

Working for less: Most common Cincinnati jobs pay too little*

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 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 Cincinnati 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
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food-	31,720	\$9.18	\$19,090	93%
Retail Salespersons+	29,450	\$10.95	\$22,780	112%
Registered Nurses+	23,580	\$30.80	\$64,050	314%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers+	23,190	\$13.59	\$28,260	138%
Cashiers+	21,320	\$9.50	\$19,760	97%
Waiters & Waitresses-	20,170	\$9.16	\$19,050	93%
Customer Service Reps-	20,080	\$15.31	\$31,840	156%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers+	17,640	\$11.87	\$24,690	121%
Office Clerks+	17,440	\$15.29	\$31,800	156%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping-	15,670	\$11.42	\$23,750	116%

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 Cincinnati 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. Note that Cincinnati MSA includes areas in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

Many of Ohio’s most common jobs now simply pay too little to eliminate need. That is also true in Cincinnati. Policymakers should not restrict access to food and health insurance when so many jobs offer neither. 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’s six. Some 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 Cincinnatians will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

* By Hannah Halbert, with research assistance from Isaac Miller

Wrong Direction			
Cincinnati MSA 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	119%	Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food-	93%
Cashiers	102%	Retail Salesperson-	112%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	141%	Registered Nurses+	314%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	97%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers-	138%
General & Operations Managers	402%	Cashiers-	97%
Office Clerks	152%	Waiters & Waitresses	93%
Customer Service Reps	177%	Customer Service Reps-	156%
Registered Nurses	295%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers-	121%
Waiters & Waitresses	93%	Office Clerks+	156%
Packers and Packagers	120%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping-	116%

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000 Cincinnati MSA estimates and May 2017 estimates, accessed 4/13/18 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) 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. Note that Cincinnati MSA includes areas in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

Cincinnati on average had 1,093,600 jobs last year. That’s 49,800 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 coverage. Yet, many of the jobs that have grown over recent years do not offer the same income or stability as 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 Cincinnati where jobs still make it hard to get by.

