



Local Indicators For Excellence

Snapshot

in *Marathon County*

9th Edition

LIFE in Marathon County is a biennial report depicting the quality of life in Marathon County. The report presents independent statistical data and a public opinion survey on important topics affecting the well-being of individuals and families in our community. **Snapshot** is a summary of the full **LIFE in Marathon County** report. The full report is available online at UnitedWayMC.org.

2013-2015



The LIFE in Marathon County Report has been published every two years since 1997. The purpose of the LIFE in Marathon County Report is to:

- Acknowledge community strengths.
- Identify community challenges.
- Serve as a catalyst for change by advancing community conversations and partnerships around the Calls to Action.

Marathon County Community Demographics

Marathon County is located in central Wisconsin. At 1,584 square miles it is the largest county geographically in Wisconsin.

	2000 Census	2010 Census	2012
Population	125,836	134,063	134,735
Median Age (Years)	36.3	37.9	40.1
Minority Population	6.6%	9.7%	10.0%
Families in Poverty	4.3%	5.0%	7.6%
Median Household Income	\$45,165	\$53,150	\$52,419
Average Household Size	2.6	2.5	2.6
Language other than English Spoken in Home	7.4%	7.8%	9.8%
In Labor Force (16+)	71.7%	72.1%	70.7%



The full LIFE in Marathon County Report is available online at **UnitedWayMC.org**

LIFE in Marathon County sponsors make this community report possible:

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LIFE in Marathon County

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Snapshot 2013 - 2015

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A Long-term Call to Action – A Great Start for Kids

With the 9th Edition publication, the LIFE Report identified a long-term call to action — *ensuring that every child in Marathon County gets off to a great start*. By mobilizing resources on this one over-arching goal, the hope is we will collectively get at the root cause of many of the communities’ challenges and, if addressed, in time will offer positive impacts and solutions to many of the challenges that tap resources today. This is a long-term goal and is not intended to undermine other current needs identified in this report.

The benefits of a supportive and healthy childhood are the focus of much thoughtful discussion. According to the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 85% of the foundation of a child’s intellect, personality, and skills is formed by age five. The experiences children have in their early years set the foundation for their physical, mental, and emotional health and academic success.

Education

With a strong public and post-secondary educational system in place, Marathon County would reap benefits from seeing an expansion of educational programs that especially relate to early childhood development.

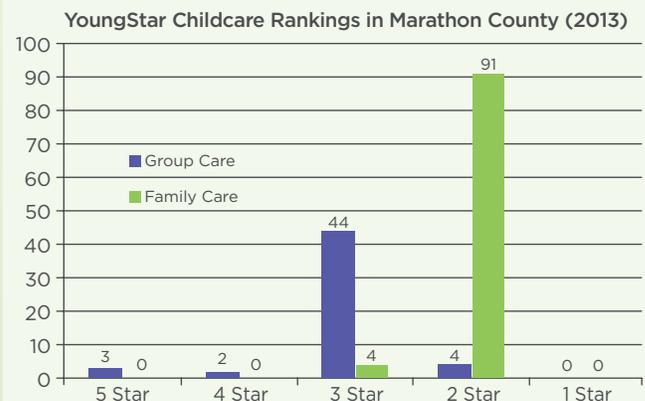
- Raising the standard of early-years childcare through professional development and training for caregivers and improving access to those providers (see *Indicators #45 – Childcare Quality and #46 – Regulated and Subsidized Childcare in the LIFE Report*).
- Programs focusing on early literacy (see *Indicator #47 – Kindergarten Readiness in LIFE Report*).
- Encouraging first trimester prenatal care in pregnant women and offering parent education courses (see *Indicators #13 – Early Prenatal Care, #15 – Low Birth Weight Babies, and #16 – Infant and Child Mortality in LIFE Report*).
- Raising awareness about the importance of a strong, healthy childhood and the impact of childhood trauma (see *Indicator #34 – Child Abuse and Neglect in LIFE Report*).

The Impact of Childhood Trauma

Research is uncovering greater links between the impact of childhood trauma and the challenges many face in later life (i.e. decreased economic productivity, increased criminal behavior, continued abusive behaviors, etc.). An effort focused on giving all kids a great start could decrease the costs associated with these challenges decades down the road.

- Ensuring resources/services are available for children suffering from abuse or other trauma.
- Expanding maternal mental healthcare screenings and providing appropriate dental, medical, and mental healthcare to families.
- Addressing the increased need in unmet basic needs for families with children facing economic hardships.

The State of Wisconsin adopted the YoungStar childcare rating system to encourage best practices in childcare. It establishes criteria and rates quality childcare.



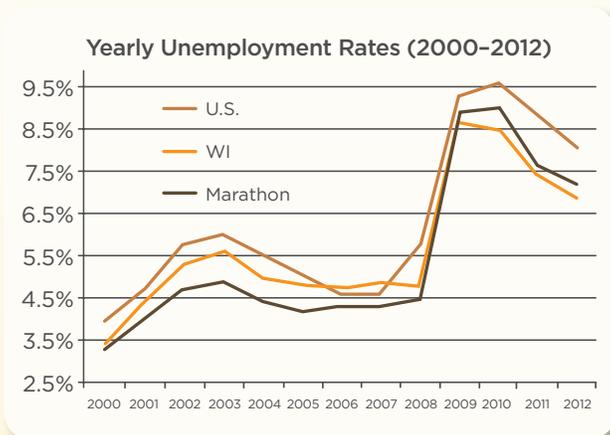


Immediate Concerns

In addition to the long-term call to action, the LIFE Report identified two immediate concerns requiring attention.

A Challenged Economy

Employment and the availability of family-sustaining jobs is a key indicator of a strong community. Respondents to the 2013 LIFE Community Survey stated their chief concern facing Marathon County is the lack of high-wage jobs and opportunities for advancement in our current economy.



Why this is important in Marathon County

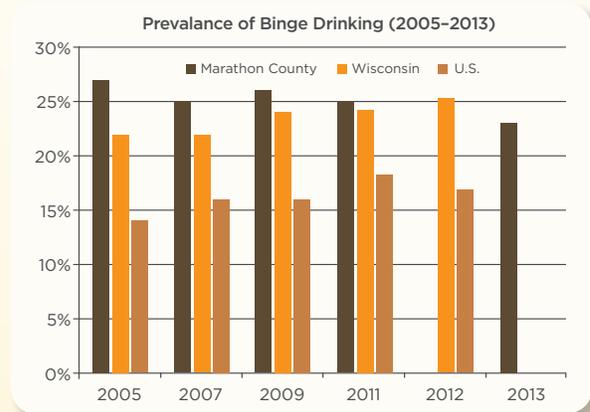
Unemployment and underemployment are at the heart of many of the other challenges facing the County, from spikes in substance abuse and related crimes to increased basic needs requests.

- Employment in paper manufacturing and wood products manufacturing declined by 12.5% (-592 jobs) between 2011 and 2012.
- Manufacturing remained 18.0% below pre-recession peaks and construction 32.6% below.
- Annual employment in 2012 remained 8.4% (about 6,000 jobs) below 2007 employment (compared to Wisconsin's rate at about 3%).
- Unemployment rates peaked at 10% in 2010 and remain above pre-recession levels.
- Almost 3,000 workers in Marathon County were affected by a business closure or a mass layoff between 2008 and 2012, more than two-thirds formerly employed in manufacturing.

For more information see Indicators #1 - Hunger, #6 - Unmet Basic Needs, #57 - Employment, and #60 - Unemployment in the LIFE Report.

Alcohol and Drug Use, Misuse, and Abuse

Alcohol plays a large part in both Wisconsin and Marathon County's culture and entertainment. The rates of alcoholism, binge drinking, and drunk driving are higher both in our state and countywide than other state and national averages. Marathon County is seeing a steep increase in recreational drug use, specifically the use of meth and heroin.



Why this is important in Marathon County

The costs of excessive alcohol consumption and drug use aren't limited to the abuser, nor are they entirely immediate. They can lead to spikes in other types of crimes and impede a person's ability to hold down a job or raise children in a healthy environment.

- 82% of LIFE survey respondents are very or somewhat concerned about drinking and driving. 81% are very or somewhat concerned about illegal drug use.
- 9.8% of LIFE survey respondents reported driving under the influence in 2013, compared with 5.8% in the 2011 LIFE survey.
- From 2003 - 2012 the Marathon County District Attorney's office experienced a 2,300% increase in heroin referrals and 860% increase in meth referrals.
- In 2011 Marathon County had 722 DWI arrests and 235 drug possession arrests.

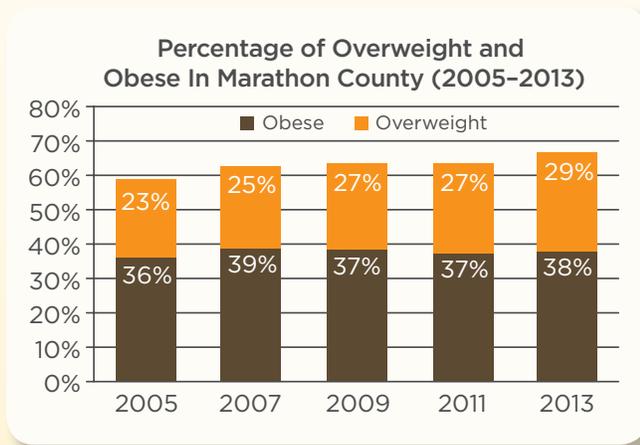
For more information see Indicators #25 - Alcohol and Other Drug Misuse and Abuse, #26 - Tobacco Use, #28 - Alcohol and Drug Arrests, and #29 - Traffic Crashes in the LIFE Report.



The LIFE report also identified issues to watch where trends call us to note their current or impending impact.

Obesity

The prevalence of obesity in our country, state, and county has increased over the decades. Although a complex health issue, overweightness and obesity result from an energy imbalance involving eating too many calories and not getting enough physical activity. The health benefits of physical activity include prevention of disease and reductions in risk factors associated with a range of diseases and conditions. Only 23% of LIFE survey respondents get an average of 30 minutes of physical activity five to seven days per week.



See Indicator #24 - Healthy Weight in the LIFE Report.

Intimate Partner Violence

This preventable public health issue affects one in four women and one in seven men in the U.S., and domestic abuse and sexual assault crimes are the most under-reported crimes both nationally and locally. Intimate Partner Violence can have long-term effects including substance abuse, depression, and long-term health consequences and extends beyond those directly affected.

In Marathon County in 2012:

- The District Attorney's office received 450 referrals for domestic abuse arrests, 426 were charged.
- The Women's Community provided support services to 492 sexual assault victims and 1,188 domestic violence victims and their non-offending family.

See Indicator #35 - Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault in the LIFE Report.

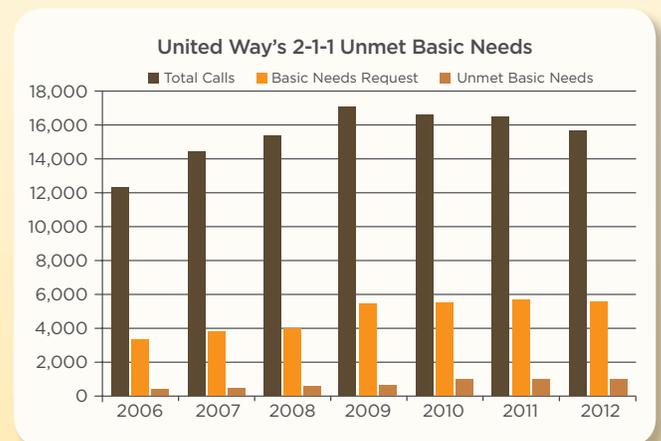
Healthy Aging

The baby boomer generation is predicted to produce an aging population at percentages communities have never before seen. This has the potential to place strains on resources that an aging population typically has need of (i.e. healthcare, transportation, housing, care-giver needs).

See Indicators #5 - Living Options for the Aging and #19 - Healthy Aging in the LIFE Report.

Unmet Basic Needs

The total amount of need in our community continued to rise as people affected by hard times are requesting greater support for a longer duration of time than in past years. United Way's 2-1-1 has experienced both an increase in the number of calls and the urgency in the needs of those calls. The struggling economy continued to affect local working families, job seekers, and special needs populations. The gaps in service are increasing and existing systems are overwhelmed by requests for assistance.



See Indicators #1 - Hunger and #6 - Unmet Basic Needs in the LIFE Report.



Report Section Highlights

Area	Community Successes	Community Challenges/Opportunities
<p>Basic Needs and Supports</p> <p><i>A community with a strong sense of connection, respect, and support is a great place to live and raise a family.</i></p>	<p>Service providers willing to collaborate. Result has been strong coalitions working on hunger and homelessness (Hunger Coalition, Housing and Homelessness Coalition).</p> <p>Food pantries provide more food and healthier choices.</p>	<p>Rise in requests for basic needs assistance.</p> <p>Needs for shelter/housing strain limited resources.</p> <p>Limited public transportation, none in rural areas.</p> <p>Research could identify root causes to basic needs challenges.</p>
<p>Health and Wellness</p> <p><i>When people make healthy choices and have access to services that support a long, healthy, and happy life the community thrives.</i></p>	<p>Good prenatal care and services that support families with young children.</p> <p>Focus on preventive care and wellness in lieu of treatment.</p> <p>Community conversations result in positive results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco use is down. • Awareness of impact of alcohol. • Drunk driving rates are down. • Embracing the idea of healthy lifestyle. • Suicide rate is down. 	<p>Alcohol and drugs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher-than-national rates of binge drinking and drunk driving. • Spikes in heroin, meth, and prescription drug use. <p>Decline in children and adults at a healthy weight.</p> <p>Aging population increases.</p> <p>Community awareness of health challenges creates opportunity for change in social norms and public policy.</p>
<p>Community Safety</p> <p><i>Communities where people are safe are desirable places to live.</i></p>	<p>The Real Happy Hour program is encouraging families to spend quality time together, focusing on dinnertime as important.</p> <p>An integrated reporting and treatment system for sexual assault victims increases the likelihood of reporting.</p> <p>Alcohol and Drugs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Host Ordinance imposes liability on those serving alcohol to minors. • OWI Treatment Court reduces the likelihood of repeat offenders. • Pushback Campaign raises awareness. • Integration of multiple alcohol and drug initiatives focuses efforts. 	<p>Marathon County has seen a rise in drug use.</p> <p>The lack of a uniform addressing system in rural areas impedes emergency response services.</p> <p>75 – 82% of fire and EMS calls occur in four metro communities, each with its own fire department. Consolidation could positively impact service delivery.</p> <p>Evidence-based best practices in the criminal justice system could reduce jail bed days and recidivism rates.</p> <p>Expanding treatment courts could reduce crimes particularly related to drug use and domestic violence.</p>



Report Section Highlights

Area	Community Successes	Community Challenges/Opportunities
<p>Environment and Energy</p> <p><i>People value and protect the natural resources for future generations.</i></p>	<p>Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available low-cost testing of drinking water. • Sufficient supply of high quality ground water to meet current needs. • High public awareness of protecting ground water. <p>Commitment to energy conservation.</p> <p>93% of residents recycle.</p> <p>Improved regional air quality.</p>	<p>Unsafe indoor radon levels.</p> <p>Water contamination sources not readily noticeable.</p> <p>Groundwater quality will not meet growing demands.</p> <p>Runoff contaminates water and increases flooding issues.</p> <p>Inconsistent waste hauling and recycling services.</p> <p>Opportunities to increase collaboration and influence legislation to protect natural resources.</p>
<p>Education</p> <p><i>Quality education is valued and available for people of all ages, and people have the training necessary for available jobs in a vibrant community.</i></p>	<p>Development of programs to ensure successful early childhood development (Early Years Coalition, YoungStar).</p> <p>Exceed state average:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten readiness. • Combined-grade reading comprehension and math proficiency scores. • High school graduation rates. • ACT composite scores. 	<p>Limited access to regulated childcare in some rural areas.</p> <p>Deep school district revenue cuts.</p> <p>Increase in disadvantaged students.</p> <p>Rates of those attending post-secondary education are lower than state rates.</p>
<p>Economic Environment</p> <p><i>Diverse economic opportunities and a skilled workforce build prosperity.</i></p>	<p>High job satisfaction and work ethic.</p> <p>Increased consumer spending.</p> <p>Coordinated local and regional efforts to improve employment and economic opportunities.</p> <p>Increase in metal fabrication jobs.</p> <p>NTC works with employers to provide worker training.</p>	<p>High unemployment.</p> <p>Strain on available county services assisting unemployed with job training.</p> <p>Opportunities for collaboration within educational sector to meet training for available jobs in region.</p> <p>Opportunity to function as a multi-county economic region.</p>





Strengths — A Great Foundation

Marathon County is a great place to live — the 9th Edition LIFE in Marathon County reinforces this message throughout the report. The County consistently exceeds state and national averages through all the report sections. The following strengths stand out in Marathon County.

A Sense of Safety

- People feel safe in Marathon County.
- Emergency services and community support groups work hard to maintain and improve upon that sense of safety.

Abundant Natural Resources

- From recreation taking place on lakes and trails to water used to support agriculture and nourish our bodies, natural resources are abundant.

Activities for All People and Seasons

- Abundant activities and recreation year-round.
- A top-10 tourist county in the state.

Advancement and Entrepreneurship

- Progressive employers with a commitment to innovation.
- Labor force with a recognized strong work ethic.
- Marathon County has been the launching pad for a variety of strong businesses that have local, state, national, and international impacts.

Family Focused

- Proximity to family was noted as the highest reason why people live in Marathon County in the 2013 LIFE Community Survey.

Great Schools

- Public schools consistently outperform state and national averages across almost all metrics.
- There are strong, varied, and growing educational options from pre-school through graduate school.

Strong Healthcare

- Regional quality healthcare service provider – steady growth in both services and jobs provided.
- Focus on increasing awareness and practice of health behaviors necessary for long and active lives.

