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**BAKERSFIELD**™

School of Business and  
Public Administration

Volume 26, Issue 1

# Kern Economic Journal

Winner of the Award for Merit from California  
Association for Local Economic Development

2024 First Quarter

## Featured Articles:



Understanding  
Employee Rights: A  
Guide for Managers



Trends in College  
Enrollment in  
the U.S.



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*KERN ECONOMIC JOURNAL* is a quarterly publication (February, May, August, November) of California State University, Bakersfield. Its purpose is to track local trends and analyze regional, national, and global issues that affect the economic well-being of Kern County. The journal provides useful information and data that can help the community make informed economic decisions. Sources of funding for this journal include university contributions and sponsorship and subscription fees.

Editorial and analytical articles on important local, regional, national, and international issues and trends are invited for *consideration* of publication in the journal. Articles (not exceeding 800 words in length) must be submitted to the Managing Editor in electronic copy. Individual authors are responsible for the views and research results.

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# Kern Economic Journal



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# Economy at a Glance!

2024 FIRST QUARTER  
BY DR. NYAKUNDI MICHIEKA  
& DR. RICHARD S. GEARHART III

## *National Economy*<sup>1</sup>

Real GDP increased at an annual rate of 1.3 percent in the first quarter of 2024. In the fourth quarter of 2023, real GDP increased by 3.4 percent.

The increase in real GDP reflected increases in consumer spending, residential fixed investment, nonresidential fixed investment, and state and local government spending that were partly offset by a decrease in private inventory investments. Imports also increased in the first quarter.

Current-dollar GDP increased by 4.3 percent (annual) or \$298.9 billion in the first quarter of 2024 to a level of \$28.26 trillion.

Current-dollar personal income increased \$404.4 billion in the first quarter. This rise reflected increases in compensation (led by private wages and salaries) and personal current transfer receipts (led by government social benefits to persons).

Real disposable personal income, which is adjusted for inflation and taxes, increased by 1.9 percent.

Personal saving was \$796.6 billion in the first quarter.

Personal saving rate—personal saving as a percentage of disposable personal income—was 3.8 percent in the first quarter.

The Conference Board's Index of Leading Economic Indicators—a measure of future economic activity—decreased by 0.5 percent in May 2024 to 101.2 (2016=100), following a 0.6 percent decline in April 2024.

The University of Michigan's Consumer Sentiment Index increased from 64.9 in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 78.4 in the first quarter of 2024. The index in the first quarter of 2023 was 64.6, and 63.1 in the first quarter of 2022.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. economic numbers were obtained from the Bureau of Economic Analysis "U.S. Economy at a Glance". This is found at <http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/glance.htm>  
The information for the Index of Leading Economic Indicators is found at <https://conference-board.org/data/bcicountry.cfm?cid=1>.  
The University of Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index is found at <http://www.sca.isr.umich.edu/tables.html>

## *State Economy*<sup>2</sup>

In California, the unemployment rate grew to 5.3 percent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 4.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023. The counties (top 5) with the highest unemployment rates include: Colusa (19.9), Imperial (17.3), Merced (11.6), Tulare (12.1) and Plumas (11.7). Those with the lowest unemployment rates include: Marin (3.9), Mono (4.1), Orange (4.1), San Francisco (3.9) and San Mateo (3.6).

California's labor force decreased by 13,100 in the first quarter of 2024. During this period, civilian employment reduced by 81,833 workers (from 18.40 million to 18.30 million). Nonfarm enterprises hired 182,867 less workers while farm employment decreased by 14,133. The mining and logging sector hired 33 less workers while construction hired 14,033 more workers. The manufacturing sector also hired 11,400 less workers. Service sector employment decreased from 15.86 million to 15.70 million between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. The state government hired 19,367 more workers while the local government added 35,767 workers.

## *Local Economy*

The local economy witnessed an increase in the labor force from 398,367 in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 396,967 in the first quarter of 2024. Civilian employment decreased by 9,200 from 366,433 to 357,233. Nonfarm employment decreased by 5,000 while farming employment decreased by 15,700.

In Bakersfield, nonfarm employment changed in the following manner: mining and logging lost 167 workers; construction lost 33 workers; manufacturing lost 333 workers while the service industry lost 4,467 workers. Within the service sector, trade, transportation and utilities lost 4,667 workers. Financial activities added 200 workers, professional and business services added 133 workers, private education and health services added 233 workers while leisure and hospitality lost 1,600 employees. Within the government, the number of federal government workers increased by 400 while the state

<sup>2</sup>The California economic numbers were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics "Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map". This is found at <https://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?survey=la&map=county&seasonal=u>.



government lost 100 workers. The local government added 1,067 workers.

Total salaries and wages in Kern County increased from \$360,033 in the third quarter of 2023 to \$362,700 (0.7 percent increase) in the fourth quarter of 2023. Compared to four quarters ago, salaries were higher by \$11,133 or 3 percent.

In Kern County, the unemployment rate varied considerably across cities, ranging from 3.8 percent in Ridgecrest to 27.8 percent in Delano. All cities in Kern County (in our sample) witnessed an increase in the unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. The biggest quarter to quarter increase in unemployment rate occurred in Delano where it rose from 18.70 percent to 27.78 percent. In Bakersfield, the unemployment rate was 6.87 percent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 6.27 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023. Overall unemployment (in Kern County) was 10.03 percent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023.

In the first quarter of 2024, the median price of a home in Bakersfield was \$397,788 compared to \$391,417 in the fourth quarter of 2023. Home prices were \$24,622 lower than they were four quarters ago. Within the county, median home prices were lowest in the city of Taft, averaging \$285,167. The region where

homes where median home prices were highest was Rosamond (\$429,333).

The weighted price index for the five publicly traded companies doing business in Kern County (Sierra Bancorp, Tejon Ranch Company, Chevron Corporation U.S., Granite Construction, and Wells Fargo Company) increased by 4.2 percentage points from \$112.90 to \$117.7 (quarter to quarter). The index was also 19.1 percentage points greater than it were four quarters ago. All companies gained/lost as follows: Chevron (increased 5.8 percent quarter-over-quarter), Tejon Ranch (decreased 10.4 percent quarter-over-quarter), Granite Construction (increased 12.3 percent quarter-over-quarter), Wells Fargo (increased 17.8 percent quarter-over-quarter) and Sierra Bancorp (decreased 10.4 percent quarter-over-quarter).

The average retail price of gasoline decreased by \$0.31 to \$4.64 from \$4.95 a gallon (quarter to quarter). The unit price of California's Class III milk was \$15.86 in the first quarter of 2024 compared to \$16.68 in the fourth quarter of 2023. The Index of Farm Price Parity in the first quarter of 2024 (0.85) was higher than that of the fourth quarter of 2023 (0.82).

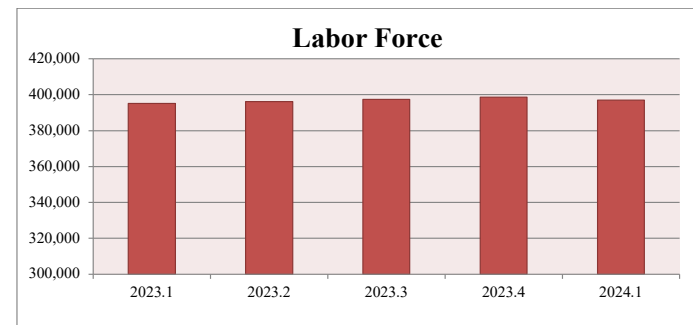
# Tracking Kern's Economy<sup>1</sup>

DR. NYAKUNDI MICHIEKA &  
DR. RICHARD S. GEARHART III  
2024 FIRST QUARTER

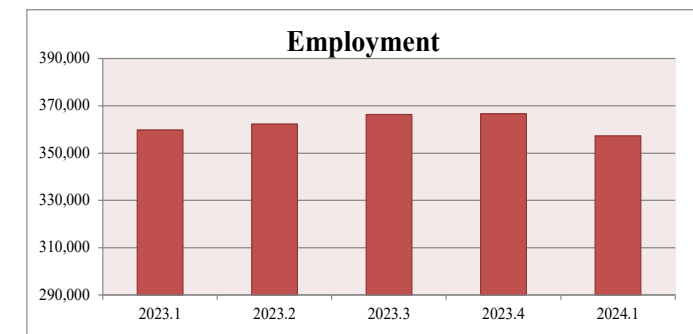
## Labor Market

We average monthly data to calculate quarterly data then adjust for seasonality in the series.

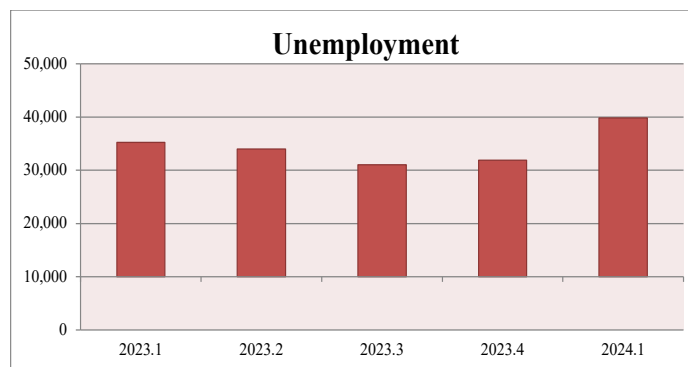
**Labor Force** – The civilian labor force decreased by 1,533 individuals, from 398,567 in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 397,033 in the first quarter of 2024. The labor force estimates for the first quarter of 2024 were similar to those recorded in the first quarter of 2016 where they averaged 397,000. The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines the labor force participation rate as the proportion of the working-age population that is either working or actively looking for work.



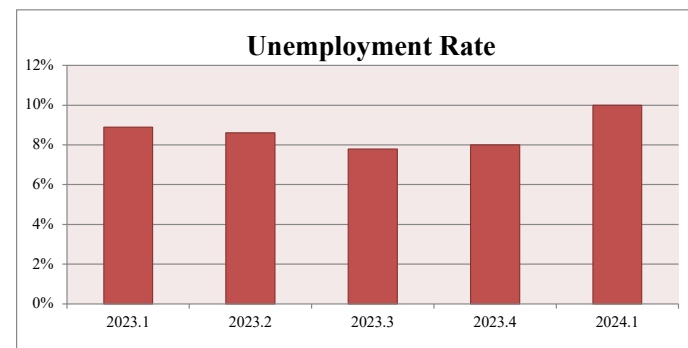
**Employment** – In the first quarter of 2024, Kern County hired 9,367 less workers (compared to the previous quarter) as total employment decreased from 366,600 to 357,233. This is a 0.73 percent decrease in employment compared to the first quarter of 2023 when 359,867 persons were employed. Last year, fourth to first quarter (2023) employment increased by 4,200 while this year, fourth to first quarter (2024) employment decreased by 1,533.



ment increased by 7,900 as the number of jobless workers increased from 31,900 to 39,800. The number of unemployed workers is 13.07 percent higher than it were four quarters ago. In the first quarter of 2023, there were 35,200 unemployed workers.



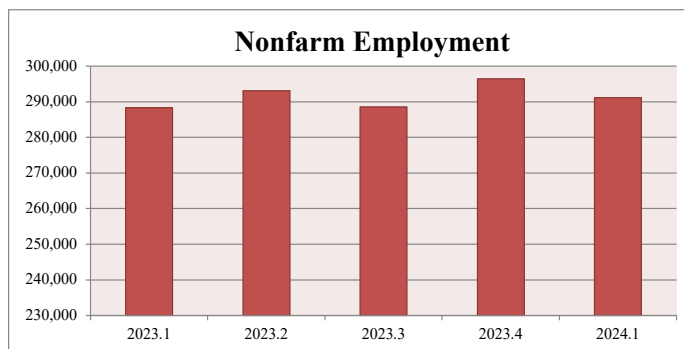
**Unemployment Rate** – Kern County's year-to-year unemployment rate rose by 1.1 percentage points from 8.9 percent in the first quarter of 2023 to 10 percent in the first quarter of 2024. The unemployment rate in the fourth quarter of 2023 was 8 percent. Kern County's first quarter unemployment rate (10 percent) was almost double that of California's (5.3 percent).



The unemployment rate varied considerably across cities, ranging from 3.8 percent in Ridgecrest to 27.8 percent in Delano. Quarter to quarter unemployment rate increased in all cities (in our sample) in Kern County. The biggest increase in the unemployment rate occurred in Delano, where it rose from 18.7 to 27.8 percent. In Bakersfield, the unemployment rate was 6.87 percent in the first quarter of 2024 compared to 6.27 percent four quarters ago.

Unemployment Rate of Cities			
Location	Unemployment Rate (%)	Location	Unemployment Rate (%)
<b>KERN COUNTY</b>	10.0%	McFarland	9.0%
Arvin	12.8%	Mojave	9.8%
Bakersfield	6.9%	Oildale	15.8%
California City	20.1%	Ridgecrest	3.8%
Delano	27.8%	Rosamond	10.7%
Edwards	9.7%	Shafter	8.1%
Frazier Park	9.8%	Taft	6.8%
Lake Isabella	23.8%	Tehachapi	9.5%
Lamont	9.6%	Wasco	18.5%

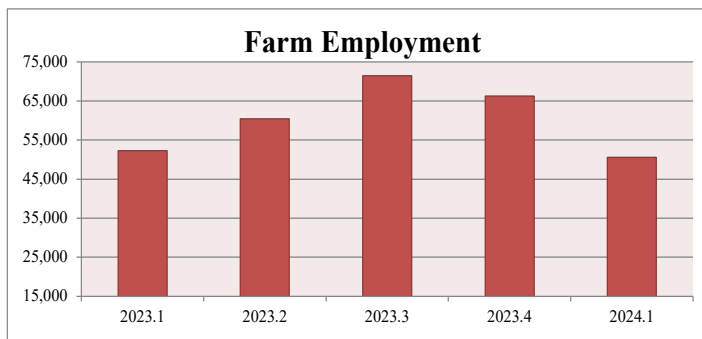
Note: City-level data are not adjusted for seasonality and “informal” market workers.



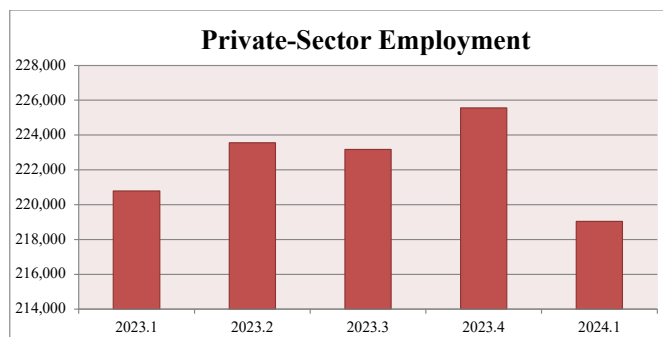
In Bakersfield, nonfarm employment changed in the following manner: mining and logging employment reduced by 167 workers; construction lost 33 workers; manufacturing lost 333 workers while the service sector lost 4,467 workers. Within the service sector, trade, transportation, and utilities lost 4,667 workers; financial activities added 200 workers; professional and business services added 133 workers; health care and social assistance added 67 workers while leisure and hospitality lost 1,600 workers. Federal government employment increased by 400 while the state employees reduced by 100. The local government added 1,067 workers.

**Farm Employment** – In the first quarter of 2024, Kern County hired 15,700 less farm workers compared to the last quarter of 2023. As a result, quarter to quarter farm employment decreased to 50,567 from 66,267. An average of 52,233 workers were employed in the farming sector last year (first quarter of 2023). The year-over-year number of farm workers is less by 1,667.

**Private-Sector Employment** – Nonfarm employment is comprised of private- and public-sector employment. In the first quarter of 2024, private companies hired 6,533 less workers compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. They also hired 0.8 percent less workers in the first quarter of 2024 than they did four quarters ago (in 2023). Today, the private sector employs 219,033 individuals.

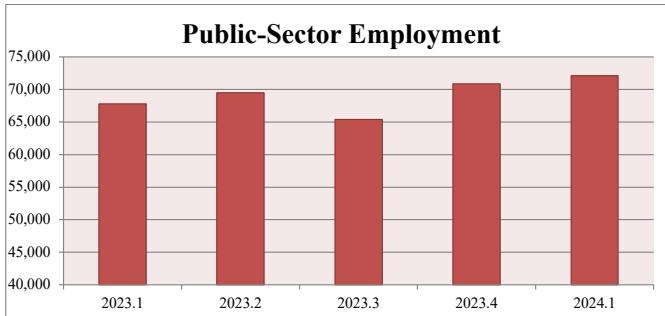


**Nonfarm Employment** – Local nonfarm industries employed 5,300 less workers in the first quarter of 2024 as the number of workers decreased from 296,433 to 291,133. The industries hired 2,800 (or 0.97 percent) more workers compared to four quarters ago.

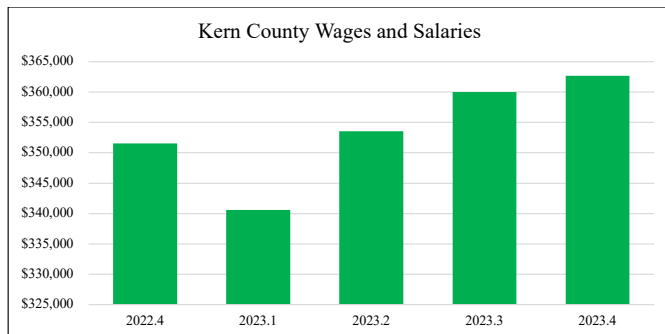


**Public-Sector Employment** – The public sector consists of federal, state, and local government agencies. The local government labor market includes workers employed by county and city agencies, and public education. In the first quarter of 2024, gov-

ernment agencies hired 1,233 more workers, as employment increased from 70,867 to 72,100 – a 1.74 percent increase. Compared to the first quarter of 2023, 6.34 percent more workers were hired in the public sector.

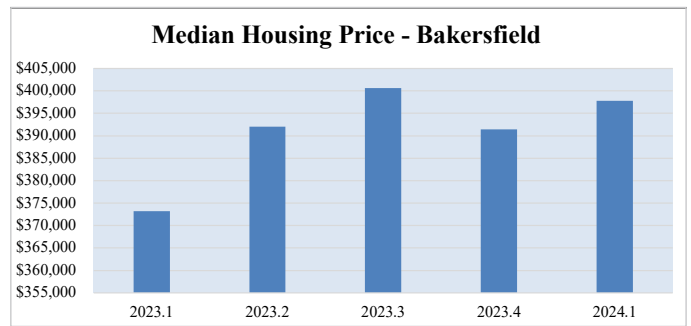


**Salaries and Wages** – Total salaries and wages in Kern County increased from \$360,033 in the third quarter of 2023 to \$362,700 in the fourth quarter of 2023 – a 0.7 percent increase. Compared to four quarters ago, salaries were \$11,133 (or 3 percent) higher.

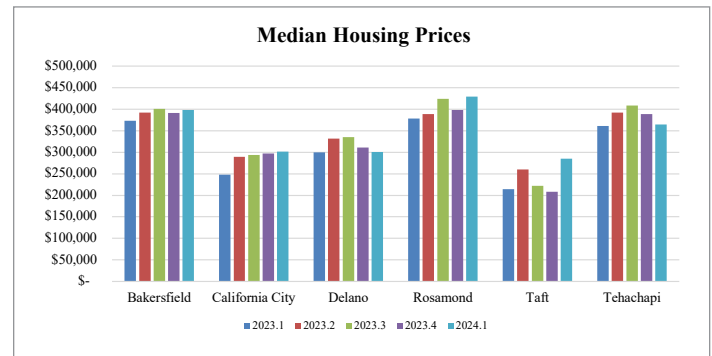


## Housing Market

**Housing Price** – In the first quarter of 2024, Bakersfield’s housing prices were up by \$6,372 (1.63 percent) compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. The median price of a home averaged \$397,788 (in the first quarter of 2024) compared to \$373,176 (in the first quarter of 2023). Prices were 6.6 percent higher than they were four quarters ago.



**Regional Housing Prices** – Changes in housing demand in Bakersfield are likely to spillover to surrounding cities as individuals who are on the margin of buying or selling are likely not located in the Bakersfield Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). An assessment of fourth quarter (2023) to first quarter (2024) changes in median sales price indicates that home prices increased in all cities in Kern County except for Delano and Tehachapi where they decreased by \$10,333 and \$24,333, respectively. Taft recorded the largest increase in home prices (+\$76,833). The average (annual) price change was +12.67 percent across all regions in the County. The median home price across all regions averaged \$346,493 in the first quarter of 2024 compared to \$312,428 last year (first quarter of 2023).

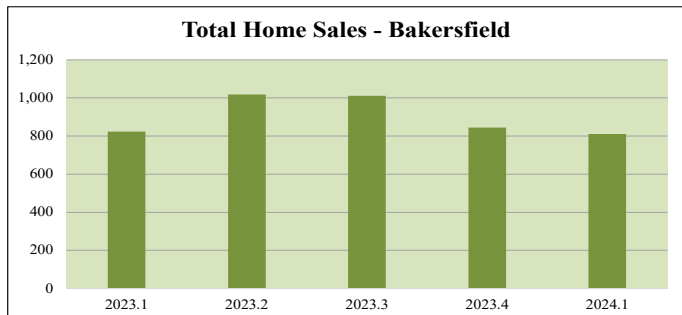


The year-to-year home prices changed as follows: Bakersfield (+6.60 percent), California City (+21.41 percent), Delano (+0.42 percent), Rosamond (+13.48 percent), Taft (+33.16 percent) and Tehachapi (+0.92 percent).

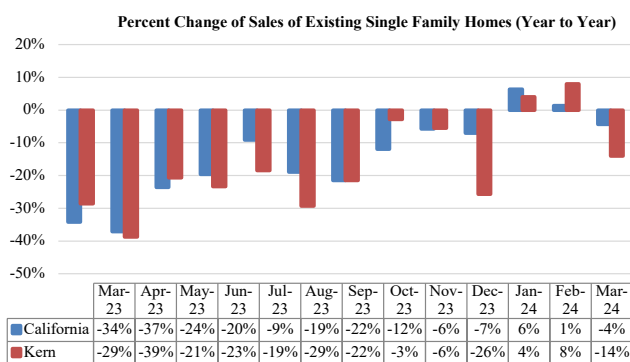
Location	Median Price (last year)	Median Price (this year)	Price Change (\$ (Annual))	Price Change (%) (Annual)
	2023.1	2024.1	2023.1 to 2024.1	2023.1 to 2024.1
Bakersfield	373,167	397,788	24,622	6.60%
California City	248,333	301,500	53,167	21.41%
Delano	299,417	300,667	1,250	0.42%
Rosamond	378,333	429,333	51,000	13.48%
Taft	214,150	285,167	71,017	33.16%
Tehachapi	361,167	364,500	3,333	0.92%
Average	312,428	346,493	34,065	12.67%



**Home Sales** – In Bakersfield, quarter to quarter sales of residential units decreased by 33 units, from 844 in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 811 in the first quarter of 2024. An average of 13 less homes were sold in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the first quarter last year (2023).

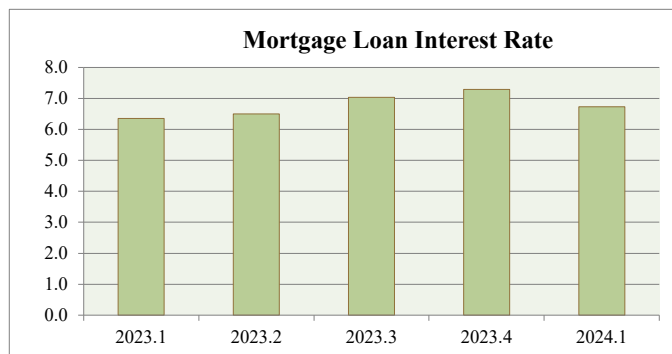


**Growth in Housing Sales** – We compare growth in sales of existing single-family homes in Kern County with growth in sales in California. Positive values indicate that more homes were sold this year compared to last year. In March 2024, 14 percent less homes were sold in Kern County compared to March last year. In California, sales were 4 percent lower this quarter compared to the first quarter of 2023. The average growth in home sales in California between March 2023 and March 2024 was -14 percent while the number was -16.7 percent in Kern County. Interestingly, January and February of 2024 recorded positive year to year growth in home sales (the first since 2021).

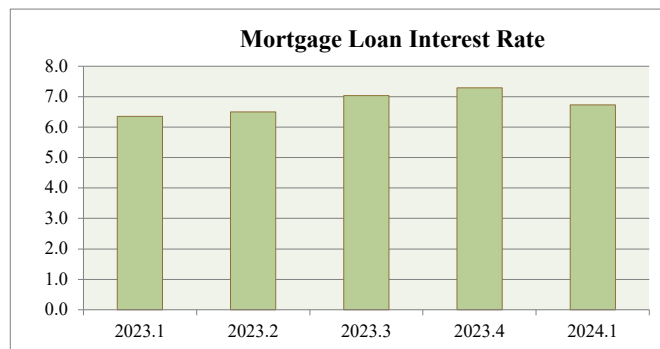


**New Building Permits** – In the first quarter of 2024, Kern County issued 16 more permits for construction of new privately-owned dwelling units compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. A total of 714 permits were issued this (first) quarter compared to 416 in the first quarter of last year (2023). The number of permits issued continues to surge.

Over the last five years, the average number of permits issued in the first quarter of every year is 524.

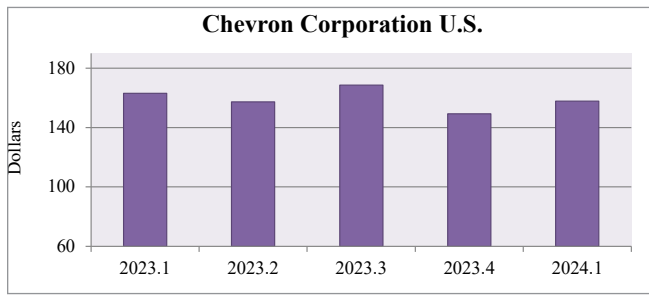


**Mortgage Interest Rate** – In the first quarter of 2024, the interest rate on thirty-year conventional mortgage loans decreased to 6.73 percent (down from 7.29 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023). The interest rate last year (first quarter of 2023 was 6.36 percent).

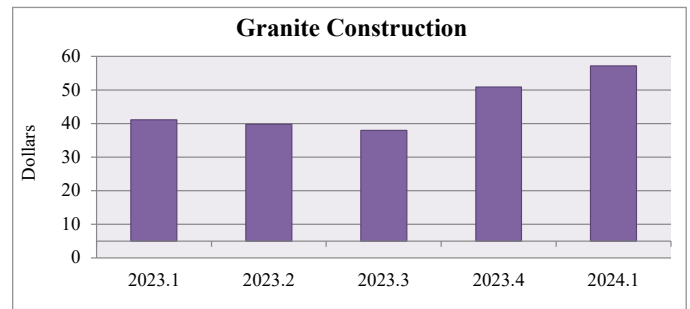


## Stock Market

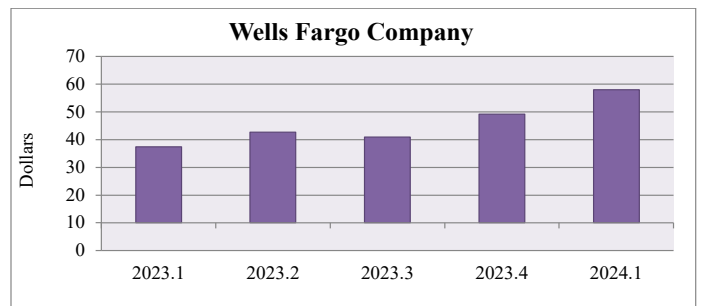
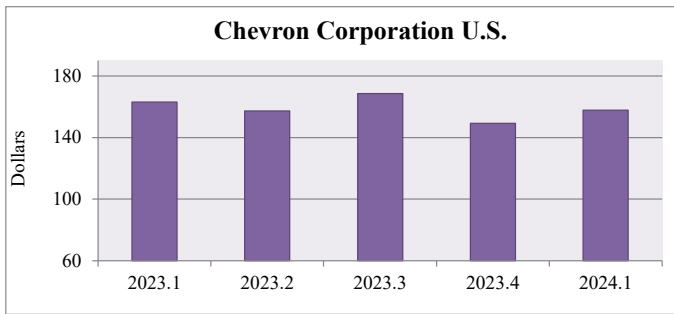
In the first quarter of 2024, the composite price index (2014.1=100) of the five publicly traded companies doing business in Kern County increased by \$5.75, from \$112.9 to \$117.7 (quarter to quarter change). The index was 19.1 percentage points higher than it were four quarters ago. Average “close” prices were measured for five local market-movers: Chevron Corporation U.S., Tejon Ranch Company, Granite Construction, Wells Fargo Company, and Sierra Bancorp.



**Chevron Corporation U.S.:** Compared to the fourth quarter of 2023, CVX gained \$8.58 (or 12.3 percent) per share as its price increased from \$149.16 to \$157.74. Relative to the first quarter of 2023, CVX was down \$5.42 (or 3.3 percent).

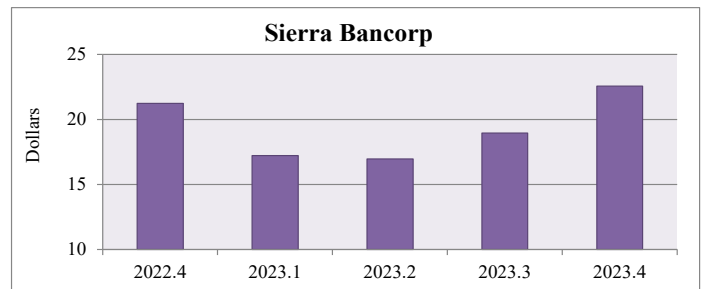
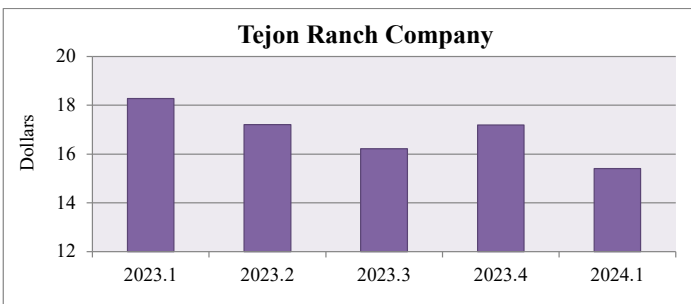


**Wells Fargo Company:** WFC gained \$8.74 (or 17.8 percent) per share as its stock price increased from \$49.22 to \$57.96 between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. Relative to first quarter of 2023, WFC was up \$20.58 (or 55.1 percent).



**Tejon Ranch Company:** TRC lost \$1.79 (or 10.4 percent) per share as its stock price decreased from \$17.20 to \$15.41, between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. Compared to the first quarter of 2023, TRC stock price was down \$2.86 (or 15.7 percent).

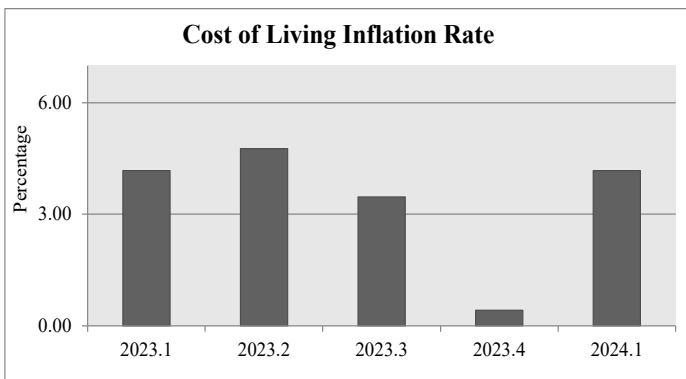
**Sierra Bancorp:** BSRR lost \$2.35 (or 10.4 percent) per share as its price decreased from \$22.55 to \$20.20 (quarter-to-quarter). BSRR gained \$2.98 (or 17.3 percent) in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the first quarter of 2023.



**Granite Construction:** GVA gained \$6.27 (or 12.3 percent) per share as its stock price increased from \$50.86 to \$57.13 between the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. GVA gained \$16.05 (or 39.1 percent) over the last four quarters.

## Inflation

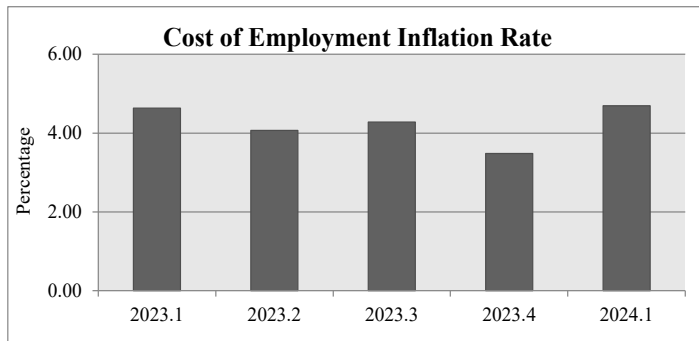
**Cost of Living** – In the first quarter of 2024, the Consumer Price Index for all urban areas (1982-84 = 100) increased from 307.2 to 310.4. As a result, inflation for the cost of living accelerated at an annual rate of 4.17 percent. The index was 300 points in the first quarter of 2023.



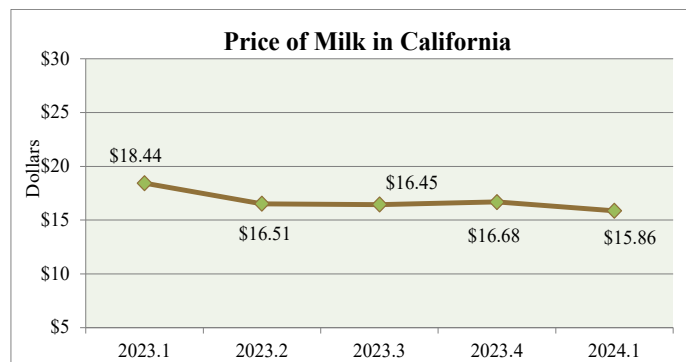
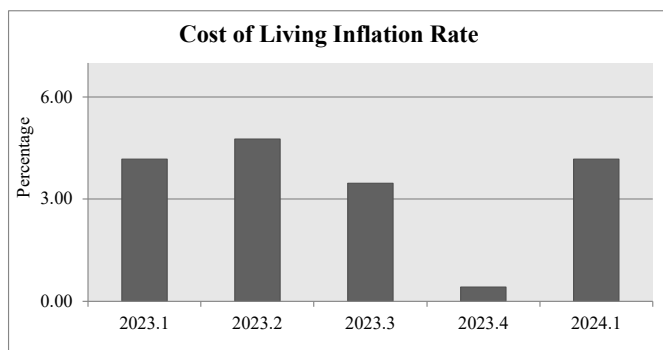
**Cost of Production** – The Producer Price Index for all commodities (1982 = 100) increased between the fourth quarter of 2023 and first quarter of 2024, from 252.49 to 253.78. The inflation rate for the cost of producing increased at an annualized rate of 2.04 percent. The cost of production inflation rate was 258.66 four quarters ago.

## Commodity Prices

**Price of Gasoline** – In the Bakersfield MSA, the average retail price of gasoline decreased by \$0.31 to \$4.64. Average gasoline prices were \$4.95 in the fourth quarter of 2023 and \$4.51 four quarters ago.

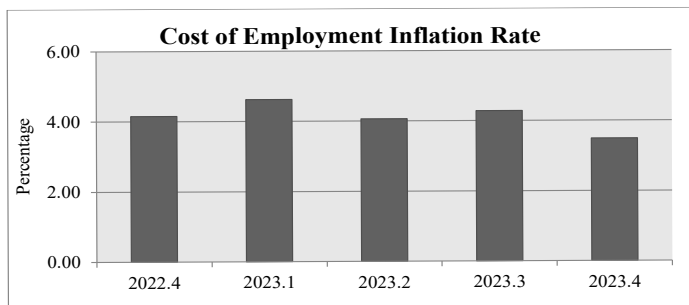


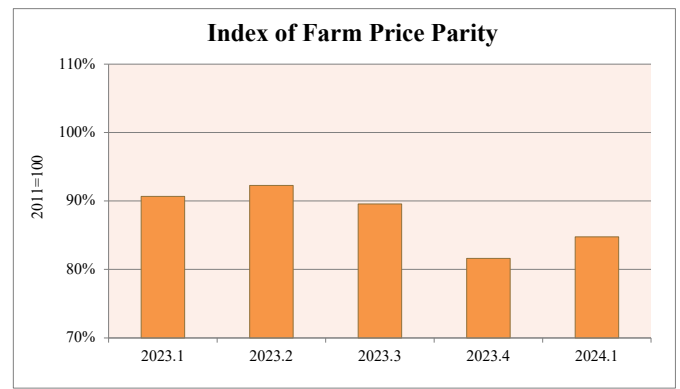
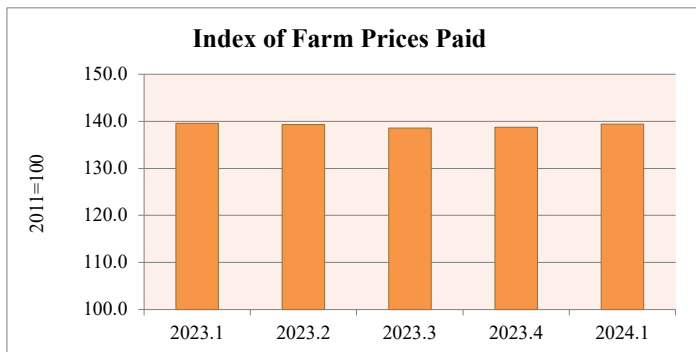
**Price of Milk** – The unit price of California’s Class III milk decreased in the first quarter of 2024 by \$0.81 to \$15.86. Milk prices were \$2.57 (or 14 percent) lower than they were four quarters ago.



**Cost of Employment** – The Employment Cost Index (December 2005 = 100) for all civilian workers increased from 162.1 in the fourth quarter of 2023 to 164 in the first quarter of 2024 causing quarter-to-quarter employment inflation to rise by 4.69 percent.

**Farm Prices** – In the first quarter of 2024, the National Index of Prices Received by Farmers for all farm products (2011 = 100) increased by 4.97 points to 118.2 compared to 113.3 (in the fourth quarter). The index is 6.56 percent lower than it were four quarters ago (first quarter of 2023).





Meanwhile, the National Index of Prices Paid by farmers for commodities, services, interest, taxes, wages, and rents increased by 0.70 percentage points. This means that farmers were better off in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the fourth quarter of 2023.

We measure the Index of Farm Price Parity as the ratio Index of Prices Received to the Index of Prices Paid. In the first quarter of 2024, the Index of Farm Price Parity was 85 percent compared to 82 percent in the last quarter. Four quarters ago, the price ratio was 91 percent.

<sup>1</sup> Source – Online databases: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>; [www.usda.com](http://www.usda.com); [www.bakersfieldgasprices.com](http://www.bakersfieldgasprices.com); [www.bea.gov](http://www.bea.gov); [www.carr.org](http://www.carr.org); [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); <https://www.redfin.com>; <https://www.cafmmo.com>; [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)



# Understanding Employee Rights: A Guide for Managers

Craig W. Kelsey, Ph.D.  
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Managers have at least two important, demanding, dynamic and at times what may seem conflicting responsibilities. On the one hand they are to represent their organization, its goals, and productive success. This requires the manager to first and foremost be focused on and committed to the organization and what must be achieved. On the other hand, the manager must, and I repeat must, protect the rights of the employees in their stewardship. Employees, by law and of course as a function of good organizational policy have certain protections as they navigate the work world. The manager must properly balance these two demands.

Employees, depending on their work status will have varying levels of protection – that is, that they are treated fairly, appropriately and in compliance with legal and policy safeguards. If any concerns or questions are raised about their work performance both quality of work and/or interaction with others certain protections are afforded the employee.

If an employee is still in the probationary zone of their work time frame, then they have very little employee rights unless something egregious happens to them. If an employee works within an ‘at will status’ work agreement, then this written agreement will dictate their protections, if any. Some employees are unionized, their collective bargaining agreement will offer certain protections. Lastly, many employees have long-standing with the organization and have achieved what is sometimes referred to as protected [or non-probationary] status.

## What is the Typical Employee Protection Process?

The term ‘due process rights’ has been coined to describe what is meant by employee protection procedures. Almost all public agency employees, by federal law are afforded these procedural rights. Private sector employers offer some of these same types of protections seeking to be the employer of choice and a desire to retain long-term high-quality employees. In either case, the following are the basics of the employee due process rights if a serious concern occurs in the workplace. Assuming that an employee has offended the policies of the organization, rather than immediate dismissal from their employment the following process occurs:

## Due Process Procedural Steps

1. Any disciplinary action taken against the employee must be based on documented facts rather than office rumor, innuendo, or manager displeasure.
2. Any action must be fair and reasonable. As an example, an employee would not be terminated for one late arrival at work.
3. The employee is allowed to respond to any disciplinary action providing their documented facts, if any.
4. An investigation of facts must occur. This provides both the organization and employee a short time to demonstrate or rebut any disciplinary action.
5. Evidence must exist. This should prevent arbitrary, opinion-based decisions from being made.
6. The rule of preponderance is the governing standard. This will be addressed in a moment.

7. Usually, some form of progressive disciplining is the route rather than termination unless the infraction is significant.
8. In some cases, a third party may be present to advise the employee. This might be a union steward, private legal counsel, or some form of employee-based panel / hearing.

### What is the Rule of Preponderance?

Mentioned earlier is what is called the rule of preponderance as the governing standard when evidence is presented by either party. What does this mean?

1. It is the process of determining the weight or value of the evidence.
2. The standard is set at 51% meaning, that there is more chance than not that the evidence on either side is true. This is generally seen as a lower level of proof.
3. The evidence needs to be just over the line of believable rather than substantially over the line.
4. This rule has been supported by legal cases and in union work environments.

Now in California, in public government settings and suggested by some legal counsel in private sector employment is what is called the Skelly Process. This is a way to assure that due process has occurred by making the following required, the employee has the right:

1. To be notified in writing that a disciplinary action is pending.
2. To have contained in that letter or in documents associated with the letter, the identified reasons for the proposed disciplinary action.
3. A copy of any evidence that supports the disciplinary actions [documents, witness statements, policy violated].
4. An explanation given to the employee of how they are to proceed [to provide rebuttal evidence, to attend a hearing, seek union representation, or private legal counsel].

Lastly, what should the manager be aware of if they are concerned with employee rights?

### Manager Safeguards

1. Know your organization's policies and procedures as they relate to acting against an employee for what is or what appears to be inappropriate work site behavior.
2. If the employees are under a union contract work agreement understand what is contained in their collective bargaining agreement regarding disciplining actions.
3. Understand state laws regarding fair employment and what protections employees have there. An employee is free to file a complaint with the State Department of Fair Employment against their employer. The state agency will investigate the complaint.
4. Employees can likewise file a complaint with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights if the employee feels that they have been discriminated against in ways other than work performance. That agency will likewise investigate.

The role of the manager has many complexities balancing the needs of the organization and required performance levels with employee rights put in place by legal standings, unions agreements and the organization's own policies.

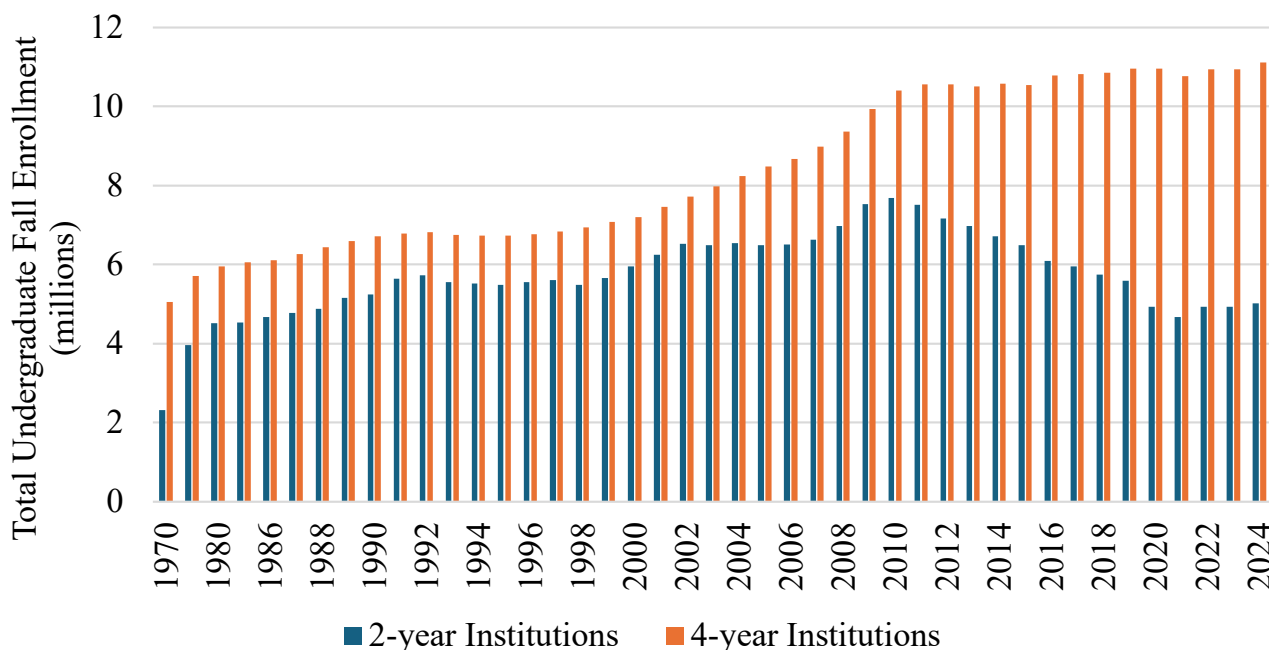
# Trends in College Enrollment in the U.S.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1970, 7.4 million students were enrolled in degree granting post-secondary institutions in the U.S. The number increased to 11.9 million in 1990, and 18.1 million in 2010. In 2020, 15.9 million students were enrolled in degree granting institutions (National Center for Education Statistics 2024a). Over the same period (1970 – 2020), the number of male students increased from 4.2 million to 6.7 million while female students increased from 3.1 million to 9.2 million. Today, there are more females enrolled in tertiary institutions compared to males. The ratio of male to female students in 1970 was 58:42 while today the ratio stands at 42:58 (National Center for Education Statistics 2024a). Figure 1 illustrates enrollment trends in 2-year and 4-year institutions between 1970 and 2024. Between 1970 and 2010, enrollment in 2-year and 4-year institutions increased. In 2010 and the years that followed, enrollment in 2-year institutions declined while that of 4-year institutions increased. (National Center for Education Statistics 2024a).

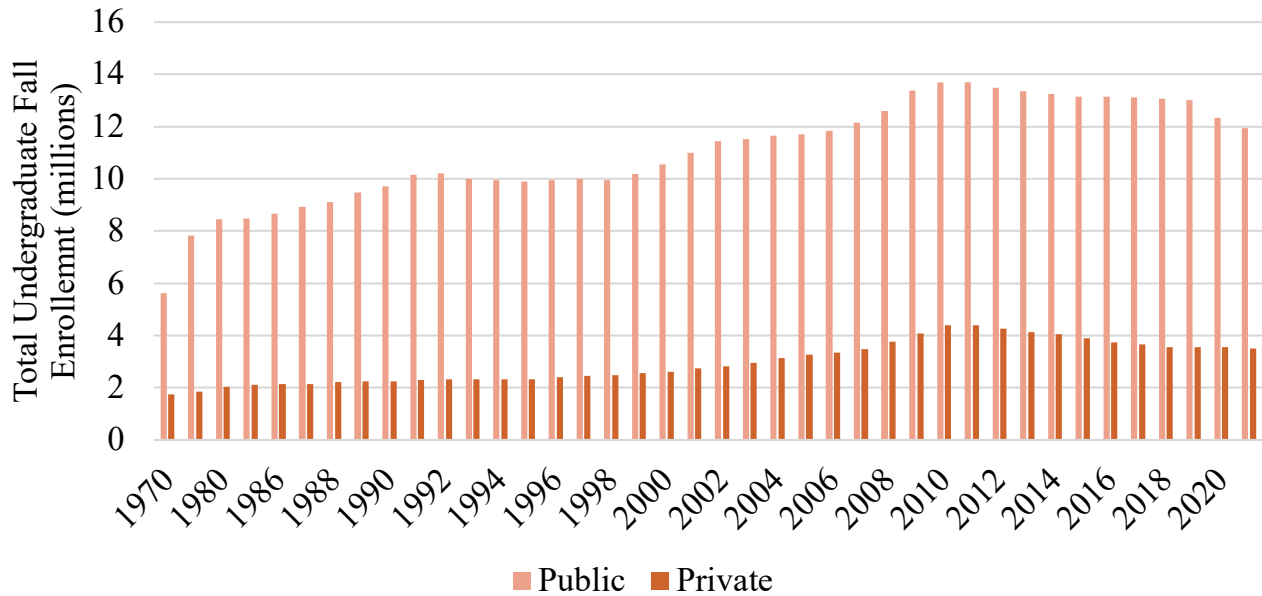
Figure 1: Enrollment in 2- and 4-year Institutions in the U.S. between 1970 and 2024



Source: Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024a)

When assessing private versus public institutions, enrollment declined in both entities between 2010 and 2020. Roughly 12.3 million students were enrolled in public institutions in 2020 while private institutions had 3.6 million students (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Enrollment in Private and Public Institutions in the U.S. between 1970 and 2024



Source: Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024a)

### 2. Rate of Growth in College enrollment

College enrollment grew in the 1970 – 1990s and the 2000 – 2009s while the last decade (2010 – 2019) has witnessed a decline in enrollment. In fact, growth in college enrollment averaged -1% over the last 10 years in all institutions. 2-year institutions witnessed an average decline of 3% in enrollment while 4-year institutions witnessed an average growth of 1% each year between 2010 and 2019, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Average Growth in College enrollment by Decade

Period	All Institutions	2-year Institutions	4-year Institutions
1970-1989	7%	14%	4%
1990-1999	1%	1%	1%
2000-2009	3%	3%	3%
2010-2019	-1%	-3%	1%

Source: Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024a)

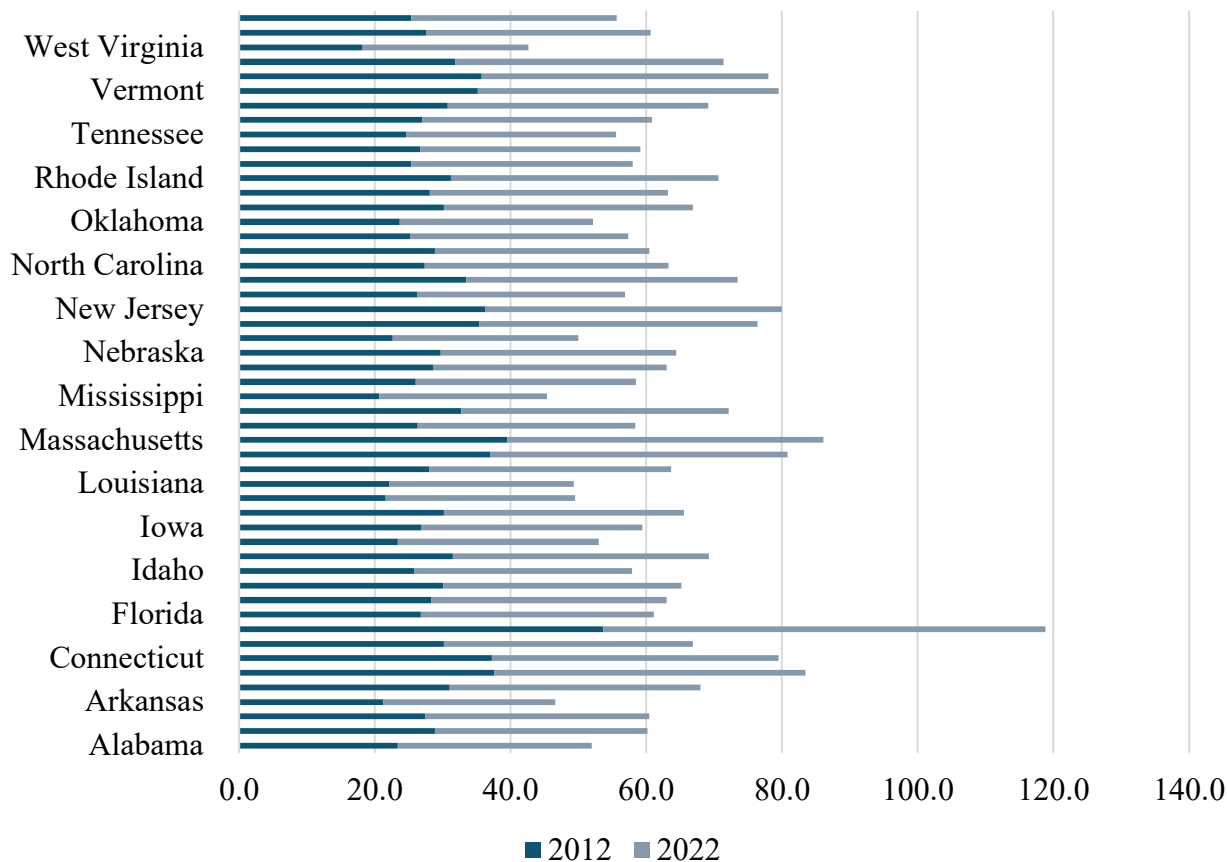
### 3. State Level Trends in College Enrollment

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of persons 18 to 24 years old and age 25 and over, by educational attainment in the U.S. In 2012, an average of 29.2% of persons 18 to 24 years old and age 25 and over had a Bachelor’s degree or higher. In 2022, 35.7% of persons had a Bachelor’s degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics 2024c). In 2012, states with the highest percentage of individuals with a Bachelor’s degree or higher included the District of Columbia (53.7%), Massachusetts (39.5%), Colorado (37.6%), Connecticut (37.2%) and Maryland (37%). Those with the lowest education attainment included West Virginia (18.2%), Mississippi (20.6%), Arkansas (21.2%), Kentucky (21.5%) and Louisiana (22.2%) (National Center for Education Statistics 2024c).



In 2022, the percentage of persons 18 to 24 years old and age 25 and over with a Bachelor’s degree or higher, increased. States with the highest percentage of individuals with a Bachelor’s degree or higher included the District of Columbia (65.2%), Massachusetts (46.6%), Colorado (45.9%), Connecticut (37.2%) and Vermont (44.4%). Those with the lowest education attainment levels included West Virginia (24.4%), Mississippi (24.7%), Arkansas (25.3%), Louisiana (27.1%) and Nevada (27.3%) (National Center for Education Statistics 2024c). In California, 31% of persons had a Bachelor’s degree or higher in 2012 while in 2022, 37% of individuals had a Bachelor’s degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics 2024c).

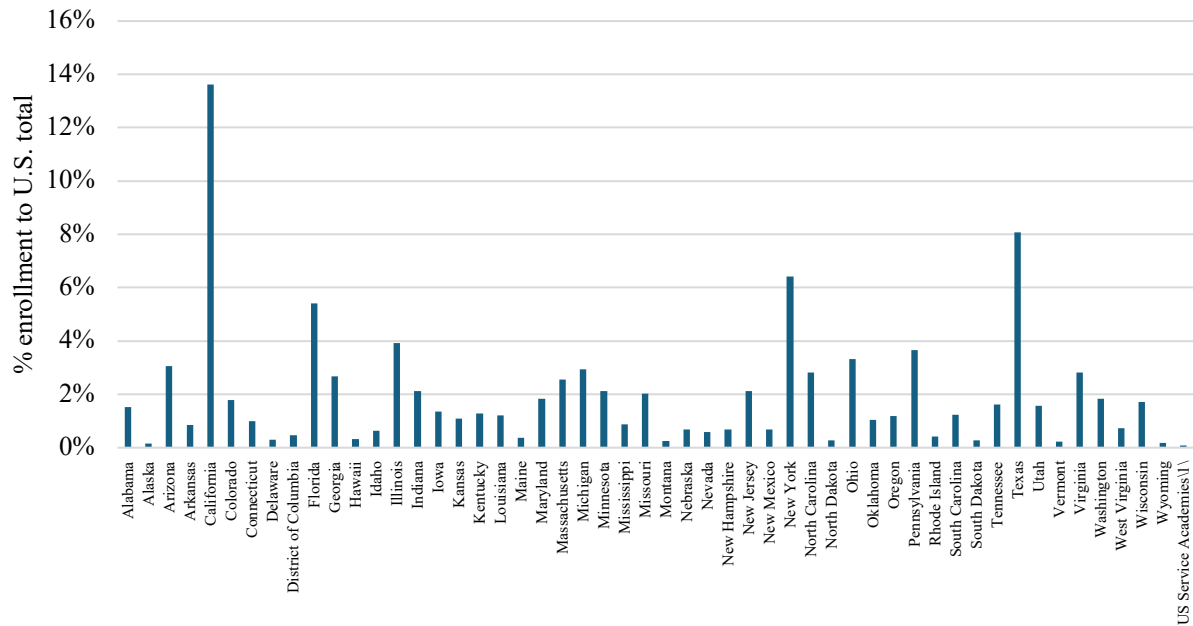
Figure 3: Percentage of persons 18 to 24 years old and age 25 and over, by Educational Attainment



Source: Author’s adaption from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024c)

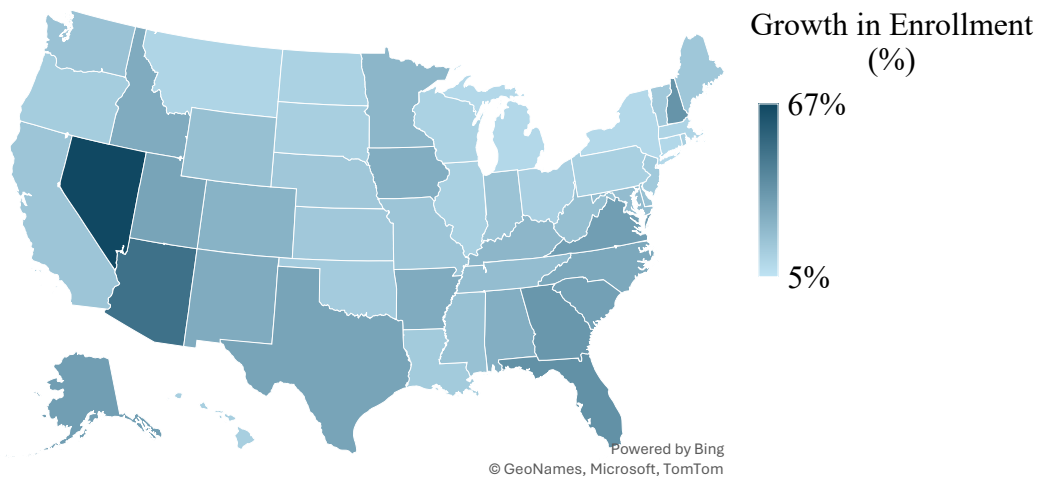
In 2016, 2.7 million students were enrolled in degree-granting institutions in California, while total enrollment in the nation was 19.8 million. Thus, 14% of the students enrolled in degree-granting institutions in the U.S. were from California. Similarly, 6% of the college students in the U.S. attended higher education institutions in Florida while Illinois, New York, and Texas possessed 4%, 6%, and 8% of the nation’s students, respectively. Figure 4 illustrates enrollment numbers for the other states. Average enrollment also increased in Western and Southern states over the past few decades compared to the Northern states (see figure 5)

Figure 4: Percentage of enrollment in degree-granting institutions as a ratio to U.S. totals



Source: Author’s adaption from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024c)

Figure 5: Average Growth in College Enrollment (1970 – 2016)



Source: Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics (2024b)

#### 4. Conclusion

The percentage of students enrolled in tertiary institutions in the U.S. doubled from 8.6 million in 1970 to 19.8 million in 2016. The rate of growth in enrollment in the 1970s, slowing down in the 90s before increasing in the 2000s. The last decade has witnessed a drop in college enrollment. Enrollment has declined at faster rate in 2-year institutions compared to 4-year institutions. Further, more female students are enrolled in tertiary level institutions compared to males. State level data indicates that roughly 14% of the students enrolled in degree-granting institutions in the U.S. were from California.

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National Center for Education Statistics (2024c). Percentage of persons 18 to 24 years old and age 25 and over, by educational attainment and state or jurisdiction: 2012 and 2022. Table 104.80. Washington D.C. Available at <[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23\\_104.80.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_104.80.asp?current=yes)>.





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