



MCPB

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BRIEFING ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY



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SUMMARY

Research and Strategic Projects (RSP) Division staff will present a demographic profile of children in Montgomery County. The research was conducted using the most recent data (2024) from primarily the American Community Survey (ACS), as well as the Maryland Department of Planning and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The publication is attached to this report and available [online](#).

Montgomery County's population under age 18 has grown more slowly than the total population in recent decades. Compared to the overall county population, the child population was more racially diverse and more likely to be U.S. native-born, and households with children were more likely to be homeowners, reside in single-family homes, and earn higher incomes. The analysis also found greater economic disadvantage among households with children headed solely by a female, with a lower median income, higher poverty rate, and higher participation rate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) than for other types of households with children. Key findings from this initial analysis on the characteristics of the county's children may warrant further research into topics such as the impact of the housing-cost burden on family location decisions and the migration and fertility drivers behind the slowing growth of this age cohort.

The RSP Division's demographic studies, including past profiles of specific racial and ethnic groups, older adults, women, and people with disabilities, are available online [here](#).

PROFILE

Children in Montgomery County

This publication highlights key demographic, housing, and economic characteristics for Montgomery County's children and the households in which they live. The primary source of population and housing information is the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand changes taking place in their communities. Demographic data are from the 2024 ACS 1-year sample, unless otherwise noted. For this profile, children are defined as people under the age of 18.



Prepared by
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 **Montgomery Planning**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Children and the households in which they live have unique needs such as schools and childcare facilities that require an understanding of their characteristics by planners and decision-makers. In 2024, there were 243,480 children in Montgomery County, representing 22% of its total population. In recent decades, this age cohort has grown more slowly than the population overall as people have had fewer children. The child population in Montgomery County is very diverse with no single racial group comprising the majority. Nineteen percent of children identified as multiracial, compared with 12% of county residents of all ages.

Households with children were more likely to be homeowners in single-family homes with higher incomes. Homeowners comprised 68% of this household type, compared with 65% of all households countywide. Also, 78% of households with children resided in a single-family home, but this figure was 65% for all households countywide. Finally, 46% of households with children earned \$200,000 or more, while 33% of all households countywide were in this income bracket.

The analysis also found greater economic disadvantage among households with children headed solely by a female. This category of households had a median annual income of \$56,475. In contrast, the median annual income for married-couple households with children was nearly four times as much (\$218,338). Also, about one-quarter of households headed solely by a female with children lived below the official poverty line and participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), higher than the 3% poverty rate and 6% SNAP participation rate for married-couple households with children.

While this brief demographic profile provides an initial analysis of the characteristics of children in Montgomery County, further research may be warranted to go deeper into topics such as the impact of the housing-cost burden on family location decisions and the migration and fertility drivers behind the slowing growth of this age cohort.

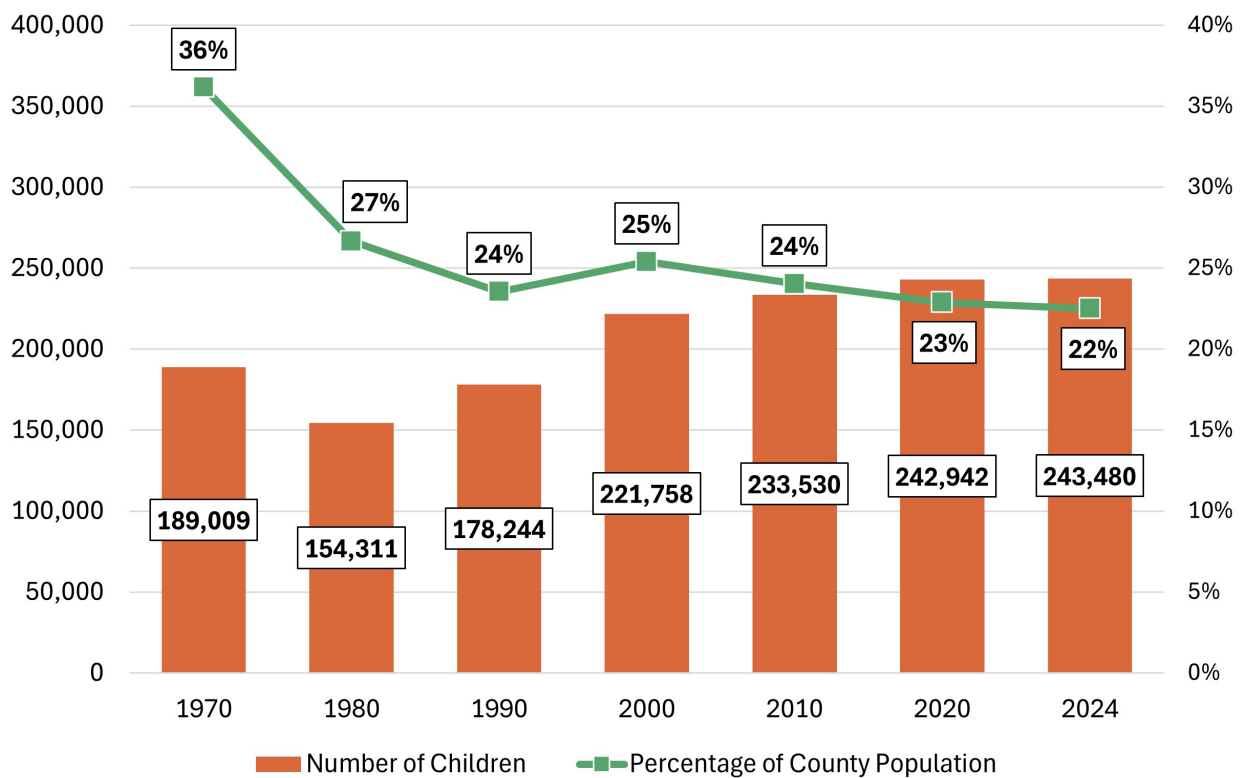


POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Nearly **243,500** children lived in Montgomery County in 2024. While this number is 29% higher than the total population of children in the county in 1970 (189,009), children represent a much smaller share of the overall population (22% compared to 36%).¹ Much of the decrease in the share of the child population occurred during the 1970s as fertility rates declined and the large baby boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, became adults. Children of the baby boomers, many of them born between 1981 and 1996 and referred to as the millennial generation, contributed to a subsequent increase in the number of children, but growth in the child population has slowed again recently. Montgomery County trends have mirrored statewide trends as the number of children as a percentage of the total population in Maryland decreased over the 1970-2024 period from 35% to 22%.



Figure 1: Change in Total and Share of Child Population (1970-2024)



¹ 1970-2020 data were from the Decennial Censuses of the U.S. Census Bureau.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age distribution of children has changed over time based on the size of the generational cohorts and their movement through each age group. In 2024, 25% (60,233) of the child population was under age 5, and 26% (63,923) were aged 5 to 9. Another 30% (74,008) comprised of children aged 10 to 14, and 19% (45,316) were aged 15 to 17. Thus, 51% of children were below age 10, and 49% were aged 10 to 17. The population of each age group has expanded and contracted since 1970, resulting in shifts over time in each group's share of the child population.

From 1970 to 1980, even as the overall number of children declined, the population aged 15 to 17 grew 2% from 33,228 to 33,844 and increased its share of the child population from 18% to 22%. This decade coincides with the youngest baby boomers entering their teenage years, with this entire generational cohort exiting childhood by 1982.

Starting in 1980, the child population experienced two decades of faster growth. From 1980 to 1990, the child population grew 16%, driven by more younger children. The population under age 5 increased 71% from 33,374 to 57,138, and the growth for the population aged 5 to 9 was 32% from 38,088 to 50,397. While 47% of all children in 1980 were under age 10, this figure climbed to 60% by 1990. The rapid growth in the number of younger children during the 1980s overlaps with the birth of a large portion of the millennial generation, which began in 1981.

From 1990 to 2000, the child population grew 24%, with older age groups having higher growth rates. The population aged 10 to 14 years increased 43% from 44,128 to 63,202, while the population aged 15 to 17 years increased 32% from 26,581 to 35,080. Overall growth of the child population declined to 5% from 2000 to 2010, but the population aged 15 to 17 still increased 16% from 35,080 to 40,835, the largest growth of any age group during this decade. The shift in growth towards older age groups between 1990 and 2010 increased the share of the child population aged 10 to 17 from 40% to 45% as more millennials reached their teenage years during this period.

As growth in the child population continued to slow after 2010, a decline in the number of younger children appeared. The population under age 5 in 2024 was 5% lower than in 2010, declining from 63,732 to 60,233, while the population aged 5 to 9 decreased 1% from 64,300 to 63,923. The age distribution continued a gradual shift towards more children aged 10 to 17 as all millennials had reached adulthood by 2014, and birth rates further declined slowly.



Figure 2: Number of Children by Age Cohort (1970-2024)

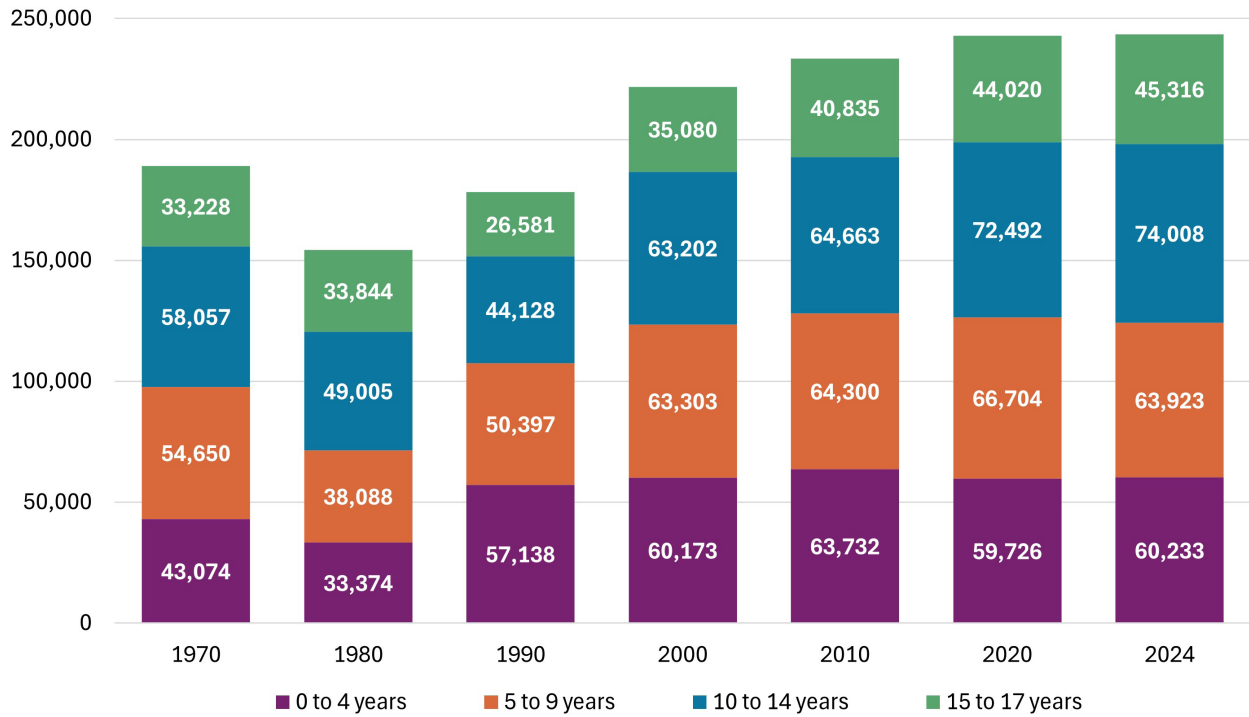
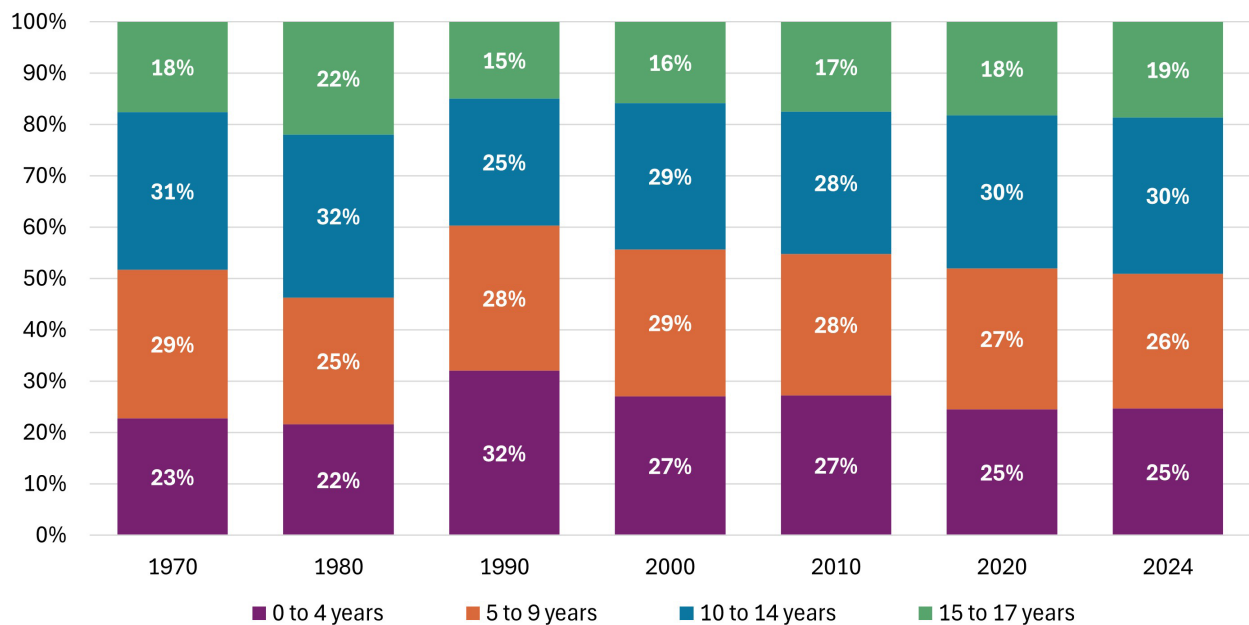


Figure 3: Percent Distribution of Children by Age Cohort (1970-2024)



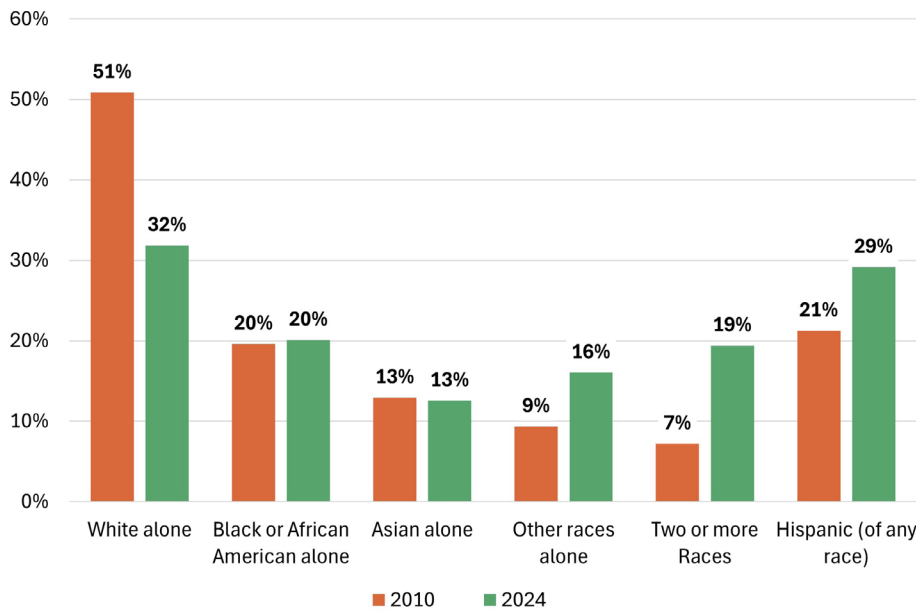
RACE AND ETHNICITY

Shifts in the racial and ethnic distribution between 2010 and 2024 highlight the growing diversity of the county’s population, especially of its younger residents. After 2010, no single racial group represented the majority of the child population. Although children who identified as White continued to be the largest racial group, their share of the child population decreased from 51% to 32% between 2010 and 2024.

During the same period, the share of children identifying as two or more races grew from **7% to 19%**, while those who identified as Hispanic grew from 21% to 29%.

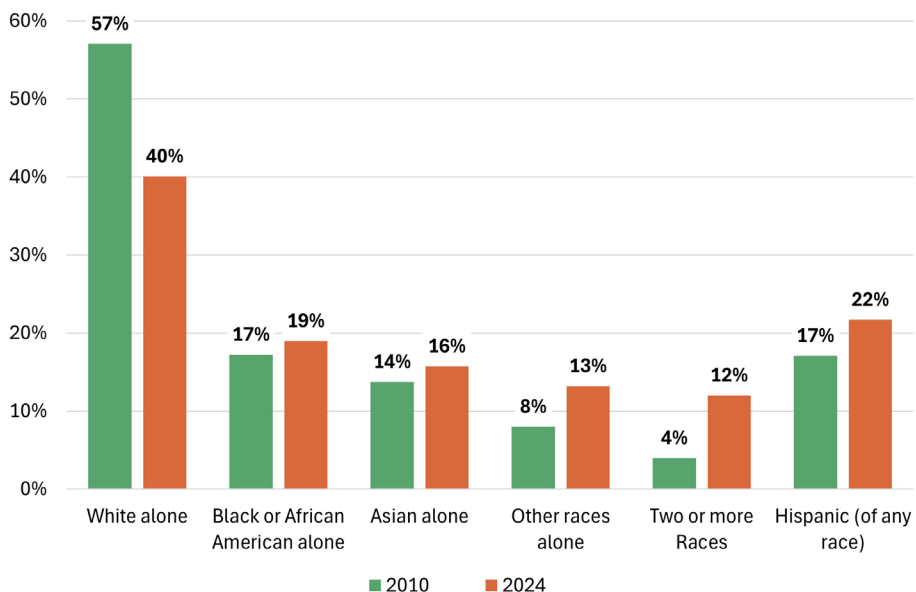
The child population was not only more racially diverse than the county’s overall population but also diversified at a faster pace. From 2010 to 2024, the share of White residents in the total population decreased from 57% to 40%. Meanwhile, the total population identifying as two or more races increased from 4% to 12%, while the county’s total Hispanic population grew from 17% to 22%.

Figure 4: Racial and Ethnic Distribution of Children (2010-2024)



Note: The “Other races alone” group includes the categories of American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders alone, and Some other race alone.

Figure 5: Racial and Ethnic Distribution of All County Residents (2010-2024)



Note: The “Other races alone” group includes the categories of American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders alone, and Some other race alone.



NATIVITY AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS

In 2024, 90% of children were native-born, a much higher percentage than the county's 66% native-born of all ages. Of the 10% that were foreign-born, 20% were naturalized U.S. citizens (2% of total).

Figure 6: Nativity and Citizenship Status of Children (2024)

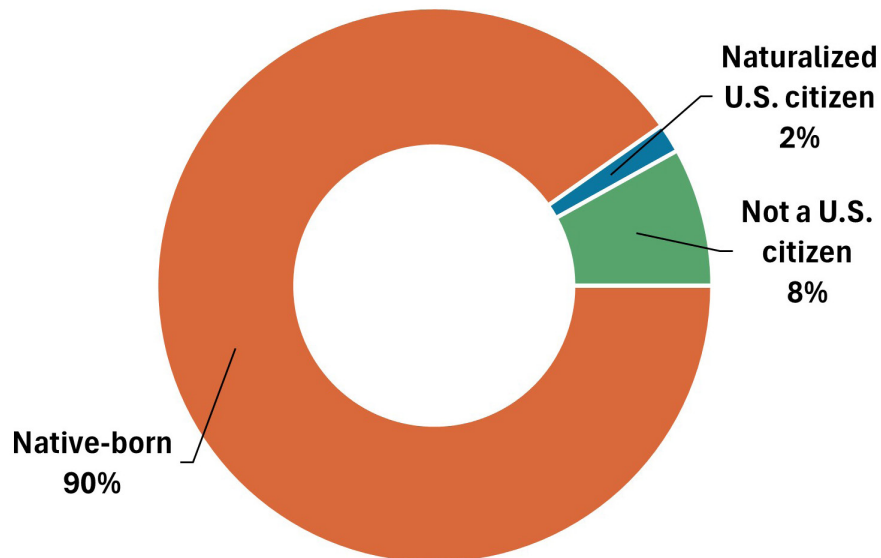
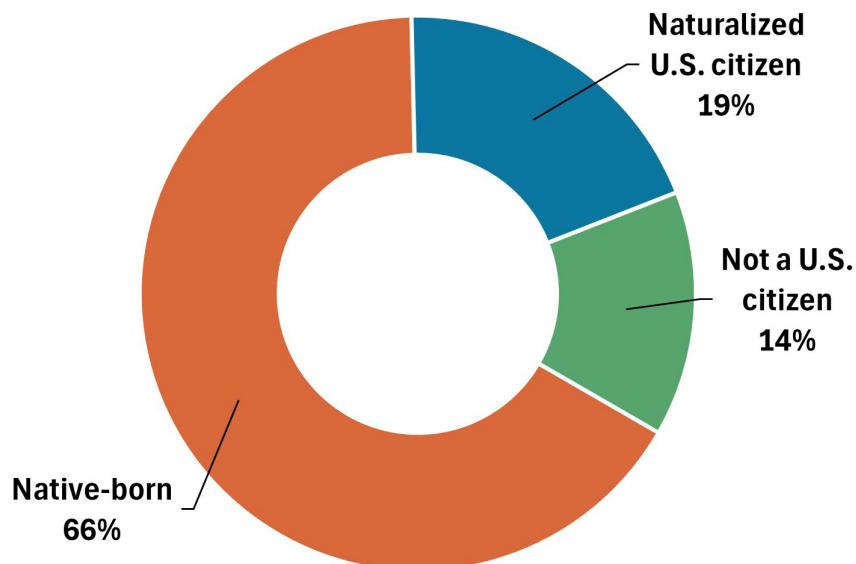


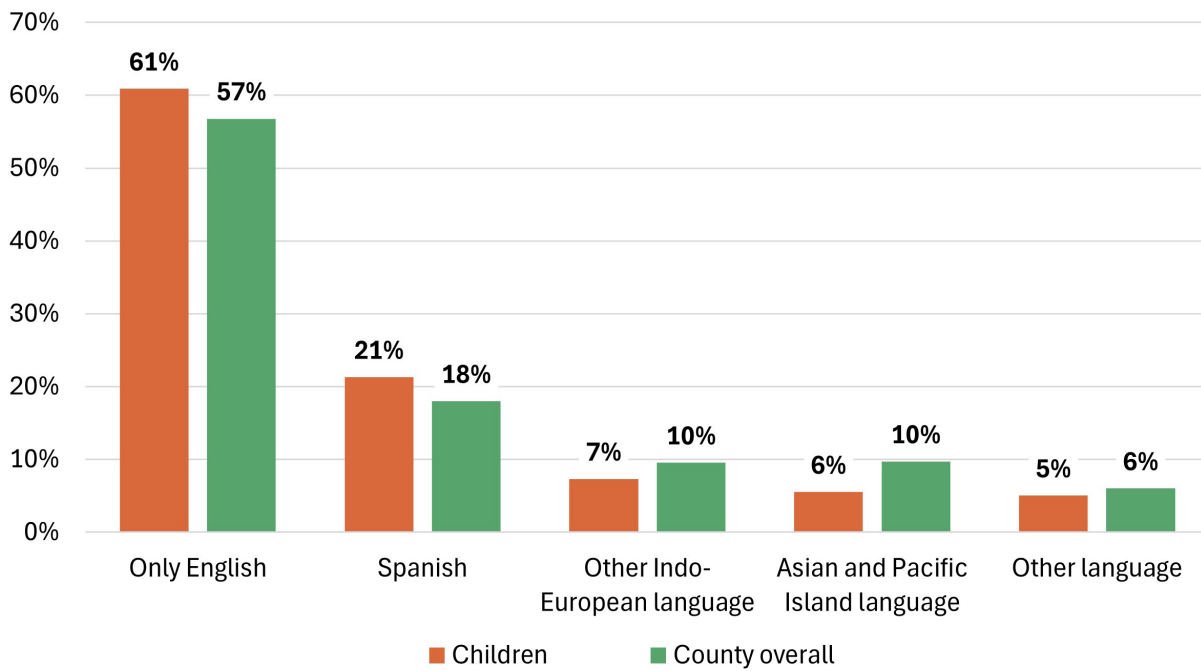
Figure 7: Nativity and Citizenship Status of All County Residents (2024)



LANGUAGE USAGE AT HOME

In 2024, a slightly higher percentage of children spoke only English at home (61%), compared to the county’s overall population (57%). While 21% of children spoke Spanish at home, another 18% spoke some other language besides English or Spanish at home.

Figure 8: Language Spoken at Home (2024)



SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

In the 2024 school year, 180,599 students in the county were enrolled in elementary, middle, or high school. Eighty-six percent (154,791) were enrolled in public schools, and 14% (25,808) were enrolled in private schools.

The distribution of students by education level was similar for both public and private schools. Public school enrollment had a slightly larger share of elementary school students (43% versus 41% in private elementary schools).²

Figure 9: Public School Enrollment by Education Level (2024)

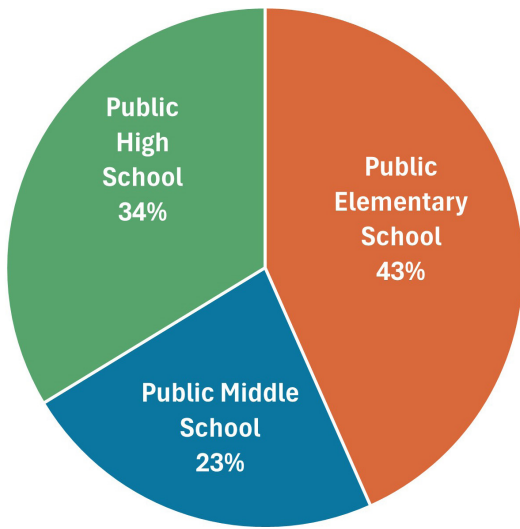
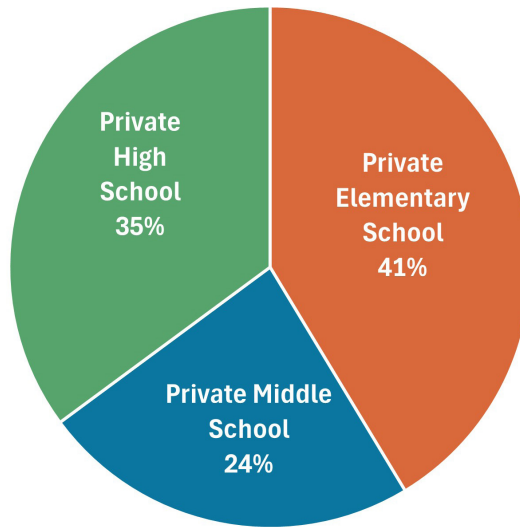


Figure 10: Private School Enrollment by Education Level (2024)



² School enrollment data were from the [Maryland Department of Planning](#). This includes a small number of students aged 18 and over.

HOUSEHOLD AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

LIVING ARRANGEMENT

Of the county’s 389,161 households in 2024, 124,391 (32%) had children under age 18. Nearly 75% of children lived in households with a married couple. The smallest percentage (4%) of children lived in households headed solely by a male (no spouse or partner present). Eight percent of children lived with a cohabitating couple, and 14% of children lived with a female who was heading the household (no spouse or partner present).



Figure 11: Child Population by Household Type (2024)

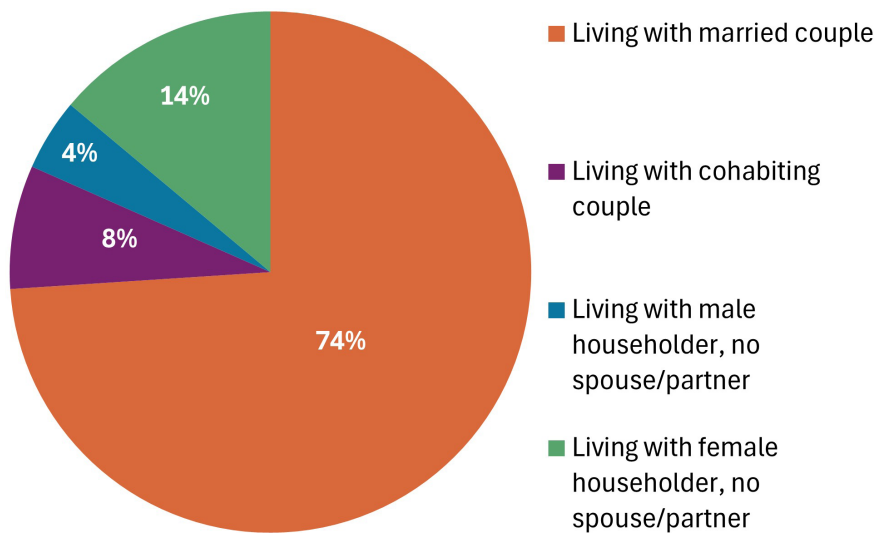
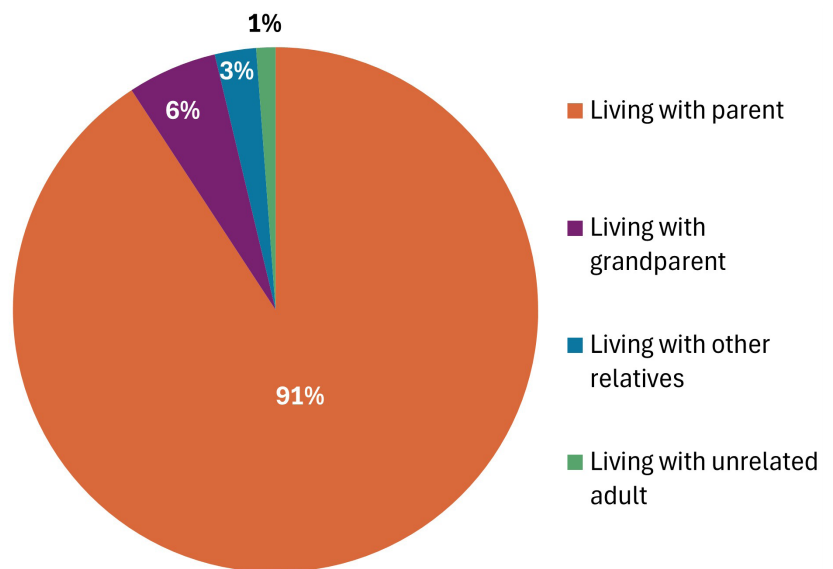


Figure 12: Child Population by Relationship with Householder (2024)

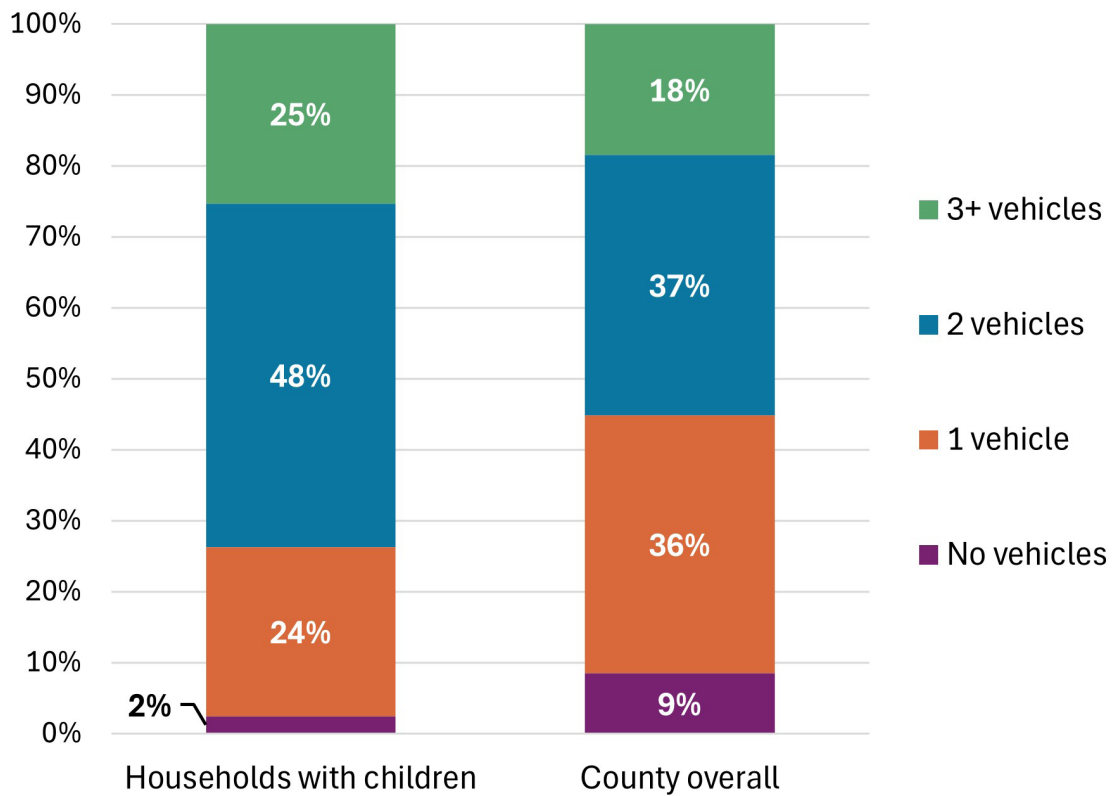
Looking at children’s relationship with the head of household in 2024, 91% lived with a householder who is the child’s parent (biological or adopted) or stepparent. Another 6% lived with a grandparent, 3% with another relative, and 1% with an unrelated adult (e.g., foster parents).



VEHICLE AVAILABILITY

Nearly all households with children (98%) had access to a vehicle at home, while 91% of households countywide did so. Households with children were also more likely to have access to two or more vehicles. Nearly half of these households (48%) had two vehicles, and another 25% had three or more vehicles. In contrast, for all households countywide, 37% had two vehicles, and another 18% had three or more vehicles.

Figure 13: Vehicle Availability (2024)



HOUSING TENURE

Households with children had a slightly higher homeownership rate (68%) than that of all households countywide (65%). Nearly one-third of households with children (32%) were renters. Households with children were larger in size on average, regardless of homeownership status.

Figure 14: Housing Tenure (2024)

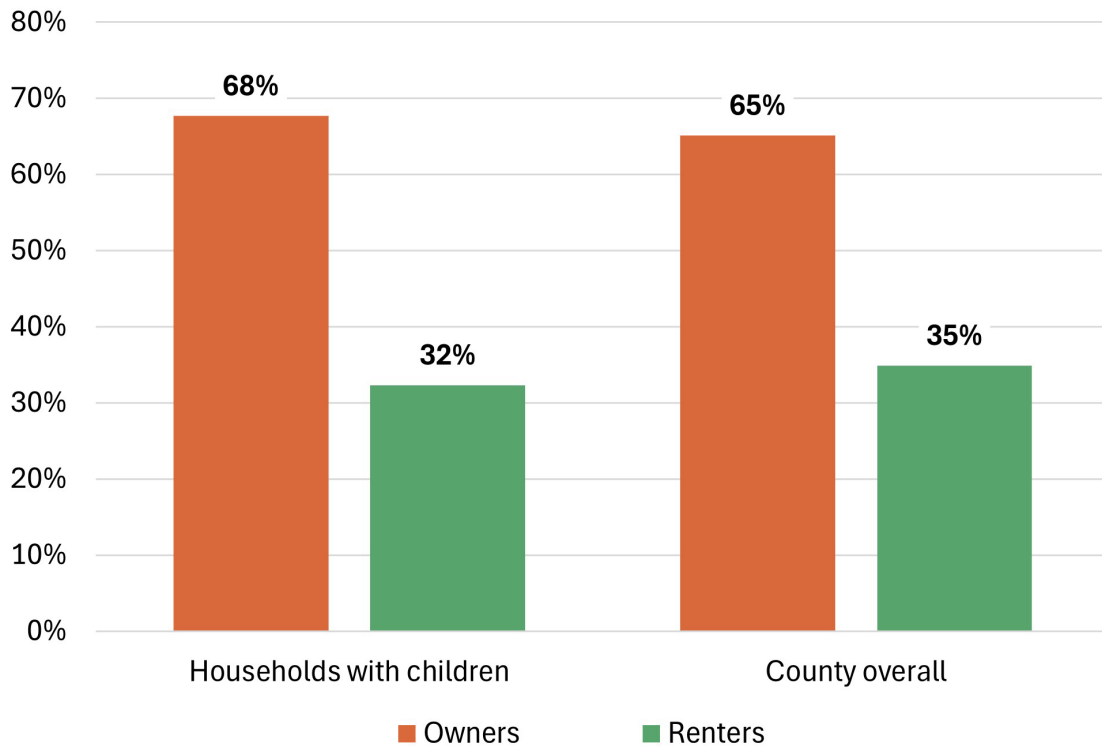


Table 1: Average Household Size by Tenure (2024)

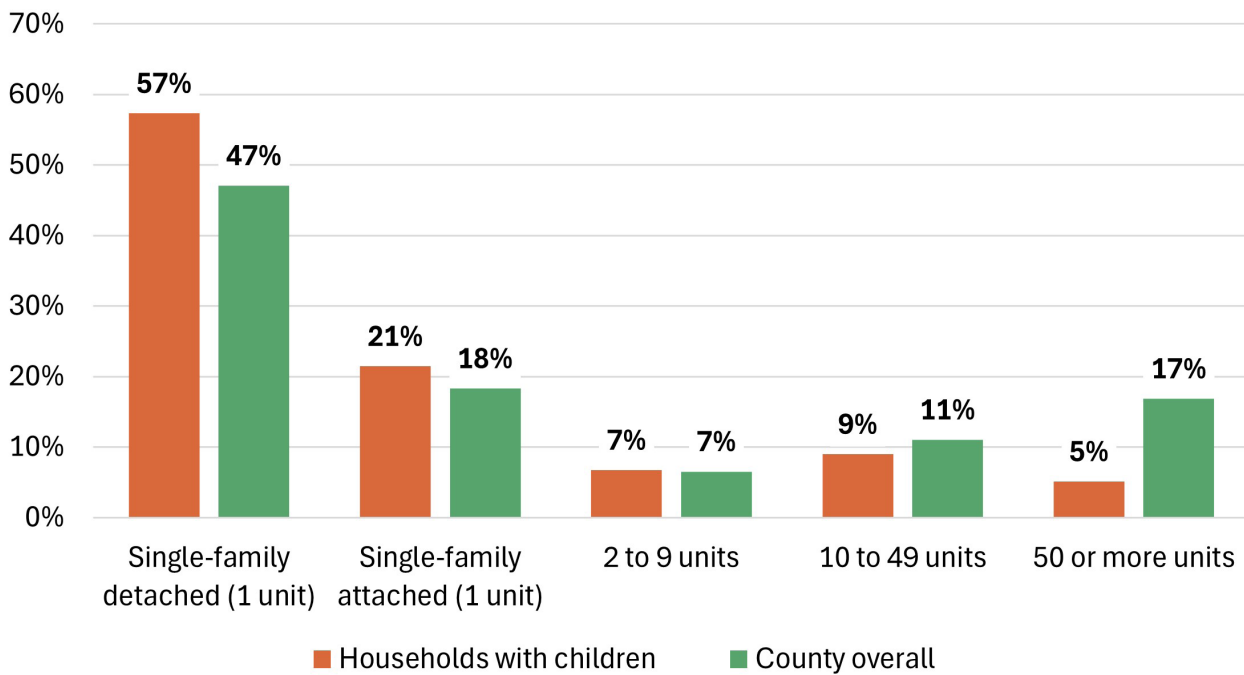
Characteristic	Households with children	County overall
Average household size for homeowners	4.21	2.92
Average household size for renters	3.91	2.47



HOUSING TYPE

Households with children were more likely to live in single-family homes, including both detached units (57%) and attached units (21%). In contrast, for all households countywide, fewer than half (47%) lived in single-family detached homes, and 18% lived in single-family attached homes. However, households with children were less likely than other households to live in large multi-family structures – only 5% of households with children lived in this unit type versus 17% of all households countywide.

Figure 15: Units in Structure (2024)

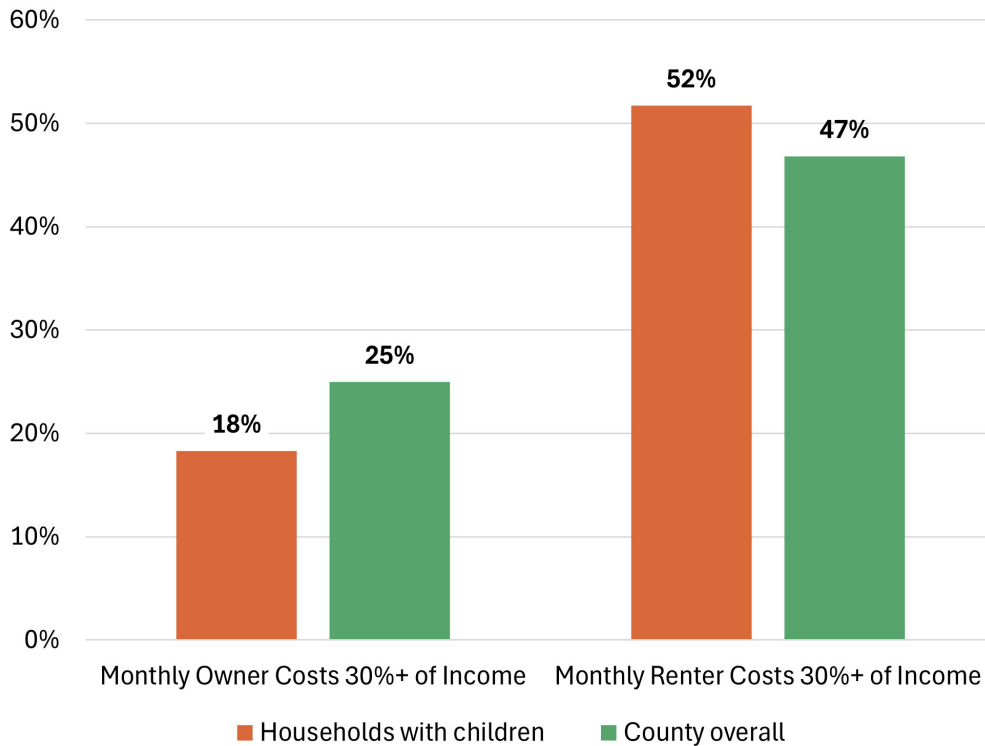



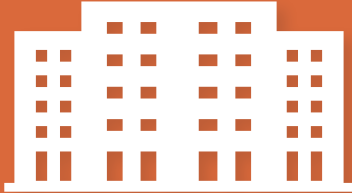
HOUSING COSTS

Among households with children, the median monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage were \$3,420, while the median monthly rent and associated costs were \$2,288. For all households countywide, the median costs for homeowners with a mortgage were \$2,974, and median rent and associated costs were \$2,097.

Cost-burdened households spend more than 30% of their income on housing-related costs. Among renter households with children, **52%** were cost-burdened, higher than the 47% for all renters. In contrast, 18% of homeowner households with children were cost-burdened, lower than the 25% for all homeowner households.

Figure 16: Housing Cost Burden (2024)



			
Homeowners with Children Median Housing Cost	County Overall Median Homeowner Cost	Renters with Children Median Housing Cost	County Overall Median Renter Cost
\$3,420	\$2,974	\$2,288	\$2,097

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Households with children generally had higher incomes compared to all households in the county overall. Among households with children, **46%** earned \$200,000 or more per year, compared with 33% for all households countywide. This difference suggests households with children are more likely to have two employed adults than other household types. Reflecting the contrasting income distributions, the median annual income for households with children was \$183,143, well above the countywide median of \$140,837 for all households. However, substantial disparities in income by household type exist. Notably, households with children headed by a female with no spouse present had a median annual income of just \$56,475—only 26% of the \$218,338 median for married-couple households with children.



Figure 17: Annual Household Income (2024)

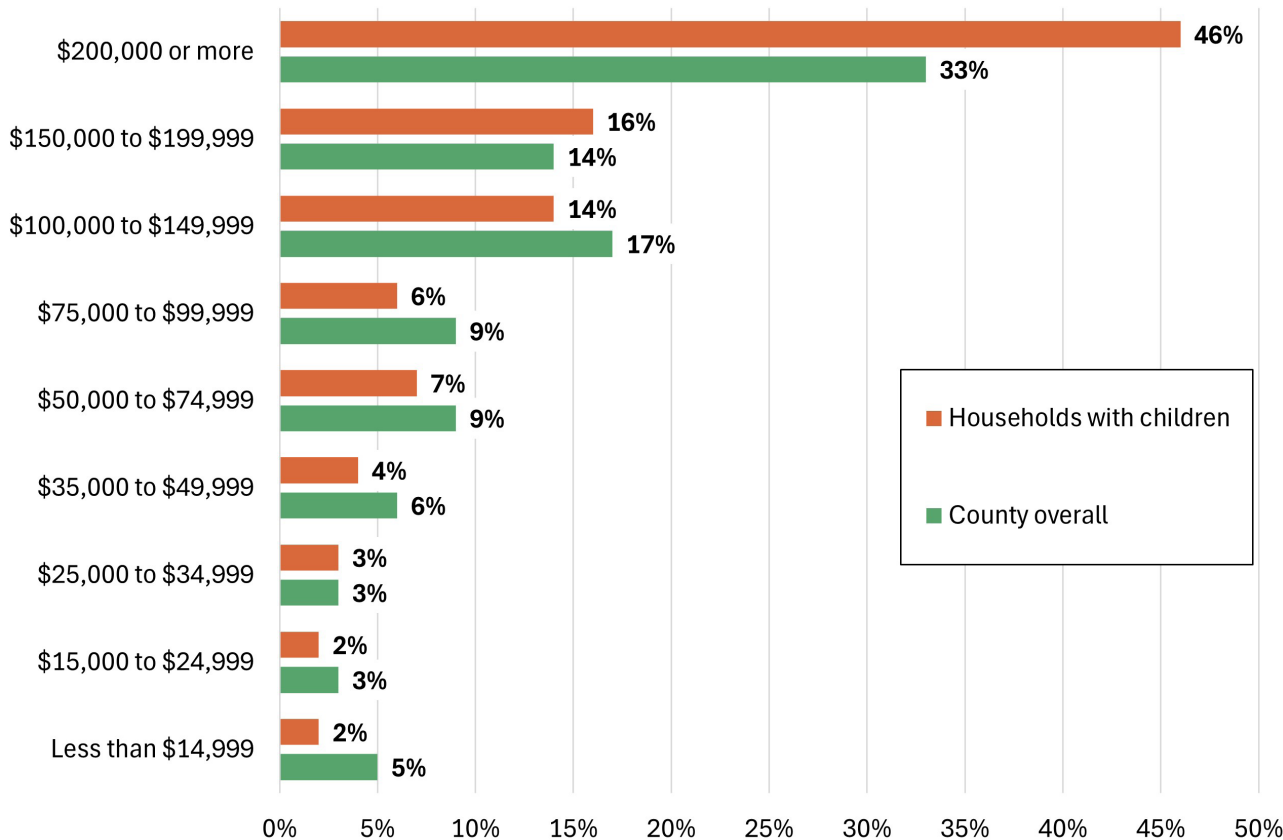
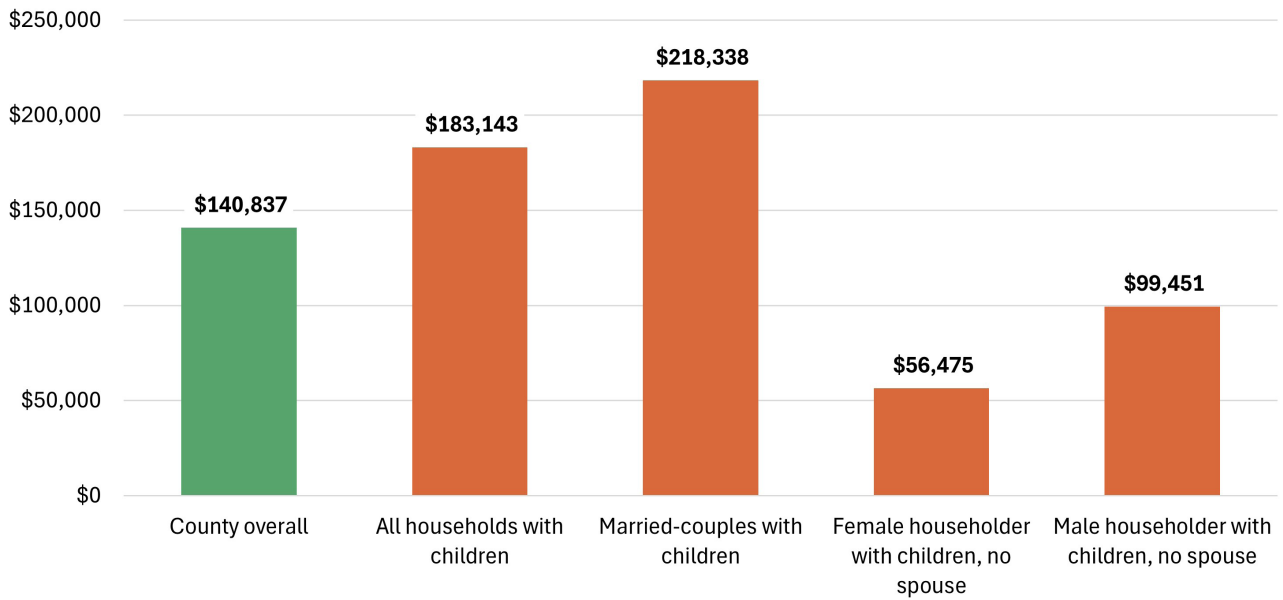


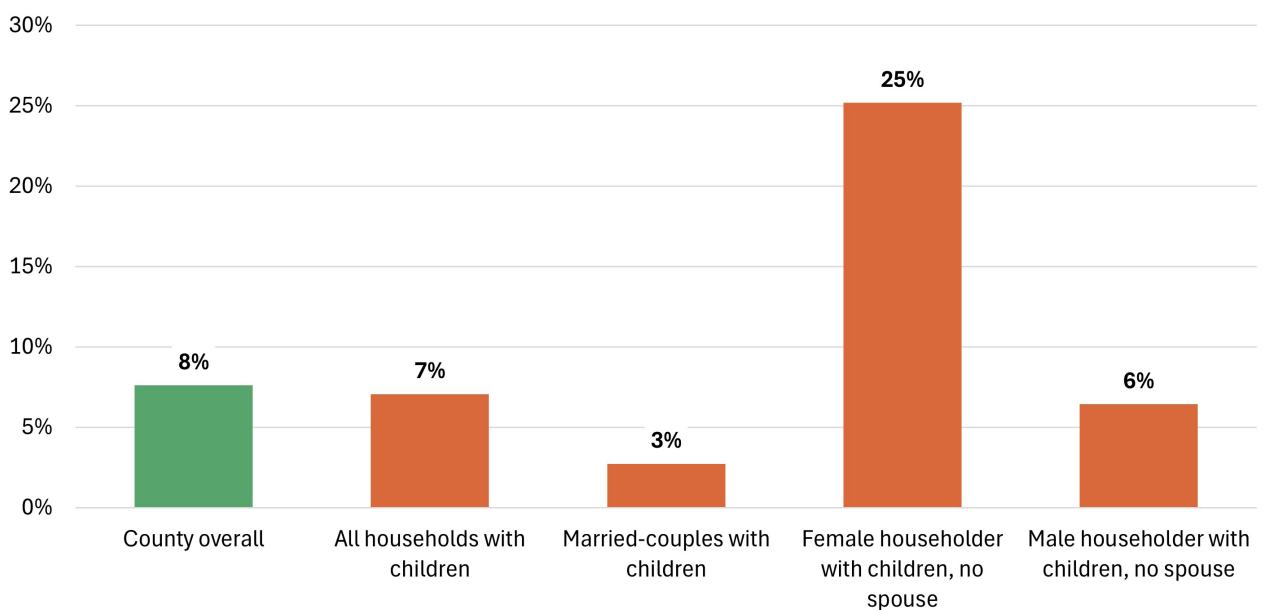
Figure 18: Median Annual Household Income by Household Type (2024)



POVERTY

Poverty rates for households with children and the countywide population were similar, at 7% and 8%, respectively. However, reflective of the disparities in median income, households with children headed by a female with no spouse present had a much higher poverty rate of **25%**. Married-couple households with children had the lowest poverty rate (3%).

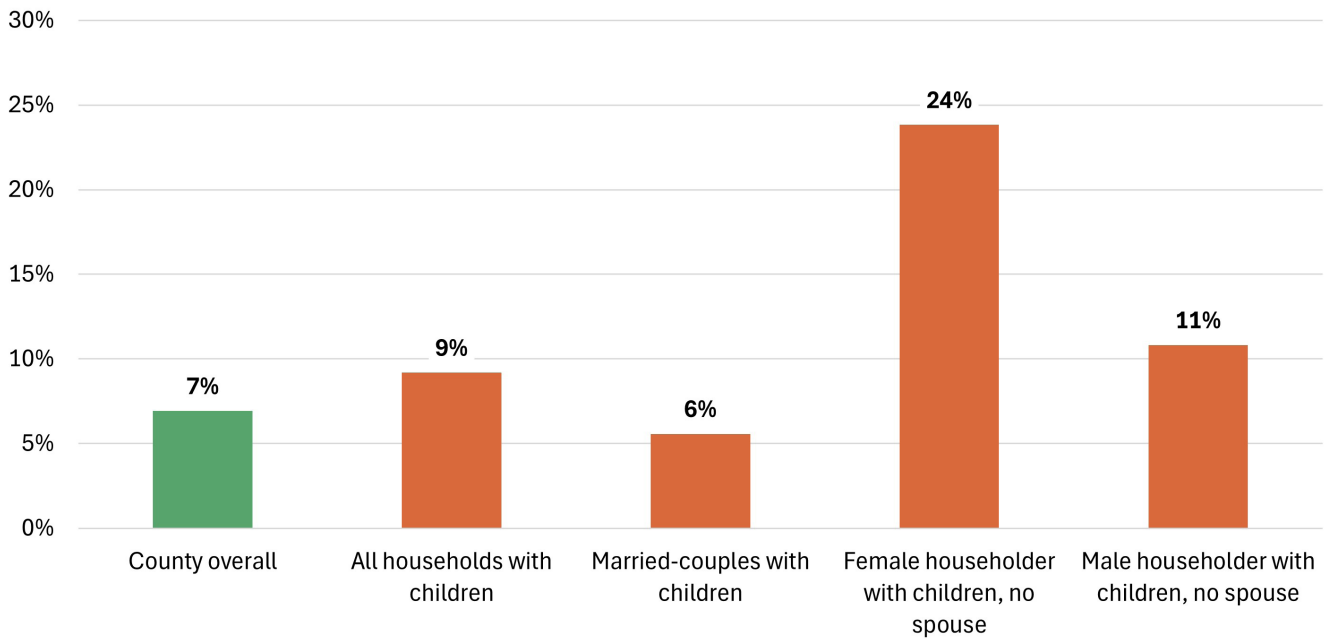
Figure 19: Poverty Rate by Household Type (2024)



PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Among households with children, 9% received assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In comparison, 7% of all households countywide received SNAP assistance. Looking at households with children by type, those with children headed by a female with no spouse present had the highest rate (24%), while only 6% of married-couple households with children received assistance.

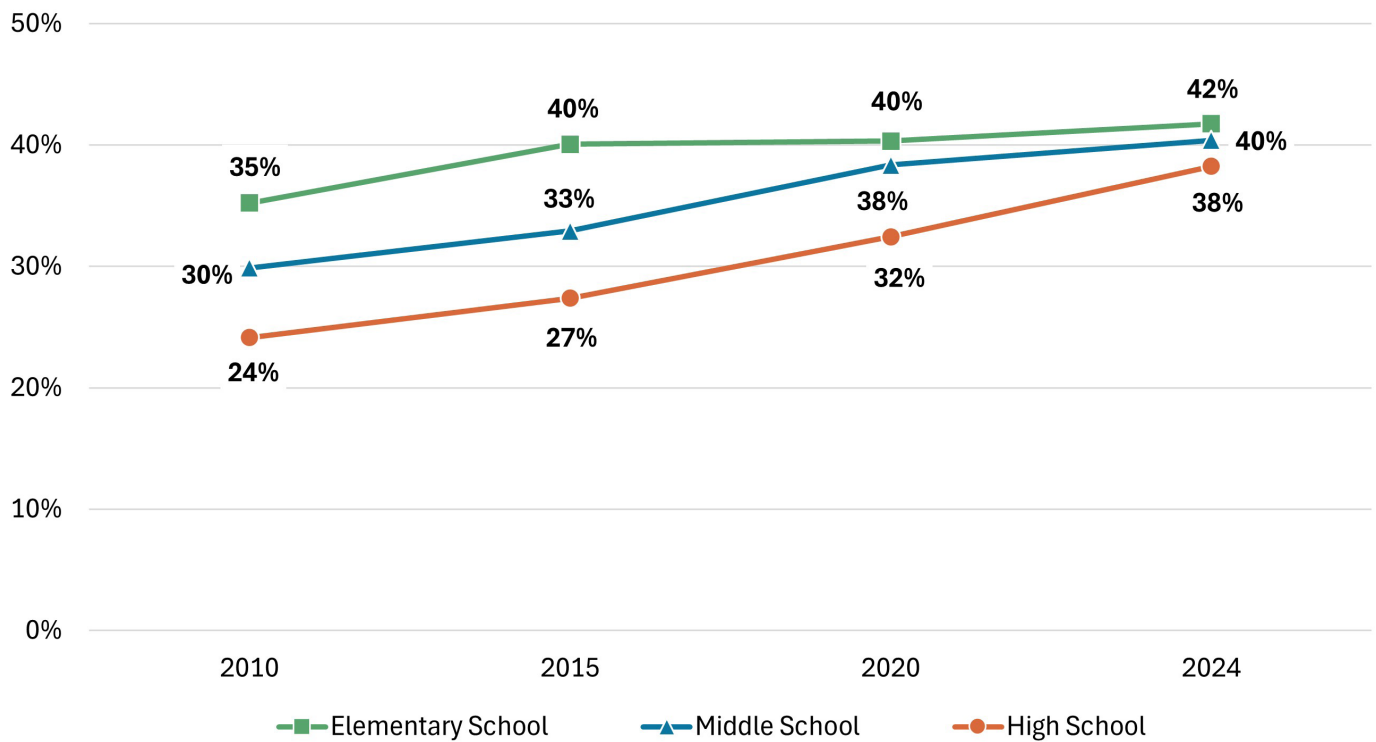
Figure 20: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation Rate by Household Type (2024)



In the 2024 school year, 63,988 public school students (**40%** of all students) were enrolled in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS) program.³ The majority of these students (47%) were in elementary school, 22% in middle school, and 31% in high school.

Since 2010, the percentage of students enrolled in the FARMS program increased at all school levels. While the FARMS enrollment rate at the elementary school level continued to be the highest (42% in 2024), the increase at the high school level was the greatest, with the FARMS enrollment rate growing from 24% to 38% from 2010 to 2024.

Figure 21: Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS) Enrollment Rate by School Level (2010-2024)



Note: *Includes a small number of students aged 18 and over.*

³ FARMS data were from [Montgomery County Public Schools \(MCPS\)](#).

POTENTIAL FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research brief on the demographic, economic, and housing characteristics of children in Montgomery County provides countywide information on this demographic group at a point in time. Like many research projects, the analysis answers some questions and raises many others. For the authors of this report, the data prompted the following key questions that may warrant future Planning Department research.

- How do the characteristics of the child population and households with children vary across Montgomery County?
- To what extent are recent changes in the age distribution driven by fertility trends versus migration patterns?
- Is the lower percentage of children living in large multi-family buildings driven by smaller apartment sizes or other reasons?
- How has the composition of households with children and the distribution of income of this household type changed over time?
- Are rising housing costs influencing where families with children choose to live within the county and in what type of housing?



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in Montgomery County

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For more information on demographic trends in Montgomery County, please visit: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research>

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