

California's \$20 Fast Food Wage Law Is Hurting the Workers and Families It Was Meant to Help



Fast food jobs are SHRINKING in California—while neighboring states hold steady.

- Seasonally-adjusted data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#) show that **California's quick-service restaurants have LOST 28,581 jobs** since September 2023 when AB 1228 was signed into law.
- Meanwhile, fast food jobs in **Oregon and Nevada have grown** during the same period.

DATE	Total Fast Food Jobs CALIFORNIA	Total Fast Food Jobs Nevada	Total Fast Food Jobs Oregon
Sept 2023	739,732	63,499	74,357
Oct 2023	735,886	63,367	73,561
Nov 2023	735,019	64,026	73,774
Dec 2023	735,200	64,260	74,044
Jan 2024	739,567	64,140	72,891
Feb 2024	731,623	64,187	72,905
Mar 2024	729,651	64,181	73,368
Apr 2024	731,003	64,350	73,320
May 2024	727,128	64,424	73,630
June 2024	720,037	64,102	73,611
July 2024	722,231	64,253	73,259
Aug 2024	718,666	64,280	73,492
Sep 2024	715,578	64,257	74,042
Oct 2024	717,489	64,458	75,214
Nov 2024	716,690	64,340	74,808
Dec 2024	716,146	64,521	74,966
Jan 2025	716,624	64,440	75,639
Feb 2025	711,719	64,112	75,745
Mar 2025	707,300	64,099	75,378
Apr 2025	703,468	65,294	75,493
May 2025	708,013	64,868	77,793
June 2025	706,900	64,731	77,564
July 2025	707,710	64,939	77,581
Aug 2025	708,063	64,119	77,180
Sept 2025	711,151	65,678	76,871
Sept 2023 – Sept 2025	-28,581	+2,179	+2,514

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Leisure and Hospitality: Limited-Service Restaurants and Other Eating Places in [California](#), [Nevada](#) and [Oregon](#); retrieved December 17, 2025. NOTE: This data is not collected for Arizona.

- California's [fast food employment](#) is **now at its lowest sustained growth rate** since the Great Recession, barring the COVID-19 pandemic.



Fast food workers are losing hours—and paychecks.

- A [recent analysis](#) shows that California's non-tipped restaurant workers—many in fast food—have **lost up to five hours of work per week** since the \$20 wage took effect in April 2024.
- That's a **loss of up to 250 hours per worker per year—or seven weeks of work**—and thousands of dollars in lost wages.



Food prices are climbing.

- A [report](#) by the Berkeley Research Group found that food prices at California's fast food restaurants have surged **by 14.5% since September 2023**—nearly double the national average of 8.2%.