

Still working for too little in Youngstown

All working people — no matter their race, gender, or the job they do — should be paid enough to live a good life and provide for their families. Labor market pressures forced many employers to increase pay during the pandemic. Federal stimulus stabilized people’s incomes. But in 2021, five of the Youngstown area’s 10 most common occupations paid so little that a worker with a family of three would need food aid, including the region’s top four. These five occupations alone employ 26,860 people.

Wages up, but not enough: From 2019 to 2021, employers increased median pay for six of the 10 most common jobs in the Youngstown area. Changes ranged from general and operations managers being paid \$3.92-per-hour less (-9.8%) to stockers and order fillers being paid \$1.06-per-hour more (+8.6%). Youngstown was unusual in paying registered nurses *less* during COVID-19. Considering nearly two decades of wage suppression that predated COVID, average annual change in pay ranged from an 18-cent-per-hour pay cut for general managers to a pay boost of 15 cents for office clerks over the whole span from 2000 to 2021. Pay rose in five occupations, fell in three, and was zero in two.

Wages up since 2019, but working people are still underpaid in Youngstown

Pay growth recovered lost ground in most common Youngstown area jobs

Top 10 occupations 2021	2021 Jobs	2021 hourly pay	Pay growth 2000-2019	Pay growth since 2019	Percent pay growth since 2019	Annualized pay growth 2000-2021	2021 pay as a share of poverty
Fast Food & Counter Workers	6,380	\$10.23	\$0.18	\$0.51	5.2%	\$0.03	97%
Retail Salespersons	6,010	\$11.11	\$0.17	-\$0.19	-1.7%	\$0.00	105%
Cashiers	5,990	\$10.40	\$0.75	-\$0.30	-2.8%	\$0.02	99%
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	4,790	\$11.60	-\$0.42	\$0.09	0.8%	-\$0.02	110%
Registered Nurses	4,470	\$29.24	-\$0.88	-\$0.33	-1.1%	-\$0.06	277%
Office Clerks, General	3,850	\$16.66	\$2.25	\$0.99	6.3%	\$0.15	158%
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,790	\$22.31	-\$0.27	\$0.22	1.0%	\$0.00	211%
Laborers & Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Handlers	3,780	\$14.33	\$1.24	\$0.45	3.3%	\$0.08	136%
Stockers & Order Fillers	3,690	\$13.27	-\$0.01	\$1.06	8.6%	\$0.05	126%
General & Operations Managers	3,610	\$35.85	\$0.18	-\$3.92	-9.8%	-\$0.18	340%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2000, May 2019, and May 2021. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 12, 2022. Largest detail occupations in Youngstown MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2021 (\$21,960). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130% of poverty (\$28,548) or less. All wages are adjusted for inflation using May 2021 dollars.

COVID disproportionately destroyed low-paying jobs

COVID-19 disproportionately destroyed the jobs of low-paid Ohioans. Statewide, these jobs are more likely to be held by Black and brown Ohioans, and women.

Seven of greater Youngstown’s 10 most common pre-COVID occupations lost jobs from 2019 to 2021. As people scaled back dining out, employers laid off 2,620 fast food workers and 1,120 waiters and waitresses. More online shopping meant fewer retail salespeople and cashiers. Youngstown gained 180 registered nurses but lost 740 home health aides, who may have become sick or left the field.

Many of Youngstown’s most common occupations lost jobs between 2019 and 2021

Most common Youngstown MSA occupations by employment, 2019

Top 10 occupations 2019 pre-COVID-19	2019 rank	2021 rank	2019 jobs	2021 jobs	Change in jobs	Percent change
Fast Food & Counter Workers	1	1	9,000	6,380	-2,620	-29%
Retail Salespersons	2	2	8,260	6,010	-2,250	-27%
Cashiers	3	3	6,320	5,990	-330	-5%
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	4	4	5,530	4,790	-740	-13%
Office Clerks, General	5	6	5,360	3,850	-1,510	-28%
Registered Nurses	6	5	4,290	4,470	180	4%
Waiters & Waitresses	7	13	3,980	2,860	-1,120	-28%
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	8	7	3,790	3,790	0	0%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Handlers	9	8	3,660	3,780	120	3%
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	10	11	3,480	3,110	-370	-11%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey, May 2000, May 2019, and May 2021. Estimates, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>, accessed April 12, 2020. Largest detail occupations in Youngstown MSA by employment. Median annual earnings shown as a share of the poverty threshold for a family of three in 2021 (\$21,960). The gross monthly income threshold for food assistance is 130% of poverty (\$28,548) or less.