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COVID-19: The Impact on Young, Low-Wage Workers Without College Degrees

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COVID-19: THE IMPACT ON YOUNG, LOW-WAGE WORKERS WITHOUT COLLEGE DEGREES

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PURPOSE:

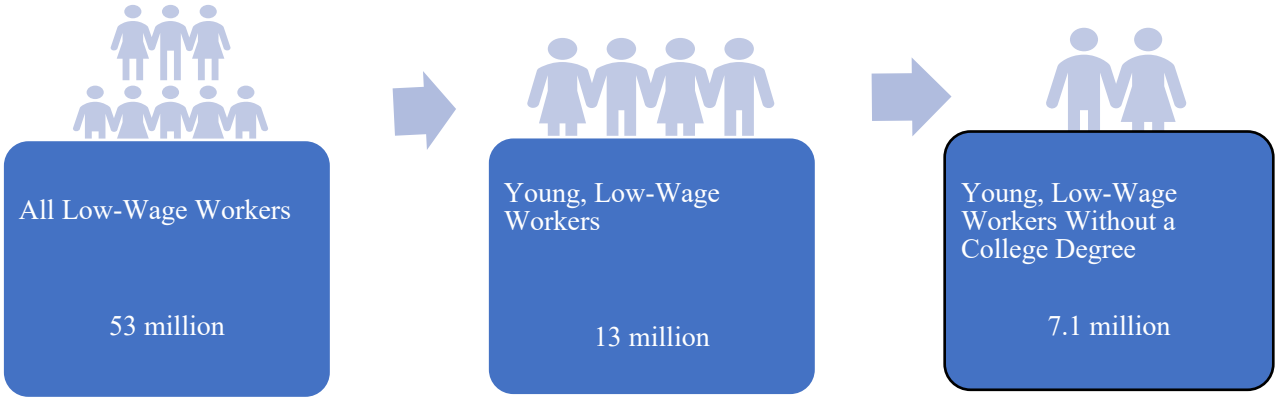
This Fact Sheet highlights select data from the Brookings Institution report "We can't recover from coronavirus recession without helping young workers" released May 7, 2020 by Martha Ross and Nicole Bateman.[1] In the context of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the report includes data on the long-term, near-term, and immediate-term risk for occupations held by young workers without college credentials. This Fact Sheet focuses on data pertaining to the employment demography of young workers without a college degree in Mountain West states (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah).

ABOUT THE DATA:

In a pre-pandemic analysis, Ross and Bateman identified 53 million low-wage workers in America who earn hourly wages of $10.22.[2] Young adult workers, aged 18 to 24, represent about 13 million, or 24%, of all low-wage workers in the United States. These 13 million young workers are especially concentrated in industries heavily affected by the stay-at-home orders issued in response to COVID-19.

For some young workers (particularly those with college degrees), a low-wage job is a temporary stop before advancing to a higher-paying occupation. However, young workers who do *not* possess college degrees less likely to experience future wage growth compared to their college credentialed peers. To date, job losses in the COVID-19 recession are far more concentrated among workers without college degrees. Of the 13 million young adults in low-wage jobs, 7.1 million do not have a college degree (associates or bachelor's) and are not in progress to complete their college credentials. This group of 7.1 million young adult workers is referred to as *Cluster 1* in the Brookings report. Refer to Figure 1 for a visual breakdown for the low-wage population.

FIGURE 1: U.S. LOW-WAGE WORKERS BREAKDOWN, IDENTIFYING *CLUSTER 1*



Source: This figure is adapted from information included in the aforementioned brief by Martha Ross and Nicole Bateman.

[1] Bateman, N. & Ross, M., *We can't recover from coronavirus recession without helping young workers*, (Brookings Institution, 2020).
[2] Bateman, N. & Ross, M., *Meet the low-wage workforce*, (Brookings Institution, 2019). https://www.brookings.edu/research/meet-the-low-wage-workforce/

TERMS:

Immediate Risk	Includes occupations of retail, restaurants, and passenger transportation; these jobs are endangered due to social distancing measures, travel restrictions, and related government actions. Job losses are significant and continue to grow.
Near-Term Risk	Includes occupations of construction, some manufacturing, and real estate; these jobs have seen layoffs in recent weeks.
Long-Term Risk	Includes occupations of food manufacturing, hospitals, and insurance carriers; these jobs are unlikely to be immediately impacted by layoffs, or closures due to COVID-19.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Cities with the highest percentage of immediate risk industries for the Cluster 1 population are Farmington, NM (64%), Santa Fe, NM (64%), Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV (61%), and St. George, UT (61%).
- Cities with the highest percentage of near-risk industries for the Cluster 1 population are Greely, CO (34%), Pueblo, CO (29%), and Las Cruces, NM (29%).
- The highest percentage of unemployment for the Cluster 1 populations are found in Yuma, AZ (20%), Lake Havasu City-Kingman, AZ (15%), and Las Cruces, NM (15%).
- Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, Nevada has the lowest median annual earnings for the Cluster 1 population among the five largest metros in Mountain West States.

For Tables 1-6, weighted population indicates the estimated number of individuals who are included in Cluster 1, based on sample size and actual population size. Table 1 identifies the Cluster 1 population in the major metros within the five Mountain West states. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 1: CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STATISTICS IN THE LARGEST METROPOLITAN CITY IN EACH MOUNTAIN WEST STATE

	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	112,942	$13,496.21	$45,679.48	$8.82	46%	20%	91%	9%
Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO	67,733	$14,721.72	$50,055.82	$9.29	50%	21%	92%	8%
Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	59,044	$12,672.36	$49,783.28	$9.30	61%	14%	90%	10%
Salt Lake City, UT	40,062	$13,728.39	$59,175.69	$8.75	38%	26%	92%	8%
Albuquerque, NM	21,122	$13,180.91	$37,280.76	$8.23	50%	18%	89%	11%

Table 2 identifies the Cluster 1 population in Arizona cities. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status

for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 2: ARIZONA CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STASTICS

City	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	112,942	$13,496.21	$45,679.48	$8.82	46%	20%	91%	9%
Tucson	29,440	$12,268.10	$31,897.07	$8.73	49%	21%	90%	10%
Yuma	6,782	$10,139.16	$34,848.99	$7.52	41%	14%	80%	20%
Lake Havasu City-Kingman	5,170	$11,153.08	$31,938.36	$8.14	48%	12%	85%	15%
Prescott	4,374	$12,129.02	$36,804.31	$8.40	57%	15%	91%	9%
Flagstaff	3,748	$12,672.36	$27,607.91	$8.14	60%	12%	89%	11%
Sierra Vista-Douglas	3,622	$14,534.38	$33,653.44	$7.90	41%	25%	95%	5%

Table 3 identifies the Cluster 1 population in Colorado cities. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 3: COLORADO CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STATISTICS

City	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Denver-Aurora-Lakewood	67,733	$14,721.72	$50,055.82	$9.29	50%	21%	92%	8%
Colorado Springs	18,376	$12,268.10	$41,079.57	$8.69	51%	23%	87%	13%
Fort Collins	9,698	$13,496.21	$24,536.21	$8.48	53%	20%	93%	7%
Boulder	6,735	$15,335.13	$31,680.90	$9.88	48%	18%	95%	5%
Greeley	5,208	$14,784.42	$42,876.42	$9.50	38%	34%	89%	11%
Grand Junction	4,005	$12,458.04	$22,407.54	$9.02	54%	19%	90%	10%
Pueblo	3,555	$9,135.90	$30,624.87	$7.24	48%	29%	88%	12%

Table 4 identifies the Cluster 1 population in Nevada cities. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 4: NEVADA CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STATISTICS

City	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise	59,044	$12,672.36	$49,783.28	$9.30	61%	14%	90%	10%
Reno	11,780	$13,496.21	$36,906.55	$9.09	46%	24%	90%	10%

Table 5 identifies the Cluster 1 population in Utah cities. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 5: UTAH CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STATISTICS

City	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Salt Lake City	40,062	$13,728.39	$59,175.69	$8.75	38%	26%	92%	8%
Provo-Orem	20,539	$11,654.70	$57,251.15	$8.28	40%	20%	94%	6%
Ogden-Clearfield	18,150	$13,098.64	$70,626.70	$8.48	35%	22%	94%	6%
Logan	5,275	$12,672.36	$33,532.89	$8.14	40%	14%	95%	5%
St. George	3,605	$12,594.85	$36,538.64	$8.14	61%	21%	95%	5%

Table 6 identifies the Cluster 1 population in New Mexico cities. The table outlines median earnings for these workers and the industries that are at risk. The employed and unemployed columns show the percentage of current employment status for low-wage, young workers without college in a given city. Though stay-at-home orders furloughed many of these workers, they are still considered employed by these industries and are represented in the employed column. If employees were fired or laid off, they are represented in the unemployed percentage figure.

TABLE 6: NEW MEXICO CLUSTER 1 POPULATION STATISTICS

City	Weighted Population	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Median hourly earnings	% in immediate risk industries	% in near-term risk industries	% Employed	% Unemployed
Albuquerque	21,122	$13,180.91	$37,280.76	$8.23	50%	18%	89%	11%
Las Cruces	7,301	$11,083.47	$30,202.46	$7.63	43%	29%	85%	15%
Farmington	3,051	$10,560.30	$41,185.17	$7.52	64%	11%	92%	8%
Santa Fe	2,979	$12,268.10	$32,444.33	$7.52	64%	7%	94%	6%