

Study: Recent changes in the composition of minimum wage workers, first quarter of 2017 to first quarter of 2018

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Interest in minimum wages and their potential consequences has grown over the past few years, particularly in light of recently announced changes in many provinces.

A new Statistics Canada study, titled "[Recent changes in the composition of minimum wage workers](#)," shows that as minimum wages increased in 2017 and 2018, the composition of the population of minimum wage employees moved away from individuals under the age of 25 and towards older workers.

Using data from the Labour Force Survey, this study tracks how the profile of Canada's minimum wage workers changed from the first quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018. During that period, minimum wages increased in every province—albeit to varying degrees.

The study finds that 43% of minimum wage workers were students aged 15 to 24 or non-students of the same age living with their parents in early 2018. That proportion was down from 52% in the first quarter of 2017. Conversely, the proportion of minimum wage workers aged 35 to 64 rose to 31% in the first quarter of 2018, up from 25% in the first quarter of 2017.

Changes in the composition of minimum wage workers were also observed across family types.

Minimum wage workers who are spouses/partners in dual-earner couples accounted for 21% of all minimum wage employees in early 2018, up from 17% in early 2017. The corresponding percentages for minimum wage workers who are single, lone-parents or spouses/partners in single-earner couples were 17% in early 2018 and 15% in early 2017.

Minimum wage workers who are single, lone-parents or spouses/partners in single-earner couples may face a different economic situation compared with minimum wage workers who are spouses/partners in dual-earner couples. The former group lives in families whose total employment income is, after adjusting for family size, less than half that of the latter.

These two groups of minimum wage workers were also less likely than their younger counterparts to work in retail trade and food and accommodation services, and more likely to work full time.

Overall, 1.57 million workers earned minimum wages in early 2018, up from 953,000 in early 2017.

The study did not assess the impact of minimum wage increases on employment or other economic variables.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3701](#).

The article "[Recent changes in the composition of minimum wage workers](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

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