



# CENTRAL MINNESOTA

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

**Covering the following counties:**

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

# 2025 REGIONAL PROFILE

*Updated October 2025*

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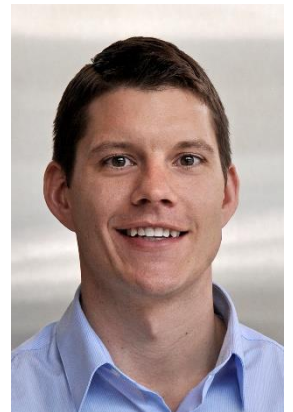
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## DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION CHANGE

The Central Minnesota planning region includes a total of 13 counties, covering three separate Economic Development Regions (EDRs) and two Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). Central Minnesota was home to just over 760,000 people in 2024, comprising 13.1% of the state's total population.

The region welcomed a 4.7% increase in population over the past four years, primarily due to rapid gains in EDR 7W and 7E. Central Minnesota was the fastest growing region of the state, accounting for 39.6% of the state's total population growth from 2020 to 2024. In comparison, Minnesota saw a 1.5% gain statewide (Table 1). Nine of the 13 counties grew faster than the state growth rate.

Twelve of the 13 counties in the region gained population from 2020 to 2024, only Renville County decreased. Wright, Isanti, and Sherburne were the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> fastest growing counties in the state, respectively.

|                          | 2020<br>Population | 2024<br>Estimates | 2020-2024 Change |              |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
|                          |                    |                   | Number           | Percent      |
| <b>Central Minnesota</b> | <b>725,940</b>     | <b>760,224</b>    | <b>+34,284</b>   | <b>+4.7%</b> |
| <b>Region 6E</b>         | <b>118,626</b>     | <b>119,398</b>    | <b>+772</b>      | <b>+0.7%</b> |
| Kandiyohi Co.            | 43,732             | 44,674            | +942             | +2.2%        |
| McLeod Co.               | 36,771             | 36,780            | +9               | 0.0%         |
| Meeker Co.               | 23,400             | 23,491            | +91              | +0.4%        |
| Renville Co.             | 14,723             | 14,453            | -270             | -1.8%        |
| <b>Region 7E</b>         | <b>169,123</b>     | <b>177,296</b>    | <b>+8,173</b>    | <b>+4.8%</b> |
| Chisago Co.              | 56,621             | 59,105            | +2,484           | +4.4%        |
| Isanti Co.               | 41,135             | 43,687            | +2,552           | +6.2%        |
| Kanabec Co.              | 16,032             | 16,608            | +576             | +3.6%        |
| Mille Lacs Co.           | 26,459             | 27,577            | +1,118           | +4.2%        |
| Pine Co.                 | 28,876             | 30,319            | +1,443           | +5.0%        |
| <b>Region 7W</b>         | <b>438,191</b>     | <b>463,530</b>    | <b>+25,339</b>   | <b>+5.8%</b> |
| Benton Co.               | 41,379             | 41,881            | +502             | +1.2%        |
| Sherburne Co.            | 97,183             | 103,059           | +5,876           | +6.0%        |
| Stearns Co.              | 158,292            | 163,997           | +5,705           | +3.6%        |
| Wright Co.               | 141,337            | 154,593           | +13,256          | +9.4%        |
| <b>Minnesota</b>         | <b>5,706,494</b>   | <b>5,793,151</b>  | <b>+86,657</b>   | <b>+1.5%</b> |

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

### COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

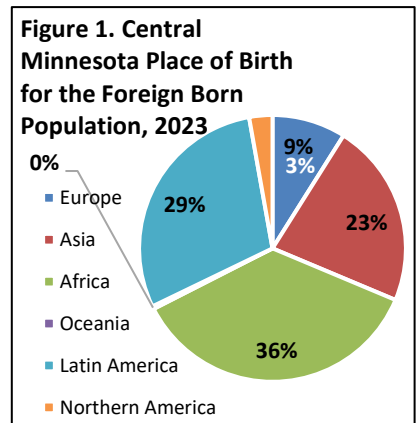
With a young and fast-growing population, Central Minnesota experienced a natural increase – more births than deaths – of 9,174 people in the past four years. In addition, the region gained residents from in-migration, with 25,036 more people moving into the region than moving out. The vast majority of this recent in-migration (68%) was from domestic residents moving into the region from other areas of the state or other states, and not from international migration like in the past. International in-migration was still positive and accounted for 8,046 new residents (Table 2).

|            | Total<br>Change | Natural<br>Increase | Vital Events |          | Net Migration |                    |          |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|----------|
|            |                 |                     | Births       | Deaths   | Total         | Inter-<br>national | Domestic |
| Central MN | +34,305         | +9,174              | +36,692      | -27,518  | +25,036       | +8,046             | +16,990  |
| Minnesota  | +86,459         | +51,570             | +268,689     | -217,119 | +33,161       | +81,091            | -47,930  |

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

Following an increase in the past year, Central Minnesota is now home to 32,076 foreign born residents, or about 4.4% of the total population, which was about half the statewide rate (8.6%). The number of immigrants in the region increased by 62% since 2013, more than double the statewide growth rate of 24.7%. Over one-third (11,605 people) of these immigrants were from Africa, while the second largest number of foreign-born residents were from Latin America (7,382 people), accounting for over three in every ten immigrants.

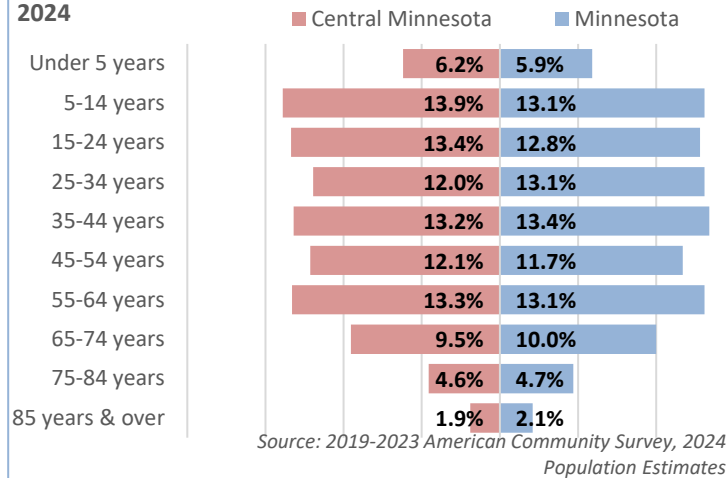
The fastest growing wave of new immigrants to Central Minnesota came from Africa, rising by 8,118 people from 2013 to 2023, a 233% jump. About one-quarter of immigrants were from Asia, after increasing over 30% since 2013, and roughly 9% were from Europe and 3% were from Canada (Figure 1).



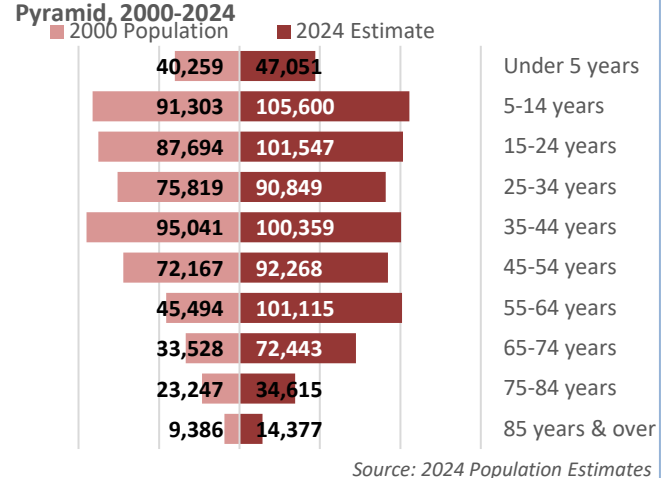
## POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Central Minnesota has a slightly younger population than the rest of the state, with 33.4% of the population under 25 years of age, compared to 31.8% statewide. Central Minnesota also has a similar percentage of people aged 55 years and older, but a slightly smaller share of people between 25 and 54 years of age, often considered the “prime working years” (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Percentage of Population by Age Group, 2024**



**Figure 3. Central Minnesota Population Pyramid, 2000-2024**



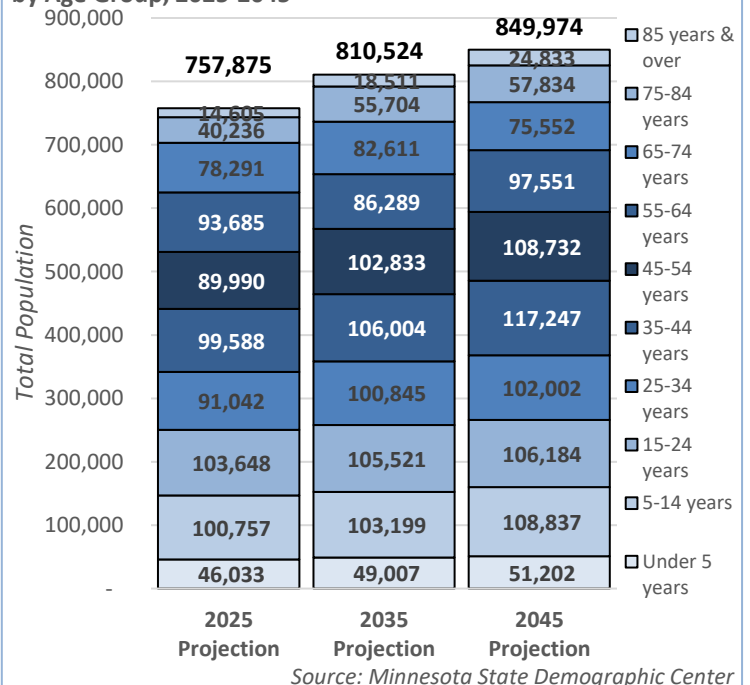
While the number of younger residents was rising rapidly as young, married couple families moved into the region, the number of residents aged 55 years and over was also expanding quickly because of size of the Baby Boom generation – people born between 1946 and 1964. The only age group to experience a nominal growth (+5.6%) in the last 24 years was the 35-to-44-year age group, right in the middle of “prime working” age and a direct result of the void Baby Boomers are leaving behind (Figure 3).

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP

The entire region is projected to continue growing through 2045. According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Central Minnesota is expected to gain 92,099 net new residents from 2025 to 2045, a 12.2% increase (Figure 4). In comparison, the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 5.5%, with the largest growth expected to occur in the Twin Cities metro area.

Central Minnesota is projected to add nearly 28,000 people aged 75 years and over. The region is also expected to gain nearly 28,000 people in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, as well as a corresponding increase in children under 14 years of age. In contrast, Central Minnesota is expected to lose older adults from 65-74 years of age as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid. But the region should also see a big bump in the 45-54 age group, increasing by some 18,750 additional people as millennials age into older age categories.

**Figure 4. Central Minnesota Population Projections by Age Group, 2025-2045**



## POPULATION BY RACE

Central Minnesota's population is less diverse than the state but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2023, 87.9% of the region's residents reported White alone as their race, compared to 78.4% of residents statewide. The region had smaller percentages of every other race than the state, and at 4.4%, Central Minnesota also had a lower percentage of people reporting Hispanic or Latino origin than the state (Table 3).

The region's White population increased, contributing to about 4.5% of overall population growth. People of two or more races provided the largest increase in numbers with 23,850 net new residents reporting this racial category. In contrast, American Indians saw a substantial decline in numbers, leading to a 18.5% loss in population from Central Minnesota.

| Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2023 | Central Minnesota |               |                       |              | Minnesota     |                       |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|                                         | Number            | Percent       | Change from 2013-2023 |              | Percent       | Change from 2013-2023 |
|                                         |                   |               | Numeric               | Percent      |               |                       |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>735,753</b>    | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>+50,104</b>        | <b>+7.3%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>+6.8%</b>          |
| White                                   | 646,397           | 87.9%         | +2,196                | +0.3%        | 78.4%         | -2.2%                 |
| Black or African American               | 26,182            | 3.6%          | +14,189               | +118.3%      | 6.8%          | +38.9%                |
| American Indian & Alaska Native         | 4,104             | 0.6%          | -933                  | -18.5%       | 0.9%          | -11.6%                |
| Asian & Other Pac. Islander             | 10,671            | 1.5%          | +3,155                | +42.0%       | 5.1%          | +29.6%                |
| Some Other Race                         | 14,039            | 1.9%          | +7,647                | +119.6%      | 2.7%          | +96.1%                |
| Two or More Races                       | 34,360            | 4.7%          | +23,850               | +226.9%      | 6.2%          | +168.3%               |
| Hispanic or Latino origin               | 32,196            | 4.4%          | +10,644               | +49.4%       | 6.2%          | +37.5%                |

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

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With 37.5% of adults aged 18 years and over having a college degree, Central Minnesota has lower educational attainment than the state, where 47% of adults have an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree. However, 13.3% of adults in Central Minnesota have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 24.2% have some college experience, but no degree, compared to 21.4% statewide. The industry mix in Central Minnesota provides ample employment opportunities for workers of every education level.

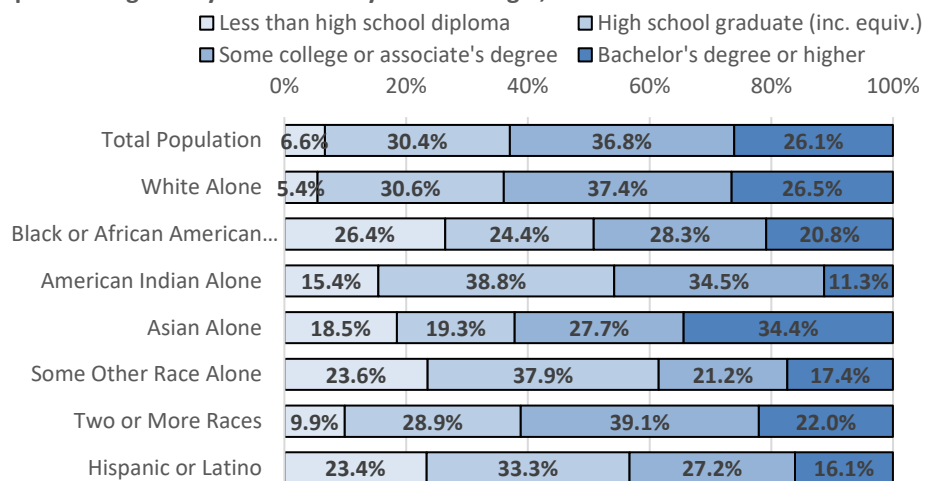
| Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Adult Population, 2023 | Central Minnesota |               | Minnesota     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                                                | Number            | Percent       | Percent       |
| <b>Total, 18 years &amp; over</b>                              | <b>555,779</b>    | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |
| Less than high school                                          | 40,613            | 7.3%          | 6.8%          |
| High school graduate (incl. equiv.)                            | 172,156           | 31.0%         | 24.4%         |
| Some college, no degree                                        | 134,348           | 24.2%         | 21.4%         |
| Associate's degree                                             | 74,192            | 13.3%         | 11.2%         |
| Bachelor's degree                                              | 94,965            | 17.1%         | 24.0%         |
| Advanced degree                                                | 39,505            | 7.1%          | 12.1%         |

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

Educational attainment varies widely by race and ethnicity in Central Minnesota. Around 25% of Hispanic or Latino, some other race and Black residents had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 6.6% of the overall

population, and just 5.4% of the White population. Overall, just over 26% of the adult population had a bachelor's degree or higher, led by the Asian population, where 34.4% had a bachelor's degree or higher, which was higher than the White population, where about 26% had bachelor's degrees or higher, and much higher than other race groups, including American Indians, Hispanics, or people of some other race, where less than 20% of adults had a bachelor's degree or higher (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Central Minnesota Educational Attainment for the population aged 25 years & over by Race or Origin, 2023**



Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey

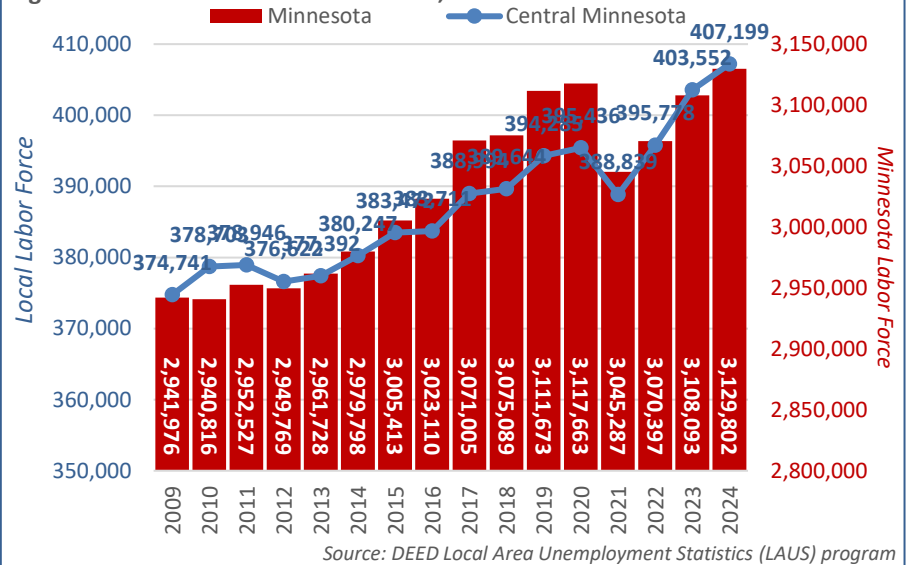
## LABOR FORCE

### LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED's [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Central Minnesota had an annual average labor force count of just over 407,000 workers in 2024. Like the population, the regional labor force has been increasing rapidly over time. The labor force dropped briefly from 2020 to 2021, but has resumed growing (Figure 6).

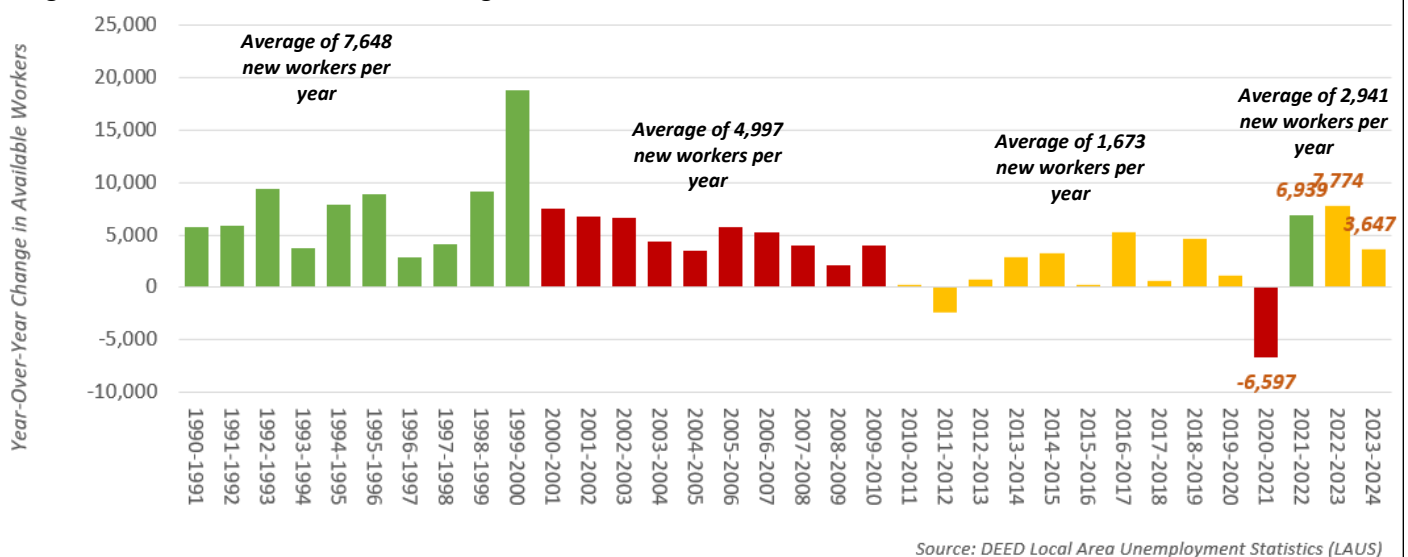
Central Minnesota added nearly 33,000 workers from 2009 to 2024. After years of growth, the region saw a loss of 6,600 workers from 2020 to 2021 during the pandemic recession; but quickly recovered, regaining around 7,000 workers per year from 2021 to 2023. Meanwhile, the number of unemployed workers reached record lows. Down from a high of roughly 25,000 in 2020, there was a low of just over 11,000 unemployed workers in 2022, before ticking up slowly to 13,000 in 2023 and 13,885 in 2024. These labor force constraints will have a substantial impact on the regional economy.

Figure 6. Annual Labor Force Estimates, 2009-2024



Averaging a net gain of 7,648 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Central Minnesota were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. The regional labor force and economy continued to grow over the next two decades as well, though at a slower pace, until the two-month pandemic recession led to a loss of nearly 6,600 workers. Since then, the region has resumed rapid labor force growth, now averaging about 2,941 new workers per year from 2020 through 2024, which is above the pace of expansion seen in the 2010's (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Central Minnesota Annual Change in Labor Force, 1990-2024





## LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS

If Central Minnesota's population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 4 above, the region would be expected to see a continued steady increase in the labor force over the next decade from applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group. The region is expected to see strong growth in workers from 25 to 54 years of age, whereas only the 55 to 64 year age group is projected to lose workers over the decade (see Table 5).

|                          | 2025<br>Labor Force<br>Projection | 2035<br>Labor Force<br>Projection | 2025-2035 Change |              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
|                          |                                   |                                   | Numeric          | Percent      |
| 16 to 19 years           | 24,299                            | 24,404                            | +105             | +0.4%        |
| 20 to 24 years           | 43,836                            | 45,239                            | +1,403           | +3.2%        |
| 25 to 44 years           | 167,080                           | 181,295                           | +14,215          | +8.5%        |
| 45 to 54 years           | 79,660                            | 91,029                            | +11,369          | +14.3%       |
| 55 to 64 years           | 68,405                            | 63,005                            | -5,400           | -7.9%        |
| 65 to 74 years           | 20,965                            | 22,122                            | +1,157           | +5.5%        |
| 75 years & over          | 3,629                             | 4,911                             | +1,282           | +35.3%       |
| <b>Total Labor Force</b> | <b>407,874</b>                    | <b>432,004</b>                    | <b>+24,131</b>   | <b>+5.9%</b> |

*Source: calculated from [Minnesota State Demographic Center population projections](#) and 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.*

## EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

With 69% of the population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Central Minnesota had higher labor force participation rates than the state's 68.5%. The region had slightly higher participation rates than the state in several age groups, with the overall rate also trending higher because a higher percentage of Central Minnesota's labor force was in the younger age groups (Table 6).

|                                                                             | Central Minnesota |                             |                | Minnesota                   |                | Percent of<br>Total Labor Force |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
|                                                                             | In Labor<br>Force | Labor Force<br>Partic. Rate | Unemp.<br>Rate | Labor Force<br>Partic. Rate | Unemp.<br>Rate | Central<br>Minnesota            | Minnesota |
| <b>Total Labor Force</b>                                                    | <b>398,391</b>    | <b>69.0%</b>                | <b>3.6%</b>    | <b>68.5%</b>                | <b>3.9%</b>    |                                 |           |
| 16 to 19 years                                                              | 23,716            | 58.2%                       | 6.4%           | 52.7%                       | 9.9%           | 6.0%                            | 5.1%      |
| 20 to 24 years                                                              | 40,014            | 85.2%                       | 5.8%           | 83.4%                       | 6.5%           | 10.0%                           | 9.5%      |
| 25 to 44 years                                                              | 162,192           | 87.6%                       | 3.5%           | 88.7%                       | 3.5%           | 40.7%                           | 43.1%     |
| 45 to 54 years                                                              | 79,048            | 88.5%                       | 2.9%           | 87.8%                       | 2.9%           | 19.8%                           | 18.9%     |
| 55 to 64 years                                                              | 71,454            | 73.0%                       | 2.5%           | 72.8%                       | 3.0%           | 17.9%                           | 17.5%     |
| 65 to 74 years                                                              | 18,774            | 26.8%                       | 3.3%           | 27.8%                       | 3.4%           | 4.7%                            | 5.1%      |
| 75 years & over                                                             | 3,137             | 6.6%                        | 0.9%           | 6.6%                        | 3.1%           | 0.8%                            | 0.8%      |
| <b>Employment Characteristics by Race &amp; Hispanic Origin</b>             |                   |                             |                |                             |                |                                 |           |
| White alone                                                                 | 355,668           | 68.7%                       | 3.2%           | 67.5%                       | 3.4%           | 89.3%                           | 80.0%     |
| Black or African American                                                   | 12,445            | 70.8%                       | 11.3%          | 71.0%                       | 8.4%           | 3.1%                            | 6.2%      |
| American Indian & Alaska Native                                             | 1,489             | 50.1%                       | 14.1%          | 57.7%                       | 11.4%          | 0.4%                            | 0.7%      |
| Asian or Other Pac. Islanders                                               | 6,230             | 74.4%                       | 2.7%           | 74.6%                       | 3.5%           | 1.6%                            | 5.3%      |
| Some Other Race                                                             | 7,941             | 76.1%                       | 4.5%           | 75.9%                       | 5.6%           | 2.0%                            | 2.7%      |
| Two or More Races                                                           | 14,628            | 70.8%                       | 5.6%           | 74.2%                       | 6.1%           | 3.7%                            | 5.1%      |
| Hispanic or Latino                                                          | 15,561            | 73.8%                       | 5.2%           | 77.1%                       | 5.9%           | 3.9%                            | 5.9%      |
| <b>Employment Characteristics by Disability, 20 to 64 years</b>             |                   |                             |                |                             |                |                                 |           |
| With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years                                         | 21,912            | 54.6%                       | 8.6%           | 55.3%                       | 9.5%           | 6.2%                            | 6.1%      |
| <b>Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment, 25 to 64 years</b> |                   |                             |                |                             |                |                                 |           |
| Population, 25 to 64 years                                                  | 312,763           | 84.0%                       | 3.1%           | 84.4%                       | 3.3%           | 78.5%                           | 79.5%     |
| Less than H.S. Diploma                                                      | 15,264            | 68.3%                       | 4.2%           | 67.1%                       | 4.7%           | 4.9%                            | 4.7%      |
| H.S. Diploma or Equivalent                                                  | 78,517            | 77.3%                       | 2.3%           | 76.5%                       | 2.6%           | 25.1%                           | 18.9%     |
| Some College or Assoc. Degree                                               | 124,634           | 86.4%                       | 3.1%           | 85.0%                       | 3.6%           | 39.8%                           | 32.2%     |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher                                                 | 94,238            | 90.6%                       | 1.5%           | 90.5%                       | 2.0%           | 30.1%                           | 44.3%     |

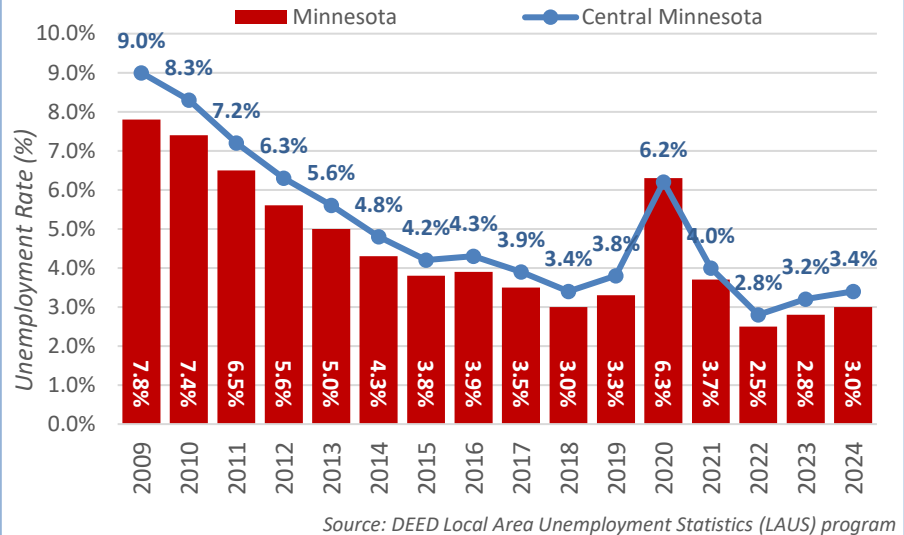
*Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates*

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state for every race group except White and workers of some other race. The highest unemployment rates were reported for Black or African Americans and American Indians, which were both over 11% in 2023. Central Minnesota also had nearly 22,000 workers with disabilities in the workforce, despite lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates than the general population.

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Central Minnesota has consistently reported slightly higher unemployment rates than Minnesota, regardless of the state of the economy. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region's unemployment rate hovered at least a half percent above the state rate from 2005 to 2008, before rising as high as 9.0% in 2009, then dropping back to prerecession levels in 2014. The short pandemic recession pushed rates above 6% for a brief moment, then dropped to 2.8% in 2022, a historically low level, before climbing to 3.4% in 2024 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Unemployment Rates, 2009-2024

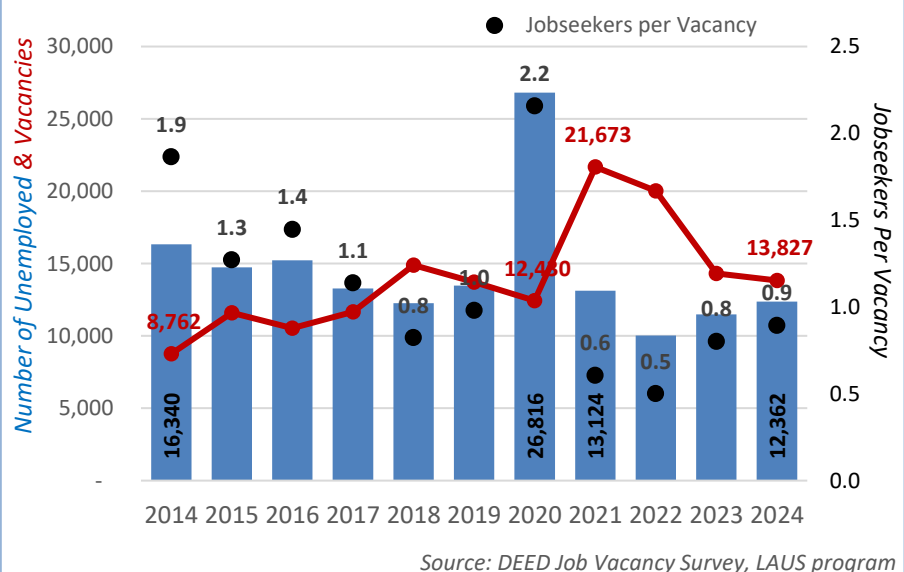


## JOBSEEKERS PER VACANCY

As the economy has changed in recent years, the region's labor market has remained tight. One clear demonstration of this is the ratio of unemployed jobseekers per vacancy, which remained below 1-to-1 in 2024.

According to 2024 Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 13,827 openings reported by employers, compared to 12,362 unemployed jobseekers in the region; or more available jobs than available workers. The ratio climbed as high as 11.2-to-1 during the Great Recession in 2009, but has dropped steadily since then, except for the uptick in 2020 (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Jobseekers Per Vacancy, 2014-2024



## COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED

According to commuting data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Central Minnesota has the most mobile workers in the state. Just over 43% of the region's working residents drive outside the region for work, primarily to the Twin Cities metro area. This means nearly 160,000 workers live in the region but drive somewhere else for work.

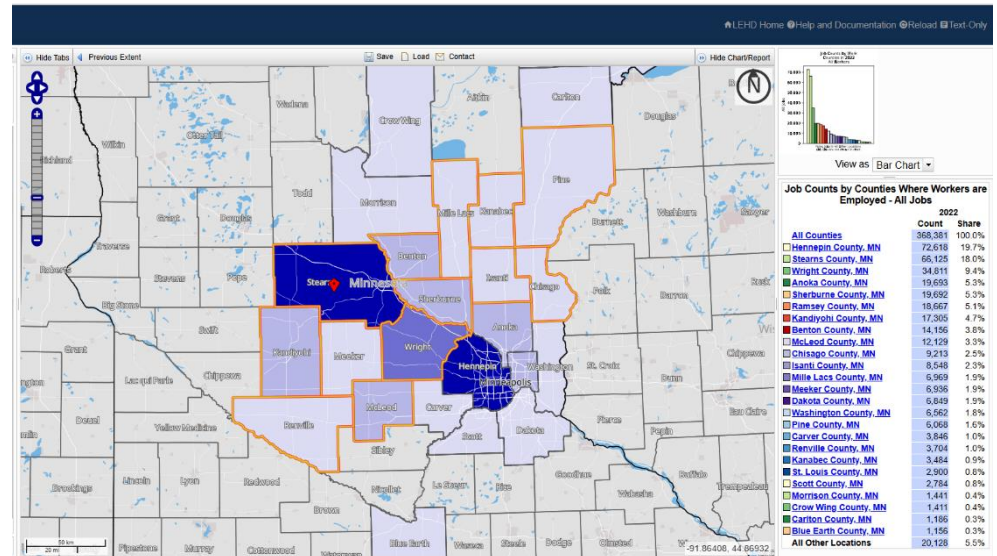
In sum, Central Minnesota is a net exporter of labor, having more workers than available jobs. In 2022, 209,140 workers both lived and worked in Central Minnesota, while 159,241 workers who lived in the region drove to surrounding counties for work, compared to just 63,691 workers who lived outside the region but drove in for work (Table 7 and Figure 10).

| Table 7. Central Minnesota Inflow/Outflow Job Counts (All Jobs) | 2022    |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|
|                                                                 | Count   | Share  |
| Employed in the Selection Area                                  | 272,831 | 100.0% |
| Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside               | 63,691  | 23.3%  |
| Employed and Living in the Selection Area                       | 209,140 | 76.7%  |
|                                                                 |         |        |
| Living in the Selection Area                                    | 368,381 | 100.0% |
| Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside               | 159,241 | 43.2%  |
| Living and Employed in the Selection Area                       | 209,140 | 56.8%  |

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

Stearns County is the largest employment center in the region, however, employers in Hennepin County draw in more workers than any other county in the region, and other counties in the Twin Cities metro area are also a major draw for workers. Other counties drawing large amounts of workers include Wright, Sherburne, and Anoka County. Hennepin, Anoka, and Ramsey, Dakota and Scott Counties attract 33% of workers in the Central Minnesota region (Figure 10).

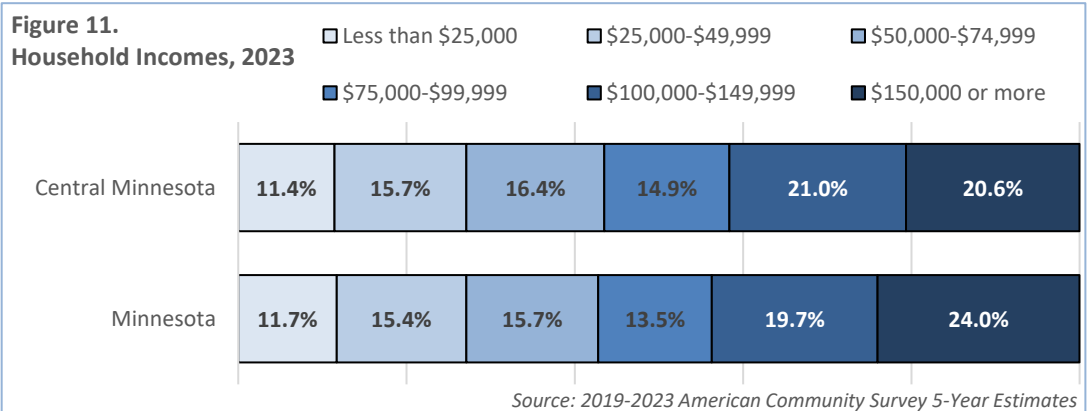
Figure 10. Central Minnesota Labor and Commute Shed, 2022



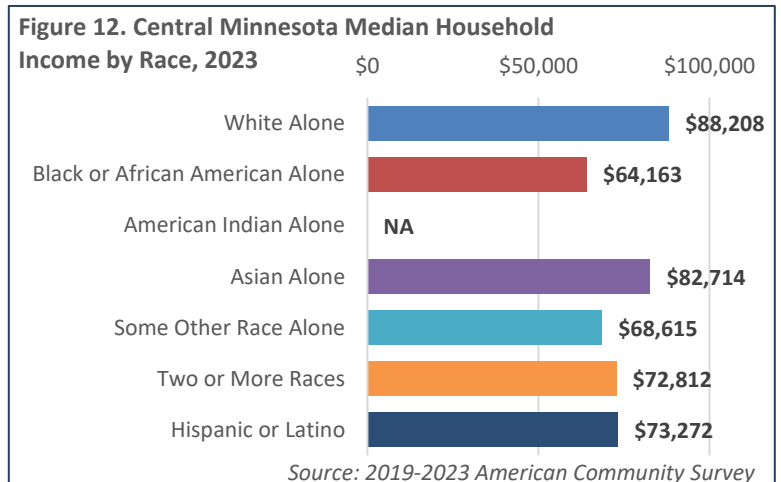
## INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

### HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes in Central Minnesota were nearly identical to the state overall. The median household income was \$86,664 in 2023, compared to \$87,556 in Minnesota. About 27.1% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2023, similar to the state. Another 31.3% earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000, 21% earned \$100,000 to \$149,999 and 20.6% earned over \$150,000 per year, which was well below the state level (Figure 11).



About 90% of households reporting incomes in 2023 were White alone, and Whites also had the highest median income level. Black or African American households reported the lowest incomes in Central Minnesota, with a median just over \$64,000, which is roughly 75% of the overall median household income (Figure 12). Median household incomes were also about \$15,000-\$20,000 lower for Hispanics and people of some other race than for Whites, while Asian households had incomes that were more similar to Whites in 2023, at \$82,714.





## 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 \$70,308 in 2024. The cost of living for a similar family in Central Minnesota was \$69,036 – which was the second highest in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area. Because of a disproportionate share of workers commute long distances in Central Minnesota the region has the highest transportation costs in the state, and the second highest housing costs.

The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing, but child care costs are substantially higher than other geographies as well. In order to meet the basic needs cost of living for the region, the two workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$22.13 per hour working a combined 60 hours per week (Table 8).

**Table 8. Central Minnesota Cost of Living, 2024**

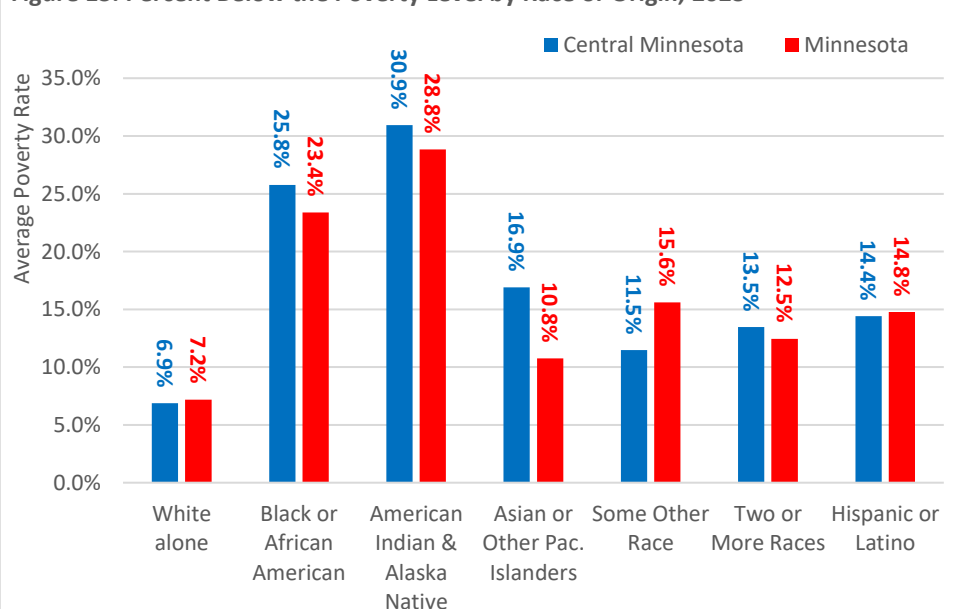
| Family Composition               | Number of Workers | Yearly Cost of Living | Hourly Wage Required | Monthly Costs |         |             |         |                |       |         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------|-------------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|
|                                  |                   |                       |                      | Child Care    | Food    | Health Care | Housing | Transportation | Other | Taxes   |
| Central Minnesota                |                   |                       |                      |               |         |             |         |                |       |         |
| Single, 0 children               | 1 FT              | \$36,468              | \$17.53              | \$0           | \$414   | \$155       | \$1,099 | \$630          | \$350 | \$391   |
| Single, 1 child                  | 1 FT              | \$59,064              | \$28.40              | \$869         | \$607   | \$445       | \$1,381 | \$636          | \$460 | \$524   |
| 2 parents, 1 child               | 1 FT, 1 PT        | \$69,036              | \$22.13              | \$434         | \$942   | \$552       | \$1,381 | \$1,170        | \$537 | \$737   |
| 2 parents, 2 children            | 2 FT              | \$95,256              | \$22.90              | \$1,273       | \$1,224 | \$563       | \$1,853 | \$1,220        | \$712 | \$1,093 |
| State of Minnesota               |                   |                       |                      |               |         |             |         |                |       |         |
| Single, 0 children               | 1 FT              | \$36,768              | \$17.68              | \$0           | \$424   | \$156       | \$1,154 | \$573          | \$365 | \$392   |
| 2 parents, 1 child               | 1 FT, 1 PT        | \$70,308              | \$22.53              | \$545         | \$964   | \$556       | \$1,446 | \$1,028        | \$557 | \$763   |
| Source: DEED Cost of Living tool |                   |                       |                      |               |         |             |         |                |       |         |

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

DEED's Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in Central Minnesota would be \$36,468, which would require an hourly wage of \$17.53 to meet the basic needs standard of living. A single parent in the region requires a substantially higher wage with no other earners in the household, in 2024, a single parent of 1 child would need to earn \$28.40 per hour to meet basic needs (Table 8).

Overall, Central Minnesota's poverty rate was 8.2%, which was below the statewide rate of 9.2%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that 31% of the region's American Indian and over 25% of the Black or African American population was below the poverty level in 2023, compared to 6.9% for the White population. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 17% for Asians, and around 14% for people of two or more races and Hispanic or Latino origin, while people of some other race had poverty rates near 11.5% (Figure 13).

**Figure 13. Percent Below the Poverty Level by Race or Origin, 2023**



Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey

## WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Central Minnesota was \$23.85 released in the first quarter of 2025, which was the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest wage level of the six planning regions in the state. Central Minnesota's median wage was \$2.37 below the state's median hourly wage, equaling roughly 91% of the statewide wage rate, and \$4.63 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to \$9,630 less per year for a full-time worker. The highest median wage in Central Minnesota for all occupations was found in EDR 7W (Table 9).

| <b>Table 9. Occupational Employment Statistics by Region, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2025</b> | Median Hourly Wage | Estimated Regional Employment |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Central Minnesota</b>                                                               | <b>\$23.85</b>     | <b>280,040</b>                |
| <i>EDR 6E - Southwest Central</i>                                                      | <i>\$23.00</i>     | <i>50,900</i>                 |
| <i>EDR 7E - East Central</i>                                                           | <i>\$23.51</i>     | <i>49,570</i>                 |
| <i>EDR 7W - Central</i>                                                                | <i>\$24.27</i>     | <i>179,570</i>                |
| Twin Cities Metro Area                                                                 | \$28.48            | 1,762,280                     |
| Northeast Minnesota                                                                    | \$23.47            | 139,940                       |
| Northwest Minnesota                                                                    | \$22.98            | 223,320                       |
| Southeast Minnesota                                                                    | \$24.82            | 244,290                       |
| Southwest Minnesota                                                                    | \$23.24            | 169,900                       |
| <b>State of Minnesota</b>                                                              | <b>\$26.22</b>     | <b>2,920,470</b>              |

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

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

| <b>Table 10. Occupational Employment &amp; Wage Statistics, 2025</b> |                    |                               |                           |                   |                    |                                |                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Occupational Group                                                   | Central Minnesota  |                               |                           |                   | State of Minnesota |                                |                           |
|                                                                      | Median Hourly Wage | Estimated Regional Employment | Share of Total Employment | Location Quotient | Median Hourly Wage | Estimated Statewide Employment | Share of Total Employment |
| <b>Total, All Occupations</b>                                        | <b>\$23.85</b>     | <b>280,040</b>                | <b>100.0%</b>             | <b>1.0</b>        | <b>\$26.22</b>     | <b>2,920,470</b>               | <b>100.0%</b>             |
| Management                                                           | \$49.59            | 15,380                        | 5.5%                      | 0.8               | \$59.38            | 200,060                        | 6.9%                      |
| Business & Financial Operations                                      | \$37.32            | 11,410                        | 4.1%                      | 0.6               | \$39.95            | 208,210                        | 7.1%                      |
| Computer & Mathematical                                              | \$39.21            | 3,350                         | 1.2%                      | 0.4               | \$50.02            | 97,460                         | 3.3%                      |
| Architecture & Engineering                                           | \$40.78            | 3,890                         | 1.4%                      | 0.7               | \$45.03            | 57,950                         | 2.0%                      |
| Life, Physical & Social Science                                      | \$39.52            | 1,680                         | 0.6%                      | 0.5               | \$38.33            | 32,150                         | 1.1%                      |
| Community & Social Service                                           | \$29.89            | 5,550                         | 2.0%                      | 1.0               | \$29.82            | 59,290                         | 2.0%                      |
| Legal                                                                | \$41.73            | 970                           | 0.3%                      | 0.5               | \$49.52            | 20,750                         | 0.7%                      |
| Education, Training & Library                                        | \$27.36            | 18,960                        | 6.8%                      | 1.2               | \$27.84            | 170,270                        | 5.8%                      |
| Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media                                  | \$23.44            | 2,080                         | 0.7%                      | 0.6               | \$28.84            | 36,030                         | 1.2%                      |
| Healthcare Practitioners & Technical                                 | \$42.24            | 17,280                        | 6.2%                      | 1.0               | \$46.51            | 187,480                        | 6.4%                      |
| Healthcare Support                                                   | \$18.73            | 17,600                        | 6.3%                      | 1.0               | \$18.67            | 176,750                        | 6.1%                      |
| Protective Service                                                   | \$30.99            | 4,720                         | 1.7%                      | 1.0               | \$29.37            | 46,960                         | 1.6%                      |
| Food Preparation & Serving Related                                   | \$15.38            | 25,520                        | 9.1%                      | 1.1               | \$16.05            | 240,830                        | 8.2%                      |
| Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.                                  | \$18.59            | 8,490                         | 3.0%                      | 1.1               | \$19.16            | 81,700                         | 2.8%                      |
| Personal Care & Service                                              | \$17.38            | 5,630                         | 2.0%                      | 0.9               | \$17.54            | 63,300                         | 2.2%                      |
| Sales & Related                                                      | \$17.83            | 26,540                        | 9.5%                      | 1.1               | \$18.66            | 244,780                        | 8.4%                      |
| Office & Administrative Support                                      | \$23.41            | 30,330                        | 10.8%                     | 0.9               | \$24.07            | 340,040                        | 11.6%                     |
| Farming, Fishing & Forestry                                          | \$23.70            | 610                           | 0.2%                      | 1.9               | \$23.48            | 3,300                          | 0.1%                      |
| Construction & Extraction                                            | \$31.52            | 15,930                        | 5.7%                      | 1.5               | \$34.20            | 114,050                        | 3.9%                      |
| Installation, Maintenance & Repair                                   | \$29.61            | 11,950                        | 4.3%                      | 1.2               | \$30.40            | 105,650                        | 3.6%                      |
| Production                                                           | \$23.74            | 26,990                        | 9.6%                      | 1.4               | \$23.56            | 205,220                        | 7.0%                      |
| Transportation & Material Moving                                     | \$22.37            | 25,190                        | 9.0%                      | 1.2               | \$22.85            | 228,260                        | 7.8%                      |

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics, Qtr. 1 2025](#)

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

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

### JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Central Minnesota reported 13,827 job vacancies in 2024, which was less than the peaks reached in 2022 and 2023, but continues to be relatively high historically. The median hourly wage offer rose to \$19.81 across all occupations but ranged from a low of \$15 per hour for Personal Care & Service and Food Prep & Serving workers, to more than \$30 per hour for Life, Physical & Social Sciences, Business & Financial Operations, Legal, and Computer & Mathematical occupations.

Overall, 31% of the openings were part-time, only 27% required any postsecondary education, and 37% 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. Some occupational groups, such as Legal, Management, Healthcare Practitioners, and Education, Training & Library occupations, have much higher postsecondary requirements; while others, including Food Prep & Serving, Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance, Sales & Related, and Office & Administrative Support occupations have lower or no postsecondary requirements.

**Table 11. Central Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey Results, 2024**

|                                      | Number of Total Vacancies | Median Hourly Wage Offer | Percent Part-Time | Percent Temp or Seasonal | Requiring Postsecondary Education | Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp. | Requiring Certificate or License | Job Vacancy Rate |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Total, All Occupations</b>        | <b>13,827</b>             | <b>\$19.81</b>           | <b>31%</b>        | <b>5%</b>                | <b>27%</b>                        | <b>37%</b>                             | <b>52%</b>                       | <b>5.0%</b>      |
| Management                           | 319                       | \$29.45                  | 3%                | 0%                       | 84%                               | 96%                                    | 69%                              | 2.1%             |
| Business & Financial Operations      | 394                       | \$33.36                  | 11%               | 0%                       | 61%                               | 87%                                    | 29%                              | 3.5%             |
| Computer & Mathematical              | 40                        | \$26.02                  | 3%                | 0%                       | 34%                               | 47%                                    | 43%                              | 1.2%             |
| Architecture & Engineering           | 197                       | \$30.87                  | 3%                | 1%                       | 65%                               | 97%                                    | 87%                              | 5.1%             |
| Life, Physical & Social Sciences     | 122                       | \$33.52                  | 2%                | 0%                       | 62%                               | 81%                                    | 71%                              | 7.3%             |
| Community & Social Service           | 283                       | \$23.80                  | 24%               | 2%                       | 65%                               | 67%                                    | 98%                              | 5.1%             |
| Legal                                | 7                         | \$45.83                  | 0%                | 0%                       | 100%                              | 100%                                   | 100%                             | 0.7%             |
| Education, Training & Library        | 735                       | \$19.62                  | 30%               | 23%                      | 70%                               | 23%                                    | 86%                              | 3.9%             |
| Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media  | 163                       | \$20.46                  | 85%               | 55%                      | 64%                               | 24%                                    | 72%                              | 7.8%             |
| Healthcare Practitioners & Technical | 1,450                     | \$29.97                  | 33%               | 1%                       | 74%                               | 54%                                    | 97%                              | 8.4%             |
| Healthcare Support                   | 1,363                     | \$18.33                  | 57%               | 1%                       | 11%                               | 15%                                    | 89%                              | 7.7%             |
| Protective Service                   | 189                       | \$21.58                  | 36%               | 6%                       | 31%                               | 42%                                    | 54%                              | 4.0%             |
| Food Preparation & Serving Related   | 1,814                     | \$15.03                  | 48%               | 4%                       | 0%                                | 22%                                    | 5%                               | 7.1%             |
| Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.  | 260                       | \$16.97                  | 39%               | 25%                      | 1%                                | 9%                                     | 55%                              | 3.1%             |
| Personal Care & Service              | 417                       | \$14.99                  | 25%               | 17%                      | 13%                               | 4%                                     | 51%                              | 7.4%             |
| Sales & Related                      | 1,861                     | \$15.92                  | 29%               | 1%                       | 2%                                | 15%                                    | 9%                               | 7.0%             |
| Office & Administrative Support      | 911                       | \$20.11                  | 15%               | 1%                       | 5%                                | 54%                                    | 63%                              | 3.0%             |
| Construction & Extraction            | 693                       | \$22.04                  | 0%                | 1%                       | 25%                               | 43%                                    | 30%                              | 4.3%             |
| Installation, Maintenance & Repair   | 695                       | \$23.62                  | 4%                | 1%                       | 37%                               | 56%                                    | 50%                              | 5.8%             |
| Production                           | 598                       | \$20.21                  | 9%                | 2%                       | 7%                                | 34%                                    | 29%                              | 2.2%             |
| Transportation & Material Moving     | 1,128                     | \$20.98                  | 43%               | 3%                       | 19%                               | 44%                                    | 71%                              | 4.5%             |

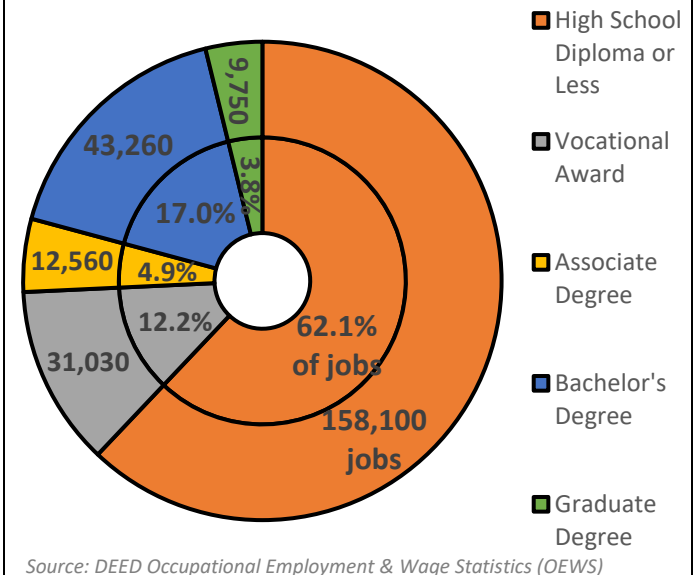
*Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey, 2023*

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Similar to Job Vacancy Survey results, data from DEED's Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics program shows that only about 38% of jobs in the region require postsecondary education for entry. The other 62% can be started with a high school diploma or less and possibly some amount of on-the-job training (Figure 14).

Certain careers – such as Dentists, Lawyers, and Teachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including Cost Estimators, Sales Representatives, and Correctional Officers – do not. College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to licensed fields that would otherwise be closed, such as Nursing or Engineering. Many of these occupations offer high wages and are in high demand in the marketplace. While education is typically a worthwhile investment, college can be expensive – with average annual expenses ranging between \$13,000 and over \$54,000 per year in Minnesota. For those who go to college, choice of major matters – different programs lead to jobs that earn different amounts of money.

**Figure 14. Central Share of Jobs by Educational Requirements, 2023**

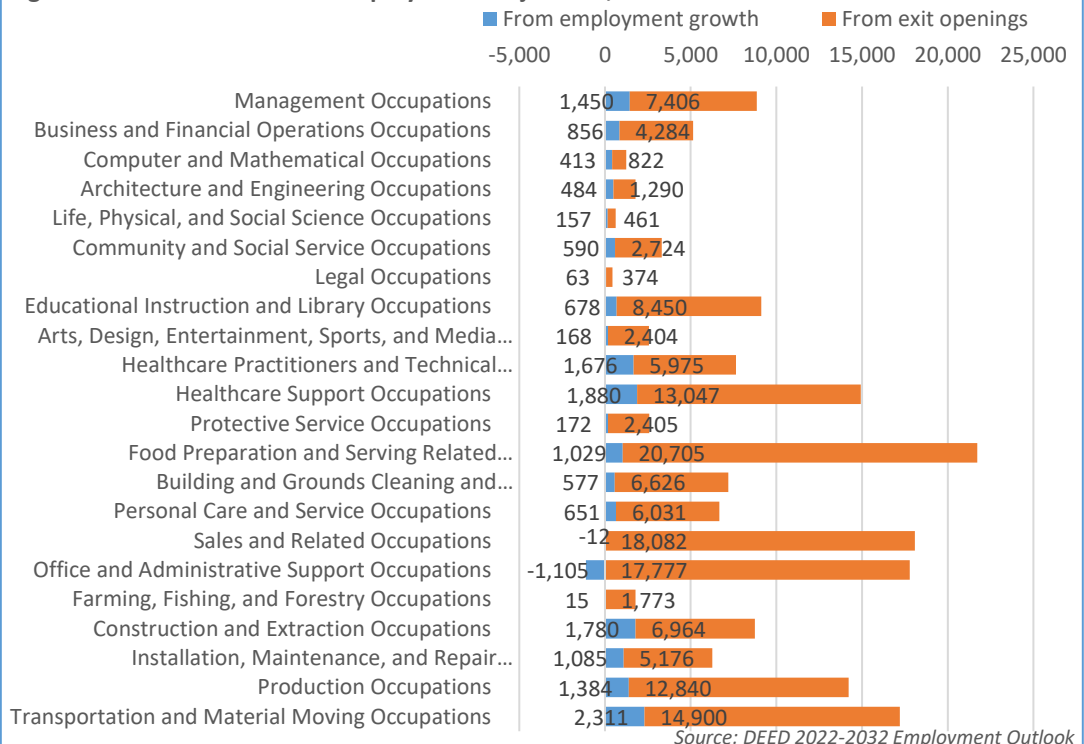


## EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Overall, the 13-county Central Minnesota planning area is projected to grow 5.2% from 2022 to 2032, a gain of 16,302 new jobs. The revised faster growth projection makes the region the fastest growing region out of the 6 planning areas.

In addition, the region is also expected to need 160,516 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. Healthcare Support, Architecture and Engineering and Computer and Mathematical occupations are expected to see the most new growth, but every occupational group will show some future demand either through new jobs or replacement openings (Figure 15).

**Figure 15. Central Minnesota Employment Projections, 2022-2032**





## OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are 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, 2024**

| High School or Less                                                         | Vocational Training                                                             | Associate Degree                                                  | Bachelor's Degree or Higher                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Home Health & Personal Care Aides<br>\$37,520/yr                            | Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers<br>\$61,513/yr                            | Registered Nurses<br>\$101,788/yr                                 | General & Operations Managers<br>\$86,311/yr                |
| Retail Salespersons<br>\$35,294/yr                                          | Nursing Assistants<br>\$45,077/yr                                               | Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers<br>\$80,894/yr                 | Elementary School Teachers<br>\$63,707/yr                   |
| Fast Food & Counter Workers<br>\$31,729/yr                                  | Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses<br>\$60,654/yr                  | Radiologic Technologists & Technicians<br>\$84,540/yr             | Secondary School Teachers<br>\$64,803/yr                    |
| Cashiers<br>\$32,454/yr                                                     | Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks<br>\$51,037/yr                       | Veterinary Technologists & Technicians<br>\$49,370/yr             | Medical & Health Services Managers<br>\$109,085/yr          |
| Stockers & Order Fillers<br>\$37,670/yr                                     | Psychiatric Technicians<br>\$46,781/yr                                          | Architectural & Civil Drafters<br>\$63,877/yr                     | Accountants & Auditors<br>\$76,798/yr                       |
| First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation & Serving Workers<br>\$45,691/yr | Machinists<br>\$60,200/yr                                                       | Dental Hygienists<br>\$99,124/yr                                  | Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education<br>\$38,622/yr |
| Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary<br>\$38,072/yr                    | Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists<br>\$64,200/yr                | Detectives & Criminal Investigators<br>\$81,545/yr                | Substitute Teachers, Short-Term<br>\$44,131/yr              |
| First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers<br>\$47,056/yr               | Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics<br>\$52,077/yr                       | Industrial Engineering Technologists & Technicians<br>\$64,951/yr | Project Management Specialists<br>\$94,626/yr               |
| Customer Service Representatives<br>\$45,804/yr                             | Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, & mental health counselors<br>\$56,854/yr | Surgical Technologists<br>\$70,461/yr                             | Middle School Teachers<br>\$64,293/yr                       |
| Janitors & Cleaners<br>\$37,935/yr                                          | Medical Assistants<br>\$48,651/yr                                               | Diagnostic Medical Sonographers<br>\$97,765/yr                    | Child, Family, & School Social Workers<br>\$69,904/yr       |

Source: DEED [Occupations in Demand](#)

## ECONOMY

### INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

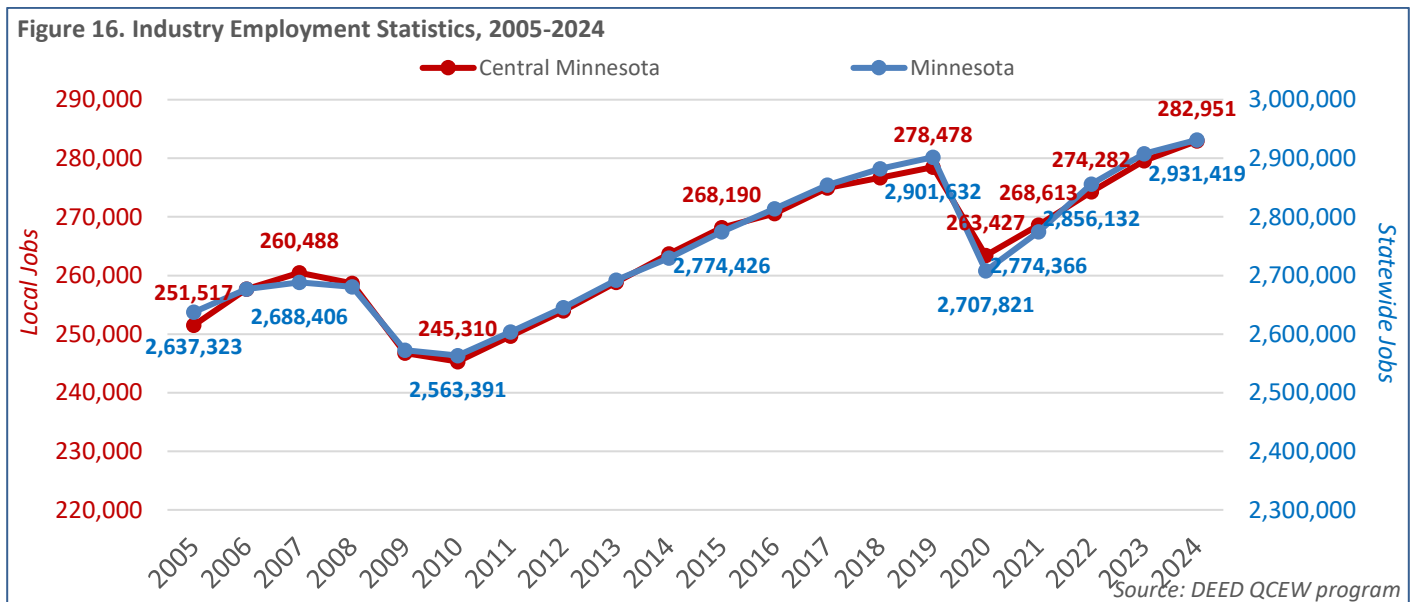
According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Central Minnesota was home to 20,329 employer establishments providing an average of 282,951 covered jobs through 2024, with a total payroll of over \$16.1 billion. That was 9.7% of total employment and 7.4% of total payroll in the state of Minnesota. Average annual wages were \$56,976 in the region, which was about \$17,250 lower than the state's average annual wage. Central Minnesota had led Greater Minnesota in job growth during the recovery since the pandemic recession, and in the past year, exceeded the state growth rate (Table 13).

With 181,415 jobs at 12,251 establishments, EDR 7W accounts for about 64% of total employment in the Central planning region. EDR 7W also accounted for 74% of the region's job gain since the pandemic recession in 2020, adding 14,417 jobs, an 8.6% increase. In contrast, EDR 7E had the fewest jobs, with 49,145 jobs at 4,254 establishments, an increase of 3,452 jobs since 2020. EDR 6E had 3,825 establishments providing 52,390 jobs, after adding 1,654 jobs from 2020 to 2024, a 3.3% increase.

| Geography                | Number of Firms | Number of Jobs   | Total Payroll            | Average Annual Wage | 2023-2024      |                | 2020-2024       |                |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                          |                 |                  |                          |                     | Change in Jobs | Percent Change | Change in Jobs  | Percent Change |
| <b>Central Minnesota</b> | <b>20,329</b>   | <b>282,951</b>   | <b>\$16,121,412,490</b>  | <b>\$56,976</b>     | <b>+3,350</b>  | <b>+1.2%</b>   | <b>+19,524</b>  | <b>+7.4%</b>   |
| Region 6E                | 3,825           | 52,390           | \$2,836,576,033          | \$54,143            | +364           | +0.7%          | +1,654          | +3.3%          |
| Region 7E                | 4,254           | 49,145           | \$2,522,914,341          | \$51,336            | +291           | +0.6%          | +3,452          | +7.6%          |
| Region 7W                | 12,251          | 181,415          | \$10,761,922,116         | \$59,322            | +2,695         | +1.5%          | +14,417         | +8.6%          |
| <b>Minnesota</b>         | <b>212,756</b>  | <b>2,931,419</b> | <b>\$217,596,492,078</b> | <b>\$74,229</b>     | <b>+23,696</b> | <b>+0.8%</b>   | <b>+223,598</b> | <b>+8.3%</b>   |

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

Central Minnesota reached a peak of 278,478 jobs in 2019, then hit a low of 263,427 jobs in 2020 as the pandemic recession spread throughout the state. Since then, the region has steadily recovered jobs each year, adding more than 5,000 jobs through 2022, then nearly 6,000 jobs in 2023, and almost 8,700 net new jobs in 2024 as the economy expanded (Figure 16). Over time, the region's economic fluctuations have closely matched the state overall.



With 50,999 jobs at 2,773 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in Central Minnesota, accounting for 18% of total jobs in the region. At \$58,070 in 2024, average annual wages were slightly higher in Health Care than in the total of all industries. The industry saw strong job growth in the past year, adding 2,100 jobs, and was up more than 2,500 jobs compared to 2020.

The next largest industry in Central was Manufacturing, with 41,266 jobs at 1,202 firms, after losing 500 jobs from 2023 to 2024. However, the industry did add about 1,750 jobs from 2020 to 2024. Central Minnesota has large concentrations of Food Manufacturing and Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing, as well as significant amounts of Machinery and Transportation Equipment Manufacturing.

Retail Trade is the third largest industry, with 36,654 jobs at 2,220 establishments, and the related Accommodation & Food Services industry also provides 24,164 jobs in the region. The Accommodation & Food Services sector suffered greatly from the pandemic recession, but regained more than 4,700 jobs in the region from 2020 to 2024. Likewise, the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry saw the fastest job growth since 2020, recovering over 1,000 jobs since 2020, a 40% increase. The 5<sup>th</sup> largest industry is Educational Services, which provides more than 24,250 jobs at just over 400 institutions, primarily at Elementary & Secondary Schools, but also at Junior Colleges and Universities.

The Construction industry is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest industry in the region, with 21,725 jobs at 3,050 firms, and was one of the fastest growing jobs in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic recession. Sixteen of the 20 industries added jobs from 2020 to 2024. Administrative Support & Waste Management Services, which includes temporary staffing services, saw the biggest decline in jobs since 2020, cutting more than 1,000 jobs. In addition, Information, Finance & Insurance, and Mining all saw very small job declines.

**Table 14. Central Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, 2024**

| NAICS Industry Title                  | 2024 Annual Data |                |                          |                  | 2023-2024      |                | 2020-2024      |                |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                       | Number of Firms  | Number of Jobs | Total Payroll (\$1,000s) | Avg. Annual Wage | Change in Jobs | Percent Change | Change in Jobs | Percent Change |
| Total, All Industries                 | 20,329           | 282,951        | \$16,121,412             | \$56,976         | +3,350         | +1.2%          | +19,524        | +7.4%          |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunting | 520              | 5,059          | \$255,760                | \$50,555         | -57            | -1.1%          | +134           | +2.7%          |
| Mining                                | 28               | 319            | \$23,889                 | \$74,887         | -32            | -9.1%          | -38            | -10.6%         |
| Construction                          | 3,050            | 21,725         | \$1,756,807              | \$80,866         | +852           | +4.1%          | +2,450         | +12.7%         |
| Manufacturing                         | 1,202            | 41,266         | \$2,857,893              | \$69,255         | -500           | -1.2%          | +1,749         | +4.4%          |
| Utilities                             | 66               | 2,248          | \$288,191                | \$128,199        | -7             | -0.3%          | +112           | +5.2%          |
| Wholesale Trade                       | 687              | 10,799         | \$814,803                | \$75,452         | +186           | +1.8%          | +1,380         | +14.7%         |
| Retail Trade                          | 2,220            | 36,654         | \$1,328,864              | \$36,254         | +467           | +1.3%          | +1,151         | +3.2%          |
| Transportation & Warehousing          | 867              | 10,246         | \$604,355                | \$58,985         | +218           | +2.2%          | +740           | +7.8%          |
| Information                           | 243              | 2,752          | \$174,479                | \$63,401         | -102           | -3.6%          | -153           | -5.3%          |
| Finance & Insurance                   | 903              | 7,161          | \$618,587                | \$86,383         | -63            | -0.9%          | -155           | -2.1%          |
| Real Estate & Rental & Leasing        | 589              | 1,906          | \$78,555                 | \$41,215         | +107           | +5.9%          | +188           | +10.9%         |
| Professional & Technical Services     | 1,264            | 6,508          | \$532,382                | \$81,804         | +27            | +0.4%          | +240           | +3.8%          |
| Management of Companies               | 93               | 1,999          | \$208,297                | \$104,201        | +66            | +3.4%          | +155           | +8.4%          |
| Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.    | 907              | 8,237          | \$426,300                | \$51,754         | -978           | -10.6%         | -1,016         | -11.0%         |
| Educational Services                  | 401              | 24,259         | \$1,332,635              | \$54,934         | +190           | +0.8%          | +1,689         | +7.5%          |
| Health Care & Social Assistance       | 2,773            | 50,999         | \$2,961,499              | \$58,070         | +2,109         | +4.3%          | +2,539         | +5.2%          |
| Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation     | 365              | 3,702          | \$68,902                 | \$18,612         | +139           | +3.9%          | +1,066         | +40.4%         |
| Accommodation & Food Services         | 1,362            | 24,164         | \$552,386                | \$22,860         | +25            | +0.1%          | +4,718         | +24.3%         |
| Other Services                        | 2,324            | 8,798          | \$325,074                | \$36,949         | +54            | +0.6%          | +1,441         | +19.6%         |
| Public Administration                 | 467              | 14,147         | \$911,755                | \$64,449         | +651           | +4.8%          | +1,137         | +8.7%          |

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

## EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

According to DEED's Quarterly Employment Demographics (QED) program, the workforce in the region was aging over the past 10 years. Nearly one-quarter (23.4%) of workers in the region were 55 years or older, compared to 22.6% statewide and 19.4% in the region one decade earlier (Table 15).

As noted above, wages were climbing across the board for all workers due to rising demand and a tight labor market, despite the short recession in the 2020 dataset. 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, the youngest age groups enjoyed the fastest percentage increase in wages from 2014 to 2024.

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

| Central Minnesota | Percentage of Workers |        | Percent of Workers, Minnesota |        | Median Hourly Wage |         | Median Hours Worked Per Qtr. |      |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------|------------------------------|------|
|                   | 2024                  | 2014   | 2024                          | 2014   | 2024               | 2014    | 2024                         | 2014 |
| Total, all ages   | 100.0%                | 100.0% | 100.0%                        | 100.0% | \$24.14            | \$15.42 | 405                          | 404  |
| 19 years & under  | 8.4%                  | 8.8%   | 6.0%                          | 6.4%   | \$16.11            | \$8.33  | 130                          | 124  |
| 20 to 24 years    | 9.7%                  | 11.8%  | 9.0%                          | 11.1%  | \$20.59            | \$11.30 | 320                          | 277  |
| 25 to 44 years    | 40.7%                 | 39.4%  | 43.6%                         | 42.4%  | \$27.60            | \$17.41 | 457                          | 457  |
| 45 to 54 years    | 17.9%                 | 20.5%  | 18.7%                         | 20.8%  | \$29.83            | \$19.04 | 479                          | 480  |
| 55 to 64 years    | 16.7%                 | 15.1%  | 16.5%                         | 15.4%  | \$27.06            | \$18.27 | 468                          | 466  |
| 65 years & over   | 6.7%                  | 4.3%   | 6.1%                          | 3.9%   | \$20.10            | \$13.71 | 219                          | 210  |
| Male              | 49.1%                 | 47.8%  | 48.9%                         | 49.3%  | \$27.40            | \$17.33 | 470                          | 473  |
| Female            | 50.9%                 | 52.2%  | 51.1%                         | 50.7%  | \$23.01            | \$14.27 | 361                          | 354  |

Source: DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics

Wages were highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age, and males worked substantially more hours than females. Interestingly, from 2014 to 2024 jobs held by workers 45 to 54 years saw the largest decline in the share of jobs they hold, dropping from 20.5% in 2014 to 17.9% in 2024.

People of color account for 9.5% of the total labor force in Central Minnesota and hold a slightly higher share of jobs, compared to the state overall where they amount to 19.7% of the labor force. According to data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators program, people of color held 35,162 jobs in Central Minnesota, compared to 255,251 jobs held by White workers. The number of jobs has nearly doubled since 2003 when People of color held 13,420 jobs (Figure 17).

People of color held an additional 21,041 jobs since 2003 compared to 2,831 by White workers. Hispanic or Latino workers hold the largest number of jobs of the racial and ethnic minority groups with 14,609 jobs in 2023, almost half of all minority held jobs. The next largest number of jobs held by a minority group was Black or African American, holding 9,571 jobs in 2023. The number of jobs held by this race has increased by 7,052 since 2003, amounting to a 280% increase (Figure 18).

The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting sector and Manufacturing sector have the highest share of non-White employment at 28% and 20%, respectively. Accommodation & Food Services and Health Care & Social Assistance also have 15% of jobs held by non-White workers. The largest numbers of non-White workers are employed in Manufacturing (10,066 jobs) and Health Care & Social Assistance (7,482 jobs). The least diverse industries include Utilities and Mining (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Employment of People of Color, All Industries, Central Minnesota

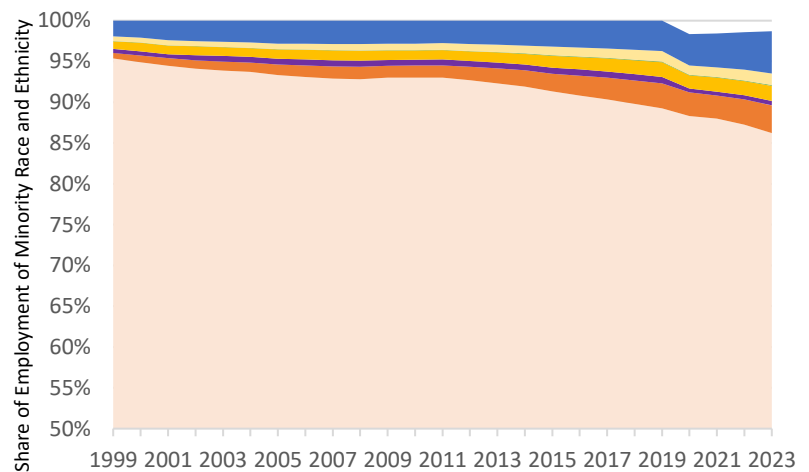


Figure 18. Employment of People of Color, All Industries, Central Minnesota

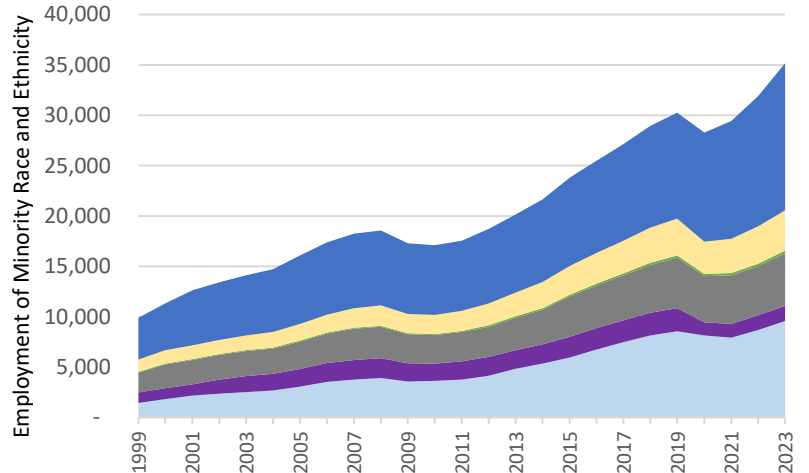
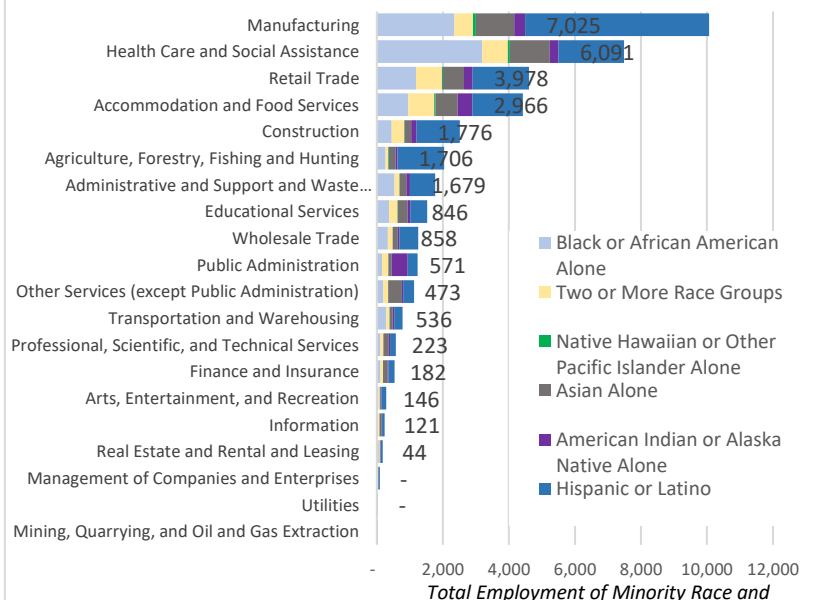


Figure 19. Employment of People of Color in Central Minnesota



Source: DEED, Census LEHD, QWI

## INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Central Minnesota is projected to grow 5.2% from 2022 to 2032, a gain of 16,302 new jobs, which would make it the fastest growing region in the state. The largest growing industry is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance, which may account for one-quarter of total projected growth in the region by 2032, followed by Manufacturing and Construction.

The fastest growth (10.9%) in the region is expected to be in the Construction industry, continuing a decades-long trend of rapid growth, while Professional and Technical Services, Management of Companies, Transportation & Warehousing, and Health Care & Social Assistance are also expected to grow about twice as fast as the region overall (Table 16).

**Table 16. Central Minnesota Industry Projections, 2022-2032**

| Industry                          | Estimated Employment 2022 | Projected Employment 2032 | Percent Change 2022-2032 | Numeric Change 2022-2032 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Total, All Industries</b>      | <b>315,929</b>            | <b>332,231</b>            | <b>+5.2%</b>             | <b>+16,302</b>           |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fish/Hunt  | 5,295                     | 5,457                     | +3.1%                    | +162                     |
| Mining                            | 354                       | 352                       | -0.6%                    | -2                       |
| Utilities                         | 1,986                     | 1,998                     | +0.6%                    | +12                      |
| Construction                      | 20,532                    | 22,780                    | +10.9%                   | +2,248                   |
| Manufacturing                     | 41,539                    | 44,543                    | +7.2%                    | +3,004                   |
| Wholesale Trade                   | 11,219                    | 12,105                    | +7.9%                    | +886                     |
| Retail Trade                      | 35,711                    | 35,808                    | +0.3%                    | +97                      |
| Transportation & Warehousing      | 9,287                     | 10,143                    | +9.2%                    | +856                     |
| Information                       | 3,002                     | 3,214                     | +7.1%                    | +212                     |
| Finance & Insurance               | 8,346                     | 8,644                     | +3.6%                    | +298                     |
| Real Estate & Rental & Leasing    | 1,796                     | 1,884                     | +4.9%                    | +88                      |
| Professional & Technical Services | 7,080                     | 7,833                     | +10.6%                   | +753                     |
| Management of Companies           | 1,960                     | 2,146                     | +9.5%                    | +186                     |
| Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.      | 10,369                    | 11,004                    | +6.1%                    | +635                     |
| Educational Services              | 24,622                    | 24,913                    | +1.2%                    | +291                     |
| Health Care & Social Assistance   | 45,668                    | 49,836                    | +9.1%                    | +4,168                   |
| Arts, Entertainment & Recreation  | 4,858                     | 5,168                     | +6.4%                    | +310                     |
| Accommodation & Food Services     | 21,188                    | 22,474                    | +6.1%                    | +1,286                   |
| Other Services                    | 10,880                    | 11,311                    | +4.0%                    | +431                     |
| Public Administration             | 20,424                    | 21,077                    | +3.2%                    | +653                     |

Source: DEED 2022-2032 Employment Outlook

## NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Central Minnesota was also home to 53,941 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2023, 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, Central Minnesota saw a steady increase in nonemployers over the past decade, responding to economic changes. In sum, the region gained 5,987 nonemployers from 2013 to 2023, a 12.5% increase. However, the vast majority of growth occurred in EDR 7W, while EDR 6E held steady. In sum, these nonemployers generated sales receipts of nearly \$3.1 billion in 2023 (Table 17).

**Table 17. Nonemployer Statistics, 2023**

|                          | 2023            |                     | 2013-2023       |                |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                          | Number of Firms | Receipts (\$1,000s) | Change in Firms | Percent Change |
| <b>Central Minnesota</b> | <b>53,941</b>   | <b>\$3,102,433</b>  | <b>+5,987</b>   | <b>+12.5%</b>  |
| Region 6E                | 8,356           | \$509,381           | +16             | +0.2%          |
| Region 7E                | 11,579          | \$621,761           | +632            | +5.8%          |
| Region 7W                | 34,006          | \$1,971,291         | +5,339          | +18.6%         |
| <b>Minnesota</b>         | <b>453,181</b>  | <b>\$25,619,689</b> | <b>+64,281</b>  | <b>+16.5%</b>  |

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

## CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Like other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is also a key industry in Central Minnesota, including 12,577 farms producing just under \$4.3 billion in the market value of products sold in 2022 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Several of the highest ranked agriculture counties in the state are in Central Minnesota, including Stearns (#1), Renville (#4), and Kandiyohi (#8). Like the state, the number of farms in the region declined over the past 5 years, but Central Minnesota still accounts for 19% of the farms in the state (Table 18).

**Table 18. Census of Agriculture, 2022**

|                          | Number of Farms | Market Value of Products Sold | State Rank      |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Central Minnesota</b> | <b>12,577</b>   | <b>\$4,297,678,000</b>        | <b>4 (of 6)</b> |
| Region 6E                | 3,975           | \$2,310,052,000               | 5 (of 13)       |
| Region 7E                | 3,416           | \$284,274,000                 | 12 (of 13)      |
| Region 7W                | 5,186           | \$1,703,352,000               | 8 (of 13)       |
| <b>Minnesota</b>         | <b>65,531</b>   | <b>\$28,482,097,000</b>       |                 |

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

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