

### Working for less: Most common Akron jobs pay too little\*

Too many jobs in Akron 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 seven of the Akron 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 typically qualify). At a time when state and federal policymakers are determined to erect new barriers to food assistance and health care these new data show that 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 their workers a fair wage with benefits and set a schedule that provides some measure of job security.

Working for Less				
Most common occupations in the Akron metropolitan area, by employment, 2017				
Top 10 occupations 2017	Total Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Median Annual Salary	Median annual earnings as a share of poverty
Retail Salesperson	10,920	\$10.74	\$22,340	109%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food-	10,660	\$9.16	\$19,050	93%
Registered Nurses+	7,370	\$33.25	\$69,170	339%
Office Clerks	6,720	\$14.88	\$30,950	152%
Cashiers	6,320	\$9.36	\$19,470	95%
Customer Service Reps+	5,700	\$15.98	\$33,240	163%
Waiters & Waitresses+	5,610	\$9.36	\$19,480	95%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers-	5,400	\$11.47	\$23,850	117%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping-	5,380	\$11.26	\$23,420	115%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers-	5,330	\$12.56	\$26,120	128%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey, May 2017 estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 13, 2018. Largest detail occupations in Akron MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2017 (\$20,420). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is generally 130 percent of poverty. Red text highlights the occupations paying a typical wage below this threshold. (-) indicates a median wage lower than the state median for that occupation. (+) indicates a median wage higher than the state's for that occupation.

Many of Ohio's most common jobs now simply pay too little to eliminate need. That is also true in Akron. Policymakers should not restrict access to food and health insurance when so many jobs offer neither. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Akron. 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 seven. Many occupations paid less as a share of poverty in 2017 than they did a decade and a half ago. The new rules of Ohio's labor market are so tilted in favor of corporate employers that many in Akron will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

\* By Hannah Halbert, with research assistance from Isaac Miller

Wrong Direction			
Akron occupations, employment and median annual wage: 2000 and 2017			
Top 10 occupations 2000	Earnings as share of poverty	Top 10 occupations 2017	Earnings as share of poverty
Retail Salespersons	113%	Retail Salesperson-	109%
Cashiers	100%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food-	93%
Team Assemblers	151%	Registered Nurses+	339%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	118%	Office Clerks+	152%
General & Operations Managers	415%	Cashiers-	95%
Office Clerks	142%	Customer Service Reps+	163%
Truck Drivers	235%	Waiters & Waitresses+	95%
Registered Nurses	327%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers-	117%
Secretaries, Except Legal Medical	163%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping-	115%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	99%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers-	128%

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000 Akron MSA estimates and May 2017 estimates, accessed 4/13/18 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Akron MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as share of poverty threshold for a family of three in 2000 (\$14,150) and 2017 (\$20,420). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is generally 130 percent of poverty. Red font notes occupations that have median annual earnings under 130% of poverty for a family of three. (+) indicates earnings increased since 2000, (-) indicates the earnings decreased since 2000, as a share of poverty.

Akron on average had 341,100 jobs last year, just 400 more than in 2007, when the last recession began. Akron is still struggling for a solid recovery. One top job, registered nurse, pays above twice the poverty rate. Most of the others 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. 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 Akron where jobs still make it hard to get by.

