



JobWatch
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Job growth continues, more needed to rebuild Ohio's middle class

Seasonally adjusted data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services show Ohio's job growth picked up slightly in October, with the addition of 10,900 jobs, over a weak September. The state's unemployment rate, which is generated from a separate survey, held steady at 4.6 percent. October's increase in jobs was enough to push the state's 12-month job growth rate to 2.1 percent, solidly above the national average of 1.7 percent. If this trend continues through the end of the year and survives the annual revision of job figures set for early 2019, this year will be the first since 2010 that [Ohio outperforms the nation](#). It will also make 2018 the first year since 1997 that state's job growth rate hits at least 2 percent. Ohio has added 115,400 jobs in the last 12 months.

"Ohio has experienced real improvement in terms of job growth," said Hannah Halbert, project director with Policy Matters Ohio. "But other data suggests that it's not enough to bring Ohioans back into the labor market in large numbers, or eliminate disparities between white and black workers. These gaps point to areas ripe for policy intervention."

Data from a separate survey of households paint a different picture. Ohio's unemployment rate remains stalled at 4.6 percent, nearly a full percentage point higher than the nation's 3.7 percent. This survey showed that fewer Ohioans were working or actively seeking work in October (-4,000), despite the more positive jobs outlook. The share of Ohioans in the labor force remains below prerecession levels. As of October, 62.5 percent of the working age population was working or looking for work compared to 68 percent in 2007. There were 146,000 fewer people in the labor force last month than when the 2007 recession ended.

"Nationally, people are returning to the labor force, but in Ohio, the share of people working or looking for work continues to fall, despite more robust job growth and a growing working age population," Halbert said.

Ohio's sluggish recovery has been hardest on working people of color. Racial discrimination in hiring as well as structural barriers to work like a lack of transportation or affordable child care, put Ohio's [black workers at a disadvantage](#). Despite strong relative gains throughout the year, black worker unemployment in Ohio was 1.7 times that of white workers in the third quarter of 2018 (6.9 percent for African-American, compared to 4.6 percent for white workers). As white workers reach full employment, the labor market starts to boost black workers, who are often [hit harder and experience a slower](#) recovery after economic downturns.

"Wage growth, poverty, and the employment gap between white and black workers are challenges that persist despite job growth," Halbert said. "People are not being drawn back into an economy that offers little in terms of stability or future prosperity. Policies that make post-secondary education and job training more affordable, improve access to affordable child care and transportation, and support transitions out of addiction and incarceration are needed to help more Ohioans secure good jobs. Job growth is not sufficient to address deep inequalities and rebuild the Ohio middle class."