

Social Change

Prepared by Samantha Schwartz-Oscar



GREATER GREEN BAY
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ENVISIONING
THE FUTURE

Overview

The social factor refers to how we think, feel, and behave in relation to others. It involves our patterns of social interactions and relationships with each other and with our communities, institutions and systems. Social relationships and connections inform almost everything we do as we are social creatures by nature and therefore, seek and require closeness to others for survival and especially in order to thrive. It is my belief that the strength of our social relationships is the key to a thriving community. When we feel supported, close to others, and a part of the larger whole, we thrive both individually and collectively.

Social elements within Brown County have changed significantly over the past several years. For example, people are less likely to be involved with religious organizations, particularly young people. Community and non-profit organizations have increased and an overwhelming majority of people are involved civically in some way. Participation in arts and cultural activities has improved and recreation and leisure activities are viewed favorably by residents. Obesity and binge drinking are common. People generally feel safe and supported by local law enforcement, in health care, and education. Concerns have arisen more recently related to the ability of residents to be represented in local government and other community organizations as well as an ability to have an impact on the decisions of community leaders. Perhaps most concerning and pervasive, particularly given the continually increasing diversity in our area, are the disparities in educational achievement, health and healthcare availability, housing and homelessness, and overall sense of financial safety/wellbeing of minority (race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status) children and families.

Key Stakeholders

Everyone has a stake in the social functioning of and trends in our community. We are all impacted by and dependent upon each other to be strong and healthy individually and collectively. Systems, including but not limited to education, health care, public health and safety, government, leisure, and businesses and organizations cannot advance without attitudes of trust and belonging which come from positive relational connections and a sense of responsibility for each other between individuals, groups, and organizations. Being the third largest city in Wisconsin, the state also has a stake in the Green Bay area thriving.

Trends

Results from the LIFE Study indicate social satisfaction and improvement in several areas:

- Continued high levels of civic engagement and a strong sense of community (82% donated to charitable service or organization, down from 86% and 71% helped at a charitable organization, church, or school, up from 68%)
- Overall satisfaction with the quality of health care (89% excellent or good, up from 86%)
- Continued satisfaction in the quality of education (73% excellent or good, remained stable)
- Continued sense of public safety (89% excellent or good, up from 86%)
- Increased sense of financial security (54% all or most of the time, up from 46%)

- Continued satisfaction with healthcare quality (82% excellent or good, down from 86%)
- Continued satisfaction with variety of recreational and leisure opportunities (80% excellent or good, up from 73%)

Despite the positive trends, there are also many social trends that are concerning:

- Continued low rates of financial security despite increase (see statistics above) and large disparities in sense of financial security when stratified by race/ethnicity (55% of people who identified as white feel financially secure all or most of the time compared to people who identified as non-white)
- Continued achievement gaps as a result of economic status (also likely overlapping with race/ethnicity given large differences in poverty rates by race/ethnicity) (27.95 of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in Wisconsin Forward Exam compared to 49.92% of those who were not economically disadvantaged)
- Continued increase in child poverty rate (18% of children, up from 15%)
- Decreased satisfaction with ability to care for the vulnerable (64% excellent or good, down from 68%)
- Continued and high rate of binge drinking and increase in binge drinking among adults (26%, up from 23%; 52% of people also rated Brown County as fair to poor in promoting responsible alcohol use)
- Continued high rate of those seeing increased diversity of population as negative (30% negative, down from 32%)

Emerging Issues

In recent years, Wisconsin has been at or very near the bottom of state rankings for racial and ethnic segregation, inequality (compilation of discrepancies in incarceration rates, household income, unemployment, home ownership, and population), and wellbeing of children of color. How has this and will this continue to impact Green Bay and Brown County, particularly considering the attitudes about increased diversity of Brown County residents?

How will possible changes in healthcare policies nationwide impact our attitudes and use of health care in Brown County?

How will a possible decrease in funding for organizations such as AmeriCorps impact our attitudes about community engagement and monetary giving?

Overall, people nationwide feel more disconnected than in previous years and spend less quality time with one another. What does this mean for our community and how can we foster social connection order to recruit and maintain diverse and representative individuals in local government, businesses, and organizations?

General attitudes of fear and mistrust in response to various factors including political division and racial and religious tension are present. Will this impact our community and organizational outreach and our ability to maintain trust and safety within our community? What can we do to combat this?