

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

Too many jobs in Cincinnati 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 Cincinnati 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). 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 Cincinnati 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	31,990	\$9.21	\$19,150	92%
Retail Salespersons	30,240	\$11.12	\$23,120	111%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	25,490	\$13.69	\$28,470	137%
Registered Nurses	23,970	\$31.23	\$64,950	313%
Customer Service Reps	23,830	\$15.71	\$32,670	157%
Cashiers	21,470	\$10.23	\$21,280	102%
Waiters & Waitresses	19,810	\$9.27	\$19,280	93%
Office Clerks	19,030	\$16.27	\$33,840	163%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	17,940	\$12.38	\$25,750	124%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	14,590	\$11.80	\$24,540	118%

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 Cincinnati 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 Cincinnati. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Cincinnati. 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 is six. Some occupations, like food service workers and retail salespersons are paid less as a share of poverty in 2018 than they were a decade and a half ago. The new rules of Ohio's labor market are so tilted in favor of corporate employers that many Cincinnatians will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

Wrong Direction

Cincinnati MSA 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	119%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	93%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	92%
Cashiers	102%	Retail Sales	112%	Retail Sales	111%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	141%	Registered Nurses	314%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	137%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	97%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	138%	Registered Nurses	313%
General & Operations Managers	402%	Cashiers	97%	Customer Service Reps	157%
Office Clerks	152%	Waiters & Waitresses	93%	Cashiers	102%
Customer Service Reps	177%	Customer Service Reps	156%	Waiters & Waitresses	93%
Registered Nurses	295%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	121%	Office Clerks	163%
Waiters & Waitresses	93%	Office Clerks	156%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	124%
Packers and Packers	120%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	116%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	118%

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000, 2017 Cincinnati MSA estimates and May 2018 estimates, accessed 4/13/19 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Cincinnati MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as share of poverty threshold for a family of three in 2000 (\$14,150), 2017 (\$20,420), 2018 (\$20,780). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is generally 130 percent of poverty. Note that Cincinnati MSA includes areas in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

Cincinnati on average had 1,108,400 jobs last year. That's 64,600 more jobs than in 2007, when the last recession began. The Cincinnati region has been a driver of the Ohio recovery. One of the top jobs, registered nurse, provides better earnings. This job relies in part on maintaining expanded health insurance coverage. Yet, many of the jobs that have grown over recent years do not offer the same income or stability as those lost. Growing sectors, in leisure and hospitality services, often pay poorly and lack benefits.

Job quality has been eroded. Ohio tax policy has sent big cuts to the wealthiest, shrinking funding for 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 Cincinnati where jobs still make it hard to get by.