

DATA REPORT  
2021

# Advancing Racial Equity in Linn County

# A Report About Racial Disparities in Linn County

November 2021

The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation exists to improve the quality of life in Linn County and its many communities. We do this by focusing on priorities that will help our community succeed now and position our community for success in the future. Our goal is to support healthy communities full of healthy people, which we pursue through strategic investments in the organizations that are working to make this a reality. As a solutions-oriented organization, we use data to identify trends and develop those investment strategies, allowing us to respond to changing needs, challenges and opportunities.

This document, prepared by the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, was created to provide the landscape and facts about racial disparities in its service area of Linn County. It as prepared to inform and educate Linn County residents.

Why Racial Equity

The communities we serve are increasingly composed of people of color, who have long faced significantly more barriers to improving their quality of life than their White peers. At the local, state, and national level, racial disparities persist in a wide range of categories—everything from healthcare to school discipline. Research shows these disparities result from inequitable practices and policies that lead to divergent outcomes<sup>i</sup>.

Our community has a better chance of trending toward a healthy, thriving community if we avoid leaving portions of it behind. A focus on racial equity will ensure that as our community’s demographics shift, we will be able to create not only personal success, but also economic growth. For the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve, it is imperative that racial equity becomes and remains a factor in all Community Foundation work. Moving forward, the Community Foundation will work to find and implement solutions that close the racial wealth gap and other disparities in our community.

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Changing Demographics<sup>ii</sup>

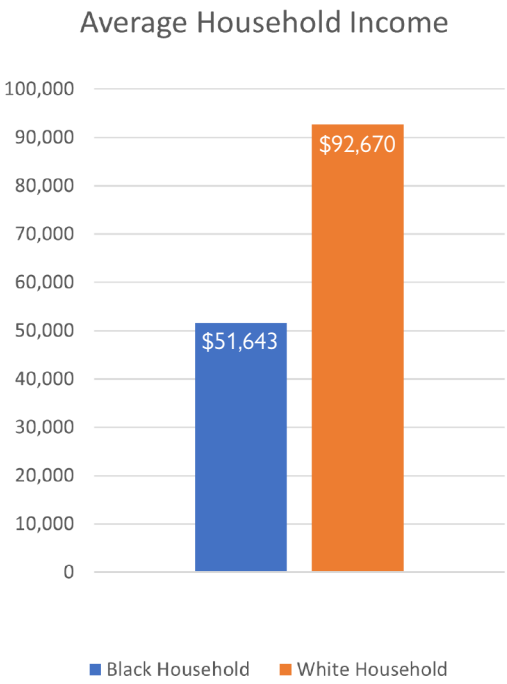
The United States is roughly 60% White, but people of color are expected to be the majority by 2045<sup>iii</sup>. While Iowa and Linn County are both behind this curve, our demographics are changing quickly, as evidenced by the racial generation gap: 4% of seniors in Iowa are people of color, but 21% of Iowans under 18 are people of color. Overall, 15% of Iowans are people of color, but that number will rise to about 27% by 2050<sup>iv</sup>.

Between 2012 and 2017, Linn County’s population grew by 3.7%, and 47.1% of that growth was attributable to immigrants<sup>v</sup>. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of people who identify as White alone fell in both Linn County and Cedar Rapids. In the same time period, there was a sharp increase in those who identify as Black alone and Asian or Pacific Islander alone, as well as those who identify as belonging to two or more races.

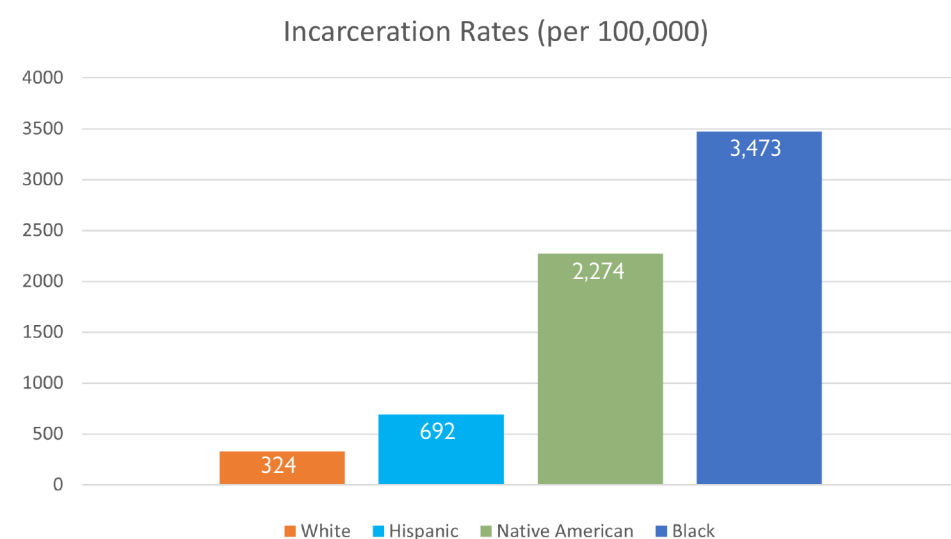
	Linn County		Cedar Rapids	
	2010	2020	2010	2020
White alone	191,884 (90.8%)	190,644 (82.8%)	111,144 (88%)	107,121 (77.8%)
Black alone	8,346 (4.0%)	16,449 (7.1%)	7,046 (5.6%)	14,338 (10.4%)
Native American alone	565 (0.3%)	548 (0.2%)	392 (0.3%)	402 (0.3%)
Asian or Pacific Islander alone	3,986 (1.9%)	5,902 (2.6%)	2,943 (2.3%)	4,252 (3.1%)
Two or more races	4,933 (2.3%)	13,737 (6.0%)	3,627 (2.9%)	9,323 (6.8%)

Disparities

While our communities have grown more diverse in recent years, racial disparities in educational attainment, income, unemployment, and neighborhood poverty have changed little since 1980.



- Average household income in Linn County is \$68,710 but is \$92,670 for White-alone households and \$51,643 for Black-alone households<sup>vi</sup>.
- Unemployment in Iowa in 2017 was 2-3 times higher for immigrants and people of color than for U.S.-born White people<sup>iv</sup>.
- Statewide, 8% of White workers are considered working poor, compared to 21% of Black workers, 20% of Latinx workers, and 18% of people of color<sup>iv</sup>.
  - Working Poor: Working full-time and having a family income less than 200% of Federal Poverty Level (about \$50,000 for a family of four in 2017).
- In Iowa in 1980, people of color working full time earned as much as their White peers. In 2017, the median hourly wage for full-time workers 25-64 is \$20 for White people and \$17 for people of color—a difference of 15%<sup>iv</sup>.
- 18% of Black Iowans live in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared with 4% of White Iowans and 5% of all Iowans<sup>iv</sup>.
- In 2010, Black Iowans made up just 3% of the state’s population, but 23% of the state’s prison population. White Iowans made up 89% of the state’s population, but just 66% of the prison population.



- o Incarceration rates per 100,000 lowans in each racial or ethnic group:
  - White: 324
  - Hispanic: 692
  - Native American: 2,274
  - Black: 3,473<sup>vii</sup>
- o Despite using illicit drugs at similar rates, Black Americans are imprisoned for drug charges at a rate nearly six times that of White Americans<sup>viii</sup>.
- o Per the 2020 Iowa Department of Corrections Racial Disparity Report, Black inmates were more likely to be supervised under maximum custody or placed in administrative segregation than those of other racial groups.
- Black students, who represent 18.1% of Cedar Rapids Community School District’s (CRCSD) enrollment, make up more than 40% of the district’s suspensions<sup>ix</sup>.

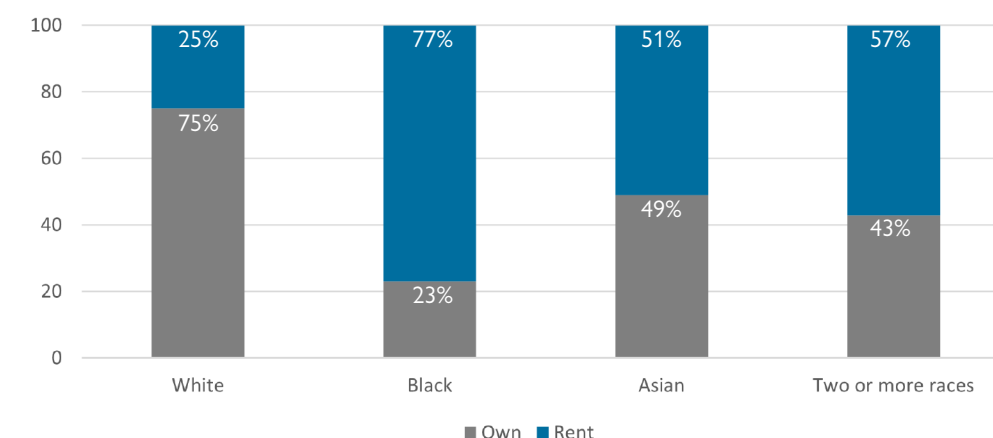
Many of these areas are considered social determinants of health, which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines as “conditions in the place where people live, learn, work and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life risks and outcomes.” Inequitable access to the social and economic resources necessary for maintaining good health has led to racial disparities in the health and wellbeing of Linn County residents:

- Between 2013 and 2015, the infant mortality rate in Iowa was more than twice as high for those born to non-Hispanic Black mothers than for those born to non-Hispanic white mothers (8.46 and 4.15 per 1,000 live births, respectively) . Between 2007 and 2016, for every 100,000 births, 13 white women died of pregnancy-related complications, compared to 30 American Indian or Alaskan Native women, and 41 Black women<sup>xi</sup>.
- 18.8% of Hispanic Linn County residents are uninsured, as are 8.6% of Black residents and 10.2% of residents who identify as two or more races. Just 2.4% of Asian residents and 3.8% of White residents are uninsured<sup>xii</sup>.
- Black people in Linn County are almost ten times more likely to contract HIV than White people<sup>xii</sup>.
- A 2018 survey found that 35.5% of Black residents and 33.5% of residents of two or more races had 16 or more poor mental health days in the previous 30 days, compared to 7.3% of White residents<sup>xii</sup>.

## Wealth and Economics

Nationwide, White families have significantly higher family wealth—an average of \$983,000, compared to \$142,500 for Black families and \$165,500 for Hispanic families<sup>xiii</sup>. For many families, housing is one of the most significant components of wealth, and racial disparities in homeownership are significant in Cedar Rapids:

- White—75% own, 25% rent
- Black—23% own, 77% rent
- Asian—49% own, 51% rent
- Two or more races—43% own, 57% rent



Under a scenario of racial equity in income, the University of Minnesota projected Iowa’s GDP would have been \$190 billion in 2017, compared to the actual GDP of \$183 billion. Additionally, the study found that racial equity in income would increase average annual income for people of color by 53% (from \$29,083 to \$44,499)<sup>iii</sup>.

## Root Causes

These disparities exist in every aspect of our economy and society because they are a result of a history of discriminatory policies and attitudes. Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example, governments in the U.S. allowed and even encouraged redlining—the practice of denying mortgages or other services to people of color despite creditworthiness. This not only denied people of color access to homeownership (one of the most significant drivers of wealth in the U.S.), but also created strict neighborhood boundaries and a cycle of low market values, poor schools, and a lack of proximity to desirable jobs<sup>xiv</sup>. Along with informalized practices of racial discrimination, this has created systems in which people of color face more barriers to achieving good health and wellbeing than their White peers. The disparities we see today in communities across the country are direct results of such policies and practices.

## Resources

<sup>i</sup> Joseph R. Betancourt and Angela W. Maina, “The Institute of Medicine Report: Unequal Treatment,” Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine. Matthew C. Fadus et al., “Racial Disparities in Elementary School Disciplinary Actions: Findings from the ABCD Study,” Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

<sup>ii</sup> United States Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Census.

<sup>iii</sup> William H. Frey, “The US Will Become ‘Minority White’ in 2045, Census Projects,” Brookings Institution.

<sup>iv</sup> PolicyLink/USC Equity Research Institute, National Equity Atlas, [nationalequityatlas.org](http://nationalequityatlas.org).

<sup>v</sup> New American Economy, “New Americans in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,” [research.newamericaneconomy.org](http://research.newamericaneconomy.org).

<sup>vi</sup> United States Census Bureau Public Use Microdata Sample 2019 ACS 5-year Estimates.

<sup>vii</sup> Prison Policy Initiative, Iowa Profile, calculated from US Census 2010

<sup>viii</sup> Criminal Justice Fact Sheet, NAACP.org.

<sup>ix</sup> United States Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017, [ocrdata.ed.gov](http://ocrdata.ed.gov).

<sup>x</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “State Variations in Infant Mortality by Race and Hispanic Origin of Mother, 2013-2015.

<sup>xi</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths—United States, 2007-2016.

<sup>xii</sup> Linn County Public Health, “Racial Differences in Health Outcomes,” January 2020.

<sup>xiii</sup> Federal Reserve Board, “Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances,” [federalreserve.gov](http://federalreserve.gov).

<sup>xiv</sup> Bruce Mitchell and Juan Franco, “HOLC ‘Redlining’ Maps: The Persistent Structure of Segregation and Economic Inequality,” March 2018.



324 3rd St SE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52401  
319.366.2862 | [www.gcrcf.org](http://www.gcrcf.org)