

# Promote Secure and Stable Work Schedules

By [Julie Yixia Cai](#)

Inconsistent work hours are now common among hourly workers in the US and are the largest contributor to month-to-month income instability. In 2024, about one-third of non-retirees experienced involuntary monthly income fluctuations. About one-quarter of children nationwide live in households with substantial variability in work hours and income each year.

Currently, several cities — such as San Francisco, Emeryville, Seattle, New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Evanston, Berkeley, and Los Angeles — and one state (Oregon) have passed scheduling laws. At least ten states have legislative initiatives underway. However, in the absence of federal measures, millions of workers may experience adverse effects.

## Overview of workers' current control over their working hours:

- About 66 percent of US hourly employees frequently experience volatile work hours due to employer demands. Over one-third of them have had their hours cut by at least 20 percent from one month to the next.
- About one-quarter of retail workers report that their weekly hours vary at their employer's discretion.
- Inconsistency and insufficiency of work hours negatively affect workers' take-home pay and contribute to increased job turnover, which represents a significant operating cost for employers. Additionally, unpredictable work schedules hinder employees' ability to organize their personal lives, especially for those with caregiving responsibilities.
- A median hourly worker is willing to forgo a portion (4 to 11 percent) of their pay in exchange for the stable income experienced by a median salaried worker.

## Solution: A Federal Mandate Requiring Advance Notice of Work Schedules

The Schedules That Work Act (STWA) outlines actionable steps employers can take to improve outcomes for both employees and organizations, thereby reducing stress associated with unpredictable work hours and income.

- Employers should consider and grant workers' scheduling requests related to caregiving responsibilities, workforce training, personal health needs, or secondary employment, unless there is a bona fide reason to deny the request.
- Employers must provide additional pay when employees are scheduled for consecutive shifts with less than 11 hours of rest between them.
- Additionally, in service-related sectors, employees must receive their updated work schedules at least two weeks in advance. If less than two weeks' notice is given, employers must pay half of hours not worked for reduced or canceled shifts, or provide an additional hour of pay for each changed shift that does not reduce total hours.
- An employer must pay a premium when employees work shifts with nonconsecutive hours and a break longer than one hour. The premium equals one additional hour of wages at the employee's regular pay rate.

## Polling Indicates Broad Bipartisan Support for Scheduling Stability

Voters support the goals of the Schedules That Work Act – and that remained true even after hearing arguments for and against the bill. A majority of Americans believe workers should have the right to influence their work schedules without fear of employer retaliation. Recognizing the impact of stable working hours is essential to improving economic stability for workers and their families.

### A Majority Back the Schedules That Work Act

Share of likely voters who support or oppose the proposed Schedules That Work Act



Source: Data for Progress, April 20–24, 2022 survey of likely voters. Independent includes unaffiliated and third party voters.



According to projections by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), over the next decade, three of the five occupations with the highest anticipated job growth offer disproportionately low wages. Many of these positions, particularly in the service sector, are characterized by irregular work schedules, are predominantly held by workers of color, and typically do not require a college degree. Prior [evidence suggests](#) that a large proportion of workers in these roles will likely remain vulnerable to instability in their working hours.

#### Resources:

- [US Workers' and Managers' Experiences with Fair Workweek Laws Can Inform Enforcement and Education](#), Susan Lambert and Julia Henly, **Washington Center for Equitable Growth**, October 2, 2025.
- [The Effects of the Emeryville Fair Workweek Ordinance on the Daily Lives of Low-Wage Workers and Their Families](#), **RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences**, August 2022.
- [The Shift Project](#), **Harvard University and UC San Francisco**.
- [How are Workers Experiencing Fair Workweek Laws?](#), Susan Lambert and Julia Henly, **Workrise**, August 2025.
- [Schedules That Work Act](#), H.R.5563, 118th Congress, September 19, 2023.