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Black/White Racial Disparities Remain in Wisconsin, 2025 *KIDS COUNT* Data Book Indicators Show

State Decision Makers Can Make Targeted Investments in the State Budget to Address Them

Yet again, Wisconsin leads the nation in many disparities in outcomes of Black and white children in our state, according to data in the Kids Count Data Center supporting the **2025 *KIDS COUNT* Data Book**, a 50-state report of recent data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how kids are faring in post-pandemic America. As decision makers draft Wisconsin's state budget, they have an opportunity to implement targeted investments in solutions that can end these racial disparities so that every family can thrive.

"We can't fix a problem if we don't know it exists. Effective policy is built on accurate information. The availability of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity is critical to accurately understanding how well all our children and families are doing," shared Michele Mackey, CEO for Kids Forward. "This data allows us to focus resources and design solutions for those that need it most."

Recent federal attacks on the mere existence of data for specific racial and ethnic groups—driven by a harmful narrative that centers whiteness—hurts Wisconsin more deeply.

Why? Because outcomes for Black and white children in Wisconsin often show a larger gap than in any other state. Kids Forward has long worked to track and compare well-being indicators for Wisconsin's Black children and families and white children and families.

"When you walk across the state line to Minnesota or Illinois, and Black families fare closer to how their white neighbors are doing, you know it's a policy problem in Wisconsin," shared Faith Roska, Youth Policy Advocacy Coach at Kids Forward. "Whether this is because white children are doing better here than other places or because Black children are experiencing more barriers than in other places, we want every child and family to thrive in our state."

Each year, the Data Book presents national and state data from 16 indicators in four domains — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors — and ranks the states according to how children are faring overall. While Wisconsin ranks 11th among all states, data that groups everyone in our state together doesn't show the full picture.

For 6 of the 15 ***KIDS COUNT*® Data Book** indicators for which disaggregated data is available, Wisconsin's racial disparities are some of the largest in the country, including:

- low birthweight (16.6% of Black children vs 6.5% of white children; largest disparity in the country);
- high school students not graduating on time (29% of Black children vs 6% of white children; largest disparity in the country);
- 8th graders not scoring proficient in math on national assessments (93% of Black children vs 55% of white children; largest disparity in the country);
- child and teen deaths (79 deaths per 100,000 Black children vs 24 deaths per 100,000 white children; 2nd largest disparity in the country behind Kansas);
- children living in families with a high housing burden (44% of Black children vs 16% of white children).

- children; 2nd largest disparity in the country behind Arkansas);
- children living in high poverty areas (30% of Black children vs 1% of white children; 2nd largest disparity in the country behind Michigan).

The state budget offers policy makers a critical opportunity to start to address some of these disparities immediately by:

- Providing about \$23 million over the biennium to [extend postpartum coverage](#) for 12 months for those enrolled in BadgerCare.
- Allowing Medicaid to reimburse providers for doula services. Doulas are part of a holistic care team. Working with doctors, nurses, and families to offer advice, information, physical and emotional support, and advocacy for birthing people and their partners before, during, and after birth. Research shows that doulas improve health outcomes.
- Expand access to treatment for children exposed to elevated blood-levels, investing about \$200 million to replace lead service lines, and funding lead remediation in homes, schools, and child care centers.
- Doubling the funding for special education so that students with disabilities can more easily get the public education they deserve.
- Investing \$300 million in general purpose revenue (GPR) to support school-based mental health.
- Taking a comprehensive approach to violence prevention through establishment of a statewide office, and increasing funding suicide prevention and crisis lifeline support.

In its 36th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made, where greater support is needed and which strategies are making a difference.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The 2025 *KIDS COUNT Data Book* will be available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

ABOUT KIDS FORWARD

Kids Forward inspires action and promotes access to opportunity for every kid, every family, and every community in Wisconsin, notably children and families of color and those furthest from opportunity. We envision a Wisconsin where every child thrives.