



COVID-19 FACT SHEET: BLACK WORKERS IN NEW ORLEANS FACE HIGHER OBSTACLES THAN WHITE WORKERS

New Orleans, Louisiana, is one of the nation's top destinations. A parish known for its diverse culture, delicious food, and warm hospitality, tourism drives the city's economy. As a majority-Black city that was already grappling with deep-seated racial inequality, the global pandemic is dramatically impacting the backbone and soul of New Orleans: Black people.

Not only have Black people in New Orleans accounted for two-thirds of the residents who have died from the coronavirus,¹ but, as workers, they also comprise the lion's share of the occupations most impacted by COVID-19. Since the pandemic struck, Black people across the US have either lost their jobs or have been classified as essential workers; the latter group has been forced to make decisions between protecting their health or receiving a paycheck.

Policymakers in Louisiana have long ignored the economic security and well-being of the population in its largest city and have now left its residents to work in occupations most at risk of exposure to COVID-19. Black people constitute 79 percent of all cooks, 87 percent of all hairdressers, and 84 percent of home health aides in Orleans Parish, but they only comprise 60 percent of the population. Women of all races are disproportionately represented in employment as childcare workers, home health aides, and maids and housekeepers. Most working people in these occupations lack paid sick leave or health insurance.

Since the onset of COVID-19, hospitality jobs have declined by nearly 50 percent, about double the decline of the next closest industry. Cities like New Orleans that rely on tourism and hospitality are likely to experience deeper economic slowdowns, but there is also a growing concern that New Orleans will experience permanent job loss and that Black and brown people and women will be disproportionately affected.² A University of Chicago analysis estimates that 42 percent of layoffs across the country will be permanent.³

Unfortunately, there is little relief in place for those who have lost work. Only 12 percent of people in Louisiana who lose their jobs receive unemployment benefits, and the state pays a maximum benefit of just \$247 per week, one of the lowest in the nation.

OCCUPATIONS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 IN ORLEANS PARISH, LOUISIANA

In many ways, economic fragility and stark racial inequality define the New Orleans economy. Overall, Black people and women face greater financial instability and insecurity during already difficult times. Black and Latinx working people make up a majority of the workforce in many of the positions with the lowest wages. Similarly, women are more likely to be on the frontlines of the coronavirus response and in occupations with higher exposure.

- Black people—at 60 percent of the population—are overrepresented in many of the occupations most impacted by COVID-19. Black people make up 79 percent of all cooks, 73 percent of cashiers, and 69 percent of maids and housekeepers in Orleans Parish.
- White people are underrepresented in occupations that have been impacted by the pandemic. They are underrepresented in 62 percent of impacted jobs in the Parish.
- Women comprise 98 percent of childcare workers in Orleans Parish and are paid an average *annual* wage of just \$6,531.
- Latinx people constitute just 6 percent of Orleans Parish's population but make up 57 percent of the Parish's manicurists, 23 percent of the maids and housekeepers, and 23 percent of construction laborers.

Occupations At-Risk	Latinx	Black	White	Women	Average Annual Wage
Childcare Workers	26%	42%	31%	98%	\$ 6,531
Cooks	1%	79%	16%	52%	\$ 17,439
Food Preparation Workers	0%	58%	31%	39%	\$ 11,922
Bartenders	3%	26%	61%	68%	\$ 25,252
Fast Food and Counter Workers	0%	21%	79%	79%	\$ 15,653
Waiters and Waitresses	5%	52%	39%	53%	\$ 20,407
Dishwashers	0%	66%	34%	0%	\$ 13,002
Janitors and Building Cleaners	10%	61%	22%	45%	\$ 14,409
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	23%	69%	7%	86%	\$ 15,973
Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	0%	68%	12%	91%	\$ 12,702
Hairdressers	0%	87%	8%	79%	\$ 21,327
Cashiers	4%	73%	19%	74%	\$ 15,975
Personal Care and Service Workers	0%	32%	68%	63%	\$ 18,321
Home Health Aides	16%	84%	0%	99%	\$ 10,711
Personal Care Aides	2%	81%	17%	91%	\$ 8,812
Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers	0%	70%	30%	23%	\$ 18,071

Source: Insight Center for Community Economic Development analysis of 2018 American Community Survey single-year data.

MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS BY RACE AND GENDER

BLACK MEN

Race and gender play important roles in determining opportunity. While a majority of workers in Louisiana are paid low wages, employers pay Black people the lowest wages and prevent them from accessing higher-quality occupations. Black residents of Orleans Parish are most often found in the lowest paying occupations in the region.

Among Black men and women, only one of the most common occupations pays over \$13 an hour. Black men are most likely to be found as drivers, cooks, or construction laborers. It's also important to note that as New Orleans's economy slows, construction jobs—another common occupation for Black men—are drying up.

Most Common Occupations for Black Men

Occupations	Average Hourly Wage
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	\$12.12
Cooks	\$9.78
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	\$11.99
Construction Laborers	\$8.35
Stockers and Order Fillers	\$8.89

Source: Insight analysis of 2018 American Community Survey single-year data.

BLACK WOMEN

The pandemic is having devastating consequences for Black women in New Orleans. Structural racism and sexism put them at the center of job loss as well as exposure to the coronavirus. They are overrepresented in retail, food service, and cleaning occupations, and they are paid low wages for their labor, **ranging from \$7 to \$10 an hour**. The fifth most common occupation for Black women is working as an elementary or middle school teacher with greater pay; however, this profession is also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most Common Occupations for Black Women

Occupations	Average hourly wage
Cooks	\$9.78
Cashiers	\$10.25
Retail Salespersons	\$8.81
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$7.40
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	\$17.45

Source: Insight analysis of 2018 American Community Survey single-year data.

WHITE MEN

White people, and in particular white men, are found in a diverse array of positions, many of which are less likely to be negatively impacted by the coronavirus. Federal data suggest that, in general, white people are more likely than people of color to be working from home.⁴ People with a college degree or higher and those who work in management, business, and finance industries are more likely to be telecommuting.

The most common occupations for white men in New Orleans include management positions, legal jobs, bartending, postsecondary teachers, and working as wait staff. While management, bartenders, and wait staff are likely to be directly impacted by the pandemic, they are paid higher wages than many of the occupations available to Black working people. This reality increases the likelihood that white working people in those occupations may have more savings to fall back on during the pandemic. For the other most common occupations, it is likely that the pandemic has had little negative effect.

Most Common Occupations for White Men

Occupations	Average hourly wage
Other Managers	\$33.63
Lawyers and Judges, Magistrates, and Other Judicial Workers	\$49.52
Bartenders	\$14.79
Postsecondary Teachers	\$27.06
Waiters and Waitresses	\$10.74

Source: Insight analysis of 2018 American Community Survey single-year data.

WHITE WOMEN

White women are more likely to be impacted by the economic slowdown than white men but less likely than Black people. The most common occupations for white women include legal professions and registered nurses, occupations that pay very high wages, and are unlikely to be impacted the economic downturn—although health concerns for nurses of all races are a definite issue. However, white women are also likely to be found as wait staff, teachers, and bartenders, all professions that are likely to be impacted by the economic slowdown.

Most Common Occupations for White Women

Occupations	Average hourly wage
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	\$17.45
Bartenders	\$14.79
Lawyers, and Judges, Magistrates, and Other Judicial Workers	\$49.52
Registered Nurses	\$27.09
Waiters and Waitresses	\$10.74

Source: Insight analysis of 2018 American Community Survey single-year data.

ENDNOTES

- 1 https://www.nola.com/news/coronavirus/article_170f9226-bbbf-11ea-b194-27f84d860372.html
- 2 https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/business/article_fe8564e8-abf5-11ea-b63e-8be385765472.html
- 3 <https://scitechdaily.com/42-of-covid-19-pandemic-related-layoffs-could-be-permanent/>
- 4 <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-and-hispanic-workers-are-much-less-likely-to-be-able-to-work-from-home/>