

Working for less in Canton: Most common jobs pay too little

The economy comes down to people: people who work, buy and sell. An economy that relies on working people who can't afford to get by is shaky even in the best of times. Now more than ever, Ohioans need leaders who put people first. Reporting to work in the midst of a pandemic is a frightening new reality for many of Ohio's working people. Others are out of work to comply with Gov. DeWine's stay-at-home order. Many still wait for unemployment compensation to arrive. Some worry how they will cope if they or a family member falls ill. Many have lost health insurance when they were sent home from work.

As Ohioans scramble to take care of one another and meet basic needs, low wages compound the hardship. New data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show a jobs landscape already drastically outmoded. Nearly 30,000 Stark and Carroll County residents who were working this March are out of work today. But looking at the jobs that dominated the region's labor market through May of 2019 sheds light on the challenges workers still at or recently laid off from work face today. These data show that even before the pandemic and after a decade of economic growth, many people in Canton and surrounding communities lived on the brink.

| Working for Less | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Most common occupations in the Canton metropolitan area by employment, 2019 | | | | |
| Top 10 occupations 2019 | Total Employment | Median Hourly Wage | Median Annual Salary | Median annual earnings as a share of poverty |
| Fast Food and Counter Workers* | 6,340 | \$9.34 | \$19,430 | 91% |
| Retail Salespeople | 5,000 | \$11.65 | \$24,230 | 114% |
| Cashiers* | 4,860 | \$10.84 | \$22,550 | 106% |
| Office Clerks | 4,130 | \$15.18 | \$31,570 | 148% |
| Home Health & Personal Care Aides* | 3,860 | \$10.66 | \$22,160 | 104% |
| Registered nurses* | 3,710 | \$30.00 | \$62,400 | 293% |
| Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Handlers* | 3,400 | \$14.15 | \$29,430 | 138% |
| Customer Service Reps | 3,080 | \$14.64 | \$30,450 | 143% |
| Waiters and Waitresses | 2,880 | \$9.61 | \$19,990 | 94% |
| Nursing Assistants* | 2,610 | \$12.69 | \$26,400 | 124% |

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey, May 2019 estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 8, 2020. Largest detail occupations in the Canton MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2019 (\$21,330). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130 percent of poverty (\$27,729) or less. Red text highlights the occupations paying a typical wage below this threshold. Asterisk (*) indicates that a job would likely be considered "essential" under Gov. DeWine's stay-at-home directive.

Too many greater Canton jobs pay too little. By 2019 six of the top 10 jobs left a worker with a family of three in need of food aid, up from five in 2000. Wages so low would not even have been possible half a century ago. At its peak in 1968, the federal minimum wage was worth over \$12 per hour in today's dollars: more than the median wage in half of Canton's 10 most common jobs.

| Wrong Direction | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Most common Canton MSA occupations, employment and median annual wage: 2000, 2018, and 2019 | | | | | |
| Top 10 occupations 2000 | Earnings as share of poverty | Top 10 occupations 2018 | Earnings as share of poverty | Top 10 occupations 2019 | Earnings as share of poverty |
| Retail Sales | 101% | Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food | 93% | Fast Food and Counter Workers* | 91% |
| Food Prep & Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food | 89% | Retail Salespeople | 111% | Retail Salespeople | 114% |
| Cashiers | 93% | Office Clerks | 131% | Cashiers* | 106% |
| Registered Nurses | 298% | Registered Nurses | 291% | Office Clerks | 148% |
| General & Operations Managers | 362% | Cashiers | 110% | Home Health and Personal Care Aides* | 104% |
| Office Clerks | 149% | Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers | 138% | Registered nurses* | 293% |
| Packers and Packers | 115% | Waiters & Waitresses | 94% | Laborers and Freight, Stock and Material Handlers* | 138% |
| Nursing Aides, Orderlies, Attendants | 141% | Stock Clerks & Order Fillers | 122% | Customer Service Reps | 143% |
| Janitors & Cleaners, except Maids & Housekeeping | 123% | Nursing Assistants | 118% | Waiters and Waitresses | 94% |
| Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers | 136% | Customer Service Reps | 141% | Nursing Assistants* | 124% |

Source: BLS, OES Survey, 2000 state estimates and May 2019 estimates, accessed April 8, 2020 at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>. Largest detail occupations in the Canton MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as share of poverty threshold for a family of three in 2000 (\$14,150), 2018 (\$20,780), and 2019 (\$21,330). Red font indicates occupations that have median annual earnings under 130% of poverty, the typical threshold for food aid, for a family of three. Asterisk (*) indicates likely "essential" occupation.

These paltry wages left many with no savings to withstand a coronavirus layoff. Policy Matters Ohio has set out four policy priorities to help working people through the crisis and beyond. Ohio lawmakers can protect people today and build a stronger state for tomorrow by protecting essential workers, shoring up unemployment comp, providing paid sick leave, and making sure all working people, no matter what job they do, get a fair return for their work.