



WOMEN'S BUREAU  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

# FACT SHEET

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## DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Domestic workers, such as home care workers, house cleaners and nannies provide services and specialized care to households and families.<sup>1,2</sup> In many cases, these workers perform the tasks of caring for children, elders, people with disabilities and households, which enable household members to maintain employment. Like roads and bridges, domestic work is a critical form of infrastructure that ensures that our economy functions and thrives. Yet while domestic workers' labor is invaluable, domestic workers—who are disproportionately women and immigrant women<sup>3</sup>—often work in precarious conditions. Domestic workers tend to earn below-average wages,<sup>4</sup> are excluded from certain labor protections,<sup>5</sup> have little bargaining power (often working without formalized employment arrangements)<sup>6</sup> and face a high risk of gender-based violence and harassment at work.<sup>7</sup> The isolated nature of their work in private homes exacerbates the risk of abuse and exploitation.

To gain a better understanding of this population of workers and the obstacles they face, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Women's Bureau has analyzed individual household surveys from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey on the demographics, work hours and average income of domestic workers. The data presented here refers to domestic workers who are directly employed by private households, unless otherwise stated. As a result, the data may differ from other research on domestic workers that also includes, for example, those employed by staffing agencies or private businesses.

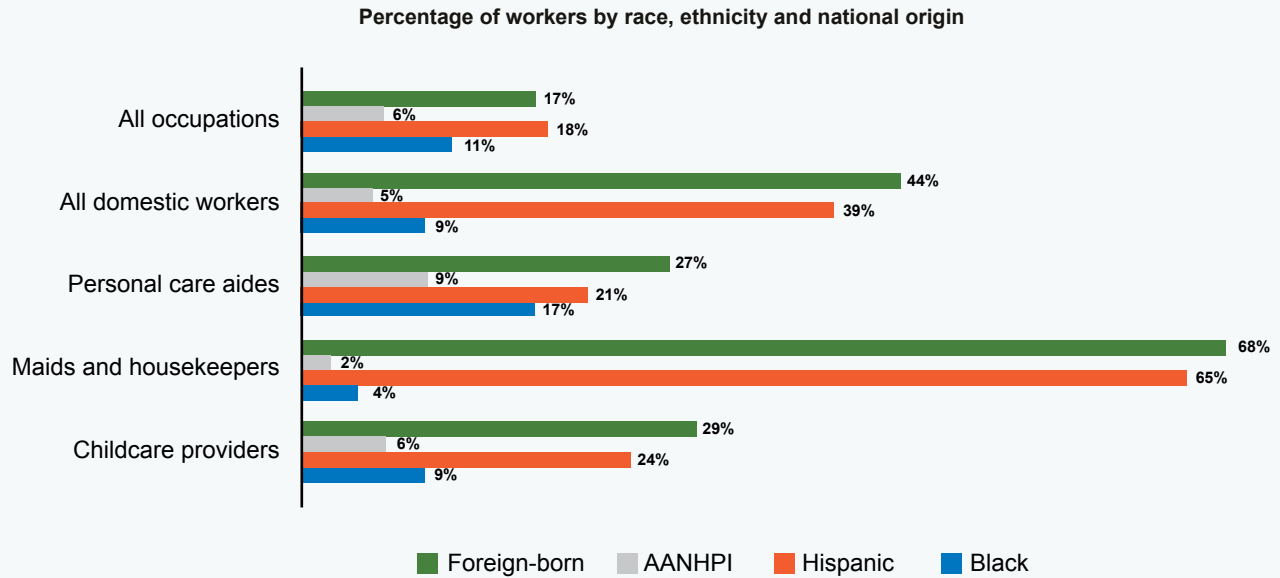
### DATA SPOTLIGHT

- There are more than 600,000 domestic workers employed directly by private households in the United States, 90% of whom are employed in three occupations: personal care aides (20%), maids and housekeepers (38%) or childcare providers (32%).<sup>8</sup>
- The vast majority of domestic workers are women. Women make up 82% of personal care aides, 95% of maids and housekeepers and 97% of childcare providers.<sup>9</sup>
- Domestic workers are more than 2.5 times as likely to be immigrants than the typical worker (figure 1).<sup>10</sup>
- Hispanic workers make up a disproportionately high percentage of domestic workers, driven in part by their overrepresentation as maids and housekeepers. Black and Asian and Pacific Islander workers make up a higher percentage of personal care aides than of other domestic work occupations.<sup>11</sup>
- Domestic workers other than childcare providers tend to be older on average than other workers, with a sizable portion aged 55 and above. Childcare providers employed in private households tend to be younger than childcare providers overall.<sup>12</sup>
- Domestic workers are less likely than workers overall to be employed full-time, year-round.<sup>13</sup>
- Even when domestic workers are employed full-time, their annual wages are less than half those of the typical worker (figure 2).<sup>14</sup>
- Compared to all domestic workers employed by private households, maids and housekeepers are less likely to be employed full-time, year-round. Even when they are employed full-time, year-round, however, maids and housekeepers have lower earnings.<sup>15</sup>



**FIGURE 1**

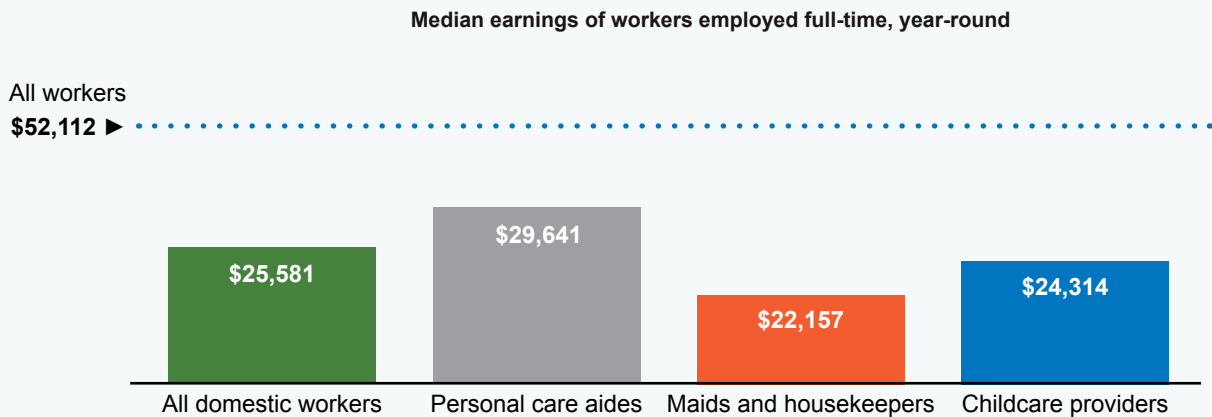
**DOMESTIC WORKERS ARE MORE THAN 2.5 TIMES AS LIKELY TO BE IMMIGRANTS AS THE TYPICAL WORKER**



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey.  
Graphic: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau.

**FIGURE 2**

**DOMESTIC WORKERS EARN LESS THAN HALF OF WHAT THE TYPICAL WORKER MAKES**



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey.  
Note: Medians calculated using linear interpolation.



## RESOURCES

DOL has developed sample employment agreements, for illustrative purposes, for cleaners, home care workers and nannies. They are a tool that both employers and domestic workers can choose to use as a helpful starting point to facilitate an open discussion about and create a shared understanding of the terms of employment. The provisions in these sample agreements are only provided as examples of the types of terms and conditions of employment that employers and employees may want to address in their own private contracts. DOL also released a list of good practices to consider when drafting an employment agreement. The agreements and good practices can be found at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/Domestic-Workers>.

*The use of these sample agreements is not required by law. The provisions in the sample agreements do not represent legal obligations or provide legal advice, but instead are intended for informational purposes only and reflect topics that employers and employees may voluntarily choose to address.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Any links to non-federal websites in this document provide additional information that is consistent with the intended purpose of this federal site, but linking to such sites does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Labor of the information or organization providing such information. For more information, please visit <https://www.dol.gov/general/disclaim>.

<sup>2</sup> In this data analysis, cleaners are referred to as maids and housekeepers; nannies are referred to as childcare providers; and home care workers are referred to as personal care aides. These terms were used in the U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey data that was analyzed through the IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [dataset].

<sup>3</sup> In this data analysis, the terms “immigrant” and “foreign-born” are used interchangeably. The Census Bureau defines foreign-born as someone who was not a citizen of the U.S. at birth and includes individuals who have later become naturalized as a U.S. citizen. This term was used in the U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey data that was analyzed through the IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [dataset].

<sup>4</sup> “IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [dataset].” Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards and Megan Schouweiler, 2023. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Domestic workers are excluded from numerous laws that protect workers, including (but not limited to): the Civil Rights Act, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and many state-level labor laws.

<sup>6</sup> For example, a National Domestic Workers Alliance report found that many domestic workers do not have a written contract with their employer, but even those with employment contracts or verbal agreements did not include key provisions such as job responsibilities, schedule, medical expenses, paid leave or termination notice requirements. “Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work.” Linda Burnam and Nik Theodore, National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2012. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023. <https://www.domesticworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HomeEconomicsReport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> In a survey of live-in workers, 36% reported having been harassed, threatened, insulted or verbally abused in the past 12 months. “Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work.” Linda Burnam and Nik Theodore, National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2012. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023. <https://www.domesticworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HomeEconomicsReport.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ruggles et al., *supra* note 4.