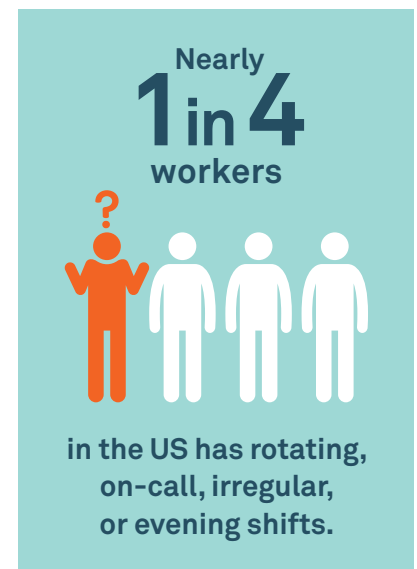


# Organizing for #HealthyHours

## Stable Work Hours Protect Our Health and Well-Being

We all deserve to live in good health, work with dignity, and care for ourselves and our families. The research is clear — being healthy is not just determined by medical care, but is actually more affected by where we live, work, learn, and play. Being healthy improves our quality of life and our collective well-being. Unfortunately, large corporations that employ hourly workers often use workforce management practices that result in unstable work hours which harm our health and well-being.

Unpredictable and unstable work hours mean that working people don't know when or how much they'll be working from week to week. Corporations use this low-road strategy to save on labor costs, but we all end up paying the price in lost wages, higher health care bills, and high job turnover rates. These practices keep us from good health, stable incomes, and time with our families. This fact sheet provides a brief summary of the harms unpredictable scheduling practices in the service sector have on working people's health.



### Unstable hours hurt our health and well-being

- ▶ **Our mental health suffers:** High stress levels and poor mental health outcomes are linked to unstable work hours and income.<sup>1,2</sup>
- ▶ **We don't have time to sleep:** 2 out of 3 people working irregular shifts experience fatigue or difficulty sleeping.<sup>4</sup> Many don't get enough rest between shifts, especially when employers schedule them to work "clopenings"—a late-night closing shift followed by an early-morning opening shift the next day. Lack of sleep is linked with increased accidents on and off the job, and decreased memory and decision-making skills.<sup>5,6</sup>
- ▶ **We risk losing our jobs for getting sick:** In one study, 1 in 3 adults under 30 in service jobs reported that their managers were not understanding when they called in sick, and 1 in 5 had their hours cut for calling in sick or taking time off.<sup>8</sup>

### Unstable hours hurt prevent us from earning livable wages

- ▶ **We struggle to cover our basic needs:** For people who are forced to work unpredictable hours, their income can be very volatile, changing month to month. Increasing hourly wages does little to help income if employers limit hours one can work. Less income means less access to high-quality housing, food, education, and health care.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **Our limited hours make it hard to build a better life:** People who want full-time hours but are involuntarily stuck with part-time work are far more likely to be in poverty than those who work full-time. In 2012, 1 in 4 involuntary part-time workers lived in poverty compared to just 1 in 20 full-time workers.<sup>9</sup> Poverty harms life expectancy — people with incomes below the federal poverty line typically live 5 years less than those above it.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ **We live with a constant stress of losing our jobs:** Being given variable hours, short-notice shift changes, and having limited input into schedules have all been linked with early job loss for parents accessing child subsidies.<sup>13</sup> People who have been laid off are more likely to have poor health and more likely to develop a stress-related condition like a stroke or heart attack.<sup>14</sup>

## Our children suffer when corporations force us to work constantly changing and restrictive schedules

- ▶ **We struggle to arrange child care:** Because parents don't have the flexibility to plan ahead, unpredictable work schedules can force parents into less-than-ideal child care options — for example, unlicensed facilities. It can also lead to irregular family mealtimes and bedtimes, which interfere with child development.<sup>18</sup>
- ▶ **Our children miss medical appointments and school:** Since parents with unpredictable work hours cannot easily schedule doctor appointments, their children likely get less routine and preventive care. These children may then have worse health and miss more school.<sup>19</sup>
- ▶ **Our children have more health issues:** Children whose parents work nonstandard hours — for example, high-variation hours or night shifts — have more physical health problems, which are linked with poorer school outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

## Unstable work hours throw our families' lives into chaos

- ▶ **Our families go hungry:** Families whose head of household works in a job where hours vary often are more likely to experience food insecurity.<sup>21</sup>
- ▶ **Our families get squeezed out of benefits:** Many employer-sponsored benefits, like health insurance or paid leave, and government benefits such as childcare assistance are tied to the number of employment hours. An unexpected drop in work hours can mean that people can lose eligibility or see their benefits reduced. The result is not just less income from reduced hours, but also less support when families need it most.<sup>22,23</sup>
- ▶ **We struggle to support our aging family members:** 6 in 10 adults regularly help aging parents — from financial support to personal care like bathing or getting dressed.<sup>24</sup> Unpredictable work hours make it harder to provide elder care.

## Unstable hours get in the way of our educational goals

- ▶ **Our schooling options are limited:** Young people report that conflicts between work and school as the top reason for leaving college. Difficult and unpredictable work hours from employers can limit the classes working students take and their access to campus resources. Those who drop out say that balancing work and school is a greater barrier than the cost of tuition.<sup>15,16</sup>
- ▶ **Our health suffers when we have less access to education:** A person with a college degree is likely to live about 5 years longer than someone who has not completed high school. For every 4 additional years of education, a person's likelihood of experiencing diabetes and heart disease decreases.<sup>17</sup>

Visit [HumanImpact.org/HealthyHours](https://HumanImpact.org/HealthyHours) for more information.

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