

LOW WAGE NATION

**Nearly half of new jobs don't pay
enough to make ends meet**



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The Alliance's Job Gap Economic Prosperity series examines the ability of working families to move beyond living paycheck-to-paycheck in today's economy, seeking to understand both the barriers keeping families from achieving economic prosperity and what actions policymakers can take to help families and communities thrive. www.thejobgap.org

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LOW WAGE NATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly half of new jobs don't pay enough to make ends meet

Workers are falling short financially in our nation, and there are few living wage jobs to go around. With most of America's job growth taking place in low-wage occupations, the reality facing workers is clear: *America is becoming a low-wage nation and, without action, the living wage crisis will only continue to worsen.*

In this study, we define a living wage as the pay a full-time worker needs to earn to make basic ends meet, with a little left over to plan for emergencies and get ahead. For the purposes of our national and 49-state analysis, we use a \$15 wage, in 2013 dollars, to represent a living wage.

This is a conservative approximation of a living wage. Based on past Job Gap Economic Prosperity Series studies, a \$15 hourly wage is not enough to make ends meet in many states and counties, even for a single individual who does not have child care costs. In the 10 states where we

calculate living wages, in only two is \$15 enough for a single individual to make basic ends meet. And, when factoring in child care costs, living wage levels are significantly higher than \$15.

The following findings are based on an Alliance analysis of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics data from 2013 and earlier, and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey one-year estimates from 2013. In this analysis we examine both existing employment levels by industry and occupation and wages for projected job openings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WE LIVE IN A NATION WHERE WORKERS ARE NOT EARNING ENOUGH TO MAKE ENDS MEET, AND HAVE FEW OPTIONS TO INCREASE THEIR WAGES.

- **A large proportion of workers are not earning living wages:** Nearly two of five existing jobs pay less than \$15 an hour.

- **Nearly half of new jobs are low-wage jobs:** About 48 percent of projected national job openings do not pay \$15 or higher. In analyzing individual states, that percentage ranges from 35 percent (Massachusetts) to 61 percent (South Dakota).

- **There are not enough living wage jobs to go around:** Nationally, there are seven times more job-seekers than there are projected jobs paying \$15 or higher, leaving workers seeking better wages with few options.

MOST OF AMERICA'S JOB GROWTH IS TAKING PLACE IN LOW-WAGE OCCUPATIONS.

- **Largest-growing occupations don't pay living wages:** Among the top 10 occupations with the most projected job openings, just one has a median wage greater than \$15 an hour. The four occupations with the greatest projected number of job openings are in retail and food service, with median wages ranging between \$8.81 and \$10.16 an hour. Many of these low-wage, high-growth occupations disproportionately employ women and people of color, negatively affecting their chances of making ends meet.

- **Largest-growing jobs are among the lowest-paying:** Two of the top five occupations with the most projected job openings also rank among the top five in lowest pay.

FOR WORKERS TO MAKE ENDS MEET, RAISE WAGES, STRENGTHEN SUPPORT SYSTEMS, AND INVEST IN HIGHER-WAGE INDUSTRIES LIKE HEALTH CARE.

- **Invest in higher-pay industries, like the health care sector:** Out of the 61 "Healthcare Practitioners and Technical" occupations defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, just two have a median wage that is less than \$15 an hour. Even in the lower-paying "Healthcare Support Occupations," the majority of occupations pay more than \$12 per hour, significantly above the federal minimum wage. Investing in health care and other higher-wage industries can reverse the trend of primarily low-wage job growth.

- **Increase the minimum wage to benefit workers in all industries:** Raising the wage floor would move all occupations toward providing wages that can meet basic needs.

- **Strengthen support systems:** Federal and state programs like food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and child care subsidies help working families earning less than a living wage get by.



INTRODUCTION

Work isn't working for half of America's workers.

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS — THEY MAKE THE WORLD GO 'ROUND. They help circulate capital through the economy, creating social utility and overall value to society. Individually, jobs are often central to our personal identities, our occupations being one of the first things we might reveal to a new acquaintance. And, for working families, jobs pay the bills.

Or, at least, that's how it's supposed to work.

But the reality is that there were about 10.6 million people in America in 2012 considered the "working poor," living in poverty despite being part of the labor force.¹ And, given that antiquated federal poverty levels fall far short of an adequate measure of true poverty, the number of working individuals who are not making ends meet is much greater.²

And that's if you have a job. Employment remains very difficult to find, by historic standards. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' U-6 labor underutilization rate — considered by many economists to be a more complete measure of joblessness in America than the standard unemployment rate — is significantly higher than levels from before the Great Recession. This rate — which includes the unemployed, those without jobs who are not considered part of the labor force, and involuntary part-time workers — was 12.0 percent in 2014, compared to 8.3 percent in 2007.

Despite being much higher than pre-recession

levels, the U-6 unemployment rate has actually decreased in recent years since its 2010 peak of 16.7. But while overall employment has increased since the Great Recession, that growth has come largely in low-wage jobs that do not pay enough to cover basic needs. That means new jobs — nearly half, as we've found in our calculations — do not provide enough to cover workers' bills.

These new low-wage jobs simply add to the fact that America already has a larger share of low-wage jobs than any other developed country in the world.³

What the U-6 labor underutilization rate does not take into account are the under-resourced, or those who have gained employment but who do not earn enough to make ends meet. Nationally, there were 51.1 million low-wage jobs that in 2013 provided a wage below \$15 an hour, which we use to represent a national living wage.

While overall employment has increased since the Great Recession, that growth has come largely in low-wage jobs that do not pay enough to cover basic needs. That means new jobs — *nearly half, as we've found in our calculations* — do not provide enough to cover workers' bills.

Workers are falling short financially in our nation, and there are few living wage jobs to go around. The number of job-seekers is nearly double what it was at the start of the recession. And the market for good jobs is tight: For every projected job opening that pays higher than the low-wage threshold, there are seven job-seekers.

The reality facing workers is clear: America is becoming a low-wage nation and, without action, the living wage crisis will only continue to worsen.

In this study, we calculate the “job gap” ratio of total job-seekers to job openings that pay \$15 an hour or better nationwide, and the percentage of jobs that

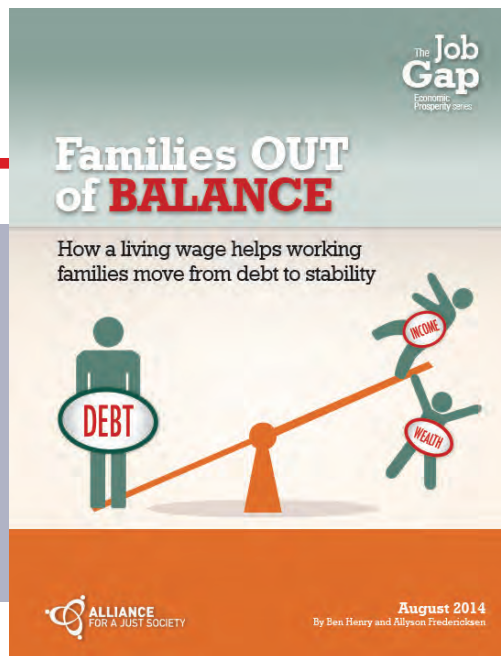
pay less than \$15 per hour nationally and in 49 states, demonstrating the scarcity of jobs that actually pay enough to make ends meet.

We also examine employment opportunities in 10 states with calculated living wage thresholds (Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Florida, Maine, Montana, New York, Oregon, Virginia and Washington state) and in New York City. The study utilizes living wage findings published in 2014 to calculate the percentage of available jobs that pay median wages below those living wage levels, and the number of job-seekers for every living wage job opening that pays higher than the low-wage threshold, there are seven job-seekers.

Definitions

Living Wage: A wage that allows families to meet their basic needs without public assistance and that provides them some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead. It is not a poverty wage. Living wages are calculated on the basis of family budgets for several household types. Family budgets include basic necessities, such as food, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, child care, clothing and other personal items, savings, and state and federal taxes. This assumes full-time work on a year-round basis.

Job Gap Ratio: The proportion of the number of job-seekers — including the unemployed, involuntary part-time workers and marginally attached workers — to the number of projected jobs openings that pay wages at various levels. In this study, these thresholds are set at either \$15 or actual living wage levels previously calculated by household type.



Employment opportunities and The Job Gap at \$15 per hour

In this study, we examine Job Gap ratios at \$15 nationally and at living wage thresholds in 10 states and New York City. Additionally, a \$15 threshold allows us to calculate the percentage of job openings that are lower-wage nationally and in 49 states.⁴ This includes jobs in occupational categories in which the median wage is less than \$15 an hour in 2013 dollars.

While \$15 per hour is not a living wage in all states, in our 10-state living wage study “Families Out of Balance,” we found that, in 2013, just two states had a living wage for a single individual that fell below \$15. And, even for those states, households with children have living wages that are significantly higher than \$15 per hour. Thus, in this study we use \$15 as a conservative representation of a living wage. See “Defining Low-Wage Jobs at \$15 an Hour” in the Technical Notes for more on why we use \$15 as a threshold.

WHAT HAPPENS TO FAMILIES THAT DO NOT MAKE A LIVING WAGE?

When families are unable to find work that pays living wages, they are forced to make difficult choices between adequate health care, balanced nutrition, paying bills, and saving for emergencies. The personal stories in this report illustrate some of the complex issues and choices confronted by households earning below the living wage.



LOW WAGE NATION

NATIONAL FINDINGS

NEARLY HALF OF ALL PROJECTED NEW JOBS ARE LOW-WAGE JOBS.

We find that about 48 percent of national job openings, or 2.4 million out of 5 million total projected jobs, are expected to pay less than \$15 an hour, in 2013 dollars on average over the next 10 years.

Further, we find that a smaller percentage of existing jobs in 2013 paid less than \$15 an hour — at 38.6 percent, or 51.1 million jobs — compared to the 48 percent of projected job openings. The difference in percentages between 2013 actual employment and projected employment is further evidence of the American economy’s shift to a low-wage workforce.

THE NATIONAL JOB GAP: SEVEN JOB-SEEKERS FOR EVERY JOB THAT PAYS MORE THAN \$15 AN HOUR.

Workers seeking better wages have few options. In 2013, for every job opening that paid above the low-wage threshold of \$15 an hour, there were seven job-seekers. This “National Job Gap” demonstrates both how crowded the job market is for employment that pays above poverty wages, and how few of those jobs actually exist.⁵

17 MILLION JOB-SEEKERS ARE OUT OF LUCK.

With 19.6 million job-seekers in 2013 and a projection of only 2.6 million job openings in occupations with median wages above \$15 an hour, there are 17 million more job-seekers than jobs that pay above the low-wage threshold. These job-seekers are left to find either low-wage, non-sustaining jobs or no work at all.

The total number of job-seekers more than doubled over the course of the 2007-2009 recession, going from 10.8 million in 2007 to 22.2 million in 2009. While the number of job-seekers decreased to nearly 19.6 million in 2013, that figure is still nearly double the 2007 pre-recession level. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

JOB-SEEKERS IN THE UNITED STATES OVER TIME

YEAR	TOTAL JOB-SEEKERS
2003	13,029,900
2004	12,839,000
2005	11,863,000
2006	11,006,900
2007	10,798,000
2008	12,438,000
2009	22,206,000
2010	23,931,000
2011	22,578,000
2012	20,800,000
2013	19,577,000

Source: Analysis of Current Population Survey data by Matthew Broaddus of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

STATEWIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Employing our methodology to all states (except Michigan, which lacks the necessary data) using a \$15 threshold provides a snapshot of the jobs outlook across the country.

We find that no state has less than one-third of projected openings with a median wage less than \$15 per hour. The percentage of projected full-time job openings with median wages less than \$15 an hour ranges between 35 percent in Massachusetts to 61 percent in South Dakota. In 25 states, half or more of job openings paid less than \$15 per hour. See Figure 2.

THE JOB GAP AT LIVING WAGE LEVELS

We also examine the percentage of job openings that pay actual living wages as calculated for 10 states and New York City, and the ratio of job-seekers to projected living wage job openings.⁶ We break this down by four household types: a single adult, a single adult with one child, a single adult with two children, and two adults (only one working) with two children.

Living wages for a single adult range from \$14.40 an hour (\$29,957 a year) in Montana to \$19.08 (\$39,682 a year) in Connecticut, to \$22.49 an hour (\$46,771 a year) in New York City. For a household with a single parent and two children, living wages range from \$25.12 an hour (\$52,239 a year) in Idaho to \$40.48 (\$84,208 a year) in Connecticut, and \$40.66 an hour (\$84,563 a year) in New York City.⁷

These wage levels are taken from our August 2014 study, "Families Out of Balance," available at www.thejobgap.org. See Figure 3 for a summary of findings.

PERCENTAGE OF OPENINGS THAT DON'T COVER BASIC NEEDS

The share of projected new jobs that pay less than a living wage for a single adult range from 40 percent in Colorado and Connecticut to 61 percent in Florida and New York State (not including New York City). The percentage of job openings that pay less than a living wage for a single adult with two children, meanwhile, ranges from 77 percent in Washington to 90 percent in Florida.

Percentages vary from state to state for a number of reasons, including the mix of industries and related occupations in a state, and the prevailing wage levels, which also vary from state to state. See the state-specific sections starting on page 15 for full details on each state.

THE RATIO OF JOB-SEEKERS TO LIVING WAGE OPENINGS

Job Gap ratios are calculated by dividing the number of people who were looking for work at some point during 2013 by the number of job openings paying a living wage that year.

The ratios for a single adult range from six to one in Montana and Washington to 12 to one in Maine. The ratios for a single adult with two children, meanwhile, range from 14 to one in Washington to 40 to one in Maine.

FIGURE 2

PERCENT OF JOB OPENINGS PAYING LESS THAN \$15/HOUR BY STATE

STATE	OPENINGS	JOBS BELOW \$15/HR	STATE	OPENINGS	JOBS BELOW \$15/HR
UNITED STATES	5,035,050	48%	Montana	17,210	56%
Alabama	67,750	55%	Nebraska	35,960	52%
Alaska	12,730	36%	Nevada	45,320	52%
Arizona	118,980	49%	New Hampshire	22,360	44%
Arkansas	43,360	59%	New Jersey	130,280	43%
California	622,690	44%	New Mexico	29,640	57%
Colorado	109,580	41%	New York	325,180	43%
Connecticut	57,420	37%	North Carolina	157,380	51%
Delaware	13,530	45%	North Dakota	16,770	47%
Florida	333,950	54%	Ohio	172,380	51%
Georgia	165,340	47%	Oklahoma	59,230	55%
Hawaii	22,110	46%	Oregon	64,390	45%
Idaho	26,070	57%	Pennsylvania	191,010	46%
Illinois	197,770	46%	Rhode Island	16,000	44%
Indiana	99,440	54%	South Carolina	69,920	57%
Iowa	61,630	50%	South Dakota	13,630	61%
Kansas	50,280	53%	Tennessee	98,920	52%
Kentucky	67,550	51%	Texas	521,440	51%
Louisiana	74,800	50%	Utah	61,520	48%
Maine	17,290	50%	Vermont	10,210	45%
Maryland	89,600	40%	Virginia	145,170	45%
Massachusetts	117,840	35%	Washington	141,210	39%
Minnesota	88,620	45%	West Virginia	23,210	60%
Mississippi	35,890	60%	Wisconsin	93,560	50%
Missouri	91,480	52%	Wyoming	10,490	44%

Source: Alliance calculations of jobs and wages data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Projectionscentral.com

FIGURE 3

SUMMARY JOB GAP STATE FINDINGS 2014

	CO	CT	FL	ID	ME	MO	NYC	NY	OR	VA	WA
Total Openings	60,852	58,743	331,484	26,789	17,775	18,492	137,540	148,960	63,319	147,680	134,392
Job Seekers	42,000	245,000	1,230,000	95,000	92,000	53,000	n/a	n/a	290,000	470,000	441,000
Household 1 Living Wage	\$16.18	\$19.08	\$16.98	\$14.57	\$15.82	\$14.40	\$22.49	\$18.47	\$15.96	\$18.57	\$15.99
Percent of Job Openings <LW	40%	40%	61%	53%	55%	49%	55%	61%	49%	56%	41%
Job Seekers to LW Openings (Job Gap)	9 to 1	8 to 1	9 to 1	8 to 1	12 to 1	6 to 1	n/a	n/a	9 to 1	7 to 1	6 to 1
Household 2 Living Wage	\$23.83	\$28.81	\$23.92	\$19.72	\$22.57	\$19.85	\$31.23	\$27.13	\$23.74	\$26.47	\$22.09
Percent of Job Openings <LW	66%	70%	78%	73%	75%	70%	67%	76%	72%	71%	61%
Job Seekers to LW Openings (Job Gap)	16 to 1	14 to 1	17 to 1	13 to 1	21 to 1	10 to 1	n/a	n/a	17 to 1	11 to 1	8 to 1
Household 3 Living Wage	\$32.49	\$40.48	\$30.43	\$25.12	\$28.86	\$25.82	\$40.66	\$36.52	\$30.75	\$35.07	\$30.01
Percent of Job Openings <LW	79%	87%	90%	83%	87%	82%	81%	89%	85%	83%	77%
Job Seekers to LW Openings (Job Gap)	27 to 1	31 to 1	36 to 1	21 to 1	40 to 1	16 to 1	n/a	n/a	31 to 1	18 to 1	14 to 1
Household 4 Living Wage	\$30.84	\$35.18	\$32.35	\$28.14	\$30.48	\$28.44	\$37.49	\$33.01	\$31.14	\$33.95	\$30.47
Percent of Job Openings <LW	75%	81%	91%	87%	90%	88%	77%	86%	87%	81%	77%
Job Seekers to LW Openings (Job Gap)	23 to 1	22 to 1	43 to 1	26 to 1	53 to 1	25 to 1	n/a	n/a	34 to 1	17 to 1	14 to 1

METHODOLOGY

For a complete discussion of the methodology of this study, see Technical Notes.

STATES AND NEW YORK CITY

In state- and city-level analyses, we determine the living wage for certain household types and measure the availability of these living wage jobs. This living wage is used to identify the “job gap,” that is, the percent of job openings that pay less than a living wage, and the ratio of the number of living-wage job openings to the number of people looking for work.

Living wage thresholds for each of the four household types included in this study come from our 2014 Job Gap Economic Prosperity Series report, “Families Out of Balance.” Living wages are calculated using a market basket approach, using estimated costs for basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, health care, and child care. Data for this calculation comes from state and federal public data sources.

In our 49-state analysis, rather than using calculated living wages as a threshold, we use the \$15 wage as a proxy for a living wage. (See “Defining Low-Wage Jobs at \$15 an Hour” in the Technical Notes.)

Occupation and wage data are available from each state in accordance with guidelines developed by the states in cooperation with the BLS and the Employment and Training Administration. The Current Population Survey (CPS) was used to find the job-seeking population in all states in this study.

The findings of this report are based on data from 2013, the most recent year for which complete

The findings of this report are based on data from 2013, the most recent year for which complete data on wages and employment are available.

data on wages and employment are available. Job opening data is based on either 2013-2023 or 2012-2022 long-term projections, as available. For the 49-state analysis, 2012-2022 projections are used for all states.

NATIONAL

In our national Job Gap analysis, we utilized similar models to determine the number of living-wage job openings to the number of job-seekers in the U.S., utilizing the \$15 proxy for a living wage. In our analysis, we employed our Job Gap model to the BLS’s most recent Employment Projections dataset, projecting employment outcomes from 2012-2022. We annualized employment by detailed occupation in 2012 and projected in 2022, paired it with the BLS’s OES wage data, and calculated the number of jobs in categories with a median wage of \$15 an hour or more in 2013 dollars, and found the ratio of job-seekers to total jobs in that category to determine the National Job Gap.



OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS

America's job growth is in low-wage occupations

Most of the largest-growing occupations have low median wages. Among the top 10 occupations with the most projected job openings, just one has a median wage greater than \$15 an hour. ***The top four are in retail and food service, with median wages ranging between \$8.81 and \$10.16 an hour.*** (See Figure 4.)

Further, two of the top five occupations with most projected openings are among the nation's lowest-wage occupations. "Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food," the lowest wage occupation with a median wage of \$8.81 per hour, is projected to be the second largest growing in the country. Meanwhile, the median projected wage for "Waiters and Waitresses," the fourth largest growing occupation, is \$8.94, the fifth lowest in the nation. (See Figure 5.)

These low wages disproportionately impact people of color, as the restaurant industry is the single largest employer of people of color and the second largest employer of immigrants in the country, according to a Restaurant Opportunities Center United report. Women and people disproportionately work in occupations that pay low wages, leaving them with little ability to make ends meet for themselves and their families.

HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY PAYS HIGH WAGES, WEATHERS RECESSION, AND HELPS SUPPORT FAMILIES

Health care industries provide a benefit to working families. With the advent of the Affordable Care Act, health insurance was made affordable and even free to millions of families across the country, removing a large cost for some and giving some care for the first time in years. While some states have yet to implement the expansion of Medicaid that would reach even more families, nearly every state has seen an increase in the number of individuals insured.

**FIGURE 4
OCCUPATIONS WITH MOST
PROJECTED JOB OPENINGS
IN 2013**

OCCUPATION	PROJECTED ANNUAL OPENINGS	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE
Retail Salespersons	195,570	\$10.16
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	155,570	\$8.81
Cashiers	153,000	\$9.12
Waiters and Waitresses	126,830	\$8.94
Registered Nurses	105,260	\$31.84
Customer Service Representatives	94,160	\$14.84
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	92,250	\$11.52
Office Clerks, General	81,090	\$13.49
Janitors/Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	71,730	\$10.86
Personal Care Aides	66,600	\$9.67

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Employment and Wage Estimates, and Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections

With this increase, though, lies the need for a greater number of workers in the health care sectors — from support occupations through physicians and specialists — and an investment in health care jobs would ensure that families are well-served by their new health insurance.

The increased demand from these investments would expand employment in occupations that tend to be comprised of living wage jobs. Out of the 61 “Healthcare Practitioners and Technical” occupations defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), just two — dietetic and pharmacy technicians — have a median wage that is less than \$15 an hour. By individual occupation, “Registered Nurses” is the fifth largest in the country, with nearly 2.7 million nurses employed in 2013 earning a median wage of \$31.84 an hour. It is also the only occupation in the top 10 most projected openings with a median hourly wage over \$15. Overall, the “Healthcare Practitioners and Technical” industry has an average wage of nearly \$36 per hour. (See Figure 6.)

While many “Healthcare Support Operations” occupations⁹ have a median wage that falls below

\$15, that industry as a whole has a weighted average wage of \$13.61 an hour, nearly double the federal minimum wage.¹⁰ Although many of the occupations in the health care support industry do not provide living wages, the average wage of both health care industries combined is \$28.43, with only 14 of 78 occupations showing a median wage of less than \$15 per hour. (See Figure 7.)

Health care industries are also largely recession-proof, as they were among the largest growing industries during the Great Recession, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of pre-recession employment levels. While many industries saw a significant decrease in employment during the Great Recession, between 2007 and 2009 the “Healthcare Practitioners and Technical industries” and “Healthcare Support Operations” industries experienced the largest growth in jobs among all industries, with an increase of 323,260 and 261,450 job, respectively. Growth as a percentage of employment was also most significant among these industries, at 5 percent and 7 percent growth, respectively. (See Figure 8.)

**FIGURE 5
LOWEST PAYING
OCCUPATIONS IN 2013**

OCCUPATION	PROJECTED ANNUAL OPENINGS	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, including Fast Food	10,190	\$8.88
Gaming Dealers	2,870	\$8.88
Shampooers	160	\$8.90
Waiters and Waitresses	126,830	\$8.94
Dishwashers	25,550	\$8.95
Dining Room, Cafeteria, Bartender Helpers	20,890	\$8.95
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	28,040	\$8.96
Ushers, Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers	5,930	\$8.98
Counter Attendants, Cafeteria, Food Concession, and Coffee Shop	26,780	\$8.99

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Employment and Wage Estimates, and Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections

FIGURE 6

MEDIAN WAGE OF HEALTH CARE OCCUPATIONS IN 2013

HEALTHCARE TECH/PRODUCTION	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE*	HEALTHCARE TECH/PRODUCTION	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE*
Chiropractors	\$31.40	Psychiatric Technicians	\$14.37
Dentists, General	\$70.36	Respiratory Therapy Technicians	\$22.61
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	\$105.27	Surgical Technologists	\$20.54
Orthodontists	\$94.36	Veterinary Technologists, Technicians	\$14.66
Prosthodontists	\$43.87	Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	\$16.80
Dentists, All Other Specialists	\$78.58	Licensed Practical, Vocational Nurses	\$20.15
Dietitians and Nutritionists	\$26.88	Medical Records, Health Info Techs	\$16.81
Optometrists	\$48.70	Opticians, Dispensing	\$16.24
Pharmacists	\$57.35	Orthotists and Prosthetists	\$30.27
Anesthesiologists	\$113.01	Hearing Aid Specialists	\$20.86
Family and General Practitioners	\$84.87	Health Techs, All Other	\$19.67
Internists, General	\$89.83	Occupational Health Safety Specialists	\$32.67
Obstetricians and Gynecologists	\$102.20	Occupational Health Safety Techs	\$22.78
Pediatricians, General	\$75.78	Athletic Trainers	\$20.57
Psychiatrists	\$86.03	Genetic Counselors	\$30.57
Surgeons	\$112.09	Healthcare Prac & Tech, All Other	\$23.37
Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	\$90.00		
Physician Assistants	\$44.70	HEALTHCARE SUPPORT OPERATIONS	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE*
Podiatrists	\$56.83	Home Health Aides	\$10.10
Occupational Therapists	\$36.99	Psychiatric Aides	\$12.08
Physical Therapists	\$38.96	Nursing Assistants	\$11.97
Radiation Therapists	\$38.05	Orderlies	\$11.75
Recreational Therapists	\$20.76	Occupational Therapy Assistants	\$26.57
Respiratory Therapists	\$27.06	Occupational Therapy Aides	\$12.67
Speech-Language Pathologists	\$34.04	Physical Therapist Assistants	\$25.65
Exercise Physiologists	\$22.12	Physical Therapist Aides	\$11.69
Therapists, All Other	\$26.61	Massage Therapists	\$17.27
Veterinarians	\$41.66	Dental Assistants	\$16.78
Registered Nurses	\$31.84	Medical Assistants	\$14.24
Nurse Anesthetists	\$72.64	Medical Equipment Preparers	\$15.25
Nurse Midwives	\$44.37	Medical Transcriptionists	\$16.63
Nurse Practitioners	\$44.55	Pharmacy Aides	\$10.85
Audiologists	\$34.22	Veterinary, Lab Animal Assistants	\$11.32
Health Diagnosing, Treating Practitioners, All Other	\$35.04	Phlebotomists	\$14.50
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists	\$28.09	Healthcare Support Workers, All Other	\$16.42
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	\$18.26		
Dental Hygienists	\$34.19		
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	\$25.58		
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	\$31.93		
Nuclear Medicine Technologists	\$34.19		
Radiologic Technologists	\$26.54		
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	\$31.75		
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	\$15.04		
Dietetic Technicians	\$12.32		
Pharmacy Technicians	\$14.25		

**For occupations without available median wage data, mean wage data was used.*

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Employment and Wage Estimates

FIGURE 7

EMPLOYMENT AND MEDIAN WAGE IN 2013 BY INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE
Management	6,542,980	\$43.07
Business and Financial Operations	6,658,090	\$29.33
Computer and Mathematical	3,696,180	\$38.12
Architecture and Engineering	2,380,840	\$35.79
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,135,080	\$32.18
Community and Social Service	1,901,740	\$19.98
Legal Occupations	1,041,710	\$25.27
Education, Training, and Library	8,400,650	\$29.15
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	1,758,300	\$21.73
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7,755,800	\$31.93
Healthcare Support	3,924,400	\$14.24
Protective Service Occupations	3,257,700	\$20.47
Food Preparation and Serving Related	11,914,620	\$9.43
Building, Grounds Cleaning, Maintenance	4,291,420	\$14.18
Personal Care and Service Occupations	3,986,740	\$11.43
Sales and Related Occupations	14,068,190	\$17.24
Office and Administrative Support	21,442,790	\$16.55
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	435,170	\$16.15
Construction and Extraction	5,088,000	\$18.12
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	5,138,140	\$19.34
Production Occupations	8,765,210	\$15.28
Transportation and Material Moving	9,005,150	\$19.32

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Employment and Wage Estimates

FIGURE 8

CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, SELECTED TIME PERIODS

INDUSTRY	Change 2000-2013	% Change 2000-2013	Change 2007-2009	% Change 2007-2009	Change 2009-2013	% Change 2009-2013
Management	-351,760	-5.10%	112,480	1.87%	426,600	6.97%
Business and Financial Operations	3,110,240	87.67%	48,160	0.80%	594,440	9.80%
Computer and Mathematical	958,360	35.00%	112,320	3.52%	392,510	11.88%
Architecture and Engineering	243,700	11.40%	-73,260	-2.95%	-31,920	-1.32%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	364,910	47.38%	52,680	4.20%	-173,280	-13.24%
Community and Social Service	588,240	44.78%	98,280	5.48%	10,420	0.55%
Legal	245,250	30.79%	420	0.04%	42,690	4.27%
Education, Training, and Library	1,832,990	27.91%	172,380	2.07%	-88,120	-1.04%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	548,110	45.29%	-15,570	-0.88%	12,600	0.72%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,237,740	40.55%	323,260	4.70%	554,850	7.71%
Healthcare Support	1,077,090	37.83%	261,450	7.21%	37,710	0.97%
Protective Service	466,350	16.71%	84,770	2.75%	85,280	2.69%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	2,096,920	21.36%	-55,610	-0.49%	696,370	6.21%
Building, Grounds Cleaning, Maintenance	88,310	2.10%	-134,390	-3.05%	21,910	0.51%
Personal Care & Service Occupations	1,431,690	56.03%	122,420	3.67%	524,810	15.16%
Sales and Related Occupations	1,088,660	8.39%	-616,990	-4.30%	353,160	2.57%
Office, Administrative Support	-608,670	-2.76%	-934,370	-4.02%	-893,640	-4.00%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	1,230	0.28%	-28,810	-6.43%	16,020	3.82%
Construction and Extraction	-871,000	-14.62%	-956,510	-14.26%	-663,630	-11.54%
Installation, Maintenance, Repair	108,470	2.16%	-275,960	-5.12%	23,970	0.47%
Production Occupations	-2,230,840	-20.29%	-1,219,440	-12.02%	-161,940	-1.81%
Transportation & Material Moving	-301,830	-3.24%	-784,320	-8.15%	160,430	1.81%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics National Employment and Wage Estimates



STATE FINDINGS

COLORADO The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 342,000
Total job openings: 60,852

KEY FINDINGS FOR COLORADO

Forty percent of job openings pay less than \$16.18 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Nearly four out of five, 79 percent, pay less than \$32.49 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$16.18 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are nine job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$32.49 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 27 job-seekers on average.

SINGLE ADULT

9



- ▶ 9 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 40% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



SINGLE ADULT with two children

27



- ▶ 27 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 79% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



2014 COLORADO JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 342,000		Total Job Openings: 60,852	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$16.18	\$23.83	\$32.49	\$30.84
Living wage job openings	36,595	20,955	12,539	15,182
Job seekers per living wage opening	9 to 1	16 to 1	27 to 1	23 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	40%	66%	79%	75%



STATE FINDINGS

CONNECTICUT The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 245,000
Total job openings: 58,743

KEY FINDINGS FOR CONNECTICUT

Forty percent of job openings pay less than \$19.08 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 87 percent, pay less than \$40.48 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

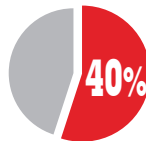
For each job opening that pays at least \$19.08 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are eight job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$40.48 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 31 job-seekers on average.

SINGLE ADULT



- ▶ 8 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 40% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



SINGLE ADULT with two children



- ▶ 31 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 87% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



2014 CONNECTICUT JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 245,000		Total Job Openings: 58,743	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$19.08	\$28.81	\$40.48	\$35.18
Living wage job openings	29,766	17,414	7,899	11,284
Job seekers per living wage opening	8 to 1	14 to 1	31 to 1	22 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	40%	70%	87%	81%

“At first I thought that many of my student loans were public, until I learned that they were actually loans from the for-profit Sallie Mae. By the time I graduated, I had \$60,000 in debt.”

**‘EVEN WITH A STABLE JOB AND TWO INCOMES,
WE’RE JUST LIVING MONTH-TO-MONTH’** **JAIME MYERS-MCPHAIL**
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

I’m a community organizer with the Connecticut Center for a New Economy. It’s great work, where I get to fight for racial and economic justice and systemic changes that help local people get local jobs. However, my pathway to getting this job to do this work has become an economic burden for me and my family.

I started school in 1999 at Goddard College and eventually graduated from the University of Southern Maine in 2007, going in and out of work and school. I studied Sociology and Women and Gender Studies. Like many young people, I liked learning, but I wasn’t really drawn to a particular career path until much later. In fact, I was unaware of any careers that reflected my real passion for justice, but I was determined to pursue my education despite a lack of clear career goals.

Throughout this process, my university kept offering me financial aid in the form of private loans, which I wasn’t savvy enough to understand well. Neither of my parents have college degrees or financial experience. My loan officer never offered any assistance navigating the financial aid process. I didn’t know how to find scholarships, either.

At first I thought that many of my student loans were public, until I learned that they were actually loans from the for-profit Sallie Mae. By the time I graduated, I had \$60,000 in debt. At one point, I had to pay \$800 per month, but, thanks to consolidating through the government, my payments are now around \$220 a month.

My partner and I share a house with a roommate and split costs across our salaries. I’m making about \$37,000 a year before taxes, which is almost a living wage where I live, but I’m still unable to create any savings due to high living expenses. I also pay child support for my stepson who lives with his dad in Maine and I help support his living costs.

It’s hard to get ahead, and even with a stable job and two incomes, we’re just living month-to-month. In Connecticut I also have to pay high gas and electricity bills. We’d like to live without a roommate, but the rent isn’t affordable on just our salaries.

I’m still paying off debt from college, and will be for many years to come. We’re living comfortably compared to many of our neighbors, but debt continues to be a burden hanging over my head. I’m looking forward to the day when Sallie Mae is no longer a part of my life.





STATE FINDINGS

FLORIDA The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 1,230,000
Total job openings: 331,484

KEY FINDINGS FOR FLORIDA

Sixty-one percent of job openings pay less than \$16.98 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Nine out of 10, 90 percent, pay less than \$30.43 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

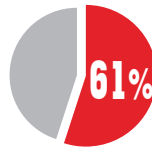
For each job opening that pays at least \$16.98 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are nine job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$30.43 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 36 job-seekers on average.

SINGLE ADULT



- ▶ 9 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 61% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



SINGLE ADULT with two children



- ▶ 36 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 90% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



2014 FLORIDA JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 1,230,000		Total Job Openings: 331,484	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$16.98	\$23.92	\$30.43	\$32.35
Living wage job openings	129,930	72,312	33,783	28,630
Job seekers per living wage opening	9 to 1	17 to 1	36 to 1	43 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	61%	78%	90%	91%

“I recently stopped in at one of Orlando’s career centers and, after waiting in a long line of job-seekers, I saw the majority of listings offered were part-time and paid little more than minimum wage. I’m not sure they can call it a career if it doesn’t pay enough to make ends meet.”

FAMILIES LIKE OURS ARE FORCED TO CHOOSE

RONDA WALLACE
ORLANDO, FLA

My husband and I both own small businesses that are part-time and seasonal. I work as a tax professional and often put in more than 80 hours a week during tax season, but things really slow down for me come spring. My husband owns a company that rents and assembles party equipment and the majority of his work is done on the weekends. With the part-time nature of our jobs, we are often looking for other forms of employment to supplement our incomes and provide for our four children.

I recently stopped in at one of Orlando’s career centers and, after waiting in a long line of job-seekers, I saw the majority of listings offered were part-time and paid little more than minimum wage. I’m not sure they can call it a career if it doesn’t pay enough to make ends meet. With four children at home, I need a job that is going to cover our child care costs or it’s not economical for me to take the position.

Child care costs are always rising, while wages remain the same. Florida raised their minimum wage by 12 cents an hour this year and associated that with cost of living increases. As a mother of four living in Florida, I can tell you with certainty that our family’s cost of living has gone up much more than what 12 cents an hour equates to.

There are programs available through the state that will help cover child care costs, but these programs aren’t available to families like mine. If our household income is even a hair above the poverty line, we are denied access to the assistance and we are left footing the bill for four children in daycare. Sometimes it feels like we are being penalized for doing well enough to pay the bills.

With wages too low to cover expenses, and state programs falling short of providing the assistance we need, families like ours are forced to choose between going to work or staying home with our children. Wages must be raised to accurately reflect the cost of living and high child care costs should certainly be factored into a family’s cost of living.





STATE FINDINGS

IDAHO The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 95,000

Total job openings: 26,789

SINGLE ADULT

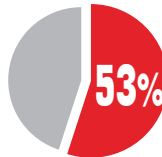
8



1
JOB

- ▶ 8 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 53% of openings don't pay living wage

**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



SINGLE ADULT with two children

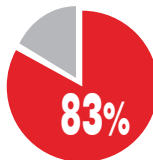
21



1
JOB

- ▶ 21 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 83% of openings don't pay living wage

**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



KEY FINDINGS FOR IDAHO

Fifty-three percent of job openings pay less than \$14.57 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 83 percent, pay less than \$25.12 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$14.57 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are eight job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$25.12 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 21 job-seekers on average.

2014 IDAHO JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 95,000		Total Job Openings: 26,789	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$14.57	\$19.72	\$25.12	\$28.14
Living wage job openings	12,471	7,342	4,447	3,603
Job seekers per living wage opening	8 to 1	13 to 1	21 to 1	26 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	53%	73%	83%	87%

“Sometimes I feel trapped because, without my boyfriend, I don’t make enough to live on my own. I don’t like that feeling. ... I really miss being able to buy things, like clothes. I have grown since moving out and none of my clothes fit, but I can’t afford new clothes.”

GENEVIEVE SYLVIA
OROFINO, IDAHO

THERE IS NO WAY I CAN AFFORD TO SEE MY DOCTOR

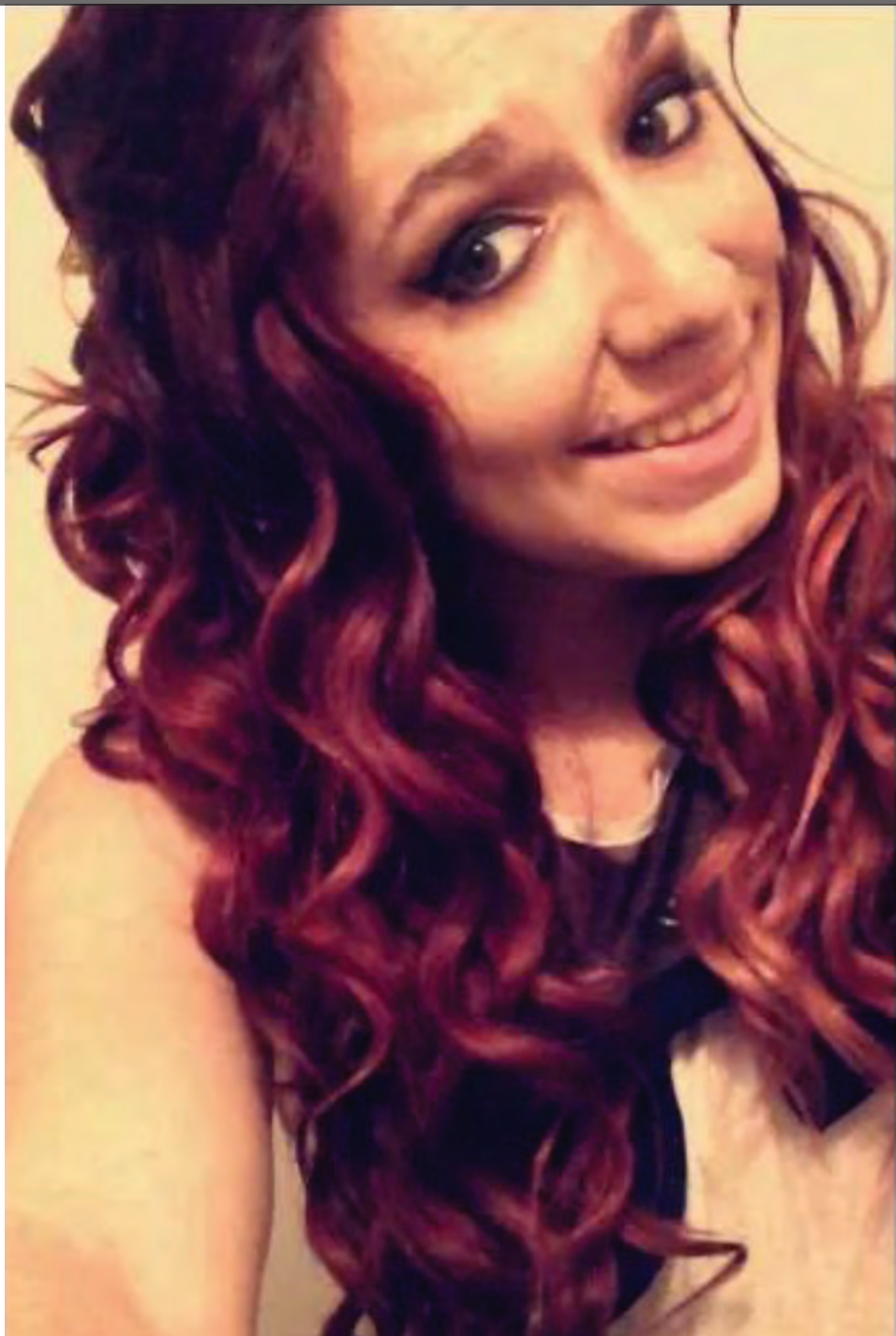
I am 20 years old and work part-time as a health care provider for a disabled child. I love my client and can't imagine not helping him, although right now I am only bringing home about \$300 a month. I took an extra course while I was in high school and became a licensed phlebotomist, but so far it hasn't helped me get another part-time job. I have always wanted to work in the health care field, but good-paying jobs in any field are hard to find in Idaho.

After I turned 18, I was a little excited to move out from my parent's home, but quickly I realized how hard it is. At first I lived with a couple roommates, and now I live with my boyfriend. He has a pretty good job for around here and makes \$12.50 an hour, but our monthly bills don't leave any money for us to fully live. We are young and want to have fun enjoying camping, swimming, hiking and exploring new places, but that is just a dream. My life has become a boring circle of sleep, work, eat and sleep.

Sometimes I feel trapped because, without my boyfriend, I don't make enough to live on my own. I don't like that feeling. I miss all the fun things we used to do and I really miss being able to buy things, like clothes. I have grown since moving out and none of my clothes fit, but I can't afford new clothes.

I miss having health care, too. Before I turned 19, I was receiving Medicaid, but now I don't qualify for any help here in Idaho. Unfortunately, I have kidney problems and need to be able to see a doctor once in awhile. There is no way I can afford to see my old doctor, whom I've gone to all my life. If I need to see a doctor, I make an 80-mile roundtrip to Lewiston and go to the free clinic, if I have the gas to get there.

Having a good job for me would be one that would offer health care and pay enough so that I have clothes that fit, money to go to out once in a while (I am only 20) and maybe someday be able to live the American Dream of a home and a family.





STATE FINDINGS



MAINE The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 92,000

Total job openings: 17,775

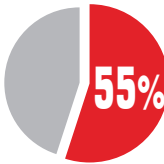
SINGLE ADULT

12



- ▶ 12 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 55% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



KEY FINDINGS FOR MAINE

Fifty-five percent of job openings pay less than \$15.82 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Nearly nine out of 10, 87 percent, pay less than \$28.86 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$15.82 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are 12 job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$28.86 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 40 job-seekers on average.

SINGLE ADULT with two children

40



- ▶ 40 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 87% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



2014 MAINE JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 92,000		Total Job Openings: 17,775	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$15.82	\$22.57	\$28.86	\$30.48
Living wage job openings	7,962	4,391	2,308	1,747
Job seekers per living wage opening	12 to 1	21 to 1	40 to 1	53 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	55%	75%	87%	90%

“Whenever I try and save, a shoe drops and I have to get something fixed on my car or my mobile home. I have \$4,000 in credit card debt from paying for gas to get my daughter and me to and from work.”

I WISH I COULD AFFORD TO PUT MORE MONEY AWAY FOR SAVINGS AND RETIREMENT

JEFF LOXTERKAMP
BANGOR, MAINE

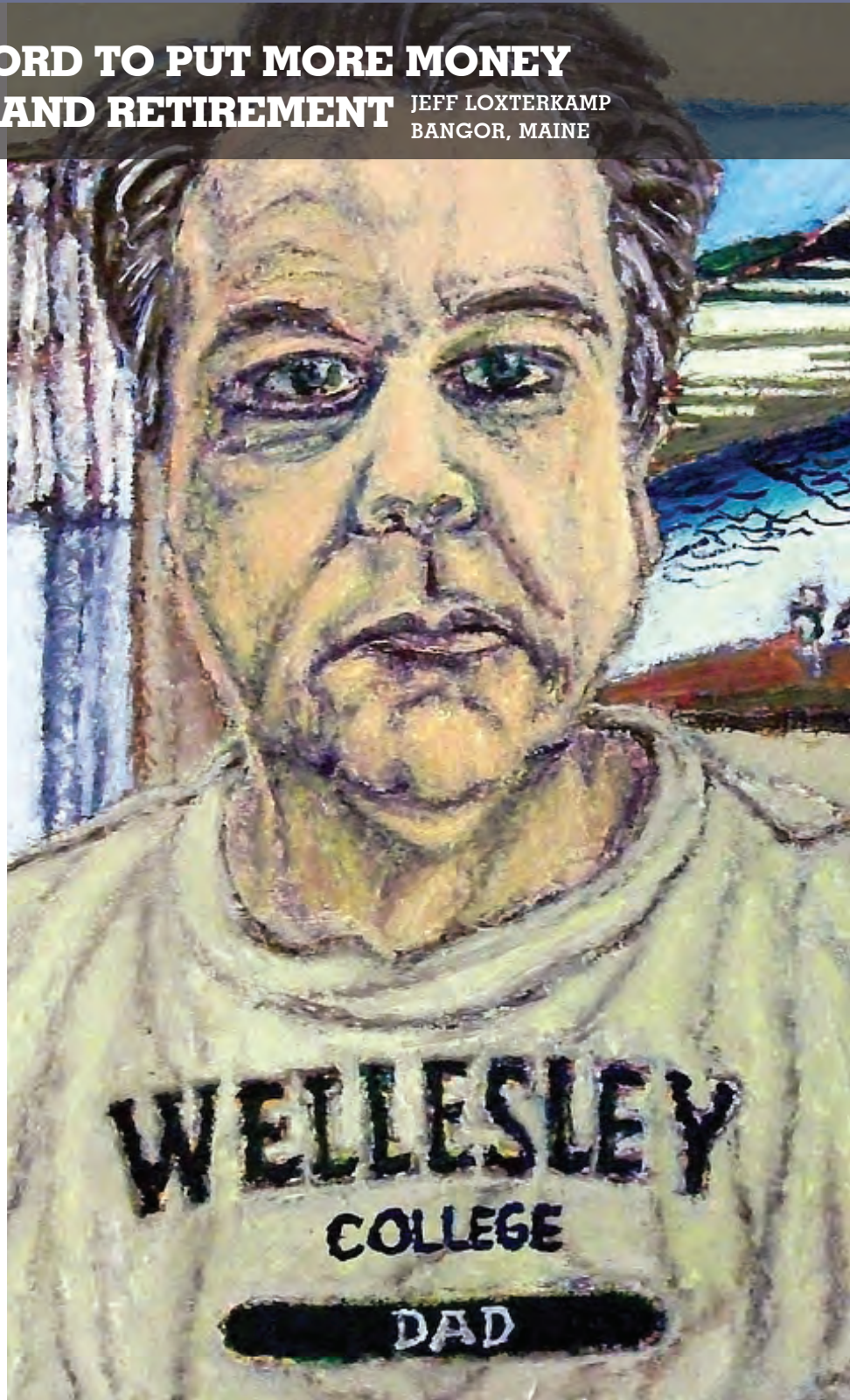
My true passion is art, but it's hard enough to find a job that pays well, let alone one that lets me pursue my passion. At one point, I was working three part-time jobs in order to pay the bills. It burned me out, and now I'm down to working at a K-Mart, where I only earn \$7.75 per hour, about 30 hours per week. I'm constantly on the lookout for better-paying jobs, such as teaching art at local colleges, but nothing has panned out.

Whenever I try and save, a shoe drops and I have to get something fixed on my car or my mobile home. I have \$4,000 in credit card debt from paying for gas to get my daughter and me to and from work. I've been living alone for the past five years since my divorce, but I recently found a roommate to help pay the bills. I own my mobile home, but still have a \$343 lot fee every month.

I earned my Master's of Fine Arts degree in painting from the University of Iowa in 1989, and I still exhibit regularly. I would love to focus more on my art, but it's a struggle just getting through the day, so art and art-related things always get cut back. Instead, I'm teaching myself how to do repairs around the house and on my car to save money.

I wish I could afford to put more money away for savings and retirement. To be honest, if I was making more money, half of my increased income would go to my brilliant daughter, who's starting college at Wellesley College in the fall.

I'm hoping my art sales pick up so I can help support her education. The rest would go to savings, paying down my credit card debt, frames and art supplies, and getting a new catalytic converter on my car. Maybe I'd even take a vacation! For now, I'm still living paycheck-to-paycheck, and trying not to think about retirement.





STATE FINDINGS



MONTANA The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 53,000
 Total job openings: 18,492

KEY FINDINGS FOR MONTANA

Forty-nine percent of job openings pay less than \$14.40 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 82 percent, pay less than \$25.82 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

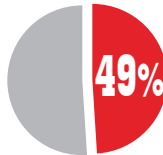
For each job opening that pays at least \$14.40 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are six job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$25.82 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 16 job-seekers on average.

SINGLE ADULT



- ▶ 6 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 49% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE

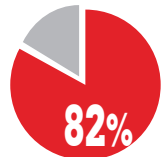


SINGLE ADULT with two children



- ▶ 16 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 82% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



2014 MONTANA JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 53,000		Total Job Openings: 18,492	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$14.40	\$19.85	\$25.82	\$28.44
Living wage job openings	9,370	5,458	3,275	2,156
Job seekers per living wage opening	6 to 1	10 to 1	16 to 1	25 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	49%	70%	82%	88%

“I work the night shift, from 7 p.m. until 7 a.m., three days a week to make \$4 more an hour. After seven years, I am up to almost \$16.”

EVERYTHING IS EXPENSIVE

SUSIE RODRIGUEZ
BELGRADE MT

I am a Mexican-American woman with a beautiful daughter, a wonderful husband, and a job I enjoy. I've worked really hard to get where I am, and I plan to continue building my career.

In high school, I had hopes of becoming a doctor, and took Advanced Placement classes so I could get college credits. I was in the top 10 of 300 students in my graduating class — while also working to help my mother support our family of seven. I entered college with enough credits to qualify as a second-year student.

Then I had a medical crisis of my own — I went blind. My eyesight eventually returned, but my college scholarships didn't, and I couldn't afford tuition to continue my studies. I took a certification course that cost me about \$600 to become a Certified Nurse. Then, with more course work that cost about \$800, I became an Emergency Medical Technician.

I now work as an emergency room technician at a local hospital. I work the night shift, from 7 p.m. until 7 a.m., three days a week to make \$4 more an hour. After seven years, I am up to almost \$16 an hour by working nights. I have to work full-time; our family needs the health insurance. I pay for it out of my paycheck, and it isn't cheap for a family.

Now I'd like to become a Registered Nurse. With a growing family, I'll have to work and take one course at a time. It's a lot more expensive that way.

My husband, Luis, works at a local dairy. It takes two of us working full-time just to cover the costs for our family. We can never get ahead. My daughter stays with my mother the nights that I work, and, during the day, she goes to a babysitter so I can sleep. Everything is expensive.

Last Christmas, I took a part-time sales job to catch us up on some bills. Unfortunately, I was so tired that I became ill and ended up in the hospital. It took me a while to recover. I want to do more with my life and my career.





STATE FINDINGS

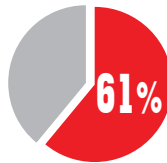


Total job openings: 148,960

SINGLE ADULT

▶ 61% of openings don't pay living wage

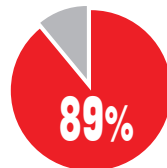
**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



SINGLE ADULT with two children

▶ 89% of openings don't pay living wage

**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



KEY FINDINGS FOR NEW YORK STATE

(EXCLUDING NYC)

Sixty-one percent of job openings pay less than \$18.47 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Nearly nine out of 10, 89 percent, pay less than \$36.52 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

2014 NEW YORK JOB GAP	Total Job Openings: 148,960			
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$18.47	\$27.13	\$36.52	\$33.01
Living wage job openings	58,410	35,460	16,410	21,490
Job seekers per living wage opening	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	61%	76%	89%	86%



LOCAL FINDINGS



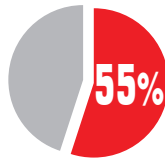
NEW YORK CITY The Job Gap

Total job openings: 148,960

SINGLE ADULT

▶ 55% of openings don't pay living wage

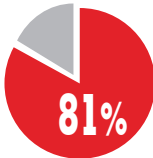
**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



SINGLE ADULT with two children

▶ 81% of openings don't pay living wage

**PERCENT AVAILABLE
JOBS THAT DON'T
PAY LIVING WAGE**



KEY FINDINGS FOR NEW YORK CITY

Fifty-five percent of job openings pay less than \$22.49 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 81 percent, pay less than \$40.66 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

2014 NEW YORK CITY JOB GAP		Total Job Openings: 137,540			
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children	
Living wage levels	\$22.49	\$31.23	\$40.66	\$37.49	
Living wage job openings	61,890	45,230	25,730	31,340	
Job seekers per living wage opening	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	55%	67%	81%	77%	

“We live paycheck-to-paycheck and my daughter, Michelle, notices it. I’ve heard her praying to God to ‘Send my *mami* some money so that she can buy me a little doll’ and it breaks my heart not to be able to do anything.”

IT BREAKS MY HEART NOT TO BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING

GLADYS COLOMA
QUEENS, NEW YORK



Eight years ago, I emigrated from Peru to New York City. I was a trained elementary teacher in Peru, but here I work hard cleaning houses and bathrooms to earn money for my family. I’ve applied to numerous jobs with New York schools to use my teaching skills, but I don’t have the connections or the English abilities. I have my documents, but each time I call to apply they tell me there are no positions available.

I earn \$9 per hour and my husband, who also does cleaning for a living, earns \$13. Even working full-time, we can barely cover the basic costs of living in Queens. New York is the most expensive state in the country and we can barely make it. We can’t afford to have savings.

In order to afford the rent, our family has to share our apartment with another family. It’s crowded and we don’t have the privacy that I would like to have, especially having a 6-year-old daughter, but it’s the only way that we can afford the rent. I’d also really like to send my daughter to a better school someday.

We live paycheck-to-paycheck and my daughter, Michelle, notices it. I’ve heard her praying to God to “send my *mami* some money so that she can buy me a little doll,” and it breaks my heart not to be able to do anything.

While I’m at work, Michelle is in school or being taken care of by a neighbor, who also happens to be an unemployed professional. Michelle tells me, “Moms should be with their kids,” but I have to keep working to make ends meet.



STATE FINDINGS

OREGON The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 290,000

Total job openings: 63,319

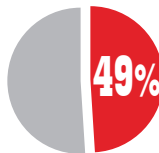
SINGLE ADULT

9



- ▶ 9 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 49% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



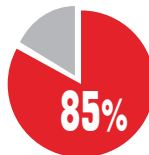
SINGLE ADULT with two children

31



- ▶ 31 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 85% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



KEY FINDINGS FOR OREGON

Forty-nine percent of job openings pay less than \$15.96 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 85 percent, pay less than \$30.75 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$15.96 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are nine job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$30.75 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 31 job-seekers on average.

2014 OREGON JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 290,000		Total Job Openings: 63,319	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$15.96	\$23.74	\$30.75	\$31.14
Living wage job openings	32,524	17,520	9,263	8,467
Job seekers per living wage opening	9 to 1	17 to 1	31 to 1	34 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	49%	72%	85%	87%

“Although I worked as many hours as I could, and sold plasma for additional income, I could not afford to pay all my bills. My car was repossessed, my phone was turned off, and my credit cards were cancelled. I quickly found that my Walmart wage could not support college attendance.”

I SOLD MY PLASMA TO MAKE SOME EXTRA MONEY

KEITH HAXTON
ASHLAND, OREGON

In 2007, at age 19, I was laid off for a second time as the Great Recession came into full swing. Despite a long effort to look for work and find ways to better my life, in 2010, I was unemployed again. The only job I could find after many months of searching was at a Walmart. Although I worked as many hours as I could, and sold plasma for additional income, I could not afford to pay all my bills. My car was repossessed, my phone was turned off, and my credit cards were cancelled. I quickly found that my Walmart wage could not support college attendance.

I moved to Oregon a few months later, hoping to find better work and a better opportunity for my future. However, the only work I was able to attain was as a teacher's aide at a local high school. Although I liked the work, it paid the minimum wage and required only a few hours a week. This meant that — despite my best efforts to look for more work, enroll in college, and continue selling off my plasma for extra income — I could not afford rent. By the spring of 2011, I became homeless, and could only find shelter in a broken-down SUV.

For months I lived in the SUV while continuing to apply for any and all jobs I could. I began receiving food stamps and eating free meals provided by charities, and continued to sell plasma. I did all that I could to not look homeless for job interviews, including having a set of clean clothes and maintaining a membership at the local YMCA. In all my searching, I never gained employment.

Eventually, I became ill and had to stop looking for work. Selling my plasma twice a week for about a year, as well as being undernourished, were major factors in my becoming ill. Not only could I not sell plasma while I was sick, but, because of that, I had to give up my YMCA membership, haircuts, and clean clothing. Because food stamps only provided for about half the month's food costs, I needed what little money I made from selling my plasma for food. It was in the spring of 2011, when I reached the point where I had to choose my health instead of the now unrealistic idea of finding a job.

By summer I made a few friends who were local activists, and college students. Because I made so little in 2010, I now qualified for some income-based grants to attend college. Over the next three years my friends helped me out enough that I was eventually able to get back on my feet, attend college, and find a



place to stay. It wasn't easy, and I learned a lot along the way.

The lesson that became most clear to me during this hardship was that my story is not unique. I learned that despite what I had been told, my becoming homeless was not all my fault. I learned that more than 10 million people in the U.S. had been laid off since the beginning of the Great Recession. I learned that since 2009 there have never been less than 12 million Americans unemployed and looking for a job every month. I learned so much, but I above all, I learned that a great injustice had been done to myself, my family, and many millions in my generation. I learned that if this was to be rectified, if justice was once again to prevail, if people weren't made to be unemployed against their will, things needed to change in a big way.



STATE FINDINGS

VIRGINIA The Job Gap

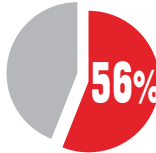
Total job seekers: 470,000
 Total job openings: 147,680

SINGLE ADULT



- ▶ 7 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 56% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE

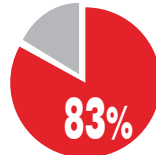


SINGLE ADULT with two children



- ▶ 18 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 83% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



KEY FINDINGS FOR VIRGINIA

Fifty-six percent of job openings pay less than \$18.57 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. More than four out of five, 83 percent, pay less than \$35.07 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$18.57 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are seven job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$35.07 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 18 job-seekers on average.

2014 VIRGINIA JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 470,000		Total Job Openings: 147,680	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$18.57	\$26.47	\$35.07	\$33.95
Living wage job openings	64,471	43,091	25,769	28,171
Job seekers per living wage opening	7 to 1	11 to 1	18 to 1	17 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	56%	71%	83%	81%



STATE FINDINGS

WASHINGTON The Job Gap

Total job seekers: 441,000

Total job openings: 134,392

SINGLE ADULT



- ▶ 6 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 41% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE

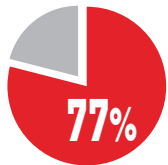


SINGLE ADULT with two children



- ▶ 14 job seekers for every 1 job opening
- ▶ 77% of openings don't pay living wage

PERCENT AVAILABLE JOBS THAT DON'T PAY LIVING WAGE



KEY FINDINGS FOR WASHINGTON

Forty-one percent of job openings pay less than \$15.99 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Nearly four out of five, 77 percent, pay less than \$30.01 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children.

For each job opening that pays at least \$15.99 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are six job-seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$30.01 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are 14 job-seekers on average.

2014 WASHINGTON JOB GAP	Total Job Seekers: 441,000		Total Job Openings: 134,392	
	Household 1: Single adult	Household 2: Single adult with one child	Household 3: Single adult with two children	Household 4: Two adults (one working) with two children
Living wage levels	\$15.99	\$22.09	\$30.01	\$30.47
Living wage job openings	79,517	52,697	31,458	30,728
Job seekers per living wage opening	6 to 1	8 to 1	14 to 1	14 to 1
Percent of all job openings paying less than a living wage	41%	61%	77%	77%

“I have hundreds of dollars in legal financial obligations and probation fees, so I have to make those payments, too. I still have many unmet needs and I don’t see any way how I can get ahead. Many weeks I need to decide between paying my \$75 phone bill and eating lunch. Paying for health insurance is out of the question.”

DARYLE WALLETTE
SPOKANE, WA

COVERING THE COSTS OF BASIC NEEDS IS A DAILY STRUGGLE

I’ve lived in Hillyard, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Washington state, for my whole life. I was raised in extreme poverty in poor living conditions. We rarely had consistent nutritious meals. Our basic needs, including decent clothing and hygiene products, were often unavailable.

Being exposed to drug activity at such a young age, I became involved with drugs myself. I ended up committing bank fraud by cashing a check for \$150 with my name on it, as I had little money and was desperate. This caught up with me, of course, so eventually I entered a rehabilitation program to try to pull myself together and overcome my addictions. When I was released from treatment in 2014, I was placed on probation in a transitional living center and started looking for my first job.

At this point, I was sober and eager to work. Finding a place that would hire me — given my felony conviction, lack of work history, and absence of a car — was really difficult.

After exhausting weeks of job searching, under pressure from my probation officer, I accepted a job at French Cleaners in Coeur d’Alene Idaho, more than 30 miles from where I live in Spokane. Each day, my employer drives from Coeur d’Alene, about 40 minutes each way, to pick me up and drop me off from work.

I am very grateful for the work and for the extra help with transportation, but I am earning a mere \$8 per hour and can only schedule 20 hours per week. This income barely covers my rent of

\$585 per month, on top of which I have to pay for electricity and phone bills, food, and other standard personal expenses.

I have hundreds of dollars in legal financial obligations and probation fees, so I have to make those payments, too. I still have many unmet needs and I don’t see any way how I can get ahead. Many weeks I need to decide between paying my \$75 phone bill and eating lunch. Paying for health insurance is out of the question.

I’ve been the front service clerk at French Cleaners for about six months, and I work as hard as I can. I’ve stayed sober and my boss tells me that I’m doing a great job at work, but covering the costs of basic needs is a daily struggle.

I’m trying to make things better for myself. I decided to start attending school at Spokane Community College, but, in order to cover costs, I had to accept an \$8,000 student loan. As it is, I’m currently unable to save any money for emergencies and feel like I’m being kept at the bottom by the system. Barely surviving is not quality living.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The data shows that workers are not making ends meet in our economy. And with most of America's job growth taking place in low-wage occupations, there are not enough living wage job openings to go around.

Policymakers can create living wage jobs by investing in industries, like health care, that have seen positive job growth with strong wages. And increasing the minimum wage will help workers in all industries to be better able to make ends meet, while strengthening other work supports will help workers earning less than a living wage better meet the needs of their families.

INVEST IN INDUSTRIES THAT OFFER A PATHWAY TO LIVING WAGES.

Investing in job growth in higher paying industries, like health care, is a way to boost workforce wages overall, while simultaneously generating social value through health care provided. One way states can do this is through Medicaid expansion.

When more individuals have access to health care coverage, it generates demand for services, which leads to job growth to support that demand. That growth would come in an industry largely comprised of living wage jobs. And, with more individuals with access to living wages, those workers can better contribute to the economy overall.

A July 2014 study by the White House Council of Economic Advisers found that the opportunity cost for the states¹¹ that have chosen not to accept funding to expand Medicaid eligibility amounts to 103,100 jobs and nearly \$14.7 billion in gross domestic product in 2016.¹²

Further, Medicaid expansion would benefit low-wage workers, reducing health care costs for many workers struggling to make ends meet. A December 2014 Families USA study found that, among states that have not expanded Medicaid eligibility, a majority of residents who stand to benefit from expansion are working adults.¹³

INCREASE MINIMUM WAGES TO HELP WORKERS ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES.

In the November election, voters in blue states and in red, from San Francisco to Arkansas, overwhelmingly approved minimum wage increases. There is significant impetus to increase wage floors to a standard that equips families to rise from poverty.

While wage floors across the country are not keeping up with living needs, municipalities — like Chicago, Oakland, Seattle and Washington, D.C. — are taking action. Chicago's city council recently approved a wage floor schedule that gets to \$13 by 2019. And Oakland voters in November approved a \$12.25 minimum wage by a landslide 81 percent vote. We are seeing progress at the city level, but, as states head into their legislative sessions, this is a critical moment for policymakers to address the living wage crisis.

At the federal level, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which Congress failed to pass in 2013, would have increased the federal wage floor for the first time since 2009 from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour. Although that falls short of providing enough to make basic ends meet, increasing the federal minimum wage and indexing it to inflation would lift millions of workers out of poverty.

This was also a failed opportunity for racial justice, as the increase would have lifted 3.5 million people of color out of poverty, according to Restaurant Opportunities Center United.¹⁴

ELIMINATE THE TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE.

While it has been six years since Congress last increased the federal minimum wage, it has been 24 years since Congress increased the subminimum wage known as the tipped credit.

According to federal law, workers who receive tips must be paid a minimum of \$2.13 an hour. As a result, restaurant servers find themselves straddling the line of a minimum wage. The median wage — including tips — for waiters and waitresses in 2013 was just \$8.94. Additionally, women and people of color are overrepresented in tipped work, and so are disproportionately affected by the subminimum wage.

Ultimately, there should not be a double standard when it comes to building reliable wage floors, and it should not be up to the kindness of strangers for servers to be able to cover living expenses.

ESTABLISH WORK SUPPORTS, LIKE PAID SICK DAYS AND PAID MATERNITY LEAVE.

Workers who do not make a living wage fall short of making ends meet with the wages they have. When these workers are forced to miss work because of sickness or a child's birth, it has a significant impact on personal finances that are already stretched too thin.

Employers in Connecticut, the only state in the country with a statewide paid sick days law, have reported minimal impacts on pricing or employment levels as a result of the law that took effect in 2012, and, in fact, say it has increased employee productivity and morale.¹⁵

STRENGTHEN FEDERAL AND STATE SAFETY NET PROGRAMS AND WORK SUPPORTS.

In the absence of living wage jobs, strong federal and state safety nets can help workers provide for their families. Federal programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) should be expanded to increased need and not have funding capped. Additionally, funding for safety net programs such as Medicare and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program should be strengthened, not cut.

At the state level, supports like state-level Earned Income Tax Credits, child care assistance and tax credits, and state health care programs should be bolstered. And, states should make state-federal partnerships, such as TANF, more robust, and should accept federal funding for expanding Medicaid.

Until all workers earn enough for their families to make ends meet, such supports are of vital importance to ensuring that these families can get by.

INCREASE FEDERAL AND STATE REVENUE.

A strong safety net requires enough revenue to support it. At the federal level, allowing taxes on high-income earners to increase to previously held levels will help inject revenue into the economy that can then support low-wage workers. A financial transaction tax can also help level the playing field by taxing certain large financial transactions and using that revenue to strengthen work supports.

Increasing revenue at the state level is also important for strengthening state-level programs. This can be done by evaluating and closing tax loopholes, making a state's tax structure more progressive, and ensuring that surpluses are used to strengthen infrastructure and work supports.

To guarantee that both federal and state budgets balance, more must be done to ensure that corporations pay into the system. When corporations that pay workers low wages do not pay taxes, they are benefiting from a safety net system into which they do not contribute.

CONCLUSION

It's a basic American value that if you work full-time, you will earn enough to make ends meet. However, we are observing a phenomenon in which families work long hours but still can't pay their bills.

Half of all projected job openings nationally fall short of paying enough to let workers cover their basic needs. Meanwhile there are seven times more job-seekers than there are living wage jobs. Employment realities are not meeting living needs.

With so few living wage jobs and so many individuals looking for work, we see an increasing shift to a chronically underpaid workforce that is lacking the means to make ends meet.

One way to address the living wage crisis is through public investments in industries with high job growth and strong wages — like health care. **In the meantime, increasing the minimum wage in all industries so workers are able to make ends meet would ease the crisis.**



TECHNICAL NOTES

Given limitations in the available data and continuity of data sets, this study updates the previous Job Gap Study as closely as possible using 2013 data. Where 2013 data were not available, data for the closest year available were adjusted for inflation to reflect 2013 dollars.

FAMILY LIVING WAGE BUDGETS

A living wage is a wage that provides a household with financial stability, allowing it to meet its basic needs without government subsidy, with a little left over to plan for emergencies. For this study, a modified market basket approach was used. Household budgets, upon which living wages are based, include:

- ▶ *Food;*
- ▶ *Housing and utilities;*
- ▶ *Transportation;*
- ▶ *Health care;*
- ▶ *Child care;*
- ▶ *Household, clothing, and personal items;*
- ▶ *Savings; and*
- ▶ *State and federal taxes*

HOUSEHOLD ASSUMPTIONS

Household types are selected to reflect the range of budget requirements for four household types:

- ▶ *Single adult*
- ▶ *Single adult with one child between the ages of 6 and 8*
- ▶ *Single adult with two children, one between the ages of 6 and 8 and the other between the ages of 1 and 2*
- ▶ *Two adults including one wage earner, with two children, one between the ages of 6 and 8 and the other between the ages of 1 and 2*

2013 Living wage findings and methodology were reported on in the Alliance's August 2014 study, "Families Out of Balance," available at www.thejobgap.org.

DEFINING JOB-SEEKERS

Job-seekers include:

- ▶ *The unemployed — people who are not employed but are looking for work. Included are those who have been laid off, quit their jobs, are entering the workforce for the first time, or are re-entering it. Not included are those who are unemployed due to temporary layoff or those looking only for part-time work.*
- ▶ *Involuntary part-time workers — people who work less than full-time, but want to work full-time.*

It is important to note that the unemployment rate reflects only the unemployed and, therefore, misses many job-seekers — including discouraged and marginally attached workers. This suggests that there are many more job-seekers for each living wage job opening than conventionally assumed.

The job-seeker figures used are likely an underestimate of the actual number of job-seekers. Ideally, the count of job-seekers would capture everyone, working or not, who needs a living wage job. The figures used here do not count those who are working full-time at less than a living wage but would prefer a living wage job, because data on this group do not exist. They overstate the number in that all the unemployed are counted, even though some may not be looking for a living wage job.

Also, people who left the labor market and then re-entered the same occupation are counted among the job-seekers, whereas those who moved directly from one job to another in the same occupation are not. However, assuming even a fraction of the people working at less than a living wage job for a single adult want a living wage job, the count is, on balance, an underestimate.

JOB OPENINGS

Job openings include the following:

- ▶ *Job openings due to growth — the result of*

new jobs being created by new or existing firms.

- ▶ *Job openings due to replacement — the result of people retiring, entering school or the military, moving across state boundaries, changing occupations, or otherwise leaving the occupation in which they currently work.*

The analysis does not include job openings that result from people changing employers but remaining in the same occupation, since these are largely invisible to the average job seeker. Also not included, for similar reasons, are job openings for unpaid family workers and self-employment.

Job openings data comes from Occupational Employment Projections, estimated at the state and national level. For calculations based off of a living wage, the most recent available data for each state was used — either 2012-2022 or 2013-2023. This data was collected from individual states.

In order to compare state and national data for the \$15 per hour analysis, projections for 2012-2022 were used for all states and nationally. This data was collected from Projectionscentral.com, as suggested by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.¹⁶

In determining which job openings paid a living wage (or \$15 in the national and 49-state analysis), the state median wage for an occupation was used where available; this means that half the people in the occupation earn less and half earn more than that amount. Not everyone will start at the median wage, but many should progress to that wage over time. For occupations where median wage numbers were shown as a range, mean wages were used instead.

DEFINING LOW-WAGE JOBS AT \$15 AN HOUR

The Alliance’s Job Gap Economic Prosperity Series methodology calculates living wages in several states, and uses those thresholds to calculate the number of projected job openings that pay those living wages. Further, we calculate the “job gap,” or the ratio of job-seekers to jobs that pay living wages.

In this study, we apply that methodology to Bureau of Labor Statistics’ national wages and employment projection data to calculate the National Job Gap.

We set \$15 an hour in the year of our study, 2013, as the cut-off between low-wage and higher-wage jobs, where anything below \$15 per hour was considered low-wage.

There were several considerations in choosing \$15. First, this figure is a conservative threshold, generally short of what it takes to actually make ends meet. Living wages measure the most basic costs of living. For instance, when calculating phone costs, we assume the most basic landline plan available, without any type of cell phone. And this, despite 91 percent of adults in America owning more-expensive cellular phones and 56 percent owning an even more-expensive smartphone.¹⁷

Fifteen dollars an hour is below living wages for single individuals for nearly all states we’ve studied (except Idaho and Montana, which have a living wage just under \$15 per hour for a single adult), and does not include child care or student debt (or debt of any kind). Of the 10 states in our study and New York City, the weighted average of all living wages for households comprised of a single adult was \$17.83 an hour.

And it is important to note that households with children need significantly higher living wages. For households with a single adult, a school-age child and a toddler, the weighted average living wage was \$33.56.

So, while the \$15 threshold falls short of providing enough for even a single individual — let alone one with children — we erred on the side of choosing a conservative threshold, knowing that there are some states for which \$15 is comparable to a living wage for a single adult (though well under in others).

Additionally, fast-food workers have gone on strike nationwide, demanding a \$15 minimum wage. Due in part to this and related campaigns, there has been growing momentum around a \$15 minimum wage. In SeaTac, Wash., a ballot initiative in 2013 passed a \$15 minimum wage for airport and hotel workers.¹⁸ In Seattle, after deliberation by a task force appointed by the mayor, the mayor and city council approved a \$15 minimum wage in June 2014 that will increase wages incrementally over the next several years.¹⁹ Even more recently, in November 2014 San Francisco voters approved an incremental \$15 minimum wage similar to that in Seattle.²⁰

There is momentum around the \$15 wage.

However, it is also important to put a \$15 per hour wage in context:

- ▶ *The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25. It has not increased since 2009, while the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has increased 9.4 percent between 2009 and the first half of 2013.²¹ In real dollars, the federal minimum wage is actually lower today than it was in 1968.²²*
- ▶ *A threshold often used to define low-wage jobs is the poverty line for a family of four. In 2012, an individual would have to earn \$23,050 annually, or an \$11.08 wage working 40 hours a week, to meet that threshold. This wage is inadequate and outdated and does not constitute a decent wage. (See "Living Wage vs. the Minimum Wage and Federal Poverty Measures" in "Families Out of Balance," available at www.thejobgap.org)*

Ultimately, we see the \$15 threshold as a conservative threshold for a basic needs wage, which makes our job gap findings even more stark.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines the working poor as those who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (working or looking for work) but whose incomes fell below official federal poverty levels.
- 2 Our August 2014 study of living wages — or how much workers actually need to earn to make basic ends meet — found that all living wage levels in the 10 states studied were significantly higher than poverty standards.
- 3 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/23/low-paying-jobs_n_5868350.html
- 4 Michigan was the only state without 2012-2022 projected openings information, so the ratio could not be calculated in that state.
- 5 These findings indicate that the economy is not creating enough living wage jobs for those who need them. However, a job gap ratio of seven to one does not necessarily imply there are seven people competing for each job opening at that wage level. It indicates that, over the course of a year, there were seven times as many job-seekers as there were living wage jobs at or above the \$15 wage level. Available data do not provide details on what sorts of jobs workers from households of different sizes actually pursue, so no precise conclusions can be reached about the applicant pool for jobs at different wage levels. The applicant pool also depends on the skills, education, and training of job-seekers, as well as other factors. Large ratios suggest greater competition among job-seekers for available job openings.
- 6 Because wage data is only available statewide, New York State (not including New York City) and New York City do not have this job gap ratio.
- 7 http://jobgap2013.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/2014-08-job-gap_families-out-of-balance_final.pdf
- 8 http://rocunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ROC_racialjustice_revfinal1.pdf
- 9 The industry is the fastest-growing in the country, with employment levels increasing 8 percent since before the recession (between 2006 and 2013), more than any other BLS industry.
- 10 http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#31-0000
- 11 This number of states that have not expanded Medicaid
- 12 http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/missed_opportunities_medicaid.pdf
- 13 <http://familiesusa.org/product/medicaid-expansion-series-spotlight-tennessee-and-indiana>
- 14 http://rocunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ROC_racialjustice_revfinal1.pdf
- 15 <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-low-cost-high-reward.pdf>
- 16 <http://www.bls.gov/emp/>
- 17 <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/February/Pew-Internet-Mobile.aspx>
- 18 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/26/seatac-15-minimum-wage-passes_n_4339492.html
- 19 <http://murray.seattle.gov/minimumwage/#sthash.lodqJDA9.dpbs>
- 20 <http://sfgsa.org/index.aspx?page=411>
- 21 Alliance analysis of BLS CPI data.
- 22 <http://www.remappingdebate.org/map-data-tool/individual-minimum-wage-versus-family-poverty-threshold>
- 23 <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml> eligibility was 24 states as of July 2014, and is down to 23 states as of December

- 2014.
- 24 http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/missed_opportunities_medicaid.pdf
- 25 <http://familiesusa.org/product/medicaid-expansion-series-spotlight-tennessee-and-indiana>
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- 32 <http://sfgsa.org/index.aspx?page=411>
- 33 Alliance analysis of BLS CPI data.
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- 35 <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>

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