



ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE
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To: Juan Hernandez, Connecticut District Director, SEIU 32BJ
From: Lawrence Mishel, President, Economic Policy Institute
Re: Janitor work hours in building services

In response to your request I have analyzed data on janitor work hours to determine the pattern of work hours in various geographic locations. These data show that there are substantial variations in the share of janitors provided substantial (thirty hours per week or more) work hours, with some localities having the vast majority of janitors with substantial work hours. This suggests that employers have choices in how they schedule work in this sector.

To determine the pattern of work hours I draw on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey which provides the most detailed picture of local employment available. To build up a sufficient sample I combine the surveys for 2011, 2012 and 2013. The analysis is of respondents who work in the janitorial occupation in the building services industry (specifically, 'Services to dwellings and other buildings'). The data are tabulated for workers who work in particular geographic areas regardless of where they live. The data are limited to some of our largest cities and metropolitan areas since these are the only locations where the sample sizes allow us a precise enough measurement of work hours across locations. The data do not permit the identification of those working in San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles so data for those areas are only provided for the metropolitan areas. The sample sizes in the metropolitan areas are: New York (599); Chicago (455); LA (557); SF/Oakland (99) and Washington (310).

Using these data I have tabulated the share of workers working in various ranges of weekly work hours: less than 20 and then increments of five such as 20-25, 25-30 and so on. The data are shown in Table 1, with panel A presenting data for entire metropolitan areas and panel B presenting data for the city areas within the metropolitan areas. I focus the discussion here on the share that is working at least thirty hours each week.

Looking first at the city data (Panel B) it is apparent that the two largest cities, New York and Chicago, have more than eighty percent of their janitors working for at least thirty hours each week. In contrast, only 61.5 percent of janitors in Washington, D.C. work at least thirty hours per week and more than a fifth work less than twenty hours each week. These comparisons illuminate that there are differing scheduling patterns available to employers, some such as in Washington emphasizing many short hour workers and fewer workers with long work hours each week while employers in the other cities provide longer workweeks to the overwhelming majority of workers. Thus, these differences reflect choices made by employers in providing services and it is possible to emphasize either short-hour work or full-time work.

The metropolitan data in Panel A provides more points of comparisons as the two largest metropolitan areas of California are included. However, because the area is an entire metropolitan area, including suburbs, the data are not focused on janitorial services in downtown urban districts. Looking across

metropolitan areas we also see distinct patterns of works hours. Washington and San Francisco/Oakland provide shorter work weeks while Los Angeles is similar to New York and Chicago in offering longer workweeks of at least thirty hours to at least three-fourth of the janitors.

Weekly work hours of janitors in building services by geographic area, 2011-13

A. Janitors work hours in metropolitan areas

Metropolitan area	Shares with weekly work hours							Total	30 or more
	0-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45+		
New York	8.2%	4.4%	7.4%	5.4%	66.0%	2.3%	6.3%	100.0%	80.0%
Washington, D.C.	23.1%	5.1%	5.3%	4.8%	52.9%	1.6%	7.1%	100.0%	66.5%
Chicago	13.1%	3.4%	6.7%	5.8%	63.5%	2.3%	5.3%	100.0%	76.8%
Los Angeles	13.5%	5.4%	5.9%	7.1%	61.3%	0.9%	5.9%	100.0%	75.3%
San Francisco/Oakland	16.6%	4.2%	12.1%	3.7%	57.1%	0.5%	5.8%	100.0%	67.1%

B. Janitors work hours in metropolitan areas

City	Shares with weekly work hours							Total	30 or more
	0-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45+		
New York	7.6%	4.3%	7.6%	5.8%	66.0%	2.4%	6.3%	100.0%	80.5%
Washington, D.C.	20.2%	9.8%	8.6%	1.3%	50.6%	1.7%	7.8%	100.0%	61.5%
Chicago	7.2%	2.1%	3.8%	5.0%	74.7%	2.9%	4.4%	100.0%	86.9%

Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2011-13.

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