



WORKPLACE JUSTICE

LOW-WAGE JOBS HELD PRIMARILY BY WOMEN WILL GROW THE MOST OVER THE NEXT DECADE

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In recent decades, women's work experience and educational attainment have increased dramatically—but for too many women, especially women of color, job and income prospects remain bleak. Women make up two-thirds of the over 23 million workers in low-wage jobs (defined as jobs that typically pay \$10.50 per hour or less), though they make up slightly less than half of the workforce as a whole.¹ Women of color are particularly overrepresented in these jobs. Wages of \$10.50 per hour leave a full-time working mother of two with an annual income scarcely above the poverty line,² and many low-wage jobs pay just the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. These jobs leave many women and families struggling to make ends meet—and the situation is unlikely to improve on its own: indeed, the jobs expected to see the most growth in the next decade are primarily female-dominated and low-wage. Policymakers must take action to ensure that all jobs our economy creates allow women and their families to be economically secure.

The five jobs with the largest projected job growth in the next decade are primarily female-dominated and low-wage.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that personal care aides, registered nurses, home health aides, combined food preparation & serving workers (including fast food workers), and retail salespersons will be the five occupations with the most job growth between 2014 and 2024. Each of these jobs will add at least 300,000 positions in the next ten years; all together they will add 1.9 million jobs, accounting for one-fifth of total job growth.³

- Among these five occupations:
 - o All have workforces that are more than 50 percent women, and four are female-dominated, with workforces that are at least 60 percent women.⁴
 - o Four are low-wage, typically paying less than \$10.50 per hour,⁵ and have no formal educational requirement.⁶
 - o Three of the five jobs are both female-dominated and low-wage. These jobs are personal care aides, home health aides, and combined food preparation and serving workers (including fast food workers).⁷
 - o In the fourth low-wage job, retail salespersons, women are just over half the workforce, though the size of the retail industry means that more women work as retail salespersons than in any of the other three low-wage, high-growth jobs.⁸ Among retail salespersons, women and people of color disproportionately fill the lowest paid positions, while white men disproportionately fill the most well-compensated jobs.⁹

In many low-wage jobs, pay is not the only problem.

For many workers in the four low-wage, high-growth jobs, low pay is just one of the challenging conditions they face. Jobs in the food service, retail, and home health/personal care industries are also particularly likely to lack benefits—like paid sick days and paid family leave—and have work schedules that are unstable and unpredictable.¹⁰ For example, in a national survey of early career workers (ages 26-32), about nine in ten workers in food service and retail jobs, and seven in ten home care workers, reported fluctuating work hours.¹¹ In all three jobs, at least half of workers reported that they received their schedules one week or less in advance.¹² These conditions can be particularly problematic for parents juggling work and caregiving responsibilities, yet mothers' share of the four low-wage, high-growth jobs is 20 percent—1.3 times larger than their share of the overall workforce (15 percent).

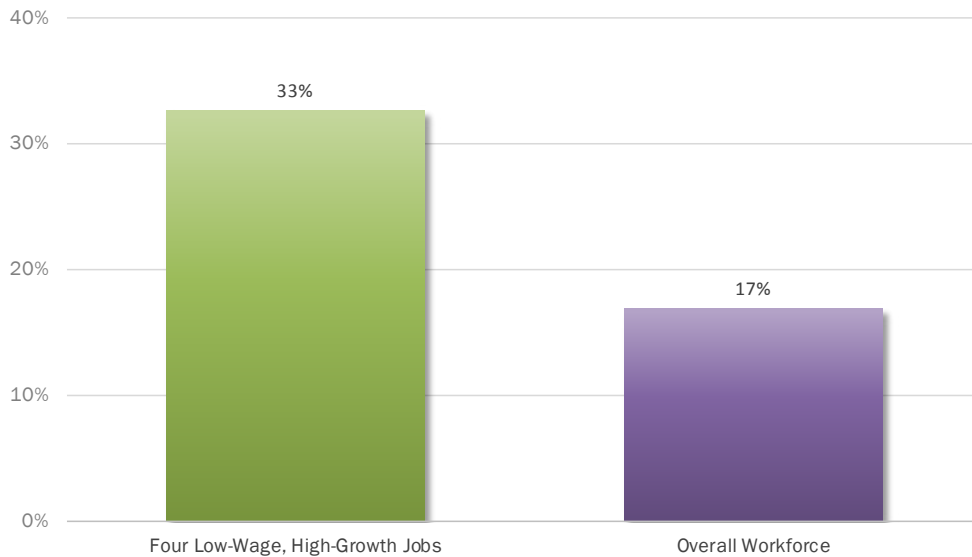


Women overall are overrepresented in the four low-wage, high-growth jobs, but women of color—especially African American women—are particularly overrepresented.¹³

- Women overall account for more than two-thirds of the workforce for these four jobs, though they comprise less than half of the overall workforce.

- Women of color account for 33 percent of the four low-wage, high-growth jobs, compared to 17 percent of the total workforce, meaning their share of these low-wage, high-growth jobs is nearly double their share of the overall workforce.

Shares of Low-Wage, High-Growth Jobs v. Overall Workforce, Women of Color



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Source: NWLC calculations using the 2014 American Community Survey. Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage jobs are those that typically pay \$10.50 per hour or less. Projected growth estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- For African American women the disparity is even greater. Their share of the four low-wage, high-growth jobs (16 percent) is 2.6 times larger than their share of the overall workforce (6 percent).
- The inequality for foreign-born women is nearly as large—their share of these four jobs (13 percent) is 1.9 times their share of the overall workforce (7 percent).

	Median Hourly Wage	Women's Share of Workforce								
		All Women	White, non-Hispanic Women	Women of Color	Latinas	African American Women	Native American Women	AAPI Women	Foreign Born Women	Mothers
Top Five High-Growth Jobs										
Registered nurses	\$32.04	90%	65%	25%	6%	10%	0.4%	8%	13%	35%
Home health aides*	\$10.28	88%	39%	49%	13%	30%	0.8%	4%	21%	31%
Combined food preparation & serving workers (including fast food)	\$8.85	63%	38%	25%	11%	10%	-	2%	8%	16%
Personal care aides	\$9.83	84%	40%	44%	17%	19%	1.1%	6%	21%	27%
Retail salespersons	\$10.29	51%	32%	20%	9%	7%	0.4%	3%	7%	11%
Four Low-Wage Jobs Combined (excludes RNs)		68%	35%	33%	12%	16%	0.6%	4%	13%	20%
All Workers	\$17.09	47%	30%	17%	7%	6%	0.3%	3%	7%	15%
<i>Representation in 4 low-wage, high-growth jobs v. workforce overall</i>		1.4	1.2	1.9	1.7	2.6	2.0	1.3	1.9	1.3

Source: Wages: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics for 2014, Demographics: NWLC calculations using ACS 2014. *Due to data constraints, demographic figures for home health aides includes nursing & psychiatric aides as well. Mothers have realted children under 18 living at home. Dashes indicate insufficient sample sizes.



- 1 Anne Morrison & Katherine Gallagher Robbins, NWLC, Chartbook: Women’s Overrepresentation in Low-Wage Jobs (Oct. 2015), *available at* <http://nwlc.org/resources/chartbook-womens-overrepresentation-low-wage-jobs/>. “Low-wage jobs” could be defined in different ways; this analysis uses occupations that pay median hourly wages of \$10.50 or less because \$10.50 in 2014 is roughly equivalent to \$12.00 in 2020, which is the proposed new federal minimum wage in the Raise the Wage Act pending in Congress (2015), see David Cooper, John Schmitt, & Lawrence Mishel, Econ. Policy Inst., We Can Afford a \$12.00 Federal Minimum Wage in 2020 (Apr. 2015), *available at* <http://www.epi.org/publication/we-can-afford-a-12-00-federal-minimum-wage-in-2020/>.
- 2 NWLC calculations based on 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year at \$10.50 per hour (\$21,000 annually). The poverty threshold in 2015 for a family with one adult and two children was \$19,096. U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Thresholds for 2015, <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/> (last visited Mar. 11, 2016).
- 3 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Projections: 2014-2024, Table 6: Occupations with the most job growth, 2014-2024, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t06.htm> (last visited Dec. 8, 2015).
- 4 NWLC calculations based on American Community Survey 2014, one-year estimates (ACS 2014), using Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015, *available at* <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/>. All figures are for employed workers.
- 5 NWLC calculations, BLS Employment Projections, Table 6, *supra* note 3. The one exception is registered nurses, an occupation that has substantially higher wages. Median hourly wages were calculated by dividing median annual salary by 2,080 hours (the number of hours of full-time, year-round work), the same method of calculation used by the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm (last visited Mar. 11, 2016). Using this measure, the overall median hourly wage in 2014 was \$17.09.
- 6 See BLS, Typical education needed for entry into the largest growing occupations 2014-24 (Feb. 2016), *available at* <http://www.bls.gov/opus/ted/2016/typical-education-needed-for-entry-into-the-largest-growing-occupations-2014-24.htm>.
- 7 NWLC calculations based on ACS 2014, *supra* note 4, and NWLC calculations based on BLS Employment Projections, *supra* note 3.
- 8 *Id.*
- 9 Ctr. for Popular Democracy, Data Brief: Retail Jobs Today, at 1 (Jan. 2016), *available at* <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/556496efe4b02c9d26fdf26a/t/56a0f00f3b0be3bde90e9363/1453387792311/RetailJobsToday1.pdf>.
- 10 See *generally* Julie Vogtman & Karen Schulman, NWLC, Set Up to Fail: When Low Wage Work Jeopardizes Parents’ and Children’s Success (Jan. 2016), *available at* <http://nwlc.org/resources/set-up-to-fail-when-low-wage-work-jeopardizes-parents-and-childrens-success/>.
- 11 Susan J. Lambert, Peter J. Fugiel, & Julia R. Henly, Precarious Work Schedules among Early-Career Employees in the US: A National Snapshot, at 18 (Aug. 2014), *available at* https://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/work-scheduling-study/files/lambert.fugiel.henly_precarious_work_schedules.august2014_0.pdf.
- 12 *Id.*
- 13 NWLC calculations based on ACS 2014, *supra* note 4.

