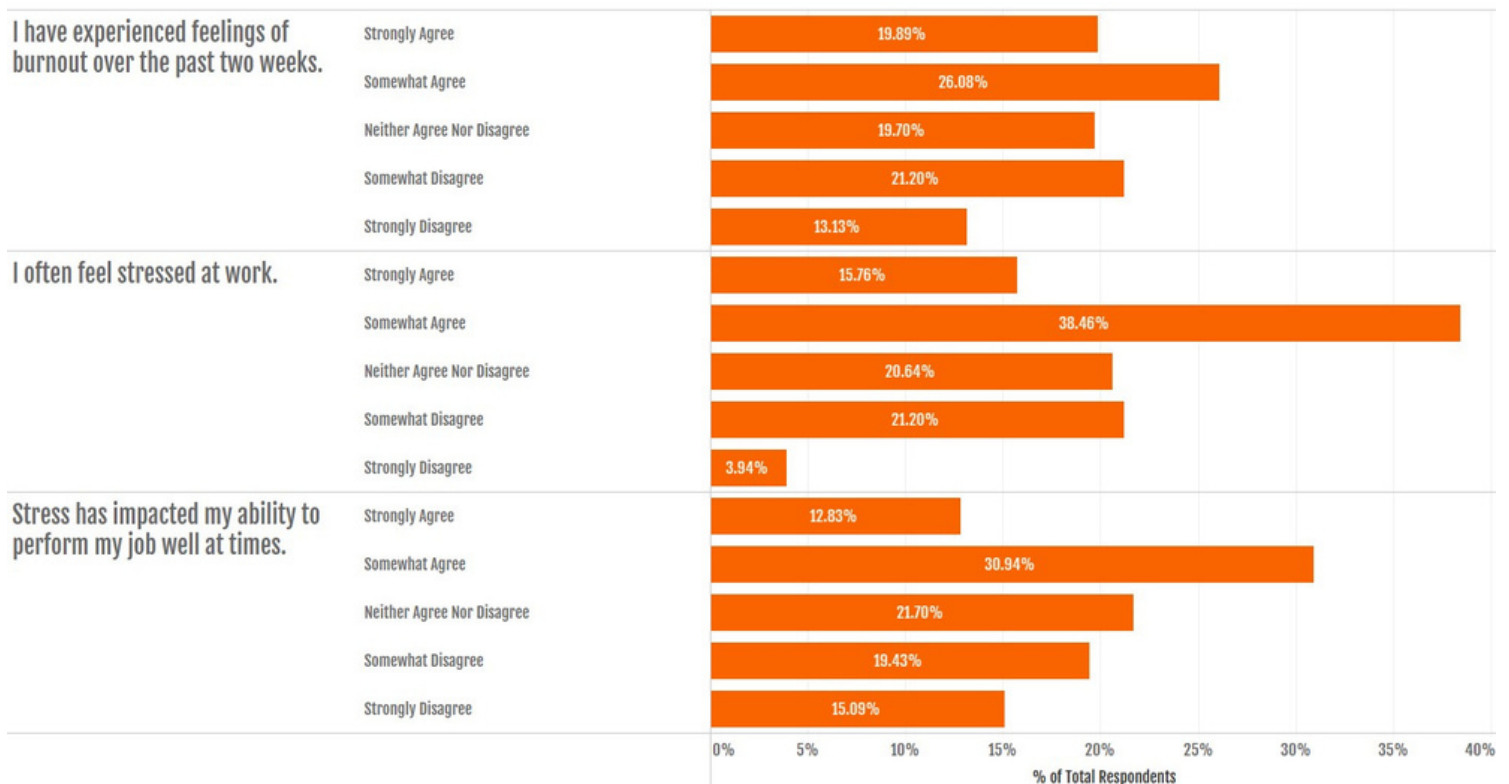


Figure 25. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Work Schedule Flexibility

As employers continue to explore the right mix of onsite versus virtual work and flexible scheduling, we wanted to hear from participants about any flexible options their company provides. Respondents were mixed on the amount of importance they place on flexible work schedules, as well as if they currently have the flexibility needed to meet personal commitments outside of work. Many respondents indicated that they would consider a lower wage in favor of flexible or hybrid work, but most would not eliminate a job offer if it didn't include flexible or hybrid work.

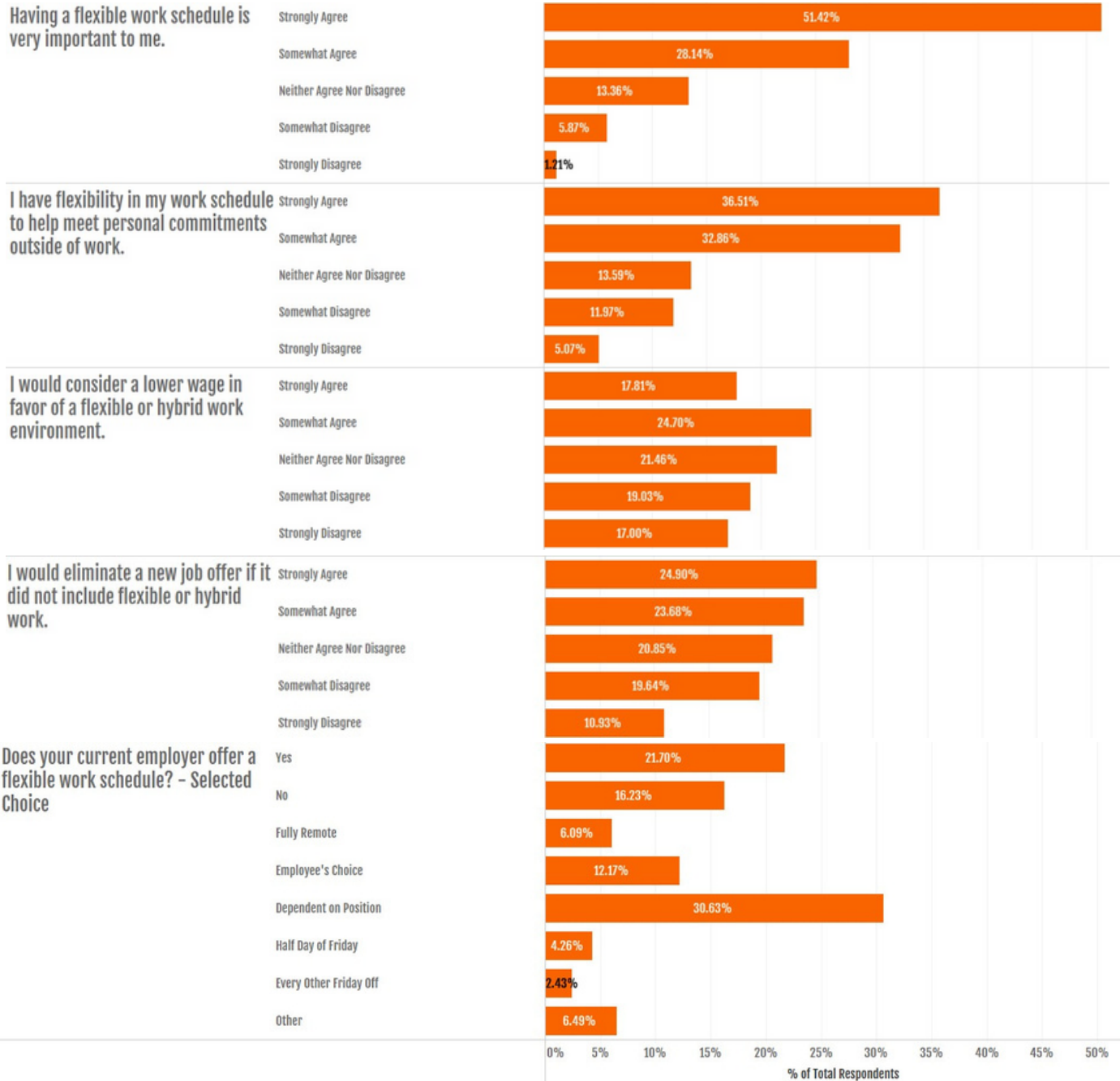


Figure 26. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

## Intentions to Quit

As the “great resignation” made local and national headlines during the pandemic, we wanted to get a pulse on workers’ intentions to quit in 2023. Only 12.1% stated that they were extremely likely to leave their job within the next six months. As a comparison, 25% of respondents responded ‘yes’ to a similar question we asked in a [2021-2022 study](#).

For those who were likely to leave their current job, below are the top three reasons cited in order of importance:

- wanting a job that better aligns with interests
- wanting a job that would pay more
- wanting a job with a more flexible schedule

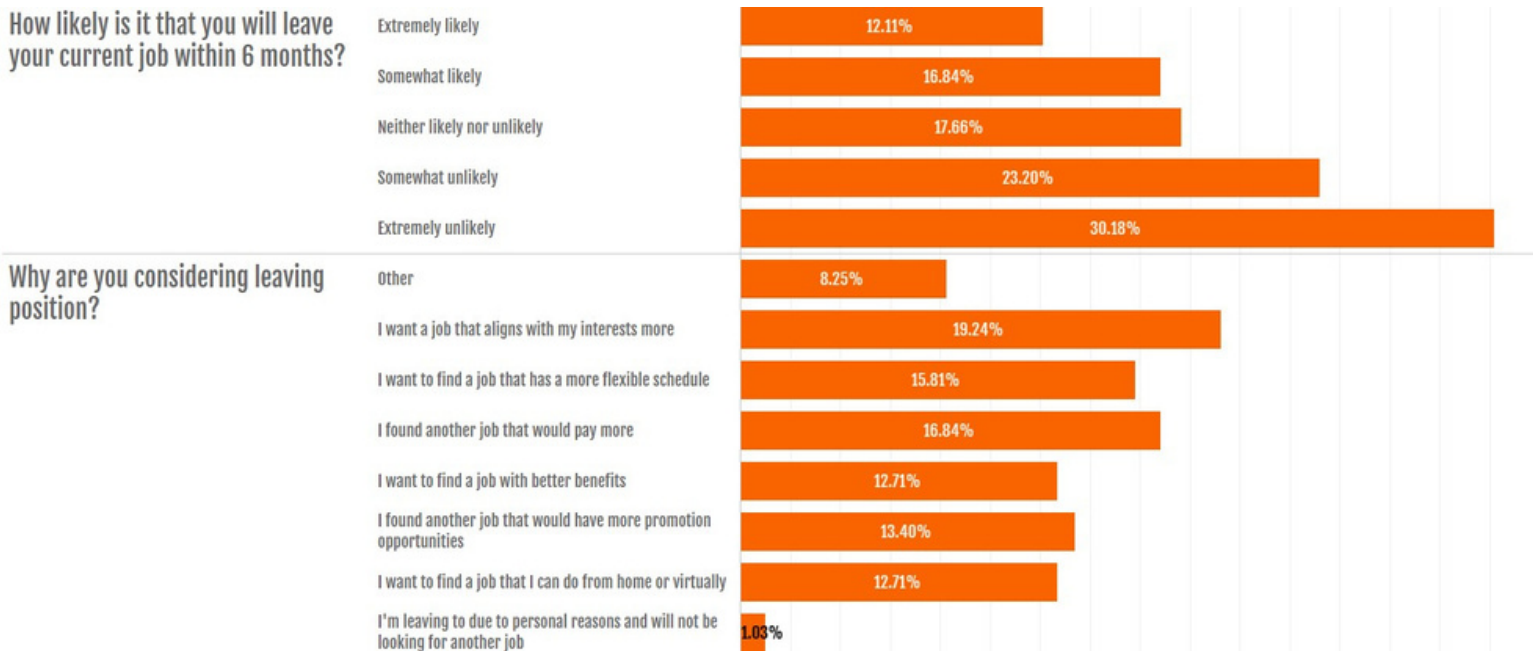


Figure 27. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study



# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

Of those who said they were extremely or somewhat likely to leave their job, 21.2% stated that they are extremely likely to seek employment outside the state of Oklahoma.

The top three reasons cited for considering leaving the state, in order of importance, were:

- wanting to experience living somewhere new
- better job opportunities outside of the state
- wanting to live somewhere that better aligns with my lifestyle

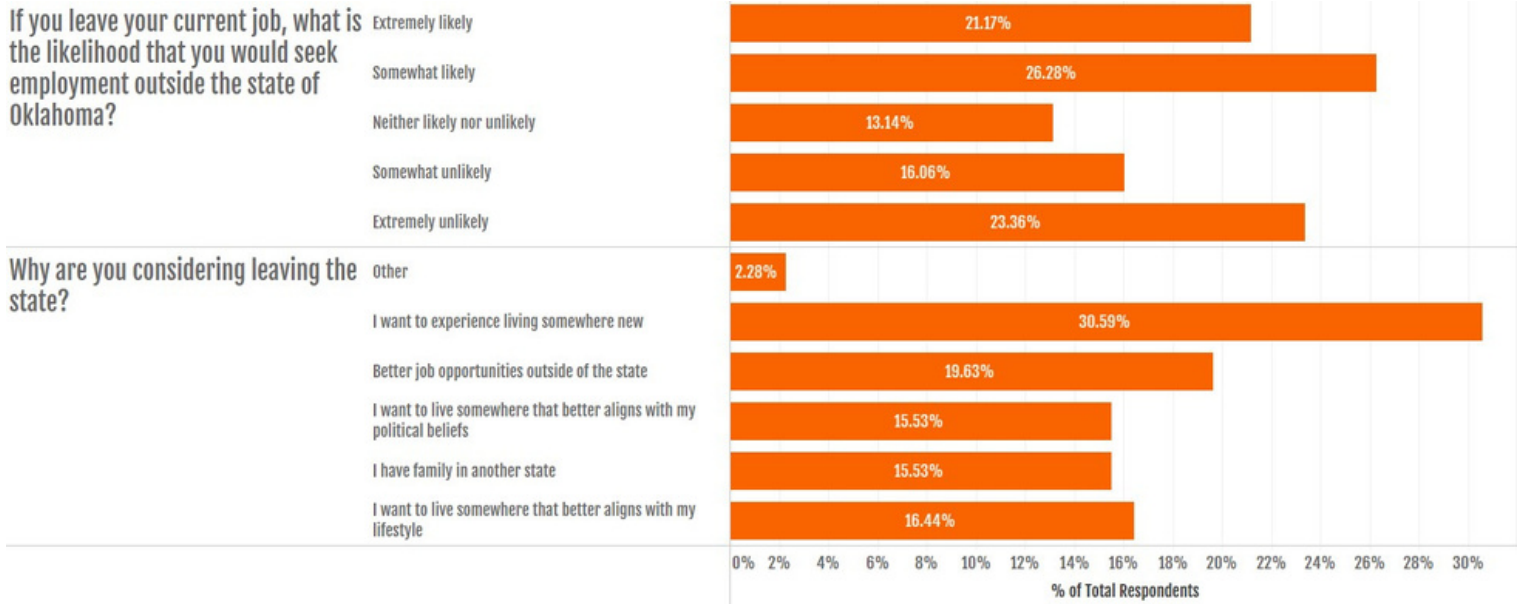


Figure 28. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study

# 2023 Voice of the Workforce

When analyzing these responses and filtering by gender and educational attainment, a few trends emerge. Males were the only demographic that did not cite wanting to find a job with a more flexible schedule as a top reason for considering leaving their job. When looking at education attainment, respondents with a post-secondary degree (2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree) who were extremely likely to leave their job had the highest rate of likely leaving the state at 25%.

Table 4

Demographics	Extremely likely to leave job	Top 3 reasons for wanting to leave job	Extremely likely to seek employment outside OK	Top 3 reasons for wanting to leave the state
Female	14%	Flex schedule, interests, pay	21%	Live somewhere new, better opportunities, family in another state
Male	9%	Interest, pay, promotion opportunities	22%	Live somewhere new, political beliefs, better opportunities
Less than a two-year degree	10%	Flex schedule, interests, find virtual or work from home job	11%	Live somewhere new, family in another state, better opportunities, lifestyle
Post-secondary degree	12%	Interests, pay, flexible schedul	25%	Live somewhere new, better opportunities, political beliefs

Table 4. Source: OSU Center for the Future of Work, 2023 Voice of the Workforce study



---

**EDUCATION  
AND  
WORKFORCE  
READINESS**

# Education and Workforce Readiness

---

## Workforce Education Attainment

In October of 2023, the Oklahoma Senate published an [interim study](#) exploring the barriers preventing Oklahoma workers from joining or returning to the job market. The need for further education was among these barriers and the study highlighted the following statistics:

1. In 2023, 56% of job postings from the top employers in the state required an associate degree or higher.
2. By 2027, 70% of jobs will require postsecondary education or training beyond high school.
3. By 2030, more than half of [Oklahoma's 100 critical occupations](#) will require an associate degree or higher.
4. Median wages for positions requiring postsecondary education or higher were \$30,400 higher than positions only requiring a high school diploma.

In addition, the study highlighted that labor force participation rates tend to increase with higher levels of educational attainment. The study showed a 56.6% participation rate for high school graduates and 70.8% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

The [2023 Oklahoma Workforce Briefing](#) breaks down education attainment levels for individuals 25 years and older in Oklahoma: high school graduates were the largest group at 30.6% followed by 22.1% reporting some college, 18.6% with a bachelor's degree, and 9.9% with a graduate or professional degree. When comparing changes in educational attainment from 2017-2022, the amount of people in the population with less than a high school diploma decreased (20.1%), while high school graduates increased (1.2%). There was also a decrease in the 'some college' category (-2.8%) and an increase in associate's (7.2%), bachelor's (13.3%), and graduate degrees (18%). These positive trends are in line with an increased focus on high school graduation rates and postsecondary degree attainment in the state.

The briefing also conducted an educational attainment mismatch analysis, which looks at typical education requirements for job demand in the state compared to the population's educational attainment. The analysis shows that there is more demand for jobs that do not require formal education or high school diplomas than there are people in that category. When it comes to jobs requiring some college, an associate's degree or a graduate degree, there are more people in the population than what is required. However, for jobs requiring a bachelor's degree, there are fewer people in that category than what is needed. This analysis could suggest that due to the amount of jobs that do not require formal or postsecondary education, individuals may experience underemployment, meaning the work does not make full use of their skills and abilities. With increases in postsecondary education attainment, workers may demand more complex and higher quality jobs.

# Education and Workforce Readiness

## Oklahoma's Postsecondary Education System

There are more than 120 postsecondary educational institutions in Oklahoma, including 25 public colleges and universities as well as 29 CareerTech center districts. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 195,830 students were enrolled across Oklahoma's state system. Over the past decade, total enrollment across higher education institutions has declined. Figures 29a to 29c were generated using the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education [Enrollment Dashboard](#). Figure 29a represents the annual enrollment headcount across all institutional tiers (research, regional and two-year). While research and regional headcount have remained steady, two-year institutions have experienced year-over-year declines.

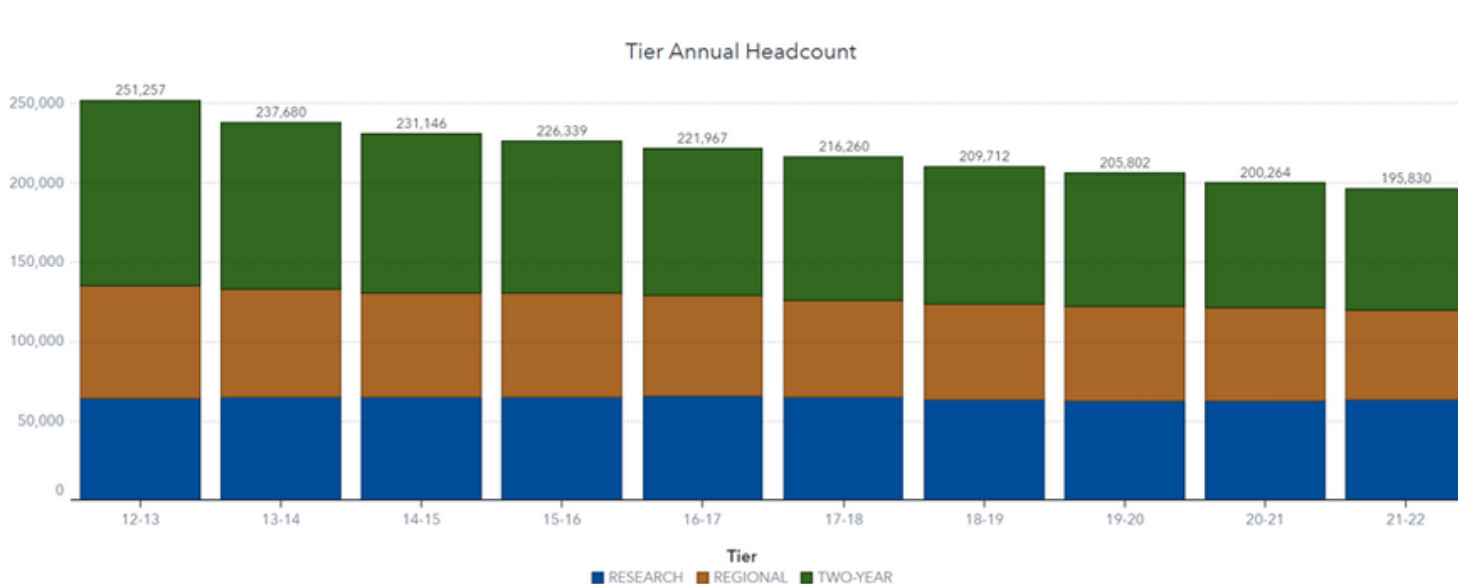


Figure 29a. Source: [https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso\\_guest=true&sas-welcome=false](https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso_guest=true&sas-welcome=false)

In the 2021-2022 academic year, more than 40,000 students were pursuing STEM education and more than 170,000 students were pursuing education aligned with [Oklahoma's 100 critical occupations](#).

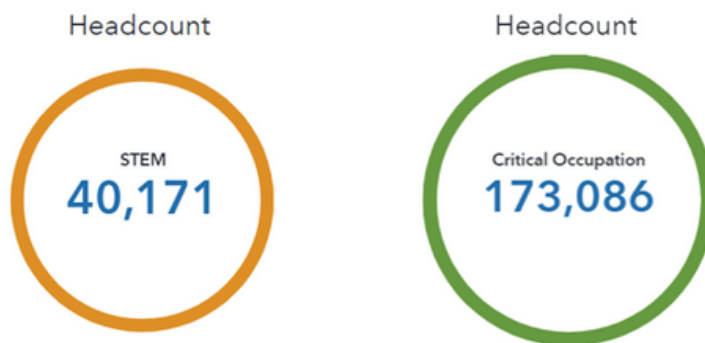


Figure 29b. Source: [https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso\\_guest=true&sas-welcome=false](https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso_guest=true&sas-welcome=false)

# Education and Workforce Readiness

The top 10 programs by enrollment included two-year healthcare-related degrees in allied health sciences and radiologic technology and four-year programs related to business, social sciences, elementary education, sports and exercise sciences, and natural sciences.

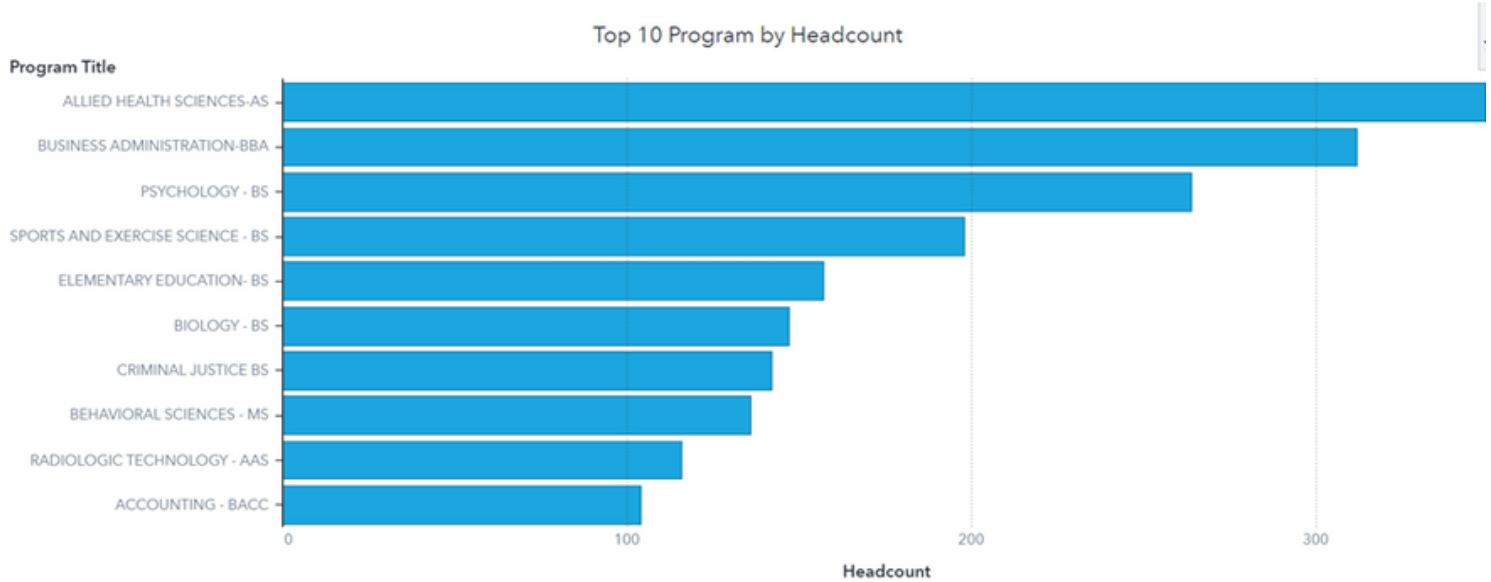


Figure 29c. Source: [https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso\\_guest=true&sas-welcome=false](https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso_guest=true&sas-welcome=false)

In 2023, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education published [Blueprint 2030: Innovating and Elevating Oklahoma Higher Education for Tomorrow’s Workforce](#), which outlines its strategic plan for the higher education system over the next several years. The plan emphasizes the key role Oklahoma’s public colleges and universities play in producing the state’s workforce.

The report highlights a few trends and challenges in our state:

- Due to the decrease in younger populations in Oklahoma, high school graduating classes are anticipated to peak by 2026 and then decline by 2030.
- When it comes to college readiness, for the 2022 graduating class in Oklahoma, only 10% of students met the four ACT college readiness benchmarks and only 6% were ready to pursue STEM majors.

# Education and Workforce Readiness

---

To assist in providing quality education to Oklahoma’s workforce that aligns with industry needs, the Oklahoma State Regents’ 2030 strategic plan focuses on four key areas that include measurable goals for each:

1. Produce workforce-ready graduates (pg. 9)
  - a. Align higher education programs with workforce demand, with a goal to produce 100,000 degrees and other credentials in STEM and critical occupations by 2030.
  - b. Develop a robust state-wide communication and outreach plan for engaging employers.
  - c. Connect students to the workforce
  
2. Grow the student pipeline (pg. 10)
  - a. Collaborate with K-12 schools and CareerTech to strengthen students’ college preparation.
  - b. Improve college awareness and increase student enrollment 10% by 2030.
  - c. Promote college access and affordability through increased availability of grants, scholarships, waivers and tuition reimbursement.
  - d. Remove administrative barriers to enrollment.
  
3. Focus on student success (pg. 11-12)
  - a. Improve student retention and graduation through the implementation of evidence-informed student support practices.
  - b. Promote timely credential completion
  - c. Re-engage and support adult learners; promote lifelong learning opportunities.
  - d. Close achievement gaps in enrollment, retention and graduation.
  - e. Strengthen online education offerings and use digital tools to augment the traditional learning experience.
  
4. Improve system efficiency and effectiveness (pgs. 12-13)
  - a. Enhance long-term institutional sustainability through increased partnerships and collaborations.
  - b. Increase student access and manage educational costs through investments in technology and diversification of revenue sources.
  - c. Incentivize excellence and innovation.
  - d. Promote transparency, accountability and responsible stewardship.



**EMPLOYER-  
DRIVEN  
WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT**



# Employer-Driven Workforce Development

---

The next two sections will highlight strategies and stories of local employers in Oklahoma who are taking workforce development into their own hands. The terms upskilling and reskilling have been used a lot recently, and it's important to understand the difference between the two. The [United States Chamber of Commerce](#) describes the terms as:

## **Upskilling**

“...when employees learn new information and skills to help them do their current jobs better. It optimizes their performance while helping them navigate change. The training may enable staff to be more efficient and productive or educate them on modern techniques.”

## **Reskilling**

“...learning new abilities to take on a different job role or function. It allows businesses to retain exceptional employees even if their job or department was eliminated. The new position may share some aspects of their previous one but require new skills. In some cases, reskilling requires workers to earn a degree or certification in a different area of expertise.”

In a [2022 Future of Work Employer Study](#) that the Center for the Future of Work conducted, 17% of employers said they were extremely likely to need to reskill portions of their workforce due to advances in technology and 45% stated they were somewhat likely.

Employers can support their employees' learning and development through several modes:

1. Internal training development efforts of employers. These can be trainings that are designed and facilitated in-house, or training programs acquired through third-party vendors or learning management systems.
2. Continued financial support of education and for-credit or non-credit learning opportunities. This could include tuition reimbursement for degree completion or a professional certificate program related to the employee's occupation.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education spearheaded the [Upskill Oklahoma](#) initiative, where individuals can pursue micro-credentials to help achieve their career goals. Upskill Oklahoma can help employers identify talent and also partner with educational institutions to develop micro-credentials that would fill current industry skill gaps. An example of these partnerships includes a [drill rig safety program](#) designed as an entry-level program for individuals interested in the groundwater industry. The following industry partners collaborated with Oklahoma State University to create this program: Associated Environmental Industries, Pumps of Oklahoma, National Ground Water Association and Franklin Electric.

# Employer-Driven Workforce Development

When it comes to leadership development, Love's Travel Stops is a pioneer in the state with its internal Love's Leadership Development Program. From store general managers to executives, Love's has an intentionally designed program to enhance leadership capabilities at all levels. With the added complexity of having managers across 42 states, Love's strives to ensure training opportunities are accessible to everyone through both onsite and hybrid offerings.

Figure 30 shows Love's Leadership Development Program, which consists of three different program series targeted for varying leadership levels and utilizes a combination of internally developed content alongside programs developed in collaboration with industry partners and higher education institutions.

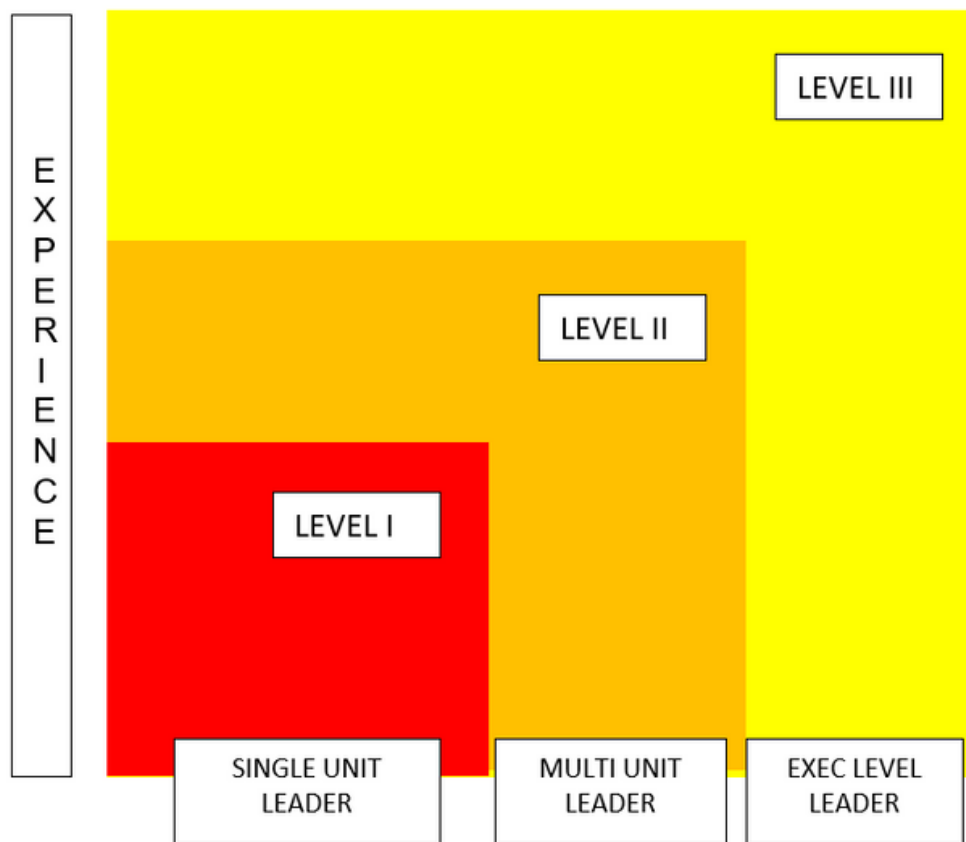


Figure 30. Love's Leadership Development Program

The examples given in this section highlighted how stakeholder collaboration can promote workforce development solutions that benefit all. As stated at the beginning of this report, effective workforce development strategies are owned and led by industry organizations, employers, educational institutions and the government. The best outcomes involve support from each area and initiatives like Upskill Oklahoma will help support our workforce and advance Oklahoma's economic competitiveness.



**EMPLOYER-  
DRIVEN  
WORKFORCE  
INNOVATIONS**

# Employer-Driven Workforce Innovations

---

Providing employees with ongoing learning and development opportunities, as outlined in the previous section, is a key driver to strategic workforce development, but there are other factors that employers should also consider. How organizations respond to changes that impact workforce effectiveness is critical to remaining competitive with regional, national and global competition.

This section will highlight success stories of employers in the state that were pioneers in the adoption of emerging technologies, implementation of new work practices (e.g. hybrid/virtual work) and creation of frameworks to promote career development.

In July 2022, Jasco Products, a smart electronics supplier, [invested \\$40 million to automate warehouse processes in Oklahoma City](#) and no jobs were lost in the process. The automation allowed Jasco to [expand their warehousing capacity by 70%](#) and create a safer, more ergonomic workplace. At a time when labor markets are tight, investing in automation like Jasco could help supplement a strong workforce and possibly provide higher-quality jobs for employees.

During the pandemic, many companies had the opportunity to pilot virtual, hybrid and flexible work options. While headlines continue to showcase a movement back to the office, many companies in Oklahoma are still offering flexible work options for employees. Hybrid and flexible work schedules may not work for every industry and every profession, but these options can help employers gain a competitive advantage when attracting and retaining a strong workforce. Providing flexible options for employees can come in all shapes and sizes and companies are encouraged to take a custom approach that takes individual jobs into consideration, while also meeting business needs.

Below are a few examples of employers in Oklahoma who offer types of flexible work options:

- [Devon Energy](#) offers alternate work schedules (9/80) and is a flexible workplace that allows working from home one to two days per week, based on position.
- [American Fidelity](#) emphasizes the importance of balance and flexibility; nearly every role is open to flexible work schedules with in-office and remote days.
- [ONEOK](#) highlights that flexible schedules are offered, which likely vary based on role.
- [Explorer Pipeline](#) values work/life harmony for employees and offer flexible hybrid work arrangements.

# Employer-Driven Workforce Innovations

---

When it comes to creating a workforce talent pipeline, [OG&E](#) worked hard to do just that. To ensure the energy industry has the talent available to deliver safe and reliable energy, OG&E partners with K-12 and higher education institutions to expose the next generation to the industry and prepare them for careers in energy. The electric company provides plant tours to students in Oklahoma City and Moore Public Schools and offers hands-on learning experiences for students in the Computer Science Academy at Francis Tuttle Technology Center.

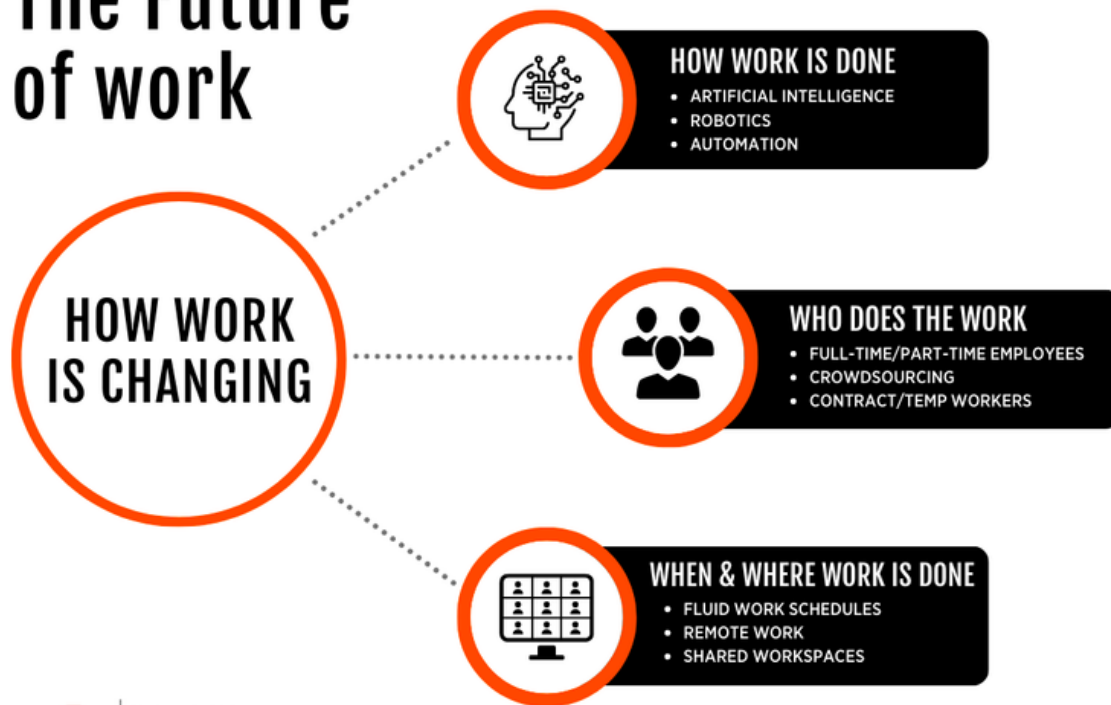
In addition, OG&E is an employer partner at Langston University, providing internship opportunities to students. The company also provides the OG&E Energy Scholarship to students studying power transmissions and distribution technology at Oklahoma State University - Oklahoma City. With a focus on inclusive recruiting, OG&E also partners with Northwest Lineman College and the Cherokee Nation.

Investing in emerging technologies, providing flexible work options and ongoing education for employees, and developing early talent pipelines starting in K-12, are likely the most impactful workforce development initiatives employers can spearhead. Strategic collaborations across all stakeholders (industry, education and government) will pave Oklahoma the best path forward to developing a strong workforce that can support Oklahoma's long-term economic competitiveness.

# Center for the Future of Work

The Center for the Future of Work is a division of the Spears School of Business at Oklahoma State University. The center's mission is to empower organizations and individuals to navigate change and thrive in the future of work. The center addresses this need by providing professional and leadership development programs, services such as customized training, executive coaching, and consulting, and conducting research to better understand and prepare for the workplace of tomorrow.

## The Future of work



# References

---

## Defining Workforce Development (01)

- Jacobs, R. L., & Hawley, J. D. (2009). The emergence of ‘workforce development’: Definition, conceptual boundaries and implications. *International handbook of education for the changing world of work: Bridging academic and vocational learning*, 2537-2552.

## General Population (05)

- Oklahoma Employment Security Commission. (2023). State of Oklahoma 2023 Workforce Briefing. <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oesc/documents/labor-market/publications/workforce-briefings/2023/ok-workforce-briefing-2023.pdf>
- Wilkerson, C., Farha, C., (2024). From Brain Drain to Brain Gain, Oklahoma’s Population on the Rise. Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/oklahomacity/oklahoma-economist/from-brain-drain-to-brain-gain-oklahomas-population-on-the-rise/>
- Hicks, C., (2023). Interim Study Labor Participation Rate & Workforce Development. Oklahoma Senate. <https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/Labor%20Participation%20Rate%20%26%20Workforce%20%2810%29.pdf>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Participation Rate for Oklahoma [LBSNSA40], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LBSNSA40>, February 20, 2024.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate for Oklahoma [LBSNSA40], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LBSNSA40>, February 20, 2024.

## Workforce Demographics (08)

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDPIY2022.DP03?q=employment&g=040XX00US40>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Residents by Gender and Age (2021), retrieved from Data USA. Oklahoma ; <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/oklahoma>, February 20, 2024.
- Center for American Progress. (2018). Oklahoma Childcare Deserts. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/?state=OK>
- First Five Years Fund. (2023). Childcare and Early Education in Oklahoma Fact Sheet. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from [https://www.ffyf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FFYF\\_Oklahoma\\_2023.pdf](https://www.ffyf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FFYF_Oklahoma_2023.pdf)
- Raache, H., (2023). Chickasaw Nation building child development center in Ada, future centers planned in Oklahoma. Oklahoma Business Voice. Retrieved February 2, 2024, from <https://okbusinessvoice.com/2023/09/20/chickasaw-nation-building-child-development-center-in-ada-future-centers-planned-in-oklahoma/>
- Sellers, C., (2023). Caddo Nation breaks ground on a new child care facility. KFOR News. Retrieved February 2, 2024, from <https://kfor.com/news/local/caddo-nation-breaks-ground-on-new-child-care-facility/>
- National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2023). Oklahoma. Retrieved February 2, 2024, from <https://nlihc.org/or/state/ok>

## Untapped Talent Populations (12)

- Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability. (2022). Disability Status Report for Oklahoma. Cornell University ILR School. Retrieved January 24, 2024, from <https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/report/pdf/2022/2040000>
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2017-2023). Prisoners Statistical Tables. U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved January 24, 2024, from [https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/list?series\\_filter=Prisoners](https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/list?series_filter=Prisoners)

# References

---

## Untapped Talent Populations, Cont. (12)

- The Council of State Governments Justice Center. (2023). Oklahoma Criminal Justice Data Snapshot. Bureau of Justice Assistance. Retrieved January 24, 2024, from [https://justicereinvestmentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Oklahoma-Criminal-Justice-Data-Snapshot\\_accessible.pdf](https://justicereinvestmentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Oklahoma-Criminal-Justice-Data-Snapshot_accessible.pdf)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer. (2022). Oklahoma. National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Retrieved January 24, 2024, from [https://justicereinvestmentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Oklahoma-Criminal-Justice-Data-Snapshot\\_accessible.pdf](https://justicereinvestmentinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Oklahoma-Criminal-Justice-Data-Snapshot_accessible.pdf)
- Housing Assistance Council. (2021). Veterans Data Central. Retrieved January 24, 2024, from <https://veteransdata.info/states/2400000/OKLAHOMA.pdf>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDPIY2022.DP03?q=employment&g=040XX00US40>

## Pay and Rewards (21)

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). News release: County Employment and Wages in Oklahoma – Second Quarter 2023. Southwest Information Office. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from [https://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/countyemploymentandwages\\_oklahoma.htm#:~:text=All%20three%20large%20Oklahoma%20counties,a%202.9%25%20increase%20in%20wages.](https://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/countyemploymentandwages_oklahoma.htm#:~:text=All%20three%20large%20Oklahoma%20counties,a%202.9%25%20increase%20in%20wages.)

## Career Development (22)

- LinkedIn Learning. (2023) Workplace Learning Report. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from [https://learning.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/learning/en-us/pdfs/workplace-learning-report/LinkedIn-Learning\\_Workplace-Learning-Report-2023-EN.pdf](https://learning.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/learning/en-us/pdfs/workplace-learning-report/LinkedIn-Learning_Workplace-Learning-Report-2023-EN.pdf)

## Autonomy (23)

- O'Hara, D. (2017). The intrinsic motivation of Richard Ryan and Edward Deci. The American Psychology Association. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://www.apa.org/members/content/intrinsic-motivation>
- Reisinger H., Fetterer, D., (2021). Forget Flexibility. Your Employees Want Autonomy. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://hbr.org/2021/10/forget-flexibility-your-employees-want-autonomy>

## Resources (25)

- Gallup. (2024). How to Measure Employee Engagement With the Q12®. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://hbr.org/2021/10/forget-flexibility-your-employees-want-autonomy>

## Meaningful Work (26)

- Weir, K. (2013). More than job satisfaction. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/12/job-satisfaction>

## Supervisor Support (28)

- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(3), 565.
- Maertz Jr, C. P., Griffeth, R. W., Campbell, N. S., & Allen, D. G. (2007). The effects of perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support on employee turnover. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 28(8), 1059-1075.



# References

---

## **Burnout and Work-Related Stress (31)**

- World Health Organization (2019). Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>

## **Intentions to Quit (33)**

- Davis, A. (2022). Understanding the Needs of Oklahoma's Workforce 2021-2022. Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University. <https://spearsbizpubs.okstate.edu/view/805701592/>

## **Workforce Education Attainment (36)**

- Hicks, C., (2023). Interim Study Labor Participation Rate & Workforce Development. Oklahoma Senate. <https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/Labor%20Participation%20Rate%20%26%20Workforce%20%2810%29.pdf>
- Oklahoma Works. (2023). Oklahoma's 100 "Critical Occupations" (2021-2030). Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://okhighered.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/critical-occupations-2021-30.pdf>
- Oklahoma Employment Security Commission. (2023). State of Oklahoma 2023 Workforce Briefing. <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/oesc/documents/labor-market/publications/workforce-briefings/2023/ok-workforce-briefing-2023.pdf>

## **Oklahoma's Postsecondary Education System (37)**

- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Enrollment Dashboard. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from [https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso\\_guest=true&sas-welcome=false](https://viya-srv-pub.osrhe.edu/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F395d7de2-90be-46c7-a0ae-cf605bf3d28c&sso_guest=true&sas-welcome=false)
- Oklahoma Works. (2023). Oklahoma's 100 "Critical Occupations" (2021-2030). Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://okhighered.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/critical-occupations-2021-30.pdf>
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2023). Blueprint 2030: Innovating and Elevating Oklahoma Higher Education for Tomorrow's Workforce. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from <https://okhighered.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Okhighered-Blueprint2030-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

# References

---

## Employer Driven Workforce Development (40)

- Elliott, J. (2023). Upskilling vs. Reskilling: Definitions, Differences, and Small Business Impact. United States Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved February 18, 2024, from <https://www.uschamber.com/co/run/human-resources/upskilling-vs-reskilling>
- Davis, A. (2022). The Future of Work Employer Study. Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University. <https://spearsbizpubs.okstate.edu/view/805701592/>
- Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. (2024) Upskill OK. <https://upskillok.org/employers/>
- Mize, R. (2023). Jasco Products delivers smart home devices from a smart warehouse in Oklahoma City. The Oklahoman. Retrieved February 18, 2024, from <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/business/real-estate/2023/03/19/okc-jasco-products-distribution-center-technology-smart-homes/69856431007/>
- Pauls Valley Democrat. (2023). OG&E energizes the industry through workforce development. Retrieved February 18, 2024, from [https://www.paulsvalleydailydemocrat.com/news/og-e-energizes-the-industry-through-workforce-development/article\\_5dcafccc-6c7f-11ee-9c1d-c78355a489f6.html](https://www.paulsvalleydailydemocrat.com/news/og-e-energizes-the-industry-through-workforce-development/article_5dcafccc-6c7f-11ee-9c1d-c78355a489f6.html)

Cover photo courtesy of [AAON](#).