Langlade County

2025 WORKFORCE PROFILE

STATE OF WISCONSIN DWD
Department of Workforce Development

WisConomy

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.
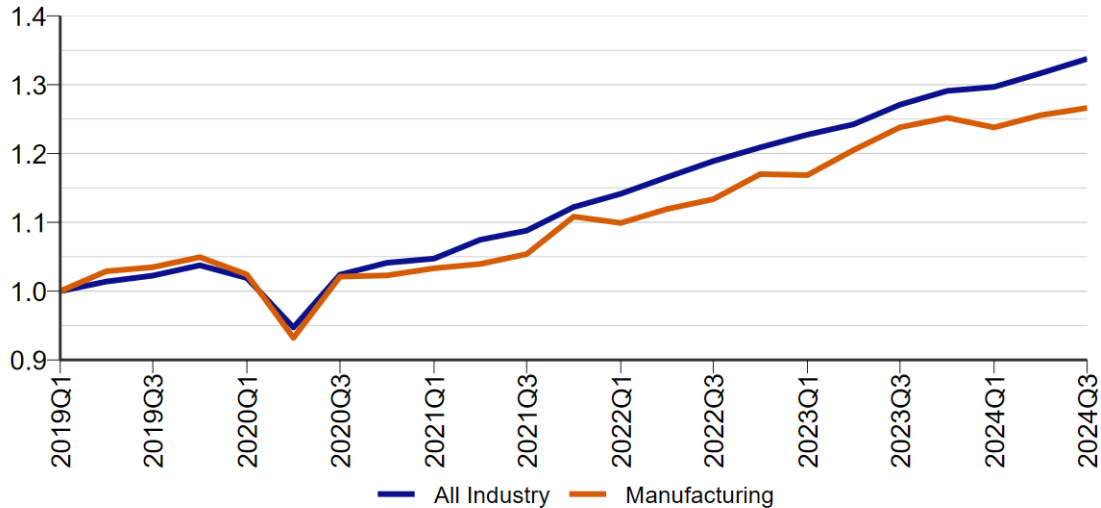

Figure 2: GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

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.

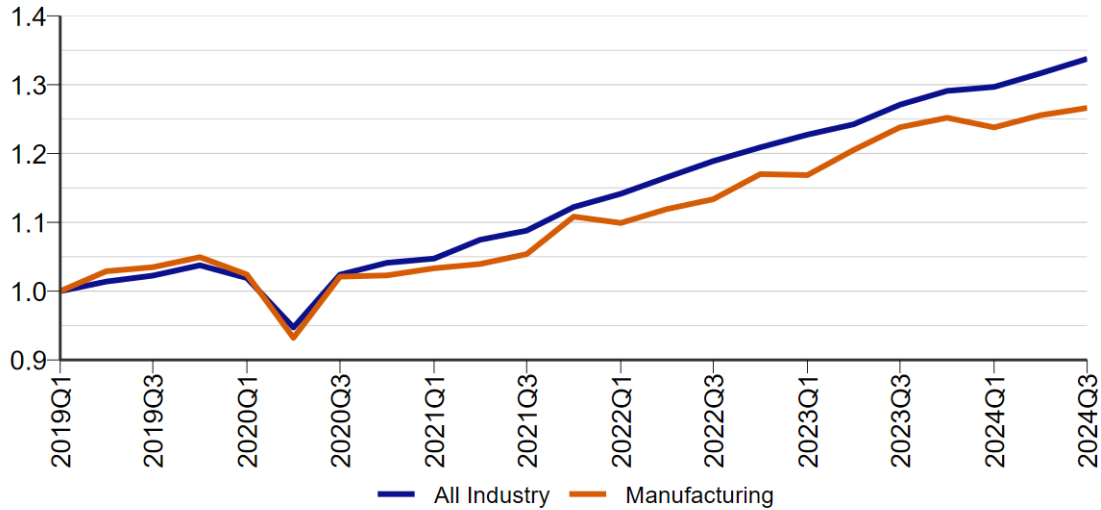[1]Third quarter 2024 is latest data available.

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.
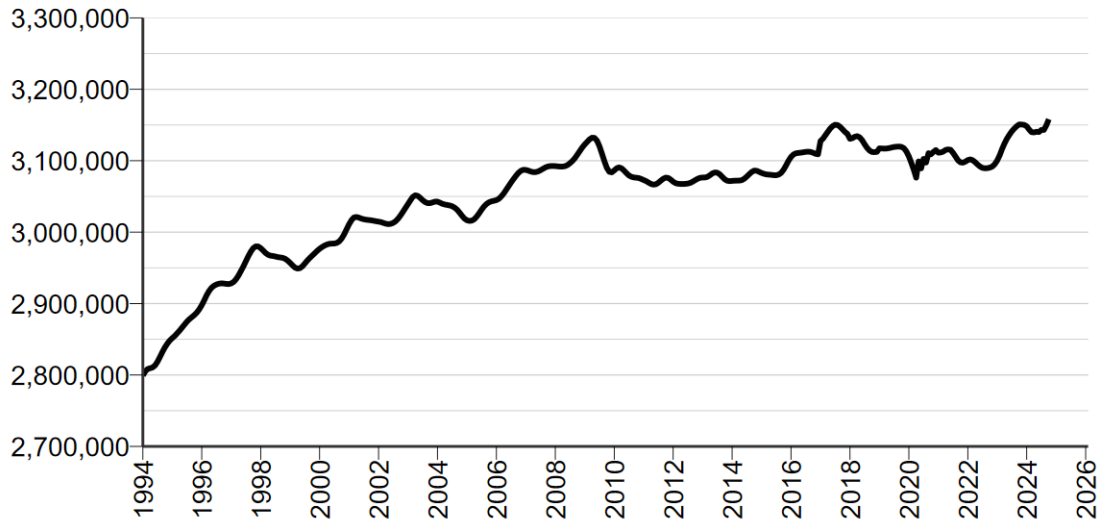
Figure 4: Wisconsin labor force.

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.
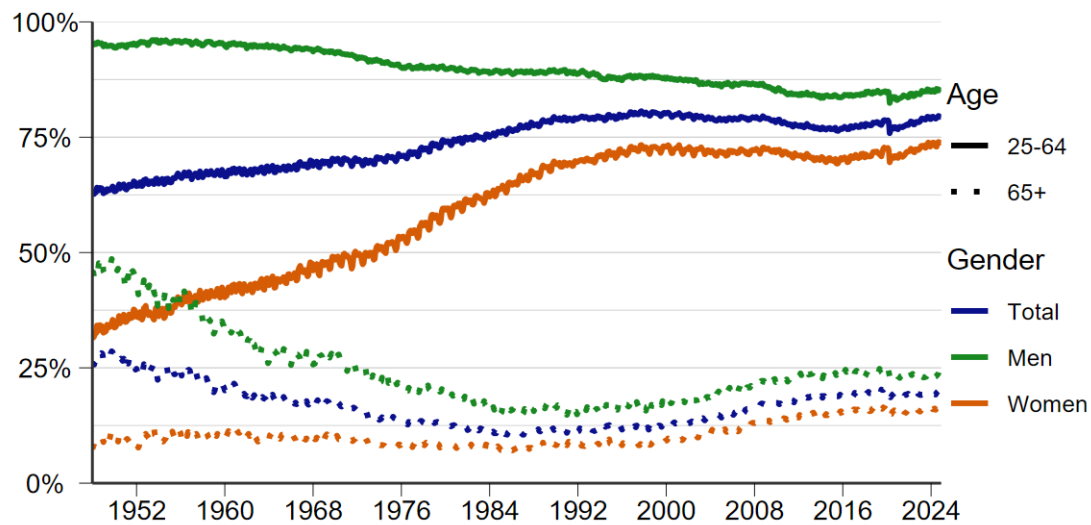

Figure 5: US labor force participation rate.

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.
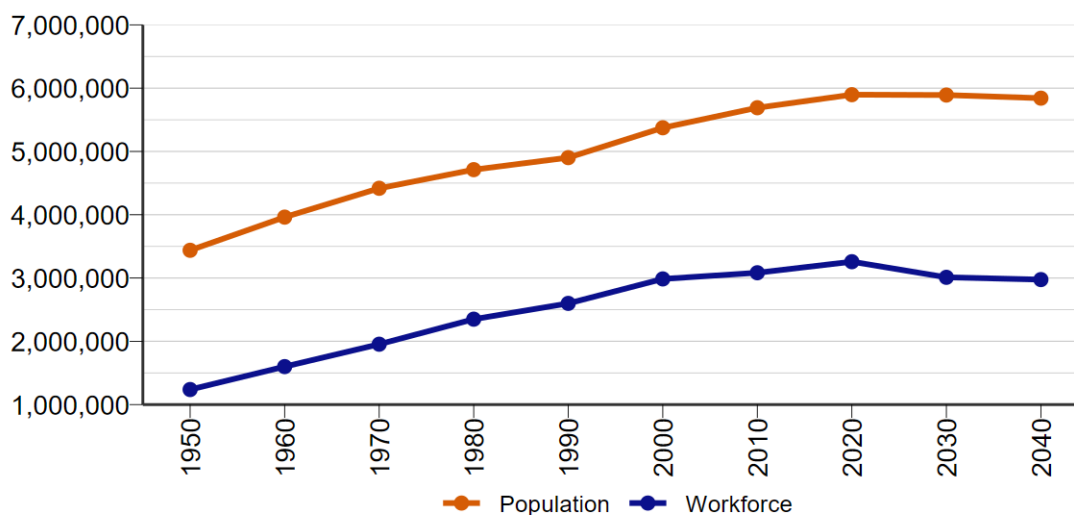
Figure 6: Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

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.
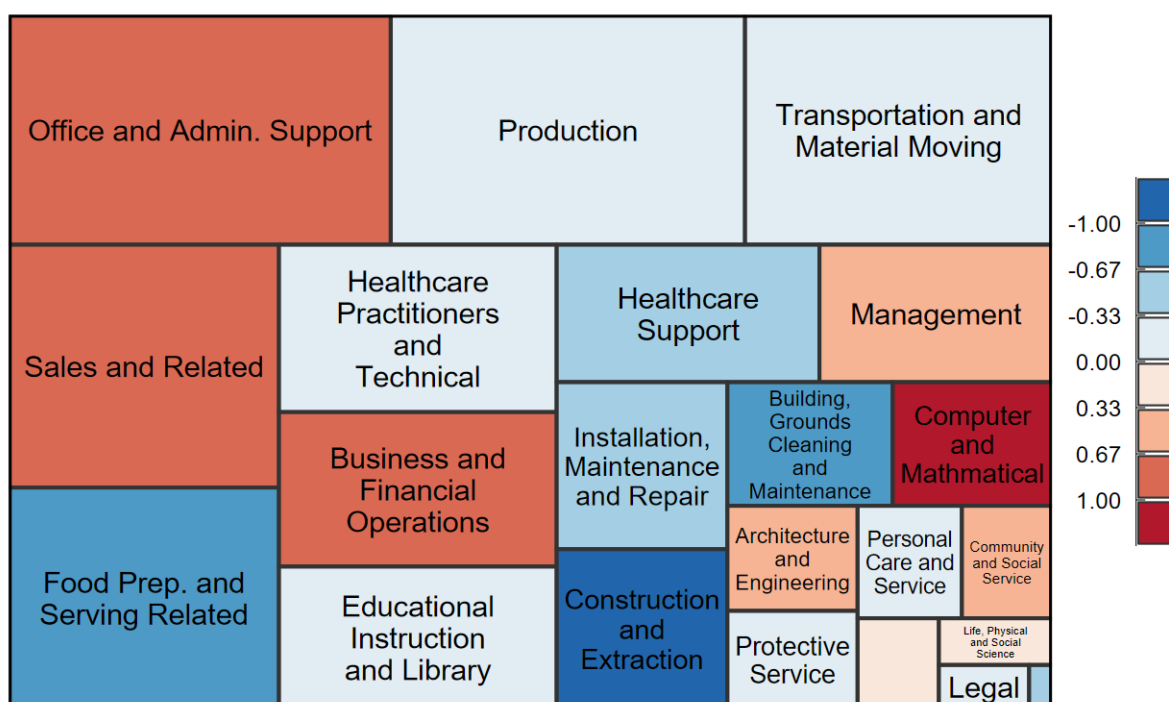

Figure 7: AI exposure per occupation group by number employed.

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
Antigo, City	8,100	7,977	-123	-1.5%
Rolling, Town	1,432	1,420	-12	-0.8%
Antigo, Town	1,369	1,358	-11	-0.8%
Elcho, Town	1,168	1,163	-5	-0.4%
Polar, Town	1,018	1,002	-16	-1.6%
Norwood, Town	907	908	1	0.1%
Neva, Town	846	835	-11	-1.3%
Wolf River, Town	783	792	9	1.2%
Upham, Town	726	723	-3	-0.4%
Langlade, Town	469	476	7	1.5%
Langlade, County	19,491	19,311	-180	-0.9%
Wisconsin, State	5,893,718	5,951,400	57,682	1.0%

Langlade County is the 54th most populous county in Wisconsin with 19,311 residents. It is also the state's 67th fastest-growing county. From 2020 to 2023, the population changed by -0.9%, compared to the 1.0% change in Wisconsin.
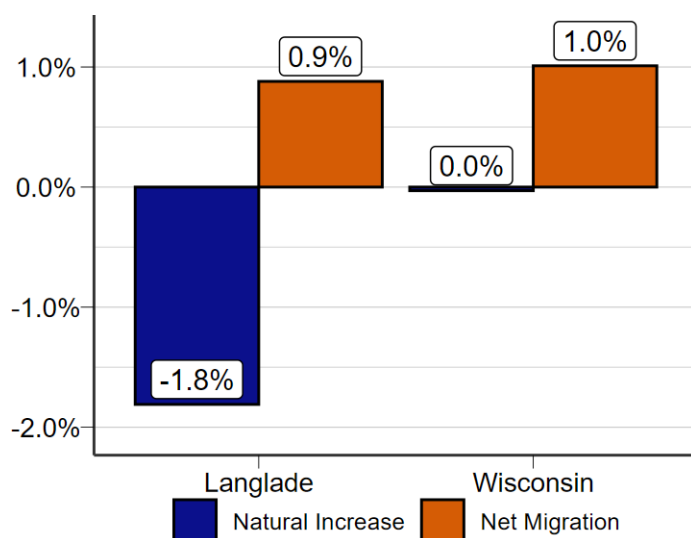
> **i Components of Population Change**
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> Population change is driven by natural increase and migration. Natural population increase occurs when there are more births than deaths, while migration increases when more people move into the county than 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 Langlade County is the Town of Langlade, which added 7 people, for a 1.5% growth rate. The largest municipality in Langlade County is the City of Antigo, its county seat. The city experienced the greatest decline in population, losing 123 residents from 2020 to 2023, resulting in a population decrease of 1.5%.

Langlade County's population growth in terms of natural increase was -1.8%, ranking 63rd in the state. Net migration was 0.9%, ranking 37th in the state. As of 2022, the county's median age was 48.6, significantly higher than the state's median age of 39.9. The county's population age 65 years and older accounted for 24.5% of its total population, while the state's accounted for 19.2%. These figures represent the age composition of both the county and the state, depicting

Langlade County's population as being older in comparison. In general, an older population exhibits a weaker natural population increase. While natural increase does not show immediate labor market availability, it offers insight into the long-term workforce pipeline. Efforts to improve net migration will have a more immediate impact on the labor force and is more actionable than natural increase. Increasing net migration is achievable by improving the county's economic opportunity and standard of living, which could benefit the county in mitigating workforce challenges that will continue as baby boomers age out of the workforce.

Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2050 Population Change
Langlade	19,491	18,155	16,440	14,720	-24.5%
Wisconsin	5,893,718	5,890,915	5,841,620	5,710,120	-3.1%

Source: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Department of Administration.

In 2024, the Wisconsin Department of Administration produced population projections based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 counts. These projections are largely driven by shifts in age distributions, of which are primarily driven by long-term trends in fertility rates. Differences in both age distribution and fertility rates contribute to different expectations to total population change. Langlade County is expected to have a significantly less favorable population change than Wisconsin.

From 2020 to 2050, the population of Langlade County is projected to decrease by 24.5%, while Wisconsin is projected to decrease by just 3.1%. Projected population decreases are generally rooted in either declining fertility rates or the age distributions shifting older, or both. From 2020 to 2050, the proportion of the population age 65 years and older in Langlade County is predicted to increase from 25.2% to 31.3%. In Wisconsin, the proportion of this age group is predicted to increase from 18.0% to 23.0% over the same period.

Employment by Industry

	2023 Avg Monthly Employment	5-year Change	5-year % Change	% of Total Employment
Total, All Industries	7,268	-132	-1.8%	100.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,177	89	4.3%	30.0%
Manufacturing	1,319	-68	-4.9%	18.1%
Education and Health Services	1,223	-185	-13.1%	16.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	645	-2	-0.3%	8.9%
Public Administration	405	-21	-4.9%	5.6%
Professional and Business Services	383	105	37.8%	5.3%
Natural Resources and Mining	374	-45	-10.7%	5.1%
Financial Activities	301	-8	-2.6%	4.1%
Construction	216	20	10.2%	3.0%
Other Services	205	14	7.3%	2.8%
Information	22	-31	-58.5%	0.3%

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

Langlade County employment lost 132 jobs (-1.8%) from 2018 to 2023. Average employment levels were at 7,268 jobs in 2023. The largest industry was trade, transportation, and utilities, accounting for 30.0% of employment in the county in 2023. A deeper dive into the data reveals that employment in this industry is heavily concentrated in the retail trade sector, which accounts for 67.5% of trade, transportation, and utilities' industry employment. From 2018 to 2023, the fastest-growing industry was professional and business services. While this industry added 105 jobs for a 37.8% growth rate, it was impacted by a non-economic code change. Comparing employment levels to 2018, an accurate pre-pandemic reference point, provides the relative employment change where a negative value signals an unfulfilled recovery. While Langlade County's employment growth of -1.8% was short of a full recovery to its 2018 level, Wisconsin has already recovered and surpassed its 2018 level by 1.6%.

Unemployment

Langlade County's monthly average unemployment rate in 2023 was 3.6%, compared to the state's rate of 3.0%. This ranks the county 51st in terms of the rate of unemployment in 2023. When the unemployment rate is below 5%, the area is considered to be near or at full employment, meaning that most people who want a job have one. While this signifies people generally having an easier time finding work, it also reflects a tight labor market where employers have a smaller hiring pool of potential workers.

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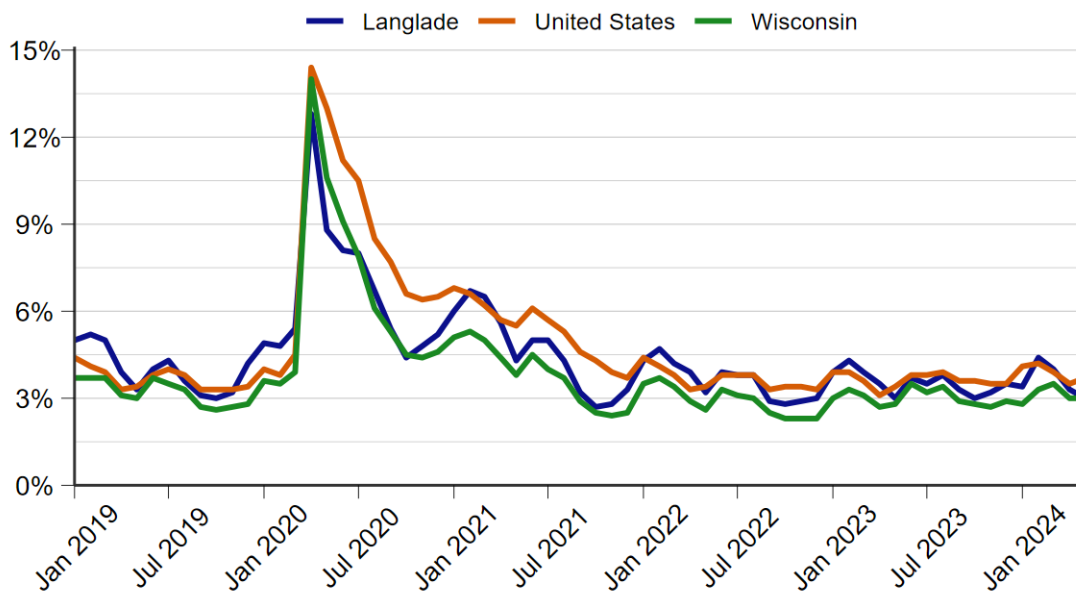
Figure 9: Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Participation

Many employers have faced difficulty in the attraction and retention of employees. Trends in the labor force participation rate (LFPR) suggest that this challenge is likely to persist into the future. From 2000 to 2023, Langlade County's rate fell by 8.9 percentage points while North Central and Wisconsin experienced declines of 11.0 and 7.9 percentage points respectively. The long-term decline in the rate is attributable to the aging of the population, as a greater share of the population reaches retirement age and leaves the workforce. As of 2023, Langlade County's labor force participation rate was 57.7%, ranking 53rd in the state. Meanwhile, North Central's rate was 60.1%, ranking 10th among the state's 11 Workforce Development Areas.

> **ℹ Labor Force Participation Rate**
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> 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.
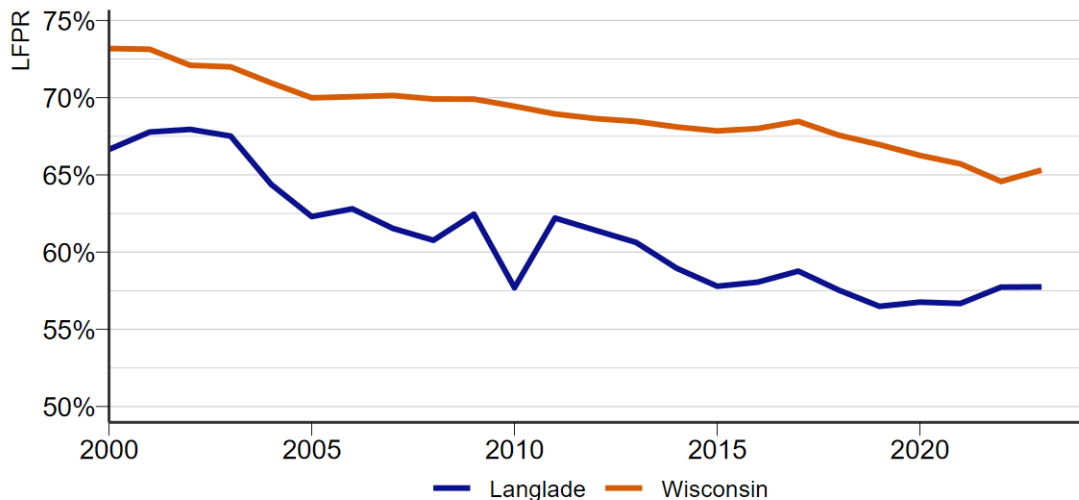

Figure 10: Source: WI Department of Workforce Development Office of Economic Advisors.

AI Impact

Occupation	Employment	% of Total Employment	AI Exposure Index
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	6,120	3.3%	-0.09
Cashiers	5,730	3.1%	0.89
Retail Salespersons	4,440	2.4%	0.40
Fast Food and Counter Workers	4,100	2.2%	-1.00
Registered Nurses	3,990	2.1%	0.04
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,900	2.1%	-0.78
Customer Service Representatives	3,390	1.8%	0.75
Office Clerks, General	3,320	1.8%	1.00
Stockers and Order Fillers	3,320	1.8%	-0.05
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,450	1.3%	-1.27

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

> ℹ️ AI Exposure
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> 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 state is composed of 11 Workforce Development Areas (WDAs). The nine-county North Central WDA consists of Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood counties. The largest occupation in the North Central WDA is heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, accounting for 3.3% of the area's employment. This occupation has an artificial intelligence exposure index of -0.09. For context, the occupation with the highest potential AI exposure is bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, with an AI exposure index of 1.89.

While this new AI technology impacts many areas, its influence will be minimal for others. Occupations with a greater reliance on unique human skills like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, physical skills, or human presence will be less likely to affected. For example, in the construction industry, the most common occupation is construction laborers. This occupation has an AI exposure index of -0.63. Due to the emerging nature of this technology, and its lack of widespread adoption by industry, only time will tell exactly how this new technology will be integrated into the economy.

Industry Employment Projections

	Industry	2022 Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Employment Change 2022-2032	% Change 2022-2032
Highest Percent Growth	Construction	7,603	8,658	1,055	13.88%
Most Jobs Added	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	40,564	44,071	3,507	8.65%
Highest Number Employed	Education and Health Services	46,989	50,171	3,182	6.77%
Total	Total All Industries	217,505	234,144	16,639	7.65%

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

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) produces projections on industry and occupational employment for Wisconsin's 11 WDAs every two years. DWD's projections methodology accounts for various types of changes that the local workforce will encounter: retirements, career changes, and demand changes. The current forecast provides employment over the 10-year period of 2022 to 2032.

The regional economy of North Central is expected to add 16,639 jobs from 2022 to 2032. Total employment is projected to grow to 234,144, growing at a rate of 7.7% and outpacing the state's anticipated growth rate of 7.1%. North Central's fastest-growing industry is projected to be construction (13.9%), while Wisconsin's is leisure and hospitality (11.9%). In North Central and Wisconsin, each industry is expected to exhibit employment growth.

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
Highest Percent Growth	Personal Care and Service	4,975	5,778	803	16.1%
Highest Number Employed	Office and Administrative Support	25,922	26,097	175	0.7%
Lowest Percent Growth	Office and Administrative Support	25,922	26,097	175	0.7%
Most Jobs Added	Transportation and Material Moving	22,293	24,917	2,624	11.8%
Total	Total, All	217,505	234,144	16,639	7.6%

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

While industry projections are useful, occupational projections offer more detailed insights. Occupational projections separate openings into three categories: labor force exits, occupational transfers, and growth. Retirements are a key driver in the labor force exits category. While actual retirement age varies among individuals, age 65 can be used as a rough proxy for expected retirement. Considering this benchmark, Wisconsin baby boomers are approximately halfway through retiring. Occupational transfers can include workers that advance in careers or make lateral movements into different occupations. Generally, a higher need for replacements due to transfers can be expected in lower paying occupations.

Analysis of projected occupational employment reveals that 26,396 total openings will be expected over the period. This will consist of 10,236 labor force exits, 14,496 occupational transfers, and 1,664 openings due to growth. This indicates that hiring replacements will be a greater need than filling new positions created by growth.

The forecast results may also be indicative of technology's increasing impact on the future of work. Computer and mathematical occupations and business and financial operations occupations are among the top ten fastest-growing occupational groups, with predicted growth rates of 14.4% and 10.2% respectively. The anticipated growth of these groups partially reflects the increasing reliance of data-driven decision making, which involves the development or utilization of emerging technologies like AI and big data.
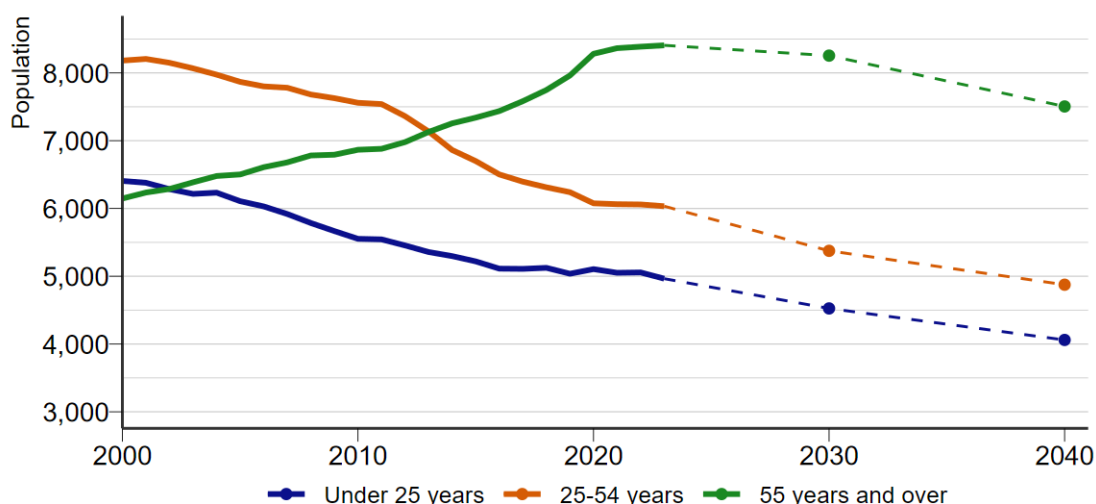
Aging Population

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

The chart displays the age structure of the local population, depicting the compositional shifts of the population by each age group. The most prominent of these shifts is the growth in the number of residents in Langlade County that are aged 55 years and older. This age group not only grew in size, increasing from 6,147 residents in 2000 to 8,407 in 2023, but also grew in proportion, significantly increasing its share of the overall population from 29.6% in 2000 to 43.3% in 2023.

In contrast, the two younger age groups have declined over time. The group aged 25-54 years decreased from 8,182 residents in 2000 to 6,033 in 2023, and its share of Langlade County's total population declined from 39.5% to 31.1%. The group aged under 25 years decreased from 6,406 residents in 2000 to 4,964 in 2023, and its share of Langlade County's total population declined from 30.9% to 25.6%.

The shifts among these age groups help detail the aging population, of which will continue to impose challenges in a myriad of ways. Older aged populations often face greater workforce challenges, as labor shortages grow more intense due to a higher occurrence of retirements and lower levels of younger workers. Lower population growth rates are also often present, supporting a long-run workforce quantity challenge. Demand for healthcare will increase, and workforce shortages will impair the availability of care. Caregiving for aging relatives will become more prevalent, fall on fewer shoulders due to decreased family sizes, and will require greater flexibility with work schedules. While not an exhaustive list of challenges, the importance of attraction and retention of workers, up-skilling, and being adaptive, will be influential to an area's economic health.
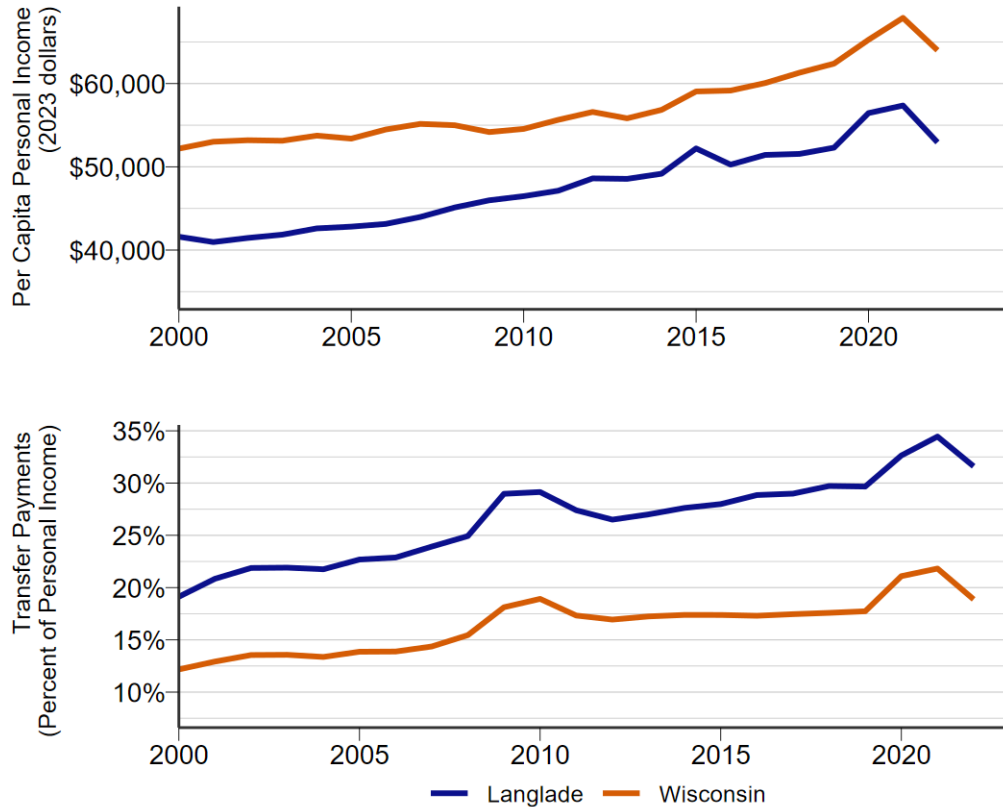
Personal Income

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 (PCPI) in Langlade County was $52,937 in 2022. Statewide, the average was $63,996 and the median was $56,656. While the county's PCPI fell below these statewide figures, it has exhibited the same upwards trend, typically increasing over time. The most visible exception to this is from 2021 to 2022, where PCPI declined year over year by $4,426. This decline depicts the decreased purchasing power among consumers, stemming from the conclusion of stimulus payments and the inflation that followed.

The second chart featured here provides the share of total personal income that was accounted for by transfer payments. While the county's shares sit above the state, it has exhibited the same upwards trend, typically increasing over time. In Langlade County, this share increased from 19.1%

in 2000 to 31.6% in 2022. In Wisconsin, this share increased from 12.2% to 18.9% during the same period. The rising shares is consistent with the previously mentioned aging of the population, as an increasingly higher share of the population becomes eligible for payments from government programs such as Social Security. The county's comparatively higher shares is consistent with the county's older aged demographics.
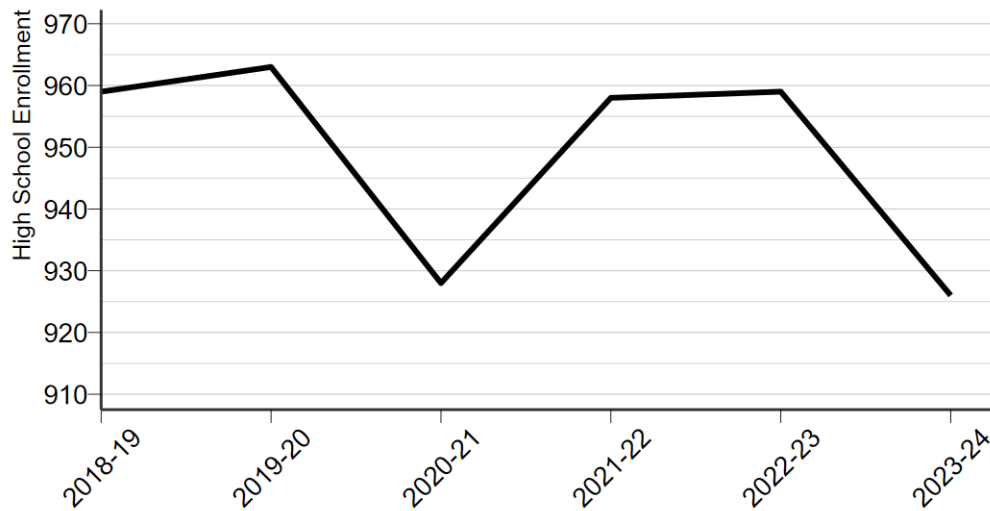
Workforce Pipeline

Figure 13: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Education prepares the next generation of the labor force and enrollment counts help provide insight on the inflow of those aging into the workforce. As of the 2023-24 school year, 926 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. This includes public, private, and home-based schools. Note that school district borders can extend into multiple counties, meaning that county-level counts may not necessarily represent the precise enrollment within county borders. Counts are determined by the reported enrollment of school districts whose main office is located in that county.
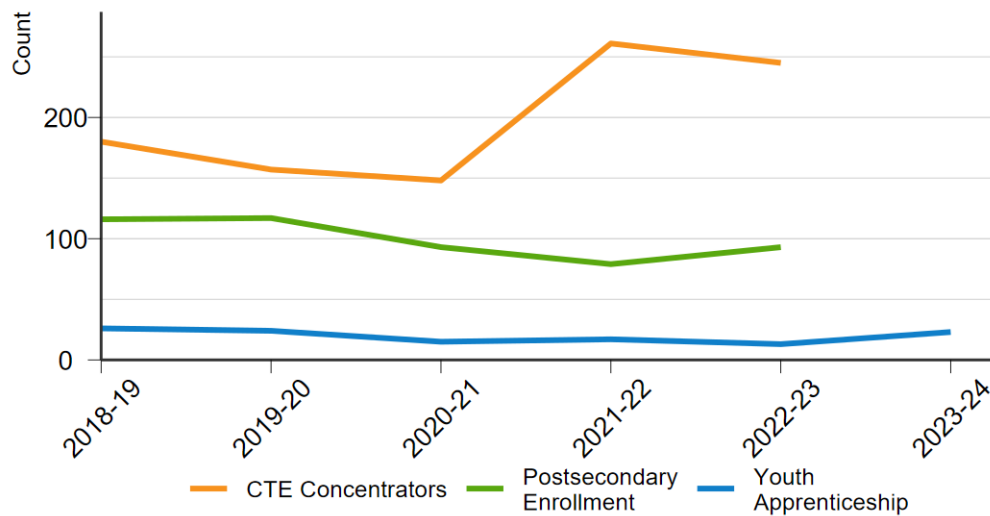

Figure 14: Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Workforce Development.

Career and Technical Education

Of those attendees, 51.4% were concentrators in career and technical education (CTE), compared to 44.3% for the state during the 2022-23 school year. These are students in 11th and 12th grade that have completed at least two CTE courses in a single career pathway. CTE participation is evidence of efforts to improve career readiness among high school students.

Career pathways help students target their preparation towards in-demand careers, which fall under one of 16 career clusters. In Langlade County, two career clusters equally recorded the greatest engagement, with each having 40 concentrators and each accounting for 16.3% of concentrators in the county. These two career clusters are agriculture, food and natural resources and arts, A/V technology and communications.

In Wisconsin, the two most popular career clusters are hospitality and tourism and business management and administration, respectively accounting for 13.4% and 12.2% of concentrators across the state. While the distribution of concentrators by career cluster often varies significantly between the county and state, it emphasizes the county's distinct labor market in terms of student interest and local demand.

> **i** Career and Technical Education
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> 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
Langlade	245	51.4%
Wisconsin	64,124	44.3%

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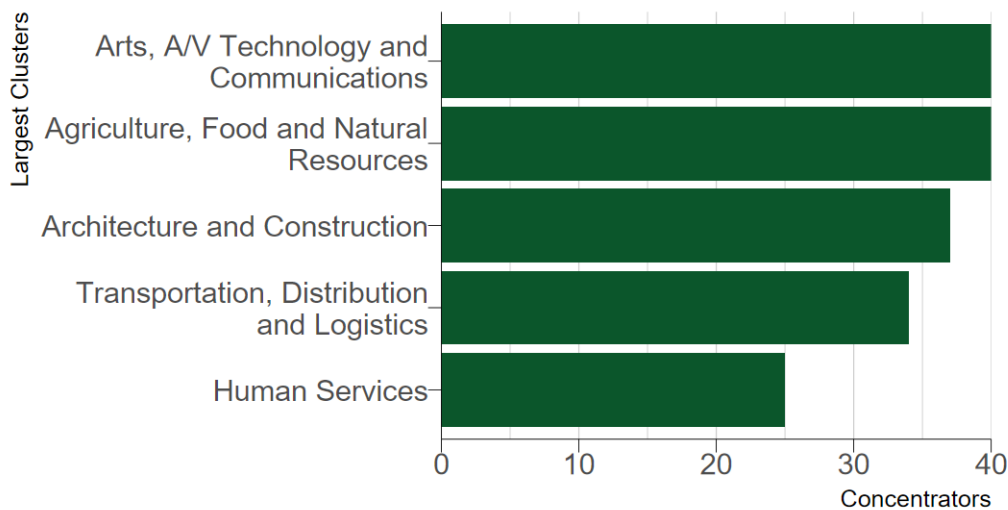

Figure 15: School year 2022-23. Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

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 37.3%. In Wisconsin, it was 43.6%.

> **i** Postsecondary Enrollment
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> 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
Langlade	93	37.3%
Wisconsin	31,893	43.6%

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

Youth Apprenticeship

Youth apprenticeship is a program that helps participants prepare for the workforce through direct, hands-on work experience. There were 13 youth apprentices in Langlade County in the 2022-23 school year.

> **i** Youth Apprenticeship
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> 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
Langlade	13	2.7%
Wisconsin	8,222	5.7%

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