



PRESS RELEASE
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New census data confirm policy action needed: Ohio poverty rates and median income still not recovered

While many rightly celebrate what is in some ways a hot economy, new Census data shows that 1.58 million Ohioans (14 percent) lived in poverty last year. The rate improved slightly from 2016 (14.6 percent).

In 2017, a family of four earning less than \$24,300 a year fell below the federal government's poverty line. In Ohio, more than 500,000 children (19.7 percent, or one in five) lived in households below the poverty line last year. More than 28 percent of African-Americans in Ohio were in poverty, a rate almost three times that of white Ohioans (10.7 percent). There were more than 118,000 additional people in poverty in 2017 than the year before the recession.

"Ohioans are living in a divided economy: There is one economy for the very well-off and a completely different economy for the vast majority of Ohioans who are living paycheck to paycheck," said Hannah Halbert, project director for Policy Matters Ohio. "Top-line economic indicators like job growth and the unemployment rate mask deep inequality that intensifies along racial lines. This divide is the consequence of our policy choices. We can have an economy that works for everyone, but policymakers must enact tax, budget, and workplace policies that unite us."

The income of a typical Ohio household -- \$54,021 -- remained statistically unchanged from 2016, according to the Census data. It was well below the national median of \$60,336. When adjusted for inflation, the typical Ohio household's income remains more than \$1,000 less than it was in 2007.

"Paying workers enough to make ends meet, having quality child care for their young kids so they can go to work, being able to see a doctor and stay healthy—all of these things build economic security and thriving communities," Halbert said.

Last year, six of Ohio's 10 most common occupations paid so little a family of three would need food assistance. In 2000, only four of the most common occupations paid this little and today's data reflect that change.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2025 would give 1.8 million Ohioans a raise. More than 700,000 kids would have a parent getting a raise. Restoring overtime protections would boost incomes of 351,000 Ohioans.

"Too many people are in poverty and wages are not recovering," Halbert said. "Ohioans do not have to accept this."

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide policy research institute.

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