

Snowmobiling in Wisconsin

Fiscal and Economic Impact | Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs



University of Wisconsin
Whitewater

College of Business and Economics
Fiscal and Economic Research Center

About AWSC

The Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) is an organization dedicated to the preservation of snowmobiling in the state of Wisconsin. They do this by monitoring proposed legislation and regulations that may affect snowmobiling. The organization acts as the legislative voice for **over 580 snowmobiling clubs** throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin is home to **over 25,000 miles** of trails, thanks to the tireless efforts of the local snowmobile club volunteers that maintain them.

“United We Trail...Divided We Fail”





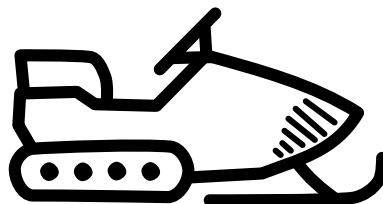
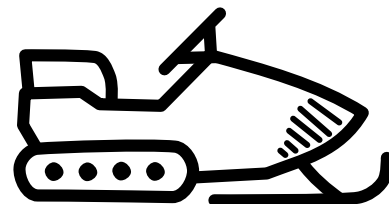
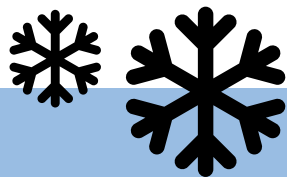
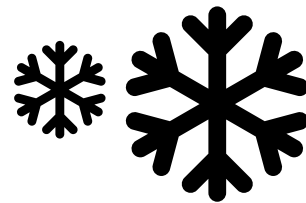
Executive Summary

This study, conducted by the UW-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center (FERC), explores and quantifies the economic impact of snowmobiling in the state of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin is often referred to as the birthplace of snowmobiling. With its over 25,000 miles of meticulously kept trails for native and visiting riders to enjoy, many citizens of the state take major interest in riding, as there are **more than 200,000 registered snowmobiles** in Wisconsin, currently.

Snowmobiling in Wisconsin has a considerable effect on the local economy, bringing money, employment, and volunteering into the area. Visitor activity and capital equipment sales support **12,525 total jobs**, generates a total of **\$507 million in labor income**, and **\$1.477 billion in total output**.

As a result, snowmobiling in Wisconsin generates a total of **\$132 million in annual tax revenue**. With popular trails in tourist hotspots such as Eagle River, Minocqua, and Three Lakes, tourism in these northern counties during the winter season accounts for around **35 percent of their local economies** year round.



Tax Impact



Visitor Activity—State, County &
Local Tax Contribution

\$98,000,000

This includes \$10 million from registrations, trail passes, and
additional gas tax.

Capital Equipment & Vehicle
Sales—State, County & Local Tax Contribution

\$34,000,000



IMPLAN

There are two primary forms of economic impact on the users of snowmobiling trails: direct and indirect. To calculate the impact of expenditures by businesses affected by snowmobiling, an IMPLAN input/output (I/O) model was used. IMPLAN (short for “impact analysis for planning”) is an economic analysis software system utilized to determine the overall economic impact of initial spending on the local economy. The IMPLAN model uses data gathered in our research and estimates to what extent different spending categories affect the local economy in terms of initial, direct, indirect, and induced effects. This input/output (I/O) model provides a means to capture and measure these effects. It uses the following three effects to measure economic impact.

DIRECT EFFECT

The direct effect refers to production change associated with a change in demand for the good itself. It is the initial impact on the economy, which is exogenous to the model. In this case, it is the spending brought about by snowmobiling and snowmobile trail users.

INDIRECT EFFECT

The indirect effect refers to the secondary impact caused by changing input needs of directly affected industries (e.g., additional input purchases to produce extra output). It concerns inter-industry transactions: Businesses near the snowmobiling trails demand locally produced materials to procure their services; their success affects all of the suppliers that provide inputs.

INDUCED EFFECT

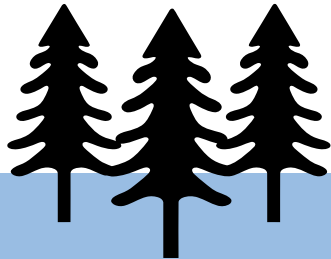
The induced effect refers to changes in household spending due to the additional employment generated by direct and indirect effects. The induced effect measures the impact of the changes in household income: employees of businesses involved with snowmobiling and employees of those business’ suppliers spending money at restaurants, grocery stores, and shops.



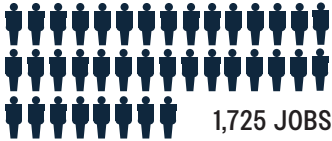
Capital Equipment & Vehicle Sales Employment

This illustrates the number of jobs created in various industries impacted by snowmobiling capital equipment and vehicle sales..

Retail has the highest number of jobs at 950. Business Services follows with 220 jobs, and FIRE with 130 jobs. This suggests that snowmobiling in Wisconsin has the potential to create new substantial jobs for businesses impacted by snowmobiling in the Retail, Business Services, and FIRE industries.



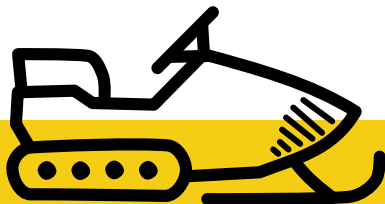
Capital Equipment & Vehicle Sales Impact

	EMPLOYMENT	LABOR INCOME	OUTPUT
DIRECT EFFECT	 1,075 JOBS	 \$75,000,000	 \$215,000,000
INDIRECT AND INDUCED EFFECT	 650 JOBS	 \$42,000,000	 \$137,000,000
TOTAL EFFECT	 1,725 JOBS	 \$117,000,000	 \$352,000,000

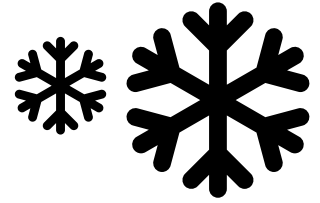
Visitor Employment Impact by Industry

This illustrates the number of jobs created in various industries impacted by visitors and snowmobiling tourism.

Entertainment has the highest number of jobs at 4,350. Restaurants follows with 2,200 jobs, and Hotel and Lodging with 1,100 jobs. This suggests that snowmobiling in Wisconsin has the potential to create new substantial jobs for businesses impacted by snowmobiling in the Retail, Business Services, and FIRE industries. Wholesale had the fewest jobs at 80.



Visitor Economic Impact

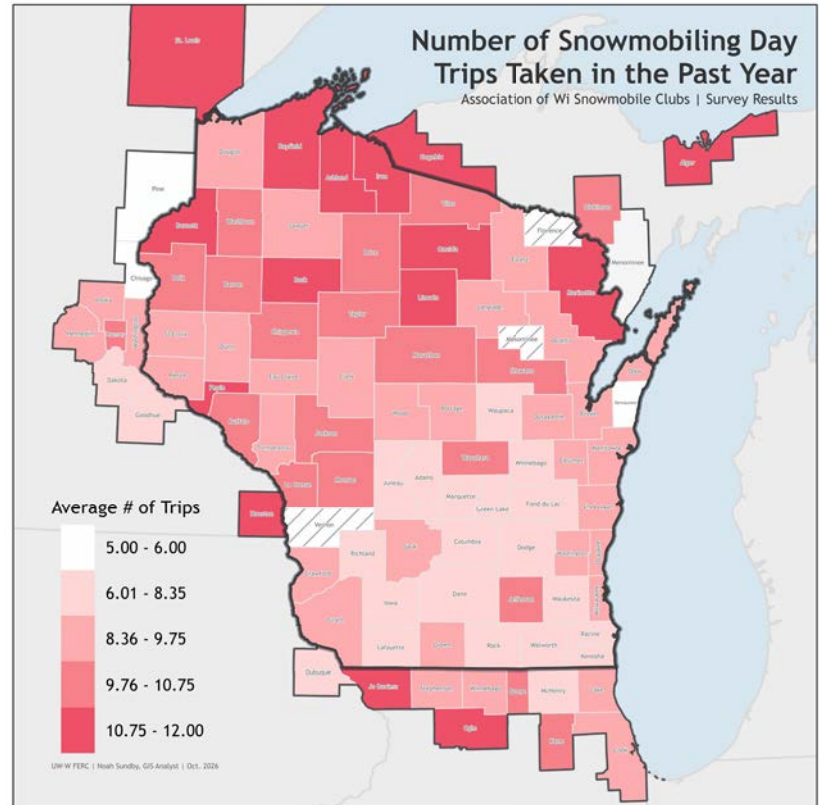


	EMPLOYMENT	LABOR INCOME	OUTPUT
DIRECT EFFECT	                                                              8,100 JOBS	     \$230,000,000	             \$600,000,000
INDIRECT AND INDUCED EFFECT	                               2,700 JOBS	    \$160,000,000	            \$525,000,000
TOTAL EFFECT	                                                                                             10,800 JOBS	          \$390,000,000	                                \$1,125,000,000

GIS Pattern: Day Trips

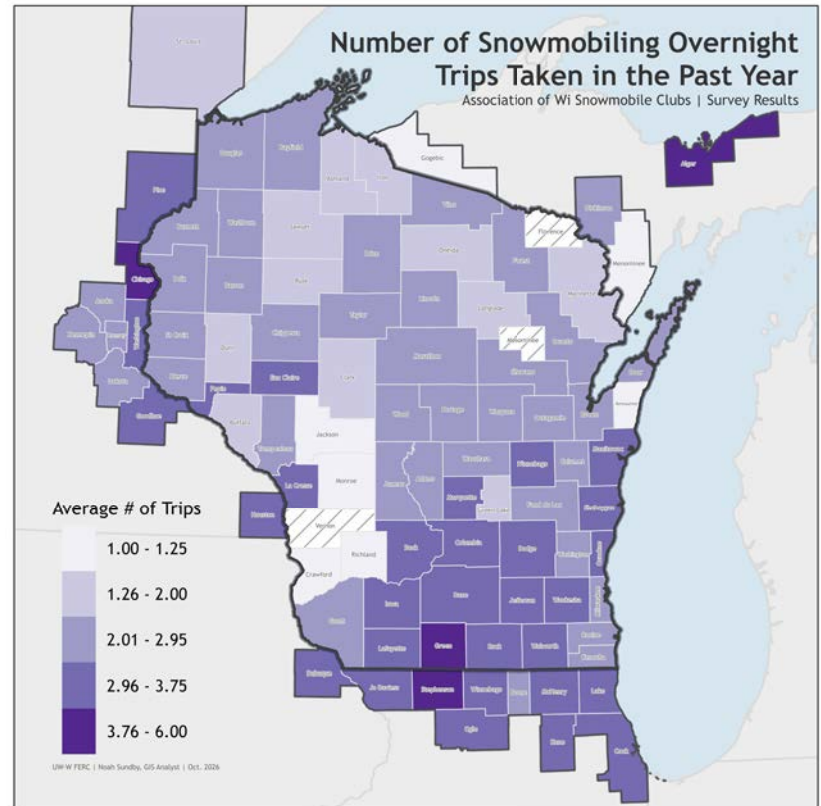


- Day trips are strongest in northern counties with denser trail access and more reliable snow cover. Most likely, these visitors live near the trails.
- The attached day-trip map uses average annual trips with upper classes reaching roughly 9.76–12.00 trips.
- This suggests northern residents can snowmobile more frequently without requiring overnight travel.
- Southern counties participate less in day-trip form because access to snow-reliable trail systems is more limited.



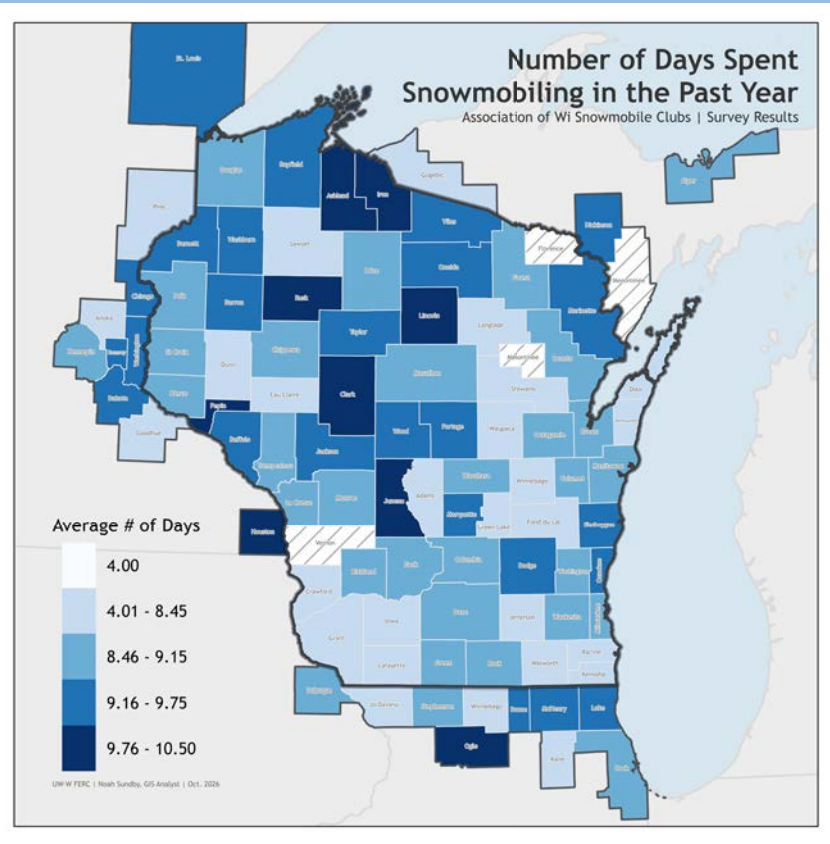
GIS Pattern: Overnight Trips

- Overnight-trip intensity is higher among southern Wisconsin snowmobilers. These respondents travel to their destination.
- The map classes range from roughly 1.00–1.25 trips on the low end to 3.76–6.00 on the high end.
- This pattern implies southern riders travel north to snow-reliable regions for destination trips.
- Northern riders, already close to prime trail systems, rely less on overnight travel and more on day use.

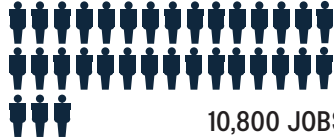
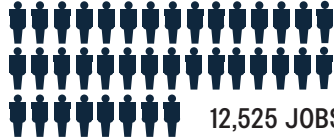


GIS Pattern: Total Days Spent Snowmobiling

- Total annual days spent snowmobiling again favors northern counties.
- The attached map shows upper classes near roughly 9.76–10.50 average days.
- Northern proximity to trails appears to outweigh the southern overnight-trip pattern in total annual use.
- Southern riders participate through fewer but longer destination-style trips to northern counties.

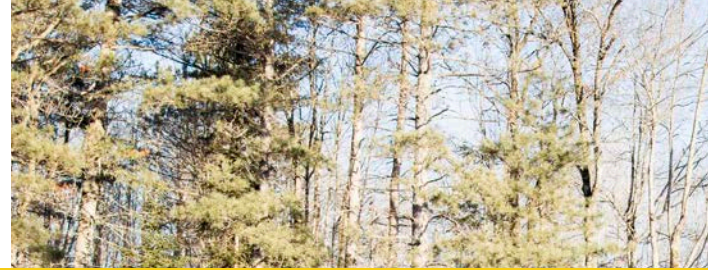
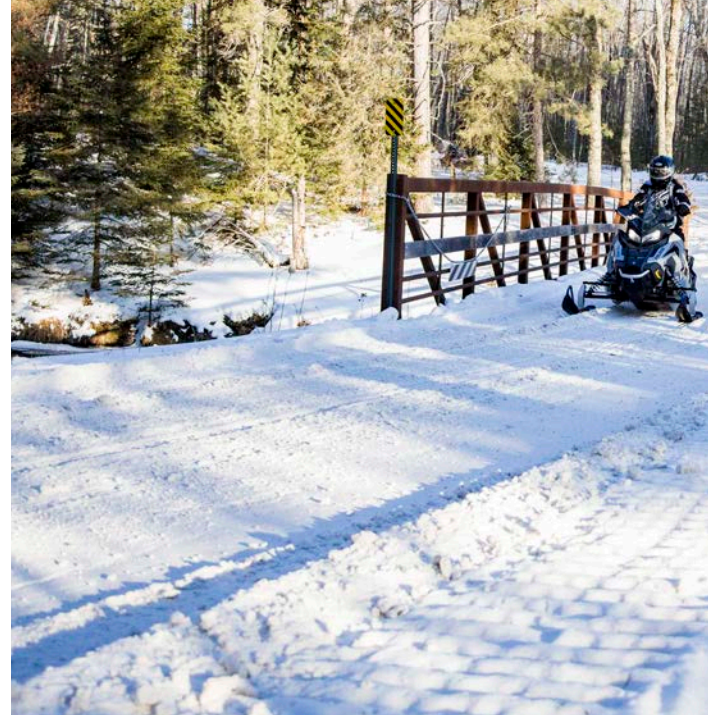


Average Labor Income per Worker

	EMPLOYMENT	LABOR INCOME	AVG. INCOME / WORKER
VISITOR ACTIVITY	 10,800 JOBS	 \$390,000,000	 \$36,111
CAPITAL EQUIPMENT SALES	 1,725 JOBS	 \$117,000,000	 \$67,826
COMBINED	 12,525 JOBS	 \$507,000,000	 \$40,479
OVERALL BLENDED AVERAGE: \$40,479			

Volunteer Labor & Club Infrastructure

- Over **580 organized snowmobile clubs** provide the operational backbone of Wisconsin's trail system.
- Thousands of volunteer hours support grooming, signage, landowner relations, and emergency clearing.
- Private landowner partnerships grant trail access across thousands of miles of private property.
- Volunteer labor effectively subsidizes the public trail system and lowers maintenance costs.
- This volunteer contribution is not fully captured in IMPLAN modeling.





Conclusions

State, County & Local Tax Revenue

\$132,000,000

- **Essential Winter Pillar:** Snowmobiling supports Wisconsin businesses and municipalities during the winter tourism season with a total statewide economic impact of **\$1.477 billion**.
- **Two-Pillar Economic Model:** **Visitor activity (\$1.125B)** and **capital equipment sales (\$352M)** together support **12,525 jobs** statewide.
- **Cross-Industry Multiplier:** Benefits extend beyond powersports into lodging, dining, events, gaming, banking, professional services, healthcare, and real estate.
- **High ROI on Trail Investment:** Trail funding and gas tax allocations support a system associated with **\$1.477B in total output** and **\$132M in annual tax revenue** from all sources.
- **Trail Permits & Registrations:** Dedicated user-pay funding from registrations and trail pass fees, reinvested into trail maintenance, grooming, and safety enforcement.
- **Visitor Activity Taxes:** Sales taxes, county/local option taxes, lodging taxes, restaurant/tavern revenues, fuel taxes, and event/gaming-related activity generated by snowmobiler spending.
- **Capital Equipment Sales Taxes:** Sales and excise taxes on snowmobiles, tow vehicles, trailers, parts, accessories, and related powersports retail activity.

ABOUT THE FERC

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Fiscal and Economic Research Center provides research services for area businesses, not-for-profits organizations and government entities, including:

- Economic Analysis
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis
- Market research, marketing strategy and planning
- Statistical analysis
- Simulation analysis
- Ecological and biological analysis
- Government and public policy analysis
- Entrepreneurship
- Economic forecasting and business development

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Russ Kashian is a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He served as a specialist for the University of Wisconsin-Extension and is the director of the Fiscal and Economic Research center at UW-Whitewater. In the 20 years that he has taught at the university, his focus has been conducting applied research projects that develop students, are of value to others, and serve the region. Dr. Kashian's main areas of interest are financial intermediaries, tourism, education, and economic development.

Email: kashianr@uww.edu

Phone: (262) 472-5584

Data Analysts

Noah Sundby

Editor and Graphic Designer

Shannon Murray

Caryana Dominguez

Zoey Prevett



University of Wisconsin
Whitewater

College of Business and Economics

Fiscal and Economic Research Center