

Still working for too little in Lima

All working people — no matter their race, gender, or the kind of job they do — should be paid enough to provide for their families. Labor market pressures forced many employers to increase pay during the pandemic. Federal stimulus stabilized people’s incomes. In 2021, four of the Lima area’s 10 most common occupations paid so little that a worker with a family of three would need food aid to get by. These four occupations employ 4,560 people.

Wages up for many, but not enough: From 2019 to 2021, employers increased median pay for seven of the 10 most common jobs in the Lima area. Changes ranged from general managers being paid \$9.58-per-hour less (-20.9%) to customer service representatives being paid \$1.39-per-hour more (+9.2%). Lima was unusual in that pay rose in a majority of the 10 most common jobs. Considering nearly two decades of wage suppression that predated COVID, average annual change in pay ranged from a 30-cent-per-hour pay cut for assemblers and fabricators to a pay boost of 32 cents for registered nurses over the whole span from 2000 to 2021.

Wages up since 2019, but working people are still underpaid in Lima

Pay growth recovered lost ground in most common Lima area jobs

Top 10 occupations 2021	2021 jobs	2021 hourly pay	Pay growth 2000-2019	Pay growth since 2019	Percent pay growth since 2019	Annualized pay growth 2000-2021	2021 pay as a share of poverty
Registered Nurses	1,600	\$35.94	\$6.27	\$0.53	1.5%	\$0.32	340%
Retail Salespersons	1,290	\$11.53	\$0.52	\$0.11	1.0%	\$0.03	109%
Fast Food & Counter Workers	1,230	\$10.59	\$0.14	\$0.81	8.3%	\$0.05	100%
Cashiers	1,230	\$10.66	\$0.68	-\$0.02	-0.2%	\$0.03	101%
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Handlers	1,060	\$14.39	\$1.24	\$0.45	3.2%	\$0.08	136%
Stockers & Order Fillers	940	\$13.78	\$0.55	\$0.60	4.5%	\$0.05	131%
Customer Service Representatives	850	\$16.48	-\$1.09	\$1.39	9.2%	\$0.01	156%
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	810	\$13.63	-\$2.93	\$1.05	8.3%	-\$0.09	129%
Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators	790	\$13.94	-\$4.16	-\$2.09	-13.0%	-\$0.30	132%
General & Operations Managers	760	\$36.22	\$6.09	-\$9.58	-20.9%	-\$0.17	343%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2000, May 2019, and May 2021. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 12, 2022. Largest detail occupations in Lima MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2021 (\$21,960). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130% of poverty (\$28,548) or less. All wages are adjusted for inflation using May 2021 dollars.

COVID disproportionately destroyed low-paying jobs

COVID-19 disproportionately destroyed the jobs of low-paid Ohioans who, statewide, are more likely to be Black or brown, and women.

Nine of greater Lima's 10 most common pre-COVID occupations lost jobs from 2019 to 2021. As people scaled back dining out, employers laid off 610 fast food workers and 260 waiters and waitresses. Movement to online shopping meant fewer retail salespeople. Unlike the state, Lima lost registered nurses during the pandemic. By 2021, Lima had lost so many multiple machine tool setters they no longer appeared in survey data.

Many common occupations in Lima lost jobs between 2019 and 2021

Ten most common Lima MSA occupations by employment, 2019

Top 10 occupations 2019 pre-COVID-19	2019 rank	2021 rank	2019 jobs	2021 jobs	Change in jobs	Percent change
Fast Food & Counter Workers	1	3	1,840	1,230	-610	-33%
Registered Nurses	2	1	1,830	1,600	-230	-13%
Retail Salespersons	3	2	1,650	1,290	-360	-22%
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Handlers	4	5	1,200	1,060	-140	-12%
Cashiers	5	4	1,150	1,230	80	7%
Office Clerks, General	6	13	950	720	-230	-24%
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	7	12	940	730	-210	-22%
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	8	8	870	810	-60	-7%
Waiters & Waitresses	9	16	860	600	-260	-30%
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, & Tenders, Metal & Plastic	10	*	830	0*	-830*	-100%*

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2000, May 2019, and May 2021. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 12, 2020. Largest detail occupations in Lima MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2021 (\$21,960). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130% of poverty (\$28,548) or less. *By 2021, when these data were collected, Lima had lost so many multiple machine tool setters they no longer appeared in survey data.