

# 2022 Arkansas Health Workforce Report



Prepared By:  
Arkansas Minority Health Commission



Working today for  
a healthier tomorrow.



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# Executive Summary

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Key outcomes from this year's report of diversity in the Arkansas healthcare workforce include:

- The majority of workers in health occupations are female. Dental hygienists, for example, were 99 percent female, specialty nurses were 94 percent female, and registered nurses were 91 percent female. Pharmacists enjoyed the most equity regarding gender (56% female vs. 44% male).
- Each profession was predominately white. In fact, there were only two professions (e.g., general physicians and specialty physicians) where the proportion of white workers was less than 60 percent. Optometrists were 96 percent white, making them the least diverse profession regarding race. Alternatively, social workers were 75 percent white and 20 percent African American, making them the most racially diverse group. Race data was not available for dental assistants and data of any kind was not provided for dietitians.
- Geographic distribution followed a similar pattern for most professions. The highest concentration of workers tended to be in the central, northwest and northeast regions of the state (i.e., the more urban areas of the state). Some professions were absent in a large number of counties. Specialty surgeons, for example, lacked active professionals in 47 counties. On the other hand, other professions enjoyed much greater dissemination. For instance, pharmacists are active in 74 counties, dental assistants and social workers are active in 73 counties, and physical therapists are active in 72 counties.
- Despite the legislative mandate, Act 1489 of 2009 requiring licensing boards to capture and report data on demographic characteristics of those licensed in Arkansas, data were not consistently provided.



# Introduction

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Monitoring the healthcare workforce is essential to ensuring both high-quality healthcare delivery and patient safety. By doing so, healthcare organizations and policy experts can identify potential shortages in certain areas and take steps to address them before they become a problem. A robust supply and distribution of quality healthcare workers is imperative to ensure optimal population health (American Hospital Association 2021). A diverse workforce helps to ensure accessibility to services, cultural competence, and is linked to increased patient satisfaction. Additionally, workforce diversity in public health and health care increases trust and communication between professionals and patients (HRSA Health Workforce 2017). In addition, because healthcare careers generally provide greater economic benefits relative to other career paths, greater representation in the field leads to benefits for a wider range of individuals, families and communities.

In order to appreciate where Arkansas rates concerning diversity in the healthcare workforce, an examination of the available data is necessary. This examination is made possible by Arkansas Act 1489 of 2009, which requires state agencies, boards and commissions that license health professionals in the state to provide demographic data on licensees each year. This report was created by incorporating the most recent data provided for selected health professionals in Arkansas, with a concentration on race, age, gender, and geographic distribution.

All data were obtained from Arkansas's professional licensing boards through the Arkansas Minority Health Commission.



# Dentists

source: Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners

In 2021, there were 1,544 dentists practicing in Arkansas.

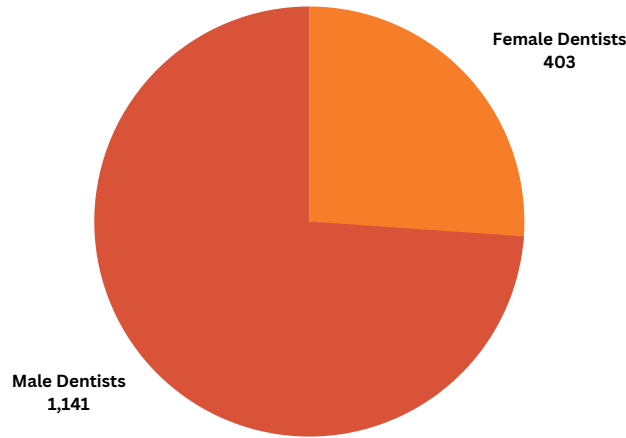
51% of dentists were under age 50, with 25% (380) between 30-39.

90% (1,390) of dentists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and less than 1% (58) were African American.

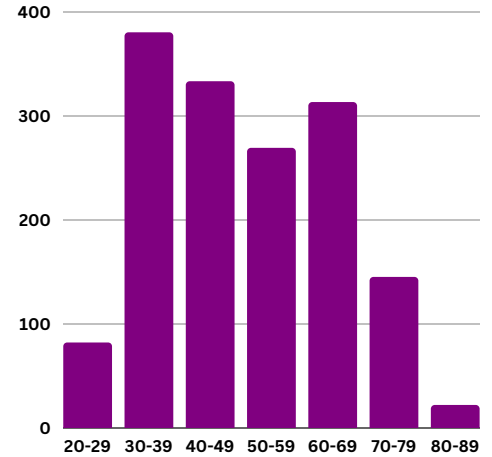
26% (403) of dentists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and nearly 74% (1,141) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of dentists reveal there were 5 counties (indicated in green) that did not have dentists listed with an address living or working in the county.

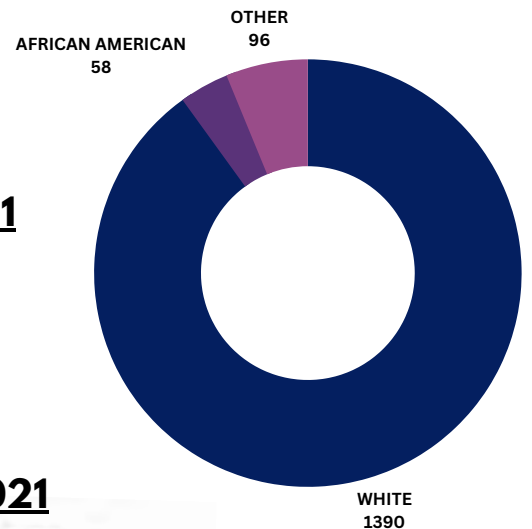
## Dentists by Gender 2021



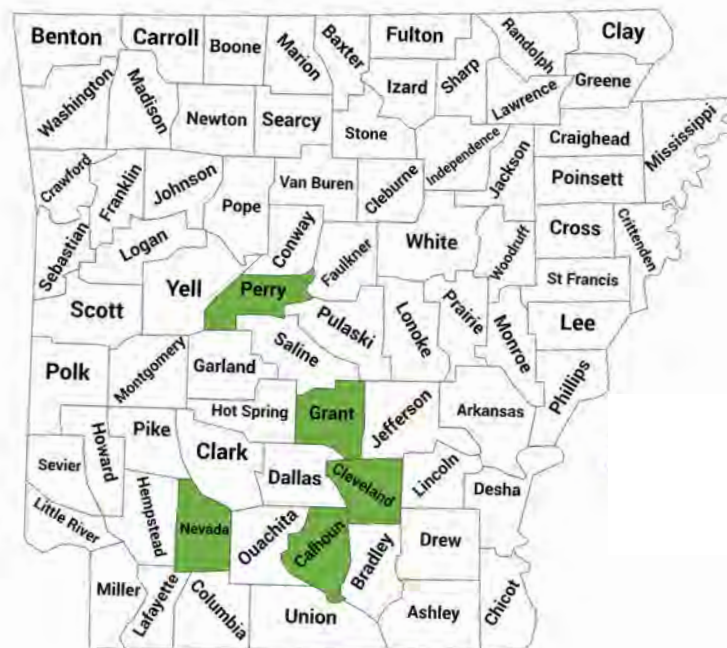
## Dentists by Age 2021



## Dentists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Dentist 2021



# Dental Assistants

source: Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners

In 2021, there were 4,454 dental assistants practicing in Arkansas.

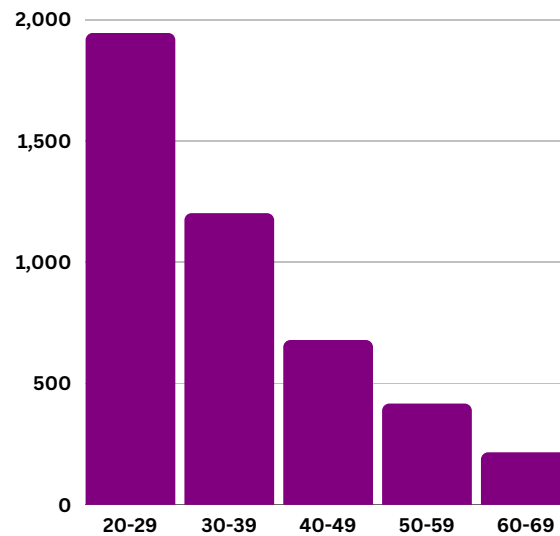
More than 85% of dental assistants were under age 50, with most (43.6%) between 20-29.

A review of the geographic distribution of dental assistants reveals there were 2 counties (indicated in green) that did not have dental assistants listed with an address living or working in the county.

**\*\*Race data was not provided by the licensing agency.**

**\*\*Gender data was not provided by the licensing agency.**

## Dental Assistants by Age 2021



## Counties with no Dental Assistant



# Dental Hygienists

source: Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners

In 2021, there were 1,880 dental hygienists practicing in Arkansas.

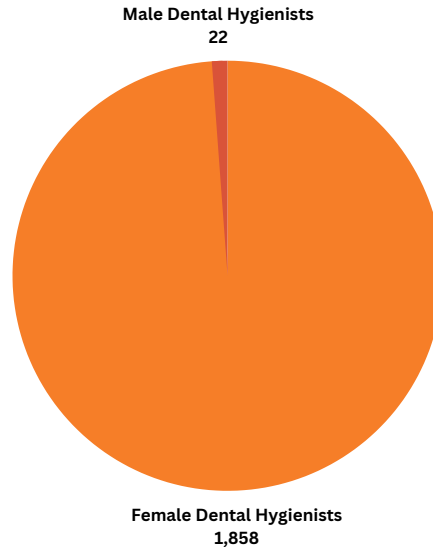
Nearly 73% (1371) of dental hygienists were under age 50, with 35% (660) between 30-39.

94% (1,775) of dental hygienists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 3% (60) were African American.

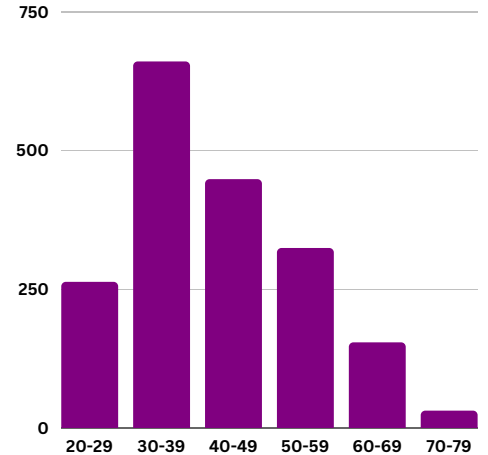
Nearly 99% (1,858) of dental hygienists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 1% (22) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of dental hygienists reveals there were 6 counties (indicated in green) that did not have dental hygienists listed with an address living or working in the county.

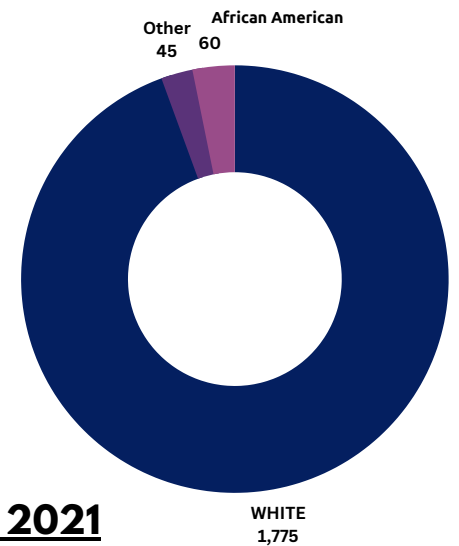
## Dental Hygienists by Gender 2021



## Dental Hygienists by Age 2021



## Dental Hygienists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Dental Hygienists 2021



# General Physicians

source: Arkansas State Medical Board

In 2021, there were 160 general physicians practicing in Arkansas.

70% (112) of general physicians were under age 50.

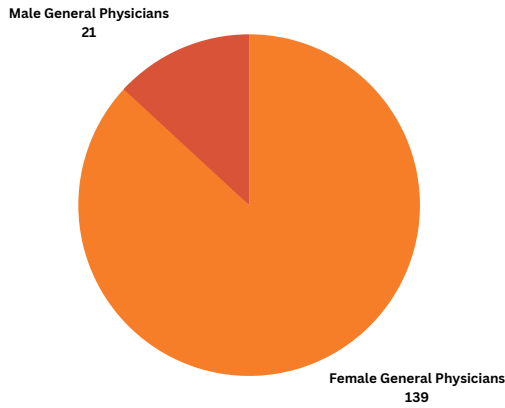
57% (91) of general physicians in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 12% (19) were African American.

37% (139) of general physicians in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 13% (21) were male.

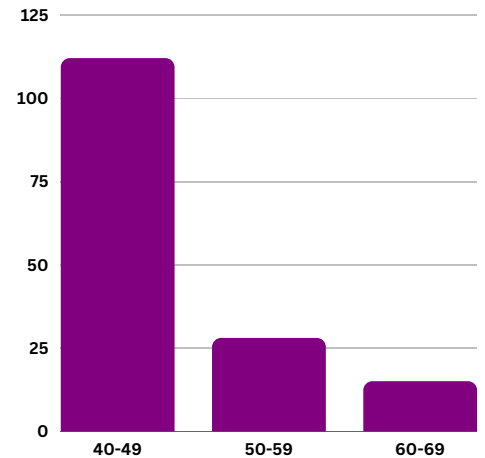
A review of the geographic distribution of general physicians reveals there were 44 counties (indicated in green) that did not have a general physician listed with an address living or working in the county.

\*General physicians include:  
 general medicine  
 general practice,  
 general pediatrics,  
 general psychiatry.

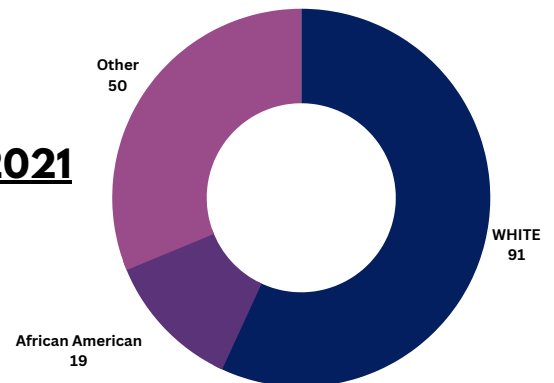
## General Physicians by Gender 2021



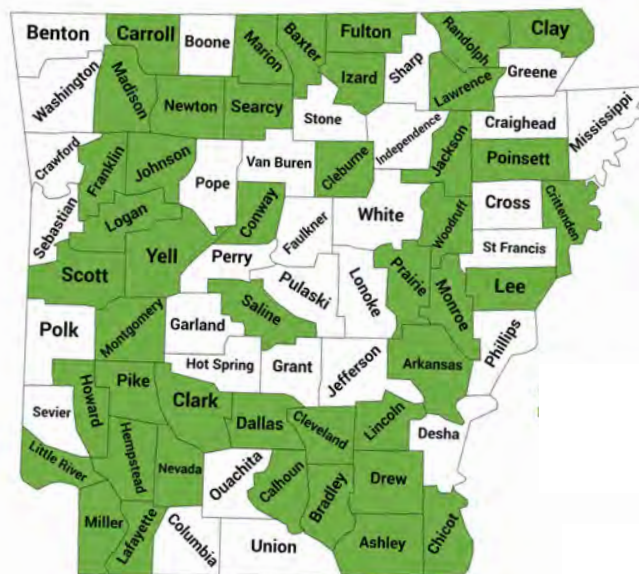
## General Physicians by Age 2021



## General Physicians by Race 2021



## Counties with No General Physicians 2021





# Specialty Physicians

source: Arkansas State Medical Board

In 2021, there were 8,137 specialty physicians practicing in Arkansas.

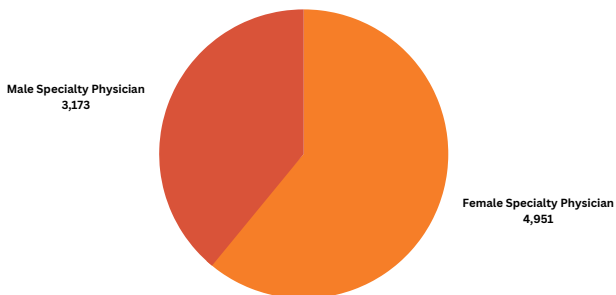
50% (4,029) of specialty physicians were under age 50. However, 26% (2,132) were between 50-59.

71% (5,824) of specialty physicians in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 6% (481) were African American.

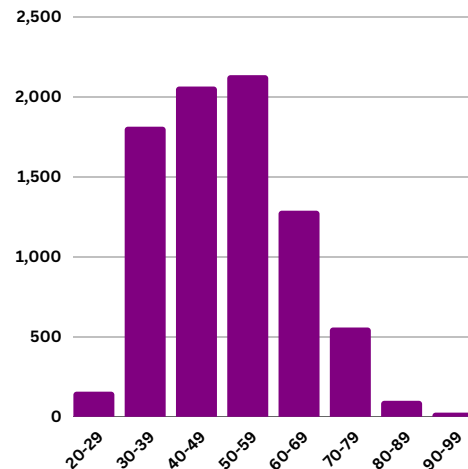
61% (4,951) of specialty physicians in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 39% (3,173) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of specialty physicians reveals there were 5 counties (indicated in green) that did not have specialty physicians listed with an address living or working in the county.

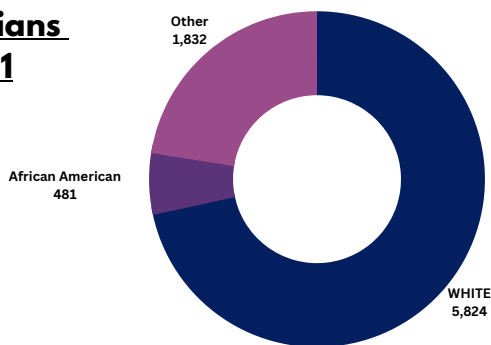
## Specialty Physician by Gender 2021



## Specialty Physicians by Age 2021



## Specialty Physicians by Race 2021



## Counties with No Specialty Physician 2021



# General Surgeons

source: Arkansas State Medical Board

In 2021, there were 342 general surgeons practicing in Arkansas.

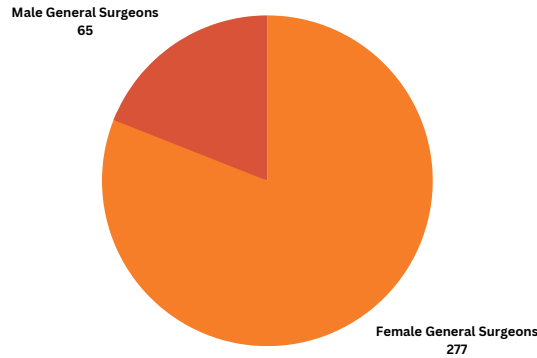
41% (140) of general surgeons were under age 50, with 26% (89) between 40-49.

62% (211) of general surgeons in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 3% (11) were African American.

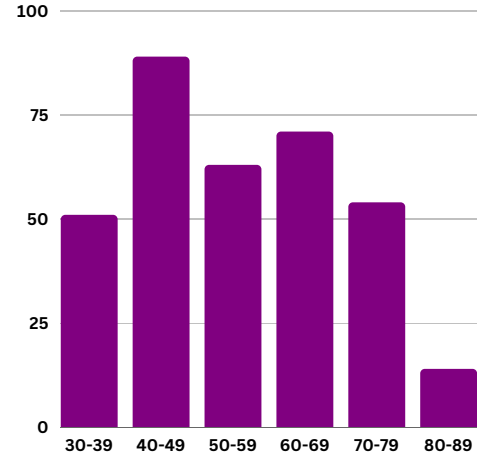
81% (277) of general surgeons in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 19% (65) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of general surgeons reveals there were 30 counties (indicated in green) that did not have general surgeons listed with an address living or working in the county.

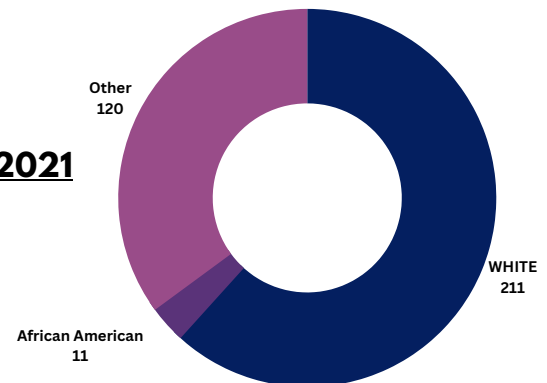
## General Surgeons by Gender 2021



## General Surgeons by Age 2021



## General Surgeons by Race 2021



## Counties with No General Surgeon 2021



# Specialty Surgeons

source: Arkansas State Medical Board

In 2021, there were 596 specialty surgeons practicing in Arkansas.

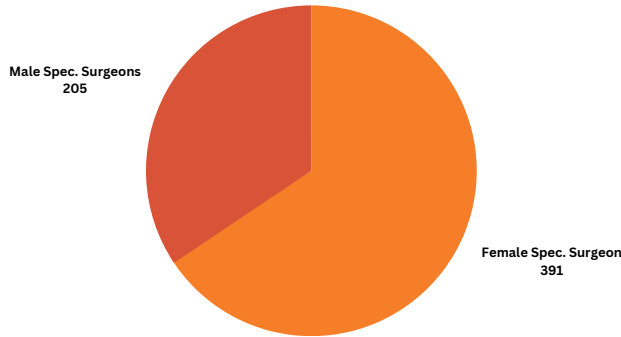
76% (454) of specialty surgeons were under age 50. However, 44% (262) were between 30-39.

78% (419) of specialty surgeons in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 9% (39) were African American.

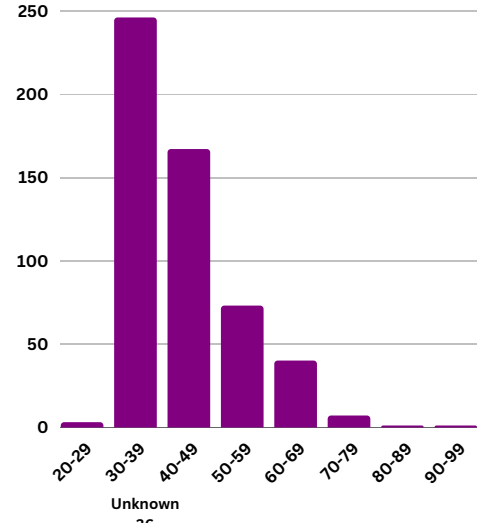
66% (391) of specialty surgeons in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 34% (205) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of specialty surgeons reveals there were 47 counties (indicated in green) that did not have specialty physicians listed with an address living or working in the county.

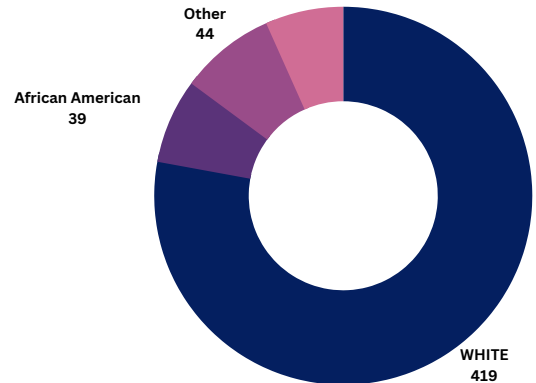
## Specialty Surgeons by Gender 2021



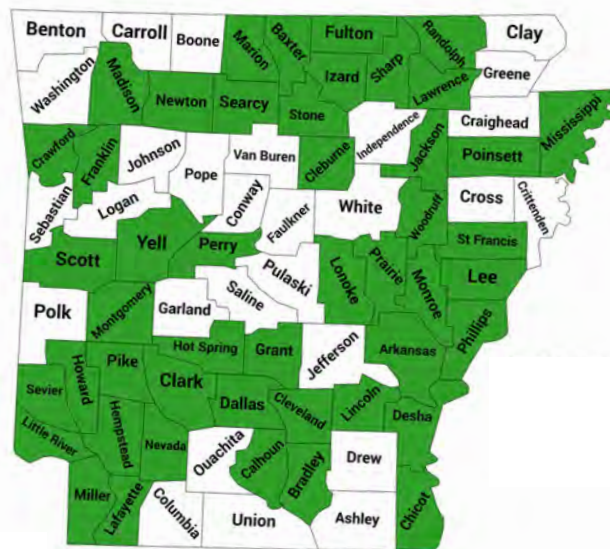
## Specialty Surgeons by Age 2021



## Specialty Surgeons by Race 2021



## Counties with No Specialty Surgeons 2021



# Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)

source: Arkansas Board of Nursing

In 2021, there were 14,686 licensed practical nurses practicing in Arkansas.

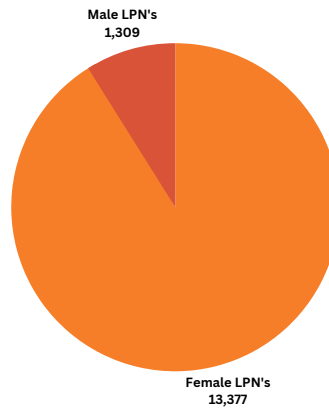
11% (1,558) of licensed practical nurses were under age 50. However, 42% (6,172) were between 60-69.

87% (12,725) of registered nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 8% (1,103) were African American.

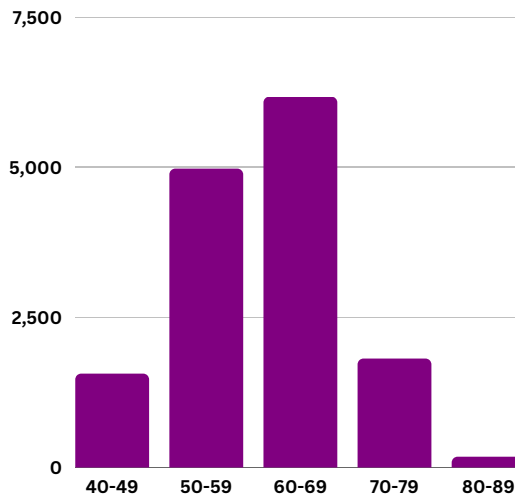
91% (13,377) of registered nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 9% (1,309) were male.

*\*Geographic data was not provided by the licensing agency.*

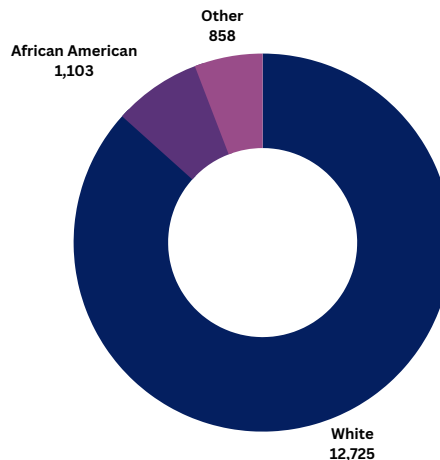
## Licensed Practical Nurses by Gender 2021



## Licensed Practical Nurses by Age 2021



## Licensed Practical Nurses by Race 2021



# Registered Nurses (RN)

source: Arkansas Board of Nursing

In 2021, there were 44,084 registered nurses practicing in Arkansas.

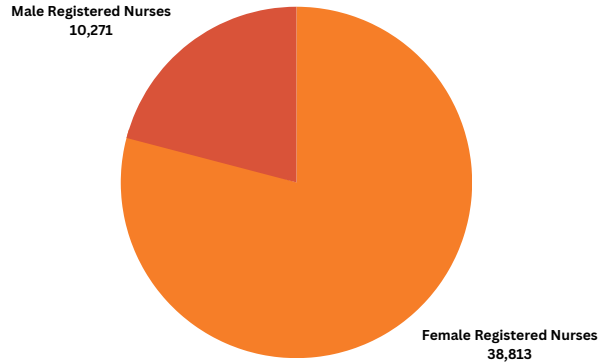
78% (34,268) of registered nurses were under age 50. However, 36% (15,866) were between 30-39.

83% (36,553) of registered nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 10% (4,554) were African American.

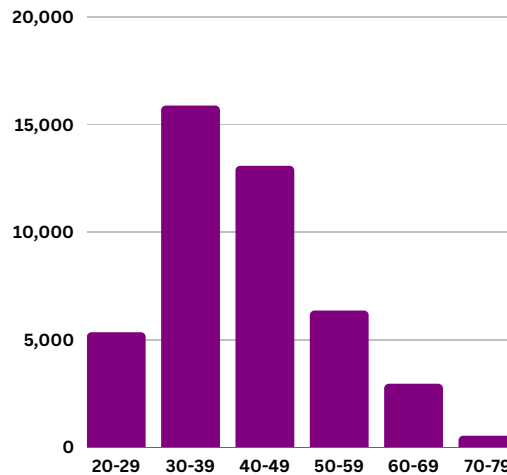
64% (38,813) of registered nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 36% (10,271) were male.

*\*Geographic data was not provided by the licensing agency.*

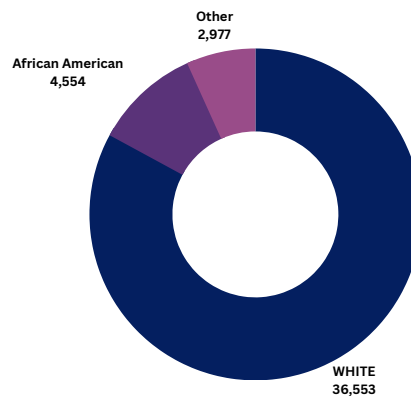
## Registered Nurses by Gender 2021



## Registered Nurses by Age 2021



## Registered Nurses by Race 2021



# Select Specialty Nurses

source: Arkansas Board of Nursing

In 2021, there were 5,073 specialty nurses practicing in Arkansas.

8% (384) of select specialty nurses were under age 50. However, 40% (2,019) were between 60-69.

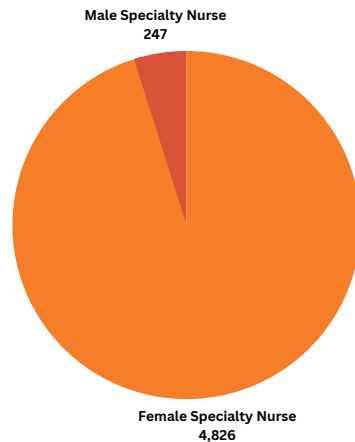
80% (4,041) of select specialty nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 13% (684) were African American.

95% (4,826) of specialty nurses in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 5% (247) were male.

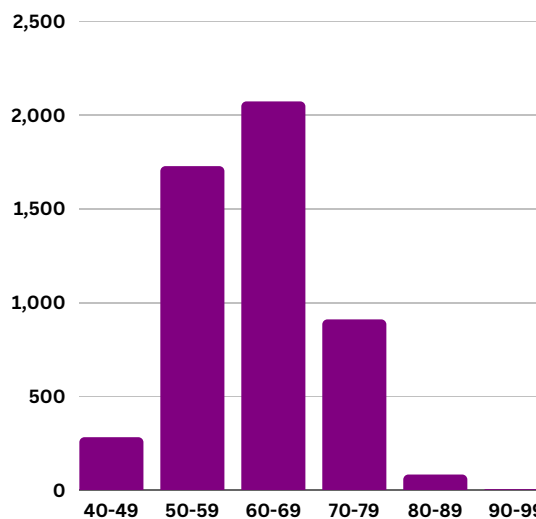
**\*Select Specialty Nurses include APRN-CNM, APRN-CNP, APRN-CNS, APRN-CRNA, and MA-C**

**\*\*Geographic data was not provided by the licensing agency.**

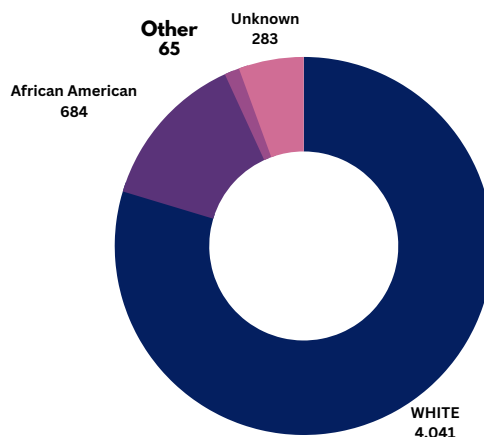
## Select Specialty Nurses by Gender 2021



## Select Specialty Nurses by Age 2021



## Select Specialty Nurses by Race 2021



# Optometrists

source: Arkansas State Board of Optometry

In 2021, there were 555 optometrists practicing in Arkansas.

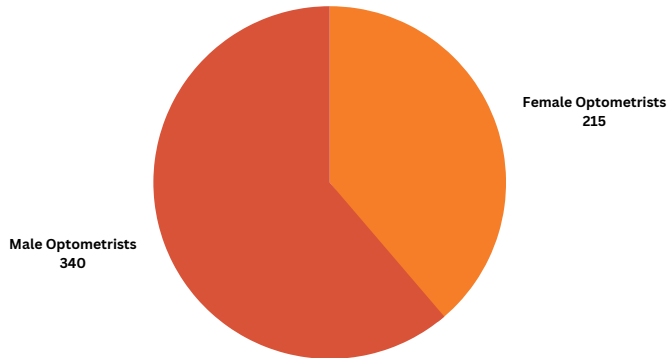
54% (298) of optometrists were under age 50, with 25% (139) between 30-39.

96% (534) of optometrists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 2% (12) were African American.

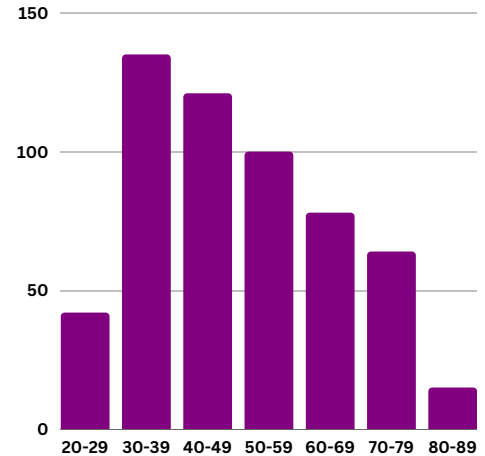
39% (215) of optometrists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 61% (340) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of optometrists reveal there were 15 counties (indicated in green) that did not have optometrists listed with an address living or working in the county.

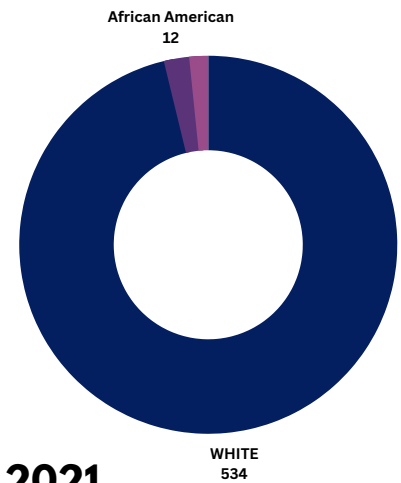
## Optometrists by Gender 2021



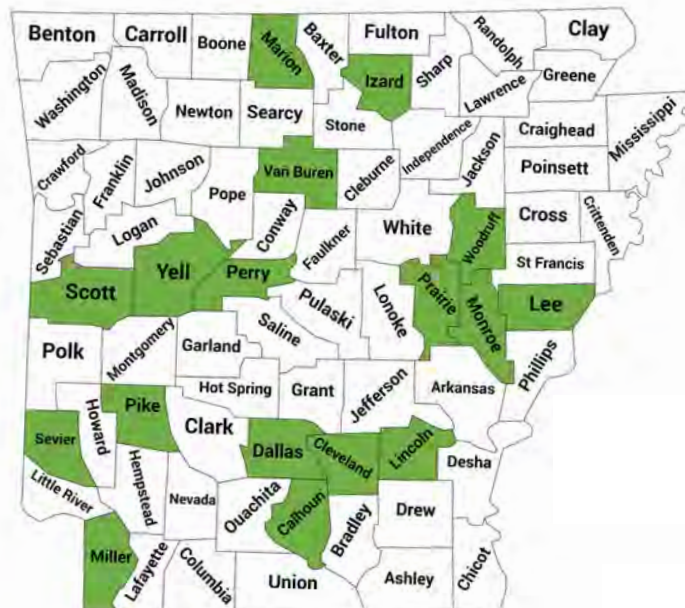
## Optometrists by Age 2021



## Optometrists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Optometrists 2021



# Pharmacists

source: Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy

In 2021, there were 6,937 pharmacists practicing in Arkansas.

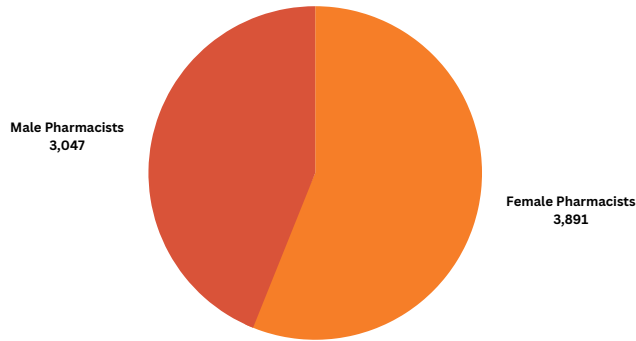
61% (4,265) of pharmacists were under age 50, with 30% (2,106) between 30-39.

87% (6,018) of pharmacists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 4% (296) were African American.

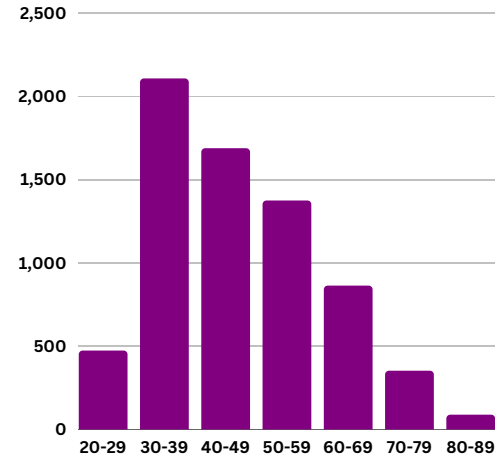
56% (3,891) of pharmacists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 44% (3,047) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of pharmacists reveal there was 1 county (indicated in green) that did not have a pharmacist listed with an address living or working in the county.

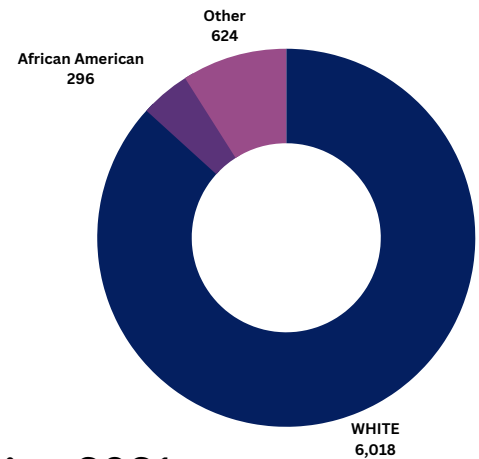
## Pharmacists by Gender 2021



## Pharmacists by Age 2021



## Pharmacists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Pharmacists 2021





# Podiatrists

source: Arkansas State Board of Podiatric Medicine

In 2021, there were 110 podiatrists practicing in Arkansas.

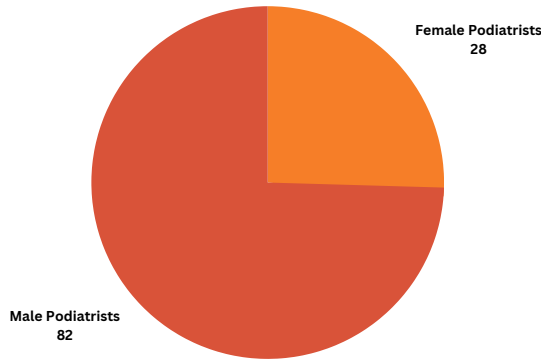
37% (41) of podiatrists were under age 50, with 36% (40) between 50-59.

79% (87) of podiatrists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 8% (9) were African American.

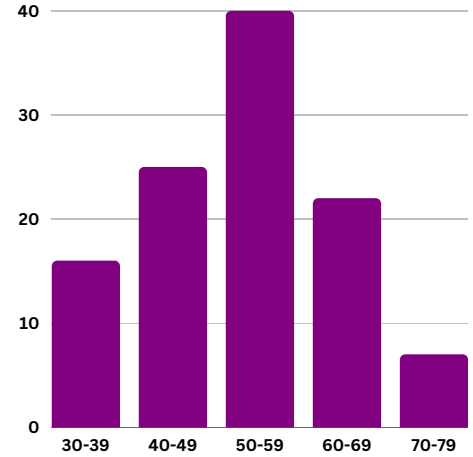
25% (28) of podiatrists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 75% (82) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of podiatrists reveals there were 49 counties (indicated in green) that did not have chiropractors listed with an address living or working in the county.

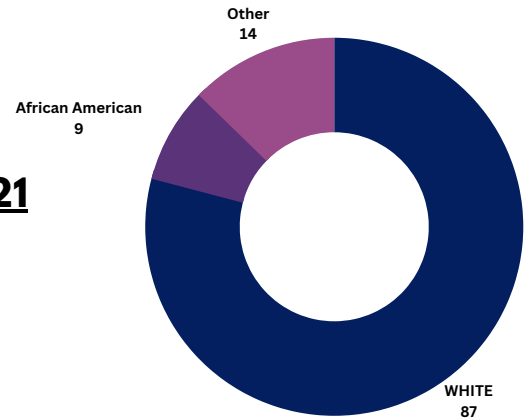
## Podiatrists by Gender 2021



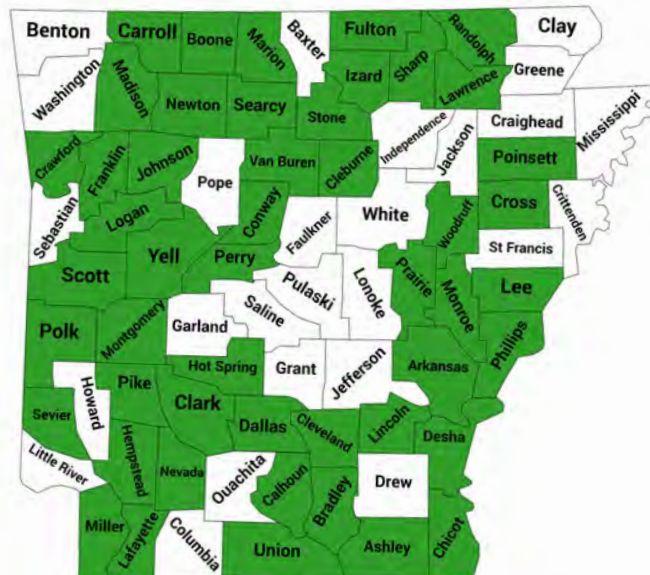
## Podiatrists by Age 2021



## Podiatrists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Podiatrists 2021



# Chiropractors

source: Arkansas State Board of Chiropractic Examiners

In 2021, there were 722 chiropractors practicing in Arkansas.

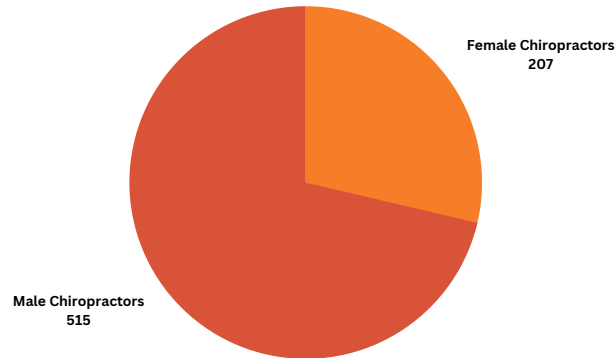
51% (370) of chiropractors were under age 50, with 23% (166) between 50-59.

94% (680) of chiropractors in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 3% (20) were African American.

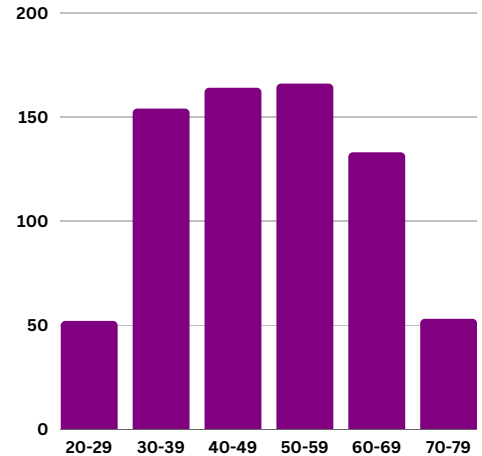
29% (207) of chiropractors in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 71% (515) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of chiropractors reveals there were 20 counties (indicated in green) that did not have chiropractors listed with an address living or working in the county.

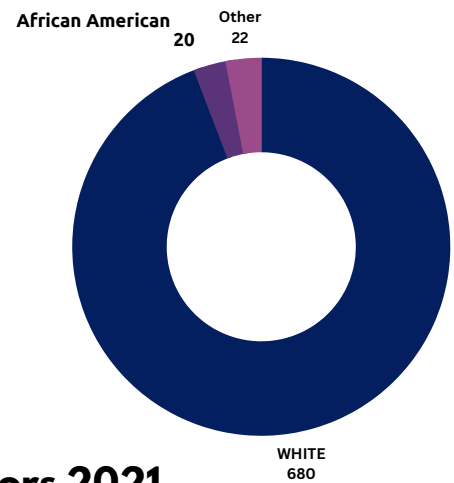
## Chiropractors by Gender 2021



## Chiropractors by Age 2021



## Chiropractors by Race 2021



## Counties with No Chiropractors 2021



# Physical Therapists

source: Arkansas State Board of Physical Therapy

In 2021, there were 6,382 physical therapists practicing in Arkansas.

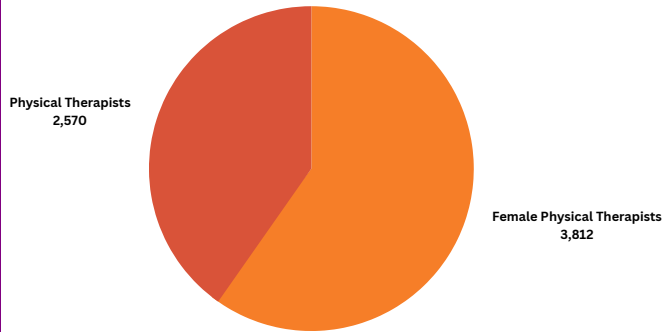
63% (4,014) of physical therapists were under age 50, with 30% (1,903) between 30-39.

91% (5,813) of physical therapists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 3% (161) were African American.

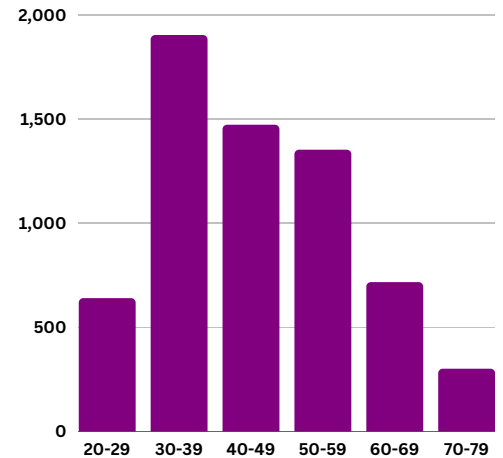
60% (3,812) of physical therapists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 40% (2,570) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of physical therapists reveals there were 3 counties (indicated in green) that do not have social workers listed with an address living or working in the county.

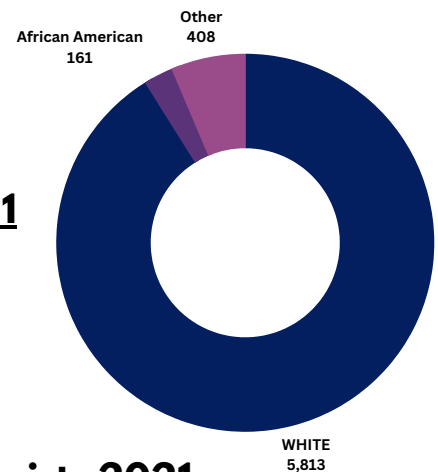
## Physical Therapists by Gender 2021



## Physical Therapists by Age 2021



## Physical Therapists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Physical Therapists 2021



# Psychologists

source: Arkansas Board of Psychology

In 2021, there were 734 psychologists practicing in Arkansas.

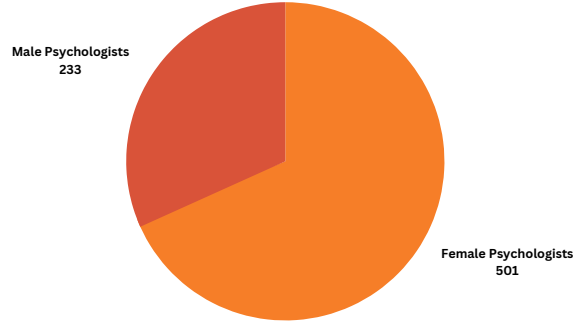
Nearly 42% (306) of psychologists were under age 50, with 14% (106) between 30-39.

79% (577) of psychologists in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 13% (97) were African American.

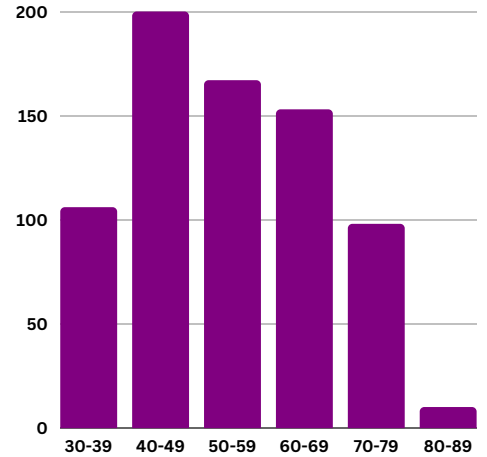
68% (501) of psychologists in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 32% (233) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of psychologists reveals there were 26 counties (indicated in green) that did not have psychologists listed with an address living or working in the county.

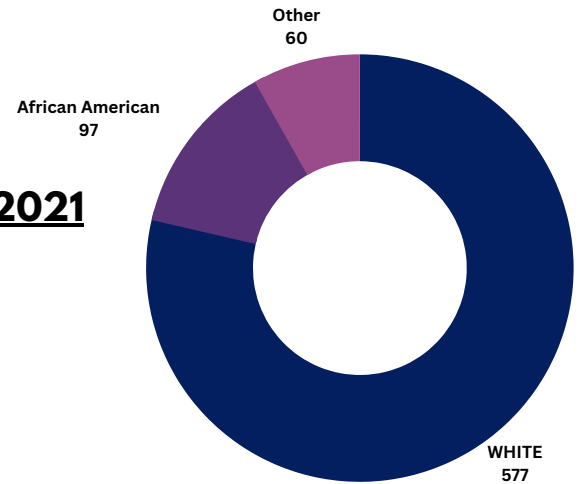
## Psychologists by Gender 2021



## Psychologists by Age 2021



## Psychologists by Race 2021



## Counties with No Psychologists 2021



# Social Workers

source: Arkansas Social Work Licensing Board

In 2021, there were 6,584 social workers practicing in Arkansas.

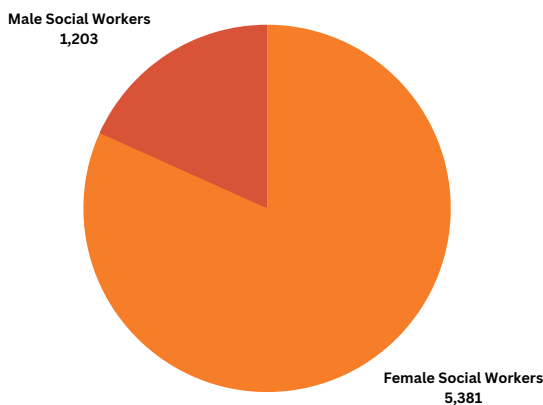
55% (3,605) of social workers were under age 50, with 24% (1,598) between 40-49.

75% (4,935) of social workers in Arkansas in 2021 were white and 20% (1,334) were African American.

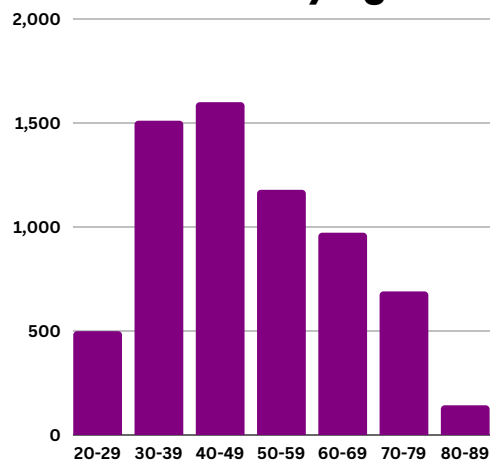
82% (5,381) of social workers in Arkansas in 2021 were female and 18% (1,203) were male.

A review of the geographic distribution of social workers reveals there were 2 counties (indicated in green) that did not have social workers listed with an address living or working in the county.

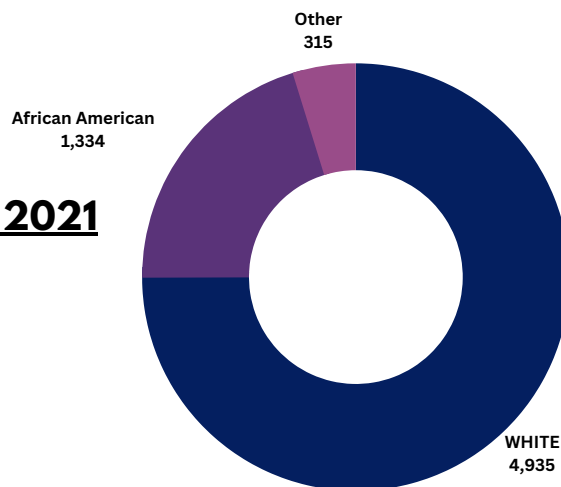
## Social Workers by Gender 2021



## Social Workers by Age 2021



## Social Workers by Race 2021



## Counties with No Social Workers 2021



# Conclusions

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Research shows the need and importance to focus on increased diversity in the state's healthcare workforce could have positive effects on both the health of minority populations and the quality of care in Arkansas. This report examines demographic data provided by the state's various healthcare workforce licensing boards to the Arkansas Department of Health, and seeks to illustrate age, race, gender, and geographic disparities found within various segments of the workforce. This report was made possible by the Arkansas General Assembly's 2009 mandate through Act 1489 which requires all licensing boards to provide the aforementioned information on its licensees.

Despite Act 1489, some 2021 data were missing, preventing a complete analysis of workforce characteristics. Of the 17 professions reporting data for examination, one was missing race data, one was missing gender data, and three were missing county data.

Racial disparities remain a reality in Arkansas's workforce. The racial and ethnic diversity found in the state's population is not, as a matter of course, reflected in the healthcare system. Moreover, gender and age disparities are also apparent.

It is not automatically assumed that healthcare professionals would be clustered in population centers found in the central and northwestern parts of the state. Nevertheless, some counties (i.e., Lee, Lafayette, and Miller counties) consistently lacked active healthcare professionals to provide general and specialty care. Geographic disparities like these can be detrimental and create barriers to healthcare services.

Although some professions have witnessed improvement in diversity measures, others declined; albeit those differences were slight. To measure true progress over time (whether positive or negative), both continual and complete reporting is required. Policy changes must also be considered and factored into the overall analysis.

This report highlights important issues in workforce diversity in Arkansas. In spite of the fact that awareness is important in the early stages of demographic data collection, sustained, systematic analysis is paramount to maintain momentum in understanding Arkansas's ever-changing healthcare workforce.

# References

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## References

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