

## Making Your Trends and Drivers Local

As you map out the domain of strategic foresight for your organization, you'll note that national and even global trends and drivers will impact your future. But all of us are also embedded in our local region and communities, and are affected by local economies, local governments, local workforce, etc. Looking at local trend data and monitoring local drivers is important. How to do that?

Good trend data on Northeast Wisconsin is collected, curated, and presented online by groups like the Greater Green Bay Chamber, Greater Green Bay Community Foundation, Brown County United Way, etc. If the strength of the local economy and the workforce supporting it is important to your foresight project, take a look at trends followed by [NEW Manufacturing Alliance](#).

The Alliance (NEWMA) is a group of manufacturers, educators, workforce development, chambers of commerce, and state organizations that promote manufacturing in the Northeast Wisconsin region. Its vision is that "every Northeast Wisconsin manufacturer will find the talent it needs."

The Alliance's [2025 Aging Workforce Study](#) found that the average age for the production workforce is 38, which is younger than the national average of 44 years. The average age for engineers is 42, similar to the national average. Average tenure for production workers of 9 years was significantly higher than the national average of 4.9 years. The engineering workforce's tenure of 10 years is higher than the national average of 4.9 years. The study asked how many people were 56 years and older in key occupations. Respondents said that 44% of their machinists were 56 years and older; as well as 45% of engineers 40% of plant managers and 33% of welders.

There were a few key findings in comparing the 2017 study to the 2025 study. There is still strong concern regarding the aging workforce, although lower than the 85% that reported concern in 2017. The average age of a production worker (38) is younger than the 2017 study's 43 year average.

The Alliance's [2025 Manufacturing Vitality Index](#) found this sector (29% of the region's employment base) remains healthy, and compared growth plans to previous surveys.

[The Industry 4.0 Talent & Technology Survey](#), funded by Microsoft and conducted by St. Norbert College, includes responses from 72 Northeast Wisconsin industry leaders. This report highlights new findings that during the past five years, companies have been increasingly proactive about adopting Industry 4.0 technologies and have become more engaged in developing Industry 4.0 plans for the future. The top three sectors of respondents were Metal & Allied Products, Machinery, and Paper & Allied Products. More than half reported more than \$30 million in sales annually. For the purposes of this survey, *Industry 4.0 is the transformation occurring in manufacturing to integrate digital technologies such as cloud computing and*

*analytics, AI and machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) into production facilities and operations. It is characterized by improved efficiencies such as increased automation, predictive (proactive) maintenance, and self-optimized process improvements.*