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).
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.