

Introduction

The purpose of the Community Profile chapter is to provide a description of the community utilizing demographic information. The data used to populate the tables in this chapter was collected from a variety of sources including the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Wisconsin Department of Administration, and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, among others. The bulk of the information presented was gathered during the development of the 2006 comprehensive planning process and is supplemented with newer data tabulated from the 2010 US Census and 2012-13 American Community Survey.

The demographic data included in this chapter was intended to inform residents and decision-makers as they embarked upon the process of developing the Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan. The information presented on the following pages is critical to forecasting needs related to development, housing, and community facilities, among others. Community demographics will play the preeminent role in determining the direction the comprehensive plan takes in preparing for the future of Oconto Falls. The purpose of the various profiles that follow is to identify trends and patterns that, when compared with neighboring municipalities, will allow decision-makers to better understand the planning context in the community. Additional demographic information will be presented in later plan chapters.

The Pros and Cons of Growth

Some residents may view growth and development as necessary and beneficial while others see them as threats to the rural character of Oconto Falls. Finding a balance between the 'preservationists' and 'pro-growth' advocates is a crucial component of every planning process. A growing population can have both positive and negative effects upon a community. Benefits may include an expanded tax base, additional consumer spending at local businesses, employment opportunities related to new home construction, and additional students in local school districts (with resulting increases in state and federal funding). Potential challenges may consist of strains on the current housing supply, increased costs of services (i.e., increased taxes), harmful effects to the natural environment resulting from unplanned or misguided development, and the loss of agricultural lands, among others.

A declining population brings a different set of challenges. As a population decreases over time, existing services and facilities necessary may exceed need. Moreover, fewer residents and occupied housing units correspond with a declining tax base and diminished state funding for local schools. The problems associated with population contraction can be more challenging than those resulting from a high growth rate. A primary purpose of this planning effort is to develop a community-supported strategy for addressing the challenges present today and those that must be faced during the next two decades.

Decennial Census vs. American Community Survey

The information presented under the year '2000' columns in the population tables that appear throughout this chapter is drawn from the 2000 US Census, the last to utilize the long survey

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census format. Beginning in 2010, the US Census Bureau distributed an abbreviated survey instrument that resulted in the collection of much more limited demographic data. The 2010 Census has since been supplemented with additional information gathered through the annual American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS is an ongoing statistical survey by the U.S. Census Bureau that is sent to approximately 250,000 addresses monthly. It regularly gathers information previously contained in the long form of the decennial census. The data listed under the '2012' or '2013' columns in this chapter's tables result from the most recent ACS survey for Wisconsin communities.

Population Profile

Historic and Current Population

The population of the Town has grown by 41.3% during the past four decades, with 11% of that number since 2000 (see Table 2.1). On average, Oconto Falls has added approximately 74 people per decade.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 1970-2013			
						Number	Percent	10-Year Average Number	10-Year Average Percent
T. Oconto Falls	895	1,033	1,014	1,139	1,265	370	41.3%	74	
Increase from previous	--	15.4%	-1.8%	12.3%	11.1%				8.3%
Oconto County	25,553	28,947	30,226	35,634	37,660	12,107	47.4%	2,421	
Increase from previous	--	13.3%	4.4%	17.9%	5.7%				9.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration; US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

The average 1990-2010 growth rate for all towns in Oconto County is 29.8% (see Table 2.2). The Town of Oconto Falls fell slightly below the average at 24.8%. With a 2010 population of 1,265 people, Oconto Falls is the eight largest of Oconto County's 23 towns.

Township	1990	2000	2010	Change Number 1990-2010	Change Percent, 1990-2010
T. Abrams	1,347	1,861	1,856	509	37.8%
T. Bagley	271	341	291	20	7.4%
T. Brazeau	1,169	1,436	1,284	115	42.4%
T. Breed	564	686	712	148	26.2%
T. Chase	1,375	2,270	3,005	1,630	118.5%
T. Doty	184	263	260	76	41.3%
T. Gillett	1,026	1,099	1,043	17	1.7%
T. How	564	579	516	-48	-8.5%
T. Lakewood	607	901	816	209	34.4%
T. Lena	790	771	727	-63	-8.0%

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T. Little River	1,003	1,076	1,094	91	9.1%
T. Little Suamico	2,637	4,164	4,799	2162	82.0%
T. Maple Valley	690	678	662	-28	-4.1%
T. Morgan	815	918	984	169	20.7%
T. Mountain	730	868	822	92	12.6%
T. Oconto	999	1,349	1,335	336	33.6%
T. Oconto Falls	1,014	1,179	1,265	251	24.8%
T. Pensaukee	979	1,252	1,381	402	41.1%
T. Riverview	483	848	725	242	50.1%
T. Spruce	776	897	835	59	7.6%
T. Stiles	1,243	1,515	1,489	246	20.0%
T. Townsend	715	997	979	264	36.9%
T. Underhill	668	869	882	214	32.0%
All Towns	21,379	26,817	27,762	6,381	29.8%
Average	930	1,166	1,207	277	29.8%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration; US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

Population Projections

Table 2.3 projects the population of Oconto Falls and adjoining communities through 2035. As with the previous table, projections for surrounding communities are provided for the purposes of comparative analysis. According to information provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, which develops population projections based upon a formula that includes historic population, regional demographics trends and economic forecasts, the Town will maintain a steady growth rate during the next 20 years, reaching a population of 1,565 by 2035.

Municipality	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	Percent Change 2015-2035
T. Oconto Falls	1,275	1,370	1,460	1,535	1,565	22.7%
C. Oconto Falls	2,890	3,050	3,200	3,305	3,310	14.5%
T. Abrams	1,880	2,030	2,170	2,285	2,335	24.2%
T. Gillett	1,025	1,060	1,090	1,100	1,080	5.4%
T. Lena	715	735	750	755	740	3.5%
T. Maple Valley	660	695	720	735	730	10.6%
T. Morgan	995	1,065	1,140	1,195	1,215	22.1%
T. Spruce	835	875	910	930	925	10.8%
T. Stiles	1,495	1,590	1,680	1,745	1,760	17.7%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration.

Population Density

The Town of Oconto Falls covers approximately 36 square miles (23,040 acres) of land. With an estimated 2015 population of 1,275, Oconto Falls has a population density of roughly 35 people per square mile, with the majority of residents located in the southern half of the township and the highest concentrations located near the City of Oconto Falls. With a projected 2035 population of 1,565, the Town can anticipate a residential density approaching 45 people per square mile.

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Population Characteristics

Of the 1,265 people living in the Town in 2010, 653 (51.6%) were male and 612 (48.4%) were female. Ninety-seven percent of respondents to the 2010 Census identified their race as white. Twenty-four residents identified themselves as of Hispanic origin. A detailed breakdown by race of Oconto Falls' 2010 population is presented below.

Stated Race	Number	Percent
White	1,231	97.3%
African American	7	0.6%
Asian	4	0.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	--
Other	11	0.9%
Identified by two or more	9	0.7%

Age Group	2000		2010		Change in Pop. 2000-2010
	Number	Percent of Total Pop.	Number	Percent of Total Pop.	
Under 5 years	60	5.3%	60	4.7%	--
5 to 9 years	70	6.1%	85	6.7%	21.4%
10 to 14 years	85	7.5%	92	7.3%	1.4%
15 to 19 years	105	9.2%	66	5.2%	-37.1%
20 to 24 years	46	4.0%	49	3.9%	0.7%
25 to 34 years	130	11.4%	125	9.8%	-16.7%
35 to 44 years	208	18.3%	179	14.2%	-13.8%
45 to 54 years	179	15.7%	230	18.2%	28.5%
55 to 59 years	71	6.2%	93	7.4%	31.0%
60 to 64 years	57	5.0%	81	6.4%	42.1%
65 to 74 years	78	6.8%	133	10.5%	70.5%
75 to 84 years	42	3.7%	59	4.7%	40.5%
85 years and older	8	0.7%	13	1.0%	62.5%
Total	1,139	100%	1,265	100%	11.1%

Source: US Census Bureau.

Table 2.4 compares the 2000 and 2010 population of Oconto Falls in various age categories. The largest increases occurred within the age '65 to 74' and age '85 and older' cohorts (70.5% and 62.5%, respectively). The most significant decrease occurred within the population aged '15 to 19', which declined by 37.1%. This is consistent with most national and state trends, particularly with respect to rural communities. As the 'baby boom generation' (those born between 1946 and 1964) reaches retirement age, communities around the country will have to address the needs of an aging population.

Figure 2.1 compares the change in the population of select age groups between the 2000 and 2010 censuses. Utilizing the same data presented in Table 2.4, the chart segregates the population into the following select set of age groups beneficial for community planning.

Under 5

- Infants, toddlers, and Pre-school.
- Entirely dependent upon others.
- Community needs include healthcare and day care.

5 to 19

- School aged children and young adults.
- Residents dependent upon others for lodging, food, education, and most other needs.
- Community needs include schools, play apparatus and sports fields/courts, safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

20 to 24

- Post high school young adults; job and career training (college, trades, military, etc.).
- Somewhat dependent upon others for some needs;
- Community needs include affordable housing, part- and full-time employment opportunities, multi-modal transportation systems, entertainment, coffee shops, high-speed/broadband internet access.

24 to 44

- Established adults.
- Prime earning and spending years; traditional child-raising years.
- Community needs include diversity in housing choices, safety, healthcare, dining alternatives, diverse retail, childcare services, career opportunities, banking and insurance.

45 to 64

- Mature adults.
- Often “empty nesters”.
- Community needs are similar to the 24 to 44 group with less emphasis on programs, facilities, and services for youth.

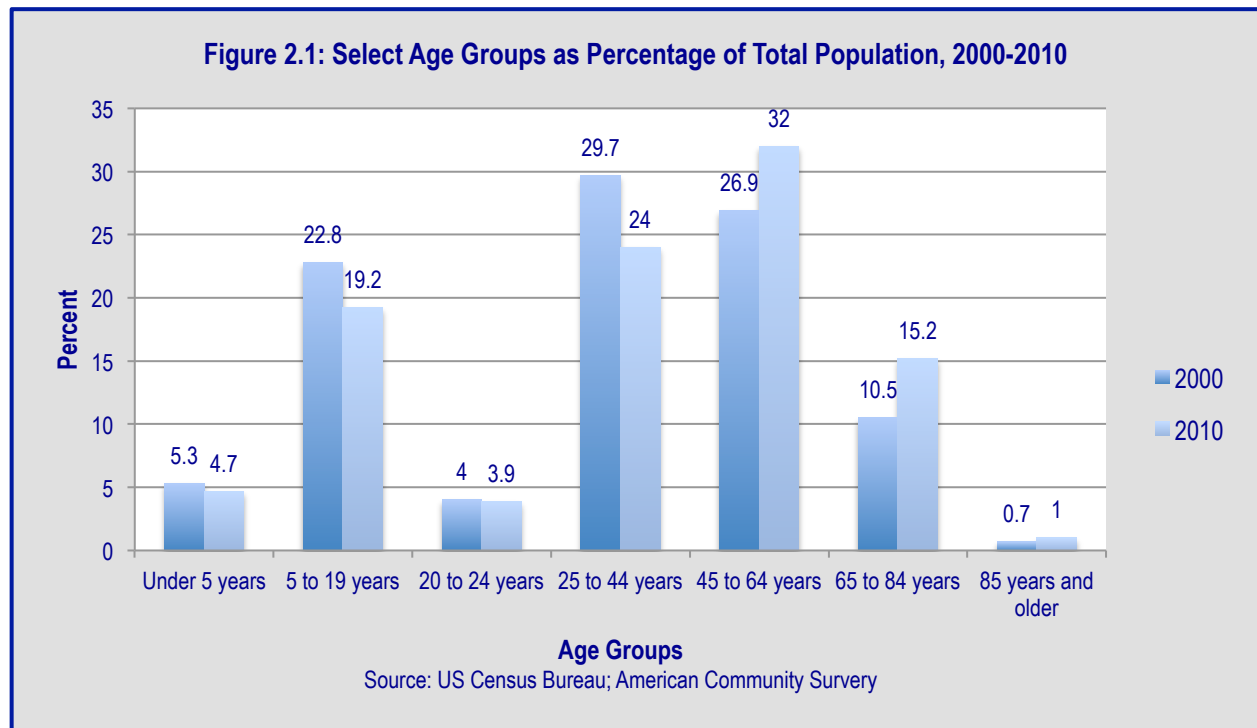
65 to 84

- Retirement-age.
- Decreased earning, sustained activity level.
- Community needs include healthcare, multi-modal transportation opportunities, recreation, senior housing options.

85 and older

- Post retirement.
- Decreased earning and activity level.
- Community needs similar to ‘65 to 84’ with greater emphasis on around the clock care.

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Housing Profile

Households

A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements. For the past five decades state and national trends have shown a shift towards an increase in the number of households with corresponding decreases in the average number of persons per household. In 1965, the average American household was 3.7 persons in size. By 2014, it had fallen to 3.13. The main reasons for the decrease includes:

- A decline in birth rate.
- People waiting longer to get married.
- An increase in the average life span (resulting in more elderly people living either alone or with another family member).

A decline in the size of households is important since it means that additional housing units will be needed to support the population *even if the overall population remains the same*. While the population of the Town is projected to grow by 23.7% from its 2010 level, the projected number of households is anticipated to increase by 34.3% (see Table 2.5). Additional information related to housing in the Town of Oconto Falls can be found in *Chapter 3: Housing*.

Table 2.5: Actual and Projected Households and Household Size in the Town of Oconto Falls and Oconto County, 2000-2035

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	Change, 2010-2035
T. Oconto Falls							
Population	1,265	1,275	1,370	1,460	1,535	1,565	23.7%
Total Households	499	518	564	608	647	670	34.3%
Avg. Household Size	2.54	2.46	2.43	2.40	2.37	2.34	-0.8%
Oconto County							
Population	37,660	38,050	40,620	43,030	44,850	45,430	20.6%
Total Households	15,415	16,025	17,288	18,504	19,486	19,973	29.6%
Avg. Household Size	2.44	2.37	2.35	2.33	2.30	2.28	-0.7%
Source: US Census Bureau-Census; Wisconsin Department of Administration-Demographic Services Center.							

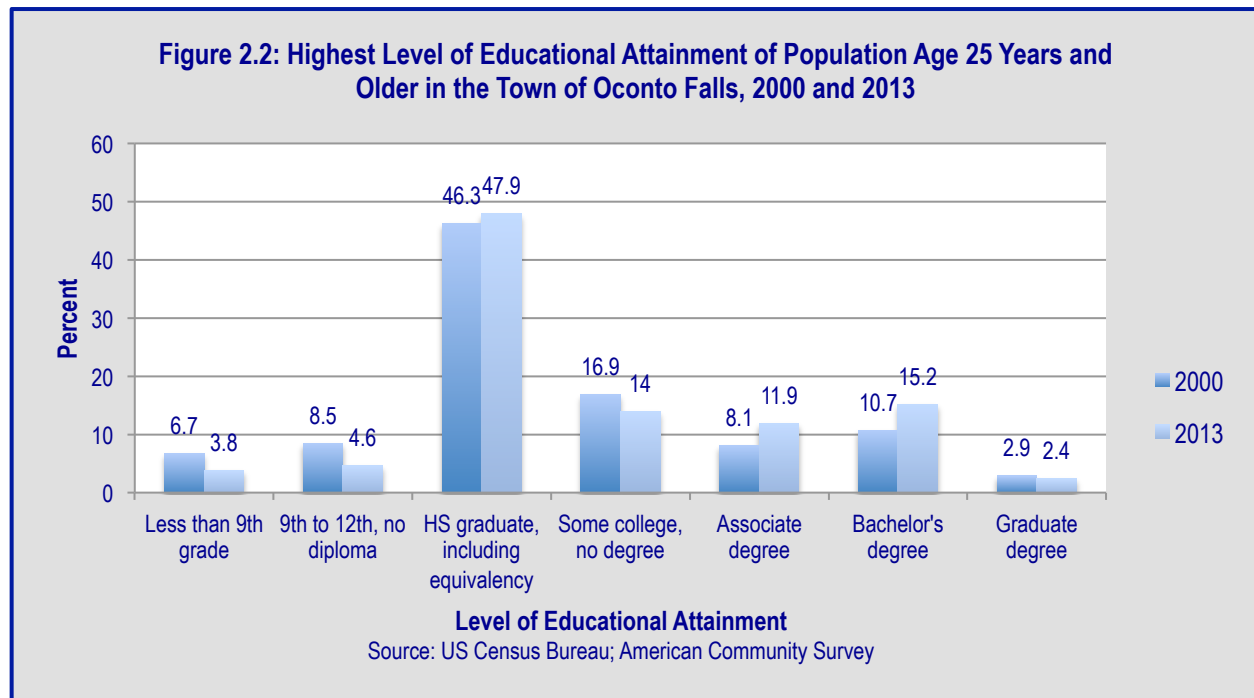
Education Profile

The level of educational attainment in a community serves as a good indicator of the quality of life. Generally, a high level of educational attainment reflects a skilled population with higher earnings potential. It also allows a community to more effectively compete for the most sought-after industries, including technology and healthcare, among others.

Each column in Figure 2.2 indicates the percentage of the community that has reached its highest level of educational attainment within a given category for the years 2000 and 2013. As the chart demonstrates, the Town of Oconto Falls is becoming a more highly educated community. For example, the 2010 educational attainment for 61.5% of the residents of Oconto Falls older than the age of 25 climaxed at a high school diploma (or its equivalency), whereas 84.8% achieved *at least* a high school diploma. By 2013, those numbers had changed to 56.3% and 91.6%, respectively. The percentage of residents with a college degree rose from 21.7% to 29.6% during between 2000 and 2013, while the number of residents without a high school diploma fell from 15.2% to 8.4%.

The list that follows Figure 2.2 compares the percentage of residents of the Town of Oconto Falls, adjoining municipalities, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin who achieved an Associate’s Degree or higher as of the 2013 American Community Survey. Only the City of Oconto Falls and the Town of Abrams exceed the Town of Oconto Falls in number of residents with college degrees.

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Percentage of Population Over Age 25 with Associate's Degree or Higher

▪ T. Oconto Falls	29.6%	▪ T. Morgan	21.9%
▪ C. Oconto Falls	33.7%	▪ T. Spruce	21.5%
▪ T. Abrams	30.4%	▪ T. Stiles	25.7%
▪ T. Gillett	12.9%	▪ Oconto County	24.3%
▪ T. Lena	20.2%	▪ State of Wisconsin	37.8%
▪ T. Maple Valley	18.0%		

Data from the federal government demonstrates the importance of a higher education degree for job seekers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2009 unemployment rate was more than twice as high for persons without a high school diploma than for persons with an Associate degree. That gap widens to three times in comparison to persons who hold a Bachelor's degree. The unemployment rate for persons with Master's, professional, and doctoral degrees was the lowest, at 2.4 percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that persons with a high school degree make, on average, \$626 weekly. In comparison, persons with an Associate degree make \$761, workers with a Bachelor's degree make \$1,025 and those with a Master's degree take in \$1,257 a week. According to these numbers, a person with an Associate degree is likely to earn nearly \$7,000 more per annum than someone with just a high school diploma, a person with a Bachelor's degree is likely to earn nearly \$14,000 more a year than someone with an Associate degree, and a worker who possesses a Master's degree is likely to earn nearly \$12,000 more annually than someone with just a Bachelor's degree.

Economic Profile

This section of the chapter profiles the local economic environment by presenting data and examining factors related to income, poverty rate, and employment. Economic conditions have a direct impact on the supply, demand, and costs of housing, infrastructure, and other services within a community. The information presented below and on the following pages offers a general description of current economic indicators in the community. For a more comprehensive look at the Town of Oconto Falls' economy, please refer to *Chapter 7: Economic Development*.

Income

The three most methods used by demographers and economists to assess local income are per capita, median household, and median family. *Per capita income* is the sum of annual income divided by the total number of residents, including children and other groups of individuals who do not actually earn income. *Median household income* is the middle point of household incomes reported in a community (households include families, married couple households, and individual households). *Median family income* is the middle income reported by families.

The US Census Bureau defines a family as a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. The data presented below compares per capita, median household, and median family incomes in the Town of Oconto Falls in 2000 and 2013.

Median vs. Mean Income

Census data related to income is reported as a median figure. This represents the middle point of all incomes reported. It is not the same as a mean (or average) income. For example, if four people reported their income at \$30,000 and one person reported their income at \$100,000, the median income would be \$30,000. In the same scenario, the mean income would be \$44,000, which does not accurately depict where the majority (i.e. four people versus only one) reported their income.

	Per Capita	Median Household	Median Family
2000	\$17,654	\$49,531	\$53,304
2013	\$26,223	\$60,486	\$62,431
Change	48.5%	22.1%	17.1%

Table 2.6: Income Comparison for Town of Oconto Falls, Select Communities, Oconto County, and State of Wisconsin, 2013

Municipality	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
T. Oconto Falls	\$26,223	\$60,486	\$62,431
C. Oconto Falls	\$24,222	\$36,406	\$60,263
T. Abrams	\$30,079	\$66,029	\$75,563
T. Gillett	\$24,039	\$50,380	\$53,625
T. Lena	\$24,204	\$54,297	\$57,500
T. Maple Valley	\$28,619	\$50,764	\$53,125
T. Morgan	\$26,703	\$58,667	\$77,083
T. Spruce	\$21,947	\$40,859	\$58,000

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T. Stiles	\$27,305	\$48,355	\$57,708
Oconto County	\$25,941	\$51,615	\$62,599
Wisconsin	\$27,448	\$51,467	\$65,618
Source: American Community Survey.			

According to the data presented in Table 2.6 the Town of Oconto Falls ranks 5th, 2nd, and 3rd, respectively, in terms of per capita, median household, and median family income among neighboring communities. It compares favorably with Oconto County and the State of Wisconsin.

Poverty Status

Each year, the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) sets poverty guidelines for the nation (see Table 2.7). The formula used to create the guidelines was originally developed in the early 1960s. It took the US Department of Agriculture's economy food plan for families of three or more persons and multiplied the costs by a factor of three. Different procedures were used to calculate thresholds for one and two-person households in order to allow for the relatively larger fixed costs that small family units face. Since its original creation, the HHS prepares annual poverty guidelines based upon the previous year and updated for price changes using the Consumer Price Index.¹

In 2000, 4.1% of families and 6.5% of individuals failed to breach the poverty guideline as defined by HHS. By the 2013 American Community Survey, those numbers had fallen to 2.2% and 2.7%, respectively. By comparison, 9.7% of families and 12.5% of individuals in Oconto County had incomes falling below the 'poverty line.' A comparison of poverty levels in the Town of Oconto Falls in 2000 and 2013 appears below.

Persons in Family / Household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$11,670
2	\$15,730
3	\$19,790
4	\$23,850
5	\$27,910
6	\$31,970
7	\$36,030
8	\$40,090
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,060 for each additional person.	
Source: US Department of Health & Human Services, 2014.	

Category	2000	2013
All families	4.2%	5.6%
Families with related children under 18 years	4.1%	10.7%
Families with related children under 5 years	5.4%	30.0%
Married couple families	--	3.3%
Families with female householder, no husband	--	25.0%
All people	7.3%	6.7%
Under 18 years	7.1%	7.8%
18 years to 64 years	7.4%	5.9%
64 years and older	13.6%	8.9%

¹ Source: US Department of Health & Human Services, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.cfm>, 2014.

Employment

The Town of Oconto Falls, like most rural communities, possesses a limited inventory of commercial and industrial businesses. Most residents in the work force tend to find employment outside of the Town, either elsewhere in Oconto County or in surrounding counties. As of the 2013 American Community Survey, there were 715 Town residents in the labor force. This represents 73.7% of the population age 16 years and older. Of those 715 individuals, 683 were employed. The 2013 unemployment rate in the Town was 3.3% (see Table 2.8 for detailed employment data).

Definitions

Labor Force: The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years of age and older and who are willing and actively seeking work. Institutionalized populations are not included in the labor force.

Unemployment: The actual unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the sum of the Labor Force by the total number of unemployed. The unemployment rate does not count those not in the Labor Force (i.e., those not employed and not seeking employment).

Table 2.8: Labor Force Comparison in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000 and 2013

Category	2000		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and older	852	100%	970	100%
In labor force	661	77.6%	715	73.7%
Employed	643	75.5%	683	70.4%
Unemployed	18	2.1%	32	3.3%
Not in labor force	191	22.4%	255	26.3%

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

Table 2.9 presents employment by industry sector for Town residents in 2000 and 2013. As the table shows, the largest employers of residents by industry sector in 2013 were: Manufacturing (24.3%); Educational services, health care, and social assistance (22.0%); and, Retail Trade (11.3%). These three sectors employed nearly six of every ten working residents of the community.

Table 2.9: Employment by Industry Sector in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000 and 2013

Sector	2000		2013		Change, 2000-2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining	71	11.0%	59	8.6%	-12	-16.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	28	4.4%	27	4.0%	-1	-3.6%
Construction	49	7.6%	34	5.0%	-15	-30.6%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	100	15.6%	150	22.0%	50	50.0%
Finance, insurance, and real estate	44	6.8%	31	4.5%	-13	-29.6%
Information	8	1.2%	3	0.4%	-5	-62.5%
Manufacturing	134	20.8%	166	24.3%	32	23.9%
Other service, except public administration	31	4.8%	11	1.6%	20	-64.5%
Professional, scientific, and management	32	5.0%	35	5.1%	3	0.9%
Public administration	25	3.9%	13	1.9%	-12	-48.0%
Retail trade	59	9.2%	77	11.3%	18	30.5%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	45	7.0%	63	9.2%	18	40.0%
Wholesale trade	17	2.6%	14	2.0%	-3	-17.6%

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

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Table 2.10 compares the average annual wage by industry sector for Oconto County and the State of Wisconsin in 2013. As is typical for the northern part of the state, wages are lower in Oconto County than the statewide average; although, the cost of living is arguably lower as well. Table 2.11 lists the top ten employers in Oconto County as of 2013.

Sector	Wisconsin	Oconto County	Oconto County as Percent of Wisconsin
All industries	\$41,985	\$28,885	68.8%
Natural resources	\$33,047	\$24,130	73.0%
Construction	\$51,670	\$32,606	63.1%
Manufacturing	\$52,413	\$35,161	67.1%
Trade, transportation, & utilities	\$35,946	\$24,786	70.0%
Information	\$56,015	\$37,453	66.9%
Financial activities	\$58,493	\$30,656	52.4%
Professional & business services	\$49,451	\$25,923	52.4%
Education & health	\$43,781	\$31,952	73.0%
Leisure & other hospitality	\$15,221	\$10,511	69.1%
Other services	\$23,598	\$33,664	142.7%
Public administration	\$42,198	\$30,352	71.9%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Workforce Training, QCEW, June 2013.

Employer	Service or Product	Number of Employees
Saputo Cheese USA, Inc.	Cheese manufacturing	250-499
Community Memorial Hospital, Inc.	General medical and surgical hospitals	250-499
County of Oconto	Executive and legislative offices, combined	250-499
KCS International, Inc.	Boat building	100-249
Unlimited Services of Wisconsin, Inc.	Current-carrying wiring device manufacturing	100-249
CESA 8	Administration of education programs	100-249
Visions of NEW, LLC	Residential mental retardation facilities	100-249
Beyond Abilities, LLC	Residential mental retardation facilities	100-249
Gillett Public School	Elementary and secondary schools	100-249
Sharpe Care Nursing and Rehabilitation	Nursing care facilities	100-249

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Workforce Training, QCEW, June 2013.

Summary

The Town of Oconto Falls is a growing rural community slowly recovering from the effects of the 2007-10 'Great Recession.' As of 2015, the Town has an estimated population of 1,272 persons, and is projected to reach 1,565 by 2035. Like most American communities, Oconto Falls is aging. The median age of its residents increased to 46.7 years in 2013 from 38.5 in 2000. The number of people aged 60 years and older increased by 55% between 2000 and 2013 and now represents nearly one-quarter of the total population. In addition, the bulk of the baby boom generation is rapidly approaching retirement age.

These factors, combined with an overall increase in the general population, will require that the Town reevaluate the strategies for providing housing, transportation, and services that worked in the past. The Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide the community with the tools it needs to adequately prepare for its future while preserving the cultural and natural resources valued by its residents.

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