

Ohio's Private Sector Is Mired in Mediocrity

IN MARCH 2000, OHIO'S PRIVATE SECTOR

hit a peak level of employment, with 4,853,400 men and women hard at work. With a population of 11,353,140 people, that meant 42.8 percent of all Ohioans were contributing to the economy and carving their personal pathways to prosperity.

Nearly 16 ½ years later, the number of Ohioans in the private sector has dropped to 4,716,300, which is 137,100 less than it was in March 2000. Though our population growth has been anemic over the last two decades, Ohio's population did increase to 11,613,423 people. That means that not only hasn't Ohio's private sector recovered to the raw number of jobs held in March 2000, but it also fell further behind when adjusting to reflect the population increase.

Specifically, to hit the 42.8 percent employment mark, Ohio's private sector would need to possess 4,964,669 workers, which is 248,369 more than it possesses today. Even worse for Ohio, the percentage of men and women in the labor force (at work or looking for work) plummeted from 67.3 percent in March 2000 to just 62.8 percent today. That drop masks Ohio's current low unemployment rate of 4.9 percent, which is nearly a point higher than the rate in March 2000.

At the same time as Ohio's private sector has failed to recover its lost jobs, government employment has grown by 5,300 workers. The bottom line is that even though Ohio has more residents, it has fewer workers in its private sector and far more people disengaged from working who likely receive some form of government assistance such as expanded Medicaid under ObamaCare. Enrollment in expanded Medicaid has exploded by nearly 700,000 people, adding roughly \$5,000,000,000 to the national debt every year. Ohio's private sector is mired in mediocrity.

CHANGES SINCE 2000

POPULATION

+260,283

March 2000: 11,353,140 • August 2016: 11,613,423

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

+0.9%

March 2000: 4.0% • August 2016: 4.9%

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

-4.5

March 2000: 67.3% • August 2016: 62.8%

PRIVATE-SECTOR JOBS

-137,100

March 2000: 4,853,400 • August 2016: 4,716,300

GOVERNMENT JOBS

+5,300

March 2000: 779,400 • August 2016: 784,700

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/eag/>, and U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/39>.