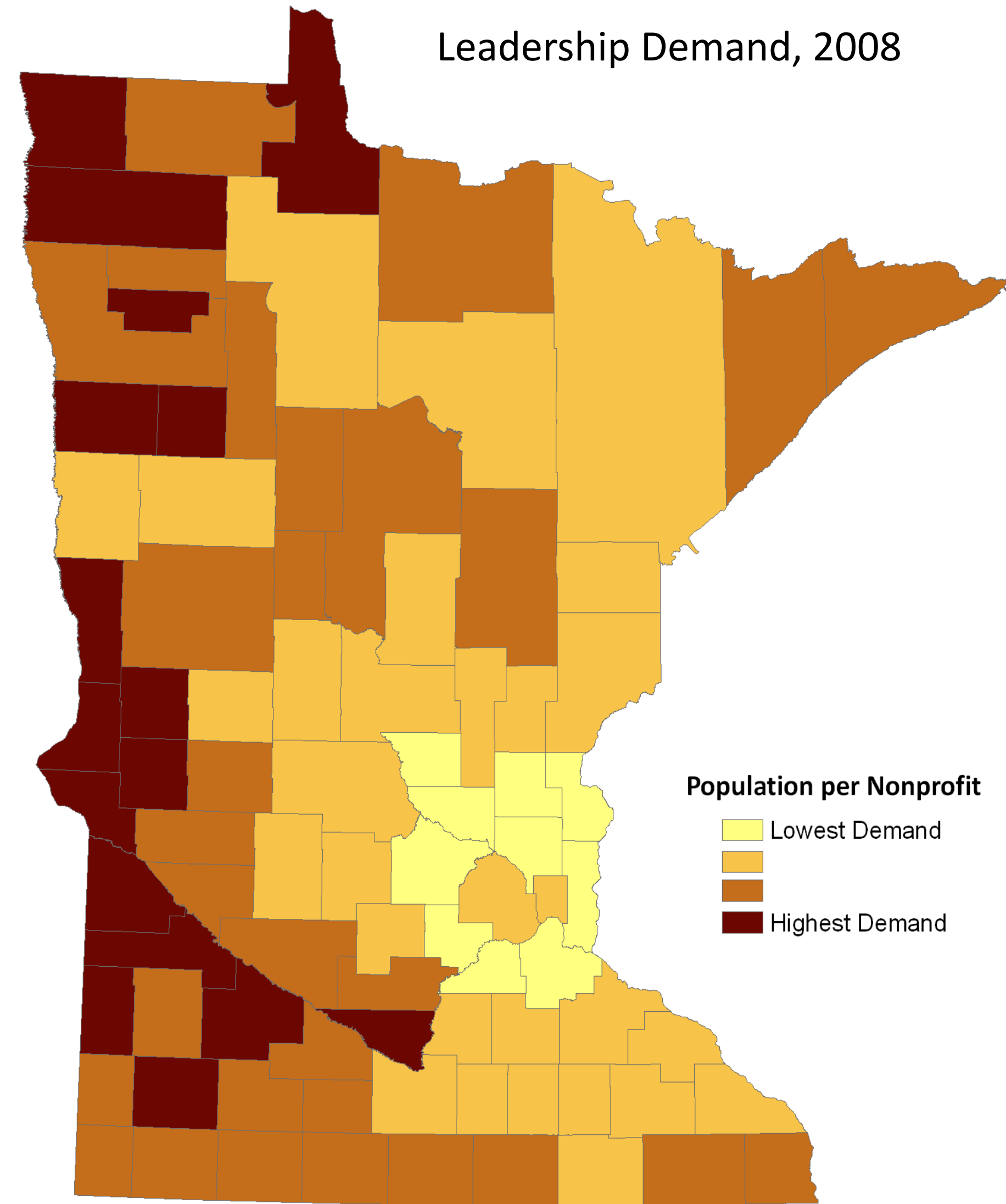


# Leadership Demands

This was a paper presented at the Community Development Society annual conference in July, 2010. For a copy of this paper, please contact Ben Winchester, benw@umn.edu

How many people do we need to run our towns? And how many leaders are available? These simple, but related, questions are seldom (if ever) asked. There is an expectation that public offices and community organizations will be able to find enough people to serve year after year. These *leadership demands* of community can be compared to the number of residents (supply) available to serve in a community. This "social organizational infrastructure" is a critical component of rural communities and must be maintained. On one hand a large number of community organizations can reflect a healthy diversity of social options for residents. On the other hand it is a challenge for organizations that depend on the finite talent, time, volunteers, and financial resources of these residents to survive.

(Swanson, Louis, 1992. "Rural Social Infrastructure" in Reid, Norman (ed). *Foundations of Rural Development Policy*. Westview Press: Boulder, CO.)



Leadership Demand, 2008

Population per Nonprofit  
 Lowest Demand  
 Highest Demand

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
 Lincoln

## Per-Capita Leadership Requirements

- **Towns with Population Over 10,000**  
 6% serve public or nonprofit leadership roles
- **Towns with Population Under 1,000**  
 27% serve public or nonprofit leadership roles  
(Nebraska Rural Poll, 2004)

## Demand for Leaders



*In rural areas leadership is limited by population, geographic conditions, and communication facilities. Potential leaders exist only in proportion to the number of people who live within a given area.*

(Queen, Stuart. 1949. Social Participation in Relation to Social Disorganization. American Sociological Review, 14(2):251-257.)

*"Community engagement is often localized, personalized and tends to be channeled through individual and group-based activities rather than through established organizations. Involvement is often episodic and occurs in response to a particular problem rather than an on-going commitment."*

(Working Together: Community Involvement in America. A Summary of Recent Research Findings from a project commissioned by The League of Women Voters and conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrance Group.)

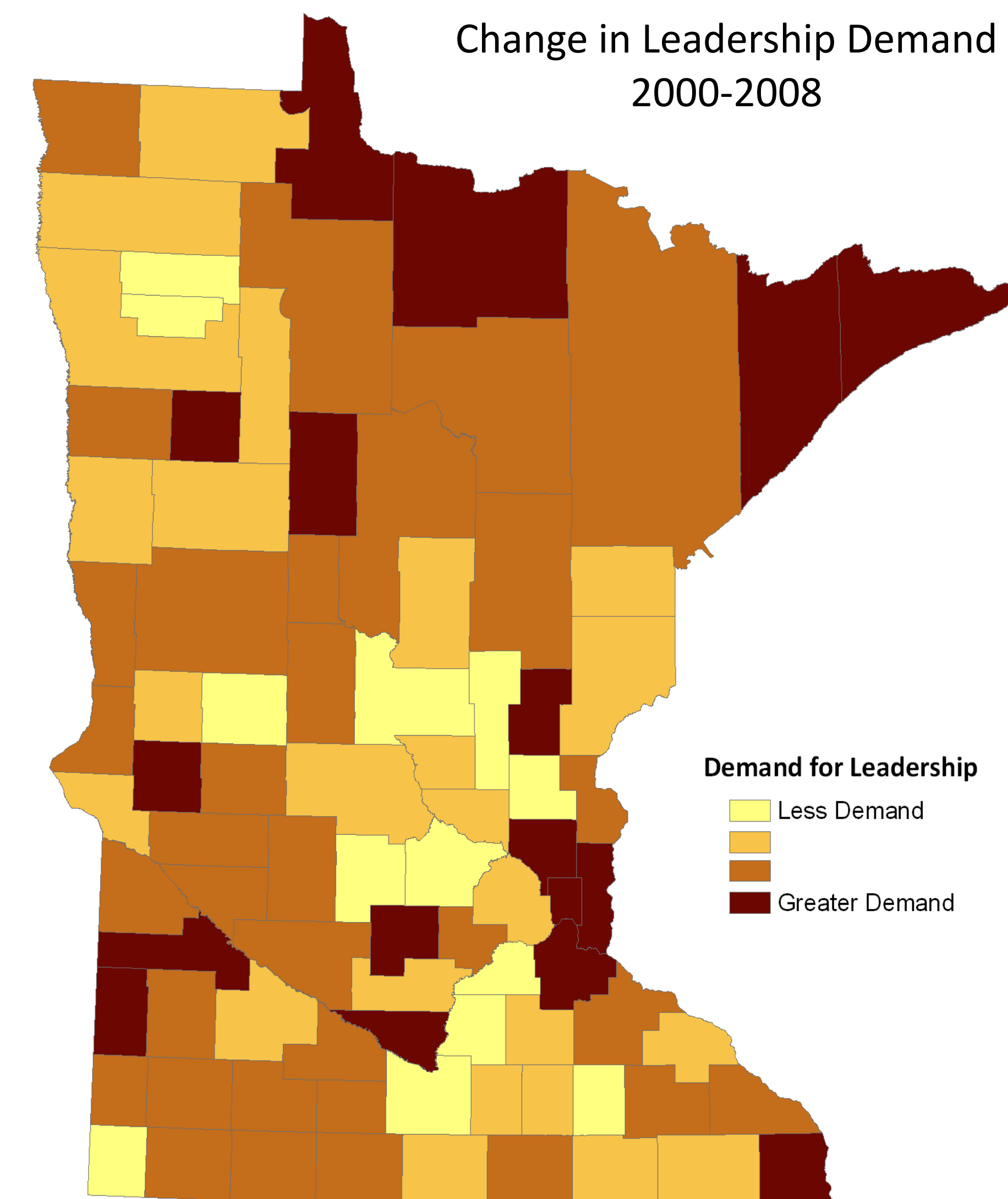
	2000	2008	% change
# Nonprofits	29,089	33,060	13.7%
Total Population	4,919,479	5,182,360	5.3%
Population age 25-64	2,567,885	2,807,941	9.3%

Change in Number of Nonprofits and Population, 2000-2008

To gain a macroscopic perspective on this demand for leaders from the social organizational infrastructure, a few data sources provide us with this proxy measure. How many people are available to serve, on average, in each organization? This measure needs to be standardized which allows us to examine the variation that exists across Minnesota. Here, we are counting the number of residents per organization.

$$\text{Leadership Demand} = \frac{\# \text{ of residents of leadership age}}{\# \text{ nonprofits} + \# \text{ political jurisdictions}}$$

The Leadership Demand variable measures the average number of people available per organization (nonprofit and political) from which to find one leader across a county. The U.S. Census Bureau provides data on total population and age structure for each county that will allow us to count the number of residents. Age structure is important, as there are few 5-year olds that are able to lead an organization. Thus, only those people age 25-64 will be counted in the pool of available community leaders.



Change in Leadership Demand 2000-2008

Demand for Leadership  
 Less Demand  
 Greater Demand

The change in leadership demand between 2000 and 2008 is represented in the map above. The demand can be greater if 1) the number of nonprofits increase or 2) the population declines. This greater demand does not appear to have a geographic component. However, the data indicates a further stress for leadership in those counties of the darkest color. There is an opportunity here for the rural development industry to devote resources to helping those communities deal with the stress this will place on the existing leadership infrastructure.

County	People per Organization	County	People per Organization
Nicollet	14.3	Benton	119.3
Kittson	21.9	Isanti	120.2
Stevens	25.8	Chisago	129.7
Marshall	26.2	Wright	136.7
Norman	26.9	Carver	137.0
Grant	27.2	Washington	143.4
Lake of the Woods	27.9	Dakota	160.6
Big Stone	28.4	Sherburne	191.5
Traverse	29.3	Anoka	199.2
Lincoln	31.0	Scott	203.0

These statistics are even more alarming given the variable number of leadership positions within each organization. The Leadership Demand variable calculates the need for just one person for each organization. However, many nonprofit boards have, at minimum, four positions – president, vice-president, secretary, and a treasurer. Political jurisdictions such as city, township, and county offices, can have anywhere between 5 and 7 positions that need to be filled. This further increases the demand for leadership. If there were assumed to require four leaders per organization, Nicollet county organizations would require 1 in 3 residents to serve on their boards. Of course, this assumes each leader only holds one position, which is not true, especially in rural areas.

## High Leadership Stress Counties

	Population Change	Nonprofit Change
Stevens County	2.0%	57.3%
Mahnomen County	-2.1%	38.2%
Kanabec County	13.4%	43.8%
Lake of the Woods County	-11.7%	16.3%
Dakota County	12.4%	40.2%
Houston County	2.6%	27.5%
Ramsey County	-0.1%	24.4%
Lincoln County	-8.3%	15.5%
Cook County	8.2%	31.5%
Washington County	14.3%	36.1%

Population and Nonprofit Change, 2000-2008

Organizations can feel stress when 1) there is an increase in the number of groups in a county (e.g. competition for leaders) or when the number of available leaders declines (e.g. smaller supply of leaders). Can we continue to add organizations at a rate well exceeding population growth (or decline)?

In countless cases, historically successful community organizations are becoming defunct due to membership deficiencies. However, in their place, new ones will arise. This restructuring of social institutions across rural America will change the face of our small towns. Losses will occur. Mourning will be necessary. It will be difficult. However, as the interests of our residents continue to diverge, so do the social organizations that are reflections of these interests.