

State of Wisconsin  
Equal Rights Division Research Portal  
<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/reports>

2023 NASCIO State IT Recognition Award Nomination  
Category: Data Management, Analytics and Visualizations

Project Initiation: April 2022  
Project Completion: August 2022

Contact: Jennifer McElroy  
IS Comprehensive Services Senior  
Equal Rights Division  
[jennifer.mcelroy@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:jennifer.mcelroy@dwd.wisconsin.gov)

## Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)'s Equal Rights Division enforces employment laws such as minimum wage and overtime, employment of minors, plant closures, personnel records, unpaid wages and benefits, employment discrimination, family medical leave, and whistleblower laws. The division also accepts discrimination complaints related to housing and public accommodations.

When an individual files a complaint, the division conducts an impartial investigation and issues a determination on whether the law was violated. The division also provides mediation services and, in some cases, conducts administrative hearings.

Given the nature of its work, the division regularly receives open records requests from researchers, the media, and other stakeholders for data concerning employee complaints and enforcement activities. Not surprisingly, the division finds value from the publication of these open records requests, as they build awareness of Wisconsin's employment laws, reinforce that enforcement is critical for compliance, and encourage workers to pursue their rights.

To further encourage inquiries and research, an Equal Rights Division Research Portal was established to give users insights into the work of the division. The portal employs data analytics and interactive data visualizations to allow users of various technological abilities ready access the information they seek.

Prior to the launch of the research portal, information was only available via open records request. Responding to an open records request required significant staff time to research, review, and package the requested information. Additionally, the data would only be accurate as of the date of the request, requiring repeat requests to track data over periods of time.

In response to the need for access to current data in real time, division staff identified metrics that could be publicly published and automatically updated. Launched in August 2022, the Equal Rights Division Research Portal currently offers four different reports about division investigations and outcomes.

## Project Narrative

The Equal Rights Division Research Portal was developed to provide interested stakeholders insight into the numbers and types of complaints the division handles, in real time, to the most requested data. The portal enables users to isolate trends using up-to-date statistics with timely, consistent, and efficient access.

The division has been collecting complaint data for decades. However, technology-based methodologies to easily share that information with interested parties did not exist. All data petitions required an open records request process. Further, such request responses only provided a static snapshot, typically in the form of raw-data only – not in easy to consume charts or graphical formats that were easy to share.

Using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the division explored ways to enhance access to information it maintained. The recent implementation of Tableau Server to host complaint data proved to be the perfect technological platform to create a research portal.

DWD's Business Intelligence development team has always stressed the value of self-service business intelligence (BI) to Division business partners, including the Equal Rights Division. The research portal is a successful example of self-service BI.

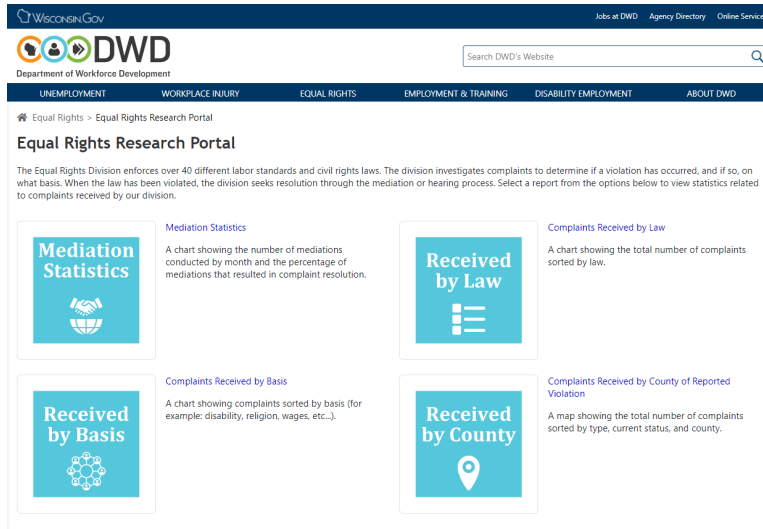


Figure 1 - Equal Rights Division Research Portal Home

The division created a list of potential reports and decided to initially publish four. The selected reports allow interested parties the ability to see:

- A chart showing the total number of [complaints received by law](#).
- A chart showing the [complaints sorted by basis](#) (e.g. disability, religion, wages, etc.)
- A [map](#) showing the total number of complaints sorted by type and county.
- A chart showing the number of [mediations](#) conducted by month and the percentage of mediations that resulted in complaint resolution.

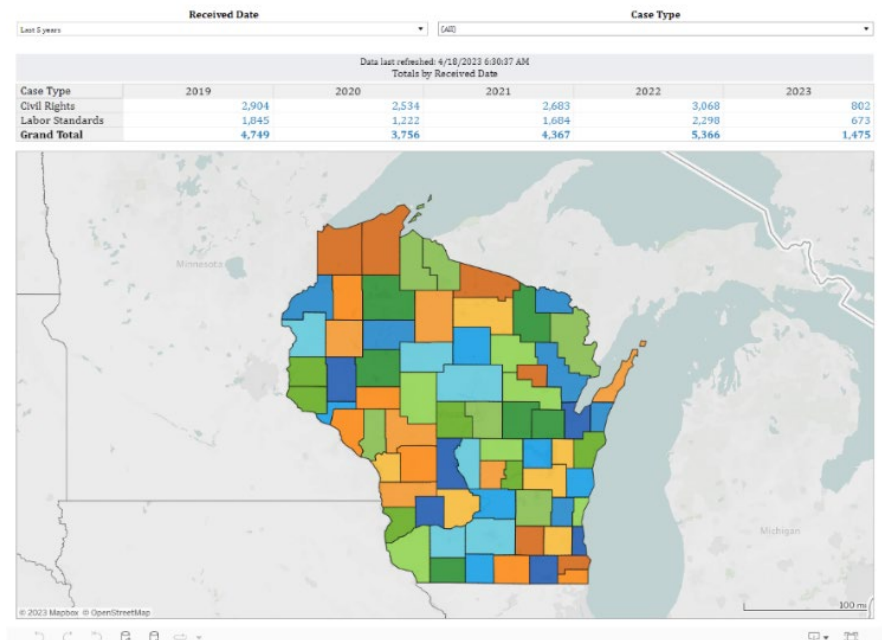


Figure 2 - Map with case count by type and county

By default, each report shows the last three years of data, but includes the ability to change that date range with a filter. Users are also able to export the data selected.

## Equal Rights Division Mediation Statistics

Use the filter below to change the date range and results.

Select the month or year heading to view and sort the data. Reset the report using the revert button found below the results.

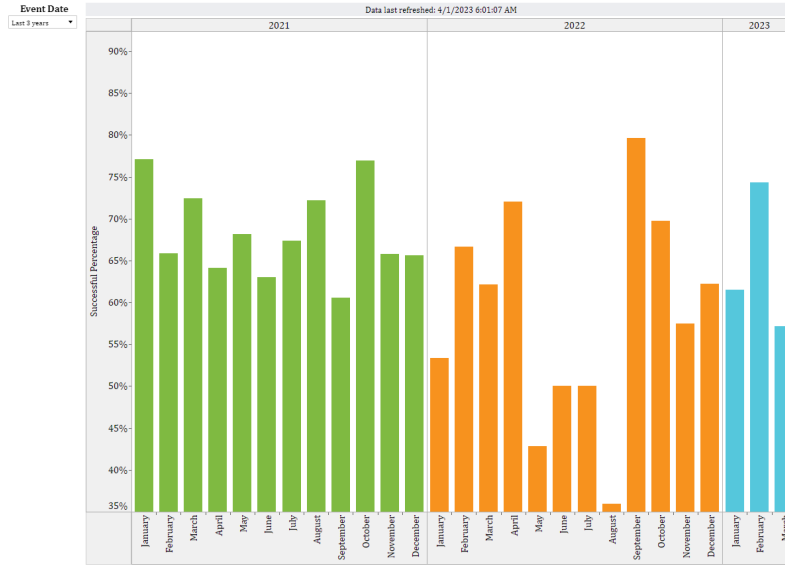


Figure 3 – Mediations conducted by month

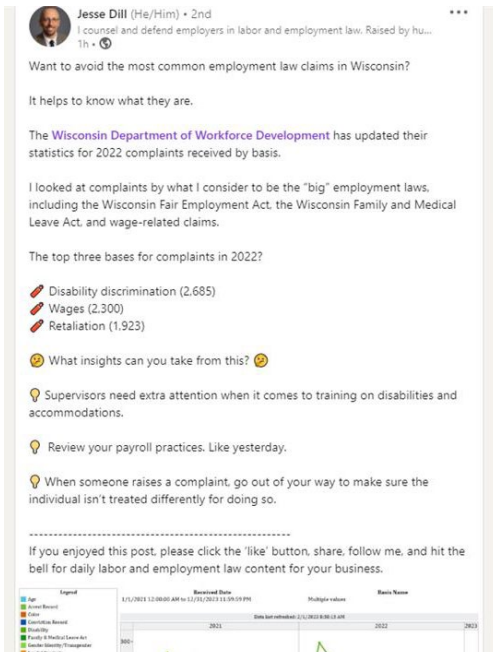


Figure 4 - LinkedIn post using Research Portal data

## Significance and Impact

The data analytics and data visualizations of the Equal Rights Division Research Portal have effectively transformed how external parties interact with our data. Making the automatically updated information available in real time has essentially eliminated the requests for standard data from internal and external users. Since introducing the research portal, the division's work has been highlighted by journalists who are now able to readily access and analyze the data, proving its effectiveness in informing the public about trends in the enforcement of employment laws.

Recently a journalist used research portal data to report on an increase in the number of open housing complaints<sup>1</sup> filed in the state over the previous five-year period. In another instance a Milwaukee employment lawyer was able to use our data to highlight the importance of training supervisors and hiring managers to ensure compliance with the law (figure 4).

<sup>1</sup> (2022, October 3). As housing discrimination complaints rise in Wisconsin, sexual harassment a key factor. Channel3000.com. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.channel3000.com/as-housing-discrimination-complaints-rise-in-wisconsin-sexual-harassment-a-key-factor/>

Moving forward, the division will add more data visualizations to the Equal Rights Division Research Portal to increase awareness about the important work the division does to serve the people of Wisconsin.