

Still working for too little in Lima

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All work should pay enough to live a good life. All working people should be paid enough to provide for their families, no matter their race or gender, the kind of job they do, or where they live and work. For years, too many of greater Lima's most common jobs paid so little the typical worker would qualify for — and likely rely on — food aid to feed a family of three. By May 2022, the number of greater Lima's 11 most common jobs paying the median worker so little was four. Eleven jobs are reported for Lima because there are three occupations tied for ninth place. In 2019, before COVID-19, six out of the 11 most common jobs paid so little.

New statewide data show that 1) wages overall and in a majority of the state's most common occupations grew since 2019, and 2) some of the lowest-paying common jobs have been displaced in the top 10 by better-paying ones. However, these trends have not been shared evenly across the state. Lima's mix of most common occupations has likewise shifted toward higher-paid positions since 2019 before COVID-19. The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has experienced wage growth in five of those jobs, the same as the state, but not enough to lift most workers in them out of economic precarity. These data are from Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics gathered over a three-year survey and using a model to estimate wages for 2022.

Jobs restored statewide, but not to Lima

A full recovery must include all Ohio communities. With 51,300 people working as of May 2023, the Lima metro area still faced a shortage of 1,800 jobs as compared with February 2020, making it one of nine metropolitan areas in Ohio where jobs had yet to fully recover. Lima had the largest percentage shortfall in jobs since before the pandemic out of any Ohio metropolitan area, 3.4% below the February 2020 jobs numbers. These data are from the monthly Current Employment Statistics survey gathered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and released with the unemployment rate.

Rising pay, but still too low for too many

From 2019 to 2022, wages rose overall by 2.3% for the typical (median) Lima MSA worker, accounting for all jobs. Among the Lima area's 11 most common jobs, wages rose in just five. The number of jobs in the 11 biggest occupations that still paid so little that the middle worker would qualify for, and likely need, food aid to feed a family of three was four in 2022, and had been six out of the top 10 in 2019. Wages below 130% of the poverty level, \$29,939 in 2022, meet that threshold. Just three occupations paid enough for financial security: a wage at least 200% of the poverty level (\$46,060).

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Pay growth recovered lost ground in most common Lima MSA jobs

Top 10 occupations 2022	Job growth		Change in jobs since 2019	Pay growth			Pay level	
	2022 rank	2022 jobs		2022 median hourly pay	Pay change since 2019	Percent pay change since 2019	2022 median annual pay	2022 pay as a share of poverty
Registered Nurses	1	1680	40	\$34.61	-\$3.00	-8.0%	\$71,990	313%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	2	1440	-390	\$11.08	\$0.98	9.7%	\$23,040	100%
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	3	1260	860	\$14.98	-\$0.98	-6.1%	\$31,150	135%
Cashiers	4	1170	40	\$11.40	-\$0.55	-4.6%	\$23,720	103%
Retail Salespersons	4	1170	-480	\$13.60	\$1.52	12.6%	\$28,290	123%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6	1160	-170	\$16.75	\$1.71	11.3%	\$34,840	151%
General and Operations Managers	7	1070	510	\$37.65	-\$10.06	-21.1%	\$78,320	340%
Stockers and Order Fillers	8	1060	110	\$15.51	\$0.91	6.2%	\$32,250	140%
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	9	770	-180	\$12.41	\$0.51	4.2%	\$25,810	112%
Office Clerks, General	9	770	-230	\$17.33	-\$1.06	-5.8%	\$36,040	156%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	9	770	40	\$22.90	-\$1.32	-5.4%	\$47,620	207%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2019, and May 2022. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, updated April 24, 2023. Largest detail occupations in Ohio by employment. Median annual pay shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2022 (\$23,030). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130% of poverty (\$29,939) or less. Note that BLS implemented a change to the data classification methodology between 2019 and 2022. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, Survey Methods and Reliability Statement for MB3 Research Estimates of the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey. We have used the updated MB3 method. **Wages in red are less than 130% of the poverty level for a family of three. Figures in orange represent a decrease in either jobs or pay.**

Wages at all jobs should cover the basics, so people and their families can thrive. While fewer working Lima residents are struggling on the brink of poverty, many jobs still pay too little for financial security. Policymakers must step up to ensure that every Lima area and Ohio job is a good job that enables the worker to thrive.