

THE STATE OF BLACK WISCONSIN: DIVING INTO OUR STATE'S RACIAL DISPARITIES

with Sen. LaTonya Johnson



Housing Security

- On a given night in 2024, over 5,000 people in Wisconsin were experiencing homelessness.
- During the 2023–24 school year, 20,195 Wisconsin public school students lacked a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- Wisconsin faces a shortage of more than 59,500 affordable rental homes for low-income households statewide.
- In Milwaukee County, 885 people were experiencing homelessness in the January 2024 Point-in-Time count.



POVERTY

Poverty Falls Hardest on Black Milwaukeeans

>30% of Black residents in Milwaukee live below the federal poverty line — the highest rate among major U.S. metropolitan areas.

27%

Black homeownership in Milwaukee, compared to 56% for White households—a 29% difference.

\$37,000

Median household income for Black families in Milwaukee, ranking last among the 50 largest metro areas.

13.4%

Black households in Milwaukee earn over \$100,000, the lowest share among the nation's largest metropolitan areas.



POVERTY

Where Milwaukee is Currently in Poverty

Poverty among Milwaukee's African American children is **38.8%** which is the **3rd worst** out of 50 largest metropolitan areas. This is higher than the national average of Black child poverty at 30.2%

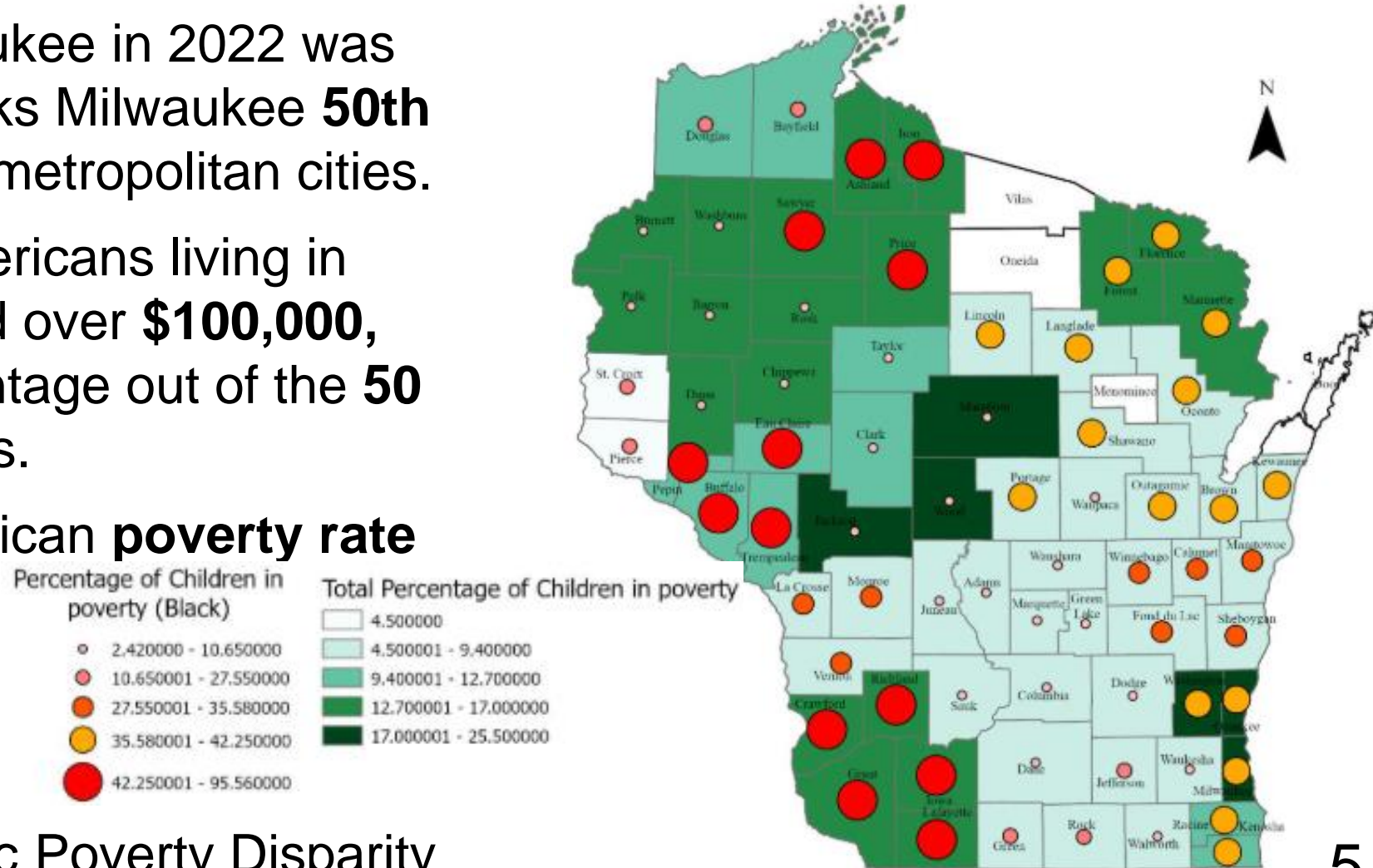
African American homeownership in Milwaukee is just **27.5%** ranking us next to last among the largest 50 metro areas, this disparity ranks **Milwaukee 48th in Black-White Non Hispanic homeownership.**

According to WHEDA the state needs around 30,000 more African American homeowners to close the racial divide.

Poverty in Wisconsin

- The median household income for African Americans living in Milwaukee in 2022 was **\$37,182**. This income ranks Milwaukee **50th out of the top 50** largest metropolitan cities.
- Just **13.4%** of African Americans living in Milwaukee in 2022 earned over **\$100,000**, which is the lowest percentage out of the **50 largest** metropolitan areas.
- Milwaukee's African American **poverty rate is 30.1%**, which is the worst out of the largest metro cities, creating the widest margin among Black- White Non-Hispanic Poverty Disparity

Black Child Poverty disparity in Wisconsin



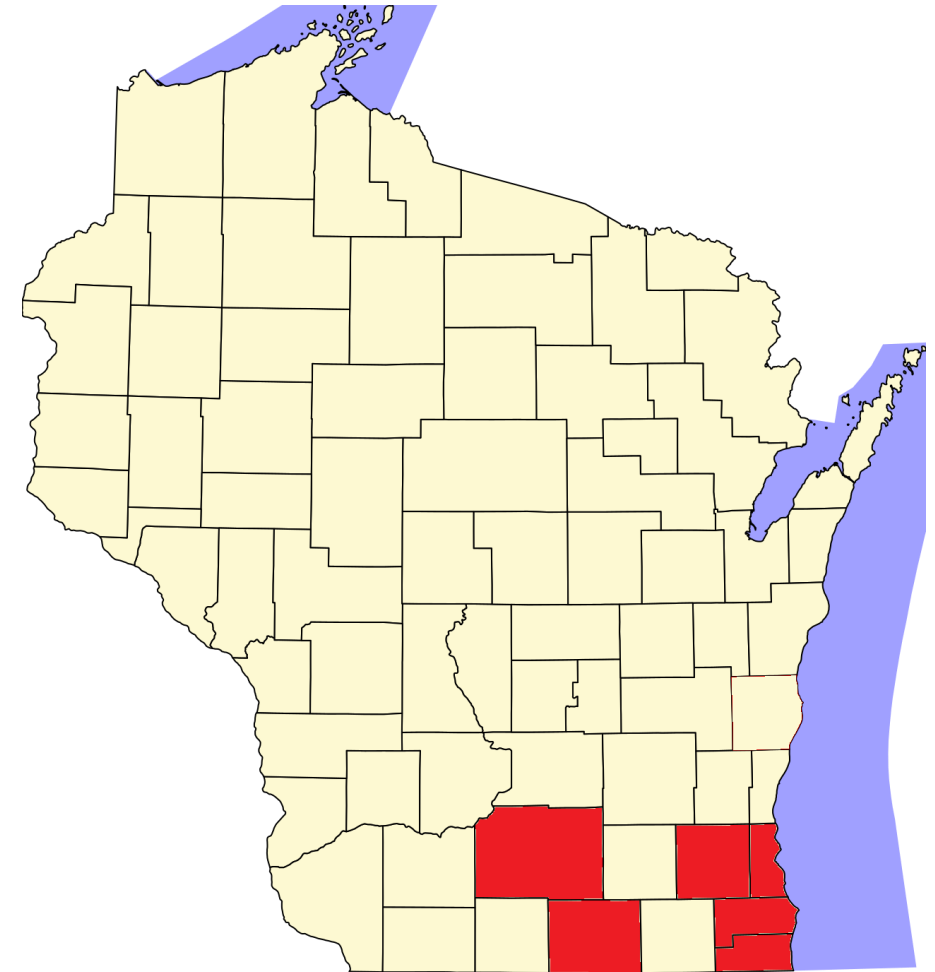
WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Affordable Housing & Protecting Renters

- **Goal:** To make housing affordable for all, increase home ownership, and to protect tenants and renters for exploitation
- **Priorities:**
- Develop housing affordability programs that prioritize communities with high displacement risk such as establishing
 - The first time homebuyers program to assist Wisconsinites purchasing their first home or those who face foreclosure.
 - Investing in home repair programs, to rehabilitate neighborhoods and prioritize safety from lead poisoning, fires and other potential natural disasters
 - Prioritize renters and tenant rights and protections so they can live in their homes with dignity and without exploitation.



Education

- **Nearly 90% of Wisconsin's African American population live in the following six counties**, all of which are located in Southeastern or Southern Wisconsin: **Milwaukee, Dane, Racine, Kenosha, Rock, and Waukesha**. When looking at African Americans as a percent of the total county population, **Milwaukee tops this list, with 38.6 percent**.
- **In Wisconsin, while 1 percent of Wisconsin's white children live in high poverty areas 35 percent of African-American children and 18 percent of Latino children do. Black children make up about 9% of total Wisconsin public school students (Hispanic students is approx. 13%). 43.7% of Wisconsin public school students are economically disadvantaged. 86.5% of MPS students are economically disadvantaged.**



Education



- 1 in 10 children in Wisconsin live in poverty while 3 in 10 African American children in Milwaukee live in poverty.
- African American children makeup 10.1% of Wisconsin's population.
- A stunning 22.5% of African American youth ages 16-24 living in Milwaukee were not in school and did not have employment resulting in us being ranked 3rd worst in the nation.
- Graduation rate for white students was 92.7%, compared to a graduation rate of 71% for Black students. This gap in graduation rates for white and Black students is the largest in the country.
- Wisconsin also had the 47th highest gap between Black and white students in its share of adults with either a high school or bachelor's degree.

At a Crossroad: Education and Juvenile Justice

The cost of disinvestment

With the passage of this budget, Wisconsin is estimated to spend just \$15,477 per child per year on the average student in a public school.

On childcare, the Legislature passed \$330 million over the biennium for an estimated 288,000 children statewide, breaking down to about \$400 per child per year

In Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools, the only high-security juvenile detention centers in the state, the cost is about \$700,000 per child per year.

WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Education and Literacy

- **Goal:** To ensure equitable access to high-quality education that prepares every child for success regardless of their school district or zip code.
- **Priorities:**
 - Fully fund public schools with targeted resources for schools with low-literacy rate scores.
 - Expand evidence-based literacy programs, including early childhood and reading intervention initiatives.
 - Strengthen accountability and transparency in voucher and charter programs to ensure all students benefit.
 - Support the development and recruitment of teachers and culturally responsive curricula to improve outcomes and engagement.



Chronic School Absenteeism and Criminal Justice Link

- Chronic absenteeism is categorized as missing 10% or more of school days which is about 18 days per school year.
- Chronic absenteeism is also strong predictor of involvement with the youth justice system.
- Data from the 2023-24 school year shows Black students in Wisconsin (including a high concentration of Milwaukee Public School student) have a chronic absenteeism rate of 47.9 to 51%.
- 4.28 times higher for Black students than their white counterparts who had an absenteeism rate of 11.2%



2017 Wis Act 185



- Replaces both Lincoln Hills for boys and Copper Lakes for girls with smaller regionally run facilities in an effort to better serve youth closer to home, with closure set for 2021.
- In 2026, the facility serves 88 youths in a facility designed to house over 500 individuals.
- Milwaukee and Dane counties have the majority of youth housed at the facility.
- JFC passed daily rates in the last legislative budget to pay 2,501 in 2025-26 and \$2,758 in 2026-27.
- Gov. Tony Evers used his partial veto to decrease the daily rates to \$501 in FY26 and \$758 in FY27. A 800% decrease, creating a major shortfall for DOC.
- Still, the cost of running the facility is about \$30 million a year, meaning the state has spent \$150 since missing the closure deadline

Juvenile Corrections Update: County-Run

Some County facilities have already or soon will be opened

x15 the rate of black youths in correctional placements when compared to white youths

Jonathan Delagrave Youth Development & Care Center

Racine County SRCCCY
Opened May 1, 2025
New Construction
\$1268 daily rate

Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Facility

Milwaukee County SRCCCY
Opens March 2026
Remodel Expansion



The Costs of Delay – Type 1 Facilities

The Type 1 Facilities are not yet operational, and most have not even been built. Their opening is needed to close Lincoln Hills

Dane County Type 1 Facility

- Operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC)
- In the planning/design stage, completion by 2029
- The original funding request was denied in the budget of **\$83 million**.
- Eventual funding cost to taxpayers as a result of previous denial, and increased supply and labor cost **\$130.7 million**

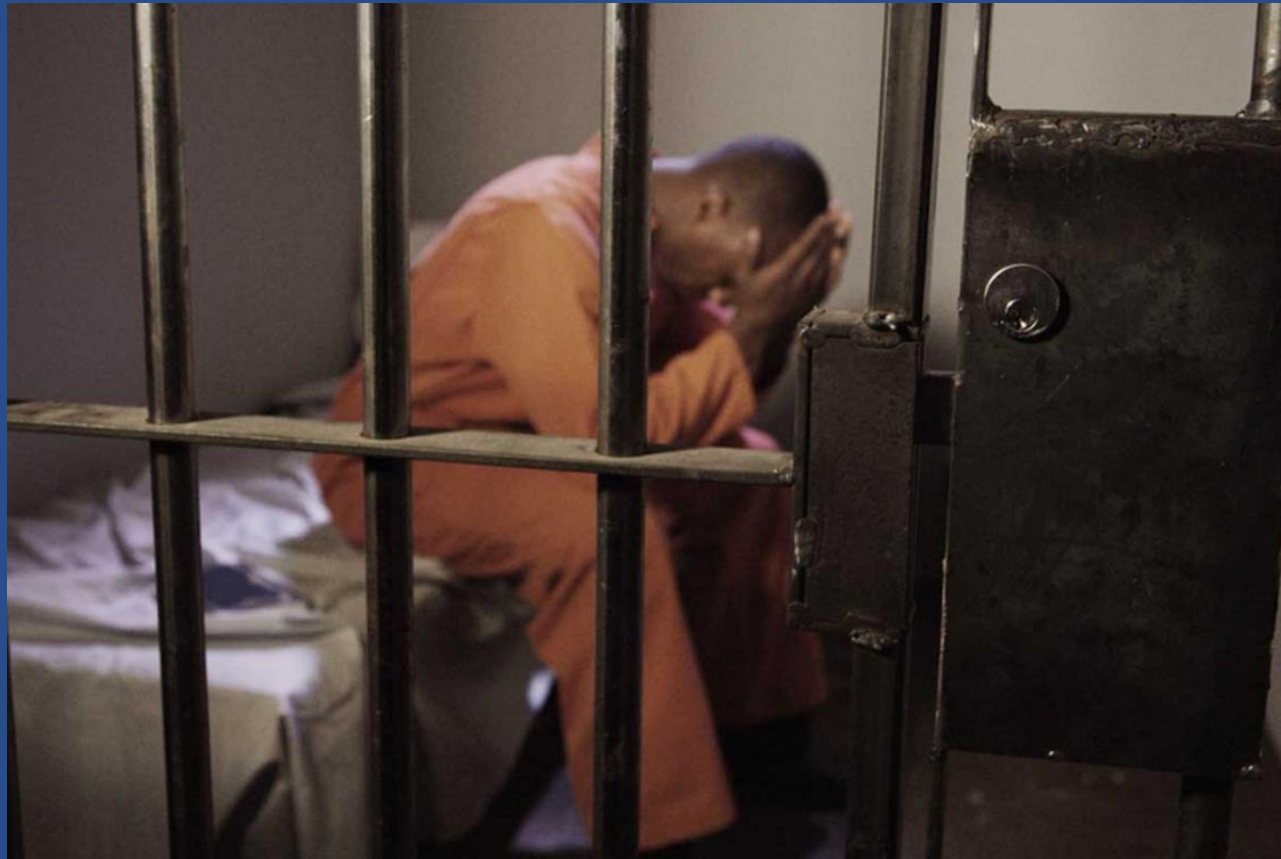
Northern Wisconsin Type Facility

- Operated by the DOC, still in the planning and design stage. Funding requested but not yet approved

Milwaukee SE Regional Care Center for Youth Type 1

- Operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC)
- New construction completion 2026
- Original Funding request was \$46 million to build the facility, denied in the budget
- Eventual cost to taxpayers as a result of the denial and increased supply and labor cost \$88 million

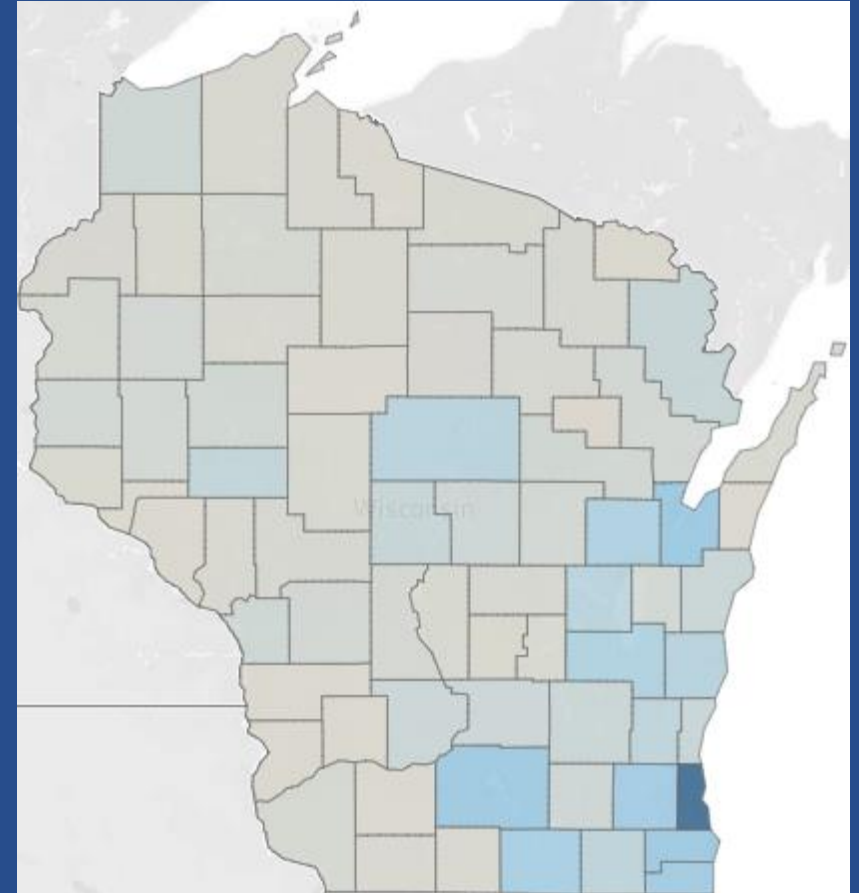
Criminal Justice 1



- As of the most recent reporting, Wisconsin holds about 23,300 people in state prisons.
- Many facilities are operating above design capacity and the total is close to historic highs compared with pre-pandemic levels.
- Combined probation and parole population in 2025 is approximately 63,400 people under supervision in the community.

Criminal Justice 2

- In 2024, over 8,000 people were admitted to Wisconsin prisons, and about 60% of those admissions involved revocations of supervision (rather than new convictions).
- Black residents in Wisconsin are incarcerated at roughly 11–12 times the rate of white residents, one of the highest racial disparities in the nation.
- Extended supervision and revocations contribute substantially to prison returns; technical violations remain a large driver of repeat incarceration.
- Jail population – 10,207 statewide
- 1502 women, 8705 men
- Juvenile Corrections – 78 boys, 10 girls (2025)



Convictions by
County

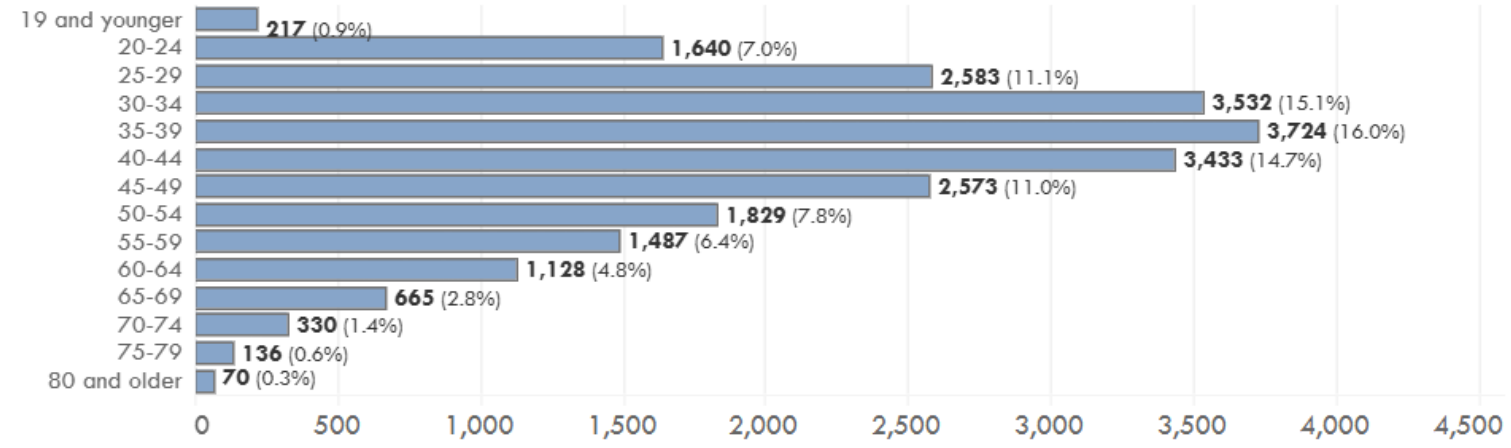
Persons in our Care (on 1/31/2026)

Total: 23,347

Current Location
 Gender
 Age Category
 Race
 Ethnicity

Most Serious Offense*
 Custody Classification
 Expected Release County
 Admission Type

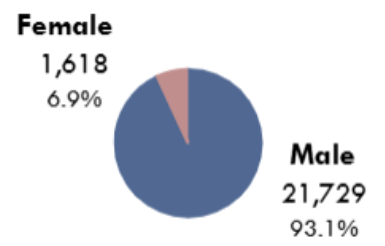
Age Category



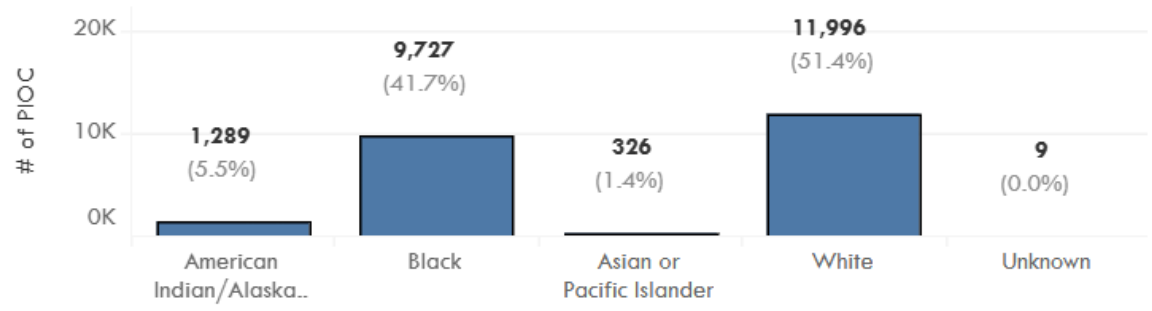
Average Age

41.1

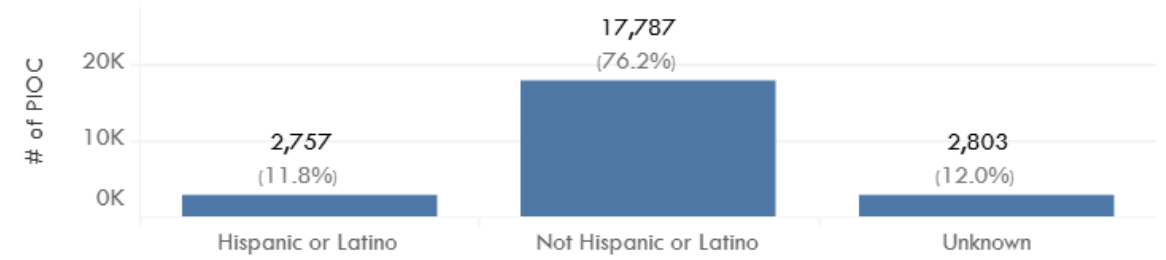
Gender



Race



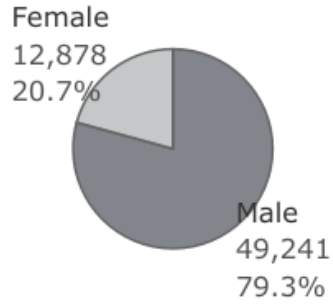
Ethnicity



Race

Total: 62,119

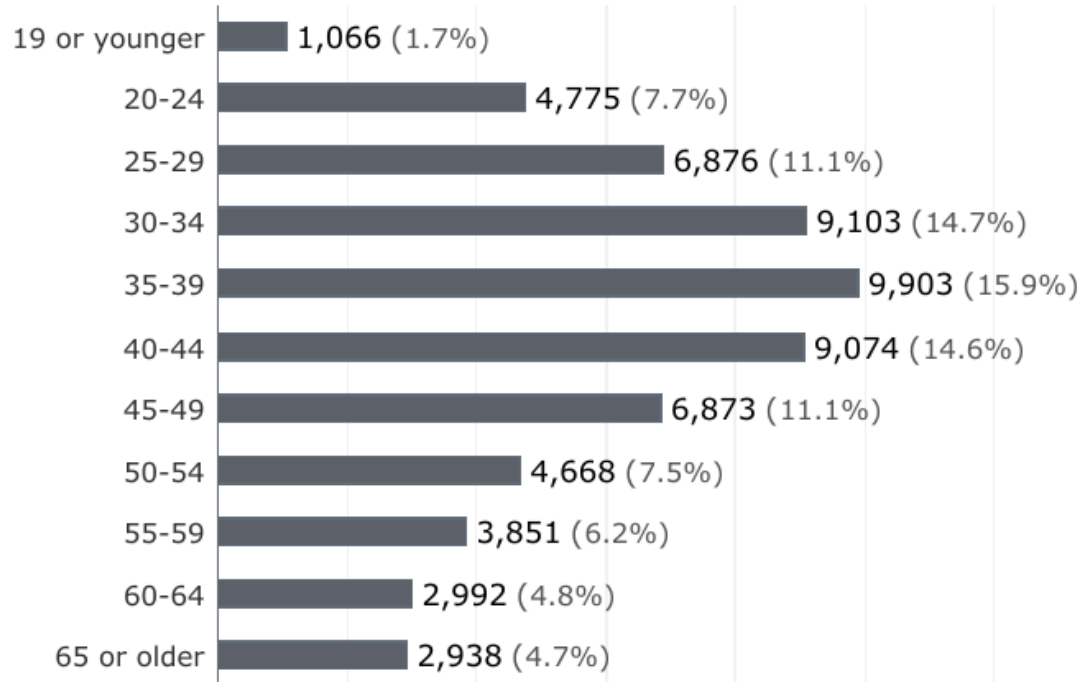
Gender



Average Age

40.6

Age



Race and Ethnicity

	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Unknown	Grand Total
All Clients	6,930 (11.2%)	48,141 (77.5%)	7,048 (11.3%)	62,119 (100.0%)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	291 (0.5%)	2,684 (4.3%)	193 (0.3%)	3,168 (5.1%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	21 (0.0%)	765 (1.2%)	103 (0.2%)	889 (1.4%)
Black	526 (0.8%)	13,954 (22.5%)	2,894 (4.7%)	17,374 (28.0%)
White	6,016 (9.7%)	30,703 (49.4%)	3,798 (6.1%)	40,517 (65.2%)
Unknown	76 (0.1%)	35 (0.1%)	60 (0.1%)	171 (0.3%)

PERSONAL SAFETY

Where Wisconsin is Currently in Gun Deaths

Gun homicides, assaults, and shootings by police cost Wisconsin **\$9 billion** each year, amounting to more than **\$1500** per person in the state.

Milwaukee Police Department Data:

In 2025, Milwaukee police confiscated 3,020 guns, of which 2,580 of those guns were evidence guns.

In 2025, Milwaukee reported 142 homicides, an 8% increase from 132 in 2024.

In 2025, Milwaukee also reported 515 non-fatal shootings, a 19% decrease from the previous year of 639.

Black residents, comprising 6.3% of Wisconsin's population, accounted for 75.5% of firearm homicide victims.

Gun Recoveries

ZIP Code	# of Guns Recovered	ZIP Code	# of Guns Recovered	ZIP Code	# of Guns Recovered
53218	332	53205	93	53219	16
53206	317	53223	89	53211	15
53209	302	53224	79	53203	11
53216	276	53233	66	53228	4
53210	221	53207	60	53227	4
53212	197	53202	60	53213	3
53204	189	53222	46	53235	1
53208	175	53214	23	53295	1
53215	175	53221	23	53226	1
53225	123	53220	19	Unknown Location	99
			# of Guns Recovered		
Total (Both Tables)			3,020		

Gun recovery data was obtained from FileOnQ and is based on the date collected and counts distinct guns for the time period of January 1-December 31, 2025. Evidence guns exclude guns taken for safekeeping.

Firearm Related Homicides

ZIP Code	Homicides
53209	26
53218	21
53216	12
53206	11
53212	11
53208	11
53204	6

ZIP Code	Homicides
53205	6
53223	6
53210	5
53224	4
53225	3
53215	2
53202	2

	Homicides
Total (Both Tables)	126

Non-Fatal Shootings

ZIP Code	Non-Fatal Shootings	ZIP Code	Non-Fatal Shootings
53206	81	53205	14
53218	61	53225	12
53209	54	53202	12
53216	41	53224	11
53208	41	53222	5
53212	40	53221	3
53210	39	53203	2
53204	20	53211	2
53215	20	53214	1
53223	16	53207	1
53233	15	Unknown Location	24
		Non-Fatal Shootings	
Total (Both Tables)		515	

CRASH DATA

Crime Type	2022	2023	2024	2025	2024-2025 % Change
Fatal Injuries	77	74	66	55	-17%
Hit & Run	5,897	5,409	5,411	5,442	1%
All Crashes	15,265	14,493	14,346	14,313	0%

Fatal Injuries data was obtained from the OMAP Fatal Crash database and counts victims for the time period of January 1–December 31, 2022-2025. Overall crashes and hit and run crash data was obtained from the TraCS 10 system and counts distinct incidents for the same time period.

RECKLESS DRIVING & TOWS

May 1, 2022 – December 31, 2025

- **Reckless driving tows: 741**
- Unregistered tows: 700
- Repeat tows: 13
- Reckless tows: 28

January 1 – December 31, 2025

- **Reckless driving tows: 161**
- Unregistered tows: 129
- Repeat tows: 4
- Reckless tows: 28

Crime Type	2022	2023	2024	2025	2024-2025 % Change
CAD Calls – Reckless Vehicle	1,618	1,290	974	983	1%
Arrests	711	831	734	1,047	43%
Reckless Driving Citations with Speeding	16,753	14,580	12,543	12,591	0%
346.62 Reckless Driving Citations	503	662	636	557	-12%

Calls for service was obtained from Tiburon and Hexagon Computer Aided Dispatched (CAD) systems and counts distinct calls for the time period of January 1-December 31, 2022-2025. Arrest data was obtained from JailInform and counts distinct arrests for the same time period. Citation data was obtained from TraCS 10 system and counts distinct citations for the same time period. Reckless driving statutes include "346.04", "346.46(1)", "346.04(2t)", "346.04(3)", "346.34(1)(a)(3)", "346.37", "346.57", "346.62", "346.62", "346.89", "346.39(1)", "346.94(1)", "346.94(12)", and "346.95", with the exceptions of 346.595(3) and 346.595(5). Tow data was obtained from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Towing Management System, counting distinct Tow ID's. A valid reckless driving tow requires one registration violation and one additional factor. Registration categories include the subsections for the following statutes: Failure to Display – "341.15", Suspended Plates – "341.03", Improper Registration – "341.04" or "341.61". The additional factor category includes the following statutes: Fleeing – "346.04(2t)" or "346.04(3)", Reckless Driving – "346.63(2)", Speeding 25mph and over – "346.57(5)", Racing on Highway – "346.94(2)".

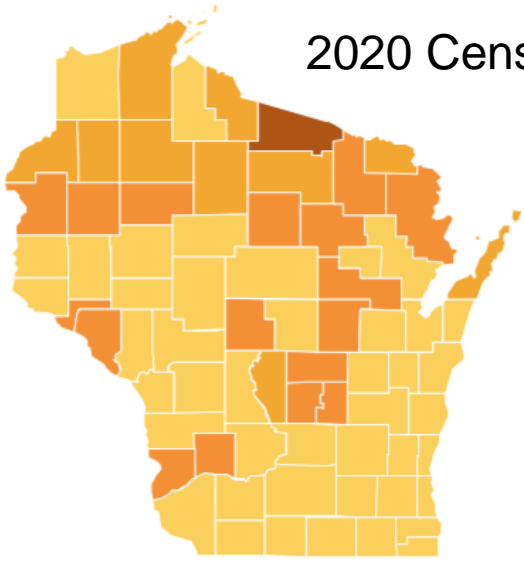
WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Criminal Justice Reform

- **Goal:** End mass incarceration cycles and create a fair, rehabilitative criminal justice system.
- **Priorities:**
 - Reform sentencing guidelines to focus on rehabilitation and lower recidivism
 - Expand reentry programs for employment, housing, and education opportunities.
 - Invest in alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenses.
 - Increase transparency and community oversight of law enforcement practices.
 - Banning Slavery in this state
 - Ending Crimeless Revocations
 - Fully fund our courts so that all communities have access to a fair justice system
 - Legalize & Decriminalize Cannabis so that communities wronged can reclaim their lives and reduce our prison population to focus on our most violent offenders

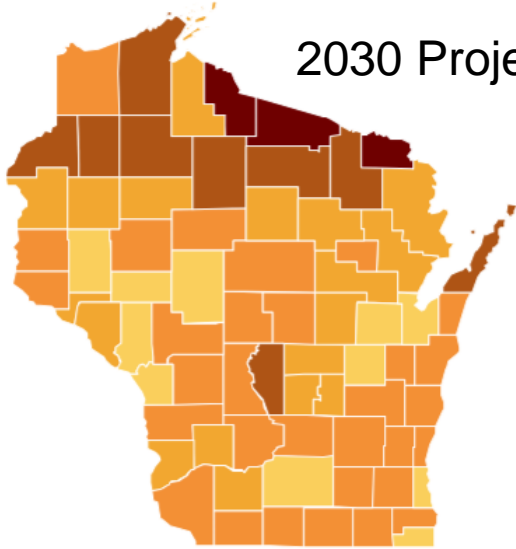


Wisconsin's 65+ Population

2020 Census



2030 Projected



Wisconsin is Aging

- Wisconsin's population has been in decline since 2020, due to long-term declines in birth rates and an aging population.
- The share of residents age 65 and older is growing rapidly and now approaches one-fifth of the population.
- Wisconsin is losing young adults, especially ages 18 to 26, who are moving for college and early-career opportunities.
- Most of these young adults who leave do not return.

● 14-21% ● 22-27% ● 28-33% ● 34-39% ● 40-46%

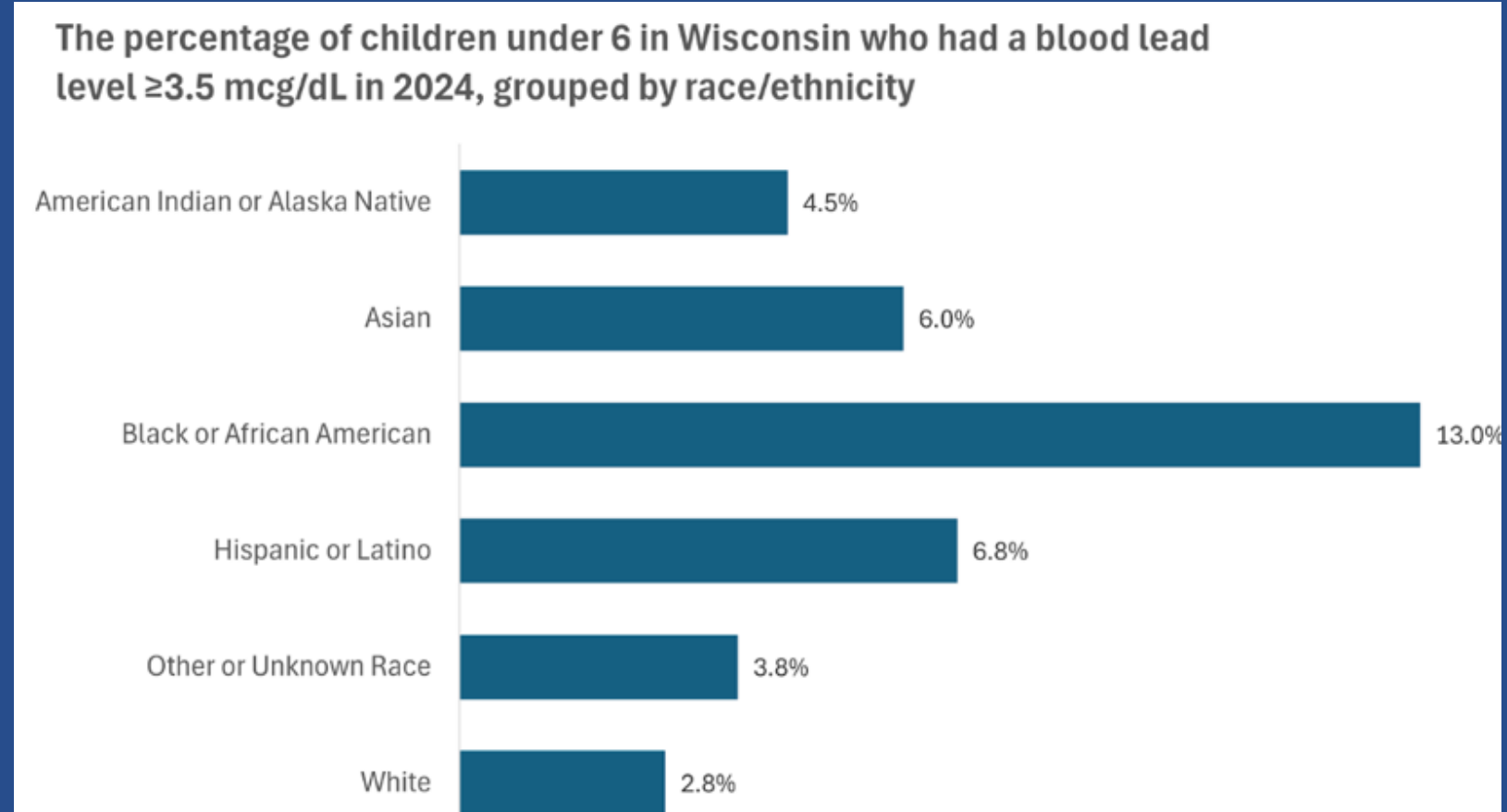
Milwaukee Population is Shrinking

- Milwaukee's city population has declined since 2020, from 577,000 residents to 563,500
- Milwaukee's two predominantly African American Districts saw a mass exodus compared to other Senate Districts in both the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County.
- Senator Dora Drake - District 4, lost a total of 15,389 residents
- Senator LaTonya Johnson - District 6, lost a total of 16,528 residents



DISPARITIES IN HEALTH: LEAD

- Lead pipes like the ones in Flint threaten 70,000 residences in Milwaukee, 10,000 in Racine, 8,000 in West Allis, 6,500 in Manitowoc, 7,000 in Kenosha, almost 2,000 in Green Bay and 3,000 in Shorewood.
- In fact, the children in Milwaukee (5.5%) and Richland (5.7%) County still have a greater incidence of lead poisoning than the Flint children at the peak of the crisis (4.9%).



Lead Water Dangers

Milwaukee's Black and Hispanic communities on both the North and South sides continue to be disproportionately affected by childhood lead poisoning.

65,000

Milwaukee homes are connected to water services using lead service lines in 2025, which they are required to replace by 2037

2600

Lead laterals were replaced in 2024

68%

of the 262,000 housing units in Milwaukee currently have lead paint

17,000

housing units were built prior to 1940, and are considered high risk for lead paint hazards

Childhood Lead Testing



- 2024 - Milwaukee County tested 29,155 children for lead.
- 2,724 cases or 9.34% had elevated blood levels either greater than or equal to 3.5 micrograms per deciliter.
- Ages 3 to 6 had the largest number of cases at a rate of 83.05 cases per 1000.
- 7.99% of children aged 1 to 2 tested positive and suggested earlier detection than the rest of the state.

Black vs White Lead Testing

- 13,210 tests were taken by children who identified as being Black
- 1717 were confirmed to have elevated lead levels greater than or equal to 3.5mg/dl.
- The results equal 13% of the children tested being positive for lead poisoning at a rate of 129.98 per 1000
- 44,810 tests were taken by children who identified as being White
- 1253 were confirmed to have elevated lead levels greater than or equal to 3.5mg/dl.
- The results equal 3% of the children tested being positive for lead poisoning at a rate of 27.96 per 1000.



Black vs White Lead Testing

Black people made up 13.86% of lead testing participants, but 36.71% of elevated lead levels

4.65x

greater contracted lead poisoning rate among the Black population vs the White population

6x

the expected rate of lead poisoning of Black vs White Populations in the coming years

5 Milwaukee Zip Codes

had the highest number of positive cases and made up 20% or more of the positive lead test, exceeding 3.5mg/dl:

- 53215
- 53208
- 53206
- 53204
- 53210

WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Environmental and Infrastructure Needs

- **Goal:** Build resilient, sustainable communities with safe roads, clean air, and affordable housing.
- **Priorities:**
 - Replace lead service lines, remove lead-based paint hazards, and upgrade aging infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water and housing.
 - Invest in road and bridge repair with safety-focused standards that protect communities and reduce long-term costs.
 - Expand energy efficiency and sustainable housing to lower utility bills and increase access to stable, lead-safe homes.
 - Advance climate resilience efforts, including green infrastructure that reduces flooding and environmental risk in vulnerable areas.
 - Address environmental justice concerns by improving water quality and reducing industrial pollution in historically impacted communities.



Milwaukee County Disparities in Life Expectancy

- Black people have the second shortest average life expectancy at birth.
- For over a decade in Milwaukee County per the Medical Examiner's Office the average age of death for Black residents has been at least 10 years or more lower than our White counterparts.
- December 2025 – The 12-month rolling average age of death for Blacks was 59.06 years old out of 30 deaths for this single month.
- December 2025 – The 12-month rolling average age of death for Whites was 73.79 years of age out of 23 deaths for this single month.



Top 10 Age-Adjusted Causes of Death by Race / Ethnicity in the City of Milwaukee, 2023*

	White	Black or African-American	Hispanic or Latino
1	Diseases of the heart (200.25)	Diseases of the heart (316.06)	Diseases of the heart (178.01)
2	Cancer (167.93)	Cancer (247.86)	Cancer (170.92)
3	Accidents (121.12)	Accidents (198.47)	Accidents (146.24)
4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases (38.81)	Assaults (homicide) (71.71)	Cerebrovascular diseases (41.20)
5	Cerebrovascular diseases (35.51)	Cerebrovascular diseases (64.96)	Alzheimer's disease (31.79)
6	Alzheimer's disease (24.82)	Diabetes (47.58)	Diabetes (31.72)
7	Suicide (18.76)	Chronic lower respiratory diseases (39.27)	Chronic lower respiratory diseases (29.42)
8	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (16.54)	Alzheimer's disease (35.91)	Hypertension (19.31)
9	Diabetes (14.59)	Hypertension (29.89)	Septicemia (17.54)
10	Parkinson Disease (9.63)	Nephritis (27.06)	Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (17.28)

**Age-adjusted death rates are shown only for White, Black, and Hispanic residents. Other race / ethnicity categories were excluded because the number of deaths in those groups was too small to produce reliable estimates and may not reflect true differences in risk.*

Source: Vital Records, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Milwaukee County Disparities in Life Expectancy

- Milwaukee County has a lower life expectancy for Blacks than the rest of Wisconsin for the same population
- Lower life expectancy is more prevalent in neighborhoods with high concentrations of unstable housing, poverty, and lack of preventive healthcare, such as primary care doctors and health care facilities. Most prevalent in zip codes like 53206 and 53204.
- Life expectancy has shown gradual improvement over time, but the gap between Blacks and Whites has remained unchanged.



Gun Homicides and Mortality



- Gun-related homicides are the leading cause of death among Black men in Milwaukee and are the second leading cause of mortality for this population.
- Despite Black residents accounting for just 6% of Wisconsin's population, Black's make up approximately 75.5% of homicide victims statewide.
- Each homicide victim loses an estimated average of 44 years of life.

Overdoses and Life Expectancy

- Overdoses are responsible for roughly 20% of all years of life lost in Milwaukee
- Older Black men born from 1951-1970 are 14 times more likely to experience drug poisoning deaths which is higher than the national average.
- Overdoses shorten life expectancy by 27 years



Disparities in Chronic Illness

Chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, stroke, asthma, and kidney disease drive preventable deaths and long-term healthcare costs in Wisconsin, with the heaviest burden falling on Black communities.

47.7 Diabetes deaths per 100,000 for African Americans in Wisconsin

2.7x

more likely for Black Wisconsinites are to die from diabetes than White Wisconsinites

249

Heart disease deaths per 100,000 for African Americans in Wisconsin

66.9

Stroke deaths per 100,000 African Americans in Wisconsin

2x

higher risk for Black children to develop asthma than White children



Disparities in Sexual Health

Black Wisconsinites account for **nearly half of the reported STI cases** statewide, despite making up **only 6-7% of the population**

31,576 reported STI cases in Wisconsin in 2024

15x

Black Wisconsinites' chlamydia rate compared to white Wisconsinites

68%

of gonorrhea cases in Wisconsin were among Black residents in 2024

31

babies born with congenital syphilis in Wisconsin in 2024, **18 of which** were Black babies

68%

of new HIV diagnosis were people of color

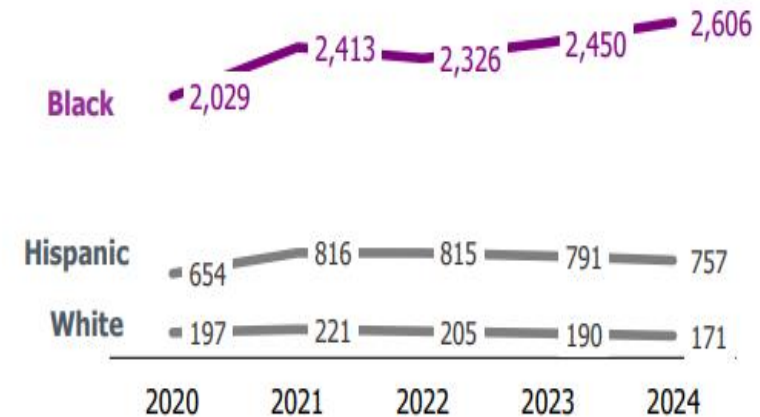
Sexual Health 2

- Chlamydia and Gonorrhea are the most frequently reported sexually transmitted infections in Milwaukee County
- Rates of Chlamydia infections are 1,094 per 100,000 residents.
- Blacks have a 6 times greater risk of Chlamydia infections than our White counterparts in Milwaukee.
- Black residents accounted for 66% of 10,023 Chlamydia infections, Whites accounted for 11%

Figure 7.

Black people continue to be disproportionately affected by chlamydia. The rate of chlamydia infections increased among Black people from 2023 to 2024 while decreasing among white people and Hispanic people.

Rates of chlamydia diagnoses per 100,000 people by race/ethnicity, 2020–2024.



*Rates are not included for races/ethnicities other than Black, Hispanic, and white due to small numbers of cases reported among these groups. See technical notes for additional information.

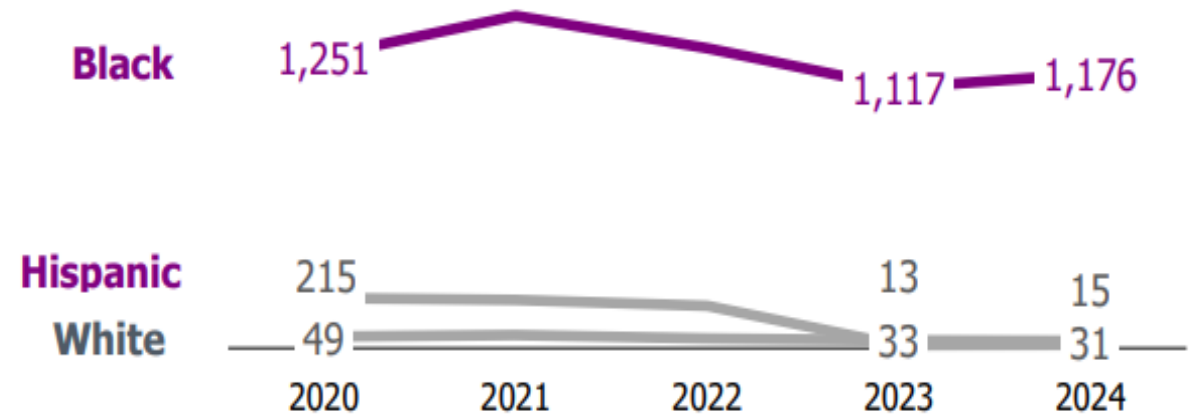
Sexual Health 4 - Gonorrhea

- Milwaukee residents contract gonorrhea almost 10 times higher than the White population.
- 78% of the 4,333 gonorrhea cases in Milwaukee were contracted by Blacks, and 8% of all total cases were of the White population

Figure 14.

Black people are disproportionately impacted by gonorrhea. In 2024, the rate increased among Black and Hispanic people compared to 2023.

Rates of gonorrhea diagnoses per 100,000 people by race/ethnicity, 2020–2024.

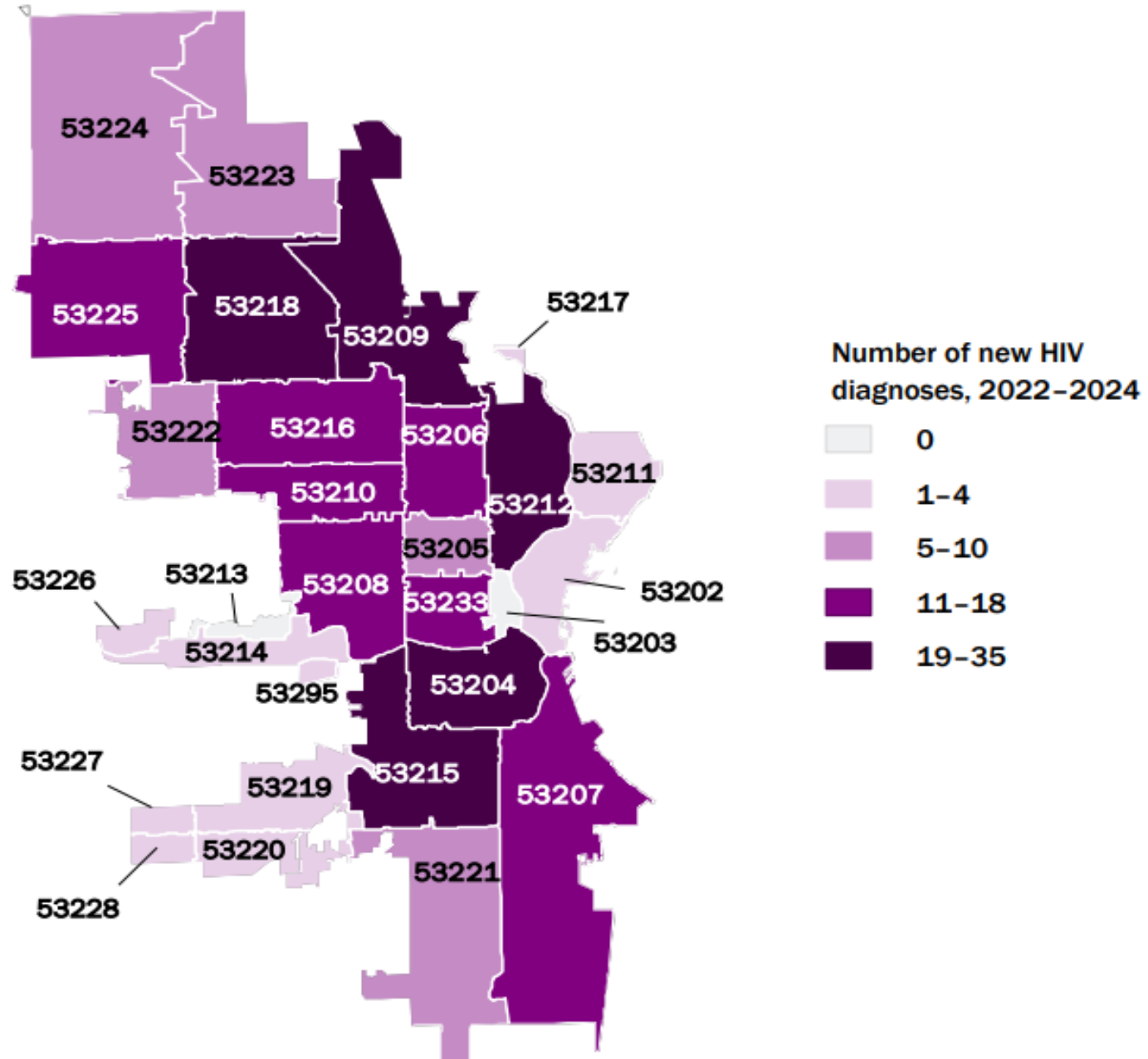


*Rates are not included for races/ethnicities other than Black, Hispanic, and white due to small numbers of cases reported among these groups.

FIGURE 9

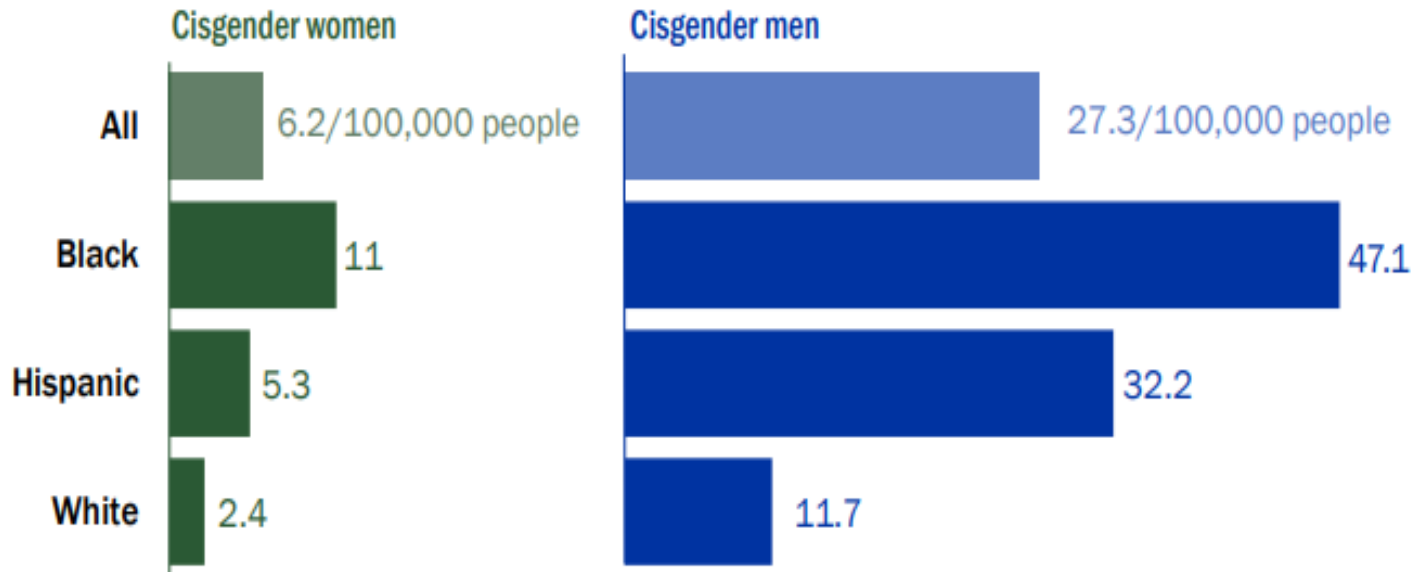
Almost half of new HIV diagnoses were identified in five zip codes.

Geographic distribution of new HIV diagnoses, Milwaukee, 2022–2024



Sexual Health 5

FIGURE 11
Black cisgender men were diagnosed with HIV at higher rate than other groups.
Number of new HIV diagnoses per 100,000 people by gender* and race or ethnicity, Milwaukee, 2020–2024



*Thirty-three transgender people diagnosed during 2020–2024 are excluded from these rates as population denominators are not available to calculate rates.

108 newly diagnosed HIV cases in 2024

93% of these cases were in people of color

3290 Individuals in Wisconsin are living with HIV

421 People living in Wisconsin who are unaware that they are carrying HIV

4x The rate of HIV diagnosis are black cisgender men compared to white cisgender men

Disparities in Health: Moms and Babies



14.3

Black infant deaths per 1,000 live births in Wisconsin, compared to 4.4 White infant deaths.

16.8%

of Black babies are born with low birth weight, compared to 7.9% statewide.

Black women are 5x

more likely to die in childbirth or complications than white women.

21%

of pregnancy related deaths are Black women.

Black babies are 3x

more likely to die before their first birthday as compared to white babies

Infant Mortality

Where Wisconsin is Currently in Disparities of Public Health

In 2023 there were 59,739 births in Wisconsin of those 5,586 were African American births. 16.8% of African American babies were born with low birth weight compared to just 7.9% statewide. This means African American babies resulted in double the number of low birthweight babies.

2023, also had 80 African American infant deaths which was 14.3 deaths per 1,000 births compared to 5.7 deaths per 1,000 births for the entire state.

Wisconsin ranks as one of the highest Black Infant Mortality rates in the nation.

In 2023 Milwaukee, saw an infant mortality rate of 9.37 deaths per 1,000 live births, which puts Milwaukee among the top 5 U.S. cities with the highest infant mortality rates. This rate is 1.67 times higher than the national and state average and highlights continual challenges in maternal and infant health system. The risk of infant mortality has its greatest risk for individuals under the age of 17.

In 2024 Milwaukee's 12.9% preterm birth rate earned it the grade "F" based on data collected from the March of Dimes Report Card. While Wisconsin received a "C" with an average rate of 10%.

Black infants in Milwaukee are 2.91 times more likely to die before their first birthday compared to white infants. Almost 56% of infant deaths in Black families are the results of complications due to prematurity. 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. As of 2025, the states maternal mortality rate reached 16.4 deaths per 100,000 live births.

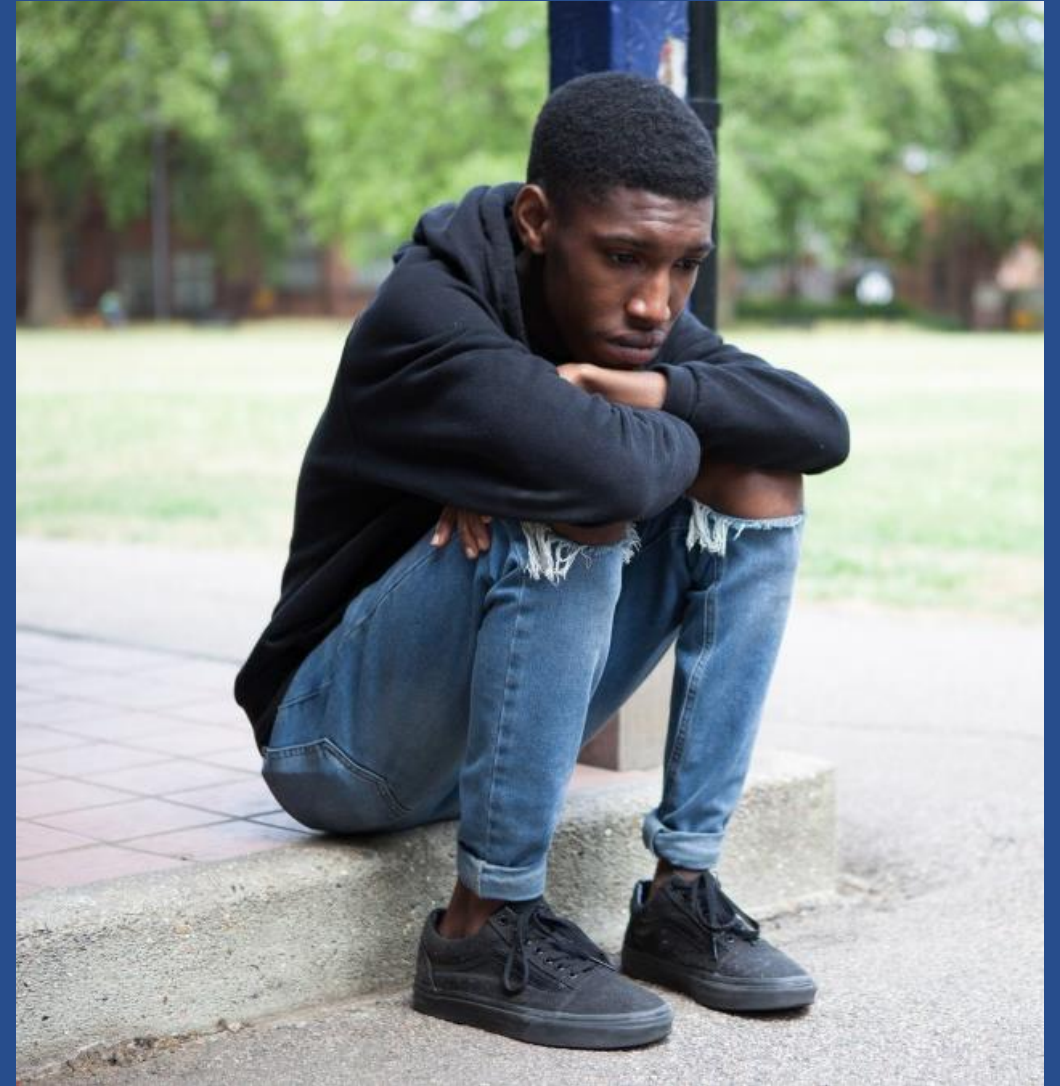
Infant Mortality

- In Wisconsin, Severe Maternal Morbidity rose to 72.8 per 10,000 delivery hospitalizations.
- Severe Maternal Morbidity (SMM) is an unexpected or unintended outcomes in labor and delivery that result in significant long-term or short-term health consequences.
- Cardiovascular conditions like cardiomyopathy, hypertension, and preeclampsia are some of the leading causes of Severe Maternal Morbidity (SMM).
- Inconsistent post- partum follow-up, chronic stress, and delayed diagnosis are closely linked to SMM.
- Wisconsin passed postpartum expansion, which allows coverage up to 12 months after birth



DISPARITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH

- In 2023, about 18% of youth ages 12–17 experienced a major depressive episode, and 9.5% of high school students reported attempting suicide in the past year.
- Black residents in Wisconsin are 23.9% more likely to be hospitalized for self-harm injuries than White residents.
- Only 23% of Black adults with mental health needs reported receiving treatment in the past year, compared to 43% of White adults.



Mental Health



- In a 2022 Kids Count Data Book produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 26% of Black kids, 22% of Latino kids, and 60% of Native American kids were diagnosed with or reported to have depression or anxiety.
- This is compared to just 15% of White kids, which means the percentage of black kids who were diagnosed with depression or anxiety was 1.73 times higher than that of White kids.
- 2023's Behavioral and Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) most recent data suggest that mental health needs among Black adults are 1.5-2 times less likely than those of Whites to be treated.
- This is less than half the rate of White adults seeking treatment

Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Help

- In 2023, a study found 16% of Black adults reported they or a family member had problems paying their medical bills. Compared to just 10% of Whites and 5% of Asians.
- Out of Wisconsin's 72 counties, 52 of those counties (72.2% of the state) are in a mental health shortage area (HPSA). This has an even greater impact on those living in high-poverty areas.
- In 2023, about 27.48% of black people living in Wisconsin were living in poverty, about 94,469 black people compared to just 9% of white people.
- Milwaukee's poverty rate for blacks was about 38.8% according to data from the 2025 U.S. Census Bureau, which is 4.3 times higher than that of white residents in 2023.



WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Healthcare and Mental Health

- **Goal:** Ensure every Wisconsinite has access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare and mental health support.
- **Priorities:**
 - Expand BadgerCare eligibility and mental health coverage, particularly for youth and seniors.
 - Establish a public option for healthcare
 - Increase funding for community-based clinics and mobile health units in underserved areas.
 - Launch statewide suicide prevention and gun violence intervention initiatives.
 - Address maternal health disparities and invest in culturally competent care providers.



WLBC 2026 Policy Platform: Democracy & Civic Engagement

- None of these disparities will change with the help of the Black community, and too often.
- As such, the Black Caucus is committed to protecting and empowering the voices of all Wisconsinites in the democratic process.
- Our priorities are:
 - Establishing a Wisconsin John Lewis Voting Rights Act to
 - Ensure fair electoral maps and end gerrymandering practices
 - Strengthen voting rights protections, including early voting access and multilingual materials
 - Expand civic education and community-led voter outreach programs.
 - Support local, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to ensure representation in governance



THANK YOU!

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