

State of Working Wisconsin: Back to “normal” won’t do, low wage jobs were unsustainable before the pandemic

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As we head into our second Labor Day of the pandemic, COWS will release their annual State of Working Wisconsin report over four days this week. First up is a focus on jobs: how is the state faring?

- 114,00 Jobs Lost: In July 2021, Wisconsin had 3.8% fewer jobs than before the COVID-19 crisis hit.
- 3.9% Unemployment: In July 2021, unemployment held steady at 3.9%, remaining slightly above the February 2020 level (3.5%).
- 49,600 Leisure/Hospitality Jobs Lost: This sector – restaurants, hotels, and more – has been hardest hit; employment is down 18%.

There are now a few reasons for cautious optimism. Wisconsin added 13,000 jobs, and vaccinations became widely available. But the delta variant is still on the rise, and the state is still in a 6-figure jobs deficit since the crisis began.

“Since the collapse, the question has been ‘when will we get back to normal?’” said Laura Dresser, Associate Director. “But ‘normal’ for low-wage workers has long been unsustainable, leaving too many families struggling to get by. Adding jobs is important, but ensuring strong job quality and supports for low-wage workers is equally important.”

View the full ‘Jobs’ analysis at <https://workingwi.org/soww-2021/jobs/>.

For more than two decades, the State of Working Wisconsin has presented the workers' perspective on the economy in the state: who is winning, and who is being left out; where is disparity growing; and what's happening to the economic chasm separating Black and white workers in the state.

Up next:

- Unions: Wednesday, 9/1
- Wages: Thursday, 9/2
- Worker Experiences: Friday, 9/3

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About the State of Working Wisconsin

For more than two decades, the State of Working Wisconsin has presented the workers' perspective on the economy in the state: who is winning, and who is being left out; where is disparity growing; and what's happening to the economic chasm separating Black and white workers in the state. The State of Working Wisconsin report will still focus on how working people are doing and continue to shine a spotlight on the state's brutal Black-white disparities. But, COWS is using updated data sources that speak to the current crises, and sharing updated worker experiences to crystallize the human costs. For previous years' State of Working Wisconsin reports, go [here](#).

About COWS

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS is a national think-and-do tank that promotes "high road" solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.