Year 2025 State of Wisconsin - Regional Economic Analysis

Department of Workforce Development

prepared by Office of Economic Advisors
State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

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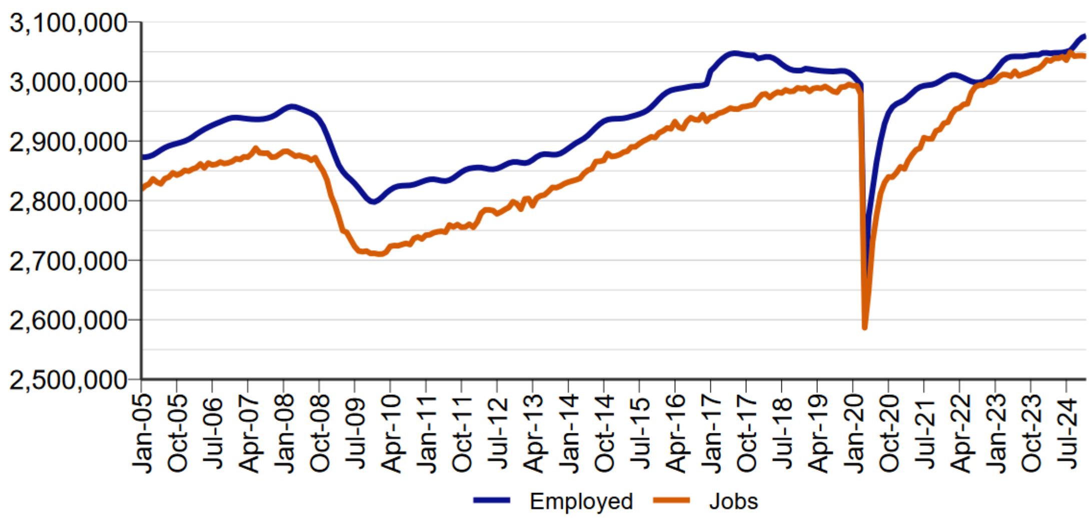
Wisconsin's labor market experienced a strong year in 2024. Employment reached record levels, inflation appeared to wane, and interest rates accommodated a largely reconstrued supply chain. In addition, real wages turned positive and consumer spending was robust.

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

Wisconsin Jobs

The 2024 employment picture was favorable for Wisconsin, reaching a new record in December at 3,076,500. The state's low unemployment rates were also noteworthy, registering 3.0% or below the entire year. Though positive employment numbers were expected in this post-pandemic expansionary economic period, many of Wisconsin's totals surpassed pre-pandemic amounts.

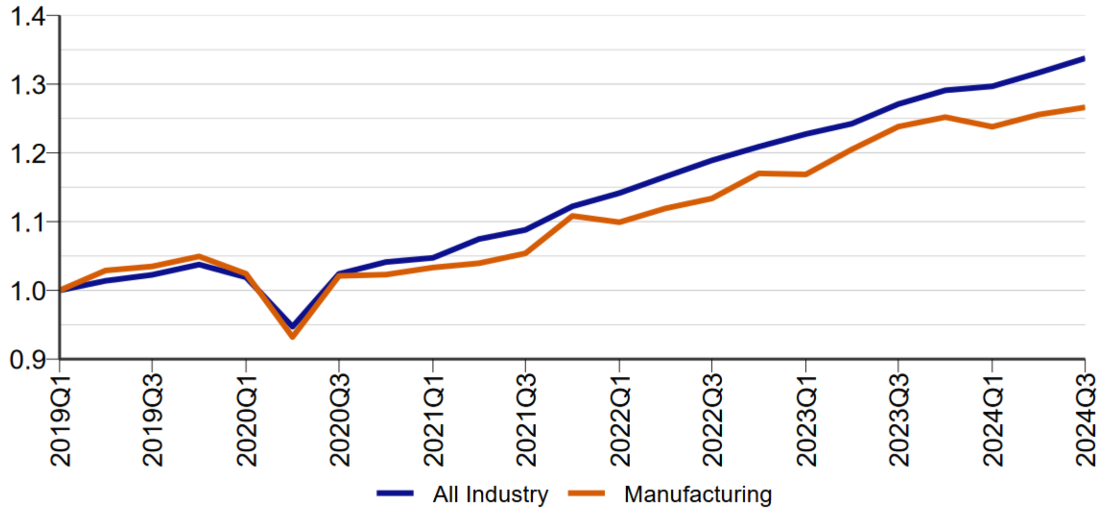
Total non-farm employment reached new highs, climbing through the year to peak in August at a seasonally-adjusted basis of 3,048,000 and consolidating high levels through the remainder of the year, ending in December at 3,042,100. That marks a 1.6% increase over the pre-pandemic highs set in December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



Wisconsin employment and jobs.

Economy

Wisconsin Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 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.

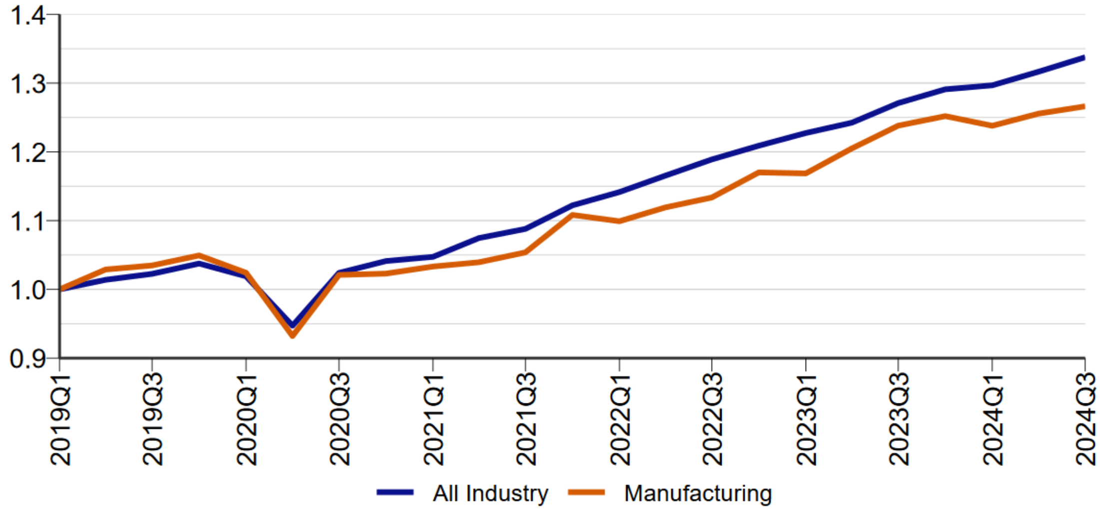


GDP growth index (2019Q1 = 100).

Many industry sectors were vibrant in 2024. Construction industry jobs hit a new record, surpassing 140,000. Healthcare jobs also set a new high at 324,200. The leisure and hospitality sector recovered almost all of 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-pandemic 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 low compared to overall economic output. Two of Wisconsin'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.



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

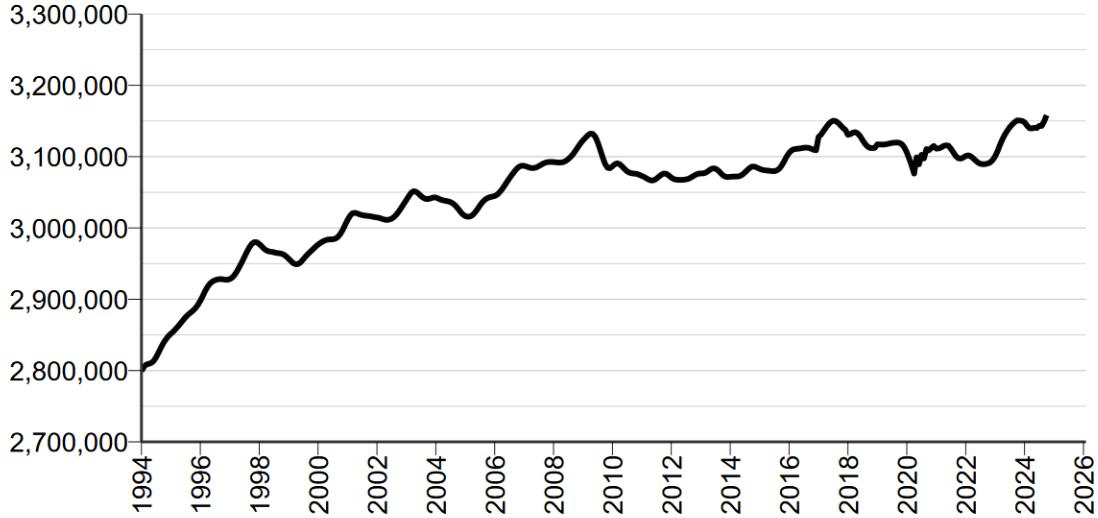
While the durable goods manufacturing sector saw declines, non-durable goods manufacturing in Wisconsin has made headway. Jobs in the non-durables industries have increased since the pre-pandemic high of 198,600 in July of 2019 to 201,000 in December 2024. Most of the increase has occurred in the food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

Labor Quantity Challenges

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

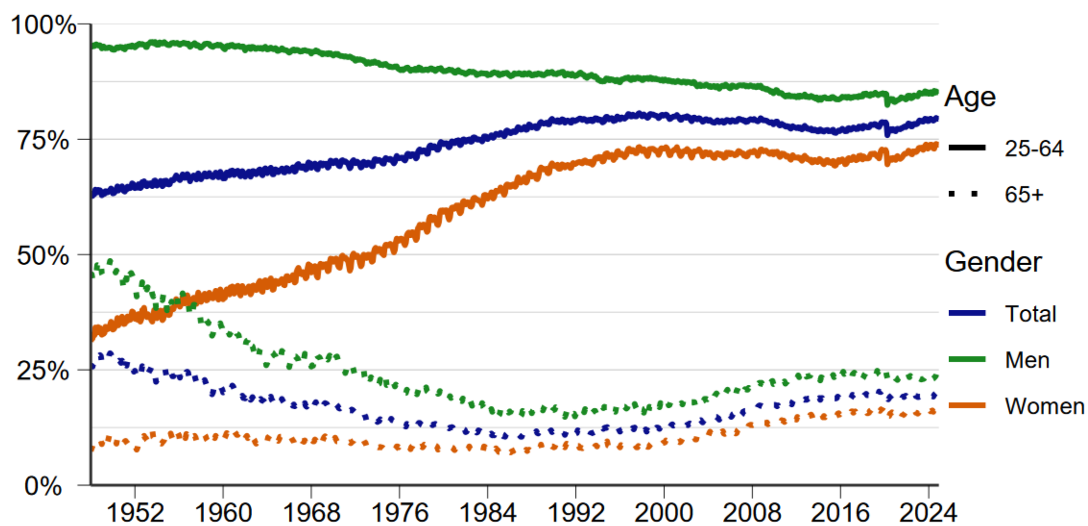
As noted in studies dating back to 2000, there are insufficient numbers of young workers to fill the jobs being vacated by the generation of baby boomers and satisfy the increased demand for workers associated with economic growth. The number of workers entering the labor market is essentially the same as the baby 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 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.



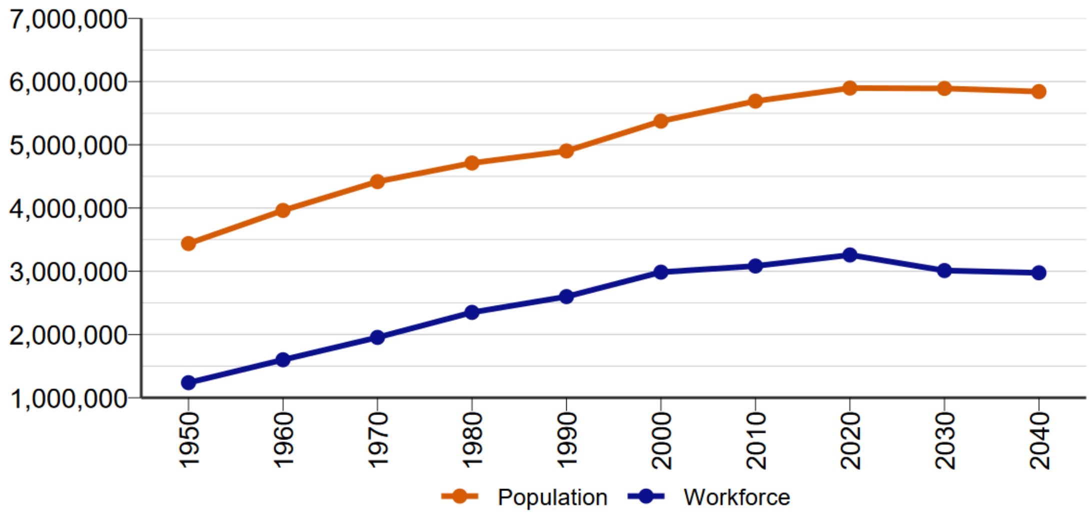
Wisconsin labor force.

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



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.



Wisconsin population and workforce projections.

While the overall situation has been realized for some time, the actual quantity of the labor shortfall has been undetermined until now. Staff at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) 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).

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

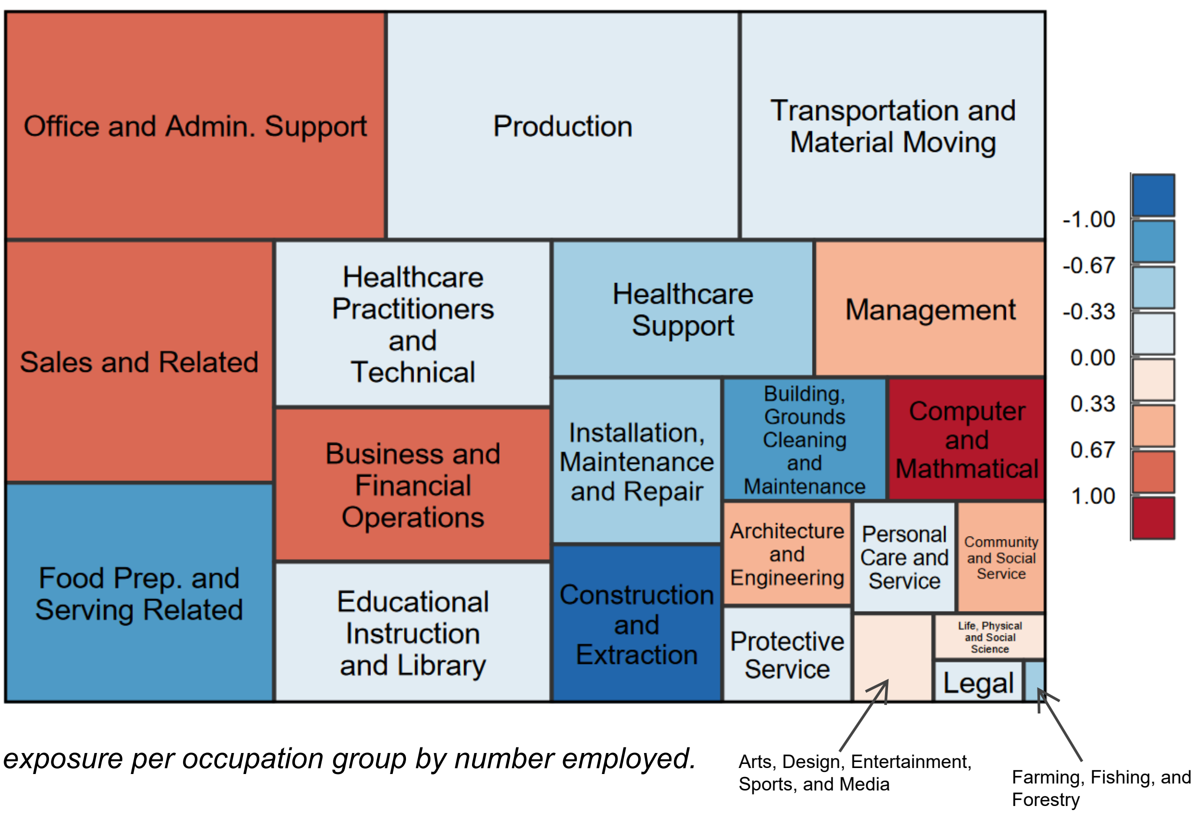
Altering a fundamental input of the macroeconomic construct will impact all sectors. The limited and shifting human resource segment will alter income streams, change demand for goods and services, and affect the provision of public goods and services.

Wisconsin's economic health and vigor have been illustrated in the employment and jobs data. However, record low unemployment rates signify two usually unassociated yet coupled performance indicators. On 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 quickly.

Yet to be explored are how the limited labor pool and aging population effect 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.

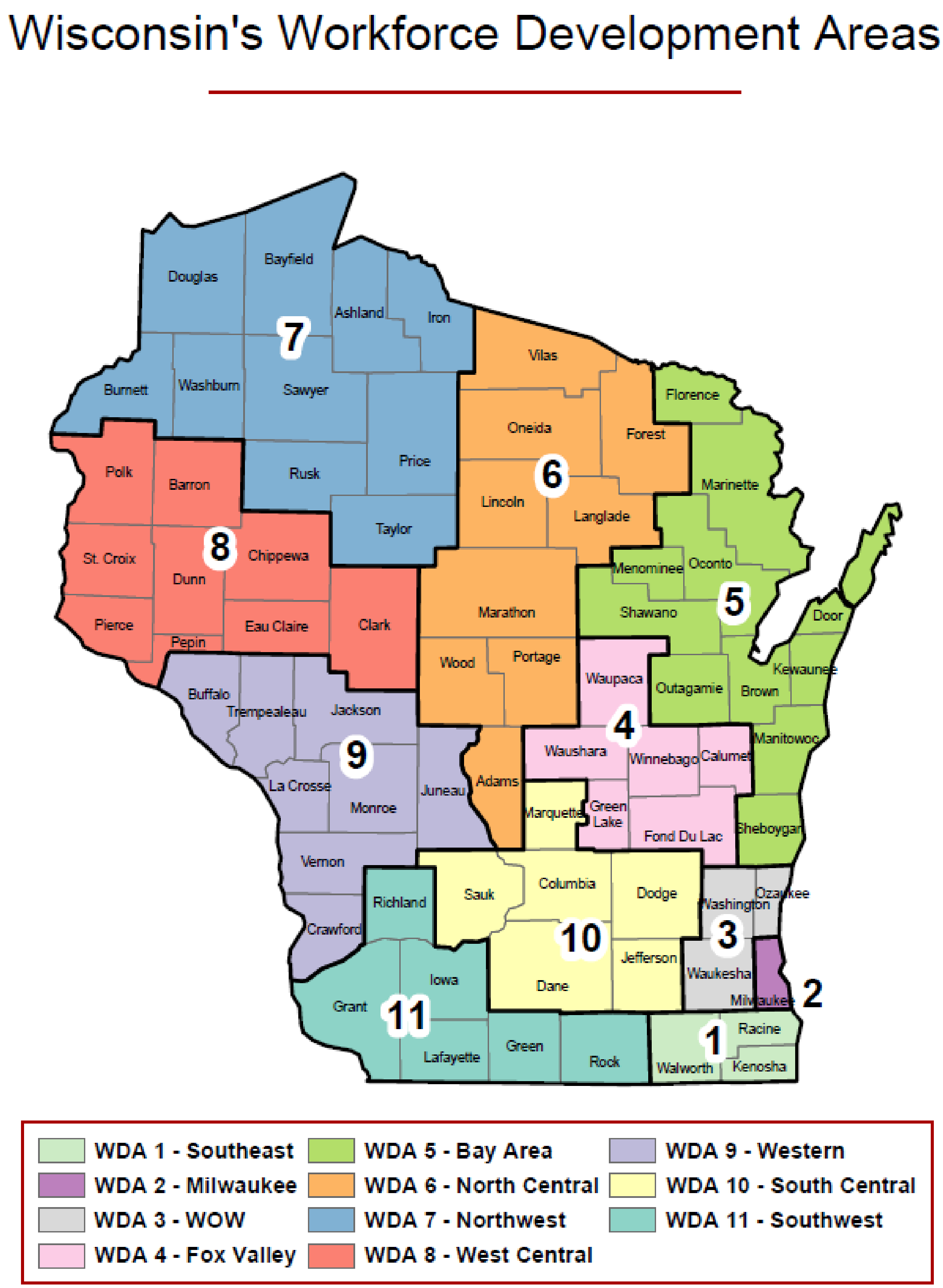
One major unknown on the horizon is the effect that artificial intelligence (AI) will have on the future of economic and workforce development. The Governor's Task Force on Workforce and Artificial Intelligence Advisory Action Plan (found here) outlines some of the expected effects of AI. For example, the chart below sheds some light on the extent that various occupations may be impacted by AI.



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 AI technology. The degree to how each will affect the other and the whole is yet to be determined.

Part II – Regional Economic Brief of Wisconsin's Workforce Development Areas (WDAs)



Bay Area WDA

The Bay Area Workforce Development Area (WDA) is composed of 11 counties in northeastern Wisconsin: Brown, Door, Florence, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, and Sheboygan. Although it encompasses a large geographical area, the Bay Area WDA is not the most populous WDA, nor does it contain the largest labor force or job base. Further, because of its large expanse, changes in the labor force, jobs, wages, and income will vary, sometimes significantly, from one county to the next.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	454,448	449,674	1.1%
Employment	442,103	438,079	0.9%
Unemployment	12,345	11,595	6.5%
Unemployment Rate	2.7%	2.6%	3.8%

In calendar year 2024, Bay Area's labor force totaled 454,448 participants consisting of 442,103 employed and 12,345 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force grew by 4,774 participants: a 1.06% increase. While the number of employed rose by 0.92% over the year, the number of unemployed rose by 6.47%.

The Bay Area's unemployment rate was 2.7% in 2024; a 0.1 percentage point increase from 2023. This rate was lower than the statewide rate of 3.0%. Generally, the Bay Area region experiences a lower unemployment rate than that seen statewide.

The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is defined as the share of the 16 and older non-institutional population (not incarcerated or in nursing facilities) that is in the labor force (working or seeking work). The Bay Area's LFPR in 2024 was 66.0%. The regional LFPR increased by 0.1% relative to 2023.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	423,959	420,064	0.9%	0.7%
Construction	23,955	23,362	2.5%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	86,625	84,513	2.5%	2.7%
Financial Activities	18,981	19,409	-2.2%	0.5%
Information	3,288	3,210	2.4%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	44,266	43,099	2.7%	2.5%
Manufacturing	93,054	92,897	0.2%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	6,815	6,710	1.6%	2.3%
Other Services	11,397	10,837	5.2%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	38,710	39,521	-2.1%	0.1%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Public Administration	16,418	15,668	4.8%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	79,842	80,113	-0.3%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the Bay Area region numbered 423,959 jobs: 3,895 greater than 2023.

The ***Education and Health Services*** supersector saw the largest numerical job increase in the Bay Area, up 2,112 jobs over the year (2.50%). In addition, the ***Leisure and Hospitality*** (+1,167 jobs, 2.71%) and ***Public Administration*** (+750 jobs, 4.79%) sectors were also among the fastest growing industries in the Bay Area over the course of 2024. Employment in the Bay Area's largest supersector, ***Manufacturing***, experienced an increase of 157 jobs (0.17%). Net job losses were present in industries such as ***Professional and Business Services*** (811 jobs, -2.05%) and ***Financial Activities*** (428 jobs, -2.21%).

Total area wages increased from $24.2 billion in 2023 to $25.4 billion in 2024. These $1.2 billion (4.86%) increases were greater than the statewide rate of 4.73%. ***Construction*** (+7.98%) is an additional industry that experienced relatively high total wage growth in 2024. No industries experienced an annual decline in total wages.

Fox Valley WDA

The Fox Valley WDA is composed of six counties in northeastern Wisconsin: Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago. This WDA is the seventh largest (out of 11) in the state in terms of labor force, while also having the fourth lowest unemployment rate and seventh highest labor force participation rate. Many of the region's urban cores are situated along the I-41 highway corridor, wholly containing two Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) - Oshkosh-Neenah and Fond du Lac, while Calumet County is included as part of the Appleton MSA.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	226,669	225,726	0.4%
Employment	220,418	220,051	0.2%
Unemployment	6,251	5,675	10.1%
Unemployment Rate	2.8%	2.5%	12.0%

In calendar year 2024, Fox Valley's labor force totaled 226,669 participants, consisting of 220,418 employed and 6,251 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force grew by 943 participants: a 0.42% increase. While the number of employed rose by 0.17% over the year, the number of unemployed rose by 10.15%.

The Fox Valley's unemployment rate was 2.8% in 2024; a 0.3 percentage point increase from 2023. This rate was lower than the statewide rate of 3.0%. Generally, the Fox Valley region experiences a lower unemployment rate than that seen statewide.

The Fox Valley's LFPR in 2024 was 65.5%. The regional LFPR decreased by 0.2% relative to 2023.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	185,250	185,268	0.0%	0.7%
Construction	10,861	10,967	-1.0%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	36,139	35,716	1.2%	2.7%
Financial Activities	7,582	7,438	1.9%	0.5%
Information	198	217	-8.8%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	16,848	16,463	2.3%	2.5%
Manufacturing	42,261	43,581	-3.0%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	3,492	3,427	1.9%	2.3%
Other Services	740	698	6.0%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	17,735	17,359	2.2%	0.1%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Public Administration	9,037	8,786	2.9%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	32,434	32,767	-1.0%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the Fox Valley region numbered 185,250 jobs; 18 fewer jobs than in 2023.

The ***Education and Health Services*** supersector saw the largest numerical job increase in the Fox Valley, up 423 jobs over the year (1.17%). In addition, the ***Leisure and Hospitality*** (+385 jobs, 2.29%) and ***Professional and Business Services*** (+376 jobs, 2.12%) sectors were also among the fastest growing industries in the Fox Valley over the course of 2024. Employment in the Fox Valley's largest supersector, ***Manufacturing***, experienced the greatest employment decline in the region (1,320 jobs, 3.12%). Net job losses were also present in industries such as ***Trade, Transportation, Utilities*** (333 jobs, 1.03%) and ***Construction*** (106 jobs, 0.98%).

Total area wages increased from $10.5 billion in 2023 to $11.0 billion in 2024. Area wages grew by $513 million (4.89%) from 2023 to 2024; this rate was greater than the statewide rate of 4.73%. ***Financial Activities*** (+7.58%) is an additional industry that experienced relatively high total wage growth in 2024. No industries experienced an annual decline in total wages.

Milwaukee WDA

The Milwaukee WDA consists of Milwaukee County, which is in the southeastern part of the state. The Milwaukee WDA holds the distinction of being Wisconsin’s only single county WDA. However, it is undoubtedly linked to its surrounding regions, and it would be naïve to ignore the regional interdependence. The relatively small geographic size of Milwaukee provides the opportunity for employers to draw from a potential workforce that includes surrounding areas, and Milwaukee WDA residents can look outside the region for desirable career prospects.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	464,762	461,749	0.7%
Employment	447,437	445,787	0.4%
Unemployment	17,325	15,962	8.5%
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	3.5%	5.7%

In calendar year 2024, Milwaukee's labor force totaled 464,762 participants consisting of 461,749 employed and 17,325 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force gained 3,013 participants: a 0.7% increase. While the number of employed rose by 0.4% over the year, the number of unemployed rose by 8.5%.

The Milwaukee area's unemployment rate was 3.7% in 2024; a 0.2 percentage point increase from 2023. This rate was higher than the statewide rate of 3.0%. Generally, the single-county WDA experiences a higher unemployment rate than that seen statewide.

Milwaukee's LFPR in 2024 was 62.6%. The regional LFPR decreased by 0.1% relative to 2023.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	468,915	467,332	0.3%	0.7%
Construction	13,398	12,816	4.5%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	140,443	139,307	0.8%	2.7%
Financial Activities	28,252	28,709	-1.6%	0.5%
Information	7,799	8,049	-3.1%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	51,199	49,809	2.8%	2.5%
Manufacturing	47,204	48,082	-1.8%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	83	85	-2.4%	2.3%
Other Services	13,831	13,506	2.4%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	70,005	70,594	-0.8%	0.1%
Public Administration	20,198	19,218	5.1%	4.4%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	76,503	77,158	-0.8%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the Milwaukee region numbered 468,915 jobs; 1,583 more jobs than in 2023, up 0.3%. The ***Leisure & Hospitality*** supersector saw the largest numeric increase with 1,390 additional jobs over the year: up 2.8%. ***Construction*** increased at the fastest rate with growth of 4.5%, or 582 additional jobs.

Total area wages increased from $31.0 billion in 2023 to over $32.4 billion in 2024, an increase of $1.5 billion (4.7%); this rate matched the statewide rate.

Additional industries that experienced relatively high total wage gains include ***Public Administration (+10.9%)*** and ***Educational and Health Services (+5.8%). Natural Resources & Mining*** was the only industry to measure a decline in total wages (-1.4%).

North Central WDA

The North Central WDA consists of nine counties located in the northern center of Wisconsin: Adams, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood counties. Notable for this region is the relatively higher median age seen in many of the counties.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	215,287	213,732	0.7%
Employment	208,663	207,405	0.6%
Unemployment	6,624	6,327	4.7%
Unemployment Rate	3.1%	3.0%	3.3%

In calendar year 2024, North Central's labor force totaled 215,287 participants consisting of 208,663 employed and 6,624 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force increased by 1,555 participants; a 0.7% increase. The number of employed increased by 0.6% over the year and the number of unemployed increased by 4.7% over the year.

The North Central region's unemployment rate was 3.1% in 2024, up from 3.0% in 2023. This rate was higher than the statewide unemployment rate of 3.0%. Generally, the North Central region generally experiences a higher unemployment rate than that seen statewide.

North Central Wisconsin's LFPR in 2024 was 61.5%, sitting well below the state's LFPR of 65.5%. The region's LFPR decreased by 0.1% relative to 2023, continuing the trend of declining rates over time. This long-term trend is expected to continue as the baby boomer population continues to age, applying a downwards pressure on the rate.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	189,759	188,988	0.4%	0.7%
Construction	8,786	8,299	5.9%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	39,627	39,413	0.5%	2.7%
Financial Activities	12,226	12,250	-0.2%	0.5%
Information	2,216	2,292	-3.3%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	21,134	20,547	2.9%	2.5%
Manufacturing	33,701	34,322	-1.8%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	3,902	3,689	5.8%	2.3%
Other Services	5,011	4,874	2.8%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	12,508	12,967	-3.5%	0.1%
Public Administration	9,586	9,299	3.1%	4.4%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	41,028	40,998	0.1%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the North Central region numbered 189,759 jobs; 771 more jobs than in 2023. From 2023 to 2024, employment in the region grew by 0.4%. This growth was outpaced by the statewide growth rate of 0.7%.

Construction experienced the greatest proportional gain in jobs, growing at a rate of 5.9% over the year. Statewide, ***Construction*** grew at a slower rate of 3.4%. Four industries recorded declines in employment in the region. ***Professional & Business Services*** experienced the greatest proportional loss of jobs, decreasing by 3.5% over the year. Statewide, this industry grew by 0.1%.

Total wages in North Central increased from 10.2 billion in 2023 to 10.5 billion in 2024. Total wages grew by 294.9 million (2.9%) over the year, growing at a slower pace than statewide wages (4.7%). The fastest growth in total wages by industry occurred in ***Construction***, growing at a rate of 11.0%. Statewide, ***Construction*** grew at a slower rate of 7.8%. North Central's average annual wages were highest in ***Financial Activities*** ($67,413), ***Construction*** ($61,297), and ***Manufacturing*** ($59,003). In North Central, average annual wages for these industries grew by 1.1%, 6.8%, and 3.0% respectively over the year. Statewide, average annual wages for these industries grew by 4.7%, 4.3%, and 4.0% respectively over the year.

Northwest WDA

The Northwest WDA region consists of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn counties.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	87,404	86,969	0.5%
Employment	83,920	83,570	0.4%
Unemployment	3,484	3,399	2.5%
Unemployment Rate	4.0%	3.9%	2.6%

The 2024 LFPR in the Northwest WDA was 57.5%, down 4.2% from 2014. This was larger than the state's overall 2.8% decrease in LFPR over the same period. In 2024, the Northwest WDA had by far the lowest LFPR of any WDA in Wisconsin, 4.0% lower than the second lowest WDA and 8.0% lower than Wisconsin as a whole.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	64,995	64,948	0.1%	0.7%
Construction	3,286	3,318	-1.0%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	13,763	13,744	0.1%	2.7%
Financial Activities	1,969	2,032	-3.1%	0.5%
Information	505	493	2.4%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	8,597	8,341	3.1%	2.5%
Manufacturing	11,218	11,607	-3.4%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	1,054	1,031	2.2%	2.3%
Other Services	1,621	1,595	1.6%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	3,418	3,384	1.0%	0.1%
Public Administration	6,630	6,471	2.5%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	12,940	12,917	0.2%	0.5%

The covered employment in the Northwest WDA region was 64,995 in 2024, representing 2.2% of the overall jobs in the state. This is a small decrease over the region's 2023 percentage of overall jobs. The three largest supersectors in terms of employment are ***Education & Health Services***, ***Trade, Transportation, Utilities***, and ***Manufacturing***. These three industries represent 58.3% of all jobs in Northwest Wisconsin. Two of the three saw an increase in employment from 2023 to 2024. ***Education & Healthcare*** had an employment increase of

0.1%. ***Trade, Transportation, Utilities*** increased 0.2%. ***Manufacturing*** decreased 3.4%. The industry supersector that saw the largest employment growth was ***Leisure & Hospitality***, with a 3.1% increase.

From 2023 to 2024, overall wages in Northwest Wisconsin grew 2.2%, which was slower than the state wages growth rate of 4.0%. All but two supersectors in the Northwest Wisconsin experienced positive wage growth. ***Professional & Business Services*** saw the largest percentage increase at 7.2%. ***Natural Resources & Mining*** wages grew 3.3%. ***Construction*** wages declined 8.7% and ***Financial Activities*** wages decreased 0.8%.

South Central WDA

The South Central WDA is composed of six counties: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Marquette, and Sauk. The economic center of this region is the city of Madison, the state's capital. The region includes a majority of the Madison MSA (Columbia, Dane, Iowa, and Green counties).

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	519,540	512,236	1.4%
Employment	506,838	500,626	1.2%
Unemployment	12,702	11,610	9.4%
Unemployment Rate	2.4%	2.3%	4.3%

The total number of South Central residents increased in 2024, adding to both employment and unemployment levels. However, the number of unemployed increased faster than the number of people in the labor force, which contributed to an increase in South Central WDA's unemployment rate of 0.1%.

The 2024 LFPR in the South Central WDA was 69.0%, a slight decrease of 0.1% from 2023. South Central continues to have the highest LFPR of all WDAs in the state. Much of this was driven by the high LFPR of Dane County, a county that has a young population.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	491,813	484,942	1.4%	0.7%
Construction	26,418	25,460	3.8%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	124,440	119,319	4.3%	2.7%
Financial Activities	25,469	25,823	-1.4%	0.5%
Information	20,323	20,182	0.7%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	53,195	52,140	2.0%	2.5%
Manufacturing	57,267	59,146	-3.2%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	5,426	5,267	3.0%	2.3%
Other Services	14,673	14,185	3.4%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	55,871	56,034	-0.3%	0.1%
Public Administration	29,620	28,557	3.7%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	77,703	77,419	0.4%	0.5%

Total wages in the South Central WDA during 2024 totaled $33.9 billion. This was an increase of 5.6% compared to the $32.1 billion in 2023. This total wage growth outpaced the state's overall, which grew at a rate of 4.7%.

The largest sector, ***Education and Health Services***, was also the fastest growing in terms of employment in the South Central WDA. This WDA is home to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the flagship institution of the Universities of Wisconsin, as well as several large medical institutions. This area's growth also outpaced the rate of growth for the state overall in this sector.

The second-largest sector, ***Professional and Business Services***, declined by 0.3%. In contrast, employment in this sector increased statewide. This could indicate that previous growth in this sector in the South Central area is diversifying geographically.

Last year, ***Information*** was the fastest-growing sector in terms of employment. In 2024, that sector only grew by 0.7%. This dramatic slowdown in hiring could reflect the changing hiring dynamics in industries like ***Information***, which are heavily affected by artificial intelligence technologies.

Southeast WDA

The Southeastern Workforce Development Area consists of three counties in the southeastern most part of the state. The region includes Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth counties. The City of Kenosha and the City of Racine provide ample opportunities for job development within the region, while nearby Milwaukee and Chicago provide employment opportunities outside of the region.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	258,414	254,313	1.6%
Employment	250,075	246,521	1.4%
Unemployment	8,339	7,792	7.0%
Unemployment Rate	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%

In calendar year 2024, Southeast's labor force totaled 258,414 participants consisting of 250,075 employed and 8,339 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force gained 4,101 participants: a 1.6% increase. The number of employed rose by 1.4% over the year, while the number of unemployed rose by 7.0%.

The Southeast WDA unemployment rate was 3.2% in 2024; a 0.1 percentage point increase from 2023. This rate was higher than the statewide rate of 3.0%. Generally, this WDA experiences a slightly higher unemployment rate than that seen statewide, but follows similar trends. The LFPR for the WDA in 2024 was 67.4%, up 0.5% relative to 2023.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	195,861	191,975	2.0%	0.7%
Construction	7,636	7,105	7.5%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	40,612	39,283	3.4%	2.7%
Financial Activities	5,301	5,035	5.3%	0.5%
Information	842	829	1.6%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	23,535	22,690	3.7%	2.5%
Manufacturing	36,155	36,354	-0.5%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	1,211	1,176	3.0%	2.3%
Other Services	4,765	4,550	4.7%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	18,477	18,865	-2.1%	0.1%
Public Administration	9,544	8,930	6.9%	4.4%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	47,783	47,156	1.3%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the Southeast region numbered 195,861 jobs: 3,886 more jobs than in 2023, up about 2.0%.

The ***Education & Health Services*** supersector saw an increase of 1,329 jobs over the year: up 3.4%, which was the largest numeric gain in the WDA. The ***Public Administration*** supersector had the highest growth rate (+4.4%). Notably, ***Business Administration*** lost the highest number of jobs (-388).

Total area wages increased from $10.6 billion in 2023 to $11.3 (5.8%). This rate was higher than the statewide rate of 4.7%. Total wages grew for all industry subsectors in the region. Additional industries that experienced relatively high total wage gains include ***Construction*** (+14.4%) ***and Financial Activities*** (+11.0%).

Southwest WDA

The Southwest WDA region is composed of six counties: Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and Rock. It borders Iowa and Minnesota to the west and Illinois to the south. The two largest cities in the region are Janesville and Beloit, both along the I-90 highway corridor leading towards Illinois. The western portion incorporates part of the broader Madison MSA (Green and Iowa counties) as well as the Janesville-Beloit MSA (Rock County).

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	167,184	165,205	1.2%
Employment	162,213	160,418	1.1%
Unemployment	4,971	4,787	3.8%
Unemployment Rate	3.0%	2.9%	3.4%

In calendar year 2024, the Southwest region's labor force totaled 167,184 individuals, 4,971 of whom were unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the region's labor force grew by 1,979. Employment increased by 1,795 while unemployment increased by 184 individuals. As a result, the unemployment rate increased slightly to 3.0% in 2024, which matched Wisconsin's overall unemployment rate of roughly 3.0%.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	124,003	122,744	1.0%	0.7%
Construction	6,554	6,142	6.7%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	27,730	27,324	1.5%	2.7%
Financial Activities	3,529	3,580	-1.4%	0.5%
Information	1,369	1,522	-10.1%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	11,388	11,253	1.2%	2.5%
Manufacturing	22,802	22,913	-0.5%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	2,681	2,662	0.7%	2.3%
Other Services	2,829	2,768	2.2%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	8,788	8,719	0.8%	0.1%
Public Administration	6,348	6,131	3.5%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	29,989	29,739	0.8%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total employment in the Southwest WDA was 124,003 individuals, up 1,259 individuals from 2023. In both 2024 and 2023, the largest sector was ***Trade,***

Transportation, Utilities, accounting for 24.2% of overall employment in the region in 2024. From 2023 to 2024, this supersector saw employment increase of 250 individuals for a growth rate of 0.8%, outpacing the state overall. The fastest growing supersector in the region was ***Construction***, which grew by 6.7%, adding 412 individuals. However, ***Construction*** accounted only for 5.3% of overall employment.

Total area wages increased from $6.5 billion in 2023 to $6.9 billion in 2024, growing at a rate of 4.9%. The ***Information*** supersector was the only supersector which experienced a decline in total wages from 2023 to 2024, which can be contributed to its 10.1% decrease in employment. ***Information*** was also the smallest industry in terms of employment, making it more susceptible to volatility.

West Central WDA

The West Central WDA is composed of nine counties in northwestern Wisconsin: Barron, Clark, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix. It is among the state’s fastest growing regions in terms of population and economic growth. The region also benefits from its location along the I-94 highway corridor, just east of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. The effects of this proximity can be seen throughout the region, though it is most obvious in the border counties.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	270,196	266,997	1.2%
Employment	261,420	258,702	1.1%
Unemployment	8,776	8,295	5.8%
Unemployment Rate	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%

The LFPR for the West Central WDA was 66.8% during 2024. This is a slight decrease compared to its LFPR of 67.0% during 2023. Despite this decline, West Central's LFPR was higher than the state's LFPR of 65.5% in both years. The overall labor force in the area added 3,199 individuals during 2024, growing at a rate of 1.2%. All nine counties in the West Central WDA experienced an increase in the number of individuals employed and in the labor force. However, at 5.8% growth, the number of unemployed individuals grew at a faster rate than the labor force. Due to this, the unemployment rate in West Central increased slightly, going up by 0.1% from 3.1% to 3.2%.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	202,283	200,287	1.0%	0.7%
Construction	9,651	9,224	4.6%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	50,046	48,661	2.8%	2.7%
Financial Activities	6,053	6,009	0.7%	0.5%
Information	1,445	1,397	3.4%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	21,690	21,190	2.4%	2.5%
Manufacturing	35,213	36,484	-3.5%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	3,256	3,210	1.4%	2.3%
Other Services	4,965	4,811	3.2%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	15,213	15,549	-2.2%	0.1%
Public Administration	10,246	9,813	4.4%	4.4%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	44,510	43,884	1.4%	0.5%

The West Central region added 1,996 employed individuals during 2024, for a growth rate of 1.0%. This outpaced the state's 0.7% growth rate of number of employed during that period. The ***Education and Health Services*** sector remained the largest sector, accounting for 24.7% of all employed people in the area. Employment also grew at a rate of 2.8%, 0.1% higher than the state's growth rate in the sector. This sector has outpaced the state's growth during both 2024 and 2023.The average total monthly payroll in the region in 2024 was $10.8 billion, up 4.1% from 2023.

Western WDA

The Western WDA includes eight counties: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon. Within this region lies the La Crosse-Onalaska MSA, which contains La Crosse County in Wisconsin and Houston County in Minnesota. However, Houston County is not part of the Western WDA regional data.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	155,272	154,100	0.8%
Employment	150,754	149,792	0.6%
Unemployment	4,518	4,308	4.9%
Unemployment Rate	2.9%	2.8%	3.6%

The region's labor force grew by 1,172 individuals from 2023 to 2024, reaching a total of 155,272 individuals. Employment increased by 962 while unemployment increased by 210 individuals. As a result, the unemployment rate increased slightly to 2.9% in 2024.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	139,520	138,951	0.4%	0.7%
Construction	5,659	5,556	1.9%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	37,753	37,124	1.7%	2.7%
Financial Activities	4,528	4,561	-0.7%	0.5%
Information	1,170	1,086	7.7%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	13,949	13,706	1.8%	2.5%
Manufacturing	21,283	21,859	-2.6%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	2,856	2,870	-0.5%	2.3%
Other Services	3,800	3,720	2.2%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	9,519	9,761	-2.5%	0.1%
Public Administration	8,647	8,278	4.5%	4.4%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	30,232	30,434	-0.7%	0.5%

The three largest industries in the region remained the same from 2023 to 2024, comprising of roughly 64.0% of industry jobs in 2024: ***Education & Health Services*** (27.1%); ***Trade, Transportation, Utilities*** (21.7%); and ***Manufacturing*** (15.3%).

Information and ***Public Administration*** industries saw the largest percentage increase from 2023 to 2024, up by 7.7% and 4.5% respectively. ***Manufacturing*** and ***Professional & Business Services*** had the largest percentage decrease in employment from 2023 to 2024, down by 2.6% and 2.5% respectively. The local manufacturing decline in employment is consistent with the broader statewide trend.

Overall, industry jobs in the Western region of Wisconsin remained stable, increasing by 0.4% in 2024. Total area wages increased from $7.3 billion in 2023 to $7.6 billion in 2024, growing at a rate of 4.1%.

WOW WDA

The WOW WDA consists of three counties in the southeastern part of the state: Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Washington (WOW). The WOW WDA is undoubtedly linked to the Milwaukee WDA. Much of the past growth and development in the region is a direct result of urban sprawl from the City of Milwaukee. The region relies on Milwaukee as a cultural and employment center, and Milwaukee relies on WOW residents to work and engage in recreation in the city.

Labor Force (Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

	2024	2023	Percent Change
Labor Force	356,507	354,599	0.5%
Employment	347,330	346,007	0.4%
Unemployment	9,177	8,592	6.8%
Unemployment Rate	2.6%	2.4%	8.3%

In calendar year 2024, WOW's labor force totaled 356,507 participants, consisting of 347,330 employed and 9,177 unemployed. From 2023 to 2024, the labor force gained 1,908 participants: a 0.5% increase. While the number of employed rose by 0.4% over the year, the number of unemployed also rose by 6.8%.

The WOW WDA unemployment rate was 2.6% in 2024; a 0.2 percentage point increase from 2023. This rate was lower than the statewide rate of 3.0%. Generally, the WDA experiences a lower unemployment rate than that seen statewide.

The LFPR for the WDA in 2024 was 67.4%. The regional LFPR decreased by 0.2% relative to 2023.

Employment and Wages (Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Total, All Industries	347,483	346,057	0.4%	0.7%
Construction	23,975	23,236	3.2%	3.4%
Education & Health Services	65,151	62,861	3.6%	2.7%
Financial Activities	18,773	19,205	-2.2%	0.5%
Information	3,272	3,726	-12.2%	0.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	33,531	32,855	2.1%	2.5%
Manufacturing	64,220	65,828	-2.4%	-1.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	1,532	1,448	5.8%	2.3%
Other Services	11,396	11,075	2.9%	3.7%
Professional & Business Services	44,370	45,326	-2.1%	0.1%
Public Administration	9,855	9,580	2.9%	4.4%

Industry	WDA Monthly Employment 2024	WDA Monthly Employment 2023	WDA Percent Change	Percent Change Statewide
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	71,408	70,919	0.7%	0.5%

In calendar year 2024, the total job base in the WOW region numbered 347,483 jobs; 1,426 more jobs than in 2023, up about 0.4%.

The ***Education & Health Services*** supersector saw an increase of 2,290 jobs over the year: up 2.7%. This was the largest numeric gain in the region. ***Other Services*** had the largest percent growth, growing by 2.9% (+321 jobs). ***Manufacturing*** had the largest numeric decline, losing 1,608 jobs.

Total area wages increased from $22.3 billion in 2023 to $23.2 billion in 2024. Area wages grew by $848.9 million (3.8%) from 2023 to 2024. This rate was lower than the statewide rate of 4.7%. ***Natural Resources & Mining*** (+11.5%) and ***Construction*** (+9.7%) had the largest growth rates. ***Information*** (-7.3%) was the only supersector to have declining total wages.

Notes

Regional information from about wages and employment statistics from the Quarterly Census on Employment and Wages (QCEW) are subject to statistical confidentiality. Data from certain industries in certain counties can be suppressed if publishing that data could potentially identify individuals or employers. This suppression can result in a systematic underestimation of employment in counties and industries with a small number of employers or employees.