

STATE OF THE CITIES

By Mark Cassell and Amy Hanauer

This report is a supplement to The State of Working Ohio, 1999, an in-depth analysis of wage change between 1979 and 1997 in the state of Ohio as a whole. Both analyses use the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey to examine wages of various groups in Ohio. The full report found that wage inequality has grown, wages have declined for 80 percent of workers, wages of black men and high school dropouts have declined precipitously and disturbing race and gender gaps endure in wages in Ohio. For a copy of the full report or for additional methodology information, please contact Policy Matters Ohio.

In addition to wages being unequally distributed across gender, racial and educational lines, wages sometimes differ substantially by location in Ohio. This section analyzes wage changes and current wages in Ohio's largest metropolitan areas to gain an understanding of how they compare to each other, and how they compare to other parts of the state.¹

As Tables 1 and 2 indicate, the trends that we've discussed statewide have also occurred in Ohio's major cities, with slight variations. The lowest-income areas of Ohio are concentrated in the non-urban southeast corner of the state, closest to West Virginia. For this reason, many of the trends were actually worse in the rest of the state than in the major metropolitan areas. Real median wages have declined in all of the metropolitan areas examined and are now below \$12.00 in all metro areas and below \$11.00 in the rest of the state. Wages at the tenth percentile have declined more drastically than median wages and now hover between \$5.15 and \$5.75 throughout the state.

Table 1
Median Wage by Metropolitan Area, 1979-97
(1997 dollars)

Metro Area	1979	1989	1997	Total Change
Akron	\$ 12.73	\$ 11.32	\$ 11.79	-7.4%
Cincinnati	\$ 12.25	\$ 11.83	\$ 11.60	-5.3%
Cleveland	\$ 13.01	\$ 11.65	\$ 11.86	-8.8%
Columbus	\$ 12.19	\$ 11.17	\$ 11.00	-9.8%
Entire State	\$ 12.45	\$ 11.24	\$ 10.94	-12.1%

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data

¹ Whenever possible we try to give information for the seven major metropolitan areas in Ohio: Akron/Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown. However, in some cases data were unavailable or sample sizes were too small for Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. In these cases, we omit these cities. Further, in some cases we compare certain cities to the state as a whole (including those cities) and in others we compare to the rest of the state (excluding those cities). We note which approach we've taken on each table.

Table 2
10th Percentile Wage by Metropolitan Area, 1979-97
(1997 dollars)

Metro Area	1979	1989	1997	Total Change
Akron	\$6.51	\$5.17	\$5.50	-15.5%
Cincinnati	\$6.50	\$5.80	\$5.75	-11.5%
Cleveland	\$6.70	\$5.64	\$5.69	-15.1%
Columbus	\$6.50	\$5.81	\$5.70	-8.0%
Entire state	\$6.47	\$5.32	\$5.36	-17.2%

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data.

White workers at the median earn substantially more than black workers at the median throughout the state, with the largest disparity being in Akron and the smallest in Cincinnati. Wages in 1997 were lowest for whites in Youngstown and for blacks in Akron.

Table 3
Median Wages By Race And Metro Area, 1997

Area	White Workers	Black Workers	Percent Difference
Akron	\$ 12.02	\$ 7.40	62%
Cincinnati	\$ 12.00	\$ 11.00	9%
Cleveland	\$ 12.00	\$ 9.50	26%
Columbus	\$ 11.06	\$ 9.00	23%
Springfield/Dayton	\$ 11.60	\$ 8.63	34%
Youngstown	\$ 10.24	\$ 8.00	28%
Rest of State	\$ 10.51	\$ 7.50	40%

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data.

Wages also differ substantially by gender in Ohio's major metropolitan areas, as seen in Table 4. Men earn significantly more than women in all areas studied. Men's wages have gone down since 1979 in all of the cities with the largest drop, of 18 percent, in Cleveland. Women's wages have also dropped slightly in Cleveland and Columbus, in contrast to the national trend discussed in the second chapter of *The State of Working Ohio 1999*. Women's wages have increased, however, in Akron and climbed by a strong 16 percent in Cincinnati. The lowest wages for both men and women are found in Youngstown, where the median woman has a sub-poverty wage of \$7.74.

Table 4			
Median wage by metro area and sex, 1979-1997 (1997 dollars)			
	1979	1997	Change
Akron			
Men	\$15.18	\$13.41	-12%
Women	\$ 9.54	\$10.00	5%
Cleveland			
Men	\$16.21	\$13.22	-18%
Women	\$ 9.76	\$ 9.66	-.1%
Cincinnati			
Men	\$14.60	\$12.69	-13%
Women	\$ 8.68	\$10.08	16%
Columbus			
Men	\$15.18	\$12.82	-16%
Women	\$ 9.72	\$ 9.69	-.1%
Youngstown			
Men	n.a.	\$12.00	n.a.
Women	n.a.	\$ 7.74	n.a.

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data.

While a worker in the suburbs of Cleveland may earn about what a similar worker earns in Cincinnati's suburbs, a worker in either urban center is likely to earn less. As Table 5 shows, there is usually about a 15-25 percent difference in median wages between Ohio's urban centers and their larger metropolitan areas. In certain small cities, such as Canton, this difference is greater. In some cities it is smaller than expected in part because urban levels of unemployment and poverty have crept into towns formerly considered suburbs. For example, the troubled community of East Cleveland is included in the suburban statistics on Cleveland.

Table 5			
Median Wages, Urban vs. Suburban, 1997			
Metropolitan Area	Suburbs	Urban center	Difference
Akron	\$12.50	\$10.00	25%
Canton	\$11.25	\$8.25	36%
Cincinnati	\$11.70	\$11.27	4%
Cleveland	\$12.00	\$10.00	20%
Columbus	\$12.25	\$10.11	21%
Springfield/Dayton	\$11.77	\$10.50	12%
Toledo	\$11.75	\$10.09	16%
Youngstown	\$10.00	\$10.00	0%

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data.

While wages between urban and suburban regions have always differed slightly, it is cities that have been devastated by the wage plunges of the last two decades. Wage differentials that were typically less than ten percent in 1979 have doubled to the 20 percent differentials above. See Table 6 for time-series data on urban-suburban splits for Cleveland, Akron and Columbus.

Table 6			
Median Wage Difference Between Central Cities And Suburbs, 1979-1997			
	1979	1997	Change
Akron			
Urban	\$12.65	\$10.00	-21%
Suburban	\$13.01	\$12.50	-4%
Cleveland			
Urban	\$11.71	\$10.00	-15%
Suburban	\$13.56	\$12.00	-12%
Columbus			
Urban	\$11.97	\$10.11	-16%
Suburban	\$12.65	\$12.25	-3%
Youngstown			
Urban	n.a.	\$10.00	n.a.
Suburban	n.a.	\$10.00	n.a.

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data

Although we do not break this data down by census tract, such a breakdown would certainly yield even greater differences. Even urban centers still include prosperous and middle class neighborhoods. But most Ohio cities also have urban cores that suffer disproportionately from unemployment, poor wages, environmental problems, and poor schools. Poverty in America is distributed block by block and our statistical breakdown fails to fully capture the pockets of urban devastation.

Finally, Ohio's large cities have all seen their percentage of workers earning poverty-level wages increase over the last two decades, as depicted in Table 7. The biggest growth in poverty wages has been in Columbus, a nearly 9 percent jump to 28.6 percent. However, Youngstown has the dubious honor of the highest percentage of poverty-wage workers, a shocking 33.8 percent, more than one-third of the workforce. Statistics on Youngstown for 1979 are, unfortunately, unavailable.

Table 7
**Percentage Of Workers Earning
 \$7.90 Or Less Per Hour, 1979-1997
 (1997 dollars)**

	1979	1997	Percentage- point change
Akron	22.2%	27.1%	4.9
Cleveland	18.7%	25.4%	6.7
Cincinnati	22.9%	24.8%	1.9
Columbus	19.9%	28.6%	8.7
Youngstown	n.a.	33.8%	n.a.

Source: Authors' analysis, based on CPS data.

The trends in Ohio's cities mirror trends in the state as a whole and indeed in the nation. For additional information about Ohio and the nation, see *The State of Working Ohio, 1999*, published by the Northeast Ohio Research Consortium and available from Policy Matters Ohio, and *The State of Working America*, published by and available from the Economic Policy Institute.

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