

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7E: East Central

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

## 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](mailto:luke.greiner@state.mn.us)  
Web: <http://mn.gov/deed/data/>



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION CHANGE

Economic Development Region 7E – East Central includes 5 counties, located in the Central Minnesota planning region. Region 7E was home to 175,943 people in 2023, comprising 3% of the state’s total population. The region saw a 4% population increase since 2020, making it the eighth largest of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in total population, and the second fastest growing. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 0.6% gain from 2020 to 2023 (Table 1).

	2020 Population	2023 Estimates	2020-2023 Change	
			Number	Percent
<b>Region 7E</b>	<b>169,123</b>	<b>175,943</b>	<b>+6,820</b>	<b>+4.0%</b>
Chisago Co.	56,621	58,535	+1,914	+3.4%
Isanti Co.	41,135	43,182	+2,047	+5.0%
Kanabec Co.	16,032	16,602	+570	+3.6%
Mille Lacs Co.	26,459	27,427	+968	+3.7%
Pine Co.	28,876	30,197	+1,321	+4.6%
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>5,706,494</b>	<b>5,737,915</b>	<b>+31,421</b>	<b>+0.6%</b>

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

Chisago County is the largest county in Region 7E and is the 18<sup>th</sup> largest county of 87 in the state, with over 58,500 people in 2023. It added 1,914 people, a 3.4% increase, since 2020, the 11<sup>th</sup> fastest growth rate. Isanti County experienced the fastest growth in the region with an increase of 2,047 people and now has over 43,000 people. The next largest county is Pine County with 30,197 people, while Mille Lacs County increased by 3.7% and has 27,427 people, and Kanabec County is the smallest county in the region with 16,602 people, the 52<sup>nd</sup> largest county in the state.

### COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

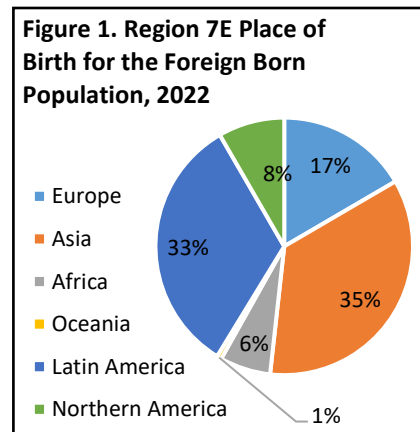
With an aging population, Region 7E experienced a natural decrease – more deaths than births – of -406 people from 2020-2023. However, the region gained substantial population because of net domestic migration with an increase of 7,104 residents moving into the area, nearly all in-migration was from domestic residents from other parts of the state or U.S. (Table 2).

Without much international in-migration, Region 7E is now home to 3,213 foreign born residents, or about 1.9% of the total population. The number of immigrants in the region increased by 40% since 2010, faster than the statewide growth rate of 31%. Just over 35% (1,130 people) of these immigrants were from Asia, while the largest number was from Central and South America, accounting for 41% of the region’s foreign-born. Lastly, there were 533 people from Europe, but this population has decreased since 2010 (Figure 1).

	Total Change	Natural Increase	Vital Events		Net Migration		
			Births	Deaths	Total	Inter-national	Domestic
Region 7E	+6,794	-406	5,814	6,220	+7,234	+130	+7,104
Minnesota	+31,111	+40,368	207,857	167,489	-11,352	+34,624	-45,976

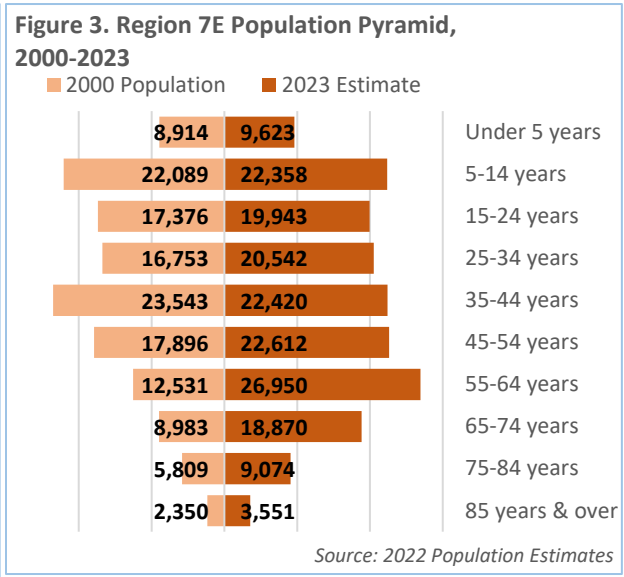
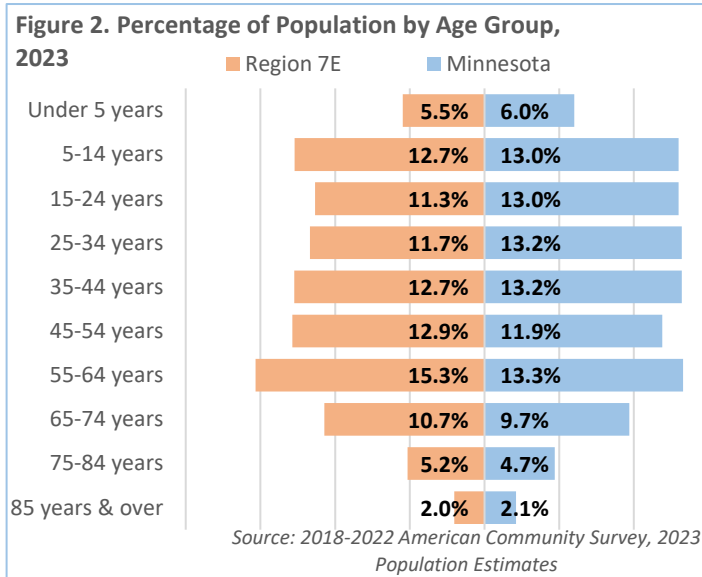
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program*

Based on year of entry, Region 7E’s foreign born population was “older” than the rest of the state. About 22% of the region’s immigrants entered the U.S. since 2010 and another 21% entered between 2000 and 2009, compared to 33% and 29% statewide. The remaining 57% of immigrants in the region settled in the U.S. prior to 2000. Foreign-born residents have a different age profile than the native-born population, with only 11% being between under 25 years of age, compared to 30% of the total population. About 18% of the foreign-born population has less than a high school degree while another 37% is a high school graduate. Meanwhile, 18% of foreign-born people in the region have a bachelor’s or higher degree.



**POPULATION BY AGE GROUP**

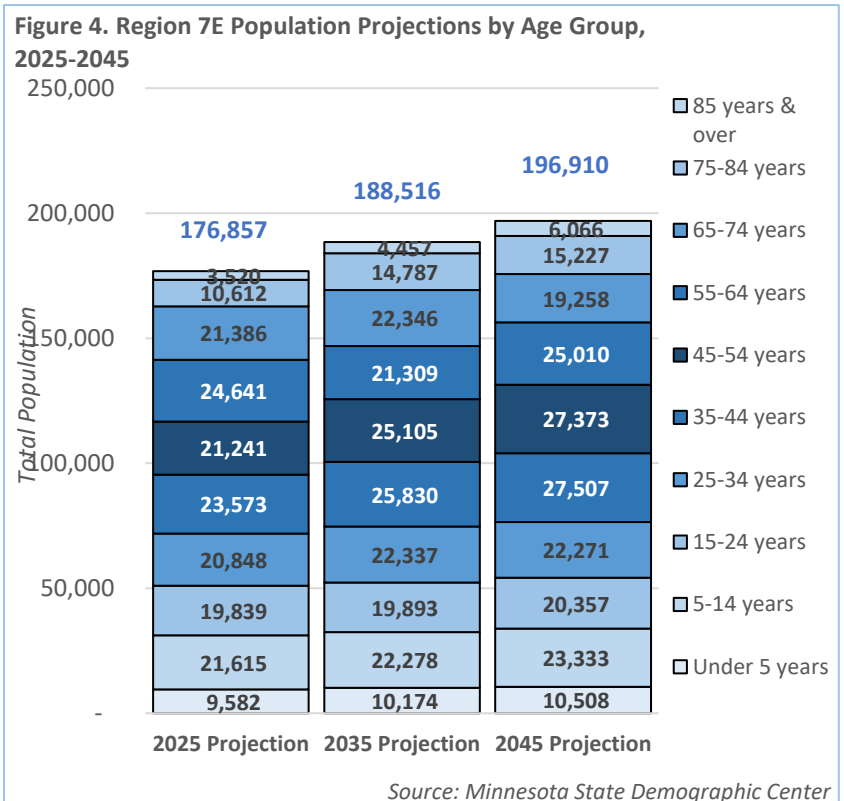
Region 7E has a slightly older population than the rest of the state, with 18% of residents aged 65 years and over, compared to 16.5% statewide. In addition, Region 7E had a higher percentage of people in the 45- to 64-year-old age groups, but consequently had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, typically the leading edge of the “prime working years”. A large portion of the area’s population is a part of the Baby Boom generation, which is creating a significant shift in regional demographics over time. Between 2000 and 2023, the 55 years or older group added more than 28,000 residents (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).



**POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP**

The more rapid recent population growth is expected to help drive continued growth in the future. According to the [State Demographic Center](#), Region 7E is expected to gain nearly 20,000 residents from 2025 to 2045, an 11.3% increase (see Figure 4). By comparison the state of Minnesota is projected to grow 5.5%.

Much of this population growth is expected to happen in older age groups. Region 7E is projected to add 7,161 people aged 75 years and over, as well as about 6,132 people in the 45- to 54-year-old age group. However, Region 7E is projected to lose 2,128 people in the 65 to 74 year old age group – as current Baby Boomers continue to age.



**POPULATION BY RACE**

Region 7E’s population is less diverse than the state’s, and actually became less diverse recently, bucking historical trends. In 2020, 90.5% of the region’s residents reported white alone as their race, compared to 92.3% in 2022 and 79.8% statewide. At 1.4%, Region 7E had a higher percentage of American Indian or Alaska Natives than the state, but otherwise had much smaller percentages of people of all other race and origin groups, especially Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino origin (Table 3).

With 6,240 people, the largest racial or ethnic group other than White is people of two or more races, which increased 147% from 2011 to 2022. Conversely, the region saw an 18% decline in the number of American Indian residents.

Table 3. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2022	Region 7E				Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2011-2022 Numeric   Percent		Percent	Change from 2011-2022
<b>Total</b>	<b>170,099</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>+6,849</b>	<b>+4.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>+7.9%</b>
White	156,958	92.3%	+2,486	+1.6%	79.7%	-0.4%
Black or African American	1,821	1.1%	+104	+6.1%	6.7%	+44.3%
American Indian & Alaska Native	2,300	1.4%	-510	-18.1%	0.9%	-10.2%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	2,056	1.2%	+1,055	+105.4%	5.1%	+37.1%
Some Other Race	724	0.4%	+4	+0.6%	2.3%	+84.7%
Two or More Races	6,240	3.7%	+3,710	+146.6%	5.3%	+159.6%
Hispanic or Latino origin	4,356	2.6%	+1,500	+52.5%	5.7%	+34.6%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey*

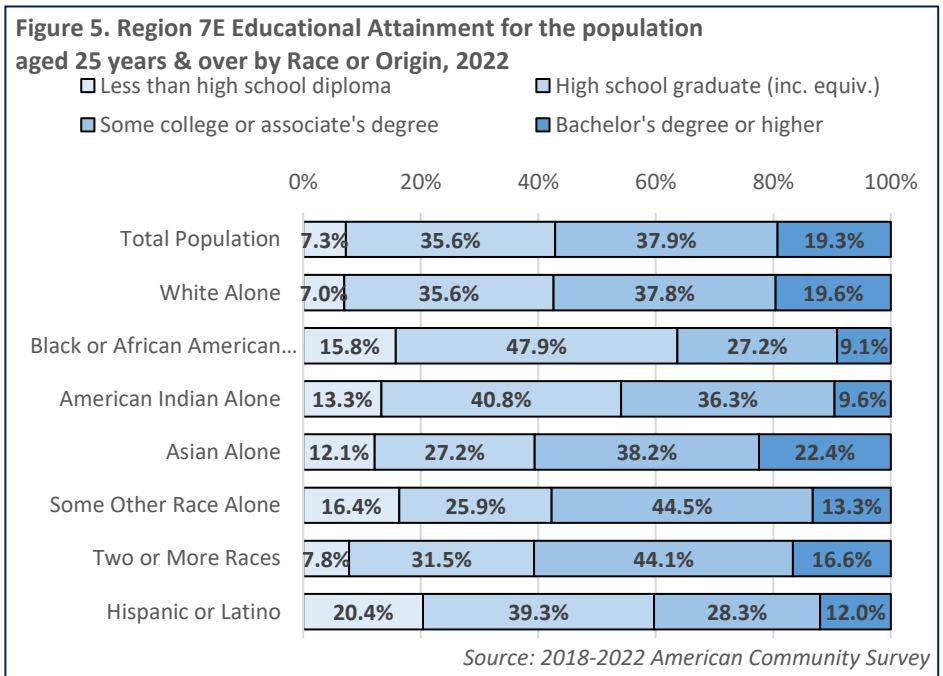
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

With 33% of adults aged 25 years and over having a college degree, Region 7E has lower educational attainment than the state, where half of adults have an associate, bachelor’s, or advanced degree. However, 13.3% of adults in Region 7E have an associate degree, which outpaces the state. Another 25% have some college experience, but no degree.

Table 4. Educational Attainment for the Population Aged 25 years & Over	Region 7E		Minnesota
	Number	Percent	Percent
<b>Total, 25 years &amp; over</b>	<b>119,900</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Less than high school	8,691	7.2%	6.3%
High school graduate (incl. equiv.)	42,707	35.6%	23.7%
Some college, no degree	29,428	24.5%	20.2%
Associate degree	15,942	13.3%	11.7%
Bachelor's degree	16,303	13.6%	24.9%
Advanced degree	6,829	5.7%	13.3%

*Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates*

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



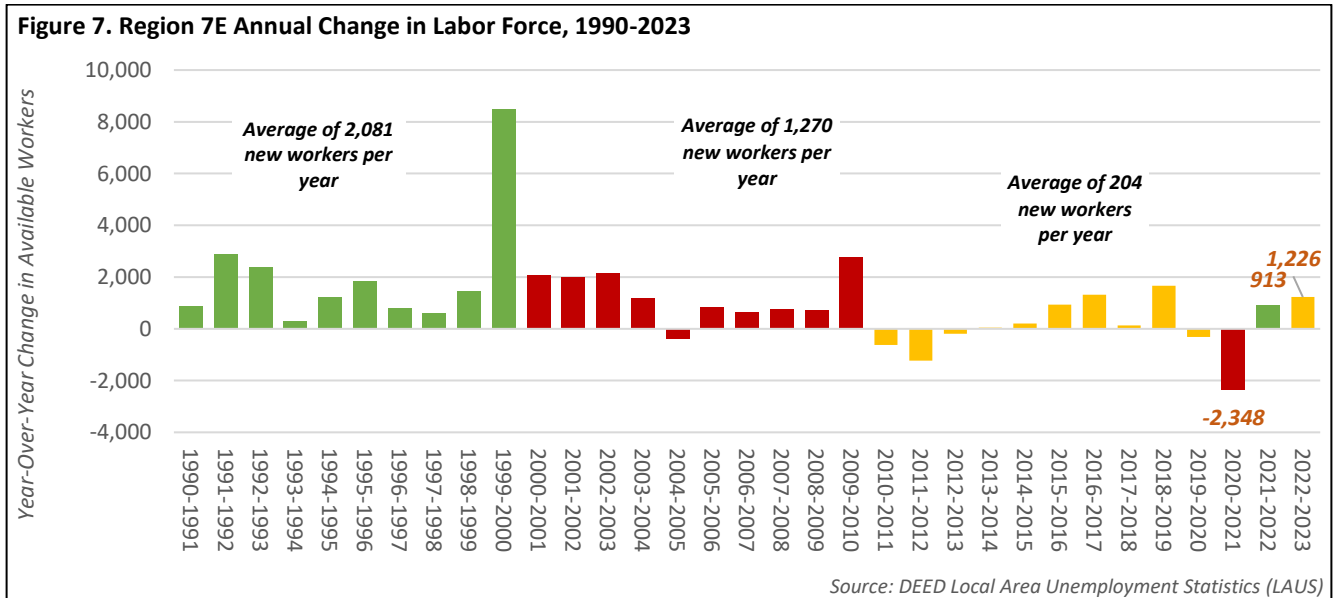
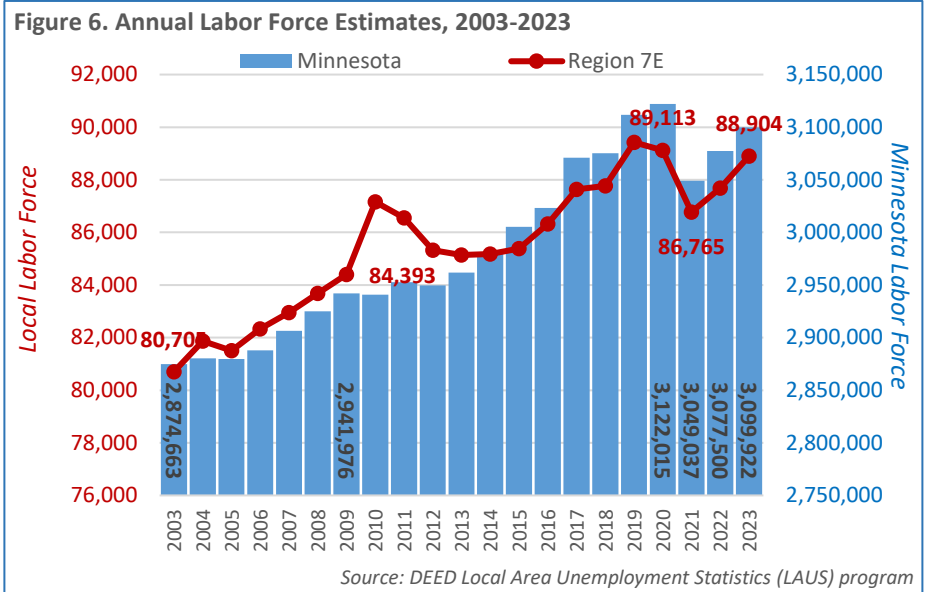
## LABOR FORCE

### LABOR FORCE CHANGE

According to data from DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Region 7E had an annual average labor force count of just under 89,000 workers through 2023. The recent increase of the labor force is a rebound from the past few years. After rising rapidly in the early part of the century, labor force slowed after 2010 before again increasing into 2019 (Figure 6). At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labor force declined precipitously, losing

more than 2,000 workers over two years. With relatively low unemployment rates, the labor market in Region 7E remains similar compared to before the pandemic, with about 3,662 unemployed workers actively seeking work in 2023, down from a peak of over 9,000 workers in 2009 and 6,700 in 2020.

Averaging a net gain of 2,081 additional labor force participants per year between 1990 and 2000, employers in Region 7E were able to tap into a large and growing pool of talented workers. Although the regional labor force and economy continue to grow, the rate of labor force growth slowed considerably, demonstrated by Region 7E adding an average of only 204 workers per year from 2010 to 2020. Finally, the trend was punctuated by a loss of more than 2,300 into 2021 (Figure 7). A relaxed labor market in 2023 has helped reduce friction in the economy from a lack of workers. Domestic in-migration from urban counties to the south have become a relief despite still having a smaller labor force than pre-pandemic. Businesses have and will continue to adjust to slower labor force growth and maximize collaboration with local education partners.



**LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS**

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

**EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS**

With 65% of people aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Region 7E had lower labor force participation rates than the state’s 68.7%. The region had lower labor force participation rates than the state in all but the youngest age group, and the overall rate was lower because a lower percentage of Region 7E’s labor force was the 25-44 age group (Table 6). Likewise, the region had lower participation rates than the state in most race groups. In addition, there were around 6,000 workers with disabilities in the regional labor force.

**Table 5. Region 7E Labor Force Projections**

	2025 Labor Force Projection	2035 Labor Force Projection	2025-2035 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	4,462	4,447	-15	-0.3%
20 to 24 years	7,674	7,748	+74	+1.0%
25 to 44 years	37,679	40,857	+3,177	+8.4%
45 to 54 years	18,316	21,648	+3,332	+18.2%
55 to 64 years	17,069	14,761	-2,308	-13.5%
65 to 74 years	4,795	5,010	+215	+4.5%
75 years & over	899	1,224	+325	+36.2%
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>90,895</b>	<b>95,695</b>	<b>+4,800</b>	<b>+5.3%</b>

*Source: calculated from Minnesota State Demographic Center population projections and 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.*

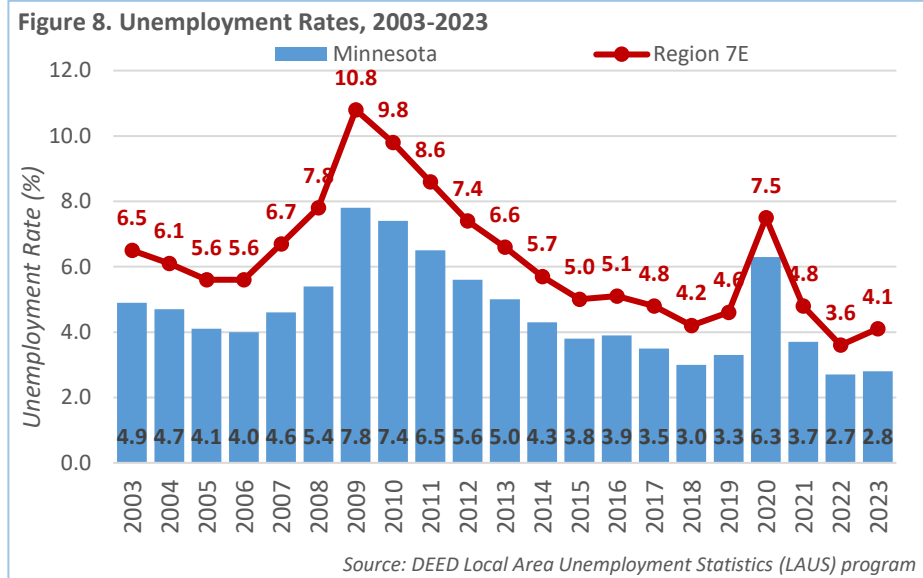
**Table 6. Employment Characteristics, 2022**

	Region 7E			Minnesota		Percent of Total Labor Force	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Region 7E	Minnesota
<b>Total Labor Force</b>	<b>88,733</b>	<b>64.7%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>		
16 to 19 years	4,501	53.2%	7.2%	53.0%	9.8%	5.1%	5.1%
20 to 24 years	7,212	82.1%	6.6%	83.1%	6.7%	8.1%	9.7%
25 to 44 years	35,231	84.8%	4.7%	88.8%	3.5%	39.7%	42.8%
45 to 54 years	18,851	86.2%	3.8%	87.8%	2.9%	21.2%	19.0%
55 to 64 years	18,049	69.3%	3.0%	72.8%	3.1%	20.3%	17.6%
65 to 74 years	4,090	22.4%	3.5%	27.6%	3.3%	4.6%	4.9%
75 years & over	776	6.4%	1.8%	6.6%	3.2%	0.9%	0.8%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Race &amp; Hispanic Origin</b>							
White alone	83,409	65.3%	4.1%	67.8%	3.4%	94.0%	81.3%
Black or African American	433	27.7%	9.5%	71.5%	8.7%	0.5%	6.1%
American Indian & Alaska Native	862	52.0%	16.4%	57.6%	11.9%	1.0%	0.7%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	1,096	70.0%	4.7%	73.9%	3.6%	1.2%	5.2%
Some Other Race	436	73.8%	3.9%	76.1%	6.1%	0.5%	2.3%
Two or More Races	2,470	62.1%	7.9%	74.3%	6.6%	2.8%	4.3%
Hispanic or Latino	1,905	64.6%	6.7%	77.0%	6.3%	2.1%	5.4%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status, 18 to 64 years</b>							
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	3,978	76.1%	5.2%	81.1%	4.0%	4.8%	3.4%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Disability, 20 to 64 years</b>							
With Any Disability, 20 to 64 years	5,868	51.5%	10.1%	54.4%	10.2%	7.4%	5.9%
<b>Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment, 25 to 64 years</b>							
Population, 25 to 64 years	72,159	80.7%	4.1%	84.4%	3.3%	81.3%	79.5%
Less than H.S. Diploma	3,778	64.5%	5.4%	67.2%	4.6%	5.2%	4.7%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	21,983	74.1%	2.0%	76.8%	2.5%	30.5%	19.0%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	30,421	84.4%	3.2%	85.1%	3.6%	42.2%	32.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15,960	89.1%	2.1%	90.3%	2.0%	22.1%	43.4%

*Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates*

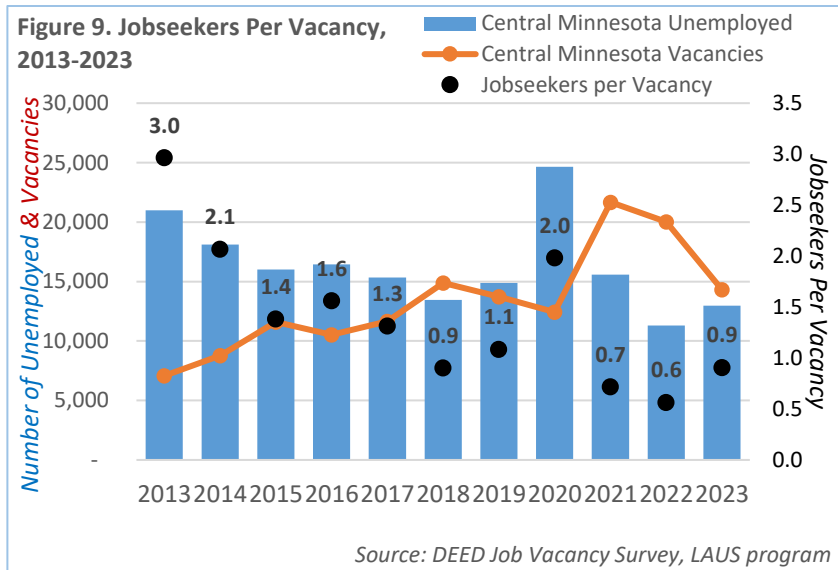
**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**

Region 7E has consistently had higher unemployment rates than the state, typically hovering around 1.5% above the state rate. According to DEED’s [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Region 7E’s rate rose as high as 10.8% in 2009, which was the highest of the 13 EDRs, and 3% above the state rate. Since then, the state and region’s economies have recovered and unemployment rates have dropped, with Region 7E reporting 4.6% in 2019, before spiking to 7.5% in 2020. Rates then returned to historical lows in 2022 and 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 dipped below 1-to-1 over the past three years. After the temporary disruption of 2020, a steep increase in vacancies paired with declining unemployment led to an all-time low ratio of 0.6 in 2022 (Figure 9). According to recent Job Vacancy Survey results, there were 14,320 openings reported by Central Minnesota employers compared to 12,977 unemployed jobseekers in the region in 2023. The ratio climbed as high as 4.1-to-1 in 2011.



**COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED**

According to commuting data from the [Census Bureau](#), Region 7E is a net labor exporter, having more workers than available jobs. In sum, 31,008 workers both lived and worked in Region 7E in 2021, while 16,492 workers drove into the region from surrounding counties for work, compared to 47,500 workers who lived in the region but drove to surrounding counties for work (Table 7 and Figure 10).

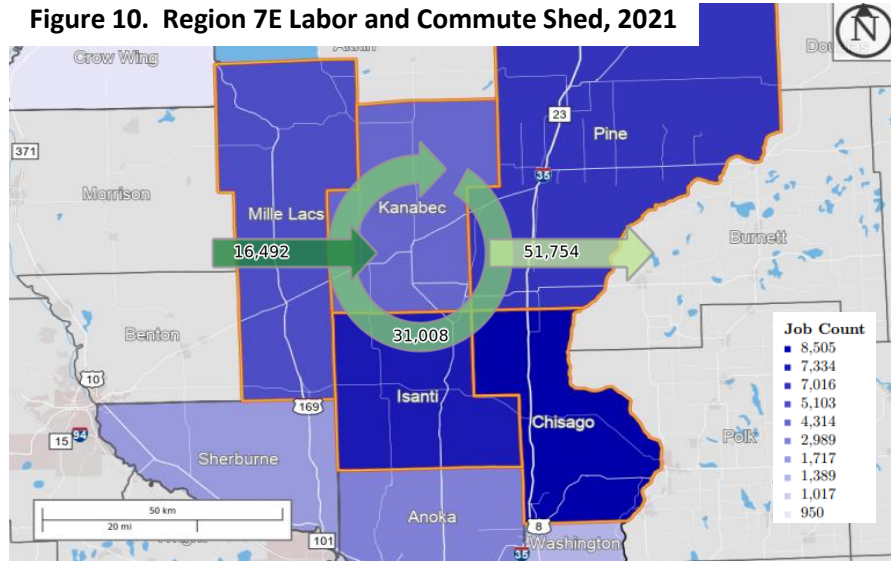
	2021	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	47,500	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	16,492	34.7%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	31,008	65.3%
<b>Living in the Selection Area</b>		
Living in the Selection Area	82,762	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	51,754	62.5%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	31,008	37.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

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

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

Figure 10. Region 7E Labor and Commute Shed, 2021

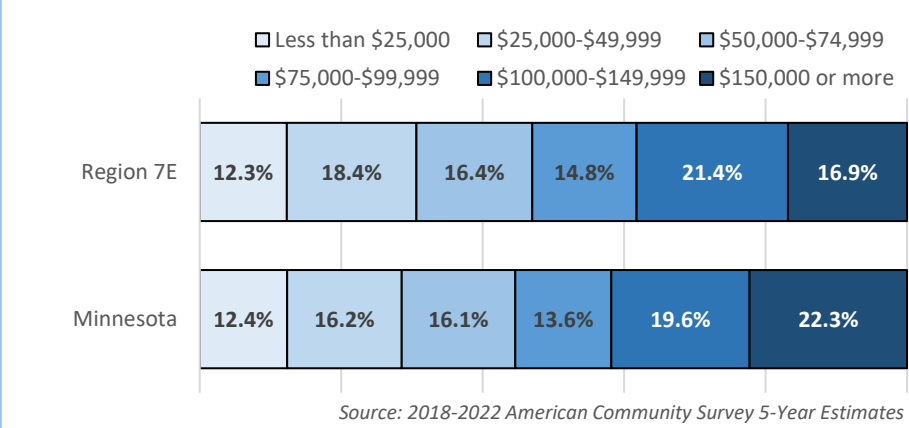


## INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

### HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

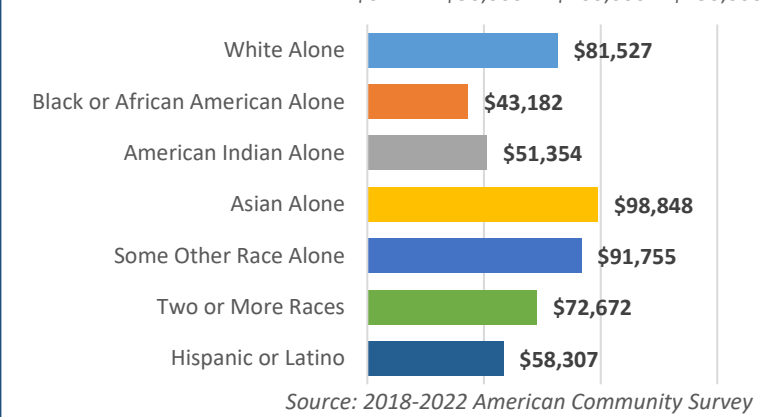
At \$80,935, median household incomes were lower in Region 7E than the state, where the median income in 2022 was \$84,313. Just over 30% of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2022, similar to statewide. Similarly, only 17% of households in Region 7E earned over \$150,000 per year, compared to 22% percent of households statewide (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Household Incomes, 2022



Median household incomes varied by race or origin in the region. Asian and people of some other race households reported the highest incomes in Region 7E, with a median income that was more than \$17,000 higher than for White households. Next highest were incomes for two or more races and Hispanic or Latino households at. In contrast, American Indian households reported much lower household incomes, as did Black households (Figure 12). Sample sizes for all minority races are small, leaving room for errors and significant fluctuations in all data points from year to year.

Figure 12. Region 7E Median Household Income by Race, 2022





**COST OF LIVING**

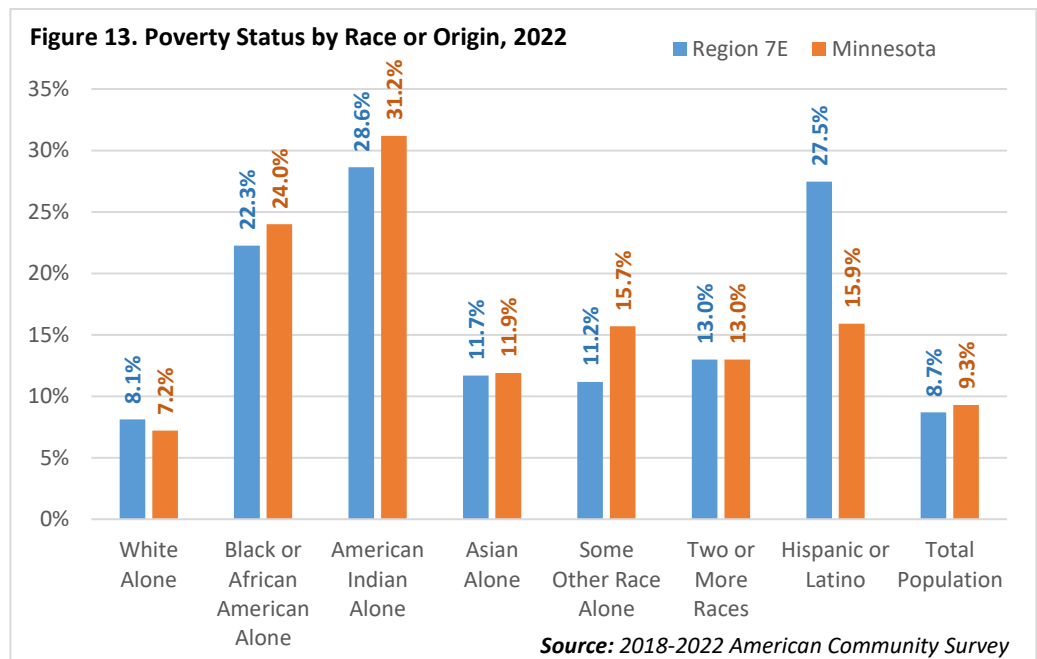
According to DEED’s [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$67,320 in 2023. The cost of living for a similar family in Region 7E was \$69,084 – which was the second highest of the 13 EDRs in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; and the cost of the region’s transportation was significantly higher than the state. In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers in the family scenario described would need to earn \$22.14 per hour over the course of 60 hours per work week, a 12% increase from the prior year (Table 8).

Table 8. Region 7E 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
<b>Region 7E</b>										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$35,952	\$17.28	\$0	\$408	\$160	\$1,010	\$675	\$340	\$403
Single, 1 child	1 FT	\$57,588	\$27.69	\$852	\$600	\$398	\$1,286	\$681	\$452	\$530
<b>2 parents, 1 child</b>	<b>1 FT, 1 PT</b>	<b>\$69,084</b>	<b>\$22.14</b>	<b>\$426</b>	<b>\$930</b>	<b>\$575</b>	<b>\$1,286</b>	<b>\$1,236</b>	<b>\$530</b>	<b>\$774</b>
2 parents, 2 children	2 FT	\$94,932	\$22.82	\$1,267	\$1,210	\$584	\$1,736	\$1,289	\$706	\$1,119
<b>State of Minnesota</b>										
Single, 0 children	1 FT	\$34,704	\$16.68	\$0	\$419	\$160	\$1,021	\$572	\$345	\$375
<b>2 parents, 1 child</b>	<b>1 FT, 1 PT</b>	<b>\$67,320</b>	<b>\$21.58</b>	<b>\$544</b>	<b>\$955</b>	<b>\$574</b>	<b>\$1,285</b>	<b>\$977</b>	<b>\$536</b>	<b>\$739</b>

*Source: DEED Cost of Living tool*

DEED’s Cost of Living tool provides different estimates for household compositions including single people, partnered couples, and up to 4 children. For a single person living alone and working full-time, the estimated yearly cost in Region 7E would be \$35,952, which would require an hourly wage of \$17.28 to meet the basic needs standard of living (Table 8). That was again the second highest in the state.

Overall, Region 7E’s poverty rate was 8.7%, which was below the statewide rate of 9.3%. Like incomes, poverty levels varied widely by race and origin. It was estimated that over 29% of the region’s American Indian and 28% of Hispanic or Latinos were below the poverty level in 2022. Likewise, poverty levels hovered around 11% those of Two or More Races, and 22% for Black or African Americans. About 11% percent of Asian or other Pacific Islanders also were below the poverty level in 2022 and only 11% of those identifying as Some Other Race were below the poverty level. With the exception of the higher rate for Whites and Hispanics/Latinos, the region’s poverty rates were below the statewide rates (Figure 13).



**WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS**

According to DEED’s [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 7E was \$22.48 in the first quarter of 2023, which was the sixth highest wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. Region 7E’s median wage was \$2.04 below the state’s median hourly wage, equaling 92% of the statewide wage rate, and \$4.60 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to \$9,568 per year for a full-time worker. Region 7E had lower wages than neighboring Regions 7W at \$23.85 and Region 3 at \$23.41, but higher than Region 5 at \$21.89 (Table 9).

Nearly 11% of the jobs in Region 7E were Food Prep and Serving Related occupations, which had a higher concentration than the state as a whole. The highest location quotient was for Protective Service occupations, at 1.7. Region 7E also had a higher share of workers in Community & Social Service; Education, Training & Library; Food Preparation & Serving Related; Farming, Fishing, & Forestry; Healthcare Support; and Construction and Extraction occupations (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
<b>EDR 7E - East Central</b>	<b>\$23.18</b>	<b>48,440</b>
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
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>\$25.22</b>	<b>2,881,100</b>

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

	Region 7E				State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment	Share of Total Employment
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>\$23.18</b>	<b>48,440</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>\$25.22</b>	<b>2,881,100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Management	\$48.04	2,620	5.4%	0.8	\$57.75	201,710	7.0%
Business & Financial Operations	\$34.51	1,560	3.2%	0.5	\$39.26	202,700	7.0%
Computer & Mathematical	\$39.52	390	0.8%	0.2	\$50.83	98,240	3.4%
Architecture & Engineering	\$40.50	720	1.5%	0.7	\$42.97	58,320	2.0%
Life, Physical & Social Science	\$37.53	340	0.7%	0.7	\$39.93	29,220	1.0%
Community & Social Service	\$28.47	1,580	3.3%	1.6	\$27.92	57,930	2.0%
Legal	\$43.72	170	0.4%	0.5	\$51.15	19,040	0.7%
Education, Training & Library	\$28.45	3,760	7.8%	1.4	\$28.22	163,340	5.7%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$25.64	300	0.6%	0.5	\$29.01	36,160	1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$41.14	3,030	6.3%	1.0	\$43.01	184,410	6.4%
Healthcare Support	\$18.31	3,230	6.7%	1.1	\$18.07	169,580	5.9%
Protective Service	\$27.55	1,300	2.7%	1.7	\$28.87	45,860	1.6%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$15.24	5,200	10.7%	1.3	\$15.07	232,190	8.1%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$18.29	1,350	2.8%	1.0	\$18.83	79,660	2.8%
Personal Care & Service	\$17.97	1,150	2.4%	1.2	\$17.60	59,420	2.1%
Sales & Related	\$17.40	4,940	10.2%	1.2	\$18.82	242,440	8.4%
Office & Administrative Support	\$23.38	5,190	10.7%	0.9	\$23.86	352,250	12.2%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	\$22.75	80	0.2%	1.4	\$22.13	3,520	0.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$30.61	2,780	5.7%	1.5	\$32.44	110,960	3.9%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	\$26.91	1,840	3.8%	1.0	\$29.54	104,530	3.6%
Production	\$23.23	3,470	7.2%	1.0	\$23.05	203,810	7.1%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$19.92	3,430	7.1%	0.9	\$22.86	225,820	7.8%

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

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in food prep and serving, building, grounds cleaning and maintenance, sales and related, personal care and service, and healthcare support, which tend to have lower experience and educational requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Region 7E and the state is also much lower in these jobs, or has higher wages than statewide. In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, legal, architecture and engineering, computer and mathematical, healthcare practitioners, business and financial operations, and life, physical, and social science occupations, which all need higher levels of education and experience, including many that require postsecondary training. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations.

### JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Central Minnesota reported 14,320 job vacancies in 2023, which was substantially less than 2022 but continues to be relatively high. The median hourly wage offer was \$19.13 across all occupations but ranged from a low of \$14.55 per hour for Personal Care and Service workers, to roughly \$32 per hour for Computer and Mathematical occupations.

Overall, 31% of the openings were part-time, only 33% required any postsecondary education, and 36% 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. Of all openings in Central Minnesota in 2023, roughly a quarter had a median wage offer below \$16.43, which was about \$0.75 below the wage needed for a single person without children to meet a basic needs cost of living standard in Central Minnesota.

**Table 11. Job Vacancy Survey Results, 2023**

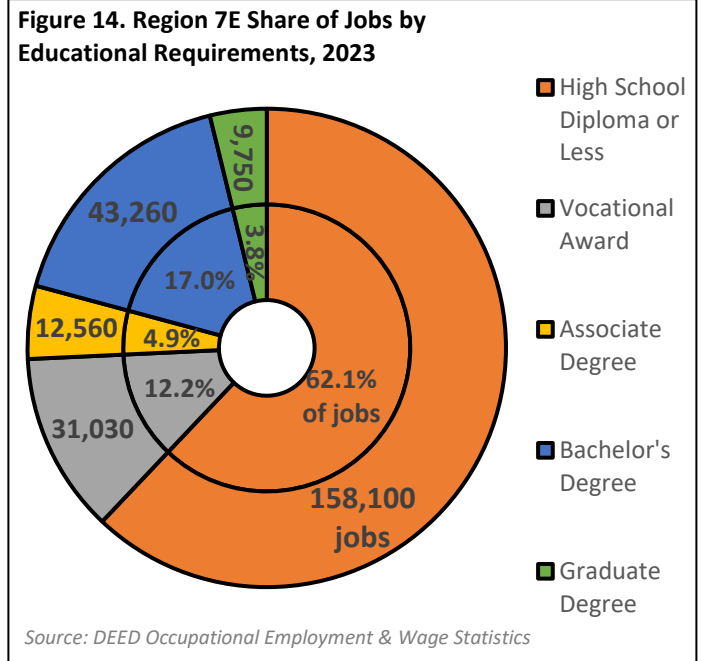
Central Minnesota	Number of Total Vacancies	Median Hourly Wage Offer	Percent Part-Time	Percent Temp or Seasonal	Requiring Postsecondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Work Exp.	Requiring Certificate or License	Job Vacancy Rate
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>14,320</b>	<b>\$19.13</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
Management	281	\$28.24	3%	1%	91%	97%	80%	1.9%
Business & Financial Operations	220	\$26.20	11%	15%	63%	70%	28%	2.1%
Computer & Mathematical	132	\$32.07	3%	1%	34%	92%	10%	4.4%
Architecture & Engineering	230	\$30.57	3%	1%	56%	74%	52%	6.4%
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	60	\$31.02	2%	2%	60%	52%	70%	3.5%
Community & Social Service	417	\$25.91	24%	3%	83%	89%	91%	7.9%
Legal	40	\$31.72	0%	2%	100%	100%	100%	4.2%
Education, Training & Library	597	\$19.04	30%	22%	71%	14%	78%	3.3%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	187	\$17.70	85%	67%	43%	21%	46%	7.9%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	1,967	\$28.25	33%	1%	86%	40%	97%	11.6%
Healthcare Support	1,097	\$17.11	57%	1%	45%	16%	81%	6.8%
Protective Service	272	\$24.39	36%	9%	42%	53%	85%	6.3%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	2,319	\$14.84	48%	3%	1%	16%	6%	9.9%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	318	\$16.27	39%	7%	0%	15%	17%	3.9%
Personal Care & Service	433	\$14.55	25%	7%	16%	13%	41%	8.2%
Sales & Related	1,632	\$17.55	29%	3%	5%	22%	15%	6.5%
Office & Administrative Support	747	\$17.98	15%	4%	11%	47%	17%	2.5%
Construction & Extraction	297	\$23.74	0%	1%	27%	69%	70%	1.9%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	589	\$24.92	4%	1%	33%	51%	56%	5.2%
Production	993	\$20.14	9%	7%	18%	46%	5%	3.5%
Transportation & Material Moving	1,275	\$19.17	43%	11%	4%	41%	78%	5.1%

*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).

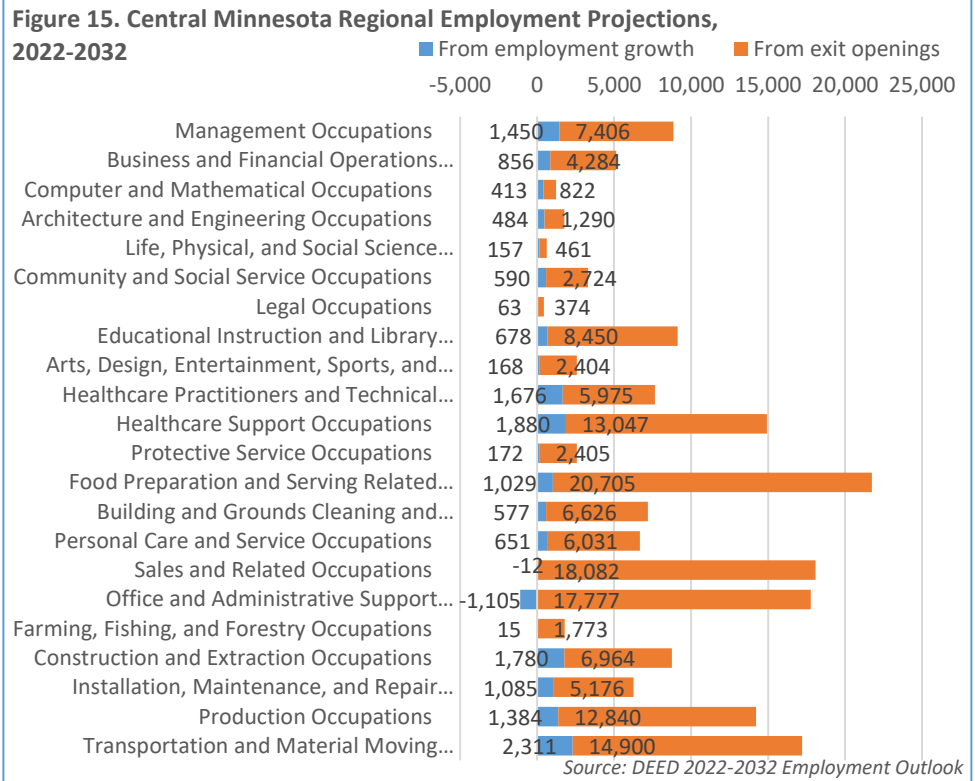
Certain careers – such as Dentists, Lawyers, and Teachers – require a college education, while other jobs – including Cost Estimators, Sales Representatives, and Correctional Officers – do not. College is an excellent way to move up career ladders and open windows of opportunity to licensed fields that 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.



### 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 existing 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).



## OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

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

High School or Less	Vocational Training	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Retail Salespersons \$35,817/yr	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers \$60,953/yr	Registered Nurses \$97,279/yr	General & Operations Managers \$82,833/yr
Home Health & Personal Care Aides \$35,952/yr	Nursing Assistants \$40,289/yr	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians \$79,926/yr	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education \$65,116/yr
Fast Food and Counter Workers \$30,548/yr	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses \$58,035/yr	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers \$78,056/yr	Secondary School Teachers, Exc. Special and CTE \$66,539/yr
Cashiers \$31,985/yr	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics \$49,872/yr	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians \$64,316/yr	Medical and Health Services Managers \$108,690/yr
Stockers and Order Fillers \$38,723/yr	Machinists \$61,397/yr	Calibration Technologists and Technicians \$51,876/yr	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education \$38,309/yr
Janitors and Cleaners \$37,511/yr	Emergency Medical Technicians \$43,830/yr	Dental Hygienists \$95,926/yr	Accountants and Auditors \$73,436/yr
Waiters and Waitresses \$24,272/yr	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks \$49,071/yr	Detectives and Criminal Investigators \$77,932/yr	Child, Family, and School Social Workers \$65,914/yr
Childcare Workers \$32,303/yr	Electricians \$79,223/yr	Surgical Technologists \$66,288/yr	Industrial Engineers \$97,918/yr
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers \$47,389/yr	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors \$54,808/yr	Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping \$49,531/yr	Project Management Specialists \$85,453/yr
Customer Service Representatives \$44,527/yr	Medical Assistants \$48,462/yr	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians \$46,438/yr	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School \$69,045/yr

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

## ECONOMY

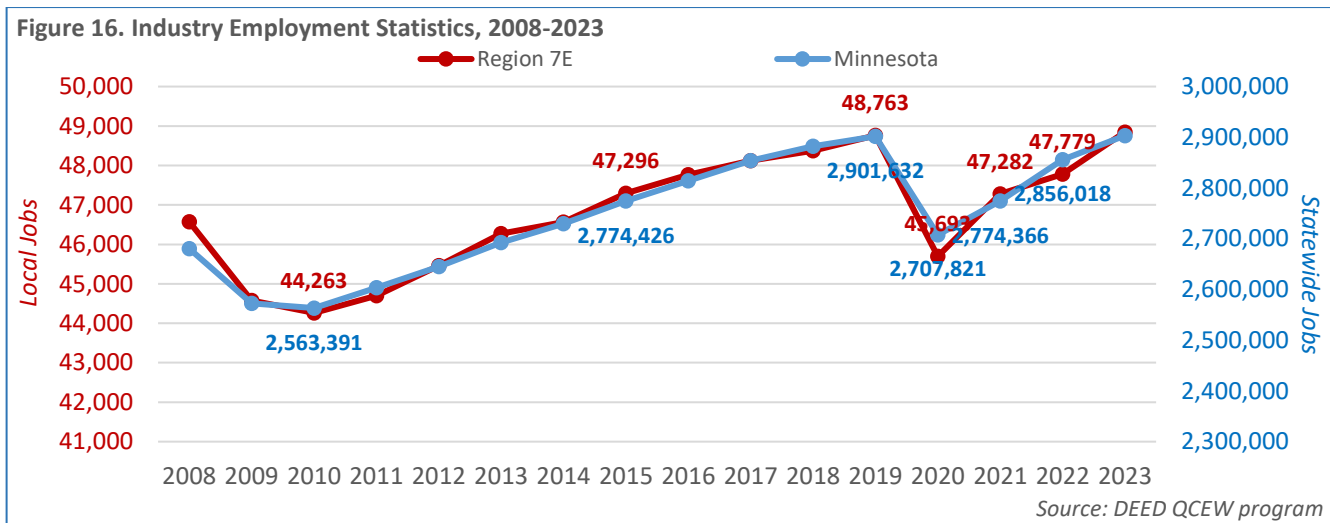
### INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Region 7E was home to 4,179 business establishments providing 48,846 covered jobs through 2023, with a total payroll of over \$2.42 billion. That was about 1.7% of total employment in the state of Minnesota, making it the fourth smallest of the 13 EDRs in the state. Average annual wages were \$49,616 in the region, which was about \$22,000 lower than the state's average annual wage, and the second lowest of the 13 EDRs. Chisago County is the largest employment center in the region, with 16,084 jobs at 1,367 firms; accounting for 33% of the region's jobs. Isanti County was the next largest, with 11,754 jobs at 958 firms, followed by Mille Lacs County with 788 firms and 9,133 jobs and Pine County with 7,780 jobs at 718 firms, while Kanabec is the smallest economy with 4,094 jobs at 348 firms (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
<b>Region 7E</b>	<b>4,179</b>	<b>48,846</b>	<b>\$2,423,523,215</b>	<b>\$49,616</b>	<b>+1,067</b>	<b>+2.2%</b>	<b>+83</b>	<b>+0.2%</b>
Chisago Co.	1,367	16,084	\$900,811,326	\$56,007	+267	+1.7%	+481	+3.1%
Isanti Co.	958	11,754	\$567,234,494	\$48,259	+324	+2.8%	+572	+5.1%
Kanabec Co.	348	4,094	\$200,717,520	\$49,027	+125	+3.1%	+187	+4.8%
Mille Lacs Co.	788	9,133	\$428,230,447	\$46,888	+187	+2.1%	-592	-6.1%
Pine Co.	718	7,780	\$326,529,428	\$41,970	+164	+2.2%	-564	-6.8%
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>207,647</b>	<b>2,903,264</b>	<b>\$207,665,582,979</b>	<b>\$71,528</b>	<b>+47,246</b>	<b>+1.7%</b>	<b>+1,632</b>	<b>+0.1%</b>

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

Region 7E has seen employment ups and downs over the past 15 years. It ended 2019 with about 2,150 more jobs than it had in 2014, but then the region was initially hit harder by the pandemic than the state. Since then, it has recovered more quickly through 2023. Before the pandemic, job growth had been steady out of the Great Recession (Figure 16).



With 9,261 jobs at 581 firms, Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in Region 7E, accounting for 19% of total jobs in the region. Due to the region’s older population, the largest sector was Nursing & Residential Care Facilities which had 3,634 jobs. However, the region’s fastest growing Health Care sector was Social Assistance including housing, food, family, child care and other social services.

Retail Trade is the next largest industry in Region 7E, with 6,732 jobs at 477 firms, accounting for 13.8% of total jobs in the region. Accommodation & Food Services is the third largest industry with 6,032 jobs at 322 stores, but was hit especially hard during the pandemic, remaining down 450 jobs. The related Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry also provided 859 jobs at 78 locations, also suffering significant employment losses during the pandemic. These three industries provide 8% of the region’s jobs but have relatively low average wages.

With 5,180 jobs at 248 firms Manufacturing is the fourth largest industry in Region 7E and saw negative growth over the past year. Wages in manufacturing were almost \$10k higher than the total across all industries. Region 7E also has a high concentration of public sector jobs in Educational Services, with 4,768 jobs at 81 institutions – primarily at Elementary & Secondary Schools, but also at Junior Colleges.

Eight of the 20 main industries in the region remain down from their pre-pandemic employment levels, with the largest relative deficits in Health Care and Social Assistance, Public Administration, Accommodation & Food Services.

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
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>4,179</b>	<b>48,846</b>	<b>\$2,423,523</b>	<b>\$49,616</b>	<b>+1,067</b>	<b>+2.2%</b>	<b>+83</b>	<b>+0.2%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	56	289	\$12,641	\$43,740	-19	-6.2%	-66	-18.6%
Mining	6	32	\$1,782	\$55,682	0	0.0%	-7	-17.9%
Construction	708	3,310	\$229,189	\$69,242	+46	+1.4%	+406	+14.0%
Manufacturing	248	5,180	\$307,576	\$59,378	-135	-2.5%	+28	+0.5%
Utilities	22	265	\$26,924	\$101,599	+18	+7.3%	+10	+3.9%
Wholesale Trade	121	810	\$45,709	\$56,431	+12	+1.5%	+78	+10.7%
Retail Trade	477	6,732	\$219,442	\$32,597	+78	+1.2%	+385	+6.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	189	1,216	\$62,812	\$51,655	-20	-1.6%	+12	+1.0%
Information	48	543	\$28,708	\$52,869	-14	-2.5%	-45	-7.7%
Finance & Insurance	133	954	\$63,055	\$66,096	-1	-0.1%	-11	-1.1%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	119	195	\$6,824	\$34,997	-19	-8.9%	-71	-26.7%
Professional & Technical Services	216	1,472	\$140,846	\$95,684	+70	+5.0%	+214	+17.0%
Management of Companies	10	117	\$8,009	\$68,456	-5	-4.1%	+35	+42.7%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	175	1,238	\$65,589	\$52,980	+10	+0.8%	+219	+21.5%
Educational Services	81	4,768	\$231,963	\$48,650	+120	+2.6%	+3	+0.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	581	9,261	\$503,630	\$54,382	+319	+3.6%	-600	-6.1%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	78	859	\$15,878	\$18,485	+175	+25.6%	+65	+8.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	322	6,032	\$156,194	\$25,894	+285	+5.0%	-450	-6.9%
Other Services	441	1,499	\$49,593	\$33,084	+36	+2.5%	-3	-0.2%
Public Administration	150	4,070	\$247,157	\$60,727	+110	+2.8%	-121	-2.9%

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

## INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

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

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

Region 7E	Percentage of Workers		Percent of Workers, Minnesota		Median Hourly Wage		Median Hours Worked (Per Qtr.)	
	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012	2022	2012
Total, all ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	\$20.50	\$14.32	362	380
19 years & under	9.4%	8.7%	6.6%	6.3%	\$14.28	\$7.80	130	129
20 to 24 years	8.6%	10.4%	9.2%	11.3%	\$17.98	\$10.31	296	279
25 to 44 years	39.5%	38.1%	43.6%	42.3%	\$23.07	\$15.90	420	424
45 to 54 years	17.9%	22.9%	18.4%	21.9%	\$24.74	\$17.13	455	452
55 to 64 years	18.1%	15.6%	16.7%	14.7%	\$22.40	\$16.88	436	431
65 years & over	6.6%	4.3%	5.4%	3.5%	\$18.15	\$13.01	225	220
Male	44.0%	42.3%	49.1%	49.1%	\$22.85	\$15.88	439	444
Female	56.0%	57.7%	50.9%	50.9%	\$19.68	\$13.25	325	345

Source: [DEED Quarterly Employment Demographics](#)

**EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY**

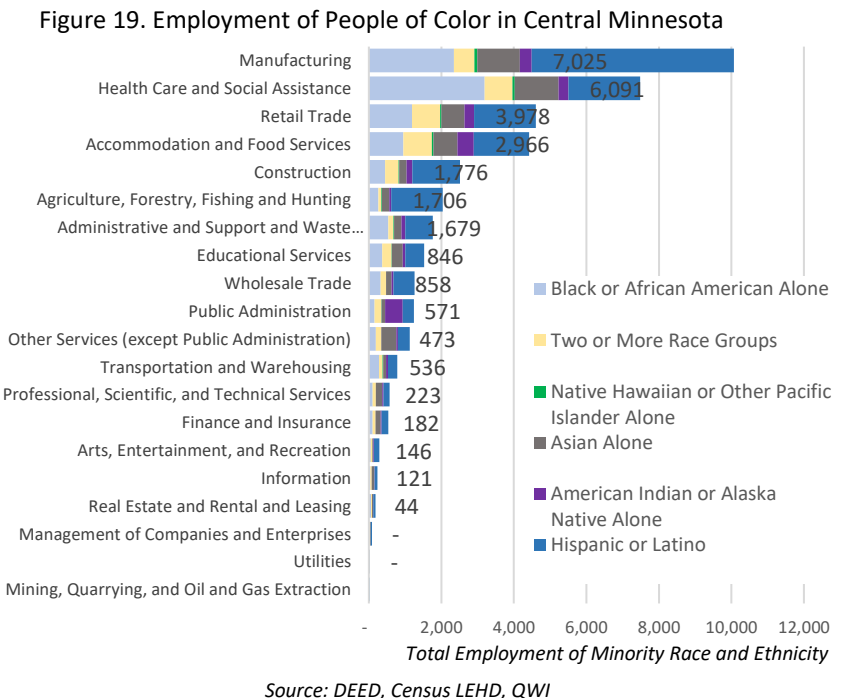
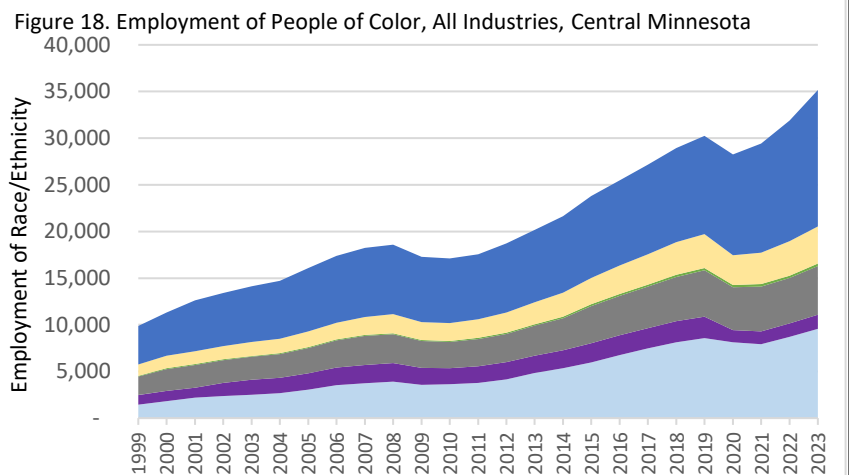
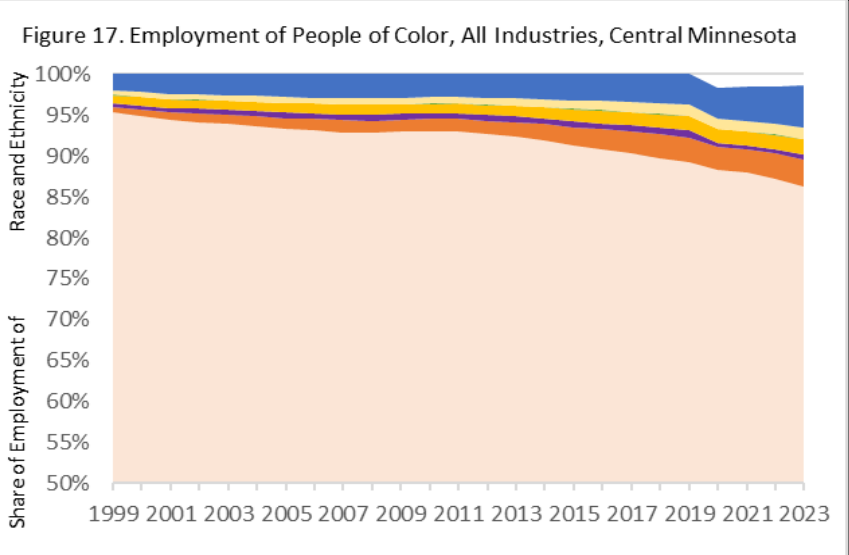
Wages were highest for workers between 45 and 64 years of age, and males worked substantially more hours than females. Interestingly, from 2010 to 2020 jobs held by workers 45 to 54 years saw the largest decline in the share of jobs they hold, dropping from 22.2% in 2010 to 18.2% in 2020.

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/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 and 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).

### INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

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.

The fastest growth (10.9%) in the region is expected to be in the Construction industry, continuing a decades long trend of rapid growth, Professional and Technical Service is also expected to grow twice as fast as the overall region. (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

Region 7E was home to 11,196 self-employed businesses or “nonemployers” in 2021, which are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as “businesses without paid employees that are subject to federal income tax, originating from tax return information of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).” Unlike covered employment, Region 7E had been seeing a steady decline in nonemployers over time, however recently the region added more than 100 of these businesses. Together, these nonemployers in Region 7E generated sales receipts of \$555.6 million in 2021 (Table 17).

**Table 17. Nonemployer Statistics, 2021**

	2021		2021-2021	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
<b>Region 7E</b>	<b>11,196</b>	<b>\$555,596</b>	<b>+113</b>	<b>+1.0%</b>
Chisago Co.	3,784	\$184,456	-68	-1.8%
Isanti Co.	2,820	\$147,036	+180	+6.8%
Kanabec Co.	1,063	\$54,932	0	0.0%
Mille Lacs Co.	1,779	\$85,377	+13	+0.7%
Pine Co.	1,750	\$83,795	-12	-0.7%
<b>State of Minnesota</b>	<b>429,672</b>	<b>\$22,727,564</b>	<b>+41,117</b>	<b>+10.6%</b>

Source: U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program

### CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Unlike other parts of Greater Minnesota, agriculture is not a key industry in Region 7E, with 3,416 farms producing just under \$285 million in the market value of products sold in 2021 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All of the counties in the planning region rank near the bottom in Minnesota in regards to the market value of products sold, with all five counties ranked between 66<sup>th</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> of the 87 counties in the state (Table 18). Market value of products sold has increased by 33% from 2017-2022.

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

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	State Rank
<b>Region 7E</b>	<b>3,416</b>	<b>\$284,274,000</b>	<b>12</b>
Chisago Co.	740	\$54,864,000	72
Isanti Co.	814	\$73,159,000	66
Kanabec Co.	531	\$32,517,000	77
Mille Lacs Co.	603	\$43,931,000	68
Pine Co.	728	\$58,065,000	70
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>65,531</b>	<b>\$28,482,097,000</b>	

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture