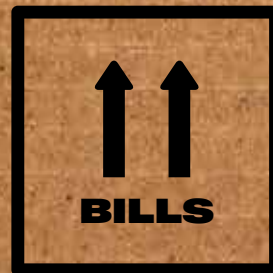


HANDLING

HARDSHIP

Data on Economic Insecurity Among Amazon Warehouse Workers



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Among Amazon Warehouse Workers

May 2024

Co-Authored by
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Key Findings

Millions of workers in the U.S. face serious financial hardship, including those working for some of the largest and most iconic global companies. Amazon has endeavored to cultivate a reputation as a generator of quality job opportunities, a claim that has gone largely unexamined through systematic evidence. In this report, we present findings on economic insecurity among Amazon's frontline warehouse workforce, drawing on a national survey of 1,484 workers across 451 facilities in 42 states. Key findings include:

53% OF WORKERS EXPERIENCED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF FOOD INSECURITY

in the previous three months.

48% OF WORKERS EXPERIENCED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF HOUSING INSECURITY

in the previous three months.

MORE THAN HALF (56%) HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PAY ALL THEIR BILLS

without a remaining balance in the previous three months.

ONE-THIRD OF WORKERS (33%) HAVE USED ONE OR MORE PUBLICLY FUNDED ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

in the previous three months, including 23% who have used the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

TAKING TIME OFF DUE TO THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF WORKING AT AMAZON IS LINKED WITH GREATER

ECONOMIC INSECURITY. For example, 60% of those taking unpaid time off due to pain or exhaustion from working at Amazon report one or more forms of food insecurity, versus 36% of those who have not taken time off.

The findings from the National Survey of Amazon Warehouse Workers suggest that, for many workers, a job at Amazon does not offer a clear pathway to economic security. Further, the data provide new evidence of the relationship between work-related pain and injury and workers' economic challenges—showing, for the first time, a hidden cost of working at Amazon.

Millions of working people in the U.S. are falling behind economically,¹ struggling to pay their bills and meet basic needs even as corporate profitability reaches an all-time high and the fortunes of the wealthiest individuals continue to surge upward.² Among the many factors contributing to workers' economic hardship is the fact that employment in large corporations no longer provides the same kind of ticket to upward mobility and relative security that it once did.³ Today, many firms that are high in market value employ relatively few people,⁴ while many with large workforces offer entry-level jobs marked by perilous conditions, inadequate pay, and limited opportunities for advancement.⁵

Since a dramatic rise that began in the early 2010s, Amazon has touted itself as an engine of quality jobs and economic development.⁶ The company is now the nation's second-largest employer⁷ and by far the single largest employer of warehouse workers,⁸ and its leaders note that Amazon has created more jobs in the U.S. than any other company during the last decade.⁹ The company raised its starting hourly wage to \$15 for its warehouse workforce in 2018, after years of pressure from workers' rights advocates, and it has since positioned itself as a proponent of increasing the federal minimum wage.¹⁰ In its efforts to recruit workers, Amazon often highlights testimonials from employees who have successfully risen through the company's ranks.¹¹ Providing pathways to opportunity and economic security are also part of its pitch to elected officials when it seeks to open new facilities, which has helped to secure substantial public subsidies for the company: roughly \$6.7 billion in state and local incentives as of February 2024.¹²

1 Prettner, K. (2023). Stagnant wages in the face of rising labor productivity: The potential role of industrial robots. *Finance Research Letters*, 58, 104687.

2 Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (2020). The rise of income and wealth inequality in America: Evidence from distributional macroeconomic accounts. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(4), 3-26; Burns, T. (2024, March 28). Corporate profits hit record high as economy boomed in fourth quarter of 2023. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/business/4561631-corporate-hit-record-high-as-economy-boomed-in-fourth-quarter-of-2023/>.

3 Bloom, N., Guvenen, F., Smith, B., Song, J., & von Wachter, T. (2018). "The Disappearing Large-Firm Wage Premium." *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 108: 317-22.

4 Davis, G. F. (2016). *The vanishing American corporation: Navigating the hazards of a new economy* (Vol. 16). Berrett-Koehler Publishers; Weil, D. (2014). *The Fissured Workplace*. Harvard University Press.

5 Howell, D. R., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2019). Declining job quality in the United States: Explanations and evidence. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5(4), 1-53.

6 See <https://www.aboutamazon.com/impact/economy/job-creation>; <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/job-creation-and-investment/investing-creating-jobs-and-contributing-to-the-american-economy>.

7 See <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/policy-news-views/amazon-is-investing-in-american-jobs-workers-and-communities>.

8 Gutelius, B. & Pinto, S. (2023) "Pain Points: Data on Work Intensity, Monitoring, and Health at Amazon Warehouses," University of Illinois Chicago Center for Urban Economic Development. https://indigo.uic.edu/articles/report/Pain_Points_Data_on_Work_Intensity_Monitoring_and_Health_at_Amazon_Warehouses/24435124

9 See https://www.convenience.org/Media/Daily/2023/September/22/3-Amazon-Target-Hiring_Ops.

10 See <https://press.aboutamazon.com/2018/10/amazon-raises-minimum-wage-to-15-for-all-u-s-employees-including-full-time-part-time-temporary-and-seasonal>.

11 Such advertisements can be seen on social media channels such as Meta.

12 See <https://goodjobsfirst.org/amazon-tracker/>.

While the significant quantity of jobs generated by Amazon's growth is clear,¹³ the quality of those jobs has been called into question. Indeed, founder Jeff Bezos acknowledged as much in a letter to shareholders in 2020, writing that the company needed a “better *vision* for how we create value for employees” and vowing to turn Amazon into “Earth’s Best Employer.”¹⁴ Observers have pointed to a range of factors as evidence of job quality concerns at Amazon’s facilities. An array of academic studies have examined the mechanisms of monitoring and labor control that the company uses to increase the pace of work and achieve productivity gains, which have been found to have unfavorable implications for workers’ autonomy, well-being, and health.¹⁵ According to federal data compiled by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Amazon’s injury rate is higher than that of other employers in the warehousing industry, and OSHA has cited safety hazards, levied fines, and issued hazard alert letters at multiple facilities—actions that have dovetailed with efforts by the Department of Justice to examine allegations that Amazon systematically under-reports on-the-job injuries.¹⁶ And it has been well-established that turnover is unusually high among the company’s frontline warehouse workers.¹⁷

The economic well-being of Amazon warehouse workers has also come under scrutiny, with media reports showing that many confront serious financial

13 Granted, given the company’s documented impacts in putting other employers, including local merchants, out of business, it is less clear whether it can be considered a “job creator.”

14 See https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/company-news/2020-letter-to-shareholders?utm_source=social&utm_medium=tw&utm_term=amznnews&utm_content=2020shareholderletter&linkId=116261313.

15 Vallas, S.P., & Kronberg, A.K. (2023) Coercion, consent, and class consciousness: how workers respond to Amazon’s production regime. *Socius*, 9:1-16; Allison, J.E., & Reese, E. (2023) *Unsustainable: Amazon, Warehousing, and the Politics of Exploitation*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Briken, K. & Taylor, P. (2018) Fulfilling the “British way”: beyond constrained choice—Amazon workers’ lived experiences of workfare. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 49 (5-6):438-458; Henaway, M. (2023). Amazon’s distribution space: constructing a ‘labour fix’ through digital Taylorism and corporate Keynesianism. *ZFW—Advances in Economic Geography*, 67(4):202-216; Gutelius and Pinto (2023).

16 See <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/national/02012023>; Strategic Organizing Center (2023). *In denial: Amazon’s continuing failure to fix its injury crisis*. Retrieved from https://thesoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SOC_In-Denial_Amazon-Injury-Report-April-2023.pdf; Southern District of New York, U.S. Attorney’s Office. (2023, January 18).

Amazon cited by OSHA based on SDNY referrals for serious violations that exposed workers to safety hazards. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/amazon-cited-osha-based-sdny-referrals-serious-violations-exposed-workers-safety>; Division of Occupational Safety and Health, Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. (2021, May 4). Inspection 317961850: Citation and notice of assessment; Pottenger, K. (2020). Speed-Ups, Write-Ups, Profits Up at Amazon. *New Labor Forum*, 29(3), 106-110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1095796020947717>; Vallas, S. P., Johnston, H., & Mommadova, Y. (2022). Prime Suspect: Mechanisms of Labor Control at Amazon’s Warehouses. *Work and Occupations*, 49(4), 421-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07308884221106922>.

17 Kantor, J., Weise, K. & Ashford, G. (2021, June 15). The Amazon that customers don’t see. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/06/15/us/amazon-workers.html>; Tung, I., Pinto, M. & Berkowitz, D. (2021). *Injuries, dead-end jobs, and racial inequity in Amazon’s Minnesota operations*. New York: National Employment Law Project. <https://www.nelp.org/publication/injuries-dead-end-jobs-and-racial-inequity-in-amazons-minnesota-operations/>; Herrera, S. (2021, December 29). Amazon union push faces hurdle as many workers leave too quickly to organize. *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/amazon-turnover-presents-organizing-challenge-for-expected-alabama-election-11640775602>; Del Rey, J. (2022, June 17). Leaked Amazon memo warns the company is running out of people to hire. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/recode/23170900/leaked-amazon-memo-warehouses-hiring-shortage>

difficulty,¹⁸ and government data indicating significant reliance on public benefits among employees of the company.¹⁹ However, systematic evidence on the economic dimensions of job quality at Amazon remains thin. In this research brief, we build on an earlier report on work intensity, monitoring, and health at Amazon warehouses²⁰ to address issues of economic security. Drawing on a national survey of 1,484 Amazon warehouse workers, we report data that speaks to compensation, meeting basic needs such as food and housing, covering household expenses, and reliance on outside assistance. Given the significant health impacts of working for Amazon that we documented in our previous report, we also examine the implications of work-related pain and exhaustion for economic security.



18 Day, M., & S. Soper. (2020, December 17). Amazon has turned a middle-class warehouse career into a McJob. *Bloomberg*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-12-17/amazon-amzn-job-pay-rate-leaves-some-warehouse-employees-homeless?embedded-checkout=true>

19 United States Government Accountability Office (2020). Federal Social Safety Net Programs: Millions of Full-Time Workers Rely on Federal Health Care and Food Assistance Programs (GAO-21-45). Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/d2145.pdf>.

20 Gutelius & Pinto (2023).

The National Survey of Amazon Warehouse Workers recruited current frontline warehouse workers from across the United States to complete a 98-question survey covering a range of topics including employment and personal background, work intensity and worker monitoring, health and safety, workplace fairness, worker voice and input, and economic security. The research protocol was approved by the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Institutional Review Board and the survey was fielded between April and August of 2023. Participants filled out the survey on the Qualtrics platform, a survey fielding program, using their computers or smartphones. They were recruited into the survey using the Meta/Facebook targeting approach refined by Schneider and Harknett,²¹ which has been established as a proven method for reaching a relatively wide cross-section of workers in specific companies, industries, or geographic areas.

Surveys were considered to be complete if respondents reached the gender, ethnicity, and race questions situated at the midpoint of the survey instrument (1,558 respondents reached this point in the survey). To provide a more demographically representative picture, we reweighted survey responses using data on race and gender composition that Amazon reported to the EEOC in 2021.²²

The results reported below are based on responses from the 1,484 individuals who provided sufficient information to be included in the weighting variable. The economic security questions were located towards the end of the survey and there was a minor drop-off in responses, so the sample size varies between 1,306 and 1,472 for all results reported below with the exception of previous occupation (n=1,197). All differences reported herein based on race, gender, household composition, and whether one took time off due to pain or exhaustion are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level according to the results of weighted logistic regression analysis.²³ For more details on the survey methodology, including weighting procedures and efforts to ensure data quality, please refer to Gutelius, B., and Pinto, S. (2023) *Pain Points: Data on Work Intensity, Monitoring, and Health at Amazon Warehouses*, University of Illinois Chicago Center for Urban Economic Development.

21 Schneider, D., & Harknett, K. (2022). What's to like? Facebook as a tool for survey data collection. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 51(1), 108–140.

22 See <https://assets.aboutamazon.com/ff/dc/30bf8e3d41c7b250651f337a29c7/2021-amazon-consolidated-eeo-1-report-2p.pdf>.

23 The sample sizes for Black, Latinx, and white workers were large enough to test for differences among these groups; in the text and tables below, we report the intergroup differences that are statistically significant.

**EMPLOYMENT
PROFILE**

The National Survey of Amazon Warehouse Workers captured a range of data about the economic lives of frontline warehouse workers. A substantial majority of Amazon warehouse workers in our sample rely on their job at the company as their main livelihood, with 86% reporting that it is their sole source of employment. Eighty-nine percent work more than 30 hours per week, which is the threshold for full-time status used by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).²⁴ Thirty percent of workers in the sample have been employed at Amazon for less than a year, 44% for one to three years, and 26% for three or more years (see Appendix Table 1 for full data on tenure, facility type, and geography). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of workers report that there are others they are helping to support with the income from their job at Amazon, and 41% have minors under the age of 18 in their household.

The survey also collected information about workers' most recent employment experiences. Before taking their job at Amazon, most of the individuals in our sample (71%) worked for another employer, 6% were self-employed, 16% were not employed, and 7% did something else. Amazon draws workers from a broad range of occupations; apart from "other" (24%),²⁵ the largest groups of warehouse workers in the sample report that their most recent job was in food preparation and services (16%), sales (13%), and production and manufacturing (11%) (for a full list of occupations, see Appendix Table 2). Nearly two-thirds of workers (65%) indicated their pay at Amazon is higher than previous jobs, 22% say it is lower, and 13% say it is about the same.²⁵ Since the occupational categories used in the survey were broad, it is difficult to determine to what degree this pattern is driven by joining Amazon from occupations that generally pay less than jobs in warehousing. That said, median wages in 2023 were lower in food preparation and services (\$15.50) and sales (\$17.57), the two categories topping the list of previous occupational groups, than in transportation (\$19.26), the major occupational group in which most warehousing jobs are situated. Manufacturing/production, third on the list of previous occupational groups, had median wages above those in transportation, at \$20.08.²⁶

²⁴ Amazon defines those working between 30 and 39 hours as "reduced time," noting that individuals in this category "can enjoy comparable benefits as those that work 40 hours, but it gives you more free time during the week." See <https://hiring.amazon.com/why-amazon/shifts-and-schedules/>. Using Amazon's definition and setting the full-time threshold at 40 hours per week or above yields very similar results to the ones we report above using the IRS threshold: 93% earn less than \$50,000 per year, with 13% earning less than \$15,000 per year and 31% in the \$15,000-\$29,999 income bracket.

²⁵ The survey question asked "Compared to the pay at your last job, is your current pay at Amazon... Higher, Lower, or about the same." Due to the wording of the question, we are unable to determine whether survey participants had in mind their wage rate or overall take home-pay (accounting for hours worked) when responding.

²⁶ See <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.t01.htm>.

PAY, EARNINGS, AND PROMOTIONS

Most workers (82%) report hourly wages between \$16 and \$20 (see Appendix Table 3). Among workers who are employed full-time according to the federal definition, 93% earn less than \$50,000 per year, including 32% who fall in the \$15,000-\$29,999 income bracket and 13% who earn less than \$15,000 per year (see Appendix Table 4). The majority (65%) report having received a raise during their time working at Amazon, including 72% working at the company for more than five years.²⁷ However, the compressed distribution of wages indicates that these increases tend to be modest, generally coinciding with longer tenure. Apart from pay, other research has found that some workers remain at the company due to the benefits.²⁸

Few workers report receiving promotions (13%) during their time at Amazon.²⁹ Our survey does not include employees who have moved from frontline warehouse jobs into other positions within the company. However, most Amazon warehouse workers do not express confidence about their prospects for advancement. When asked if their chances for promotion are good, 32% say they are, 41% say they are not, and 27% are unsure. When asked if promotions are handled fairly by the company, 26% say they are, 42% say they are not, and 32% say they are unsure. Many companies champion pay increases and internal promotion as mechanisms of rewarding employee loyalty.³⁰ The findings presented here call into question the availability of opportunities for significant wage growth and career advancement at Amazon.

FOOD INSECURITY

A large share of Amazon warehouse workers report facing financial strain, including difficulties meeting basic needs. Fifty-three percent of workers experienced one or more forms of food insecurity in the three months prior to taking the survey due to not having enough money for food (see Figure 1). This includes 34% who ate less food than they thought they should at some point, 29% who could not eat balanced/healthy meals, and 17% who were hungry but did not eat. Overall, food insecurity was especially pronounced for women and those in households with minors (see Figure 1).

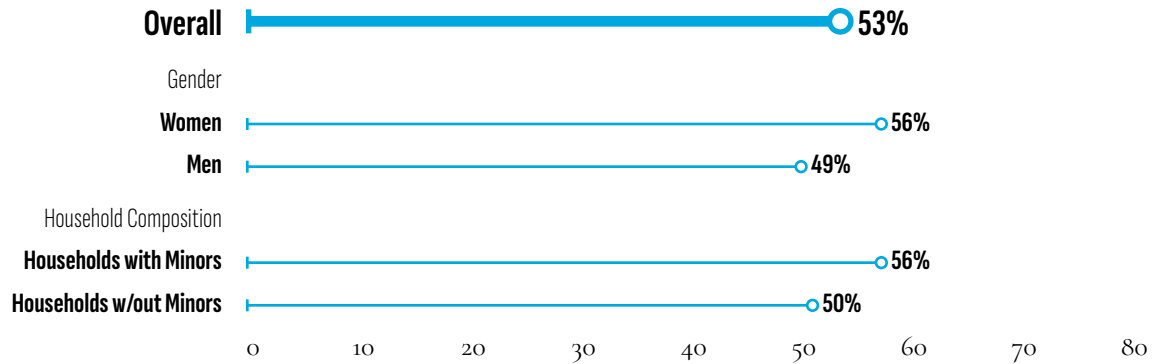
²⁷ As an indication of the correlation between tenure and pay, 8% of workers at the company for less than a year earn over \$20 per hour, while 45% of workers with five or more years at the company do.

²⁸ See Vallas et al. (2022).

²⁹ In speaking with Amazon warehouse workers during the process of piloting the survey, and in other interviews conducted over the last five years, some have noted the existence of lateral “promotions” that do not entail increases in pay; unfortunately, the structure of our data does not allow us to assess how widespread this phenomenon is.

³⁰ See, for example, Farris, D. (2004). Internal labor markets and worker quits. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* 43(3): 573-594; <https://www.reveliolabs.com/news/macro/which-companies-promote-most-from-within/>; <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/five-companies-where-employees-move-up-the-ladder-fast>.

FIGURE 1 Incidence of Food Insecurity Due Not Having Enough Money for Food*

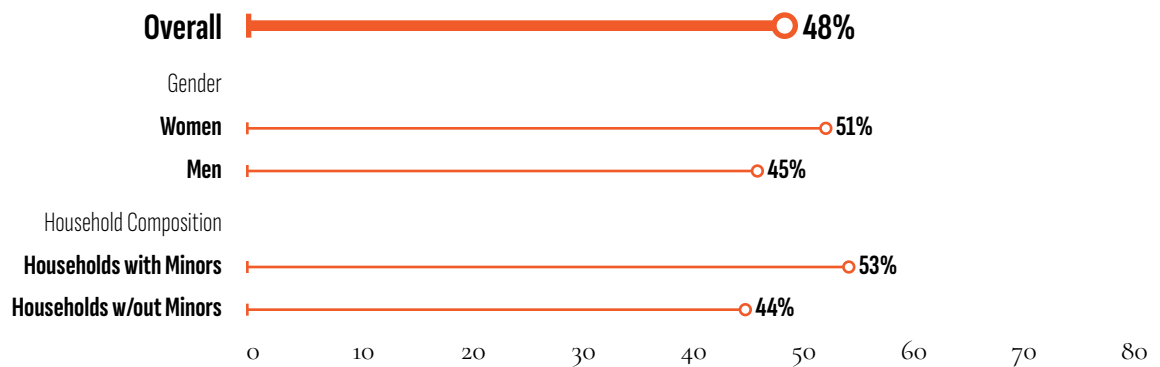


* Including "eaten less food than you thought you should," "were hungry but didn't eat," and/or "couldn't eat balanced (i.e., healthy) meals" over the past three months

HOUSING INSECURITY

Many Amazon warehouse workers also experience challenges related to paying for housing. Forty-eight percent of workers report one or more forms of housing insecurity in the three months prior to taking the survey (see Figure 2). Many report being worried about affording rent or mortgage payments (43%), and smaller but still notable proportions report receiving notice of eviction or foreclosure (6%) or having to move due to eviction or foreclosure (5%). Like food insecurity, overall housing insecurity was more widespread among women and those in households with minors (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 Incidence of Housing Insecurity*

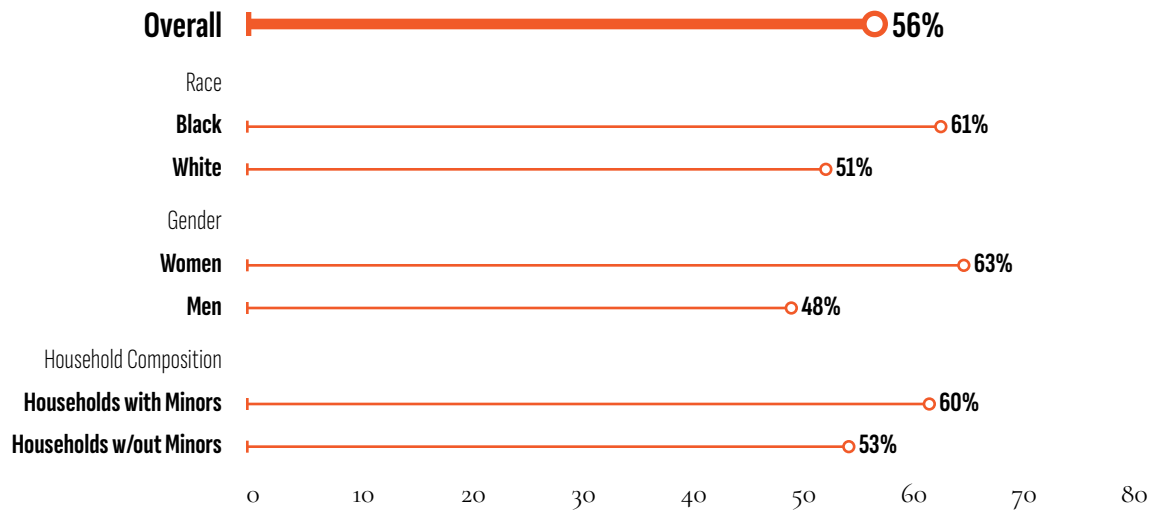


* Including "had to move due to eviction or foreclosure," "received notice of eviction or foreclosure," and/or "were worried about being able to make rent or mortgage payments" over the past three months

CHALLENGES COVERING EXPENSES

Our data also indicate that many Amazon warehouse workers confront difficulties covering household expenses. More than half (56%) say that, in the three months prior to taking the survey, they have not been able to pay all their bills without a remaining balance, including larger proportions of Black workers, women, and people with minors living in their household (see Figure 3).³¹ And, while financial experts recommend having three to six months' worth of emergency expenses saved, over half of Amazon workers (57%) do not have any emergency savings, including a substantially higher proportion of women (67%) than men (47%). Most also say they could not rely on friends or family outside their household for substantial financial assistance, including a higher proportion of Black workers than white workers.³²

FIGURE 3 Inability to Pay Bills* in Full (with no Remaining Balance)



* Including "rent or mortgage, credit cards, utilities, car payments, student loans, gas, childcare, medications, or medical fees"

³¹ In turn, the inability to pay bills often forces workers to rely on high-interest loans (an issue we report on below) or face late-payment penalties. Johnson, C. (2002). Payday loans: Shrewd business or predatory lending. *Minn. L. Rev.*, 87, 1.

³² Asked whether, in an emergency, they or someone in their household would be able to obtain financial assistance of \$3,000 or more from friends or relatives not residing in their household, 64% said they would not be able to, 13% said they would be able to, and 23% said they were unsure. Among Black and white workers, the figures were 69% / 11% / 20% and 62% / 18% / 20%, respectively.

USE OF ASSISTANCE

The economic security challenges faced by many Amazon workers are reflected in their reliance on external support in order to make ends meet and secure basic necessities such as food and housing. One-third of workers (33%) have used one or more of the publicly funded programs that we asked about in the three months prior to taking the survey, including 23% who have used the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps; 20%, Medicaid; 2%, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and 2%, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Workers also report relying on food banks (14%), payday loans (13%), emergency utility support (6%), and other kinds of programs that we did not include in our list (2%). All told, nearly half (48%) of workers report using one or more of these forms of external support in the three months prior to taking the survey (see Figure 4).

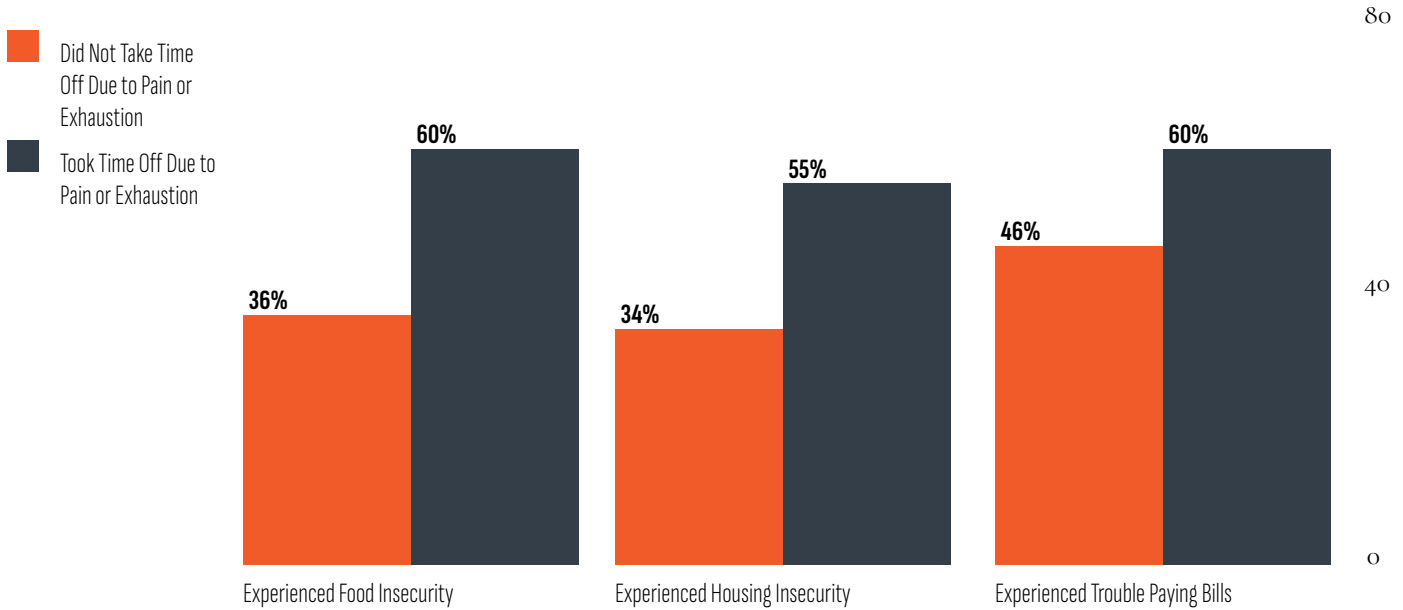
FIGURE 4 Use of Assistance

USED ONE OR MORE FORMS OF ASSISTANCE	48%
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE	33%
SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)	23%
MEDICAID	20%
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES	2%
CHILDREN’S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM	2%
NON-PUBLIC ASSISTANCE	26%
FOOD BANKS	14%
PAYDAY LOANS	13%
EMERGENCY UTILITY SUPPORT	6%
OTHER	2%

**PAIN,
EXHAUSTION,
AND ECONOMIC
INSECURITY**

In our previous report, “Pain Points: Data on Work Intensity, Monitoring, and Health at Amazon Warehouses,” we found that 41% of Amazon warehouse workers in our sample were injured on the job—a far higher toll than previously recognized. One consequence of injury, pain, and general exhaustion from working for Amazon, that analysis found, is that most workers (69%) have to take unpaid time off in order to recover. Figure 5 shows how taking unpaid time off due to pain or exhaustion in the previous month is correlated with different forms of economic insecurity. Those taking unpaid time off are more likely to experience food and housing insecurity and difficulties covering expenses than their counterparts who have not done so. These data are the first to illustrate the cascading impacts of health and safety hazards on economic security, and how lost wages resulting from work-related pain and exhaustion can further imperil households already experiencing financial precarity.

FIGURE 5 Relationship Between Unpaid Time Off Due to Pain or Exhaustion and Different Forms of Economic Insecurity



The findings from the National Survey of Amazon Warehouse Workers offer a unique view into the economic lives of these workers. Even as Amazon has raised its base rate of pay, our data suggest that wage growth is relatively limited for those who remain in frontline warehouse positions, and most do not foresee opportunities for promotions. Large cross-sections of its frontline workforce also report different forms of financial strain, with challenges covering expenses particularly acute for women, Black workers, and those in households with minors.³³ These challenges are reflected in the fact that many Amazon workers rely on government assistance. Nearly one-quarter report using SNAP benefits even as the company receives significant taxpayer-supported subsidies (to the tune of over \$1.2 billion in 2023 alone³⁴).

The higher levels of economic insecurity reported by workers having to take unpaid time off from work due to pain or exhaustion also point to a worrying relationship between financial strain and the injury toll documented in our previous report. The economic impact of taking unpaid time off is a hidden cost of working for Amazon that, until now, has not been accounted for fully in discussions about compensation at the company. As the previous report suggested, the magnitude of the health toll reported by Amazon warehouse workers should raise concerns both about take-home pay in the immediate term and potential long-term effects on well-being, medical costs, and future employment.

The employment picture that emerges in the survey data is not only about Amazon; it speaks to larger structural trends in the U.S. economy. In warehousing, as in other industries, pay has stagnated in recent decades³⁵ even as new performance monitoring technologies often demand greater work effort.³⁶ Had wages kept pace with inflation since 1990, warehouse workers today would be earning \$25.66 per hour, on average.³⁷ Given a context in which real wages have eroded for many, pay increases of the sort that Amazon has made in recent years are undoubtedly welcomed by workers. But, as the survey findings reported here show, modest increases still leave many far short of achieving genuine economic security. While it used to be expected that most leading firms would

³³ These patterns of economic hardship echo those experienced by large numbers of lower-income workers. See Braga, D. (2022, December 7). One-in-four U.S. parents say they've struggled to afford housing in the past year. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/07/one-in-four-u-s-parents-say-theyve-struggled-to-afford-food-or-housing-in-the-past-year/>.

³⁴ See <https://goodjobsfirst.org/amazon-tracker/>.

³⁵ Gutelius, B. & Pinto, S. (2023).

³⁶ Some have argued that wage increases at companies employing such surveillance technologies need to be understood in this context, since these technologies squeeze more effort from workers that may not fully be compensated. See, for example, Guy, F., & Skott, P. (2005). Power-biased technological change and the rise in earnings inequality. University of Massachusetts-Amherst Economic Working Paper 2005-17. Thanks to Brian Callaci for pointing us to this literature.

³⁷ Calculation based on BLS Current Employment Statistics data (NAICS 493 Warehousing & Storage, Production and Nonsupervisory Employees, 1990-2023) and BLS CPI Inflation Calculator.

offer a path into the middle class for entry-level workers, the data indicate that many Amazon warehouse workers are struggling to make ends meet, even after multiple years at the company.

It has been four years since Jeff Bezos proclaimed that Amazon would become “Earth’s Best Employer,” yet questions remain about job quality at the company. This report provides additional evidence on the distance Amazon would need to go in order to claim that title.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Brian Callaci, Alex Kowalski, Maya Pinto, Nik Theodore, and Steve Vallas for helpful comments on this report, and Dave Pabellon for report design.

TABLE 1 **Descriptive Data on the Weighted Sample**

Tenure at Amazon	
Less than 3 months	7%
Between 3 and 6 months	10%
Between 6 months and a year	14%
Between 1 and 3 years	44%
Between 3 and 5 years	16%
More than five years	10%
Facility Type	
Fulfillment Center	71%
Sortation Center	9%
Delivery Station	11%
Other	9%
Geographic Region*	
Northeast	13%
Midwest	25%
South	42%
West	20%

* Based on U.S. Census Bureau-designated regions

TABLE 2 **Most Recent Occupation**

Food preparation and services	16%
Sales	13%
Production/manufacturing	11%
Transportation and moving of goods	7%
Management	5%
Office/administrative support	4%
Healthcare support	4%
Healthcare professional	3%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	2%
Construction and Mining	2%
Education Training Library	2%
Personal Care	1%
Building/ground cleaning and maintenance	1%
Arts/design/entertainment/sports/media	1%
Armed forces	1%
Community and social services	1%
Computers/mathematical sciences	1%
Protective service	1%
Legal	<.5%
Farming/fishing/forestry	<.5%
Architecture/engineering	<.5%
Business/financial operations	<.5%
Other	24%

TABLE 3 **Hourly Wage Distribution***

Less than \$16	2%
\$16	12%
\$17	17%
\$18	23%
\$19	17%
\$20	13%
\$21	8%
\$22	5%
\$23	1%
\$24	1%
\$25	1%
\$26	<.5%
More than \$26	1%

* Respondents were asked to round to the nearest dollar.

TABLE 4 **Distribution of Annual Personal Income Among Full-Time Workers**

Less than \$15,000	13%
\$15,000 - \$29,999	32%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	48%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	6%
\$75,000+	1%

* Using the federal IRS standard of 30 or more working hours per week