Brooke E. Lierman
Comptroller of Maryland

COMPTROLLER of MARYLAND
SERVING THE PEOPLE

News Release

Maryland Comptroller Releases Women and the Economy Report

New report highlights women's contributions to Maryland's workforce and entrepreneurship while examining persistent gaps in participation, wages, business ownership, and leadership

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (October 8, 2026) — The Office of the Comptroller today released a new report examining women's impact on Maryland's economy. The first-of-its-kind report provides comprehensive data on women's significant contributions to Maryland's workforce and highlights persistent gaps in labor force participation rates, wages, business ownership, and executive leadership.

"Women power Maryland's economy as workers, business owners, entrepreneurs, leaders, and consumers, yet the data shows that they continue to face barriers that limit their ability to fully participate and prosper," said **Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman**. "This report gives us a clearer picture of where women are succeeding, where gaps remain, and what we can do in government, in our workplaces, and across our communities to ensure women have the opportunity and support to thrive."

"I commend the Comptroller and her team for carefully studying how women are faring in Maryland's economy by taking a close look at the data and also talking directly with women from across the state," said **Executive Director of the Maryland Commission for Women Ariana Kelly**. "Women are the backbone of our households, communities,

and economy. It is important that we better understand key challenges getting in the way of our economic growth and effective strategies for helping us advance."

Report Highlights

- **An estimated 8% gap remains between women's and men's labor force participation rates**. The sub-groups with the largest disparities between women and men are married parents of young children, those with low educational attainment, and those with limited English language proficiency.
    - Gaps in labor force participation are driven by a combination of factors, including societal and cultural norms (which vary by region, race, ethnicity, etc.), sexism, caregiving duties, wage gaps, job availability, economic conditions, and workplace policies.
    - Wage gaps are driven in part by industry and occupation-based segregation, but can persist even when men and women work in the same jobs with the same educational attainment.
- **Women make up 51.6% of Maryland's population** and account for 80% of employment in health care and 67% of employment in educational services, two of the state's largest industries by employment.
- **Recent federal government job and spending cuts have likely disproportionately impacted Black women in Maryland, based on available data and analyses.**
    - As of 2024, Black women living in Maryland were employed in the federal government at rates much greater than their population share (21% federal employment compared to 15% population).
    - When the Trump administration laid off 30,000 federal government workers in Maryland last year, **women, particularly Black women, bore the brunt of the loss.**
    - At the beginning of 2024, Maryland had the lowest Black unemployment rate in the country at 3.3%, but by mid-2026, Black unemployment in

Maryland increased to 7.5%, slightly above the national average (7.2%) and the 12th highest of all states (with large enough sample sizes of Black workers).

- The elimination of DEI programs within the federal government and across the private sector, a proven practice for facilitating merit-based hiring and promotion, and a bulwark against discrimination, has coincided with a recent increase in black unemployment.

- **Women are driving Maryland's startup growth**, accounting for 58% of new businesses established in the state since 2019.

- While economic disparities have narrowed between women and men over the past two decades, women continue to experience **lower wages, lower rates of business ownership, and fewer leadership opportunities** than men.

In developing the report, the Office of the Comptroller held nine roundtable discussions with nearly 200 women from across the state, which helped inform the report's analyses and findings.

The report also identifies several policy areas that could help women advance economically, including workforce and caregiving supports, equal pay and career advancement, access to capital and government contracting opportunities for women-owned businesses, career and technical education, and assistance for women disproportionately affected by federal workforce changes.

The report is the latest installment in the Comptroller's State of the Economy Series, which examines economic trends in Maryland to inform policymakers and the public.

Join Comptroller Lierman for a Discussion of the Report

The public and members of the media are invited to join Comptroller Lierman and other subject matter experts on **October 19, 2026, at 2 p.m.** at the **Louis L. Goldstein Treasury Building Assembly Room in Annapolis** for a discussion of the report's findings.

RSVP for the event.

Access the full report.

###

Media Contacts

Jeremy Ames

james@marylandtaxes.gov

443-336-8162 (cell)

Bruce Nilson

bnilson@marylandtaxes.gov

443-254-6153 (cell)

Comptroller of Maryland, 80 Calvert Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, United States