

Low Wages Could Affect Memory, Research Says

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Earn /ɜːrn/ (verb) to receive money from one's job or investments
Example: People work to earn a living.
2. Decline /daɪˈklaɪn/ (noun) a continuous decrease in amount, quality, etc.
Example: The country had a huge population decline.
3. Rate /reɪt/ (noun) a price paid or charged for something
Example: The hotel is offering room accommodations at discounted rates.
4. Median /ˈmiːdiən/ (adjective) having a value in the middle of a list of numbers ordered from lowest to highest
In 2020, the median income in Switzerland was around CHF39,000.
5. Age /eɪdʒ/ (verb) to grow or become older
Example: My friend has aged from the last time I saw her.
6. Minimum wage /ˌmɪnɪməm ˈweɪdʒ/ (noun) the lowest wage that an employer can legally pay
Example: The legislators made a law that increases the workers' minimum wage.



Earning low wages could affect your memory later in life, according to new research. A study from Columbia University has found that people in the US who earned low wages over a number of years were more likely to experience faster memory decline. Researchers looked at available data from more than 2,800 people who were born between 1936 and 1941. They then looked at what these people earned between 1992 and 2004. Using this information, they put

the people into three groups: those who always earned low wages during this time, those who sometimes did and those who never did.

By low wages, they meant that a person's hourly rate was lower than two-thirds of the US' median wage for that year. So if the median wage was \$10 per hour, they were earning less than \$6.67 per hour. Between 2004 and 2016, when these people would have been 63 and older, the researchers found that the low-wage group experienced faster aging of the mind. It was found that, over a time of 10 years, the minds of long-term low earners aged about a year faster than those who never earned low wages.

The minimum hourly wage in the US has been \$7.25 since 2009, but some states have a higher minimum. It is \$10 in Florida, and \$14 in California, for example. In the capital, Washington DC, it is \$16.10. This research was shared in a presentation at an international meeting of the Alzheimer's Association, and has not yet been published. The research is based on wages, not the type of work that people were doing.

DISCUSSION

1. Do you find it surprising that long-term low wage earners experienced faster aging of the mind?
2. What's the minimum wage where you live? When was the last time it was raised?
3. What is the median wage in your town or city?
4. How much money does it take to live comfortably in your town or city?
5. Do you know anyone who's still working past retirement age?
6. What do you think are the best ways to keep our minds sharp as we age?