Southwest Minnesota

Regional Profile Project Report
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Executive Summary

Southwest Minnesota is a 14-county region that encompasses Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties in Region 6W; and Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock Counties in Region 8. Together, these counties operate within their own Workforce Service Area, WSA 6, also known as Southwest Minnesota.

Southwest Minnesota has long been experiencing population declines, with most of the counties in the region peaking in population between 1940 and 1960. None of the 14 counties have added people since the turn of the century, and only two counties have more than 20,000 people total. The number of births in the region is going down, while life expectancies are going up. In many parts of the region, more than 20 percent of the population is aged 65 years and over. The region is expected to see a continued slight decline in population over the next thirty years, and as much as one-third of the region's population may be aged 65 years and over by 2035. Out-migration led to much of the decline, though every county in the region actually welcomed a small increase in the number of 35 to 44 year old people over the last couple decades, who often brought their school aged children with them. The region has also experienced increasing diversity, especially with Asian residents and people of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Similarly, the region's labor force is changing along with the population, and is projected to be among the slowest growing region of the state in the future. The workforce is both older *and* younger than in other regions, with a smaller middle-aged workforce. The region's workers are very loyal to their employers, but are also concerned about better pay, benefits, or job security when choosing jobs. Median hourly wages in the region were the lowest in the state of Minnesota, and about 40 percent lower than the Twin Cities metro area. However, wages in the region were competitive with the nearby Sioux Falls, SD metro area, which has been growing recently. For the most part, workers who live in the region also work in the region, though some drive into South Dakota, Iowa, and the Twin Cities.

From 1980 to 2007, Southwest Minnesota gained more than 18,000 net new covered jobs, a 33 percent rise. The 72,936 covered jobs reported by business establishments in the region in 2007 was the highest number recorded, following a 2.7 percent increase over the last five years. Despite the deepening state and national recession happening in 2008 and 2009, through the third quarter of 2008 Southwest Minnesota had actually recorded a slight year-over-year job gain from 2007, adding 219 net new jobs. Unemployment rates in the region are among the lowest in the state. Manufacturing is still the largest employing industry in the region, followed by health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, educational services, construction, and wholesale trade.

Southwest Minnesota's distinguishing industries include food manufacturing, crop and animal production, chemical manufacturing (which includes ethanol and biodiesel production), truck transportation, hog and pig farming, animal slaughtering and processing, oilseed and grain farming, crop production support activities, and cattle ranching and farming. All of those are in the goods-producing domain – primarily in manufacturing and agriculture-related specialties. Southwest Minnesota also has a strong concentration of employment in government-owned hospitals and nursing care facilities, owing to the region's aging population. The region also has a high percentage of the state's merchant wholesalers in the areas of farm products and petroleum, both related to the region's agricultural foundation.

The region still has many career opportunities represented by a list of Occupations in Demand, calculated by DEED through job vacancy survey data, unemployment insurance claims, and employment projections. Well over 100 occupations continue to show demand in the region, at least through the fourth quarter of 2008, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to post-secondary education to advanced degrees. However, educational attainment lags in Southwest Minnesota, partly due to the region's older population.

Recent data and trends show that 2009 will be a challenging year for the state and nation, but because of steady economic growth and a strong agriculture sector, Southwest Minnesota is positioned to deal with the changes. This report presents the most up-to-date information on the region, setting a context for future efforts in Southwest Minnesota.

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Demographic Changes in WSA 6 - Southwest Minnesota Region

From 2000 to 2008, 39 of the 87 counties in Minnesota saw population growth, with the state as a whole gaining just over 300,000 net new people. However, none of the counties in Southwest Minnesota were among the 39 growing counties, and instead the region's population decreased by about 10,000 people. Eleven of the 14 counties in Workforce Service Area 6 – Southwest Minnesota lost at least 500 people since the turn of the century. Every county declined at least 2 percent, while two counties contracted more than 10 percent from 2000 to 2008. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Southwest Region Population Change, 2000-2008				
	2000 Pop.	2008 Pop.	2000-2008	2000-2008
Big Stone Co.	5,820	5,365	-455	-7.8%
Chippewa Co.	13,088	12,414	-674	-5.1%
Cottonwood Co.	12,167	11,283	-884	-7.3%
Jackson Co.	11,268	10,734	-534	-4.7%
Lac qui Parle Co.	8,067	7,165	-902	-11.2%
Lincoln Co.	6,429	5,837	-592	-9.2%
Lyon Co.	25,425	24,844	-581	-2.3%
Murray Co.	9,165	8,389	-776	-8.5%
Nobles Co.	20,832	20,365	-467	-2.2%
Pipestone Co.	9,895	9,395	-500	-5.1%
Redwood Co.	16,815	15,493	-1,322	-7.9%
Rock Co.	9,721	9,476	-245	-2.5%
Swift Co.	11,956	11,035	-921	-7.7%
Yellow Medicine Co.	11,080	9,958	-1,122	-10.1%
Southwest Region	171,728	161,753	-9,975	-5.8%
State of Minnesota	4,919,479	5,220,393	300,914	6.1%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program				

Though the recent declines may seem severe, they are part of a longer term trend in the region. Of the 14 counties, just two have more people now than they did 100 years ago – Lyon and Nobles. Since 1910 the region's population has fallen more than 12 percent, or 22,765 fewer people. Six of the 14 counties peaked in population in 1940, three more peaked in 1960, two in 1950, and one each in 1920 and 1930. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Southwest Region Population Change, 1910-2008											Change	
	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	1910-2008	1910-2008
Big Stone	9,367	9,766	9,838	10,447	9,607	8,954	7,941	7,716	6,285	5,820	5,365	-4,002	-42.7%
Chippewa	13,458	15,720	15,762	16,927	16,739	16,320	15,109	14,941	13,228	13,088	12,414	-1,044	-7.8%
Cottonwood	12,651	14,570	14,782	16,143	15,763	16,166	14,887	14,854	12,694	12,167	11,283	-1,368	-10.8%
Jackson	14,491	15,955	15,863	16,805	16,306	15,501	14,352	13,690	11,677	11,268	10,734	-3,757	-25.9%
Lac qui Parle	15,435	15,554	15,398	15,509	14,545	13,330	11,164	10,592	8,924	8,067	7,165	-8,270	-53.6%
Lincoln	9,874	11,268	11,303	10,797	10,150	9,651	8,143	8,207	6,890	6,429	5,837	-4,037	-40.9%
Lyon	15,722	18,837	19,326	21,569	22,253	22,655	24,273	25,207	24,789	25,425	24,844	9,122	58.0%
Murray	11,755	13,631	13,902	15,060	14,801	14,743	12,508	11,507	9,660	9,165	8,389	-3,366	-28.6%
Nobles	15,210	17,917	18,618	21,215	22,435	23,365	23,208	21,840	20,098	20,832	20,365	5,155	33.9%
Pipestone	9,553	12,050	12,238	13,794	14,003	13,605	12,791	11,690	10,491	9,895	9,395	-158	-1.7%
Redwood	18,425	20,908	20,620	22,290	22,127	21,718	20,024	19,341	17,254	16,815	15,493	-2,932	-15.9%
Rock	10,222	10,965	10,962	10,933	11,278	11,864	11,346	10,703	9,806	9,721	9,476	-746	-7.3%
Swift	12,949	15,093	14,735	15,469	15,837	14,936	13,177	12,920	10,724	11,956	11,035	-1,914	-14.8%
Yellow Medi.	15,406	16,550	16,625	16,917	16,279	15,523	14,418	13,653	11,684	11,080	9,958	-5,448	-35.4%
Southwest	**184,518**	**208,784**	**209,972**	**223,875**	**222,123**	**218,331**	**203,341**	**196,861**	**174,204**	**171,728**	**161,753**	**-22,765**	**-12.3%**
Region 6W	66,615	72,683	72,358	75,269	73,007	69,063	61,809	59,822	50,845	50,011	45,937	-20,678	-31.0%
Region 8	117,903	136,101	137,614	148,606	149,116	149,268	141,532	137,039	123,359	121,717	115,816	-2,087	-1.8%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; (year of peak population highlighted in yellow)												

The largest county in the region, Lyon County has grown 58 percent from 1910 to 2008, adding just over 9,000 additional residents. But it peaked in population in 2000 and has lost about 600 people since then, dropping just below 25,000 people. Nobles, the second largest county in the region, has grown 34 percent since 1910 but peaked in 1960 and is down exactly 3,000 people over the last half century. At various times between 1940 and 1960, ten of the 14 counties in the region had at least 15,000 people. By 2008 there were only three counties with at least 15,000 people, and just four others with even 10,000 people. The remaining seven counties in the region were all below 10,000 people in 2008, with the smallest counties seeing the fastest population declines. In fact, Southwest Minnesota was home to 11 of the 25 fastest-declining counties in the state from 2000 to 2008.

Interestingly, the population exodus has been much more severe in the five counties of Region 6W, which dropped nearly 21,000 people from 1910 to 2008, accounting for 91 percent of the regional decline. Region 8 was steadied by the growth in Lyon and Nobles, but also had 2,000 fewer people than 100 years prior.

One major reason for the demographic changes lies in the region's changing birth and death rates. According to statistics from the Minnesota Dept. of Health, Lyon and Nobles led the region with 366 births reported in both counties in 2007. In 1950, ten of the 14 counties had at least 366 births, with Lyon and Nobles leading the way with 643 and 632 births, respectively. At that time, the region averaged 417 births per county, but by 2007, the region averaged just 158 births per county. The number of births occurring each year in the region dropped 62 percent from 1950 to 2007, as compared to a 1.9 percent decline in the state as a whole. The number of deaths has actually remained mostly constant over the last 60 years, ranging between 1,800 and 2,200 deaths per year in the region. Despite the population loss of the last 60 years, the number of deaths reported in Southwest Minnesota in 2007 was just 53 lower than the number reported in 1950, according to Dept. of Health data. From 2000 to 2007, Southwest Minnesota saw a 3.3 percent decrease in the number of people under 5 years of age, while the state of Minnesota enjoyed a 7.3 percent gain and the United States increased 8.1 percent.

According to population projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the 14 counties in Southwest Minnesota are expected to see a continued 3.8 percent decline in population between 2005 and 2035. Every age group under 55 years was expected to have fewer people, while the senior citizen population is projected to jump 41 percent over the next three decades. Due to increasing life expectancies, the region will gain – or more likely, hold on to – more than 13,000 additional people aged 65 years and over. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Southwest Region Population Projections, 2005-2035

	2005 Pop.	2015 Pop.	2025 Pop.	2035 Pop.	2005-2035 Change
0-14 years	32,781	30,030	30,820	29,540	-9.9%
15-24 years	19,368	16,830	15,090	15,580	-19.6%
25-34 years	18,243	18,870	18,110	16,250	-10.9%
35-44 years	25,597	18,530	18,830	18,370	-28.2%
45-54 years	21,766	24,060	17,940	18,160	-16.6%
55-64 years	17,707	21,610	21,420	18,110	2.3%
65 years & over	31,734	32,090	40,190	44,830	41.3%
Total Population	167,196	162,020	162,400	160,840	-3.8%

Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

Led by the Baby Boom generation, the front end of which will start reaching retirement age in the year 2011, the fastest growing cohort in the region is expected to be 65 years and older. In 2005, about 19 percent of the population in the region was aged 65 years and over (as compared to 12.0% statewide); by 2035, it is projected to be 28 percent of the population (as compared to 21.7% statewide). To put that in perspective, one in five residents in Southwest Minnesota are already aged 65 years and over, as compared to one in eight residents statewide. Big Stone and Lincoln already had one in four residents past retirement age. By 2035, only Lyon County is expected to have less than 25 percent of its population aged 65 years and over, while Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, and Murray are all projected to have senior citizens making up at least one-third of their population. The growth demonstrates an increase in life expectancies, as people are living longer than they ever have, coupled with continued population declines. However, this would also presume that even as residents begin to reach retirement age, they will remain living in the region rather than moving away. That wasn't the case in the region from 2000 to 2007 however, as the number of people aged 65 years and over in the region actually declined by nearly 2,300 people. Because of declining populations in all of the younger age groups, any projected population gain is reliant upon senior citizens living longer and staying in the region.

The number of children in the region is expected to drop from 2005 to 2015, then hold steady over the next two decades. Likewise the number of new entrants to the workforce, those people aged 15 to 24 years, is projected to decline by about 4,000 through 2025, before increasing by about 500 people in the region from 2025 to 2035. The number of 25 to 34 year olds is also expected to fall in the region, from 18,250 people in 2005 to 16,250 people in 2035. Based on the projections formula, the number of 35 to 44 year olds will decline in the region. However, recent research by Benjamin Winchester, the Data Analysis and Research Coordinator for the Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota, Morris, shows that actual behavior has been different in the past decade. This interview in *the Minnesota Preservationist* magazine details the changes in rural demographics:

"Could you provide some background on the economic forces at work in rural areas? How have small towns evolved over the past fifty years?

Most small towns were originally tied to the railroad system. They were established about every eight to twelve miles to function as agricultural collection points for rail lines, which shipped their products to cities like Minneapolis and Chicago. Agriculture continued to be the primary industry until around 1950, when advances in farming technology led to increased efficiency and began to replace manual labor. This really changed the face of our small towns, and by the 50s and 60s, it was clear that they needed to do something else. The 50s and 60s saw the rise of manufacturing, overtaking agriculture as the primary industry. At that time, small town manufacturing generally consisted of mono-industries; there might be a single bolt factory, for example, and many in the town were employed there. Starting in the 70s, the manufacturing mono-industries started to decline as well. This trend has continued to the present, and small towns are now becoming more diversified. In fact, health and education are now the two main sectors experiencing growth.

How have rural areas fared demographically over the past few decades?

During the 70s, something interesting began to happen – what I call the first "rural rebound." This was largely due to an increase in negativity surrounding urban areas. At the time, perceptions of urban life increasingly related to crime, homelessness, etc. At that point people started to flock to rural areas in a concentric circle around the urban core, and that's when the suburbs started to take off. By the 80s, the migration from the city began to taper off, and nationally there was even some population decline. But rural growth started up again in the 90s and completely reversed the 80s trend. In fact, between 1990 and 2000, 70% of rural counties in the United States grew in population. Many people hold the notion that rural areas are suffering from population decline, but that is not always the case.

What factors have led to the more recent population shifts?

People have generally held pretty positive views of small towns, but before the 80s, people had to live where the jobs were. With the technological advancements of the 90s through today, our choices have increased. Now in their homes people can have a bank, an office, a bookstore, a brokerage firm, a school, a newspaper, or an investment firm. Where you want to live becomes the question; now quality of life matters. And people are choosing rural areas. Through this migration, we are getting newcomers into small towns. We often lose our 18- to 29-year-olds; they tend to move away, especially those 18 to 25. But our research shows that there is a large influx of 35- to 44-year-olds, and they are bringing their children with them. People are realizing as their kids are getting into second and third grade that they do not want to be in an urban area. And we see this reflected in the school populations. If you have 100 children that start kindergarten, you expect the next year to have 100 children in first grade, and so on. But if you follow the actual pattern, you might have 100 in kindergarten and first grade, maybe 105 in second grade, 120 in third, 140 in fourth. This is the effect of the 35- to 44-year-olds bringing their kids. A lot of people don't realize this, even within the towns themselves. You show them that the fifth and sixth and seventh grades are huge, and they say, "Wow – I didn't know that! This is good news!" So they are pretty excited by it, too.

How has this affected Minnesota? Are all areas experiencing this growth, or does it vary by region?

Nationally, the greatest population gains between 1990 and 2000 were in retirement and recreational areas. The number one predictor of population growth during this time is the presence of or proximity to water. That has certainly worked in the favor of Minnesota; where you have lakes, you have growth. The number-one predictor of population decline between 1990 and 2000 is reliance on agriculture; the second is reliance on manufacturing. If you're living in a primarily agricultural area that has not diversified its economy, you're almost guaranteed to decline in population. A lot of people still view rural areas with a sentimental attachment to agriculture. But less than half of one percent of the U.S. population is engaged in farming as a primary occupation; rural does not equal agriculture anymore. In Minnesota, there are actually three forms of "rural": rural as agricultural areas; rural as high amenity and recreational areas; and rural as suburban growth. Within these three categories, there are different definitions of development and sustainability. Our few remaining agricultural counties are in the southwest part of the state. In north central, west central, and northeastern Minnesota – the high amenity areas – tourism is key. Then there is the growth corridor from St. Cloud to Minneapolis to Rochester. These areas all deal with different issues. When you've got large population growth in suburban areas, you are concerned with the development of water systems and libraries. If you're in the southwestern part of the state, you're thinking about manufacturing, economic development incentives, value-added agriculture and energy projects. There is not a single definition of rural, and everyone has to respect that.

How has immigration affected smaller towns and rural areas?
What I tell groups is this: if your town is going to keep growing, it's going to be through people who don't look like you. And that tends to be the rule, especially in agricultural areas. In some cases people don't know how to welcome newcomers to their town. Despite that, they are opening new businesses and bringing their families. This is definitely a growth area. If towns are going to be successful, they will find economic and social development strategies that encourage peoples' transition. Willmar is a good example; there have been struggles, but recently they've had great success with a multicultural fair and multicultural market.

Looking forward, what are some of the challenges and opportunities for rural Minnesota?
Within any town, there are limited human and financial resources. The physical infrastructure systems – roads, water, and sewer systems – are aging, and replacing them can be costly. The lack of a proactive approach to maintaining this infrastructure is a tremendous hardship today. The West Central Initiative estimated a $6.9 billion need to repair, upgrade, and replace these water and wastewater systems across Greater Minnesota. The social infrastructure is also aging, yet it is here that people can make a difference. The clubs and organizations built years ago are now adjusting to the influx of the 35- to 44-year-old people with children. By providing a welcoming social environment for these newcomers, small towns have a tremendous opportunity to reinvigorate civic life."

Today's Rural Demographics:
An Interview with Benjamin Winchester
Interviewed by Amy Douma,
Preservation Alliance of Minnesota Board Member
http://www.morris.umn.edu/services/cst/pubs/2007/MNpreservationist.pdf

Winchester's research is brilliant and interesting because it approaches demographic shifts from a different perspective. Instead of simply comparing the totals by age group from year to year or decade to decade, which continually show declines, he examined the population change using the "Simplified Cohort Approach". According to Winchester, it can be explained as follows: "If you were 10 years old in 1990, you would be 20 in 2000. So, if there were 100 people 15-19 in 1990, we expect 100 people 25-29 in 2000."[1] Using that approach, Winchester discovered that rural regions were seeing some gains. In Southwest Minnesota in 1990, there were 23,231 people aged 25 to 34 years. If no one moved into or out of the region over the decade, there should have been 23,231 people in the 35 to 44 year old age group in 2000; but instead there were 25,157 people, meaning the region gained almost 2,000 additional people in that age cohort over the decade. Despite the overall population loss, the same phenomenon occurred from 2000 to 2007. Although not covering a full decade and therefore not directly comparable, in 2000 there were 17,896 people aged 25 to 34, meaning if no one moved in or out, there should be 17,896 people aged 35 to 44 in 2010. But by 2007 there were 19,132 people aged 35 to 44, setting up the possibility that the region may technically "gain" another 1,000 people or more in that age group, even while losing in that age group over time.

The research also pays special attention to how this group's children affect school districts in the region, since enrollments have been declining along with the population. Winchester's approach focused on student enrollment data from the Minnesota Dept. of Education to examine age cohorts as they moved through the various grade levels, again using the simplified cohort approach. If there were 100 students in kindergarten in 2002, we expect 100 students to be in third grade in 2005. However, analysis of student enrollments in Southwest Minnesota over the last eight years show a slight increase in the number of students in older age groups, even as total student enrollment was declining. In 2002, there were 1,839 first grade students in the region, and if no one moved into or out of the region, there should have been 1,839 fourth graders in 2005 and 1,839 seventh graders in 2008. Actual data from the Dept. of Education show that the region actually had 1,928 seventh graders by 2008, an increase of nearly 100 students. Each subsequent grade level saw the same positive change – the number of second graders in 2002 rose by 71 students by the time they were in eighth grade; the third grade cohort expanded by 222 students from 2002 to 2008; the fourth grade cohort gained 228 students; the fifth grade cohort added 218 students; and the sixth grade cohort picked up 194 students. (See Table 4.)

[1] http://www.morris.umn.edu/services/cst/pubs/2008/2008.The Newcomers.ppt#317,7,Cohort

Despite the cohorts adding students in each grade from year to year, overall school enrollments were experiencing steady declines. From 2002 to 2008, enrollments in Southwest Minnesota dropped over 10 percent, a decrease of more than 3,000 students. Every grade but first grade had less students in 2008 than in 2002, with most grade levels falling more than 10 percent and one – seventh grade – dropping just over 19 percent.

Though the region is still relatively non-diverse, several school districts are seeing a much higher number of minority students. According to 2006-2007 data from the Minnesota Dept. of Education, there were several diverse school districts in Southwest Minnesota. At 50.6 percent, Worthington had the highest percentage of students of color in the region (and ninth highest in the state); followed by Lynd at 38.6 percent, Westbrook-Walnut Grove at 32.8 percent, and Mountain Lake at 31.5 percent. Overall the school districts in Cottonwood, Lyon, Nobles, and Redwood County had the most diverse student populations; while districts in Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, and Rock were the least diverse. In general, the larger counties tended to have more students of color, while the smaller counties had fewer. In sum, seven of the 42 school districts in the region had more than 20 percent students of color. (See Figure 1.)

Because the cultural background of students is changing, the numbers of people speaking Spanish, other Indo-European, and Asian & Pacific Islander languages is also increasing. This has led to increased demands on the local school districts to provide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) programs. Again, the highest need for LEP programs was found in the largest counties: Lyon, Nobles, and Cottonwood. Interestingly, just 10.6 percent of the student body in Worthington was in need of LEP programs. The percent of total enrollment requiring LEP programs was below 5 percent in 32 of the 42 school districts in the region, including eight that were at 0.0 percent. (See Figure 2.)

According to the Dept. of Education, it is important to know how many different native languages are spoken by enrolled students in order to design an effective educational curriculum. Three of the 42 school districts in the region had at least 10 different languages spoken at home; led by Worthington and Marshall with 14 different languages and Pipestone Area with 10. Lac qui Parle Valley, Montevideo, Redwood Area, Mineota, Murray County Central, Mountain Lake, Jackson County Central, Adrian, and Luverne all had between 5 and 7 languages spoken at home. Instead, most of the school districts in the region had just two languages spoken at home – most likely English and Spanish. Interestingly, Westbrook-Walnut Grove – which is one of the most diverse school districts in the region – reported only two languages spoken at home.

Table 4. Southwest Minnesota Student Enrollments, 2002-2009

2002-2003 Students		2005-2006 Students		2008-2009 Students		2002-2009
KG	1,992	KG	1,890	KG	1,956	-1.8%
01	1,839	01	1,879	01	1,879	2.2%
02	1,951	02	1,801	02	1,895	-2.9%
03	1,909	03	1,894	03	1,826	-4.3%
04	2,105	04	1,830	04	1,859	-11.7%
05	2,168	05	1,947	05	1,852	-14.6%
06	2,150	06	1,972	06	1,959	-8.9%
07	2,383	07	2,185	07	1,928	-19.1%
08	2,350	08	2,283	08	2,022	-14.0%
09	2,585	09	2,340	09	2,131	-17.6%
10	2,609	10	2,495	10	2,333	-10.6%
11	2,661	11	2,461	11	2,386	-10.3%
12	2,700	12	2,562	12	2,344	-13.2%
	29,402		**27,539**		**26,370**	**-10.3%**

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Education

Figure 1: Students of Color, 2006-2007

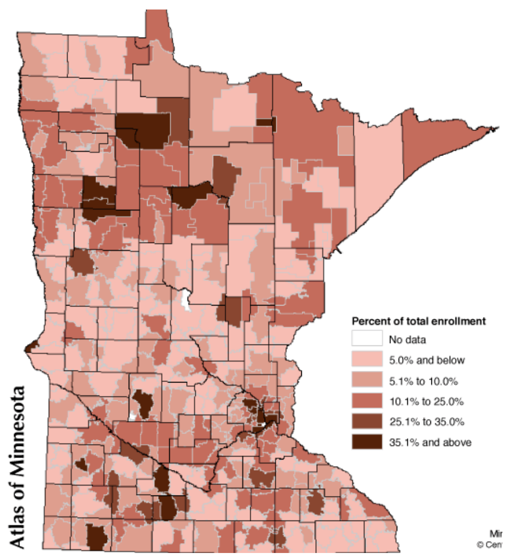
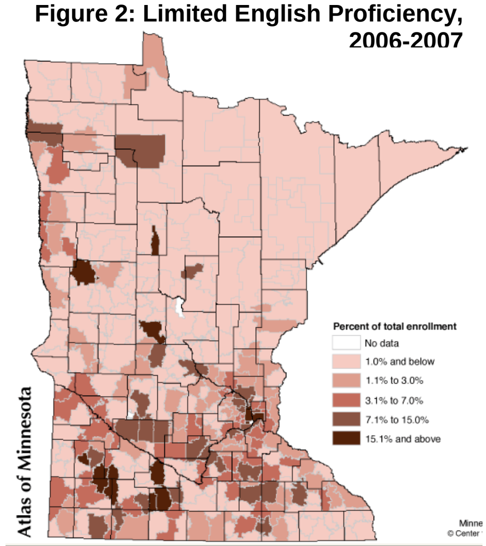


Figure 2: Limited English Proficiency, 2006-2007

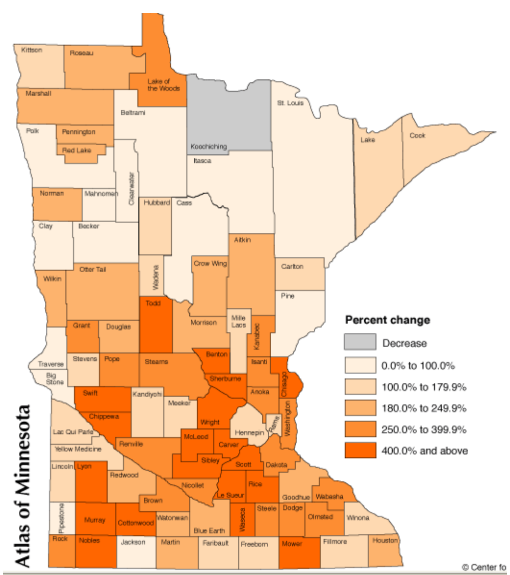


Obviously migration is an important aspect of population change, especially in Southwest Minnesota. In fact, every county in the region has fewer white people now than it had in 1990, while all but one county (Jackson) has more people of other races.

Table 5: Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, 2007				
Race or Origin Category	**Southwest Minnesota**	**Southwest Minnesota**	**United States**	**State of Minnesota**
Total Population	162,193	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
White Alone	154,692	95.4%	80.0%	89.3%
Black or African American	1,579	1.0%	12.8%	4.5%
American Indian	1,668	1.0%	1.0%	1.2%
Asian Alone	2,563	1.6%	4.4%	3.5%
Native Hawaiian & Pac. Island	289	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Two or More Races	1,402	0.9%	1.6%	1.5%
Hispanic or Latino	7,341	4.5%	15.1%	4.0%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program				

Percentage-wise, the increases in different racial populations in Southwest Minnesota during the 1990s and 2000s were huge. However, these figures are not tremendously useful because of the relative size. For example, the number of Black or African American persons increased five times in Chippewa County from 1990 to 2007 – from 6 to 30 people. The region is still predominantly white – 95.4 percent overall in 2007. Eleven of the 14 counties were at least 95 percent white in 2007, with only Redwood (93.4%), Nobles (92.2%), and Swift County (89.3%) below that line. And that is relatively non-diverse in comparison to the rest of the state and the nation. (See Table 5 and Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Change in Distribution of People of Color, 1990-2007



People of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 4.5 percent of the population in the region, led by Nobles County at 16.5 percent. Nobles was the only county that surpassed the U.S. rate, which was 15.1 percent in 2007. Every county except for Big Stone in Southwest Minnesota at least doubled the number of residents of Hispanic or Latino origin from 1990 to 2007, including nine counties that more than tripled and six counties that jumped more than 400 percent. Nobles County (+1165%) and Murray County (+805%) saw the fastest increases in their Hispanic populations from 1990 to 2007; while Nobles (+3,052 people) and Lyon (+1,059 people) had by far the largest numerical increase.

Again, Lyon, Nobles, and Redwood County had the most diverse populations, but Swift County saw the largest and fastest increase in diversity from 1990 to 2007. In 1990, just 1 percent of Swift County's population was non-white; by 2007 nearly 11 percent was non-white. Overall, the increasing diversity is slowing the population losses that Southwest Minnesota has been experiencing over time.

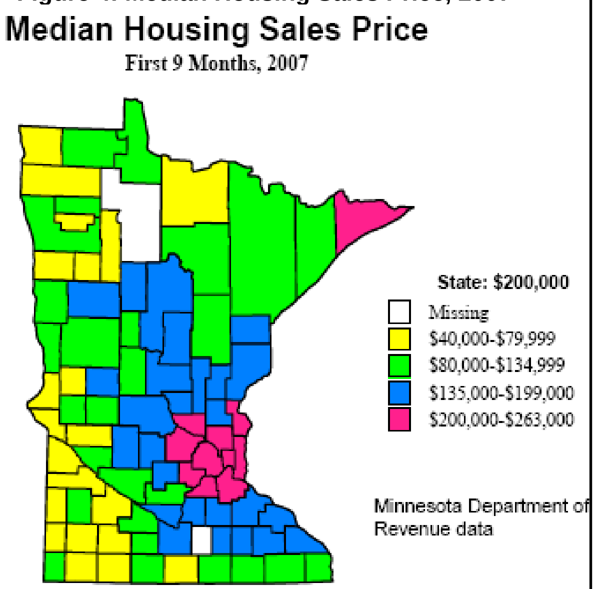
Housing Demands

Despite losing population since the turn of the century, every county in the region actually saw an increase in the number of housing units from 2000 to 2007. A housing unit is defined as: "a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live separately from any other individuals in the building and which have direct access from outside the building or through a common hall. For vacant units, the criteria of separateness and direct access are applied to the intended occupants whenever possible."[2] The number of housing units added was relatively low across the region, with Lyon County singlehandedly accounting for 33.9 percent of the net housing stock growth.

[2] http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/epss/glossary_h.html

Lyon County added 699 net new housing units from 2000 to 2007 (a 6.8% increase), while Lac qui Parle County gained just 11 units (a 0.3% rise). The state of Minnesota added 238,521 net new housing units from 2000 to 2007, an 11.5 percent increase; while Southwest Minnesota housing units grew 2.7 percent. Eight of the 14 counties in the region saw a 2 percent or less gain in housing units, with nine of the counties averaging less than 15 net new housing units each year. Every county in Southwest Minnesota has an older housing stock – at least based on the median year that structure was built – than the state (1969). Lyon (1963) and Nobles (1955) had the newest housing stock, with Lac qui Parle (1941), Yellow Medicine (1948), and Jackson (1949) having the oldest housing.

Figure 4: Median Housing Sales Price, 2007



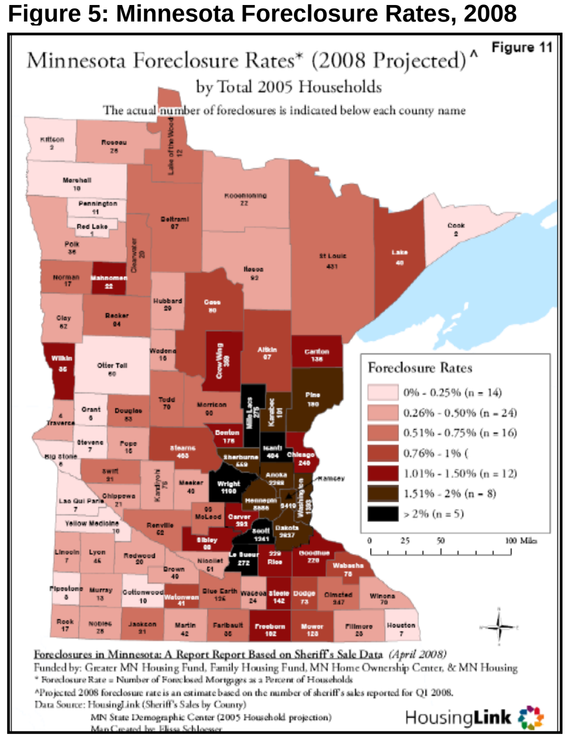
After several years of steady growth, the real estate market slowed throughout the state in 2007 and 2008. Overall, the Twin Cities Metro area experienced a bigger fall-off than Greater Minnesota. In the 11 counties of the Minneapolis-St. Paul combined metropolitan statistical area, the number of sales in the first nine months of 2007 was down 25 percent, while the number of sales declined 16 percent outside the Twin Cities and was down 8.4 percent in Southwest Minnesota. In fact, the number of housing sales rose in only 14 of the 87 counties in Minnesota from 2006 to 2007.

Likewise, the number of sales rose in four of the 14 counties in Southwest Minnesota. Interestingly, sales rose in Rock (24.6%), Murray (24.0%), Lincoln (11.1%), and Lyon County (7.6%), all of which are either within or close to a large employment center in the region. The largest rates of decline occurred in Big Stone (-37.5%) and Chippewa (-36.6%).

At least through 2007, the rapid fall in the number of sales was not accompanied by similar rapid declines in prices. However, realtor reports suggest that prices are going down in 2008 as the real estate market weakens. The median statewide price was $200,850 in the first 9 months of 2006 and $200,000 in the first 9 months of 2007, a -0.4 percent decline. Only four of the 14 counties in the region saw declines in sales prices, as compared to 36 of the 87 counties in the state. At $126,400, Lyon County easily had the highest median sales price in the region – more than $40,000 higher than the next highest county – Rock, at $82,500 and Chippewa, at $82,000. Every other county in the region had median sales prices below $75,000 through 2007. (See Figure 4.)

Being left out of the booming housing market of the last decade has also left the region out of the foreclosure crisis. According to data and analysis from HousingLink, there were 38,077 mortgages foreclosed in Minnesota between 2005 and 2007. That translated into one mortgage foreclosed for every 54 households in Minnesota; but if 2008 foreclosure projections hold true, approximately 28,000 *more* Minnesota mortgages will be foreclosed by the end of the year. This would translate into one foreclosure occurring for every 31 households.

Figure 5: Minnesota Foreclosure Rates, 2008



Sixty-four percent of foreclosures were located in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, and another 19 percent were concentrated in ten greater Minnesota counties (Wright, Sherburne, Stearns, St. Louis, Olmsted, Isanti, Chisago, Rice, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs). The remaining 17 percent occurred in the other 70 greater Minnesota counties. In 2008, foreclosures were expected to hit Lyon the hardest in terms of numbers and Jackson the hardest in rate per household, but none of the counties in Southwest Minnesota were projected to see more than 45 foreclosures. In fact, ten of the 14 counties were expected to have less than 25 foreclosures in 2008, including six counties with 10 or less foreclosures. (See Figure 5.)

Labor Force Changes in Southwest Minnesota

Southwest Minnesota has consistently had a tight labor market in this decade, with some of the lowest unemployment rates in the state. According to Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data from DEED, the size of the labor force in Southwest Minnesota increased about 1.7 percent from 2000 to 2009, in comparison to a 5.5 percent gain in the state of Minnesota and an 8.5 percent expansion in the U.S. (See Table 6.) In February of 2000, Southwest Minnesota had 90,901 people in the labor force – including 86,983 people who were employed and 3,918 people who were unemployed and actively seeking work – and an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent. Nine years later, there were 92,490 available workers in the region, and 7,126 unemployed people that were actively seeking work. The labor force was nearly 1,600 people larger in February of 2009, but the number of unemployed workers was also up 3,200 people, pushing the unemployment rate 3.4 percentage points higher, to 7.7 percent.

Table 6: Monthly Labor Force, Not Seasonally Adjusted, 2000-2009, Southwest Minnesota

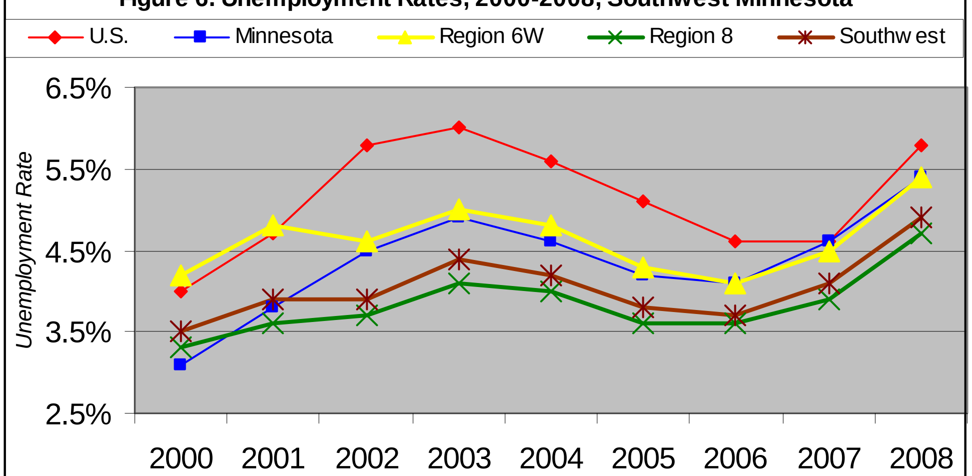
	Feb. 2000	Feb. 2009	2000-2009
United States	141,775,000	153,804,000	8.5%
Minnesota	2,770,361	2,922,600	5.5%
Southwest Region	90,901	92,490	1.7%
EDR 6W	25,220	25,892	2.7%
EDR 8	65,681	66,598	1.4%

Source: DEED Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

Southwest Minnesota's unemployment rate was lower than the U.S. rate every year from 2000 to 2009, and has remained about a half a point below the state's rate every year since 2002. The unemployment rate was lowest in Region 8, where it was at 4 percent or lower for seven of the last nine years. Region 6W also had extremely low unemployment rates, ranging between 4 and 5 percent until 2008, when it climbed to 5.4 percent. (See Figure 6.)

Over the last nine years, counties in the Southwest region have posted some of the lowest annual unemployment rates in the state – led by Rock, Nobles, Lyon, Jackson, and Pipestone, all of which were below 4 percent in seven of the last nine years. In fact, Rock County was below 3.5 percent from 2000 to 2007, and below 3 percent in 2000, 2001, 2005, and 2006.

Figure 6. Unemployment Rates, 2000-2008, Southwest Minnesota



Source: DEED LAUS Program

In late 2008 and early 2009, unemployment rates in Southwest Minnesota started climbing to heights not seen since the recession in the early 1980s, but remained among the lowest in the state. In fact, Rock County's 5.7 percent rate was the lowest in Minnesota in February of 2009.

According to labor force projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the 14 counties of Southwest Minnesota are expected to lose just over 10,000 workers between 2005 and 2035, an 11.9 percent decrease. This follows the projected decline and aging of the region's population, but is more acute because not every person that is 16 years and over is actually in the labor force, especially for people who have reached retirement age of 65 years and over. In contrast, the state of Minnesota is expected to add 436,320 workers from 2005 to 2035, a 14.9 percent rise. (See Table 7.)

Similar to the demographic shifts described above, Southwest Minnesota is expected to see labor force declines in the younger age groups, but large gains in the older age groups. The number of teenagers and new entrants to the workforce (16 to 24 years) is the fastest shrinking age group, and actually is expected to drop almost 5,000 people by 2035. Nearly 5,000 fewer workers will comprise the 25 to 44 year old and 45 to 64 year old cohorts in Southwest Minnesota over the next three decades as well, leading to a combined loss of nearly 15,000 workers in the prime working years.

Table 7: Labor Force Projections, 2005-2035, Southwest Minnesota

	2005	2015	2025	2035	2005 - 2035 % Change
Total labor force	89,350	87,050	82,640	78,700	-11.9%
Age 16-24	14,930	10,540	10,130	10,240	-31.4%
Age 25-44	33,740	32,290	31,380	28,920	-14.3%
Age 45-64	35,440	36,940	31,050	29,990	-15.4%
Age 65 plus	5,230	7,280	10,090	9,590	83.4%

Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

The oldest members of the Baby Boom generation – persons born between 1946 and 1964 – reached 62 years of age in 2008, while the youngest of that generation will reach 62 years in 2026. The earliest age of eligibility for Social Security retired-worker benefits is set at age 62, but the usual retirement age for people retiring now is age 65 – considered the "full retirement age" by the Social Security Administration. Because of longer life expectancies, starting in year 2003 the full retirement age began increasing in gradual steps until it reaches age 67. The entire Baby Boom generation will be over 67 by the year 2035. Their sheer numbers suggest that the impact on labor markets could be substantial if this generation chooses to remain in the workforce longer – or retire earlier – than previous generations. In Southwest Minnesota, the only growth in the labor force is occurring from 65 years and older. In every county the number and percentage of older workers is increasing rapidly. For example, in 2005 about 5.9 percent of Southwest Minnesota's labor force was aged 65 years and over; by 2035, as much as 12.2 percent will be senior citizens. In Region 6W, the concentration might be 13.8 percent, reflecting the demographic shift.

Commuting Patterns in Southwest Minnesota

For the most part, workers who live in the region also work in the region. According to 2006 commuting patterns from the U.S. Census Bureau's Worker Origin-Destination database, about 61.6 percent of residents in Southwest Minnesota worked in their county of residence, while the other 38.4 percent drove to work somewhere else, but primarily still within the region. With a regional employment center in Marshall, Lyon County had the highest percentage of residents that also worked in their home county, at 80.5 percent. Likewise, because of Worthington, Nobles County retained 72.8 percent of its working residents for jobs in the county; followed by Chippewa County, which is anchored by Montevideo, at 64.2 percent. Just four of the 14 counties had less than 50 percent of their residents also working in their home counties. (See Table 8.)

Table 8: Commuting Patterns, 2006

	Percent who work in their home county	Percent who commute elsewhere
Big Stone Co.	45.5%	54.5%
Chippewa Co.	64.2%	35.8%
Cottonwood Co.	58.3%	41.7%
Jackson Co.	54.0%	46.0%
Lac qui Parle Co.	51.1%	48.9%
Lincoln Co.	51.3%	48.7%
Lyon Co.	80.5%	19.5%
Murray Co.	48.9%	51.1%
Nobles Co.	72.8%	27.2%
Pipestone Co.	66.3%	33.7%
Redwood Co.	56.7%	43.3%
Rock Co.	49.8%	50.2%
Swift Co.	61.5%	38.5%
Yellow Medicine	47.7%	52.3%
Southwest Region	61.6%	38.4%

Source: U.S. Census Worker Origin-Destination Database

Workers living in counties along the borders were crossing into neighboring states for work, including North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa. Throughout the 14 counties, about 2,700 residents drive into South Dakota for work, including 948 workers in Rock County and 402 workers in Pipestone County. About 1,200 workers drive into Iowa, primarily from Jackson County (416 workers), Nobles County (326 workers), and Rock County (141 workers). North Dakota gains just over 100 workers from Southwest Minnesota, with most coming from Big Stone County (104 workers).

But just as counties send their workers elsewhere, they also draw workers in from surrounding counties. Five of the 14 counties in the region are actually net labor importers, drawing in more workers than are driving out. Lyon County is the largest labor importer, drawing in workers from Yellow Medicine, Redwood, Murray, and Lincoln, among others. Chippewa County is the next largest labor importer, with workers commuting in from Yellow Medicine, Lac qui Parle, Kandiyohi, and Swift; followed closely by Nobles County, which attracts workers from Jackson, Murray, Rock, and Osceola County, Iowa. All three of these counties have regional employment centers in Marshall, Montevideo, and Worthington, respectively. Pipestone and Jackson also had net labor imports. (See Table 9.)

Redwood, Murray, Rock, and Lac qui Parle have the largest net labor export, but even they draw in workers from surrounding counties. And while it is important to understand how workers flow throughout the region, it is also important to note that most counties in Southwest Minnesota draw their workforce from local residents. Approximately 66 percent of the workforce in Southwest Minnesota counties is drawn from workers who live in that county. About 82 percent of the workers in Lac qui Parle County also live in Lac qui Parle County, followed by 75.6 percent in Murray and 73.1 percent in Redwood. In contrast, just 52.9 percent of the workers in Jackson County also live in Jackson County, and only 57.0 percent of Chippewa County's workers are residents.

Table 9: Worker Origins & Destinations, 2006

	Both Work & Live	In-Commuters	Out-Commuters	Net Import/ Export
Big Stone Co.	1,169	665	1,402	-737
Chippewa Co.	3,240	2,444	1,807	637
Cottonwood Co.	3,879	2,568	2,769	-201
Jackson Co.	2,951	2,624	2,514	110
Lac qui Parle Co.	1,651	366	1,579	-1,213
Lincoln Co.	1,116	572	1,058	-486
Lyon Co.	9,998	3,997	2,418	1,579
Murray Co.	2,035	657	2,127	-1,470
Nobles Co.	6,943	3,206	2,594	612
Pipestone Co.	3,258	1,948	1,658	290
Redwood Co.	3,897	1,432	2,978	-1,546
Rock Co.	2,403	974	2,424	-1,450
Swift Co.	2,556	1,058	1,602	-544
Yellow Medicine	2,389	1,705	2,618	-913

Source: U.S. Census Worker Origin-Destination Database

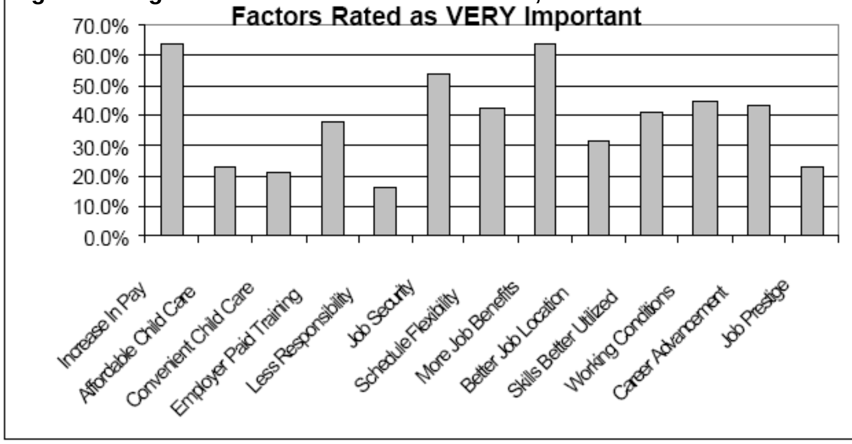
Regional Salary Surveys in Southwest Minnesota

In a regional Labor Force Assessment conducted in 2001, residents were asked their primary factors when choosing a job. Not surprisingly, an increase in pay was the primary factor considered – meaning wages often play the single most important role in helping workers decide where to work. A wage increase was deemed important by 90 percent of working respondents. And while the 2001 Labor Force Assessment also showed that workers in Southwest Minnesota have a tendency to stay with their current employer for the long-term (employment tenure), there are incentives that would make them consider a different job. (See Figure 7.)

Beyond pay, workers in the region also desire better job benefits – including health insurance, life insurance, and retirement plans – with 87 percent of respondents rating this as an important job change consideration. Eighty percent of respondents had interest in having their employers "better utilize their skills." And again highlighting their loyalty, three out of every four respondents felt that more job security and better career advancement opportunities were important factors. Interestingly, 77 percent rated improved working conditions as important.

As described, there is more to choosing a job than money, but pay is still of utmost importance to most workers. Much like its geographic location, wages in Southwest Minnesota are among the lowest in the state. Median wages for all occupations are lower in Southwest than in the Twin Cities, Southeast, Central, and Northeast Minnesota; but competitive with the Northwest regions. (See Table 10.)

Figure 7: Region 7W Labor Force Assessment, 2001



According to the Minnesota Salary Survey from the 4th quarter of 2008, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 6W is $13.34 and in Region 8 is $13.76; making them the two lowest earning regions in the state. Wages in the region have been steadily increasing over time, but still lag other areas. Through the 4th quarter of 2008, the median hourly wage in the Twin Cities metro area is $19.00, which is about 40 percent higher than wages in Southwest Minnesota. Over the course of a full-time work year, or 2,080 hours, the difference in wages between Southwest Minnesota and the Twin Cities metro area works out to between $10,900 and $11,775 per year - no doubt part of the incentive for all of those younger people who have been moving out of the area over the last couple decades! However, Southwest Minnesota is much closer – both in geography and wage scales – to the Sioux Falls metro area in South Dakota. Through the 4th quarter of 2008, the median wage in Sioux Falls was $13.75 per hour, which was very similar to the median hourly wages in Region 6W and Region 8.

Table 10: Salary Survey, 4th Qtr. 2008

Economic Development Region	Median Hourly Wage
EDR 1 - Northwest	$13.90
EDR 2 - Headwaters	$13.89
EDR 3 - Arrowhead	$15.36
EDR 4 - West Central	$13.95
EDR 5 - North Central	$14.18
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	$14.67
EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley	$13.34
EDR 7E - East Central	$14.86
EDR 7W - Central	$15.12
EDR 8 - Southwest	$13.76
EDR 9 - South Central	$14.60
EDR 10 - Southeast	$16.06
EDR 11 - Twin Cities	$19.00

Source: DEED Minnesota Salary Survey

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs in the region are concentrated in food preparation and serving related occupations, personal care and service occupations, sales and related occupations, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations. For the most part, the gap in pay between Southwest Minnesota and the Twin Cities is also much lower in these jobs, from less than a dollar an hour in food preparation, personal care and service, and building and grounds cleaning to about three or four dollars an hour in sales and related occupations. In contrast, the highest paying jobs are typically management occupations, architecture and engineering occupations, business and financial operations occupations, and life, physical, and social science occupations, which all require higher levels of education and experience. The gaps in pay are much bigger in these occupations between the Twin Cities and Southwest Minnesota, ranging from as much as 22 dollars an hour for legal occupations to 16 dollars an hour in management occupations, and around 15 dollars per hour in computer and mathematical occupations. (See Table 11.)

Though wages are lower in many areas, two major occupational groups – farming, fishing, and forestry occupations and personal care and service occupations – have higher wages in Southwest Minnesota as compared to the state. Other occupational groups that have competitive wages include: protective service occupations; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations; education, training and library occupations; and transportation and material moving occupations.

Table 11: Minnesota Salary Survey, 4th Quarter 2008								
	EDR 6W		EDR 8		Minnesota		Sioux Falls MSA	
Occupational Group	Regional Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Regional Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Statewide Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Regional Employment	Median Hourly Wage
Total, All Occupations	18,010	$13.34	51,810	$13.76	2,687,740	$17.25	132,220	$13.75
Management	790	$32.03	2,330	$34.78	133,760	$44.96	3,660	$38.64
Business & Financial Operations	910	$22.03	2,780	$22.25	154,590	$26.65	6,070	$24.27
Computer & Mathematical	290	$20.89	900	$29.33	77,660	$34.90	3,060	$23.98
Architecture & Engineering	300	$22.77	800	$24.05	51,910	$30.48	1,260	$26.27
Life, Physical, & Social Science	200	$23.16	690	$25.12	29,500	$29.09	740	$26.79
Community & Social Services	510	$14.49	1,270	$16.13	50,950	$18.18	1,580	$17.42
Legal	90	$22.33	250	$16.12	18,090	$36.13	570	$26.21
Education, Training, & Library	1,310	$18.89	3,090	$18.37	150,320	$20.77	4,810	$16.14
Arts, Design, Ent., Sports, & Media	160	$11.44	480	$14.00	36,040	$21.24	2,340	$14.56
Healthcare Practitioners & Tech.	1,370	$20.81	2,920	$21.31	147,650	$29.30	9,560	$24.51
Healthcare Support	820	$10.84	2,060	$10.78	84,010	$12.93	3,180	$12.05
Protective Service	600	$13.92	960	$17.40	47,670	$17.44	1,660	$15.90
Food Prep. & Serving Related	1,290	$8.36	4,220	$8.69	220,910	$9.25	11,910	$8.32
Bldg. & Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	480	$10.68	1,260	$10.14	80,840	$11.78	4,330	$10.58
Personal Care & Service	370	$9.79	1,090	$12.53	82,360	$11.36	3,750	$10.28
Sales & Related	1,370	$9.16	4,920	$9.17	276,300	$12.18	15,040	$11.92
Office & Administrative Support	2,580	$12.50	7,510	$12.64	433,440	$15.62	27,380	$12.62
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	50	$11.88	240	$14.86	3,700	$13.03	230	$11.51
Construction & Extraction	930	$17.35	1,850	$16.23	109,800	$23.86	6,580	$15.27
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	600	$17.20	1,780	$17.51	91,530	$20.58	5,150	$16.87
Production	1,740	$13.12	6,250	$13.38	233,080	$15.44	9,610	$13.21
Transportation & Material Moving	1,240	$13.01	4,160	$13.46	173,620	$14.43	9,750	$12.38
Source: DEED Minnesota Salary Survey, 4th Quarter 2008; South Dakota Labor Market Information								

Many of these occupational groups have seen an increase in the number of unemployment insurance initial claims filed in the last two years, jumping nearly 900 claims higher in 2008 as compared to 2006. Claim activity was spread across occupations in the region, with production and construction and extraction occupations showing the largest number of claims; and farming, fishing and forestry, personal care and service, and business and financial operations showing the fastest increases. (See Table 12.)

The large percentage of claims filed in production and construction and extraction occupations are not unexpected, as those two occupational groups regularly account for the majority of claims filed. In 2008, those two occupations comprised 57.3 percent of the claims filed in the region, as compared to 51.6 percent of UI claims in 2006. Unemployment claims filed by construction workers increased by more than 300 claims over the last two years, while the number of claims filed in production occupations was also trending upward with more than 600 additional claims filed in 2008 as compared to 2006.

Within the region, Chippewa (+20.8%), Lyon (+19.0%), Yellow Medicine (+17.5%), Cottonwood (+17.0%), and Jackson County (+12.0%) saw the steepest increase in the number of initial claims filed in 2008 as compared to 2006, while Pipestone (-12.3%), Lac qui Parle (-8.8%), Big Stone (-5.9%), Rock (-5.2%), and Murray County (-5.1%) actually saw decreases in the number of initial claims filed. Nobles (+7.9%), Lincoln (+3.9%), and Swift (+2.1%) also saw small increases in the number of UI claims filed, while claims fell in Redwood County (-2.8%) for a second straight year.

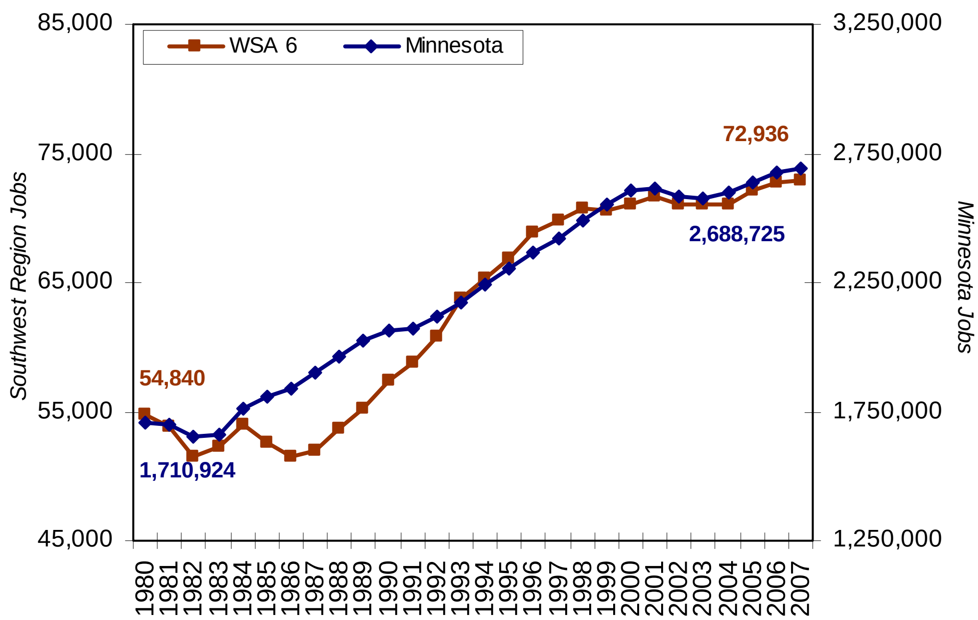
Table 12: Unemployment Insurance Initial Claim Characteristics, 2006-2008, Southwest Minnesota	2006 Claims	2007 Claims	2008 Claims	2007-2008 % Change
Total, Initial Claims	7,524	7,883	8,410	6.7%
Management Occupations	223	187	139	-25.7%
Business & Financial Operations Occs	38	44	78	77.3%
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	43	44	51	15.9%
Architecture & Engineering Occs	79	68	48	-29.4%
Life, Physical, & Social Science Occs	21	16	7	-56.3%
Community & Social Services Occs	32	37	26	-29.7%
Legal Occupations	4	6	3	-50.0%
Education, Training, & Library Occs	111	104	125	20.2%
Arts, Design, Ent, Sports, & Media Occ	30	39	26	-33.3%
Healthcare Practitioners & Tech. Occs	71	63	111	76.2%
Healthcare Support Occupations	163	188	191	1.6%
Protective Service Occupations	20	22	38	72.7%
Food Prep & Serving Related Occs	254	255	393	54.1%
Bldg. & Grounds Cleaning & Maint Occ	193	191	158	-17.3%
Personal Care & Service Occupations	28	29	95	227.6%
Sales & Related Occupations	206	173	237	37.0%
Office & Administrative Support Occs	559	524	335	-36.1%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry Occs	62	110	221	100.9%
Construction & Extraction Occupations	2,440	2,718	2,755	1.4%
Installation, Maint., & Repair Occs	232	208	216	3.8%
Production Occupations	1,446	1,676	2,066	23.3%
Transportation & Mat'l. Moving Occs	1,246	981	539	-45.1%
Military Specific Occupations	0	0	20	ND
Unknown	23	200	571	185.5%

Source: DEED Unemployment Insurance Initial Claims Characteristics

Industry Employment Statistics in Southwest Minnesota

Southwest Minnesota's economy has grown steadily over the last 27 years, according to data from the Minnesota Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, which tracks employment at firms that are reporting to the Unemployment Insurance program. From 1980 to 2007, Southwest Minnesota gained more than 18,000 net new covered jobs, a 33 percent rise. In comparison, the state of Minnesota added 977,801 net new covered jobs, a 57 percent increase. In 1980 Southwest Minnesota provided 3.2 percent of total statewide employment, but finished 2007 with 2.7 percent of statewide employment. However, the 72,936 covered jobs reported by business establishments in the region in 2007 was the highest number recorded, following a 2.7 percent increase over the last five years. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8. Employment Change, 1980-2007



Source: DEED QCEW Program

Southwest Minnesota's economy has performed steadily over the last three decades, responding to recessions with slight declines. During the 1980 to 1982 recessionary period, Southwest Minnesota lost 3,394 covered jobs, before recovering in 1983 and then suffering a significant slowdown in 1985 and 1986. After 1986, the Southwest region enjoyed 12 straight years of job growth, before a small job decline from 1998 to 1999 (less than 100 jobs total). The region also saw a small job decline from 2001 to 2003 during the recession, but the total job loss was less than 600 jobs over three years. Southwest Minnesota started growing again in 2004, albeit slowly; and despite the deepening state and national recession happening in 2008, through the third quarter of 2008 Southwest Minnesota had actually recorded a slight year-over-year job gain from 2007, adding 219 net new jobs. (See Table 13.)

Table 13: Industry Employment Statistics, 2007-2008					**Change from Qtr.3 2007-Qtr.3 2008**			
Industry Title	**Ownership Level**	**Number of Firms**	**Number of Jobs**	**Avg. Weekly Wage**	**Number of Firms**	**Number of Jobs**	**Number of Jobs**	**Avg. Weekly Wage**
Total, All Industries	All Ownerships	5,837	73,019	$569	79	219	0.3%	5.1%
Total, All Industries	*Government*	*702*	*14,487*	*$614*	*0*	*12*	*0.1%*	*2.9%*
Total, All Industries	*Private*	*5,135*	*58,532*	*$558*	*79*	*207*	*0.4%*	*5.8%*
Goods-Producing Domain	All Ownerships	1,198	18,975	$697	29	170	0.9%	6.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Hunt	All Ownerships	219	1,688	$504	11	29	1.7%	1.5%
Mining	All Ownerships	14	125	$791	0	2	1.6%	3.4%
Construction	All Ownerships	693	4,180	$775	14	79	1.9%	10.9%
Manufacturing	All Ownerships	272	12,981	$697	4	62	0.5%	4.8%
Service-Providing Domain	All Ownerships	4,639	54,043	$524	50	49	0.1%	4.6%
Utilities	All Ownerships	45	470	$1,029	-3	40	9.3%	20.5%
Wholesale Trade	All Ownerships	359	4,035	$773	-8	154	4.0%	10.3%
Retail Trade	Private	806	8,020	$373	3	-395	-4.7%	2.0%
Transportation & Warehouse	Private	309	2,100	$614	13	11	0.5%	1.4%
Information	All Ownerships	121	841	$554	-3	-27	-3.1%	6.6%
Finance & Insurance	All Ownerships	386	3,032	$759	2	26	0.9%	5.6%
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	Private	141	450	$349	-4	-68	-13.1%	18.8%
Professional & Technical Svc	Private	256	1,385	$724	11	89	6.9%	3.3%
Management of Companies	All Ownerships	15	1,270	$895	-1	90	7.6%	-11.6%
Admin. & Waste Services	Private	158	1,362	$488	-1	-24	-1.7%	-10.0%
Educational Services	All Ownerships	125	4,507	$656	1	47	1.1%	2.9%
Health Care & Social Asst.	All Ownerships	426	12,395	$504	6	90	0.7%	3.9%
Arts, Entertainment, & Rec.	Private	98	750	$180	2	-27	-3.5%	5.4%
Accommodation & Food Svc	Private	383	4,645	$175	19	-91	-1.9%	5.0%
Other Services, ex. Pub Adm	Private	468	2,225	$415	12	173	8.4%	19.0%
Public Administration	All Ownerships	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program								

Over the last year, the fastest growing industry in the region was utilities, which added 40 net new covered jobs, a 9.3 percent increase. Other services – which includes auto repair, hair salons, death care services, and religious, civic, and social organizations – saw the largest job increase, adding 173 net new jobs over the last year, an 8.4 percent rise. Wholesale trade – which in the region most notably includes farm supplies, chemicals, and petroleum – also gained more than 150 net new jobs, a 4.0 percent expansion. Health care and social assistance, management of companies, and professional and technical services all gained about 90 net new jobs, showing a positive shift in the region toward services providing jobs. Unlike many other regions in the state, Southwest Minnesota actually gained jobs in manufacturing (+62 net new jobs) and construction (+79 net new jobs) over the last year. In contrast, in response to the recession and tightening budgets retail trade (-395 jobs) and accommodation and food services (-91 jobs) saw the largest net job declines in the region from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. Real estate (-68 jobs), information (-27 jobs), administrative and waste services (-24 jobs), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (-27 jobs) also saw slight job declines.

Overall, through the third quarter of 2008, Southwest Minnesota was home to 5,837 business establishments with 73,019 covered jobs, paying out about $540 million in quarterly payroll. Despite the long-term national shift to services-providing jobs, more than one in four jobs in the region is still in traditional industries like agriculture, natural resources and mining, manufacturing, or construction. About 26 percent of total employment in the 14-county region was in the goods producing domain, which is 7.6 percent higher than the state concentration of goods producing jobs (18.4%). The region has a location quotient of 1.4 in the goods-producing domain, showing a significant concentration. The remaining 74 percent of jobs are in the services providing domain, with large amounts of employment in health care and social assistance, retail trade, educational services, and accommodation and food services, though the latter two have lower location quotients. (See Table 14.)

Table 14: Southwest Minnesota Industry Employment Statistics, 3rd Quarter 2008

Industry Title	Ownership Level	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total Jobs	Location Quotient (vs. MN)	Avg. Weekly Wage	Total Quarterly Payroll
Total, All Industries	All Ownerships	5,837	73,019	100.0%	1.0	$569	$540,084,349
Total, All Industries	*Government*	*702*	*14,487*	*19.8%*	1.4	*$614*	*$115,630,351*
Total, All Industries	*Private*	*5,135*	*58,532*	*80.2%*	3.2	*$558*	*$424,453,998*
Goods-Producing Domain	All Ownerships	1,198	18,975	26.0%	0.8	$697	$172,025,707
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	All Ownerships	219	1,688	2.3%	1.2	$504	$11,060,781
Mining	All Ownerships	14	125	0.2%	1.4	$791	$1,285,547
Construction	All Ownerships	693	4,180	5.7%	0.9	$775	$42,086,418
Manufacturing	All Ownerships	272	12,981	17.8%	1.2	$697	$117,592,961
Service-Providing Domain	All Ownerships	4,639	54,043	74.0%	1.1	$524	$368,058,642
Utilities	All Ownerships	45	470	0.6%	1.0	$1,029	$6,290,243
Wholesale Trade	All Ownerships	359	4,035	5.5%	1.0	$773	$40,522,249
Retail Trade	Private	806	8,020	11.0%	0.5	$373	$38,886,942
Transportation & Warehousing	Private	309	2,100	2.9%	0.8	$614	$16,773,637
Information	All Ownerships	121	841	1.2%	0.4	$554	$6,057,344
Finance & Insurance	All Ownerships	386	3,032	4.2%	0.4	$759	$29,930,270
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	Private	141	450	0.6%	0.7	$349	$2,043,234
Professional & Technical Svcs.	Private	256	1,385	1.9%	0.4	$724	$13,042,732
Management of Companies	All Ownerships	15	1,270	1.7%	0.9	$895	$14,777,895
Administrative & Waste Services	Private	158	1,362	1.9%	1.1	$488	$8,646,650
Educational Services	All Ownerships	125	4,507	6.2%	0.6	$656	$38,415,086
Health Care & Social Assistance	All Ownerships	426	12,395	17.0%	0.8	$504	$81,150,853
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	Private	98	750	1.0%	0.9	$180	$1,751,669
Accommodation & Food Services	Private	383	4,645	6.4%	1.0	$175	$10,597,341
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	Private	468	2,225	3.0%	1.4	$415	$11,996,317
Public Administration	All Ownerships	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND

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

Manufacturing is still the largest employing industry in the region, with 12,981 covered jobs, or 17.8 percent of total employment. Health care and social assistance followed closely with 12,395 jobs, or 17.0 percent of total jobs. The third largest employing industry is retail trade, with 8,020 covered jobs, or 11.0 percent. Together, these three industries account for nearly half (45.8%) of the jobs in the region. Accommodation and food services provides 4,645 jobs (6.4%), educational services offers 4,507 jobs (6.2%), construction has 4,180 jobs (5.7%), and wholesale trade supplies 4,035 jobs (5.5%); meaning those major industries account for nearly 70 percent of the jobs in the region. In comparison, those industries comprise about 63.2 percent of the state's employment. Manufacturing (12.6%), health care and social assistance (15.3%), and retail trade (10.9%) all have lower concentrations statewide than in Southwest Minnesota. The region also has higher concentrations of agriculture, construction, wholesale trade, and utilities employment. In contrast, the region has smaller concentrations than the state of information, finance and insurance, professional and technical services, management of companies and enterprises, and administrative and waste services employment.

Southwest Minnesota also has a higher percentage of public sector jobs. In Minnesota, about 12.9 percent of jobs are in government; in Southwest Minnesota, about 19.8 percent are in the public sector.

Based on average weekly wages, the highest paying industries in Southwest Minnesota include utilities ($1,029), management of companies and enterprises ($895), and mining ($791). However, these three industries are relatively small, providing just 2.5 percent of regional jobs combined. Construction ($775), wholesale trade ($773), finance and insurance ($759), and professional and technical services ($724), all pay high wages in the region as well, and provide a much larger portion of total employment. The lowest paying industries in the region include accommodation and food services ($175), arts, entertainment, and recreation ($180), and real estate ($349), although it should be noted that many of the jobs in these industries tend to be part-time, and rely more heavily on tips, gratuities, and commissions. Manufacturing ($697), the largest employing industry in the region, has higher-than-average wages compared to the total of all industries in the region ($569); while health care and social assistance has relatively low wages ($504), mostly due to low wages in nursing and residential care facilities.

Average weekly wages in the state of Minnesota were $862 in the third quarter of 2008, which was 51.5 percent higher than average weekly wages in the Southwest Minnesota region. Despite being relatively high paying industries in the region, average weekly wage gaps between the state of Minnesota and the Southwest region were largest in industries like mining ($791 vs. $1,430), construction ($775 vs. $1,002), manufacturing ($697 vs. $982), utilities ($1,029 vs. $1,452), wholesale trade ($773 vs. $1,298), finance and insurance ($759 vs. $1,353), professional and technical services ($724 vs. $1,364), and management of companies ($895 vs. $2,215). As detailed by the Salary Survey data in Table 11, wage gaps are significant between the region and the state, and more so for higher skilled occupations.

Fortunately, wages have been increasing in the region, and actually went up 5.1 percent from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008 ($541 to $569). Among industries, wages increased fastest in utilities (20.5%), other services (19.0%), and real estate (18.8%), although combined those industries provided only 4.2 percent of total employment in the region. Wages also jumped up in construction (10.9%) and wholesale trade (10.3%), which both provide more than 5.5 percent of total employment and are relatively high paying industries in the region. Only two industries saw wage declines over the last year, with wages in management of companies (-11.6%) and administrative and waste services (-10.0%) both suffering 10 percent declines from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. The remaining industry sectors all saw wage increases, ranging between one and six percent.

Distinguishing Industries in Southwest Minnesota

Southwest Minnesota has several notable, distinguishing industries, defined as those with a better-than-average share of statewide industry employment. With 73,019 jobs, the region has about 2.7 percent of total statewide employment through the third quarter of 2008. But Southwest Minnesota has nearly 30 percent of the state's employment in agricultural machinery manufacturing, almost 24 percent of the state's hog and pig farming jobs, and just under 23 percent of the Minnesota's animal slaughtering and processing employment. It is important to note that almost all of Southwest Minnesota's distinguishing industry sectors and subsectors are in the goods-producing domain – and they are mostly in manufacturing and agriculture-related specialties. (See Figure 9 and Figure 10.)

On the services providing side, Southwest Minnesota has a strong concentration of employment in government-owned hospitals (but not hospitals in general, when private employment is added in) and nursing care facilities, owing to the region's aging population. The region also has a high percentage of the state's merchant wholesalers in the areas of farm products and petroleum, both related to the region's agricultural foundation. That strength is further displayed by Southwest Minnesota's high concentration of food manufacturing, crop and animal production, chemical manufacturing (which includes ethanol and biodiesel production), and truck transportation. The region is also defined by high employment in hog and pig farming, animal slaughtering and processing, oilseed and grain farming, crop production support activities, and cattle ranching and farming.

Figure 9: Southwest Minnesota Distinguishing Industries, 2008

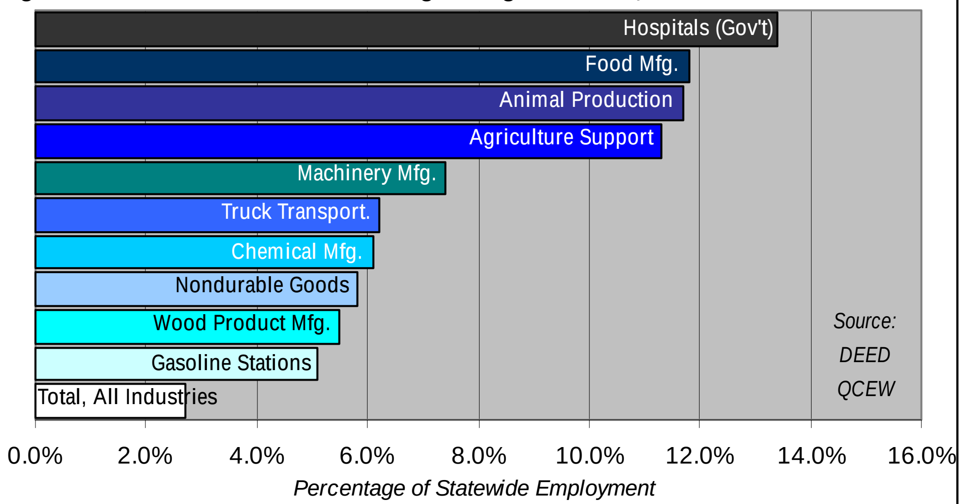
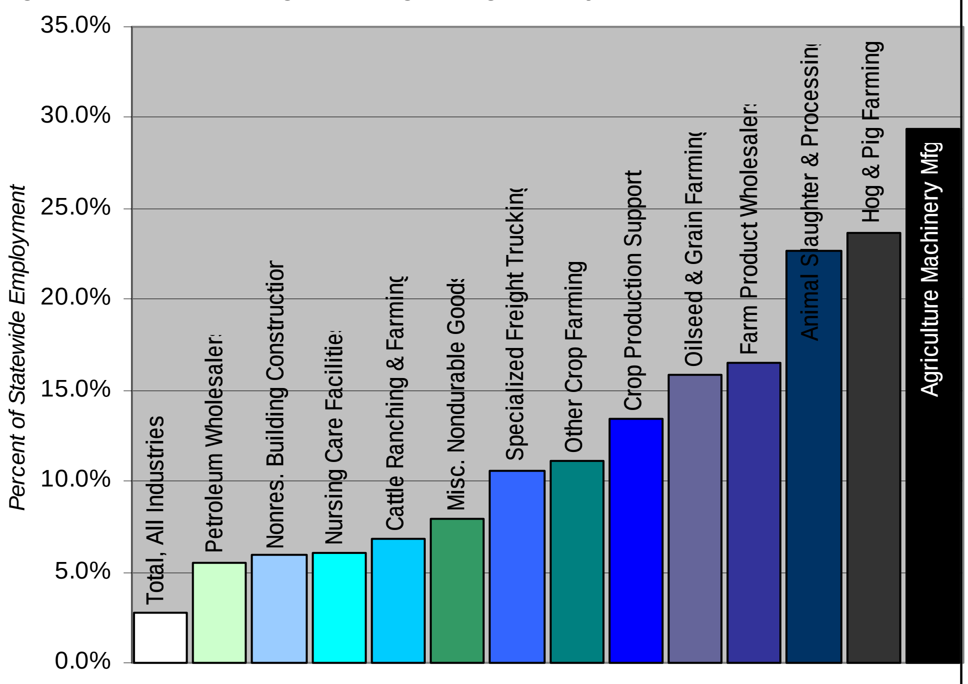


Figure 10: Southwest Region Distinguishing Industry Subsectors



Source: DEED QCEW Program

But just because an industry is considered "distinguishing" does not mean it is a large industry, a growing industry, or even a high-paying industry. For example, chemical manufacturing is a vital, growing component of the region's economy, but actually only provides 656 jobs in Southwest Minnesota, or 0.9 percent of total employment. But chemical manufacturing employment expanded 16.3 percent from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, placing it among the fastest growing industries in the region over the last year. In contrast, with 5,260 jobs food manufacturing is among the largest employing industry specialties in Southwest Minnesota, but it declined 0.2 percent from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. Of the top 10 industries detailed in Figure 9, half of them saw employment declines over the last year, with animal production, food manufacturing, wood product manufacturing, gasoline stations, and truck transportation all suffering small declines. The five industries that were growing, including agriculture support activities, chemical manufacturing, machinery manufacturing, merchant wholesalers of nondurable goods, and government-owned hospitals, all saw steady job increases. Average weekly wages in merchant wholesalers of nondurable goods was $763 through the third quarter of 2008, which was nearly $200 higher than the total of all industries in the region. Wages in chemical manufacturing and machinery manufacturing were also considerably higher than the total of all industries, while wages at gasoline stations were considerably lower.

Major Industries by Economic Development Region in Southwest Minnesota

Though there are many similarities, each economic development region in Southwest Minnesota has a slightly different industrial composition and has been experiencing different trends. Looking at each region separately allows a deeper understanding of what is happening in each region, and a better idea of where to put workforce/economic development efforts.

Region 6W

Region 6W – which is comprised of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties – had 1,648 business establishments with 18,892 covered jobs through the third quarter of 2008, which is the highest number of jobs reported in the region over the last 28 years. And since the third quarter of 2007, Region 6W actually added 78 net new covered jobs, a 0.4 percent increase. Average weekly wages were $567, which was a 5.8 percent gain over the last year, but still significantly lower than the state of Minnesota as a whole ($862). Nearly 25 percent of employment in the region was in the public sector, but all of the job growth occurred in the private sector. (See Table 15.)

Table 15: Industry Employment Statistics, Region 6W, 2007-2008						Change from 2007-2008		
Industry Title	Ownership Level	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs	Avg. Weekly Wage	Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs	Avg. Wage
Total, All Industries	All Ownerships	1,648	18,892	100.0%	$567	78	0.4%	5.8%
Total, All Industries	*Government*	*221*	*4,613*	*24.4%*	*$571*	*-11*	*-0.2%*	*1.6%*
Total, All Industries	*Private*	*1,427*	*14,279*	*75.6%*	*$565*	*89*	*0.6%*	*7.0%*
Goods-Producing Domain	All Ownerships	350	4,588	24.3%	$756	44	1.0%	8.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	All Ownerships	64	412	2.2%	$474	21	5.4%	-5.0%
Mining	All Ownerships	5	48	0.3%	$916	-15	-23.8%	5.2%
Construction	All Ownerships	191	1,484	7.9%	$877	132	9.8%	18.0%
Manufacturing	All Ownerships	90	2,643	14.0%	$730	-93	-3.4%	4.4%
Service-Providing Domain	All Ownerships	1,298	14,304	75.7%	$506	34	0.2%	4.3%
Utilities	All Ownerships	11	141	0.7%	$1,180	26	22.6%	70.8%
Wholesale Trade	All Ownerships	96	1,168	6.2%	$796	37	3.3%	10.4%
Retail Trade	Private	214	1,755	9.3%	$320	16	0.9%	3.6%
Transportation & Warehousing	Private	80	382	2.0%	$587	-2	-0.5%	-2.2%
Information	All Ownerships	33	198	1.0%	$414	0	0.0%	-2.1%
Finance & Insurance	Private	118	578	3.1%	$649	-29	-4.8%	2.2%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	Private	39	156	0.8%	$317	-43	-21.6%	16.5%
Professional & Technical Svcs..	Private	70	395	2.1%	$630	43	12.2%	-4.5%
Management of Companies	All Ownerships	6	43	0.2%	$721	-3	-6.5%	11.4%
Administrative & Waste Services	Private	46	628	3.3%	$547	-65	-9.4%	-13%
Educational Services	All Ownerships	41	1,293	6.8%	$594	-3	-0.2%	4.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	All Ownerships	110	3,863	20.4%	$502	82	2.2%	1.4%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	Private	24	131	0.7%	$182	-46	-26.0%	7.7%
Accommodation & Food Services	Private	106	981	5.2%	$169	0	0.0%	5.0%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	All Ownerships	134	644	3.4%	$365	29	4.7%	9.9%
Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program								

Health care and social assistance was easily the largest employing industry in Region 6W through the third quarter of 2008, with 3,863 jobs, or 20.4 percent of total jobs. That is 5 percent higher than the statewide concentration (15.3% of total jobs). The growing and aging population has created steady demand for health care services, making it one of the largest growing industries in the region over time.

Overall, health care and social assistance gained 82 jobs in Region 6W (2.2% growth), as compared to a 2.7 percent increase statewide. Reflecting the region's older population, nursing and residential care facilities is the largest specialty, with 1,328 jobs, although it actually lost 16 jobs from 2007 to 2008. There were six hospitals in the region, providing just under 1,200 jobs following a 22 job increase from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. Ambulatory health care services – which includes offices of physicians, dentists, chiropractors, and home health care services – was the next largest specialty with 429 jobs, after a 14 job gain over the last year.

Manufacturing was the next largest employing industry, with 2,643 jobs at 90 firms. Manufacturers in Region 6W cut 93 jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, a 3.4 percent decline. That was twice as fast of a decline as the state of Minnesota as a whole, which saw manufacturing employment decline 1.7 percent over the last year. The main manufacturing specialties in Region 6W include machinery manufacturing (14 firms, 570 jobs), fabricated metal product manufacturing (16 firms, 374 jobs), computer and electronic product manufacturing (4 firms, 257 jobs), plastics and rubber product manufacturing (3 firms, 135 jobs), and chemical manufacturing (3 firms, 97 jobs). All those specialties saw slight job losses from 2007 to 2008, except computer and electronic product manufacturing, which sliced employment by 15.7 percent.

Despite not having a regional employment center or a micropolitan statistical area in the region, retail trade was the third largest employing industry in Region 6W, with 1,755 jobs at 214 firms in the third quarter of 2008. In complete contrast to industry trends statewide, retail trade actually gained 16 jobs from 2007 to 2008. In Minnesota, retail trade lost more than 7,000 jobs over the last year. The largest retail specialties in Region 6W are food and beverage stores (446 jobs), gasoline stations (338 jobs), health and personal care stores (171 jobs), building material and supply stores (147 jobs), and motor vehicle and parts dealers (131 jobs), but each have had mixed results since 2007. Food and beverage stores, motor vehicle and parts dealers, and clothing and clothing accessories stores all saw job declines, while gasoline stations saw a slight uptick. Closely aligned and also holding steady in the region in spite of the statewide recession, accommodation and food services has 106 establishments providing 981 jobs in the third quarter of 2008. The industry held steady over the last year, with employment increasing 15 jobs at food services and drinking places but declining 15 jobs in accommodation.

Region 6W has considerable strength in the construction industry, with 1,484 jobs at 191 firms, or 7.9 percent of regional employment. In comparison, the state of Minnesota has about 4.8 percent of total employment in the construction industry. Statewide, construction employment has dipped by nearly 10,000 jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, amid a housing slowdown and high unemployment in the industry. Regionally, construction employment was up nearly 10 percent, or 132 net new jobs, over the last year. The growth was fueled by the construction of buildings specialty, and more specifically, the nonresidential building construction subsector, which was seeing tremendous growth due to the emerging renewable energy industry.

Wholesale trade is an important industry in the region as well, with 6.2 percent of total employment, or 1,168 jobs at 96 firms. Wholesale trade comprises 5.0 percent of statewide employment, and added 225 net new jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, a 0.2 percent increase. In region 6W, wholesale trade jobs jumped 3.3 percent over the last year, gaining 37 net new jobs – which was 16.4 percent of the statewide increase. The two largest specialties in the region are farm product merchant wholesalers (33 firms, 477 jobs) and miscellaneous nondurable goods merchant wholesalers (21 firms, 258 jobs).

Despite tight budgets, educational services was still a large employing industry in Region 6W, with 1,293 jobs at 41 establishments. While elementary and secondary schools were cutting jobs because of declining enrollments and tight budgets, post-secondary institutions saw a slight job increase and were seeing enrollment gains as unemployed workers went back for training.

Other notable industries in the region include other services (644 jobs), administrative and waste services (628 jobs), finance and insurance (578 jobs), agriculture (412 jobs), professional and technical services (395 jobs), and transportation and warehousing (382 jobs). Smaller industries include information (198 jobs), real estate (156 jobs), utilities (141 jobs), arts, entertainment and recreation (131 jobs), mining (48 jobs), and management of companies (43 jobs). For more detailed industry subsector employment information, see the appendix.

In addition to covered jobs, the region also has a high number of self-employed individuals. Through 2006, there were 3,323 non-employers in the region with combined sales receipts of $107.7 million. From 2005 to 2006, the region lost 121 non-employers, and sales receipts declined over the year. However, Big Stone and Yellow Medicine saw increases in the number of non-employers, while Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Swift County saw decreases in self-employment. (See Table 16.)

Table 16: Nonemployer Statistics, 2005-2006

	2006 Non-employers	2006 Sales Receipts (1000s)	Change 2005-2006
Big Stone Co.	377	$15,752	9
Chippewa Co.	935	$27,079	-61
Lac qui Parle	549	$18,973	-6
Swift Co.	683	$21,274	-73
Yellow Medicine	779	$24,623	10
Region 6W	3,323	$107,701	-121

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Nonemployer Statistics

Region 8

Region 8 – which is comprised of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock counties – had 4,189 business establishments with 54,127 covered jobs through the third quarter of 2008. Region 8 gained 141 net new covered jobs, a 0.3 percent increase. Average weekly wages were $570, which was a 5.0 percent gain over the last year, but significantly lower than the state of Minnesota as a whole ($862). Eighteen percent of employment in the region was in the public sector, which was about 5 percent higher than the state of Minnesota (12.9%). (See Table 17.)

Table 17: Industry Employment Statistics, Region 8, 2007-2008						Change from 2007-2008		
Industry Title	Ownership Level	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs	Avg. Weekly Wage	Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs	Avg. Wage
Total, All Industries	All Ownerships	4,189	54,127	100.0%	$570	141	0.3%	5.0%
Total, All Industries	*Government*	*481*	*9,874*	*18.2%*	*$634*	*23*	*0.2%*	*3.4%*
Total, All Industries	*Private*	*3,708*	*44,252*	*81.8%*	*$556*	*117*	*0.3%*	*5.5%*
Goods-Producing Domain	All Ownerships	848	14,387	26.6%	$679	126	0.9%	5.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	All Ownerships	155	1,276	2.4%	$514	8	0.6%	3.6%
Mining	All Ownerships	9	77	0.1%	$713	17	28.3%	9.2%
Construction	All Ownerships	502	2,696	5.0%	$718	-53	-1.9%	6.1%
Manufacturing	All Ownerships	182	10,338	19.1%	$688	155	1.5%	4.9%
Service-Providing Domain	All Ownerships	3,341	39,739	73.4%	$530	15	0.0%	4.7%
Utilities	All Ownerships	34	329	0.6%	$965	14	4.4%	5.6%
Wholesale Trade	All Ownerships	263	2,867	5.3%	$763	117	4.3%	10.3%
Retail Trade	All Ownerships	592	6,265	11.6%	$388	-411	-6.2%	2.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	All Ownerships	229	1,718	3.2%	$621	13	0.8%	2.3%
Information	All Ownerships	88	643	1.2%	$597	-27	-4.0%	8.9%
Finance & Insurance	All Ownerships	268	2,454	4.5%	$785	55	2.3%	6.1%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	All Ownerships	102	294	0.5%	$366	-25	-7.8%	19.2%
Professional & Technical Svcs.	Private	186	990	1.8%	$762	46	4.9%	6.3%
Management of Companies	All Ownerships	9	1,227	2.3%	$901	93	8.2%	-12%
Administrative & Waste Services	Private	112	734	1.4%	$438	41	5.9%	-4.2%
Educational Services	All Ownerships	84	3,214	5.9%	$680	50	1.6%	2.3%
Health Care & Social Assistance	All Ownerships	316	8,532	15.8%	$505	8	0.1%	5.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	Private	74	619	1.1%	$179	19	3.2%	4.7%
Accommodation & Food Services	Private	277	3,664	6.8%	$177	-91	-2.4%	4.7%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	All Ownerships	334	1,581	2.9%	$435	144	10.0%	22.2%

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

Manufacturing is the largest employing industry in Region 8, with 182 firms providing 10,338 jobs, which is 19.1 percent of total regional employment. That was 6.5 percent higher than the state concentration (12.6%). Manufacturers in Region 8 gained 155 jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, a 1.5 percent jump. That was in contrast to the state's 1.7 percent decline over the last year. The main manufacturing specialties in Region 8 include food manufacturing (36 firms, 4,600 jobs) and machinery manufacturing (14 firms, 1,935 jobs), both of which are strongly concentrated in Southwest Minnesota. Food manufacturing employment remained steady from 2007 to 2008, while machinery manufacturing gained 104 net new jobs, a 5.7 percent increase, from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. At $699 and $720, respectively, they were also among the higher paying industries in the region. Other notable manufacturing specialties include wood product manufacturing (16 firms, 728 jobs), furniture and related product manufacturing (13 firms, 568 jobs), chemical manufacturing (11 firms, 559 jobs), computer and electronic product manufacturing (5 firms, 547 jobs), fabricated metal product manufacturing (19 firms, 352 jobs), transportation equipment manufacturing (8 firms, 289 jobs), and printing and related activities (12 firms, 273 jobs). Despite large losses in the industry in other regions, computer and electronic product manufacturing actually expanded by 123 net new jobs over the last year (29.0% increase), while chemical manufacturing gained 93 jobs, a 20.0 percent jump.

Health care and social assistance is the next largest employing industry in Region 8 with 8,532 jobs, or 15.8 percent of total jobs, through the third quarter of 2008. Again, the region's growing and aging population has created steady demand for health care services. From the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, health care and social assistance added just 8 net new jobs, but since the third quarter of 2000, the industry is up a net gain of 1,178 jobs, a 16.0 percent increase. Reflecting the region's older population, nursing and residential care facilities is the largest specialty, with 3,408 covered jobs, though it lost 42 jobs from 2007 to 2008. Next, the region had a high number of ambulatory health care services (2,407 jobs), following a steady increase over the last eight years. Finally, the region also had 5 government-owned hospitals providing 1,302 jobs, which was a 73 job gain from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. Average weekly wages at hospitals were relatively high ($752), while wages at nursing and residential care facilities were relatively low ($370).

With micropolitan statistical areas located in Lyon County (Marshall) and Nobles County (Worthington), retail trade was the third largest employing industry in Region 8, with 6,265 jobs in the third quarter of 2008, or 11.6 percent of total jobs. However, in response to a slowing economy, retail trade lost -411 jobs from 2007 to 2008. The largest specialties are general merchandise stores (1,393 jobs) and food and beverage stores (1,366 jobs); with general merchandise stores losing jobs (-204 jobs) and food and beverage stores gaining jobs (+49 jobs) over the last year. Other large retail specialties include gasoline stations (875 jobs), motor vehicle and parts dealers (664 jobs), building and material supply stores (515 jobs), health and personal care stores (331 jobs), miscellaneous store retailers (256 jobs), and clothing stores (186 jobs). Closely aligned and also suffering job declines in the wake of the recession, accommodation and food services has 277 establishments providing 3,664 jobs in the third quarter of 2008. The industry has dropped 91 jobs over the last year, mainly at food services and drinking places.

Despite tight budgets, educational services was still a large employing industry in Region 8, with 3,214 jobs, after adding 50 jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008. Elementary and secondary schools (2,616 jobs) gained 26 jobs over the last year, while colleges and universities (391 jobs) added 16 jobs.

After years of holding steady, construction employment declined nearly 2.0 percent from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008 in Region 8, dropping to 2,696 jobs. Specialty trade contractors (1,295 jobs) – which includes carpenters, plumbers, electricians, masons, and so on – took the largest hit, losing 47 jobs over the last year as residential growth slowed. Construction of buildings (546 jobs) bucked the trend and gained 4 jobs from 2007 to 2008, while heavy and civil engineering construction (855 jobs) also sliced -10 jobs.

Wholesale trade is an important industry in the region as well, with 5.3 percent of total employment, or 2,867 jobs at 263 firms. In region 8, wholesale trade jobs jumped 4.3 percent over the last year, gaining 117 net new jobs – which was more than half of the net job increase statewide (+225 jobs). The three largest specialties in the region are farm product merchant wholesalers (66 firms, 704 jobs), grocery product merchant wholesalers (29 firms, 553 jobs), and miscellaneous nondurable goods merchant wholesalers (42 firms, 414 jobs).

The region also has a fair concentration of finance and insurance employment, with 2,454 jobs at 268 establishments. With average weekly wages of $785, it is one of the highest paying industries in the region, and has gained 227 net new jobs from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, a 10.2 percent rise. Management of companies and enterprises, which includes corporate headquarters, provided 1,227 jobs at 9 firms and an average weekly wage of $901. The highest paying industry in the region was utilities, at $965.

Other notable industries in the region include transportation and warehousing (229 firms, 1,718 jobs), other services (334 firms, 1,581 jobs), agriculture (155 firms, 1,276 jobs), professional and technical services (186 firms, 990 jobs), administrative and waste services (112 firms, 734 jobs), information (88 firms, 643 jobs), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (74 firms, 619 jobs). Of those, only information (-27 jobs) saw an employment decline from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008, with the others growing between 0 and 10 percent over the last year.

In addition to covered jobs, the region also has a high number of self-employed individuals, or "non-employers". According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, through 2006 there were 8,431 non-employers in the nine-county region with combined sales receipts of $315.9 million. From 2005 to 2006, the region lost 25 non-employers, but different counties saw very different changes. Lyon, Nobles, Pipestone, and Redwood saw decreases in the number of non-employers, while Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Murray, and Rock all saw increases in self-employment. Over the timeframe, the largest counties saw the largest declines in self-employment, but also had the largest number of nonemployers. The three counties of Lyon, Nobles, and Redwood had 48 percent of the self-employed individuals in the region. (See Table 18.)

Table 18: Nonemployer Statistics, 2005-2006

	2006 Non-employers	2006 Sales Receipts (1000s)	Change 2005-2006
Cottonwood	872	$36,426	98
Jackson Co.	797	$29,839	65
Lincoln Co.	503	$15,820	40
Lyon Co.	1,652	$58,726	-98
Murray Co.	721	$28,036	27
Nobles Co.	1,349	$48,450	-45
Pipestone Co.	738	$31,299	-48
Redwood Co.	1,079	$39,170	-86
Rock Co.	720	$28,171	22
Region 8	8,431	$315,937	-25

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Nonemployer Statistics

Occupations in Demand in Southwest Minnesota

Based on the number of current job vacancies, unemployment insurance claims, and future employment projections, DEED's Occupations in Demand (OID) dataset provides a listing of job opportunities in high demand now while also displaying the typical wage, long-term employment outlook, the typical training (or degree) required to work in a field, and information on related training programs offered around the state. This list is helpful to jobseekers that are looking for available employment in the region.

There were 104 occupations in demand that earned either 3, 4, or 5 stars in Region 6W, based on the OID tool's representation of how favorable current demand conditions are for an occupation relative to other occupations in the same region – occupations are rated using a combination of local labor market data, and then assigned an indicator from 'Five Stars' (more favorable current demand conditions) to 'One Star' (less favorable current demand conditions) – are spread across different sectors but well represented by the region's major industries. For example, nursing aides, registered nurses, and correctional officers and jailers are the top three occupations based on the consistent need for workers in these industries. Health care jobs occupy five of the top ten spots, while production occupations including welders, sewing machine operators, CNC machine tool operators, cabinetmakers and bench carpenters, and engineering managers are all ranked in the top 20 in region 6W. There are job opportunities for workers at any level of education, from short-term on-the-job training to master's and professional degrees. (See Table 19.)

Table 19: Occupations in Demand, 4th Quarter 2008, Region 6W

Rank	Job Title	Median Annual Wage	Planning Area Growth Rate	Planning Area Total Openings	Education and Training Requirements
1	Nursing Aides, Orderlies, & Attendants	$23,805	Average	974	Short-term on-the-job training
2	Registered Nurses	$54,727	Well Above Average	1,141	Associate degree
3	Correctional Officers & Jailers	$27,907	Average	152	Moderate-term on-the-job training
4	Licensed Practical & Licensed Voc. Nurses	$35,636	Below Average	617	Post secondary vocational training
5	Home Health Aides	$19,268	Well Above Average	1,112	Short-term on-the-job training
6	Cashiers	$16,352	Well Below Average	2,670	Short-term on-the-job training
7	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	$28,306	Below Average	370	Post secondary vocational training
8	Office Clerks, General	$21,739	Below Average	1,245	Short-term on-the-job training
9	Social and Human Service Assistants	$24,440	Well Above Average	312	Moderate-term on-the-job training
10	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	$32,718	Average	440	Post secondary vocational training
11	Physical Therapists	$59,869	Above Average	46	Master's degree
12	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Mfg.	$39,558	Average	435	Moderate-term on-the-job training
13	Sewing Machine Operators	$24,041	Below Average	28	Moderate-term on-the-job training
14	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators	$54,500	Average	85	Long-term on-the-job training
15	Accountants & Auditors	$46,735	Well Above Average	572	Bachelor's degree
16	First-Line Mgrs. of Transportation Workers	$36,044	Average	186	Work experience (in related occupation)
17	Cabinetmakers & Bench Carpenters	$34,978	Average	NA	Long-term on-the-job training
18	Engineering Managers	$91,284	Above Average	45	Bachelor's degree plus experience
19	Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services	$26,316	Below Average	169	Short-term on-the-job training
20	Janitors & Cleaners	$22,106	Above Average	NA	Short-term on-the-job training
21	Substance Abuse & Beh Disorder Counselors	$42,257	Well Above Average	39	Master's degree
22	Cost Estimators	$42,768	Above Average	115	Bachelor's degree
23	Medical Secretaries	$26,482	Average	111	Post secondary vocational training
24	General & Operations Managers	$60,852	Average	622	Bachelor's degree plus experience
25	Medical & Health Services Managers	$68,496	Above Average	108	Bachelor's degree plus experience
26	Separating, Filtering, Clarifying, Precipitating,	$30,470	Well Above Average	77	Moderate-term on-the-job training
27	Slaughterers & Meat Packers	$26,155	Well Above Average	328	Moderate-term on-the-job training
28	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	$27,746	Well Below Average	662	Moderate-term on-the-job training
29	First-Line Mgrs. of Mechanics, Installers	$48,421	Above Average	273	Work experience (in related occupation)
30	Human Resources Assistants	$30,048	Average	58	Short-term on-the-job training
31	Loan Officers	$64,641	Above Average	212	Bachelor's degree
32	Stationary Engineers & Boiler Operators	$40,391	Average	43	Long-term on-the-job training
33	Executive Secretaries & Administrative Assts.	$35,078	Below Average	224	Moderate-term on-the-job training
34	Network & Computer Systems Administrators	$43,849	Well Above Average	154	Bachelor's degree
35	Market Research Analysts	$87,362	Above Average	101	Bachelor's degree
36	Construction Managers	$86,436	Below Average	80	Bachelor's degree
37	Educational, Vocational & School Counselors	$43,599	Well Above Average	128	Master's degree
38	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	$37,573	Above Average	266	Long-term on-the-job training
39	Management Analysts	$79,575	Below Average	93	Bachelor's degree plus experience
40	Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors	$34,779	Well Below Average	30	Short-term on-the-job training
41	First-Line Mgrs. of Office and Admin Workers	$39,764	Below Average	371	Work experience (in related occupation)
42	Industrial Engineers	$52,675	Well Above Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
43	First-Line Mgrs. of Non-Retail Sales Workers	$57,562	Well Below Average	70	Work experience (in related occupation)
44	Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technologists	$42,645	Well Above Average	52	Bachelor's degree
45	Education Administrators, Elem. & Secondary	$76,022	Well Below Average	80	Bachelor's degree plus experience
46	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	$42,964	Well Below Average	40	Moderate-term on-the-job training
47	Bill and Account Collectors	$31,370	Above Average	55	Short-term on-the-job training
48	Compliance Officers, Except Ag., Const.	$55,897	Above Average	49	Long-term on-the-job training
49	First-Line Mgrs. of Construction Workers	$49,068	Average	235	Work experience (in related occupation)
50	Computer & Information Systems Managers	$114,629	Well Above Average	92	Bachelor's degree plus experience
51	Computer Systems Analysts	$74,889	Well Above Average	93	Bachelor's degree
52	Customer Service Representatives	$31,789	Well Above Average	708	Moderate-term on-the-job training
53	Computer Software Engineers, Sys. Software	$94,746	Well Above Average	53	Bachelor's degree
54	Pharmacy Technicians	$23,999	Well Above Average	94	Moderate-term on-the-job training
55	First-Line Mgrs. of Retail Sales Workers	$27,417	Well Below Average	410	Work experience (in related occupation)

56	Medical Assistants	$27,026	Well Above Average	179	Moderate-term on-the-job training
57	First-Line Mgrs. of Personal Service Workers	$27,505	Well Above Average	178	Work experience (in related occupation)
58	Secondary School Teachers	$46,407	Well Below Average	780	Bachelor's degree
59	Purchasing Agents	$41,540	Average	112	Bachelor's degree
60	Driver/Sales Workers	$20,079	Below Average	NA	Short-term on-the-job training
61	Vocational Education Teachers, Postsec.	$60,022	Well Below Average	NA	Master's degree
62	Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	$22,204	Below Average	127	Moderate-term on-the-job training
63	Medical Records & Health Info.Technicians	$28,476	Well Above Average	121	Associate degree
64	Mechanical Engineers	$57,964	Above Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
65	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists	$27,206	Below Average	251	Post secondary vocational training
66	Sales Managers	$120,612	Above Average	86	Bachelor's degree plus experience
67	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	$55,115	Well Above Average	93	Associate degree
68	Food Batchmakers	$26,460	Below Average	112	Short-term on-the-job training
69	Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria	$25,651	Well Below Average	250	Long-term on-the-job training
70	Computer Software Engineers, Applications	$84,661	Well Above Average	160	Bachelor's degree
71	Personal & Home Care Aides	$20,780	Well Above Average	1,771	Short-term on-the-job training
72	Clinical, Counseling, & School Psychologists	$49,482	Above Average	66	Master's degree
73	Cutting, Punching, & Press Machine Setters	$31,758	Well Below Average	NA	Moderate-term on-the-job training
74	Fire Fighters	$29,245	Above Average	NA	Long-term on-the-job training
75	Secretaries	$29,655	Well Below Average	170	Moderate-term on-the-job training
76	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	$30,899	Average	422	Long-term on-the-job training
77	Emergency Medical Techs & Paramedics	$23,639	Well Above Average	204	Post secondary vocational training
78	Food Service Managers	$41,508	Below Average	86	Work experience (in related occupation)
79	Interviewers, Except Eligibility and Loan	$29,965	Well Above Average	70	Short-term on-the-job training
80	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	$38,712	Well Above Average	NA	Associate degree
81	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	$26,323	Below Average	192	Short-term on-the-job training
82	Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	$28,277	Below Average	239	Short-term on-the-job training
83	Molding, Core & Casting Machine Setters	$28,666	Well Below Average	90	Moderate-term on-the-job training
84	Pharmacists	$109,839	Well Above Average	83	First professional degree
85	Industrial Production Managers	$71,010	Below Average	82	Bachelor's degree
86	First-Line Mgrs. of Housekeeping Cleaners	$35,936	Above Average	87	Work experience (in related occupation)
87	Administrative Services Managers	$79,523	Average	48	Bachelor's degree plus experience
88	First-Line Mgrs. of Food Prep. Workers	$24,442	Average	409	Work experience (in related occupation)
89	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	$40,218	Below Average	283	Long-term on-the-job training

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand (OID) tool, 4th Quarter 2008

Based on the number of current job vacancies, unemployment insurance claims, and future employment projections, there are also a large number of occupations in demand in Region 8. There were 169 occupations that earned either 3, 4, or 5 stars in Region 8. Again, several health care occupations are in demand including registered nurses, nursing aides, licensed practical nurses, home health aides, EMTs and paramedics, personal and home care aides, and physical therapists, among others. There are also a lot of job opportunities in production occupations, ranging from packers and packagers, slaughterers and meat packers, industrial machinery mechanics, and meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers. There are job opportunities for workers at any level of education, from short-term on-the-job training to master's and professional degrees. Most of the jobs requiring short-term on-the-job training tend to be lower paying, while jobs requiring post-secondary education tend to be higher paying. However, there are notable exceptions to both rules. (See Table 20.)

Table 20: Occupations in Demand, 4th Quarter 2008, Region 8

Rank	Job Title	Median Annual Wage	Planning Area Growth Rate	Planning Area Total Openings	Education and Training Requirements
1	Registered Nurses	$59,488	Well Above Avg.	1,141	Associate degree
2	Packers & Packagers, Hand	$15,406	Average	492	Short-term on-the-job training
3	Slaughterers & Meat Packers	$27,199	Above Average	328	Moderate-term on-the-job training
4	Cashiers	$16,176	Well Below Avg.	2,670	Short-term on-the-job training
5	Nursing Aides, Orderlies, & Attendants	$23,781	Average	974	Short-term on-the-job training
6	Licensed Practical & Licensed Voc. Nurses	$36,393	Average	617	Post secondary vocational training
7	Home Health Aides	$19,740	Well Above Avg.	1,112	Short-term on-the-job training
8	Office Clerks, General	$23,690	Below Average	1,245	Short-term on-the-job training
9	Construction Laborers	$28,482	Below Average	139	Moderate-term on-the-job training
10	Social & Human Service Assistants	$25,642	Well Above Avg.	312	Moderate-term on-the-job training
11	Executive Secretaries & Administrative Assts.	$36,832	Below Average	224	Moderate-term on-the-job training

12	Customer Service Representatives	$27,710	Above Average	708	Moderate-term on-the-job training
13	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, & Investigators	$47,482	Well Above Avg.	40	Long-term on-the-job training
14	Accountants & Auditors	$49,898	Above Average	572	Bachelor's degree
15	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Mfg.	$40,743	Average	435	Moderate-term on-the-job training
16	First-Line Mgrs. of Retail Sales Workers	$28,443	Below Average	410	Work experience (in related occupation)
17	Medical & Health Services Managers	$72,500	Above Average	108	Bachelor's degree plus experience
18	Financial Analysts	$56,489	Above Average	40	Bachelor's degree
19	Janitors & Cleaners	$21,161	Above Average	NA	Short-term on-the-job training
20	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	$31,578	Above Average	266	Long-term on-the-job training
21	Meat, Poultry, & Fish Cutters & Trimmers	$23,730	Well Above Avg.	305	Short-term on-the-job training
22	Financial Managers	$87,667	Above Average	158	Bachelor's degree plus experience
23	Retail Salespersons	$17,222	Average	2,719	Short-term on-the-job training
24	Driver/Sales Workers	$18,433	Below Average	NA	Short-term on-the-job training
25	Farmworkers, Farm & Ranch Animals	$23,375	Below Average	84	Moderate-term on-the-job training
26	Network Systems & Data Comm. Analysts	$89,204	Well Above Avg.	85	Bachelor's degree
27	Chemists	$66,530	Well Below Avg.	NA	Bachelor's degree
28	Purchasing Agents	$49,281	Average	112	Bachelor's degree
29	Securities, Comm., & Financial Salespersons	$54,687	Above Average	47	Bachelor's degree
30	First-Line Mgrs. of Personal Service Workers	$33,700	Well Above Avg.	178	Work experience (in related occupation)
31	Correctional Officers & Jailers	$39,264	Average	152	Moderate-term on-the-job training
32	Physical Therapists	$67,674	Above Average	46	Master's degree
33	Truck Drivers, Heavy & Tractor-Trailer	$34,563	Above Average	1,312	Moderate-term on-the-job training
34	Management Analysts	$79,575	Average	93	Bachelor's degree plus experience
35	Medical Secretaries	$26,697	Average	111	Post secondary vocational training
36	Electrical & Electronic Equipment Assemblers	$21,649	Well Below Avg.	230	Short-term on-the-job training
37	Industrial Engineers	$62,336	Well Above Avg.	NA	Bachelor's degree
38	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	$36,395	Well Below Avg.	40	Moderate-term on-the-job training
39	Network & Computer Systems Administrators	$58,189	Well Above Avg.	154	Bachelor's degree
40	Counter & Rental Clerks	$15,650	Average	263	Short-term on-the-job training
41	Property, Real Estate & Community Mgrs.	$35,286	Well Below Avg.	62	Bachelor's degree
42	First-Line Mgrs. of Transportation Workers	$42,076	Average	186	Work experience (in related occupation)
43	Marketing Managers	$106,201	Well Above Avg.	61	Bachelor's degree plus experience
44	First-Line Mgrs. of Mechanics, Installers	$49,980	Above Average	273	Work experience (in related occupation)
45	Computer Systems Analysts	$70,390	Well Above Avg.	93	Bachelor's degree
46	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	$46,021	Well Above Avg.	93	Associate degree
47	Bill & Account Collectors	$27,809	Above Average	55	Short-term on-the-job training
48	Agricultural & Food Science Technicians	$43,068	Well Above Avg.	69	Associate degree
49	Surgical Technologists	$35,541	Well Above Avg.	32	Post secondary vocational training
50	Loan Officers	$55,622	Above Average	212	Bachelor's degree
51	Market Research Analysts	$58,625	Above Average	101	Bachelor's degree
52	Compliance Officers, Except Ag., Const.	$57,233	Above Average	49	Long-term on-the-job training
53	Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians	$38,777	Well Above Avg.	NA	Associate degree
54	Cleaners of Vehicles & Equipment	$22,906	Average	297	Short-term on-the-job training
55	General & Operations Managers	$65,508	Average	622	Bachelor's degree plus experience
56	Computer & Information Systems Managers	$89,583	Well Above Avg.	92	Bachelor's degree plus experience
57	Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technologists	$48,758	Well Above Avg.	52	Bachelor's degree
58	Training & Development Specialists	$39,438	Well Below Avg.	20	Bachelor's degree
59	Personal & Home Care Aides	$27,848	Well Above Avg.	1,771	Short-term on-the-job training
60	Mechanical Engineers	$64,853	Above Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
61	Electrical Engineers	$69,332	Above Average	49	Bachelor's degree
62	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators	$33,472	Average	85	Long-term on-the-job training
63	Cooling &Freezing Equipment Operators	$29,411	Average	26	Moderate-term on-the-job training
64	Education Administrators, Elem & Secondary	$68,368	Well Below Avg.	80	Bachelor's degree plus experience
65	Machinists	$28,161	Average	120	Long-term on-the-job training
66	Natural Sciences Managers	$86,965	Above Average	18	Bachelor's degree plus experience
67	Dental Assistants	$40,809	Well Above Avg.	NA	Moderate-term on-the-job training
68	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Mfg.	$79,082	Above Average	82	Moderate-term on-the-job training
69	Pharmacy Technicians	$26,473	Well Above Avg.	94	Moderate-term on-the-job training
70	First-Line Mgrs. of Police & Detectives	$68,668	Below Average	67	Work experience (in related occupation)
71	Civil Engineers	$73,043	Above Average	51	Bachelor's degree
72	First-Line Mgrs. of Office & Admin. Workers	$36,977	Below Average	371	Work experience (in related occupation)
73	Computer Software Engineers, Applications	$61,157	Well Above Avg.	160	Bachelor's degree
74	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics	$39,859	Above Average	76	Post secondary vocational training
75	Engineering Managers	$79,361	Above Average	45	Bachelor's degree plus experience
76	Wholesale & Retail Buyers	$44,972	Below Average	48	Bachelor's degree
77	Laundry & Dry-Cleaning Workers	$22,869	Below Average	127	Moderate-term on-the-job training
78	First-Line Mgrs. of Food Preparation Workers	$25,532	Average	409	Work experience (in related occupation)

79	Agricultural Equipment Operators	$29,228	Below Average	36	Moderate-term on-the-job training
80	Food Batchmakers	$30,157	Below Average	112	Short-term on-the-job training
81	Administrative Services Managers	$63,702	Average	48	Bachelor's degree plus experience
82	Loan Interviewers & Clerks	$31,815	Average	51	Short-term on-the-job training
83	Surgeons	NA	Well Above Avg.	9	First professional degree
84	Tellers	$23,007	Above Average	746	Short-term on-the-job training
85	Computer Software Engineers, Sys. Software	$94,746	Well Above Avg.	53	Bachelor's degree
86	Family & General Practitioners	NA	Well Above Avg.	117	First professional degree
87	Cabinetmakers & Bench Carpenters	$27,963	Average	NA	Long-term on-the-job training
88	Stationary Engineers & Boiler Operators	$51,741	Average	43	Long-term on-the-job training
89	Insurance Sales Agents	$37,579	Well Above Avg.	317	Bachelor's degree
90	First-Line Mgrs. of Non-Retail Sales Workers	$59,827	Well Below Avg.	70	Work experience (in related occupation)
91	Compensation, Benefits, Job Specialists	$44,332	Well Above Avg.	18	Bachelor's degree
92	Substance Abuse & Beh Disorder Counselors	$31,392	Well Above Avg.	39	Master's degree
93	Dispatchers, exc. Police, Fire, & Ambulance	$44,206	Well Below Avg.	41	Moderate-term on-the-job training
94	Legal Secretaries	$32,517	Average	26	Post secondary vocational training
95	Conservation Scientists	$66,786	Below Average	21	Bachelor's degree
96	Emergency Medical Techs & Paramedics	$26,823	Well Above Avg.	204	Post secondary vocational training
97	Occupational Therapists	$57,097	Above Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
98	Shipping, Receiving, & Traffic Clerks	$27,587	Below Average	239	Short-term on-the-job training
99	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists	$20,966	Below Average	251	Post secondary vocational training
100	Database Administrators	$71,541	Well Above Avg.	NA	Bachelor's degree
101	Probation Officers & Correctional Spec.	$63,067	Below Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
102	Nursing Instructors & Teachers, Postsec.	$62,826	Well Above Avg.	NA	Master's degree
103	Environmental Scientists & Specialists	$62,797	Average	12	Bachelor's degree
104	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	$63,747	Well Above Avg.	NA	Doctor's degree
105	Dentists, General	NA	Below Average	36	First professional degree
106	Tax Examiners, Collect, & Revenue Agents	$56,220	Below Average	NA	Bachelor's degree
107	Biological Technicians	$42,472	Below Average	1	Associate degree
108	Medical Equipment Preparers	$31,763	Above Average	15	Short-term on-the-job training
109	Conveyor Operators & Tenders	$25,221	Average	24	Short-term on-the-job training
110	Home Appliance Repairers	$48,744	Below Average	33	Long-term on-the-job training
111	Computer, ATM & Office Mach. Repairers	$39,566	Well Above Avg.	58	Post secondary vocational training
112	Electrical & Electronic Engineering Techs	$38,533	Well Below Avg.	40	Associate degree
113	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repair	$53,003	Average	97	Long-term on-the-job training
114	Educational, Vocational, & School Counselors	$47,649	Above Average	128	Master's degree
115	Rehabilitation Counselors	$39,294	Well Above Avg.	50	Master's degree
116	Cost Estimators	$32,307	Above Average	115	Bachelor's degree
117	Instructional Coordinators	$59,787	Below Average	13	Master's degree
118	Food Service Managers	$35,423	Average	86	Work experience (in related occupation)
119	Food Roasting & Baking Machine Operators	$25,409	Average	42	Short-term on-the-job training
120	Construction & Building Inspectors	$43,523	Average	16	Work experience (in related occupation)
121	Coating, Paint & Spraying Machine Setters	$29,215	Below Average	NA	Moderate-term on-the-job training
122	Medical Transcriptionists	$29,588	Well Above Avg.	108	Post secondary vocational training
123	Social & Community Service Managers	$63,346	Well Above Avg.	67	Bachelor's degree
124	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	$26,952	Below Average	662	Moderate-term on-the-job training
125	Refuse & Recyclable Material Collectors	$30,967	Well Below Avg.	30	Short-term on-the-job training
126	Advertising Sales Agents	$31,010	Well Below Avg.	60	Moderate-term on-the-job training
127	Mental Health Counselors	$42,989	Above Average	32	Master's degree
128	Separating, Filtering, Machine Operators	$33,464	Well Above Avg.	77	Moderate-term on-the-job training
129	Forest & Conservation Technicians	$34,927	Average	14	Associate degree
130	Molding, Core, & Casting Machine Setters	$33,008	Well Below Avg.	90	Moderate-term on-the-job training
131	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	$55,902	Well Below Avg.	60	Long-term on-the-job training
132	Clinical, Counseling, & School Psychologists	$50,780	Above Average	66	Master's degree
133	Vocational Education Teachers, Postsec.	$60,022	Well Below Avg.	NA	Master's degree
134	Mental Health & Subs. Abuse Social Workers	$41,602	Average	29	Master's degree
135	First-Line Mgrs. of Helpers, Laborers	$36,080	Average	85	Work experience (in related occupation)
136	Appraisers & Assessors of Real Estate	$41,149	Well Below Avg.	40	Post secondary vocational training
137	Interviewers, Except Eligibility & Loan	$25,435	Above Average	70	Short-term on-the-job training
138	Pharmacists	$91,242	Well Above Avg.	83	First professional degree
139	Medical Assistants	$22,084	Well Above Avg.	179	Moderate-term on-the-job training
140	Employment, Recruit & Placement Specialists	$41,681	Well Above Avg.	26	Bachelor's degree
141	Opticians, Dispensing	$24,442	Average	28	Long-term on-the-job training
142	Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria	$23,540	Well Below Avg.	250	Long-term on-the-job training
143	Purchasing Managers	$91,487	Average	27	Bachelor's degree plus experience
144	File Clerks	$23,129	Well Below Avg.	40	Short-term on-the-job training
145	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	$31,619	Average	440	Post secondary vocational training

146	Bakers	$20,551	Above Average	85	Long-term on-the-job training
147	Computer Programmers	$55,686	Below Average	74	Bachelor's degree
148	Fire Fighters	$29,245	Above Average	NA	Long-term on-the-job training
149	Automotive Body & Related Repairers	$30,617	Below Average	NA	Long-term on-the-job training
150	Medical Records & Health Info. Technicians	$34,049	Well Above Avg.	121	Associate degree
151	Industrial Production Managers	$74,698	Average	82	Bachelor's degree
152	Dental Hygienists	$62,176	Well Above Avg.	118	Associate degree
153	Paralegals & Legal Assistants	$51,661	Well Above Avg.	31	Associate degree
154	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers	$29,714	Average	260	Moderate-term on-the-job training
155	Mechanical Drafters	$42,405	Below Average	NA	Post secondary vocational training
156	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	$30,983	Average	422	Long-term on-the-job training
157	Public Relations Specialists	$33,717	Average	30	Bachelor's degree
158	First-Line Mgrs. of Construction Workers	$51,244	Average	235	Work experience (in related occupation)
159	Biological Science Teachers, Postsecondary	$55,262	Well Above Avg.	22	Master's degree
160	Cooks, Short Order	$18,871	Well Below Avg.	NA	Short-term on-the-job training
161	Crushing, Grind, & Polishing Machine Setters	$29,834	Above Average	100	Moderate-term on-the-job training
162	Child, Family, & School Social Workers	$46,158	Below Average	69	Bachelor's degree
163	Lawyers	$64,789	Below Average	NA	First professional degree
164	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	$45,206	Below Average	283	Long-term on-the-job training
165	Computer Support Specialists	$38,809	Above Average	83	Associate degree
166	Taxi Drivers & Chauffeurs	$23,605	Average	44	Short-term on-the-job training
167	Construction Managers	$48,642	Below Average	80	Bachelor's degree
168	Business Teachers, Postsecondary	$57,480	Well Above Avg.	NA	Master's degree
169	Speech-Language Pathologists	$48,043	Well Below Avg.	30	Master's degree
Source: DEED Occupations in Demand (OID) tool, 4th Quarter 2008					

Workforce Demographics in Southwest Minnesota

As described above, Southwest Minnesota is home to an older population. Because of its demographic composition, the region has a higher percentage of its workforce in the older age groups. However, Southwest Minnesota also has a higher percentage of workers in the younger age groups than the rest of the state, with the middle age groups being a smaller percentage. Interestingly, the region also has a higher percentage of females in the workforce that the state. (See Table 21.)

Table 21: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 1st Qtr. 2007 - 1st Qtr. 2008
Total, All Industries

	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota		
	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate
Total	76,769	100.0%	9.7%	2,659,297	100.0%	9.6%
14-18 years	4,101	5.3%	21.4%	107,546	4.0%	23.8%
19-21 years	4,573	6.0%	22.4%	147,691	5.6%	22.1%
22-24 years	4,978	6.5%	16.5%	179,132	6.7%	17.2%
25-34 years	14,903	19.4%	10.9%	576,069	21.7%	10.9%
35-44 years	15,068	19.6%	8.1%	583,977	22.0%	7.7%
45-54 years	18,137	23.6%	6.2%	625,396	23.5%	6.1%
55-64 years	11,219	14.6%	6.1%	349,500	13.1%	6.1%
65-99 years	3,787	4.9%	9.4%	89,984	3.4%	9.2%
Male	35,614	46.4%	10.0%	1,307,960	49.2%	9.6%
Female	41,155	53.6%	9.5%	1,351,336	50.8%	9.6%

Source: LEHD Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Overall, 19.5 percent of Southwest Minnesota's workforce is aged between 55 years and over, as compared to 16.5 percent statewide. About 5 percent of the workforce was aged 65 years and over, meaning one in every 20 workers in the region had reached retirement age but was still in the labor force. In contrast, just 11.3 percent of the workforce is 21 years or younger, as compared to 9.6 percent in Minnesota. Another 6.5 percent were aged 22 to 24 years, meaning about 18 percent of the regional workforce could be considered new entrants, including those graduating from high school or post-secondary institutions.

The largest portion of the workforce in the region and the state is aged 25 to 54 years. Southwest Minnesota's workforce has a much smaller concentration of middle aged workers than the state (62.6% in Southwest vs. 67.2% in Minnesota), especially from 25 to 44 years. Southwest Minnesota had very similar turnover rates to the state, with the highest turnover rates in the younger age groups and the lowest turnover rates in the 45 to 64 year old age groups. Just over 53.6 percent of the Southwest Minnesota workforce is female, compared to 50.8 percent statewide.

In manufacturing, the workforce is predominantly male (69.2%), and is less reliant on younger workers (13.5% is 14 to 24), though Southwest actually has a higher percentage of young workers than the rest of the state. However, as might be expected, turnover rates are much higher for younger age groups, as entry-level workers grow up and change jobs. Interestingly, the industry has a smaller reliance on older workers. (See Table 22.)

In health care and social assistance, the workforce was over 84 percent female, and about 20 percent was in the 14 to 24 year age group (as compared to 13.5% statewide). In contrast, 19.5 percent of workers were 55 years and over, meaning retirement is a significant future issue for the industry.

Not surprisingly, retail trade had a large component of young adult workers, with nearly 27.5 percent of the workforce aged 14 to 24 years (31.9% in the state). Turnover was 12.6 percent in the industry, and was higher for younger workers. Accommodation and food services relied even more heavily on young workers, with just over half of all workers aged 14 to 24 years in the region (44.7% in the state). Again, turnover rates were relatively high, especially for younger workers. Both industries had more females than males in the workforce.

Table 22: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 1st Qtr. 2007 - 1st Qtr. 2008

	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota		
Manufacturing	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate
Total	11,815	100.0%	8.5%	337,233	100.0%	6.5%
14-18 years	156	1.3%	23.8%	3,086	0.9%	22.6%
19-21 years	556	4.7%	20.1%	10,488	3.1%	19.0%
22-24 years	885	7.5%	14.7%	16,694	5.0%	12.8%
25-34 years	3,038	25.7%	10.1%	67,553	20.0%	8.1%
35-44 years	2,787	23.6%	7.5%	85,956	25.5%	5.8%
45-54 years	2,765	23.4%	5.2%	97,303	28.9%	4.6%
55-64 years	1,398	11.8%	4.9%	48,419	14.4%	4.3%
65-99 years	227	1.9%	8.5%	7,733	2.3%	7.3%
Male	8,174	69.2%	8.5%	234,962	69.7%	6.2%
Female	3,641	30.8%	8.4%	102,270	30.3%	7.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance						
	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota		
	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate
Total	17,057	100.0%	9.0%	390,827	100.0%	8.0%
14-18 years	600	3.5%	18.8%	7,679	2.0%	20.1%
19-21 years	1,301	7.6%	19.7%	18,037	4.6%	19.2%
22-24 years	1,494	8.8%	14.5%	27,038	6.9%	15.0%
25-34 years	3,482	20.4%	9.7%	88,091	22.5%	9.6%
35-44 years	2,929	17.2%	7.4%	84,639	21.7%	6.8%
45-54 years	3,922	23.0%	6.0%	96,778	24.8%	5.2%
55-64 years	2,464	14.4%	5.3%	55,557	14.2%	4.7%
65-99 years	862	5.1%	6.6%	13,006	3.3%	6.8%
Male	2,685	15.7%	9.1%	79,047	20.2%	7.9%
Female	14,372	84.3%	8.9%	311,780	79.8%	8.0%
Retail Trade						
	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota		
	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate
Total	9,422	100.0%	12.6%	302,294	100.0%	12.6%
14-18 years	1,216	12.9%	20.0%	31,483	10.4%	23.1%
19-21 years	811	8.6%	24.3%	36,144	12.0%	21.3%
22-24 years	569	6.0%	19.3%	28,824	9.5%	17.1%
25-34 years	1,521	16.1%	14.2%	57,338	19.0%	12.5%
35-44 years	1,658	17.6%	10.7%	48,061	15.9%	9.5%
45-54 years	1,910	20.3%	8.3%	53,177	17.6%	7.9%
55-64 years	1,140	12.1%	7.6%	33,141	11.0%	7.3%
65-99 years	594	6.3%	7.2%	14,122	4.7%	8.2%
Male	4,403	46.7%	12.8%	144,058	47.7%	12.1%
Female	5,019	53.3%	12.5%	158,236	52.3%	13.0%
Accommodation & Food Services						
	Southwest Minnesota			Minnesota		
	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate	Number of Workers	Percent of Workers	Turnover Rate
Total	4,322	100.0%	17.8%	204,824	100.0%	16.7%
14-18 years	1,159	26.8%	22.6%	35,848	17.5%	24.2%
19-21 years	614	14.2%	25.8%	30,501	14.9%	22.7%
22-24 years	394	9.1%	23.7%	25,113	12.3%	19.5%
25-34 years	660	15.3%	17.2%	45,139	22.0%	15.4%
35-44 years	524	12.1%	14.6%	28,460	13.9%	12.2%
45-54 years	529	12.2%	10.7%	22,906	11.2%	10.2%
55-64 years	283	6.5%	8.1%	10,865	5.3%	9.4%
65-99 years	156	3.6%	6.1%	5,989	2.9%	11.4%
Male	1,398	32.3%	19.2%	88,065	43.0%	16.9%
Female	2,924	67.7%	17.2%	116,759	57.0%	16.5%

In almost complete contrast, educational services relies almost entirely on older workers, with nearly 60 percent of the workforce aged 45 years and over. The small number of younger workers is related to the educational requirements – many of the jobs in the industry require a four-year degree. This industry had been gearing up for retirements, although the recent recession has slowed that transition of older workers out of the industry.

Wholesale trade has similar demographics, with 48.2 percent of the workforce aged 45 years and over, including over 20 percent that are 55 years and over. Depending on the economy and the industry's ability to recruit younger workers, retirements will be an issue in the next ten years.

The region's construction firms pull a lot of younger workers, with 17.6 percent of the workforce (12.9% in the state), and a lot of older workers, with 16.2 percent of the workforce (12.4% in the state); but are missing the middle aged workers.

Educational Services						
	Southwest Minnesota			**Minnesota**		
	Number of Workers	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**	**Number of Workers**	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**
Total	6,374	100.0%	8.4%	219,453	100.0%	7.7%
14-18 years	36	0.6%	38.3%	2,025	0.9%	28.0%
19-21 years	48	0.8%	31.0%	3,304	1.5%	27.6%
22-24 years	153	2.4%	22.3%	7,447	3.4%	21.4%
25-34 years	969	15.2%	10.1%	40,298	18.4%	9.9%
35-44 years	1,416	22.2%	7.2%	50,436	23.0%	6.8%
45-54 years	1,903	29.9%	5.6%	62,708	28.6%	5.1%
55-64 years	1,487	23.3%	7.6%	44,652	20.3%	6.1%
65-99 years	358	5.6%	21.4%	8,580	3.9%	12.2%
Male	1,825	28.6%	7.9%	69,902	31.9%	7.8%
Female	4,548	71.4%	8.6%	149,551	68.1%	7.6%
Construction						
	Southwest Minnesota			**Minnesota**		
	Number of Workers	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**	**Number of Workers**	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**
Total	3,705	100.0%	15.1%	122,973	100.0%	12.2%
14-18 years	89	2.4%	30.8%	1,631	1.3%	25.2%
19-21 years	245	6.6%	22.9%	5,353	4.4%	23.1%
22-24 years	318	8.6%	20.7%	8,799	7.2%	18.0%
25-34 years	870	23.5%	16.2%	32,888	26.7%	13.2%
35-44 years	738	19.9%	14.7%	29,505	24.0%	10.7%
45-54 years	841	22.7%	11.3%	29,594	24.1%	9.6%
55-64 years	472	12.7%	12.1%	12,881	10.5%	10.3%
65-99 years	131	3.5%	16.4%	2,320	1.9%	14.6%
Male	3,236	87.3%	16.0%	107,024	87.0%	12.6%
Female	469	12.7%	9.3%	15,949	13.0%	9.5%
Wholesale Trade						
	Southwest Minnesota			**Minnesota**		
	Number of Workers	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**	**Number of Workers**	**Percent of Workers**	**Turnover Rate**
Total	4,877	100.0%	6.6%	134,856	100.0%	7.5%
14-18 years	178	3.6%	22.8%	2,115	1.6%	23.5%
19-21 years	179	3.7%	18.8%	3,935	2.9%	19.7%
22-24 years	253	5.2%	12.4%	6,341	4.7%	14.1%
25-34 years	827	17.0%	7.2%	28,688	21.3%	9.0%
35-44 years	1,087	22.3%	5.1%	34,988	25.9%	6.5%
45-54 years	1,370	28.1%	4.4%	36,033	26.7%	5.4%
55-64 years	755	15.5%	4.4%	18,142	13.5%	5.2%
65-99 years	226	4.6%	9.4%	4,612	3.4%	7.4%
Male	3,754	77.0%	6.6%	93,262	69.2%	7.2%
Female	1,123	23.0%	6.9%	41,594	30.8%	8.1%
Source: LEHD Quarterly Workforce Indicators						

Educational Attainment

Without much new growth (or projected future growth) in the labor force, retraining of the current workforce becomes much more important. With far fewer new entrants into the labor force, the region has a void for entry-level workers, but a stable and available pool of experienced, older workers. While these workers are often more loyal and hard-working, they are not necessarily more skilled or educated, and they may need re-training to compete in a global economy. While there is no exact measure, educational attainment can be used as a proxy for employee skill levels and trainability. Southwest Minnesota lags the rest of the state in most measures of educational attainment, with fewer workers having associate's, bachelor's, or

Table 23: Educational Attainment, 2000			
	Southwest Minnesota	**Minnesota**	**United States**
High School or less	55.7%	40.9%	48.2%
Some college, no degree	22.6%	24.0%	21.0%
Assoc degree	6.9%	7.7%	6.3%
Bachelor's degree	11.2%	19.1%	15.5%
Grad/Prof. degree	3.5%	8.3%	8.9%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

advanced degrees than the state as a whole. Just under 56 percent of the population aged 25 years and over in Southwest Minnesota stopped with a high school diploma or less; which may sound high, especially compared to the state benchmark of 40.9 percent. (See Table 23.)

By looking more closely, however, a different picture emerges. Much like the participation rates, the attainment rates are skewed by the region's large elderly population, which did not have the same educational opportunities as today's workers. Comparing attainment among age groups is more useful.

For example, in the 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 year old age groups, Southwest Minnesota actually had higher percentages of residents with at least some college or with an associate degree than the state and the nation. This points to the strength of the region's community and technical college system. But the region still has a significantly lower percentage of people with bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees, as well as a slightly higher percentage of people with a high school diploma or lower. (See Table 24.)

Table 24: Educational Attainment by Age Group, 2000

	United States	Minnesota	Southwest Region
Total Population	209,279,149	3,632,940	128,038
25 to 34 years:			
Less than High School	16.1%	7.6%	10.0%
High School Graduate	25.8%	20.7%	25.3%
Some college, no degree	23.1%	26.5%	28.6%
Associate degree	7.5%	10.7%	13.6%
Bachelor's degree	20.3%	27.4%	19.2%
Grad or professional degree	7.2%	7.1%	3.4%
35 to 44 years:			
Less than High School	15.0%	6.8%	8.0%
High School Graduate	28.5%	27.4%	34.9%
Some college, no degree	22.6%	26.3%	30.4%
Associate degree	8.1%	10.0%	10.3%
Bachelor's degree	17.2%	21.1%	12.5%
Grad or professional degree	8.7%	8.4%	3.9%
45 to 64 years:			
Less than High School	16.8%	8.2%	10.6%
High School Graduate	28.7%	31.3%	42.1%
Some college, no degree	21.7%	24.9%	23.8%
Associate degree	6.4%	6.9%	6.2%
Bachelor's degree	15.0%	18.0%	12.6%
Grad or professional degree	11.4%	10.7%	4.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Updated data on educational attainment is available through 2007, but only for counties with at least 20,000 in population. Lyon and Nobles are the only counties in the region that meet that criteria, and both are home to post-secondary institutions, meaning they have higher educational attainment than the rest of the counties in the region. In general, Southwest Minnesota has a higher percentage of people with lower educational attainment, especially for bachelor's degrees and higher. However, Lyon County actually has a higher percentage of people with a bachelor's degree than the state as a whole. (See Table 25.)

Table 25: Educational Attainment, Population 25 Years & Over, 2005-2007

	Lyon County		Nobles County		Minnesota	U.S.
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total:	15,395	100.0%	13,132	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
No schooling completed	141	0.9%	234	1.8%	0.9%	0.6%
Less than 9th grade	1,186	7.7%	1,500	11.4%	5.6%	3.1%
9th through 12th grade	712	4.6%	981	7.5%	9.5%	5.5%
High school grad. (inc. equiv.)	4,744	30.8%	4,563	34.7%	30.0%	28.5%
Some college, <1 year	896	5.8%	957	7.3%	6.2%	6.8%
Some college, >1 year, no deg	2,201	14.3%	1,298	9.9%	13.4%	15.3%
Associate's degree	1,382	9.0%	1,316	10.0%	7.4%	9.5%
Bachelor's degree	3,138	20.4%	1,638	12.5%	17.1%	20.9%
Master's degree	706	4.6%	368	2.8%	6.9%	6.6%
Professional/Doctorate degree	289	1.9%	277	2.1%	1.9%	2.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 2005-2007

While the lower educational attainment may seem like a barrier to growth, research shows that close proximity to post-secondary institutions can lead to economic growth. The region is home to a growing 4-year university (Southwest Minnesota State University) and several campuses of a growing 2-year technical college (Minnesota West Community & Technical College: Granite Falls, Canby, Pipestone, Worthington, and Jackson). According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Minnesota West had a student population of 2,943 undergraduates. Of those, there were 1,034 program completers through 2007-2008, in programs ranging across agriculture, business, computer and information systems, construction, education, engineering, human sciences, health professions, liberal arts, mechanic and repair technologies, personal services, precision production, social services, science technologies, security services, and transportation. Southwest Minnesota State University had 6,073 students, including 5,721 undergraduates. SMSU confers associates, bachelor's, and master's degrees, and awarded 616 program completers in 2007-2008, in programs that include: agriculture, biological sciences, business, communication and journalism, computer science, education, languages, mathematics and statistics, natural resources, fitness studies, philosophy, physical sciences, psychology, social sciences and public administration, security services, and visual arts. (See Table 26.)

Table 26: Program Completers in Southwest Minnesota, 2007-2008									
Minnesota West Program Completions 2007-2008					**Southwest Minnesota State Program Completions 2007-2008**				
Program	<1 year Certificate	1 to <2 yr. Certificate	Associate	2 to <4 yr. Certificate	Program	Associate	Bachelor	Master	
Agriculture, Agriculture Operations	*35*	*5*	*10*	-	*Agriculture, Agriculture Operations*	-	*6*	-	
Ag. & Food Products Processing	4	-	7	-	Agribusiness/Ag. Business Opers.	-	6	-	
Agricultural Production Operations	-	4	3	-	*Biological & Biomedical Sciences*	-	*11*	-	
Farm/Farm & Ranch Management	31	1	-	-	Biology/Biological Sciences	-	11	-	
Business, Management, Marketing	*3*	*6*	*45*	-	*Business, Management, Marketing*	*4*	*148*	*33*	
Accounting & Bookkeeping	-	3	19	-	Accounting/Finance	-	26	-	
Administrative Asst. & Receptionist	2	3	12	-	Business Administration & Mgmt.	4	66	33	
Business Admin. & Mgmt.	1	-	14	-	Marketing/Management Sciences	-	54	-	
Computer & Info. Science & Support	*3*	-	*3*	-	Non-Profit/Public/Org. Mgmt.	-	1	-	
Construction Trades	*1*	*43*	*16*	*26*	Restaurant/Food Services Mgmt.	-	1	-	
Carpentry/Carpenter	-	5	-	-	*Communication, Journalism*	**-**	**22**	**-**	
Electrical Transmission/Lineworker	1	31	9	-	*Computer & Info. Science & Support*	-	*13*	-	
Electrician/Plumber	-	7	7	26	*Education*	-	*69*	*136*	
Education-Teacher Assistant/Aide	*2*	-	-	-	Art/Music Teacher Education	-	4	-	
Engineering Technologies	-	-	*13*	*2*	Education	-	-	124	
Computer Systems Technology	-	-	5	-	Elementary/Kindergarten Educ.	-	45	-	
Hydraulics & Fluid Power Tech.	-	-	4	1	English/Spanish/Language Arts	-	5	-	
Manufacturing/Robotics Tech.	-	-	4	1	Mathematics Teacher Education	-	6	-	
Family & Consumer/Human Science	*2*	*6*	-	-	Physical Educ./Health & Coaching	-	9	-	
Child Care Mgmt./Assistant	2	6	-	-	Special Education & Teaching	-	-	12	
Health Professions Clinical Sciences	*369*	*120*	*106*	-	*English Language & Literature*	-	*18*	-	
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Tech.	-	-	11	-	Creative Writing/English Language	-	18	-	
Dental Assisting/Assistant	-	7	3	-	*Foreign Languages, Lit. & Linguistics*	-	*1*	-	
Home Health Aide	356	-	-	-	Spanish Language & Literature	-	1	-	
Licensed Practical Nurse	-	68	-	-	*History*	-	*16*	-	
Massage Therapy	-	15	-	-	*Mathematics & Statistics*	-	*3*	-	
Medical Admin./Medical Reception	12	11	11	-	*Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies*	-	*1*	-	
Medical Insurance Coding Spec.	-	16	-	-	*Natural Resources & Conservation*	-	*7*	-	
Medical/Clinical Asst./Phlebotomist	1	3	5	-	Environmental Science	-	7	-	
Registered Nurse	-	-	76	-	*Parks, Rec., Leisure & Fitness*	-	30	-	
Liberal Arts & Sciences, Humanities	-	-	*98*	-	Health & Physical Education	-	30	-	
Mechanic & Repair Technologies	*29*	*29*	*3*	*1*	*Philosophy & Religious Studies*	-	*6*	-	
Autobody/Collision & Repair Tech.	17	-	-	1	*Physical Sciences*	-	*6*	-	
Automobile Mechanics Tech.	4	4	1	-	Chemistry	-	6	-	
Diesel Mechanics Technology	-	6	-	-	*Psychology*	-	*17*	-	
Heating/Vent./AC/Refrig. Tech.	8	2	2	-	Psychology	-	17	-	
Small Engine Mech & Repair Tech.	-	17	-	-	*Public Admin. & Social Service*	-	20	-	
Personal & Culinary Services	*4*	*18*	-	-	Public Administration	-	3	-	
Cosmetology/Nail Technician	4	18	-	-	Social Work	-	17	-	
Precision Production	-	*10*	-	-	*Security & Protective Services*	-	*13*	-	
Machine Tool Tech./Machinist	-	10	-	-	Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	-	13	-	
Public Admin. & Social Service	-	*1*	*10*	-	*Social Sciences*	-	*18*	-	
Science/Biology Technologies	-	-	*5*	-	Political Science & Government	-	7	-	
Criminal Justice/Police Science	-	-	*8*	-	Sociology	-	11	-	
Truck Driver/Commercial Vehicle Op.	*2*	-	-	-	*Art/Music/Drama & Performing Arts*	-	18	-	
Grand total	**450**	**238**	**317**	**29**	**Grand total**	**4**	**443**	**169**	
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS COOL Search									