

ACLU: Milwaukee Police Department's racial disparities worsen despite 2018 stop and frisk settlement

Posted on Thursday, Sep 23, 2021

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MILWAUKEE — The latest stop-and-frisk report shows that racial disparities against Black and Latinx people have increased. The Milwaukee Police Department has once again failed to comply with the 2018 settlement requirements.

According to data from the newest report, which was released Thursday, the Milwaukee Police Department continues to stop and frisk Black and Latinx people at significantly higher rates than white people. Data shows that the Milwaukee Police Department conducts traffic stops on Black Milwaukee residents an estimated 9.5 times more often than on white residents and on Latinx residents an estimated 2.9 times more often.

Additionally, the field interview rate is 5.71 times higher for Black than white residents, and Black residents are frisked at a rate almost 10 times higher than white residents. All these statistics show more significant racial disparities than were present in last year's report.

The analysis was conducted as required by the settlement of a lawsuit by nine Black and Latinx Milwaukee residents, represented by the ACLU of Wisconsin, national ACLU, and the law firm of Covington & Burling LLP. The data showed that the Milwaukee Police Department was unconstitutionally and disproportionately stopping Black and Brown people in Milwaukee.

“We’re at a critical moment where the Milwaukee Police Department, three years

into the settlement, has failed to achieve compliance for even a single year and continues to over police Black and Latinx people at an alarming, unacceptable, and worsening rate,” said Karyn Rotker, senior staff attorney with the ACLU of Wisconsin. “We are also deeply concerned by the lack of adequate supervision and discipline to impose the accountability that this agreement requires.”

“The city is required to comply with the requirements of this agreement for a minimum of five years – and its failures are setting the conditions for this settlement to continue indefinitely,” said Emma Shakeshaft, staff attorney researcher with the ACLU of Wisconsin. “We are concerned about the lack of adequate commitment at all levels of the MPD to make the required changes, and we are prepared to seek enforcement, either through mediation or by seeking further action by the court.”

“As the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission selects the next permanent chief, it must make willingness and ability to comply with this settlement a priority. That means the FPC must carefully examine and heavily weigh any candidate’s history and record of achieving unbiased and constitutional policing in their police departments. That also means that if the FPC is considering internal candidates for the chief position, it must use its oversight authority to look at not just what the candidates claim they will do in the future, but also what they have done – or not done – to comply with this agreement, including holding MPD officers, and their supervisors, responsible if they continue to fail to meet compliance with the settlement,” said Olga Akselrod, senior staff attorney of nationwide ACLU’s Racial Justice Program.

This press release, along with the stop-and-frisk report and data report, is available online here: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/news/milwaukee-police-departments-racial-disparities-worsen-despite-2018-stop-and-frisk-settlement>