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### Profile of San Francisco Domestic Workers

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# Profile of San Francisco Domestic Workers

Report by Isaac Jabola-Carolus | The Graduate Center, City University of New York  
December 2020

## Introduction

Domestic workers are integral to the social and economic fabric of San Francisco, providing childcare to working families, cleaning and maintaining homes, and supporting older adults and people with disabilities in their everyday activities. This report, based on an ongoing study, outlines the demographic composition and employment conditions of this workforce. The analysis draws upon U.S. Census Bureau data, Bureau of Labor Statistics data, and an original survey of over 200 domestic workers employed in San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>

Approximately 10,000 home attendants, nannies, and housecleaners work in San Francisco, excluding individuals employed through the state's In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program and other publicly funded programs.<sup>2</sup> This report focuses on the first group—domestic workers employed by private households or private agencies. Unlike IHSS providers, these workers often lack collective bargaining rights, rendering public policy especially crucial in shaping their employment outcomes.

The inadequacy of employment conditions in this field poses serious challenges, both during the COVID-19 crisis and in the face of long-term economic trends. Amid the pandemic, low wages and weak labor protections leave domestic workers acutely vulnerable to both illness and economic hardship. This vulnerability is worsened by informal employment arrangements that often leave workers without access to employee benefits and social safety net programs, such as paid sick leave and time off, unemployment insurance, and paid family leave. Workers who patch together employment across multiple households—especially common among housecleaners—experience further insecurity.

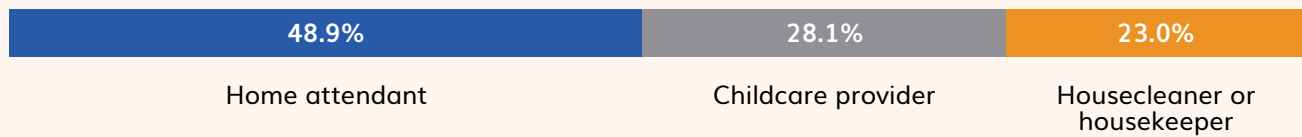
Beyond the pandemic, these realities perpetuate racial and gender inequality, as the low wages and poor conditions in this field fall upon a workforce predominated by immigrant women of color. Workers and their families are not the only ones affected: households who rely on domestic workers also suffer, as the dearth of good jobs contributes to high worker turnover and mounting labor shortages. While greater public investment from the state and federal government will be critical in reversing these trends, the City and County of San Francisco should consider a range of immediate policies to advance change in this sector.



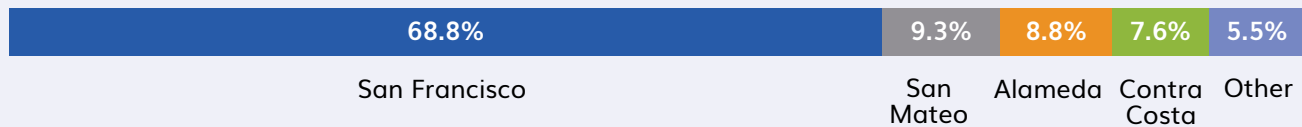
## Workforce Overview

The figures below are estimates based on analysis of the Census Bureau's 2014-2018 American Community Survey five-year file. This survey data tends to underrepresent recent immigrants, non-citizens, and undocumented immigrants. The estimates should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.<sup>3</sup>

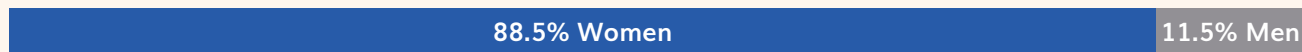
### Type of Worker



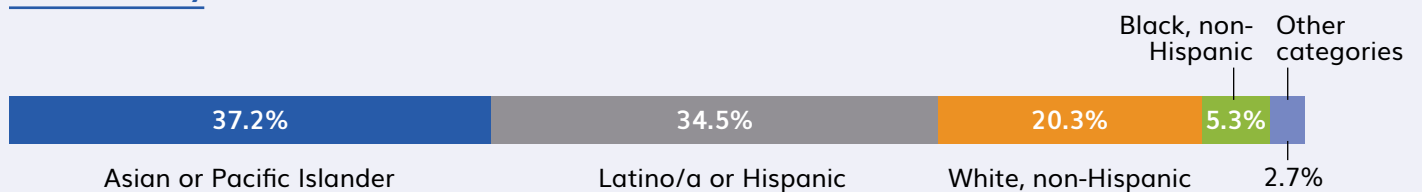
### County of Residence



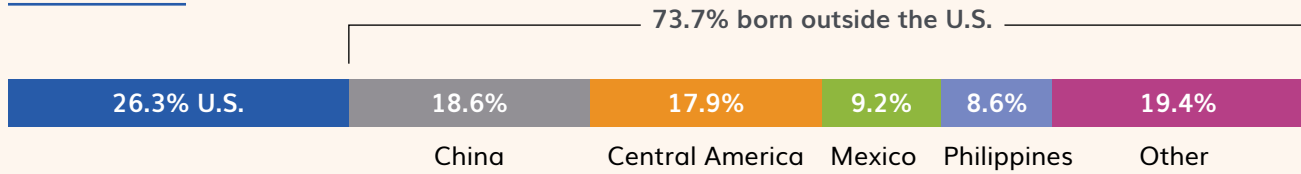
### Gender



### Race/Ethnicity



## Place of Birth



## Age

San Francisco domestic workers tend to be much older than workers in other low-wage industries.

1 in 4 domestic workers is 60 or older, and the median age is 50.

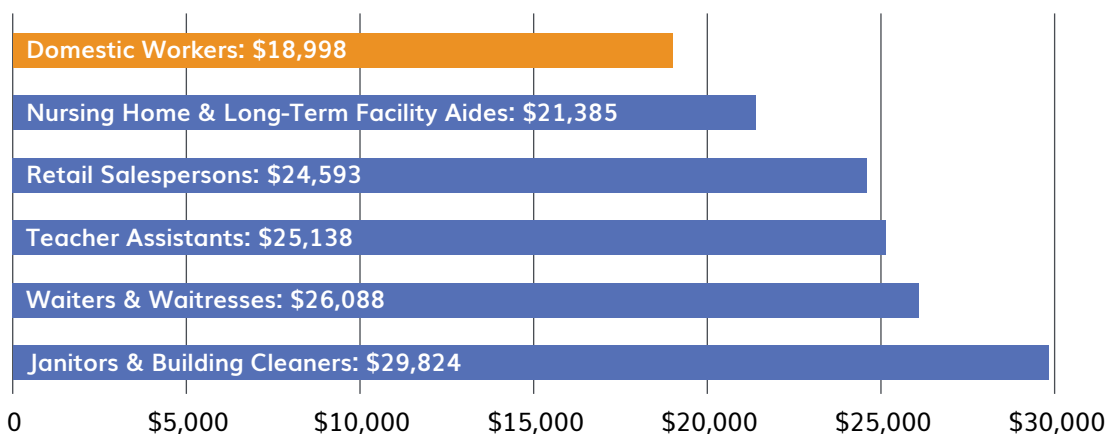
By contrast, the median age is 36 in retail and 33 in food services.

## Employment Conditions

**Domestic workers are paid less than other low-wage workers, and far below a living wage.**

- According to Census Bureau data, the median annual pre-tax income of San Francisco domestic workers is only \$19,000—lower than that of most other low-wage occupations.<sup>4</sup>

### Median Annual Earned Income in Select Low-Wage Occupations, San Francisco



Source: Author's analysis of 2014-2018 American Community Survey five-year data. Estimates are inflation-adjusted to 2020 dollars.

- Domestic workers' current wages fall far below living wage levels for all counties in the metro area. For a single worker with no children, the median domestic worker wage amounts to less than 50% of the living wage in San Francisco, which is \$21.15 an hour or \$43,993 annually.<sup>5</sup> Yet 47% do have children to support, and 20% are single parents.
- Facing such economic hardship, at least 14% receive food assistance through SNAP. The true percentage is likely higher, given the underreporting of such reciprocity in official survey data.<sup>6</sup>
- Among workers surveyed by the author, 60% report that they do not earn enough to meet their living expenses. Many work for multiple households in order to assemble an income; this is common among housecleaners, 81% of whom work for more than one household.

**Domestic workers have limited access to employee benefits and social safety net programs.**

- 72% of respondents do not receive any benefits through their employer, such as health and dental insurance, paid time off, retirement contributions, or other forms of non-wage compensation.\*
- 71% are paid by cash, personal check, or an app such as Venmo or PayPal, suggesting an informal employment arrangement. As a result, these workers likely lack access to unemployment insurance, paid family leave, disability insurance, and workers' compensation. As they retire or age, they may also lack access to Medicare and Social Security. Fewer than 40% of respondents report that they pay into these programs, either directly or through payroll deductions.
- 90% do not have any type of personal retirement savings.
- Less than 5% of respondents report that their employers provide retirement contributions as a fringe benefit.<sup>7</sup>

**Employee Benefits and Retirement Savings among San Francisco Survey Respondents, 2019–2020**

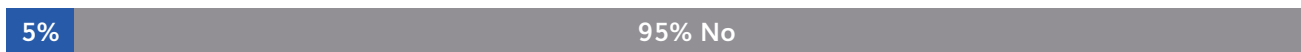
Receives benefits through employer



Has retirement savings



Receives retirement contributions from employer



Yes

\* Unless otherwise noted, all following statistics on employee benefits, safety net programs, paid time off, and workplace hazards are based on the author's survey of San Francisco domestic workers.

One divergent trend emerges in relation to health insurance and healthcare coverage:

- 86% of respondents report that they are covered by some form of health insurance or plan.<sup>8</sup>
- 44% are covered through public programs, including Medi-Cal and Healthy San Francisco.
- Healthy San Francisco, which offers coverage to qualifying undocumented immigrants, appears especially crucial in boosting domestic workers' access to healthcare: approximately 20% of survey respondents, all of whom are migrant workers, report receiving coverage through that program. Furthermore, 72% of respondents had heard or read about the program.<sup>9</sup>

These healthcare coverage indicators should be interpreted with some caution, given the potential underrepresentation of undocumented workers in both the Census Bureau data and the author's survey. However, these same data sources show low levels of access to other types of safety net support, suggesting that the health coverage statistics do reveal a meaningful pattern of relatively broader access. Nevertheless, the number of uninsured individuals remains sizable, comprising at least 10–15% of the workforce. These basic indicators, moreover, do not address the quality or affordability of existing plans and programs among those with coverage.

### **Few domestic workers have access to paid time off.**

- Only 17% of respondents receive paid time off or vacation days based on their terms of employment.
- 28% have ever accessed paid time off under San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance. A larger share, 50%, say they have heard or read about that ordinance, indicating basic awareness of its existence and purpose.
- 33% have received some type of paid time off in the past 12 months, whether for illness, national holidays, or vacation. Two-thirds have received no paid time off.
- More than 10% were denied paid sick leave by an employer in the past 12 months.

### **Access to Paid Time Off among San Francisco Survey Respondents, 2019–2020**

Receives paid time off as a formal employee benefit



Has accessed paid time off through the Paid Sick Leave Ordinance



Has received any type of paid time off, past 12 months\*



\* Note: Includes paid time off for illness, national holidays, or vacation that a respondent has accessed through any of the following means: formal employee benefits; San Francisco's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance; and informal or ad hoc provision by one's employer.

## Workplace hazards are common and are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access to paid leave and safety net programs is critical because domestic work is physically demanding and often dangerous. Home attendants lift and assist clients in ways that can strain and injure. Nannies keep up with young children and often contract their frequent colds and illnesses. Housecleaners handle toxic cleaning chemicals and maneuver vacuums, laundry, and garbage bags. All face the possibility of sexual harassment, assault, and workplace violence. And now, the risk of COVID-19 exposure compounds these dangers. Notably, the chances of injury and illness are further elevated because domestic workers are excluded from protections established by California's Occupational Safety and Health Act.<sup>10</sup>

Among San Francisco respondents:

- 22% have been injured on the job at least once in the past 12 months.
- 10% have been seriously injured, requiring medical attention, in the past 3 years.
- 12% have experienced verbal or physical aggression in the past 12 months, reporting that they have been yelled at, threatened, pushed, or physically hurt by an employer or client.

Injury and illness rates from other data sources add further context:

- The author's survey of domestic workers in the Los Angeles metro area found that approximately 25% said they had contracted a contagious illness on the job in the past year. That rate is even higher for nannies—38%—likely due to their close contact with children.
- National data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that home health aides experience higher rates of injury and illness than registered nurses and physical therapists. Compared to occupations beyond the healthcare sector, home health aides have somewhat lower overall rates of injury and illness than construction workers and building cleaners—but comparable or higher rates of back injury; soreness or pain; and sprains, strains, and tears.<sup>11</sup>

Because domestic workers often lack access to workers' compensation, such workplace injuries can result in steep medical costs and lost wages.<sup>12</sup>

## The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread job loss within this sector.

Official unemployment statistics for domestic workers are unavailable at the local level. But national trends, and survey data from other cities, indicate that the pandemic has caused unprecedented levels of job loss among domestic workers. There is little reason to believe that San Francisco is any exception.

- A review of multiple data sources suggests that the percentage of domestic workers out of work rose from less than 10% in February 2020 to a peak between 40–60% by early May, before stabilizing between 15–30% by August. When accounting for partial job loss, such as a housecleaner's reduction of clients, those rates are even higher.<sup>13</sup>
- These ranges are necessarily large due to data limitations involved in measuring domestic employment. It is not yet clear how the latest surge is affecting these trends.

- Available data indicates that housecleaners have been most severely affected by job loss. The author's Los Angeles survey found that 48% of housecleaners were out of work when contacted in April and May 2020, compared to 41% of nannies and 32% of home attendants. National estimates based on the Current Population Survey show a similar pattern. And the National Domestic Workers Alliance's weekly survey of Spanish-speaking domestic workers, primarily housecleaners, saw joblessness peak at 68% in early May 2020 before sliding to 30% in mid-August.<sup>14</sup>

## Poor Conditions Create Short-Term and Long-Term Problems

The short-term consequences of inadequate employment conditions have been magnified by the COVID-19 crisis. Domestic workers who are now fully or partly jobless find themselves facing immense hardship, often with little chance of accessing unemployment insurance or other public assistance. Those who remain employed must confront the daily hazards of exposure, which are compounded by domestic workers' general exclusion from Cal/OSHA workplace safety protections. Low wages and limited access to paid time off create extra pressure to tolerate otherwise avoidable health risks.

As the pandemic unfolds, however, a slower-moving crisis continues to build. Both nationally and locally, demand for home attendants is soaring, given the aging of the population and the advantages of "aging in place" instead of in nursing homes or institutions. Yet the labor supply is lagging behind, and this shortage leaves many without access to the care they need. Poor employment conditions exacerbate the shortage, causing turnover within the field and propelling workers away from the field entirely. Official employment projections capture the scale of this crisis. While these estimates include home attendants working in both institutional and non-institutional settings, the latter group is driving the change:<sup>15</sup>

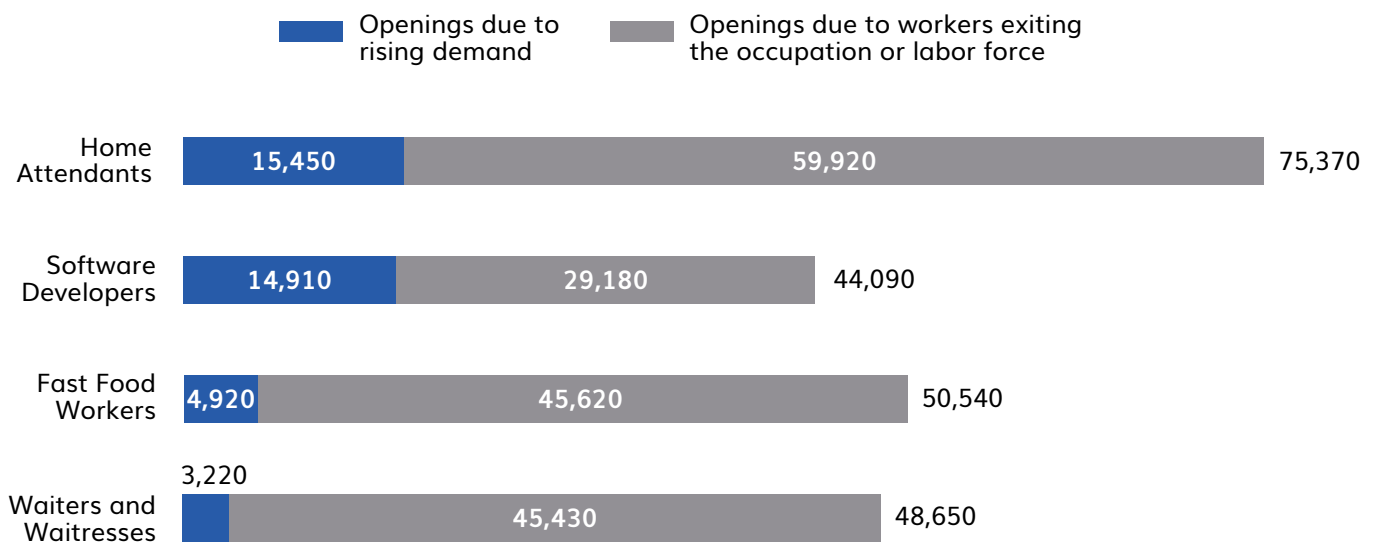
- Both statewide and locally, home attendants are projected to see more job growth between the years 2016 and 2026 than any other occupation. Due to rising demand, this occupation is projected to add over 15,000 new positions in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties during that period, an increase of 44%—more job growth than among teachers, construction workers, and restaurant workers combined.
- Every year, however, approximately 6,000 home attendants in San Francisco and San Mateo leave the labor force or change occupations—more exits than in any other occupation. These exits result in 60,000 job vacancies to be filled between 2016–2026, on top of the 15,000 openings from rising demand.
- In total, over 75,000 job openings for home attendants need to be filled in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties between 2016–2026 to keep up with rising demand and occupational exits. Of these openings, 80% result from workers leaving the occupation, often due to inadequate wages and employment conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has likely exacerbated these trends, making it even more difficult to recruit and retain home attendants given the high risks posed by intimate, in-person work. On the demand side, the nursing home crisis amid the pandemic may further shift preferences away from institutional care, toward home-based care.



Occupational exits among cleaners and childcare workers are nearly as common as among home attendants, although projected job growth in those categories is much more modest. Thus, while cleaners and childcare workers may avoid the labor shortage seen in home care, high rates of occupational exit across domestic worker occupations can pose significant turnover costs: employers must recruit and onboard new workers, while forgoing the experience and skills left behind by workers exiting the field.

### Projected Job Openings in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties, 2016-2026, Top Four Occupations



Source: Author's analysis of 2016-2026 Occupational Projections, State of California Employment Development Department<sup>16</sup>

## Recommendations

Taken together, the immediate and long-term crises affecting domestic work underscore the need for policy action that will improve employment conditions. While greater public funding from the state and federal government will be critical in transforming this field, actions that the City and County of San Francisco can pursue now include:

- Strengthen enforcement of the Minimum Wage Ordinance and Paid Sick Leave Ordinance to ensure that domestic workers benefit from annual minimum wage increases and existing sick leave provisions.
- Expand access to paid time off by creating a portable benefits system, allowing domestic workers to accrue time off through the contributions of multiple employers. Explore such a benefits system for other programs as well, such as retirement savings.

- Continue funding and promoting Healthy San Francisco as a means to ensure healthcare access, especially for undocumented domestic workers. Dedicate adequate resources for targeted outreach to such workers.
- Protect and support domestic workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Create emergency workplace safety rules that are specific to domestic work. Legislation to include domestic workers under Cal/OSHA regulations recently passed the State Legislature but was vetoed by the Governor. As a result, there are no COVID-19 safety rules or guidelines in place for domestic work. The City and County should require domestic employers to abide safety precautions modeled upon Cal/OSHA's emergency COVID-19 regulations,<sup>17</sup> including covering the cost of workers' personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - Extend hazard pay to domestic workers. In addition to performing essential labor, domestic workers are incurring out-of-pocket costs for PPE and safer commuting options, such as taxis and ride-hail services. Raising wages would dampen those financial burdens, boost worker retention, and compensate workers for the risks they are shouldering during the pandemic.

## Acknowledgments

This research was supported by grant funding from the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. Design was provided by Jason Luz. Many individuals offered valuable guidance that shaped the original survey, including Rocio Avila, Eileen Boris, Juana Flores, Sarah Gonzaga, KC Ho, Ken Jacobs, Sarah Leadem, Daniel Schneider, Nik Theodore, and Megan Whelan. Worker center leaders and members, as well as online group moderators, generously facilitated survey distribution. Special thanks to the domestic workers who participated in the research, and to the California Domestic Workers Coalition, Chinese Progressive Association, Dolores Street Community Services, La Colectiva, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, and the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

## Author

Isaac Jabola-Carolus is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology at The Graduate Center, CUNY. His dissertation examines the enforcement of labor standards within paid in-home care industries, with a focus on Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York City, and Seattle. He is currently a fellow at the Berkeley-based Center for Engaged Scholarship and a member of the Scholars Strategy Network.



## Appendix: Methodological Details

The San Francisco survey was fielded between November 2019 and February 2020. The primary survey sample was recruited through targeted Facebook advertisements, an approach shown to be effective in studying hard-to-reach, industry-specific populations.<sup>18</sup> In collaboration with the California Domestic Workers Coalition, a second sample was recruited through worker centers and Facebook groups. For the purposes of this report, the two samples have been pooled and analyzed jointly. Comparisons between ad-based and non-ad samples are explored in the author's ongoing research, and further information is available upon request. A total of 230 respondents participated in the San Francisco survey. The analysis presented here excludes IHSS providers, resulting in a sample size of 166.

All surveys were completed digitally, using the survey platform Qualtrics. As a participation incentive, respondents had the option to enter a drawing for one of five \$50 digital Target gift cards after completing the survey. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Nepali, and Haitian Kreyol, Tagalog (Filipino), and Chinese (simplified and traditional). Participants completed a set of screening questions upon reaching the survey website. To be included in the survey, workers were required to be at least 18 years of age; to have worked in a private home in the past week as a housecleaner, housekeeper, nanny, personal care aide, or home health aide; and to have performed that work in San Francisco.

Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) were used to set targets for sample recruitment and to weight the final data to align with demographic benchmarks for this workforce in San Francisco. Following previous research by the Economic Policy Institute,<sup>19</sup> home attendants are defined as home health aides (Census occupation code 3601) and personal care aides (3602) who work in one of the following industries: home health care services (Census industry code 8170); employment services (7580); individual and family services (8370); or private households (9290). Childcare providers include two groups: nannies, who are defined as childcare workers (4600) in private households (9290) or employment services (7580); and workers who provide childcare in their own homes, defined as childcare workers (4600) in child daycare services (8470) who are self-employed and not incorporated. Housecleaners are defined as maids and housekeeping cleaners (4230) in private households (9290). The ACS analysis presented in this report is based on the same definitions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The original survey data is drawn from the author's Care Worker Survey, a multi-city online survey conducted in 2019 and 2020. See Appendix for further methodological details.

<sup>2</sup> The precise size of the workforce is difficult to estimate because many domestic workers lack documentation or work authorization, and many work in informal employment arrangements. Official surveys tend to underrepresent such workers (see Note 3). According to 2014-2018 American Community Survey data, there were approximately 8,700 domestic workers employed by private households or agencies in San Francisco in 2018, but this figure likely underestimates the true size of the workforce. Given that limitation, and given rapid employment growth in home care since 2018, a figure of at least 10,000 is likely a more accurate estimate of the workforce size. When incorporating workers employed through public programs, the total estimate grows to over 30,000, as more than 20,000 IHSS providers are employed in San Francisco ("[Wage Increase for IHSS Caregivers](#)," San Francisco IHSS Public Authority, October 24, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey (ACS) data was accessed through: Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek, *IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]*, (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020). For ACS limitations relating to immigration, see: Elizabeth M. Grieco, Luke J. Larsen, and Howard Hogan, "How Period Data Influence the Estimates of Recently Arrived Immigrants in the American Community Survey," *International Migration Review* 52, no. 1 (2018): 299–313; Eric B. Jensen, Renuka Bhaskar, and Melissa Scopilliti, "Demographic Analysis 2010: Estimates of Coverage of the Foreign-Born Population in the American Community Survey" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015); Jennifer Van Hook and James D. Bachmeier, "How Well Does the American Community Survey Count Naturalized Citizens?," *Demographic Research* 29, no. 1 (2013): 1–32; and Jennifer Van Hook et al., "Recent Trends in Coverage of the Mexican-Born Population of the United States: Results From Applying Multiple Methods Across Time," *Demography* 51, no. 2 (2014): 699–726.

<sup>4</sup> Estimates of median personal earned income are adjusted to 2020 dollars using annual August values of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the San Francisco metro area (see Bureau of Labor Statistics, "[All items in San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted](#)," Series ID CUURS49BSA0). Adjusting for inflation, however, does not account for minimum wage increases implemented since 2018, the last year of data used in this analysis of the American Community Survey 2014-2018 five-year file. As a result, the estimates presented here may underestimate current median earnings. Since July 2018, the minimum wage has risen from \$15.00 to \$16.07, a 7.1% increase. The author's analysis of Current Population Survey data for 2018 and 2020 show that median wages in low-wage occupations have similarly risen, by approximately 7.6%. If such an increase has been fully realized in the domestic work sector, then annual earnings may be closer to \$20,000; but such a scenario is improbable, given the prevalence of minimum wage non-compliance in this sector. According to a recent analysis, an estimated 51% of private household workers in San Francisco were paid less than minimum wage between 2005 and 2018 (see Daniel J. Galvin, Jenn Round, and Janice Fine, "[A Roadmap for Strategic Enforcement: Complaints and Compliance with San Francisco's Minimum Wage](#)," Rutgers Center for Innovation in Worker Organization, 2020). Such widespread violations make it difficult to account for recent minimum wage increases when estimating current wages. Nevertheless, domestic workers' annual incomes likely remain lower than those of other low-wage workers, who have also benefited from recent minimum wage increases.

<sup>5</sup> Amy K. Glasmeier and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "[Living Wage Calculator](#)." Living wage levels presented here are adjusted to 2020 dollars; annual figures assume full-time work of 2080 hours per year.

<sup>6</sup> Kathryn Shantz and Liana Fox, "Precision in Measurement: Using State-Level Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Administrative Records and the Transfer Income Model (TRIM3) to Evaluate Poverty Measurement," Working Paper SEHSD-WP2018-30, U.S. Census Bureau, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Workers reporting receipt of retirement contributions are almost all employed by formal home care or cleaning agencies.

<sup>8</sup> This figure aligns with American Community Survey data, according to which 89% of San Francisco domestic workers have health coverage, and 42% have coverage through Medi-Cal or other public plans.

<sup>9</sup> As of June 2020, Healthy San Francisco provides healthcare access to approximately 13,500 enrolled individuals citywide (author's email correspondence with San Francisco Department of Public Health, December 2020). The overwhelming majority of enrollees are Spanish speakers (SFDPH Office of Managed Care, "[Healthy SF Annual Report](#) (Fiscal Year 2016-17)," December 2017).

<sup>10</sup> In 2020, the California State legislature passed SB 1257 to rectify domestic workers' exclusion from Cal/OSHA protections, but Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed the bill. As a result, households that hire domestic workers have no legal obligation to mitigate workplace hazards, inform workers about unsafe conditions, or provide workers with training or protective equipment. See Jacqueline Garcia, "[Governor Vetoes Bill Extending Protections to Domestic Workers](#)," *CalMatters*, October 1, 2020; Carolyn Said, "[California House Cleaners, Nannies, Caregivers Could Get New Workplace Protections](#)," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 23, 2020; and Frank Shyong, "[In the Midst of Wildfires and a Pandemic, Domestic Workers Need Protections More than Ever](#)," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Author's analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "[Case and Demographic Characteristics for Work-related Injuries and Illnesses Involving Days Away From Work](#)," Tables R97, R98, R99, and R100, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> UCLA Labor and Occupational Safety and Health Program, "[Hidden Work, Hidden Pain: Injury Experiences of Domestic Workers in California](#)," 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Estimated job loss trends derive from three sources: (1) Paulina López González and Tracy Anderson, "[6 Months in Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Workers](#)," National Domestic Workers Alliance/NDWA Labs, October 2020; (2) author's original survey of Los Angeles domestic workers, presented in Isaac Jabola-Carolus, "[Unprotected on the Job: How Exclusion from Safety and Health Laws Harms California Domestic Workers](#)," CUNY Graduate Center, September 2020; and (3) author's analysis of the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. CPS data for January 2020 through October 2020 was accessed through: Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren, *IPUMS, Current Population Survey: Version 8.0 [dataset]*, (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020). The typical CPS variable for "employment status" offers the most conservative monthly estimates, according to which the overall percentage of privately employed domestic workers out of work jumped from 7% in February to 28% in April, before leveling around 17% from July to October. "Out of work" is defined here as any employment status other than "employed, at work." I include workers coded as "employed, not at work" and "not in the labor force," due to employment status misclassification during the COVID-19 pandemic (Heidi Shierholz, "[The Economy President-Elect Biden Is Inheriting](#)," *Economic Policy Institute*, December 4, 2020).

In May 2020, however, the CPS introduced a question to assess whether a worker was unable to work due to the pandemic, and this variable suggests a higher rate of job loss (for further detail, see Note 14). Measured with this variable, the percentage of domestic workers unable to work in May 2020 is nearly 10 points higher than when measured with the typical "employment status" variable. Based on this discrepancy, I conclude that a low estimate for peak unemployment among domestic workers in 2020 is approximately 40%, or roughly 10 points higher than an April estimate based on the typical "employment status" variable. This low estimate is consistent with my Los Angeles survey, which found that approximately 38% of respondents were out of work in April and May 2020. The high estimates, including the peak estimate of 60%, are informed by the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) data. Although based on a non-probability sample, NDWA's weekly surveys likely reached undocumented and informally employed workers more effectively than the CPS, thus offering a valuable reference point. Yet the NDWA data also likely overrepresent housecleaners, who have been most affected by job loss; as a result, the peak measurement of 68% may be an overestimate of unemployment among domestic workers overall. I assume that reasonable high-end estimates may be 5-10 percentage points lower than the NDWA measurements.

<sup>14</sup> Based on the core CPS employment status question, the percentage of housecleaners out of work ballooned from 9.5% in February 2020 to nearly 50% in April, before leveling around 20% from July to October. The CPS's supplemental COVID-19 question yields an even higher peak estimate, 63%, for May 2020. The discrepancy likely stems from question wording, as other occupations also see a higher estimate from the supplemental question than from the core employment status question. Specifically, while the supplemental question is potentially confusing from a domestic worker's perspective, it likely yields higher estimates because it uses a broader time frame and explicitly asks whether one's work has been affected by the pandemic: "At any time in the last 4 weeks, were you unable to work because your employer closed or lost business due to the coronavirus pandemic?" In addition, CPS interviewers are instructed to "Enter Yes for the self-employed who lost work or customers because of the Coronavirus pandemic." No housecleaners are classified as self-employed in the January-October dataset,

but interviewers may have coded housecleaners reporting a loss of most clients as "unable to work." With its more expansive wording, this supplemental question may more accurately capture the scale of job disruption caused by the pandemic than the traditional employment status question.

<sup>15</sup> Employment projections are based on the author's analysis of: State of California Employment Development Department, "[2016-2026 Occupational Employment Projections, San Francisco-Redwood City-South San Francisco Metropolitan Division \(San Francisco and San Mateo Counties\)](#)," accessed November 2020. The term "home attendants" is used here to encompass "personal care aides" (SOC code 39-9021) and "home health aides" (31-1011). Occupation codes for the comparison groups are: 25-2000 (Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers); 47-2000 (Construction Trades Workers); and 35-3000 (Food and Beverage Serving Workers). For information on the regional definitions used for projections, see State of California Employment Development Department, "[Metropolitan Statistical Areas in California](#)," accessed November 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Fast food workers include occupation codes 35-3021 (Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food) and 35-3022 (Counter Attendants, Cafeteria, Food Concession, and Coffee Shop). Software developers include codes 15-1132 (Software Developers, Applications) and 15-1133 (Software Developers, Systems Software). Waiters and waitresses are occupation code 35-3031.

<sup>17</sup> See California State Department of Industrial Relations, "[COVID-19 Prevention](#)," 2020, accessed December 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett, "[What's to Like? Facebook as a Tool for Survey Data Collection](#)," *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2019, 1–33.

<sup>19</sup> Julia Wolfe, Jori Kandra, Lora Engdahl, and Heidi Shierholz, "[Domestic Workers Chartbook: A Comprehensive Look at the Demographics, Wages, Benefits, and Poverty Rates of the Professionals Who Care for Our Family Members and Clean Our Homes](#)," Economic Policy Institute, 2020.