Meet the low-wage workforce

Grouping low-wage workers by age, education, and school enrollment leaves us with nine clusters. These clusters, and the personas that represent them, make it easier to understand the range of people and experiences in the low-wage workforce.

Cluster 1: Ages 18-24, not in school, no college degree

13% of all low-wage workers

José, 22, is a warehouse worker. He enrolled in community college after graduating from high school but left after one semester

Cluster 2: Ages 18-24, in school, no college degree

7% of all low-wage workers

Ari is a 24-year-old single mom who works as an office assistant in a homebuilding company. She is taking a course to prepare her to earn a real estate agent license.

Cluster 3: Ages 18-24, with an associate degree or more

4% of all low-wage workers

Robert, 24, recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in business. He works as a customer service representative.

Cluster 4: Ages 25-50, with a high school diploma or less

28% of all low-wage workers

Daniel, 45, works in construction as a sprinkler installer. He and his wife emigrated from Mexico and now have three children.

Cluster 5: Ages 25-50, with some postsecondary education but no degree

14% of low-wage workers

Christine, 28, trained to earn her certified nursing assistant certificate after high school and is now a nursing assistant in a long-term care facility. She is a single parent.

Cluster 6: Ages 25-50, with an associate degree or more

14% of all low-wage workers

Julie is a preschool teacher. She is 40 years old and has an associate degree in early childhood education.

Cluster 7: Ages 51-64, with a high school diploma or less

10% of all low-wage workers

Paul, 53, works as a shipping clerk for an auto parts supplier. He has a high school diploma but no further education. He has rheumatoid arthritis, which now requires him to use a wheelchair.

Cluster 8: Ages 51-64, with some postsecondary education but no degree

4% of all low-wage workers

Lorenzo, 61, is a delivery driver. He also has training as a machine maintenance worker from previous work in a manufacturing plant.

Cluster 9: Ages 51-64, with an associate degree or more

5% of all low-wage workers

Donna, 54, has a bachelor's degree and works as an administrative assistant.