

The fastest-growing jobs in America pay about \$22,000 a year

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-health-care-jobs-20171113-story,amp.html>

The fastest-growing jobs in America pay about \$22,000 a year

Danielle Paquette

[<http://www.trbimg.com/img-59fcb13b/turbine/la-1509732663-u347xawlld-snap-image/1400/1400x788>]

The largest two categories of America's fastest-growing jobs offer some of the country's lowest wages and weakest benefits.

Over the next 10 years, analysts expect to see 1.2 million more jobs for home health aides and personal care aides, according to a recent report<<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecopro.pdf>> from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those are more positions than the projected job creation in the eight other most rapidly growing fields combined.

By 2026, the home health aide industry will add 425,600 positions, an increase of 46.7%, the government estimates show. The occupation's median annual wage today is \$22,600.

The ranks of personal care aides, who handle mostly domestic tasks, meanwhile, are expected to grow by 754,000 jobs, or 37.6%. These aides typically make about \$21,000 a year.

Solar-cell installer and wind-turbine technician jobs, which come with larger paychecks, are projected to grow by 105% and 96% respectively, but the tiny fields will add just 17,400 new positions in the next decade, researchers predict.

Roughly nine in 10 caretaker positions are held by women. Nearly half identify as black or Latino.

Workers in these roles share one central mission: They care for people who struggle to care for themselves. But many of these workers live in poverty, and most have little or no paid time off.

"They're typically the breadwinners in low-income households," said Ariane Hegewisch, a labor economist at the Institute for Women's Policy Research who co-wrote a

study<<https://iwpr.org/publications/undervalued-and-underpaid-in-america-women-in-low-wage-female-dominated-jobs/>> published last year about low-wage jobs filled by women. "But what they earn makes it hard for them to pay the rent, or get an education to move into better paying jobs, or look after their children."

More than half of home health aides - 55% - subsist on incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line, her research found. They tend to rely on public benefits and lack the resources to set their children on an economically better path, she said.

Hegewisch said policymakers need to pay attention to this growing group of workers.

"If these jobs work well, the overall health system and social care system can save a lot of money," she said.

Hegewisch has proposed using Medicare dollars to supplement caregivers' wages, arguing it would reduce turnover and save the government money by keeping the elderly and the sick out of nursing homes. Nursing homes tend to be much costlier drains on the health system than home care.

Demetra Nightingale, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute, a left-leaning Washington, D.C., think tank, said demand for home health aides and personal care aides will continue to skyrocket as the U.S. population ages.

"We have a lot of these low-wage jobs, and we're going to need a lot of these low-wage jobs in the

future," she said.

President Trump<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/politics-government/donald-trump-PEBSL000163-topic.html>> has said he aims to expand

apprenticeships<<http://beta.latimes.com/business/la-fi-trump-apprentice-20170610-story.html>> in the United States, and Nightingale said she hopes to see similar opportunities for domestic caretakers. Los Angeles and Seattle both have robust - and replicable - paid training programs, she said.

"We need to provide career ladders for people who can meet the growing demand," Nightingale said.

Advocates for these workers also push for raising the minimum wage and a national paid parental leave plan so that aides could afford to take time off to care for a sick child or recover after a birth.

Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and advisor, has proposed opening paid leave to low-income workers through the nation's unemployment insurance system. But the idea hasn't gained traction on Capitol Hill.