

SEARCHING FOR WORK THAT PAYS:

2005 NORTHWEST JOB GAP STUDY

IDAHO

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STATE FINDINGS (IDAHO)

IDAHO KEY FINDINGS

Key findings for Idaho are:

- The living wage for a single adult is \$9.30 an hour. This is based on what is needed to meet basic needs and maintain some ability to deal with emergencies and plan ahead. The living wage for a single adult with two children is \$20.28 an hour.
- Twenty-nine percent pay less than \$9.30 an hour, the living wage for a single adult. Over three quarters of all job openings (78 percent) pay less than \$20.28, an hour the living wage for a single adult with two children.
- For each job opening that pays at least \$9.30 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are two job seekers on average. For each job opening that pays at least \$20.28 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are eight job seekers on average.

WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

Living wages for Idaho, which reflect family budgets as shown on the following page, are:

- For a single adult household, \$19,338 a year or \$9.30 an hour.
- For a single adult with one child, \$33,432 a year or \$16.07 an hour.
- For a single adult with two children, \$42,180 a year or \$20.28 an hour.
- For two adults, one of whom is working, with two children, \$39,433 a year or \$18.96 an hour.
- For two adults, both of whom are working, with two children, \$55,092 a year or \$26.49 an hour (which means that the combined wages of both working adults needs to total this amount).

These are statewide averages. In some areas, costs are higher (particularly for housing and child care) and, as a result, living wages are higher. In other areas, including most of the state's rural areas, costs and, therefore, living wages are lower.

ARE WE CREATING ENOUGH JOBS THAT PAY A LIVING WAGE?

Of all job openings, 29 percent pay less than the \$9.30 an hour living wage for a single adult, as shown in the chart above. Over three quarters of job open-

ings (78 percent) pay less than the \$20.28 an hour living wage for a single adult with two children. It is important to note the distinction between jobs and job openings. Not all jobs come open during a year. Job openings are of particular interest because they provide employment opportunities to people looking-for work.

In addition, there are more people looking for work than there are job openings that pay a living wage. As shown in the table on the following page, job gap ratios, which compare job seekers to job openings, are:

- For each job opening, regardless of pay, there are two job seekers on average.
- For each job opening that pays at least \$9.30 an hour, the living wage for a single adult, there are two job seekers on average.
- For each job opening that pays at least \$20.28 an hour, the living wage for a single adult with two children, there are eight job seekers on average.



TWIN FALLS, IDAHO

My name is Carlos Benavides and I live in Twin Falls with my wife Minerva, and my daughter Carla. I work at the Holiday Inn doing maintenance. I make about \$950 every two weeks. My wife receives \$600 every month in disability. The three of us live on \$1900 a month. Our rent and utilities come to \$900, and we pay an additional \$220 for car insurance every month and \$250 for the car payment. The real big expense that we face is for our health care.

The health insurance premium for the coverage I get through work for me, my wife and our daughter is \$133.85 every two weeks. It is expensive, but it is a necessity. Minerva has an enlarged artery in her brain

which causes a lot of health problems for her including facial spasms, headaches and eye problems. That means a lot of visits to the doctor and prescription drugs. She is taking six medications that have a co-pay of \$15 each and two that are \$30 each. There are other medicines that she needs for her blood pressure and migraines that we can't afford; she has to rely on samples from her doctor. Every time she visits the doctor there is a \$15 co-pay as well. That really adds up, and we're not even counting her health care requirements

that aren't covered. Her neurologist isn't covered, and she has to visit him every two months for injections for an eye condition caused by the enlarged artery. She may have to have surgery on her eye, and that would mean another big bill. Her arm needs surgery because of a rotor cuff tear, but we are putting that off because of the cost. My daughter also has some health problems, and the cost varies from month to month. Last year we had to claim bankruptcy because of medical bills, but that doesn't stop new ones from piling up.

Household 1 is a single adult

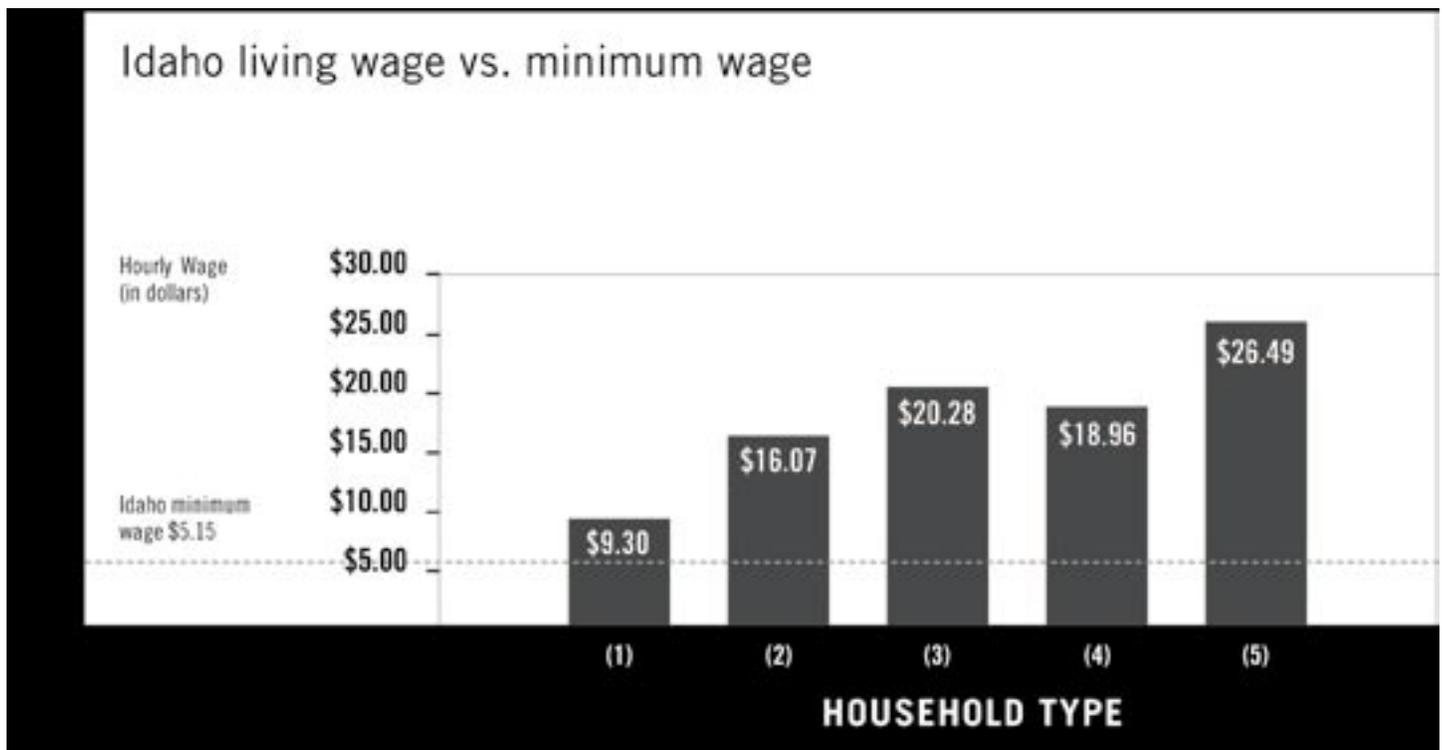
Household 2 is a single adult with a school-age child (age 6-8 yrs)

Household 3 is a single adult with a toddler (12-24 months) and a school-age child (age 6-8 yrs)

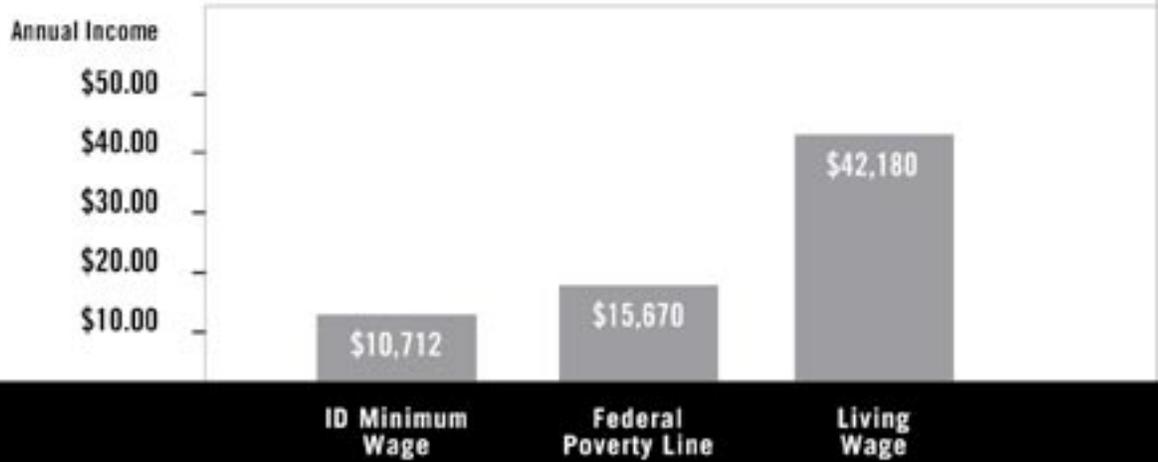
Household 4 is two adults (one of whom is working) with a toddler and a school-age child

Household 5 is two adults (both of whom are working) with a toddler and a school-age child

*Total amount earned by two working adults



Idaho living wage compared to other income benchmarks, Household 3



Household 1 is a single adult

Household 2 is a single adult with a school-age child (age 6-8 yrs)

Household 3 is a single adult with a toddler (12-24 months) and a school-age child (age 6-8 yrs)

Household 4 is two adults (one of whom is working) with a toddler and a school-age child

Household 5 is two adults (both of whom are working) with a toddler and a school-age child*

*Total amount earned by two working adults

IDAHO Family Budgets (in 2004 Dollars)

	HOUSEHOLD 1	HOUSEHOLD 2	HOUSEHOLD 3	HOUSEHOLD 4	HOUSEHOLD 5
Food	162	304	401	587	587
Housing & Utilities	432	543	543	543	543
Transportation	313	484	484	764	910
Health Care	93	174	256	301	301
Child Care	0	433	906	0	906
Household, Clothing, & Personal	250	376	421	548	585
Savings	139	209	234	305	325
State & Federal Taxes	222	263	270	239	435
Gross Monthly income needed	1,612	2,786	3,515	3,286	4,591
Gross Annual income needed	19,338	33,432	42,180	39,433	55,092
Living Wage (at 2080 hours/year)	9.30	16.07	20.28	18.96	26.49

Idaho Job Gap Ratio

TOTAL JOB SEEKERS – 51,000	TOTAL JOB OPENINGS – 29,115			
	HOUSEHOLD 1	HOUSEHOLD 2	HOUSEHOLD 3	HOUSEHOLD 4
Living Wage Job Openings	20,632	8,913	6,533	7,225
Job Seekers per Living Wage Opening	2:1	6:1	8:1	7:1
Percentage of All Job Openings Paying Less than a Living Wage	29%	69%	78%	75%



PAUL, IDAHO

My name is Gary Hathaway and I live in Paul, Idaho with my wife Linda. I am a garbage man for the city of Rupert and Linda works at the Idahoan potato processing plant. I make \$8.50 an hour and Linda makes \$9.50 an hour. Her job is seasonal though, so until the new potatoes are ready to be processed she is receiving unemployment benefits of \$170 a week.

We own our own home. Our monthly utility bills are \$150 for water and sewer, \$130 for electricity and \$50 for phone. The car insurance is \$100 a month, and unfortunately we have no homeowners insurance because we just can't afford it. Groceries come last after all bills are paid. We rely on the food bank to make it through the month.

I don't have any health insurance. I opted out of the health insurance plan my employer offers; the out of pocket is \$10,000, and having insurance like that is the same as having none at all. When I need medical

attention, I go to the VA. Linda has health insurance through her work, but that also has a high deductible. Sometimes she goes without some of her medications because of the high cost. If she runs out of her diabetes medicine, she uses mine until we can afford to get more of hers.

We're too old to look for new jobs. Linda will retire next year and will get a little from the plant and a little from Social Security. We have some stock for their retirement, but otherwise will be relying on Social Security for their income after retirement. We worked hard all our lives, and never really had a chance to save for the years ahead.

TRADE-OFFS AND TOUGH TIMES: WHAT HAPPENS TO FAMILIES THAT DON'T MAKE A LIVING WAGE?

The living wage estimates the level of income sufficient to meet a family's basic needs and maintain a reasonable standard of living. When families are unable to earn living wages, many are forced to make difficult choices between adequate health care, balanced nutrition, and paying the bills. If full-time workers are making trade-offs between basic needs, their wages do not allow for economic self-sufficiency. Since the living wage is a state-wide average, the budget for each individual family will vary according to their particular circumstances. This fact sheet and the full report titled "Searching for Work That Pays: 2005

Northwest Job Gap Study” include examples of the complex issues and difficult trade-offs that households confront when they do not earn a living wage.

Health care is an example of a serious budget issues for families. Previous Northwest Job Gap Studies and many other living wage studies assume that families have access to employer-based healthcare, but the number of employers who neglect to offer health insurance is increasing, particularly for low-wage workers. In Idaho, 59 percent of the non-elderly population had employer-based health insurance, six percent purchased private health insurance, 13 percent were covered by Medicaid, 1 percent were covered by Medicare, and 21 percent were uninsured.

What happens to people without access to employer-sponsored health care? Public programs provide assistance to some low-income adults who meet income and family structure requirements. Others

must purchase private non-group health insurance, or take the risk of going without any health insurance coverage. A living wage would allow people without access to employer-sponsored or public health care to purchase private health insurance.

The Northwest Job Gap study estimated the cost of purchasing very basic private health insurance on the private market, for those families who did not have access to employer based health insurance. Private plans vary from state to state, but most do not cover the costs of vision, dental, mental health, or substance abuse treatment, which must be purchased for an additional fee. So the estimates of the cost of purchasing health insurance on the individual market are for the most minimum of health care plans, and the level of coverage is not comparable to the typical level of coverage provided by employer-based plans.

Distribution of individual health insurance premiums for single policies, 1996 and 2002

PERCENTILE	1996 (Median \$1,302)	2002 (Median \$1,913)
90th	\$2,886	\$4,728
75th	\$2,006	\$3,261
50th	\$1,302	\$1,913
25th	\$665	\$990
10th	\$312	\$541



more money in my community. I'm really thankful to have my job. If I wanted to make more money, I would have to commute 86 miles round trip, and that just isn't worth it. The fact is, my family is not doing that badly, but at the end of the month there is no money left over for savings. I budget really carefully and pray that there isn't an emergency, because I don't know where the money would come from.

PRESTON, IDAHO

My name is Beth and I live in Preston, Idaho. I am a single mother with three sons at home. I was unemployed for a while, and have luckily just started a new job at a local small business. I make \$9 an hour and receive no benefits because of the high cost of health insurance for small businesses. My middle son receives Social Security because of the death of my husband in a car accident in 1988. My youngest receives Social Security because of his father's disability. I don't get the child support that is owed me. The four of us live on \$2800 a month.

I pay \$243 a month for health insurance that I can't even use because the deductible is \$5,000, but I know I need it for me and my boys in case one of us gets hurt. I owe over \$1,000 to the dentist because I don't have any dental coverage. When I get caught up, I will find some better insurance, but I know that it will cost me a lot more than what I am paying now. In the past, I have paid as much as \$430 a month to have health insurance that provides more than catastrophic coverage.

Luckily, I own my home. I pay \$50 a month for home owners insurance. My utilities are about \$100 each month in the summer, although they go up in the winter when I have to buy propane to heat my house. Additionally, each month my car insurance for me and my two oldest sons is \$200 and the phone bill is \$90.

On top of all of the regular bills, I'm paying for my son to go to college so he has a chance at a good future and a job that pays well. I'm afraid it will be hard for him to find one around here, though. I went to school for two years, but my extra skills don't mean



LEWISTON, IDAHO

My name is Terri Sterling. I am married and have three kids—15, 13, and 10. We live in Lewiston, Idaho. My husband, a hard working man, currently earns \$14.00/hr. His employer provides him with health insurance, but the \$650.00 monthly premium to cover the kids and me is unaffordable.

Recently, I graduated from college with a BA in Communication Arts. At first I was hopeful that I would find a better-than-average job because of my degree. But, unfortunately, it seems I may have been wrong.

After graduation, I searched and searched for a job that a paid decent wage. Out of desperation and despair, I took a job as a homecare worker. My job doesn't offer any benefits, not even holiday or overtime pay. Since I started, I have worked every holiday, and one week I even worked 50 hours, but I only was only paid my hourly rate of \$8.25. Most of the time, though, I have a hard time working 40 hours a week because I usually am scheduled to work only five or six hours a day. To get close to 40 hours I have to work seven days a week, which I have done for the last two months.

Between my husband and me, we bring home \$3200 per month. Our expenses including house payment (\$828), insurance for car and home, utilities, medical bills, food and clothing for the kids—the usual provisions for survival all add up to \$3218. This budget leaves no room for school supplies or school lunches.

The kids used to get free lunch, but now they get reduced price: \$0.50 per lunch. That \$0.50 times 3 kids for 180 days of school equals \$270 or about \$30 per month. Also, school supplies are \$80 per kid or \$240. School registration fees are \$30 per kid or \$90. If these totals were averaged monthly, it would be another \$50 monthly.

I see my college friends struggling too. A couple of girls in my class told me that some of the people they work with at Wal-Mart have college degrees and they stock shelves. One of my closest friends in school just graduated with a Psychology degree and after five months of job searching, she might accept a cashier job at a convenience store.

Soon I will have to start paying on student loans, and without a good job I am worried about how I will afford any more payments. I'm not sure which would be worse—having a health care emergency or not finding a good job to pay my student loans. I wonder if a college education doesn't make a difference, what does it take to find a living wage job?

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

HOUSING COSTS

*housing costs are monthly costs and do not include the cost of basic phone service.

IDAHO Housing & Utilities Cost for 2004

	HUD Fair Market Rents – 1bdrm	HUD Fair Market Rents – 2bdrm
Ada County	487	593
Adams County	351	452
Bannock County	388	499
Bear Lake County	351	452
Benewah County	351	452
Bingham County	351	452
Blaine County	515	686
Boise County	390	452
Bonner County	431	535
Bonneville County	388	535
Boundary County	351	452
Butte County	351	452
Camas County	351	452
Canyon County	487	593
Caribou County	351	452
Cassia County	351	452
Clark County	351	452
Clearwater County	351	452
Custer County	351	452
Elmore County	351	452
Franklin County	351	452
Fremont County	351	452
Gem County	351	452
Gooding County	351	452
Idaho County	351	452
Jefferson County	351	452
Jerome County	351	452
Kootenai County	452	592
Latah County	351	452
Lemhi County	351	452
Lewis County	351	452
Lincoln County	351	452
Madison County	351	452
Minidoka County	351	452
Nez Perce County	351	452
Oneida County	351	452
Owyhee County	351	452
Payette County	351	452
Power County	351	452
Shoshone County	351	452
Teton County	351	452
Twin Falls County	351	457
Valley County	351	452
Washington County	351	452

IDAHO Child Care

REGION	Household 2 - School age child (6-8yrs) in childcare 1/2 time	Households 3 and 5 School age child (6-8yrs) in childcare 1/2 time and 12-24 month old child full time.
Region 1 (includes Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties).	\$434.34	\$912.38
Region 2 (includes Clearwater, Latah, Nez Perce, and Idaho counties).	\$419.14	\$915.30
Region 3 (includes Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, and Washington counties).	\$389.12	\$809.78
Region 4 (includes Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley counties).	\$506.16	\$1,065.52
Region 5 (includes Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Jerome, Gooding, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties).	\$394.06	\$792.69
Region 6 (includes Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Lewis, Oneida, and Power counties).	\$388.36	\$820.42
Region 7 (includes Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton counties).	\$407.36	\$842.84

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About the organization releasing this report



Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (NWFCO) is a regional federation of four statewide, community-based social and economic justice organizations located in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington: Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN), Montana People's Action (MPA), Oregon Action (OA), and Washington Citizen Action (WCA). Collectively, these organizations engage in community organizing and coalition building in 14 rural and major metropolitan areas, including the Northwest's largest cities (Seattle and Portland) and the largest cities in Montana and Oregon. 1265 South Main Street Suite #305, Seattle, WA98144, Voice: (206) 568-5400, Fax: (206) 568-5444, Web: <http://www.nwfc.org>