

Demographic Trends in Minnesota

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Minnesota is home to a growing and changing population. In the next twenty years, the state's population is projected to grow in number and in diversity. It is important to keep these demographic changes in mind as MnDOT plans to serve an evolving customer base that engages with the transportation system in different ways.

Defining the Issue

Although transportation and transit planning affects all residents in the state, it impacts different populations in different ways. A person's transportation mode of choice varies depending on what is available to them, and is often linked to demographic factors such as income, ethnicity, or disability. Planners must recognize these nuances in the population's needs.

In Minnesota, the impact of demographic changes differs between the Twin Cities metropolitan area and Greater Minnesota. The Twin Cities metro is home to more than half of the state's population and is projected to see a dramatic rise in populations that have historically used transit and other non-automobile modes to travel. Population shifts in Greater Minnesota are projected to be less dramatic, although certain pockets of the state will undergo more dramatic demographic transformations.

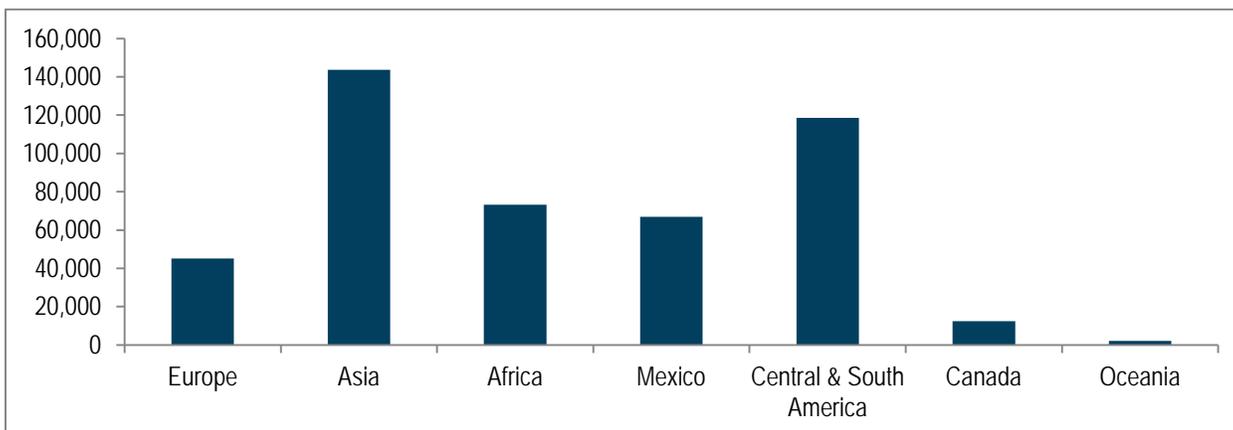
The goal of this analysis is to provide a demographic profile of the state in several key areas including immigration, languages spoken, and disability status.

Key Characteristics of MN's Population

IMMIGRATION

Minnesota has a long history of immigration, with patterns that have shifted over time. In 1920, the Minnesota State Demographer reported that nearly 20 percent of Minnesotans, or around 475,000 people, were foreign-born. In the present day, the number of foreign-born Minnesota residents is less in magnitude, nearly 400,000, and proportion at about 7 percent. The origins of foreign-born Minnesotans, however, have shifted dramatically. While early immigrants to the state came primarily from Northern Europe, people from all over the globe now call Minnesota home. Over 36 percent of Minnesota's foreign-born residents come from Asia, the most common continent of origin for foreign-born people. During the later decades of the 20th century, Minnesota accepted a large number of refugees from conflicts in Southeast Asia. Figure 1 shows where Minnesota's foreign-born population lived before coming to Minnesota.

Figure 1: Population of foreign-born Minnesota residents by place of birth



Neighboring nations are another common source of many of Minnesota's foreign-born residents. Mexican- and Canadian-born residents combined make up 20 percent of Minnesota's foreign-born population. However, more than five times as many Mexican-born people live in Minnesota as Canadian-born people. This may be somewhat surprising given Minnesota's close proximity to Canada, but it is unsurprising in the context of larger immigration trends across the United States as whole.

Africa is the third most common continent of origin. Over 18 percent of Minnesota's foreign-born population comes from Africa, and approximately 60 percent of people in this group were born in East Africa. These numbers reflect Minnesota's second notable refugee population who have and continue to come to Minnesota due to the persistent conflicts in Somalia and other nearby regions.

People originating from Central and South America, and Europe, are also well represented in Minnesota, but not to the degree of other continents. Oceania is by far the least represented continent, with just over 2,000 people native to that part of the world residing in Minnesota.

Additionally, many Minnesotans came to the state from other states in the United States. Roughly 1.25 million Minnesotans, or 24.2 percent of the population, were born in another US state or Puerto Rico.

The remainder of the state's population is native-born Minnesotans. Roughly 3.65 million residents, or 68.6 percent of the population, were born in Minnesota. This percentage of residents still residing in the state of their birth is 9.9 percent higher than the national average. Correspondingly, the percentages of residents who were born in different states or abroad are lower in Minnesota than in the United States generally. Across the country the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the percent of the United States' population that is foreign-born will continue to rise through 2060.¹ Tracking changes in Minnesota's foreign-born population in comparison to the United States as a whole will provide further insights into how MnDOT will continue to ensure that newly-arriving populations have a say in how the transportation system serves them.

Immigrants are significantly more likely to not use a car compared to non-immigrants. An analysis of 2006 Integrated Public Use Microdata Series data found that 33.7 percent of recently arrived immigrants (less than one year in the United States) used public transportation or walked or biked to work, compared with just 5.9 percent of non-immigrants². Even immigrants who had been in the country for five years still were more likely to take transit, walk or bike (14 percent) than were non-immigrants (5.9 percent).³

Immigration is vital to maintaining Minnesota's population. From 2010 to 2014, Minnesota welcomed over 56,000 immigrants from abroad, but lost over 25,000 people to other domestic destinations.⁴

LANGUAGES

As a function of the increasing geographic diversity of migrants to Minnesota, the state's population is growing and becoming more diverse than recent years in terms of languages spoken. However, at present, English remains the primary spoken language in Minnesota by a large margin; 89.4 percent of Minnesotans speak English at home.

The ubiquity of English can no longer be safely assumed in some areas, especially the Twin Cities region. The least English speaking area in the state is Ramsey County, where 79.6 percent of people speak English at home. The three most common languages or language groups spoken in Minnesota after English are Spanish, African Languages, and Hmong. As languages other than English proliferate in Minnesota, it will become increasingly important for public agencies like MnDOT to offer information and services in these languages.

Spanish speakers are primarily concentrated in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, but there are also significant numbers of Spanish speakers in various regions around the state. As shown in Figure 2, there are slightly more Spanish speakers living outside the Twin Cities than there are in Hennepin County.

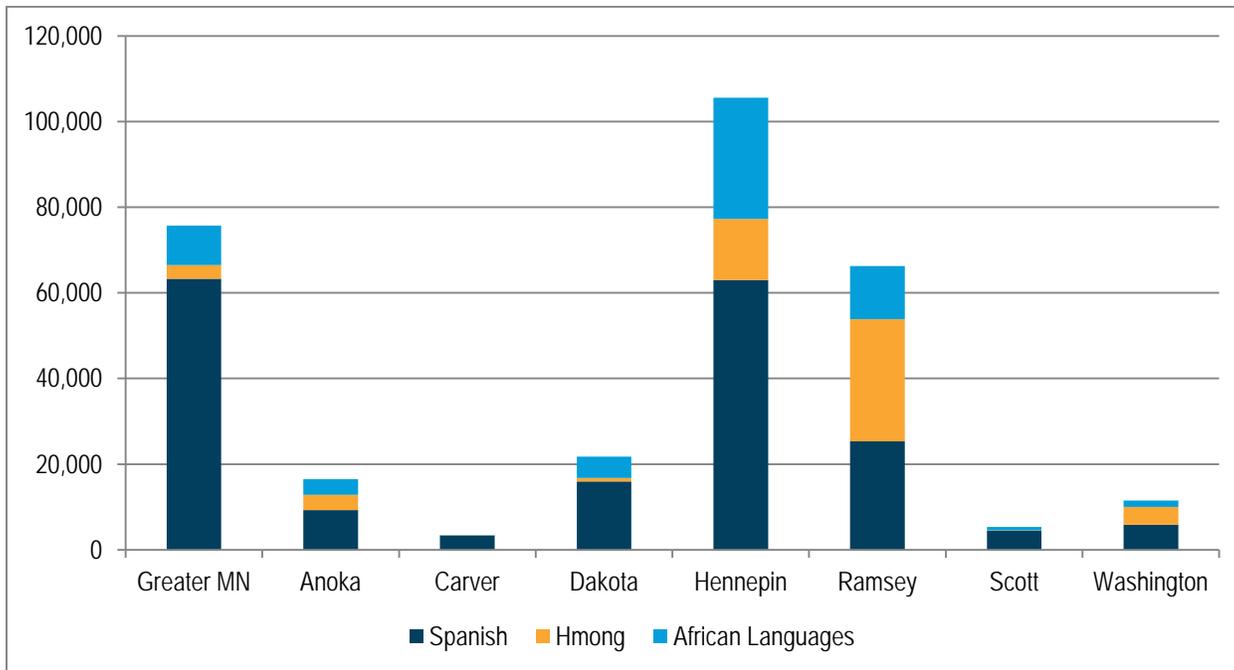
¹ [Brown, 2015](#)

² [Kim, 2009](#)

³ *Ibid*

⁴ [MN State Demographer, 2015](#)

Figure 2: Number of Spanish, Hmong, and African Language Speakers by Metro County/Greater Minnesota (2013)



The American Community Survey unfortunately does not distinguish between different African Languages, which limits the level of detail that this analysis can achieve. Combined with the data about immigration, it is likely that most speakers of “African Languages” come from East Africa and it is highly probable they speak Somali. However this cannot be assumed across the board.

The data shows that African languages are spoken mostly in the Twin Cities, although a fair number of ‘African Language’ speakers live in Greater Minnesota. The population of ‘African Language’ speakers is tilted heavily towards the inner cities of the Twin Cities region. Nearly half of those who speak African languages live in Hennepin County and a fifth live in Ramsey County.

Hmong is the least prevalent of the major languages and language groups outside of the Metro region. Only 5.8 percent of Hmong speakers live outside the Twin Cities. A majority of Hmong speakers live in Ramsey County, with slightly over a quarter living in Hennepin County. Hmong is the most geographically concentrated of the major languages other than English spoken in Minnesota. Other languages from Southeast Asia are also widely spoken in Minnesota, especially Vietnamese and Laotian, and the settlement patterns of these language groups are similar.

DISABILITIES

People with disabilities make up one of Minnesota’s most transit dependent populations. While the term “disability” encompasses a wide range of conditions, a large number preclude forms of personal transportation. The presence and ease of access to alternative means of transportation is a critical factor in integrating people with disabilities into the broader fabric of society.

In Minnesota, the number of people with disabilities is highest in the most populous areas. However, the percentages of people with disabilities are generally higher in Greater Minnesota than in the Twin Cities region, as is shown in Figures 3 and 4. Statewide, 10.3 percent of Minnesotans live with a disability.⁵

⁵ [American Community Survey, 2014](#)

Figure 3: Real Numbers of Minnesota with a Disability by County/Region (Total 536,307)⁶

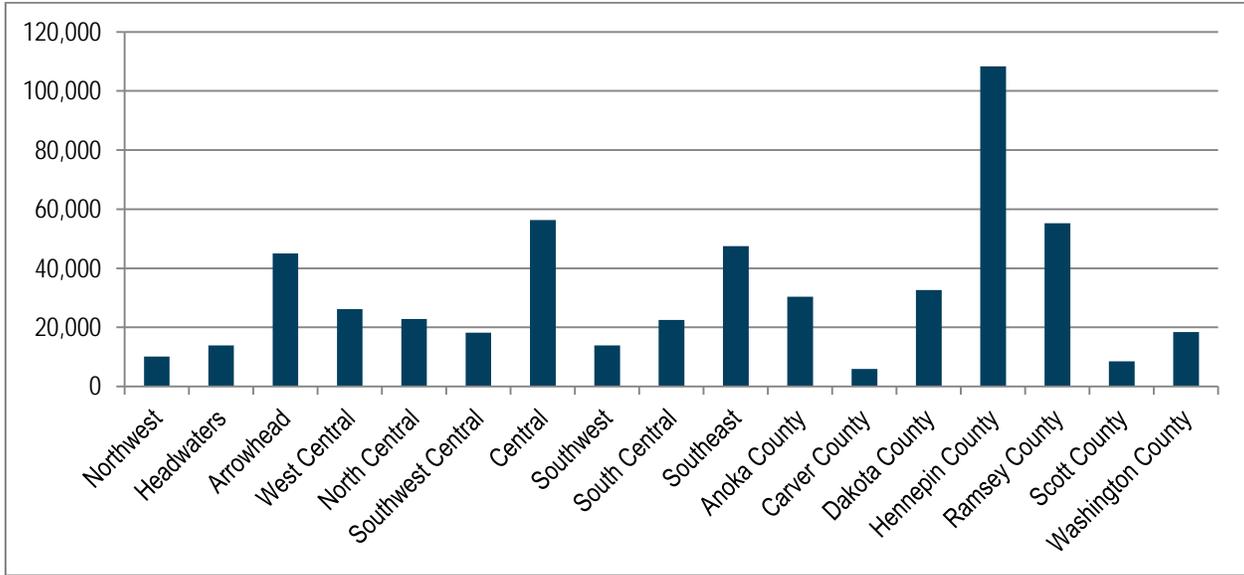
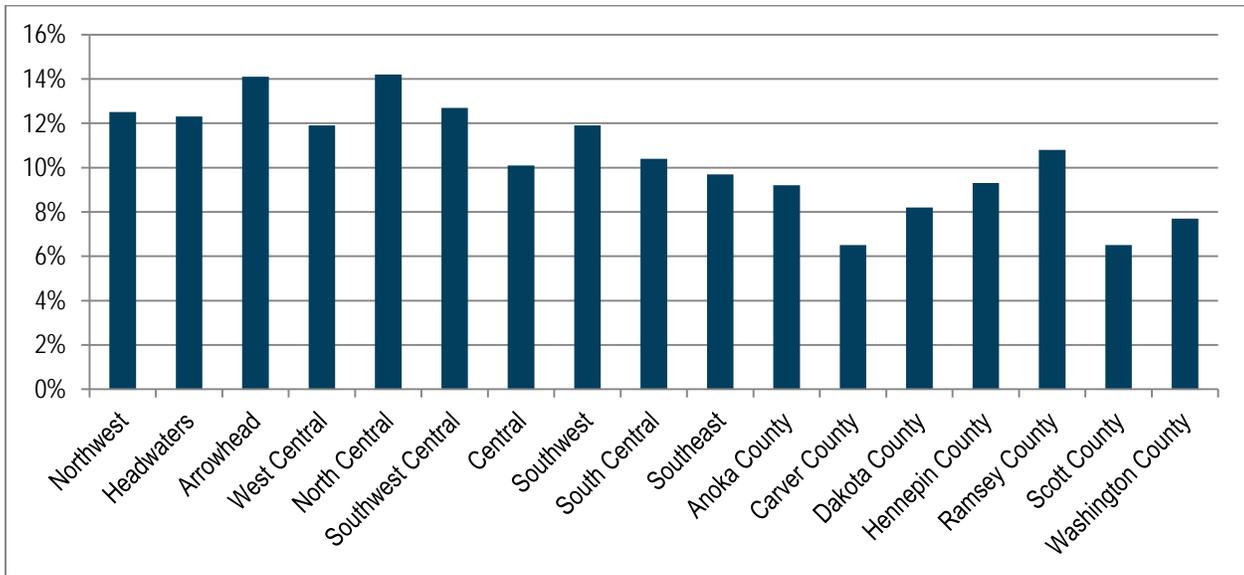


Figure 4: Percentage People with a Disability by County/Region (Total 54,790)



The transportation challenges that are faced by people with disabilities across Minnesota are difficult and vary case by case. Where mass transit is unavailable, there is often a need for public transit of a more specialized and on-demand nature. Given the rate at which Minnesota's population is aging, it is reasonable to assume that the proportion of the population living with some sort of disability will increase in the next 20 years. Over 45 percent of those 75 and older in Minnesota report having a disability, compared to 10 percent of Minnesotans between 35 and 64.⁷ Minnesota's recently accepted Olmstead Plan sets requirements for the state in terms of implementing improvements to accessible pedestrian infrastructure, expanded transit coverage, the number of passenger trips, and improved on-time performance for transit systems with the goal of allowing individuals with disabilities to be fully integrated into society.⁸

⁶ Region refers to [Regional Development Commission](#) areas
⁷ [American Community Survey, 2013](#)
⁸ [Minnesota's Olmstead Plan, 2015](#)

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Minnesota's average household size has decreased consistently since the middle of the 20th century. In 1970, the average Minnesota household was home to 3.28 people. By 2000, the average had fallen to 2.52 and as of the 2010 US Census was 2.48. As households in Minnesota become smaller on average, more housing units will be needed to accommodate a growing population. Decreasing car ownership per household may also be related to changing household size. An increase in the number of single-parent households also likely corresponds to an increase in single-vehicle households where children of parents are not of legal driving age.

AGING POPULATION

Minnesota's population is aging – sometime around the year 2030 more Minnesotans will be over the age of 65 than under the age of 18.⁹ This will have significant impacts on Minnesota's transportation system and is discussed in further detail in a separate trend analysis paper on Minnesota's aging population.

RACE, INCOME & EQUITY

Since 1990 Minnesota has become significantly more diverse – 19 percent of Minnesotans are now people of color. Disappointingly, Minnesota has some of the worst racial disparities between white individuals and people of color. More information can be found in the Racial Disparities & Equity paper.

⁹ [Minnesota Demographer's Office Projections](#)