



Twenty Years Later, Ohio Works First Is a Poor Safety Net for Ohio Children in Deep Poverty

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May, 2016



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Introduction

Ohio Works First (OWF) is Ohio's version of the federal/state Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF was established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the passage of the law.

TANF/OWF replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which had operated since 1935. The purpose of OWF is to provide cash assistance, family support, and employment services to families with children under 18 whose incomes fall below 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

National Trends

In a policy brief¹, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) documented a decline in the safety net for poor families with children since the onset of the Great Recession, as measured by the ratio of families receiving TANF benefits per 100 families with children below FPL. This is referred to as the TANF-to-Poverty-Ratio, or TPR. The CBPP reports that for every 100 families in poverty nationwide, 31 families received TANF benefits in 2006, but only 23 in 2014.² This continues a longer term decline from the inception of the TANF program in 1996, when 68 out of 100 poor families received benefits. The CBPP report attributes the decline in the TPR to a growth in the number of families in poverty with a simultaneous decline in the number of families enrolled in TANF.

The report also gives state-by-state trends in the TPR; Ohio's ratio fell from 32.7 in 2005-2006 to 25.7 in 2013-2014; under the old AFDC program, the state's ratio was 88.6 in 1994-1995. The report singles out Ohio's enrollment decline as due to a strategy of improving the state's work participation rate by sanctioning more families off the program.

¹ Floyd I, Pavetti L, Schott L. TANF Continues to Weaken as a Safety Net. Washington, DC. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. October 27, 2015.

² In both the CBPP report and in our own analysis for Ohio, the TPR (or TDPR) should not be interpreted as the percent of those below poverty (or deep poverty) who are on TANF, as some TANF recipients, especially some of those in child-only cases, are above poverty. We merely compare the number on TANF to the number below poverty nationally, or below 50 percent of poverty in Ohio.

Ohio Trends

This paper applies the CBPP report methodology to Ohio counties for the 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 periods. Our data source for TANF/OWF enrollment is the Public Assistance Monthly Statistics (PAMS) reports released by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). We took the annual averages by county and averaged these over the five-year periods. The population below poverty is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) five-year samples for 2009 and 2014.

In our estimation of a comparable TPR for Ohio counties, we count only children and not adults on TANF (OWF) because 76 percent of OWF caseloads statewide are child-only.³ Our income measure of 50 percent of the FPL (\$840 per month for a family of three in 2016) matches the income eligibility level for OWF and is a common measure of deep poverty. We therefore rename our measure the TANF-to-Deep-Poverty-Ratio (TDPR). The accompanying table and maps show the county-level TDPR for each period and the change from one period to the other.

As more children have fallen into deep poverty in the aftermath of the 2007-2009 recession, fewer children are receiving OWF benefits. In Ohio as a whole, the average number of children on OWF declined from 135,800 in 2005-2009 to 128,700 in 2010-2014, a 5.2 percent decline. In the same time span, the number of Ohio children in deep poverty increased 17.5 percent from 251,500 to 295,600. The resulting statewide TDPR thus fell from 54.0 in 2005-2009 to 43.6 in 2010-2014, a decline of 19.2 percent. This means that for every 100 children in deep poverty, 54 were receiving OWF benefits in 2005-2009, but only 43 were receiving benefits in 2010-2014. This declining trend will most likely continue, as the total number of children on OWF dropped below 100,000 in 2015 alone.

County-level TDPRs in 2005-2009 ranged from a low of 9.9 in Geauga County to a high of 88.8 in Gallia County (see the maps and data table at the end of this report). In 2010-2014, Hancock County had the lowest TDPR (10.1) and Ottawa the highest (94.2). The TDPR declined in 51 of 87⁴ counties between the two periods. Preble County had the greatest decrease, from 71.4 to less than half of that (29.5). Thirty-six counties experienced an increase in their TDPR; Ottawa had the greatest increase, almost doubling from 48.6 to 94.2.

The variation in TDPR among counties may be due in part to differences in application procedures from county to county as well as variations in granting extensions beyond 36 months. Some counties, especially in Appalachia, suffer deeper concentrations of poverty, which may pose a challenge to enroll the eligible population.

Regionally, Ohio counties with the largest TDPRs in both periods have been either urban counties or those rural counties in the southern and south-central parts of the state. Northwest rural counties tended to have lower TDPRs. Of the nine most urban counties, all but Mahoning had lower TDPRs in

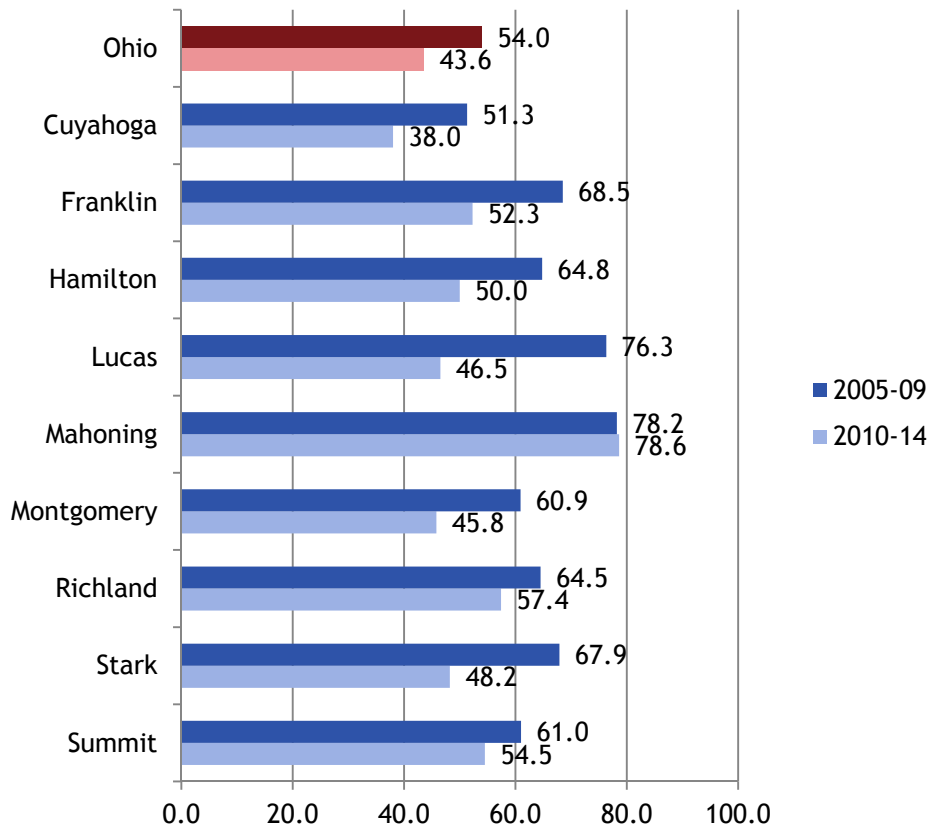
³ Athens County Department of Job and Family Services, December, 2015. "Child-only" cases exclude adults from the OWF grant. The most common of these cases are those in which the parent is on SSI, is a non-citizen immigrant, or the child is living with an adult other than a custodial parent.

⁴ Pickaway County is excluded because its calculated TDPR exceeded 100.0 in 2005-2009.

2010-2014 than in 2005-2009 (see Figure 1). Southwest counties (excluding Hamilton) had increases in their TDPRs, while the remaining rural counties had a variety of increases and decreases.

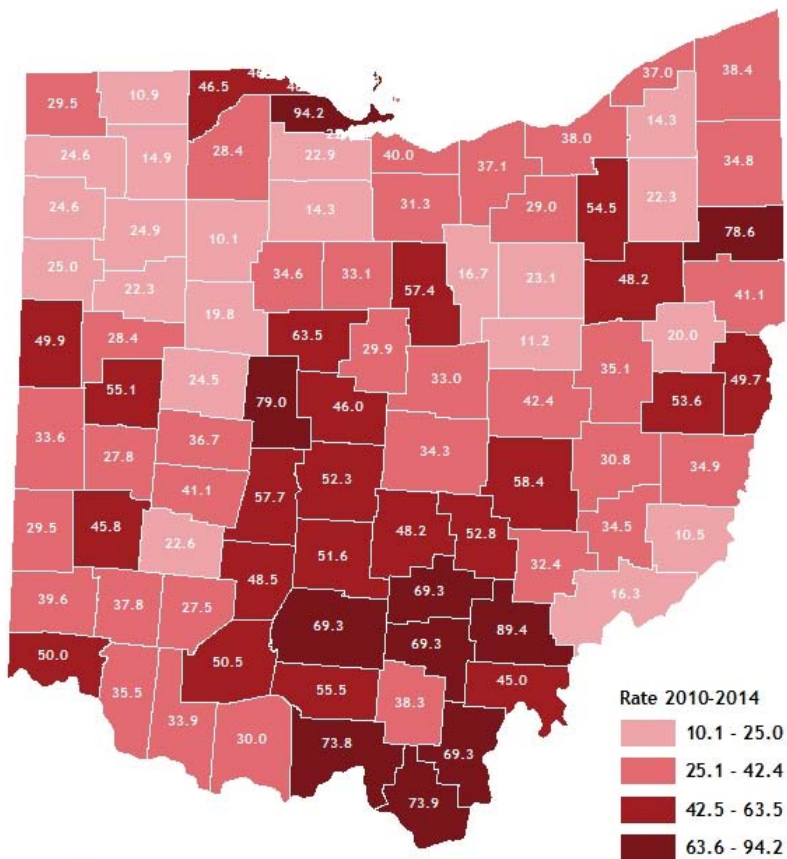
The fact that the number of children receiving OWF benefits is less than half the number of children in deep poverty makes it clear that TANF/OWF has been insufficient in meeting its stated goal of providing a safety net for the poorest families with children. The Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP), included in Ohio’s 2016-2017 state budget, could be a partial remedy. The CCMEP will assess the employment and training needs of work-required TANF recipients ages 16 to 24 and connect them with workforce services to help move them out of poverty. The effectiveness of this and similar welfare-to-work programs will depend to some extent on the strength of the local economy and the demand for unskilled and low-skilled workers. But, in the end, there is substantial research to show that providing families with children even a small amount of cash, like what would be provided via monthly TANF benefit (\$195 per child in 2015), has significant benefits on the children’s school achievement and their long-term success. Ohio should do more to ensure that these children living in deep poverty, who are particularly vulnerable, get the TANF assistance they are entitled to and need.

Figure 1. OWF Recipients Under 18 Per 100 Children Below 50% of FPL



Map B

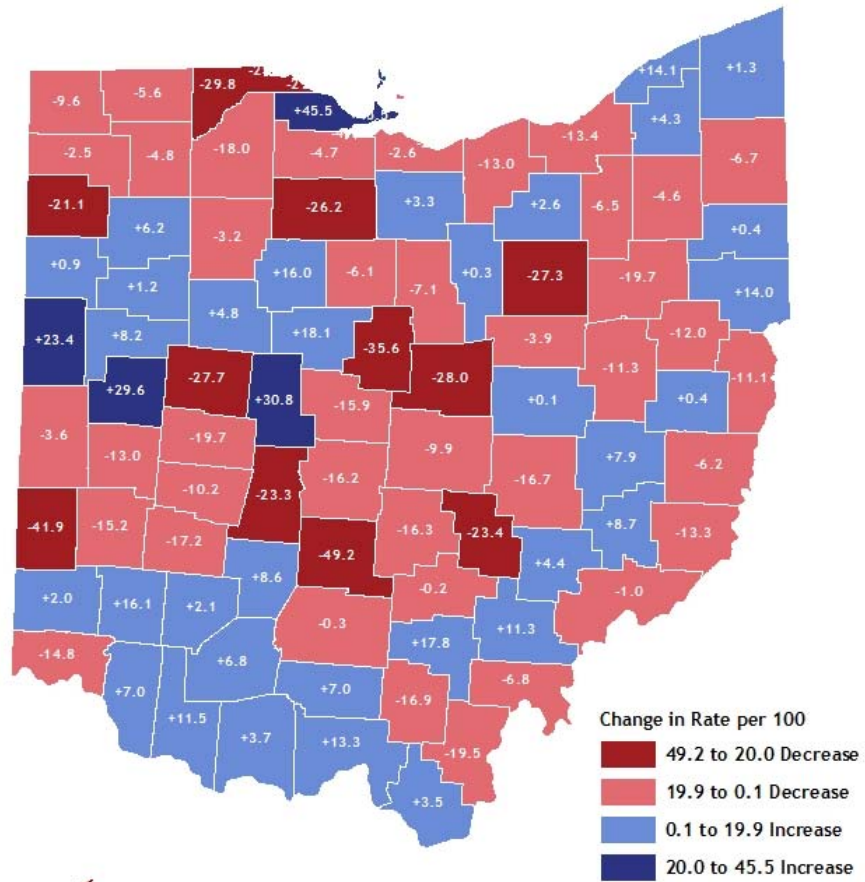
**OWF Recipients Under 18
Per 100 Children Below 50% of Poverty
2010-2014 Average, by County**



Source: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services,
Public Assistance Monthly Statistics;
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Map C

**Change in Rate of OWF Recipients Under 18
Per 100 Children Below 50% of Poverty
2005-09 to 2010-14 Averages, by County**



Source: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services,
Public Assistance Monthly Statistics;
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Child OWF Recipients per 100 Children Below 50% of FPL									
Sources: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Public Assistance Monthly Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey									
	OWF Children (ODJFS-PAMS)			Children Under 18 Below .50 FPL (ACS)			Ratio (OWF Children per 100 Below .50 FPL)		
	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Change
Ohio	135,805	128,748	-7,057	251,495	295,625	44,130	54.0	43.6	-10.4
Adams	235	324	89	891	1,079	188	26.4	30.0	3.7
Allen	657	678	22	3,121	3,048	-73	21.0	22.3	1.2
Ashland	157	179	22	952	1,070	118	16.5	16.7	0.3
Ashtabula	1,121	1,251	130	3,027	3,260	233	37.0	38.4	1.3
Athens	1,016	1,222	206	1,301	1,367	66	78.1	89.4	11.3
Auglaize	100	119	19	493	417	-76	20.2	28.4	8.2
Belmont	608	493	-115	1,482	1,414	-68	41.0	34.9	-6.2
Brown	257	346	88	1,144	1,018	-126	22.5	33.9	11.5
Butler	2,584	3,034	450	6,875	7,657	782	37.6	39.6	2.0
Carroll	159	191	32	497	957	460	32.0	20.0	-12.0
Champaign	344	351	8	609	956	347	56.4	36.7	-19.7
Clark	2,217	1,914	-304	4,323	4,654	331	51.3	41.1	-10.2
Clermont	735	1,064	329	2,579	2,996	417	28.5	35.5	7.0
Clinton	215	304	90	842	1,105	263	25.5	27.5	2.1
Columbiana	747	837	90	2,754	2,037	-717	27.1	41.1	14.0
Coshocton	356	416	60	842	983	141	42.3	42.4	0.1
Crawford	353	442	89	902	1,336	434	39.1	33.1	-6.1
Cuyahoga	18,496	15,360	-3,136	36,020	40,431	4,411	51.3	38.0	-13.4
Darke	249	249	0	670	742	72	37.2	33.6	-3.6
Defiance/Paulding	406	296	-110	1,251	1,205	-46	32.5	24.6	-7.9
Defiance	NA	NA	NA	888	874	-14	27.0	24.6	-2.5
Delaware	563	555	-8	908	1,205	297	62.0	46.0	-15.9
Erie	421	669	248	988	1,673	685	42.6	40.0	-2.6
Fairfield	1,237	1,133	-104	1,917	2,351	434	64.5	48.2	-16.3
Fayette	285	396	111	715	817	102	39.9	48.5	8.6

	OWF Children (ODJFS-PAMS)			Children Under 18 Below .50 FPL (ACS)			Ratio (OWF Children per 100 Below .50 FPL)				
	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Change		
Franklin	20,330	18,289	-2,040	-10.0%	29,691	34,973	5,282	17.8%	68.5	52.3	-16.2
Fulton	108	103	-5	-4.6%	652	942	290	44.5%	16.5	10.9	-5.6
Gallia	774	577	-197	-25.4%	871	833	-38	-4.4%	88.8	69.3	-19.5
Geauga	113	125	12	11.0%	1,134	877	-257	-22.7%	9.9	14.3	4.3
Greene	928	869	-59	-6.3%	2,331	3,844	1,513	64.9%	39.8	22.6	-17.2
Guermsey	280	451	171	61.0%	1,225	1,465	240	19.6%	22.9	30.8	7.9
Hamilton	14,189	14,232	44	0.3%	21,889	28,456	6,567	30.0%	64.8	50.0	-14.8
Hancock	183	186	3	1.8%	1,379	1,848	469	34.0%	13.2	10.1	-3.2
Hardin	99	190	91	92.5%	662	962	300	45.3%	14.9	19.8	4.8
Harrison	165	202	37	22.1%	311	377	66	21.2%	53.2	53.6	0.4
Henry	59	69	10	17.0%	298	461	163	54.7%	19.7	14.9	-4.8
Highland	430	621	191	44.5%	984	1,230	246	25.0%	43.7	50.5	6.8
Hocking	NA	NA	NA	NA	742	1,028	286	38.5%	69.5	69.3	-0.2
Holmes	77	80	4	5.0%	508	720	212	41.7%	15.1	11.2	-3.9
Huron	338	577	239	70.5%	1,209	1,843	634	52.4%	28.0	31.3	3.3
Jackson	498	577	79	15.8%	903	1,508	605	67.0%	55.2	38.3	-16.9
Jefferson	1,230	979	-251	-20.4%	2,021	1,969	-52	-2.6%	60.9	49.7	-11.1
Knox	464	519	55	11.8%	761	1,571	810	106.4%	61.0	33.0	-28.0
Lake	849	1,152	303	35.6%	3,716	3,116	-600	-16.1%	22.9	37.0	14.1
Lawrence	1,128	1,026	-101	-9.0%	1,602	1,389	-213	-13.3%	70.4	73.9	3.5
Licking	1,062	1,057	-5	-0.4%	2,401	3,081	680	28.3%	44.2	34.3	-9.9
Logan	355	467	112	31.5%	682	1,911	1,229	180.2%	52.1	24.5	-27.7
Lorain	3,524	2,900	-624	-17.7%	7,039	7,819	780	11.1%	50.1	37.1	-13.0
Lucas	10,448	7,514	-2,934	-28.1%	13,689	16,147	2,458	18.0%	76.3	46.5	-29.8
Madison	390	446	56	14.4%	481	773	292	60.7%	81.0	57.7	-23.3
Mahoning	4,992	4,833	-158	-3.2%	6,383	6,150	-233	-3.7%	78.2	78.6	0.4
Marion	678	791	113	16.7%	1,495	1,247	-248	-16.6%	45.4	63.5	18.1
Medina	418	447	29	6.9%	1,585	1,541	-44	-2.8%	26.4	29.0	2.6
Meigs	319	374	55	17.2%	617	832	215	34.8%	51.7	45.0	-6.8
Mercer	122	163	40	32.8%	463	326	-137	-29.6%	26.4	49.9	23.4
Miami	523	570	48	9.1%	1,280	2,053	773	60.4%	40.8	27.8	-13.0

	OWF Children (ODJFS- PAMS)			Children Under 18 Below .50 FPL (ACS)			Ratio (OWF Children per 100 Below			
	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Pct Change	2005-09 Avg	2010-14 Avg	Change	
Monroe	100	53	-47	422	504	82	19.4%	23.7	10.5	-13.3
Montgomery	8,679	7,645	-1,034	14,244	16,708	2,464	17.3%	60.9	45.8	-15.2
Morgan	141	142	1	505	438	-67	-13.3%	28.0	32.4	4.4
Morrow	210	248	38	321	830	509	158.6%	65.5	29.9	-35.6
Muskingum	1,453	1,506	53	1,935	2,578	643	33.2%	75.1	58.4	-16.7
Noble	63	49	-13	243	143	-100	-41.2%	25.8	34.5	8.7
Ottawa	234	274	40	481	291	-190	-39.5%	48.6	94.2	45.5
Paulding	NA	NA	NA	363	331	-32	-8.8%	45.7	24.6	-21.1
Perry	594	596	3	779	1,129	350	44.9%	76.2	52.8	-23.4
Pickaway	727	616	-111	721	1,194	473	65.6%	100.8	51.6	-49.2
Pike	606	679	73	1,252	1,225	-27	-2.2%	48.4	55.5	7.0
Portage	684	808	124	2,544	3,630	1,086	42.7%	26.9	22.3	-4.6
Preble	291	305	14	407	1,032	625	153.6%	71.4	29.5	-41.9
Putnam	52	90	38	277	361	84	30.3%	18.7	24.9	6.2
Richland	1,150	1,846	696	1,784	3,217	1,433	80.3%	64.5	57.4	-7.1
Ross	NA	NA	NA	1,680	1,826	146	8.7%	69.6	69.3	-0.3
Sandusky	321	339	18	1,161	1,478	317	27.3%	27.6	22.9	-4.7
Scioto	1,666	1,630	-36	2,753	2,208	-545	-19.8%	60.5	73.8	13.3
Seneca	282	278	-4	694	1,938	1,244	179.3%	40.6	14.3	-26.2
Shelby	235	319	84	922	579	-343	-37.2%	25.5	55.1	29.6
Stark	4,731	4,066	-666	6,971	8,431	1,460	20.9%	67.9	48.2	-19.7
Summit	7,716	6,711	-1,006	12,659	12,319	-340	-2.7%	61.0	54.5	-6.5
Trumbull	2,374	2,501	128	5,718	7,180	1,462	25.6%	41.5	34.8	-6.7
Tuscarawas	659	592	-67	1,420	1,686	266	18.7%	46.4	35.1	-11.3
Union	289	298	9	599	377	-222	-37.1%	48.2	79.0	30.8
Van Wert	73	164	91	304	657	353	116.1%	24.1	25.0	0.9
Vinton	NA	NA	NA	436	448	12	2.8%	51.6	69.3	17.8
Warren	395	640	245	1,815	1,691	-124	-6.8%	21.7	37.8	16.1
Washington	197	189	-9	1,135	1,154	19	1.7%	17.4	16.3	-1.0
Wayne	673	615	-58	1,334	2,657	1,323	99.2%	50.4	23.1	-27.3
Williams	252	249	-3	646	846	200	31.0%	39.1	29.5	-9.6
Wood	391	448	56	844	1,578	734	87.0%	46.4	28.4	-18.0
Wyandot	71	77	6	382	222	-160	-41.9%	18.6	34.6	16.0
South Central*	1,910	2,289	379	2,858	3,302	444	15.5%	66.8	69.3	2.5

*Includes Hocking, Ross, and Vinton Counties

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