City of WHITEWATER
Live • Learn • Work • Play

Economic Base Analysis

REDEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

MAPS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Whitewater's economic base reflects both notable strengths and unique structural dynamics that distinguish it from peer communities in Walworth and Jefferson Counties. While population growth and institutional stability provide a strong foundation, structural challenges—particularly in housing, wages, and workforce retention—limit long-term economic potential.

Key Findings

- Labor export: A majority of residents and students work outside the city.
- Population growth since 2020 has outpaced surrounding jurisdictions, however, this growth is shaped heavily by the presence of the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater.
- Student-driven economy: Students contribute tens of millions annually, dominating key sectors like housing and entertainment.
- Household growth has remained steady, yet it lags population growth, suggesting delayed household formation, smaller household sizes, and ongoing housing supply constraints.
- Household size and median household income have real implications for housing demand, consumer spending patterns, and the city's long-term tax base. Addressing the documented gap between housing supply and demand—particularly for owner-occupied and workforce housing—will be critical to sustaining future growth.
- While major employers provide stability, many dominant industries offer relatively low average wages.
- From a fiscal perspective, the analysis of the property tax base underscores the importance of compact, higher-value land uses such as Community Business district, Central Business District, and Multifamily districts in terms of value per acre.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Whitewater is economically resilient but at an inflection point. Future economic health will depend on leveraging the university's presence more intentionally, expanding housing options, supporting higher-wage employment opportunities, and making strategic land use decisions that strengthen the tax base. By aligning growth, workforce development, and housing strategies, Whitewater can convert its demographic and institutional advantages into sustained economic vitality.

INTRODUCTION

Population, household, employment, income, and tax base growth are all indicators of an economically healthy community. The following report examines each of these indicators, their trends and trajectories, and factors decision-makers can leverage to influence the overall economic health of the City of Whitewater. Data sources include Census OnTheMap, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, ESRI Business Analyst, and Placer.ai. Data presented in this report for the City of Whitewater includes the student population.

A non-randomized student survey was conducted to gage the impact students have on the local economy through their consumer spending and labor force contributions. Only currently enrolled students that indicated that they were over the age of 18 were permitted to respond to the survey. Students were asked to indicate the months of the year they were in Whitewater (summer term vs. academic year). They were asked whether they lived on campus, off campus but in Whitewater, or outside of Whitewater; about their spending habits, and employment circumstances. Of the 172 surveys started, 138 were completed. These responses were then weighted to gauge the impact of the whole student population. (See Appendix A for the survey results and Appendix B for the methodology.) Therefor, where applicable, the student population has been segmented for a more in-depth analysis of the impact the university has on the community.

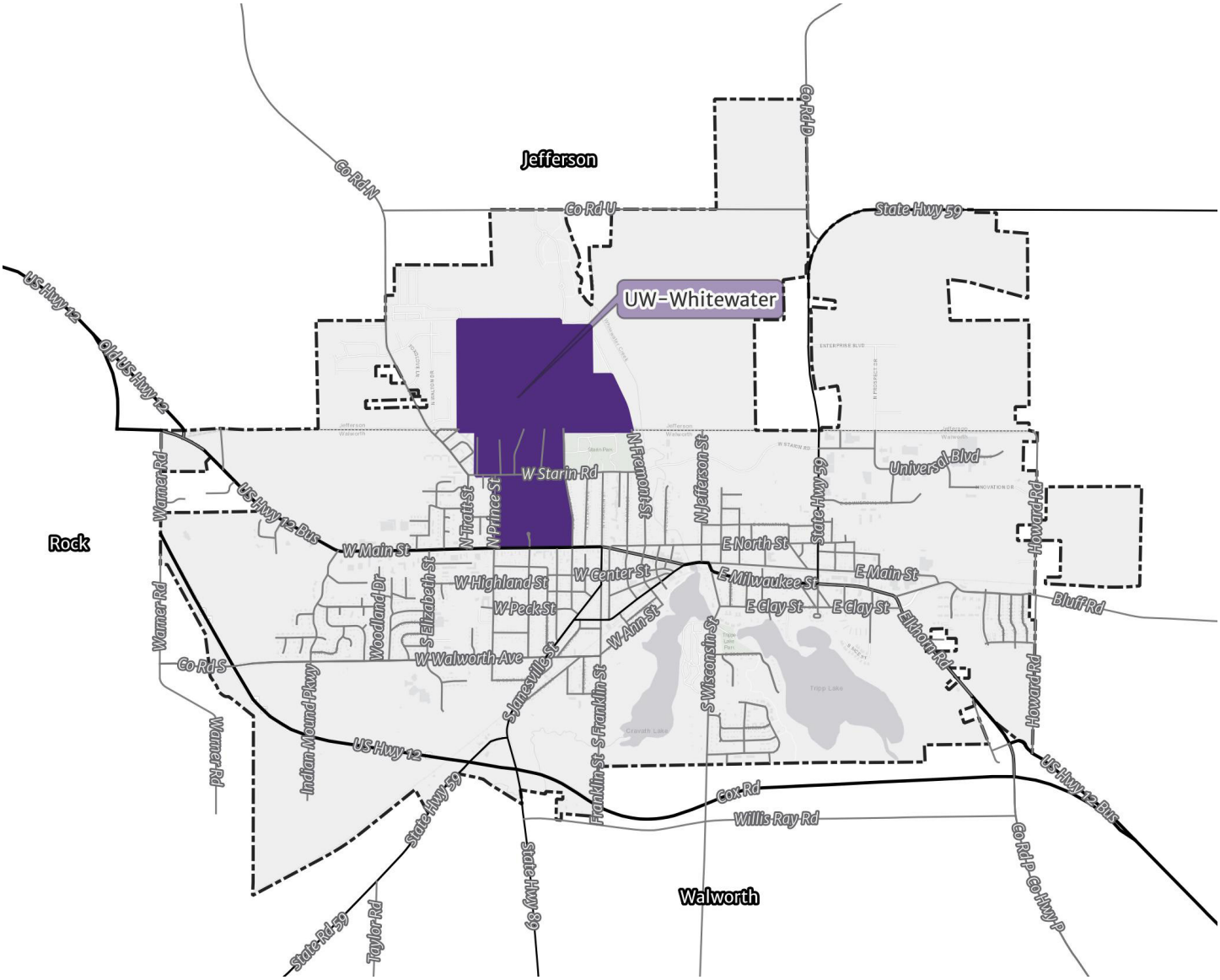
Study Area

The boundaries of the city include parts of both Walworth and Jefferson counties; therefore, data analysis is at both city and the county level. Additionally, the incorporated areas of each county were examined for comparison purposes as well as other Wisconsin communities with Wisconsin system universities. These include:

- Delevan
- East Troy
- Elkhorn
- Fort Atkinson
- Johnson Creek
- Lake Geneva
- Lake Mills
- Watertown
- Menomonie*
- Platteville*
- Stevens Point*

*Communities with University of Wisconsin system schools (UW-System). (Not shown in Map 1.)

Map 1: Whitewater, Wisconsin



Community Overview

Indicator 1: Population Trends

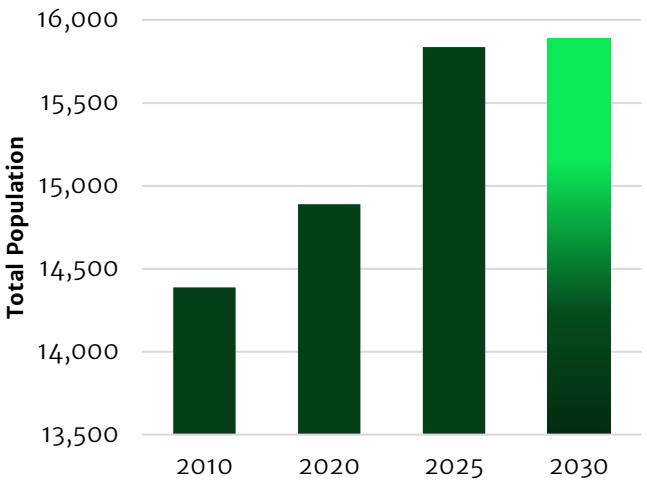
The population of Whitewater has grown by approximately 1,000 people since 2020 to approximately 15,800–16,000 people as of 2025 estimates from ESRI and the Department of Administration (Figure 1). It is the largest incorporated community in Walworth County. The only other larger community in Jefferson County is Watertown (which also is partially in Dodge County).

Menomonie, WI, which is home to UW–Stout, is the most similar to Whitewater, in terms of population, among the other university communities. Stevens Point is the largest community while Platteville is the smallest.

Definition of Total Population

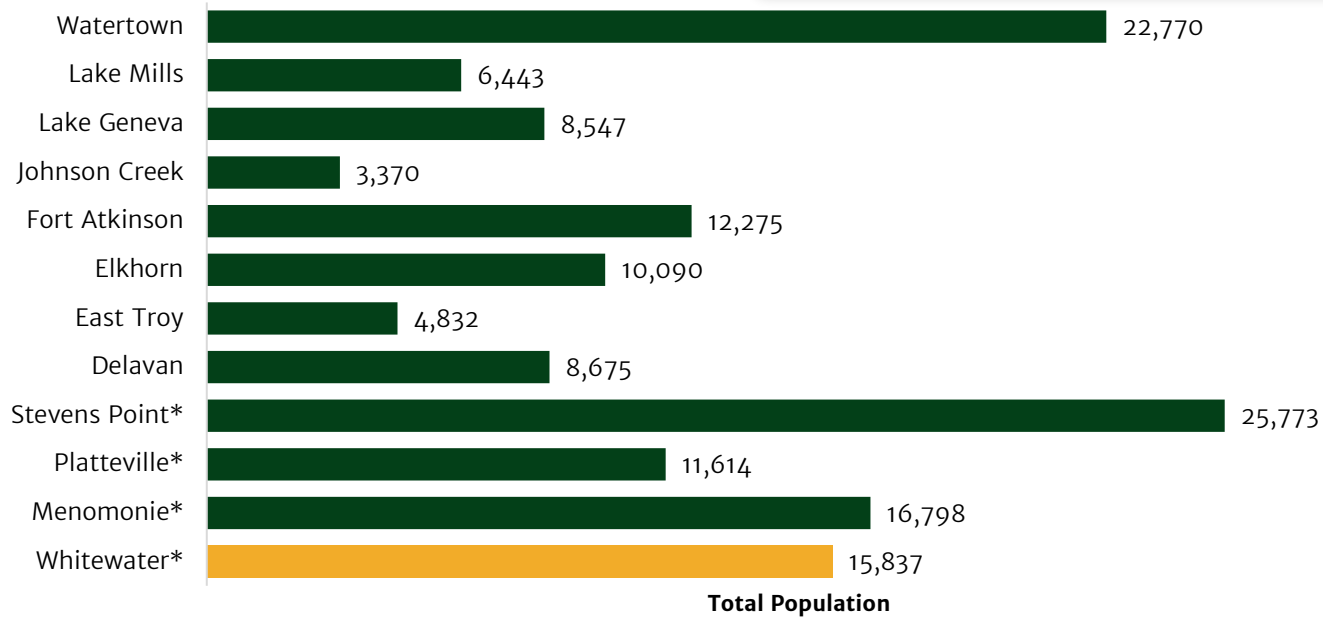
Total Population is defined as the estimated count of all people who primarily reside in a specific geographic area as of July 1st of the reference year. This refers to the nighttime population (without daytime workers) of households and Group Quarters (like nursing homes, institutions, etc.). Total population pulls from USPS residential delivery counts (identifying new or vacant homes), IRS migration data, Building permits and housing starts, and Data Axle and other private sources for facility counts (for updating Group Quarters).

Figure 1. Whitewater Population Trends



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Figure 2. Total Population Comparison



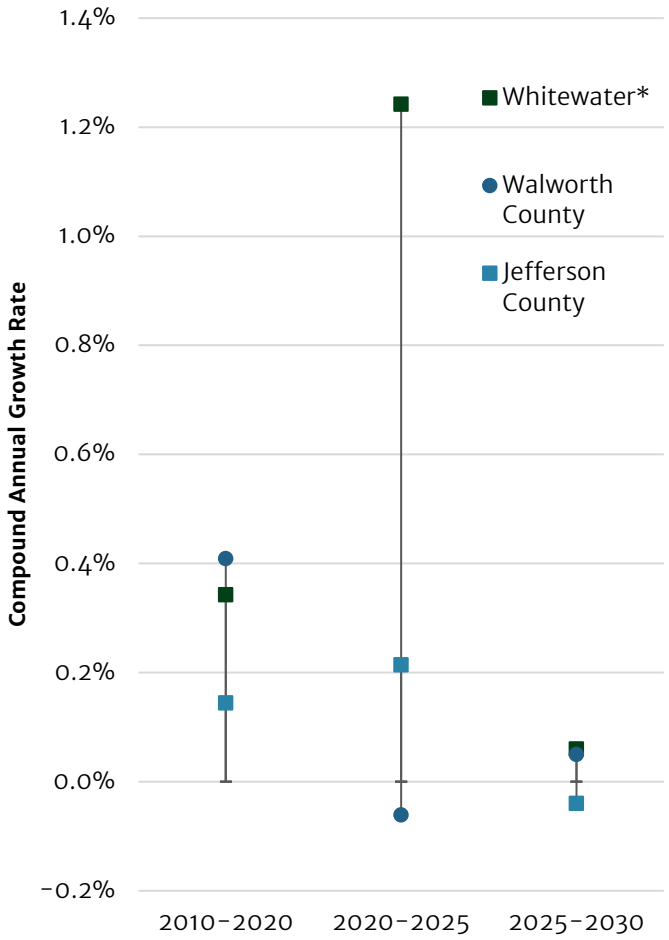
* Indicates communities with Wisconsin System universities. Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment Resources.

Compared to Walworth and Jefferson County's overall population growth rate, the city grew much faster from 2020-2025. Esri projects positive growth for the City of Whitewater and Walworth County as a whole, but negative growth for Jefferson County by 2030 (Figure 3).

Compared to other communities in Jefferson and Walworth Counties, the growth rates over time in Whitewater, East Troy, Johnson Creek, Lake Geneva and Lake Mills stand out. Johnson Creek had the largest Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) overall from 2010 to 2020 (2%). Whitewater had the largest CAGR from 2020-2025. East Troy, Lake Geneva and Lake Mills each had a CAGR of 0.5% or higher from 2010-2025. Consistent population decline has occurred in Watertown (Figure 4). Compared to communities with UW-System schools, Whitewater is the only community that has experienced consistent population growth.

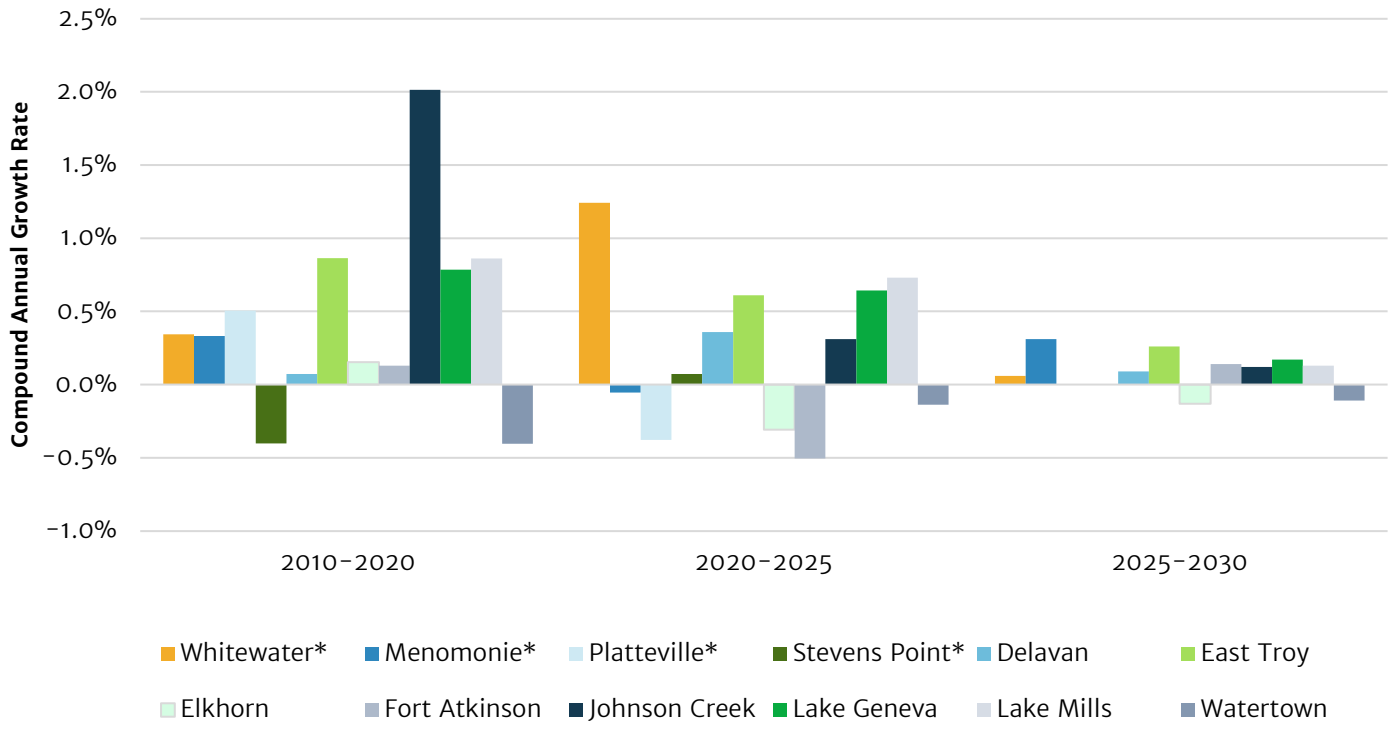
It is outside the scope of this analysis to identify why these population shifts are occurring, but population growth generally occurs due to increased births, decreased deaths, and migration. The only factor within the city's realm of influence is migration: creating a community that is an attractive place to live, work, and spend recreational time. To do that, there needs to be employment opportunities, available housing, safe neighborhoods, and quality services.

Figure 3. Compound Annual Population Growth Rate Comparison



Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment

Figure 4. City Compound Annual Population Growth Rate Comparison



Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment Resources.

Population by Age

The distribution of a community's residents by age is an indication of the types of goods and services that will be demanded as well as the current and potentially available labor force. The distribution of the City of Whitewater residents is unusual compared to other local communities (Figure 5) and is indicative of the influence of the university (Figure 6).

For context, imagine walking into a public meeting with a representative sample of 100 Whitewater residents. Half the room would be between 15 and 24. There would be three to four infants to toddlers, three to four elementary age students, and three to four middle school students. Nine attendees would be graduate students (age 25-34), nineteen at prime working age (between the ages of 35 and 64), and eleven retirees (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Population by Age by Local Community

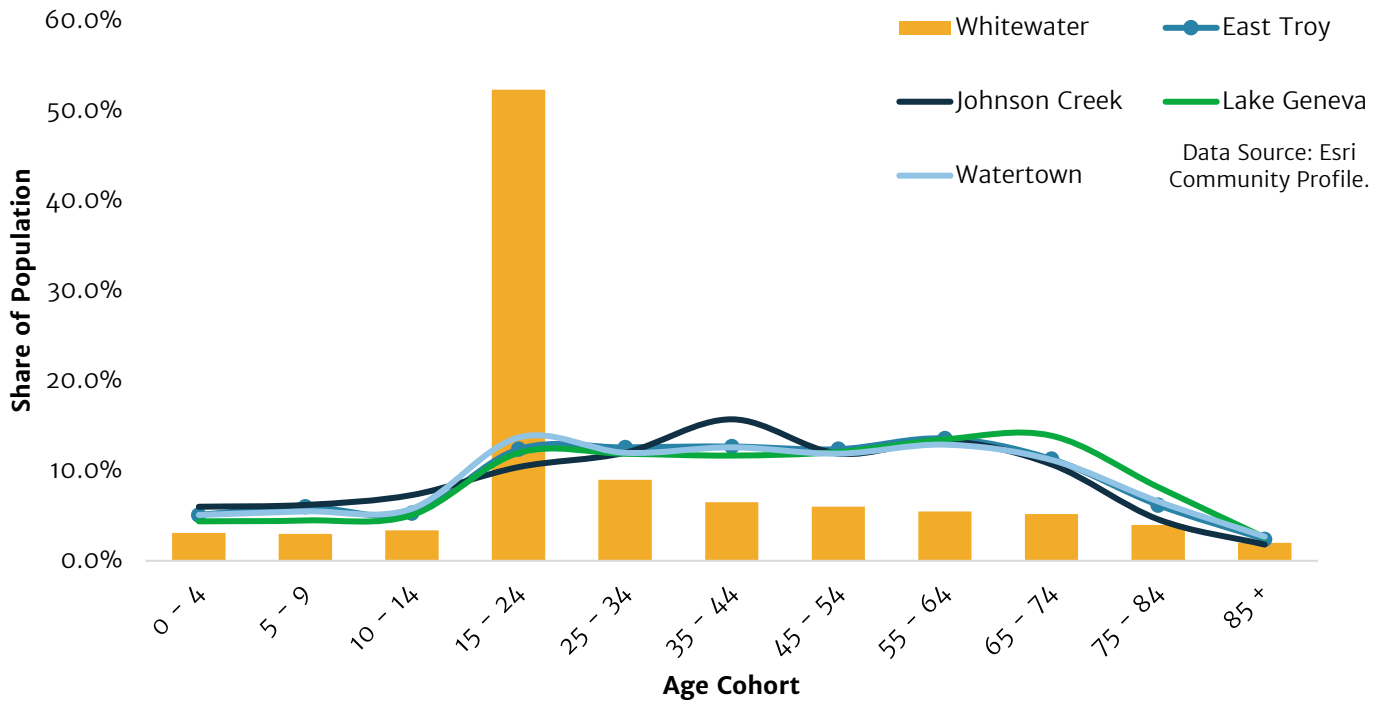
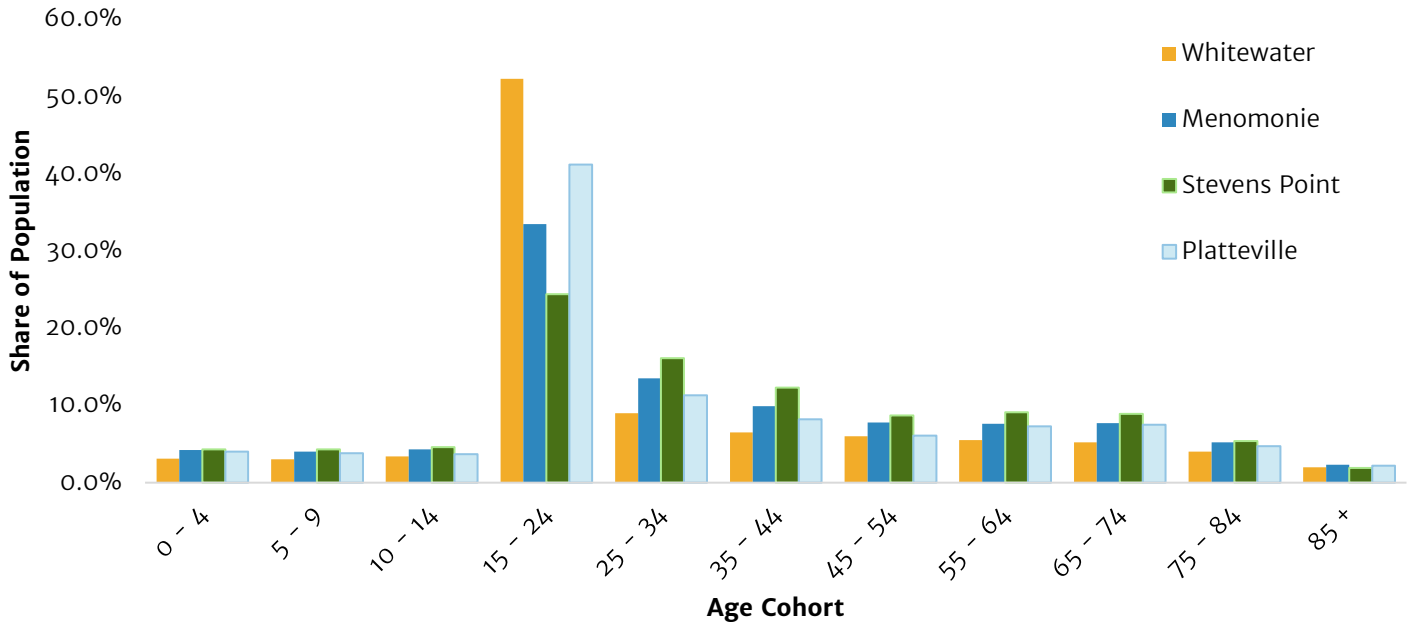


Figure 6. Population by Age by University Community



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Indicator 2: Household Trends

Households contribute to a community's tax base through sales taxes and property taxes. Growth, or decline, in the quantity of households is one indicator of economic health, but not all households demand the same goods and services due to the difference in income levels and household configuration (e.g., marital status).

Household Growth

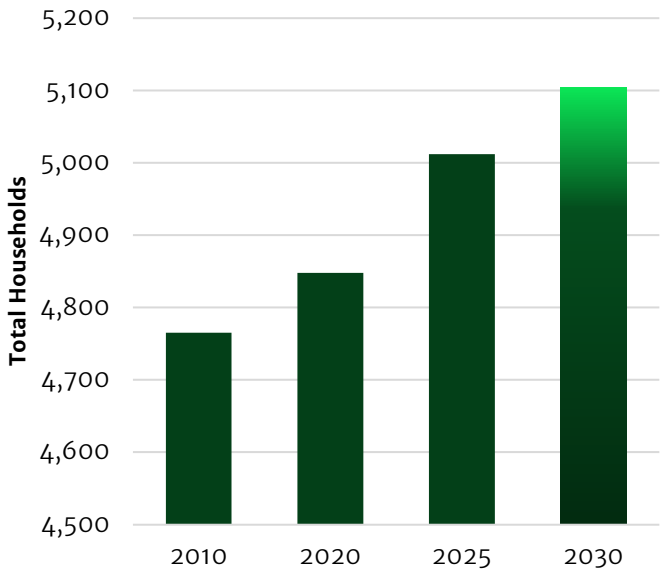
The City of Whitewater has had steady household growth since the 2010s and is predicted to exceed 5,000 by 2030 (Figure 7). Compared to other local communities, however, Whitewater households are not growing as quickly apart from Elkhorn, Fort Atkinson, and Watertown (Figure 8). The same is true for the rate of growth compared to other university communities (Figure 9, next page). Whitewater's trends most closely reflect Stevens Point trends. Since household sizes are shrinking, this may reflect delayed household formation and the availability of housing.

According to recent housing market studies conducted in 2023 and 2024, the City of Whitewater needs 225 owner-occupied units and 175 renter-occupied units built per year to keep up with demand. Since 2023, the City of Whitewater has approved a total of 163 single-family homes and 128 multi-family homes.

Myth: Renters don't pay property taxes.

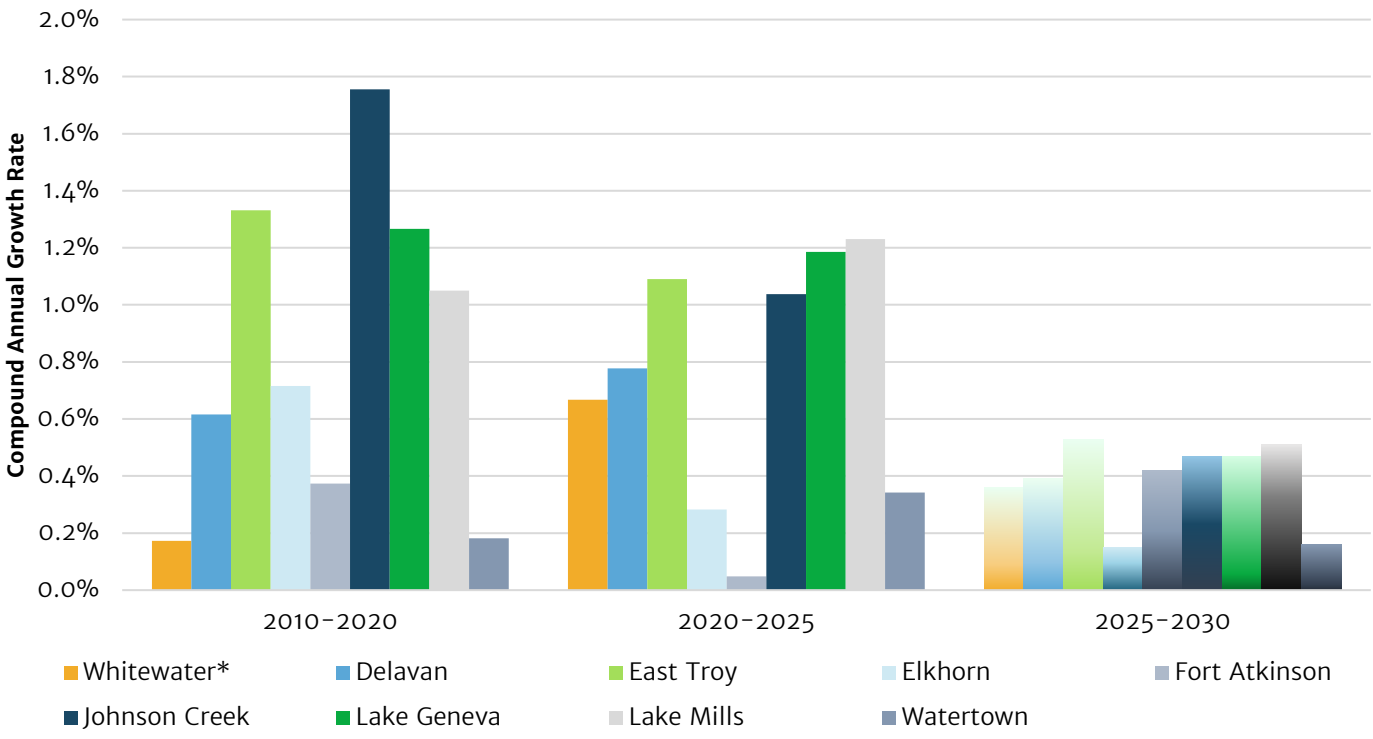
Fact: The monthly lease rate includes expenses such as property taxes and insurance passed on to the tenant. However, only the landlord receives the tax benefit.

Figure 7. Whitewater Households



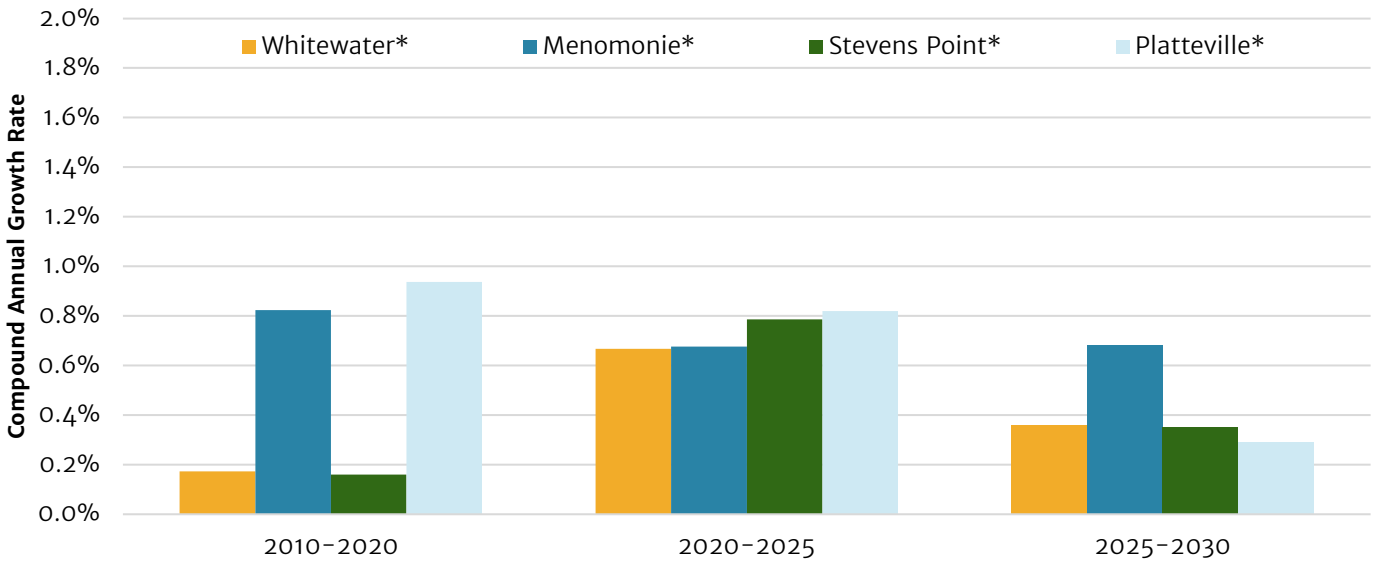
Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Figure 8. Compound Annual Household Growth Rate Trends Local Comparison



Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment Resources.

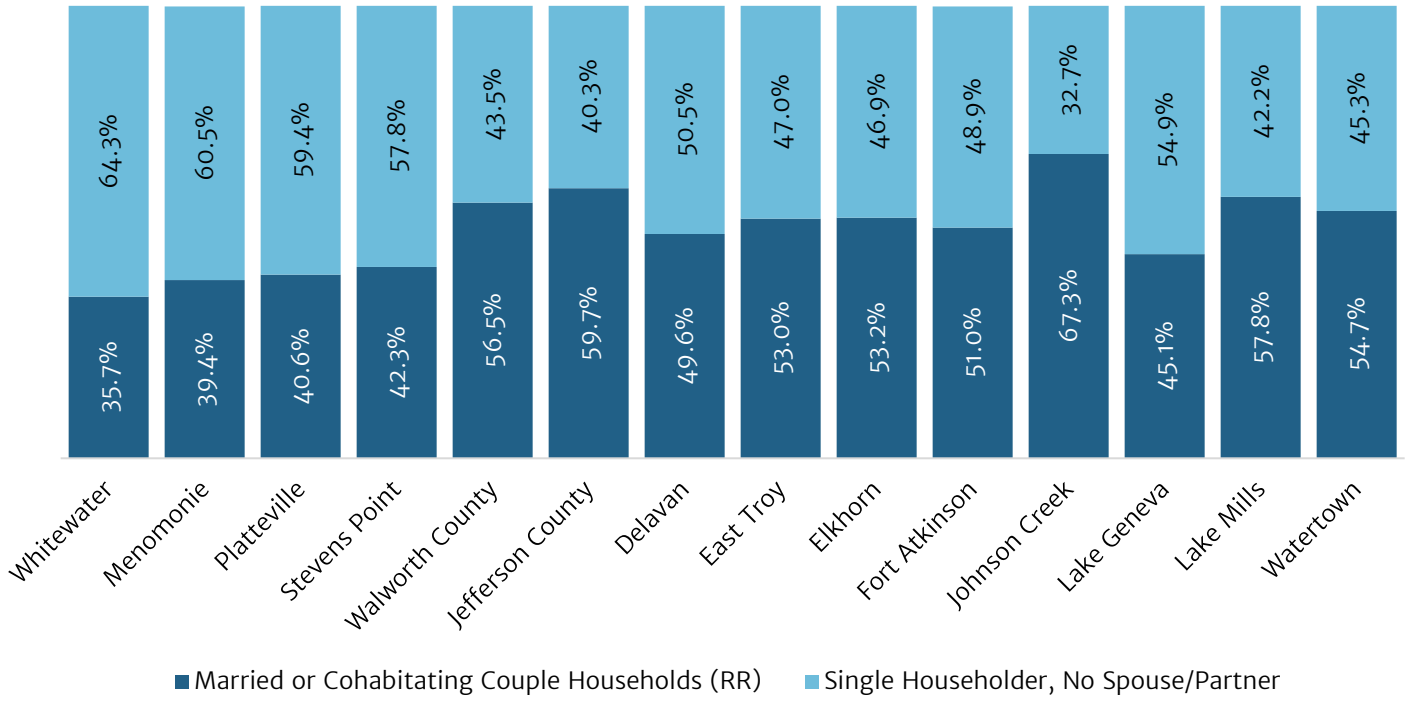
Figure 9. Comparison of University Communities Compound Annual Household Growth Rate Trends



Data Source: Esri Community Profile, Redevelopment Resources.

Compared to each county as a whole and the other communities, the City of Whitewater has a disproportionate number of single households. Single households, as shown in the next section of this report, have a lower median income than family households, particularly married-couple households.

Figure 10. Comparison of Households by Type (2020)



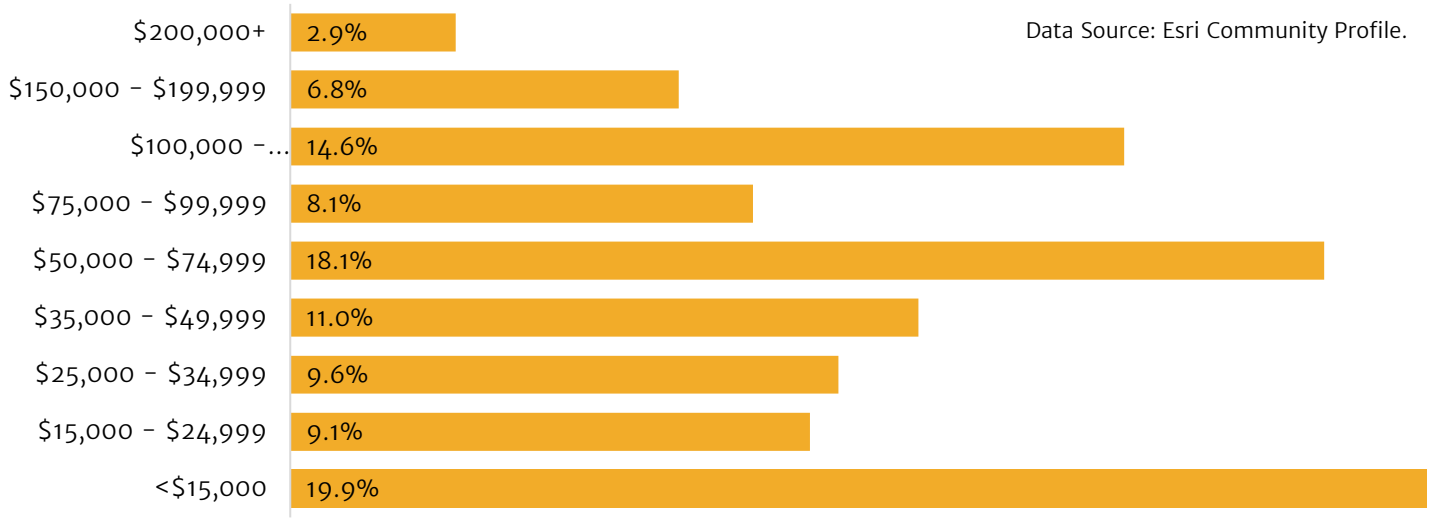
Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Household Income

The distribution of households by income level impacts nearly every facet of a local economy: the types of goods and services demanded, housing market, labor expectations, and long-term economic resilience. Higher income households support niche industries such as luxury retail, high-end restaurants, etc. Middle-income households foster stable demand for retail, dining, healthcare, and services. Low-income households have less disposable income and focus on essential goods and value-oriented retail. A local economy with a concentration of households at either end of the spectrum is more susceptible to economic shocks. Income levels also signal employers to the skill level of the available workforce and wage expectations. Additionally, if income levels and housing costs are misaligned, households may be cost burdened or new household formation delayed.

Whitewater household income is notably centred around the $50,000 to $74,999 bracket. Since 50% of the residents are age 15-24, it is reasonable to assume that the estimated 20% of households earning less than $15,000 includes students.

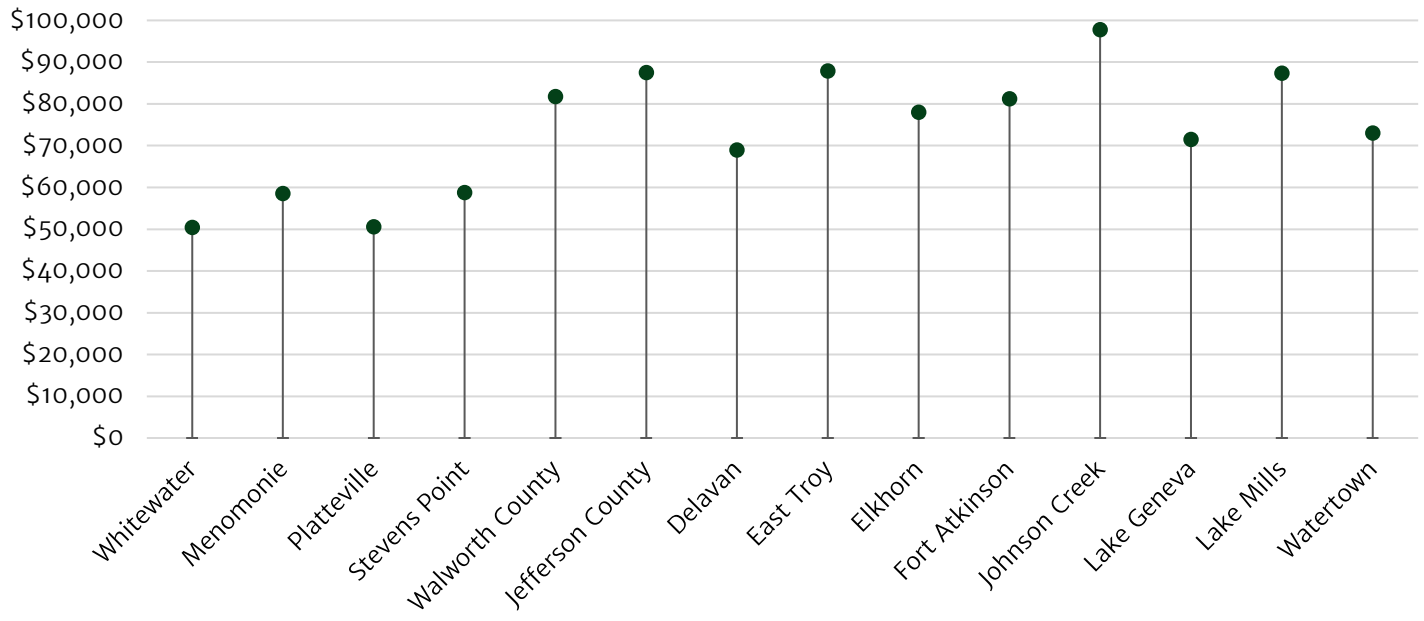
Figure 11. Share of Whitewater Households by Income Level Cohort



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

Whitewater has the lowest median income compared to the other communities (Figure12). However, this is likely due to the higher percentage of 15-24 year olds (Figures 5 and 6) and single households (Figure 10).

Figure 12. Median Household Income Comparison



Data Source: Esri Community Profile.

ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

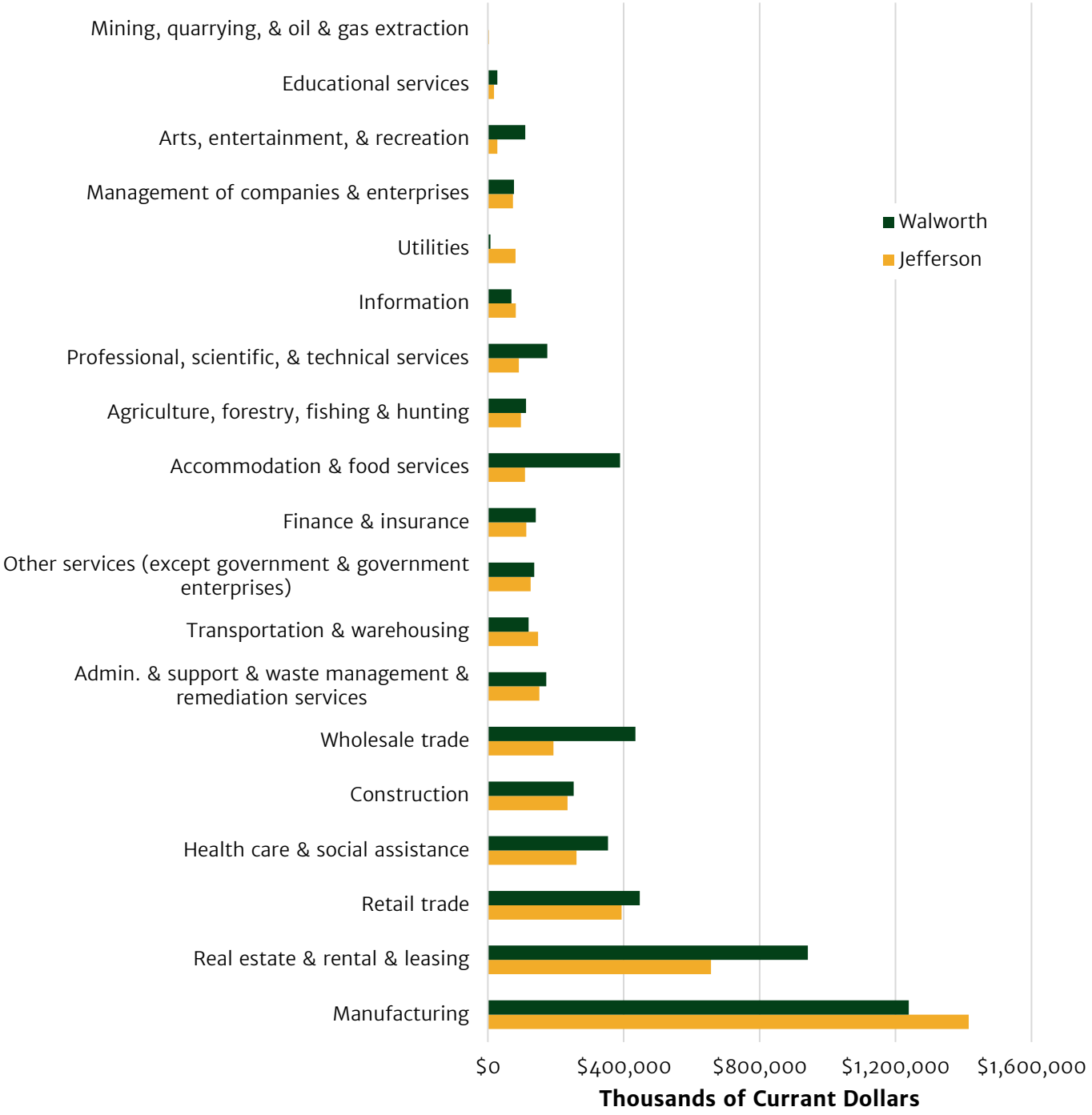
Industry Base Analysis and Trends

Understanding the regional economy by industry paints a picture of its structure, strengths, vulnerabilities, and future prospects. It also sheds light on wage levels, income distribution, household purchasing power, and strength of the tax base. Furthermore, policy makers can allocate resources appropriately for workforce training programs, make better informed land use decisions, and strategic growth decisions. The following section will look at the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, and wages by county as well as the employment landscape of the City of Whitewater.

County GDP by Industry

Manufacturing and Retail Trade are dominant industries in both Walworth and Jefferson County in terms of both employment and GDP. While not a large employment category, Real Estate & Rental Leasing is the second largest industry by GDP in both counties (Figure 13).

Figure 13. GDP by Industry (2023)

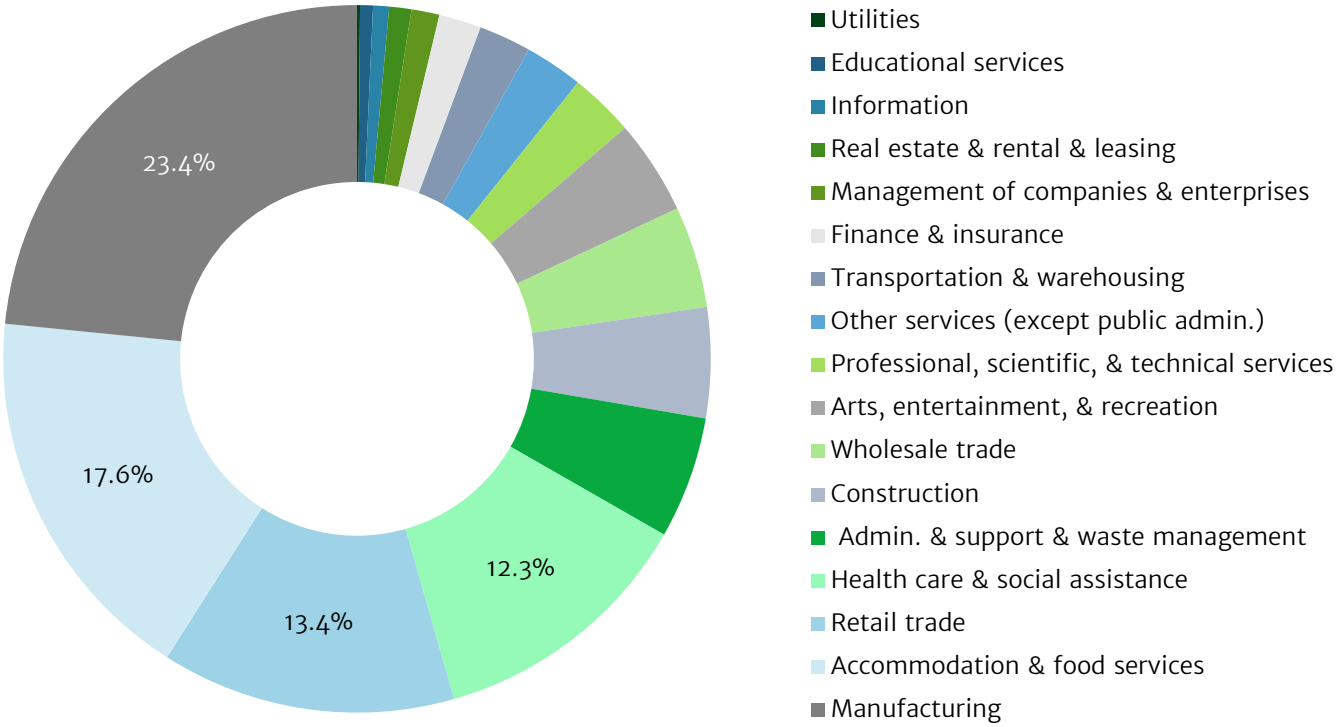


Data Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAGDP2.

County Employment by Industry

In terms of employment, in Walworth County, Accommodation & Food Services is significant (Figure 14).

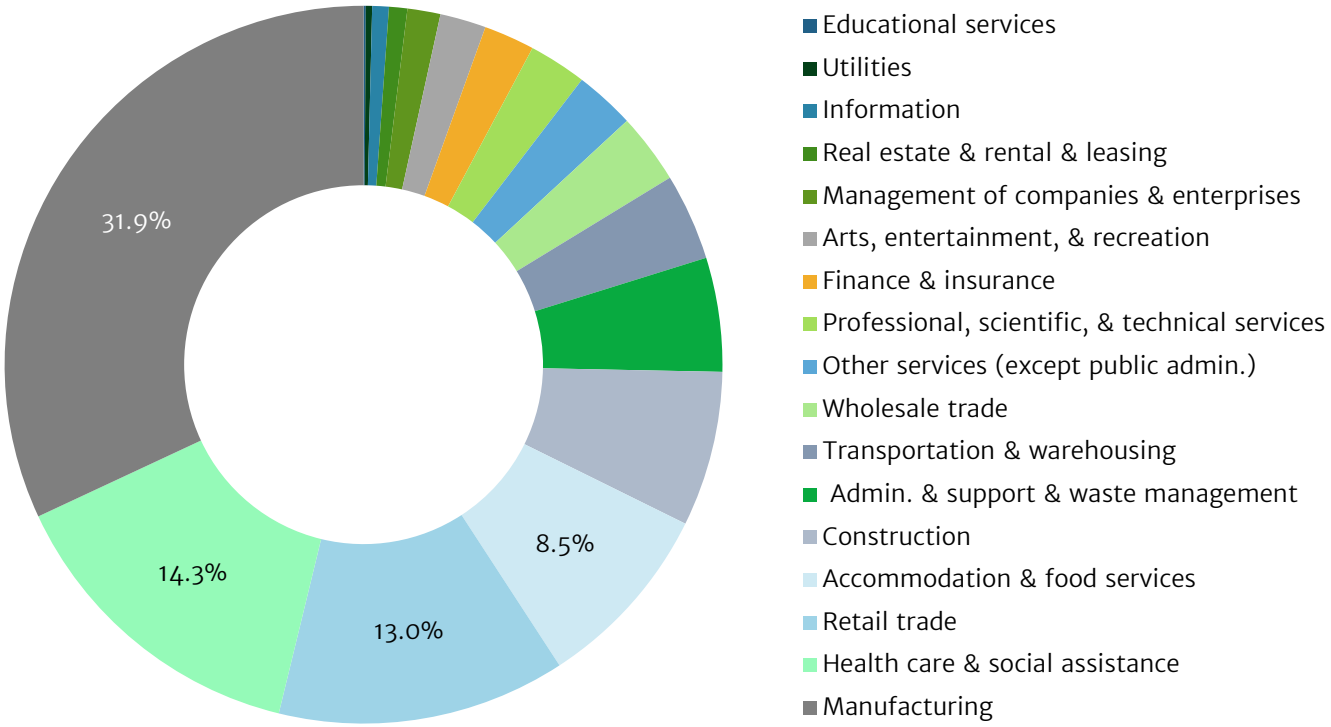
Figure 14. Share of Walworth County Employees by Industry (2024)



Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

In Jefferson County, Health Care & Social Assistance, is the second largest industry in terms of employment (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Share of Jefferson County Employees by Industry (2024)

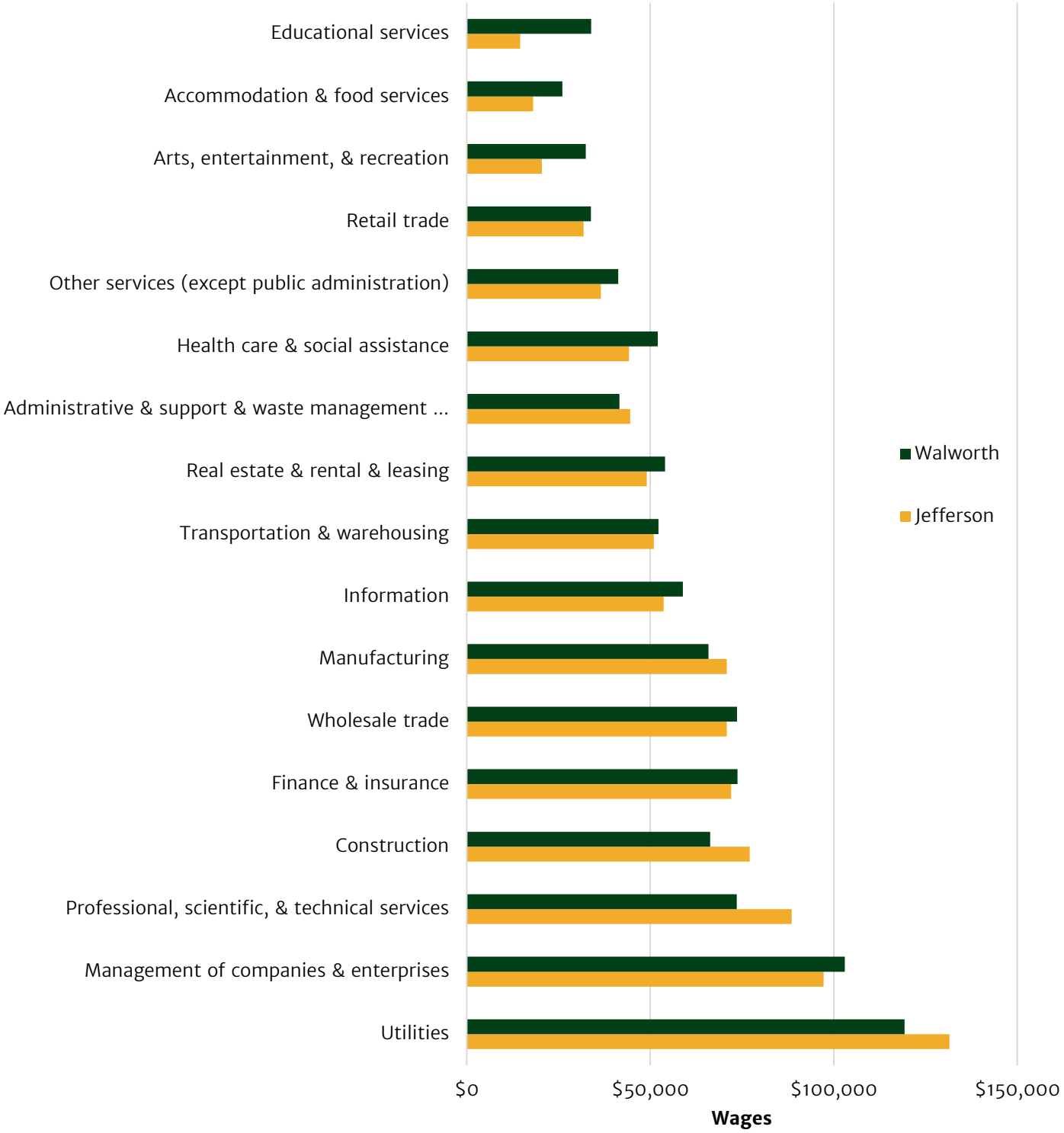


Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

County Average Annual Pay

While Retail Trade is a significant industry in terms of both employment and GDP for both counties, the average annual pay is less than $35,000 per year. The average annual pay in Walworth County in the Accommodation & Food Service industry is approximately $26,000 per year and it is one of the largest industries by employment in both the county and the city (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Average Annual Pay by Industry (2024)

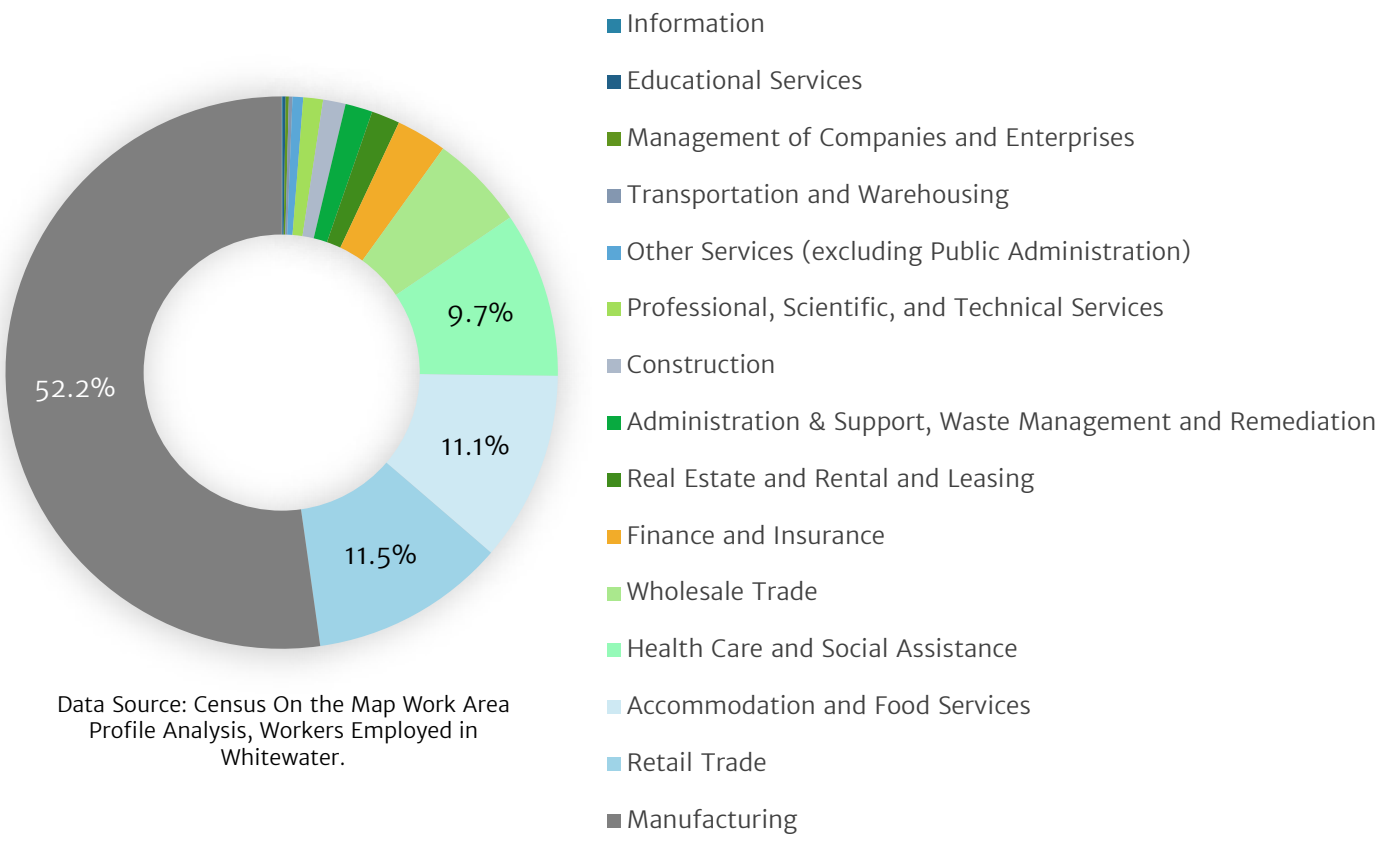


Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Private Sector.

Whitewater Employment by Industry

The largest employment sectors in Whitewater are Manufacturing, Educational Services, and Accommodation & Food Services (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Whitewater Employment by Industry Sector



Data Source: Census On the Map Work Area Profile Analysis, Workers Employed in Whitewater.

Largest "Small" Private Sector Employers

According to the Small Business Administration, a small business employs less than 500 employees. The following table is a list of the largest private sector small businesses (100-500 employees) in Whitewater.

Table 1. Large "Small" Private Sector Businesses in Whitewater, WI.

Business Name	Main Line of Business	Employee Size
Walmart Supercenter	Department Stores	300
Universal Electronics	Electronic Parts & Equipment Wholesale	275
Fairhaven Senior Services	Residential Care	270
Toppers Pizza Inc HQ	Restaurant Management	200
Coldspring Egg Farm Inc	Livestock & Animal Production	160
Productive Living Systems Inc	Individual & Family Social Services	144
Provisur Technologies	Food Processing Equipment & Supplies Mfg	130
Weiler and Company	Manufacturing Industries	125
Nelsons Bus Service Inc	Charter Bus Transportation Services	125
Schenck Process Inc	Manufacturing Industries	120
Wisconsin Innovation Service	Research & Development Laboratories	107

Data Source: DataVu.

Mid-sized Private Sector Employer

Generac Power Systems, a large manufacturer of generators, employs approximately 850.

Largest Employer

The university campus employs more than 2,000 people, including students.

Entrepreneurship

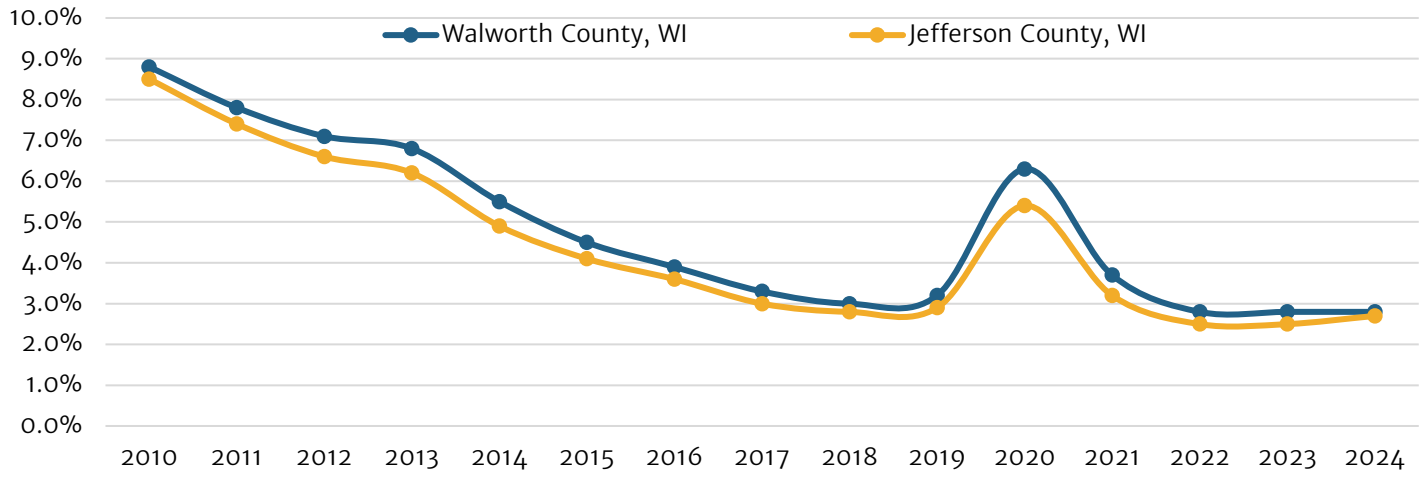
The Whitewater Innovation Center, located in the Technology Park, serves the entrepreneurial community with support from the university and larger state entrepreneurial ecosystem. The building opened in 2011 and with support from the city, the community development authority, and the university, the Innovation Center provides workspace, coaching and programming to nurture start-up businesses in their growth trajectory. As of November of 2025, the vacancy rate of the building is approximately 10%. This is a healthy vacancy rate for a commercial building, as space is potentially available for new businesses when they are ready to move in.

Labor force Analysis and Trends

Unemployment Rate Trends

As the economy recovered following the Great Recession, the unemployment rate in both Jefferson and Walworth County began to fall slowly at first and then more rapidly until bottoming out in 2018 to 2019. While the COVID-19 pandemic increased unemployment for a time in 2020, the elevated rate reached what has traditionally been perceived as a healthy rate (6%). By 2021, the rate dropped to its pre-pandemic levels indicating a tight labor market once again (Figure 18).

Figure 18. County Unemployment Rate (2010-2024)



Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

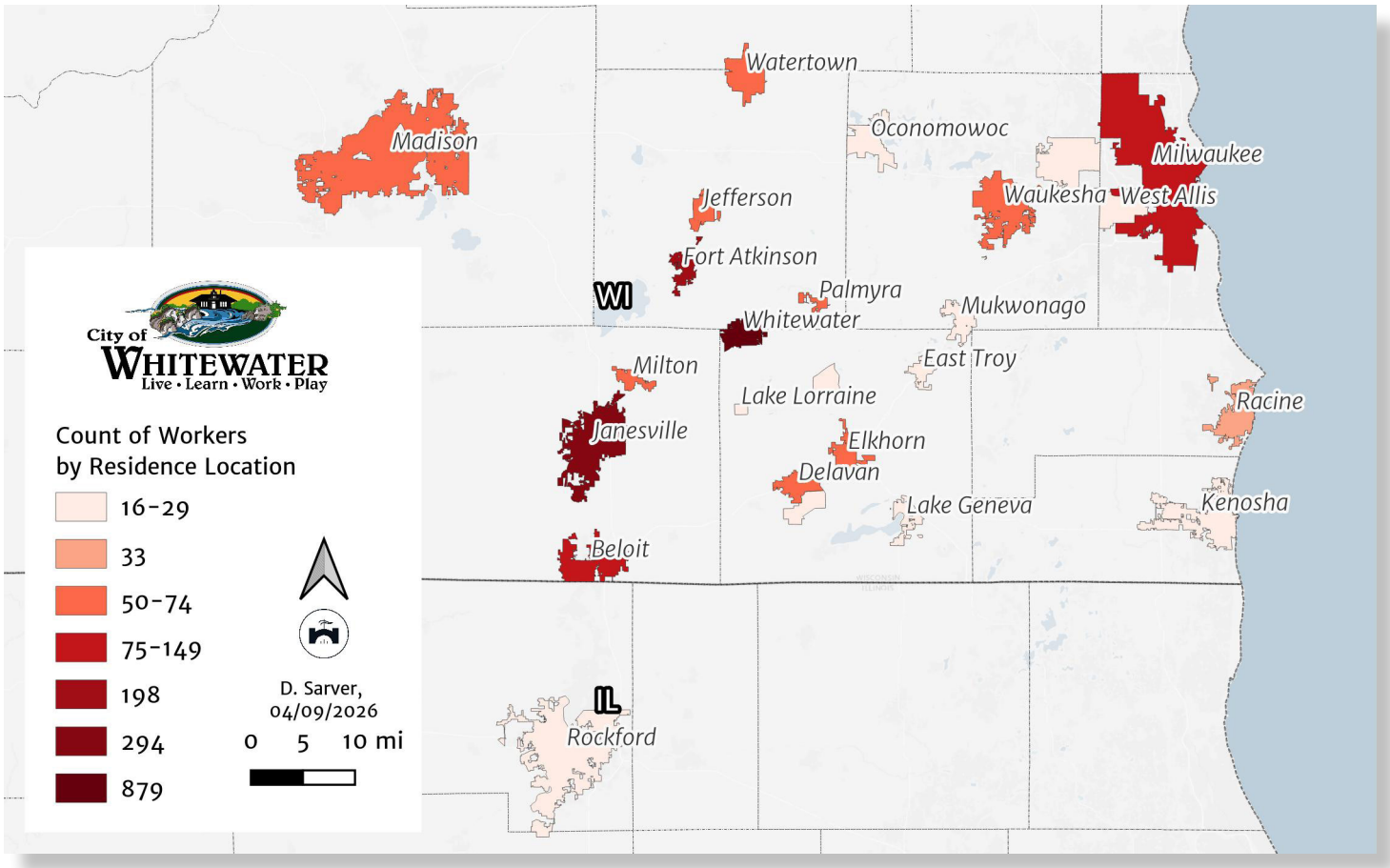
Commuting Characteristics

Of the 4,328 people employed in Whitewater 3,449 commute from other locations (Figure 17). Map 2 illustrates how many people come from the top 25 locations for work in Whitewater. Of the 4,872 Whitewater residents that were employed in 2022, nearly 4,000 commuted out of the city for work (Map 3). Only 879 people both live and work in Whitewater. Therefore, Whitewater is a net exporter of labor.

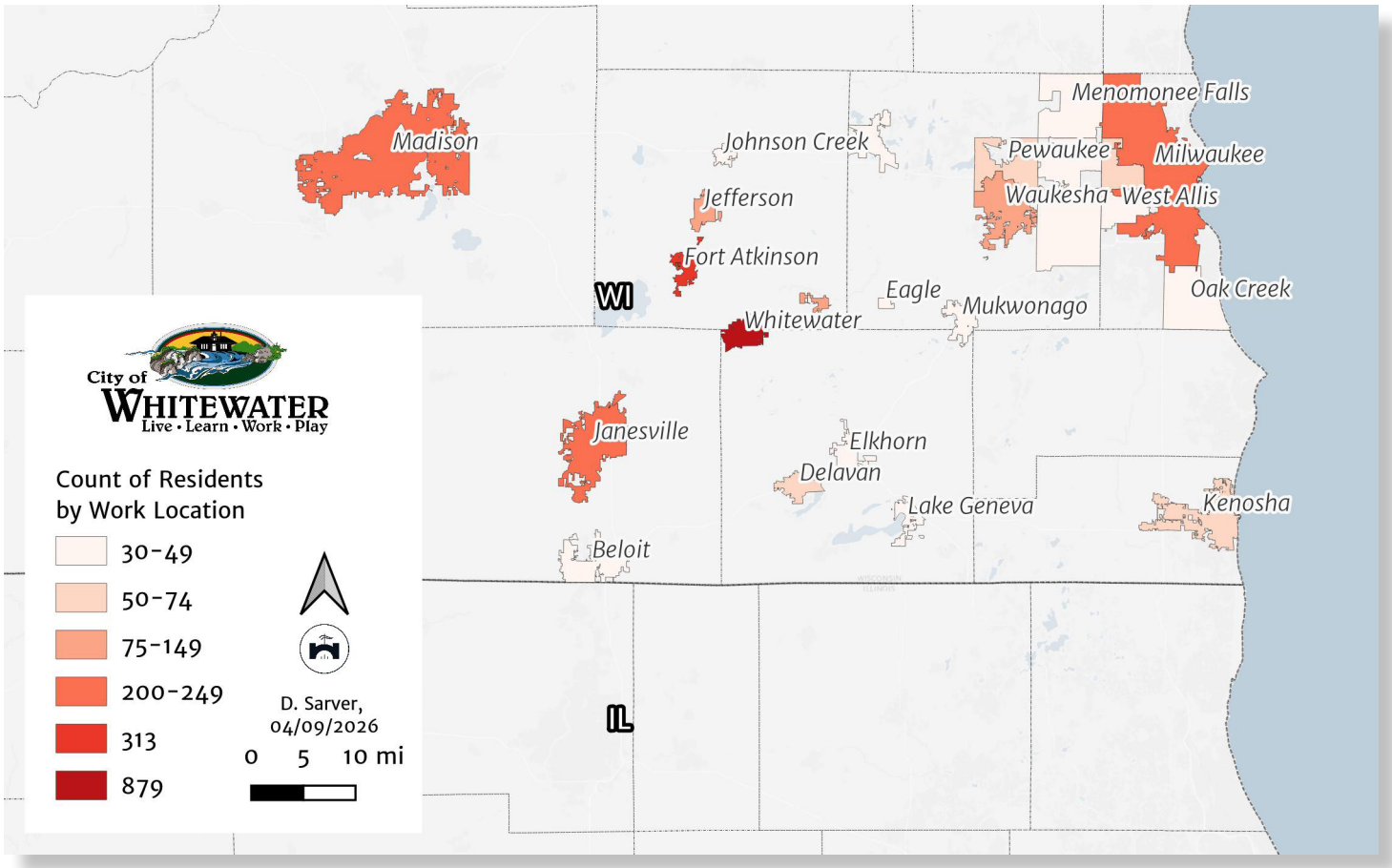
Figure 19. Inflow-Outflow of workers who live or work in Whitewater, WI.

Data Source: Census On the Map Work Area Profile Analysis, Workers Employed in Whitewater.

Map 2. Top 25 Places Whitewater Workers Live



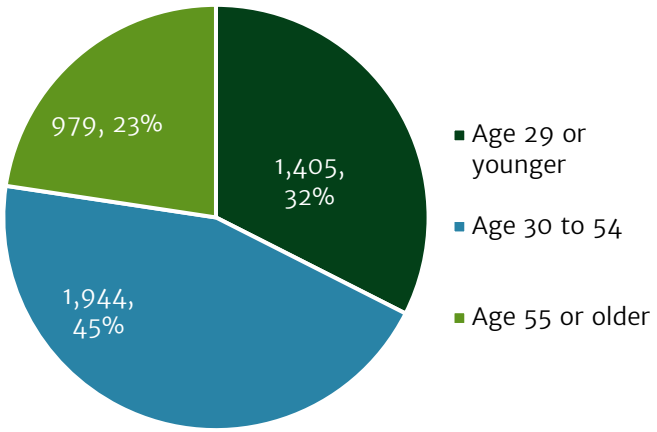
Map 3. Top 25 Places Whitewater Residents Work



Workforce by Age

According to OnTheMap, in 2022, there were 4,328 private primary jobs in Whitewater. Of those jobs, nearly 23% of employees were age 55 or older (i.e., approaching retirement), 45% were age 30-54, and 32% age 29 or younger (Figure 20). Decision makers will want to consider methods for retaining the existing younger labor force, while also considering pathways for the more experienced members of the labor market to continue to contribute to their respective industries.

Figure 20: Jobs by Worker Age



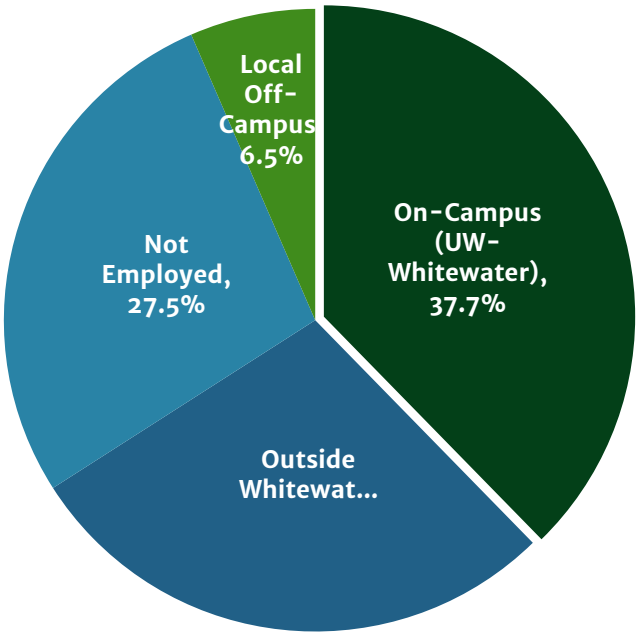
Data Source: Census On the Map Work Area Profile Analysis, Workers Employed in Whitewater.

Student Labor

To understand how the student body interacts with the local Whitewater labor market, we analyzed specific employment-related questions from the student survey and cross-referenced those results against the macro-economic findings from the Census. The goal was to quantify the student contribution to the city's overall labor pool and measure their impact on the city's commuter trends.

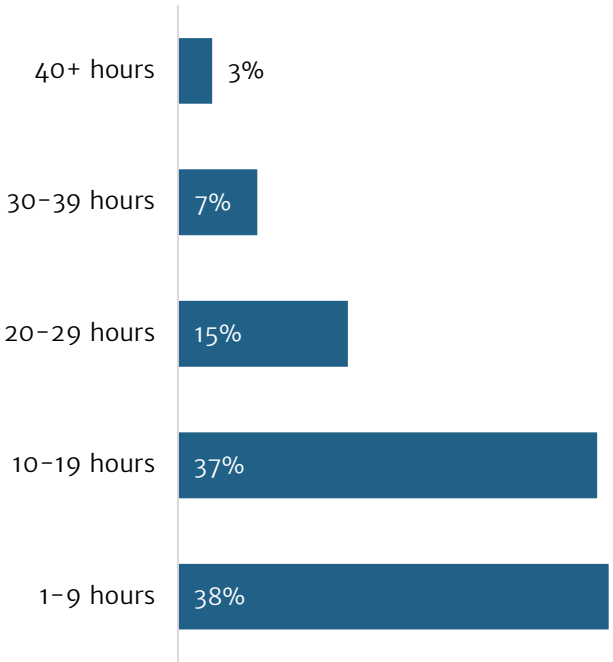
Students were asked "Are you currently employed (paid work) during the academic term?" More than 37% of students work on campus while 28.5% work outside of Whitewater. Local businesses capture 6.5% of students (Figure 21). With a weighted estimate from the student body, this equates to around 3,100 students who are actively working outside of Whitewater. This could be due to a lack of competitive jobs for part time students. "Retail Trade" and "Accommodation & Food Services" are significant industries in Whitewater. These industries traditionally rely heavily on part-time labor which is a dominant segment of the working student population. Approximately 75% indicated that they work less than 20 hours per week (Figure 22).

Figure 21. Student Employment by Location



Data Source: Redevelopment Resources.

Figure 22. Average Weekly Hours Worked by Students



Student Spending

During the 2024-2025 academic year, more than 11,700 students were enrolled in courses offered by University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (UW-Whitewater). Data obtained from student survey responses was weighted to measure the spending power of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater students.

Approximately $38.3M is spent on off-campus housing annually (Figure 23) in Whitewater. The second largest spending category is grocery ($17.1M). Of students surveyed, more than 63% buy their groceries in Whitewater (Q17 in Appendix A). The third largest category, Night Extras, includes drinks, covers, rides, Greek life events, and event tickets. Students spend approximately $14.5M annually in this category.

Figure 24 compares student spending to the resident population as a whole. Key takeaways:

- more than 40% of spending on housing is spent by students
- more than 46% of spending on food is spent by students
- approximately 90% of spending on entertainment is spent by students

Figure 23. Annual Consumer Spending by Student Segment

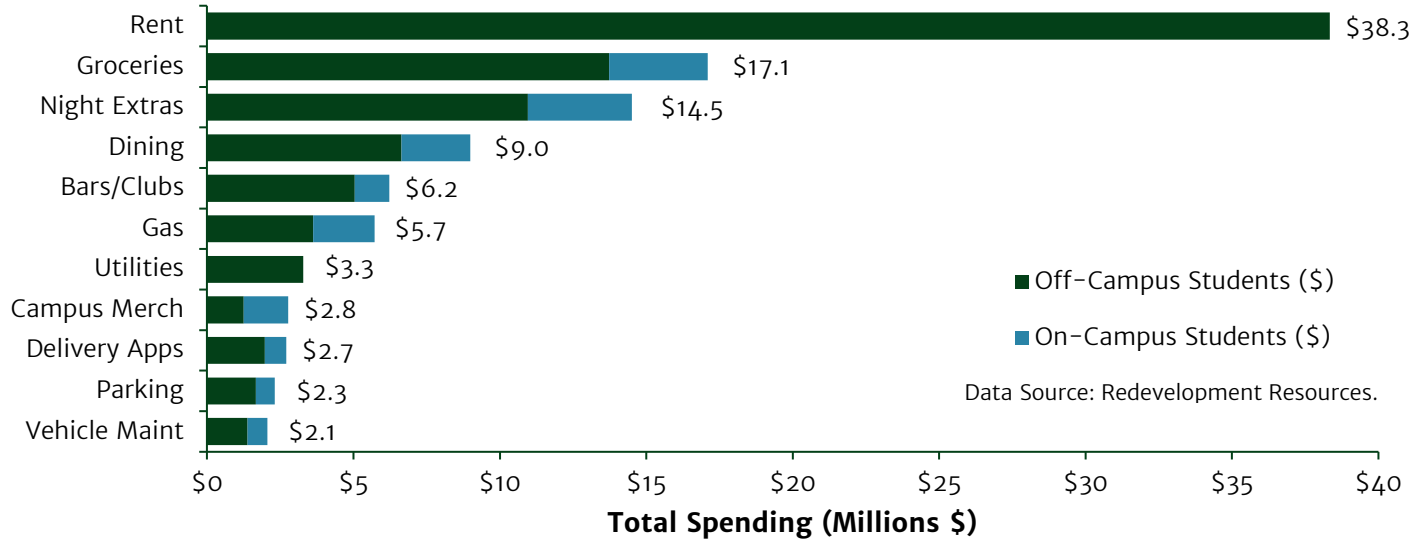
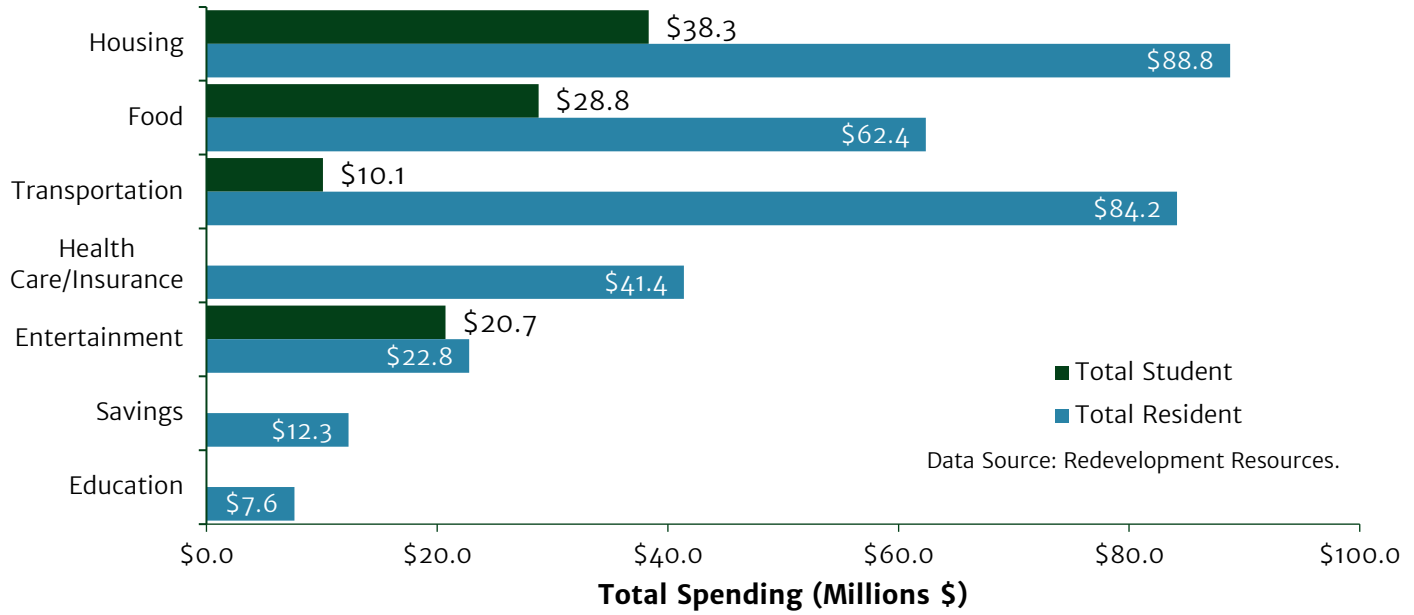


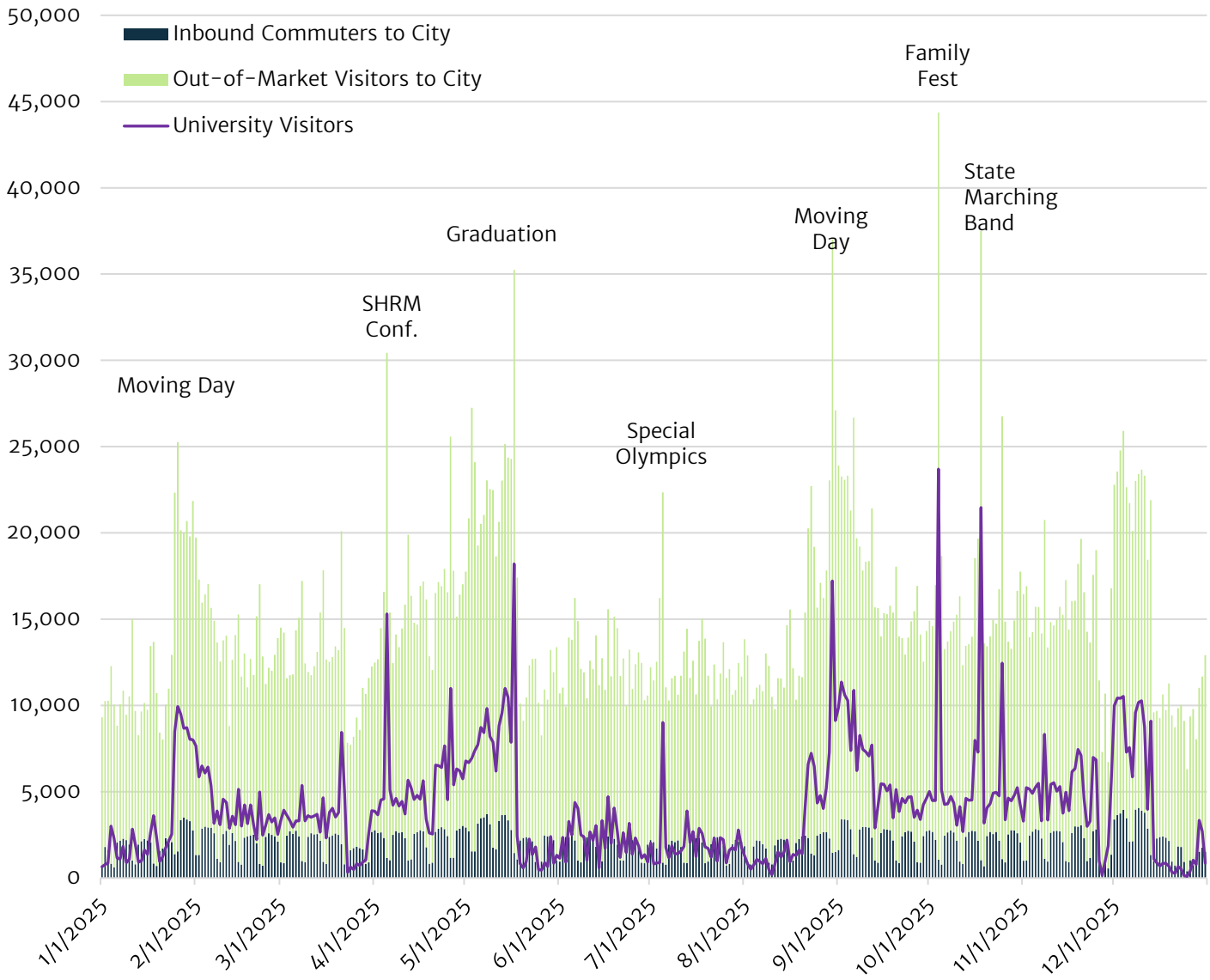
Figure 24. Student Spending vs. Resident Spending



Tourism

The university draws visiting families of students, prospective students, and events such as graduation, conferences and the Special Olympics Summer Games. The following chart identifies non-resident employees to the city (in-bound commuters), out-of-market visitors (not employees or residents) to the city, as well as visits to the university campus. Events that draw the biggest number of visits are also identified.

Figure 25. Visit Trends to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (2025)



Data Source: Placer.ai.

Many of these visits convert to overnight stays, local spending and tax revenue. There is an 8% Room Tax on overnight lodging in the city. The local businesses keep 2% of the total tax collected. The remaining is split 70/30 with 70% of the remaining tax collections are paid to the Whitewater Tourism Council to promote local tourism as required under state statue. The remaining 30% of collections are retained by the General Fund to support municipal services. In 2024, the city collected $229,115 in room tax dollars which is down 4.1% over the previous year. (The 2025 report isn't due until May 1, 2026.)

Property Tax Base

In terms of overall value, the R-2 zoning district is the largest contributor to the city's property tax base, but it is also the second largest in terms of area. To compare each district, it is best to observe the value produced per acre. In this context, the B-1A Community Business district, while small, is the heavy hitter contributing $1,391,000 per acre. The B-2 and R-3A districts are runners-up (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated Market Value per Zoning District

Code	Zoning	Estimated Fair Market Value	GIS Acres	Est. FMV/Acre
AT	Agricultural Transition	$2,458,500	1542.2	$2,000
B-1	Community Business	$59,247,600	155.8	$380,000
B-1A	Community Business	$21,366,500	15.4	$1,391,000
B-2	Central Business	$37,841,300	29.4	$1,289,000
B-2A	Central Business	$627,400	1.5	$424,000
B-2A/R-2	One & Two Family Residence	$1,405,500	1.9	$736,000
B-3	Highway Commercial & Light Industrial	$36,546,600	157.6	$232,000
I	Institutional	$5,156,900	425.1	$12,000
M-1	General Manufacturing	$81,557,200	496.3	$164,000
M-2	Manufacturing & Misc. Use	$0	49.5	$0
PCD	Planned Community Development	$80,160,000	194.4	$412,000
R-0	One Family Residence	$55,032,700	49.8	$1,104,000
R-1	One Family Residence	$113,768,900	253.8	$448,000
R-1x	One Family Residence	$17,955,900	34.1	$527,000
R-2	One & Two Family Residence	$309,100,000	978.8	$316,000
R-3	Multi-family Residence	$167,885,400	345.5	$486,000
R-3A	Multi-family Residence	$34,701,800	28.0	$1,239,000
R-4	Mobile Home	$7,611,100	65.9	$115,000
TP	Technology Park	$2,869,300	80.0	$36,000
ROW	Right-of-Way	$0	906.4	$0
(blank)	(blank)	$0	39.5	$0
		$1,035,292,600	**5,851.0**	**$177,000**

CONCLUSION

This economic base analysis demonstrates that Whitewater is a growing and resilient community with a distinct economic structure shaped by its role as a university city. Population growth has exceeded that of surrounding jurisdictions in recent years, reinforcing Whitewater's regional importance. At the same time, the city's demographic profile, particularly its younger population and high share of single-person households, creates economic patterns that differ from peer communities and require tailored policy responses.

Whitewater's employment base benefits from diversity, with strengths in manufacturing, education, and service industries. Major employers provide stability, yet many of the largest employment sectors offer relatively low wages, and a significant share of residents commute outside the city for work. This pattern positions Whitewater as a net exporter of labor and highlights opportunities to strengthen local job creation, attract higher-wage industries, and better align workforce development with employer needs. The presence of the university and the Whitewater Innovation Center offer a foundation for entrepreneurship, talent retention, and knowledge-based economic growth.

From a fiscal perspective, higher-value commercial and mixed-use districts generate substantially more value per acre than lower-density or institutional uses, emphasizing the importance of land use efficiency. Redevelopment, infill, and strategic zoning will support municipal finances and service delivery.

Overall, Whitewater is well-positioned, but intentional coordination between housing policy, workforce development, land use planning, and economic development will be essential. By building on its existing strengths while addressing challenges, Whitewater can translate continued growth into long-term economic vitality, fiscal sustainability, and an improved quality of life for residents.

STUDENT SURVEY

This quick survey will be used to estimate the economic impact that students have on the city of Whitewater. Your input is private and will help city leaders be informed and make better decisions about public investments. Feel free to answer honestly about your spending habits and rest assured that your answers will be private. By completing the entire survey, you will secure a chance to win a $1
$250 gift card!

https://www.survey
.com/r/UWW

APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY

UW-Whitewater

STUDENTS

Take the City of Whitewater's Economic Development Survey to Enter to Win a . . .

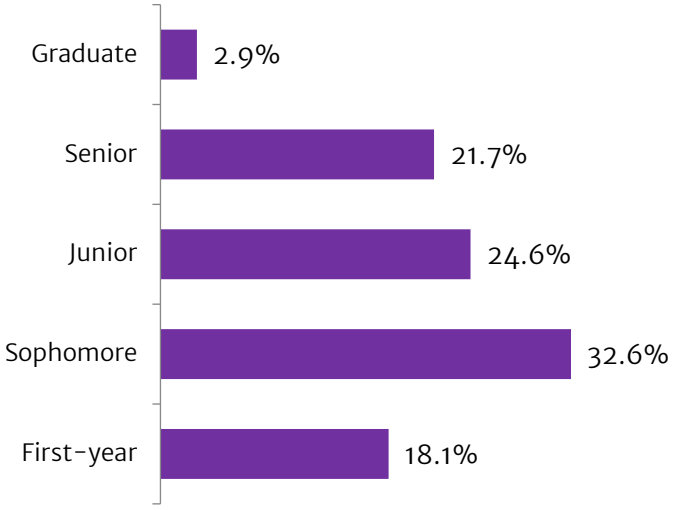
City of WHITEWATER

~~$100~~ 250 VISA GIFT CARD

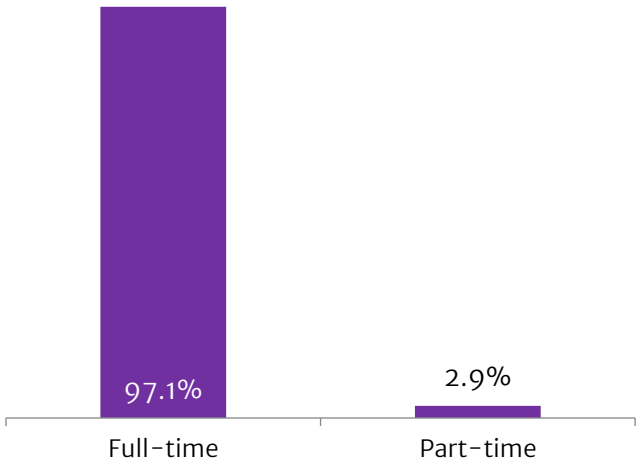
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

STUDENT SURVEY

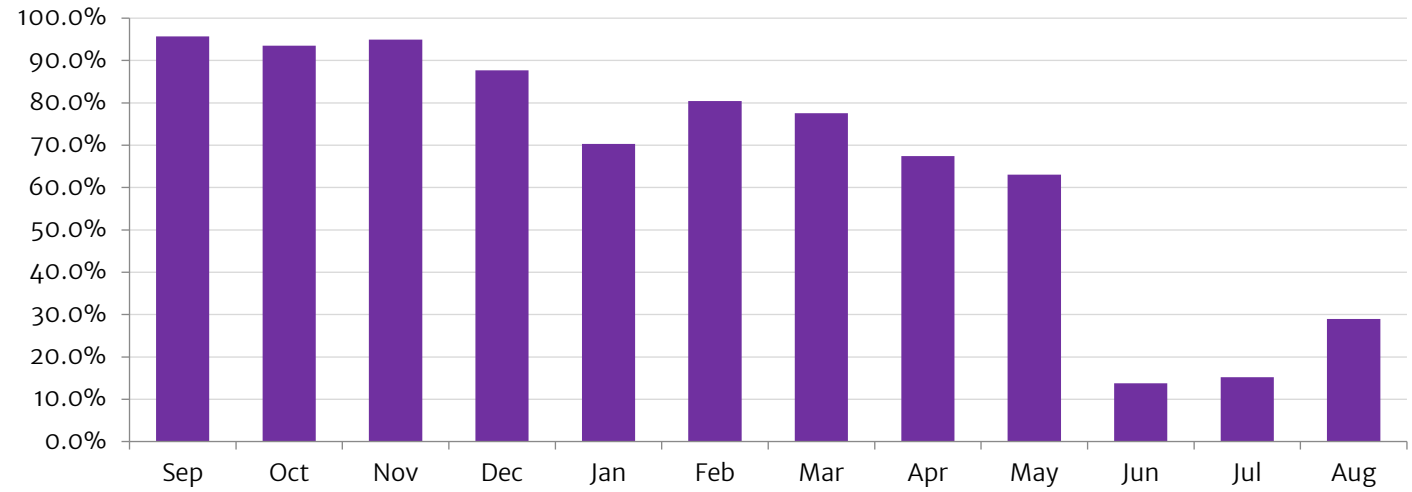
Q3: Please indicate your class level:



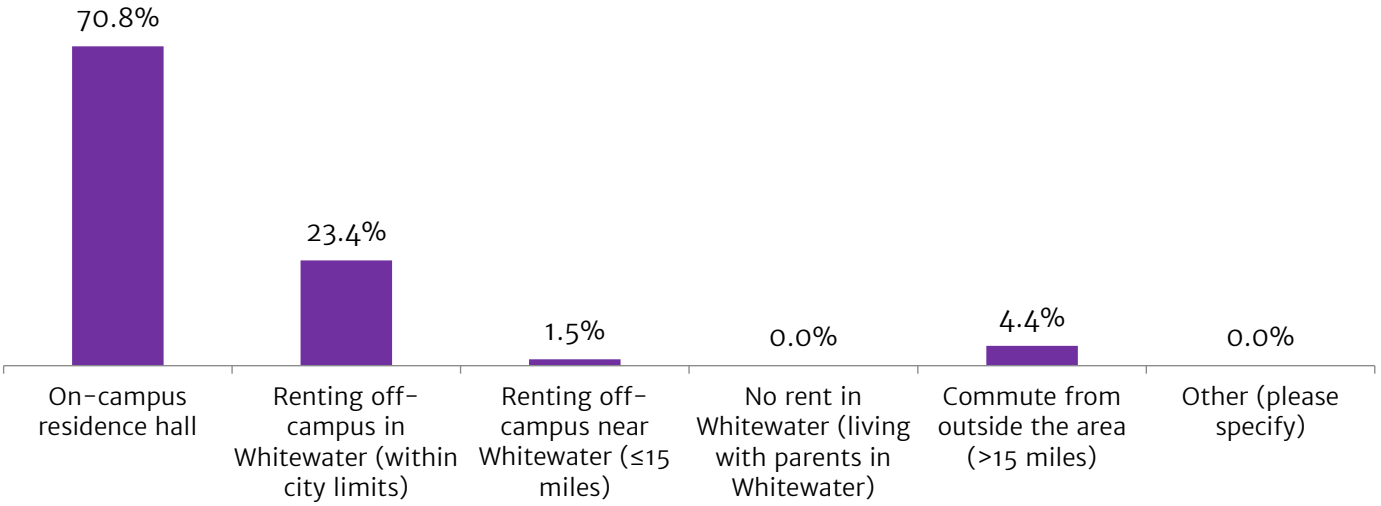
Q4: What is your enrollment load? (12 credits or more per semester = full-time; Less than 12 credits per semester = part-time)



Q5: In the last year, which months were you physically in Whitewater? (Check all that apply.)

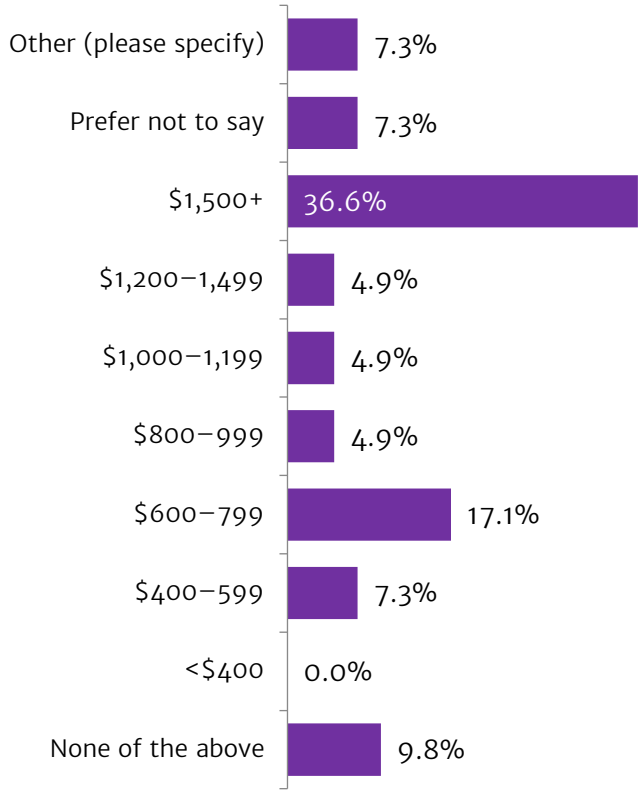


Q6: During the current academic term, where are you primarily living?

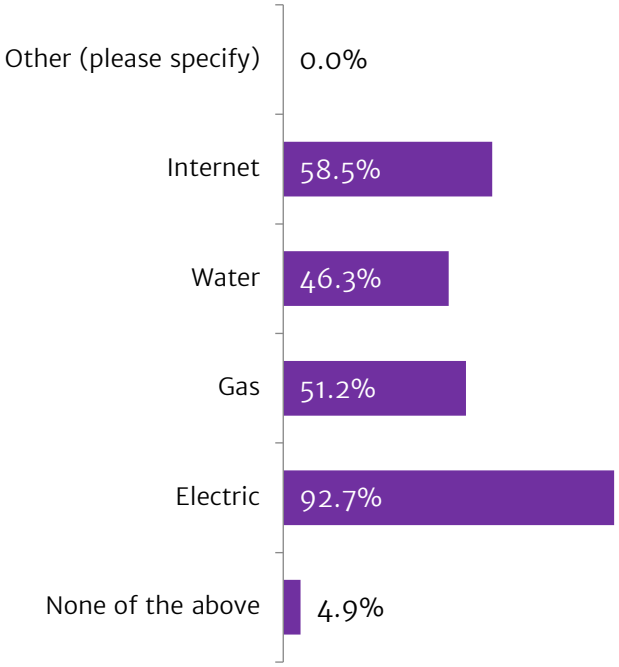


Students that responded "On-campus residence hall" were then asked Q10. All other responses were asked questions 7 and 8.

Q7: What is the total rent for your unit (exclude utilities/ parking)? If rent is per person, what is the sum total?

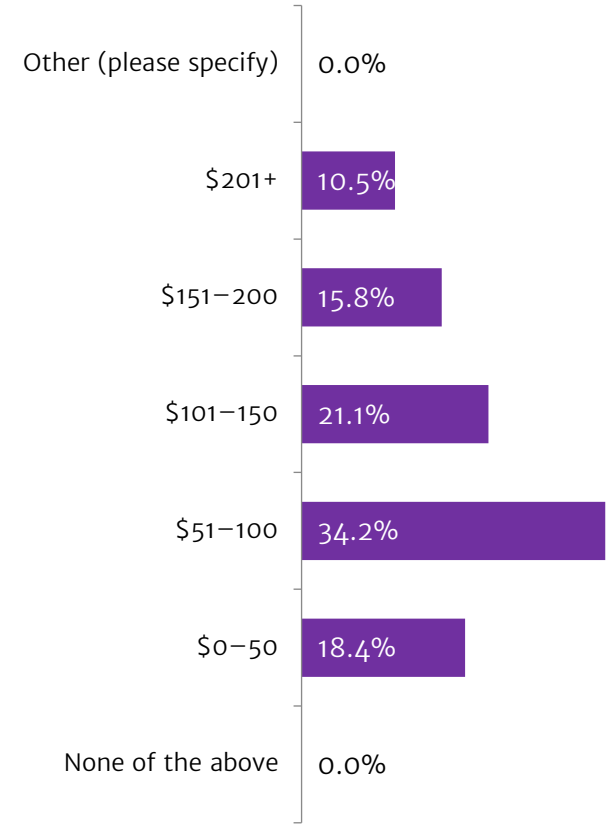


Q8: Do you (or your household) pay for any of the following utilities? (check all that apply)

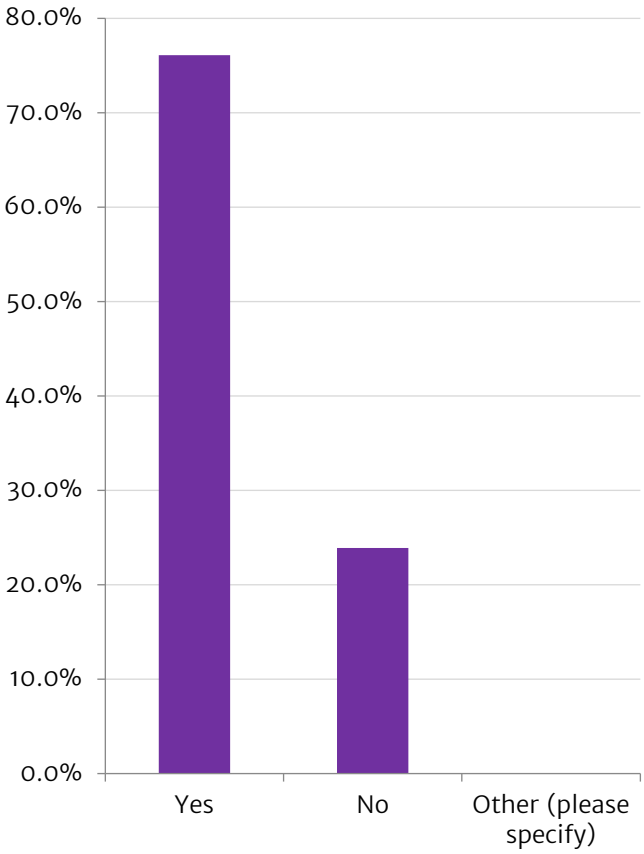


If the respondent answered "None of the above", they were then asked question 10. All other respondents were asked question 9.

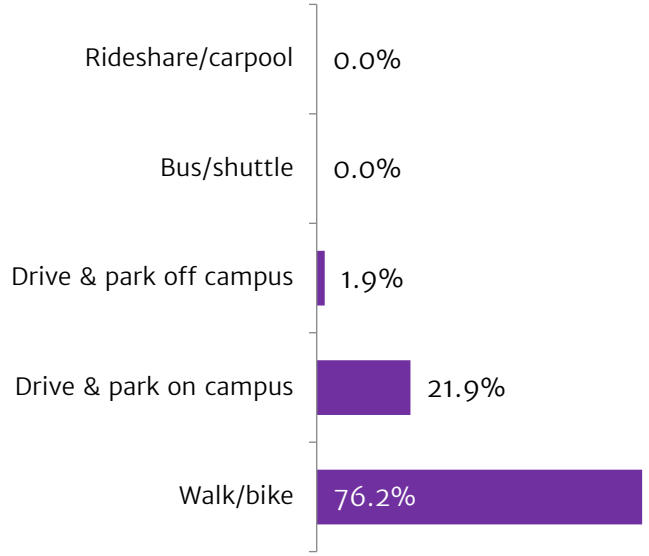
Q9: What is the total amount typically spent on these utilities per month?



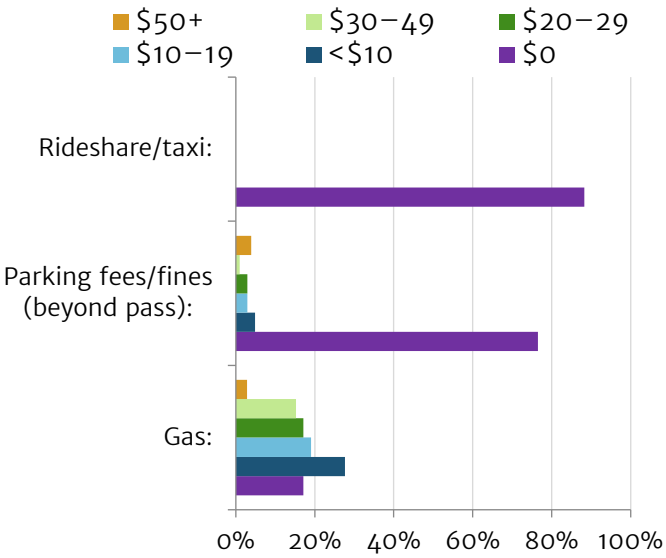
Q10: Do you have a car in Whitewater during the academic term?



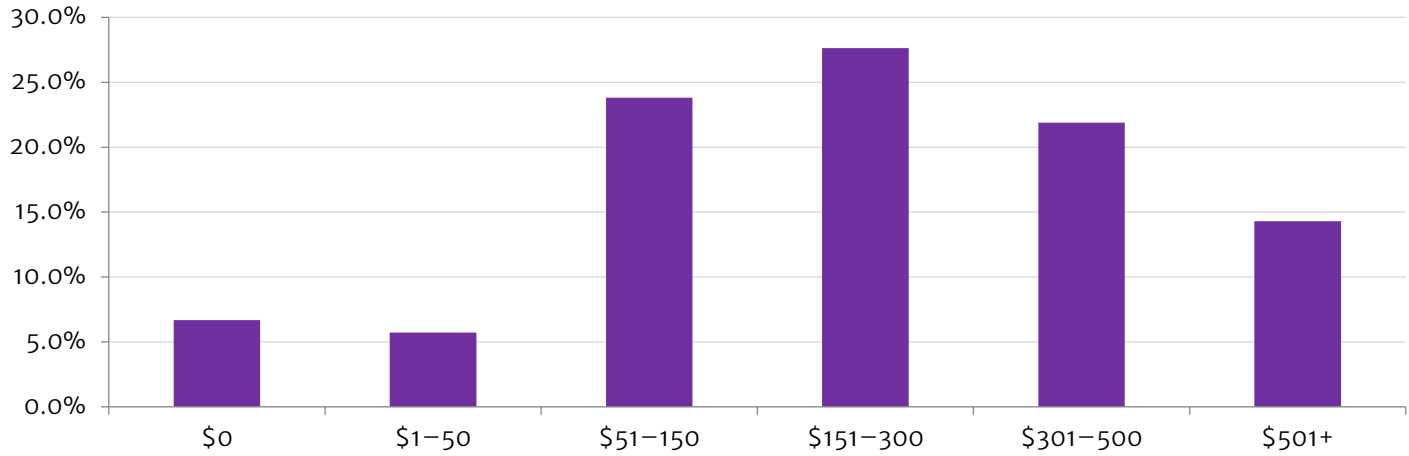
Q11: How do you usually get to campus (most days)?



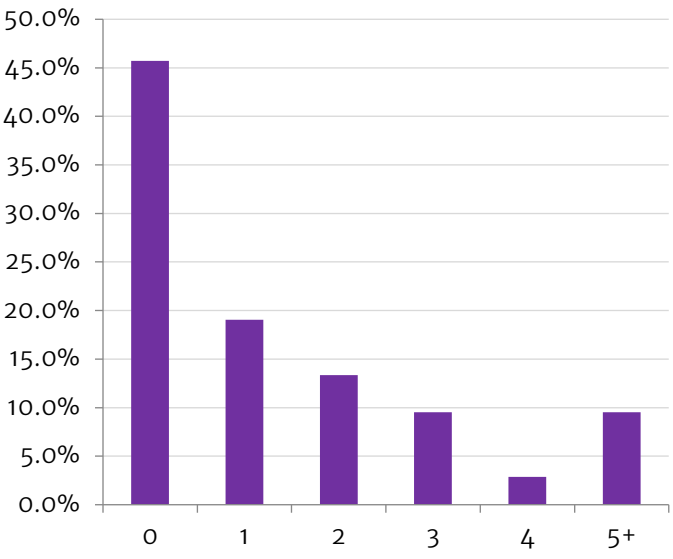
Q12: Please indicate your share of weekly transportation spending in/around Whitewater:



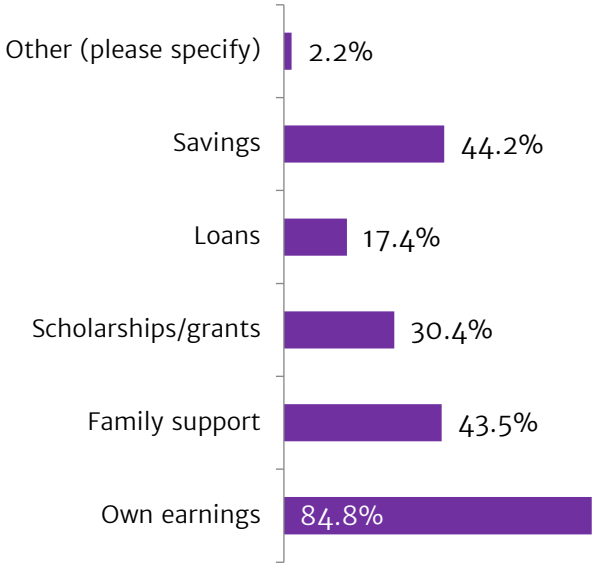
Q13: How much do you spend on vehicle maintenance yearly?



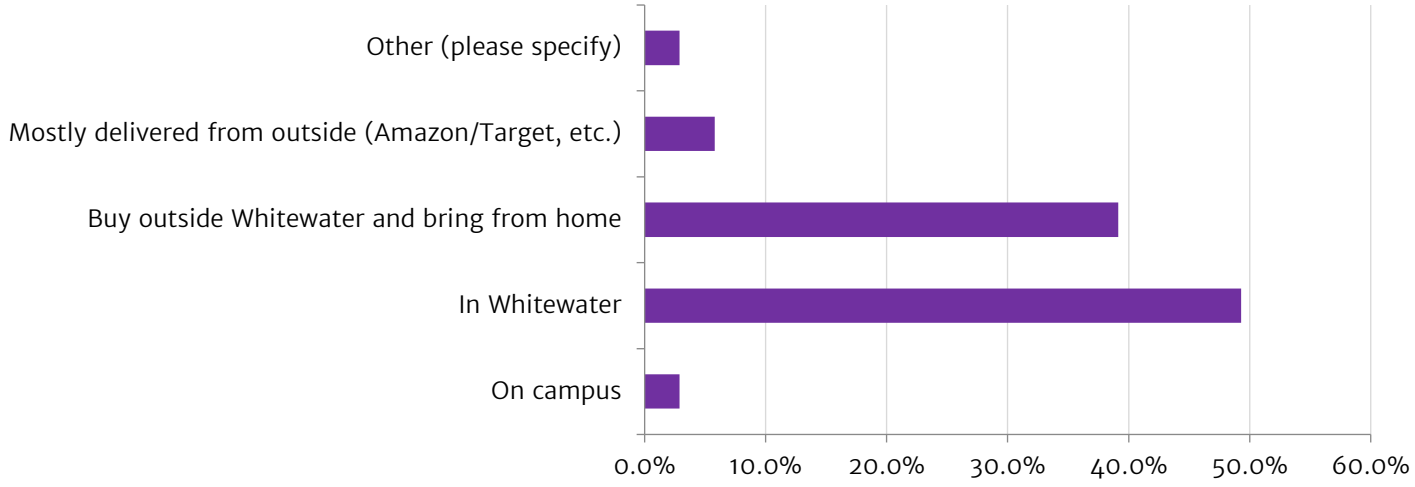
Q14: How many nights per week do you sleep outside Whitewater during the academic term?



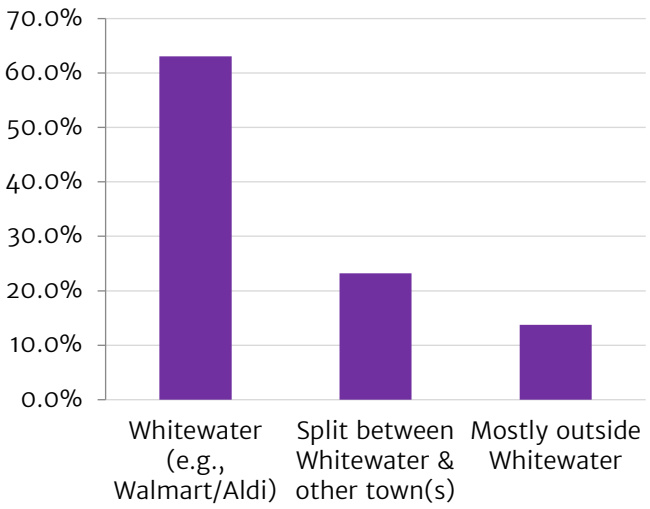
Q15: What are your main sources of income for day-to-day expenses? (check all that apply)



Q16: Where do you usually get household supplies (cleaning, toiletries)?



Q17: Where do you primarily purchase groceries?

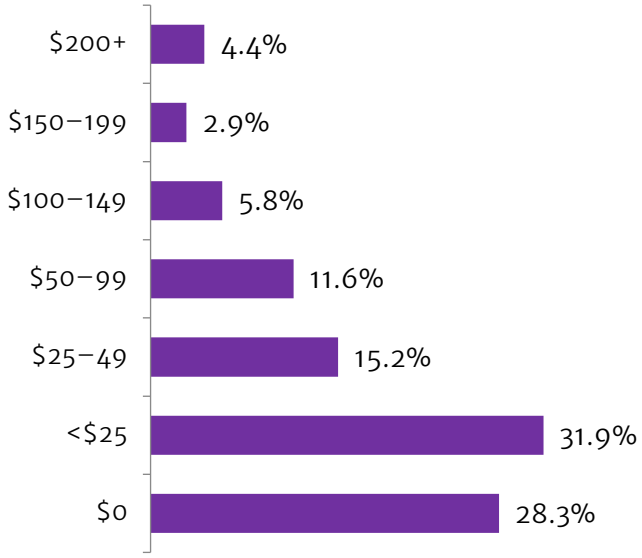


If respondents selected "Split between Whitewater & other town(s)", they were then asked to elaborate in question 18. All others were moved on to question 19 regarding campus spending.

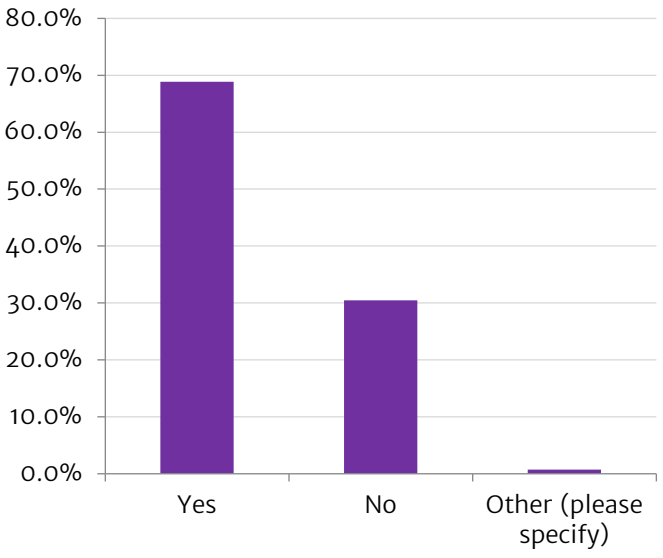
Q18: Please elaborate on the community or communities you purchase groceries in.

Of the 28 students that responded to this question, Janesville was the dominant response, followed by Whitewater, and a few mentions of Fort Atkinson, Madison, and Chicago.

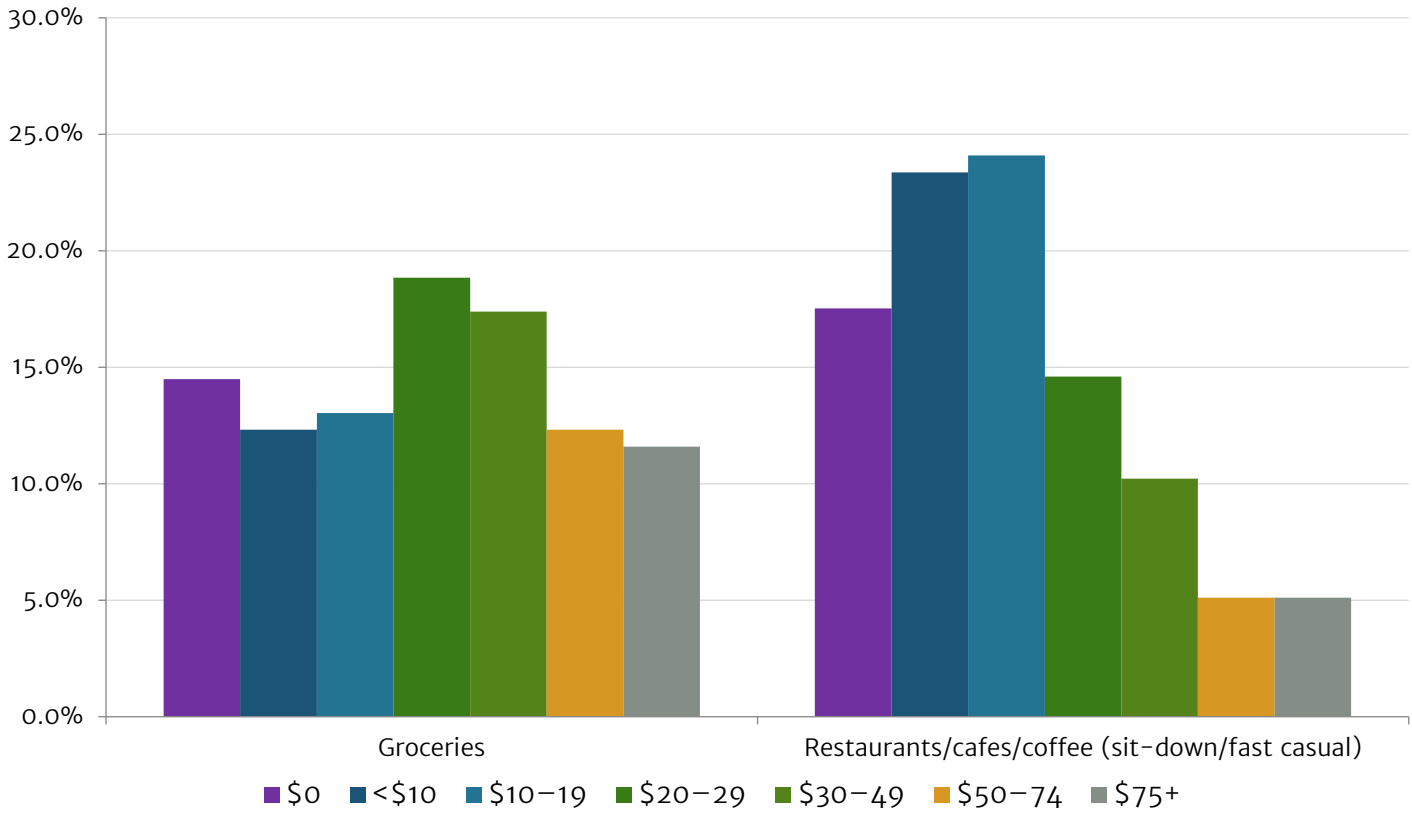
Q19: In a typical school month, how much do you spend with campus merchants (dining halls, cafés, bookstore)?



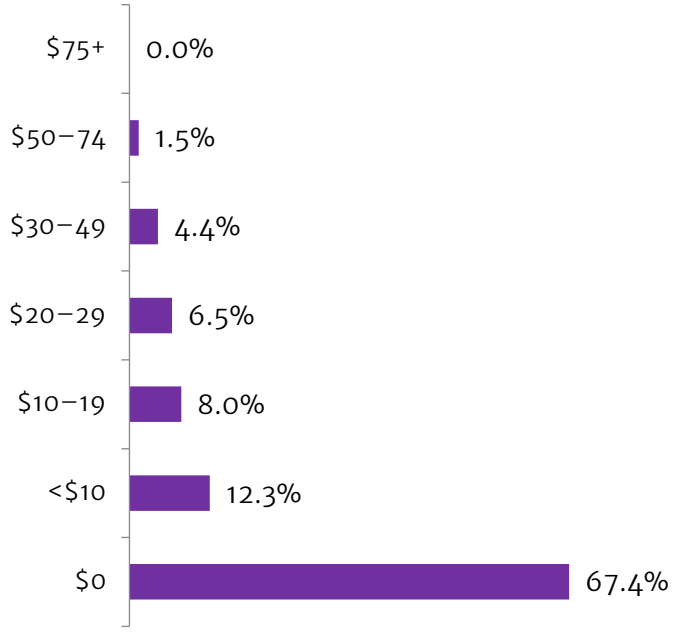
Q20: Do you have a meal plan?



Q21: During the academic year (Sept.-May), how much do you spend per week (on average) in the following categories in Whitewater businesses?

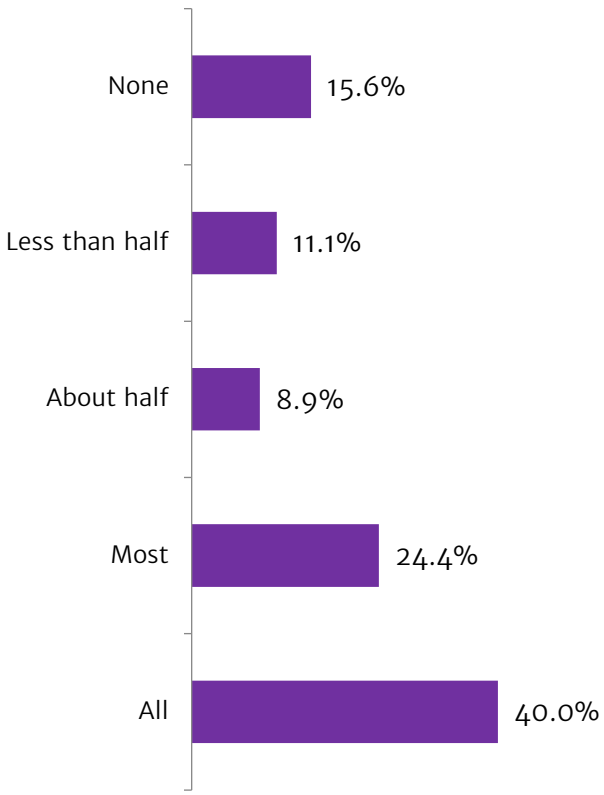


Q22: During the academic year (Sept.-May), how much do you spend per week (on average) on delivery apps such as DoorDash, UberEats, etc.?

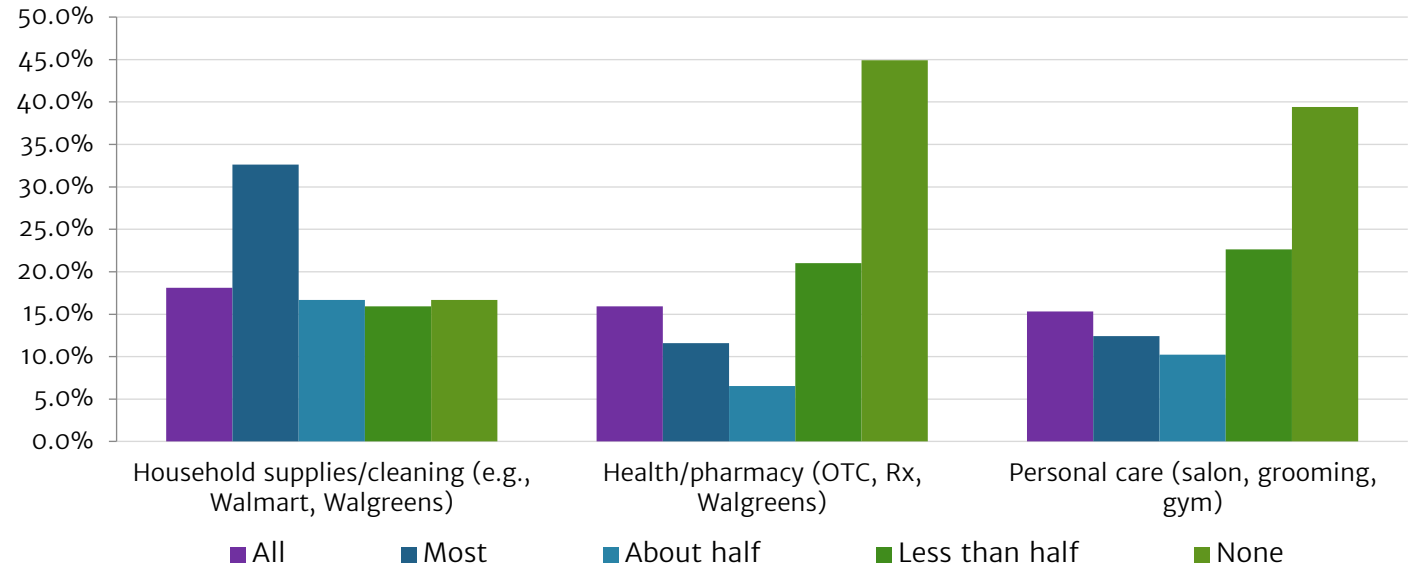


If the student selected $0, they were then asked to indicate the percentage of their spending by category in Whitewater businesses (question 24). All others were asked question 23.

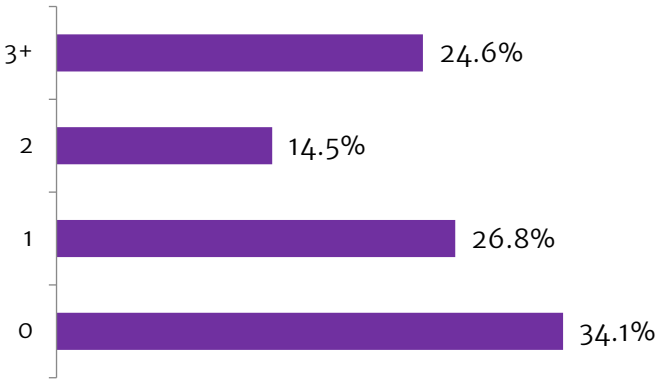
Q23: What percent of delivery orders are from Whitewater restaurants?



Q24: What percent of are from Whitewater businesses?

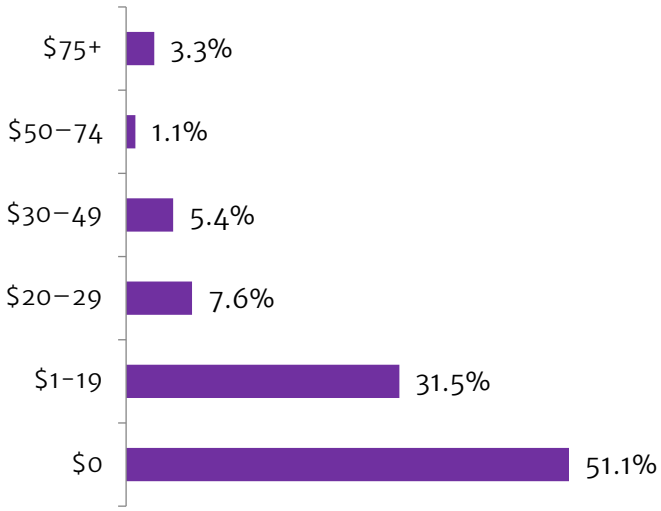


Q25: How many nights out do you spend in Whitewater per week during the school year?

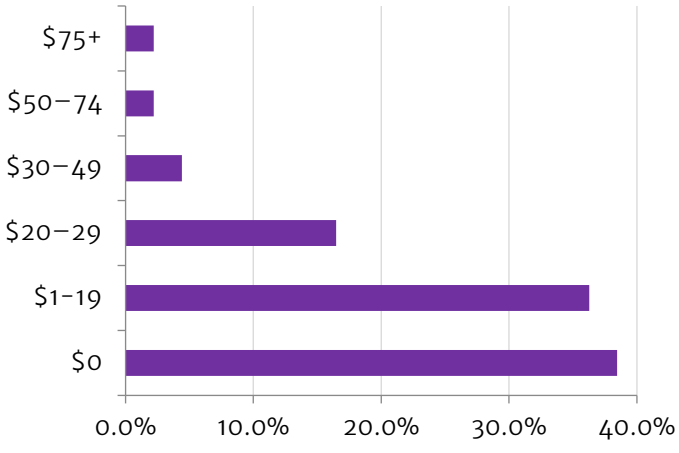


If "0" was selected, the respondent was moved on to employment question #28. All others were asked questions 26-27.

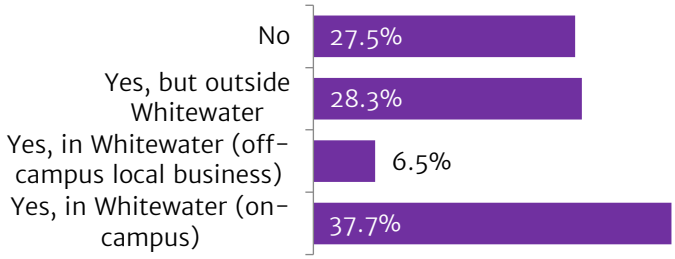
Q26: During the school year, what is your average weekly spending on bars/clubs/Greek life events tickets/covers?



Q27: During the school year, how much do you spend on average per night out on drinks, cover, rides, etc.?



Q28: Are you currently employed (paid work) during the academic term?

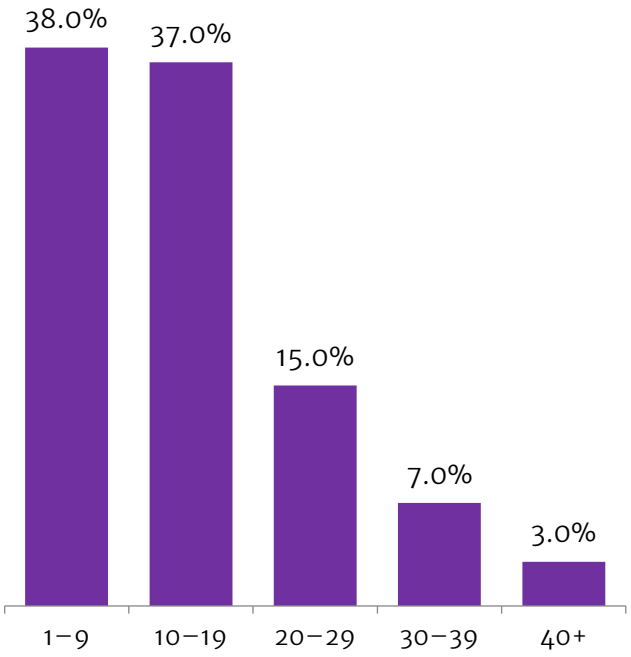


Those that answered that they work in Whitewater were asked to elaborate in question 29. Those that indicated that they work outside of Whitewater were moved on to question 30. Those that answered "No" were then asked question 33.

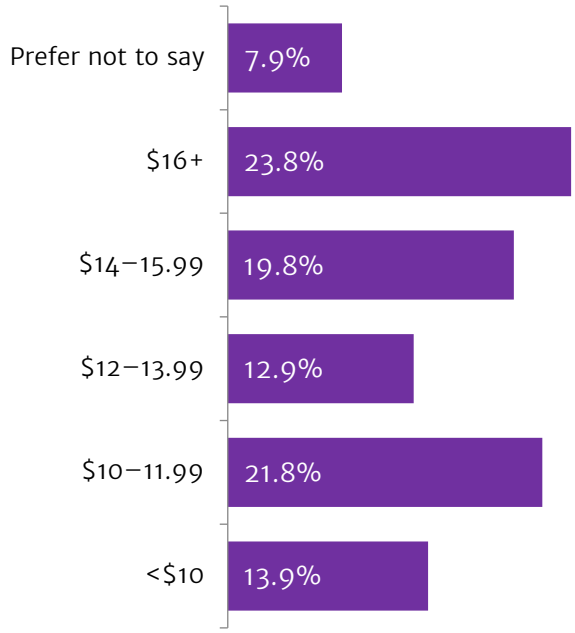
Q29: What business do you primarily work at?

Of the 61 students that indicated that they work in Whitewater, 56 students indicated that they work in various university departments, in student services, or at campus facilities. There were a few mentions of private sector businesses in retail or service jobs off-campus.

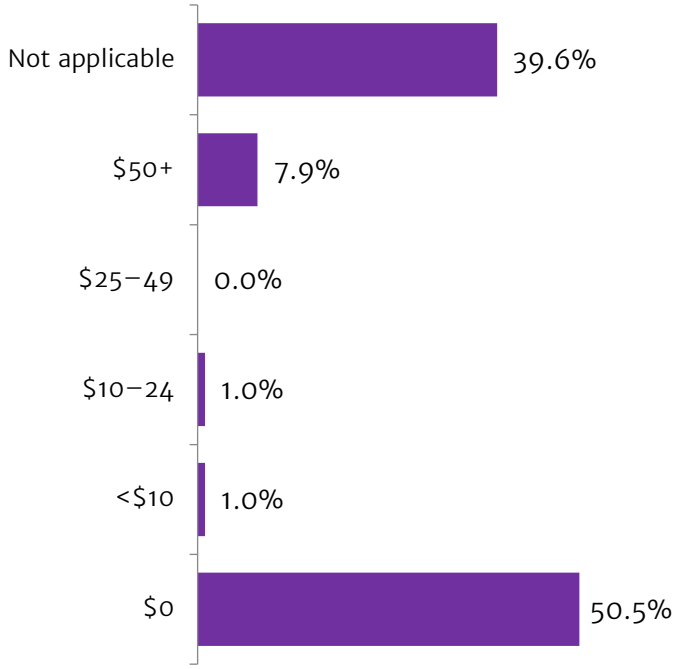
Q30: Average weekly work hours:



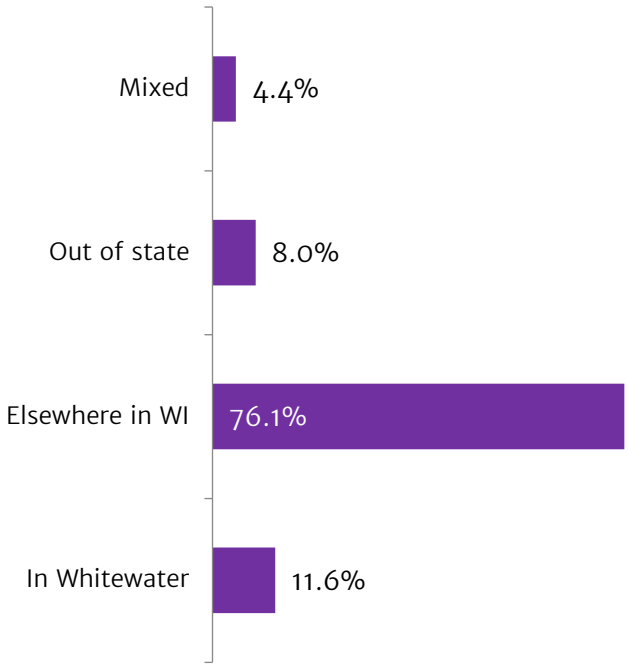
Q31: Hourly wage (before tips):



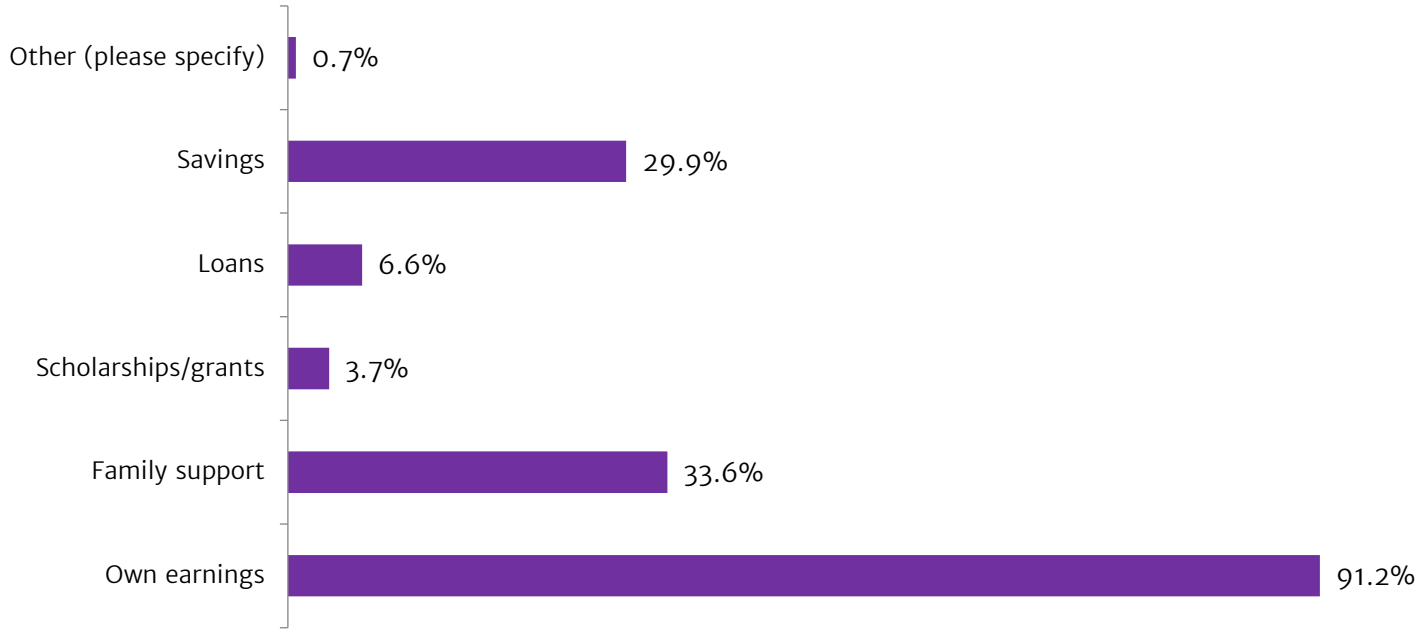
Q32: Weekly tips (if applicable):



Q33: Where are you located most weeks during summer?



Q34: What are your main sources of income for summer expenses? (check all that apply)



Q35: What's one thing that would make you spend more locally in Whitewater?

Major themes in response to this question were:

1. More Variety (Most Dominant Theme)
2. Lower Prices / Affordability
3. Food & Dining Improvements
4. More Non-Drinking Activities
5. Community & Social Environment
6. Convenience & Accessibility (Businesses open more often)

Q36: Any comments about housing availability, quality, or pricing?

The housing experience is characterized by high cost, low perceived value, maintenance and service frustrations. There is distrust or frustration with landlords/property managers and basic amenities (like internet) are not meeting expectations, which is critical for students.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

IMPLAN

Implan data was not used because the data is built using an aggregation scheme below the county level. When the selection was initially pulled for review, it was determined that the data had too much fabrication or leakage from other parts of Walworth and Jefferson counties.

Property Tax Base

Parcel data for the City of Whitewater was gleaned from the Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office and zoning codes applied based on the city's zoning map available on the city's website. The total land area within the city boundary is 5,851 acres. Land used as right-of-way (ROW) was calculated using the total land area less the sum of all the zoning districts.

Survey Statistical Significance (Confidence Interval of Survey):

When applying a sample size of 138 against the total University of Wisconsin-Whitewater population of roughly 11,000 students, the survey yields a Margin of Error of ±8.3% at a 95% Confidence Level.

Calculating Student Economic Impact

To accurately measure the economic footprint of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater students, we processed the raw student survey data through a four-step scaling and projection model. The goal was to take individual survey responses and responsibly scale them up to represent the real-world financial impact of the entire student body.

Step 1: Balancing the Sample (Demographic Weighting): Because a voluntary survey rarely captures the exact demographic split of the real world perfectly, our first step is to "weight" the data.

- We know the true university population is roughly 11,000 students, divided into 4,000 students living on campus and 7,000 living off campus.
- We apply a mathematical weight to each survey respondent based on where they live. This ensures that when we calculate the totals, the voices of off-campus and on-campus students are balanced to perfectly match their actual 4k/7k representation in the real world.

Step 2: Translating Survey Ranges into Standard Dollar Amounts: To make the survey easy for students to take, spending questions were asked in ranges (e.g., "$30–$49 per week"). To calculate total economic impact, we must convert these ranges into hard numbers.

- Midpoint Math: We assign the midpoint of the range to represent the typical student in that bracket (e.g., "$30–$49" becomes $39.50).
- Nightlife Calculation: For entertainment spending, we combined two questions. We took the "average spend per night out" and multiplied it by the "average nights out per week" to find total weekly entertainment spending. Additionally, students who answered that they spent 0 nights out in Whitewater received no further questions about spending.
- Calculating Cohort Averages: Once all responses were converted to exact dollar amounts, we calculated the average spending profile for an individual student living on campus, and compared it to the average spending profile of a student living off campus.

Step 3: Adjusting for Shared Expenses: Before scaling up to the whole population, we account for the fact that off-campus students usually share expenses.

- Roommate Divider: For monthly housing expenses like rent and utilities, we divided the reported household cost by 1.89 (the average number of roommates) to isolate the individual student's financial contribution.
- Note: On-campus residence hall fees are excluded from the local "Rent" calculation, as those funds are paid directly to the university rather than injected into the off-campus Whitewater real estate market.
- Note: Students who live more than 15 miles away or with parents within Whitewater were excluded from the spending equation.

Step 4: Scaling to Total Market Impact: Finally, we take the adjusted individual averages and multiply them by the total student population over specific timeframes to find the total millions of dollars injected into the local economy.

- The Academic Year (September–May): We multiply weekly habits by 32 weeks, and monthly habits by 8 months. We apply this to the full population of 11,000 students.
- The Summer Session (June–August): We multiply weekly habits by 20 weeks, and monthly habits by 4 months. We adjust the population drastically down to reflect the students who actually stay in Whitewater over the summer (approximately 433 on-campus and 1,417 off-campus).
    - Estimating summer session The survey directly asked students: "Where are you located most weeks during summer?" Overall, 11.6% of respondents indicated they stay "In Whitewater," while the vast majority selected "Elsewhere in WI" or "Out of state."
        - We did not apply a flat 11.6% to the entire university. Because students renting off-campus are much more likely to have 12-month leases than those in residence halls, we cross-referenced the summer residents against their academic-year living situations.
        - By applying the demographic weights established in Step 1 to this specific group of students, we identified the exact retention rates for both segments:
            - On-Campus Retention: Approximately 10.8% of the 4,000 on-campus students stay in Whitewater over the summer. (4,000 x 0.108 = 433 students)
            - Off-Campus Retention: Approximately 20.2% of the 7,000 off-campus students stay in Whitewater over the summer. (7,000 x 0.202 = 1,417 students). By combining these two groups, we establish a total summer population of 1,850 students.

Methodology: Labor Market and Employment Analysis

Step 1: Segmenting Employment Location

To determine where students are supplying their labor, we analyzed the survey responses regarding employment status and physical work location during the academic term. We segmented the student body into four primary categories:

- Working on-campus (UW-Whitewater)
- Working off-campus at a local Whitewater business
- Working outside of Whitewater (commuting or remote)
- Not currently employed

Step 2: Quantifying the Commuter Ratio:

We can see that Whitewater is a net exporter of labor from the Census data noting that out of 4,872 employed residents, nearly 4,000 commute outside the city for work. To determine the student body's role in this trend, we compared the survey's off-campus local workers against those working outside of Whitewater.

- By establishing the ratio between these two groups, we could accurately state the volume of "exported" student workers for every one student worker retained by a local business.

Step 3: Assessing Labor Availability vs. Industry Needs

"Retail Trade" and "Accommodation & Food Services" are significant industries in Whitewater. These industries traditionally rely heavily on part-time labor.

- To assess the potential student labor pool for these sectors, we analyzed the survey data regarding average weekly work hours.
- We grouped respondents into part-time (working less than 20 hours per week) and full-time/heavy part-time brackets to identify the true size of the demographic uniquely suited for local retail and hospitality roles.

Step 4: Synthesizing Macro and Micro Trends

- We contextualized the low local employment rate (6.5%) against the finding that major local industries often offer relatively low average wages (e.g., less than $35,000 annually for retail).

REDEVELOPMENT
RESOURCES

W18610 Hwy 45,
Eland, WI 54427
Phone: 715-581-1452
kristen@redevelopment-resources.com
www.redevelopment-resources.com