



2026 Community Level Data

June 2026 - February 2027



United Way of Dane County relies on accurate data to track changes, make informed decisions and ensure a consistent message across the organization about our collective impact.

Dane County population (individuals): 572,674¹

Poverty

59,334 people are experiencing poverty² in Dane County (10.6% of the population).¹

74% of Camp Randall could be filled with people experiencing poverty in Dane County.³

116,183 people in Dane County live below 200% of the federal poverty line (20.3% of the population).¹

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 8.4%; Black or African American: 20.6%; Asian: 13.2%; Some Other Race: 8.9%; Two or More Races: 14.6%; Hispanic or Latino: 12%.⁴

Child Poverty

2,534 children under 5 (8.7%) are experiencing poverty in Dane County.¹

844 red wagons could be filled with children under 5 experiencing poverty in Dane County.⁵

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 3.7%; Black or African American: 30.6%; Asian: 10.2%; Some Other Race: 10.8%; Two or More Races: 7.9%; Hispanic or Latino: 25.2%.⁴

9,750 children under 18 (8.6%) are experiencing poverty in Dane County.¹

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 4.2%; Black: 22.4%; American Indian and Alaska Native: 19.7%; Asian: 13.0%; Some Other Race: 20.8%; Two or More Races: 18.3%; Hispanic or Latino: 30.8%.⁴

Unemployment

2.4% of individuals 16 years or older are experiencing unemployment in Dane County.⁶

Unemployment among Black or African American and American Indian or Alaska Native people is significantly higher than the overall rate (at 4.3% and 10.8%, respectively).⁶

Homelessness

790 individuals (including 114 children in 54 families) were experiencing acute homelessness in 2025.⁷

Homelessness has increased by 7.2% from last year.⁷

Black or African American people make up 44% of those experiencing homelessness in Dane County despite composing 5.2% of the population.⁷

High School Completion

96% of students completed high school in Dane County (5,451 out of 5,687) (6-year cohort).⁸

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 98%; Black or African American: 89%; Asian: 99%; Two or More Races: 95%; Hispanic or Latino: 90%.⁹

Third Grade Literacy

55.9% of third grade students meet grade level standards in reading and writing (2,838 out of 5,080).¹⁰

(Note: Due to changes in test score benchmarks, this data is not comparable to 2023 and prior years).

32 school buses could be filled with third-grade students who are not reading and writing at grade level.¹¹

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 70.7%; Black or African American: 14.0%; Asian: 43.6%; Two or More Races: 32.8%; Hispanic or Latino: 24.0%.¹²

Low Birthweight

7.9% of babies were born at low birthweight in Dane County (436 out of 5,548).¹³

By Race and Ethnicity (Mother): White: 7%; Black: 15%; Laotian/Hmong: 5.1%; Asian (non-Hmong) or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian: 7.4%; Two or More Races: 7.1%; Hispanic: 8.6%.¹⁴

Health Insurance

Nearly 1 in 25 people do not have health insurance in Dane County (3.6%, or 20,491 out of 568,974).¹⁵

By Race and Ethnicity: White: 2.3%; Black or African American: 4.9%; American Indian or Alaska Native: 12.0%; Asian: 3.5%; Some Other Race: 21.7%; Two or More Races: 9.2%; Hispanic or Latino: 16.0%.¹⁵

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is over 10 years shorter for Black or African American people than the overall average.¹⁶

Overall: 81.1 years. By Race and Ethnicity: White: 81.5; Black or African American: 70.4; Asian: 86.5; Hispanic: 85.7.¹⁶

Whenever we present data disaggregated by race and ethnicity internally or externally, it is essential that this data is properly contextualized. When we see disparities by race and ethnicity in education, income and health outcomes, we are seeing the result of systemic racism (happening at institutional, cultural and interpersonal scales), not placing blame or assuming cultural or group-based deficits.





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United Way of Dane County Community-Level Data Footnotes

- 1 2020-2024 US Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, Table S0101.
- 2 Poverty defined as below 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Poverty status cannot be determined for people in institutional group quarters (such as prisons or nursing homes), college dormitories, military barracks or living situations without conventional housing (and who are not in shelters). Additionally, poverty status cannot be determined for unrelated individuals under age 15 (such as foster children) because income questions are asked of people age 15 and older and, if someone is under age 15 and not living with a family member, we do not know their income. The total number of individuals for whom poverty status is calculated in Dane Co. in ACS 5-year (2020-2024) Data (Table S1701) is 558,819 people.
- 3 Based on a seating capacity of 80,321.
- 4 2020-2024 US Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, Table B17001A, B17001B, B17001C, B17001D, B17001E, B17001F, B17001G, B17001I.
- 5 Based on a seating capacity of 3.
- 6 2020-2024 US Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, Table S2301. Unemployment rate is a percentage of the total civilian labor force (332,559 total individuals in Dane County).
- 7 Data from Annual Point in Time (PIT) Count conducted by the Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County; this year's count was conducted in January 2025. The PIT count involves counting people in emergency shelter or transitional housing in Dane County alongside unsheltered people who are spending the night outside, in a car, or in another place unsuitable for human habitation. The PIT count is a snapshot of people who are homeless on a single night; consequently, it under-represents the number of people who experience homelessness in Dane County throughout a given year. Additionally, the PIT count does not include people who are living "doubled up" with friends or family or who are living in hotels or motels, as these people do not meet the HUD's criteria for being considered homeless during a PIT count.
- 8 Data from 2023-2024 School Year, Department of Public Instruction WiseDash, HS Completion for 6 year (2022) cohort, calculated by United Way, <https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/dashboard/17880>; Dataset excludes Online Only Schools within Dane County school districts.
- 9 DPI suppresses small data points for privacy reasons, meaning that students of marginalized groups are often hidden from smaller or less diverse districts. Consequently, the count of racial and ethnic groups is not fully representative of students in Dane County, and marginalized students are much more likely to be underrepresented numerically. The redaction of small data points accounts for 10.4% (592 out of 5,691) of students in this cohort. The HS completion rate of the redacted group is 91.3%.
- 10 2024-2025 School Year, Department of Public Instruction WiseDash, Forward Test (English Language Arts), calculated by United Way (online only schools removed), <https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/dashboard/19948>. The Forward English Language Arts exam scores students as either advanced, meeting, approaching, or developing. Students who did not take the exam (<5%) are excluded from the results but included in the total number of students at each school (source: <https://dpi.wi.gov/wisedash/about-data/forward>).
- 11 Based on an average capacity of 70 students.
- 12 WiseDash suppresses small data points for privacy reasons, meaning that students of marginalized groups are often hidden from smaller or less diverse districts. Consequently, the count of racial and ethnic groups is not fully representative of students in Dane County, and marginalized students are much more likely to be underrepresented numerically. The redaction of small data points accounts for 5.5% (277 out of 5,080) of students in this cohort. The share of the redacted group meeting grade level standards is 34.7%.
- 13 Wish Query: Low Birthweight Module, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, data from 2023: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/lbw/form.htm>. Low birthweight is defined as less than 2,500 grams.
- 14 Data for some racial and ethnic groups was suppressed for privacy reasons.
- 15 2020-2024 US Census American Community Survey, 5 year estimates, Table S2701; all percentages are a percentage of the total "civilian non-institutionalized population."
- 16 Data from HealthyDane, "Life Expectancy," Dane County, 2021-2023. Original source data from National Center for Health Statistics - Natality and Mortality Files; Census Population Estimate. Last updated by HealthyDane in November 2025.