

Essential Changes Needed for Essential Workers: Job Quality for California's Service Sector

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The coronavirus outbreak has caused a massive global economic and health shock, which has exacerbated existing social [inequalities](#). Workers in the service sector, many of whom were already in an economically precarious position before the pandemic when the economy was booming, were among the [hardest hit](#). Many of these workers experienced layoffs or furloughs, while others, particularly in grocery, pharmacy, and delivery sectors, were deemed [essential workers](#). These essential workers are not able to work from home and shelter in place, but rather continue to report for work and risk exposure to coronavirus throughout the pandemic. Workers of color were disproportionately affected by [layoffs](#), and are also at [heightened risk](#) of serious complications or death from coronavirus.

The coronavirus crisis puts into sharp relief the precarity faced by low-wage workers in the service sector as well as significant racial/ethnic disparities in job quality. These workers have little margin for coping with economic shocks from reduced hours, furloughs, layoffs, or missed work because of illness. Safety net programs, designed to provide assistance with basic needs such as food or housing costs in times of need, are often [hard to access](#) because of waiting periods, onerous application requirements, and decades of retrenchment.

As we look forward to an eventual economic recovery, policymakers and employers will face important decisions about the nature of the social contract with workers. Will workers continue to bear the lion's share of the risk from the uncertainties in service sector business? Or will the recognition of the essential work provided by workers in the service sector finally compel policymakers and employers to recognize the value of these workers? As we remake our economy, we must reconsider what constitute fair wages, benefits, and schedules. To mark progress towards equitable working conditions, we must gauge the reality of precarious job conditions in the service sector and their consequences before the shock of the coronavirus.

This report provides a detailed accounting of job conditions for workers in the service sector, drawing on data from [The Shift Project](#). Over the past four years, The Shift Project has collected rich survey information from workers to learn about their job conditions, household economic conditions, and health and wellbeing. This report draws on responses from 7,850 workers employed at large retail and food service employers in the state of California. We also draw on a set of in-depth interviews with service sector workers in the Bay Area. We address the following questions:

- ▶ What were the job conditions for California service sector workers before the coronavirus outbreak in terms of wages, benefits, and work schedules?
- ▶ How did exposure to unstable and unpredictable work schedules differ for workers of color compared with white workers and for women compared with men?
- ▶ How is work schedule quality related to outcomes such as job satisfaction, economic security, health, and parenting?
- ▶ What role can policymakers and employers play in improving conditions for service sector workers?

As we look ahead to rebooting the service sector economy and an eventual economic recovery, we can learn lessons from a close examination of the many faces of job quality, their unequal distribution, their consequences, and the policy and employer-initiated

approaches that have made progress in raising the floor for workers.

Many Faces of Job Quality

In our conversations with service sector workers in the Bay Area, the high cost of living was a recurring theme and wages were naturally one important dimension of job quality. However, these conversations made clear that there was much more to job quality than wages alone. Workers emphasized the desire for stability and regularity in their work schedule and some weekends off. Work schedules were every bit as important as wages or benefits in workers' accounts of the quality of their work life.

Drawing on our large-scale survey data from 7,850 California workers allows us to trace a detailed portrait of job conditions – capturing not just wages, but also fringe benefits, work schedule instability and

A Snapshot of Job Quality in the California Service Sector

Job quality is multi-faceted. Although there is no standard approach to measuring job quality, wages, fringe benefits, work schedules, and underemployment are some key dimensions.

Wages.

The minimum wage has risen but half of workers still earn less than \$15 per hour, far below a living wage.

Benefits.

Most workers have access to some paid leave but the legally required amount of leave is just 3 days per year, putting many workers in a position of feeling economic pressure to work when sick. Most workers are covered by health insurance but 14% don't qualify or can't afford it.

Work Schedules.

- ▶ Work schedules are often unpredictable and unstable.
- ▶ More than half of workers get less than two weeks' notice of their schedule
- ▶ More than one-quarter work on-call
- ▶ More than two-thirds experience last-minute changes to schedules
- ▶ Almost half work back-to-back closing then opening shifts

Underemployment.

35% of workers are involuntarily part-time at their job - getting part-time hours, but wanting to work more hours

unpredictability, schedule control, underemployment, and workers' desire for change.

Wages

Even as the federal minimum wage has remained stuck at \$7.25 per hour, the minimum wage for California workers has steadily risen, from \$10 an hour in 2017, to \$10.50 in 2018, to \$11 in 2019 and to \$12 in 2020. Retail and food service workers at some of the State's largest firms also saw an incremental increase in their wages across these years, from a median hourly wage of \$12.50 in 2017, to \$13.11 in 2018, to \$15 in 2019. Yet, even by 2019, half of workers were still earning less than \$15/hour. These low wages are insufficient to meet basic needs in the context of California's high and [rising income inequality](#), where the living wage for a worker with a child is estimated to be [\\$31.25](#).

Benefits

While wages dominate the conversation on job quality, much more goes into a good job than just hourly wage. For food and retail workers in California, efforts to raise the floor on job quality have had tangible results. Nearly three-quarters of workers (71%) report access to paid sick leave, far above the 45% of workers nationally at these same firms who report paid sick leave. Nearly two-thirds of workers report access to paid vacation days, but only 40% of workers report access to paid parental leave at work.

Although many California workers have access to paid sick leave, not all of those with this benefit can actually use it. As one worker, employed at a big box store, told us, using paid sick leave would count as a strike against you without a doctor's note.

...they call it sick leave, so you still have to bring a doctor's note and that's the time that you're going to use to cover your hours that you're missing, but you still have to provide proof... you can't just call in and say, hey, I have time off and I want to use it. I'm not coming in today – you can't do that.

—Jerome, a 26-year old worker at a Big Box store

When it comes to insurance coverage, only 31% of workers report getting health coverage through their job. Most other workers report coverage from another source (47%), but some workers report that they do not work enough hours or have long enough tenure to qualify for their employer's plan (7%) or find it prohibitively expensive (7%).

Only about half of California workers report any retirement savings benefits through their job. Smaller shares report a tuition benefit (30%) or a childcare benefit (8%).

Work Schedules

California retail and food service workers also face uncertainty and instability in their work schedules. Rather than a regular 9-5 shift, the reality is that workers experience schedules that vary from week-to-week and day-to-day, with little advance notice and even less employee control. This instability and unpredictability also occurs against a backdrop of often insufficient work hours.

Unstable and Unpredictable. Overall, we find that just one in five California retail and food service workers report a regular day shift, while 32% who report a variable shift that changes from day-to-day or week-to-week and another 22% report a rotating shift. Even when including the stability of a regular evening or regular night-shift, less than half of California retail and food service workers have a regular schedule.

Moreover, this variability occurs alongside a backdrop of limited advance notice. More than half, 57%, of workers get their schedules less than two weeks in advance. In fact, 30% have less than one week's notice and 14% have less than 72 hours' notice.

Workers are exposed to a specific set of human resource management practices that give rise to daily instability and unpredictability in work schedules. More than a quarter of workers, 28%, reported working "on-call" at least once in the past month – that is, having to be available to work if needed, but not guaranteed the hours. Forty percent of these workers were in fact called in, but 60% were not. Of those workers, despite California's reporting time pay law, more than half were not paid.

In addition to on-call shifts, 20% of workers also reported having at least one scheduled shift cancelled in the last month. For these workers, cancellation came with very little advance notice – less than 24 hours in half of cases and less than 48 hours in 75% of cases. Cancelled shifts also rarely came with any compensation, with only 14% of workers saying that they received some pay for the cancelled hours.

Even more common than full shift cancellations were last-minute changes to schedule timing. These last-minute changes included being asked to come in early,

to stay late, or to work a different shift altogether. We find that 68% of workers reported at least one such timing change in the past month. Here too, these changes were made with very little notice – less than 24 hours for 68% of workers and less than 48 hours for 84% of workers experiencing timing changes – and only rarely with compensatory pay – just 18% of workers received some compensation for the change.

A final common practice was the use of “Clopensing” shifts – working a closing shift and then an opening shift with fewer than 10 hours of rest in-between.

Robert’s Unpredictable Work Schedule

Robert is a 35 year old working father who is employed at a fast food restaurant in the Bay Area. He told us about how his unpredictable work schedule interferes with sleep, healthy eating, and spending time with his family.

It’s What the Store Needs

Some days I start at 10:00 a.m., some days I start at 5:00 a.m., some days I don’t start until 3:00 p.m. ... At least once a week, I get called in to cover someone else’s shift. So-and-so didn’t show up, or so-and-so’s sick... I try to get Monday through Friday shifts, but at the end of the day, it’s what the store needs.

You Get Three Hours of Sleep Basically

The thing I dread the most is if you close and then you have to open the next morning. I try not to schedule that because by the time you’re done, like I said, it’s 1:30, by the time you get home, it’s 2:00-2:30, and then the next day you start at 5:00, you get three hours of sleep basically.

Eating Takes Time

Sometimes when I come home really late... I’ll just eat whenever... I’ll have cereal for dinner... I’ll have leftover pizza. I’ve actually eaten three Snickers bars for dinner before....I once ate a bag of beef jerky as lunch. Just an entire bag of it....I know this sounds strange, but eating takes time so – sometimes I don’t have time to waste, so then I eat so that by the time I get home, I can just shower and go to sleep.

I Wish I Had More Time

I wish I would have more time... I have some friends that are professionals, they have really set schedules, and they’re able to see their kids and family every night, which I wanna do, and have Saturdays and Sundays off. I don’t think I’ve had a full Saturday-Sunday off in a year...

... I wish I had more time to really kinda look at ... my kid’s education. To really sit there ... I wanna really be more involved in his education, even if I might not be up to speed on everything.... It’s tough... I wish I had more time just to spend even with my wife. Honestly, I don’t think we’ve had time alone with each other in forever.

Our survey shows that Robert’s situation is not unusual. Most workers in the service sector face routine uncertainty in their work schedules.

Forty-six percent of workers had staffed at least one clopening in the prior month and generally did so with no extra compensation. Just 8% of workers who were asked to work a clopening shift reported receiving extra compensation for working these consecutive closing then opening shifts. The fast food worker, Robert, featured in the text box above, shared with us that these clopening shifts were “the thing I dread the most” about his work schedule.

Insecurity, Not Flexibility. Employers and managers use these practices to closely and continuously align staffing with customer demand, keeping payrolls as lean as possible. While some would argue that these experiences reflect desirable work schedule “flexibility,” worker reports make plain that these practices are experienced by workers as insecurity and instability.

Perhaps the clearest measure of this is that 73% of workers reported that they “strongly agree” or “agree” that they would like a more stable and predictable work schedule. Further, workers’ lack of schedule control also puts to lie the idea these practices provide flexibility. Half of workers say that their schedules are decided entirely by their employers and another 29% report that their employer mostly decides their schedule. In fact, 64% of workers report that they must keep their schedules open and available for work whenever needed by their employer.

Sometimes I wish it was more of a set schedule. You know, I could plan my day... Because it's rough... because I have a tendency just to jump when he says – You need me, I'll be there, you know.

—**Sylvia, a 57 year-old, employed at a specialty retail store**

Insufficient and Volatile Hours. Unstable and unpredictable scheduling practices go hand-in-hand with insufficient work hours for many workers. We find that 52% of worker reported working fewer than 35 hours in a typical week and that 59% reported that

they would like more hours at their main job in retail or food service. Putting these two pieces of data together, we find that 35% are involuntarily part-time at their job - getting part-time hours, but wanting to work more hours. Involuntary part-time employment is a conscious strategy. By constructing a reserve of under-employed workers eager for additional hours, employers ensure that they always have employees eager for more hours who they can call on at the last minute if needed. This business strategy is apparent in workers’ reports that, among the employers who hired new part-time workers, only a third offered hours to existing part-time workers first.

Together, these practices are a recipe for work hour volatility – swings in the number of hours that workers get from week-to-week. The average California food or retail worker experienced a 39% swing in hours from the week in the past month when they worked the most hours to the week in the past month when they worked the fewest hours.

Yeah, so the schedules are kind of crazy. I mean, they change every week and sometimes you'll get more hours, sometimes you'll get less, there's no guarantee of anything.

— **Jessica, retail apparel employee**

Inequality in Work Schedules

Schedule instability and unpredictability along with involuntary part-time work is common for food and retail workers in California. In California, women and people of color are over-represented in these precarious jobs (author tabulations from the American Community Survey).

But, even among food service and retail workers, women and people of color may be disadvantaged. Managers have a great deal of discretion in assigning work hours and schedules, leaving open the door to gender and racial discrimination stemming from both conscious and unconscious bias.

To assess inequalities in work schedules, we compare the number of types of schedule precarity faced by workers of color and white workers and by men and women.

Measuring Precarious Schedules

To assess inequalities and consequences of precarious schedules, we construct a summary measure to capture the *number of types of schedule precarity* experienced by workers.

Workers with a 0 on the scale have the most stable schedules. These workers have at least two weeks’ notice, no cancelled shifts, no on-call work, no clopenings, and no last-minute shift timing changes.

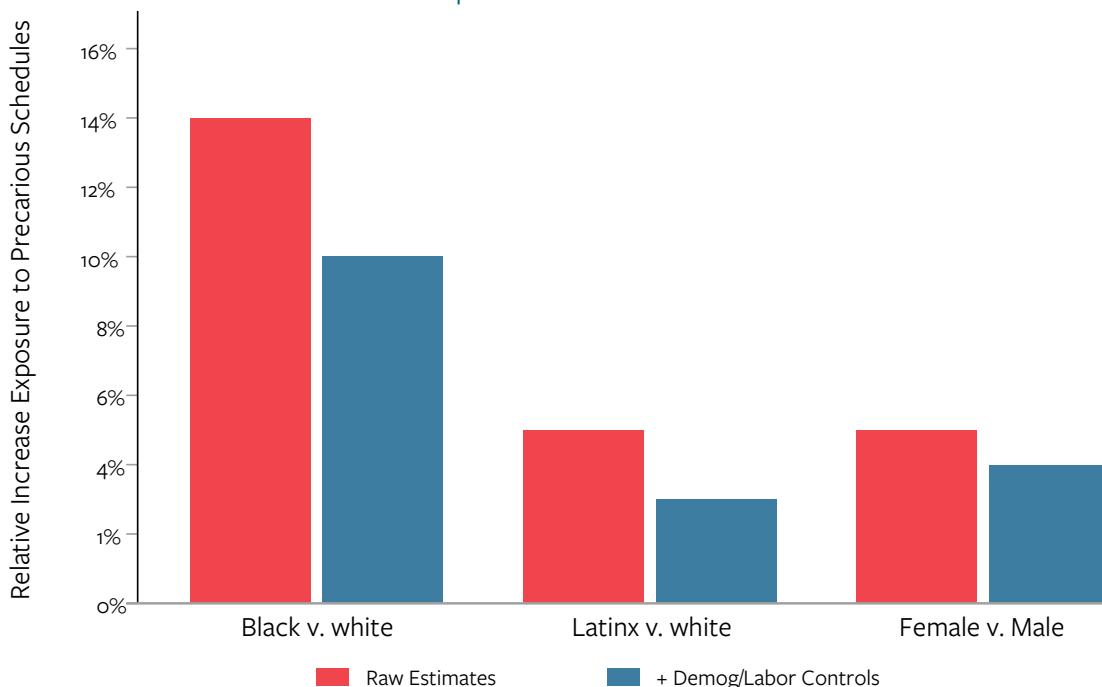
Workers with a 5 on the scale have the least stable schedules. These workers have less than two weeks’ notice, experience cancelled shifts, work on-call, work clopenings, and experience last-minute changes to the timing of shifts.

Inequality in Schedule Instability and Unpredictability

Looking across the set of unstable and unpredictable work scheduling practices, we find that Black workers experience 14% more instability and unpredictability than their white counterparts. (In other words, the number of types of schedule precarity is 14% higher for Black workers than for White workers.) Even after adjusting for worker characteristics, like education and job tenure, that could themselves be influenced by a discriminatory process, the gap is 10%. We find somewhat smaller gaps in schedule instability between white and Latinx workers – with Latinx workers exposed to 5% more instability (and just 3% more after adjusting for background characteristics). There are also small gender gaps that favor male workers.

These inequalities are also intersectional with women of color experiencing the highest levels of work schedule instability. This is especially so for Latina women. While overall, Latinx workers experience 5% more instability than their white counterparts, Latina women experience 15% more schedule instability than white men.

Figure 1. Black, Latinx, and Female Workers in California Have More Unstable and Unpredictable Work Schedules



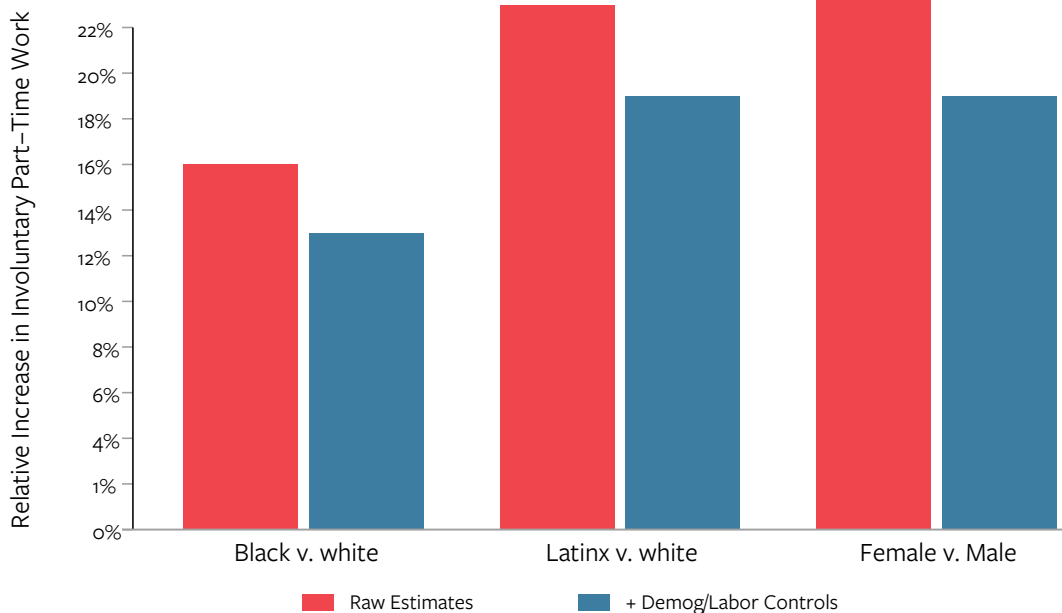
Inequality in Involuntary Part-Time Work

There are even larger disparities in involuntary part-time work among California workers along the lines of race/ethnicity and gender. While just 31% of white workers are involuntarily part-time, the share is significantly higher for 35% of Black workers and 37% for Latinx workers. These rates for Black and Latinx workers are 13% and 19% higher than for white workers, respectively. There is also an equally large gap in involuntary part-time work between male and

female workers, with 32% of men, but 38% of women reporting being involuntary part-time.

To an even greater extent than for work schedule instability, inequalities in involuntary part-time work are intersectional. The rate of involuntary part time work among white women is 10% higher than among white men. But, the rate among Black women is 23% higher than among white men and the rate among Latina women is 37% higher than among white men.

Figure 2. Black, Latinx, and Female Workers in California are More Likely to be Involuntary Part Time



The Costs of Unstable and Unpredictable Work Schedules

The “just in time” employer scheduling practices may serve to cut costs from firms’ payrolls, but these practices impose significant costs on workers and their families. Workers exposed to more unpredictable and unstable work schedules are less satisfied with their

jobs, more economically insecure, and report lower wellbeing.

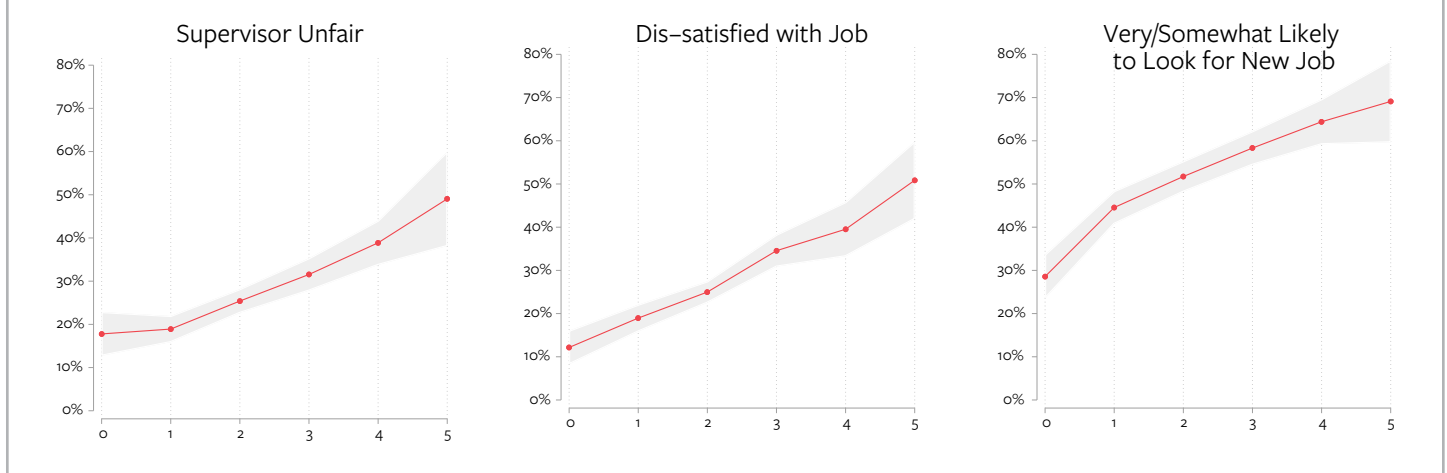
To assess the costs of unstable and unpredictable work schedules we examine relationships between the “precarious schedules” scale, in which high values indicate more numerous types of unstable and unpredictable schedules, and a set of consequences at work, for health, and for children.

Consequences at Work

Workers with more precarious schedules view their supervisors as less fair, are more dis-satisfied at work, and are more likely to plan to look for a new job.

These associations are very large. Workers with the most precarious schedules are twice as dis-satisfied and twice as likely to plan to look for a new job.

Figure 3. Workers with Unstable and Unpredictable Schedules are Less Satisfied with their Jobs



Consequences at Home

Precarious schedules are strongly associated with material hardship, but rates of hardship are very high even for workers with the most stable schedules. Among workers with the most stable schedules, one-quarter went hungry because they could not afford enough to eat and around 15% reported having insecure housing or not seeking medical care because

of the cost. Workers with more precarious schedules are about twice as likely to experience material hardship of each type. For instance, one-quarter of workers with the most stable and predictable schedules experienced hunger hardship compared with half of workers with the most unstable and unpredictable schedules.

Figure 4. Workers with Unstable and Unpredictable Schedules Experience More Material Hardship



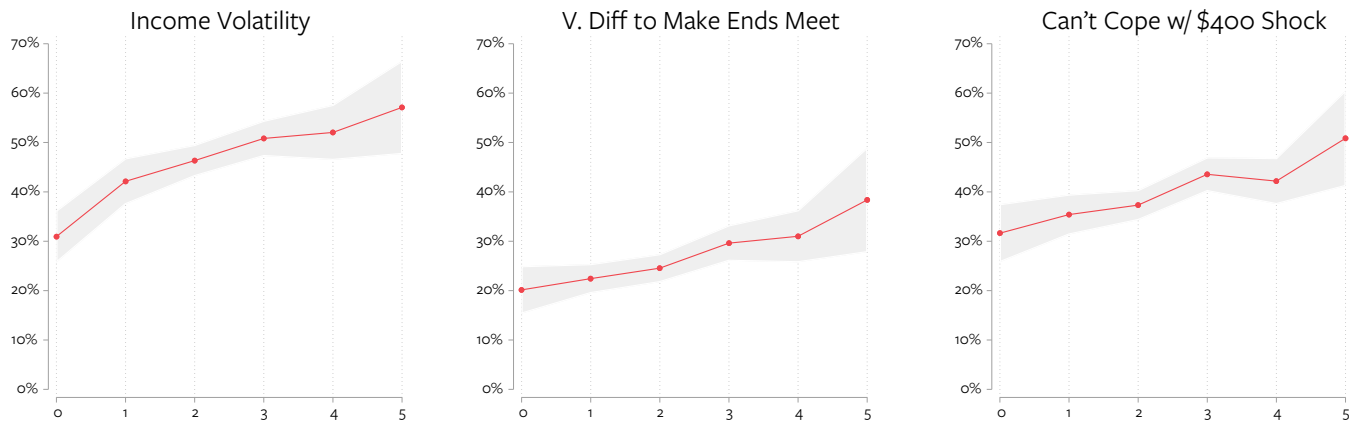
As a whole, California service sector workers report high levels of economic insecurity. Even among workers with the most stable schedules, about 30%

report income volatility, 20% report difficulty making ends meet, and over 30% report that they would be unable to cope with a \$400 expense shock.

Workers with more precarious schedules experience even higher levels of income volatility, difficulty making ends meet, and inability to cope with expense shocks. For example, where one-third of workers with the most stable and predictable schedules lacked

confidence in their capacity to cope with a \$400 expense shock, the share was 50% higher for those workers with the most unstable and unpredictable work schedules.

Figure 5. Workers with Unstable and Unpredictable Schedules are More Financially Insecure



Consequences for Health

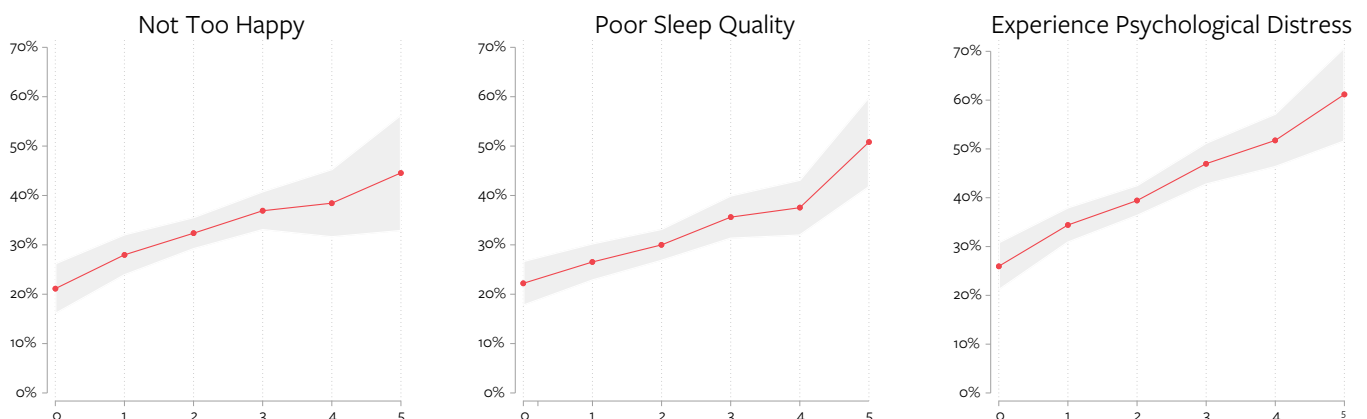
Precarious schedules take a toll on the health of California workers. Among those with the most stable schedules, about 1 in 5 workers report being unhappy and a similar share report poor sleep quality. The share reporting unhappiness or poor sleep is more than twice as high among workers with the least stable schedules. Reports of psychological distress are even more common. Even among workers with the most stable schedules, 25% report suffering from psychological distress. In comparison, a staggering

60% of workers with the least stable and predictable schedules report psychological distress.

It's stressful. Yeah, that's probably one of the biggest stress factors in my life is balancing my work schedule.

— Brian, a 26 year old retail employee employed at an electronics store, whose schedule changes day to day and week to week.

Figure 6. Workers with Unstable and Unpredictable Schedules Have Lower Wellbeing

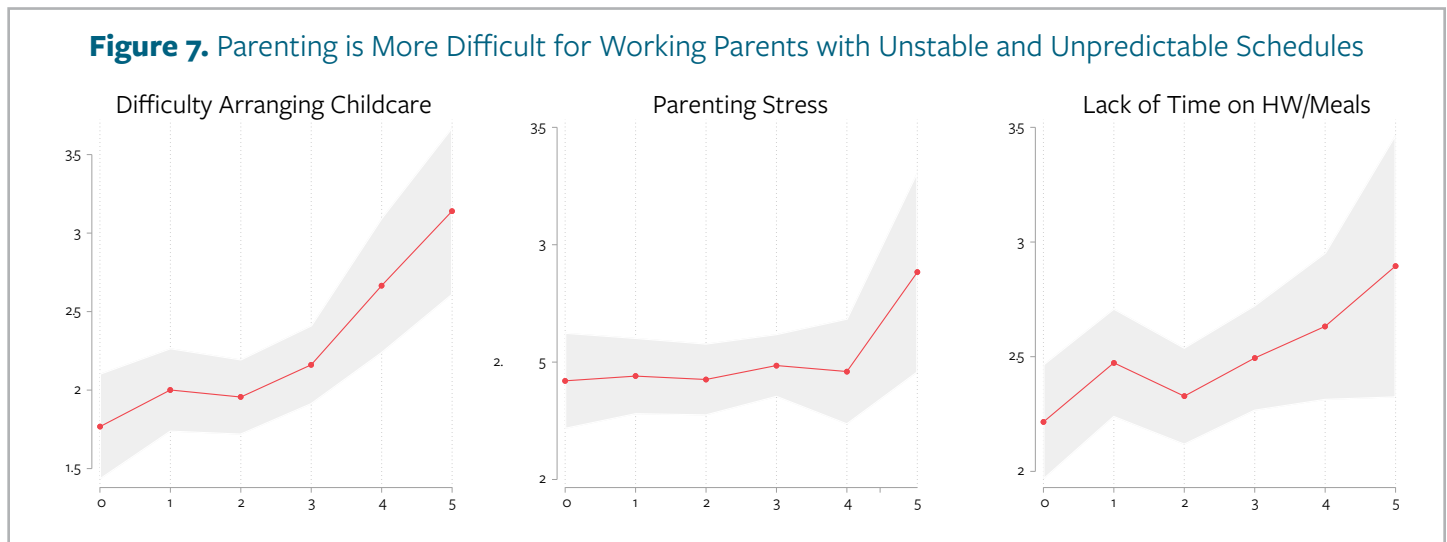


Consequences for Children

Precarious schedules may also have intergenerational consequences. The negative consequences of unstable and unpredictable work schedules may cascade from parents to children. Diminished parental wellbeing and increased financial strain may make it difficult for parents to provide the warm and supportive care that fosters healthy child development, and routine schedule instability may make it impossible for parents to establish the consistent and stable childcare arrangements under which children are most likely to thrive.

Parents exposed to unstable and unpredictable work schedules reported significantly more difficulty in arranging for childcare compared with parents at the same set of firms who had stable and predictable work schedules. Parents who experienced the highest levels of schedule unpredictability and instability were also more stressed as parents – more likely to report that they felt trapped by the responsibilities as a parent or that they often felt tired, worn out, or exhausted from raising a family. Finally, parents exposed to multiple sources of schedule instability and unpredictability spent less time helping their kids with homework or having family meals together.

Figure 7. Parenting is More Difficult for Working Parents with Unstable and Unpredictable Schedules



Avenues for Change

According to official statistics, the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic were some of the best on record for California workers, with record low levels of unemployment and even modest wage gains. But, when we look below the surface of these high-level statistics, we find a far more sobering reality of work in retail and food service.

While California service-sector workers did experience wage gains in the period preceding the coronavirus outbreak, these gains still left workers far short of the living wage needed to meet basic needs, given the high cost of living in California. During the outbreak, even the [temporary wage increases](#) that some employers offered to compensate workers for

the added risks of working during the pandemic fell far short of meeting workers' basic needs, let alone compensating them adequately for their personal risk.

California is one of [13 states](#) that mandate that employers provide some paid sick leave for workers, and this provision does seem to have had a meaningful effect on access to paid sick leave. Nearly three in four California hourly workers in the service sector reported access to paid sick leave. A prior [Shift Project report](#) shows that this is a far higher share than in states without paid sick leave legislation. However, this same report shows that, even among those with paid sick leave, the amount of leave time is rarely sufficient to cover a two-week period of illness or quarantine when exposed to the coronavirus.

When it comes to work schedules, the period preceding the coronavirus outbreak was characterized by rampant instability, unpredictability, and insufficiency of work hours. Although [San Francisco](#), [San Jose](#), and [Emeryville](#) have taken local action to try to combat this work-schedule instability, this is a dimension of job quality with little evidence of state-wide progress over time. Here, we also find racial and gender inequality in job conditions, with workers of color and women more likely to experience unstable and unpredictable schedules and more likely to be involuntarily working part-time. When we compare workers with the most and least stable work schedules, we see that these schedule conditions have widespread consequences for workers and families. Unstable and unpredictable work schedules are strongly associated with material hardships, economic insecurity, worse health, and child care and parenting challenges.

Raise the Floor

California has taken some steps toward “raising the floor” for workers by mandating higher wages and some paid sick leave. For instance, in California, we find that 71% of hourly service sector workers reported access to paid sick leave against just 45% of workers at the same firms in states without paid sick leave laws. Mandating better job quality can lead to meaningful improvements.

But, could legislation effectively move the needle on work schedule instability, unpredictability, and insufficiency? [New evidence](#) from Seattle suggests that it could. Seattle’s Secure Scheduling Ordinance went into effect in July of 2017 and mandated that service sector workers receive at least two weeks’ notice of their schedules, discouraged shift cancellation, last minute timing changes, on-call shifts, and clopening shifts by providing for predictability pay for such practices, and encouraged access to sufficient work hours by requiring employers to offer new shifts to existing workers before hiring more part-timers.

We found that just eight months after implementation, the Secure Scheduling Ordinance had increased by 20 percent the proportion of workers receiving at least two weeks’ advanced notice of their work schedule

and doubled the proportion of workers receiving compensation for schedule changes with short notice. For other scheduling dimensions such as cancelled shifts, on-call shifts, and clopening shifts, changes were more modest or had not yet begun to appear after eight months. A longer-term impact report will assess effects two years after the ordinance went into effect.

Take the High Road

Companies use “just-in-time” scheduling practices such as limited advance notice, on-call shifts, and last minute cancellations and timing changes to keep payroll costs as low as possible. In the low-margin world of brick-and-mortar retail and food service, one could imagine that these practices are a business imperative, that all firms must take a low-road approach to scheduling to make the economics work.

When we look at workers’ experiences with work scheduling firm by firm, we see that this story of low-road inevitability is simply untrue. Among service sector firms, and even among firms in the same sub-sector, we see very different approaches to work scheduling, with some firms embracing a model of schedule instability, unpredictability, and insufficiency and others providing far more stable, predictable, sufficient schedules to their workers.

At Home Depot, 86% of workers get at least two weeks’ notice of their schedules, as do 75% of workers at Costco and Trader Joe’s – compared to just 38% of workers at other large firms in the service sector in California. At Costco, Trader Joe’s, and Home Depot approximately 15% of workers report at least one cancelled shift in the prior month, against 21% at other firms. And, at Home Depot, Costco, and Trader Joe’s, between 19% and 26% of workers are involuntarily part-time, compared with 37% of workers at other firms.

These three firms stand out for providing greater work schedule stability, predictability, and sufficiency. Workers’ experiences at these firms shows that there is a business case for less precarious scheduling.

Conclusion

During the coronavirus outbreak of 2020, many service sector workers are experiencing precarious and dangerous working conditions and other workers are finding themselves suddenly with reduced hours or out of work. Those workers who have been deemed “essential” in grocery, pharmacy, and delivery sectors are being lauded as heroes and members of the front-line during the pandemic. This new appreciation has drawn attention to the precarious conditions that these workers face. A week or two away from work because of illness would push many of these workers over a perilous financial cliff. In the short term, expansion of paid leave and rapid response from safety net programs such as Unemployment Insurance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will be critical stop-gap measures in addressing widespread and potentially dire hunger, housing, and health hardships.

However and importantly, even in the strong economy of 2019, these same service sector workers were already in a precarious position – often earning low wages, lacking benefits, working erratic schedules, and underemployed -- but less attention was paid to this everyday precarity in the period preceding the coronavirus crisis.

In the middle of 2020, we are still early in the crisis response and the timing of a return to business as usual may be a long time coming. Nevertheless, as service sector workers resume or continue to provide essential services, policymakers and employers have decisions to make about compensation, benefits, and work schedules. Some decisions around expanded compensation, benefits, and protections on a temporary, emergency basis, but there are also longer-term choices to grapple with.

During the strong, pre-coronavirus economy, many service sectors workers were treated as “ideal workers” unfettered by any needs or demands outside of work. The unwritten expectation often seemed to be that workers should be open and available for work, and that work should take precedence over sleep, school, family, or any other pursuits. The Shift Project data allow us to reveal the widespread consequences of

this orientation for worker satisfaction, economic security, health, and for their children.

As we anticipate an eventual economic recovery, policymakers and employers have an opportunity to reassess the value of service sector work and what constitutes fair compensation and conditions for workers. The Shift Project offers some lessons from an examination of job conditions for workers in the period leading up to the coronavirus outbreak.

- ▶ Hourly wages are an important dimension of job quality, but far from the only important dimension.
- ▶ Access to paid leave is an important worker and public health measure at all times, not just during a pandemic. California has played a leading role in requiring paid leave for all employees, but there is still room for improvement. Few workers have enough paid leave to protect them, their families, and the public during the coronavirus pandemic or a seasonal flu outbreak. Expanding paid leave to two weeks per year for every worker and removing medical documentation hurdles would be worthwhile next steps.
- ▶ Alongside wages and benefits, the work schedule dimension of job quality is highly salient for workers and strongly linked to economic, health, and well-being outcomes. Valuing the time of workers providing essential services involves hourly wages, but also encompasses the notice workers receive of when they are needed for work, the control workers have over the amount and timing of their work, and the regularity of the amount and timing of work shifts.

The coronavirus crisis has taught us that service sector work is a lynchpin of our economy and essential for the basic needs of our population. The disruption of the coronavirus offers an opportunity to recognize the value of service sector work and to strike a new bargain for workers – raising the floor on wages, offering access to full-time work, respecting workers’ time by providing advance notice, and making paid leave accessible for all workers. ■

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Methodological Appendix

The Shift Project has collected survey data from hourly service sector workers employed at large retail and food establishments since the fall of 2016. This brief focused on a subsample of 7,850 hourly service sector workers in California employed at 93 of the largest service-sector firms who were interviewed between September of 2017 and November of 2019.

The Shift Project recruits survey respondents using online Facebook/Instagram advertisements, targeted to workers employed at large retail and food service employers. Those who responded to the Shift survey invitation were automatically routed to a survey landing page where they were asked to consent to participate in the study, then began the online self-administered survey using the Qualtrics platform. As an incentive, those who completed the survey and provided contact information were entered into a lottery for an Apple iPad. The survey included modules on job characteristics, work schedules, demographics, economic stability, health, parenting, and child outcomes. To screen out invalid survey responses, we used an attention filter (a question that instructed respondents to select a particular response category to verify the accuracy of their responses) as

well as a speed filter (discarding data for surveys that were completed too hastily).

The survey recruitment approach yields a non-probability sample of workers, which may differ from the broader population of service sector workers. Therefore, the estimates in this brief may differ somewhat from the broader population of workers. To mitigate this potential bias, we have applied weights that adjust our sample to reflect the universe of service sector workers in California. These weights are constructed in two stages.

First, we construct survey weights to adjust the demographic characteristics of the Shift survey sample to match the demographic characteristics of California service-sector workers in the American Community Survey (ACS) for the years 2008-2017. We align the ACS sample with the Shift sample by selecting workers in the ACS who are employed in the same occupations and industries as the Shift sample.

Second, to ensure that our sample accurately reflects the distribution of employment types among large retail and food-service employers, we use data from the Reference USA database of U.S. establishments. The RefUSA database contains a detailed listing of all retail and food establishments nationally. RefUSA contains the size of the workforce for each establishment, which we aggregate up to the firm level for the state of California. Then, using the aggregated RefUSA employer data, we weight our Shift survey sample to match the distribution of workers by firm. In our analysis of job quality, we estimate weighted (using the combined demographic and employer size weights) unadjusted descriptive statistics. In our analysis of racial/ethnic and gender inequality in work schedules, we present predicted levels from weighted regression models that first adjust for just race/ethnicity and gender, and then also adjust for educational attainment, school enrollment, age, marital status, having children, union membership, job tenure, and being a manager as well as month and year fixed-effects. In our analysis of the association between work schedules and worker and family wellbeing, we present predicted levels from

weighted regression models that adjust for race/ethnicity and gender, educational attainment, school enrollment, age, marital status, having children, union membership, job tenure, being a manager, household income, and hourly wage as well as month and year fixed-effects.

For a detailed discussion of The Shift Project data collection, methodology, and data validation, see: Schneider, D. and K. Harknett. 2019. "What's to Like? Facebook as a Tool for Survey Data Collection." *Sociological Methods & Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124119882477>.