

Only Wisconsin's population older than 65 is projected to grow between now and 2040.

Wisconsin Population Change By Age Bracket

Source: U.S. 2010 and 2020 Census Data
WI Dept of Administration Population Projections Vintage 2024

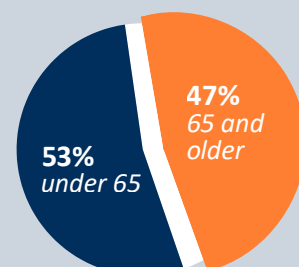
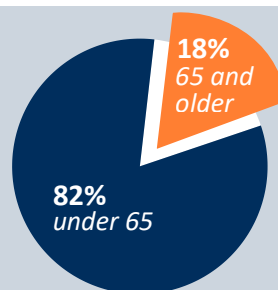
■ 2040-50 ■ 2020-2040 ■ 2010-2020



Caring for an aging population requires a larger health care workforce.
(WHA Information Center 2024 Discharge Data)

Fewer than 1 in 5 Wisconsinites is 65+

Nearly half of all health care visits serve those 65+



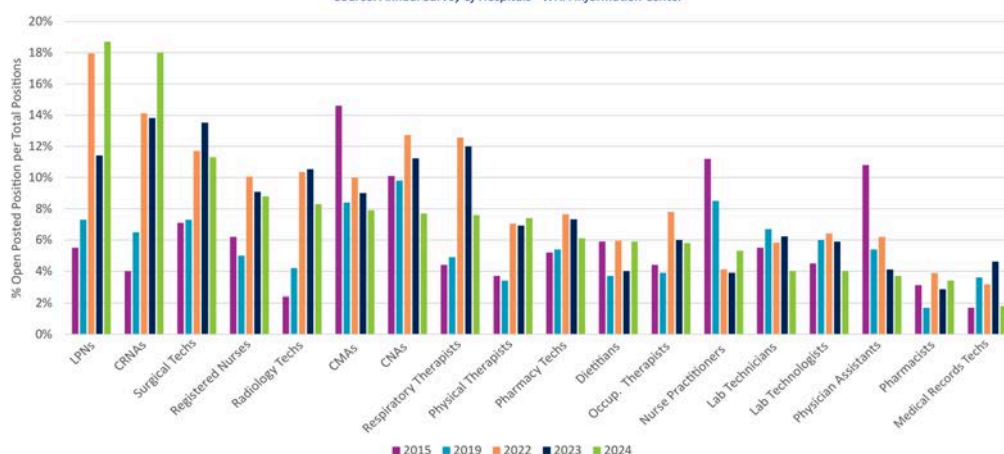
Population

Health Care Demand

The Silver Tsunami continues to surge through Wisconsin and the nation as 10,000 members of the baby boomer generation reach the age of 65 each day, creating surges of retirement and increased demand for health care.

Vacancy rates continue to fall as hospitals make strides in recruiting and retaining staff. While progress is being made, the current overall vacancy rate is still more than double the 2019 overall vacancy rate.

Vacancy Rates for Selected Hospital Professions
Source: Annual Survey of Hospitals - WHA Information Center



Since first raising the alarm about the Silver Tsunami and its impact on Wisconsin's health care workforce, WHA has seen great progress in workforce growth, advancements in building team models and technology that supports patients and providers, and new policies that help health care professionals work effectively. Unfortunately, burdensome payer requirements and unnecessary or overly complex regulations stand between health care teams and patients. Addressing this avoidable burden tops the list of WHA's 2026 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce recommendations.

Policymakers, educators, employers and health care professionals should act to:

➔ ***Break down barriers to entering and remaining in the health care workforce, including legal, regulatory and payer barriers, and mitigate internal and external factors that hinder workplace culture and workforce well-being.***

- Make reimbursement models and regulation more flexible to support unique patient and family needs within the bounds of available community resources and systems of care.
- Set reasonable requirements and ensure the added benefit outweighs the additional work required, or the barriers to access created, before adopting new regulations or requirements.
- Mitigate insurance company policies and practices that unnecessarily delay and deny care at hospitals and get between providers and their patients.

➔ ***Create, expand and support accessible and achievable educational and occupational pathways.***

- Provide potential entrants with career exposure, experience and support.
- Partner to increase capacity at technical colleges and universities and to leverage apprenticeships and other employer-based training opportunities.
- Ensure that the impact of sustained shortages on patient access and on the workforce in place are part of the risk-benefit evaluation when changes to career pathways are considered.
- Increase funding to "Grow Our Own."

➔ ***Identify practice, policy and payment reforms that allow health care professionals and teams to reach their full potential, encourage innovative use of teams and technology and support the continuum of care.***

- Recognize the potential of new models of care aided by technology, such as telehealth monitoring, recovery care at home and hospital at home through updated reimbursement and regulation.
- Identify opportunities to optimize the use of technology, simulation and artificial intelligence to enhance educational pathways, care for patients and work for clinicians with needed guardrails, but not unnecessary regulation.
- Update state law to support patient and family decision-making as they seek post-acute care to relieve bottlenecks in the continuum of care.

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Report >>>>**

