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Industry

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The restaurant industry added jobs at double the rate of the overall economy in 2012, and the [National Restaurant Association](#) (NRA) expects this trend to continue in 2013. That's good news for America's small businesses.

Eating and drinking places added jobs at a robust 3.4 percent rate last year, the strongest increase in 17 years, according to NRA's analysis of new figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The restaurant industry is the third-largest private-sector job creator since the employment recovery began in March 2010.

The solid restaurant industry job growth in 2012 represented the 13th consecutive year in which restaurant job growth outpaced the overall economy. Overall, restaurant employment currently stands 441,000 jobs above its high-point before the recession, while the overall economy is still down 3.2 million jobs from the pre-recession peak.

"The sizable disparity in 2012 job growth marked the continuation of a long-term trend," said Bruce Grindy, chief economist for the National Restaurant Association. "In fact, during the last 13 years, the number of eating-and-drinking-place jobs jumped 25 percent, while total U.S. employment rose by only 4 percent."

The NRA expects restaurants to add jobs at a 2.7 percent rate in 2013, a full percentage-point above the projected 1.7 percent gain in total employment. Employment gains will continue to be driven by growth in the number of locations,

as well as existing restaurants staffing up to meet an improving business

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clearer picture of employment trends during and after the recession. Restaurant employment fell 3.9 percent during the recession, while the overall economy lost 6.3 percent of its employment base.

“The restaurant industry was certainly not immune from the effects of the Great Recession, with job losses in 2009 and 2010 representing just the second and third years on record that the industry cut staffing levels,” said Grindy. “However, the restaurant industry bounced back quickly after the recession, with January’s employment level up 8.8 percent from the bottom of the cycle. In comparison, total U.S. employment is only up 4.3 percent from the recession trough.”

Job growth within the restaurant industry was broad-based on 2012, with several of the major segments registering strong gains. Snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars – including coffee, donut and ice cream shops – set the pace with a robust 4.9 percent employment gain. Foodservice contactors (4.8 percent), quickservice restaurants (4.1 percent) and fullservice restaurants (3.0 percent) also added jobs at rates well above the overall economy in 2012.

Eating and drinking places (restaurants and bars) are the primary component of the restaurant industry, and account for roughly three-fourths of the total restaurant and foodservice workforce. The restaurant and foodservice industry remains the nation’s second largest private-sector employer with its workforce of 13.1 million.

The National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which comprises 980,000 restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of more than 13 million employees.

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