

Trapped in the Wage Gap: Nanaimo

On June 1, BC's minimum wage is going up to \$17.40 per hour. Despite this welcome pay raise for the lowest-paid workers in the province, the minimum wage remains \$5 per hour lower than the living wage in Nanaimo (\$22.87 per hour).

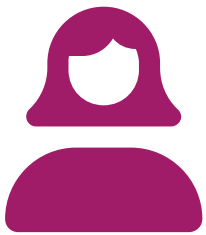
The living wage is the hourly rate that full-time workers need to earn to support a family, including covering the necessities, escaping severe financial stress and participating in the social, civic and cultural lives of their communities. It is based on the actual costs of living in a particular community and affords a decent if still very modest standard of living without the extras many of us take for granted. The living wage does not cover credit card, loan or other debt payments, savings for retirement, or for a downpayment on a home or the extra costs of caring for a disabled, seriously ill or elderly family member.

19,100 workers in Nanaimo earn less than the living wage of \$22.87 per hour (34% of all paid employees in the area, or 1 in 3 workers). Far too many of these workers will continue to face impossible choices—buy groceries or heat the house, keep up with bills or pay the rent on time. The result can be spiraling debt, constant anxiety and long-term health problems. In many cases it means working long hours, often at multiple jobs, just to pay for basic necessities.

We took a closer look at who earns less than \$22.50 per hour in Nanaimo, which is very close to the living wage of \$22.87 per hour. The data were obtained through a custom tabulation from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey.



19,100 Nanaimo workers earned less than the living wage of \$22.87 per hour (34%).



11,600 workers earning less than \$22.50 per hour are women (61%).



About half of Nanaimo workers (8,800)* earning less than \$22.50 are over 25

- ➔ 5,300 workers earning less than \$25 per hour are between 25 and 44 years old (28%).*
- ➔ 2,500 workers earning less than \$25 per hour are between 45 and 64 years old (13%).*
- ➔ Data for Nanaimo workers aged 65 or older who earn less than \$22.50 per hour are not available due to small sample sizes in this age group.