

# Wisconsin Wage Theft Data Report

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## Data Summary

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Through a public records request under the Wisconsin Open Records Law, CBS News sought more than 10 years of data from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's wage and hour complaint process. In response, the agency provided approximately 11,011 records going back to January 2010.

### Overall amounts

The data obtained by CBS News shows that, since 2010, 11,011 wage theft claims were filed with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The total amount owed was \$33,833,405.81.

The median amount for each case was \$540.00. Here's how losing that amount could impact an average worker in Wisconsin

\$540.00 is the equivalent of:

- About 2/5 week(s) of income for the median household in Wisconsin.
- About 1/2 month(s) of rent for a renter paying the fair market rent in Wisconsin or about 2/5 month(s) of mortgage payments for the average homeowner in Wisconsin.
- About 3 week(s) of groceries for a family in Wisconsin.

Some cases were worth even more money, however. Below is a breakdown of the number of cases filed in each amount range:

- \$0-\$100: 1,169 cases (10.8% of all cases)
- \$100-\$500: 3,928 cases (36.3% of all cases)
- \$500-\$1,000: 2,156 cases (19.9% of all cases)
- \$1,000-\$2,000: 1,647 cases (15.2% of all cases)
- \$2,000-\$5,000: 1,195 cases (11.1% of all cases)

- \$5,000-\$10,000: 400 cases (3.7% of all cases)
- \$10,000+: 314 cases (2.9% of all cases)

## **Amounts paid to claimants**

About 89% of the 11,011 wage theft cases provided to CBS News by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development showed a payment was made to the claimant. The total amount paid to claimants was \$25,047,136.63.

Just because a person was paid doesn't mean they were paid the full amount they claimed: 55% of the cases were paid in full.

## **Time taken to resolve cases**

Wisconsin did not provide data on the amount of time it took to resolve cases.

## **How to reference this data**

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All references to this data must be attributed to CBS News analysis.

### **On first reference**

On first reference, attribution must mention that the data was analyzed by CBS News and was obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development by CBS News through a public records request under the Wisconsin Open Records Law.

### **On subsequent references**

After the first reference, you can simply attribute the data to CBS News analysis, e.g. "CBS News' analysis" or "the analysis."

## **FAQs**

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### **What is "wage theft?"**

Wage theft refers to the illegal practice of an employer not paying their employees the full amount of wages that they are owed. This can take many

forms, such as not paying overtime, not paying the minimum wage, or making illegal deductions from an employee's pay.

## **How did you get this data?**

CBS News requested the data through a public records request under the Wisconsin Open Records Law. The agency provided data exported from its case management system. The data was then merged with nearly identical data from dozens of other states and analyzed by CBS News.

## **How can I trust this data?**

This data was thoroughly vetted prior to being analyzed. The data was provided by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, which is the agency responsible for enforcing the state's wage and hour laws. CBS News then undertook a thorough review of the data to ensure that it was accurate and complete. Wherever possible, any errors or inconsistencies were identified and addressed, and cases that were clearly incomplete, inaccurate, or otherwise not relevant were removed from the dataset.

## **How does my state compare to others?**

It is difficult to make direct comparisons between states because each state has different laws and enforcement mechanisms, and because the quality of states' case management systems can vary wildly. For example, some states track detailed data on each case, including status dates and detailed disposition data, while others only track the amount claimed and the date the case was filed. This means that data on wages and labor conditions in one state may not be directly comparable to data from another state.