

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

Too many jobs in Columbus 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 Columbus 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 Columbus 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	30,770	\$9.22	\$19,190	94%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers-	29,290	\$12.84	\$26,710	131%
Retail Salesperson	27,100	\$10.67	\$22,190	109%
Customer Service Reps+	26,120	\$15.64	\$32,540	159%
Registered Nurses-	22,070	\$30.03	\$62,460	306%
Cashiers+	20,719	\$9.42	\$19,590	96%
Waiters & Waitresses+	18,970	\$9.34	\$19,430	95%
Office Clerks+	18,860	\$16.17	\$33,630	165%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers+	17,150	\$11.97	\$24,910	122%
Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping+	14,810	\$11.96	\$24,880	122%

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 Columbus 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 Columbus. Policymakers should not restrict access to food and health insurance when so many jobs offer neither. Low wages were not always so ubiquitous in Columbus. In 2000, four of the 10 most common occupations in the Columbus area paid so little that a family of three was left dependent on food assistance to get by – today it is six. 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 Columbus will not be able to work their way to self-sufficiency.

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

Wrong Direction			
Columbus 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-	94%
Customer Service Reps	171%	Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers-	131%
Cashiers	109%	Retail Salesperson-	109%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	147%	Customer Service Reps-	159%
Waiters and Waitresses	92%	Registered Nurses	306%
Office Clerks	159%	Cashiers-	96%
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	133%	Waiters & Waitresses+	95%
General Operations Managers	422%	Office Clerks+	165%
Food Prep & Serving Workers, including Fast Food	102%	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers-	122%
Registered Nurses	306%	Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping-	122%

*Source:* BLS, OES Survey, 2000 Columbus MSA estimates and May 2017 estimates, accessed 4/13/18 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in Columbus 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.

Columbus on average had 1,0839,000 jobs last year, 123,100 more than in 2007, when the last recession began. Columbus is a driver of the statewide recovery. While one of the top jobs, registered nurse, pays well above twice the poverty line, the others do not. Most of the top jobs do not offer the same income or stability as top jobs from 2000. Manufacturing, which offered good jobs for less educated workers, took the biggest hit.

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 Columbus where jobs still make it hard to get by.

