

Working for less in Mansfield: 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 working Ohioans. Others are out of work to comply with Gov. DeWine's stay-at-home order. Many still wait for unemployment compensation to arrive. Many have lost health insurance and some worry how they will cope if they or a family member falls ill.

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. More than 9,700 Richland County residents who were working this March are out of work today.¹ But looking at the jobs that dominated greater Mansfield 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 Mansfield and surrounding communities lived on the brink.

Working for Less

Most common occupations in the Mansfield 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
Cashiers	1,890	\$9.64	\$20,050	94%
Retail Salespeople	1,750	\$10.80	\$22,460	105%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,660	\$9.30	\$19,350	91%
Registered Nurses	1,100	\$30.77	\$64,010	300%
Office Clerks	1,030	\$14.50	\$30,160	141%
Waiters and Waitresses	990	\$9.32	\$19,390	91%
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	900	\$13.90	\$28,920	136%
Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers	800	\$14.46	\$30,070	141%
Stockers and Order Fillers	740	\$14.65	\$30,480	143%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	700	\$22.03	\$45,810	215%

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 Mansfield 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% 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.

¹ Initial unemployment compensation filings four weeks ended April 11, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2v6bfBZ>

Too many greater Mansfield jobs pay too little. Wages in four of the MSA’s top 10 jobs paid so little that a family of three would need food aid.² That’s down from five in 2000, making Mansfield the only MSA to improve on this metric. Yet, wages for those four jobs were so low they 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 four of Mansfield’s 10 most common jobs.

Slight progress					
Most common Mansfield 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
Assemblers and Fabricators	148%	Cashiers	93%	Cashiers	94%
Cashiers	99%	Retail Salespeople	104%	Retail Salespeople	105%
Retail Salespeople	110%	Food Prep and Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	93%	Fast Food and Counter Workers	91%
Registered Nurses	301%	Waiters and Waitresses	91%	Registered Nurses	300%
Helpers - Production Workers	136%	Registered Nurses	292%	Office Clerks	141%
Food Prep and Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	105%	Office Clerks	139%	Waiters and Waitresses	91%
Secretaries, except Legal and Medical	142%	Assemblers and Fabricators	132%	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	136%
Cutting, Punching & Press Machine Workers	162%	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	181%	Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers, Hand	141%
Stockers and Order Fillers	121%	Stockers and Order Fillers	139%	Stockers and Order Fillers	143%
Waiters and Waitresses	92%	Secretaries, except Legal and Medical	148%	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	215%

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 Mansfield 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.

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.

² Wages are shown as a share of poverty. Using this benchmark also accounts for inflation, since the Federal Poverty Threshold is indexed to inflation.