

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

Too many jobs in Youngstown pay too little and some 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 five of the Youngstown 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 two pay a typical worker less than \$35,000, for full-time year-round work, and four pay less than \$25,000.

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 to pay a fair wage with benefits and set a schedule that provides stability.

Working for Less				
Most common occupations in the Youngstown 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	8,340	\$10.62	\$22,100	106%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	8,250	\$9.07	\$18,870	91%
Cashiers	7,210	\$9.64	\$20,060	97%
Office Clerks	5,110	\$14.47	\$30,100	145%
Registered Nurses	4,280	\$27.86	\$57,940	279%
Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	4,230	\$13.90	\$28,910	139%
Waiters and Waitresses	4,100	\$9.46	\$19,680	95%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,670	\$20.46	\$42,550	205%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	3,350	\$12.44	\$25,880	125%
Secretaries and Admin Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, Exec.	3,340	\$15.03	\$31,260	150%

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 Youngstown 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 common jobs pay too little to eliminate need. That is also true in Youngstown. Since 2000, Youngstown, unlike most areas of the state, shows an improvement. In 2000, seven 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 five, as laborers have seen better pay and poorly paid nurses’ aides take up a smaller share of the regional labor force. Most of the area’s common jobs are paying marginally more as a share of poverty than they did a decade and a half ago. Even with the improvements, many in Youngstown will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

Some improvement, but too many stuck in low wage work

Youngstown 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	104%	Retail Salespersons	103%	Retail Salespersons	106%
Cashiers	93%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	93%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	91%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	89%	Cashiers	94%	Cashiers	97%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	209%	Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	139%	Office Clerks	145%
Registered Nurses	285%	Office Clerks	139%	Registered Nurses	279%
General and Operations Managers	371%	Waiters & Waitresses	94%	Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	139%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	116%	Registered Nurses	281%	Waiters and Waitresses	95%
Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Movers	118%	Secretaries and Admin Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, Exec.	151%	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	205%
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, Attendants	122%	Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers	216%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	125%
Waiters and Waitresses	93%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping	126%	Secretaries and Admin Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, Exec.	150%

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

Youngstown, more than any other economic region is struggling to regain the jobs lost to the 2007 recession. The Youngstown area on average had 219,700 jobs last year, 19,100 fewer than when the last recession began. While some occupations have seen slight earnings improvements, the number of available jobs still lags.

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 has set 10 policy priorities that help working people by raising wages, extending overtime protections, providing paid leave, and preserving public jobs. New data show that such policies are essential in Youngstown where jobs still make it hard to get by.