



JobWatch
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January Job Watch: **Updated Ohio job numbers show slowing growth**

Updated data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) confirm that last year was a tough one for working Ohio. The state added 32,200 jobs last year, just a measly 0.6 percent gain. In 2014, our best post-recession year, Ohio gained nearly three times as many jobs – more than 95,000 – thanks to a revived auto industry. The gap between Ohio’s job growth and the national average grew in 2017. National job growth stood at 1.5 percent.

The monthly data show a decent increase in January, when Ohio added more than 12,000 jobs. The gains were spread through nearly all sectors of work: private, production and service work, and public sector jobs.

“This is one month worth of good news for our stalled state,” said Hannah Halbert, researcher with Policy Matters Ohio. “Unfortunately, the longer-term trend is weak – and data for a single month is less reliable than performance over a longer period. Ohio needs many months like January to pull people back into the labor market and drive up wages.”

Ohio policymakers began drastically cutting taxes in 2005 on the promise they would bring broad prosperity back to the state. They have not succeeded. Since 2005, Ohio jobs grew by just 2.4 percent compared to more than 10 percent nationally. Meanwhile, tax cuts have drained state revenue that should have been used to invest in policies that bring people into the workforce, keep people healthy and make communities more livable.

Slowing job growth is not unexpected as the economy edges closer to full employment, but data from the separate household survey, which determines the unemployment rate, suggest that is not the only cause of Ohio’s sluggishness. Ohio’s unemployment rate in January improved slightly to 4.7 percent, from 4.9 percent in December. This is positive news, but it hides persistent slack in the Ohio labor market. The number of people employed or looking for work fell in January by 14,000. The state’s labor force is still 3.6 percent – or 218,000 persons – smaller than when the recession began more than a decade ago.

“Ohio has too many people on the sidelines. Too many jobs pay too little. Programs that help Ohioans get and stay healthy enough to work are threatened by a proposal for short-sighted work requirements,” said Halbert. “Last month, we proposed [10 policies](#) that would help get Ohio’s economy back on track for working people. Policy sets the rules for our economy. It is time to change the rules.”

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

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