

New BLS Employer-Reported Data Shows \$20 Fast Food Wage is Costing Industry Jobs

Analysis by the Employment Policies Institute

Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 1228, a law that enacted a \$20 minimum wage for California's fast food industry, in September 2023.¹ Prior research shows restaurants began bracing for the mandate before the law took effect, downsizing staff, reducing scheduled hours, or raising menu prices.² The law took effect on April 1, 2024, and the effects have been devastating for the industry and its employees.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) uses employer-reported unemployment filings to track job growth. This data, unlike the smaller sample-based monthly Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, includes employers covering more than 95 percent of U.S. jobs.³ The data was retrieved through the QCEW Downloadable Data Files.⁴

- Since the passage of AB 1228 in September 2023, California's privately-owned fast food restaurants⁵ have **lost -6,166 jobs (-1.1%)** through June 2024 (the latest available data). (See Table 1, page 2)
 - Over the same period the previous year, prior to passage of AB 1228 (September 2022 through June 2023), California gained 17,528 private sector fast food jobs (+3.1%).
- California's fast food job losses are unique to the state – total private sector fast food employment nationwide grew over the same period (September 2023 through June 2024). (See Table 3, page 3)
 - U.S. total private fast food restaurants **added 74,327 jobs (+1.6%)** during this period.
- California's fast food employment decline is steeper than statewide private employment decline over this period. (See Table 2, page 2)

¹ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billHistoryClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB1228

² <https://epionline.org/app/uploads/2024/07/2024-06-California-Limited-Service-Restaurant-Operator-Survey-Final-Booklet.pdf>

³ <https://www.bls.gov/cew/>

⁴ Accessed December 5, 2024. <https://www.bls.gov/cew/downloadable-data-files.htm>

⁵ NAICS 722513

- California's **total private employment dropped by -0.3%** from September 2023 to June 2024, **compared to -1.1% decline** in fast food restaurants.

Table 1: Comparing California private fast food restaurant employment, 2022 – present.

Sep 2022	557,913	Sep 2023	570,909
Oct 2022	557,646	Oct 2023	568,736
Nov 2022	558,289	Nov 2023	567,292
Dec 2022	558,915	Dec 2023	566,469
Jan 2023	553,987	Jan 2024	564,008
Feb 2023	562,121	Feb 2024	563,744
Mar 2023	566,323	Mar 2024	564,337
Apr 2023	567,117	Apr 2024	568,999
May 2023	572,904	May 2024	570,127
Jun 2023	575,441	Jun 2024	564,743
Sep 22-Jun 23	+17,528	Sep 23-Jun 24	-6,166
	+3.1%		-1.1%

Table 2: Comparing California private fast food restaurant employment to total CA private employment, September 2023 – present.

	Fast Food Restaurants	Total Private Employment
Sep 2023	570,909	15,565,519
Oct 2023	568,736	15,617,889
Nov 2023	567,292	15,597,843
Dec 2023	566,469	15,550,847
Jan 2024	564,008	15,410,638
Feb 2024	563,744	15,402,658
Mar 2024	564,337	15,401,038
Apr 2024	568,999	15,477,673
May 2024	570,127	15,562,353
Jun 2024	564,743	15,522,243
Sep 23-Jun 24	-6,166	-43,276
	-1.1%	-0.3%

Table 3: Comparing California private fast food restaurant employment to U.S. private fast food restaurant employment, September 2023 – present.

	California	U.S.
Sep 2023	570,909	4,610,236
Oct 2023	568,736	4,585,710
Nov 2023	567,292	4,584,906
Dec 2023	566,469	4,597,768
Jan 2024	564,008	4,525,201
Feb 2024	563,744	4,541,245
Mar 2024	564,337	4,591,397
Apr 2024	568,999	4,637,205
May 2024	570,127	4,693,024
Jun 2024	564,743	4,684,563
Sep 23-Jun 24	-6,166	+74,327
	-1.1%	+1.6%