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Dear friends and colleagues,

As we celebrate Labor Day, this newsletter highlights the Shift Project's recent research on labor conditions for hourly workers. In new articles, we build the evidence base on the effects of fair workweek laws across the country, show how unstable work schedules undermine marital relationships and other social ties, and present new data on the effects of punitive points-based attendance policies. In research briefs, we spotlight a surprising political consensus in what workers say it would take to make ends meet, and debut a new tool for evaluating employer paid sick leave compliance.

On this Labor Day, we want to acknowledge and thank each of the workers who have shared their experiences with us and made this research possible.

Warm regards,
The Shift Project Team

NYC and Shift Collaborate to Enhance PSL Enforcement

[Benchmarks for Evaluating Compliance with Protected Time Off Laws](#). Mike Papadopoulos and Daniel Schneider (2026). *Shift Project Research Brief*.



A new joint report by the Shift Project and the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection provides new tools to detect violations of Paid Sick Leave laws by comparing actual leave-taking against national benchmarks. This work was supported by the Bloomberg Center and Harvard Impact Labs.



This approach aims to streamline the work of municipal enforcement bodies like DCWP in uncovering employer noncompliance with PSL laws.

"How are you going to make sure these laws actually have force?... What this tool is really intended to do is say, 'Look, here's the benchmark.'"

— Sam Levine, DCWP Commissioner

A New Minimum: Workers Agree on \$24/hr and 40 hrs/week to Make Ends Meet



[What Do Workers Want and Need: Partisan Consensus on What it Takes to Make Ends Meet](#). Daniel Schneider, David Weil, and Kristen Harknett (2026). *Shift Project Research Brief*.

While the federal minimum wage has stayed stagnant at \$7.25 per hour for over a decade, everyday costs have continued to rise. This Shift report asked service workers what it would take to make ends meet. The study found that respondents overwhelmingly supported a \$15-dollar minimum wage, however, they reported needing \$24 an hour for 40 hours a week to get by.



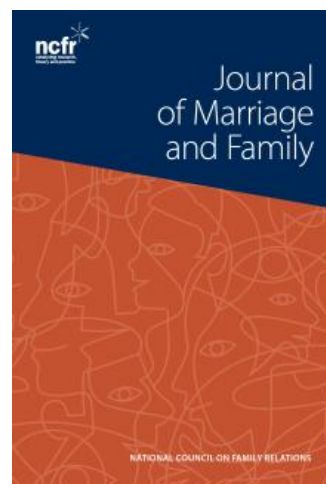
Respondents all broadly agreed on the \$24 an hour for 40 hours a week standard, regardless of political party. The results show that the experience of low-wage work creates uniform policy demands that outweigh partisan divisions.

Check out some short [explainers videos](#) on the report!

Schedule Instability Undermines Social Connection

[Predictably Unstable?: Precarious Work and Precarious Relationships in the U.S.](#) Kristen Harknett, Kevin Bruey, and Elizabeth Kuhlman (2026). *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Unstable schedules create difficult work conditions that spillover into workers' personal lives. Using Shift Project data, this study finds that last minute timing changes, on-call work schedules, and other features of chaotic worker schedules are predictive of breakups and divorces.



[The Double Bind of Precarious Work: Creating Need and Undermining Support](#). Tyler Woods, Kristen Harknett, and Daniel Schneider (2026). *Sociological Science*.

In this paper, the authors examine the interplay between precarious working conditions and supportive social ties. The study demonstrates a vicious cycle faced by low-wage workers: schedule instability undermines workers' social support while simultaneously heightening the need for it.



Fair Workweek Laws and the Benefits of Protecting Workers' Schedules



[Fair Workweek Laws in the US: An Appraisal of Intended and Unintended Consequences.](#) Daniel Schneider, Kristen Harknett, and David Arbelaez (2026). *Social Advances*.

Using data collected from four major U.S. cities and one state before and after their passage of Fair Workweek (FWW) ordinances, this article provides robust evidence that FWW regulations led to improved schedule conditions: increasing advance notice and time to rest between shifts and reducing last-minute schedule changes. The authors find no evidence that these improvements in schedules led to countervailing retrenchment in other aspects of job quality, such as wages and fringe benefits. The results reveal substantial heterogeneity across jurisdictions, pointing to the importance of local enforcement in realizing policy goals.

[How Well is Fair Workweek Working? A Review of Existing Research.](#) Daniel Schneider, Kevin Bruey, and Kristen Harknett (2026). *Shift Project Research Brief*.

This research brief provides a comprehensive synthesis of the existing research evidence on the effects of Fair Workweek laws. The authors' review of the research documents improvements to schedule conditions and worker sleep quality, and reductions in material hardship.

[A recent story](#) published by NPR cited The Shift Project as it highlighted the dangers that FWW laws attempt to guard against and the harsh conditions that hourly workers not covered by FWW laws continue to face. In addition, [other outlets](#) have also reported on The Shift Project's FWW research.



The Health Risks of Points-Based Attendance Systems



[The Prevalence and Consequences of Punitive Time and Attendance Policies in the Food and Retail Industries](#). Kess Ballentine, Meredith Slopen, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett (2026). *Community, Work & Family*.

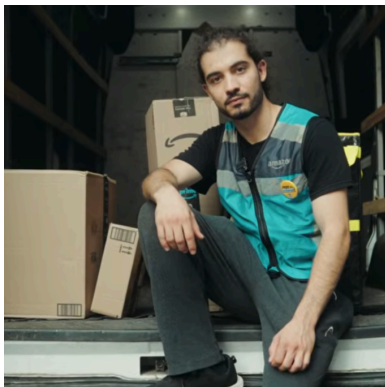
Two out of 5 hourly service sector workers are subject to punitive attendance systems. Under these systems, workers with poor health are disproportionately likely to accrue points. Workers penalized through point systems have worse employment and well-being outcomes, raising the concern that point systems may compound the disadvantages faced by workers with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

[Points-Based Attendance Systems Associated With Presenteeism Despite Paid Sick Leave Protections](#). Meredith Slopen, Kess Ballentine, Kristen Harknett, and Daniel Schneider (2026). *Health Affairs*.

This paper shows that workplace points-based attendance systems are associated with large increases in workers attending work despite being sick, a phenomenon known as presenteeism. This effect persists among workers who have and have not accrued points. Because this relationship between points systems and presenteeism exists regardless of local paid sick leave mandates, these results suggest additional outreach to covered workers and employers and stronger enforcement efforts may be needed.



NYC to Create Greater Protections for Amazon Delivery Drivers



New York City is considering the [Delivery Protection Act](#), a proposal that would require certain last-mile delivery facilities to obtain city licenses, establish stronger safety and labor standards, and hold companies such as Amazon accountable for the working conditions shaped by their delivery operations. The bill, backed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani, would also challenge Amazon's subcontracting model by requiring greater responsibility for the workers who deliver its packages.

The proposal is closely aligned with themes raised in our testimony to the New York City Council in May and in our recent report, [Amazon Drives Low Wages: The Unraveling of Workplace Protections for Delivery Drivers](#). Drawing on Shift Project data, the report finds that Amazon delivery workers earn substantially less than unionized UPS drivers—an average of \$19 per hour compared with \$35—and face more unstable schedules, fewer benefits, and intense technological surveillance. Twenty-six percent of Amazon delivery workers reported going hungry because they could not afford enough food, while thirty-three percent reported being unable to pay a utility bill.



The legislation and the research have received growing national attention, including coverage of remarks by Shift Project collaborator [David Weil](#) in [Bloomberg](#) and [The Next Web](#).

Bloomberg



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Team Updates

We are happy to announce three new additions to the Shift Project team! Taylor Watson has joined us as our new postdoctoral fellow and Michael Schmitz and Sydney Pugh have joined us as our two new predoctoral research fellows.



Taylor Watson



Michael Schmitz



Sydney Pugh

The Shift Project

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