

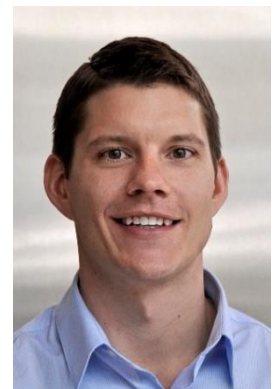
# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 6E: Southwest Central

*Covers counties:*  
Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville

## 2023 REGIONAL PROFILE

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION CHANGE

Economic Development Region 6E – Southwest Central includes a total of 4 counties, located in the Central Minnesota planning region. Region 6E was home to 118,574 people in 2022, comprising 2.1% of the state’s total population. The region saw a 0.6% population increase since 2010, making it the ninth largest of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in total population, and the ninth fastest growing. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 7.8% gain from 2010 to 2022 (Table 1).

	2010 Population	2022 Estimates	2010-2022 Change	
			Number	Percent
<b>Region 6E</b>	<b>117,920</b>	<b>118,574</b>	<b>+654</b>	<b>+0.6%</b>
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%
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>5,303,925</b>	<b>5,717,184</b>	<b>+413,259</b>	<b>+7.8%</b>

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates](#)

Anchored by the regional center of Willmar, Kandiyohi County is the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest county of 87 in the state, with 43,839 people in 2022, and was the fastest growing county in the region and the main contributor to regional growth since 2010. After gaining 63 people this decade, McLeod County had just over 36,600 people, making it the 29<sup>th</sup> largest county. Meeker County is the 43<sup>rd</sup> largest county and saw a gain of 76 people since 2010. Renville was the smallest county in the region and the 57<sup>th</sup> largest in the state, and it lost 1,205 people this decade, making it the fifth fastest declining county in the state.

### COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

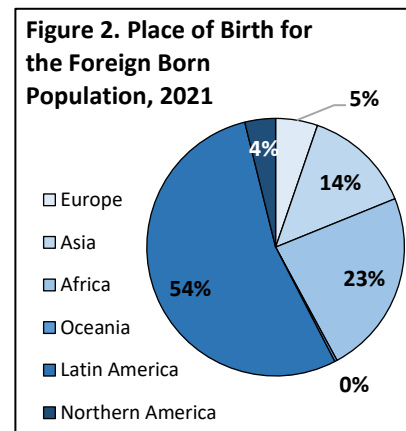
Region 6E experienced a natural increase – more births than deaths – so far this decade, but the region lost population due to out-migration, with 117 more people moving out of the region than moving in. However, the region did benefit from international in-migration of 321 people (Table 2).

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter- national	Domestic
Region 6E	-48	+22	3,002	2,980	-117	+321	-438
Minnesota	+10,680	+26,917	144,350	117,433	-17,365	+20,012	-37,377

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program](#)

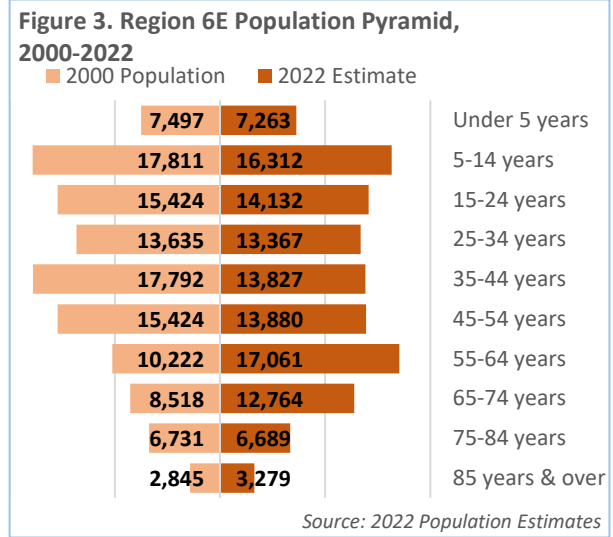
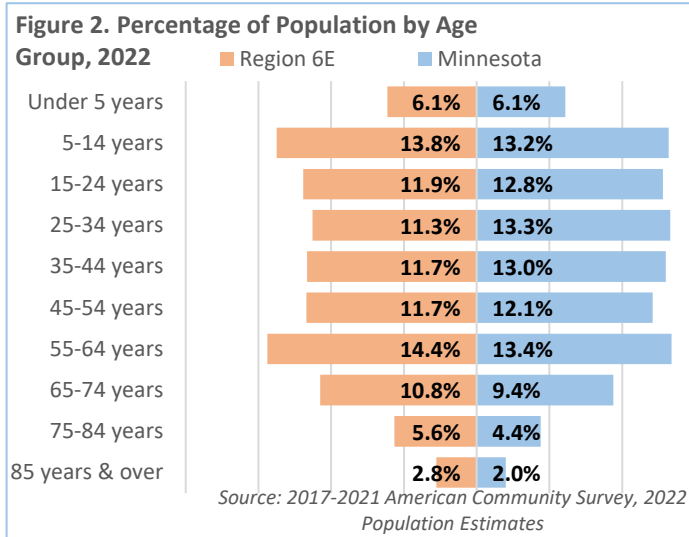
Region 6E is now home to 5,422 foreign born residents, or about 4.6% of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region jumped by 43% since 2010, faster than the statewide growth rate of 30.6%. Over half (3,123 people) of these immigrants were from Latin America, while the second largest number were from Africa, accounting for 23% of the region’s immigrants, and the fastest growth came from Africa, with 730 additional immigrants from 2010 to 2021.

Based on year of entry, Region 6E’s foreign born population was “older” than the rest of the state. About 24% of the region’s immigrants entered the U.S. prior to 1990 and another 29% entered between 2000 and 2009, compared to 20% and 31% statewide, respectively. The remaining 35% of immigrants in the region settled in the region since 2010, compared to 27.6% statewide. Foreign-born residents have a younger age profile than the native-born population, with 58% being between 25 and 54 years of age, compared to 35% of the total population. However, there are some barriers for immigrants, as roughly 40% of foreign-born adults aged 25 years and over have not attained a high school diploma or GED compared to just 8% for the overall population, and 12% had a bachelor’s degree or more compared to 21% for the domestic population.



**POPULATION BY AGE GROUP**

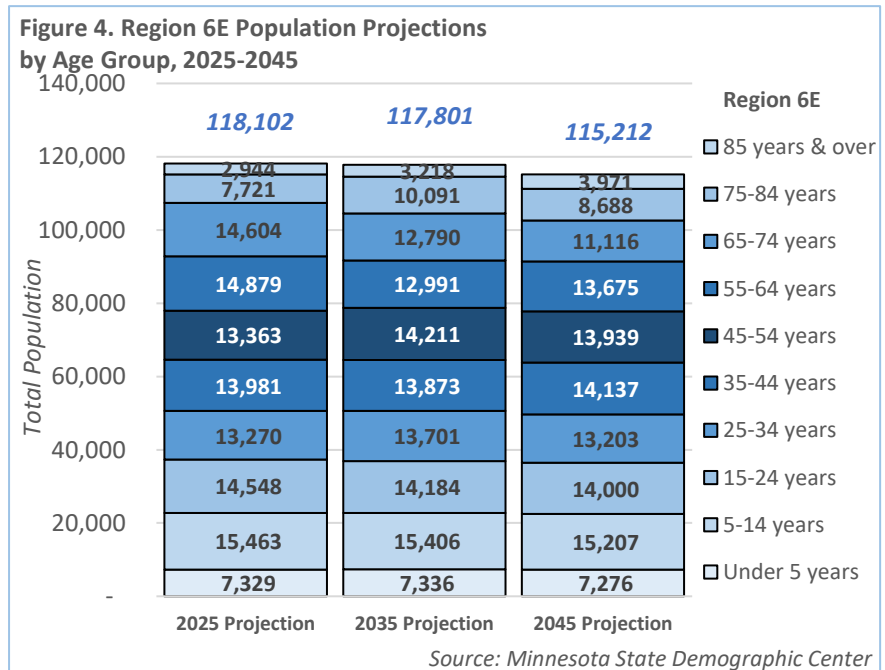
Region 6E has an older population than the state – 19% of the region’s population was 65 years or older, compared to 16% statewide, but 20% of the population was also under 15 years, compared to 19% in the state. In contrast, Region 6E had a smaller percentage of people in the 25-to-54-year age group - typically considered the “prime working years” - than the state. A large portion of the area’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation, which is creating a significant shift in regional demographics over time. Between 2000 and 2022, over 11,400 more residents were in the 55 years or older groups (Figure 2 and Figure 3).



**POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP**

After steady gains the previous five decades (from 1970 to 2020), Region 6E is projected to start losing residents in the next 20 years due to an aging population and low birth rates, and domestic out-migration. According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Region 6E is expected to lose 2,890 residents from 2025 to 2045, a -2.4% decrease (Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 7.4%.

Despite the overall decline, Region 6E is projected to gain more than 2,000 people aged 75 years and over, a 19% increase. The region is expected to see a notable decrease in the 55- to 74-year-old age group as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid. Maintaining the previous two-decade trend, Region 6E is expected to lose school-aged children and young adults from 0 to 25 years of age. This decline in population will pull the overall population down to 115,212 people, similar to the region’s population back in the 1990’s.



**POPULATION BY RACE**

Region 6E’s population is less racially diverse than the state’s, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2021, 90% of the region’s residents reported White alone as their race, compared to 81% of residents statewide. Less than 1% of the region’s residents reported being American Indian or Alaska Natives and Asian or Other Pacific Islanders, while 2.4% reported being Black or African American. However, at 8.8%, Region 6E had a much higher percentage of residents of Hispanic or Latino origin than the state (Table 3).

The region saw a notable decline in the number of white residents, but saw fast increases in every other race group except American Indian. People of Some Other Race rose by 3,059 people and people of Two or More Races and Hispanic or Latino residents grew more than 2,000 people from 2011 to 2021.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2021	Region 6E				Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2011-2021 Numeric   Percent		Percent	Change from 2011-2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>118,202</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>+309</b>	<b>+0.3%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>+7.4%</b>
White	106,146	89.8%	-6,832	-6.0%	80.7%	+0.4%
Black or African American	2,837	2.4%	+1,649	+138.8%	6.6%	+42.2%
American Indian & Alaska Native	460	0.4%	-103	-18.3%	0.9%	-8.0%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	746	0.6%	+141	+23.3%	5.0%	+35.8%
Some Other Race	4,404	3.7%	+3,059	+227.4%	2.1%	+66.5%
Two or More Races	3,609	3.1%	+2,395	+197.3%	4.6%	+121.8%
Hispanic or Latino origin	10,397	8.8%	+2,245	+27.5%	5.6%	+31.6%

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

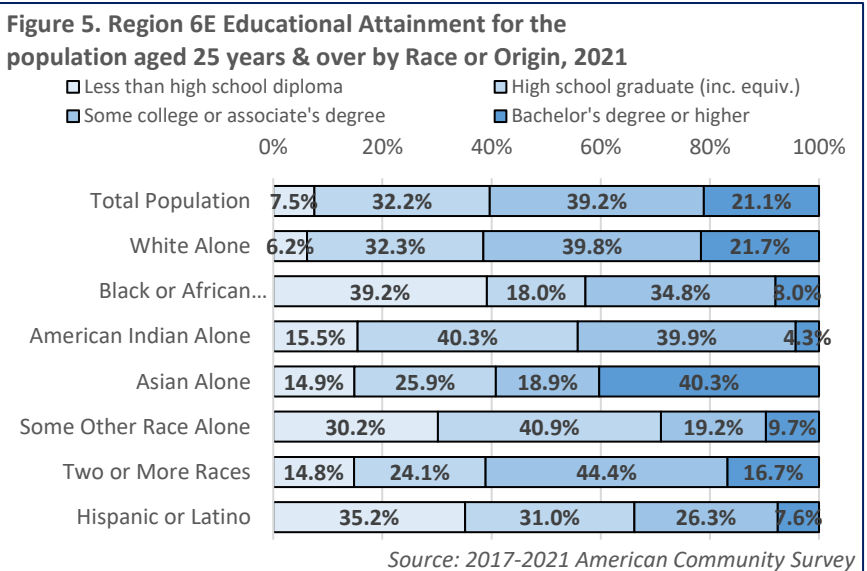
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

With 35% of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Region 6E has lower educational attainment than the state, where 46% of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. However, 15% of adults in Region 6E have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 24% have some college experience but no degree, which also exceeds the state. In contrast, Region 6E has a higher percentage of people with a high school diploma with 33% of adults in the region.

Table 4. Educational Attainment for Pop. Aged 18 years & Over	Region 6E		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
<b>Total, 18 years &amp; over</b>	<b>89,799</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Less than high school	7,667	8.5%	7.1%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	29,661	33.0%	24.5%
Some college, no degree	21,281	23.7%	22.4%
Associate's degree	13,329	14.8%	11.1%
Bachelor's degree	12,669	14.1%	23.3%
Advanced degree	5,192	5.8%	11.6%

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

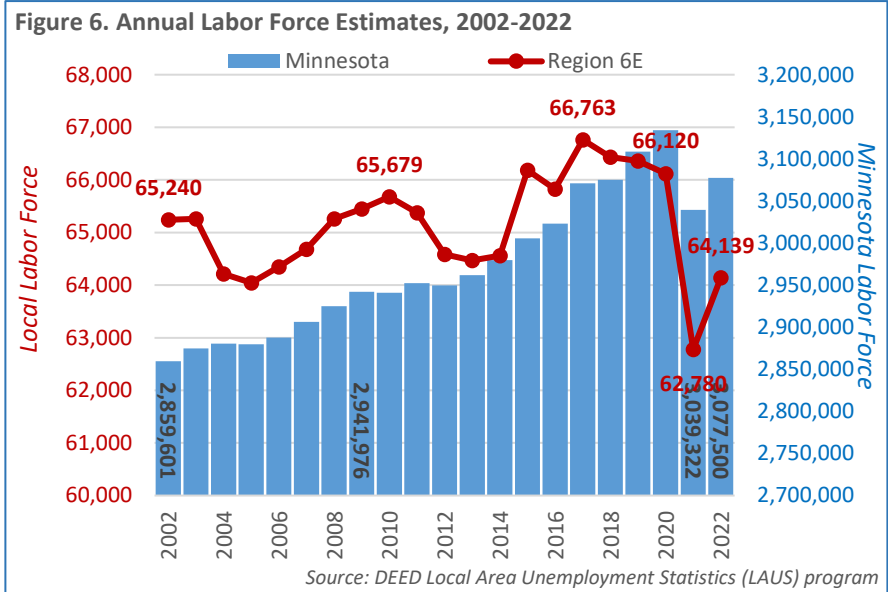
Educational attainment varied significantly by race and ethnicity in Region 6E. About a third of Black or African Americans, people of Some Other Race, and Hispanic or Latino adults had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 6% of white residents. Likewise, a much smaller percentage of people of color have completed a bachelor’s degree, except for Asians, who outpace all races in their attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher, but a much smaller share have some college or an associate degree (Figure 5).



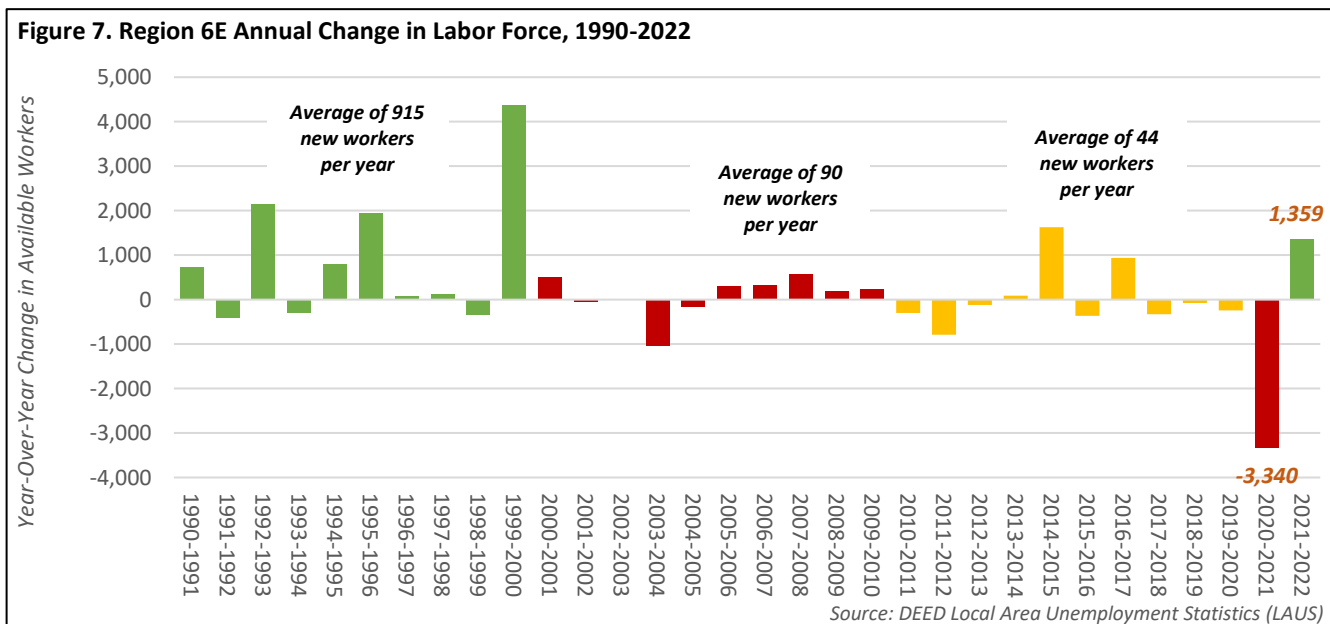
## LABOR FORCE

### LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Region 6E has experienced ups and downs in the size of the available labor force over the last 20 years in response to changing economic conditions. During the recessions in both 2001 and 2007, workers flooded into the labor market to earn extra income. However since the pandemic recession in 2020, the region lost more than 3,500 workers. The recovery of workers over the past 10 years was more than offset by recent losses. Statewide and national trends mirror the region’s decline, and suggest that most of the people leaving the labor force in the past two years are 55 years or older.



Averaging a net gain of 915 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Region 6E were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. Although the regional labor force and economy continued to grow, the rate of labor force growth slowed down considerably, demonstrated by Region 6E adding an average of 44 workers per year from 2010 to 2020 (Figure 7). Increasingly tight labor markets and a growing scarcity of workers is now recognized as one of the most significant barriers to future economic growth in Region 6E. It’s possible that labor force growth will rebound in the next few years, but considering the projected population declines it’s uncertain how long it could take to recover to pre-pandemic labor force levels. The severity of the most recent declines are not likely the start of a long-term trend, but rather a one-time loss in labor force due to a variety of pandemic-related factors.



## LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

In step with the region's projected population decline, applying current labor force participation rates to population projections by age group, as shown in Figure 4, would lead to even larger declines in workforce numbers in Region 6E over the next decade. Region 6E is projected to lose another 906 workers over the next decade, which would lead to on-going tight labor markets for employers to recruit from (Table 5).

	2025 Labor Force Projection	2035 Labor Force Projection	2025-2035 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	3,355	3,184	-170	-5.1%
20 to 24 years	5,936	5,966	+30	+0.5%
25 to 44 years	24,139	24,425	+286	+1.2%
45 to 54 years	11,661	12,401	+740	+6.3%
55 to 64 years	11,045	9,643	-1,401	-12.7%
65 to 74 years	4,520	3,959	-561	-12.4%
75 years & over	692	864	+172	+24.8%
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>61,347</b>	<b>60,441</b>	<b>-906</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>

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

## EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 66.9% of people aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Region 6E had a lower labor force participation rate than the state. Interestingly, the region had higher labor force participation rates than the state in 4 of the 7 age groups, but the overall rate was lower because a higher share of Region 6E's labor force was in the older age groups (Table 6).

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state in all race groups except Black or African Americans; yet the region had lower unemployment rate disparities for all racial groups. In sum, unemployment rates were highest for young people and workers of races other than white, and for workers without a high school diploma. In addition, there were about 3,800 workers with disabilities between 20 and 64 years of age in the regional labor force. Increasing labor force participation rates and lowering unemployment rates for groups that have barriers could help grow the region's labor force.

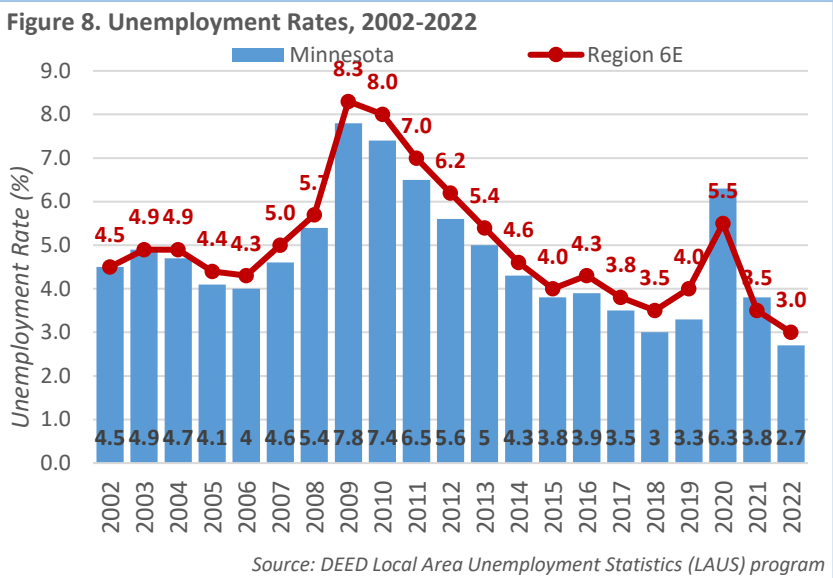
	Region 6E			Minnesota		Percent of Total Labor Force	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Region 6E	Minnesota
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>62,257</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>		
16 to 19 years	3,151	53.5%	5.3%	52.3%	10.7%	5.1%	4.9%
20 to 24 years	5,811	88.4%	4.3%	83.3%	6.7%	9.3%	9.5%
25 to 44 years	24,013	88.6%	3.8%	88.8%	3.6%	38.6%	42.6%
45 to 54 years	12,073	87.3%	2.0%	87.6%	3.0%	19.4%	19.4%
55 to 64 years	12,624	74.2%	1.6%	73.1%	3.2%	20.3%	17.9%
65 to 74 years	3,938	31.0%	4.6%	28.0%	3.2%	6.3%	4.8%
75 years & over	645	6.5%	1.7%	6.6%	2.9%	1.0%	0.8%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Race &amp; Hispanic Origin</b>							
White alone	56,682	66.3%	3.0%	68.5%	3.4%	91.0%	82.6%
Black or African American	1,214	77.7%	6.0%	71.9%	8.6%	1.9%	6.0%
American Indian & Alaska Native	117	38.7%	6.0%	57.4%	12.9%	0.2%	0.7%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	NA	NA	NA	72.7%	4.1%	NA	5.0%
Some Other Race	2,106	73.5%	7.6%	75.8%	6.2%	3.4%	2.1%
Two or More Races	1,621	74.0%	1.6%	74.1%	7.3%	2.6%	3.5%
Hispanic or Latino	4,702	72.4%	9.2%	77.0%	6.6%	7.6%	5.2%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Disability</b>							
With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years	3,808	56.0%	6.1%	53.6%	9.9%	7.0%	5.7%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment</b>							
Population, 25 to 64 years	48,690	84.0%	2.8%	84.4%	3.4%	78.2%	79.9%
Less than H.S. Diploma	2,920	71.9%	3.2%	66.6%	4.6%	6.0%	4.7%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	12,969	80.1%	1.7%	77.3%	2.5%	26.6%	19.4%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	21,304	85.3%	1.9%	85.1%	3.6%	43.8%	33.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	11,509	90.4%	1.7%	90.3%	2.1%	23.6%	42.6%

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



**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**

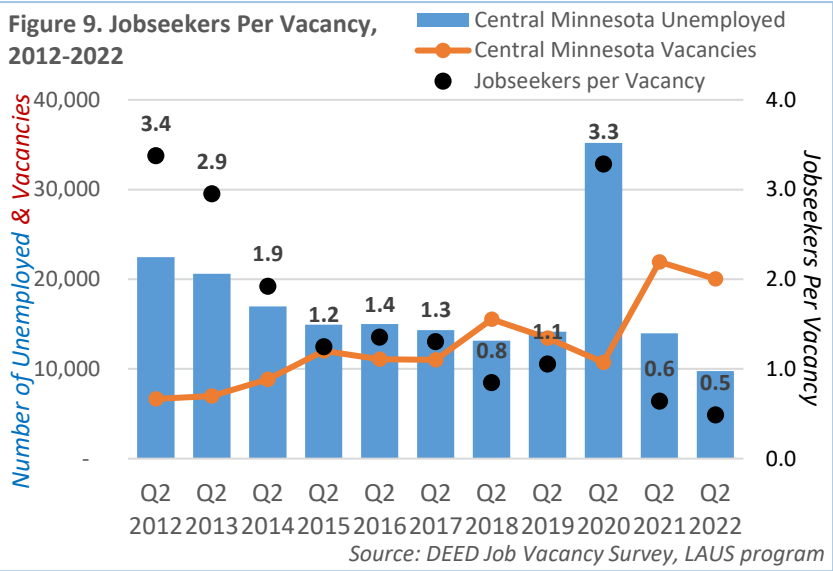
Though slightly higher, Region 6E’s unemployment rate has closely tracked the state rate over time, typically hovering within half a percent of Minnesota’s rate. According to DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region’s unemployment rate rose as high as 8.3% in 2009. Since then, the state and region’s economies have recovered and unemployment rates have generally remained low with the exception of the pandemic recession spike to 5.5% in 2020 (Figure 8).



**JOBSEEKERS PER VACANCY**

As the number of available workers has declined, Central Minnesota’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**

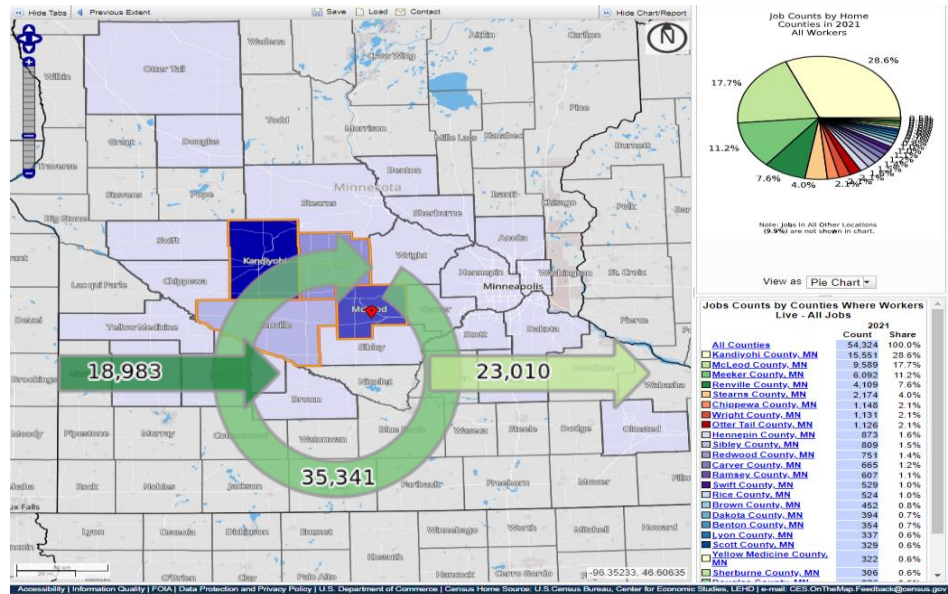
According to commuting data from the [Census Bureau](#), Region 6E is a net labor exporter, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 35,341 workers both lived and worked in Region 6E in 2021, while 18,983 workers drove into the region from surrounding counties for work, compared to 23,010 workers who lived in the region but drove to surrounding counties for work. Bordering both the St. Cloud MSA and Twin Cities MSA, workers in Region 6E can access two much larger labor markets (Table 7 and Figure 10).

	2021	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	54,324	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	18,983	34.9%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	35,341	65.1%
Living in the Selection Area	58,351	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	23,010	39.4%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	35,341	60.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Home to Willmar, Kandiyohi County is the largest county and the largest employment center in the region and was the biggest draw for workers. On a smaller scale, Hutchinson in McLeod County, Litchfield in Meeker County, and Olivia in Renville County were also employment centers drawing workers. Employers in the region both lose and draw workers from nearby counties with the largest net outflow going to metropolitan areas including the Twin Cities and St. Cloud (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Region 6E Labor and Commute Shed, 2021

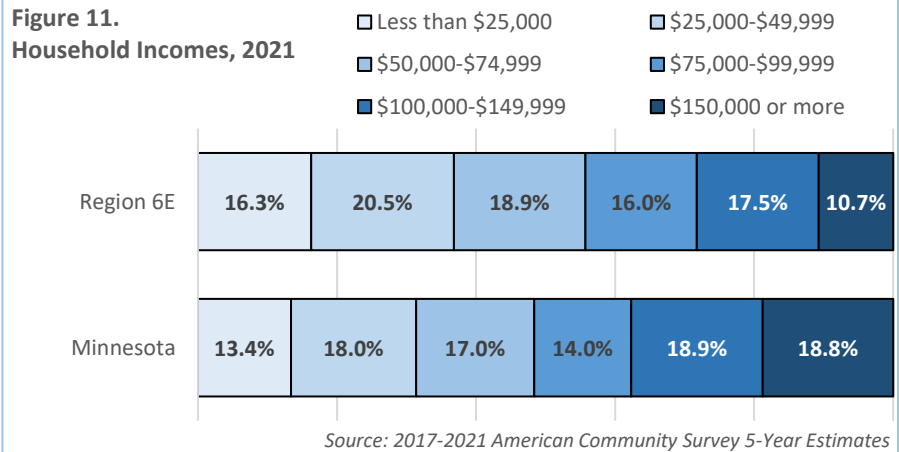


INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

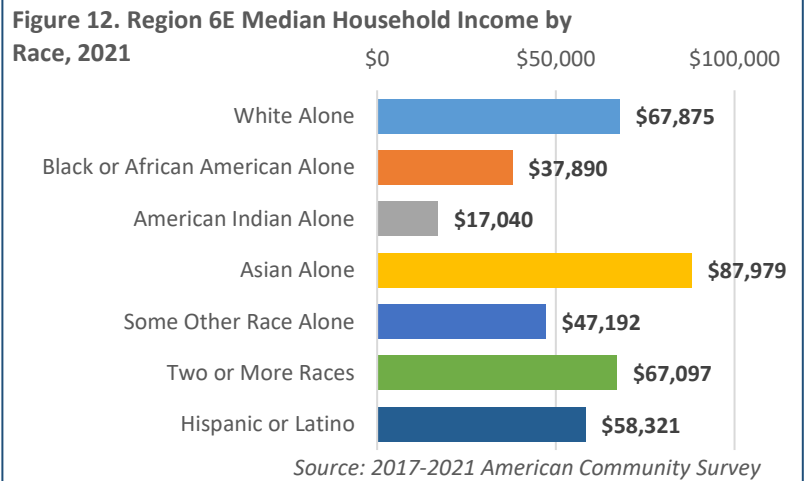
At \$66,603, household incomes were lower in Region 6E than the state, where the median income in 2021 was \$77,706. Just under 37% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2021, compared to 31.4% statewide. Similarly, only 28% of households in Region 6E earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 37.7% of households statewide (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Household Incomes, 2021



Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. American Indian households reported the lowest incomes in Region 6E, with a median income that was about \$50,000 lower than the overall median, however the estimated households in that category numbered just 86 so the estimate has a large margin of error. Asians reported the highest household incomes with a median household income that was \$21,000 higher than the overall median household income (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Region 6E Median Household Income by Race, 2021





**COST OF LIVING**

According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for a typical Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$60,720 in 2022. The cost of living for a similar family in Region 6E was \$48,648 – which was the fifth lowest of the 13 EDRs in the state. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; but the cost of the region’s housing, child care, and taxes were significantly lower than the state. In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$15.59 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week (Table 8).

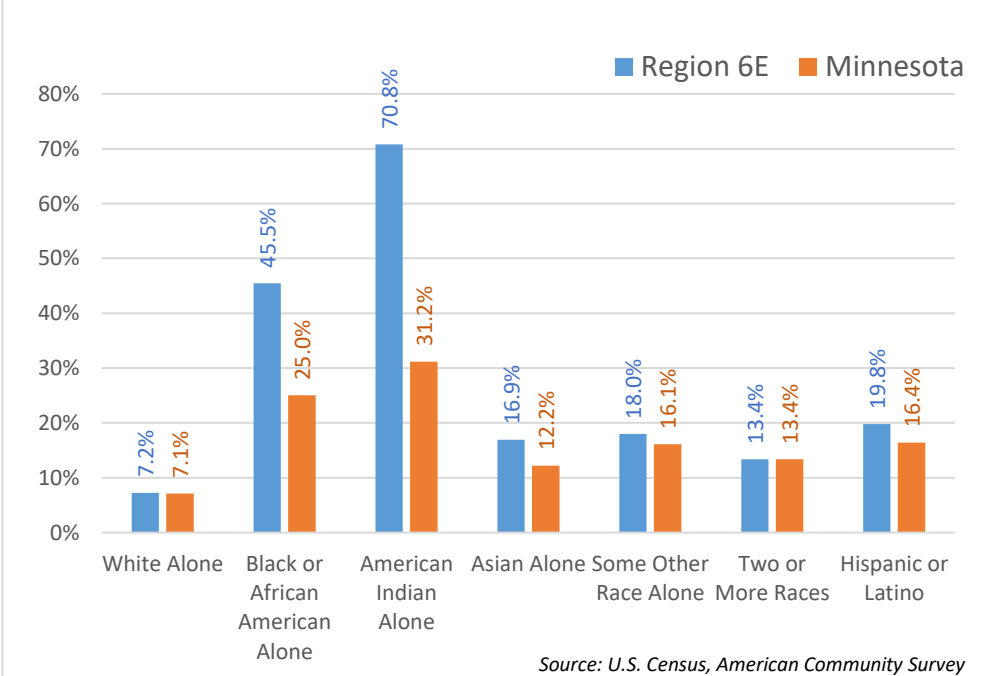
DEED’s Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in Region 6E would be \$30,168, which would require an hourly wage of \$14.50 to meet the basic needs standard of living (Table 8). That was the sixth lowest in the state.

Table 8. Region 6E 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
<b>Region 6E</b>										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$30,168	\$14.50	\$0	\$394	\$163	\$667	\$800	\$257	\$233
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$44,472	\$21.38	\$529	\$583	\$449	\$850	\$805	\$347	\$143
<b>2 parents, 1 child</b>	<b>1 FT, 1 PT</b>	<b>\$48,648</b>	<b>\$15.59</b>	<b>\$265</b>	<b>\$902</b>	<b>\$528</b>	<b>\$850</b>	<b>\$936</b>	<b>\$424</b>	<b>\$149</b>
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$65,712	\$15.80	\$793	\$1,176	\$539	\$1,194	\$989	\$574	\$211
<b>State of Minnesota</b>										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$34,992	\$16.82	\$0	\$403	\$159	\$961	\$760	\$330	\$303
<b>2 parents, 1 child</b>	<b>1 FT, 1 PT</b>	<b>\$60,720</b>	<b>\$19.46</b>	<b>\$574</b>	<b>\$921</b>	<b>\$555</b>	<b>\$1,216</b>	<b>\$886</b>	<b>\$517</b>	<b>\$391</b>

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

Overall, Region 6E’s poverty rate was 9%, which was just below the statewide rate of 9.2%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. The highest poverty levels hovered around 70% for American Indians and over 45% of Black or African American residents were living below the poverty rate in 2021, compared to 7.2% for white residents. Almost one in five Hispanic or Latino residents and people of some other race were living below the poverty rate, which was also similar to statewide rates. People of two or more races had the same likelihood to be living below poverty in the region as the state (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Poverty Status by Race, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey

**WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS**

According to DEED’s [Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 6E was \$21.20 in the first quarter of 2023, which was the third lowest wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. Region 6E’s median wage was \$3.05 below the state’s median hourly wage, equaling 87% of the statewide wage rate, and \$4.47 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to \$9,298 per year for a full-time worker. Region 6E had lower wages than some surrounding regions including Region 8 at \$21.23, Region 4 (\$21.88), Region 7W (\$23.10), but had higher wages than Region 6W (\$20.82).

Over 13% of the jobs in Region 6E were Production occupations, which was almost twice as concentrated as in the state as a whole. Likewise, the highest location quotient was for Farming occupations, at 5.9, meaning they were more than 5 times more concentrated in Region 6E than the state as a whole. Region 6E also had a higher share of workers in Healthcare Support, Transportation & Material Moving, Installation & Repair, and Community & Social Service occupations (Table 10).

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
EDR 1 - Northwest	\$22.83	35,000
EDR 2 - Headwaters	\$21.90	31,370
EDR 3 - Arrowhead	\$22.57	136,490
EDR 4 - West Central	\$21.88	87,550
EDR 5 - North Central	\$19.98	62,060
<b>EDR 6E - Southwest Central</b>	<b>\$21.20</b>	<b>49,510</b>
EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley	\$20.82	16,160
EDR 7E - East Central	\$22.48	48,210
EDR 7W - Central	\$23.10	172,540
EDR 8 - Southwest	\$21.23	51,900
EDR 9 - South Central	\$22.61	99,520
EDR 10 - Southeast	\$23.44	236,590
EDR 11 - 7-County Twin Cities	\$25.67	1,718,290
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>\$24.25</b>	<b>2,827,310</b>

*Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics*

Occupational Group	Region 6E				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
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>\$21.20</b>	<b>49,510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>\$24.25</b>	<b>2,827,310</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Production	\$22.07	6,470	13.1%	1.8	\$22.07	209,380	7.4%
Office & Administrative Support	\$20.29	5,440	11.0%	0.9	\$23.06	345,830	12.2%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$19.96	4,870	9.8%	1.2	\$21.05	227,780	8.1%
Sales & Related	\$16.29	4,270	8.6%	1.0	\$18.14	239,500	8.5%
Healthcare Support	\$15.62	4,190	8.5%	1.5	\$17.40	162,400	5.7%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$14.10	3,830	7.7%	1.0	\$14.89	216,970	7.7%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$37.75	2,860	5.8%	0.9	\$41.07	186,700	6.6%
Education, Training & Library	\$23.33	2,700	5.5%	1.0	\$24.82	158,830	5.6%
Management	\$43.27	2,460	5.0%	0.7	\$51.58	193,760	6.9%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$24.77	2,120	4.3%	1.2	\$27.95	98,670	3.5%
Construction & Extraction	\$26.13	2,090	4.2%	1.0	\$31.00	113,930	4.0%
Business & Financial Operations	\$31.31	1,630	3.3%	0.5	\$38.19	201,940	7.1%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$17.23	1,400	2.8%	1.0	\$18.26	76,210	2.7%
Community & Social Service	\$27.97	1,150	2.3%	1.2	\$25.82	54,820	1.9%
Architecture & Engineering	\$38.69	930	1.9%	1.0	\$40.60	53,100	1.9%
Personal Care & Service	\$15.20	820	1.7%	0.8	\$16.96	58,120	2.1%
Protective Service	\$25.23	690	1.4%	1.0	\$25.83	40,620	1.4%
Computer & Mathematical	\$37.20	450	0.9%	0.3	\$49.73	99,250	3.5%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$19.79	420	0.8%	5.9	\$19.84	4,060	0.1%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$20.44	310	0.6%	0.5	\$28.80	37,630	1.3%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$30.81	290	0.6%	0.6	\$39.37	29,070	1.0%
Legal	\$31.91	160	0.3%	0.5	\$47.87	18,730	0.7%

*Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, Qtr. 1 2023*

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in Food Prep & Serving, Personal Care & Service, Sales & Related, and Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance, 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 typically need higher levels of education or experience, including many that require postsecondary training.

### 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 nearly \$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 & Material Moving. 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**

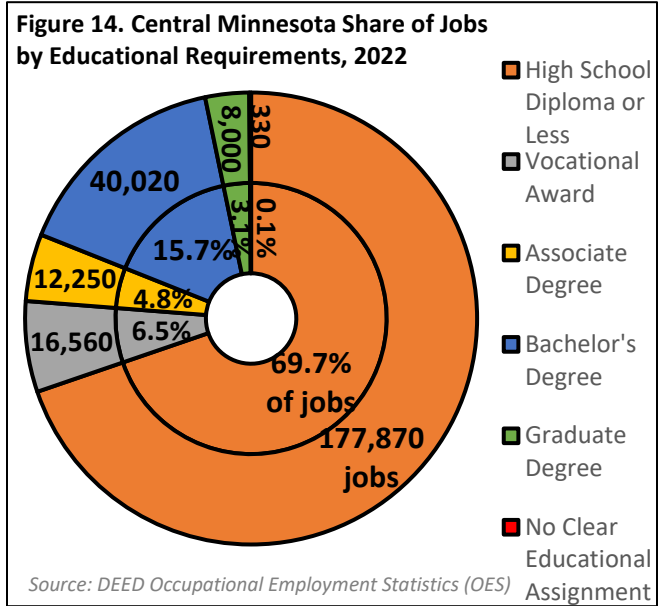
Central Minnesota	Number of Total Vacancies	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Percent Part-Time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Percent Requiring Certificate or License	Job Vacancy Rate
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>20,029</b>	<b>\$18.05</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>
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).

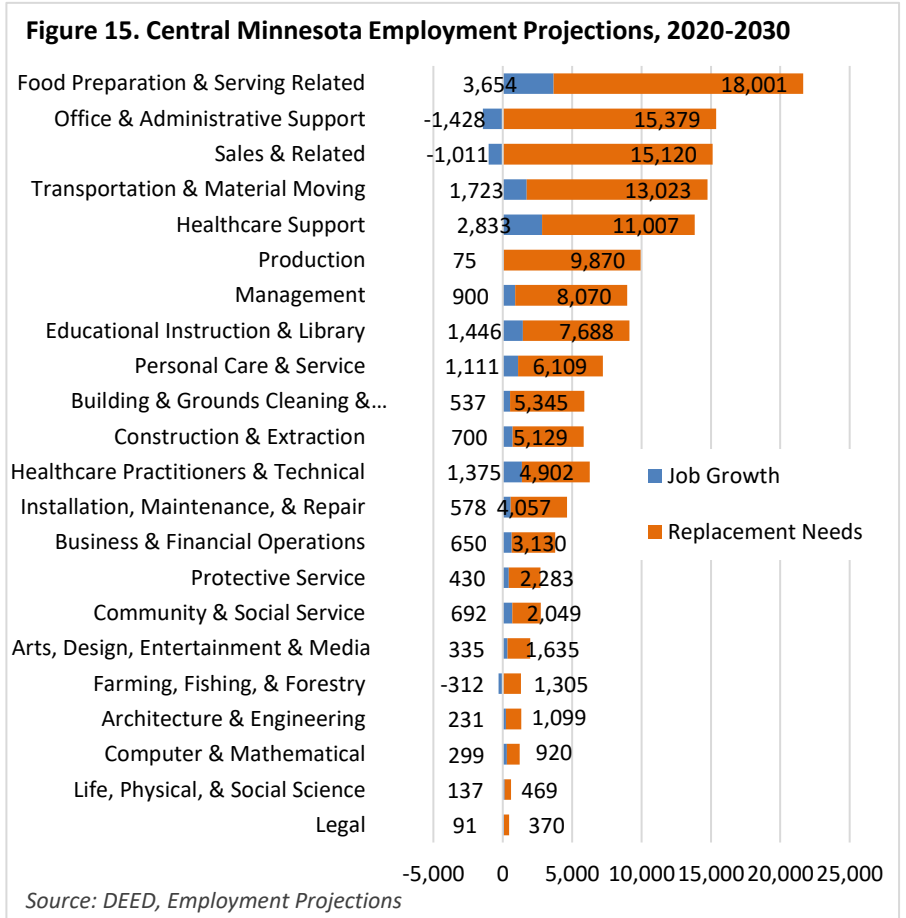
Certain careers – such as Dentists, Lawyers, and Teachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including Cost Estimators, Sales Representatives, and Correctional Officers – do not. College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to licensed fields that 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, 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](#), Region 6E was home to 3,685 business establishments providing 51,345 covered jobs through 2022, with a total payroll of just under \$2.6 billion. That was about 1.8% of total employment in the state of Minnesota, making it the ninth largest of the 13 EDRs in the state. Average annual wages were \$50,470 in the region, which was about \$19,200 lower than the state's average annual wage, and the eighth highest of the 13 EDRs (Table 13).

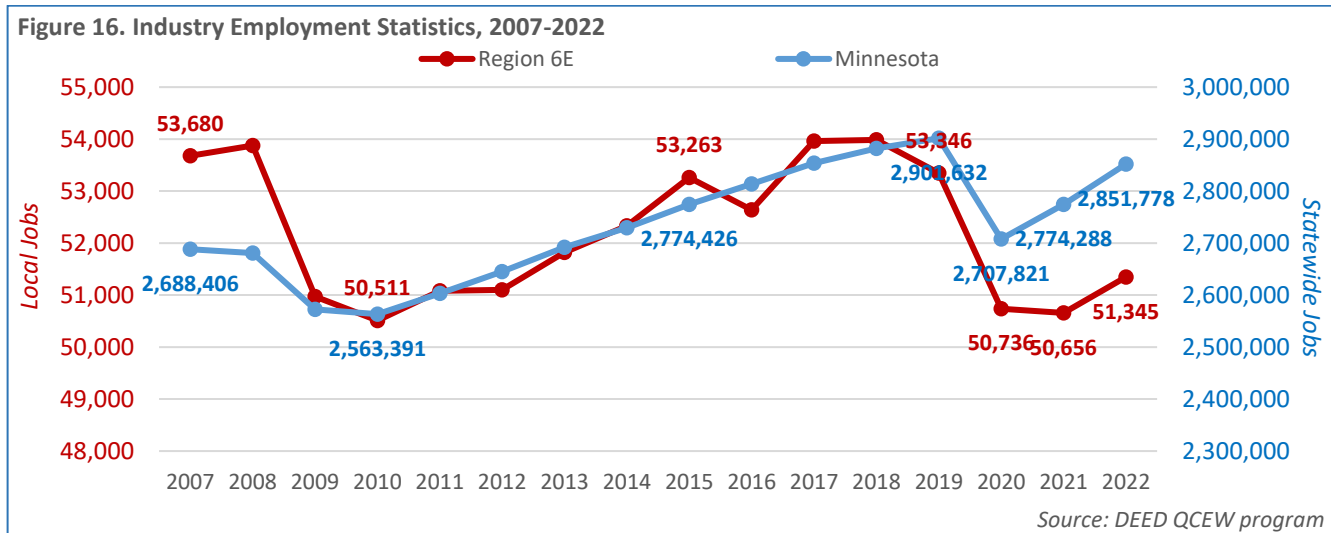
Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Average Annual Wage	2021-2022		2019-2022	
					Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
<b>Region 6E</b>	<b>3,685</b>	<b>51,345</b>	<b>\$2,591,376,943</b>	<b>\$50,470</b>	<b>+689</b>	<b>+1.4%</b>	<b>-2,001</b>	<b>-3.8%</b>
Kandiyohi Co.	1,445	22,643	\$1,106,930,684	\$48,886	+132	+0.6%	-1,416	-5.9%
McLeod Co.	1,007	15,611	\$833,593,896	\$53,398	+202	+1.3%	-380	-2.4%
Meeker Co.	647	7,683	\$376,911,578	\$49,058	+426	+5.9%	+180	+2.4%
Renville Co.	586	5,407	\$273,940,785	\$50,664	-71	-1.3%	-385	-6.6%
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>199,603</b>	<b>2,851,778</b>	<b>\$198,839,398,672</b>	<b>\$69,725</b>	<b>+77,490</b>	<b>+2.8%</b>	<b>-49,854</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>

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



Home to Willmar, Kandiyohi County is the largest employment center in the region with 22,643 jobs at 1,445 firms in 2022, followed by McLeod County with 15,611 jobs at 1,007 firms. Every county except McLeod lost jobs since 2019, though three of the four counties regained jobs from 2021 to 2022 when most counties and regions were recovering from the pandemic recession (Table 13).

Region 6E has seen employment ups and downs over the past 15 years. The region entered the Great Recession later than the state, experiencing job growth through 2008, then suffering severe declines in 2009 and 2010. From there, Region 6E had seen a steady but slower recovery than the rest of the state before ultimately shedding over 2,500 jobs in 2020 during the pandemic recession. Held back by Kandiyohi and Renville County, the region remains down from 2019 employment levels (Figure 16).



The largest industry in Region 6E shifted from Health Care to Manufacturing during the pandemic recession, now accounting for more than one in five jobs. However, the Manufacturing sector actually shed jobs since the most recent peak of 11,683 jobs in 2018. The largest type of manufacturing in the region was Food Manufacturing with 2,654 jobs, followed by Machinery Manufacturing with 1,710 jobs. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing was also a significant subsector accounting for 1,287 jobs by 2022. Overall, Manufacturing provided 10,358 jobs with an average annual wage of \$66,517 in the region and a total payroll of \$688.9 million. The region is much more strongly concentrated in Manufacturing than the state, where only 11.3% of jobs are in Manufacturing.

With 9,954 jobs at 401 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the second largest employing industry in Region 6E, accounting for 19.4% of total jobs in the region. That is about 2 percentage points higher than the state’s concentration. Region 6E has lost 44 jobs in Health Care & Social Assistance over the last year, and it’s still off by more than 900 jobs since 2019, a decline of 8.8%. At \$46,467, average annual wages were roughly \$4,000 less than the average wage across the total of all industries. The largest subsector was Nursing & Residential Care with 3,097 jobs, followed by Ambulatory Healthcare Services (2,596 jobs), Social Assistance (2,194 jobs), and Hospitals (2,066 jobs). The first three of these subsectors shed jobs since 2019, with the largest decline (-14%) at Nursing & Residential Care Facilities.

Retail Trade was the third largest industry, with 5,857 jobs at 431 establishments. The related Accommodation & Food Services industry provides 3,786 jobs at 216 firms. Retail Trade has been losing employment since 2016 while Accommodation & Food Services had been growing. Substantial losses in the Accommodation & Food Service sector in 2020 have been slowly recovering, but it’s still down 5.2% through 2022 (Table 14).

**Table 14. Region 6E Industry Employment Statistics, 2022**

Region 6E	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
<b>NAICS Industry Title</b>								
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>3,685</b>	<b>51,345</b>	<b>\$2,591,377</b>	<b>\$50,470</b>	<b>+689</b>	<b>+1.4%</b>	<b>-2,001</b>	<b>-3.8%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	235	2,343	\$114,245	\$48,760	+26	+1.1%	+78	3.4%
Mining	10	64	\$3,992	\$62,380	+14	+28.0%	+33	106.5%
Construction	467	2,550	\$163,390	\$64,074	+12	+0.5%	+46	1.8%
Manufacturing	230	10,358	\$688,982	\$66,517	+197	+1.9%	-414	-3.8%
Utilities	15	246	\$23,474	\$95,423	-1	-0.4%	-21	-7.9%
Wholesale Trade	150	2,073	\$153,930	\$74,255	+46	+2.3%	+27	1.3%
Retail Trade	431	5,857	\$189,816	\$32,408	-134	-2.2%	-245	-4.0%
Transportation & Warehousing	238	1,781	\$90,621	\$50,882	-13	-0.7%	-63	-3.4%
Information	58	545	\$23,451	\$43,030	+19	+3.6%	-55	-9.2%
Finance & Insurance	208	1,137	\$78,873	\$69,369	+11	+1.0%	-50	-4.2%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	88	183	\$6,308	\$34,472	-7	-3.7%	-7	-3.7%
Professional & Technical Services	189	1,158	\$73,312	\$63,310	+44	+3.9%	+107	10.2%
Management of Companies	14	252	\$23,167	\$91,932	+3	+1.2%	-23	-8.4%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	155	1,343	\$68,539	\$51,034	+6	+0.4%	-10	-0.7%
Educational Services	66	3,464	\$164,788	\$47,572	+66	+1.9%	-118	-3.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	401	9,954	\$462,528	\$46,467	-44	-0.4%	-959	-8.8%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	57	415	\$8,345	\$20,109	+11	+2.7%	-56	-11.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	216	3,786	\$80,051	\$21,144	+272	+7.7%	-208	-5.2%
Other Services	337	1,298	\$39,858	\$30,707	+66	+5.4%	-60	-4.4%
Public Administration	123	2,535	\$133,705	\$52,744	+95	+3.9%	-3	-0.1%

*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. Almost one-quarter of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 22% statewide and just 21% in the region one decade earlier. In contrast, the percentage of teenaged workers was falling, and while wages were going up for younger workers, their wage growth lagged that for workers from 20-44 years (Table 15).

As noted above, wages were climbing across the board for all workers due to rising demand and a tight labor market. 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. Wages were

**Table 15. Region 6E Workforce Demographics by Age Group and Gender, 2012-2022**

Region 6E	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%	\$21.33	\$14.10	414
19 years & under	8.2%	8.3%	6.6%	6.3%	\$14.74	\$7.93	128	116
20 to 24 years	9.1%	11.0%	9.2%	11.3%	\$18.74	\$10.46	324	277
25 to 44 years	40.4%	37.9%	43.6%	42.3%	\$23.60	\$15.44	460	466
45 to 54 years	17.7%	21.9%	18.4%	21.9%	\$25.52	\$17.23	482	480
55 to 64 years	17.9%	16.2%	16.7%	14.7%	\$23.82	\$17.03	477	478
65 years & over	6.8%	4.7%	5.4%	3.5%	\$18.91	\$12.67	230	192
Male	50.1%	48.2%	49.1%	49.1%	\$23.98	\$15.95	479	480
Female	49.9%	51.8%	50.9%	50.9%	\$20.03	\$12.92	351	352

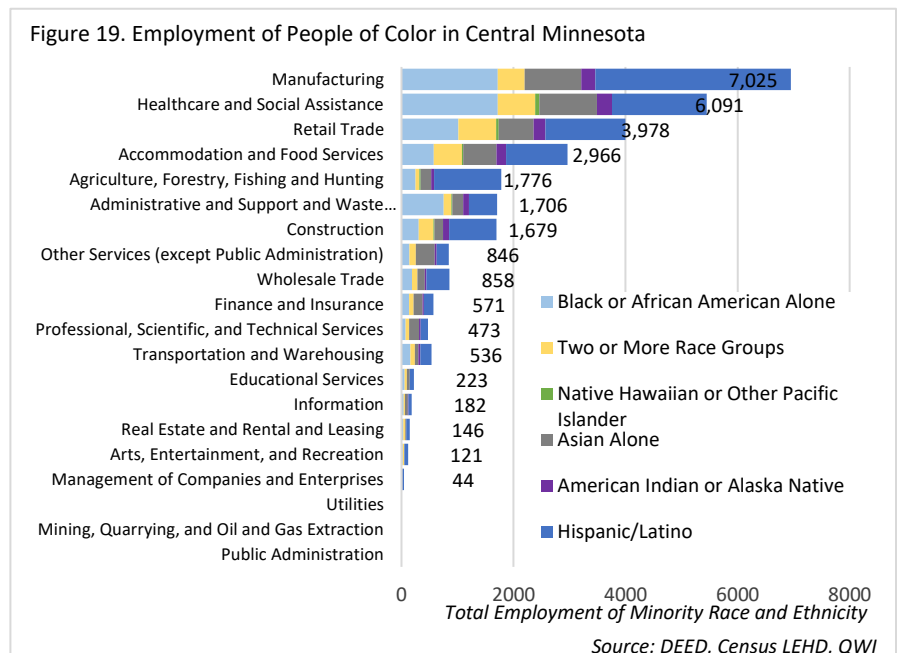
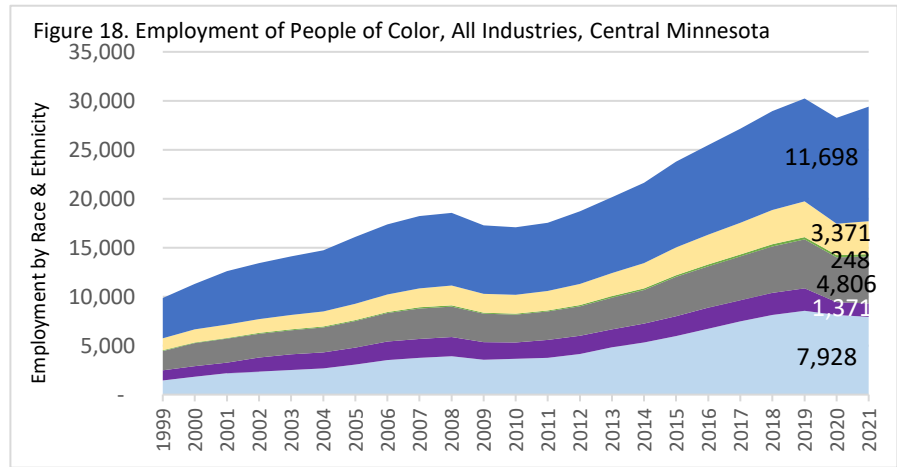
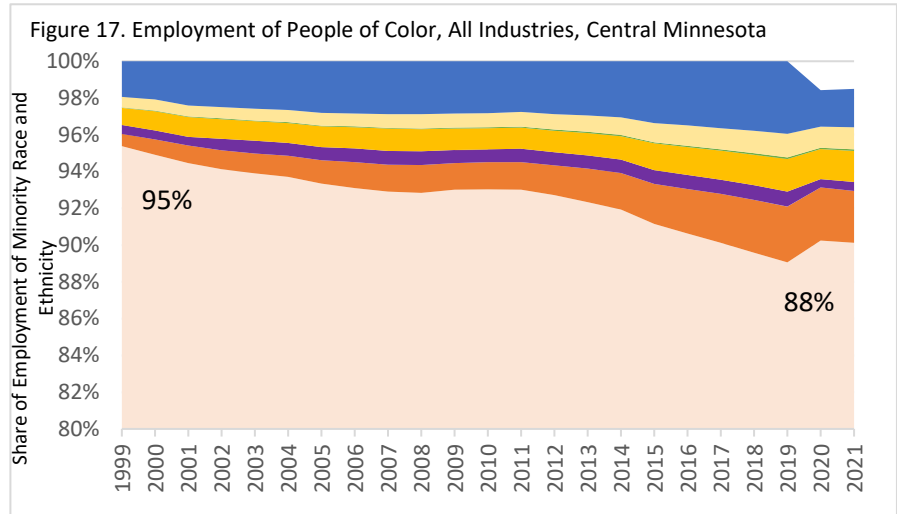
*Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics*

highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age. In comparison, females worked 73% of the hours worked by males, contributing to the higher wages earned by men. Since 2012, the gap in hours worked held steady while the gap in wages between men and women widened.

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 only hold 15.7% of jobs. According to data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators program, people of color held 29,422 jobs in the Central Minnesota planning region, 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).

Workers of color gained an additional 18,114 jobs since 2000, compared to 4,265 jobs gained by White workers. Hispanic or Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic groups in the region with 11,698 jobs in 2021, a third of all jobs held by workers other than white. The next largest number of jobs held by a different race group was Black or African American, holding 7,928 jobs in 2020 (Figure 18).

The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting sector and Administrative Support & Waste Management Services 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) (Figure 19).



**INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS**

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 & 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 & 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).

**Table 16. Central Minnesota Industry Projections, 2020-2030**

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**

Region 6E was also home to 8,156 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2019, 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).” Region 6E saw a small decline in nonemployers over the past decade, responding to economic changes. In sum, the region lost 277 nonemployers from 2009 to 2019, a -3.3% decrease. In sum, these nonemployers generated sales receipts of roughly \$413 million in 2019 (Table 17).

**Table 17. Nonemployer Statistics, 2019**

	2019		2009-2019	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
<b>Region 6E</b>	<b>8,156</b>	<b>\$412,890</b>	<b>-277</b>	<b>-3.3%</b>
Kandiyohi Co.	3,131	\$161,676	-58	-1.8%
McLeod Co.	2,360	\$121,907	-71	-2.9%
Meeker Co.	1,633	\$76,165	-41	-2.4%
Renville Co.	1,032	\$53,142	-107	-9.4%
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>418,080</b>	<b>\$20,377,253</b>	<b>+39,926</b>	<b>+10.6%</b>

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

**CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE**

Like other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is also a key industry in Region 6E, including 4,154 farms producing just under \$1.5 billion in the market value of products sold in 2017 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years, but Region 6E still accounts for 6% of the farms in the state. Region 6E is home to two of the top 10 farm counties in the state: Renville (#3) and Kandiyohi (#8) are both farm juggernauts (Table 18).

**Table 18. Census of Agriculture, 2017**

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
<b>Region 6E</b>	<b>4,154</b>	<b>\$1,484,036,000</b>	<b>5</b>
Kandiyohi Co.	1,220	\$424,078,000	8
McLeod Co.	880	\$185,617,000	49
Meeker Co.	1,028	\$265,151,000	30
Renville Co.	1,026	\$609,190,000	3
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>68,822</b>	<b>\$18,395,390,000</b>	

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](mailto:luke.greiner@state.mn.us)