

Millions of workers have jobs with low pay, shifting schedules, few if any benefits, and limited opportunities for advancement or career growth. Women and people of color are particularly likely to have low-wage jobs. Despite employment gains since the Great Recession, wages have remained low. A median worker did not earn much more in 2017 than in 1979.¹ Workers in low-wage jobs are also more likely to work part time when they would prefer a full-time schedule.

Workers in low-wage jobs

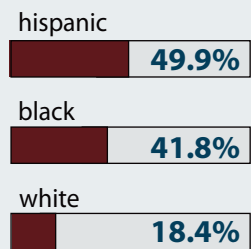
Almost a **quarter** of workers earn **poverty-level wages**²



Workers in low-wage jobs care for the young and elderly, prepare food, clean offices and homes, and help customers, among other jobs.



Working parents living below **200 percent of federal poverty**³



Women, especially women of color, are over-represented among the lowest-paid workers.

Low-wage work is the fastest growing job sector

Employment increases from 2005 to 2015 were **concentrated in nonstandard or alternative work**.⁴ Good jobs were replaced by **temporary, part-time, and low-quality positions paying low wages**.⁵

Home care work, which is one of the fastest-growing sectors, has a **median annual income** of just **\$13,800**.⁶

8 million new jobs are projected **by 2022**.
The majority will pay below \$14.26/hr.⁷

Part-time and involuntary part-time work

In 2015, **6.4 million people were involuntary part-time workers**, meaning they wanted to work full time but were only offered part-time hours.⁸ The involuntary part-time rate remains high despite declining unemployment.

Part-time workers are three times less likely to have health care through their employers.

People of color are more likely to involuntarily work part time. Black and Latino workers represent 27.9 percent of those who are working but constitute 41.1 percent of all involuntary part-time workers.

Part-time workers often earn less than full-time workers. Retailers are increasingly hiring **part-time workers**, who make **68 cents for every dollar** earned by full-time workers.⁹



Full-time retail wage



Part-time retail wage

Job scheduling

About **half of low-wage hourly workers do not work 9-to-5, Monday-through-Friday jobs.**¹¹ Unstable schedules make it **difficult for workers** to arrange transportation; attend education and training programs; hold a second job; manage their budgets; obtain quality child care; and maintain a stable income.¹²

41 percent of hourly workers ages 26 to 32 receive **one week or less notice** of their job schedules.¹³

83 percent of part-time workers report having **unstable work schedules.**¹⁴

Workers are struggling with unpredictable and unstable work schedules that wreak havoc on their families, finances, and lives.¹⁰



Access to paid and unpaid leave

Workers who can't afford unpaid leave are also unlikely to have access to paid leave. **Less than 10 percent of workers in low-wage sectors** such as retail or food service **had access to paid family and medical leave.**¹⁵ One in four surveyed retail workers did not receive any form of paid leave.¹⁶

One in seven low-wage workers—and one in five low-wage working mothers—reports **losing a job because of illness** or the need to **care for a family member.**¹⁷

Only about half of workers are even eligible for unpaid leave through the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and few can afford to take it.¹⁸



Access to health care benefits



In 2017, **78 percent** of **very low-wage workers** did **not have health care** through their job.¹⁹

What a good job requires

Jobs should provide people **economic security**, room to **care for their families**, and stability to **be productive**. That means...

Fair wages

Benefits like **paid family and medical leave & paid sick days**

Fair & predictable schedules

Strong implementation & enforcement of labor standards

Fact Sheet Citations

1. Jay Shambaugh and Ryan Nunn, "Revitalizing Wage Growth: Policies to get American workers a raise," Brookings, February 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/revitalizing-wage-growth-policies-to-get-american-workers-a-raise>.
2. Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library, "Poverty Level Wages," February 2017, <https://www.epi.org/data/#?subject=povwage>.
In 2018, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family of four is \$25,100 annually, which averages to \$12.06/hour or less. This is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Poverty Guidelines: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>.
3. The Heller School, Brandeis University, "Data for a Diverse and Equitable Future," <http://www.diversitydatakids.org/data/ranking/562/working-parents-living-below-200-of-the-federal-poverty-line-share-by-raceethnic/#loct=2&cat=46,31&tf=17&ch=1,2,3,4>.
4. Lawrence F. Katz and Alan B. Krueger, "The Rise and Nature of Alternative Work Arrangements in the United States, 1995-2015," NBER, September 2016, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22667>.
5. National Employment Law Project, "The Low-Wage Recovery and Growing Inequality," August 2012, <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/2015/03/LowWageRecovery2012.pdf>.
6. PHI, "U.S. Home Care Workers: Key Facts," September 2017, <https://phinational.org/resource/u-s-home-care-workers-key-facts>.
7. Aimee Picchi, "America's Job Problem: Low-Wage Work is Growing Fastest," CBS News, August 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/americas-job-problem-low-wage-work-is-growing-fastest>.
8. Lonnie Golden, "Still Falling Short on Hours and Pay," Economic Policy Institute, December 2016, <http://www.epi.org/publication/still-falling-short-on-hours-and-pay-part-time-work-becoming-new-normal>.
9. Center for Popular Democracy, Fair Workweek Initiative, "Job Quality and Economic Opportunity in Retail: Key Findings from a National Survey of the Retail Workforce," November 2017, <https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/DataReport-WebVersion-01-03-18.pdf>.
10. CLASP, Retail Action Project, and Women Employed, "Tackling Unstable and Unpredictable Work Schedules," March 2014, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Tackling-Unstable-and-Unpredictable-Work-Schedules-3-7-2014-FINAL-1.pdf>.
11. Liz Ben-Ishai, "Volatile Job Schedules and Access to Public Benefits," CLASP, September 2015, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/2015.09.16-Scheduling-Volatility-and-Benefits-FINAL.pdf>.
Liz Watson and Jennifer E. Swanberg, "Flexible Workplace Solutions for Low-Wage Hourly Workers: A Framework for a National Conversation," Georgetown Law and University of Kentucky, May 2011, <http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/images/uploads/whatsnew/Flexible%20Workplace%20Solutions%20for%20Low-Wage%20Hourly%20Workers.pdf>.
12. Liz Ben-Ishai, Hannah Matthews, and Jodie Levin-Epstein, "Scrambling for Stability: The Challenges of Job Schedule Volatility and Child Care," CLASP, March 2014, <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/2014-03-27-Scrambling-for-Stability-The-Challenges-of-Job-Schedule-Volat-.pdf>.
13. Susan J. Lambert, Peter J. Fugiel, and Julia R. Henly, "Schedule Unpredictability Among Early Career Workers in the US Labor Market: A National Snapshot," University of Chicago, July 2014, https://ssa.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/lambert.fugiel.henly_precarious_work_schedules.august2014_0.pdf.
14. Lonnie Golden, "Irregular Scheduling And Its Consequences," Economic Policy Institute, April 2015, <https://www.epi.org/publication/irregular-work-scheduling-and-its-consequences>.
15. U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Employee Benefits, Survey Table 32, <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ownership/private/table32a.htm>.
16. Center for Popular Democracy, "Job Quality and Economic Opportunity in Retail."

Fact Sheet Citations (cont.)

17. Zoe Ziliak Michel and Liz Ben-Ishai, "Good Jobs for All," CLASP, March 2016, <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/good-jobs-all-racial-inequities-job-quality>.
(CLASP's report cites: Oxfam America, "Hard Work, Hard Lives: Survey Exposes Harsh Reality Faced By Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," 2013, <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/low-wage-worker-report-oxfam-america.pdf>. The study didn't ask respondents about a specific length of illness, so it could have been lack of either paid sick days or paid family and medical leave that contributed to this job loss.)
18. IMPAQ Int'l LLC and Institute for Women's Policy Research, "The Effects of FMLA Eligibility and Awareness on Family Leave-Taking," January 2017, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/IMPAQ-Eligibility-and-Awareness-7.pdf>.
19. U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employee Benefits, Survey Table 9, <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ownership/private/table09a.htm>.
"Very low-wage workers" defined as workers in jobs with average hourly wages in the bottom decile of the wage distribution.