

# Trapped In Part-Time

## Walmart's Phantom Ladder of Opportunity



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Nikki Thanos and Maggie Corser with editing support from Eddie Iny, Eric Schlein, Sam Hampton, Emily Gordon, Lily Wang, Andrea Dehlendorf, and Taylor Campbell. Meredith Slopen consulted on the questionnaire design and conducted the analysis of the Voices Of Walmart Associates survey data.



Organization United for Respect (OUR) elevates the voices of those employed by America's largest low-wage retail corporations to call on industry leaders in the service economy and policymakers to provide family-sustaining jobs for all working Americans. OUR leverages technology—social media and a new digital platform, WorkIt—to support people working in retail and bring them into community with one another. Through our online peer networks and on-the-ground base-building strategies, we build the leadership of working people to share their stories and advocate for solutions to the pressing needs of the country's massive low-wage workforce.\*



The Fair Workweek Initiative, a collaborative effort anchored by the Center for Popular Democracy, is dedicated to restoring family-sustaining work hours for all working Americans. We partner with diverse stakeholders to advance an integrated set of strategies that include policy advocacy, public education and grassroots engagement.



Popular Democracy in Action and its affiliates know that everyday people have the power to change the world. We upend politics as usual to forge a representative, multiracial government and society where we all thrive, no exceptions.

\* Legal disclaimer: Organization United for Respect (OUR) is a non-profit organization, organized under the laws of the District of Columbia. OUR brings together low-income workers, their families and communities to improve working conditions in the retail industry throughout the United States, promote human and civil rights secured by law, build strong and healthy communities, and end all forms of discrimination. OUR Walmart is a project of OUR. OUR does not intend or seek to represent retail employees over terms and conditions of employment, or to bargain with retail employers, including Walmart.

**“When you work hard at Walmart, you can climb the ladder of opportunity and build a better life.”**

—Greg Foran, President and CEO of Walmart U.S.<sup>1</sup>

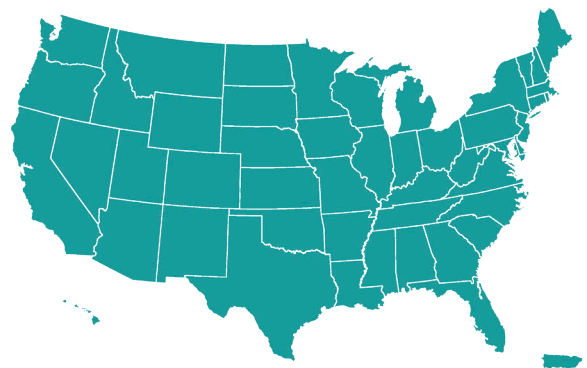
**“At Walmart, you work as hard as you can and it’s always the same. ‘Ladder of opportunity?’ There’s no such thing. You work and you work, but you can’t get ahead.”**

—Laura Gonzalez, Current Walmart Associate

Walmart’s promise of a “ladder of opportunity,” is a cornerstone of the company’s identity, mission, and vision. Yet no matter how hard hundreds of thousands of Walmart associates work, there is simply no way to climb up. Walmart’s vision for associate advancement is fundamentally incompatible with the company’s policies, particularly its increasing reliance on part-time labor. For Walmart’s more than 500,000 part-time hourly associates, the pathway to build a better life simply does not exist. Walmart associates work hard each day with the hope of getting ahead, but soon face a sobering reality: what the company has promised is actually a phantom ladder of opportunity.

## Methodology

Walmart associates were primarily recruited via social media to share their experiences through the *Voices Of Walmart Associates* survey in March and April 2018. Text and email invitations were also used for recruitment. In total, 7,098 current and former Walmart associates participated. The information shared in this report includes only the 6,176 associates currently working at Walmart (87%). For most analyses, workers who are salaried managers were also excluded (2%). Respondents to the survey were more likely to be women and to be working full-time than Walmart associates overall: we used stratified analyses to produce estimates generalizable to workers. Limitations include recruitment bias, self-selection bias (individuals chose whether or not to respond) and challenges related to recruiting via social media. Finally, data is self-reported by Walmart associates and could not be independently verified.



**Total Respondents:**  
**6,176 current Walmart associates**  
**from across the U.S.**

# Introduction

**Walmart Drives Working Conditions in Retail.** Walmart's size is unparalleled: with 1.5 million American workers, the company is the largest corporate employer and the largest low-wage employer in the country.<sup>2</sup> Walmart employs one out of every 100 private sector employees and one in 10 retail workers.<sup>3</sup> Walmart sets industry standards, profoundly impacting local economies, working people, and their families.<sup>4</sup>

When Walmart takes the low road, its bad practices are often mimicked by other retailers. But when Walmart does the right thing and leads by example, the industry also often follows suit. On the heels of large Black Friday protests by Walmart associates and supporters in 2014, Walmart's CEO Doug McMillon committed publicly to raise wages, saying, "in the world, there is a debate over inequity. Sometimes we get caught up in that." Shortly thereafter, Walmart raised its starting wage to \$9 then \$10 an hour.<sup>5</sup> Other retailers including Target, Gap Inc., and T.J. Maxx soon announced similar wage increases. Pressure from Walmart associates, community advocates and investors also pushed Walmart to provide paid family leave for full-time hourly employees in 2018.<sup>6</sup> That policy was quickly mimicked by Starbucks, CVS, and the Gap—but like Walmart, each took the low road and excluded part-time associates from coverage.<sup>7</sup>

**For decades Walmart has faced sustained criticism and a series of lawsuits challenging its alleged gender and race discrimination, low wages, violations of overtime labor protections, and attempts to silence associates who speak about these conditions.**<sup>8</sup> In 2004, for example, 1.6 million women attained class status in a suit against the company alleging a pattern of discriminating against women in "promotion, pay, training and job assignment."<sup>9</sup> Although the Supreme Court dismissed the class certification in a narrow five to four vote in 2011, women continue to come forward in large numbers to allege gender discrimination. There have been 2,000 filings against Walmart at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since 2011.<sup>10</sup> In her dissent in the case, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, "gender bias suffused Walmart's corporate culture."<sup>11</sup> Walmart has also been sued repeatedly for alleged racial discrimination. The company agreed to pay \$17.5 million in a settlement alleging that Walmart was not hiring Black truck drivers, for example.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, Walmart has attempted to improve its poor reputation as a low road employer. Executives spent a reported \$18 million on promotional ads between 2016 and 2017 touting the company's improved labor practices and commitment to selling American-made products.<sup>13</sup> In that same period, Walmart announced multi-billion dollar investments to raise wages, provide stable hours and schedules, and train associates to move up a retail career ladder.<sup>14</sup> The Walmart Foundation is increasingly positioning itself as a leader in workforce development, launching a \$100 million five-year initiative that garnered a wave of positive media coverage.<sup>15</sup> In recent years, the Walmart Foundation publicly supported both career readiness programs for African Americans and launched a women's economic empowerment initiative designed to provide job training and economic security.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, Walmart associates around the country are calling on the company to disclose pay rates and part-time/full-time status by gender and race, in order to ensure all associates are receiving full-time hours, equal pay, and opportunities to advance.<sup>17</sup> **Despite the company's stated commitment to 'a new era of trust and transparency,' Walmart has refused to disclose data** that would allow third party entities to evaluate equal opportunity and job quality, such as the exact size of its part-time workforce or the earnings of its associates across race and gender.<sup>18</sup>

In an effort to better understand the experience of Walmart's massive workforce, we surveyed over 6,000 Walmart associates currently working at the company, representing all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. The survey data sheds important light on the crisis of underemployment, low wages, persistent earnings limitations, and lack of opportunities for Walmart associates.

## Key Findings

- **Over the last decade, Walmart has quietly been reducing full-time positions and shifting to a part-time workforce.** In 2005, 80% of Walmart's associates were full-time.<sup>19</sup> In 2018, an estimated 50% Walmart's U.S. workforce is part-time.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, nationally, 29% of people working in retail are part-time.<sup>21</sup> It appears that Walmart may be pursuing a deliberate part-time strategy. A 2005 internal memo from Susan Chambers, then serving as Walmart's Executive Vice-President of Benefits, proposed "increasing the percentage of part-time Associates in stores" as a "major cost-savings opportunity."<sup>22</sup>
- **Walmart's reliance on its part-time workforce has locked hundreds of thousands of associates out of its "opportunity ladder."** Part-time associates receive fewer benefits and earn less pay for the same work as full-time associates. **The vast majority of part-time Walmart associates we surveyed—69%—said they would prefer to work full-time.\*** Nationally, by Bureau of Labor Statistics tracking, only 9% of part-time retail workers would prefer full-time jobs.<sup>23</sup> Less than a third of all respondents agree or strongly agree that they have a future career at Walmart.
- **People of color are more likely to be involuntary part-time and locked out of the opportunity ladder.** Four out of five part-time Black, Latinx and Asian Walmart associates described themselves as involuntary part-time associates who would prefer to work full-time. While this is consistent with national data showing Black and Latinx workers nearly twice as likely to be involuntary part-time, racial disparities appear even more pronounced at Walmart.<sup>24</sup>
- **When Walmart rolled out its new workforce management scheduling system in 2016, called "Customer First Scheduling," many part-time associates hoped it would enable them to secure more hours.** The company said it would provide associates with more seniority access to fixed schedules while others could "build their own schedules from the hours available."<sup>25</sup> Although the company did not guarantee more hours to part-time associates, the company said that the new "flexibility allowed many workers to cobble together 40 hours."<sup>26</sup> However, only 6% of associates reported an increase in hours since the new system was implemented. **A third of part-time associates reported their hours hadn't improved and the majority (59%) actually saw their hours decline.**
- **Walmart associates have families, but jobs at Walmart are not family-sustaining.** While government data shows 12% of U.S. households are food insecure,<sup>27</sup> **the majority (55%) of Walmart associates surveyed are food insecure.** Associates of color and part-time associates are more likely to report food insecurity. Walmart associates with spouses and children are the least likely to have enough food to meet their basic needs. Only 29% of full-time associates and 20% of part-time Walmart associates say their earnings allow them to support themselves and their families. That number drops to 14% for involuntary part-time associates.

\* The Voices of Walmart Associates survey defines "involuntary part-time" as any part-time associate who would prefer to work full-time. The Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of involuntary part-time work is narrower. It does not include part-time workers who have childcare responsibilities, family obligations, school, or a full-time workweek that is less than 35 hours a week. For more information on definitional considerations and differences, see the 2018 Monthly Labor Review: <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2018/article/who-chooses-part-time-work-and-why.htm>.



- **Childcare responsibilities, compounded by demands for open availability, keep women in part-time.** Overall, 36% of women reported family caretaking responsibilities as a reason they are part-time though they would prefer to work full-time, with 14% reporting that caretaking responsibilities are the primary reason. Women also indicated Walmart's apparent requirement to maintain open availability is a primary reason they are part-time.\* Unpredictable hours and schedules, combined with the need to maintain open availability, can make it harder for caregivers to access full-time jobs.
- **Walmart associates face widespread racial and gender discrimination.** Twenty percent of all respondents reported *personally* experiencing at least one form of discrimination, which they believed was based on their gender, sexual orientation, and/or race. People of color are significantly more likely than white associates to report personally experiencing at least one form of discrimination.
- **Unfair treatment by managers is widespread, which may create hurdles to advancement for women and people of color.** To achieve higher paying full-time jobs and a promotion at Walmart, associates often require a recommendation by a supervisor. Hourly supervisors and salaried managers in the retail sector are disproportionately white and male.<sup>28</sup> Walmart's own diversity data shows that women and people of color are underrepresented in U.S. corporate officer and management positions.<sup>29</sup> Sixty eight percent of Walmart associates agree or strongly agree that there is favoritism at Walmart, with women and younger associates (ages 25–34) agreeing significantly more strongly.



\* Retail employers are increasingly requiring workers to maintain open availability, or the ability to work on any day, at any time, with little notice.

# A Crisis of Underemployment in Retail

In the wake of the Great Recession, many corporate retail chains sought to cut labor costs by shifting to a part-time workforce that worked just-in-time schedules.\* Rather than hiring full-time staff, employers began to rely on a large pool of part-time, contingent workers. With the industry's shift away from stable full-time jobs, working people in retail increasingly faced fluctuating work schedules where hours changed from day to day, straining their families and causing volatile incomes.

The rise of part-time employment started well before 2008, but the financial crash caused the trend to dramatically accelerate.<sup>30</sup> Many people who wanted full-time jobs could only find part-time work. The number of involuntary part-time workers—retail workers who were unable to find full-time jobs even though they wanted them—more than doubled during the Great Recession.<sup>31</sup> Since 2007, 63% of the growth in part-time employment can be attributed to retail, hotels and restaurants.<sup>32</sup> Far from a temporary response to an economic downturn, the growing service industry's heavy reliance on part-time work has become the new norm.

Today, a growing share of retail workers are unable to secure full-time employment. One in three people in retail are part-time; for some occupations, like cashier, one in two workers is part-time.<sup>33</sup> According to federal data on the makeup of the part-time workforce, women and people of color are more likely to be part-time workers.<sup>34</sup>

Retailers' attempts to "contain costs" negatively impacts people working across the service sector, in particular, by eroding the career ladder. Entry-level retail jobs used to start with full-time positions. The career pathway now typically begins with a part-time position.<sup>35</sup> For many people working in retail, securing a full-time job is increasingly framed as promotion. At Walmart, part-time hourly jobs are being treated as the entry-level rung on the "opportunity ladder."

## Part-Time Jobs Are Poor Quality Jobs

Why is the shift to part-time work hurting people working in retail? The answer is simple: because part-time jobs are poorer quality jobs.<sup>36</sup> Despite having the same work responsibilities as their full-time counterparts, part-time workers also earn lower hourly wages, have less job security, and are often excluded from employer-provided benefits like health care and family leave.<sup>37</sup> Part-time workers across industries only have one-third the access to health insurance coverage of full-time workers—22% compared with 73%.<sup>38</sup>

With unpredictable schedules and hours that vary week to week, people working in retail never know how big their paychecks are going to be.<sup>39</sup> This rise in income volatility causes a financial crisis for millions of working families. Nationally, we know that part-time workers face significantly higher rates of poverty. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, when a household has at least one full-time year-round earner, the poverty rate among those families is 5%. Among families without a full-time worker, but at least one part-time worker in the home, the poverty rate spikes to 43%.<sup>40</sup> In female-headed households with only one part-time/part-year worker, the poverty rate climbs to 55%. Within African American and Hispanic households with one part-time/part-year worker, poverty rates are over 40%.<sup>41</sup>

\* "Just-in-time scheduling" occurs when companies rely on algorithms and workforce management technologies to automate workers' schedules based on projected customer demand, often on an hourly basis. This scheduling practice presents many challenges for working people as their workweeks and incomes change from day to day and they are required to call in the day of their shift to see if they should come to work.

## Why Do People Work Part-Time? Redefining Involuntary Part-Time

With unemployment at pre-Recession levels, some argue that the economy and local communities are thriving. However, we need to look at broader economic indicators to get the full picture.<sup>42</sup> To really understand the national crisis for low wage workers in America, we must turn our attention to the involuntary part-time workforce. Involuntary part-time workers are people who want full-time work but can only find a part-time job.

Today, there are 5 million involuntary part-time workers in the United States—an elevated number that remains higher than pre-Recession levels.<sup>43</sup> The actual number of involuntary part-time workers is much higher than 5 million, as the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not count people in “full time” jobs that are capped at 35 hours, people who cannot work more hours because of a lack of affordable childcare, and people who are attending school/training programs.<sup>44</sup>

Since 2007, the service industry, including retail, accounted for more than 50% the growth of involuntary part-time employment.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the retail workforce is nearly twice as likely to work involuntary part-time as the rest of the country’s workforce.<sup>46</sup> Women and people of color disproportionately experience underemployment in the retail industry.<sup>47</sup>



### Arianna Smith

Barstow, CA

When I started at Walmart a year ago, I was working full-time to help launch a new store location in Barstow, CA because I heard the company was a good place to work. Instead, I was met with disrespect, favoritism, and lack of empathy.

Walmart did not inform me until after I was hired that the store would cut my hours to part-time a few months after the grand opening. I went from working more than 40 hours a week at \$11 an hour to being scheduled for only 16-24 hours each week. I regularly watched other employees receive priority scheduling over me despite commuting two hours by foot to and from the store each day and working through a chronic illness. My requests to stay longer and work additional hours were always declined. Walmart cut my hours for one pay period and that was all it took for me to fall into debt. Right now I just can't make ends meet. I've been on the verge of eviction for falling so far behind on my rent. I'm getting by on food stamps. It feels like Walmart doesn't care if I or any of my coworkers are living on the street and starving, as long as we still clock in on time.

It's very hard to climb Walmart's "ladder of opportunity." One way I've tried to get more hours is to get trained to do more types of work. I've asked my managers to cross train me on money center or customer service. I'm told that I need to do online trainings but then my manager never lets me.



# The Phantom Opportunity Ladder for Walmart's Involuntary Part-Time Associates

Over the last decade, Walmart has quietly been reducing full-time positions and shifting to a part-time workforce (see: Appendix I).<sup>\*</sup> In 2005, 80% of Walmart's associates were full-time.<sup>48</sup> Today only an estimated half of Walmart's U.S. workforce is full-time.<sup>49</sup> It appears that Walmart may be pursuing a deliberate part-time strategy. A 2005 internal memo from Susan Chambers, then serving as Walmart's Executive Vice-President of Benefits, proposed "increasing the percentage of part-time Associates in stores" as a "major cost-savings opportunity."<sup>50</sup>

While Walmart is not alone in increasing part-time jobs, the company has moved with great speed to reconfigure its workforce. Walmart employs a significantly higher percentage of part-time associates than the national average in retail and across the country.<sup>51</sup> The percentage of part-time associates at Walmart—50%—is significantly higher than the national retail average which is 29%.

At least half of Walmart's hourly workforce—an estimated 550,000 people—are in part-time employment.<sup>52</sup> Although some people prefer to work part-time, the survey shows that the vast majority do not: **69% of part-time Walmart associates we surveyed said they would prefer to work full-time. In contrast, only 9% of people working in retail nationally want full-time jobs but can only secure part-time employment.**<sup>53</sup>



In 2005, Walmart executives proposed

**“increasing the percentage of part-time Associates in stores [as a] major cost-savings opportunity”**

## Walmart's Growing Hourly Part-Time Workforce

**20%** of Walmart employees were part-time in 2005



**50%** (estimate) of Walmart employees are **currently** part-time



**1.1 million** total hourly associates  
= **550,000** part-time hourly associates

## Walmart Now Leads the Nation in Part-Time Jobs

**18%**

Part-Time Workers  
Across Industries

**29%**

Part-Time Workers  
in Retail Industry Overall

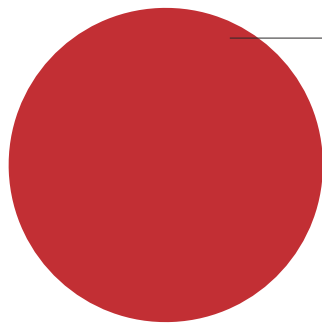
**50%**

Walmart's Workforce  
Employed Part-Time

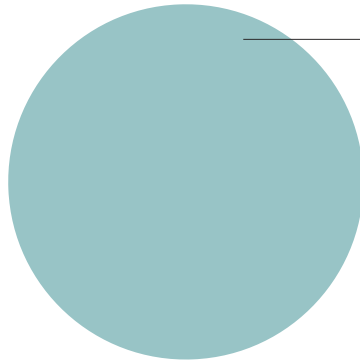
<sup>\*</sup> Full-time status at Walmart indicates at least 34 hours per week. Part-time status at Walmart has no minimum hours.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey; Percentage of Part-Time workers at Walmart based on public company disclosures. See Appendix I.

## Walmart is Driving a Crisis of Underemployment



**69%** of part-time Walmart associates we surveyed would prefer to work full-time  
= involuntary part-time



**78%** of part-time Walmart associates of color described themselves as involuntary part-time



**9%** of all people working part-time in retail are involuntary part-time

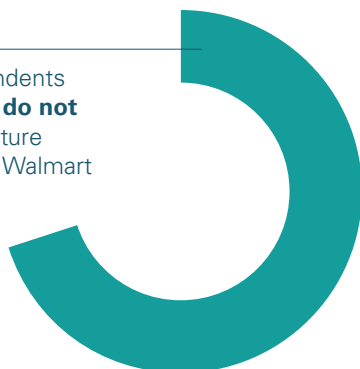
The struggle to access full-time employment opportunities is even more burdensome for people of color: our survey found that people of color at Walmart are more likely to be working involuntary part-time and face barriers to promotions and higher wages. **Four out of five part-time Black, Latinx and Asian Walmart associates described themselves as involuntary part-time and would prefer a full-time job.** While this is consistent with national data showing Black and Latinx workers nearly twice as likely to be involuntary part-time, racial disparities appear even more pronounced at Walmart.<sup>54</sup>

Walmart's erosion of full-time employment opportunities has locked hundreds of thousands of associates out of its "opportunity ladder" and caused a spike in the involuntary part-time workforce. Walmart says it is "committed to helping make retail and the retail supply chain a place

of inclusive opportunity, where our jobs and purchase orders can help people build a better life for themselves and their families."<sup>55</sup> In its 2018 Global Responsibility Report, Walmart committed to putting "millions of associates through focused training programs to equip them with skills to improve career prospects and move to jobs with greater responsibility and higher pay [by 2025]."<sup>56</sup>

But the reality could not be more different on the store floor: less than one third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have a future career at Walmart. As the largest private-sector employer of Black and Latinx workers nationwide,<sup>57</sup> Walmart is a leading driver in the crisis of underemployment in communities of color. Long-term associates do not feel their expertise is valued by Walmart: only 19% agree or strongly agree that long-term associates and expertise are valued by Walmart.

**70%** of respondents feel they **do not** have a future career at Walmart



**“ Taking care of the basics of wages and benefits matters, but you also want to demonstrate you’re creating an opportunity for them. So that ladder that’s within Walmart that someone can climb up to be a store manager or do my job someday has got to be intact. ”**

— Doug McMillon  
Walmart Chief Executive Officer<sup>58</sup>

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey analysis by National Employment Law Project; and Voices of Walmart Associates Survey.

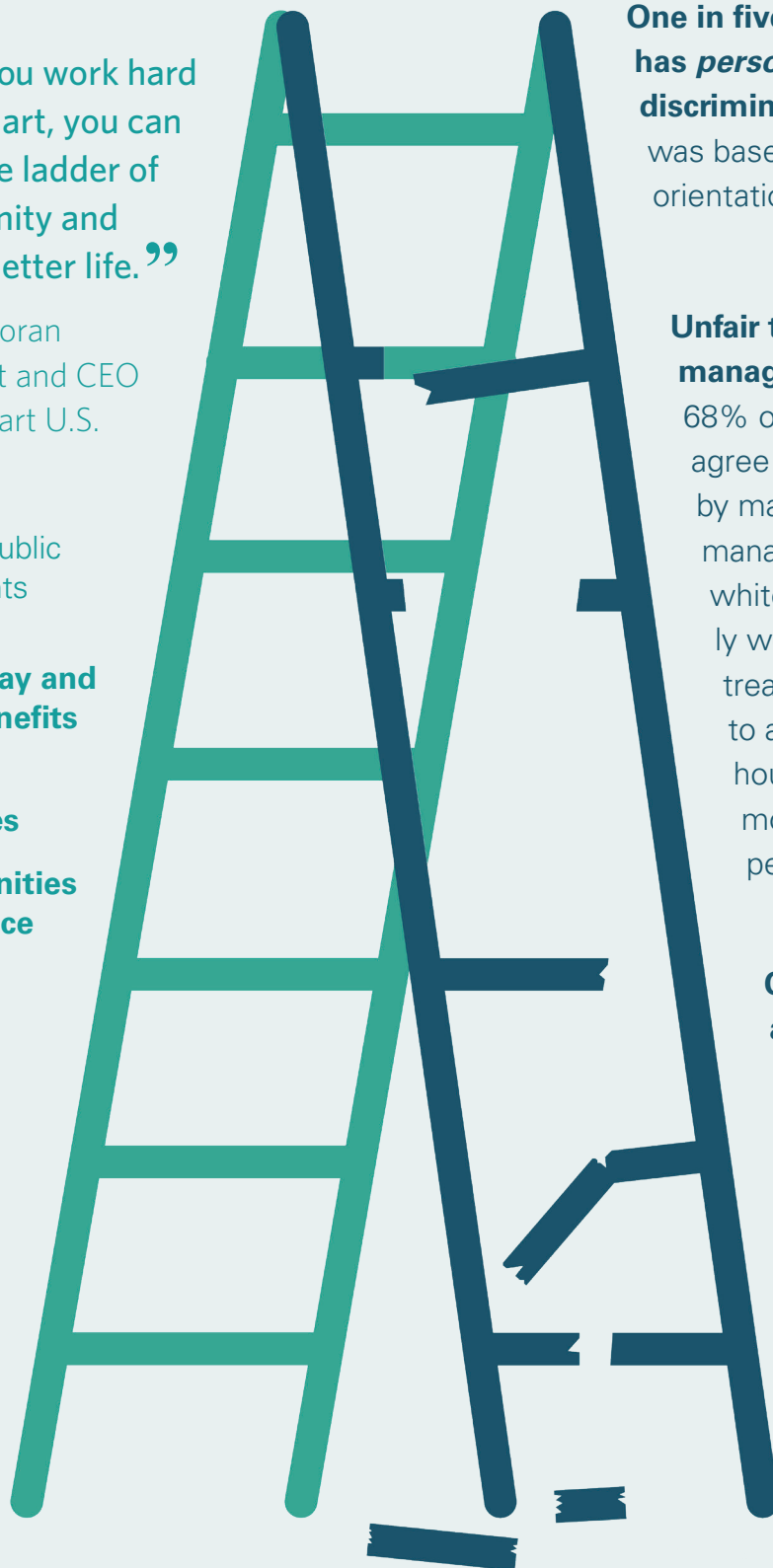
# Walmart's Phantom Ladder of Opportunity

“When you work hard at Walmart, you can climb the ladder of opportunity and build a better life.”

—Greg Foran  
President and CEO  
of Walmart U.S.

Walmart's public commitments include:

- **Higher pay and more benefits**
- **Stable schedules**
- **Opportunities to advance**



**One in five Walmart associates has *personally* experienced discrimination** which they believed was based on their gender, sexual orientation, and/or race.

**Unfair treatment by managers is widespread.**

68% of Walmart associates agree that there is favoritism by managers. With a salaried management team that is more white and male than the hourly workforce, this differential treatment may create hurdles to advancement and access to hours, schedules and accommodations for women and people of color.

**One in three Walmart associates cannot secure full-time work**

because they say Walmart requires them to maintain open availability.

**Everyday Low Wages:**

73% of Walmart associates do not earn enough to support themselves and their families.

**Involuntary Part Time:**

69% of part-time Walmart associates would prefer full-time work.

## Part-Time Associates Get Less of Everything: Benefits for Part-Time vs. Full-Time Associates

	Part-Time Benefits	Full-Time Benefits
Health Insurance	Must maintain at least 30 hours a week for a year to be eligible to purchase health insurance	Eligible to purchase health insurance.
Long Term Disability Insurance	No	Eligible to purchase
Family Life Insurance	No	Eligible to purchase
401k with up to 6% company match	Available	Available
Paid Maternity Leave	No	Yes
Paid Paternity Leave	No	Yes
\$5,000 Adoption Benefit	No	Yes
Dependable minimum number of hours to be scheduled	No	Walmart defines full-time as at least 34 hours a week
Earned Paid Time Off (PTOs)*	347 hours worked = 1 PTO day	138 hours worked = 1 PTO day

\*For a new associate. Accrual rates between part-time and full-time are vastly unproportional.

Sources: Walmart's 2018 Associate Benefits Book; Walmart's 2016 Full Time Paid Time Off Hourly Guide; Walmart's 2016 Part Time Paid Time Off Hourly Guide; and FAQ Parental and Material Leave, 2018 at <https://smartguide.walmartone.com/SmartPages/Media/Default/LeadershipGuide/Maternity-Parental-FAQ-2018.pdf>

## Less Pay and Benefits for Part-Time Walmart Associates

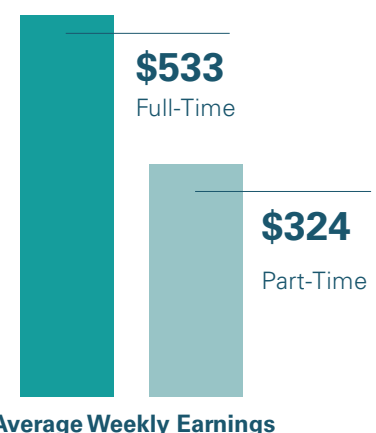
Nationally, part-time workers earn significantly less money per hour than full-time workers—just 68 cents to every dollar a full-time worker makes.<sup>61</sup> This pay penalty is compounded by the fact that, on average, part-time workers receive about half as many hours as full-time workers. Across the industry, part-time retail workers earn significantly less than full-time workers and face diminished prospects for career advancement.<sup>62</sup>

**According to Walmart's figures, the company pays part-time associates 79 cents to every dollar it pays full-time associates for the same job.**<sup>63</sup> Part-time associates are also concentrated in the lowest paying jobs—our survey found that only 3% of part-time associates occupy the two higher pay tiers (jobs such as hourly supervisors, eCommerce, and office associates.)

Walmart's part-time associates are excluded from many major employer-provided benefits. For instance, part-time associates are not eligible for Walmart's new paid family leave policies. In order to be eligible to pay into Walmart's optional health care plan, a person must consistently work at least 30 hours each week. A part-time associate can accrue a small amount of paid time off. However, in practice, most part-time associates do not get scheduled enough hours to make this a meaningful benefit. For those who do qualify, accruing paid time off while working part-time is a very slow process. For instance, a part-time associate would only earn about an hour of paid time off after working a whole week of part-time shifts.

Many of the benefits Walmart *does* extend to part-time associates cannot feasibly be accessed by working people with low pay and unstable hours. For instance, part-time associates can participate in a company match through a 401k retirement fund and stock purchase options. However, these programs require people to use a portion of their paychecks to realize the benefits. After one year, a part-time associate is eligible for an optional insurance product that is deducted from their paycheck to cover death, accidents, and critical illness - but these benefits are less meaningful than health insurance and which many part-time associates are excluded from.

### How Much Smaller is a Part-Time Paycheck?



Note: Estimates based on average reported hourly pay rate and average reported hours/week among survey respondents.



## More Phantom Opportunities with “Customer First Scheduling”

When Walmart rolled out their new workforce management scheduling system in 2016, called **“Customer First Scheduling,”** the company said it would provide associates with more seniority access to fixed schedules while others could “build their own schedules from the hours available.”<sup>64</sup> Although the company did not guarantee more hours to part-time associates, the company said that the new “flexibility allowed many workers to cobble together 40 hours.”<sup>65</sup> In reality, only **6% of all associates reported an increase in hours since the new system was implemented.** A third of part-time associates reported their hours hadn’t changed and the majority (59%) reported their hours had actually declined.

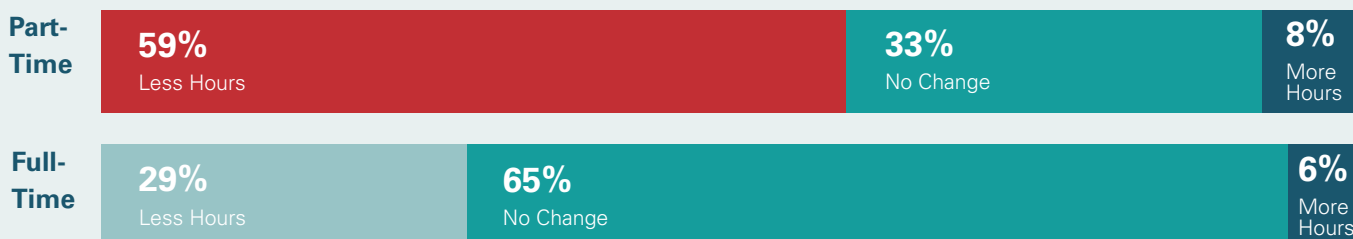
According to Walmart, the company

**“instituted scheduling systems changes [...] to better meet the needs of our associates.”<sup>66</sup>**

Walmart reported that as a result of the Customer First pilot,

**“Over the last 18 months, more than 60 hourly associates in the Van Buren [Arkansas] store alone have moved from part-time to full-time, just by being able to see available shifts and choose more hours.”<sup>67</sup>**

## How Has Customer First Scheduling Affected Your Hours?



Survey Respondents with Customer First Scheduling

Source: Voices of Walmart Associates survey

## Pay and Other Disparities Among Women and People of Color in Retail

Walmart does not disclose data on race and gender pay gaps, but we know that nationally, women retail salespeople earn 74 cents to the dollar of what men make for the same exact job.<sup>68</sup> The pay gap is even more shocking along lines of race and gender. Retail salespeople who are white men make nearly twice what Black women earn for the same work.<sup>69</sup> Part-time workers who face these types of pay disparities struggle to earn stable, family-sustaining incomes. When low pay meets volatile work hours, many working people struggle to keep with basic expenses like food, transportation and rent.

Pay disparities are often connected to occupational segregation in retail: women and people of color are concentrated in certain lower paying sub-sectors and occupations. Retail sectors and occupations with higher wages and more stable work hours employ lower percentages of people of color and women. For instance, in the retail sector people of color make up 50% of cashiers and 43% of retail sales workers, but only 34% of first-line supervisors.<sup>70</sup>

**Women and people of color are underrepresented in both management and corporate positions at Walmart,** according to Walmart's 2018 Global Social Responsibility Report:<sup>71</sup>

- 42% People of Color, Walmart's U.S. workforce
- 32% People of Color, U.S. Management positions
- 20% People of Color, U.S. Corporate Officers
- 55% Women, Walmart's U.S. workforce
- 43% Women, U.S. Management positions
- 30% Women, U.S. Corporate Officers

Walmart does not currently disclose the gender and race breakdown of its hourly and part-time associates.<sup>72</sup> These gender and racial disparities are likely even more striking for the frontline workforce.



## Who Benefited from Walmart's Move to \$11 an Hour?

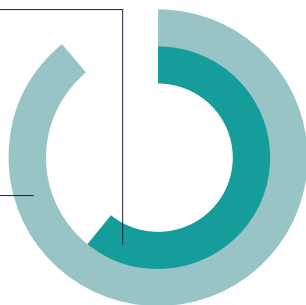
In January 2018, Walmart increased its starting salary to \$11 an hour for all associates. Forty-two percent of all associates we surveyed, including 61% of part-time associates, said they had benefited from the wage floor increase. Black and Latinx associates were more likely than white associates to benefit from the increase. This would be expected, given previous research has shown widespread and persistent gender and racial pay gaps among frontline retail workers.<sup>73</sup> It's likely Walmart's Black and Latinx associates earned lower wages and, therefore, were more likely to benefit from the wage floor increase. An across-the-floor wage increase is unlikely to narrow the gap between workers but simply raise the wages among the lowest paid workers.<sup>74</sup> **This data underscores just how many Walmart associates work at or just above the wage floor.**

Additionally, over half of associates reported that when the minimum wage increased to \$11, they saw an increase in the number of associates losing hours and/or moving to part-time. This trend was particularly acute in the South. **When associates who are supposed to benefit from wage floor increases experience a significant decline in their hours, the net benefit of a pay raise is lost.**

## Higher Wages Came at a Cost: Less Hours

**61%** of part-time associates reported benefiting from the increase to \$11 /hour

but **84%** believe this raise came at a cost of loss in hours.



**Guirlene Mazarin**

Miami Gardens, FL

I'm a Haitian immigrant and single mom who moved to Florida to pursue a better life for myself and my daughter. In 2016, I left my job at JCPenney to work at Walmart's Miami Gardens supercenter after seeing online ads about how well the company treats its customers.

Even though I am available to work additional hours, I'm only scheduled for approximately 30 hours every week. My schedule is always random, which prevents me from planning for the week, picking up a second part-time job, or being available to pick up my daughter from school. When I've asked for a consistent schedule or additional hours, my supervisors refuse.

There is no "ladder of opportunity" at Walmart. Even after Walmart's company-wide wage increase to \$11 an hour, I cannot afford to pay my bills. Before the raise, I worked my whole 40 hours. After the raise, I am only scheduled 32-34 hours a week. It is not fair. I feel like Walmart doesn't want to give me more hours or a full-time position because I'm Black and Haitian. It's discrimination. I see other non-Black people get full-time, but not me. A raise doesn't help if Walmart cuts my hours.

I have coworkers who have worked more than 12 years at Walmart and only make \$1.50 more than new employees. Although I've been here for almost two years, I make the same \$11 that someone walking through the door makes. To make ends meet, I visit payday loan centers to get cash advances and I pay a \$22 fee each time. Walmart needs to give me and other associates real opportunities.



## Unfair Treatment by Managers Is Widespread, Which May Create Hurdles to Advancement for Women and People of Color

To achieve higher paying full-time jobs and a promotion at Walmart, associates often require a recommendation by a supervisor. Hourly supervisors and salaried managers in the retail sector are disproportionately white and male.<sup>75</sup> Walmart's own diversity data shows that women and people of color are underrepresented in U.S. corporate officer and management positions.<sup>76</sup> **Sixty eight percent of Walmart associates we surveyed agree or strongly agree that there is favoritism, with women and younger associates (ages 25-34) agreeing significantly more strongly.**

## Favoritism Impacts the Majority of Part-Time Associates

Part-time associates who would prefer full-time work are significantly more likely to agree that management shows favoritism in schedules, pay, and discipline when compared to part-time associates who prefer part-time hours.

**64%** of **voluntary part-time** associates believed favoritism was a factor in their experience at work.



**71%** of **involuntary part-time** associates believed favoritism was a factor in their experience at work.

## Walmart Associates Face Widespread Discrimination

One in five of all respondents reported *personally* experiencing at least one form of discrimination (gender, sexual orientation, or racism). People of color are significantly more likely than white associates to report personally experiencing at least one form of discrimination





# Walmart Associates Have Families, but Jobs at Walmart Are Not Family-Sustaining

## A Majority of Walmart Associates Are Food Insecure

Walmart promotes itself as a global leader in eradicating hunger.<sup>77</sup>

Walmart has donated 2.5 billion pounds of food in the U.S. and committed to providing 4 billion meals to people in need from 2014 to 2019.<sup>78</sup>

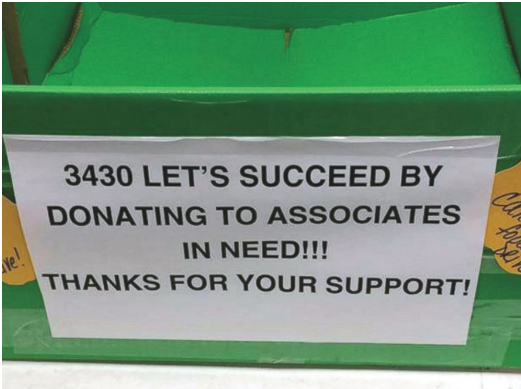
Yet the majority of Walmart associates (55%) we surveyed are food insecure.\*

In contrast, 12% of U.S. households are food insecure nationally.<sup>79</sup> At Walmart, people of color and people working part-time are more likely to report food insecurity. Only one in five part-time Walmart associates (27%) say their earnings allow them to support themselves and their families. That number drops to 14% for people who are involuntary part-time.



BUSINESS INSIDER

Wal-Mart Asks Workers To Donate Food To Its Needy Employees



### Food Insecurity at Walmart



Walmart associates with spouses and children are least likely to have enough food to meet their basic needs.

Age	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
% Who Is Food Insecure	54%	64%	62%	48%	32%
Family Members Supported	1.9	2.7	3.1	2.4	1.9

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service; Voices of Walmart Associates survey

\* Food insecurity is defined as a respondent reporting concern about having enough food for themselves and/or their family in the last 30 days.

## Most Walmart Associates Face Financial Insecurity



**27%** of Walmart associates say their earnings allow them to support themselves and their families



**33%** agree that Walmart provides a safe place to work



**36%** say they like or love their job



**86%** of involuntary part-time associates are not able to support themselves and their families with their earnings.

Part-time associates of color are less likely than white associates to have an hourly rate over \$13/hour.

**13\$**

only **10%** of part-time associates of color earn \$13 or more an hour

Latinx associates are particularly underrepresented (7% are making over \$13/hour compared to 13% of white associates and 14% of Black associates).

*Sources: Voices of Walmart Associates survey*

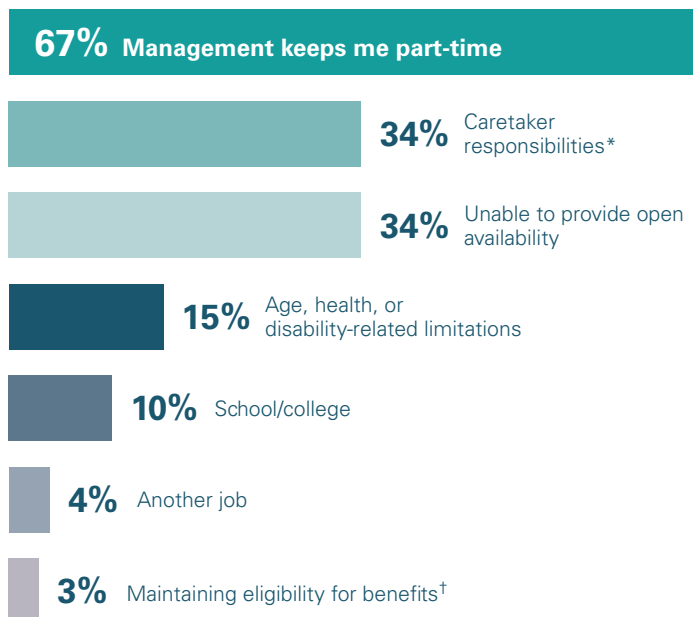
## Childcare Responsibilities, Compounded by Demands for Open Availability, Keep Women in Part-Time.

While the top reason part-time associates cited for part-time hours was management keeping them part-time, caretaking responsibilities and open availability were the second and third most common reason. Overall, one-third of women reported family caretaking responsibilities as a reason they are part-time though they would prefer to work full-time, with 14% reporting that caretaking responsibilities are the primary reason. Women also indicated Walmart's requirement to maintain open availability is a primary reason they are part-time. Men with caregiving responsibilities also reported being part-time, despite wanting full-time hours, as a result. People of color are significantly more likely to not work full-time, despite a preference to do so, because of caretaking responsibilities. Among many associates of color this is the primary reason they are part-time.

**Unpredictable hours and schedules, combined with the need to maintain open availability, can make it harder for caregivers to access full-time jobs.**

## What Keeps You From Getting Full-Time Status?

Reasons Reported by Involuntary Part-Time Associates



\* Includes having to care for children, elderly or disabled family, and childcare costs

† Includes health insurance or other programs

## Walmart's Sick Time Policies Incentivize People Coming to Work While Sick

Walmart's sick time policy incentivizes "presenteeism"—showing up for work at all costs, even when associates are sick or have a family emergency. Sick days are penalized using a point system—every time an associate misses a scheduled shift, they accrue a "point." If an associate accrues too many points, they can be disciplined or fired. A 2017 study by A Better Balance found that "Walmart's policies and practices, including giving points for serious medical and disability-related absences, penalizing workers who need time off for caregiving for ill family members, and refusing to consider doctors' notes, are consistent and widespread throughout the country."<sup>80</sup>

**The survey data clearly underscores the impact of Walmart's sick time policies: Eighty-eight percent of our survey respondents—including associates who handle groceries and stock produce—reported that in the past 12 months they attended work when they have been ill.** Many Walmart associates, 19%, did not take a sick day to care for themselves or others even though they were ill. Among associates who face discipline for taking sick days, women are more likely to be disciplined for caring for a sick child.

### Laura Gonzalez

Fort Worth, TX



In the past, Walmart required me to have "open availability," i.e. to be ready to work 24/7, in order to qualify for full-time hours. I relied on my older children to take care of the younger ones when I worked late into the night.

One afternoon at work my daughter called saying that my 10-year-old son never made it home from school. Because Walmart wouldn't let me leave without an automatic "point" on my record (and reaching nine "points" would result in immediate termination), I waited until I got off work to search for him. After the police found my son and returned him home late that night, I knew I had to restrict my availability at Walmart so I could be more present with my kid—even if it meant losing hours and income to support my family.

My supervisor punished me by cutting my hours down to an average of 15 per week. Despite the company-wide wage increase from \$9 to \$11 an hour, I have to scrape together my income tax refund for extra cash to buy my children shoes and food. I'm currently on food stamps, and I clean a house in my spare time for extra cash.

At Walmart, you work as hard as you can and it's always the same. "Ladder of Opportunity?" There's no such thing. You work and you work, but you can't get ahead.

# Conclusion

Walmart's "ladder of opportunity" remains elusive for hundreds of thousands of Walmart associates. Our survey of over 6,000 Walmart associates sheds important light on the crisis of underemployment, low wages, persistent earnings limitations, and lack of opportunities at Walmart. Despite the company's stated commitment to improving the lives of its 1.5 million U.S. associates, Walmart's shift to a part-time workforce has not only eroded job quality but excluded an estimated 550,000 hourly part-time associates from higher wages and better benefits. The vast majority of Walmart associates we surveyed—69%—said they would prefer to work full-time, with four out of five Black and Latinx part-time associates seeking full-time work. Walmart initiatives, such as the Customer First Scheduling, have failed to provide more hours to associates. Higher incomes and more hours are sorely needed by Walmart's workforce—over 55% of Walmart associates are food insecure and 73% indicated their earnings do not allow them to support themselves and their families. This stark reality is further compounded along lines of race and gender. Based on the survey findings, Walmart associates face widespread racial and gender discrimination. Unfair treatment by managers has the potential to create hurdles to advancement for women and people of color. What Walmart has promised is, in fact, a phantom ladder of opportunity that is failing to deliver family-sustaining wages, stable hours, and opportunities to advance.

## Recommendations

Ensuring economic stability for people who work at Walmart is within easy reach for America's largest corporate employer. In light of the report findings, **Walmart should take immediate steps to:**

### **Provide people of color and women equitable access to the ladder of opportunity by:**

- Ensuring equal pay and opportunity among all Walmart associates, starting by disclosing pay rates and part-time/full-time status by gender and race.
- Providing full-time positions to all part-time associates who want them before creating new part-time positions.
- Providing the training and support Walmart associates need to access emerging e-commerce opportunities.
- Ensuring the selection processes for managerial positions, as well as access to advanced training, is equitable, available to all, and free of favoritism.

### **Provide family-sustaining wages and stable hours to part-time associates by:**

- Fairly compensating associates with a \$15 an hour starting wage. Ensure comparable wage increases for long-term associates.
- Provide stable full-time jobs and predictable schedules that are responsive to working families.
- Provide part-time associates equal wages, benefits and opportunities to advance.

### **Lead the retail sector in "family economic stability" with policies that enable associates to economically support and actively participate in their families' lives:**

- Ensuring people have paid leave when they or family members are sick. Associates should be able to earn designated paid sick time without incurring penalties and by accepting medical providers' notes.
- Eliminating the apparent 'open availability' requirement which, in practice, forces people to choose between time to care for their children and having full-time hours by accepting scheduling accommodation requests.



# Appendix:

## Walmart's Growing Part-Time Workforce

Despite sustained calls for greater transparency, Walmart does not currently disclose how many associates are part-time vs. full-time. Based on public disclosures, statements to the media, and company memos, we can trace Walmart's growing part-time workforce. Thirteen years ago, 80% of Walmart's associates had full-time jobs. Today, that number has dropped to 50%.

### 2003

Before 2002, if an associate worked 28 hours or less per week they were considered part-time.<sup>81</sup> Walmart's definition of full-time changes to 34 hours a week in 2003.<sup>82</sup>

### 2006

In October 2006, Walmart store managers and investment analysts told reporters that Walmart wanted to increase part-time workers to 40%.<sup>86</sup> Walmart reportedly denied the goal but did confirm to the *New York Times* that 25–30% of its workers were part-time.<sup>87</sup>

### 2012

While Walmart does not disclose the number or percent of part-time workers, a Walmart spokesperson goes on record with the *New York Times* that “less than half of Walmart's hourly employees are part-time.”<sup>89</sup>

### 2014

An anonymous source who claimed to be a salaried assistant store manager at Walmart indicated that Walmart has a required ratio of full to part-time associates. “Walmart use to require us at the stores to have a 60%: 40% ratio to Full-Time: Part-Time. Then I was told it had to be 40%: 40%: 20%, Full-Time: Part-Time: Temporary.”<sup>91</sup>

### 2005

An internal Walmart memo to the Walmart Board of Directors on “current initiatives to improve labor productivity,” presented “increasing the percentage of part-time Associates in stores” as a “major cost-savings opportunity.”<sup>83</sup>

Walmart officials later went on record that in October 2005 about 20% of Walmart's workforce were part-time workers.<sup>84</sup>

Nationally, 17.3% of people in the workforce were part-time.<sup>85</sup>

### 2010

A study by professors at the UC Berkeley Labor Center estimate that among Walmart associates, “65% are full-time while 35% are part-time.”<sup>88</sup>

Nationally, 31% of retail jobs are part-time.

### 2013

Walmart goes on record with *Time Magazine* to say that one million Walmart workers “have been with the company long enough to have an annual wage. Of those one million workers, more than half are full-time.”<sup>90</sup>

### 2015

On an annual earnings call with media, Hiroko Tabuchi from the *New York Times* asks Walmart U.S. President and CEO, Greg Foran, the ratio of workers who are part-time versus full-time. Foran answers “The ratio is approximately 50/50.”<sup>92</sup>

According to the *New York Times*, “Walmart says about half of its hourly-wage workers work part time.”<sup>93</sup>

Nationally, 29% of retail jobs are part-time.

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