

NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE



Coronavirus' Economic Impact on Domestic Workers

There are almost 2.5 million domestic workers in the United States. In this unprecedented moment of global health and economic crises, domestic workers are a critical workforce on the frontlines of our collective response in the fight against coronavirus. Home care workers continue to provide life-saving in-home services to the elderly, people with disabilities and people with chronic illnesses. Nannies are caring for the children of essential workers like health care professionals.

Most domestic workers do not have paid time off or sick days, formal contracts with protection against unfair dismissal, or livable wages. As a result, many domestic workers, especially home care workers, are either continuing to show up on the frontlines providing the critical care that their employers need, and putting their own health at risk. Or domestic workers, like house cleaners, are losing their jobs if they self-isolate or practice social distancing, leaving them without even the work they were receiving.

Who are domestic workers?



More than 90% women, and disproportionately women of color and immigrants.
(Economic Policy Institute)



Low-wage workers: The median hourly wage for a domestic worker is **\$10.21**, compared to **\$17.55** for other workers.
(Economic Policy Institute)



High rates of working while living under the poverty line: **23.4%** of domestic workers live under the poverty line compared to **6.5%** of other workers, and **51.4%** of domestic workers live under twice the poverty line, compared to **20.8%** of other workers.
(Economic Policy Institute)



Using a conservative measure of income adequacy, **48 percent** of workers are paid an hourly wage in their primary job that is below the level needed to adequately support a family.
"Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work", The National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2012.

Key Survey Results

Respondents are experiencing sudden and devastating unemployment or underemployment.



72% of respondents reported having no jobs for the week beginning 4/6, a 9 percentage point increase from the previous week of March 30th.



80% of respondents with a high volume of work (more than 10 jobs per week) either had no work for the following week, or had lost at least half of their jobs for the following week.



94% report that coronavirus-related cancellations were by their client, rather than by them. And of those respondents, **70%** say they don't know if their clients will give them their job back after the pandemic.

Most respondents are primary breadwinners, and experiencing housing and food insecurity.



77% of respondents are primary breadwinners.



84% of workers reported they either will not be able to afford food for the weeks of April 6-19 (**30%**) or are uncertain if they will be able to (**54%**)



55% of respondents were unable to pay April's rent, and **77%** of respondents are worried about eviction.



Half of surveyed domestic workers reported lack of access to medical care.

This puts them at even greater risk if they or their family contracts coronavirus. While **87%** of respondents affirmed they need a mask to be protected from coronavirus, only **18%** have regular access to masks.

Conclusion

Respondents are being disproportionately affected by the coronavirus in comparison to the US workforce at large. Workers surveyed are seeing extreme job loss and unemployment at higher rates to the general US workforce, and most do not know when they will be able to return to their jobs. Most respondents are breadwinners and their families are now experiencing food and housing insecurity. They are at a high risk of infection, both by working in others' homes, and also as a result of not having the safety equipment they need.

Methodology

Since March 13, NDWA Labs has conducted weekly surveys with subscribers of La Alianza, a news service for domestic workers. The goal of the surveys is to learn how the coronavirus crisis is affecting domestic workers today. Questions range from jobs booked, jobs lost, access to safety equipment, and workers' food and housing security and concerns.

Here we are sharing results from the third survey, conducted between March 27-30, with 12,153 respondents, and the fourth survey, conducted between April 3-6, with 16,617 respondents.

La Alianza is a media venture for Spanish speaking domestic workers all around the country—it includes a news website, Facebook page and messenger bot. More than 200,000 domestic workers subscribe to La Alianza; they work as home careworkers, house cleaners and nannies, and the majority work as cleaners. In addition to sharing information about their work, subscribers also receive resources, tips and opportunities to share with fellow workers. La Alianza is a project of NDWA Labs, the innovation arm of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.