JOBLESSNESS FOR DOMESTIC WORKER RESPONDENTS REMAINED AT 19% IN AUGUST

Joblessness remains higher than its pre-pandemic rate of 9%

Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report · August 2022
Source: La Alianza surveys, NDWA Labs
Released: September 6, 2022

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics Jobs Report shows the number of jobs added in August was around market expectations. The general unemployment rate ticked up, after having recovered to its pre-pandemic level in July. Unemployment rates for Latina and Black women increased in August 2022.

NDWA Labs' August Report shows that the percentage of jobless domestic worker respondents in August remained unchanged compared to July. NDWA Labs' data shows joblessness for domestic worker respondents is at 19%, still far from the rate of 9% who reported having no jobs before COVID-19.

Domestic workers are the nannies, homecare workers, and house cleaners whose work is essential to our economy, and yet they are one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of workers. Even before COVID-19, domestic workers earned less than the average US worker and were three times as likely to be living in poverty.

La Alianza survey data from Spanish-speaking domestic workers shows how the pandemic has amplified the vulnerability of this workforce. Domestic workers continue to face low wages and high levels of unemployment and underemployment.

A contextual note regarding our findings: domestic workers, and particularly house cleaners, often have multiple employers. This means they may have to schedule several jobs in a given week in order to make ends meet.
**August Jobs Report - Bureau of Labor Statistics**

Each month, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) releases an Economic Situation Summary with employment and other labor market data. This is an important report to keep track of how the economy is doing. However, domestic workers, along with other vulnerable workers, are often underrepresented in official data. Here we present an overview of the BLS Jobs report, along with NDWA Labs’ data which shows the employment and economic situation of thousands of Spanish-speaking domestic workers.

On September 2nd, the BLS released [new employment data for August 2022](#).

- The number of jobs added in August was around market expectations.
- The general unemployment rate ticked up, after having recovered to its pre-pandemic level in July.
- **The unemployment rate for Latina and Black women increased in August.**
- The unemployment rates for Black and Latinx adults continue to be higher compared to the rates for white adults.
- People who have been unemployed long-term (27 weeks or more) represented 18.8% of the total unemployed in August.

The unemployment rate for Latina women increased in August 2022 with respect to July. **NDWA Labs’ August Report shows the percentage of jobless Spanish-speaking domestic worker respondents remained unchanged in August compared to the previous month.** While the share of joblessness for domestic workers is not directly comparable to the unemployment rate nationwide*, looking at trends in the data for Spanish-speaking domestic workers in the context of national trends can support our understanding of the sector as it relates to the broader economy.

**August Domestic Worker Jobs and Wages**

**August joblessness remained unchanged compared to July.** In July and August, an average of 19% of respondents reported having zero hours of work in a weekly survey.

- Comparatively, joblessness among respondents was 20% in the second quarter and 23% in the first quarter of 2022.
- Before COVID, 9% of respondents reported having zero hours of work.
19% of surveyed domestic workers were jobless in August, the same rate as in July 2022.

How many hours did you work last week?

- More than 40
- 31-40
- 21-30
- 1-10
- 11-20
- 0

Four-week rolling average

2022

n = 23,585 responses | Source: NDWA Labs’ La Alianza Weekly Survey, March 4 – Aug 26, 2022
Note: The rolling average is calculated using four consecutive calendar weeks. For weeks where we did not survey and we lacked data for a given calendar week, the rolling average is calculated using 3 weeks of data.

- Nearly 7 in 10 respondents who had work in August were underemployed. 68% of domestic worker respondents who had at least one hour of work per week said they wanted to work more hours.
  - Of the underemployed domestic worker respondents in August, 67% told us they were underemployed because they did not find more clients, 12% were taking care of relatives, 14% had a health problem, and 7% were underemployed for another reason.

62% domestic worker respondents earned less than $15 per hour in August 2022, fewer compared to July (64%) and to the second quarter (70%) of 2022. This signals a fast improvement in the distribution of wages for domestic worker respondents over the past two months, after showing little change throughout 2021 and the first half of 2022.4
While we have seen notable improvements, this is share is still higher than the share of respondents who earned less than $15 per hour before COVID-19, which was at most 55%***.

The distribution of wages improved in August. 62% of respondents reported earning less than $15 per hour, compared to 70% in the second quarter of 2022.

How much did you earn per hour last week, on average?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$9 or less</th>
<th>$10-14</th>
<th>$15 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2022</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 2022</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 11,533 total responses | Source: NDWA Labs’ La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 1 - July 1, 2022; August 5-26, 2022

Job search

Most domestic worker respondents, whether or not they had current work, looked for additional work in August.

- 3 in 4 (75%) of domestic worker respondents, whether or not they had current work, told us they had looked for new work in the past 30 days.
- Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) respondents, whether or not they had current work, told us they had asked at least one of their regular employers to go back to work in the past 30 days.

Housing and Food Security

Economic insecurity has shown little to no change compared to the second quarter of 2022. More than 4 in 10 domestic worker respondents faced housing insecurity, and nearly 8 in 10 experienced food insecurity in August 2022.
In August 2022, 42% of domestic worker respondents, on average, said they were unable to pay their monthly rent or mortgage, showing no change from the second quarter of 2022.

42% of surveyed domestic workers experienced housing insecurity in August, with no change from the second quarter of 2022.

Were you able to pay your rent or mortgage this month?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I could not</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2022</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 2022</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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n = 3,590 total respondents  | Source: NDWA Labs’ La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 1 – July 1, 2022, August 5-26, 2022  | Note: Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100.

78% of surveyed domestic workers experienced some level of food insecurity in August 2022.

Will you be able to pay for food in the next two weeks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2022</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 2022</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 3,557 total responses  | Source: NDWA Labs’ La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 1 – July 1, 2022, August 5-26, 2022
● In August 2022, 16% of respondents, on average, said they would not be able to afford food in the following two weeks and 62% were unsure if they would be able to.
  ○ This is largely unchanged compared to the second quarter of 2022, where 16% of respondents, on average, said they would not be able to afford food in the following two weeks and 63% were unsure if they would be able to.

About the surveys

NDWA Labs surveys Spanish-speaking domestic workers each week, via La Alianza, a Messenger chatbot. At the end of each survey, La Alianza provides respondents with relevant news articles and resources in Spanish. To learn more about NDWA Labs’ La Alianza survey of Spanish-speaking domestic workers, see this report.

The employment numbers presented in this report include data from all of our weekly surveys from March through August 2022. August averages reflect data from three weekly surveys in August 2022 and second quarter averages reflect data from fourteen weekly surveys in April, May, and June 2022.

The total number of fully completed surveys for our three August weekly surveys, which includes both new and repeated respondents, was 1,799; for July weekly surveys, we had 1,743 completed surveys; for June weekly surveys, we had 3,605 completed surveys; for May, we had 2,814 completed surveys; and for April, we had 4,169 completed surveys.

Questions about hours worked and hourly wages are asked weekly, questions regarding underemployment and job search are asked bi-weekly, and questions around food and housing security are asked monthly.

La Alianza is a product of NDWA Labs, the innovation partner of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. NDWA Labs experiments with the ways technology can organize domestic workers and transform domestic work jobs into good jobs by bringing respect, living wages, and benefits to an undervalued and vulnerable part of the economy.

For questions, please contact us here.
Notes

1 White House Council of Economic Advisers (2022), *The Employment Situation in August*
2 NDWA Labs (2020), *6 Months in Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Workers*
3 Economic Policy Institute (2019), *Domestic Workers Chartbook*
4 NDWA Labs (2022), *2021 Overview: Domestic Workers’ Economic Situation*; NDWA Labs (2022), *Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report: June 2022*

* Unlike unemployment rates, joblessness for domestic workers may include people who are not working but are currently unavailable to work, or not actively looking for jobs.
** In January 2022 we modified the ranges for answer options in the hourly wage questions. The previous ranges were: $10 or less, $11-15, $16-20, $21-25, and $26 or more. As of January 2022, the ranges are: $9 or less, $10-14, $15-19, $20-24, and $25 or more.
*** The share of respondents earning less than $15 in 2022 cannot be directly compared to baseline numbers before COVID-19, due to a change in answer option ranges (see above footnote). However, since 55% of respondents reported earning $15 or less before COVID-19, a share which is inclusive of those who earned $15 per hour, we know that the share of respondents earning less than $15 is at most 55%.