



# PRESS RELEASE

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## New data show wage and employment improvements are not widely shared

Three of Ohio's 10 most common occupations pay so little that the median worker would qualify for food aid for a family of three. In some areas, up to half of the 10 most common occupations paid so little. New analysis by Policy Matters Ohio of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data also reveals that while Ohio's statewide employment has recovered to numbers seen prior to the pandemic, this recovery was concentrated in just three Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and has not yet extended to all communities.

Occupation-specific data come from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS MB3) survey for 2022, and total job numbers come from the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey through May 2023. The report includes a statewide fact sheet, as well as fact sheets for the 11 Ohio MSAs.

"All working people should be able to provide for their families, no matter their race or gender, the kind of job they do, or where they live and work," said Policy Matters senior researcher Michael Shields, report coauthor with Policy Matters intern, Bryce Springfield.

Pay for the median worker — the one in the middle of the pay scale — is rising in half of the 10 most common occupations. At the same time, Ohioans have been moving into better-paying jobs, displacing some of the low-paying occupations that until recently dominated the state's labor market. Both changes enable Ohio workers to secure somewhat better pay for their work after decades of stagnant compensation despite rising productivity. Still, the progress is not yet enough to provide workers in these jobs with economic security above 200% of the poverty level.

Fast food workers, cashiers and retail salespeople are all paid too little at the median to feed a family of three. These occupations collectively represent 372,340 workers. All three of them pay less than the 1968 peak value of the minimum wage, worth about \$13.50 when the data were gathered and \$14 today.

The COVID-19 pandemic had major implications for Ohio's working people. By April 2020, Ohio had lost 881,600 jobs since February. Layoffs were more common in low-paying occupations where women and Ohioans of color were more likely to work, meaning that the hardest-hit Ohioans were those with the fewest resources to withstand the setback. In the recovery, working people are leveraging improved bargaining power to win wage gains of 7.1% for the median Ohio worker.

"A full recovery from the pandemic must include people of all backgrounds," said Shields. "That starts with paying all Ohioans a wage that meets the cost of living."

For a list of policy recommendations to support Ohio's working people, check out our recent report "[A New Way Forward](#)." For a deep dive into how working Ohioans are doing in our state's labor market, stay tuned for our annual State of Working Ohio report, out Labor Day.

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*