

# Rusk 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 2024<sup>1</sup>, 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.

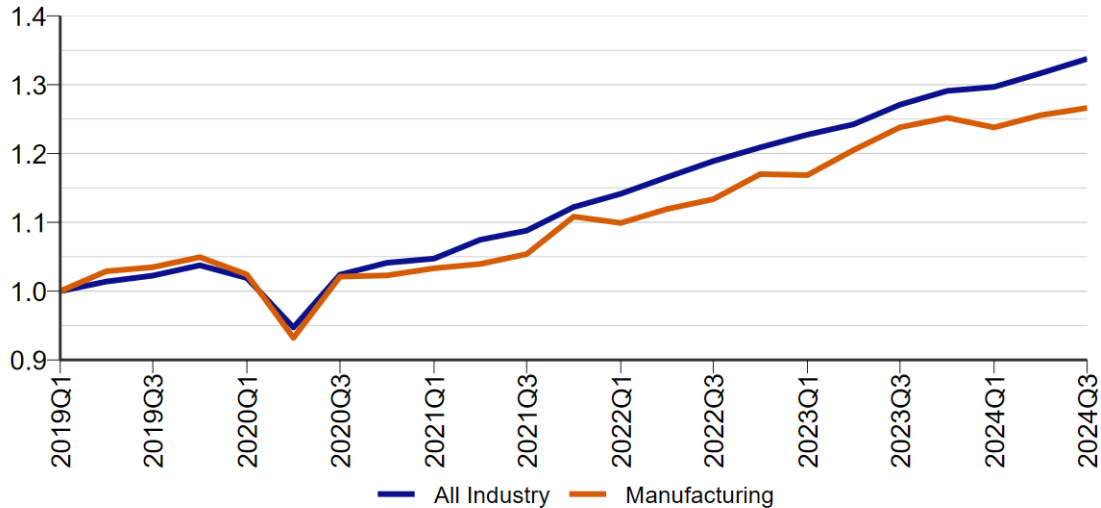


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

<sup>1</sup>Third quarter 2024 is latest data available.

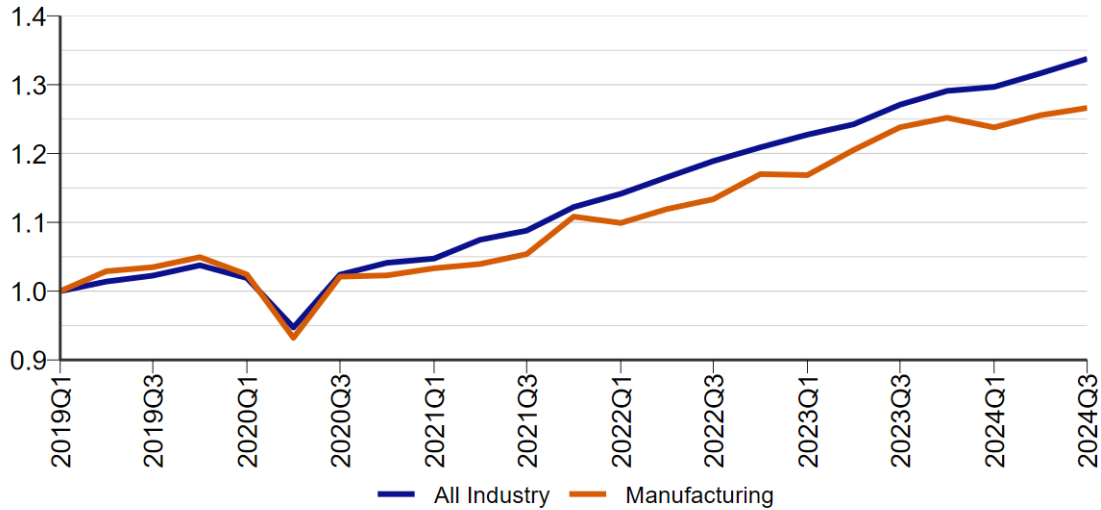


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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.



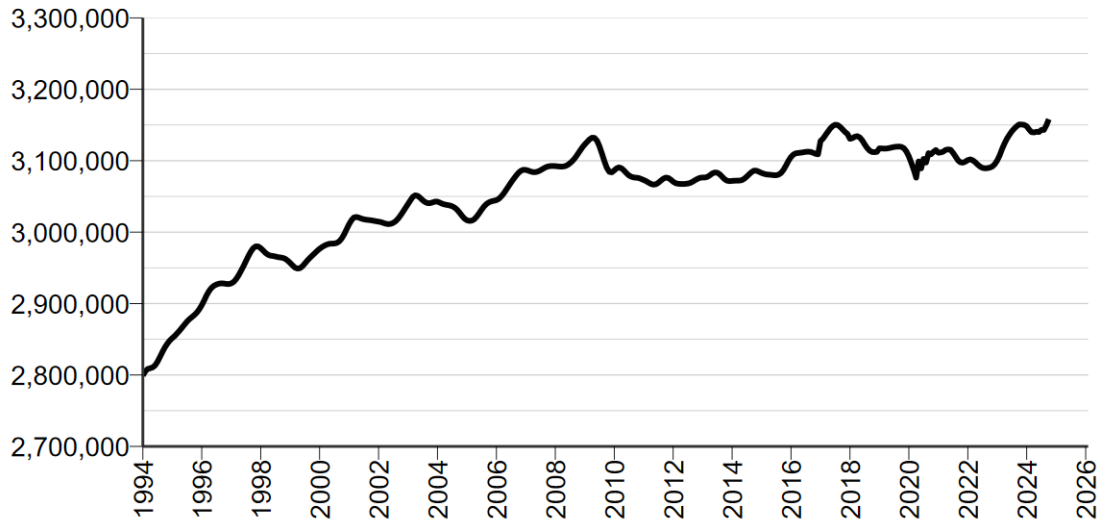


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.

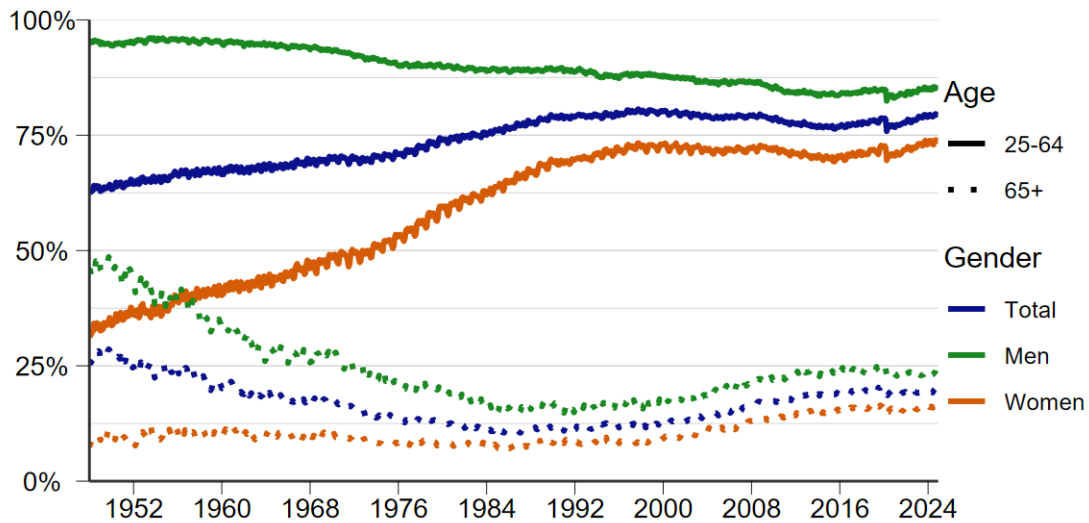


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.

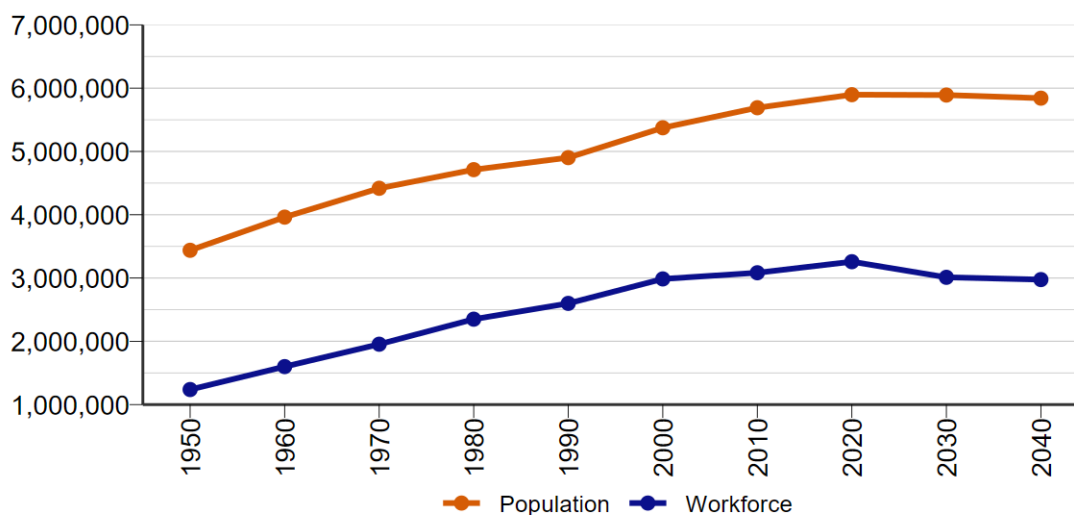


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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](http://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.

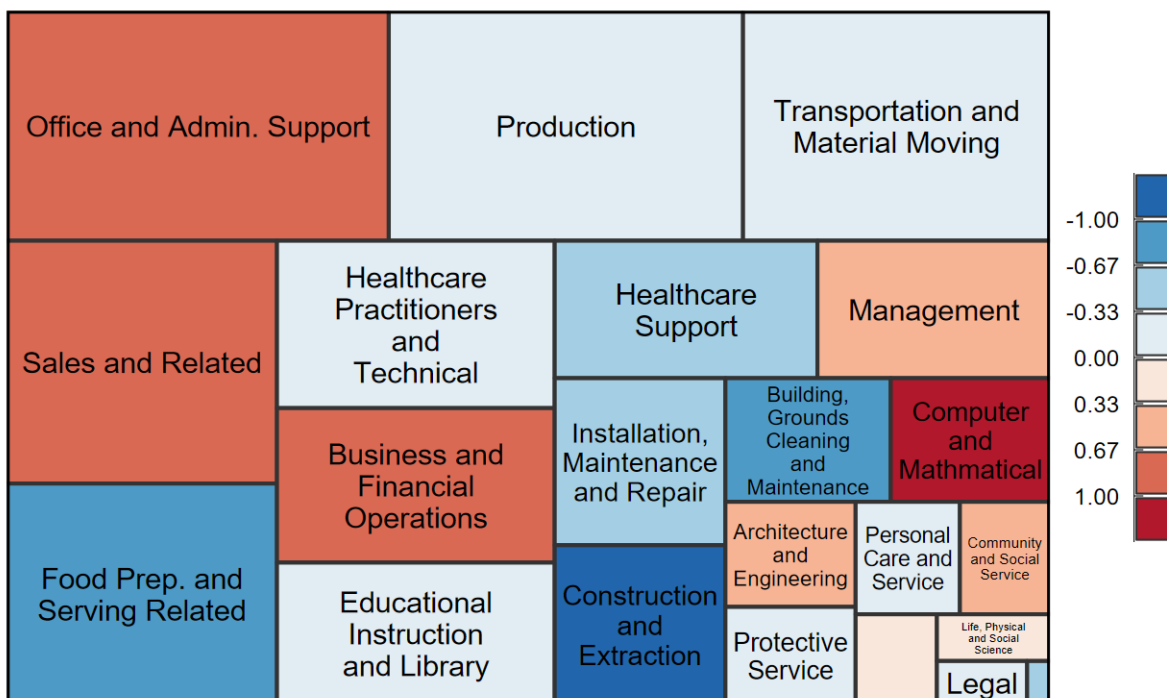


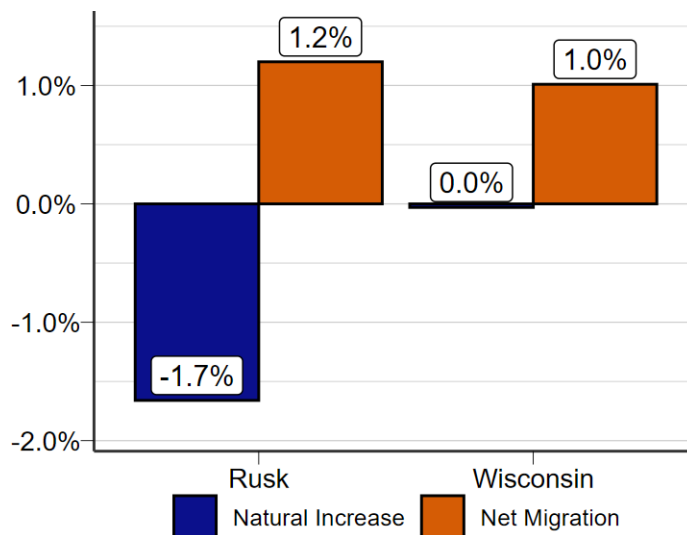
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Ladysmith, City	3,216	3,164	-52	-1.6%
Flambeau, Town	987	983	-4	-0.4%
Bruce, Village	781	766	-15	-1.9%
Grant, Town	732	730	-2	-0.3%
Thornapple, Town	721	723	2	0.3%
Marshall, Town	664	654	-10	-1.5%
Atlanta, Town	560	561	1	0.2%
Rusk, Town	551	558	7	1.3%
Dewey, Town	542	545	3	0.6%
Rusk, County	14,188	14,122	-66	-0.5%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Rusk County is the 65th most populous county in Wisconsin with 14,122 residents. It is also the 58th fastest-growing county in the state. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -0.5%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin. Rusk County saw its population peak in 1940 at 17,737. The City of Ladysmith saw its population peak in 1990 at 3,938.



### 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 Rusk County is the Town of Rusk, which added 7 people, for a 1.3% growth rate.

Rusk County's population growth in terms of natural increase was -1.7%, ranking 59th in the state. Net migration was 1.2%, ranking 29th in the state.

In 2022, according to data gathered by Wisconsin's Department of Health Services, there were 127 births in Rusk County. Its fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–44) in 2022 was 64.7, which rated 13th highest out of Wisconsin's 72 counties. In 2022, Wisconsin's fertility rate was 54.2 and the United States' fertility rate was 56.0. In comparison, the fertility rate for the county



was 62.4, the state's was 62.3 and the United States' was 64.7 in 2010. Rusk County's 0-5 age population in 2022 is 5.9% of the county's population, compared to Rusk County's 75 and older population, which is 10.6% of the county's population. In 2010, the 0-5 age population was 6.5%, and the 75 and older population was 9.9%.

Rusk County's birth rate has been low for a long time. The baby boomer generation is currently aged 60 to 78. Once the baby boomer generation passes, Rusk County's population will have a hard time rebounding because its number of births has decreased over time. Immigration from outside the county must accelerate to stabilize the population.

## Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Rusk	14,188	13,040	11,650	10,260	-27.7%
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 of Rusk County's total population of 27.7% from 2020 to 2050. The 0-19 age group is projected to decrease by 33.6%, the 20-69 age group is projected to decrease by 34.4%, and the 70 and older age group is projected to increase by 0.1%. Comparing Rusk County's numbers to Wisconsin's, the projected decrease of Wisconsin's overall population from 2020-2050 is 3.1%. The 0-19 age group of Wisconsin is projected to decrease by 13.4%. Its 20-69 age group is projected to decrease by 7.4%. The population 70 and older in Wisconsin is projected to increase by 40.6%.

## Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	4,722	-423	-8.2%	100.0%
Manufacturing	1,372	-163	-10.6%	29.1%
Education and Health Services	930	-73	-7.3%	19.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	874	-49	-5.3%	18.5%
Public Administration	419	-149	-26.2%	8.9%
Professional and Business Services	368	43	13.2%	7.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	286	10	3.6%	6.1%
Natural Resources and Mining	144	-50	-25.8%	3.0%
Construction	128	42	48.8%	2.7%
Financial Activities	90	-34	-27.4%	1.9%
Other Services	70	12	20.7%	1.5%
Information	42	-10	-19.2%	0.9%

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

Rusk County employment lost -423 jobs (-8.2%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 4,722 jobs in 2023. The largest industry was manufacturing, accounting for 29.1% of employment in the county in 2023. From 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was construction, adding 42 jobs for a 48.8% growth rate. Some of the largest employers in Rusk County are the School District of Flambeau, Weather Shield Windows & Doors, 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 industries was 11.9% in 2018 versus 13.3% in 2023. This suggests an increase in future retirements. To maintain current production levels with a shrinking workforce, industries could embrace advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics. Examples of these technologies 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

Rusk County's monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 3.7%, compared to the state's rate of 3.0%. This ranks the county 54th in terms of unemployment in 2023. These rates were 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 of 2010. Both Rusk County and the nation reached their lowest unemployment rates in 2023, while Wisconsin reached its lowest in 2022.

Rusk 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, mainly caused by changes in demand for a service or a change in weather. 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.

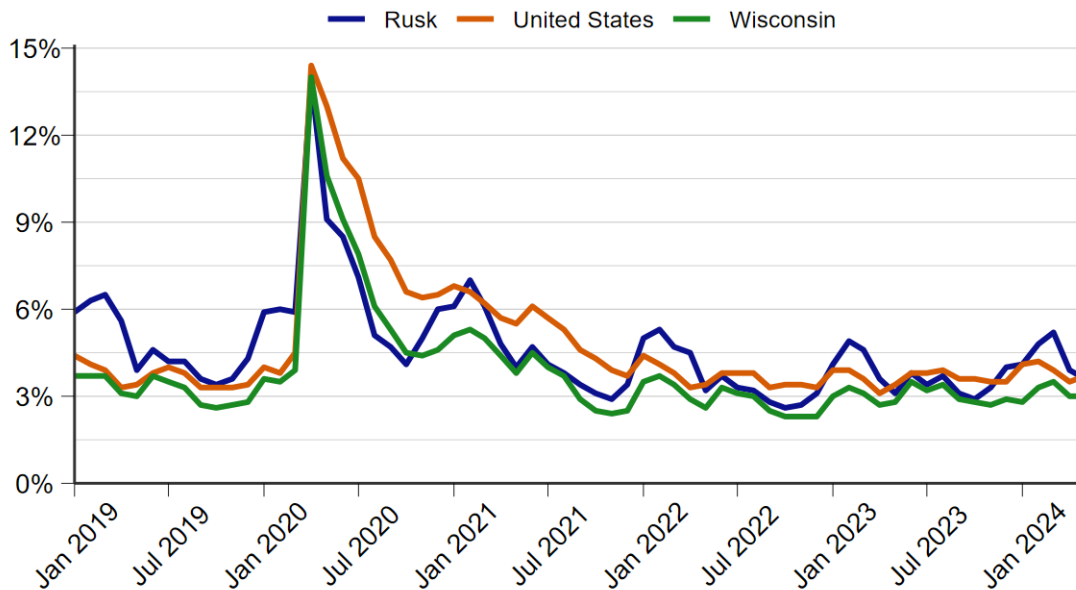


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Labor Force Participation

Rusk County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 55.4%, ranking 59th in the state. Historically, Rusk County's LFPR has been lower than Wisconsin. Since Rusk County's recent high of 67.1% in 2000, the gap between the county and the state has widened to 9.9 percentage points, 65.3% (WI) and 55.4% (Rusk). The main reason for this divergence is the aging of the Rusk population. The LFPR includes the number of people aged 16 and older working or looking for work. Most workers retire in their 60's. Now that the baby boomer generation, the largest generation in American history, begun to retire, the LFPR has decreased dramatically. The share of the Rusk County population who was 65 and older was 19% in 2002. In 2022 it was 26%.

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 who is employed. The EMRATIO is the LFPR without accounting for the people looking for a job. The larger the unemployment rate, the larger the difference is between the two metrics. Rusk County's EMRATIO was 61.5% in 2002, declining to 54.3% in 2022.

As stated earlier, the share of the Rusk County population 65 and older was 26% or 3,700 individuals in 2022. If the LFPR is to reverse this declining trend, many of those 3,700 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.

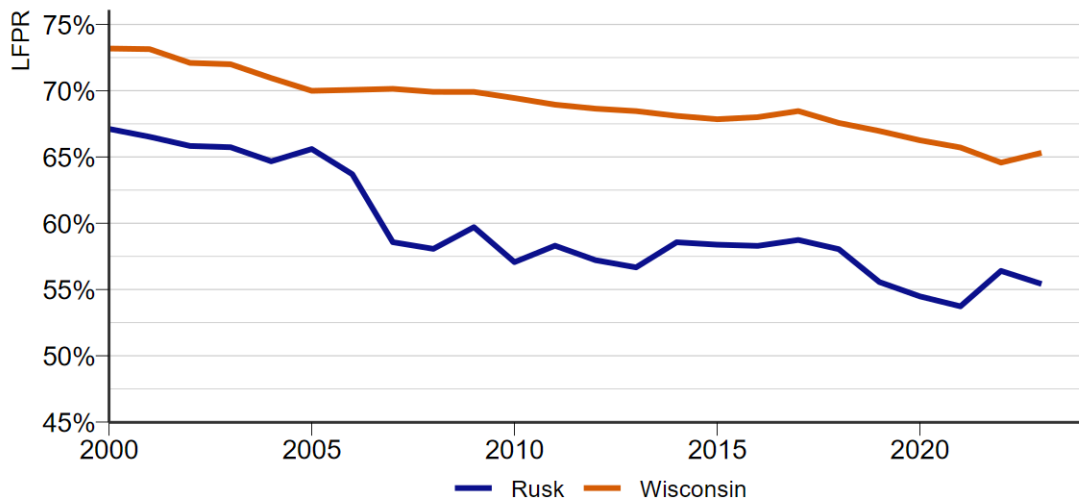


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

## 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](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/ai-taskforce/pdf/ai-advisory-action-plan.pdf))

The largest occupation in the Northwest Workforce Development Area (WDA) is cashiers, accounting for 3.6% of the area's employment. This occupation has an artificial intelligence (AI) 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. These occupations are estimated to be 1.3% of the Rusk 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 1.9% of Rusk County's employment. Two occupations with negative AI expose scores are heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers; and stockers and order fillers. They are estimated to be 2.7% and 2.3% of Rusk County's total 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. Rusk County is part of the Northwest WDA, which includes Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn counties.

Non-farm employment located within the Northwest WDA is expected to increase by 3,806 (5.1%), compared to the state's growth rate of 7.1%. In recent decades, the Northwest WDA's projected industry growth has been lower than the state because its population growth has been lower than most of Wisconsin while its 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 11.2% from 2022 to 2032. This growth rate in the construction industry 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 the Northwest WDA in 2022 was 6,169 and is projected to grow by 8.6% to 6,700 in 2032. The Wisconsin projected growth 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](https://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 occupation, growing 12.2% from 2022 to 2032. The occupation projected to be the fastest growing in Wisconsin is the computer and mathematical occupation at 17.8%. The second fastest-growing occupation in the Northwest WDA is transportation and material moving growing 11.7%. These occupations are also projected to have the most jobs added.

Two useful statistics not included in the occupation employment projections table below are projected total openings and typical education. The Northwest WDA occupation projected to have the most total openings is food preparation and serving occupations with 1,190 total openings. The employment change for food preparation and serving occupations is only projected to increase 289. An occupation can have a 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 the 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. Thirty-eight percent of those occupations require education beyond high school, and 19% of those occupations require 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 requiring education above a high school diploma, and 29% requiring a bachelor's degree.

## Aging Population

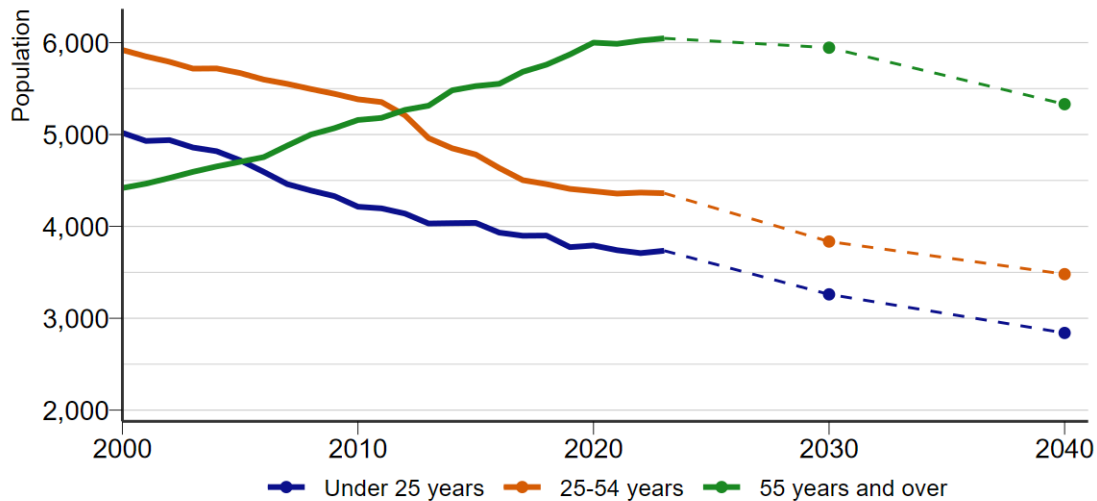


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

The aging population is an issue for Rusk County and most of Wisconsin. The graph above shows the change over time of three age groups, the green representing 55 years and over is flat in the early 2000s increasing dramatically during the remainder of the time. This illustrates the aging of the baby boomer generation. The share of the population age 55 and older was 42.8% in 2023, growing from 37.1% in 2013 and 30.3% in 2003.

The cause of such a rapid acceleration in the 55 and over share of the total population is the negative growth of the other two age groups in Rusk County. The share of the population aged 25 to 55 was 30.8% in 2023, shrinking from 34.7% in 2013 and 37.7% in 2003. Ages 25 through 55 are the prime working years when labor force participation is at its highest. When the share of a community's workforce declines in this age group it becomes challenging to grow the economy in industries that require humans.

The share of the population ages under 25 was 26.4% in 2023, down from 28.2% in 2013 and 32.0% in 2003. The under-25 age group are those that will soon be replacing the 55 and over age group when they retire. It will continue to be a challenge to recruit workers to replace retirees since the under-25 age group is shrinking while at the same time the 55 and over age group is growing. From 2017 to 2022, the median age in Rusk County was 49.0, compared to Wisconsin's median age of 39.9, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Rusk County's median age ranked 15th oldest in Wisconsin's 72 counties.

Even though Rusk 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. If both parents want to work outside the home, but can't find affordable childcare, then one or both parents must work fewer hours outside the home to be able to watch their children. 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 Rusk County. A challenge that the large increase in the number of elderly in Rusk County creates is the increased need for personal care workers to provide in-home or nursing home care. Both childcare and eldercare are highly physically and emotionally demanding jobs that are important to many people in Rusk County. It will continue to be a challenge to find workers for these occupations, when a worker in these occupations can make as much, if not more, money working at a fast-food restaurant or a gas station.

The dashed lines on the aging population graph shows the projected populations of the three age groups discussed previously. All three age groups are projected to decline in Rusk County between 2020 and 2040. The under-25 group is projected to decrease by 860, 25-54 is projected to decrease by 880, and 55 and over is projected to decrease by 798. If these projections hold true, companies would have a hard time finding employees for jobs that cannot be automated. Demand for local goods and services will greatly decline, and the housing market would have an oversupply of structures. Local road maintenance would be more challenging due to fewer gasoline taxes being collected.

## Personal Income

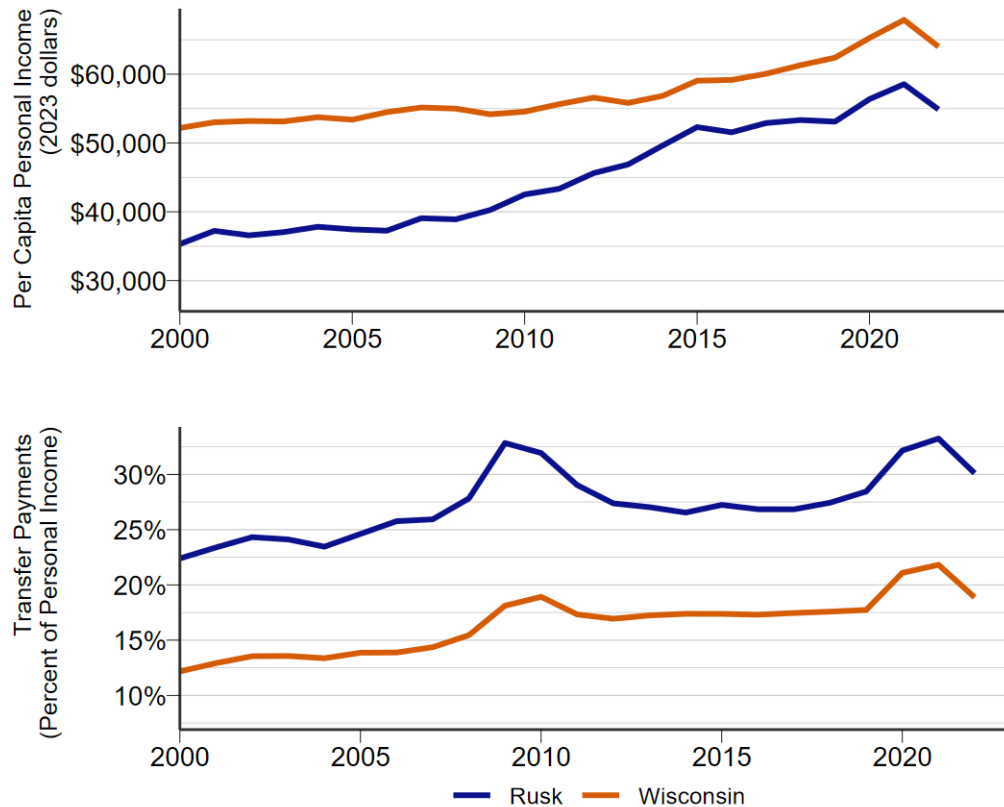


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

### **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 personal income (PCPI) usually increases over time, even after accounting for inflation. A few 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 PCPI in Rusk County was \$54,873 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of \$63,996. The gap between the statewide and Rusk County average PCPI has narrowed over the last 22 years. The gap in 2000 was \$16,876, in 2022 the gap was \$9,123.

In total, 30.1% 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 re-



cessions, 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 Rusk County grew faster than the share in Wisconsin because Rusk County's population has a larger share of older individuals than the statewide population. Therefore, a larger share of Rusk County's personal income is retirement income which includes things like 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 Rusk County, the share increased 7.7 percentage points during the same period.

## Workforce Pipeline

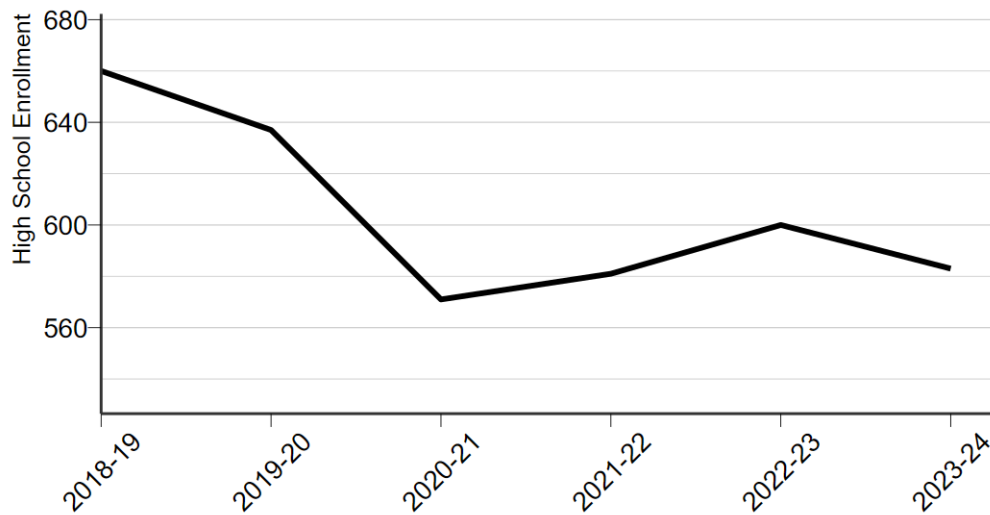


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 583 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. This includes public, private, and home-based schools. Another term for home-based schools is home-schooling, which is classified differently than online schooling. Over the last 5 years, home-based schooling increased 97% in Rusk County. It is now 10% of 9-12 grade students in Rusk 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.

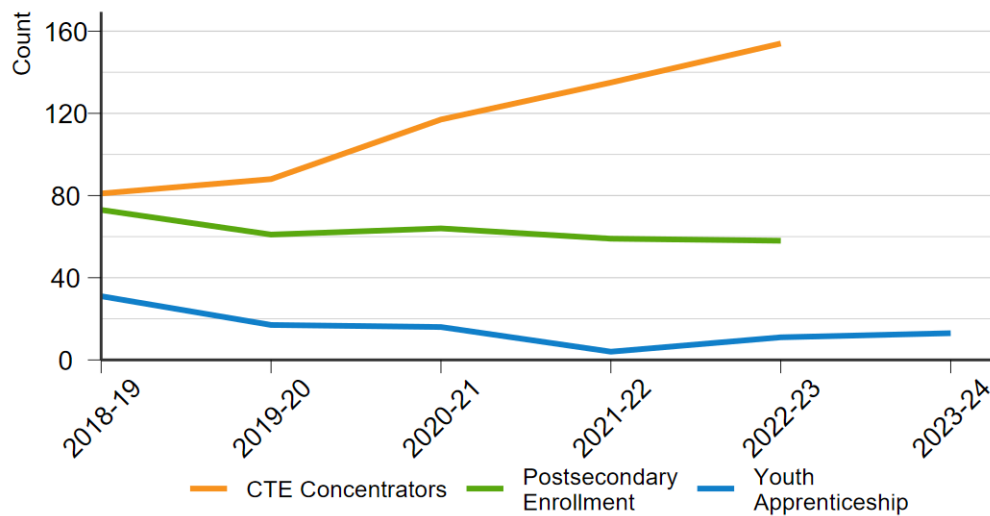


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

## Career and Technical Education

Of those who attended school, 52.0% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% for the state during the 2022-23 school year. The number of Rusk County students receiving CTE has been trending upward over the last 5 years. During those 5 years, the most popular CTE clusters in Rusk County was architecture and construction, with 145 students. The second most popular cluster was manufacturing with 114 students. The construction industry employs 2.7% of jobs in Rusk County, and the manufacturing industry employs 32.4% of jobs in Rusk 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
Rusk	154	52.0%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

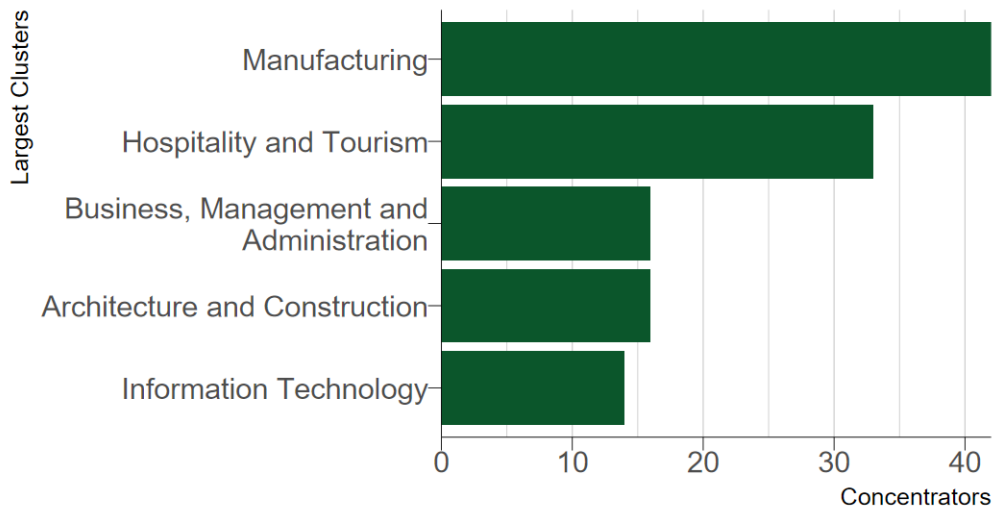


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

## Postsecondary Enrollment

The percentage of high school completers who enrolled in a postsecondary institution as a percentage of all 12th-grade students in 2022-23 was 38.4%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%. That 38.4% was a decrease in the percentage enrolled 5 years prior. Of the 2018-2019 graduating class, 45.3% of students chose to pursue a postsecondary education. Rusk County is home to a Northwood Technical College Outreach Center in Ladysmith. Adjacent counties have either a technical college campus or college.

### 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
Rusk	58	38.4%
Wisconsin	31,893	43.6%

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

## Youth Apprenticeship

The Youth Apprenticeship (YA) Program prepares participants for the workforce through direct, hands-on work experience. There were 11 youth apprentices in Rusk County in the 2022-23 school year. Rusk 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 connects high school students to businesses in their community. If a high school graduate knows that a local employer is willing to hire them, they are less likely to move away. It can be challenging for Rusk County businesses to attract employees from outside 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
Rusk	11	3.7%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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