



# Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa

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# Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa

## Founding

- The Center for Worker Justice (CWJ) was founded in 2012 by low wage workers
- Brought together immigrants from all over to identify and address issues affecting their communities

## Mission

- To achieve social and economic justice through education, organization, direct service, and community alliances



# Wage Theft in Iowa

- Wage theft: when employers do not pay workers according to the law
- In 2022 Common Good Iowa reported that \$900 million dollars is stolen yearly from Iowans
  - Overtime violations make up most of the wage theft in Iowa
- In Iowa Division of Labor there is only 2 investigator
  - Less than 1 year
  - Amount owed has to be less than \$6,500

## Key findings

Each year,  
**employers steal wages** from

**1 in 7**  
Iowa workers

These  
**250,000 Iowans**  
**are robbed** of over

**\$900 million**  
in stolen wages

For **every \$1,000**  
**of stolen wages**

just **\$2**  
are recovered by  
public agencies

Each year **wage theft** cheats the  
**public** out of

**\$190 million+**  
in lost tax  
revenue

Wage theft is most  
common in **essential**  
**industries** like

Food service  
• Hospitality •  
Nursing • Child  
care • Construction

Employers often target  
**workers vulnerable**  
**to abuse** due to

Disabilities •  
Language barriers  
• Immigration  
status

When low-road  
employers **steal**  
**wages to cut costs**

**responsible**  
**businesses**  
lose out



- At CWJ the amount owed does not matter
- In 2023 we recovered \$62,029
  - Stolen wages
  - Rental security deposit
  - Housing/Liens
- Every year we see an increase in stolen wages

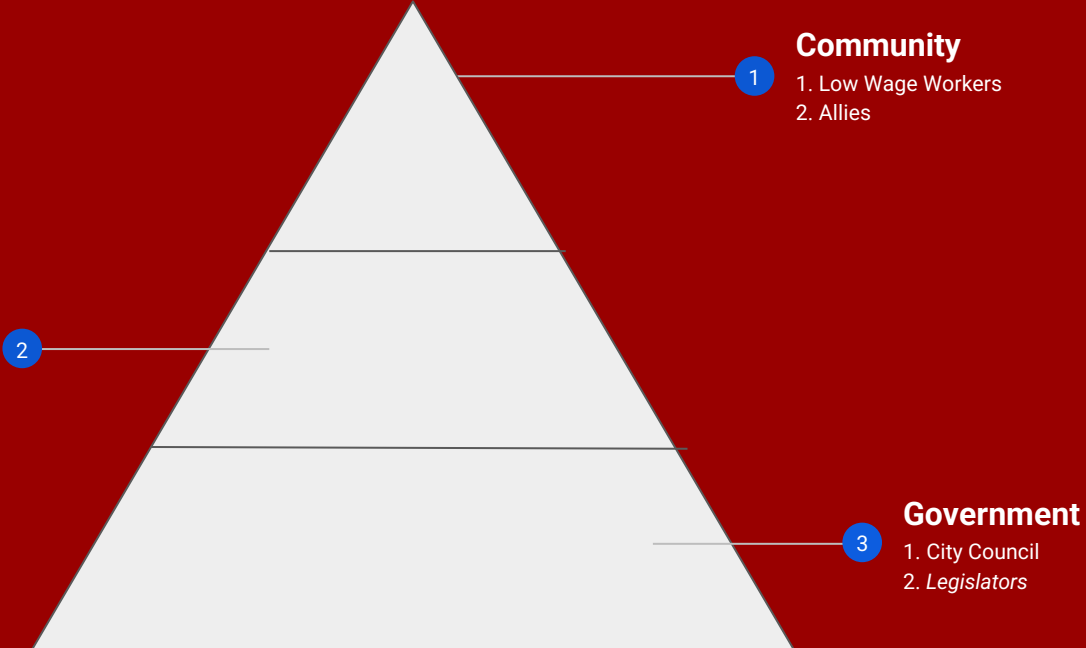
Wages Recovered from 2013 - 2023



# Key Stakeholders

## Advocacy Organizations

- 1. Religious Organizations
- 2. Non Profits
- 3. Unions



## Community

- 1. Low Wage Workers
- 2. Allies

## Government

- 1. City Council
- 2. Legislators



# The Data

- Wage Theft Cases
  - Cases that were recovered
  - Demographics



"Recently my supervisor been taking the tips home, and then gives them to us the next day!"

## WHAT IS WAGE THEFT?

Wage Theft is an illegal or unethical practice of employers not paying workers their full wages or benefits they are entitled to under labor laws



**Types of Wage Theft:**

- Nonpayment of wages:** Sometimes, when people leave their job, the boss doesn't give them their last paycheck.
- Worker Misclassification:** Bosses might say you're not an official employee to avoid paying you fairly.
- Not Paying Overtime:** If you work more than 40 hours a week, you should get paid extra. But sometimes, bosses forget or don't want to pay.

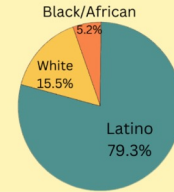
### So who's affected?

Anyone can be affected by wage theft. But those who are affected more are low-wage workers, women, people of color and immigrant workers. As you can see from the data from Center for Worker Justice (CWJ), immigrants are mostly to be affected.

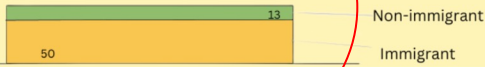
### Gender from Cases 2022-2033



### Demographics by Race from 2022 and 2023



### Immigrant Status 2022-2023



Who can help you?

## 1 CENTER FOR WORKER JUSTICE

The Center for Worker Justice in Eastern Iowa helps workers with problems like not getting paid right, facing discrimination, or working in unsafe conditions. They also work to make sure laws are fair for workers and help organize communities to support better working conditions for everyone.



## What Can I Do?



# 2

There are several options to address wage theft.



1. Get help with wage theft
  - a. CWJ will first take intake information of the case. After the intake they will call your employer, to set up a meeting
  - b. If employer does not want to answer through the phone, a letter will be sent for an in person meeting.
  - c. If no response after 10 days, a small delegation is formed with allies, union leaders, ect.
  - d. Next step of escalation is a protest and media pressIf neither of these steps work we...

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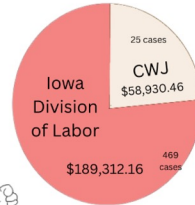
### 2. File a Wage Complaint

a. Either with the Department of Labor or Iowa Department of Wage and Labor

### 3. File a legal claim

a. Small claims  
b. Seek legal advice

In 2023 Iowa Division of Labor recovered \$189,312.16 from 469 cases. And CWJ recovered \$58,930 from 25 cases. Wage theft is a silent crime that isn't taken seriously.



## Next steps?

1. Enforce the law
  - a. Hire more investigators
2. Empower Workers
  - a. Educate workers about their rights



## Citations

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- <https://laborcenter.uiowa.edu/iowa-workers-rights-publications-resources>
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- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/owed-employers-face-little-accounability-for-wage-theft/>
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- <https://www.dayworkercentermv.org/for-workers>



Recientemente mi supervisor se ha estado llevando los consejos a casa, ¡y luego nos los da al día siguiente!

### ¿QUÉ ES EL ROBO DE SALARIOS?

El robo de salarios es una práctica ilegal o poco ética en la que los empleadores no pagan a sus trabajadores el salario completo o los beneficios a los que tienen derecho según las leyes laborales.

**Tipos de robo de salario:**

Falta de pago de salarios: A veces, cuando las personas dejan su trabajo, el patrón no les entrega su último sueldo. Clasificación errónea de los trabajadores: Los chefes pueden decir que usted no es un empleado oficial para evitar pagarle de manera justa. No pagar horas extras: Si trabaja más de 40 horas a la semana, le deberían pagar más dinero a menos que usted se olvide a no querer pagar.

Podrías ser un víctima de robo de salario

Entonces, ¿quién se ve afectado? Cualquiera puede verse afectado por el robo de salario. Pero los que se ven más afectados son los trabajadores con salarios bajos, las mujeres, las personas de color y los trabajadores inmigrantes. Como puede ver en los datos del Centro para la Justicia Laboral (CWJ), los inmigrantes son los más afectados.

### Immigrant Status 2022-2023

Non-immigrant	11
Immigrant	50

### Gender from Cases 2022-2023

Female	88
Male	12
Non Binary	0

### Demographics by Race from 2022 and 2023

Black/African	1.5%
White	15.5%
Latino	79.3%

¿Quién puede ayudarte?

### 1 CENTRO PARA LA JUSTICIA LABORAL

El Centro para la Justicia Laboral en el este de Iowa ayuda a los trabajadores con problemas como no recibir un salario adecuado, enfrentar discriminación o trabajar en condiciones inseguras. También trabajan para garantizar que las leyes sean justas para los trabajadores y ayudar a organizar a las comunidades para apoyar mejores condiciones laborales para todos.

### ¿Qué puedo hacer?

### 2

Hay varias opciones para abordar el robo de salarios.

Obtenga ayuda con el robo de salario CWJ primero tomará la información inicial del caso. Después de la admisión, llamarán a su empleador para programar una reunión. Si el empleador no quiere contestar por teléfono, se enviará una carta para una reunión en persona. Si no hay respuesta después de 10 días, se forma una pequeña delegación con aliados, líderes sindicales, ect. El siguiente paso de la escalada es una protesta y prensa mediática. Si ninguno de estos pasos funciona nosotros...

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- Presente una queja salarial al Departamento de Salario y Trabajo de Iowa
- Presentar un reclamo legal
- Reclamaciones menores
- Busque asesoramiento legal

En 2023, la División del Trabajo de Iowa recuperó 189,312,16 dólares de 469 casos. Y CWJ recuperó 58.930 dólares de 25 casos. El robo de salarios es un delito silencioso que no se toma en serio.

### Citas

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### ¿Próximos pasos?

- Aplicar la ley
- Contratar más investigadores
- Empoderar a los trabajadores
- Educar a los trabajadores sobre sus derechos.

Spanish Version

# Key design considerations

- Languages
- Is it easy to understand
- Can it be posted/printed

## How this tool will be used

- This tool is for the public
- It can be shared online
- Other organizations can use to educate/ do workshops



# Reflections

- Knowing my key audience
- Design

## Challenges

- Not overloading with information



**CENTER  
FOR  
WORKER  
JUSTICE**

**WE KNOW  
OUR  
RIGHTS**

**WE  
KNOW  
OUR  
RIGHTS**

**NO MAS  
IC  
P  
RAIS  
MIL**

**KEEP  
FAMILI  
UNIT**