

Working for less in Springfield: 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 9,800 Clark County residents who were working this March are out of work today.¹ But looking at the jobs that dominated greater Springfield 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 Springfield and its surrounding communities lived on the brink.

Too many greater Springfield jobs pay too little. Employers in seven of the MSA's largest occupations paid so little in 2019 that a family of three would need food aid. Statewide, just four of the top 10 jobs paid so little back in 2000. The Springfield MSA was designated later. 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 six of Springfield's 10 most common jobs.

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

Working for Less

Most common occupations in the Springfield 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	1,770	\$9.80	\$20,380	96%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,620	\$9.37	\$19,480	91%
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,360	\$12.24	\$25,450	119%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,330	\$21.93	\$45,620	214%
Retail Salespeople	1,280	\$11.15	\$23,190	109%
Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers	1,100	\$11.43	\$23,780	111%
Registered Nurses	1,010	\$35.00	\$72,800	341%
Office Clerks	920	\$15.01	\$31,210	146%
Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping	860	\$11.48	\$23,870	112%
Waiters and Waitresses	770	\$9.76	\$20,310	95%

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 Dayton 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.

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.