



## DOMESTIC WORKERS' JOBLESSNESS CONTINUES TO DECREASE BUT REMAINS AT 25%

More than 8 in 10 respondents who had work in May are underemployed

### Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report · May 2021

Source: La Alianza surveys, NDWA Labs

Released: June 4, 2021

Today's Bureau of Labor Statistics' Jobs report shows the unemployment rates for Black and Latinx adults decreased in May 2021 but remain higher than before the pandemic and higher than other demographic groups. NDWA Labs' May report shows a similar trend: Latina domestic workers continue gradually to recover work, but unemployment is still very high for these workers. In May 2021, 25% of domestic worker respondents were still out of work, much higher than the 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.<sup>1</sup>

La Alianza survey data of **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.

### May 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 June 4, the BLS released [new employment data for May 2021](#).

- **The unemployment rates for Black and Latinx adults decreased in May 2021 but remain higher than other demographic groups.**
- People who have been unemployed long-term (27 weeks or more) represented 40.9% of the total unemployed in May.

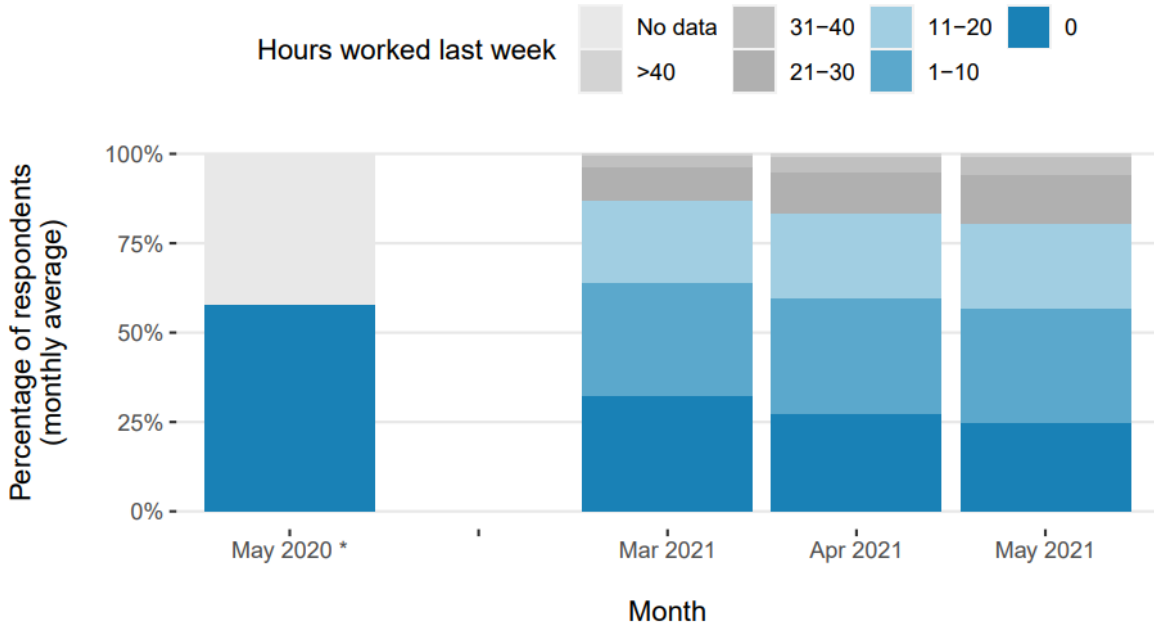
The economic crisis that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly harsh for Latina women. In April 2020, the unemployment rate for Latina women reached 20%, the highest compared to other racial/ethnic and gender groups. **While there has been improvement, the unemployment rate for Latina women in May 2021 remains higher than before the pandemic.**<sup>2</sup>

**NDWA Labs' May report shows a similar trend: Latina domestic workers continue gradually to recover work, but unemployment is still very high for these workers. In May 2021, 25% of domestic worker respondents were still out of work, much higher than the 9% who reported having no jobs before COVID-19.**

### May Domestic Worker Jobs and Wages

**May unemployment and underemployment for domestic workers continue to be very high. However, the decrease in unemployment we have seen throughout 2021 continued in May, and unemployment is much lower compared to May 2020.**

**Domestic workers' joblessness continues to decrease, but 1 in 4 workers remain jobless.**



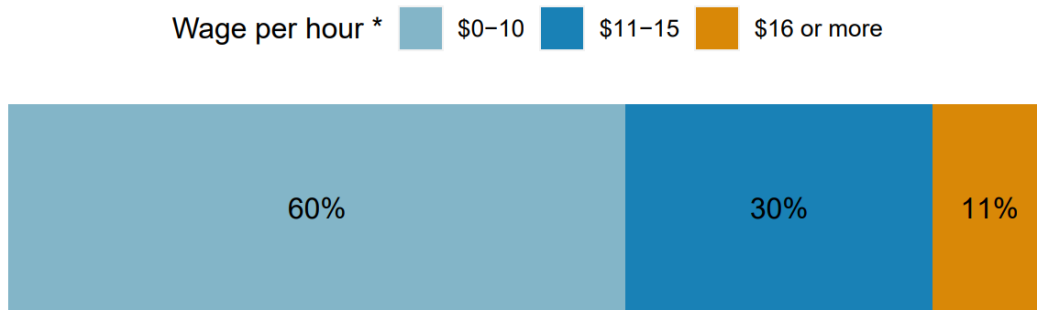
Source: NDWA Labs Weekly Survey, May 1–29, 2020; March 1 – May 28, 2021

Note: May 2020 data for zero hours worked is imputed from a question regarding number of jobs per week. We assume that workers who said they had 0 jobs per week had 0 hours of work that same week. \*



- 25% of domestic worker respondents had ZERO work hours per week in May, compared to 29% in April and 31% in March.
  - By contrast, in May 2020, 58% of domestic workers reported ZERO jobs per week.<sup>3</sup>
- **More than 8 in 10 respondents who had work in May are underemployed.** 82% of domestic worker respondents who had at least one hour of work per week said they wanted to work more hours.

## 9 in 10 surveyed domestic workers earn \$15 or less per hour.



Source: NDWA Labs Weekly Survey, May 7 – May 28, 2021

Notes: Percentages shown are monthly averages. \*  
Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100.



- 9 in 10 domestic worker respondents earned \$15 or less per hour this month.

### Job search

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

- More than 8 in 10 (85%) domestic worker respondents, whether or not they had current work, told us they had looked for new work in the past 30 days.
- Similarly, more than 8 in 10 (80%) 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.

### **About the surveys**

La Alianza surveys Spanish-speaking domestic workers each week, via a Messenger chatbot. The employment numbers presented in this report pool data from four weekly surveys in May. Questions about hours worked and hourly wages are asked weekly, questions regarding underemployment and job search are asked bi-weekly.

The total number of fully completed surveys for our four May weekly surveys, which includes both new and repeated respondents, was 4,123. At the end of each survey, La Alianza provides respondents with relevant news articles and resources in Spanish. To learn more about the La Alianza survey of Spanish-speaking domestic workers, see our recent [report](#).

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

<sup>1</sup> Economic Policy Institute (2019), [Domestic Workers Chartbook](#)

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute (2021), Jobs and Unemployment, [“A more comprehensive look at unemployment rates”](#)

<sup>3</sup> In 2020, our main indicator for unemployment was based on those who responded ZERO to the question: “How many jobs did you have last week?” In 2021, our main indicator of unemployment is based on those who responded ZERO to the question: “How many hours did you work last week?”