



Restaurant Employee Demographics

Data Brief – March 2026

Introduction

The restaurant and foodservice industry is the nation’s second largest private sector employer, providing 15.7 million jobs – or 10% of the total U.S. workforce. This includes 12.5 million jobs at eating and drinking places, plus an estimated 3.2 million foodservice jobs in other sectors such as healthcare, accommodations, education, food-and-beverage stores, and arts, entertainment and recreation.

Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, this National Restaurant Association Data Brief contains an overview of restaurant employee demographics in 2024.

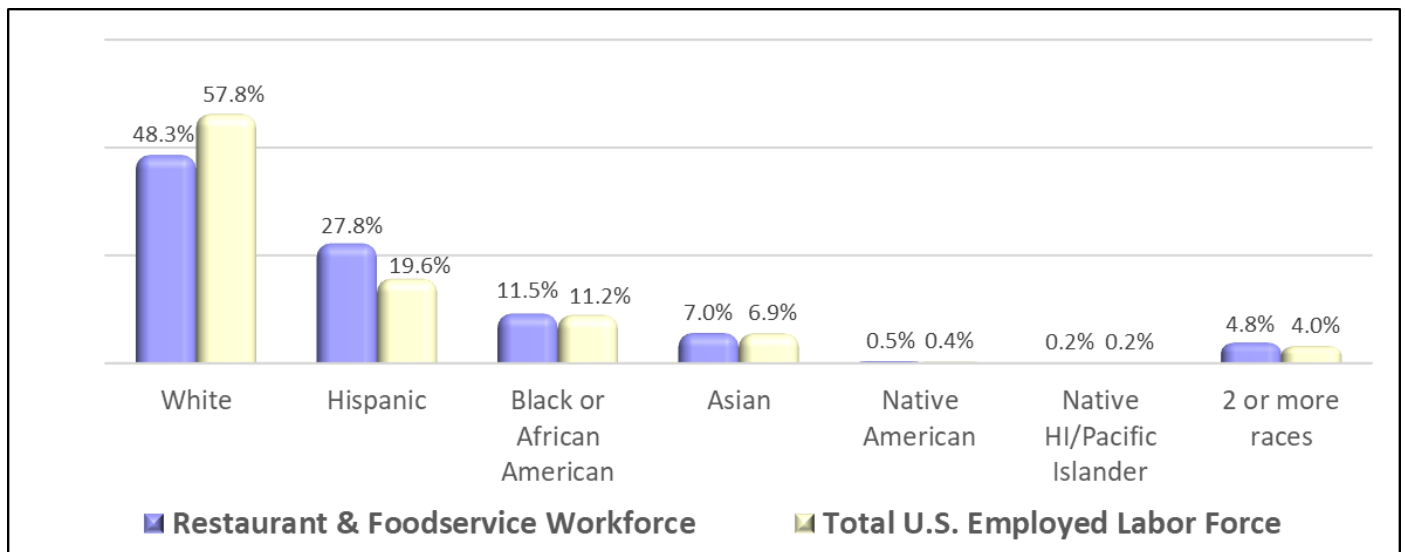
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Race and Ethnicity

- 52% of restaurant and foodservice employees are minorities, compared to 42% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 28% of restaurant and foodservice employees are Hispanic; 12% are Black or African American; and 7% are Asian. Each of these groups have a larger representation in the restaurant industry than they do in the overall U.S. workforce.
- 63% of chefs and 62% of cooks are minorities – the highest proportions among the major restaurant occupation categories.
- 46% of managers are minorities, which means the restaurant and foodservice industry employs more minority managers than any other sector in the economy.

Distribution of Employees by Race and Ethnicity
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Race and Ethnicity Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

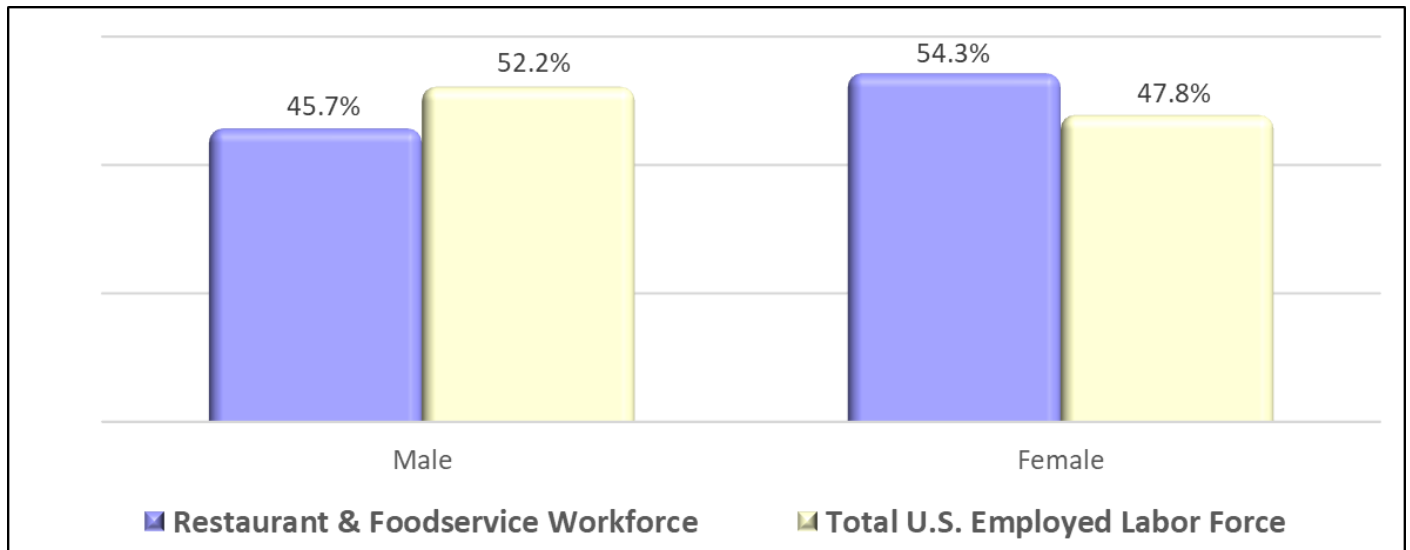
Race/Ethnicity	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
White	53.8%	51.9%	36.9%	37.9%	52.9%	67.9%	47.7%
Hispanic	22.3%	27.3%	27.3%	38.2%	25.6%	18.7%	28.6%
Black or African American	9.8%	12.1%	10.8%	13.6%	8.0%	5.7%	10.8%
Asian	9.6%	3.8%	20.7%	5.8%	7.5%	2.2%	6.6%
Native American	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
Native HI/Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
2 or more races	4.1%	4.5%	3.5%	3.8%	5.4%	5.0%	5.6%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Gender

- 54% of restaurant and foodservice employees are female, compared to 48% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 50% of managers and 55% of supervisors are female. As a result, the restaurant and foodservice industry employs more female managers than any other sector in the economy.
- Females make up a majority of tipped positions in the restaurant industry: 68% of waitstaff and 60% of bartenders are female.
- Females have a lower representation in the back of the house: 21% of chefs and 34% of cooks are female.

Distribution of Employees by Gender
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Gender Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

Gender	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
Male	50.2%	45.3%	79.5%	66.0%	31.8%	40.4%	38.3%
Female	49.8%	54.7%	20.5%	34.0%	68.2%	59.6%	61.7%

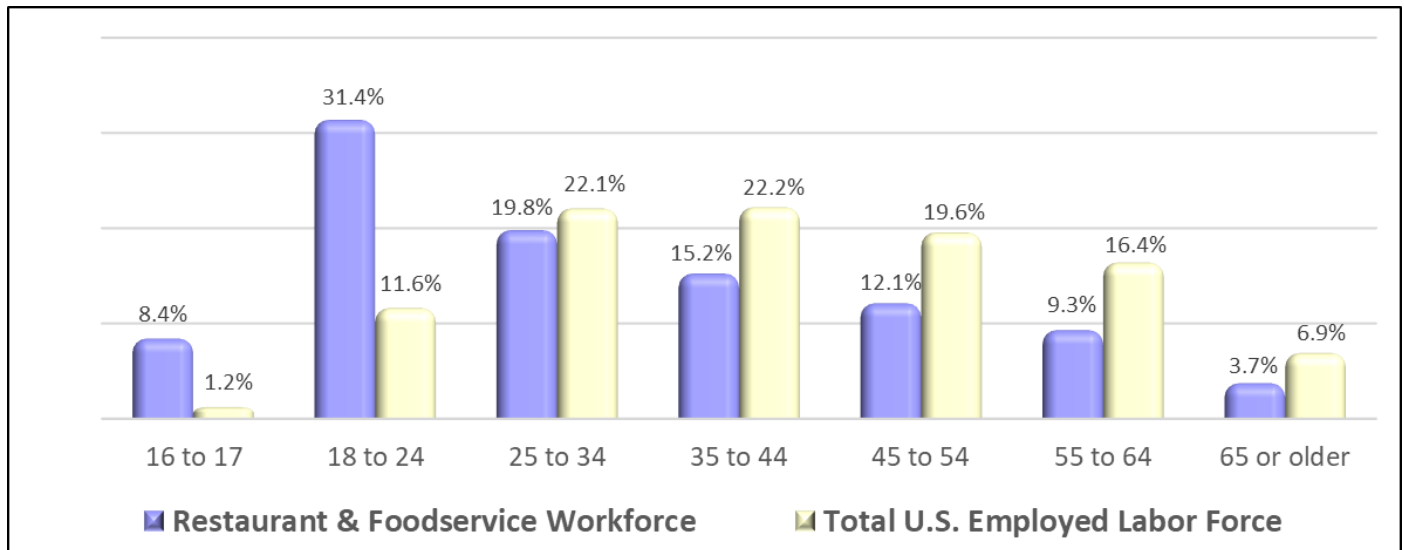
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Age

- The restaurant industry employs a much higher proportion of younger workers than the overall economy. 40% of restaurant and foodservice employees are under the age of 25, while 60% are under the age of 35.
- Only 13% of employees in the overall employed labor force are under the age of 25, while 35% are under the age of 35.
- 64% of food preparation and counter workers and 52% of waitstaff are under the age of 25.
- Adults aged 55 and older have the highest representation in the manager (16%) and chef (17%) occupations.

Distribution of Employees by Age

Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Age Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

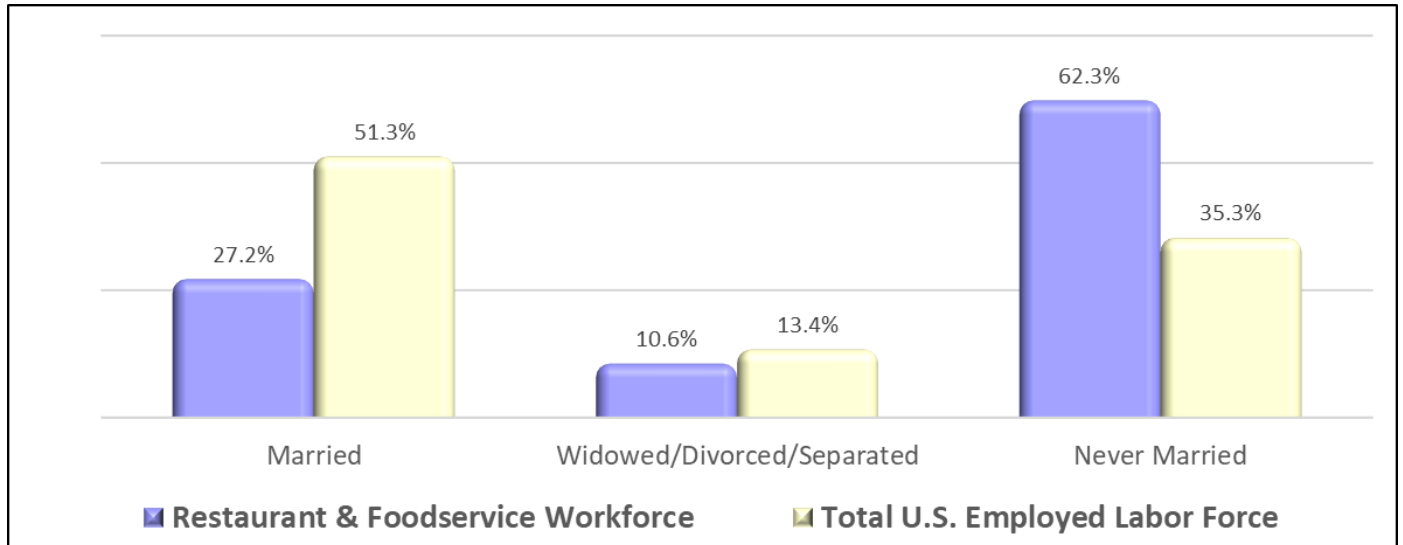
Age Group	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
16 to 17	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%	7.7%	8.4%	0.2%	15.5%
18 to 24	16.3%	31.6%	8.3%	29.7%	43.3%	19.8%	48.5%
25 to 34	22.4%	28.1%	23.2%	20.4%	22.3%	38.6%	15.4%
35 to 44	25.0%	17.8%	28.1%	17.4%	12.4%	22.5%	8.1%
45 to 54	19.8%	12.1%	22.6%	13.6%	7.3%	11.5%	5.9%
55 to 64	11.9%	7.1%	13.9%	8.6%	4.7%	5.6%	4.4%
65 or older	4.2%	2.4%	3.4%	2.5%	1.5%	1.9%	2.1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Marital Status

- The restaurant industry employs a much higher proportion of single workers than the overall economy. 62% of restaurant and foodservice employees have never been married, compared to 35% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 27% of restaurant and foodservice employees are married, while 11% are widowed, divorced or separated.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, food preparation and counter workers (79%) and waitstaff (73%) are the most likely to have never been married.
- Chefs (50%) and managers (45%) are the most likely to be married.

Distribution of Employees by Marital Status
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Marital Status Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

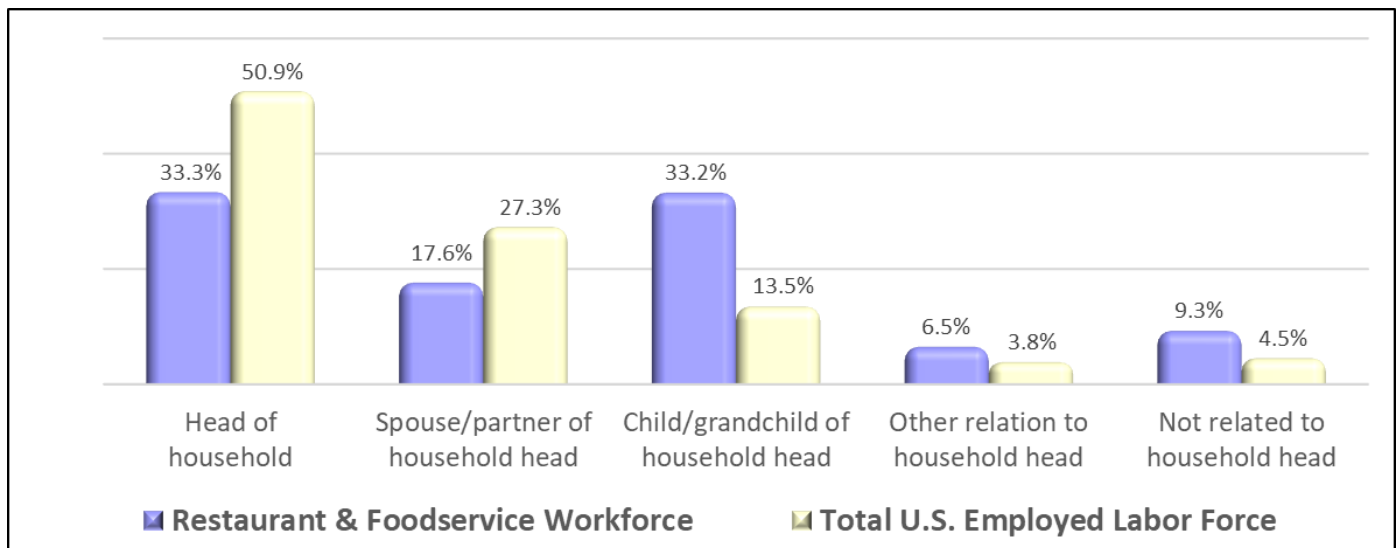
Marital Status	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
Married	45.3%	28.1%	50.1%	25.9%	18.6%	22.9%	14.8%
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	13.7%	11.2%	10.8%	10.5%	8.1%	13.4%	6.1%
Never Married	41.0%	60.7%	39.0%	63.6%	73.3%	63.7%	79.1%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Household Position

- A majority of restaurant workers are not the heads of their household. Only 33% of restaurant and foodservice employees are the heads of their household, compared to 51% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 18% of restaurant and foodservice employees are the spouse or partner of the household head, while 33% are the child or grandchild of the household head.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, managers (50%), bartenders (48%), chefs (44%) and supervisors (42%) are the most likely to be heads of their household.
- 50% of food preparation and counter workers are the child or grandchild of the household head, while only 21% are the head of their household.

Distribution of Employees by Household Position
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Household Position Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

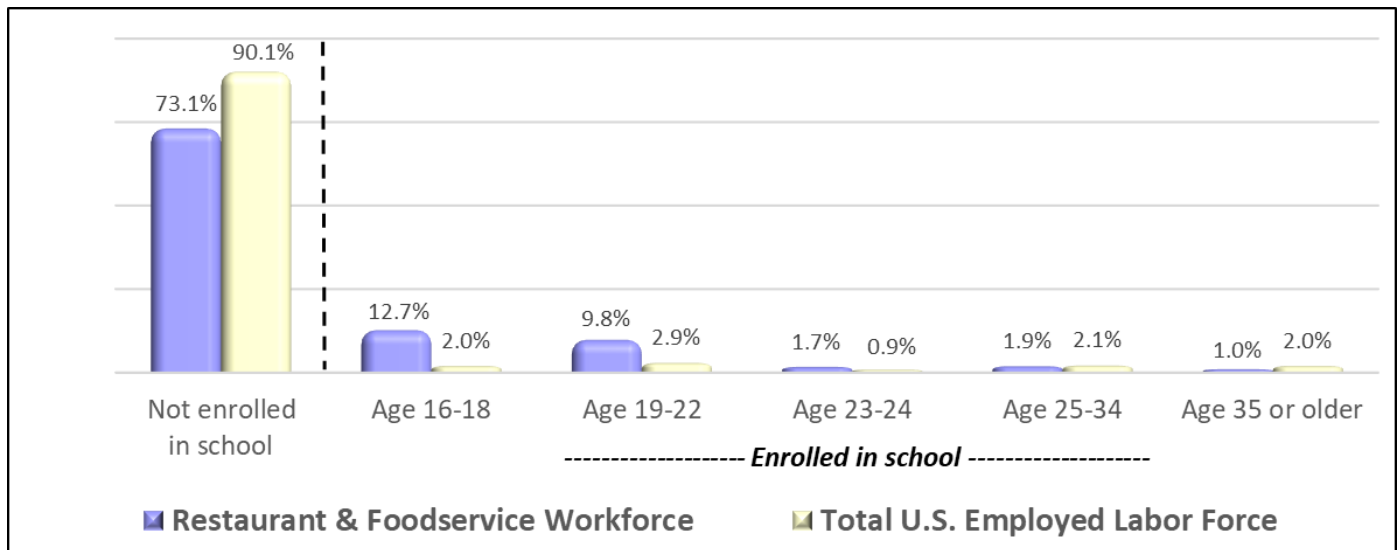
Household Position	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
Head of household	50.3%	41.9%	43.9%	30.6%	28.9%	48.3%	20.6%
Spouse or partner of household head	25.2%	19.1%	29.9%	18.2%	14.2%	20.4%	10.8%
Child or grandchild of household head	14.8%	23.8%	12.3%	32.4%	39.8%	15.2%	49.7%
Other relation to household head	4.8%	4.9%	7.2%	9.1%	5.7%	3.8%	6.3%
Not related to household head	4.9%	10.3%	6.7%	9.7%	11.4%	12.3%	12.6%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

School Enrollment

- 27% of restaurant and foodservice employees are enrolled in school, compared to 10% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 13% of restaurant and foodservice employees are 16-to-18-year-olds that are enrolled in school, while 10% are 19-to-22-year-olds that are enrolled in school.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, food preparation and counter workers (45%) and waitstaff (37%) are the most likely to be enrolled in school.
- 9% of bartenders and 7% of waitstaff are individuals aged 23 and older that are enrolled in school.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, chefs (6%) and managers (8%) are the least likely to be enrolled in school.

Distribution of Employees by School Enrollment
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

School Enrollment Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

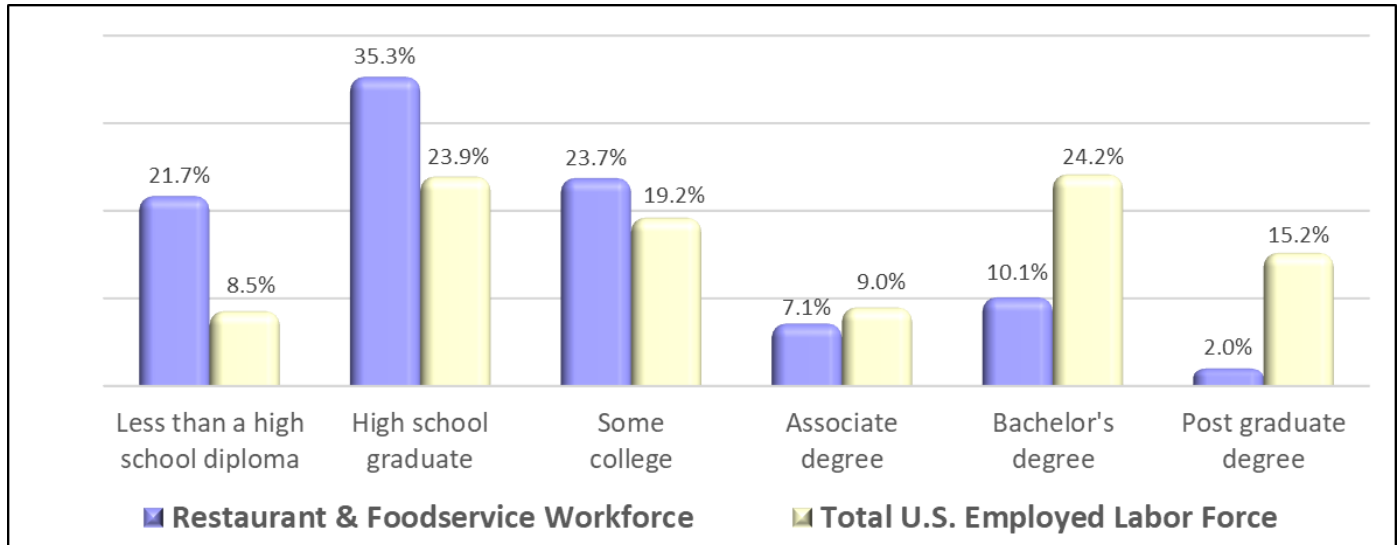
School Enrollment	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
Not enrolled in school	92.2%	83.1%	93.7%	78.2%	62.9%	85.4%	55.5%
Enrolled in school							
Age 16-18	1.2%	3.3%	0.8%	11.5%	13.7%	0.5%	23.5%
Age 19-22	2.9%	8.7%	2.3%	6.7%	16.7%	5.4%	16.0%
Age 23-24	0.8%	1.5%	0.8%	1.3%	3.0%	2.6%	2.6%
Age 25-34	1.5%	2.4%	1.5%	1.4%	2.8%	4.8%	2.0%
Age 35 or older	1.4%	0.9%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	1.4%	0.5%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Educational Attainment

- Employees in the restaurant industry have a lower educational attainment than workers in the overall economy, which is due in part to the fact that many are still enrolled in school.
- 22% of restaurant and foodservice employees have less than a high school diploma, compared to less than 9% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- 32% of cooks and 28% of food preparation and counter workers have less than a high school diploma.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, managers (23%) and bartenders (20%) are the most likely to hold either bachelor’s or post graduate degrees.

Distribution of Employees by Educational Attainment
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Educational Attainment Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

Educational Attainment	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
Less than high school diploma	9.3%	9.8%	20.2%	32.1%	17.9%	5.5%	27.8%
High school graduate	33.0%	38.9%	33.5%	39.3%	32.1%	29.6%	34.8%
Some college	25.2%	28.2%	19.8%	18.1%	29.4%	33.0%	24.2%
Associate degree	9.7%	8.6%	12.8%	4.5%	7.7%	11.9%	5.4%
Bachelor’s degree	18.5%	12.2%	12.0%	5.0%	11.3%	17.6%	6.9%
Post graduate degree	4.3%	2.3%	1.7%	1.1%	1.6%	2.3%	1.0%

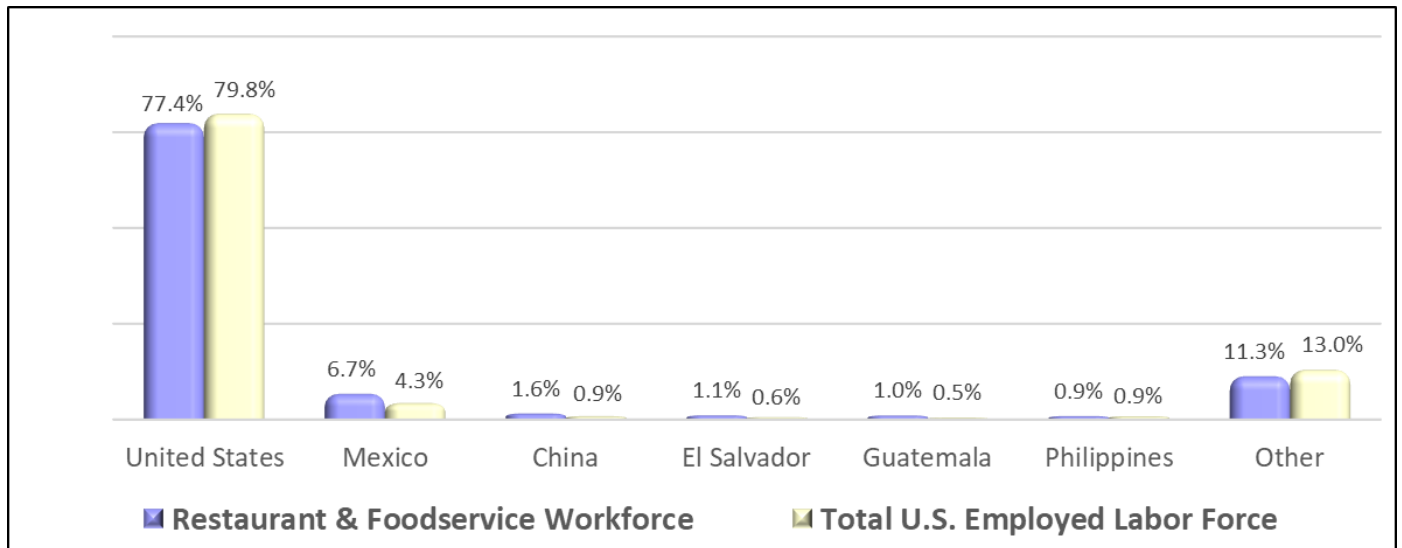
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Place of Birth

- 23% of restaurant and foodservice employees were born outside of the United States, compared to 20% of employees in the total U.S. employed labor force.
- The top non-U.S. countries of birth for restaurant and foodservice employees are Mexico, China and El Salvador.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, chefs (44%) and cooks (33%) are the most likely to have been born outside of the U.S.
- 24% of managers and 16% of supervisors were born outside of the U.S.
- 19% of waitstaff and 18% of food preparation and counter workers were born outside of the U.S.

Distribution of Employees by Place of Birth

Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Place of Birth Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

Place of Birth	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
United States	75.6%	84.1%	56.3%	67.4%	81.1%	89.9%	81.9%
Mexico	5.2%	5.1%	8.3%	14.1%	4.6%	3.1%	5.2%
China	2.6%	0.5%	8.1%	1.6%	1.7%	0.4%	1.2%
El Salvador	0.8%	1.0%	1.2%	2.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.9%
Guatemala	0.6%	0.6%	2.0%	2.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.8%
Philippines	0.7%	0.9%	0.7%	0.5%	0.9%	0.4%	1.0%
Other	14.5%	7.7%	23.3%	11.7%	10.0%	5.6%	9.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Language Spoken at Home

- 30% of restaurant and foodservice employees speak a language other than English at home. In the overall U.S. employed labor force, 25% of employees speak a language other than English at home.
- 21% of restaurant and foodservice employees speak Spanish at home, compared to 15% of the total U.S. employed labor force.
- Among the major restaurant occupation categories, chefs (46%) and cooks (39%) are the most likely to speak a language other than English at home.
- 30% of managers and 24% of supervisors speak a language other than English at home.

Distribution of Employees by Language Spoken at Home
Restaurant and foodservice workforce versus total U.S. employed labor force



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data

Language Spoken at Home Breakouts for the Major Restaurant Occupation Categories

Language Spoken at Home	Managers	Supervisors	Chefs	Cooks	Waitstaff	Bartenders	Food Prep & Counter Workers
English only	70.1%	76.0%	53.7%	61.4%	72.8%	83.4%	72.3%
Spanish	17.2%	18.5%	23.2%	30.5%	18.3%	12.7%	19.4%
Chinese	1.9%	0.3%	6.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.1%	0.7%
Vietnamese	0.8%	0.1%	1.7%	0.6%	0.7%	0.1%	0.6%
Tagalog	0.4%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.2%	0.7%
Arabic	1.0%	0.2%	0.9%	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%
Other	8.5%	4.2%	14.1%	5.4%	6.1%	3.4%	5.8%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Restaurant Association; 2024 data