

**UCLA
COMMUNITY
SCHOLARS
PROJECT**

**STRATEGIES FOR ECONOMIC
SURVIVAL: A LABOR AND
EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT OF
WESTLAKE AND PICO-UNION**

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Executive Summary

This report, conducted by Community Scholars, aims to understand economic survival strategies of the predominantly Latino immigrant community living in the Westlake and Pico- Union neighborhoods. The research group created a seventeen question survey to gather data about the socioeconomic status of the population living in these two neighborhoods. The survey was revised and piloted by workers and community organizations. This report explores issues that surfaced from the findings such as: type of occupation currently engaged in, wage issues, workplace issues, as well as what the ideal job would be. Research methods consisted of individual interviews with workers gathered at the CARECEN Day Labor Center , with members of the Restaurant Opportunity Center and with street vendors who are members of La Union Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes (The Popular Union of Street Vendors) . We also interviewed participants at two well attended community festivals this spring at MacArthur Park: Taste of MacArthur Park and Fiesta Salud by conducting surveys at a booth where we gave out snacks as an incentive to encourage participation in our survey. Through surveys conducted with over 50 people, we have four key findings as strategies for economic survival and three policy recommendations we will give the City of Los Angeles and community organizations.

Findings

Workplace Issues

Our results found that over 67% of survey respondents indicated earning a monthly income of below \$1,200 a month. According to research conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, this is below the living wage calculated for Los Angeles which is estimated to be \$1,900 a month.² In addition 33% of survey respondents indicated being paid late by their employer. These issues contribute to workers earning poverty wages.

In order to combat these labor conditions we found that respondents used four major strategies to survive economically.

Strategies for Economic Survival

- Multiple Jobs
20% of survey respondents have two or more jobs.
- Long Work Hours
30% of respondents indicated working over 40 hours a week.
- Informal Self Employment
55% of respondents are classified as self-employed informal workers such as Street Vendors and Day Laborers³.

² Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Living Wage Calculator ". Accessed May 26th 2015, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06037>

³Self-employed informal workers are defined using the definition of Marta Lopez Garza, "Convergence of the public and private spheres: Women in the informal economy." *Race, Gender & Class* 175-192, (2002)

- Rely on Day Labor Centers
36% of day laborers stated prior experience with police harassment and 47% experience workplace accident or injury. As a result day laborers depend heavily on day labor centers in order to help curb police harassment and as a safe haven to be able to work.

Recommendations

1) Allocate Funding to Worker Centers and Community Organizations to Conduct Job Training Courses

Based on our survey, we feel that the City of Los Angeles should make job training opportunities and classes available to all LA residents for little to no cost for all, regardless of immigration status. We propose that these classes be made available through trusted entities that already exist in the neighborhood such as labor centers and community organizations. The classes should respond to the specific needs of the workers that each respective center or nonprofit works with and should allow for the center or organization to create the curriculum and lead the classes. By the city granting funding to these centers and nonprofits to build a curriculum to better support workers in their jobs, it will not only allow workers to advance in their careers but also mobilize the entire community, as income levels rise when people become eligible for higher paying jobs and opportunities.

2) Decriminalize Workers

In order for the programs we propose through the labor centers and community organizations in LA to be successful, they must also be coupled with the decriminalization of workers in industries that have traditionally faced great discrimination and harassment from the police and the city. These workers have also faces grave labor violations. We urge the City to consult with groups that are currently working on campaigns around the legalization of such industries to ensure that workers voices are represented in the implementation of these policies in The City of Los Angeles.

3) Create Incentives for Workers to Start Their Own Small Businesses

We urge the city to extend and improve programs such as the Business Assistance Program and the PACE Business Development Center. These courses should take into account workers' literacy levels, their native language, and should be offered to all residents of Los Angeles. This should also extend to include undocumented workers in order to help them expand their businesses.

Introduction

Los Angeles has an array of distinct ethnic enclaves that many immigrants call home. It is also a city with a high concentration of poverty. Pico-Union and Westlake are two areas predominantly inhabited by Latino immigrant populations. Latino immigrants who work and/or reside in the area have created a strong and vibrant community and labor force that is instrumental to the local economy of Los Angeles.

Our project focused on attempting to understand the labor performed throughout the Westlake and Pico-Union area by conducting a series of surveys that would provide a snapshot of the strategies Latino immigrants utilize to survive economically⁴. Our surveys focused on industries such as street vending, day laborers, and service workers. We conducted a total of (52) surveys in the Pico-Union and Westlake area.

Overall, our research indicates that workers in the Westlake and Pico-Union neighborhoods are likely to work in informal industries as a way to survive economically and oftentimes perform two jobs simultaneously. They also tend to work long hours and are highly likely to experience getting paid late, wage theft, police harassment, and/or workplace accidents/injuries.

Demographics

The communities of Westlake and Pico-Union lie in central Los Angeles, centered in between Koreatown and Downtown Los Angeles, University Park and Silverlake. The neighborhoods are some of the densest neighborhoods of Los Angeles with a combined population of more than 204,000⁵. Research also indicates that the population is predominantly Latino (71%). According to the American Community Survey 2013 ACS

The characteristics of *informal self-employment* are:

- Wages paid in cash
- Five or fewer workers
- Small enterprises
- Flexible hours
- Lax in labor, health, and safety regulations, and working conditions
- Pay that are not regulated by law.¹

¹ Marta Lopez Garza, "Convergence of the public and private spheres: Women in the informal economy." *Race, Gender & Class* 175-192, (2002)

⁴ While our study aims to focus around Latino Immigrants living in Westlake and Pico-Union, 8% of our respondents did not live in our area of study but worked in our area of study. In addition 6% of our survey respondents did not identify as Latino but either worked or lived in the area of study. For this reason their responses are part of our research findings.

^{5,4} American Community Survey 2013 5 year Estimate. Accessed May 17th 2015

⁵ The unemployment rates for the neighborhoods of Pico-Union and Westlake, which are 15% and 16% respectively, are high compared to the city of Los Angeles' 8% unemployment rate.

Methodology

The Community Scholars Labor and Employment group chose to create a survey in order to find out the issues associated with economic survival methods of residents within the area of study. We also chose to inform community organizations about our project and ask for their advice because as outsiders to the community, we wanted to ensure to respect their work during the course of our research.

Survey Design

The survey was comprised of a total of seventeen questions, which were meant to yield both qualitative and quantitative data. In an effort to understand the basic economic and labor profile of this area we set out to answer some basic questions, including: How many hours per week, on average, do people work? How many days out of the week do they work? What are some obstacles they face while performing this work? How far do they travel to and from work? What form of transportation do they utilize? We also wanted to capture data relating to the environment and working conditions which participants experienced. Therefore, we asked about the nature of participant's employment and hours worked, as well as whether they experienced police harassment, wage theft, getting paid late, and/or workplace accidents/injuries. Demographic questions were also included, such as the person's home country and age range. The research survey also included a portion that allowed the interviewee to add additional commentary that best described their socio-economic circumstances. A crucial component of the data we collected came from personal anecdotes that described the nature of the work performed by individuals who have been in their respective trades for numerous years. Narratives recorded from interviewees are included throughout this report and in the observational findings, which provide important contextual information about the circumstances of workers.

Data Collection

Our researchers surveyed a pool of self-employed participants that were engaged in industries such as street vending, day labor (carpentry, gardening, construction), service work (janitors, restaurant workers, hotel workers), and factory/garment work. Researchers contacted respondents via community organizations located in Westlake and Pico-Union, including the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), Restaurant Opportunities Center- Los Angeles (ROC-LA), and street vendor who are members of La Union Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes. We informed the organizations of our research questions and asked for permission to reach out to their members. Researchers

also visited sites where day laborers and street vendors conduct business, such as the Home Depot located in Pico-Union near CARECEN, the CARECEN Day Labor Center, and MacArthur Park. Researchers also hosted informational booths at two public festivals held at Los Angeles' MacArthur Park on May 2nd and 16th, 2015 ("*Taste of MacArthur Park*" and "*Fiesta Salud*", respectively). At both events information about our study was disseminated to individuals who inquired about our labor study, making survey participation directly voluntary and self-initiated.

Limitations and Lessons Learned

Our research team faced many limitations in acquiring data from individuals for a variety of reasons. The research team understands these challenges as being indicative of the vulnerability of individuals who perform informal work and we hope our experiences will inform future research attempts with this community. Participants felt a sense of anxiety and distrust when asked about the nature of their work, and therefore, the research team members spent a significant amount of effort and time developing rapport with individuals who agreed to be interviewed. It is highly important for future research of this nature to take this reality into consideration.

Our research team took several steps to establish rapport with individuals. First, we sought out help from well-known members of the community that were well respected in their field of work. The Restaurant Opportunities Center-Los Angeles, CARECEN and Unión de Inquilinos who are members of the Union Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes, helped us establish contact and develop an understanding with survey respondents that helped them feel comfortable talking to surveyors about their daily labor experiences. Entering into the research relationship through trusted organizations opened the door for more workers to participate in the survey. This also made it more likely that participants would open up to share openly and honestly about their representative experiences in Once relationships with the community were established, our research team was able to gather data that was most representative of their true working conditions in a manner that was also most efficient.

Additional barriers were faced when collecting data from our participants due to varying literacy levels. Significant portions of our interviewees were assisted in the survey process by researchers who verbally asked the questions and hand wrote corresponding answers. We learned that attention to the type of questions should be limited to short and quick answers that can be given by interviewees; participants that were not assisted frequently were asked to elaborate on answers, such as in answering how many hours they worked a day and throughout the week. This in part is due to the complex and unpredictable nature of their work. Thus future research survey design should take into careful consideration the length and how easily understood the questions

are if respondents will not be assisted throughout the process. Short answers also proved to be most practical in the data analysis phase.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

- 31% of respondents were Pico-Union Residents and 61% were Westlake Residents.
- 8% of respondents indicated living in other neighborhoods such as Downtown Los Angeles, South Central and the San Gabriel Valley.
- 58% of survey respondents were men, 40% women and 2% identified as other.
- Survey respondents identified as
 - 40% Mexican,
 - 19% Guatemalan
 - 17% Salvadoran
 - 10% Honduran
 - 4% Caucasian
 - 2% Asian
 - 2% Puerto Rican
 - 2% African American
 - 4% of respondents did not indicate ethnicity.

Our survey respondents consisted of

- Day Laborers (34%)
- Street Vendors (21%)
- Restaurant Workers (9%)
- Janitors (6%)
- Clerical/ Office Workers (5%)
- Garment Workers (4%)
- Factory Workers (2%)
- Gardeners (2%)
- Hotel Workers (2%).
- We surveyed respondents who were currently unemployed but who shared experiences regarding their last employer, (5%).
- Four percent of respondents indicated “Other” which included a worker employed at a Dry Cleaner, a Mechanic and a Security Officer.

Findings

The ACS 2013 found that residents of Westlake and Pico-Union earn a low median income between \$16,296 and \$19,158 a year. This figure divided by 12-month period demonstrates that on average, a Westlake and Pico-Union resident earns about \$1,358 and \$1,597 per month. Through our research, we found that about a third (33%) of our survey respondents indicated earning a monthly income of \$600-\$900. Research from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimates that a resident of Los Angeles must make an average of \$1,900 a month in order to be considered with earning a living wage. Our research indicates that 67.7% of respondents reported making under \$1,200 which is below this estimation.⁶ Other significant wage and payment issues that workers reported were that of being paid late. Over a third of survey respondents (33%) indicated having issues with being paid late by their employer. This research demonstrates that along with not earning a living wage, workers are also subject to issues of wage theft which contribute to and add to their occupation providing poverty wages.

Due to the above mentioned situations by which workers are subject to below living wage earnings and wage theft violations, we believe that workers use four main strategies for economic survival to help them combat being subject to poverty wages. 1) Multiple Jobs 2) Work Long Hours 3) Resort to informal labor 4) Seek Centers such as day labor centers to improve working conditions.

Respondents are working multiple jobs in order to survive economically

The strategies of economic survival of residents of Westlake and Pico-Union indicated that around 20% of respondents have two or more jobs. One survey respondent indicated working at two major chain restaurants. In the mornings he works at a Mexican restaurant as a waiter and in the evenings he works at a major fine dining restaurant as a busboy. This strategy of having two jobs is not uncommon amongst low-income Latino immigrants living in the United States. Cal State University Northridge Professor Marta Tienda's research of the Little Village neighborhood in Chicago conducted in 2003 found that migrant households are likely to be made up of members that hold down multiple jobs, both formal and informal, to cope with the economic insecurity associated with decreasing employment opportunities for "unskilled workers"⁷. The workers were interviewed reflected this finding as they had two jobs in order to survive economically.

⁶ Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Living Wage Calculator". Accessed May 26th 2015, <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/06037>

⁷ Marta Tienda and Rebeca Raijman, "Immigrants' Income Packaging and Invisible Labor Force Activity". *Social Science Quarterly*, 81 (1):291- 310,(2000).

Respondents are working long hours in order to make up for lost wages

Of our total survey respondents 30% indicated working over 40 hours a week. This can be noted as both a burden a strategy for economic survival, because they are not earning enough money by working 40 hours a week they have to work more hours in order to survive economically.

A garment worker noted that at his workplace he earns a living by pieces he produces rather than by hours he works. For this reason he works every day of the week, in order to be able to produce more and earn more. This is a strategy him and many of his coworkers have to perform because if they work less hours they earn less money.

Many of the entrepreneurs we interviewed also stated they worked daily for long hours, which includes the time they are on the street waiting for customers and clients, not necessarily receiving income. Street Vendors and day laborers revealed that while they work extensive hours, it may not be reflected in their income as there is fluctuation in wages earned per day based on how busy the traffic and demand is for their product on any given day. Day laborers are often at the day labor center or outside of local home improvement stores from sun up to sun down but they only get paid for the hours they work, which sometimes is only two hours a day. Although day laborers spend many hours a day looking for work, oftentimes they only work a small portion of this time. For this reason many day laborers reported either working part time (under 32 hours) or over time (over 40 hours) when asked how many hours they worked. If the day laborer is hired through the worker center the employer is required to pay them at least \$13 for the hour, however the employer only pays them for the hours that they work. For this reason day laborers often have to find other means to earn an income. Many day laborers reported a strategy of signing up for work at the day labor center but also having business cards that they give to their clients and that they post at local Laundromats and other local places so that whenever their service is requested the client can call them personally. With this strategy they are always looking for work in two places; at the center and through their networks.

Respondents are turning to informal labor in order to survive economically

A report given by the California Chief Legislative Analyst to the Economic Development Committee estimates there are 50,000 street vendors in Los Angeles who annually generate \$504 million in sales of food and merchandise⁸. 1 in 5 street vendors

⁸ Sharon Tso, "City of Los Angeles Sidewalk Vending Status Report" , Report of the Chief Executive Analyst, November (2014).

prepare food related products producing 100 million in revenues each year. The vast majority, 40,000 vendors, sell non-food items and generate \$403 million annually.⁹

Through our survey collection we identified a total of 55% self-employed informal workers: 34% day Laborers and 21% Street Vendors. These respondents indicated various reasons for engaging in informal work, such as loss of employment, undocumented status and overall life experiences which led them to become either day laborers or street vendors. It is important to note that while many self-employed informal workers are autonomous, they still face various issues in the workplace. Being an informal worker comes with many additional setbacks. An example of an obstacle encountered by informal workers is that of police harassment. Our research found that more than a third (36.4%) of day laborers we interviewed reported police harassment and a significant majority (63.6%) of street vendors reported likewise. Despite such harassment by police officials, informal workers interviewed reported that they felt proud of the work they perform and wish that city officials would acknowledge their limited economic survival strategies.

Respondents depend on day labor centers in order to ensure better working conditions

The National Day Labor Survey found that on any given day 117,600 people are looking for work as day laborers¹⁰. According to this study, nearly half of these workers live on the west coast (42%). 79% of these workers search for work at informal sites such as gas stations, busy streets and home improvement stores and only 1 in 5 day laborers search for work at day labor centers. National data reveals that the majority of day laborers search for work on a full-time basis and support themselves and their families through this work. Day laborers earnings are low, unstable, and insecure. For example, our findings indicate that day laborers are overrepresented as part time and over time workers (26.5% and 8.2%). Although national findings suggest the median hourly wage of day laborers is \$10 an hour, these earnings are volatile and can range from \$1,400 during good months and as little as \$500 during bad months. Through the national day labor survey, day laborers reported experiencing discrimination and harassment from merchants and police while searching for work. 19 % of day laborers experience verbal abuse from merchants, while 15% were denied entrance into establishments by merchants. 16% of day laborers reported experiencing verbal abuse from police, 9% reported being arrested, and 11% reported receiving a citation.

⁹ Sharon Tso, "City of Los Angeles Sidewalk Vending Status Report" , Report of the Chief Executive Analyst, November (2014).

¹⁰ Abel Valenzuela, Nick Theodore, Edwin Melendrez and Ana Luz Gonzalez, "*On The Corner: Day Labor In the United States*", (2006).

Furthermore, our research indicates that day laborers, along with street vendors, comprise a large portion of participants who reported police harassment (36.4%). Our research also shows that day laborers were more likely to experience workplace accidents/injuries than other industries. For example, 47.1% of day laborers report having experienced a workplace accident/injury, compared to 23.5% of service workers. Day laborers were also more likely to experience wage theft, getting paid late, police harassment, and workplace accident/injury, while other groups were overrepresented in some categories and not in others. These statistics underscore the important role day labor centers play in helping curb workers' rights violations and facilitate a safe space for day laborers to find work.

Testimonies

Our research team received several personal testimonies describing the difficulties that workers face whether they are street vendors, day laborers or restaurant workers. In the following section we highlight specific stories that add a narrative and voice to our research findings.

Street Vending Obstacles

While having the opportunity to become self-employed provides many liberties for new arrivals into the Westlake and Pico- Union neighborhoods, it also provides many unforeseen challenges that make earning a living an arduous task. Our research team

Street Vendors educate each other about the limited rights they possess as street vendors when engaging with police officers.

received several personal testimonies describing the difficulties that they face as “informal workers”, specifically as street vendors who are vending in Los Angeles where it currently is illegal to be a street vendor. A self-employed middle-aged woman who has worked as

a food street vendor for over 20 years gave our research team a notable testimony describing the nature of her work and the socio-political dynamics of street vending that exist within the Pico-Union area. It has been individuals with years of experience such as herself, she explains, who have been involved in educating vendors regarding the limited rights they possess as street vendors when engaging with police officials.

Issues of health and the misconceptions that exist about food street vending were discussed with our interviewee. She informed us about the day to day struggles with shop owners who purposefully litter alongside their street vending post to discourage people from purchasing food. As we spoke, our interviewee pointed at several sites where trash with many of the surrounding shops' logo was on food trays that were piled up along the sidewalk. She also mentioned that shop owners would discard human waste on public trash bins along the sidewalk to hinder street vending sales. Our interviewee also noted

that issues of public safety such as public intoxication at times becomes an issue for street vendors who have to bear the presence of individuals that are under the influence. She recalls there being instances where violent confrontations with intoxicated individuals have happened while street vending both for herself and fellow street vendors. Surprisingly, issues of safety have not been gender specific because of the close knit street vendor community that exists within those spaces. These relationships established amongst street vendors have helped address issues of safety when they do arise.

Obstacles of Transgender Workers

A significant finding that the community scholars found through this research was that of opportunities and economic survival of transgender individuals. On one occasion, we surveyed a transgendered street vendor, who was fired from her job of many years for no particular reason. She stated that she believed that she was fired because of how her identity.

“Prefiero vender ropa y cosas en la calle que tener que vender mi cuerpo”

“I prefer to sell clothing on the street than to be selling my body”

Anonymous Street Vendor

According to a 2013 study titled “A Broken Bargain for Transgendered Workers”, there is a high unemployment rate amongst transgender individuals (14%) due to the social stigma and employment discrimination.¹¹ This unemployment and underemployment contributes to high levels of poverty amongst transgendered individuals, who are four times more likely to earn a yearly income of less than \$10,000 compared to overall workers. This and many reasons often push transgendered individuals to find alternatives to survive economically. This particular Street Vendor identified Street Vending as one of her only options before “selling her body”. She was very proud of the work she was doing as a street vendor, selling thrift items such as shoes, bags, pants, shirts and accessories. Although our group only interviewed oneself identified transgender individual, she informed us that many of her friends were in the same position as her. They had been rejected from other employment opportunities and thus Street Vending was their only option for them to work and not have to prostitute themselves.

¹¹ LGBT Movement Advancement Project “A Broken Bargain for Transgender Workers” (2013) <http://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/transgender-workers>

Fear of Day Labor Centers Closing Down

While day laborers in our study report a high incidence of wage theft and injury, the workers argued that the worker center helps to insure their

safety, stipulates workers receive a minimum of \$13 an hour, and shields them from experiencing higher incidences of wage theft. Day laborers shared, another strategy they utilize to protect themselves from wage theft is memorizing employers license plates so that they can file a report if the employer refuses to pay. Anecdotally, day laborers shared their fear that if the worker center, located near Home Depot shut down, police will harass, arrest, and fine workers throughout the entire area. Our interviews with day laborers suggest that the worker center is perceived to be the only barrier protecting them from police harassment, and that it serves as a shield for day laborers within the center as well as for those who stand in the parking lot outside the center because of its close proximity to the center. For example, one day laborer interviewed stated that if worker centers closed then he believed crime in the area would increase since the need for economic survival would still be present and workers might resort to crime in order to help sustain their families. Fortunately, for these workers, to subsidize the loss of federal funding, the Mayor provided \$250,000 and City Council provided \$750,000 in order to keep worker centers funded for another year¹². This funding however only secures the day labor center funding until next spring, which means that the fear of losing day labor centers will continue to haunt the many workers that they currently provide services for.

If worker centers shut down, day laborers fear that police will harass arrest and fine day laborers throughout the entire area.

Worker Centers provide skills and education about rights of workers

A report by the Restaurant Opportunities Center¹³, finds that the restaurant industry is highly segregated with White people in the high-wage positions and People of Color in the low-wage positions. 89.8% restaurant workers interviewed reported their employer did not offer health insurance. Of the workers 44.1% experienced overtime violations and 26.7% reported working without pay. 1 of 3 workers reported experiencing verbal abuse in the workplace based off of race. As a result, immigrant workers earn much less than non-immigrant workers. In addition, inadequate bus services make it difficult for Workers of Color to find livable wages in upscale restaurants that are located in wealthier neighborhoods.

¹² Kate Linthicum, "Federal funding cuts could close seven Los Angeles day labor centers" Los Angeles Times, May 9th (2014).
<http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-day-labor-cuts-20140510-story.html>

¹³ "Behind the Kitchen Door: Inequality and Opportunity in Los Angeles, the Nation's Largest Restaurant Industry" ROC United (2011)

During the month of April, staff members from the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United of Los Angeles (ROC LA) invited us to the graduation of a cohort of COLORS Hospitality and Opportunity for Workers (CHOW) institute where primarily immigrant restaurant workers are taught the skills to qualify for living wage jobs in fine dining, bartending, and management positions. It was a celebratory event with food, special performances, and certificates recognizing the efforts of those graduating from the program. We had the opportunity to interview a few of the restaurant workers who had just graduated from the program. Our informal conversations while administering the survey revealed that another form of wage theft is when employers force their workers to come to work before their shifts even begins to take their “break”. Workers are then forced to work a full shift without any additional breaks. Our survey did not ask workers specifically about breaks, but through these informal conversations we discovered how “breaks” are used as another form of wage theft. The survey respondent told the student researcher that he was appreciative of the skills that he was learning at the Restaurant Opportunities Center. He was not only learning skills to improve his career opportunities but was also learning about how to defend his rights as a restaurant worker and to fight for a living wage.

A restaurant worker reported that the Restaurant Opportunities Center taught him about skills in order to improve his career opportunities and taught him about rights in the workplace such as the rights to take breaks and fighting for a living wage.

Dreams and Aspirations for Entrepreneurship

55% of informal workers have dreams of being able to vend legally and own their business.

Survey respondents were asked to share what their ideal job would be. They were given the choice of describing any type of occupation, whether it was similar to their current job or completely different from their current occupation.

58% of survey respondents indicated that their dream job is different from their current occupation. However when specifically focusing on street vendors, over half of street vendors (55%) indicated that their dream job is to legitimize their occupation by growing their business and establishing a storefront. For day laborers however, just about half of Day Laborers (50%) indicated that their dream occupation would not be in a similar field to their current occupation. For those that did indicate a dream of continuing with a similar occupation, their dream is to also legitimize their job for example by being able to earn a contractor's license. Many cited undocumented status, lack of information and resources for reasons why they currently are not able to hold a contractor license. The

survey respondents that indicated wanting to pursue a similar field either in street vending or day laborers demonstrate that there are many street vendors who already do identify as business owners. They have the dream of being able to vend legally and own their own business.

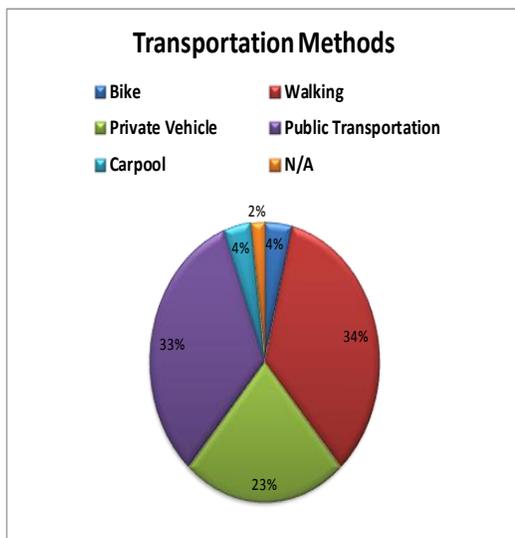
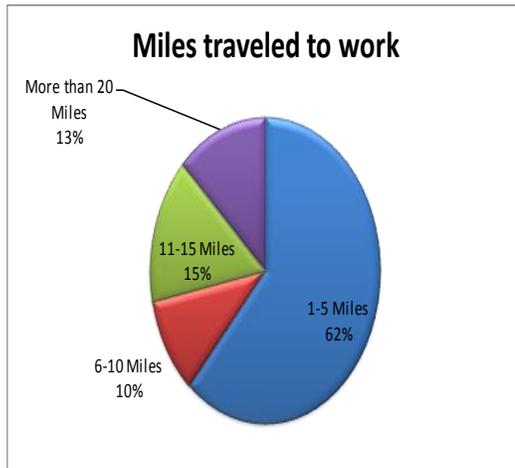
The responses of dream occupations from the survey respondents varied from business owners, mechanics and house cleaners to teachers, social workers and lawyers. Our survey findings demonstrate that many respondents have to pursue their current occupation in order to survive

economically, and if given the opportunity they aspire to learn more skills, get an education and pursue their own dreams. One specific survey respondent who was a day laborer told us of his dream to pursue a different job, however because he needs to provide for himself and his son, and help him pay for college, he must continue working as a day laborer.

58% of total Survey Respondents indicated having dreams of changing their profession which include the dream of becoming business owners, lawyers, teachers and social workers.

Additional Research Recommended:

Transportation and implications for the labor force



Respondents were asked to indicate their transportation methods from home to their workplace. More than a third of respondents (34%) indicated walking as their transportation method to get to work. Similarly, about another third of respondents (33%) indicated public transportation as their main method to travel to and from work. Only less than one fourth (23%) of respondents indicated private vehicle as their main transportation method to and from work. 4% of respondents carpool to work and 4% bike to work. 2% of respondents did not state their main transportation method.

The majority of respondents (62%) indicated working 1-5 miles away from their home. 10% indicated working a distance between six and ten miles (10%) and 15% indicated between 11-15 miles (15%). Only 13% of respondents indicated working more than 20 miles away from their home.

Although our data demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of respondents do not rely specifically on private vehicle to be able to get to their workplace, more research must be conducted in how vehicle access

would break down barriers that currently exist for those that do not have vehicle access. In addition, due to AB60 being implemented this year, many undocumented immigrants have the opportunity to obtain drivers licenses. Further research must be conducted in order to understand the limits of lack of vehicle access and lack of driver's license had upon individuals.

Policy Recommendations

Based on our findings and observations we have developed the following recommendations for policies that aim to aim the immigrant labor force of Westlake and Pico-Union:

1) Allocate Funding to Worker Centers and Community Organizations to Conduct Job Training Courses

Numerous workers noted their desire for increased opportunities for further education in order to advance in their careers and to perform daily tasks better, however immigration status, long work hours, and high prices for such courses remain barriers for many working class folks. The City of Los Angeles should make job training opportunities and classes available to all LA residents for little to no cost for all, regardless of immigration status. We propose that these classes be made available through the well trusted entities that already exist in the neighborhood such as through labor centers and community organizations. The classes should respond to the specific needs of the workers that each respective center or nonprofit works with and should allow for the center or organization to create the curriculum and lead the classes. The classes could teach new skills and give certifications, as well as include various topics such as financial literacy to help workers succeed in all aspects of their lives. These entities have already built relationships with workers and are trusted by the community. By giving the flexibility to the center or nonprofit to create the curriculum it will ensure that the content targets what the worker really wants and needs in order to be more successful at work. It will also ensure that the classes are offered at times and days that workers can actually attend. The classes will also be more accessible if held in a community space with familiar faces.

As was seen in the crisis of the labor centers almost losing funding in LA, it was further revealed how much community members value these centers and rely on them as both a source of employment but also as a source of knowledge, specifically of their rights in the workplace. By the city granting funding to these centers and nonprofits to build a curriculum to better support workers in their jobs, it will not only allow workers to advance in their careers but also mobilize the entire community, as income levels rise when people become eligible for higher paying jobs and opportunities.

2) Decriminalize Workers

Our research indicates that in many cases undocumented immigrants who were ineligible for work authorization were the most apt to engage in forms of informal employment perhaps due to the unjust, anti-immigrant policies that attempt to verify the work authorization of immigrants through flawed systems such as E-Verify. Thus, these types of erroneous programs have pushed many workers into the informal economy as the only means to survive and support their families. However, there currently exist rules and regulations which criminalize these informal occupations. In order for the programs we propose through the labor centers and community organizations in LA to be successful, they must also be coupled with the de-criminalization of industries that have traditionally faced great discrimination and harassment from the police and the city, as

well as grave labor violations. As one step towards this goal, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) must stop targeting and preying on workers who are constantly in the public's view, specifically day laborers and street vendors. As cited both through our interactions with such workers as well as through public cases like that of Oscar Velasquez¹⁴, a Guatemalan day laborer in LA county who received a ticket for "peddling" outside of a Home Depot, it reveals how local law enforcement agencies have worked to criminalize the industries many immigrants work in, as well as to criminalize the workers themselves. These workers make up the fabric of our communities and if one worker is ticketed for performing their job, it has ripple effects-- not only affecting that worker's family but also the community as a whole due to a loss of productivity and lost wages.

In an effort to de-criminalize workers, the City of LA must also work to find ways to legalize industries such as street vending and day labor in accordance with what workers want. Only through the legalization of these industries will it allow workers to not be susceptible to harassment from law enforcement for doing their job. While the city may not recognize the professions that day laborers and street vendors do as a "legitimate" career, this is a job that a great number of people perform every day that has contributed greatly to the city's economy. We urge the city to consult with the groups that are currently working on campaigns around the legalization of such industries to ensure that workers voices are represented in the implementation of these policies in LA County.

3) Create Incentives for Workers to Start Their Own Small Businesses

Many workers also indicated through the survey -- in particular street vendors (55%) -- stated that they wanted to own their own small business in Los Angeles. While this is an aspiration of many workers, unfortunately the infrastructure currently available for undocumented workers is non-existent. The Business Source program available through the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department (CDD) under the Los Angeles Business Assistance Program (LABAP) offers courses at the PACE Business Development Center, a center located close to the Westlake and Pico-Union neighborhood. These programs however, are costly and do not regularly offer courses in languages other than English. We urge the city to extend these programs and the opportunity to start a small business to undocumented workers in the city. We also urge the city to make these programs and opportunities more accessible to workers. Some workers may not have access to a computer, making it difficult for them to hear about these small business opportunities, let alone sign up for a class or locate a course they'd be interested in. These courses should also take into account workers' literacy levels and

¹⁴ Alex Garcia, "Day Laborers Await Court date for 'Peddling' Tickets", National Day Laborers Organizing Network. May (2015)
<http://www.ndlon.org/en/news-all/760-day-laborers-await-court-date-for-'peddling'-tickets>

value the knowledge that many already possess in how to run their own business, as this is what many are already doing daily.

We also urge the city to look into incentives for people who might be thinking about starting their own small business. One such example could be to offer workers incentives for selling healthy foods or for being local businesses where the owners come directly from the community. This can also help to curb gentrification in this area and the push out of community members that have called these neighborhoods home for many years. It also encourages business owners to be creative and to continue to move the community forward.

Conclusion

Our research findings tell us a significant amount about the informal labor force, and in general, the obstacles that workers face as they struggle to provide for themselves and their families. It provides us enough information to assert that workers in the Westlake and Pico-Union neighborhoods are not only significant to the local economy, but also play an important role in the integration of immigrants into the area. The anecdotes we collected and the research findings we acquired accurately paint how unjust and unsafe working conditions are in the absence of policy initiatives that seek to formally integrate immigrants into the labor force. People are subject to police persecution, wage theft, issues with clients and competitors, unhealthy working conditions, and continual poverty as a result of not having the resources to be able to survive economically in a much politicized environment.

We urge the city to legalize these professions and to honor the people who perform these difficult jobs daily to better provide for their families and communities. While we push for the legalization of these industries, we also recognize the need for those directly impacted by these policies to be at the center of the decision making process. It is essential that the city consult with community members who have been fighting for this for years through the Legalize Street Vending Campaign and others in the community like National Day Labor Organizing Network (NDLON), Instituto De Educacion Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), CARECEN, and the UCLA Labor Center. This will also allow the city to better understand the intricacies of how these networks are setup as well as the needs of workers who perform these jobs daily. Each of these workers are residents of Los Angeles and deserve to have their voices be heard to ensure that LA is a city that is welcoming and protects the rights of all workers.

While the city has a lot of room to grow in how it protects all workers in their respective workplaces, we urge the Mayor to consider our policy proposals and to consult with labor advocacy groups to better understand their struggles and demands. Instead of

asking how workers best can serve the city, we should also ask how can the city best protect and serve ALL of its residents, regardless of income level or immigration status.

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Appendix

Survey Tool

Surveyor:

Date of Survey:

Location of Survey:

Labor and Employment Survey

This survey is being conducted by UCLA graduate students to investigate Labor and Employment characteristics of Pico Union and Westlake residents. This is a voluntary survey, any questions you do not feel comfortable with you may leave blank.

Demographics:

Place of Residence: Pico-Union Westlake Other _____

Gender: Male Female Other

Age Range: 18-24 25-30 31-35 36-40 41-50 50-60 60+

Race/Ethnicity

Latino

El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Costa

Rica

Ecuador

Peru

Bolivia

Other _____

Eastern European African American Asian Caucasian Middle Eastern

Other _____

Occupational History

1. What do you do for work?

Construction Factory Restaurant Garment Health Care

Street Vendor Hotel Day Laborer Other: _____

Describe your work:

2. Last week, how many different employers did you work for? _____ none ___1 ___2 ___3
___3+

3. How many years have you been doing this kind of work? *Please indicate years for each type of work you are currently doing*

1st Occupation and years _____ 2nd Occupation and years _____

3rd Occupation and years _____

4. What do you enjoy about your

work? _____

5. What are some challenges you face with the type of work you do? _____

6. Have you ever experienced the following at your workplace?
- You were paid late by your employer
 - You were paid less than the amount you were promised
 - Harassment by Police for doing your job
 - Injury or illness due to work

7. Last week what was your work schedule? Please explain as detailed as possible.

Sun Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat

Morning

Noon

Evening

Night

8. How many hours per week do you work? Less than 20 21-31 32-40 41+

8a. Do your work hours change? If yes, please explain _____

9. How much is the average monthly income for someone in your occupation?
 I chose not to disclose \$600-\$900 \$901-\$1200 \$1201-\$1500 Between \$1,501-\$2,000 More than \$2,000

10. How many people in your household work? _____

11. Are you the head of your household? Yes No

12. How do you get to work? Bicycle Walking Private Vehicle Public Transportation
 Carpool Other _____

13. How many miles would you estimate there are from your home to work?
_____ miles

14. What cities or neighborhoods do you work in? _____

15. Does your current work schedule allow you to have time to spend time with your families or for hobbies _____

16. What would be your ideal job? _____

17. Are there any other comments you would like to share with us about your work/employment ?

Thank You Very Much for Your Time. Your survey responses will remain confidential and will be used in order to work towards the goal of our project

Figure One

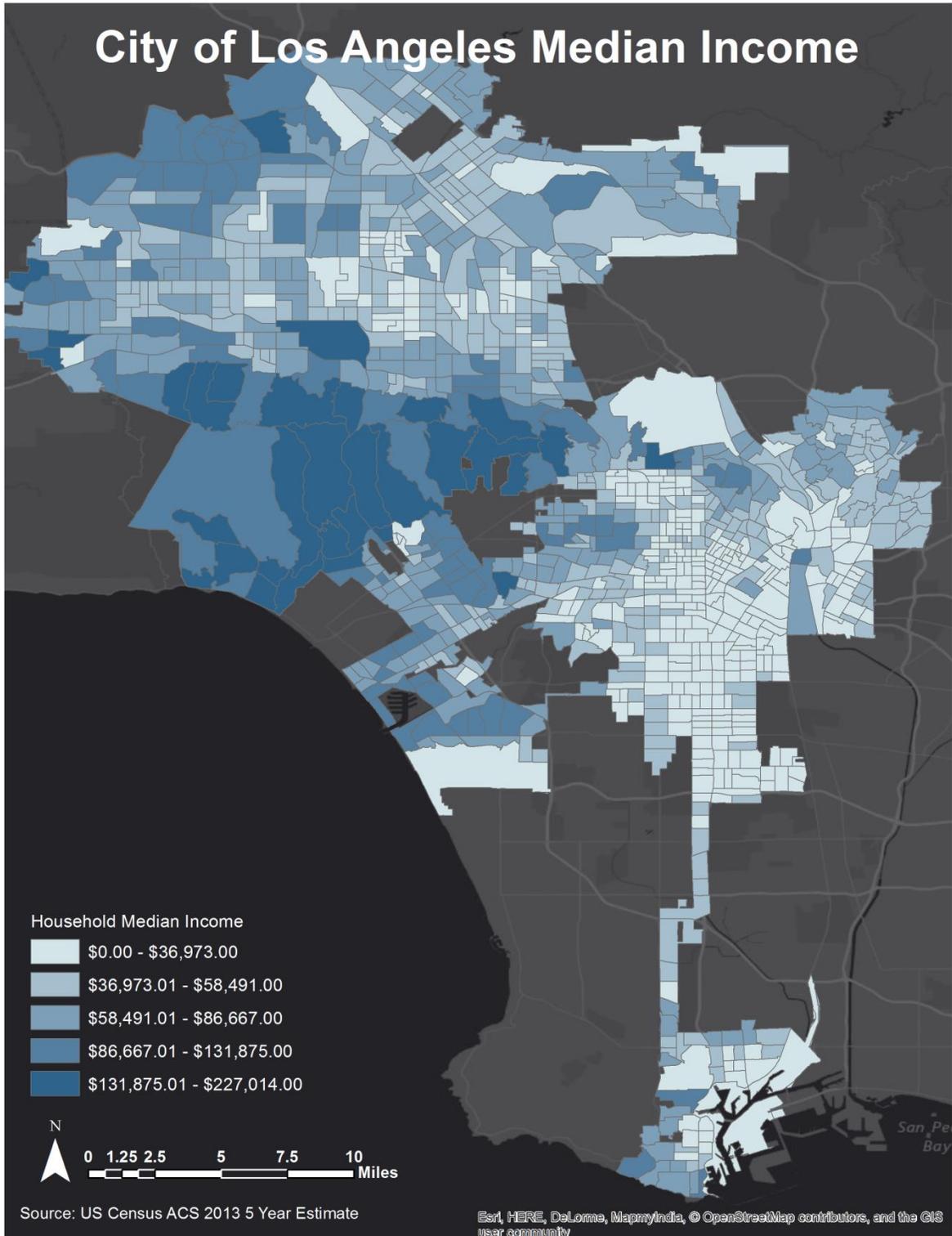


Figure Two

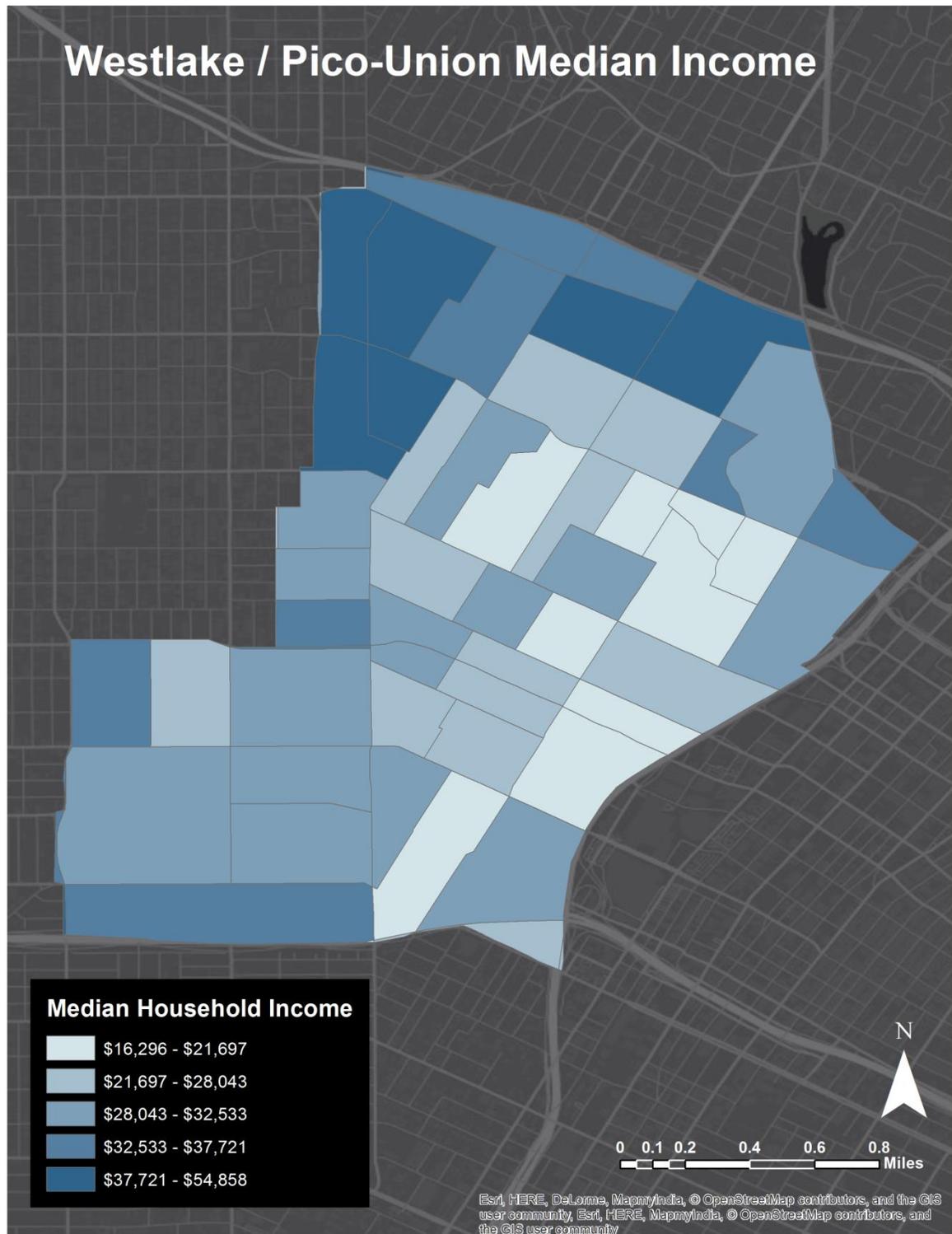
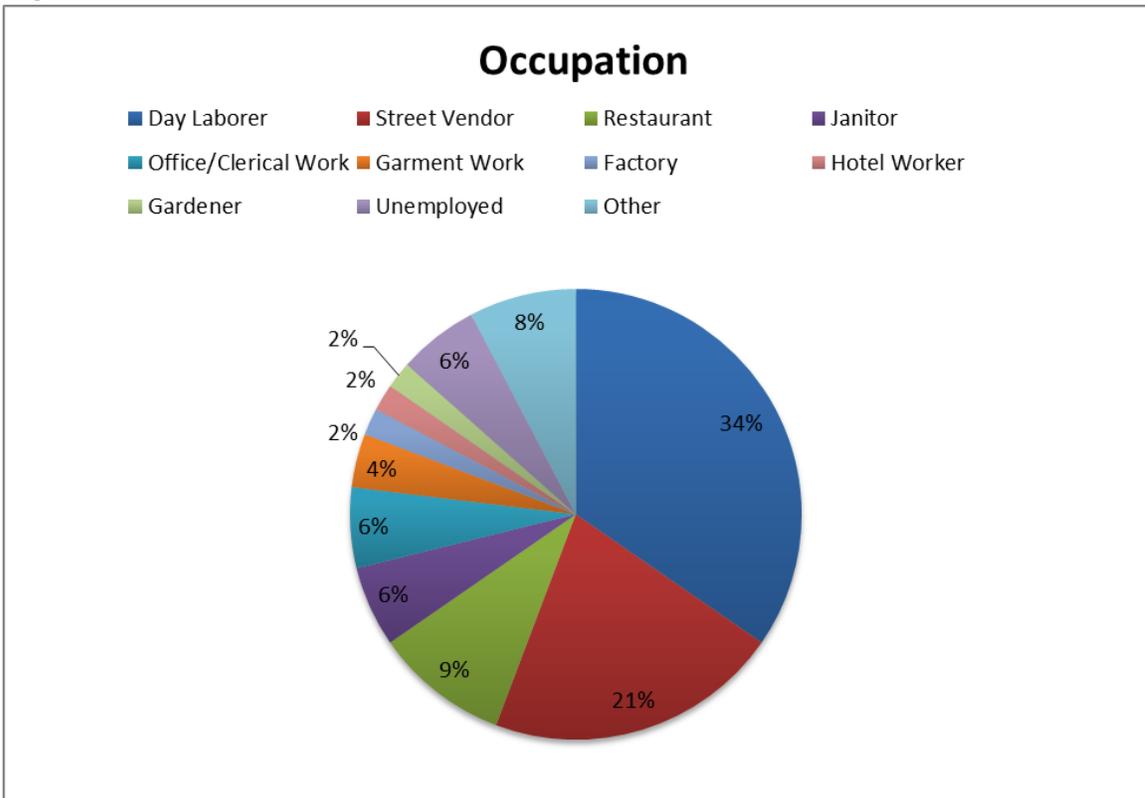


Figure One



Source: Authors

Figure Two

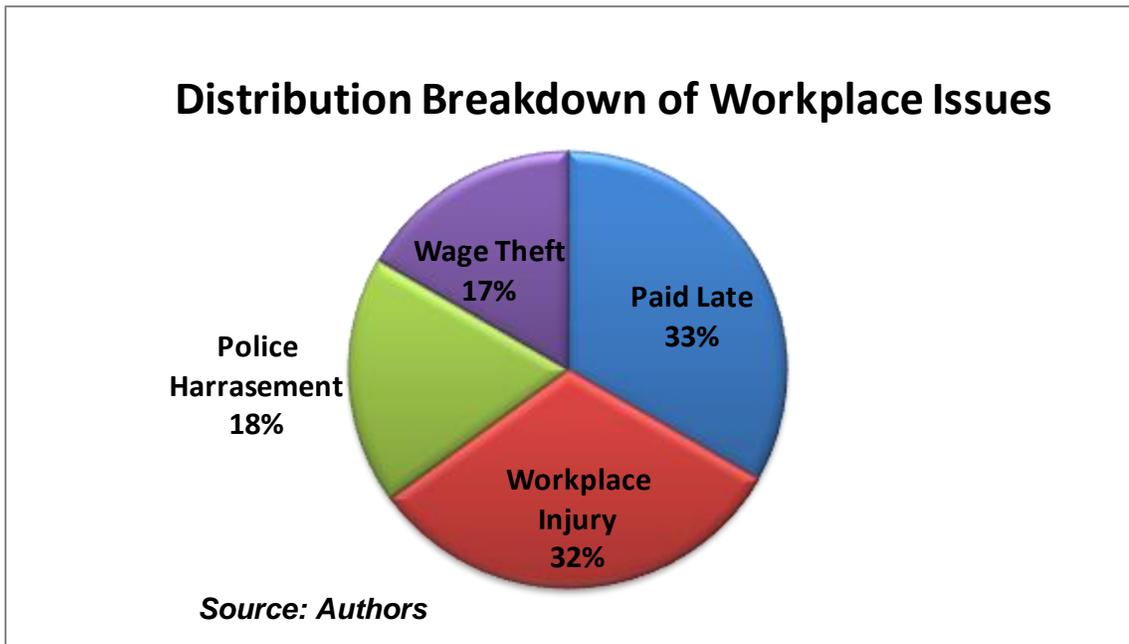


Chart above displays information for those who report facing workplace issues

Figure Three

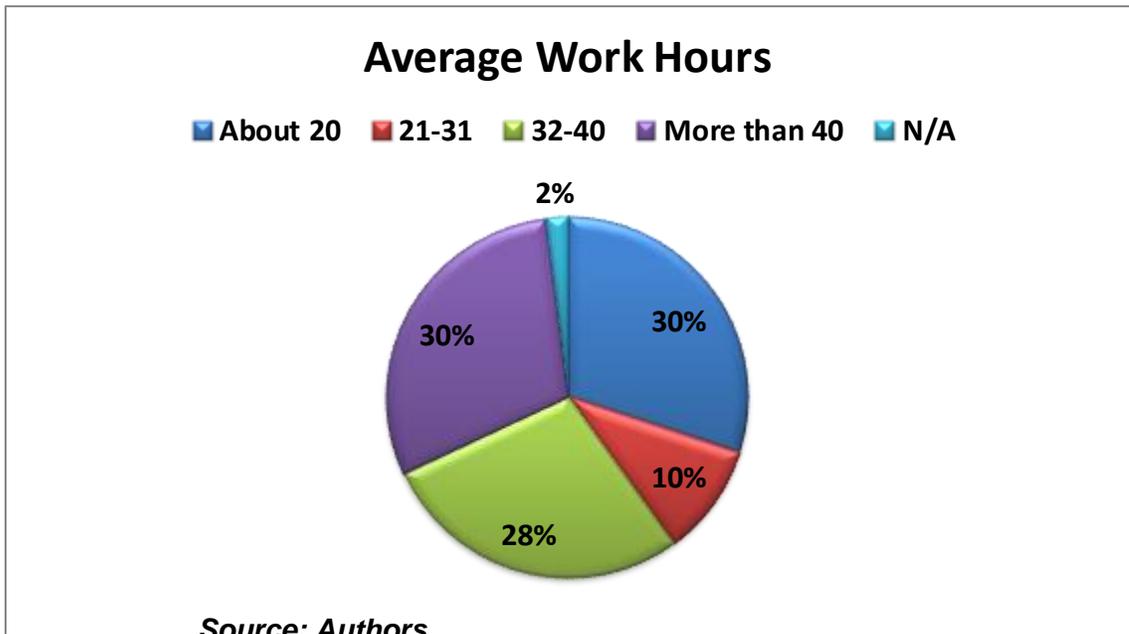
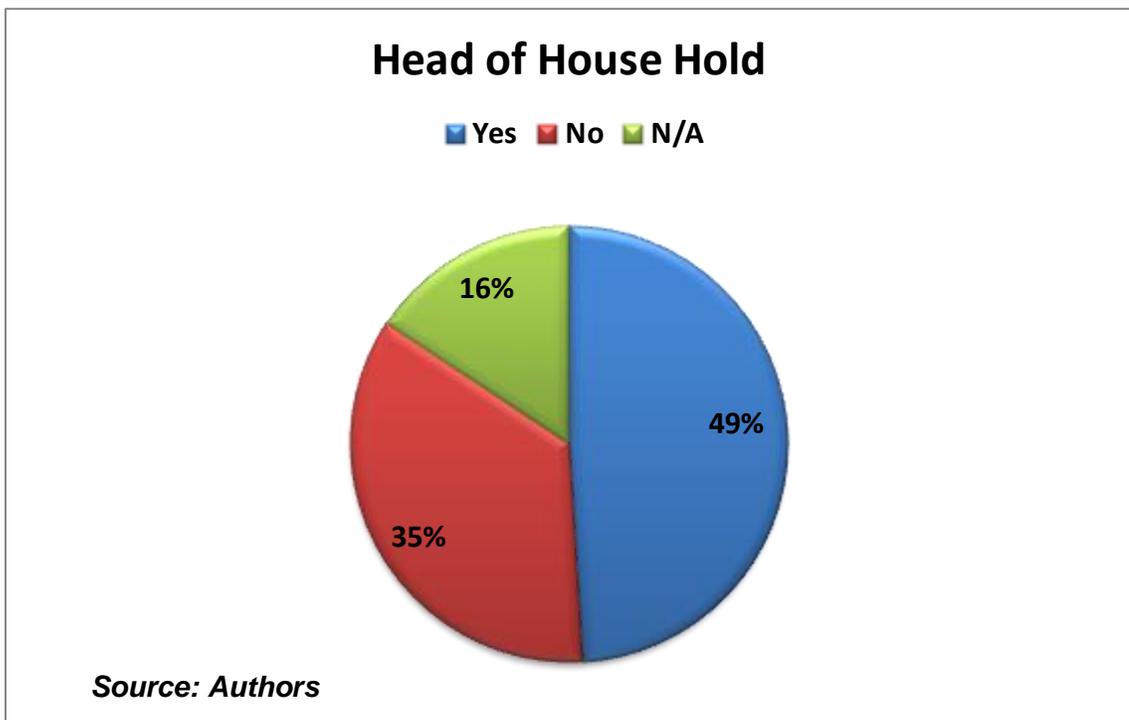


Figure Four



Research Findings Cross Tabulations

Hours worked by sex

- 14.6% female respondents report working part time
- 27.1% male respondents report working part time

- 64.3% of female respondents report working full time
- 18.8% of male respondents report working full time

- 28.6% of female respondents report working over time
- 71.4% of male respondents report working over time

Hours worked by industry

- 72.2% of construction workers/day laborers report working part time, 5.6% report working full time, and 22.2% report working over time. (these numbers are within industry, changes if you compare them to overall industries to 26.5%, 2%, and 8.2%)

- 22.2% of service workers report working part time, 55.6% report working full time, and 22.2% report working over time (numbers within industry, changes if compared to overall industries surveyed to 4%, 10.2% and 4.1%).

- 27.3% of street vendors report working part time, 9.1% report working full time, and 63.6% report working over time (numbers within industry, changes if compared to overall industries- 6.1%, 2%, and 14.3%)

Industries and salaries

- 38.09% of construction workers/day laborers report making under \$1200, 28.57% report making between \$1200-\$2000, and none reported making above \$2000.

- 14.28% of service workers report making less than \$1200, 14.28% report making between \$1200-2000, and 33% report making above \$2000.

- 28.57% of street vendors report making under \$1200, 14.28% report making between \$1200-\$200, and 66% report making over \$2000.

- 67.7% of total respondents who let us know their income report making less than \$1200, 33.58% reported making between \$1200-\$2000, and 9.6% reported making above \$2000

Industries and sex

- 5.3% of construction/day laborers were female, compared to 94.7% that were males (changes if compared to all industries to 2% vs. 35.3%)

- 66.7% of factory/garment workers were female, compared to 33.3% (changes if compared to all industries, 3.9% vs. 2%)
- 55.6% of service workers were female, compared to 7.8% that were male (changes if compared to all industries, 9.8% vs. 7.8%)
- 70% of street vendors were female, compared to 30% of males (changes if compared to all industries, 13.7% vs 5.9%)

Environment

Paid late

- 65% of construction workers/day laborers reported getting paid late at some point or another (25% of total respondents)
- 20% of service workers reported paid late (7.7% of total respondents)
- 0% street vendors reported getting paid late

Police harassment

- 36.4% construction/day laborers reported police harassment (7.7% of total respondents)
- 0% service workers reported police harassment
- 63.6% of street vendors reported police harassment (13.5% of total respondents)

Wage theft

- 70% of construction/day laborers report experiencing wage theft (13.5% of total respondents)
- 20% of service workers report experiencing wage theft (3.8% of total respondents)
- 0% street vendors report wage theft

Workplace accidents/injuries

- 47.1% of construction/day laborers report experiencing a workplace accident or injury (15.4% of total respondents)
- 23.5% of service workers report workplace accident/injury (7.7% of total respondents)
- 0% street vendors reported workplace accident or injury