



Still working for too little in Columbus, 2024

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Everyone who works for a living should be paid a wage that enables them to cover the basics for themselves and their families. Yet last year, four of Columbus’s 10 largest occupations paid their median worker so little they would qualify for and likely depend on food aid to feed a family of three. That’s a wage less than \$32,318 in 2023.¹ These four occupations alone employ 95,000 people (8.9% of all workers in the area). The table shows where pay fell short of food subsistence in Columbus, and where pay and the number of jobs grew and shrank over the course of the recovery.

Many of Columbus’s 10 most common jobs pay near poverty							
Changes in jobs and pay among Columbus’s most common jobs in 2023							
Top 10 occupations	2023 jobs	Change since 2019	Percent Change since 2019	2023 median hourly pay	2023 median annual pay	2023 pay as % of poverty level	Percent change in pay since 2019*
Stockers and Order Fillers	33,730	14,930	79%	\$ 17.99	\$37,410.00	150%	15%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	28,390	-3,340	-11%	\$ 13.58	\$28,240.00	114%	21%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand General and Operations Managers	26,570	-5,440	-17%	\$ 18.62	\$38,720.00	156%	8%
Customer Service Representatives	26,530	14,530	121%	\$ 47.84	\$99,500.00	400%	-16%
Registered Nurses	24,800	-5,230	-17%	\$ 20.32	\$42,260.00	170%	3%
Retail Salespersons	24,510	1,260	5%	\$ 38.95	\$81,020.00	326%	9%
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	23,570	-4,350	-16%	\$ 14.95	\$31,100.00	125%	12%
Cashiers	22,460	-80	0%	\$ 14.08	\$29,290.00	118%	7%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	20,830	2,850	16%	\$ 13.70	\$28,500.00	115%	10%
	17,680	4,070	30%	\$ 26.86	\$55,860.00	225%	5%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2019, and May 2023. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, updated April 3, 2024. Largest detail occupations in Columbus MSA by employment. Median annual pay shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2023 (\$24,860). **Red text** indicates annual income below 130% of poverty for a family of three, (\$32,318), the threshold for food assistance. Note that BLS implemented a change to the data estimation methodology between 2019 and 2023, so comparisons with prior reports may vary slightly. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Survey Methods and Reliability Statement for MB3 Research Estimates of the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Survey.” We have used the updated MB3 method for both years. **Orange text** marks a decrease in jobs or wages. *Percent change in pay since 2019 is given as a change in pay as a share of the poverty level for the year in which it was reported.

¹ The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130 percent of poverty for Ohio and most states. The poverty level depends on the family size and was \$24,860 for a family of three in 2023. See [Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Level 2023](#).



This report covers the 10 most common jobs in the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as ranked by the number of workers holding them.² Together these 10 occupations account for over 249,000 jobs, 23% of all jobs in the MSA.

Jobs fully recovered Columbus

Columbus is among just three Ohio MSA's which have fully recovered jobs from the COVID recession. With 1,156,400 jobs by February 2024, the Columbus MSA had added 33,300 jobs (+3.0%) compared with its pre-COVID February 2020 number.³

Policy solutions must create access to jobs and ensure livable wages for all

Policymakers at all levels must ensure that the job market enables everyone who wants a job to find one; support childcare infrastructure that provides a safe place for children while parents work; ensure a robust unemployment system that enables working people to withstand times of joblessness and use them to train for better jobs; and pass a wage floor and other policies that enable Ohioans to take home a wage that covers the basics and better reflects their worth on the job. Priorities include:

- Pay all Ohioans a minimum wage of at least \$15 per hour.
- Support working parents with robust childcare.
- Pass a slate of pro-worker policies.

Conclusion

Too many of Columbus's most common jobs pay too little. Everyone who works deserves to be paid a wage that dignifies the value of their work and meets the cost of living. It's time for state leaders to make that a reality for all working people in Columbus and across Ohio.

² Data are from newly released May 2023 figures from Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). The survey uses three years of sample data to estimate wages for the year, making this release the first since the COVID recession to exclude data from the highly irregular 2020 labor market disrupted by COVID-19. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, with Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Labor Market Information, Current Employment Statistics, February 2020 and February 2024, seasonally adjusted data, available at: https://ohiolmi.com/Home/CES/DS_Results_CES