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FIRST TO \$15: ALBERTA'S MINIMUM WAGE POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT BY WAGES, AGES, AND PLACES

ABSTRACT

Most minimum wage studies are identified on small, plentiful, mostly expected wage changes, spread out over time. A recent set of changes have instead been large, rapid, and unexpected, following the "Fight for \$15" movement. Alberta is the first North American province, state, or territory to have this \$15 minimum wage, with an unexpectedly large increase (47%) occurring over a short time horizon (3 years). The employment effects of this policy are estimated using a synthetic control approach on Labour Force Survey data. Similar to the existing literature, workers moved up the wage distribution, increment by increment, but with a higher distributional reach. Employment losses occurred at similar elasticities, but with large level changes, mostly among younger workers. Newer to the literature, regional employment losses were found in four of the five non-urban economic regions, but not in Alberta's two main cities, showing the significance and nuance of regional heterogeneity.