The women in the low-wage workforce may not be who you think

Two-Thirds of low-wage workers, who work in jobs that typically pay $10.50 per hour or less, are women. The women who make up the low-wage workforce may not be who you think. The vast majority are neither high school dropouts nor teenagers. Most don’t have a spouse’s income to rely on. Many are supporting children—and their family incomes are low. Over half of the women in the low-wage workforce work full time and nearly three-quarters work all year. Nearly half are women of color.

Four out of five women in the low-wage workforce have a high school degree or higher

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics.
Nearly nine out of ten women in the low-wage workforce are beyond their teens

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics.

Most women in the low-wage workforce do not have a spouse’s income to rely on

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics. “Single” includes married, spouse absent.
Many women in low-wage jobs are supporting children

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics. “Mothers” have related children at home. “Single” includes married, spouse absent.

Family income for mothers in the low-wage workforce is even lower than for women working in low-wage jobs overall

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics. “Mothers” have related children at home.
Half of women in the low-wage workforce work full time, and a large majority work all year

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for workers who usually work full or part time. “Full-time” refers to working 35 or more hours per week. “Part-time” refers to working between one and 34 hours per week. “Worked all year” is defined as worked 50-52 weeks in the last year. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics.

Nearly half of low-wage women workers are women of color

Source: NWLC calculations based on IPUMS-CPS (2014). Figures are for employed workers. The low-wage workforce is defined here as occupations with median wages of $10.50 or less per hour based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics. Women of color make up 47 percent of the female low-wage workforce, but just 34 percent of the female workforce overall.
Note on methods