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For Immediate Release
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**Forward Analytics Issues Initial Report:
"Falling Behind: Migration Changes and State Workforce"**
Too Few Young People, Retiring Baby Boomers Pose Challenges for Wisconsin

A new report issued today by Forward Analytics, "Falling Behind: Migration Changes and State Workforce," reveals troubling trends for the future of Wisconsin's workforce landscape.

"Wisconsin has too few young people to replace retiring baby boomers over the next 15 years, so the state must turn to migration to grow its workforce," said Forward Analytics Director of Research Dale Knapp. "However, during 2010-2015, the state lost population among key workforce groups, with the most troubling being the net outmigration of young families, a group that Wisconsin typically attracted."

The report shows that the ability of a state to naturally grow its workforce over time can be measured by comparing the number of residents under 16 years of age to the number who are 50 to 64 years of age. Many in this older group will likely leave the workforce over the ensuing 15 years and be replaced by those in the younger group. The larger the ratio, the greater ability to grow the labor force.

For example, in 1990, Wisconsin had 1.75 residents under 16 for each resident 50 to 64 years of age, and the state's workforce expanded almost 17% over 15 years. By 2000, this ratio had fallen to 1.42 young people per resident near retirement, and the labor force expanded just 4.1% during 2000-15. At 0.87 in 2017, this long-term indicator is pointing to a shrinking labor pool over the next 15 years.

"To grow its labor force, Wisconsin will need to attract workers from other states," said Knapp. "However, since 2010, the state has not fared well in attracting key population groups. In fact, the state's migration patterns began shifting after 2000 and have only worsened among key age groups since then."

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Since 1990, Wisconsin has lost young people as they age from their early twenties into their late twenties. That pattern continued during 2010-2015 with the state losing almost 30,000 of these young people, many of whom were new college graduates.

The state has typically recouped those losses by attracting people in their thirties, forties, and even fifties. For example, during 2000-2005, the state experienced a net outflow of about 25,000 young adults but added over 40,000 residents in the older groups. However, during 2010-2015, the state not only lost 30,000 young adults to other states, it also lost population among those in the older groups. This partly explains the state's current labor shortage.

"Our state's recent net loss of residents in the critical 'family formation' years creates a second, long-term problem for the state," said Knapp. "Those moving into the state who are in their late twenties to early fifties often bring with them children, who will be part of the future workforce. When this population does not move here it is not only a workforce challenge for today, but it foretells of a challenge in the future."

During both 2000-05 and 2005-10, the state added more than 40,000 children from migration. However, during 2010-15, net migration of children to the state totaled fewer than 10,000.

"This large drop in the net migration of children portends trouble for long term workforce growth in Wisconsin," said Knapp. "For Wisconsin to position itself for future success, we must find ways to keep the people we have as well as bring people back into our state."

To read the full report, "Falling Behind: Migration Changes and State Workforce," visit www.forward-analytics.net.

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It is the mission of Forward Analytics, the research division of the Wisconsin Counties Association, to use the best data available to highlight challenges facing Wisconsin and share this information to assist policymakers in understanding the data in pursuit of informed policy decisions.

Forward Analytics is led by Director of Research and Analytics Dale Knapp, who brings more than two decades of research experience in economics and public policy to the Association. Prior to helping create Forward Analytics, Knapp spent 18 years with the nonpartisan and well-respected Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, including 15 years as Research Director.