

Montana's High-Tech Economy

Growth, AI, and the Future Workforce

Christina Henderson, Executive Director
Montana High Tech Business Alliance



Why This Report Matters

First update since 2021

- AI has gone mainstream
- Remote work has stabilized
- Montana's economy has evolved
- Technology has become a larger driver of growth



What counts as Montana's technology economy?

| Survey definition

- Make or sell high-tech products
- Provide professional technology services
- Conduct ecommerce
- Advanced manufacturing

| Federal & private economic data

- Computer Systems Design
- Software, Data & Information Services
- Architecture & Engineering
- Scientific Research & Development
- High-Tech Manufacturing

Technology is growing faster than Montana's economy

5%

of Montana's GDP

\$7.9B

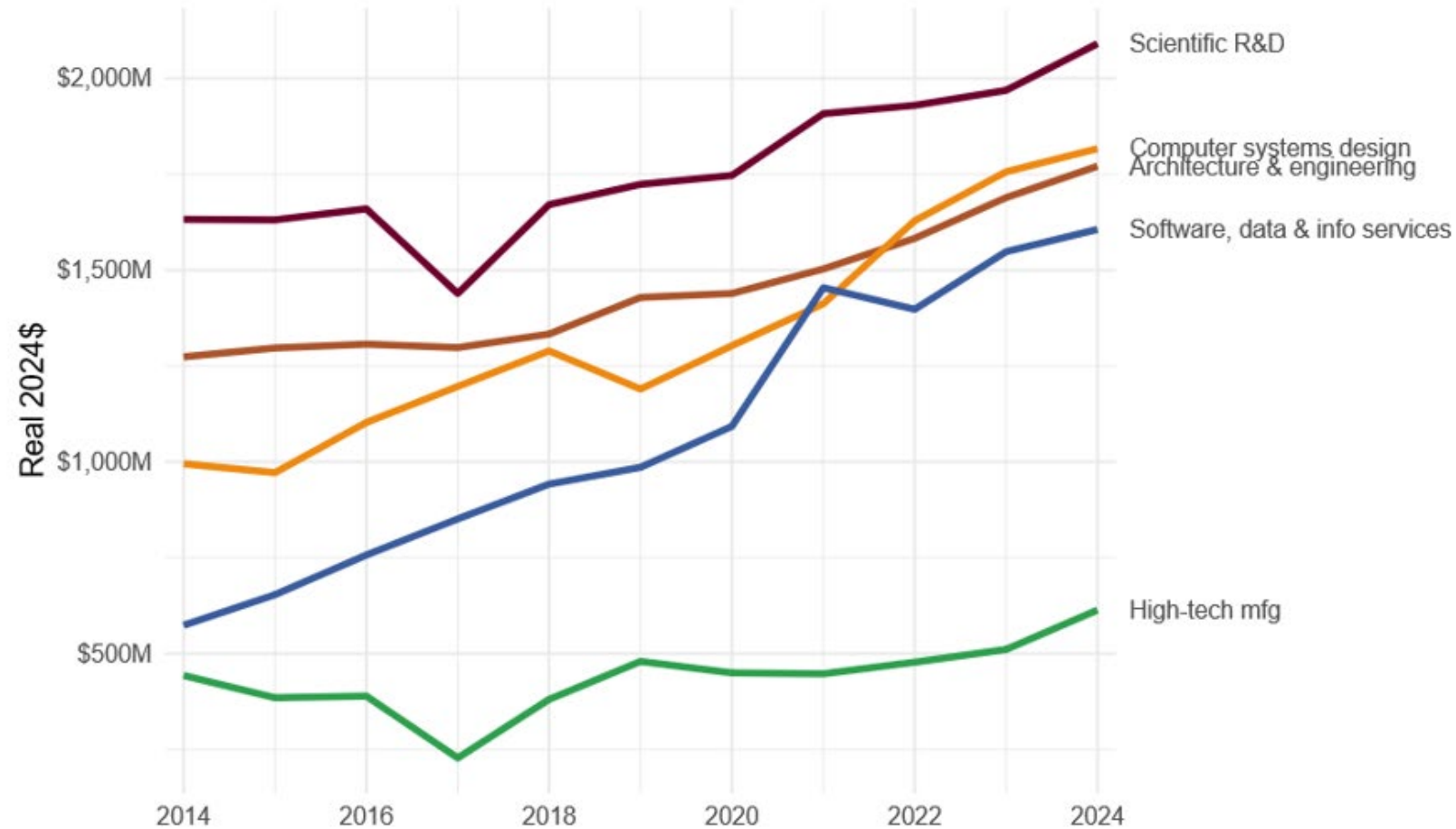
in annual revenue

\$4B+

in value added

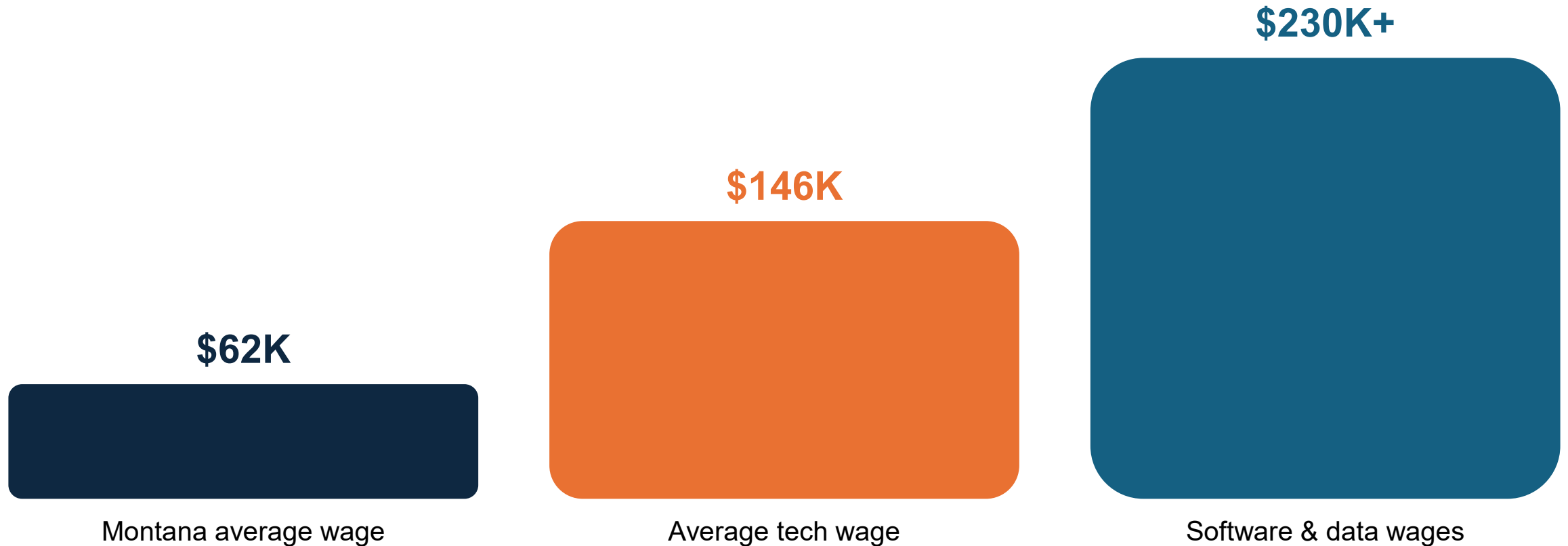
Where growth is occurring

FIGURE 2 TOTAL REVENUE BY HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY



Tech jobs are high-paying jobs

The average tech wage is 2.4x Montana's average wage.



Closing the national wage gap

Montana computer systems design wages have caught up with U.S. peers.

BEFORE

-35%

behind U.S. peers



NOW

On par

with U.S. peers

Wages and employment are telling different stories

Growing jobs + wages

- Architecture & Engineering
- Software

Growing wages, declining jobs

- Computer Systems Design
- Scientific R&D

Declining jobs + wages

- Manufacturing

Why might this be happening?

Possible Reasons

- Productivity gains
- AI adoption
- Post-pandemic correction
- Business restructuring
- Changing job mix
- National tech trends

Several forces are likely at work — the causes need more research.

SURVEY FINDINGS

What the survey tells us



Insights from our survey of Montana technology employers

Montana talent

68%

of new hires come from within Montana

Remote work

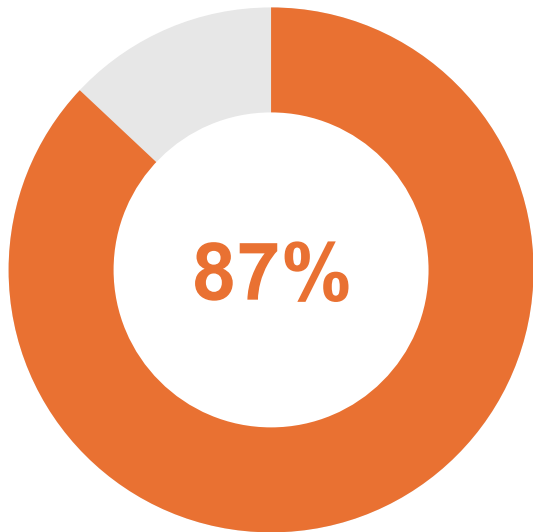
53%

work remotely at least part
time

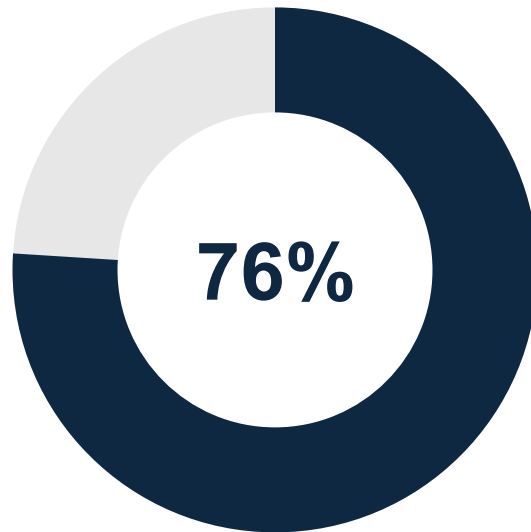
30%

are fully remote

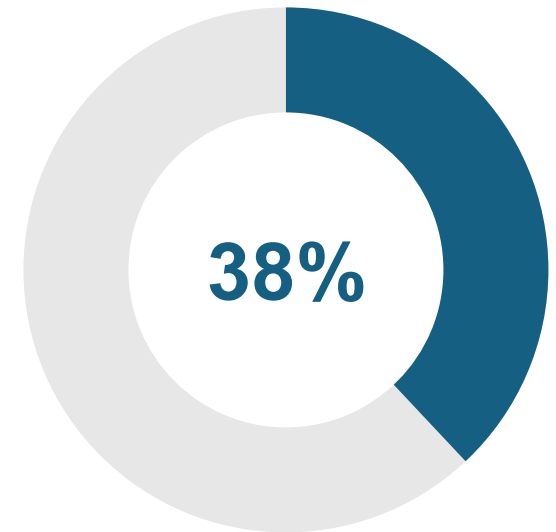
AI adoption is widespread



use AI daily or occasionally



say AI is strategic to future growth



seek specific AI skills in open roles

What employers need now

| Common hires

1. Software developers **\$90,000**
2. Engineers **\$101,000**
3. Sales & marketing **\$91,000**
4. Medical scientists **\$79,000**
5. Assemblers & fabricators **\$52,000**

| Skills in demand

1. Technical skills **23%**
2. Coding **21%**
3. Communication **13%**
4. Self-motivation, energy, persistence **13%**
5. Working with people, relationships, networking **11%**

Montana's advantages and constraints

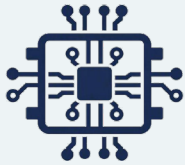
Advantages

- Quality of life
- Quality workforce
- Local client base
- Business climate

Constraints

- Access to capital
- Talent recruitment
- Customer acquisition
- Economic conditions

Emerging areas of opportunity



AI & software



**Photonics, quantum & smart
sensors**



Biotechnology & medical tech



Aerospace & defense



Advanced manufacturing



**Agriculture & natural resource
tech**

Remsight

Stevensville company, remote sensing for irrigation management

- Won UM and MSU business pitch competitions in 2025
- Pilot project with Daly Ditches in Hamilton



Biotech momentum

What SB 535 is

- First-of-its-kind Montana law (May 2025) licensing Experimental Treatment Centers
- Lets licensed providers administer treatments that clear Phase I trials but lack full FDA approval
- Open to any consenting adult, not only terminally ill patients

Where it stands

- Rules just finalized by DPHHS
- First treatment centers now moving into implementation

Why it matters

- Drawing national attention as a first mover
- Economic impact still unknown, but interest is high

What comes next



Opportunities

Invest in Montana talent

Build AI literacy

Strengthen access to capital

Expand research and statewide dialogue

Help every region benefit

The bottom line

Montana's technology economy is:

- **Larger**
- **More nationally competitive for wages**
- **More AI-enabled**
- **More important to every region of the state**

Thank You!

Any Questions?

Contact: director@mthightech.org



MONTANA
HIGH TECH
BUSINESS ALLIANCE

www.mthightech.org

