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# Sustaining Wisconsin

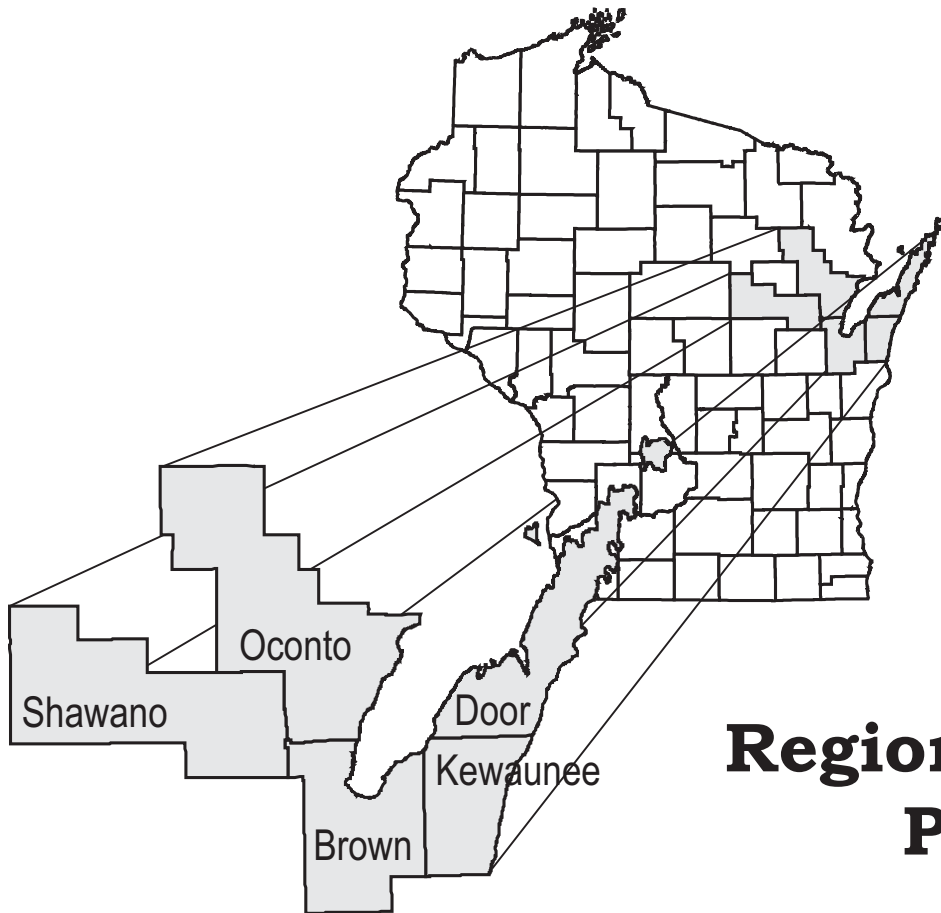
A Statewide Dialogue on Wisconsin's Future

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A project of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), UW-Madison

## **Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, & Shawano Counties**

An Economic, Social, Environmental, and Political Snapshot



## **Regional Briefing Paper Series**

**Center on Wisconsin Strategy**

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
1180 Observatory Drive, Room 7122  
Madison, WI 53706-1393

TEL 608-262-5176

FAX 608-262-9046

EMAIL [info@sustainingwisconsin.org](mailto:info@sustainingwisconsin.org)

WEB PAGES [www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org) [www.sustainingwisconsin.org](http://www.sustainingwisconsin.org)



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## **Preface: Why we need State of the Region Reports**

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In January the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) launched an 18-month statewide grassroots public education campaign — complete with coordinated media outreach, public discussion forums, an interactive web site, and regular electronic mailings — on major issues of concern to the state. “Sustaining Wisconsin” offers a model for mass education on public policy and involvement that will produce real results now and can be used elsewhere in the future.

A central component of Sustaining Wisconsin is providing useful, accessible information to people in their communities. Integral to this mission is a series of regional reports we are releasing throughout the campaign. The regional reports are an attempt to understand and portray issues and matters that are of specific importance to residents in particular areas of Wisconsin. The regional reports focus more detailed attention on the many facts within Sustaining Wisconsin’s five broad issue categories: Jobs and the Economy, Families and Communities, The Future, Environment and Natural Resources, and Democracy and Civic Participation.

The regional reports are also part of a larger project currently underway at COWS to explore the state of rural Wisconsin. The rural areas of Wisconsin vary significantly depending on the region. In the northern part of the state, rural economies are facing unique challenges as tourism grows and the mining and timber industries change. In the southern part of the state, the pressures of suburban development and the current low prices for agricultural commodities, including milk, Wisconsin’s farming backbone, are forcing many farmers into heavier debt and often foreclosure.

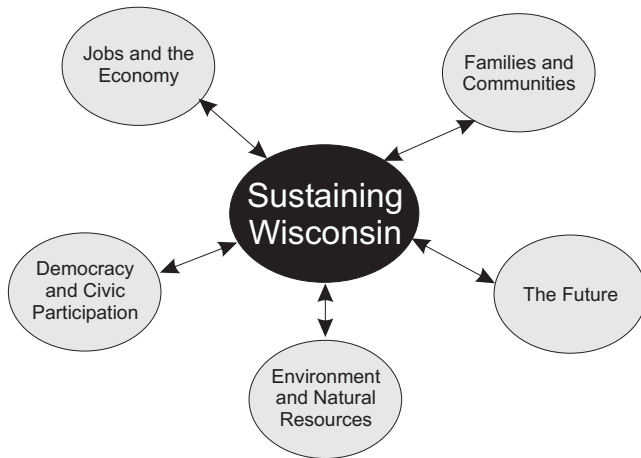
There are similarities behind the concerns facing residents of rural Wisconsin, as there are common features in the concerns that face us all. Our rural areas do not exist independently of the urban areas and the state of rural affairs is directly related to the state as a whole. By dividing the state into regions comprised of three to six counties, and then exploring in detail the particular issues, trends, opportunities and challenges, we believe that we can better understand our state as a whole, and for the first time begin to articulate a policy agenda for long-term, statewide economic sustainability.

Many decisions that impact our daily lives are made at the local and regional levels. More information about job growth, unemployment, health and social services, schools, lakes and rivers, and political participation can help us in making the right policy choices in our local areas. The regional reports are designed to contribute to the discussion around these issues, and draw attention to important choices and challenges that we face right in our own backyards.

The differences in geographical location, landscape, industry base, political affiliations, and environmental concerns all offer a chance to compare one area of Wisconsin to another area and to the state as a whole.

As with virtually all regions in Wisconsin, the counties explored in this regional report highlight how great it is to live here. The challenge before us as a state is to preserve our strongest traditions while confronting our greatest challenges.

## Findings: The State of the Brown-Door-Kewaunee-Oconto-Shawano Region



Even a quick review of the challenges we face — that is, the problems we need to solve and the opportunities we need to preserve — reveals important connections between seemingly unrelated issues. The choices we and our leaders make should embrace those connections.

### ***Jobs and the Economy***

- Per capita income in Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties is significantly below the state average, though Shawano County improved from having the third lowest per capita income in 1969 to the 23rd lowest in 1999. Over the last 20 years, both Brown and Door counties have been at or above the state average.

- Last year, Door County experienced the sharpest jump in seasonal unemployment from 2.6% in August to 8.1% in January.

### ***Families and Communities***

- The median household income has risen in all five counties since 1995, with Brown County consistently maintaining a higher median household income than Wisconsin as a whole. The median household income in Kewaunee County has moved from lagging behind the statewide average in 1995, to slightly above the average in 1998.
- In 1999 more than four in ten families in Door and Oconto counties could not afford the Fair Market Rent in their area.

### ***The Future***

- In 1998, Brown County led this region with more than 87% of mothers seeking prenatal care in the first trimester. With the exception of Shawano County, this region had higher rates of prenatal care than the Wisconsin average.
- The ratio of students to teachers in public schools in this region is generally slightly above the statewide average, although several districts in Door County and two in Shawano County have brought their ratios significantly below the statewide average.
- All of the counties in this region had lower arrest rates as a percentage of the adult population than the state average. Brown County had the highest arrest rate in the region.

### ***The Environment and Natural Resources***

- The region has 25 impaired water bodies, fourteen of which are located in Brown and Kewaunee counties.
- Oconto County, with 25% of its acreage designated as wetlands, ranks 7th highest in the state.
- Brown County has the smallest percentage of forestland in the region, with just under 14% of its area designated as such. Oconto, with 60% has the greatest percentage of forestland in the region.

### ***Democracy and Civic Participation***

- The incumbent in Assembly District 89, Joint Finance Committee Chair John Gard, spent more than ten times the amount spent by his challenger.
- In Assembly District 88, an open seat, both candidates far exceeded the state spending average on competitive races, spending \$63,954 and \$85,404 respectively.

### **Top 10/Bottom 10 in WI**

- **Per Capita Income 1969–99** — Brown moved from 21st highest to 6th highest
- **Labor Force Participation Rate 1999** — Brown 8th highest; Oconto 7th lowest
- **Job Growth in Manufacturing 1993–98** — Shawano 8th highest
- **Manufacturing Wage 1998** — Brown 8th highest; Oconto 8th lowest
- **Retail Wage 1998** — Brown 5th highest; Oconto 10th lowest
- **Percentage of Jobs Paying Poverty Wages 1998** — Brown 6th lowest
- **Travel Spending 2000** — Oconto 5th highest, Brown 6th highest
- **Median Household Income 1998** — Brown 10th highest, Oconto 7th lowest
- **Percent of Families Unable to Afford FMR 1999** — Kewaunee 8th lowest
- **Percent Growth in Hispanic Population** — Brown 3rd highest, Shawano 8th highest
- **Percent of Land as Wetlands** — Oconto 7th highest
- **Number of Superfund Sites** — Brown 5th highest
- **Growth in Number of Rental Households 1990–2000** — Brown 4th highest

## Jobs and the Economy

While Wisconsin as a whole has recently experienced an economic boom, several economic trends should concern us as we look for ways to develop a sustainable future for our state. The nature of work in Wisconsin is changing. We are moving from family-supporting jobs in the manufacturing sector to low wage, dead-end jobs in the retail and service sectors. People are being forced to work longer hours to maintain their standards of living. Furthermore, not all citizens have shared equally in the economic boom. Many of Wisconsin's workers remain poor. The rich are getting richer, the middle class is largely stuck, and the poor are slipping further behind. As the economy dips, further challenges are sure to emerge.

Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties have historically had strong manufacturing and agricultural economic bases. These two sectors continue to play important roles in the region's economy, but the region has also experienced significant economic changes that have strongly impacted jobs and the economic futures of residents in this area. In addition, the tourist industry continues to contribute significantly to the economies of Brown and Door counties.

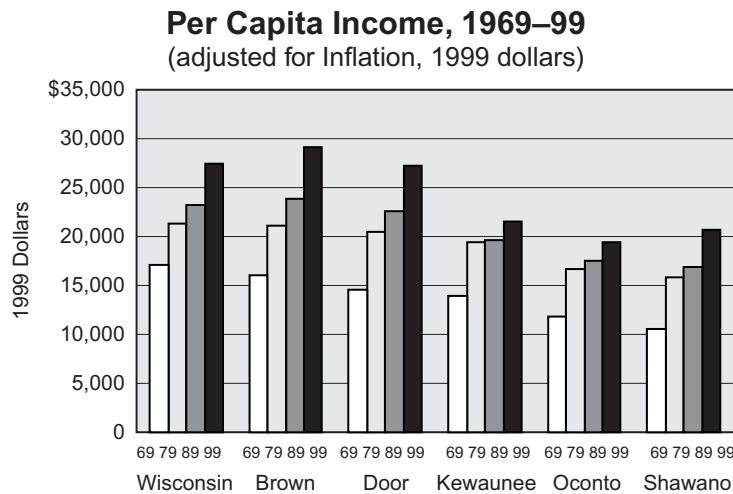
The Wisconsin trend toward growth in sectors with lower wages and fewer benefits is less visible in this region, where high rates of job creation and growth have been in the construction industry. Manufacturing jobs typically pay higher wages and provide better benefits than service jobs. The service sector is one of the largest employers in every county except Kewaunee and Oconto, which have a higher proportion of manufacturing jobs. Shawano County has the most balanced employment between services, trade, manufacturing, and government.

While Brown and Door counties both have labor force participation rates above the Wisconsin average, many of the jobs in these counties are service related. As a result, participation rates are high, but benefits from participation are lower than they would be if more manufacturing jobs were present in the region. In fact, over 50% of workers in Door County earn poverty wages. On the other hand, though the bulk of jobs in Oconto County are in the manufacturing sector, just under 50% of jobs pay poverty wages, and labor force participation is the lowest in the region.

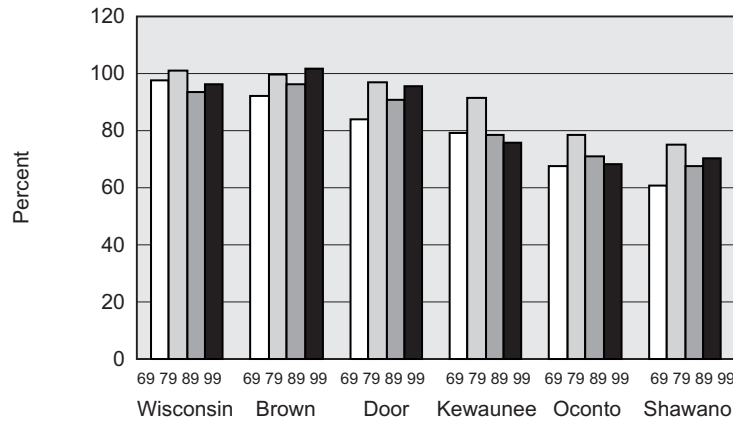
Finally, as is the case statewide, many of the farmers in Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties are having an increasingly difficult time. The fate of the farmers in these counties should be of concern to all residents of the area, as farming is the center of a large cluster of local economic activities. Throughout Wisconsin, there is a trend toward large factory farms. Although this trend is not particularly strong in this region, farmers are still rapidly losing their land; less and less land is being used for agricultural activities in these counties, as well as throughout Wisconsin.

### Economic Growth

- The growth in per capita income in the region reflects the general growth in Wisconsin during the same period. Per capita income in Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties is significantly below the state average, though Shawano moved from having the third highest per capita income in 1969 to having the 23rd lowest in 1999. Over the last 20 years, both Brown and Door counties have been at or above the state averages.



**Per Capita Income as a Percentage of the U.S. Average, 1969–99**

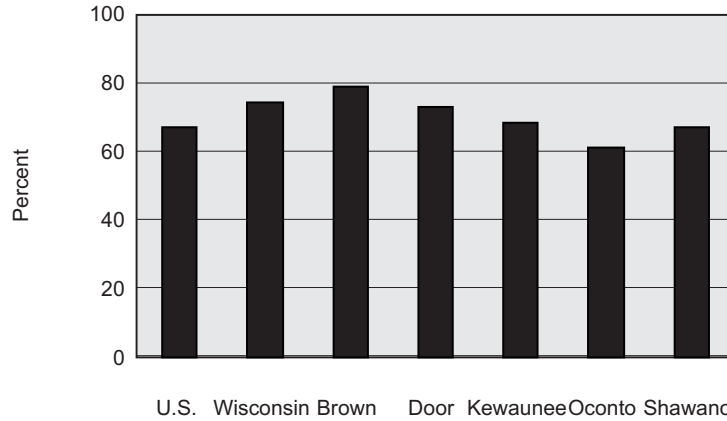


- Per capita income as a percentage of the U.S. average also shows Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties following growth patterns similar to Wisconsin. But here as well, per capita income in Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano is far below the national average.

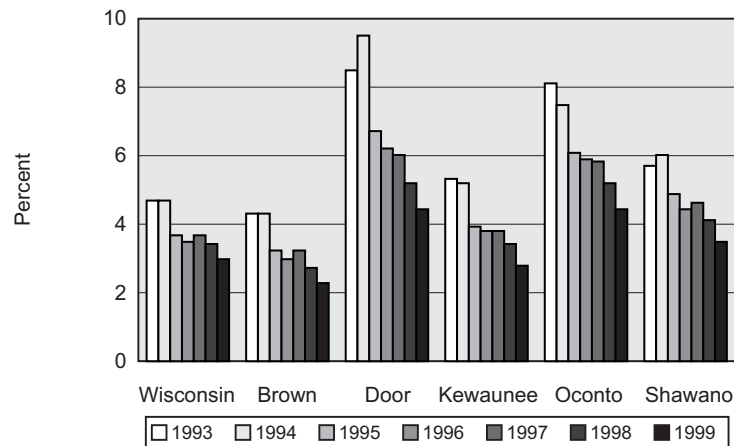
***Labor Force Participation and Unemployment***

- Wisconsin rightfully takes pride in its strong work ethic. Door, Brown, Kewaunee, and Shawano counties all had labor force participation rates at or above the national rate, led by Brown and Door counties. By contrast, labor force participation in Oconto County was six percentage points lower than the national rate and more than 13 points under the Wisconsin level.
- Through the 1990s, unemployment rates were at historic lows in Wisconsin. Each county in this region experienced steady declines in unemployment during the 1990s. Throughout this period, unemployment rates in Brown County have been the lowest in the region and consistently below the state averages. While rates in Door County have also declined in the 1990s, they are significantly higher than the state average, which reflects the county’s dependence on jobs from seasonal tourism.
- Unemployment rates fluctuate and change with seasons. Seasonal unemployment rates reveal cycles of economic activity in particular areas by taking into account jobs such as those in the hospitality sector that are added during the summer to meet increased tourism demands. Unemployment in each of these counties varies throughout the business year. In each county, unemployment is at or near its highest level in January and its lowest in August. Last year, Door County experienced the sharpest jump in seasonal unemployment, from 2.6% in August to 8.1% in January.

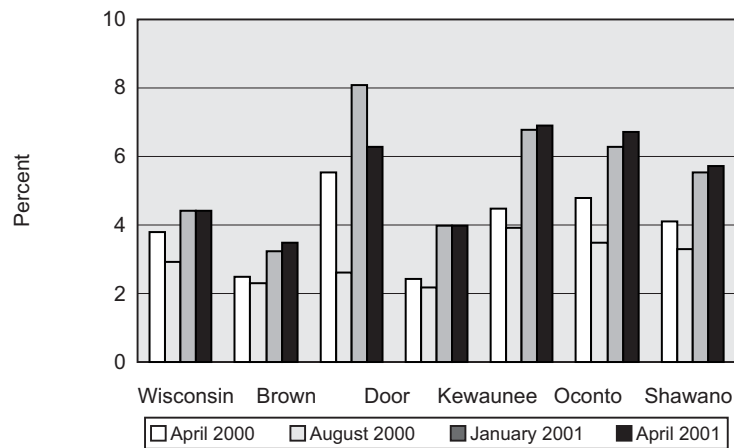
### Labor Force Participation Rate, 1999



### Unemployment Rate, 1993–99



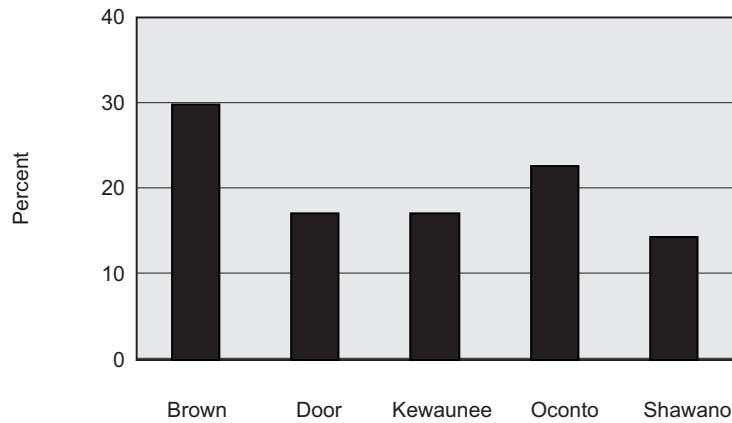
### Recent Seasonal Unemployment Rates



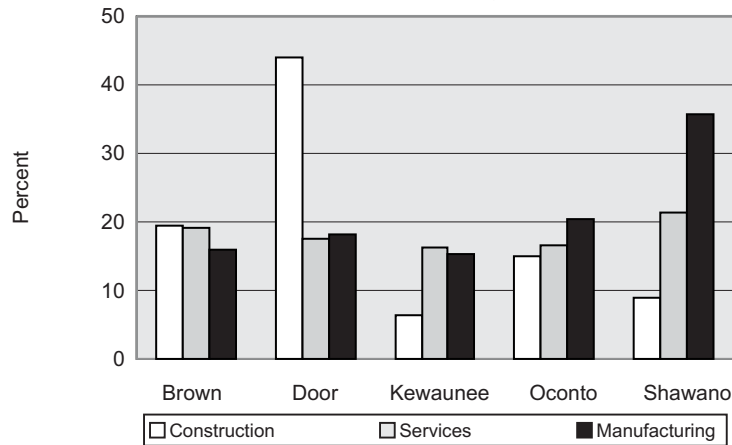
**Job Growth**

- Although Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties are all growing, job growth in Brown and Oconto counties exceeds the growth in the other counties. Between 1990 and 1998, total employment increased by 30% and 23% in Brown and Oconto counties, respectively; the other counties saw growth only in the teens.
- Many employment sectors in the region have experienced growth. In Shawano County manufacturing jobs spiked 36% between 1993 and 1998. The highest level of job growth in the region was in Door County’s construction industry, which increased by over 44%.

**Change in Total Employment, 1990–98**



**Job Growth Across Sectors, 1993–98**



## Employment by Sector

Manufacturing jobs typically pay higher wages and provide better benefits than service jobs. The service sector is one of the largest employers in Brown and Door counties, while Kewaunee and Oconto counties have a higher proportion of manufacturing jobs. Shawano County has the most evenly distributed employment between services, trade, manufacturing, and government.

### Brown

- The majority of jobs in Brown County are in the service and trade industries, which account for 48% of the county's total employment. Employment in manufacturing is the third largest employment sector.

### Door

- Employment in Door County is dominated by the service and trade industries, which together account for 55% of the county's total employment. The bulk of remaining jobs in the county are in the government and manufacturing sectors.

### Kewaunee

- More people work in manufacturing than any other sector in Kewaunee. Nearly half of the remaining positions are in the trade, services, and government sectors.

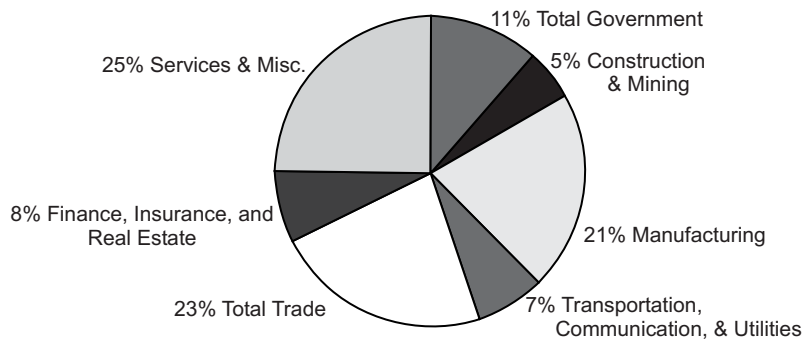
### Oconto

- Similar to Kewaunee, the majority of jobs in Oconto are in the manufacturing industry, which employs one-third of the county's working population.

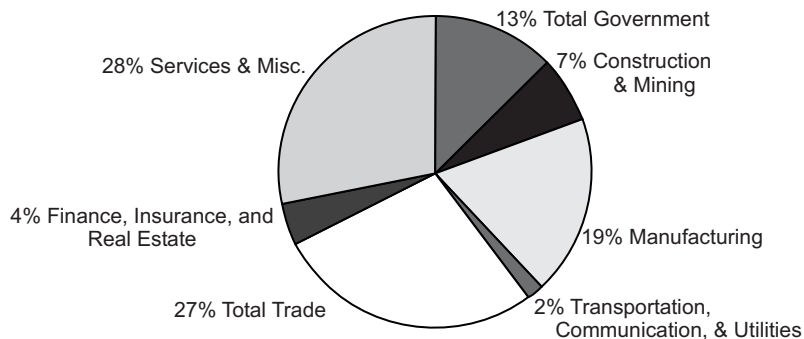
### Shawano

- Shawano has the most balanced employment in the region with roughly one quarter of people working in government, services, manufacturing, and trade positions.

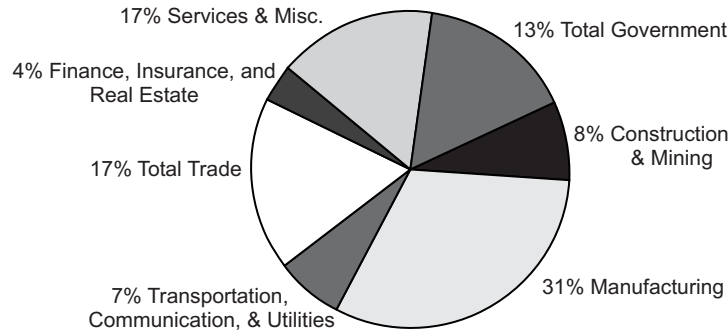
**Brown County Employment by Sector, 1999**



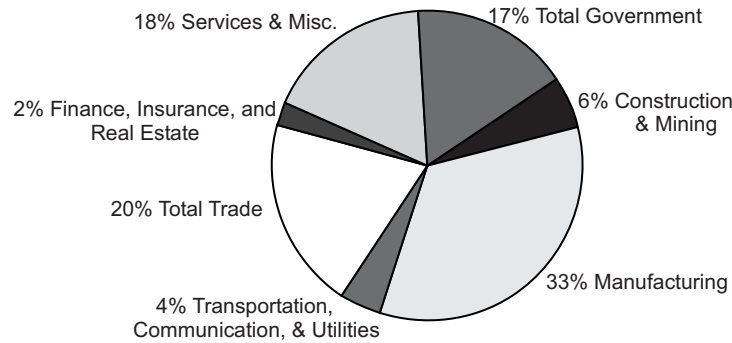
**Door County Employment by Sector, 1999**



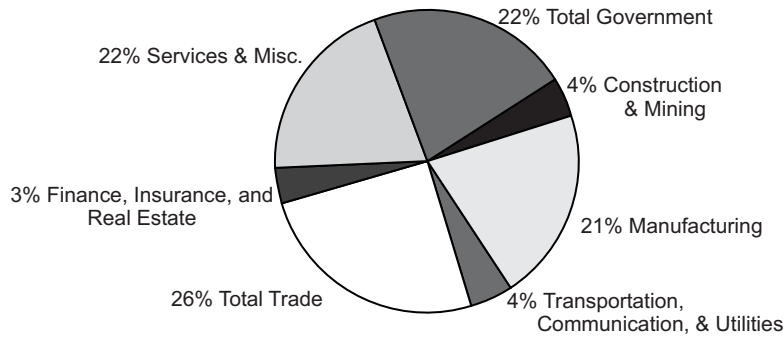
**Kewaunee County Employment by Sector, 1999**



**Oconto County Employment by Sector, 1999**



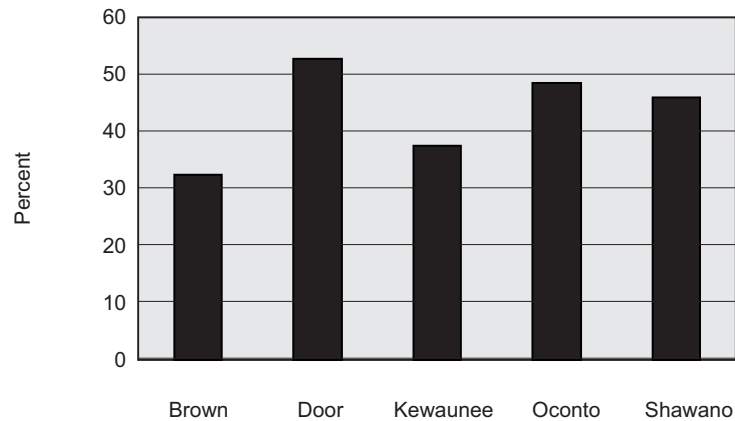
**Shawano County Employment by Sector, 1999**



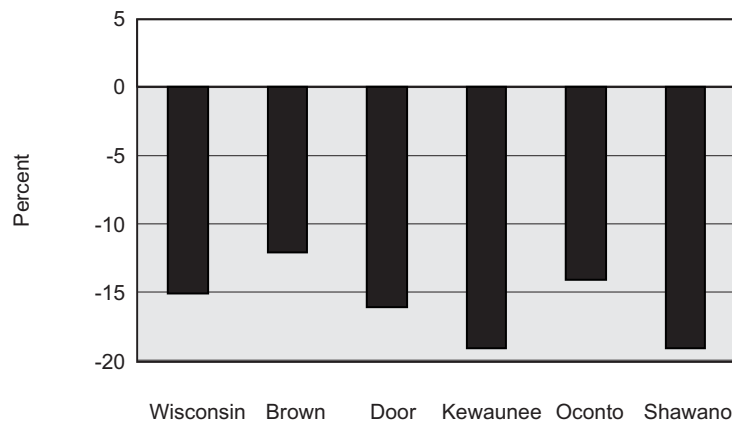
A high percentage of jobs in this region of Wisconsin pay poverty wages; that is, they pay less than the federal poverty line, which was \$16,700 for a family of four in 1999. The prevalence of poverty wage jobs in itself does not mean that people are living in poverty. Poverty wage earners may live with another wage earner, work multiple jobs, or draw on alternative income sources. But poverty wages are reflective of the type of jobs that are available in particular counties in Wisconsin and of the chances residents have of securing the wages and the benefits sufficient for a good quality of life.

The percentage of poverty wage jobs in this region is moderate compared to counties throughout the state, which range from a high of 68.4% to a low of 29.6%. Door County, which employs more people in services than any other sector, has the highest percentage of jobs paying poverty wages in this region. In 1998, approximately one-half of the jobs in Door and Oconto counties paid poverty wages. Brown County has one of the lowest rates in Wisconsin, at 32%.

### Jobs Paying Poverty Wages, 1998



### Decline in Full Time Farms, 1992–97

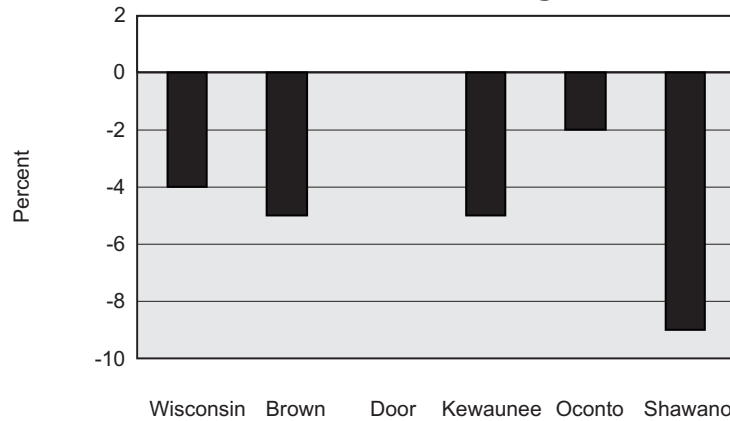


## Agriculture

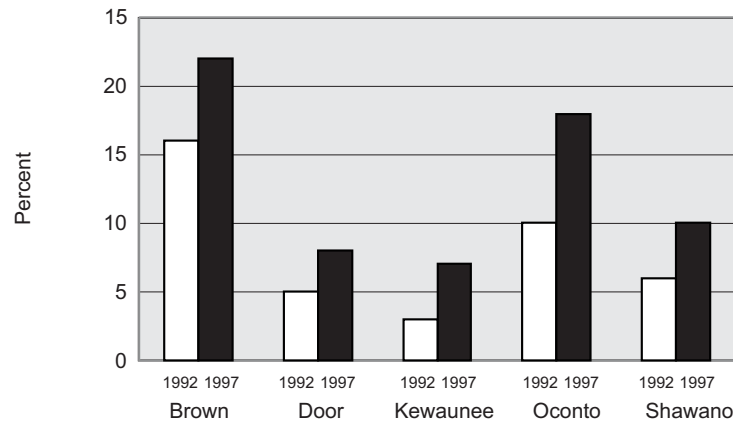
Agriculture has always played an important role in Wisconsin. This role is declining as farmers continue to be squeezed by low commodity prices and development pressures. Farmers spend roughly seventy-five cents in the local economy for every dollar they earn and, as a result, as farms disappear, many local businesses may follow.

- Like Wisconsin in general, the number of full-time farms declined in all five counties between 1992 and 1997. The rate of decline is fastest in Kewaunee and Shawano counties, and slowest in Brown County. The future of these farms will affect all residents of these counties not only in the supermarket but also in terms of the environment and the local economy.
- Between 1992 and 1997 the amount of land used for farming decreased in each county except Door County, where the amount of farmland held steady. Kewaunee and Brown counties experienced declines similar to the state average.
- There are a growing number of large farms in Wisconsin. The number of farms that are larger than 1000 acres increased 32% between 1987 and 1997. The number of farms with more than 1000 acres in the United States increased by just 4.3% over the same time period. This region represents a similar trend toward large farms. Brown County has the largest number of farms at 22 in 1997, but Oconto saw the largest increase in large farms between 1992 and 1997.

**Decline in Land Used for Farming, 1992–97**



**Number of Farms Larger than 1000 Acres, 1992–97**

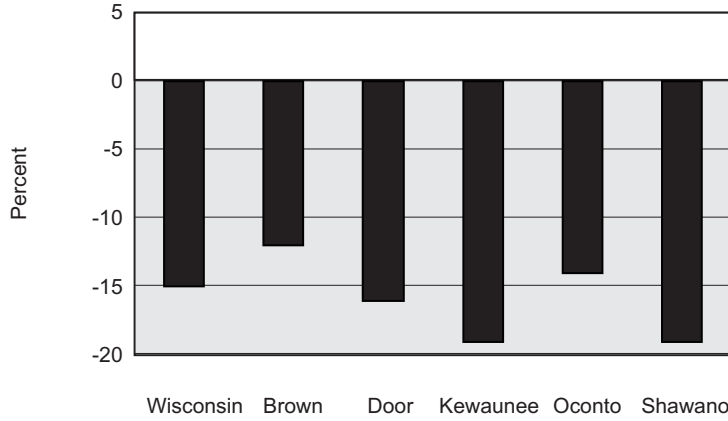


The characteristics of farmers in Wisconsin are changing. In particular, farming families are more likely to rely on additional income earned off of the farm, and income earned from two workers.

- The number of farmers who report farming as their principal occupation decreased in all five counties, following the statewide trend. This pattern is especially pronounced in Kewaunee and Shawano counties.
- The average age of Wisconsin farmers is increasing, which means that young people are not entering the occupation as quickly as older farmers are retiring. Higher average ages mean that a disproportionate number of farmers will retire without being replaced. In Wisconsin, the average age of a farmer was 50.6 years in 1992, and 52.2 years in 1997. Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties all show similar increases in average farmer age during the same period.

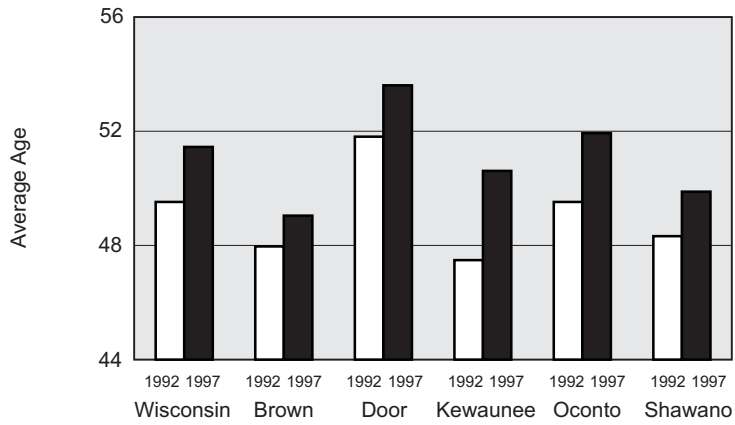
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**Change in Those Reporting Farming as Principal Occupation, 1992–97**



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**Average Age of Farmers, 1992–97**

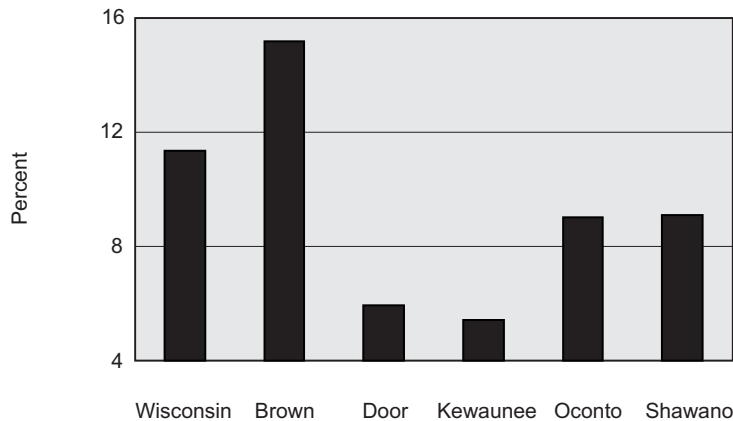


**Tourism**

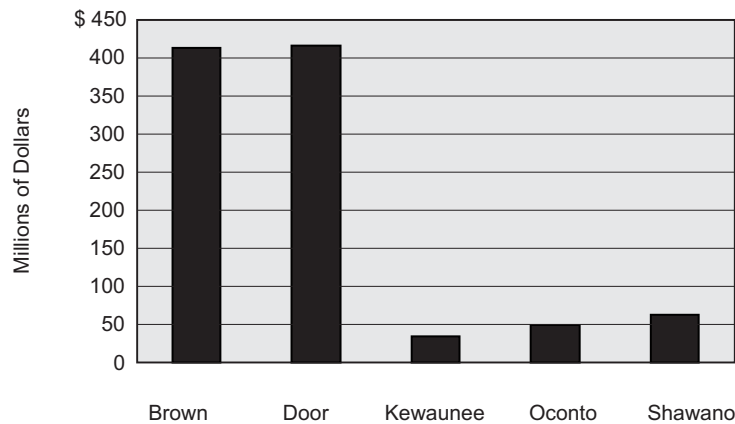
Tourism is an important industry throughout Wisconsin; revenue from tourism supports job growth and local businesses. On the other hand, the jobs that the tourism industry generates are frequently low-wage and seasonal. Tourism can be healthy for a county, but the organization of the industry must be carefully planned in order to ensure that workers are being paid sustainable wages.

- Tourism revenue in each county increased between 1999 and 2000. Increased revenue in Brown County exceeded the state average and was well above the levels of the region’s other counties. Each of the other counties had increases below the state average.
- Dollars from tourism are increasing in all five counties, especially in Brown and Door counties. These two counties received the largest amount of tourism revenue, at \$400 million in 2000. Tourism revenue contributes a much smaller portion of the Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano economies.
- Tourism provides for a large number of jobs in Brown and Door counties, which also enjoy the greatest revenue from this industry. Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties employ far fewer people in their tourism industries.

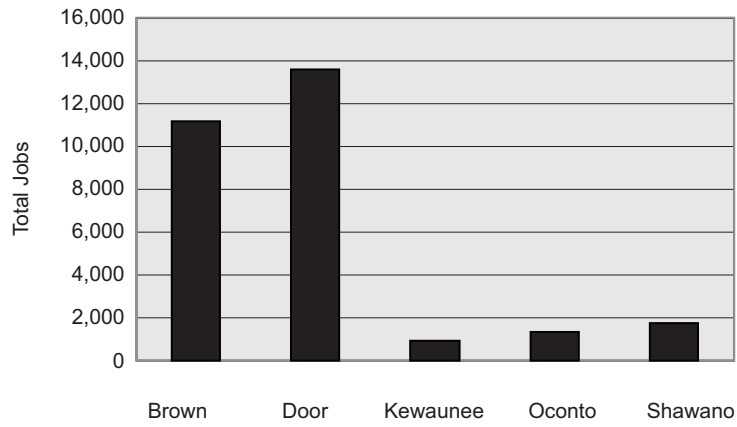
**Increase in Tourism Revenue, 1999–2000**



**Travelers’ Spending, 2000**  
(millions of dollars)



### Total Jobs in Tourism, 2000



## Families and Communities

Strong families and communities are integral to the realization of the American dream. In Wisconsin, work is up and welfare rolls are down, yet many workers remain poor. Shelter is considered a fundamental right, yet many of our citizens do not have access to affordable housing. Even as household incomes rise, the percentage of families who cannot afford the Fair Market Rent in their community remains stubbornly high.

By supporting working families, we promote strong communities. We must ensure that local economies can support family-supporting wages, that our children and those in need are cared for, and that we provide affordable housing options to the citizens of our state.

As a whole, this region has experienced increasing median household incomes, lower Fair Market Rents than Wisconsin as a whole, and a lower number of students eligible for free or reduced cost lunch as compared to the entire state. Higher incomes and fewer children requiring social services demonstrate that this region is moving in the right direction.

Yet, as the region moves forward, it will become increasingly important to recognize the needs of all of its families, including those who have so far been left behind. In all of the counties in this region, more than 30% of families could not afford the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment. Across all five counties, between 9% and 14% of children are living in poverty. And the gap in earnings for most of the counties in this region relative to Wisconsin has persisted. These challenges will become increasingly visible in the region as it continues to grow.

### ***Income Levels and Poverty Wage Jobs***

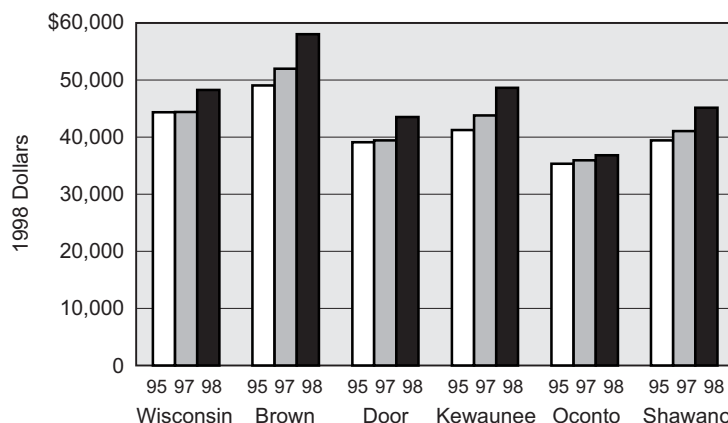
Job growth, low unemployment rates, and increased economic performance have improved many lives in the region. But these indicators need to be further explored to assess whether the benefits of economic improvement are within the reach of all residents.

- The median household income has risen in all five counties since 1995, with Brown County consistently maintaining a higher median household income than Wisconsin as a whole.
- The median household income in Kewaunee County has moved from lagging behind the statewide average in 1995, to slightly above the average in 1998.
- Oconto County saw the slowest growth in median household income in the region in the same time period.

The reasons for the growth in household income must be looked at more closely, however, as it is often a result of longer working hours, and an increased number of full-time, two-income households. The typical married couple in Wisconsin now works the equivalent of 1.9 full time jobs.

### **Median Household Income, 1995–98**

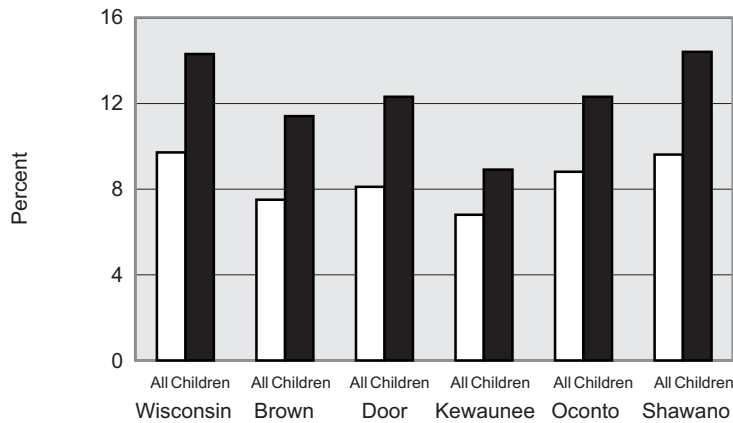
(adjusted for inflation, 1998 dollars)



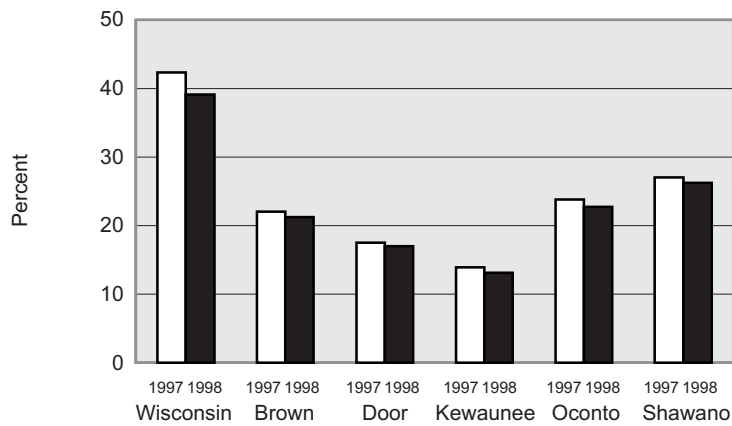
**Poverty**

- Poverty rates — defined as having income at or below \$16,700 for a family of four in 1999 — in this region vary significantly. Only Shawano County had a poverty rate above the Wisconsin average in 1998. But with childhood poverty rates still at 9% to 14% throughout the region, it is clear that large numbers of people, and more specifically children, are struggling.
- Most of the counties in this region have relatively low numbers of children eligible for free or reduced cost lunch programs as compared to Wisconsin as a whole. Oconto and Shawano counties have considerably higher percentages of children who are eligible for this program.

**Poverty Rates, 1998**



**Percent of Children Eligible for Free or Reduced School Lunch, 1997–98**

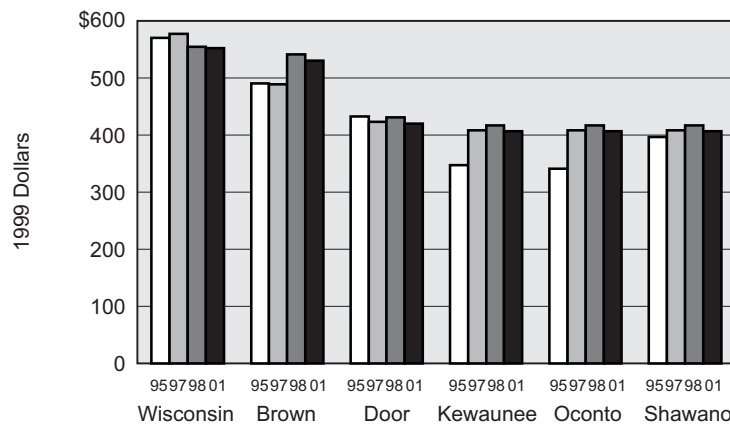


### ***Affordable Housing***

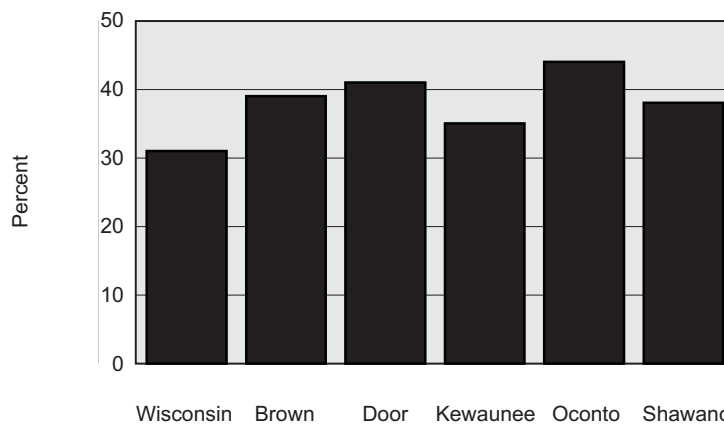
Wisconsin’s building industry has been at the forefront of the recent economic boom. While construction rates for single-family residences have increased, construction rates for apartments and other affordable housing options lag desperately behind.

- Fair Market Rent — defined as a “gross rent estimate”, including the cost to rent a home or apartment plus the cost of all utilities — largely held steady in this region between 1995 and 2001.
- Even as real Fair Market Rent held steady or slightly decreased, many residents remain priced out of a significant portion of the rental housing in each of the region’s counties. “Affordable FMR” is commonly calculated to be 30% of a household’s total gross income. More than four in ten families in Door and Oconto counties were priced out of housing in 1999.

**Fair Market Rent (FMR) For a Two Bedroom Apartment**  
(adjusted for Inflation, 1999 dollars)

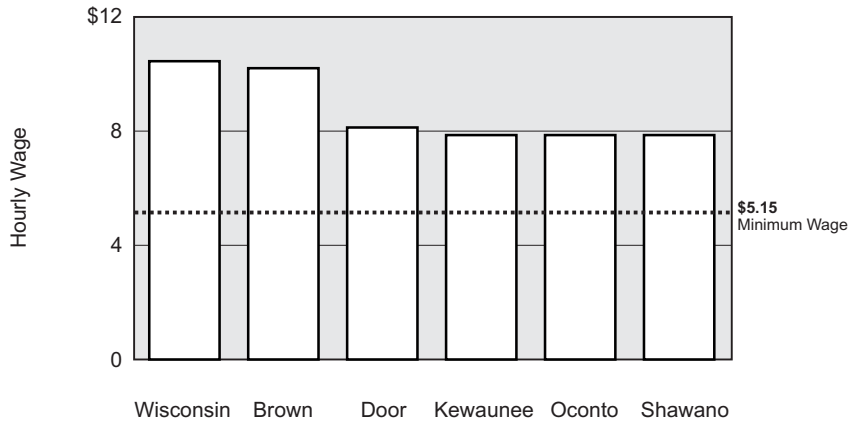


**Families That Could Not Afford FMR, 1999**

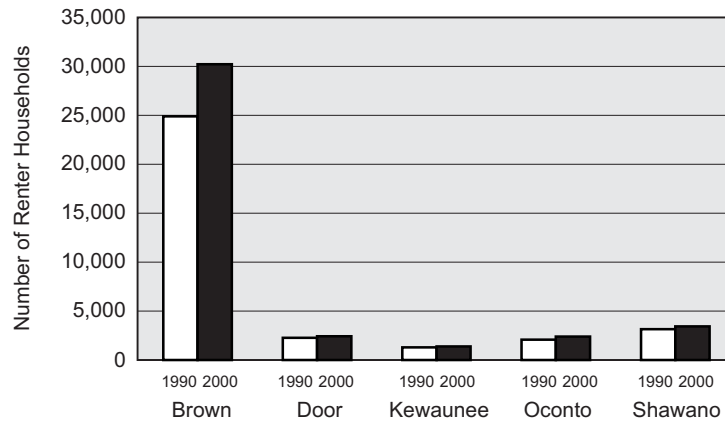


- In 2001, the average hourly wage in each county that was necessary to pay Fair Market Rent was beyond the reach of many residents of this region. Overall, however, the hourly wage in these counties needed to afford Fair Market Rent was lower than the Wisconsin average.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households that rented instead of owned their residences increased only modestly in each county. Brown County however saw a significant jump in rental households over this ten year period.

### Hourly Wage Needed to Meet FMR, 2001



### Number of Renter Households, 1990 and 2000

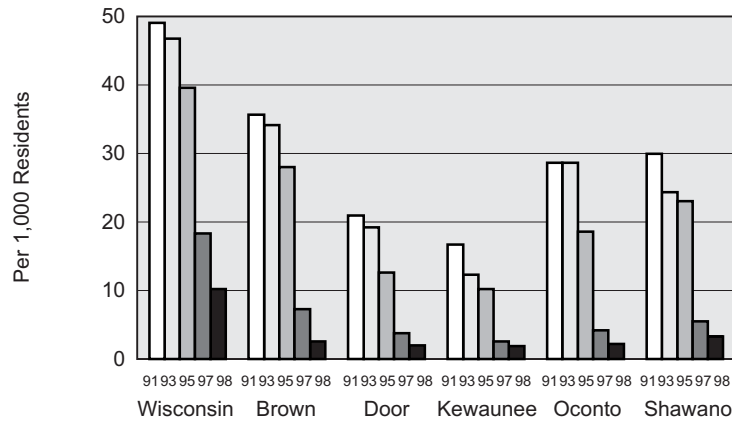


**Welfare Reform**

Wisconsin’s landmark welfare reform — W2 — has significantly altered the social services system. Welfare rolls have been cut by almost two-thirds in the state. While encouraging work as a solution, close attention should be paid to the jobs that are available and whether these jobs provide the resources necessary to support working families.

In all of the counties in this region, as in Wisconsin as a whole, the number of recipients of AFDC /W2 declined significantly between 1991 and 1998. All of these counties had fewer AFDC/W2 recipients than the Wisconsin average over this period; Brown County saw the most significant decline.

**AFDC/W2 Recipients per 1000 Residents, 1991–98**



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## The Future

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This region is undergoing significant transformations. As the population changes and ages, the future of these counties will depend on how well the needs of all residents are met. The number of young people aged 16-24 is growing, and issues such as education, family services, and crime rates will be of increasing importance.

All counties in the region, with the exception of Kewaunee County, experienced a rise in prenatal care rates between 1991 and 1998, yet Shawano County's prenatal care rates still lag behind the Wisconsin average. On measures of assistance for lower-income families — WIC and Badger Care — the rates indicate a significant level of assistance provided to the region's residents, but factors determining the level of need for these services must still be examined.

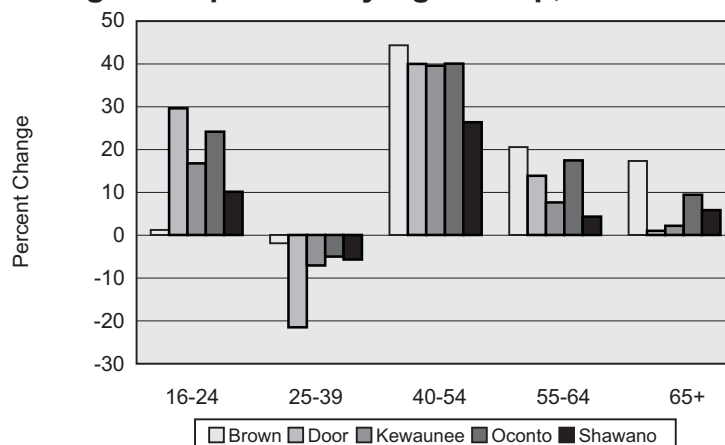
Essential to a strong future is maintaining the strong foundation in education in all communities across the state. The five counties in the region vary greatly in terms of educational indicators, although for the most part they've enjoyed lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates than Wisconsin as a whole. ACT scores in these counties are essentially in line with the rest of the state.

### Population

- The population in all of these counties is increasing, although not uniformly across age groups. While the region has seen a significant influx of young adults, the number of individuals aged 25-39 has declined overall. The number of residents aged 40-54 increased the most dramatically in the region.
- Brown County had the third highest growth in Hispanic population in the state between 1990 and 2000. Shawano County saw the 8th highest jump.

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**Change in Population by Age Group, 1990–2000**



**Health Services**

Wisconsin is among the nation’s leaders when it comes to quality health care and employer-provided health insurance. Continued attention, however, must be paid to the working poor, the unemployed, and the disabled, especially as county agencies are forced to bear an increasing portion of safety net services.

- Prenatal care initiated in the first trimester decreases the likelihood of complications during childbirth and helps to ensure that both mothers and infants are healthy. In 1998, Brown County led this region with more than 87% of mothers seeking prenatal care in the first trimester. With the exception of Shawano County, this region had higher rates of prenatal care than the Wisconsin average. It is important that continued attention be paid to access to such care, in particular to the availability of these services for low-income women.

Federal aid for women, infants, and children (WIC) is a program that provides pregnant or breastfeeding mothers and children up to age five with necessary medical care if the family is earning less than 185% of the federal poverty level (\$31,504 for a family of four in 1999).

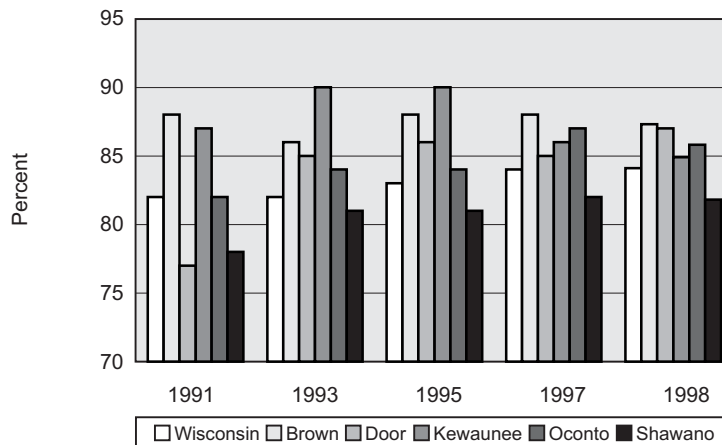
The measure of WIC rates can be read in at least two ways. The first is that participation rates indicate that residents in need of WIC assistance are receiving the services they require. On the other hand, higher rates of WIC assistance indicate more families in need, a concern that should be addressed throughout this region.

- Shawano County has the highest rate of participation in the program, and in 1998 was the only county with a participation rate that exceeded the statewide average.

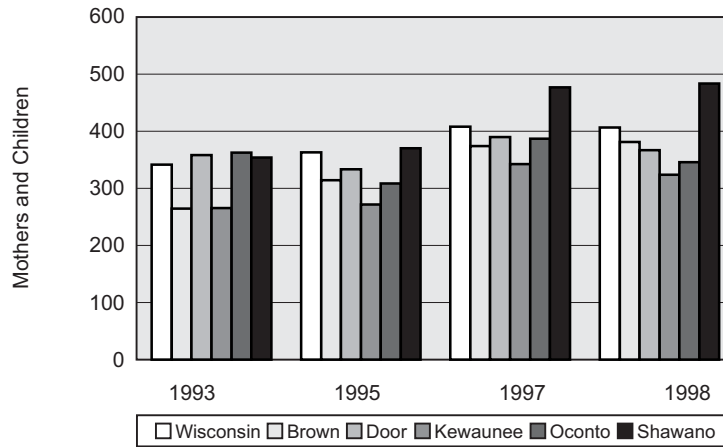
Badger Care is a health insurance program for families whose income does not exceed 185% of the federal poverty line and who are not covered by an employer’s group plan that pays 80% or more of the premium, and if they are not covered by or eligible to be covered by Medicaid. As with other assistance programs, Badger Care participation rates indicate the presence of people in need.

- Both Shawano and Oconto counties had a higher percentage of people enrolled in the Badger Care program than the statewide average in 1999. Brown County’s Badger Care enrollment, however, was significantly lower than the statewide average.

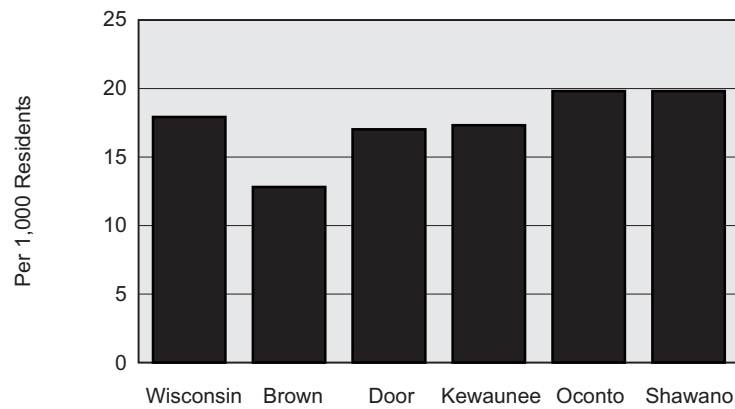
**Prenatal Care Initiated in First Trimester, 1991–98**



### Mothers and Children Receiving WIC Services, 1993–98



### Badger Care Enrollment, 1999 (per 1000 residents)



**Education**

This region has had varying degrees of success in maintaining or improving the quality of education services when looking at indications such as student to teacher ratios, dropout rates, and graduation rates.

- The ratio of students to teachers in public schools in this region is generally slightly above the statewide average, although several districts in Door County and two in Shawano County have brought their student to teacher ratios significantly below the statewide average.
- A “dropout” is officially defined as a student who was enrolled in school at some point during the school year, but who was not enrolled in school during the following school year and who did not graduate. Overall dropout rates in this region are significantly below the statewide average.
- The “graduation rate” is the number of graduates divided by the total number of graduates and dropouts over a four-year period. All of these counties had higher graduation rates than Wisconsin as a whole.

There are many concerns surrounding the use of test scores as indicators of a county’s educational system. Standardized test scores, however, do enable comparisons of academic performance on specific tasks across the state. The ACT scores in this region all hovered around the statewide average, although some school districts have ACT scores that are significantly lower than the statewide average. These numbers, however, are by no means the only indicator of performance, as they include only college bound students.

**Public School Information, 1999–2000**

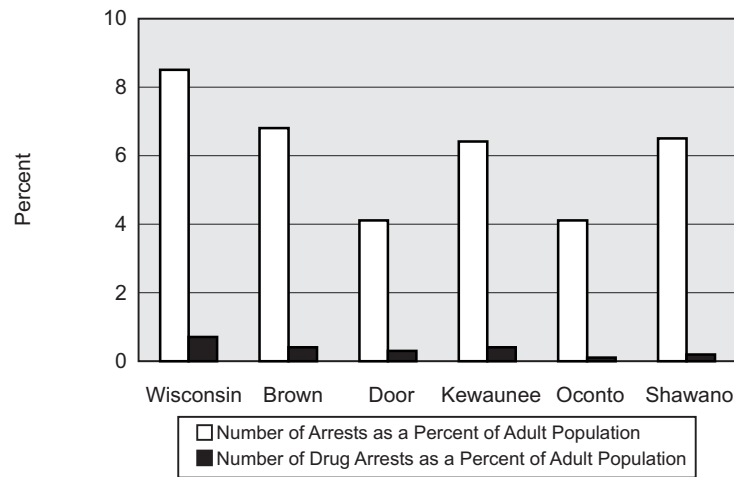
County	District	Student/Teacher Ratio	Dropout Rate	Graduation Rate	ACT Average
<b>Wisconsin</b>		<b>13.29</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>22.2</b>
<b>Brown</b>	Ashwaubenon	13.9	0.5	96.5	22.1
	DePere	14.8	1.3	91.9	22.7
	Denmark	14.8	2.2	93.6	20.7
	Green Bay Area	13.0	3.3	86.5	22.5
	Howard-Suamico	14.2	1.1	94.9	22.5
	Pulaski Community	14.1	1.7	95.0	22.9
	West DePere	13.4	1.6	93.0	22.2
	Wrighton	13.7	0.0	100	22.6
<b>Door</b>	Gibraltar Area	10.5	1.3	93.0	22.1
	Sevastopol	11.2	0.4	98.3	21.7
	Southern Door	11.7	0.9	95.4	22.6
	Sturgeon Bay	13.0	1.0	94.1	22.8
	Washington	9.7	0.0	100	20.0
<b>Kewaunee</b>	Kewaunee	13.6	1.4	95.6	19.8
<b>Shawano</b>	Bonduel	13.4	0.6	97.4	20.4
	Bowler	10.5	3.1	91.9	19.6
	Shawano-Gresham	14.5	2.0	92.4	21.4
	Tigerton	11.6	0.7	96.4	21.8
	Wittenberg-Birnamwood	13.1	1.6	92.1	21.2

**Crime**

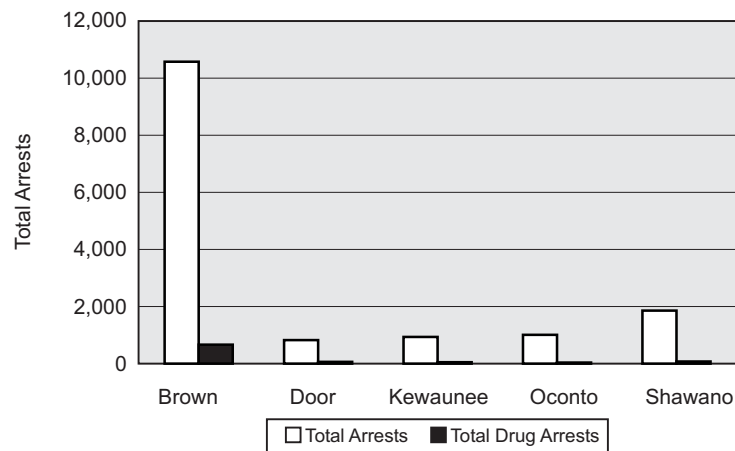
While crime rates are not the only determinant in assessing the quality of life in an area, they nevertheless remain a primary concern in all of our communities.

- All of the counties in this region had lower arrest rates as a percentage of the adult population than the state average. Brown County had the highest arrest rate in this region.
- The percentage of adults arrested on drug related crimes is roughly equal in all five counties, and is lower than the statewide average.
- In 1998, Brown County had the highest number of juvenile arrests, although this factor should be considered in light of its larger overall population compared to other counties in the region.

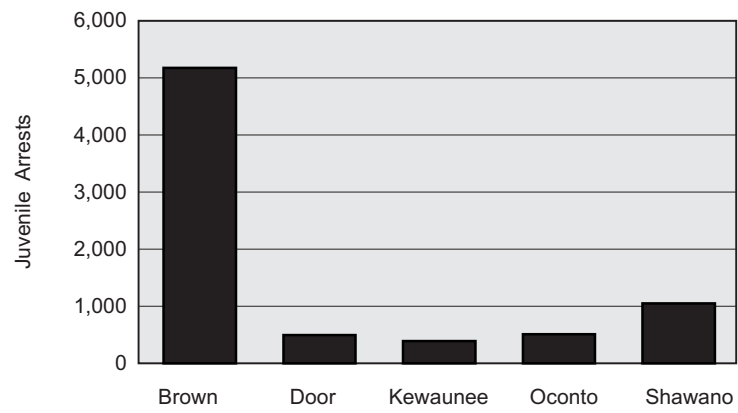
**Arrests by County as a Percent of the Adult Population, 1998**



**Total Arrests by County, 1998**



### Number of Juvenile Arrests by County, 1998



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## The Environment and Natural Resources

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The environment and natural resources are keys to a successful future in all regions of Wisconsin. Water, air, and land quality is important for jobs, families, communities, and health in Wisconsin. Whether used for industry, recreation, or consumption, Wisconsin's natural resources must be safeguarded.

Wisconsin's environment has always been a source of pride for its citizens. Yet, our state faces continuing threats to clean air, clean water, and open space that put Wisconsin's health and green legacy at risk. While it is vital that other regions in the United States share responsibility for improving air quality, immediate action is necessary in Wisconsin to protect our more vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and those with respiratory ailments. Urban sprawl and farmland conversion are reducing open space and drastically changing Wisconsin's landscape, and continued reliance on short-term land use policies force farmers to reduce their productive acreage and cause urban centers to deteriorate.

On the whole, the Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto and Shawano region contains a substantial percentage of wetlands and forestland, and a small amount of recreation and conservation land. Flooding, erosion, and polluted water bodies are issues requiring attention in this area. Of particular concern are the number of Superfund sites located in Brown County, ranking it fifth highest among all counties in Wisconsin.

### **Water Quality**

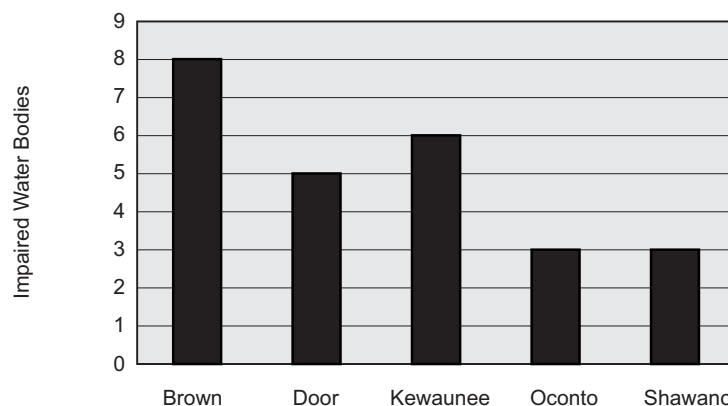
A number of water bodies in the region are polluted enough to be listed as "impaired waters" under the terms of the Clean Water Act, which requires states to identify waters that do not meet federal water quality standards. States are obligated to establish a priority ranking for these waters, taking into account their designated uses and pollution severity.

- This five-county region has 25 impaired water bodies. Fourteen of these polluted water bodies are located in Brown and Kewaunee counties, while Oconto and Shawano counties each have three impaired water bodies, and Door County has five.
- The three impaired water bodies in this region that are classified as a high priority for cleanup and abatement are located in Brown and Kewaunee counties.
- All of the impaired water bodies in Oconto and Shawano counties are classified as low priority for cleanup.

As with the rest of the state, this region faces some threat from mercury contamination of area water bodies and the fish that inhabit them. Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources expanded their mercury warning to include all Wisconsin water bodies, noting that it may be unsafe for women who are pregnant or of childbearing age to consume any fish from any Wisconsin inland water body.

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**Impaired Water Bodies, 2000**



**Wetlands**

In January 2001, a United States Supreme Court ruling limited the protections of the Clean Water Act to water and wetlands connected to navigable waters only. This decision removed many of Wisconsin’s wetlands from protection, some of which were filled in within weeks following the Court’s decision. In May 2001, the Wisconsin legislature enacted Act 6, reestablishing protections for all wetlands in the state, including those not connected to navigable waters.

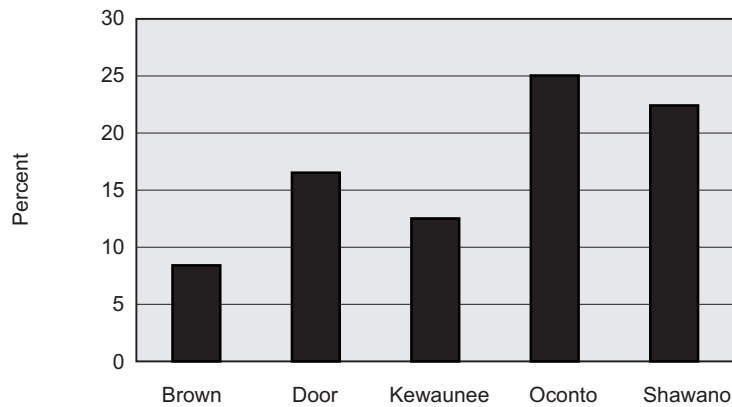
- The region has 394,178 acres of wetlands, comprising 19 percent of its total area, and 7.3% of Wisconsin’s total wetland acreage
- Oconto County, with 25% of its acreage designated as wetlands, is ranked 7th highest in the state. With 159,717 wetland acres, this county also has the most land designated as wetlands in the region.

**Forest Land**

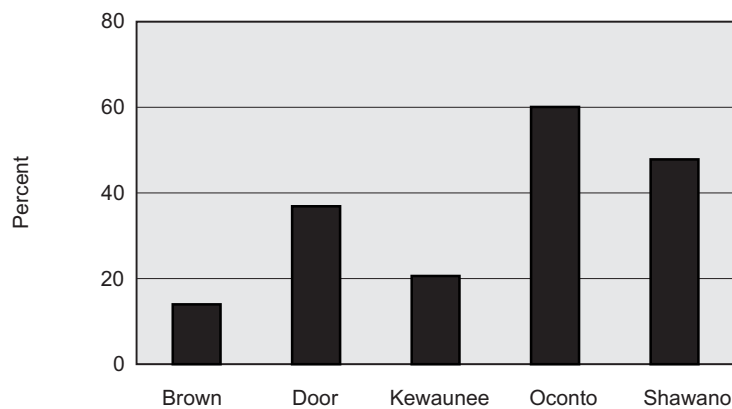
Over 45% of Wisconsin’s land area is covered by forests, though more than 98% of these forests are unprotected timberlands. In the Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto Shawano region, a relatively moderate amount of land is covered with forests.

- Brown County has the smallest percentage of forestland in the region, with just under 14% of its area designated as such. Oconto County, with 60% of its area as forestland, has the greatest percentage of such land in the region.

**County Acreage in Wetlands, 2000**

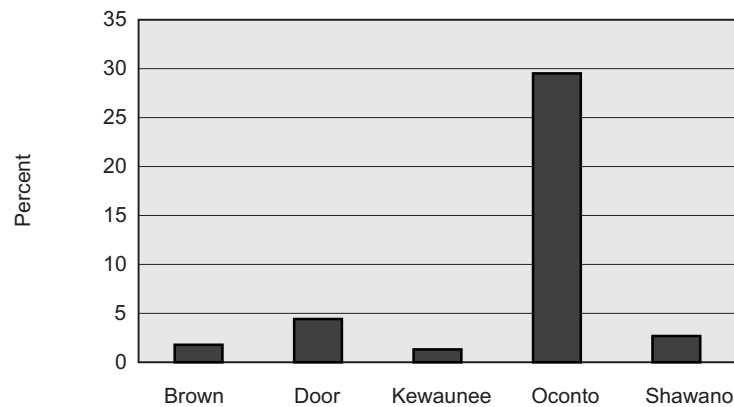


**County Acreage in Forests, 2000**



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### County Acreage in Conservation and Recreation Land, 2000




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### ***Conservation and Recreational Land Use***

Wisconsin is known for its strong tourism industry, much of which is fueled by the relatively high proportion of land designated for conservation and recreation purposes. These include federal land, state forests, DNR-owned land, county parks and forests, and privately held recreation areas.

- With the exception of Oconto County, the region contains a noticeably small percentage of conservation and recreation land.
- Brown and Kewaunee counties rank 7th and 3rd lowest respectively in percentage of land designated for conservation and recreational use.
- Door County, well known as a tourism hot spot for its natural beauty, has just 13,545 acres designated for conservation and recreational land use.

### ***Environmental Health Risks***

The Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) is a uniform system developed by the EPA to measure five air pollutants: particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and ozone. It converts the measured pollutant concentrations in a community's air to a number on a scale of 0 to 500. A PSI over 100 is considered unhealthy.

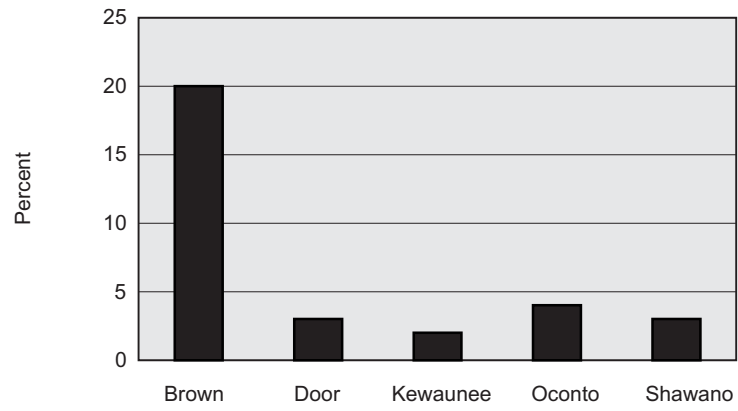
- All of the counties in this region had PSI ratings of under 100 and thus did not make the EPA's rating scale.

### ***Superfund sites***

In general, Superfund sites include regions where public health is threatened by the existence of serious environmental hazards.

- With the exception of Brown County, all counties in the region have between two and four Superfund sites.
- Brown County, with 20 sites, ranks fifth highest among all counties in the state. One Brown County site is located at the Better Brite Plating Company Chrome and Plate Shops in De Pere, and is currently on the final National Priorities List.

### Superfund Sites, 1999



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## **Democracy and Civic Participation**

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Wisconsin has a strong tradition of political independence, clean politics and civic engagement. Unfortunately, today that tradition is waning. Lax civic participation and an unresponsive government are caught in a downward spiral fueled by big money and special interests. This is further exacerbated by a lack of substantive media coverage on issues and candidates, ultimately hurting voters who rely on such sources to inform their decisions. The challenge facing our state is how best to recapture our strong grassroots political tradition, including providing citizens with the information they need and encouraging all to actively participate in the political process.

Wisconsin's political system is awash in money, and the cost of running a state-level campaign is skyrocketing. Legislative candidates spent \$7.1 million, and special interests a reported \$2.5 million, setting new spending records in election year 2000; overall spending was 26% higher than in election year 1998, when candidates spent approximately \$5.6 million.

On average in Wisconsin, the cost of a competitive State Senate campaign in 2000 was \$224,888; it took roughly \$46,732 to run the average competitive State Assembly race. (Competitive here means any race where the winner garnered less than 60% of the total votes cast.) Incumbent spending was nearly double that of spending by challengers; not surprisingly, only three of sixty-two challengers statewide won contested seats in the 2000 state legislative elections.

### ***Campaign Spending***

Statewide in 2000, 36% of all legislative seats were uncontested. In the remaining races, only a handful were truly competitive. Unfortunately, these same races also drew an inordinate amount of special interest money and large individual contributions from outside the candidate's district. Such spending patterns diminish voter choice at the ballot box.

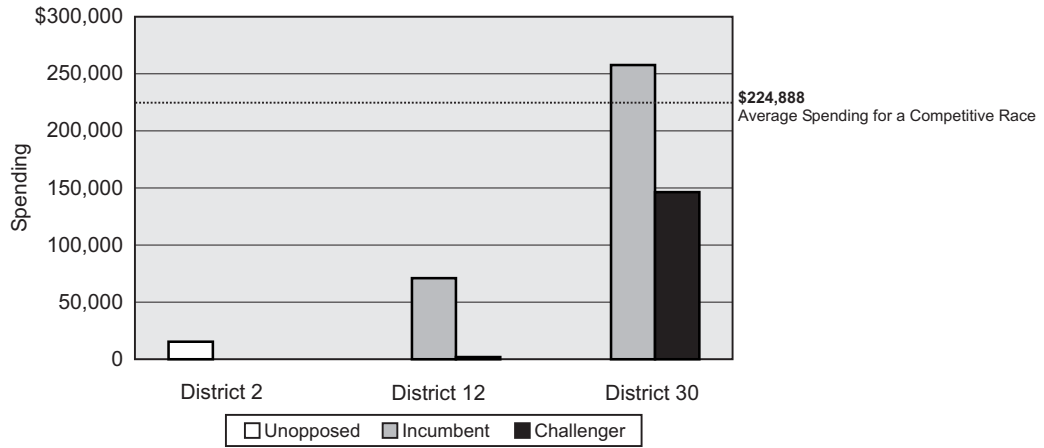
- In this region, four of twelve state legislative races were 'won' by candidates who ran unopposed.
- In Assembly District 2, the unopposed candidate spent five to nine times that of the two other candidates running unopposed Assembly races in the region.

Incumbents running for four of eight contested seats spent far more than the challengers. And in five of the six competitive state legislative races held in the region in 2000, spending by at least one candidate surpassed the state average for competitive races.

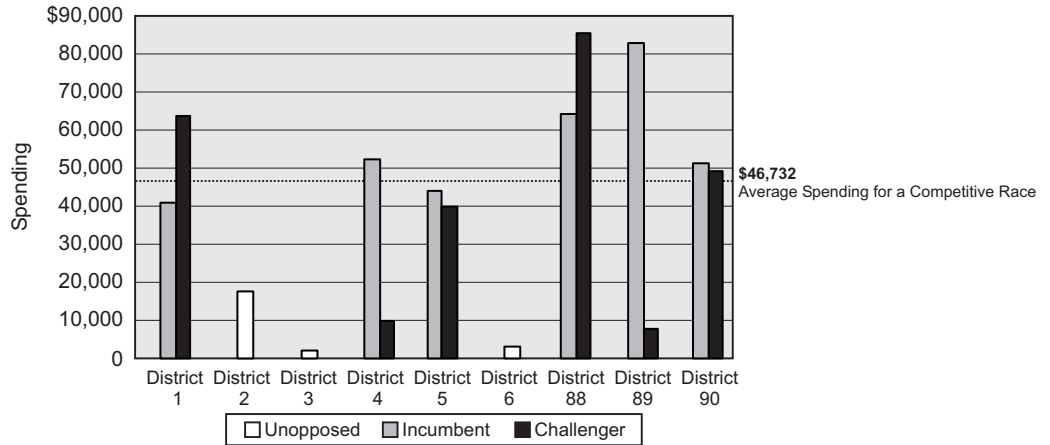
- The incumbent in Assembly District 89, Joint Finance Committee Chair John Gard, spent more than ten times the amount spent by his challenger.
- In Assembly District 88, an open seat, both candidates far exceeded the state spending average on competitive races, spending \$63,954 and \$85,404 respectively.

With the explosion of campaign money acutely evident in this region, it should come as no surprise that residents here have shown a desire to reduce the undue influence of money in the electoral process. A November 2000 advisory referendum to place limits on campaign spending passed by nearly 90% in Door, Kewaunee and Oconto counties. Voters in Brown County also passed the referendum by a similar margin in the spring of 2001. The referendum was not on the ballot in Shawano County.

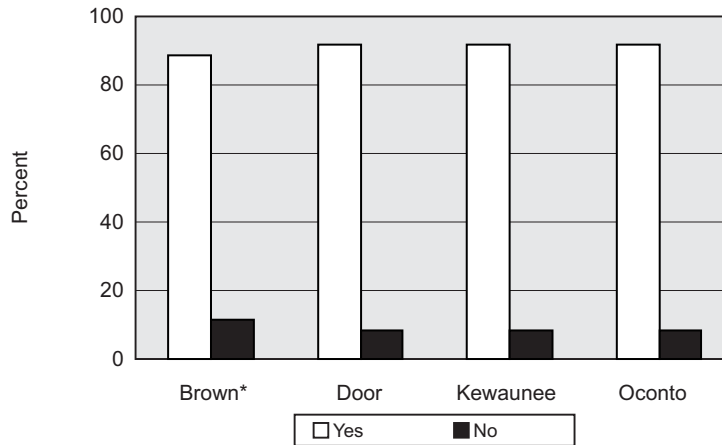
### Candidate Spending, State Senate, November 2000



### Candidate Spending, State Assembly, November 2000



### Campaign Finance Reform Referendum, 2000



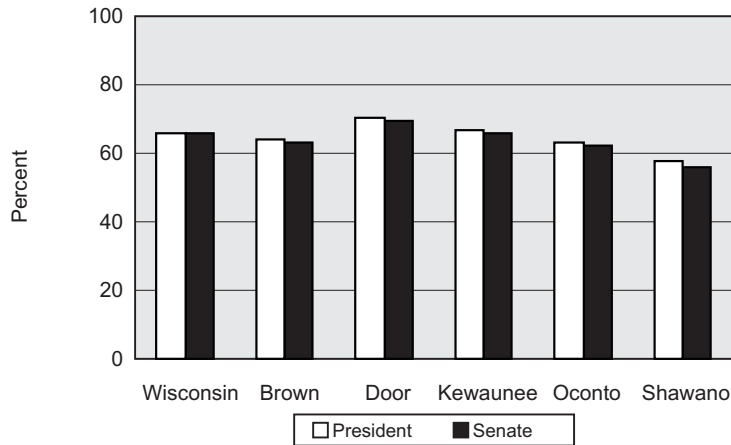
\* Brown County referendum held spring, 2001

### ***Voter Turnout***

Statewide voter participation in the fall general election was nearly 67% in 2000, and all counties in the region show comparable levels of voter participation. Door County had the highest participation rate, with 70% in the Presidential and 69% in the US Senate elections. Shawano County showed the lowest rate, with 58% in the Presidential and 56% in the Senate race.

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**Voter Turnout, November 2000**  
(based on voting age population)

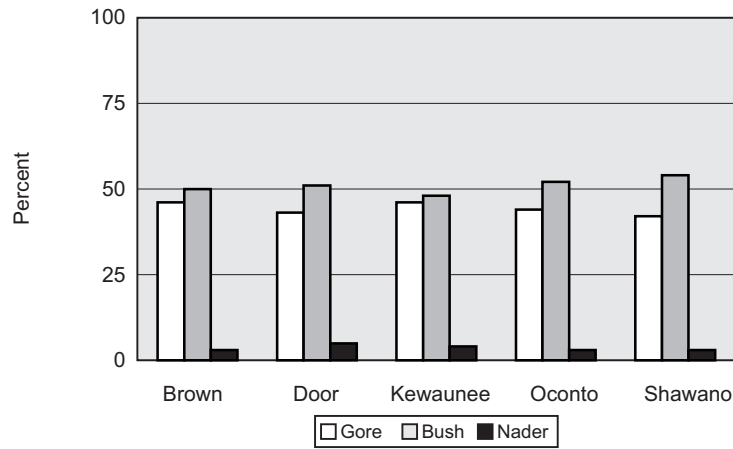


### Political Independence

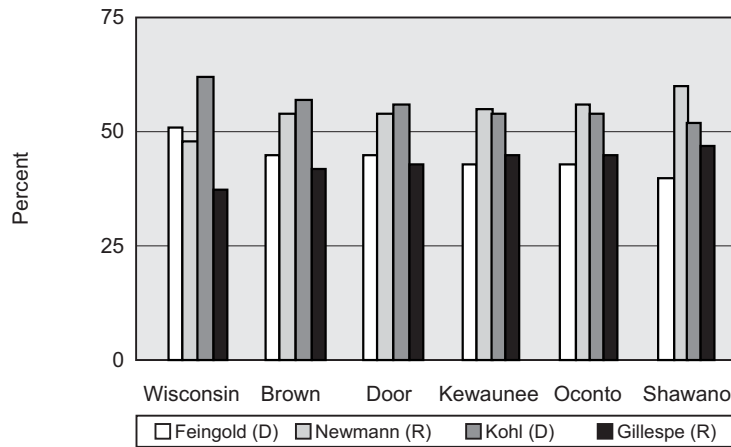
Wisconsin also maintains a long tradition of independent, split-ticket voting. Our state currently has four Republican US House members and five Democrats; two Democratic US Senators; a Republican governor; a Republican controlled State Assembly; and a State Senate with a Democratic majority. Yet, while this state trend exists somewhat in the region, voting has tended to favor a single party affiliation.

- The Republican candidates for President, Senate and Congress in 2000 won in all counties of the region.
- Republican officials fill the majority of the total seats representing the major state legislative districts in this region.

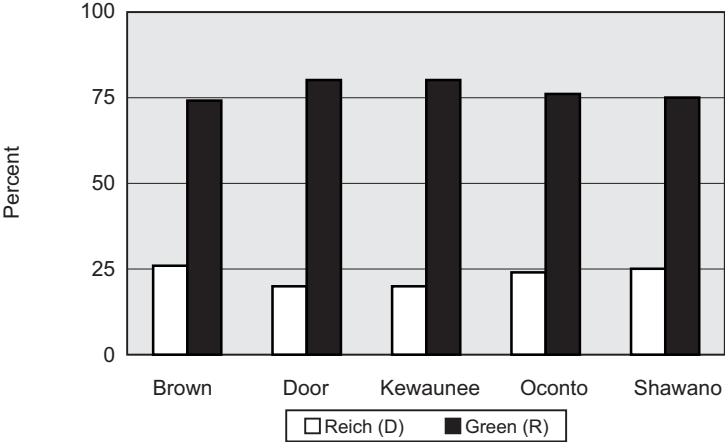
**US Presidential Election, November 2000**



**US Senate Elections, November 1998 and 2000**



**US Congressional Election, November 2000**



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## Sources

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### **Jobs and the Economy**

- *Per Capita Income 1969-1999* and *Per Capita Income as Percent of U.S. Average* from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce at <http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis>.
- *Labor Force Participation Rate* from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us> (available only upon request).
- *Unemployment Rate 1993-1999, Recent Seasonal Unemployment Rates, and Change in Total Employment* from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Wisconsin Labor Market Information website at [http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/cp\\_pdf/cp\\_maiinx.htm](http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/cp_pdf/cp_maiinx.htm).
- *Job Growth Across Sectors, and Employment by Sectors in each county* from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us>.
- *Decline in Full Time Farms, Decline in Land Used for Farming, Number of Farms Larger than 1000 Acres, Change in Farmers who Report Farming as Principal Occupation, and Average Age of Farmers* from the 1997 Census on Agriculture by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/profiles/wi/wi.htm>.
- *Change in Tourism Revenue, and Traveler's Spending* from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism at [http://agency.travelwisconsin.com/Research/EconomicImpact\\_Active/00econData.shtm#county](http://agency.travelwisconsin.com/Research/EconomicImpact_Active/00econData.shtm#county).
- *Total Jobs in Tourism* from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism at [http://agency.travelwisconsin.com/Research/EconomicImpact\\_Active/economipacthistory.shtm](http://agency.travelwisconsin.com/Research/EconomicImpact_Active/economipacthistory.shtm).

### **Families and Communities**

- *Median Household Income* from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Wiskids report at <http://www.wccf.org/wiskidcounties.html>.
- *Poverty Rates* from the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://www.census.gov/datamap/www/55txt.html>
- *Percent of Children Eligible for Free and Reduced Cost Lunch, Fair Market Rent, and Hourly Wage Needed to Pay Fair Market Rent* from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Wiskids report at <http://www.wccf.org/wiskidcounties.html>.
- *Number of Renter Households* from the National Low Income Housing Coalition at <http://www.nlihc.org/cgi-bin/oor2001.pl?getstate=on&getcounty=on&county=-all&state=WI>.
- *AFDC/W2 Recipients* from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Wiskids report at <http://www.wccf.org/wiskidcounties.html>.

### **The Future**

- *Change in Population by Age Group* from the U.S. Census Bureau at [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/wiconsin\\_map.html](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/wiconsin_map.html).
- *Prenatal Care Initiated in First Trimester, Mothers and Children Receiving WIC Services, and Badgercare Enrollment* from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Wiskids report at <http://www.wccf.org/wiskidcounties.html>.
- *Public School Information* from the Department of Public Instruction at <http://www2.dpi.state.wi.us/spr/topselect.asp>.
- *Total Arrests by County, Arrests by County as a Percent of the Adult Population, and Number of Juvenile Arrests by County*, from the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance at <http://oja.state.wi.us/static/publications.htm>.

### ***Environment and Natural Resources***

- *Impaired Water Bodies* from the Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/wqs/303d/waterbody.html>
- *County Acreage in Wetlands* from the Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/wetlands>.
- *County Acreage in Forests* calculated by COWS based on data from U.S. Department of Agriculture publication [Wisconsin Forest Statistics](#) 1996 pp 35-36.
- *County Acreage in Conservation and Recreation Land* from the Wisconsin Legislature at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/bb/ch8d.pdf>.
- *Superfund Sites* compiled from data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency, at Toxic Alert at <http://www.cqs.com/esuper.htm>.

### ***Democracy and Civic Participation***

- *Campaign Spending* compiled from public records maintained by the State Elections Board, at the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign at <http://www.wisdc.org/WDCFTMPg.html>.
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- *Voter Participation Rates* calculated by COWS from data provided by the US Census Bureau at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55000.html>, and the Wisconsin State Elections Board at <http://badger.state.wi.us/agencies/elections/sebpage38.html>.
- *November 2000 and 1998 Presidential, Senate, and Congressional Elections* compiled from data from the Wisconsin State Elections Board at <http://elections.state.wi.us/sebpage4.html>.