Dodge County

2025 WORKFORCE PROFILE

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DWD
Department of Workforce Development

WisConomy

DETI-17957-DOD-P (R. 05/2025)

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 reconstrued 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.

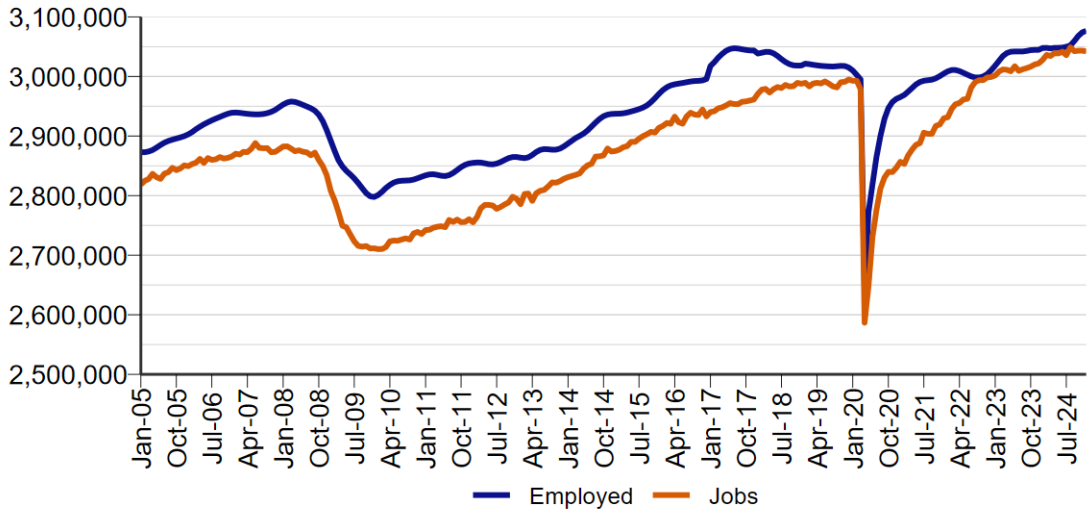


Figure 1: Wisconsin employment and jobs.

Economy

Wisconsin Gross Domestic Product (WGDP) reached new highs in nominal and real dollar terms in 2024[1], 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.

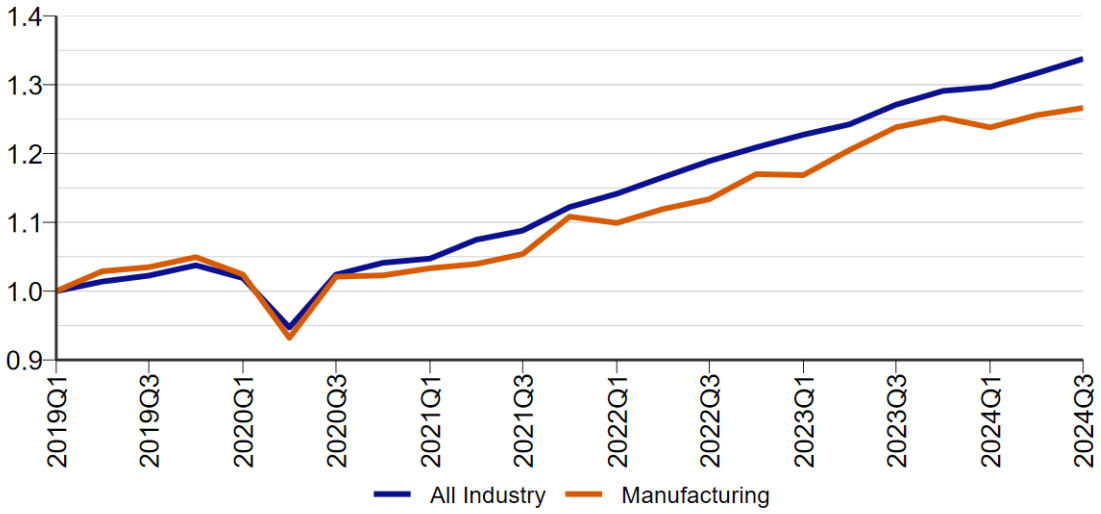


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

[1]Third quarter 2024 is latest data available.

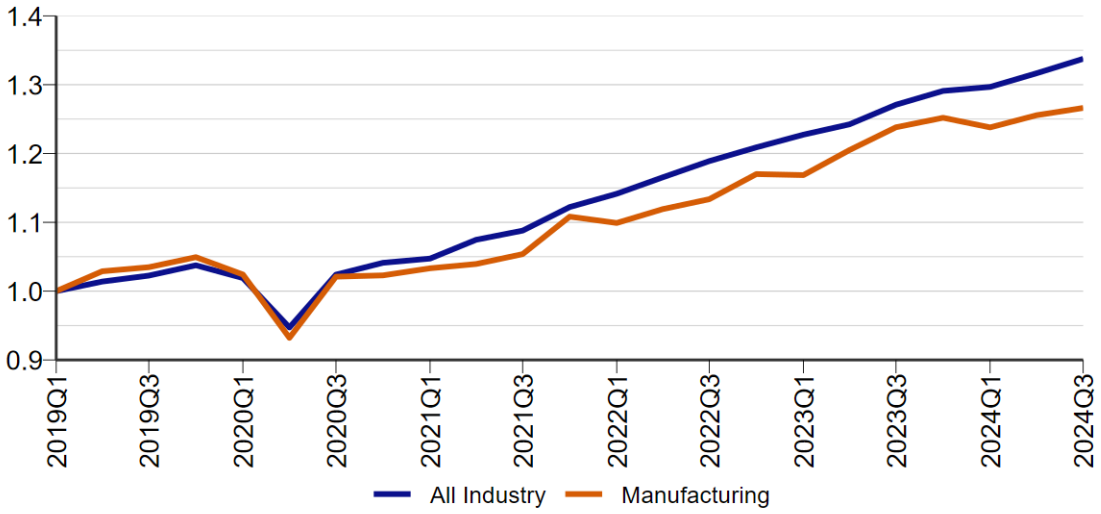


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

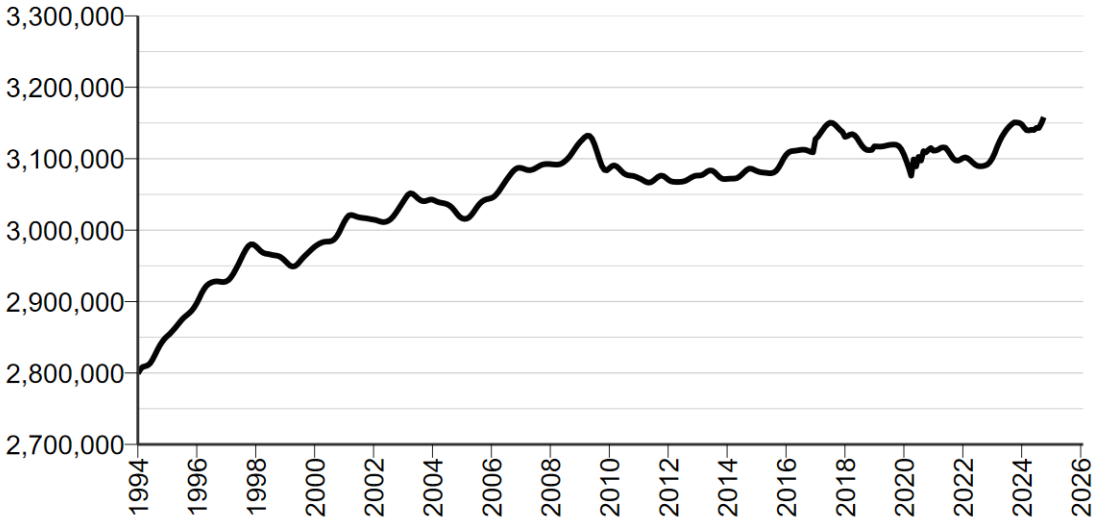


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.

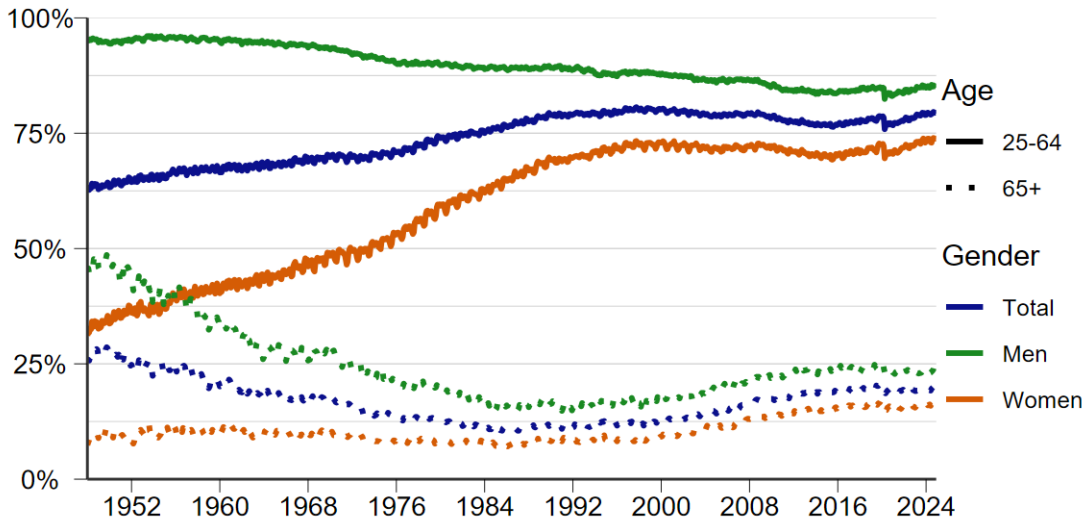


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.

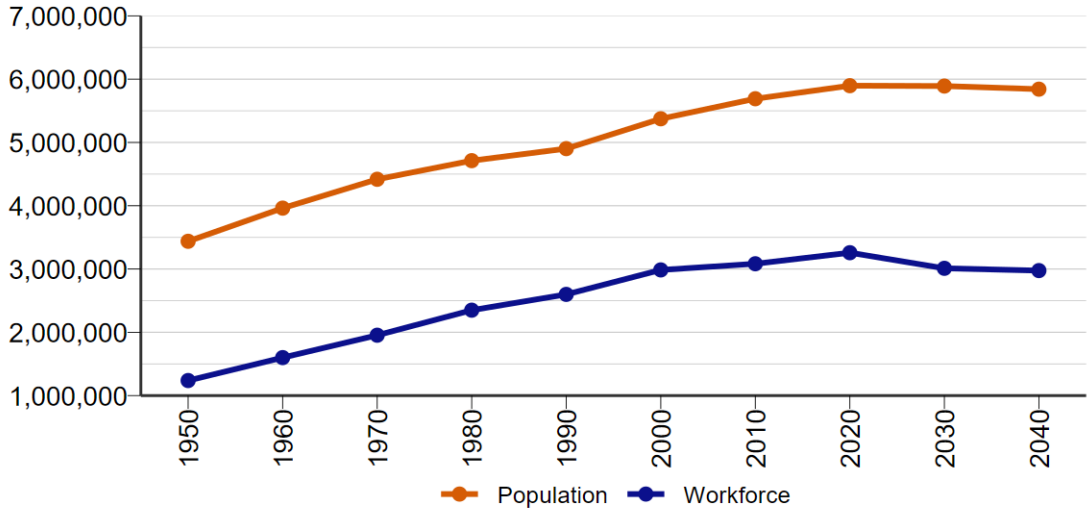


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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.

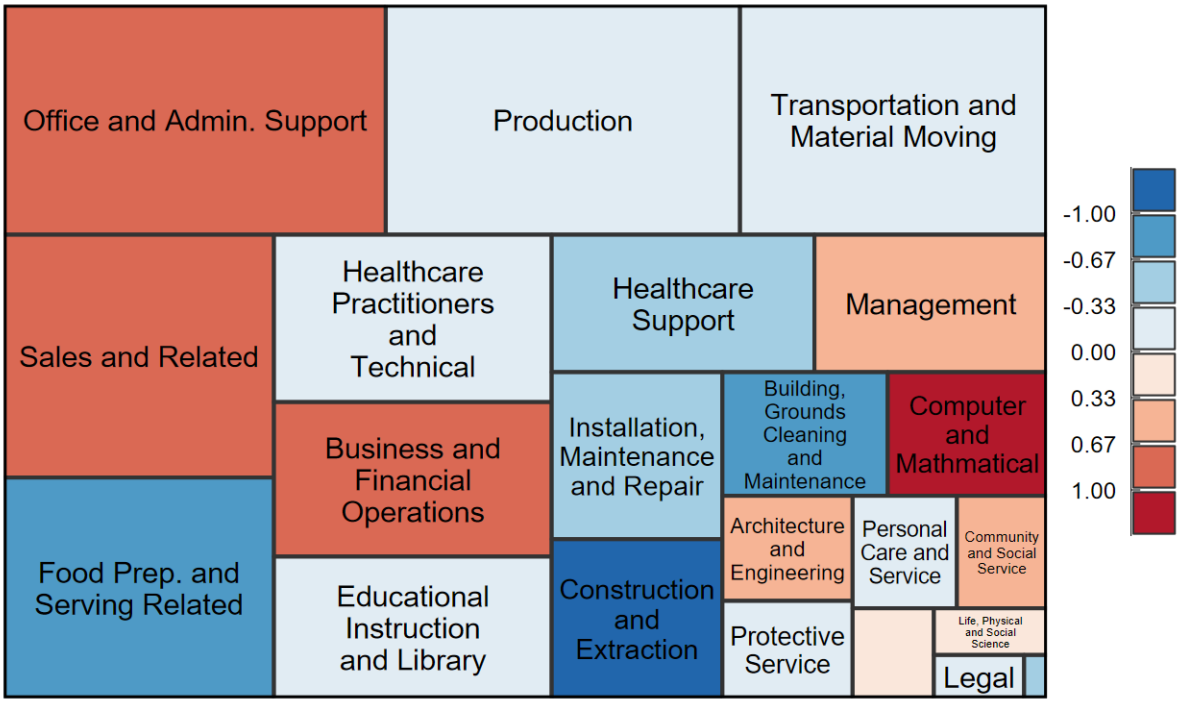


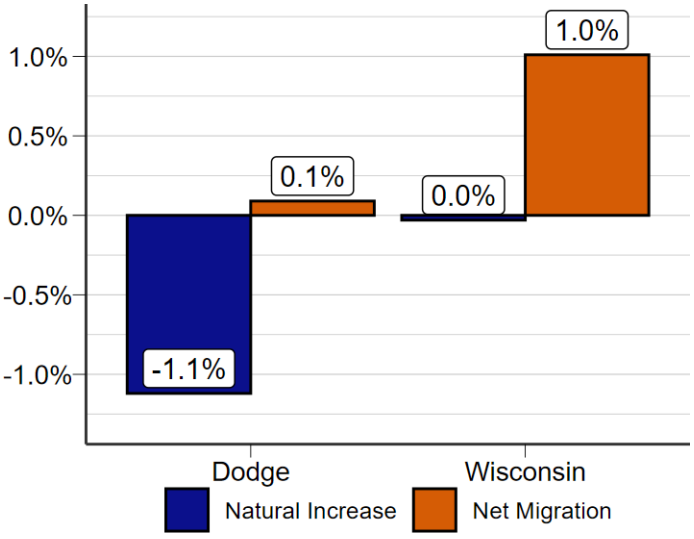
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Beaver Dam, City	16,708	16,605	-103	-0.6%
Watertown, City	8,252	8,214	-38	-0.5%
Waupun, City	8,014	7,574	-440	-5.5%
Mayville, City	5,196	5,207	11	0.2%
Beaver Dam, Town	4,062	4,054	-8	-0.2%
Horicon, City	3,767	3,769	2	0.0%
Lomira, Village	2,678	2,685	7	0.3%
Ashippun, Town	2,663	2,666	3	0.1%
Juneau, City	2,658	2,527	-131	-4.9%
Fox Lake, Town	2,588	2,394	-194	-7.5%
Dodge, County	89,396	88,477	-919	-1.0%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Dodge County is the 19th most populous county in Wisconsin with 88,477 residents. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -1.0%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin. The largest municipality in Dodge County is the city of Beaver Dam, located next to Beaver Dam Lake and right on the U.S. Highway 151, which connects to Madison, the southwest, and Fond du Lac in the northeast.



Components of Population Change

Population change is driven by natural increase and migration. Natural population increase occurs when there are more births than deaths, while migration increases when more people move into the county than leave. Natural increase is primarily influenced by the population's age structure, while migration has a more immediate and actionable impact on the county labor force.

Figure 8: Source: WI Department of Administration.

The fastest-growing municipality in Dodge County is the Village of Lomira, which added seven people, for a 0.3% growth rate. Dodge County's population growth in terms of natural increase was -1.1%, ranking 52nd in the state. As an older county, the county is naturally losing population without replacing it with migration. It's crucial that the county attract resident to maintain a stable workforce because of this declining population due to aging.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Dodge	89,396	85,470	79,850	71,715	-19.8%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Recent projections by the Department of Administration Demographic Services Center predict that this trend will continue. According to these predictions, Dodge County population will lose 19.8% of its 2020 population by 2050, compared to the 3.1% decline for the state as a whole. However, this is not set in stone. While birth rates are relatively stable, trends in net migration could easily reverse.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	36,329	694	1.9%	100.0%
Manufacturing	11,244	775	7.4%	31.0%
Education and Health Services	6,179	-787	-11.3%	17.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	6,126	-211	-3.3%	16.9%
Construction	2,801	830	42.1%	7.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,467	261	11.8%	6.8%
Professional and Business Services	2,437	65	2.7%	6.7%
Public Administration	2,396	-371	-13.4%	6.6%
Other Services	1,045	179	20.7%	2.9%
Natural Resources and Mining	807	-115	-12.5%	2.2%
Financial Activities	696	83	13.5%	1.9%
Information	132	-13	-9.0%	0.4%

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

Dodge County employment added 694 jobs (1.9%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 36,329 jobs in 2023. COVID-19 caused a very steep job loss in 2020, interrupting a multi-year growth trend, from which the county has recovered. However, this recovery was not evenly distributed. Education and health services declined by 787 jobs over the period. In contrast, from 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was construction, adding 830 jobs for a 42.1% growth rate.

The largest industry was manufacturing in 2023, representing 31.0% of all registered employment in the county. This is a much higher share than Wisconsin as a whole, where manufacturing is the third-largest industry, but only represents 16.2% of all employment. The largest subsector for which we have data is food manufacturing, which accounted for 32.7% of all employment in manufacturing in 2023. Prominent employers in the region have, unsurprisingly, a dairy and sausage focus.

Unemployment

Dodge County's monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 2.6%, compared to the state's rate of 3.0%. This ranks the county 13th in terms of the rate of unemployment. After recovering from the COVID-19 recession, the unemployment rates of late 2022 reached near record lows, indicating a tight labor market where employers were finding it difficult to fill positions. Since then, unemployment rates have stabilized to around where they were prior to the disruptions of COVID-19. For example, in May 2024, Dodge County's unemployment rate was 2.6%, just under the 2.7% unemployment rate of May 2019. Except for downturns in the business cycle, this trend of consistently low unemployment rates is likely to continue due to shortages of workers as a result of an aging population.

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.

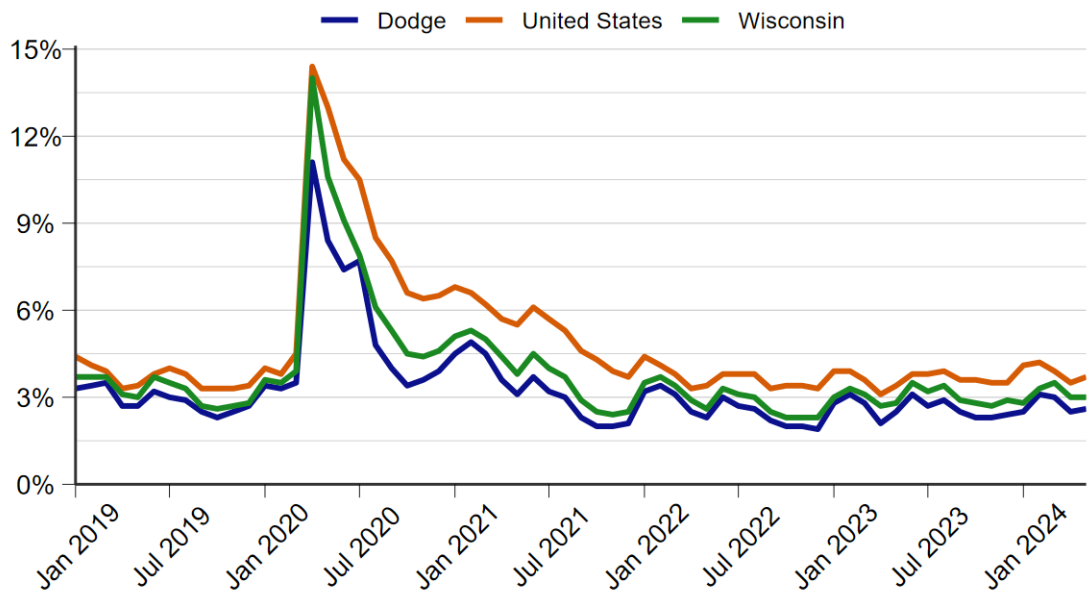


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Dodge County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 70.2%, ranking sixth in the state. Like the state overall, the county has experienced a general decline in the LFPR over the past two decades. This decline in the labor force is primarily driven by an aging population; as individuals age and retire, they exit the labor force.

While Dodge County's LFPR matched the states throughout the 2000s and 2010s, its LFPR has declined much more slowly than the state's during the late 2010s and early 2020s. As of 2023, Dodge County's LFPR exceeded the states by 4.9 percentage points. This can be a positive indicator for the dynamism of the county's labor market, with residents willing and able to participate in the county's workforce.

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.

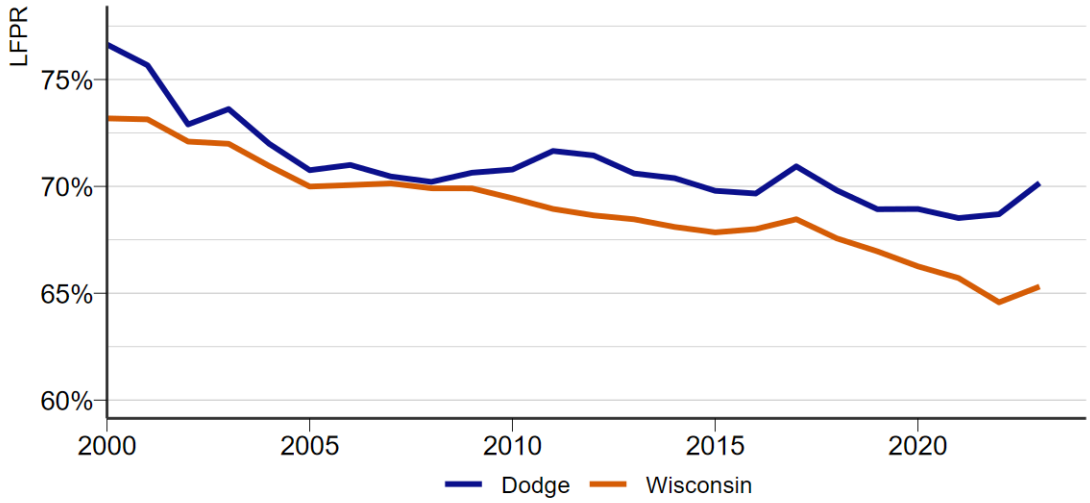


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Fast Food and Counter Workers	11,110	2.3%	-1.00
Retail Salespersons	10,730	2.2%	0.40
Cashiers	10,680	2.2%	0.89
Registered Nurses	10,320	2.2%	0.04
Customer Service Representatives	8,830	1.8%	0.75
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	8,700	1.8%	-0.78
Office Clerks, General	7,700	1.6%	1.00
Stockers and Order Fillers	7,360	1.5%	-0.05
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	7,010	1.5%	-1.27
Waiters and Waitresses	6,160	1.3%	-0.78

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 South Central workforce development area is fast food and counter workers, accounting for 2.3% of the area's employment. Dodge is part of the South Central Workforce Development Area (WDA), which also includes Columbia, Dane, Jefferson, Marquette, and Sauk counties. This occupation has an artificial intelligence exposure index of -1.00. For context, the occupation with the highest potential AI exposure is bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, with an AI exposure index of 1.89.

Manufacturing is by far the largest industry in Dodge County. As such, the production-related jobs which are the primary occupations of that industry are less likely to be affected than other occupations. Packaging and filling machine operators, for example, have an AI exposure index of -0.47. This indicates that the occupation is less likely to be affected by AI relative to other occupations. However, there is still a diversity of potential AI exposure within manufacturing-related occupations. The first-line supervisors of productions workers have an AI exposure index of 0.15.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Information	17,853	21,530	3,677	20.6%
Most Jobs Added	Professional and Business Services	56,016	63,379	7,363	13.1%
Highest Number Employed	Education and Health Services	119,801	126,968	7,167	6.0%
Lowest Percent Growth	Government	36,633	37,319	686	1.9%
Total	Total All Industries	527,186	568,717	41,531	7.9%

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

DWD conducts employment projections for Wisconsin's 11 WDAs every two years. Employment in South Central WDA is expected to increase by 41,531 (7.9%), slightly faster compared to the state's growth rate of 7.1%.

In the South Central WDA, the information industry is projected to grow at a rate of 20.6% from 2022 to 2032, making it the fastest growing. While much of the employment in the information industry is driven by healthcare software developer Epic Systems, other software developers and publishers in the area are contributing to this growth. Despite not being the fastest-growing industry, professional and business services is expected to add the most jobs in the region. This points to the growing importance of these highly technical and professional industries to the area. In contrast, while manufacturing is projected to grow by 4.7% by 2032, this puts it at a slower rate than the area as a whole.

For more information and detailed projections results for both occupations and industries, view the WisConomy 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	Computer and Mathematical	23,528	27,764	4,236	18.0%
Most Jobs Added	Computer and Mathematical	23,528	27,764	4,236	18.0%
Lowest Percent Growth	Legal	3,481	3,391	-90	-2.6%
Highest Number Employed	Office and Administrative Support	63,491	62,767	-724	-1.1%
Total	Total, All	527,186	568,717	41,531	7.9%

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

Overall employment in the South Central WDA is projected to increase by 41,531, growing at a rate of 7.9%. In the South Central WDA, computer and mathematical occupations are projected to be the fastest-growing occupation, growing at a rate of 18.0% from 2022 to 2032. This growth is driven by the growing information industry in the region as well as the high pay for computer-related occupations and the increasing demand for software-driven business solutions. Additionally, this area has a concentration of employers in highly technical industries, like biotechnology or computer systems, which take advantage of the highly educated coming from the area's postsecondary institutions. This is also exemplified by the second-fastest growing occupation group: life, physical and social sciences.

While this occupation group added the most jobs, a shrinking occupation group can still provide occupational opportunities. For example, total employment in administrative and support occupations are projected to decline. Despite this overall decline, there will still be significant demand to fill positions in that occupation, primarily driven by labor force exits and occupational transfers. This occupations group is projected to have the second-most annual number of openings, with 7,040 openings annually.

Aging Population

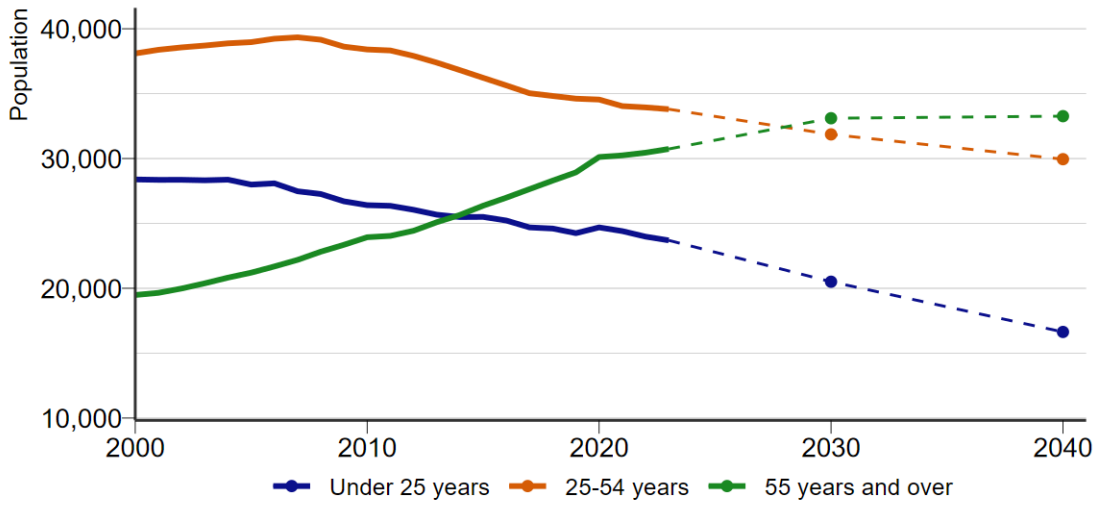


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

The selected age groups, under 25, 25-54, and over 55, represent three broad life stages, each with unique social needs and impacts. Individuals under 25 are typically pursuing education or exploring early career options. The 25-54 age group represent the prime working years, often associated with career advancement and family formation. Those aged 55 and older are more likely to be transitioning out of the workforce and into retirement.

Dodge County, much like the state as a whole, has an aging population. From 2017 to 2022, the median age in the county was 42.7, compared to Wisconsin's median age of 39.9. The share of the population age 55 and older was 34.8% in 2023, growing from 28.5% in 2013. At the same time, the share of the population age 25 to 54 has also been declining. Assuming these trends continue, the population of the oldest age group will soon exceed each of the younger two age groups. While Dodge County's LFPR is high relative to the state's, there are limits to the working age of a population, which could pose challenges to the economy.

Personal Income

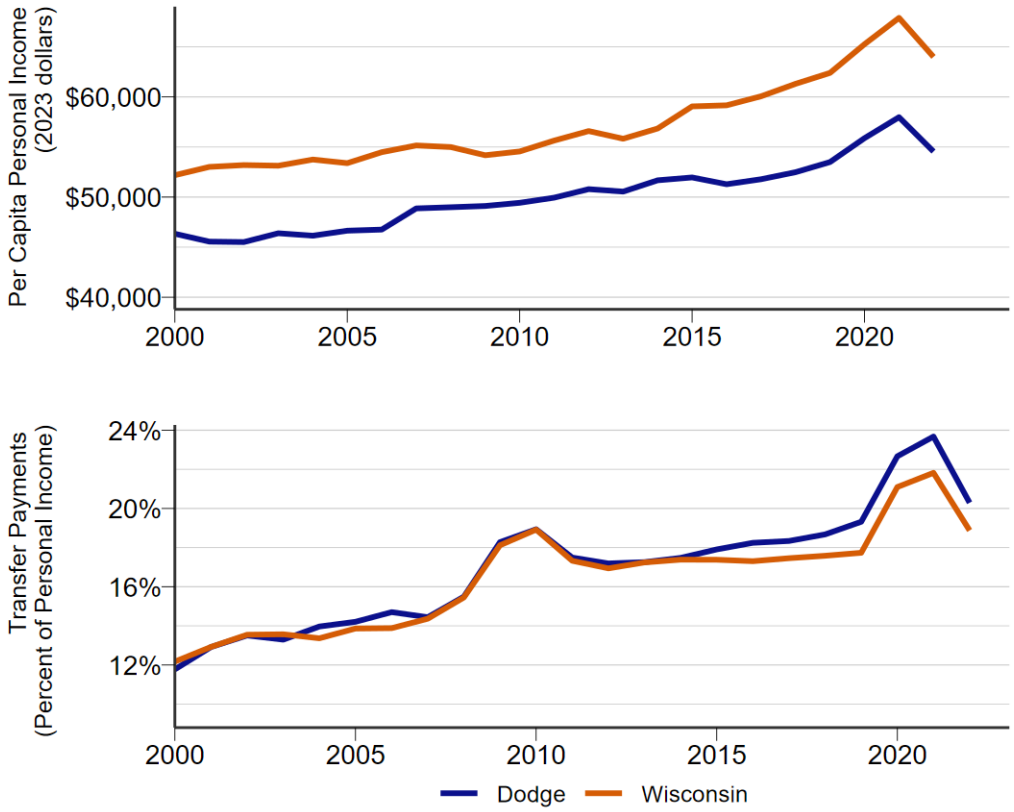


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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.

The per capita personal income in Dodge County was $54,546 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of $63,996. Dodge County has consistently been below the state in terms of per capita income over the last two decades. However, this is partially negated by the relatively lower cost of living in Dodge County. For example, a family of two adults, one infant, and one school age child requires $73,305 per year to maintain an adequate standard of living in 2023, according to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin. For comparison, the same family in the median county in Wisconsin would require $78,773.

In total, 20.3% of that income came from transfer payments as opposed to earned income in 2022. Dodge County's experience in this respect has closely mirrored the state's. This has been trending

upward as the population has aged. As individuals age, they become eligible for Social Security payments. Additionally, transfer payments like Unemployment Insurance increase during recessions as individuals are laid off, acting as stabilizing forces during economic downturns.

Workforce Pipeline

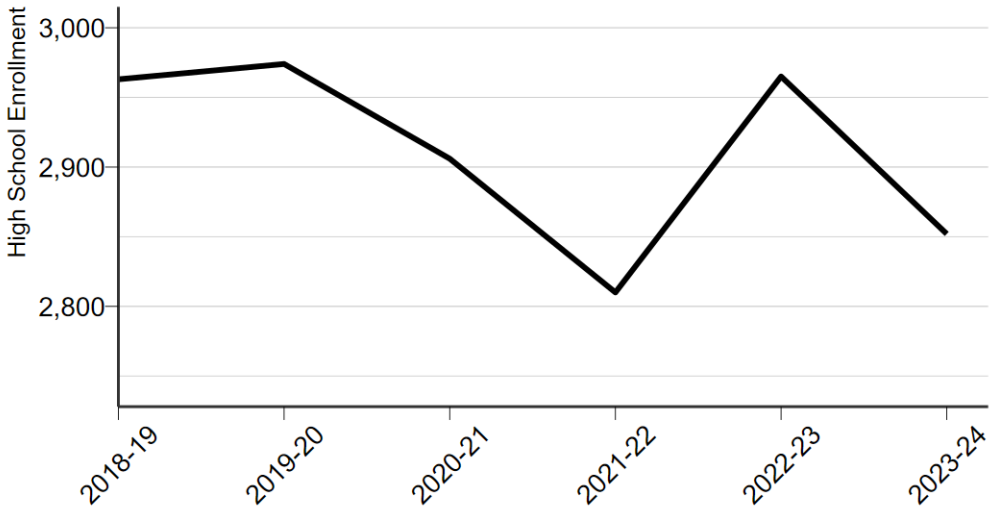


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation for the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 2,852 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 in Dodge County. This includes public, private, and home-based schools. County-level totals are determined by the reported enrollment of school district whose main office is located in that county. As school district borders do not necessarily align with county borders, the numbers below may not match the total number of students residing in the county.

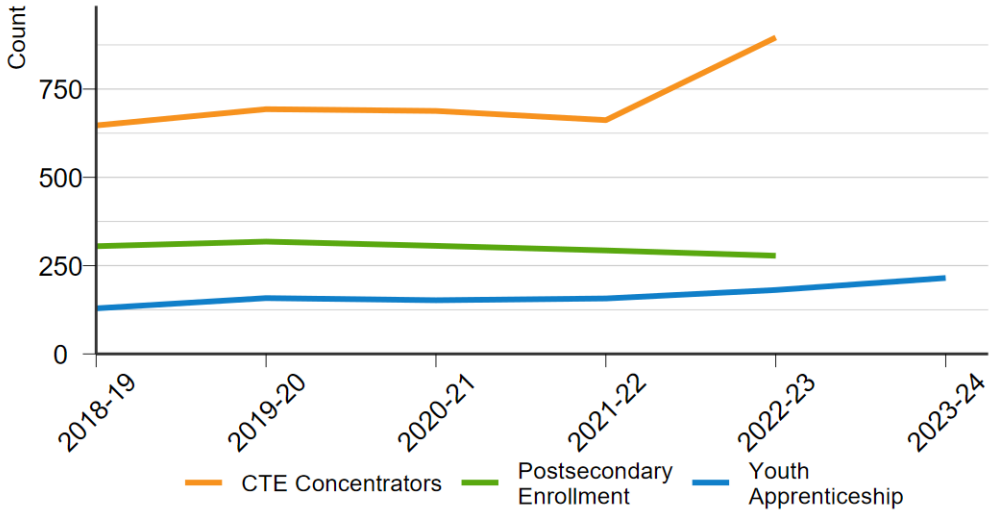


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Of those attendees, 59.1% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% for the state during the 2022-23 school year. Dodge County has seen an uptick in participation in CTE in the last few school years, significantly outperforming the state.

Agriculture, food, and natural resources was the largest career cluster in the 2022-23 school year. The largest industry in the county, manufacturing, was the second largest CTE career cluster.

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
Dodge	896	59.1%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

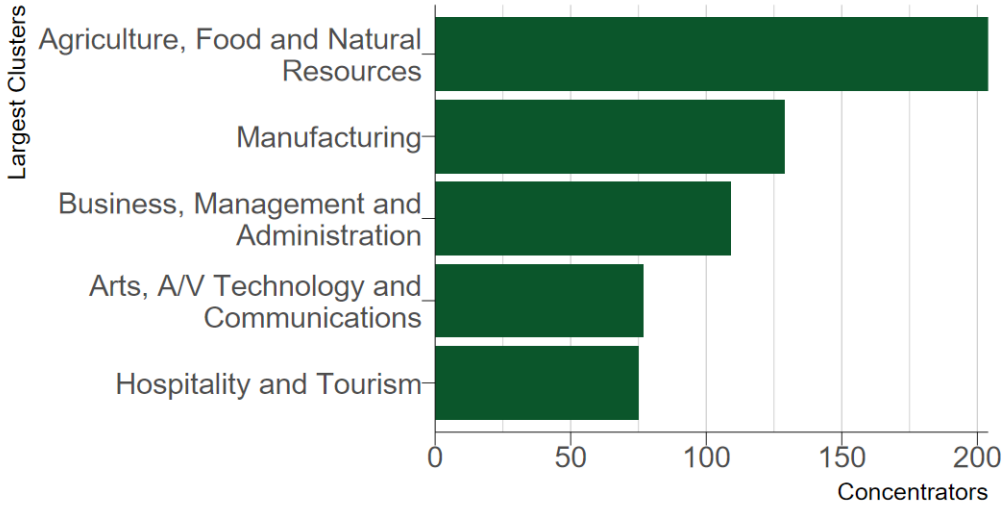


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

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 2022-23 was 35.5%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%. Although postsecondary enrollment in Dodge County is lower than the state overall, there are many options nearby. Dodge County is home to technical colleges in Beaver Dam and Watertown, while also being close to University of Wisconsin-Madison in adjoining Dane County.

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
Dodge	278	35.5%
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 181 youth apprentices in Dodge County in the 2022-23 school year. Dodge County has a significantly higher rate of youth apprenticeship participants than the state overall.

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
Dodge	181	11.9%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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