



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
10 West Broad Street
Suite 1800, Columbus, OH
43215-3485

EMAIL:
occ@occ.state.oh.us

WEBSITE:
www.pickocc.org

Customer Profile: OHIO'S RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CUSTOMER

Factors affecting Residential Utility Customers in Ohio



Residential Utility Customer Profile:

- ▶ 4.5 million residential utility households in Ohio;¹
- ▶ Average annual utility bill: \$2,600 (\$212/month);²
- ▶ 1:10 (10%) of households disconnected for non-payment of electric or natural gas in past year;³
- ▶ Approximately \$209 million in Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits provided to Ohioans;⁴
- ▶ 394,000 households qualified for HEAP benefits (48% having household income less than the federal poverty guidelines);⁵
- ▶ 180,000 qualified for and received winter crises benefits.⁶

Energy Customer Profile:

- ▶ Approximately 67% use both electric and natural gas in their homes;⁷
- ▶ Approximately 22% have all-electric homes;⁸
- ▶ Approximately 12% use alternative sources for energy such as propane, fuel oil and/or wood.⁹

Telephone Utility Customer Profile:

- ▶ Approximately 96% of households subscribe to telephone service (wireline, wireless, voice over internet protocol, also known as VOIP);¹⁰
- ▶ Approximately 66% subscribe to broadband services;¹¹
- ▶ It is unknown how many Ohioans subscribe to bundled telephone services.

Water Utility Customer Profile:

- ▶ Approximately 93% of Ohioans (10.3 million) are served by municipally-owned public drinking water systems;¹²
- ▶ Approximately 4% of homes use water supplied from investor-owned water systems;¹³
- ▶ The remaining customers are served by well water or cisterns.

Additional Factors affecting Ohio's Utility Customers:

Unemployment:

- ▶ For 2011, the average monthly Ohio unemployment rate through December was 8.9% compared to the 10.4% average annual rate for 2010;¹⁴

Continued on back

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- ▶ As of March 2012, 66 of Ohio's 88 counties experienced unemployment levels above both the state and national average;¹⁵
- ▶ Ohio's unemployment rate was 7.5 percent in March 2012, down from 7.6 percent in February and down from 8.8 in March 2011. The number of unemployed workers in Ohio in March 2012 was 438,000, down 73,000 from March 2011¹⁶
- ▶ 42 percent of those unemployed in 2010 had been without a job for more than six months.¹⁷

Underemployment:

In 1994, the federal government began tracking underemployment, a category that included unemployed workers, discouraged workers (jobless individuals who have stopped looking for work) and involuntary part-time workers (those who want full-time work but can only find part-time jobs).

- ▶ In 2011, more than one in six Ohio workers (16.9%) could be classified as underemployed.¹⁸

Poverty:

In May 2011, the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies released a report entitled "The State of Poverty in Ohio: A Path to Recovery." The following data were included in this report:¹⁹

- ▶ From 1999 to 2009, an additional half million Ohioans (539,000) moved into poverty.
- ▶ As of 2009, 1.7 million people, 15.2 percent of Ohio's population lived at or below the federal poverty level (\$22,050 per year for a household of four).
- ▶ In that time, Ohio's poverty rate went from 20th to 35th lowest among all states.
- ▶ The counties with the highest numbers of people at or below the federal guidelines lived in major metropolitan areas.

According to data released by the Children's Defense Fund, Ohio's total child poverty rate in 2009 was 22 percent, a 46 percent increase over what it was in 2001.²⁰



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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

Foreclosures:

- ▶ According to data released by the Supreme Court of Ohio in March 2012, there were 71,556 new commercial and residential foreclosure filings in 2011, a 16 percent decrease from 2010. This was the lowest number of new foreclosures reported since 2005.²¹
- ▶ Seventy-five of Ohio's 88 counties reported double-digit foreclosure decreases last year from 2010.²²

Renter Earnings Lag Housing Costs:

- ▶ Typical renters do not earn enough to afford "safe and modest" rental housing in Ohio, according to "Out of Reach 2012: America's Forgotten Housing Crisis," a report released in March by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO).²³
- ▶ The average Ohio renter earns an hourly wage of \$11.20, slightly more than two dollars below the wage identified as the amount a family would need to afford rent and utilities in a "safe, modest home in a private housing market." The average hourly housing wage nationally is \$18.25.²⁴

Impact on utility customer service:

Utility service is a necessity and, given these hard economic times, more customers are struggling to maintain service. The OCC plays a vital role in advocating for affordable service.

Endnotes:

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20. "Group: Data shows jump in Ohio child poverty rate," The Sentinel Tribune, August 17, 2011, <http://www.sent-trib.com/ap-news/group-data-shows-jump-in-ohio-child-poverty-rate>
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