Home Care in Washington

What is Home Care?
Professional home care workers support their elderly and disabled clients with activities of daily living. This workforce enables their clients to remain in their homes and supports their clients’ family members to participate in the labor force.

Growing Need for Home Care Workers

1.1 million
people 65 and older in Washington.¹

By 2030, this population is projected
to increase by 45%, to 1.6 million.²

920,000
additional disabled individuals in
Washington who could potentially
benefit from personal support
workers in their homes.³

Rapidly Growing Occupation

Home care is one of the largest and fastest growing occupations, but the need exceeds the supply, drawing unpaid family caregivers from full-time employment to help fill the gap.

+ There are 58,000 professional home care workers in Washington.⁴
  + This occupation has grown 102% over the past 10 years in Washington.
  + Washington is projected to add an additional 83,410 home care jobs by 2028.⁵
  + Due to high turnover, each year there are projected to be 11,730 home care job openings in Washington.

Rising Revenues, Persistent Low Wages, High Costs of Home Care

+ The annual median cost of home care in Washington is $72,369⁶ up from $59,307 in 2009.⁷ This has translated into rising revenues, while low wages persist.
  + Home care industry revenues are $109.6B and projected to increase by 5.1% annually.⁸
  + In 2019, Washington home care workers received a median hourly wage of $14.41/hour and a median annual income of $31,000.
    + This rose to $15.14/hour and $32,860 annually in 2020,⁹ though this increase may be temporary as pandemic subsidies expire.¹⁰
Recruitment and retention of workers in this rapidly growing occupation can help support the Washington economy. 

- Professional home care workers help family members—especially women—to remain in the workforce, but many families are waiting to receive this support.  
- Studies have found that raising wages for home care workers leads to lower costs from reduced turnover and from workers’ reliance on public safety net programs. Low wages result in thousands of Washington home care workers living in poverty.

Worker Demographics

The Washington home care workforce is disproportionately composed of women of color and immigrant women. Their median age is 50.

- **Women**: 85%
- **People of Color**: 31%, 25% being women of color
- **Foreign-Born**: 26%

Economic Impacts and Racial & Ethnic Disparities

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- Studies have found that raising wages for home care workers leads to lower costs from reduced turnover and from workers’ reliance on public safety net programs.
- Low wages result in thousands of Washington home care workers living in poverty.

- **Home care workers live in poverty including:**
  - 19% of Black workers
  - 15% of Hispanic workers
  - 7% of Asian workers
  - 15% of White workers

- **Home care workers receive food stamps including:**
  - 30% of Black workers
  - 31% of Hispanic workers
  - 19% of Asian workers
  - 28% of White workers
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Disclaimer
The views expressed here are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco or the Federal Reserve System.

Endnotes
11. U.S. Census Bureau. IPUMS microdata, American Community Survey: 2015–2019 (5-year estimate). For comparison, the Washington working age population is 23% people of color, including 11% women of color, and 18% foreign-born.

For additional state profiles and more on this topic, please visit: sffed.us/homecare