PATH TO A JOB

WIOA Adult's Forgotten Client

The Wage Outcomes Of Low Income Clients Not Receiving Training

ABSTRACT

These numbers are not projections, estimates, or worst-case illustrations; they are drawn directly from the same PY2023 WIOA client transition file ETA itself uses to prepare its own performance evaluation. Every state reports wage-at-exit for its untrained WIOA Adult participants. That number tracks who walked in the door, not what the program did, participants with no recent work history exit 42% below fast-food wages, and even the strongest available profile lands at fast-food parity, never above it. The reason: 44% of all post-exit jobs nationally concentrate in three secondary labor market sectors, temporary staffing, retail trade, and food service, where low wages and high turnover predominate. A stronger work history buys a modestly better wage within that tier, not a job in a different one.

None of this shows up in standard reporting: the federal window closes before a job's durability is knowable, and expected wage is calibrated to what states can already clear, not to what economic mobility would require. In 76% of states, the negotiated expected wage itself sits below fast-food wages. In 94%, this population misses even that low bar. The low expectations allow local success across states. Local WIOA entities are not the failure point; the standard they are held to is. Local boards appear to succeed: states clear their targets, and the service delivery model that produces these low-wage outcomes remains fully intact. This constitutes ‘success.’

Success for everyone but the client and the family behind them.

Richard Sheir · Path To A Job
PATHTOAJOB.COM · RSHEIR@PATHTOAJOB.COM

The Same Pattern Holds
However Administration Is Organized

WIOA Adult is not administered uniformly. In most states it runs through local and regional workforce areas. More than 500 exist nationally, each shaped by its own board and labor market. In smaller and rural states, the designated workforce area is organized statewide, but the services themselves are still delivered locally, office by office, staff member by staff member. Training intensity varies enormously across all of these arrangements. Some areas train nearly every eligible participant; most do not. This analysis does not assume any of these entities operate alike, and nothing here is a claim about any one of them. What it finds is a pattern that holds regardless of how administration is organized: **wherever low-income clients are being served without training, the current service delivery model is producing very low wage outcomes.** That commonality, showing up independent of local design choices, is what the rest of this document evaluates.

Questions Standard WIOA Reporting Can't Answer

Every state reports wage-at-exit and employment rate for its untrained WIOA Adult participants. What none of the standard reporting from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) reveals is whether those numbers reflect anything the program did, or whether they simply reflect who walked in the door. That test was run against the national PY2023 WIOA client transition file, split by nothing more than each participant's work history in the three quarters before enrollment. The results say something worth knowing about where the current job search assistance model's gaps actually sit, and about the participants most likely to fall into them.

A METHODOLOGY NOTE

This report is drawn from the PY2023 WIOA client transition file; the same file ETA uses to prepare its own performance evaluation. To gain a fuller picture of whether outcomes hold up over time, each participant's outcome is tracked over a full year, not the six-month window ETA reports on.

FINDING ONE

A State's Negotiated WIOA Adult Expected Wage Metric Is Of Little Value

In Shaping Effective Client Services Locally

Key Elements Differentiate Clients

Among untrained, low-income WIOA Adult participants nationally, wage-at-exit tracks one thing almost perfectly, prior labor market attachment, which is an element captured in the WIOA client transition file. To see whether that pattern reflects real program impact, this was checked against a population the reporting doesn't usually put side by side with WIOA Adult exiters: people who registered for Job Service and never formally entered WIOA Adult at all.

Quarter-Four-After-Exit Wage vs. Median Fast Food Counter Worker Wage

Prior work	WIOA Adult (untrained)	Job Service only
None	−42.4%	−36.7%
Any	−17.0%	−20.0%
All three	−7.2%	−13.1%
All three, same industry	−0.7%	−8.6%

The two lines move almost identically. Enrollment shows a modest, real edge, three to eight points, but only for participants who already had strong work histories. For participants with no recent work at all, the group with the least cushion, WIOA Adult enrollment currently tracks slightly *behind* bare Job Service registration. Neither pattern is a New York artifact; both hold with New York excluded.

> *None of this means enrollment isn't helping: it means wage-at-exit alone can't separate real program impact from an outcome that fails to exceed fast-food wages in any locale; hovering just above it hardly counts as 'success,' particularly for those with prior stable work histories.*

Source: BLS OEWS median wage, Fast Food and Counter Workers (SOC 35-3023), by state, quarterly.

FINDINGS TWO & THREE

Even The Strongest Candidates *Exit At Fast-Food Wage Parity*

Finding Two: The Strongest Candidates Still Exit At Fast-Food Wage Parity

Take the single most job-ready profile the file of untrained WIOA clients can produce, nine consecutive months of work, in the same industry, ending immediately before program entry. That participant exits at statistical parity with a fast-food counter wage. If the best-attached untrained participants are landing there, the wage-at-exit number for the average untrained participant is very likely obscuring more than it reveals.

Finding Three: Where People Actually Land, Not Just What They Earn

Post-exit industry codes show why. Nationally, **44% of all classified post-program placements land in exactly three sectors, temporary staffing, retail trade, and food service.** That share barely moves with attachment. A strong work history appears to buy a modestly better wage within that tier, not a placement in a different one.

48%	44%	35–37%
No Prior Work, Landing in Temporary Staffing / Retail / Food Service	All Untrained Participants, Nationally	Strongest, Most Continuous Work Histories

None of this contradicts a state meeting its federal performance standards. It explains how a state can meet them while the outcomes above are still true. Two features of the ETA evaluation model make that possible.

01

Negotiated Targets Mirror What's Already Being Achieved

Negotiated wage performance levels are set through negotiation with each state, calibrated to what local areas can already clear, not to what economic mobility out of low-income status would actually require. A target built around what's already achievable will keep getting achieved, regardless of whether it describes progress or simply describes the status quo.

02

ETA's Evaluation Window Is Too Short To Capture Job Stability

The primary federal indicator is median earnings in the second quarter after exit, roughly six months out. This analysis used the full window through the fourth quarter after exit, roughly twelve months out, deliberately, because six months captures whatever job someone took to exit the system, not whether that job held or led anywhere.

WHY IT DOESN'T SHOW UP

Why This Doesn't Show Up *In ETA's Performance Reports*

A twelve-month window is far more likely to show whether a participant is still cycling through the same tier of the labor market, or has moved beyond it. The findings above are what that longer, truer window shows. The standard six-month indicator was never built to catch it.

What This Means For The Population Currently Getting The Least

The low-income clients without training these findings describe most sharply are those with no recent work history at all, the group where WIOA Adult enrollment currently tracks even with, or slightly behind, bare Job Service registration. That is not a training gap in the credential sense; it's a readiness and job-search gap that shows up before training ever becomes the right conversation to have. Standard reporting has no way to flag this population as distinct, because wage-at-exit collapses everyone into the same number regardless of what they walked in with.

CLOSING ARGUMENT

Low Wage Outcomes Aren't A Staff Failure

None of these findings describe counselor effort or judgment. Front-line staff are working within a model built to move participants through, not to change their trajectory. The outcomes documented here, low wages a year after exit, concentration in temporary staffing and food service, and WIOA Adult enrollment barely outperforming Job Service alone, are not evidence of staff failure. These outcomes are not inevitable. Staff equipped with contemporary job-search tools that stress economic mobility can produce very different results.

That is the argument for changing the approach, not the staff delivering it. Nothing in the current performance system creates pressure to find out whether that's true. When the negotiated target sits at or below a fast food wage, the existing model clears the bar every year without changing anything. No sanction triggers, no report flags it, so more effective tools are never required, and never tried.

Economic mobility beyond low-income status deserves to become the goal for every client, trained or not, with wage expectations well above the secondary labor market nearly everyone is currently returned to. Current job-search assistance models are not working to their advantage, and WIOA entities need to rethink practice. Adopting more effective job search assistance tools is a small training expense next to the cost of training alternatives. The price of doing nothing different falls on clients, not on any performance report. Every year spent at or below fast-food wages is a year of mobility that will not come back.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION
Richard Sheir · Path To A Job
rsheir@pathtoajob.com · pathtoajob.com

WIOA Adult (Low Income, No Training) vs. Fast Food Counter Worker Wages and WIOA Plan Negotiated Expected Wage

State	Percent Of All WIOA Adult	Low Income, No Training Median Wage Per Quarter Worked	Fast Food Counter Worker Median Wage	PY 2023 State Plan Expected Wage	WIOA Cohort vs Fast Food Counter Worker	PY 2023 State Plan Expected Wage to Fast Food Counter Worker Wage
Alabama	44.0%	$8,383	$5,718	$5,950	+0.5%	+4.1%
Alaska	38.3%	$4,558	$7,372	$8,400	-0.4%	+13.9%
Arizona	40.5%	$6,133	$7,695	$6,503	-0.2%	-15.5%
Arkansas	46.9%	$3,571	$6,605	$6,389	-0.5%	-3.3%
California	42.0%	$5,677	$8,792	$7,000	-0.4%	-20.4%
Colorado	41.4%	$5,410	$8,692	$7,272	-0.4%	-16.3%
Connecticut	37.3%	$7,492	$7,782	$5,800	-0.0%	-25.5%
DC	30.4%	$8,618	$9,252	$6,700	-0.1%	-27.6%
Delaware	30.8%	$3,296	$7,322	$6,250	-0.5%	-14.6%
Florida	44.0%	$4,514	$6,870	$7,000	-0.3%	+1.9%
Georgia	36.6%	$3,989	$5,850	$4,242	-0.3%	-27.5%
Hawaii	16.9%	$7,335	$7,268	$5,800	+0.0%	-20.2%
Idaho	41.0%	$5,278	$6,965	$7,025	-0.2%	+0.9%
Illinois	45.7%	$5,626	$7,685	$6,200	-0.3%	-19.3%
Indiana	47.4%	$5,162	$6,940	$6,760	-0.3%	-2.6%
Iowa	43.1%	$4,465	$7,082	$5,600	-0.4%	-20.9%
Kansas	40.3%	$5,651	$6,645	$6,866	-0.1%	+3.3%
Kentucky	38.4%	$4,730	$5,878	$7,500	-0.2%	+27.6%
Louisiana	50.2%	$4,753	$5,585	$6,400	-0.1%	+14.6%
Maine	38.7%	$4,755	$7,942	$6,750	-0.4%	-15.0%
Maryland	38.1%	$6,432	$7,495	$6,500	-0.1%	-13.3%
Massachusetts	36.8%	$5,623	$8,710	$6,200	-0.4%	-28.8%
Michigan	39.9%	$5,571	$7,168	$6,621	-0.2%	-7.6%
Minnesota	34.7%	$5,452	$7,460	$7,306	-0.3%	-2.1%
Mississippi	44.3%	$4,488	$5,402	$6,475	-0.2%	+19.9%
Missouri	52.5%	$5,183	$7,090	$5,300	-0.3%	-25.2%
Montana	26.0%	$5,760	$7,062	$6,159	-0.2%	-12.8%
Nebraska	38.9%	$4,930	$7,052	$6,500	-0.3%	-7.8%
Nevada	50.5%	$5,288	$7,125	$5,700	-0.3%	-20.0%
New Hampshire	46.6%	$6,034	$7,282	$6,900	-0.2%	-5.2%
New Jersey	38.7%	$3,516	$7,622	$5,146	-0.5%	-32.5%
New Mexico	46.8%	$5,280	$6,935	$7,400	-0.2%	+6.7%

State	Percent Of All WIOA Adult	Low Income, No Training Median Wage Per Quarter Worked	Fast Food Counter Worker Median Wage	PY 2023 State Plan Expected Wage	WIOA Cohort vs Fast Food Counter Worker	PY 2023 State Plan Expected Wage to Fast Food Counter Worker Wage
New York	47.4%	$5,873	$8,580	$7,100	-0.3%	-17.2%
North Carolina	46.6%	$4,380	$7,000	$6,900	-0.4%	-1.4%
North Dakota	52.3%	$5,787	$7,378	$6,300	-0.2%	-14.6%
Ohio	39.5%	$5,499	$6,842	$6,300	-0.2%	-7.9%
Oklahoma	37.7%	$4,560	$5,748	$5,000	-0.2%	-13.0%
Oregon	40.5%	$5,692	$7,998	$6,528	-0.3%	-18.4%
Pennsylvania	43.6%	$4,724	$6,945	$6,500	-0.3%	-6.4%
Rhode Island	29.4%	$3,642	$7,202	$7,100	-0.5%	-1.4%
South Carolina	46.3%	$5,420	$6,448	$6,525	-0.2%	+1.2%
South Dakota	54.5%	$4,349	$7,290	$5,100	-0.4%	-30.0%
Tennessee	44.6%	$4,925	$6,868	$7,850	-0.3%	+14.3%
Texas	52.7%	$5,156	$6,575	$5,500	-0.2%	-16.3%
Utah	31.9%	$5,545	$7,138	$6,000	-0.2%	-15.9%
Vermont	25.4%	$4,605	$8,368	$5,665	-0.4%	-32.3%
Virginia	39.6%	$5,436	$7,178	$5,800	-0.2%	-19.2%
Washington	46.9%	$6,503	$8,922	$7,718	-0.3%	-13.5%
West Virginia	47.9%	$4,353	$6,425	$6,436	-0.3%	+0.2%
Wisconsin	40.5%	$5,111	$6,965	$6,200	-0.3%	-11.0%
Wyoming	31.7%	$4,543	$6,808	$6,808	-0.3%	+0.0%
MEDIAN ACROSS 50 STATES	**40.8%**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**-0.3%**	**-13.0%**

48 of 50 states fall below fast-food wage parity; 38 of 50 states' own negotiated WIOA Adult earnings target itself falls below fast-food wages (DC excluded from medians)

Note: Forty-eight of fifty states fall below fast-food wage parity for this population. This is the baseline every other appendix builds on: before any split by prior experience, the untrained population as a whole is already landing under the floor in nearly every state.

Source: BLS OEWS median wage, Fast Food and Counter Workers (SOC 35-3023), by state, quarterly.

Wage Gap vs. Fast Food Counter Worker, by Prior Work Experience, by State

Does Prior Labor Market Attachment Predict Outcomes? By State

State	No Prior Experience (0 of 3)	Any Prior Experience (1-3 of 3)	All 3 of 3 Prior Quarters	All 3, Same Industry
Alabama	-4.7%	+63.9%	+86.4%	+107.0%
Alaska	-49.4%	+9.0%	+28.1%	+35.1%
Arizona	-26.6%	-12.9%	-2.3%	+1.3%
Arkansas	-50.9%	-30.1%	-25.6%	-9.4%
California	-44.2%	-23.6%	-15.3%	-11.1%
Colorado	-44.7%	-34.2%	-23.9%	-16.8%
Connecticut	-28.2%	+14.3%	+24.4%	+27.8%
Delaware	-64.4%	-27.2%	-10.5%	+23.0%
District of Columbia	-16.4%	+2.7%	+36.4%	+36.4%
Florida	-41.6%	-20.8%	-13.9%	-6.3%
Georgia	-37.6%	+12.5%	+25.9%	+42.9%
Hawaii	-5.4%	+16.2%	+17.3%	+17.3%
Idaho	-40.4%	-15.9%	-4.0%	+0.6%
Illinois	-40.8%	-7.2%	+1.3%	+7.4%
Indiana	-41.2%	-8.9%	+0.2%	+5.1%
Iowa	-53.3%	-13.7%	-7.1%	+7.0%
Kansas	-33.3%	+1.3%	+16.0%	+24.1%
Kentucky	-24.3%	-18.8%	-12.1%	-8.2%
Louisiana	-25.6%	-10.6%	+0.2%	+6.3%
Maine	-48.2%	-29.9%	-26.2%	-16.9%
Maryland	-31.1%	+5.1%	+16.7%	+24.7%
Massachusetts	-43.7%	-30.2%	-19.5%	-20.6%
Michigan	-35.6%	+0.7%	+10.6%	+19.2%
Minnesota	-39.0%	+5.9%	+9.4%	+17.4%
Mississippi	-33.3%	-11.4%	-1.8%	+4.6%
Missouri	-39.4%	-23.4%	-13.5%	-7.0%
Montana	-28.4%	-11.7%	+11.0%	+7.2%
Nebraska	-48.6%	-4.6%	+3.6%	+8.4%
Nevada	-38.9%	-9.5%	+0.0%	+7.0%
New Hampshire	-25.0%	-2.8%	+1.4%	+1.4%
New Jersey	-61.2%	-35.3%	-27.2%	-13.5%
New Mexico	-34.8%	-3.7%	+6.5%	+5.0%
New York	-48.9%	-27.0%	-20.6%	-17.4%
North Carolina	-53.7%	-31.5%	-23.8%	-20.8%

Does Prior Labor Market Attachment Predict Outcomes? By State

State	No Prior Experience (0 of 3)	Any Prior Experience (1-3 of 3)	All 3 of 3 Prior Quarters	All 3, Same Industry
North Dakota	-33.9%	-18.9%	-18.5%	-16.6%
Ohio	-42.0%	+0.4%	+9.3%	+18.1%
Oklahoma	-25.8%	-12.9%	-4.6%	+6.3%
Oregon	-40.6%	-20.5%	-11.9%	-7.1%
Pennsylvania	-44.4%	-14.6%	-2.7%	+4.6%
Rhode Island	-54.5%	-4.1%	-10.1%	-10.1%
South Carolina	-37.0%	-1.4%	+6.4%	+15.5%
South Dakota	-52.7%	-36.8%	-26.6%	-21.6%
Tennessee	-41.8%	-13.8%	-4.5%	+6.1%
Texas	-34.2%	-16.4%	-9.4%	-4.2%
Utah	-27.2%	-20.6%	-16.3%	-7.1%
Vermont	-49.2%	-39.4%	-47.9%	-35.3%
Virginia	-35.9%	-8.2%	+1.7%	+21.0%
Washington	-27.2%	+132.3%	+98.9%	+98.9%
West Virginia	-32.8%	-31.5%	-18.2%	-13.3%
Wisconsin	-44.0%	-14.9%	-7.1%	+4.8%
Wyoming	-40.5%	-21.6%	*-59.6%*	*-14.3%*
NATION	**-42.4%**	**-17.0%**	**-7.2%**	**-0.7%**

States with fewer than 15 in a given group shown in gray — small-sample caution. Negative (red) = WIOA wages fall short of fast food; positive (green) = exceed it.

Note: The gradient from red to green moving left to right in nearly every state row is the clearest single piece of evidence that wage-at-exit is tracking prior attachment, not program contact. Washington's reversal in the rightmost columns (small sample) and a handful of thin-sample states are the only real exceptions to an otherwise consistent national pattern.

Source: BLS OEWS median wage, Fast Food and Counter Workers (SOC 35-3023), by state, quarterly.

APPENDIX C

Untrained WIOA vs. Job Service-Only, Wage Gap vs. Fast Food Counter Worker

Testing the Untrained WIOA Arm Against a True Control Group

Prior Experience Group	WIOA Adult (Untrained)	Job Service Only (Never Entered WIOA)	Gap (WIOA - WP)
No Prior Experience (0 of 3)	-42.4%	-36.7%	-5.7%
Any Prior Experience (1-3 of 3)	-17.0%	-20.0%	+3.0%
All 3 of 3 Prior Quarters	-7.2%	-13.1%	+5.9%
All 3, Same Industry	-0.7%	-8.6%	+7.9%

Positive Gap = WIOA Adult enrollment outperforms bare Job Service registration for that group; negative = underperforms.

Note: The only negative gap in this table is the No Prior Experience row — the one population where WIOA Adult enrollment currently underperforms bare Job Service registration. Every other row favors enrollment by a modest margin. Read together, this is the table that supports treating the untrained WIOA Adult population as behaving like a control arm rather than a treatment arm.

Source: BLS OEWS median wage, Fast Food and Counter Workers (SOC 35-3023), by state, quarterly.

APPENDIX D

None of this is a critique of the sectors themselves. Temporary staffing, retail, and food service are legitimate work. The question is whether a program built to advance economic mobility should treat placement there, at these wages, as a finished outcome rather than a starting point.

Percent of Low Income Without Training Ending Up in the Secondary Labor Market	
Temp Staffing (NAICS 56) + Retail Trade (44-45) + Accommodation & Food Services (72), Combined	
State	**% Temp Staffing + Retail + Food Service**
Alabama	27.5%
Alaska	50.7%
Arizona	46.2%
Arkansas	49.0%
California	43.6%
Colorado	45.6%
Connecticut	32.6%
Delaware	*N/A*
District of Columbia	43.5%
Florida	57.8%
Georgia	53.6%
Hawaii	*N/A*
Idaho	46.0%
Illinois	42.2%
Indiana	46.2%
Iowa	43.6%
Kansas	38.5%
Kentucky	36.9%
Louisiana	48.4%
Maine	47.9%
Maryland	38.9%
Massachusetts	47.2%
Michigan	39.1%
Minnesota	37.4%
Mississippi	46.4%
Missouri	42.9%
Montana	*N/A*
Nebraska	43.8%
Nevada	42.8%
New Hampshire	*N/A*
New Jersey	47.2%
New Mexico	44.9%

Temp Staffing (NAICS 56) + Retail Trade (44-45) + Accommodation & Food Services (72), Combined

State	% Temp Staffing + Retail + Food Service
New York	45.6%
North Carolina	51.4%
North Dakota	42.7%
Ohio	36.7%
Oklahoma	44.2%
Oregon	40.5%
Pennsylvania	43.0%
Rhode Island	58.1%
South Carolina	48.7%
South Dakota	49.4%
Tennessee	48.1%
Texas	45.6%
Utah	45.2%
Vermont	*N/A*
Virginia	47.0%
Washington	41.3%
West Virginia	*N/A*
Wisconsin	39.9%
Wyoming	*N/A*
NATION	**44.1%**

N/A = fewer than 100 classified placements or 100% unclassified NAICS codes — sample too unreliable to report.

Note: Florida and Georgia stand out among states with real sample size, with over half of all classified placements landing directly in temporary staffing, retail, or food service. Alabama is the notable low outlier — worth a follow-up look at whether that reflects genuine manufacturing absorption or a data-completeness artifact, given its elevated unclassified share in Appendix F.

Secondary Labor Market Placement, by Prior Work Experience

Do Solid Work Histories End Up Somewhere Different? By State

State	% Untrained (WIOA Adult, LI)	No Prior Experience (0 of 3)	Any Prior Experience (1-3 of 3)	All 3 of 3 Prior Quarters	All 3, Same Industry
Alabama	67.7%	51.1%	24.6%	20.2%	16.0%
Alaska	51.1%	59.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arizona	51.6%	49.0%	43.2%	42.9%	40.8%
Arkansas	46.6%	51.8%	43.8%	42.2%	N/A
California	69.1%	47.6%	39.2%	37.4%	36.5%
Colorado	54.8%	46.3%	45.4%	40.5%	39.5%
Connecticut	52.9%	40.9%	28.4%	25.9%	23.1%
Delaware	24.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
District of Columbia	48.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Florida	40.3%	61.7%	52.7%	51.8%	52.7%
Georgia	37.6%	56.5%	40.9%	38.4%	34.4%
Hawaii	69.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Idaho	62.2%	52.6%	42.9%	39.8%	36.4%
Illinois	25.5%	47.2%	34.7%	35.2%	32.2%
Indiana	75.0%	55.7%	37.5%	35.4%	32.2%
Iowa	57.4%	55.4%	35.7%	33.6%	29.1%
Kansas	74.7%	40.9%	37.1%	35.3%	33.1%
Kentucky	66.1%	35.8%	37.3%	37.5%	38.9%
Louisiana	42.3%	51.7%	47.0%	44.2%	41.9%
Maine	58.3%	47.9%	47.9%	N/A	N/A
Maryland	45.0%	47.9%	34.0%	29.5%	28.3%
Massachusetts	38.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan	53.4%	43.6%	33.0%	30.6%	28.1%
Minnesota	60.7%	42.3%	23.5%	20.3%	18.3%
Mississippi	70.8%	51.8%	45.0%	42.0%	39.8%
Missouri	63.8%	43.7%	42.7%	39.4%	37.9%
Montana	36.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	56.0%	38.7%	48.0%	47.6%	N/A
Nevada	55.5%	44.3%	41.5%	39.9%	37.3%
New Hampshire	42.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	36.7%	50.3%	42.9%	40.7%	N/A
New Mexico	36.1%	47.6%	41.2%	41.3%	41.4%
New York	92.2%	49.2%	44.8%	43.2%	41.6%

Do Solid Work Histories End Up Somewhere Different? By State

State	% Untrained (WIOA Adult, LI)	No Prior Experience (0 of 3)	Any Prior Experience (1-3 of 3)	All 3 of 3 Prior Quarters	All 3, Same Industry
North Carolina	40.0%	54.4%	50.7%	49.4%	47.9%
North Dakota	27.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	64.4%	41.7%	33.3%	31.8%	29.3%
Oklahoma	38.5%	45.5%	42.8%	40.4%	42.8%
Oregon	72.0%	45.7%	38.0%	36.9%	35.0%
Pennsylvania	61.7%	49.2%	36.6%	34.0%	30.7%
Rhode Island	33.2%	61.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	55.5%	58.2%	43.6%	43.0%	40.0%
South Dakota	90.5%	50.8%	49.1%	47.5%	46.7%
Tennessee	43.7%	52.5%	43.7%	41.8%	37.6%
Texas	72.3%	50.2%	44.0%	42.9%	41.8%
Utah	47.8%	44.2%	45.5%	42.7%	42.5%
Vermont	53.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	36.6%	51.6%	42.4%	36.4%	34.2%
Washington	72.0%	41.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Virginia	35.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	50.3%	49.6%	32.1%	31.6%	28.7%
Wyoming	55.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A = fewer than 100 classified records for that state/group combination.

Note: Even in the strongest column, All 3, Same Industry, most states still land a third or more of these participants in the secondary labor market, ranging from roughly one in six to well over one in three depending on the state. Prior attachment narrows the odds of secondary-market placement. It does not close them, in any state in this table.

Dominant Post-Exit Industries, by State

Evidence of Recycling into the Secondary Labor Market

State	N (Classified)	% Unclassified (excluded)	#1 Industry	#1 %	#2 Industry	#2 %
Alabama	4,461	12.7%	Manufacturing	27.8%	Health Care & Social Assistance	14.1%
Alaska	361	4.7%	Accommodation & Food Services	25.2%	Retail Trade	10.8%
Arizona	3,528	1.3%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	18.9%	Health Care & Social Assistance	14.2%
Arkansas	518	1.1%	Accommodation & Food Services	17.8%	Health Care & Social Assistance	16.0%
California	28,266	3.1%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	19.0%	Health Care & Social Assistance	18.0%
Colorado	1,545	2.5%	Accommodation & Food Services	16.4%	Health Care & Social Assistance	16.3%
Connecticut	1,171	4.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	23.7%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	12.7%
Delaware	80	9.1%	Health Care & Social Assistance	16.2%	Accommodation & Food Services	13.8%
District of Columbia	*154*	*27.4%*	*Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)*	*28.6%*	*Health Care & Social Assistance*	*22.1%*
Florida	2,951	13.9%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	20.1%	Accommodation & Food Services	17.7%
Georgia	1,865	5.6%	Accommodation & Food Services	19.6%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.1%
Idaho	476	0.6%	Accommodation & Food Services	16.4%	Health Care & Social Assistance	14.7%
Illinois	1,897	0.7%	Health Care & Social Assistance	18.5%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	17.0%
Indiana	3,983	3.7%	Accommodation & Food Services	17.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	15.4%
Iowa	509	1.7%	Health Care & Social Assistance	21.0%	Accommodation & Food Services	15.9%
Kansas	1,167	1.7%	Manufacturing	15.2%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	14.4%
Kentucky	1,245	3.6%	Health Care & Social Assistance	19.9%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	12.0%
Louisiana	1,922	2.5%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.5%	Accommodation & Food Services	16.0%

Evidence of Recycling into the Secondary Labor Market

State	N (Classified)	% Unclassified (excluded)	#1 Industry	#1 %	#2 Industry	#2 %
Maine	476	0.2%	Health Care & Social Assistance	19.7%	Accommodation & Food Services	15.5%
Maryland	803	3.0%	Health Care & Social Assistance	20.2%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	12.3%
Massachusetts	*36*	*94.3%*	*Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)*	*25.0%*	*Transportation & Warehousing*	*13.9%*
Michigan	2,711	13.9%	Health Care & Social Assistance	18.9%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.7%
Minnesota	995	5.2%	Health Care & Social Assistance	28.4%	Accommodation & Food Services	13.3%
Mississippi	3,521	2.5%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.3%	Accommodation & Food Services	14.6%
Missouri	2,767	2.8%	Health Care & Social Assistance	18.3%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.8%
Montana	41	0.0%	Accommodation & Food Services	22.0%	Health Care & Social Assistance	22.0%
Nebraska	329	1.8%	Health Care & Social Assistance	20.7%	Accommodation & Food Services	13.4%
Nevada	2,045	3.1%	Accommodation & Food Services	19.8%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	15.7%
New Jersey	636	9.9%	Accommodation & Food Services	20.0%	Health Care & Social Assistance	19.2%
New Mexico	846	2.8%	Accommodation & Food Services	18.8%	Health Care & Social Assistance	14.7%
New York	29,225	3.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	21.9%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	21.9%
North Carolina	2,080	2.5%	Accommodation & Food Services	19.3%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	15.2%
North Dakota	103	0.0%	Health Care & Social Assistance	19.4%	Retail Trade	17.5%
Ohio	*5,024*	*32.3%*	*Health Care & Social Assistance*	*26.3%*	*Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)*	*20.3%*
Oklahoma	821	3.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	17.9%	Accommodation & Food Services	14.7%
Oregon	2,509	0.9%	Health Care & Social Assistance	23.4%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	15.3%
Pennsylvania	5,468	2.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	21.8%	Accommodation & Food Services	14.7%
Rhode Island	313	4.3%	Accommodation & Food Services	27.5%	Health Care & Social Assistance	13.1%

Evidence of Recycling into the Secondary Labor Market

State	N (Classified)	% Unclassified (excluded)	#1 Industry	#1 %	#2 Industry	#2 %
South Carolina	1,692	2.8%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	19.0%	Accommodation & Food Services	14.4%
South Dakota	1,572	1.2%	Accommodation & Food Services	22.8%	Retail Trade	12.0%
Tennessee	3,092	6.0%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	18.3%	Accommodation & Food Services	16.1%
Texas	11,013	0.1%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	21.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	17.1%
Utah	668	0.1%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	15.3%	Accommodation & Food Services	12.6%
Vermont	*65*	*27.0%*	*Health Care & Social Assistance*	*24.6%*	*Retail Trade*	*12.3%*
Virginia	878	5.2%	Health Care & Social Assistance	16.1%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	15.9%
Washington	3,931	0.6%	Health Care & Social Assistance	18.2%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	16.5%
West Virginia	*30*	*90.6%*	*Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)*	*33.3%*	*Health Care & Social Assistance*	*23.3%*
Wisconsin	1,246	1.3%	Health Care & Social Assistance	25.8%	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt (incl. Temp Staffing)	14.7%
Wyoming	20	0.0%	Accommodation & Food Services	35.0%	Retail Trade	20.0%

Rows in red italics = 25%+ of that state's post-exit records were unclassified ("99") — interpret with caution.

Note: Admin/Support/Waste Management (which includes temporary staffing) and Accommodation & Food Services are the #1 or #2 destination in the large majority of states with usable data. Health Care & Social Assistance appears frequently as well, but without occupation-level detail it likely spans a wide range from home health aide to higher-wage clinical roles — a limitation worth flagging rather than resolving here.

THE QUESTION AT HAND

Low Wage Outcomes Are A Policy Choice By Default

The pattern holds even at the strongest end of the experience scale: participants with a full same-industry work history before entry still land in temporary staffing, retail, or food service at rates that range from roughly one in six to well over one in three, depending on the state. Prior attachment somewhat narrows the odds of secondary-market placement. It does not come close to closing them.

It bears repeating that the secondary labor market absorbs a very large fraction of this population across every experience group, and its wages sit at or near the poverty line. That is true whether a participant walked in with no work history or with three straight quarters in the same industry. The question of whether this is an acceptable client outcome is the issue at hand. Does perpetuating participation in the low-wage, low-hour, high-turnover economy serve low-income WIOA Adult clients not involved in training well, in the short or long term?

Before a state negotiates anything, the federal government hands it a suggested number, built from a formula that accounts for the local economy and how disadvantaged the job seekers are. It does not account for rent, or for what a real job pays down the street. From there, the number goes sequentially through the state's own negotiators, the state's workforce board, the Governor's office, a federal regional office, and finally the local Workforce Investment Board (WIB), each approving it in turn. Local WIBs are of course free to push past it, but there is little evidence that many if any do so. Not one of those approvals, at any point in that sequence, ever asks whether the target wage clears what a person in a local community could earn without program participation.

The tools exist. The staff are capable of using them. What's missing is a local Workforce Investment Board willing to set a higher bar than the one nobody above them is checking — to treat exceeding the target as the job, not as a risk with no offsetting reward. Until that happens at the local level, better job-search assistance models will keep producing better results inside a ceiling nothing requires anyone to raise.

Low Income clients deserve better.