

Orange County Worker Profile

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The UCI Labor Center’s analysis of labor market trends is informed by a worker-centered approach. We focus on workers as the level of analysis. For example, we analyze workers’ wages as opposed to household income. We also focus on key worker characteristics, such as gender, race, and ethnicity. Part I of our report analyzes employment levels and changes in Orange County between 2019 and 2021 as well as workers’ median wages by gender, race, industry, and occupation. Part II analyzes unionization levels and union wage differentials in Orange County, to the extent afforded by available data.

Part I

Part I utilizes Census data from the American Community Survey, or ACS. The most recently available Census data comes from a yearly one-percent sample. The size of Orange County provides researchers with a robust annual sample of detailed individual-level data, allowing analysis of individual worker characteristics such as gender, race, occupation, and wages.¹ The granularity of this detailed information about individuals at the county level is traded off against geography: we cannot locate where these individual live at a fine geographic scale such as the neighborhood. We analyze 2019 and 2021 data, capturing a snapshot of the workforce before the pandemic and again on the heels of the pandemic. More recent 2022 data will be released in September 2023, providing more information about Orange County’s trajectory of labor market recovery.

Total Employment in Orange County

2019 total employment	2,037,217
2021 total employment	1,964,746
Change	-72,471

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2019, 2021²

In 2019, Orange County supported just over two million workers. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the number of employed workers declined to 1.96 million by 2021, a contraction of 3.6%. The 2021 data reveal a labor market in recovery but not fully rebounded to pre-Covid levels.

¹ An additional value of the Census is that it includes vulnerable communities and individuals. Although challenges with undercounting continue, the Census has made progress on reaching vulnerable communities through outreach efforts in partnership with community-based organizations over the past two decades.

² Sample selection: civilian wage/salary workers aged 18-64 who reside in non-group quarters in Orange County. Outliers, i.e., persons with hourly wages below 50 cents or above \$100 in 1989 dollars (adjusted by the [CPI-U-RS](#) consumer price index), were removed from the analysis (source: [EPI](#)).

Employment Change by Gender, 2019-2021

	2019		2021		2019-2021 change	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Men	1,059,762	52.0	1,029,398	52.4	-30,364	-2.9
Women	977,455	48.0	935,348	47.6	-42,107	-4.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2019, 2021

The pandemic exerted a gendered impact on employment. Between 2019 and 2021, women experienced greater job losses than men. Women’s employment decreased by 4.3 percent compared to 2.9 percent for men. As a result, men slightly increased their share of the workforce between 2019 and 2021 (from 52.0 to 52.4%) while women’s share decreased by three times as much (48.0 to 47.6%), or 0.4 percentage points compared to 1.3 percentage points.

Employment Change by Race/Ethnicity, 2019-2021

	2019		2021		2019-2021 change	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
White	941,529	46.2	868,866	44.2	-72,663	-7.7
Latinx	592,045	29.1	560,647	28.5	-31,398	-5.3
API	332,631	16.3	338,114	17.2	5,483	1.6
Black	118,790	5.8	120,781	6.1	1,991	1.7
Other	52,222	2.6	76,338	3.9	24,116	46.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2019, 2021

Orange County’s workforce is racially diverse. White workers comprise the largest segment of the workforce, followed by Latinx workers. In 2019, white workers held 46.2% of all jobs, Latinx workers 29.1%, Asian Pacific Islanders (API) 16.3%, Blacks at 5.8%, and Other (American Indian, Alaska Native, and workers who selected two or more racial identities) at 2.6%.

Both white and Latinx workers declined as a share of the workforce in 2021. White employment decreased by 7.7% between 2019 and 2021; Latinx employment by 5.3%. Significantly, the share of workers who identify with two or more racial identities increased by 46.2%. Our analysis cannot attribute these changes to underlying causes. The decreases in white and Latinx workers could be due to workers losing jobs, or workers leaving the region.

Employment Change by Occupation, 2019-2021

	2019		2021		2019-2021 change	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Office and Administrative Support	232,237	11.4	215,385	11.0	-16,852	-7.3
Management	228,924	11.2	247,339	12.6	18,415	8.0
Sales and Related	202,124	9.9	176,282	9.0	-25,842	-12.8
Educational Instruction and Library	145,611	7.2	157,513	8.0	11,902	8.2
Business and Financial Operations	138,723	6.8	151,857	7.7	13,134	9.5
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	130,318	6.4	140,333	7.1	10,015	7.7
Food Preparation and Serving Related	120,595	5.9	95,549	4.9	-25,046	-20.8
Transportation and Material Moving	109,619	5.4	109,884	5.6	265	0.2
Production	101,112	5.0	86,643	4.4	-14,469	-14.3
Construction and Extraction	90,799	4.5	72,081	3.7	-18,718	-20.6
Computer and Mathematical	72,650	3.6	82,237	4.2	9,587	13.2
Healthcare Support	63,495	3.1	61,660	3.1	-1,835	-2.9
Building & Grounds Cleaning, Maintenance	61,206	3.0	51,912	2.6	-9,294	-15.2
Architecture and Engineering	52,745	2.6	59,242	3.0	6,497	12.3
Installation, Maintenance, Repair	52,168	2.6	39,671	2.0	-12,497	-24.0
Protective Service	51,180	2.5	48,085	2.5	-3,095	-6.1
Personal Care and Service	50,923	2.5	35,226	1.8	-15,697	-30.8
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	41,819	2.1	40,826	2.1	-993	-2.4
Legal	32,809	1.6	29,689	1.5	-3,120	-9.5
Community and Social Service	31,483	1.6	33,377	1.7	1,894	6.0
Life, Physical, and Social Science	19,145	0.9	22,416	1.1	3,271	17.1
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	7,532	0.4	7,539	0.4	7	0.1
All Employment	2,037,217	100.0	1,964,746	100.0	-72,471	-3.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2019, 2021

A high degree of variation in job loss and gain across occupations underlies the overall contraction of the Orange County labor market. The following four occupations experienced the greatest employment losses (highlighted in orange): Personal Care and Service (30.8% decrease); Installation, Maintenance, Repair (24%), Food Preparation and Serving Related (20.8%), and Construction and Extraction (20.6%). The impact of the pandemic on Personal Care and Service occupations is notable; nearly one-third of workers in these occupations lost their jobs. Examples of specific occupations in this category include childcare workers, manicurists, hair stylists, and fitness trainers and instructors.

The following four occupations experienced the largest growth (highlighted in green): Life, Physical, and Social Science (17.1% increase), Computer and Mathematical (13.2%), Architecture and Engineering (12.3%), and Business and Financial Operations (9.5%).

Employment Change by Industry, 2019-2021

	2019		2021		2019-2021 change	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Health Care and Social Assistance	278,652	13.7	287,619	14.6	8,967	3.2
Educational services	223,246	11.0	229,482	11.7	6,236	2.8
Manufacturing	209,059	10.3	212,630	10.8	3,571	1.7
Retail Trade	206,775	10.2	192,807	9.8	-13,968	-6.8
Accommodation and Food Services	162,366	8.0	125,308	6.4	-37,058	-22.8
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	161,869	8.0	186,082	9.5	24,213	15.0
Finance and Insurance	128,119	6.3	119,117	6.1	-9,002	-7.0
Construction	120,893	5.9	103,510	5.3	-17,383	-14.4
Public Administration	82,175	4.0	85,745	4.4	3,570	4.3
Administrative & support, waste management services	80,990	4.0	73,203	3.7	-7,787	-9.6
Transportation and Warehousing	74,590	3.7	81,900	4.2	7,310	9.8
Other Services, Except Public Administration	74,476	3.7	64,909	3.3	-9,567	-12.9
Wholesale Trade	66,488	3.3	56,450	2.9	-10,038	-15.1
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	47,061	2.3	37,697	1.9	-9,364	-19.9
Information	45,181	2.2	40,287	2.1	-4,894	-10.8
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	43,237	2.1	37,954	1.9	-5,283	-12.2
Utilities	16,511	0.8	13,150	0.7	-3,361	-20.4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	10,704	0.5	11,661	0.6	957	8.9
Management of companies and enterprises	2,452	0.1	2,923	0.2	471	19.2
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	2,373	0.1	2,312	0.1	-61	-2.6
Total	2,037,217	100.0	1,964,746	100.0	-72,471	-3.6

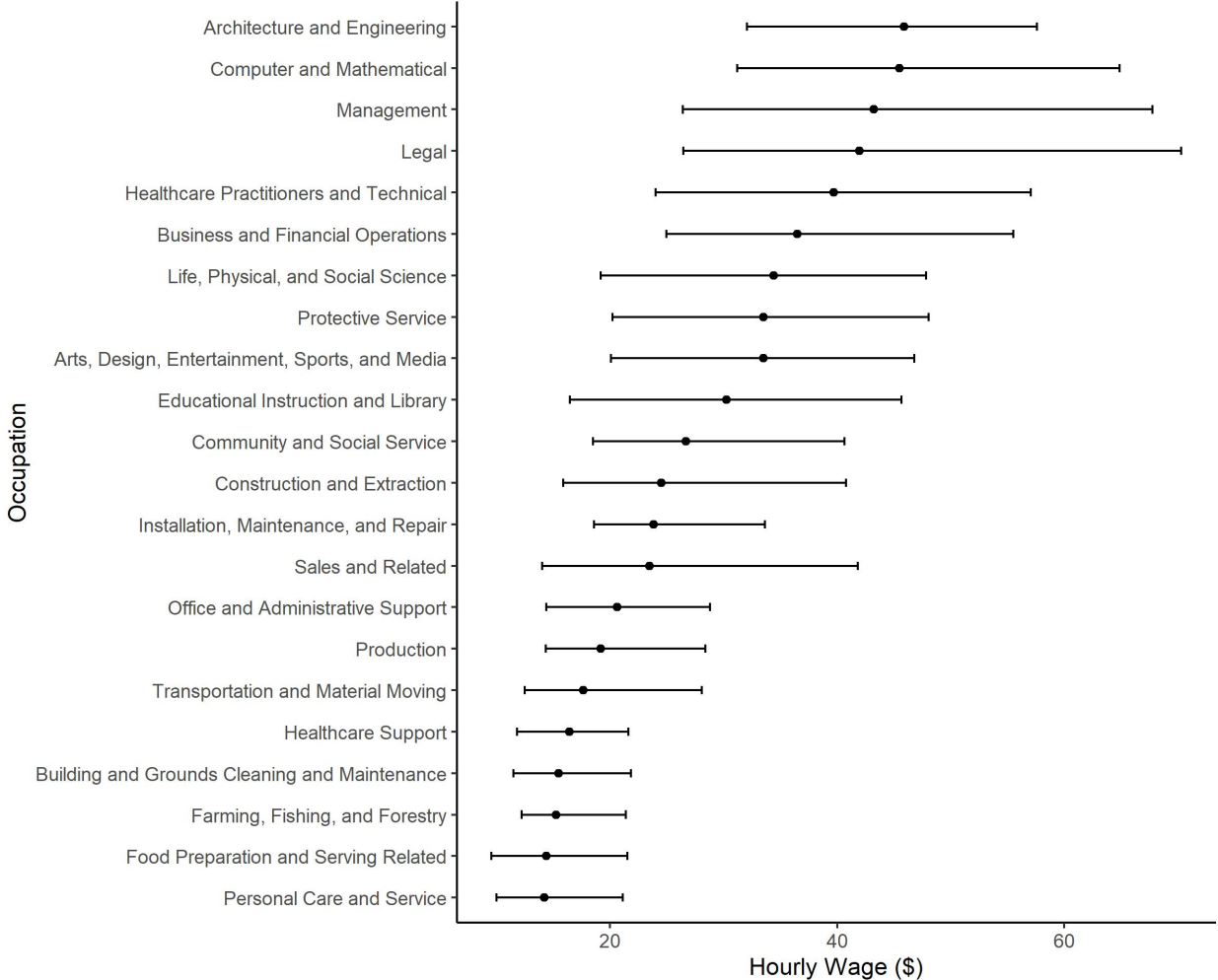
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2019, 2021

The table above reports employment levels and rates of change between 2019 and 2021 by industry. Health Care and Social Assistance is Orange County’s single largest employment industry, comprising nearly 15% of all jobs in 2021. Educational Services is the second largest jobs industry, employing nearly 12% of all workers. Manufacturing and Retail Trade round out the top four employment industries. Combined, these four industries employed nearly half of the Orange County workforce in 2021 (47%).

Between 2019 and 2021, the three industries that experienced the greatest rates of growth (highlighted in green) are: Management of Companies and Enterprises (19.2%; but note very small absolute numbers of workers); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (15%); and Transportation and Warehousing (9.8%).

The three industries that experienced significant declines in employment (highlighted in orange) are: Accommodations and Food Services (22.8% decrease); Utilities (20.4%); and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (19.9%).

Hourly Wage by Occupation, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

This chart ranks occupations by median hourly wage from highest to lowest, top to bottom, marked by a dot. Half of all workers earn above the median wage; half earn below. This chart also illustrates the spread of wages within an occupation, marked by a line. The left tick mark of the line indicates wages at the 25th percentile of the distribution of all wages; the right tick mark of the line indicates the 75th percentile. One-quarter of all workers earn a wage lower than the 25th percentile; three-quarters earn above. Similarly, one-quarter of all workers earn a wage higher than the 75th percentile; three-quarters earn below. Longer lines indicate a high degree of variability in wages for that occupation. Shorter lines indicate more similarity among workers' wages, referred to as "wage compression."

Top-paying occupations include: Engineering, Computer, Management, Legal, and Finance.
 Middle-paying occupations include: Protective Services, Education, Social Services, Construction.
 The lowest paying occupations include: Healthcare Support, Building Maintenance, Landscaping, Food Preparation, and Personal Care and Services.

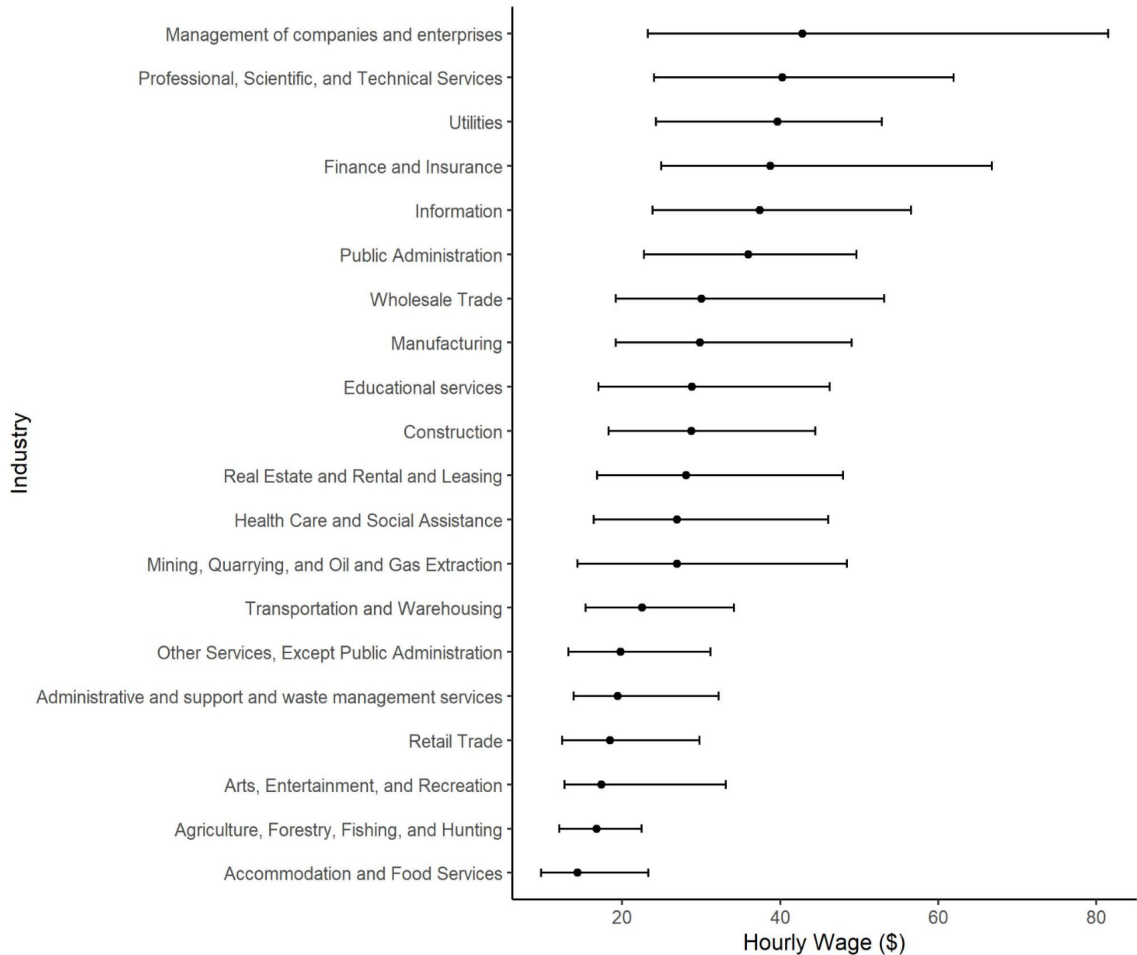
Hourly Wage by Occupation, 2021

	% emp	Median	25th	75th
Management	12.6	\$43.22	\$26.41	\$67.76
Office and Administrative Support	11.0	\$20.64	\$14.41	\$28.81
Sales and Related	9.0	\$23.48	\$14.02	\$41.83
Educational Instruction and Library	8.0	\$30.25	\$16.48	\$45.65
Business and Financial Operations	7.7	\$36.49	\$24.98	\$55.52
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7.1	\$39.70	\$24.01	\$57.06
Transportation and Material Moving	5.6	\$17.64	\$12.50	\$28.10
Food Preparation and Serving Related	4.9	\$14.41	\$9.59	\$21.56
Production	4.4	\$19.21	\$14.35	\$28.40
Computer and Mathematical	4.2	\$45.49	\$31.23	\$64.88
Construction and Extraction	3.7	\$24.52	\$15.91	\$40.77
Healthcare Support	3.1	\$16.41	\$11.81	\$21.62
Architecture and Engineering	3.0	\$45.91	\$32.07	\$57.58
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	2.6	\$15.50	\$11.53	\$21.84
Protective Service	2.5	\$33.49	\$20.22	\$48.05
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	2.1	\$33.49	\$20.10	\$46.78
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	2.0	\$23.85	\$18.60	\$33.63
Personal Care and Service	1.8	\$14.22	\$10.03	\$21.15
Community and Social Service	1.7	\$26.68	\$18.51	\$40.67
Legal	1.5	\$41.96	\$26.48	\$70.32
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1.1	\$34.40	\$19.19	\$47.83
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	0.4	\$15.27	\$12.24	\$21.42

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

This table ranks occupations by employment size. It contains the same information presented in the previous chart with the addition of an occupation’s share of the Orange County workforce (% emp) and specific wage rates at the median (50th percentile), 25th percentile, and 75th percentile—the latter two marking the lower and upper bounds of the middle 50% of workers’ hourly earnings in an occupation.

Hourly Wage by Industry, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

This chart ranks industries by median hourly wage from highest to lowest, top to bottom, marked by a dot. Half of all workers earn above the median wage; half earn below. This chart also illustrates the spread of wages within an industry, marked by a line. The left tick mark of the line indicates wages at the 25th percentile of the distribution of all wages; the right tick mark of the line indicates the 75th percentile. One-quarter of all workers earn a wage lower than the 25th percentile; three-quarters earn above. Similarly, one-quarter of all workers earn a wage higher than the 75th percentile; three-quarters earn below. Longer lines indicate a high degree of variability in wages for that industry. Shorter lines indicate more similarity among workers' wages, referred to as "wage compression."

Top-paying industries include: Management of Companies, Finance, and Public Administration. Middle-paying industries include: Wholesale Trade, Education, Construction, and Health Care. The lowest paying industries include: Administrative Support Services, Retail, Arts and Entertainment, and Accommodation and Food Services.

Hourly Wage by Industry, 2021

	% emp	Median	25th	75th
Health Care and Social Assistance	14.6	\$26.98	\$16.40	\$46.08
Educational services	11.7	\$28.84	\$17.00	\$46.24
Manufacturing	10.8	\$29.86	\$19.21	\$49.04
Retail Trade	9.8	\$18.44	\$12.39	\$29.80
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	9.5	\$40.28	\$24.04	\$61.94
Accommodation and Food Services	6.4	\$14.35	\$9.73	\$23.34
Finance and Insurance	6.1	\$38.77	\$24.97	\$66.80
Construction	5.3	\$28.75	\$18.26	\$44.45
Public Administration	4.4	\$35.98	\$22.77	\$49.64
Transportation and Warehousing	4.2	\$22.52	\$15.38	\$34.12
Administrative & support, waste management services	3.7	\$19.41	\$13.90	\$32.19
Other Services, Except Public Administration	3.3	\$19.81	\$13.18	\$31.19
Wholesale Trade	2.9	\$30.05	\$19.18	\$53.15
Information	2.1	\$37.43	\$23.83	\$56.54
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	1.9	\$28.10	\$16.82	\$47.98
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.9	\$17.40	\$12.71	\$33.12
Utilities	0.7	\$39.66	\$24.27	\$52.88
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	0.6	\$16.75	\$12.06	\$22.45
Management of companies & enterprises	0.2	\$42.79	\$23.27	\$81.52
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	0.1	\$26.92	\$14.33	\$48.43

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

This table ranks industries by employment size. It contains the same information presented in the previous chart with the addition of an industry’s share of the Orange County workforce (% emp) and specific wage rates at the median (50th percentile), 25th percentile, and 75th percentile—the latter two marking the lower and upper bounds of the middle 50% of workers’ hourly earnings in an industry. Note the small absolute number of workers in some of the highest paying industries.

Good Jobs

In this section, we identify workers with “good jobs” in Orange County. Consistent with Bay Area CERF researchers, we define workers with “good jobs” as those who:

1. Earn a living wage, or \$23.66 for a single adult and \$25.58 for a household of two working adults and one child, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Living Wage Calculator
2. Receive employer-sponsored health care
3. Have a full-time (30 hours/week) and full-year appointment (50 weeks or more)

We adopted these criteria to leverage publicly available data, the American Community Survey 1-Year estimates for 2021, and begin to measure the heterogeneity of working conditions by gender, race, occupation, and industry. The State of California states the following about “High Quality Jobs”:

Job quality varies across industry, occupation, and region. Indicators of high quality jobs include family-sustaining wages, clearly defined routes to advancement into higher wage jobs, benefits (like paid sick and vacation), adequate hours and predictable schedules, access to training, occupational health and safety, worker representation or right to organize, and no employer or subcontractor record of wage theft or other violations of labor law. High quality jobs bring sustainable income to the region.

No single dataset includes all of the criteria included in the State of California’s definition of “high quality jobs.” The three criteria we utilize—living wage, health care, full-time employment—serve as a floor for good jobs; high quality jobs as defined above would offer even more benefits to workers.

Living Wage

According to the Living Wage Calculator (MIT, 2023), the living wage in Orange County is \$23.66 an hour for a single adult with no children and \$25.57 for two adults and one child, assuming that both adults are working.³ A living wage is defined as the hourly pay necessary to cover basic family expenses plus all relevant taxes. Basic family expenses refer to food costs, childcare, housing, transportation, other necessities, broadband, and “civic engagement”, which includes education and entertainment. The likely cost of rental housing was derived from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Fair Market Rents (FMR) estimates, assuming that a single adult household would rent a single occupancy unit (zero bedrooms) and a two adult plus one child household would rent a two-bedroom apartment. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) also used HUD’s FMR estimates to estimate the two-bedroom housing wage for Orange County at \$48.83, or what a household needs to earn to afford a two-bedroom apartment.⁴ Fair Market Rents are “estimates of 40th percentile gross rents for standard quality units within a metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan county.”⁵

³ Nadeau A., and Glasmeier, A. (2023). *Living Wage Calculator User’s Guide / Technical Notes*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Urban Studies and Planning, accessed 6/30/2023. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/resources/Living-Wage-Users-Guide-Technical-Documentation-2023-02-01.pdf>

⁴ Aurand, A., Pish, M., Rafi, I., Yentel, D. (2023). *Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing*. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), accessed 6/30/2023. https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/California_2023_OOR.pdf

⁵ *Fair Market Rents (FMR)*, US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Office of Policy Development and Research, accessed 6/30/2023. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>

Good Jobs for a Single Adult

Good Jobs for a Single Adult by Gender, 2021

	All Jobs	Good Jobs	% Good Jobs
All Workers	1,964,746	833,447	42.4
Men	1,028,398	481,971	46.9
Women	935,348	351,476	37.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

We define a good job for a single adult using the MIT living wage required to support a single adult in addition to the good-job criteria of providing employer-sponsored healthcare and offering full-time, full-year employment.

We estimate that 833,447 workers in Orange County had good jobs that would support a single adult in 2021, or 42% of all workers in Orange County. Men are more likely than women to hold these good jobs: 47% of men had good jobs compared to 38% of women.

Good Jobs for A Single Adult

Good Jobs for a Single Adult by Race and Ethnicity, 2021

	All Jobs	Good Jobs	% Good Jobs
White	868,866	443,955	51.1
Latinx	560,647	140,603	25.1
API	338,114	166,909	49.4
American Indian & Alaska Native	58,597	27,306	46.6
Black	120,781	46,738	38.7
Other	17,741	7,948	44.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

This table depicts racial and ethnic disparities in employment in good jobs. The percentages above represent the proportion of workers in each racial or ethnic category that hold a good job that can support a single adult. Over half of non-Hispanic white workers have good jobs, compared to only a quarter of Latinx workers.

Good Jobs for a Two-Adult and One-Child Household

Good Jobs for Two Adults and One Child by Gender, 2021

	All Jobs	Good Jobs	% Good Jobs
All Workers	1,964,746	770,180	39.2
Men	1,028,398	447,353	43.5
Women	935,348	323,630	34.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

We define a good job for two adults and one child using the MIT living wage required to support a household of two working adults and one child in addition to the good-job criteria of providing employer-sponsored healthcare and offering full-time, full-year employment.

Using this definition of a good job, over 770,690 workers in Orange County held good jobs, or 39.2% of all workers in Orange County. This is about 60,000 workers less than the definition of a good job using the living wage for a single adult with no children.

Men are still more likely to hold good jobs under this definition: 43.5% of men compared to 34.6% of women. The gender gap is also similar. Men are 9 percentage points more likely than women to have good jobs using both types of living wages.

Good Jobs for Two Adults and One Child by Race and Ethnicity, 2021

	All Jobs	Good Jobs	% Good Jobs
White	868,866	416,187	47.9
Latinx	560,647	124,464	22.2
API	338,114	156,547	46.3
American Indian & Alaska Native	58,597	25,665	43.8
Black	120,781	39,737	32.9
Other	17,741	7,682	43.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

All racial and ethnic groups hold fewer good jobs needed to support a household of two working adults and one child compared to the definition using a living wage for a single adult. White workers are the most likely to have good jobs, followed by Asian Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, Other, Black, and Latinx workers. Just over one-in-five Latinx workers hold a good job required to support a household of two working adults and one child.

Good Jobs for Two Adults and One Child by Occupation, 2021

	n	% of occ
Architecture and Engineering	45,086	76.1
Computer and Mathematical	56,807	69.1
Management	159,475	64.5
Legal	18,696	63.0
Business and Financial Operations	94,114	62.0
Life, Physical, and Social Science	12,438	55.5
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	76,224	54.3
Protective Service	23,705	49.3
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	18,101	44.3
Educational Instruction and Library	61,935	39.3
Community and Social Service	12,880	38.6
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	14,031	35.4
Construction and Extraction	23,681	32.9
Sales and Related	56,676	32.2
Office and Administrative Support	53,432	24.8
Production	16,737	19.3
Transportation and Material Moving	17,551	16.0
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	3,681	7.1
Healthcare Support	2,598	4.2
Personal Care and Service	1,232	3.5
Food Preparation and Serving Related	1,552	1.6
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	58	0.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

Almost two-thirds of workers in management occupations have good jobs – many of these occupations are associated with higher hourly wages. Jobs that pay higher hourly wages are also more likely to offer employer-sponsored health insurance and full-time, full-year employment. Other occupations that have higher rates of “good jobs” are: Business and Financial operation, Computer and mathematical, Architecture and engineering, and Life, physical and social sciences. On the other hand, personal care and service, and food preparation and serving related occupations have very low rates of good jobs – 3.5 and 1.6 percent respectively. A little over a third of workers in Installation, Maintenance, and Repair, and Construction and Extraction have good jobs.

Good Jobs for Two Adults and One Child by Industry, 2021

	n	% of ind
Management of Companies & Enterprises	1,959	67.0
Utilities	8,789	66.8
Finance and Insurance	78,416	65.8
Public Administration	50,430	58.8
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	108,151	58.1
Information	22,601	56.1
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	1,166	50.4
Wholesale Trade	27,067	48.0
Manufacturing	101,940	47.9
Educational services	92,726	40.4
Construction	41,460	40.1
Health Care and Social Assistance	112,906	39.3
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	14,445	38.1
Transportation and Warehousing	24,940	30.5
Retail Trade	41,582	21.6
Administrative & Support, Waste Management Services	15,654	21.4
Other Services, Except Public Administration	13,382	20.6
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5,284	14.0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	879	7.5
Accommodation and Food Services	6,913	5.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2021

Workers employed in the industry of Management of Companies and Enterprises are most likely to have good jobs, over two-thirds. However, the absolute number of workers employed in this industry is very small (fewer than 2,000 workers). Workers in the utilities sector have a high rate of good jobs as well – also over two-thirds. Workers in Accommodation and Food Services have the lowest rate of employment in good jobs (5.5%). Workers in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry have the second lowest rate of employment in good jobs at 14%.

Part II: Unionization and Union Wage Differentials

In Part II, we analyze unionization levels and union wage differentials in Orange County, to the extent afforded by available data.

The only publicly available source of union membership and union coverage data is the Current Population Survey, a nation-wide monthly household survey carried out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPS contains a question for workers about union membership and employment in a job covered by a union contract. The CPS is a timely source of labor market data. The frequency of the survey is made possible by a sophisticated random sampling method that results in much smaller sample sizes than the American Community Survey (ACS). As a result, estimates at the county level come with larger margins of error than the ACS. Further, small counts disallow many disaggregated cross-tabulations. For example, we are unable to estimate union density at the occupation or industry level.

Unionization in Orange County, 2019 and 2021

Union density decreased in Orange County between 2019 and 2021. In 2019, 15% of all workers who were members of a union or covered by a union contract. In 2021, this percentage had dropped to 11%.⁶

Union Wage Differentials, 2019 and 2021

In 2019, union wages were 30% higher than non-union wages. In 2021, union wages were 55% higher than non-union wages. These are median wages for all workers, across all industries in OC. Contraction in union employment likely pushed the union wage rate up in 2021 because although there were fewer unionized workers in 2021, those with higher wages remained.

⁶ All CPS analyses in Part II utilize the [Outgoing Rotation Group/ Earner Study](#) (from IPUMS CPS). [EARNWT](#) earnings weight variable used for weighting hourly wage and union variables in CPS data analysis.

Union Wage Differentials by Sector, 2021

	Non-union	Union	% difference
Construction	\$18.25	\$26.45	44.9%
Transportation & Warehousing	\$15.75	\$28.50	81.0%
Educational Services	\$19.87	\$24.00	20.8%
Retail Trade	\$14.25	\$17.45	22.5%

Source: Current Population Survey, Outgoing Rotation Group, 2021

We report union and non-union median wages for a few key sectors with sufficient sample sizes. The union wage differential is highest in Transportation & Warehousing: union wages are 81% higher than non-union wages. Construction has the second highest differential with union jobs paying 45% more than non-union jobs.

Union Wage Differentials by Job

We gathered data for three case-study jobs in Orange County, requesting union contracts from Orange County unions that specify wage rates for specific jobs. We selected jobs for which a comparison job exists in the ACS. These jobs were identified by locating a specific occupation within a specific industry. The three case-study jobs are:

- Licensed Vocational Nurses
- Hotel Housekeepers
- Grocery Cashiers

Union wage rates were sourced from current collective bargaining agreements covering workers in Orange County. We compared these to the Orange County median wage rates for the same jobs using the 2021 ACS 1-year data sample. These overall Orange County median wage rates include union and non-union workers (no union variable exists in the ACS).

Union Wage Differentials: Licensed Vocational Nurses

Union wage rates for Licensed Vocational Nurses were provided by SEIU-UHW. We calculated the median union wage across four current collective bargaining contracts at Kaiser, Anaheim Global Medical Center, Chapman Global Medical Center, and South Coast Global Medical Center.

Union median hourly wage = \$41.43

OC median hourly wage, 2021 = \$27.40*

*All LVNs in Orange County (union + non-union)

Union Wage Differentials: Hotel Housekeepers

Union hourly wage rates for Hotel Housekeepers were provided by Unite Here Local 11.

Disney hotels = \$23.50

Anaheim Hilton & Sheraton Park = \$21.00

Irvine union hotels, Balboa Bay, Laguna Cliffs = \$18.00

OC median hourly wage, 2021 = \$15.60*

*All hotel housekeepers in Orange County (union + non-union)

Union Wage Differentials: Grocery Cashiers/Food Clerks

Union hourly wage rates for Grocery Cashiers/Food Clerks were provided by UFCW 324.

Vons & Albertson's entry-level wage, 2021 = \$15.40

Vons & Albertson's entry-level wage, 2023 = \$16.25

Vons & Albertson's top-level wage, 2021 = \$22.50

Vons & Albertson's top-level wage, 2023 = \$25.50

OC median hourly wage, 2021 = \$15.19*

*All grocery cashiers in Orange County (union + non-union)

Appendix A

HRTC Participant Questions and UCI Labor Center Responses by Professor Virginia Parks and Youjin Kim
June 30, 2023

1. Where would we see domestic workers reflected?

In occupations under “Personal Care and Service” for childcare workers or under “Building & Grounds Maintenance” for housekeepers. In industries, work usually carried out by domestic workers falls under “Other Services, Except Public Administration.” This latter industry classification covers a diverse range of activities, including car washes, funeral homes, civic and advocacy organizations, as well as private households.

2. Are job losses (between 2019 to 2021) due to the closing of positions, vaccination requirements, etc?

We do not analyze data on this question so cannot respond to it directly. From anecdotal evidence, we know that many businesses had to close or layoff employees due to decreased demand for goods and services, e.g., restaurants, brick-and-mortar retail. While some of these businesses were able to weather the pandemic, some closed and did not re-open. However, this is a larger question that deserves further research, but is beyond the scope of our project.

3. Based on my limited experience with acs/census, there are hard-to-reach communities. Do we have a sense of how inclusive this data is of our most disinvested/vulnerable communities?

The value of the Census is that it includes vulnerable communities and individuals. Although challenges with undercounting continue, the Census has made progress on reaching vulnerable communities through outreach efforts in partnership with community-based organizations over the past two decades.

4. Do you have the “good jobs” breakdown by census tracts with race percentages in OC?

There’s always a trade-off with census data: you can either get a lot of information about an individual worker, but you can’t locate this worker at a fine geographic scale such as a census tract. Or you can get aggregate information about a census tract, but not information attached to the workers that live in that tract.

In our analysis, “good jobs” percentages represent the percent of workers in each racial/ethnic category, not the racial composition of workers who have good jobs. Latinx workers represent the second largest racial or ethnic group in Orange County and less than a quarter of them hold good jobs.

5. Is the Hospitality industry - although very valuable as a first job, transitional job, 2nd job, going to school jobs - the industry that is depressing wage growth?

Many workers in the hospitality industry are long-time workers in this sector. We do not analyze this question directly, but research over the past 15 years has shown that many jobs we used to consider “first jobs,” are in fact long-time jobs held by working adults. If the question is about the hospitality’s industry’s influence on overall wages in OC, we would expect the impact to be negligible

given the size of the industry relative to the overall size of the OC labor market. If the question is about wage growth within the industry, union jobs within the industry reflect an upward trajectory in wage rates.

6. How do you define a living wage and what factors are considered in its calculation? Could you provide some insight into the criteria used to determine the cost of housing in Orange County? We have seen reports where a person has to earn \$40 or more an hour to be able to afford a 2 bedroom apartment in Orange County

Our estimates are consistent with these reports. The MIT living wage for a household of two adults and one child is the hourly wage for both adults to afford a two-bedroom apartment (and other basic necessities and taxes). That is, both adults would need to earn at least \$25.57, which times two equals \$51.14. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) estimated the two-bedroom housing wage for California at \$42.25, or what a household needs to earn to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Both MIT researchers and NLIHC used “the likely cost of rental housing in a given area in April 2022 using HUD Fair Market Rents (FMR) estimates” ([Nadeau & Glasmeier, 2023](#)). Fair Market Rents are “estimates of 40th percentile gross rents for standard quality units within a metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan county” ([HUD, 2022](#)).

7. I have a big question- why are the wages in the service, eg, personal care occupations kept so low? We’ve seen through COVID that there is a high demand for these essential occupations, we know they are not low-skilled as much as they are work that is not desirable to do. And we see that unionization provides higher wages, benefits and protections, so there is a lot of power in management and leadership of businesses to be able to provide better wages, right? It makes me think about incentives (if not requirements) for employers to provide better wages and protections as a key strategy to increase good jobs.

There have also been legislative efforts led by unions to increase wages industry-wide. For example, SB 525 in California seeks to raise healthcare worker wages to \$25/hour minimum. In New York City, delivery workers will be earning \$17.96/hour minimum. California’s AB 257 passed last year, which raised the minimum wage for fast-food workers to \$22/hour this year.

8. Is there research on how many “good paying jobs” are available compared to the number of unemployed or underemployed individuals

The State of California’s Economic Development Department provides yearly reports documenting unemployment in [Orange County](#) by industry. This provides data points that can be compared to the UCI Labor Center data slides about good jobs by industry. One note: unemployment changed dramatically during Covid and through the prolonged post-Covid recovery. We don’t have Census/ACS data available that is as recent as unemployment data. Most recent worker-level Census data is from 2021. Unemployment in May 2021 was 6.2% in Orange County and 3.2% in May 2023.

9. Question on the overall regional plan draft – there’s data there about living wages by race that seems different than what we saw through UCI. Is that right? Page 50 specifically.

Our data analysis includes a “living wage” in our “good jobs” definition, which also requires employer-sponsored healthcare and full-time, full-year employment. Hence, a smaller proportion of workers have “good jobs” than are earning a “living wage.” No single data set includes all of the criteria included in the State of California’s definition of “high quality jobs” (see below). The three criteria we utilize—living wage, health care, full-time employment—serve as a floor for good jobs; high quality jobs as defined below would offer even more benefits to workers.

The State of CA definition of High Quality Jobs:

“Job quality varies across industry, occupation, and region. Indicators of high quality jobs include family-sustaining wages, clearly defined routes to advancement into higher wage jobs, benefits (like paid sick and vacation), adequate hours and predictable schedules, access to training, occupational health and safety, worker representation or right to organize, and no employer or subcontractor record of wage theft or other violations of labor law. High quality jobs bring sustainable income to the region.”