

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7E: East Central

Covers counties:
Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec
Mille Lacs, and Pine

2023 REGIONAL PROFILE

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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE

Economic Development Region 7E – East Central includes 5 counties, located in the Central Minnesota planning region. Region 7E was home to 173,904 people in 2022, comprising 3.0% of the state’s total population. The region saw a 6.2% population increase since 2010, making it the eighth largest of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in total population, and the fifth fastest growing. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 7.8% gain from 2010 to 2022 (Table 1).

Table 1. Population Change 2010-2022

	2010 Population	2022 Estimates	2010-2022 Change	
			Number	Percent
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%
Central Minnesota	684,001	743,173	+59,172	+8.7%
Minnesota	5,303,925	5,717,184	+413,259	+7.8%

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

Chisago County is the largest county in Region 7E and is the 18th largest county of 87 in the state, with just under 58,000 people in 2022. It added 4,101 people, a 7.6% increase, since 2010, the 19th fastest growth rate. Isanti County experienced the largest growth in the region with an increase of 4,911 people and now has nearly 43,000 people. The next largest county is Pine County with 29,446 people but has declined in population since 2010, while Mille Lacs County has increased slightly and has 27,280 people, and Kanabec County is the smallest county in the region with 16,463 people, the 52nd largest county in the state.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

With an aging population, Region 7E has experienced a natural decrease – more deaths than births – of -274 people from 2020-2022. However, the region gained substantial population because of net domestic migration with an increase of 5,025 residents moving into the area. Unlike other parts of the state, nearly all in-migration was from domestic residents from other parts of the state or U.S. (Table 2).

Without much international in-migration, Region 7E is now home to 3,115 foreign born residents, or about 1.9% of the total population. However, the number of

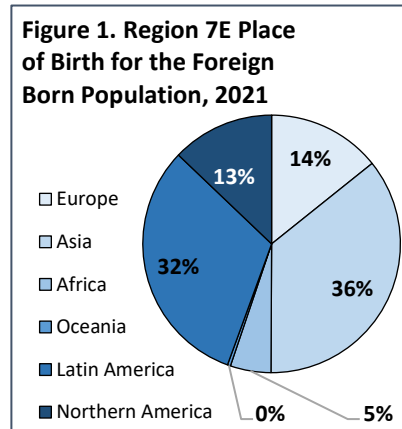
Table 2. Estimates of the Components of Population Change, 2020-2022

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Region 7E	+4,773	-274	3,931	4,205	+5,025	+87	+4,938
Minnesota	+10,680	+26,917	144,350	117,433	-17,365	+20,012	-37,377

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

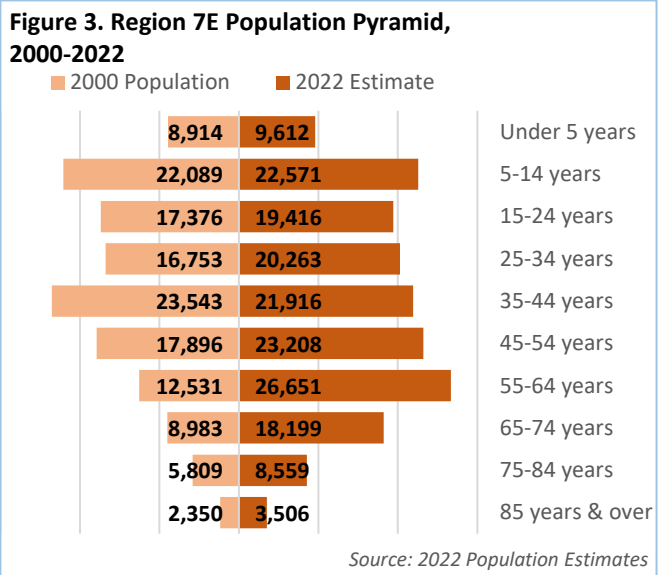
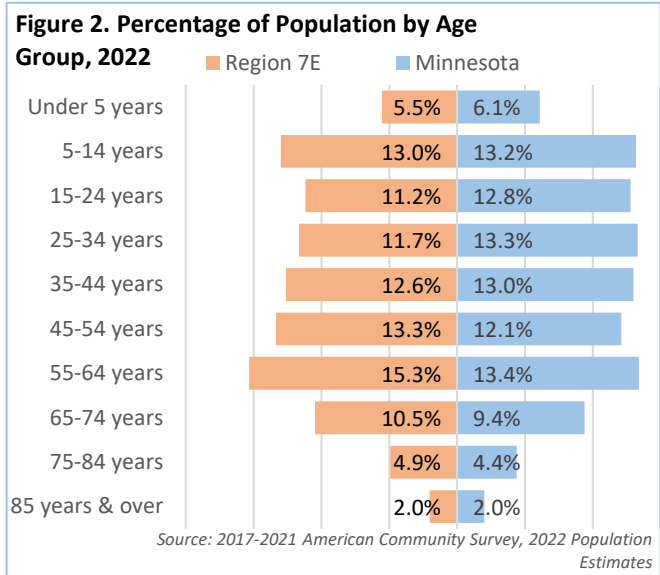
immigrants in the region increased by 35.6% since 2010, slightly faster than the statewide growth rate of 30.6%. Just under 36% (1,116 people) of these immigrants were from Asia, while the largest number was from Central and South America, accounting for 44% of the region’s foreign-born population. Lastly, there were 444 people from Europe, but this population has decreased since 2010 (Figure 1).

Based on year of entry, Region 7E’s foreign born population was “older” than the rest of the state. Only about 24% of the region’s immigrants entered the U.S. since 2010 and another 22% entered between 2000 and 2009, compared to 28% and 31% statewide. The remaining 54% of immigrants in the region settled in the U.S. prior to 2000. A much higher percentage of foreign-born residents are in their prime working years than the native-born population, with 55% being between 25 and 54 years of age, compared to 37.6% of the total population. About 18% of the foreign-born population has less than a high school degree while another 34% is a high school graduate. Meanwhile, 19% of foreign-born people in the region have a bachelor’s or higher degree.



POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

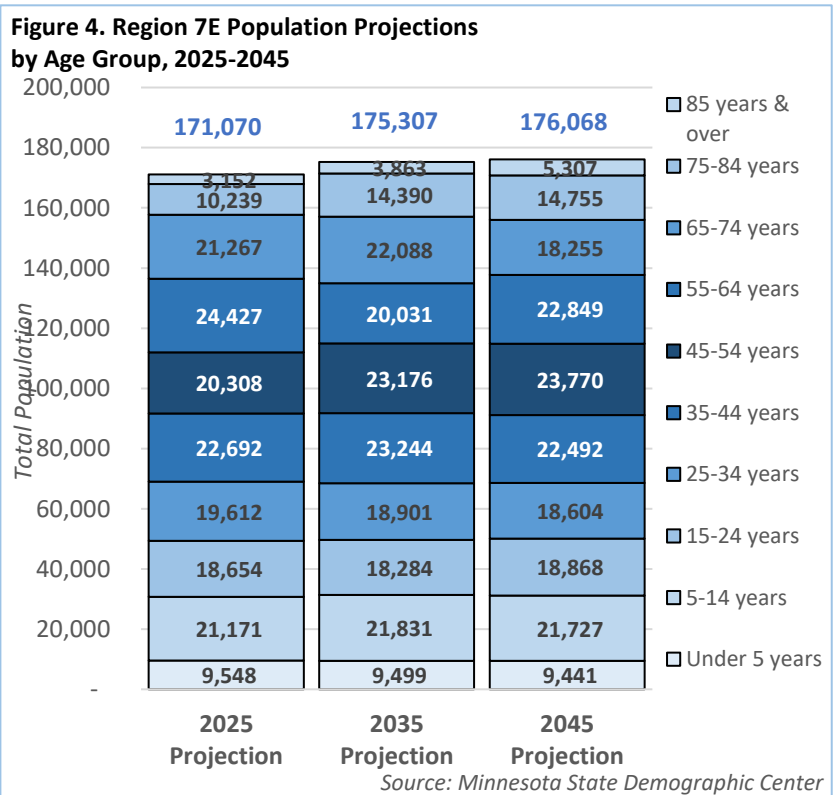
Region 7E has a slightly older population than the rest of the state, with 17% of residents aged 65 years and over, compared to 16% statewide. In addition, Region 7E had a higher percentage of people in the 45-54 year old age group, but consequently had a lower percentage of people in the 25-44 year old age group. 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, the 55 years or older age cohort added more than 27,000 residents (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).



POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

The more rapid recent growth is expected to help drive continued growth in the future, albeit at a much slower rate. According to the [State Demographic Center](#), Region 7E is expected to gain nearly 5,000 residents from 2025 to 2045, a 2.9% increase (see Figure 4). By comparison the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 7.4%.

Much of this population growth is expected to happen in older age groups. Region 7E is projected to add 6,671 people aged 75 years and over, as well as about 3,462 people in the 45-54 year old age group. However, Region 7E is projected to lose 545 people under 45 years of age, and about 4,590 people in the 55-74 year old age group – as current Baby Boomers continue to age.



POPULATION BY RACE

Region 7E’s population is less diverse than the state’s, and actually became less diverse recently, bucking historical trends. In 2021, 92.8 of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 80.7% statewide. At 1.4%, Region 7E had a higher percentage of American Indian or Alaska Natives than the state, but otherwise had much smaller percentages of people of all other race and origin groups, especially Black or African Americans, Asians, and Hispanic or Latino origin (Table 3).

With just over 5,200 people, the largest racial or ethnic group other than white is people of Two or More Races, which increased 107% from 2011 to 2021. Conversely, the region saw a 16% decline in the number of American Indian residents and a 6.7% decline for people of Some Other Race.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2021	Region 7E				Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2011-2021 Numeric/Percent		Percent	Change from 2011-2021
Total	168,330	100.0%	+5,080	+3.1%	100.0%	+7.4%
White	156,157	92.8%	+1,685	+1.1%	80.7%	+0.4%
Black or African American	1,805	1.1%	+88	+5.1%	6.6%	+42.2%
American Indian & Alaska Native	2,362	1.4%	-448	-15.9%	0.9%	-8.0%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	2,090	1.2%	+1,089	+108.8%	5.0%	+35.8%
Some Other Race	672	0.4%	-48	-6.7%	2.1%	+66.5%
Two or More Races	5,244	3.1%	+2,714	+107.3%	4.6%	+121.8%
Hispanic or Latino origin	4,149	2.5%	+1,293	+45.3%	5.6%	+31.6%

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

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

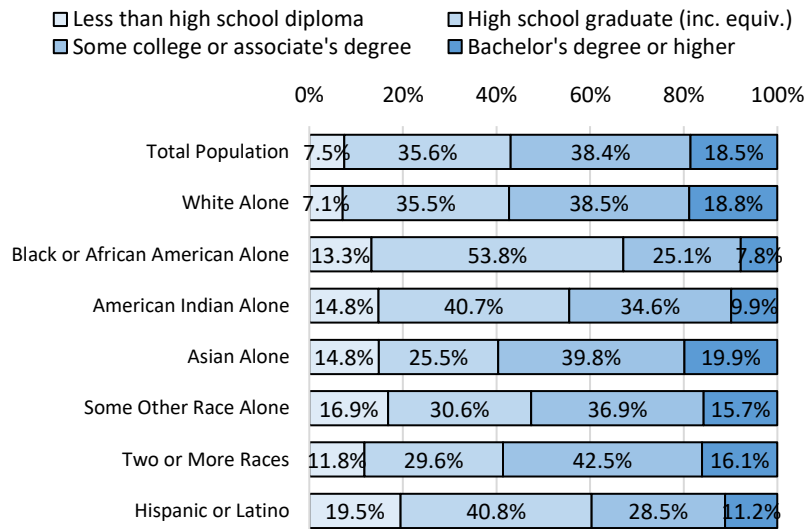
With 32% of adults aged 25 years and over having a college degree, Region 7E has lower educational attainment than the state, where 49.2% of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. However, 13.4% of adults in Region 7E have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 25% have some college experience, but no degree.

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Population Aged 25 years & Over	Region 7E		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
Total, 25 years & over	118,384	100.0%	100.0%
Less than high school	8,868	7.5%	6.4%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	42,093	35.6%	23.9%
Some college, no degree	29,598	25.0%	20.5%
Associate degree	15,868	13.4%	11.6%
Bachelor's degree	15,582	13.2%	24.6%
Advanced degree	6,375	5.4%	13.0%

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

Educational attainment varied significantly by race and ethnicity in Region 7E. In addition to overall educational attainment being lower in the region than the state, the percentage of people of other races with less than a high school diploma was even higher. Roughly two-thirds of Black or African American residents in the region had a high school diploma or less, as did just over 56% of American Indians and Hispanic or Latinos. In contrast, a higher share of people of Two or More Races and Asians had attended some college or earned a degree (Figure 5). Asians also had the highest share of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Figure 5. Region 7E Educational Attainment for the population aged 25 years & over by Race or Origin, 2021

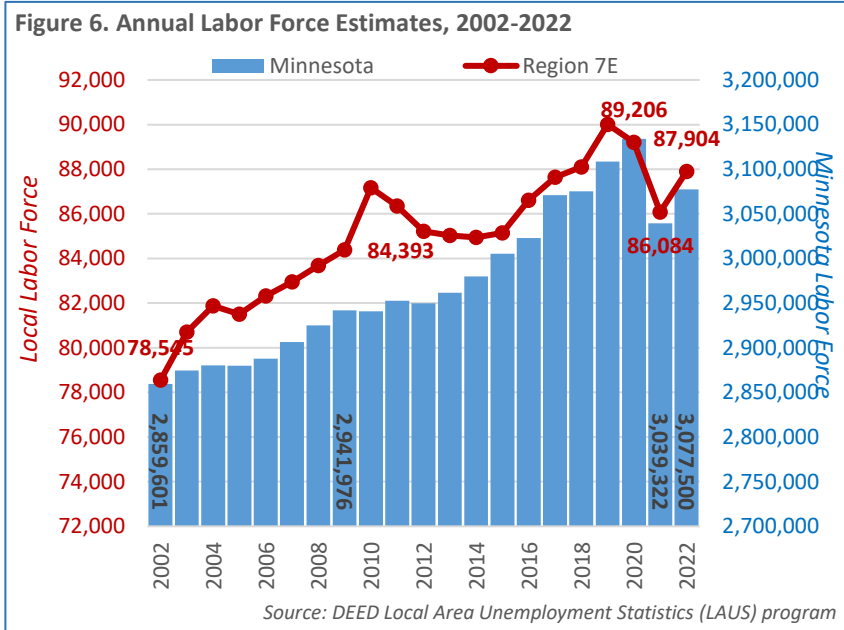


Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

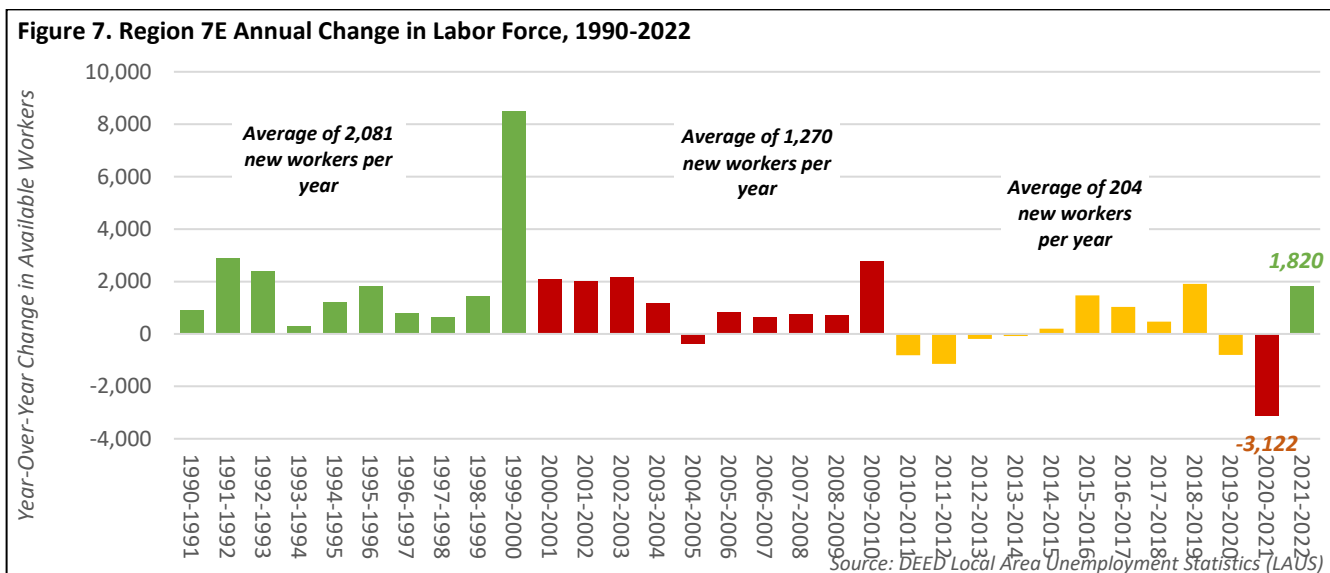
LABOR FORCE

LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Region 7E had an annual average labor force count of just under 88,000 workers through 2022. The recent increase of the labor force is a rebound from the past few years. After rising rapidly in the early part of the century, labor force growth slowed after 2010 before again increasing into 2019. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labor force declined precipitously, losing nearly 4,000 workers over two years (Figure 6). With low unemployment rates, the labor market in Region 7E remains even tighter than before the pandemic, with about 3,293 unemployed workers actively seeking work in 2022, down from a peak of over 9,000 workers in 2009 and an average of 6,700 in 2020.



Averaging a net gain of 2,081 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Region 7E were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. Although the regional labor force and economy continue to grow, the rate of labor force growth slowed considerably, demonstrated by Region 7E adding an average of only 204 workers per year from 2010 to 2020. Finally, the trend was punctuated by a loss of more than 3,100 into 2021 (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 7E. In the face of these constraints, domestic in-migration from urban counties to the south have become a relief despite still having a smaller labor force than pre-pandemic. Businesses have and will continue to adjust to slower labor force growth and maximize collaboration with local education partners.



LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

In step with the region's projected population changes, applying current labor force participation rates to population projections by age group, as shown in Figure 4, would lead to declines in workforce numbers in Region 7E over the next decade (Table 5).

Though the size of the labor force is expected to decline, the age composition of the workforce will also see a significant shift over time, with a steady gain in the number of workers aged 45 to 54 years and gains in workers aged 65 years and over against large declines in the number of workers aged 55 to 64 years. Smaller declines are expected for workers under 44. The region may lose about 3,000 workers in the 55- to 64-year-old age group as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid. The 25- to 54-year-old age group will still be the largest part of the labor force, accounting for 64% of the total. This will likely lead to an even tighter labor market in the future, with employers needing to respond to changing labor force availability.

	2025 Labor Force Projection	2035 Labor Force Projection	2025-2035 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	4,567	4,448	-120	-2.6%
20 to 24 years	6,613	6,536	-77	-1.2%
25 to 44 years	35,556	35,423	-134	-0.4%
45 to 54 years	17,349	19,799	+2,450	+14.1%
55 to 64 years	16,852	13,819	-3,033	-18.0%
65 to 74 years	4,882	5,071	+188	+3.9%
75 years & over	936	1,276	+340	+36.3%
Total Labor Force	86,757	86,372	-385	-0.4%

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

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EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 65% of people aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Region 7E had lower labor force participation rates than the state's 69.3%. The region had lower labor force participation rates than the state in all but the oldest age group, and the overall rate was even lower because a higher percentage of Region 7E's labor force was in older age groups (Table 6).

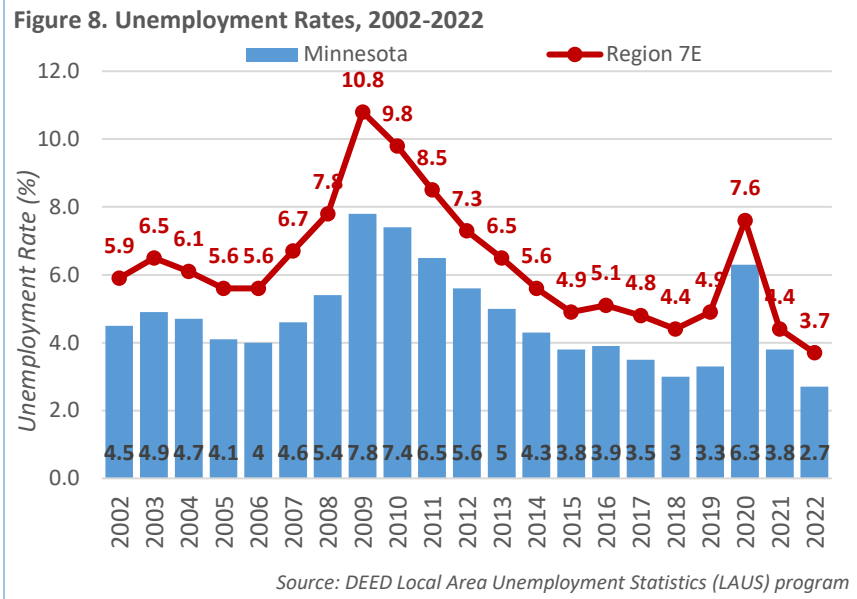
Likewise, the region had lower participation rates than the state in all race groups except Asian or Other Pacific Islander; and higher unemployment rates for all but one minority group – Black or African Americans. In sum, unemployment rates were highest for young people and people of color. In addition, there were 5,587 workers with disabilities in the regional labor force. Increasing labor force participation rates and lowering unemployment rates for groups that have barriers would help grow the region's labor force.

Age Group	Region 7E			Minnesota	
	Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	87,471	64.8%	4.6%	69.2%	4.0%
16 to 19 years	4,420	54.6%	7.8%	52.3%	10.7%
20 to 24 years	6,858	80.7%	6.6%	83.3%	6.7%
25 to 44 years	34,316	84.0%	4.8%	88.8%	3.6%
45 to 54 years	19,191	85.4%	4.5%	87.6%	3.0%
55 to 64 years	17,797	69.0%	3.1%	73.1%	3.2%
65 to 74 years	4,044	23.0%	3.3%	28.0%	3.2%
75 years & over	816	7.0%	1.1%	6.6%	2.9%
Employment Characteristics by Gender					
Male	46,559	66.8%	5.3%	72.7%	4.4%
Female	40,884	62.6%	3.8%	65.6%	3.6%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	82,675	65.4%	4.3%	68.5%	3.4%
Black or African American	347	23.0%	9.5%	71.9%	8.6%
American Indian & Alaska Native	843	50.0%	18.4%	57.4%	12.9%
Asian or Other Pacific Islanders	1,075	70.8%	6.9%	72.7%	4.1%
Some Other Race	426	74.9%	5.2%	75.8%	6.2%
Two or More Races	2,076	62.0%	7.9%	74.1%	7.3%
Hispanic or Latino	1,795	63.9%	8.5%	77.0%	6.6%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	5,532	49.7%	11.8%	53.6%	9.9%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population 25 to 64 years	71,312	80.0%	4.3%	84.4%	3.4%
Less than H.S. Diploma	3,692	62.5%	5.5%	66.6%	4.6%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	21,806	73.8%	2.3%	77.3%	2.5%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	30,544	83.6%	3.4%	85.1%	3.6%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15,258	89.1%	2.3%	90.3%	2.1%

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

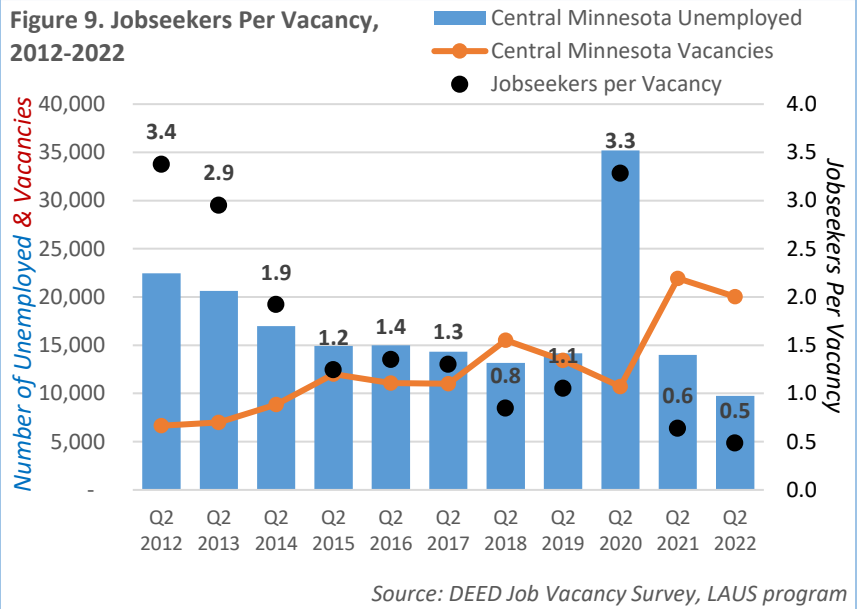
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Region 7E has consistently had higher unemployment rates than the state, typically hovering around 1.5% above the state rate. According to DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Region 7E’s rate rose as high as 10.8% in 2009, which was the highest of the 13 EDRs, and 3% above the state rate. Since then, the state and region’s economies have recovered and unemployment rates have dropped, with Region 7E reporting 4.9% in 2019, before spiking to 7.6% in 2020. Rates then returned to near record lows in 2022 (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 0.9-to-1 in 2018 before rebounding slightly in 2019 and then to 1.3 in 2020. A recent step increase in vacancies paired with declining unemployment led to an all-time low ratio of 0.5 in 2022 (Figure 9). According to recent Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 20,092 openings reported by Central Minnesota employers compared to 9,747 unemployed jobseekers in the region. The ratio climbed as high as 4.1-to-1 in 2011.



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

According to commuting data from the [Census Bureau](#), Region 7E is a net labor exporter, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 29,814 workers both lived and worked in Region 7E in 2020, while 15,489 workers drove into the region from surrounding counties for work, compared to 49,061 workers who lived in the region but drove to surrounding counties for work (Table 7 and Figure 10).

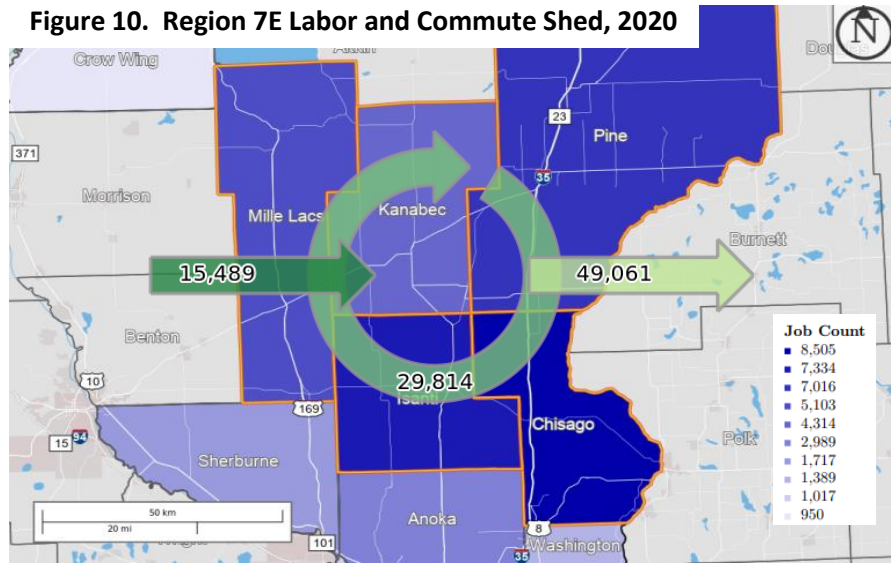
	2020	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	45,303	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	15,489	34.2%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	29,814	65.8%
Living in the Selection Area		
Living in the Selection Area	78,875	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	49,061	62.2%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	29,814	37.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Chisago County is the largest county and the largest employment center in the region and was the biggest draw for workers, followed by Isanti County, Pine County, Mille Lacs County, and Kanabec County is the smallest.

Most workers in the region commute to the Twin Cities metro area and Hennepin County, as well as to the northern and eastern counties like Ramsey, Anoka, and Washington County (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Region 7E Labor and Commute Shed, 2020

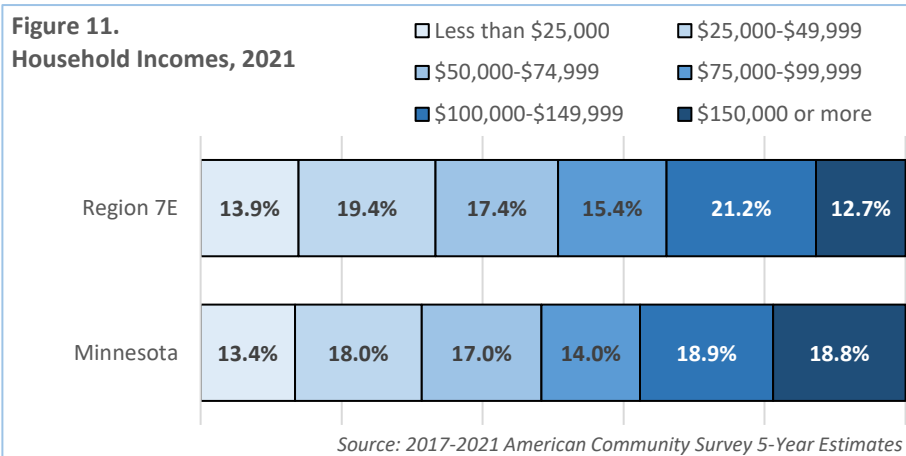


INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

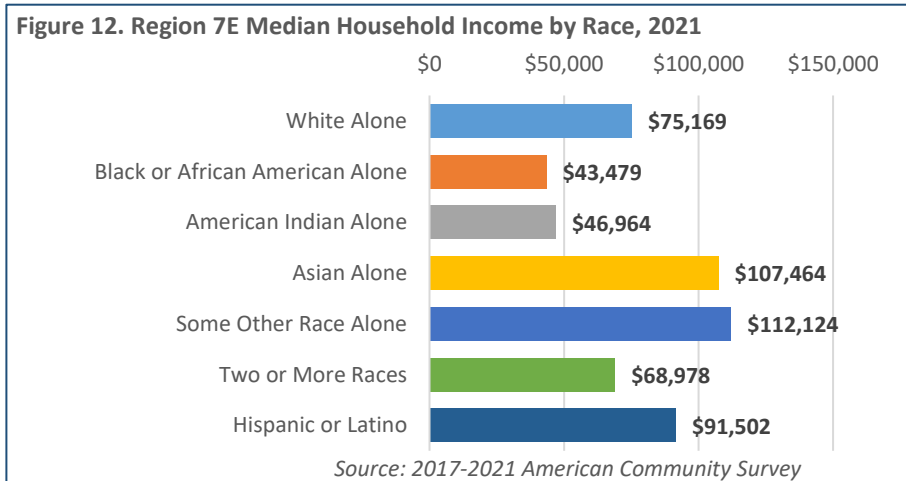
At \$74,866, median household incomes were lower in Region 7E than the state, where the median income in 2021 was \$77,706. Just over 33% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2021, similar to statewide. Similarly, only 33.9% of households in Region 7E earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 37.7% percent of households statewide (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Household Incomes, 2021



Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. Asian and people of some other race households reported the highest incomes in Region 7E, with a median income that was more than \$32,000 higher than for White households. Next highest were incomes for Hispanic or Latino households at \$86,625. In contrast, American Indian households reported much lower household incomes, however incomes for all races were similar (Figure 12). It is important to note that sample sizes for all races other than white are small, with large margins of error in these data points.

Figure 12. Region 7E Median Household Income by Race, 2021



COST OF LIVING

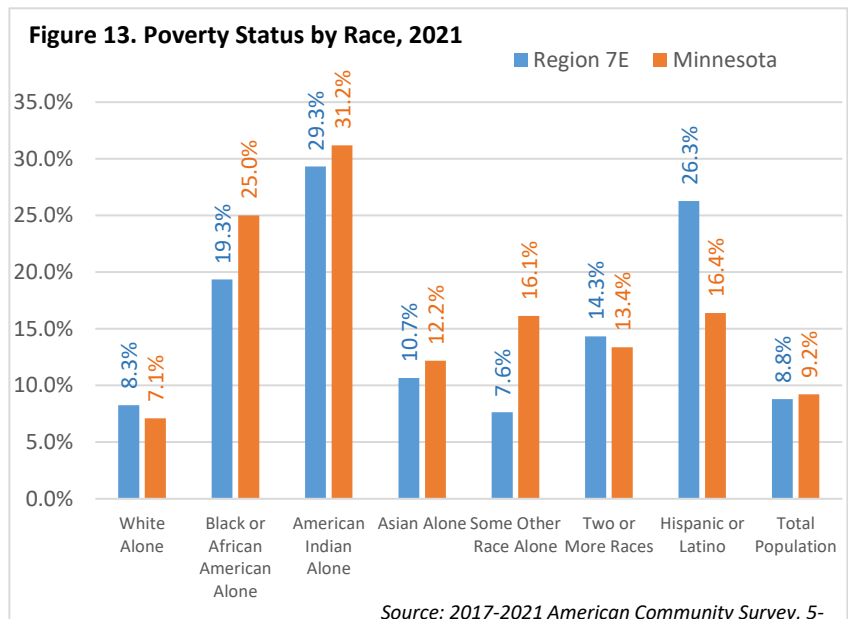
According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$60,720 in 2022. The cost of living for a similar family in Region 7E was \$61,632 – which was the second highest of the 13 EDRs in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; and the cost of the region’s transportation was significantly higher 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 \$19.75 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week (Table 8).

Table 8. Region 7E 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
Region 7E										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$37,632	\$18.09	\$0	\$393	\$160	\$954	\$944	\$326	\$359
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$57,984	\$27.88	\$854	\$580	\$399	\$1,220	\$951	\$435	\$393
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$61,632	\$19.75	\$426	\$897	\$555	\$1,220	\$1,116	\$512	\$410
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$86,016	\$20.68	\$1,250	\$1,170	\$566	\$1,678	\$1,182	\$689	\$633
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 Region 7E would be \$37,632, which would require an hourly wage of \$18.09 to meet the basic needs standard of living (Table 8). That was again the second highest in the state.

Overall, Region 7E’s poverty rate was 8.8%, which was below the statewide rate of 9.2%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that over 29% of the region’s American Indian and 26% of Hispanic or Latinos were below the poverty level in 2021. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 14% those of Two or More Races, and 19% for Black or African Americans. About 11% percent of Asian or other Pacific Islanders also were below the poverty level in 2021 and only 8% of those identifying as Some Other Race were below the poverty level.



Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey, 5-

With the exception of the higher rate for whites, Hispanic or Latino residents, and people of two or more races, the region’s poverty rates were below the statewide rates (Figure 13).

WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED’s [Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 7E was \$22.48 in the first quarter of 2023, which was the sixth highest wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. Region 7E’s median wage was \$1.54 below the state’s median hourly wage, equaling 93.6% 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 per year for a full-time worker. Region 7E had lower wages than neighboring Regions 7W at \$23.10 and Region 3 at \$22.57, but higher than Region 5 at \$19.98 (Table 9).

Nearly 11% of the jobs in Region 7E were Food Prep & Serving Related occupations, which had a higher concentration than the state as a whole. The region’s highest location quotient was for Protective Service occupations, at 1.8. Region 7E also had a higher share of workers in Community & Social Service; Education, Training & Library; Food Preparation & Serving Related; Farming, Fishing, & Forestry; Healthcare Support; and Construction & Extraction (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
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$21.20	49,510
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
State of Minnesota	\$24.25	2,827,310

Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	State of Minnesota		
					Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$22.48	48,210	100.0%	1.0	\$24.25	2,827,310	100.0%
Management	\$45.02	2,560	5.3%	0.8	\$51.58	193,760	6.9%
Business & Financial Operations	\$33.54	1,560	3.2%	0.5	\$38.19	201,940	7.1%
Computer & Mathematical	\$38.36	390	0.8%	0.2	\$49.73	99,250	3.5%
Architecture & Engineering	\$38.62	640	1.3%	0.7	\$40.60	53,100	1.9%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$33.22	360	0.7%	0.7	\$39.37	29,070	1.0%
Community & Social Service	\$25.76	1,420	2.9%	1.5	\$25.82	54,820	1.9%
Legal	\$35.76	180	0.4%	0.6	\$47.87	18,730	0.7%
Education, Training & Library	\$25.34	3,650	7.6%	1.3	\$24.82	158,830	5.6%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$26.15	350	0.7%	0.5	\$28.80	37,630	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$40.05	3,150	6.5%	1.0	\$41.07	186,700	6.6%
Healthcare Support	\$17.90	3,310	6.9%	1.2	\$17.40	162,400	5.7%
Protective Service	\$29.98	1,280	2.7%	1.8	\$25.83	40,620	1.4%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$14.99	5,040	10.5%	1.4	\$14.89	216,970	7.7%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$18.03	1,340	2.8%	1.0	\$18.26	76,210	2.7%
Personal Care & Service	\$17.45	1,210	2.5%	1.2	\$16.96	58,120	2.1%
Sales & Related	\$16.26	4,790	9.9%	1.2	\$18.14	239,500	8.5%
Office & Administrative Support	\$22.25	5,020	10.4%	0.9	\$23.06	345,830	12.2%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$22.00	90	0.2%	1.3	\$19.84	4,060	0.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$29.51	2,850	5.9%	1.5	\$31.00	113,930	4.0%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$24.88	1,840	3.8%	1.1	\$27.95	98,670	3.5%
Production	\$22.26	3,720	7.7%	1.0	\$22.07	209,380	7.4%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$19.42	3,470	7.2%	0.9	\$21.05	227,780	8.1%

Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in food prep and serving, building, grounds cleaning and maintenance, sales and related, personal care and service, and healthcare support, which tend to have lower experience and educational requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Region 7E and the state is also much lower in these jobs. In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, legal, architecture and engineering, computer and mathematical, healthcare practitioners, business and financial operations, and life, physical, and 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.

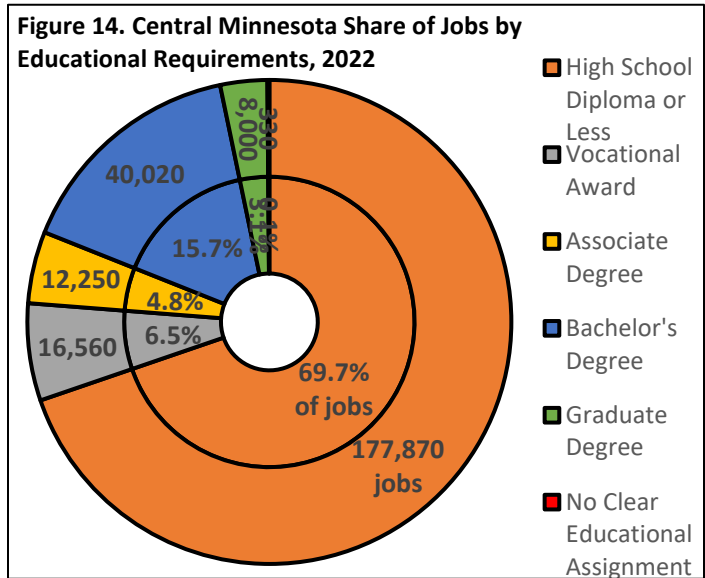
Central Minnesota	Number of Total Vacancies	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Percent Part-Time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Percent Requiring Certificate or License	Job Vacancy Rate
Total, All Occupations	20,029	\$18.05	39%	19%	23%	40%	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 one-third of current jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other two-thirds can be started with a high school diploma or less and 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 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 \$19,500 and more than \$52,000 per year in Minnesota¹. For those who go to college, choice of major matters – different programs lead to different jobs that earn different amounts of money.



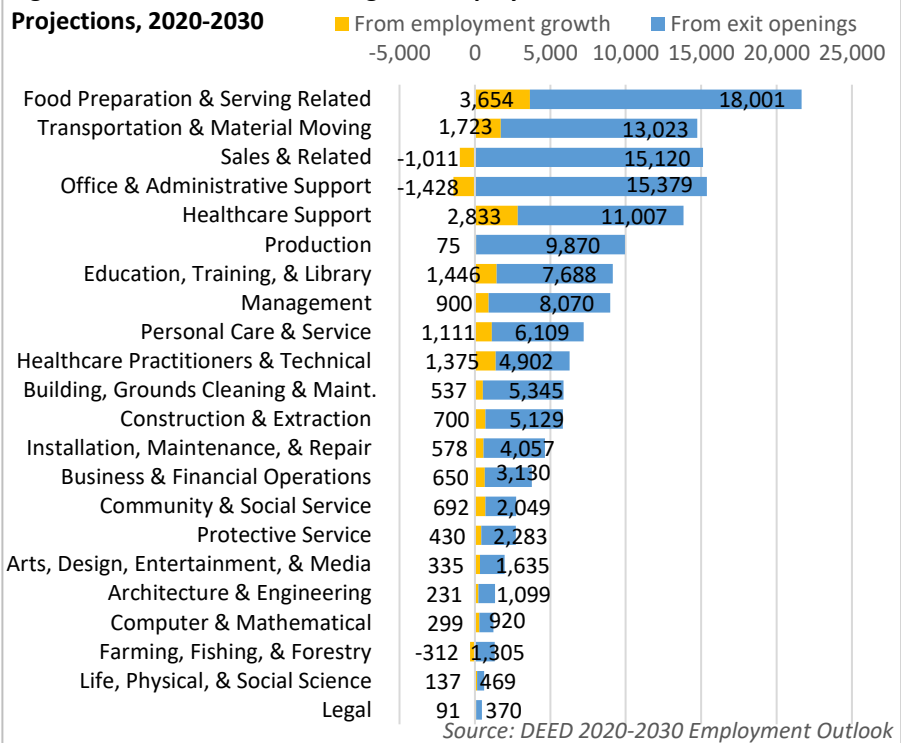
Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Region 7E is a part of the larger 13-county Central planning area, which is projected to grow 5% percent from 2020 to 2030, a gain of 15,046 new jobs. That is the fifth fastest of the 6 planning regions in the state. In addition, the region is also expected to see an additional 136,960 openings created by workers retiring or leaving the labor force.

Food Prep & Serving, Healthcare Support, and Transportation & Material Moving occupations are projected to see the most new growth over the decade and only Sales & Related, Office & Admin Support, and Farming, Fishing & Forestry are expected to see negative employment change (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Central Minnesota Regional Employment Projections, 2020-2030



Source: DEED 2020-2030 Employment Outlook

¹ <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=94>

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).

Table 12. Central Minnesota Occupations in Demand by Education Level (Median Wage), 2022

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

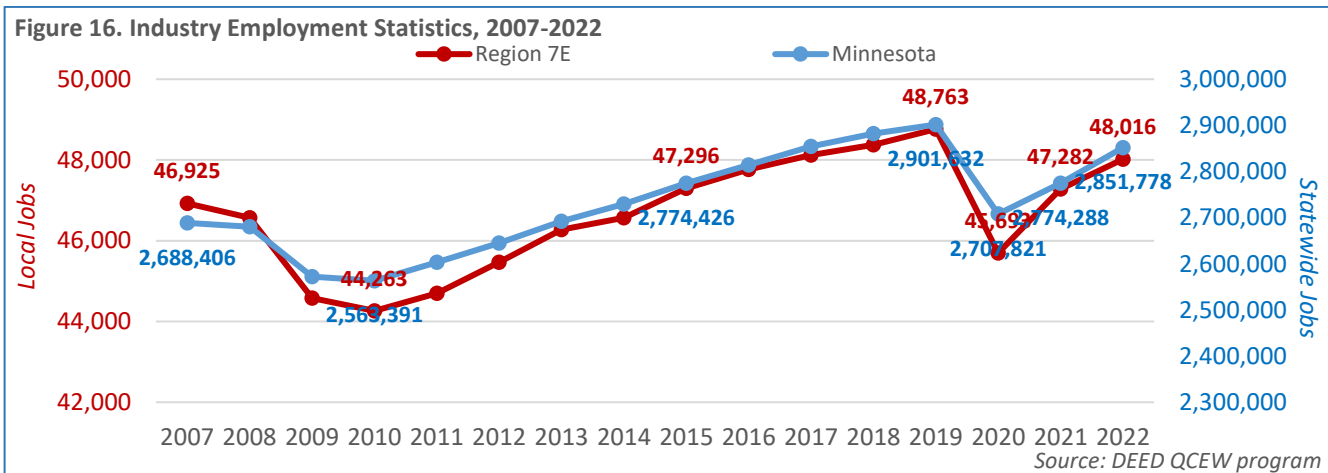
According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Region 7E was home to 4,077 business establishments providing an annual average of 48,016 covered jobs through 2022, with a total payroll of nearly \$2.28 billion. That was about 1.7% of total employment in the state of Minnesota, making it the fourth smallest economy of the 13 EDRs in the state. Average annual wages were \$47,650 in the region, which was about \$22,074 lower than the state's average annual wage, and the second lowest of the 13 EDRs.

Chisago County is the largest employment center in the region, with 15,781 jobs at 1,333 firms; accounting for 32% of the region's jobs. Isanti County was the next largest, with 11,419 jobs at 936 firms, followed by Mille Lacs County with 755 firms and 9,243 jobs and Pine County with 7,600 jobs at 707 firms. The region regained more than 700 jobs over the past year, but was still about 750 jobs below its pre-pandemic employment level in 2019. Four of the five counties saw job growth over the past year, with only Chisago County still losing jobs. However, Chisago was one of three counties that actually had more jobs now than in 2019, with Isanti and Kanabec also up despite the Pandemic Recession. In contrast, both Mille Lacs and Pine are still down more than -5.0% since 2019, with severe losses during the pandemic (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
Region 7E	4,077	48,016	\$2,287,981,648	\$47,650	+734	+1.6%	-747	-1.5%
Chisago Co.	1,333	15,781	\$848,390,348	\$53,760	-30	-0.2%	+178	+1.1%
Isanti Co.	936	11,419	\$536,804,949	\$47,010	+323	+2.9%	+237	+2.1%
Kanabec Co.	346	3,972	\$188,191,127	\$47,379	+133	+3.5%	+65	+1.7%
Mille Lacs Co.	755	9,243	\$403,451,661	\$43,649	+120	+1.3%	-482	-5.0%
Pine Co.	707	7,600	\$311,143,563	\$40,940	+189	+2.6%	-744	-8.9%
State of 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 \(QCEW\)](#)

Beyond that, Region 7E has seen employment ups and downs over the past 15 years, but ended 2019 with about 2,150 more jobs than it had in 2014. The region was initially hit harder by the pandemic than the state, but has recovered more quickly through 2022. Before the pandemic, job growth had been steady but slower out of the Great Recession. Region 7E finally regained all the jobs lost during the recession in 2015, while the state reached breakeven in 2013 (Figure 16).



With 9,230 jobs at 550 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in Region 7E, accounting for 19.2% of total jobs in the region. Due to the region’s older population, the largest sector was Nursing & Residential Care Facilities which had 3,500 jobs. However, the region’s fastest growing Health Care sector was Social Assistance including housing, food, family, child care and other social services.

Retail Trade is the next largest industry in Region 7E, with 6,647 jobs at 465 firms, accounting for 13.8% of total jobs in the region. Accommodation & Food Services is the third largest industry with 5,724 jobs at 313 stores, but was hit especially hard during the pandemic, remaining down 631 jobs. The related Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry also provided 684 jobs at 80 locations, also suffering significant employment losses during the pandemic. These three industries provide 27.2% of the region’s jobs but have relatively low wages.

With 5,313 jobs at 255 firms Manufacturing is the fourth largest industry in Region 7E and saw above average growth over the past year. Wages in manufacturing were more than \$8,000 higher than in the total of all industries. Region 7E also has a high concentration of public sector jobs in Educational Services, with 4,648 jobs at 78 institutions – primarily at Elementary & Secondary Schools, but also at Junior Colleges.

Twelve of the 20 main industries in the region remain down from their pre-pandemic employment levels, with the largest relative deficits in Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, Accommodation & Food Services, Real Estate, and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting. Most industries have started to add jobs back since 2020, with the largest growth in some of those same industries that saw the largest initial declines.

Table 14. Region 7E Industry Employment Statistics, 2022

NAICS Industry Title	2022 Annual Data			Avg. Annual Wage	2020-2022		2019-2022	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	4,077	48,016	\$2,287,982	\$47,650	+734	+1.6%	-747	-1.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	53	295	\$11,925	\$40,424	-11	-3.6%	-60	-16.9%
Mining	6	32	\$2,030	\$63,428	-6	-15.8%	-7	-17.9%
Construction	691	3,263	\$213,424	\$65,407	+150	+4.8%	+359	+12.4%
Manufacturing	256	5,313	\$296,129	\$55,737	+154	+3.0%	+161	+3.1%
Utilities	22	247	\$24,997	\$101,201	0	0.0%	-8	-3.1%
Wholesale Trade	118	798	\$42,069	\$52,719	+58	+7.8%	+66	+9.0%
Retail Trade	465	6,647	\$216,731	\$32,606	+203	+3.2%	+300	+4.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	182	1,235	\$61,435	\$49,745	-84	-6.4%	+31	+2.6%
Information	50	557	\$27,639	\$49,622	+25	+4.7%	-31	-5.3%
Finance & Insurance	131	955	\$59,932	\$62,756	-2	-0.2%	-10	-1.0%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	118	212	\$6,876	\$32,435	-16	-7.0%	-54	-20.3%
Professional & Technical Services	217	1,407	\$128,733	\$91,494	+125	+9.8%	+149	+11.8%
Management of Companies	10	122	\$7,875	\$64,549	+3	+2.5%	+40	+48.8%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	167	1,228	\$61,416	\$50,013	-168	-12.0%	+209	+20.5%
Educational Services	78	4,648	\$221,593	\$47,675	+262	+6.0%	-117	-2.5%
Health Care & Social Assistance	550	9,230	\$482,258	\$52,249	-322	-3.4%	-631	-6.4%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	80	684	\$13,386	\$19,570	+47	+7.4%	-110	-13.9%
Accommodation & Food Services	311	5,719	\$143,730	\$25,132	+254	+4.6%	-763	-11.8%
Other Services	423	1,462	\$45,082	\$30,836	+53	+3.8%	-40	-2.7%
Public Administration	152	3,957	\$220,722	\$55,780	+6	+0.2%	-234	-5.6%

Source: [DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's Quarterly Employment Demographics (QED) program, the workforce in the region was aging over the past 10 years. Nearly one-quarter (24.7%) of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 22.1% statewide and just 19.9% in the region one decade earlier. In contrast, the percentage of workers aged 20-24 or 45-54 was falling. (Table 15).

As noted above, wages were climbing across the board for all workers due to rising demand and a tight labor market. While wages were still lowest for the youngest and oldest workers who tend to fill lower-skilled, less-than-fulltime jobs in industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services, the two youngest age groups enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2011 to 2021. Wages were highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age, and males earned more per hour than females, though much of the difference is associated to the substantial increase in hours worked by males.

Table 15. Workforce Demographics by Age Group and Gender, Total of All Industries, 2012-2022

Region 7E	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%	\$20.50	\$14.32	362	380
19 years & under	9.4%	8.7%	6.6%	6.3%	\$14.28	\$7.80	130	129
20 to 24 years	8.6%	10.4%	9.2%	11.3%	\$17.98	\$10.31	296	279
25 to 44 years	39.5%	38.1%	43.6%	42.3%	\$23.07	\$15.90	420	424
45 to 54 years	17.9%	22.9%	18.4%	21.9%	\$24.74	\$17.13	455	452
55 to 64 years	18.1%	15.6%	16.7%	14.7%	\$22.40	\$16.88	436	431
65 years & over	6.6%	4.3%	5.4%	3.5%	\$18.15	\$13.01	225	220
Male	44.0%	42.3%	49.1%	49.1%	\$22.85	\$15.88	439	444
Female	56.0%	57.7%	50.9%	50.9%	\$19.68	\$13.25	325	345

Source: [DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics](#)

EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

People of color account for 9.5% of the total population in Region 7E and hold 8.4% of jobs, compared to the state overall where they hold 15.2% of jobs. According to data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators program, people of color held 3,989 jobs in Region 7E compared to 43,772 jobs held by white Workers. The number of jobs has more than doubled since 2000 when people of color held just 4.1% of jobs (See Figure 17).

People of color have filled an additional 2,393 jobs since 2000 compared to 6,144 by White workers, amounting to 28% of all new jobs. Hispanic/Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic groups after whites with 1,114 jobs in 2021, a third of all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) held jobs. The next largest number of jobs held by BIPOC workers was American Indian or Alaska Natives, holding 898 jobs in 2021. The number of jobs held by this group increased by 528 since 2000, amounting to a 143% increase. Asian employment was the fastest growing, expanding 210% from 2000 (See Figure 18).

The Public Administration and Accommodation & Food Services sectors have the highest share of BIPOC employment at 16% and 13.7%, respectively. Admin Support and Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing also had more than 10% BIPOC workers. The largest number of workers of color are employed by Accommodation & Food Services (726 jobs) and Healthcare & Social Assistance (712 jobs) (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Employment Share & Ethnicity in Region 7E, 2000-2021

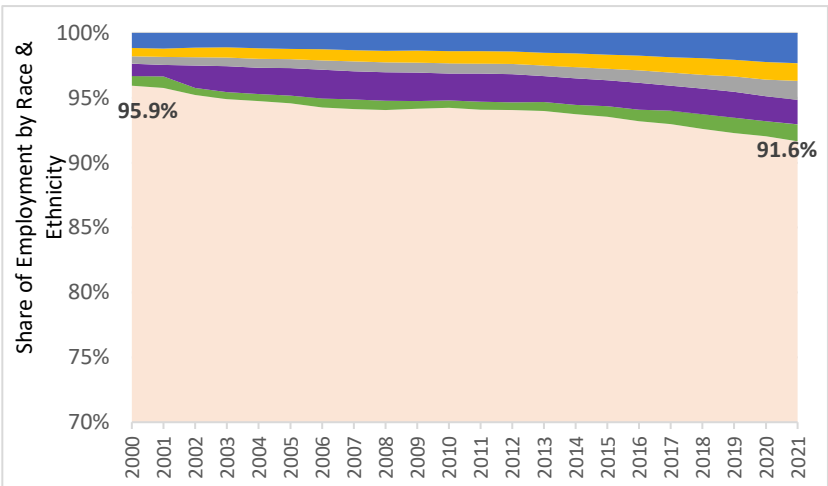


Figure 18. People of Color Employment in Region 7E, 2000-2021

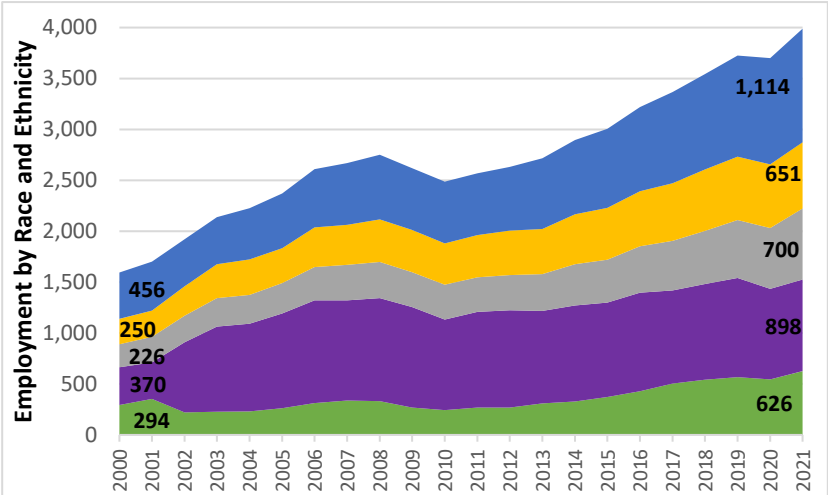
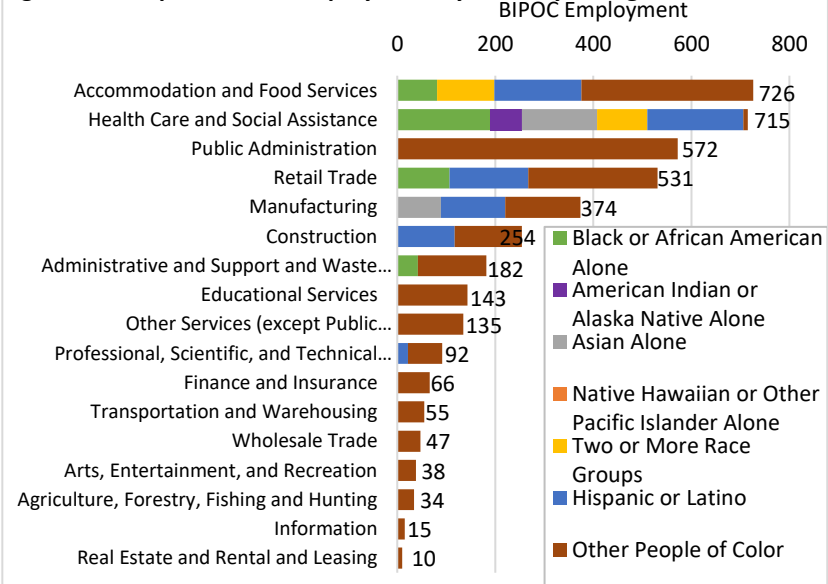


Figure 19. People of Color Employment by Industry in Region 7E, 2021



Source: US Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators

INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Central Minnesota is projected to grow 5% from 2020 to 2030, a gain of 15,046 new jobs, which would make it the 5th fastest growing region in the state. The largest and fourth fastest growing industry is expected to be Healthcare & Social Assistance, which may account for one-third (36.8%) of total projected growth in the region by 2030. The region is also expected to see significant employment growth in Accommodation & Food Services, Educational Services, and Other Services. The fastest growing industries were many that suffered the largest losses during the pandemic. In contrast, Real Estate, Utilities, Agriculture, and Retail are all expected to suffer job cuts in the next decade (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
Accommodation & Food Services	19,327	23,505	+21.6%	+4,178
Educational Services	23,734	24,976	+5.2%	+1,242
Other Services	10,108	11,290	+11.7%	+1,182
Manufacturing	39,543	40,646	+2.8%	+1,103
Public Administration	19,239	20,198	+5.0%	+959
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2,636	3,456	+31.1%	+820
Construction	18,984	19,792	+4.3%	+808
Transportation & Warehousing	10,098	10,685	+5.8%	+587
Professional & Technical Services	6,685	7,228	+8.1%	+543
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	9,545	10,066	+5.5%	+521
Wholesale Trade	10,123	10,516	+3.9%	+393
Information	2,639	2,842	+7.7%	+203
Finance & Insurance	7,796	7,912	+1.5%	+116
Mining	364	386	+6.0%	+22
Management of Companies	1,877	1,891	+0.7%	+14
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,754	1,737	-1.0%	-17
Utilities	1,952	1,686	-13.6%	-266
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & hunt	5,052	4,493	-11.1%	-559
Retail Trade	35,588	33,781	-5.1%	-1,807

Source: DEED 2020-2030 Employment Outlook

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Region 7E was home to 10,884 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).” Unlike covered employment, Region 7E saw a steady decline in nonemployers over the past decade, responding to economic changes. In sum, the region lost 653 nonemployers from 2009 to 2019, a -5.7% decrease. Together, these nonemployers in Region 7E generated sales receipts of \$497.3 million in 2019 (Table 17).

	2019		2009-2019	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Region 7E	10,884	\$497,327	-653	-5.7%
Chisago Co.	3,724	\$172,482	-163	-4.2%
Isanti Co.	2,696	\$127,302	-63	-2.3%
Kanabec Co.	1,059	\$50,098	-83	-7.3%
Mille Lacs Co.	1,682	\$72,291	-208	-11.0%
Pine Co.	1,723	\$75,154	-136	-7.3%
State of Minnesota	418,080	\$20,377,253	+39,926	+10.6%

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Unlike other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is not a key industry in Region 7E, with 3,780 farms producing just under \$215 million in the market value of products sold in 2017 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All of the counties in the planning region rank near the bottom in Minnesota in regards to the market value of products sold, with all five counties ranked between 69th and 75th of the 87 counties in the state (Table 18). Market value of products sold has decreased by 20% in 2012.

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Region 7E	3,780	\$214,252,000	11
Chisago Co.	821	\$52,838,000	69
Isanti Co.	805	\$48,673,000	70
Kanabec Co.	624	\$29,832,000	75
Mille Lacs Co.	707	\$43,931,000	72
Pine Co.	823	\$38,978,000	73
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 320-223-6992 or at luke.greiner@state.mn.us