

Minimum Wage Violations in the Pittsburgh Metro Area

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Pennsylvania's minimum wage of \$7.25 has not been raised in over fifteen years. A full-time worker making \$7.25 an hour makes \$15,080 a year—more than \$5,000 below the [2024 federal poverty guideline for a two person household](#).

Research by the Workplace Justice Lab @ Rutgers University (WJL@RU) shows that, even with the decline in purchasing power of the Pennsylvania minimum wage, thousands of workers continue to be paid below the minimum every year.

Using Current Population Survey (CPS) Outgoing Rotation Group data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau, **WJL@RU finds that an estimated 55,000 workers in the Pittsburgh metropolitan statistical area (MSA)¹ were paid below the minimum wage between 2018 and 2022**, an average of roughly 11,000 workers a year. These workers on average were underpaid over \$3,700 a year in earned wages. **In total, WJL@RU estimates that workers lost nearly \$208 million between 2018 and 2022, or \$41.6 million per year on average, to minimum wage violations.**

Further analysis of CPS data from 2003-2022² reveals that, in the Pittsburgh MSA:

- Workers are particularly likely to experience minimum wage violations in a) the [food services and drinking places](#) and b) the [personal and laundry services](#)³ industries;
- **Workers without a high school diploma are over three times as likely as workers with a high school education** to be paid below the minimum wage;
- **Female workers are twice as likely as male workers** to be paid below the minimum wage;
- **Black workers are 60-70 percent more likely than white workers** to be paid below the minimum;
- **Non-citizens are 30-40 percent more likely than citizens** to experience a minimum wage violation; and
- **Younger and older workers** are particularly likely to be paid below the minimum wage.

Minimum wage is just one form of wage theft, meaning the actual number of workers impacted by wage theft—through illegal practices like unpaid overtime, off-the-clock work, withheld tips, illegal deductions, misclassification of employees as independent contractors, and more—is far higher. **We recommend that policymakers within the greater Pittsburgh region move urgently to address this matter by passing a wage theft law** that makes violations of state wage protections—including the right to minimum wage and overtime—a violation of local code. We further recommend that the full enforcement of any wage theft laws be supported through the creation of a dedicated labor standards enforcement agency within local government.



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¹ Including Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

² This longer timeframe was necessary to calculate meaningful estimates for these more detailed groups.

³ "Personal and laundry services" includes beauticians, laundry and dry-cleaning workers, parking attendants, animal caretakers, and other forms of service work—for more, see <https://www.census.gov/naics/>