



A Foundation for Change:

Understanding African American Community Conditions in Monterey and San Benito Counties

In collaboration with UC Santa Cruz Institute for Social Transformation (Gabriella Alvarez and Chris Benner), Action Council of Monterey County, Monterey County Black Caucus, and New Hope Baptist Church

Executive Summary

This report presents a picture of the demographics, socioeconomic status, and challenges faced by African American residents in Monterey and San Benito Counties. The analysis reveals notable issues related to education, employment, income, health coverage, and housing conditions. Key findings include high rates of institutionalization, low educational attainment relative to other racial groups, particular low home ownership rates and high housing burden rates, and significant income disparities. These insights underscore the need for targeted community interventions to improve the economic and social well-being of African American residents in the region. The Institute for Social Transformation and Monterey County Black Caucus will be conducting further in-depth research to help inform such efforts in the near future.



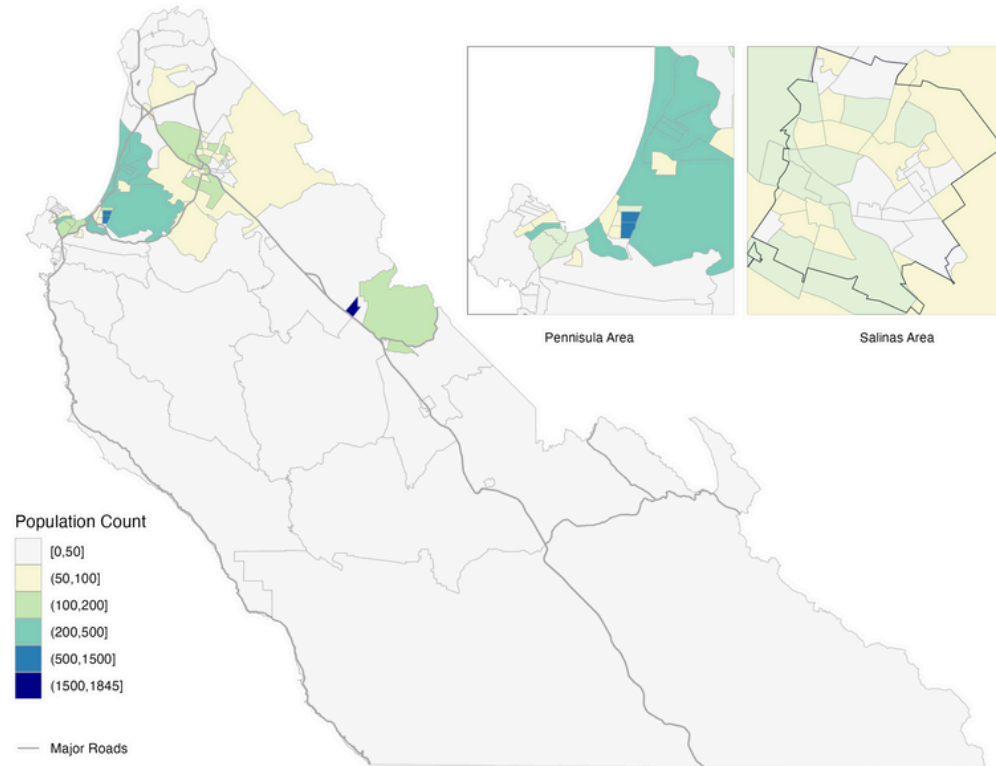
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Introduction

Understanding the demographics and socioeconomic conditions of African American residents in Monterey and San Benito Counties is crucial for informed policy-making and community development. This report synthesizes findings from the American Community Survey (ACS) and other publicly available datasets, focusing on various indicators such as education, employment, income, health coverage, and housing. The findings provide a snapshot of the current state, with some data limitations, and provides a useful baseline for further research and action.

Black Population by Census Tract
Monterey County 2020



Methodology

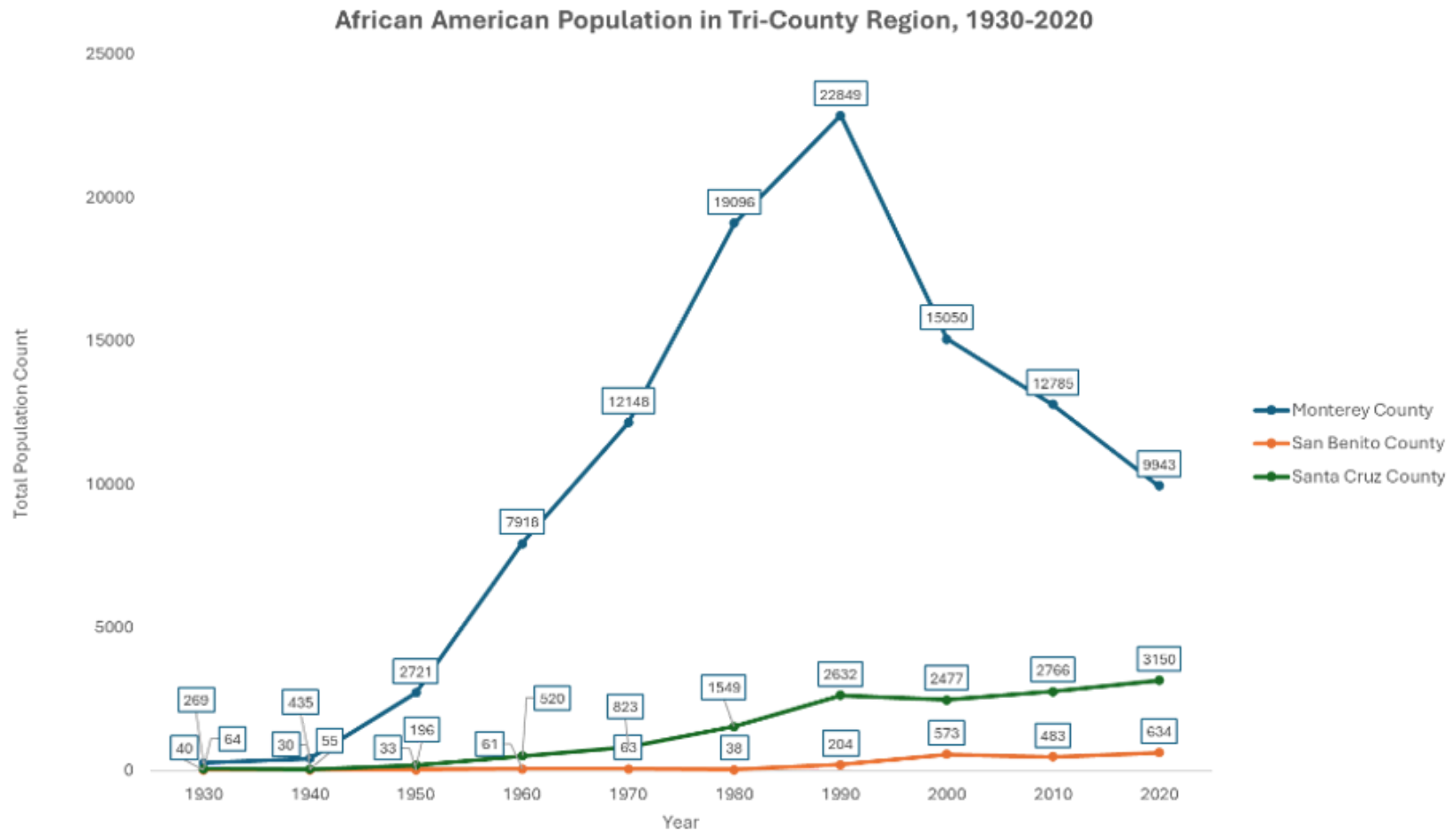
The majority of data analyzed in this report was derived from the Census Bureau's 2018-2022 ACS 5-year estimates. Our focus is on Monterey County, though due to technical details of the availability of census micro-data, data from a portion of Monterey County is combined with San Benito County, thus some of the data includes the small number of African-American's living in San Benito County as well.¹ Also, due to small sample sizes, findings may exhibit high margins of error; therefore, they should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

¹The smallest geography that census micro-data is available is at what are called PUMAs (Public Use Micro-data Areas). The data shown here combines PUMAs 5301, 5302 (both entirely in Monterey County) and 5303 (which includes all of San Benito County and southern Monterey County).

Findings

Historical Presence

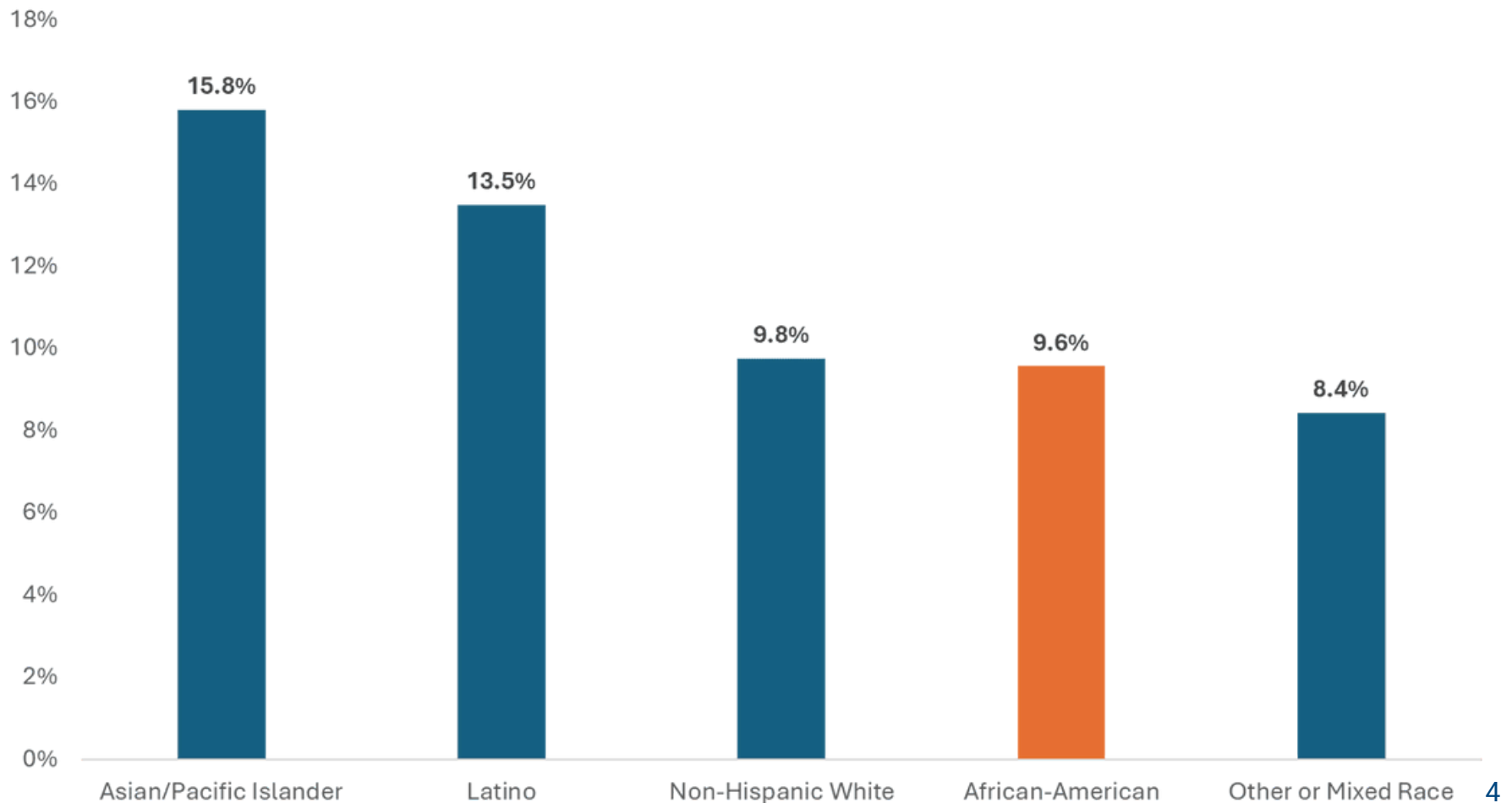
African American residents have a long history across Monterey and San Benito Counties, drawn to the region particularly during World War II with the growth of employment opportunities and military presence in the region. The African-American population peaked in 1990, with nearly 23,000 African-American residents of Monterey County. Since the closure of Ford Ord in 1994, there has been a notable decline in the presence of African American residents in the region, down to just under 10,000 in Monterey County in the last decennial census.



Households and Youth

Nearly 75% of African American households in the region have no children living in the household, 7.5% have at least one child under 5 living in the household, and another 18% have children aged 5-17 with no younger children living in the household—a slightly lower proportion of families with children than other racial groups in the region. Among youth aged 16-24, just under 10% are considered disconnected from both school and work, a lower rate than the 15.8% observed among Hispanic/Latino youth.

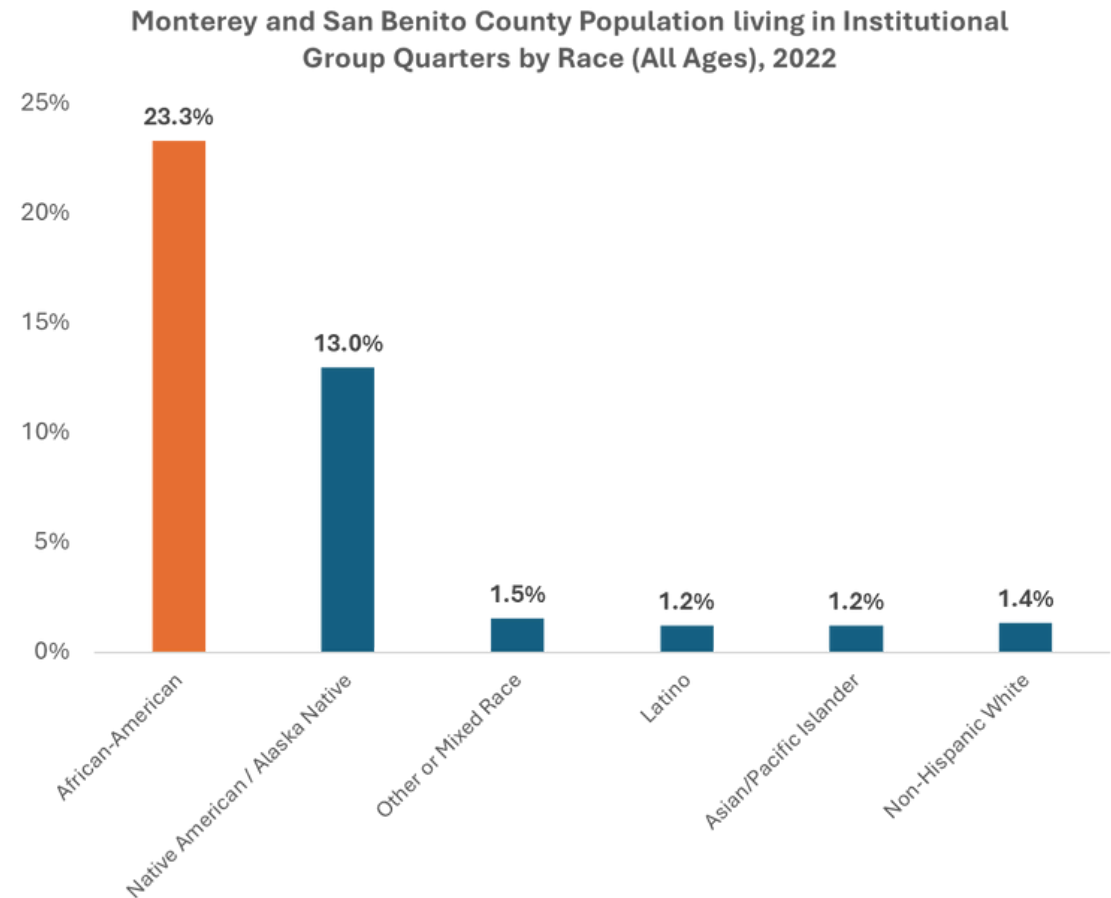
Proportion of Monterey and San Benito County Youth that are Disconnected from School and Work by Race, 2022



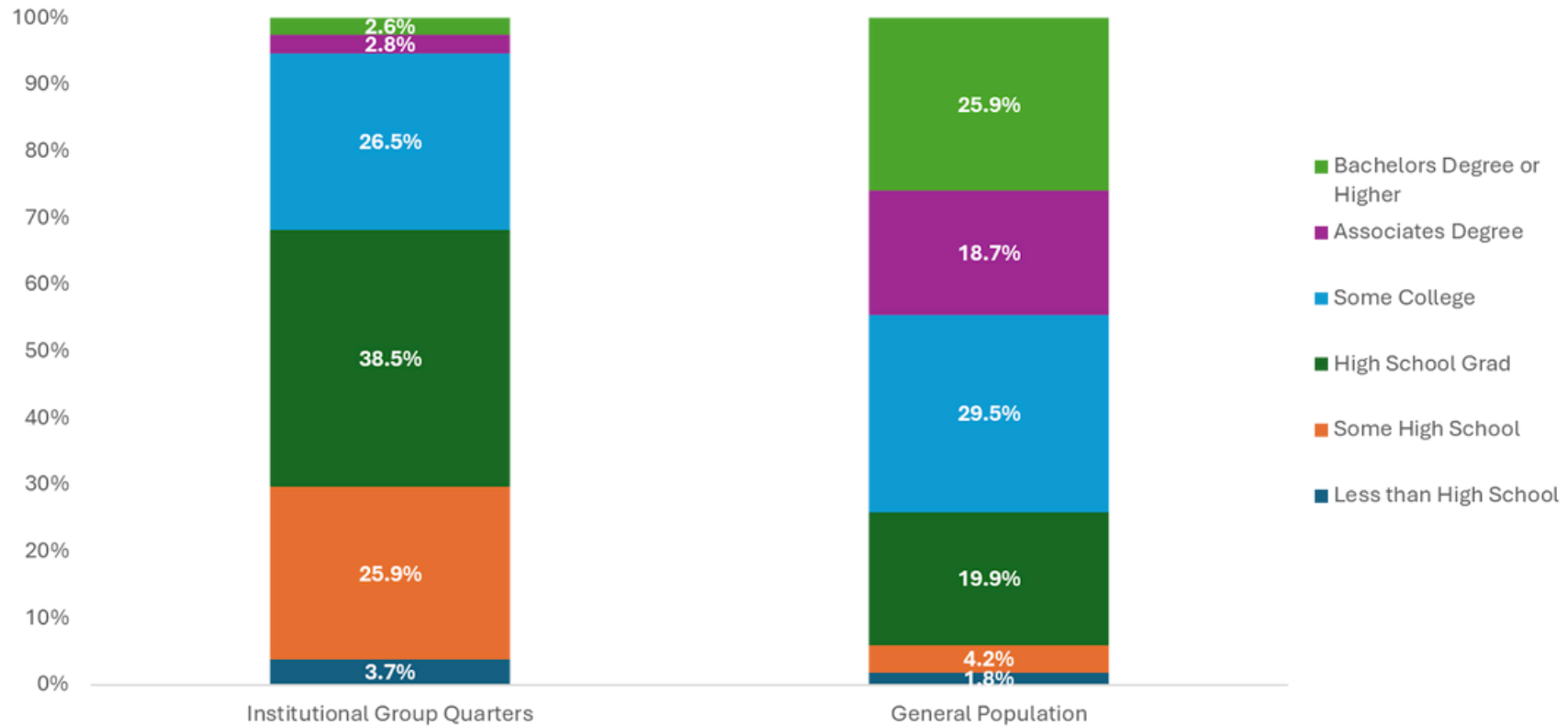
High Institutionalized Population

People living in “institutional group quarters” refers to individuals living in correctional facilities, mental institutions or institutions for the handicapped, elderly, and poor. This does NOT include residents living in military group quarters or student housing.

A high proportion (23.3%) of African American residents in Monterey and San Benito counties resides in institutionalized group quarters, substantially higher than any other racial group, and 17 times as high as the 1.4% of Non-Hispanic White residents in similar conditions. The vast majority (80.6%) of institutionalized group quarters residents in Monterey County are individuals that are incarcerated or in juvenile detention. Most African American individuals in institutionalized settings are of core working age (25-54) and have only a high school diploma or less, highlighting a critical need for educational programs for institutionalized populations.



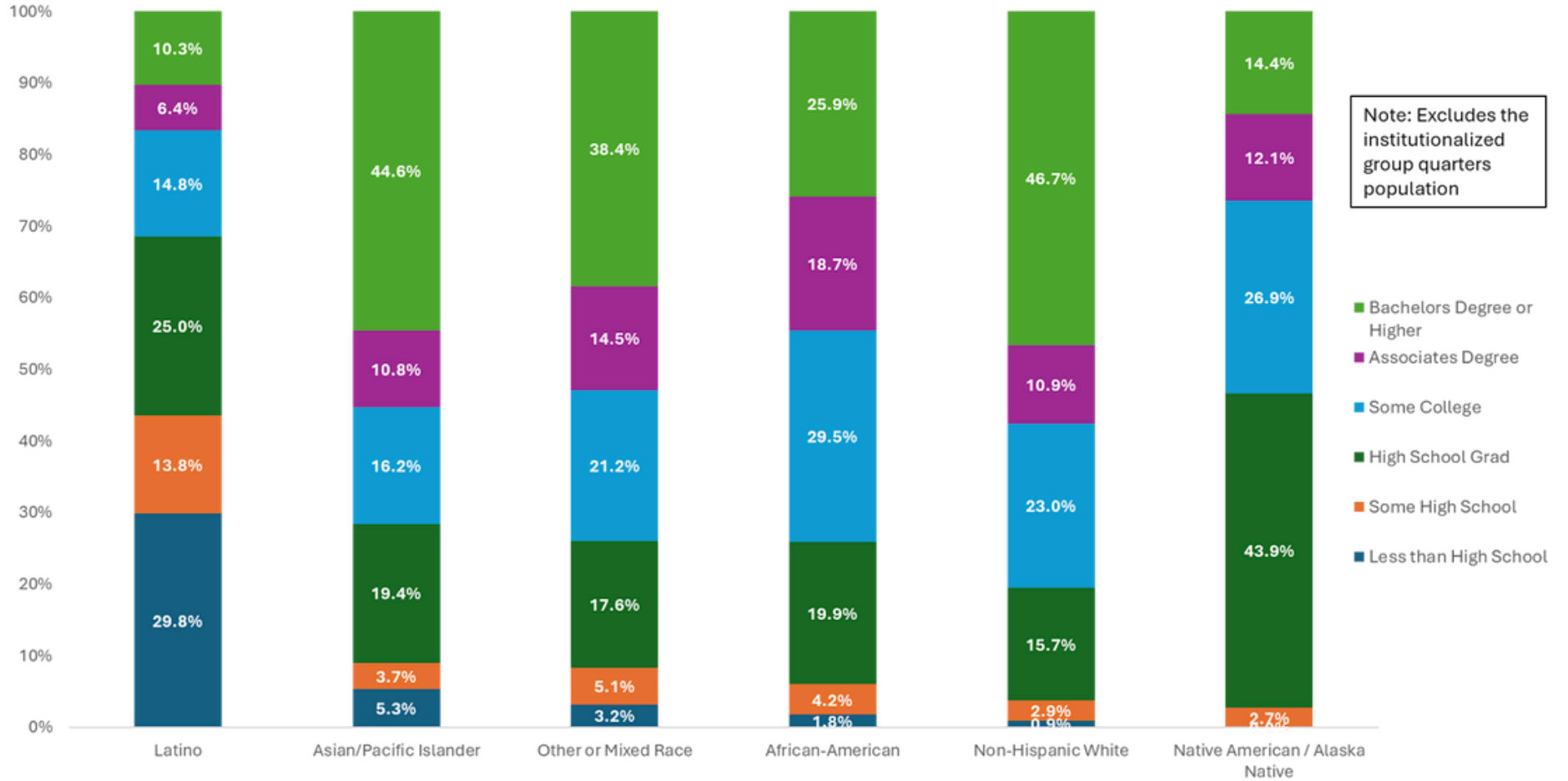
**Educational Attainment for Monterey and San Benito County African American Population by Group
Quarters Status (Ages 25+), 2022**



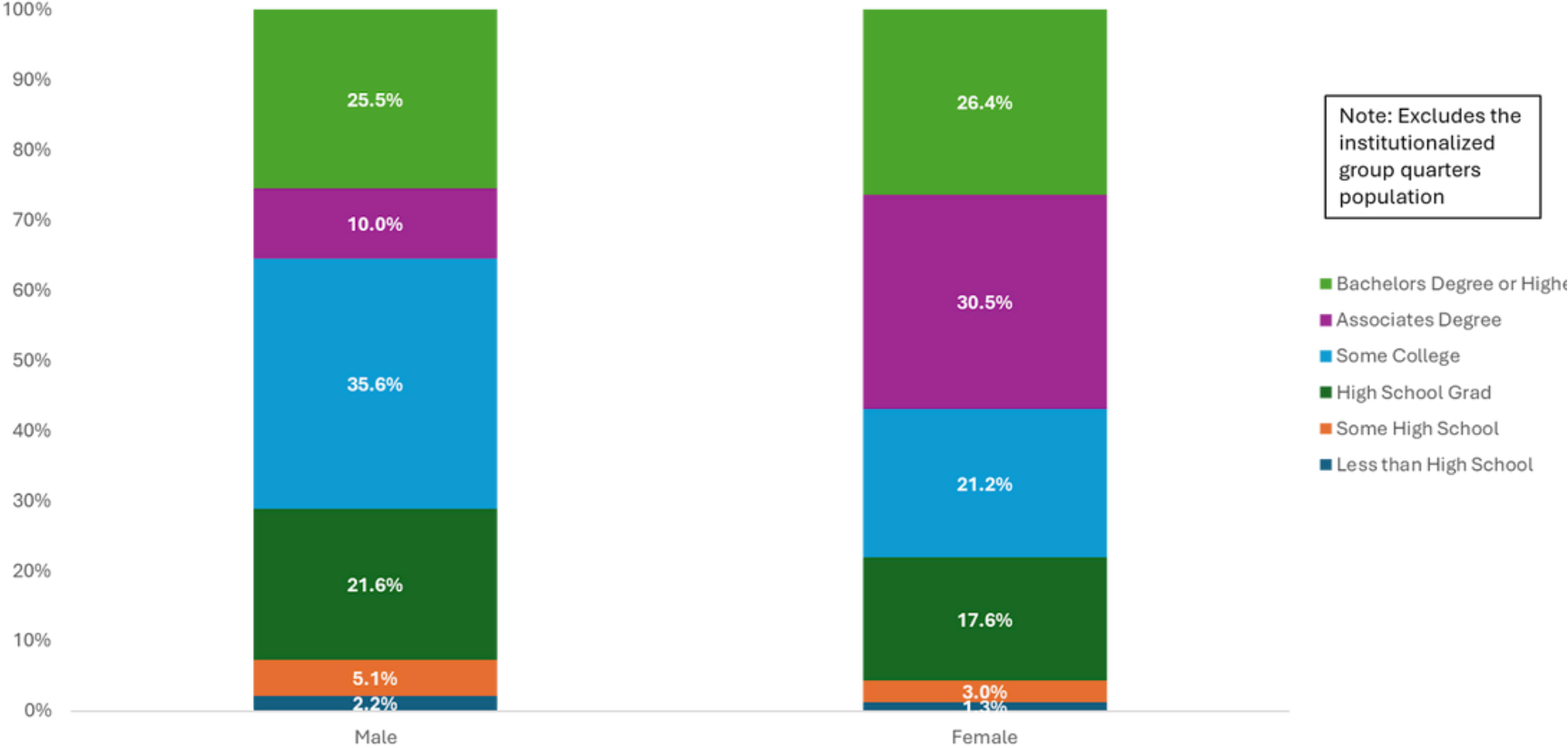
Educational Gaps

While 74.1% of African American residents aged 25 and older have completed some college, only 25.9% possess a bachelor’s degree or higher, significantly lower than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts (46.7%). A higher proportion of African American female residents than male residents have been able to complete an Associate’s Degree.

Monterey and San Benito County Educational Attainment by Race (Ages 25+), 2022



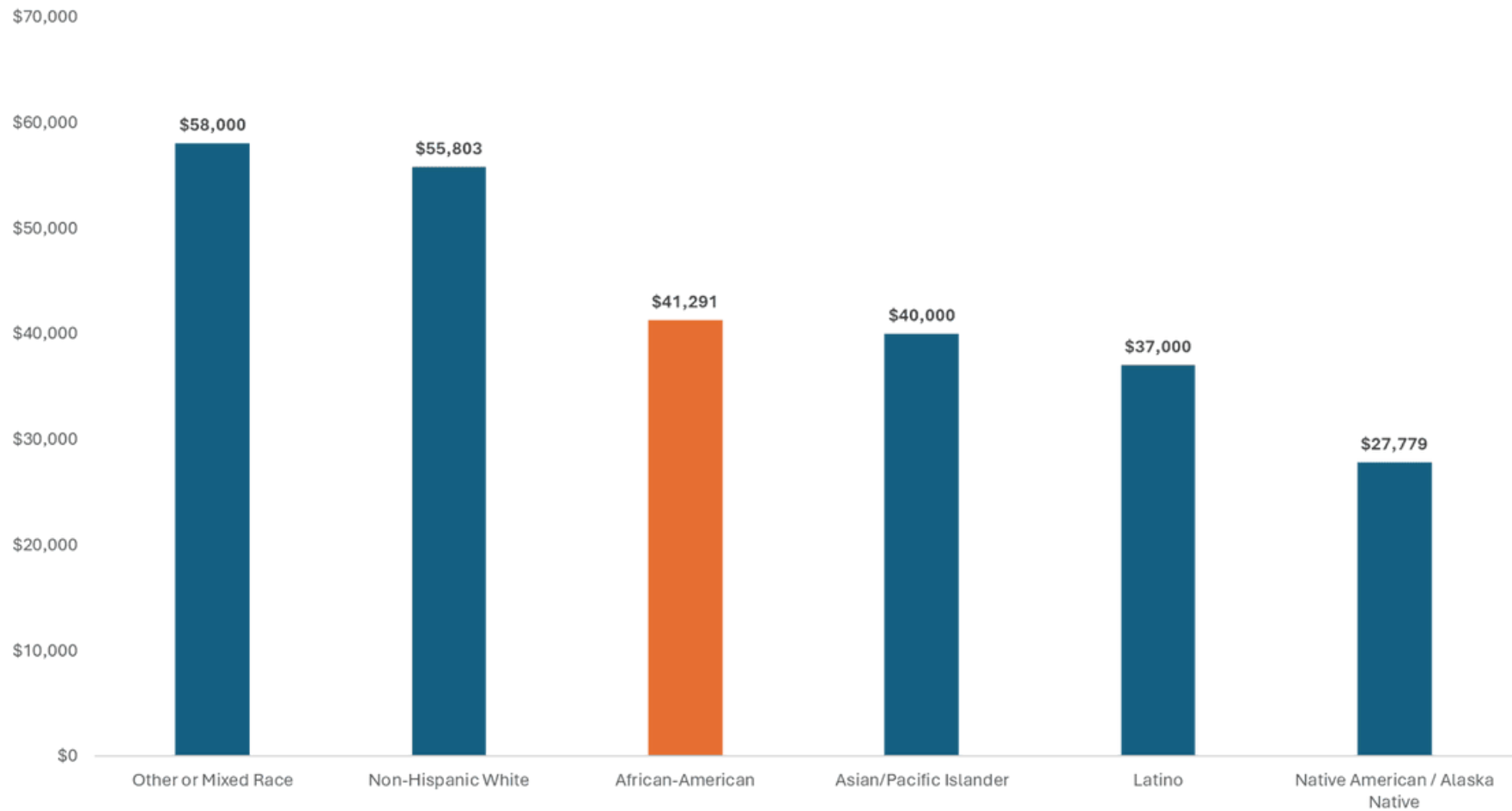
Monterey and San Benito County African American Educational Attainment by Sex (Ages 25+), 2022



Income Challenges

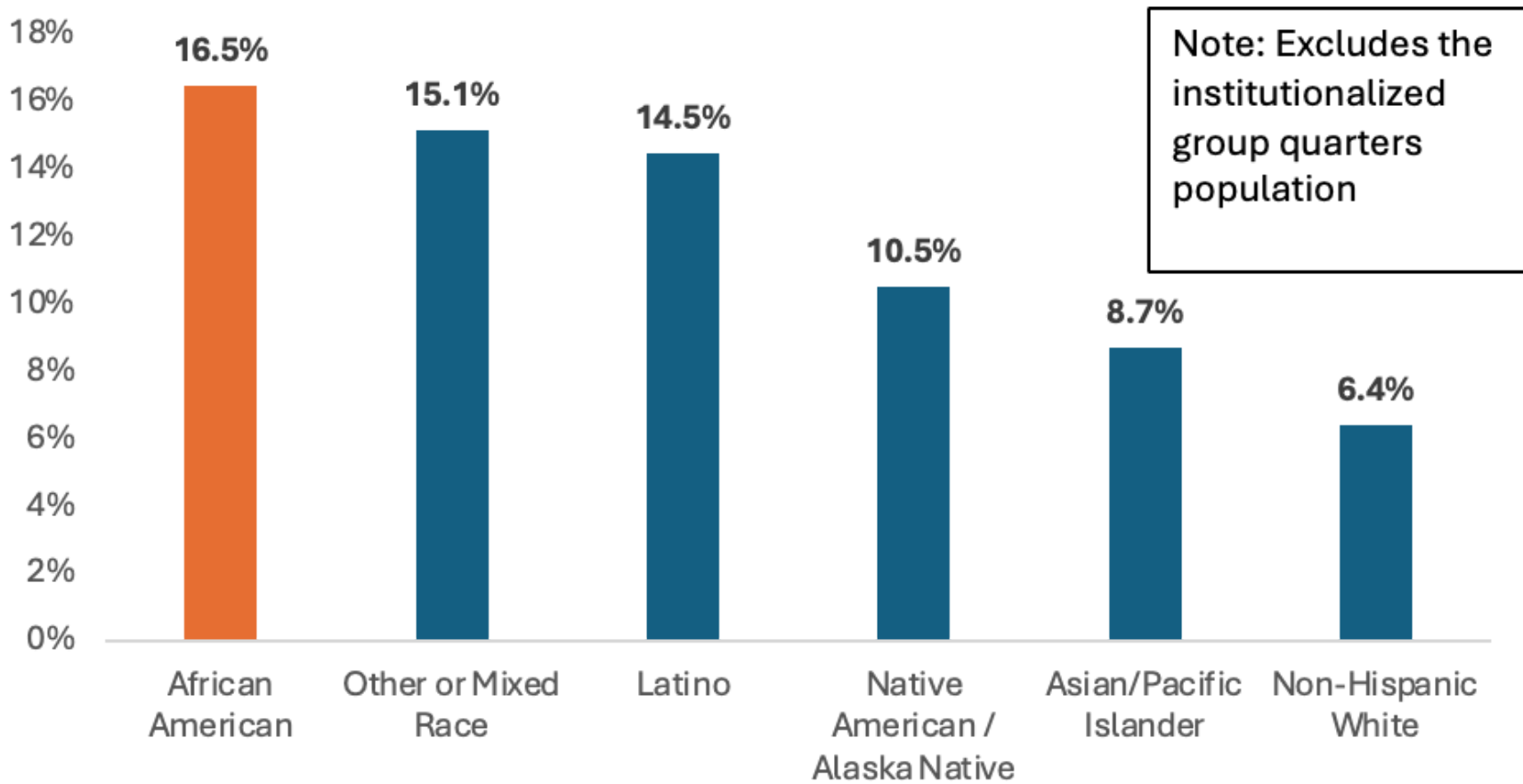
The median income of African American residents is \$41,291, which is higher than the median for Latino residents in the region, but only 75% of the median income of Non-Hispanic white residents. The majority of African American residents earn between \$38,580 and \$60,000 annually, with a mere 12% in the highest income quintile.

Monterey and San Benito County Median Individual Income by Race (Ages 16+), 2022

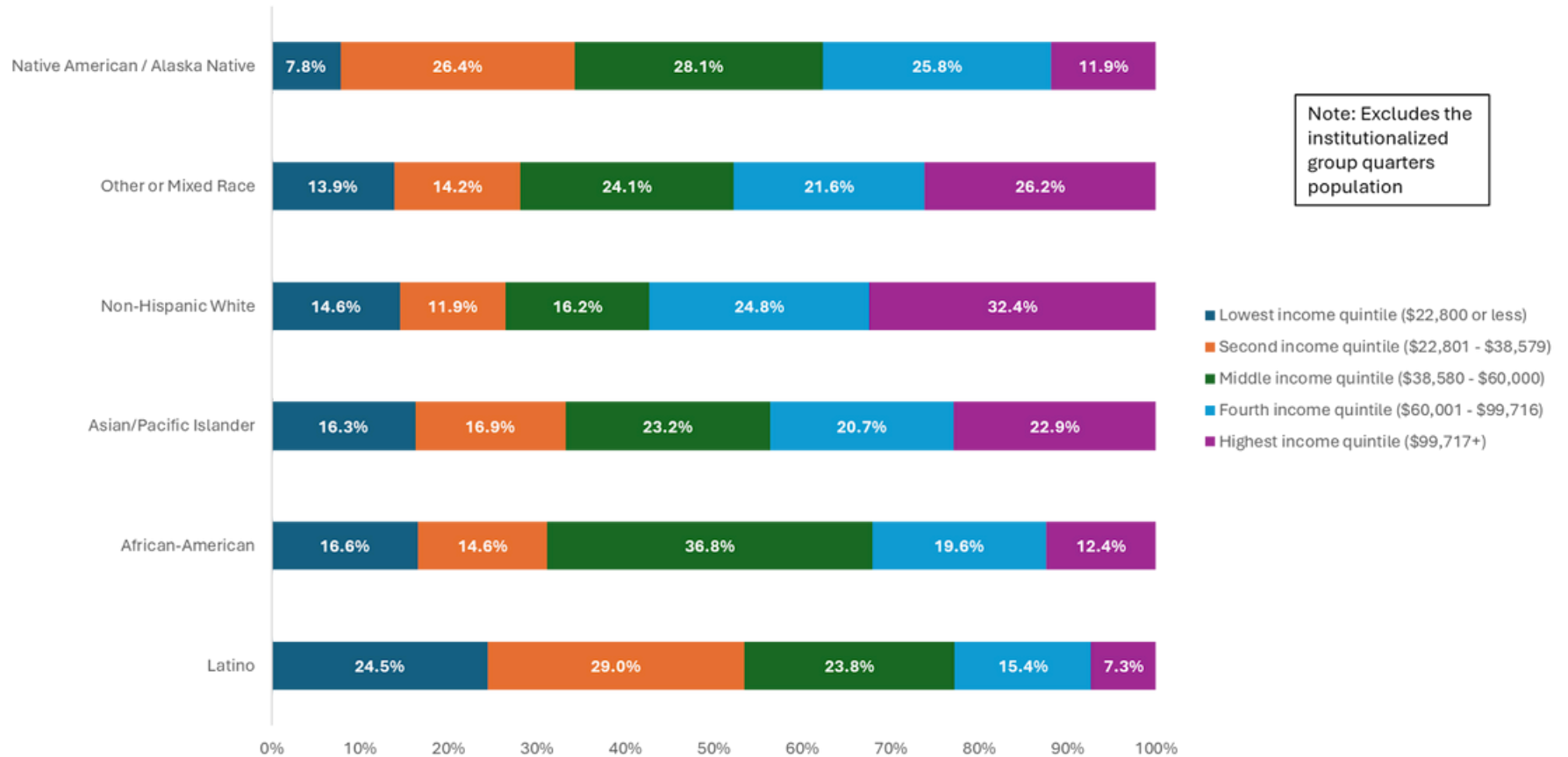


African Americans in the County have the highest poverty levels of any racial group, with 16.5% of African-American residents living below the official poverty line, compared to 14.5% of Latinos and only 6.4% of Non-Hispanic white residents.

Monterey and San Benito County Population Living Below Poverty Level by Race (All Ages), 2022



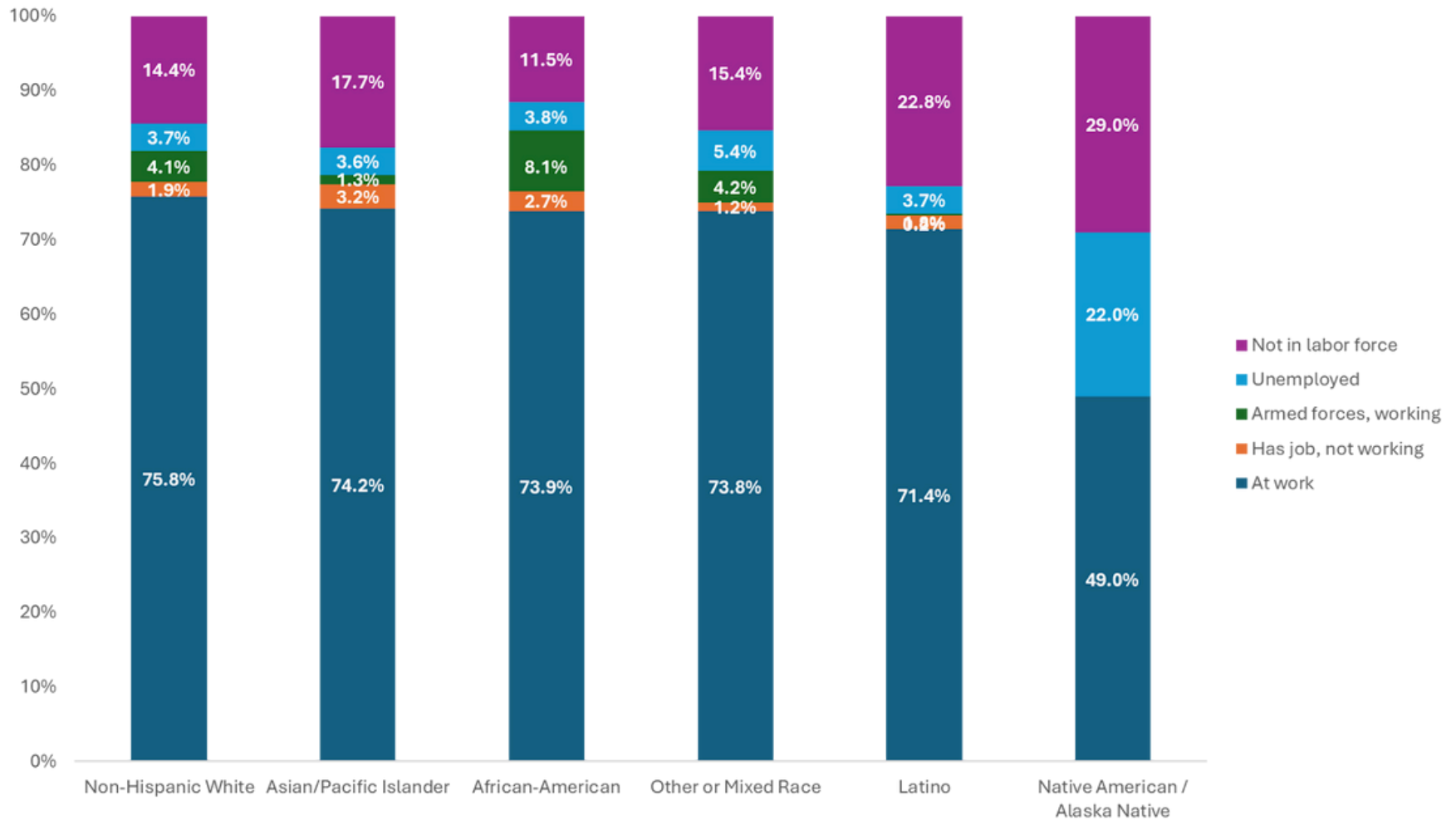
Individual Income Quintile by Race in Monterey and San Benito County (Ages 16+), 2022



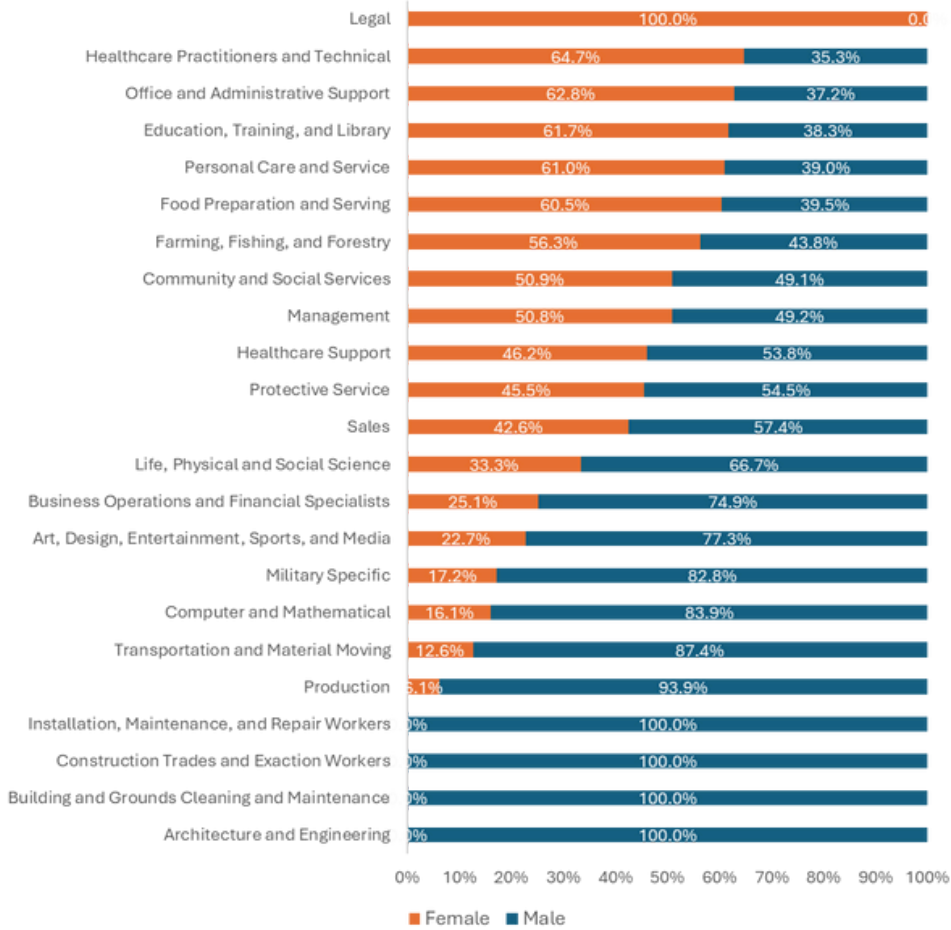
Employment Patterns

Approximately 74% of core working age (25-54) African Americans residents are employed, a rate comparable to other racial groups in the region. Employment trends show that African American females are more likely to work in healthcare, education, and administrative roles, while males work disproportionately in construction and production sectors.

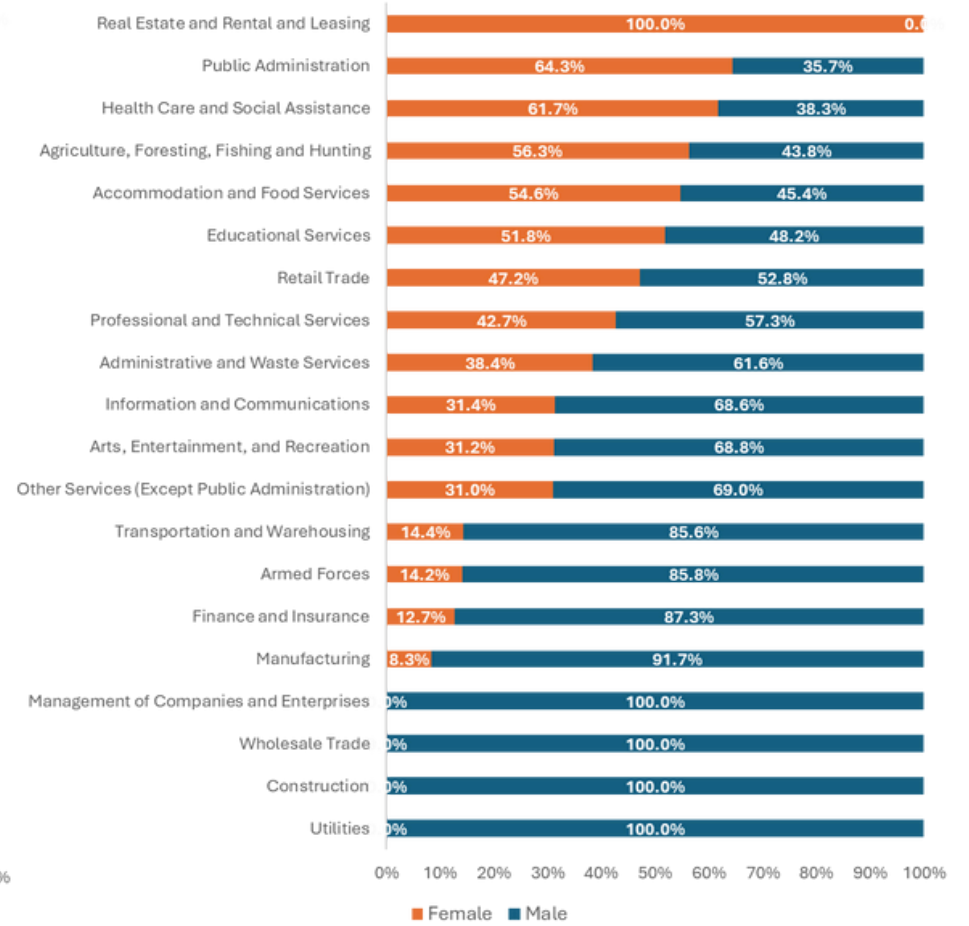
Core Working Age Employment in Monterey and San Benito County by Race, 2022



Representation by Sex within Occupation Amongst the Employed Adult Monterey and San Benito County African American Population (Ages 16+), 2022



Representation by Sex within Industry Amongst the Employed Adult Monterey and San Benito County African American Population (Ages 16+), 2022

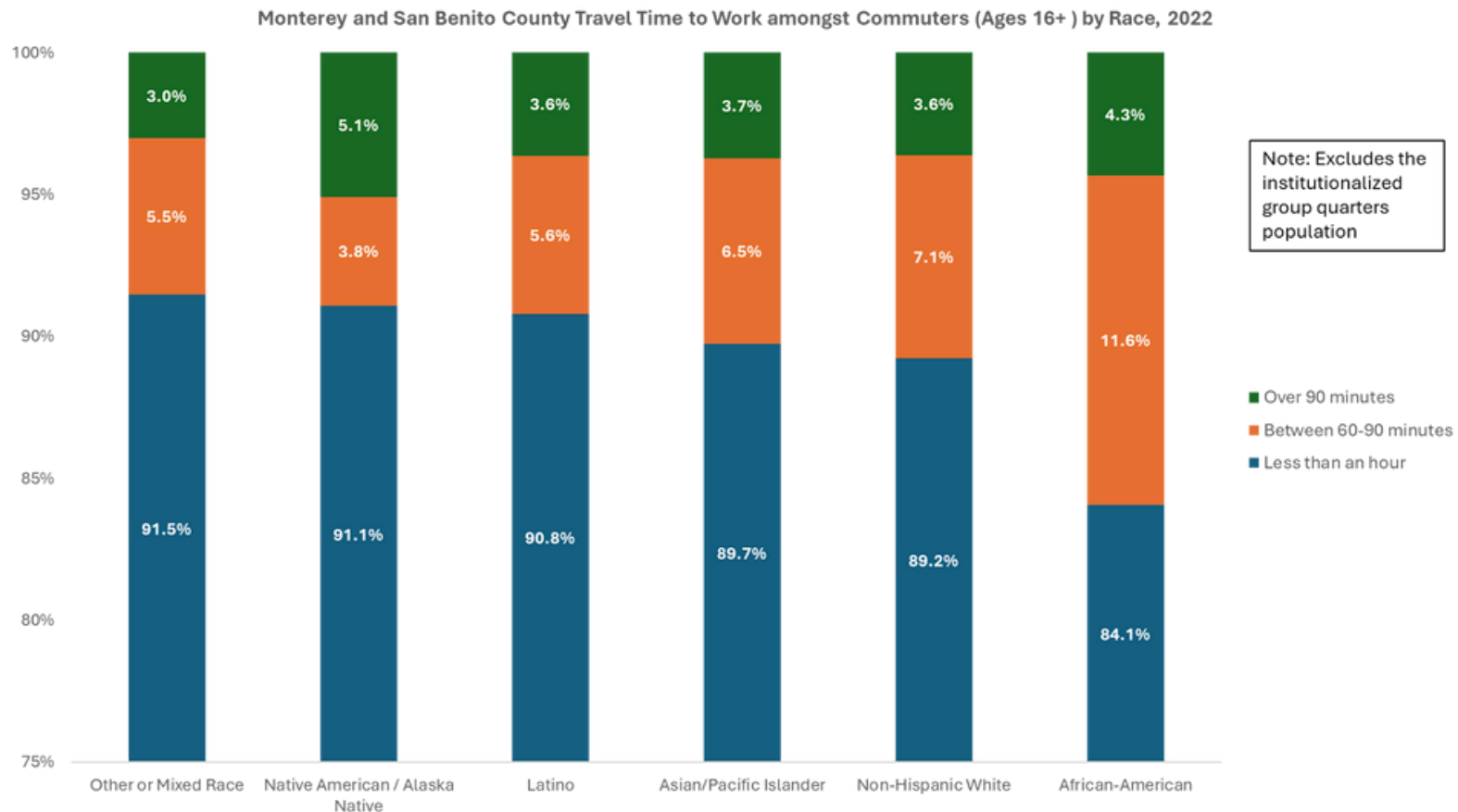


Healthcare Needs

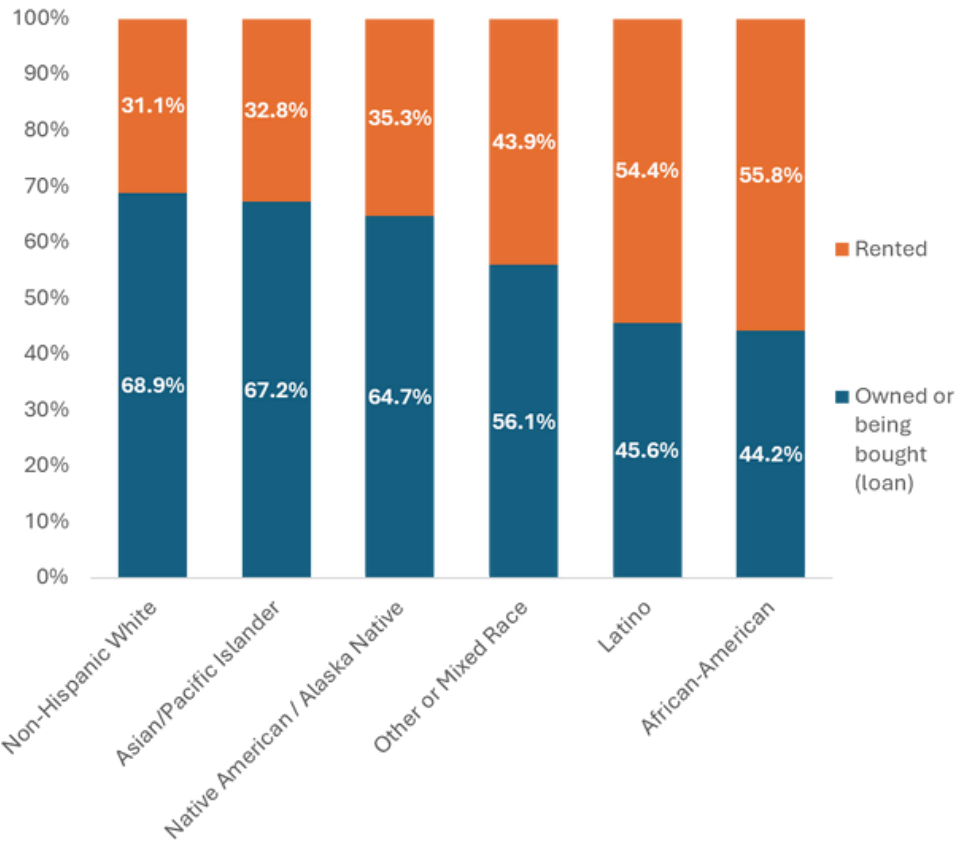
About 6% of African American residents lack health insurance, lower than other racial groups in the region. Most insured African American residents are covered through employer-sponsored healthcare plans. However, disproportionately high COVID-19 mortality rates indicate ongoing health disparities that necessitate further public health initiatives beyond simply access to health insurance.

Housing and Transportation Challenges

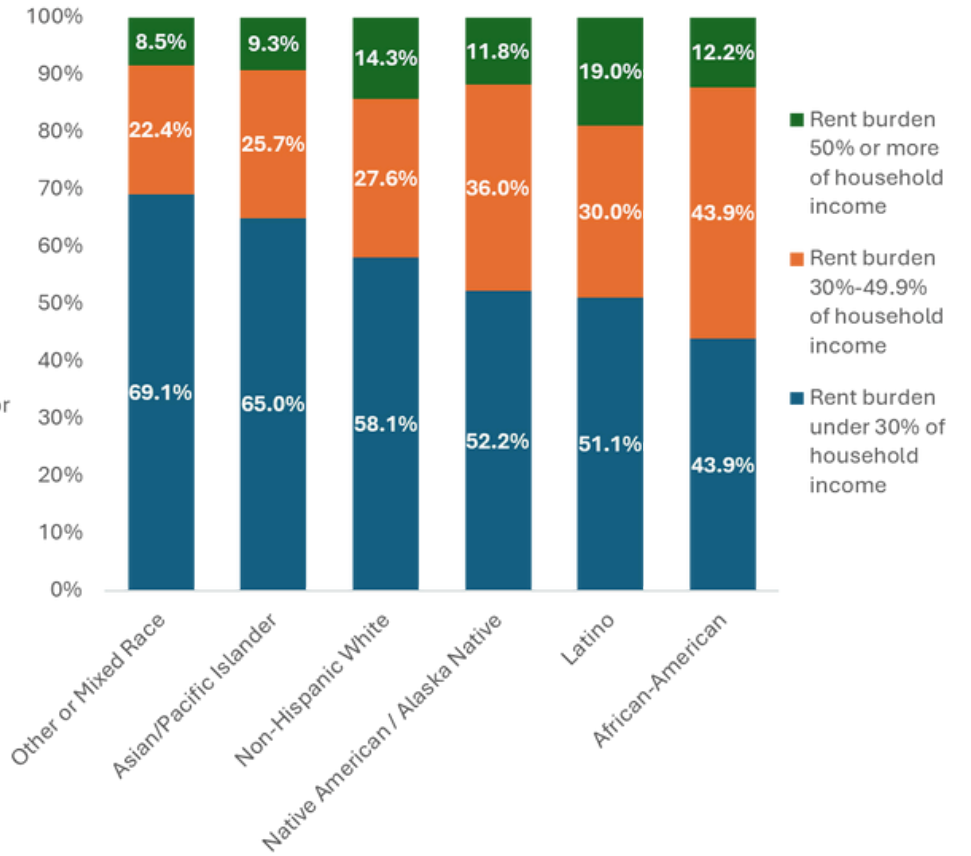
Homeownership rates among African Americans stand at just over 44%, the lowest of any racial group in the area, while over 56% of African American renters (excluding the institutionalized group quarters population) experience rent burdens. Additionally, the commute times for African American workers are the longest, indicating potential barriers to local employment opportunities.



Monterey and San Benito County Household Homeownership (Tenure) Status amongst Housed Population by Race, 2022 (Ages 15+)



Proportion of Household Income Spent on Gross Rent in Monterey and San Benito County by Race, 2022





Conclusions

The findings highlight the need for tailored targeted interventions in various domains, including efforts to reduce incarceration and providing education and workforce development for institutionalized individuals, income support for low-income families, job creation focused on industries employing African American residents, improved healthcare access, and initiatives to support affordable housing and homeownership. This report serves as a foundation for developing strategies aimed at enhancing the quality of life for African American residents in Monterey and San Benito Counties, fostering greater equity and opportunity within the community.



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