

# \$15 is the Floor: Why Pennsylvania Must Raise the Minimum Wage Now

**1.01 million**  
workers earn  
\$7.25-\$15/hour

**18%**  
of PA workers earn  
under \$15/hour

**88.4%**  
of workers earning  
under \$15 are age 20+

## Key Highlights

- An estimated 1,013,808 Pennsylvania wage/salary workers earn between \$7.25 and \$15 per hour, equal to 18.0% of wage/salary workers in the state.
- Beyond the direct under-\$15 workforce, many additional workers earn near the proposed wage floor: 1,344,103 workers earn up to \$17 per hour, and 1,505,148 earn up to \$18 per hour.
- Under-\$15 workers are primarily adults, not teenagers. Workers age 20 and older account for 896,146 under-\$15 workers, or 88.4% of the group.
- Women make up 564,982 under-\$15 workers, or 55.7%. People of color make up 357,562, or 35.3%.
- Roughly 293,966 under-\$15 workers are parents living with their own child under 18, and 77,908 are parents living with their own child under 5.
- The geographic pattern differs depending on whether we look at numbers or shares. The largest numbers of under-\$15 workers are in Pennsylvania's largest labor markets, especially Philadelphia and Allegheny counties, while the highest shares appear in several smaller, rural, and post-industrial counties, including Jefferson, Clarion, Venango, Columbia, Armstrong, and Indiana counties.

## Key Statistics

Measure	Estimate
Total Workers in PA	5,620,732
Workers earning \$7.25-\$12/hour	490,742 (8.7%)
Workers earning \$7.25-\$15/hour	1,013,808 (18.0%)
Workers earning \$7.25-\$17/hour	1,344,103 (23.9%)
Workers earning \$7.25-\$18/hour	1,505,148 (26.8%)

Source: PPC analysis of ACS/IPUMS Pennsylvania 1-year sample. Universe excludes self-employed workers and workers with constructed hourly wages below \$7.25.

## Low-wage Workers are Concentrated Near the Proposed \$15 Wage Floor.

Among workers earning less than \$15, the largest group earns \$12.01-\$15.00 per hour, totaling 523,066 workers. Another 490,742 workers earn between \$7.25 and \$12.00. Just above the proposed wage floor, 330,295 workers earn \$15.01-\$17.00 and 161,045 earn \$17.01-\$18.00, suggesting that many more workers could benefit if wages above the minimum also rise.

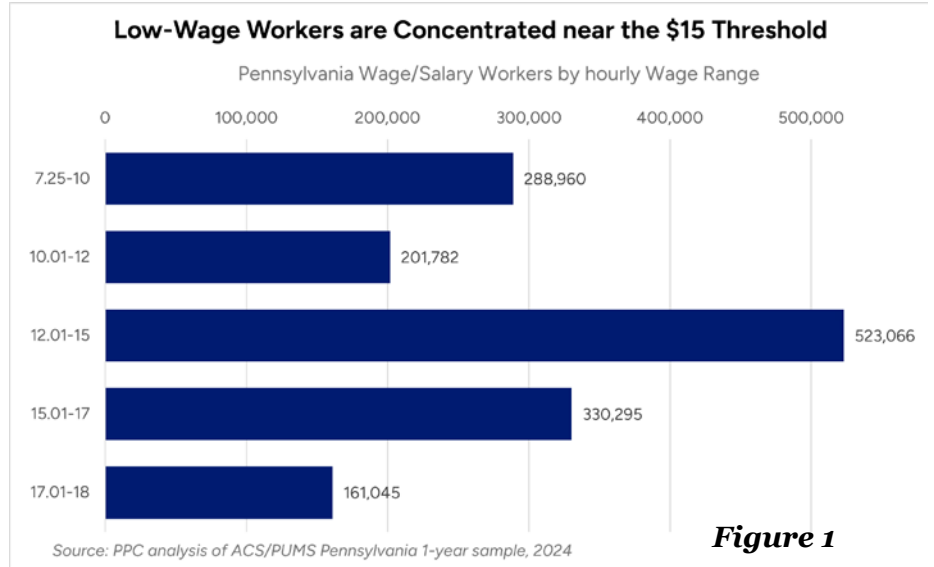


Figure 1

## Workers Earning Under \$15 are Adults, Women, Parents, and Workers Supporting Households

Pennsylvania's under-\$15 workforce is not primarily made up of teenagers or students. Workers age 20 and older account for 88.4% of those earning \$7.25-\$15 per hour, and nearly four in five are not enrolled students. More than half are women, and about one in five live in a household receiving SNAP or food stamps, underscoring that low-wage work is closely tied to household economic security.

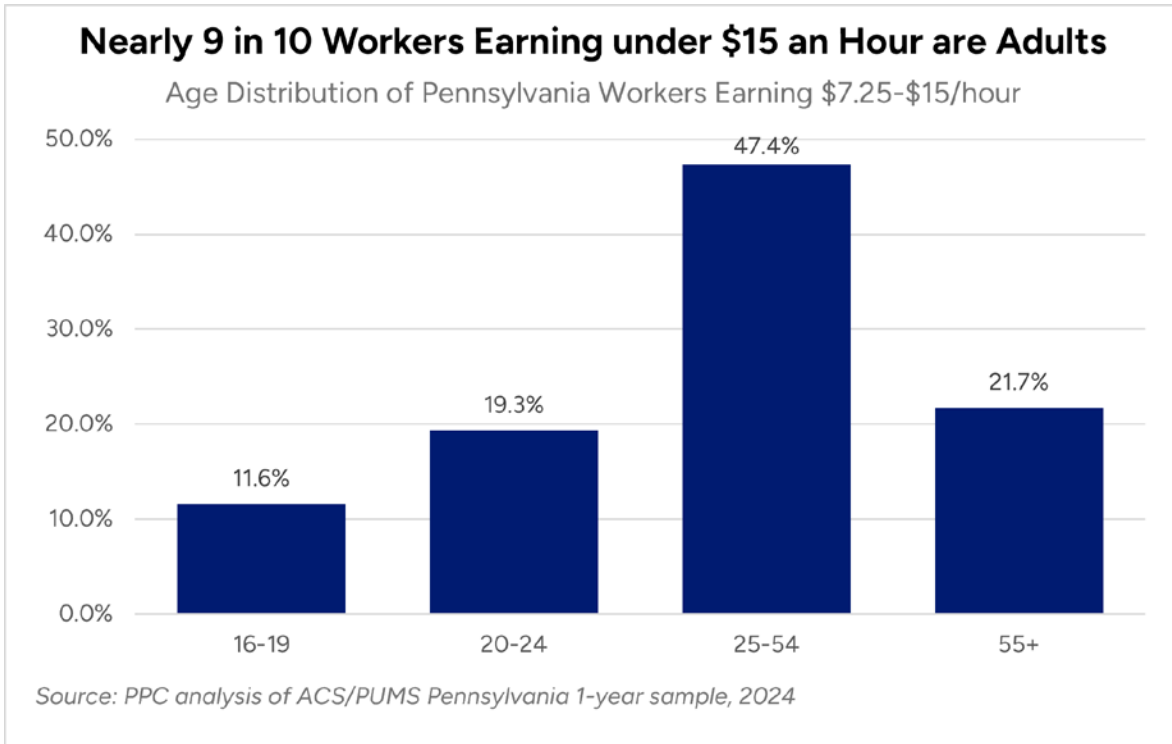
Figure 2. Demographic and household profile of workers earning \$7.25-\$15/hour.

### Workers Earning under \$15 an hour are mostly Adults and Non-Students

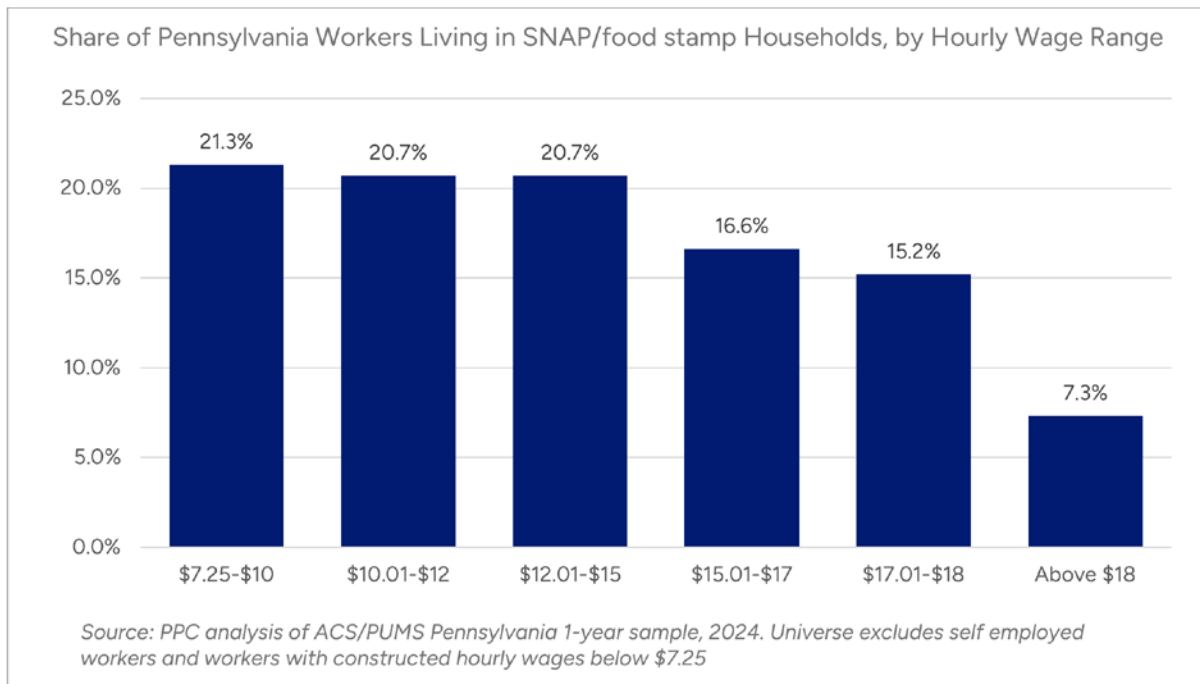


Source: PPC analysis of ACS/PUMS Pennsylvania 1-year sample, 2024

**Figure 3. Age distribution of workers earning \$7.25-\$15/hour.**



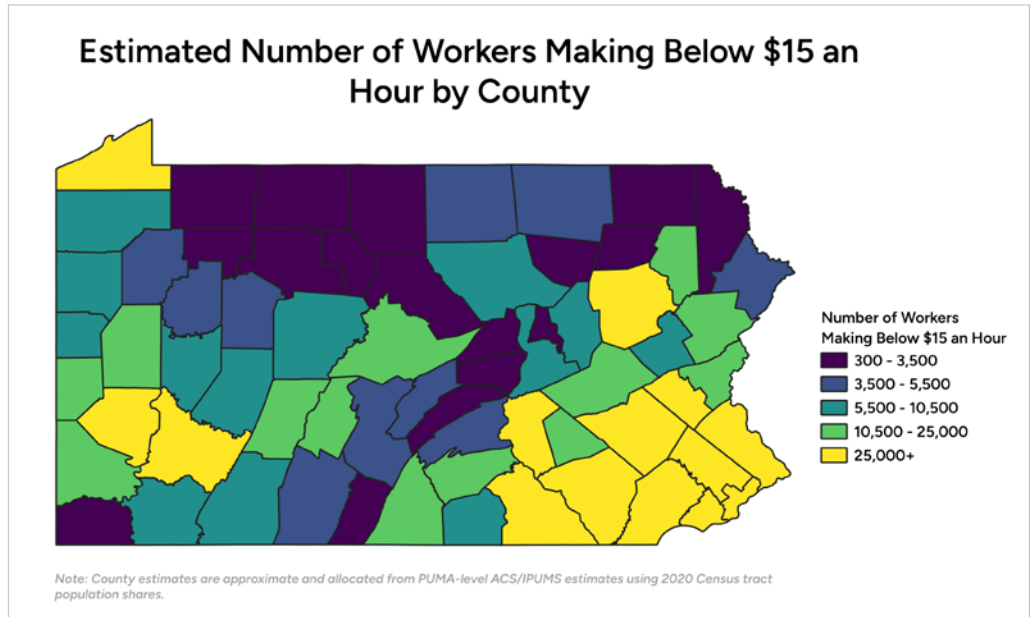
**Figure 4. SNAP Receipt is Concentrated Among Workers Earning Below \$15/hour**



## Under-\$15 Work Reaches Both Large Labor Markets and Smaller Counties

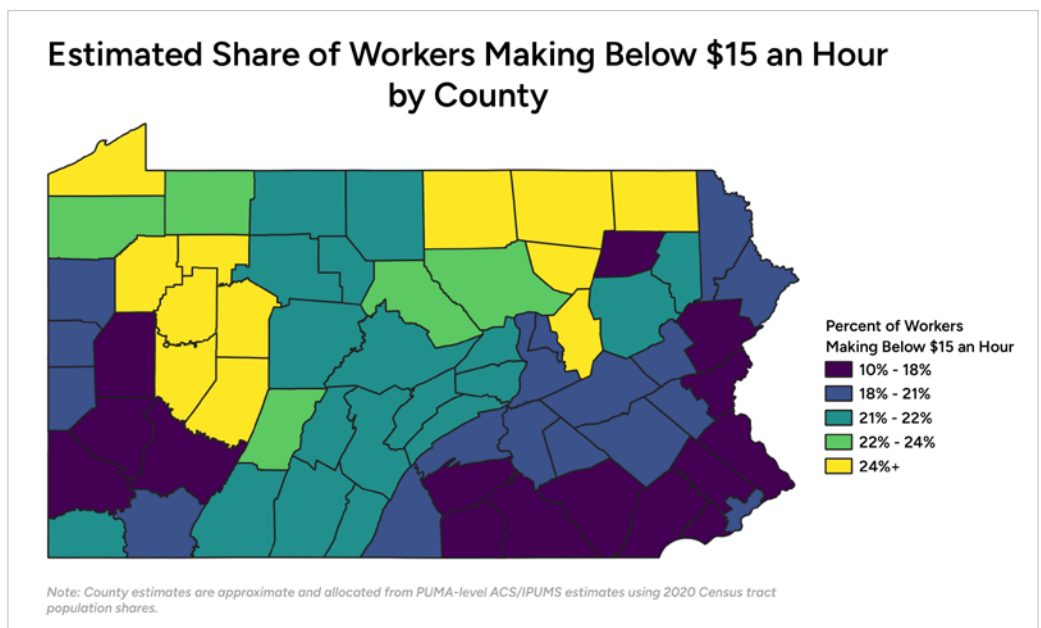
The geographic pattern differs depending on whether we look at the number of workers earning under \$15 or their share of the local workforce. The largest counts appear in the state’s largest labor markets. Philadelphia has the largest estimated number of workers earning under \$15 per hour, followed by Allegheny County. Several suburban and regional labor-market counties, including Delaware, Bucks, Montgomery, Lancaster, Berks, York, and Chester counties, also have large numbers of workers earning below \$15.

**Figure 5. Estimated number of workers earning under \$15/hour by county.**



However, smaller and rural counties can have relatively high shares even when their total number of under-\$15 workers is smaller than in large counties. The highest estimated shares appear in several smaller, rural, and post-industrial counties, including Venango, Jefferson, Clarion, Columbia, Armstrong, Indiana, Susquehanna, Bradford, Tioga, and Sullivan counties. This means that while large counties have the largest numbers of low-wage workers, smaller counties may have a higher concentration of low-wage work within their local labor markets.

**Figure 6. Estimated share of workers earning under \$15/hour by county.**

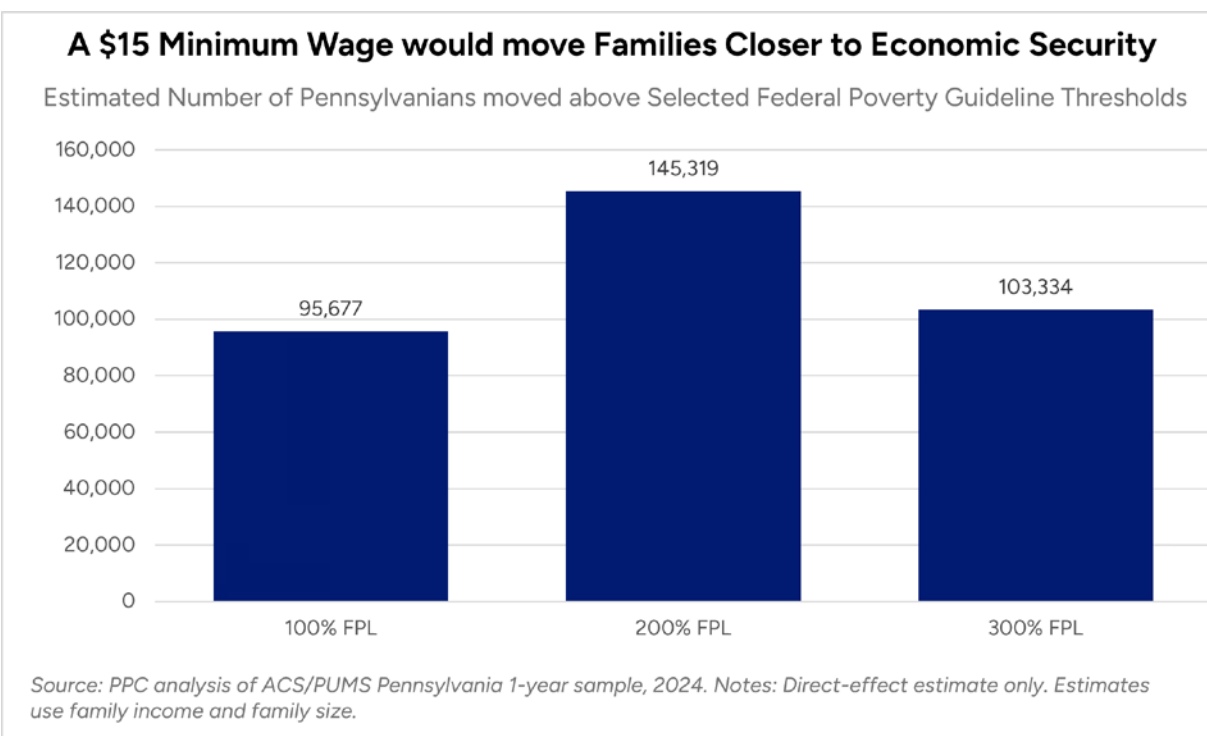


*Note: County estimates are approximate and allocated from PUMA-level ACS/IPUMS estimates using 2020 Census tract population shares.*

## Raising the Wage Would Move Families Closer to Economic Security

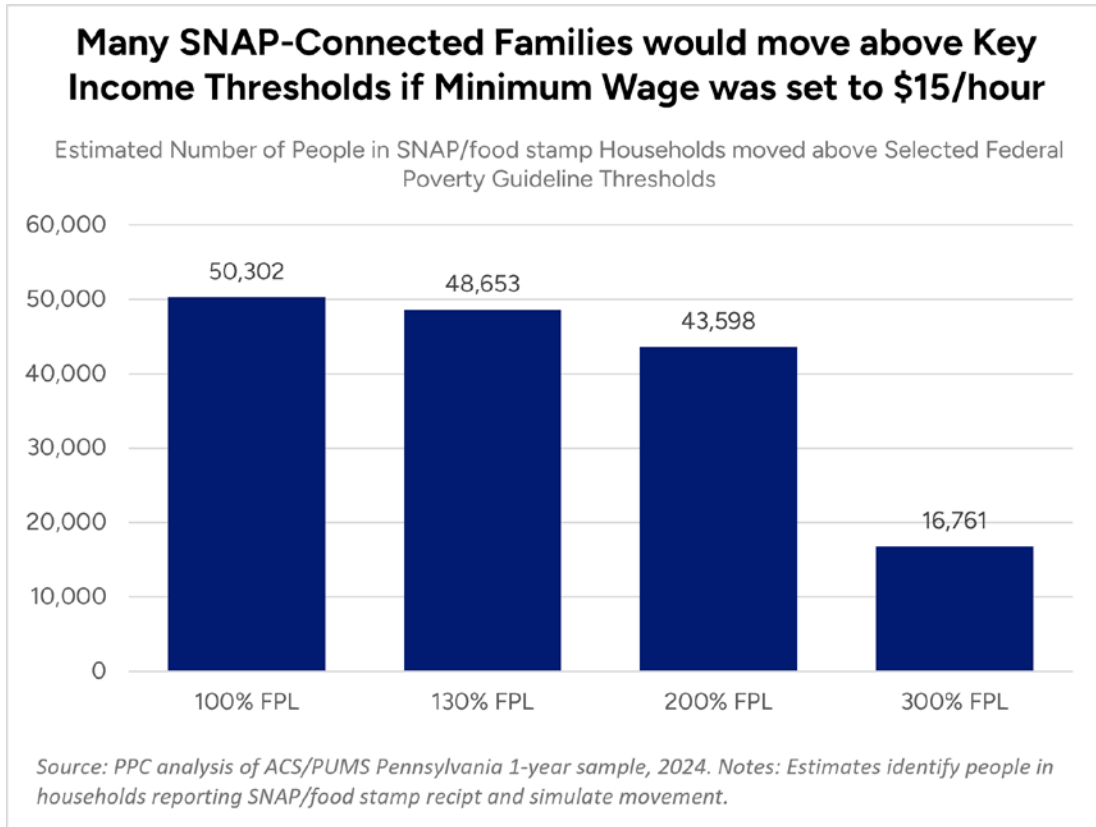
Raising Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$15 would generate substantial income gains for low-wage workers and their families. Our direct-effect analysis estimates that raising current wages below \$15 to \$15 per hour would increase annual wages by approximately \$5.1 billion for more than 1 million Pennsylvania workers. These gains would also move many families closer to economic security. Using family income and family size to approximate federal poverty guideline thresholds, we estimate that a \$15 minimum wage would lift nearly 96,000 Pennsylvanians above 100% of the federal poverty guideline, about 145,000 above 200%, and more than 103,000 above 300%.

**Figure 7. Estimated number of Pennsylvanians moved above federal poverty guideline thresholds.**



The connection between low wages and public benefit reliance is especially clear for SNAP. About one in five Pennsylvania workers earning below \$15 lives in a household receiving SNAP or food stamps. A \$15 minimum wage would not automatically remove families from SNAP, because eligibility depends on household size, deductions, reporting rules, and other program requirements. However, the wage increase would move many SNAP-connected families above key income thresholds. Among people living in SNAP/food-stamp households, our analysis estimates that a \$15 minimum wage would move about 50,000 above 100% of the federal poverty guideline, nearly 49,000 above 130%, about 44,000 above 200%, and nearly 17,000 above 300%.

**Figure 8. Many SNAP – Connected Families Would Move Above Key Income Thresholds**



### Policy Interpretation

These findings show that raising Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$15 per hour would reach a large and diverse group of workers across the state. More than 1 million wage and salary workers earn between \$7.25 and \$15 per hour, and many more earn just above \$15, meaning the policy could also affect workers whose wages rise as employers adjust pay scales. At the same time, the wage distribution shows why \$15 should be understood as a necessary floor, not the finish line: many workers are clustered near \$15 per hour, but even \$15 remains below what workers need to meet basic living costs in Pennsylvania.

The data also challenges the common claim that low-wage workers are mostly teenagers or students. Nearly nine in ten workers earning under \$15 are age 20 or older, and nearly four in five are not enrolled students. More than half are women, nearly one-third are parents living with their own children, and about one in five live in households receiving SNAP or food stamps. In other words, Pennsylvania’s low-wage workforce includes many adults and families whose wages are closely connected to household economic security. Our direct-effect analysis estimates that raising wages below \$15 to \$15 per hour would increase annual wages by approximately \$5.1 billion for more than 1 million Pennsylvania workers and lift nearly 96,000 Pennsylvanians above 100% of the federal poverty guideline.

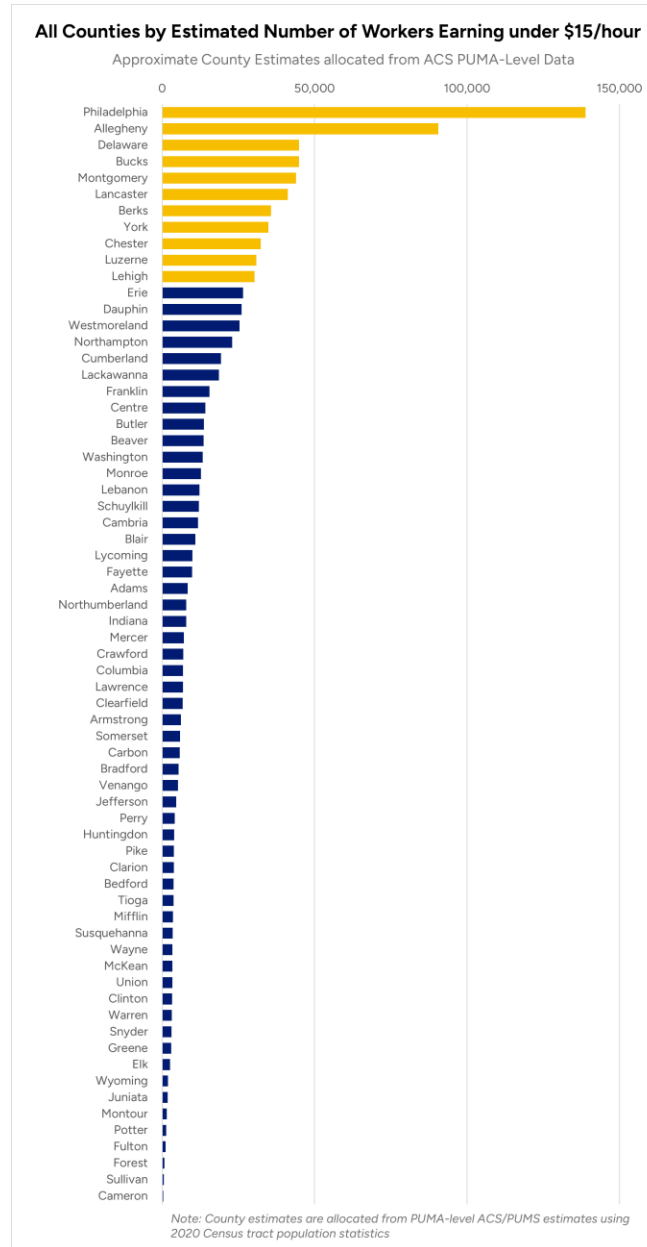
The geographic findings also matter for policy. A \$15 minimum wage would affect workers in every part of the state, but in different ways. Large counties such as Philadelphia and Allegheny have the largest numbers of workers earning under \$15 because they have the largest labor markets. At the same time, many smaller, rural, and post-industrial counties have relatively high shares of workers earning below \$15, meaning low-wage work represents a larger part of their local economies. Together, these results suggest that a \$15 minimum wage would not be a narrow policy affecting only young workers or only major cities. It would reach adults, women, parents, workers connected to public benefit programs, and communities across Pennsylvania. Raising the wage floor would therefore be a statewide economic security policy: one that directly reaches more than 1 million low-wage workers, could help many more workers whose pay is clustered just above \$15 per hour, and would move many families closer to economic security.

- Updated June 2026 -

## Appendix A. Additional Geography Tables and Figures

### A1. All counties by estimated number of workers earning under \$15/hour

*Figure A1. All counties by estimated number of workers earning under \$15/hour.*



*Table A1. County estimates by number of workers earning under \$15/hour.*

County	Workers under \$15	Share under \$15	Workers under \$18
Philadelphia	138,859	20.9%	194,023
Allegheny	90,540	16.1%	132,696
Delaware	44,912	17.9%	61,589
Bucks	44,861	15.0%	63,555

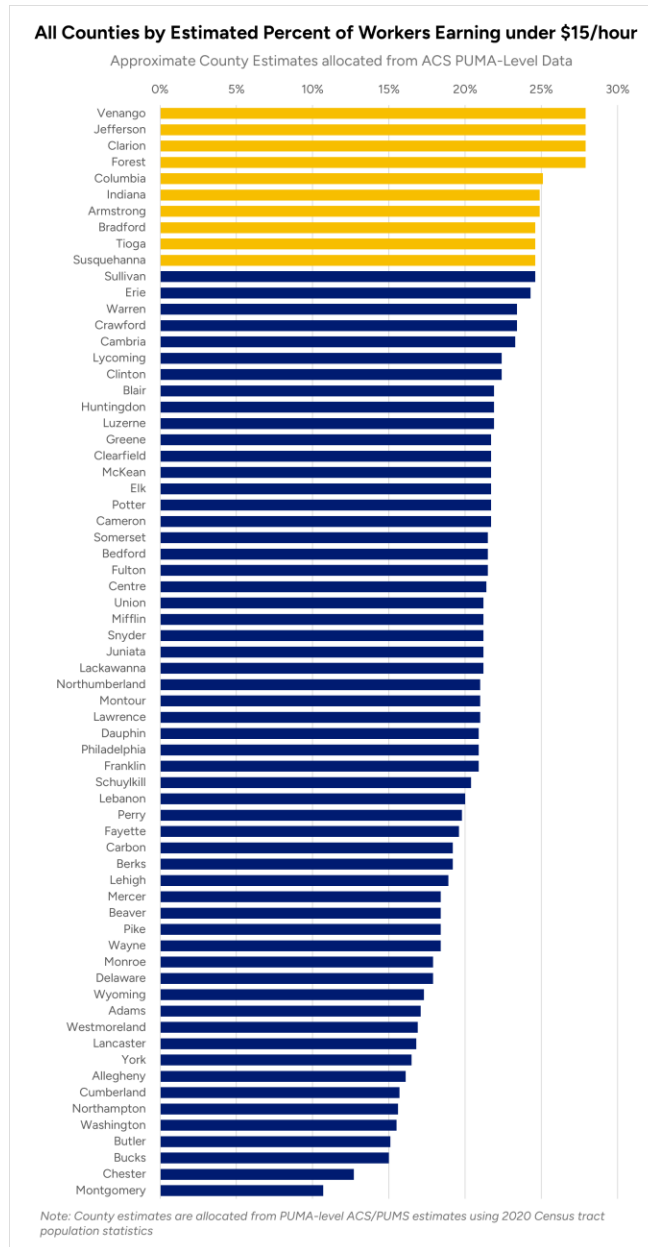
County	Workers under \$15	Share under \$15	Workers under \$18
Montgomery	43,952	10.7%	70,804
Lancaster	41,245	16.8%	67,351
Berks	35,681	19.2%	50,382
York	34,814	16.5%	54,615
Chester	32,373	12.7%	48,889
Luzerne	30,892	21.9%	46,086
Lehigh	30,285	18.9%	45,194
Erie	26,553	24.3%	37,054
Dauphin	26,088	20.9%	35,383
Westmoreland	25,397	16.9%	39,938
Northampton	23,012	15.6%	35,445
Cumberland	19,294	15.7%	29,936
Lackawanna	18,669	21.2%	27,311
Franklin	15,519	20.9%	22,769
Centre	14,167	21.4%	21,233
Butler	13,714	15.1%	20,528
Beaver	13,563	18.4%	21,041
Washington	13,327	15.5%	22,185
Monroe	12,757	17.9%	20,252
Lebanon	12,295	20.0%	18,543
Schuylkill	12,063	20.4%	18,740
Cambria	11,801	23.3%	16,391
Blair	10,871	21.9%	16,153
Lycoming	9,905	22.4%	14,681
Fayette	9,851	19.6%	16,274
Adams	8,349	17.1%	13,238
Northumberland	7,903	21.0%	11,480
Indiana	7,869	24.9%	11,507
Mercer	7,138	18.4%	11,807
Crawford	6,902	23.4%	10,172
Columbia	6,881	25.1%	9,008
Lawrence	6,866	21.0%	10,592
Clearfield	6,717	21.7%	10,785
Armstrong	6,197	24.9%	9,062
Somerset	5,849	21.5%	9,098
Carbon	5,822	19.2%	7,909
Bradford	5,422	24.6%	7,721
Venango	5,192	27.9%	7,607
Jefferson	4,579	27.9%	6,708
Perry	4,138	19.8%	6,739
Huntingdon	3,903	21.9%	5,799
Pike	3,875	18.4%	5,835
Clarion	3,832	27.9%	5,615
Bedford	3,754	21.5%	5,839
Tioga	3,711	24.6%	5,285
Mifflin	3,591	21.2%	5,892
Susquehanna	3,475	24.6%	4,949
Wayne	3,387	18.4%	5,100

County	Workers under \$15	Share under \$15	Workers under \$18
McKean	3,371	21.7%	5,413
Union	3,322	21.2%	5,450
Clinton	3,249	22.4%	4,815
Warren	3,173	23.4%	4,676
Snyder	3,093	21.2%	5,074
Greene	2,944	21.7%	4,074
Elk	2,584	21.7%	4,149
Wyoming	1,925	17.3%	3,043
Juniata	1,830	21.2%	3,002
Montour	1,564	21.0%	2,272
Potter	1,367	21.7%	2,195
Fulton	1,148	21.5%	1,786
Forest	718	27.9%	1,051
Sullivan	528	24.6%	752
Cameron	379	21.7%	609

Source: PPC allocation of ACS/IPUMS PUMA estimates to counties using 2020 Census tract population shares.

## **A2. All counties by estimated share of workers earning under \$15/hour**

*Figure A2. All counties by estimated share of workers earning under \$15/hour.*



**Table A2. County estimates by share of workers earning under \$15/hour.**

County	Share under \$15	Workers under \$15	Share under \$18
Venango	27.9%	5,192	40.9%
Jefferson	27.9%	4,579	40.9%
Clarion	27.9%	3,832	40.9%
Forest	27.9%	718	40.9%
Columbia	25.1%	6,881	32.8%
Indiana	24.9%	7,869	36.5%
Armstrong	24.9%	6,197	36.5%
Bradford	24.6%	5,422	35.0%
Tioga	24.6%	3,711	35.0%

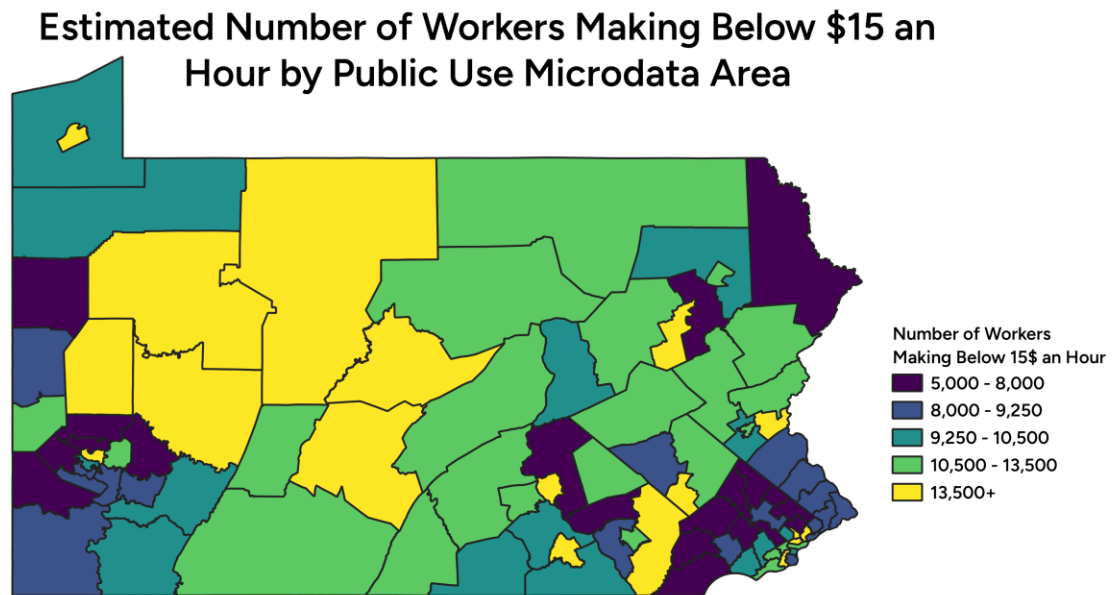
County	Share under \$15	Workers under \$15	Share under \$18
Susquehanna	24.6%	3,475	35.0%
Sullivan	24.6%	528	35.0%
Erie	24.3%	26,553	33.9%
Warren	23.4%	3,173	34.5%
Crawford	23.4%	6,902	34.5%
Cambria	23.3%	11,801	32.4%
Lycoming	22.4%	9,905	33.2%
Clinton	22.4%	3,249	33.2%
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Huntingdon	21.9%	3,903	32.6%
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Northumberland	21.0%	7,903	30.6%
Montour	21.0%	1,564	30.6%
Lawrence	21.0%	6,866	32.4%
Dauphin	20.9%	26,088	28.4%
Philadelphia	20.9%	138,859	29.2%
Franklin	20.9%	15,519	30.6%
Schuylkill	20.4%	12,063	31.7%
Lebanon	20.0%	12,295	30.1%
Perry	19.8%	4,138	32.2%
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Beaver	18.4%	13,563	28.5%
Pike	18.4%	3,875	27.6%
Wayne	18.4%	3,387	27.6%
Monroe	17.9%	12,757	28.5%
Delaware	17.9%	44,912	24.6%
Wyoming	17.3%	1,925	27.3%
Adams	17.1%	8,349	27.1%
Westmoreland	16.9%	25,397	26.6%

County	Share under \$15	Workers under \$15	Share under \$18
Lancaster	16.8%	41,245	27.5%
York	16.5%	34,814	25.9%
Allegheny	16.1%	90,540	23.5%
Cumberland	15.7%	19,294	24.4%
Northampton	15.6%	23,012	24.1%
Washington	15.5%	13,327	25.8%
Butler	15.1%	13,714	22.6%
Bucks	15.0%	44,861	21.3%
Chester	12.7%	32,373	19.2%
Montgomery	10.7%	43,952	17.3%

Source: PPC allocation of ACS/IPUMS PUMA estimates to counties using 2020 Census tract population shares.

### A3. Direct PUMA maps

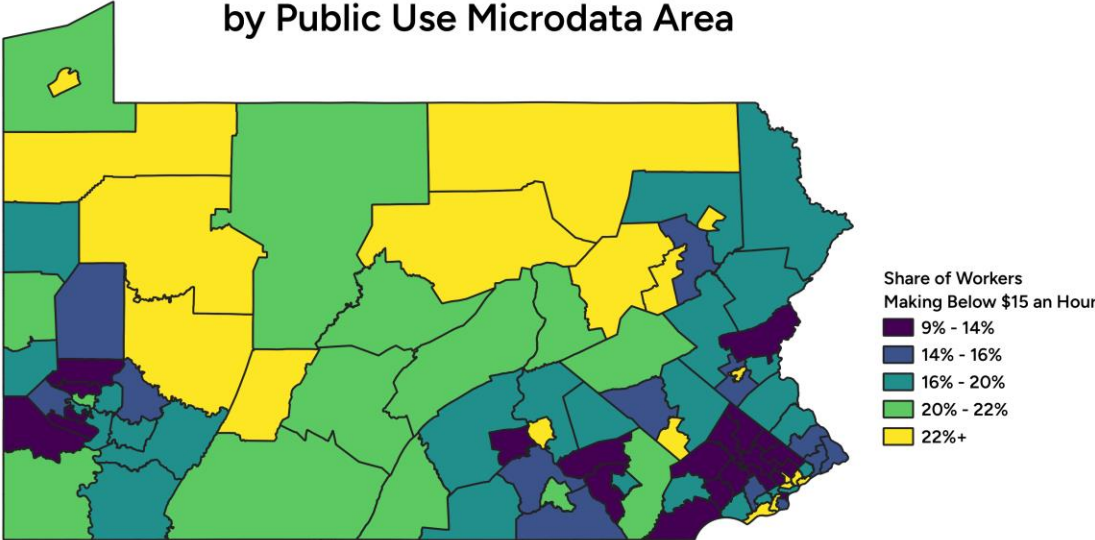
*Figure A3. Estimated number of workers earning under \$15/hour by PUMA.*



Note: County estimates are approximate and allocated from PUMA-level ACS/IPUMS estimates using 2020 Census tract population shares.

*Appendix Figure A4. Estimated share of workers earning under \$15/hour by PUMA.*

# Estimated Share of Workers Making Below \$15 an Hour by Public Use Microdata Area



*Note: County estimates are approximate and allocated from PUMA-level ACS/IPUMS estimates using 2020 Census tract population shares.*