

People with Disabilities

in Montgomery County

Prepared by
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 Research and Strategic Projects Division

This factsheet presents key demographic, economic, and household characteristics of people with disabilities in Montgomery County compared with people without disabilities.

In 2021, 91,129 residents, or **8.7%**, of Montgomery County had at least one disability. The goal of this profile is to provide information to help planners, local government decision makers, and the public better understand the unique characteristics and some of the challenges faced by this group.¹

In Montgomery County, people with disabilities tend to skew older, be female, and identify as White. They are more likely to earn less, hold fewer educational degrees, and live alone relative to people without disabilities. Considering these factors can assist the County in developing accessible and inclusive communities for all.

¹ All data for this profile come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 1-year estimates. The ACS uses six aspects of disability—hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living—to create an overall measure of disability. Given data availability, this profile reflects the total civilian non-institutionalized population. This excludes persons residing in institutions such as nursing homes, prisons, jails, mental hospitals, and juvenile correction facilities.



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Type of Disability

The most commonly occurring disabilities in the County were independent living difficulties (4.0%) and ambulatory difficulties (3.9%).

Of those with a disability, **44%** reported having more than one of the six types outlined in the text box. Recognizing the multiple types of disabilities is important for planning. For example, the recently approved [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) addresses pedestrians with vision and/or mobility issues and incorporates many design recommendations that reduce barriers for them. Increased awareness of mobility and related challenges can help guide more inclusive planning, design, and development outcomes.

Types of Disabilities (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau):



Hearing difficulty:
Deaf or having serious difficulty hearing.



Vision difficulty:
Blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing corrective lenses.



Cognitive difficulty:
Due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.



Ambulatory difficulty:
Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

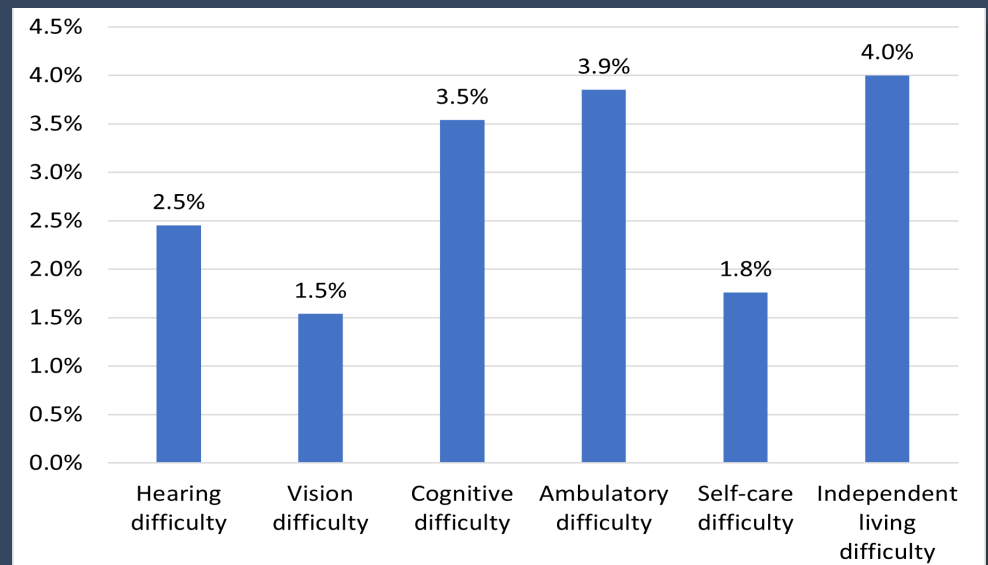


Self-care difficulty:
Having difficulty bathing or dressing.



Independent living difficulty:
Due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping.

Figure 1: Distribution of Disabilities in the County by Type (2021)²



² Respondents could select more than one disability type. Hearing and vision difficulties were counted for all ages; cognitive, ambulatory, and self-care difficulties were counted for the population 5 years and over; independent living difficulties were counted for the population 15 years and over.



Race and Ethnicity

Nearly half of people with a disability in the County identified their race as White.³

This share (49.8%) was relatively higher than the overall White share of the County (42.2%). This corresponds with the trend of the older population being more likely to be White.⁴ In contrast, those who identify as “some other race” were less likely to have a disability compared with their overall makeup in the County (7% versus 12%).

In terms of ethnicity, **14%** of people with disabilities identified as Hispanic or Latino, inclusive of all races. This value was lower than the share of people without disabilities who were Hispanic or Latino (21%). This demonstrates that Hispanics or Latinos were less likely to have a disability than non-Hispanics.

In line with this racial and ethnic breakdown, the data show that people with disabilities were more likely than those without disabilities to speak only English at home (67% versus 55%).

In addition, **70%** of people with disabilities were native-born, which is slightly greater than the share of native-born people without disabilities (67%).

Figure 2: Racial Composition of Population with a Disability (2021)

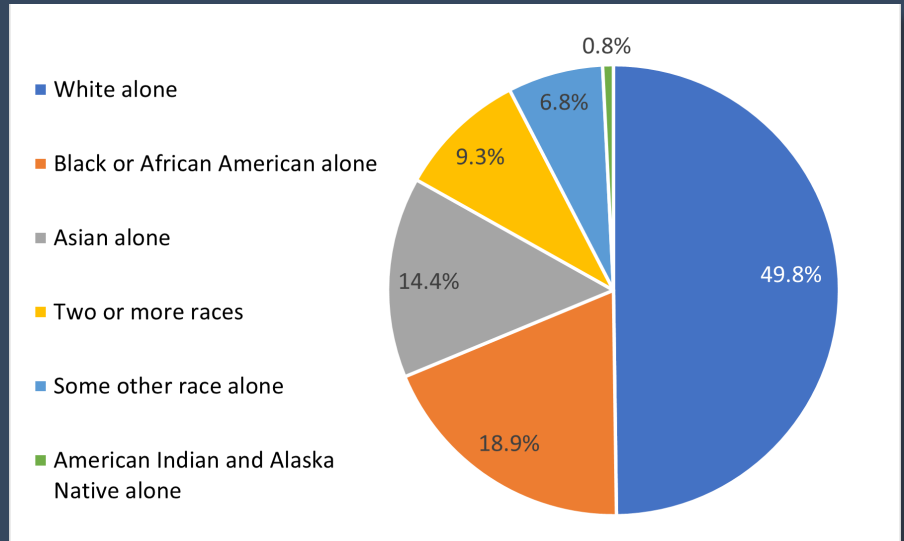
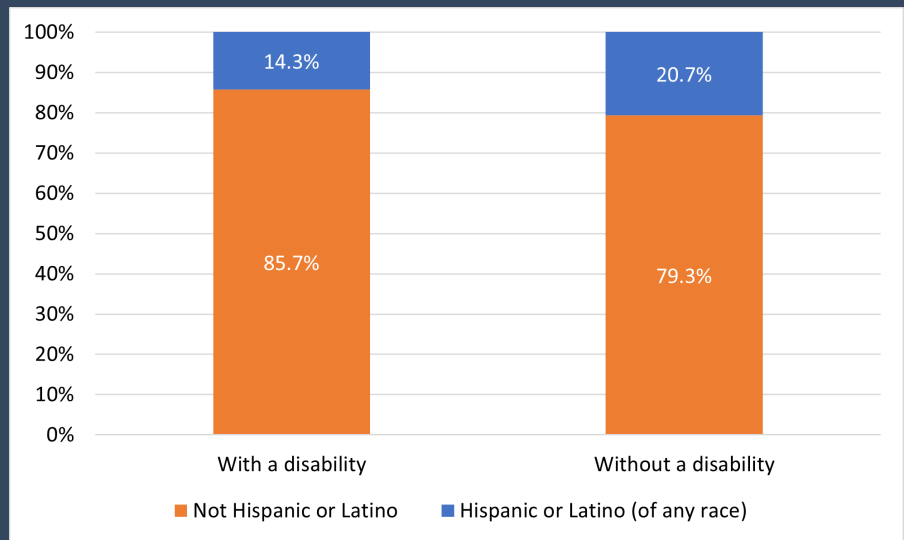


Figure 3: Ethnic Composition of Population by Disability Status (2021)



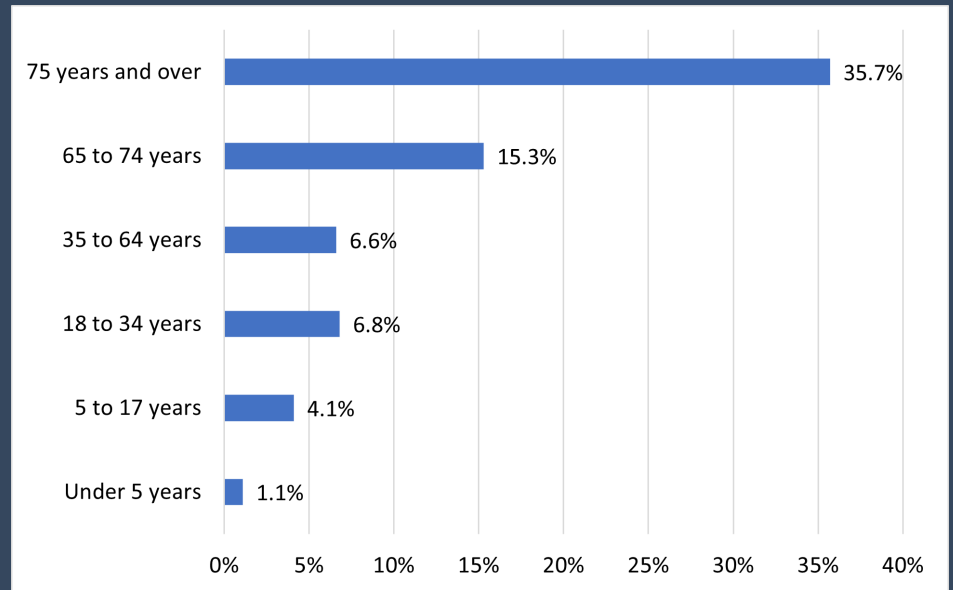
³ These racial groups include individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino.

⁴ See the [Montgomery County Trends Report](#) for more details.

Age

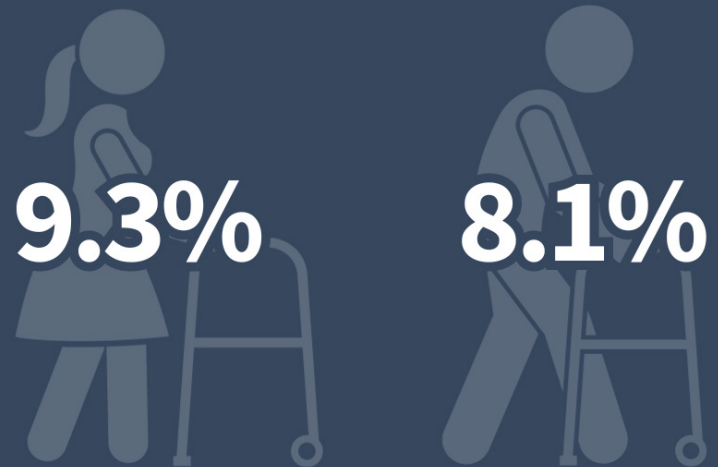
Individuals **75** years and over exhibited the highest prevalence of disability (36%). Notably, 22% of people in this age group lived with an ambulatory difficulty and 20% had an independent living difficulty.

Figure 4: Prevalence of Disability by Age (2021)



Gender

There was a gender discrepancy among County residents with a disability. Females were more likely than males to report having at least one of the six disabilities, with **9.3% of women** and **8.1% of men** reporting a disability.



Overall, in 2021, 3.8% of the County were veterans. Of these, 21.6% reported having a disability. In contrast, only 11% of non-veterans reported having a disability.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS



Employment and Occupation

Nearly 80% of working-age County residents without a disability were employed in 2021.

The employment share for the working-age population with a disability was drastically lower at **52%**. While 16% of working-age individuals without a disability were not in the labor force, a much larger percentage (42%) of working-age individuals with a disability did not participate in the labor force. The share of unemployed working-age people with and without disabilities was comparable at 6% and 5%, respectively.

Employed residents with disabilities most commonly worked in educational services (25%) and professional and administrative services (23%). While most industries employed a similar share of those with and without disabilities, public administration consisted of a much lower share of people with disabilities.

Figure 5: Employment Status of Working-Age Population by Disability Status (Population 16 Years and Over, 2021)

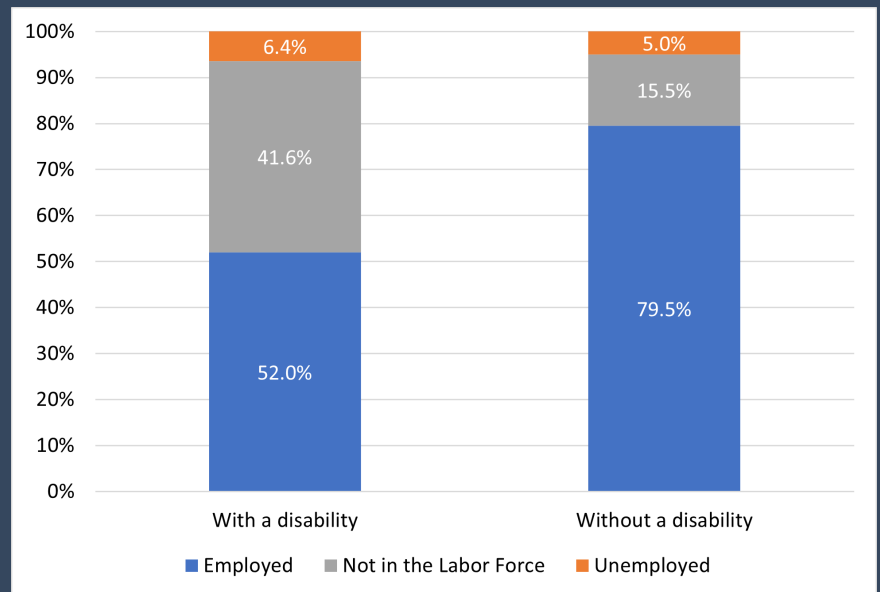
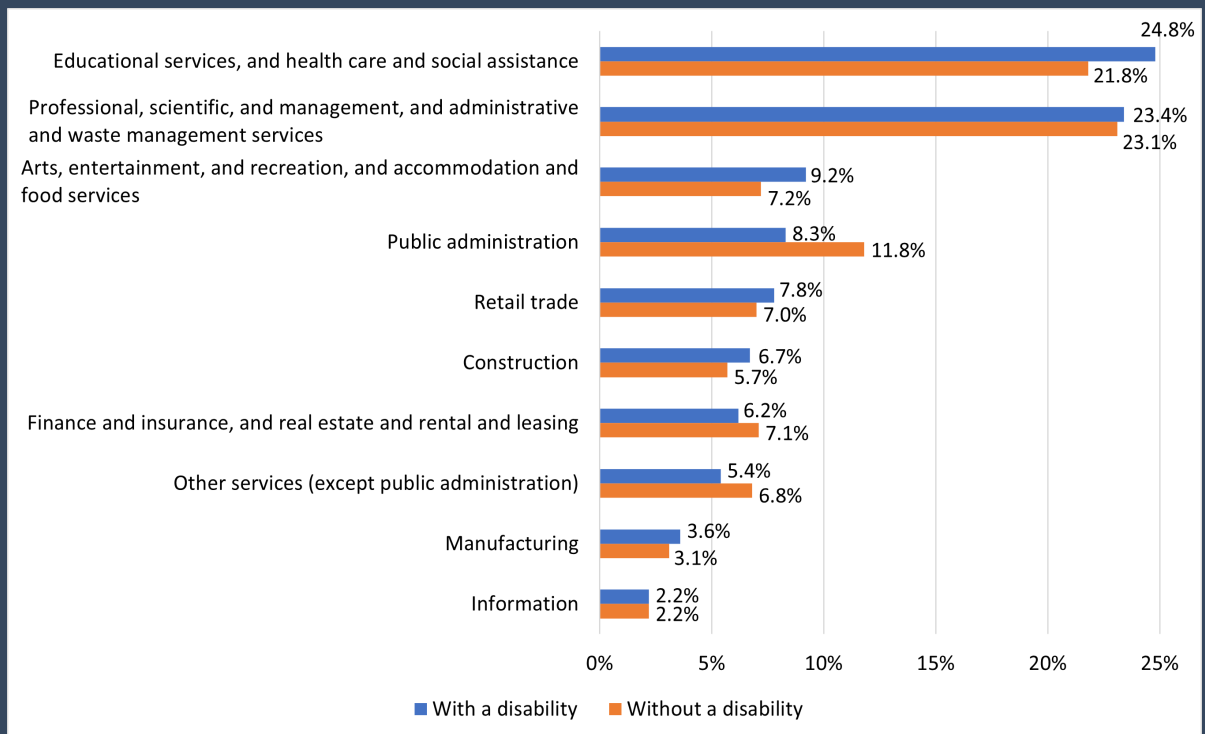


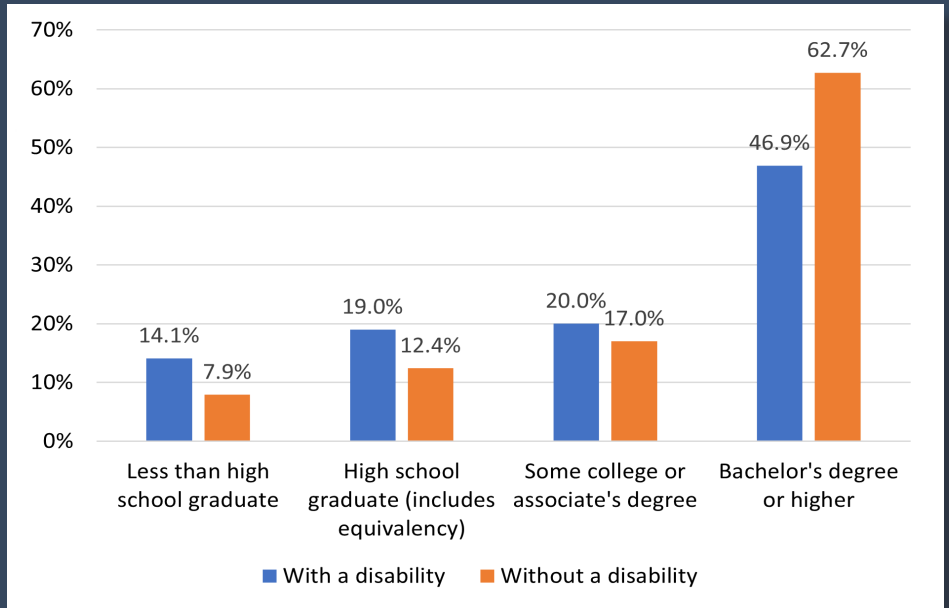
Figure 6: Distribution of Employment by Disability Status, Top 10 Industries (Population 16 Years and Over, 2021)



Education

People with a disability were significantly less likely to have a bachelor's degree and more likely to hold up to a high school diploma, compared with those without a disability. Two-thirds of people without disabilities earned a bachelor's degree or higher, while less than half of people with a disability obtained this level of education. The percentage of people with a disability holding only a high school diploma (or equivalent) was 19% compared with 12% of the population without a disability.

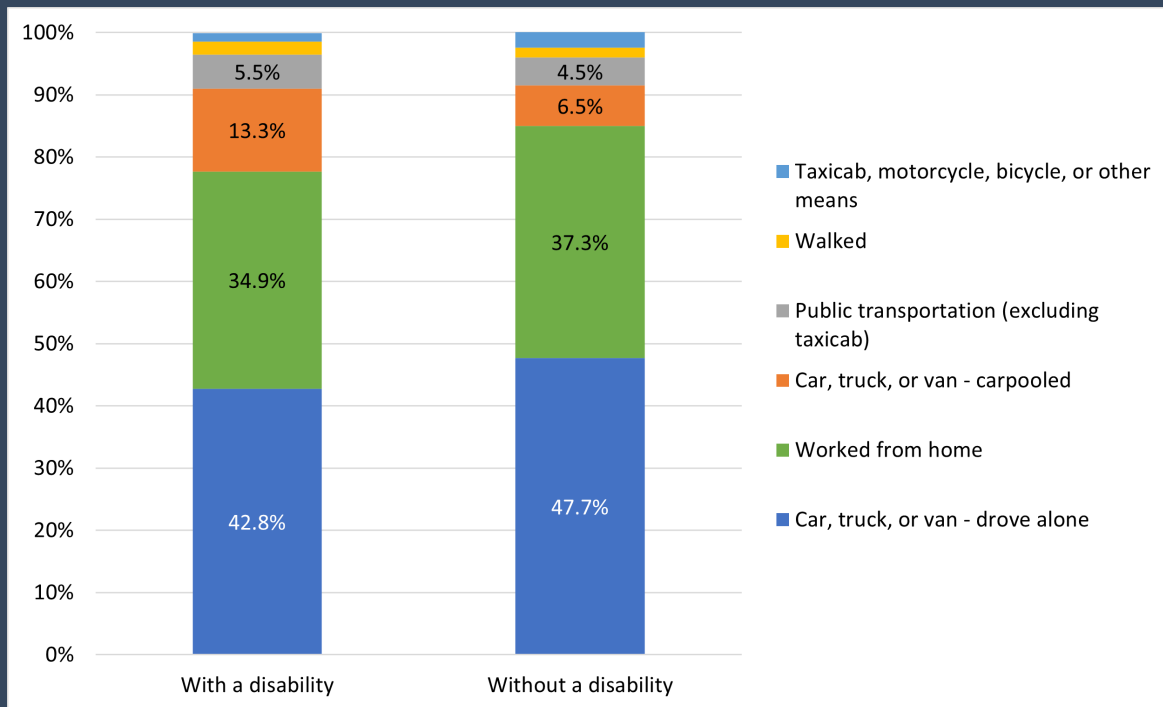
Figure 7: Educational Attainment by Disability Status (Population 25 Years and Over, 2021)



Commute to Work

People with a disability primarily worked from home (35%) or drove alone to their work site (43%) in 2021. In contrast, people without a disability were slightly more likely to work from home (37%) and much more likely to drive alone to their job (48%). Along with these modes, 13% of those with a disability carpooled to work, a relatively larger share than the 7% of those without a disability who carpooled to work. Notably, the use of public transportation was low both for people with disabilities (6%) and for those without (5%), perhaps due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 8: Mode of Commute to Work by Disability Status (Workers 16 Years and Over, 2021)





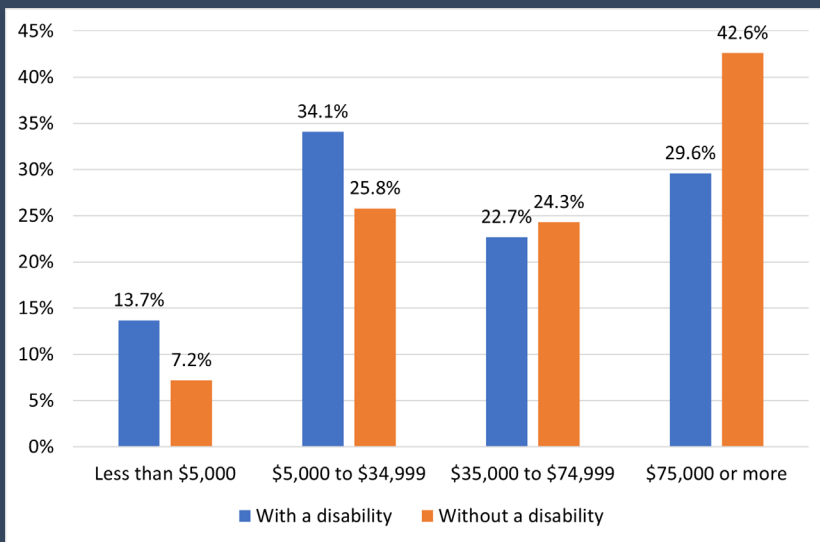
Income

The median annual earnings for people with a disability 16 years and over was \$36,987, while the median annual earnings for people without a disability was \$60,816. This disparity is further evidenced by the 16% of people with a disability age 16 years and over that fell below 100% of the poverty level. This is more than twice the share of residents without a disability who were below 100% of the poverty level in 2021 (7%).

As demonstrated by the median annual earnings findings, in 2021, individuals with a disability earned significantly less than those without a disability. While 43% of respondents without a disability earned \$75,000 or more in the previous year, only 30% of people with a disability earned this amount. At the other end of the scale, 14% of those with a disability earned less than \$5,000 annually, which is a higher share than those without a disability (7%).⁵



Figure 9: Earnings by Disability Status
(Population 16 Years and Over, 2021)



⁵ As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, "earnings" are a subset of income that include wages or salary from a job, or income from being self-employed.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

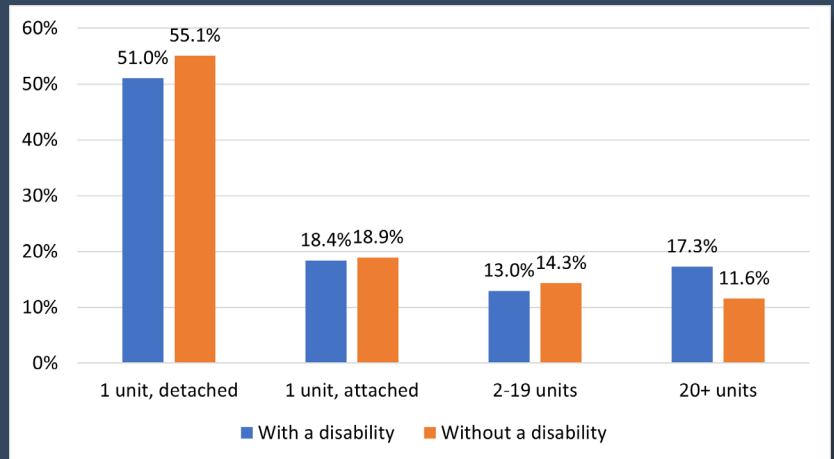
People with disabilities were slightly more likely to be renters than people without disabilities (35.4% versus 31.6%). In terms of home ownership, the percentage of people with disabilities living in owner-occupied homes was 3.8 percentage points lower than the percentage of people without disabilities living in owner-occupied homes (64.6% versus 68.4%).



Housing Type

Individuals with disabilities were slightly less likely than individuals without disabilities to live in single-family detached units (51% versus 55%). Relative to people without disabilities, people with disabilities tended to live in multifamily apartment buildings with 20 or more units (17% versus 12%).

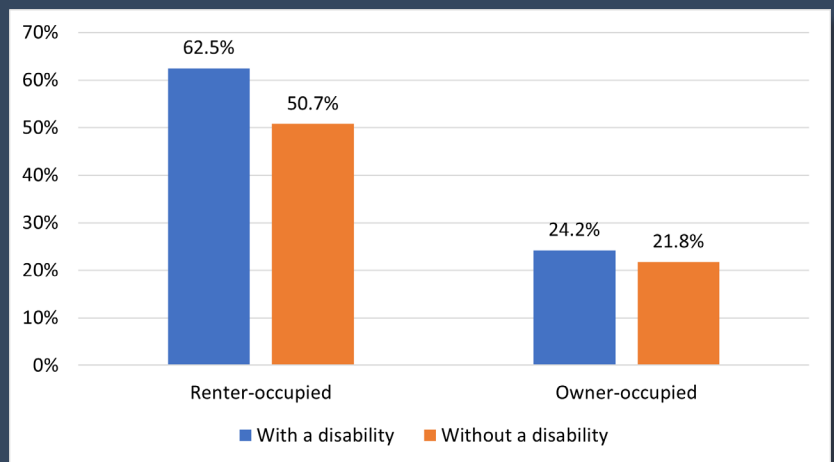
Figure 10: Housing Unit Structure by Disability Status (2021)



Housing Costs

People with disabilities experienced a higher rate of housing cost burden⁶ relative to people without disabilities. Sixty-three percent of people with disabilities who rented their home were cost-burdened, while only 50% of people without disabilities were cost-burdened. The difference in housing cost burden was less stark among homeowners.

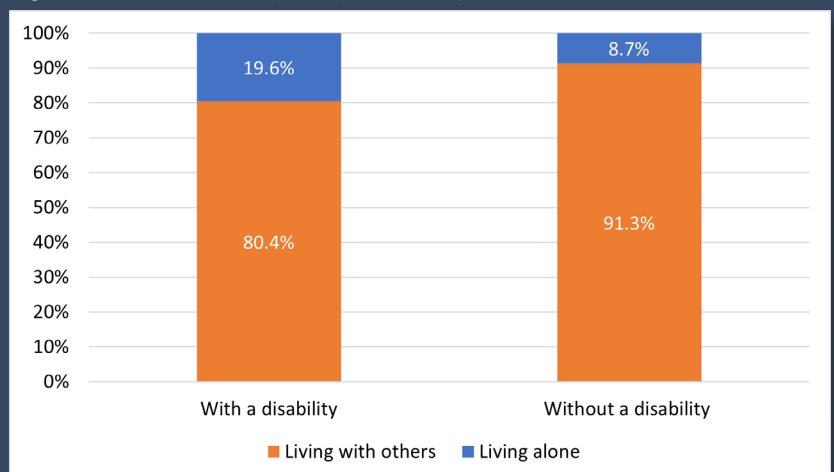
Figure 11: Housing Cost Burden by Tenure and Disability Status (2021)



Household Type

As shown in Figure 12, almost 20% of people with a disability lived alone in 2021. This is notably higher than those without a disability, of whom only 9% lived alone.

Figure 12: Household Type by Disability Status (2021)



⁶ As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, households are considered cost-burdened when they spend more than 30% of their income on rent, mortgage, and other housing needs.

Profile of People with Disabilities in Montgomery County

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<https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research>

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