

Walworth 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.

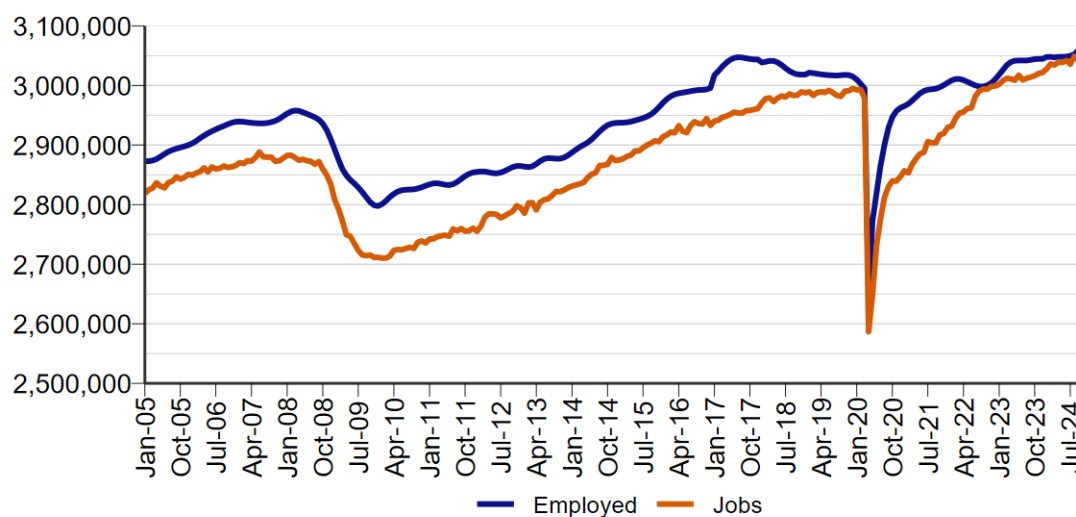


Figure 1: Wisconsin employment and jobs.

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.

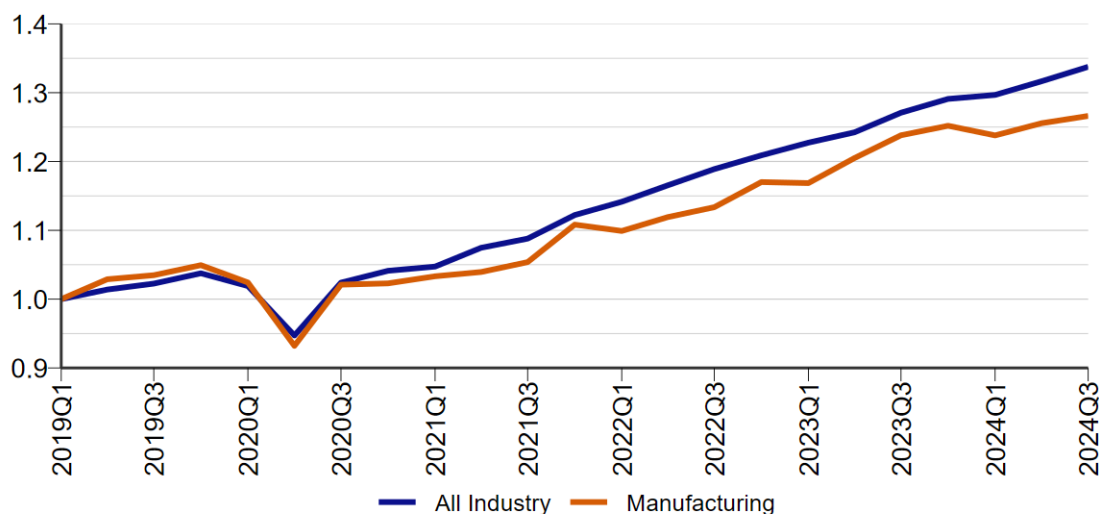


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

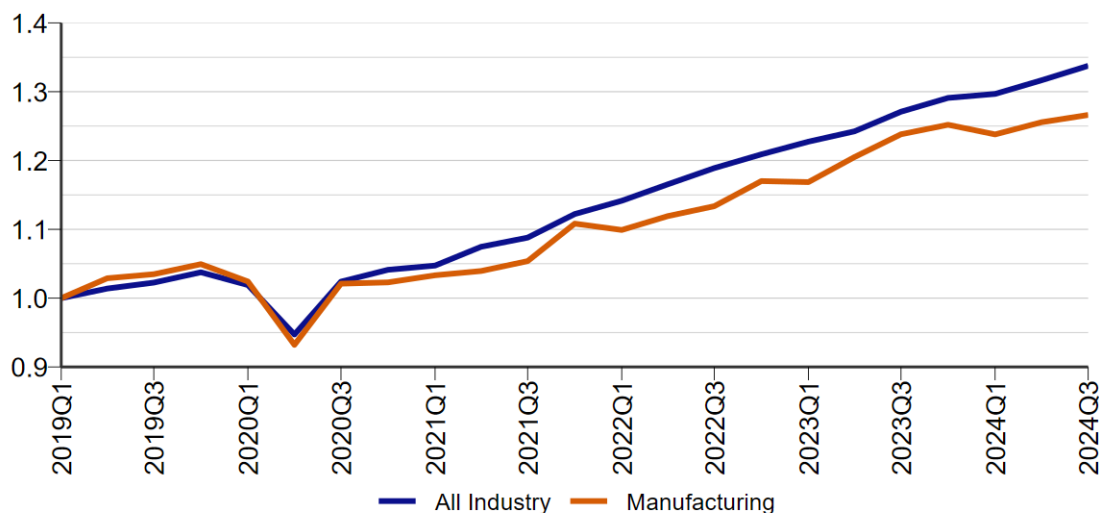


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

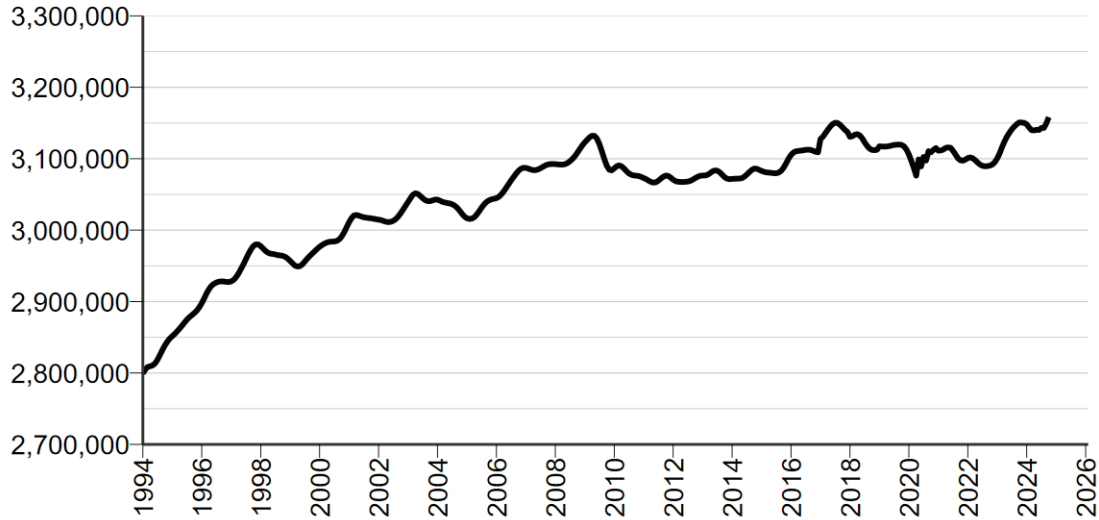


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.

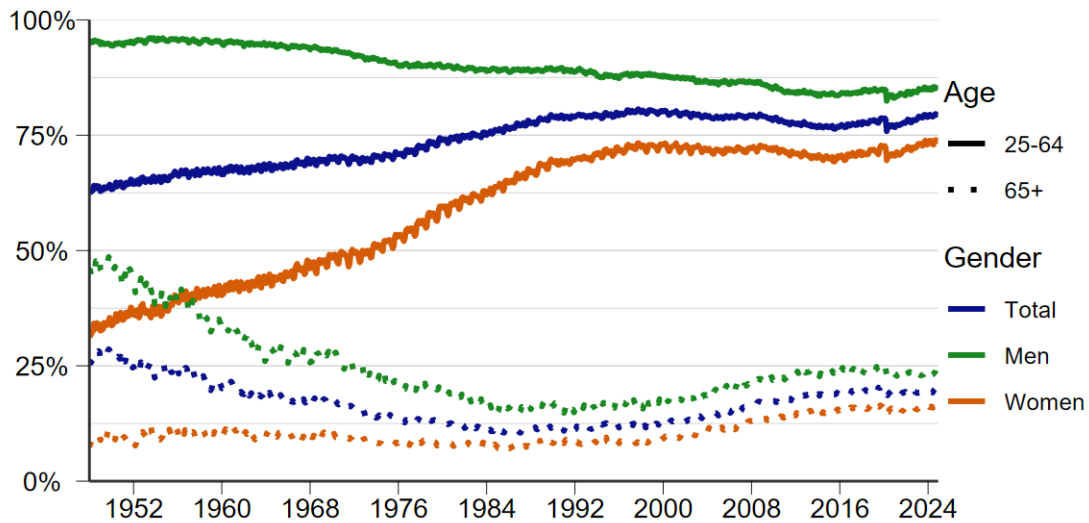


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.

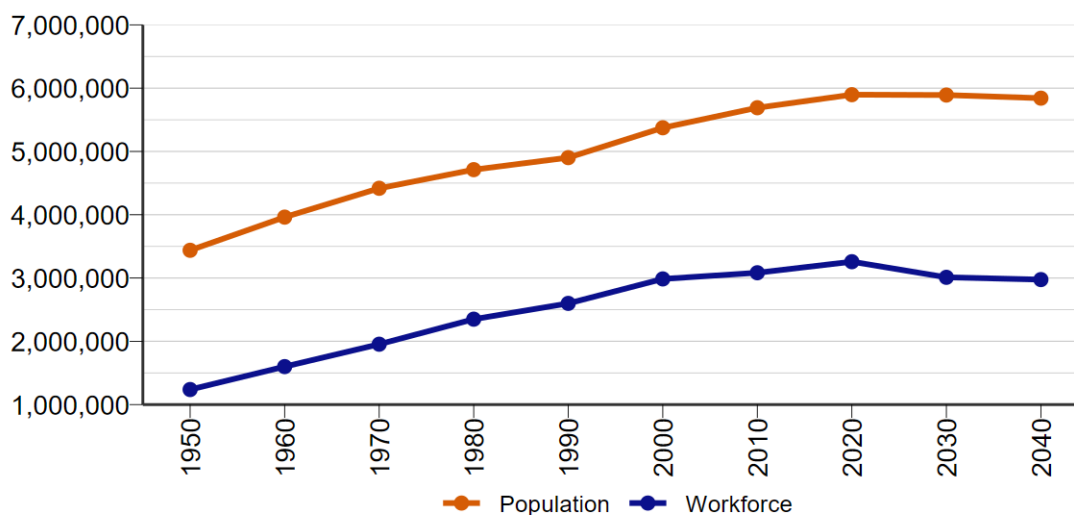


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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.

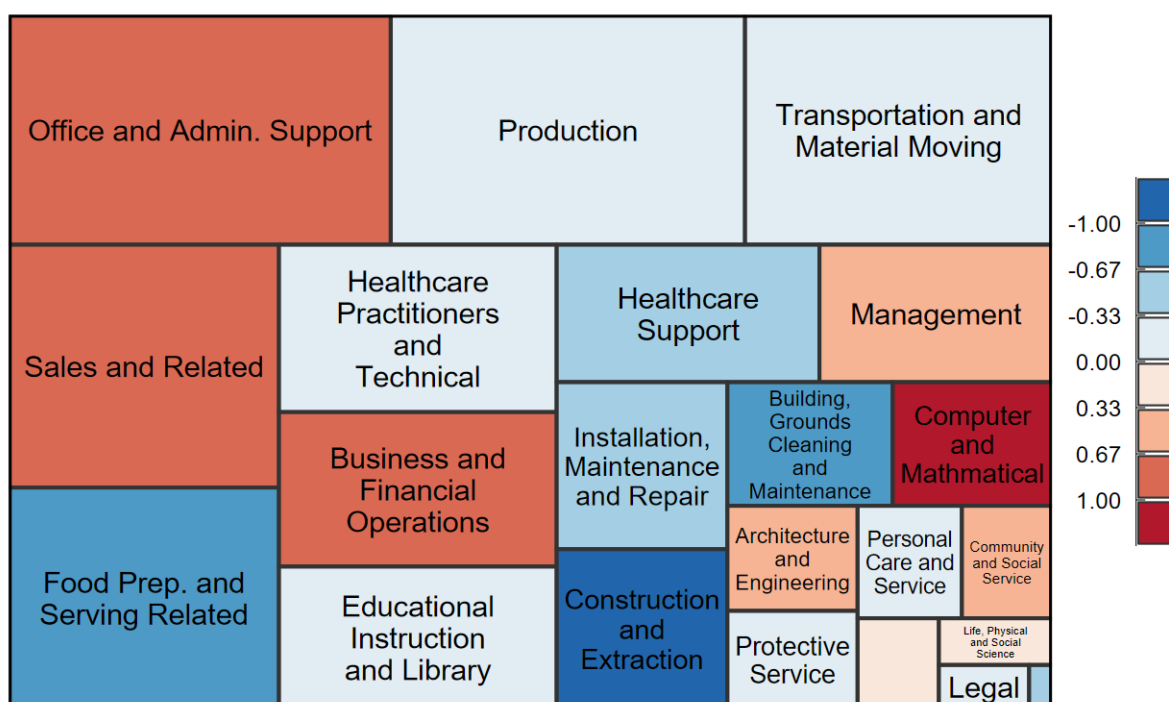


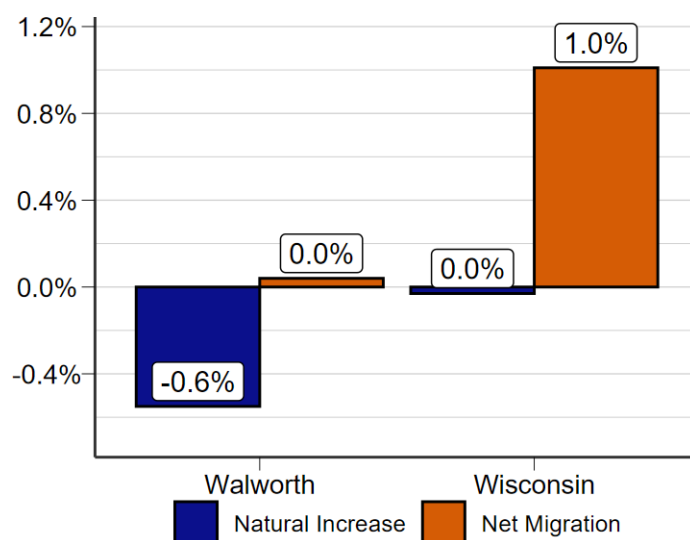
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Whitewater, City	11,721	11,506	-215	-1.8%
Elkhorn, City	10,247	10,286	39	0.4%
Lake Geneva, City	8,277	8,635	358	4.3%
Delavan, City	8,505	8,487	-18	-0.2%
Geneva, Town	5,390	5,485	95	1.8%
Delavan, Town	5,273	5,232	-41	-0.8%
East Troy, Village	4,687	5,054	367	7.8%
Bloomfield, Village	4,781	4,802	21	0.4%
East Troy, Town	3,992	4,010	18	0.4%
Sugar Creek, Town	3,902	3,906	4	0.1%
Walworth, County	105,230	105,926	696	0.7%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Walworth County is the 15th most populous county in Wisconsin, with 105,926 residents. From 2020 to 2023, the population declined by 0.5%, compared to a 1.0% increase statewide. This figure includes an administrative data change in which 1,248 residents were reassigned to neighboring Jefferson 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.

The county recorded more deaths than births during this time resulting in a natural decrease of 0.6%, which was slightly greater than the state's decline of 0.03%. While the county's median age is similar to the state's (40.7 vs. 39.9), its fertility rate is substantially lower - 36 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 50, compared to 48 statewide.

Walworth County's 10 most populous municipalities account for roughly two-thirds of the total population. Seven of these municipalities experienced population growth since 2023. The fastest-growing was the Village of East Troy, which added 367 residents – a 7.8% increase.

Looking ahead, both state and county populations are both projected to decline. While this is a concerning outlook, it's important to remember that projections are not set in stone – they will change if the actual components of population change differ from the underlying assumptions.

Fertility rates, already lower than the statewide average, have also declined over time. In 2010, the rate was 47 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 50. It had dropped to 36 by 2023. A reversal in this trend would positively impact long-term population growth.

Net migration is another area where improvement is possible. Retaining current residents and attracting new ones could shift the trajectory. Strategies might include revising zoning codes to allow for greater housing density, expanding access to family-supporting jobs, and making the county a more desirable place to live overall.

While net migration is often considered a short-term factor, it can also contribute to long-term, sustainable population growth. In particular, improving net migration among younger residents would likely lead to a stronger natural increase over time.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Walworth	105,230	102,815	97,860	90,120	-14.4%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	43,539	1,342	3.2%	100.0%
Education and Health Services	8,705	346	4.1%	20.0%
Manufacturing	8,198	-926	-10.1%	18.8%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	8,067	443	5.8%	18.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	7,971	396	5.2%	18.3%
Professional and Business Services	3,660	845	30.0%	8.4%
Public Administration	2,081	-73	-3.4%	4.8%
Construction	1,854	294	18.8%	4.3%
Financial Activities	1,094	70	6.8%	2.5%
Other Services	958	-164	-14.6%	2.2%
Natural Resources and Mining	621	61	10.9%	1.4%
Information	329	50	17.9%	0.8%

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

Walworth County added 1,342 jobs from 2018 to 2023, a growth of 3.2%. Average employment reached 43,539 jobs in 2023. It's important to note that this five-year period includes an unprecedented dip in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the public health measures that followed. Employment bottomed out at 39,677 before steadily rebounding.

Growth in the leisure and hospitality sector outpaced statewide growth (5.2% vs. 0.1%). This industry was especially hard hit by the pandemic but remains prominent in Walworth County, largely due to Lake Geneva's status as a well-known resort hub and vacation destination.

Manufacturing accounts for 18.8% of employment in the county. However, employment declined in the sector by 10.1% over five-year period. The number of manufacturing establishments held steady at 218, but the average number of employees per establishment declined from 41.9 to 37.6. One of the larger subsectors – plastics and rubber products manufacturing – lost 354 jobs, a decrease of 17.8%.

Unemployment

Walworth County's monthly unemployment rate in 2023 was 2.9%, slightly below the statewide rate of 3.0%. Rates for both the county and the state remain historically low, reflecting a tight labor market. Simply put, employers are having difficulty finding workers.

There are some signs that this pressure has eased in recent months. However, the demographic challenges – particularly an aging population – that contribute to these tight labor markets are not going away.

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.

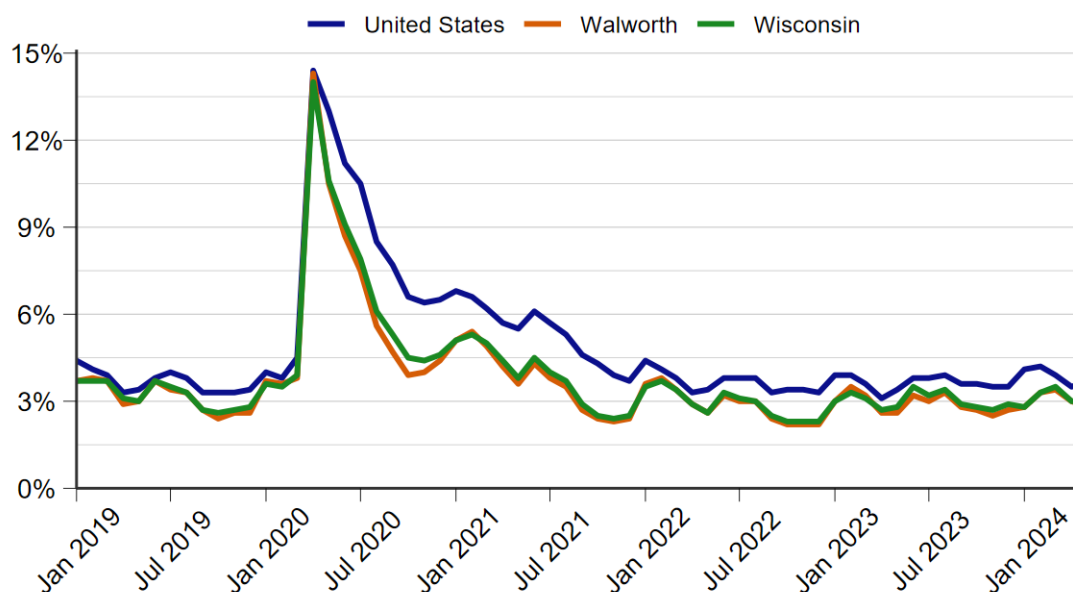


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

The long-term impact of an aging population is also reflected in the county's declining labor force participation rate (LFPR). While LFPR by age group has remained relatively steady over time, the population is steadily aging. As more residents enter retirement, the overall LFPR continues to decline.

IN 2023, Walworth County's LFPR was 67.1%. By comparison, it exceeded 80% in the mid-1990s, when baby boomers were in their prime working years. There are two general strategies to help address the challenges of declining labor force: (1) increase migration and (2) more fully utilizing the existing population – which largely means identifying and removing barriers to workforce participation.

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.

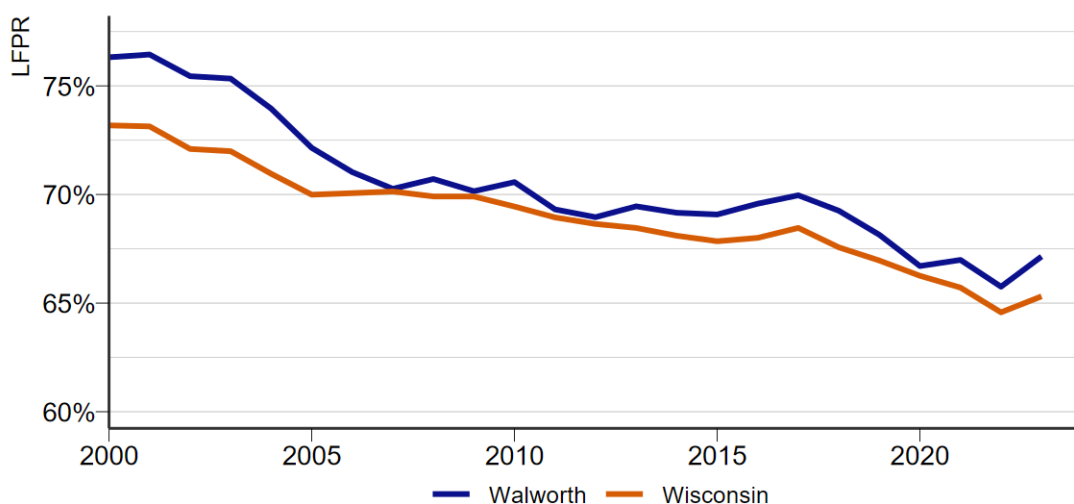


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	8,570	4.5%	-0.78
Cashiers	5,620	2.9%	0.89
Fast Food and Counter Workers	5,260	2.8%	-1.00
Stockers and Order Fillers	5,170	2.7%	-0.05
Retail Salespersons	5,030	2.6%	0.40
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,760	2.0%	-0.09
Registered Nurses	3,250	1.7%	0.04
Office Clerks, General	3,070	1.6%	1.00
Waiters and Waitresses	2,910	1.5%	-0.78
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,650	1.4%	-1.27
Customer Service Representatives	2,650	1.4%	0.75

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)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are profoundly shaping the future of work. When implemented effectively, AI has the potential to help address workforce shortages driven by demographic changes – by automating routine tasks and allowing workers to focus on responsibilities that cannot be replaced by technology. The key challenge is ensuring the workforce is prepared to adapt as technologies continue to evolve rapidly.

The Southeast Workforce Development Area (WDA), which includes Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth Counties, provides insight into regional trends. The largest occupation in the WDA is laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand, accounting for 4.5% of total employment. This occupation has an AI exposure index of -0.78. For comparison, the occupation with the highest potential exposure to AI is bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, with an exposure index of 1.89.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Construction	6,837	7,949	1,112	16.26%
Highest Number Employed	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	46,016	50,105	4,089	8.89%
Most Jobs Added	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	46,016	50,105	4,089	8.89%
Lowest Percent Growth	Government	9,683	9,712	29	0.30%
Total	Total All Industries	209,899	229,666	19,767	9.42%

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 Southeast WDA is expected to grow by 19,767 jobs (9.4%) from 2022 to 2032, outpacing the statewide growth rate of 7.1%.

Within the Southeast WDA, the construction industry is projected to be the fastest-growing sector, with a projected growth rate of 16.3% over the decade. Trade, transportation, and utilities is both the largest industry by employment and is projected to add the most jobs.

Goods-producing industries in the region are expected to grow by 9.7%, while service-providing industries are projected to increase by 8.8%.

For more information and detailed projections results 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
Lowest Percent Growth	Office and Administrative Support	22,099	22,256	157	0.7%
Highest Percent Growth	Construction and Extraction	6,810	7,980	1,170	17.2%
Highest Number Employed	Transportation and Material Moving	26,913	29,909	2,996	11.1%
Most Jobs Added	Transportation and Material Moving	26,913	29,909	2,996	11.1%
Total	Total, All	209,899	229,666	19,767	9.4%

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

In the Southeast WDA, construction and extraction occupations are projected to be the fastest-growing occupation, with a 17.2% increase expected between 2022 to 2032. This includes 19.0% growth specifically among skilled trades workers.

At the other end of the spectrum, office and administrative support workers support occupations are projected to grow at the slowest rate. However, despite limited growth, this group still has a high demand for replacement workers. As the population continues to age, many occupations may experience limited or even negative growth in total employment but will still require new employees to replace those retiring. This need is largely driven by increasing retirements.

Aging Population

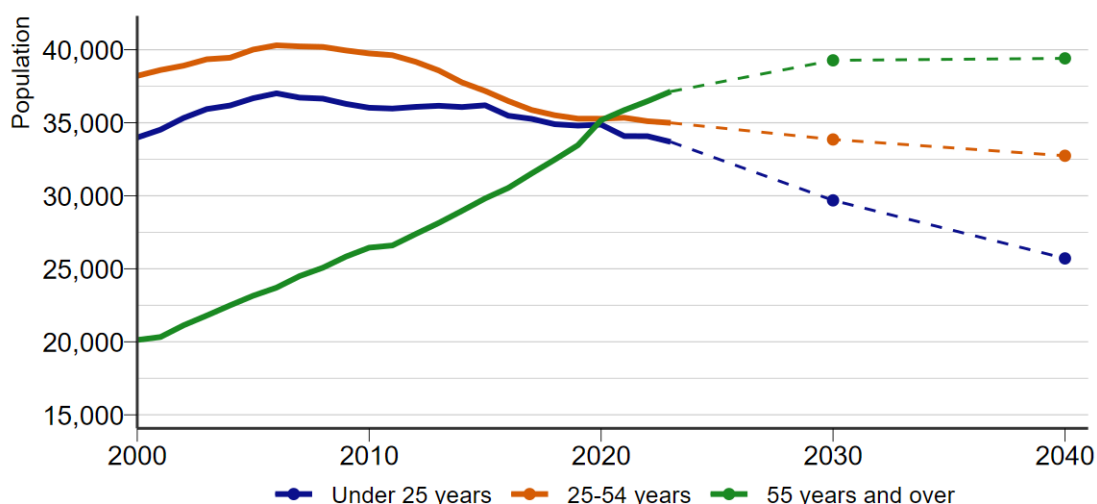


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

Age demographics have been a recurring theme throughout this profile. The chart above shows population trends by age group: both the under 25 and 25-54 age cohorts have declined slightly, while the number of residents aged 55 and older has nearly doubled. In 2023, 35.0% of Walworth County's population was 55 or older – up from 21.7% in 2000. This aging trend is expected to continue, with the share projected to reach 40.2% by 2040.

These age groups are significant because they represent different stages of typical labor force participation. Participation begins to rise rapidly between ages 16 to 24, though individuals in this range are less likely to be employed full-time due to secondary or post-secondary education. The 25- 54 age group represents the prime working years. Participation begins to decline sharply after age 55 years old, as many in this group are nearing or entering retirement. This shift marks the tail end of workforce participation for a growing portion of the population.

Personal Income

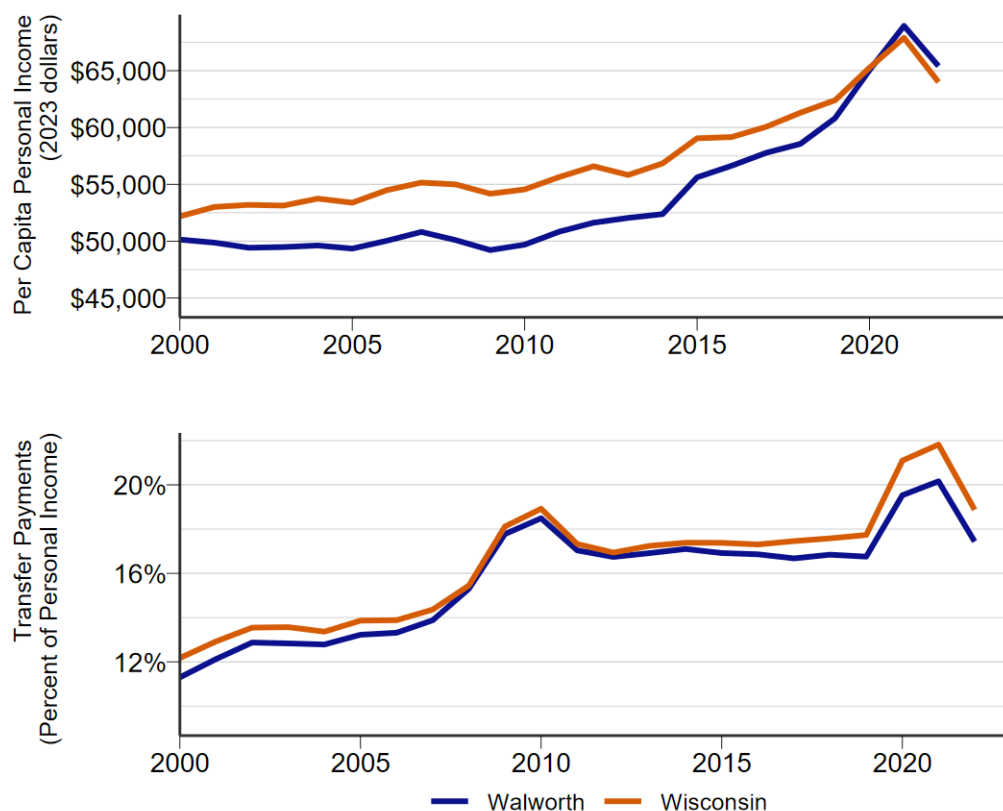


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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 Walworth County was \$65,404 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of \$63,996. Historically, the county's per capita income has trailed the state average but surpassed it in 2021. Walworth County now ranks seventh out of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

In 2022, 17.4% of that income came from transfer payments rather than earned income. This share increased from 11.3% in 2000. Two noticeable temporary spikes in transfer payments align with the Great Recession and the COVID-era recession. Economic downturns typically reduce earned income sources – such as wages and business income – while triggering automatic stabilizers like Unemployment Insurance.

The long-term upward trend in transfer payments also reflects the county's aging population, as this category includes Social Security and other retirement income sources.

Workforce Pipeline

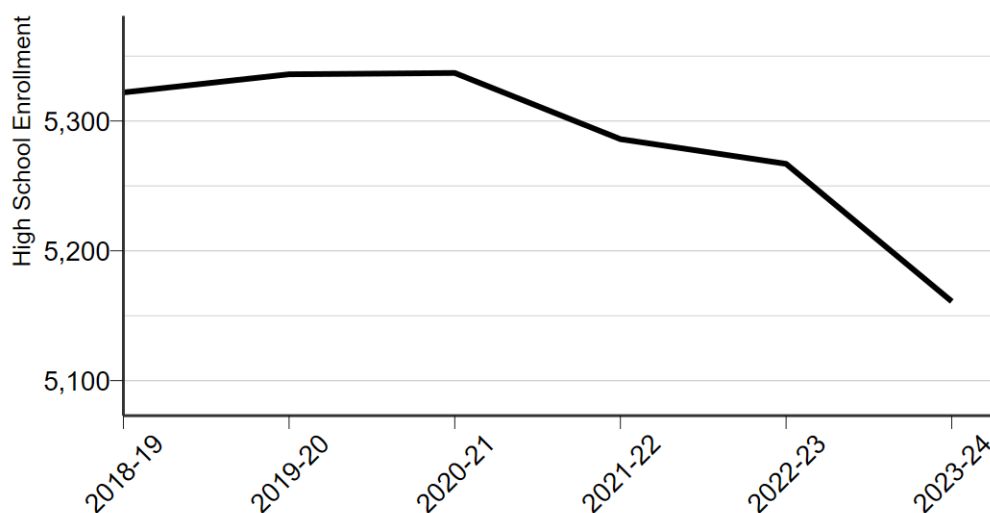


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 5,161 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. This includes public, private, and home-based schools.

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.

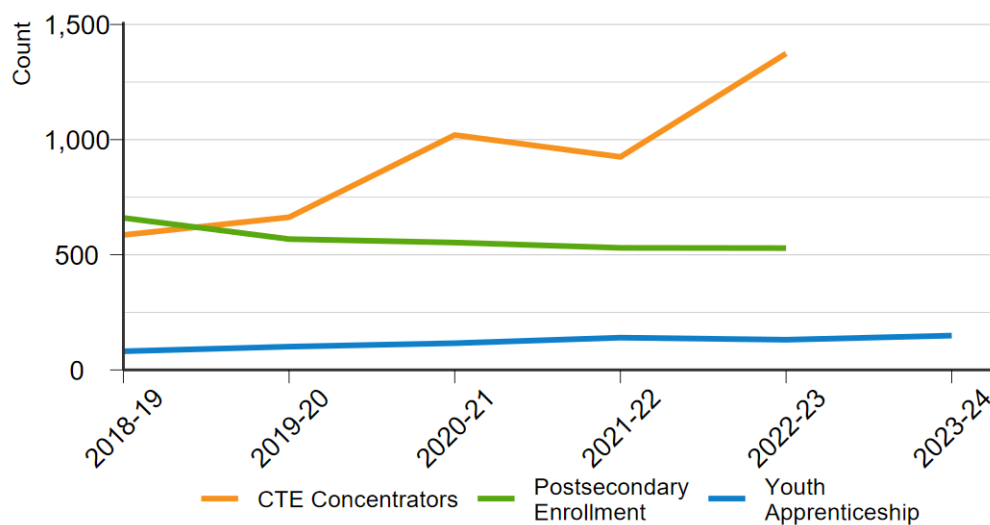


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Of students enrolled in grades 11–12, 50.5% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE) during the 2022-23 school year, compared to 44.3% statewide. CTE participation reflects ongoing efforts to improve career readiness among high school students.

In Walworth County, Manufacturing was the most popular career cluster among CTE participants.

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
Walworth	1,374	50.5%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

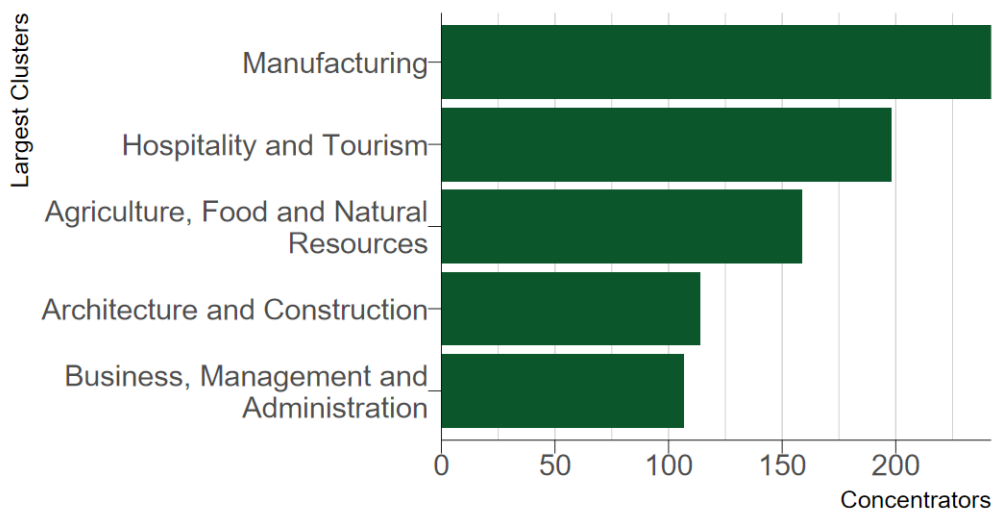


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Postsecondary Enrollment

In the 2022–23 school year, 36.2% of high school completers in Walworth County enrolled in a postsecondary institution, compared to 43.6% statewide. While there's no guarantee these students will return to the county after completing their education, their existing ties to the area make them a potential source of skilled workers in the future.

The relatively low postsecondary enrollment rate may reflect that some students are finding opportunities that do not require additional education or training. However, it may also indicate that

workforce preparedness could be improved by bringing enrollment rates closer to the statewide average.

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
Walworth	529	36.2%
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, 131 youth apprentices participated in the program in Walworth County.

Expanding this program could further enhance workforce readiness among students.

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
Walworth	131	4.8%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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