

## Milwaukee area tops Brookings segregation study of census data

### But 2 UWM researchers fault its methodology

By Tom Tolan and Bill Glauber of the Journal Sentinel  
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Burdened by history and shaped by demography, Milwaukee remains one of the most racially segregated large metropolitan areas in the nation, according to U.S. census data released Tuesday and analyzed by the Brookings Institution.

The city and surrounding area, including Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties, sit atop a black-white segregation index of America's top 100 metro areas. Milwaukee is in a virtual tie with the Detroit and New York metro areas, and just ahead of Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo and St. Louis.

While the study was getting national attention, two University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee researchers cast doubt on the findings, saying the way segregation is defined defies common sense.

The data comes from the American Community Survey's new five-year estimates, representing 2005 through '09 numbers. Milwaukee actually showed a slight decline in segregation compared with the 2000 census numbers, according to the analysis, but it came at a time when American neighborhoods overall appeared to be becoming more integrated, especially in the South and West.

"It's not like this year Milwaukee is doing something wrong," said demographer William H. Frey, who led the Brookings Institution study. "It's an historical thing to a large extent."

Frey's findings come partly from a demographic index that tracks how evenly racial groups are spread among census tracts. In other words, for Milwaukee's metro area to meet the definition of black-white integration, every census tract from Franklin to Fredonia would have to be 16% African-American, matching the black population percentage.

John Pawasarat and Lois Quinn of the Employment and Training Institute at UWM said that methodology is not only faulty, it's racist.

"We have a (segregation) problem, there's no doubt about that," but the problem is not that black population is not spread evenly across the metro area, Quinn said. "I believe it's racist to say that a neighborhood that's majority African-American is segregated even if it's 30-40% white."

By Frey's calculations, she said, such metro areas as El Paso, Texas, and Modesto, Calif., are listed as among the nation's least segregated in terms of black-white mix, even though they have black populations of less than 3%.

"It's a completely invalid method of doing it," Pawasarat said.

Frey acknowledged it's not unusual for northern cities to still have patterns of segregation, especially in those

places where African-Americans moved during a period of racial discrimination.

"Most of the metros at the top of this list are in the same boat," he said.

Milwaukee also was ranked in the top 10 metropolitan areas for segregation between Hispanics and whites, Frey's analysis showed, though not among Asians and whites.

Frey's study was not the only one analyzing the new census numbers for metropolitan segregation. Another one by Brown University researcher John Logan put the Milwaukee area in second place, after New York, followed by Newark, N.J., Detroit and Chicago.

Logan's approach was similar to Frey's - drawing the same objections from Pawasarat and Quinn - but was based on smaller neighborhoods. He concluded black segregation had changed little from 2000 in the average metropolitan area.

### **Concentration of poverty**

Patrick Curley, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett's chief of staff, said the data "reaffirms that the city itself is the most diverse city in terms of race, ethnicity and economics in the state of Wisconsin. We're proud of that."

But citing statistics from Quinn that showed Milwaukee to have 73% of the poor people in the metropolitan area - most of whom are people of color - Curley added: "The powers that be, be it legislative or suburban and exurban, are very comfortable with the fact that Milwaukee is home to the region's poor population."

One statistic released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Tuesday underlined the fact that not many poor people live in the suburbs here - at least the outlying ones.

Ozaukee and Waukesha counties were among only 19 counties across the country that had poverty rates below 5%.

"People live where they want to and where they can afford to," said Milwaukee Common Council President Willie Hines. "So we just have to make sure that our policies are inclusive to increase the choices for all residents."

Tuesday's data - an astounding 11 billion estimates from 2005 through 2009 data - provide information on communities large and small.

Next week, the U.S. Census Bureau will release the first counts from the 2010 census. Those figures will include the overall population of the country and the states - data on which congressional reapportionment will be based.