

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

At a Glance: Poverty in Seattle

DECEMBER 2017

FOCUS: CITY OF SEATTLE

Poverty in Seattle

This issue of Beyond the Headlines is an update to an issue originally published in [July 2011](#).

Seattle has long been described as a hub of well-educated and affluent residents. In 2015, Seattle residents reported median earnings that were 34% greater than median earnings reported nationwide (\$41,496 vs. \$30,926). During this period, Seattle also reported a lower unemployment rate than the national unemployment rate (5.7% vs. 8.3%). However, Seattle still has its share of low-income working adults.¹

How many adults are low-income in Seattle? How many are low-income *working* adults? How many have less than an Associate's (AA) degree and who are they? These figures will help you better understand the demographic characteristics, education level, and industries of choice for low-income working adults.

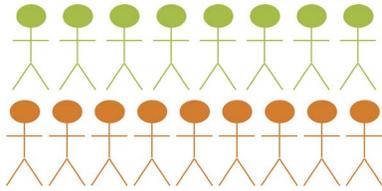
The following graph shows that a quarter (25.4%) of Seattle residents 18 and older are living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL):



While some of these residents are students, the elderly, and the chronically unemployed, a surprisingly large number of them are working adults:

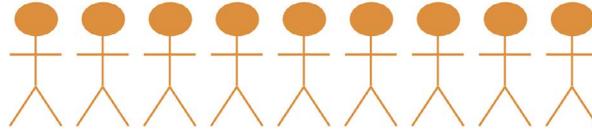


These individuals typically have low levels of education and training:



Of these 17 working low-income adults, 9 have less than an AA degree.

The following diagram depicts some of the characteristics of Seattle’s working low-income adults who have less than an AA degree:



MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS: \$24,000

Demographics

- 35 years old on average
- 53% Male
- 31% People of Color
- 16% Hispanic or Latino
- 34% Foreign Born

Educational Attainment:

- 41% have 1+ year of college
- 10% have less than 1 year
- 32% have a HS degree/GED
- 17% have less than a HS degree/GED

Industry Employment:**

- 25% Accommodation and Food Services
- 15% Retail Trade
- 12% Health Care and Social Assistance
- 9% Other Services (except Public Administration)
- 7% Administrative and Support

**20% of all working low-income adults who have less than an AA degree work in restaurants and other food services

What these charts portray is a “tale of two cities” in Seattle. We have – and continue to attract – a large number of highly-educated workers for a relative abundance of well-paying jobs. At the same time, we have a surprising number of people in Seattle who are poor, many despite the fact that they are working hard. This population could significantly benefit from further education and training that leads to college credentials in high-demand fields and helps them compete for higher-wage jobs.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates from 2011-2015 ACS 5-year Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS)

- i. SJI is using 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to define “poverty” and “low-income” in this issue of Beyond the Headlines. This is the target population for SJI programs and services.

BEYOND THE HEADLINES: Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

About Seattle Jobs Initiative

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today’s marketplace.

Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development

Author: Bryce Jones

Contact Information

For questions or suggestions, please email:

David Kaz | SJI Director of Consulting and Professional Services/Policy | dkaz@seattlejobsinit.com