

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Rochester skyline at dusk. The sky is a mix of blue and purple, with some clouds. Several tall buildings are visible, including the Bank of America Tower on the right. In the foreground, there's a body of water reflecting the city lights. A bridge is visible in the middle ground. There are three circular overlays on the image: one large one at the top left containing the title, and two smaller ones on the left and right sides, each showing a different view of the city skyline.

# Wage Disparities in Monroe County by Race and Gender

A Joint Investigation by The  
Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty  
Initiative and The Mayor's Office of  
Innovation and Strategic Initiatives



# Wage Disparities in Monroe County by Race and Gender

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## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to explore the demographic and earning disparities in the local workforce in Monroe County. It focuses on people who live in poverty, despite being employed, and aims to help the community better understand major contributing factors preventing residents from becoming self-sufficient. It is meant to augment and contextualize existing data on the state of poverty in Rochester and to inform the strategy deployed by the Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative.

This report includes analysis on the correlations between the industries in which Rochester residents in poverty are employed, the wages they earn, and the hours that they work. It also examines these factors by race, gender, educational attainment, and physical ability. Through the analysis of several data sources, including the U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample, the Office of Innovation examines how the intersection of these factors contributes to Rochester's poverty landscape. Key findings outlined in this report include:

- Many part-time and seasonal workers live in poverty or are not self sufficient.
- Minorities are over-represented in several key service industries.
- The industries with over-representation of minorities also tend to be the county's lowest paying and largest sectors.
- Minorities earn less than their white counterparts in nearly every industry sector.
- Regardless of educational attainment, the wage gap between whites and minorities persists.

The report concludes that wages play a key role in preventing minorities, women, and the disabled from achieving self-sufficiency in Rochester. The recommended next steps for RMAPI are to engage employers and lawmakers in the industry sectors where minorities are both underpaid and over-represented and work towards increasing wages to help meet the goal of increasing self-sufficiency and reducing poverty in Rochester by 50% over the next 15 years.

## **Introduction**

In September, 2015, the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) issued a report titled "Progress Report: A Roadmap for Change."<sup>1</sup> Based on community-wide discussion involving hundreds of citizens and community leaders, the report outlines goals for reducing poverty in the region and establishes a working framework to approach these goals including, 1) community building, 2) structural racism, and 3) poverty-induced trauma. The report concluded with an eight part action plan to identify opportunities to decrease poverty by increasing access to quality jobs and career paths. Listed in the latter category are four separate action items:

- I. Engage in a thorough examination of the working poor using the standard of self-sufficiency.

- II. Empower the working poor to better inform strategies for creating opportunities to move people out of poverty.
- III. Conduct a workforce study of the working poor that includes an examination of the types of jobs held, employers, pay, and demographic information, e.g. place of residence, race, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- IV. Develop relationships and strategies with the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council to increase access to employment and upward mobility opportunities in specific organizational structures, from entry level positions to higher levels of management.

The focus of this paper is item III and will include information relevant to item I. In addition, this report will 1) provide a brief overview of key poverty metrics and locally relevant literature, 2) examine the demographic and geographic context of the local low-income workforce, 3) examine trends in workforce disparities between race, gender, and educational attainment, and 4) draw preliminary conclusions and suggest areas of further investigation and policy research.

Finally, two significant studies in neighboring cities lend further weight to the importance of documenting employment and compensation patterns in fighting poverty in Rochester.

“Working Toward Equality: Employment and Race in Buffalo” demonstrates the graphic concentration of minorities in lower paying jobs as well as racial disparities within occupations.<sup>2</sup> “Healthy Work in Syracuse? Conversations with Low-Wage Workers” draws the connection between low wage work and poorer health status.<sup>3</sup> Both of these reports should inform our approach in drafting a picture of the low wage workforce in Monroe County.

As Peter Edelman, a national expert in social welfare policy, stated in his January 2015 address to over 500 civic leaders in Rochester, “We have become a low wage nation. Low wages are by far the single leading cause of poverty in America.”

The report will profile the Monroe county’s workforce, focusing on low wage workers, their employers, their earnings, and significant disparities in earnings.

Please note, the report does not seek to address the large and growing segment of the impoverished population that is not in the workforce, and by no means do its authors wish to diminish the importance of addressing the challenges faced by this population. This population and its complexity merits its own analysis, research and policy development.

## **Overview of Poverty Metrics and Local Literature**

There are several tools used to measure poverty. Various guidelines and interpretations are used throughout the literature. However, two common concepts worth discussing are the federal poverty guidelines and self-sufficiency standard.

The federal poverty guidelines are a simplification of the more nuanced federal poverty threshold. The guidelines are set at the federal level based on methodology developed in the 1960's and 1970's and do not take in to account differences in the cost of living across the contiguous 48 states.<sup>4</sup> Because of the federal poverty guidelines lack of flexibility, a different standard called self-sufficiency, was created.

Self-sufficiency, or the ability for an individual to maintain their household without supplemental financial assistance, is more complex because it not only takes in to consideration the number of individuals in a household, but the unique composition of those individuals, including age. Self-sufficiency measures also take into account local living conditions and expenses. One locally recognized self-sufficiency measure, the Self-Sufficiency Standard is outlined in a report titled "The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York State 2010."<sup>5</sup> This report was thought of as useful for internal research by RMAPI's data team, however, because it has not been updated since its creation this standard is not used.

These two measures can lead to differing numbers of individuals. For example, ACT Rochester's 2016 report found that only 61.2% of Monroe County residents are self-sufficient or living in self-sufficient households.<sup>6, 7</sup> In comparison, an RMAPI Data Team internal memo titled "The Federal Poverty Level and Self-Sufficiency" categorized only 53% of county residents and less than 30% of city residents as self-sufficient. The memo's findings were consistent with those of the Women's Foundation of Genesee Valley, a local charitable and research organization dedicated to promoting economic self-sufficiency for women.<sup>8</sup> However, based on federal guidelines, the poverty rate is 15% thus highlighting how federal poverty guidelines can underestimate the number of individuals who cannot make ends meet (in this case have all bills paid without assistance).

Table 1 compares the self-sufficiency standard and federal poverty guideline for reference and shows the difference in these measures.

**Table 1. Comparison of the Self-Sufficiency Standard and Federal Poverty Level <sup>6</sup>**

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>NYS Self-Sufficiency Standard (Monroe County, 2016 Dollars)</b>	<b>Federal Poverty Threshold (2016)</b>	<b>Self-Sufficiency as a % of Federal Poverty Level</b>
1	\$21,990	\$11,880	185%
2	\$40,762	\$16,020	254%
3	\$53,742	\$20,160	267%
4	\$63,949	\$24,300	263%

Yet another report, which uses a different methodology for measuring poverty, is the United Way's 2016 report "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE)."<sup>9</sup> The report provides another measure of poverty as its creators felt the federal guidelines were underestimating and did not give a complete picture of who is in poverty. The ALICE threshold is based off of average household size and the Household Survival Budget, a tool that measures the estimated minimal cost of five basic household necessities- child care, housing, food, transportation, and health care. This report quantifies ALICE households, or households in which family member(s) is/are employed but cannot meet their basic needs. According to the report, the

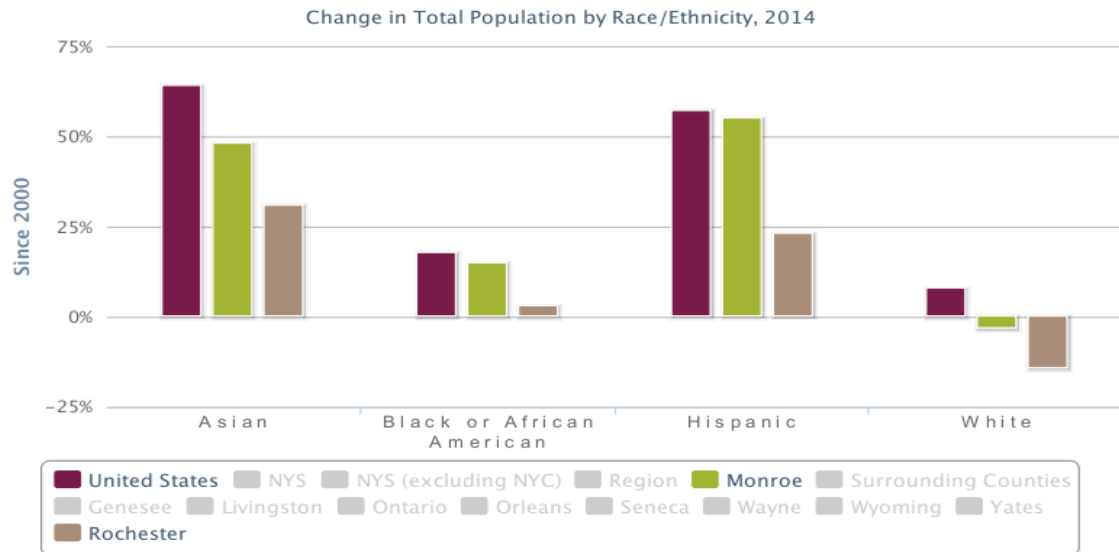
city of Rochester has the highest ratio of ALICE individuals in the state; 69% of households are below the ALICE Threshold. In Monroe County, 125,000 households are below federal poverty levels or are ALICE. Around 46% of those households are located in the city of Rochester. According to the report the relative abundance of low wage jobs reinforces the high proportion of ALICE households in the area. In the Rochester metro area, 55.8% of all jobs are in job titles where the median wage is less than \$20 per hour.<sup>10</sup>

Also note that this is a sampling of the ways in which poverty is measured. For the purposes of this report, as in line with RMAPI's stated goals, only the federal poverty guidelines and self-sufficiency will be used.

## **Demographic and Geographic Context**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rochester was a thriving city. The highly skilled labor force employed at businesses such as Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch & Lomb contributed significantly to the efforts of World War II and the area's farms provided food for the troops and at home.<sup>11</sup> By the 1950s, Rochester was the 32<sup>nd</sup> largest city in the US and during this era, Xerox, Kodak, and General Motors began to boom. In the 1950s, the city's population began to shift, as national trends of suburbanization and white flight had local impact.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, the Great Migration, the mass exodus of blacks from the Jim Crow South to northern cities, was underway.<sup>13</sup> Upon arrival in Rochester, blacks were frustrated with discriminatory treatment and the lack of opportunity. These tensions erupted with historic race riots in 1964.<sup>14, 15</sup>

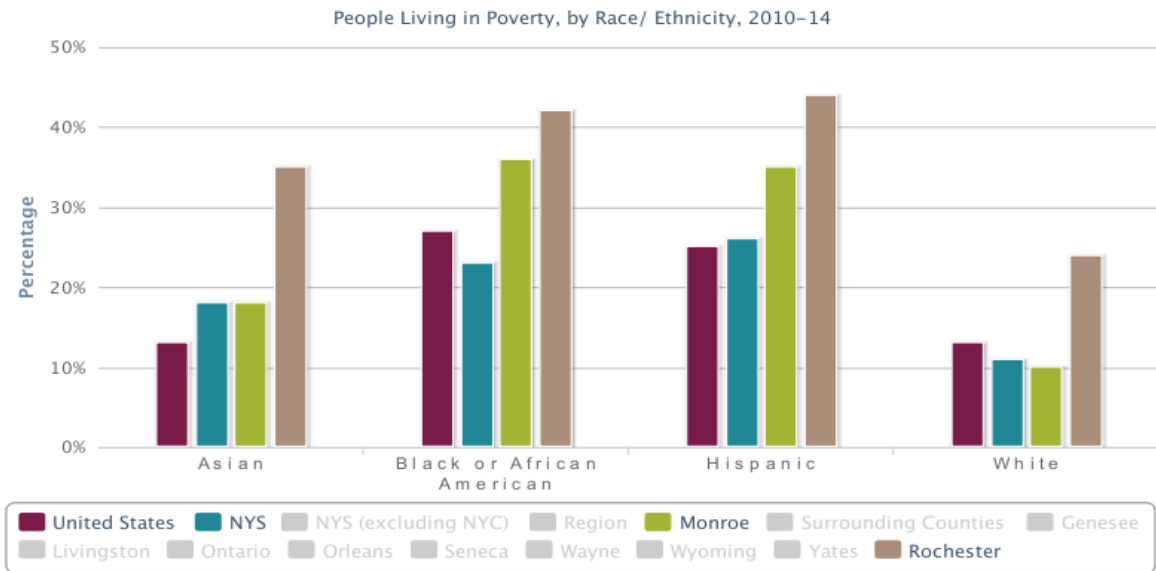
Following these events, white migration to the suburbs increased dramatically. According to Census records, the population of Rochester decreased 24% from 1960 to 1980, falling from 318,611 to 241,741. According to the 2010 Census, the population was 210,565 and the estimated 2016 population was 208,880. In 1970, whites comprised 82.4% of the population, a decrease from 97.4% in 1940 and in 2010's Census, the total white population was just 43.7% (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The white population rate has consistently decreased in Rochester while Black and Hispanic population rates have increased since 2000. Source: ACT Rochester, U.S Census American Community Survey 2014 Five Year Estimates

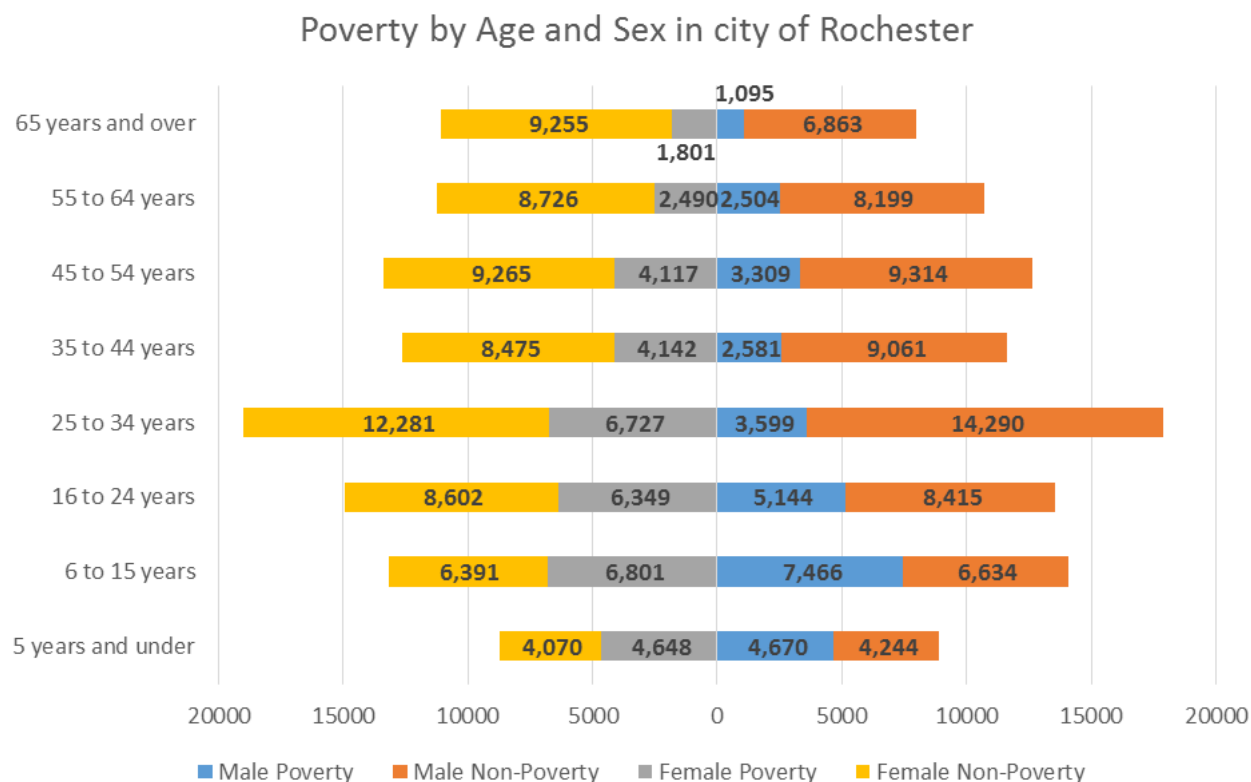
The long-term effects of depopulation as a result of white flight in Rochester include the redistribution of jobs from the city center to the suburbs, due to the closing of historic downtown shopping center such as Midtown and Sibley, and increased levels of concentrated poverty.<sup>16</sup> In 2013 and 2016 ACT Rochester released reports highlighting the severity of poverty in Rochester.<sup>7, 17</sup> According to 2015 Census ACS data, Rochester ranks as the 4<sup>th</sup> poorest city in the U.S. among the top 75 metropolitan areas. Compared with cities of similar sizes, ACT Rochester reports that Rochester ranked #1 for child poverty, rates of extreme poverty (people living below half of the federal poverty level), and rates of poverty for female heads of households with and without children.<sup>17</sup> Minority populations experience dramatically greater rates of poverty locally, as seen in Figure 2 below.





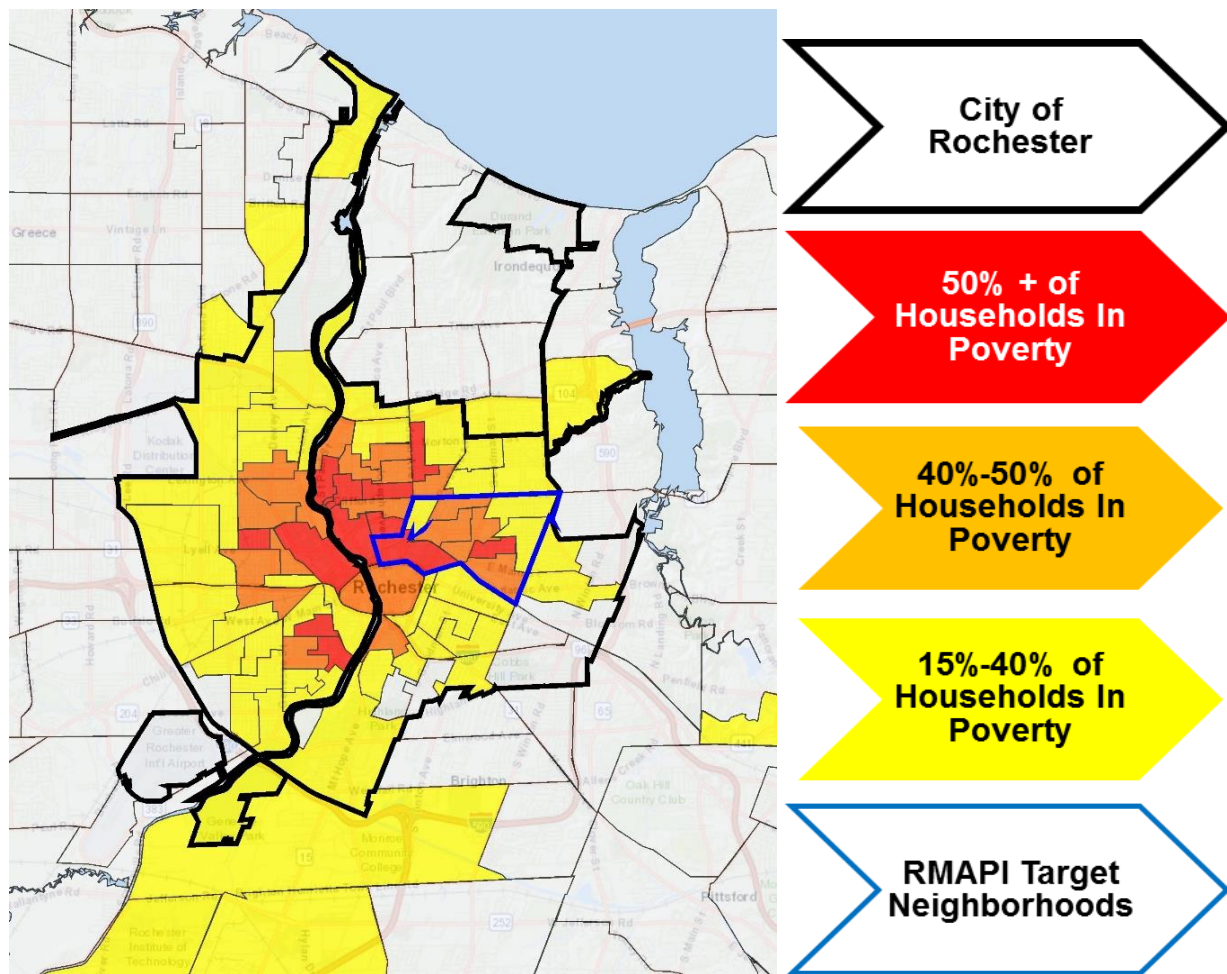
**Figure 2.** Poverty in Rochester is high overall, but minority populations experience higher rates of poverty than whites. Source: ACT Rochester, U.S Census American Community Survey 2014 Five Year Estimates

Poverty is also disproportionately experienced by working age women compared to men (Figure 3). According to a 2014 report by the Women’s Foundation of Genesee Valley, 49% of all households headed by women are living in poverty and 67% have incomes below self-sufficiency thresholds.<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, women of childrearing age are more likely to experience poverty due in part to the financial burden of caring for dependents. The report further highlights that if children under 18 are present, poverty rates for female headed homes are even higher; 58% are in poverty and 78% have income below self-sufficiency thresholds.



**Figure 3.** Working age women are more likely to be in poverty than men. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2015

The city of Rochester contains the majority of Monroe County's high poverty census tracts (Figure 4). According to the Brookings Institution, Rochester has the nation's 3rd highest concentration of poor people living in extremely poor neighborhoods or census tracts with greater than 40% poverty rates. Brookings reports that the number of these census tracts has grown from 27 to 37 since the initial 2013 report.<sup>17</sup> For a more comprehensive look of the area's poverty, see ACT Rochester's 2016 report.

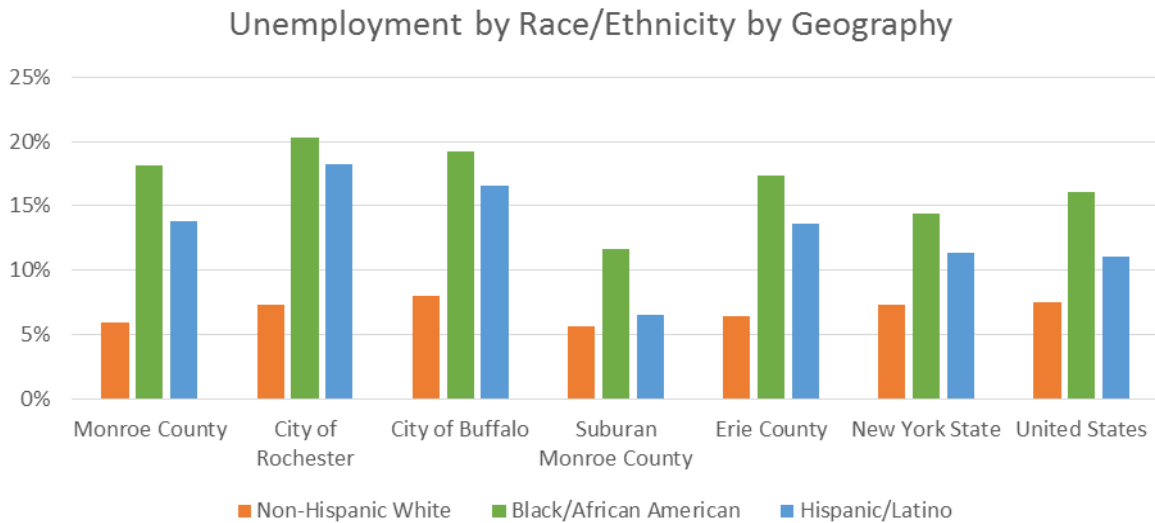


**Figure 4.** Data showing percentage of households below the poverty level in the Rochester area by census tract.  
Source: 2010-2014 Census ACS

## Trends in Local Workforce

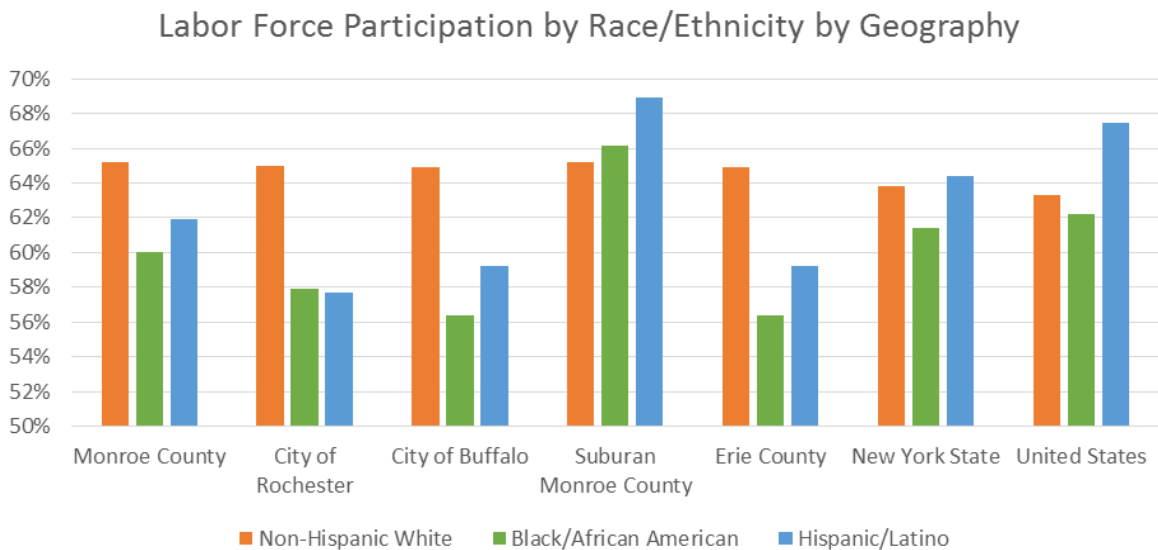
### *Unemployment & Labor Force Participation*

The unemployment rate is a standard labor force measure that compares the number of people not working and actively seeking work to the total number of people in the workforce. People who are capable of working but have given up looking for work are not counted as being part of the workforce. High unemployment rates of Black and Hispanic people continue to be an issue locally, regionally, and nationally. Unemployment rates reflect a local and national trend; minorities have higher unemployment rates than whites (Figure 5). The city of Rochester experiences the highest unemployment rates for minorities when compared to regional, statewide, and national figures.



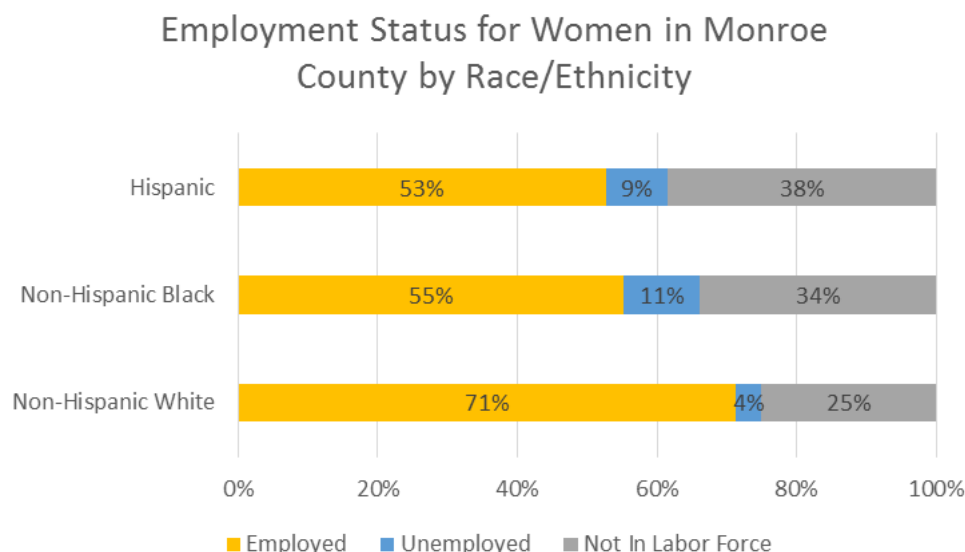
**Figure 5.** Across different geographic areas, unemployment is higher for minorities than their white counterparts, and the disparity is greatest in Rochester. Source: Calculated from Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2014

Labor force participation rates reflect similar disparities across races (Figure 6). Please note that labor force participation is not the inverse of unemployment and that a variety of complex and interrelated factors likely explain these observations. It is the percentage of the population that is either employed or unemployed/working or actively seeking work. For example, the high rate of Hispanic labor force participation at the national level may be explained in part by the lower median age of that subpopulation compared with other populations.

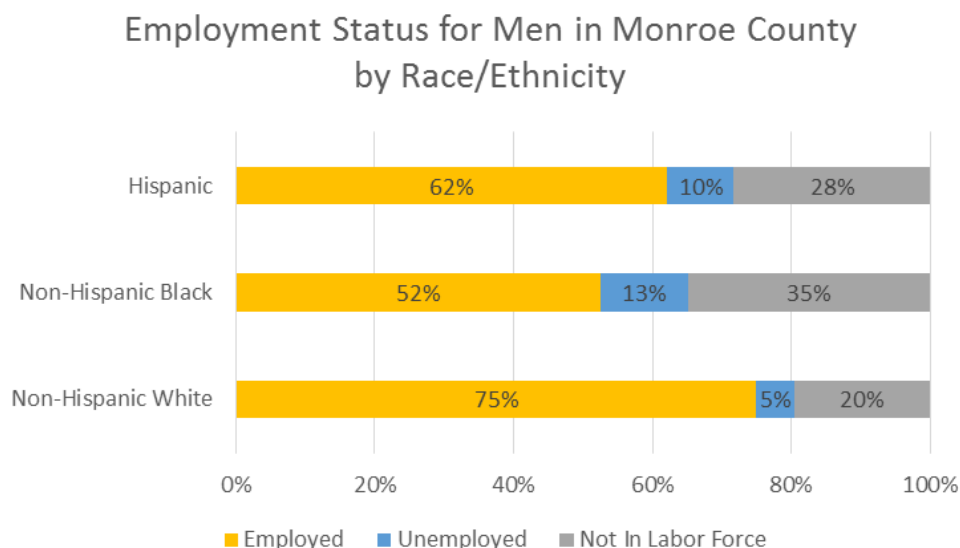


**Figure 6.** Labor force participation rates are generally higher and fairly steady among white populations across the geographies noted above. Nationally, the disparity between white and black labor force participation rates is less significant than in upstate cities shown here. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2014

In 2014, the Women’s Foundation of Genesee Valley documented that women are more likely to be in poverty than men, and in Rochester, single female heads of households are the demographic most likely to be in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Figure 7 and 8 show the disparity in labor data between races, and between women and men in Monroe County.



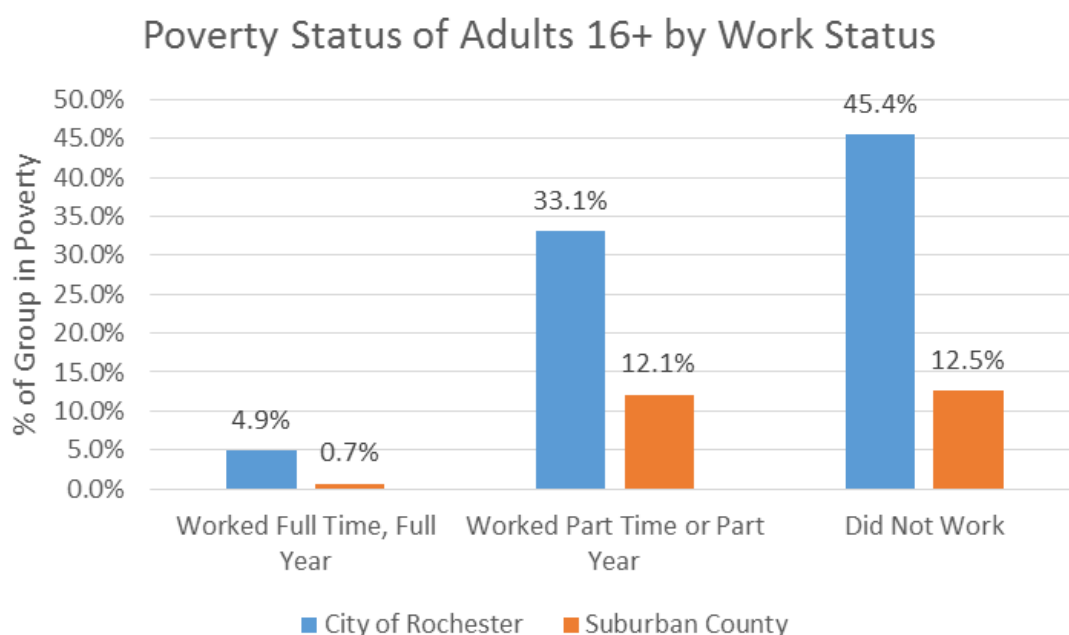
**Figure 7.** Minority women are more likely to be unemployed than white women. Black women have the highest unemployment rate of the groups. Hispanic women and black men are least likely to be employed in Monroe County. Adults age 16-64. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2014 Public Use Microdata Sample<sup>ii</sup>



**Figure 8.** Minority men are much more likely to be unemployed than men of other race and ethnic backgrounds. Black men have a similar labor force participation rate in Monroe County as black and Hispanic women. Adults age 16-64. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2014 Public Use Microdata Sample<sup>i</sup>

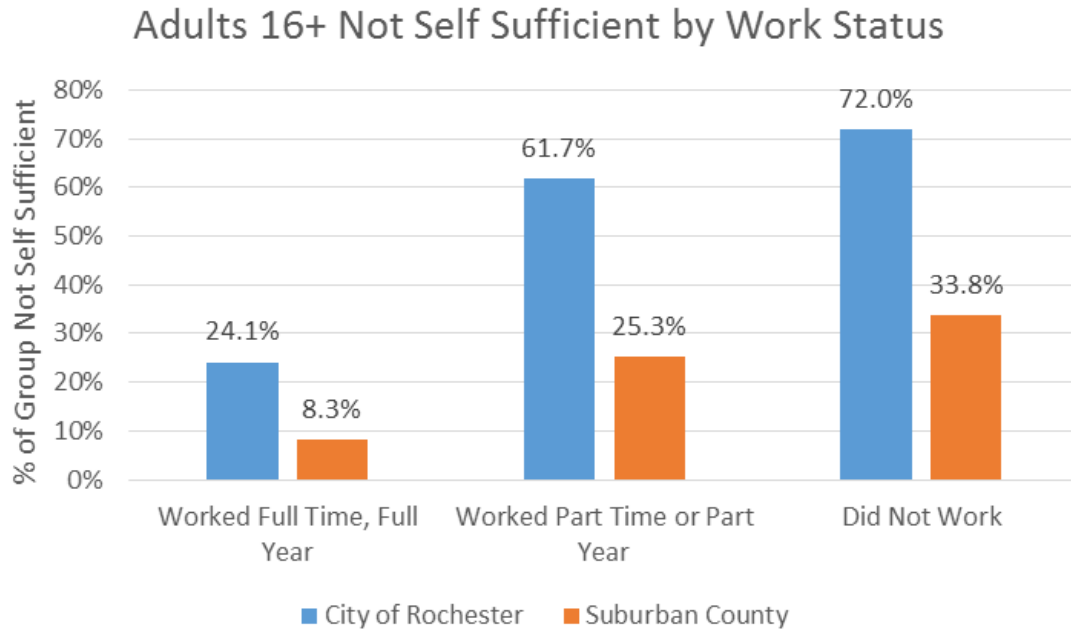


These statistics indicate that there are disparities among races in both employment and unemployment. This may contribute to disparities in earnings and poverty rates among groups. Finally an analysis of poverty and self-sufficiency (figures 9 and 10) by work status highlights that individuals who are able to achieve full-time, full-year employment are much less likely to live in poverty compared to those working part time or part year. Figure 10 shows that there are a significant number of part-time workers who are not self-sufficient as well as a number of full-time workers who are not self-sufficient. Further examination of barriers to achieving full time status is required, as well as careful look at hours and hourly wages for part time positions contributing to these trends.



**Figure 9.** Few full time, full year workers live in poverty. Adults age 16 and older. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2015

	In Poverty, Worked Full Time, Full Year	In Poverty, Worked Part Time or Part Year	In Poverty, Did Not Work
<b>City of Rochester</b>	2,672	14,826	26,414
<b>Suburban County</b>	1,264	13,693	16,336

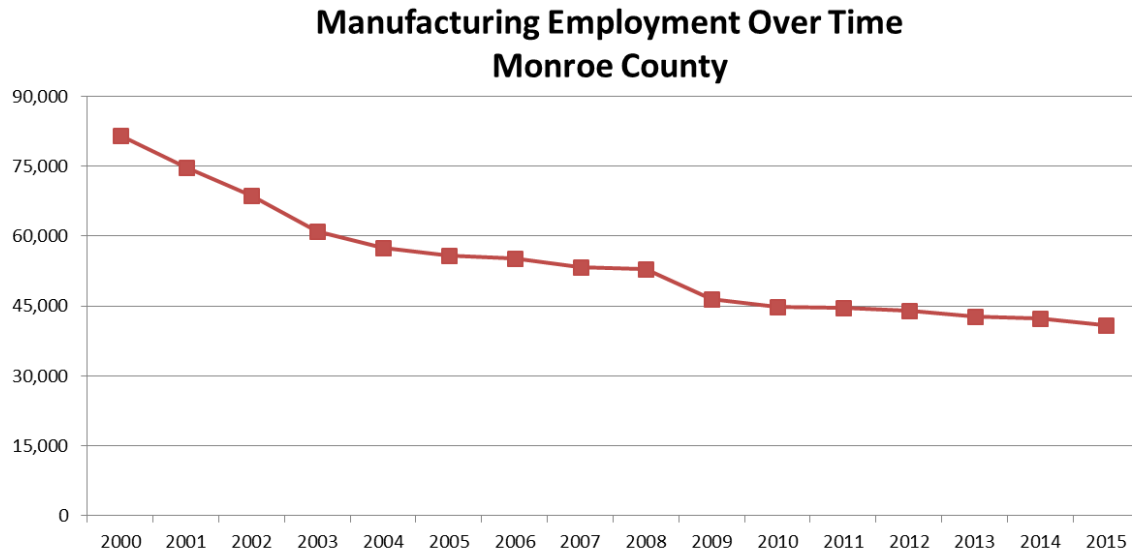


**Figure 10.** More full time, full year workers are not self-sufficient as compared to Figure 9. Part-time or part year workers still have higher percentage who are not self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency calculated using 200% of the federal poverty threshold. Adults age 16 and older. Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2014 Public Use Microdata Sample<sup>i</sup>

	Not Self-Sufficient, Worked Full Time, Full Year	Not Self-Sufficient, Worked Part Time or Part Year	Not Self-Sufficient, Did Not Work
<b>City of Rochester</b>	13,477	17,513	42,802
<b>Suburban County</b>	15,110	18,362	45,150

### ***Past, Current, and Future Employment Landscape***

Like many rust belt cities, Rochester has experienced significant changes in its employment landscape in recent decades. In particular, the dramatic decline of manufacturing jobs continues to trend downward (Figure 11). According to the New York State Department of Labor’s 2012-2022 long term industry employment projections, manufacturing in the Finger Lakes Region is expected to decline by another 2.9%.<sup>18</sup> The substantial anticipated public investment to grow Rochester’s photonics industry will result in job growth that primarily requires higher levels of educational attainment in fields such as electrical engineering or optics.<sup>19</sup> While the return of manufacturing of great local interest, the data does not point to a reversal of this downward trend. Low skill manufacturing jobs are not solely being offshored to China or Mexico, they are being made obsolete by robots and automation.<sup>20, 21</sup>

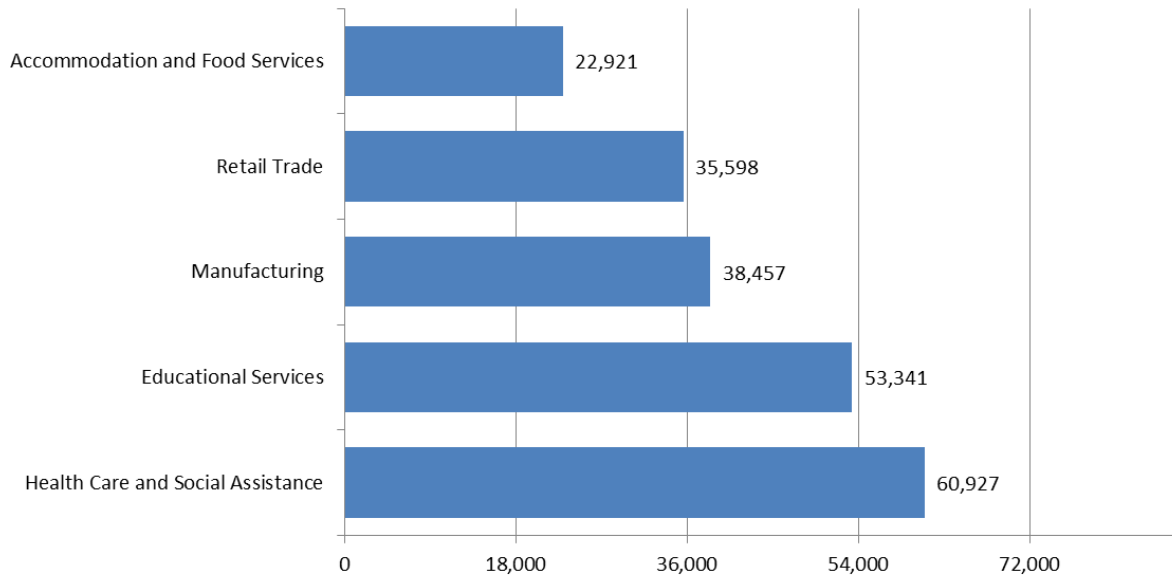


**Figure 11.** Manufacturing jobs steadily declined in Rochester from 2000 to 2015. Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators Q4 Employment.

In 2015, New York State declared that the fastest growing jobs were registered nurses, childcare workers, home health aides (HHA), and personal care aides (PCA).<sup>22</sup> Additionally, according to a 2016 report by the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI), HHA providers are facing a shortage of workers even as demands for their service increase.<sup>23</sup> A Center for Workforce report corroborates this trend.<sup>24</sup> Between 2012 and 2022, available HHA and PCA jobs are predicted to increase by 21.7%.

Currently, the healthcare and social assistance industry is the largest employment sector and trends indicate that that will continue (Figure 12).

### Full-Quarter Employment (Stable): Counts



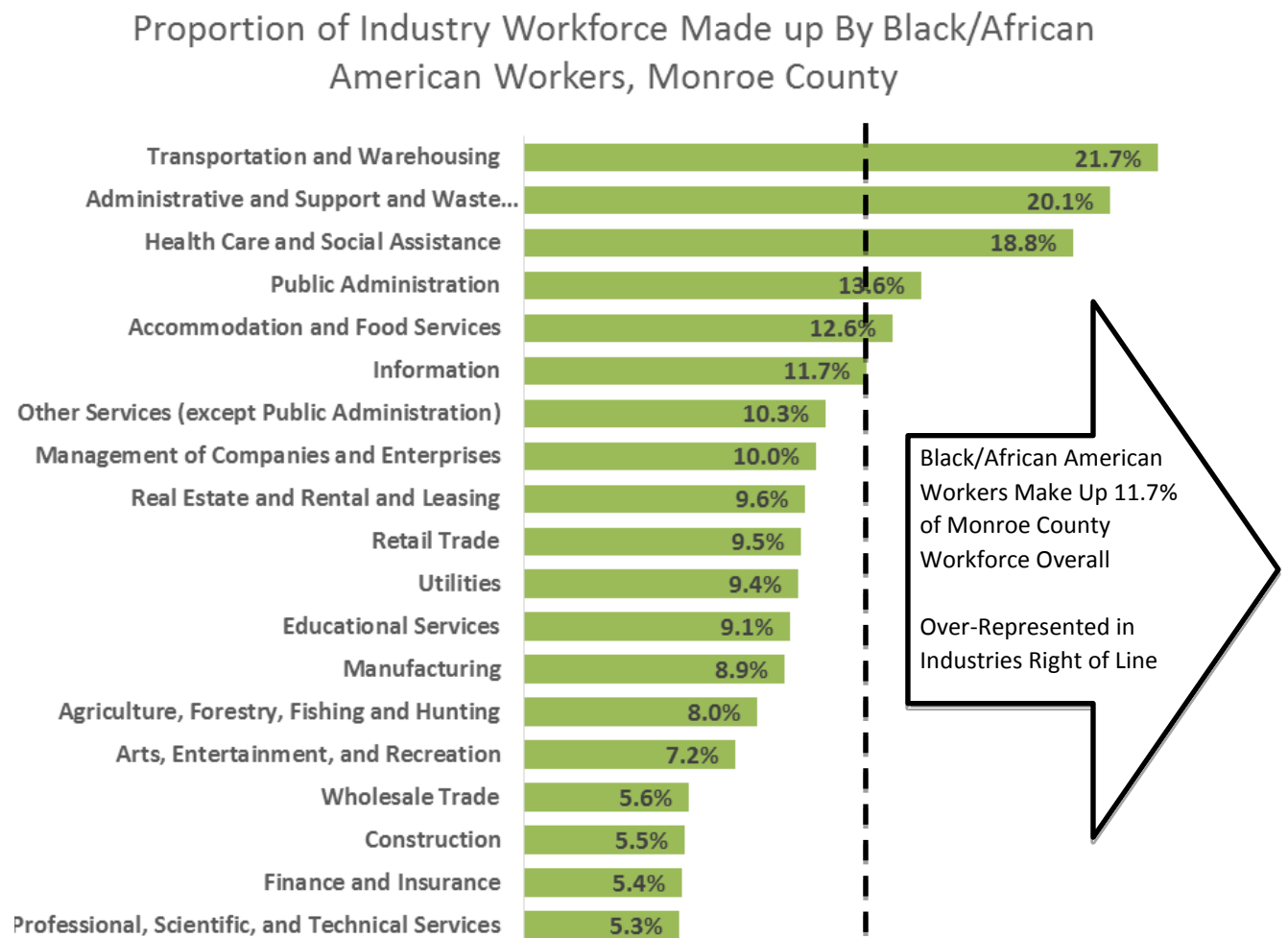
**Figure 12.** The two largest industry sectors in Monroe County are healthcare and social assistance and educational services. Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators Q4 2015.

As ranked by the Rochester Business Journal, the area's largest employers are shown below in Table 2.<sup>25</sup> There is a correlation between the largest employers and the largest employment sectors.

**Table 2. Rochester Area Largest Private Sector Employers – Rochester Business Journal 2016**

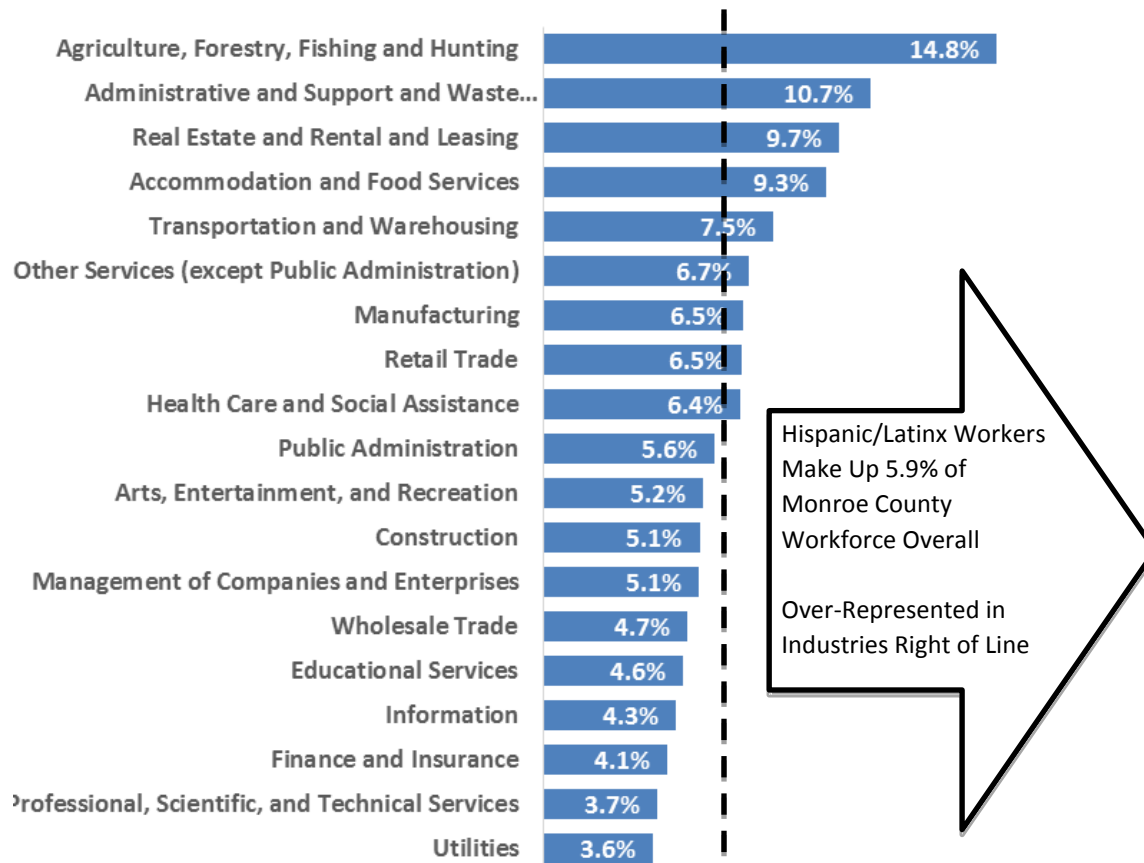
Rank	Employer	Total Employees	Full-Time	Part-Time
1	University of Rochester	27,590	N/A	N/A
2	Rochester Regional Health	15,753	N/A	N/A
3	Wegmans	13,606	6,396	7,513
4	Xerox	6,396	6,396	0
5	Paychex	4,123	4,074	49
6	Rochester Institute of Technology	3,993	3,305	688
7	Lifetime Healthcare	3,569	N/A	N/A
8	Harris	3,450	N/A	N/A
9	YMCA	2,745	249	2,496
10	Tops Markets	2,588	801	1,787
11	Sutherland Global Services	2,438	2,416	22
12	Finger Lakes Health	1,851	1,366	485
13	Frontier Communications Corp.	1,800	N/A	N/A
14	Eastman Kodak Co.	1,750	N/A	N/A
15	Finger Lakes Racing Association Inc.	1,744	1,134	610

The same data sources show racial and ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in the top two largest industry sectors – healthcare and social services and education. Relative to their makeup of the total workforce, minorities are also overrepresented in areas including transportation, waste management, food services, and agriculture (Figure 13). Understanding that minority populations in the region are more likely to experience poverty and that they are overrepresented in several sectors, we can ask the critical question of whether wages earned in these sectors are contributing to the growing issue of poverty in Rochester and what other factors, such as educational attainment, contribute to the disparity.





## Proportion of Industry Workforce Made up By Hispanic/Latinx Workers, Monroe County

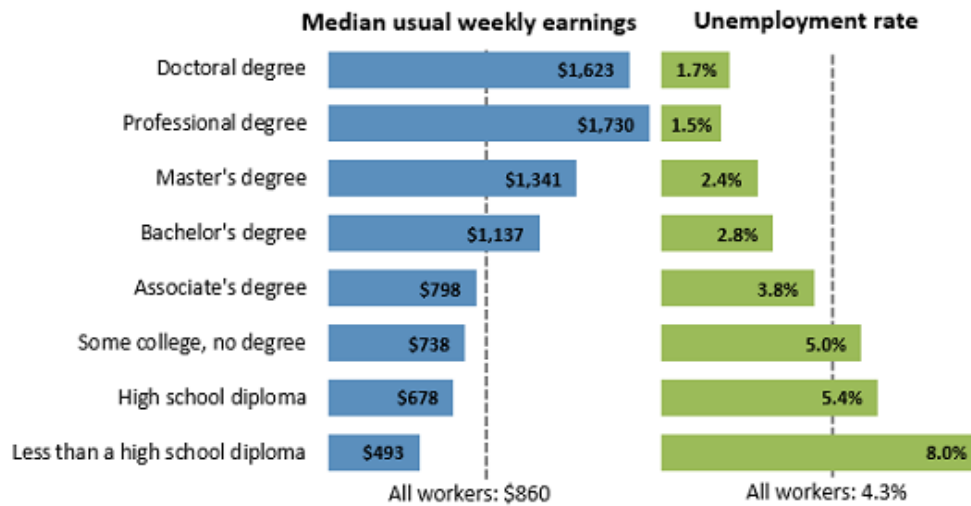


**Figure 13.** Black and Hispanic workers are overrepresented in several key service industries in Monroe County.  
Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2015 Q4 Beginning Quarter Employment.

### *Educational Attainment and Earnings*

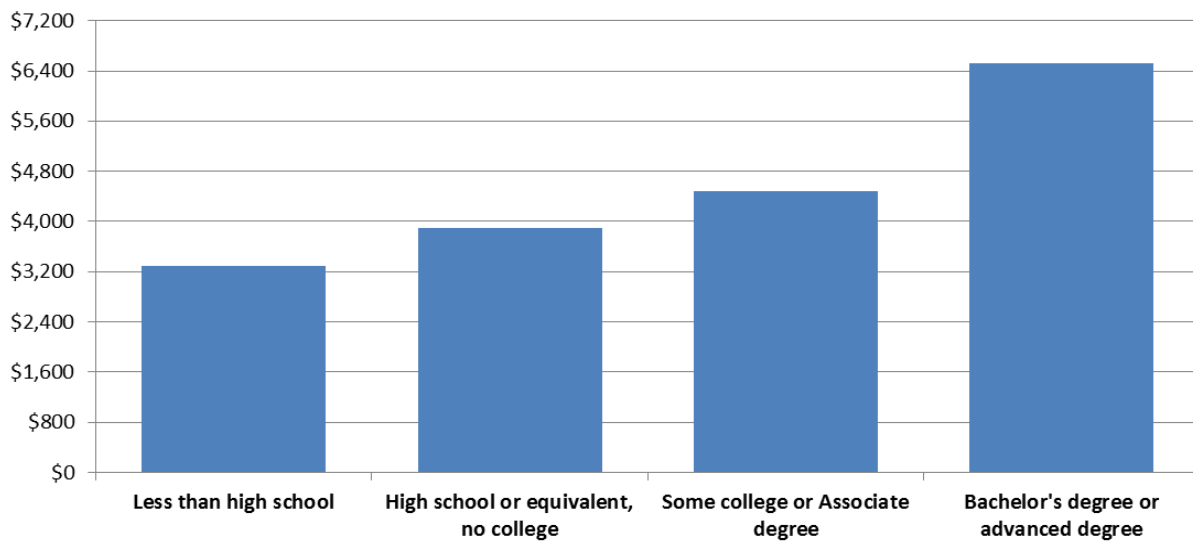
Educational attainment is a commonly accepted indicator of earning potential. There is a strong correlation between educational attainment and both earnings and unemployment rates, as illustrated in Figure 14.

## Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2015



**Figure 14.** National statistics on earnings by educational attainment for age 25+ full-time salary workers. Those with higher levels of education earn more per week than those with a high school diploma or less. Unemployment rates are also higher for those without a high school diploma. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, data updated in March 2016.

## Average Monthly Earnings by Educational Attainment

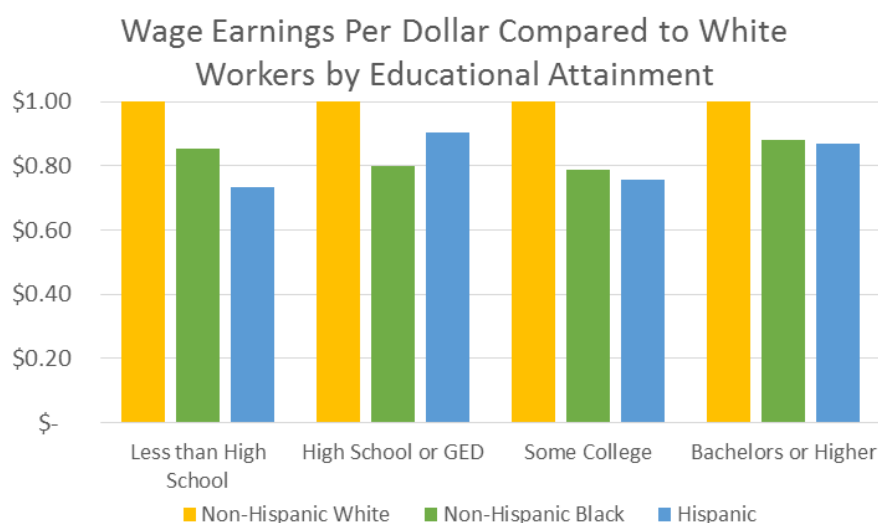


**Figure 15.** Earnings by educational attainment for Monroe County. Data is skewed because these earnings are averaged across all job sectors and all races. For example, some higher paying jobs like crabbing or in forestry do not require a high school diploma leading to this category having higher average monthly earnings. Despite this, the higher the degree level, the higher the earnings still holds. Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators Q4 2015 Full Quarter Employment

The correlation between education and earnings at the national level holds true in Monroe County as seen in Figure 15.

The Rochester City School District has low graduation rates; in 2015 46% graduated in comparison to the average graduation rate for New York State of 78%.<sup>26</sup> The RCSD graduation rate for blacks was 47% and for Hispanics was 38% in 2015. The overall graduation rate for males is 40% and for females is 50%. Nationally, these disparities are less pronounced; blacks have a high school graduation rate of 87%, whites 93%, and Hispanics 67%.<sup>27</sup>

Earnings disparities exist even when controlling for the education level. Racial and ethnic minorities consistently earn less on the dollar than whites with the same education level and across all education levels (Figure 16). Many plausible hypotheses may explain this observation including structural racism and discrimination, degree types and reputation of academic institutions from which they were awarded or even differences in behavior and access to job search skills and professional networks. Further research may reveal a more complex system of underlying causes of this disparity.



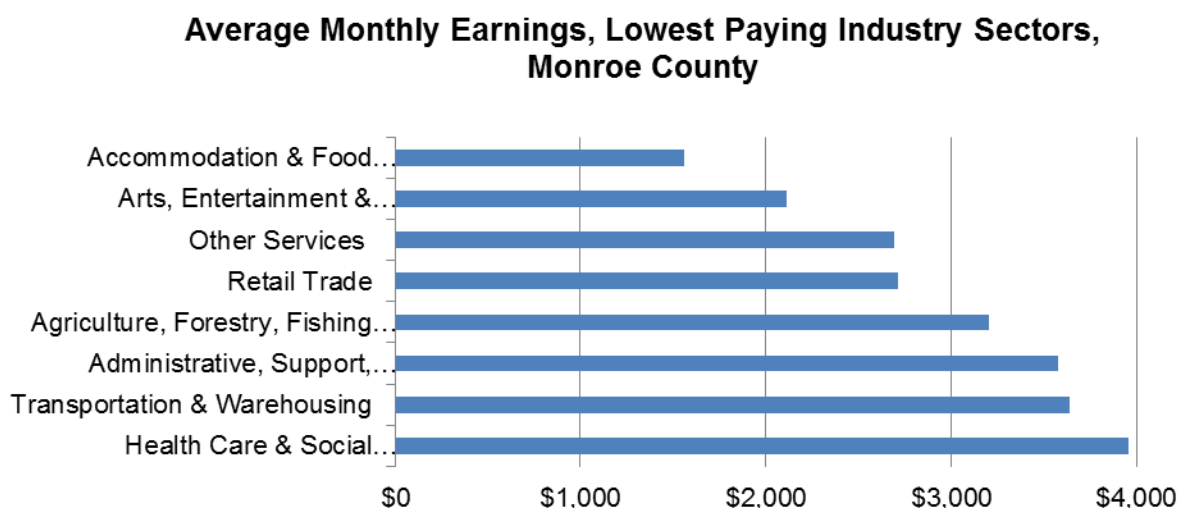
**Figure 16.** Comparing full year workers and holding education constant, minorities earn less than their white counterparts in Monroe County. Having a college degree helps reduce this wage gap but does not close it. Source: Census American Community Survey 2014 5-Year Public Use Microdata Sample<sup>1</sup>

### ***Occupations and Earnings***

Examining earnings within the context of occupations and industries reveals interesting trends. Educational attainment levels generally limit an individual's ability to seek employment in occupations or industries associated with higher pay. Therefore those in poverty with low educational attainment are often overrepresented in industries and occupations with the lowest barriers to entry. These industries typically require little formalized education or are risky or physically demanding occupations. For example, PCAs generally earn low wages, have high injury rates, and irregular hours. Turnover rates as high as 60% in this occupation contributes to

the shortage of workers and reinforces the minimal requirements necessary to keep an adequate supply of workers.<sup>28, 29</sup> These jobs require some high level skills and fill a vital need for care and service. For example, PCAs and HHAs do the same type of work, such as dealing with complex medical equipment and giving medication, as a nurse, as referenced in the two case studies in this report. If a PCA is taking care of a patient on a ventilator, a complex machine that helps an individual to breathe, the PCA needs to know how to properly suction the patient if the airway is blocked by mucus or troubleshoot the machine if it malfunctions. Failure to know how to work this complex machinery, or notice that the patient is in distress, can result in injury or death of the patient.

These conditions are reflected in the 2014 survey of Syracuse HHA and PCA workers.<sup>3</sup> This high level of skill in taking care of a vulnerable part of the population and high demand for the service, would be assumed to have a reflection in higher wages, however, as seen in the subsequent graphs, PCAs and HHAs consistently earn low wages.



**Figure 17.** Average Monthly Earnings for the Five Lowest Paying Industry Sectors, Monroe County, Full Quarter Employees Q4 2015

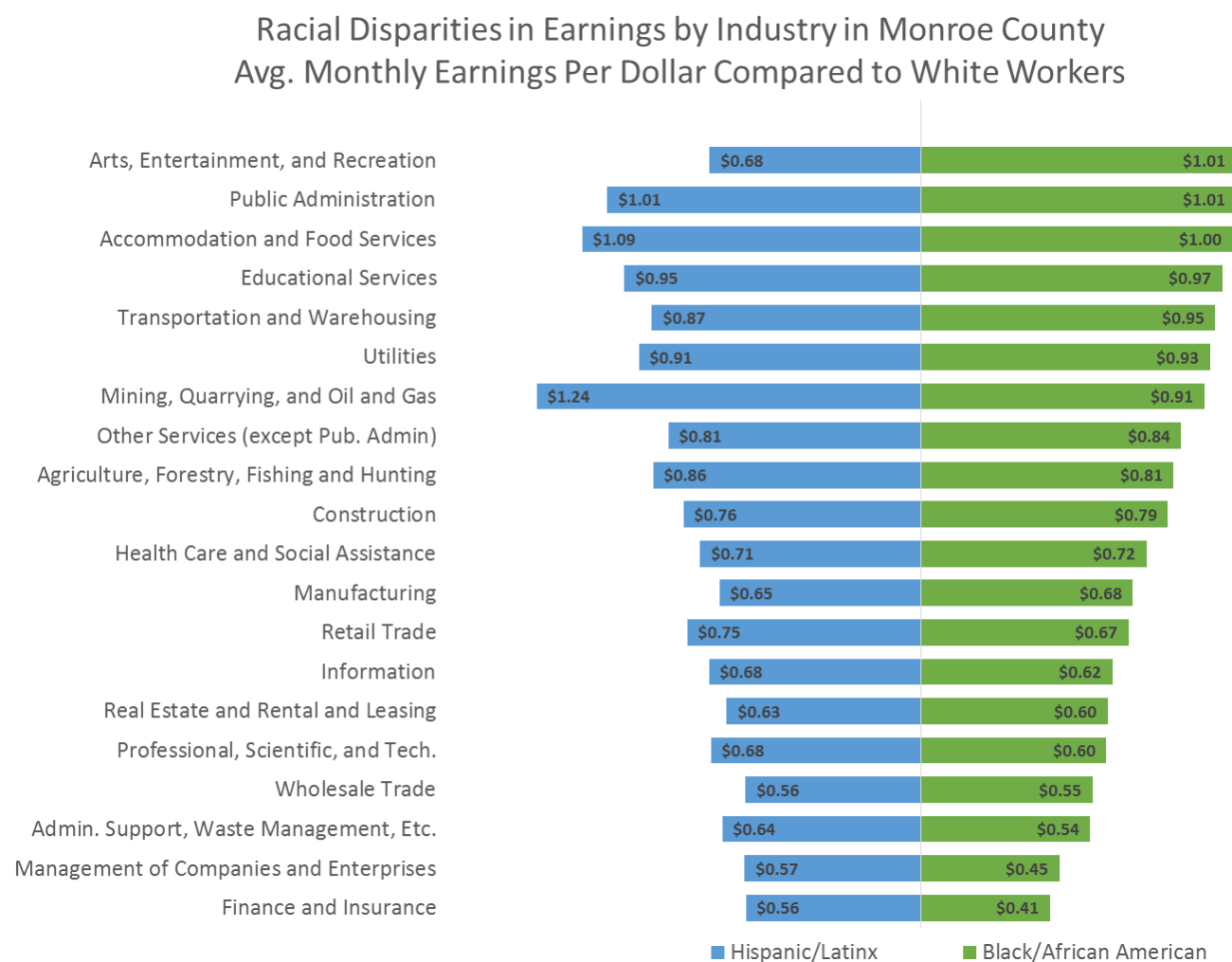
Many of the lowest paying industries also coincide with several industries where minorities are overrepresented. Healthcare and social assistance is the largest industry sector in the Rochester area, accounting for three of the ten largest employers. Wages for the sector average \$43,000, but 14% of the employees in this sector work in medical support occupations earning an average of \$27,000 annually.<sup>10, 30</sup>

Locally, there is a push to increase the workforce of HHAs and PCAs to meet the needs of a large local disabled and/or aging population. Action for a Better Community (ABC) recently received a Health Profession Opportunity Grant to train people in poverty for work in these occupations.<sup>31</sup> However, at current pay rates it is unlikely these newly trained individuals will earn enough to be considered self-sufficient.

The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute's, *U.S. Home Care Workers: Key Facts*, reports that nationally over half of healthcare workers are minority women living in poverty. In 2015, the national average for wages in this occupation was \$10.11 per hour, a decrease from \$10.21 per hour in 2005.<sup>23</sup> In the Finger Lakes, the wages for these positions is slightly better, ranging from \$11.65 per hour to \$12.25 per hour.<sup>18</sup> According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015 estimates for Rochester, the total number of low wage healthcare workers is 20,780 and a large proportion, or 7,460, of those are PCAs.<sup>30</sup> This means that over a third of workers in the area's top growth sector are earning low wages and unlikely to meet self-sufficiency standards for households with dependents.

## Race and Earnings

It is not just in healthcare that wage disparities are evident. In the lowest paying sectors, minorities still make less than their white counterparts, as seen in Figure 18.



**Figure 18.** Proportion of monthly earnings displayed as dollar figure compared to white workers. Black and Hispanic workers in Monroe County earn less on the dollar than whites in most sectors. Source: Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators Q4 2014, Full Quarter Employed.



For the top 15 job titles in Monroe County, there are about 29,000 workers who earn under 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (Table 3).

**Table 3. Top 15 Job Titles in Monroe County  
with Full Year Workers Earning 200% or below Federal Poverty Rates, 2014**

Rank	Occupation	Total Full Year Workers Monroe County (ACS PUMS 2014)	Total Full Year Workers Below 200% of Federal Poverty Level (ACS PUMS 2014)	% of Occupation that are Workers Below 200% of Poverty Level (ACS PUMS)	Avg. Hourly Wage 2015 (BLS, ROC MSA)	Median Hourly Wage 2015 (BLS, ROC MSA)
1	Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	6,281	2,790	44.4%	\$12.81	\$12.31
2	Cashiers	4,815	2,263	47.0%	\$9.88	\$9.27
3	Janitors And Building Cleaners	4,656	1,468	31.5%	\$11.79	\$10.82
4	Cooks	3,007	1,336	44.4%	\$11.54	\$10.83
5	Customer Service Representatives	6,164	1,331	21.6%	\$17.41	\$15.09
6	Retail Salespersons	5,389	1,239	23.0%	\$13.11	\$10.02
7	Waiters and Waitresses	2,647	1,134	42.8%	\$11.53	\$9.78
8	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,964	1,092	55.6%	\$10.89	\$10.09
9	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	6,330	1,087	17.2%	\$21.80	\$19.14
10	Childcare Workers	2,214	1,023	46.2%	\$10.70	\$9.65
11	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,714	995	36.7%	\$13.54	\$11.90
12	Secretaries And Administrative Assistants	8,738	924	10.6%	\$18.47	\$17.98
13	Driver/Sales Workers And Truck Drivers	4,275	893	20.9%	\$16.68	\$14.95
14	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	2,574	764	29.7%	\$12.34	\$10.85
15	Personal Care Aides	1,756	734	41.8%	\$12.20	\$11.00

Sources: Census ACS 2014 5- Year Public Microdata Sample, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics May 2015

Furthermore, 44% of workers earning less than 200% of the poverty guidelines are minorities. This is an overrepresentation as, according to Public Microdata Sample<sup>i</sup> (PUMS) data, only 22% of employed individuals in Monroe County are minorities (Table 4).

**Table 4. Racial/Ethnic Breakdown of Full Year Employed Workers**

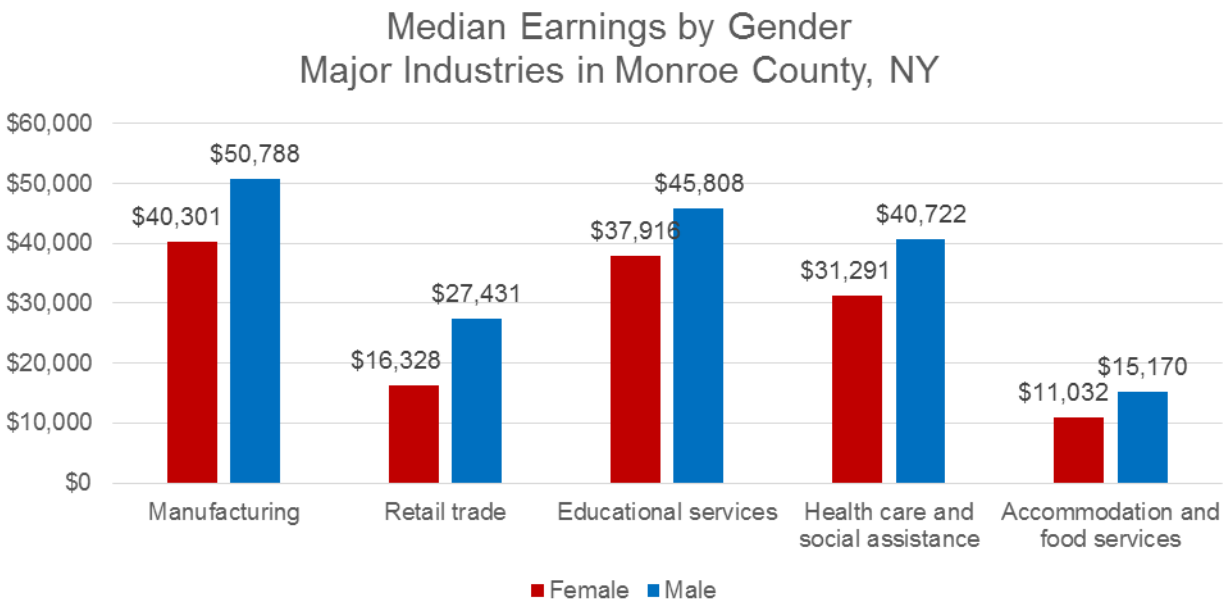
**Earning 200% or Below Federal Poverty Rate in Monroe County**

Race/Ethnicity	Full Year Employed Workers Earning Less than 200% of Poverty Rate	Percent of Full Year Employed Earning Less than 200% of Poverty Rate	Avg. Hours Worked Per Week	Avg. Annual Wage Earnings 2014
Non- Hispanic, White	23,452	56%	34.2	\$16,802
Non-Hispanic, Black	9,543	23%	34.9	\$18,199
Non-Hispanic, Other Race or Multiple Races	2,935	14%	37.6	\$16,911
Hispanic, Any Race	5,839	23%	34.9	\$18,199
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,769</b>	<b>100%</b>		

Source: Census ACS 2014 5- Year Public Microdata Sample

Both race and gender contribute to wage disparities. Women of color earn less than white men. Comparing median earnings nationally, for every dollar a white man earns, a white woman earns \$0.75, a Latinx woman earns \$0.56, and a Black woman earns \$0.64.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 19 shows median earning by gender in the largest sectors in Monroe County. Full time male employees earn about 1.2 times more than their female counterparts across local industries. This wage disparity further contribute to women being the largest demographic living in poverty.



**Figure 19.** Women make less than men across the largest industries in Monroe County. Source: American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2015

## ***Workers with Disabilities***

Any report about wage disparities would be remiss to exclude workers with disabilities. Disability spans race and gender and does not necessarily preclude one from working, although poverty among the disabled is high. Highlighted in the ACT Rochester 2015 report, there were over 34,000 people in Rochester with at least one disability. The poverty rate for this group was 42.1%, accounting for 22% of those in poverty in Rochester. Nationally, an increase in working age adults entering nursing homes and the shortage of PCAs and HHAs to help the disabled get to work, has made entering the workforce even more difficult for this population.<sup>33</sup>

For those with intellectual or mental disabilities, wage disparities are embedded in the law. The 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act certified sheltered workshops, which predominantly serve those with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, to pay subminimum wages to disabled workers. Nationally, many of these workers earn less than a dollar per hour.<sup>34</sup>

Movement to end these practices is slowly gaining bipartisan support. For example, the proposed TIME Act would ban subminimum wages and provide funding to help disabled workers transition into mainstream employment. Vermont was the first state to eliminate subminimum wages in 2003. As a result, the employment rate of the disabled in Vermont is now double the national rate.<sup>35</sup>

New York State's Office of People with Developmental Disabilities has planned to shift people away from sheltered workshops, however the wage restrictions are still in place. Disabled men have earnings of about \$20,000 per year and women have earnings of around \$16,000 per year.<sup>36</sup> For comparison, median earnings for nondisabled men is \$38,000 and for women is \$27,000.

This disparity experienced by Rochester's disabled working population merits RMAPI's further engagement with this community as well as making effective policy that address barriers to employment as outlined by Senator Tom Harkin and the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.<sup>37</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Rochester is at a critical point in a collective effort to reduce poverty. Poverty continues to increase across the city and has begun to rise in parts of suburban Monroe County. The community is poised to take action, prepared to think and act differently, and use data to inform strategy as RMAPI and partners implement their first wave of strategies.

The data in this report outlines low wages contribute to issues of poverty in Monroe County and disproportionately impact women and minorities. More than 30,000 Rochester workers, and over

65,000 countywide, are living at or below 200% federal poverty levels. Despite intense demand for workers in rapidly growing sectors such as healthcare, wages remain stagnant. Wages must play a role in reducing poverty and building a more self-sufficient community. Increased wages are a key area of opportunity for achieving RMAPI's goal of reducing poverty by 50% in 15 years.

The complexity of the local economy and factors contributing to the growth of low wage work should not be overlooked or oversimplified. The data within this report may serve as a starting point in understanding the disparities that exist across different categories of workers. As the community continuously works to address poverty through improved programming, workforce development, and policy redesign, a serious consideration of wage levels and exactly who workforce development targets and for which occupations and industries should be included.

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