

DENVER REGION DATA BRIEF

COVID-19's effect on workers

April 2020

RESPONSES TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THEIR EFFECT ON WORKERS

The Brookings Institution compiled microdata from the 2018 American Community Survey to estimate the potential effects of local and national response to the COVID-19 pandemic on workers in major metropolitan areas. Based on its analysis, the share of workers in immediate-risk industries in the Denver region is the same as the nationwide estimate: 23%. For the Denver region, that translates to approximately 420,000 workers.

Just the numbers

- 23% of the region's workers (420,000) are vulnerable to the immediate effects of the pandemic response.
- Affected services and non-essential retail, such as restaurants and many stores, employ the most workers in immediate-risk industries in the region. Their employees account for approximately two-thirds of the 420,000 vulnerable workers.
- Vulnerable workers in immediate-risk industries already have more modest incomes, with median wages estimated at half of the median for workers outside of immediate-risk industries.

Immediate-risk industry wage gap among metro areas

Metro area	Median worker wage		Difference of medians	
	Immediate-risk industries	All other industries	Total	Metro area gap rank
San Francisco	\$30,400	\$70,900	\$40,500	2
Boulder	\$23,300	\$50,700	\$27,400	21
Denver	\$26,300	\$50,700	\$24,300	42
Austin	\$24,300	\$48,600	\$24,300	44
Minneapolis	\$25,300	\$49,600	\$24,300	44
Portland	\$25,300	\$48,600	\$23,300	66
Kansas City	\$22,300	\$45,600	\$23,300	68
Atlanta	\$24,300	\$45,600	\$21,300	112
Dallas	\$24,900	\$45,600	\$20,700	121
Nationwide	\$22,300	\$42,400	\$20,200	
Greeley	\$27,400	\$44,600	\$17,200	224
Los Angeles	\$24,300	\$40,800	\$16,500	258
Phoenix	\$24,300	\$40,500	\$16,200	272
Salt Lake City	\$25,300	\$40,500	\$15,200	294

WORKERS ALREADY AT RISK

Workers in the immediate-risk industries already have lower median wages than their counterparts in other industries. While the gap is pervasive throughout the nation, the difference in median wages is more pronounced in Boulder and Denver metro areas. Household finances for those in immediate-risk industries may prove less resilient and require more time or assistance to recover.



IN PRACTICE: ACCESSING RESOURCES

While federal and state action is making more resources available to affected workers, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce is helping businesses and the region's workforce access and navigate resources through its COVID-19 Business Resource Center (denverchamber.org/members/covid/), as well as a series of e-newsletters and webinars.

For information on unemployment benefits and other state or local resources available to workers and employees affected by the pandemic response, visit the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment COVID-19 Information page at colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/covid-19-4.



Denver region¹ immediate-risk industries and workers

Industry category	Immediate-risk industries	Workers
Affected services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> child day care services food services and drinking places personal and laundry services 	153,000
Non-essential retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building material and garden supply stores clothing and clothing accessory stores electronics and appliance stores furniture and home furnishing stores general merchandise stores health and personal care stores (except pharmacies and drug stores) miscellaneous store retailers motor vehicle and parts dealers sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores 	131,000
Transportation and travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> air transportation rail transportation scenic and sightseeing transportation support activities for transportation transit and ground passenger transportation travel arrangements and reservation services 	62,000
Non-essential gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> amusements, gambling and recreation museums, historical sites, zoos and parks performing arts and spectator sports religious organizations 	54,000
Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mining and resource extraction 	16,000
Other affected sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct selling establishments gasoline stations vending machine operators 	4,000
Total workers		420,000



Industries identified by Brookings analysis of 2018 American Community Survey one-year microdata. brookings.edu/research/who-are-the-workers-already-impacted-by-the-covid-19-recession/. Accessed April 2020. Categories added in DRCOG analysis.

¹Analysis geography

For the purposes of this analysis, the Denver region corresponds with both the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood metropolitan statistical area (Denver metro) and the Boulder metropolitan statistical area (Boulder metro). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget labels all of Weld County, including a portion of DRCOG, as the Greeley metropolitan statistical area (Greeley metro).

The Denver Regional Council of Governments is a planning organization where local governments collaborate to make the region a great place to live, work and play. To support decision-making, DRCOG staff maintains and analyzes various data sets. This briefing is an opportunity to highlight insights from the data sets.

Questions? Ideas for topics? Contact Andy Taylor at ataylor@drcog.org. For more data, visit data.drcog.org.

