

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

Too many jobs in Canton 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 Canton 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 customer service reps made up a larger share of the Canton labor force last year, bumping lower paid janitors off the list. Of the 10 most common jobs, all but one pay a typical worker less than \$35,000, for full-time year round work, and half pay less than \$25,000.

This data confirms that job quality matters to family stability. During this budget cycle, 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 Canton-Massillon 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	6,920	\$9.25	\$19,240	93%
Retail Salesperson	5,890	\$11.11	\$23,110	111%
Office Clerks	4,570	\$13.10	\$27,250	131%
Registered Nurses	4,510	\$29.05	\$60,430	291%
Cashiers	4,120	\$10.98	\$22,840	110%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	3,530	\$13.80	\$28,700	138%
Waiters & Waitresses	3,040	\$9.37	\$19,490	94%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	3,040	\$12.16	\$25,300	122%
Nursing Assistants	2,480	\$11.84	\$24,620	118%
Customer Service Reps	2,460	\$14.09	\$29,310	141%

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 Canton 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. That is also true in Canton. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Canton. In 2000, five 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. Some occupations paid less as a share of poverty in 2018 than they did as a share of poverty a decade and a half ago, and some like nursing assistance earned less in 2018 than they did in 2017 and in 2000. The new rules of Ohio’s labor market are so tilted in favor of corporate employers that many in Canton will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

Wrong Direction

Canton-Massillon 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 Sales	101%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	93%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	93%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	89%	Retail Sales	106%	Retail Sales	111%
Cashiers	93%	Registered Nurses	289%	Office Clerks	131%
Registered Nurses	298%	Office Clerks	130%	Registered Nurses	291%
General & Operations Managers	362%	Cashiers	97%	Cashiers	110%
Office Clerks	149%	Waiters & Waitresses	93%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	138%
Packers and Packagers	115%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	141%	Waiters & Waitresses	94%
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, Attendants	141%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids, Housekeeping	117%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	122%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids, Housekeeping	123%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	121%	Nursing Assistants	118%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	136%	Nursing Assistants	127%	Customer Service Reps	141%

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000 Canton MSA estimates and May 2018 estimates, accessed 4/13/19 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Canton 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.

Canton on average had 174,800 jobs last year, 1,500 more jobs than in 2007, when the last recession began. The highest paying among the top jobs, registered nurse, relies in part on maintaining expanded health insurance coverage. 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 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 Canton where jobs still make it hard to get by.