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JOBLESSNESS AMONG DOMESTIC WORKER RESPONDENTS DECREASED TO 17% IN SEPTEMBER

EIGHT IN TEN RESPONDENTS REPORTED FACING FOOD SCARCITY IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE YEAR

Domestic Workers Economic Situation Report · September 2023
With analysis from the third quarter of 2023
Source: La Alianza surveys, NDWA Labs
Released: October 6, 2023

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics Jobs Report shows an increase in payroll jobs which was above market expectations. The general unemployment rate remained steady compared to August, while the rate for Latina women decreased.

NDWA Labs' September data shows that the joblessness rate for domestic worker respondents declined to 17% in September. This comes after a joblessness increase during August. It remains higher compared to 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, yet they are some of the most vulnerable and marginalized workers. They work in private homes and often have multiple employers, meaning they may have to schedule several jobs to make ends meet. Domestic workers earn less than the average US worker and are three times as likely to be living in poverty.[3]

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

September Jobs Report - Bureau of Labor Statistics

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) releases an Economic Situation Summary with employment and other labor market data each month. It's an important report to keep track of how the economy is doing. However, domestic workers and other vulnerable workers are underrepresented in official data.[4] 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 October 6, the BLS released new employment data for September 2023.
- The number of jobs added in September was above market expectations.
- The general unemployment rate remained steady.
- **The unemployment rate for Latina and Black women decreased.**
- The unemployment rates for Black and Latinx adults continue to be higher compared to the rates for white adults.

NDWA Labs' data similarly shows a decrease in joblessness for surveyed Spanish-speaking domestic workers. 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.

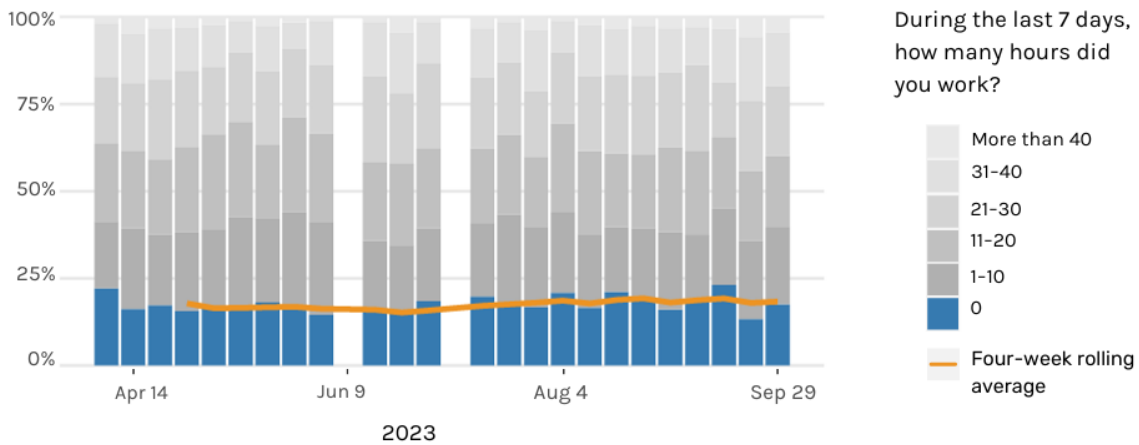## September Domestic Worker Economic Situation

Below are our main findings on the Economic Situation of Spanish-speaking domestic workers in September. 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. Additionally, at the end of each quarter, we calculate quarterly averages for key economic indicators.

Jobs and Wages

- **Joblessness worsened in the third quarter compared to the prior quarter, to 18% on average.**
  - 21% and 16% of domestic worker respondents were jobless on average in the first and second quarters, respectively.
  - Joblessness in September, the final month of the third quarter, decreased by 2 percentage points since August, to 17%.

- **The share of respondents working more than twenty hours per week increased by 2 percentage points, averaging 38% in the third quarter.**
  - On average, 36% of domestic worker respondents reported working more than twenty hours per week in the first and second quarters.
  - The share increased in September by 5 percentage points since August, to 41%.

Joblessness increased to 18% among surveyed domestic workers in the third quarter of 2023, up from 16% in the second quarter

n = 14,164 responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 7 - September 29, 2023 | Note: Due to office closures, surveys were not sent during the week of June 9 or July 7. The rolling average is calculated using four consecutive calendar weeks. For weeks where surveys were not sent and data is lacking, the rolling average is calculated using 3 weeks of data.
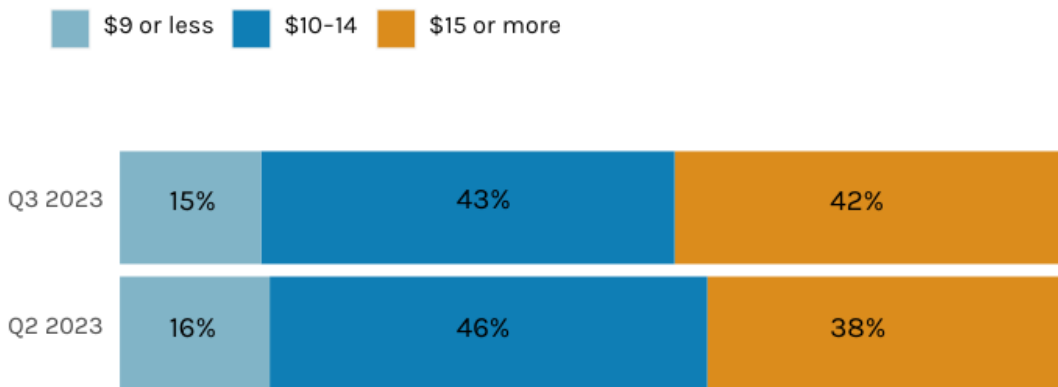
- **Underemployment worsened by 2 percentage points in the third quarter, to 63% on average.**
  - The main reason for underemployment that workers reported in the third quarter was that they could not find more clients (70%), followed by having a health problem (10%) and taking care of a family member (12%), while 8% chose some "other" reason.
  - Underemployment in September increased by 1 percentage point since August, to 64%.
- **The wage distribution improved during the third quarter of 2023**, 58% of domestic worker respondents reported earning less than $15 per hour on average, compared to 63% and 62% during the first and second quarters, respectively.

- 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%.**
- In the third quarter of 2023, 15% of workers earned $9 or less per hour, 44% earned $10-14 per hour, and 42% earned $15 or more per hour on average.
- In September, 53% of respondents reported earning less than $15 per hour on average, a 9 percentage point decrease since August.

58% of surveyed domestic workers reported earning less than $15 per hour in the third quarter of 2023, down from 62% in the prior quarter

During the last 7 days, how much did you earn on average per hour?

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

| Q3 2023 | 15% | 43% | 42% |
| Q2 2023 | 16% | 46% | 38% |

n = 10,906 responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 7 - September 29, 2023 | Note: Due to office closures, surveys were not sent during the week of June 9 or July 7.
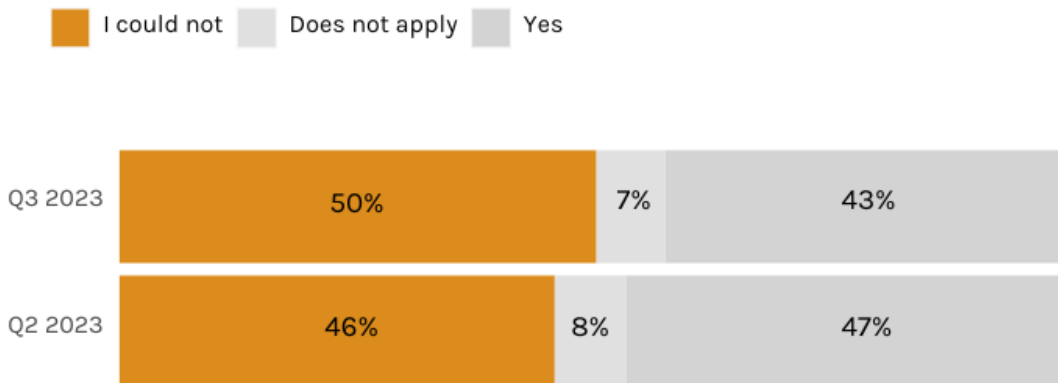
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Economic Security

- **In the third quarter of 2023, 81% of domestic worker respondents said their households faced food scarcity, a 1 percentage point increase from the prior quarter.**
  - In the third quarter, respondents said they either often (12%) or sometimes (69%) faced food scarcity in the week prior to being surveyed.
  - Food scarcity in September decreased by 2 percentage points since August, to 80%.
- **Domestic workers' housing insecurity increased by 4 percentage points in the third quarter of 2023 to 50%.**

○ On average, 49% and 46% of domestic worker respondents reported being unable to pay their monthly rent or mortgage at the beginning of the month during the first and second quarters, respectively.

○ 7% percent of respondents reported that the question regarding the ability to afford rent or mortgage does not apply to them in the third quarter. This does NOT necessarily mean they are housing secure. While some of these respondents may be debt-free homeowners, others may be temporarily staying with friends or family, staying in shelters, or facing homelessness.

○ The share of respondents who could not afford their rent or mortgage increased in September by 3 percentage points since August, to 51%.

50% of surveyed domestic workers experienced housing insecurity in the third quarter of 2023, up from 46% in the prior quarter

In the last 30 days, were you able to make your rent or mortgage payment on time?

Legend: ■ I could not ■ Does not apply ■ Yes

	I could not	Does not apply	Yes
Q3 2023	50%	7%	43%
Q2 2023	46%	8%	47%

n = 3,604 responses | Source: NDWA Labs' La Alianza Weekly Survey, April 7 - September 29, 2023 | Note: Due to office closures, surveys were not sent during the week of June 9 or July 7.

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● **The share of domestic worker respondents who struggled to afford regular household expenses remained constant in the third quarter of 2023.**

○ 47% of respondents reported it was very or somewhat difficult to afford household expenses in the week prior to being surveyed - such as food, housing, car payments, and medical expenses - in the third and second quarters of the year, compared to 51% during the first.

○ The share decreased in September by 8 percentage points since August, to 44%.

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 the methodology section of this report. Note that starting on September 22, we expanded the survey cohort to increase the number of respondents and address survey fatigue.

The employment numbers presented in this report include data from twelve weekly surveys in the third quarter of 2023 and twelve weekly surveys in the second quarter. The total number of fully completed surveys in the third quarter of 2023, which includes both new and repeated respondents, was 5,249. For the second quarter, the total number of completed surveys was 6,769. For greater detail on completions broken down by month, please see the table below. Surveys were paused on June 9 due to NDWA's all-staff retreat, and due to NDWA's summer office closure, we did NOT send a survey on July 7.

Month	Number of weekly surveys	Total completed surveys
September	4	2,059
August	5	1,734
July	3	1,456
June	4	1,625
May	4	2,568
April	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 about 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

[1] White House Council of Economic Advisers (2023), *The Employment Situation in September*
[2] NDWA Labs (2020), *6 Months in Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Workers*
[3] Economic Policy Institute (2022), *Domestic Workers Chartbook*
[4] Kopparam (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. 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%.