PROFILE

# Women in Montgomery County

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# KEY TAKEAWAYS

In honor of Women's History Month, this profile presents a snapshot of key demographic, economic, and employment characteristics of the female population in Montgomery County. Gender disparity is a national and global topic of study, and this publication aims to highlight such differences in the county. Considering the unique characteristics and challenges faced by females in the county can help planners, local government decision-makers, and the public develop equitable, diverse, and inclusive communities for all. All data for this profile come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates. Data are from respondents who answered "Female" to Question 2, which asks "What is your sex?"

In 2022, women comprised more than half of Montgomery County's population. They had a median age of 41.9 years, compared with 38.8 years for men. At 48 births per 1,000 women, the birth rate in the county was slightly lower than the national rate of 52 per 1,000, and approximately 73% of county residents who gave birth were 30–39 years old, compared with only 49% nationally.

Women and men had nearly equal levels of educational attainment, with 60.7% of women having at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 61.1% of men. Both genders participated in the labor force in Montgomery County at higher levels than the national average, with nearly 90% of men participating and just over 80% of women. Women in Montgomery County earned considerably less than their male counterparts ($0.81 cents per $1), likely driven in part by overrepresentation in fields that typically pay less despite comparable education levels.

Sixteen percent of family households in Montgomery County were headed by women with no spouse, and more than half of these households had children under 18. The other half included women living with other family members such as an adult child, a parent, or a sibling. Overall, these households were more likely to have incomes below the poverty line (16.3% compared with 5.8% in the county overall).

The following sections provide a detailed analysis of the demographic, economic, and employment characteristics of women in Montgomery County.

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Over half of Montgomery County's 1.06 million residents were female in 2022. For every 100 females in the county, there were 95.2 males. In comparison, the national sex ratio was 98.3 males for every 100 females. This means that the county had approximately three more females per 100 males than the national average. Consistent with national trends of women living longer than men, the sex ratio varied by age; it was 92.3 males for the population 18 years and younger and 78.1 males for the population 65 years and over.

## AGE

The county's female population tended to be older than the male population. For example, 18.9% of the female population was in the 65 years and over age group, compared with only 15.5% of the male population. The median age for the female population was 41.9 years compared with 38.8 years for males.

*Figure 1: Age Distribution by Sex (2022)*
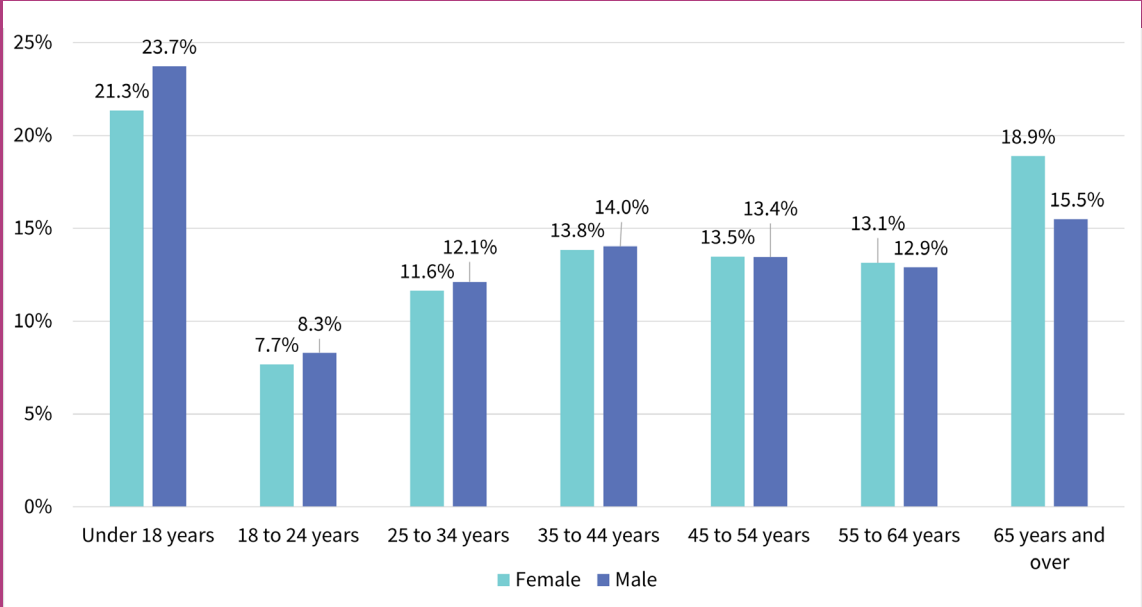


## Race and Ethnicity

The distribution of racial groups for the female population closely reflected that of the county overall. Compared with the male population, the share of Black women (19.3%) was slightly greater than Black men (17.7%). In terms of ethnicity, 19.6% of females identified as Hispanic or Latino, inclusive of all races. This value was slightly lower than the 21.6% of males who identified as Hispanic or Latino.

*Figure 2: Racial Distribution by Sex (2022)*
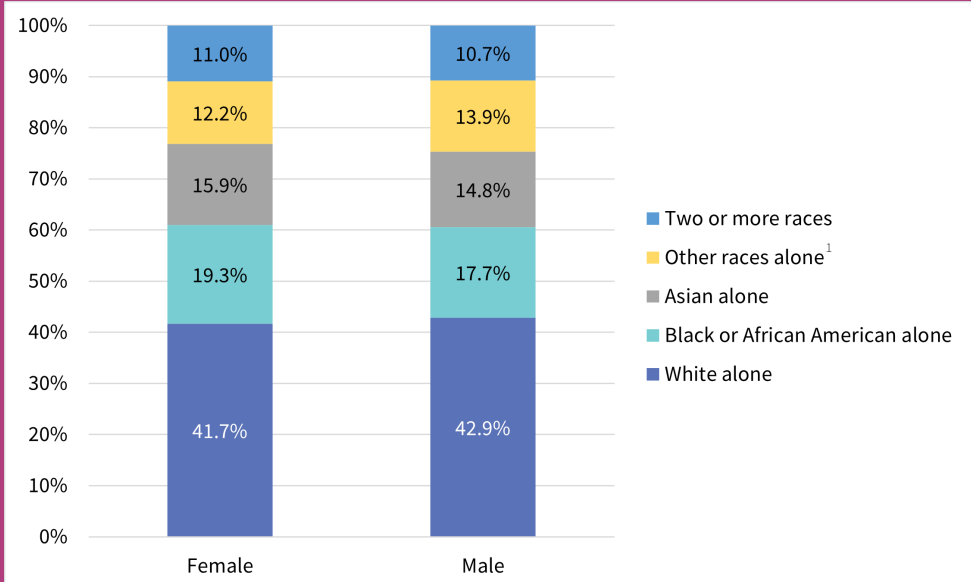


[1] *The "Other races alone" group includes the categories of American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, and Some other race alone.*

## Marital Status  ⚭

Females 15 years and over were less likely than males to be currently married or never married, yet more likely than males to be widowed, divorced, or separated. This variation in marital status was increasingly evident across age. Among women 65 years and over, 46.6% were married and 25.0% were widowed. By contrast, only 7.3% of elderly men were widowed, while 74.7% remained married. Again, this difference can be explained by women's overall higher life expectancy.

*Figure 3: Marital Status by Sex (Population 15 Years and Over, 2022)*
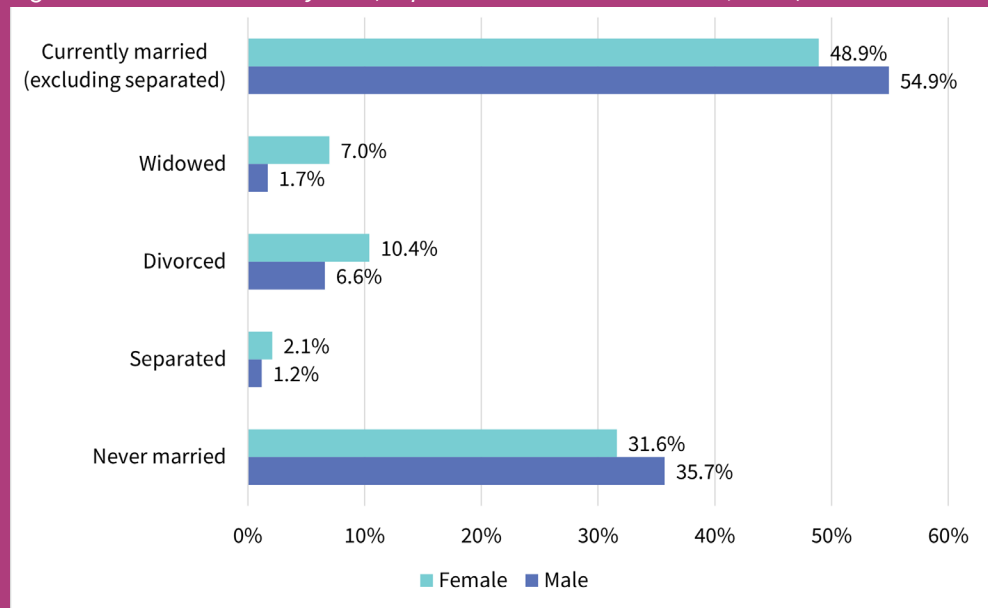


## Fertility Status  👶

In 2022, 11,619 (4.8%) women aged 15 to 50 years had given birth in the previous 12 months. While the national fertility rate was 52 births per 1,000 women, that of the county was lower at only **48 births per 1,000 women**. Figure 4 displays the distribution of ages at which these women gave birth. Of women in the county who gave birth in the past 12 months, only 18.6% were between 20 and 29 years, while 72.9% were between 30 and 39 years. By contrast, at the national level, 39.0% of women who gave birth in the past 12 months were 20 to 29 years, while 49.1% were 30 to 39 years. The county trend of lower fertility rates among younger women and higher rates among older women was not as apparent at the national scale.
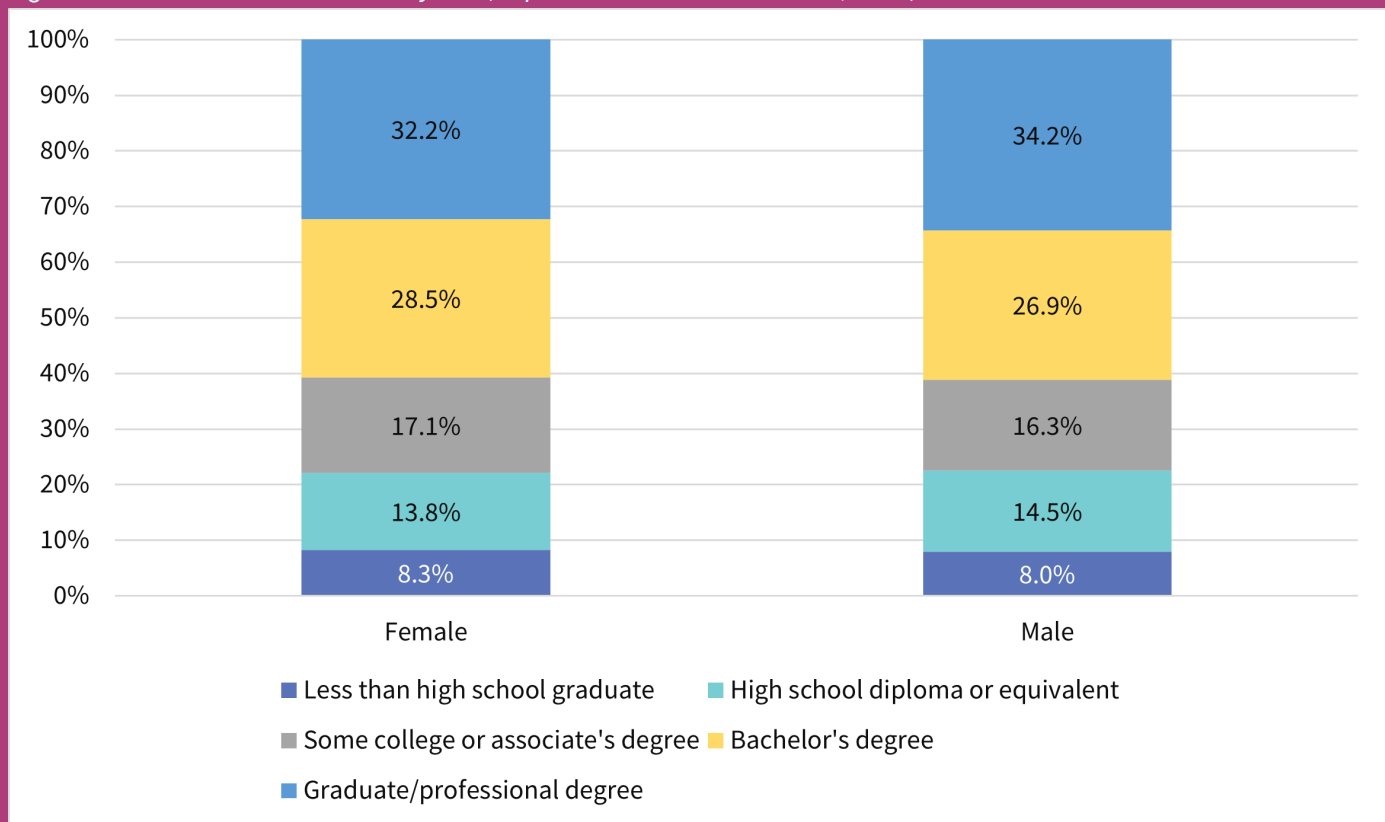
*Figure 4: Women Who Gave Birth in the Past 12 Months by Age (Females 15 to 50 Years, 2022)*
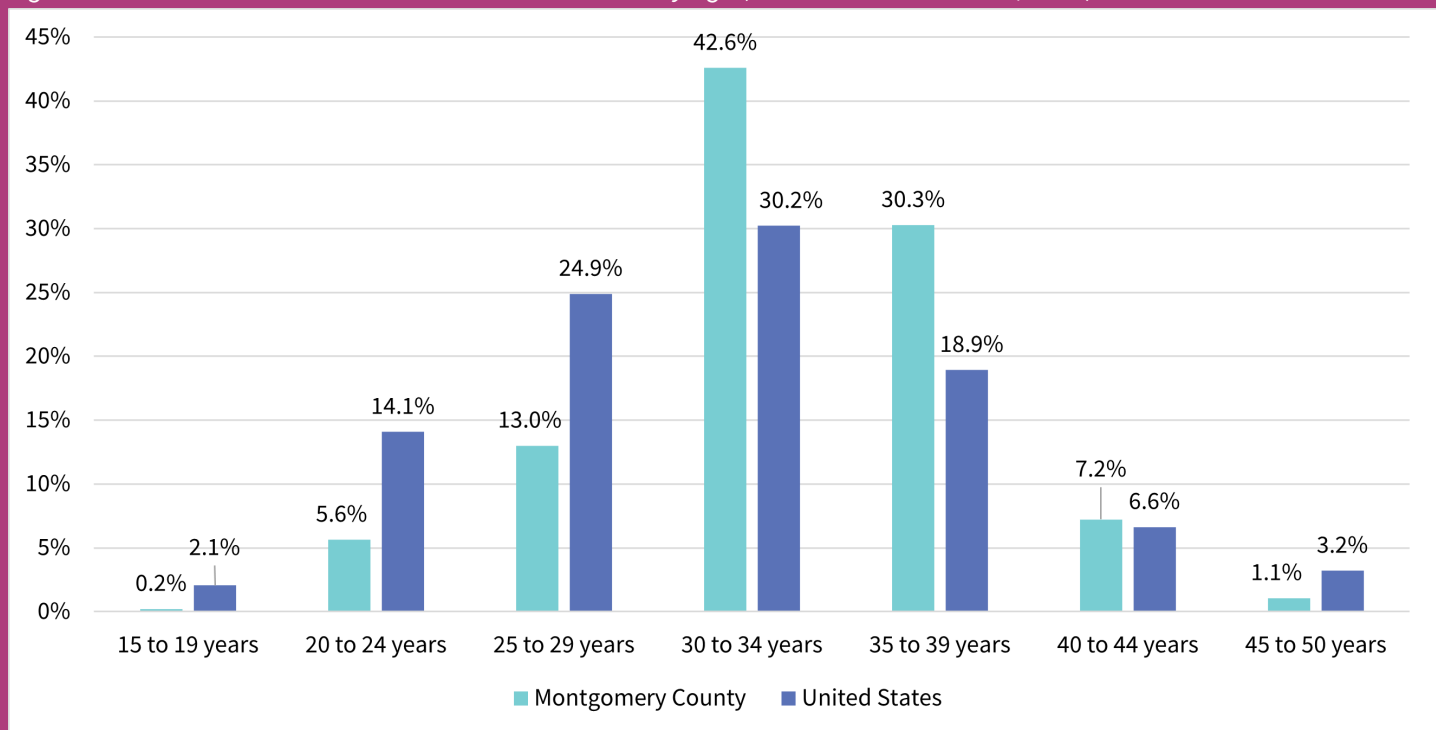
## Education 🎓

Females ages 25 and over in the county were highly educated, with 91.7% having completed high school and **60.8%** having received a bachelor's degree or higher. Although males were slightly more likely than females to hold a graduate or professional degree, there were no significant differences in educational attainment across sexes. Compared with females nationwide, however, women in the county were considerably better educated. While 14.7% of females in the United States had completed a higher education degree, twice as many (32.2%) had done so in Montgomery County.

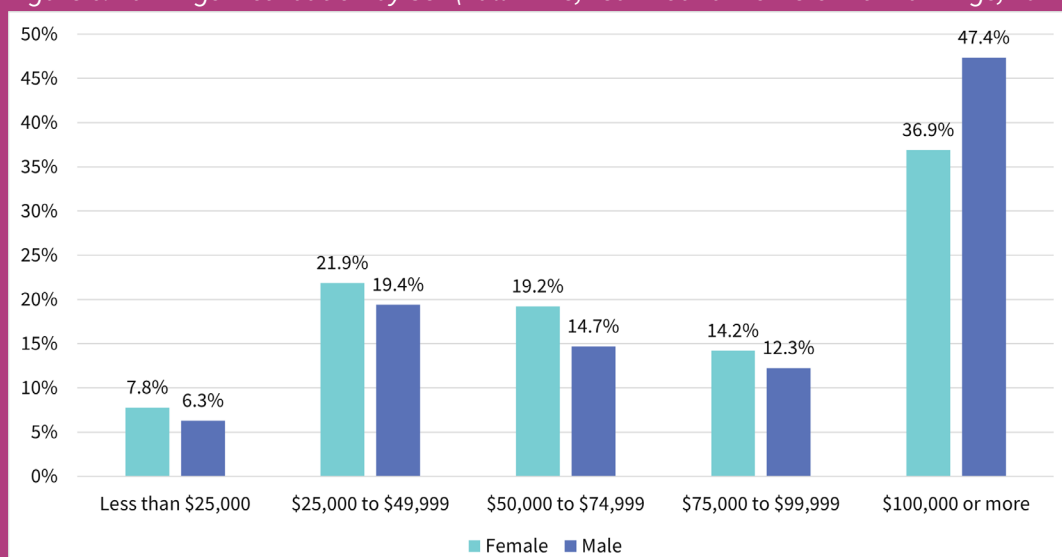*Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Sex (Population 25 Years and Over, 2022)*



Legend:
- ■ Less than high school graduate
- ■ High school diploma or equivalent
- ■ Some college or associate's degree
- ■ Bachelor's degree
- ■ Graduate/professional degree

Female:
- 32.2%
- 28.5%
- 17.1%
- 13.8%
- 8.3%

Male:
- 34.2%
- 26.9%
- 16.3%
- 14.5%
- 8.0%

# ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

## Earnings and Poverty 💵

Despite similarities in educational attainment between males and females in the county, there was a notable disparity in earnings. In 2022, the median earnings of women in Montgomery County was $76,884, which was **81.2%** of the male median earnings of $94,642. The local gender-wage gap was one percentage point higher than the gap at the national level, where the median earnings for full-time, year-round female workers was 82.2% of their male counterparts ($51,275 versus $62,344). Furthermore, men in Montgomery County consistently earned more than women with comparable education levels. As shown in Table 1, for the population 25 years and over with earnings, females earned between two-thirds and three-quarters of what men earned.

*Figure 6: Earnings Distribution by Sex (Full-Time, Year-Round Workers with Earnings, 2022)*



*Table 1: Earnings by Educational Attainment (Population 25 Years and Over with Earnings, 2022)*

| Earnings by education | Male median earnings | Female median earnings | Female earnings as percentage of male earnings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than high school graduate | $38,372 | $25,868 | 67.4% |
| High school graduate (or equivalent) | $42,890 | $31,217 | 72.8% |
| Some college or associate's degree | $52,595 | $39,748 | 75.6% |
| Bachelor's degree | $95,265 | $67,777 | 71.1% |
| Graduate or professional degree | $132,577 | $99,151 | 74.8% |

Interestingly, there was also variation between males and females in earnings associated with the next level of education. While a man with a bachelor's degree made 81.1% more than a man with some college or an associate's degree, a woman with a bachelor's degree earned only 70.5% more than a woman with the previous level of education. Relative to males, females had greater growth in earnings when they received a graduate or professional degree (46.3% versus 39.2%).

This disparity in earnings is further evidenced by the 8.5% of females who fell below the poverty line in 2022. This is greater than the 7.3% of males who were below the poverty line.

# EMPLOYMENT

## Employment Status

The proportion of women aged 20–64 years in the labor force was **80.5%**, 8.8 percentage points lower than the share of men (89.3%) who were in the labor force. Notably, the Montgomery County figure in 2022 was 5.9 percentage points higher than the national female labor force participation rate of 74.6%.

*Table 2: Employment Status by Sex (Population 20 to 64 Years, 2022)*

|  | Montgomery County | | United States | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Labor force participation | 89.3% | 80.5% | 83.1% | 74.6% |
| Unemployment rate | 3.1% | 4.2% | 4.0% | 4.0% |

As seen in Figure 7, participation in the county's labor force was lower for women with children. Less than three-quarters (73.2%) of females with children under 6 years of age and children 6 to 17 years of age were in the labor force. This share was nearly 10 percentage points higher (82.9%) for women with children aged 6 to 17 years only. This pattern can be attributed to women leaving the labor force to care for their young children and returning to work when their children are older.

*Figure 7: Female Rate of Participation in the Labor Force (Females 20–64 Years, 2022)*
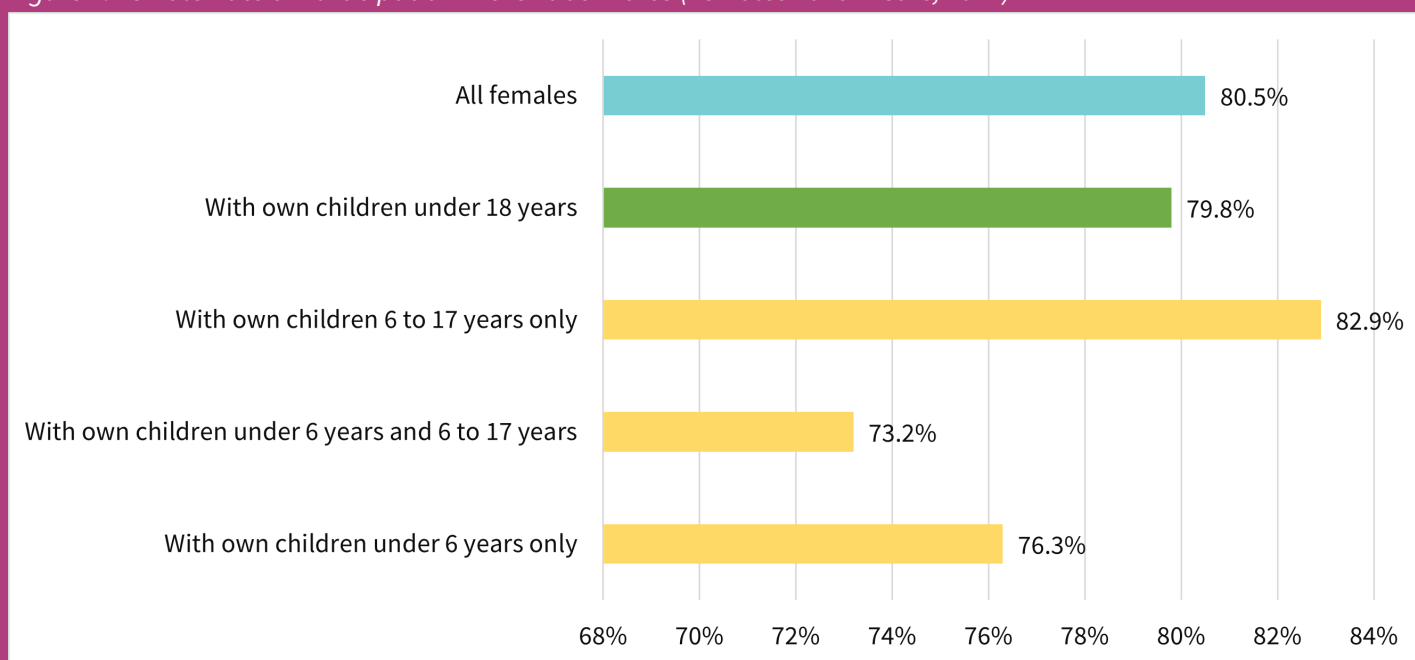
# Occupation 👥

Management, education, and computer professions employed 143,898 (53.7%) women in the county (see Appendix for a detailed breakdown of occupation by sex). While these top three occupations for both women and men reflected those of the county, Figure 8 demonstrates where employed men and women were over- and under-represented. As indicated by the bars showing the percentage of females in each occupation, women were overrepresented in healthcare support professions, personal care and service jobs, and office and administrative roles, and underemployed in construction, transportation, and engineering occupations. This indicates a clustering of women in occupations that are generally lower paying and viewed as traditionally "female." The occupations with a relatively even gender split included sales, food preparation, and management, business, and financial.

As shown by the points in Figure 8, men tended to out-earn women even within the same occupation, revealing a pervasive gender-wage gap.

*Figure 8: Sex and Earnings by Occupation (Population 16 Years and Over, 2022)*
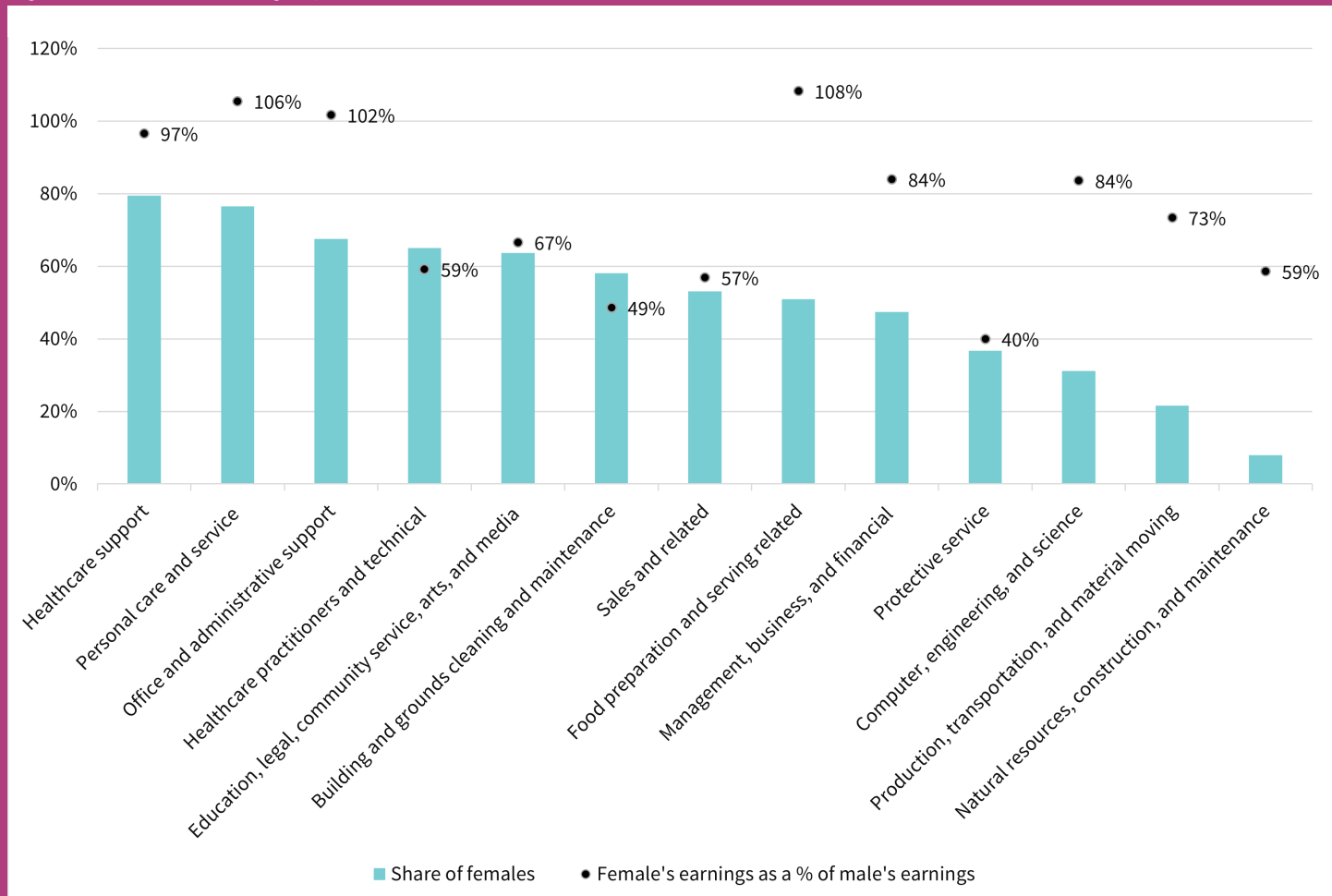
# Commute to Work 🚗

In 2022, more than three-quarters (76.9%) of the working female population in Montgomery County were employed within the county. Relative to men, women were less likely to work both outside the county and outside Maryland.

As seen in Figure 9, more than half (51.5%) of females drove alone to work, though this was smaller than the share of males (54.7%) who drove alone to work. Women were more likely to work from home than men, and this share has increased drastically since the COVID-19 pandemic (7.1% in 2019 versus 29.1% in 2022). Females were also more likely than males to take public transportation to work, likely because their workplaces were closer to their homes.

*Figure 9: Commute to Work by Sex (Workers 16 Years and Over, 2022)*
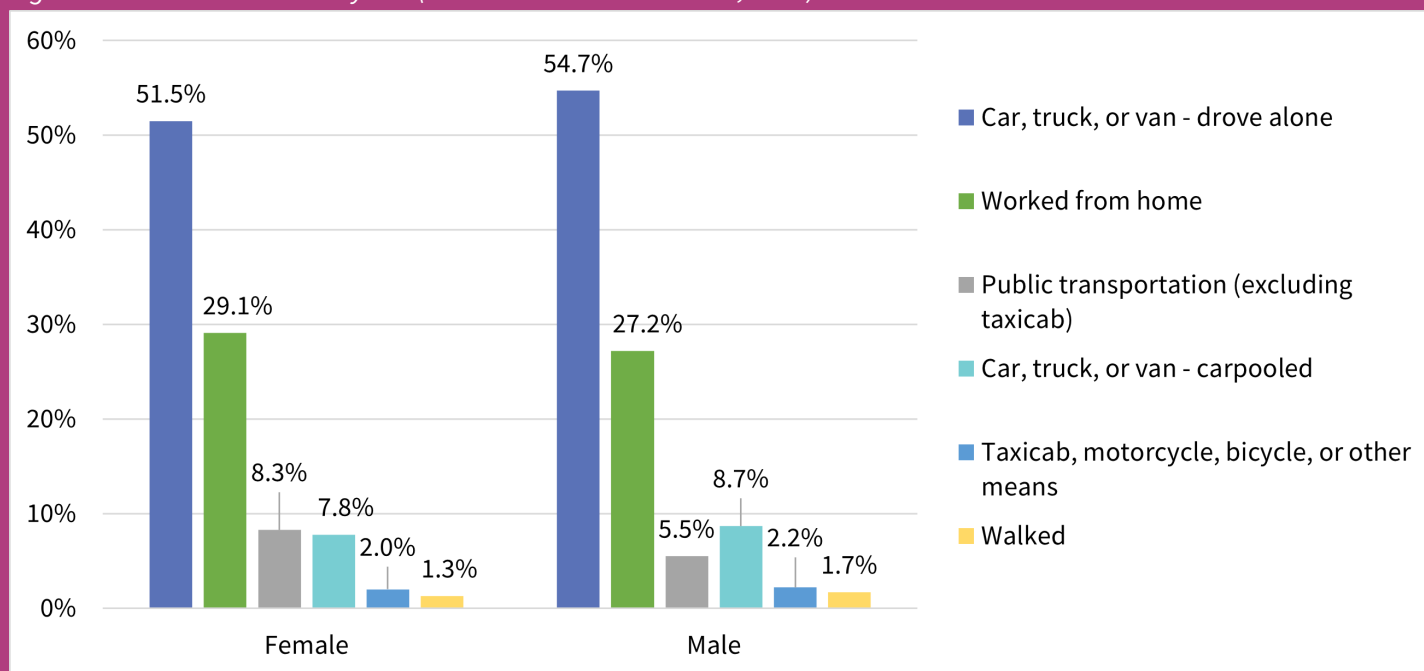


Because they more often had jobs that were closer to their place of residence and due to the prevalence of work-from-home opportunities, women also had shorter travel times to work. While 53.3% of women spent less than 30 minutes commuting to work, only 41.3% of men did.

# FAMILIES HEADED BY A FEMALE WITH NO SPOUSE 👩‍👧

This section describes family households headed by females without a spouse (see box below for definitions).[2] In addition to statistics on this subset of households, their characteristics are compared with those of other family households and the overall female population of the county.

**Family:** *A group of two or more people in a household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption and who are living together.*

**Family Household:** *Members of a family plus any people unrelated to the householder who are living together.*

**Householder:** *The person in whose name the housing unit is owned/rented. If the house is owned/rented by a married couple, the householder may be either spouse. The householder is also referred to as "head of household."*

**Female Householder with No Spouse:** *A householder who is female and is separated, widowed, divorced, or single and lives with at least one other relative. This includes single mothers with children under 18 or adult children, and women without spouses living with other relatives (e.g., sister, father). Females living alone in one-person households are excluded.*

Of the 261,250 family households in the county, 77.3% were households headed by married couples, 6.8% were headed by a male with no spouse, and the remaining **15.9%** were headed by a female with no spouse.

*Figure 10: Family Types in Montgomery County (2022)*



- Female householder, no spouse — 15.9%
- Male householder, no spouse — 6.8%
- Married couple families — 77.3%

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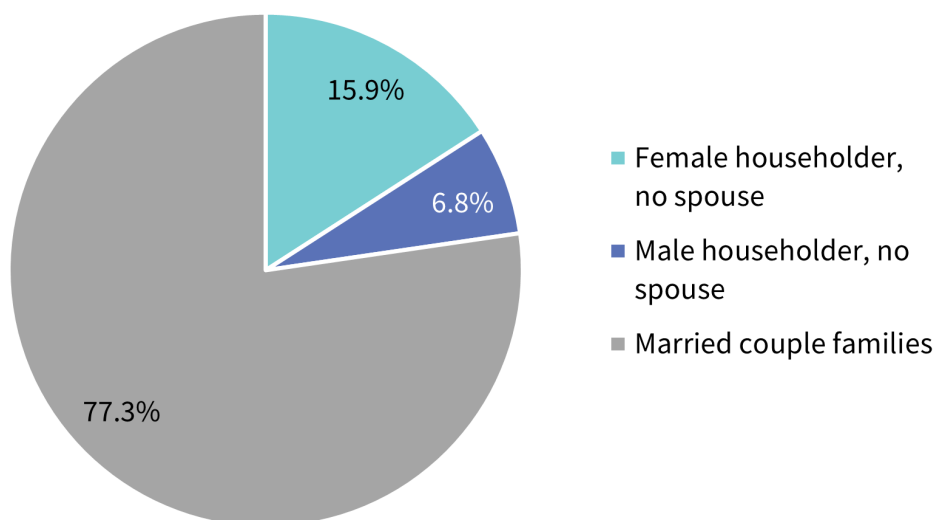
[2] *In this section, the terms "female householder" and "male householder" refer to householders in a family household with no spouse.*

## Demographic Characteristics 👥

More than half (55.8%) of families headed by females with no spouse had children under 18 years. The average family size for a female householder family was 3.24 people. While this was on par with the countywide average family size of 3.27 people, families with a male householder were considerably smaller at an average of 2.90 people.

Notably, the racial breakdown of female householders did not reflect the composition of females in the county. While 19.3% of all females identified as Black, 33.9% of female householders fell under this racial category. By contrast, only 28.4% of female householders were white, although 41.7% of all females identified as such.

Female householders tended to be less educated than all females in the county. While 60.8% of women in the county held a bachelor's degree or higher, this share was 44.1% for female householders without a spouse.

## Income and Poverty 💰

Female householder families were more likely to have incomes that were below the poverty line compared with married couple families. In 2022, 5.8% of the county's households were below the poverty line. This share was 16.3% for female householder families, nearly twice the share (8.9%) of male householder families. In contrast, only 3.4% of married couple families fell below the poverty line.

*Figure 11: Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level (2022)*
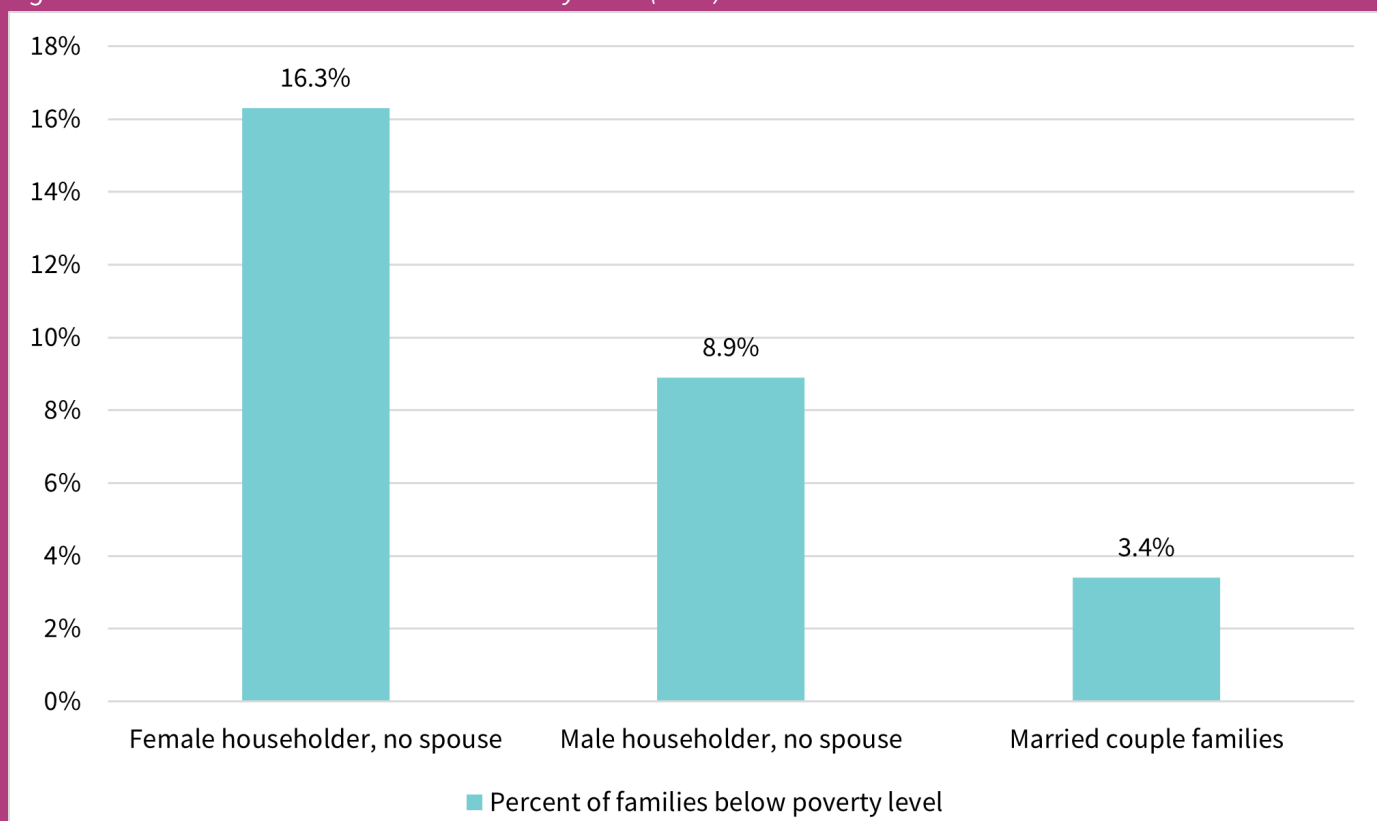
# Housing Characteristics 🏠

Households headed by married couples were significantly more likely than single-householder families to live in owner-occupied housing. Among single-householder families, a slightly larger share of male householder families lived in owner-occupied housing than female householder families (55.2% versus 53.8%). In line with home ownership trends, married couple families were also considerably more likely than single-householder families to live in single-family units. While 83% of married couple families lived in one-unit structures, this share was approximately 62% for both male and female householder families.

*Figure 12: Housing Tenure by Family Type (2022)*
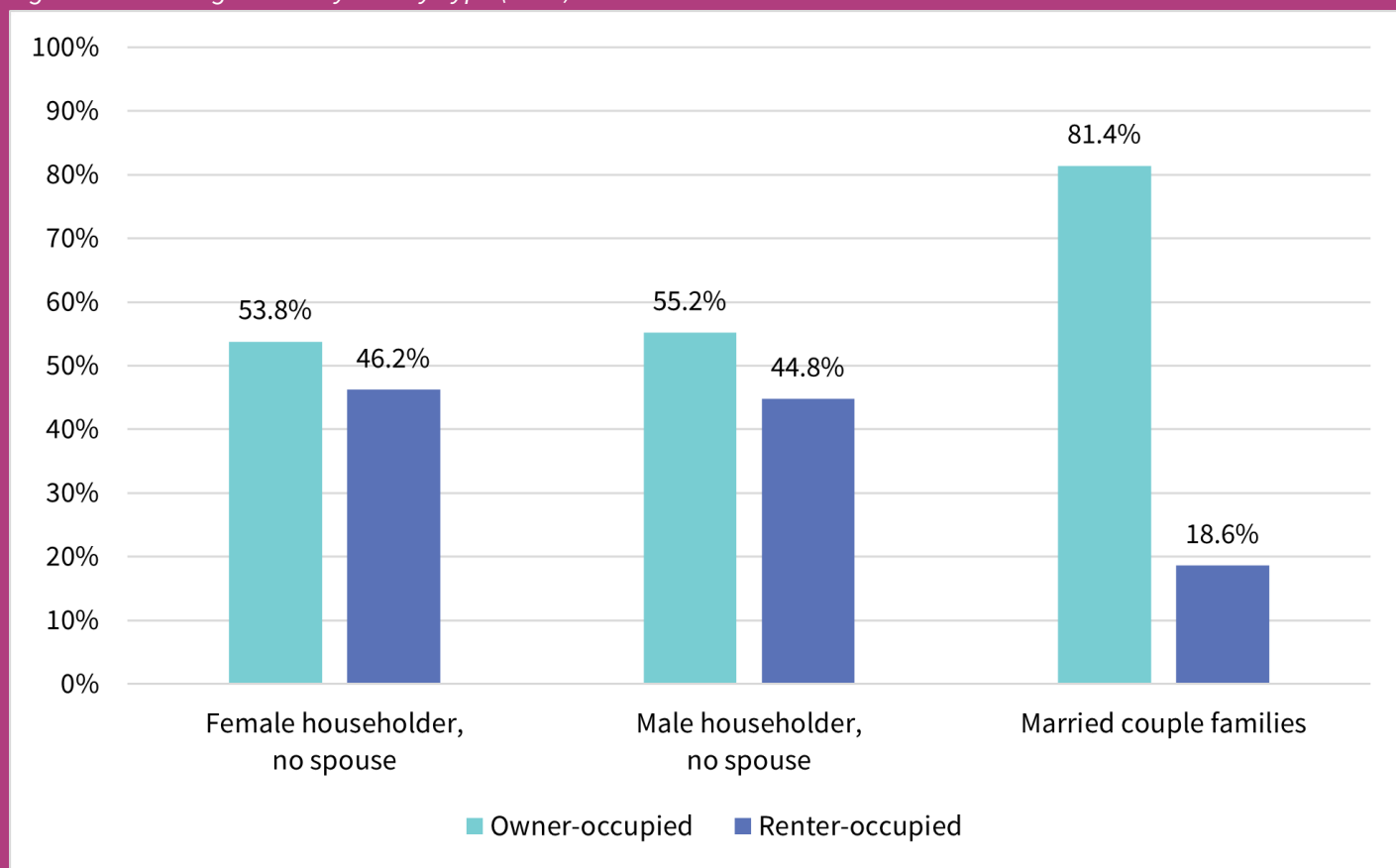
# APPENDIX

*Table A-1: Occupation by Sex (2022)*

| Occupation | Females | Males |
|---|---|---|
| Management, business, and financial | 61,402 | 68,235 |
| Computer, engineering, and science | 26,800 | 59,376 |
| Education, legal, community service, arts, and media | 55,696 | 31,704 |
| Healthcare practitioners and technical | 20,819 | 11,221 |
| Healthcare support | 10,408 | 2,676 |
| Protective service | 2,995 | 5,171 |
| Food preparation and serving related | 10,778 | 10,391 |
| Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance | 11,176 | 8,054 |
| Personal care and service | 12,943 | 3,971 |
| Sales and related | 19,816 | 17,528 |
| Office and administrative support | 25,576 | 12,338 |
| Natural resources, construction, and maintenance | 3,133 | 35,950 |
| Production, transportation, and material moving | 6,598 | 23,890 |

Profile of
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