

The Company Wage Tracker: Estimates of Wages at 66 Large Service Sector Employers

Low wages are widespread in the service-sector – a sector that makes up [nearly 20%](#) of the nation’s workforce. While the COVID-19 crisis has focused public and policy attention on the service-sector, workers in retail, food service, big box stores, pharmacy, hardware, delivery, grocery and other subsectors continue to labor under [precarious working conditions](#). Workers struggle with a lack of [paid sick leave](#), unstable and unpredictable work schedules, and low wages.

In this brief, we report wage distributions for hourly workers at 66 large service-sector firms, using unique survey data collected from Facebook and Instagram users between March 2021 and November 2021 by the Shift Project. [The Company Wage Tracker](#) provides a visual way to compare company’s wage distributions and corporate financials.

At a high-level, the Company Wage Tracker shows:

- **Wages are low throughout the service sector but vary across sectors.** Overall, 56% of hourly service sector workers make less than \$15 per hour and 25% make less than \$12 per hour across 66 large companies. The hospitality sector had the lowest wages with 73% of workers making less than \$15 per hour. Workers were paid the most in the delivery sector where only 8% of workers made less than \$15 per hour.
- **Wages vary across companies within sectors, showing that low wages are not inevitable.** In the food service sector, for example, In-N-Out Burgers stands out with only 9% of workers making below \$15 per hour, compared to the sector average of 63%. In the grocery sector, 1%

of Whole Foods workers make under \$15 per hour, compared to the average 49%. In the retail sector, Target and Costco stand out with below 3% making under \$15 per hour, compared to the average 60%.

- **The lowest wages are most prevalent in the food service and hospitality sectors.** Overall, 13% of food service and hospitality workers make under \$10 per hour, compared to under 4% in retail, grocery, pharmacy, and delivery sectors. A few food service employers stand out with particularly low wages: Between 23 and 25% of workers at McDonald’s, Subway, Pizza Hut and Waffle House make under \$10 per hour.
- **Some firms with the highest CEO pay and revenue pay workers the least.** At one extreme of these 66 firms, Dollar General’s CEO has the third highest pay, at \$58.5 million per year while Dollar General has the highest proportion of workers making below \$15 per hour (92%).

As the federal minimum wage has remained stagnant at \$7.25 per hour for over a decade, workers have increasingly counted on companies to provide for anything that approaches a living wage. Public attention is often drawn to high-profile firms that announce voluntary higher-than-minimum wage floors, but a lack of available data often prevents a systematic understanding of how much service sector workers are paid across the large profitable firms that dominate these industries.

Beginning in the fall of 2016, [The Shift Project](#) has, twice per year, collected survey data from thousands of workers employed at large service-sector companies in the United States. The Shift Project

survey provides unique insight into job conditions for workers at large companies, including hourly wages and tipped wages, and The Shift Project’s linked data structure allows for unprecedented insight into the wage structure of these firms, by name.

The Shift Project recruits survey respondents using online Facebook and Instagram advertisements, targeted to workers employed at specific large retail and food-service employers. These ads appear in the newsfeeds of workers employed at a particular company, such as McDonald’s, display a picture tailored to their workplace setting, and include a headline, “Working at McDonald’s? Take a Short Survey and Tell us About your Job!”. Those who responded to the Shift survey invitation and consented to participate were asked to confirm their current employer, then were asked questions about job characteristics and other outcomes, including wages. The Shift Project has used these survey responses to analyze [work schedules](#), [paid sick leave](#), and other [working conditions](#).

For more information, visit us at:
shift.hks.harvard.edu

Access the EPI Company Wage Tracker at:
www.epi.org/company-wage-tracker

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Table 1. Wage Distributions and Employer Characteristics (by employer)

● Food ● Grocery ● Retail ● Hospitality ● Delivery ● Pharmacy

Employer	Under \$10	\$10 - \$12	\$12 - \$14	\$14 - \$16	\$16 - \$18	\$18 - \$20	At least \$20	Under \$15	Employment	Revenue (\$mil)	CEO Pay (\$mil)
Ace Hardware	6%	27%	25%	23%	8%	6%	5%	71%	38,464	8,594.2	NA
Albertsons	1%	9%	16%	21%	21%	13%	21%	36%	131,158	70,275.8	NA
Aldi	0%	0%	16%	41%	14%	9%	21%	36%	20,945	NA	NA
Amazon	0%	0%	0%	27%	40%	19%	13%	0%	1,298,000	386,064.0	212.7
Applebees	10%	10%	14%	17%	17%	8%	24%	42%	112,137	689.3	1.7
Arby's	14%	35%	26%	15%	8%	1%	1%	84%	68,607	3,884.0	NA
Bath & Body Works	1%	29%	38%	20%	9%	1%	3%	80%	32,012	12,914.0	5.3
Best Western	15%	32%	23%	18%	5%	3%	4%	77%	41,725	NA	NA
Big Lots	7%	31%	31%	19%	8%	1%	3%	80%	37,000	6,199.2	5.3
Burger King	17%	30%	25%	20%	4%	1%	2%	83%	191,698	3,834.4	4.7
Chick-Fil-A	11%	27%	24%	19%	11%	4%	4%	72%	111,163	NA	NA
Chipotle	3%	13%	27%	23%	21%	10%	3%	54%	54,508	5,984.6	60.7
Costco	0%	1%	0%	1%	32%	12%	53%	1%	126,439	166,761.0	17.2
Cracker Barrel	13%	24%	18%	14%	10%	6%	16%	61%	77,315	2,522.8	5.5
CVS	0%	4%	20%	19%	33%	8%	16%	32%	191,712	268,399.0	15.1
DHL	0%	0%	3%	27%	32%	16%	21%	9%	NA	NA	NA
Dollar General	22%	35%	27%	12%	2%	1%	1%	92%	119,904	33,746.8	58.5
Domino's	9%	18%	19%	18%	13%	10%	14%	53%	105,168	4,117.4	17.1
Dunkin Donuts	8%	21%	26%	26%	13%	3%	2%	68%	117,818	1,308.0	NA
Express	0%	9%	14%	21%	17%	17%	22%	32%	18,759	1,208.4	1.0
Fedex	0%	0%	8%	18%	19%	15%	40%	14%	577,000	83,959.0	39.7
Food Lion	15%	33%	21%	13%	8%	7%	3%	77%	64,124	NA	NA
GameStop	15%	16%	25%	9%	21%	6%	8%	61%	26,562	5,089.8	2.0
Gap	4%	42%	20%	11%	7%	5%	11%	72%	126,646	13,800.0	3.6
Hannaford	0%	3%	4%	47%	21%	10%	15%	25%	62,782	NA	NA
HEB	1%	3%	38%	20%	19%	11%	6%	56%	23,767	NA	NA
Home Depot	0%	2%	22%	29%	17%	10%	18%	42%	345,139	132,110.0	39.2
IHOP	14%	16%	17%	18%	11%	7%	15%	58%	74,242	689.3	1.7
In-N-Out Burgers	0%	0%	2%	22%	36%	26%	14%	9%	21,017	6.6	NA
Jimmy John's	15%	22%	22%	18%	7%	5%	10%	69%	49,382	NA	NA
Kohls	7%	41%	24%	12%	8%	5%	3%	78%	135,334	15,955.0	12.7
Kroger/QFC	2%	18%	21%	18%	20%	11%	9%	48%	268,544	132,498.0	18.0
LongHorn Steakhouse	3%	4%	8%	13%	15%	9%	48%	19%	156,883	7,196.1	19.5
Lowe's	0%	5%	31%	28%	14%	7%	15%	51%	244,806	89,597.0	7.3
Marriott	3%	21%	21%	21%	12%	6%	16%	55%	263,023	10,635.0	9.9
Marshalls	3%	46%	25%	16%	6%	2%	3%	85%	136,314	32,137.0	14.6
McDonald's	23%	35%	22%	14%	3%	1%	1%	89%	670,760	19,207.8	3.2
Meijer	1%	14%	42%	31%	5%	3%	5%	77%	88,167	NA	NA
Michaels	5%	26%	26%	24%	12%	6%	1%	69%	43,193	5,271.1	8.9
Olive Garden	6%	10%	14%	15%	15%	8%	33%	38%	101,285	7,196.1	19.5
Panera	5%	22%	25%	23%	14%	5%	6%	62%	72,031	NA	NA
Papa John's	16%	20%	23%	19%	10%	5%	5%	70%	67,477	1,813.2	2.9
Pizza Hut	25%	27%	18%	12%	7%	3%	8%	75%	186,028	5,652.0	8.7
Price Chopper	1%	8%	35%	17%	7%	11%	22%	49%	12,905	NA	NA
Publix	0%	14%	34%	21%	12%	11%	7%	60%	169,199	47,996.6	NA
Red Lobster	9%	8%	10%	16%	17%	8%	31%	34%	61,951	7,196.1	19.5
Rite Aid	4%	24%	31%	17%	9%	7%	8%	68%	33,457	24,043.2	3.6
Ross	0%	40%	34%	22%	4%	0%	1%	86%	58,509	12,531.6	15.5
Safeway	1%	3%	17%	22%	15%	18%	24%	35%	126,000	70,275.8	NA
Sonic	22%	32%	25%	13%	6%	1%	2%	85%	98,377	NA	NA
Speedway	4%	43%	22%	24%	4%	2%	2%	84%	NA	NA	NA
Starbucks	1%	26%	26%	22%	14%	6%	5%	63%	225,529	23,518.0	5.1
Stop & Shop	0%	4%	40%	20%	12%	2%	22%	56%	55,356	NA	NA
Subway	23%	24%	22%	14%	9%	4%	3%	78%	213,506	NA	NA
Taco Bell	14%	31%	28%	16%	6%	1%	5%	81%	162,469	5,652.0	8.7
Target	0%	0%	2%	82%	6%	4%	4%	3%	305,538	93,561.0	77.0
Tractor Supply Co.	0%	29%	31%	24%	7%	3%	6%	74%	33,500	8,351.9	12.0
UPS	0%	1%	0%	17%	9%	10%	63%	10%	543,000	84,628.0	0.7
Victoria's Secret	0%	19%	28%	26%	19%	3%	6%	56%	44,378	12,914.0	5.3
Waffle House	24%	17%	17%	21%	8%	5%	9%	66%	42,473	NA	NA
Walgreens	0%	13%	21%	28%	13%	8%	15%	51%	202,074	139,537.0	5.1
Walmart	0%	14%	24%	29%	16%	8%	9%	51%	1,387,139	556,933.0	34.3
Wegmans	0%	5%	25%	32%	14%	12%	12%	50%	60,839	NA	NA
Wendy's	17%	34%	26%	17%	6%	0%	2%	87%	160,140	1,733.8	13.1
Whole Foods	0%	1%	1%	36%	27%	12%	24%	1%	82,108	386,064.0	212.7
Wyndham	22%	34%	23%	13%	5%	1%	1%	87%	105,794	1,300.0	2.8
Total	7%	18%	21%	21%	13%	7%	13%	56%	170,051	61,541.9	24.6

Table 2. Wage Distributions and Employer Characteristics (by sector)

Industry	Under \$10	\$10 - \$12	\$12 - \$14	\$14 - \$16	\$16 - \$18	\$18 - \$20	At least \$20	Under \$15	Employment	Revenue (\$bn)	CEO Pay (\$mil)
Delivery	0%	0%	3%	22%	25%	15%	34%	8%	806,000	184.88	84.39
Food	13%	21%	20%	18%	12%	6%	11%	63%	133,415	5.68	12.74
Grocery	2%	11%	24%	26%	14%	9%	14%	49%	89,684	141.42	115.36
Hospitality	13%	29%	22%	17%	7%	3%	7%	73%	136,847	5.97	6.36
Pharmacy	1%	14%	24%	21%	18%	8%	13%	50%	142,414	143.99	7.93
Retail	4%	23%	24%	23%	12%	5%	10%	60%	181,091	67.09	18.81

Methodological Appendix

Data were collected by The Shift Project between March and November 2021. The Shift Project has collected survey data from hourly service sector workers employed at large retail and food establishments since the fall of 2016. The data presented here is based on a subsample of 20,933 hourly service sector workers employed at 66 of the largest food service and retail firms who were interviewed between March 2021 and November 2021. The surveys were completed in two waves: the spring wave in March, April, and May of 2021 (N=11,498) and the Fall wave in September, October, and November of 2021 (N=9,435). The survey data collection was national in scope and the survey sample includes respondents from all 50 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. Uniquely, The Shift Project data identify the firm at which each respondent works and contains substantial numbers of respondents at each of the 66 firms described here. The average number of respondents per firm is 317.

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 drawing for a \$500 Amazon gift card. 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).

Total employee counts at each firm are estimated from Reference Solutions data that The Shift Project purchased and processed. These counts pertain to workers employed at each firm in the United States, excluding corporate offices. CEO pay was collected by EPI using Compustat data. CEO pay refers to total realized compensation, including salaries and benefits and realized or vested stock options. Revenue estimates come from Compustat data or, when unavailable, Capital IQ. Revenues are generally sales for U.S. operations but may sometimes include subsidiaries and also some international operations. Wages are non-inclusive at the upper boundary. For example, the range \$10-\$12 includes wages ranging from \$10 to just under \$12.

Hourly wage percentiles are constructed from respondents' hourly wage and tips data. In addition to their hourly wage, respondents are also asked whether they are paid tips and how much. 23% of workers in the sample report receiving tips, concentrated in food service. For workers who report receiving tips in addition to their hourly wage, tips are added in after converting usual weekly tips to estimated hourly tips. If workers report their usual hours worked in a week: $\text{hourlywage_including_tips} = \text{hourlywage} + (\text{weekly_tips} / \text{usual_weekly_hours})$. For workers who did not respond to the usual weekly hours question, we take the employer-season mean usual weekly hours and divide by that: $\text{hourlywage_including_tips} = \text{hourlywage} + (\text{weekly_tips} / \text{employer_average_usual_weekly_hours})$.

Workers are asked the following questions about their wages:

Hourly Wage: *“How much are you paid per hour at [EMPLOYER NAME]? Please enter dollars per hour (for example, if you earn \$10 per hour, enter 10.00).”*

Tips (Spring 2021): *“In addition to your hourly wage, do you receive extra tips?”*

With response options: *“Yes, I receive tips”* and *“No, I don't get tips”*

Tips (Fall 2021): *“Does that include any tips you might receive at [EMPLOYER NAME]?”*

With response options: *“Yes”, “No, I get tips in addition to my hourly wage”,* and *“No, I don't get tips”*

Amount Tips : *“Please enter the amount you usually earn in tips per week at [EMPLOYER NAME]. Please enter a dollar amount (for example, if you earn \$100 in tips per week, enter 100).”*

Usual Weekly Hours: *“How many hours per week do you usually work at [EMPLOYER NAME]? Please enter a number between 0 and 80 hours per week.”*

In Spring 2021, workers are routed to the Amount Tips question if they answered “Yes, I receive tips” in the Tips question. In Fall 2021, workers are routed to the Amount Tips question if they answered “No, I get tips in addition to my hourly wage”. Workers who responded “Yes” to Tips in Fall 2021 are removed from the sample since we did not collect their corresponding weekly tips; they make up 4% of respondents to the tips question.

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. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0049124119882477>.

Additional peer-reviewed articles using the Shift Project data are listed below:

- » Mariana Amorin and Daniel Schneider. Forthcoming. “Schedule Unpredictability and the Use of High-Cost Financial Services: The Case of Service Workers.” Sociological Science.
- » Josh Chopper, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett. 2021. “[Uncertain Time: Precarious Schedules and Job Turnover in the U.S. Service Sector.](#)” ILR Review.
- » Julia Goodman and Daniel Schneider. 2021. “[The Effects of Paid Medical and Caregiving Leave on the Economic Security and Wellbeing of Service Sector Workers.](#)” BMC Public Health.
- » Kristen Harknett, Daniel Schneider, and Veronique Irwin. 2021. “[Evaluating the Impacts of the Seattle Secure Scheduling Ordinance.](#)” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
- » Daniel Schneider, Elmer Vivas Portillo, and Kristen Harknett. 2021. “[Under Pressure: Evidence from New Employer Provision of Paid Sick Leave at Olive Garden.](#)” Health Affairs.
- » Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett. 2021. “[Maternal Exposure to Work Schedule Uncertainty and Child Behavior.](#)” Journal of Marriage and Family.
- » Kristen Harknett, Daniel Schneider, and Rebecca Wolfe. 2020. “[Losing Sleep over Work Scheduling? The Relationship between Work Schedules and Sleep Quality for Service Sector Workers.](#)” SSM Population Health.
- » Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett. 2020. “[Hard Times: Routine Schedule Unpredictability and Material Hardship among Service Sector Workers.](#)” Social Forces.
- » Kristen Harknett, Daniel Schneider, and Sigrid Luhr. 2020. “[Who Cares if Parents have Unpredictable Work Schedules? The Association between Just-in-Time Work Schedules and Child Care Arrangements.](#)” Social Problems.
- » Adam Storer, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett. 2020. “[Race/Ethnic Gaps in Service-Sector Job Quality: Firm Sorting and Organizational Dynamics.](#)” American Sociological Review.
- » Daniel Schneider. 2020. “[Paid Sick Leave in Washington State: Evidence on Employee Outcomes.](#)” American Journal of Public Health.
- » Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett. 2019. “[Consequences of Routine Schedule Instability for Worker Health and Wellbeing.](#)” American Sociological Review.

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- 3 Schneider, Daniel and Kristen Harknett. 2020. “Essential and Vulnerable: Service-Sector Workers and Paid Sick Leave” Shift Project Research Brief. <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/essential-and-vulnerable-service-sector-workers-and-paid-sick-leave/>
- 4 Economic Policy Institute. 2022. “Company Wage Tracker: Estimates of Wages at 66 Large Service Sector Firms.” www.epi.org/company-wage-tracker/
- 5 Schneider, D. and K. Harknett. 2019. “What’s to Like?” Facebook as a Tool for Survey Data Collection.” Sociological Methods & Research. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0049124119882477>