

Oregon’s Licensed Behavioral/Mental Health Care Workforce

A Profile of Selected Behavioral/Mental Health Occupations

An important goal of transforming health care includes improving access to and the integration of behavioral/mental health care services into primary care. As this work progresses, understanding the supply and composition of Oregon’s behavioral/mental health workforce is imperative.

There are a variety of professionals who engage in health promotion, prevention therapies, and treatment of behavioral/mental health issues.¹ Using the workforce data from the state’s *Licensed Health Professional Database*², this report focuses on those health providers with prescriptive authority (psychiatrists, advanced nurse practitioners and physician assistants with a practice specialty or setting in psychiatry/mental health) and those without prescriptive authority (registered nurses who practice in psychiatry/mental health settings, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors,

licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed psychologists). Unfortunately, a significant amount of data were unavailable for Oregon’s licensed social workers, counselors and therapists, and psychologists, which limits the report’s findings (see the Data Sources and Methodology section for details).

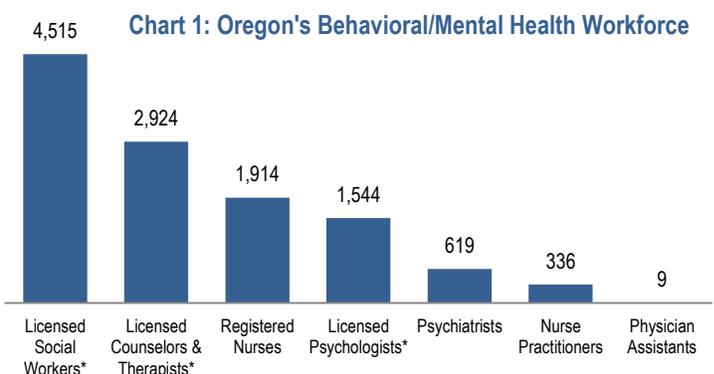
The providers profiled in this report are only a segment of the behavioral/mental health workforce. There are a number of health and social service providers for whom workforce data are not collected. These include, for example, Qualified Mental Health Associates, Qualified Mental Health Professionals, Certified Alcohol Drug Counselors, and peer counselors.^{3,4,5,6} It is also important to note that primary care clinicians who diagnose and treat behavioral and mental health disorders are not represented in this report.^{7,8}

Licensed Health Care Professionals Engaged in Behavioral/Mental Health

Behavioral and mental health services are provided by many different professions, each of which has its own training and area of expertise.⁹ Though all of these professionals play a role in assessment and treatment of behavioral health, there are a select number of providers who can also prescribe medications, including physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. In 2014, 6% of physicians (619) were psychiatrists, while 15% of all nurse practitioners (336) and 0.8% of physician assistants (9) indicated psychiatry or mental health as their practice specialty.

Six percent (1,914) of registered nurses identified a practice area in behavioral health care. There were

also 4,515 clinical social workers, 2,924 professional counselors and marriage and family therapists, and 1,544 psychologists licensed in Oregon; however, it is not known how many were practicing in the state.



*Results are based on available data and may not be generalized to the profession as a whole.

Geographic Distribution

More than half of the behavioral/mental health clinicians with prescriptive authority were located in the Portland Metro region in 2014 (see Table 1). This included 61% of psychiatrists and 57% of nurse practitioners. Similarly distributed, 49% of registered nurses who worked in psychiatry/mental health settings were located in the Portland Metro region.

This imbalance in regional distribution emphasizes

the need for integration of behavioral health services into primary care settings, especially in areas outside of the Portland Metro region.

Without the complete count of licensed counselors and therapists, social workers, and psychologists who actively practice in Oregon, it is impossible to accurately describe the geographic distribution of this segment of the behavioral/mental health workforce.

Table 1: Regional Distribution of Selected Behavioral/Mental Health Workforce in Oregon

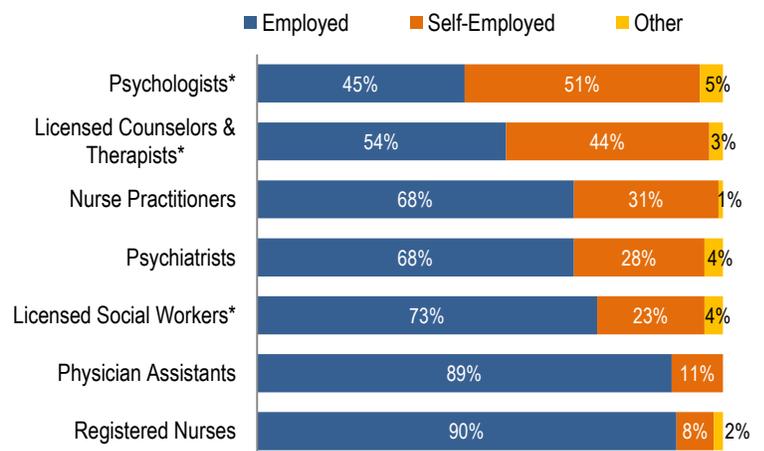
Oregon Region	Behavioral/Mental Health Clinicians with Prescriptive Authority			Registered Nurses	Total	% of Statewide Total in Region
	Psychiatrists	Nurse Practitioners	Physician Assistants			
Portland Metro (Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington)	376	190	2	929	1,497	52%
Northwest (Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Tillamook, Yamhill)	114	62	0	518	694	24%
Southwest (Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane)	85	48	3	309	445	15%
Central (Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler)	35	23	1	88	147	5%
Eastern (Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa)	9	13	3	66	91	3%
Missing	-	-	-	4	4	0.1%
Total	619	336	9	1,914	2,878	100%

Employment Characteristics

A large portion of behavioral/mental health providers were self-employed in 2014 (see Chart 2). Based on available information, the professions with the largest percentage of self-employed individuals were psychologists (51%) and licensed counselors and therapists (44%).

Behavioral health providers worked in a variety of care settings (see Table 2). Except for registered nurses, the most common setting for the majority of behavioral health care providers was an office or clinic. For registered nurses, the most common setting was a hospital, followed by an office/clinic setting.

Chart 2: Behavioral Health Workforce Employment Status



*Results are based on available data and may not be generalized to the profession as a whole.

Table 2: Top Three Work Settings by Behavioral Health Profession

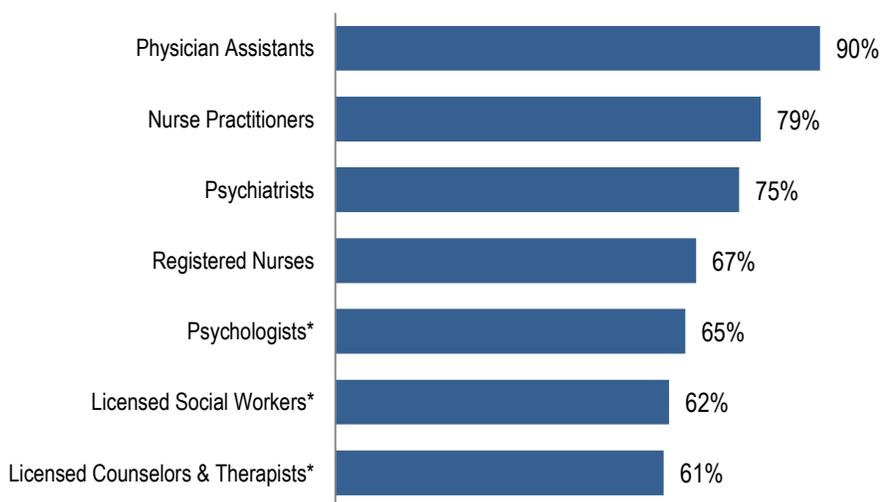
Profession	Percentage of Profiled Profession Working in Top Three Most Frequently Reported Work Settings					
	Office/Clinic		Private Practice		Hospitals	
Psychiatrists	35.1%	30.7%	25.5%			
Physician Assistants	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%			
Nurse Practitioners	53.9%	10.7%	8.9%			
Registered Nurses	43.4%	14.9%	5.5%			
Psychologists*	60.8%	4.2%	3.7%			
Licensed Counselors & Therapists*	53.7%	8.3%	4.1%			
Licensed Social Workers*	29.9%	9.1%	7.4%			

Not all behavioral/mental health providers worked full-time. Only 60% of the profiled providers reported working more than 30 hours a week (see Table 3). Furthermore, not all of their time was spent in direct patient care (see Chart 3). On average, physician assistants reported that they spent 90% of their time in direct patient care. Nurse practitioners spent an average of 79% of their time in direct patient care.

Table 3: Percent of Profiled Profession Working Part-Time (1-30 Hours) or Fulltime (31-51+ Hours) per Week on Average

Profession	1-30 Hours	31-51+ Hours	Missing
Licensed Social Workers*	29.8%	70.0%	0.2%
Registered Nurses	23.4%	62.4%	14.2%
Psychiatrists	36.7%	62.0%	1.3%
Psychologists*	39.7%	60.1%	0.3%
Licensed Counselors & Therapists*	43.2%	56.5%	0.3%
Physician Assistants	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%
Nurse Practitioners	34.8%	50.3%	14.9%

Chart 3: Average Percent of Time in Direct Patient Care by Behavioral/Mental Health Profession



All of the profiled behavioral health providers reported engaging in activities outside of direct patient care, including teaching/training, research, and management/administration. Licensed social workers spent 62% of their time in direct patient care and 19% of their time in management activities. Licensed counselors and therapists spent 61% of their time in direct patient care and 20% of their time in management activities.

*Results are based on available data and may not be generalized to the profession as a whole.

Age and Future Practice Plans

As a whole, 46% of the behavioral/mental health workforce profiled in this report was 55 years of age or older (see Chart 4). Of the available data for psychologists, 56% were 55 years of age or older. Similarly, over half of the nurse practitioners were 55 years of age or older.

Chart 4: Age Range of Behavioral/Mental Health Professionals

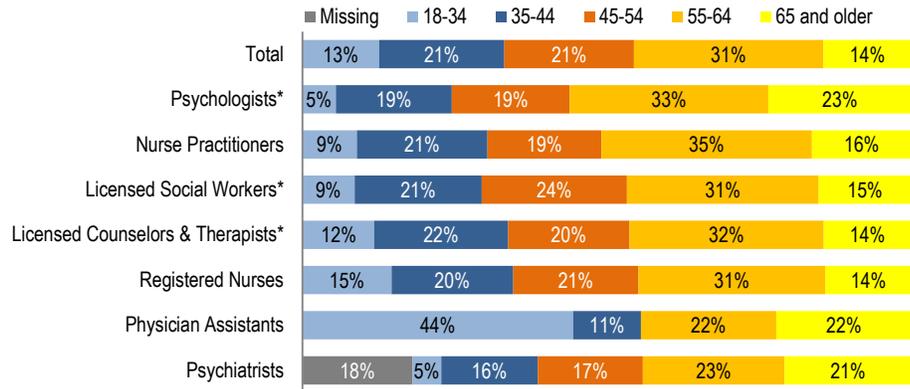


Table 4: Behavioral/mental health professionals who intend to reduce hours, retire, leave practice, or move from Oregon within the next two years

Profession	Count	Percent of Profession
Nurse Practitioners	55	16%
Registered Nurses	218	11%
Psychologists*	53	14%
Licensed Counselors & Therapists*	70	11%
Licensed Social Workers*	92	11%
Psychiatrists	31	9%
Physician Assistants	0	-
Total	519	12%

Despite so many of the behavioral/mental health workforce approaching or past traditional retirement age, the available data suggested few plan to leave the profession or reduce their practice hours within the next two years. In fact, 76% of the behavioral health workforce aged 55 or older reported intentions to maintain or increase work hours.

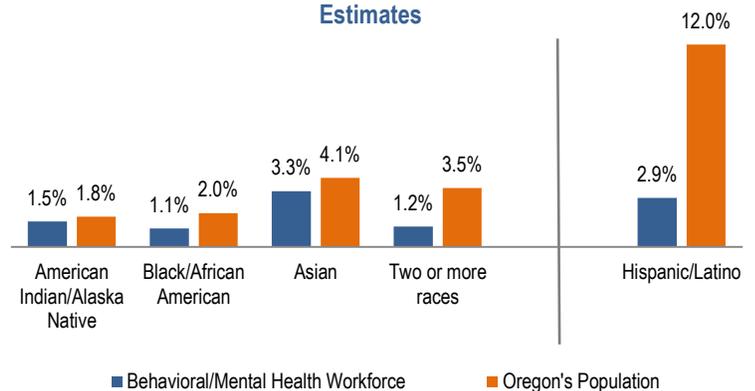
Overall, only 12% of the profiled behavioral health workforce for all ages reported an intention to reduce hours, move out of Oregon, retire, or leave the practice within the 2014-2015 timeframe (see Table 4). It is unclear if missing data from licensed social workers, counselors and therapists, and psychologists might alter these findings.

Race and Ethnicity

Racial diversity within the behavioral/mental health workforce appears to somewhat mirror that of Oregon's population (see Chart 5).¹⁰ Eighty-six percent of the profiled behavioral/mental health workforce identified as Caucasian/White, as compared with 88% of the state's population. Three percent of these providers identified as Asian, 1% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1% as Black/African American.

Three percent of the behavioral health workforce identified as Hispanic/Latino, significantly lower than the population of Oregon at 12%.

Chart 5: Race and Ethnicity of the Behavioral/Mental Health Workforce as Compared to State Population Estimates



*Results are based on available data and may not be generalized to the profession as a whole.

Data Sources and Methodology

Data for this report comes from the following licensing boards as submitted to the state's Licensed Health Professions Workforce Database: The Oregon Medical Board; the Oregon State Board of Nursing; the Board of Licensed Social Workers; the Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists; and the Board of Psychologist Examiners.

Health care workforce data for the occupations profiled in this report were collected during the license renewal process. Data from the Oregon Medical Board, the Board of Licensed Social Workers, the Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists, and Board of Psychologist Examiners reflects information collected after June 30, 2012 through June 11, 2014. Data from the Oregon State Board of Nursing reflects information collected through December 2014. Data on Oregon's behavioral/mental health workforce represent those licensees who reported a valid practice address in Oregon and indicated they were employed in the field, self-employed in the field, a student or faculty member, a volunteer, or were retired but still practicing.

Psychiatrists are those active licensed physicians who identified practice specialties in addiction psychiatry, child and/or adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, psychiatry, and

psychoanalysis. Physician assistants included in this report are those who identified a practice area in psychiatry.

Oregon State Board of Nursing data included nurse practitioners and nurses who renewed their license to practice in Oregon. Nurse practitioners and registered nurses included in this report are those who indicated a specialty in psychiatry/mental health and reported working in Oregon. Data were available on 85% of nurse practitioners and 86.4% of nurses.

The Boards of Licensed Professionals Counselors and Therapists, Licensed Social Workers, and Psychologist Examiners have been collecting and submitting workforce data from their licensees on a voluntary basis since 2012. Because licensees are not required to complete the questionnaires, response rates are low (less than 25%) among counselors, therapists, social workers, and psychologists. Demographic and employment data were only available for 839 social workers, 637 professional counselors and marriage and family therapists, and 383 psychologists. Data presented in the report on these three professions should not be generalized across the profession and only represents those licensees who submitted data during the 2014 renewal cycles.

Race and ethnicity data for Oregon's population comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's *Oregon Population Estimates*, accessed on May 20, 2015.

Resources

Oregon Center for Nursing - <http://oregoncenterfornursing.org/>

Oregon Health Authority, Addictions and Mental Health - <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/Pages/index.aspx>

Oregon Health Authority, Primary Care Office, Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas - <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/OHPR/PCO/Pages/HPSA%20Designation.aspx>

Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute – <http://oregonhwi.org/>

Endnotes

1. Heisler, E.J., and Bagalman, E. (2015). *The Mental Health Workforce: A Primer*. Congressional Research Service, 7-5700. Available at <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43255.pdf>
2. See http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ohpr/rsch/pages/workforce_Rptg.aspx
3. See *Oregon Administrative Rules 309-019-0125 (8)* for definition of Qualified Mental Health Associates.
4. See *Oregon Administrative Rules 309-019-0125 (9)* for definition of and Qualified Mental Health Professionals.
5. See <http://www.accbo.com/> for information on Certified Alcohol Drug Counselors in Oregon.
6. See Oregon Health Authority's Addictions and Mental Health Division (<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/amh/pd/Pages/approved-training.aspx>) and Aging and People with Disabilities Division (http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/spwpd/pages/hlth_med/peer.aspx) for information on state-approved peer counselor programs.
7. Wittchen, H., Mühlig, S., and Beesdo, K. (2003). Mental disorders in primary care, *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, Vol. 5(2): 115–128. Accessed online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181625/>.
8. Information on Oregon's primary care clinicians can be found in the *2015 Oregon Health Professions: Occupational and County Profiles* report available at <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/OHPR/HCW/Pages/Policy-Recommendations.aspx>.
9. National Alliance on Mental Illness (2013.) *Mental Health Professionals Fact Sheet*. Available at http://www2.nami.org/factsheets/mentalhealthprofessionals_factsheet.pdf.
10. U.S. Census Bureau (2014). Oregon Population Estimates, accessed 5/20/2015 at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/41000.html>.

Appendix A: County of Practice for Selected Behavioral/Mental Health Occupations

	Physician Assistants	Psychiatrists	Nurse Practitioners	Registered Nurses	Total by County
Baker	0	0	1	2	3
Benton	0	27	3	54	84
Clackamas	0	45	25	95	165
Clatsop	0	1	3	8	12
Columbia	0	1	2	5	8
Coos	0	5	3	26	34
Crook	0	0	0	0	0
Curry	1	2	2	4	9
Deschutes	1	23	12	62	98
Douglas	0	7	7	54	68
Gilliam	0	0	0	0	0
Grant	0	1	0	2	3
Harney	0	0	0	1	1
Hood River	0	4	0	2	6
Jackson	2	20	9	71	102
Jefferson	0	1	2	5	8
Josephine	0	4	3	26	33
Klamath	0	4	7	11	22
Lake	0	0	0	1	1
Lane	0	47	24	128	199
Lincoln	0	3	2	9	14
Linn	0	3	2	12	17
Malheur	3	1	2	10	16
Marion	0	66	35	387	488
Morrow	0	1	0	1	2
Multnomah	2	256	140	745	1,143
Polk	0	2	4	7	13
Sherman	0	0	0	0	0
Tillamook	0	1	4	6	11
Umatilla	0	4	7	38	49
Union	0	2	3	7	12
Wallowa	0	0	0	5	5
Wasco	0	3	2	7	12
Washington	0	75	25	89	189
Wheeler	0	0	0	0	0
Yamhill	0	10	7	30	47
Missing	0	0	0	4	4
Total by Profession	9	619	336	1,914	2,878

Note: The available practice location data for licensed clinical social workers, counselors, therapists, and psychologists were insufficient to provide county counts.