

POLICY BRIEF

Six common myths about the minimum wage

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December 2017

Key Findings

1. The buying power of the federal minimum wage, and state minimum wages that are higher, have kept pace with inflation.
2. Minimum wage workers are not worse off economically than they were in the past. In 1968 minimum wage workers could buy more with their money, but there were three times as many workers earning minimum wage and they were paying much higher taxes than today's minimum wage workers.
3. Increasing the minimum wage does not reduce poverty. Low wages are not the cause of poverty; it is lack of a job. Of working age adults living in poverty, nearly two-thirds do not work. Of the close to one-third who do work, only 10 percent work full time.
4. Very few people are "trying to survive" on minimum wage earnings. The majority of minimum wage earners are young and many are still in school. Most minimum wage workers are not poor, are not working full-time, and do not rely on their wages as the sole source of income to support a family.
5. A family that relies solely on minimum wage earnings is rare. The vast majority of adult minimum wage earners, with or without children, are supplementing the income of a higher-earning spouse.
6. The value of the minimum wage has more than kept pace with gains in worker productivity in the jobs that typically pay minimum wage.
7. Economic studies show raising the minimum wage comes with significant harmful effects, making it harder for young people, immigrants and minorities, and workers with less on-the-job experience to find employment.



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Introduction

Throughout the political movement pushing for a higher minimum wage, advocates have routinely told the public a series of claims that deserve further scrutiny.

This Policy Brief examines and debunks six of the most common myths supporters of increasing the minimum wage routinely cite to support their agenda.

Background

In 2013, the small city of SeaTac, Washington became ground zero for the “15 Now” minimum wage political movement that since has spread to cities, and to some states, around the nation. After one of the most expensive initiative campaigns in state history, SeaTac became the first U.S. city to impose a \$15 minimum wage law, paving the way for the adoption of similar wage laws the following year in Seattle, San Francisco, and others.

While the narrative behind the push for a higher mandated wage focused on convincing voters that minimum wage earners are trying to support families while stuck in low-paying jobs that keep them locked in poverty, the real motive behind the union-backed push for a \$15 minimum wage in SeaTac had nothing to do with helping workers.

As pointed out by *The Washington Post*, the political battle for a \$15 minimum wage in SeaTac started as an effort to intimidate the city’s employers into accepting a union-dominated labor market.¹

“Initially, unions hoped simply to win contracts for the 6,000 service-sector workers at Seattle’s airport and the surrounding hotels. When employers resisted, the unions threatened to place a \$15 wage proposal on the SeaTac ballot (the airport is located in SeaTac), but still the employers wouldn’t negotiate.”

1 “How to get a raise at McDonald’s,” by Harold Meyerson, *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2014, at www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/harold-meyerson-minimum-wage-fights-mark-unions-adapting-to-change/2014/09/03/8f1eb71c-3397-11e4-9e92-0899b306bbea_story.html?utm_term=.bf790eb39c7a.

Union executives spared no expense in making sure they could follow through on their threat. In a city with just 12,100 registered voters, unions spent \$1.4 million to support passage of Proposition 1, which passed by just 77 votes (out of 6,003 votes cast). So the union spent more than \$230 for every “yes” vote cast.²

Since their victory in SeaTac, organized labor executives have made increasing the mandated minimum wage to \$15 an hour a top priority, and have spent a significant sum to further that agenda. In 2013, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) spent \$17 million to fund the “Fight for \$15” campaign.³ That was followed by \$23 million spent in 2014 and another \$20 million spent in 2015 on “Fight for \$15” activities.⁴ Last year SEIU executives spent more than \$16 million promoting their \$15 minimum wage political agenda.⁵

The organizing director of Fast Food Forward, who is also paid by SEIU, explained why union executives are willing to spend so heavily on the “Fight for \$15” cause:

“Just to be clear, this is not a minimum wage campaign, these fast food workers are not trying to raise minimum wage. They want to sit down with the \$200 billion fast food industry and get the money out of their pockets and negotiate a union contract with them.”⁶

Clearly the union’s support for a \$15 minimum wage is less about helping workers than about increasing their membership rosters. More members translate into more dues dollars, which translates into greater union power.

Despite that plain-spoken admission, SEIU and others in the labor movement continue to promote the “Fight for \$15” as an effort to end low-wages for workers and “lift families out of poverty.”

2 “\$15 minimum wage passes in SeaTac, but recount coming,” by Amy Martinez, *The Seattle Times*, November 26, 2013 at www.seattletimes.com/business/15-minimum-wage-passes-in-seatac-but-recount-coming/.

3 “Union spent \$23 million last year on higher minimum wage push,” by Sean Higgins, *Washington Examiner*, April 2, 2015, at www.washingtonexaminer.com/union-spent-23-million-last-year-on-higher-minimum-wage-push/article/2562428.

4 “New Report: SEIU spends estimated \$20 million on Fight for \$15 in 2015, loses almost 6,000 members,” Press Release, Center for Union Facts, March 2016, at http://laborpains.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/seiu_release.pdf.

5 “Labor movement spends millions to boost wages for workers who don’t yet pay dues,” by Erik Morath, Fox Business, May 23, 2017 at www.foxbusiness.com/features/2017/05/23/labor-movement-spends-millions-to-boost-wages-for-workers-who-dont-yet-pay-dues0.html.

6 “SEIU Rep: Fight for \$15, ‘not a minimum wage campaign,’ we want a union,” Illinois Review, October 6, 2014, at <http://illinoisreview.typepad.com/illinoisreview/2014/10/seiu-rep-fight-for-15-not-a-minimum-wage-campaign-we-want-a-union.html>.

U.S. Senators Patty Murray (D-Washington) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) announced earlier this year they will introduce legislation that would increase the federal minimum wage by 107%.

In an editorial published in *The Seattle Times* explaining their decision to push for a \$15 federal minimum wage, Senators Murray and Sanders rely on the usual series of predictable, but erroneous, claims that make for good media sound bites but which are misleading at best, and patently false at worst.⁷

Myth 1: Minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation

Advocates frequently claim that workers earning the \$1.60 federal minimum wage in 1968 had more purchasing power (and therefore supposedly a better standard of living) than today's minimum wage workers. That is, if the federal minimum wage rose with the cost of living since 1968, today's minimum wage would be \$11.22.

This is mathematically true. But the claim relies on cherry-picking because 1968 was the year the federal minimum wage hit its inflation-adjusted high point.

If you compare the value of today's federal minimum wage with any other random year the numbers tell a different story. Using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI calculator, if the federal minimum wage tracked inflation since 1938, the year it started, today's wage would be just \$4.34 per hour.

If one chooses 1948 as the base year, the inflation-adjusted minimum today would be \$4.01. With 1958 as the base year it would be \$8.44 today, and starting at 1978 it would be \$9.87. Using 1988 as the starting point means workers' inflation-adjusted earnings would be \$6.92 per hour. Base years 1998 and 2008 result in inflation-adjust minimum wages of \$7.72 and \$7.29 an hour today.⁸

There are only two legitimate ways of measuring the effects of inflation on the buying power of the minimum wage: 1) measure from the based year of 1938, when the policy started, or; 2) compare today's minimum wage with the rise in the average annual increase in inflation since the policy started.

Here are the mathematical results using these two methods.

7 "Bernie Sanders and Patty Murray: It's time for a national \$15 minimum wage," by Senator Bernie Sanders and Senator Patty Murray, *The Seattle Times*, April 28, 2017, at www.seattletimes.com/opinion/bernie-sanders-and-patty-murray-its-time-for-national-15-minimum-wage/.

8 CPI Inflation Calculator, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed July 2017 at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=1.60&year1=196807&year2=201707>.

1. Inflation has risen 294 percent since 1938, meaning the same level of buying power today would set the federal minimum at \$4.34 an hour. In reality, the federal minimum is \$7.25, or 2,800 percent higher than when the policy started.⁹

2. Under the second method, the federal minimum has tracked closely with the average rise in inflation over 80 years. Using average annual inflation the federal minimum would be \$7.70 an hour. In reality it is just slightly less, at \$7.25 an hour.

Conclusion: The claim that the buying power of the federal minimum wage, and state minimum wages that are even higher, have not kept up with inflation is false.

Myth 2: Minimum wage workers are worse off today than in the past

Minimum wage advocates like Senators Sanders and Murray routinely declare that today's minimum wage workers are worse off economically than they were decades ago, falling farther and farther behind in achieving the American dream of economic prosperity.

To understand the fallacy of this statement we must again go to the selected year of 1968, when minimum wage workers were supposedly better off.

The year is an outlier because the federal minimum hit its inflation-adjusted high point, giving workers more buying power, but those workers also paid much higher tax rates than today.¹⁰

Today's income tax rates for the lowest earners are half of what they used to be, due, in part, to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).¹¹ Low-income workers today receive up to a 45 percent EITC tax credit, meaning they pay no income tax and often receive a cash payment from the government. Nearly

9 Ibid.

10 "How the tax burden has changed since 1960," by Tom Curry, NBC News, April 2, 2009, at www.nbcnews.com/id/29861648/ns/politics-capitol_hill/t/how-tax-burden-has-changed/#.WQt6trzyuYU.

11 "Reducing poverty via minimum wages, alternatives," by David Neumark, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Economic Letter, December 28, 2015, at www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2015/december/reducing-poverty-via-minimum-wages-tax-credit/.

a quarter of the lowest earning workers are eligible for the EITC tax subsidy.¹²

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What is more, regressive excise taxes, which carry a greater burden for low-income families, have decreased from 13 percent of total revenues in 1960 to only about 2 percent today.¹⁴

Add to the lower tax burden is the fact today far fewer workers even earn the minimum wage than in 1968. In 1979, according to the earliest data available, they represented 7.9 percent of all wage and salary workers. Today minimum wage earners comprise just 2.6 percent of all wage and salary workers.¹⁵

So in 1968 minimum wage workers could buy more with their money, but there were three times as many workers earning minimum wage and they were paying much higher taxes than today's minimum wage workers.

Conclusion: Claiming minimum wage workers of 1968 were better off than those today is a simplistic view of a snapshot in time. Taking into consideration the broader picture of how the minimum wage has tracked inflation over eight decades (versus one year), the significantly lower taxes minimum wage earners pay today and that far fewer workers earn minimum wage, the reality is much different.

Myth 3: Increasing the minimum wage “lifts workers out of poverty”

Senators Murray and Sanders make the claim that today's federal minimum wage is a “starvation wage” and “is a major reason why more than 43 million Americans are living in poverty today. People are working, and they're working hard. But they're going nowhere in a hurry.”

This statement is not true.

The majority of people living in poverty do not work. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2015, 24 million of adults ages 18-64 lived under the poverty line; about 15 million of them (62 percent) did not have a job

12 “Credit where taxes are due,” *The Economist*, July 2, 2015, at www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21656710-reducing-wage-subsidies-would-hurt-workers-more-their-employers-credit-where.

13 “Key Elements of the U.S. Tax System: What is the EITC?,” Tax Policy Center, Urban Institute & Brookings Institution, accessed July 2017, at www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-earned-income-tax-credit-eitc.

14 “How the tax burden has changed since 1960,” by Tom Curry, NBC News, April 2, 2009, at www.nbcnews.com/id/29861648/ns/politics-capitol_hill/t/how-tax-burden-has-changed/#.WQt6trzyuYU.

15 “Who makes minimum wage,” by Drew Silver, Pew Research, September 8, 2014, at www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/08/who-makes-minimum-wage/.

during the year. Of those who did work, just 2.5 million worked full time (10 percent) while seven million worked part time (28 percent).¹⁶

So of the working age adults living in poverty, nearly two-thirds do not work. Of the close to one-third who do work, only 10 percent of them work full time.

Low wages are not the cause of poverty; it is the lack of a job. A minority living in poverty may be “working hard,” as Senators Murray and Sanders say, but the overwhelming majority are not working at all.

Multiple minimum wage studies show that past minimum wage hikes have had no effect on poverty.¹⁷

Ironically, artificially increasing the minimum wage reduces job opportunities and available hours for low-wage workers, thereby decreasing income and increasing poverty.¹⁸ The new \$15 minimum wage law in Seattle provides the most recent and compelling evidence of this job-killing effect.¹⁹

Senators Murray and Sanders opine that, “a basic principle of American economic life should be that if you work 40 hours or more a week, you do not live in poverty.” Statistics show that if a person works full time, the odds of living in poverty are quite low. Increasing the mandated wage makes it harder for young and low-skilled workers to find a job in the first place.

Conclusion: Increasing wages to help people who don’t have a job does not “lift workers out of poverty.” A better policy is suggested by economist Walter Williams, who, as one of his five steps for staying out of poverty says, “take a job, any kind of job.”²⁰

16 “Income and poverty in the United States: 2015,” U.S. Census Bureau, September 2016, at www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf.

17 “The negative effects of minimum wage laws,” by Mark Wilson, Cato Institute, September 1, 2012, at www.downsizinggovernment.org/labor/negative-effects-minimum-wage-laws.

18 “The effects of minimum wage on employment,” by David Neumark, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Economic Letter, December 21, 2015, at www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2015/december/effects-of-minimum-wage-on-employment/.

19 “UW study finds Seattle’s minimum wage is reducing jobs,” by Janet I. Tu, *The Seattle Times*, June 26, 2017, at www.seattletimes.com/business/uw-study-finds-seattles-minimum-wage-is-costing-jobs/.

20 “Poverty in America,” by Dr. Walter E. Williams, George Mason University, February 24, 2003, at <http://econfaculty.gmu.edu/wew/articles/03/povamerica.html>.

Myth 4: The average minimum wage earner is 35 years old

Advocates often claim that the typical minimum wage earner is no longer a young person with little or no work experience, but instead is an older, established worker “trying to survive on totally inadequate wages.”²¹

According to Senators Sanders and Murray, “Despite a popular misconception, minimum-wage workers are not all high school kids. In fact, the average worker who would benefit from a \$15-an-hour minimum wage is age 36.”²²

Note that they do not say the average minimum wage earner is 36. Instead they say the average worker who would benefit from their proposed \$15 wage is 36. Of course, the higher the proposed minimum wage, the greater the effect on higher-age workers.

So let’s examine who currently earns the minimum wage. The claim is routinely made that the average age of a minimum wage earner is 35 or 36. Advocates conjure images of middle-age workers who are working full-time as they desperately try to support their family while trapped in low-wage jobs.

The reality is much different. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics paints “a starkly different picture of low-wage workers»²³ The Bureau finds that, “minimum wage workers tend to be young.”

Of the tiny group of workers (2.6% of all workers in the U.S.) who earn minimum wage, 45 percent are under age 25, and 60 percent are under age 30. The median age of people earning the minimum is closer to mid-twenties than middle age.

To complete the picture, 65 percent of minimum wage workers have never been married, nearly 60 percent work part-time, and 62 percent live with their parents (or another relative), or are single.²⁴

Conclusion: While it is true not all minimum wage earners are high school kids, the data clearly shows the majority of them are young and many are still in school. Most minimum wage workers are not poor, are not

21 “Bernie Sanders and Patty Murray: It’s time for a national \$15 minimum wage,” by Senator Bernie Sanders and Senator Patty Murray, *The Seattle Times*, April 28, 2017, at www.seattletimes.com/opinion/bernie-sanders-and-patty-murray-its-time-for-national-15-minimum-wage/.

22 Ibid.

23 “Sen. Erin Lynch says 35 is the average age for people earning the minimum wage,” by C. Eugene Emery Jr., Politifact, June 20, 2014, at www.politifact.com/rhode-island/statements/2014/jun/20/erin-lynch/sen-erin-lynch-says-35-average-age-people-earning-/.

24 “Characteristics of minimum wage workers,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2017, at www.bls.gov/opub/reports/minimum-wage/2016/home.html.

working full-time, and do not rely on their wages as the sole source of income to support a family.

In other words, very few people are “trying to survive” on minimum wage earnings.

Myth 5: Minimum wage workers are supporting a family

The data shows the majority of minimum wage earners are young, work part time, have never been married, and live at home.

But what about adults who do earn the minimum wage? Do they fit the picture painted by minimum wage advocates of parents scraping by trying to support a family on meager minimum wage earnings?

The answer is no.

Even among the older minimum wage earners, the reality simply doesn't fit the image perpetuated by minimum wage supporters.

A 2016 study using Congressional Budget Office methodology found that just one in 10 workers who would be affected by a proposed \$12 federal minimum wage are single parents with children. A majority of those who would be affected (60 percent) are either second or third-earners in households where the average family income is more than \$50,000 per year.²⁵ The study found that:

- 41 percent live with family or relative
- 20 percent are in married dual earner households
- 21 percent are single adults
- 9 percent are married sole earners
- 9 percent are single parents

So just 18 percent of minimum wage earners are the sole source of income for their family, and only half of those are single parents dependent upon minimum wage earnings to support their children.

²⁵ “The Effects of a \$12 Federal Minimum Wage.” Dr. William E Even, Miami University, and Dr. David Macpherson, Trinity University, for Employment Policies Institute, March 2016, at www.minimumwage.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MinimumWage101_PolicyBrief_July.pdf.

Conclusions from an earlier study support the finding that few adult minimum wage workers provide the sole support for families. Those who do have families also have substantial income from spousal employment.²⁶

- In 94 percent of families with adults who earn minimum wage, the spouse works as well.
- In 80 percent of those families with children, minimum wage earnings account for less than 20 percent of the household income.

Among adults with children who work part time at a minimum wage job, the study found:²⁷

- Nearly half have a spouse who earn more than \$40,000 a year;
- Another 16 percent have a spouse earning between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a year;
- 12 percent have a spouse earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 each year.
- Looking at it a different way:²⁸
- In more than 75 percent of families with children present, earnings from a minimum wage job account for less than 20 percent of total family income;
- In less than 5 percent of families with children present do minimum wage earnings account for more than 70 percent of family income.

The numbers are similar for minimum wage earners who do not support children:²⁹

- In 67 percent of households with a minimum wage earner with no children, earnings from the minimum wage job account for less than 20 percent of total household income;
- In only 10 percent of households do minimum wage earnings account for more than 70 percent of total income.

In other words, the vast majority of adult minimum wage earners, with or without children, are supplementing the income of a higher-earning spouse. A small minority of adult minimum wage earners are the primary earner in

26 “Just getting by? Income dependence on minimum wage jobs,” by Bradley R. Shiller, Department of Economics, University of Nevada-Reno, for Employment Policies Institute, March 2011, at www.epionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/schiller_03-2011.pdf.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

their household. A family that relies solely on minimum wage earnings is rare, not typical.

Conclusion: Advocates claim a higher minimum wage would mostly help parents struggling to make ends meet. The data clearly shows, however, that increasing the minimum wage ends up benefitting many workers who are not struggling to support a family at all, and would do very little to increase the overall family income of minimum wage earners.

Myth 6: Minimum wage has not kept up with productivity

Advocates of a high minimum wage claim it has not kept pace with increases in productivity. They reason that, since average labor productivity increased by 135 percent between 1968 and 2015, lawmakers should have increased the minimum wage by the same amount. Adjusted for inflation (pegged to the minimum wage's high point of 1968), they argue today's minimum wage should be \$26 an hour.³⁰

This comparison of productivity and the minimum wage is meaningless.

The labor productivity argument is based on using the average productivity gains of all workers in every industry. This includes the productivity of workers in high-tech industries, such as computer programmers and software engineers. It also includes increases in productivity of manufacturing workers who have gained from efficiencies and advances in mechanization.³¹

Thanks to improvements in technology, certain sectors of the workforce have simply been more productive in recent decades than others.^{32 33} For example, the wireless telecommunication carrier industry has realized annual labor productivity growth of over 15 percent over the past decade.³⁴

30 "A \$15 U.S. minimum wage: How the fast-food industry could adjust without shedding jobs," by Robert Pollin and Janette Wicks-Lim, Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts Amherst, January 2015, at <http://cafehayek.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/WP373.pdf>.

31 "Robots seem to be improving productivity, no costing jobs," by Mark Muro and Scott Andes, *Harvard Business Review*, June 16, 2015, at <https://hbr.org/2015/06/robots-seem-to-be-improving-productivity-not-costing-jobs>.

32 "Labor Productivity and Costs, 1947-2016," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed July 2017, at www.bls.gov/lpc/prodybar.htm.

33 "Technology and productivity," by Linda Gorman, National Bureau of Economic Research, September 12, 2017, at www.nber.org/digest/oct01/w8359.html.

34 "Why this counts: Productivity and its impact on our lives," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 9, 2016, at <https://blogs.bls.gov/blog/2016/08/09/why-this-counts-productivity-and-its-impact-on-our-lives/>.

While advances in technology have increased productivity sharply in certain sectors, these are not the parts of the economy in which minimum wage earners typically work.

A fair assessment would not examine the productivity of U.S. workers as a whole, but would focus on sectors with jobs that actually pay the minimum wage.³⁵

The food service industry employs almost half of all minimum wage workers. Between 1987 (the earliest year available) and 2016, worker productivity in the food service sector rose by an average of 0.5 percent per year. During that same period of time, unit labor costs increased an average of 3.1 percent per year.³⁶

So the cost of labor in the fast food industry significantly outpaced the output of that labor. The minimum wage increased by more than 116 percent (from \$3.35 to \$7.25) during that period, an average increase of around four percent every year. Productivity increased an average of .5 percent every year. The minimum wage for workers in the food service industry, a typical sector for minimum wage jobs, increased nearly tenfold in comparison to labor productivity gains.

In contrast, during the same 1987-2016 year span, the productivity of workers throughout the entire U.S. economy rose around an average of 2.2 percent per year. That's over four times the average annual productivity gains as the food service industry.

So have the average wages of all workers kept pace with their average gains in productivity? The answer is yes; once total compensation is factored in, average wages have grown with average productivity.

Ironically, productivity in the food service sector will likely rise as increases in the mandated minimum wage push restaurant owners and fast food operators toward automation and the hiring of workers with greater skills and experience.

That means younger and lower-skilled workers will find it even harder to find work. Again, a policy of imposing a high minimum wage has the job-killing effect of hurting the very workers advocates say they want to help.

Conclusion: Productivity growth in one of the largest sectors of minimum wage workers, the food service industry, has clearly lagged behind the average

35 "Almost everything you have been told about the minimum wage is false," by Jeffrey Dorfman, *Forbes*, January 30, 2014, at www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2014/01/30/almost-everything-you-have-been-told-about-the-minimum-wage-is-false/#bcb8e176bc2.

36 "Productivity and Costs by Industry: 2016," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 3, 2017, at www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/prin1.pdf.

productivity growth of all workers. So why would we expect the wages of those workers to keep pace with the productivity of all workers? Just because advances in technology pulled up average productivity and wages does not mean it should also pull up burger flipping wages.

Conclusion

When pushing for a higher minimum wage, advocates paint a false picture of parents who are struggling to support a family on a meager minimum wage. The image of hard-working individuals who are helplessly stuck in a cycle of exploitive, low-paying jobs and poverty from which they cannot escape is not supported by the data.

The emotional value of that image is an easier message than data and facts when it comes to urging policymakers and the public to support increasing the minimum “starvation” wage to a so-called “living wage.”

Emotional images are appealing, but in the case of increasing the minimum wage, the facts simply do not support the most oft-repeated and enduring myths offered by high-minimum wage advocates.

The minimum wage has kept pace with average inflation, minimum wage workers are not worse off economically than they were in the past, and increasing the minimum wage does not reduce poverty.

Far from being typical working parents, most minimum wage workers are young, most do not rely on the minimum wage to support a family, and the value of the minimum wage, like average wages, has more than kept pace with gains in worker productivity.

These are objective, measurable findings that minimum wage advocates simply ignore in making their arguments, turning instead to attractive, but invented, emotional imagery to influence the public debate over economic policy.

As shown in this study, prominent advocates like U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders and Patty Murray rely on error-laden and easily-corrected myths to convince the public that workers, employers and the economy will thrive with the imposition of a \$15 federal minimum wage.

In fact, economic studies show that raising the minimum wage comes with significant harmful effects, by making it harder for young people, immigrants and minorities, and workers with less on-the-job experience to find employment. Negative findings like these demonstrate why policymakers and the public should not rely on unsupported myths when making policy decisions that will affect the lives of workers and families across the country.

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