

Wisconsin's Public Sector is Leaner than Most Other States'

Wisconsin ranks 39th in the number of government workers per population, meaning Wisconsin's state and local governments are leaner than all but 11 other states. The number of public employees in Wisconsin has fallen over time, and current levels of public employment are significantly lower than they were a decade ago.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT IN WISCONSIN HAS FALLEN OVER TIME

The number of government employees in Wisconsin compared to population has fallen over time and is now at among its lowest levels since at least 1993, the earliest point for which U.S. Census Bureau makes figures available.

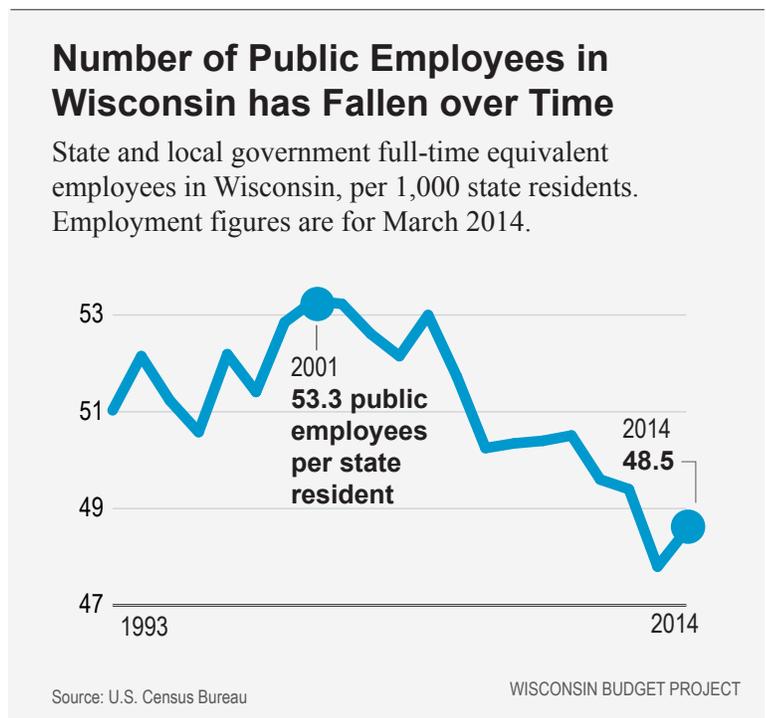
Wisconsin had 48.5 state and local government full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) per 1,000 state residents in 2014. That's down 9% from a high of 53.3 employees in 2001. If Wisconsin government employment levels had stayed at the 2001 peak levels, Wisconsin would have nearly 27,000 additional government employees over the current levels.

This analysis is based on recently-released state and local government employment figures collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, which publishes public employment levels for March of each year. Because different states delegate responsibilities to different levels of government, combining state and local government employees gives a better picture of the size of a state's public sector than does looking at each level of government independent of the other.

In Wisconsin, about 1 out of every 7 jobs are in state or local government.

WISCONSIN HAS FEWER STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

Compared to other states, Wisconsin has relatively few state and local government employees for the size of our population. Wisconsin had 48.5 government employees per 1,000 residents in 2014, 4.4% less than the national average. Put another way, for every 100 public employees in other states, Wisconsin has only 96.



Fewer government employees means that Wisconsin governments spend less on public payrolls. For each person that lived in the state, Wisconsin spent 7.1% less than the national average on public payrolls, ranking 26th among the states.

Another reason that public payroll costs in Wisconsin are low is that public employees in Wisconsin earn less than the national average. The payroll per employee was 2.9% below the national average.

Wisconsin Has Fewer Public Workers, Smaller Payrolls than the National Average

For full-time equivalent employees, March 2014.

	WISCONSIN	NATIONAL AVERAGE	DIFFERENCE	WISCONSIN RANKING
State and local government employees per 1,000 state residents	48.5	50.8	-4.4%	39
Monthly payroll per state resident	\$213	\$230	-7.1%	26
Monthly payroll per employee	\$4,394	\$4,524	-2.9%	19

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

WISCONSIN BUDGET PROJECT

MOST PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WORK IN EDUCATION

State and local government workers in Wisconsin are concentrated in the field of education. Six out of ten government employees work in education, mostly in K-12 schools. A smaller number of employees work in higher education.

There are also significant concentrations of state and local government employees working in health and human services, police and fire, corrections, and transportation.

Most government employees in Wisconsin work in local government. Wisconsin's public sector employed 278,600 FTEs in 2014, 74% of whom worked at the local level.

HOW LOW IS TOO LOW?

Wisconsin has long had a lean public sector compared to other states, and in 2014 the number of state and local government workers per Wisconsin resident stayed considerably below national levels. State-imposed constraints on property taxes and reductions in state support for local governments have likely contributed to the decline.

An efficient, effective public sector helps Wisconsin families and businesses thrive. Government employees teach Wisconsin's children, repair our transportation network, and keep our communities safe — all activities that help make Wisconsin a good place to do business and raise families. If the number of workers doing these jobs dips too low, the quality of life of Wisconsin residents and the state's economic competitiveness will be harmed.

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