



CENTRAL MINNESOTA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGIONS 6E, 7E, and 7W WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS 5 and 17

Covering the following counties:

Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi,
McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine,
Renville, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright

2023 REGIONAL PROFILE

Updated July 2023

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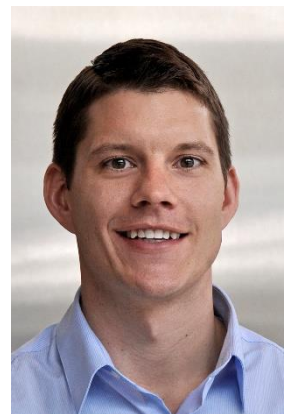
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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE

The Central Minnesota planning region includes a total of 13 counties, covering three separate Economic Development Regions (EDRs) and two Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). Central Minnesota was home to just over 743,000 people in 2022, comprising 13% of the state’s total population.

The region welcomed an 8.7% increase in population over the past 12 years, primarily due to rapid gains in Region 7W. Central Minnesota was the second fastest growing region of the state, accounting for 14.3% of the state’s population growth from 2010 to 2022. In comparison, Minnesota saw a 7.8% gain statewide (Table 1).

Eleven of the 13 counties in the region gained population from 2010 to 2022, with the other 2 seeing decreases. Wright and Sherburne were the 3rd and 5th fastest growing counties in the state, respectively. In contrast, Renville was the 5th fastest declining county in the state and is now the smallest county in the region.

	2010 Population	2022 Estimates	2010-2022 Change	
			Number	Percent
Central Minnesota	684,001	743,173	+59,172	+8.7%
Region 6E	117,920	118,574	+654	+0.6%
Kandiyohi Co.	42,239	43,839	+1,600	+3.8%
McLeod Co.	36,651	36,714	+63	+0.2%
Meeker Co.	23,300	23,376	+76	+0.3%
Renville Co.	15,730	14,525	-1,205	-7.7%
Region 7E	163,789	173,904	+10,115	+6.2%
Chisago Co.	53,887	57,988	+4,101	+7.6%
Isanti Co.	37,816	42,727	+4,911	+13.0%
Kanabec Co.	16,239	16,463	+224	+1.4%
Mille Lacs Co.	26,097	27,280	+1,183	+4.5%
Pine Co.	29,750	29,446	-304	-1.0%
Region 7W	402,292	450,695	+48,403	+12.0%
Benton Co.	38,451	41,463	+3,012	+7.8%
Sherburne Co.	88,499	100,824	+12,325	+13.9%
Stearns Co.	150,642	160,405	+9,763	+6.5%
Wright Co.	124,700	148,003	+23,303	+18.7%
Minnesota	5,303,925	5,717,184	+413,259	+7.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

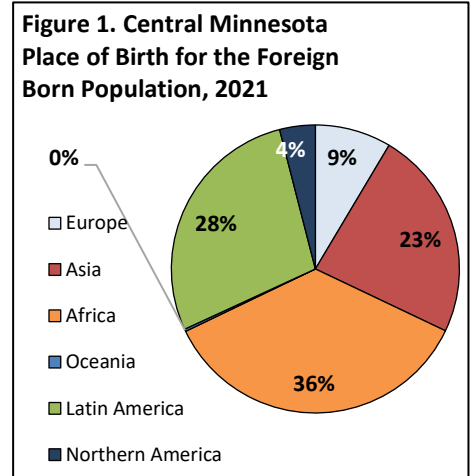
With a young and fast-growing population, Central Minnesota experienced a natural increase – more births than deaths – of 4,088 people in the past two years. In addition, the region gained residents from in-migration, with 11,004 more people moving into the region than moving out. The vast majority of this recent in-migration (85%) was from domestic residents moving into the region from other areas of the state or other states, and not from international migration like in the past. International in-migration was still positive and accounted for 1,966 new residents (Table 2).

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Central	+17,220	+4,088	19,190	15,102	+12,970	+1,966	+11,004
Minnesota	+10,680	+26,917	144,350	117,433	-17,365	+20,012	-37,377

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

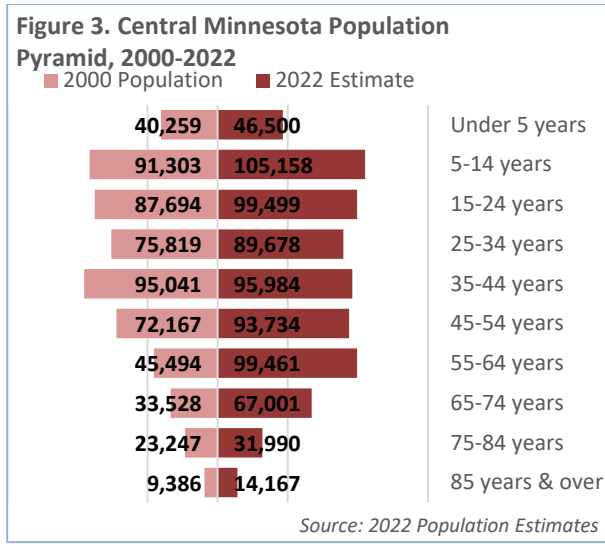
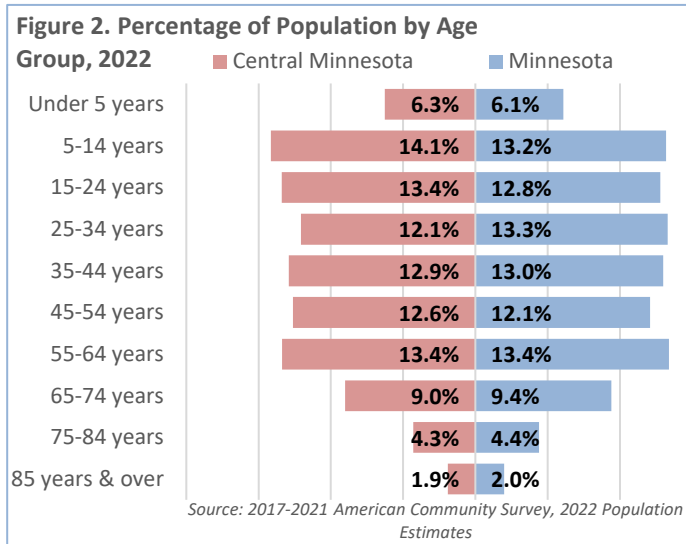
Despite the slowdown in the past year, Central Minnesota is now home to 28,009 foreign born residents, or about 3.9% of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 56.5% since 2010, nearly doubling the statewide growth rate of 30.6%. Over one-third (10,029 people) of these immigrants were from Africa, while the second largest number of foreign-born residents were from Latin America, accounting for over three in every ten immigrants.

The fastest growing wave of new immigrants to Central Minnesota came from Africa, rising by 7,653 people from 2010 to 2021, a 322% jump. About one-quarter of immigrants were from Asia, after increasing over 30% since 2010, and less than 9% were from Europe and 4% were from Canada (Figure 1).



POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Central Minnesota has a slightly younger population than the rest of the state, with 33.8% of the population under 25 years of age, compared to 32.1% statewide. Central Minnesota also has a similar percentage of people aged 55 years and older, but a slightly smaller share of people between 25 and 54 years of age, often considered the “prime working years” (Figure 2).

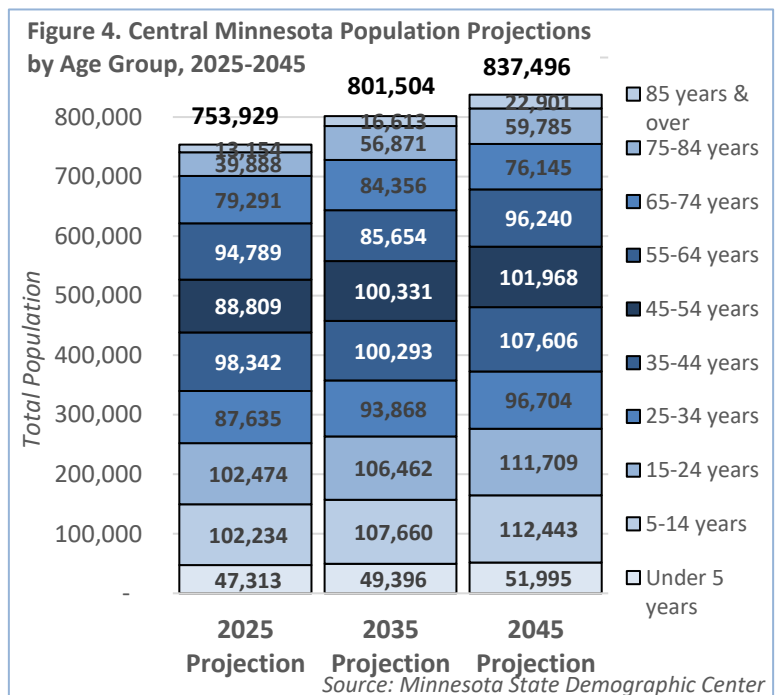


While the number of younger residents was rising rapidly as young, married couple families moved into the region, the number of residents aged 55 years and over was also expanding quickly because of size of the Baby Boom generation – people born between 1946 and 1964. The only age group to experience a nominal growth (+1%) in the last 22 years was the 35-44 year old age group, right in the middle of “prime working” age and a direct result of the void Baby Boomers are leaving behind (Figure 3).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

The entire region is projected to continue growing through 2045. According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Central Minnesota is expected to gain 83,567 net new residents from 2025 to 2045, an 11.1% increase (Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 7.4%, with the fastest growth expected to occur in the Twin Cities metro area.

Central Minnesota is projected to add nearly 30,000 people aged 75 years and over, a 56% increase. The region is also expected to gain people in the 25-44 year old age group, as well as a corresponding increase in children under 5 years of age. In contrast, Central Minnesota is expected to lose older adults from 65-74 years of age as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid. But the region should also see a big bump in the 45-54 age group, increasing by some 13,000 additional people as millennials age into older age categories.



POPULATION BY RACE

Central Minnesota’s population is less diverse than the state but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2021, 90% of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 80.7% of residents statewide. The region’s white population increased by just 1.3%, contributing to about 20% of overall population growth. The region had smaller percentages of every other race than the state, and as the largest group at 4.0%, Central Minnesota also had a lower percentage of people reporting Hispanic or Latino origin than the state (Table 3).

Six of the 13 counties in the region had more than 90% of the population reporting white alone as their race, whereas Stearns and Kandiyohi County reported the most diverse populations, due to large Black and Hispanic populations, respectively. Mille Lacs and Pine were also more diverse due to larger American Indian populations.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2021	Central Minnesota				Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2011-2021 Numeric Percent		Percent	Change from 2011-2021
Total	721,442	100.0%	+41,705	+6.1%	100.0%	+7.4%
White	649,612	90.0%	+8,037	+1.3%	80.7%	+0.4%
Black or African American	23,463	3.3%	+12,772	+119.5%	6.6%	+42.2%
American Indian & Alaska Native	3,965	0.5%	-987	-19.9%	0.9%	-8.0%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	9,517	1.3%	+2,093	+28.2%	5.0%	+35.8%
Some Other Race	11,460	1.6%	+5,770	+101.4%	2.1%	+66.5%
Two or More Races	23,425	3.2%	+14,020	+149.1%	4.6%	+121.8%
Hispanic or Latino origin	28,668	4.0%	+8,079	+39.2%	5.6%	+31.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey

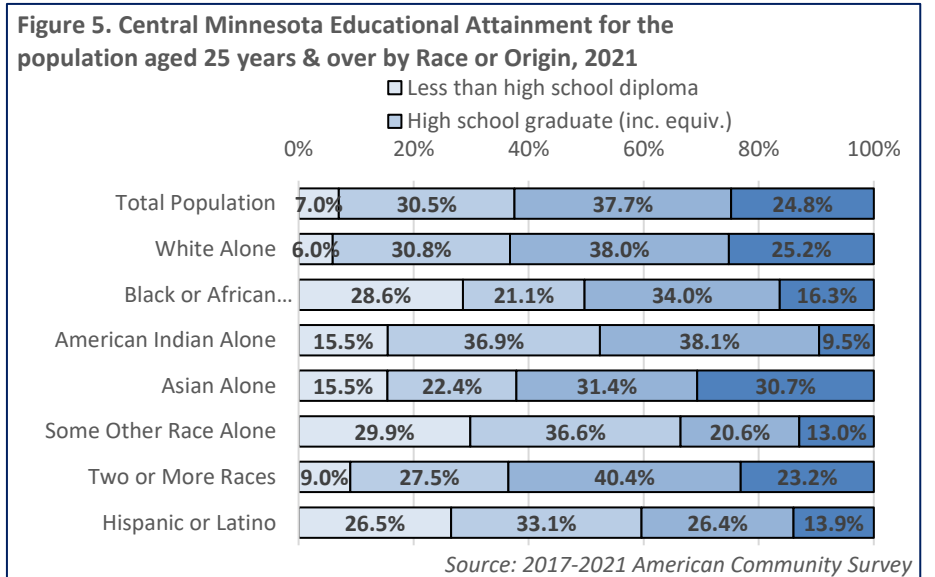
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With 36% of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Central Minnesota has lower educational attainment than the state, where 46% of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. However, 13.3% of adults in Central Minnesota have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 25.4% have some college experience, but no degree, compared to 22.4% statewide. Data show that Central Minnesota has a younger population that is focused on advancing their education.

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Adult Population, 2021	Central Minnesota		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
Total, 18 years & over	542,991	100.0%	100.0%
Less than high school	41,220	7.6%	7.1%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	167,553	30.9%	24.5%
Some college, no degree	137,675	25.4%	22.4%
Associate's degree	72,285	13.3%	11.1%
Bachelor's degree	88,080	16.2%	23.3%
Advanced degree	36,178	6.7%	11.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey

Educational attainment varies widely by race and ethnicity in Central Minnesota. Over 26% of Hispanic or Latino, some other race and Black residents had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 6% of White residents. However, 34% of Black or African Americans, American Indians, and people of Two or More Races have attended some college or earned an associate’s degree, and 30.7% of Asian residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher, which was higher than the White population, where about 24.8% had bachelor’s degrees or higher (Figure 5).

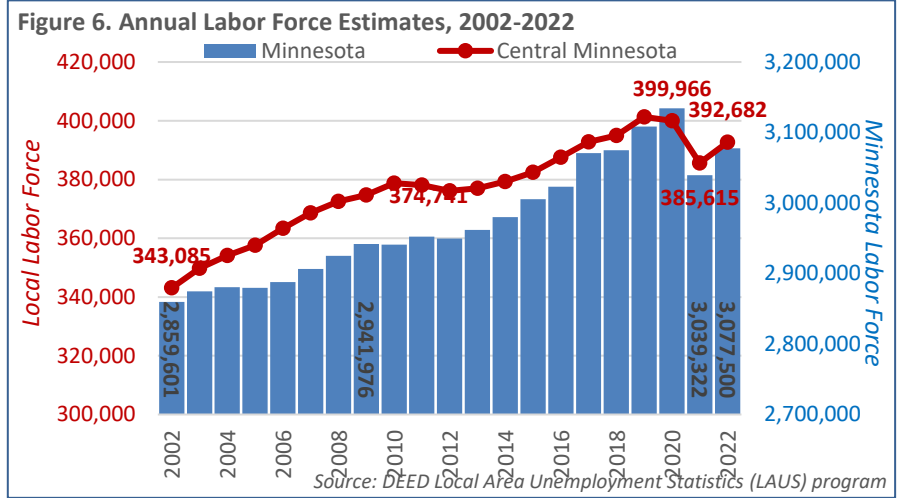


LABOR FORCE

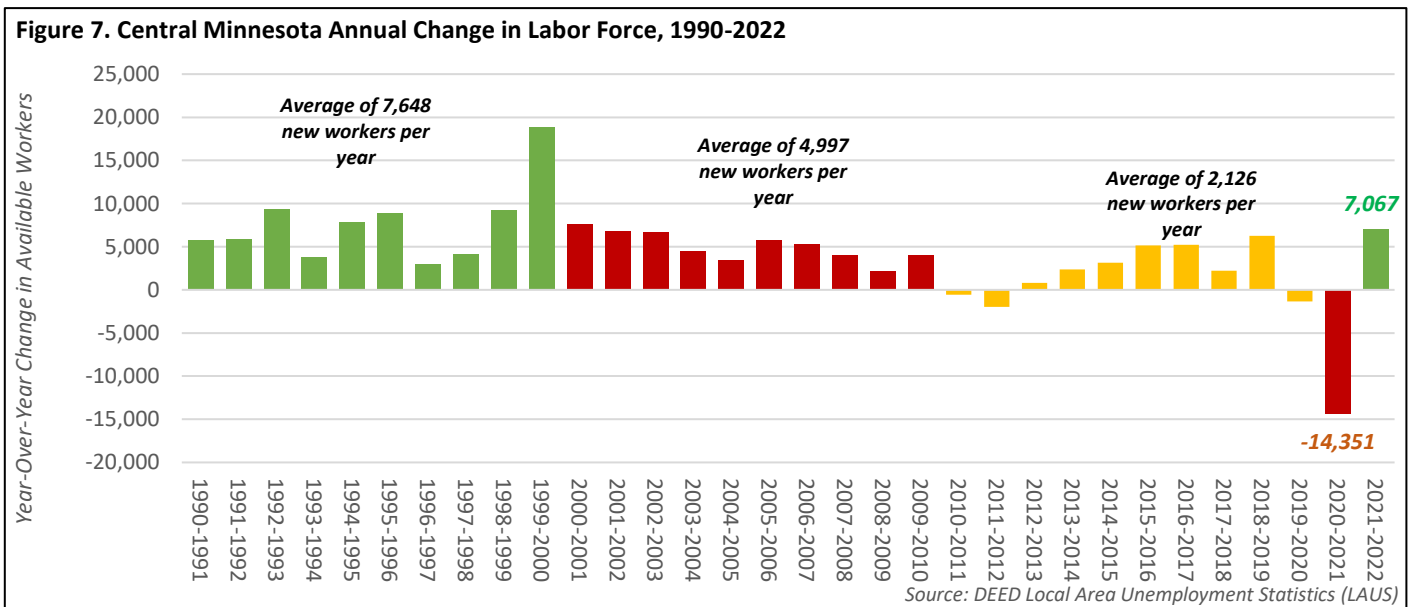
LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Central Minnesota had an annual average labor force count of just over 392,500 workers in 2022. The regional labor force had been increasing since 2012, adding 24,342 new workers in the 6 years leading up to the pandemic. But since 2019, the labor force declined and still has 8,600 fewer workers (Figure 6).

Mass labor force exits were experienced in the aftermath of the pandemic recession, and Central Minnesota erased its previous six years’ worth of gains in just two years. Meanwhile the number of unemployed workers reached record lows. There were just under 12,000 unemployed workers in 2021, down from a high of more than 30,000 unemployed workers in both 2009 and 2010 and roughly 25,000 in 2020. These labor force constraints will have a substantial impact on the regional economy.



Averaging a net gain of 7,648 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Central Minnesota were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. The regional labor force and economy continued to grow over the next two decades as well, though at a slower pace, until the two-month pandemic recession led to a loss of more than 14,000 workers. The region has since regained about half of those workers, but others remain on the sidelines. Pandemic-related labor force losses could be temporary as increasing economic uncertainty pushes many older workers who left the labor force to seek employment again.



LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

If Central Minnesota’s population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see a steady increase in the labor force over the next decade. Labor force projections can be made by applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group. Growth is a welcome expectation, yet it is stubbornly slow.

Aside from an overall increase, the labor force will also see a significant shift over time, with gains in the number of workers aged 65 years and over against large declines in the number of workers aged 55 to 64 years. However, the region is still expected to see gains in the number of 20-to-44-year old’s (see Table 5). In step with workforce growth, the shift in aging will lead to a labor market that relies more on older workers.

Table 5. Central Minnesota Labor Force Projections, 2025-2035

	2025 Labor Force Projection	2035 Labor Force Projection	2025-2035 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	24,866	25,136	+270	+1.1%
20 to 24 years	41,323	44,227	+2,904	+7.0%
25 to 44 years	163,413	170,604	+7,191	+4.4%
45 to 54 years	78,725	88,939	+10,214	+13.0%
55 to 64 years	69,771	63,047	-6,724	-9.6%
65 to 74 years	20,924	22,261	+1,337	+6.4%
75 years & over	3,377	4,679	+1,302	+38.5%
Total Labor Force	402,400	418,893	+16,493	+4.1%

Source: calculated from [Minnesota State Demographic Center population projections](#) and [2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 69.6% of the population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Central Minnesota had slightly higher labor force participation rates than the state’s 69.2%. The region had slightly higher participation rates than the state in several age groups, with the overall rate trending higher because a higher percentage of Central Minnesota’s labor force was younger (Table 6).

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state for every race group except white, Asian or Other Pacific Islanders; and had large unemployment rate disparities for minority groups, especially American Indian workers. The highest unemployment rates were reported for Black or African Americans and American Indians, which were both over 11% in 2021.

Central Minnesota also had over 20,000 workers with disabilities in the workforce, despite lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates than the general population. Disparities are present in unemployment rates across different race groups in the region.

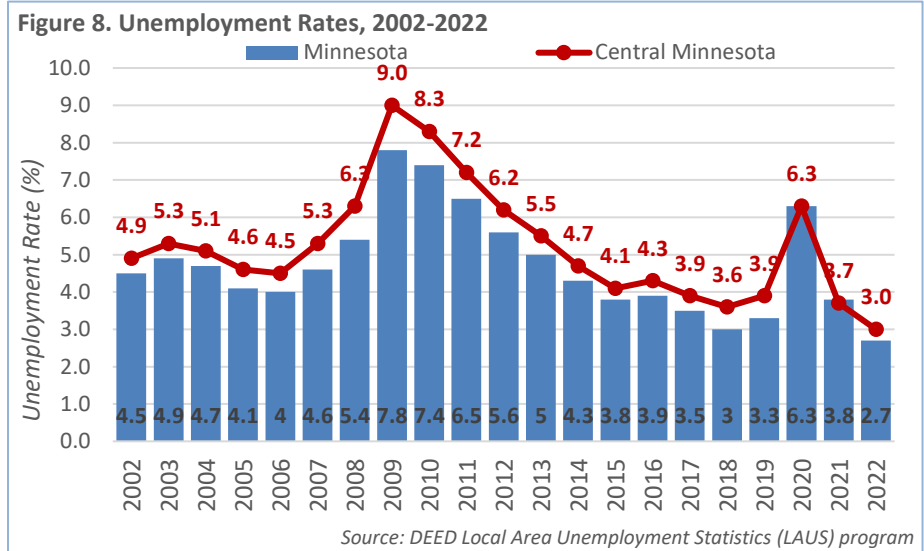
Table 6. Employment Characteristics, 2021

	Central Minnesota			Minnesota	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	392,750	69.6%	3.7%	69.2%	4.0%
16 to 19 years	23,275	57.5%	8.4%	52.3%	10.7%
20 to 24 years	39,277	85.4%	6.0%	83.3%	6.7%
25 to 44 years	158,366	87.9%	3.4%	88.8%	3.6%
45 to 54 years	80,661	88.6%	3.0%	87.6%	3.0%
55 to 64 years	71,069	73.6%	2.7%	73.1%	3.2%
65 to 74 years	17,164	26.4%	3.1%	28.0%	3.2%
75 years & over	2,853	6.4%	1.1%	6.6%	2.9%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	359,529	69.6%	3.3%	68.5%	3.4%
Black or African American	11,000	70.5%	11.7%	71.9%	8.6%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1,498	50.7%	15.1%	57.4%	12.9%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	5,742	76.0%	7.2%	72.7%	4.1%
Some Other Race	5,864	74.2%	4.5%	75.8%	6.2%
Two or More Races	9,103	68.9%	4.7%	74.1%	7.3%
Hispanic or Latino	13,611	73.6%	6.3%	77.0%	6.6%
Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status					
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	14,796	78.1%	3.1%	80.6%	3.9%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	20,655	53.8%	8.9%	53.6%	9.9%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population, 25 to 64 years	310,031	84.3%	3.1%	84.4%	3.4%
Less than H.S. Diploma	15,461	68.5%	3.9%	66.6%	4.6%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	79,193	78.5%	2.0%	77.3%	2.5%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	128,094	86.7%	3.0%	85.1%	3.6%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	87,319	90.4%	1.6%	90.3%	2.1%

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

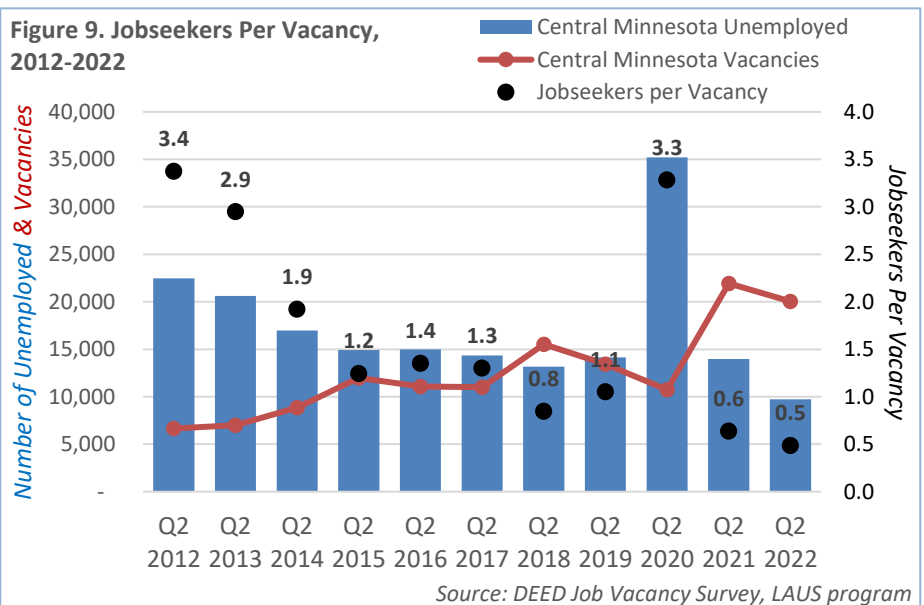
Central Minnesota has consistently reported slightly higher unemployment rates than Minnesota, regardless of the state of the economy. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region’s unemployment rate hovered at least a half percent above the state rate from 2005 to 2008, before rising as high as 9.0% in 2009, then dropping back to prerecession levels in 2014. The short pandemic recession pushed rates above 6% for a brief moment, then dropped back to 3% in 2022, a historically low level (Figure 8).



JOBSEEKERS PER VACANCY

As the number of available workers has declined, the region’s labor market has tightened. One clear demonstration of this is the ratio of unemployed jobseekers per vacancy, which dipped to 0.5-to-1 in 2022.

According to 2022 Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 20,029 openings reported by employers, compared to 9,747 unemployed jobseekers in the region. The ratio climbed as high as 11.2-to-1 during the Great Recession in 2009, but has dropped steadily since then, except for the uptick in 2020 (Figure 9).



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

According to commuting data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Central Minnesota has the most mobile workers in the state. Just over 42% of the region’s working residents drive outside the region for work, primarily to the Twin Cities metro area.

Central Minnesota is a net exporter of labor, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 204,395 workers both lived and worked in Central Minnesota in 2020, while 152,736 workers who lived in the region drove to surrounding counties for work (Table 7 and Figure 10).

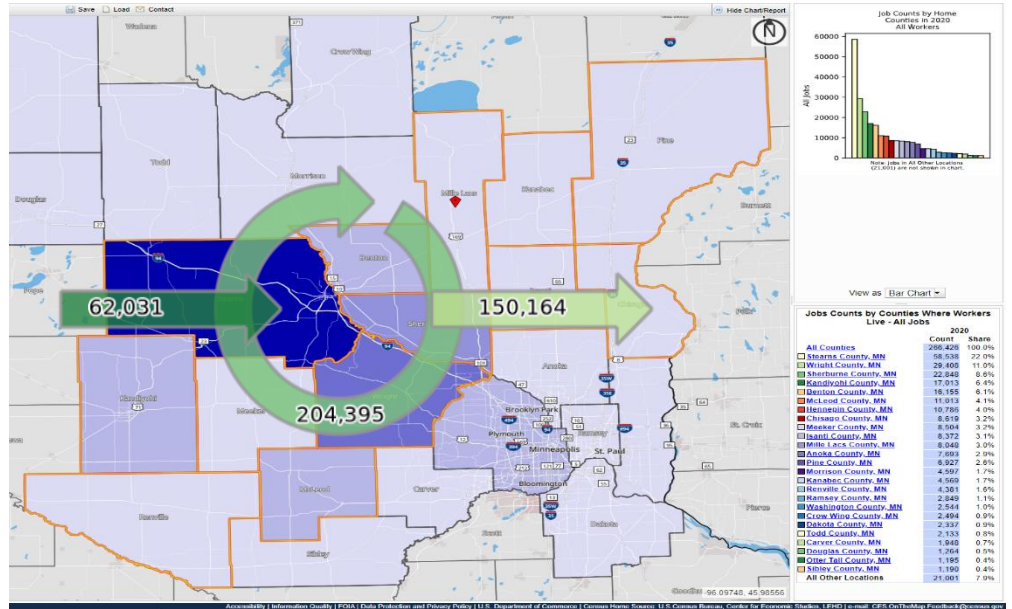
	2020	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	266,426	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	62,031	23.3%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	204,395	76.7%
Living in the Selection Area	354,559	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	150,164	42.4%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	204,395	57.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Stearns County is the largest employment center in the region, however, employers in Hennepin County draw in more workers than any other county in the region, and other counties in the Twin Cities metro area are also a major draw for workers.

Other counties drawing large amounts of workers include Wright, Sherburne, and Anoka County. Hennepin, Anoka, and Ramsey Counties attract 29.7% of workers in the Central Minnesota region (Figure 10).

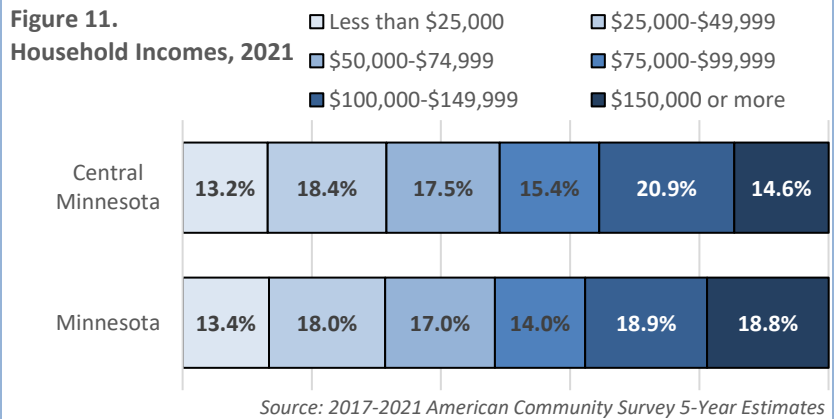
Figure 10. Central Minnesota Labor and Commute Shed, 2020



INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

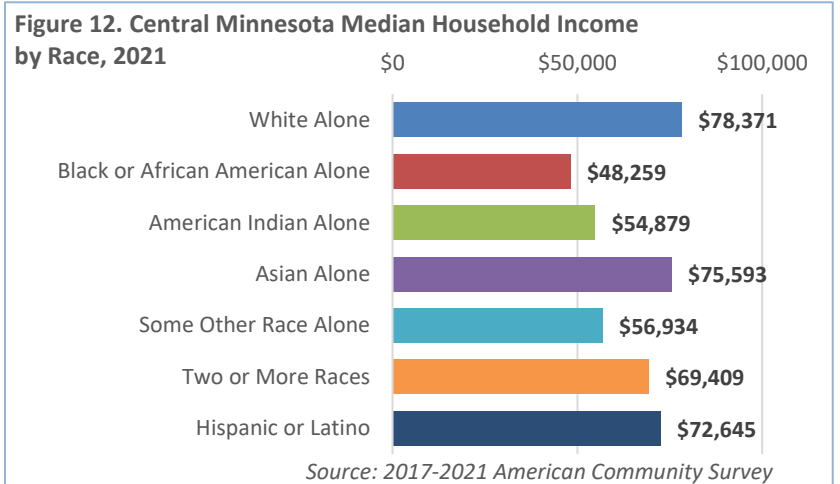
HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes in Central Minnesota were slightly lower than the rest of the state. The median household income was \$77,204 in 2021, compared to \$77,706 in Minnesota. About one-third of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2021, similar to the state. Another 33% earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 14.6% earned over \$150,000 per year (Figure 11). The family median income was \$92,074 compared to \$123,870 for Minnesota.



Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. About 92% of households reporting incomes in 2021 were white alone, and whites also had the highest median income level. Though a much smaller percentage of the total population, Black or African American households reported the lowest incomes in Central Minnesota, with a median of \$48,259, which is roughly 62% of the overall median household income (Figure 12).

Median household incomes were also about \$20,000 lower for American Indian and people of some other race than the overall median, while households of Asians, two or more races, and Hispanic or Latinos had incomes that were more similar to whites.



COST OF LIVING

According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) is \$60,720 in 2022. The cost of living for a similar family in Central Minnesota was \$57,504 – which was the second highest in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area. Because a disproportionate share of workers commute long distances in Central Minnesota, the region has the highest transportation costs in the state, and the second highest housing costs.

The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing, but child care costs are substantially higher than other geographies as well. In order to meet the basic needs cost of living for the region, the two workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$18.43 per hour working a combined 60 hours per week (Table 8).

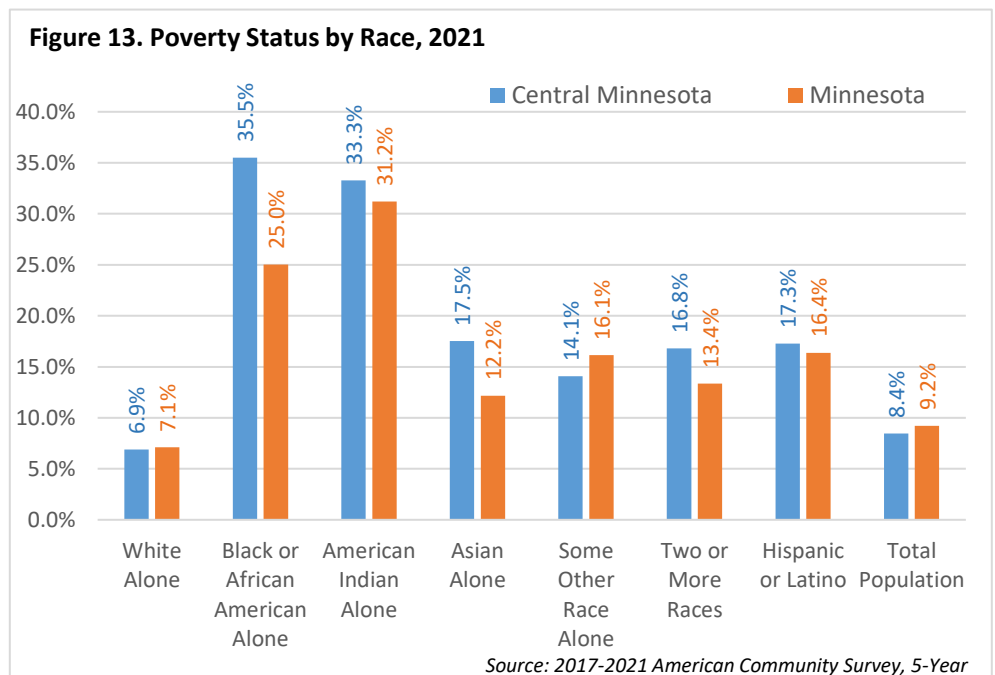
Table 8. Central Minnesota Cost of Living, 2022

Family Composition	Number of Workers	Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
				Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Central Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$35,244	\$16.94	\$0	\$394	\$161	\$909	\$845	\$315	\$313
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$53,832	\$25.88	\$772	\$582	\$410	\$1,143	\$851	\$417	\$311
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$57,504	\$18.43	\$386	\$900	\$551	\$1,143	\$993	\$495	\$324
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$80,352	\$19.32	\$1,152	\$1,174	\$562	\$1,580	\$1,050	\$667	\$511
State of Minnesota										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$34,992	\$16.82	\$0	\$403	\$159	\$961	\$760	\$330	\$303
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$60,720	\$19.46	\$574	\$921	\$555	\$1,216	\$886	\$517	\$391

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

DEED’s Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in Central Minnesota would be \$35,244, which would require an hourly wage of \$16.94 to meet the basic needs standard of living. A single parent in the region requires a substantially higher wage with no other earners in the household, in 2022 that family needed an hourly wage approaching \$26 per hour in order to meet basic needs.

Overall, Central Minnesota’s poverty rate was 8.4%, which was below the statewide rate of 9.2%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that over 35% of the region’s Black or African American population was below the poverty level in 2021, compared to just 8.4% for the broad population. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 30% for American Indians while people of some other race, Hispanic or Latino origin, Asians, and some other race had poverty rates near 15% (Figure 13).



WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Central Minnesota was \$22.71 in the first quarter of 2023, which was the 3rd highest wage level of the six planning regions in the state. Central Minnesota's median wage was \$1.54 below the state's median hourly wage, equaling roughly 94% of the statewide wage rate, and \$2.96 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to \$6,157 less per year for a full-time worker. The highest median wage in Central Minnesota for all occupations was found in EDR 7W (Table 9).

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
Central Minnesota	\$22.71	270,260
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$21.20	49,510
EDR 7E - East Central	\$22.48	48,210
EDR 7W - Central	\$23.10	172,540
Twin Cities Metro Area	\$25.67	1,718,290
Northeast Minnesota	\$22.57	136,490
Northwest Minnesota	\$21.67	215,980
Southeast Minnesota	\$23.44	236,590
Southwest Minnesota	\$22.00	167,580
State of Minnesota	\$24.25	2,827,310

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#)

Based on location quotient, Central Minnesota stands out for having higher concentrations of Production, Education, Training & Library, Farming, Construction & Extraction, Installation & Maintenance, and Transportation & Material Moving workers than the state. The largest occupations in the region include Office & Administrative Support, Production, Transportation & Material Moving, and Sales & Related positions (Table 10).

Occupational Group	Central Minnesota				State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Statewide Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$22.71	270,260	100.0%	1.0	\$24.25	2,827,310	100.0%
Management	\$46.42	14,420	5.3%	0.8	\$51.58	193,760	6.9%
Business & Financial Operations	\$33.23	10,580	3.9%	0.5	\$38.19	201,940	7.1%
Computer & Mathematical	\$38.38	3,020	1.1%	0.3	\$49.73	99,250	3.5%
Architecture & Engineering	\$38.76	3,580	1.3%	0.7	\$40.60	53,100	1.9%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$33.45	1,710	0.6%	0.6	\$39.37	29,070	1.0%
Community & Social Service	\$27.97	5,290	2.0%	1.0	\$25.82	54,820	1.9%
Legal	\$35.94	950	0.4%	0.5	\$47.87	18,730	0.7%
Education, Training & Library	\$24.68	17,840	6.6%	1.2	\$24.82	158,830	5.6%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$24.96	2,360	0.9%	0.7	\$28.80	37,630	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$40.24	17,010	6.3%	1.0	\$41.07	186,700	6.6%
Healthcare Support	\$17.52	16,030	5.9%	1.0	\$17.40	162,400	5.7%
Protective Service	\$28.30	4,290	1.6%	1.1	\$25.83	40,620	1.4%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$14.72	23,430	8.7%	1.1	\$14.89	216,970	7.7%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$17.93	8,070	3.0%	1.1	\$18.26	76,210	2.7%
Personal Care & Service	\$16.35	5,250	1.9%	0.9	\$16.96	58,120	2.1%
Sales & Related	\$17.11	25,020	9.3%	1.1	\$18.14	239,500	8.5%
Office & Administrative Support	\$21.92	30,320	11.2%	0.9	\$23.06	345,830	12.2%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$19.23	770	0.3%	2.0	\$19.84	4,060	0.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$29.96	16,010	5.9%	1.5	\$31.00	113,930	4.0%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$26.16	11,220	4.2%	1.2	\$27.95	98,670	3.5%
Production	\$21.98	28,020	10.4%	1.4	\$22.07	209,380	7.4%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$19.75	25,060	9.3%	1.2	\$21.05	227,780	8.1%

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, Qtr. 1 2023](#)

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in Food Prep & Serving, Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance, Sales & Related, Personal Care & Service, and Healthcare Support, which tend to have lower experience and educational requirements.

In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in Management, Legal, Architecture & Engineering, Computer & Mathematical, Healthcare Practitioners, Business & Financial Operations, and Life, Physical, & Social Science occupations, which all need higher levels of education and experience, including many that require postsecondary training. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations.

JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Central Minnesota reported 20,029 job vacancies in 2022, which was similar to 2021 and continues to be well above the historical range. The median hourly wage offer was \$18.05 across all occupations but ranged from a low of \$13.43 per hour for Food Prep and Serving workers, to roughly \$40 per hour for Management occupations. Reflecting changing demand for occupations and for the workers to fill the openings, nominal wage offers increased by over 18% but record high inflation limited real wage growth for offers to just 94 cents, a 10% increase. Typically, such a tight labor market would provide substantial real wage growth as employees gain leverage to negotiate higher wages, but through 2022, employers have been challenged to keep up with inflation.

The largest number of vacancies were in Food Prep & Serving Related occupations, followed by Sales & Related, and Transportation. Over a third of the vacancies in the region were in these three occupational groups. Overall, 39% of the openings were part-time, only 23% required any postsecondary education, and 40% required a year or more of experience (Table 11). In sum, educational requirements in the region have been declining over the past 5 years, while previous work experience requirements were rising, largely the result of an expanding economy and tightening labor market.

Table 11. Job Vacancy Survey Results, 2022

Central Minnesota	Number of Total Vacancies	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Percent Part-Time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Percent Requiring Postsecondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Percent Requiring Certificate or License	Job Vacancy Rate
Total, All Occupations	20,029	\$18.05	39%	19%	23%	40%	38%	7.5%
Management	320	\$39.17	12%	1%	66%	94%	39%	2.3%
Business & Financial Operations	202	\$27.62	9%	0%	78%	96%	27%	2.0%
Computer & Mathematical	171	\$23.54	4%	0%	96%	87%	71%	5.9%
Architecture & Engineering	158	\$24.47	2%	0%	87%	94%	62%	4.6%
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	621	\$18.79	84%	85%	8%	12%	8%	39.8%
Community & Social Service	254	\$23.73	49%	10%	67%	61%	84%	4.9%
Legal	37	\$29.33	0%	5%	98%	98%	90%	3.7%
Education, Training & Library	1,003	\$22.10	52%	42%	81%	82%	76%	6.0%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	218	\$15.89	75%	16%	28%	58%	32%	9.7%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	1,788	\$32.69	35%	14%	91%	49%	89%	10.5%
Healthcare Support	1,330	\$15.48	56%	4%	20%	10%	61%	7.9%
Protective Service	133	\$17.93	59%	20%	26%	45%	85%	3.1%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	2,629	\$13.43	72%	6%	0%	21%	7%	11.6%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	669	\$15.07	61%	22%	0%	30%	18%	8.5%
Personal Care & Service	650	\$14.19	59%	11%	25%	16%	30%	11.9%
Sales & Related	2,437	\$15.93	35%	2%	1%	25%	5%	9.5%
Office & Administrative Support	1,264	\$15.74	48%	2%	10%	29%	5%	4.3%
Construction & Extraction	1,479	\$24.86	1%	37%	6%	73%	69%	9.7%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	620	\$22.53	11%	1%	27%	57%	60%	5.8%
Production	1,690	\$17.91	3%	2%	6%	25%	4%	6.4%
Transportation & Material Moving	1,845	\$20.33	37%	50%	4%	46%	79%	7.6%

Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey, 2022

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

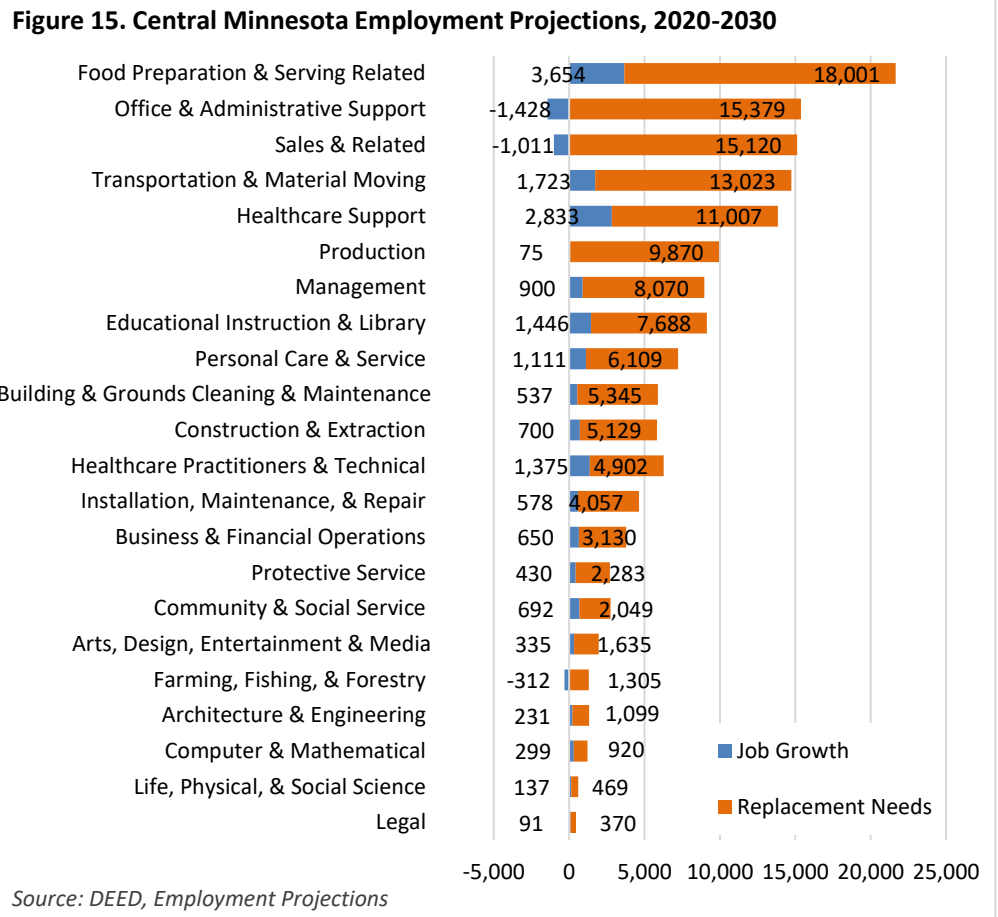
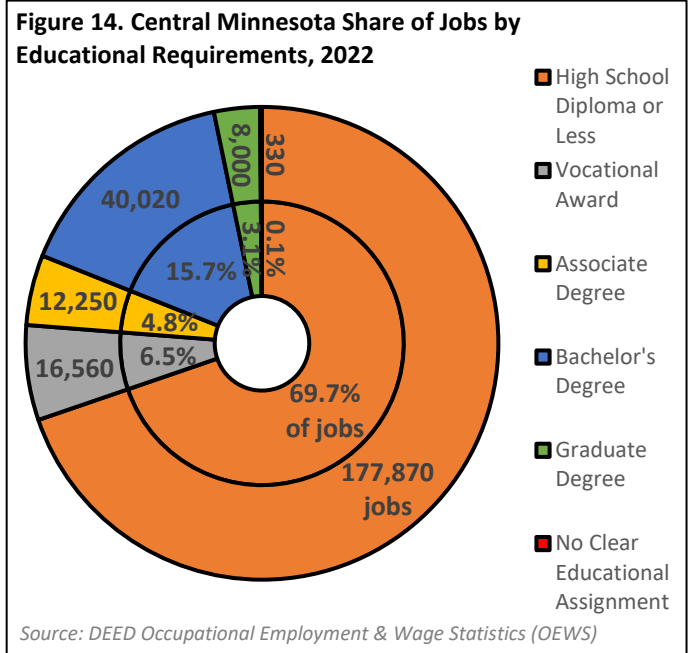
Similar to Job Vacancy Survey results, data from DEED’s Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics program shows that only about 30% of jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other 70% can be started with a high school diploma or less and possibly some amount of on-the-job training (Figure 14).

Certain careers – such as Dentists, Lawyers, and Teachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including Cost Estimators, Sales Representatives, and Correctional Officers – do not. College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to licensed fields that would otherwise be closed, such as Nursing or Engineering. Many of these occupations offer high wages and are in high demand in the marketplace. While education is typically a worthwhile investment, college can be expensive – with average annual expenses ranging between \$19,000 and over \$52,000 per year in Minnesota. For those who go to college, choice of major matters – different programs lead to jobs that earn different amounts of money.

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Overall, the 13-county Central Minnesota planning area is projected to grow 5% from 2020 to 2030, which would be a gain of 15,046 new jobs. The revised slower growth makes the region the second slowest growing region out of the 6 planning areas.

In addition, the region is also expected to need 136,960 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. Healthcare Support, Food Prep & Serving, Community & Social Service, and Personal Care & Service occupations are expected to see the most new growth, but every occupational group will show some future demand either through new jobs or replacement openings (Figure 15).



OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are roughly 300 occupations showing relatively high demand in the region, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to postsecondary education to advanced degrees. These occupations are spread across different sectors but are also concentrated in the region's major industries. For example, Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Aides, Home Health Aides, Licensed Practical and Registered Nurses, Electricians, Industrial Engineers, Machinists, Truck Drivers, and Teachers are all in high demand (Table 12).

High School or Less	Vocational Training	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Fast Food Workers (\$30,214)	Nursing Assistants (\$39,353)	Registered Nurses (\$86,694)	Elementary School Teachers (\$64,300)
Home Health & Personal Care Aides (\$32,476)	Agricultural Technicians (\$50,734)	Police and Sheriff Officers (\$74,178)	Secondary School Teachers (\$64,602)
Retail Salespersons (\$31,947)	LPN (\$52,954)	Clinical Lab Technologists & Technicians (\$62,998)	General & Operations Managers (\$79,121)
Cashiers (\$29,935)	Automotive Service Technicians (\$50,038)	Dental Hygienists (\$84,542)	Accountants & Auditors (\$69,793)
First Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers (\$45,819)	Machinists (\$57,338)	Radiologic Techs/Technologists (\$76,318)	Financial Managers (\$120,404)
Laborers and Freight, Stock Movers (\$39,815)	Medical Assistants (\$46,901)	Architectural and Civil Drafters (\$60,894)	Medical and Health Services Managers (\$100,201)
Janitors and Cleaners (\$36,758)	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists (\$35,910)	Computer Network Support Specialists (\$75,592)	Substance Abuse, Behavioral & Mental Health Counselors (\$51,463)
First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep and Serving Workers (\$39,562)	Electricians (\$63,794)	Surgical Technologists (\$64,849)	Middle School Teachers (\$65,007)
CDL Truck Drivers (\$57,479)	HVAC Mechanics (\$64,161)	Computer Network Support Specialists (\$72,592)	Substitute Teachers (\$43,575)
Teaching Assistants (\$38,154)	Industrial Machinery Mechanics (\$63,521)	Paralegals and Legal Assistants (\$53,999)	Preschool Teachers (\$36,959)

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

ECONOMY

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

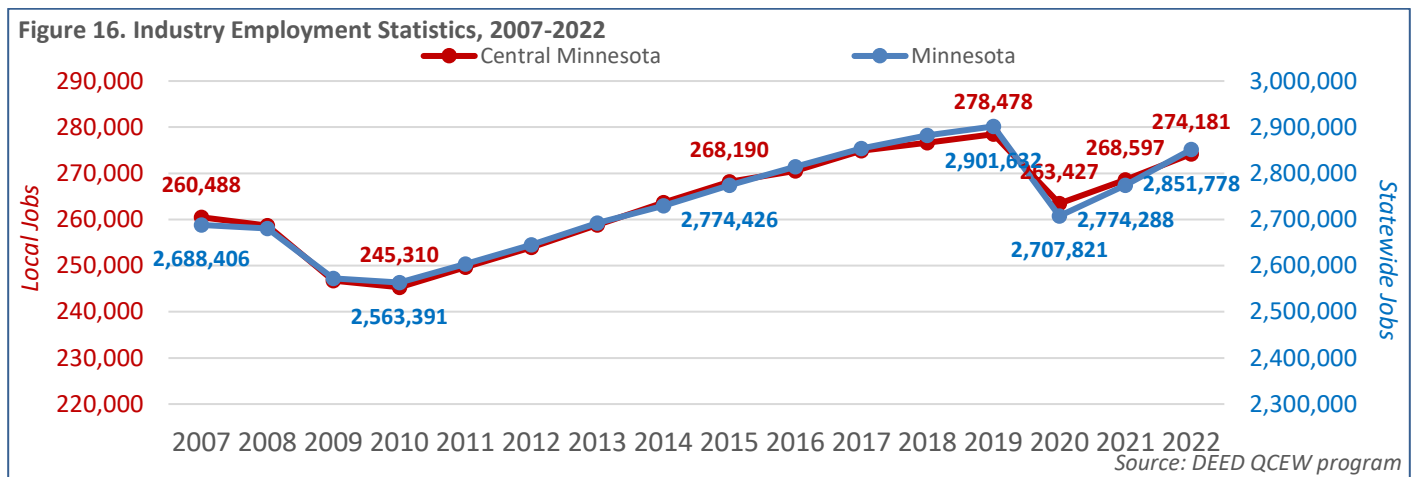
According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Central Minnesota was home to 19,538 business establishments providing an average of 274,181 covered jobs through 2022, with a total payroll of over \$14.6 billion. That was 9.6% of total employment and 7.4% of total payroll in the state of Minnesota. Average annual wages were \$53,301 in the region, which was about \$16,000 lower than the state's average annual wage. Central Minnesota had led Greater Minnesota in job growth during the recovery since the recession, but in the past year has seen slower than average growth (Table 13).

Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Average Annual Wage	2021-2022		2019-2022	
					Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Central Minnesota	19,538	274,181	\$14,614,124,990	\$53,301	+5,584	+2.1%	-4,297	-1.5%
Region 6E	3,685	51,345	\$2,591,376,943	\$50,470	+689	+1.4%	-2,001	-3.8%
Region 7E	4,077	48,016	\$2,287,981,648	\$47,650	+734	+1.6%	-747	-1.5%
Region 7W	11,777	174,819	\$9,734,766,399	\$55,685	+4,160	+2.4%	-1,550	-0.9%
Minnesota	199,603	2,851,778	\$198,839,398,672	\$69,725	+77,490	+2.8%	-49,854	-1.7%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)

With 174,819 jobs at 11,777 establishments, EDR 7W accounts for about two-thirds of total employment in the Central region. EDR 7W also accounted for 58% of the region’s job decline during the pandemic recession in 2020, losing 5,730 jobs, a 3.2% decrease. In contrast, EDR 7E had the fewest jobs and smallest percent decline, with 48,016 jobs at 4,077 establishments. EDR 6E had 3,685 establishments providing 51,345 jobs, after losing 2,000 jobs from 2019 to 2022, a 3.8% decrease, the largest job loss rate in the region.

Like other areas of the state, Central Minnesota still had not recovered jobs lost during the two-month pandemic recession by the end of 2022. With roughly 4,300 fewer jobs than it had in 2019, the region’s employment was cut back to 2016 levels. Despite fewer workers in the labor force and record low unemployment, employers in Central Minnesota managed to create 5,584 net new jobs in 2022, a 2.1% increase. Central Minnesota reached a prerecession peak of 278,478 jobs in 2019, then hit a low of 263,427 jobs in 2020 (Figure 16).



With 47,389 jobs at 2,480 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in Central Minnesota, accounting for 17.3% of total jobs in the region. However, Central Minnesota lost 3.6% of its Health Care & Social Assistance jobs, losing 1,776 jobs from 2019 to 2022. At \$55,302 in 2022, average annual wages were about the same in Health Care as in the total of all industries.

The next largest industry in Central was Manufacturing, with 41,384 jobs at 1,201 firms, after losing 594 jobs from 2019 to 2022. Central Minnesota has large concentrations of Food Manufacturing and Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, as well as significant amounts of Machinery and Transportation Equipment Manufacturing. Retail Trade is the third largest industry, with 35,875 jobs at 2,155 establishments, and the related Accommodation and Food Services industry also provides 22,976 jobs in the region. The Accommodation & Food Services sector suffered greatly from the pandemic and pandemic-related policies, still down 1,014 jobs from 2019 to 2022, a loss of 4.2% from 2019 employment levels. Those losses are substantially muted from job gains in 2021 and 2022 when employers added back thousands of jobs that were lost in 2020.

Nearly every sector lost jobs during the pandemic recession and only six (Agriculture, Mining, Construction, Wholesale trade, Finance & Insurance, and Administrative Support & Waste Management) of the 20 main industry sectors have since recovered and had more jobs in 2022 compared to 2019. Construction had been a bright spot leading into the pandemic recession and remained steadfast in employment gains during the tumultuous past few years, adding more jobs than any sector and growing payroll employment by 6%. The Construction industry is the 6th largest industry in the region and provides roughly half as many jobs as Manufacturing (the second largest sector). The Real Estate, Rental and Leasing industry has suffered the largest job loss rate, at -8.6%, the sector had 163 fewer jobs in 2022 than in 2019. Meanwhile the healthcare and Social Assistance sector has the largest job deficit from 2019- to- 2022 with 1,776 fewer jobs. The substantial losses recorded in the Management of Companies and Enterprises is largely due to a change in a business classification (Table 14).

Table 14. Central Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, 2022

NAICS Industry Title	2022 Annual Data				2021-2022		2019-2022	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)	Avg. Annual Wage	Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	19,538	274,181	\$14,614,125	\$53,301	+5,584	+2.1%	-4,297	-1.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunting	509	5,067	\$233,704	\$46,123	+121	+2.4%	+269	+5.6%
Mining	27	342	\$23,725	\$69,371	-49	-12.5%	+5	+1.5%
Construction	2,958	20,767	\$1,575,535	\$75,867	+812	+4.1%	+1,931	+10.3%
Manufacturing	1,201	41,384	\$2,644,945	\$63,912	+1,380	+3.4%	-594	-1.4%
Utilities	65	2,146	\$255,805	\$119,201	+18	+0.8%	-84	-3.8%
Wholesale Trade	690	10,290	\$722,343	\$70,199	+715	+7.5%	+589	+6.1%
Retail Trade	2,155	35,875	\$1,248,693	\$34,807	+132	+0.4%	-697	-1.9%
Transportation & Warehousing	874	9,801	\$565,167	\$57,664	+154	+1.6%	-180	-1.8%
Information	258	2,993	\$179,852	\$60,091	+54	+1.8%	-127	-4.1%
Finance & Insurance	879	7,254	\$573,672	\$79,084	-383	-5.0%	+124	+1.7%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	579	1,733	\$64,983	\$37,498	+44	+2.6%	-163	-8.6%
Professional & Technical Services	1,193	6,423	\$488,679	\$76,083	-36	-0.6%	-96	-1.5%
Management of Companies	83	1,905	\$178,164	\$93,525	+45	+2.4%	-1,097	-36.5%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	862	9,694	\$428,961	\$44,250	+44	+0.5%	+78	+0.8%
Educational Services	386	23,479	\$1,207,497	\$51,429	+667	+2.9%	-730	-3.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	2,480	47,389	\$2,620,698	\$55,302	-524	-1.1%	-1,776	-3.6%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	363	3,098	\$56,675	\$18,294	+228	+7.9%	-195	-5.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	1,302	22,976	\$498,756	\$21,708	+1,394	+6.5%	-1,014	-4.2%
Other Services	2,194	8,375	\$278,595	\$33,265	+508	+6.5%	-365	-4.2%
Public Administration	482	13,187	\$767,675	\$58,215	+257	+2.0%	-175	-1.3%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program

EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

According to DEED's Quarterly Employment Demographics (QED) program, the workforce in the region was aging over the past 10 years. Nearly one-quarter (22.8%) of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 22.1% statewide and 18.1% in the region one decade earlier (Table 15).

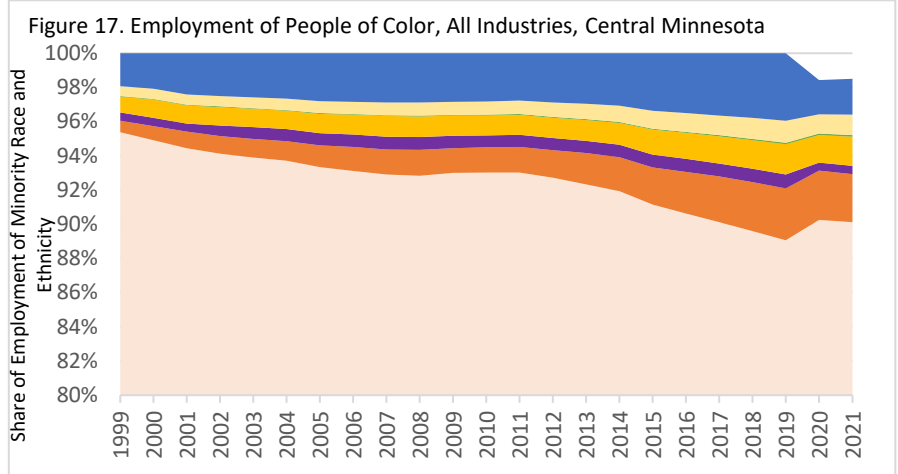
Table 15. Workforce Demographics by Age Group and Gender, Total of All Industries

Central Minnesota	Percentage of Workers		Percent of Workers, Minnesota		Median Hourly Wage		Median Hours Worked Per Qtr.	
	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012
	Total, all ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	\$21.99	\$14.65	402
19 years & under	9.0%	8.6%	6.6%	6.3%	\$14.73	\$7.97	127	124
20 to 24 years	9.9%	12.3%	9.2%	11.3%	\$18.79	\$10.42	304	259
25 to 44 years	40.6%	39.5%	43.6%	42.3%	\$25.03	\$16.66	458	455
45 to 54 years	17.8%	21.4%	18.4%	21.9%	\$26.74	\$18.13	481	480
55 to 64 years	17.0%	14.2%	16.7%	14.7%	\$24.51	\$17.56	472	460
65 years & over	5.8%	3.9%	5.4%	3.5%	\$18.56	\$12.74	230	206
Male	49.1%	47.5%	49.1%	49.1%	\$24.76	\$16.47	474	470
Female	50.9%	52.5%	50.9%	50.9%	\$20.72	\$13.46	349	347

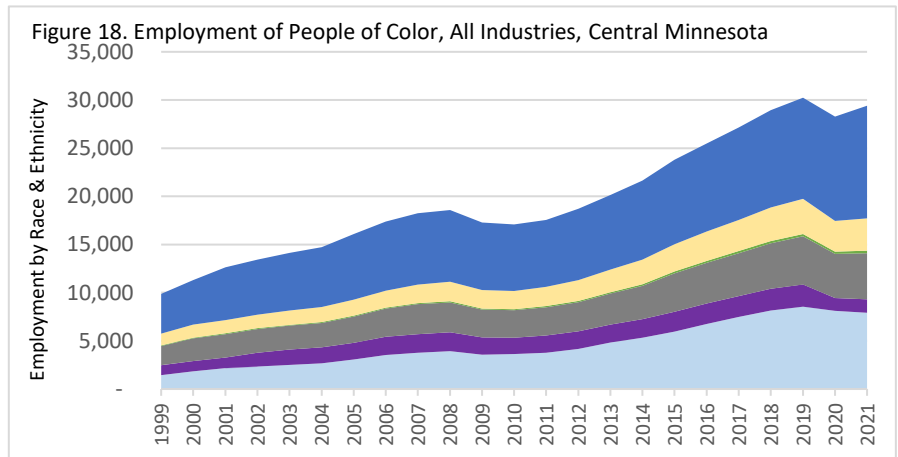
Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics

As noted above, wages were climbing across the board for all workers due to rising demand and a tight labor market, despite the short recession in 2020. While wages were still lowest for the youngest and oldest workers who tend to fill lower-skilled, less-than-full-time jobs in industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services, these two age groups enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2012 to 2022. Wages were highest for workers between 25 and 54 years of age, and males worked substantially more hours than females. Interestingly, from 2012 to 2022 jobs held by workers 45 to 54 years saw the largest decline in the share of jobs they hold, dropping from 21.4% in 2012 to 17.8% in 2022.

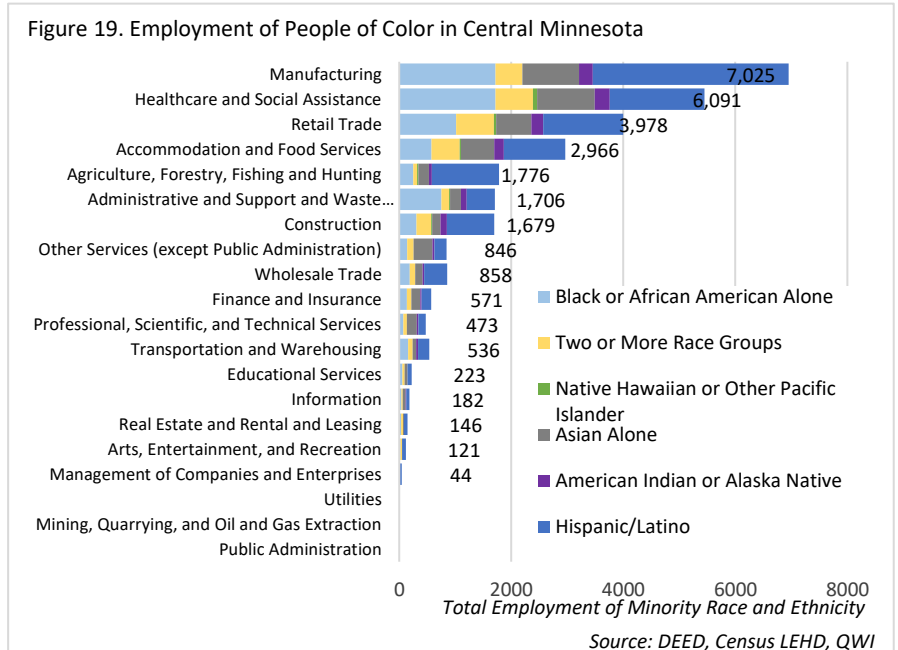
People of color account for 7.7% of the total labor force in Central Minnesota and hold a slightly higher share of jobs, compared to the state overall where they amount to 16.2% of the labor force but hold 15.7% of jobs. According to data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators program, people of color held 29,422 jobs in Central Minnesota, compared to 215,563 jobs held by white workers. The number of jobs has nearly tripled since 2000 when People of color held 5% of jobs (Figure 17).



People of color held an additional 18,114 jobs since 2000 compared to 4,265 by White workers. Hispanic/Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic minority groups with 11,698 jobs in 2021, a third of all minority held jobs. The next largest number of jobs held by a minority group was Black or African American, holding 7,928 jobs in 2020. The number of jobs held by this race has increased by 6,103 since 2000, amounting to a 334% increase (Figure 18).



The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting sector and Administrative Support & Waste Management sector have the highest share of non-White employment at 27% and 18%, respectively. Accommodation & Food Services and Manufacturing also have 15% of jobs held by non-White workers. The largest numbers of non-White workers are employed in Manufacturing (7,025 jobs) and Health Care & Social Assistance (6,091 jobs). The least diverse industries include Utilities and Mining (Figure 19).



INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted earlier, Central Minnesota is projected to grow 5% from 2020 to 2030, a gain of 15,046 new jobs, which would make it the second slowest growing region in the state. The largest growing industry is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance, which may account for one-third (36.8%) of total projected growth in the region by 2030.

The fastest growth in the region is expected to be in the Accommodation and Food Services industry as employers try to recover from the aftermath of the pandemic, yet due to the substantial number of jobs that were lost in 2020 the sector is still not projected to be recovered to 2019 employment levels by 2030 (Table 16).

Industry	Estimated Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Percent Change 2020-2030	Numeric Change 2020-2030
Total, All Industries	301,170	316,216	+5.0%	+15,046
Health Care & Social Assistance	46,672	52,213	+11.9%	+5,541
Manufacturing	39,543	40,646	+2.8%	+1,103
Retail Trade	35,588	33,781	-5.1%	-1,807
Educational Services	23,734	24,976	+5.2%	+1,242
Accommodation & Food Svcs	19,327	23,505	+21.6%	+4,178
Public Administration	19,239	20,198	+5.0%	+959
Construction	18,984	19,792	+4.3%	+808
Wholesale Trade	10,123	10,516	+3.9%	+393
Other Services	10,108	11,290	+11.7%	+1,182
Transportation & Warehousing	10,098	10,685	+5.8%	+587
Administrative & Waste Services	9,545	10,066	+5.5%	+521
Finance and Insurance	7,796	7,912	+1.5%	+116
Professional & Technical Services	6,685	7,228	+8.1%	+543
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	5,052	4,493	-11.1%	-559
Information	2,639	2,842	+7.7%	+203
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2,636	3,456	+31.1%	+820
Utilities	1,952	1,686	-13.6%	-266
Management of Companies	1,877	1,891	+0.7%	+14
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,754	1,737	-1.0%	-17
Mining	364	386	+6.0%	+22

Source: DEED 2020-2030 Employment Outlook

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Central Minnesota was also home to 49,461 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2020, which are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as “businesses without paid employees that are subject to federal income tax, originating from tax return information of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).” Unlike covered employment, Central Minnesota saw only a small increase in nonemployers over the past decade. In sum, the region gained 1,495 nonemployers from 2010 to 2020, a 3.1% increase. However, the only increase occurred in EDR 7W, while both EDR 6E and EDR 7W saw declines. In sum, these nonemployers generated sales receipts of just over \$2.4 billion in 2020 (Table 17).

	2020		2010-2020	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Central Minnesota	49,461	\$2,426,448	+1,495	+3.1%
Region 6E	7,990	\$413,088	-352	-4.2%
Region 7E	10,651	\$493,518	-764	-6.7%
Region 7W	30,820	\$1,519,842	+2,611	+9.3%
Minnesota	409,431	\$20,253,778	+27,672	+7.2%

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Like other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is also a key industry in Central Minnesota, including 13,540 farms producing just under \$3 billion in the market value of products sold in 2017 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Several of the highest ranked agriculture counties in the state are in Central Minnesota, including Stearns (#1), Renville (#3), and Kandiyohi (#8). Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years, but Central Minnesota still accounts for 20% of the farms in the state (Table 18).

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Central Minnesota	13,540	\$2,939,547,000	3
Region 6E	4,154	\$1,484,036,000	5
Region 7E	3,780	\$214,252,000	11
Region 7W	5,606	\$1,241,259,000	7
Minnesota	68,822	\$18,395,390,000	

Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Upon request, this information can be made available in alternate formats for people with disabilities by contacting Luke Greiner at 320-223-6692 or at luke.greiner@state.mn.us