

# OHIO WORKFORCE COALITION

## When Working Isn't Enough Wages and Public Benefits in Ohio



The Ohio Workforce Coalition asked The Center for Community Solutions to investigate wages, public benefit eligibility, and benefit uptake by occupation. This report is a summary of that work. The findings will be released in a series of briefs that highlight low-wage work across Ohio and in several sub-state regions. This research was made possible with support from the National Skills Coalition, Deaconess Foundation, and Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit [www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org](http://www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org).

# WORKING OHIOANS

Ohioans are working to support themselves, their families, and their communities. Too many of them are working but do not earn enough to meet their basic needs for food or medical care. From Home Health Aides to Childcare Workers and Fast Food Counter Workers to Laborers, Freight, and Material Movers, several in-demand, critical occupations leave even full time workers still eligible for benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid. These benefits, determined by income eligibility, provide workers and their families with access to essentials—like food and medical care—that are critical for being able to work. This report contains profiles for 10 occupations in Ohio and details wage and public benefit enrollment across the state. As we consider record low unemployment and the needs of Ohio employers, we ought to also consider wages, benefits, and working conditions for those these low-wage, front-line jobs.



## Racial Disparities

Low wages in high demand jobs disproportionately impact Black workers in Ohio. Across the state, Black workers are overrepresented in nine of the ten occupations reviewed for this report. The greatest over-representation is in Home Health Aid Occupation where 36% of workers are Black (12% of the Ohio Labor Force is Black). Over-representation in low-paying occupation contributes to disparities across a range of indicators including earnings. The only occupation in which Black workers are under-represented is Assemblers and Fabricators and then, only by 2%.

## Methodology

Multiple data sources were used to develop the occupational profiles. The **Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation** provides Ohio's Top Jobs List which details information about the wages, current, employment, growth potential and current openings for occupations across the state. For purposes of this analysis, we selected occupations that had both low wages and either high current openings, growth potential or high current employment. We then examined the wages for these occupations with data provided by the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**. Wage data were paired with the eligibility guidelines for receiving SNAP to allow for a deeper understanding of where along the pay scale a person can be working full time and still be eligible for benefits. **American Community Survey** data was utilized to analyze the over-representation of either Black or white workers specific occupations.



Occupations with wages low enough that workers qualify for public benefits results in the state subsidizing employer wages and benefit offerings. Higher wages and better conditions in these high demand, essential occupations would improve economic conditions for individuals and families; would help employers attract and retain talent; and would save state funds.

Of 531 occupations with Ohio data available

## KEY FINDINGS FROM 10 OCCUPATIONS

### Highest Projected Growth

Home Health Aide has the highest projected growth of all occupations in Ohio and also...

- the highest rate of over-representation of Black workers. Black workers compose 12% of the Ohio Labor Force and 36% of Home Health Aide workers.
- the highest rate of workers receiving Medicaid at 42%. Thirty-two (32%) of Ohio's Home Health Aides receive SNAP.
- income that only increases 31% between the lowest to the highest wage percentiles.

### Most Current Openings

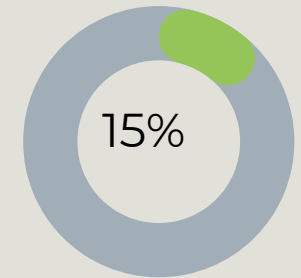
Manufacturing Laborers, Freight and Material Movers has the highest number of current openings and also...

- 17% of all Laborers, Freight and Material Movers were enrolled in SNAP
- 21% of Laborers, Freight, and Material Movers were enrolled in Medicaid
- 30,574 Ohioans work as Assemblers and Fabricators and 10% are enrolled in SNAP and 16% were enrolled in Medicaid.

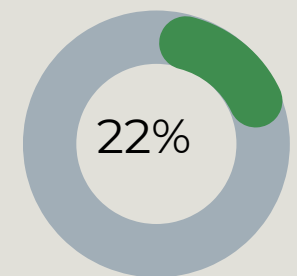
### Highest Current Employment

Fast Food and Counter Workers has the highest current employment at 119,970 and also...

- at \$22,260, the lowest median income of all occupations
- the second highest percentage workers receiving Medicaid at 35%
- the third highest percentage of workers receiving SNAP at 23%



15% of all workers are enrolled in SNAP



22% of all workers are enrolled in Medicaid

# Policy Priority: Policy makers must ensure quality jobs and workplaces so those who are working can make ends meet.

With historically low rates of unemployment, competition for workers is intense. As we point to low rates of unemployment, we must also consider key details if we are to make good policy decisions:

1. Across Ohio 12% of working-age individuals living under 125% of the federal poverty level are working full-time, year-round. That's \$16,100/year for single person and \$33,125 for a family of four. Additionally, 37% of those under 125% of poverty are working part-time or less than full-year.
2. Historically, 70% of those under 200% of federal poverty level are working (\$25,760 for single Ohioan and \$53,000 for family of four).
3. Decreases in unemployment do not impact everyone proportionately. Ohio's unemployment rate in the most recent quarter reviewed (Q4 2022) was 4.2%: white unemployment was 3.6% and Black unemployment was 7.7%. The only time the Black unemployment rate was significantly less than double the white unemployment rate was during the Great Recession.
4. At least 4 million jobs or 78 percent of jobs in Ohio pay less than \$33.89/hour [3] which is the Ohio living wage for 1 adult with 1 child according to the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

What this means is that there are a lot of Ohioans showing up for work each day and still not getting by. Some fill the gaps with opportunities in the gig economy, some can access public benefits like SNAP and Medicaid, and others rely on networks of community and family to make ends meet. Conditions are worse for older and younger Ohioans and non-white Ohioans.

While we consider the implications of work requirements, we must also make sure that those who are and will be working can make ends meet.

1. American Community Survey 2021, 1-Year estimates. Working age=16-64. Only available for up to 125% Federal :Poverty Level. FPL from <https://www.advocatesforohio.org/news/2021>.
2. Economic Policy Institute analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/>.
3. The rate for Blacks is over double that of whites and this gap has existed since the U.S. Bureau of Employment Statistics started tracking Black unemployment rates in 1972.
4. Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Survey. Based on 5.2 million jobs in 2021 <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/39>

# Policy Priority: Ohio must do better to provide publicly available data with demographic information across programs and indicators.

Although copious amounts of data is collected through benefit applications of Ohio residents, very little of that data is available to the public for analysis and very little tracks demographic data across indicators. Even less is available from employers that receive public funds for education and training of their workers. The variation among administering agencies, applications and required fields results in a lack of data cohesion related to participation in benefit programs.

1. ODJFS provides monthly reports on Ohio Works First, SNAP and Publicly Funded Childcare. The information provided includes the number of households and active members for caseloads by county and the number of adults and children enrolled in a program by county. What it does not provide is the race, ethnicity, gender, household size, employment status or income.
2. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides a data dashboard with state and county level data regarding housing vouchers. The data report includes things like units leased, housing vouchers used, and financial information. It does not however include any detail about the individuals using the vouchers.
3. The Women Infant and Children (WIC) program provides caseload data by fiscal year and includes the number of women, infants and children enrolled in the program and some financial data related to the total spending of the program. No aggregate data is available of the participants race, ethnicity, income or employment status.
4. There is no publicly available data related to who is receiving utility assistance in Ohio.

Medicaid is an exception to the norm in terms of aggregate data reporting in Ohio. The Ohio Department of Medicaid provides an Annual Enrollment Dashboard that includes demographics available for the state and each county. Enrollment information can be filtered by race, ethnicity, gender, age group, and program type. It does not include employment status or income.

# BENEFIT ENROLLMENT

Percentages of workers each occupation enrolled in SNAP or Medicaid

Source: Public Use  
Microdata Sample, 2021




# OCCUPATION FACT SHEETS

A guide on how to read the fact sheets


U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

This section details how much the workers in this occupation make at both the highest and lowest levels of wages.



## Early Childhood Childcare Worker


**Wage for Childcare Workers in Ohio, by Percentile**  
The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 10th percentile wage, 90% of Childcare Workers earn less than \$16.30




WAGES	10 <sup>TH</sup>	25 <sup>TH</sup>	70 <sup>TH</sup>	90 <sup>TH</sup>
Hourly	\$9.35	\$10.49	\$13.95	\$16.30
Annual	\$19,450	\$21,810	\$29,020	\$33,900

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$23,230 is the median annual salary and \$12.52 is the mean hourly wage for childcare workers in Ohio**

 A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits

 A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 75th percentile wage for this position

**RANKINGS**

**#20 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
5,461 jobs

**#31 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
35,625 jobs

**#66 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
85 jobs

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**

Group	Percentage
White workers	78%
Black workers	17%
82% (average all occupations)	82%

**“** A higher share of Black childcare workers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Even at the 75th income percentile, workers in this job who support two or more people are likely to qualify for benefits.

American Community Survey, 2021

This section shows the percent of Black and white workers in the entire Ohio labor force and compares it to the ratio of Black and white workers for the specific occupation.

Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

This section includes the rankings of the occupation by the Governor's Office and includes the current openings, current number of Ohioans employed and the projected growth of the occupation.



# Early Childhood Childcare Worker

**Wage for Childcare Workers in Ohio, by Percentile**  
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Annual	\$19,450	\$21,810	\$29,020	\$33,900

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**\$23,230 is the median annual salary and \$12.52 is the mean hourly wage for childcare workers in Ohio**



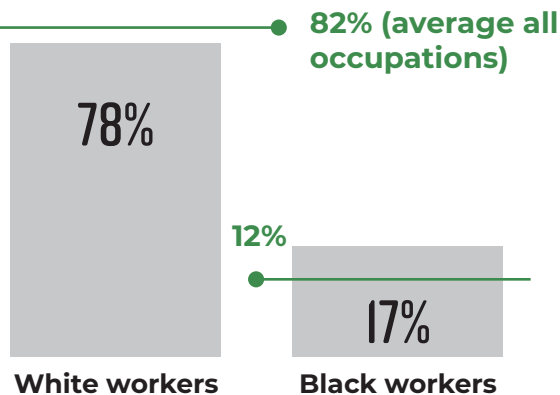
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 75th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black childcare workers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Even at the 75th income percentile, workers in this job who support two or more people are likely to qualify for benefits.

## RANKINGS

**#20 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
5,461 jobs

**#31 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
35,625 jobs

**#66 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
85 jobs





# Early Childhood Preschool Teachers

**Wage for Preschool Teachers in Ohio, by Percentile**  
The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Preschool Teachers earn less than \$22.03



WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$10.93	\$11.53	\$17.19	\$22.03
Annual	\$22,740	\$23,980	\$35,760	\$45,830

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**\$29,890 is the median annual salary and \$15.40 is the mean hourly wage for preschool teachers in Ohio**



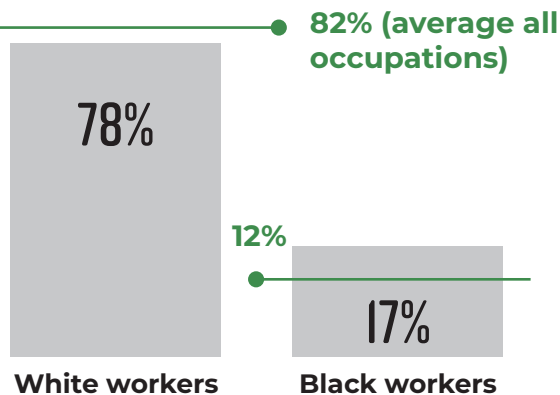
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 50th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black preschool teachers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. This job is in the top 20 percent for projected growth in Ohio. Preschool teachers earning close to or slightly more than the median income may experience the benefit cliff.

## RANKINGS

**#66 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
1,747 jobs

**#70 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
15,839 jobs

**#51 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
105 jobs



# Food Service

## Fast Food and Counter Workers

### Wage for Fast Food and Counter Workers in Ohio, by Percentile

The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Fast Food and Counter Workers earn less than \$13.77



WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$9.27	\$10.28	\$11.18	\$13.77
Annual	\$19,280	\$21,370	\$23,260	\$28,650

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$22,260 is the median annual salary and \$11.24 is the mean hourly wage for fast food and counter workers in Ohio**



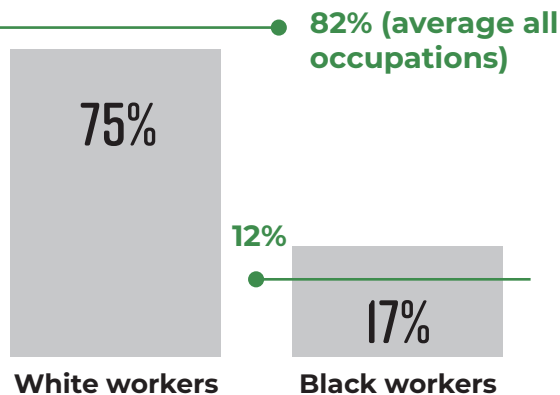
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 90th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black fast food and counter workers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Even at the highest income percentile, workers in this job who support two or more people are likely to qualify for benefits.

## RANKINGS

### JOB OPENINGS

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
(unknown)

### CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
(unknown)

### PROJECTED GROWTH

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
(unknown)



# Food Service

## First-line Supervisors, Food Prep and Serving Workers

### Wage for Food Service Supervisors in Ohio, by Percentile

The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Food Service Supervisors earn less than \$24.25

WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$11.52	\$13.97	\$19.20	\$24.25
Annual	\$23,970	\$29,060	\$39,940	\$50,440

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$32,550 is the median annual salary and \$17.54 is the mean hourly wage for food service supervisors in Ohio**



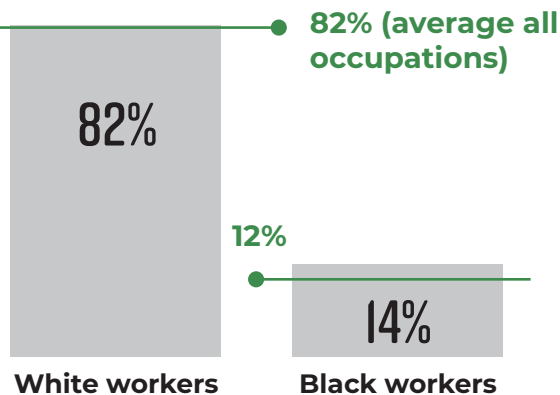
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 10th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are slightly overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black food service supervisors are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. While workers at the lowest pay percentile of this occupation are likely eligible for benefits, those earning at or above the median pay are not likely to be eligible.

## RANKINGS

**#13 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
6,385

**#26 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
39,614

**#23 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
191 jobs



# Food Service

## Food Preparation Workers

### Wage for Food Prep Workers in Ohio, by Percentile

The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Food Prep Workers earn less than \$17.34

WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$9.83	\$10.21	\$14.46	\$17.34
Annual	\$20,450	\$21,230	\$30,080	\$36,060

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$24,320 is the median annual salary and \$12.64 is the mean hourly wage for food prep workers in Ohio**



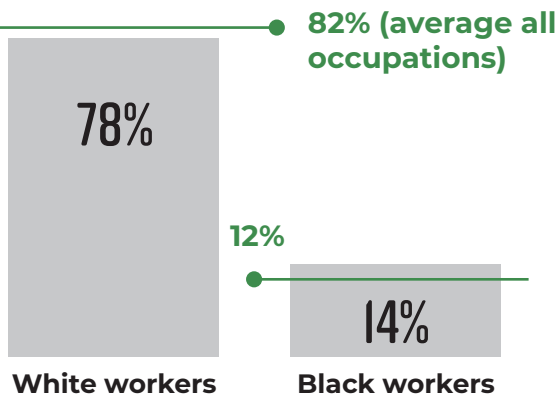
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 50th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are slightly overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black food preparation workers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. A person earning the median income or slightly more may experience a benefit cliff.

## RANKINGS

### JOB OPENINGS

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
(unknown)

### CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
(unknown)

### PROJECTED GROWTH

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
(unknown)



# Healthcare Support Staff Home Health Aide



**Wage for Home Health Aides in Ohio, by Percentile**  
The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Home Health Aides earn less than \$14.42

WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$10.71	\$11.05	\$13.89	\$14.42
Annual	\$22,280	\$22,990	\$28,990	\$29,990

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**\$24,000 is the median annual salary and \$12.70 is the mean hourly wage for home health aides in Ohio**



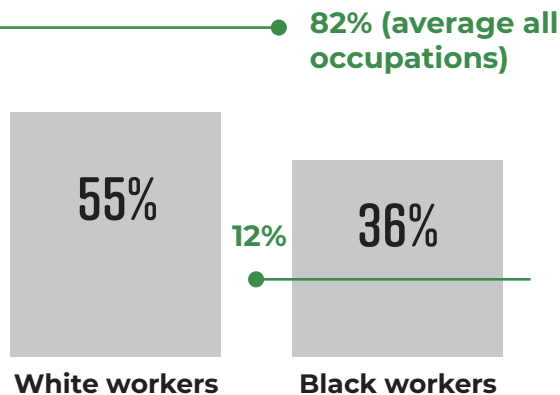
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 75th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black home health aides are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Even at the 75th income percentile, home health aides who support two or more people are likely to qualify for benefits.

## RANKINGS

**#5 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
9,025 jobs

**#13 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
56,510 jobs

**#1 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
1,725 jobs



# Healthcare Support Staff Nursing Assistant



**Wage for Nursing Assistants in Ohio, by Percentile**  
The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile wage, 90% of Nursing Assistants earn less than \$17.98

WAGES	10 <sup>TH</sup>	25 <sup>TH</sup>	70 <sup>TH</sup>	90 <sup>TH</sup>
Hourly	\$11.49	\$13.89	\$17.44	\$17.98
Annual	\$23,910	\$28,900	\$36,280	\$37,400

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

**\$29,840 is the median annual salary and \$14.34 is the mean hourly wage for nursing assistants in Ohio**



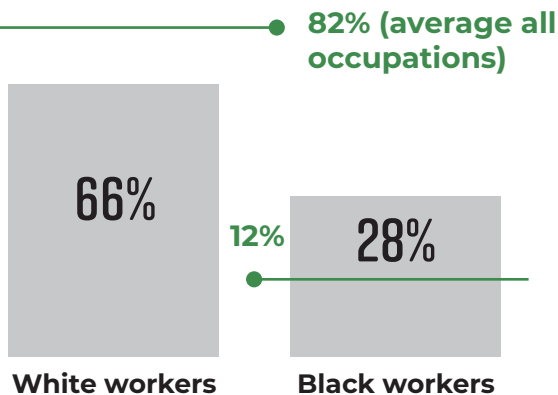
A single person with one child earning less than \$34,800 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 25th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black nursing assistants are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Nursing assistants who surpass the median income may experience the benefit cliff.

## RANKINGS

**#6 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
8,814 jobs

**#8 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
68,537 jobs

**#11 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
358 jobs



# Manufacturing Laborers, Freight, and Material Movers



**Wage for Laborers, Freight and Material Movers in Ohio, by Percentile**  
 The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile, 90% of Laborers, Freight and Material Movers earn less than \$22.90

WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$11.39	\$14.06	\$18.41	\$22.90
Annual	\$23,680	\$29,240	\$38,830	\$47,630

*Bureau of Labor Statistics*



A higher share of Black laborers, freight, and material movers are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Only those earning at the lowest levels of this occupation are likely eligible to receive benefits.

**\$34,050 is the median annual salary and \$16.75 is the mean hourly wage for labor, freight, and material movers in Ohio**



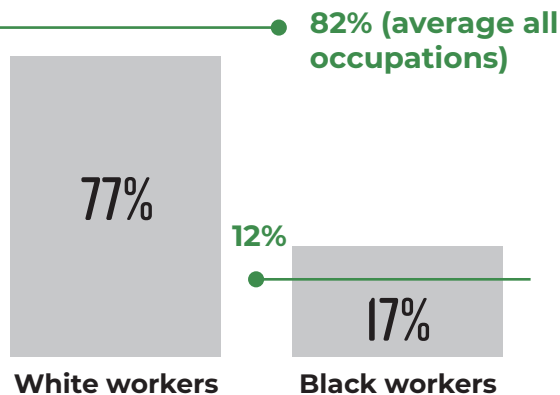
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 10th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



## RANKINGS

### #1 JOB OPENINGS

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
17,626 jobs

### #8 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
119,583 jobs

### #2 PROJECTED GROWTH

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
600 jobs



# Manufacturing

## Cutting, Punching and Press Machine Setters, Operators



### Wage for Cutting, Punching and Press Machine Setters, Operators in Ohio, by Percentile

The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile, 90% of Machine Setters and Operators earn less than \$24.71

WAGES	10 <sup>TH</sup>	25 <sup>TH</sup>	70 <sup>TH</sup>	90 <sup>TH</sup>
Hourly	\$14.15	\$14.67	\$22.57	\$24.21
Annual	\$29,440	\$30,510	\$46,950	\$57,110

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$39,890 is the median annual salary and \$19.18 is the mean hourly wage for Ohio machine setters and operators**



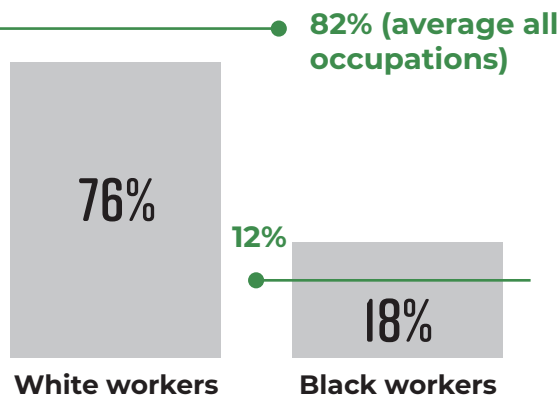
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 10th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are overrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black machine setters and operators are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Only those earning at the lowest levels of this occupation are likely eligible to receive benefits.

## RANKINGS

**#60 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
1,773 jobs

**#60 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
17,639 jobs

**#219 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
-128 jobs





# Manufacturing

## Assemblers and Fabricators

### Wage for Assemblers and Fabricators in Ohio, by Percentile

The percentile wage estimate is the value of a wage below which a percent of workers fall. At the 90th percentile, 90% of Assemblers and Fabricators earn less than \$24.21

WAGES	10TH	25TH	70TH	90TH
Hourly	\$11.50	\$14.23	\$21.71	\$24.21
Annual	\$23,930	\$29,610	\$45,150	\$50,350

Bureau of Labor Statistics

**\$36,980 is the median annual salary and \$17.87 is the mean hourly wage for Ohio machine setters and operators**



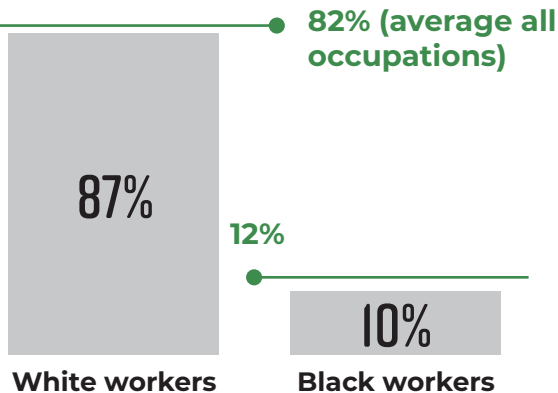
A single person with one child earning less than \$23,808 would be income eligible to receive SNAP benefits



A single person with two children would qualify for SNAP at the 25th percentile wage for this position

82% of labor force in Ohio is white and 12% is Black.

**Black workers are underrepresented in this occupation.**



A higher share of Black assemblers and fabricators are eligible for public benefits than their white peers. Only those earning at the lowest levels of this occupation are likely eligible to receive benefits.

## RANKINGS

**#38 JOB OPENINGS**

**Job Openings in Ohio**  
2,726 jobs

**#31 CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Current Employment in Ohio**  
30,574 jobs

**#228 PROJECTED GROWTH**

**Projected growth in Ohio**  
-504 jobs

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research started with a grant from the National Skills Coalition. This grant allowed the Ohio Workforce Coalition to convene a group of state advocates interested in exploring how state policy can advance racial equity across Ohio. Together with the Coalition and Ohio's Business Leaders United affiliates, this group met to discuss how to tackle racial equity across workforce and public systems in Ohio. Specifically, we explored how we might better understand conditions for low-wage workers in Ohio in a specific set of occupations -- what wages are they earning, what public benefits are they eligible for, and what policy priorities might help Ohio leaders ensure that work, works.

This report is the first in a series that will be released on Ohio Workforce Coalition's website: [www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org](http://www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org). Future work will highlight specific occupations, regional nuances, and the racial disparities across the data.

Thank you to the team at the Center for Community Solutions. They were willing to explore new questions about occupations in Ohio and consider a range of inquiries. Thank you to the following individuals who offered insights, critiques, and direction to this work. This work does not represent the opinions of any specific individual or organization but the work of each of these smart, committed, and tireless advocates has informed the Coalition's thinking and we are grateful.

*Kelsey Bergfeld, Sarah Hudacek, Stephanie Keinath, Amanda Byers, Mike Glavin, Holly Hankinson, Renee Timberlake, Hope Lane-Gavin, Rachel Cahill, Will Petrik, Laura Abu-Absi, Dr. LaShon Sawyer, Meredith Whitehead, Joree Novotny, Shana Marbury, and members of the Ohio Workforce Coalition Leadership Committee.*