

The Minimum Wage Debate: Who Would Be Affected in Wisconsin?

Whenever the topic of increasing the minimum wage comes up, there is a discussion about which workers will be affected. This paper summarizes the available data regarding the wages of Wisconsin workers and the types of workers who would be affected by a hike in the minimum wage.

Wisconsin Wage & Salary Workers Affected by Minimum Wage Proposals

Hourly Wage	Total Workers (in 2000)	Percent of Wage & Salary Workers
Less than \$5.15	40,000	2.2%
\$5.15 - \$6.14	116,000	6.4%
\$6.15 - \$6.64	55,000	3.0%
\$6.65 - \$7.14	91,000	5.0%
Approximate Number of Workers below \$6.80 per hour	238,000	13.1%

Source: Wisconsin Budget Project, using unpublished tabulation by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from the 2000 Current Population Survey.

Demographics of Low-Income Workers

We do not currently have good state-level data on the demographics of low-wage workers. However, the following data derived from the Census Bureau's 1999 Current Population Survey provides a national picture of those earning at or near the minimum wage:

- 37 percent of workers earning from \$5.15 to \$6.14 in 1999 were the household head or a spouse who contributes to family income. (National Economic Council [NEC]).
- 33 percent of workers in the \$5.15 to \$6.14 pay range were parents with children under 18. (Bernstein, Hartmann and Schmitt 1999)
- About 60 percent of the workers in that wage range are women. (NEC)
- Almost 70 percent (69.9 %) of workers making the minimum wage or less in 1999 were age 20 and over. For those between \$5.15 and \$6.14, 69.0 percent were 20 and over, and for workers making \$6.15 to \$7.14, 82 percent were at least age 20. (NEC)
- Over 50 percent of the benefit of a \$1.00 increase in the minimum wage would go to households with incomes less than \$25,000 per year. (Bernstein, Hartmann and Schmitt 1999)

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