**Fiscal Facts: On Racial Equity in Homeownership, Milwaukee Ranks Last Among Peers**

Milwaukee stands out among its peer cities for its stark racial inequity in homeownership, with larger disparities in homeownership rates than 10 national peer cities.

These and other findings come from the Wisconsin Policy Forum’s latest in an ongoing research series on homeownership disparities in Wisconsin. For this comparison, Milwaukee peer cities were selected including Albuquerque, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, El Paso, Fresno, Kansas City, Memphis, Tampa, and Tucson.

According to 2020 five-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, Milwaukee’s white homeownership rate was 55.8%. Its Hispanic homeownership rate was 38.5%, and its Black homeownership rate was 25.2%, the lowest among peer cities.

Comparing owner-occupancy rates between Black and Hispanic households combined, relative to white households, shows Milwaukee has a 26.9 percentage point disparity – the largest among the peer cities.

This challenge has only mounted in recent years. Since the Great Recession, racial homeownership disparities have widened more in Milwaukee than in any of the 10 peer cities.

Black households in Milwaukee have suffered the greatest homeownership declines. While the total number of Black households living in Milwaukee increased by 2.3% between 2010 and 2020, the number of housing units occupied by Black owners decreased by 24.6%.

Milwaukee stands out among peer cities for having a public-private strategic plan focused on racial equity in homeownership. Yet Milwaukee is the only city without a consolidated housing agency. Thus, implementing and coordinating this strategy across agencies may be challenging.

The report also analyzes the city of Milwaukee’s use of key federal funds that support its homeownership programs. We find the city has prioritized lower-cost home rehabilitation services over higher-cost services like homebuyer financing, counseling, and new construction.

Homeownership is an important means by which households can build wealth and, therefore, a key way for Milwaukee to become more equitable and prosperous. Advancing racial equity in homeownership is especially important given that Black and Hispanic residents comprise more than half of the city’s total population. Compounding the issue is the fact that rising home prices and mortgage rates are reducing housing affordability in Wisconsin and nationally.

Ultimately, Milwaukee leaders may wish to assess if the manner in which the city has prioritized services for current versus prospective homeowners strikes the right balance -- and produces the best possible results in advancing Black and Hispanic homeownership.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at* [*wispolicyforum.org*](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/state-tax-burden-up-but-overall-burden-still-falling/)*.*