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BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Food for Thought

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BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Food for Thought

Abstract

[Excerpt] This Spotlight uses BLS data to provide insight into the wonderful world of food—including food-related time use and household expenditures, the costs of food at home and away from home, employment and earnings of several food-related occupations, and injury and illness data for the food industry.

Comments

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Food for Thought

November 2010

With the end of the year upon us, many Americans begin to look forward to upcoming feasts involving friends, family, and fully satisfying meals. Packed with family gatherings, holiday celebrations, and related social events, November and December provide opportunities for Americans to join together for many food-related activities, and are often thought of as two of the busiest months of the year.

A variety of occupations in the food industry provide people with the ability to enjoy food both at home and away from home. Whether you regularly prepare home-cooked meals or order take-out a few times a week, food is a major part of daily life.

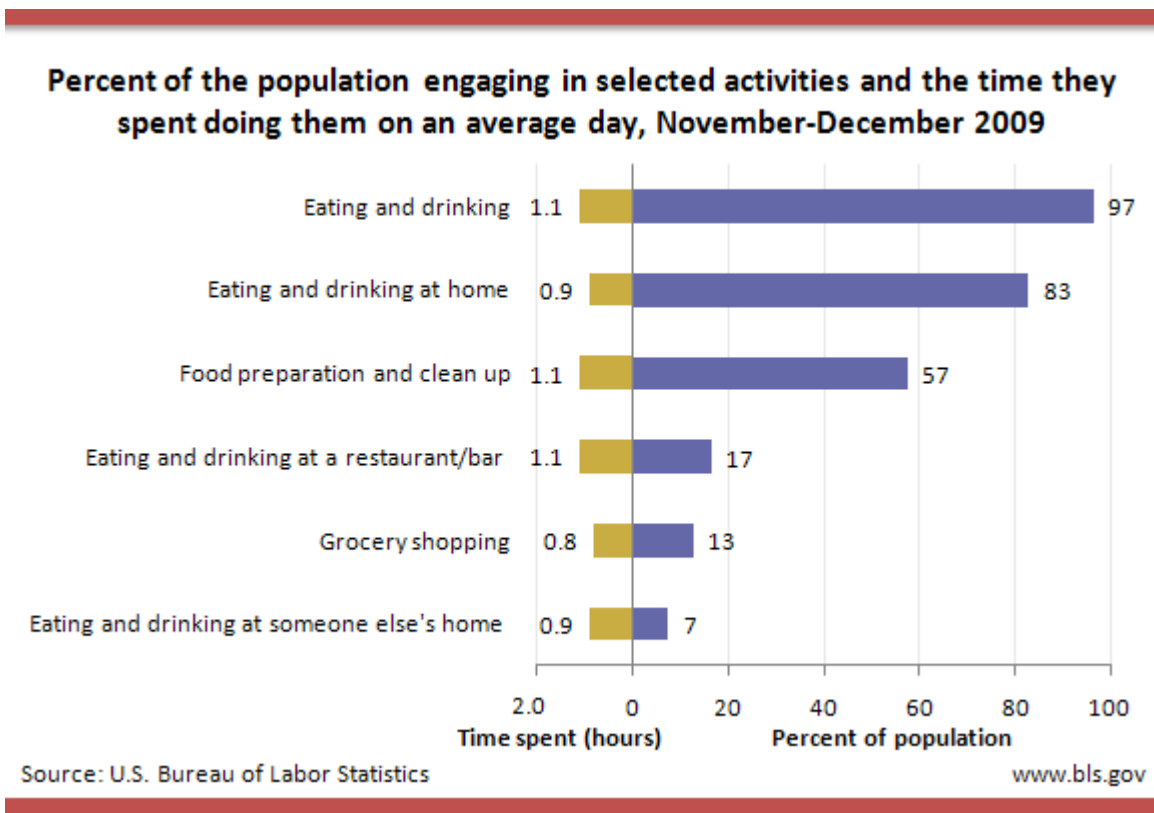
This Spotlight uses BLS data to provide insight into the wonderful world of food—including food-related time use and household expenditures, the costs of food at home and away from home, employment and earnings of several food-related occupations, and injury and illness data for the food industry.



November and December: A time to eat, drink, and be merry

On a given day in November and December 2009, nearly all Americans spent time—an average of about an hour—eating and drinking as a main activity. Eighty-three percent of Americans spent time eating and drinking while at home, 17 percent did so at a restaurant or bar, and 7 percent ate and drank while at someone else's home. A small share (3 percent) only ate and drank while doing another main activity, such as watching tv and eating dinner at the same time, or did not eat at all.

More than half (57 percent) of Americans spent time preparing food and cleaning up on a given day in November and December 2009. Those who engaged in food preparation and clean up spent an average of 1.1 hours doing so. A smaller share of the population went grocery shopping (13 percent). Those who went grocery shopping averaged just under one hour in the activity.



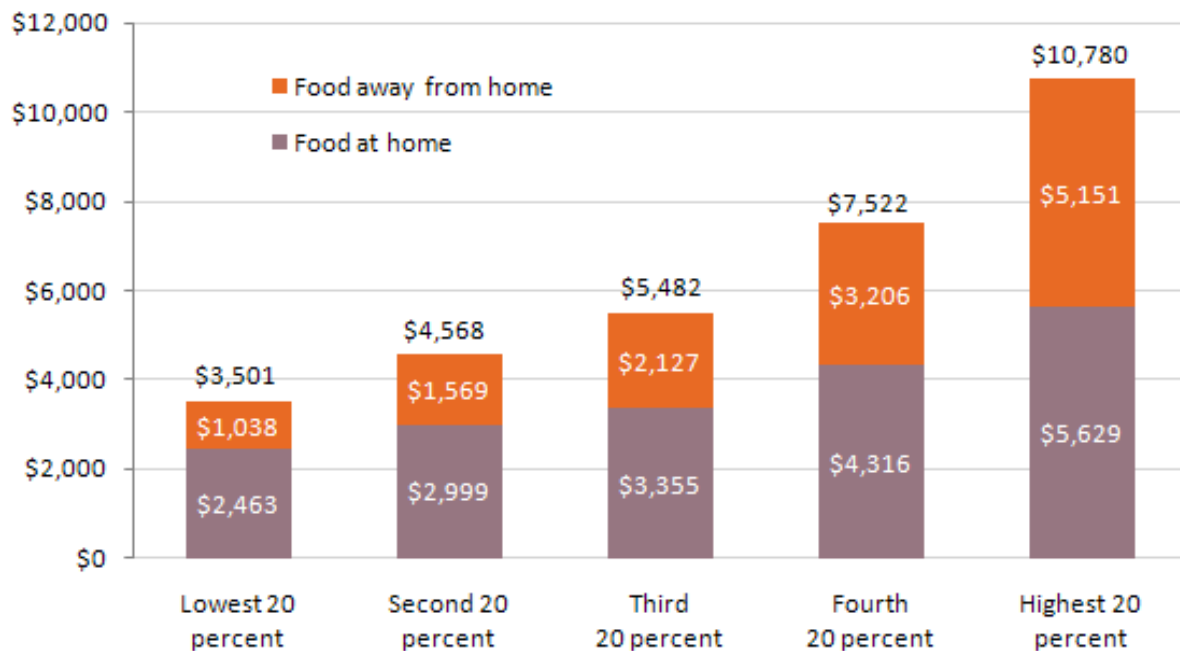
Source: American Time Use Survey

Annual food expenditures as a function of household income

In 2009, households earning a pretax income of \$93,784 and above—which represented the highest 20 percent of all household incomes—spent, on average, more on food away from home than the combined total spent by households in the first three income groups. Across all income groups, consumers spent more on food at home than food away from home. Consumers in the lowest income group spent the highest proportional amount of annual food expenditures on food at home, about 70 percent. Consumers in the highest income group split their food budget nearly evenly between food at home, 52 percent, and food away from home, 48 percent.

Average annual food expenditures as a function of household income

Average annual food expenditures by quintiles of income before taxes, 2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

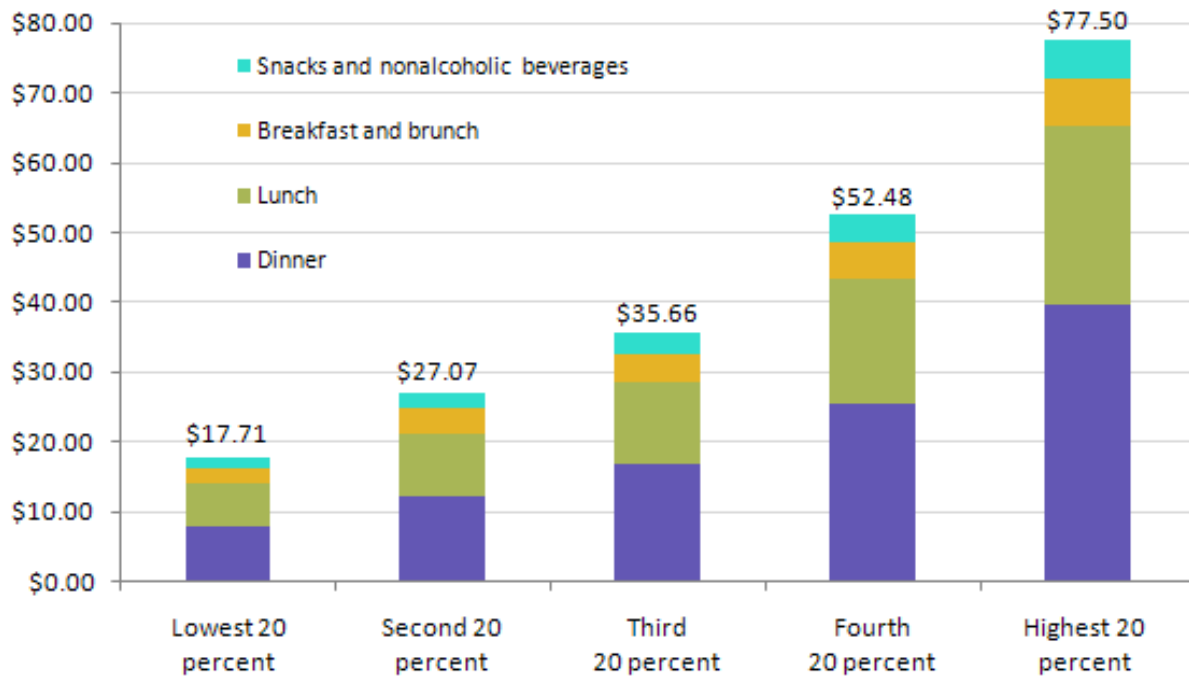
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Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey

Where are we going for dinner?

Many people enjoy meals away from home, whether it is snacks, breakfast and brunch, lunch, or dinner. Across all income groups, consumers spent the largest portion of their weekly expenditures for meals away from home on dinner. Households in the highest income group spent more on dinner than the combined total spent on dinner by the lowest three income groups.

Average weekly expenditures as a function of household income, meals away from home, 2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

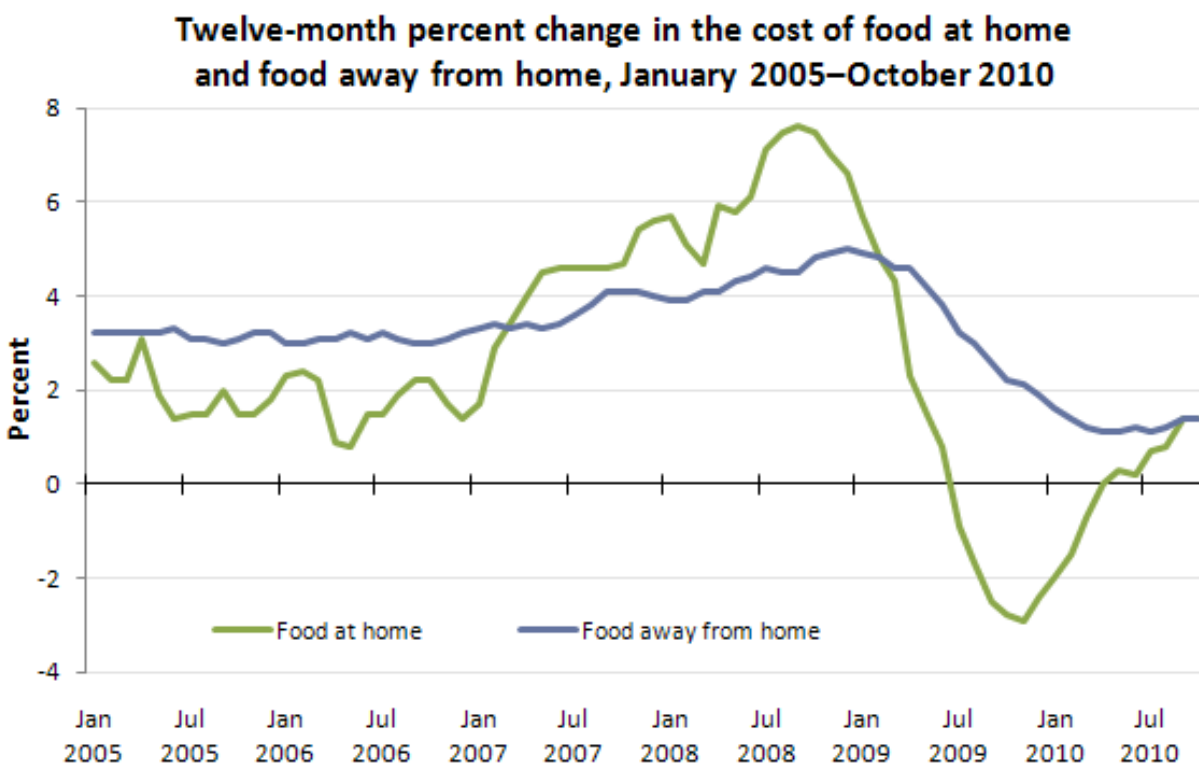
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Source: Consumer Expenditure Survey

Cooking at home versus dining out

Most consumers consider price when deciding whether to eat at home or away from home; they also consider price to determine where they can afford to go out to eat.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food at home compared with the CPI for food away from home has fluctuated over the past 5 years. From March 2007 to March 2009, consumer prices for food at home grew faster than those for food away from home. Though the CPI for both food indexes continued to fluctuate after March 2009, the price of food away from home has grown faster than the price of food at home. In October 2010, the price index for both food at home and food away from home grew at the same pace.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

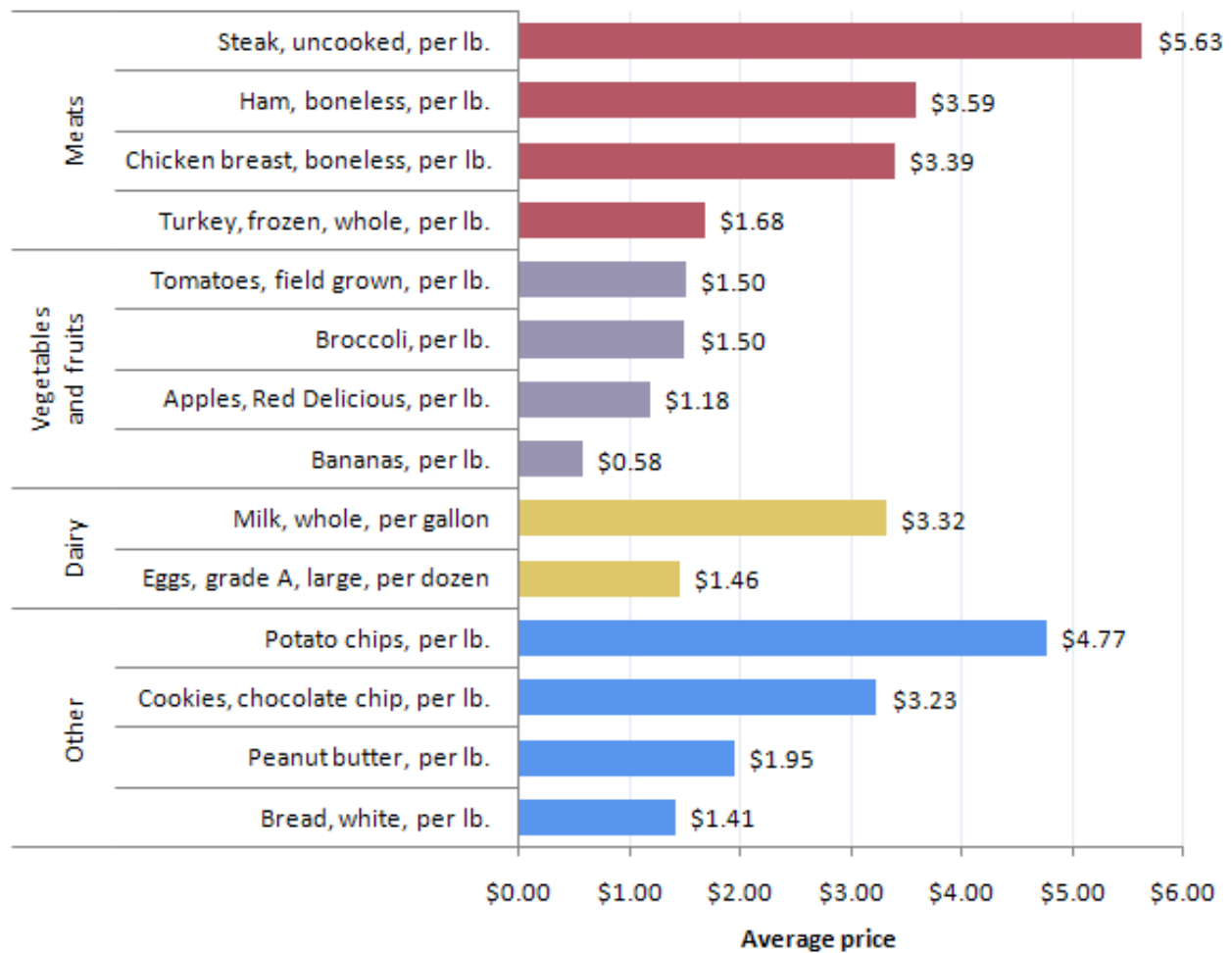
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Source: Consumer Price Index

What you pay at the grocery store

In October 2010, goods in a typical shopping basket, such as meats, vegetables and fruits, dairy products, and other items, varied in price. Potato chips, a favorite snack-food for many people, were more expensive per pound than typical meal staples such as turkey, broccoli, bread, and chicken. Around the holidays, many Americans plan feasts that usually include a meat. Uncooked steak is more expensive than the combined price for ham and turkey, per pound.

U.S. city average price for selected food items, October 2010



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Source: Consumer Price Index

Where food is manufactured

Have you ever wondered where your favorite foods are manufactured and processed? Nationwide, there were about 28,000 food manufacturing establishments in 2009. This represents about 0.3 percent of the total number of establishments in the United States. The Nation's large metropolitan areas generally have a higher number of food manufacturing establishments. These manufacturing establishments are responsible for dairy, sugar, animal, fruit, vegetable, and grain manufacturing as well as seafood product preparation and animal slaughtering. Food manufacturing establishments also bag, bottle, cook and freeze the food. Food manufacturing establishments contribute to the production process of many items people eat, whether at home or away from home.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

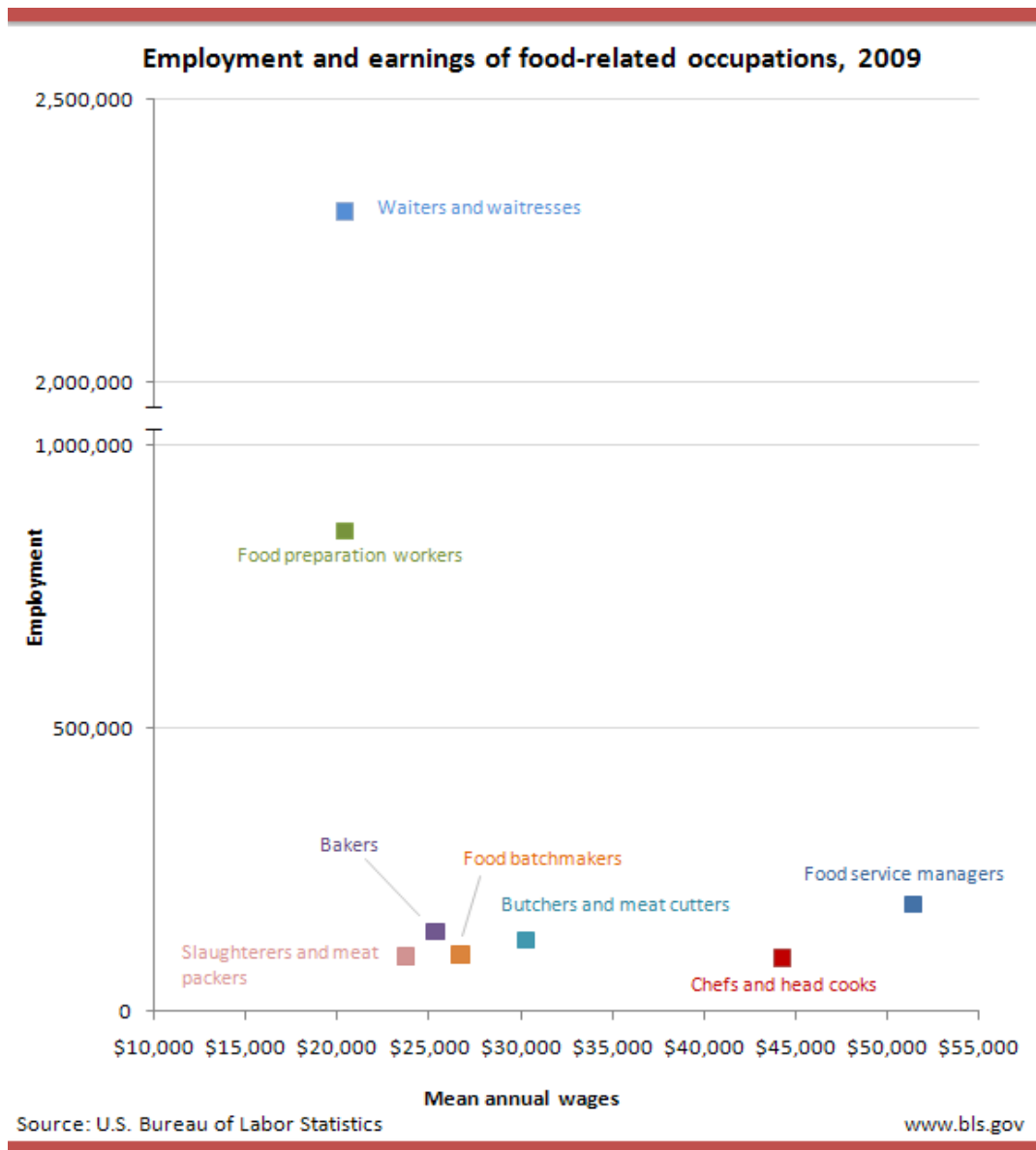
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Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Employment and earnings of food-related occupations

In 2009, earnings in food-related occupations were typically lower than the average for all occupations (\$43,460), with six out of the eight listed occupations falling more than \$10,000 below that average. The two occupational groups with higher than average earnings were chefs and head cooks and food service managers.

Waiters and waitresses, food preparation workers, chefs, and food service managers perform a variety of tasks. They prepare food, clean food preparation and service areas, accept payment from customers, and manage the food establishment. There were 2,302,070 waiters and waitresses employed in 2009. People who were employed as butchers and meat cutters and slaughterers and meat packers totaled 223,040 workers in 2009.



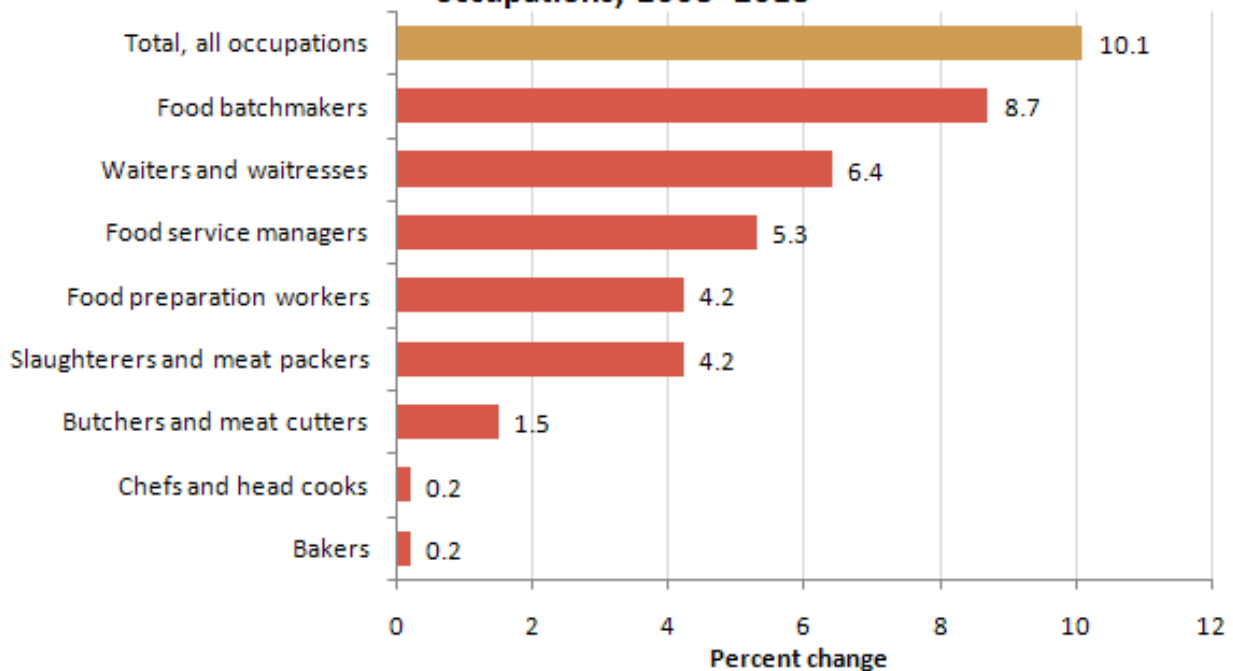
Source: Occupational Employment Statistics

Employment projections for food-related occupations

Employment in food-related occupations is projected to increase over the 2008-18 period. Food batchmakers (workers who operate equipment that mixes, blends, or cooks ingredients used in various manufacturing foods) are projected to increase by 8.7 percent because population growth will lead to an increased demand for more convenient, prepackaged foods. Employment among handworkers, such as slaughterers and meat packers, will rise because tasks performed by these workers are difficult to automate.

Job opportunities in restaurant establishments should remain steady, because the large number of young and part-time workers employed will generate substantial replacement needs. Two of these occupations, waiters and waitresses and food preparation workers, are projected to increase by 6.4 percent and 4.2 percent over the 2008-18 period, respectively.

Percent change in projected employment, select food-related occupations, 2008–2018



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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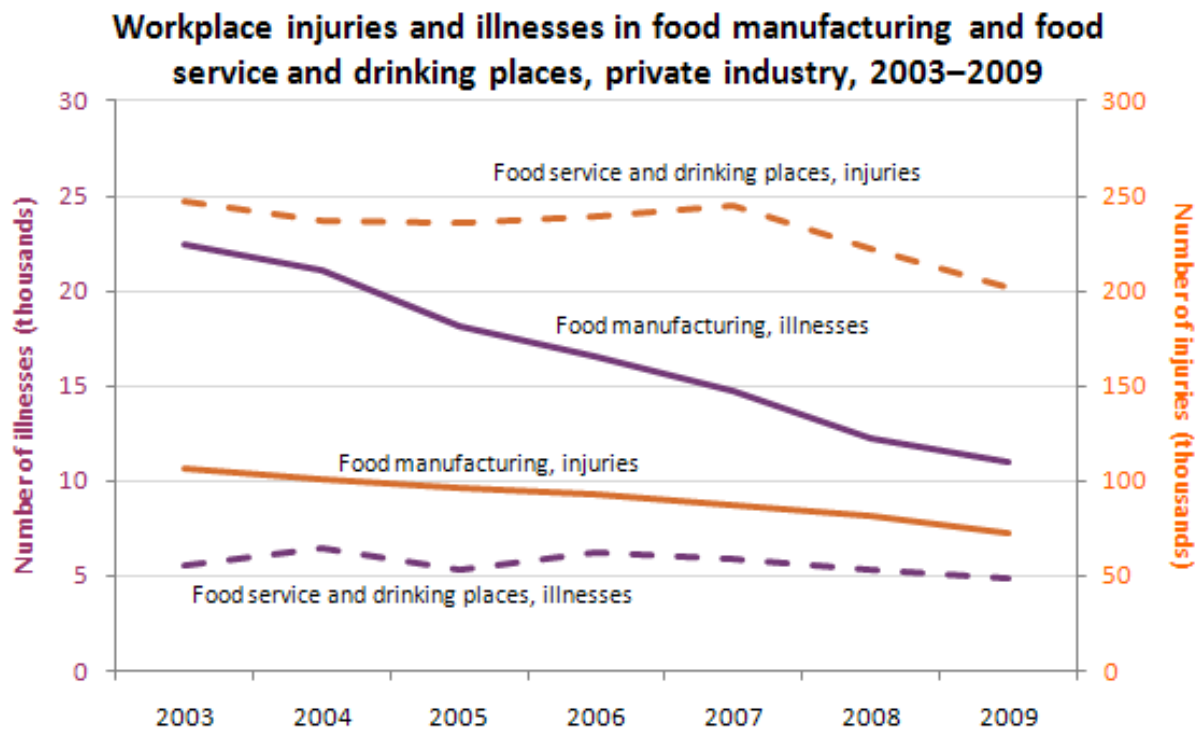
Source: Employment Projections Program

Injuries and illnesses in food-related industries

Workers in the food manufacturing and food service and drinking places industries are prone to certain kinds of injuries and illnesses, depending on the specific nature of their job.

Food manufacturing workers are highly susceptible to repetitive-strain injuries to their hands, wrists, and elbows—injuries common in meat- and poultry-processing plants. Production workers may be required to lift heavy objects or use cutting, slicing, grinding, and other dangerous tools and machines. Working conditions also depend on the type of food being processed. Some bakery employees spend much of their shifts near ovens that can be uncomfortably hot. There were 72,800 food manufacturing-related injuries in 2008.

Waiters, waitresses, chefs, and food preparation workers are subject to hazards such as the possibility of burns from hot equipment as well as sprained muscles and wrenched backs from heavy lifting and falls on slippery floors. There were 201,900 injuries reported in the food service and drinking places industry in 2008.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Source: Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities