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The State of Black Milwaukee in National Perspective: Racial Inequality in the Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas. In 65 Charts and Tables

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*The State of Black Milwaukee in National Perspective:
Racial Inequality in the Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas
In 65 Charts and Tables*

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July 2020

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

The author of this study is Marc V. Levine (veblen@uwm.edu), Professor Emeritus of History, Economic Development, and Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and founding director of the UW-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development (CED). Research assistance was provided by Shuayee Lee, Catherine Madison, and Lisa Heuler Williams of the CED staff. The author also wishes to acknowledge the especially helpful insights over the years, on topics covered in this study, from UWM colleagues Professors Joel Rast, Anne Bonds, Margo Anderson, William Holahan; Robert Smith (now at Marquette) and Michael Rosen (at MATC); as well as the enlightening comments from and discussion with hundreds of students and community members in university classes and community forums throughout the Milwaukee region to whom much of this material was presented.

The Center for Economic Development is a unit of the College of Letters and Science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The College established CED in 1990 to conduct university research on crucial issues in urban economic development, and to provide technical assistance to nonprofit organizations and units of government working to improve the Greater Milwaukee economy in socially just ways. Racial equity and racial justice have been core concerns of the Center since its founding. The analysis and conclusions presented in this study are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of UW-Milwaukee, or any of the organizations providing financial support or partnership with the CED.

A guiding principal at CED is that informed public debate is vital to identifying good public policies and solutions to societal problems. The Center publishes detailed studies on economic conditions, trends, and policies; shorter briefing papers on economic development and public policy issues; and “technical assistance” reports of applied economic analysis. In these ways, as well as in conferences and public lectures sponsored or co-sponsored by the Center, we hope to contribute to public discussion on economic development policy in Greater Milwaukee and in the State of Wisconsin.

Further information about the Center and its publications and activities is available on our web site: www.ced.uwm.edu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At this moment of national reckoning, with cities across the country grappling with the state of racial injustice in their communities, it is important to have a solid base of comparative and historical data to guide actions and policies. In 65 charts and tables, this study aims to provide that comparative base, examining how Black communities in the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas fare on measures such as residential segregation; income, poverty, and intergenerational economic mobility; employment and earnings; the racial composition of private-sector economic decision-makers; mass incarceration; educational attainment; school segregation; and health care outcomes. The charts and tables permit readers from metropolitan areas across the country to examine how the status of their region's Black community compares to the nation's other large metropolitan areas on all of these indicators. Where is Black household income the highest? What metro area has the lowest Black male or female employment rate? Which metro area posts the highest Black incarceration rate? Where is racial segregation in schooling the most intense? All these questions –and many more—are answered in this study.

Our particular emphasis is on Milwaukee, which we argue represents the archetype of modern-day metropolitan racial apartheid and inequality. And our findings are devastating: on virtually all key measures of Black community well-being, Milwaukee ranks at or near the bottom when ranked against other large metropolitan areas. Moreover, when we examine historical trends in some key areas, the results are equally grim: Black Milwaukee is generally worse off today than it was 40 or 50 years ago. This study documents how poorly Black communities across the nation's largest metro areas were faring – even before the COVID-19 economic collapse. But no metropolitan area ranks as consistently poorly, across the board, on indicators of Black community well-being as does Milwaukee.

Some key findings:

- Discernible racial desegregation has occurred in many metro areas since the 1980s, but not very much in Milwaukee, which remains the nation's most segregated metropolitan area, with the region's racial geography marked in particular by the nation's lowest rate of Black suburbanization.
- Milwaukee's Black community is exceptionally impoverished. Black median household income in Milwaukee, adjusted for inflation, has declined by an astonishing 30 percent since 1979. Today, Milwaukee has the lowest Black median household income, adjusted for metro area cost-of-living differences, of any of the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas. The income of the median Black household in Milwaukee is only 42 percent that of a white (non-Hispanic) household, the biggest racial disparity in the country. Small surprise, therefore, that the Black poverty rate in Milwaukee –33.4 percent—is the highest Black poverty rate among the nation's largest metropolitan areas, and almost five times the white rate.
- The ability of low-income Black youth to climb the economic ladder in Milwaukee is among the most truncated in the country. A Black child born into a

low-income household in Milwaukee in the late 1970s or early 1980s has estimated household income in early adulthood about 11 percent less than his/her low-income counterpart born and raised in Baltimore and over 40 percent less than his/her counterpart born and raised in Boston. Moreover, the racial gap in the ability of low-income youth to climb the economic ladder is wider in Milwaukee than all but three other metro areas (Pittsburgh, Chicago, and New York). A child born into a low-income Black household in Milwaukee has estimated young adult income 80 percent lower than his/her white counterpart.

- Milwaukee has the second-lowest Black homeownership rate among the nation's largest metropolitan areas (27.2 percent). Only Minneapolis' is lower.
- Only two-thirds of Black males between the ages of 25-54 (prime working-age adults) were employed in Milwaukee in 2016-18, the 3rd lowest rate among large metros. (By contrast, 85 percent of prime-age Black males were employed in Milwaukee in 1970). The Black-white gap in male employment rates in Milwaukee is the second largest in the country (only Buffalo's is higher).
- While education clearly matters for Black males in securing employment—a Black college graduate in Milwaukee is almost four times as likely as a Black high school dropout to be employed—race also strongly affects the labor market. A white high school dropout is over twice as likely to be employed in Milwaukee as a Black dropout; and white high school *dropouts* post a higher employment rate than Black high school *graduates* in Milwaukee.
- The median annual earnings for Black male and female workers in Milwaukee, even adjusted to take into account Milwaukee's relatively low cost of living, nonetheless are still among the lowest for Blacks in the nation's large metros. In addition, the median Black male worker in Milwaukee makes only 59.7 percent of a white worker's earnings, the worst racial disparity in the U.S. Only 17.4 percent of Black males, and only 14.6 percent of Black females in Milwaukee make more than \$40,000 a year (compared to 46.3 percent of white males).
- Blacks are severely underrepresented in management occupations in Milwaukee in proportion to their weight in the labor force. Blacks hold management jobs at only two-fifths of their presence in overall employment in Milwaukee, the lowest ratio in the country. The rate for Blacks in top-executive positions in Milwaukee is even lower.
- Black schoolchildren in metro Milwaukee are as likely to attend an intensely segregated school—a school in which enrollment is over 90 percent minorities—as they were in 1965. 72.2 percent of Black schoolchildren in Milwaukee attend hypersegregated schools, the highest rate in the country, and significantly higher than the percentage 30 years ago. Moreover, 35 percent of Milwaukee's Black schoolchildren today attend so-called “apartheid schools” (schools with over 90 percent minority enrollment).

- Milwaukee registers the third-highest rate of Black incarceration in state prisons among the 50 largest metro areas in the US (measured by Black incarceration rates in the central county of the metro area). The Black prison incarceration rate in Milwaukee is 10-times the white rate.
- In Milwaukee, Black infant mortality rates, teen pregnancy rates, and low birth-weight babies rates rank among the worst for Black communities in the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas.

The study concludes with an intriguing comparison of Birmingham, Alabama and Milwaukee and with an exhortation to “rewrite the racial rules” in Milwaukee and elsewhere where racial injustice prevails.

INTRODUCTION

In the past month, in the aftermath of the George Floyd killing and the mobilization of Black Lives Matter, there has been a remarkable awakening of national attention to the realities of systemic racism and entrenched racial inequality in the U.S. One report noted that “Black Lives Matter may be the largest movement in U.S. history,” suggesting that “about 15 million to 26 million people in the United States have participated in demonstrations over the death of George Floyd and others in recent weeks.”¹ Public opinion surveys revealed that “never before in the history of modern polling have Americans expressed such widespread agreement that racial discrimination plays a role in policing – and in society at large.”² In one survey, from Monmouth University, “76 percent of Americans –including 71 percent of white people—called racism and discrimination ‘a big problem’ in the United States.”³

At such a moment of national reckoning, with cities across the country grappling with the state of racial injustice in their communities, it is important to have a solid base of comparative and historical data to guide actions and policies. In 65 charts and tables, this study aims to provide that comparative base, examining how Black communities in the nation’s largest metropolitan areas fare on measures such as residential segregation; income, poverty, and intergenerational economic mobility; employment and earnings; the racial composition of private-sector economic decision-makers; mass incarceration; educational attainment; school segregation; and health care outcomes. The charts and tables permit readers from metropolitan areas across the country to examine how the status of their region’s Black community compares to the nation’s other large metropolitan areas on all of these indicators. Where is Black household income the highest? What metro area has the lowest Black male or female employment rate? Which metro area posts the highest Black incarceration rate? Where is racial segregation in schooling the most intense? All these questions –and many more—are answered in this study.

¹ Larry Buchanan, Quoctrung Bui and Jugal K. Patel, “Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History,” *The New York Times*, 3 July 2020. Access at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>

² Giovanni Russonello, “Why Most Americans Support the Protests,” *The New York Times*, 5 June 2020. Access at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/us/politics/polling-george-floyd-protests-racism.html>

³ Ibid. However, the data are much more ambiguous on what policies and programs Americans would actually support to address racial inequality. See Meredith Conroy and Perry Bacon, “White Democrats Are Wary of Big Ideas to Address Racial Inequality,” *FiveThirtyEight.com*, 14 July 2020. Access at: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/white-democrats-are-wary-of-big-ideas-to-address-racial-inequality/>

Our particular emphasis is on Milwaukee, which we argue represents the archetype of modern-day metropolitan racial apartheid and inequality. And our findings are devastating: on virtually all key measures of Black community well-being, Milwaukee ranks at or near the bottom when ranked against other large metropolitan areas. Moreover, when we examine historical trends in some key areas, the results are equally grim: Black Milwaukee is generally worse off today than it was 40 or 50 years ago. Real household income for Blacks in Milwaukee has declined by 30 percent over the past four decades; the Black poverty rate is higher than it was in 1970 (though lower than its peak in 1990); Black male employment rates have plummeted since 1970 (though had improved, at least through 2018, since the Great Recession); and the Black incarceration rate in Milwaukee is over two and a half times as high as it was 25 years ago and 10 times higher than the white rate (though it is down from its peak in 2003). The region's schools are as segregated as they were 50 years ago (and significantly more than 30 years ago), and residential racial segregation is higher in Milwaukee than any of the nation's largest metropolitan areas (though slightly lower than it measured 40 years ago).

As dismal as these findings are, we must also note that the data underlying them all pre-date the COVID-19 economic calamity. The full extent of the economic impact of the COVID recession/depression on racial groups in local communities remains unknown, given the temporal limitations of available data (for example, there is a two-year lag in reported American Community Survey data, the most widely-used source for city and metro area socio-economic indicators broken down by race and ethnicity). But in light of trends in the national data -- such as the steep drops in Black male and female employment rates, the concentration of Black employment in industries and occupations especially vulnerable to pandemic-related job losses (such as hospitality and personal care), and the millions of persons who have lost health insurance-- we know that the impact of the COVID economic collapse on local Black communities has been staggering. The structural racial inequality and struggling conditions in Black Milwaukee (and elsewhere) documented in this study can only have worsened in the wake of the unmanaged pandemic.

There is sometimes a refrain in activist circles that “we don't need any more studies,” or “we know the facts – now is the time for action.” It *is* surely the time for action on racial injustice in Milwaukee and elsewhere. And it is certainly already widely known, at least in general terms, how poorly Black Milwaukee has fared socio-economically over the years – indeed, reports from

this Center have consistently documented elements of that reality over the past three decades. But there is always the need for more research and analysis: We *don't* always have (all) the facts, often what are proclaimed as “facts” in public discourse or the media are based on poor research, tendentious opinion, or even myths, and there are always new and important data that pinpoint key problem areas as well fruitful directions for policy interventions. In the last analysis, providing comprehensive comparative data on a range of indicators can help us see which metros are doing better on racial equity than others, perhaps draw some lessons from the “success stories,” and, at the very least, provide some benchmarks so we can set a path to racial justice in the years ahead. That, then, is the goal of this study.

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Milwaukee has, since the 1970s, been ranked among America's most racially segregated metropolitan areas, a finding confirmed in every serious academic study on the subject.⁴ Social scientists measure residential segregation in several ways, but the most widely used and accepted measure is the "index of dissimilarity," sometimes also called the "segregation index." This index measures the degree to which racial groups reside in equal proportion in neighborhoods (or even on city blocks) to their weight in the city or metro area's population. The dissimilarity index portrays segregation in a metropolitan area (or city) on a scale from zero to 100, where low values indicate that the racial composition of every neighborhood resembles that of the entire region (or city), and high values reveal clustering of racial groups into separate areas. A value of 60 or above on the dissimilarity index is considered "very high" segregation; 80 is considered "extreme" or "hyper" segregation. In 1970, the Black-white dissimilarity index in Milwaukee was 90.5, the fourth highest level of segregation among the 30 biggest U.S. metropolises containing large black populations (see Table 1). Since 1970, metro Milwaukee's segregation index has almost always exceeded 80 (a level of extreme segregation), and Milwaukee's rate has consistently been much higher than the average level of segregation in the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas (see Chart 1). Today, as Chart 2 shows, Milwaukee ranks as the nation's most racially segregated metropolis, with a Black-white segregation index just barely below 80.

In a widely publicized study released in 2012, economists Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor triumphantly proclaimed "the end of segregation" in American cities. Since the 1970s, they reported, the racial segregation of residents in U.S. metropolitan areas has declined steadily, a shrinking percentage of Black residents now live in "all-Black ghetto neighborhoods," and "all-white neighborhoods are effectively extinct."⁵

⁴ The list of important studies of racial segregation in US metropolitan areas is long, but key works documenting Milwaukee's extreme level of Black-white segregation over the past 50 years include: Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); John R. Logan, "The Persistence of Segregation in the 21st Century Metropolis," *City and Community*, 12:2 (June 2013): 160-168; Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor, *The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America's Neighborhoods, 1890-2010* (New York: The Manhattan Institute, 2012); William Frey, "New Racial Segregation Measures for Large Metropolitan Areas: Analysis of the 1990-2010 Decennial Census," University of Michigan Population Studies Center, Institute for Social Research. Accessed at: <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/dis/census/segregation2010.html>; John Iceland and Daniel H. Weinberg, with Erika Steinmetz, *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980-2000* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002); and Richard H. Sander, Yana A. Kucheva, and Jonathan M. Zasloff, *Moving toward Integration: The Past and Future of Fair Housing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

⁵ Glaeser and Vigdor, *End of the Segregated Century*, p. 1-2

Although the Glaeser-Vigdor study was criticized as hyperbolic for claiming an “end to the segregated century,”⁶ there *has* been a striking reduction in residential segregation in numerous metro areas, particularly in many that were extremely segregated 50 years ago. Table 1 arrays trends in the 16 metropolitan areas that, in 1970, posted segregation indexes above 80, a rate denoting extreme segregation in the eyes of experts. In metro areas such as Dallas, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, the diminution in racial residential segregation has been especially large, but all of the hypersegregated metros saw segregation rates fall markedly. Even Milwaukee’s segregation index has fallen from its hypersegregated level of 1970.

Nevertheless, as Chart 2 shows, racial segregation in Milwaukee today remains stubbornly high, still at the level of “extreme segregation” and higher than in any of the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas. One key element underpinning this segregation can be seen in Charts 3-5: Milwaukee has the lowest rate of Black suburbanization of any large metro area in the country. As Table 2 shows, most large metropolitan areas have experienced significant increases in Black suburbanization since the 1980s; indeed, on average, in the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas today, over 53 percent of Black residents live in the region’s suburbs (compared to just 29 percent in 1980).⁷ By contrast, while the rate of Black suburbanization in Milwaukee has increased from a near-apartheid 2.5 percent in 1980 to 11.4 percent in 2018 --with small but discernible growth in the Milwaukee County inner suburbs of Brown Deer, Glendale, Shorewood, and Wauwatosa-- the region nevertheless remains the only large metropolitan area in the U.S. where almost 90 percent of the region’s Black population lives in the central city. As Tables 2 and Chart 2 show, no place else – not even strongly segregated metros like Detroit, Cleveland, or Buffalo-- is even close.⁸ The degree to which Milwaukee’s African Americans

⁶ See, for example: John R. Logan, “The Persistence of Segregation in the 21st Century Metropolis,” *City and Community*, 12:2 (June 2013): 160-168; Jonathan Rothwell, “Reports of the End of Segregation Greatly Exaggerated,” *The New Republic*, 31 January 2012; Sam Roberts, “Segregation Curtailed in U.S. Cities, Study Finds,” *The New York Times*, 30 January 2012; and Richard Alba and Steven Romalewski, “The End of Segregation? Hardly,” Center for Urban Research, City University of New York. Accessed at: <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Center-for-Urban-Research/CUR-research-initiatives/The-End-of-Segregation-Hardly>.

A nuanced discussion of the decline in hypersegregation is Douglas Massey and Jonathan Tannen, “A Research Note on Trends in Black Hypersegregation,” *Demography* 52:3 (June 2015): 1025-1034.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of the progress on residential desegregation in many metro areas after 1970, which the authors attribute in part to the impact of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, see Sander et. al., *Moving toward Integration*.

⁸ What makes this concentration in Milwaukee even more striking, is that even places such as Jacksonville, Indianapolis, Louisville, or Columbus –which have either consolidated governments or annexation policies so that their central cities have subsumed areas that in most other regions would be autonomous suburbs—the level of Black suburbanization is *still higher* than it is in Milwaukee (Chart 2). Needless to say, it would be misleading to compare suburbanization levels in these jurisdictions to Milwaukee.

have remained concentrated in central city neighborhoods over the past fifty years is unparalleled among large metropolitan areas in the United States.

As Chart 5 shows, even among relatively affluent Black households – those with annual income over \$100,000 a year—the rate of suburbanization in Milwaukee lags far behind the nation’s other large metropolitan areas (although in Milwaukee, as elsewhere, affluent Blacks are more likely to live in the region’s suburbs than the African American population as a whole).⁹ Indeed, segregated largely into the central city, a higher percentage of Milwaukee’s affluent Black households than in any other metro area in the country actually live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty –where 40% or more of residents are poor.¹⁰

In short, even as many U.S. metro areas have edged toward more complex and diverse patterns of racial geography in recent years, hypersegregated Milwaukee continues to resemble, more than any other metro, the stereotype of “two regions in one, separate and unequal.”¹¹ In turn, as we shall see, this persistent, entrenched residential segregation underpins the long litany of glaring racial disparities in income, poverty, employment, and schooling that mark Milwaukee’s social fabric.¹²

⁹ To be sure, substantial Black suburbanization is not necessarily evidence, in and of itself, of metropolitan area desegregation. Many of the regions in the U.S. posting high segregation index scores also have relatively high (and increasing) rates of Black suburbanization. A Brookings Institution study in 2014 documented the growth of predominantly minority, high poverty suburban communities since 2000, and the 2014 events in Ferguson, a predominantly Black suburb in a St. Louis metropolitan area containing several “suburban ghettos,” certainly underscored that minority suburbanization does not necessarily result in desegregation –to say nothing of eradicating racial inequality. (See Elizabeth Kneebone, “The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012,” Brookings Institution, 31 July 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/concentrated-poverty#/M10420>; and Ben Casselman, “The Poorest Corner of Town,” 26 August 2014. Accessed at: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/ferguson-missouri/>). But, in the case of Milwaukee, the low rate of minority suburbanization –or, put another way, the extremely high concentration of African Americans in inner city ghetto neighborhoods-- is an integral component in the metro area-wide pattern of residential segregation. There are no Fergusons –yet—in metro Milwaukee.

¹⁰ See Marc V. Levine, *Race, Class, and Concentrated Poverty in America’s Largest Metropolitan Areas: 1970-2018* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development Working Paper, forthcoming, 2020).

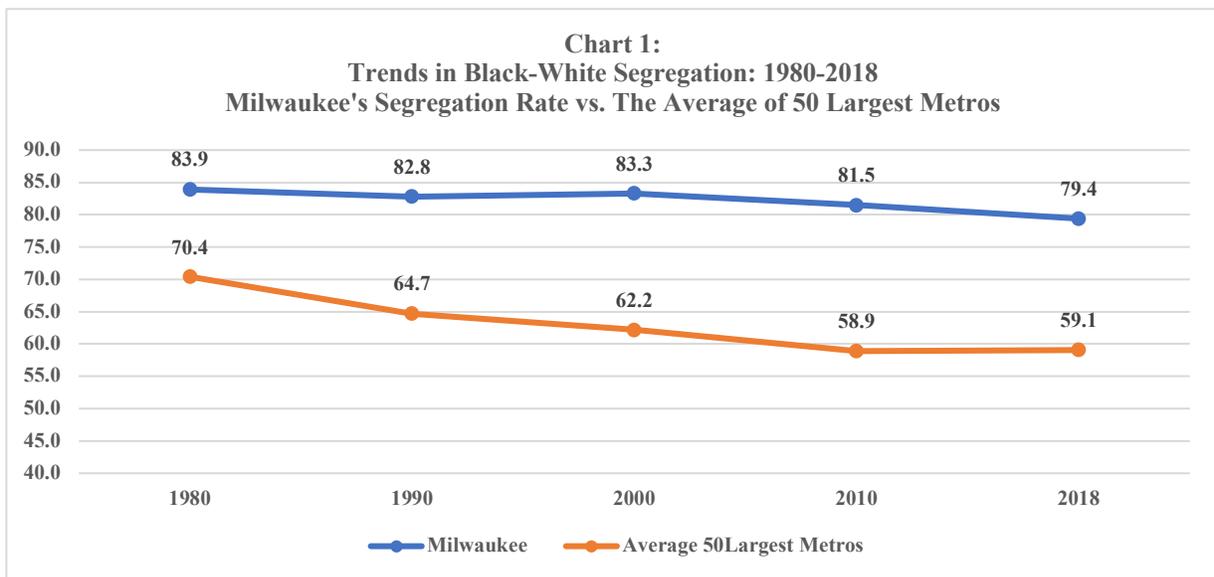
¹¹ I have deliberately borrowed and paraphrased here, of course, the famous and striking words of the Kerner Commission.

¹² A recent paper found that residential segregation was the most important independent variable explaining the status of metropolitan areas on an index of African American well-being. See Marc V. Levine, *The AALAM/UWMCED Index of African American Well-Being in the Nation’s Largest Metropolitan Areas* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2020), pp. 26-30.

Table 1:

**America’s Most Hypersegregated Metropolises in 1970 --- Fifty Years Later
Black-White Segregation Indexes Today in the Nation’s Most
Segregated Large Metropolitan Areas of 1970**

Metropolitan Area	1970 Index of Dissimilarity	2014-2018 Index of Dissimilarity	Index Change
Chicago	91.9	75.0	-16.9
Los Angeles	91.0	66.3	-24.7
Cleveland	90.8	72.8	-18.0
Milwaukee	90.5	79.4	-11.1
Detroit	88.4	73.3	-15.1
Kansas City	87.4	59.1	-28.4
Buffalo	87.0	70.7	-16.3
Dallas	86.9	56.5	-30.4
Miami	85.1	64.0	-21.1
St. Louis	84.7	71.8	-12.9
Atlanta	82.1	58.8	-23.3
Baltimore	81.9	63.2	-18.7
Columbus	81.8	62.1	-19.7
Indianapolis	81.7	64.3	-17.4
Washington, D.C.	81.1	61.0	-20.1
New York	81.0	75.8	-5.2



**Chart 2:
Black-White Segregation Index in Nation's Largest Metro Areas:
2014-2018**

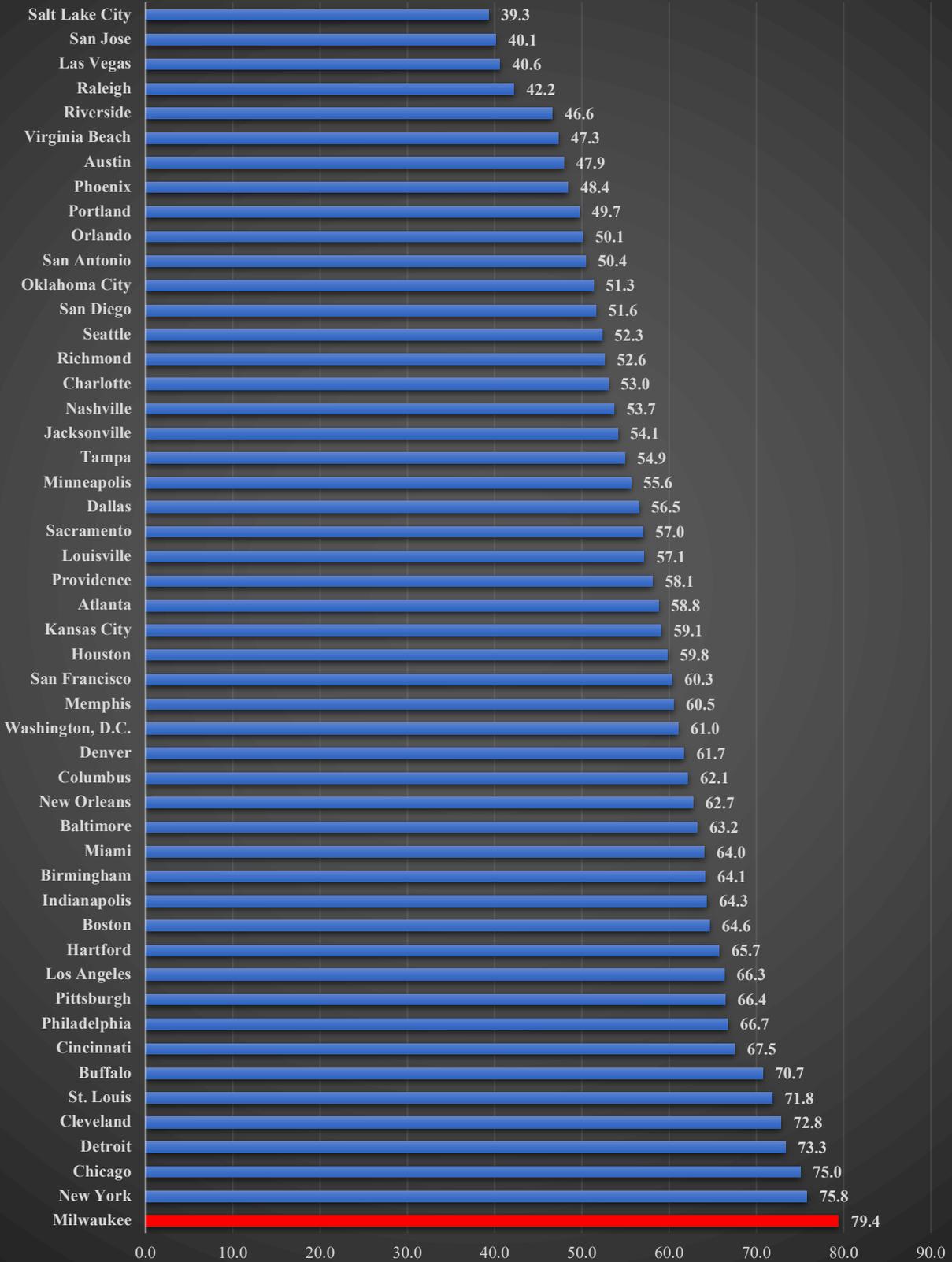


Chart 3:
Share of Black Population Living in Suburbs of Metro Area:
2014-2018

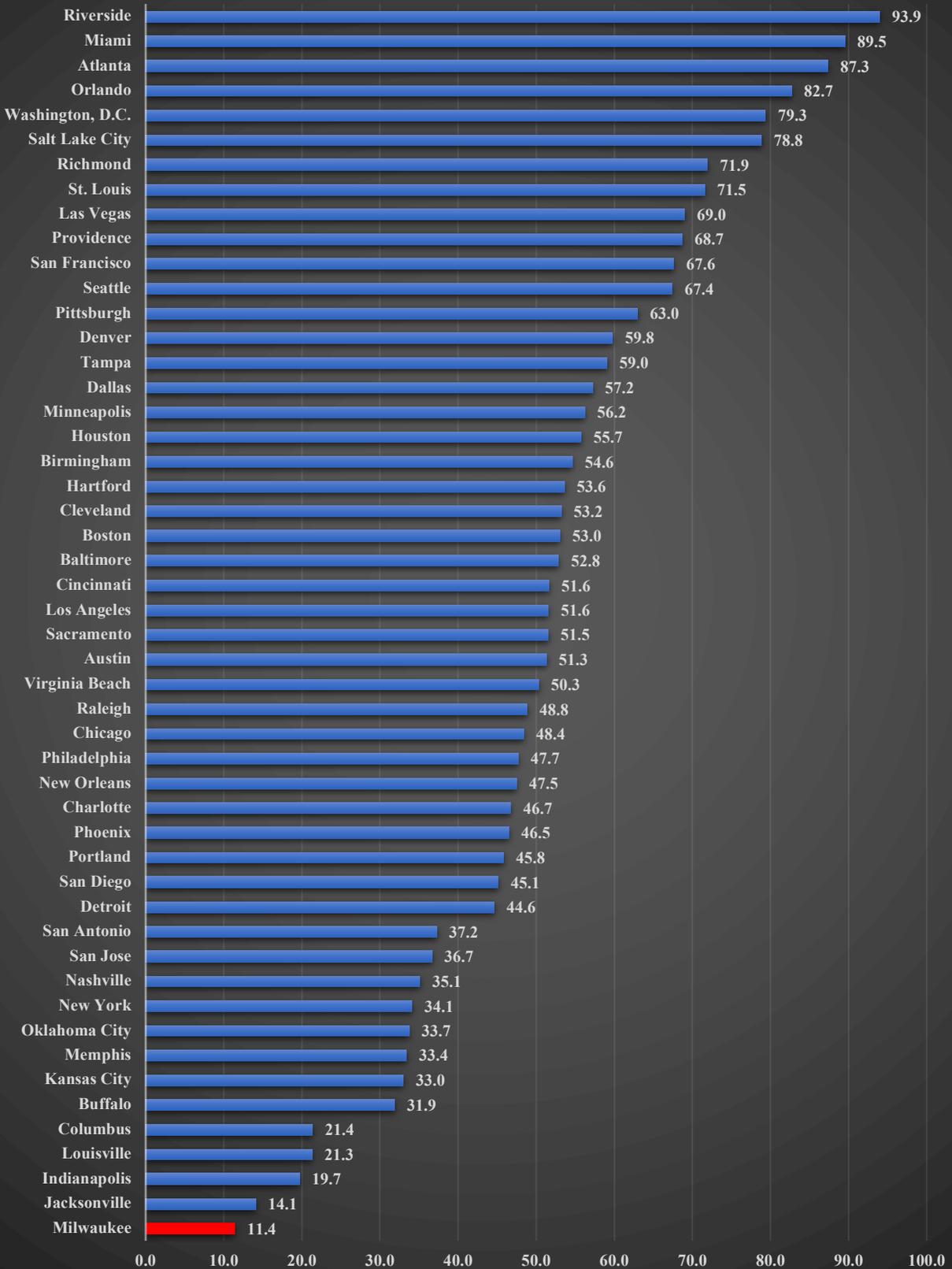


Chart 4:
Percentage of Milwaukee Black Population Living in Suburbs
of the Metropolitan Area: 1970-2018

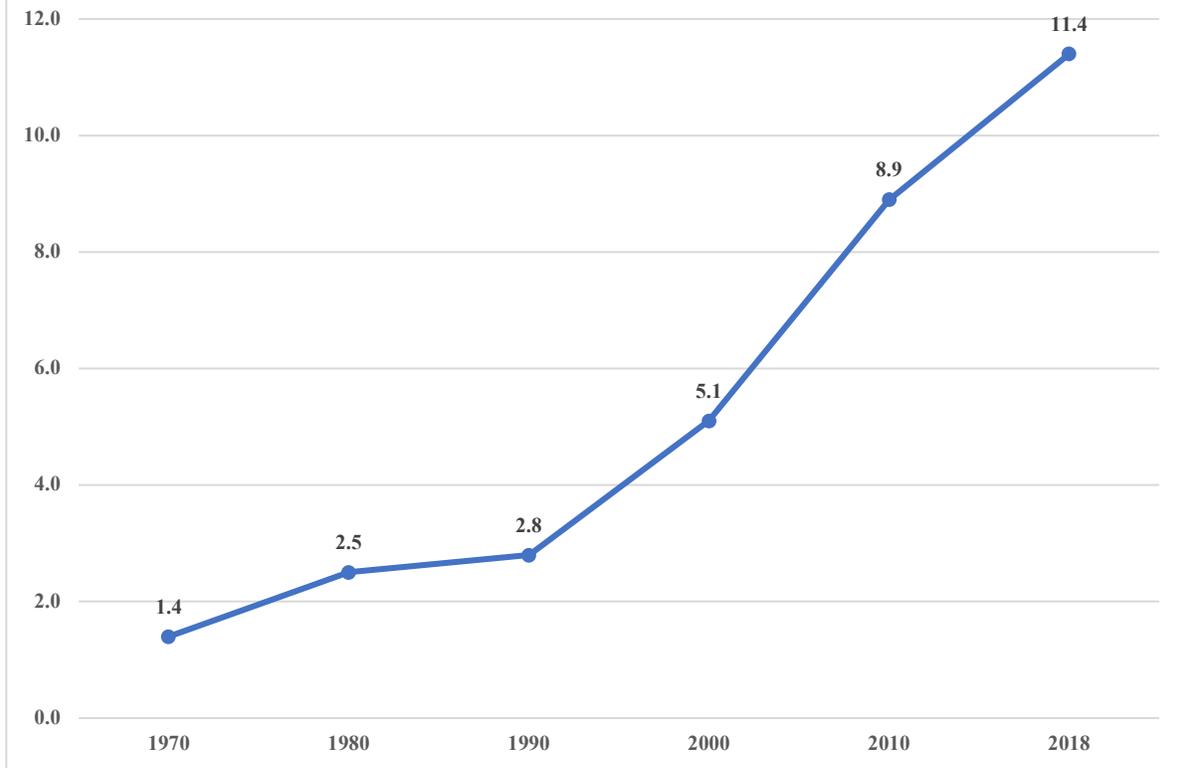
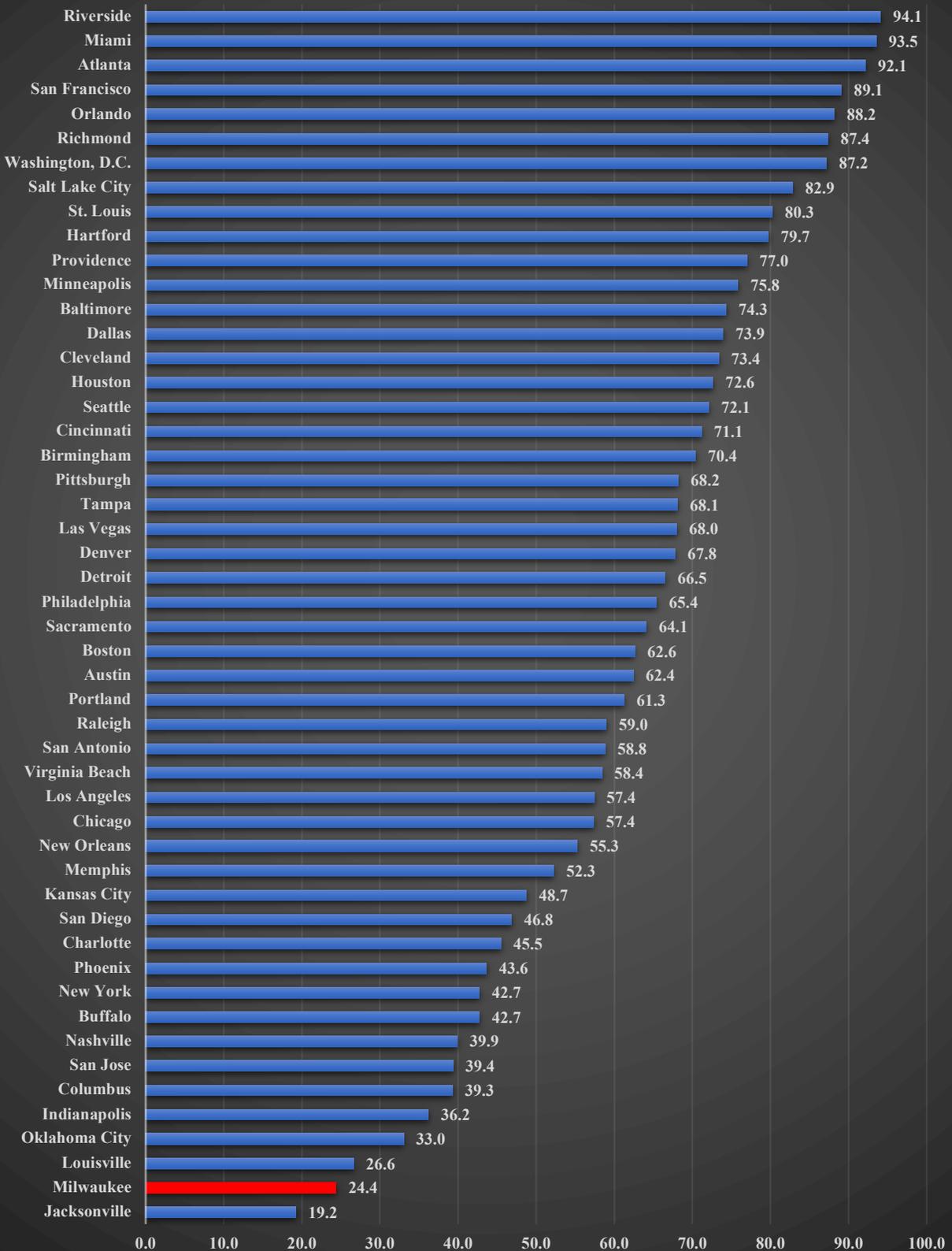


Table 2:

Growth in Black Suburbanization in Selected Metropolitan Areas: 1980-2018
 Percentage point increase in proportion of metro area Black population living outside central city

Metropolitan Area	% living in suburbs 1980	% living in suburbs 2018	Pct Point Gain 1980-2018
Milwaukee	2.5	11.4	8.9
Buffalo	9.5	31.9	22.4
Kansas City	6.2	33.0	26.8
Memphis	15.7	33.4	17.7
Oklahoma City	22.4	33.7	11.3
New York	6.1	34.1	28.0
San Jose	19.9	36.7	16.8
San Antonio	25.9	37.2	11.3
Detroit	14.9	44.6	29.7
San Diego	24.9	45.1	20.2
Portland	15.3	45.8	30.5
Phoenix	17.9	46.5	28.6
Charlotte	43.2	46.7	3.5
New Orleans	26.8	47.5	20.7
Philadelphia	23.4	47.7	24.3
Chicago	16.3	48.4	32.1
Raleigh	45.2	48.8	3.6
Virginia Beach	17.8	50.3	32.5
Austin	26.2	51.3	25.1
Sacramento	38.3	51.5	13.2
Cincinnati	25.2	51.6	26.4
Los Angeles	39.4	51.6	12.2
Baltimore	23.1	52.8	29.7
Boston	15.2	53.0	37.8
Cleveland	31.8	53.2	22.6
Hartford	37.0	53.6	16.6
Birmingham	32.7	54.6	21.9
Houston	13.4	55.7	42.3
Minneapolis	16.8	56.2	39.4
Dallas	16.8	57.2	40.4
Tampa	24.6	59.0	34.4
Denver	22.1	59.8	37.7
Pittsburgh	44.2	63.0	18.8
Seattle	17.6	67.4	49.8
San Francisco	32.1	67.6	35.5
Providence	26.6	68.7	42.1
Las Vegas	54.6	69.0	14.4
St. Louis	49.5	71.5	22.0
Richmond	37.8	71.9	34.1
Washington, D.C.	47.7	79.3	31.6
Orlando	63.0	82.7	19.7
Atlanta	47.1	87.3	40.2
Miami	69.3	89.5	20.2
Riverside	60.9	93.9	33.0

Chart 5:
Suburbanization of the Black Affluent
% of Metro Area Black Households with annual income over \$100,000
living outside the central city of metropolitan areas: 2014-2018



INCOME, POVERTY, AND INTERGENERATIONAL ECONOMIC MOBILITY

By virtually every measure, Black Milwaukee is the poorest African American community in big city America. Chart 6 arrays the most recent available U.S. census data on Black median annual household income in the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas, adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences (“regional price parities”).¹³ Even taking into account Milwaukee’s relatively moderate cost-of-living (about 5 percent lower than the national average, and 30-35 percent lower than places like New York and San Francisco), Black Milwaukee ranks last among the nation’s largest metropolitan areas in median annual household income. And the gap is substantial: For example, Milwaukee’s “RPP-adjusted” Black median household income is almost 14 percent lower than in Minneapolis, which ranks 5th from the bottom among the 50 largest metros and whose racial inequities have been extensively documented in the wake of the killing of George Floyd.¹⁴

Table 3 shows trends in RPP-adjusted median Black household income in the largest metro areas since the end of the Great Recession (2010). The findings are sobering: in over 20 of the metro areas, real RPP-adjusted household income for Blacks (i.e. adjusted for cost-of-living differences and inflation) *declined* over the past decade –and this was, of course, *before* the COVID-19 economic collapse of 2020. Real annual income in Black Milwaukee households tumbled by over 7 percent during the “recovery” years after the Great Recession –a sign that a “stealth depression,” which took hold in Black Milwaukee in the early 1980s as the city’s deindustrialization accelerated and systemic racial inequities crystallized, continued to grip the region’s African American community.¹⁵

¹³ Generally, studies simply report the census figure for median household income in a given city or metropolitan area. But, as we know, there are significant cost-of-living differences between metropolitan areas: a \$30,000 annual income in Milwaukee goes much further than in, say, New York or San Francisco, where goods and services are much more expensive. Using “regional price parities” (RPP), which measure the differences in price levels of goods and services across metropolitan areas –pegged to a national average cost—we can adjust metro area income levels to account for these differences. Thus, concretely: Black median annual household income in Milwaukee in 2014-18 was \$29,655; but taking into account RPPs pegged to the national average, we modify this income to an RPP-adjusted \$31,052. Conversely, although Black household income in San Francisco is \$50,709, according to the census, when we take into account RPPs, which quantify the high cost of goods and services in the Bay Area, the RPP-adjusted Black household income in San Francisco drops to \$39,616. For Chart 6, we performed these RPP-adjustments for all 50 of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas.

¹⁴ See, for example, Myron Orfield and Will Stancil, “George Floyd and Derek Chauvin might have lived on different planets,” *New York Times*, 3 June 2020 (Access at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/opinion/george-floyd-minneapolis-segregation.html>); and Christopher Ingraham, “Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among the worst in the nation,” *The Washington Post*, 30 May 2020. Access at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/30/minneapolis-racial-inequality/>

¹⁵ For an early analysis of the “stealth depression” theme in Black Milwaukee, see Marc V. Levine, “*Stealth Depression*”: *Joblessness in the City of Milwaukee Since 1990* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2003).

Plummeting household income is nothing new for Milwaukee's African American community; in fact, real household income for Blacks has been eroding in Milwaukee for four decades. As Chart 7 shows, real median household income for Blacks in Milwaukee has fallen by almost 30 percent since 1979. *The median Black household in Milwaukee today is significantly poorer than it was 40 years ago.* (Real income in Milwaukee's white non-Hispanic households has fallen by 2.3 percent during that same period). Consequently, as Chart 8 graphically shows, Milwaukee's racial income gap has grown substantially over the past 40 years. In 1979, annual income in the median Black household in Milwaukee was 58.3 percent of a median white household; by 2018, that figure had fallen to only 42.0 percent. Even more striking is how this racial income gap has grown much wider in Milwaukee than in the nation as a whole. In 1979, the ratio of Black to white household income was about the same in Milwaukee as in the U.S. (58.3 percent in Milwaukee versus 57.8 in the U.S.). Today, while Black median household income is only 42.0 percent of white income in Milwaukee, it is 60.9 percent of white income nationally (although the Black percentage has declined nationally as well since 1999, but by less than in Milwaukee).

Chart 9 shows the most recent data on the racial income gap in all of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. No region, of course, has anything approaching racial income parity; in the 20 or so least unequal metro areas, located mostly in the Sunbelt, Black household income as a percentage of white ranges between 60 and 77 percent. But, at only 42 percent, the Black percentage of white income in Milwaukee ranks lowest among the nation's largest metropolitan areas; only Minneapolis (43.6 percent) and San Francisco (43.6 percent) are close to this level of racial disparity in income.

Unsurprisingly, in a metropolitan area where Black income has steeply regressed over four decades and where Black income lags behind white income more than in any other large metro, Black Milwaukee has become the most impoverished African American community in big city America. Chart 10 reveals that Milwaukee has the highest Black poverty rate among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas, at 33.4 percent. The Black poverty rate in Milwaukee is 4.7 times higher than the white non-Hispanic rate, the second widest racial disparity among large metros (see Chart 11). Only Minneapolis, where the Black poverty rate is 5.2 times higher than the white rate, is worse. Chart 12 provides an overview of how racial disparities in poverty have evolved in Milwaukee since 1970. Black poverty skyrocketed in Milwaukee during the 1980s, as

the 1982 recession, galloping deindustrialization, and the collapsing local labor market for Black males drove the metro area's Black poverty rate to an all-time high of 41.3 percent. Black poverty dropped to 32.5 percent during the prosperous 1990s, but spiked again in 2010 in the aftermath of the Great Recession. It has since dropped slightly, but, as noted above, remains the highest Black poverty rate among the nation's largest metropolitan areas.

Charts 13-16 further amplify the extraordinary dimensions of Black poverty in Milwaukee. 14.4 percent of Black Milwaukeeans live in "extreme poverty," defined as those persons with income *less than half* the official poverty line; this is the fourth worst rate among the nation's largest metropolitan areas (Chart 12). 44.6 percent of Black children in Milwaukee live below the poverty line, the third worst rate among large metros (Chart 13).

Not only are various Black poverty rates exceptionally high in Milwaukee, but the nature of poverty in Milwaukee is particularly *concentrated*. Thanks, in part, to Milwaukee's high rate of racial segregation, Milwaukee's many poor Black residents are clustered in inner city census tracts, creating neighborhoods where over 40 percent of the population is poor. Sociologists call this *concentrated poverty*¹⁶, with multiple deleterious consequences for the quality of life as well as economic opportunities of neighborhood residents. Remarkably, as Chart 14 shows, over one-quarter of *all* metro Milwaukee's Black residents – *regardless* of whether they are poor—live in concentrated poverty neighborhoods, a figure higher than all but three metros in the US. 39 percent of Milwaukee's *poor* Black residents live in concentrated poverty neighborhoods --a figure more than 2.5 times as high as Baltimore or Minneapolis (both at 15.6), both recent centers of serious racial unrest. By way of contrast, only 10 percent of Milwaukee poor white non-Hispanic residents live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.¹⁷ In this very important way, Black poverty is very different than white poverty.

Chart 17 provides an overview of how shrinking incomes and concentrated poverty have influenced economic opportunity and intergenerational economic mobility for Milwaukee's

¹⁶ There is now a voluminous academic literature on concentrated poverty in US metropolitan areas. William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) was the seminal work on the subject, spelling out how concentrated poverty was a defining element in America's urban racial inequality; Paul Jargowsky's *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997) documents the explosive growth in concentrated poverty in urban America between 1970-1990 (with subsequent updates in reports through the 2000s); and Patrick Sharkey's *Stuck In Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Inequality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) examines how concentrated poverty engenders persistent, multi-generational neighborhood-based racial inequality in US cities. For an analysis of concentrated poverty in one key Milwaukee neighborhood, see Marc V. Levine, *Milwaukee 53206: The Anatomy of Concentrated Disadvantage in an Inner-City Neighborhood, 2000-2017* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2019). Access at: https://dc.uwm.edu/ced_pubs/48/.

¹⁷ See Marc V. Levine, *Race, Class, and Concentrated Poverty in America's Largest Metropolitan Areas* (forthcoming).

Black residents. Drawn from the enormous data base of IRS and Census bureau data assembled and generously made available by the Harvard University Opportunity Insights project, this chart shows the estimated household income in 2014 for young adult Blacks who were born between 1978 and 1983 and raised in low-income households in various metropolitan areas. Low-income households were defined by the Harvard researchers as in the bottom quartile of the national income distribution.

As Chart 17 shows, Milwaukee ranks near the bottom of the nation's 50 largest metro areas in the intergenerational economic mobility of Black children. Black children born in Milwaukee into low-income households in the 1970s and early 1980s by and large remained in the lowest income segment when they reached adulthood – to a greater extent than almost anywhere in the country.

Table 4 illustrates stunning racial disparities in intergenerational economic mobility, showing the young adult racial income gap in 2014 between Blacks and whites born into low-income households in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These racial disparities are sizeable in *all* of the nation's metropolitan areas, but Milwaukee's gap is among the widest: on average, a white young adult born into a low-income household in Milwaukee 30+ years ago earns over 80 percent more today than his or her Black counterpart also born into the same lowest income quartile. The Harvard Opportunity Insights data estimates that annual household income gap at almost \$17,000.

That gap is so large for two reasons: First, upward mobility for poor Black youth in Milwaukee over the past four decades has been the 4th *worst* in America's 50 largest metropolitan areas; but second, upward mobility for Milwaukee's poor white youths has been the 18th *best* among the large metros. Put another way, it's not just that Milwaukee has been, over the past 35 years, a region offering little upward mobility for poor African Americans; Milwaukee has been a metro area that has offered, in comparison with other large metros, relatively good prospects for white youths born into poor households to advance economically. Nothing could be more emblematic of Milwaukee's entrenched racial inequality.

In sum, Milwaukee is not simply a metro area of high poverty and shrinking real incomes for African Americans; it is also one of the regions in the US where economic opportunity and upward mobility for Black residents is the most limited. To borrow from the title of Patrick Sharkey's influential book on stagnant Black economic mobility nationally: Black Milwaukeeans

remain multigenerationally “stuck in place” in poor neighborhoods that Sharkey has described as “the inherited ghetto.”¹⁸

Three other charts round out this overview of income, poverty, and economic mobility in Black Milwaukee. Recently, the Black-white “wealth gap” has come under increased attention from researchers as a central element in America’s enduring racial disparities.¹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not have reliable data on the distribution of wealth by race for cities or metropolitan areas. National estimates are that the average wealth of white-headed households is nearly 6.5 times that of Black-headed households; given the data we’ve already presented on income inequality, there is little reason to believe that the racial wealth gap is any smaller in Milwaukee than nationally.²⁰ One limited proxy for gauging the racial wealth gap locally is to examine comparative homeownership rates; by one estimate, among homeowners, housing equity constitutes between 41% (for whites) and 57% (for Blacks) of their net worth.²¹ Unfortunately, as Chart 18 shows, Milwaukee has the second lowest rate of Black homeownership among the nation’s largest metropolitan areas (27.4 percent). Only Minneapolis’ rate (25.2 percent) is lower. And, as Chart 19 shows, Black homeownership is *lower* in Milwaukee than it was 50 years ago and the disparity in Black-white homeownership (41 percentage points) is the widest it has been since 1970.

Chart 20 illustrates, from another angle, the degree to which Black Milwaukee is a low-income community. Consistent with having high Black poverty rates and plunging Black householding income, Milwaukee has one of the nation’s smallest shares of affluent Black households. Only 7.7 percent of Milwaukee’s Black households report annual income over \$100,000, which ranks next-to-lowest among the nation’s 50 largest metro areas (Cleveland’s

¹⁸ Patrick Sharkey, “Ending Urban Poverty: The Inherited Ghetto,” *The Boston Review*, 1 January 2008. Access at: <http://bostonreview.net/patrick-sharkey-inherited-ghetto-racial-inequality>

¹⁹ See, among others, Darrick Hamilton and William Darity, Jr., “Can Baby Bonds Eliminate the Racial Wealth Gap,” *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 37:3-4 (2010): 207-216; Kriston McIntosh, Emily Moss, Ryan Nunn, and Jay Shambaugh, “Examining the Black-white wealth gap,” The Brookings Institution, 27 February 2020. Access at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>; and William A. Darity, Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020);

²⁰ Dionissi Aliprantis and Daniel R. Carroll, “What is Behind the Persistence of the Racial Wealth Gap?” Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, 28 February 2019. Access at: <https://www.clevelandfed.org/newsroom-and-events/publications/economic-commentary/2019-economic-commentaries/ec-201903-what-is-behind-the-persistence-of-the-racial-wealth-gap.aspx>

²¹ Michelle Singletary, “Coronavirus could widen black wealth gap,” *The Washington Post*, 13 June 2020. Access at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/06/13/black-wealth-matters-homeownership-is-key/?arc404=true>. For some important nuance on the role of homeownership in the racial wealth gap, see William Darity Jr., et al, *What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap* (Durham: Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity, Duke University, 2018), pp 10-14.

share is 7.6 percent). That is less than half the percentage than Philadelphia (16.2) or Dallas (17.8), and less than one-third the percentage of Baltimore (23.4).

In summary, analysis of key measures of income, poverty, and economic mobility reveals that Milwaukee is one of the nation's poorest metropolitan areas for African Americans. On virtually every indicator, Black Milwaukee ranks at-or-near the bottom in comparison to Black communities in the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas. Moreover, historical data (Charts 7, 8, 12, and 19) show that on measures such as real household income, poverty rates, and homeownership, conditions have *worsened* for Black Milwaukee over the past 40-50 years (and even just over the past decade). There is no evidence to suggest that a turnaround is at hand.

Chart 6:
Black Median Annual Household Income in Largest Metro Areas:
2014-2018
 Adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences

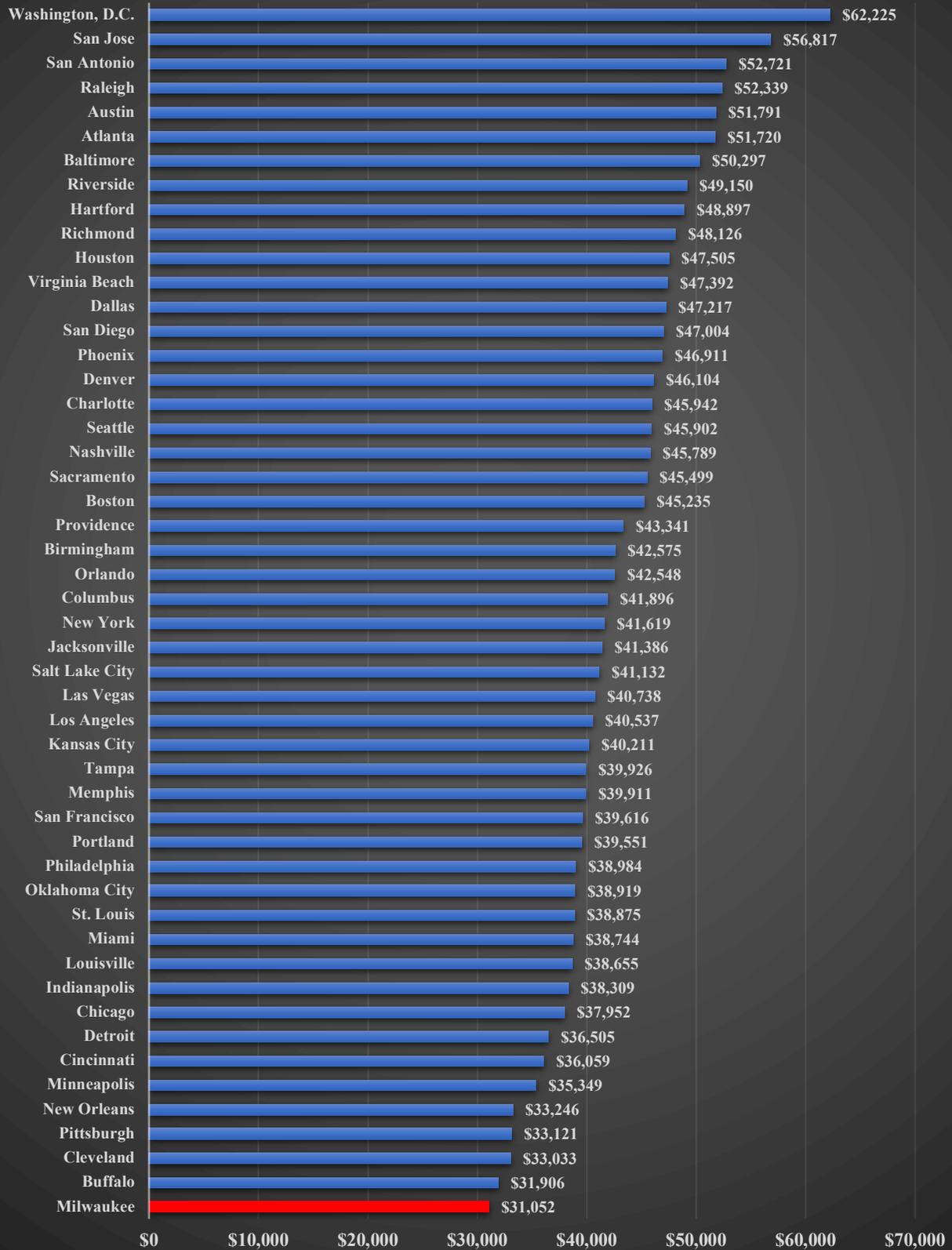


Table 3:
Percentage Change in Median Black Household Income in the Nation's Largest Metros: 2010-2018
 % change, adjusted for inflation and regional cost-of-living differences (RPP) (in \$2018)

Metropolitan Area	Adjusted HH Income 2006-10	Adjusted HH Income 2014-18	Percentage Change
Austin	\$45,706	\$51,791	+13.3
Denver	40,722	46,104	13.2
Raleigh	47,257	52,339	10.8
San Jose	53,392	56,817	8.4
Minneapolis	32,787	35,349	7.8
Nashville	42,725	45,789	7.2
Seattle	43,394	45,902	5.8
Houston	44,958	47,505	5.7
Washington, D.C.	58,903	62,225	5.6
Portland	37,578	39,551	5.3
Baltimore	47,889	50,297	5.0
Dallas	44,982	47,217	5.0
Louisville	36,957	38,655	4.6
Birmingham	40,876	42,575	4.2
San Antonio	50,745	52,721	3.9
Buffalo	30,729	31,906	3.8
Pittsburgh	31,935	33,121	3.7
San Diego	45,637	47,004	3.0
Boston	44,172	45,235	2.4
Providence	42,519	43,341	1.9
Kansas City	39,455	40,211	1.9
Columbus	41,214	41,896	1.7
Oklahoma City	38,318	38,919	1.6
Phoenix	46,616	46,911	0.6
San Francisco	39,380	39,616	0.6
Sacramento	45,239	45,499	0.6
Philadelphia	38,766	38,984	0.6
Tampa	39,703	39,926	0.6
Atlanta	51,509	51,720	0.4
New York	41,656	41,619	-0.1
Richmond	48,314	48,126	-0.4
Hartford	49,182	48,897	-0.6
Memphis	40,264	39,911	-0.9
Virginia Beach	48,243	47,392	-1.8
Cincinnati	36,721	36,059	-1.8
Jacksonville	42,178	41,386	-1.9
Charlotte	47,054	45,942	-2.4
Orlando	43,780	42,548	-2.8
St. Louis	40,032	38,875	-2.9
Chicago	39,299	37,952	-3.4
Los Angeles	42,053	40,537	-3.6
Indianapolis	39,852	38,309	-3.9
Detroit	38,226	36,505	-4.5
Salt Lake City	43,374	41,132	-5.2
Miami	41,420	38,744	-6.5
Milwaukee	33,418	31,052	-7.1
Cleveland	36,236	33,033	-9.1
Riverside	54,327	49,150	-9.5
New Orleans	36,936	33,246	-10.0
Las Vegas	48,326	40,738	-15.7

Chart 7:
Real Median Household Income By Race in Metro Milwaukee: 1979-2018
 (in 2018 inflation-adjusted dollars)

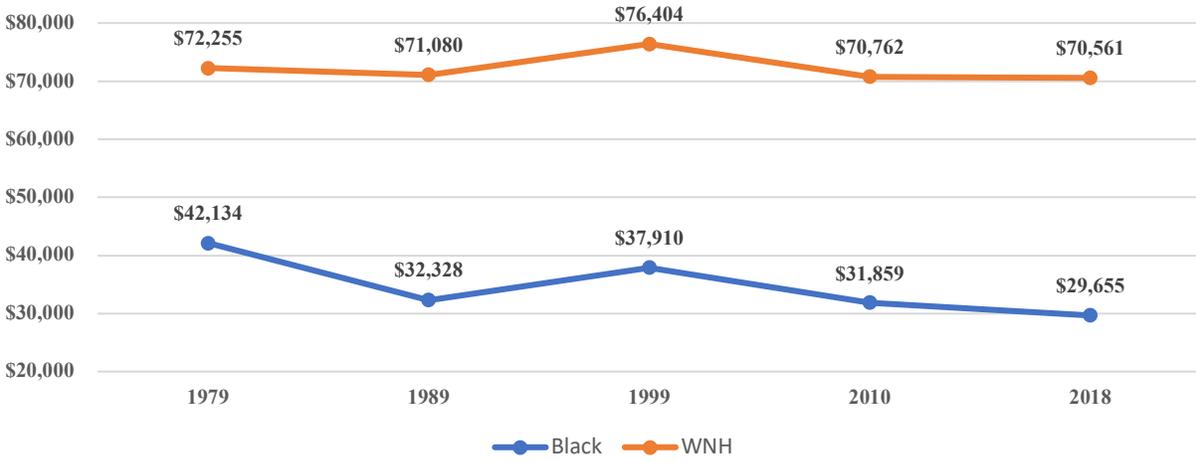
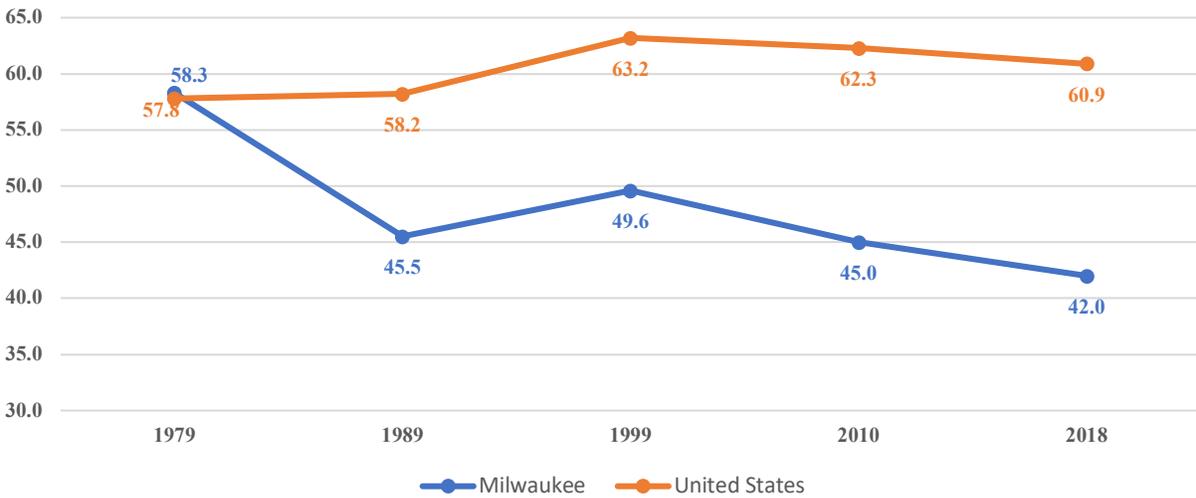


Chart 8:
The Growing Black-White Income Gap
Median Black Household Income as Percentage of White (Non-Hispanic):
Milwaukee vs. the United States: 1979-2018



**Chart 9:
Black Household Income as Percentage of White (NH) Income:
2014-18**

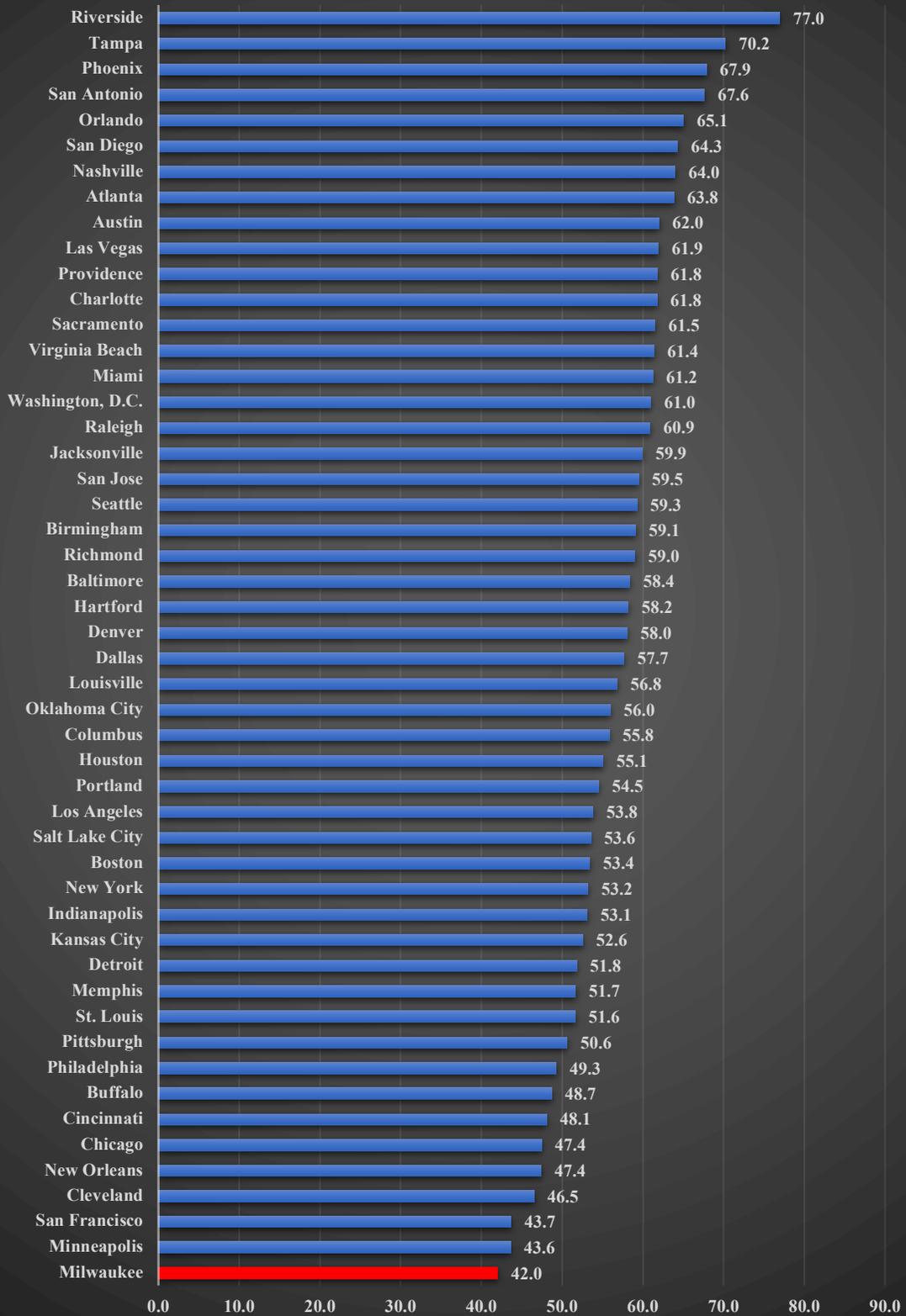


Chart 10:
Black Poverty Rates in Nation's Largest Metros: 2014-2018

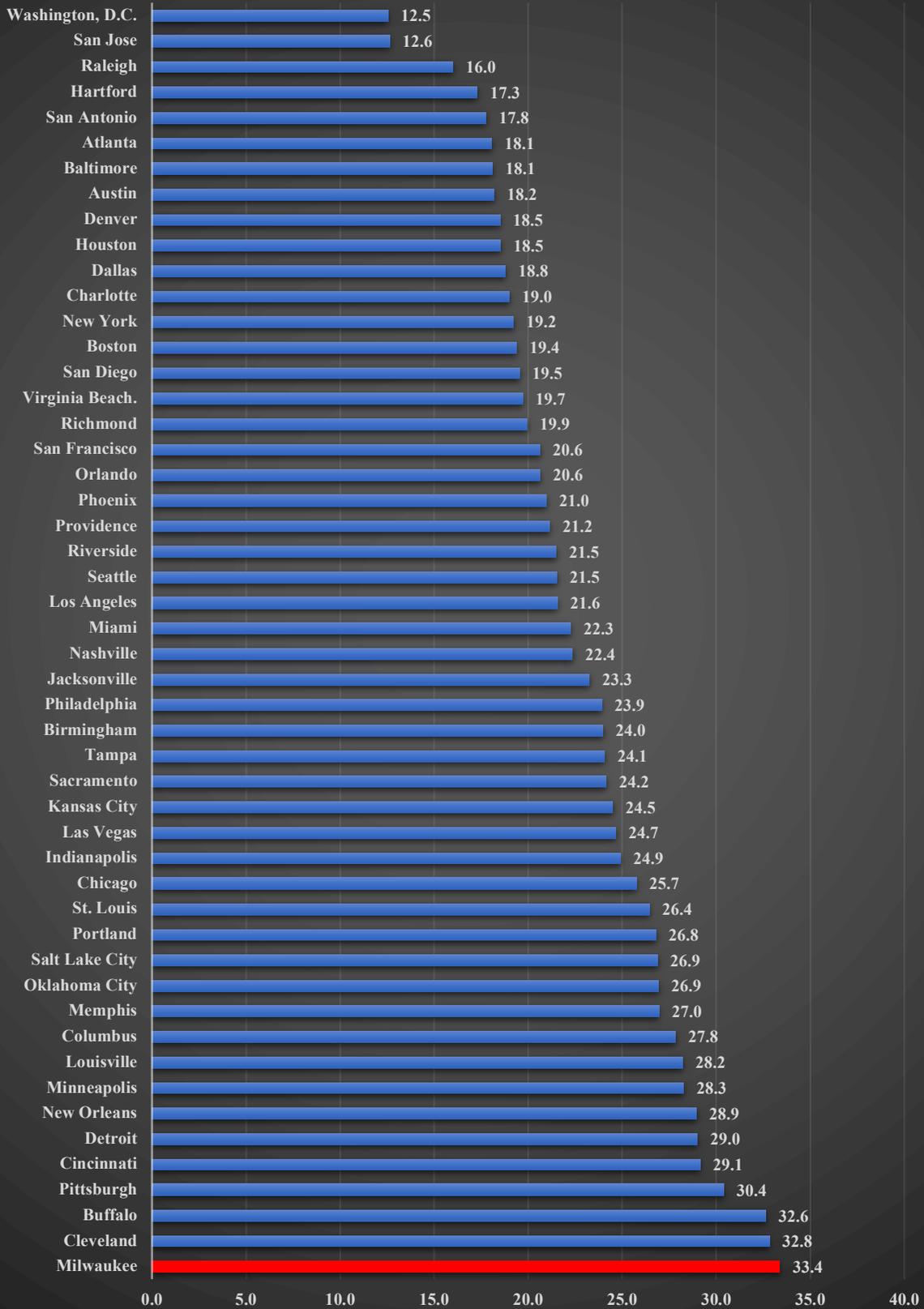
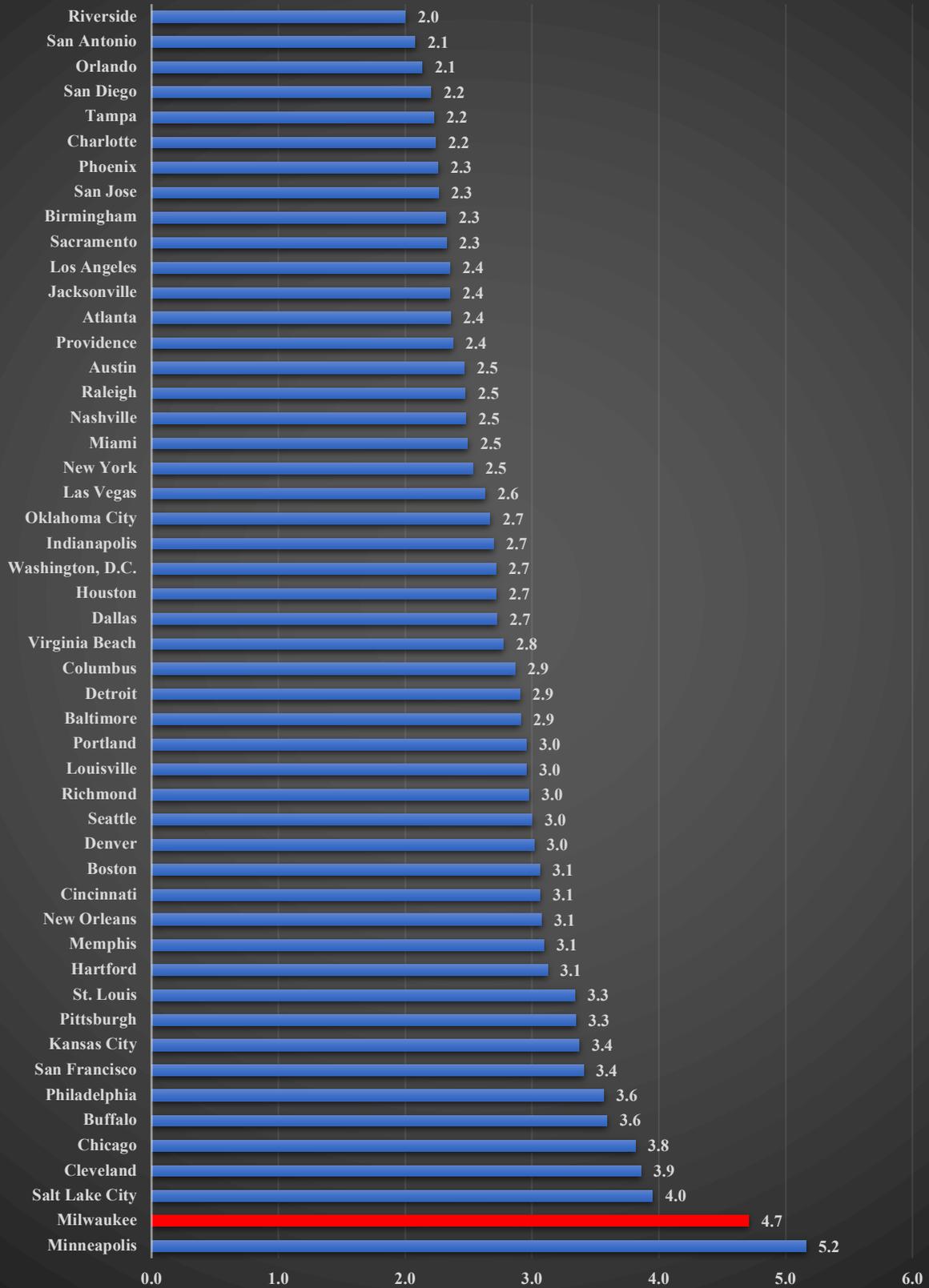


Chart 11:
Ratio of Black Poverty Rate to White (NH) Poverty Rate:
2014-2018



**Chart 12:
Poverty by Race in Milwaukee: 1969-2018**

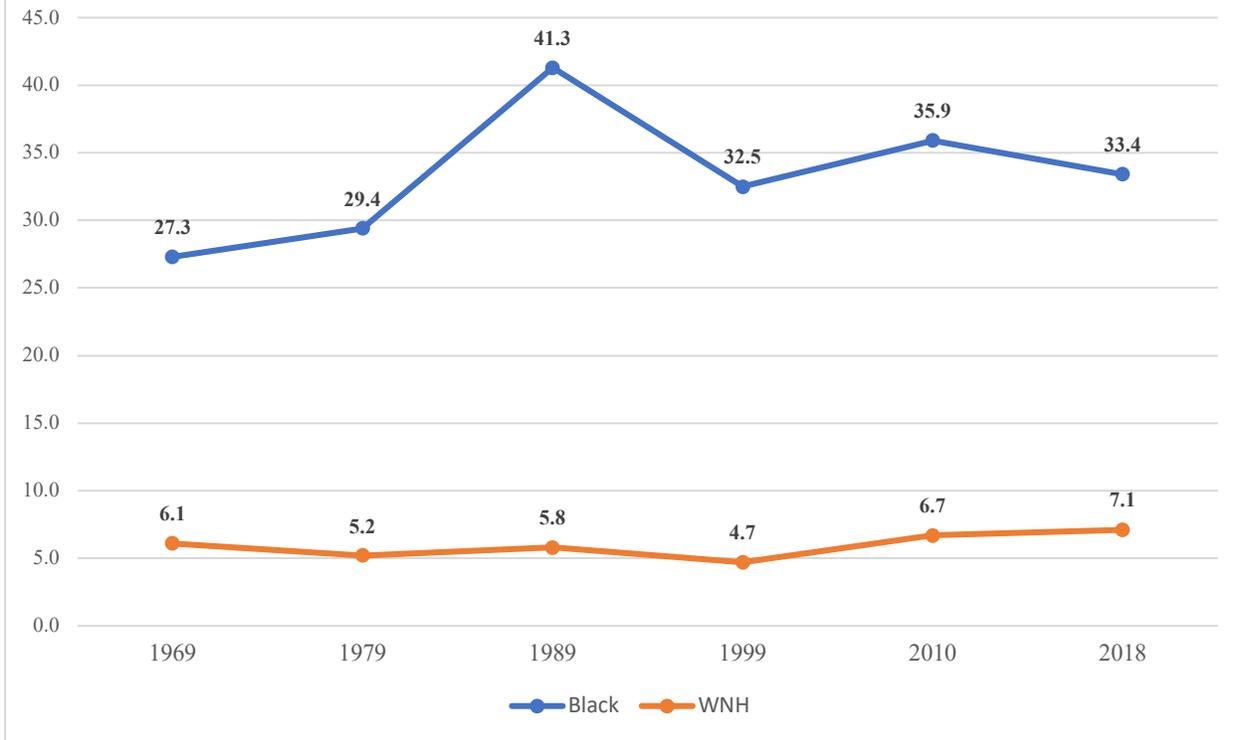


Chart 13:
Percentage of Blacks Living in Extreme Poverty: 2014-2018
 % blacks with income less than 50% the official poverty level

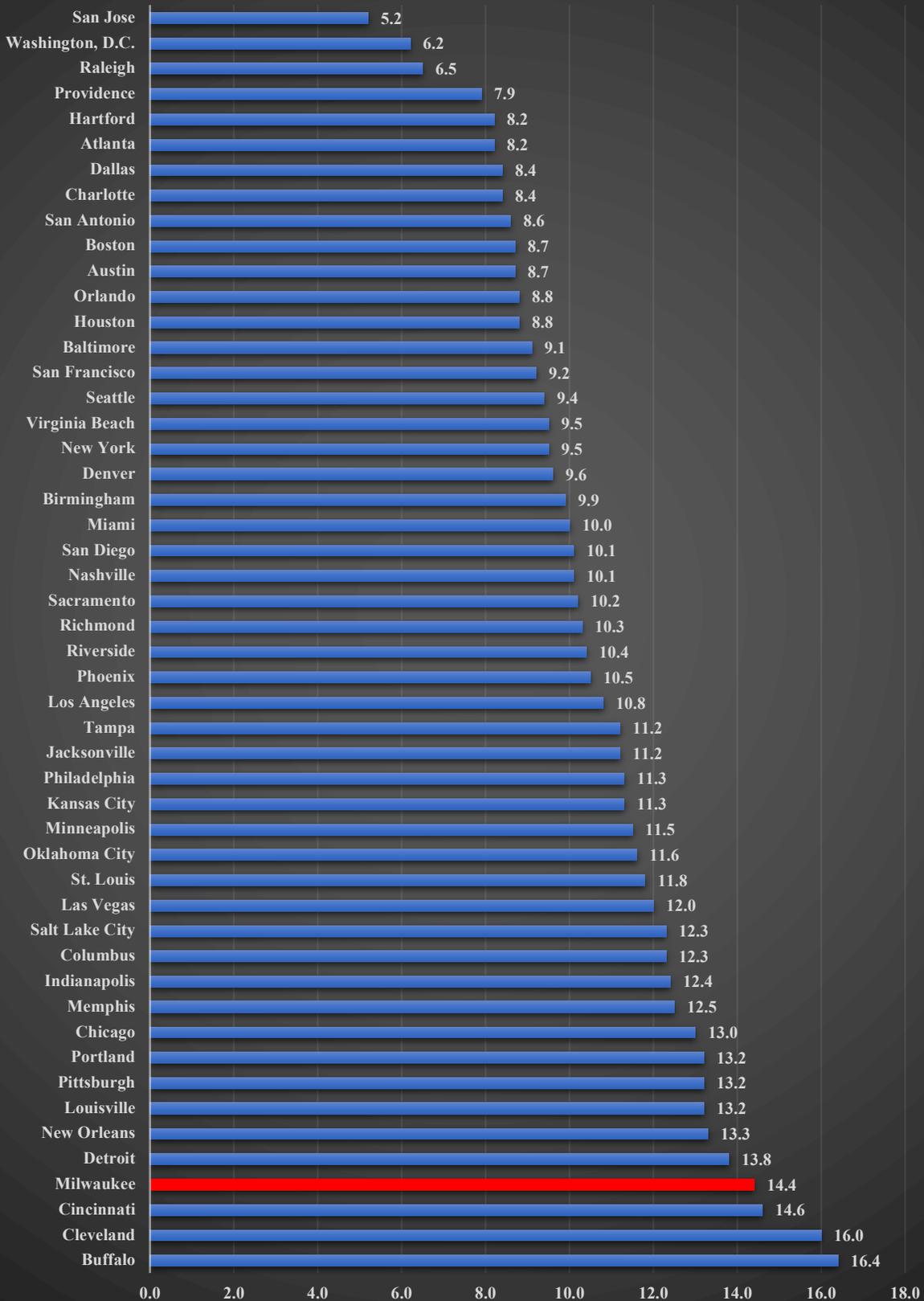


Chart 14:
Percentage of Black Children Living in Poverty: 2014-2018

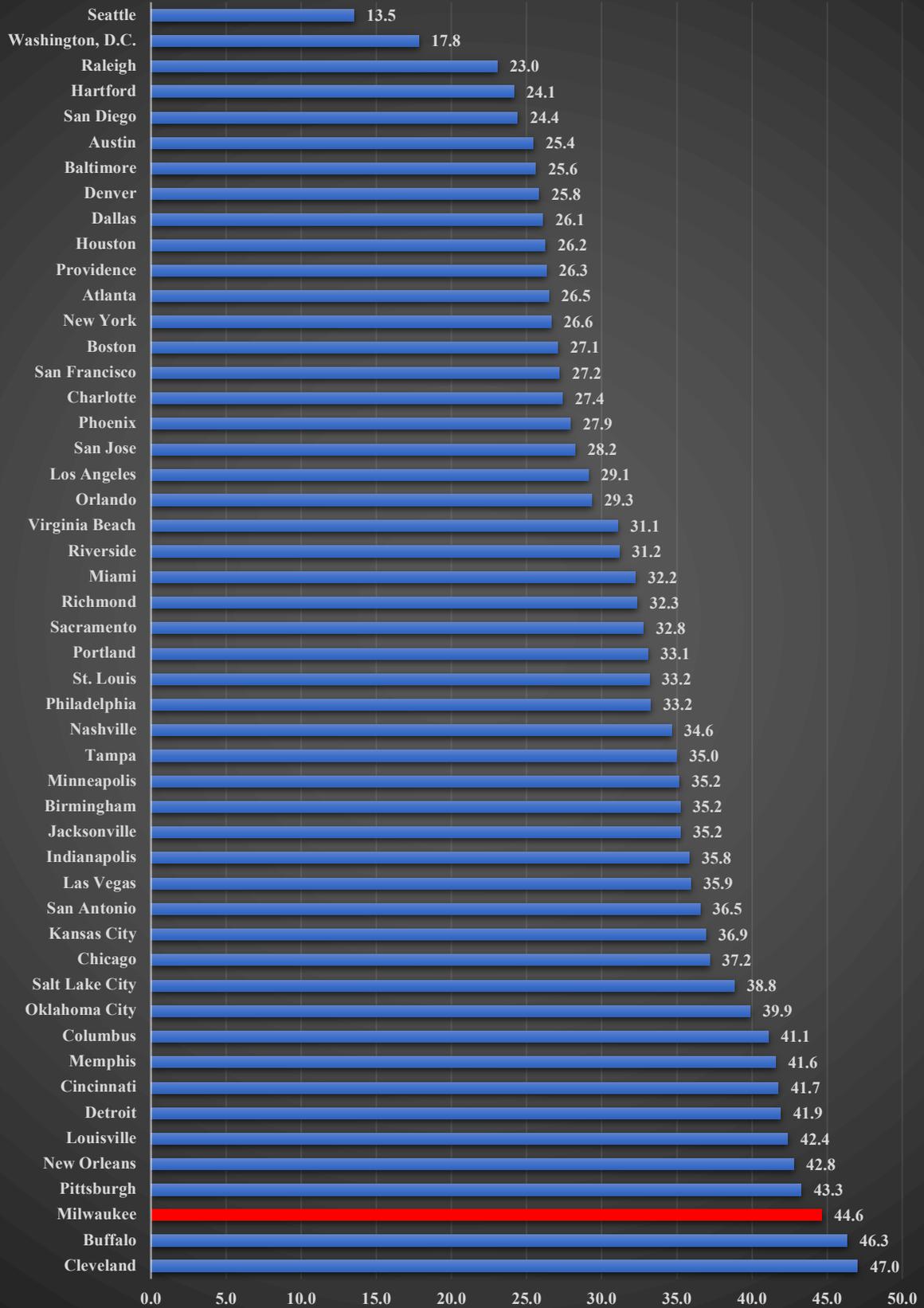


Chart 15:
Percentage of Metro Area's Black Population Living in
Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods: 2013-2017
 (% living in census tracts in which over 40% of residents poor)

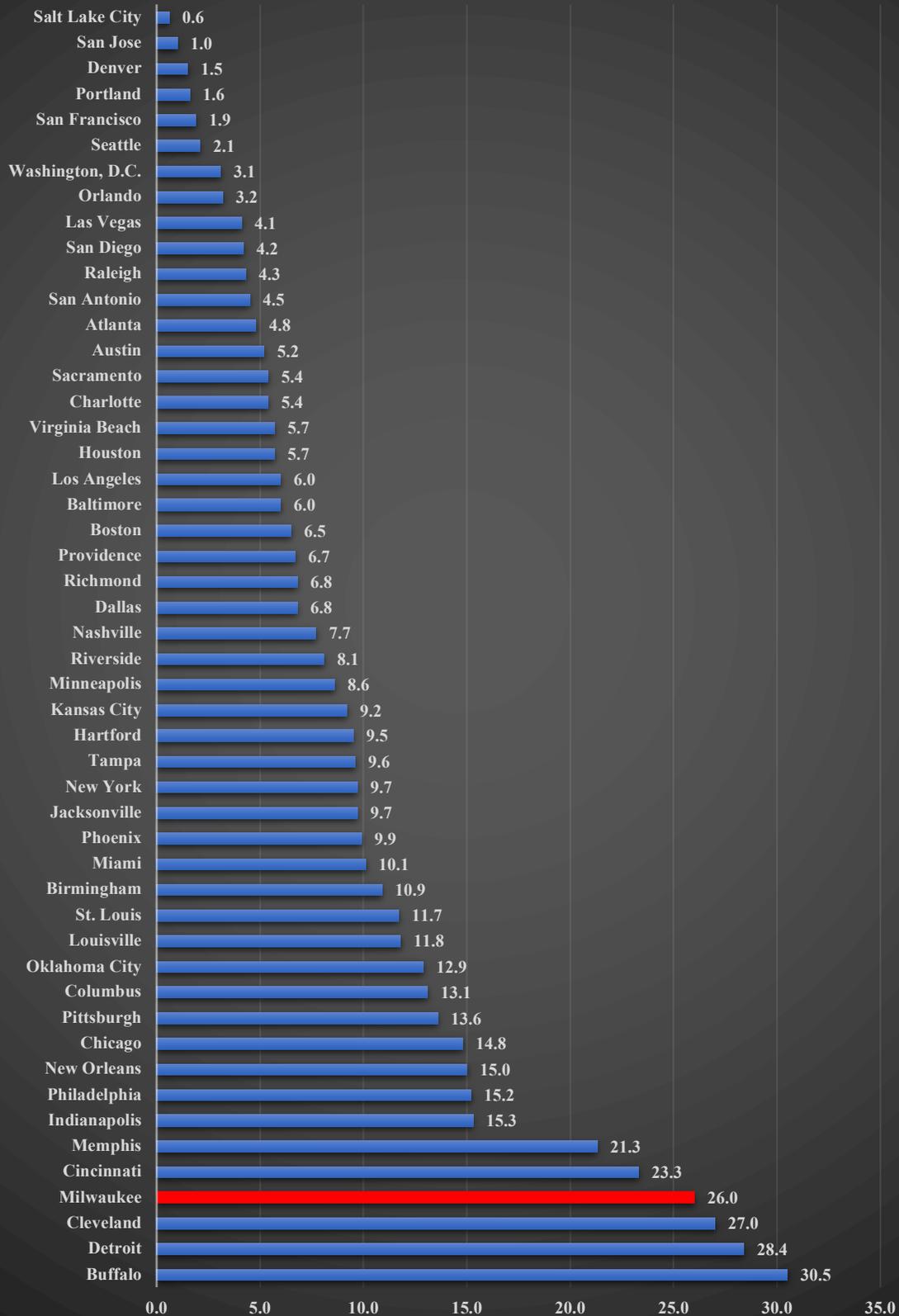


Chart 16:
Percentage of Metro Area's Poor Black Population Living In
Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods: 2013-2017
 (% living in census tracts of over 40% poverty)

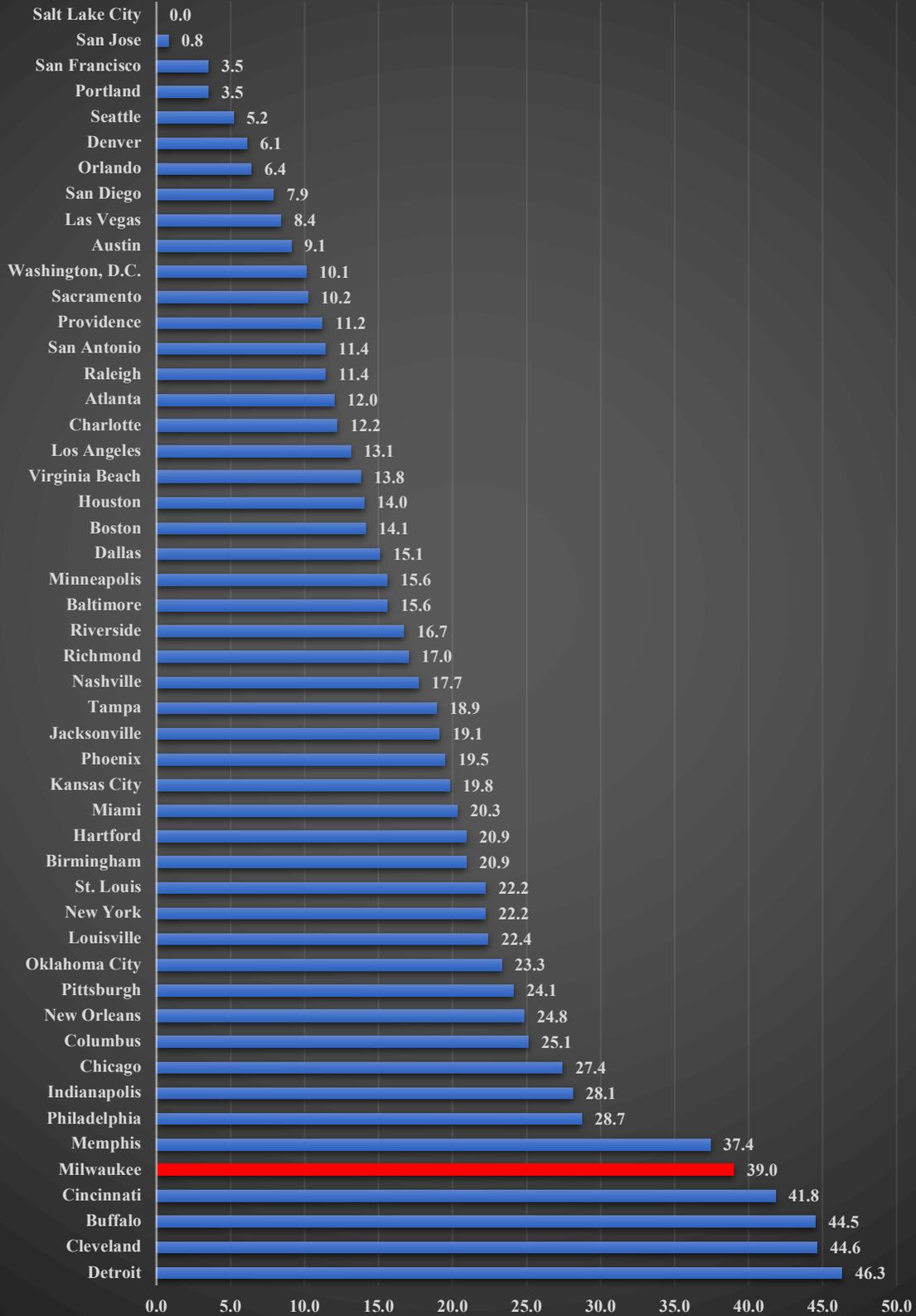
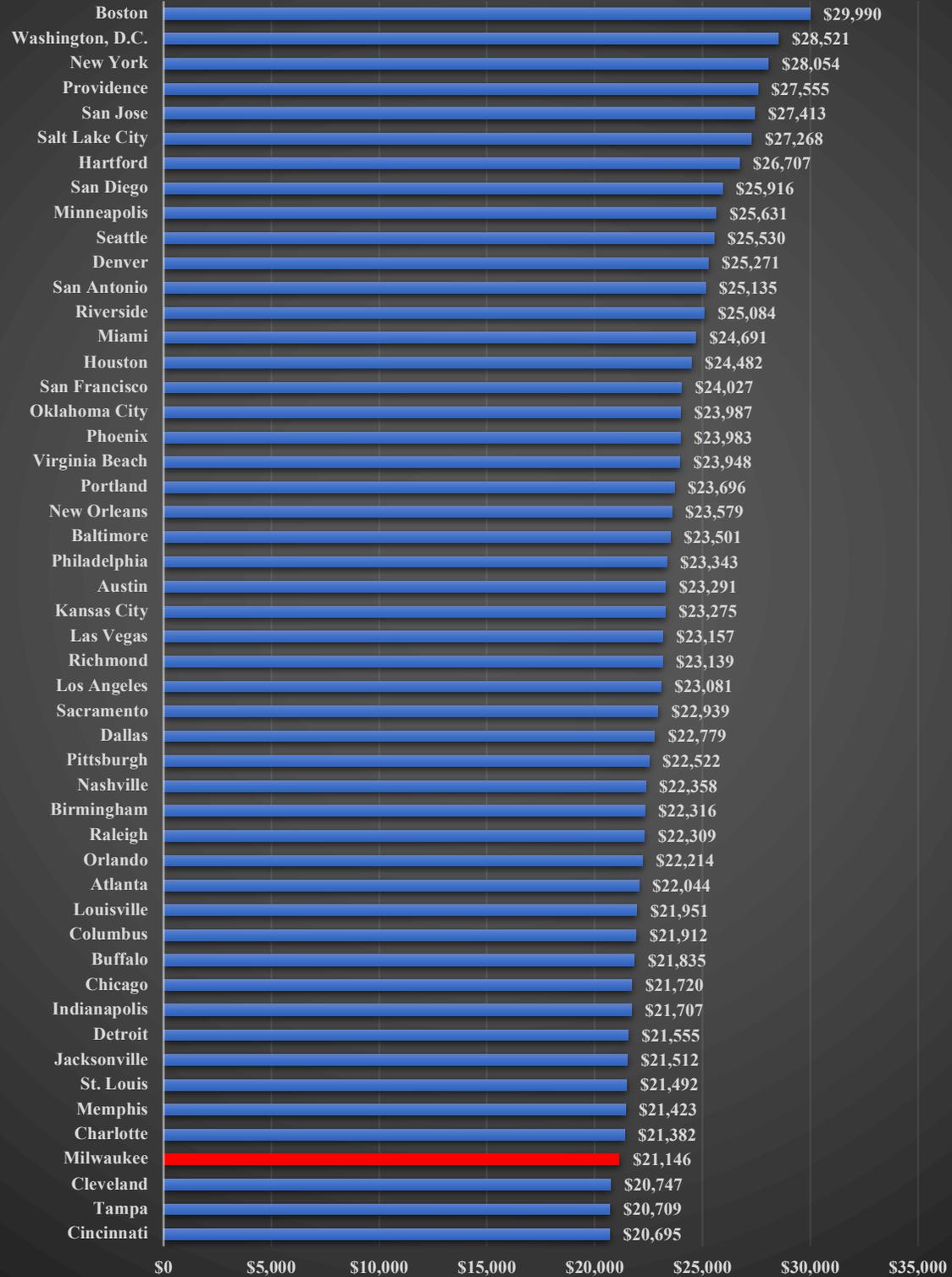


Chart 17:
 Economic Mobility of Poor Blacks in Nation's Largest Metros
 Estimated Young Adult Average Household Income for Blacks born between
 1978-83 into low income households in large metro areas
 (low income = HHs in the lowest quartile of the
 national inc

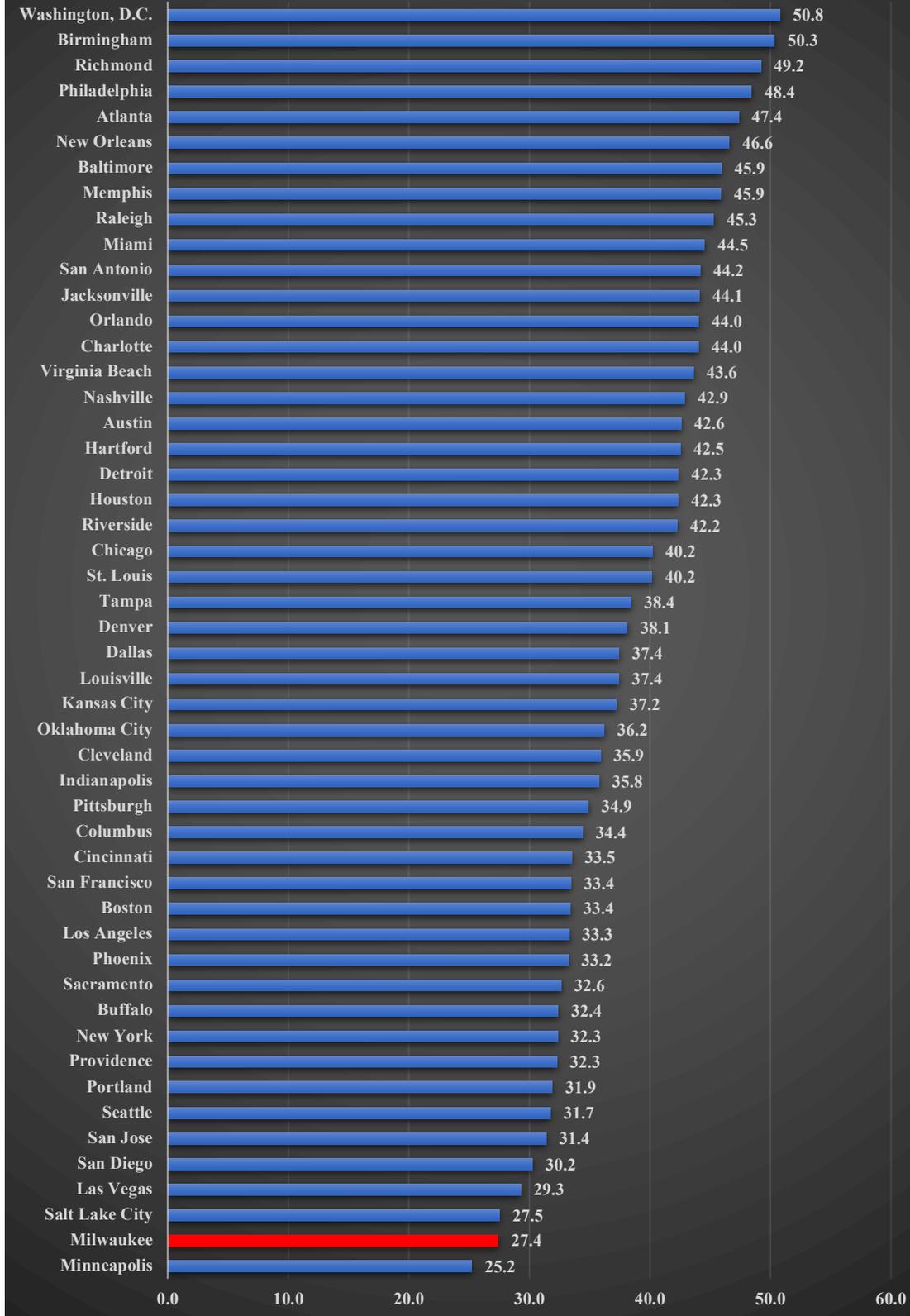


**Table 4:
Racial Disparities in the Economic Mobility of the Poor in the Nation's Largest Metros**

Estimated Young Adult Average Household Income for Blacks and Whites Born in the late 1970s and early 1980s into low-income households (HHs in the 25th percentile of national income distribution)

Metropolitan Area	Ave. Black HH Income in 2014; born poor 1978-83	Ave. White NH HH Income in 2014; born poor 1978-83	Estimated Racial Income Gap
Indianapolis	\$21,707	\$30,985	\$9,278
Providence	\$27,555	\$37,137	\$9,582
Jacksonville	\$21,512	\$31,214	\$9,702
Columbus	\$21,912	\$31,636	\$9,724
Louisville	\$21,951	\$31,842	\$9,891
Virginia Beach	\$23,948	\$34,309	\$10,361
Las Vegas	\$23,157	\$33,607	\$10,450
Nashville	\$22,358	\$33,090	\$10,732
Boston	\$29,990	\$40,732	\$10,742
Charlotte	\$21,382	\$32,330	\$10,948
Birmingham	\$22,316	\$33,373	\$11,057
Tampa	\$20,709	\$31,947	\$11,238
Cincinnati	\$20,695	\$32,014	\$11,319
Orlando	\$22,214	\$33,677	\$11,463
Seattle	\$25,530	\$37,173	\$11,643
Portland	\$23,696	\$35,421	\$11,725
Riverside	\$25,084	\$36,845	\$11,761
Memphis	\$21,423	\$33,250	\$11,827
Washington, D.C.	\$28,521	\$40,640	\$12,119
Oklahoma City	\$23,987	\$36,215	\$12,228
Phoenix	\$23,983	\$36,222	\$12,239
Detroit	\$21,555	\$33,974	\$12,419
Miami	\$24,691	\$37,125	\$12,434
Kansas City	\$23,275	\$35,783	\$12,508
Baltimore	\$23,501	\$36,043	\$12,542
San Jose	\$27,413	\$39,980	\$12,567
Atlanta	\$22,044	\$34,747	\$12,703
Richmond	\$23,139	\$35,866	\$12,727
Hartford	\$26,707	\$39,515	\$12,808
Raleigh	\$22,309	\$35,356	\$13,047
San Antonio	\$25,135	\$38,399	\$13,264
New Orleans	\$23,579	\$36,991	\$13,412
Denver	\$25,271	\$38,702	\$13,431
Salt Lake City	\$27,268	\$40,797	\$13,529
San Diego	\$25,916	\$39,670	\$13,754
Sacramento	\$22,939	\$37,323	\$14,384
Cleveland	\$20,747	\$35,135	\$14,388
St. Louis	\$21,492	\$35,951	\$14,459
Dallas	\$22,779	\$37,726	\$14,947
Houston	\$24,482	\$40,067	\$15,585
Austin	\$23,291	\$38,994	\$15,703
San Francisco	\$24,027	\$40,010	\$15,983
Philadelphia	\$23,343	\$39,366	\$16,023
Minneapolis	\$25,631	\$41,983	\$16,352
Buffalo	\$21,835	\$37,364	\$16,364
Los Angeles	\$23,081	\$39,570	\$16,489
Milwaukee	\$21,146	\$38,011	\$16,865
Pittsburgh	\$22,522	\$39,459	\$16,937
Chicago	\$21,720	\$41,591	\$19,871
New York	\$28,054	\$48,007	\$19,953

Chart 18:
Black Homeownership in Nation's Largest Metropolitan Areas:
2014-2018
% Blacks living in owner-occupied homes



**Chart 19:
Homeownership Rates By Race:
Metro Milwaukee: 1970-2018**

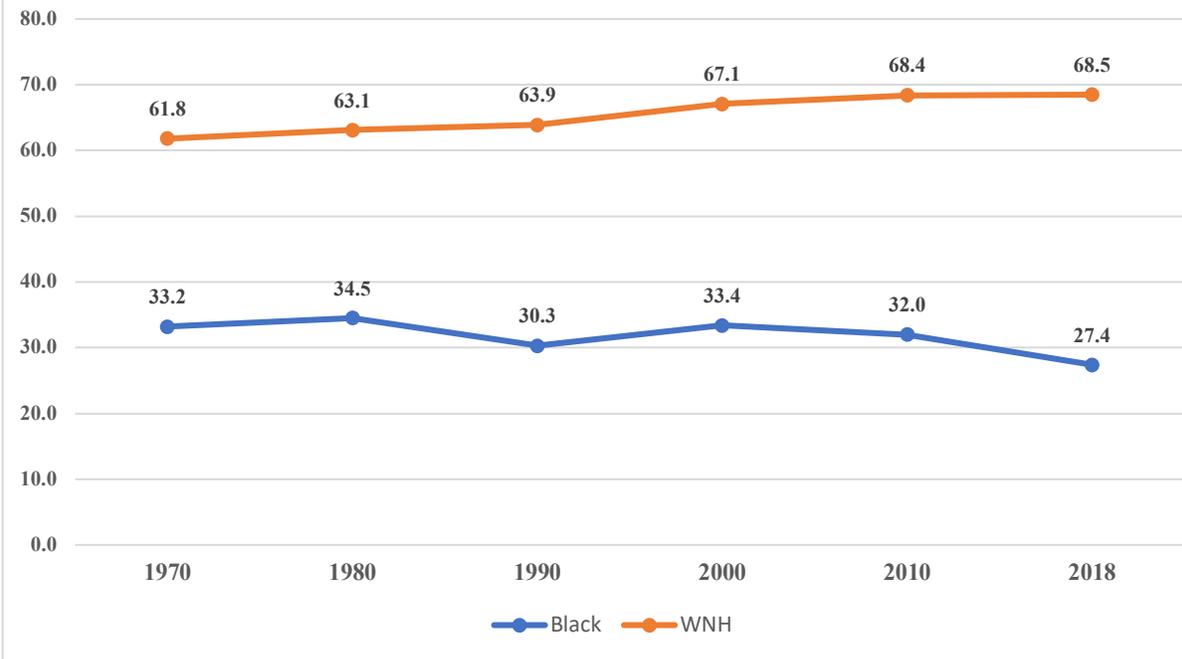
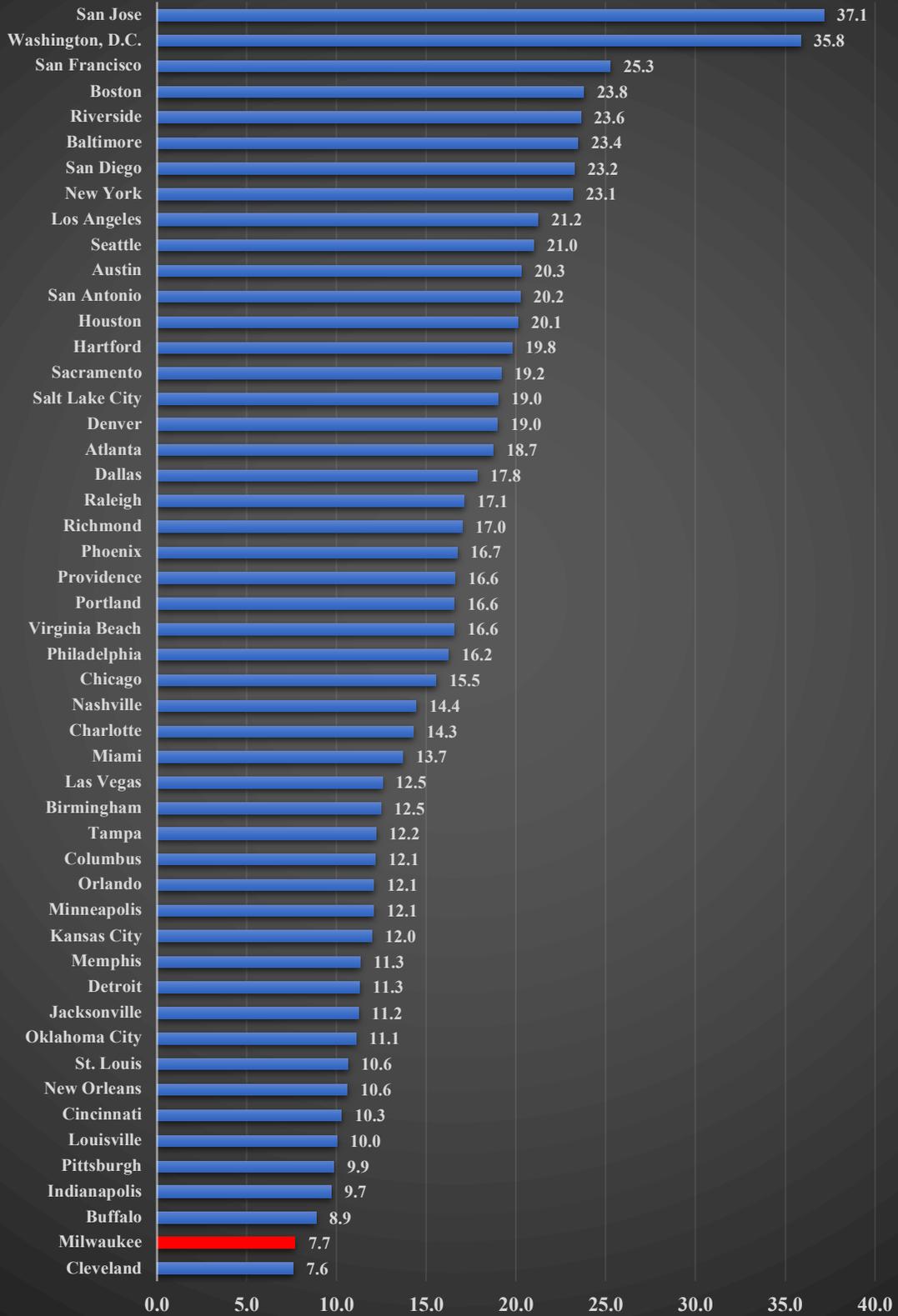


Chart 20:
Size of the Affluent Black Community in Large Metro Areas:
2014-2018
Black HHs with annual income over \$100,000 as % of all Black HHs



EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

A series of studies over the past two decades have documented the degree to which the Milwaukee labor market has produced disastrously low employment rates for African Americans, especially Black males.²² Charts 21-27 and Table 5-6 offer a comprehensive overview of the key dimensions of this employment crisis.

Charts 21 and 23 and Table 5 display the employment rates for Black males in their prime working-years (ages 25-54) in pooled, 2016-2018 American Community Survey (ACS) data.²³ As labor economists often note, the prime-years cohort provides an especially revealing indicator of labor market performance inasmuch as, all things considered, one would generally expect a high percentage of such individuals to be employed in a well-functioning labor market. In metro Milwaukee, slightly fewer than two-thirds of prime-years Black males were employed in 2016-18, the third-lowest Black male rate among the nation's largest metropolitan areas.²⁴ Table 5 shows the extraordinary racial disparity in Milwaukee's labor market: the employment rate for prime-age white males (90.1 percent) is almost 24 percentage points higher than for Black males; as Chart 23 shows, this racial gap was less than 10 percentage points in 1970, and peaked at 29 points in the wake of the Great Recession.

Chart 23 vividly illustrates the jobs crisis for Black males in Milwaukee since the 1970s. Basically, the bottom dropped out of the labor market for Black males in the region between 1970-1990, when the prime-years employment rate fell by over 20 percentage points -- a consequence of deindustrialization, the brutal recession of 1982, a secular trend of corporate disinvestment in places accessible to Milwaukee's segregated Black workers, persistent racial discrimination, and the beginning impact of mass incarceration on the employment prospects of Black males.²⁵ The prime working-years Black male employment rate continued to fall in

²² See, for example: Marc V. Levine, *Race and Male Employment in the Wake of the Great Recession in the Nation's Largest Metro Areas: 2010*, (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2012). Access at: https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=ced_pubs; Marc V. Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness in Milwaukee: Trends, Explanations, and Policy Options* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2007); and Devah Pager, *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

²³ ACS one-year employment data has large enough error margins to render comparisons between metropolitan areas statistically meaningless, so we have pooled three years of the data to reduce error margins to more acceptable levels. This is, of course, the same logic behind using ACS "five year" data where available (i.e. the 2014-18 data used in various parts of this report).

²⁴ As I will discuss in the conclusion, although we lack real-time employment data by race for local areas, the strong likelihood is that the employment rate for all groups—but especially Black males and females—has plummeted as a result of the COVID-19 economic contraction, and is much lower today than it was in 2018. Indeed, it may have reached historic lows.

²⁵ See Levine, *Race and Male Employment in the Wake of the Great Recession* (2010); Levine, *The Crisis of Black Male Joblessness* (2007); and Pager, *Marked* (2007). As I have argued elsewhere, although the officially-measured Black male

Milwaukee, albeit more slowly after 1990, reaching its nadir after the Great Recession in 2010 (58.8 percent). Encouragingly, for the first time in a generation, the percentage of Milwaukee's prime-age Blacks employed actually *increased* in the post-recession recovery, reaching 66.3 percent in the pooled 2016-18 data.²⁶ It remains to be seen how much of this much-needed improvement has been wiped out—and perhaps more-- by the COVID-19 economic downturn.

Charts 22 and 24 and Table 6 tell the employment story for prime working-years Black females in Milwaukee. Once again, Milwaukee ranks near the bottom of the largest metro areas in the Black female employment rate in 2016-18, and manifests the second worst the racial employment gap as well. (The prime-age Black female employment rate in Milwaukee is slightly higher than the male rate; and the racial gap for women is about half the disparity for men). As Chart 24 shows, the employment rate for prime-age Black females in Milwaukee is actually at an all-time high, but that is misleading, as growth in Black female employment since 1990 has coincided with larger societal trends of women entering the labor force. In fact, as the chart shows, through 1970 Black women in Milwaukee had entered the workforce in much higher numbers than white non-Hispanic females: The Black prime-age female employment rate was almost 13 percentage points higher than the white rate in 1970.²⁷ By 1980, however, that trend had reversed and the Black female employment rate in Milwaukee has consistently trailed the white rate by double-digits.

Charts 25-27 show the employment situation for young adults. 55.9 percent of Milwaukee's 20-24-year-old Black males were employed in 2016-18, a rate that ranked 42nd among the nation's largest metro areas. 66.3 of the metro area's 20-24-year-old Black females were employed, a rate that ranked in the middle-of-the-pack (26th) among the largest metro areas. Chart 27 shows calculations of what labor market researchers call “disconnected youth”: 16-24-year-olds who are neither working nor in school. Over one in four of Milwaukee's Black 16-24-year-olds (both sexes) were “disconnected” in 2012-16, a rate of “disconnection” that ranked

unemployment rate has increased in Milwaukee since the 1970s, it is the surging number of prime-age Black males “not in the labor force” (and thus not counted in the official unemployment rate) that accounts for the lion's share of declining Black male employment in Milwaukee. See Marc V. Levine, *Mismeasuring Joblessness: A rejoinder to ETI/Murphy* (Milwaukee: UWM Center for Economic Development, 2010). Access at: https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=ced_pubs

²⁶ This did not significantly improve Milwaukee's rank among the nation's largest metro areas on this indicator as virtually all metros experienced rebounds in prime-age Black male employment rates during the 2010-2018 period.

²⁷ Interestingly, this pattern of Black female employment rates exceeding white non-Hispanic rates persists today in 14 metropolitan areas, all in the South and Sunbelt, where the portion of white females entering the labor force remains lower than in other large metro areas (see Table 6).

second worst among the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas. It is a disconnection rate with troubling implications for the region’s labor market as well as K-12 schooling.

As we have seen, racial inequality is a pervasive and enduring feature of employment trends in Milwaukee. By way of summary, Chart 28 and Table 7 underscore how “race matters” for employment prospects in the metro area. Chart 28 shows employment rates for prime working-years males in Milwaukee, controlling for education. At every level of educational attainment, prime-age Black male employment rates are significantly lower than for white non-Hispanic males. A white male in Milwaukee who did not finish high school is 2.5 times likelier than a Black high school dropout to be employed, and slightly likelier than a Black high school *graduate* to be employed.²⁸ A *white high school graduate* has a just slightly lower probability of being employed in Milwaukee than a *Black college graduate*. (To be clear: the chart also reveals that education matters too. At each higher level of educational attainment, Black male employment rates commensurately improve as well. But race vitiates the impact of education as the “great equalizer”).

As Table 7 shows, these disparities are near the worst in the country. 33.1 percentage points separate the Black and white male employment rates for high school dropouts in Milwaukee; only San Antonio (33.3) and Pittsburgh (34.3) posted larger gaps, although those differences are not statistically significant. What is most striking about Table 7, though, is the pervasiveness of these racial disparities: in every single one of the largest metropolitan areas of the US, white prime age males who did not complete high school post higher employment rates than their Black counterparts with equal educational credentials; in all but two of the metro areas, the Black-white employment gap is in double-digits. The economics literature is rife with studies showing how the bottom has dropped out of labor markets for high school dropouts in recent decades, but Table 7 makes clear that the consequences of falling behind on educational attainment matter much more for Black males than whites (non-Hispanic) in big US metro areas.

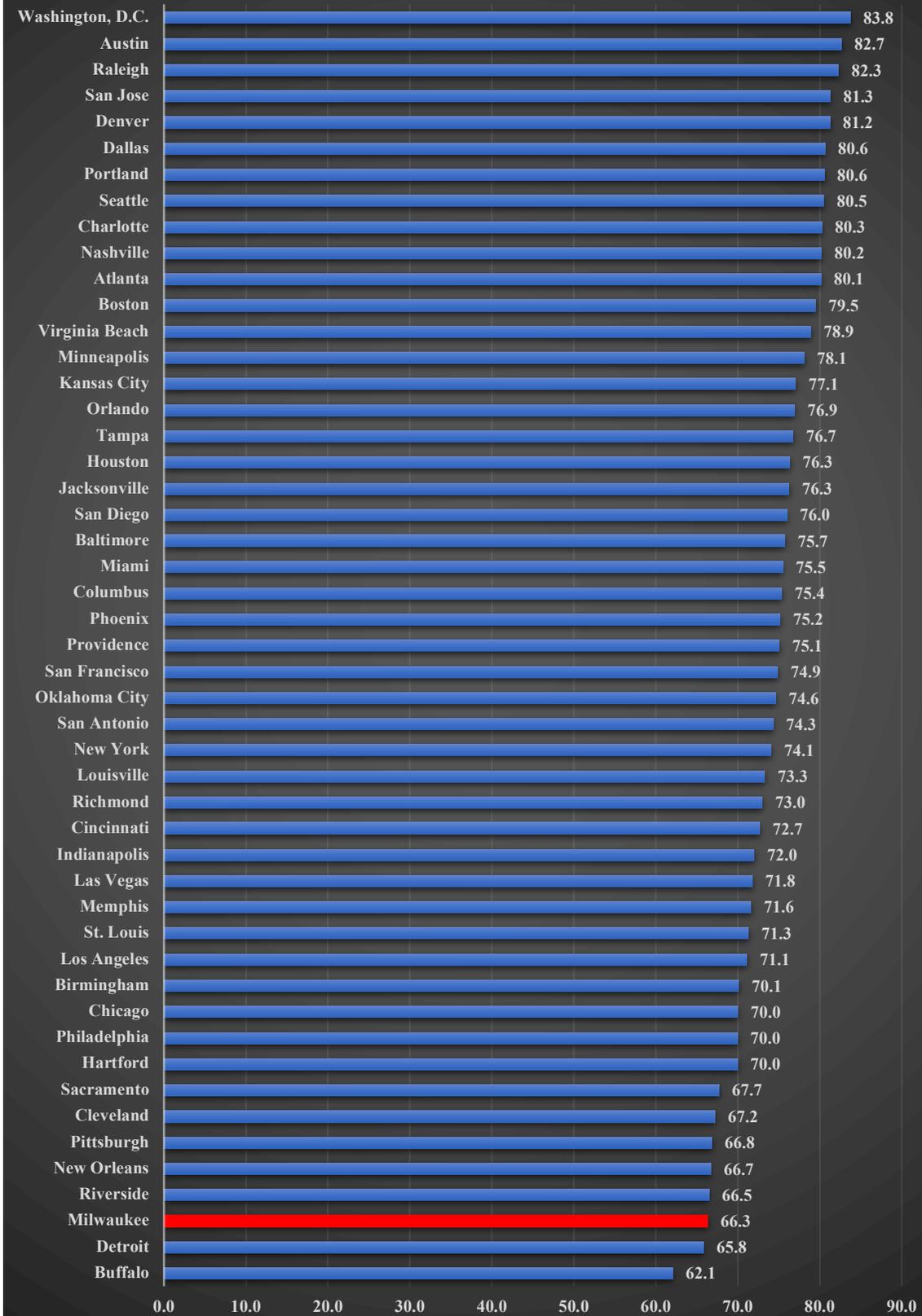
²⁸ This racial employment gap between Black and white male high school dropouts is affected by factors such as “the spatial mismatch” (entry level, lower-skill jobs increasingly located in suburbs not easily accessible to Black job candidates in segregated Milwaukee); and racial disparities in incarceration, where national studies have shown that Black high school dropouts are two to three times likelier than white to have been incarcerated. And, as Devah Pager and others have shown, having a criminal record profoundly hurts the job prospects of low- and moderate-skill African American males. See Bruce Western and Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, “Incarceration & social Inequality,” *Daedalus* (Summer 2010): 8-19 Access at: https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/daedalus/downloads/10_summer_western.pdf; Pager, *Marked*, passim.

In sum, Milwaukee may be among the worst metro areas when it comes to racial disparities in labor market outcomes, but it is hardly alone.

Not only do employment rates lag for Black Milwaukee compared to the rest of the nation, but for those African Americans in the region who have secured jobs, earnings are low and racial disparities abound. Charts 29 and 30 display the median annual earnings for Black workers (male and female), adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences. Milwaukee's Black male and female workers are paid less than their Black counterparts in all but a few of the largest metro areas in the country. Milwaukee's racial earnings gap is huge: the median Black male's earnings are less than 60 percent of his white counterpart's (the lowest ratio among large metro areas); the median Black female earns just under 64 percent of median white female earnings (third lowest percentage in the country).

Milwaukee's Black workers, male and female, are anchored in the low-wage segment of the region's labor market. Only 17 percent of Black men and just 14 percent of Black women in Milwaukee earn over \$40,000 annually (Charts 33-34). By contrast, 46 percent of Milwaukee's white non-Hispanic men and 29 percent of white non-Hispanic women make over \$40,000 a year. In an all-too-common refrain, this is the largest racial earnings disparity for males among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas, and the second biggest racial disparity for female workers.

Chart 21:
 Black Male Employment Rates: Prime Working-Years Adults
 (ages 25-54): 2016-2018



**Table 5:
Racial Gap in Prime Age (25-54) Male Employment Rates: 2016-2018
The Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas**

Metropolitan Area	Black Emp Rate	White Non-Hisp Emp Rate	Percentage Point Gap
Tampa	76.7	82.4	5.7
Portland	80.6	87.4	6.8
Austin	82.7	89.8	7.1
Seattle	80.5	88.1	7.6
Washington, D.C.	83.8	91.6	7.8
Nashville	80.2	88.2	8.0
Charlotte	80.3	88.4	8.1
San Jose	81.3	89.6	8.3
Atlanta	80.1	88.5	8.4
Dallas	80.6	89.1	8.5
Raleigh	82.3	91.0	8.7
Miami	75.5	84.3	8.8
Denver	81.2	90.1	8.9
San Antonio	74.3	83.3	9.0
Boston	79.5	88.6	9.1
Phoenix	75.2	84.7	9.5
Virginia Beach	78.9	88.4	9.5
Jacksonville	76.3	86.0	9.7
Providence	75.1	84.8	9.7
Orlando	76.9	86.6	9.7
San Diego	76.0	85.9	9.9
Oklahoma City	74.6	85.4	10.8
Houston	76.3	87.2	10.9
Las Vegas	71.8	82.8	11.0
Columbus	75.4	86.7	11.3
Louisville	73.3	85.2	11.9
Kansas City	77.1	89.6	12.5
Riverside	66.5	79.2	12.7
Minneapolis	78.1	91.5	13.4
Baltimore	75.7	89.1	13.4
Birmingham	70.1	83.9	13.8
New York	74.1	88.0	13.9
Cincinnati	72.7	86.9	14.2
San Francisco	74.9	89.1	14.2
Los Angeles	71.1	85.5	14.4
Richmond	73.0	87.7	14.7
Indianapolis	72.0	86.8	14.8
Memphis	71.6	87.3	15.7
Sacramento	67.7	84.0	16.3
Philadelphia	70.0	86.7	16.7
St. Louis	71.3	88.3	17.0
Hartford	70.0	88.4	18.4
New Orleans	66.7	85.4	18.7
Chicago	70.0	89.5	19.5
Cleveland	67.2	86.9	19.7
Pittsburgh	66.8	87.2	20.4
Detroit	65.8	86.7	20.9
Milwaukee	66.3	90.1	23.8
Buffalo	62.1	86.6	24.5

Chart 22:
 Black Female Employment Rates: Prime Working-Years Adults
 (ages 25-54): 2016-2018

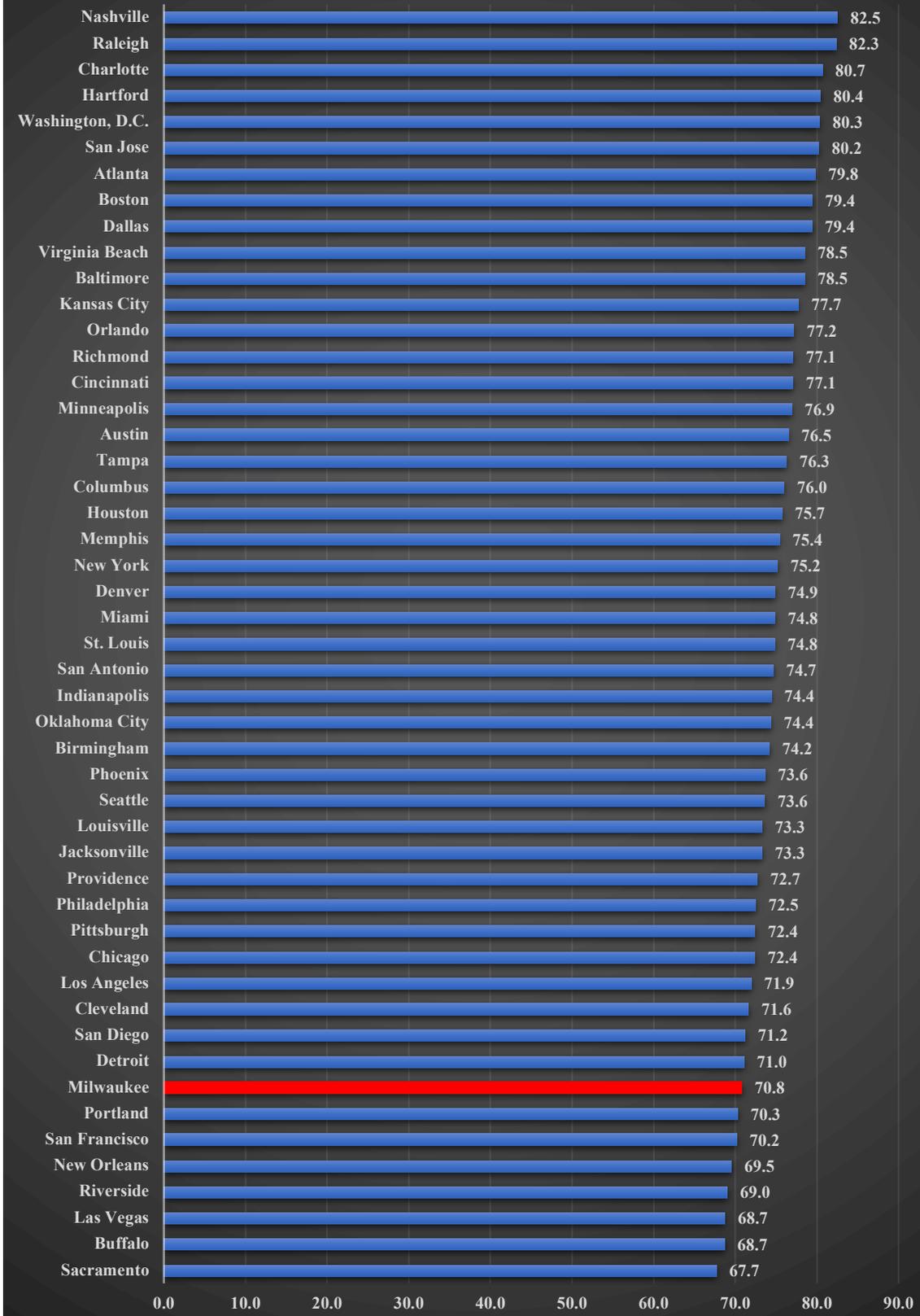


Table 6:
Racial Gap in Prime Age (25-54) Female Employment Rates: 2016-2018
The Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas

Metropolitan Area	Black Emp Rate	White Non-Hisp Emp Rate	Percentage Point Gap
Nashville	82.5	76.0	-6.5
Charlotte	80.7	74.6	-6.1
Seattle	80.2	74.7	-5.5
Atlanta	79.8	74.9	-4.9
Houston	75.7	71.2	-4.5
Memphis	75.4	70.9	-4.5
Birmingham	74.2	69.9	-4.3
Raleigh	82.3	78.3	-4.0
Virginia Beach	78.5	74.7	-3.8
Dallas	79.4	75.9	-3.5
San Diego	74.7	71.8	-2.9
Orlando	77.2	75.5	-1.7
Riverside	69.0	67.4	-1.6
Tampa	76.3	74.7	-1.6
Miami	74.8	75.3	0.5
Cincinnati	77.1	77.9	0.8
Jacksonville	73.3	74.2	0.9
Washington, D.C.	80.3	81.2	0.9
Phoenix	73.6	75.0	1.4
Baltimore	78.5	80.1	1.6
Oklahoma City	74.4	75.9	1.6
Richmond	77.1	78.9	1.8
Kansas City	77.7	79.8	2.1
Boston	79.4	81.6	2.2
New York	75.2	77.7	2.5
Hartford	80.4	83.0	2.6
Austin	76.5	79.1	2.6
Columbus	76.0	78.8	2.9
Detroit	71.0	74.0	3.0
St. Louis	73.6	76.6	3.0
Los Angeles	71.9	75.0	3.1
San Francisco	71.2	75.0	3.8
Indianapolis	74.4	78.4	4.0
Louisville	73.3	77.3	4.1
Las Vegas	68.7	73.2	4.5
Sacramento	67.7	73.4	5.8
San Antonio	74.8	80.6	5.8
New Orleans	69.5	75.5	6.0
Philadelphia	72.5	78.7	6.2
Pittsburgh	72.4	78.7	6.3
Chicago	72.4	79.0	6.6
Providence	72.7	79.6	6.9
Portland	70.3	77.1	6.9
Denver	74.9	82.0	7.1
Cleveland	71.6	78.9	7.3
Minneapolis	76.9	85.7	8.8
San Jose	70.2	79.6	9.5
Milwaukee	70.8	83.0	12.2
Buffalo	68.7	81.3	12.6

Chart 23:
Employment Rate of Prime Working-Age (25-54) Males:
Milwaukee Metro Area, 1970-2018

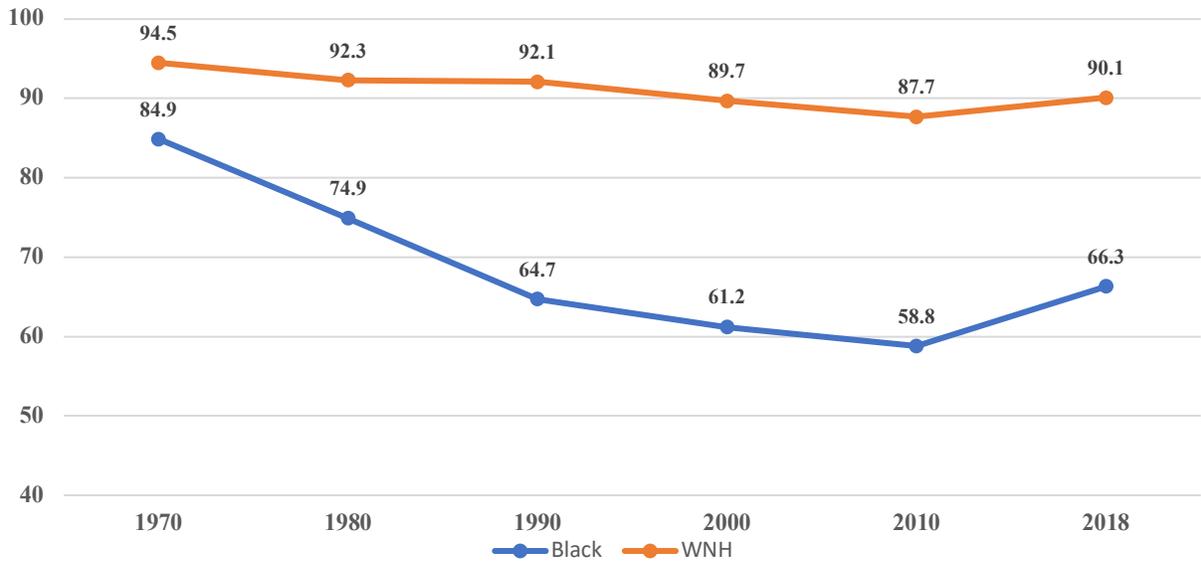
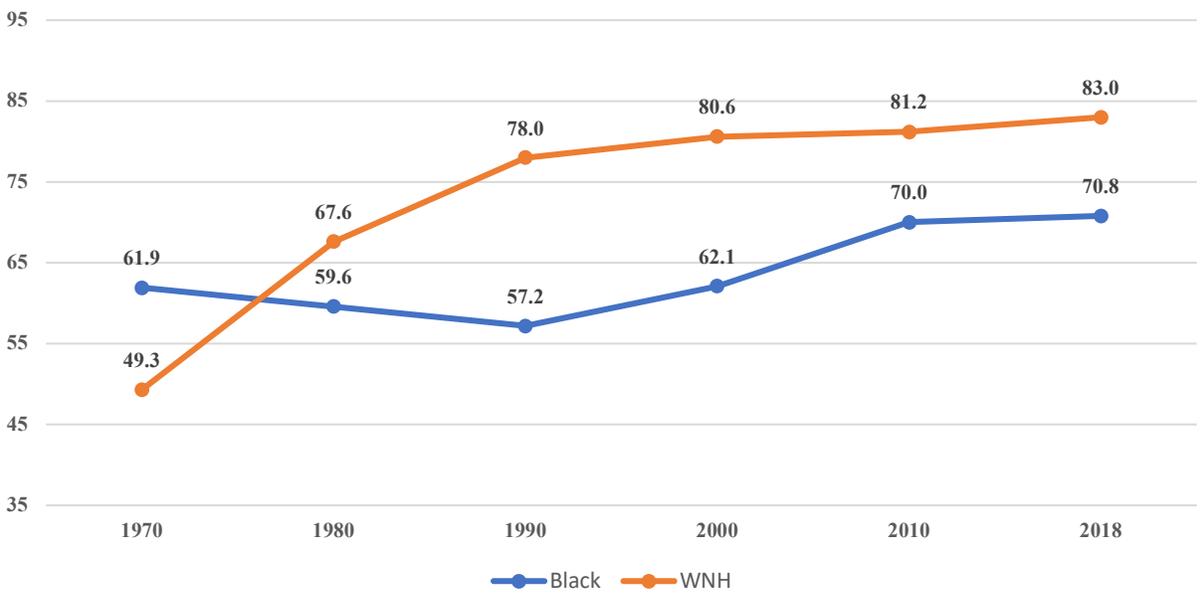


Chart 24:
Employment Rate of Prime Working-Age (25-54) Females:
Milwaukee, 1970-2018



**Chart 25:
Black Male Employment Rates: Young Adults (ages 20-24)
2016-2018**

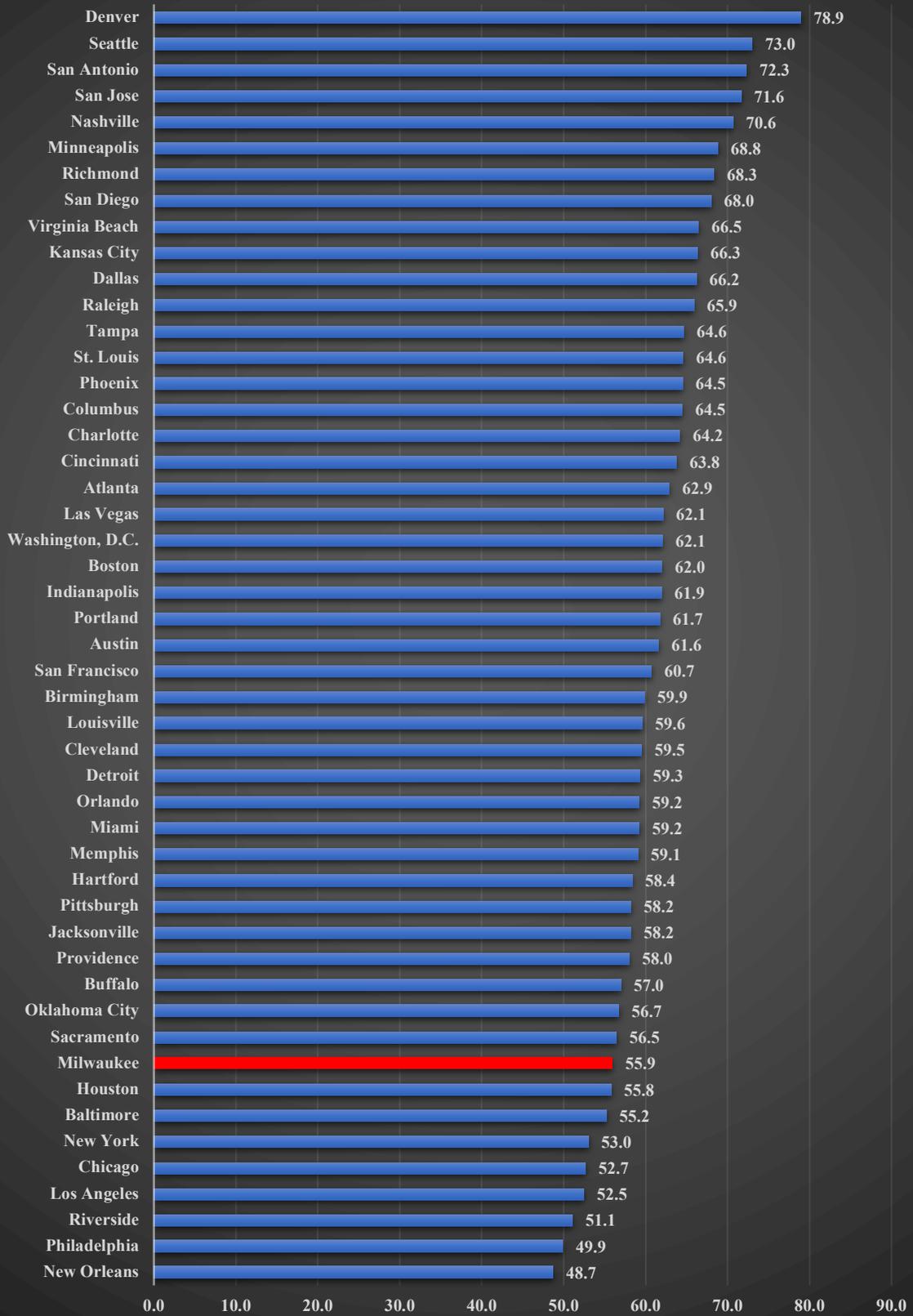


Chart 26:
Black Female Employment Rates: Young Adults (ages 20-24)
2016-2018

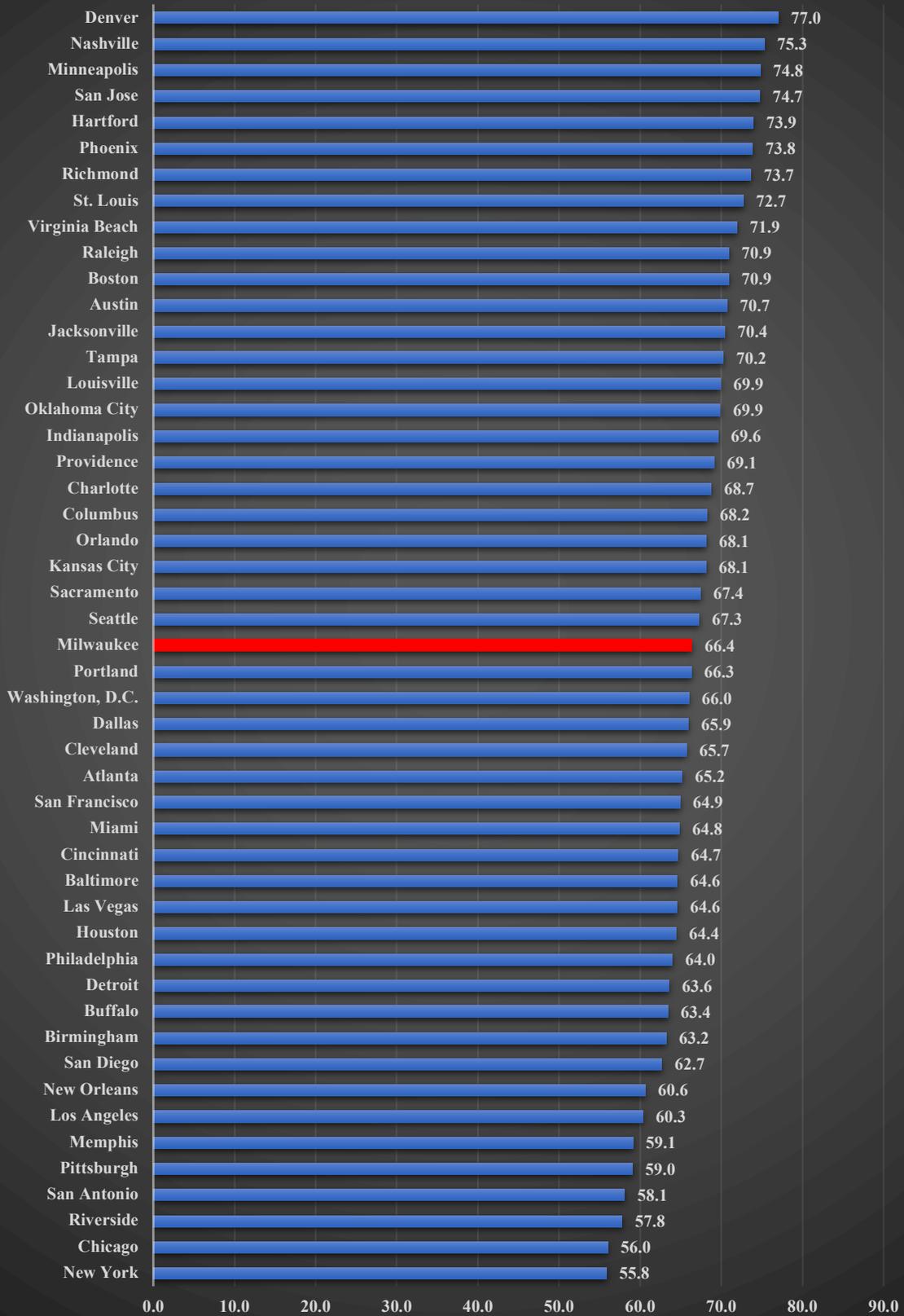


Chart 27:
Disconnected Black Youth in the Nation's Largest Metros
 % ages 16-24 not employed or not in school: 2012-2016

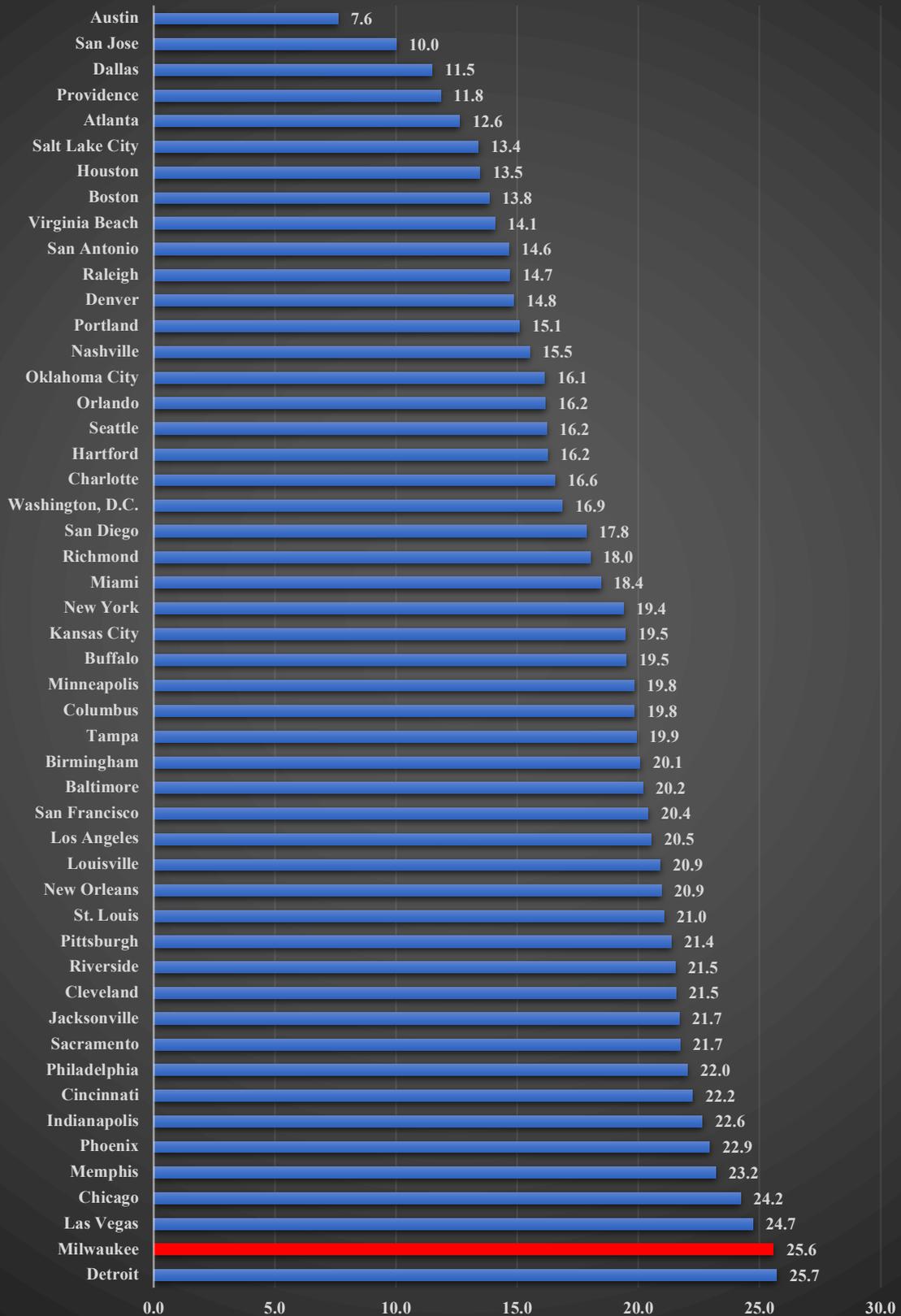


Chart 28:
Employment Rates For Prime-Age Males (ages 25-54)
By Race and Educational Attainment
Milwaukee: 2012-2016

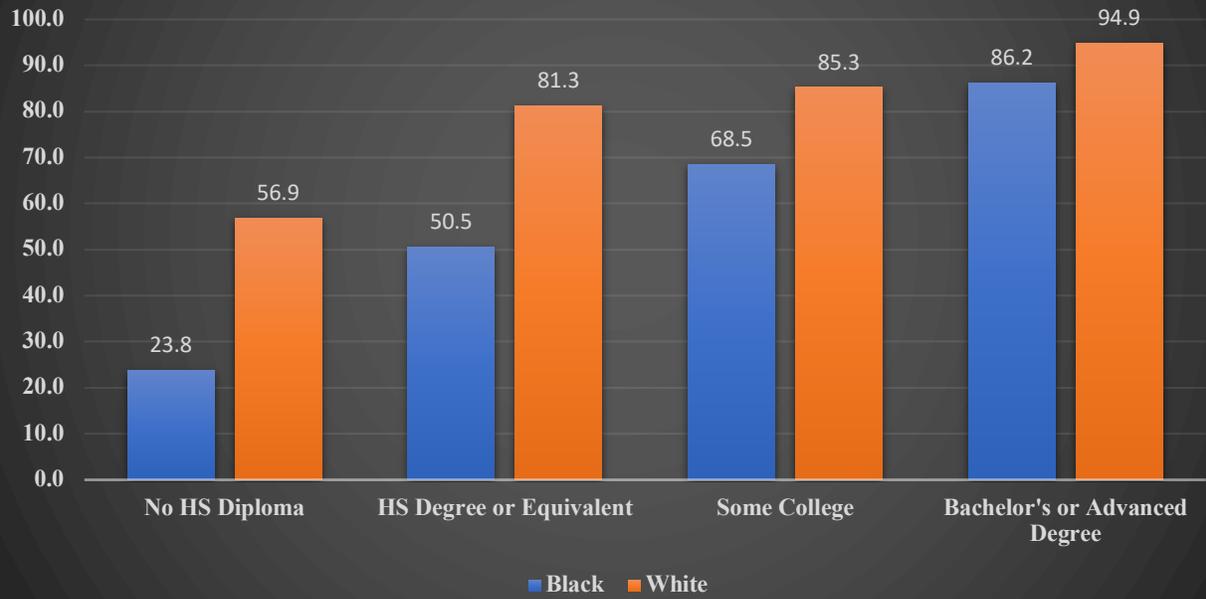


Table 7:

**Race Matters:
Employment Rates for Prime-Age Males (ages 25-54) Without a High School Degree
Blacks and White (Non-Hispanic): 2012-2016**

Metropolitan Area	Black Emp Rate	White Non-Hisp Emp Rate	Percentage Point Gap
Providence	52.7	54.0	1.3
Boston	46.0	51.8	5.8
Miami	45.0	59.4	14.4
San Jose	36.8	51.4	14.6
Seattle	41.5	56.4	14.9
Columbus	35.3	50.8	15.5
Orlando	43.6	60.2	16.6
Charlotte	41.0	57.7	16.7
Birmingham	33.2	50.9	17.7
Denver	48.7	66.9	18.2
Tampa	37.3	55.6	18.3
San Francisco	28.7	47.4	18.7
Washington, D.C.	44.9	63.9	19.0
Atlanta	39.0	58.2	19.2
Hartford	31.4	50.6	19.2
Louisville	29.0	48.6	19.6
Indianapolis	31.3	51.2	19.9
Kansas City	35.0	55.1	20.1
Memphis	36.6	56.8	20.2
Los Angeles	29.3	50.0	20.7
Phoenix	34.8	55.6	20.8
New York	39.2	60.6	21.4
Cincinnati	29.0	51.5	22.5
New Orleans	40.8	63.8	23.0
Nashville	33.7	58.5	24.8
Jacksonville	34.5	59.5	25.0
Oklahoma City	31.6	57.5	25.9
San Diego	27.4	53.4	26.0
St. Louis	31.5	57.5	26.0
Baltimore	30.1	56.4	26.5
Riverside	20.9	47.2	26.3
Austin	31.6	58.1	26.5
Houston	34.6	61.6	27.0
Raleigh	28.9	55.9	27.0
Dallas	39.1	66.2	27.1
Sacramento	19.5	46.6	27.1
Philadelphia	26.5	54.3	27.8
Cleveland	30.5	59.8	29.3
Detroit	27.5	57.6	30.1
Portland	32.7	63.7	31.0
Virginia Beach	33.7	64.7	31.0
Minneapolis	33.9	65.1	31.2
Las Vegas	41.9	74.3	32.4
Buffalo	21.5	54.0	32.5
Chicago	25.2	57.7	32.5
Richmond	28.2	60.7	32.5
Milwaukee	23.8	56.9	33.1
San Antonio	25.5	58.8	33.3
Pittsburgh	21.5	55.8	34.3

Chart 29:
Median Annual Earnings of Black Males in Nation's Largest Metros:
2014-2018
 Adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences

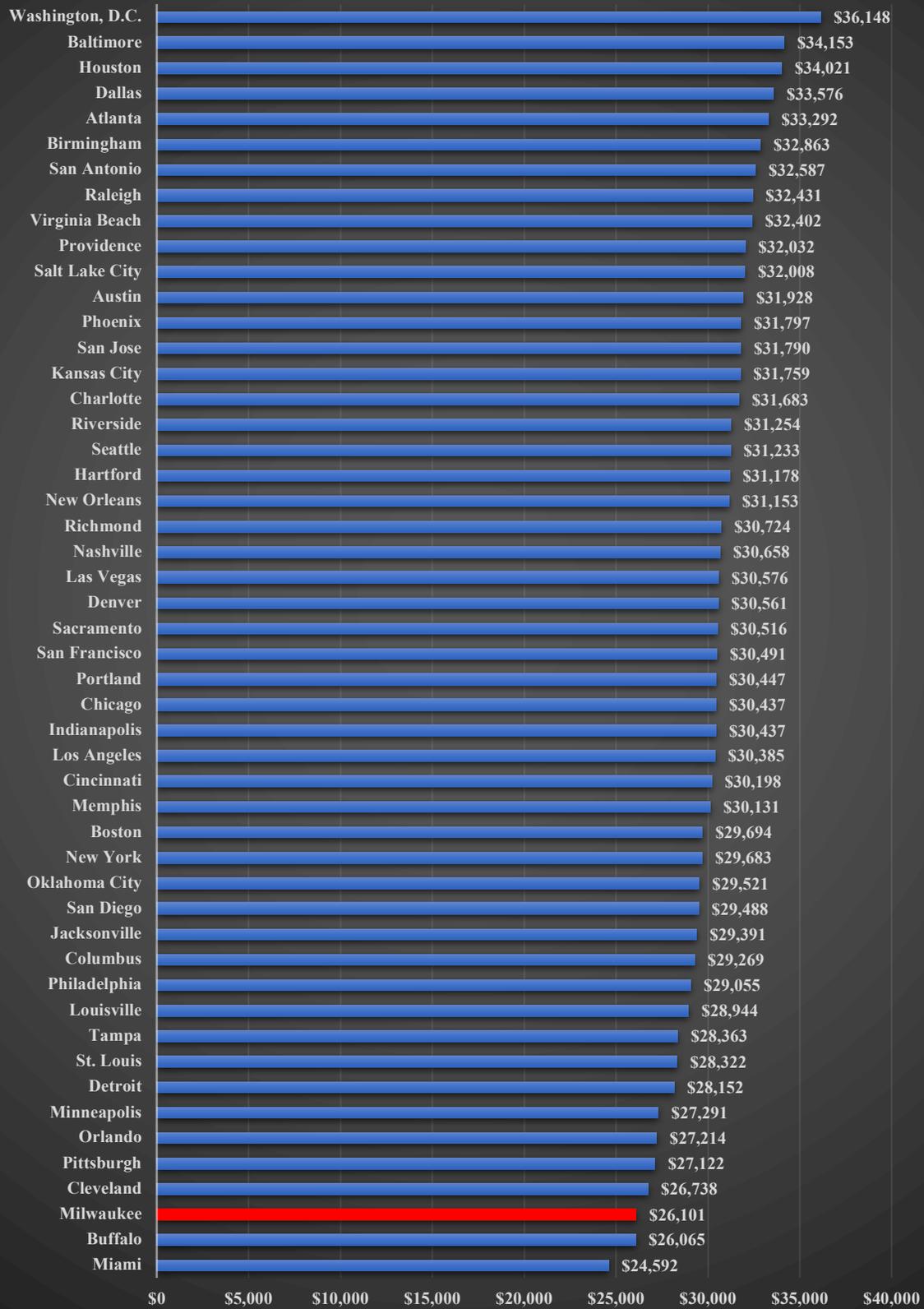


Chart 30:
Median Annual Earnings of Black Females in Nation's Largest Metros:
2014-2018
 Adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences

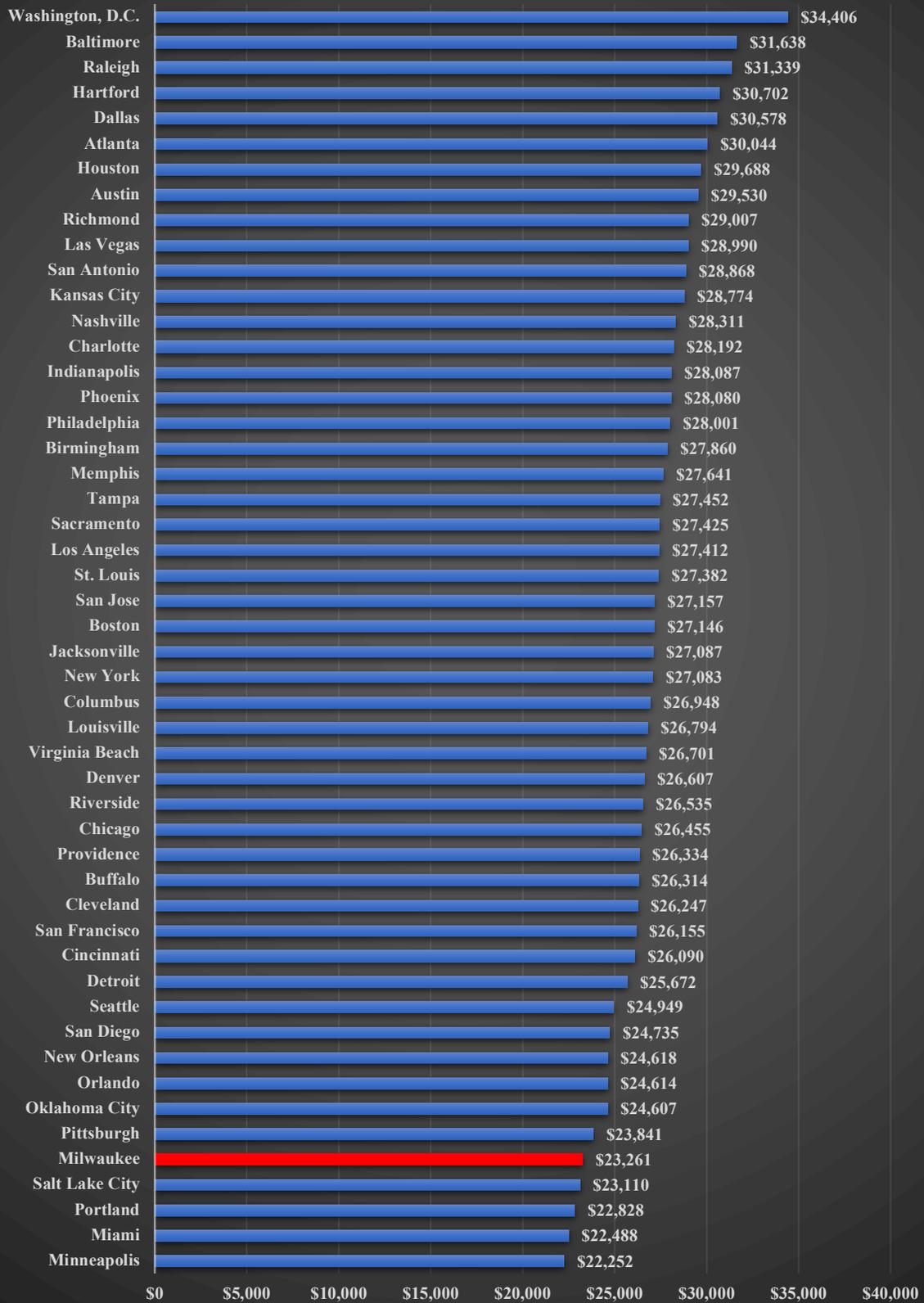


Chart 31:
Median Black Male Annual Earnings as Percentage of
White (Non-Hispanic): 2014-2018

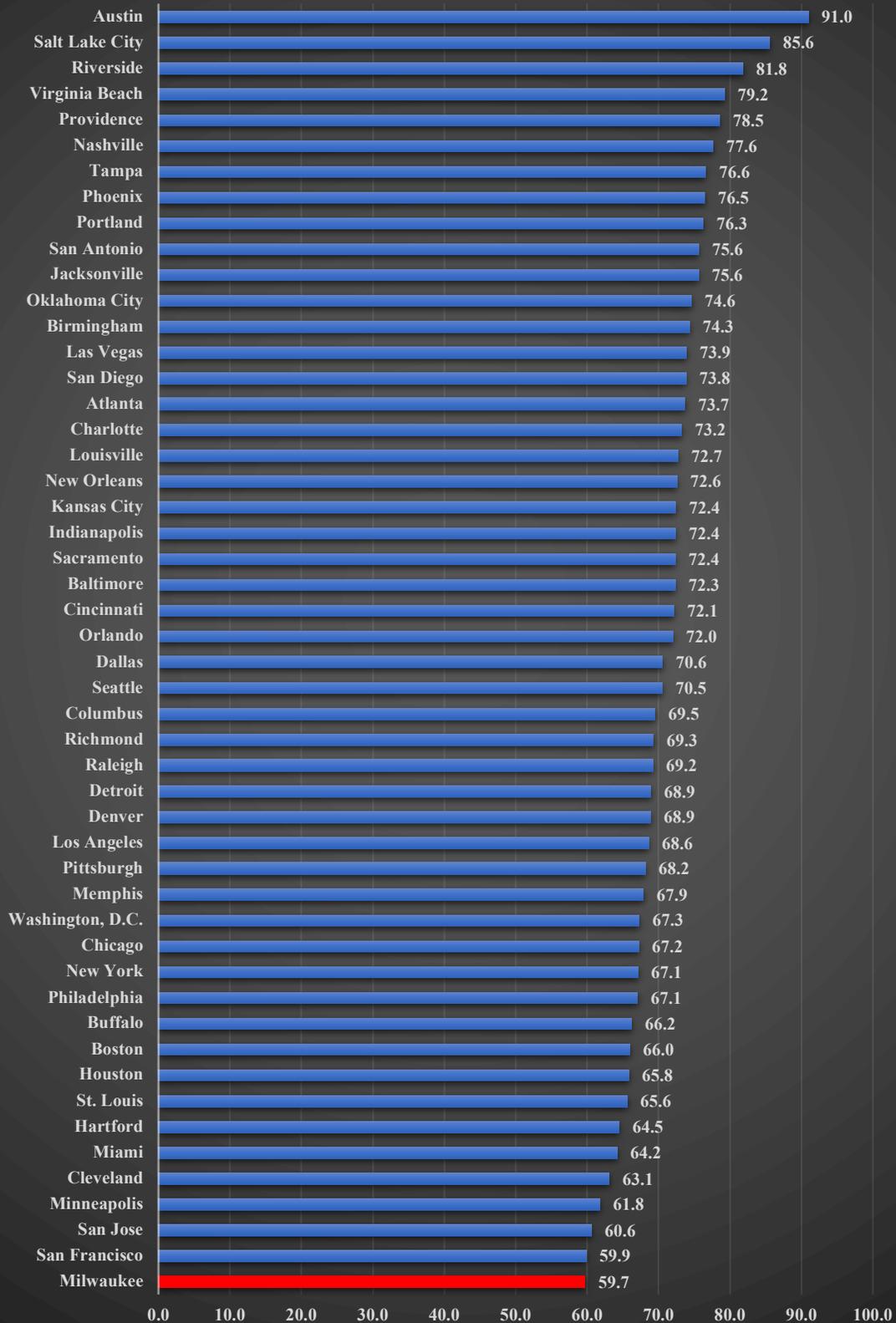


Chart 32:
 Median Black Female Annual Earnings as Percentage of
 White (Non-Hispanic): 2014-2018

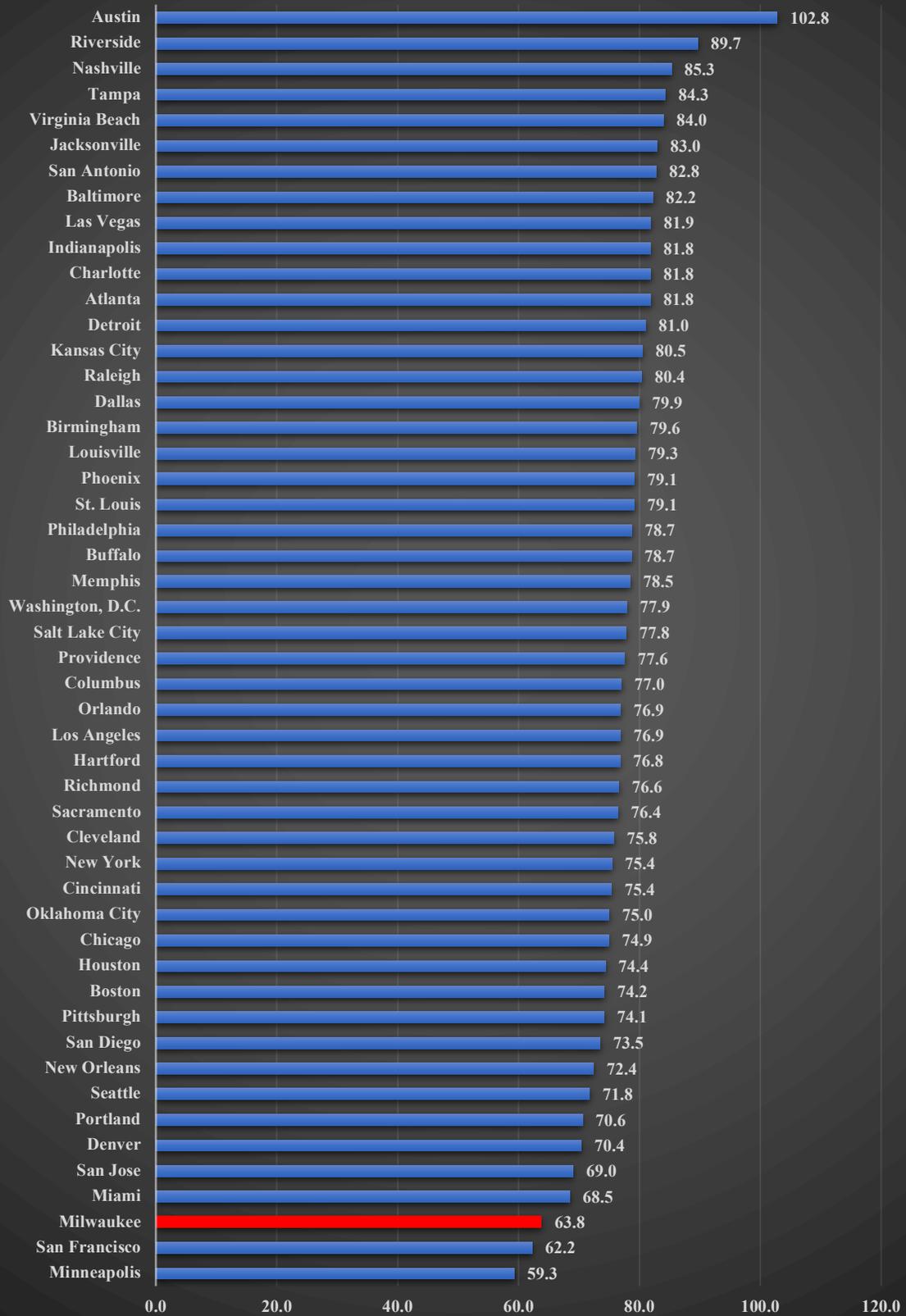


Chart 33:
 Percentage of Black Males Earning Over \$40,000 annually:
 2014-2018
 (in \$2018)

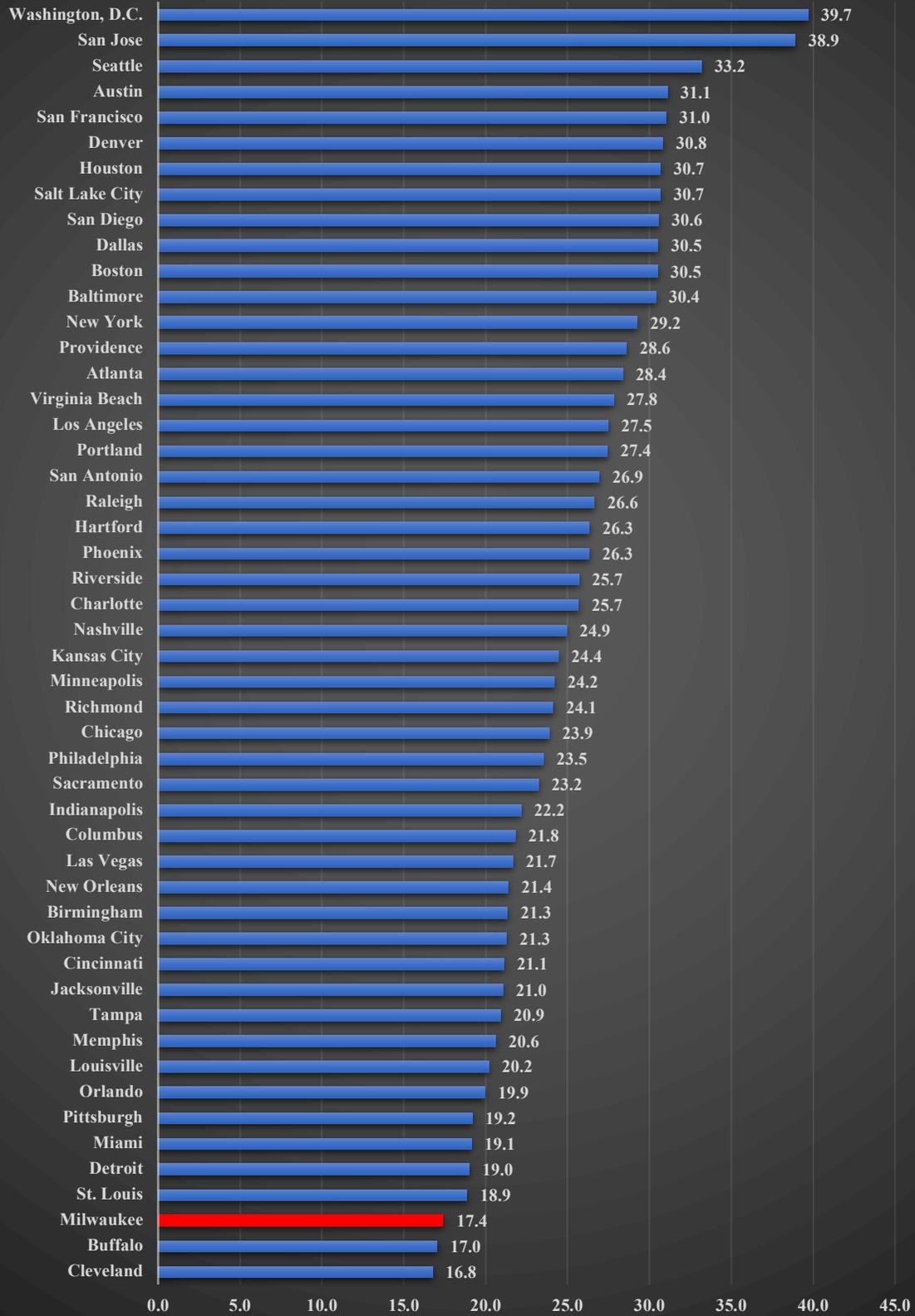
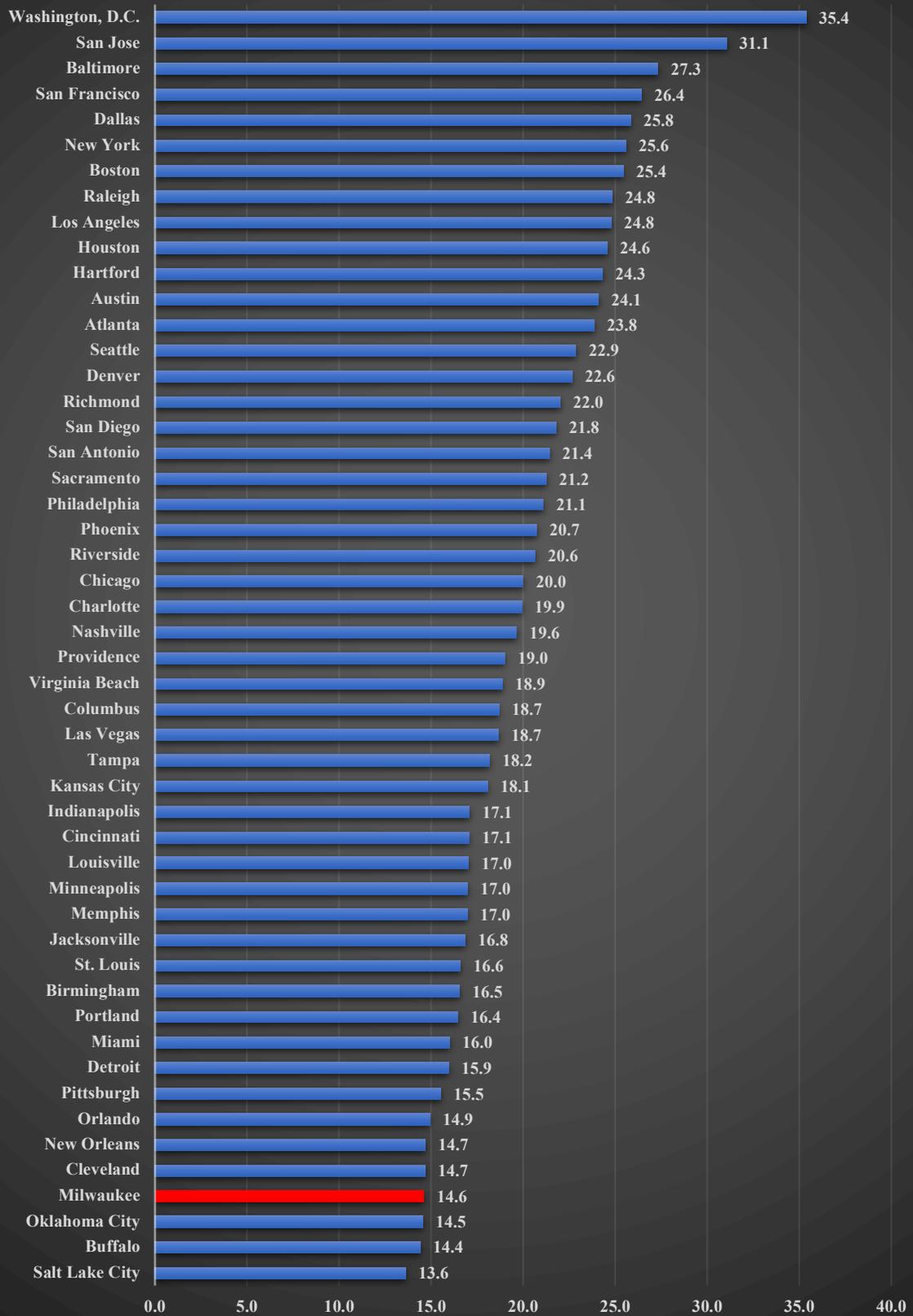


Chart 34:
 Percentage of Black Females Earning Over \$40,000 annually:
 2014-2018 (in \$2018)



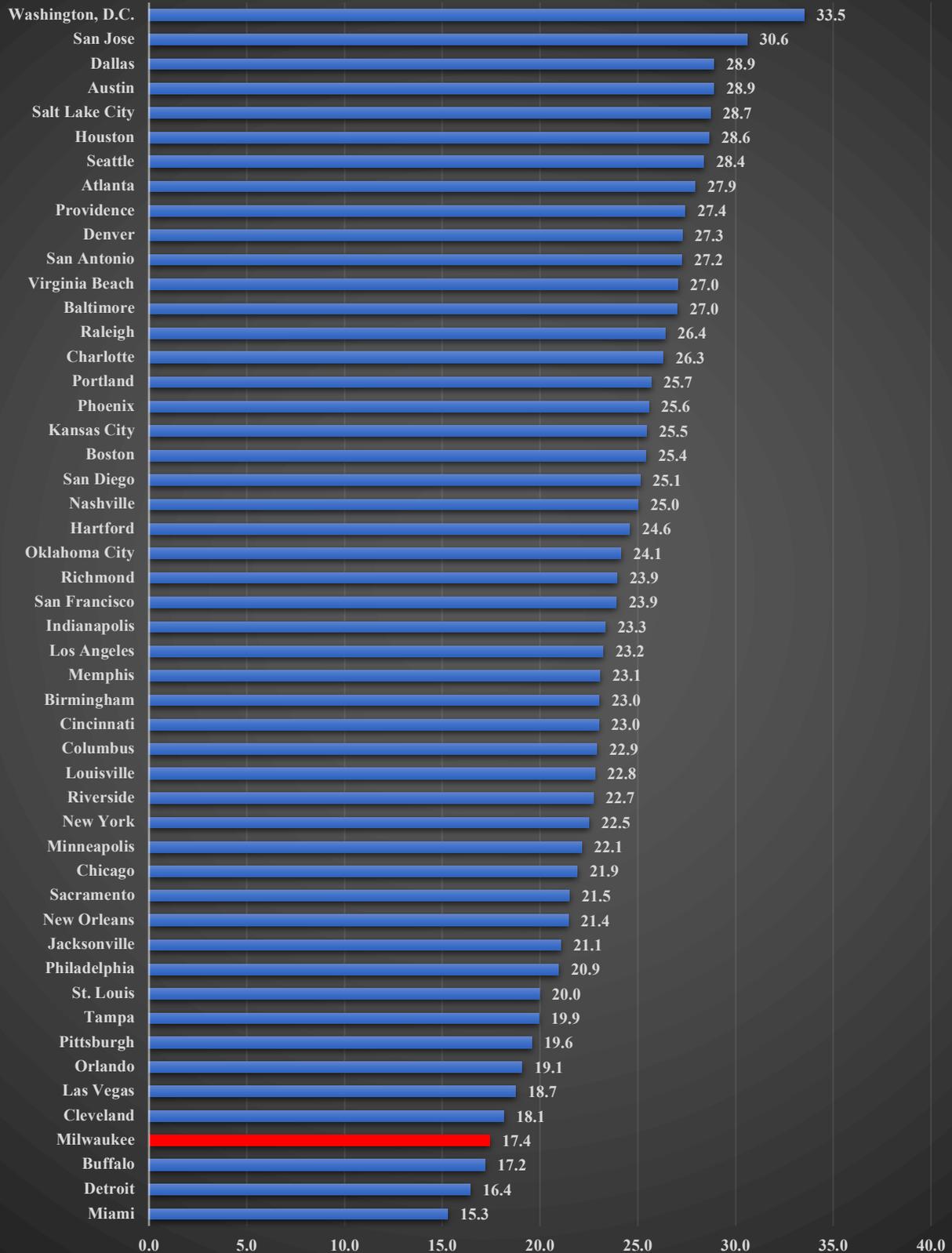
**Table 8:
Black-White Disparities in Male Earnings: 2014-2018
Share of Black and White (Non-Hispanic) Males Earning over \$40,000 annually**

Metropolitan Area	% of Black Males Earning over \$40k	% of WNH Males Earning over 40k	Percentage Point Gap
Riverside	25.7	36.4	10.7
Tampa	20.9	32.7	11.8
Phoenix	26.3	38.9	12.6
Providence	28.6	41.9	13.3
San Diego	30.6	44.1	13.5
San Antonio	26.9	40.7	13.8
Salt Lake City	30.7	46.6	15.9
San Jose	38.9	54.6	15.9
Las Vegas	21.7	37.7	16.0
Portland	27.4	43.5	16.1
Virginia Beach	27.8	44.2	16.4
Sacramento	23.2	39.8	16.6
Orlando	19.9	37.3	17.3
Nashville	24.9	42.3	17.4
Jacksonville	21.0	38.4	17.4
Seattle	33.2	51.1	17.9
Atlanta	28.4	46.5	18.1
Washington	39.7	57.9	18.2
Louisville	20.2	38.6	18.5
Charlotte	25.7	44.3	18.6
Miami	19.1	38.1	19.0
Austin	31.1	50.2	19.1
Birmingham	21.3	40.5	19.2
Dallas	30.5	49.8	19.3
Los Angeles	27.5	46.9	19.4
Baltimore	30.4	50.0	19.6
Oklahoma City	21.3	41.0	19.7
New York	29.2	49.4	20.1
Boston	30.5	50.8	20.3
Denver	30.8	51.2	20.4
Columbus	21.8	42.5	20.7
Cincinnati	21.1	41.9	20.8
Indianapolis	22.2	43.0	20.8
Kansas City	24.4	45.6	21.1
Richmond	24.1	45.5	21.4
Houston	30.7	52.1	21.4
Hartford	26.3	47.8	21.5
Pittsburgh	19.2	40.8	21.7
New Orleans	21.4	43.5	22.1
Buffalo	17.0	39.4	22.3
Memphis	20.6	43.1	22.5
Raleigh	26.6	49.2	22.6
Detroit	19.0	41.8	22.8
Philadelphia	23.5	46.8	23.3
San Francisco	31.0	54.6	23.5
St. Louis	18.9	42.9	24.0
Cleveland	16.8	41.2	24.5
Chicago	23.9	49.2	25.3
Minneapolis	24.2	50.4	26.2
Milwaukee	17.4	46.3	28.9

Table 9:
Black-White Disparities in Female Earnings: 2014-2018
Share of Black and White (Non-Hispanic) Females Earning over \$40,000 annually

Metropolitan Area	% of Black Females Earning over \$40k	% of WNH Females Earning over 40k	Percentage Point Gap
Riverside	20.6	21.5	0.9
Tampa	18.2	22.1	3.9
San Antonio	21.4	25.3	3.9
Atlanta	23.8	27.9	4.1
Phoenix	20.7	24.9	4.2
San Jose	31.1	35.3	4.2
Dallas	25.8	30.9	5.0
Charlotte	19.9	25.1	5.2
Birmingham	16.5	21.8	5.3
Virginia Beach	18.9	24.6	5.7
Washington, D.C.	35.4	41.1	5.7
Nashville	19.6	25.5	5.8
Jacksonville	16.8	22.7	5.8
Sacramento	21.2	27.2	5.9
Houston	24.6	30.5	5.9
Louisville	17.0	23.1	6.0
Las Vegas	18.7	24.8	6.1
Raleigh	24.8	31.1	6.2
Baltimore	27.3	33.6	6.3
Los Angeles	24.8	31.2	6.4
Detroit	15.9	22.9	7.0
Oklahoma City	14.5	21.6	7.1
Pittsburgh	15.5	22.7	7.1
Memphis	17.0	24.2	7.2
New York	25.6	33.1	7.5
San Diego	21.8	29.4	7.7
Richmond	22.0	29.8	7.8
Cincinnati	17.1	24.9	7.9
Orlando	14.9	23.3	8.3
Providence	19.0	27.5	8.5
Miami	16.0	24.5	8.5
Hartford	24.3	32.8	8.5
Columbus	18.7	27.3	8.6
St. Louis	16.6	25.3	8.7
Indianapolis	17.1	25.9	8.8
Austin	24.1	32.9	8.8
Seattle	22.9	31.9	9.0
Boston	25.4	34.9	9.4
Kansas City	18.1	27.7	9.6
Philadelphia	21.1	30.8	9.7
Salt Lake City	13.6	23.4	9.8
Cleveland	14.7	24.6	10.0
Chicago	20.0	30.1	10.1
Buffalo	14.4	24.6	10.2
Portland	16.4	26.8	10.4
New Orleans	14.7	25.4	10.7
Denver	22.6	34.9	12.3
San Francisco	26.4	39.5	13.1
Milwaukee	14.6	29.1	14.5
Minneapolis	17.0	34.7	17.7

Chart 35:
Percentage of Black Males Earning Over \$40,000 annually: 2014-2018
 Adjusted for Regional Cost-of-Living Differences (in 2018 Milwaukee dollars)



BLACK REPRESENTATION AS PRIVATE SECTOR ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKERS

As we have documented in preceding sections of this report, Black job-holders are concentrated in low-wage occupations in Milwaukee: just under 85 percent of all Black workers earn under \$40,000 a year (Charts 33-34). Milwaukee also has (along with Cleveland) the smallest stratum of affluent Black households among the nation's largest metropolitan areas: only 7.7 percent of Black households in Milwaukee report annual income over \$100,000 (Chart 20).

Large numbers of Blacks hold low-wage jobs, few Blacks have achieved affluence in Milwaukee. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to report that Blacks are severely underrepresented in private sector economic decision-making in the metropolitan area. In proportion to their weight in the region's workforce, fewer Blacks hold private-sector management jobs than in any large metropolitan area in the country (Chart 36). Moreover, at the upper-reaches of Milwaukee's corporate hierarchy—top executive positions—Blacks are even more severely underrepresented (Chart 37).

How do we measure “underrepresentation” of a racial or ethnic group in occupations? One way in which economists gauge the level of diversity in an occupational category is to calculate an “index of concentration” or “index of participation,” which measures the degree to which a group is employed in a particular occupation at a percentage greater than, or less than, their percentage of total employment. For example, in a stylized case, if Black workers make up, say, 25 percent of a metro area's employment, but (improbably) hold 50 percent of the metro's managerial jobs, we would calculate an “index of participation” for Blacks in management as 200 percent ($50/25$). If Blacks constituted 25 percent of total employment and 25 percent of managers, we would calculate the index as 100 percent ($25/25$). Thus, for any occupation, an index of 100 means that the group is found roughly in proportion to their presence in the overall workforce (roughly, ethnic or racial parity); an index below 100 means that the group is “underrepresented” in the occupation; and an index over 100 means that the group is concentrated, in relation to its weight in the overall labor force, in a given occupation.

Charts 36 and 37 make clear that *in no large metropolitan area* in the US is there racial parity in management or top executive positions. No metro area posts an “index of participation” for Blacks over 100 in either occupational category, and in the case of top executive posts, only

three metros show indexes above 50. The paucity of Blacks in positions of private-sector economic decision-making is a near-universal reality in metropolitan America.

But Milwaukee stands out for a particularly low presence of Blacks in management or executive positions. Black Milwaukee ranks dead-last on the index of Black participation in management occupations among the nation's largest metropolitan areas (Chart 36), and trails by a considerable amount other places where Blacks are severely underrepresented, such as Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. Only Minneapolis approaches Milwaukee's low level of Black participation in private-sector management. Moreover, the presence of Blacks in management positions has barely improved in the past 20 years. In 2000, the Black "index of participation" in Milwaukee private-sector management jobs was 34.4, which means that Blacks held management positions at about one-third their presence in the region's employment base. By 2018, that index had risen to only 41.2 (Chart 36), meaning Blacks were still severely underrepresented in Milwaukee management, holding posts at only two-fifths of their weight in the labor market.²⁹

When we look at top executive positions (Chart 37), even though Milwaukee's comparative position is not dead-last (it ranks 42nd of the 50 largest metropolitan areas), the region's index of Black participation is nonetheless dismal. To repeat: virtually all metro areas lag on this indicator, as in a majority of the nation's largest metro areas Blacks hold top executive positions at about one-quarter their presence in the overall workforce. In Milwaukee, Blacks hold top executive jobs at about one-fifth their weight in the overall labor force (and there is a cluster of about 20 metro areas whose "index of participation" is virtually indistinguishable from Milwaukee's, or lower). In short, the "C-suite" in Milwaukee, as in the vast majority of metro areas in the US, looks very little like the racial composition of the region's workforce.

²⁹ The EEOC data between 2000 and 2018 are not directly comparable, as the 2000 calculation includes "managers and officials" while the 2018 tabulation includes simply "managers" (with top executives broken out into a separate category). If we combine managers and top-executives in the 2018 calculation, then the Black participation index was unchanged between 2000 and 2018.

Chart 36:
Index of Black Participation in Management Occupations: 2018
 Share of Blacks Holding Management Jobs Relative To
 Black Share of Total Employment (100= racial parity)

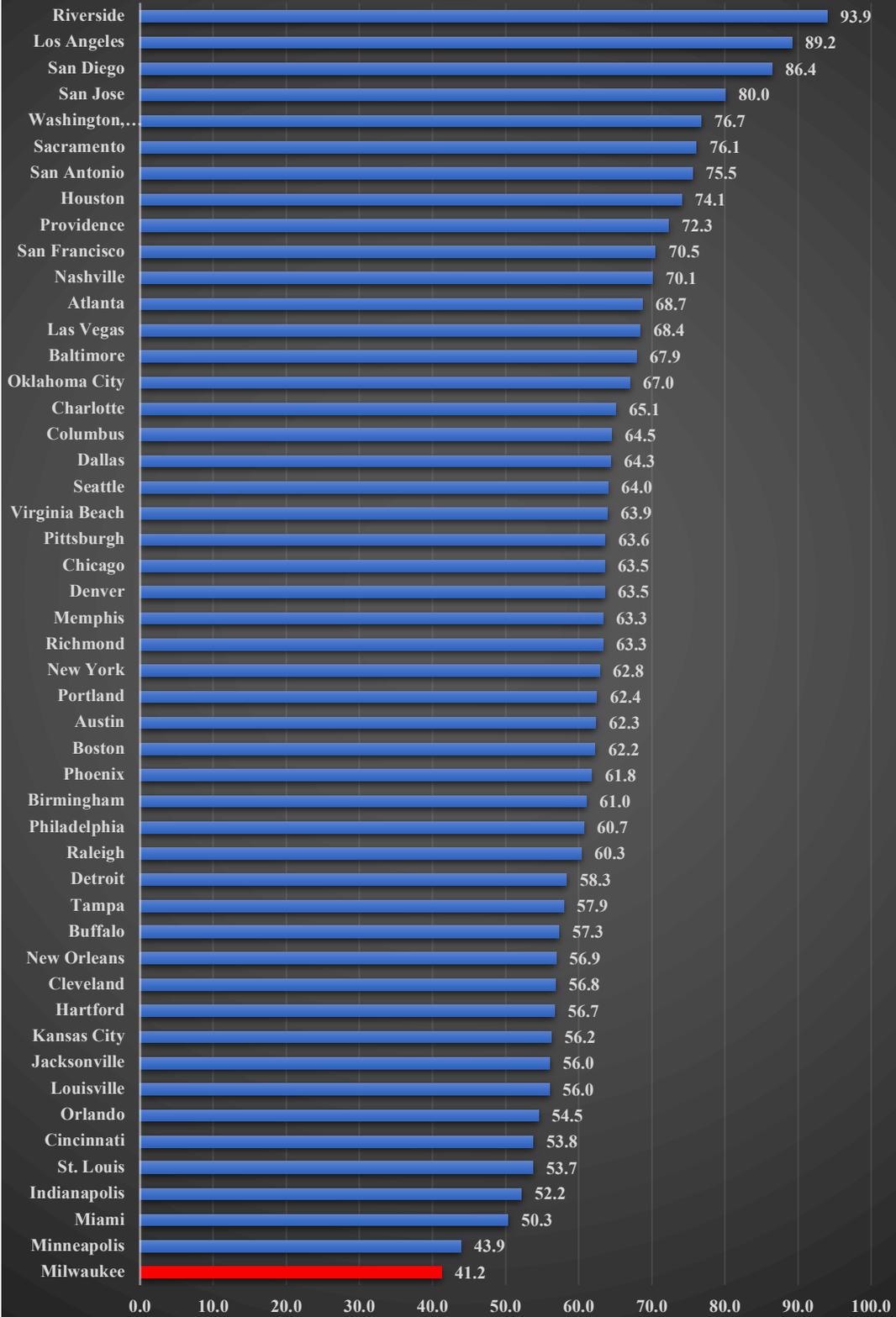
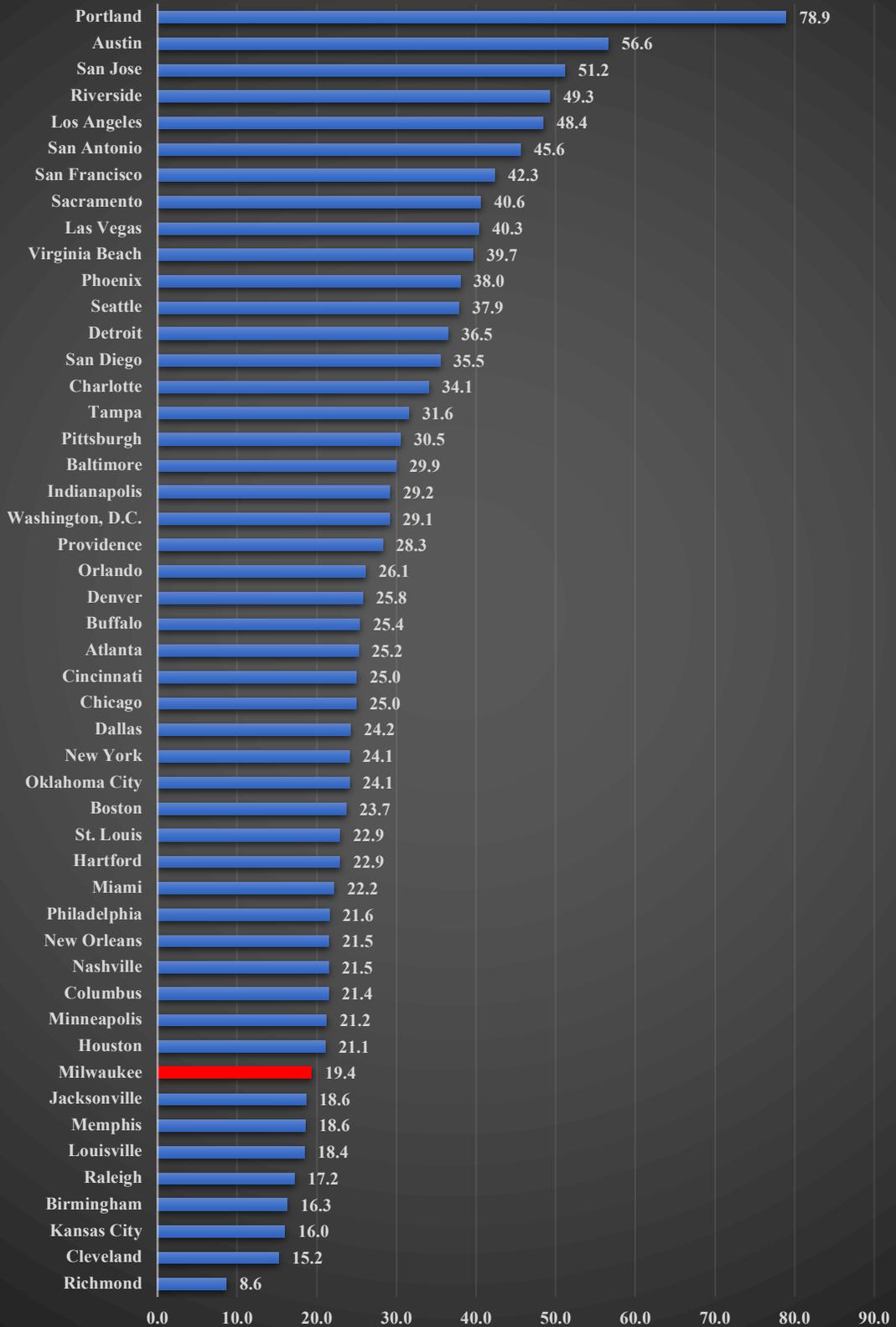


Chart 37:
Index of Black Participation in Top Executive Occupations: 2018
 Share of Blacks Holding Top Executive Posts Relative To
 Black Share of Total Employment (100= racial parity)



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment in Milwaukee's Black community has improved considerably since 1970. Among the Black population 25 years or older, the percentage with a high school diploma or equivalent has jumped from 34.0 percent in 1970 to 82.8 in 2018. The share holding a college, professional, or advanced degree has increased from 3.8 percent in 1970 to 14.1 percent in 2018.

Nonetheless, as Charts 38 and 39 make clear, when compared to the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas today, Black Milwaukee's educational attainment lags behind African American communities elsewhere. These charts array the two extremes of educational attainment: the percentage of Black adults holding college or advanced degrees; and the percentage of Blacks without a high school degree. As Chart 38 shows, Milwaukee ranks last among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas in the percentage of Black adults holding college or advanced degrees. At the other extreme of educational attainment, Milwaukee posts the fourth worst (highest) level of high school dropouts (17.2 percent); only Minneapolis (17.6 percent), New Orleans (18.5 percent) and Miami (19.2 percent) are worse.

Educational attainment matters for a myriad of reasons affecting community prosperity, so Milwaukee's lag in this area remains an impediment to Black community advancement. For example, as we analyzed earlier (Chart 28), educational attainment strongly affects employment prospects in Black Milwaukee: at each step of the process (high school graduation, some college or associate's degree, or bachelor's degrees and beyond), the employment rates for Blacks increase. While it is true, as we showed, that education does not eliminate racial disparities in employment (in Milwaukee or elsewhere --see Table 7), it remains nonetheless true that improving educational attainment is an essential ingredient to advancing economic opportunity in Black Milwaukee – and it is an area where Milwaukee continues to lag in comparison to the nation's largest metropolitan areas.

Chart 38:
Percentage of Blacks Holding College or Advanced Degrees:
2014-2018
 % over age 25 with college or advanced degree

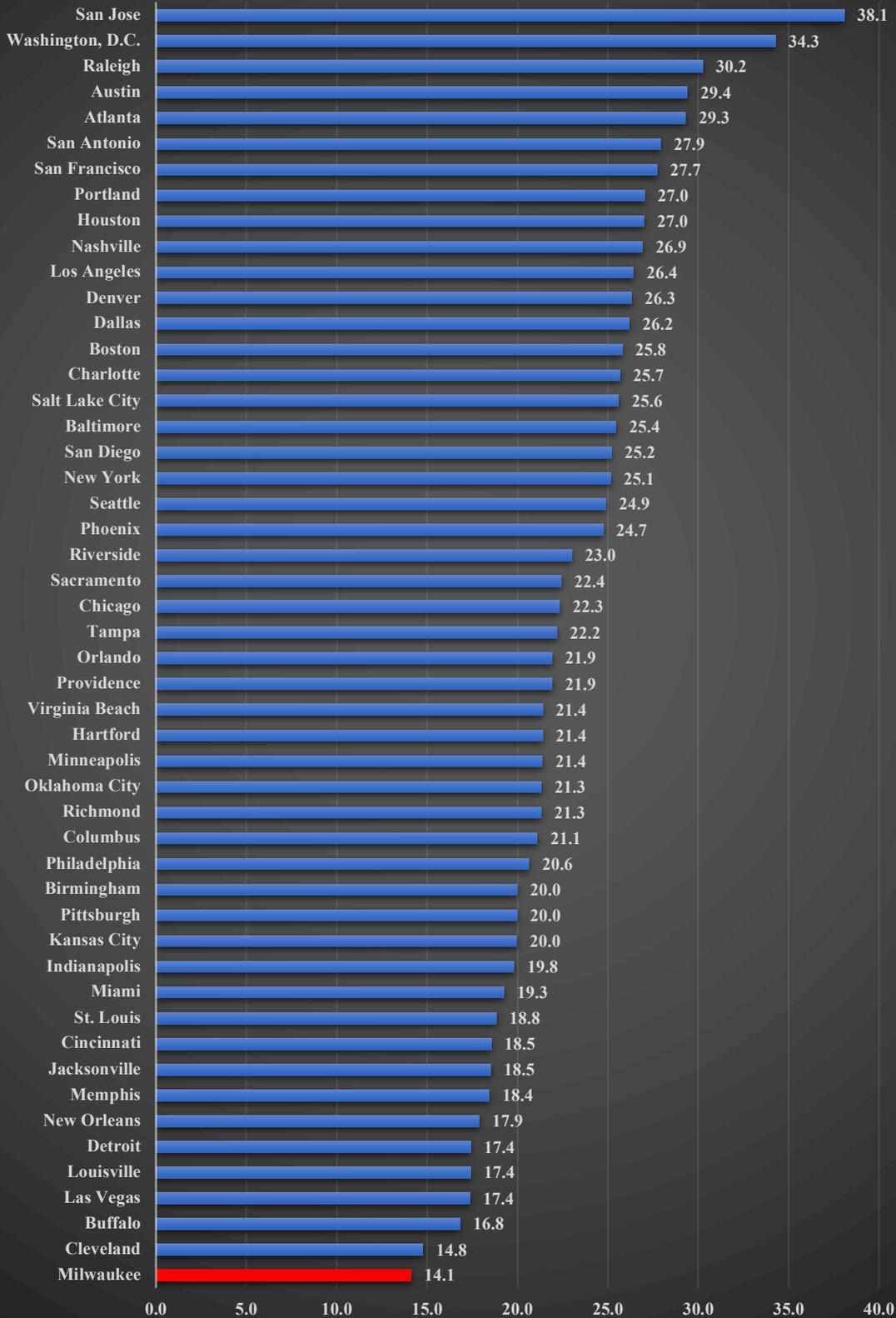
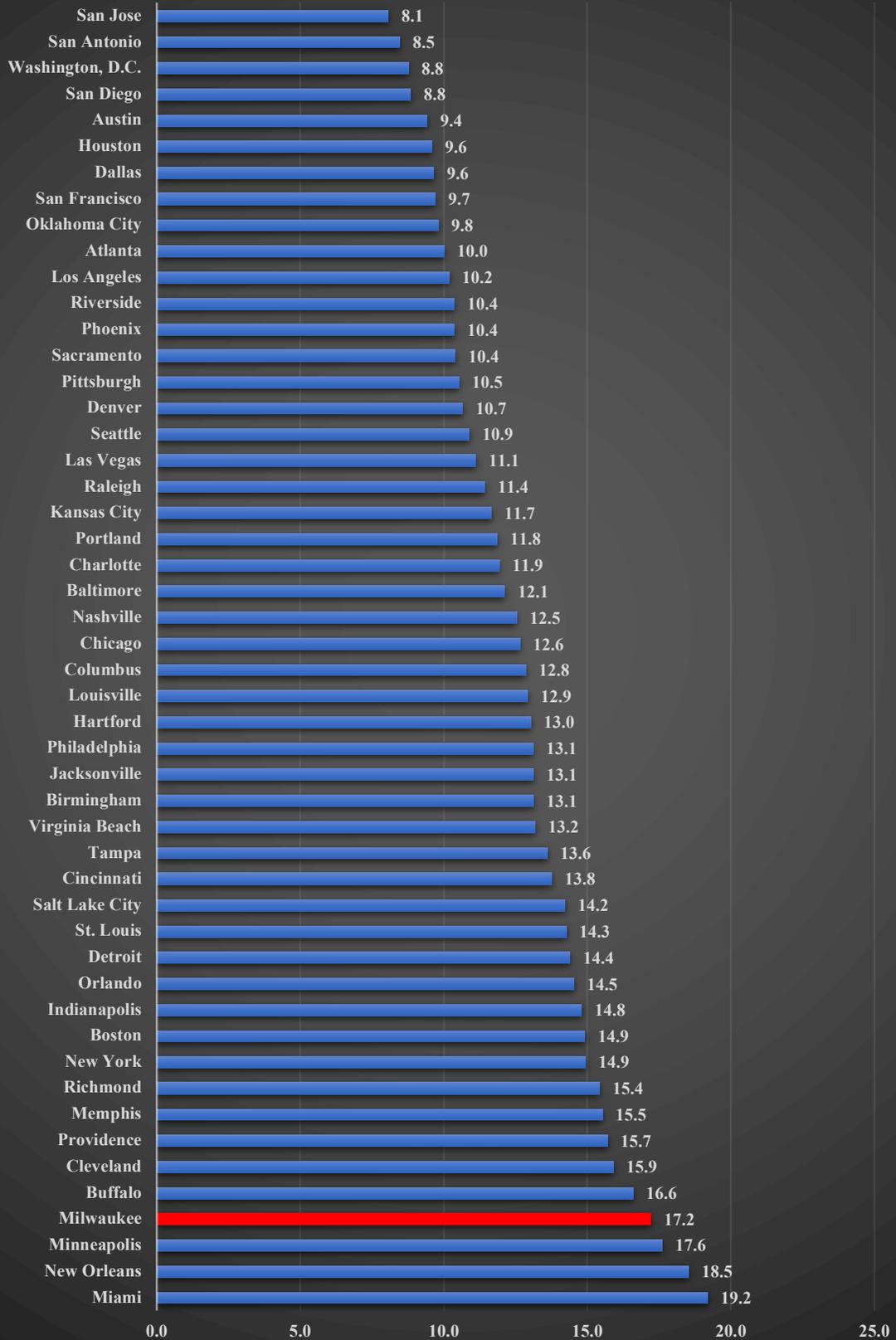


Chart 39:
 Percentage of Blacks Without a High School Degree: 2014-2018
 % over age 25% without high school diploma or equivalent



SEGREGATED SCHOOLING

It has now been 66 years since *Brown v. Board of Education* began the arduous process of dismantling racial segregation in America's K-12 schools; almost 50 years since decisions such as *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg* established a mechanism (busing) to accomplish desegregation; and over 40 years since the federal order to desegregate Milwaukee Public Schools.³⁰ Yet, racial isolation remains endemic in America's and Milwaukee's urban schools and, by most measures, has been increasing over the past decades as *resegregation* has characterized enrollment patterns in many metropolises. This, despite a vast body of social science research showing that school segregation is strongly associated with racial achievement gaps and that school desegregation/integration is the most effective policy promoting educational and economic equality of opportunity.³¹ Today, exactly the same percentage of Milwaukee's Black schoolchildren attend hypersegregated schools (in which 90 percent or more of the students are minorities)³² as was the case in the mid-1960s.

Chart 40 shows the historical trajectory of segregated schooling in metro Milwaukee, displaying the percentage of Black schoolchildren in the region attending hypersegregated schools at various points between 1950 and 2019. By the mid-1960s, as Black migration to the city surged, over 70 percent of Milwaukee's Black schoolchildren attended hypersegregated schools in a rigidly segregated public-school system. Surprisingly, though, by 1980 --after decades of anti-segregation mobilization in Milwaukee's Black community, the 1976 passage of the Chapter 220 bill offering incentives for limited inter-district integration, and the implementation of a court-ordered plan (the Reynolds Plan) to desegregate the Milwaukee Public Schools-- this percentage had tumbled to just under 30 percent. This was a steep decline, all the

³⁰ Of course, a key court decision left out of this litany is *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), which effectively precluded compulsory metropolitan-area wide school desegregation plans, limiting court-ordered desegregation to districts where prior *de jure* (intentional) segregation had been proven, and, as one analysis put it, permitted "school district borders" to become "a wall that can separate our students by race, class, and opportunity." See Edbuild, "Dismissed: America's Most Divisive School District Borders," July 2019. Access at: <https://edbuild.org/content/dismissed/edbuild-dismissed-full-report-2019.pdf>. By prohibiting compulsory cross-district (metro-wide) desegregation, *Milliken*, in the eyes of virtually all scholars of race and education, established the legal straitjacket that not only undermined desegregation efforts but, as the overwhelming majority of whites moved to the walled-off suburbs of metro areas, set the stage for the *resegregation* of schooling in many regions.

³¹ The literature, starting with the legendary Coleman Report of 1966, is much too voluminous to summarize here, but most recently see: Sean F. Reardon, "School Segregation and Racial Academic Achievement Gaps," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2, no. 5 (2016): 34-57; and especially Rucker C. Johnson's exhaustive analysis, *Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

³² The eminent sociologist of education Gary Orfield has been using this measure for years. More recently, see Erica Frankenberg, Jongyeon Ee, Jennifer B. Ayscue and Gary Orfield, *Harming Our Common Future: America's Segregated Schools 65 Years After Brown* (Los Angeles: UCLA Civil Rights Project 2019).

more remarkable in light of Milwaukee's persistent status as one of the nation's most residentially segregated metropolitan areas. Indeed, by the end of the decade, only 21 percent of Milwaukee's Black schoolchildren attended hypersegregated schools.³³

As Chart 40 shows, however, this percentage has risen ever since –especially in the period between 1995-2000. It was during those five years when a combination of factors contributed to a *doubling* of the percentage of Milwaukee's Black schoolchildren attending hypersegregated schools. These include: 1) long-term demographic trends (continuing white flight from the city combined with Milwaukee's comparatively low rate of Black suburbanization); 2) policies such as open enrollment (which permits large numbers of non-minority students living in the city to attend suburban schools); 3) the dramatic expansion of the city's highly segregated private voucher schools; and 4) a general surrender on integration (and rise in opposition to desegregation policies) by the region's political and educational leadership. This explosive resegregation between 1995-2000 continued at a more moderate pace through the next two decades, especially as Milwaukee and Wisconsin state leaders wound down and eliminated the Chapter 220 voluntary metro-wide desegregation program, and segregated voucher and charter schools proliferated. The ultimate result, as noted earlier, is that the same proportion of Black children in Milwaukee are attending racially isolated, hypersegregated schools today as was the case in 1965.

As Chart 41 shows, Milwaukee now has the highest percentage of Black children attending hypersegregated schools among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas.³⁴ Higher than in the historically segregated schools of New York, Detroit, and Chicago. Higher than in the schools of Birmingham, Atlanta, or Memphis, which themselves have not transcended the continuing legacy of the Jim Crow South. Higher than everywhere.

³³ In the eyes of critics, counterbalancing this positive result were other equity considerations in the way the Milwaukee desegregation plan was implemented, including disparate burdens placed on Black and white students in the city's busing plan. As one critic has written: "[O]ver time it became clear that the method used to achieve this was a cynical charade meant to dupe Black families in Milwaukee and pacify a school board that opposed such busing... Milwaukee's plan was massively unequal in its busing burden while disrupting black neighborhoods in the city." See Bruce Murphy, "The Truth About Busing," *Urban Milwaukee*, 11 July 2019.

³⁴ In addition to all the historical and political factors noted in explaining Milwaukee's resegregation, the low rate of Black suburbanization in Milwaukee may be a particularly salient factor distinguishing Milwaukee's more intense resegregation from other metro areas. In many other metro areas, as documented in Chart 3 earlier, a substantial portion of the metro area Black population lives in the suburbs. While some of those suburbs elsewhere have hypersegregated, 90%+ minority schools, the majority of Black children in metro area suburbs are not attending such schools. In Milwaukee, a small fraction of the region's Black students attend non-hypersegregated schools in the suburbs because such a small percentage of Black households live in the region's suburbs or have the resources to take advantage of open enrollment policies.

Moreover, as Chart 42 shows, Milwaukee not only leads the nation in Black children attending hypersegregated schools, but it also posts among the highest rates of Black children attending what Gary Orfield has called “apartheid schools” (defined as schools in which more than 99 percent of students are minorities).³⁵ Over one-third of metro Milwaukee’s Black schoolchildren are enrolled in such schools –triple the rate 30 years ago. Only Detroit, Birmingham, and Memphis report a higher percentage of Black schoolchildren enrolled in apartheid schools.

³⁵ Gary Orfield, John Kucsera, and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *E Pluribus...Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students* (Los Angeles: UCLA, The Civil Rights Project, September 2012). Access at: https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_omplete_2012.pdf

Chart 40:
Racial Segregation in Metro Milwaukee Schools: 1950-2019
% of Black students attending hypersegregated schools (90% or more minority)

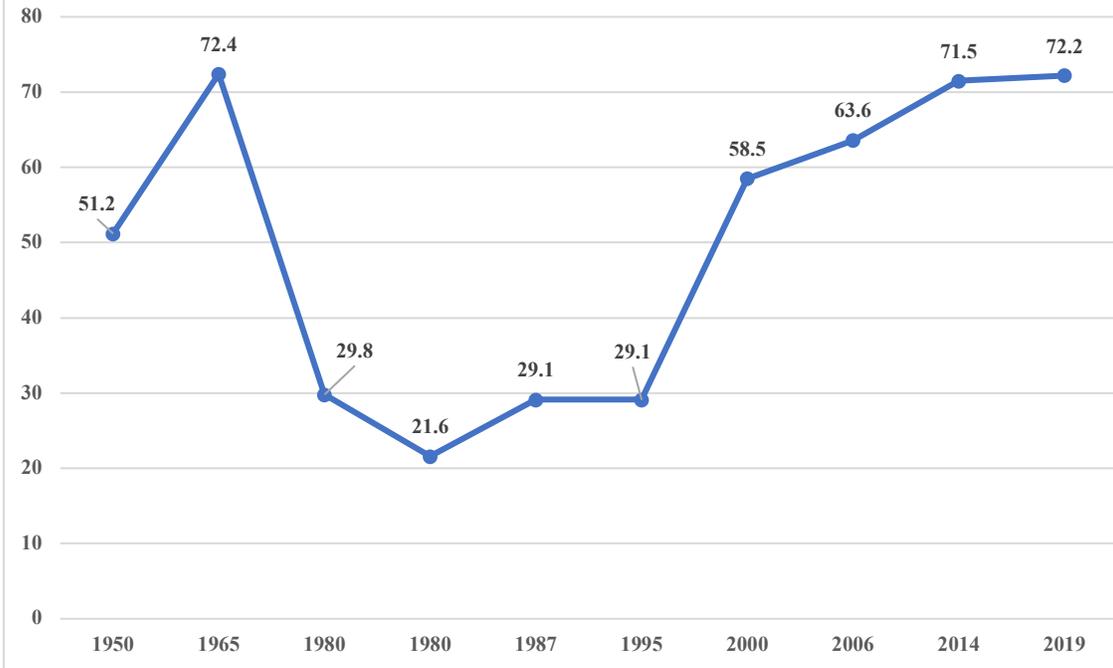


Chart 41:
Percentage of Black Students Attending Hypersegregated Schools in
the Nation's Largest Metropolitan Areas: 2017-2018
 (% attending 90%+ minority schools)

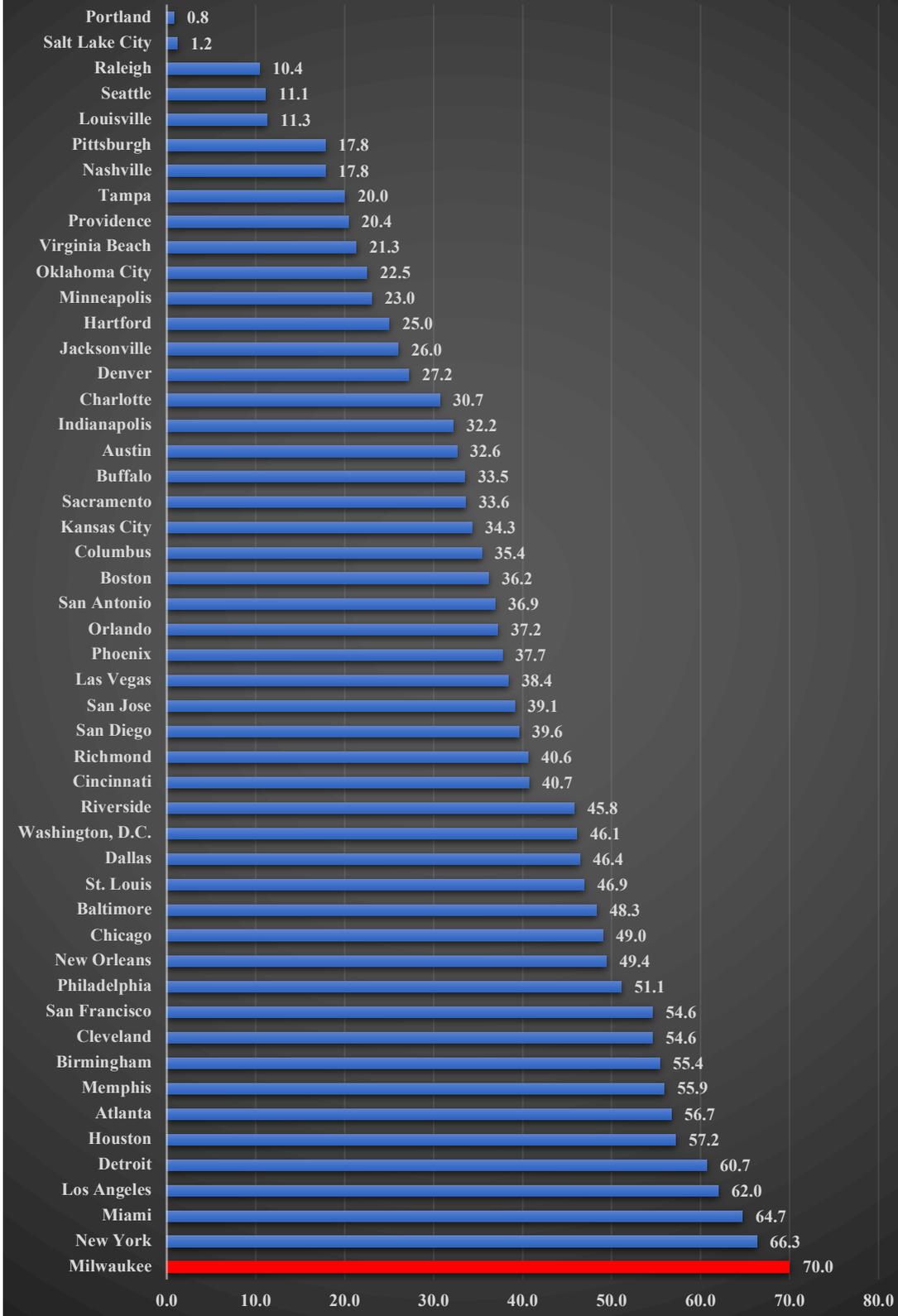
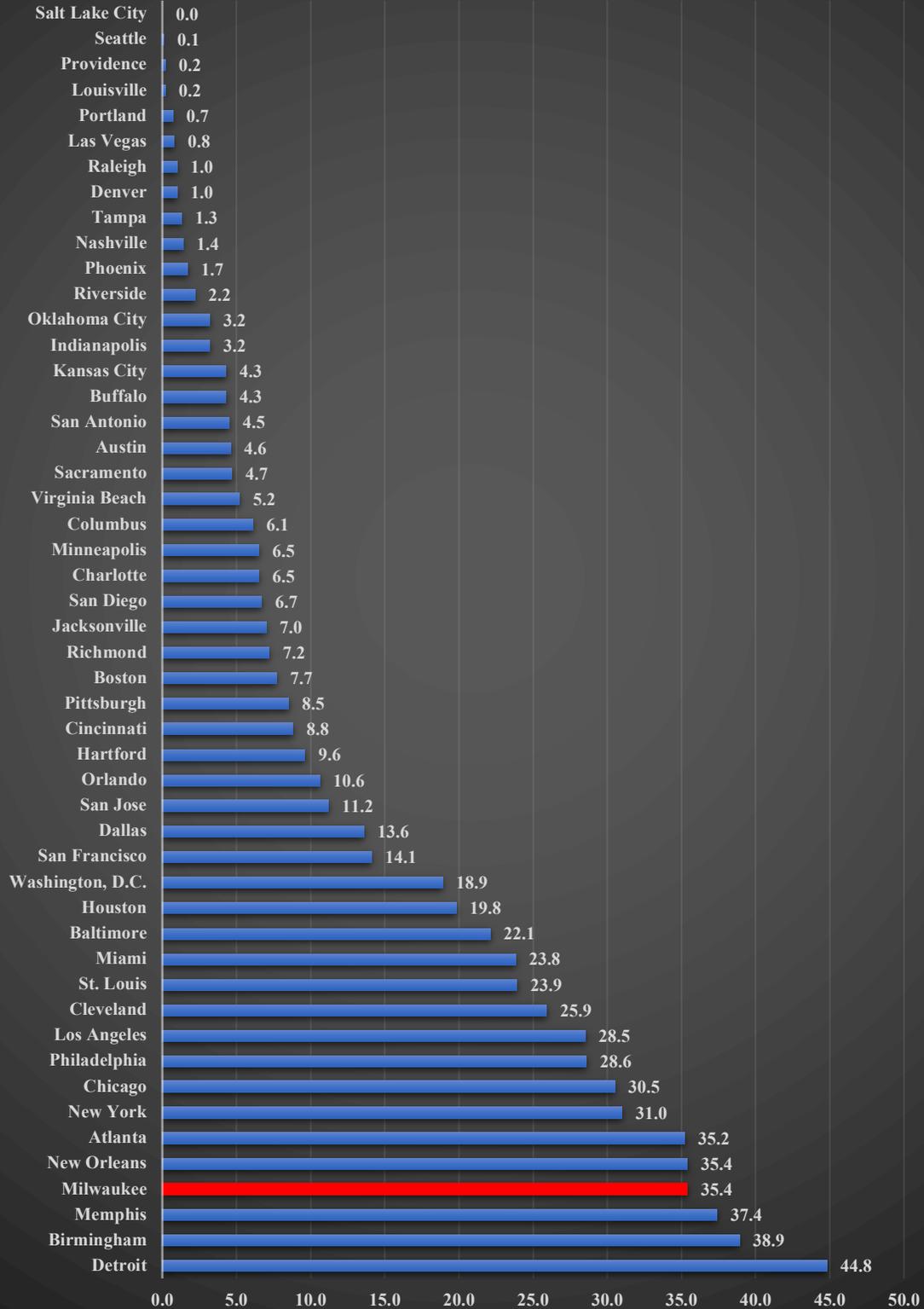


Chart 42:
Percentage of Black Students Enrolled in Apartheid Schools in
the Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas: 2017-2018
 (% attending 99%+ minority schools)



RACE AND MASS INCARCERATION

In recent years, the mass incarceration of Black males has become widely recognized, in academic and public policy circles, as a central element of systemic racial inequality in America.³⁶ For young Black men in distressed inner-city neighborhoods, especially those with limited education, “serving time has become a normal life event,” wrote Bruce Western and Becky Pettit a decade ago. “Economic disadvantage, crystallizing in penal confinement, is sustained over the life course and transmitted from one generation to the next. This is a profound institutionalized inequality that has renewed race and class disadvantage.”³⁷ The effects of mass incarceration ripple through poor, segregated neighborhoods in cities like Milwaukee, increasing poverty,³⁸ undermining families and disrupting the lives of children, and severely undermining the employment prospects of Black males who have become entangled in the surging “carceral state” of the past 40 years.

Reliable data on Black incarceration in Milwaukee, especially in comparison to other large metropolitan areas, have been hard to come by; as noted criminologist John Pfaff points out, there are serious gaps in data available on state prisoner and ex-incarcerated populations.³⁹ Estimates, for example, that have widely-circulated in Milwaukee media and public discourse – that “over half of Black men in their 30s in Milwaukee County have been incarcerated”⁴⁰—are based on questionable data and flawed research methodology and should be viewed with great skepticism.⁴¹

³⁶ There is a vast and burgeoning literature on the politics, economics, sociology, and history of mass incarceration. Among the many important works, see in particular: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), the seminal best-seller that brought the issue of mass incarceration to wide public consciousness; Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007); John Pfaff, *Locked In: The True Cause of Mass Incarceration and How to Achieve Real Reform* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); James Forman, Jr., *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2017); Marie Gottschalk, *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics*; and Issa Kohler-Hausman, *Misdemeanorland: Criminal Courts and Social Control in an Age of Broken Windows Policing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

³⁷ Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, “Incarceration & social Inequality,” *Daedalus* (Summer 2010): 8. Access at: https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/daedalus/downloads/10_summer_western.pdf

³⁸ Robert Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), chapter 5. Sampson discusses at length the connections between concentrated poverty and what he calls “concentrated incarceration.”

³⁹ Pfaff, *Locked In*, pp. 14-23.

⁴⁰ James Causey, “Report: “Over half of black men in their 30s in Milwaukee County have been incarcerated,” *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 18 April 2013. This claim is frequently repeated: see, for example, Reggie Jackson, “The Growth of Mass Incarceration in Milwaukee,” *The Milwaukee Independent*, 18 April 2019.

⁴¹ The flawed methodology underpinning this assertion is examined in Marc V. Levine, *Milwaukee 53206*, p. 50. The chief problem involves assumptions about the number of ex-incarcerated who are no longer on probation or parole, a group on which we have no precise or reliable systematic data. This study also offers estimates of the Black male incarceration rate in the

Two data sets, approaching the incarceration issue from different angles, provide us with some measures of how Black incarceration in Milwaukee stacks up in comparison to other metropolitan areas. First, the Harvard Opportunity Insights project has assembled data on the fraction of Black males, born in a given metro area between 1978-83, who were incarcerated in state or federal prisons in the 2010 U.S. Census enumeration. As Chart 43 reveals, 15.8 percent of Black males born in Milwaukee in the late 1970s or early 1980s were incarcerated in 2010, the highest percentage among the nation’s largest metropolitan areas. (For Black youth born into low-income (bottom quartile) households, the incarceration rate was over 17 percent. By way of comparison, the rate for all white youths was 1.4 percent).

Second, the Vera Institute has assembled a detailed, longitudinal “Incarceration Trends” dataset on state prison inmates, using information from the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), broken down by the “county of commitment” (in other words, where the prisoner was convicted for his/her crime and sentenced to prison, not where they’re serving their sentence).⁴² For each “county of commitment” in a given year, the dataset provides an incarceration rate (per 100,000 population), by race and ethnicity. Chart 44 arrays the incarceration rates Blacks, ages 15-64, for the central counties of the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas in 2016.⁴³ Milwaukee posts one of the nation’s highest Black incarceration rates, just below St. Louis and Oklahoma City; over four times the rate of places like Boston or Charlotte; and twice the rates in Birmingham or Atlanta.

In short, both datasets make clear that Milwaukee is indeed one of the most carceral places in urban America for African Americans. Chart 45 graphically illustrates how this mass incarceration has developed in Milwaukee since 1990, and vividly shows the county’s racial disparities in incarceration. In 1990, the Black incarceration rate in Milwaukee County was 1,571 per 100,000 – as it happens, among the lower rates for Blacks in the nation’s largest metros. There was, however, already a huge racial disparity in incarceration: The Black rate was 12-times the white rate in Milwaukee. As Chart 45 shows, the Black rate soared in Milwaukee

Milwaukee 53206 neighborhood, which has been inaccurately portrayed in media as “the most incarcerated zip code in America.”

⁴² To underscore: these data are for state prison incarceration (which accounts for the overwhelming majority of prison incarceration in the US). Not included here is jail incarceration – usually in county jails and usually for shorter duration—but which also represent another element of the mass incarceration phenomenon in US metropolitan areas.

⁴³ The central county is generally the largest county in the metro area, typically encompassing the central city and, in most cases, immediately surrounding suburbs. In Milwaukee, obviously, the central county is Milwaukee County; in Minneapolis, it’s Hennepin County; in Detroit, it’s Wayne County, and so forth. In some areas – such as San Francisco, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Baltimore—the central county is coterminous with the central city.

during the 1990s, tripling between 1990 and its peak in 2003. Although the Black incarceration rate has come down since 2003, the rate today nonetheless remains well above what it was in 1990. Interestingly, the white incarceration rate in Milwaukee County has also soared: it too almost tripled between 1990-2003, and today remains well over 2.5-times as high as the 1990 rate. Milwaukee, in many ways, has become a more “carceral” county across the board, although the data make clear that the impact of mass incarceration has been disproportionately felt in the African American community.

Chart 43:
Black Male Incarceration Rates in the Nation's Largest
Metropolitan Areas
Percentage Born between 1978-83 who were incarcerated in 2010

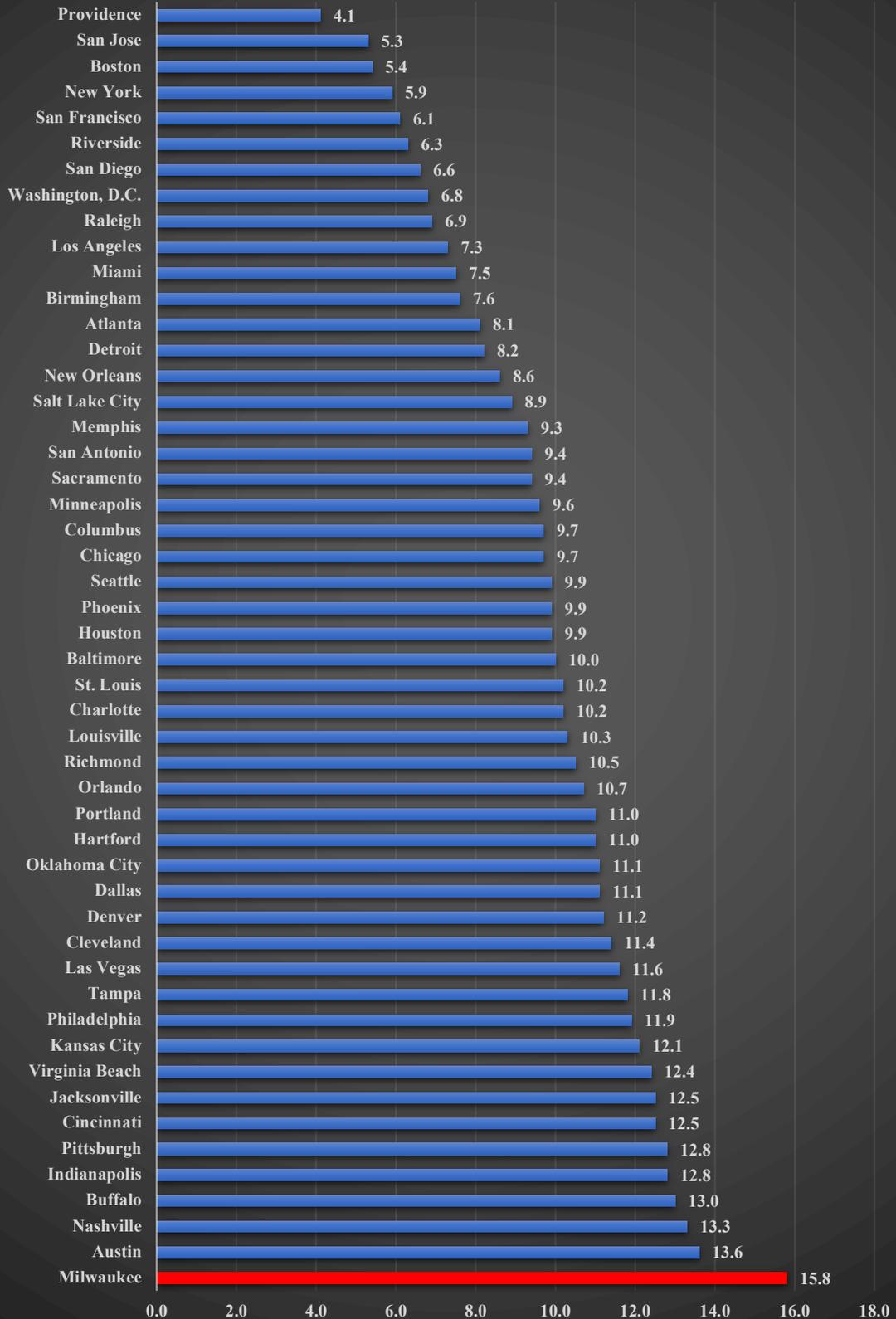


Chart 44:
 Black Incarceration Rates in Central County of
 Large Metropolitan Areas: 2016
 per 100,000 Black residents, ages 15-64

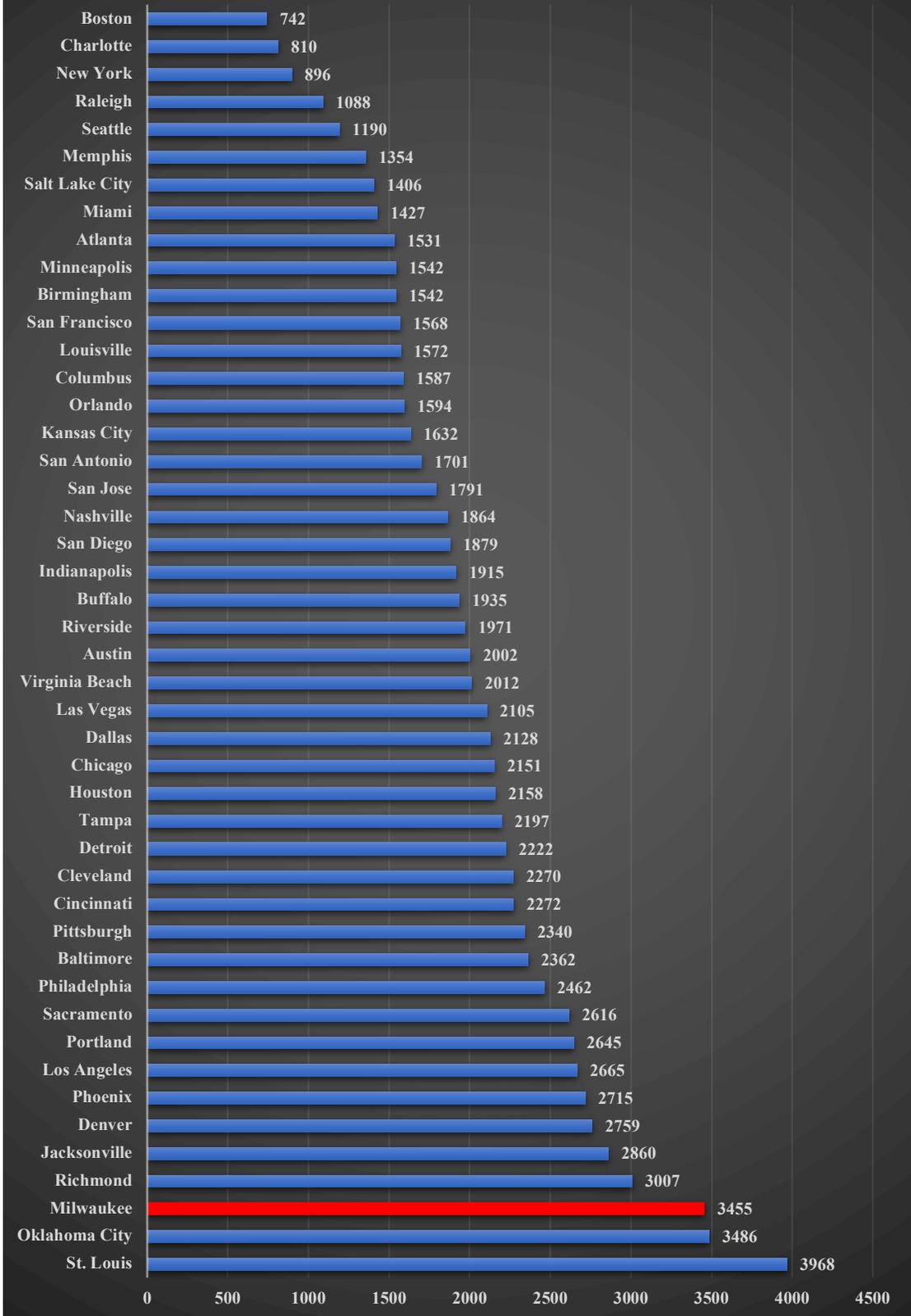
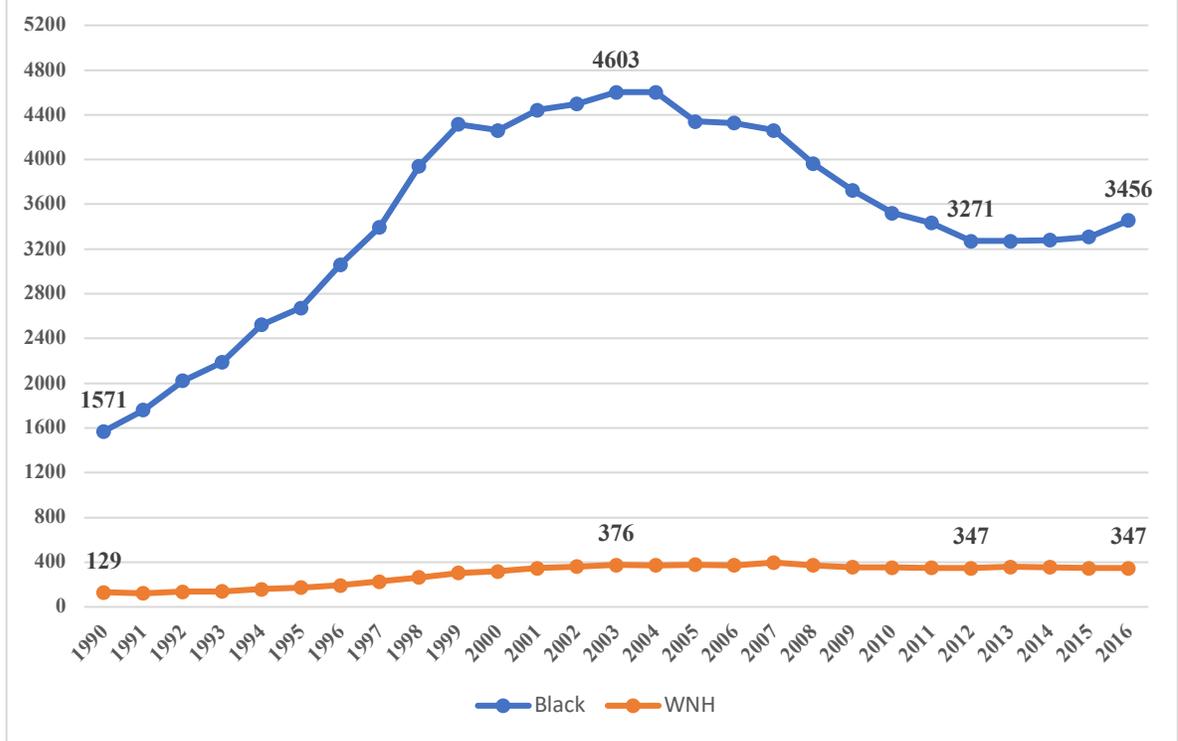


Chart 45:
Black and White Incarceration Rates in Milwaukee County: 1990-2016
 Prison population by "county of commitment" per 100,000 residents, ages 15-64, by race



BLACK COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES

The preceding sections of this study have detailed the poor conditions in Black Milwaukee and racial disparities in what have come to be called “the social determinants of health.” Segregation, poverty, joblessness, inadequate housing, incarceration – all have been associated with poor outcomes for community health.

It is therefore not surprising that on indicators of community health, Black Milwaukee generally fares poorly compared to Black communities in the nation’s largest metropolitan areas. Charts 46-51 draw from the database on county health outcomes of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The charts array, for Milwaukee County compared to the central counties of the other 50 largest metropolitan areas, outcomes on Black infant mortality, low birth-weight babies, teen pregnancy, mortality rates from coronary disease, deaths from homicide, and what have now entered the lexicon as “deaths of despair”: deaths from suicide, alcohol abuse, or drug overdoses.⁴⁴ Black Milwaukee ranks particularly badly when it comes to matters of childbirth (infant mortality, low birth-weight babies, and teen pregnancy). In addition, Milwaukee ranks in the bottom ten of the 50 largest metropolitan areas when it comes to deaths by homicide and “deaths of despair” among African Americans.

The only health care indicator on which Black Milwaukee fares relatively well is the proportion of the population covered by health insurance.⁴⁵ As Charts 52 and 53 show, Milwaukee ranks in the middle-of-the-pack of the 50 largest metros in the proportion of Black residents with health insurance coverage (only 12.6 percent of adult Black Milwaukeeans are without health insurance today, down from an estimated 23.3 percent before the Affordable Care Act). And, by 2018, Milwaukee ranked in the top five metros on the share of Black children with health insurance coverage.

⁴⁴ The expression comes from the influential work of Anne Case and Angus Deaton, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020). “Deaths of despair,” in Milwaukee and metros across the country, is one of the few health outcomes categories in which racial disparities are actually favorable to African Americans. In Milwaukee, the Black rate of “deaths of despair” (39.6 per 100,000) is significantly lower than the white, non-Hispanic rate (64.7 per 100,000).

⁴⁵ A caveat here is that we do not know the quality of this health insurance coverage (especially for pre-Medicare age adults). A certain percentage of Milwaukee’s Black adults with coverage may, in fact, have so-called “junk plans” with deductibles and co-pays so high that their utility is minimal.

Chart 46:
Black Infant Mortality Rate in Central County of Metro Area
Deaths per 1,000 live births, 2012-2017

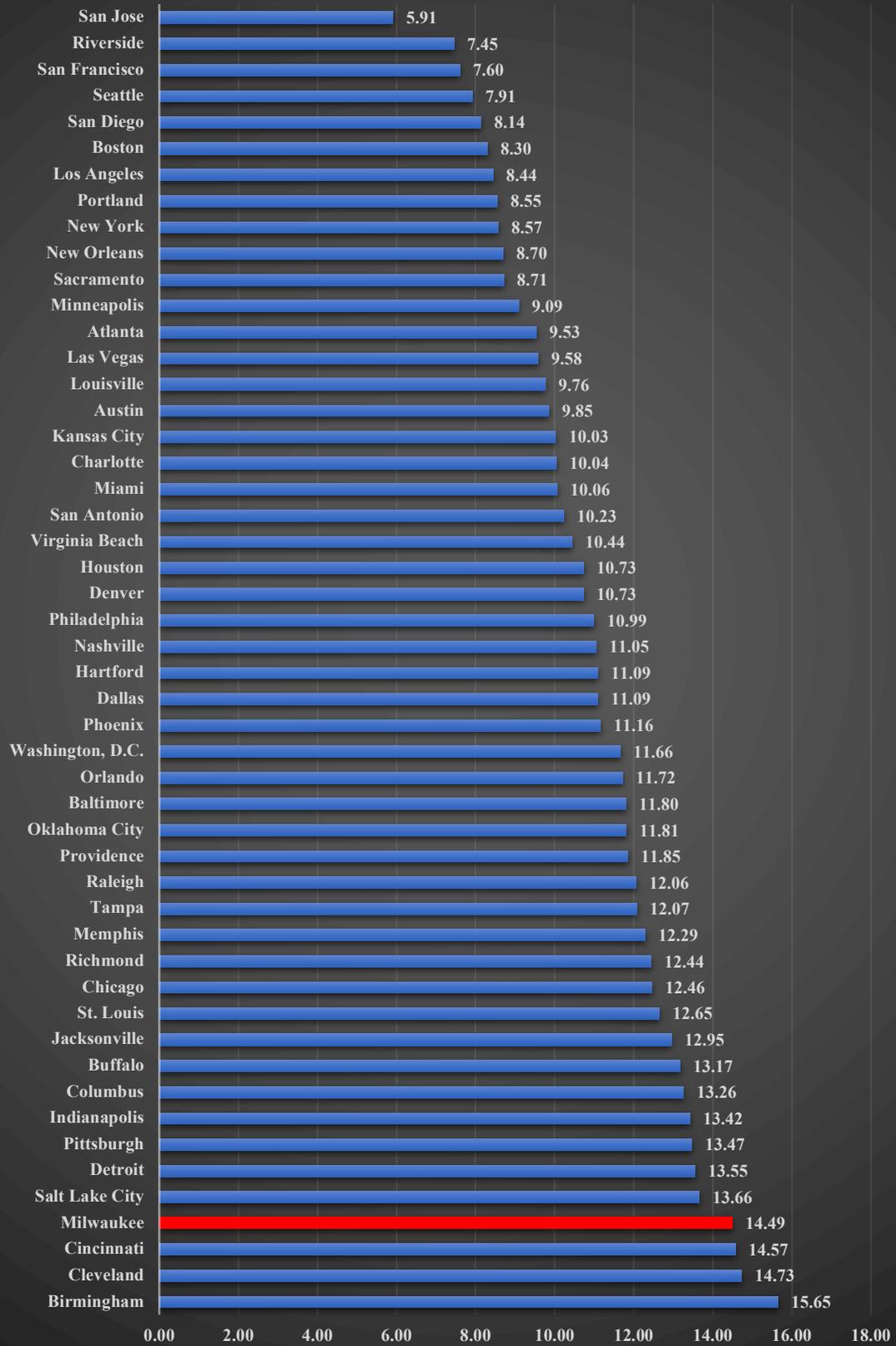


Chart 47:
Black Teen Pregnancy Rates in Central County of Metro Area
 % of births to mothers under 19 years old; 2016-2018

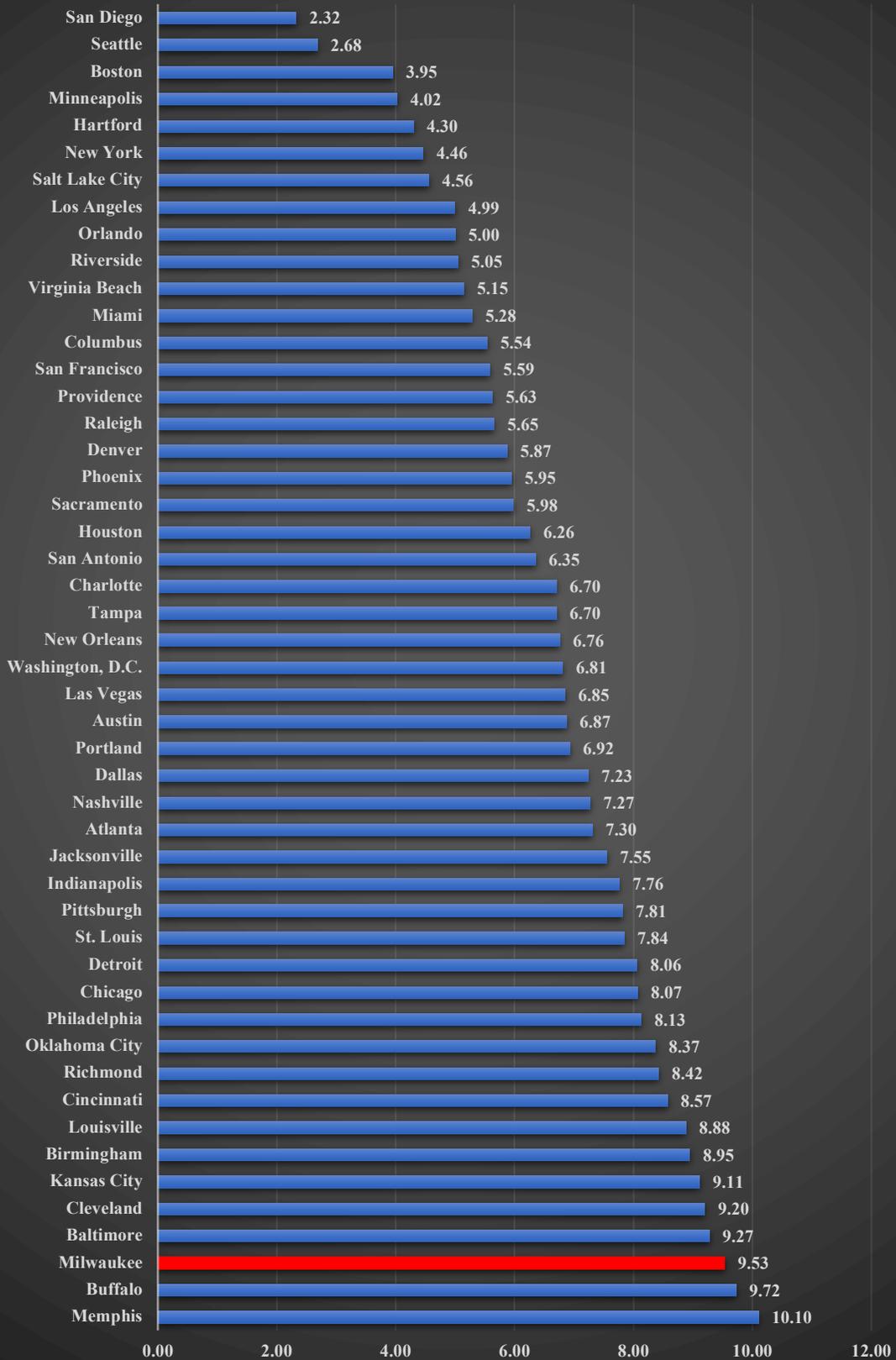


Chart 48:
Black Low Birth-Weight Babies in Central County of Metro Areas
 % of African American births to babies less than 2500g, 2016-2018

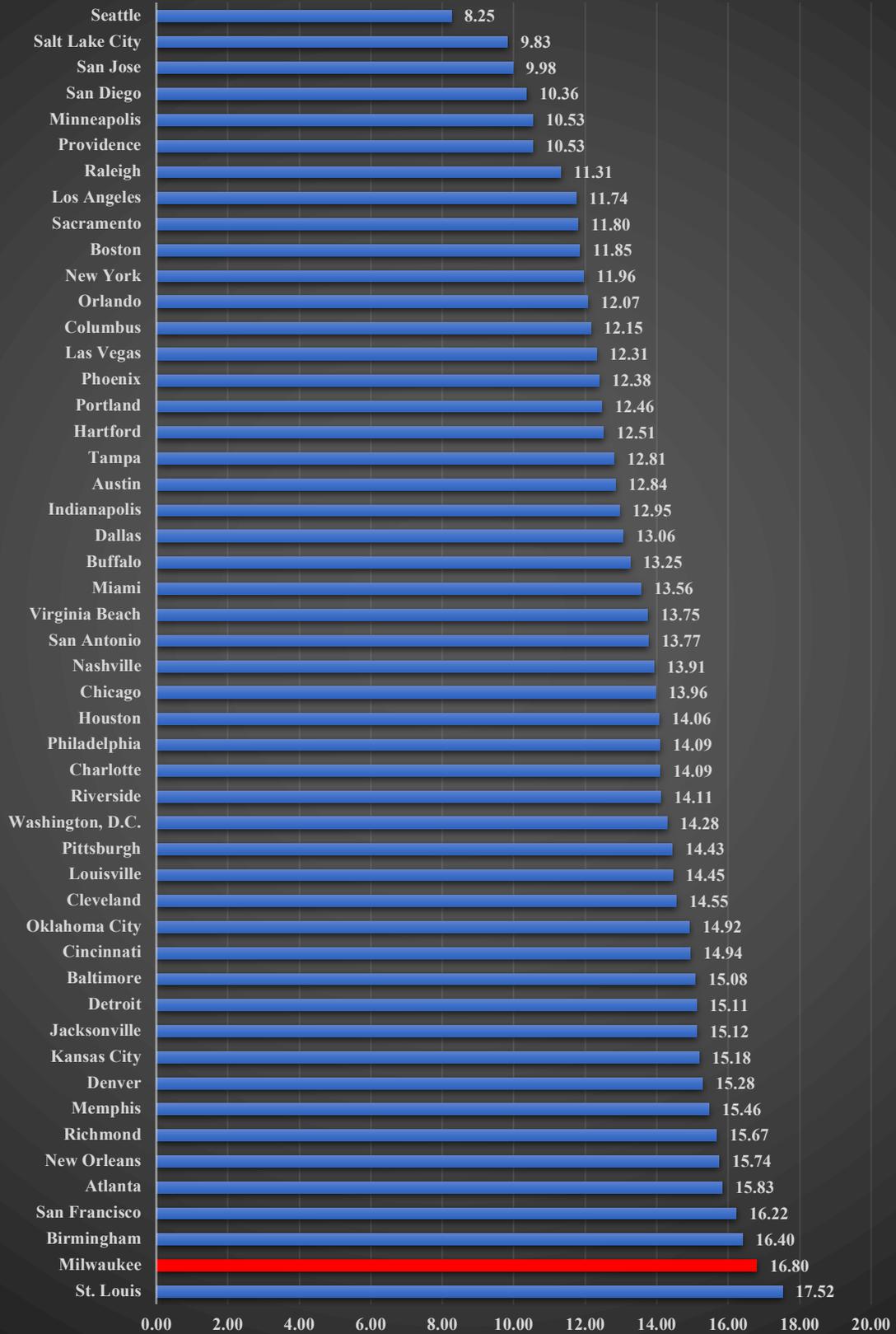


Chart 49:
 Black mortality rate from Coronary Disease in Central
 County of Metro Area
 Rate per 100,000 population; 2013-2018

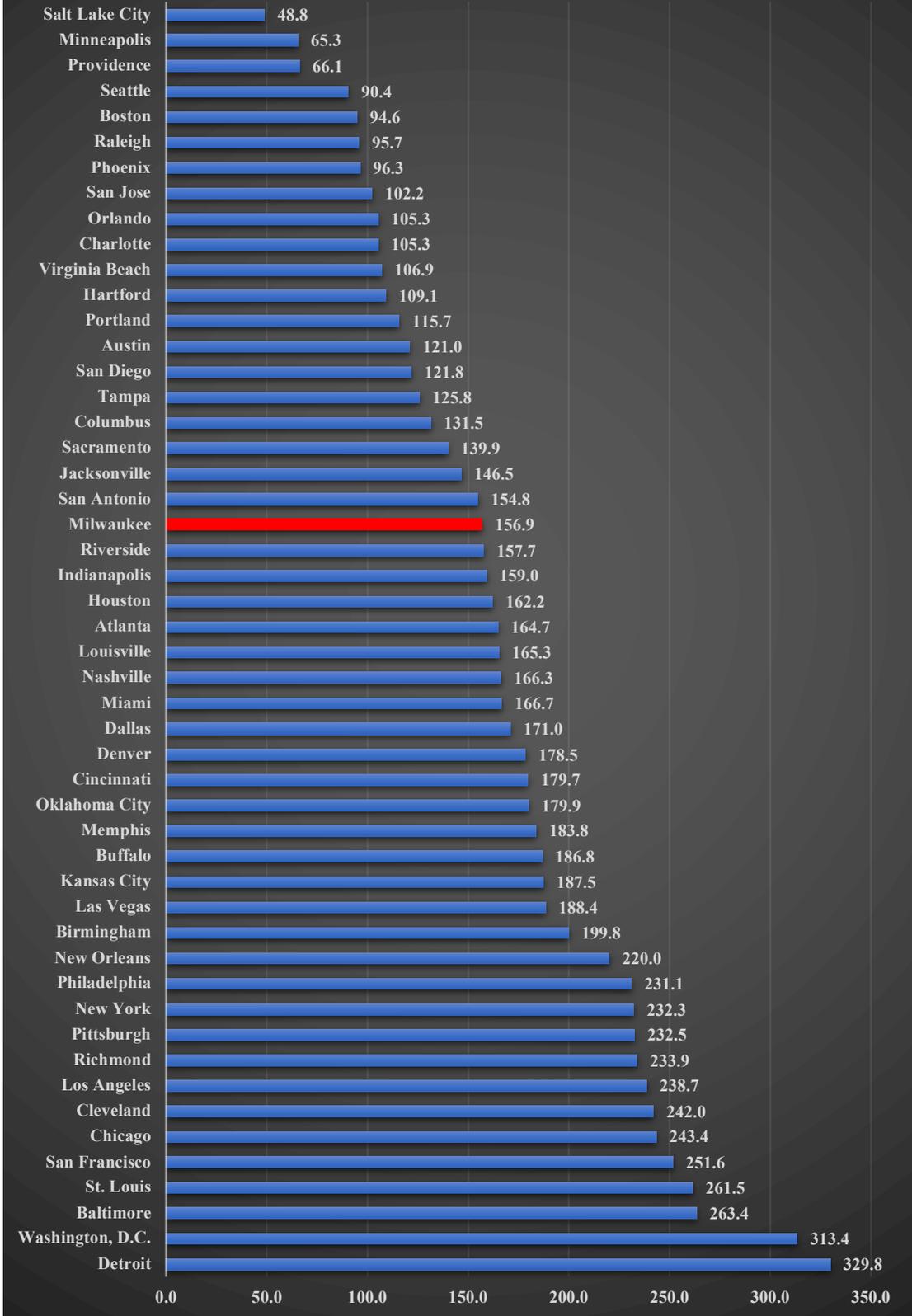


Chart 50:
Death By Homicide for Blacks in Central County of Metro Area
 Black deaths per 100,000 population, 2013-2018

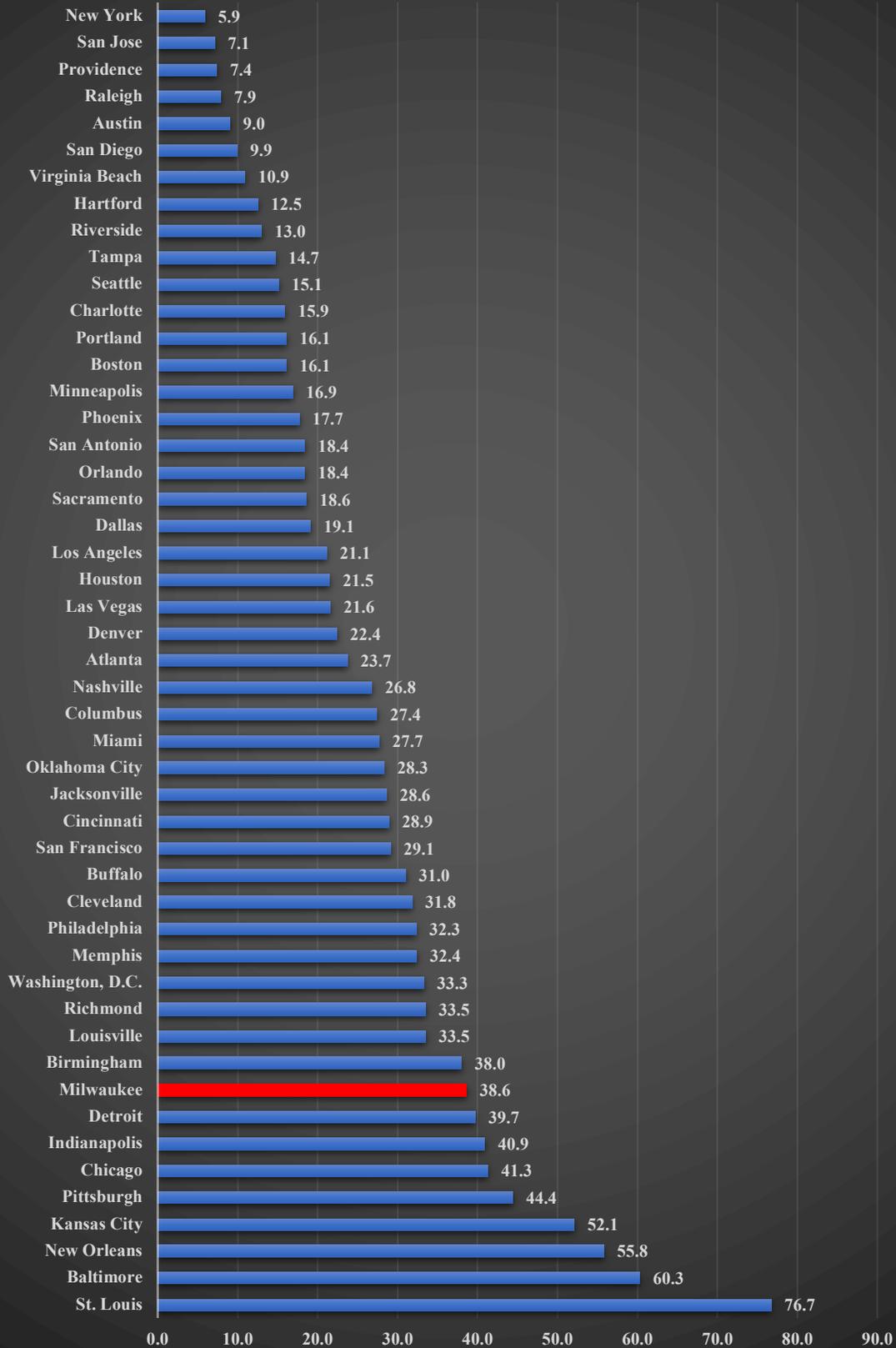
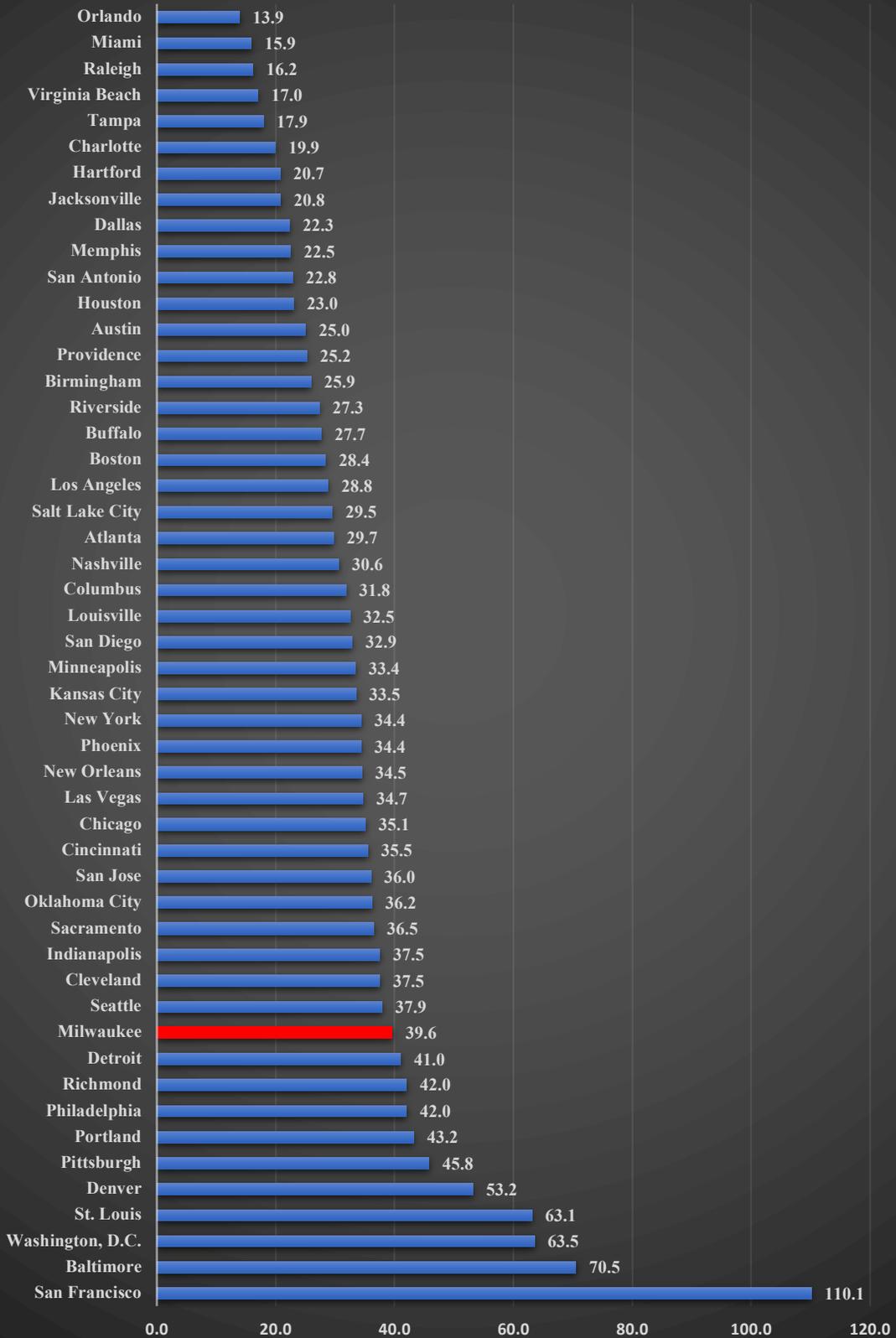


Chart 51:
Deaths of Despair in the Central County of Metro Area
 Rate of African American deaths per 100,000 population by drug or alcohol abuses/overdose, or by suicide. 2010-2018



**Chart 52:
Percentage of Black Adults (ages 18-64) Without
Health Insurance Coverage In the Nation's Largest
Metropolitan Areas: 2014-2018**

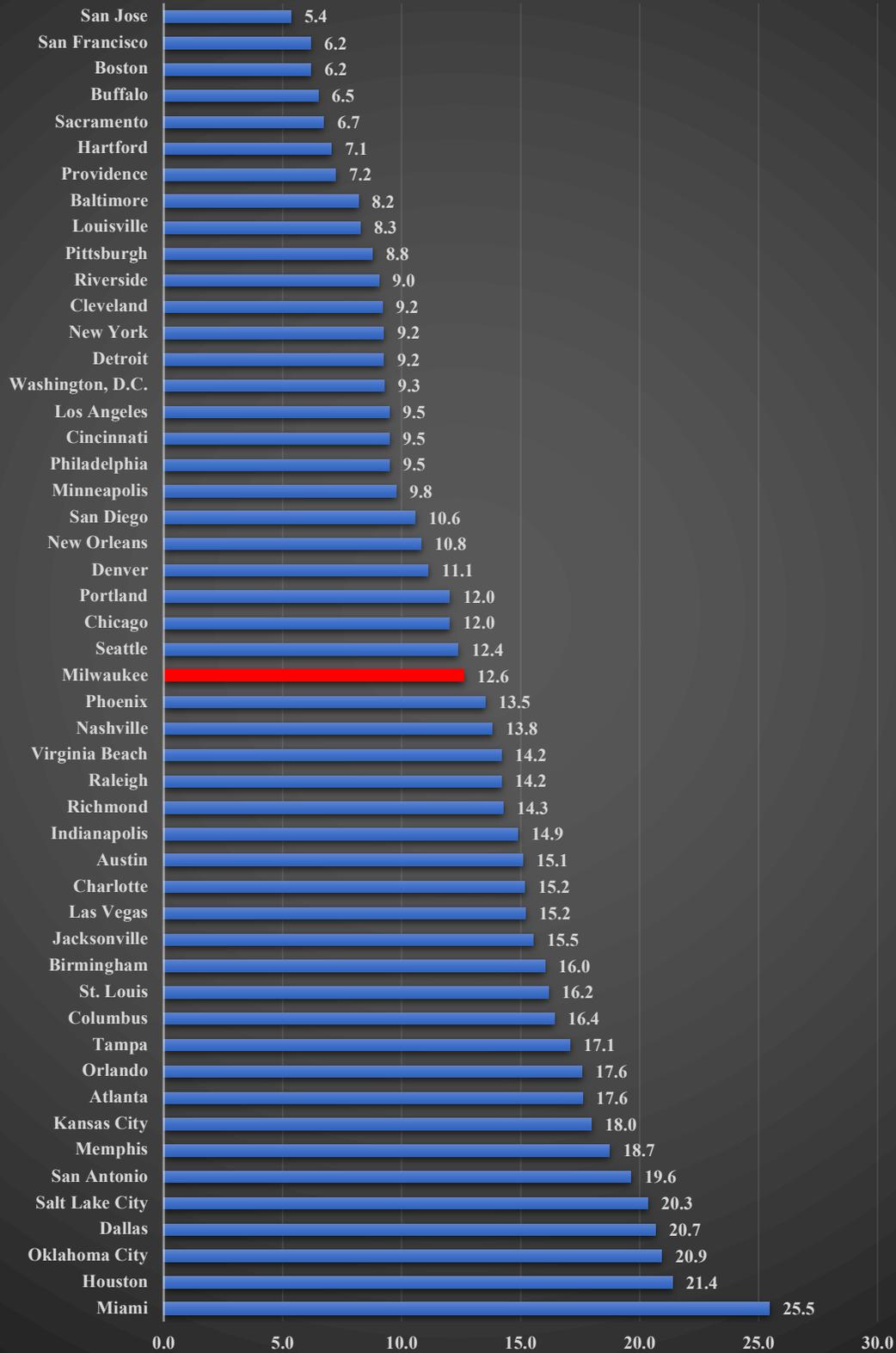
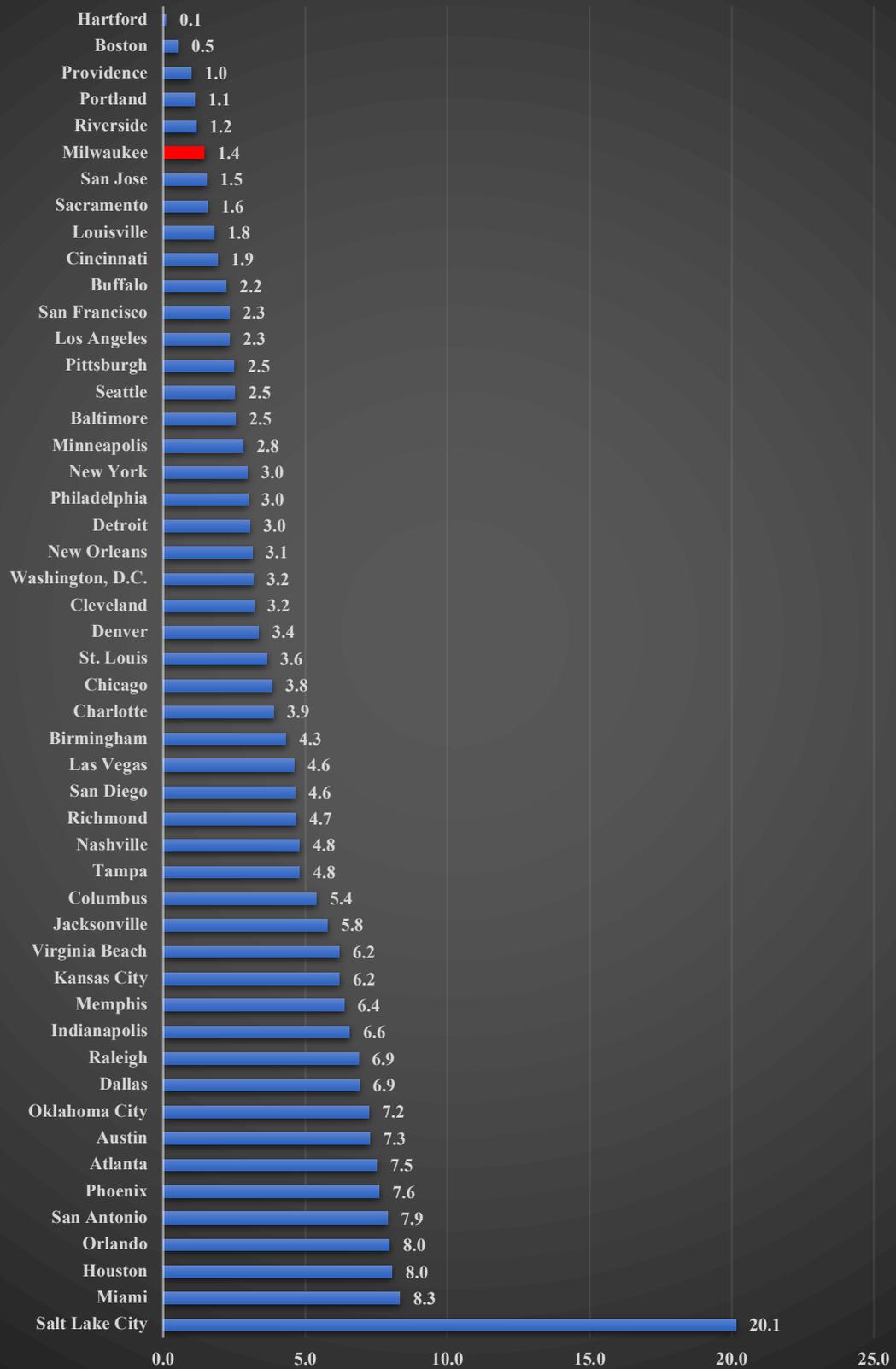


Chart 53:
 Percentage of Black Children (18 and under) without Health Insurance Coverage in Largest Metros: 2014-2018



EPILOGUE

In 1963, in his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr wrote: “I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham...There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs the community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States... I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...I am in Birmingham because injustice is here.”⁴⁶

In 2020, as America again faces a reckoning over systemic racism and entrenched racial inequality, there are far too many cities that would draw Dr. King’s attention: the Minneapolis of George Floyd, the Baltimore of Freddie Gray, the Cleveland of Tamir Rice, or the Flint, Michigan of poisoned water – and the list goes on. But if Dr. King felt compelled to go to Birmingham in 1963 because it was America’s “most thoroughly segregated city,” then in 2020 a modern-day Dr. King would surely be in Milwaukee. Indeed, by the mid-1960s, Dr. King *had* expanded his campaign for racial justice to segregated cities in the North, visiting Milwaukee in 1965 to support the city’s burgeoning civil rights movement and speaking out against the segregated schools, truncated economic opportunity, and housing discrimination facing Blacks in what some were calling “the Selma of the North.”⁴⁷ In 1966, Dr. King’s Northern campaign ran into the harsh resistance of Cicero, an inner suburb of Chicago, where open housing marches he led were met with “white power” counter-demonstrators and violence. King said: “I have never in my life seen such hate. Not in Mississippi or Alabama.”⁴⁸

Racial inequality pervades the large metropolitan areas of the United States, and no one city today carries the same symbolic power as *the* archetype of rank injustice and grinding racial inequality as did Birmingham in 1963. But as the charts and tables in this study make clear, no metropolitan area today ranks as consistently poorly, across the board, on indicators of Black community well-being, as does Milwaukee. “The most segregated,” “the highest Black poverty rate;” “the greatest gap in Black-white income;” “the lowest Black share of private-sector management jobs;” “the 3rd worst employment rate for prime working-years Black males;” “the

⁴⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” 16 April 1963. Access at: https://swap.stanford.edu/20141218230016/http://mlkpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf

⁴⁷ Excerpts of Dr. King’s speech at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC9fiMqdwck> For a full discussion of the civil rights movement in Milwaukee in the 1960s, see Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Taylor Branch, *At Canaan’s Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

second highest rate of ‘disconnected’ Black youths;” “the 3rd lowest median earnings for Black males;” “the second lowest Black homeownership rate;” “the fourth worst Black infant mortality rate;” “the 3rd highest Black incarceration rate” – these are just some of the findings in the numbing litany of dismal results when Milwaukee’s Black community is compared to others across metropolitan America.⁴⁹

Although Birmingham today is not the vicious, apartheid city of the Jim Crow 1960s—the church bombings, fire hoses, and attack dogs are now part of history—no one would call it a nirvana of racial justice today either. Yet, on indicator after indicator in this study, it ranks better than Milwaukee in the well-being of African Americans. Black household income in Birmingham, adjusted for cost-of-living differences, is \$11,500 a year higher than in Milwaukee (Chart 6); Black male workers in Birmingham earn, on average, over 25 percent more than their Milwaukee counterparts (Chart 30); Black homeownership is twice as high in Birmingham (Chart 18); Blacks in Birmingham are less than half as likely to be incarcerated in state prison as in Milwaukee (Chart 44); Blacks are likelier to hold a private-sector managerial job in Birmingham than in Milwaukee (Chart 36); a Black child born into a poor household in Birmingham has a much better chance of climbing the economic ladder than does his or her Milwaukee counterpart (Chart 17); and Black schoolchildren in Birmingham are now less likely than Milwaukee pupils to attend a “hypersegregated” school (although schooling in both metro areas remains extremely segregated). Black poverty is lower in Birmingham (Chart 10), and there is a much higher percentage of Black households with annual income greater than \$100,000 a year in Birmingham than in Milwaukee (Chart 20).

Charts 54-56 show how the fortunes of African Americans have diverged in these two metropolitan areas since the end of the 1960s. Trends in income and poverty, two key measures of community well-being, are unambiguous: Black Birmingham has steadily improved since the 1960s; Black Milwaukee is much worse off than it was in 1969. As we have noted, the 1980s in particular were a brutal period for Black Milwaukee: the collapse of the city’s industrial economy, coupled with persistent segregation and systemic neglect by business and political elites alike, resulted by the end of the decade in the highest Black poverty rate ever recorded in

⁴⁹ In a companion report to this study, the author created an “index of African American well-being” for the nation’s 50 largest metropolitan areas, synthesizing 30 key indicators of community conditions—income and poverty; employment; health outcomes; social mobility; and incarceration—into a single index that ranks how Blacks fare in the 50 largest metro areas. Milwaukee ranked solidly last on the index. See Marc V. Levine, *The AALAM/UWMCED Index of African American Well-Being in the Nation’s Largest Metropolitan Areas* (Milwaukee: UWMCED, 2020).

Milwaukee (41.3 percent); in addition, Black household income (adjusted for inflation) fell by 24 percent in Milwaukee during the 1980s, and by 1990 over one-third of Milwaukee’s prime working-age Black males were without jobs (up from 15 percent in 1970). A “stealth depression” had fully enveloped the Black community, and despite some episodic improvements on some indicators over the years, the “stealth depression” has held a relentless grip on the fortunes of Black Milwaukee ever since. Birmingham of the 1960s was the exemplar of a certain kind of urban “racial regime:” an apartheid city, a Jim Crow center of legal segregation and state-mandated racial injustice. Milwaukee, in many ways, has emerged as the epitome of a 21st century racial regime: a metropolis of entrenched segregation and racial inequality, without the legal structure of Jim Crow but nonetheless with “racial rules”⁵⁰—public policies, private-sector actions, and institutional practices-- that undergird the persistence of caste-like conditions for vast numbers of Blacks in the metropolitan area. Milwaukee is assuredly not *uniquely* representative of this contemporary urban racial regime: places such as Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, St. Louis, and Chicago rank almost as poorly across almost as many indicators of Black well-being as does Milwaukee. But the sheer number of indicators on which Black Milwaukee ranks worst or near-worst compared to large metro area counterparts, the omnipresence of Milwaukee’s racial inequities and the stunning lack of progress (and even deterioration of conditions) over the past 40-50 years – all of these factors make Milwaukee a poster-child for modern-day metro area racial injustice.⁵¹

Perhaps in the same way that Dr. King challenged and ultimately helped dismantle the “Birmingham model” of *de jure*, state-mandated racial injustice, the Black Lives Matter mobilization taking place in Milwaukee and cities across the country represents a powerful moment to begin, in the words of the Roosevelt Institute study, to “rewrite the racial rules” that helped create and perpetuate the conditions and trends in Black Milwaukee documented in this study. As the authors write:

[W]e argue that, in order to understand racial and economic inequality in America today, we must look below the surface and understand the web of rules and

⁵⁰ The concept of “racial rules” is borrowed from the excellent Roosevelt Institute report: Andrea Flynn, Susan Holmberg, Dorian Warren, and Felicia Wong, *Rewrite the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy* (New York: The Roosevelt Institute, 2016).

⁵¹ To reiterate: portraying Milwaukee as emblematic of modern racial injustice does not mean that it is the *only* metro area in American deeply segregated and teeming with racial inequality, any more than Dr. King’s designation of Birmingham as “the most segregated city” of 1963 meant that cities like Atlanta, Jackson, Memphis, Richmond or smaller places throughout the South weren’t also places in which state-mandated apartheid ruthlessly defined the racial order. But both Birmingham and Milwaukee can be viewed as the archetypical cases of the patterns of urban racial injustices of the 1960s and the 2020s.

institutions that lead to unequal outcomes...Our rules and institutions are rarely colorblind, and even when policymakers intend on race-neutral results, policies are refracted through historical institutions, current rules, and societal norms, resulting in disparate impacts on black and white Americans.⁵²

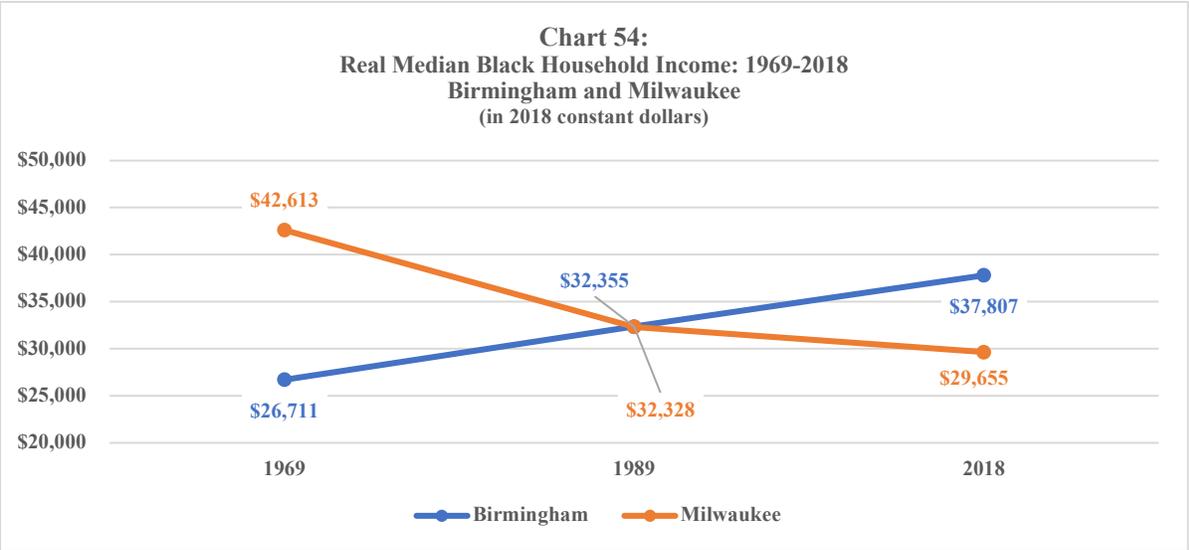
Moreover, the authors conclude:

Despite a history of rules borne from a desire to maintain a stratified racial order, we have also made real –though incomplete—progress at times. During Reconstruction, we wrote rules to bring newly freed slaves into the real economy and the labor market. During the civil rights movement, we integrated schools, increased voting rates, and ultimately saw incomes rise for many African Americans. It is now time again to write a bold set of inclusionary rules, and to write them in such a way that the retrenchments that followed the previous two periods of progress will not be repeated.⁵³

This study has detailed the myriad areas of community well-being in which the “Milwaukee model” of racial injustice has produced “worst or nearly-worst in the nation” outcomes for its Black residents. The time has surely come for community leaders to “write a bold set of inclusionary rules” – in employment, education, criminal justice, poverty-reduction, and housing-- that dismantle the Milwaukee model of persistent segregation and end the region’s Black “stealth depression” with the same vigor and purpose that Dr. King and his generation took down the “Birmingham model” of racial apartheid in the 1960s.

⁵² Flynn et al, *Rewrite the Racial Rules*, p. 6.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 79.



*Household income in this chart not adjusted for cost-of-living differences (regional price parities)

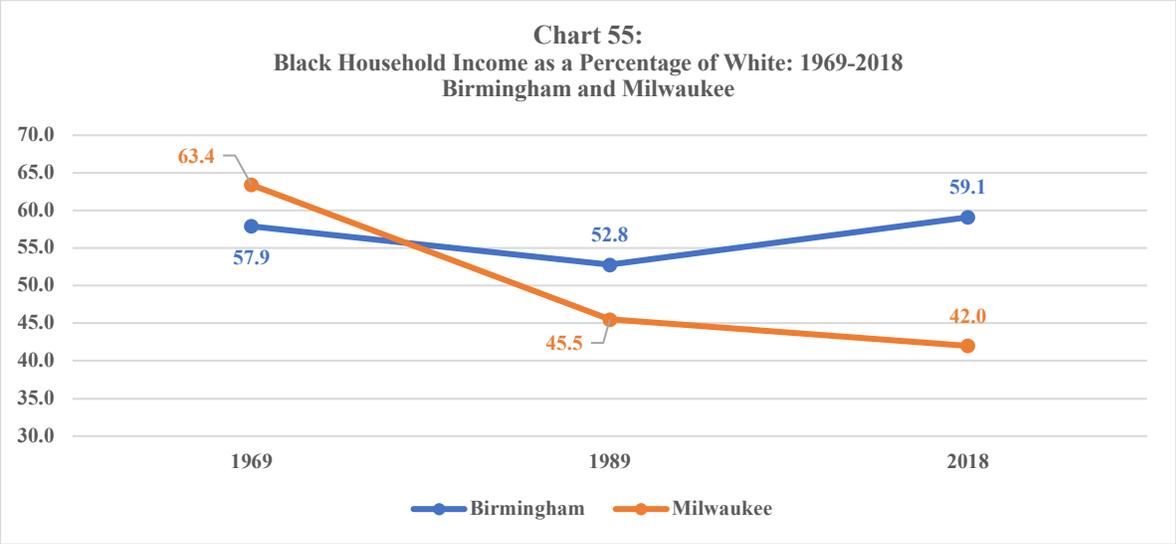
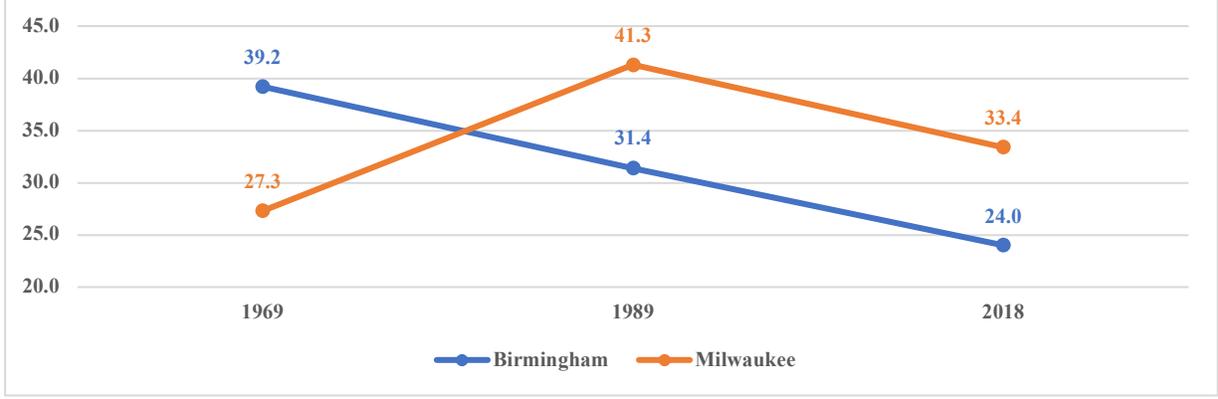


Chart 56:
Black Poverty Rates: 1969-2018
Birmingham and Milwaukee



SOURCES FOR CHARTS AND TABLES

Table 1: Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*; William Frey, “Even as metropolitan areas diversify, white Americans still live in mostly white neighborhoods,” Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 23 March 2020. Access at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/even-as-metropolitan-areas-diversify-white-americans-still-live-in-mostly-white-neighborhoods/>

Chart 1: John Iceland and Daniel H. Weinberg, with Erika Steinmetz, *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980-2000* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002); William Frey, (See Table 1); and Frey, “New Racial Segregation Measures for Large Metropolitan Areas: Analysis of the 1990-2010 Decennial Census,” University of Michigan Population Studies Center, Institute for Social Research. Accessed at: <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/dis/census/segregation2010.html>

Chart 2: Frey (see Table 1).

Chart 3: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (hereafter cited as ACS). Table DP05, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 4: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970-2010); ACS Table DP05, 2014-2018.

Table 2: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *State of the Cities Data Systems* (tabulation of 1980 census data). Access at: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/socds.html>
For 2014-2018 data, ACS Table DP05.

Chart 5: ACS, Table B19001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 6: ACS, Table B19013B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates. Metro area cost-of-living adjustments made using 2018 Regional Price Parities (RPP), available from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Regional Price Parities by State and Metro Area.” Access at: <https://www.bea.gov/data/prices-inflation/regional-price-parities-state-and-metro-area>

Table 3: ACS, Table B19013B, 2006-2010, and 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates. RPP adjustments made using BEA RPP data for both 2010 and 2018 (see notes on Chart 6).

Chart 7: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970-2000, for 1969-1999 income data). 2010 and 2018 data available from ACS, Table B19013B, 2006-2010, and 2014-2018; and ACS Table 19103H, 2006-2010 and 2014-2018 Estimates. Data are presented in constant 2018 dollars; adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator. Access at: https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

These household income data are not adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences (RPP data are not readily accessible for the earlier years). This accounts for the different 2010 and 2018 income figures on Chart 7 compared to Chart 6 or Table 3.

Charts 8-9: Same as Chart 7.

Chart 10: ACS, Table B17001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 11: Same as Table 10; ACS, Table B17001H, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 12: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970-2000, for 1969-1999 poverty data); ACS, Table B17001B, 2006-2010, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates; ACS, Table B17001H, 2006-2010, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 13: ACS, Table S1703, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 14: ACS, Table B17001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Charts 15-16: ACS Table B17001B, 2013-2017 Five-Year Data; ACS Table DP05, 2013-2017 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 17: The Opportunity Atlas; Harvard University Opportunity Insights. Access at: <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

Table 4: Same as Chart 17.

Chart 18: ACS, Table B25003B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 19: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970-2000, owner-occupancy housing tenure); ACS, Table B25003B, 2016-2010 and 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 20: ACS, Table B19001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Charts 21-22: ACS, Table B23002B, pooled data three-year estimates (2016-2018) from ACS 2016, 2017, and 2018 one-year estimates.

Table 5-6: Same as Chart 21-22.

Charts 23-24: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Wisconsin* (1970-2010); ACS, Table B23002B and Table B23002H, 2008-2010 Three-Year Estimates; and 2016-2018 pooled one-year estimates.

Charts 25-26: Same as Charts 21-22.

Chart 27: U.S. Bureau of the Census, IPUMS, one-percent sample, 2012-2016.

Chart 28: Same as Chart 27.

Table 7: Same as Chart 27.

Charts 29-30: ACS, Table B20017B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates. RPP adjustments from BEA data.

Charts 31-32: ACS, Table B20017B and Table 20017H, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Charts 33-34: ACS, Table B20005B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Tables 8-9: Same as Charts 33-34.

Chart 35: Same as Chart 31, but adjusted for RPP in “Milwaukee dollars.”

Charts 36-37: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “2018 Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in Private Industry (EEO-1) Raw Datasets.” Access at: <https://www.eeoc.gov/statistics/2018-job-patterns-minorities-and-women-private-industry-eeo-1-raw-datasets>

Charts 38-39: ACS, Tables C15002B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Chart 40: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967); Milwaukee Public Schools, School Enrollments by Race, 1980 (unpublished MPS data); National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), ELSi Express Tables, Public and Private School Enrollments by Race/Ethnicity, 1987-2019. Access at: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/expressTables.aspx>

Charts 41-42: NCES, ELSi Express Tables, Public and Private School Enrollments by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2018.

Chart 43: The Opportunity Atlas; Harvard University Opportunity Insights. Access at: <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

Charts 44-45: Vera Institute, Incarceration Trends Dataset. Prison Incarceration rates by County. Access at: <http://trends.vera.org/incarceration-rates?data=prison>

Chart 46: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “CDC WONDER” Database. Infant Deaths: Linked Birth/Infant Death Records. Access at: <https://wonder.cdc.gov/lbd.html>

Charts 47-48: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “CDC WONDER” Database. Natality Information. Access at: <https://wonder.cdc.gov/natality.html>

Charts 49-51: CDC WONDER. Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2018. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D76>

Charts 52-53: ACS, B27001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates.

Charts 54-55: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Birmingham* (1970 and 1990); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970 and 1990); ACS, Table B19001B, 2014-2018 Five-Year Estimates. Not adjusted for RPPs.

Chart 56: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Birmingham* (1970 and 1990); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing: Milwaukee* (1970 and 1990); ACS, Table B17001B, 2014-2018, Five-Year Estimates.