



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Labor Day report: equity, wage gains elusive despite job growth**

Wage increases and equity elude Ohio's working families nine years into economic recovery, even as low unemployment and strong job growth should be pushing wages up. This year's [State of Working Ohio](#) report finds a 4 cent increase in Ohio's median hourly wage for 2017, a decline from the 3 percent growth rate in 2015 and 2016.

"We're more productive, more educated, unemployment is low, job growth is up. So where are the raises?," asked Amy Hanauer, Executive Director of Policy Matters and a report author.

- Between 1973 and 2015, Ohio's wealthiest seized a whopping 86 percent of pre-tax, pre-transfer income growth.
- Ohio's 2017 median wage (\$17.79) was up just four cents an hour adjusted for inflation from the previous year and was nearly 50 cents less than the U.S. median wage (\$18.28).
- Of the 10 most common Ohio jobs, three pay less than the official 3-person poverty line, nine pay less than twice this, and just two pay more than \$15 an hour at the median.
- Women earn less (\$16.15) than men (\$19.29) in Ohio, an improvement but still a \$6,500 difference with full-time year-round work. Black workers earn much less (\$13.96) than white workers (\$18.57) at the median and this has grown much worse. This \$4.60-plus hourly gap translates into more than \$9,500 less each year with full-time year-round work.
- Ohio labor force participation of 63 percent in 2017 was up slightly from a modern low of 62.3 percent in 2015. The current level is lower than the whole period from 1979-2012. Men's labor force participation is down more than 10 percentage points from 1979.
- Ohio finally surpassed the jobs at the official start of the last two recessions, but still had fewer in July 2018 than in January 2000, in contrast to the U.S., which added 13.83 percent to its job base since then. By July 2018 there were 5.616 million jobs in Ohio.
- Official unemployment was very low in Ohio (5.0 percent) and the U.S. (4.4 percent) in 2017. Rates in the black community (9.4 percent) in Ohio in 2017 were more than double those facing white workers (4.2 percent) but were lower than at any time since 2001.
- Wages are higher for those with a BA or more and falling for less educated workers, but Ohio ranks low in BA attainment and post-graduate degrees. Still, adults have become much more educated in Ohio, despite costs.
- Black workers and women face unequal wages compared to white workers and men, even with the same education levels, a difference of more than \$4 an hour or \$9,000 a year.
- Union workers out-earned non-union median workers in 2017, by more than \$4.75 an hour and more than \$9,900 over a year—over 28 percent.
- In 2010, 12.3 percent of Ohioans were uninsured but by 2016 just 5.6 percent of Ohioans lacked insurance, after the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion.

"We can strengthen our economy and our communities," Hanauer said. "How? Reverse tax cuts to the wealthiest, invest in conservation and renewables, keep the ACA and Medicaid, and defend the rights and programs that help working people." The report also recommends supporting Issue 1 to reduce incarceration and redirect resources to communities.

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

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