REGIONAL FORECAST TO 2050

A biennial update about the Twin Cities region's expected population and employment

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2026

Key Findings

- The Twin Cities region will add 420,000 residents from 2020 to 2050. This will raise our total population to 3,583,000. International immigration will drive the region's future population increase, followed by natural growth.
- An aging population and growing racial and ethnic diversity will define our future. These changes will reshape schools and workplaces.
- After the temporary job loss from COVID-19 and the job market's recovery, a modest rise of 230,000 jobs is expected by 2050. Immigrants, older adults, and remote or commuting workers will play a key role in filling these new jobs.
- The regional forecast to 2050 is updated every two years. This update forecasts fewer people and jobs than the 2023 version. Declining birth rates are largely responsible for this downward revision. Notably, the region's economic position and long-term immigration levels remained largely consistent with previous forecasts, for now.

Like the world we live in, forecasts change

Long-range population and employment forecasts provide a shared foundation for coordinated regional and local planning, regional infrastructure investments, and other policy and service considerations. However, forecasts change as the world around us—and the data available to us—change. These realities are why we prepare an update to the regional forecast every two years.

This regional forecast expects fewer people and jobs by 2050 than previous forecast (published in 2023). This downward revision results from falling birth rates over the forecast period. The region will see fewer new residents from international immigration in the short-term (2025-2030), but long-term, net immigration to the U.S. has not been lowered across national forecasts after 2030—yet.

See page 5 for further discussion about this update compared with previous forecasts.

Our region will continue to grow, but at a slower pace

Metropolitan Council's long-range forecast shows the seven-county region will gain 420,000 people, bringing the total population to nearly 3.6 million residents by 2050 (Figure 1). Future population growth rates will range between +3% and +5% per decade, a much slower pace than in the past. For example, the region's population grew 11% between 2010 and 2020.

The Twin Cities region added 238,000 jobs between 2010 and 2019, then lost these gains temporarily in 2020 because of the economic recession caused by COVID-19. Following this economic recovery, 230,000 new jobs are expected by 2050, for a total of about 2 million jobs regionwide.

FIGURE 1 | REGIONAL FORECAST TO 2050: 2026 UPDATE

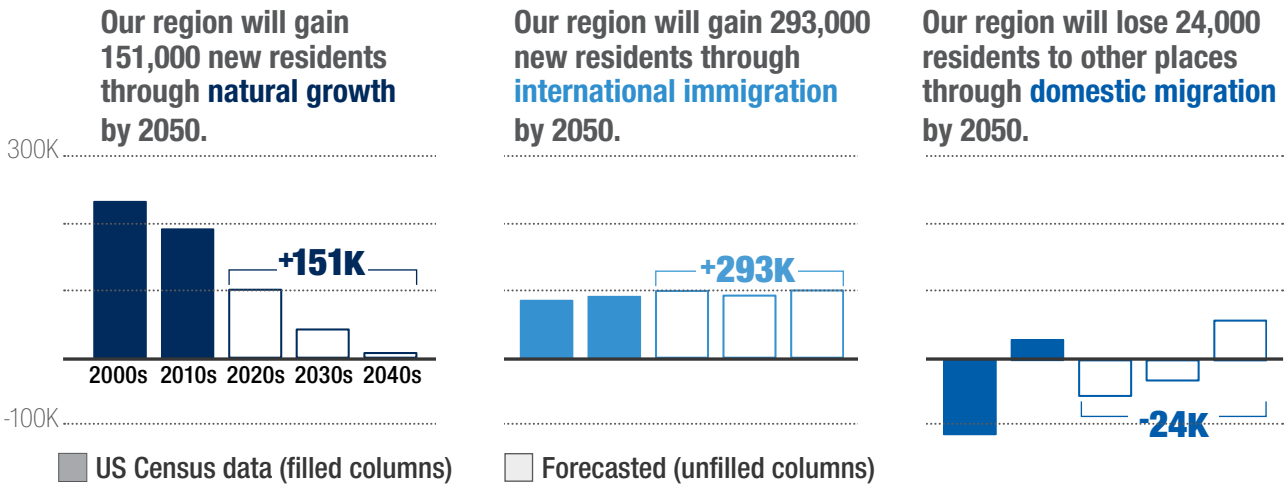
Forecast	2020	2025	2030	2040	2050
Population	3,163,100	3,272,100	3,311,200	3,416,100	3,582,700
Employment	1,584,700	1,781,900	1,789,600	1,888,100	2,011,700

Source: Metropolitan Council's Regional Forecast to 2050 (October 2026 Update).

Immigration drives the region's future population growth

The interplay of two main factors drives our region's population growth. The first is natural growth, that is, births minus deaths. The second is new residents who move here from other parts of the country (domestic migration) or other countries (international immigration). Figure 2 presents the trends within each of these population factors.

FIGURE 2 | TRENDS DRIVING POPULATION GROWTH IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 - 2020 and Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050 (October 2026 Update), 2030 - 2050. Each chart provides net change within each decade between 1990 and 2050; the totals summarize net change during the forecast period, 2020-2050.

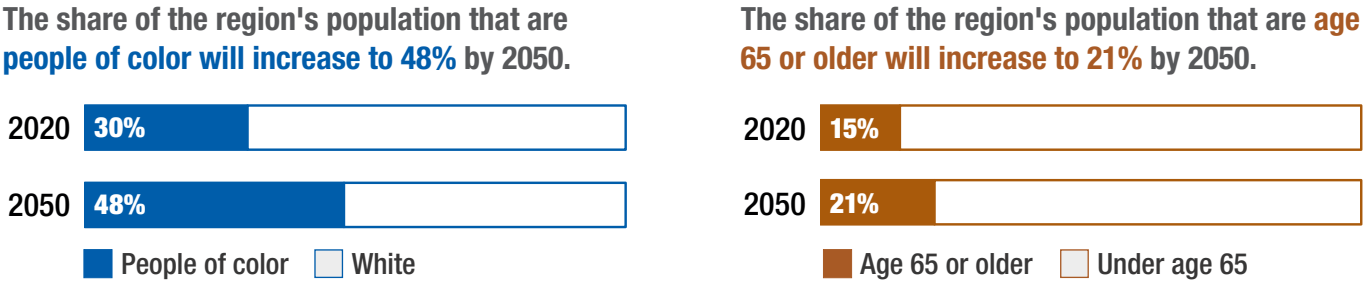
Immigration will add twice as many people to the region as natural growth will add by 2050. At the same time, more people will move out of the region than will move here from other places over the next 30 years. Taken together, these trends result in a total population increase of 420,000 people. These trends will also contribute to demographic changes that will define our future.

An older and more racially diverse population will reshape schools and workplaces

Over the next three decades, the region's population will change substantially:

- By 2050, 48% of the region's residents will be people of color. Black, Latine, and Asian populations are projected to nearly double between 2020 and 2050. In contrast, the region's white population peaked in 2020, and will decline in coming decades.
- By 2050, 21% of the region's residents will be age 65 or older. As baby boomers age and life expectancies increase, older adults are now—and will become—a much greater factor in housing and consumer markets.

FIGURE 3 | FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2020 and Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050 (October 2026 Update), 2050.

These two demographic changes cannot be explained by simply projecting our region's current population forward. The population growth trends described earlier (Figure 2) play a role as well.

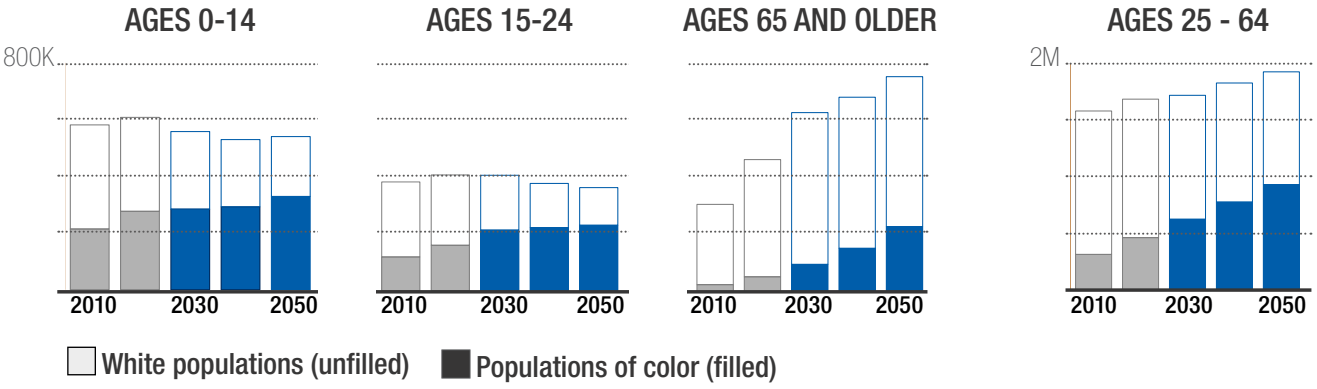
Before 2020 the Twin Cities region attracted new residents—mainly new workers and students—with first-rate employment opportunities and livable wages. These economic advantages have worn away in recent years, however. Rather than net gains or even "breaking even," the region will experience net population loss over the next 15 years from migration. People leaving the Twin Cities region are typically older and white, often retirees moving to Sun Belt states. In contrast, immigrants moving to our region are more likely to be people of color under age 40.

Family formation also contributes to these dynamics. The Twin Cities region and nation are now in an era of much lower birth rates and smaller family sizes. Affordability issues, among other considerations, have discouraged or delayed younger people's decision to have children. Even so, birth rates are higher among the region's communities of color on average. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Black, Latine, and Asian women bear more children over their lifetime on average compared with white women. Over time, if death rates remain unchanged, these differences will result in higher natural growth among populations of color. In summary, the balance of trends that contribute to the region's population growth also contributes to future demographic change.

Taken together, these demographic changes will reshape schools and workplaces in the Twin Cities region by 2050 (Figure 4). Consider this:

- By 2050, 61% of children under 15 and 63% of young adults (ages 15-24) will be people of color.
- By 2050, 48% of the region's working-age population will be people of color, up from 28% in 2020.

FIGURE 4 | FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE BY AGE AND RACE IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020; Metropolitan Council's Regional Forecast to 2050 (October 2026 Update), 2030-2050.

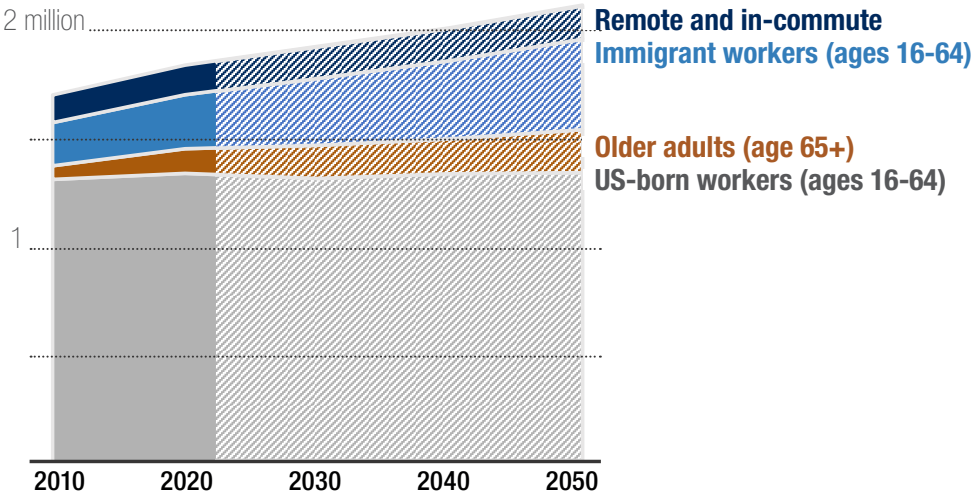
Limited workforce growth constrains the region's economic growth—until 2040

Following the temporary loss of jobs due to COVID-19 and their later recovery, a modest increase of 230,000 jobs is expected by 2050. The regional employment forecast takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of our region's economy, along with a workforce shortage expected to last until 2040.

The Twin Cities region's economy has "strong fundamentals" and possesses most of the conditions needed for future economic growth. For instance, economic output and productivity are high. We have a diverse mix of industries that contribute to growth, along with cost and resource advantages, and a stable supply of workers across all occupational sectors. Before 2020, our region led the nation's metro areas in low unemployment and high wages, which attracted new residents. However, other places can now offer similar economic opportunities. As a result, we are seeing fewer people move to the Twin Cities region, which also means fewer workers.

During the forecast period, the prime working-age population (ages 25-64) will grow by just 14%. Millennial workers can replace retiring baby boomers, but they can't increase the overall workforce. The region's traditional workforce—U.S.-born adults under age 65—will only grow by about 10,000 workers during the forecast period. In other words, the workforce of 2040 and the college freshmen of 2045 are already born. To fill the new jobs expected by 2050, both immigrant and non-traditional workers will be essential.

FIGURE 5 | CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION'S CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE



Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, 2010-2025; and Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050 (October 2026 Update), 2025-2050. The chart's solid areas present actual totals and the patterned areas represent forecasted data.

Further analysis of the employment forecast surfaced new sources for future workforce growth (Figure 5):

- Immigration will make a difference. Immigration brings a steady stream of people in their prime working years. After adjusting for participation rates, we expect an increase of 130,000 immigrant workers between 2025 and 2050.
- Older adults are the region's fastest-growing demographic. Increased retirement ages will add 58,000 workers during this period.
- Many jobs are filled by workers living outside the Twin Cities region. This trend is hard to measure, leading to uncertain projections. Even so, we estimate that long-distance commuters and remote workers will grow by 7,000.

These workers, along with the traditional workforce, can help fill the 230,000 new jobs expected by 2050. Changes in labor force participation could affect this outlook. So could the number of workers holding more than one job and trends in remote work.

Lastly, regional forecast shows an economic rebound during the 2040s. This rise comes from S&P Global's economic model, which forecasts more manufacturing jobs after 2040. The Twin Cities region has a strong market share in high tech and machinery. This may attract job seekers looking for economic opportunities to the region once again.

About the 2026 update to the Twin Cities regional forecast to 2050

Community development researchers prepare an update to the Metropolitan Council's regional forecast to 2050 every two years. We use the REMI model from Regional Economic Models Inc. (REMI.com) to refresh assumptions and time-series data about demographic dynamics and national and regional economies. REMI projections rely on the Twin Cities region's industry mix, business conditions, and competitiveness in the national economy. Trade flows, employment, migration, and population outcomes stem from projected economic performance.

Compared with the regional forecast published in 2023, this update reduced the region's population forecast by 237,000 people and employment forecast by 62,000 jobs (Figures 6 and 8). The following summarizes the key changes in our 2026 update:

- Declining birth rates made a big difference. We updated the REMI model with recent data and future projections from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Congressional Budget Office (CBO). The total fertility rate is projected to decline 8.2% between 2022 and 2050. While deaths and net domestic migration are also forecasted to cause population losses, they are less significant than the decline in birth rates (Figure 7).
- According to CBO, higher levels of international immigration were observed between 2021 and 2024, followed by a sharp decline that continues to 2030. Long-term immigration projections post-2030 remain unchanged, however (Figure 7).

More information about how we develop the regional forecast to 2050 is available on our website at https://metrocouncil.org/forecasts.

FIGURE 6 | COMPARING THE 2023 AND 2026 VERSIONS OF THE REGIONAL FORECAST TO 2050, POPULATION

Population forecast	2023	2026	Difference
Number of people in 2025	3,256,000	3,272,000	+16,000
Number of people in 2050, forecasted	3,820,000	3,583,000	-237,000

Source: Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050, published in April 2023 (and adopted with the latest regional development guide, Imagine 2050) and October 2026 Update.

FIGURE 7 | COMPARING THE 2023 AND 2026 VERSIONS OF THE REGIONAL FORECAST TO 2050, POPULATION CHANGE

Population change projections	2023	2026	Difference
Total population change by 2050	657,000	420,000	-237,000
Natural growth (births minus deaths)	344,000	151,000	-193,000
Births	1,161,000	1,047,000	-114,000
Deaths	-817,000	-897,000	-80,000
Domestic migration	2,000	-24,000	-26,000
International immigration	311,000	293,000	-18,000

Source: Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050, published in April 2023 (and adopted with the latest regional development guide, Imagine 2050) and October 2026 Update.

FIGURE 8 | COMPARING THE 2023 AND 2026 VERSIONS OF THE REGIONAL FORECAST TO 2050, EMPLOYMENT

Employment forecast	2023	2026	Difference
Number of jobs in 2025	1,783,000	1,782,000	-1,000
Number of jobs in 2050, forecasted	2,074,000	2,012,000	-62,000

Source: Metropolitan Council, Regional Forecast to 2050, published in April 2023 (and adopted with the latest regional development guide, Imagine 2050) and October 2026 Update.