

WISCONSIN
EMPLOYER SURVEY

SUMMER 2021

WORKFORCE & EMPLOYMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Nearly Nine in 10 Wisconsin Businesses Struggling to Hire Workers

A new survey of Wisconsin businesses indicates the state's workforce shortage has become an emergency, and employers are pleading with Gov. Tony Evers to take action. According to the *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, 86 percent of businesses are struggling to hire workers.

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the combined state chamber and manufacturers' association – conducted the survey over the first three weeks of June on a variety of topics. On Wednesday, WMC released data focused specifically on workforce and employment.

"It is time for Gov. Evers to connect the dots on this major issue for our economy," said WMC President & CEO Kurt Bauer. "Hundreds of Wisconsin businesses just barely survived months of government-mandated lockdowns, restrictions and limited capacity. Now, many of those same businesses face another serious government-imposed burden in the form of overly generous unemployment benefits that have created a full-blown workforce emergency."

When asked why they were having trouble hiring workers, a plurality – 35 percent of businesses – said the unemployment benefits were too generous. That was followed by 30 percent blaming a lack of applicants with the proper skills and 26 percent blaming the overall shortage of people. Additionally, 85 percent of employers said they support ending the \$300 pandemic-related unemployment enhancement.

Respondents overwhelmingly – 72 percent – said the workforce shortage was the top public policy issue facing Wisconsin. Businesses are not struggling to hire due to a lack of trying, however. Nearly 80 percent said they plan to increase the number of employees in the next six months, and they are raising wages to do so. Seven in 10 businesses plan to raise wages at least three percent in 2021, while over a quarter of businesses plan to raise wages by more than four percent.

"Repealing the expanded unemployment benefits is a short-term solution that our economy needs right now," added Bauer. "But, we must also address long-term challenges to retain young Wisconsinites after they graduate from high school, attract people from outside the state to live and work here, and train people who need upskilling for the family-supporting careers we have available."

To help grow the population of working-age people, 73 percent of employers think the state should fund a talent attraction campaign. Businesses also back increased technical training opportunities for high school students. Eighty-seven percent said they would support expanding these types of classes in the place of some general education courses.

About the Wisconsin Employer Survey

The *Wisconsin Employer Survey* is conducted twice a year by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the combined state chamber and manufacturers association. The assessment provides a snapshot of where Wisconsin's employers stand on a number of important issues and outlines their economic outlook for both Wisconsin and the United States. For the Summer 2021 edition, WMC surveyed 266 employers that make up a representative sample of its membership. Businesses of all sizes, industries and geographic locations in Wisconsin participated.

The survey will be released in four separate reports on topics including: Workforce & Employment, State & Federal Public Policy, COVID-19 and the Economy.

Are you having trouble hiring employees?



** Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

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If you are having trouble hiring employees, why?



If you are having trouble hiring employees, what level/field?



What is the **top public policy** issue facing Wisconsin?

LABOR SHORTAGE/ LACK OF QUALIFIED APPLICANTS	72%
HIGH TAXES	7%
EXCESSIVE REGULATION	7%
HEALTH CARE COSTS	5%
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING	2%
EDUCATION QUALITY	1%
LAWSUITS/LEGAL CLIMATE	<1%
COVID-19 REGULATIONS/ SAFER AT HOME	<1%
OTHER	3%

Do you support or oppose **ending the \$300 weekly** federal unemployment enhancement currently available through September?

85%
SUPPORT

14%
OPPOSE

STRONGLY SUPPORT 80%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT 5%

STRONGLY OPPOSE 10%
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE 4%

UNSURE 1%

Do you support or oppose a **taxpayer-funded talent attraction campaign** aimed at drawing more people into Wisconsin and filling available jobs?

73%
SUPPORT

19%
OPPOSE

STRONGLY SUPPORT 27%
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT 46%

STRONGLY OPPOSE 7%
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE 12%

UNSURE 8%

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Do you support or oppose **expanding technical training opportunities** for high school students in the place of general education classes like language arts, foreign languages or others?

87%
SUPPORT

9%
OPPOSE

STRONGLY SUPPORT 53% **STRONGLY OPPOSE 3%**

SOMEWHAT SUPPORT 34% **SOMEWHAT OPPOSE 6%**

UNSURE 5%

In the next 6 months, do you anticipate your number of employees to:



79%
INCREASE



4%
DECREASE

17%
**STAY
THE SAME**

How much do you expect hourly wages to **increase or decrease** in your company in 2021?

**2021 Hourly Wages:
Increase or Decrease?**

8%	.....	Increase 0 to 2.0 Percent
16%	.....	Increase 2.1 to 2.9 Percent
26%	.....	Increase 3.0 to 3.5 Percent
20%	.....	Increase 3.6 to 4.0 Percent
26%	.....	Increase 4.1 Percent or Above
<1%	Decrease 0 to -2.0 Percent
<1%	Decrease -2.1 to -2.9 Percent
0	Decrease -3.0 or More
4%	Stay the Same

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