



### **Part-Time Work and Unemployment Insurance**

The UI system has been a critical work support for male-headed families since its creation in 1935. But the composition of our workforce is changing. More women are entering the workforce overall, and since the advent of welfare reform more single mothers have entered the workforce. Including part-time workers in the UI system is required to address the needs of this new workforce.

#### **Facts about part-time work and UI:**

- Part-time work has tripled in the US since the 1950s; a little less than one in five workers now works part time (NELP)
- Part-time workers demonstrate significant attachment to the labor market
- Part-time workers are a large share of the unemployed; about 1 in 5 unemployed workers worked part-time before losing work
- Nationally, women make up 70% of part-time workers
- 1997 census data shows that, nationwide, only slightly more than half of single women with children worked full-time (Census bureau data compiled by UWM-CED)

#### **Wisconsin's 2001 part-time workforce:**

Average hours worked

	5 or fewer	10 or fewer	15 or fewer	20 or fewer	25 or fewer	30 or fewer	35 or fewer
Wisconsin	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>65.7%</b>	<b>86.1%</b>	<b>98.3%</b>

Median hours worked and median wages

	Mean Hours	Median Hours	Median Wages
Wisconsin	<b>22.4</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>\$8.62</b>
U.S.	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>\$8.00</b>
Lowest	<b>19.9</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>\$6.50</b>
Highest	<b>24.2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>\$9.50</b>

Data from Current Population Survey, prepared by Economic Policy Institute.

**Wisconsin has a significant gender gap in access to UI benefits:**

- Nationwide, in 1997, only 30% of unemployed women obtained UI benefits, compared to 36% of unemployed men (National Association of Child Advocates issue brief)
- Wisconsin has a high reciprocity rate, but also has the highest gender gap among the states; 49% of unemployed workers receive UI, but the gap between men and women workers is 10% (Institute for Women's Policy Research)

**We are especially concerned about expanding access for three groups of part-time workers:**

***1) Single parents***

Historically, many single mothers used the welfare system as a form of unemployment compensation. These women may work part-time so that their work hours coincide with their children's school day. Because of changes in social welfare provision, single mothers who work part-time can no longer rely on welfare during periodic economic downturns. Absent changes to the UI system, they will have no resources to cushion them against the most dangerous kind of economic vulnerability. Moreover, many of these women have work histories and show strong laborforce attachment. Simply put, they are workers that are attempting to balance the competing needs of work and family.

***2) Part-time workers who are part of a parenting couple***

Historically, the income of married women who work part-time has been seen as unnecessary for meeting family needs. But women have increasingly moved into the laborforce. Many women work part-time while their children are in school. Their income is critical to the family budget, even though they are part-time workers.

IWF surveyed 480 working families in Wisconsin with incomes under \$40,000 and dependent children living at home. This group corresponds to 44% of Wisconsin tax filers in 1998. We found that in 43.7% of these families where both parents worked, women worked less than 30 hours a week.

***3) Anyone caring for an ill or infirm family member***

Passage of FMLA shows a commitment to serving this group of workers. Part-time work should be justified in cases where family care is required.