

## 'Starvation wages': Walmart and McDonald's among firms with the most workers on food stamps and Medicaid, according to a Bernie Sanders-commissioned report

Business Insider, by Grace Dean

November 19, 2020



McDonald's President and CEO Chris Kempczinski. Richa Naidu/Reuters

Thousands of workers at Walmart, McDonald's, and other stores and fast food chains are on federally-funded social safety net programs to help pay for basic needs like healthcare and food, according to a report by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO).

5 Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who commissioned the report, described the findings as "outrageous" and called for companies to pay their workers more.

Around 70% of people on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps and Medicaid work full-time, the watchdog found, and the majority of these worked for larger companies with 100 or more staff.

10 Around 90% of SNAP and Medicaid beneficiaries worked for private sector employers such as restaurants, department stores, and grocery stores, the report found.

Some also worked for state governments, public universities, and nonprofit organizations. [...]

Discussing the findings on Twitter, Sanders called for Walmart to pay its workers a living wage.

15 Other companies whose workers were among the top claimants of Medicaid and SNAP include Amazon, Dollar Tree, and fast food chains such as Burger King, Subway, and Taco Bell, according to the report, though this varied significantly between states.

Sanders said the study showed that "giant corporations pay starvation wages – wages so low their workers have to rely on Medicaid and food stamps to survive."

"This is what a rigged economy is about," he added. "We need a \$15 living wage and Medicare for All."

20 In the November elections, Florida voted to increase the state's minimum wage from \$8.56 to \$15 by 2026. This made it the eighth state — and the most conservative yet — to approve a \$15 hourly minimum wage.

President-elect Joe Biden wants to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, up from the current \$7.25. This could raise the incomes of more than 27 million workers.

25 In 2019, the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives passed a plan to incrementally raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025, but this was rejected by the Republican-controlled Senate.