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Workers of Color are Disproportionately Impacted by the Labor-Market Impacts of COVID-19, New Study Finds

Today, the National Equity Atlas, Burning Glass Technologies and JPMorgan Chase released an [analysis](#) of the labor market, finding that people of color and immigrants are bearing the brunt of job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Low-wage non-essential jobs have been the most impacted. Workers of color and immigrants are overrepresented in these positions, which are the last employment opportunities expected to recover from this crisis.

“It is both a moral and economic imperative for racial equity to be at the heart of our country’s coronavirus relief strategy,” said **Michael McAfee, president and CEO at PolicyLink**. “Our economy is powered by people of color and immigrants, who are the least paid and the most harmed. We are only as safe as the least protected among us and too many workers are suffering right now. Business leaders and policymakers must prioritize protecting the health and economic security of essential workers, supporting those dislocated by this crisis, and laying the foundation for an inclusive recovery.”

Based on Burning Glass Technologies data on changes in job openings between March 2 and April 13 layered with Census data on worker demographics and wages, it is the most comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of the crisis on workers by race, gender, nativity, and occupation to date. The report analyzes labor-market and workforce data for the United States as a whole and 10 metropolitan regions: Boston, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Miami, Nashville, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. The regional data can be downloaded [here](#).

Our analysis of the national workforce finds that:

- **Low-wage jobs that disproportionately employ people of color and immigrants will likely be the last to recover from the job-market impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The steepest declines in employment opportunities have been in non-essential jobs that pay less than \$35,000 per year -- and workers of color and immigrants are overrepresented in these low-wage jobs. These jobs include childcare workers (\$10 median wage, 43 percent people of color, 60 percent decline in new job postings) and waiters and waitresses (\$11 median wage, 40 percent people of color, 77 percent decline in new job postings).
- **People of color, and especially women of color, are also overrepresented in low-wage essential jobs. These workers are not included in shutdown orders and are therefore more likely to be exposed to COVID-19,** like personal care aides (\$11 median wage, 50 percent people of color) and hand-packers and packagers (\$12 median wage, 62 percent people of color). Among Black, Latinx, and Native American women in essential jobs, half earn less than \$12 per hour – far short of the average

[living wage](#) in the United States (\$16.54 per hour) and just \$0.57 for every dollar earned by White men in essential jobs.

- **Assuming that higher-risk non-essential jobs will experience a longer duration of disruption due to COVID-19, workers of color will be disproportionately impacted.** Among those employed in non-essential occupations, 43 percent of White workers and 38 percent of Asian workers are in higher risk roles, compared with more than half of Black, Pacific Islander, and Native American workers, and 57 percent of Latinx workers - the highest rate of any racial/ethnic group.
- **Metros with large tourism sectors have been hit particularly hard, while diversified regional economies with strong tech sectors have fared somewhat better.** Jobs in [advanced industries](#) have an outsized multiplier effect, driving and supporting a range of service sector jobs, and may have buffered some of the economic impacts of the pandemic in “innovation economy” hubs like San Francisco, Seattle, and Boston. But in economies that rely heavily on tourism, such as Miami or Nashville -- which has developed as a nexus for tourism in the southeast -- the large accommodation and food services sectors were hit particularly hard by the economic shutdowns.
- **The impact on retail and logistics jobs has been uneven across different places.** For example, weekly job postings for driver/sales workers and truck drivers declined by 73 percent in Miami (where they pay a median wage of \$15 per hour), while they actually increased by 40 percent in Chicago (where they pay a median wage of \$20 per hour).

Funded by JPMorgan Chase, this analysis will help inform the firm’s investment decisions - in the face of a shifting labor landscape - as part of their \$350 million global investment in the [Future of Work](#).

“Many of those who were already struggling the most before the pandemic have been hardest hit by it. As the economy recovers, we must rebuild in a way that leaves no one behind,” said **Matt Sigelman, CEO of Burning Glass Technologies**. “It’s crucial that we provide all Americans with access to the skills and the career pathways that offer the opportunities to move upward economically, both for themselves and their families.”

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The National Equity Atlas, produced by PolicyLink and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, is a first-of-its-kind data and policy tool for the community leaders and policymakers who are working to build a new economy that is equitable, resilient, and prosperous.

Burning Glass Technologies delivers job market analytics that empower employers, workers, and educators to make data-driven decisions. The company’s artificial intelligence technology analyzes hundreds of millions of job postings and real-life career transitions to provide insight into labor market patterns. This real-time strategic intelligence offers crucial insights, such as which jobs are most in demand, the specific skills employers need, and the career directions that offer the highest potential for workers. For more information, visit burning-glass.com.