

# Wisconsin's labor force participation rate high among 'prime working age' adults

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Wisconsin often has among the highest labor force participation rates in the country for "prime working age" residents, according to a recent UW-Madison report.

The labor force participation rate is typically based on the percentage of workers over age 16 that are either employed or unemployed and actively seeking work, the report shows. But a researcher with the university's Division of Extension notes this measure can be calculated for "a variety of demographic characteristics."

For residents between the ages of 25 and 54, Wisconsin is frequently among the top 10 U.S. states for labor force participation on an annual basis, the report found. In 2021, that rate was 88.9 percent for men and 83.1 percent for women in the state — the ninth and fifth highest rates in the country, respectively.

The report also explores county-level prime working age labor force participation. But the author notes margins of error in U.S. Census Bureau data used to calculate these figures at the county level "make geographic comparisons somewhat challenging." The report aims to avoid this issue by analyzing if a county's rate has a statistically significant difference from national rates.

"Calculating significant differences (at a 90% confidence level) shows variations in [labor force participation rates] for both men and women within states and across regions," author Matt Kures wrote.

For prime working age men, 42 counties in the state have labor force participation rates above the national rate of 86.4 percent, while 15 counties have a lower rate and another 15 don't have a statistically significant difference. The counties with a lower rate include: Bayfield, Burnett, Washburn, Rusk, Chippewa, Forest, Menominee, Jackson, Vernon, Crawford, Juneau, Adams, Waushara, Dodge and Milwaukee.

Meanwhile, 51 counties in the state have participation rates for women that are above the national average, and just two counties have lower rates, the report shows.

See the full report:

<https://economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/2023/04/18/unveiling-labor-force-participation-rates-in-wisconsin/>

— *By Alex Moe*