

Marquette 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.

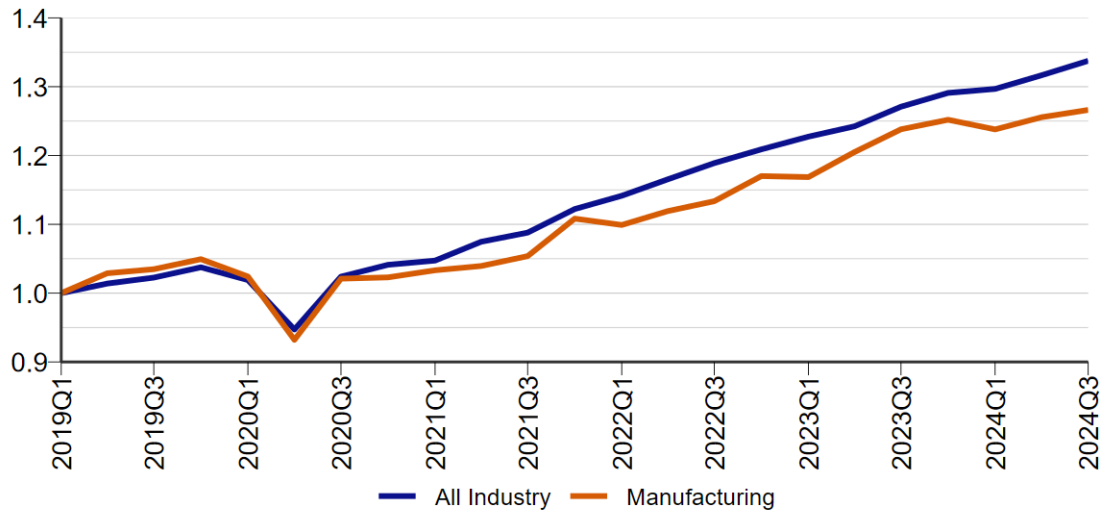


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

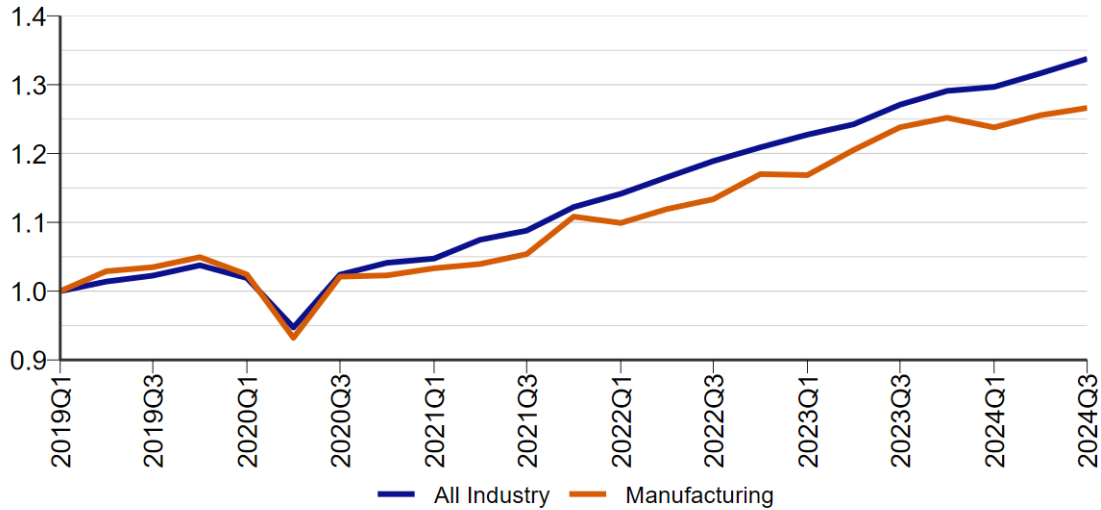


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

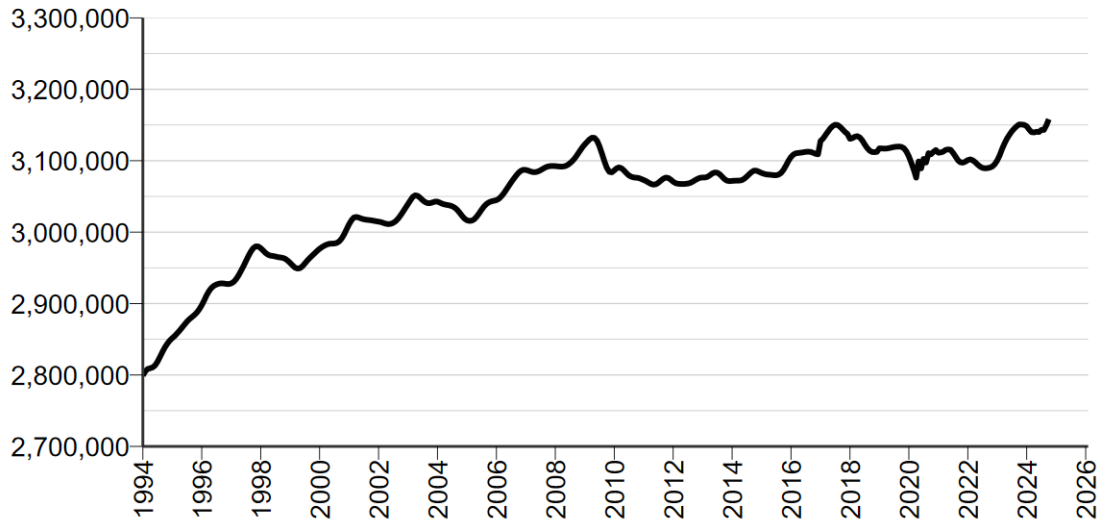


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.

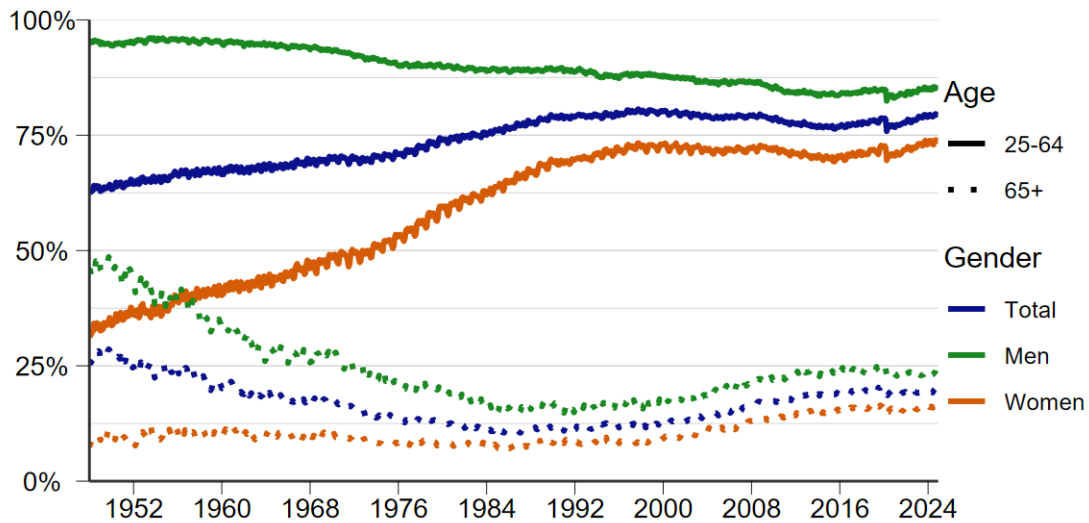


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.

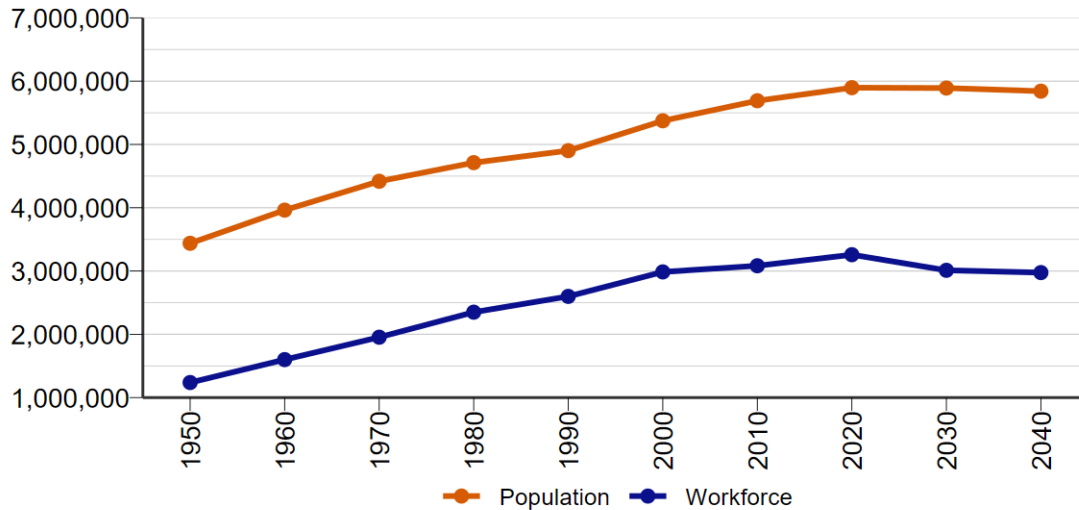


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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.

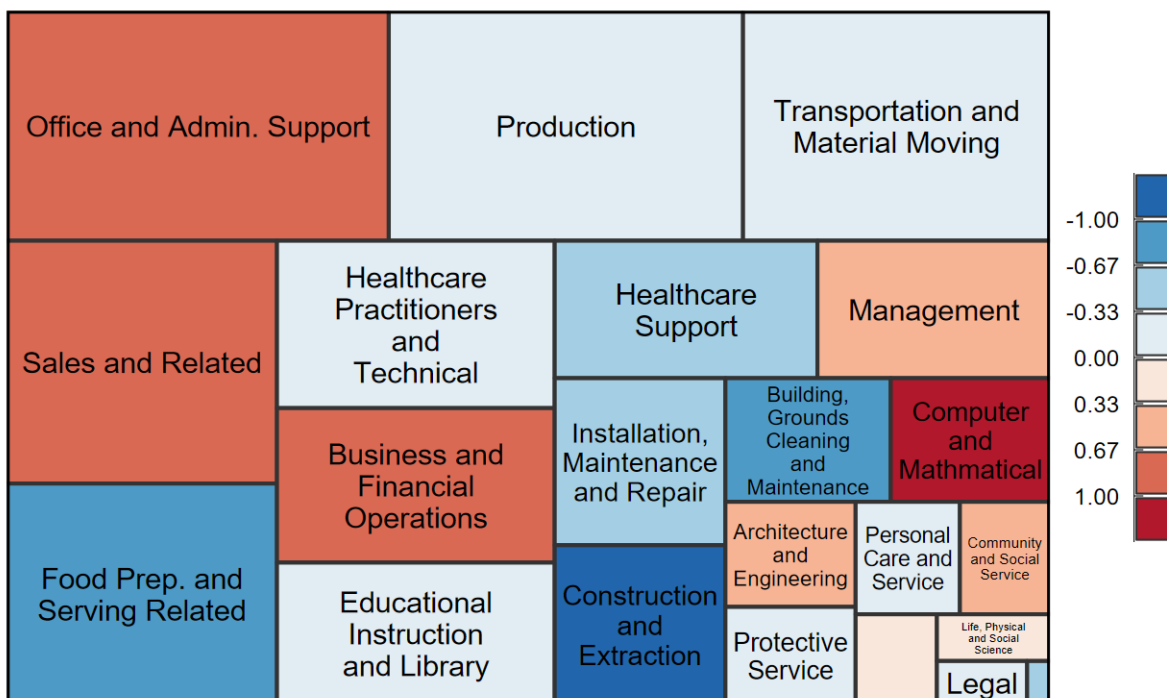


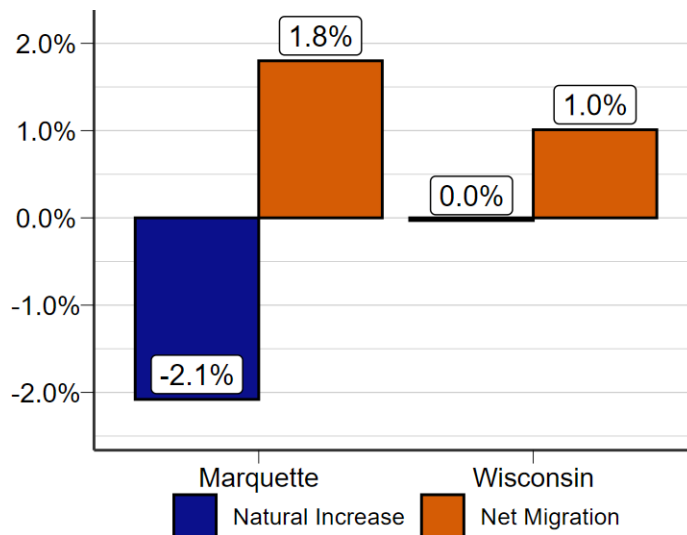
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Packwaukee, Town	1,469	1,462	-7	-0.5%
Montello, City	1,448	1,427	-21	-1.4%
Buffalo, Town	1,389	1,409	20	1.4%
Westfield, Village	1,302	1,283	-19	-1.5%
Montello, Town	1,132	1,129	-3	-0.3%
Oxford, Town	930	937	7	0.8%
Springfield, Town	811	811	0	0.0%
Westfield, Town	789	787	-2	-0.2%
Douglas, Town	784	786	2	0.3%
Mecan, Town	752	752	0	0.0%
Marquette, County	15,592	15,548	-44	-0.3%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Marquette County is the 64th most populous county in Wisconsin, with 15,548 residents. Located at the northern edge of South Central Wisconsin, just north of Columbia County, Marquette County lacks a clear municipal center. The difference in population between its largest municipality, Packwaukee, and the fifth-largest, Montello, is just 337 residents. Among the five largest municipalities, only the Town of Buffalo experienced population growth from 2020 to 2023, adding 20 residents – a 1.4% increase. The nearest large city is Portage, located in neighboring Columbia County.



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.

Marquette County's population declined by 0.3% between 2020 and 2023, compared to a 1.0% population increase statewide. This decline is largely due to an aging population – Marquette County's residents are significantly older, on average, than Wisconsin's population as a whole. Despite the overall decline, net migration to Marquette County was 1.8%, ranking 15th in the state. In other words, while natural decrease (more deaths than births) is contributing to population loss, this trend has been partially offset by in-migration. Given the sharp increase in the population aged 55 and older, much of this migration is likely driven by retirees choosing to settle in the area.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Marquette	15,592	14,975	14,190	13,375	-14.2%
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 from the Department of Administration's Demographic Services Center indicate that Marquette County's population decline is likely to accelerate. According to these estimates, the county's population is projected to decline by 14.8% between 2020 and 2050, compared to a 3.1% decline for the state as a whole.

However, these projections are not set in stone. While birth and death rates tend to remain relatively stable, migration is far more difficult to predict. Positive trends in net migration could help slow the rate of population decline in Marquette County.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	3,866	-59	-1.5%	100.0%
Education and Health Services	700	-11	-1.5%	18.1%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	643	1	0.2%	16.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	433	19	4.6%	11.2%
Natural Resources and Mining	326	20	6.5%	8.4%
Public Administration	191	-22	-10.3%	4.9%
Professional and Business Services	90	-13	-12.6%	2.3%
Other Services	71	-1	-1.4%	1.8%
Construction	NA	NA	NA	NA
Manufacturing	NA	NA	NA	NA
Information	NA	NA	NA	NA
Financial Activities	NA	NA	NA	NA

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

Marquette County lost 59 jobs between 2018 and 2023, a decline of 1.5%. Average employment in 2023 was 3,866 jobs. It's important to note that this five-year period includes a sharp decline in employment in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health measures. Employment bottomed out at 3,796 before steadily rebounding. The largest industry was education and health services, which accounted for 18.1% of total employment. Within that sector, education was the largest subsector, with 316 jobs.

From 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was natural resources and mining, which added 20 jobs – a 6.5% increase. Leisure and hospitality employment has surpassed 2018 levels, indicating a strong recovery from the pandemic recession, which had a particularly severe impact on that industry. For comparison, statewide employment in leisure and hospitality grew by just 0.1% over the same period.

As a smaller county, some industry-level employment data in Marquette County is suppressed to protect confidentiality. Unsuppressed data accounts for only 63.5% of total employment in the county.

Unemployment

Marquette County's average monthly unemployment rate in 2023 was 3.7%, compared to the statewide rate of 3.0%. While Marquette's rate is higher, the gap between the county and state unemployment rates has narrowed over time. For instance, in 2013, Marquette County's annual average unemployment rate was 8.4% – 1.7 percentage points higher than the statewide rate. By 2023, that gap had decreased to just 0.7 percentage points.

After reaching record-low unemployment near the end of 2022, Marquette County's rate has stabilized around pre-pandemic levels. In May 2024, the unemployment rate was 3.4%, slightly above the 3.1% recorded in May 2019.

Marquette County also experiences larger seasonal swings in unemployment compared to the state average, underscoring the importance of seasonal employment – such as jobs related to hunting, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

i 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.

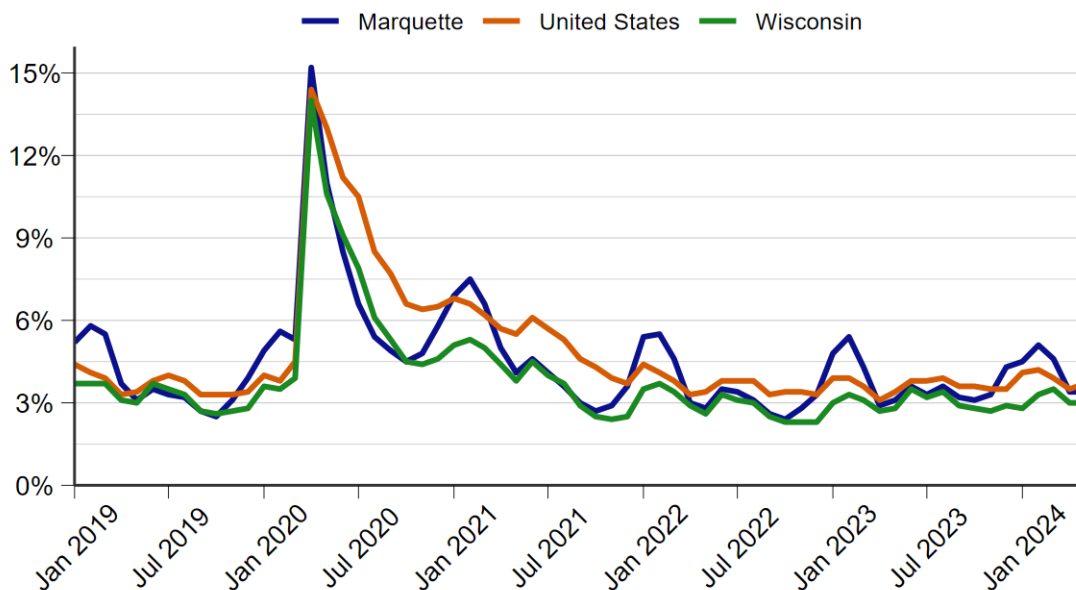


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Marquette County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 60.0% in 2023. Similar to the state overall, the county has experienced a general decline in LFPR over the past two decades. This trend is largely driven by age – individuals tend to exit the labor force as they retire.

Marquette County has a significantly older population compared to the state, contributing to its lower LFPR. Although the county has seen a slight increase in participation since 2014, the long-term trend remains downward. As the population continues to age, Marquette County is likely to face increased workforce shortages due to rising retirement rates.

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.

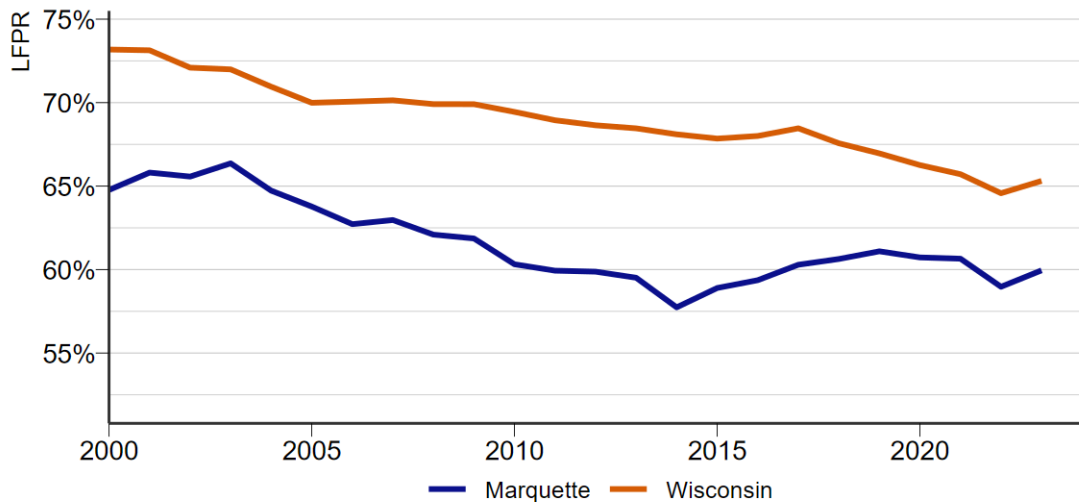


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

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)

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

Marquette County's largest industry – education and healthcare – is likely to experience some degree of AI exposure. While direct care tasks, such as administering nursing care, are less likely to be automated, other aspects of a nurse's role – like documentation and care plan development – are more susceptible to the influence of AI tools. As Marquette County's population continues to age, nurses may increasingly rely on AI to enhance productivity and meet the growing demand for care services.

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 produces employment projections for the state's 11 WDAs every two years. Employment in the South Central WDA is expected to grow by 41,531 jobs – a 7.9% increase – from 2022 to 2032, slightly outpacing the statewide growth rate of 7.1%.

Within the South Central WDA, the information industry is projected to be the fastest-growing, with a projected increase of 20.6% over the decade. Much of this growth is driven by Epic Systems, a major healthcare software developer, along with other software developers and publishers in the area.

Although not the fastest-growing sector, professional and business services is expected to add the most jobs in the region, underscoring the growing importance of highly technical and professional industries. In contrast, manufacturing is projected to grow by 4.7% by 2032 – a slower rate than the region overall.

For more information and detailed projections for both occupations and industries, visit 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	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 jobs from 2022 to 2032, reflecting a growth rate of 7.9%.

Computer and mathematical occupations are projected to be the fastest-growing occupational group in the region, with an 18.0% growth rate over the decade. This growth is driven by the expanding information industry, high wages in computer-related roles, and increasing demand for software-driven business solutions. The South Central region is home to a concentration of employers in highly technical industries – such as biotechnology and computer systems – that benefit from a steady pipeline of highly educated graduates from nearby postsecondary institutions.

The region's second-fastest growing occupational group is life, physical, and social sciences, further highlighting the area's technical and scientific strengths.

While some occupational groups are expected to shrink, they may still present job opportunities. For example, administrative and support occupations are projected to decline in total employment. However, due to labor force exits and occupational transfers, there will still be substantial demand for workers. In fact, this group is projected to have the second-highest number of annual openings, with approximately 7,040 openings each year.

Aging Population

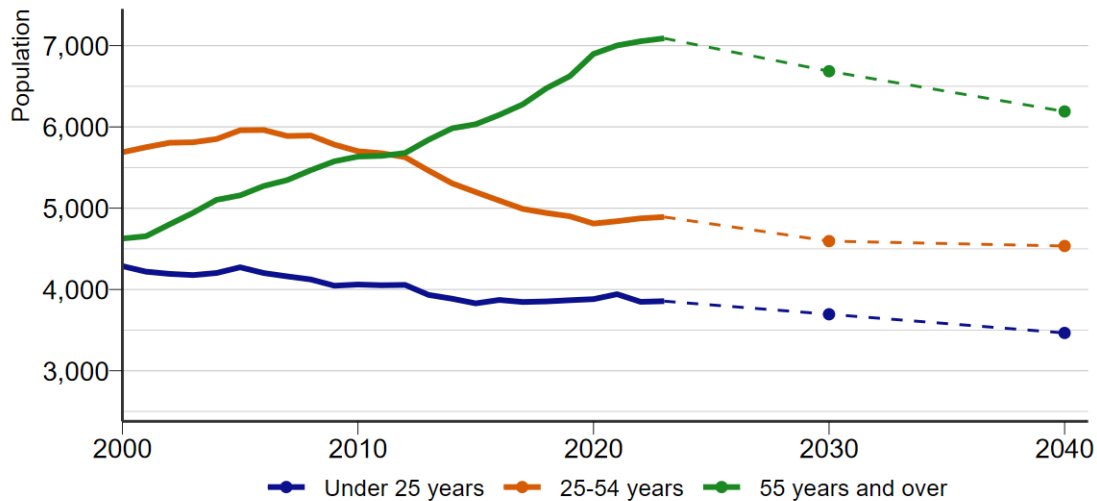


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

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.

Marquette County's population is significantly older than the state's overall. From 2017 to 2022, the median age in Marquette County was 50.4, compared to the statewide median of 39.9. In 2023, 44.8% of the county's population was age 55 or older – an increase from 38.3% in 2013.

This steady rise in the older age group has occurred alongside a decline in residents ages 25 to 54, the age range typically considered the prime working-age population. As the number of retirees continues to grow and the working-age population shrinks, Marquette County employers will likely face increasing challenges in finding available workers.

Personal Income

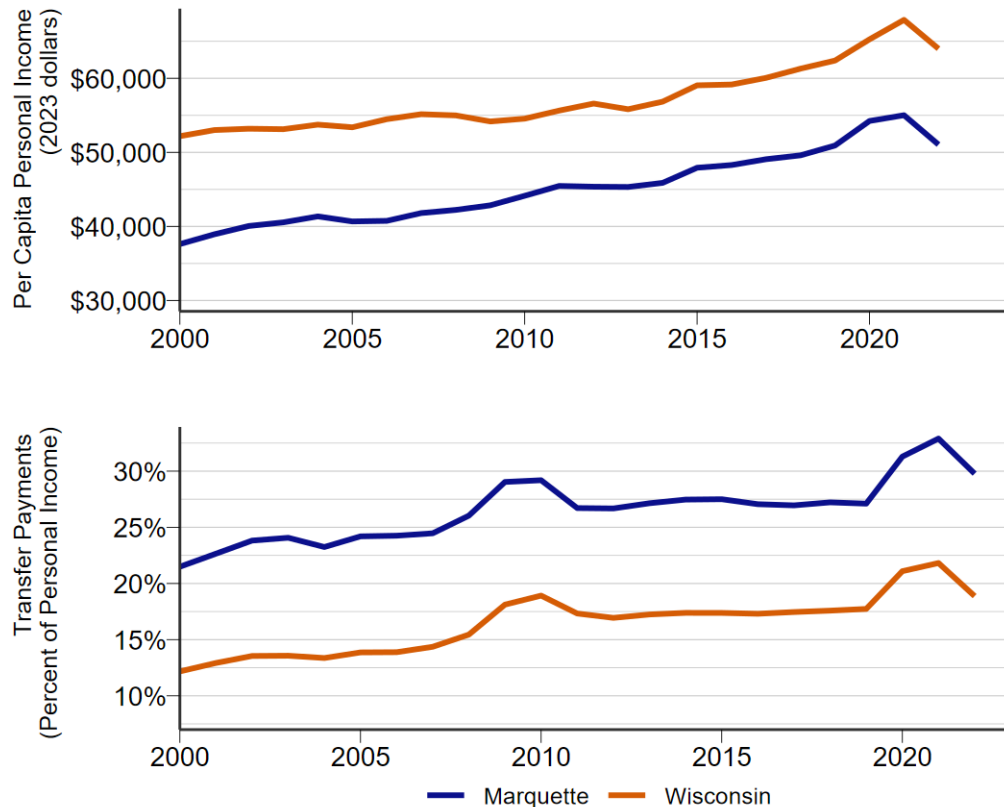


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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.

The per capita personal income in Marquette County was \$51,051 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of \$63,996. Per capita income in the county has consistently trailed the state's; however, this is partially offset by a lower cost of living. According to the 2023 Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin, a family of two adults, one infant, and one school-age child requires \$68,226 annually to maintain an adequate standard of living in Marquette County – making it the eighth most affordable county in the state.

In 2022, 29.8% of the county's personal income came from transfer payments rather than earned income. As with the state overall, this share has increased over the past two decades. Transfer

payments – such as Social Security – tend to make up a larger portion of income as the population ages and more individuals enter retirement.

Workforce Pipeline

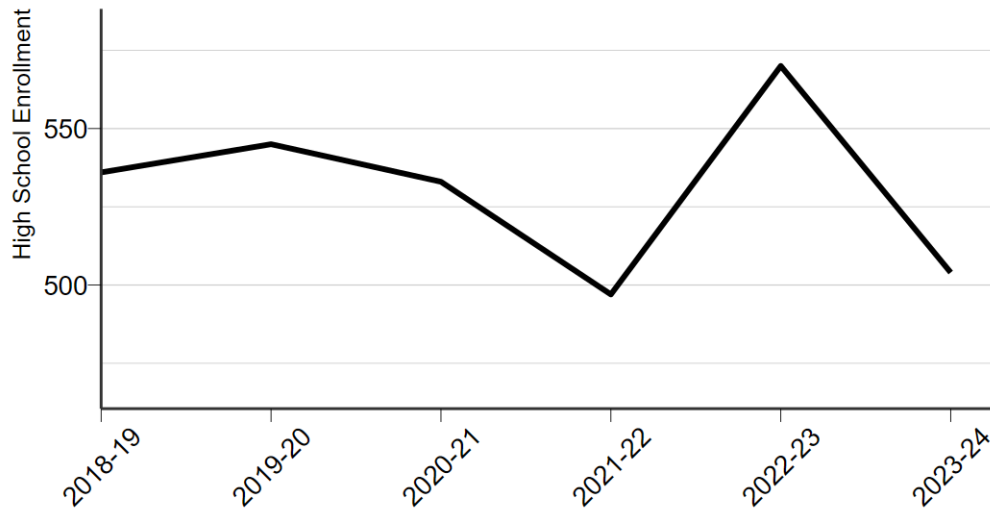


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023–24 school year, 504 students were enrolled in grades 9–12. This includes students in public, private, and home-based schools.

It's important to note that school district boundaries often extend into multiple counties, so county-level enrollment figures may not precisely reflect the number of students residing within Marquette County. Counts are based on the location of the school district's main office.

Given Marquette County's aging population, simply maintaining an adequate supply of workers can be a challenge. This makes it even more critical to ensure that today's youth are well-prepared to enter the workforce.

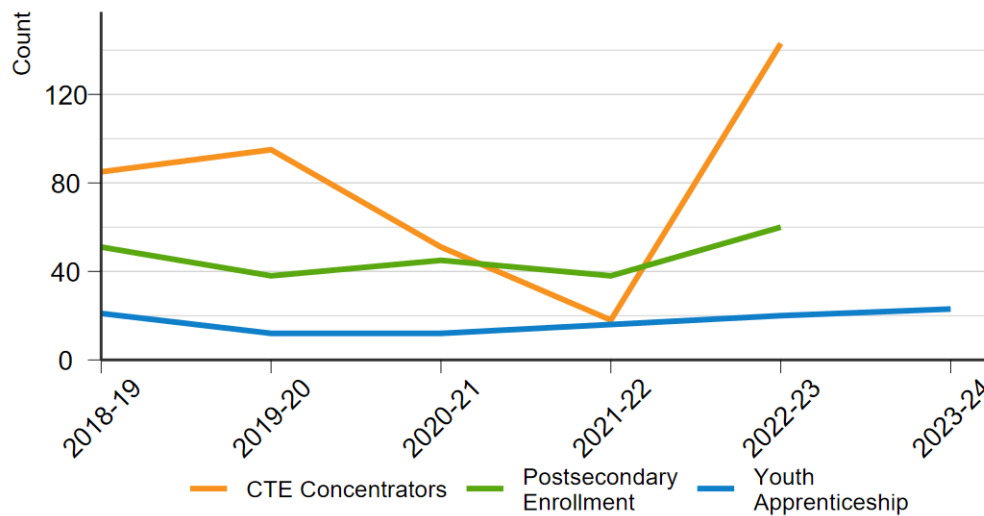


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

In the 2022–23 school year, 54.0% of students in grades 11–12 were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% statewide.

The largest career cluster in Marquette County was agriculture, food, and natural resources, which aligns with the county’s rural character. The second-largest cluster was manufacturing. Although manufacturing data for Marquette County is suppressed for confidentiality reasons, it is a major industry in surrounding counties. Just south of Marquette County, 21,934 individuals are employed in manufacturing – representing a significant share of the regional workforce.

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
Marquette	143	54.0%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

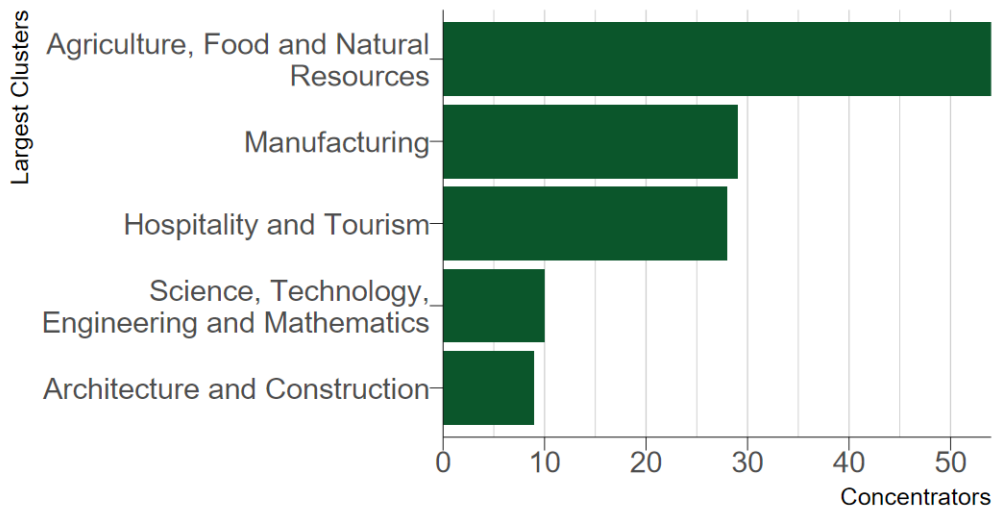


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Postsecondary Enrollment

In the 2022–23 school year, 44.1% of high school completers in Marquette County enrolled in a postsecondary institution, slightly above the statewide rate of 43.6%.

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
Marquette	60	44.1%
Wisconsin	31,893	43.6%

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

Youth Apprenticeship

Youth apprenticeship is a program that allows participants to prepare for the workforce through direct, hands-on work experience. In the 2022–23 school year, 20 students in Marquette County participated in the program.

i 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
Marquette	20	7.5%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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