

Census: Local families losing income

Families in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky are losing income, putting many household earnings below where they were in 1999.

Latest U.S. Census Bureau numbers show that the region's median income in 2010 was \$51,572 - down nearly 6 percent from 2007, before the recession ravaged the workplace. Incomes, which are adjusted for inflation, were down in every nearby county except for Clermont, which saw a 2 percent bump.

Compared to 1999, median incomes dropped more than 10 percent in most counties.

The local numbers mirror the national trend. Among key factors behind the declines: High levels of unemployment and part-time work.

Nationally, one of every three men was working part-time in 2010. Since 2007, the number of full-time workers fell by 6.6 million for men and 2.8 million for women.

The region's unemployment rate, which was 8.7 percent in August, averaged 9.7 percent in 2010. Nationally, unemployment averaged 9.6 percent in 2010. It was 9.1 percent in August.

The annual census estimates underscore just how weak the economic recovery has been, says Amy Hanauer, executive director with Policy Matters Ohio, a

Cleveland-based research and advocacy group.

"When you see numbers as bad as this, and you have unemployment as high as it is - it's clear that we don't have enough jobs or enough good-paying jobs," Hanauer said.

The region's unemployment rate has improved this year, but the number of people working for less money or fewer hours remains high, says Janet Harrah, director of Northern Kentucky University's Center for Economic Analysis and Development.

One in six people in Ohio and Kentucky from mid-2010 to mid-2011 were underemployed - meaning they were working part-time, but wanted a full-time job, federal Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows.

At more than 15 percent, the underemployment rates were six points higher than unemployment levels in both states during that same period.

"The average hours worked per week declined through the recession, and while they've rebounded from the low, they are still below where they were before the recession," Harrah said. "Also, among those people who didn't lose their jobs, many haven't seen raises."

George Vredevelde, director of the University of Cincinnati's Economics Center, called the steep declines since 1999 "very surprising."

"It's a really significant fall-off, and it's not a sign of a vibrant economy," he said.

Still, Harrah said the declines aren't too

unexpected considering the events of the past decade.

"In the 1990s we had a very robust economy that was driven by the tech bubble, but when that burst most of the impact rolled over into the 2000 decade," she said. "Then we also had two recessions, 9/11, and the housing bubble burst. That's a lot for an economy to absorb in a decade."

Through the turmoil, companies turned to innovation and technology to help increase profitability, she said.

"What we have now is a significant portion of our workforce that wants to work, but they don't have the skills for the jobs available," she said.

Without a comprehensive, government-backed jobs plan and tax reform, the trend of falling incomes won't be curbed, said Policy Matters' Hanauer.

"Our economy has grown in the last decade. There is more wealth and income overall - it's just not going to working families," she said.

We're earning less

Median incomes have fallen across the region, underscoring the lingering impact of the recession.

	2010	% change from 2007*
Ohio	\$45,090	-8.0%
Butler Co.	\$54,541	-2.1%
Clermont Co.	\$56,952	2.1%
Hamilton Co.	\$46,236	-9.2%
Warren Co.	\$66,499	-11.1%
Kentucky	\$40,062	-5.4%
Boone Co.	\$64,008	-9.5%
Campbell Co.	\$44,829	-17.6%
Kenton Co.	\$50,872	-3.9%
City of Cincinnati	\$34,110	-1.8%
Cincinnati MSA	\$51,572	-5.8%

* The percentage change is based on 2007 income values that were adjusted for inflation for 2010 dollars.

2010 incomes are based on Census estimates with varying margins of errors.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey The Enquirer