

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 6W: Upper Minnesota Valley

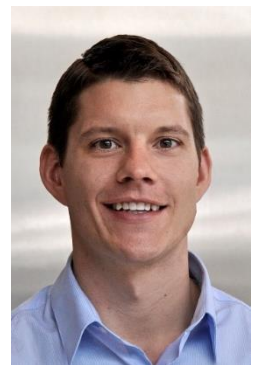
Covers counties:

Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine

2024 REGIONAL PROFILE

Updated January 2025

Luke Greiner
Regional Analyst, Central & Southwest Minnesota
 Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
 Office: 320-223-6992
 E-mail: luke.greiner@state.mn.us
 Web: <http://mn.gov/deed/data/>



DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE

Economic Development Region 6W – Upper Minnesota Valley includes a total of 5 counties, located in the larger 23-county Southwest Minnesota planning area. Region 6W was home to 43,093 people in 2023, comprising less than 1% of the state’s total population, making it the smallest of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in the state. Region 6W also saw a -4.6% population decline since 2010, which was the second fastest decline of the EDRs. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw an 8.2% gain from 2010 to 2023 (Table 1).

Table 1. Population Change 2010-2022

	2010 Population	2023 Estimates	2010-2023 Change	
			Number	Percent
Region 6W	45,190	43,093	-2,097	-4.6%
Big Stone Co.	5,269	5,105	-164	-3.1%
Chippewa Co.	12,441	12,172	-269	-2.2%
Lac qui Parle Co.	7,259	6,630	-629	-8.7%
Swift Co.	9,783	9,719	-64	-0.7%
Yellow Medicine Co.	10,438	9,467	-971	-9.3%
State of Minnesota	5,303,925	5,737,915	+433,990	+8.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates

Every county in the region lost population since 2010, with Yellow Medicine County seeing the fastest population decline in the region and the 29th largest decline in the state. Big Stone County is now the fourth smallest county in the state, while Lac qui Parle is the 11th smallest, Yellow Medicine is 16th, Swift is 19th, and Chippewa County is the 26th smallest. These recent declines are part of a long-term trend in the region, which has been losing population since the 1950’s.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

Region 6W experienced a negative natural change – having more deaths than births – in the past three years. There were 1,854 deaths compared to 1,632 births, a gap of -222 people.

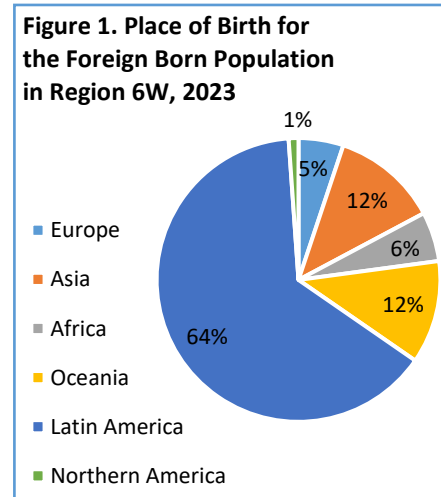
Table 2. Components of Population Change, 2020-2023

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Region 6W	-752	-222	1,632	1,854	-516	+216	-732
Minnesota	+31,111	+40,368	207,857	167,489	-11,352	+34,624	-45,976

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

The region also lost population because of out-migration, with an estimated 516 more people moving out of the region than moving in, though the region did experience positive in-migration of an estimated 216 additional residents from international sources (Table 2).

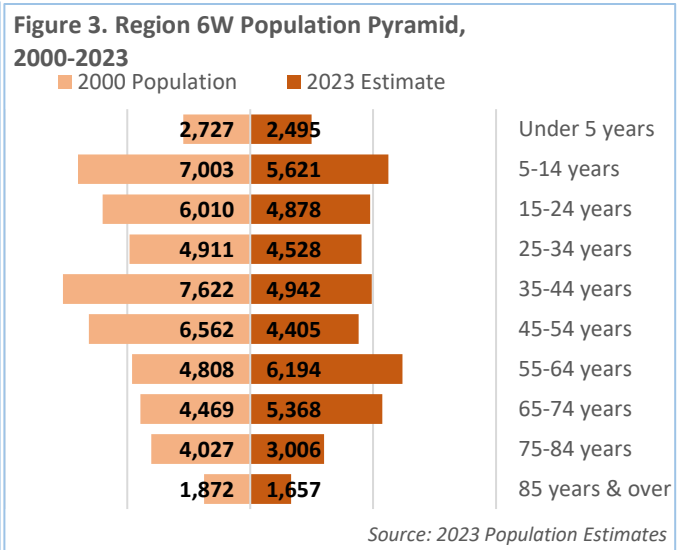
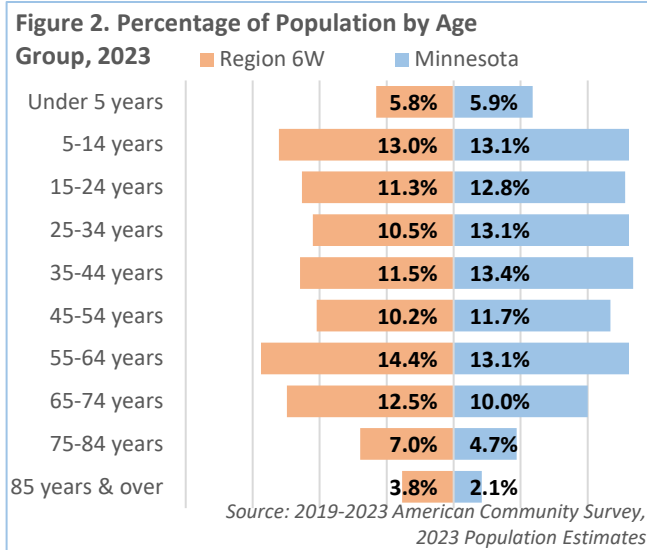
With the international in-migration, Region 6W is home to over 1,500 foreign born residents, or about 3.5% of the total population, which is very low compared to 8.6% statewide. However, the number of immigrants in the region increased by 64% since 2013, outpacing the statewide growth rate of 25%. Over half of the immigrants in the region (978 people) were from Latin America, while the second largest number were from Asia, accounting for 12% of immigrants in the region. The fastest growing wave of new immigrants came from Africa, rising by more than 377% percent from 2013 to 2023, but the largest numbers are still coming from Latin America (Figure 1).



By year of entry, foreign-born residents in Region 6W were newer than in the rest of the state, with more than 44% entering the U.S. since 2010 compared to 35% statewide. Only 26% were naturalized citizens in 2023, compared to 58% statewide.

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Region 6W has a much older population than the rest of the state, with 23% of residents aged 65 years and over, compared to 17% statewide. Consequently, Region 6W had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 54-year-old age group, typically considered the “prime working years”, but a similar share of school-aged children compared to the state (Figure 2).

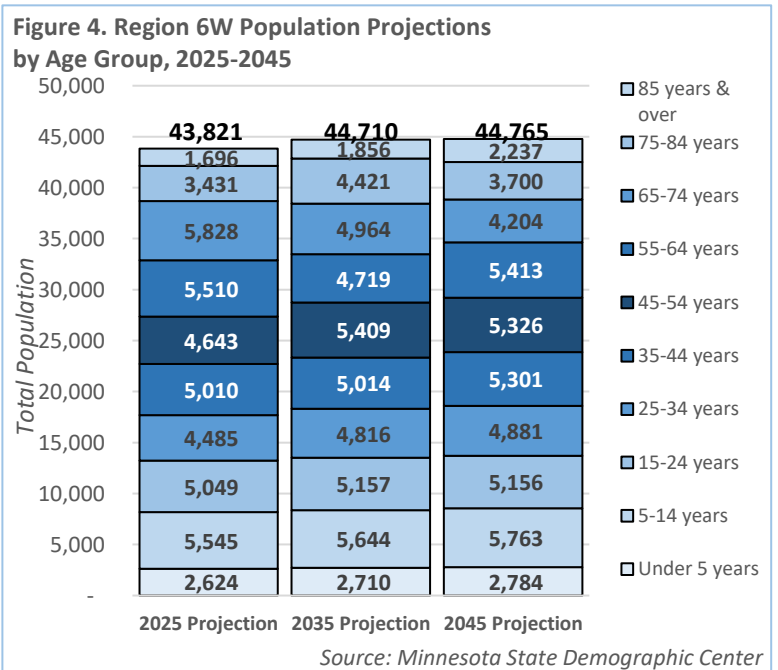


A large portion of the region’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation (people born between 1946 and 1964) which is creating a significant shift in the population over time. While the number of younger and middle-aged residents was declining, the number of residents aged 55 years and over was mostly increasing. This included a huge jump in the number of people from 55 to 74 years of age, and a lower number of people aged 75 years and over, as some senior citizens are choosing to leave the region for various reasons (Figure 3).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

Region 6W is projected to reverse long standing trends of decline and grow by a healthy 2.2% in the next 20 years. According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Region 6W is expected to gain 944 residents from 2025 to 2045, a 2.2% increase (see Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 5.5%.

Most notably, Region 6W is projected to gain residents in every age group except 55-74 year olds. A 28% decrease from losing 1,624 people aged 65 to 74 years is more than offset by gains across the other age cohorts. The region is expected to increase by nearly 500 people younger than 25. This is important for regional economic growth projections, which show an increase of 1,370 people 25-54 years (10%), in their prime working years.



POPULATION BY RACE

Region 6W’s population is less racially diverse than the state’s, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2023, 90% of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 78% of residents statewide. The region had much smaller percentages of Black or African Americans, Asian or Other Pacific Islanders, and people of Two or More Races. However, Region 6W had slightly larger percentages of American Indians, people of Some Other Race and those reporting Hispanic or Latino origin than the state (Table 3).

With almost 2,700 people, the largest ethnic group is Hispanic or Latino, which also added the largest number of residents in the previous ten years. The fastest decline was from white residents, which decreased by -8.5% from 2013 to 2023.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2023	Region 6W				Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2013-2023		Percent	Change from 2013-2023
			Numeric	Percent		
Total	43,530	100.0%	-1,107	-2.5%	100.0%	+6.8%
White	38,986	89.6%	-3,629	-8.5%	78.4%	-2.2%
Black or African American	303	0.7%	+40	+15.2%	6.8%	+38.9%
American Indian & Alaska Native	554	1.3%	+160	+40.6%	0.9%	-11.6%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	549	1.3%	+276	+101.1%	5.1%	+29.6%
Some Other Race	1,344	3.1%	+975	+264.2%	2.7%	+96.1%
Two or More Races	1,794	4.1%	+1,071	+148.1%	6.2%	+168.3%
Hispanic or Latino origin	2,732	6.3%	+1,140	+71.6%	6.2%	+37.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey

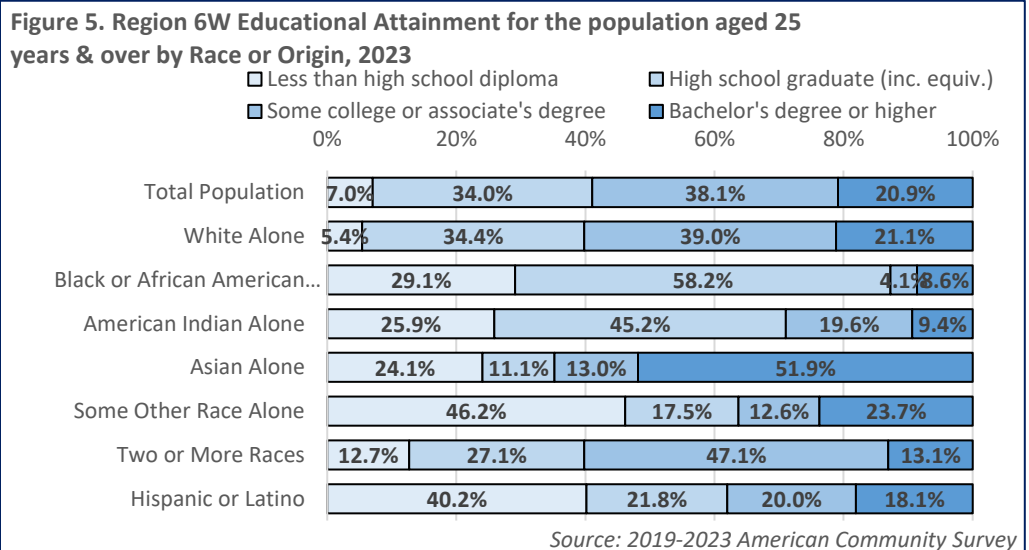
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With 36% of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Region 6W has lower educational attainment than the state, where 47% of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. In contrast, Region 6W has a slightly higher percentage of people with some college but no degree or associate’s degrees, and a higher percentage of people with a high school diploma or less (Table 4).

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Adult Population, 2023	Region 6W		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
Total Population, 18 years & over	33,534	100.0%	100.0%
Less than high school	2,617	7.8%	6.8%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	11,475	34.2%	24.4%
Some college, no degree	7,321	21.8%	21.4%
Associate's degree	5,331	15.9%	11.2%
Bachelor's degree	5,111	15.2%	24.0%
Advanced degree	1,679	5.0%	12.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey

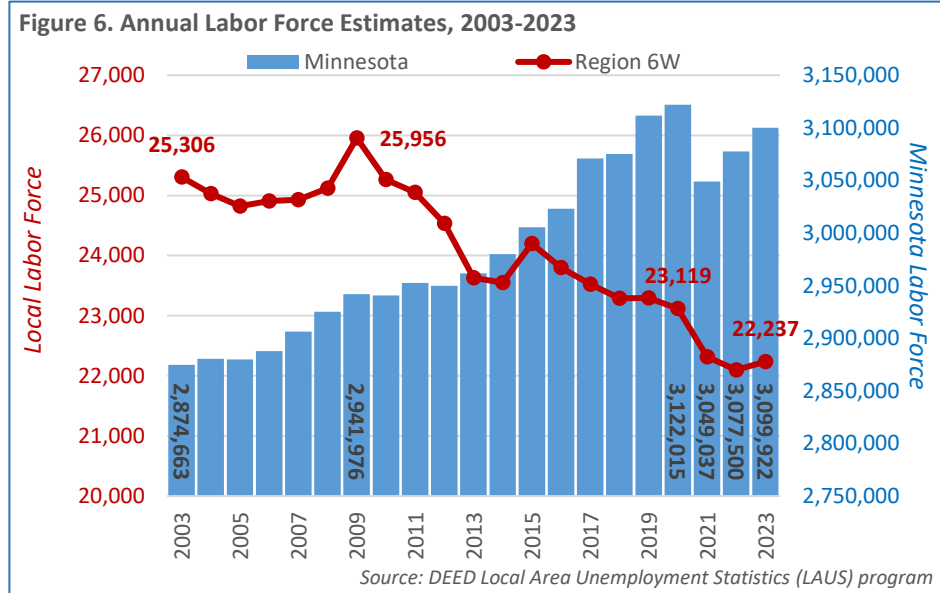
Educational attainment varies significantly by race and ethnicity in Region 6W. Roughly 40% of Hispanic or Latino residents, 26% of American Indians, 46% of people of Some Other Race, and 24% of Asians had less than a high school diploma, compared to 5.4% of white residents. Asians and people of two or more races were estimated to have attended some college or received an associate degree or bachelor’s degree, roughly the same or higher than the share for white residents (Figure 5).



LABOR FORCE

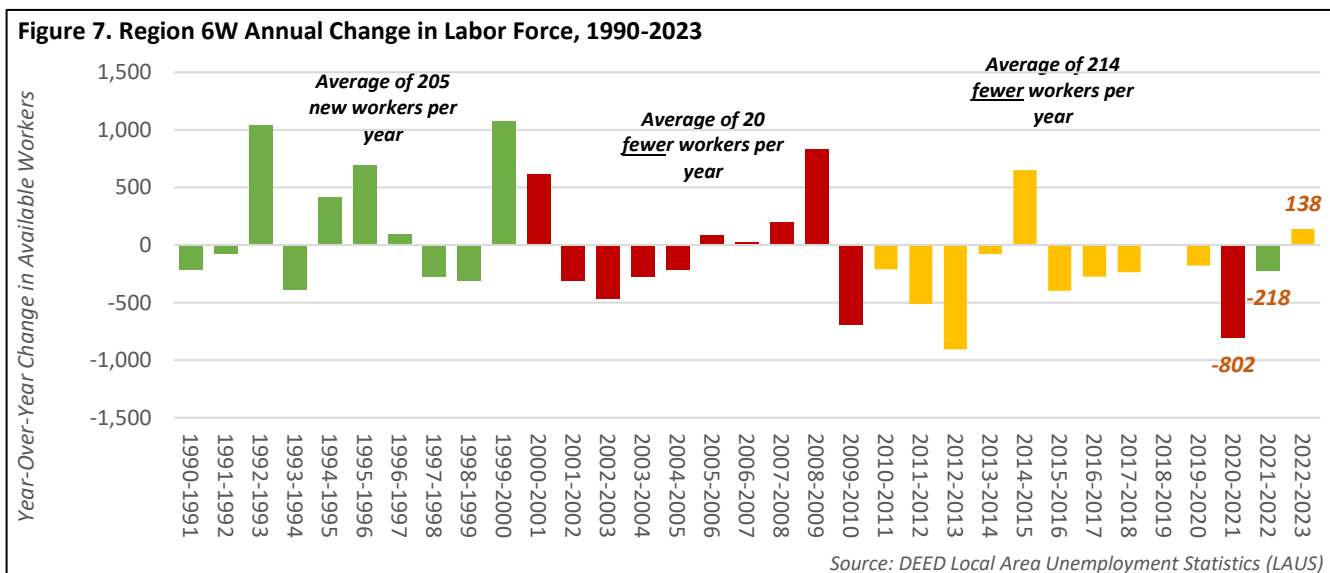
LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Region 6W had an average labor force count of 22,237 workers in 2023. The regional labor force has mostly trended downward over the past 20 years, and ended 2023 with about 1,000 fewer workers than it had in 2019. Pandemic-related factors pushed many workers out of the labor force across the state, and Region 6W followed suit. Fortunately, the region gained nearly 140 workers over the previous year (Figure 6).



Region 6W saw a slow but steady decline in workers from 2000 to 2007, then added over 1,000 workers during the Great Recession as people flooded into the labor market to earn extra income. As the economy recovered, people began dropping out again until a brief surge in 2014, then the region resumed further declines. These labor force constraints will have a substantial impact on the regional economy.

After averaging a net gain of 205 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Region 6W were able to tap into a growing pool of talented workers. With recent declines, the region actually averaged a loss of about 214 fewer workers per year between 2010 to 2020 (Figure 7). Increasingly tight labor markets and a growing scarcity of workers is recognized as one of the most significant barriers to future economic growth. However, the labor market shift in 2020 from the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that for a brief time there were record numbers of unemployed workers. But that quickly changed to a record low number of unemployed workers in 2022. The small number of unemployed workers combined with labor force losses are contributing to a very tight labor market.



LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS, 2025-2035

If Region 6W’s population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see an increase in the labor force over the next decade. Applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group creates labor force projections for the region, which show a 1.3% increase in workforce numbers. Due to the loss of Baby Boomers into retirement, the 55-74 year old age group will decline but all other age cohorts are expected to grow except for a nominal loss in teenage workers.

	2025 Labor Force Projection	2035 Labor Force Projection	2025-2035 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	1,026	1,020	-6	-0.6%
20 to 24 years	1,952	2,055	+103	+5.3%
25 to 44 years	8,061	8,345	+284	+3.5%
45 to 54 years	3,979	4,636	+656	+16.5%
55 to 64 years	4,009	3,434	-576	-14.4%
65 to 74 years	1,835	1,563	-272	-14.8%
75 years & over	424	519	+95	+22.4%
Total Labor Force	21,286	21,572	+285	+1.3%

Source: calculated from MN State Demographic Center projections, and 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 62% of the population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Region 6W had lower labor force participation rates than the state’s 69% rate. However, the region did have higher labor force participation rates than the state in the oldest age groups, (Table 6).

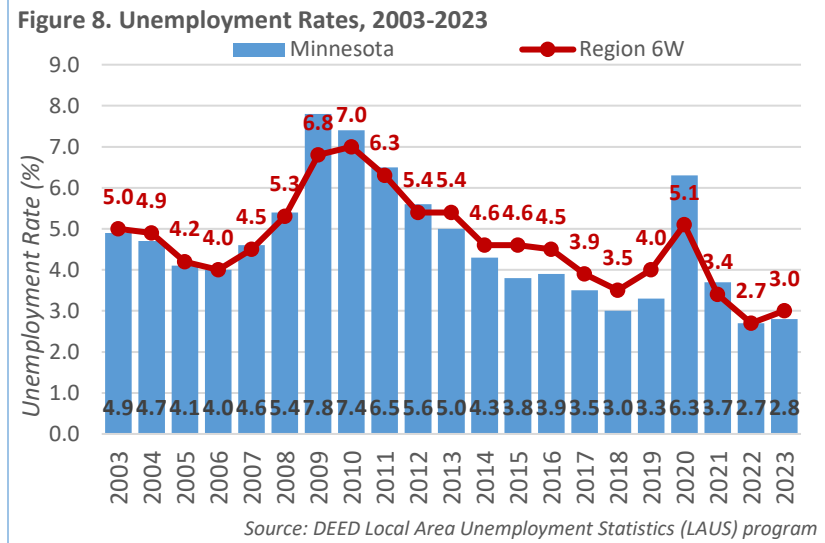
The region had lower participation rates than the state for every race group except for people of some other race. Participation and unemployment rate accuracy for racial categories are limited by small a sample size. People with disabilities have substantially lower rates of participation in the labor force in the region and have high rates of unemployment.

	Region 6W			Minnesota		Percent of Total Labor Force	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Region 6W	Minnesota
Total Labor Force	21,489	61.9%	3.5%	68.5%	3.9%		
16 to 19 years	921	47.5%	13.5%	52.7%	9.9%	4.3%	5.1%
20 to 24 years	1,991	83.1%	5.2%	83.4%	6.5%	9.3%	9.5%
25 to 44 years	8,121	84.9%	3.4%	88.7%	3.5%	37.8%	43.1%
45 to 54 years	3,814	85.7%	2.8%	87.8%	2.9%	17.7%	18.9%
55 to 64 years	4,553	72.8%	2.2%	72.8%	3.0%	21.2%	17.5%
65 to 74 years	1,707	31.5%	2.0%	27.8%	3.4%	7.9%	5.1%
75 years & over	390	8.3%	2.8%	6.6%	3.1%	1.8%	0.8%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin							
White alone	19,515	61.7%	3.2%	67.5%	3.4%	90.8%	80.0%
Black or African American	80	32.9%	0.0%	71.0%	8.4%	0.4%	6.2%
American Indian & Alaska Native	176	40.5%	2.9%	57.7%	11.4%	0.8%	0.7%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	247	58.8%	10.9%	74.6%	3.5%	1.1%	5.3%
Some Other Race	674	76.9%	8.0%	75.9%	5.6%	3.1%	2.7%
Two or More Races	803	72.3%	5.6%	74.2%	6.1%	3.7%	5.1%
Hispanic or Latino	1,299	76.2%	10.2%	77.1%	5.9%	6.0%	5.9%
Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status							
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	612	73.9%	2.6%	81.2%	4.1%	3.2%	3.2%
Employment Characteristics by Disability							
With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years	1,235	49.6%	8.4%	55.3%	9.5%	6.7%	6.1%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment							
Population, 25 to 64 years	16,966	81.3%	3.2%	84.4%	3.4%	77.8%	79.9%
Less than H.S. Diploma	933	64.6%	2.7%	66.6%	4.6%	5.5%	4.7%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	4,576	73.8%	0.8%	77.3%	2.5%	27.0%	19.4%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	7,553	86.1%	2.9%	85.1%	3.6%	44.5%	33.3%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3,903	87.8%	2.0%	90.3%	2.1%	23.0%	42.6%

Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

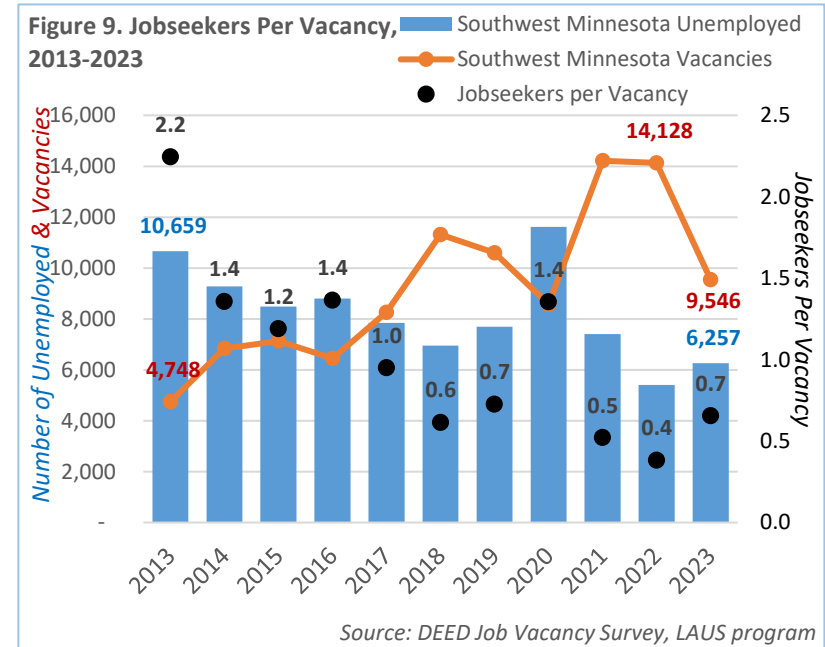
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Region 6W has consistently reported unemployment rates that closely match the state rate. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region’s unemployment rate hovered right in line with the state rate from 2002 to 2012, even dropping below the state rate during the recession in 2009 and 2010. Region 6W managed to maintain a lower rate of unemployment in 2020 due to the area’s smaller reliance on the Leisure & Hospitality sectors, however, while the state’s economy has recovered and unemployment rates are back to prerecession levels, Region 6W’s rate jumped in 2023 (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 stood at 0.7-to-1 in Southwest Minnesota by the end of 2023. The numbers of unemployed workers who are seeking employment matched with record numbers of job openings means that there was slightly less than one unemployed worker for each job opening in 2023 (see Figure 9). According to recent Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 9,546 openings reported by employers in the 23-county Southwest planning region, compared to 6,257 unemployed jobseekers in the region. In contrast, the ratio climbed well above 3-to-1 in the depths of the recession in 2009 and into 2011.



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

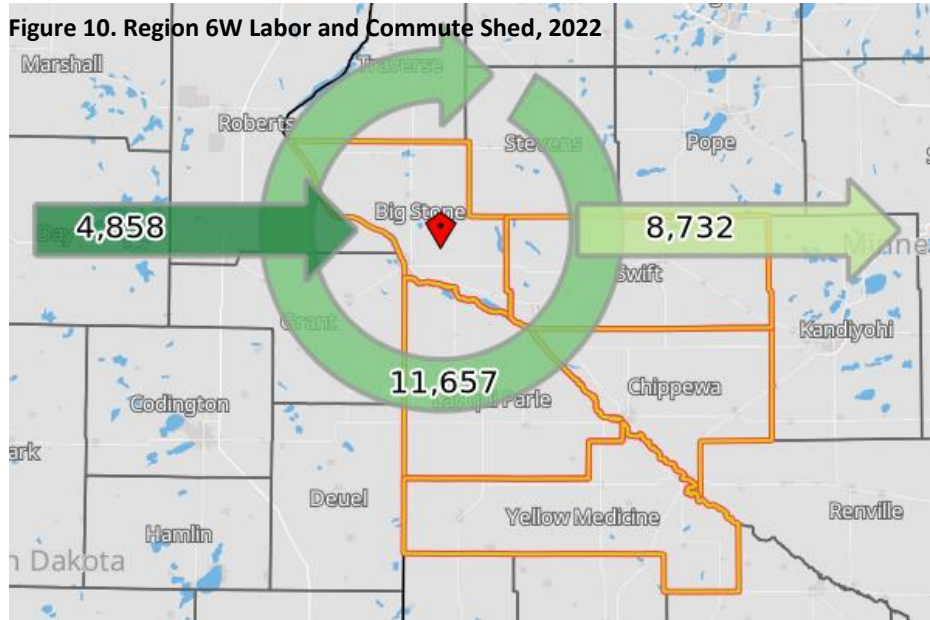
According to commuting data from the [Census Bureau](#), Region 6W is a net labor exporter, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 11,657 workers both lived and worked in Region 6W in 2022, while another 4,858 workers drove into the region from surrounding counties for work, compared to 8,732 workers who lived in the region but drove elsewhere for work (see Table 7 and Figure 10).

	2022	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	16,515	100%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	4,858	29%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	11,657	71%
<hr/>		
Living in the Selection Area	20,389	100%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	8,732	43%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	11,657	57%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Home to Montevideo, Chippewa County is the largest employment center in the region and was the biggest draw for workers, followed by Granite Falls and Canby in Yellow Medicine, Benson in Swift, and Dawson in Lac qui Parle County. Employers in the region both lose and draw workers from nearby regional centers like Willmar in Kandiyohi County, Marshall in Lyon County, and Redwood Falls in Redwood County, as well as Olivia in Renville County and Morris in Stevens County.

Figure 10. Region 6W Labor and Commute Shed, 2022

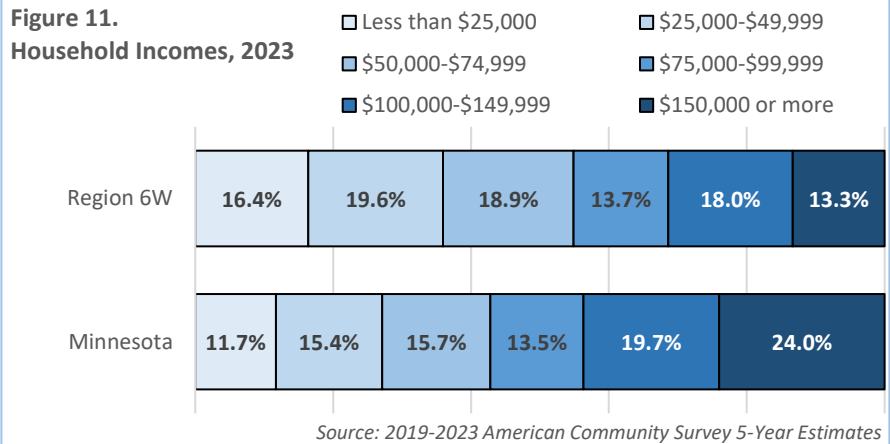


INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

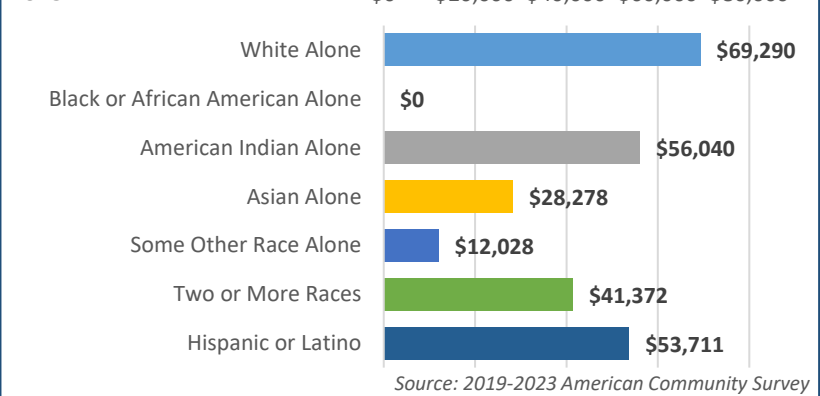
Household incomes were significantly lower in Region 6W than the rest of the state. The median household income in Region 6W was \$68,170 in 2023, compared to \$87,556 in Minnesota. About 36% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2023, compared to 27% statewide. Another 33% of households earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in the region, compared to 29% statewide. At the high end, only 31% of households in Region 6W earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 44% of households statewide (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Household Incomes, 2023



Like educational attainment and employment, median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. However, since the region's population is so small, the sample sizes for these groups were small with large margins of error, so disparities could very well be less or more than most recent estimates. Aside from white households, the largest sample of household incomes were for Hispanic or Latino households (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Region 6W Median Household Income by Race, 2023



COST OF LIVING

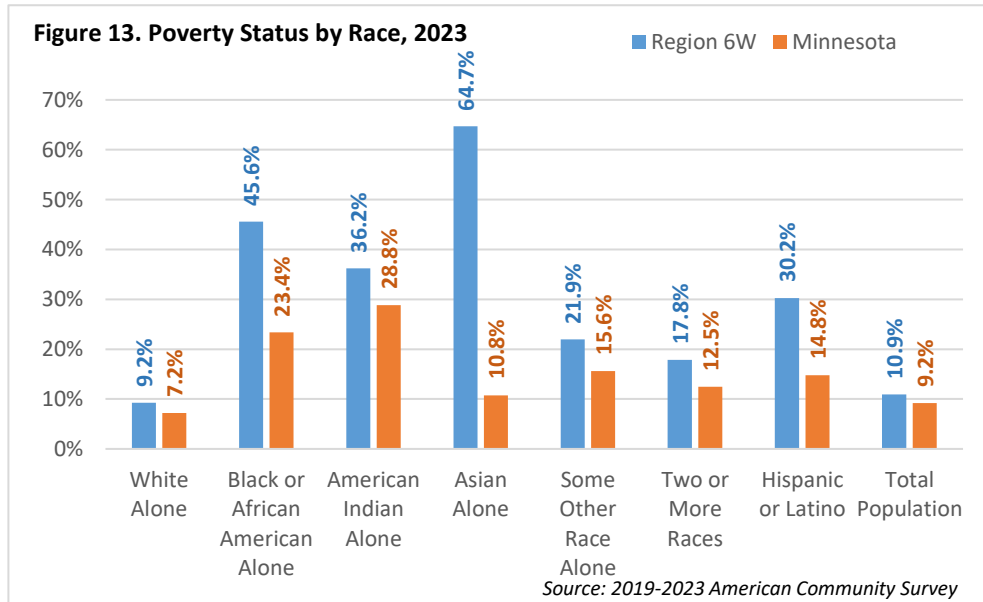
According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$67,320 in 2023. The cost of living for a similar family in Region 6W was \$54,996 – which was the second lowest of the 13 economic development regions in the state. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; though the region’s housing, child care and taxes costs were significantly lower than the rest of 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 \$17.63 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week.

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 6W would be \$28,284, which would require an hourly wage of \$13.60 to meet the basic needs standard of living (Table 8). That was also the second lowest cost of living in the state.

Table 8. Region 6W Cost of Living, 2023											
Family Composition	Number of Workers	Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs							
				Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes	
Region 6W											
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$28,284	\$13.60	\$0	\$417	\$160	\$655	\$576	\$257	\$292	
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$43,596	\$20.96	\$565	\$614	\$413	\$849	\$580	\$350	\$262	
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$54,996	\$17.63	\$283	\$951	\$573	\$849	\$994	\$431	\$502	
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$71,496	\$17.19	\$810	\$1,238	\$582	\$1,099	\$1,032	\$559	\$638	
State of Minnesota											
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$34,704	\$16.68	\$0	\$419	\$160	\$1,021	\$572	\$345	\$375	
2 parents, 1 child	1 FT, 1 PT	\$67,320	\$21.58	\$544	\$955	\$574	\$1,285	\$977	\$536	\$739	

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

Overall, Region 6W’s poverty rate was 10.9%, which was above the state rate of 9.2%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin but also suffers from reliability issues due to small sample sizes for Asians, Black or African Americans, and Two or More Races. It was estimated that at least 17% of every other race group was below the poverty level in 2023, compared to 9.2% of



whites. Over 40% of American Indian, Black or African Americans, and Asian residents were below the poverty level, which was well above state levels. However, 76% of people living in poverty in Region 6W are white, amounting to 3,527 residents. In all cases, the region’s rate was above the state, due to lower household incomes (Figure 13).

WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED’s [Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 6W was \$22.61, which was the second lowest median wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. Region 6W’s median wage was \$2.61 below the state’s median hourly wage, and \$5.17 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to roughly \$10,754 per year for a full-time worker. Region 6W had lower wages than the surrounding regions, including Region 8 at \$22.81 and Region 4 at \$23.04 (see Table 9).

The largest occupation group in the region was Office & Administrative Support, accounting for 12% of all jobs in the region. In contrast the most concentrated occupational categories are Farming, Installation & Maintenance, and Education-related occupations with location quotients of 2.5, 1.4 and 1.5, respectively (see Table 10).

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are in Food Preparation & Serving, Personal Care & Service, Healthcare Support, Sales & Related, and Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance jobs, which tend to have more employment in entry-level occupations. For the most part, the gap in pay between Region 6W and the state is also lower in these jobs (see Table 10).

	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
EDR 1 - Northwest	\$23.51	35,370
EDR 2 - Headwaters	\$22.68	32,230
EDR 3 - Arrowhead	\$23.41	138,010
EDR 4 - West Central	\$23.04	89,340
EDR 5 - North Central	\$21.89	62,970
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$22.72	50,190
EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley	\$22.61	16,230
EDR 7E - East Central	\$23.18	48,440
EDR 7W - Central	\$23.85	175,560
EDR 8 - Southwest	\$22.81	52,080
EDR 9 - South Central	\$23.24	100,990
EDR 10 - Southeast	\$24.26	240,340
EDR 11 - 7-County Twin Cities	\$27.78	1,743,500
State of Minnesota	\$25.22	2,881,100

Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics

	Region 6W				State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Statewide Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$22.61	16,230	100.0%	1.0	\$25.22	2,881,100	100.0%
Management	\$42.40	960	5.9%	0.8	\$57.75	201,710	7.0%
Business & Financial Operations	\$31.02	480	3.0%	0.4	\$39.26	202,700	7.0%
Computer & Mathematical	\$35.47	80	0.5%	0.1	\$50.83	98,240	3.4%
Architecture & Engineering	\$39.51	130	0.8%	0.4	\$42.97	58,320	2.0%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$26.93	110	0.7%	0.7	\$39.93	29,220	1.0%
Community & Social Service	\$25.10	370	2.3%	1.1	\$27.92	57,930	2.0%
Legal	\$31.25	30	0.2%	0.3	\$51.15	19,040	0.7%
Education, Training & Library	\$24.51	1,360	8.4%	1.5	\$28.22	163,340	5.7%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$20.66	130	0.8%	0.6	\$29.01	36,160	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$36.94	1,120	6.9%	1.1	\$43.01	184,410	6.4%
Healthcare Support	\$18.54	1,050	6.5%	1.1	\$18.07	169,580	5.9%
Protective Service	\$23.98	240	1.5%	0.9	\$28.87	45,860	1.6%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$14.38	1,370	8.4%	1.0	\$15.07	232,190	8.1%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$17.77	530	3.3%	1.2	\$18.83	79,660	2.8%
Personal Care & Service	\$17.10	310	1.9%	0.9	\$17.60	59,420	2.1%
Sales & Related	\$16.96	1,350	8.3%	1.0	\$18.82	242,440	8.4%
Office & Administrative Support	\$21.74	1,900	11.7%	1.0	\$23.86	352,250	12.2%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$21.55	50	0.3%	2.5	\$22.13	3,520	0.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$28.06	810	5.0%	1.3	\$32.44	110,960	3.9%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$26.99	800	4.9%	1.4	\$29.54	104,530	3.6%
Production	\$21.43	1,490	9.2%	1.3	\$23.05	203,810	7.1%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$22.21	1,560	9.6%	1.2	\$22.86	225,820	7.8%

Source: DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics

In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in Management, Architecture & Engineering, Healthcare Practitioners, Computer & Mathematical, and Legal occupations, most of which typically require higher levels of education and experience, including many that require bachelor's degrees or higher. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations.

JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in the 23-county Southwest Minnesota planning region reported 9,546 job vacancies in 2023, which was down by about 4,600 vacancies compared to the past year, though that was the second highest number ever reported (going back to 2001). Instead, the 9,546 vacancies in 2023 was in line with pre-pandemic levels, down slightly from the average in 2018 and 2019, but up compared to 2016 and 2017. The median hourly wage offer jumped up to \$19.74 across all occupations, but ranged from a low of around \$14.60 per hour for Personal Care & Service occupations, to \$37.50 per hour for Computer & Mathematical occupations. The median wage offer increased by \$3.19 compared to 2022, reflecting high demand for workers.

The largest number of vacancies were in Food Preparation & Serving Related and Sales & Related occupations, with each having just under 1,200 vacancies. There were also a lot of openings in Transportation & Material Moving, Healthcare Practitioners, Installation, Maintenance & Repair, Office & Administrative Support, Production, and Healthcare Support occupations (Table 11).

Overall, about one-quarter of openings were part-time and only 11% were temporary or seasonal. Just under one-third required postsecondary education, and nearly the same amount required a year or more of experience. In sum, educational requirements in the region had been stable or declining over the past 5 years, while work experience requirements were rising. Educational requirements vary widely by occupation though, with 91% of Computer & Mathematical occupations requiring a degree compared to 0% of both Food Prep & Serving Related and Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance occupations, which can be learned on the job.

	Number of Total Vacancies	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Percent Part-Time	Percent Temporary or Seasonal	Requiring Postsecondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Requiring Certificate or License
Total, All Occupations	9,546	\$19.74	26%	11%	31%	33%	46%
Management	202	\$32.04	0%	0%	66%	87%	43%
Business & Financial Operations	520	\$25.88	26%	9%	64%	49%	47%
Computer & Mathematical	100	\$37.50	2%	0%	91%	41%	12%
Architecture & Engineering	96	\$28.56	0%	0%	74%	86%	61%
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	69	\$24.18	1%	0%	26%	61%	52%
Community & Social Service	258	\$23.46	18%	0%	88%	48%	75%
Education, Training & Library	453	\$18.35	40%	24%	58%	30%	70%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	129	\$16.82	81%	55%	51%	24%	34%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	738	\$31.97	30%	2%	95%	47%	98%
Healthcare Support	508	\$16.76	46%	0%	45%	9%	77%
Protective Service	177	\$22.52	50%	14%	35%	37%	77%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	1,180	\$15.32	31%	5%	0%	17%	7%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	432	\$16.90	26%	43%	0%	13%	13%
Personal Care & Service	188	\$14.60	70%	45%	21%	5%	37%
Sales & Related	1,164	\$15.93	22%	5%	5%	20%	10%
Office & Administrative Support	563	\$19.27	25%	2%	9%	44%	21%
Construction & Extraction	431	\$25.04	0%	14%	17%	46%	54%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	653	\$22.92	6%	4%	33%	60%	63%
Production	540	\$18.93	18%	7%	12%	37%	12%
Transportation & Material Moving	773	\$21.15	36%	35%	3%	24%	91%

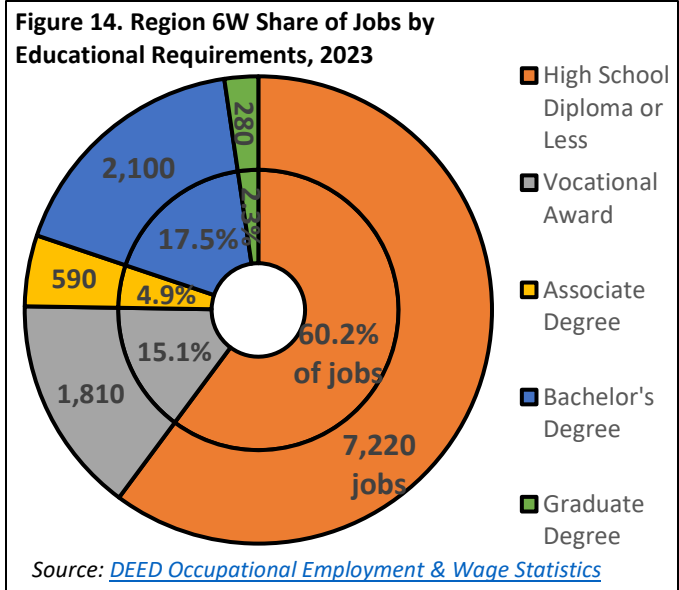
Source: [DEED Job Vacancy Survey, 2023](#)

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Similar to Job Vacancy Survey results, data from DEED’s Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics program shows that roughly 40% of jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other 60% can be started with a high school diploma or less and some amount of on-the-job training (see 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 \$20,500 and almost \$53,000 per year in Minnesota. For those who go to college, choice of major matters – different programs lead to different jobs that earn different amounts of money.

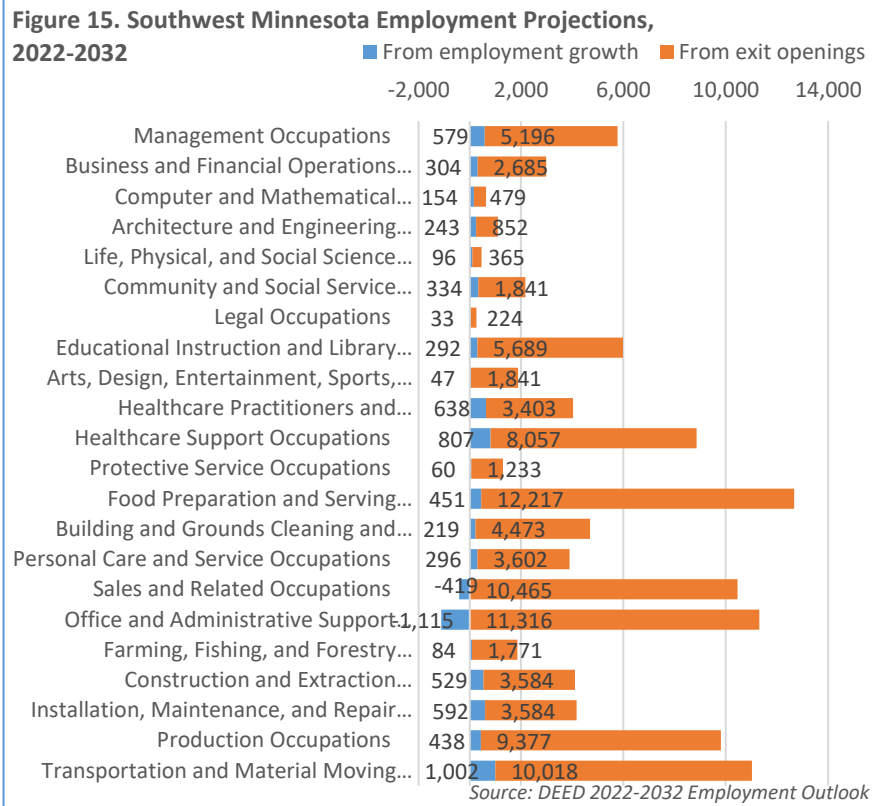


EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Overall, the 23-county Southwest Minnesota planning area is projected to grow 2.8% from 2022 to 2032, a gain of 5,664 new jobs. That is the slowest of the 6 planning regions in the state. In addition, the region is also expected to need 102,272 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements or other people who have dropped out of the labor force or changed careers.

Transportation & Material Moving, Healthcare Support, Healthcare Practitioners, Installation, Maintenance & Repair, Management, and Construction & Extraction occupations are expected to see the most new growth, while Architecture & Engineering, Healthcare Support, and Computer & Mathematical

occupations are projected to be the fastest growing. But every occupational group will show some future demand either through new jobs or replacement openings, with the most openings shown for Food Preparation & Serving, Office & Administrative, Sales & Related, and Transportation (Figure 15).



OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are well over 200 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, Home Health & Personal Care Aides, Teachers, Mechanics and Repair workers, Truck Drivers, and Retail Trade workers are among the top occupations in demand based on the consistent need for workers in these fields. Many of the jobs are concentrated in Healthcare, Transportation, Education, and other related industries (Table 12).

Table 12. Southwest Minnesota Occupations in Demand, 2023

High School or Less	Vocational Training	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Retail Salespersons \$34,798/yr	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers \$54,491/yr	Registered Nurses \$85,138/yr	Accountants & Auditors \$69,245/yr
Home Health & Personal Care Aides \$36,495/yr	Nursing Assistants \$39,764/yr	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers \$74,684/yr	General & Operations Managers \$82,482/yr
Fast Food & Counter Workers \$30,228/yr	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses \$58,499/yr	Dental Hygienists \$84,870/yr	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education \$65,364/yr
Cashiers \$30,595/yr	Heating, Air Conditioning, & Refrig. Mechanics & Installers \$64,265/yr	Industrial Engineering Technologists & Technicians \$60,049/yr	Secondary School Teachers, exc. Special Ed. & Career/Technical \$66,349/yr
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary \$38,031/yr	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists \$59,444/yr	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians \$78,236/yr	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term \$52,112/yr
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers \$45,427/yr	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks \$47,963/yr	Agricultural Technicians \$50,274/yr	Financial Managers \$119,560/yr
Janitors & Cleaners \$37,379/yr	Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters \$61,794/yr	Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll & Timekeeping \$49,828/yr	Industrial Engineers \$90,455/yr
Construction Laborers \$49,744/yr	Substance abuse, behavioral, & mental health counselors \$49,947/yr	Civil Engineering Technologists & Technicians \$71,227/yr	Computer Systems Analysts \$96,291/yr
Bus Drivers, School \$49,228/yr	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics \$50,024/yr	Physical Therapist Assistants \$62,988/yr	Middle School Teachers, exc. Special Ed & Career/Technical \$66,534/yr
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand \$43,003/yr	Industrial Machinery Mechanics \$60,689/yr	Veterinary Technologists & Technicians \$40,453/yr	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education \$37,747/yr

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

ECONOMY

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Region 6W was home to an average of 1,626 business establishments providing 16,571 covered jobs through 2023, with a total payroll of just over \$844 million. That was about 0.7% of total employment in the state of Minnesota, making it the smallest of the 13 EDRs in the state. Average annual wages were \$50,963 in the region, which was about \$20,000 lower than the state's average annual wage, and the second lowest of the 13 EDRs.

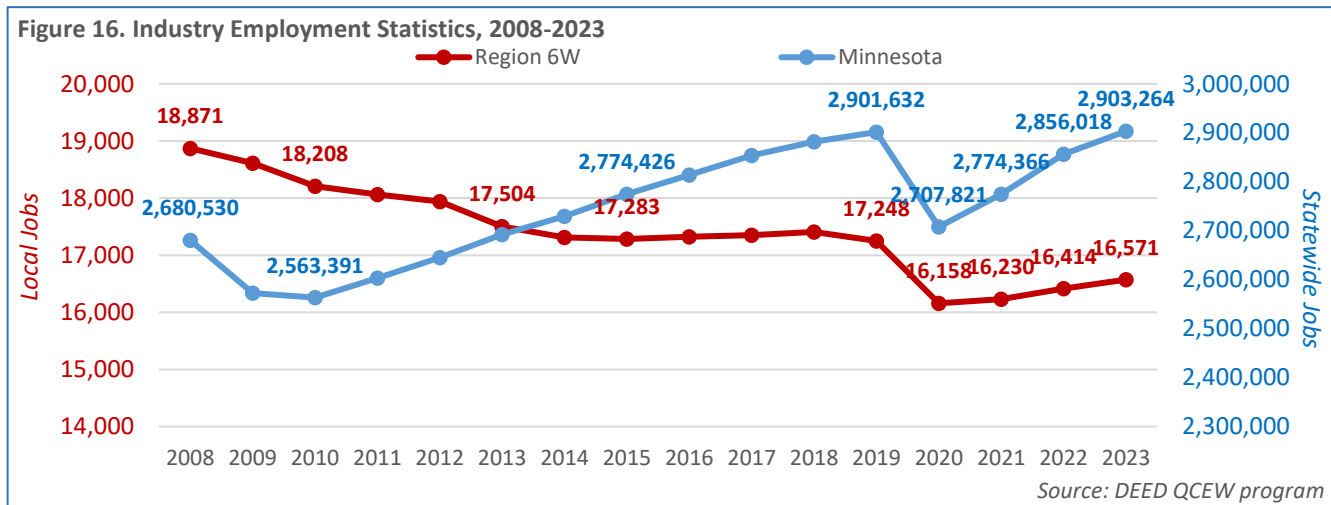
Chippewa County is the largest employment center in the region, with 5,301 jobs at 424 firms; followed by Swift County with 3,719 jobs at 362 firms and Yellow Medicine County with 3,713 jobs at 383 firms. Big Stone

and Lac qui Parle are among the smallest economies in the state. The region suffered job losses like other areas of the state and country in 2020 from the pandemic-related recession, but it has slowly added some jobs back since 2020. The past year saw nominal employment growth, just starting to provide a meaningful offset to the more than 1,000 jobs that the region lost in 2020 (Table 13).

Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Average Annual Wage	2022-2023		2019-2023	
					Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Region 6W	1,626	16,571	\$844,511,233	\$50,963	+157	+1.0%	-677	-3.9%
Big Stone Co.	213	1,654	\$85,004,105	\$51,393	+3	+0.2%	-40	-2.4%
Chippewa Co.	424	5,301	\$274,901,883	\$51,858	+29	+0.6%	-439	-7.6%
Lac qui Parle Co.	244	2,183	\$99,591,578	\$45,621	+20	+0.9%	-36	-1.6%
Swift Co.	362	3,719	\$211,751,078	\$56,938	+105	+2.9%	+170	+4.8%
Yellow Medicine	383	3,713	\$173,262,589	\$46,664	+1	0.0%	-333	-8.2%
State of Minnesota	207,647	2,903,264	\$207,665,582,979	\$71,528	+47,246	+1.7%	+1,632	+0.1%

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

Longer term, Region 6W has seen employment declines over the past 10 years as well, ending 2023 with about 1,000 fewer jobs than it had in 2013. The region entered the Great Recession later than the state, still experiencing job growth through 2008, before suffering declines in 2009 and 2010. Since then, Region 6W has not seen the same recovery experienced in the state. Furthermore, losses from the pandemic recession in 2020 affected the region similarly to the state, and the region’s rebound has been slower (see Figure 16).



With 3,282 jobs at 151 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in Region 6W, accounting for one in every five jobs in the region. The region saw a decrease in Health Care jobs since 2019, and also a decline over the past year, reflecting challenges in sectors like Nursing & Residential Care Facilities and Hospitals. Manufacturing is the next largest employing industry in Region 6W, accounting for a growing share (13.1%) of jobs in the region. The largest sectors include Machinery Manufacturing and Food Manufacturing, which both have over 400 jobs. Overall, Manufacturing in Region 6W has held somewhat steady after slight declines over the past year. At \$62,730 in 2023, average annual wages were nearly \$12,000 higher in Manufacturing than the total of all industries.

The region has a higher concentration of employment in Educational Services, the third largest industry with 1,713 jobs at 32 institutions, primarily at elementary & secondary schools as well as junior colleges. Retail Trade is the fourth largest industry, with 1,570 jobs at 179 establishments. All but six industries had fewer jobs in 2023 compared to 2019. However, in the prior year 11 of the 20 main industry sectors gained jobs, closing the gap in a move towards recovery from 2020 (see Table 14).

NAICS Industry Title	2023 Annual Data			Avg. Annual Wage	2022-2023		2019-2023	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll (\$1,000s)		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	1,626	16,571	\$844,511	\$50,963	+157	+1.0%	-677	-3.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	133	501	\$25,202	\$50,302	+59	+13.3%	+47	+10.4%
Mining	6	20	\$1,141	\$57,044	+1	+5.3%	-12	-37.5%
Construction	199	990	\$80,065	\$80,874	+72	+7.8%	+65	+7.0%
Manufacturing	73	2,106	\$132,109	\$62,730	-30	-1.4%	-47	-2.2%
Utilities	11	120	\$13,539	\$112,829	-8	-6.3%	-38	-24.1%
Wholesale Trade	88	1,170	\$95,046	\$81,236	+49	+4.4%	+30	+2.6%
Retail Trade	179	1,570	\$44,922	\$28,613	+11	+0.7%	-67	-4.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	114	598	\$29,245	\$48,905	-6	-1.0%	+2	+0.3%
Information	26	151	\$6,335	\$41,954	-5	-3.2%	-31	-17.0%
Finance & Insurance	95	513	\$35,304	\$68,819	-11	-2.1%	-35	-6.4%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	28	213	\$6,923	\$32,501	+5	+2.4%	+11	+5.4%
Professional & Technical Services	69	239	\$11,108	\$46,477	-3	-1.2%	-14	-5.5%
Management of Companies	7	79	\$7,788	\$98,585	+9	+12.9%	+9	+12.9%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	40	187	\$7,631	\$40,806	-16	-7.9%	-27	-12.6%
Educational Services	32	1,713	\$75,700	\$44,192	+16	+0.9%	-46	-2.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	151	3,282	\$164,040	\$49,982	-39	-1.2%	-345	-9.5%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	30	398	\$15,912	\$39,981	-8	-2.0%	-85	-17.6%
Accommodation & Food Services	108	936	\$14,352	\$15,333	+31	+3.4%	-57	-5.7%
Other Services	147	522	\$16,099	\$30,842	+15	+3.0%	-35	-6.3%
Public Administration	89	1,259	\$62,048	\$49,283	+17	+1.4%	-2	-0.2%

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

WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

According to DEED's Quarterly Employment Demographics (QED) program, the workforce in the region was aging over the past 10 years. In 2022, 29% of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 22% statewide and 24% in the region one decade earlier. In contrast, the percentage of teenaged workers was falling regionally, while they increased statewide. However, wages were going up fastest for younger workers, and they also saw modest gains in the number of hours worked (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-full time jobs in industries like Retail Trade and Accommodation & Food Services, people aged 20 to 24 years old enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2012 to 2022. Wages were highest for 45 to 64 year old workers, and men earned higher wages than women, though the gap was narrowing.

Region 6W	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%	\$20.83	\$14.07	411	412
19 years & under	7.6%	8.6%	6.6%	6.3%	\$12.89	\$7.86	113	107
20 to 24 years	7.9%	9.4%	9.2%	11.3%	\$18.39	\$11.01	322	286
25 to 44 years	38.5%	34.7%	43.6%	42.3%	\$23.23	\$15.54	465	473
45 to 54 years	16.9%	22.4%	18.4%	21.9%	\$25.21	\$16.20	483	480
55 to 64 years	19.8%	18.2%	16.7%	14.7%	\$22.63	\$16.11	477	474
65 years & over	9.3%	6.6%	5.4%	3.5%	\$18.63	\$12.32	209	197
Male	47.6%	48.3%	49.1%	49.1%	\$22.98	\$16.01	481	480
Female	52.4%	51.7%	50.9%	50.9%	\$19.94	\$12.42	361	344

Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics

EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

According to data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators program, just under 84% of jobs in the 23-county Southwest region were held by workers who were white and not Hispanic or Latino, compared to about 16% of jobs that were held by workers of other races or Hispanic or Latino origin. That was a significant increase over the past 23 years – non-Hispanic whites accounted for 94% of jobs back in 2000. In 2023, 150,999 jobs were held by non-Hispanic whites, compared to 28,893 jobs held by BIPOC workers, which was an 182.9% increase from 2000 (see Figure 17).

Southwest Minnesota has a high concentration of Hispanic or Latino workers, holding 15,584 jobs in 2023, up from 5,798 jobs in 2000, a 168.8% increase. The next largest number of jobs held by a BIPOC group was Black or African Americans, holding 6,242 jobs in 2023, a 382.8% increase since 2000. The region also had 4,119 jobs held by Asian or Pacific Islanders, up 103.5% since 2000; and 2,058 jobs for people of Some Other Race, up 230.3%. American Indians held 890 jobs in the region, up 87.8% since 2000 (Figure 18).

The Manufacturing, Agriculture, Accommodation & Food Services, Administrative Support & Waste Management Services, and Health Care & Social Assistance sectors have the highest share of non-White employment at 30%, 24.3%, 20.5%, 20.3%, and 19% respectively. The largest numbers of non-White workers are employed by Manufacturing (9,620 jobs), Health Care & Social Assistance (6,378 jobs), Retail Trade (2,857 jobs), and Accommodation & Food Services (both 2,479 jobs) (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Employment Share by Race & Ethnicity in Southwest, 2000-2023

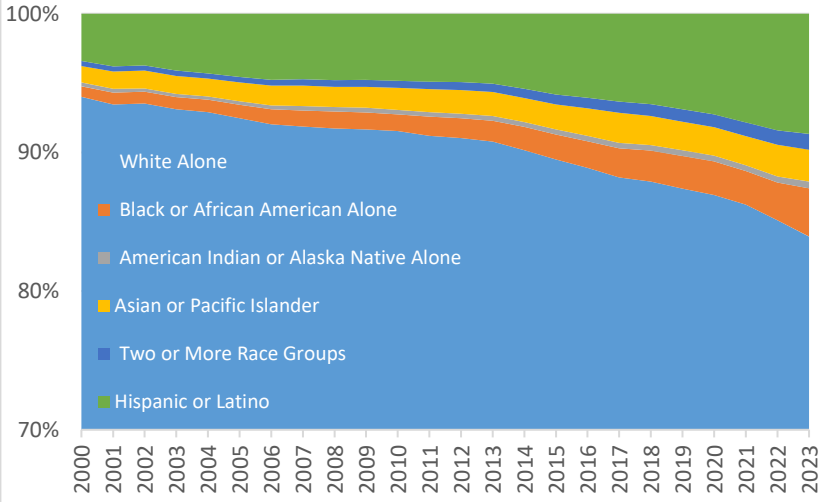


Figure 18. Jobs Held by People of Color in Southwest Minnesota, 2000-2023

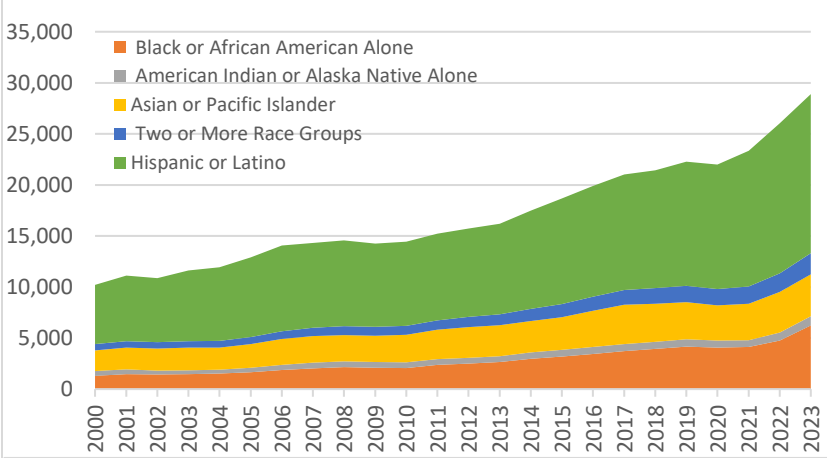
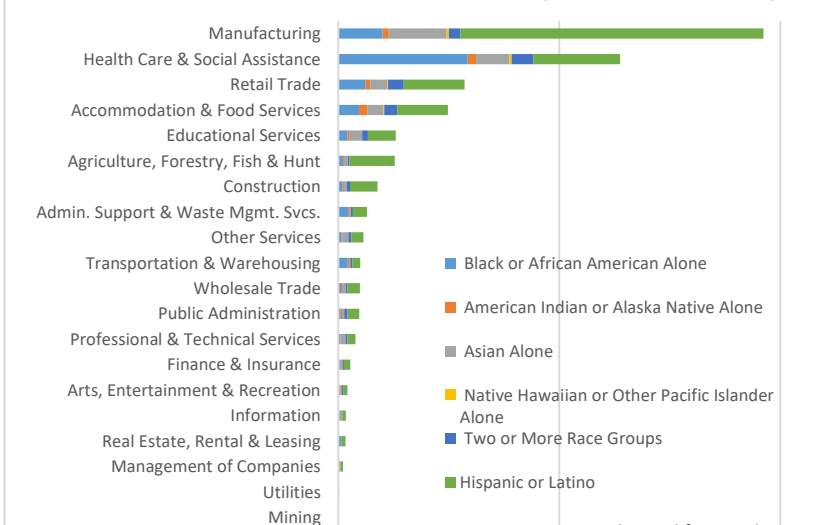


Figure 19. People of Color Employment by Industry in Southwest Minnesota, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators

INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, the Southwest planning region is projected to grow 2.8% from 2022 to 2032, a gain of 5,664 new jobs. Management of Companies, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, Transportation & Warehousing and Construction are expected to grow the fastest as the pandemic employment recovery continues. Health Care & Social Assistance is projected to add the most new jobs over the next decade, followed closely by Manufacturing. Those two industries are projected to account for over half (54%) of the region's job growth. Accommodation & Food Services, Construction, and Transportation & Warehousing will also see strong gains. Mining, Information, and Retail Trade are the only industries projected to lose jobs (Table 16).

Industry	Estimated Employment 2022	Projected Employment 2032	Percent Change 2022-2032	Numeric Change 2022-2032
Total, All Industries	202,214	207,878	+2.8%	+5,664
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	5,309	5,566	+4.8%	+257
Mining	214	211	-1.4%	-3
Utilities	690	690	0.0%	0
Construction	7,679	8,252	+7.5%	+573
Manufacturing	32,192	33,537	+4.2%	+1,345
Wholesale Trade	8,001	8,116	+1.4%	+115
Retail Trade	19,409	19,084	-1.7%	-325
Transportation & Warehousing	6,297	6,810	+8.1%	+513
Information	2,093	2,046	-2.2%	-47
Finance & Insurance	6,830	6,930	+1.5%	+100
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	1,397	1,445	+3.4%	+48
Professional & Technical Services	4,066	4,371	+7.5%	+305
Management of Companies	1,478	1,614	+9.2%	+136
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	4,127	4,331	+4.9%	+204
Educational Services	16,065	16,116	+0.3%	+51
Health Care & Social Assistance	28,786	30,498	+5.9%	+1,712
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,889	2,059	+9.0%	+170
Accommodation & Food Services	11,736	12,318	+5.0%	+582
Other Services	7,097	7,281	+2.6%	+184
Public Administration	14,117	14,370	+1.8%	+253

Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Region 6W was home to 3,237 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2022, 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).” Like covered employment, Region 6W saw a decline in nonemployers over the past decade, though there were small increases in Big Stone County. In sum, these nonemployers generated sales receipts of over \$179 million in 2022 (Table 17).

	2022		2012-2022	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Region 6W	3,237	\$179,634	-182	-5.3%
Big Stone Co.	400	\$25,010	+18	+4.7%
Chippewa Co.	797	\$48,733	-72	-8.3%
Lac qui Parle Co.	593	\$32,136	-5	-0.8%
Swift Co.	634	\$30,206	-80	-11.2%
Yellow Medicine Co.	813	\$43,549	-43	-5.0%
Minnesota	429,672	\$22,727,564	+41,117	+10.6%

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Like other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is also a key industry in Region 6W, including 3,245 farms producing just under \$2 billion in the market value of products sold in 2022 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Region 6W ranks 7th of the 13 EDRs in the state for farms, with four of the five counties ranking between 26th and 36th. Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years (Table 18).

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
Region 6W	3,245	\$1,911,756,000	7
Big Stone Co.	392	\$194,879,000	57
Chippewa Co.	563	\$446,611,000	28
Lac qui Parle Co.	735	\$394,270,000	36
Swift Co.	708	\$453,273,000	26
Yellow Medicine Co.	847	\$422,723,000	29
Minnesota	65,531	\$28,482,097,000	

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.