



\$15 Minimum Wage Study

Understanding how Americans feel
about raising the minimum wage

October 2016

About the Study

The ValuePenguin \$15 Minimum Wage Study is designed to gain a deeper understanding of how Americans feel about a \$15 minimum wage and its effects. The survey aims to discover differences among demographic groups and their support for a \$15 minimum wage, as well as perceptions about minimum wage workers and the economic consequences of raising the minimum wage.

ValuePenguin and SSI conducted an online survey between June 29 and July 14, 2016. Participants come from 49 states (excluding South Dakota) and Washington, D.C. and are at least 18 years old. The survey results are based on 1,066 usable responses and are weighted by age and educational attainment to reflect the characteristics of the U.S. population as reported in the 2016 Census.¹

¹ The sample was not statistically different from the population in terms of gender

Key Findings

Who Supports a \$15 Minimum Wage?

52% think a \$15 minimum wage is just right for the country

More than half of women (55%), millennials (61%) and Democrats (67%) think a \$15 minimum wage is just right

More people in the South (54%) and West (59%) think that a \$15 minimum wage is just right than in the Midwest (44%) or Northeast (49%)

Half of Republicans (51%) think a \$15 minimum wage is too high

Consequences of Raising the Minimum Wage

Most (78%) believe² that raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour will also increase the prices of goods and services

5 in 10 (52%) believe² that raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would result in fewer minimum wage jobs

Most who think a \$15 minimum wage is just right (59%) or too low (63%) would still support an increase to \$15 per hour, even if it meant that the prices of goods and services were higher

However, 66% of all respondents agree that if the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, their yearly income also deserves to increase

Support for a \$15 Minimum Wage Across Party Lines

Most Democrats (67%) and Republicans (89%) share the belief² that an increase in the minimum wage would result in higher prices

Half of Democrats (52%) would still support an increase to \$15 per hour even if the prices of goods and services were higher, but half of Republicans (52%) would not

46% of Democrats believe² that an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would lead to fewer minimum wage jobs

Republicans (62%) are even more likely to believe² this

Another common belief² among respondents of both parties (70% of Democrats and 67% of Republicans) is that their yearly incomes deserve to increase if the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour

Even though Republicans are more likely to think a \$15 minimum wage is too high, they suggested, on average, that the minimum wage should be around \$12.59

² Agree or strongly agree

Who Supports a \$15 Minimum Wage?

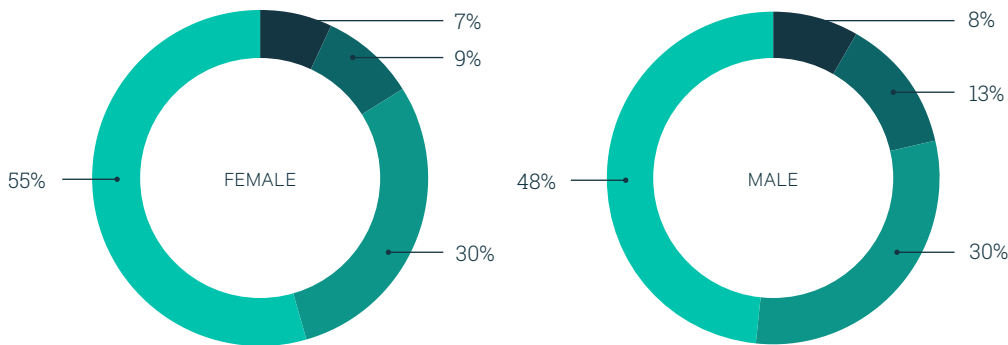
Half of respondents think a \$15 minimum wage is just right for the country, and Democrats, women and millennials are more likely to think this.

Just over half of all respondents think a \$15 minimum wage is **just right**.



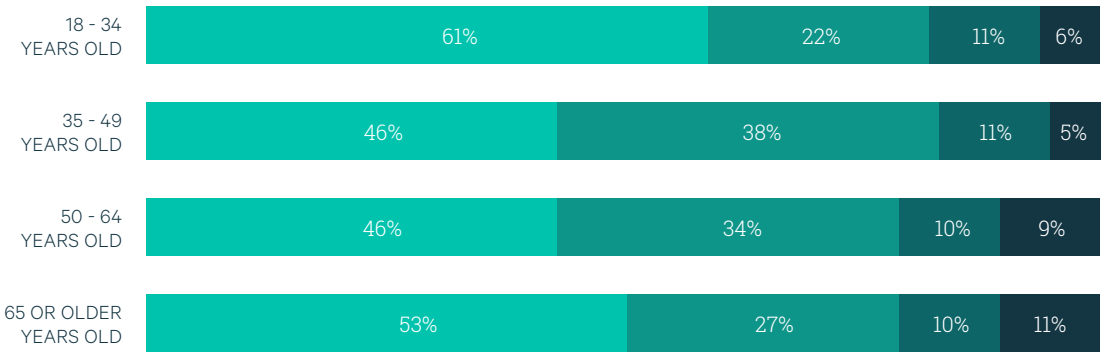
Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

55% of women think a \$15 minimum wage is just right, compared with 48% of men.



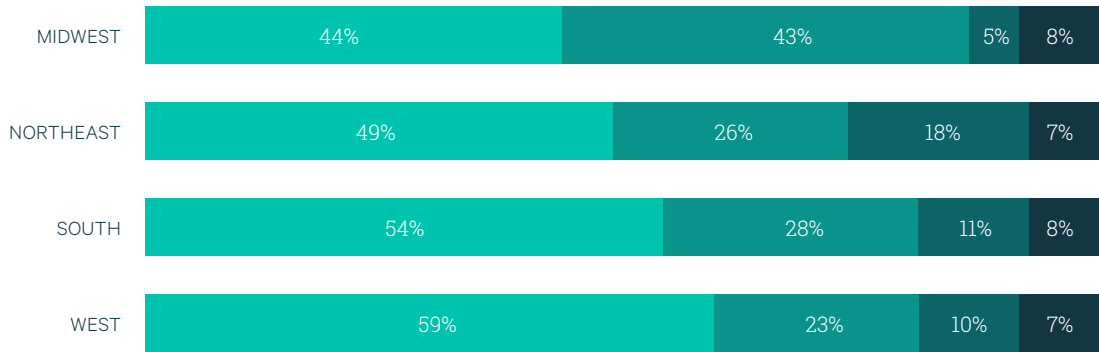
Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

The strongest support comes from millennials: 61% say a \$15 minimum wage is **just right**. On the opposite end, 38% of 35 to 49 year olds think a \$15 minimum wage is **too high**.



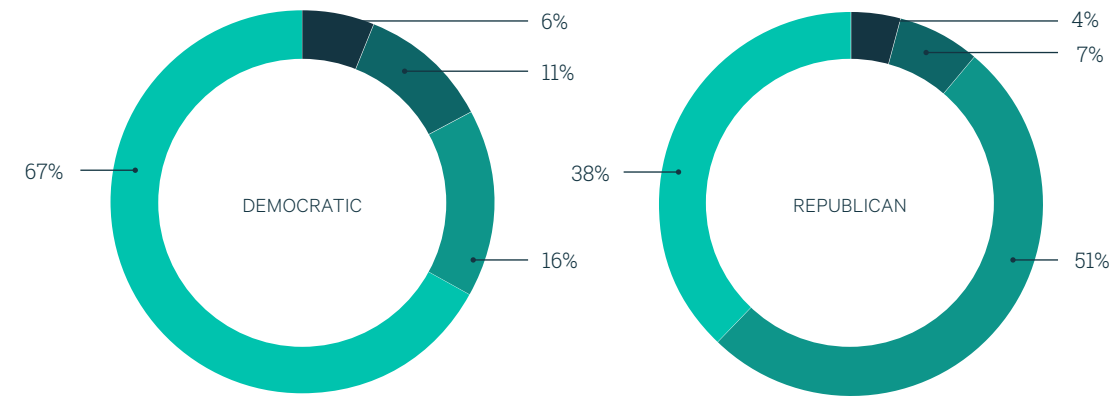
Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

Support for a \$15 minimum wage is lowest in the Midwest, with respondents almost evenly split between thinking \$15 per hour is **just right** or **too high** (44% vs. 43%).



Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

The largest differences in support are evident by political party. 67% of Democrats think \$15 per hour is **just right**, but 51% of Republicans think it is **too high**.

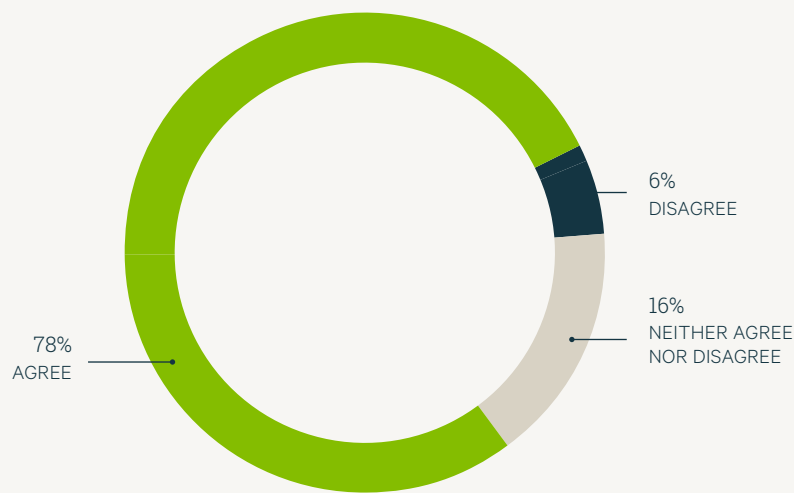


Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

Consequences of Raising the Minimum Wage

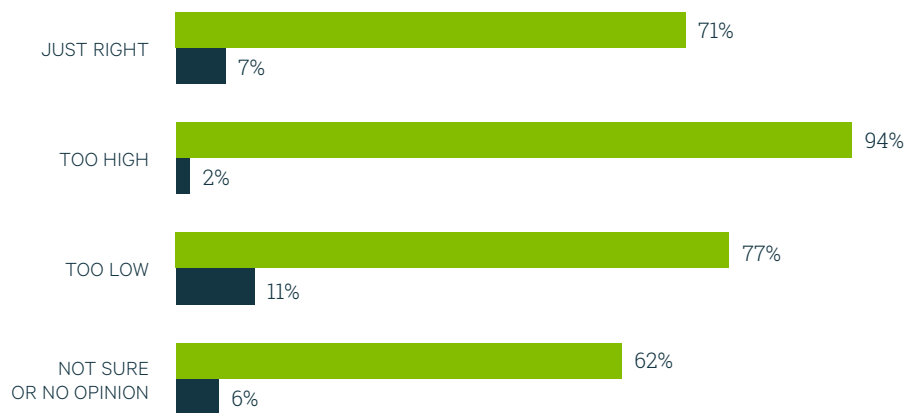
People generally share the same beliefs about the economic consequences of a minimum wage increase, regardless of how they feel about a \$15 minimum wage.

Most believe that raising the federal minimum wage will also increase the prices of goods and services.



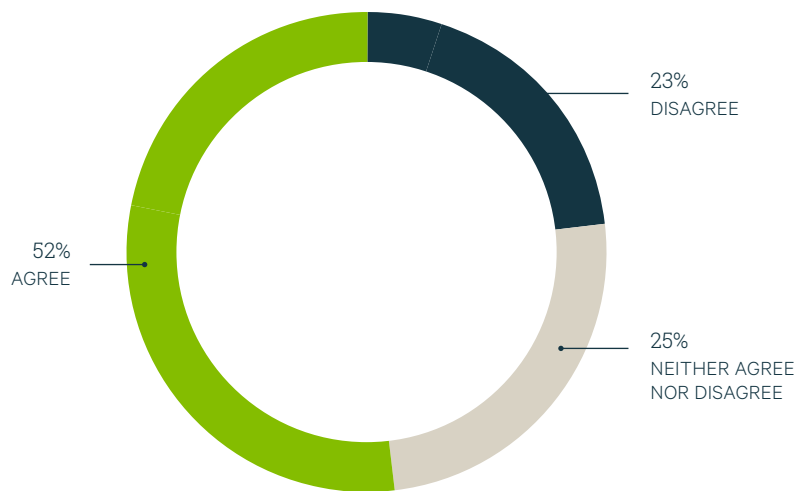
Question 13B
If the federal minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe the prices of goods and services will, in general, also increase.

This belief is still true regardless of what they think about raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. And it's almost universally true among those who think \$15 per hour is **too high**.



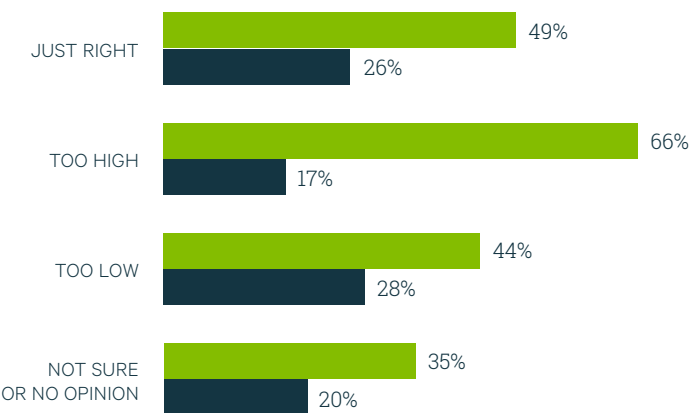
Question 13B
If the federal minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe the prices of goods and services will, in general, also increase.

A full 5 in 10 respondents believe that raising the minimum wage would result in fewer minimum wage jobs.



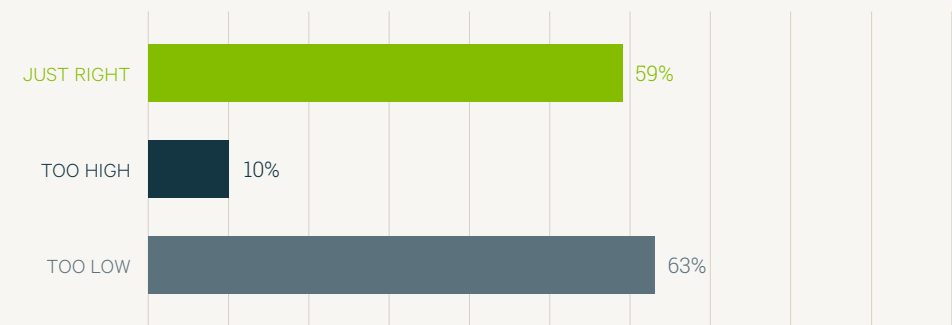
Question 13D
If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe there would be fewer minimum wage jobs.

Those who think \$15 per hour is **too high** (66%) as a minimum wage are more likely to think this.



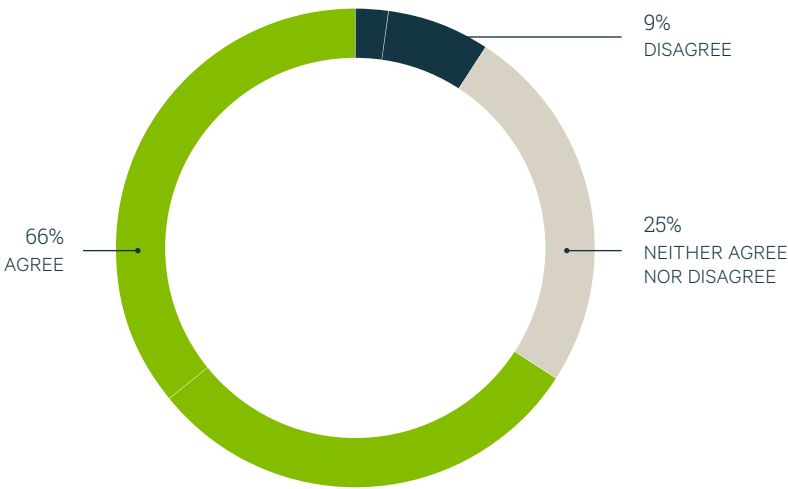
Question 13D
If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe there would be fewer minimum wage jobs.

Most people who think a \$15 minimum wage is just right or too low would still support an increase even if it meant that the prices of goods and services were higher. However, most feel that their incomes deserve to increase too.



Question 13C
I would support an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, even if it meant that the prices of goods and services were higher.

Despite this, most believe their yearly income deserves to increase if the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour.



Question 13A
If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, my yearly income deserves to increase as well.

This question was only shown to respondents who said they make currently make more than \$15 per hour at their job

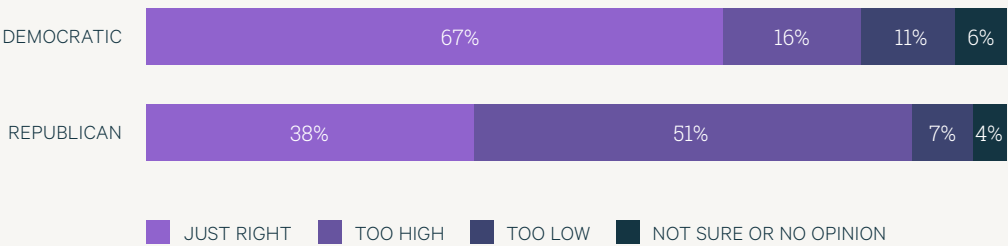
And this was true regardless of how a respondent feels about a \$15 minimum wage.



Percent of those who agreed with question 13A.³

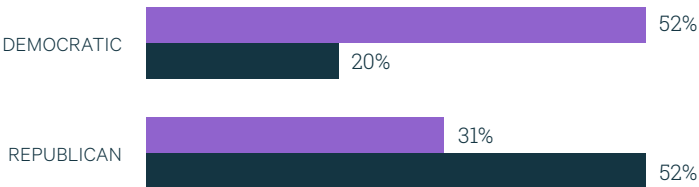
Support for a \$15 Minimum Wage Across Party Lines

The biggest difference in support for a \$15 minimum wage is evident along party lines, even if beliefs about the economic consequences of a \$15 minimum wage aren't drastically different among political parties.



Question 3
Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is...

Half of Democrats would still support an increase to \$15 per hour even if the prices were higher, but half of Republicans would not.



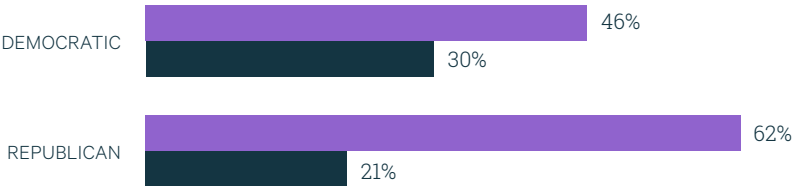
Question 13C
I would support an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, even if it meant that the prices of goods and services were higher.

However, both Democrats and Republicans share the belief that an increase in the minimum wage would result in higher prices.



Question 13B
If the federal minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe the prices of goods and services will, in general, also increase.

Almost half of Democrats (46%) believe that an increase in the minimum wage would lead to fewer minimum wage jobs. Republicans (62%) are even more likely to believe this.



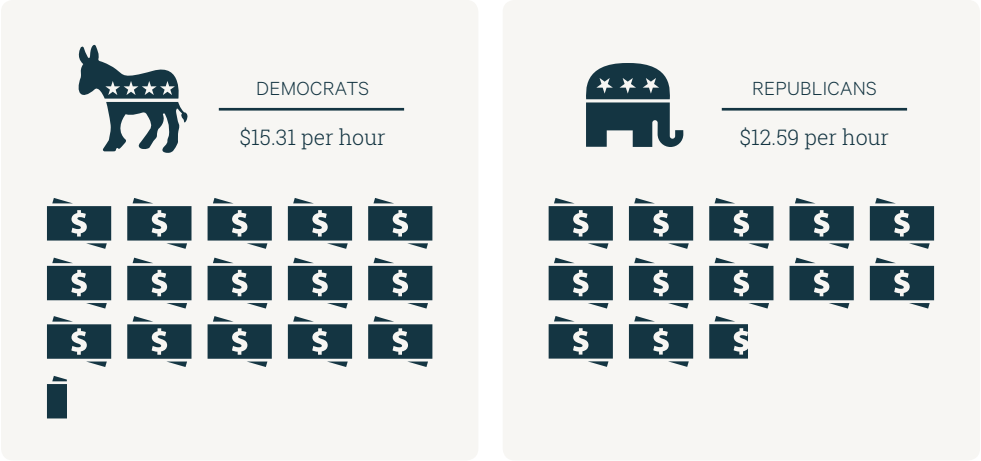
Question 13D
If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe there would be fewer minimum wage jobs.

Another common opinion between both political parties? Their yearly incomes deserve to increase if the minimum wage increases. In fact, Democrats were more likely to hold this belief, even though they were more likely to support a \$15 minimum wage.



Question 13A
If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, my yearly income deserves to increase as well.
Only shown to respondents who answered "no" to Question 1.

Even though Republicans are more likely to think a \$15 minimum wage is **too high**, they suggested, on average, that the minimum wage should be around \$12.59. This is 1.7 times higher than the current federal minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour).



Question 4
What do you think the minimum wage should be (in dollars per hour)?
Responses were limited from \$0 to \$35 per hour and includes those that thought \$15 was just right

AGREE³ DISAGREE³

Appendix

Survey Demographics

The survey results are weighted by age and educational attainment to reflect the characteristics of the U.S. population as reported in the 2016 Census.

DEMOGRAPHIC	UNWEIGHTED NUMBER	WEIGHTED %
Gender		
Female	651	57%
Male	581	43%
Age		
18 to 34 years old	380	30%
35 to 49 years old	286	25%
50 to 64 years old	243	26%
65 and older	159	19%
Region		
Northeast	235	17%
Midwest	270	23%
South	469	36%
West	283	24%
Educational Attainment		
No high school diploma	33	12%
High school or equivalent	231	29%
Some college, less than 4-yr degree	428	29%
Bachelor's degree or higher	532	31%
Political Party		
Democratic	501	40%
Republican	297	23%
Independent	272	23%
Other	30	3%
Not sure/none	120	11%

Weighted Survey Questions

Question 1

Do you currently work at a job that pays less than \$15 per hour before taxes (approximately \$30,000 full time before taxes)?

Yes	36%
No	64%

Question 2

Have you ever worked at any job that paid less than \$15 per hour before taxes (approximately \$30,000 full time before taxes)?

Yes	82%
No	18%

Question 2 was only shown to respondents who answered "no" to Question 1.

Question 3

Some lawmakers have proposed changing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Do you think \$15 per hour is:

Just right	52%
Too high	30%
Too low	10%
Not sure or no opinion	8%

Question 4

What do you think the minimum wage should be? (in dollars per hour)

Mean (all responses)	\$14.55
Mean (with maximum capped at \$35)	\$12.77

Question 4 was only shown to respondents who said \$15 per hour is "too high" or "too low" in Question 3.

Question 5

Do you think the minimum wage should be set at \$X per hour nationwide?

Yes	79%
No	15%
Not sure	7%

Question 5 was only shown to respondents who said \$15 per hour is "too high" or "too low" in Question 3.

Respondents' answers from Question 4 were shown in place of X.

Question 6

Do you think the minimum wage should be set at \$15 per hour nationwide?

Yes	86%
No	7%
Not sure	7%

Question 6 was only shown to respondents who said \$15 per hour is “just right” in Question 3.

Question 7

Do you think the minimum wage should be the same nationwide?

Yes	44%
No	22%
Not sure	34%

Question 7 was only shown to respondents who answered “not sure or no opinion” to Question 3.

Question 8

Do any of your friends or family members currently hold a job paying less than \$15 per hour?

Yes	67%
No	22%
Not sure	11%

Question 9

Are any under the age of 18?

Yes	19%
No	81%

Question 9 was only shown to respondents who answered “yes” to Question 8.

Question 10

To what extent do you agree with the following: In general, minimum wage jobs require a low level of skill or training.

Strongly agree	20%
Agree	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%
Disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	4%

Question 10B

To what extent do you agree with the following: In general, minimum wage jobs are not physically demanding.

Strongly agree	7%
Agree	10%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Disagree	39%
Strongly disagree	22%

Question 10C

To what extent do you agree with the following: In general, minimum wage jobs are not mentally stressful.

Strongly agree	10%
Agree	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Disagree	36%
Strongly disagree	22%

Question 11

Do you believe people who work for minimum wage are more likely to be: (check all that apply)

Under 18 years old	50%
18 to 34 years old	72%
35 to 49 years old	17%
50 years old or older	19%
Not sure	12%

Question 12

Do you believe people who work for minimum wage are more likely to be: (check all that apply)

White	53%
Hispanic or Latino	71%
Black or African American	68%
Asian or Pacific Islander	27%
Middle Eastern	27%
Other	5%

Question 13A

To what extent do you agree with the following: If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, my yearly income deserves to increase as well.

Strongly agree	36%
Agree	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	2%

Question 13A was only shown to respondents who answered "no" to Question 1.

Question 13B

To what extent do you agree with the following: If the federal minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe the prices of goods and services will, in general, also increase.

Strongly agree	43%
Agree	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%
Disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	1%

Question 13C

To what extent do you agree with the following: I would support an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, even if it meant that the prices of goods and services were higher.

Strongly agree	13%
Agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	20%
Strongly disagree	13%

Question 13D

To what extent do you agree with the following: If the minimum wage increases to \$15 per hour, I believe there would be fewer minimum wage jobs.

Strongly agree	22%
Agree	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	18%
Strongly disagree	5%

Question 14

What is your employment status? (check all that apply)

Employed full-time	39%
Employed part-time	16%
Student	8%
Retired	25%
Unemployed	15%

Question 15

Are you typically paid a salary or an hourly wage?

Salary	43%
Hourly wage	57%

Question 16

What is your current yearly income before taxes?

Less than \$20,000	6%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	18%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	17%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	18%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	18%
\$100,000 or more	23%

Question 16 was only shown to respondents who said they were paid a salary in Question 15.

Question 17

What is your current hourly wage before taxes?

Less than \$10 per hour	24%
\$10 to \$14.99 per hour	38%
\$15 to \$19.99 per hour	20%
\$20 to \$29.99 per hour	10%
\$30 to \$39.99 per hour	2%
\$40 to \$49.99 per hour	3%
\$50 or more per hour	2%

Question 17 was only shown to respondents who said they were paid an hourly wage in Question 15.

Question 18

What is your gender?

Female	57%
Male	43%

Question 19

In what state do you currently live? (recoded to region)

Northeast	17%
Midwest	23%
South	36%
West	24%

Question 20

Were you born in the United States?

Yes	94%
No	6%

Question 21

How many years have you lived in the United States?

Minimum	1
1st Quartile	11
Median	23
Mean	26.2
3rd Quartile	40
Maximum	67

Question 21 was only shown to respondents who answered "no" to Question 20.

Question 22

How old are you?

18 to 34 years old	30%
35 to 49 years old	25%
50 to 64 years old	26%
65 years old or older	19%

Question 23

What is the highest level of education you have received?

Less than high school diploma	12%
High school diploma or equivalent, including GED	29%
Associate's degree or trade/technical diploma	9%
Some college, no diploma	20%
Bachelor's degree	17%
Some postgraduate, no diploma	3%
Master's or professional degree	10%
Doctoral degree	1%

Questions 24 through 26 were only shown to respondents who said they were employed full-time and/or part-time in Question 14.

Question 24

My current job includes the following functions: (check all that apply)

Clerical or administrative work	26%
Manual or physical labor	20%
Customer service or sales	26%
Management	20%
Professional, technical or scientific work	25%
Other	13%

Question 25

My current job requires one or more of the following to attain competency: (check all that apply)

Internship, residency or apprenticeship	17%
12 months or more of on the job training	26%
Less than 12 months of on the job training	31%
No on the job training required	33%

Question 26

The minimum educational level required for my current job is:

A high school diploma	43%
An associate's degree or technical/trade diploma	11%
A bachelor's degree	22%
A master's or professional degree	9%
A doctoral degree	1%
None	14%

Question 27

What is your political party preference?

Democratic	40%
Republican	23%
Independent	23%
Other	3%
Not sure/none	11%

Learn More

About ValuePenguin

ValuePenguin focuses on providing high quality resources to help consumers understand the topics they're interested in. Whether its building visual tools to explain data or publishing in-depth research our goal is to provide objective analysis to help guide you to the best decision. In the process of developing our research, we focus on Value, assessing whether the return of a particular purchase or decision is worth the cost or risk of that option, and how this stacks up with the other possible choices you may have.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Kapil Bawa, Professor of Marketing at Baruch College, CUNY

Contact

For more information about ValuePenguin, visit valuepenguin.com.
For other inquiries, please email media@valuepenguin.com.