Dunn County

2025 WORKFORCE PROFILE

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DWD
Department of Workforce Development

WisConomy

DETI-17957-DUN-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.

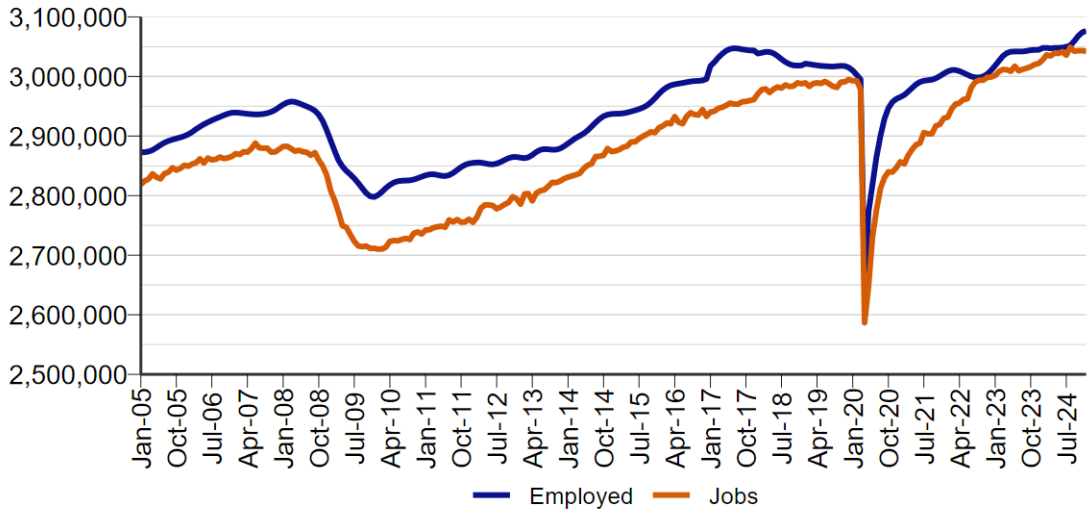


Figure 1: Wisconsin employment and jobs.

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.

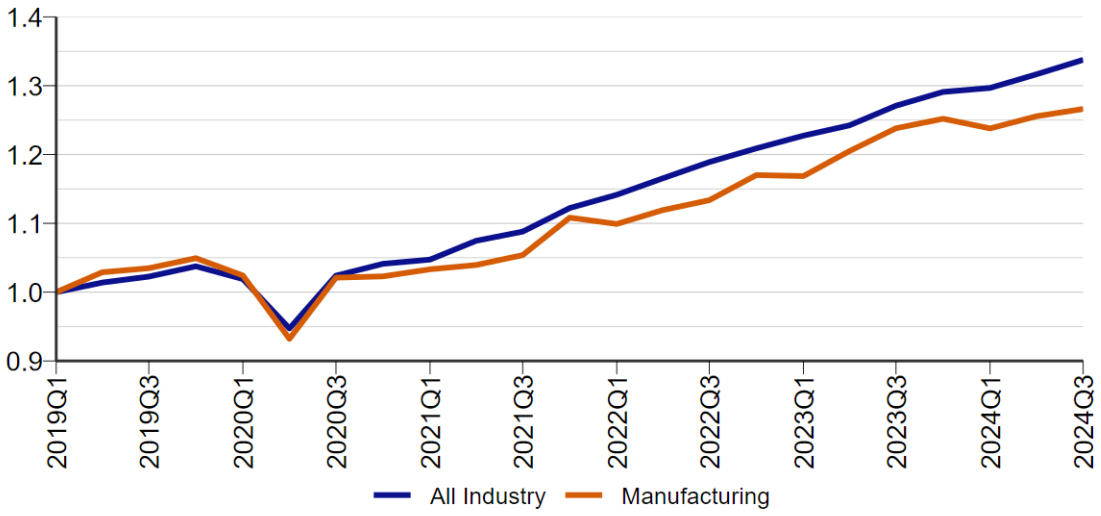


Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

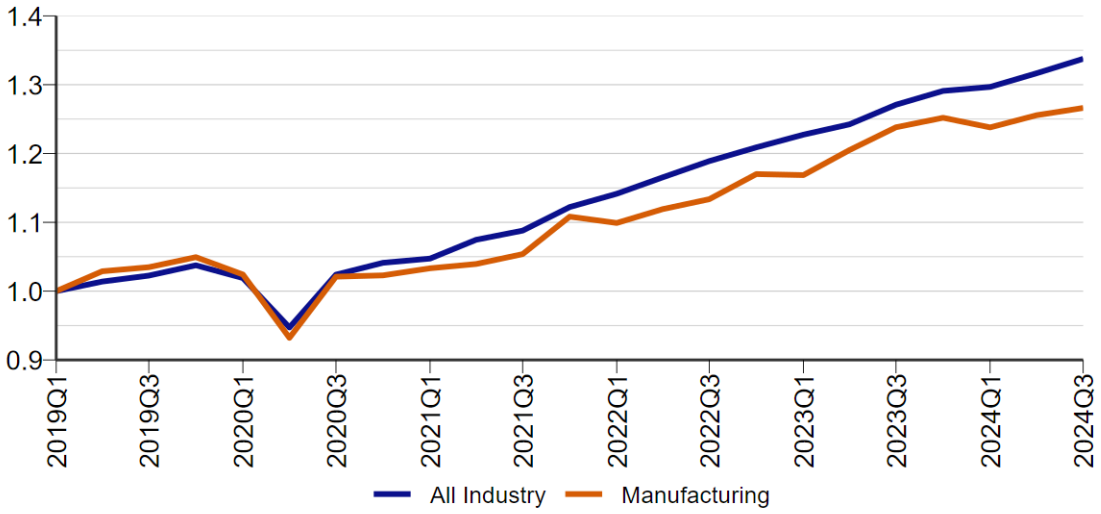


Figure 3: Wisconsin all industry v manufacturing growth (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

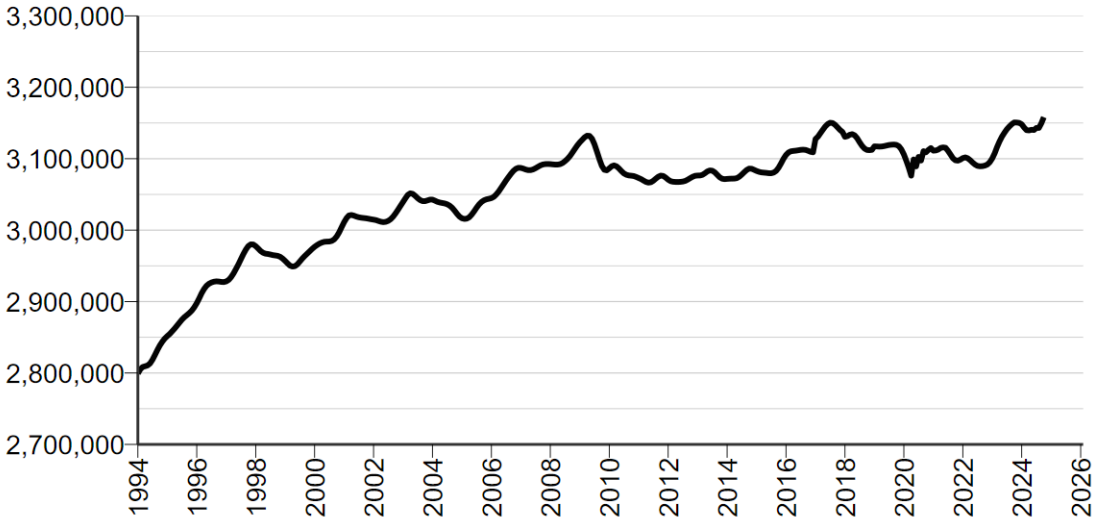


Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.

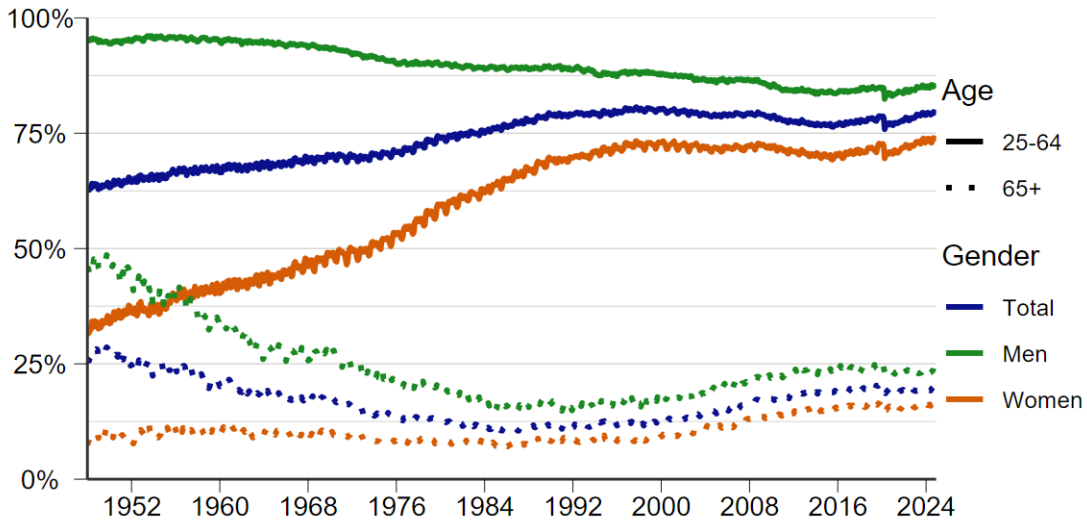


Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.

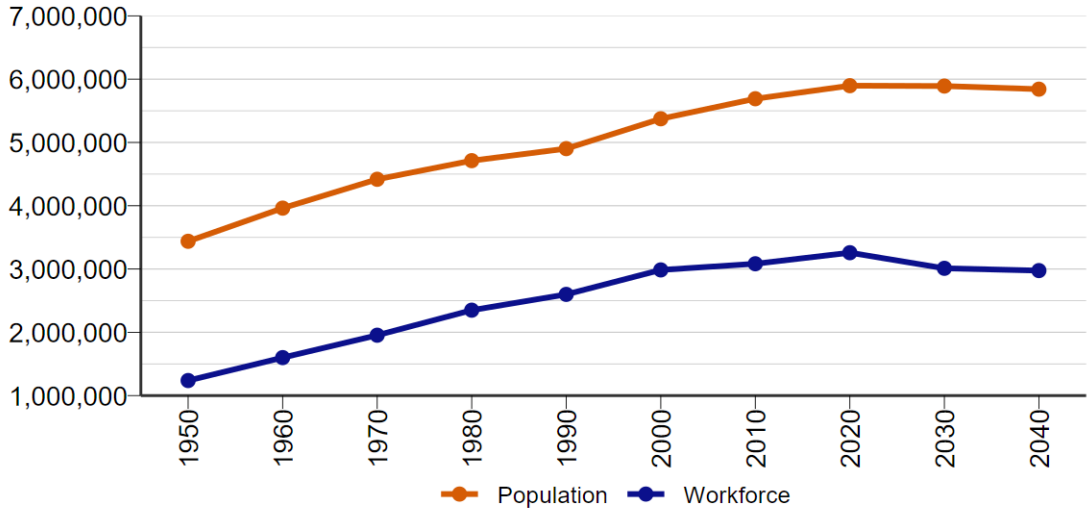


Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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.

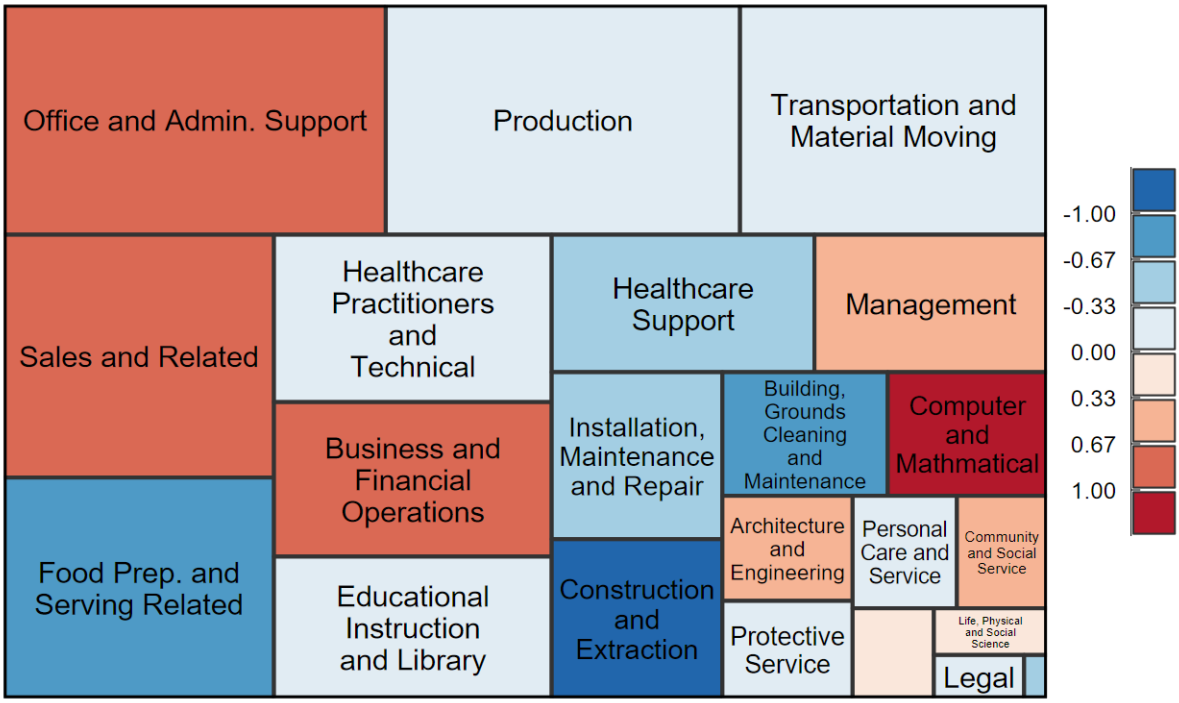


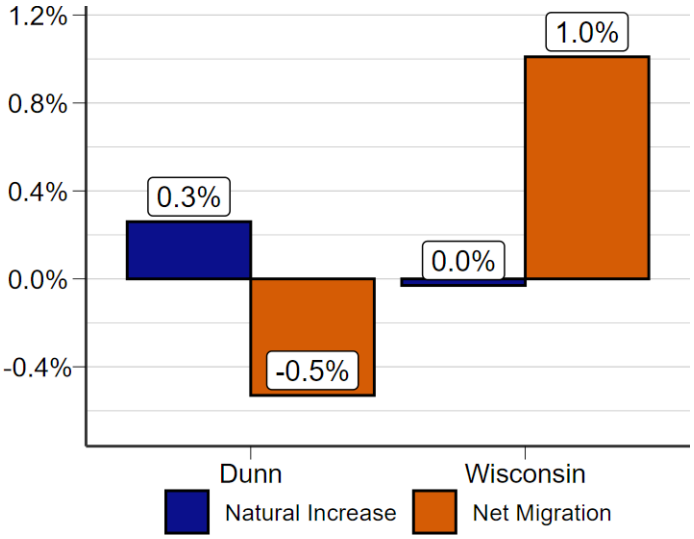
Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Menomonie, City	16,843	16,480	-363	-2.2%
Menomonie, Town	3,415	3,414	-1	0.0%
Tainter, Town	2,643	2,651	8	0.3%
Red Cedar, Town	2,359	2,417	58	2.5%
Elk Mound, Town	1,897	1,960	63	3.3%
Spring Brook, Town	1,687	1,709	22	1.3%
Dunn, Town	1,473	1,468	-5	-0.3%
Colfax, Town	1,230	1,243	13	1.1%
Colfax, Village	1,182	1,183	1	0.1%
Boyceville, Village	1,100	1,089	-11	-1.0%
Dunn, County	45,440	45,317	-123	-0.3%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Dunn County is the 32nd most populous county in Wisconsin with 45,317 residents. It is also the 51st fastest-growing county. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -0.3%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin. The county is centered around the city and town of Menomonie, which accounts for 43.9% of the county's total population. The city of Menomonie, the largest municipality in the county, is centrally located within the county. Menomonie lies along I-94, a busy east-west interstate highway which connects Eau Claire and the Minneapolis-St Paul Metropolitan area. The second-largest municipality, the town of Menomonie, which mostly surrounds the city of Menomonie, stayed at roughly the same population level. Menomonie is home to University of Wisconsin-Stout, with enrollment of 6,938 as of fall 2023.



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 Dunn County is the Town of Elk Mound, also located along I-94, nearer to Eau Claire. Elk mound added 63 people from 2020 to 2023, for a 3.3% growth rate.

Dunn County's population growth due to natural increase was 0.3%, ranking 14th in the state. This can be partially attributed to the county's relatively young population; the median age in the county was 35.8

Dunn County had a relatively high level of natural increase, a higher rate of births than deaths, likely partially a result of its relatively young population. For example, Dunn County's median age of 35.8 compared to the state's median age of 40.5. However, this young population is partially explained by the presence of UW-Stout, a large population of students who may not be permanent residents.

On the other hand, the county's net migration is the seventh lowest in the state. Dunn County is in a somewhat difficulty position; located between the larger and faster-growing counties of Eau Claire and St. Croix, which draw nearby residents.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Dunn	45,440	45,565	44,470	42,475	-6.5%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Recent projections from Wisconsin's Department of Administration's Demographic Services Center indicate that Dunn County's population will continue to decline in the coming decades. The county is projected to decline at a faster rate than the state as a whole. Although its population may be young by Wisconsin standards, the non-student population is aging. Similarly, student enrollment in UW-Stout has been declining. Although migration is more variable than birth and death rates, this workforce quantity challenge will affect almost every Wisconsin county. Areas across the state and the country will be competing to attract workers and families.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	17,836	204	1.2%	100.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	5,168	582	12.7%	29.0%
Education and Health Services	4,353	-137	-3.1%	24.4%
Manufacturing	3,449	-63	-1.8%	19.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,520	-138	-8.3%	8.5%
Construction	907	157	20.9%	5.1%
Professional and Business Services	708	-197	-21.8%	4.0%
Financial Activities	541	39	7.8%	3.0%
Public Administration	487	11	2.3%	2.7%
Natural Resources and Mining	429	-1	-0.2%	2.4%
Other Services	209	-27	-11.4%	1.2%
Information	64	-23	-26.4%	0.4%

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

Dunn County added 204 jobs (1.2%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 17,836 jobs in 2023. The largest industry was trade, transportation, and utilities, accounting for 29.0% of employment in the county in 2023. While this industry appeared to be the second fastest-growing industry by adding 590 jobs from 2018 to 2023, much of that growth was due to coding reclassifications. Regardless, warehousing and storage is particularly important to the county, being the second largest subsector behind educational services. This highlights the importance of the county as a trade conduit along a crucial regional corridor between the Twin Cities and Wisconsin.

Overall employment growth was slightly positive, growing at a rate of 1.2% from 2018 to 2023. The fastest-growing industry was construction, adding 157 jobs for a 20.9% growth rate. However, many other industries have not matched their pre-COVID levels. Professional and business services was especially hard-hit, declining by 197 jobs between 2018 and 2023.

Unemployment

Dunn County's monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 3.4%, compared to the state's rate of 3.0%, ranking 39th among Wisconsin's counties. The county's unemployment rate has generally followed the state, rarely going more than half a percentage point above the state's rate. Dunn County recovered more quickly from the COVID-19 Recession than the state, with unemployment rates stabilizing around the relatively low unemployment rates which prevailed prior to that disruption. For example, the county's May 2024 unemployment rate of 3.4% is just shy of the May 2019 unemployment rate of 3.5%. Although not as low as late 2022, when unemployment rates reached twenty year lows, these persistently low unemployment rates are indicative of a tight labor market. This is characterized by more job openings than available workers, which is generally favorable for job seeks but poses challenges for employers.

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.

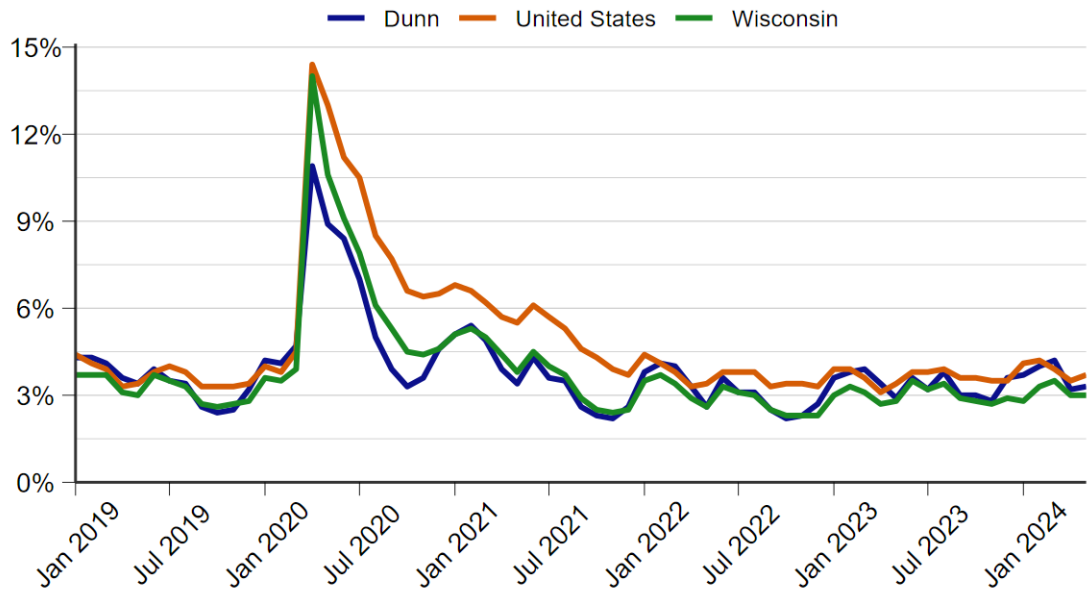


Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Dunn County's labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 64.9%, ranking 32nd in the state. Dunn County has experienced an overall decline in LFPR over the past twenty years. After peaking in 2007, with an LFPR of 75.0%, the county's LFPR declined to 10.1 percentage points. This downward trend is not unique to Dunn County but reflects a broader county, state, and national trend associated with an aging population exiting the labor market. Baby boomers are retiring in large numbers, contributing to this decline. Dunn County's population is noticeably younger than the state, which would normally indicate a higher LFPR. However, the county has a large share of students, a group who generally do not participate in the labor force.

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.

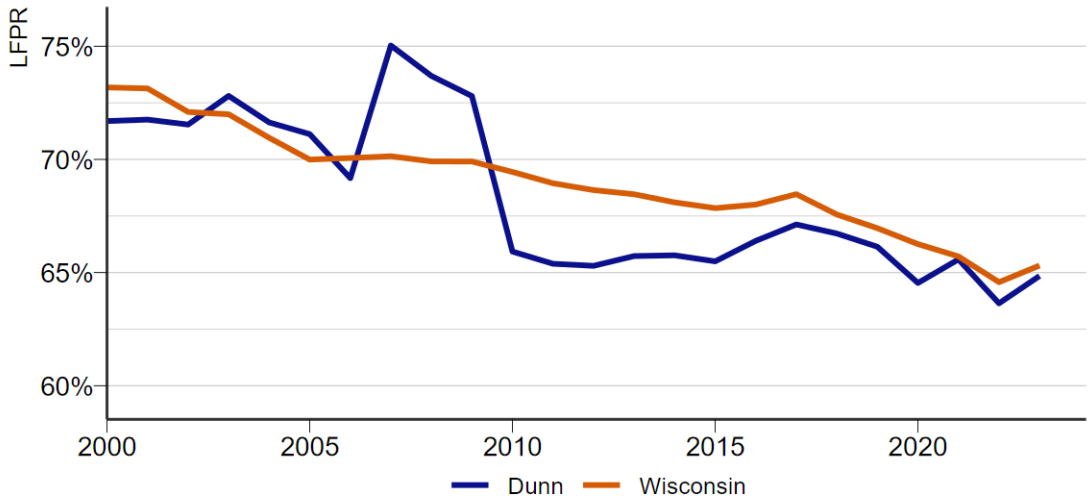


Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Cashiers	6,300	3.2%	0.89
Fast Food and Counter Workers	5,290	2.7%	-1.00
Retail Salespersons	4,930	2.5%	0.40
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	4,640	2.3%	-0.78
Registered Nurses	4,310	2.2%	0.04
Stockers and Order Fillers	4,050	2.0%	-0.05
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,030	2.0%	-0.09
Customer Service Representatives	3,340	1.7%	0.75
Office Clerks, General	3,270	1.6%	1.00
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,630	1.3%	-1.27

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)

In the West Central Workforce Development Area (WDA), which includes Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk and St. Croix counties, the largest occupation is cashiers, accounting for 3.2% of the area's employment. This occupation has an artificial intelligence exposure index of 0.89. For comparison, the occupation with the highest potential AI exposure is bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, with an AI exposure index of 1.89.

In Dunn County, four of the five most common jobs are related to transportation and material moving. This follows the fact that warehousing is one of the largest subsectors in the county. Manual occupations like these tend to have lower AI exposure indexes. In contract, office-based roles like cashiers and customer service representatives have higher AI exposure indexes, reflecting a greater likelihood of being impacted by AI adoption. Given the emerging nature of AI and its limited current adoption across industries, the long-term effects on occupations and the economy remain uncertain.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Construction	8,800	10,035	1,235	14.03%
Lowest Percent Growth	Information	1,208	1,075	-133	-11.01%
Highest Number Employed	Education and Health Services	48,084	52,353	4,269	8.88%
Most Jobs Added	Education and Health Services	48,084	52,353	4,269	8.88%
Total	Total All Industries	221,430	242,223	20,793	9.39%

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

DWD produces employment projections for Wisconsin's 11 WDAs every two years. Employment in the West Central WDA is projected to grow by 20,793 (9.4%) between 2022 and 2032, slightly outpacing the state's overall rate of 7.1%.

Industries are categorized as either goods-producing industries (for example, manufacturing, construction, and natural resources and mining) or service-producing industries (trade, transportation, utilities, education, health services, and leisure and hospitality). Goods-producing industries are expected to see growth of 8.3% over the decade, while service-producing industries are projected to grow by 9.5%, reflecting demand for services.

During the pandemic, demand shifted dramatically from services to goods, contributing to rapid inflation. With the economy opening, demand for services – and the industries that provide them – is expected to grow significantly.

For more information and detailed projections results for both occupations and industries, view the WisConomy projections page (jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconomy/pub/projections).

Occupation Employment Projections

	Occupation	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Lowest Percent Growth	Protective Service	3,352	3,381	29	0.9%
Highest Percent Growth	Personal Care and Service	5,561	6,447	886	15.9%
Highest Number Employed	Production	25,871	27,394	1,523	5.9%
Most Jobs Added	Transportation and Material Moving	21,814	24,472	2,658	12.2%
Total	Total, All	221,430	242,223	20,793	9.4%

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

In the West Central WDA, employment is projected to grow by 20,793 jobs between 2022 and 2032, translating to an average annual increase of approximately 2,079 jobs in the region. However, annual growth is just one component of total yearly job openings. The other two components include labor force exits, or retirements, and occupational transfers, or people switching to different roles. Strategies to address job openings will vary depending on the combination of these factors for each occupation.

For example, the computer numerically controlled tool operators occupation illustrates the dynamics of job openings. Total employment in this role is expected to decline by 1.6% for west central Wisconsin, but there are 96 projected annual openings. The openings will stem from labor force exits or occupation transfers. Addressing these openings may require strategies beyond simply hiring new workers, such as incentivizing current workers to stay in their occupations longer.

Aging Population

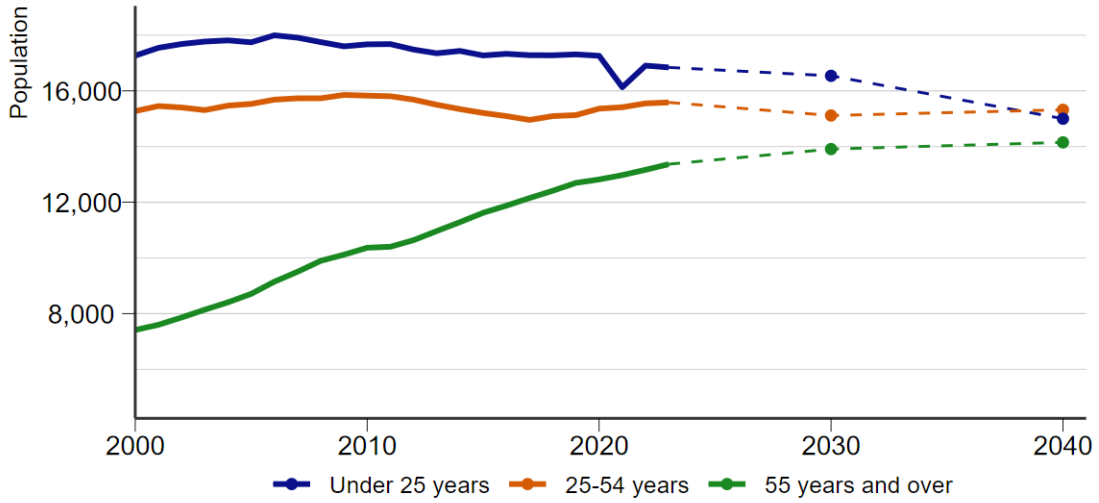


Figure 11: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program and WI Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center.

Dunn County's population is aging. The share of the population age 55 and older was 29.2% in 2023, growing from 25.0% in 2013. The selected age groups, under 25, 25-54, and over 55, represent three broad life stages, each with unique societal 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 the workforce and into retirement.

Dunn County's population under 25 is relatively stable, but steadily declining. This stability is buoyed by the prominence of UW-Stout. However, the population of individuals 55 and over is only increasing. This aging population impacts communities by reducing the labor force, increasing demand for health care, and raising the number of individuals relying on transfer payments. These demographic shifts present challenges for policy and workforce planning.

Personal Income

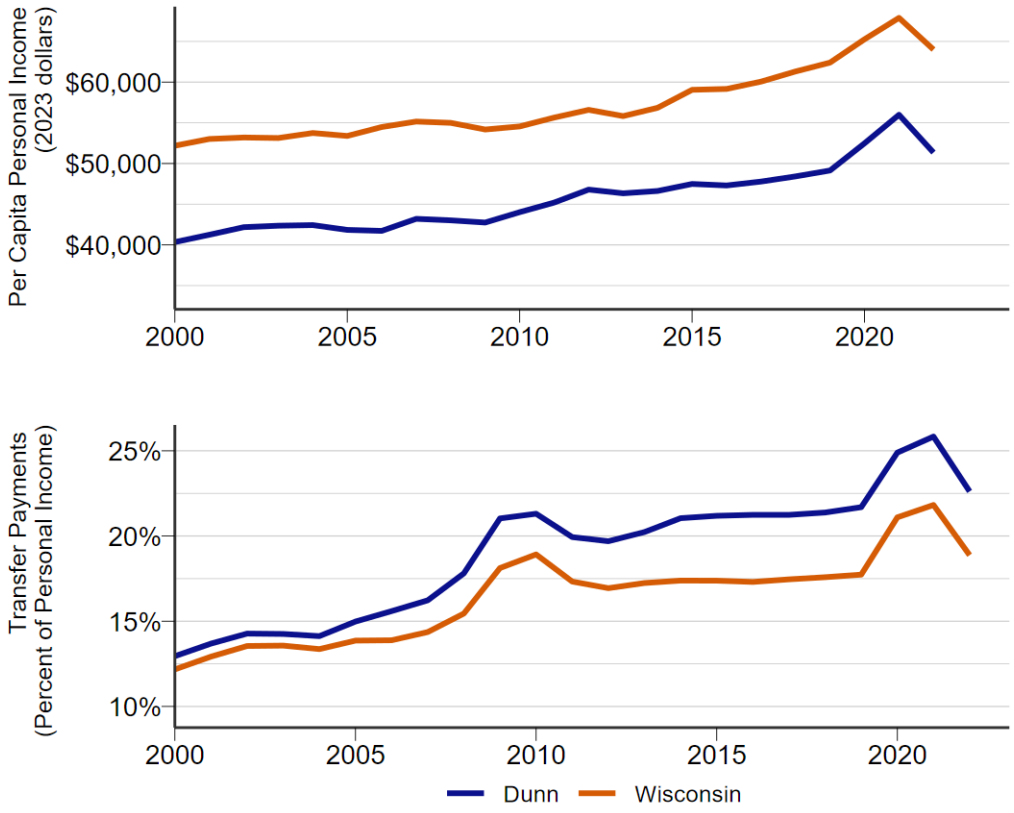


Figure 12: Source: United States Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Personal Income

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

The per capita personal income in Dunn County was $51,346 in 2022, compared to the statewide average of $63,996. While these figures are adjusted for inflation, they do not account for differences in cost of living across regions. Dunn is more affordable than the counties of St. Croix and Eau Claire, the two prominent neighboring counties. According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wisconsin, a family of two adults, one preschooler and one school-age child requires $71,783 annually to meet their basic needs. The same family in Eau Claire would need $82,667; in St. Croix, they would need $77,783.

In total, 22.6% of that income came from transfer payments as opposed to earned income in 2022. The steady increase in the share of transfer payments is likely closely tied to the county's aging population. As residents age, many become eligible for Social Security benefits, with contribute

significantly to transfer payments. Similar increases were observed during the 2008-2009 Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, when Unemployment Insurance and stimulus payments played a key role in stabilizing the economy during those economic downturns.

Workforce Pipeline

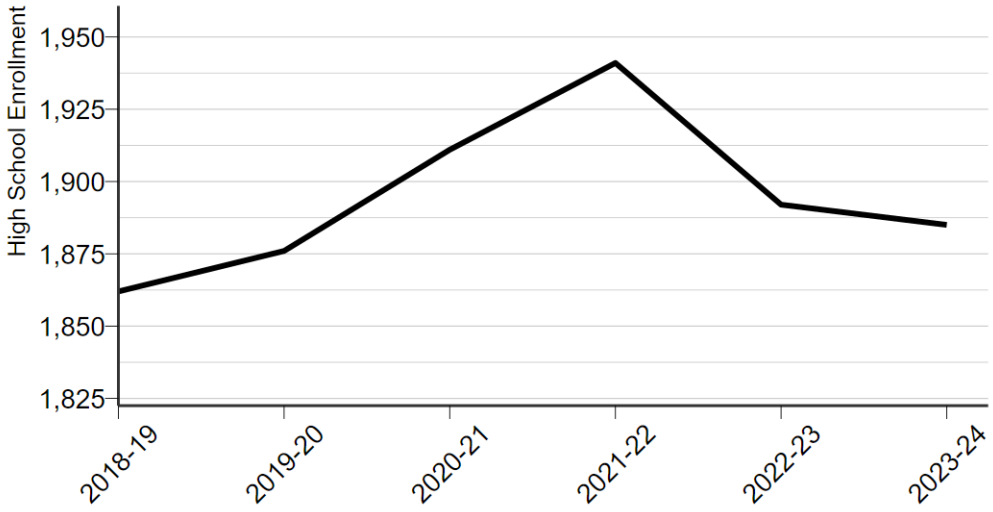


Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education plays a vital role in preparing the next generation of the labor force. As of the 2023-24 school year, 1,885 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 across 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.

As Dunn County's population continues to decline and age, high school enrollment has followed a similar downward trend over recent years. With a shrinking workforce, the quality of education and training becomes increasingly critical to meet the county's economic needs and ensure a skilled labor force.

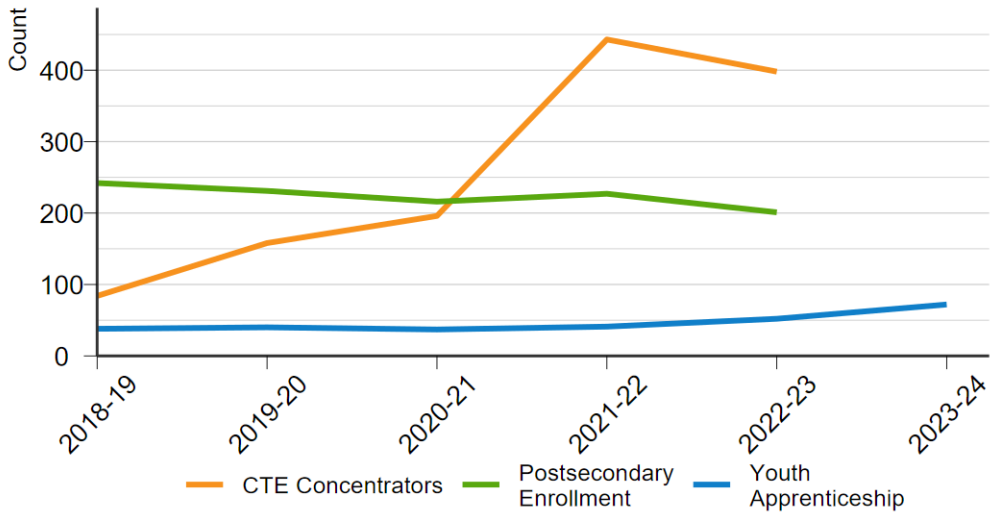


Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Among students in grades 11-12, 62.1% were enrolled as concentrators in career and technical education (CTE) during the 2022-23 school year, compared to 44.3% statewide. The career pathway with the largest number of participants was agriculture, food, and natural resources. It is a positive indication to see business, management and administration as the third largest CTE career clusters given that management occupations are projected to add the most jobs of any occupation group in the West Central region.

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
Dunn	398	40.7%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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

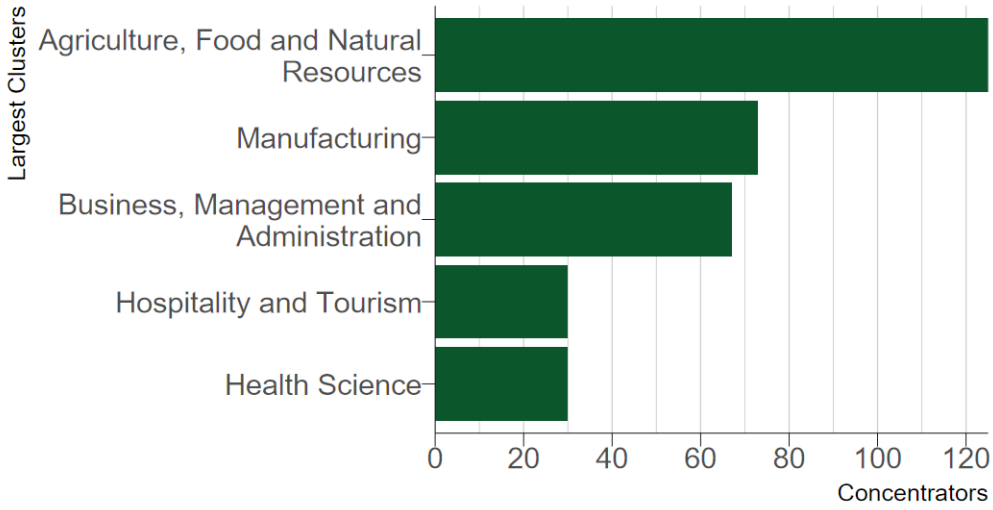


Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Postsecondary Enrollment

The percentage of high school completers who went on to enroll in a postsecondary institution as a percentage of all 12th grade students in 2022-23 was 42.2%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%. Dunn County high schoolers have the advantage of close access to UW-Stout as well as UW-Eau Claire in adjacent Eau Claire.

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
Dunn	201	42.2%
Wisconsin	31,893	43.6%

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

Youth Apprenticeship

Youth apprenticeship prepares students for the workforce through direct, hands-on experience. In the 2022-23 school year, 52 students in Dunn County participated in youth apprenticeship opportunities, gaining valuable skills and practical training.

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
Dunn	52	5.3%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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