

Ashland County

2025 WORKFORCE PROFILE



State Narrative for County Profiles

Wisconsin's labor market experienced a strong year in 2024. Employment reached record levels, inflation appeared on the wane, and interest rates are accommodating a largely reconstructed supply chain. In addition, real wages turned positive, and consumer spending was robust.

The primary challenge still facing the future economic construct is the labor quantity challenge and its broader economic impacts.

Wisconsin Jobs

The 2024 employment picture was favorable for Wisconsin, reaching new records in December at 3,076,500. The state's low unemployment rates were also noteworthy registering 3.0% or below the entire year. Although setting new records is always a good sign, new highs in employment would be expected through new expansionary economic periods.

Total non-farm employment also reached new highs, climbing through the year to peak in August at a seasonally adjusted basis of 3,048,000 and consolidating high levels through the remainder of the year, ending in December at 3,042,100. That marks a 1.6% increase over the pre-pandemic highs set in December 2019.



Figure 1: Wisconsin employment and jobs.

Economy

Wisconsin Gross Domestic Product (WGDP) reached new highs in nominal and real dollar terms in 2024¹, at \$456 billion or \$357 billion in real 2017 dollars. After a slower recovery coming out of the COVID-19 recession, Wisconsin's GDP growth rate has mimicked that of the country.

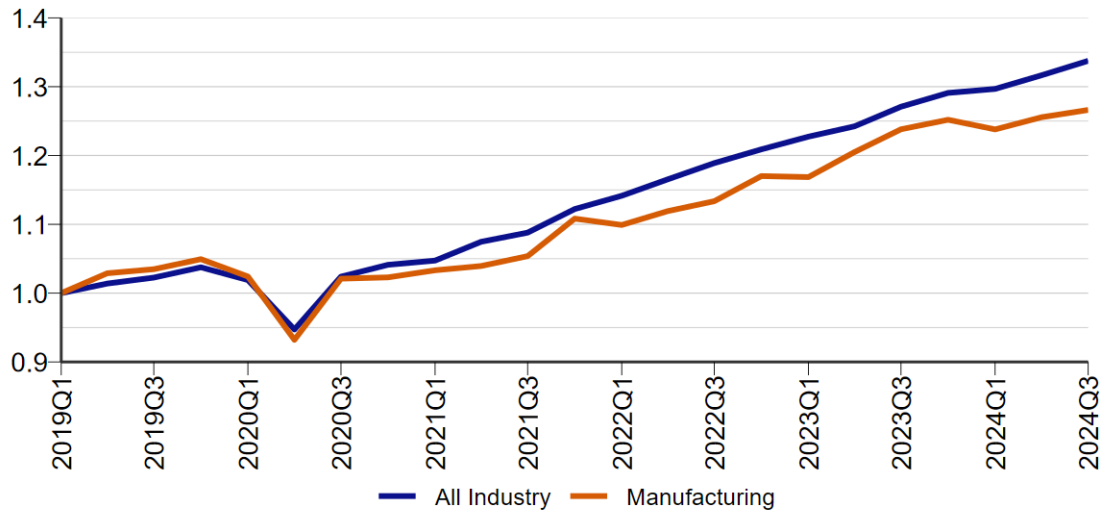


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

Many industry sectors were vibrant. Construction industry jobs hit new records, surpassing 140,000. Healthcare jobs also set new highs at 324,200. The leisure and hospitality sector recovered almost all the nearly 50% loss of jobs experienced during the COVID-19 recession, finishing with 285,200 jobs. Manufacturing jobs rose above 2023 levels to 481,200, but have not yet returned to pre-Covid19 levels.

Wisconsin ranks first in the number of manufacturing jobs per government job and second in manufacturing jobs share of total jobs. However, state-level manufacturing output was relatively weak against overall economic output. Two of the state's primary manufacturing industries, fabricated metal and machinery manufacturing, lost jobs through 2024. Fabricated metal manufacturing jobs peaked in July 2019, before the COVID-19 recession at 79,400 jobs, and ended 2024 with 74,300. Machinery manufacturing peaked in early 2023 with 68,800 jobs and finished 2024 with 67,200.

¹Third quarter 2024 is latest data available.

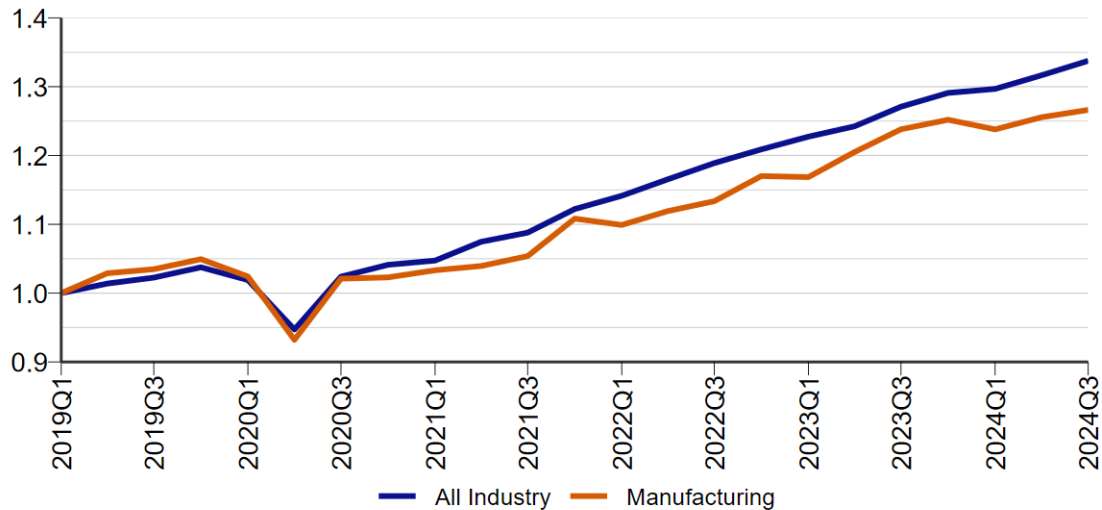


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

While the durable goods manufacturing sector saw declines, non-durable goods manufacturing in Wisconsin has made headway. Jobs in the non-durables industries have increased since the pre-Covid high of 198,600 in July of 2019, to 201,000 in December 2024. Most of that has occurred in the food processing industry.

Labor Quantity Challenges

Employers continue to express challenges finding workers. This situation is being felt in all industries and most occupations – locally, regionally, and globally. Even China is experiencing population and workforce declines. Industries that are showing steady job growth, such as construction and healthcare, are limited by the number of workers available for positions.

As noted in studies dating back to 2000, there are not sufficient numbers of young workers to fill the jobs being vacated by the generation of baby boomers and the increased demand for workers associated with economic growth. The number of workers entering the labor market is essentially the same as the boomers exiting. A growing economy necessitates an increasing labor force or at least a more productive one. Wisconsin's labor force growth has remained close to zero.

The new high in Wisconsin's labor force reached in December 2024 of 3,170,300 is only 0.63% above the previous high in July 2017 and only 0.83% above the peak before that in June of 2009. That amounts to an annual average labor force growth rate of 0.08% per year, or about zero over 15 years.

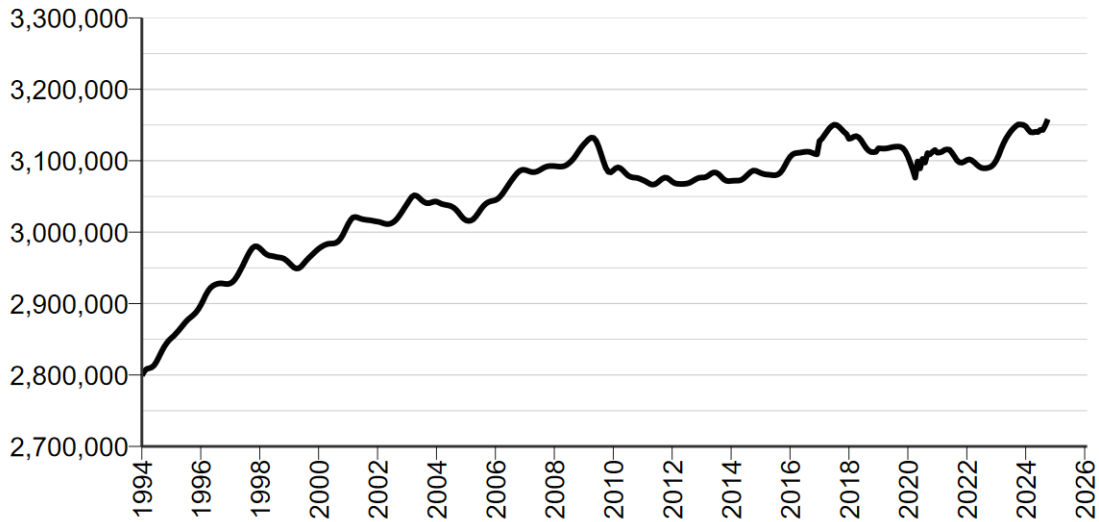


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

This shift has long been anticipated and is well documented. The front edge of the baby boomers turned 63 years old in 2009. By 2024, the back edge of the boomers (those born in 1964) were 60 years old. And while the labor force participation rates of workers 65 and older has increased since the 1990s, the remaining tenure of the boomers is short.

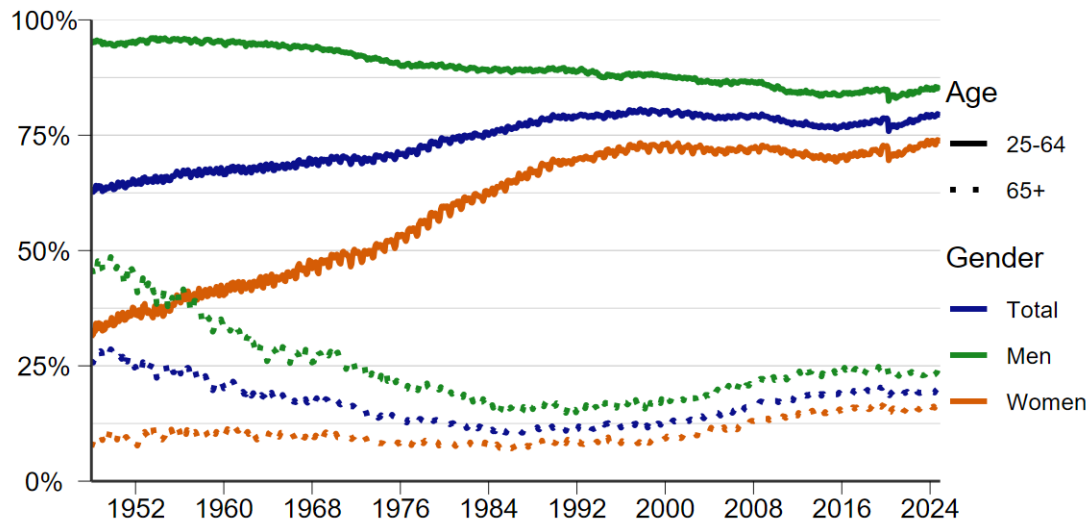


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

Below is a graph of Wisconsin’s population and labor force projected out to 2040 based on the latest information from the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services. On a decennial basis, Wisconsin’s population has already peaked. This suggests that the workforce will not experience substantial growth moving forward.

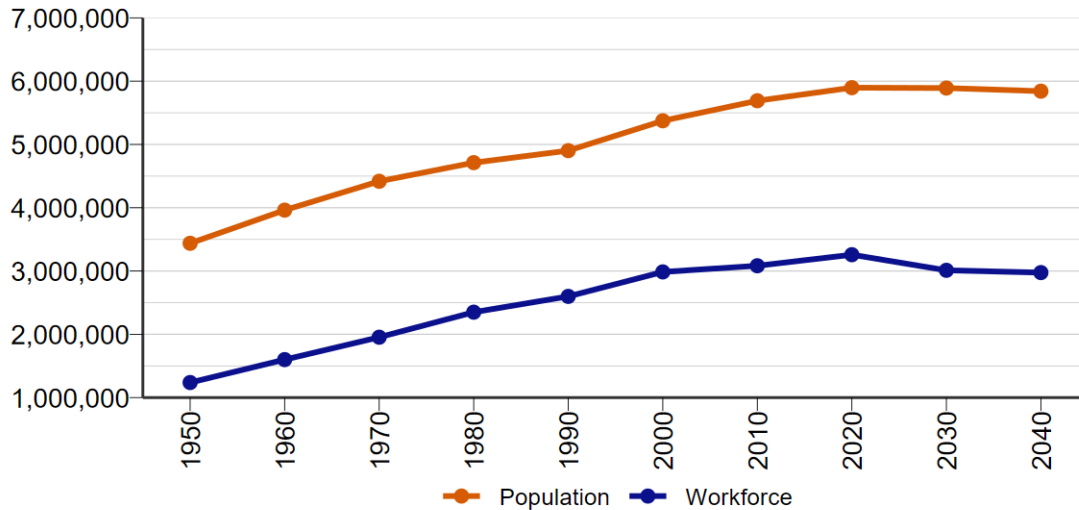


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

While the overall situation has been realized for some time, the actual quantity of the shortfall has been undetermined until now. Staff at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Office of Economic Advisors estimate that by 2031, the state could face a labor shortage exceeding 241,000 workers. (See Labor Supply Projections for Wisconsin 2020 – 2040, Winters, Kaur, and Otis, [Labor Supply Projections for Wisconsin](#)).

New Construct

Human resource constraints affect the entire economic construct. As one of the three primary components of economic inputs – along with natural resources and capital – a compromise in the abundance of labor permeates the economy. Having never encountered a labor constraint before, it needs to be noted – old models and old policies do not apply.

Moreover, the labor quantity challenge is a macroeconomic phenomenon. It cannot be remedied with microeconomic solutions. Microeconomic attraction and retention incentives of higher wages, better benefits, early exposure, and more are, at best, short-term and limited symptom remedies.

Jobs will go unfilled. Macroeconomic solutions to the challenge include:

1. A workable immigration policy
2. Reducing barriers to employment (see [2023 Wisconsin County Profiles](#))
3. Expanding trade
4. Technology infusion

Altering a fundamental input of the macroeconomic construct will impact all sectors. The limited and shifting human resource segment will alter income streams, change demand for goods and services, and affect the provision of public goods and services.

Wisconsin’s economic health and vigor has been illustrated in the employment and jobs data. However, record low unemployment rates signify two usually unassociated yet coupled performance indicators. On the one hand, low unemployment rates indicate an engaged labor force – a relatively large numerator. On the other hand, in today’s environment, low unemployment rates indicate a scarce labor force – a relatively small denominator.

This is an unprecedented situation – and it is not likely to resolve itself quickly.

Yet to be explored are how the limited labor pool and aging population effects other critical economic drivers, such as personal income, as a significant portion of the population (Baby Boomers) shifts to transfer payments that are fixed in real dollar terms, housing stock, dependency ratios, and fiscal balances.

One major unknown on the horizon are the effects that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have on the future of economic and workforce development. The Governor’s Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence Advisory Action Plan (dwd.wisconsin.gov/ai-taskforce/pdf/ai-advisory-action-plan.pdf) outlines some of the expected effects of AI. For example, the chart below sheds some light on the extent that occupations may be affected by AI.

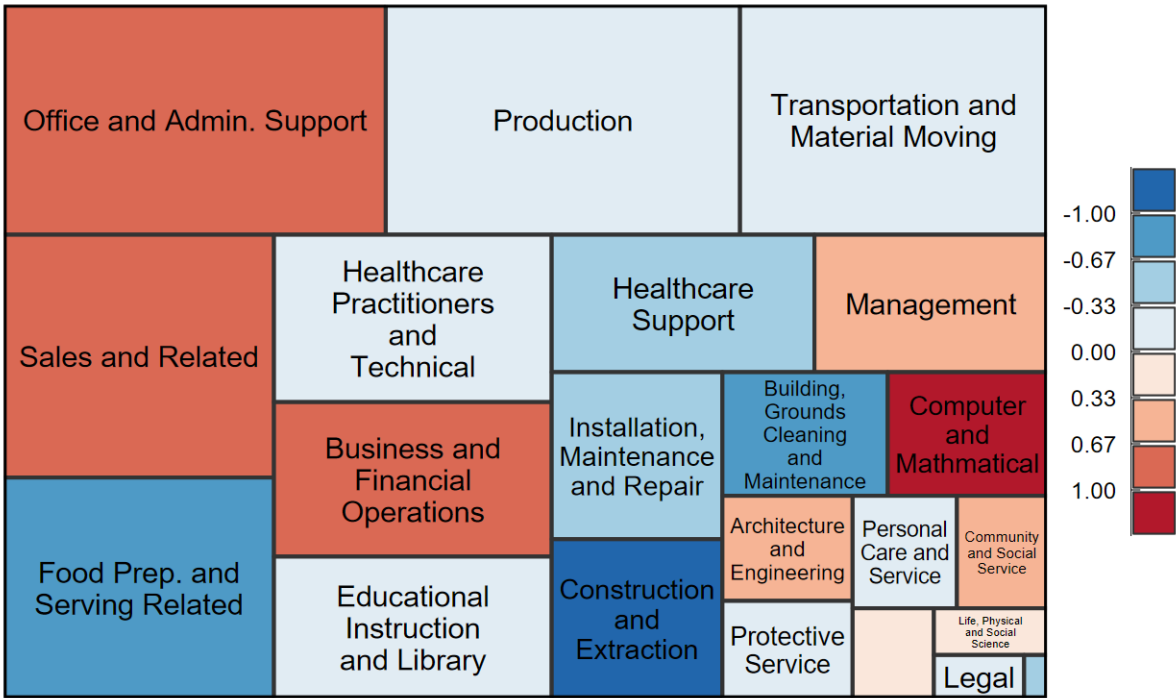


Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

Fundamental changes are in store for Wisconsin’s economy due primarily to two new influencers: workforce constraints and artificial intelligence technology. The degree to how each will affect the other and the whole is yet to be determined.

Population and Demographics

	2020 Census	2023 Final Estimate	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Ashland, City	7,905	7,766	-139	-1.8%
Sanborn, Town	1,381	1,364	-17	-1.2%
White River, Town	1,067	1,073	6	0.6%
Gingles, Town	738	744	6	0.8%
Mellen, City	698	667	-31	-4.4%
Jacobs, Town	648	643	-5	-0.8%
Ashland, Town	589	579	-10	-1.7%
Morse, Town	499	499	0	0.0%
Marengo, Town	460	468	8	1.7%
La Pointe, Town	428	428	0	0.0%
Ashland, County	16,027	15,827	-200	-1.2%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Ashland County is the 63rd most populous county in Wisconsin with 15,827 residents. It is also the 71st fastest-growing county. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -1.2%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin. Ashland County saw its population peak in 1920 at 24,538. The City of Ashland saw its population peak in 1900 at 13,074.

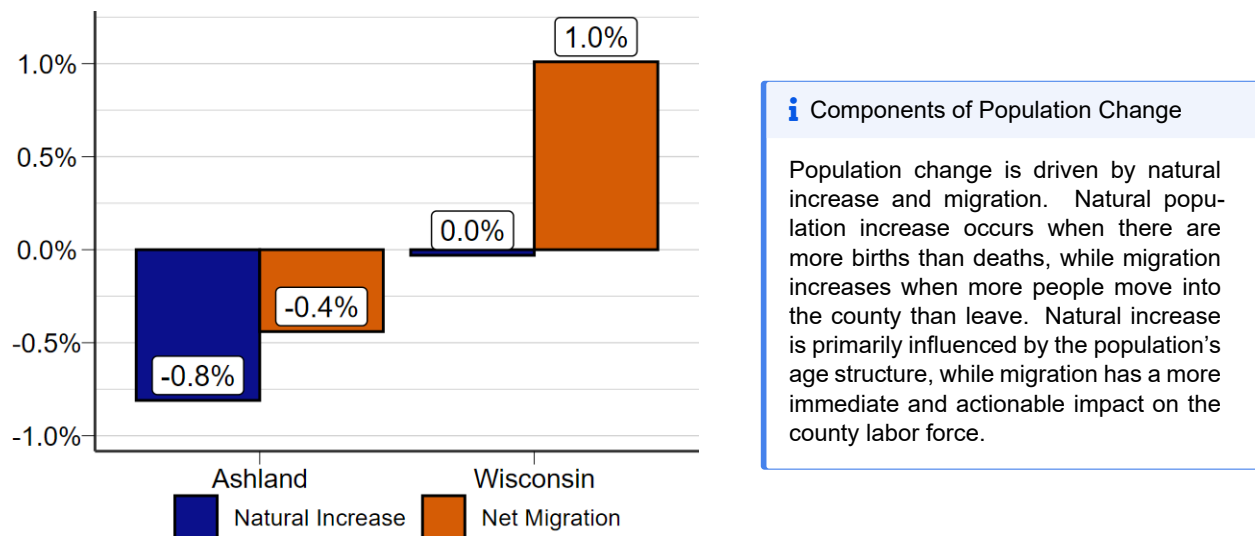


Figure 8: Source: WI Department of Administration.

The fastest-growing municipality in Ashland County is the Town of Marengo, which added 8 people for a 1.7% growth rate.

Ashland County's population growth in terms of natural increase was -0.8%, ranking 45th in the state. Net migration was -0.4%, ranking 63rd in the state.

According to the Wisconsin's Department of Health Services, there were 167 births in Ashland County in 2022. Its fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–44) was 60.9, which rated 19th highest in the state. In 2022, Wisconsin's fertility rate was 54.2 and the United States fertility rate

was 56.0. For comparison, the rate for the state and county was 62.3 and the United States was 64.7 in 2010.

Ashland County's 0-5 age population in 2022 is 6.3% of the county's population, compared to Ashland County's 75 and older population, which is 8.3% of its population. In 2010, the 0-5 age population was 7.4%, and the 75 and older population was 7.7%. Ashland County's fertility rate has been low for a long time. The baby boomer generation is currently aged 60 to 78. It will be hard for Ashland County to maintain its population, because the baby boomer generation will die, millennials and gen z have a below replacement fertility rate, and Ashland County has a negative level of net migration.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Ashland	16,027	15,270	14,285	13,235	-17.4%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

The recently released Wisconsin population projections show a decrease in Ashland County's total population of 17.4% from 2020 to 2050. The 0-19 age group is projected to decrease 19.2%, the 20-69 age group is projected to decrease 25.1%, and the 70 and older age group is projected to increase 0.9%. Comparing Ashland County's numbers to Wisconsin's, the projected decrease of Wisconsin's overall population from 2020-2050 is 3.1%. Wisconsin's 0-19 age group is projected to decrease 13.4%. It's 20-69 age group is projected to decrease 7.4%. The population 70 and older in Wisconsin is projected to increase 40.6%.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	7,801	-265	-3.3%	100.0%
Education and Health Services	2,116	-96	-4.3%	27.1%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,477	-78	-5.0%	18.9%
Public Administration	1,043	-13	-1.2%	13.4%
Manufacturing	949	-103	-9.8%	12.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	779	-26	-3.2%	10.0%
Construction	453	86	23.4%	5.8%
Professional and Business Services	398	12	3.1%	5.1%
Other Services	226	-41	-15.4%	2.9%
Financial Activities	223	18	8.8%	2.9%
Natural Resources and Mining	80	-9	-10.1%	1.0%
Information	57	-15	-20.8%	0.7%


Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Ashland County employment lost -265 jobs (-3.3%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 7,801 jobs in 2023. The largest industry was education and health services, accounting for 27.1% of employment in the county in 2023. From 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was construction, adding 86 jobs for a 23.4% growth rate. Some of the largest employers in Ashland County are C. G. Bretting Manufacturing Co. Inc, Bad River Band, and Walmart.

The Quarterly Workforce Indicators dataset includes age groups of workers by industries at the county level. The share of 65 and older workers in the trade, transportation, and utilities industry was 10.3% in 2018 compared to 13.9% in 2023. This suggests an increase in manufacturing industry retirements in the near future. To keep production levels the same with a shrinking workforce, industries could embrace advancements in artificial intelligence and robotics. Examples of these advancements would be autonomous semi-trucks in the transportation industry, automated robots in the warehouse and manufacturing industries, and digital ordering in the food services industry.

Unemployment

Ashland County’s monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 3.8%, compared to the state’s rate of 3.0%. Ashland County’s 2023 unemployment rate ranks 58th in the state. This rate was much lower than the all-time high rates achieved during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which interrupted a long steady decline that began at the end of the Great Recession in 2010. Both Ashland County and the nation reached their lowest unemployment rates on record in 2023, while Wisconsin reached its lowest in 2022. Ashland County’s unemployment rate has a higher degree of variability than does the state and nation. A larger share of its businesses temporarily increase employment at certain times of the year to respond to changes in consumer demand or weather conditions. Industries that often have seasonal employment are logging, retail, and tourism.

 Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate is the percentage of people who are not working but actively looking for work compared to the total number of people in the labor force.

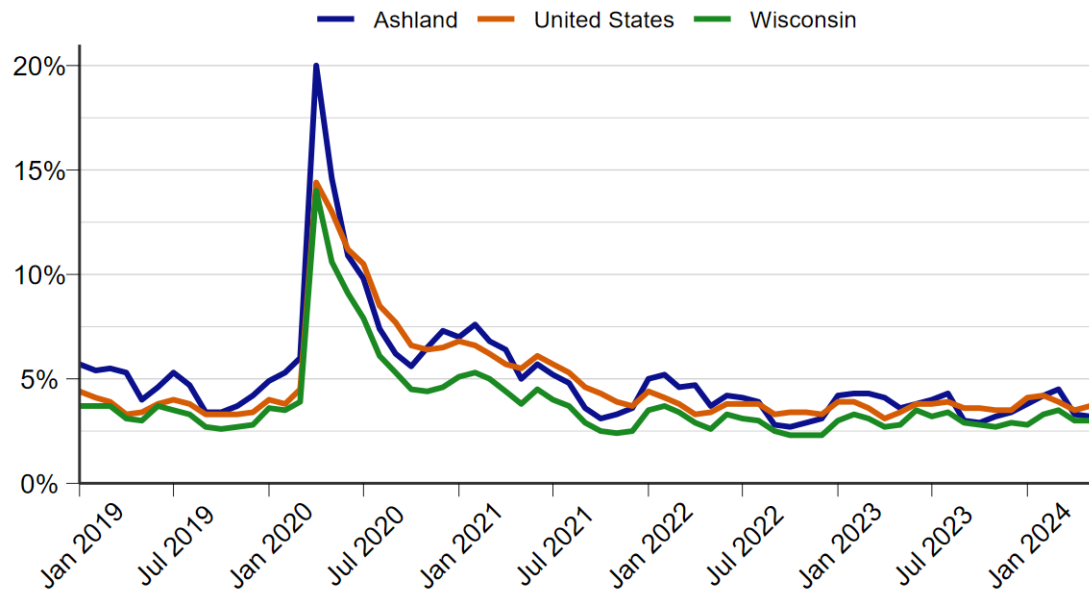


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Ashland County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 58.5%, ranking 52nd in the state. In recent history, Ashland County's LFPR has been lower than the state of Wisconsin's, only briefly surpassing it in 2005 by 0.6 percentage points. Since then, the gap between the two has widened to 6.8 percentage points, 65.3% (WI) and 58.5% (Ashland). The main reason for this divergence is the county's aging population. The LFPR includes the number of people aged 16 and older working or looking for work. Most workers retire in their 60's. In recent years, the baby boomer generation, the largest generation in American history, began to retire causing the LFPR to decrease dramatically. The share of the Ashland County population in 2002 that was 65 and older was 16%; in 2022 it was 22%.

Another way to look at this situation is through the Employment-Population Ratio (EMRATIO). The EMRATIO is the proportion of the civilian non-institutional population aged 16 years and over that is employed. It is basically the LFPR without a count of people who are looking for a job. The larger the unemployment rate, the larger the difference is between the two metrics. Ashland County's EMRATIO was 65.8% in 2002 declining to 55.9% in 2022.

As stated earlier, the share of the Ashland County's total population who were 65 and older was 22% (3,500 residents). If the LFPR is to return to the 2002 high of 71.0%, many of those 3,500 will have to be recruited back into the labor force, because the number of youths entering the labor market is not large enough to offset the people retiring.

Labor Force Participation Rate

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) looks at the relative labor resources available and is expressed as the percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work.

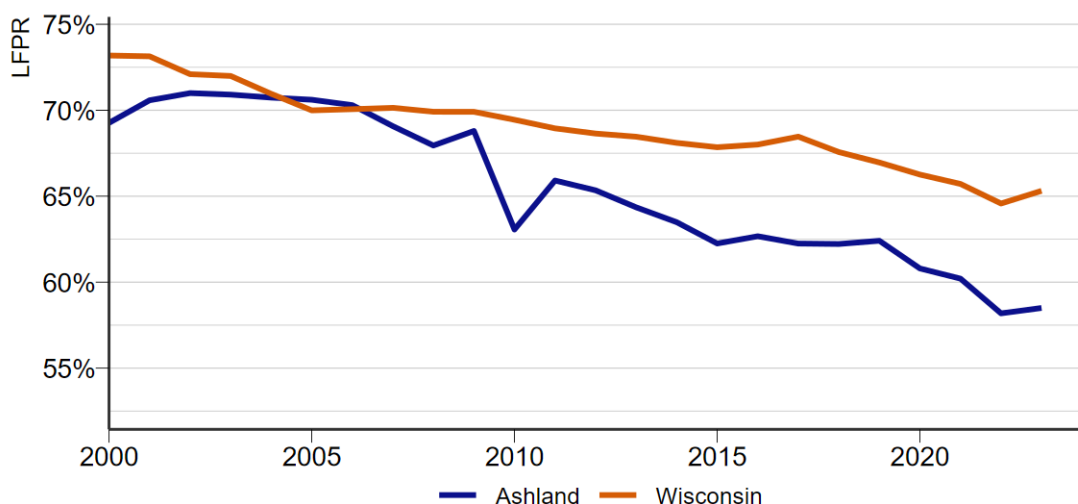


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Cashiers	2,170	3.6%	0.89
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,560	2.6%	-0.09
Retail Salespersons	1,230	2.1%	0.40
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,180	2.0%	-0.78
Office Clerks, General	1,150	1.9%	1.00
Stockers and Order Fillers	1,150	1.9%	-0.05
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,130	1.9%	-1.00
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	970	1.6%	0.15
Bartenders	970	1.6%	-0.68
Registered Nurses	920	1.5%	0.04

Source: Governor's Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence.

AI Exposure

AI exposure, as computed by the Governor's Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence, is the median value across four different research paper's measures of exposure after normalizing each paper's measure to the same mean and variance. A positive value of AI exposure indicates placement in the top 50% of occupations for AI exposure, with higher values indicating greater exposure to AI. Conversely, negative numbers indicate exposure in the bottom 50%. For more information about AI exposure, refer to The Governor's Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence Advisory Action Plan (dwd.wisconsin.gov/ai-taskforce/pdf/ai-advisory-action-plan.pdf)

The largest occupation in the Northwest workforce development area is cashiers, accounting for 3.6% of the area's employment. According to the best county-level estimates, cashiers are 4.1% of Ashland County's employment. This occupation has an artificial intelligence exposure index of 0.89. For context, the occupations with the highest potential AI exposure are bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, with an AI exposure index of 1.89. They are estimated to be 1.7% of the Ashland County employment. Another occupation with a high potential AI exposure is general office clerks with an AI exposure index score of 1.00, accounting for 2.0% of Ashland County's employment.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Construction	3,322	3,695	373	11.23%
Most Jobs Added	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	12,804	13,912	1,108	8.65%
Highest Number Employed	Education and Health Services	15,227	15,860	633	4.16%
Total	Total All Industries	75,106	78,912	3,806	5.07%

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

DWD conducts employment projections for Wisconsin's 11 WDAs every two years. Ashland is part of the Northwest WDA, which includes Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn counties. Non-farm employment located within Northwest WDA is expected to increase by 3,806 (5.1%), compared to the state's growth rate of 7.1%. In recent decades, Northwest WDA projected industry growth has been lower than the state because Northwest WDA's population growth has been lower than most of Wisconsin and the Northwest WDA population's median age has been higher than much of Wisconsin. The higher the growth rate in the working-age population, the higher the employment growth rate when you have an economy where the main limiting factor to growth is a shortage of human capital.

In the Northwest WDA, the construction industry is projected to be the fastest-growing industry, growing at a rate of 11.2% from 2022 to 2032. This growth rate is slightly higher than the statewide growth rate of 11.1%.

In the Northwest WDA, the trade, transportation, and utilities industry is projected to have the most jobs added of an industry, growing by 1,108 jobs from 2022 to 2032. The industry projected to have the most jobs added statewide is the education and health services industry.

The estimated number of self-employed people in Northwest WDA in 2022 was 6,169 and is projected to grow 8.6% to 6,700 by 2032. The Wisconsin projected grow rate for the self-employed is higher at 10.4%

For more information and detailed projections results for both occupations and industries, view Wisconsin's projections page (jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconomy/pub/projections).

Occupation Employment Projections

	Occupation	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Architecture and Engineering	837	939	102	12.19%
Lowest Percent Growth	Legal	276	262	-14	-5.07%
Highest Number Employed	Production	8,302	8,351	49	0.59%
Most Jobs Added	Transportation and Material Moving	7,090	7,917	827	11.66%
Total	Total, All	75,106	78,912	3,806	5.07%

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

In the Northwest WDA, architecture and engineering occupations are projected to be the fastest-growing occupations, growing at a rate of 12.2% from 2022 to 2032. The occupations projected to be the fastest-growing in Wisconsin is the computer and mathematical occupations at 17.8%. The second fastest-growing occupations in the Northwest WDA is transportation and material moving occupations at 11.7%, which is also projected to have the most jobs added.

Two useful things not included in the occupation employment projections table below are projected total openings and typical education. The Northwest WDA occupations projected to have the most total openings are food preparation and serving occupations with 1,190 total openings. The employment change for food preparation and serving occupations is only projected to increase by 289. An occupation can have a high rate of turnover in employees, as shown in the high number of openings, and have a low growth rate in employment.

Total openings include three categories: labor force exits, occupational transfers, and annual growth. For all occupations in the Northwest WDA, labor force exits are projected to be 39.7% of job openings; occupational transfers are projected to be 56.1% of openings; and annual growth is projected to be 4.2% of job openings. Annual growth is lower than the Wisconsin projected rate of 5.9%, which is consistent with the higher projected growth rate in Wisconsin employment of 7.1% versus the Northwest WDA's projected employment growth rate of 5.1%.

When viewing the growth rate of employment based on the typical education required to perform an occupation, 62% of employment growth in the Northwest WDA is in occupations that typically require a high school degree or less. 38% typically require education beyond high school, with 19% typically requiring a bachelor's degree. The projected employment growth at the state level is in occupations that typically require higher levels of education than in the Northwest WDA. Forty-six percent of statewide projected employment growth is in occupations with typical education above a high school diploma, 29% requiring a bachelor's degree.

Aging Population

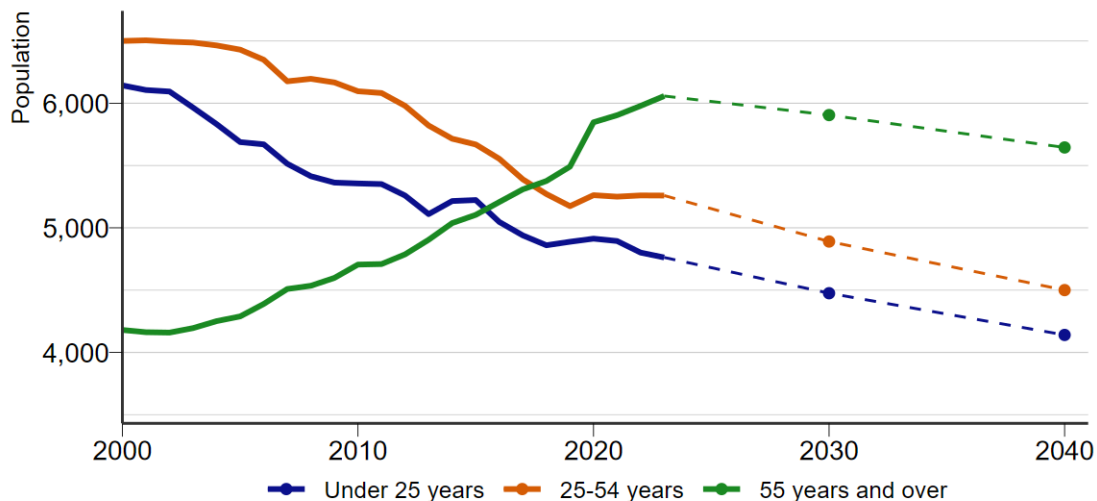


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

The aging population is an issue not only in Ashland County but most of Wisconsin. The above graph shows the change over time of three age groups, the green line representing 55 years and over. This group is flat in the early 2000s but then increases dramatically during the remainder of the period. This illustrates the aging of the baby boomer generation. The share of the population aged 55 and older was 37.7% in 2023, growing from 31.0% in 2013 and 25.2% in 2003. The rapid acceleration in the 55 and over share of the total population is attributed to the negative growth of the other two age groups in Ashland County. The share of the population aged 25 to 55 was 33.7% in 2023, shrinking from 36.8% in 2013 and 39.0% in 2003. Ages 25 through 55 are known as the prime working years with the highest labor force participation rate. When the share of a community's workforce declines in this age group it makes it challenging to grow the economy, especially in industries that require human presence. The share of the population ages under 25 was 29.6% in 2023, shrinking from 32.3% in 2013 and 35.8% in 2003. The under 25 age group are those who will soon be replacing the 55 and over age group when they retire. It will be challenging to recruit workers to replace retirees since the under 25-year age group is shrinking while the 55 and over age group is simultaneously growing. From 2017 to 2022, the median age in Ashland County was 42.2, compared to Wisconsin's median age of 39.9, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Ashland County's median age ranked 42nd oldest in Wisconsin.

Even though Ashland County's younger population is decreasing, it has a shortage of affordable childcare. A lack of affordable childcare compounds the negative effect that the downward trend in the 25-54 age group has on the growth of the area's workforce. Not only is a lack of childcare bad for the current economy, but it also disincentivizes future parents from having children early and often, which reduces the number of young people in Ashland County. A challenge that the large increase in the number of older people in Ashland County creates is the increased need for personal care workers as either in-home care or at a nursing home.

The dashed lines on the aging population graph show the projected populations of the three age groups previously discussed. All three age groups are projected to decline in Ashland County when comparing 2020 and 2040. Under 25 is projected to decrease by 791, 25-54 is projected to decrease by 707, and 55 and over is projected to decrease by 244. This would be devastating for the county's economy. Companies, that are challenging to automate, would have a hard time finding employees. Demand for local goods and services such as groceries, haircuts, schools, and energy consumption would greatly decline. The housing market would have an oversupply of structures, leading to many structures becoming abandoned and falling into disrepair. Local road maintenance would be more challenging due to fewer gasoline taxes being collected.

Personal Income

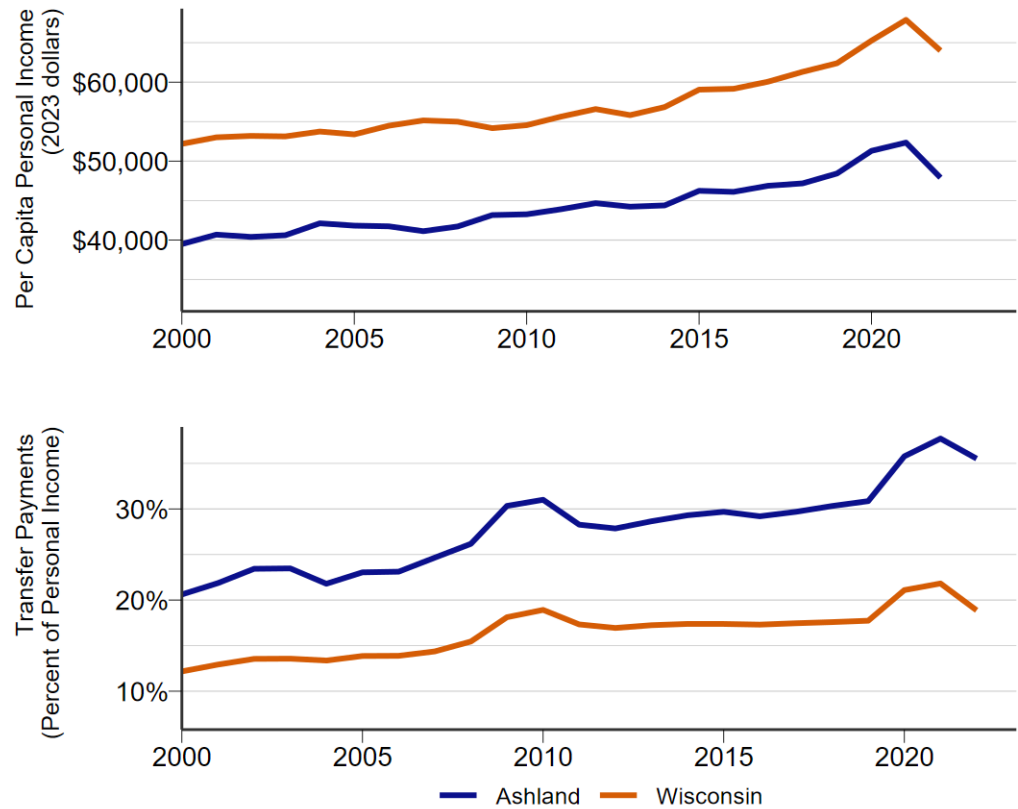


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

i Personal Income

Personal income includes income from all sources, such as wages, business income, rental income, investments, and government transfer payments. It excludes capital gains or losses, whether realized or unrealized. All dollar amounts are adjusted for inflation using 2023 dollars.

In the modern world, per capita income usually increases over time, even after accounting for inflation. A couple of reasons for this are technological innovation that improves worker efficiency, and a decrease in the number of children as a share of the total population. Children do not work to earn income and don't collect money from public and private retirement accounts. The per capita personal income in Ashland County was \$47,901 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of \$63,996. The gap between the statewide and Ashland County average per capita personal income has widened over the last 22 years. The gap in 2000 was \$12,695, in 2022 the gap was \$16,095.

In total, 35.5% of that income came from transfer payments rather than earned income in 2022. Transfer payments, as a share of personal income, increase during economic depressions and

recessions because the number of people working decreases and the number of people collecting government payments such as food stamps and unemployment insurance increases. Transfer payments, as a share of personal income in Ashland County, grew faster than the share in Wisconsin because Ashland County's population has a larger share of older individuals than the statewide population. Therefore, a larger share of Ashland County's personal income is retirement income, including private pensions, Social Security, and Medicare. Transfer payments, as a share of personal income in Wisconsin, grew 6.7 percentage points from 2000 to 2022. In Ashland County, the share increased 14.9 percentage points during the same period.

Workforce Pipeline

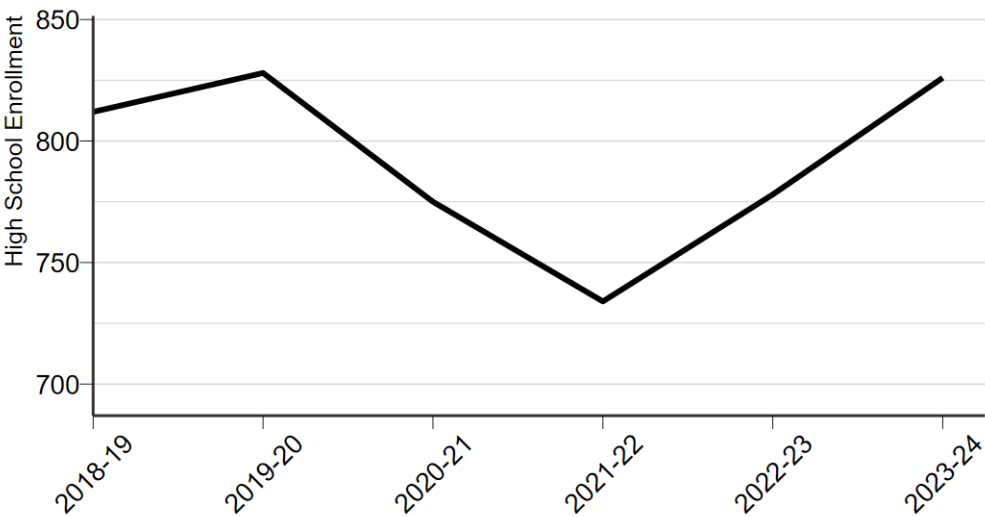


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 826 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 in Ashland County. This includes public, private, and home-based schools. Another term for home-based schools is homeschooling, which is classified differently than online schooling. Over the last 5 years, home-based schooling increased 186% in Ashland County. It is now 7% of 9-12 grade students in Ashland County, the statewide average is 3%.

It is important to note that school district boundaries can extend into multiple counties, meaning that county-level enrollment figures may not precisely reflect the number of students residing within the county. Enrollment counts are based on the location of the school district’s main office.

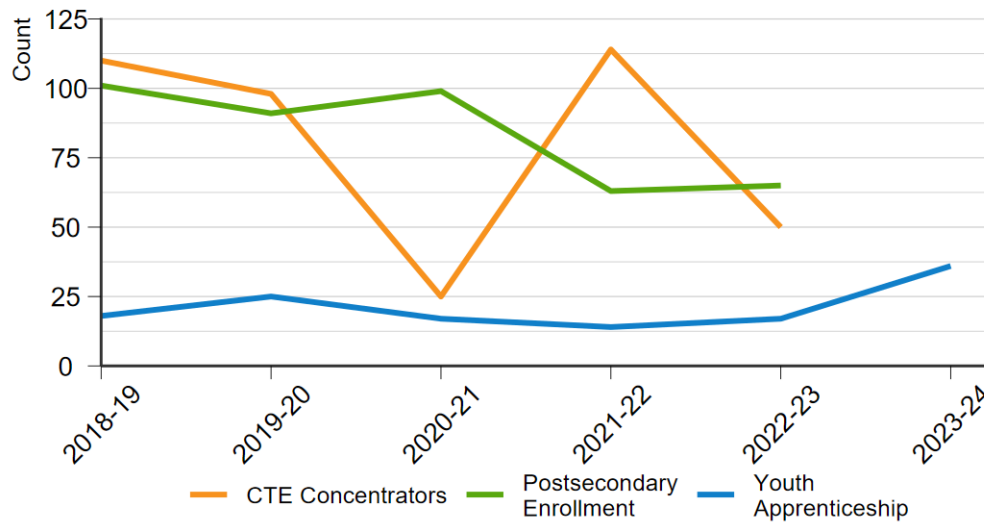


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Of those attendees, 13.3% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% for the state during the 2022-23 school year. The number of Ashland County students receiving CTE has been trending downward over the last 5 years on record. During those 5 years, the most popular CTE pathway in Ashland County was manufacturing, with 113 students; the second most popular pathway was education and training with 69 students. The manufacturing industry employs 12.8% of jobs in Ashland County, and the educational services industry employs 8.6% of jobs in Ashland County.

i Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education (CTE) equips students for both the workforce and postsecondary education through work-based learning opportunities. CTE concentrators are 11th and 12th graders who have passed at least two CTE courses within a specific career pathway. Home-based students are not included in this data.

	CTE Concentrator	Percent of Grade 11 and 12
Ashland	50	13.3%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

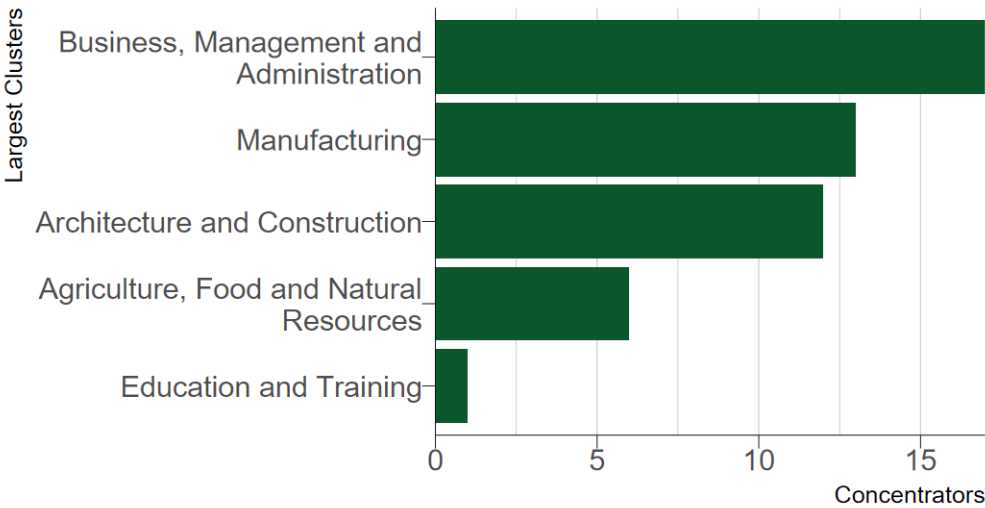


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Postsecondary Enrollment

The percentage of high school completers who went on to enroll in a postsecondary institution as a percentage of all 12th-grade students in Ashland County in 2022-23 was 34.4%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%. That 34.4% was a decrease in the percentage enrolled 5 years prior. Fifty-one percent of the 2018-2019 graduating class pursued a postsecondary education. Students in Ashland County may choose to stay close to home for their postsecondary education, as Ashland County is home to Northland College and a Northwood Technical College campus.

i Postsecondary Enrollment

Postsecondary enrollment tracks the percentage of high school graduates who attend a postsecondary school (public or private colleges, two- or four-year universities, technical colleges, or training programs) in the fall immediately following graduation. It is important to note that this data may slightly underrepresent actual enrollment due to limitations in how information is matched within the National Student Clearinghouse.


	Postsecondary Enrollment	Percent of Grade 12
Ashland	65	34.4%
Wisconsin	31,893	43.6%

School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Youth Apprenticeship

Youth apprenticeship is a program that prepares participants for the workforce through direct, hands-on work experience. There were 17 youth apprentices in Ashland County in the 2022-23 school year. Ashland County has a lower rate of youth apprentices than Wisconsin. Historically,

Northwest Wisconsin counties have struggled to find employers to participate in youth apprenticeship programs. Youth Apprenticeship is an important tool for counties because it connects high school students to businesses in their local community. If a high school graduate knows a local employer is willing to hire them, they are less likely to move away. It can be challenging for Ashland County businesses to attract employees from outside of Northwest Wisconsin, emphasizing the importance of retaining the young talent already in the community.

 Youth Apprenticeship

Youth Apprenticeship (YA) Program is a school-supervised program that combines work and classroom learning to help high school students prepare for a career. Participants receive on-the-job training directly from the employer. The program helps students explore career paths and helps employers develop a qualified workforce.

	Youth Apprenticeship Participants	Percent of Grade 11 and 12
Ashland	17	4.5%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.