

### Working for less in Lima: 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. Recent data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics show a jobs landscape already drastically outmoded. Nearly 8,900 Allen County residents who worked in March are now out of work.<sup>1</sup> Looking at the jobs that dominated Lima's labor market through May of 2019 show that even before the pandemic, many working people in Lima and surrounding communities lived on the brink.

Working for Less				
Most common occupations in the Lima 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*	1,840	\$9.30	\$19,350	91%
Registered Nurses	1,830	\$33.69	\$70,080	329%
Retail Salespeople	1,650	\$10.86	\$22,590	106%
Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers *	1,200	\$13.26	\$27,590	129%
Cashiers*	1,150	\$10.16	\$21,120	99%
Office Clerks	950	\$15.27	\$31,760	149%
Home Health and Personal Care Aides*	940	\$11.11	\$23,110	108%
Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping*	870	\$11.97	\$24,900	117%
Waiters and Waitresses	860	\$9.38	\$19,520	92%
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	830	\$18.43	\$38,340	180%

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 Lima 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.

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

Too many greater Lima jobs pay too little. Wages in seven of the MSA’s top 10 jobs left a worker with a family of three in need of food aid, up from six in 2000.<sup>2</sup> 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 Lima’s 10 most common jobs in 2019.

Wrong Direction					
Most common Lima 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
Food Prep and Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	90%	Food Prep and Serving Workers, incl. Fast Food	91%	Fast Food and Counter Workers*	91%
Retail Salespeople	102%	Registered Nurses	326%	Registered Nurses*	329%
Cashiers	94%	Retail Salespeople	102%	Retail Salespeople	106%
Registered Nurses	273%	Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers	125%	Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers*	129%
Laborers and Freight, Stock & Material Movers	119%	Waiters and Waitresses	93%	Cashiers*	99%
Office Clerks	114%	Cashiers*	97%	Office Clerks	149%
Team Assemblers	189%	Office Clerks	153%	Home Health and Personal Care Aides*	108%
General and Operations Managers	372%	Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping	119%	Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping*	117%
Janitors and Cleaners, except Maids and Housekeeping	145%	Nursing Assistants	135%	Waiters and Waitresses	92%
Nursing Aides, Orderlies and Attendants	118%	Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	180%	Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	180%

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 Lima 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. 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.

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