

The Biden-Harris administration has boosted the multiracial working class

The share of workers earning at least \$17 an hour jumped from 63% to 79% between 2019 and 2023

When people talk about “the working class,” they often invoke the image of a white man in a blue-collar job and stop there. In reality, the working class looks a lot like the overall U.S. population—it is multiracial. The policies that benefit the working class—higher minimum wages, a larger child tax credit, increased support for unions—benefit Americans from all backgrounds.

One simple way to think about who counts as working class is to look at the group of U.S. workers with less than a bachelor’s degree. These include workers in many of the jobs considered “essential” for the economy, such as farm, factory, construction, transportation, retail, and restaurant workers. In 2023, just over half of U.S. workers without a bachelor's degree were white (52.9%), a quarter were Hispanic, 15.4% were Black, and 5.1% were Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI).

The Biden-Harris administration’s policies have been hugely beneficial to the working class, especially for those who earn lower wages. The share of all U.S. workers earning at least \$17 an hour rose from 63% in 2019 to 79% in 2023. The most notable increases occurred among Black and Hispanic workers, who are most likely to be low-wage earners. While only about half of Black and Hispanic workers earned at least \$17 an hour in 2019, that number rose to more than 70% of each group in 2023. Thus, policies that have raised wages for the working class have also helped reduce racial wage gaps.

FIGURE A

Racial and ethnic composition of working-age population with less than a bachelor's degree, 2023

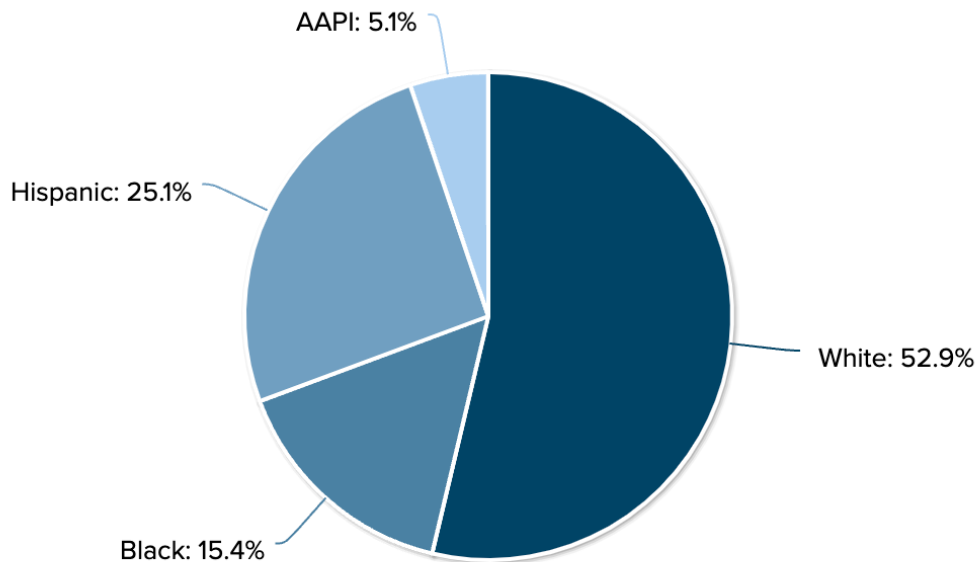


Chart Data

Notes: AAPI refers to Asian American and Pacific Islander. Race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive (i.e., white non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, AAPI non-Hispanic, and Hispanic any race). Adult working age population includes workers 18-64 years old.

Source: EPI analysis of the Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata, EPI Current Population Survey Extracts, Version 1.0.52 (2024), <https://microdata.epi.org>.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) provided direct economic assistance to working families and state and local governments that fueled robust job growth, a 30-month streak of unemployment at or below 4%, and historically low Black and Hispanic unemployment rates. As a result of the strong labor market, low-wage workers saw the [fastest wage growth](#)—up 13.2% in inflation-adjusted terms—between 2019 and 2023. The Biden-Harris administration has further supported the working class by [supporting workers' rights to form unions](#), increasing the [minimum wage for federal contractors](#), and expanding [eligibility for overtime pay](#).

FIGURE B

Share of workers making \$17 per hour or more in 2019 and 2023

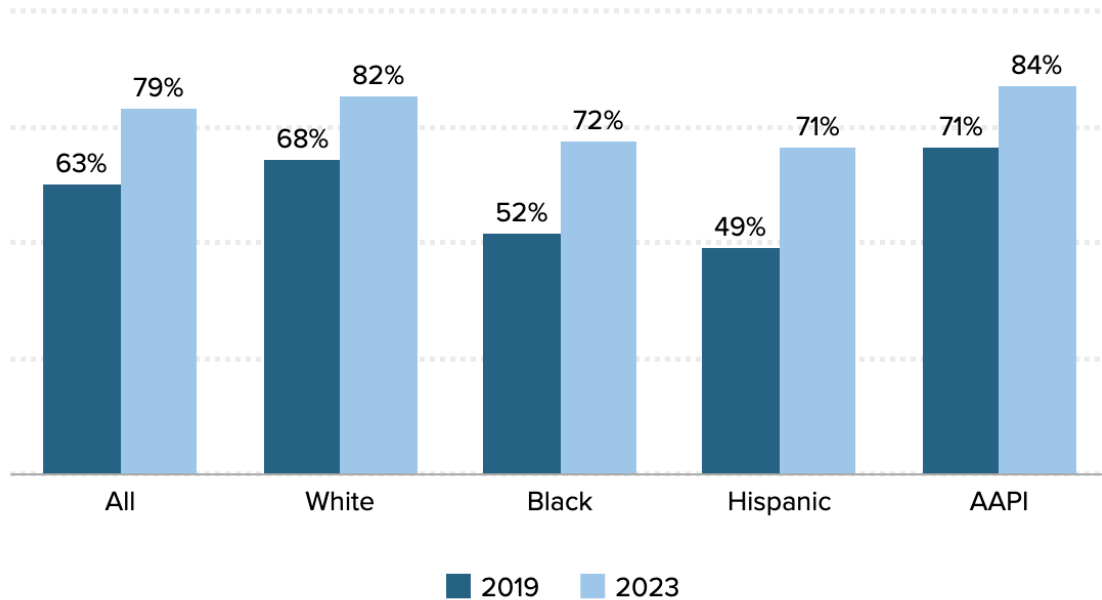


Chart Data

Notes: Shares reflect nominal wages. AAPI refers to Asian American and Pacific Islander. Race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive (i.e., white non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, AAPI non-Hispanic, and Hispanic any race)

Source: [Low-Wage Workforce Tracker](#), Economic Policy Institute, January 2024.

The Harris-Walz campaign’s proposed economic plans—increasing the federal minimum wage, providing an even bigger child tax credit, and continuing to support unions—constitute an extension and expansion of the working-class focused policies that the Biden-Harris administration used to revitalize the economy after the pandemic. A Trump-Vance administration, meanwhile, would throw working families under the bus to benefit the wealthiest individuals and corporations, by implementing [costly tax cuts](#) for the richest Americans, [mass deportations](#), [dangerous deregulation](#), and other anti-growth, anti-equity policies. Supporting the multiracial working class means supporting all of us, and it’s clear which set of policies would do exactly that.