

# FAQ

Here are some answers to common arguments made by right-wing commentators and opponents of raising the minimum wage.

## Aren't most minimum-wage workers just teenagers earning pocket money?

No. 75% of minimum-wage workers are age 20 or older. More than 25% are parents, and a majority of them are the primary or only providers for their household.

Nearly two-thirds of low wage workers are women.

Contrary to the popular "mobility myth", entry-level positions in the fast-food industry offer few prospects for promotion or advancement. Most low-wage workers are not able to advance to better-paying jobs.

## Shouldn't workers who want to earn more get an education and then a better job?

In fact, more education today promises more student debt, not more opportunity.

Minimum-wage workers are better-educated today than ever before, but they are paid less than they were thirty years ago. Between 1979 and 2011, the share of workers at or below the federal minimum wage who had some college education increased from 19.5% to 33.3%.

Low-wage jobs accounted for 76% of net job growth in 2010.

## Can businesses afford to pay \$15/hour?

Starbucks, McDonald's, Subway, Pizza Hut, and a majority of other big corporations are raking in mega-profits and CEO salaries and bonuses are at record highs. The CEO of YUM! Brands (KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell) made \$20.5 million last year while the average worker in one of those stores made just \$7.50/hour. Estimates show that Walmart's CEO is paid more per hour than the average Walmart worker is paid in a whole year.

Every worker deserves a living wage – no one should have to live in poverty if they work a full-time job (or jobs). We live in the richest country in world history; there is no doubt our society, as a whole, has the resources to easily provide every worker a decent standard of living.

## But what about the small businesses that can't afford an increase in the minimum wage to \$15?

Workers at these business should make a living wage just like everyone else. The government, which currently spends billions on handouts and tax breaks for giant multinational corporations such as Boeing and Goldman Sachs, could cut off the welfare to big business and instead provide necessary subsidies to small businesses to allow them to pay their workers at least \$15/hour.

## Won't an increase in minimum wage cause inflation?

When the minimum wage was first instituted, and every time it has since been raised, there have been dire predictions that it would cause an immediate and steep increase in prices. However, these apocalyptic predictions have never been borne out.

A 1999 study found that a \$1 increase in minimum wage to McDonald's workers would add only 2 cents to the cost of a hamburger. If Walmart passed

the entire costs of the new \$12.50/hour minimum wage in Washington D.C. to consumers, the cost to the average Walmart shopper is estimated to increase by 1.1% per shopping trip.

But why should that be necessary? Instead, the increased costs of paying their workers should come from reducing their already extravagant profits.

## Won't increasing the minimum wage be a "job killer"?

Let's remember, it was the blatant greed and criminality of Wall Street and Corporate America that crashed the economy in 2008 – not low wage workers. The policies of big business have been the real "job killers."

The economy is reeling with over 20 million people unemployed or underemployed, a low-wage mostly non-union workforce, and staggering consumer and student debt.

Paying \$15/hour to tens of millions of workers will increase the amount they and their families can spend on goods and services, which would provide a huge boost to the economy. Consumer spending has a far bigger impact on economic growth than handouts to the top 1%, who sit on much of that money.

Studies done on recent minimum wage increases show that they did not, for the most part, adversely affect employment. That said, if the working class is consistently successful in winning wage increases, corporations will try to retaliate in other ways. They may threaten to mechanize production to cut jobs, move their stores, or lay off workers.

However, most low-wage workers have jobs that cannot easily be outsourced. Fast-food cooks and servers, hotel workers, child care providers, health care workers, parking lot attendants – all do their work on site. Most jobs that can be outsourced to low-wage free trade zones already have been.

Ultimately, the only way to stop the nationwide and global race to the bottom is for workers to fight for better conditions everywhere.

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## Across the country low-wage workers are rising up, protesting, and striking for a \$15/hour minimum wage.

In Seattle the movement is poised in 2014 to be the first major U.S. city to win \$15. Voters in SeaTac, a small city outside Seattle, recently passed a ballot initiative for \$15. A leader in the Fight for \$15 in Seattle, Kshama Sawant, shocked the corporate elite by winning a City Council seat in Seattle as a Socialist Alternative candidate. Newly elected Mayor Ed Murray has also declared his support for \$15.

But big business will not let this pass without a fight. They will mobilize their resources to derail, delay, and dilute efforts to end the poverty wages that are the source of their profits.

The only way we can counter the power of Corporate America is by building a massive grassroots campaign with local neighborhood and campus groups, town hall meetings, mass rallies, and strikes.

Seattle Councilmember Kshama Sawant, along with a growing list of workers, unions, and activists, have come together to form 15 Now to organize this movement.

15 Now is currently centered in Seattle – where the Fight for 15 has the best immediate prospects – but we aim to build a nationwide movement. A victory in Seattle in 2014 would open the floodgates for working people to demand \$15/hr in cities across the country. But it will not happen automatically.

We need you to get involved. Please sign up here to join this historic campaign and help fund the Fight for 15! We will need real resources to organize the struggle and counter the lies and propaganda of the richest 1%. We are relying on you – workers, young people, and activists. To lay the basis for a serious campaign, we are launching an appeal for 1,000 people to donate \$15/month. Sign up at [15Now.org](http://15Now.org) to make a monthly donation or one-time donation, and add your name to the list of people supporting 15 Now.



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