

# State of Working Wisconsin: Wage inequalities based on race, ethnicity, and gender persist

Posted on Thursday, Sep 2, 2021

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As we head into our second Labor Day of the pandemic, COWS is releasing their annual State of Working Wisconsin report in a four part series this week. Today the focus is on wages: where inequalities persist, and the surprising ways these inequalities have changed over time.

Most notably:

- In Wisconsin, the 2020 median hourly wage was \$20.24, a new high for the state. Accounting for inflation, the current wage is \$2.76 per hour higher than the median in 1979.
- A 1979 gender hierarchy in wages has evolved into a 2020 hierarchy more based on race and ethnicity. In 1979, Wisconsin's men—white, Black, and Hispanic—earned wages well above women's wages. But by 2020, white men and white women earned the highest hourly wages, while Black and Hispanic wages—for both genders—were clustered together at lower levels.
- Associate degrees matter. Workers with Associate degrees earned \$21.45/hour, in contrast to those with some college (\$17.17) or high school degree only (\$17.27).

“In Wisconsin and the US, we've seen a few years of wage growth and that's good news. At the same time, wage disparity in the state remains pronounced. Black and Hispanic workers in our state face substantial wage gaps. Raising the minimum wage in the state would be one way to help close those gaps.” said Laura Dresser,

Associate Director.

View the full Wages analysis at <https://workingwi.org/soww-21/wages/>.

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:

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.*