



Business and Minimum Wage Research Summary

Holly Sklar, CEO, Business for a Fair Minimum Wage

Updated April 15, 2026

Selection of studies on the impact of wages on employment, productivity, employee turnover, customer service, consumer spending, prices, profits, health, safety, and more. See the final section for business polling and opinion.

Employment Impact

Arin Dube, **These Republican-leaning States Went Big on Minimum Wages: Here's What Happened to their Restaurant and Retail Jobs**, Substack, April 8, 2026.

“During the past decade, voters in four Republican-leaning states – Arizona, Florida, Missouri, and Nebraska – enacted big minimum wage increases. ... By 2025, the population-weighted minimum wage across these states had nearly doubled from around \$7.80 to \$14.00 an hour. Meanwhile, 20 other states – like Texas, Georgia, or Tennessee – kept their minimum wage at the federal floor of \$7.25, unchanged since 2009. These 20 (also Red or Purple) states serve as a clean ‘control group’ for our four ‘treatment’ states. ... So, what happened? Based on administrative payroll data covering nearly every private-sector employer in all 24 states from 2014 through 2025, the answer is clear: wages rose substantially [in the four states that raised minimum wage], while restaurant and retail employment was unaffected.”

<https://arindube.substack.com/p/these-republican-leaning-states-went>

Denis Sosinskiy and Michael Reich, **Effects of a \$20 Minimum Wage: Evidence from Granular Data on Wages, Employment and Prices**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, April 1, 2026.

“On April 1, 2024, California implemented a \$20 hourly wage floor for workers in large chains in fast food restaurants and snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars. ... We use difference-in-differences (DiD) and triple difference (DDD) event study methods and granular data that permit distinguishing trends affecting the entire industry from those caused by the new minimum wage policy. ... We find that the policy increased average weekly wages for covered fast food workers by about 11 percent and did not reduce employment. Compared to controls, prices increased by 1.5 percent, equivalent to 6 cents for a \$4 item.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/publications/working-papers/effects-of-a-20-minimum-wage-evidence-from-granular-data-on-wages-employment-and-prices/>

Nirupama L. Rao and Max Risch, **Who's Afraid of the Minimum Wage? Measuring the Impacts on Independent Businesses Using Matched U.S. Tax Returns**, Published December 10, 2025, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 141, Issue 1, February 2026.

“Our study establishes that even the small to medium-size firms that typify independent businesses are able to accommodate higher minimum wages with new revenues, leaving owners’ profits unchanged. ... Higher worker retention and productivity allow incumbent owners to fully escape the economic burden of minimum wage increases. ... At the individual level, low-earning and young individuals experience significant earnings gains and stable employment after minimum wage increases.”

<https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjaf053>

Claire Kovach and Avery Spicka, **Employment and Wage Growth in New York & New Jersey Outpace Pennsylvania Border Counties**, Keystone Research Center blog, June 26, 2025.

“We compare employment and wages in the leisure and hospitality service sector for PA counties that border counties in New Jersey as well as New York. ... both New York and New Jersey pay a minimum wage that is over double PA’s current [\$7.25] minimum wage, and both states have raised their minimum wages 11 or more times since the federal minimum wage reached \$7.25 in 2009. ... Leisure and hospitality employment growth in New York far outpaced Pennsylvania’s throughout New York’s scheduled minimum wage increases, the reverse of what critics of minimum wage increases predict. ... New Jersey leisure and hospitality employment growth slightly [outpaced] Pennsylvania’s.”

https://keystoneresearch.org/research_publication/pushing-the-borders-or-crossing-the-line/

Justin C. Wiltshire, Carl McPherson, Michael Reich and Denis Sosinskiy, **Minimum Wage Effects and Monopsony Explanations**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, IRLE Working Paper Revised December 18, 2024 (forthcoming Journal of Labor Economics).

Analysis of the effects of \$15 and higher minimum wages. “We find substantial pay growth and no unemployment. Our results hold among lower-wage counties and counties without local minimum wages. In the tight post-pandemic labor market, when labor supply becomes more elastic, we find positive employment effects.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Minimum-Wage-E%E2%80%82ects-and-Monopsony-Explanations-Revised-December-2024.pdf>

Daniel Schneider, Kristen Harknett and Kevin Bruey, **Early Effects of California’s \$20 Fast Food Minimum Wage: Large Wage Increases with No Effects on Hours, Scheduling or Benefits**, The Shift Project, Harvard Kennedy School, October 9, 2024.

“In response to the sizeable wage increase for California fast food workers, we do not find evidence that employers turned to understaffing or reduced scheduled work hours to offset the increased labor costs. Rather, weekly work hours stayed about the same for California fast food workers, and levels of understaffing appeared to ease.”

https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ca_fastfood_MW_Final.pdf

Jessica Vela, **Higher State-Level Minimum Wages Aid in Faster Jobs Recovery**, Center for American Progress, July 24, 2023.

“The 30 states, plus Washington, D.C., with minimum wages that are higher than the federal minimum have experienced a faster jobs recovery in their leisure and hospitality industry since January 2021 compared with states maintaining the federal level. ... From January 2021 to May 2023, states with minimum wages higher than \$7.25 per hour experienced 38 percent industrywide growth – almost double that of states using the federal minimum wage, which was only 19 percent.”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/higher-state-level-minimum-wages-aid-in-faster-jobs-recovery/>

Jesse Wursten and Michael Reich, **Small Businesses and the Minimum Wage**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, IRLE Working Paper No. 102-23, March 2023.

“We provide the first causal analysis of the role of firm size on minimum wage effects in the U.S. ... we find that minimum wages increase pay in low wage industries, particularly so in small businesses. We do not detect any corresponding unemployment effects.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Small-Businesses-and-the-Minimum-Wage-3-14-23.pdf>

Michael Reich, **The Economic Effects of a \$21.25 Minimum Wage in New York by 2026**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, March 2023.

“A proposed increase of New York State’s minimum wage to \$21.25 by 2026 sounds large, but its level would be comparable to the inflation-adjusted \$15 New York City fast-food minimum wage that took effect on December 31, 2018, and to the rate of fast-food minimum wage increases from \$7.25 to \$15 over the

period December 31, 2013 to December 31, 2018. ... Minimum wage increases to \$15 substantially raised the pay of low-wage workers without creating disemployment effects, both upstate and downstate.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/The-Economic-Effects-of-a-21.25-Minimum-Wage-in-New-York-by-2026.pdf>

New York City Comptroller, Selçuk Eren - Senior Economist, **Spotlight: Impact of Recent Minimum Wage Increases on NYC Employment, Earnings, and Poverty**, New York by the Numbers, No. 69, September 12, 2022.

“Between 2013 and 2019, as the minimum wage increased from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour in New York City, economic growth in industries reliant on minimum wage workers outpaced that of other U.S. cities where the minimum wage did not increase, and that of the U.S. overall.”

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/newsletter/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-69-september-12th-2022/>

Carl McPherson, Michael Reich and Justin C. Wiltshire, **Are \$15 Minimum Wages Too High?**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, September 11, 2022.

“In January 2022 California became the first state with a \$15 minimum wage, a remarkable 87.5 percent increase over its \$8 level in early 2014. In the same period, 38 California localities raised and indexed their minimum wages above the state level. These increases are considerably larger than those previously studied. ... we provide the first causal analyses of the effects of these minimum wage policies – throughout the wage distribution and on the two groups most exposed to the policies: restaurant workers and teens 16 to 19. ... We find substantial and ongoing pay increases throughout the treatment period and find no significant disemployment effects, even in relatively low-wage counties.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2022/08/Are-15-Minimum-Wages-Too-High.pdf>

Justin Schweitzer and Kyle Ross, **Higher Minimum Wages Support Job Growth as the Economy Recovers From COVID-19**, Center for American Progress, November 3, 2021.

Analysis “shows that having higher minimum wages and eliminating subminimum wages has not hindered job growth. Indeed, employment in the predominantly low-wage leisure and hospitality industry has recovered faster in states that guarantee better pay for low-wage workers.”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/11/Higher-Min-Wages-Support-Job-Growth.pdf>

House/Senate Joint Economic Committee, **Criticisms of Minimum Wage Increases Lag Behind Latest Research**, March 2021.

“The continued focus on potential job losses ignores the latest research and much of the evidence from states that have recently increased their minimum wage. ... The latest domestic and international evidence shows that higher wage floors discourage low-pay employment and encourage the creation of good jobs with higher wages, more security, and higher productivity. This delivers benefits to workers, businesses, and the broader economy.”

https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b5056335-1b0f-4751-8e3a-2739e7963738/minimum-wage-critics-lag-behind-latest-research-final.pdf

Doruk Cengiz, Arindrajit Dube, Attila S. Lindner and David Zentler-Munro, **Seeing Beyond the Trees: Using Machine Learning to Estimate the Impact of Minimum Wages on Labor Market Outcomes**, National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 28399, Jan. 2021.

Assesses “the effect of the minimum wage on labor market outcomes such as employment, unemployment, and labor force participation for most workers affected by the policy... We find no indication that minimum wage has a negative effect on the unemployment rate, on the labor force participation, or on the labor market transitions. Furthermore, we detect no employment or participation responses even for sub-groups that are likely to have a high extensive margin labor supply elasticity – such as teens, older workers, or single mothers.”

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w28399>

Arindrajit Dube and Attila S. Lindner, **City Limits: What do Local-Area Minimum Wages Do?**, National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 27928, October 2020.

“Cities are increasingly setting their own minimum wages, and this trend has accelerated sharply in recent years. While in 2010 there were only three cities with their own minimum wages exceeding the state or federal standard, by 2020 there were 42. ... Early evidence suggests that the impact of the policy on wages and employment to date has been broadly similar to the evidence on state and federal-level minimum wage changes. Overall, city-level minimum wages seem to be able to tailor the policy to local economic environment without imposing substantial distortions in allocation of labor and businesses across locations.”

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w27928>

Anna Godøy and Michael Reich, **Are Minimum Wage Effects Greater in Low-Wage Areas?**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, September 2020.

“We examine minimum wage effects in low wage counties, where relative minimum wage ratios reach as high as .82, well beyond the state-based ratios in extant studies. ... We find positive wage effects, especially in high impact counties, but do not detect adverse effects on employment, weekly hours or annual weeks worked. We do not find negative employment effects among women, blacks and/or Hispanics. In high impact counties, we find substantial declines in household and child poverty.” (All the states in the sample experience one or more changes to the statutory minimum wage over the 2004-2017 period.)

<http://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2020/09/Are-Minimum-Wage-Effects-Greater-in-Low-Wage-Areas.pdf>

Jason Bram, Fatih Karahan and Brendan Moore, **Minimum Wage Impacts along the New York-Pennsylvania Border**, Liberty Street Economics, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, September 25, 2019.

“In this analysis, we look at counties along both sides of the New York-Pennsylvania border. Since the fourth quarter of 2009, workers in both New York and Pennsylvania have been subject to the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Over the last five years, though, New York’s minimum wage has gone up. ... Specifically, we evaluate the effects on both employment and average weekly earnings in two industries with lots of lower-wage workers: retail trade and leisure & hospitality. ... As the minimum wage was raised to levels above \$10 per hour, leisure and hospitality employment in New York counties, if anything, *increased* relative to businesses over the Pennsylvania state line. ... Next, we look at retail trade, an industry in which employment has contracted along the New York-Pennsylvania border in recent years. ... We detect a pattern similar to that for leisure and hospitality: there appears to be a positive divergence in average wages between the states but no discernible divergence in employment trends.”

<https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2019/09/minimum-wage-impacts-along-the-new-york-pennsylvania-border.html>

Greg David, **NY Fed: Minimum wage hikes didn’t kill jobs**, Crain’s New York Business, September 25, 2019.

<https://www.craigslist.com/greg-david-new-york/ny-fed-minimum-wage-hikes-didnt-kill-jobs>

Doruk Cengiz, Arindrajit Dube, Attila Lindner and Ben Zipperer, **The Effect of Minimum Wages on Low-Wage Jobs**, The Quarterly Journal of Economics, August 2019.

“We estimate the effect of minimum wages on low-wage jobs using 138 prominent state-level minimum wage changes between 1979 and 2016 in the United States... We find that the overall number of low-wage jobs remained essentially unchanged over the five years following the increase... We also find no evidence of disemployment when we consider higher levels of minimum wages.”

<https://academic.oup.com/qje/article/134/3/1405/5484905>

Richard Florida, **In Praise of a Higher Minimum Wage**, Bloomberg City Lab, April 26, 2019.

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/04/minimum-wage-by-state-jobs-data-employment-economic-research/587992/>

Jared Bernstein, **New evidence of the minimum wage doing what it's supposed to do: Help low-wage workers**, Washington Post, March 8, 2018.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/03/08/new-evidence-of-the-minimum-wage-doing-what-its-supposed-to-do-help-low-wage-workers/?utm_term=.ad5694dc30a0

John Schmidt, **Why Does the Minimum Wage Have No Discernible Effect on Employment?**, Center for Economic and Policy Research, February 2013.

Spotlights two meta-studies analyzing the extensive research conducted since the early 1990s. They conclude that “the minimum wage has little or no discernible effect on the employment prospects of low-wage workers. The most likely reason for this outcome is that the cost shock of the minimum wage is small relative to most firms’ overall costs and only modest relative to the wages paid to low-wage workers.” The report explores varied means of adjustment by employers such as increased worker productivity and diminished wage gap between lower and higher paid employees. “But, probably the most important channel of adjustment is through reductions in labor turnover, which yield significant cost savings to employers.”

<http://cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>

Arindrajit Dube, T. William Lester and Michael Reich, **Minimum Wage Effects Across State Borders: Estimates Using Contiguous Counties**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, August 2008, and The Review of Economics and Statistics, November 2010.

Groundbreaking study that compared all neighboring counties in the U.S. located on different sides of a state border with different minimum wage levels between 1990 and 2006 and found no adverse employment effects from higher minimum wages. “We show that traditional approaches that do not account for local economic conditions tend to produce spurious negative effects due to spatial heterogeneities in employment trends that are unrelated to minimum wage policies.”

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Minimum-Wage-Effects-Across-State-Borders.pdf>

For an overview of employment research, including additional studies since 1992, see:

Holly Sklar, **Research Shows Minimum Wage Increases Do Not Cause Job Loss**, Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, Updated September 2022.

<https://www.businessforafairminimumwage.org/news/00135/research-shows-minimum-wage-increases-do-not-cause-job-loss>

Productivity, Customer Service, Health and Other Benefits

Good overview of the positive impact of higher wages:

Justin Wolfers and Jan Zilinsky, **Higher Wages for Low-Income Workers Lead to Higher Productivity**, Peterson Institute for International Economics, January 13, 2015.

Summarizes research showing:

- Higher wages “motivate employees to work harder.”
- Higher wages “attract more capable and productive workers.”
- Higher wages “lead to lower turnover, reducing the costs of hiring and training new workers.”
- Higher wages “enhance quality and customer service.”
- Higher wages “reduce disciplinary problems and absenteeism.”
- Firms with higher wages “need to devote fewer resources to monitoring.”
- Workers “excessively concerned about income security perform less well at work.”
- Higher wages “are associated with better health – less illness and more stamina, which enhance worker productivity.”
- Higher wages lead to “enhanced reputation with consumers.”

Moreover, “All of these positive effects may interact to yield even larger aggregate effects, as the productivity of one worker often raises the productivity of their coworkers.”

<https://piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/higher-wages-low-income-workers-lead-higher-productivity?p=4700>

Natalia Emanuel and Emma Harrington, **The Payoffs of Higher Pay: Labor Supply and Productivity Responses to a Voluntary Firm Minimum Wage**, Federal Reserve Bank of New York *Staff Reports*, no. 1182, February 2026.

Analyzes higher pay’s effects on turnover, absenteeism and productivity among warehouse workers after the introduction of a voluntary, firm-wide minimum wage in a Fortune 500 firm. Finds “that a \$1/hour pay increase (5.5 percent) halves worker departures, reduces absenteeism by 18.6 percent, and increases productivity (boxes moved per hour) by 5.7 percent.” And “Warehouses that saw bigger increases in pay also saw bigger increases in productivity. When the firm imposed its \$15/hour minimum wage, the productivity of its lowest paid and least productive warehouses caught up to the productivity in its other warehouses.” Moreover, “Our empirical results suggest that the reductions in turnover and increases in productivity fully defrayed the increased labor costs of higher pay.”

https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/staff_reports/sr1182.pdf

Joseph Fuller and Manjari Raman, **The High Cost of Neglecting Low-Wage Workers: Six mistakes that companies make – and how they can do better**, Harvard Business Review, May-June 2023.

“After studying this topic for several years, as part of Harvard Business School’s Project on Managing the Future of Work, we have concluded that the real problem lies in the way that organizations mismanage their hourly workers: They are underinvesting in those employees and harming their own strategic interests. ... How are companies going astray? By not recognizing the contribution that low-wage workers make to executing their strategies. By not measuring all the hidden costs of constant churn. By not implementing management practices that could improve the productivity of low-wage workers and encourage them to stay and prosper at the company. ... This pattern of denial and neglect hurts workers in ways that have profound societal costs. No matter how hard or how long they work, many low-wage workers cannot climb out of poverty. ... The pattern also inflicts all sorts of direct and indirect costs on companies, including lower retention and higher absenteeism, more overtime, a reliance on staffing agencies to provide temporary workers, constant recruitment and training of new employees, a lowering of morale, a loss of institutional and process knowledge, a decline in customer goodwill, a damaged reputation among job seekers, stagnant or lower rates of productivity – and less revenue.”

<https://hbr.org/2023/05/the-high-cost-of-neglecting-low-wage-workers>

Slawa Rokicki, Nancy E. Reichman and Mark E. McGovern, **Association of Increasing the Minimum Wage in the US With Experiences of Maternal Stressful Life Events**, JAMA Network Open Medical Journal, July 18, 2023.

In this cross-sectional study including women who gave birth between 2004 and 2015, across 39 states, “a \$1 increase in the state-level minimum wage was associated with significant reductions in experiences of financial, partner-related, and total stressful life events.” The study notes, “Exposure to stressful life events (SLEs) before and during pregnancy is associated with serious adverse health for pregnant people and their children.”

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2807378>

Holly Sklar and Alissa Barron-Menza, **Raising the Minimum Wage to \$15 Helps Small Business**, Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, February 24, 2021.

“It’s too often forgotten that workers are also customers. Businesses typically have many more customers than employees. Raising the minimum wage is a very efficient way to boost business and the economy because it puts money in the pockets of people who most need to spend it. Raising the minimum wage pays off for businesses in other ways. Businesses that pay low wages typically have high employee turnover. With increased wages, businesses see:

- Lower employee turnover, which reduces hiring and training costs
- Decreased employee financial stress and increased morale
- Increased productivity
- Lower error and accident rates
- Less product waste
- Better customer service

https://www.businessforfairminimumwage.org/sites/default/files/BFMW_Raising_Min_Wage_Helps_Small_Business_Feb_24_2021.pdf

Seema Jayachandran, **How a Raise for Workers Can Be a Win for Everybody**, New York Times, June 18, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/business/coronavirus-minimum-wage-increase.html>

Krista Ruffini, **Better workplace conditions for long-term eldercare staff are key to promoting resident safety amid the coronavirus pandemic**, Washington Center for Equitable Growth, June 4, 2020.

<https://equitablegrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/060420-Long-term-care-ib.pdf>

<https://equitablegrowth.org/better-workplace-conditions-for-long-term-eldercare-staff-are-key-to-promoting-resident-safety-amid-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Krista Ruffini, **Worker earnings, service quality, and firm profitability: Evidence from nursing homes and minimum wage reforms**, Washington Center for Equitable Growth, June 2020.

<https://equitablegrowth.org/working-papers/worker-earnings-service-quality-and-firm-profitability-evidence-from-nursing-homes-and-minimum-wage-reforms/>

George Wehby, Robert Kaestner, Wei Lyu, Dhaval M. Dave, **Effects of the Minimum Wage on Child Health**, National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 26691, January 2020. Revised December 2020.

“We find that an increase in the minimum wage throughout childhood is associated with a significant improvement in child health.”

https://www.nber.org/papers/w26691?utm_campaign=ntwh&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ntwg11

Natalia Emanuel and Emma Harrington, **The Payoffs of Higher Pay: Elasticities of Productivity and Labor Supply with Respect to Wages**, Harvard University, January 12, 2020.

https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/nataliaemanuel/files/emanuel_jmp.pdf

Katie Bach, Sarah Kalloch and Zeynep Ton, **The Financial Case for Good Retail Jobs**, Harvard Business Review, June 26, 2019.

<https://hbr.org/2019/06/the-financial-case-for-good-retail-jobs>

Retail’s Big Mistake: Slashing Payroll Cuts into Profits, Wharton’s Marshall Fisher, Santiago Gallino and Serguei Netessine discuss their research on the impact of staffing on retailers’ profits. Knowledge@Wharton, Wharton School, February 14, 2019.

“It is imperative for retail companies to recognize that employees are the most valuable asset on any sales floor, especially now. Increased competition from online shopping threatens the very existence of many physical stores, so top-shelf service can make the difference between a customer making a purchase or walking out in frustration.”

<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/retail-staffing-model/>

Marshall Fisher, Santiago Gallino, Serguei Netessine, **Retailers Are Squandering Their Most Potent Weapons**, Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2019.

<https://hbr.org/2019/01/retailers-are-squandering-their-most-potent-weapons>

Obama White House Summary Report, Executive Office of the President, **Raising the Minimum Wage: A Progress Update**, October 2016.

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/minimum_wage/6_october_2016_min_wage_report-final.pdf

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, **Taking the High Road: New Data Show Higher Wages May Increase Productivity, Among Other Benefits**, ESA Issue Brief, August 4, 2015.

<https://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/migrated/reports/taking-the-high-road-new-data-show-higher-wages-may-increase-productivity-among-other-benefits.pdf>

Jody Heymann, Magda Barrera, Magda Barrera, **How businesses can profit from raising compensation at the bottom**, Ivey Business Journal, December 2010. Based on their book, *Profit at the Bottom of the Ladder: Creating Value by Investing in Your Workforce* (Harvard Business Press, 2010).

“Our findings very clearly demonstrate that investing in employees at the bottom can be an advantage both in times of economic growth and during a recession.”

<https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/how-businesses-can-profit-from-raising-compensation-at-the-bottom/>

Employee Turnover

Carol Warner, **The Real Cost of Employee Turnover Now**, HR Morning, April 23, 2025.

“Employee turnover isn’t just a staffing issue – it’s a significant financial drain that affects a company’s bottom line. ... Turnover isn’t cheap. Recent research from [Applauz](#) suggests that replacing a single employee in 2025 could cost between 50% and four times that person’s annual salary, depending on the role and level of experience. We can divide these employee turnover costs into two categories: direct and hidden. Direct costs include the time and money spent recruiting and hiring new employees, onboarding, training, and missed sales quotas. The hidden costs are indirect. For example, dips in employee morale, productivity declines, and knowledge losses are hidden costs of employee turnover.”

<https://www.hrmorning.com/articles/real-cost-employee-turnover/>

Zeynep Ton, **Good Jobs Are Good Business**, Time, June 8, 2023.

“Low pay drives high employee turnover ... In low-wage settings including senior living, call centers, warehouses, retail stores, and restaurants, we have seen some companies replacing their entire frontline workforce annually, with more than 100% employee turnover. ... At most companies with which Good Jobs Institute has worked, employers are pouring the equivalent of 10 to 25% of their labor budget on replacement costs—the costs to recruit, train, and reach baseline productivity, only to start all over again when employees leave. ... But those costs pale in comparison to costs from the inevitable poor operational execution that takes place when there is high turnover: lower sales from mistakes, slow service, and customer dissatisfaction; high product costs from more errors, overtime costs, and reduced labor productivity.”

<https://time.com/6285516/good-jobs-good-business/>

Kim Parker and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, **Majority of workers who quit a job in 2021 cite low pay, no opportunities for advancement, feeling disrespected**, Pew Research Center, March 9, 2022.

The survey finds the top reasons why Americans quit their jobs in 2021 are low pay (63%), no opportunities for advancement (63%) and feeling disrespected at work (57%).

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/>

Kate Bahn and Carmen Sanchez Cumming, **Improving U.S. labor standards and the quality of jobs to reduce the costs of employee turnover to U.S. companies**, Washington Center for Equitable Growth, December 21, 2020.

An analysis of case studies published between 2000 and 2020 found that the median cost of turnover represented 23.5 percent of an employee's annual wage.

<https://equitablegrowth.org/improving-u-s-labor-standards-and-the-quality-of-jobs-to-reduce-the-costs-of-employee-turnover-to-u-s-companies/>

Adecco, **How Wages Impact Your Employee Turnover**, October 12, 2020.

"There's plenty of research that shows the correlation between low wages and low productivity (and lack of employee engagement). ... Some lower-paying companies actually spend more than some higher-paying companies when it comes to workforce management. Why? Because the lower-paying companies have higher turnover costs in the form of job ads, onboarding, training and opportunity costs. Not to mention, poor culture and productivity issues." Adecco's data found that in addition to higher turnover the lower an organization paid, "50% of that turnover occurred within the first 45 days of a new hire starting a job. That's very little time for an organization to see any ROI from their hires before losing them due to poor wages."

<https://www.adeccousa.com/employers/resources/increasing-hourly-wages/>

Matthew Castillon, **70% of workers are likely to quit at current \$7.25 federal minimum wage in 'brutal' turnover cycle**, CNBC, September 25, 2019.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/25/70percent-of-workers-are-likely-to-quit-at-current-federal-minimum-wage.html>

Amanda Gallea, **The Impact of Wages and Turnover on Security and Safety in Airports: A Review of the Literature**, UC Berkeley Labor Center, October 18, 2017.

<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/SFO-literature-review.pdf>

Arindrajit Dube, T. William Lester and Michael Reich, **Minimum Wage Shocks, Employment Flows and Labor Market Frictions**, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, October 2014, and *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2016.

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/685449?journalCode=jole>

<https://irle.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Minimum-Wage-Shocks-Employment-Flows-and-Labor-Market-Frictions.pdf>

Heather Boushey and Sarah Jane Glynn, Center for American Progress, **There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees**, November 2012.

<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/16084443/CostofTurnover0815.pdf>

Blake Frank, Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council, **New Ideas for Retaining Store-Level Employees**, 2000.

This in-depth study of the supermarket industry found that the annual cost of turnover exceeded the industry's total annual profit by 40 percent. The research factored in direct costs such as advertising, screening, training and new employee processing. It measured indirect costs such as errors, product damage and improper use of equipment. It also analyzed the "large and critical cost element" of lost customers due to employee turnover, as customers are irritated by new and inexperienced replacement employees, to the point of taking their business elsewhere.

<https://www.ccrcc.org/content/dam/ccrc/us/en/pdf/north-america-large-store/new-ideas-for-retaining-store-level-employees-2000.pdf>

Prices

Daniel Cooper, María José Luengo-Prado and Jonathan A. Parker, **The Local Aggregate Effects of Minimum Wage Increases**, National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper 25761, April 2019.

Finds that a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage leads to just a cumulative 0.24 percent increase in prices. Analyzes the period 1999-2017, using variation in minimum wages across Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and controlling for differences in business-cycle factors and long-run local economic trends.
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w25761>

Daniel MacDonald and Eric Nilsson, **Effects of Increasing the Minimum Wage on Prices: Analyzing the Incidence of Policy Design and Context**, Upjohn Institute for Employment Research Working Paper, July 2016.

Uses updated methodology, with the benefit of being able to incorporate “rich variation in minimum wage policy of the last 10–15 years – including the rise of state and city-level minimum wage changes and the increased use of indexation – to investigate how the extent of price pass-through varies by policy context.” “Our first main finding is that wage-price elasticities are notably lower than reported in previous work: we find prices grow by 0.36 percent for every 10 percent increase in the minimum wage, which is almost half of the previously accepted 0.7 percent. Second, we find that pass-through is primarily concentrated on the month that the minimum wage hike goes into effect, with no appreciable impact on the month before or after.”

https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1278&context=up_workingpapers

Profits and Inflation

Talmon Joseph Smith, **Corporate America Aims to Preserve Profit Streak During War in Iran: Higher inflation is leading companies to raise prices without sacrificing margins**, New York Times, April 15, 2026.

“From the start of the 2020s, American businesses have been formidable in maintaining and growing their profits. Despite a gantlet of challenges — a pandemic, tariffs, high inflation and wars in key commodity hubs — profits have leaped ahead. Corporate profits have reached a record share of the U.S. economy, [data show](#). And a measure of margins that tracks the difference between input costs for businesses and the final selling price of goods and services to customers is also near a record high.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/15/business/economy/companies-profits-prices-iran-war.html>

Josh Bivens, **Profits and price inflation are indeed linked**, Economic Policy Institute, September 5, 2024.

“A spike in profit margins contributed significantly to inflation in the early part of the pandemic recovery ... For example, rising profits explained well over 40% of the rise in the price level between the end of 2019 and mid-2022, compared with profits normally accounting for about 11-12% of prices. ... Even as of the second quarter in 2024, corporate profits could explain roughly a third of the growth in the price level since the end of 2019, still much higher than the long-run average of just 11.5%.”

<https://www.epi.org/blog/profits-and-price-inflation-are-indeed-linked/>

Ryan Hogg, **The biggest study of ‘greedflation’ yet looked at 1,300 corporations to find many of them were lying to you about inflation**. Fortune, December 8, 2023.

“A joint study by think tanks IPPR and Common Wealth found profiteering by some of the world’s biggest companies forced prices up significantly higher than costs during 2022. ... While this obviously contributed to rising prices, the report finds that company profits increased at a much faster rate than costs did, in a process often dubbed ‘greedflation.’ Profits for companies in some of the world’s largest economies rose by

30% between 2019 and 2022, significantly outpacing inflation, according to the group’s research of 1,350 firms across the U.S., the U.K., Europe, Brazil, and South Africa.”

<https://fortune.com/europe/2023/12/08/greedflation-study/>

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/biggest-study-greedflation-yet-looked-11272227.html>

Tracy Alloway and Joe Weisenthal, **How ‘Excuseflation’ Is Keeping Prices — and Corporate Profits — High**, Bloomberg, March 9, 2023.

“Once companies enact higher prices, there isn’t a lot of motivation to reverse them. The result is a surge in profit margins ... across major companies in general. It’s a point picked up by UMass Amherst economists Isabella Weber and Evan Wasner. ... In new research published last week they named the phenomenon ‘sellers’ inflation,’ noting that a series of ‘overlapping emergencies’ in recent years had effectively given companies the peg they need to collectively raise prices. ‘Bottlenecks can create temporary monopoly power which can even render it safe to hike prices not only to protect but to increase profits,’ Weber says.”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-03-09/how-excuseflation-is-keeping-prices-and-corporate-profits-high#xj4y7vzkg>

Staff Report, **Power and Profiteering: How Certain Industries Hiked Prices and Drove Inflation**, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, November 2022.

“Recent economic studies and this Subcommittee’s analysis of corporate financial information demonstrate that certain corporate pricing decisions have played a key role in driving inflation, along with supply chain disruptions... Record corporate markups, profits, and profit margins contributed to – and continue to contribute to – ongoing inflation. ... This is especially true in highly concentrated industries.”

<https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/2022.11.04%20ECP%20Staff%20Report%20re%20Excess%20Corporate%20Profits.pdf>

Rakeen Mabud, Groundwork Collaborative, **Congressional Testimony, Power and Profiteering**, Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, September 22, 2022.

“While consumers have struggled to navigate both a deadly pandemic and rising costs that have further strapped family budgets, large corporations have exploited consumers to enjoy record profits and profit margins. Corporate profit margins exploded in 2021, but they reached new highs in the second quarter of 2022 at 15.5%, the highest quarterly profit margin in over 70 years.”

<https://www.congress.gov/117/meeting/house/115145/witnesses/HHRG-117-GO05-Wstate-MabudR-20220922.pdf>

Josh Bivens, **Inflation, Minimum Wages, and Profits: Protecting low-wage workers from inflation means raising the minimum wage**, Economic Policy Institute, September 22, 2022.

“Faster inflation makes it *more* important, not less, to raise the federal minimum wage. Every year lawmakers don’t raise the minimum wage is a year that they have effectively *cut* the purchasing power and living standards of this country’s lowest wage workers. ... During normal times, profits account for about 13% of the price of goods and services, but since recovery from the COVID-19 recession began in the second quarter of 2020, rising profit margins have accounted for roughly 40% of the rise in prices.”

<https://www.epi.org/blog/inflation-minimum-wages-and-profits-protecting-low-wage-workers-from-inflation-means-raising-the-minimum-wage/>

Justin Schweitzer and Rose Khattar, **Wages and Employment Do Not Have To Decline To Bring Down Inflation**, Center for American Progress, September 1, 2022.

“Wage growth for many workers has been trailing behind inflation in 2022... Meanwhile, data from the AFL-CIO show that profits of S&P 500 companies rose by 17.6 percent in 2021 – and the earnings of their CEOs grew by 18.2 percent. ... Company executives – rather than reinvesting much of their record profits into their workers and into the expansion of their businesses – have been executing stock buybacks at

historic levels... artificially boosting share prices that mainly benefit the executives themselves and other wealthy investors. In the first quarter of 2022, U.S. corporations repurchased more than \$300 billion in stocks, a new all-time high.”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/wages-and-employment-do-not-have-to-decline-to-bring-down-inflation/>

Mike Konczal and Niko Lusiani, **Prices, Profits, and Power: An Analysis of 2021 Firm-Level Markups**, Roosevelt Institute, June 2022.

“This research brief is the first to explore the size and distribution of markups (essentially the difference between sales and marginal costs) and profit margins across 3,698 firms operating in the US in 2021. ... [We] find that markups and profits skyrocketed in 2021 to their highest recorded level since the 1950s. Further, firms in the US increased their markups and profits in 2021 at the fastest annual pace since 1955. Digging deeper, the evidence of this unusually and suddenly high jump in markups fits all three of the main explanatory stories of inflation being debated – namely those related to changes in demand, supply, and market power. ... Since markups are unusually and suddenly so high, there is room for reversing them with little economic harm and likely societal benefit, including lower prices in the short term, and less inequality and potentially more innovation in the medium term.”

https://rooseveltinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RI_PricesProfitsPower_202206.pdf

Tom Perkins, **Revealed: Top US corporations raising prices on Americans even as profits surge**, The Guardian, April 27, 2022.

“The analysis of Securities and Exchange Commission filings for 100 US corporations found net profits up by a median of 49%, and in one case by as much as 111,000%. Those increases came as companies saddled customers with higher prices and all but ten executed massive stock buyback programs or bumped dividends to enrich investors.” Meanwhile, US median wages increased 1.6% from Q1 2020 to Q1 2022. “The Guardian’s findings are in line with recent US Commerce Department data that shows corporate profits rose 35% during the last year and are at their [highest level](#) since 1950. Inflation, meanwhile, rose to 8.5% year over year in March.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/27/inflation-corporate-america-increased-prices-profits>

Molly Kinder, Katie Bach, and Laura Stateler, **Profits and the pandemic: As shareholder wealth soared, workers were left behind**, Brookings, April 21, 2022.

The 22 major companies studied “spent five times more on dividends and stock buybacks than on all additional pay for workers. Diverting some, or all, of that shareholder cash would have allowed companies to increase wages significantly. The 16 companies that repurchased nearly \$50 billion of their shares could have raised the annual pay of their median worker by an average of 40% if they had redirected that money to employees.”

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/profits-and-the-pandemic-as-shareholder-wealth-soared-workers-were-left-behind/>

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Pandemic_Profits_report.pdf

Paul Constant, **It’s not just inflation – corporate greed is also partially to blame for the rising prices you’re paying**, Business Insider, February 12, 2022.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-measure-inflation-raise-prices-corporate-profits-supply-chain-2022-2>

Josh Bivens, **U.S. workers have already been disempowered in the name of fighting inflation**, Economic Policy Institute, January 21, 2022.

Analyzes the acceleration in prices and wages across 110 industries. “There is very little correlation to be seen. In sectors where inflation is high, like motor vehicle manufacturing, it’s generally not because wage growth is high. And in those sectors where labor scarcity has put upward pressure on wages, like hotels and other accommodations, it has not led to atypically fast price growth. In short, price inflation remains a problem coming from outside the labor market.”

<https://www.epi.org/blog/u-s-workers-have-already-been-disempowered-in-the-name-of-fighting-inflation-policy-makers-should-not-make-it-even-worse-by-raising-interest-rates-too-aggressively/>

Accident Rates

Christopher D. B. Burt, **Chapter 2: New Employee Accident Rates**, [New Employee Safety: Risk Factors and Management Strategies](#), Springer, 2015.

“At its broadest level, there are three different bodies of research that have addressed new employees’ occupational accident rate. All three literatures clearly show that an employee is more likely to have an accident at work in their initial period of employment in a job.”

<https://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319186832>

Business Closings

U.S. Small Business Administration, **Small Business Facts: Why Do Business Close?** May 2018.

“Of the businesses with employees that closed in 2015, the top reasons for closing were low sales, the owner(s) retiring, and the owner(s) selling the business (Chart 2). With the next top reasons being opening another firm and illness/injury, it shows that many owners close for personal or health reasons not just business reasons. (‘Other reasons’ was also relatively high.)”

https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Small_Biz_Facts_Why_Do_Businesses_Close_May_2018_0.pdf

Polling/Opinion

Eric Johnson, CNBC, **A majority of America’s small business owners support minimum wage increase**, February 22, 2024.

61 percent of small business owners support raising the minimum wage in their state, reports the Q1 2024 CNBC/SurveyMonkey Small Business Survey among a national sample of more than 3,000 small business owners.

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/22/a-majority-of-americas-business-owners-support-minimum-wage-increase.html>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/cnbc-survey-monkey-small-business-index-q1-2024/>

Payscale, **Federal Minimum Wage Report**, July 11, 2023

75 percent of U.S. employers surveyed by Payscale support raising the federal minimum wage. Only 9 percent said it should not be increased and 15 percent were unsure. 66 percent of U.S. respondents said it should be automatically increased each year to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Payscale also found “Although opponents to minimum wage increases believe that raising it will hurt small businesses, our survey indicates small organizations with fewer than 100 employees are actually more in favor of raising the minimum wage” than very large organizations.

<https://www.payscale.com/research-and-insights/minimum-wage-report/>

Julia Rock and Andrew Perez, **McDonald’s, Other CEOs Tell Investors \$15 Minimum Wage Won’t Hurt Business**, Newsweek, April 5, 2021.

“Big restaurant chains are telling investors that a national minimum wage hike wouldn’t be a big deal – even as their corporate lobbying groups in Washington fight plans for a \$15 minimum wage.” In fact, California’s law raising the minimum wage to \$15 “has actually been good for the diner chain’s business, according to Denny’s chief financial officer, Robert Verostek.”

<https://www.newsweek.com/mcdonalds-other-ceos-tell-investors-15-minimum-wage-wont-hurt-business-1580978>

Lydia DePillis, **Leaked documents show strong business support for raising the minimum wage**, Washington Post, April 4, 2016.

The survey commissioned by the Council of State Chambers “of 1,000 business executives across the country was conducted by LuntzGlobal, the firm run by Republican pollster Frank Luntz... (The slide deck is [here](#), and the full questionnaire is [here](#).) Among the most interesting findings: **80 percent** of respondents said they supported raising their state's minimum wage, while only eight percent opposed it.

‘That’s where it’s undeniable that they support the increase,’ LuntzGlobal managing director David Merritt told state chamber executives in a webinar describing the results, noting that it squares with other polling they’ve done. ‘And this is universal. If you’re fighting against a minimum wage increase, you’re fighting an uphill battle, because most Americans, even most Republicans, are okay with raising the minimum wage.’”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/04/04/leaked-documents-show-strong-business-support-for-raising-the-minimum-wage/>

Copyright © 2026 Holly Sklar