

WISCONSIN
EMPLOYER SURVEY

WINTER 2024

ECONOMY & WORKFORCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Economic Optimism Drops in Latest Wisconsin Employer Survey *Hiring & Wage Growth Dip Significantly From One Year Ago*

A new survey of Wisconsin businesses previewed a slow economic start to 2024, as only one-fifth of employers have a positive view of the state's economy. According to the *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, 22 percent of businesses rank the Wisconsin economy as strong, which is a significant drop from 39 percent just six months ago and a steady decline from 58 percent in the Summer 2021 survey.

However, the national economy performs even worse with only 10 percent rating it as strong and 28 percent saying it is weak – up from 18 percent one year ago. This abysmal rating of the national economy is actually lower than the 12 percent of Wisconsin employers who rated the U.S. economy as strong in the Summer 2020 survey, which was taken during the economic shutdowns that occurred in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – the combined state chamber and manufacturers' association – conducted the survey in December on a variety of topics. WMC released the following data focused specifically on the economy.

"A WMC Board Member commented at a recent meeting that 'we may not be in a recession, but we are certainly in something,' and I think that perfectly fits the state of our economy," said WMC President & CEO Kurt R. Bauer. "Optimism is falling. Wage growth is slowing. Now hiring signs are coming down. It is clear that record inflation and rising interest rates have hit both employers and their workers."

The latest *Wisconsin Employer Survey* found that hiring continues to slow. Only 46 percent of employers plan to increase their employee count in the next six months – a drop from 60 percent a year ago and 68 percent in the Winter 2022 survey.

Additionally, while wages are still going up, it is expected to be at a slower rate than before. Businesses planning to raise wages by less than three percent grew from 17 percent a year ago to 24 percent today. Additionally, the number of employers planning raises of more than four percent dropped from 34 percent a year ago to just 14 percent today.

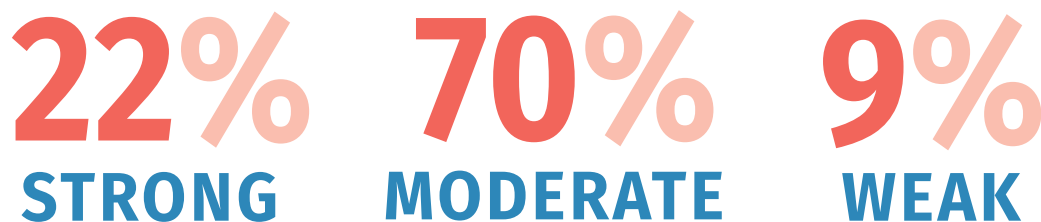
While hiring and wage growth shows concern, businesses are still struggling to find workers. Seventy-two percent of respondents said they are having trouble hiring – though that is a drop from 85 percent 12 months ago.

"Economic concerns are requiring employers to cut back in a variety of ways," added Bauer. "But, the state's long-term demographic challenges continue to impact hiring. Even in the face of a potential recession, businesses are still having a hard time finding talent."

About the Wisconsin Employer Survey

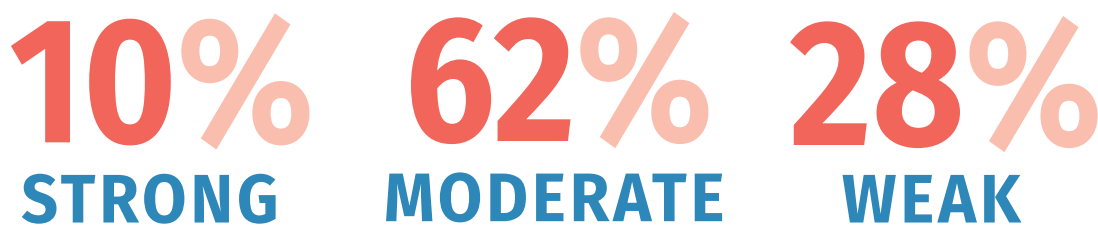
The *Wisconsin Employer Survey* is conducted twice a year by WMC. The assessment provides a snapshot of where Wisconsin's employers stand on a number of important issues and outlines their economic outlook for both Wisconsin and the United States. For the Winter 2024 edition, WMC surveyed 180 employers that make up a representative sample of its membership. Businesses of all sizes, industries and geographic locations in Wisconsin participated.

How would you rate the current **Wisconsin economy?**



VERY STRONG	1%	MODERATE	70%	VERY WEAK	1%
STRONG	21%			WEAK	8%

How would you rate the current **U.S. economy?**



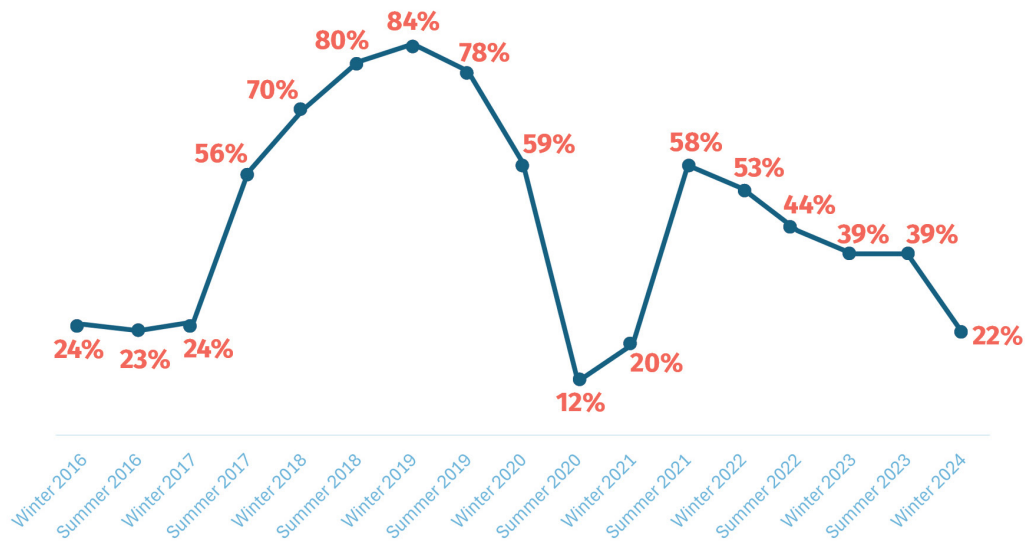
VERY STRONG	1%	MODERATE	62%	VERY WEAK	2%
STRONG	9%			WEAK	26%

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

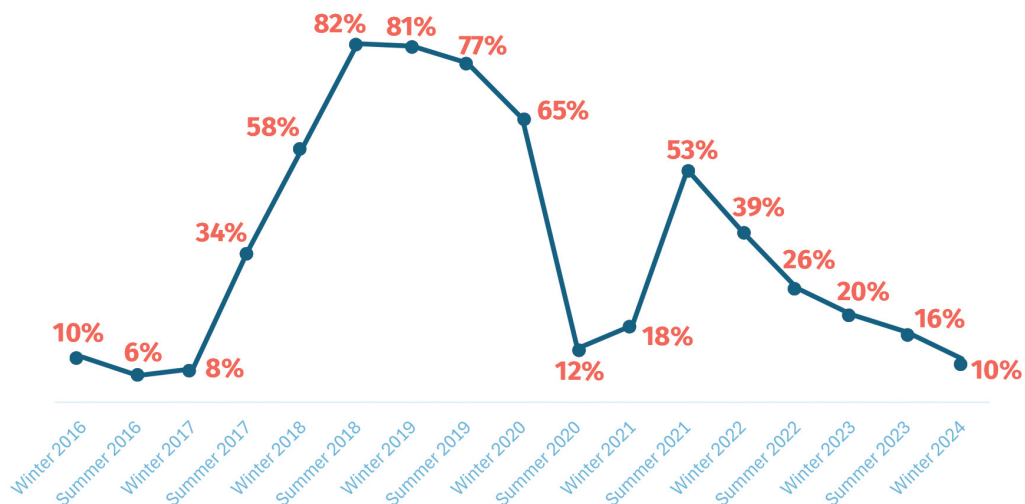
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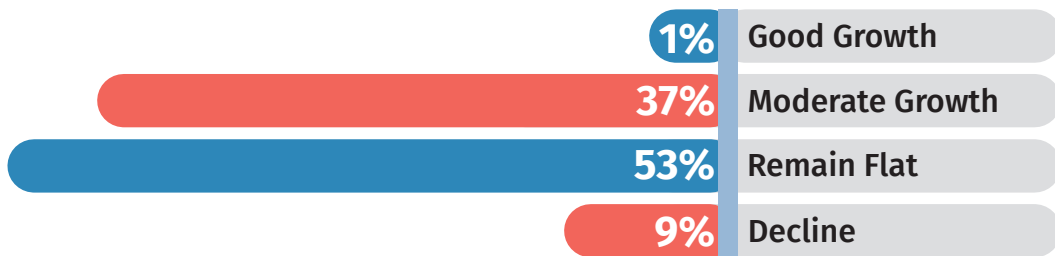
HISTORICAL: Percentage Rating Wisconsin Economy as Strong



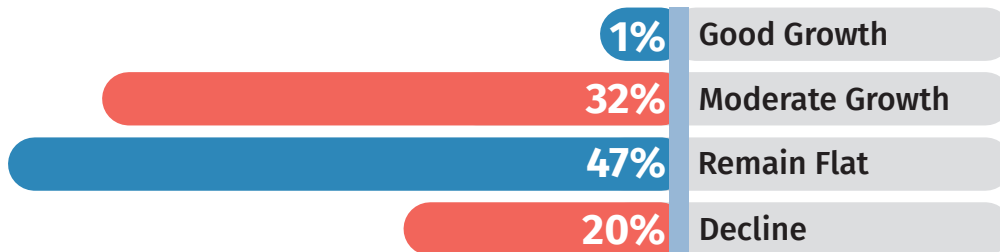
HISTORICAL: Percentage Rating U.S. Economy as Strong



How will the **Wisconsin economy** perform over the next 6 months?



How will the **U.S. economy** perform over the next 6 months?



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Are you **having trouble hiring** employees?

YES

72%

NO

28%

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



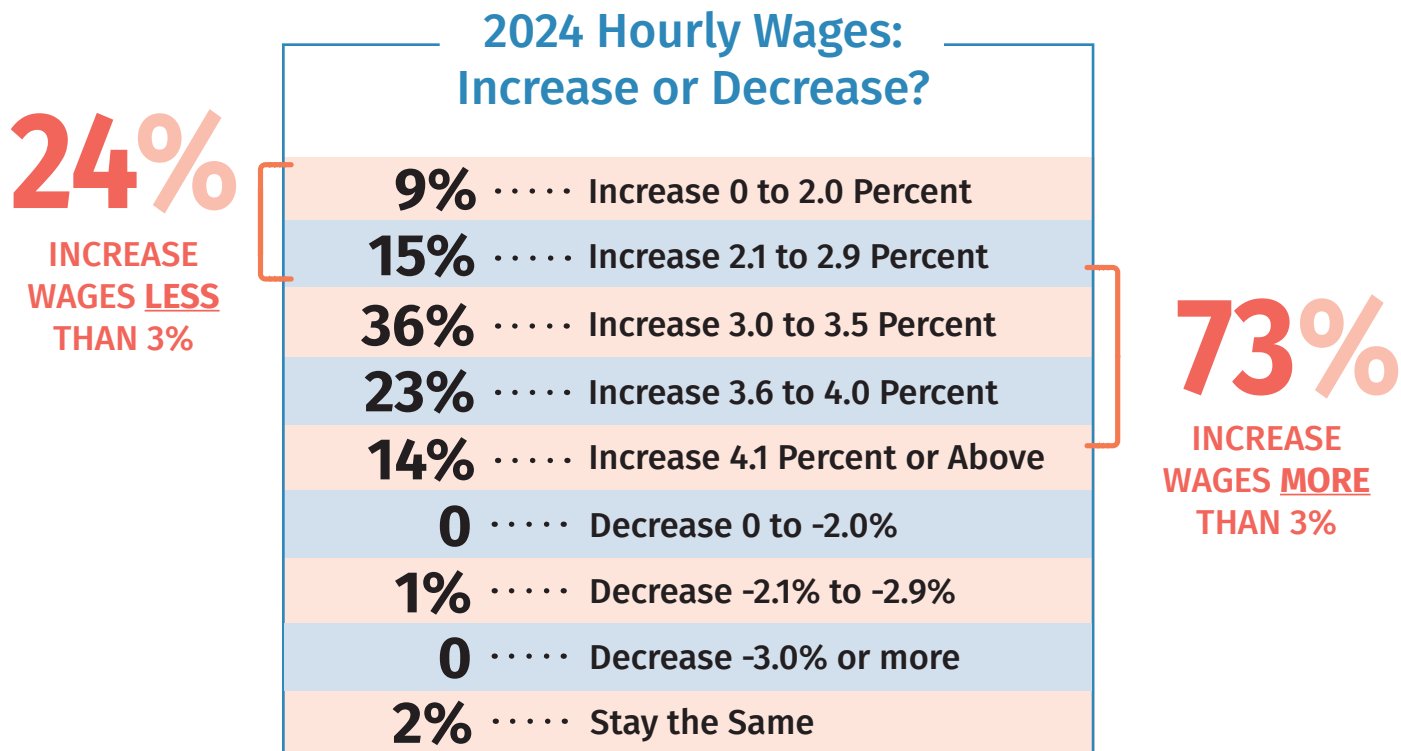
46%
INCREASE



12%
DECREASE

42%
NO CHANGE

How much do you expect hourly wages to **increase** or **decrease** in your company in 2024?



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