Policy Matters Ohio

STATEMENT

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Census data tell (some of) Ohio's story

Federal changes mean state-level data are unavailable

Today, the U.S. Census Bureau released 2025 data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides estimates on income, poverty, housing, health insurance coverage, and the well-being of people nationwide. The CPS is the little sister to the American Community Survey (ACS), considered a more robust dataset because of its larger sample size and inclusion of state- and local-level findings. Federal changes are delaying the release of ACS data, explained below. Policy Matters Ohio's Work and Wages Researcher, Heather Smith, released the following statement:

The Current Population Survey data released today illustrate the need for accessible, transparent, and comprehensive state- and local-level data. National data shows an increase in median household income and earnings, while our State of Working Ohio report, using a different data set, shows a decrease in earnings for Ohioans across the board. Poverty is reportedly down across the country and health insurance coverage remains unchanged. National data will not tell the story of every state, and even across Ohio, wages, poverty, and insurance coverage differ by geographic area, demographics, and more.

This year's data will be a key benchmark for the impacts of HR 1's SNAP and Medicaid cuts. Poverty and health insurance data from 2025 will not yet reflect most changes from the 2025 reconciliation law. While persistent income inequality and the rising costs of food, housing, utilities, and healthcare are likely to continue putting financial pressure on families, those impacts will become more evident in 2026 and 2027 data.

Ohioans have lost access to the enhanced premium tax credits that made ACA marketplace insurance more affordable. Expanded work requirements and other changes to SNAP will affect hundreds of thousands of Ohioans. These policy changes began in very late 2025 or 2026 and are not yet reflected in this data release. Further cuts to Medicaid — like expanded work requirements — and changes to important programs families rely on are expected to impact millions of Americans, including hundreds of thousands of Ohioans. As those repercussions become realized, future Census Bureau data releases will help measure the long-term damage done by HR 1.

Income

In 2025, national median *household income and benefits* was $87,460, an increase of $2,250 over 2024 or 2.6% (all values adjusted for inflation). This increase in household income was not felt across the income spectrum: While the wealthiest households

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experienced a 1.7% increase to $261,300 in 2025, the bottom 10% of households saw no significant change.

Median *earnings* for a full-time, year-round worker, which tracks the individual rather than the household, ticked up to $66,620 in 2025, not a significant increase over 2024 ($65,250). The data show a closing of the female-male wage gap, with women making 83.9% of men's earnings in 2025 compared to 80.6% in 2024, spurred by a 3.2% increase in median earnings for women and no significant change for men. In this year's State of Working Ohio, we find that median earnings in Ohio were down between 2024 and 2025, with wages down for both men and women at the median and across the income spectrum. The dataset used in our report showed Ohio was one of 15 states that saw decreases in their median wage, and that Ohio's decrease was the fourth largest. While national data indicate wage growth, other 2025 data indicate Ohio is not following this trend.

Poverty

The official poverty rate nationally was 10.2% in 2025, 0.5 percentage points less than in 2024. The official child poverty rate fell a whole percentage point from 14.4% in 2024 to a historic low of 13.4% in 2025. (According to the Census Bureau, a family of four with two adults and two children was in poverty if their 2025 income was less than $32,649.)

But the official poverty measure doesn't tell the full story. According to Sharon Parrot, President of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities,

"While the official poverty measure showed child poverty at a record low in 2025, poverty overall and among children as measured by the preferred Supplemental Poverty Measure dropped to its lowest in 2021, when pandemic relief drove down child poverty to 5.1 percent. That showed we have policy tools — like an expanded Child Tax Credit and help for people who lose their jobs — available to reduce poverty markedly. We should use them."

Census data show that Social Security and SNAP moved 28.8 million and 3.1 million people out of poverty in 2025, respectively, while necessary costs like medical expenses moved 7.7 million people into poverty. The need for public support programs is clear: Access to income and comprehensive medical care make all the difference in families' bottom lines.

Health Insurance

Health insurance coverage remained unchanged between 2024 and 2025 at 92.1%. The U.S.' aging population spurred a 0.6-percentage-point increase in Medicare coverage to 20.1%, but Medicaid coverage decreased by 0.5 percentage points to 17.1%. That change was driven by coverage losses for adults ages 19-64, who will also face work requirements enacted for Medicaid expansion recipients come January. How this data presents in future years will reveal the impact of federal policy changes to Medicaid, Medicare, and other publicly funded healthcare programs.

Data availability

National data is valuable for monitoring the impacts of federal policy changes but cannot demonstrate impacts on the state and local level. In past years, we've received ACS data at the same time and been able to do state- and local-level analyses of changes in income, poverty, and health insurance. Since 2010, ACS data has drilled down to the Census Tract and Block Group level, relatively small groups of a few thousands inhabitants. However, a Commerce Department order erected new barriers for the Census Bureau, making it more difficult for the Bureau to release data with the same level of detail as it has in the past, especially for small geographic areas or population groups. As a result, the release of 2025's American Community Survey (ACS) has been delayed, and we won't know exactly which Ohio communities' data will be impacted by this change until the 2025 ACS data is released. This delay is leaving us with an incomplete picture of how policy and economic changes have affected inequality, poverty, and income in Ohio.

While we have confidence in the integrity of the Census Bureau's data, ideological interference with the historically independent, nonpartisan bureau threatens its future viability. The Census Bureau's usual rigorous, transparent procedures are the foundation on which public trust is built and policy is made. Ohioans should be able to count on accessible public data and feel confident about its accuracy. Congress must take steps to protect the integrity of our public data and allow the numbers to speak for the effectiveness of policy decisions.