



## JOBLESSNESS INCREASED TO 18% IN JULY

### Housing insecurity increased this month.

#### Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report · July 2023

Source: La Alianza surveys, NDWA Labs

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The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics Jobs Report shows continued, if slower, job growth in June, with little change in the unemployment rate. **NDWA Labs' July Report shows an increase to 18% in joblessness for surveyed domestic workers.** This comes after a joblessness decrease during June. It remains over twice the rate of 9% who reported having no jobs before COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

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. They work in private homes, and often have multiple employers. This means they may have to schedule several jobs in a given week in order to make ends meet. Domestic workers earn less than the average US worker and are three times as likely to be living in poverty.<sup>2</sup>

La Alianza survey data from **Spanish-speaking domestic workers** shows how respondents continue to face low wages and high levels of unemployment and underemployment.

#### July 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 August 4, the BLS released new employment data for [July 2023](#).

- The general unemployment rate ticked down.
- **The unemployment rate for Latina women ticked down.**
  - However, the non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Latina women remained unchanged.
- The unemployment rate for Black women decreased, while the non-seasonally adjusted rate increased for this group.
- The unemployment rates for Black and Latinx adults continue to be higher compared to the rates for white adults.
- Average hourly earnings for nonfarm payroll workers increased.

**NDWA Labs' data shows an increase in joblessness for surveyed domestic workers, at 18%.** 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.

### July Domestic Worker Economic Situation at a Glance

Below are our main findings on the Economic Situation of Spanish-speaking domestic workers in July. Note that monthly numbers may be volatile, which is why we look at our findings as they relate to prior trends in the data, and the economic situation of the overall economy.

#### *Jobs and Wages*

- **Joblessness increased to 18% in July.** This comes after a decrease in joblessness during the second quarter of the year. Joblessness on average during the second quarter was at 16%.
- **Six in ten domestic worker respondents were underemployed.**
  - The main reason for underemployment that workers reported was that they could not find more clients (68%), followed by taking care of a family member (14%), having a health problem (10%), and “other” (8%).
- **The wage distribution improved in July compared to the second quarter of 2023.** 61% of domestic worker respondents reported earning less than \$15 per hour in July, compared to 62% on average during the second quarter of the year.
  - This share remains higher than the share of respondents who earned less than \$15 per hour before COVID-19, which was at most 55%.\*\*\*

## Economic Security

**Some signs of economic insecurity worsened in July**, with an increase in the prevalence of housing insecurity and food scarcity. However, there was an improvement in the ease of affording regular household expenses.

- **Food scarcity increased slightly.** 81% domestic worker respondents said their households faced food scarcity either often (12%) or sometimes (69%) in the week prior to being surveyed, a slight increase compared to 80% in the second quarter of the year..
- **Housing insecurity increased this month.** More than half (52%) of domestic worker respondents reported they were unable to pay their rent or mortgage in time at the beginning of July, compared to a 46% average in the second quarter of the year.
- **In early July, 43% of domestic worker respondents reported struggling to afford regular household expenses.** This is notably better compared to the second quarter share of 47%.
  - In July, respondents told us that it was either very (21%) or somewhat difficult (22%) to afford regular household expenses, such as food, housing, car payments, and medical expenses, in the week prior to the survey.
  - 50% of workers told us that it was a little difficult to afford household expenses and only 8% told us that it was not difficult.

### 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 three weekly surveys in July 2023, and twelve weekly surveys in the second quarter of 2023. Due to NDWA's summer office closure, we did NOT send a survey on July 7. For greater detail on completions broken down by month, please see the table below.

| Month | Number of weekly surveys | Total completed surveys |
|-------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|-------|--------------------------|-------------------------|

|            |   |       |
|------------|---|-------|
| July 2023  | 3 | 1,456 |
| June 2023  | 4 | 1,625 |
| May 2023   | 4 | 2,568 |
| April 2023 | 4 | 2,576 |

Questions about hours worked and hourly wages are asked weekly, questions regarding underemployment and job search are asked bi-weekly, and questions around economic 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 or feedback, please contact us [here](#).

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> NDWA Labs (2020), [6 Months in Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Workers](#)

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute (2022), [Domestic Workers Chartbook](#)

<sup>3</sup> Koppam (2022), [What federal statistical agencies can do to improve survey response rates among Hispanic communities in the United States](#)

\* 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. Additionally, the NDWA Labs' joblessness rate for surveyed domestic workers is NOT seasonally adjusted, while BLS unemployment rates are adjusted.

\*\*\* 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,<sup>2</sup> 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%.