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# Colorado's Workforce Woes Should Spell Opportunity for Economic Mobility

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Check out the [full report](#) for a list of recommendations.

## Colorado's Labor Force is the Tightest on Record

The labor shortage & skills mismatch is costing the state **\$46 billion** in additional state Gross Domestic Product (GDP) this year, which is more than the entire Colorado state budget. If Colorado's labor needs were met, this would result in a **10% increase** in the state's GDP.

- Colorado's labor force is the tightest on record, with 2.7 jobs open for every unemployed person. Colorado has 243,000 job openings and 89,371 individuals unemployed.
- Relief is not coming by in-migration or natural population growth under current projections.

## Coloradans Are Working

**68.6%** Colorado's labor force participation rate in May, is the fourth highest in the US, 6 percentage points above the US rate of 62.6%.

- The state's LFPR for prime age workers between the ages of 25 and 64 is lower than it was before the '08 financial crisis.
- If every unemployed worker took a job, reducing the unemployment rate to zero, there would still be 153,000 unfilled jobs in the state.

• **Construction trades** face unique challenges, there is an anticipated need for 50,000 more workers by 2030. Additionally, 20% of the current 190,000 construction workers in Colorado are 55 and older, meaning even more openings in the coming years.

• In 2020, there were 174,730 people employed in Colorado's construction sector, that means the industry must attract about 8,000 new workers each year—for the next five years.

## Low postsecondary education attainment rates keep Coloradans behind

About **75%** of Colorado jobs require education beyond high school, but only **49.9%** of Colorado's 2021 high school graduates enrolled in college. The Colorado Department of Higher Education has set a goal to reach 66% post-secondary attainment by 2025.

## Barriers to Employment

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Pathway to addressing workforce gaps requires a focus on helping younger workers enter the workforce, keeping older workers engaged, helping those with barriers to employment and getting the chronically unemployed the assistance they need. Employers, educators, and the state workforce development program have a role to play in breaking down barriers to employment. The state will reap the benefits of higher economic output while improving the lives of thousands of Coloradans through upward economic mobility.

**Check out the [full report](#) for a list of recommendations.**

### Disabled Workers

Overall, 8.5% of Coloradans ages 21-64 have at least one disability. 48% of these individuals are employed, with just over 30% of this group employed full-time.

### Veterans

Veterans with service-connected disabilities experience a 35.3% unemployment rate.

### Formerly Incarcerated

Each year about 8,500 citizens return to our Colorado communities from prison. More than 27% of these formerly incarcerated individuals are unemployed.

### Childcare Challenges

The Center for American Progress reports that 51% of Coloradans live in a childcare desert, where there is a shortage of childcare providers. Childcare challenges have become a barrier to work for parents, predominantly affecting women, who are inclined to take on more unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

### Educational Attainment

In 2022, individuals over 25 without a high school diploma were less likely to be employed than individuals with higher levels of education

## Other Recent CSI Workforce Reports To Reference:

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[Colorado's Future: The Impact of An Aging Workforce](#)

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[The She-Cession in Colorado: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women in the Workforce in 2020](#)

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[Reimagining Colorado's Social Safety Net to Incentivize Work: An Examination of the Unintended Consequences of Minimum Wage & the Benefits Cliff on Colorado Workers](#)