

Working for less: Many common Cleveland jobs pay too little, 2019

Too many jobs in Cleveland 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 Cleveland 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). That is a little worse than 2017, as stock clerks and order fillers took up a larger share of Cleveland employment last year than better paid Secretaries and Administrative Assistants. Of the 10 most common jobs, all but one 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. 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 Cleveland 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
Retail Salespersons	30,580	\$11.18	\$23,250	112%
Registered Nurses	25,270	\$32.97	\$68,570	330%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	23,970	\$9.41	\$19,580	94%
Cashiers	22,320	\$9.83	\$20,440	98%
Office Clerks	21,760	\$16.04	\$33,370	161%
Customer Service Reps	20,650	\$16.75	\$34,840	168%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	20,450	\$13.57	\$28,230	136%
Waiters & Waitresses	17,830	\$9.47	\$19,700	95%
Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeepers	16,740	\$11.89	\$24,730	119%
Stock Clerks and Order Filers	13,610	\$11.97	\$24,910	120%

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 Cleveland-Elyria 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 pay too little to eliminate need. That is also true in Cleveland. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Cleveland. 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. The new rules of Ohio's labor market are so tilted in favor of corporate employers that many in Cleveland will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

Wrong Direction

Cleveland 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	116%	Retail Salespersons	109%	Retail Salespersons	112%
Cashiers	101%	Registered Nurses	330%	Registered Nurses	330%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	135%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	94%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	94%
Registered Nurses	325%	Cashiers	96%	Cashiers	98%
General & Operations Managers	470%	Office Clerks	154%	Office Clerks	161%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	121%	Waiters & Waitresses	95%	Customer Service Reps	168%
Office Clerks, General	156%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	132%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	136%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	92%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	113%	Waiters & Waitresses	95%
Team Assemblers	161%	Customer Service Reps	169%	Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids, Housekeepers	119%
Customer Service Reps	182%	Secretaries and Admin Assistants, except legal, medical and exec.	175%	Stock Clerks and Order Filers	120%

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000, 2017 Cleveland, Lorain-Elyria MSA estimates and May 2018 estimates, accessed 4/13/19 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Cleveland 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.

Cleveland on average had 1,067,400 jobs last year. That’s 4,800 fewer jobs than in 2007, when the last recession began. Cleveland is still struggling to recover. One top job, registered nurse, provides better earnings. Its continued strength relies in part on maintaining expanded health insurance coverage. But most jobs that have grown over recent years offer less income and stability than those lost. Manufacturing took the biggest hit. Growing sectors, like leisure and hospitality, 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 Cleveland where jobs still make it hard to get by.