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JOBLESSNESS FOR DOMESTIC WORKER RESPONDENTS DECREASED TO 16% IN OCTOBER
Joblessness remains higher than its pre-pandemic rate of 9%

Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report · October 2022
Source: La Alianza surveys, NDWA Labs
Released: November 7, 2022

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics Jobs Report shows the number of jobs added in October was above market expectations.[1] The general unemployment rate ticked up. Similarly, unemployment rates for Latina and Black women increased in October 2022.

NDWA Labs' October Report shows that the percentage of jobless domestic worker respondents in October decreased to 16%. This is the lowest rate of joblessness we have seen since we started surveying in 2020. However, it remains higher than the rate of 9% who reported having no jobs before COVID-19.[2]

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.[3]

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.

October 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 November 4, the BLS released [new employment data for October 2022.](#)
- The number of jobs added in October was above market expectations.
- The general unemployment rate ticked up.
- **The unemployment rate for Latina and Black women increased in October.**
- 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 19.5% of the total unemployed in October.
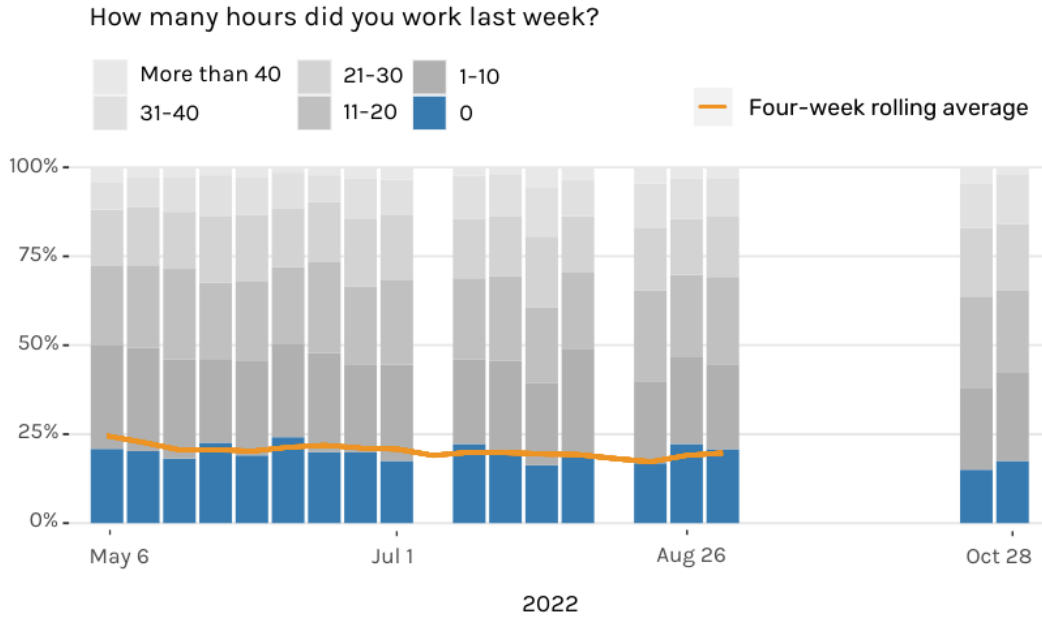
NDWA Labs' October Report shows the percentage of jobless Spanish-speaking domestic worker respondents decreased in October. While the share of joblessness for domestic workers is not directly comparable to the unemployment rate nationwide*, looking at trends in the data for Spanish-speaking domestic workers in the context of national trends can support our understanding of the sector as it relates to the broader economy.

October Domestic Worker Jobs and Wages

October joblessness decreased for domestic worker respondents. In October, an average of 16% of respondents reported having zero hours of work in a weekly survey, compared with 19% on average in July and August.
- This is the lowest rate of joblessness we have seen since we started surveying in 2020. However, it remains higher than the rate of 9% who reported having no jobs before COVID-19.[2]
- The share of respondents working more than 20 hours per week increased in October. 36% of respondents reported working more than 20 hours a week in October, up from 32% on average in July and August 2022.

16% of surveyed domestic workers were jobless in October, down from 19% in July and August 2022.

How many hours did you work last week?

Legend: More than 40 | 21–30 | 1–10 | 31–40 | 11–20 | 0 | Four-week rolling average

n = 16,641 responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, May 6 - October 28, 2022
Notes: Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to send surveys between September 2 - October 14, 2022; the rolling average is calculated using four consecutive calendar weeks. For weeks where we did not survey and we lacked data for a single calendar week, the rolling average is calculated using a minimum of 3 weeks of data. It is left out otherwise.
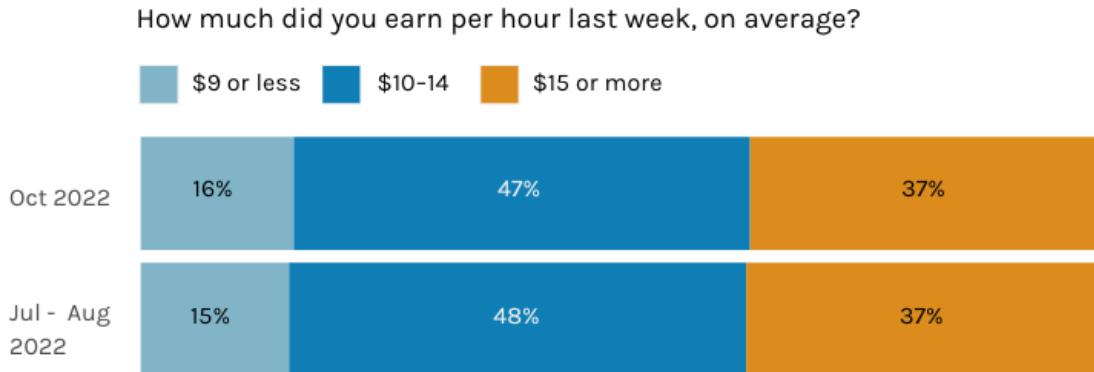
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- **Nearly 7 in 10 respondents who had work in October were underemployed.** 67% of domestic worker respondents who had at least one hour of work per week said they wanted to work more hours.
  - Of the underemployed domestic worker respondents in October, 65% told us they were underemployed because they did not find more clients, 13% were taking care of relatives, 15% had a health issue, and 7% were underemployed for another reason.

63% domestic worker respondents earned less than $15 per hour in October 2022, remaining steady compared with the average for July and August.
- The distribution of wages has improved since the [first half](#) of 2022, with fewer workers making less than $15 per hour.
- This share is still higher than the share of respondents who earned less than $15 per hour before COVID-19, which was at most 55%***.

63% of respondents reported earning less than $15 per hour in October, remaining steady compared with July and August 2022.

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

| | $9 or less | $10-14 | $15 or more |

Oct 2022	16%	47%	37%
Jul - Aug 2022	15%	48%	37%

n = 5,056 total responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, July 15 - August 26, 2022; October 21-28, 2022 | Note: Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to send surveys between September 2 - October 14, 2022

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Job search

3 in 4 respondents, whether or not they had current work, looked for additional work in October.

- 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.
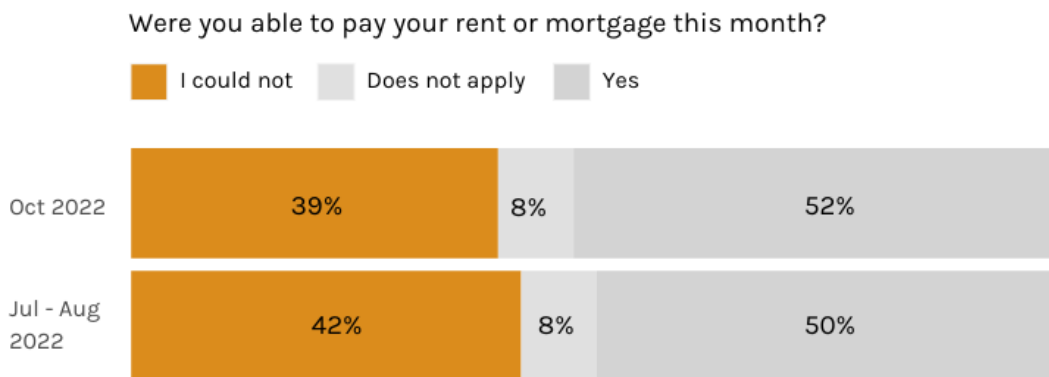
Housing and Food Security

Economic insecurity was still very high, showing little change compared to July and August. 4 in 10 domestic worker respondents faced housing insecurity, and nearly 8 in 10 experienced food insecurity in October 2022.

- In October 2022, 39% of domestic worker respondents, on average, said they were unable to pay their monthly rent or mortgage, compared to 42% on average in July and August.
  - This lower number may reflect the difference in timing when we asked this question. In July and August, we asked this question during the first week of the month, while in October we asked it during the third week of the month, due to technical difficulties that prevented us from sending surveys earlier.

- In October 2022, 13% of respondents, on average, said they would not be able to afford food in the following two weeks and 66% were unsure if they would be able to.
  - For comparison, on average in July and 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.
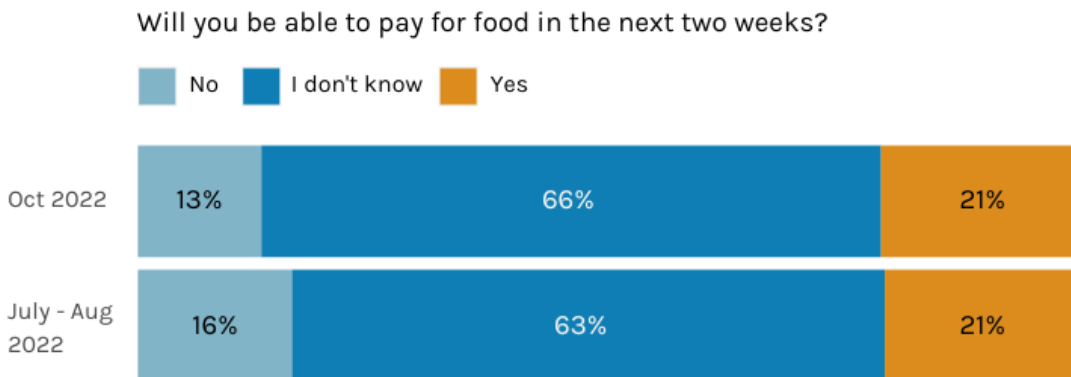
39% of surveyed domestic workers experienced housing insecurity in October, down from 42% on average in July and August 2022.

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

	I could not	Does not apply	Yes

	I could not	Does not apply	Yes
Oct 2022	39%	8%	52%
Jul - Aug 2022	42%	8%	50%

n = 2,355 total respondents | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, July 15, August 5, October 21, 2022 | Notes: Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100; Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to send surveys between September 2 - October 14, 2022

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79% of surveyed domestic workers experienced some level of food insecurity in October 2022. Fewer workers could not afford food compared with July and August 2022.

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

	No	I don't know	Yes

	No	I don't know	Yes
Oct 2022	13%	66%	21%
July - Aug 2022	16%	63%	21%

n = 2,325 total responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, July 15, August 5, October 21, 2022 | Note: Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to send surveys between September 2 - October 14, 2022

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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 May through October 2022. Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to send surveys between September 2 and October 14. October averages represent data from two weekly surveys fielded on October 21 and October 28, 2022. July and August averages reflect data from six weekly surveys in July and August 2022.

The total number of fully completed surveys for our two October weekly surveys, which includes both new and repeated respondents, was 1,450; for August weekly surveys, we had 1,799 completed surveys; for July, we had 1,743 completed weekly surveys; for June, we had 3,605 completed weekly surveys; and for May, we had 2,814 completed weekly 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 October*
[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,[2] 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%.