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# UCLA Labor Center hosts 'Young Workers and Leaders Convening'

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The [UCLA Labor Center](#) and the [UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center](#) collaborated to host the Young Workers and Leaders Convening on Nov. 29, 2022, a gathering of youth-focused organizations, young workers, and other leading youth advocacy organizations at the [James Lawson Jr. Worker Justice Center](#) in MacArthur Park. Organizations were able to get to know one another, share their main areas of work, and review some preliminary young worker profile findings from UCLA Labor Center's ongoing research initiative, "The State of Young Workers in California." Together, participants reacted to the data and discussed ways in which they might use these findings to expand their current work and campaigns.

The convening featured a data gallery walk, where participants were able to walk around the room through the four different data stations and discuss in small groups whether the data matches the real life experiences they see young people face in their respective fields. The four data stations—“Demographics,” “Employment,” “Young Workers and Education,” and “Impact of Low Wages”—each told a different story about the experiences young workers are facing. Before participants were broken up into small groups to view the data, they were asked to consider the following questions:

- What important issues does this data show about the experiences of young workers?
- What problems does the data show that young workers, their families, and their communities are facing?
- What did you find surprising, missing, or wrong?

These questions fueled robust conversations about the ways that the data collection can improve to tell a more complete story of the experiences young people in California face.



“There’s not a lot of data right now about the situation of young workers in California,” said [Janna Shadduck-Hernández](#), Project Director with the UCLA Labor Center and one of the project’s principle investigators. “We want to know, is this data right? Is it wrong? Does it only represent one type of experience? What are young workers really saying?”

In 2020, the UCLA Labor Center published “[Young Workers in California: A Snapshot](#),” which illuminated that contrary to popular narratives, the vast majority of young people in Los Angeles County work to support their family, not to earn pocket money for leisure items. The UCLA Labor Center recently received [funding](#) from the [Stuart Foundation](#) to continue to advance this work.

“This is a really great time for young workers organizing,” said [Lucero Herrera](#), Senior Research Analyst with the UCLA Labor Center and one of the project’s principle investigators. “From Amazon warehouses to the Starbucks campaigns, we see more and more young workers leading the charge and bringing greater visibility to their experiences in the workplace. The YW convening felt very timely and inspiring to be able to connect with young people and folks who are working on these issues and ground the data on their experiences.”



At the event, participants leaned on their experience as youth advocates as they considered these questions and reviewed the data. Walking around the room, people voiced their challenges to the data and discussed whether or not the data paints a full picture. Many participants expressed shock at how many hours young workers work, especially those in high school: 83% of young workers attending high school work more than 15 hours. All of these perspectives contributed to a large group discussion where participants shared how they will take this information back to their organization and apply it to the work they are currently doing.

“I left our meeting feeling energized and excited about the work everyone is doing to aid young people,” said Jazmin Rivera, Community Education Specialist with the UCLA Labor Center and one of the organizers of the event. “It felt great to be able to talk to so many different people and strategize what we can do with this data.”

Following the gallery walk, participants joined together to have lunch and watch the “[I am a #YOUNGWORKER](#)” animated short film. As everyone ate their tacos, the conversation continued to circle back to strategizing on what can be done next. There were many hopeful voices in the room agreeing about just how powerful young people are—that young people are organized, vocal, and a force to be reckoned with. As the convening came to a close, participants shared that they felt connected under the same mission: ensuring that young people can thrive through healthy workplaces.