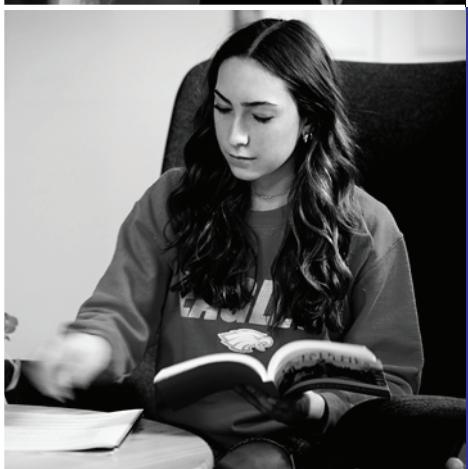




# RACINE SPEAKS

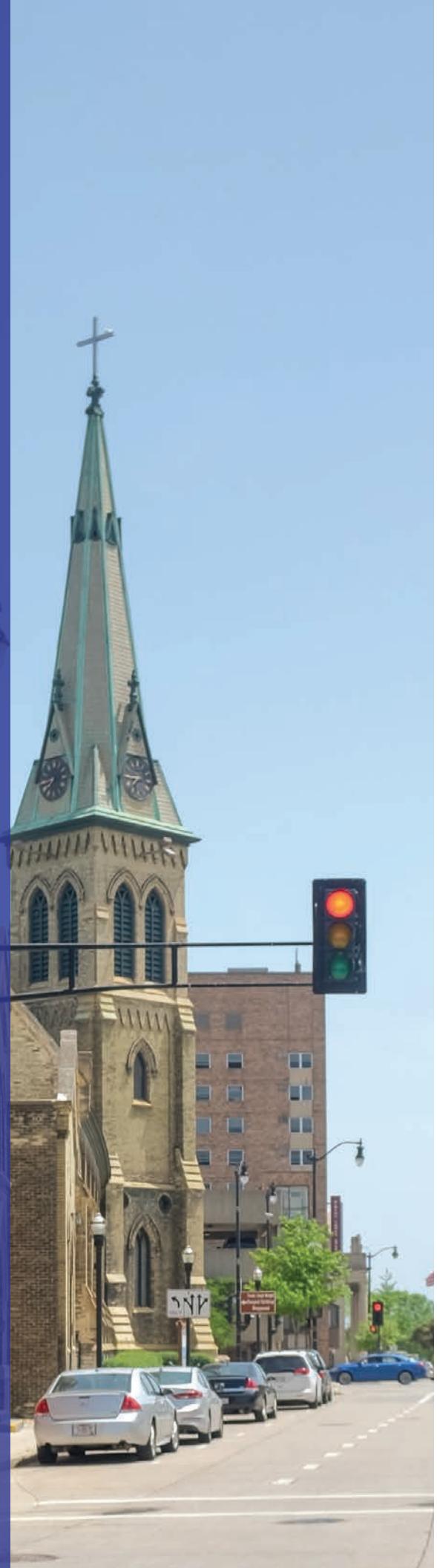
Real Data. Real People.



A Resilient Communities Collaboration

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# A New Kind of Conversation

## SPARKING STRATEGIES

The Johnson Foundation's Resilient Communities Initiative is about making the community and our world a better place. We do that by bringing together people with different perspectives and life experiences to learn from each other and find common ground. We create space for respectful conversations on complex topics.

We began this initiative in 2017, after the Wisconsin Policy Forum uncovered troubling trends across Greater Racine. When our Resilient Communities Roundtable discussions further uncovered a lack of understanding about disparities across Greater Racine's populations, The Johnson Foundation decided to launch a new kind of conversation.

We began by listening, guided by a community advisory panel who recommended we focus on four areas: education, economy, health, and justice. In neighborhoods across Racine, we heard from grassroots and community leaders and nearly 300 community members who shared their experiences and perspectives. Their stories shed light on how we can build a more equitable and prosperous region for all.

We firmly believe that data helps people with different viewpoints begin to connect. So, in addition to listening, we analyzed third-party data to quantify regional progress in the four areas.

While the data and lived experiences help make clear the disparities, there is nothing simple or easy about these issues. They are complex, interconnected and deeply personal. These are old problems in need of inclusive collaborations to find new paths forward.

## DRIVING CHANGE

The conversations we held were powerful. They made us think. We hope they'll make you think, too. And we hope you'll join us in holding conversations with people you've never talked with before – people different from you in life experiences, beliefs, age, race and ethnicity, and employment.

Our region's diversity is our strength and the key to our success. We can build on this strength by focusing attention and resources on the neighborhoods and people most affected by these issues. Individually and collectively, we can make the Racine region a better place for all to live, work and enjoy—one conversation, one project, one day at a time.

# Executive Summary

In the summer of 2021, as part of our Resilient Communities Initiative, The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread collaborated with local partners on conversations with nearly 300 community members about education, economy, health, and justice. In early 2022 we worked with the Wisconsin Policy Forum and local partners to gather related quantitative data. This report highlights our key findings.

Both the data and participants' experiences show significant disparities in a wide range of outcomes for different racial/ethnic groups in our community. Our goal is to spark collaborative action and inspire new strategies for addressing these complex, longstanding challenges.

Here's an overview of what we heard that people see pronounced racial disparities; note that the opinions expressed are those of the participants. For details including quotes from participants and sources for data, please read the full report. And please join us in continuing the conversation to make Racine a better place for us all.

## EDUCATION

In conversations with Racine Unified School District high school students, parents of K-12 students, teachers, principals and counselors, we heard that **people see pronounced racial disparities**; participants said there is unequal access to essential resources and want **successful programs expanded** to all schools. They seek **better racism training** for teachers and admin staff; greater **diversity** in staff and curriculum; clear, consistent **leadership** and **communication**; and efforts to build **community** beyond the school, **supporting all children**.

### Key data points:

- **RUSD enrollment** fell 18% from 2009 to 2019 versus a statewide drop of only 2%. Because school funding is tied to enrollment, resources have also decreased for already-struggling schools.
- **Four-year RUSD graduation percentages** for 2018-19 include 66% of Black students, 74% of Hispanic students, and 83% of White students. People without a high school diploma earn less and face a greater risk of unemployment and involvement in the criminal justice system.
- **RUSD 3rd graders testing at proficient** or advanced reading levels in 2018-19 include 5% of Black students, 15% of Hispanic students, and 35% of White students. Third-grade reading levels are linked to high school completion and college enrollment.
- **Black students were suspended** at a rate six times higher than White students in RUSD during the 2018-19 school year. School discipline correlates to the likelihood of dropping out, arrest and incarceration.

## ECONOMY

In conversations with people who were unemployed, low-wage/underemployed, and working women and mothers, we heard that **the minimum wage is too low**, especially with rising rents. Participants said **opportunity is limited** by race, gender and background. They seek more affordable **talent development opportunities** and **childcare**, and **workplace flexibility** that supports employees. In conversation with business owners, we heard that our community lacks a **shared vision** and **shared responsibility**. Participants want to see **more cross-collaboration** across borders and sectors, **entrepreneurship support**, and **qualified job candidates**.

### Key data points:

- **The percentage of people living in poverty** has increased in the City of Racine over the last 20 years at a higher rate than in the county and the state. Black Racinians are more than twice as likely to be poor as White. Poverty is associated with physical and mental health damage and limits access to safe housing, healthy foods, quality schools and employment options.
- **Median income** for all Racine County households has increased over the last 20 years, but Black and Hispanic household income has lagged that of White households. In 2019, households headed by a Black person earned less than 40% of the average White household income. In addition to the negative effects of low income, income inequality can decrease trust and a sense of community.

## HEALTH

In conversations with parents of young children, adults with limited access to healthcare, healthcare providers, and environmental health leaders, we heard that **quality healthcare is not seen as a given** for people of all races. There is a **fear of receiving diagnoses and treatment**, exacerbated by barriers such as **language, lack of healthcare literacy**, and the spread of **misinformation**. Community **safety** is also a concern as gun violence affects daily life and stress levels. Additionally, participants want more focus on **addressing causes** of health issues and **prevention**, making **healthy food** available in all neighborhoods, and increasing **environmental literacy**.

### Key data points:

- **Racine County uninsured rates** have dropped, but in 2019, 6% of the county's population was uninsured—and nearly 60% of those uninsured resided in the City of Racine. Uninsured people receive less preventive care, dental care, chronic disease management, and mental health care, and have higher mortality rates.
- **The crime rate for the City of Racine** in 2020 was 56 per 100,000 individuals. Violent crime not only harms individuals but also causes social and emotional distress, with far-reaching effects.

- **Life expectancy**, considered a measure of a community's health, was 78.7 years in Racine County (estimated from 2010-2014) but as low as 68.9 years in certain eastern Racine County census tracts.

## J U S T I C E

In conversations with adults and youth involved in the justice system, their parents and family members, law enforcement officers, public defenders and attorneys, we heard that there are **racial disparities in arrests and sentencing**, heightened by lack of **affordable legal representation**. Both law enforcement officers and community members said **stereotypes and lack of trust** pose challenges. Participants want more **resources for rehabilitation**, system-wide **mental health support**, **decriminalization**, and better communication between system leaders.

### Key data points:

- **The Wisconsin prison population** is 42% Black people, although they make up only about 6% of the state population. Prison life can lead to mental health disorders and affect the ability to be an effective partner, parent and employee upon release.
- **Black youth arrests** numbered almost four times those of White youth in 2020 in the City of Racine. Studies show juvenile justice involvement may catalyze rather than deter from adult offending.
- **Black adult arrests** were 59% higher than those of White adults. Studies show this can affect employment opportunities.

## N E X T   S T E P S

As you read the report, you'll see that each section ends with a list of recommendations from our participants. We hope these recommendations spark conversation and further exploration of potential strategies for improvement. We also hope individuals and groups will collaborate with the Foundation, working together to move Racine ahead.

HUMAN-  
oriented  
Company.

PEOPLE  
FIRST.

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&  
people  
UNDIVIDE

We stan  
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# BACKGROUND

# WHERE WE STARTED

## IGNITING INTEREST

The Johnson Foundation set out to collect qualitative data on education, economy, health and justice in Racine, recognizing people with lived experiences as the experts and using their stories to change hearts and minds. Our strategy:

- Listen to directly impacted and involved community members
- Learn about first-hand challenges and perceived opportunities/solutions
- Confirm and summarize what we heard
- Identify and prioritize the areas where we can make the greatest impact

The powerful response to our plan exceeded our expectations. Our goal was to conduct 16 community conversations—four per issue area. Ultimately, we conducted 19 conversations, including two pilots with high school students and parents, and an extra teachers' group due to high interest.

Our goal was an average of 12 participants in each conversation; we averaged 15. We hoped to engage 180 directly impacted and involved people; we engaged with 270 unique community members.

## GROWING THE NETWORK

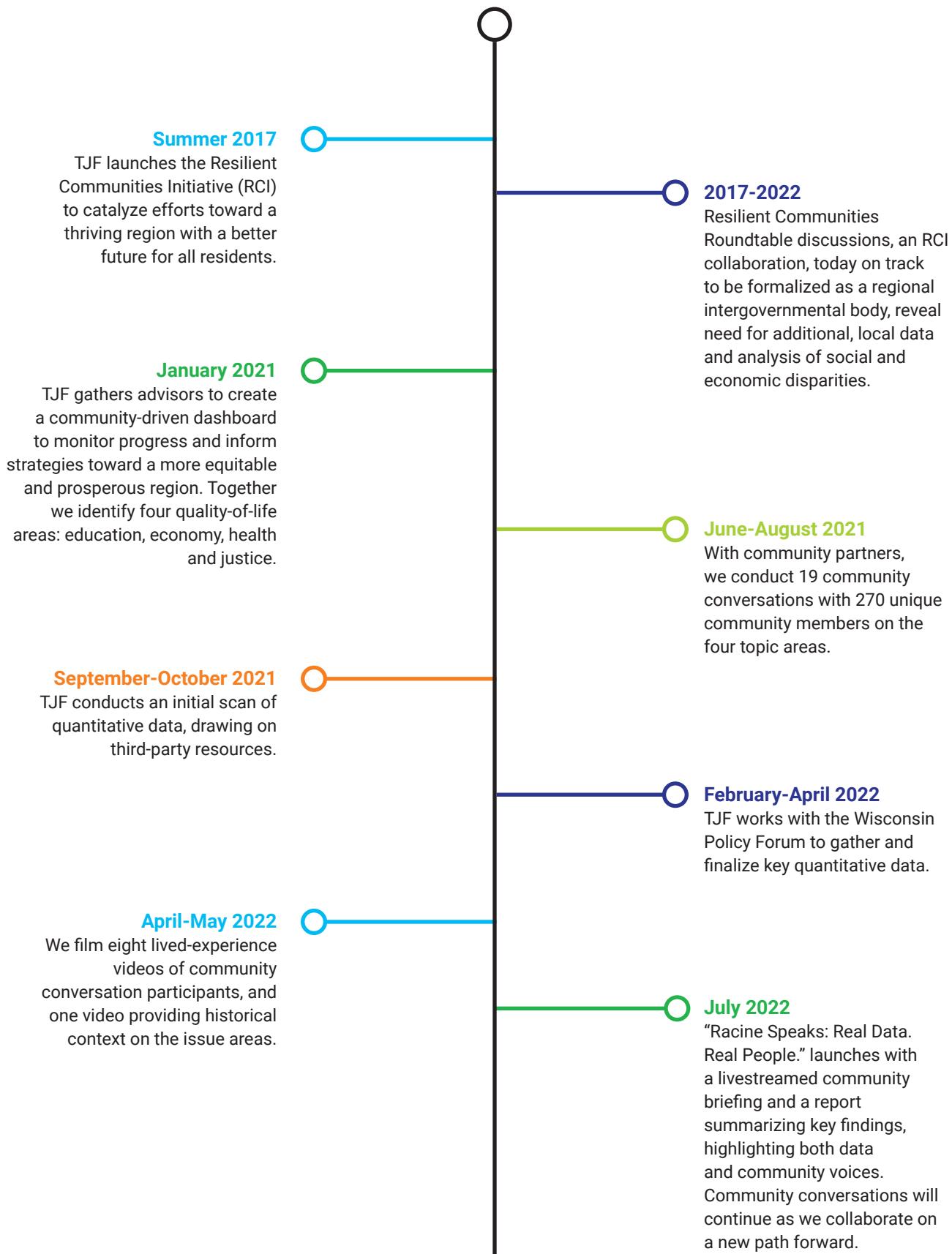
As part of expanding the grassroots network to address key challenges, we engaged trusted local partners to facilitate the conversations, including United Way of Racine County, Payne & Frazier Consultants, and Community Consulting LLC. Conversations were organized using the following equitable practices:

- Half the conversations took place at Wingspread and half at local, accessible locations
- We offered a \$50 Visa Gift Card to every directly impacted attendee
- We offered transportation to conversations when needed
- We offered childcare for one conversation
- We paid an interpreter for a conversation that included at least five Spanish speakers
- We Zoomed in a participant from the Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility

In addition to the conversations, we filmed eight videos with participants, and one video providing historical context on education, economy, health and justice in Racine. Finally, we worked with the Wisconsin Policy Forum and local partners on key quantitative data.

Again and again in the following pages, you'll read of participants' challenges, bright spots and recommendations. We encourage you to ask the questions we asked when we set out: What are the human experiences? What are the gaps? What efforts are emerging or going well? What are potential solutions? We hope you'll seek even more information to move from this starting point to a more equitable, flourishing Racine.

# TIMELINE



# ADVISORS

**Ari Antreassian**, Racine Organizer, Youth Empowered in the Struggle

**Nick Demske**, Community Resources Librarian, Racine Public Library

**Eric Gallien**, Superintendent, Racine Unified School District

**Alexa Haigh**, President & CEO, United Way of Racine County

**Eric Hopkins**, County Board Supervisor, Racine County

**Alberto Huerta**, Director of Foundation Development, Versiti Blood Research Institute

**Dasheika Kidd**, Racine Program Manager, Housing Resources Inc.

**Mario Martinez**, President, Marz Insurance Services

**Ernest Ni'A**, Pastor, Wayman AME Church

**Hope Otto**, Human Services Director, Racine County

**Kimberly Payne**, Owner, Payne & Frazier Consultants

**Chelsea Powell**, Managing Director, Higher Expectations for Racine County

**Liz Powell**, President & CEO, Racine Community Foundation

**Corey Prince**, Owner, Community Consulting LLC

**Travis Richardson**, Director of Data and Performance Analytics, Racine County

**Susie Seidelman**, Director, Victura Communications

**Vicky Selkowe**, Manager of Strategic Initiatives & Community Partnerships, City of Racine

**Matt Snyder**, Director of Data & Assessment, Carmen Schools of Science and Technology

**GeorgAnn Stinson**, President, African American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Racine

**Ben Taft**, Data Impact Manager, Higher Expectations for Racine County

**John Tate II**, City Council President, City of Racine

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATION LOCATIONS

The Main Project & Cafe

The Branch at 1501

Racine Public Library

Racine Family YMCA, George Bray Branch

The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread

A photograph of three young children in a classroom. Two girls are in the foreground, one on the left with her hand raised and another on the right also with her hand raised. In the background, a boy is visible. The scene is overlaid with a large blue rectangular area containing a white graphic and text.

# DEMOGRAPHICS



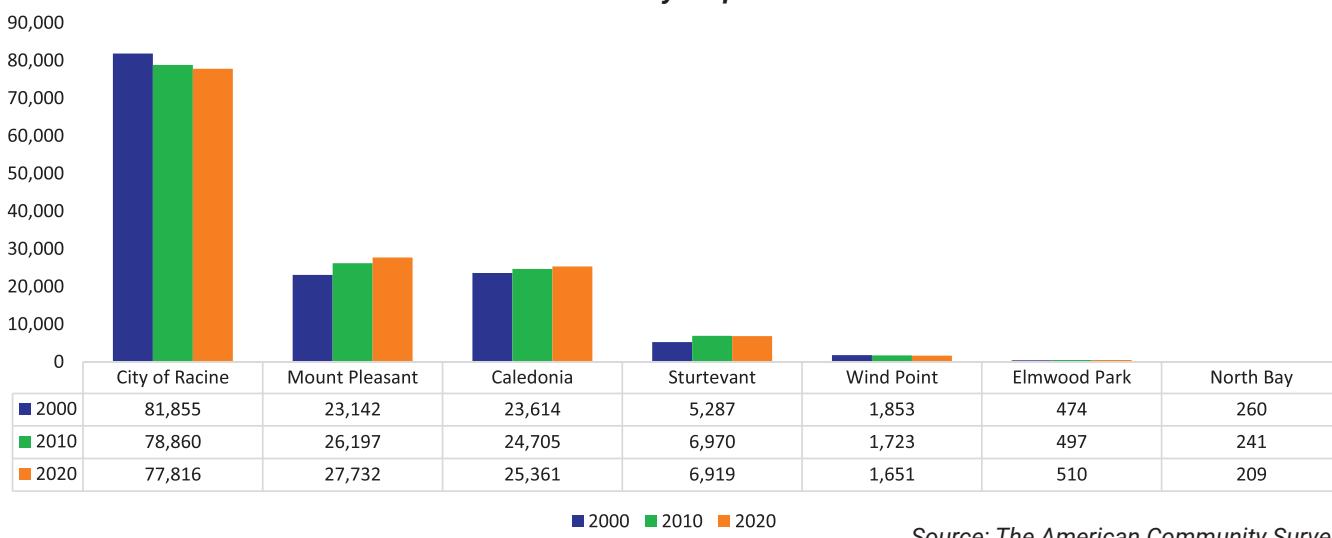
# WHO LIVES IN RACINE?

## SHAPING TOMORROW

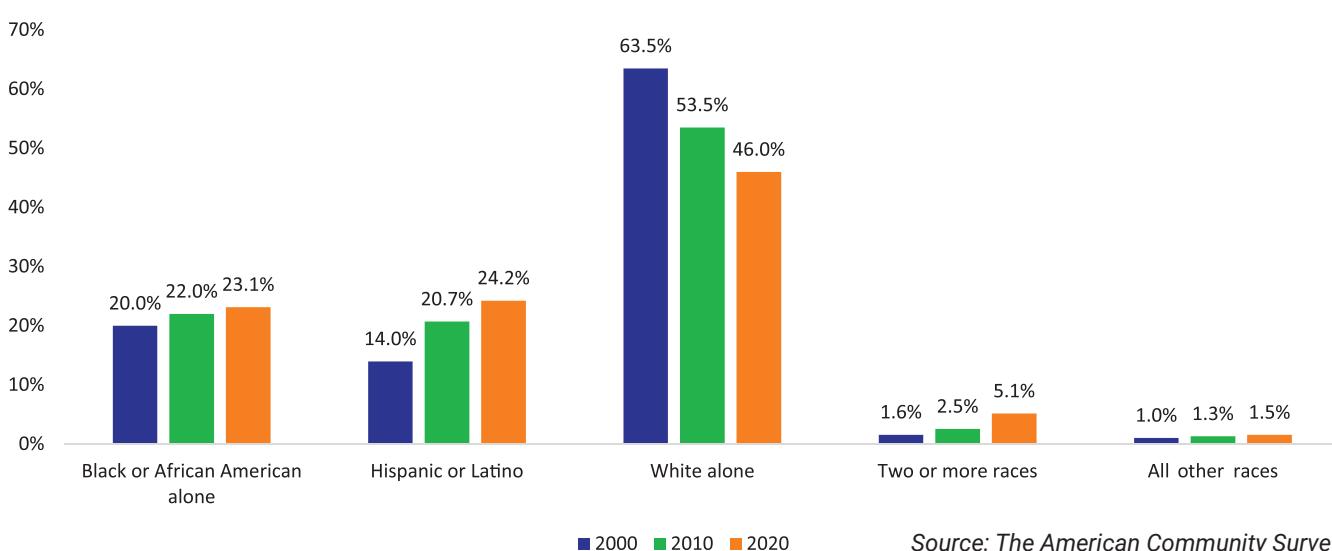
Racine County's total population increased over the last 20 years from 188,831 to 197,727. Most growth in eastern Racine County was in the surrounding villages; the City of Racine's population decreased from around 82,000 to 78,000.

The county's population would also be declining if not for growth in communities of color. Of particular note, Racine County's Hispanic or Latino population has nearly doubled since 2000. And in 2020, the City of Racine was 46% White, 23% Black or African American and 24% Hispanic or Latino—the first time in the City's history that people of color made up a slight majority. Given these demographic trends, communities of color are increasingly important to the future of Racine County.

*Eastern Racine County Population Over Time*



*City of Racine Population by Race Over Time*



# EDUCATION

## GAINING KNOWLEDGE TO ADVANCE

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that the concept of what a school is and how it operates can change—and generate significant discussion on what people think school should be. We believe changing our schools for the better starts with listening, and we invite you to hear what community members have to say about their hopes and accomplishments, frustrations and failures, explanations and recommendations for the Racine Unified School District.

“ *I want my community to have a system of hope. I want kids and teachers to feel hopeful.* ”  
- Teacher



# **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

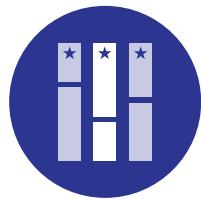
# **WHO WE HEARD FROM & THEMES**

We held seven conversations on education, collecting qualitative data from diverse participants:

- RUSD high school students
- Parents of RUSD high school students
- RUSD non-graduates/HSED program participants
- Parents of RUSD K-8 students
- RUSD principals and counselors
- RUSD teachers

*This report highlights 2018-19 data, given the effects of COVID-19 on the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. Source for all indicators: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.*

## **KEY THEMES**



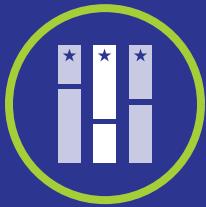
Racial  
Equity



School  
Quality



Building  
Community

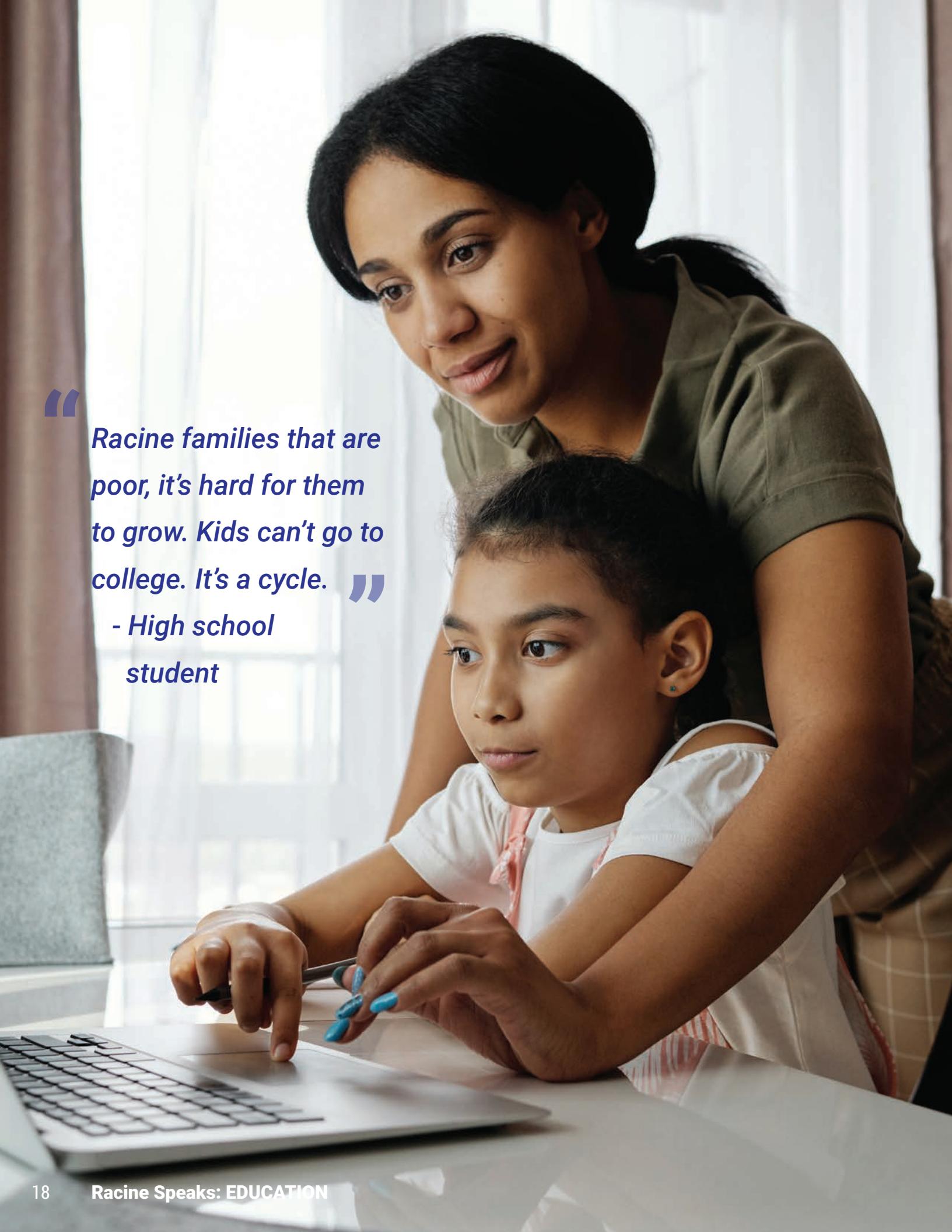


# RACIAL EQUITY

When you see that RUSD suspensions of Black students far exceed those of White students, what's your reaction? We understand data on racial equity can mean different things to different people. And we believe that working together for change requires moving beyond individual perceptions to a broader view—starting with the thoughts of RUSD students, parents and staff.

- **No one sees equal opportunity.** Every conversation revealed perceived differences in access to the resources essential for education. RUSD policies and programs may, however unintentionally, create segregation—and the stakes are high. Said one parent, “There are levels to RUSD; if you don’t get [students] to the right track, it messes up their path.”
- **Understanding starts with education on racism.** Parents and teachers requested better training. One teacher wants to “hear from a person who has actually done the work vs. a 20-minute YouTube video. Hear from people in the community and those with lived experiences.”
- **Diversity and representation are missing in staff and curriculum.** Said one parent, “It’s hard if they don’t see themselves in textbooks and videos.” A principal added, “We need qualified people, people that look like [our] kids. We need role models.”

***“We have a responsibility for our lowest-performing kids in RUSD - Black boys and Black girls. We will never be successful until we systematically address that and it involves everyone.” – Teachers***

A photograph of a woman and a young girl. The woman, with dark hair pulled back, is leaning over a desk, looking down at a laptop screen. She is wearing a green t-shirt. A young girl with dark hair is sitting in front of her, also looking at the laptop screen. The girl is wearing a white t-shirt with a red and white striped bow. They appear to be in a home setting, with a window and curtains visible in the background.

“

*Racine families that are  
poor, it's hard for them  
to grow. Kids can't go to  
college. It's a cycle.*

”

*- High school  
student*



# SCHOOL QUALITY

Imagine walking through a classroom door. What do you see? Chances are your vision is shaped by your own experiences. To move away from preconceived notions, empty that imaginary classroom. Listen to students, parents and teachers to get a clear vision of their experiences in RUSD.

- **Classrooms have too many students and not enough resources.** Parents and students say the traditional classroom setup isn't always effective, especially with more students and fewer teachers and aides. "It's hard to focus with a large group of people," said a non-grad. There's also a need to update curriculum. Said one principal, "It should be useful, not 30 years old." And improved resources should extend to better student meals. Said one student, "You need to [hunt for] a milk with a good date."
- **Leadership and communications lack clarity and consistency.** One teacher described the RUSD Administrative Services Center as "a revolving door, with no continuity to see if things are effective." A group of K-8 parents wanted more information on funding, saying, "The money is there - we just don't spend it how it should be spent; we need more counseling and social workers for early intervention." Students asked for more communication (and understanding, and patience) from teachers—while parents encouraged staff to "listen to kids more, even though the kids may be intimidated. Value their voice as much as adults."
- **There are programs that work—let's expand them.** Parents pointed to examples of success, such as the Community Schools and Academies models. A principal also recommended expanding career/trade readiness, saying, "There needs to be a rebranding of 2- to 4-year career options."

**"If one thing works at one school – it should be applied everywhere instead of people fighting to get into two programs or two schools"**

**– K8 Parents**



# BUILDING COMMUNITY

Transformational change can't occur in isolation; it requires collaboration among people with diverse and even divergent viewpoints, people who seek opportunities to hear how others think. We invite you to start with the thoughts of RUSD students, parents and staff.

- ***Trust is in short supply, with more focus on blame.*** The longing for mutual respect came through in conversations with every group. Parents say they want to be welcomed into schools, with expectations clearly laid out. High school students want better student/teacher relationships. And teachers feel overburdened, lacking support from the district and the community. “Everyone’s playing politics and blaming the teachers,” said one teacher. “[We need to] get people to trust in the district so they’ll help the kids a little more. Or get them to trust in the kids.”
- ***“Community” extends beyond the school walls.*** Said one parent, “There has to be a shift from just being supportive of your child to being supportive of all children.” Participants agree this means involving Racine businesses, community leaders and multiple generations of families, bringing in mentors as well as more counselors and social workers. The result, said one principal, would be “a community where kids have their needs met—mental health, health care, food—not just from school but before they come in.”
- ***Students, families and teachers are (cautiously) eager to participate in decision-making.*** “Students are in the best place to make change, [and] motivated to follow through,” said a high school student. A parent added, “Kids should have a voice in the schools.” Some teachers said change needs to be better focused; said one, “Training changes every two years, depending on who’s in charge.” Another said, “I’ve seen people of color bring up concerns and get shut down.” Even so, hope also came through: “I really love this community,” said a teacher. “I want to see kids advantaged and not disadvantaged in any way.”

***“We need more teachers recruited from our area/  
community. Many are not from the Racine area. This  
is a community issue, not a race issue.”***

***– High school parent***



# WHAT PARTICIPANTS SEE AND RECOMMEND

Throughout our conversations, participants identified RUSD bright spots and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement. Here's a brief summary.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

"The kids. There are good things coming out of the younger generation." – K8 parents

"Parents. The majority of parents care." – Principals

"We have fabulous colleagues, [but] need more time to learn from each other." – Teachers

"There are good things happening in the district—like the food truck project. Kids built it, marketed it and cooked the food." – HS parents

## CHALLENGES

"Many staff don't understand kids' backgrounds. Change this lens of what kids are going through." – Principals

"All the awards went to White kids. I asked the principal, 'Who are you selecting, mentoring, and seeing potential in?'" – K8 parents

"Resources are getting worse: no books, cut programs and arts, can't afford for kids to go into sports." – HS parents

"If a kid can't get help, it's like *Groundhog Day* for them every day." - Counselors



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FROM PARTICIPANTS

### **Racial Equity:**

- Put the programs and policies that work at high-achieving schools in place at challenged schools
- Create opportunities for administrators to build relationships with staff, students and the Racine community
- Update school curriculum to be culturally representative and relevant
- Develop an education pathway/training program targeting community members of color

### **School Quality:**

- Build ownership by partnering with students to create school “rules”
- Create a student/peer council in each school to advise on behavioral or academic issues and hold each other accountable
- Empower staff to build relationships across schools
- Improve student breakfast and lunch quality
- Expand successful Community Schools model to more schools
- Increase understanding of funding with simplified visuals of the school budget

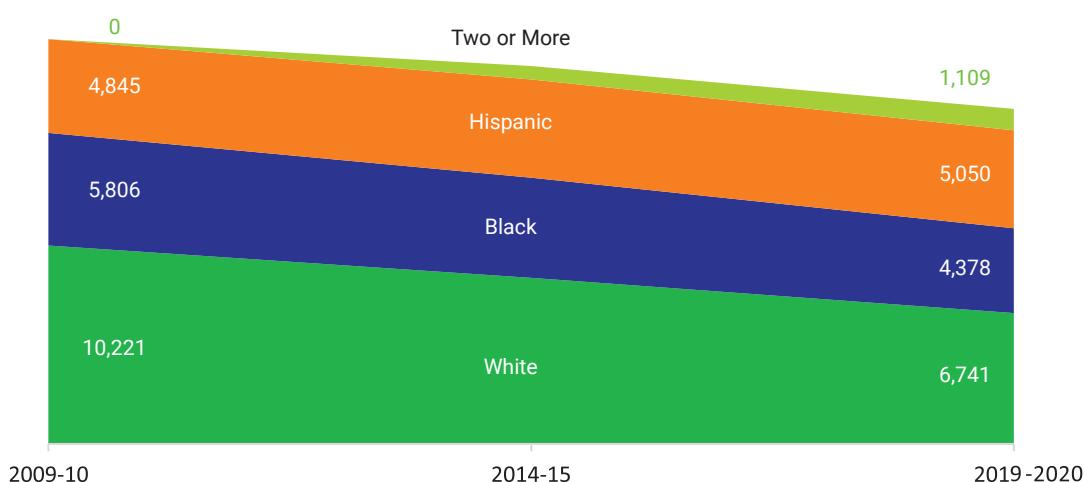
### **Building community:**

- Create opportunities for people in positions of authority to listen and problem-solve with students, families and staff
- Assess students' and families' immediate, basic needs and follow up with appropriate resources
- Partner with students and community organizations to build a robust mentor network
- Create a counseling or therapy pathway/ training program to expand this resource
- Partner with counseling and social work students to provide services while they're earning their credentials
- Engage educators in goal-setting and conversations on work barriers

## RUSD ENROLLMENT



*RUSD Enrollment by Race Over Time*



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

### At a glance

- RUSD enrollment fell 18% from 2009 to 2019 (from 21,276 to 17,529). While declining birth rates play a role, Wisconsin saw a statewide drop in that same period of only 2% (from 871,262 to 854,959)
- White student enrollment dropped from 10,221 to 6,741, and Black student enrollment from 5,806 to 4,378. Meanwhile, enrollment of Hispanic students rose from 4,845 to 5,050 and students identifying as two or more races rose from 0 (not recorded) to 1,109. Asian data was not included in this graph. For more detail, view the online appendix.

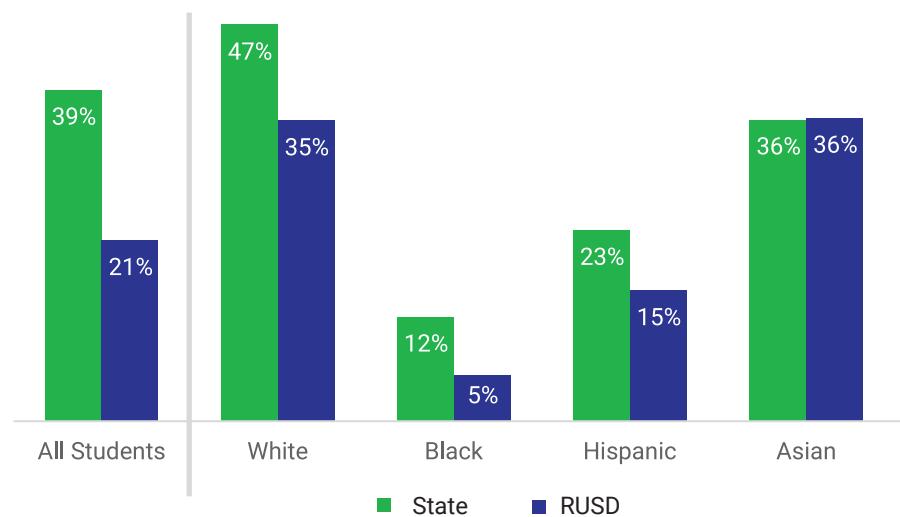
### Why this matters

- School funding is tied to enrollment. As Marguerite Roza, director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University, said, "When you lose kids, you lose money." Shrinking resources for operations and improvements puts more pressure on already-struggling schools, potentially amplifying existing inequities in education.<sup>1</sup>



# THIRD GRADE READING

*Third Graders Testing as Proficient or Advanced in English Language Arts (2018-19)*



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

## At a glance

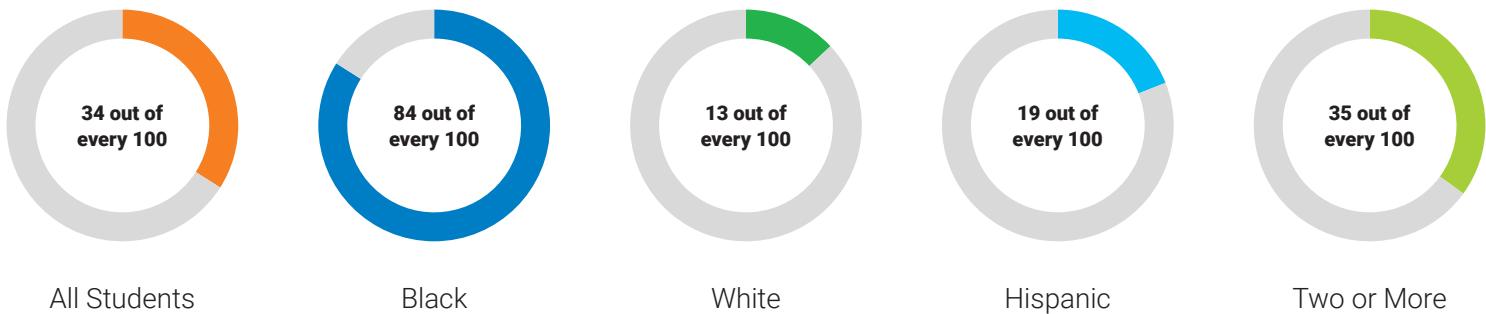
- Only 39% of all third graders in Wisconsin tested as proficient or advanced in English Language Arts in 2018-19. Proficiency is measured by the Forward Exam, which was not administered in 2019-20 due to COVID.
- RUSD lagged the state, with lower percentages of students testing at proficient or advanced levels in 2018-19.

## Why this matters

- Third-grade reading levels are linked to later educational outcomes including high school completion and college enrollment.<sup>2</sup>
- By fourth grade, students are expected to use reading to learn other subjects. Those who struggle with reading are more likely to struggle academically.<sup>3</sup>

# OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

RUSD Out-of-School Suspension Rates by Race (2018-19)



## At a glance

- Black students were suspended at a rate 6 times higher than White students in RUSD during the 2018-19 school year.
- Suspension rates in 2020-21, not shown here, were much lower than in previous years (2% in 2020-21 vs. 23% in 2019-20 vs. 34% in 2018-19 for all students).
- Out-of-school student suspensions are reported as a percentage of enrolled students—that is, the number of suspensions divided by the number of enrolled students as of the September count date. Students who are suspended multiple times are counted for each incident.
- For example, the All Students category shows 34 suspensions per 100 students—but that could be 34 students each suspended once, one student suspended 34 times, or any combination in between.

## Why this matters

- School discipline correlates to the likelihood of dropping out, arrest and incarceration. Studies show male minority students are most likely to be affected.<sup>4</sup>
- The numbers indicate a need to learn exactly how many students are suspended and explore potential patterns and disparities.

# GRADUATION RATE

4-Year High School Completion (2018-19)



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

## At a glance

- Although four-year high school completions steadily increased in RUSD and across Wisconsin from 2010 to 2019, RUSD consistently lags the state—by 14 percent points in 2018-19.

## Why this matters

- High school graduates earn more than people without a diploma.<sup>5</sup>
- People without a high school diploma face a greater risk of unemployment and involvement in the criminal justice system.<sup>6</sup>

4-year RUSD high school completion by race (2018-19)



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

# ECONOMY

## SHARING IN RACINE'S RESOURCES

Quantitative data shows significant differences in economic outcomes for racial/ethnic groups in Racine. We believe in using such data to inform planning—and also to help people with different viewpoints begin to find common ground. In that same spirit, we're sharing qualitative data: Racine residents' stories of weariness and determination, anger and ambition, and the desire for change.

“ *We're always living in survival mode. You get worn out.* ”  
– *Unemployed*



# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

# WHO WE HEARD FROM & THEMES

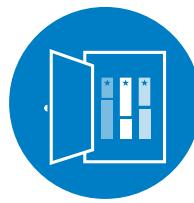
We held four conversations on Racine's economy, collecting qualitative data from diverse participants:

- Unemployed
- Low-Wage/Underemployed
- Working women and mothers
- Business owners

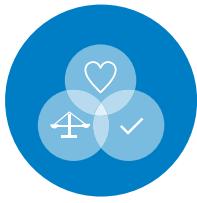
## KEY THEMES



Talent  
Development



Equity &  
Opportunity



Workplace  
Attributes



Housing



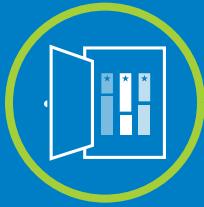
# TALENT DEVELOPMENT

How did you achieve your current employment status? What would you have done if that path had been closed to you? As we collaborate to help all the people of Racine reach their full potential, it's helpful to understand their paths and barriers in their own terms.

- **Knowledge is power, but education is costly.** All groups recognized the value of enhancing skills; among the barriers cited are time and cost. Said one participant, "I just finished QuickBooks certification, but I had to come up with \$500." They said education should include financial literacy; as one participant noted, "If you don't know how to budget, you miss out on opportunities like getting a car." Low-wage participants pointed to another potential cost of increased income: losing eligibility for benefits such as childcare assistance. Said one worker, "When you think you're catching up, you're still behind."
- **Talent development programs can be inaccessible or underused.** "We need to find people willing to take advantage of these resources," said a business owner. A low-wage worker, however, said, "It's only offered from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; I can't get there on first shift." Others said it's hard to know what resources are available or where to start. Meanwhile, people feel held back by job and education requirements. "Pay hasn't gone up, but the education requirements have," said a low-wage worker.
- **Workers bear responsibility—and have bigger goals.** While participants want action from agencies and employers, they also emphasized mutual support and personal responsibility. "I'm the only one who can change my situation," said one. Their aspirations include career advancement as well as business ownership, "so we can spend money [supporting] each other." One participant recommended accountability partners: "Keep company [with people who] have the same motivation." Added another, "Having confidence, we could be change agents."

**"Programs need to pay participants. I can't afford to pay bills if I'm in a 6-month program."**

**– Unemployed**



# EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

It's possible to move up the economic ladder in Racine through education and training programs, just as it's possible to be pushed down by unexpected job loss, illness, or simply the costs of rent, childcare and gas. Here's how participants viewed their opportunities to work toward a better life.

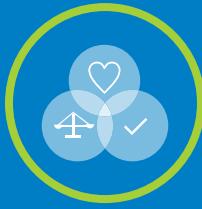
- **Willingness to work collides with the minimum wage wall.** Participants described working two or three jobs to pay their bills. "You can't live on \$7.25 an hour," said one. Business owners, however, said Racine has more jobs than people to fill them. Participants agreed some people are chronically unemployed, but one working mother wanted to be clear: "There's a perception that Racine residents don't want to work. We need to dispel that myth."
- **Opportunity is limited by race, gender and background.** Participants with corporate jobs said lack of diversity can be intimidating. Said one, "Rules apply to me that don't apply to others." Another added, "I want more women who look like me in leadership positions." An unemployed woman said workforce development programs focus on "many jobs for men and not enough geared toward women." People who were formerly incarcerated also face barriers, participants said. "My son wants to work, but a felony is an automatic denial," said a working mother. "They don't look at what you've accomplished."

***"I can't save if I'm not making enough to save. For most Americans, if your car breaks down we don't even have the money for that."***

***– Low-wage/underemployed***







# WORKPLACE ATTRIBUTES

What does a good workplace look like? The answer may change from employee to owner, policymaker to consumer. We encourage you to look at characteristics of Racine workplaces through many lenses, including experiences and expectations you may not have considered.

- **Childcare and transportation help can overcome barriers.** “Access to high-quality childcare is foundational to ensuring there is a [talent] pipeline,” said one working parent. Added a single parent, “If you’re working two or three jobs, who’s watching the kids?” Employer assistance with transportation can be a lifeline for people who don’t have a car or a driver’s license. “I depended on the bus for four years,” said one participant. “But there weren’t enough riders, so they cut the route.”
- **Workplace culture focuses on work, not people.** Participants described inflexible attendance policies and point systems. “Workers get one point if they’re sick—and if it’s twice, they’re fired,” said one. Temp agency policies also create barriers, said participants: “They string workers along...and during the trial period, they keep you at 31 hours so they don’t have to offer benefits.” Work/life balance is a struggle; said one low-wage worker, “I used to work 60-70 hours a week and once worked 54 days straight. Your family comes first, but you have to provide for them.”

*“I want people to see opportunities and pathways,  
not just problems.”*

*– Business owner*



# HOUSING

Numbers alone illustrate Racine's housing problem: housing takes up a third or more of income for more than half the city's residents. We believe it's also important to hear the stories behind the numbers.

- **Rent and wages are out of balance.** Participants said increased demand has created a spike in rents. "\$1,300 a month for a one-bedroom," said one participant. "How can anyone afford that?" Tenants are also being pushed out as rental properties sell: "I know women living in hotels right now. They can't get Section 8 [assistance] and they don't make enough to purchase a house."
- **There is resistance to certain types of housing—and certain tenants.** Section 8 housing (a federal government rent assistance program) is in short supply, participants said. Others noted that although rental property is subject to regulation, "landlords aren't fixing up the houses." Participants who had been previously incarcerated said they face discrimination. "Once a felony is eight years old, they shouldn't be able to dig that up," said one. "Background checks stop people from getting jobs and apartments."

**"Rent and gas have gone up, but wages are the same - it doesn't add up."**

**- Low wage/underemployed**



# WHAT PARTICIPANTS SEE AND RECOMMEND

Throughout our conversations, participants identified economy-related bright spots and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement. Here's a brief summary.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

"There are more small business opportunities [post-COVID-19], many Black businesses."  
- Unemployed

"We have mentoring and networking connections in our organizations, to bring folks to resources." - Working women and mothers

"We have to be creative and resilient; don't give up hope." - Business owners

## CHALLENGES

"With the cost of living...all my money would have gone to childcare. I only could afford it because I lived with my parents and didn't pay rent." - Working women and mothers

"I declined a promotion late last year because I was scared of losing benefits." - Working women and mothers

"People don't know where to get training or don't know where to start. Schools don't teach banking and resumes." - Unemployed

"There are powerful women in this city, but they don't look like me."  
- Working women and mothers

"In a digital economy, people can live almost anywhere - how do we get people to stay here?"  
- Business owners



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FROM PARTICIPANTS

### ***Equity & Opportunity:***

- Provide family-sustaining wages
- Address the “benefits cliff”
- Increase financial literacy
- Increase opportunity for those formerly incarcerated
- Focus agency collaboration to maximize resources
- Implement universal basic income

### ***Talent Development:***

- Understand barriers to maintaining employment
- Adjust job/education requirements
- Consider targeted training and hiring programs
- Offer on-site certification programs
- Increase access to training in soft and technical skills

### ***Workplace Attributes:***

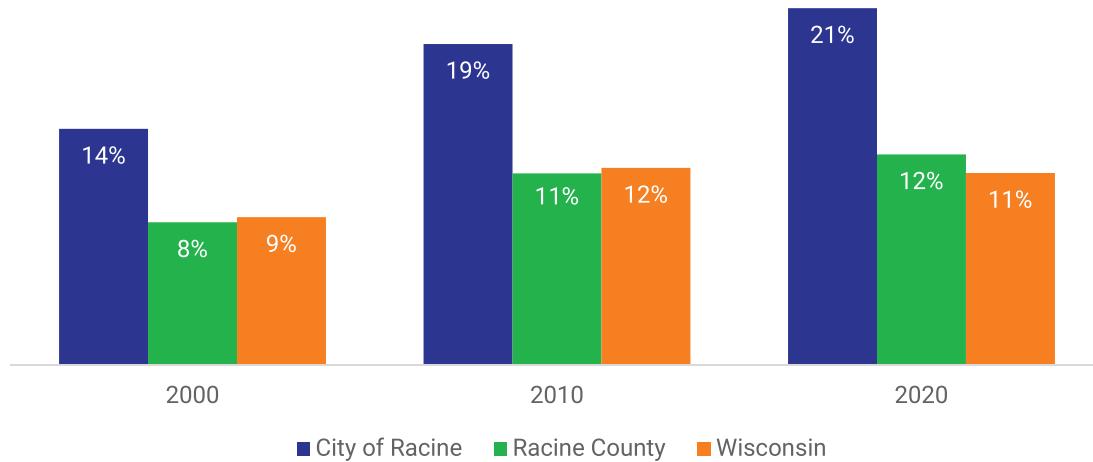
- Support access to high-quality childcare
- Support rideshare and carpool programs
- Increase flexibility and remove the point system
- Embrace work/life balance
- Rely less on temp agencies
- Build internal “community”

### ***Housing:***

- Limit which crimes are shown on background checks for rental applications
- Reinstate the eviction moratorium
- Emphasize jobs with wages that keep up with rent

## POVERTY

*Total % in Poverty Over Time*



Sources:

2000 Decennial Census; Poverty Status in 1999 by Age (White alone) - for all race categories - for all places

2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Age (White alone) - for all race categories - for all places

2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Age (White alone) - for all race categories - for all

### At a glance

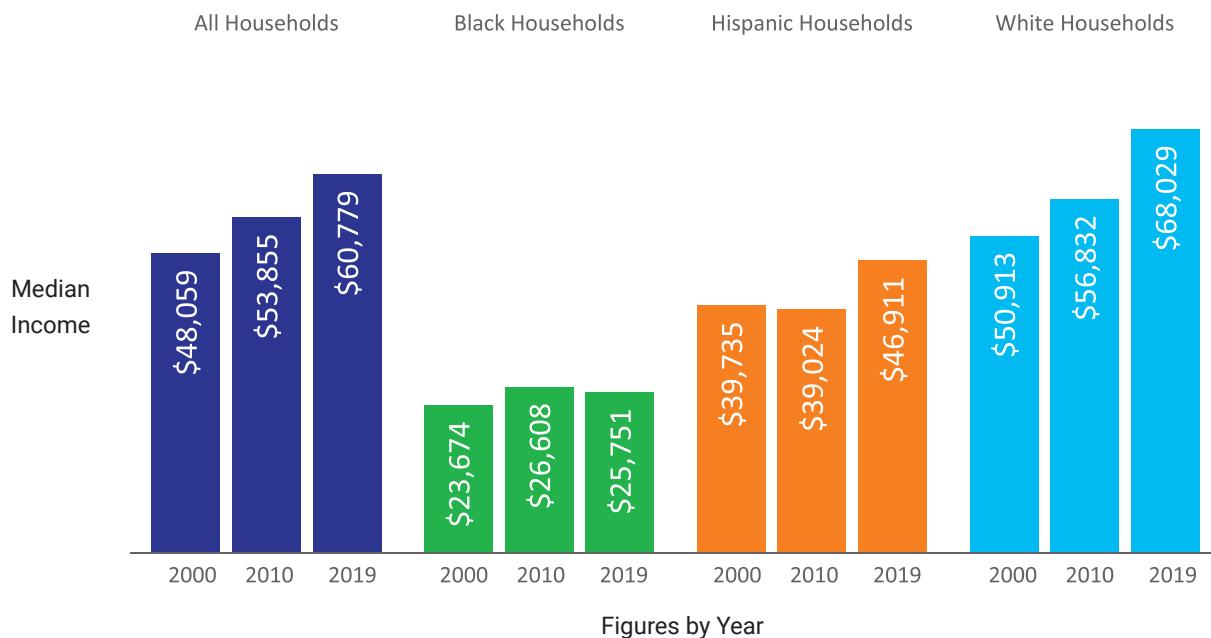
- Over the last 20 years, the percentage of people living in poverty has increased in the City of Racine at a higher rate than in the county and the state.
- Black Racineans are more than twice as likely than White residents to be in poverty. Based on how city residents identified themselves, in 2020, 14.5% of White, 23% of Hispanic or Latino, and 37% of Black or African American residents lived in poverty.

### Why this matters

- Poverty is associated with physical and mental health problems, including more pre-term or low birthweight babies, sicker children, more chronic illness and shorter lifespans.<sup>7</sup>
- Poverty limits access to safe housing, healthy foods, quality schools and employment options.<sup>8</sup>

# MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

## Racine County Median Income by Race Over Time



Sources:

2000 Decennial Census; Median Household Income in 1999 (dollars) (white alone householder) - for all race categories - for all places  
2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2010 Inflation adjusted dollars) (white alone householder) - for all race categories - all places  
2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 Inflation adjusted dollars) (white alone householder) - for all race categories - all places

### At a glance

- While median income for all Racine County households has increased over the last 20 years, Black and Hispanic household income has lagged that of White households.
- In 2019, households headed by a Black person earned less than 40% of what the average White household earned. Median household income in Racine County was \$25,751 for Blacks, \$46,911 for Hispanics and \$68,029 for Whites.

### Why this matters

- As noted above, low income is associated with negative effects on health, housing, education and employment.
- Income inequality can also reduce trust, social support, and a sense of community for all residents.<sup>9</sup>

# HEALTH

## ENJOYING PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Long-term data, as well as COVID-19 statistics, show disproportionate negative health outcomes for specific racial/ethnic groups. We suggest keeping this framework in mind as you hear from Racine residents and healthcare providers; it provides valuable context for their concerns, feelings and hopes related to the many factors that make up health.

*“ I want accessibility for everyone...and not to have any losses for the facility, so we can maintain excellent service. ”*  
*– Healthcare professional*



# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

# WHO WE HEARD FROM & THEMES

We held four conversations on education, collecting qualitative data from diverse participants:

- Parents of Young Children
- Adults with Limited Access to Healthcare
- Healthcare Providers
- Environmental Health Leaders

## KEY THEMES



Healthcare Quality



Healthcare Access,  
Literacy, and  
Prevention



Environmental  
Literacy & Policies



Community  
Safety



# HEALTHCARE QUALITY

For many of us, it may never have crossed our mind to be afraid of going to the doctor or registering as an organ donor—and your first response to such an idea may be to offer explanations, rebuttals or assurances. Instead, we invite you to set aside that response and listen, gaining insight into a different perspective.

- ***Quality care isn't seen as a given.*** Some participants said they've experienced racial discrimination. "When I was pregnant, I switched to a midwife because due to my skin color, I didn't get proper care," said one parent. Other parents said doctors were too quick to medicate their children: "Labeling is a huge problem; they say, 'He has ADHD' and don't go deeper."
- ***Experiences lead to mistrust.*** Said one participant, "Mom had a stroke and was put on medication. Then they asked about being an organ donor...What if they don't help as much as they should?" Other participants feared going to the hospital for one thing and being treated for another—or, as they saw with COVID-19, being hospitalized and dying. There is also a fear of being denied care. "If you don't have citizenship status," said one participant, "you don't get the help you need...you feel helpless."
- ***Staff shortages affect quality.*** Quality can improve with better communication, said healthcare professionals, but physician and nursing shortages make that a challenge. "A lot of providers are leaving. Even finding people to refer to [is hard]," said one. Said another, "I have 15 people standing in line, and they all want to have interactions, but I only have one nurse. It comes down to time."

***"I feel like I don't want to go to the doctor. I'm frightened I won't make it back."***

***– Adult with limited access to healthcare***



# HEALTHCARE ACCESS, LITERACY AND PREVENTION

What are the barriers to community-wide quality healthcare? Your answer may depend on whether you're a consumer, provider, insurer or community worker. As you consider the answers below, note the gaps and the overlaps—a good starting point for finding common ground.

- **Barriers can be as basic as transportation and language, and as complex as healthcare literacy.** All groups said insurance coverage is hard to understand. Following the Affordable Care Act, said a healthcare professional, “people have an insurance card [but] no idea how to use it, where to get care, what a deductible is.” Access remains a challenge; said one participant, “Women can get their hands on healthcare if they have children, but... it’s hard for a male.” Cost of care and prescriptions was mentioned repeatedly. Said one participant, “If I didn’t have state insurance, I’d be dead.”
- **Mental health is receiving attention—now even more is needed.** Participants said that with more awareness of mental health issues, it’s time for action, especially for children growing up in difficult circumstances. “Mental health classes should be mandatory for K-12 students,” said one parent. Said another, “Childhood trauma is blocking our growth as a community.”
- **Credible information is often lost in the noise.** Healthcare providers expressed frustration with misinformation on social media and via word-of-mouth. “It might be about diabetes management, cancer management, COVID of course, hygiene, safety issues,” said one. Another said the cost of care sends people to such sources; providers need to find “respected community members, educate [them] to spread the word, and recognize it may not be the doctor who holds the clout.”
- **There are good options to pursue.** Parents of young children said they want more focus on causes and prevention instead of medication—and on making healthy food available in all neighborhoods. Providers described successful outreach efforts such as a prenatal care program that fosters conversations while also educating people who have limited access to care. Said one provider, “A lot of my groups stay friends, and they become parents and... support each other.”

***“In my community there is only one grocery store in a 5-mile radius. I shouldn’t have to go out of my way to eat healthy.”***  
***– Parent of a young child***







# ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY & POLICIES

The environmental leaders with whom we spoke note that access to clean air, clean water, and unpolluted soil is a health issue—and also a social justice issue. We encourage you to view their comments through both these lenses.

- **A compromised environment has far-reaching effects.** Asthma and medical concerns resulting from pollution affect learning, said one environmental leader. Another pointed to stress caused by an overabundance of concrete/heat islands in high-poverty areas. There are also economic impacts: “If we don’t have clean water, no one invests in Racine, purchases, plays, lives or works here.”
- **Some neighborhoods suffer disproportionately.** Contamination from long-ago businesses affects Racine’s south side, said environmental leaders: “[Residents] can’t grow their own food due to the polluted soil.” Housing may have lead and other problems affecting health. Said one participant, “I can’t [bathe] my baby in the tub, because black mold is coming out of the bathtub.”
- **Engagement can create success.** Environmental leaders said education on topics such as recycling have successfully involved the community and are a form of prevention. They urge Racine residents to look closely at what resources businesses use (and vote for leaders who hold businesses accountable). And they seek more people of color in the environmental justice field. “We need to resist privatization of [resources],” said one participant. “Air and water belong to all of us.”

***“The south side of Racine has a coal train - it’s been blowing coal dust in communities for decades. I know people in these communities with severe respiratory issues.”***

***– Environmental leader***



# COMMUNITY SAFETY

Although the total crimes counted in the City of Racine remained roughly consistent from 2017 to 2020, there was a surge of weapons law violations in 2020. Ask yourself how safe you feel stepping outside your front door—and think about what participants' answers mean for their health and well-being.

- **Taking children outside is stressful.** A parent of young children said she fears fights as well as shootings. "I've been working in daycare for 5 years. [Now] I'm scared to take the kids on a walk." Said another, "I've seen the south side go from a family neighborhood to empty parks. The kids aren't outside. It's sad."
- **Gun violence is affecting everyday life.** "All over Racine, the lack of importance on life is extremely scary for parents," said one parent. Another said, "My sister is scared by fireworks - scared that she's hearing gunshots. That shows how bad it is, that it's hard to determine what's what."

***"Kids have it really tough. They need an outlet and to express themselves. They go to school and are labeled bad kids - they act out, don't trust. They're not a bad kid, just a kid who needs to talk."***

***– Parent of a young child***



# WHAT PARTICIPANTS SEE AND RECOMMEND

Throughout our conversations, participants identified health-related bright spots and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement. Here's a brief summary.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

"We had a picnic on the south side yesterday – there was no heavy police presence, courtyards were quiet, it was beautiful, we felt safe, maybe things are getting better." - Parent

"We found this person who happens to be a key leader and has multi-level, multi-disciplinary skills to help [patients]...The community healthcare model has been very successful in other places. I anticipate that it will be successful." – Healthcare professional

"A pond in Racine was built per DNR guidelines—a low standard. Then they went into the community, educated the folks, had communications, and give and take. The result is a better pond." – Environmental leader

## CHALLENGES

"I see clients here on a regular basis [who] are insured, but they have a \$12,000 deductible, or they have a copay...so they put off the service...Do I pay my rent or do I pay my hospital bill? Do I pay my surgery and lose my house, or do I do something different?" – Healthcare professional

"Kids are coming from ADHD families, single-parent homes, family death, shootings—so much for them to work through at a young age. Then they develop issues like ADHD because they didn't get help early." – Parent

"Physicians in primary practice, if they take more than 32% of Medicaid [patients], will have to close their doors because they won't be able to make payroll or buy supplies."  
- Healthcare professional

"The climate crisis encompasses everything, and it has a deadline. The window of opportunity is closing." – Environmental leader

"I want to not worry about shootings while my kids are outside on their bikes." - Parent



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FROM PARTICIPANTS

### ***Healthcare Quality:***

- Offer more preventative services
- Ensure patients understand treatment; offer post-visit education
- Focus on root causes and preventative behaviors in place of medication
- Advocate for the change you want to see

### ***Healthcare Access, Literacy and Prevention:***

- Address mental health needs caused by family trauma
- Fill in food desert gaps
- Educate high schoolers on healthcare services
- Help people navigate resources at community centers, in multiple languages
- Provide reliable information through trusted community members

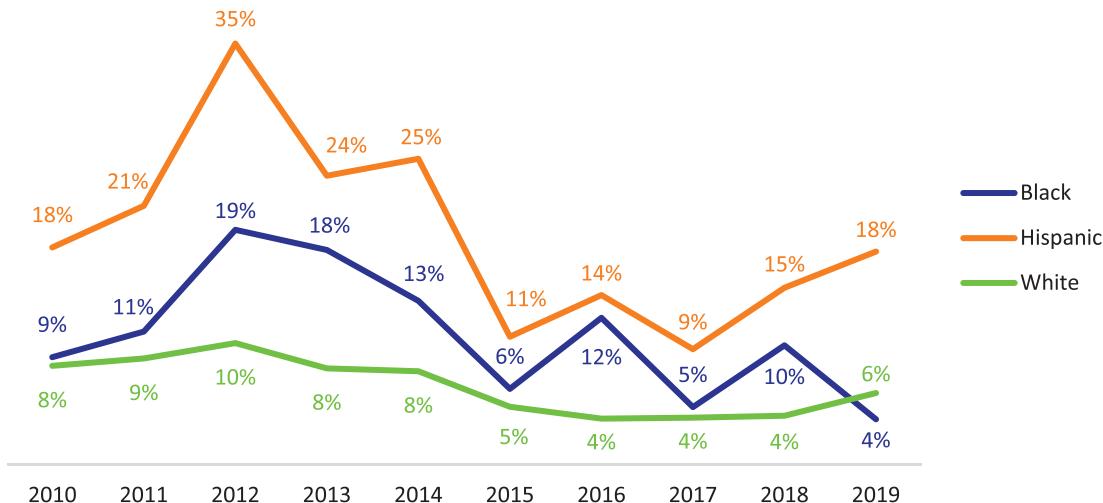
### ***Environmental Literacy & Policies:***

- Transform concrete areas to green space
- Create environmental justice jobs for young adults
- Promote action at home and in daily life
- Review business use of resources

### ***Community Safety:***

- Amplify stories of people coming together for the greater good
- Create opportunities for community connections

# HEALTH INSURANCE

*Racine County Percent Uninsured*

Source: 1-Year ACS S2701

## At a glance

- Racine County uninsured rates dropped significantly from 2012 to 2015, particularly among Black and Hispanic individuals, as the Affordable Care Act and other reforms extended coverage to those previously uninsured.<sup>10</sup>
- On average, the uninsured rate is higher in the City of Racine and among Hispanic/Latinx individuals. In 2019, 11,819 of Racine County's 191,234 residents (6% of the population) were uninsured—and nearly 7,000 of those uninsured resided in the City of Racine.
- See the online appendix for comparisons of city, county and state rates.

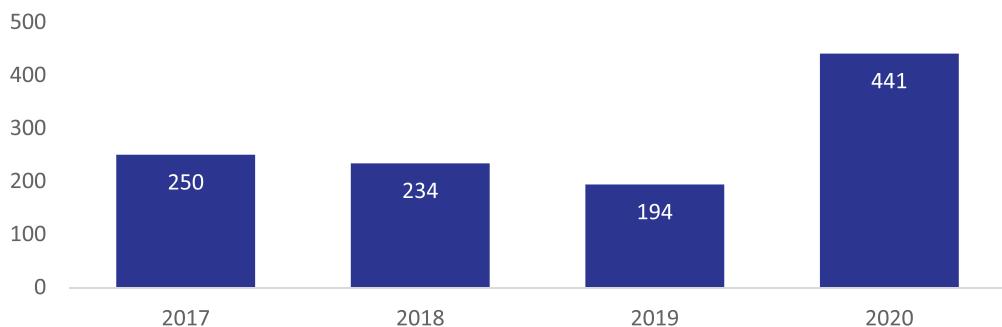
## Why this matters

- People who are uninsured receive less preventive care, dental care, chronic disease management, and behavioral health counseling.<sup>11</sup>
- They are often diagnosed at later, less treatable disease stages, and overall have higher mortality rates.<sup>12</sup>



# CRIME DATA

## *City of Racine Weapons Law Violations*



Source: Wisconsin Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Data Dashboard Center

### **At a glance**

- Roughly 4,300 crimes were counted in the City of Racine in 2020, a crime rate of 56 per 1000 individuals. The rate has ranged from a high of 63 in 2017, to a low of 45 in 2019.
- There were 2 counted homicides in the City of Racine in 2020, a decrease from 7 in 2019. Weapons law violations increased from 250 counts in 2017 to 441 in 2020.

### **Why this matters**

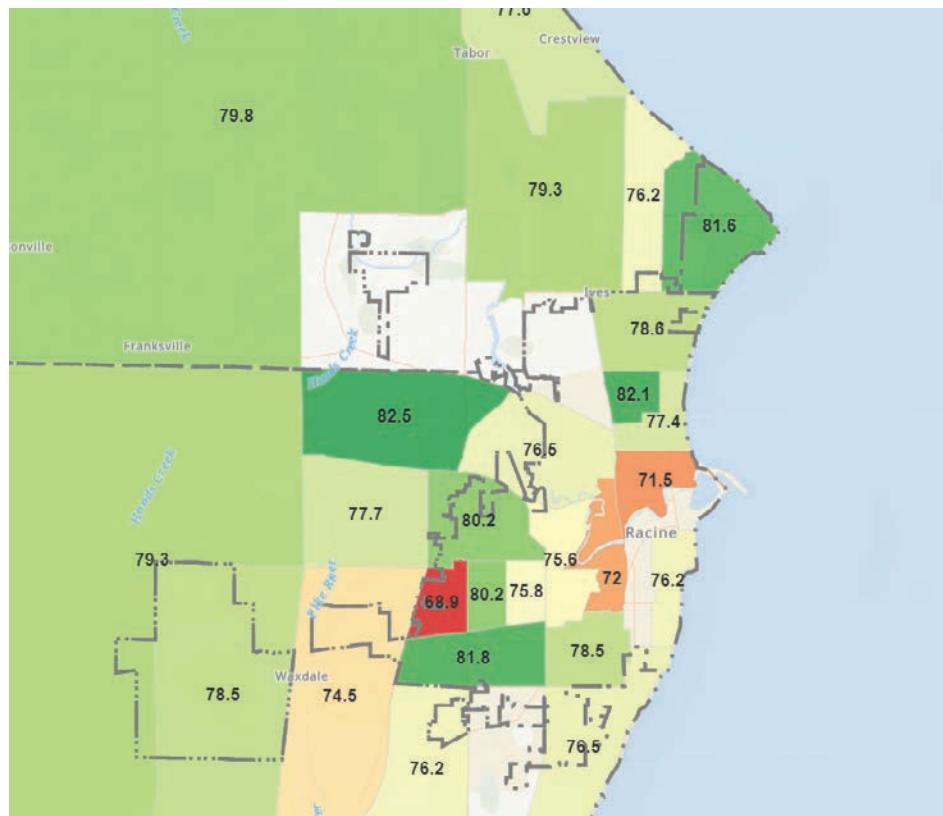
- Injuries through accidents or violence are the leading cause of death for people in the U.S. between ages 1 and 44, and the third leading cause of death overall.<sup>13</sup>
- Violent crime affects families, neighborhoods and communities, causing social and emotional distress with far-reaching effects.<sup>14</sup>

## *City of Racine Offense Counts*

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Murder & Non-Neg. Manslaughter	1	6	7	2	5
Total Crimes	4,921	4,499	3,492	4,357	N/A
Total Crime Rate (Per 1000)	63.3	58.0	45.3	56.0	N/A

# LIFE EXPECTANCY

Racine County Life Expectancy (in Years) by Census Tract



Sources: Wisconsin DHS,  
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>

## At a glance

- Life expectancy, the average number of years a person can expect to live, was 78.7 years overall in Racine County (estimated from 2010-2014) and 79.5 in Wisconsin.
- In Eastern Racine County, life expectancy ranges from 68.9 years to 82.9 years, depending on the census tract.

## Why this matters

- Life expectancy is considered a measure of a community's overall health.
- Studies show that where people live, down to the U.S. census tract level, can significantly affect life expectancy.<sup>15</sup>

# JUSTICE

## FAIR TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW

The issues surrounding our community's justice system are as complex and interconnected as the system's primary branches—policing, prosecution, courts, and corrections. One fact stands out: while Black people make up 6.2% of Wisconsin's population, they make up 42.7% of the state's incarcerated population. We believe addressing this disparity starts with understanding its scope and impact—and that understanding must begin with listening.

**“ We only ask to hold the system accountable to what it says it is. ”**

– *Adult involved in justice system*



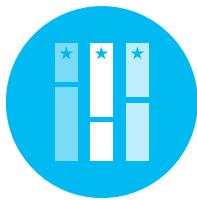
# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

# WHO WE HEARD FROM & THEMES

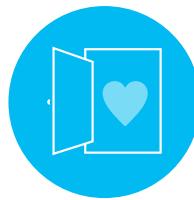
We held four conversations on justice, collecting qualitative data from diverse participants:

- Adults Involved in Justice System
- Parents/Family Members of Those Involved in Justice System
- Law Enforcement Officers
- Public Defenders and Attorneys

## KEY THEMES



Equity &  
Opportunity



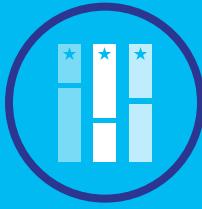
Rehabilitation



Access &  
Affordability



Police-Community  
Relations



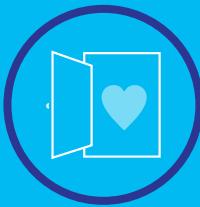
# EQUITY & OPPORTUNITY

Justice in the ideal world is swift, fair and certain. Depending on your experiences, you may be surprised at how far real-world justice falls from that ideal—or, like our participants, saddened, angered, frustrated or motivated. We suggest a powerful step toward the ideal is seeking knowledge from those involved in the system.

- **Racial disparities in arrests and sentencing are real.** “Charges are different based on where people live,” said one attorney. Added another, “Minorities receive stiffer sentences than White.” An attorney said charges can’t be viewed by race: “I have to look at it as a crime... I’m accountable to victims and the community.” A participant incarcerated for nine years summed it up: “There are many on-ramps to put you in the system...the few [off-ramps] that exist are afforded to those who don’t look like us.”
- **The system as a whole is broken.** Participants said they’re frustrated with resistance to change. “I’ll be 45. Y’all been doing the same criminal justice system stuff my entire life,” said one. Attorneys were equally direct: “I had great ideas in law school. [After being a] public defender for four months, I didn’t believe in the system.” An attorney said, “I grew up in the inner city...When I came into the system I was much more gung-ho about consequences, but now I see the bigger picture of what people need, and that has changed me.” And from a law enforcement officer: “We’re the front face of the justice system, but my concern is everything that comes after us.”
- **Decriminalization offers a path forward.** “Resources are wasted [on] tiny crimes... or a prison sentence instead of a fine,” said one attorney. Another said it’s possible to decriminalize “everything except major crimes...misdemeanors dropped during COVID when people couldn’t be put in jail.” Participants who have been involved with the system emphasized decriminalizing marijuana: “They’re locking us up for something that other states say is okay.”

***“My White niece got caught with a bunch of drugs...she got 15 days in county jail. My son is mixed and did the same thing, and he got 5 years.”***

***– Parent/family member of those involved in justice system***



# REHABILITATION

How should incarceration balance punishment for criminal acts with treatment and training that empower people to successfully reintegrate into the community? We believe the best way to address this complex question is to examine complex viewpoints.

- ***Support is missing at every step.*** Rehabilitation can't happen without resources, participants said. "In prison there's no programs, no education unless you educate yourself; it's a paycheck for them, a business," said one person involved with the system. Others said parole is more of a burden than a support: "I feel like the system is meant to keep you on parole," said one. "You get on papers and they want to revoke you for anything. They have laws you don't even know about." Added another, "Real equity means no one should be on parole for 20 years."
- ***Mental health support is especially needed***—not only for rehabilitation, but also for those who work in the system. People who have been incarcerated, law enforcement personnel and attorneys all described trauma. "You go to jail and have PTSD but no mental health support," said one participant. "Imagine dealing with cheating, deaths, and shootings in [prison]." Added a law enforcement officer, "We see things you should never have to see..... PTSD is real for us." And an attorney said, "Everyone is overworked and traumatized again and again."
- ***Belief in the possibility of reform is needed to overcome long-term barriers.*** Participants who have been involved with the system cite the lack of family-supporting employment opportunities as a major challenge to rehabilitation. "I haven't had police contact in 15 years," said one. "Why is it hard for people like me?" Added another, "I want people to respect me. It will take hard work to change people's minds. The system is messed up, but you still need to take responsibility."

***"Do people have the right to get their life back?"***

***– Adult involved in justice system***







## ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Access to justice includes the ability to access legal representation and navigate the system. We invite you to consider the following comments as you think—and perhaps re-think—about the reality of access in our community.

- **Legal representation is expensive; legal aid caseloads are overwhelming.** Said an attorney, "We see new entrants into the criminal justice system [who have] very little support...even the resources to have good representation. We fail on that." Another attorney agreed: "No private bar attorneys are taking those cases. It's all legal aid, whose load is already way too much." That affects sentencing, said one participant: "I got public defenders who have so many cases they can't handle all of them—so I'm passed off and given two years when I could have gotten probation."
- **Fees strain individual and family finances.** "I paid \$20,000 for a lawyer and all they kept telling my family member was, 'Get ready to go to jail,'" said one participant. Others pointed out that there are booking fees as well as fees in prison. "They charge you to wash and dry your clothes," said one. Added another, "Even with work release, [they take] so much out of your check to pay for room and board in the prison."
- **Inclusivity can help.** The potential for better outcomes grows with broader representation at every level of the system, said one attorney—"law enforcement, judges, attorneys...It's taken my entire career to see inclusivity; in 1985 there were no women in court." A family member of an incarcerated person asked, "Can you expect a person that's not like you to think like you, to care about you?"

*"I have a grown child in the system—he's sitting in County. It will be a year next month. We have to wait months for an attorney."*

*- Parent/family member of those involved in the justice system*



# POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Discussions of law enforcement's role and impact in the community raise complicated emotions and reactions. We believe it's important to consider multiple viewpoints—beginning with these thoughts and experiences from our participants.

- **Stereotypes affect perceptions and reactions.** Law enforcement officers said portrayals on television and in social media lead to misunderstanding about their work. "People get mad when we show up to do our job...[they think] we're just there to ruin people's lives," said one. Added another, "We're people, we understand taking someone to jail or writing a ticket isn't always the solution." Other community members said they are stereotyped by law enforcement: "As a member of the Spanish-speaking population, this has been going on forever...we are good people, we work hard, [but] we call for help and don't get any." In general, an officer said, "positive interactions happen far more frequently than the negative ones that dominate the news cycle."
- **Programs help build trust, but it's not easy.** Family members of people involved in the justice system said they remain wary of interactions with police. "I have a 12-year-old grandson and I'm teaching him what to do if he comes across an officer," said one. Said another, "They need to get out and network with the people in the community." Law enforcement officers noted positive results from COP houses and youth intervention programs, though challenges remain: "We're trying to get out into the parks and into the kid's lives. I give them stickers, but the parents tell them not to talk to us...it's hard to even start that conversation when people don't have a fundamental trust in you as a person."
- **Success requires shared accountability.** "So many different groups are forming that are becoming so separate when we should all be coming together to build the system," said one law enforcement officer. Community members said voting and appearing at government meetings can make a difference. "We have to trust our voice—it's more powerful than we know."

**"It's on police, too. We don't get out of our squad car. You should make it a point to step out and talk to people at barbecues. That's on us to do."**

**- Law enforcement officers**



# WHAT PARTICIPANTS SEE AND RECOMMEND

Throughout our conversations, participants identified justice-related bright spots and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement. Here's a brief summary.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

"The things we see on the news is my story. Now I'm back doing all these things they told me weren't possible." – Adult involved with the justice system

"There is progress with each generation. I hope this new generation who puts everything out there can make some changes." – Attorney/public defender

"I work at COP house...we have 1-2 dozen kids that come to the house constantly, looking for that [role model]." – Law enforcement officer

"More first-timers/not serious offenders are taking advantage of our diversion program—the goal is to keep people's name off CCAP." – Attorney

## CHALLENGES

"A White kid was being sentenced and the judge said, 'If I send you to prison, they will eat you alive.' But with Black kids I guess he felt they could handle it." – Family member of person involved with the system.

"I try to keep my interactions as positive as I can, but no matter how positive or mellow you try to keep it, there's this stigma that we just want to shoot you." – Law enforcement officer

"Charges coming from certain areas...are written differently; in the city they're written as felonies, and we don't have time to invest in getting those charges down, where other families can afford an attorney." – Attorney/public defender

"We been marching, protesting, praying, crying—the only way we'll change [things] is if we hit them in the pockets." - Family member of person involved with the system.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FROM PARTICIPANTS

### ***Equity & Opportunity:***

- Focus more economic resources on census tracts 1-5
- Fund mental health support to prevent entry into the system
- Reduce criminalization of issues related to mental health
- Provide wrap-around services at schools

### ***Rehabilitation***

- Offer parenting mentors for people leaving prison
- Offer personal job coaches

### ***Access & Affordability***

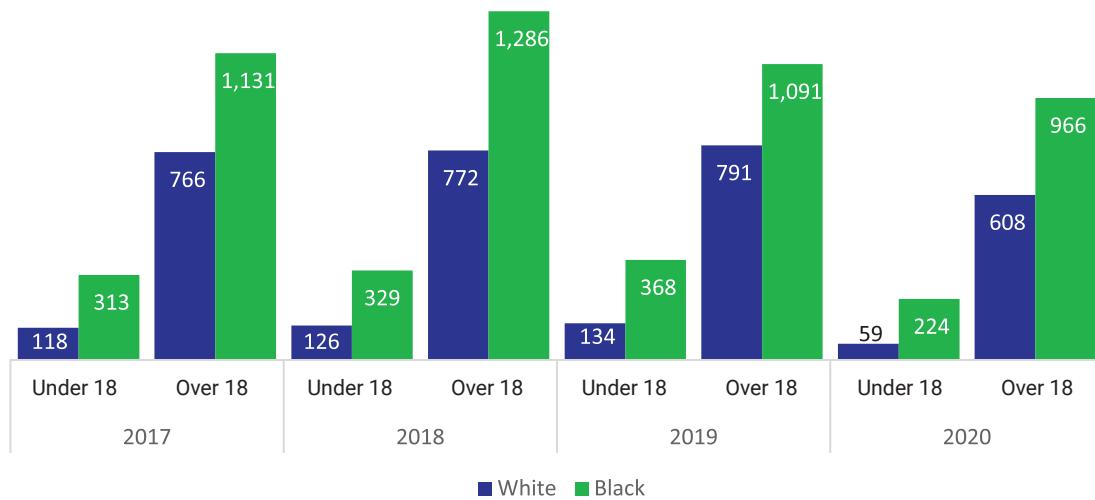
- Allow court attendance by Zoom or phone, especially for brief procedures
- Expand teen court programs, using more community volunteers
- Provide law enforcement officers with explanations of declined charges

### ***Police-Community Relations***

- Bring back the Citizens Police Academy to educate people about the job
- Use social media such as TikTok to explain police procedures
- Train neighborhood residents to serve as liaisons with police
- Encourage officers to interact more with youth

## ARRESTS

*City of Racine Arrests by Age and Race Over Time*



Source: Wisconsin Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Data Dashboard Center

### At a glance

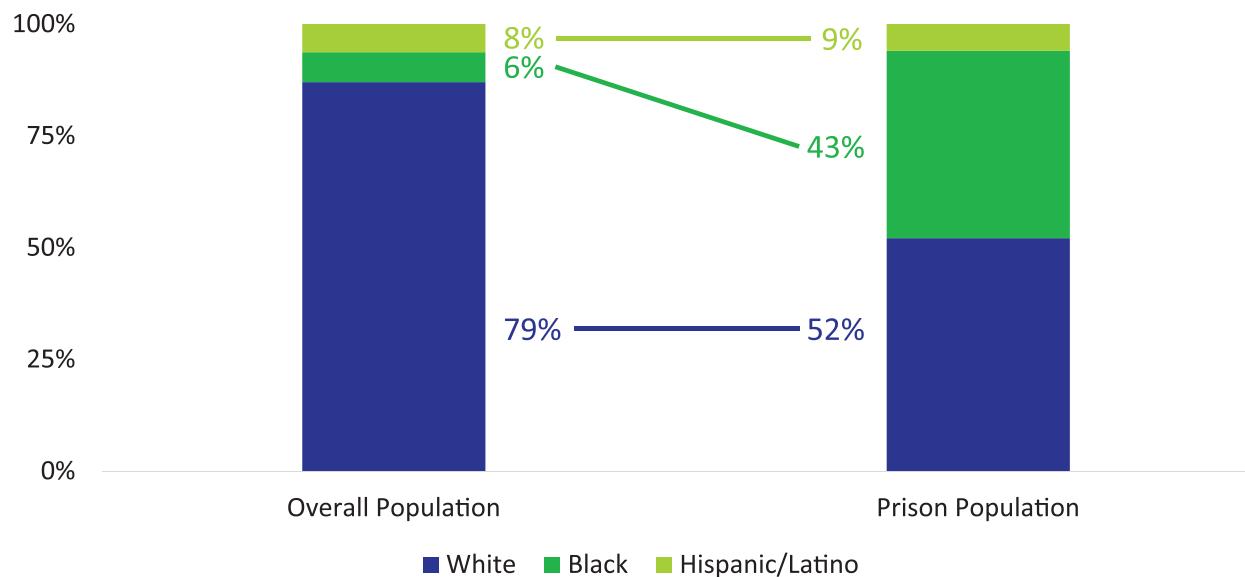
- Black youth arrests numbered almost four times those of White youth in 2020 in the City of Racine. Black adult arrests were 59% higher than those of White adults.
- In 2020, there were 966 arrests in the City of Racine of Black adults (over age 18); 608 of White adults; 224 of Black youth (under 18); and 59 of White youth. Note: These numbers may include people not from the City of Racine, as well as multiple arrests per person.

### Why this matters

- Juvenile justice involvement has been associated with increased risk of adult criminality; studies show it may catalyze rather than deter from offending as an adult.<sup>16</sup>
- Studies show job applicants with criminal records are disfavored by employers.<sup>17</sup> In Wisconsin, it is not employment discrimination under the law when an employee's arrest or conviction is substantially related to the employment.<sup>18</sup>

# PRISON POPULATION

*Wisconsin Overall Population Compared to Prison Population (As of Dec. 31, 2020)*



DOC DAI - Prison Point-in-Time Dashboards: <https://doc.wi.gov/Pages/DataResearch/PrisonPointInTime.aspx>  
2000 Decennial Census

## At a glance

- Black people make up roughly 6% of Wisconsin's population but 42% of the Wisconsin prison population.
- In 2020, the Wisconsin prison population included roughly 10,500 White, 8,200 Black, 1,000 American Indian/Alaskan Native and 250 Asian or Pacific Islander individuals.

## Why this matters

- Prison life can lead to mental health disorders and difficulty rejoining society. The loss of liberty and separation from family and social support, as well as uncertainty, loneliness and fear, can affect the ability to be an effective partner, parent and employee upon release.<sup>19</sup>

# It's Time to Act!

**FIND RESOURCES.** Scan the QR code to visit our website for links to resources in each of the following areas.



The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread encourages you to start your own small group conversations about this report. What did you learn? What surprised you? What compels you to act? What can you do, individually or as an organization? Build a group that otherwise might not assemble. Meanwhile, we'll collaborate with local partners on our priority issues, seeking to learn more and convene people to drive change. We're committed to supporting this constantly evolving process, to strengthen our region and ensure everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

## TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

- Share Racine Speaks with your professional and personal networks
- Implement a Racine Speaks recommendation and share it with us

## HOST A CONVERSATION

- Host or participate in an "On The Table" conversation this fall
- Share your conference or meeting idea with us
- Listen to people with lived experience

## VOLUNTEER TIME, TALENTS & RESOURCES

- Volunteer or support a local cause
- Join a nonprofit board

# ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY DECISION-MAKING

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- Attend a council, board or committee meeting
- Apply to join a village, city, or county committee or commission
- Get to know who represents you
- Register to vote

## FIND MORE SUPPORT

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- Explore community services that address immediate needs
- Dial 2-1-1 from any phone, or text your ZIP code to 898-211 for access to a 24-hour central access point to information, agencies and assistance

## LEARN MORE

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- Download the full Racine Speaks report
- Connect with us on social media

## FOLLOW US



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# Footnotes

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**Resilient  
Communities**  
An initiative of:  
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AT WINGSPREAD

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