

# Connected

## Opportunities for Action

### For Individuals

- Improving our connections and understanding of others will require ongoing and intentional effort to visit other communities, reach out to those with backgrounds different from our own, and attend local cultural events.
- Regularly talking to elderly neighbors, friends, and family will serve an important role in helping them connect and engage. In addition, look for opportunities to serve the elderly through volunteer programs.
- Understand and experience the difficulty experienced by those without access to their own vehicle by relying on alternative transportation for a week.
- Reach out to your neighbors. Consider planning a neighborhood block party or cookout.

### For Organizations

- In their effort to meet labor force needs, businesses have become more innovative and intentional about connecting with diverse populations. Continued work with schools, trade organizations and social service providers will help with that effort. Advancing the understanding of ethnic, cultural and generational differences will help employees connect and succeed.
- The racial makeup of jail inmates to the population and the disproportionate number of minority school suspensions raise a host of questions that require answers. Law enforcement, public schools, and social service providers must research and work together to understand and address ongoing institutional disparities in punishment.
- Employers should work closely with the Society for Human Resources Management and wage equity organizations to evaluate, confront, and address wage and earnings disparities. As the labor pool shrinks, addressing those disparities will become more important.
- Local institutions will need to continue to adopt and expand the use of trauma-informed care principles in order to develop more empathetic and understanding approaches to connect with people at a personal and community level.

### For the Community

- Marathon County will need to ensure a diverse and culturally inclusive culture to secure its long-term future. Whether it is attracting millennials, including LGBTQ perspectives or tapping the contributions of minority populations, regional viability requires that everyone is welcomed, engaged, and connected in the community.
- Community and business leaders have a responsibility to explore additional diversity and inclusion strategies to supplement those in process. Exciting opportunities exist to share ideas with other communities. Establishing additional benchmarks will help track progress and create parity for populations that have historically experienced disadvantages and discrimination.
- Our region needs to develop an aggressive and collaborative approach to ensuring high-speed broadband. Marathon County has stepped up to evaluate needs and opportunities to improve

Internet service. Municipalities must see past their borders and work together in support of efforts to attract vendors and establish competitive broadband services for the region.

- Easily accessible public transportation is a critical way to connect our community to services, job opportunities and shopping centers. Each of our municipalities must adopt a broader perspective on the impact of public transportation — how it helps address regional labor shortages and keeps seniors in the community by ensuring accessibility.

# CONNECTED

## Successes & Progress

- The Marathon County Board has made it a priority to identify the gaps in high speed Internet access and help residents connect to affordable high speed Internet services.
- To serve the growing population of seniors and increase social and community connections, a multimillion-dollar initiative to develop new facilities and programming has been put into place. Those efforts include development of the YMCA's The Landing and extensive renovations at North Central Health Care.
- The Marathon County Board passed a resolution in 2019 to recognize June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) PRIDE month.
- Investments in parks and outdoor recreation spaces have provided additional ways for people to connect. Those improvements include the new River Life Park, a playground by WOW and additional bicycle trails.
- Marathon County has continued to be a Midwest regional destination for visual and performing arts. Local festivals provided a wide assortment of opportunities to connect with the community and its culture.
- Marathon County residents engaged with social associations at a higher rate than average in Wisconsin and the United States.

## Calls to Action

- In 2019, more than one-third of LIFE Survey respondents reported one or more experiences of discrimination; this is a 7% increase since 2017.
- LIFE Survey respondents reported a continued decline in satisfaction with how welcoming their community is in 2019. Satisfaction with how welcoming the community is has fallen more than 20 percentage points since 2013.
- Several disparities continue to exist in our county:
  - Women's earnings as a percentage of men's are lower
  - Women's earnings by race vary despite equal education levels
  - Jail population by race does not reflect the population-at-large
  - In-school suspensions by race do not reflect the population-at-large
- In 2019, LIFE Survey respondents reported a decrease in perception that Marathon County is a good place to live for young adults, people of color, and people with disabilities. Less than half of survey respondents are satisfied with the level of tolerance in the community.
- It is estimated that nearly half of rural Marathon County residents do not have access to high speed Internet.
- Since 2013, satisfaction with public transit has decreased from 46% to 25%.

Generated by [www.healthymarathoncountypulse.org/](http://www.healthymarathoncountypulse.org/) on January 6, 2020.

## Why is this Important?

A sense of community, or feeling of belonging, is important to our physical and emotional well-being as human beings.

Government, community groups, businesses and individuals have invested in a number of new opportunities for citizens to connect and engage in Marathon County over the past several years. Those efforts include Riverlife Park, newly developed trails along the Wisconsin River, a new bicycle trail system near Ringle and continued commitment to an extensive parks and recreation system.

In Marathon County, more than three-quarters of the 2019 LIFE survey respondents identified that friends and family help them feel connected to the community. Each time the survey has been completed since 2013, the majority of respondents have also indicated that they serve as volunteers.

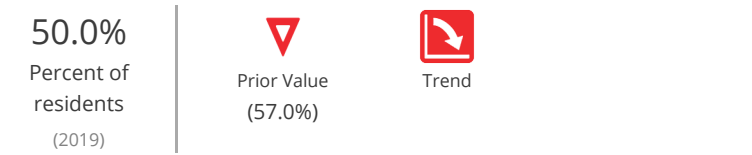
But recent LIFE Survey responses indicate a trend that Marathon County is perceived as a less welcoming, less connected and less tolerant community. Seventy percent of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that Marathon County is a good place to live, a slight drop from 2017; furthermore, LIFE Survey respondents perceived Marathon County as less of a good place to live for some groups including people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, younger people and people with different abilities.

### Key Takeaways

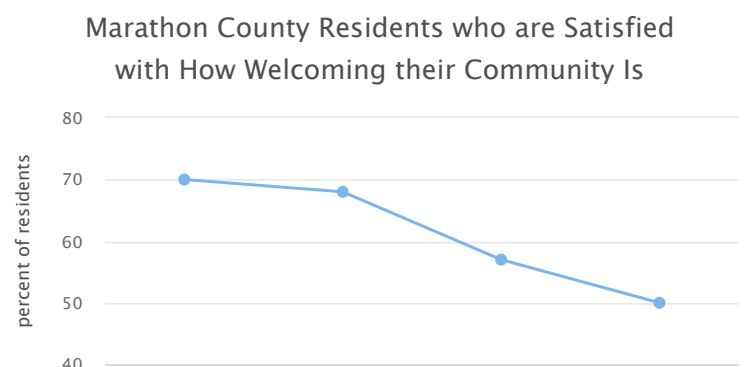
There is a trend in respondents' perception that we are a less welcoming, connected, and tolerant community.

The top three reasons LIFE Survey respondents indicated they chose to live in Marathon County are: Near family/friends (66%), size of the community (29%), and job opportunities (26%).

### Marathon County Residents who are Satisfied with How Welcoming their Community Is

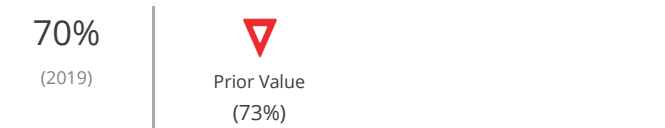


### Fewer residents are Satisfied with How Welcoming their Community is.

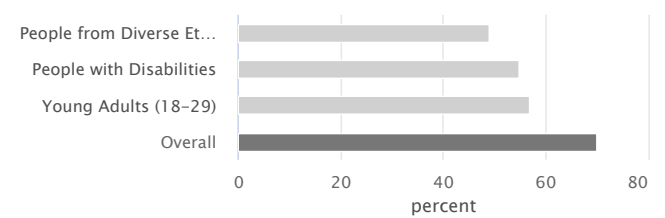


Generated by [www.healthymarathon.org](http://www.healthymarathon.org) on January 6, 2020.

### Marathon County is a Good Place to Live



### Marathon County is a Good Place to Live by Population



Number of Years Residing	Percent of 2019 LIFE Survey Respondents
20 or more	72.1%
11-20	14.2%
5-10	6.1%
Less than 5	7.5%

### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

74% of LIFE Survey respondents indicated they volunteered or helped others outside their household.

59.3% of LIFE Survey respondents indicated they are satisfied or very satisfied with the availability of information about community services.

## Why is this Important?

Discrimination is defined as prejudicial treatment of a person or a group of people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion or other characteristics. In Marathon County, a higher number of LIFE Survey respondents reported experiencing discriminatory acts in 2019 than in 2017. In addition, 2019 respondents indicated a decreased satisfaction in how tolerant the community is.

Members of minority groups may experience a unique stress related to the experience of discrimination or hate crimes. Hate crimes are “criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. According to the 2017 FBI Hate Crimes Statistics report there was a 17% increase in the number of reported hate crimes (totaling 7,175 incidents that impacted 8,828 victims) since the 2015 report. It is thought that the number of hate crimes committed is actually higher since these types of crimes are underreported. The stress of discrimination and hate crimes negatively impacts a person’s physical and mental health; it also has detrimental effects on families and communities.

\*It is important to note that respondents to the 2019 LIFE Survey do not fully reflect the demographics of Marathon County.

### Key Takeaways

A higher percentage of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents reported experiences of discrimination.

Less than half of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents indicated they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied that we are a tolerant community.

In the 2017 FBI Hate Crimes report 46 hate crimes occurred in Wisconsin. In the 2015 report, the number of hate crimes reported in Wisconsin was 43.

### Marathon County Residents who are Satisfied with How Tolerant their Community Is



### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

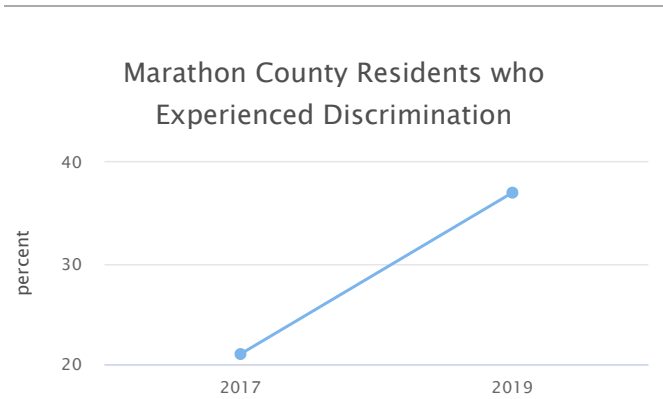
In 2019, 37% of LIFE Survey respondents indicated they have experienced discrimination on one or more occasions.

In 2019, 15% of LIFE Survey respondents indicated that what makes them feel connected to the community is respectful treatment, compared to 21% of respondents in 2017.

### Marathon County Residents who Experienced Discrimination



Number of Times Experiencing Discrimination in Past Year	2017	2019
None	70%	63%
1 Time	5%	5%
2-5 Times	10%	15%
6-10 Times	4%	4%
11-20 Times	1%	1%
21+ Times	1%	3%
Don't Know	8%	9%



# RACIAL DISPARITIES WITHIN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

## Indicator 55

### Why is this Important?

Racial disparities within the justice system negatively impact individuals and the community. According to the [Academy of Pediatrics](#), students who have been suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school. Individuals who do not complete high school can expect to earn considerably less over a working career and have fewer educational and employment opportunities. Adults who have served time in jail or prison also experience employment barriers upon re-entry to the community.

Marathon County is currently experiencing worker shortages due to changes in age demographics. To help address workforce shortages in our state, the [Future Wisconsin Project's Wisconsin Workforce Competitive Evaluation](#) includes recommendations to improve the career pathway and reach disconnected groups, such as ex-offenders and students in the juvenile justice system.

In addition to employment and income-related impacts on a family, having a parent(s) in jail or prison is considered an [Adverse Childhood Experience \(ACE\)](#). Individuals with four or more ACE's are more likely to deal with a variety of physical and mental health issues throughout their lives.

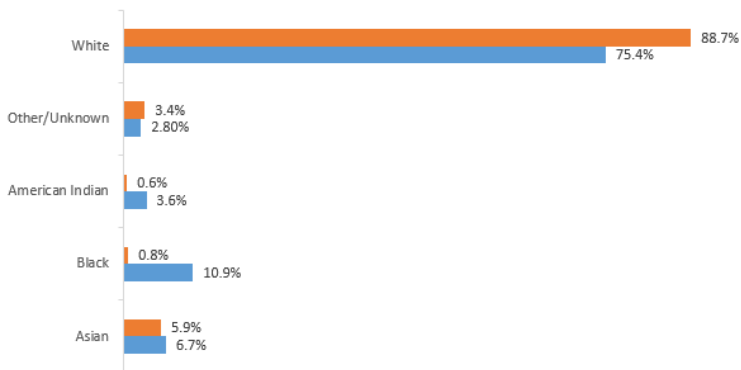
### Key Takeaways

Students of color in Marathon County receive **out-of-school suspensions** at a disproportionate rate.

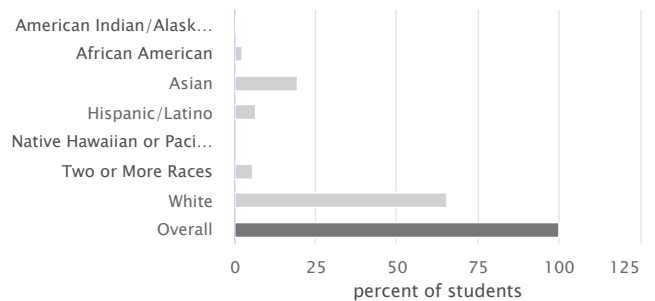
There is a disproportionate percentage of American Indian and Black individuals in Marathon County Jail compared to those demographic groups' percentage of the general population.

The State of Wisconsin has larger racial disparities in the prison population than Marathon County.

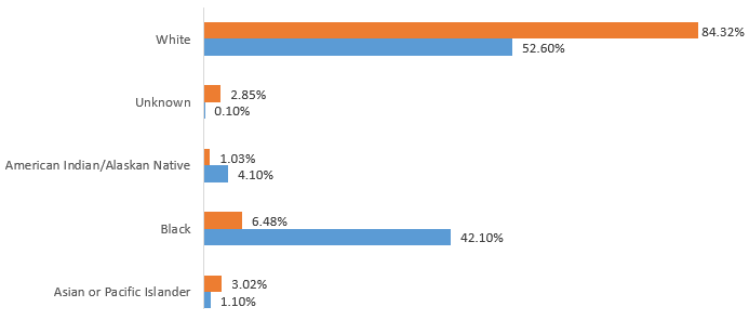
2018 Marathon County General Population Compared to Jail Population by Race



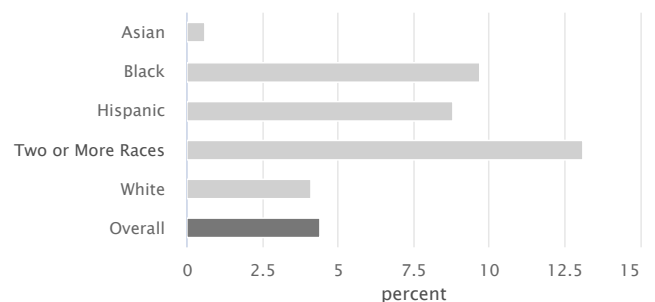
School District Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity by Race/Ethnicity



2018 Wisconsin General Population Compared to Prison Population by Race



Out-of-School Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity



# INCOME/WAGE DISPARITIES BY RACE AND GENDER

## Indicator 6

### Why is this Important?

An individual or family's **income** impacts their quality of life and their ability to ensure their **basic needs** are met. Pay inequality due to race and gender can make some groups more vulnerable to financial hardship than others. The costs of basic needs (e.g. **food, housing, transportation, health care, and child care**) may be higher than is affordable based on their **income**. When people are unable to afford their basic needs, they may be forced to make difficult decisions choosing between food and paying utilities, **skipping needed health care** or medications, or living in unsafe or substandard housing. This can create a strain on community resources and government programs, as well.

**Attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce** is essential to the health of an economy. Wage disparities may make it more challenging to attract new workers to the area and lower the amount of money that goes back into the economy. This issue is not unique to Marathon County, though, as shown in the Economic Policy Institute's "**State of Working America: Wages 2018**" report, which may indicate policy action is needed at the state and/or national level to address wage disparities.

#### Key Takeaways

There are racial disparities in wages in Marathon County. A disproportionate percentage of those in poverty are people of color.

Women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings are slightly higher in Marathon County (74.5%) compared to the State of Wisconsin (70.3%) and U.S. (72.8%).

Women earn less than men with the same educational attainment.

#### Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings

74.5%  
(2013-2017)

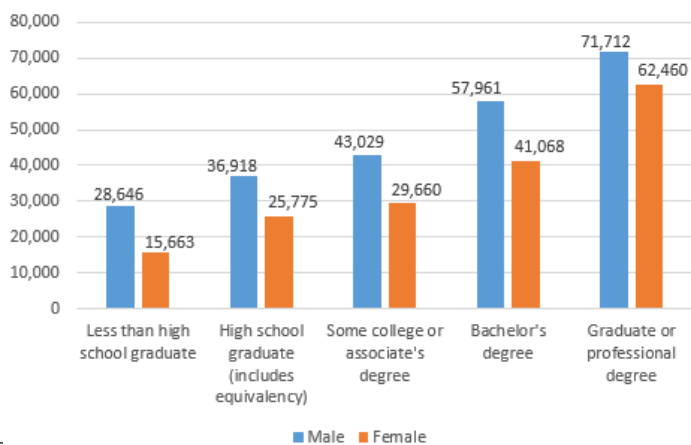


WI Value  
(70.3%)

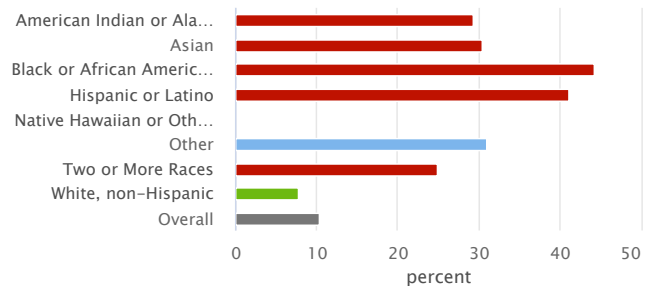


US Value  
(72.8%)

#### Median Earnings in Marathon County by Sex and Educational Attainment

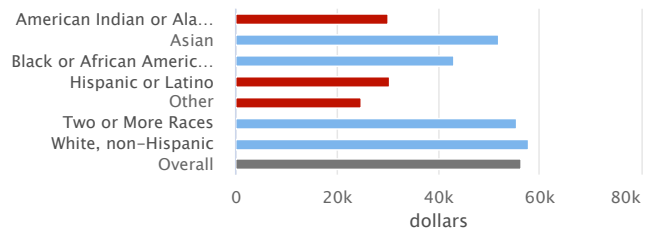


#### People Living Below Poverty Level by Race/Ethnicity



- Significantly **better** than the overall value
- Significantly **worse** than the overall value
- No significant difference with the overall value

#### Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity



- Significantly **worse** than the overall value
- No significant difference with the overall value

#### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

33% of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents are concerned or very concerned about the availability of jobs that pay enough to meet basic household expenses.

## Why is this Important?

Transportation is an essential resource for conducting daily life and staying connected to the community. Affordable reliable, transportation helps families sustain household income; it connects workers with jobs and employers with workers; and it enables seniors to be active and independent and remain in their homes.

The cost of owning, maintaining and insuring a vehicle can burden low-income residents in Marathon County. Guidelines from American Consumer Credit Council estimate transportation costs at 20 percent of household budgets. In areas where taxi services are available, cost and lack of ADA accessibility are significant barriers for low-income populations and people with disabilities.

In Marathon County, public transportation services have diminished since 2011, due to municipal levy limits and reduced transit investment. City bus service and ADA paratransit for persons with disabilities are now available only in the City of Wausau. Public transportation is not provided in the evenings, on weekends or on holidays and key destinations for employment, medical care and retail activity in the Wausau region are no longer served.

Attracting young people to live and work in Marathon County is crucial for local business success and a vibrant economy. The availability of transportation alternatives may be an important factor in that effort. According to a Global Strategy Group survey conducted in 2014, more than half of millennials said they would consider moving to another community if better transportation options were offered.

### Key Takeaways

According to a 2019 **WISPIRG survey**, 75% of surveyed college students in Wisconsin prioritized modes of transportation that did not involve driving.

In 2018, there were 321 calls to 2-1-1 regarding transportation. Of those calls, 136 resulted in unmet needs.

The strongest factor in attracting or maintaining transit ridership is transit service availability.

### More than 500,000 rides were provided in 2018

Metro Ride Operating Statistics <sup>2018</sup>			
Bus Miles:	401,607	Paratransit Riders:	3,841
Bus Passengers:	503,359	Paratransit Expense:	\$166,190
Bus Expense:	\$2,970,590	Paratransit Exp./Rider	\$43.27
Bus Exp./Passenger:	\$5.90	Paratransit Revenue:	\$7,714
Bus Revenue:	\$388,037	Paratransit Rev/Expense:	4.64%
Revenue/Expense	13.06%	Paratransit Riders:	3,841

### Number of Riders on Fixed-Route Bus

503,297

Number of Riders

(2018)



Prior Value  
(498,902)

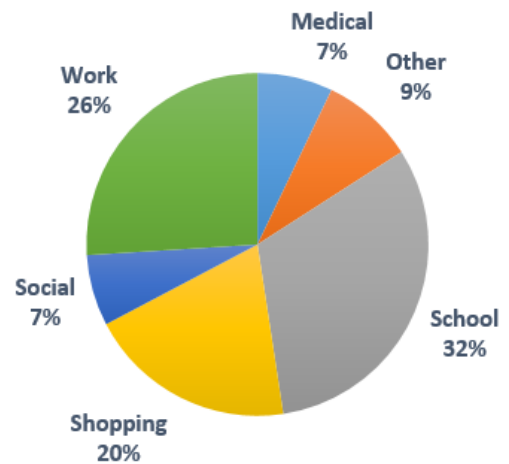


Trend

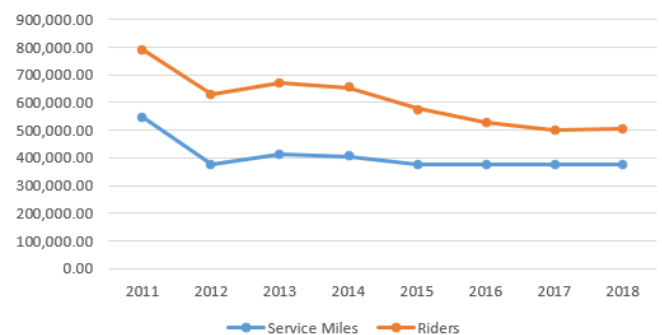
Generated by [www.healthymarathoncountypulse.org/](http://www.healthymarathoncountypulse.org/) on January 6, 2020.

### Passengers Ride for a Variety of Purposes

#### Metro Ride Passengers By Trip Purpose



#### Transit Service Levels Impact Ridership





## Why is this Important?

Voting is a central part of democracy. It is one way that citizens can exercise their voice about how their government operates. In Marathon County and across the state of Wisconsin, the number of registered voters tends to increase around months in which elections are held.

Voter turnout can vary based on a number of factors including the type of election and level of competition in each race, voting laws that impact how easy or difficult it is to cast a ballot and demographics such as age, race or ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status.

While recent elections have seen increased voter turnout, compared to many developed nations, the United States has relatively low voter turnout. Low voter turnout can also be a symptom of “voter apathy” or a lack of interest in elections. Voter apathy can occur when eligible voters feel like their vote will not make a difference or that candidates do not represent them or their interests.

In Wisconsin, voter turnout for the 2018 midterm election increased by about 5 percentage points since the last midterm election. Nationwide, midterm voter turnout was the highest it has been since 1914. While the majority of voters still visit their polling place, the number of absentee ballots cast is on the rise.

### Key Takeaways

Surrounding the 2018 midterm election, the number of registered voters in Marathon County increased by 4,746 (from 73,429 to 78,175).

Approximately 3,250 absentee ballots were mailed to voters ahead of the 2018 midterm election. Of the ballots mailed, 2,598 were returned.

In Marathon County, a total of 62,144, or roughly 80%, of registered voters cast a ballot in the 2018 midterm election.

### Presidential General Election Voter Turnout

67.3%  
(2016)

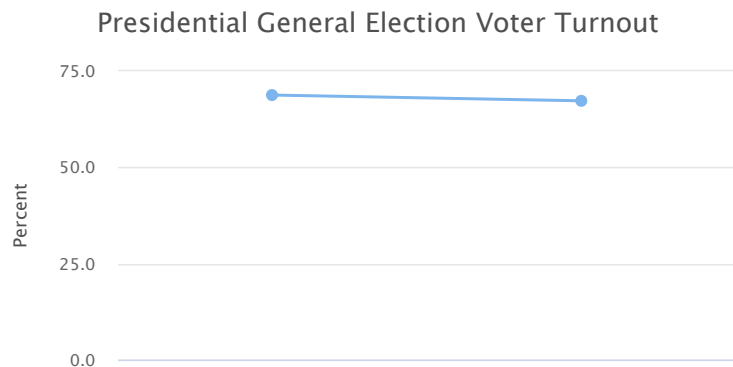


WI Value  
(67.34%)



Prior Value  
(68.8%)

The percent of eligible voters that turned out for the presidential general elections.

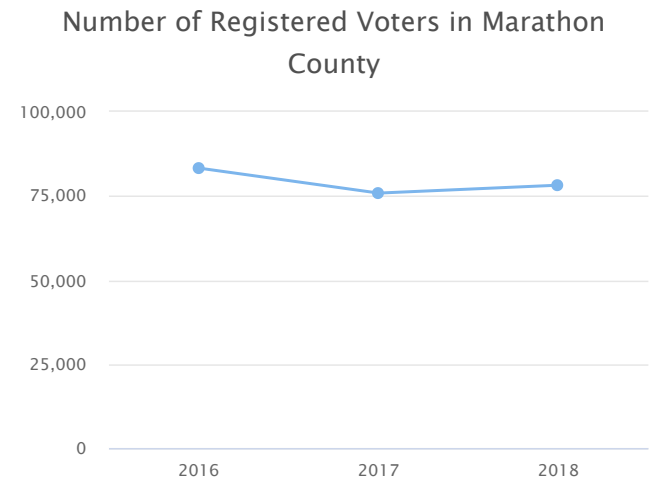


### Number of Registered Voters in Marathon County

78,178  
(2018)



Prior Value  
(75,825)



### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

When asked what most connects residents to their community, 8% of 2019 LIFE Survey respondents indicated civic engagement is part of what helps them feel connected.

## Why is this Important?

Human connections are essential to our mental and physical well-being.

Research also shows that adolescents who spend more time on electronic devices are less happy than those who spend time on most other activities. Other studies link increased social media use among young adults with loneliness.

While these concerns apply to Marathon County residents, LIFE survey and other indicators show that respondents continue to maintain important social connections. Nearly all survey respondents have someone they can talk to. Most (66%) say they choose to live here to be near family and friends. Eighty-six percent agree or somewhat agree that Marathon County is a good place for adults and families.

Community leaders have recognized the need to help seniors stay connected. The Woodson YMCA in Wausau is developing The Landing, a senior activity center. North Central Health Care plans extensive renovations to better serve seniors.

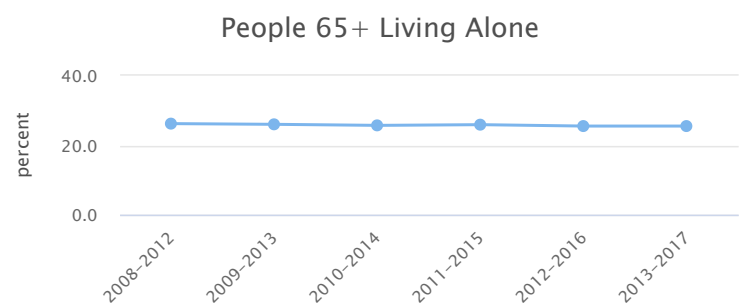
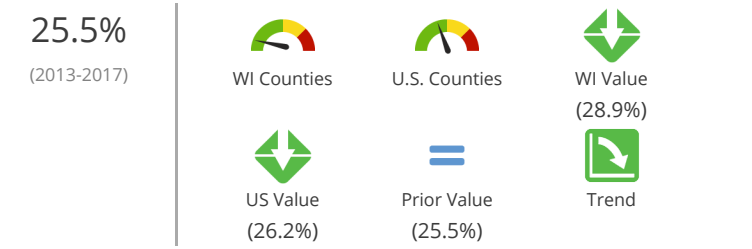
### Key Takeaways

While connections to community organizations has dropped based on LIFE survey results, county health data indicates that Marathon County maintains **social associations** at a higher rate than the state or U.S. residents overall.

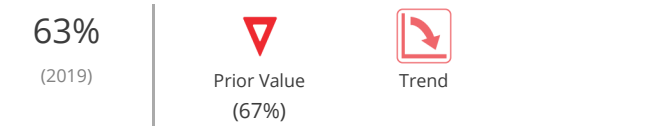
Marathon County residents have a higher rate of **social associations** (13.9 per 100,000) than others in Wisconsin (11.6 per 100,000) or the U.S. (9.3 per 100,000) Social associations include business, labor, religious, civic and other organizations. Individuals with strong social networks are more likely to perform healthy behaviors

**73% of Marathon County teens** reported having at least one teacher or other adult in their school who they can talk to if they had a problem.

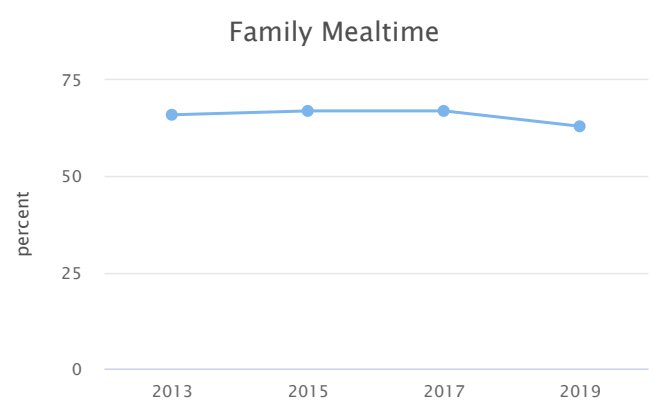
### People 65+ Living Alone



### Family Mealtime



The percentage of LIFE Survey respondents that ate a meal at a table with family and/or friends at least 3 days per week.



### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

**79% of 2019 LIFE Survey Respondents** feel connected to the community because of their family/friends.

Fewer LIFE Survey Respondents said they feel connected to the community because of organizations like clubs and churches | 2017 - 47% | 2019 - 29%

Twenty percent of LIFE Survey Respondents said they feel connected to the community because of access to needed service, an 18 percentage point drop from the previous survey | 2017 - 38% | 2019 - 20%

## Why is this Important?

High speed Internet access and usage play an important role in helping people connect to goods, services and information as well as to family, friends and entertainment sources. Broadband is high-speed Internet that comes in four different forms: cable, DSL (or Digital Subscriber Line), fiber-optic and satellite.

As Internet usage increases so does its variety of uses including those by businesses trying to connect with customers, health care providers sharing information with patients and job seekers looking for employment. Many schools have also begun utilizing iPads, Chromebooks or other tablets, which depend on high speed Internet to be effective, for students in and out of the classroom. Due to the limited data available regarding broadband Internet access, it is uncertain how many students in Marathon County are able to utilize these tools at home.

In Marathon County, it is estimated that less than half the population in rural parts of the county has access to broadband Internet. In urban areas, nearly all of the population has access to broadband Internet, though affordability may factor into a family's ability to purchase it. Those who live or work in geographic regions without access to affordable Internet may experience distinct disadvantages.

### Key Takeaways

Because of concerns about access to affordable high-speed internet, Marathon County has launched an extensive [study of broadband access](#) and its development.

In urban areas, 99% of the population in Marathon County as well as across Wisconsin have access to [25 Mbps/3Mbps](#). In rural areas, we begin to see a gap: only 41.5% of the rural population have the same access in Marathon County in contrast with 56.9% across rural Wisconsin.

### Households with an Internet Subscription

79.7%  
(2013-2017)



WI Counties

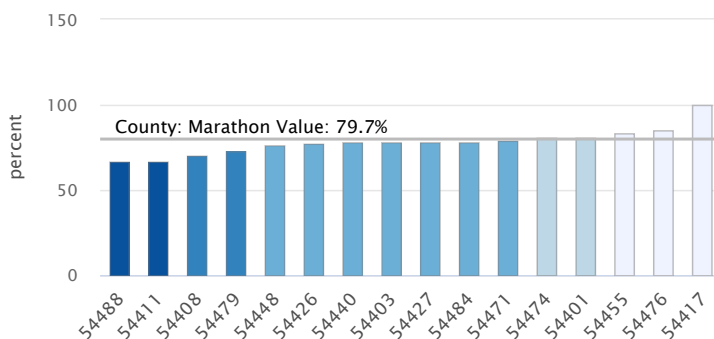


WI Value  
(79.1%)



US Value  
(78.7%)

### Households with an Internet Subscription



### Households with One or More Types of Computing Devices

85.8%  
(2013-2017)



WI Counties

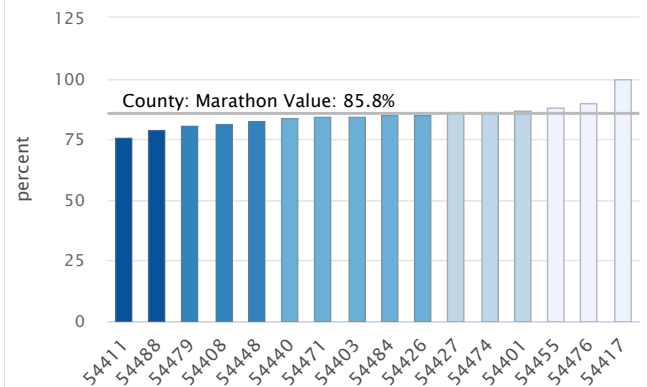


WI Value  
(86.6%)



US Value  
(87.2%)

### Households with One or More Types of Computing Devices



### Teen Computer/Video Game Usage (High School)

40.0%  
Percent of high school students  
(2019)



US Value  
(41.7% in 2015)



Prior Value  
(39.4%)

## Why is this Important?

Marathon County has a vibrant arts and culture scene with opportunities for individuals of all ages. Research has long shown that a thriving arts and culture sector in a community not only fuels economic development, but also enhances the connectedness of the community as a whole.

Marathon County has two internationally-acclaimed venues in Wausau, with the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum and The Grand Theater combining to bring over 200,000 guests through their doors each year. There are opportunities beyond Wausau, with over 30 arts organizations throughout the county, which not only provide opportunities for residents but also drive tourism and attract new residents to the region.

From diverse cultural activities such as Hmong New Year and Polish Fest to opportunities to participate in public art projects, individuals can take part in the arts in many ways. Residents can enjoy the Center for Visual Arts, Wausau Museum of Contemporary Art, community theater groups, and a variety of music venues, including the popular summer concert series on the 400 block. This is of great importance as strong arts and culture in a community is tied to broader civic engagement. People involved in the arts in any capacity demonstrate increased voter participation, volunteerism and charitable giving compared to those who are not. Abundant and accessible arts and culture opportunities for youth also help to build skills for the next generation of Marathon County residents.

### Key Takeaways

Over two-thirds of LIFE Survey respondents continue to be satisfied or very satisfied with the availability of arts and entertainment opportunities in Marathon County.

More than half respondents of LIFE Survey respondents were very or somewhat satisfied with the availability of family-friendly activities.

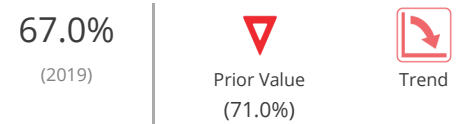
### Culture and Arts Bring Revenue into Communities.

Total Impact of the Non-Profit Arts and Culture Industry in Marathon County	
Expenditures by both organizations and audiences	
Total Direct Expenditures	\$9,174,439
Full-Time Equivalent Jobs	340
Resident Household Income	\$6,074,000
Local Government Revenue	\$309,000
State Government Revenue	\$464,000
Source: 2012 Total Impact of the Arts- Economic Prosperity Study IV	

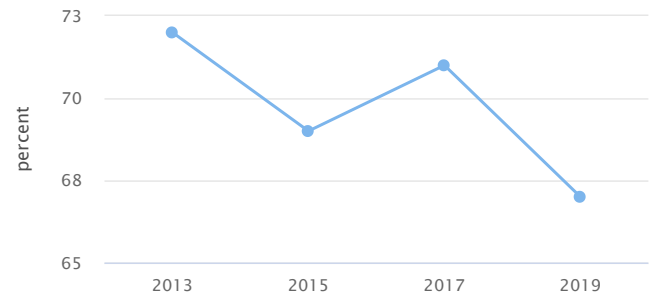
### LIFE Survey: Resident Perspectives

Only 4% of LIFE Survey respondents indicated they chose to live in Marathon County for the arts and entertainment opportunities.

### Marathon County Residents Satisfied with Arts/Entertainment



### Marathon County Residents Satisfied with Arts/Entertainment



### Marathon County Residents who are Satisfied with Family Activities

