

# EMPOWER-MKE

empower yourself  
empower your community  
empower milwaukee



A LOOK INSIDE THE UNIQUE  
CHALLENGES & OBSTACLES  
FACING RESIDENTS  
OF WISCONSIN'S  
6<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

WISCONSIN  
STATE SENATOR

**LaTonya Johnson**

Proudly serving the 6th Senate District



# EMPOWER-MKE

In January 2018, I started a community engagement series called EMPOWER-MKE. The first session focused on providing residents with the knowledge and tools they needed to engage with local and state government. Since then, I have held nearly a dozen events on various issues.

In 2022, based on feedback from community members, I expanded EMPOWER-MKE to include a community action center in my monthly electronic newsletter. Through the EMPOWER-MKE philosophy, I hope to continue to build resources and connections and inspire action among residents of the 6th Senate District.

This book will provide a look into issues affecting Milwaukee residents, particularly those in Senate District 6, and disparities that exist among minority communities.



## INTRODUCTION

State legislators are blessed to have an abundance of information as well as industry experts available to explain and provide information for just about any question we have. I wanted to share some of that knowledge with you as I believe this city has no better advocates than those who are well-informed and sincere in their desire to improve the city of Milwaukee.

As a long-time resident, my family and I benefited from the many amazing opportunities Milwaukee has offered, from a quality education and family-sustaining jobs to homeownership and entrepreneurship. However, as fortunate as I feel for being a part of such an amazing city, I know there is significantly more work that needs to be done to ensure this is a place of opportunity for everyone—regardless of who you know, your zip code, or your socioeconomic status.

It is the honor of a lifetime to serve our community in the State Senate, and I am grateful for the opportunities and information it has provided me. As such, I will continue to work to ensure that the opportunities our community has are improved upon for you and your family.

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES

Addressing affordable housing is a top priority for our city. The city of Milwaukee has some of the lowest percentages of homeownership in the state. For instance, in the 53205 neighborhood, just 27% of residents own their home. The Milwaukee Metro area has the second-lowest Black homeownership rate in America at 26%. Low homeownership means most of our residents have to rent, and more than half of these renters are rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on housing. The city of Milwaukee needs 30,000 more Black homeowners to reach racial equity in homeownership. To ensure families remain in their homes, Milwaukee offers several programs to residents, including the STRONG Homes Loan Program, Milwaukee Home Down Payment Assistance Program, Anti-Displacement Neighborhood Preference Policy, and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. This session, I have co-sponsored bills that would have protected people from being discriminated against based on a prior eviction (SB 634), increased rental assistance options (SB 557), and provided assistance to individuals wishing to purchase a home (SB 975).

### STRONG HOME LOAN PROGRAM

STRONG Homes Loan Program offers homeowners loans of up to \$20,000 for essential and emergency repairs. The program supports homeowners with contractor solicitation, scope development, contract management, and financial coaching. **Recently, the program has seen significant growth and is now available to residents city-wide.** In 2021, the program approved 65 loans totaling \$1.1 million, delivered its 500th loan, and has invested over \$8 million in neighborhood renovations since its inception.

### ANTI-DISPLACEMENT NEIGHBORHOOD PREFERENCE POLICY

The Anti-Displacement Neighborhood Preference Policy was created in 2019, and reserves 20% of new affordable housing units in developments that benefit from Milwaukee’s financial aid. Targeted at four zip codes near downtown Milwaukee where rising costs may lead to evictions, the Department of City Development utilizes Requests for Proposals and City-owned land sales to achieve anti-displacement and affordable housing objectives. In 2021, **three areas adopted this policy, with five more projects in the pipeline, aiming to create over 450 housing units designated for anti-displacement.**

### MILWAUKEE HOME DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Milwaukee Home Down Payment Assistance Program was launched by the Department of City Development in 2021 to address homeownership rate disparities. Working in collaboration with Milwaukee’s home-buying counseling agencies such as Housing Resources Inc., Acts Housing, and the United Community Center, the program provides grants to qualified Milwaukee residents to support their home ownership goals. With over 97% of loan recipients being families of color, this program has done the work to help close the gap in racial disparities of home ownership.

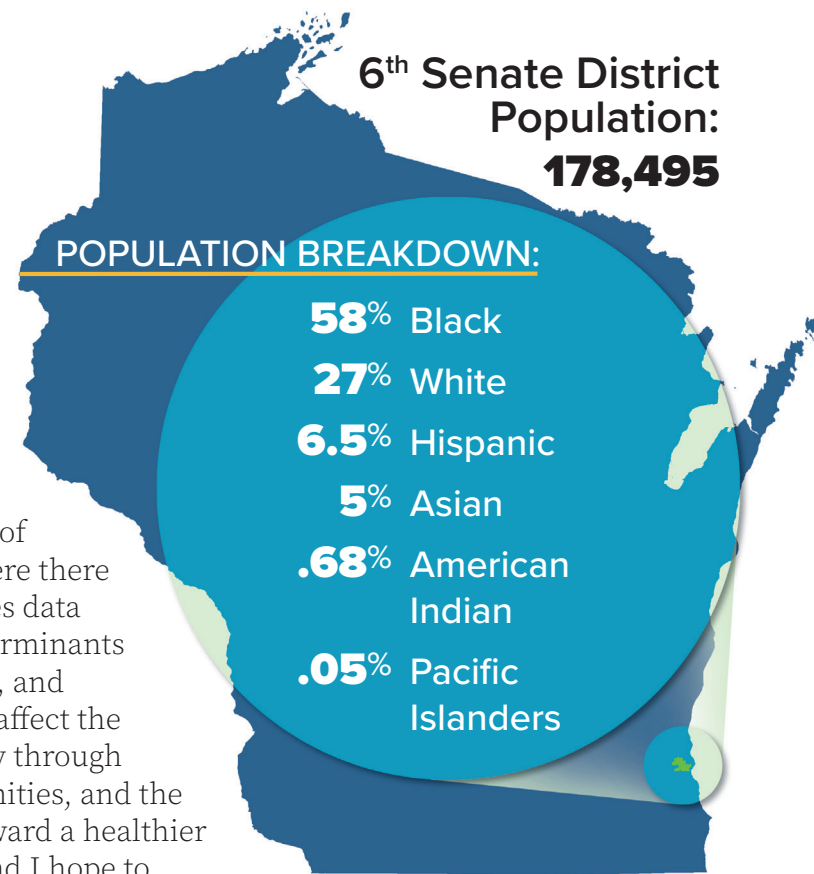
### LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority Low Income Housing Tax Credit program is used by the Department of City Development to support affordable rental housing projects. This program incentivizes private investment in affordable housing by lowering the tax burden on investors. In 2022, five development projects, which involved old City-owned land and buildings, created 260 affordable housing units.



# The 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District THROUGH A SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH LENS

The outcomes and opportunities available within a community depend on a variety of social, economic, and health factors. When looking at disparities in health and other outcomes, these factors all play a critical role. This concept is known as **social determinants of health**. This booklet seeks to highlight some of the available data while underscoring areas where there is a need for improvement. This booklet includes data about some of the main tenets of the social determinants of health, such as economic stability, education, and community safety, and shows how these issues affect the health and wellbeing of individuals, particularly through disparities that exist. Individuals, local communities, and the state must all be involved in moving the dial toward a healthier 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District and Milwaukee as a whole, and I hope to empower action through this data.



## FOOD INSECURITY & ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

According to data from the 2022 Food Insecurity Index, created by Conduent Healthy Communities Institute, which measures food access correlated with economic and household hardship, **nearly all zip codes in the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District are considered areas of high need** relative to surrounding areas.

Additionally, despite the City of Milwaukee's geographic concentration, data from 2019 shows that nearly **45%** of all city residents live more than a half mile from a major grocery store or supermarket. For Black and Asian residents, that number jumps to **47% and 48.9%**, respectively. Hispanic residents have a lower-than-average access disparity at **30.5%**.

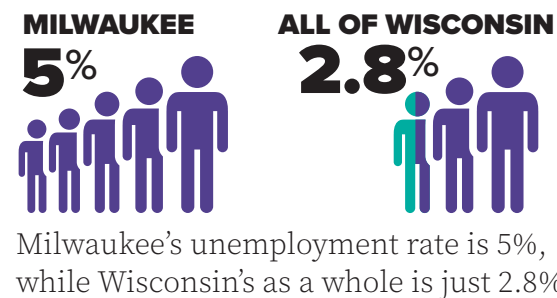
## TRANSPORTATION

In Wisconsin, **Black residents are 3x less likely to own a vehicle** than White residents, and the majority of Black households have access to half as many cars as white households. Despite Milwaukee's robust public transit system, residents of the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District have an average daily commute of five minutes longer than residents in the rest of the state. Low vehicle ownership rates in rural parts of the state can make employment difficult, especially for Black Wisconsinites.



## ECONOMIC SECURITY

### EMPLOYMENT



Unemployment discrepancies are even worse when broken down by race. The latest census data indicates that:

- ▶ Native people in Wisconsin have an unemployment rate of **4.3% that of white** Wisconsinites, while
- ▶ Black Wisconsinites have a **rate of 9.3%**.

### INCOME & BENEFITS

While in office, I supported enhancing the earned income tax credit (SB 453) and creating a more robust paid family leave program (SB 32).

The median household income in the City of Milwaukee is **\$45,318**.



Due to concentrated poverty in areas of the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District, many residents make less than **\$30,000** per year.



**77%** of working Wisconsinites do not have access to paid family leave, and **62%** lack access to unpaid family leave.



## EDUCATION

### LITERACY

In Wisconsin, children's **reading literacy levels vary significantly by racial demographics**. The graph pictured below is data collected from an assessment of Milwaukee public schools that was conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2022. One aspect of the graph that is particularly jarring is the drastic difference between the percentages of students in fourth grade who scored at or above the basic and proficient reading levels. This demonstrates the **extreme racial disparity** that exists between literacy levels of students in fourth grade across different racial categories.

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Students	Average Score	Percentage At or Above NAEP		Percentage at NAEP Advanced
			Basic	Proficient	
WHITE	11	224	72	43	43
BLACK	46	174	22	5	5
HISPANIC	31	190	32	9	9
ASIAN	9	203	49	16	16

## EARLY CHILDCARE ACCESS IN MILWAUKEE

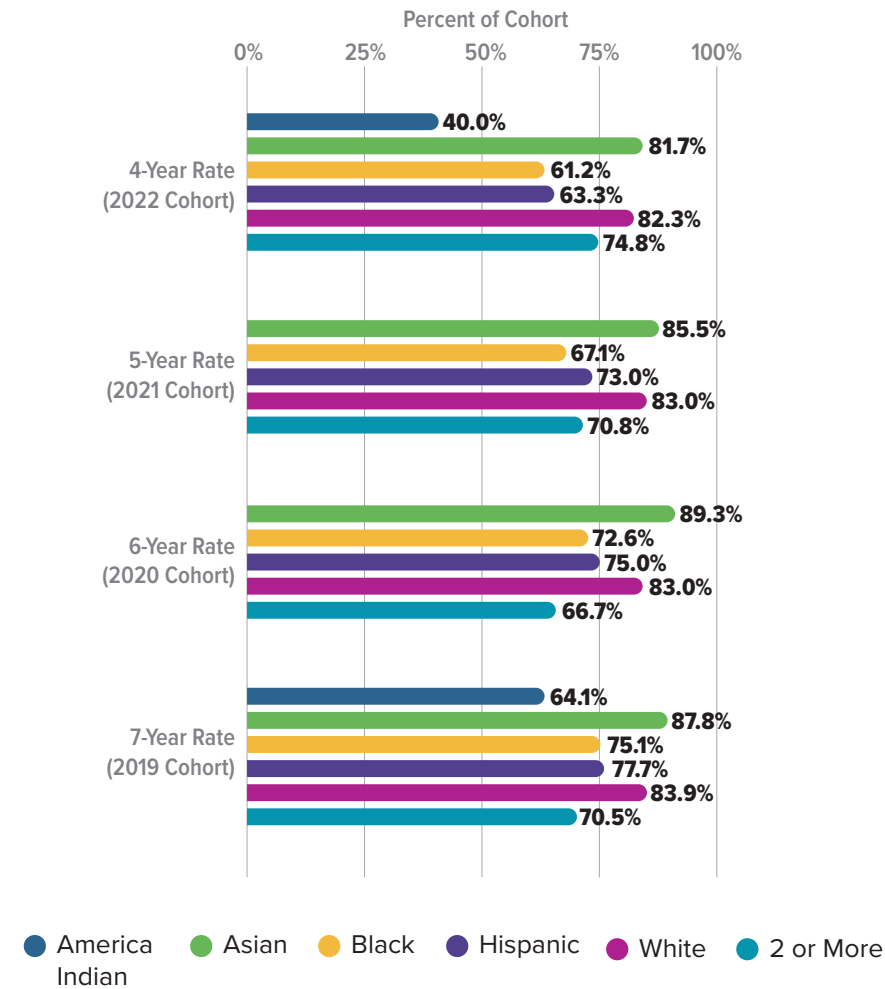
Early childcare and education resources are inaccessible to Wisconsin and Milwaukee residents for many reasons, including cost and quality of care. According to the Economic Policy Institute, Wisconsin’s average annual cost of infant care is \$12,567, however, in Milwaukee the average is \$16,236 per year. In addition to high costs, finding quality childcare is another obstacle. Each childcare provider is given a rating across a one to five-star scale. In Milwaukee, only 5% are rated as five-star providers. In recent years, I have strongly advocated for the 53206 Early Care and Education Initiative, which allocates funding and support to childcare providers in order to increase the overall quality of childcare. I also introduced legislation to continue the Childcare Counts program (SB 487).



## GAPS IN GRADUATION RATES

High School graduation rates are a **significant indicator of the racial disparities** that exist in Milwaukee and Wisconsin overall. About 61% of Black students and 63% of Hispanic students graduate from Milwaukee schools in four years, in comparison to 82% of their white counterparts. In Wisconsin overall, public high school graduation rates are 71% among Black students, 82% among Hispanic students, and 94% among white students.

### Graduation Rates in Milwaukee by Race



## HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS

There is a **substantial disparity that exists in college graduation rates** at public universities in Wisconsin. The six-year college graduation rate at public institutions is 72% for white students, 44% among Black students, 57% among Hispanic students, and 56% among Asian students. In the city of Milwaukee, just 7% of African American residents hold a bachelor’s degree while 17% of the total population does. Notably, 35% of African American Milwaukeeans have some college or an associates degree. To help students of color be successful in college, I introduced a bill to create a paid internship program (SB 473).

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

### RECKLESS DRIVING

Making sure the communities we live in are safe for our families and neighbors is a major concern. Crime and safety ranks number one among residents when asked to rank their top list of concerns. Elected officials, law enforcement and community partners are working tirelessly to address these issues and we are seeing some improvements. However, it still isn’t enough. In an effort to help make our streets safer, I am proud that some of the first bills to be signed into law for 2023 were both my bills: Act 1 and Act 9 – both aimed at **reducing reckless driving**.

#### Citywide Crashes

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022-23 % CHANGE
Total Fatal Crashes	51	78	66	77	74	-4%
Total Hit & Runs	6,033	6,081	7,120	5,896	5,398	-8%
Total Crashes	18,206	16,141	17,479	15,266	14,489	-5%

Data was obtained from the TraCS 10 data system and counts distinct crash reports filed during the time period of January 1 – December 31, 2019 – 2023. Crash fatalities were obtained from the OMAP Fatal Crash database and counts victims for the same time period.

#### Reckless Driving

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022-23 % CHANGE
CAD Calls – Reckless Vehicle	2,722	2,175	2,072	1,618	1,290	-20%
Arrests	631	584	733	692	812	17%
Reckless Driving Citations	4,588	4,297	4,904	3,397	3,709	9%
Reckless Driving Citations with Speeding	13,861	20,456	29,363	14,969	13,028	-13%

Calls for service data was obtained from the Computer Aided Dispatched System (CAD) and counts distinct calls for the time period of January 1 – December 31, 2019 – 2023. Arrest data was obtained from Tri Tech JailInform and counts distinct arrests for the same time period above. Citations were obtained from TraCS 10 and counts distinct citations for the same time period above. Reckless driving citations include “346.46(1)”, “346.04(2)”, “346.57(2)”, “346.57(5)”, “346.04(3)”, “346.62(2)”, “346.94(12)”, “346.89(1)”, “346.57(3)”, “346.39(1)”, “346.04(2t)”, “346.62(4)”, “346.94(2)”, “346.62(3)”, “346.59(1)”, “346.94(1)”, “346.89(3)(a)”, “346.595(5)”, “346.89(5)”. Arrests use the citations listed above.

## GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence is an epidemic that robs our city of its most valued possessions: our loved ones. It completely devastates families, forever leaving gaping holes that can never be filled. The reality is simple, there are **far too many guns on our streets** and those who aren’t legally allowed to own or possess them have easy access. Our lax regulation and lackluster desire to protect our most vulnerable communities allow some communities to be victimized constantly. Trust me when I say your zip code matters, studies have proven it. I have been pushing gun violence prevention every legislative session that I have been in office, some bills I have sponsored include universal background checks (SB 372) and a bill to incentivize gun buy-backs (SB 638).





## Shotspotter Activations

Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022-23 % CHANGE
North Boundary	6,274	11,790	15,421	14,617	13,224	-10%
South Boundary	1,106	1,530	1,582	1,519	1,462	-4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,380</b>	<b>13,320</b>	<b>17,003</b>	<b>16,136</b>	<b>14,686</b>	<b>-9%</b>

ShotSpotter data was obtained from the ShotSpotter Insight Portal and counts distinct ShotSpotter activations and excludes suppressed incidents (e.g., an incident determined by ShotSpotter to be non-gunfire/firework) for the time period of January 1 – December 31, 2019 – 2023.

## Gun Recoveries

Work Location	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022-23 % CHANGE
District 1	45	58	65	68	69	-1%
District 2	171	153	272	337	389	15%
District 3	233	267	295	353	403	14%
District 4	186	233	295	357	392	10%
District 5	421	533	625	370	379	2%
District 6	86	83	140	199	116	-42%
District 7	350	380	361	363	345	-5%
CIB	709	888	904	1,104	1,141	3%
Other	420	502	323	91	72	-21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,621</b>	<b>3,097</b>	<b>3,280</b>	<b>3,242</b>	<b>3,306</b>	<b>2%</b>

In 2023, 86% (2,849) guns recovered were evidence guns.

Gun recovery data was obtained from WinACE and is based on the date prepared for the time period of January 1 – December 31, 2019 – 2023. Evidence guns exclude guns taken for safekeeping. Other activities includes search (probable cause & consent), turned in, other and safekeeping. Incident category includes investigations, complaints, accidents and more.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

As noted previously, there are many factors that contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of members of our community. For too long, people of color have been left behind and intentionally harmed by our policies and systems in place, which in turn, contributes to the challenges affecting prosperity for communities of color. This shows up in maternal and child health outcomes, overall life expectancy, the prevalence of acute or chronic illnesses, and more.

### MATERNAL HEALTH

Black mothers experience 1.75x the risk of significant complications from labor or delivery facing white mothers, and **5x the risk of dying in childbirth** or from complications.



### INFANT MORTALITY



Specifically, in 2020, the infant mortality rate in Wisconsin was 14.3 deaths per 1000 live births for Black babies compared to 4.4 deaths per 1000 live births for white babies. For zip code 53206 the overall infant mortality rate per 1000 live births is 17.1, in 53216 it's 18.9, and in 53210 it is 17.5. For comparison, in 53207, the infant mortality rate is 2.7. These alarming numbers of Black infant mortality make Wisconsin one of the highest of any state in the nation.

**Black babies in Wisconsin are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday as compared to white babies.**

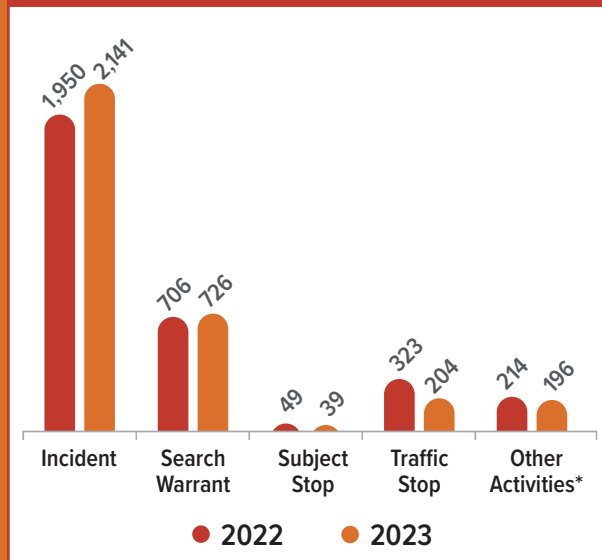
### CHILD LEAD EXPOSURE

Lead poisoning is especially damaging to our children, particularly those under 6 years of age. Exposure to lead can lead to lifelong health effects, such as brain damage. This threat to our kids comes from swallowing dust from lead-based paint, which is most prevalent in homes built before 1978, as well as from lead pipes. This is an issue that impacts households statewide, but is of particular concern in the city of Milwaukee where, in some areas of the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District, nearly 20% of children tested have elevated blood lead levels. This is an alarming rate given the statewide average of under 4% of tested children having elevated blood levels. This session I introduced legislation to offer grants to help pay for lead service line removal.

### DID YOU KNOW

You can learn more about lead exposure and how to protect your child from lead poisoning by visiting [www.city.milwaukee.gov/LeadSafeMKE](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/LeadSafeMKE)

### Citywide Guns Recovered by Police Activity Type



### RAISING AWARENESS

I have been pushing gun violence prevention every legislative session that I have been in office, some bills I have sponsored include requiring universal background checks (SB 372) and a bill to incentivize gun buy-backs (SB 638). **To raise awareness for the critical need to pass legislation to save lives, I also displayed photos of child victims of gun violence in the Capitol during Gun Violence Awareness Month in June.**



# MENTAL HEALTH

In Wisconsin, 14% of youth aged 12-17 report having a major depressive episode in the past year. In our state's high schools, 34% of students report feeling sad or hopeless and 18% seriously consider suicide. Wisconsin's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that of the pupils surveyed, **49.0% reported high levels of anxiety, 28.5% indicated depression, and 18.5% reported that they had engaged in self-harm** over the previous twelve months.

## DID YOU KNOW

You can **dial 988** if you are having a **mental health crisis**. 988 is now active across the United States. This new, shorter phone number will make it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services. You can also dial **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

# ROUTINE CHECK-UPS

Access to health insurance is just one piece of a large puzzle when it comes to accessing quality health care services. Barriers exist to having routine check-ups that can help identify health concerns before they become chronic issues, especially for lower income residents. Affording co-pays, transportation, receiving culturally appropriate care, work schedules, and childcare can prevent people from being able to see a doctor before they have a medical emergency.

**In the city of Milwaukee, 70% of those with the lowest incomes saw a doctor for a routine check-up within the past year, compared to 86% of those with the highest income.**

Recent studies have indicated that up to **40%** of overall health outcomes are indicated by socio-economic factors.

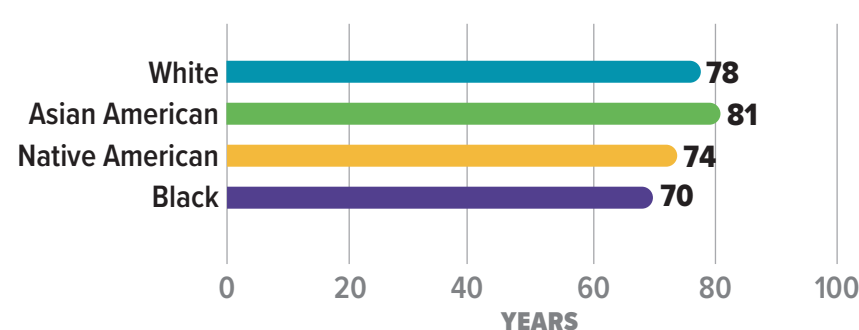
Wisconsin ranks **40<sup>th</sup>** in the nation for preventative dental care for low-income children.

At any given moment, **6-8%** of the Milwaukee population is uninsured.

# CHRONIC ILLNESS

- In Wisconsin, 7% of non-Hispanic white adults are living with diabetes, compared to **12% of Black adults and 15% of Hispanics**.
- In Wisconsin, **Black women are 7x as likely as White women to die from a premature stroke** (before age 65), and Black men are at 4x the risk of White men to die from a premature stroke.

CDC data compiled by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicates that Wisconsin has the third-highest racial disparity in the rates of death by stroke in the country.



**Disparities in Life Expectancy at Birth in Milwaukee County by Race**

# LIFE EXPECTANCY

**Disparities in life expectancy** exist across Milwaukee County, including by zip code. The **life expectancy of children born** into the 53217 zip code is 83.2 years, but 71.3 years in the 53206 zip code. 89.4% of 53217 residents are white, 76.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and the median household income is \$97,690). 93.6% of 53206 residents are black, 21.6% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and the median household income is \$22,468.

# HEALTH OUTCOMES SNAPSHOT

Zip Code	2016-2018 Infant Mortality Rate <sup>1</sup>	2018 Teen Birth Rate <sup>2</sup>	% Males 18-24 without HS diploma	% Females 18-24 without HS diploma	% Female Single Parent Household with Children under 18	% Families below the poverty level	Median Income	Life Expectancy (2010-14) <sup>3</sup>
53226	NA	0	9.70	2.30	18.90	3.10	\$66,132	81.1
53203	NA	NA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$57,870	NA
53211	2.8	0	1.90	1.60	17.50	5.20	\$53,482	82.9
53213	4.9	0	6.80	8.20	23.30	4.60	\$65,950	81.9
53214	NA	NA	8.00	13.10	32.10	15.00	\$42,209	75.0
53220	5.8	15.2	8.30	16.30	38.00	8.70	\$46,786	78.6
53227	6.3	NA	8.90	5.30	27.20	7.10	\$48,347	79.2
53228	NA	NA	2.70	3.30	21.40	5.40	\$54,071	79.3
53202	4.6	NA	1.80	0.20	9.00	7.20	\$47,890	77.5
53205	8.1	38.9	28.30	25.20	64.60	37.90	\$25,388	73.0
53219	2.8	12.4	18.10	7.90	29.00	9.60	\$46,241	77.6
53222	7.3	18.9	15.70	10.60	25.20	11.90	\$52,842	79.5
53204	7.5	60.7	44.10	28.70	40.50	43.10	\$24,580	76.1
53208	9.7	55.9	31.70	20.30	54.10	10.40	\$30,318	74.8
53215	6.8	28.9	35.00	28.70	34.30	29.20	\$33,129	76.4
53221	4.8	20.5	9.20	9.70	22.40	13.40	\$47,109	79.0
53223	11.1	16.2	22.80	9.20	40.60	15.20	\$41,462	76.7
53233	7.9	6.1	8.20	3.60	74.10	59.50	\$13,544	75.9
53207	9.8	10.8	18.50	9.50	25.30	10.30	\$54,889	78.4
53224	12.7	34.4	25.30	16.70	50.70	25.30	\$40,571	76.9
53209	12.3	29.4	35.20	21.20	61.00	25.80	\$32,376	74.8
53212	10.4	28.5	25.60	11.80	59.70	33.40	\$30,003	73.8
53216	14.2	41.3	25.30	10.30	67.60	26.70	\$32,388	74.8
53218	13.8	50.2	31.00	16.90	57.60	27.00	\$35,901	73.5
53206	20.7	72.8	34.50	30.50	76.30	45.70	\$22,468	71.3
53210	15.2	29.7	27.70	21.60	62.60	28.00	\$32,177	72.1
53225	20.7	25.5	21.90	6.90	58.80	18.90	\$39,348	73.2

## DID YOU KNOW

In addition to our hospitals and clinics, the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District has five community health centers that **serve over 20,000 patients** in our district each year. Learn more at [wphca.org](http://wphca.org).

## DID YOU KNOW

A project of Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service, called **NEWS414**, helps provide information on a variety of focus areas, such as food resources, housing, employment, mental health & domestic violence, civic engagement, and health and safety (especially COVID-19). To access this service, start by **texting MKE to 73224**.





# STATE SENATOR LaTonya Johnson

Serving Wisconsin's 6th District

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## EMPOWER-MKE A look inside the unique challenges facing 6<sup>th</sup> Senate District residents

State legislators are blessed to have an abundance of information as well as industry experts available to explain and provide information for just about any questions we have. I wanted to share some of that knowledge with you as I believe this city has no better advocates than those who are well-informed and sincere in their desire to improve the city of Milwaukee.

Because data are ever-changing, my office makes every attempt to make sure to update this resource with the most current data available. Updated copies of this guide will be posted online and can be found by scanning this QR code.



## SERVING YOU IN THE STATE CAPITOL

It is a privilege to serve the people of the 6th Senate District. While I am deeply proud of being able to pass dozens of bills into law that support veterans, increase quality childcare access, and move the dial on equity initiatives, I know families are continuing to feel left behind. As such, **I am committed to ensuring Milwaukee has a seat at the table when decisions about state policy and spending are being made.**

It is an honor of a lifetime to serve on Wisconsin's Joint Finance Committee, which is in charge of writing the state budget. **I will continue to fight for Milwaukee to get its fair share of state investments.** I continue to be hopeful that we will use this money towards increasing **prosperity for all.**



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR **LaTonya Johnson**