Grant County

2025 WORKFORCE PROFILE

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DWD
Department of Workforce Development

WisConomy

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

State Narrative for County Profiles

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

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

Wisconsin Jobs

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

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

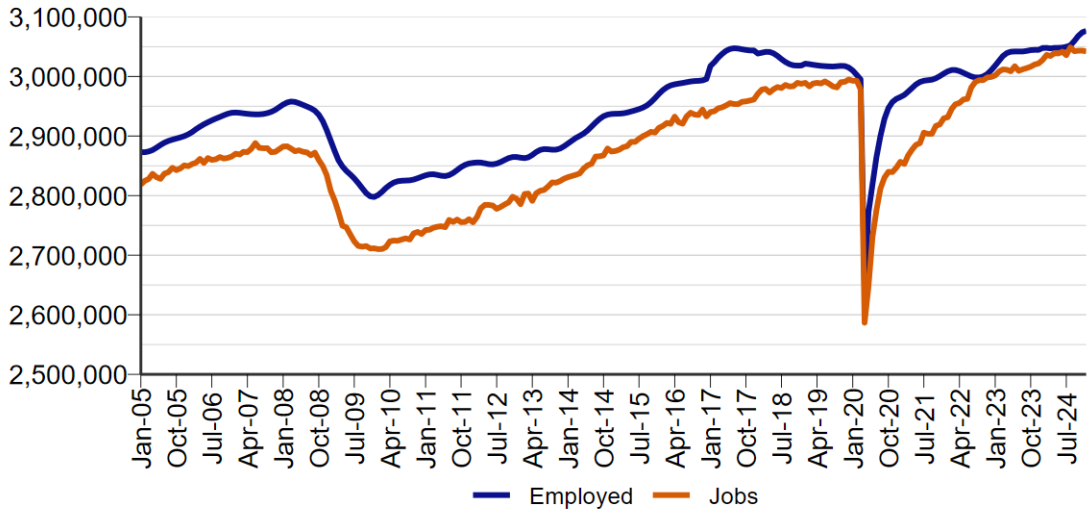


Figure 1: Wisconsin employment and jobs.

Economy

Wisconsin Gross Domestic Product (WGDP) reached new highs in nominal and real dollar terms in 2024[1], at $456 billion or $357 billion in real 2017 dollars. After a slower recovery coming out of the COVID-19 recession, Wisconsin's GDP growth rate has mimicked that of the country.

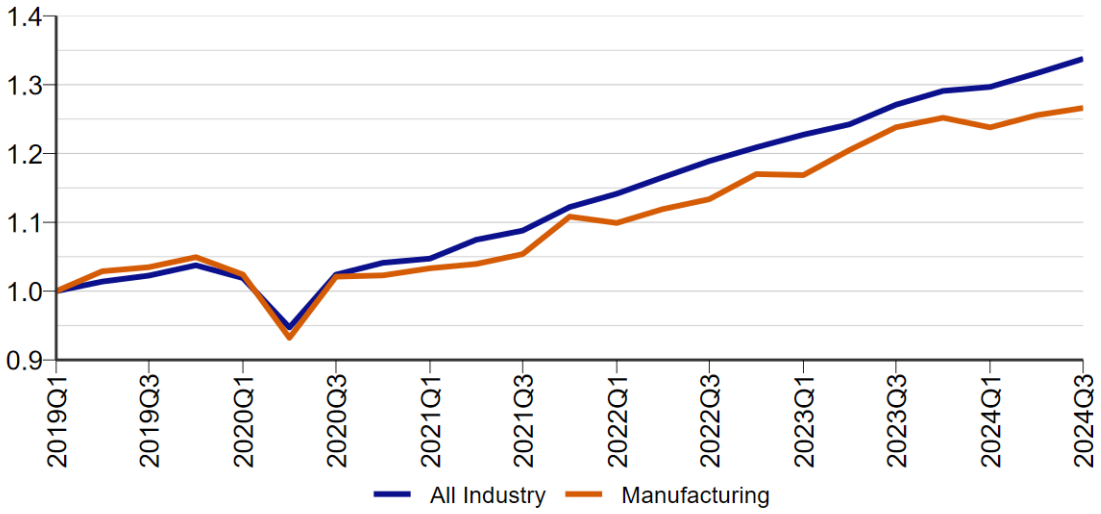


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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

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

[1]Third quarter 2024 is latest data available.

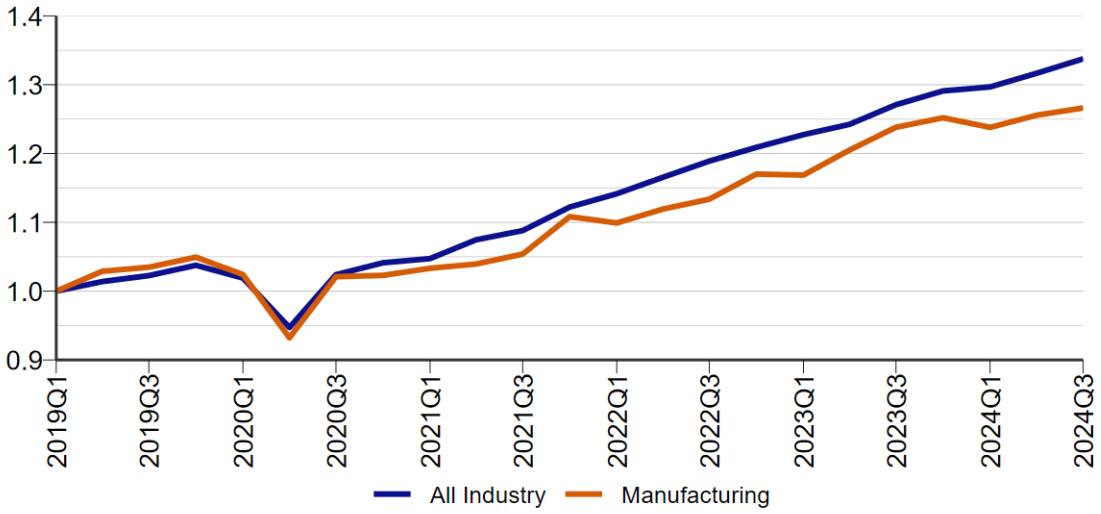


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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

Labor Quantity Challenges

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

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

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

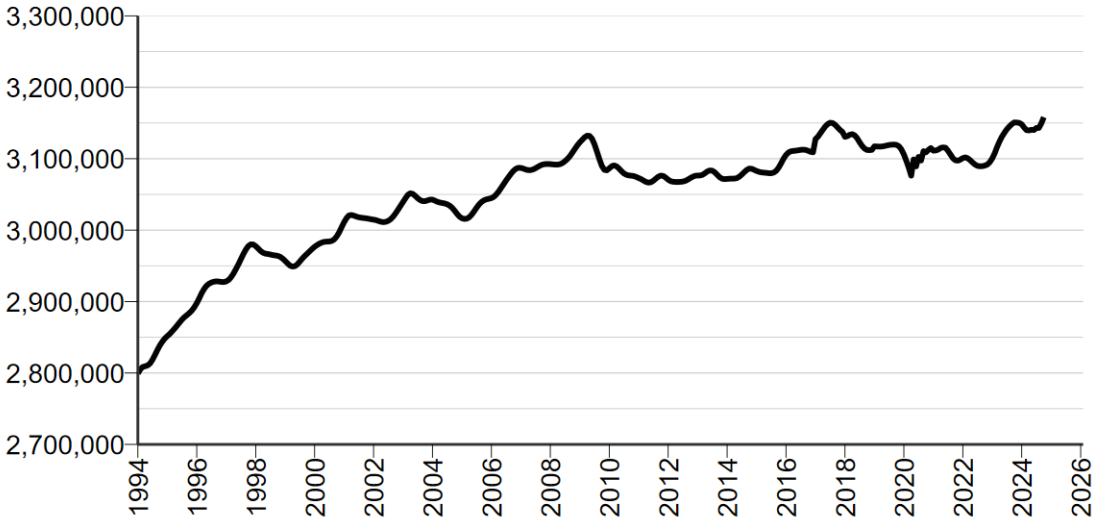


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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

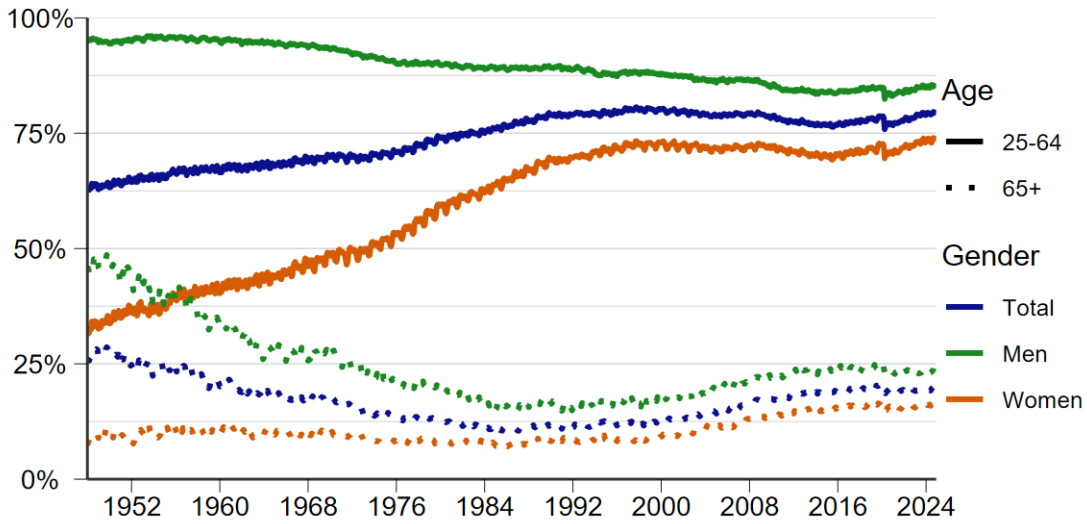


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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

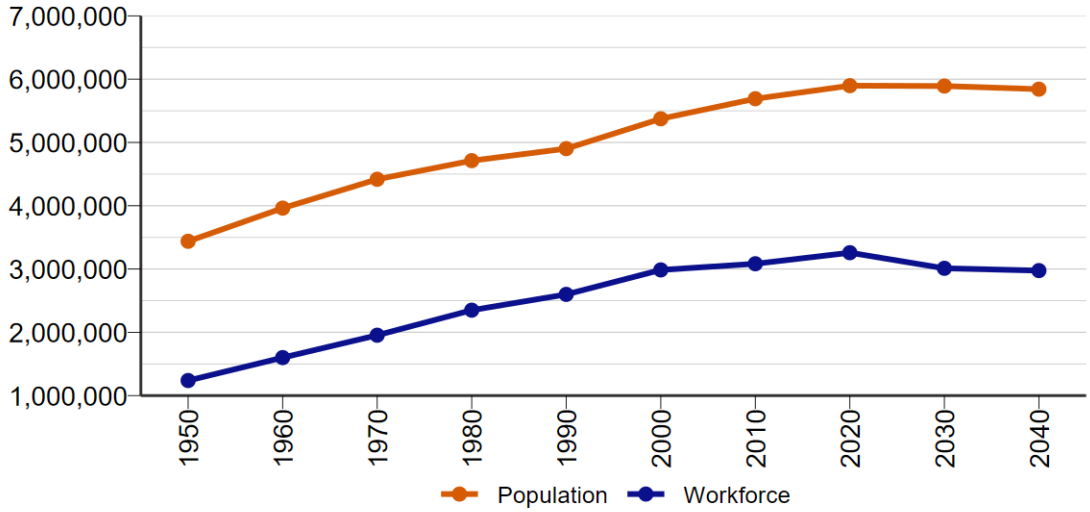


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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

New Construct

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

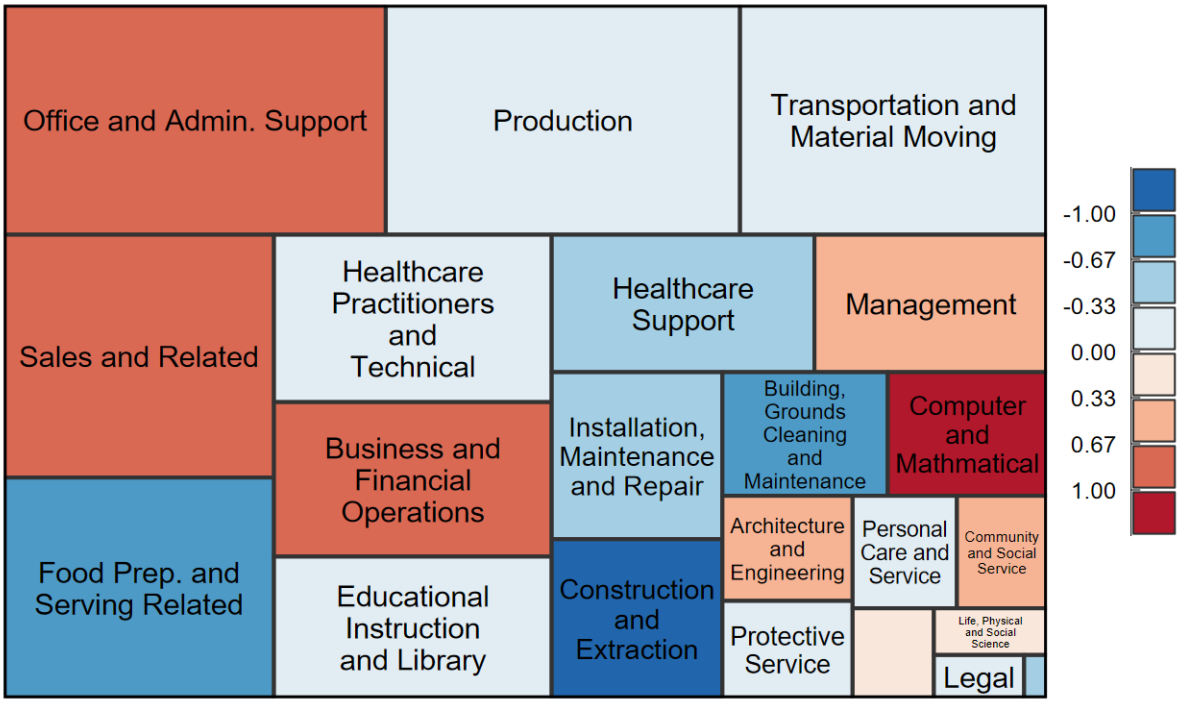


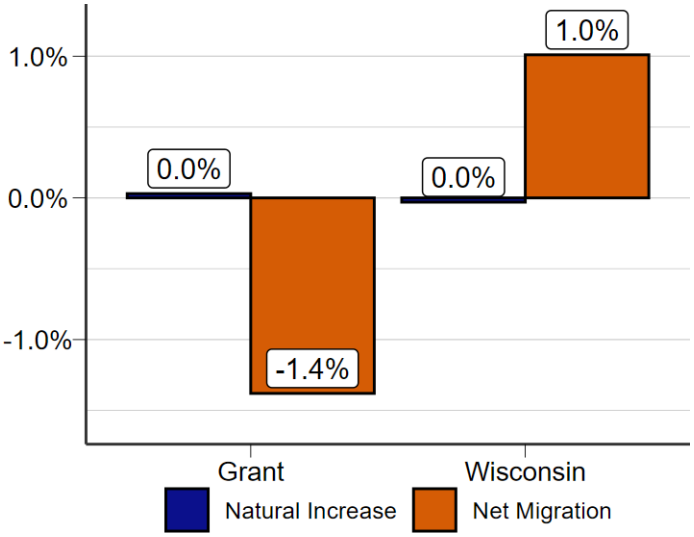
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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

Population and Demographics

	2020 Census	2023 Final Estimate	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Platteville, City	11,836	11,460	-376	-3.2%
Lancaster, City	3,907	3,877	-30	-0.8%
Boscobel, City	3,286	3,148	-138	-4.2%
Fennimore, City	2,764	2,719	-45	-1.6%
Jamestown, Town	2,181	2,207	26	1.2%
Cuba City, City	1,890	1,822	-68	-3.6%
Platteville, Town	1,513	1,508	-5	-0.3%
Muscoda, Village	1,245	1,241	-4	-0.3%
Hazel Green, Village	1,151	1,141	-10	-0.9%
Dickeyville, Village	1,015	1,075	60	5.9%
Grant, County	51,938	51,236	-702	-1.4%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Grant County is the 29th most populous county in Wisconsin with 51,236 residents. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -1.4%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin. Grant County experienced the highest rate of population decline of all counties in Wisconsin.



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 Grant County is the Village of Dickeyville, which added 60 people, for a 5.9% growth rate. Platteville, the largest municipality, is located near US 151, connecting it to Dodgeville to the northeast and Dubuque to the southwest. Grant County is located on the southwestern corner of Wisconsin bordering Iowa and Illinois. The Mississippi River serves as the county's western border. Grant County's nearest large city is Dubuque, located across the Iowa border. With a population of 59,667 as of 2020, the city of Dubuque exceeds Grant County's entire population.

Grant County's population growth in terms of natural increase was 0.03%. While this is slightly higher than the state's rate of -0.03%, the county's natural increase remained essentially flat. While

many other counties in Wisconsin make up for low or negative natural population growth with positive net migration, that is not the case in Grant County. Grant County's net migration is notably negative. This is not necessarily dire; migration trends are much more changeable than the long-term demographic trends that influence natural population change.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Grant	51,938	51,705	51,670	51,645	-0.6%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Recent projections by the Department of Administration's Demographic Services Center predict that Grant County's population will remain steady over the next 25 years, only slightly declining by 0.6% from 2020 to 2050. In contrast, Wisconsin is overall predicted to decline by 3.1% over the same period. This is relatively good news for Grant County, which may avoid the dramatic declines of other counties.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	17,340	-530	-3.0%	100.0%
Education and Health Services	5,006	56	1.1%	28.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,275	-36	-1.1%	18.9%
Manufacturing	2,347	-357	-13.2%	13.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,631	149	10.1%	9.4%
Public Administration	1,236	-154	-11.1%	7.1%
Professional and Business Services	1,099	-101	-8.4%	6.3%
Construction	808	81	11.1%	4.7%
Financial Activities	768	-64	-7.7%	4.4%
Natural Resources and Mining	635	-93	-12.8%	3.7%
Other Services	318	-35	-9.9%	1.8%
Information	218	25	13.0%	1.3%

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

Grant County employment lost -530 jobs (-3.0%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 17,340 jobs in 2023. COVID-19 caused a very steep job loss in 2020, interrupting a multi-year growth trend, from which the county is still recovering. The largest industry was education and health services, accounting for 28.9% of employment in the county in 2023. Within that sector, the hospital industry grew the fastest, adding 224 jobs from 2018 to 2023.

From 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was information, adding 25 jobs for a 13.0% growth rate. The information industry is relatively small, allowing a change of 25 jobs to lead to a high percentage change. The leisure and hospitality industry added the most jobs, exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels. While Grant County's manufacturing industry appears to have significantly declined, this is a result of noneconomic code changes resulting from updated county locations. These changes occur when information on file is correctly reclassified based on updated information.

The employment makeup of Grant County closely matches the state overall. The education and health services sector makes up the most employment in both Grant County (28.9%) and Wisconsin (22.4%), followed in both areas by trade, transportation, and utilities.

Unemployment

Grant County's monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 2.9%, compared to the state's rate of 3.0%. This ranks the county 25th for rate of unemployment in 2023. In recent years, Grant County has typically had an unemployment rate that closely matches the state's, consistent with its similar industrial makeup.

In 2024, unemployment ticked up slightly compared to the record-low unemployment rates of late 2022 and early 2023 that Grant County and the state experienced. However, this puts Grant County safely within the range of unemployment rates experienced before the COVID-19 Recession. For example, Grant County experienced an unemployment rate of 2.9% in May 2024, only 0.1 percentage points below the 3.0% unemployment experienced in May 2019. These consistently low unemployment rates of recent years point towards a tight labor market driven by worker shortages as a result of an aging population.

Unemployment Rate

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

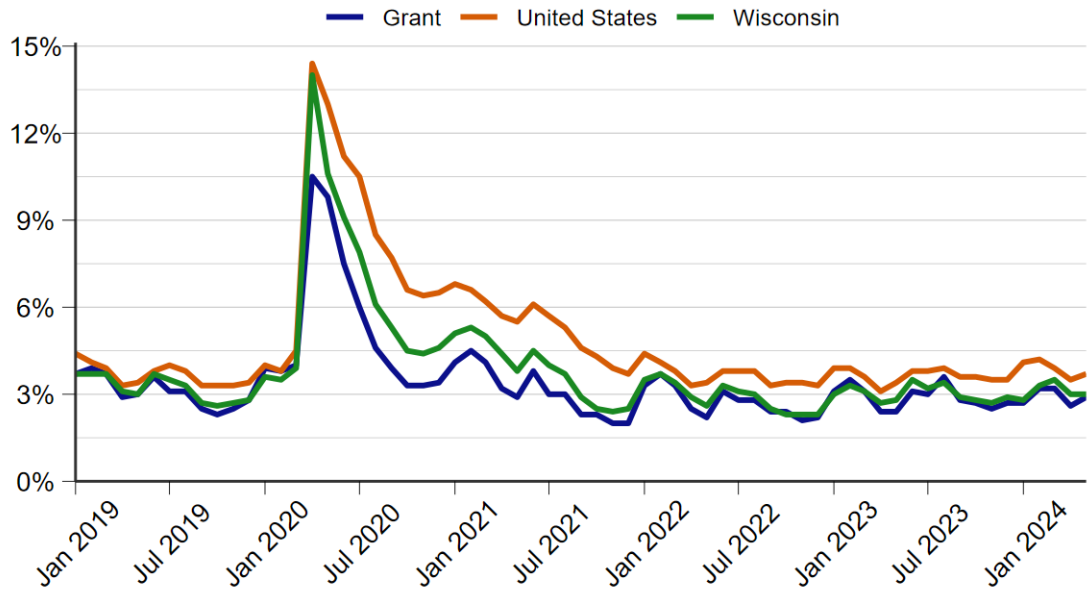


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Grant County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 65.4%, ranking 28th in the state. Grant County has seen a declining LFPR over the past two decades. This trend is not unique to Grant County; the level of decline has closely matched Wisconsin's. From 2003 to 2023, both LFPRs have dropped by about seven percentage points. This trend is driven primarily by an aging population. As the county's population ages, more individuals retire and leave the labor force. As Grant County's LFPRs decline, workforce quantity challenges will likely intensify.

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.

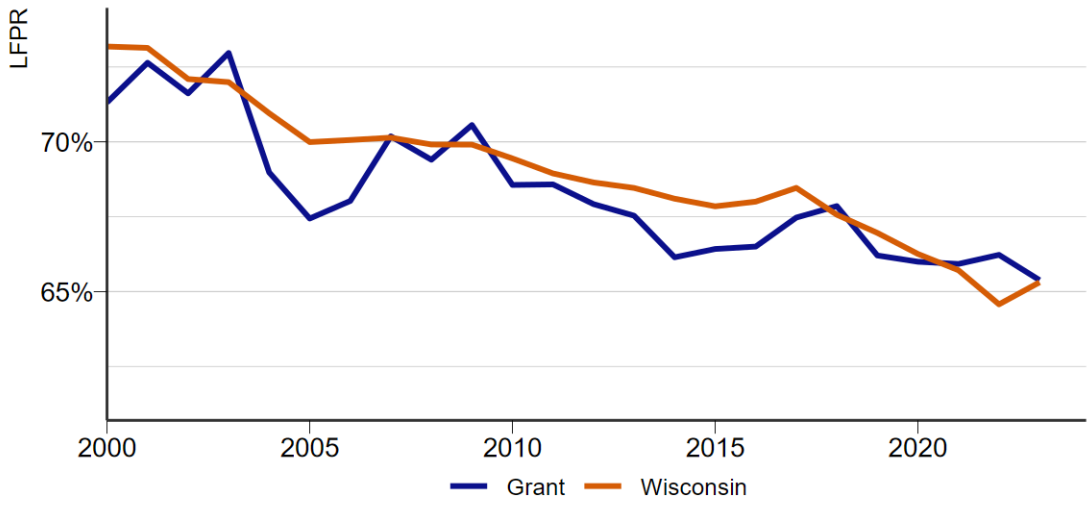


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Cashiers	3,960	3.3%	0.89
Retail Salespersons	3,380	2.8%	0.40
Fast Food and Counter Workers	3,160	2.6%	-1.00
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,000	2.5%	-0.09
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,840	2.4%	-0.78
Stockers and Order Fillers	2,790	2.3%	-0.05
Registered Nurses	2,550	2.1%	0.04
Office Clerks, General	2,060	1.7%	1.00
Customer Service Representatives	1,850	1.5%	0.75
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,740	1.4%	0.15

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

AI Exposure

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

The largest occupation in the Southwest Workforce Development Area WDA) is cashiers, accounting for 3.3% of the area's employment. Grant is part of the Southwest WDA, which includes Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and Rock counties. 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.

In Grant County, the largest sector is education and health services. Prominent occupations in that industry, like registered nurses, have a slightly positive AI exposure index. While AI cannot replace a physical and human-centric occupation like nursing, there could be tools to help nurses create documentation or inform clinical decision-making.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Construction	5,651	6,463	812	14.4%
Most Jobs Added	Manufacturing	21,906	23,668	1,762	8.0%
Highest Number Employed	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	29,145	30,671	1,526	5.2%
Lowest Percent Growth	Information	1,505	1,479	-26	-1.7%
Total	Total All Industries	134,520	143,758	9,238	6.9%

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

DWD conducts employment projections for Wisconsin's 11 WDAs every two years. Employment in Southwest WDA is expected to increase by 9,238 (6.9%), slightly below the state's growth rate of 7.1%.

In the Southwest WDA, the construction industry is projected to be the fastest-growing industry, growing 14.4% from 2022 to 2032. Declining interest rates and increased infrastructure investment have contributed to the recent growth in this industry. The Southwestern WDA's strong career training helps propel growth through a quality workforce. More broadly, goods-producing industries are projected to grow faster than services-providing industries. For example, manufacturing is projected to have the highest employment increase between 2022 and 2032.

In contrast, the information industry is the only industry projected to decline. For the information technology and software-related publishing sectors, this likely reflects the decreased demand for labor with increased productivity due to automation. The other significant portion of the information industry, newspaper publishing and broadcasting, has long experienced declines due to competition with larger, national information sources with increased internet access.

For more information and detailed projections results for both occupations and industries, view Wisconomy'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	Personal Care and Service	3,111	3,563	452	14.5%
Lowest Percent Growth	Office and Administrative Support	14,661	14,522	-139	-1.0%
Highest Number Employed	Transportation and Material Moving	14,730	16,134	1,404	9.5%
Most Jobs Added	Transportation and Material Moving	14,730	16,134	1,404	9.5%
Total	Total, All	134,520	143,758	9,238	6.9%

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

In the Southwest WDA, personal care and service occupations are projected to be the fastest-growing occupations, growing 14.5% from 2022 to 2032. This group includes a variety of occupations like hairdressers, childcare workers, and exercise trainers, among others. The high projected rate of growth in these types of occupations highlights the increase in small businesses that often employ personal care workers.

The transportation and material moving occupations are projected to add the most employment by 2032. This includes jobs like warehouse workers and truck drivers. The continued dominance of online retail shopping has contributed to the growth of these occupations.

However, even those occupations that are not expanding can provide job opportunities. For example, overall employment in office and administrative support occupations is projected to decline slightly by 2032. Despite this overall decline, there will still be significant demand to fill positions in those occupations, primarily driven by labor force exits and occupational transfers. This occupations group is projected to have the second-most annual number of openings, with 1,625 openings annually.

Aging Population

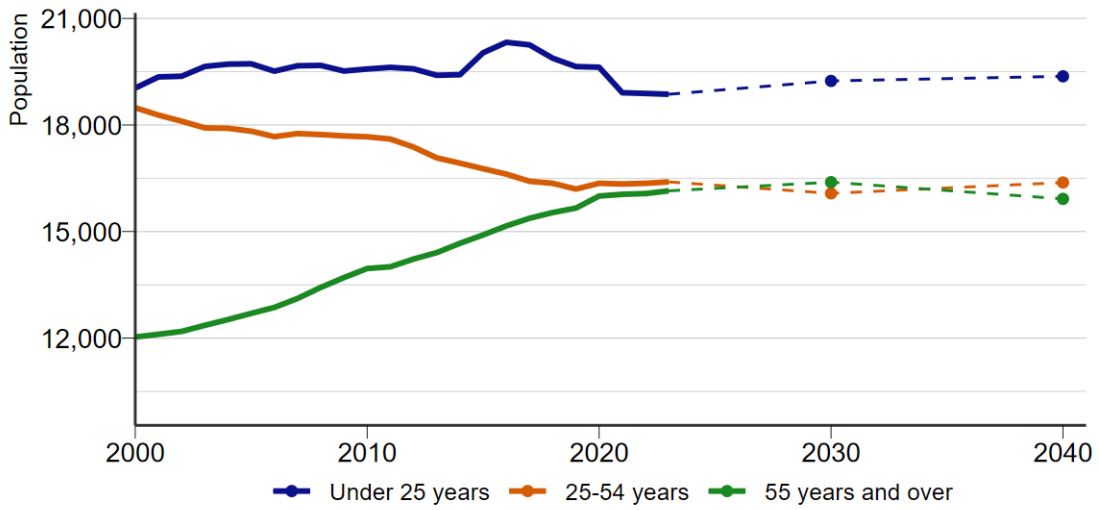


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

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

Grant County is slightly younger than the state overall. From 2017 to 2022, the median age in Grant County was 36.8, compared to Wisconsin's median age of 39.9. However, the population has been increasing in age. The share of the population age 55 and older was 31.4% in 2023, growing from 28.3% in 2013. The population of residents 55 and over is on trend to exceed the population of residents between 25 and 54. As the share of the older population grows, retirements will increase, contributing to the challenge of finding new workers. As Grant County is slightly younger than the state, the county could have fewer challenges with worker shortages compared to the state.

Personal Income

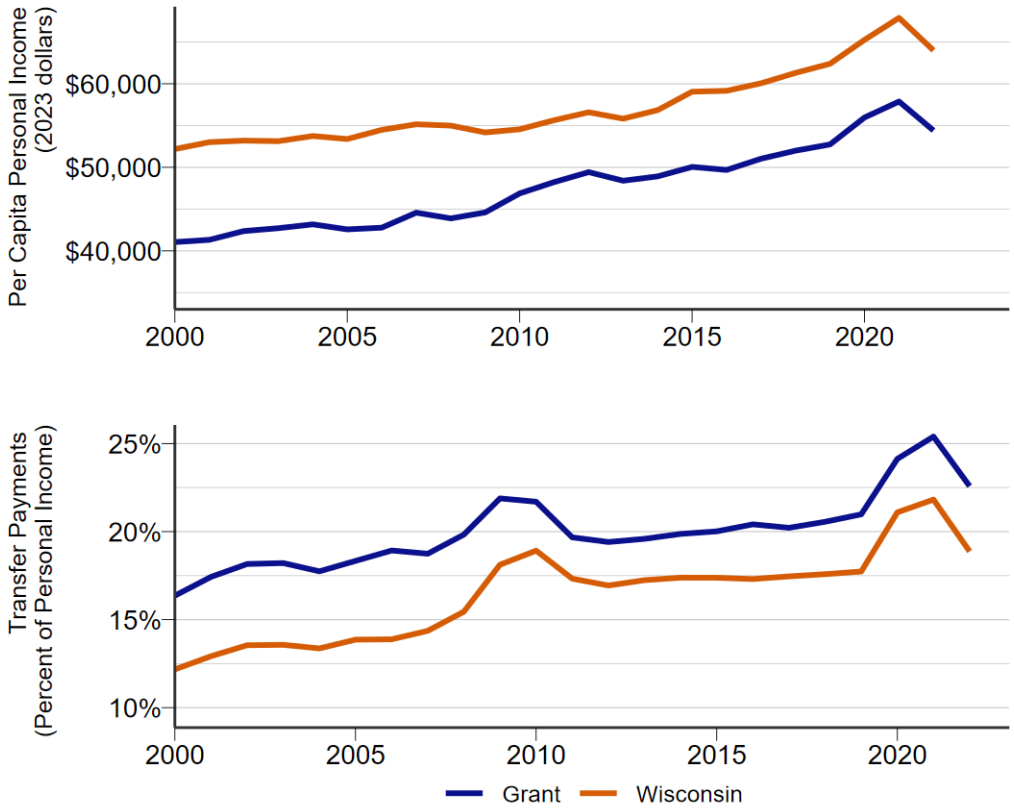


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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

The per capita personal income (PCPI) in Grant County was $54,406 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of $63,996. In total, 22.6% of that income came from transfer payments rather than earned income in 2022.

Grant County has historically had a PCPI lower than the state's over the past two decades. However, that gap has shrunk slightly over the last two decades. In 2003, Grant County's PCPI was 19.6% lower than Wisconsin's. By 2023, that difference had shrunk to 15.0%. Although Grant County has a lower PCPI, the cost of living in the county is lower than in the state. According to the Self Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin 2023, a family of two adults, one infant, and one

school-age child needs $70,374 to maintain an adequate standard of living. For reference, that same household in the median county in Wisconsin requires $71,986.

The percentage of income from transfer payments has increased over the last two decades in Grant County. This is likely due to an aging population; as individuals age, they become eligible for Social Security payments. Similarly, transfer payments like Unemployment Insurance increase during recessions as individuals are laid off, acting as stabilizing forces during economic downturns, as evidenced by the spike in transfer payments during recessions.

Workforce Pipeline

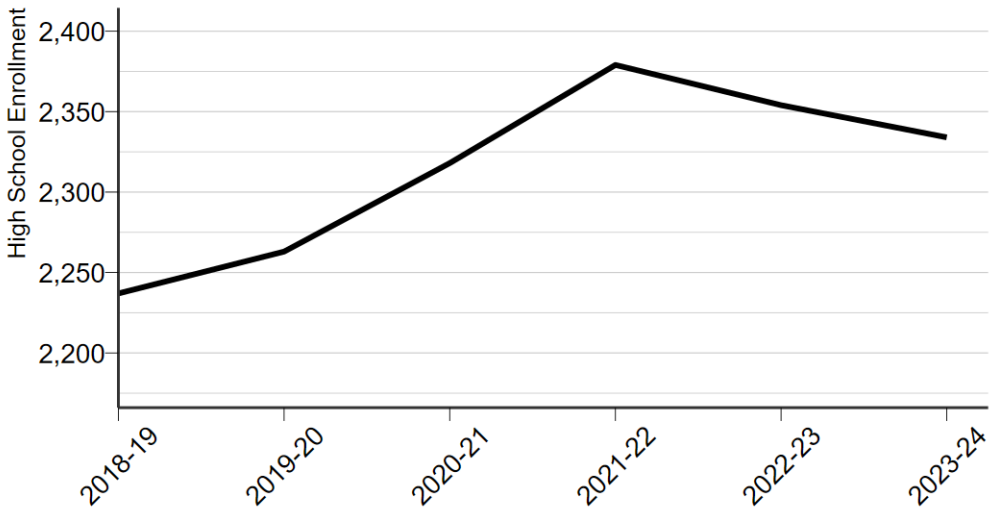


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 2,334 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. This includes public, private, and home-based schools. County-level totals are determined by the reported enrollment of school district whose main office is located in that county. As school district borders do not necessarily align with county borders, the numbers below may not match the total number of students residing in the county.

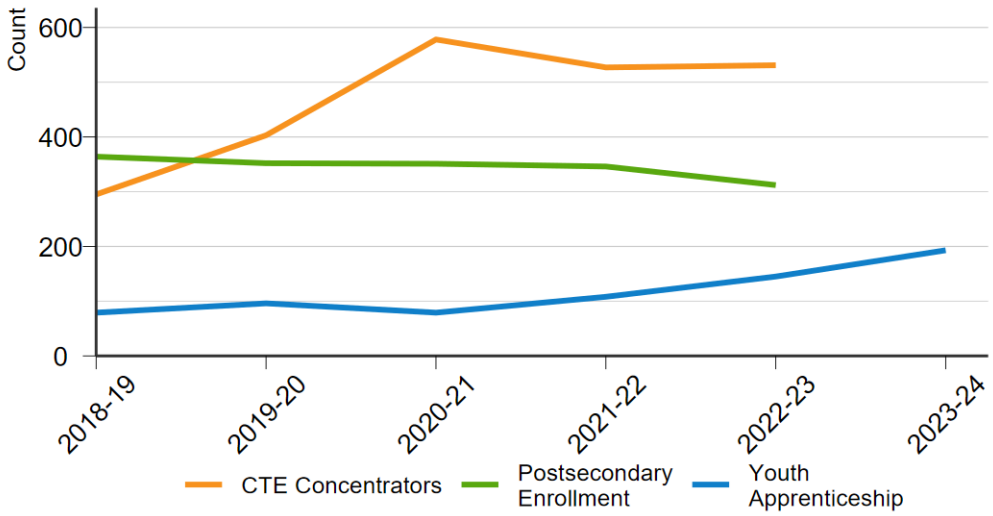


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Of those attendees, 45.6% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% for the state during the 2022-23 school year. Grant County has experienced an increase in the number of CTE concentrators over the last few school years. The most popular CTE career cluster is agriculture, food, and natural resources, which makes sense given that Grant and its neighboring counties are predominantly rural. For example, there were 3.4 cows per person in Grant County ("Where Cows and Deer Outnumber People in Wisconsin", University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab).

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
Grant	531	45.6%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

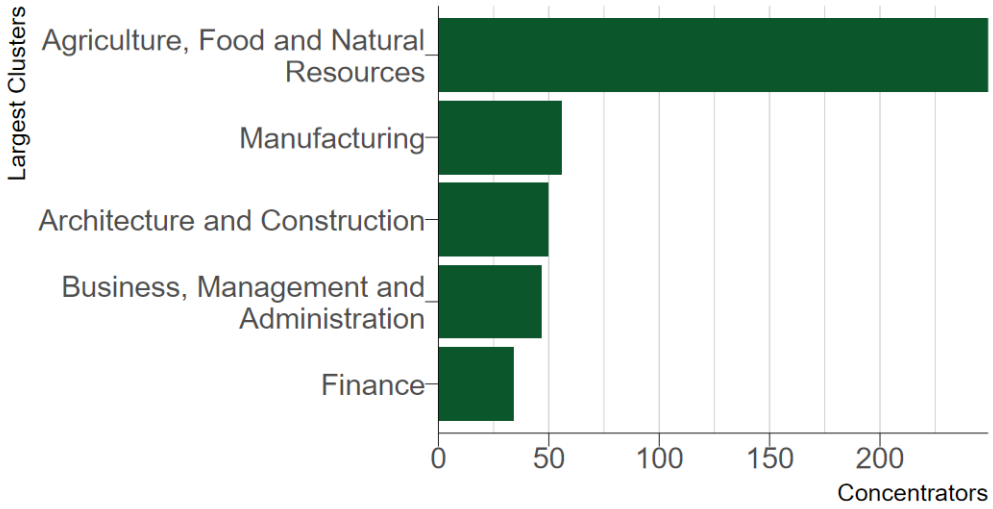


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Postsecondary Enrollment

The number of high school completers who enrolled in a postsecondary institution as a percentage of all 12th grade students in 2022-23 was 52.7%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%. Grant County outperforms the state in the number of 12th graders who choose to continue their education at a postsecondary institution. Grant County is home to Southwest Wisconsin Technical College,

University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Nearby Dubuque, Iowa, also offers a variety of colleges and universities.

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
Grant	312	52.7%
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 145 youth apprentices in Grant County in the 2022-23 school year. Grant County students participate in YA at double the rate of the state.

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
Grant	145	12.5%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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