

Working for less: Most common Akron jobs pay too little, 2019

Too many jobs in Akron pay too little and many pay less as a share of poverty than they did nearly two decades ago. New data released by the U.S. Department of Labor show that six of the Akron area’s 10 most common jobs pay the typical worker too little to feed a family of three without food assistance (earnings under 130 percent of poverty, about \$27,000, typically qualify). This is a small improvement over 2017, as laborers and material movers earned more than they did in 2017. Of the 10 most common jobs, all but one, Registered Nurses pay a typical worker less than \$35,000, for full-time year round work and six pay less than \$25,000.

This data confirms that job quality matters to family stability. State policymakers should not restrict access to food and health insurance when so many jobs offer neither. The challenge is not requiring people to work, as most already do. Rather, the true challenge is getting employers—many of which are major international corporations with vast profits—to pay a fair wage with benefits and set a schedule that provides stability.

| Working for Less | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Most common occupations in the Akron metropolitan area, by employment, 2018 | | | | |
| Top 10 occupations 2018 | Total Employment | Median Hourly Wage | Median Annual Salary | Median annual earnings as a share of poverty |
| Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food | 11,640 | \$9.42 | \$19,600 | 94% |
| Retail Sales | 9,950 | \$11.44 | \$23,790 | 114% |
| Registered Nurses | 7,490 | \$33.44 | \$69,550 | 335% |
| Customer Service Reps | 7,000 | \$16.31 | \$33,910 | 163% |
| Cashiers | 6,640 | \$9.92 | \$20,630 | 99% |
| Office Clerks | 6,570 | \$15.91 | \$33,100 | 159% |
| Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers | 5,450 | \$14.18 | \$29,490 | 142% |
| Stock Clerks & Order Fillers | 5,400 | \$11.52 | \$23,960 | 115% |
| Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping | 5,130 | \$11.48 | \$23,870 | 115% |
| Waiters and Waitresses | 4,840 | \$9.39 | \$19,530 | 94% |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey, May 2018 estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 13, 2019. Largest detail occupations in Akron MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2018 (\$20,780). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is generally 130 percent of poverty.

Many of Ohio’s most common jobs now simply pay too little to eliminate need for food assistance. That is also true in Akron. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Akron. In 2000, four of the 10 most common occupations paid so little that a family of three was left dependent on food assistance to get by – now it’s six. Many occupations paid less as a share of poverty in 2018 than they did a decade and a half ago and some, like RNs, stock clerks, and waiters earned a little less at the median than they did in 2017. The new rules of Ohio’s labor market are so tilted in favor of corporate employers that many in Akron will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

Wrong Direction

Akron occupations, employment and median annual wage: 2000, 2017, and 2018

| Top 10 occupations 2000 | Earnings as share of poverty | Top 10 occupations 2017 | Earnings as share of poverty | Top 10 occupations 2018 | Earnings as share of poverty |
|--|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Retail Salespersons | 113% | Retail Salesperson | 109% | Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food | 94% |
| Cashiers | 100% | Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food | 93% | Retail Sales | 114% |
| Team Assemblers | 151% | Registered Nurses | 339% | Registered Nurses | 335% |
| Stock Clerks & Order Fillers | 118% | Office Clerks | 152% | Customer Service Reps | 163% |
| General & Operations Managers | 415% | Cashiers | 95% | Cashiers | 99% |
| Office Clerks | 142% | Customer Service Reps | 163% | Office Clerks | 159% |
| Truck Drivers | 235% | Waiters & Waitresses | 95% | Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers | 142% |
| Registered Nurses | 327% | Stock Clerks & Order Fillers | 117% | Stock Clerks & Order Fillers | 115% |
| Secretaries, Except Legal Medical | 163% | Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids Housekeeping | 115% | Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids Housekeeping | 115% |
| Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food | 99% | Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers | 128% | Waiters and Waitresses | 94% |

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000 Akron MSA estimates and May 2017 estimates, accessed 4/13/18 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Akron MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as share of poverty threshold for a family of three in 2000 (\$14,150), 2017 (\$20,420), and 2018 (\$20,780). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is generally 130 percent of poverty.

Akron on average had 340,100 jobs last year, 600 less than in 2007, when the last recession began. While some occupations are showing earnings gains, the region still struggles with job loss. Job quality has been eroded. Tax policy has sent big cuts to the wealthiest, shrinking funding to support education, infrastructure, and healthcare—investments that help working people and their kids get ahead.

Policy Matters Ohio has set out 10 policy priorities that will help working people by raising wages, extending overtime protections, providing paid leave, preserving public jobs and more. These new data show that such policies are essential in Akron where low-paying jobs still make it hard to get by.