Profile of the Unemployed in Ohio

2024

Department of Job & Family Services

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I. Introduction

Understanding who is unemployed in Ohio—and why—is essential for shaping effective workforce policies and programs. This report provides a comprehensive profile of unemployed individuals in Ohio using 2024 annual average data from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program (LAUS) in Ohio and information from the Current Population Survey (CPS).

It explores key questions such as:

- **Who** are the unemployed?

- **How long** have they been out of work?

- **Which industries and occupations** they worked in before becoming unemployed?

- **Where** are unemployment rates highest across the state?

- **What** are the main reasons for unemployment, and how long do jobless spells typically last?

The report begins with a look at unemployment trends over the past decade, followed by a breakdown of demographic characteristics. It then examines unemployment by industry and occupation, highlights geographic patterns, and concludes with insights into the nature and duration of unemployment. The goal is to inform workforce development strategies and support efforts to connect Ohioans with meaningful employment opportunities.

*For a detailed glossary of terms, see **Appendix A**.*

II. Trends in Ohio's Unemployment, 2015 – 2024

Unemployment

Unemployment, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), refers to individuals who are jobless, available for work, and actively seeking employment. In 2024, approximately **253,000** Ohioans were unemployed.

Figure 1 shows the monthly number of unemployed workers in Ohio from 2015 to 2024. Unemployment peaked at **911,200** in **April 2020**, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2024, that number had dropped by more than **70%**, reaching **264,800**. The lowest number of unemployed workers during this period was **198,200**, recorded in **May 2023**.

Figure 1: Total Number of Unemployed Workers in Ohio, 2015 - 2024
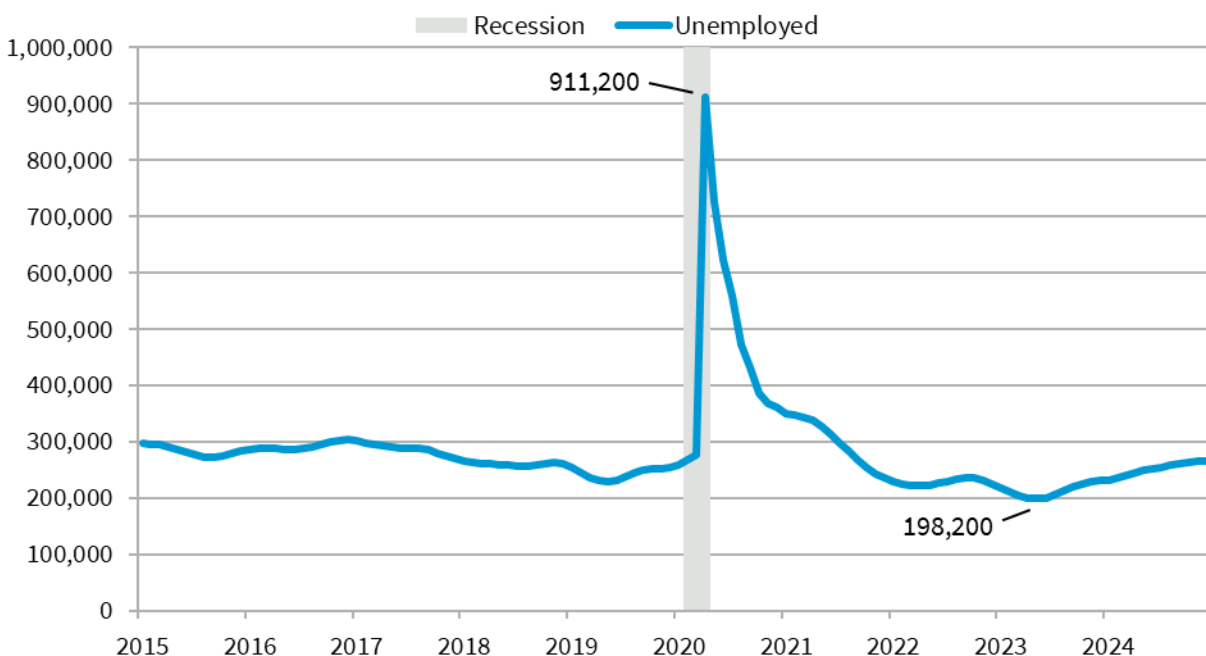
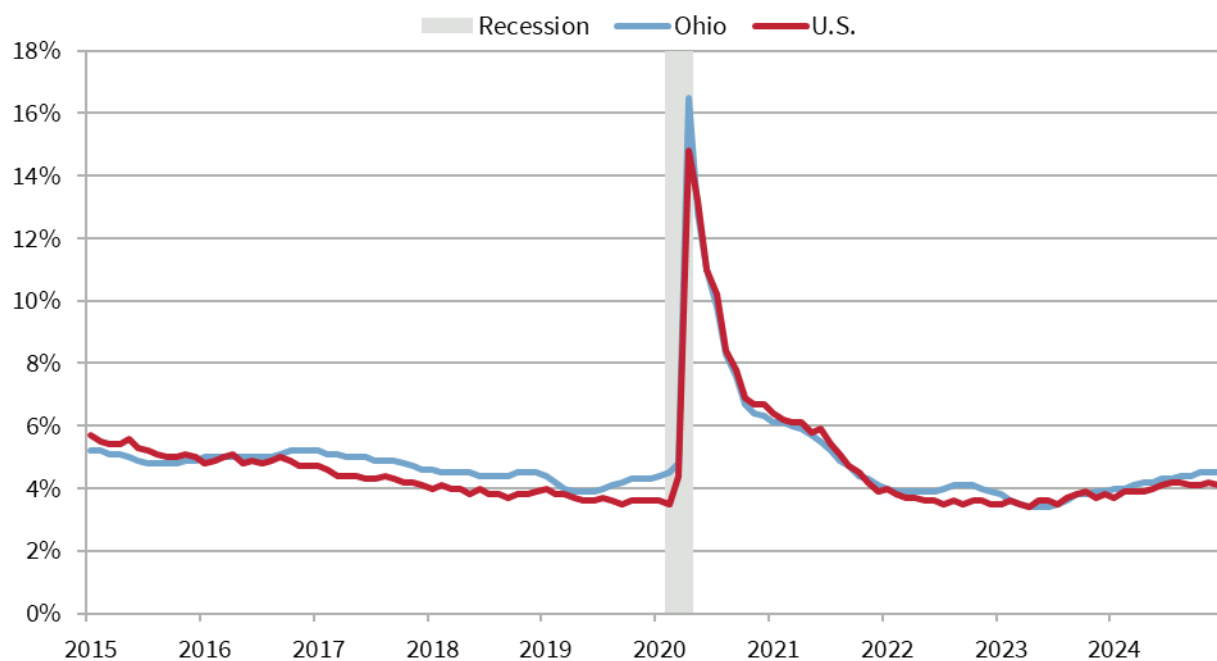Note: Recessionary periods as defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Unemployment Rate

The **unemployment rate** measures the percentage of people in the labor force who are unemployed and actively looking for work. In **2024**, Ohio's average unemployment rate was **4.3%**, an increase from **3.7%** in **2023**. The highest annual average rate in recent years was **8.2%** in **2020**, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2 shows the monthly, seasonally adjusted unemployment rates for both **Ohio** and the **United States** from **2015 to 2024**. The trends in both areas closely follow each other. The unemployment rate peaked in **April 2020**, reaching **16.5%** in Ohio and **14.8%** nationally. Since then, Ohio's unemployment rate has steadily declined. By the end of **2024**, it stood at **4.5%**, slightly higher than the national rate of **4.1%**.

Figure 2: Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates, 2015 - 2024

Note: Recessionary periods as defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Current Population Survey, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Long-term unemployment

Long-term unemployed individuals are those who have been actively looking for work for **27 weeks or more**.

Figure 3 shows the annual average number of long-term unemployed people in Ohio from **2015 to 2024**. The number peaked in **2021** at **79,000**, reflecting the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. By **2024**, the number dropped to **39,000**, indicating a significant improvement and close to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 3: Total Number of Long-Term Unemployed in Ohio, 2015 - 2024
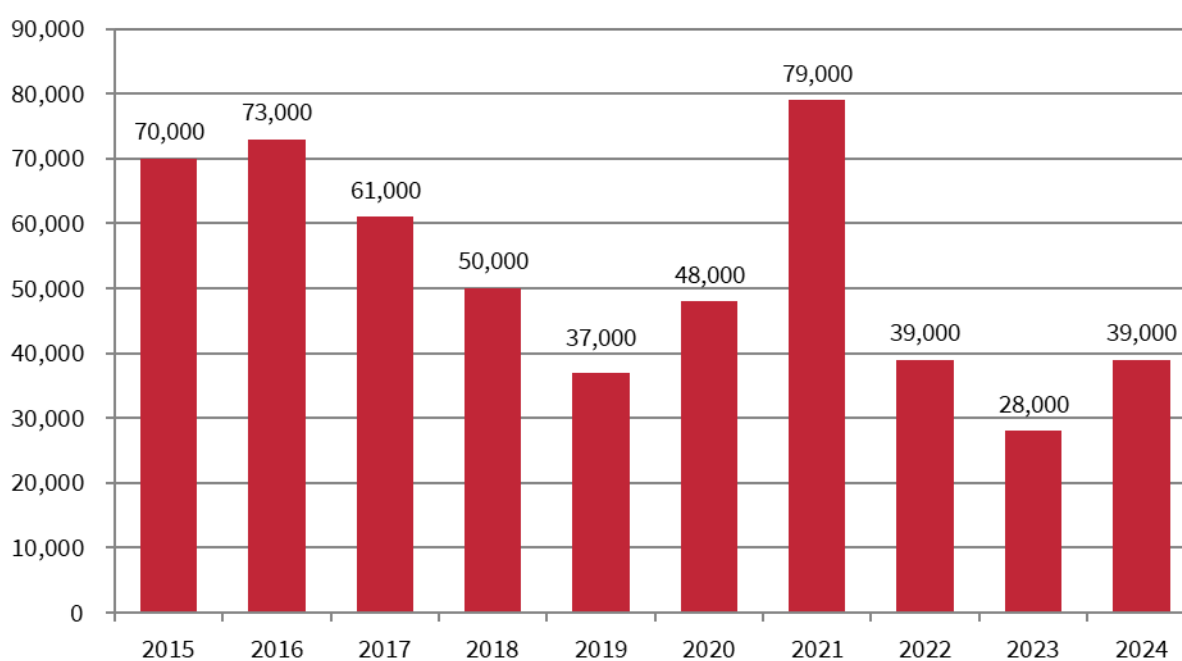
Source: Current Population Survey

III. Demographic Characteristics of Unemployed Ohioans

This section describes the demographic makeup of Ohio's unemployed population in **2024**, using estimates from the **Current Population Survey (CPS)**.

Table 1: Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population (Age 16 and Older)

	Annual 2024
Civilian Noninstitutional Population	9,461,000
Labor Force	5,920,000
Labor Force Participation Rate	62.6%
Employment	5,666,000
Employment to Population Ratio	59.9%
Unemployment	**254,000**
Unemployment Rate	4.3%

Source: Current Population Survey

Gender and Age

Figure 4: Age of Ohio's Unemployed Workers
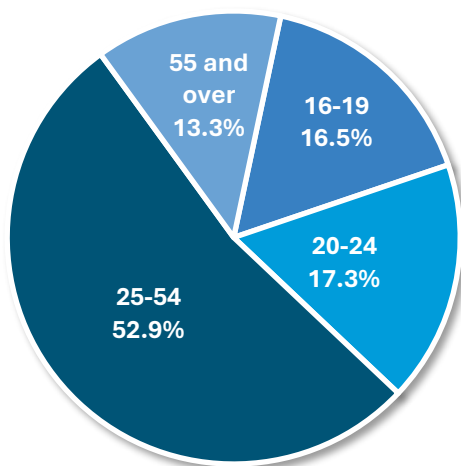
Of the **254,000** unemployed workers in Ohio:
- **52.2%** were **men**
- **47.8%** were **women**

Most unemployed individuals were adults:
- **83.5%** were **20 years or older**
- **52.9%** were in the **prime working age group (25 to 54 years)**

Source: Current Population Survey

Race and Ethnicity

Figure 5: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Unemployed Workers in Ohio
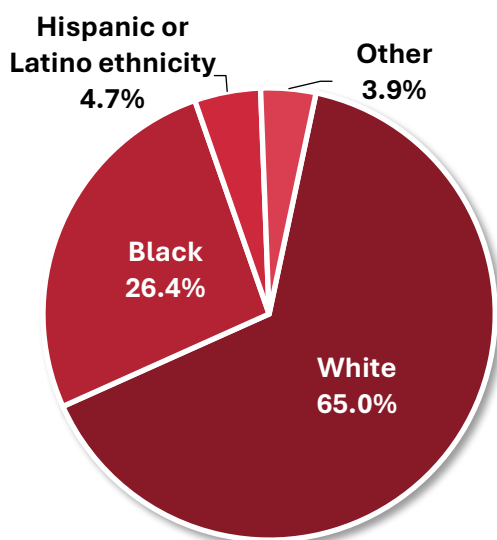
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity 4.7%

Other 3.9%

Black 26.4%

White 65.0%

Although white individuals make up **81.5% of Ohio's total population**, they account for **65.0% of the unemployed**.

In contrast, **racial and ethnic minorities**, who represent **18.5% of the population**, make up **35.0% of the unemployed**.

This means that **minority groups are experiencing unemployment at nearly twice the rate** expected based on their share of the population.

Source: Current Population Survey

Education

Figure 6: Education of Unemployed Ohio Residents

Another important characteristic of Ohio's unemployed population is **educational attainment**. In **2024**, there were approximately **169,000 unemployed individuals** in Ohio who were **25 years or older**.

About **one-fourth** of these individuals held a **bachelor's degree or higher**—including bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degrees. In other words, **three out of four unemployed adults** had **less than a bachelor's degree**, highlighting the continued challenges faced by those with lower levels of formal education.

Less than a High school diploma 9.5%

Bachelor's degree and higher 24.9%

Some college or associate degree 30.8%

High school graduates, no college 34.9%

Source: Current Population Survey

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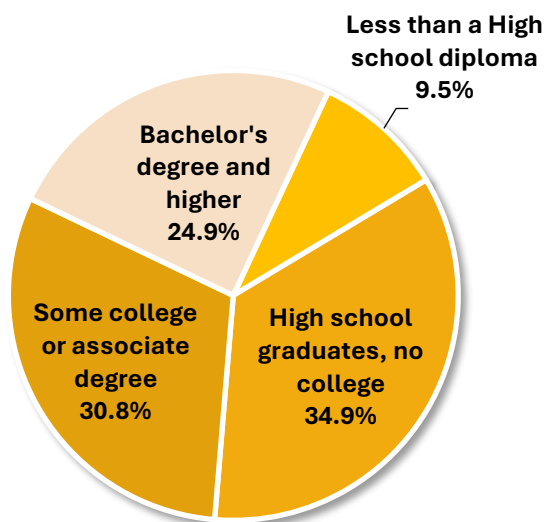
Table 2: Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, 2024

Table 2 highlights the relationship between education level and the unemployment rate in **2024**:

- Individuals with **some college or an associate degree** had an unemployment rate of **3.9%**.

- Those **without a high school diploma** faced a much higher unemployment rate of **8.2%**, more than double that of the former group.

- In contrast, individuals with a **bachelor's degree or higher** had the lowest unemployment rate at just **2.0%**.

	Unemployment Rate
Less than a high school diploma	8.2%
High school graduates, no college[1]	4.3%
Some college or associate degree	3.9%
Bachelor's degree and higher[2]	2.0%

[1] Includes persons with a high school diploma or equivalent
[2] Includes person with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees

Source: Current Population Survey

*For more detailed demographic comparisons between the unemployed, employed, and total population, see **Appendix B**.*

IV. Industry and Occupation Distribution of the Unemployed

Unemployment by Industry

Table 3 presents the distribution of unemployed workers by the industry they worked in before becoming unemployed, alongside each industry's share of total employment. The **final column** shows the **ratio** of an industry's share of unemployment to its share of employment:

- A ratio of **1.0** means the industry accounts for the **same share** of unemployment as it does employment.
- A ratio of **2.0** means the industry's share of unemployment is **twice as large** as its share of employment.

This ratio helps identify industries where workers are **overrepresented among the unemployed**.

Table 3: The Industry Distribution of Unemployment and Employment in Ohio, 2024

Industry	Industry Share of Employment	Industry Share of Unemployment	Ratio of Industry Share of Unemployment to Industry Share of Employment
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	(1)-	(1)-	(1)-
Mining	(1)-	(1)-	(1)-
Construction	**6%**	**10%**	**1.80**
Manufacturing	14%	12%	0.83
Wholesale and retail trade	12%	11%	0.96
Transportation and utilities	**6%**	**11%**	**1.71**
Information	(1)-	(1)-	(1)-
Financial activities	6%	3%	0.49
Professional and business services	11%	7%	0.69
Educational and health services	26%	20%	0.76
Leisure and hospitality	**8%**	**18%**	**2.22**
Other services	4%	3%	0.72
Public administration	4%	2%	0.43

(1) Data are not shown when the labor force base does not meet the BLS publication standard of reliability for the area, as determined by the sample size.
Source: Current Population Survey

In **2024**, the industry most affected by unemployment in Ohio was **leisure and hospitality**, followed by **construction** and **transportation and utilities**.

Unemployment by Occupation

Unemployment can also be analyzed by **occupation** (see **Table 4**). Like the trends seen across industries, some broad occupational groups have **higher shares of unemployment** than others.

Table 4 compares each occupation's share of total employment with its share of unemployment. The **final column** shows the **ratio** of share of unemployment to employment share:

- A ratio of **1.0** means the occupation accounts for the **same share** of unemployment as employment.
- A ratio above **1.0** indicates the occupation is **overrepresented** among the unemployed.
- A ratio below **1.0** means the occupation is **underrepresented** among the unemployed.

Workers in **transportation and material moving occupations** face the highest risk of unemployment, followed by those in **construction and extraction**, and **service occupations**.

Table 4: The Occupational Distribution of Unemployment and Employment in Ohio, 2024

Occupation	Occupation Share of Employment	Occupation Share of Unemployment	Ratio of Occupation Share of Unemployment to Occupation Share of Employment
Management, business, and financial	19%	9%	0.45
Professional and related	24%	15%	0.63
Service	**16%**	**25%**	**1.58**
Sales and related	8%	6%	0.78
Office and administrative support	10%	10%	1.05
Farming, fishing, and forestry	(1)-	(1)-	(1)-
Construction and extraction	**4%**	**7%**	**1.78**
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3%	3%	1.01
Production	7%	8%	1.11
Transportation and material moving	**8%**	**16%**	**1.93**

(1) Data are not shown when the labor force base does not meet the BLS publication standard of reliability for the area, as determined by the sample size.
Source: Current Population Survey

V. Geographic Distribution

Unemployment Rates by County, Annual Average 2024

The map below displays the **not seasonally adjusted annual average unemployment rates for 2024** across **Ohio's 88 counties**.

- **29 counties** had unemployment rates **at or below the national average** of **4.0%**.
- **Holmes County** recorded the **lowest unemployment rate** in the state at **3.2%**.

At the other end of the spectrum:

- **Six counties** had unemployment rates **at or above 6.0%**.
- **Meigs County** had the **highest annual average unemployment rate** in 2024, at **6.8%**.
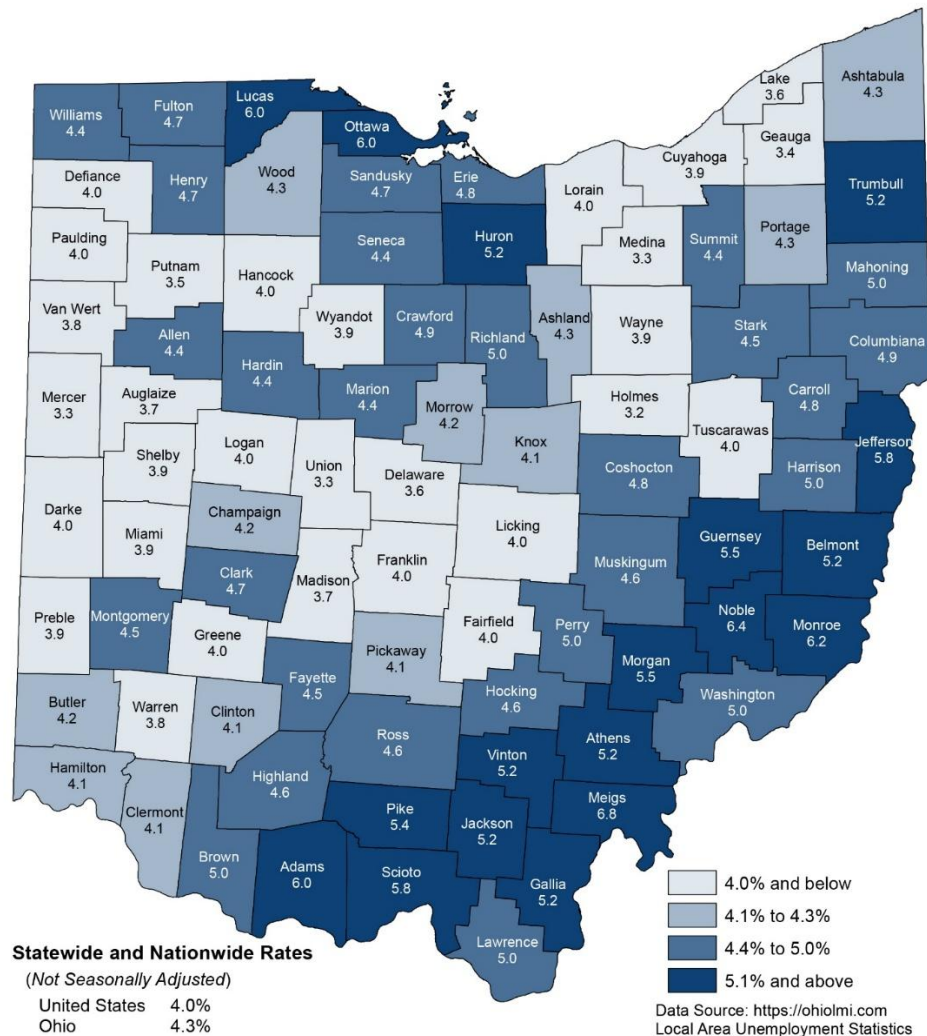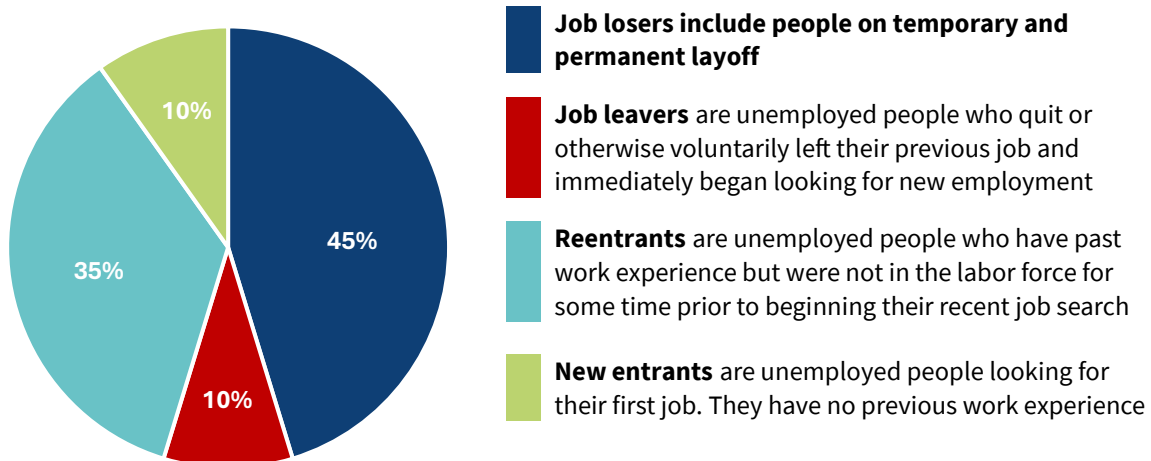

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Current Population Survey, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

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VI. Nature of Unemployment

Reasons for Unemployment

Figure 7: Reasons for unemployment

Job losers include people on temporary and permanent layoff

Job leavers are unemployed people who quit or otherwise voluntarily left their previous job and immediately began looking for new employment

Reentrants are unemployed people who have past work experience but were not in the labor force for some time prior to beginning their recent job search

New entrants are unemployed people looking for their first job. They have no previous work experience

Source: Current Population Survey

Duration of Unemployment in 2024

In 2024, Ohio reported a total of **254,000 unemployed individuals**. Among them, the largest share—**96,000 people (38%)**—had been unemployed for **less than 5 weeks**, indicating that most people experience short-term unemployment. Another **82,000 (32%)** were unemployed for **5 to 14 weeks**, while **77,000 (30%)** experienced **longer-term unemployment** of **15 weeks or more**.

The **mean duration** of unemployment in Ohio was **16.1 weeks**, while the **median duration** was **7.4 weeks**. The **mean** represents the average number of weeks unemployed, while the **median** is the midpoint—half of the unemployed were out of work for less than 7.4 weeks, and half for more.

Table 5: Durations of Unemployment, 2024

People							Weeks	
		15 weeks or more						
				27 weeks or more				
Less than 5 weeks	5 to 14 weeks	Total	15 to 26 weeks	Total	27 to 51 weeks	52 weeks or more	Mean duration	Median duration
96,000	82,000	77,000	37,000	40,000	23,000	17,000	16.1	7.4

Source: Current Population Survey
*Totals may not sum due to rounding*

Discouraged Workers

Discouraged workers are individuals who are not in the labor force, but who want and are available for work and have looked for a job within the past 12 months (or since their last job if it ended within that period). However, they are not currently searching for work because they believe no jobs are available for them or that they do not qualify for the jobs that are.

Although discouraged workers are not counted in the labor force, they can be identified through the Current Population Survey (CPS) by responses to the question: "What is the main reason you were not looking for work during the last four weeks?" Common reasons include believing no work is available in the area, lacking qualifications, family responsibilities, transportation issues, or attending school.

Figure 8 shows that the number of discouraged workers in Ohio peaked at 24,400 in 2015. By 2023, that number had declined by 85% to 3,600. In 2024, the number rose to 11,300, which is still less than half the 2015 peak.

Figure 8: Discouraged Workers in Ohio, Annual Average 2015 - 2024
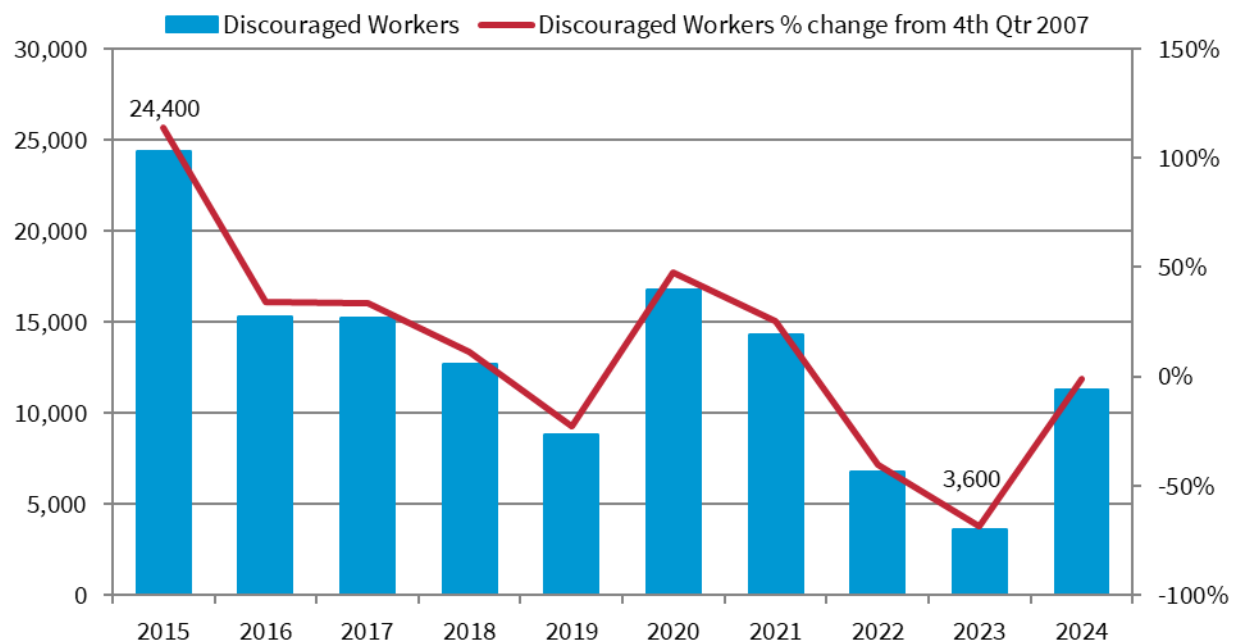
Source: Current Population Survey

VII. Appendices

Appendix A – Glossary of terms

1. Civilian Noninstitutional Population
All people age 16 and older who are not in the military or living in institutions (such as prisons or nursing homes). This group forms the base population for labor force statistics.

2. Labor Force
The total number of people who are either employed or actively looking for work.

3. Labor Force Participation Rate
The percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population that is in the labor force.

4. Employment
The number of people currently working for pay or profit.

5. Employment-to-Population Ratio
The percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population that is employed.

6. Unemployment
The number of people who are jobless, available for work, and actively seeking employment.

7. Unemployment Rate
The percentage of the labor force that is unemployed.

8. Long-Term Unemployed
Individuals who have been unemployed for **27 weeks or more** while actively looking for work.

9. Seasonally Adjusted
Data that has been modified to remove the effects of predictable seasonal patterns (such as holiday hiring or school schedules) to better reflect underlying trends.

10. Not Seasonally Adjusted
Raw data that includes seasonal fluctuations. Often used for geographic or short-term comparisons.

11. Industry
A group of businesses or organizations that produce similar goods or services (e.g., manufacturing, healthcare, construction).

12. Occupation

The type of work a person performs, regardless of the industry (e.g., teacher, electrician, cashier).

13. Share of Employment

The percentage of total employment represented by a specific industry or occupation.

14. Share of Unemployment

The percentage of total unemployment represented by a specific industry or occupation.

15. Unemployment-to-Employment Ratio

A measure comparing industries' or occupations' share of unemployment to their share of employment.

- A ratio of **1.0** means the share of unemployment matches the share of employment.

- A ratio **above 1.0** indicates the group is **overrepresented** among the unemployed.

- A ratio **below 1.0** indicates **underrepresentation**.

Appendix B – Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, by sex, age, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and marital status.

This appendix provides a detailed demographic breakdown of Ohio's labor force in 2024.

(Numbers in thousands)

Population Group	Civilian non-institutional population	Civilian labor force		Employed		Unemployed	
		Total	Percent of population	Total	Percent of population	Total	Rate
Total	9,461	5,920	62.6	5,666	59.9	254	4.3
Men	4,609	3,054	66.3	2,921	63.4	133	4.3
Women	4,852	2,866	59.1	2,745	56.6	122	4.2
Men and women, 16 to 19 years	667	308	46.2	266	39.9	42	13.6
White	7,710	4,796	62.2	4,631	60.1	165	3.4
Men	3,786	2,516	66.4	2,426	64.1	90	3.6
Women	3,923	2,280	58.1	2,205	56.2	75	3.3
Men and women, 16 to 19 years	508	256	50.5	229	45.0	28	10.9
Black or African American	1,185	750	63.3	683	57.6	67	8.9
Men	549	348	63.4	316	57.5	32	9.2
Women	635	402	63.2	367	57.7	35	8.7
Asian	305	200	65.6	191	62.6	9	4.5
Women	171	106	62.0	101	58.8	5	5.2
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	391	256	65.4	244	62.4	12	4.6
Men	194	139	71.7	135	69.5	4	3.1
Women	197	117	59.2	109	55.4	8	6.5
Married men, spouse present	2,321	1,610	69.4	1,590	68.5	21	1.3
Married women, spouse present	2,234	1,353	60.5	1,324	59.3	29	2.1
Women who maintain families	520	361	69.5	344	66.2	17	4.7

Source: Current Population Survey
Totals may not sum due to rounding

Department of Job & Family Services

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