



PRESS STATEMENT

Sept. 17, 2020

Contact: Michael Shields

mshields@policymattersohio.org

330.906.2062

Newly released Census data show Ohioans fared better by end of expansion COVID-19 and recession have rolled back progress

Today, the Census Bureau released data from the American Community Survey which provides information on the well-being of people living in states and communities. Today's data release captures 2019, the final chapter of the longest economic expansion in history, brought to an abrupt end by COVID-19 this spring. Despite measurable progress, the new data show that last year, many Ohioans struggled in poverty, and enormous disparities based on race persisted. Now the pandemic and recession have set back years of progress. Policy Matters Ohio Researcher Michael Shields made the following comments on the data:

"Everyone deserves to be able to cover the basics, to build a life for themselves and their loved ones, regardless of race, gender or geography. New data released by the Census Bureau today show this can't be accomplished by economic growth alone.

"Working Ohioans were [more productive than ever](#) last year, generating record wealth for their employers. But they didn't fully share in the prosperity they created, and now COVID-19 has set back years of progress. Children and Ohioans of color in particular continued to face high levels of poverty. Too many of our leaders are more accountable to corporations than they are to people, and they passed policies that held down wages, attacked working people's right to organize and bestowed costly tax cuts and tax breaks on the wealthy and powerful few at the expense of our infrastructure and schools.

"The data show meaningful gains, and some factors improved for the first time to pre-Great Recession levels. That long recovery underscores the urgent need for our elected leaders to take action now. Instead, we're seeing gridlock in Congress. Our state leaders are dealing with low revenues by making harmful budget cuts, instead of tapping the public resources in the rainy day fund or those that the state gives away to special interests via tax breaks. In May, Gov. DeWine announced \$776 million in budget cuts due to low state revenue collections. Now, state lawmakers have a new, lower funding baseline for many important programs. We already know about \$440 million in [reduced](#) funding for budget year 2021.

"Ohio leaders should demand that Congress pass a new round of fiscal support to state and local governments, and direct public resources already in Ohio toward supporting Ohioans through the downturn and avoiding public service and jobs cuts that would deepen and prolong the recession. That means finding every available dollar to make sure kids have good, safe schools to attend, people who need health care can see a doctor, and local governments have the resources they need to pick up the trash and make sure re-opened businesses are operating safely.

"Policymakers must help Ohioans recover and rebuild Ohio as a place where all people thrive. They should raise the minimum wage; boost the overtime earnings threshold so more salaried workers will be covered; stop employers from stealing from their workers; and support workers' efforts to form a union."

Findings include:

- The median household income for Ohioans rose 2.7% to \$58,642 in 2019, from \$57,128 in 2018. That compares to a 4.2% increase for the country. Ohio's median income in 2019 trailed the nation's \$65,712 by 10.8%. Increases likely reflected an increase in the number of Americans and Ohioans working.
- Median Ohio household income approached levels not seen since 2001, when the typical household took in \$59,180. Last year's figure, which came at the peak of an historic expansion, fell within the margin of error of that number. Early evidence shows that COVID-19 and the recession have already rolled back years of progress (see below).
- The median Black household in Ohio was paid \$34,955, just over half of the typical white household, a difference of more than \$27,595. The gap between Black and white household income grew by \$1,658, about 6.3%, since 2007. Latinx Ohioans trailed white non-Latinx Ohioans by \$18,028.
- The poverty rate stood at 13.1% for all Ohioans, making 2019 the lowest rate since 2007 (also 13.1%), just before the Great Recession.
- The child poverty rate was 18.0% in 2019, the lowest since the Great Recession. Still, 435,700 Ohio children were in poverty.
- More than one in four Black Ohioans (27.3%), and nearly one in four Latinx Ohioans (23.0%) lived in poverty last year, as did 10.0% of white Ohioans.
- Some 758,000 Ohioans (6.6%) lacked health insurance coverage. The number was not statistically different from 2018.

All figures are given in 2019 dollars adjusted for inflation by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

More recent figures from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse survey cover adults asked about their households this summer. Most figures are from August 19 to August 31.

- A majority of Ohioans, 53.7%, had at least some difficulty covering usual household expenditures in August.
- Black Ohioans (77.2%) were 28 percentage points more likely to have difficulty in covering those expenditures than white residents (49.3%) in August.
- An estimated 15.9% of Ohio adults in households with children reported not having enough to eat sometimes or often in the prior week, compared with 14.1% prior to COVID-19. This figure is from July 2 through July 21.

policymattersohio.org

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