



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



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INTRODUCTION

Trinity County, chartered in 1850 as one of California's original 27 counties, is home to two million acres of rugged mountains, rivers, and unincorporated towns housing the county's 16,000+ residents. Only 3 percent of property is privately owned with three different national forests – Mendocino, Six Rivers and Shasta-Trinity – comprising most of the land area. The Trinity River Scenic Byway traverses the county alongside State Route 299, complementing the many gateways to the Trinity Alps Wilderness and its opportunities for wild-stream fishing, day hikes, or extended trips.

Originally driven by the mining and logging industries, Trinity County's economy is now centered on a mix of legacy industries like lumber mills and conventional agriculture and newer sectors like cannabis, tourism, healthcare, and the arts. As one of the three counties making up the legendary Emerald Triangle cannabis-growing region, Trinity County has become a case study for the challenges and opportunities this crop creates.

Trinity County finds itself in a time of transition between the old and new economies, unsure of the industries that will power future job and wealth creation. Besieged by wildfires and struggling with the impacts of illegal cannabis grows, Trinity County nevertheless has a wealth of assets and amenities that can drive future success. Aligning behind a common vision for what that future looks like will enable Trinity County to collaborate in new ways to build the capacity necessary for its current and next generations to thrive.

OVERVIEW

Trinity County has been awarded a Rural Business Development Grant through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help define a unified vision and identify strategic opportunity areas. For this project, Trinity County has teamed up with Atlas Community Studios, a firm specializing in strategic planning and community development, to build an action plan focused on three major components: Housing, Economic Development, and Workforce Development.

Public input is critical to this process and was comprised of two community visioning sessions and an online public survey. Atlas' partner, Broad Ripple Strategies (BRS), conducted quantitative analysis to complement the hundreds of Trinity County stakeholders who participated in the visioning sessions and survey. This Community Assessment leverages both qualitative and quantitative research to identify key trends, issues, and opportunities facing Trinity County as it competes for the top jobs and talent in today's economy.

The Strategic Implications of the Community Assessment's key findings and takeaways are profiled later in the report and lay the groundwork for the process' next phase, the Placemaking Playbook.

To gain perspective on trends in Trinity County's workforce, economy, and quality of life and place, BRS compared the community to three peer counties, California, and the U.S. Peer counties were selected from a list of potential comparison areas based on the following criteria:

- Rural counties with populations between 10,000 to and 30,000
- Predominantly mountainous topography
- California strongly preferred
- No Interstate access preferred
- Presence of cannabis industry preferred
- Landlocked preferred
- Lack of "differentiator assets" (e.g., a major university)

Though not every potential benchmark area met all these factors, BRS believed that the most appropriate comparison areas were: **Del Norte County, CA; Mendocino County, CA, and Plumas County, CA.**

These peer counties, along with the state and nation, are included in most quantitative indicators profiled in this report. Their competitive dynamics will become clearer as the analysis proceeds.

Data was acquired from publicly available sources like the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the California Department of Education, and the proprietary database JobsEQ.

The benefits and limitations of some of these data sources are discussed in more detail later in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Population Trends

- Population analysis is complicated by the fact that the U.S. Census Bureau failed to count a large population of Hmong immigrants that in-migrated to Trinity County between the 2010 and 2020 Census years.
 - Inter-decade Census estimates showed Trinity County lost residents from 2010 to 2019, but the 2020 Census reported a population increase of 2,326, a 16.9 rise that dwarfed the growth rates of the comparison areas.
- Confirming that inter-decade undercounts were likely in the Hmong population, 2020 Census figures demonstrated a 13.1 percent increase in Trinity County's Asian population from 2010, well above the benchmarks.
 - Trinity County's White population declined by 13.0 percent from 2010 to 2020 but still comprises 70 percent of the total population.
- Trinity County's age-related trends are of concern for workforce sustainability but may also be affected by Census undercounts.
 - Residents over age 65 are the fastest growing cohort in Trinity County and comprise nearly 30 percent of the population, well above all the comparison areas.

Talent Trends

- Population trends that add proprietary data to Census estimates show that Trinity County's age ranges are actually more sustainable than most of its peer counties.
 - However, the total size of the workforce in Trinity County is shrinking compared to California and experiences seasonal peaks in the summer months.
- Low college degree attainment in Trinity County puts it at a competitive disadvantage for knowledge-based companies compared to the state and national averages.
 - Nearly three-quarters of Trinity County's population over age 25 lacks a college degree and declined by 2.4 percent from 2015 to 2020.

- However, Trinity County’s Pre-K to 12th grade public school districts operate from a position of strength versus its peer systems.
 - Trinity County students’ performance on statewide assessment tests is stronger than all the peer counties, with a high percentage of college readiness.
 - Where Trinity County schools fall behind is in graduation rate, where it trails all the comparison areas.
- Public survey respondents noted that the lack of diverse job availability in Trinity County for well-paying careers limits the need for most workforce training programs.
- A confluence of factors contributing to Trinity County’s perceived lack of opportunity leads some residents to feel there is a “brain drain” of top talent
- The lack of a diverse base of well-paying occupations in Trinity County is borne out in the data.
 - The largest occupations by total employment in Trinity County are in lower-paying jobs.
 - The county’s most prevalent occupations compared to the U.S. average are Law Enforcement Workers and Ground Maintenance Workers.
 - The three occupations with the greatest projected future demand are Food and Beverage Serving Workers, Retail Sales Workers, and Home Health and Personal Care Aides.
- Trinity County’s average annual wages reinforces stakeholder perceptions that the county’s jobs pay lower than average rates.
 - Trinity County’s wages are the lowest of all the comparison areas, and nearly \$30,000 below the state’s annual figure
- Below average wage rates are also reflected in Trinity County’s lower per capita incomes.
 - Lower incomes and higher rates of government assistance correlate with a larger distribution of Trinity County households earning under \$50,000 and higher poverty rates, including the highest percentage of youth poverty compared to the benchmark areas.

Economic Trends

- Federally reported data for the third quarter of 2021 show that Trinity County only had 3,170 total jobs, roughly the same number of jobs as the equivalent time period in 2011; however, the policy-related omission of cannabis employment from official totals distorts the county's economic picture.
 - Unofficial estimates show that 1,236 individuals worked full time and 5,240 part time in cannabis cultivation in Trinity County in the year 2018. An additional 112 adults were estimated to work in noncultivation occupations.
- Stakeholders feel that Trinity County's economy has underperformed but has key advantages like lower cost of living that can drive future growth.
- Trinity County employment is mostly comprised by lower-paying service sectors.
 - Of Trinity County's largest sectors, only Health Care and Social Assistance grew in the five years prior to Q3 2021.
 - Sawmills and Wood Preservation, a sub-category of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, is Trinity County's most specialized employment sector.
 - Individual and Family Services is projected to be the strongest growth driver for Trinity County's future economy.
- Trinity County features outsized rates of self-employment and has higher percentages of small and younger firms than the comparison geographies.
- Cannabis and its role in the community and economy was a prominent input topic.
 - Multiple survey respondents encouraged the county to increase its licensing of commercial cannabis operations, though many structural challenges to legal cannabis exist in California.
 - Trinity County's long-standing illegal cannabis sector has made the transition to a regulated system uniquely challenging.

Place-Related Trends

- Though Trinity County is a lower-cost alternative to the average California community, it is expensive compared to the U.S. average.

- Trinity County’s lower average wages and incomes mean that existing residents’ dollars do not go as far in the county as the comparison areas.
- Trinity County employees are traveling longer distances to work and spending more time commuting than the benchmark areas.
 - However, 15 percent of Trinity County’s labor force works from home, over twice the closest comparison area.
- Census estimates underscore stakeholders’ assessments that Trinity County is underserved for broadband.
 - Just over 70 percent of local households have broadband internet subscriptions, the lowest rate of all the comparison areas.
- Housing was another prevalent theme discussed in Trinity County’s public input process.
 - Nearly 85 percent of survey respondents have had difficulties finding appropriate housing or know someone who has.
 - Census data reinforces residents’ beliefs that local housing costs and affordability are more prohibitive than comparison areas.
 - Availability of rental properties has also declined markedly in Trinity County.
- The devastating Monument Fire in Trinity County consumed 223,124 acres, the second largest fire in all of California in 2021.
 - Stakeholders lamented the fire’s impact on the natural environment and housing sector.
- Outdoor recreation is a local strength, with the Trinity River serving as the principal showpiece for the county with plentiful opportunities for fishing and whitewater rafting.
- Trinity County is also home to a small but active arts community.

Strategic Implications

The analysis in this report speaks to a community with notable assets that is struggling to transition from the past to the future. One thing many stakeholders hope will come from the Placemaking Playbook is a

clear vision of where Trinity County must go strategically to become a more competitive, thriving community.

Based on Community Assessment findings the following strategic implication categories have emerged.

- Cannabis
- Housing
- Broadband
- Fire Prevention
- Creative Industries
- Outdoors and Adventure Tourism
- Governmental Capacity

POPULATION TRENDS

A growing population is not always a reflection of a community’s economic health but is still an important indication of its desirability as a place to live, work, and invest. With tight labor markets in virtually every U.S. community, an expanding population base can help ease workforce shortages and give employers confidence that future labor supplies will be sufficient to support their growth.

When assessing Trinity County’s population growth and other trends, it is necessary to consider the peculiarities of U.S. Census Bureau’s different programs. The Decennial Census (the nationwide count held every ten years) is typically the most accurate survey and is used as the basis for Population Estimates and American Community Survey (ACS) data released in between Decennial Census years.

Because the 2020 Census counted thousands of new residents in Trinity County, this affects the analysis of trends between 2010 and 2020 using ACS and Population Estimates data. **We believe this new source of population is comprised largely of Hmong immigrants who migrated to Trinity County to work in the cannabis industry.** It is likely that this growth was not captured by the Census Bureau’s survey methodologies between the Decennial Census years. This is confirmed later in this report by exploring change in the county’s race and ethnicity percentages.

Thus, you see a marked population increase in Trinity County from 2010 to 2020 of 16.9 percent, dwarfing the rates in all the comparison areas.

TOTAL POPULATION, 2000-2020

Geography	2000	2010	2020	% Change	
				2010-20	2000-20
Trinity County	13,022	13,786	16,112	16.9%	23.7%
Del Norte County	27,507	28,610	27,743	-3.0%	0.9%
Mendocino County	86,265	87,841	91,601	4.3%	6.2%
Plumas County	20,824	20,007	19,790	-1.1%	-5.0%
California	33,871,648	37,253,956	39,538,223	6.1%	16.7%
United States	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	7.4%	17.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

The first population estimate after the 2020 Census, however, shows Trinity County’s population declining by 0.3 percent from 2020 to 2021. Thus, the county’s population trends will most likely normalize based on the new baseline from the 2020 Census.

Here is where things might get a bit confusing. To analyze trends in between the Decennial Census years, our only source of data is the Bureau’s Population Estimates and American Community Survey reports which do not capture the larger Hmong presence. As a result, whenever you see trend analysis with these two sources, you can assume that they **DO NOT** include the full Hmong population.

As an example, the Census’ Population Estimates program, not capturing the total Hmong population, showed a loss of population in Trinity County from 2010 to 2019. **Especially telling is the survey’s reporting of a net decline in international migration of ten persons during this period.**

Components of population change highlight the three ways communities can grow: 1) natural change (births minus deaths); 2) international migration (residents coming from another country; and 3) domestic migration (residents coming from another U.S. county). The following table shows trends identified in California for some time, namely that population growth is solely attributable to natural change and international migration. Residents have been leaving the state for other parts of the U.S. for years, most likely due to cost of living challenges.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE, 2010-2019

Geography	Natural Change	Int'l Migration	Domestic Migration	Total Change
Trinity County	(424)	(10)	(1,063)	(1,499)
Del Norte County	146	103	(1,085)	(798)
Mendocino County	1,685	(153)	(2,565)	(1,101)
Plumas County	(619)	16	(606)	(1,200)
California	2,163,148	1,021,544	(912,038)	2,257,704

Source: U.S. Census, Population Estimates

When our analysis returns to data reported from the 2020 Decennial Census, the true presence of the local Hmong population becomes more evident. **As measured by the official ten-year Census counts, Trinity County’s Asian population grew by 13.1 percent from 2010 to 2020, well in excess of all the comparison geographies.** Asians now comprise 13.7 percent of Trinity County’s population, equivalent to statewide numbers.

POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2010-2020

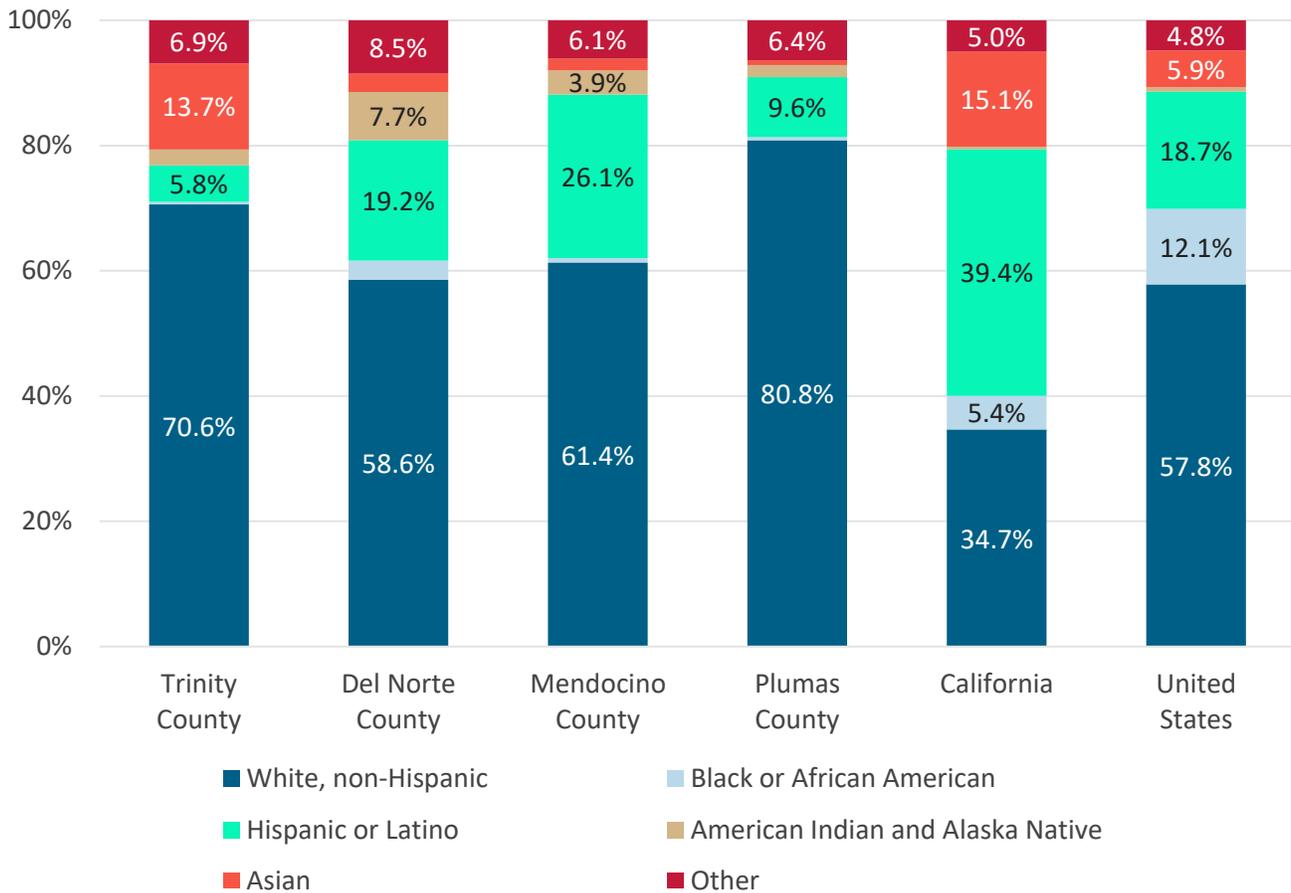
Race/Ethnicity	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
White, non-Hispanic	-13.0%	-6.1%	-7.2%	-4.2%	-5.5%	-5.9%
Black or African American	0.1%	-0.3%	0.0%	-0.4%	-0.4%	-0.2%
Hispanic or Latino	-1.1%	1.4%	3.9%	1.6%	1.8%	2.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	-1.5%	0.9%	-0.1%	-0.4%	-0.0%	-0.0%
Asian	13.1%	-0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	2.3%	1.2%
Other	2.4%	4.4%	3.1%	3.3%	1.9%	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

Every racial and ethnic cohort in Trinity County besides Asians and negligible increases in Black or African American and Other (mixed race, etc.) residents declined in the last decade, including **a 13.0 percent drop in White residents**. These trends echo those of the comparison counties, state, and nation; the diversification of the United States will continue to be the dominant population narrative for decades to come. Despite these declines, **White residents of Trinity County are still the most prevalent race or ethnicity, representing just over 70 percent of the county’s population**.

Population trends identified by Census data echo feedback from many Trinity County public input residents who explained that thousands of Hmong workers immigrated to the county to work on cannabis farms. As will be discussed later in this report, Hmong residents struggle along with much of the Trinity County population to find adequate affordable housing.

POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2020

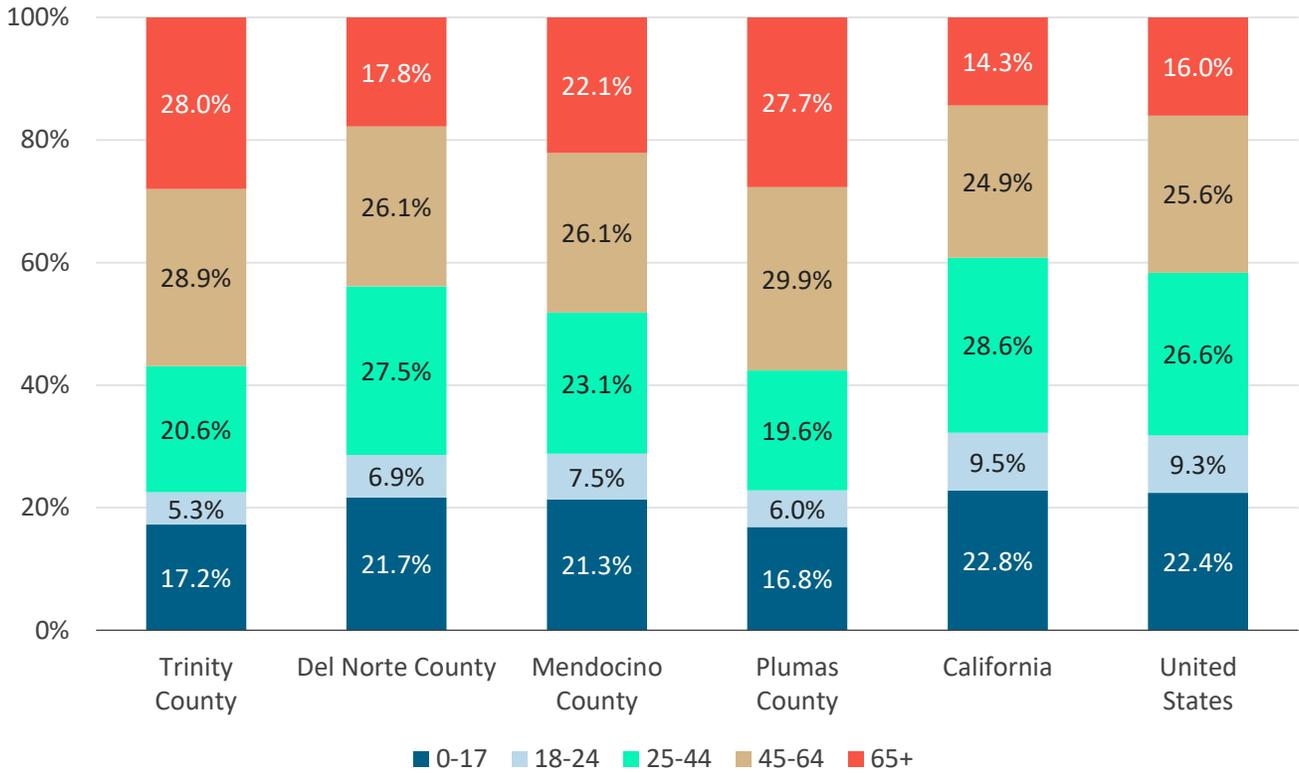


Source: U.S. Census, Decennial Census

In addition to examining overall population growth, analyzing a community’s age dynamics helps paint a picture of its current and future workforce capacity. Ideally, there is a balanced mix of residents of all ages, including the “prime” working years of 25 to 64 and sustainable percentages of younger residents who represent the future talent pool.

Trinity County’s age-related trends should be of concern for workforce sustainability. Residents over age 65 are the fastest growing cohort in Trinity County and comprise nearly 30 percent of the population, well above all the comparison areas. In terms of age cohorts who will make up the county’s future workforce, Trinity County has fewer relative numbers of these residents than every comparison geography except Plumas County. It is unclear how inclusion of the full Hmong population in ACS data would affect these trends, but it is likely that the county’s average age would drop.

POPULATION BY AGE, 2020



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Because their average ages are likely lower than the overall population, determining how to leverage Hmong residents as important long-term members of the Trinity County community would be an important way to ensure future workforce capacity is sustainable.

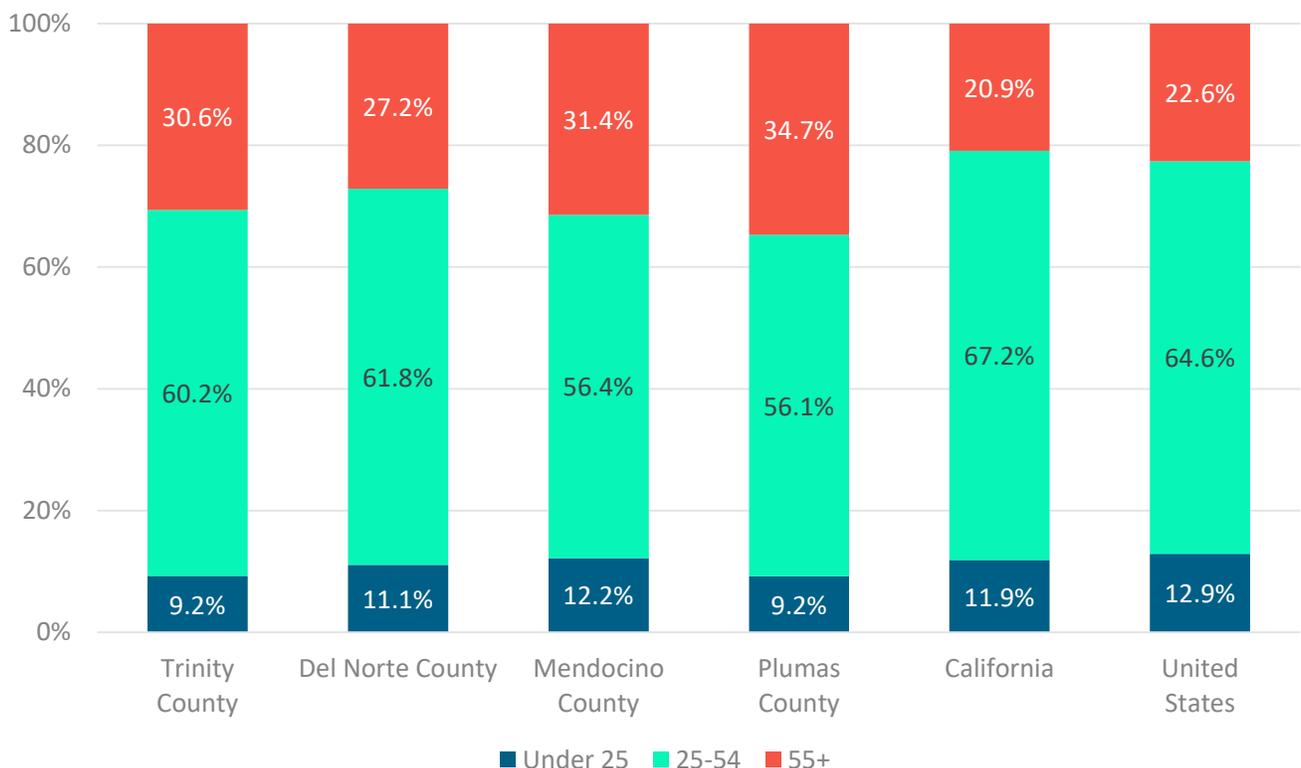
TALENT TRENDS

Population dynamics directly influence the most pressing issue facing communities today: the need to provide a sufficient supply of trained workers to satisfy employers' hiring needs. The ability to retain and attract the right talent and ensure that training pathways prepare students for jobs in demand can make or break success in today's economy.

Data are mixed in terms of Trinity County's current competitive position related to talent and highlight the limitations of using federal surveys to approximate workforce capacity. As mentioned in the last section, Trinity County's relative percentages of working-age adults and future workforce cohorts are different based on the U.S. Census' decennial counts and year-to-year blended averages in the American Community Survey.

In the following chart, JobsEQ uses publicly available data like the U.S. Census and proprietary sources to determine Trinity County's working-age population. **Per these estimates, Trinity County's age cohorts are more sustainable than most of its peer counties.**

WORKING AGE POPULATION, 2021

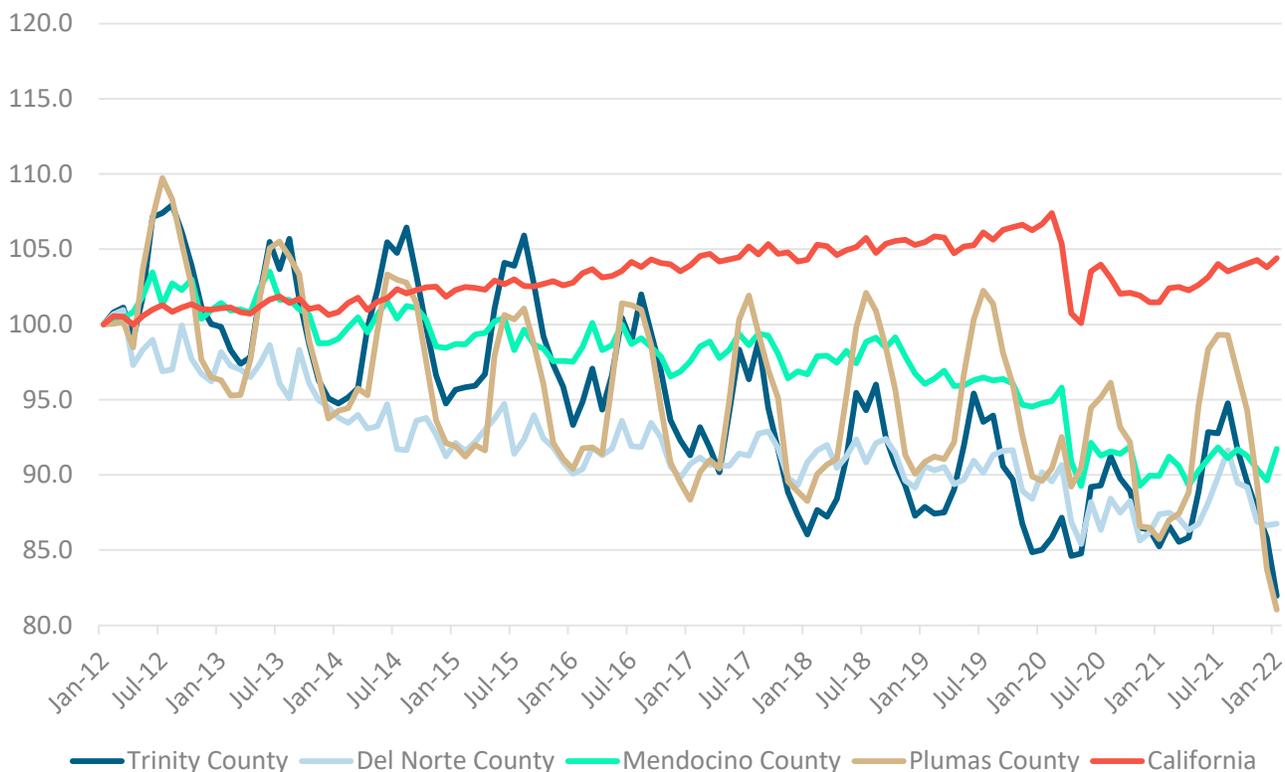


Source: JobsEQ

The percentage of Trinity County’s population nearing retirement age is lower than two of the three peer counties while its cohort in the prime working age years of 25 to 54 trails only Del Norte County. However, its under 25 percentage is still comparatively low. The differences between the more rural California counties and state and national averages are clear; **California and the U.S. have more sustainable working age cohorts and larger population shares aging into the labor force than Trinity County and its peers.** Looking at total workforce (those who are employed or looking for work) data over the last decade demonstrates the seasonality of employment in the profiled counties. An indexed chart measures change from an arbitrary fixed point (in this case, 100.0) to see how the geographies diverge over time.

In addition to a decade-long decline in total workforce capacity versus the state, Trinity County and its peers experience noticeable labor force peaks during the summer months – potentially a result of tourism spikes and harvest cycles. The trend is less pronounced in Mendocino County, the community with the largest population and strongest economy in the last ten years.

LABOR FORCE INDEX, JANUARY 2012 TO JANUARY 2022



Data are not seasonally adjusted
January 2012 = 100

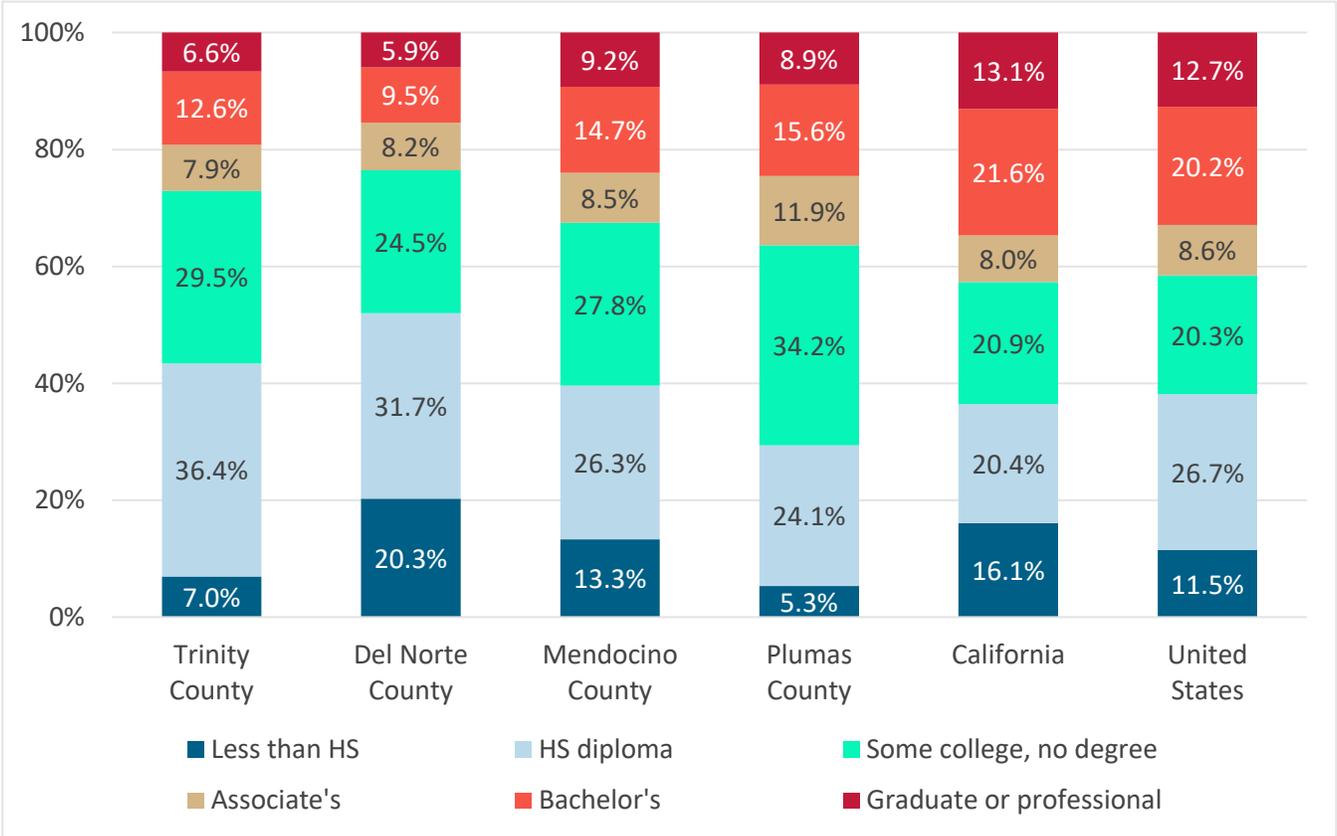
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Another key population element influencing workforce capacity is educational attainment. This statistic correlates to adults' highest level of education and is seen by companies and professionals who scout relocation markets as a proxy for the skill levels of the local workforce. An information technology company, for example, will look for regions with higher levels of bachelor's degree-plus attainment.

As opposed to most of the last century when growth in America's production-based sectors meant that an individual with a high school degree (or often no degree at all) could find and keep a quality middle-class job, the highest-paying jobs in today's knowledge-and-services-based economy typically require at a minimum an associate's degree and often more than that.

The competitive disadvantage of Trinity and Del Norte counties, and, to a lesser degree, Mendocino and Plumas versus California and U.S. is evident in the following chart. Nearly three-quarters (72.9%) of Trinity County's population over age 25 lacks a college degree. Trinity and its three peer counties also significantly trail the state and nation in their percentage of adults with bachelor's degrees or higher, although Mendocino and Plumas are more competitive on this count.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

More concerning is that Trinity County’s percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree declined by 2.4 percent from 2015 to 2020, the largest drop of all the comparison geographies. On a more positive note, Trinity’s high school degree attainment rose notably during this period, as did its population with a graduate or professional degree.

The differences between the decennial U.S. Census count and American Community Survey data potentially improve the optics of Trinity County’s degree attainment rates. Consistent with established trends in itinerant agricultural labor forces, it is likely that the county’s Hmong population (not captured in ACS data) does not have high levels of college degree attainment.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2015-2020

Age Group	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
Less than HS	-2.2%	0.2%	0.1%	-4.2%	-2.1%	-1.9%
HS diploma	5.4%	2.6%	-0.2%	0.2%	-0.3%	-1.1%
Some college, no degree	-0.7%	-3.0%	-1.1%	1.1%	-1.0%	-0.8%
Associate's	-1.7%	-0.1%	0.8%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%
Bachelor's	-2.4%	0.1%	-1.0%	2.3%	1.8%	1.7%
Graduate or professional	1.6%	0.2%	1.3%	0.3%	1.5%	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

While it is always possible to import skilled talent, the most reliable way for communities to improve their educational attainment rates and the efficacy of their talent pipelines is through local education and training systems. The pre-kindergarten to higher education “continuum” must effectively prepare students for college or careers. Ensuring that leaders and practitioners in the education space have the support necessary to produce skilled graduates is critical to any economic development strategy.

Fortunately for Trinity County, its Pre-K to 12th grade public school districts operate from a position of strength versus its peer systems. Currently, Trinity County includes nine school districts operating 25 schools serving over 1,600 students. In the last five years, two schools in Trinity County have been recognized as California Distinguished Schools, with [RISE Academy](#) in Weaverville receiving the California School Board Association’s Golden Bell Award and Apple for Excellence Award for 2020.

As the data in the following table demonstrate, **Trinity County students' performance on statewide assessment tests is stronger than all the benchmark geographies. Furthermore, a higher percentage of Trinity County seniors are college ready than Del Norte and Plumas counties,** though all the profiled counties trail the state by a wide margin in this category. Trinity County also saw the most dramatic rise in college readiness from the 2017-18 to 2020-21 school years.

Where Trinity County schools fall behind is in graduation rate. The performance of Trinity County high schools trails all the benchmark areas and has declined by 2.0 percent in the period measured, the largest drop of all the comparison geographies.

PRE-K TO 12 PUBLIC SCHOOL DATA, 2017-18 TO 2020-21

Year / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California
CAASPP* Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA)					
2017-18	45.1%	34.6%	36.2%	42.0%	49.9%
2020-21	51.9%	44.9%	35.5%	46.3%	49.0%
% pt. chg.	6.8%	10.3%	-0.7%	4.3%	-0.9%
CAASPP* Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for Mathematics					
2017-18	40.0%	23.5%	25.0%	31.6%	38.7%
2020-21	46.8%	24.2%	17.7%	24.0%	33.8%
% pt. chg.	6.8%	0.7%	-7.3%	-7.6%	-4.9%
Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rate					
2017-18	76.8%	80.8%	83.8%	86.5%	85.3%
2020-21	74.8%	87.1%	86.5%	85.8%	87.3%
% pt. chg.	-2.0%	6.3%	2.7%	-0.7%	2.0%
College Readiness (% of graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements)					
2017-18	20.7%	16.4%	28.6%	26.9%	49.9%
2020-21	30.5%	16.9%	31.5%	27.9%	52.1%
% pt. chg.	9.8%	0.4%	2.8%	1.1%	2.2%

*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

Source: California Department of Education

Numerous studies have shown that providing quality early childhood education has strong benefits in later grades. The [Trinity County Office of Education](#) (TCOE) sponsors, provides training for, and oversees

the California State Preschool Programs located in Lewiston and Weaverville. TCOE also oversees a training and resources program for Trinity County pre-school staff called Quality Counts California (QCC) that improves their vocational stability and educational quality. A School Readiness Program administered by TCOE currently offers services in Coffee Creek, Hayfork, Hoaglin-Zenia, and Van Duzen districts. The program is structured to fill identified gaps in early childhood education by targeting children between the ages of zero and five who live in high-poverty communities with underperforming schools or are unserved/underserved for early childhood programming.

Importantly, **Trinity County students benefit from a holistic, public-private approach to academic performance through a cradle-to-career partnership called [Trinity Together](#).** These efforts are typically found in much larger communities and focus on a collective, data-driven, and coordinated approach to student success.



Part of a larger regional effort branded [North State Together](#) with Shasta, Tehama, Siskiyou, and Modoc counties, Trinity Together is comprised of leaders from the Trinity County Office of Education and the education community, the local business community, and local service organizations. North State Together services as the regional backbone for the county-level partnerships and guides the overall regional vision and strategy, establishes shared measurements, builds public support, aligns activities, advances policy, and mobilizes funding.

There was very little feedback in the visioning sessions for the Trinity County placemaking plan focused on pre-K to 12 systems or schools. Online survey participants asked about workforce development strengths, challenges, and programs in Trinity County provided some perspectives, but most respondents deferred. Of those who commented, stronger relationships among pre-K to 12 institutions were cited as a positive development, while a handful of stakeholders mentioned Trinity Together as an advantage. Two respondents noted that Trinity High School was adding career and technical education (CTE) classes with pathways to entry-level careers.

At the post-secondary level, Trinity County is home to a satellite campus of Shasta Community College. Opened in 2008, the Trinity Campus is located adjacent to the Trinity Alps Performing Center in Weaverville. Students can access free tutoring services – in person or online – free wireless connections,

a computer lab, free Chromebooks, and guidance with the enrollment process, financial aid, and support navigating online classes. **Because Shasta College is part of the Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District, all campuses allow students to complete a degree or certificate without commuting to the main campus in Redding.** Additionally, high school students can earn credits toward high school completion through the Concurrent Enrollment program available at each campus.

Shasta College degree and certificate programs are offered in the following subject areas: Earth and Environment, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, Industrial Technology, Business and Hospitality, Language and Literature, Education, Visual and Performing Arts, People, Culture, and Society, Public Safety, and Health and Wellness.

Public survey respondents noted that the lack of diverse job availability in Trinity County for well-paying careers limits the need for workforce training programs outside of key sectors such as forestry and healthcare. Others cited the programs at the SMART Center as a valuable local resource, although one input participant countered, “I only know that because of where I work. I’m not sure how much the general public knows about those resources.” Another called the SMART Center “underutilized. Employers like the hospital and county need to recruit many positions from out of the area as the qualified candidate pool is low here.” According to another resident, “We have multiple agencies that provide assistance with workforce but there doesn't seem to be a connection between them. We need a stronger united front to help the agencies support each other and the clients.”

The [SMART Workforce Center](#) is a four-county non-profit organization with an office in Weaverville that leverages federal, state, and philanthropic dollars to assist job seekers with finding work and employers with sourcing talent.

Another local asset cited by input participants was the [Watershed Research and Training Center](#), a non-profit Trinity County-based organization that offers land and watershed management services, leads state biomass and fire resilience partnerships, stewards the natural environment, and creates and sustains quality jobs.

Despite these services, stakeholders remain skeptical about the breadth and depth of local workforce development programming. One survey respondent explained, “We are isolated and it is a far drive to more in-depth options. Cannabis offers seasonal employment that pays well enough that it is

hard to find year-round employees. This quick money can be deceptive in terms of keeping people from developing long term skills. Also, there is a serious lack of affordable child care options. Especially at a price you can afford with a lower paying job.”

The [Trinity County Child Care Planning Council](#) is the lead entity overseeing local child care capacity and quality issues. The Council provides a forum to address child care needs, recommends priorities for funding, and advises the County Board of Supervisors and County Superintendent of Schools on child care programs and policies. The Council has ten members and meets five times per school year.

The confluence of factors contributing to Trinity County’s perceived lack of opportunity leads some residents to feel there is a “brain drain” of top talent who leave for, as one stakeholder called it, “better and higher paying jobs in Shasta or Humboldt.” Another said, “Our kids go off to get educated at college and there’s nothing to return for. What college graduate comes back home to Trinity for a career? Your kids finish high school and either stay in dead-end jobs at home or move away.” Whether or not this is truly the case in all instances is up for debate, but **the lack of a diverse base of well-paying occupations is nevertheless borne out in the data.**

The following tables measure Trinity County’s **occupational structure** by broad categories of jobs. Occupational data relates to the *type of work* people are doing regardless of what their company does. Occupational trends allow for analysis of a labor force’s core skill sets and speaks to opportunities available in the local economy. As with population totals, a caveat is necessary for this data. **The federal government does not count employment in the cannabis industry – legal or illegal – in its official job reports. Therefore, these occupations will not be reflected in the following two tables.** As we will see later in this report, this omission complicates analysis of Trinity County trends.

In this analysis, we will use a calculation called a **location quotient (LQ)** to measure the relative concentration of an occupation in Trinity County versus the national average. Essentially, LQs show whether a community has the same number (LQ=1.0), more (LQ=>1.0), or fewer (LQ=<1.0) people working in that occupation than the average community nationwide. We use LQs to identify which local occupations are more “specialized” in that a greater number of local workers have these skills.

Trinity County’s occupation structure shows that the community’s most concentrated occupations are in Farming, Fishing, and Forestry, Protective Service, Life, Physical and Social Science, Community and Social Service, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, Personal Care and Service, and

Management. Aside from Life, Physical, and Social Science and Management, these occupational categories typically do not pay high wages. The largest occupations by total employment in Trinity County are also in lower-paying jobs.

TRINITY COUNTY, OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE (2-DIGIT SOC), Q3 2021

Occupation	Location Quotient	Employment	# Change	5-yr % Change	5-yr US % Change
Office and Administrative Support	 0.80	323	-11	-3.4%	-4.4%
Sales and Related	 0.88	268	-11	-4.1%	-4.7%
Management	 1.25	248	-22	-8.1%	4.5%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	 0.99	241	-33	-11.9%	-10.1%
Educational Instruction and Library	 1.21	211	-42	-16.7%	-2.8%
Transportation and Material Moving	 0.76	208	-7	-0	0
Business and Financial Operations	 0.92	176	18	11.7%	13.0%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	 0.91	170	-1	-0.7%	7.0%
Healthcare Support	 1.16	165	27	19.4%	9.0%
Protective Service	 2.15	145	4	3.1%	-0.5%
Construction and Extraction	 0.97	142	10	7.2%	3.6%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	 1.36	142	24	20.6%	-4.5%
Production	 0.74	136	-19	-12.4%	-3.9%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	 1.01	122	4	3.0%	0.7%
Personal Care and Service	 1.29	101	6	6.1%	-7.3%
Community and Social Service	 1.53	88	-0	-0.3%	3.1%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	 3.19	68	16	30.9%	2.1%
Computer and Mathematical	 0.52	57	5	10.1%	16.2%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	 1.63	47	2	4.8%	8.1%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	 0.83	47	-1	-1.8%	-2.4%
Architecture and Engineering	 0.68	36	-1	-2.5%	3.1%
Legal	 1.03	28	-2	-7.9%	5.6%
Total - All Occupations	1.00	3,170	-36	-1.1%	0.5%

Source: JobsEQ

Conversely, Trinity County has low concentrations in better paying sectors like Production, Computer and Mathematical, and Architecture and Engineering. **Aside from Farming, Fishing, and Forestry, many of Trinity County's other top occupational sectors grew slower than the national average.**

The following table looks at occupations that are sub-sets of the broader categories in the previous table. Here we can see that **the most specialized occupations in Trinity County are Law Enforcement Workers and Ground Maintenance Workers.**

TRINITY COUNTY, PROJECTED OCCUPATIONAL DEMAND (4-DIGIT SOC), Q3 2021

SOC	Industry	Employment		Location Quotient	10-Yr. Forecast Demand	10-Yr. Forecast Growth %
35-3000	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	129		0.99	250	7
41-2000	Retail Sales Workers	177		1.06	228	-41
31-1100	Home Health and Personal Care Aides...	136		1.35	226	32
53-7000	Material Moving Workers	129		0.85	145	-16
13-1000	Business Operations Specialists	132		1.02	108	-13
11-9000	Other Management Occupations	153		1.88	108	-20
35-2000	Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	69		1.06	104	1
47-2000	Construction Trades Workers	112		0.98	99	-14
21-1000	Counselors, Social Workers, and Other...	84		1.79	92	3
39-9000	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	56		1.59	92	2
43-4000	Information and Record Clerks	86		0.74	88	-12
37-2000	Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	67		0.96	83	-4
25-2000	PK-12 and Special Education Teachers	111		1.37	71	-10
37-3000	Grounds Maintenance Workers	60		2.33	68	-6
53-3000	Motor Vehicle Operators	63		0.67	65	-6
43-9000	Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	69		0.89	63	-11
49-9000	Other Install., Maintenance, & Repair Occupation	73		1.14	57	-9
35-9000	Other Food Prep. & Serving Related Workers	24		0.97	47	2
33-9000	Other Protective Service Workers	26		0.86	47	-1
33-3000	Law Enforcement Workers	84		3.54	46	-12

Source: JobsEQ

The three occupations with the greatest projected future demand are **Food and Beverage Serving Workers, Retail Sales Workers, and Home Health and Personal Care Aides**. These projections support Trinity County stakeholders’ perceptions that the most prevalent future jobs would not be compelling for talent with higher levels of degree attainment.

A look at Trinity County’s average annual wages also reinforces perceptions that the county’s jobs pay lower than average rates. Trinity County’s wages are the lowest of all the comparison areas, and nearly **\$30,000 below the state’s annual figure**. Even so, they have been increasing faster than every benchmark except Del Norte County and California.

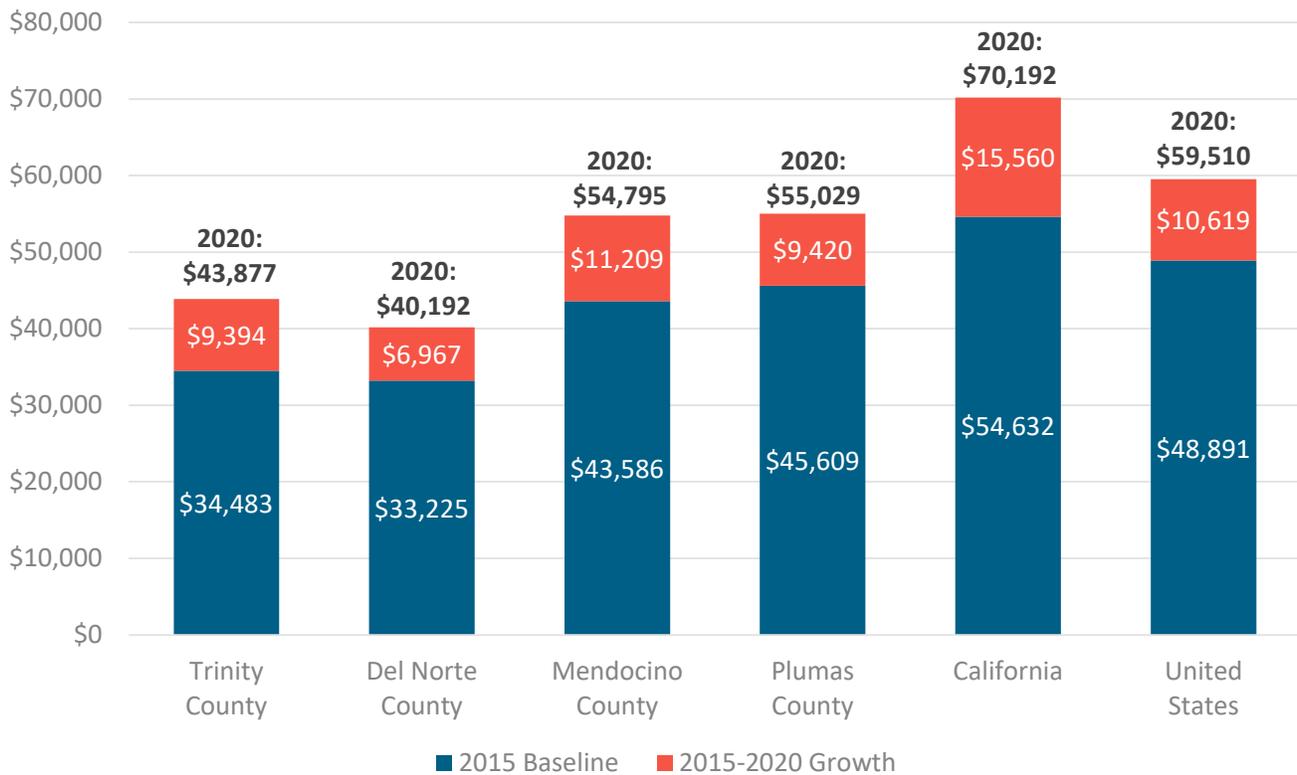
AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES, Q2 2016 TO Q3 2021

Geography	Q3 2016	Q3 2021	\$ change	% change
Trinity County	\$34,964	\$45,527	\$10,563	30.2%
Del Norte County	\$36,741	\$47,943	\$11,203	30.5%
Mendocino County	\$36,944	\$47,489	\$10,545	28.5%
Plumas County	\$39,717	\$49,533	\$9,815	24.7%
California	\$61,626	\$82,400	\$20,774	33.7%
United States	\$52,492	\$64,555	\$12,063	23.0%

Source: JobsEQ

Below average wage rates are also reflected in Trinity County’s lower per capita incomes. The average individual in Trinity County had an annual income of \$43,877 in 2020, the most recent data available. Only Del Norte County’s figure was lower. Again, Trinity County compared unfavorably to the state and nation, with annual incomes about \$27,000 below California and \$16,000 lower than the U.S.

PER CAPITA INCOME, 2015-2020



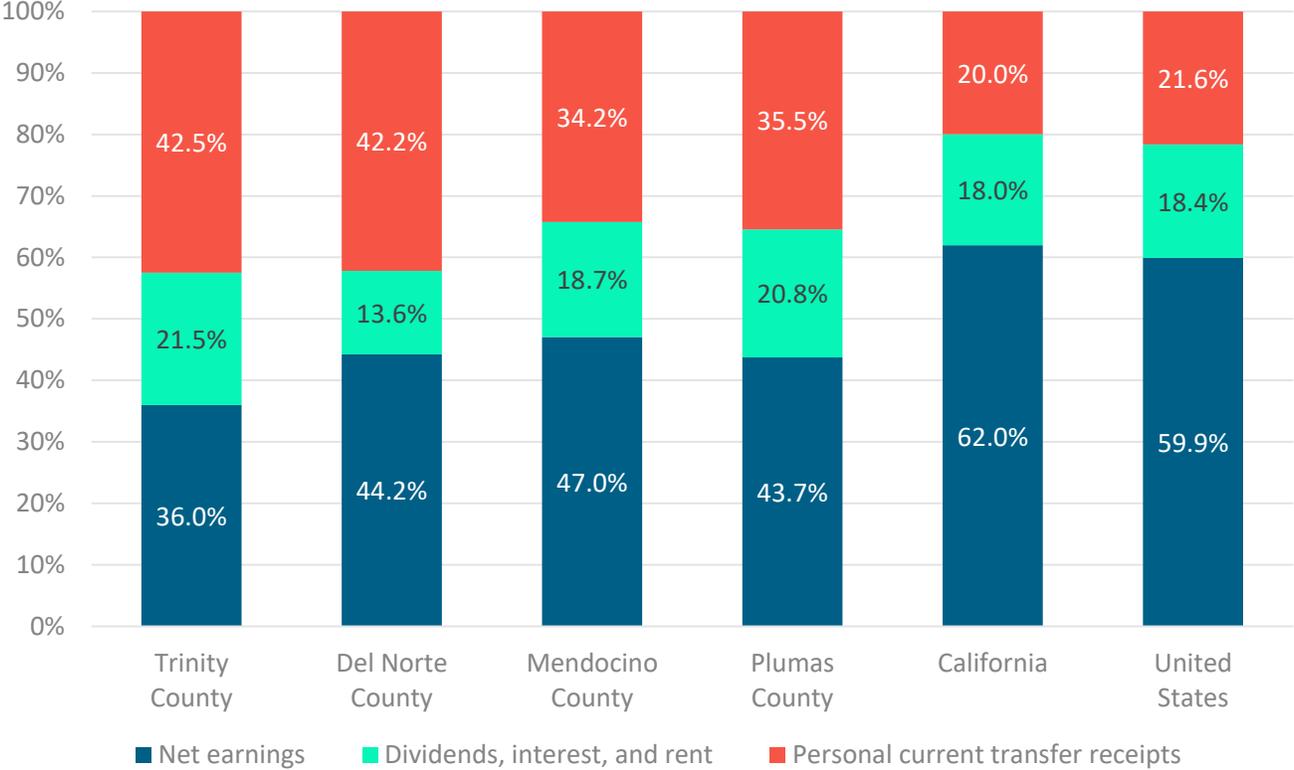
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Annual incomes come from additional sources besides wages from employment; individuals can also receive income from dividends, interest, and rent (investments and property ownership), and personal transfer receipts (social insurance programs, welfare, and business subsidies). Community wealth building generally benefits the most from higher rates of net earnings because they translate to greater numbers of residents employed and contributing fully to the local economy.

Trinity County's low rate of income from wages and higher relative receipts from transfer payments speaks both to the lower comparative wages of local jobs and larger shares of the population receiving federal benefits. This is typical of communities with larger percentages of older residents.

Interestingly, Trinity County has the highest rate of income from dividends, interest, and rent, implying a large presence of landholders or perhaps many residents with robust investment portfolios.

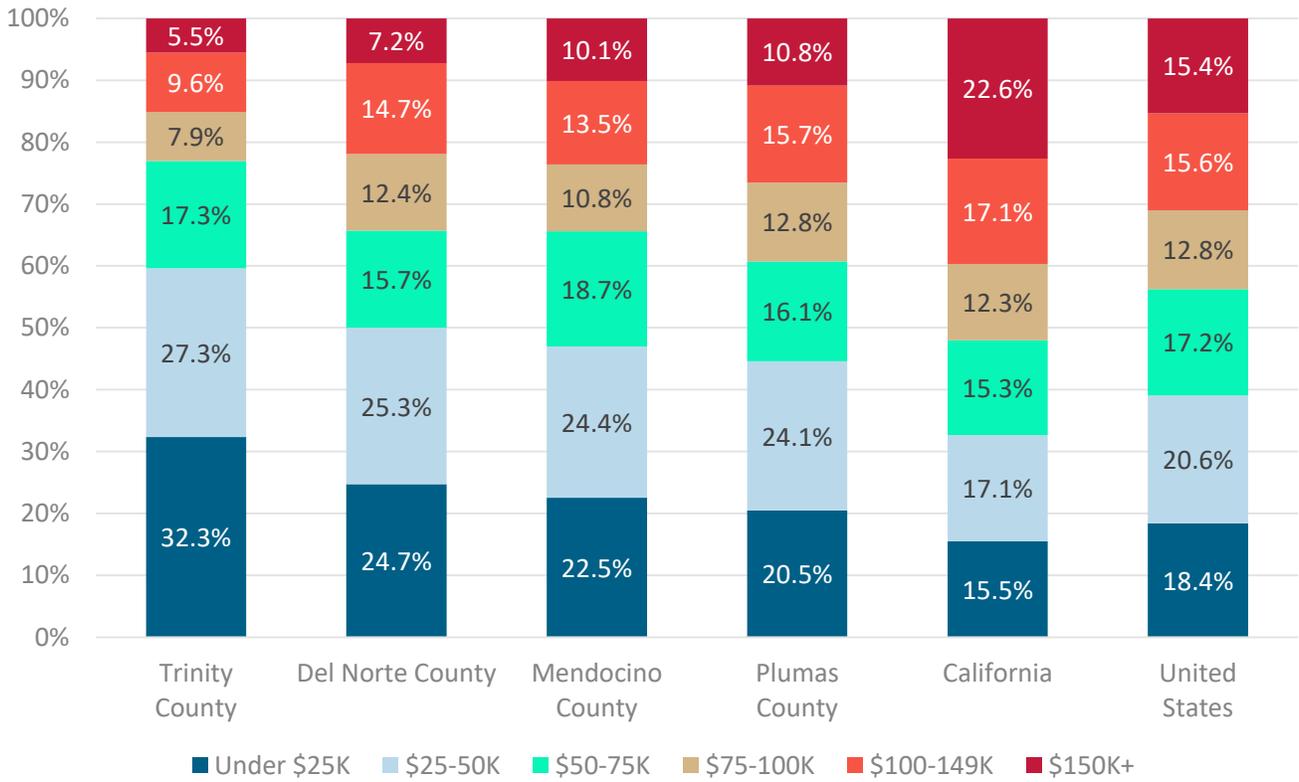
COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL INCOME, 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Per capita and sources of income trends correlate with a larger distribution of Trinity County households earning under \$50,000 than the comparison geographies. Nearly a third of Trinity County households have annual incomes below \$25,000, well above the peer counties and nearly double the state average. Conversely, just over 15 percent of Trinity County households have annual incomes above \$100,000 per year compared to nearly 40 percent in California and 31 percent in the U.S.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

These income distributions are consistent with Trinity County’s higher poverty¹ rates than most of the comparison areas. Trinity and Del Norte counties have the highest poverty rates (18.0 and 18.5 percent, respectively) among the comparison areas, about four percentage higher than Mendocino and Plumas and nearly seven percent above the state and national rates. Unfortunately, total poverty rates in Trinity County declined slower than every benchmark except Plumas County.

Trinity County also has the highest relative percentage of its youth population in poverty. Just over one-quarter of the county’s children under age 17 currently live in poverty, slightly above Del Norte County, roughly eight percent higher than Mendocino and Plumas counties, and over ten percent higher than California and the U.S.

¹ The federal poverty threshold in 2021 for an individual under age 65 was \$14,097. For two person households under age 65 it was \$18,145. For a four-person household with two children, the rate was \$27,479.

TOTAL AND YOUTH POVERTY, 2015-2020

Year / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
Poverty, All Ages						
2015	19.7%	23.3%	20.3%	13.8%	15.4%	14.7%
2020	18.0%	18.5%	14.3%	13.5%	11.5%	11.9%
% chg.	-1.7%	-4.8%	-6.0%	-0.3%	-3.9%	-2.8%
Poverty, Ages 0-17						
2015	32.1%	33.8%	27.3%	22.5%	21.2%	20.7%
2020	26.4%	23.4%	18.9%	18.3%	14.6%	15.7%
% pt. chg.	-5.7%	-10.4%	-8.4%	-4.2%	-6.6%	-5.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program

Multiple statistical indicators that show Trinity County features lower wages and incomes and higher rates of poverty are consistent with feedback from stakeholder input for the Placemaking Playbook. Discussions during visioning sessions and via the online survey often concerned the county’s challenges related to lack of quality employment opportunities and the resulting impacts on personal wellbeing and community vibrancy.

In the next section, we will look more closely at economic trends, concerns, and opportunities in Trinity County. These will help identify key issues that will inform the development of the county’s strategic plan.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Like many communities that largely depended on a single industry for their livelihood, Trinity County's economy has struggled as forestry and logging employment has declined in recent decades. While there is still a lumber mill presence, **Trinity County's job growth is increasingly comprised by government and administrative services, healthcare, and tourism sectors.**

Another growth industry is the subject of much local controversy: cannabis. Along with Mendocino and Humboldt counties, Trinity County forms the so-called Emerald Triangle region, the base of marijuana cultivation for California and the entire country. A recent report funded by Leafly found that California remains the nation's leading cannabis employer, with \$5.1 billion in 2021 sales supporting 83,607 jobs. The cannabis issue in Trinity County will be explored in more depth later in this section.

The prevalence of the cannabis industry in Trinity County also complicates the analysis of its economic trends and structure. **Because of the federal prohibition of marijuana sales, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis does not include any cannabis-related employment in its official job reports.** That is why merchandisers like Leafly feel the need to assess the economic and job impact of the cannabis industry to help legitimize it as a high impact sector.

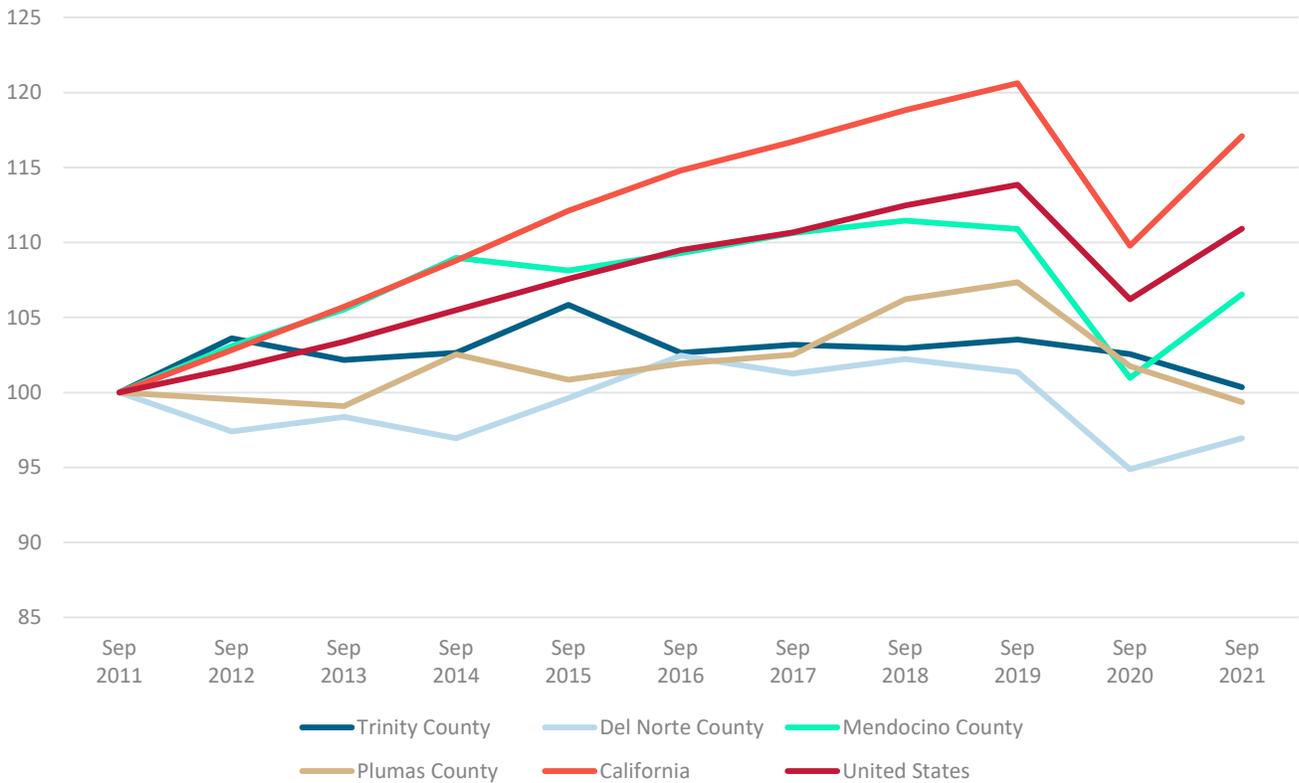
In the November 2020 Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Trinity County Cannabis Program, consulting firm Ascent Environmental attempted to estimate the county's total cannabis cultivation and non-cultivation employment. Utilizing total acreage estimates for Trinity County outdoor, mixed light, and indoor cultivation uses, Ascent calculated the county's cannabis cultivation employment by extrapolating industry-wide average jobs per acre for different uses.

The firm estimated that 1,236 individuals worked full time on cannabis cultivation in Trinity County in the year 2018. Further, they believe that 5,240 individuals are employed part-time during seasonal harvests. An additional 112 adults were estimated to work in noncultivation (manufacturing, distribution, nursery, testing, non-storefront retail, etc.) occupations.

If these numbers are correct, nearly 1,400 Trinity County workers were employed full time in the cannabis industry in 2018, with over 5,000 engaged part-time in these businesses. These are staggering "off-the-book" numbers in the context of official government data. **Federally reported data for the third quarter of 2021 show that Trinity County only had 3,170 total jobs, roughly the same number of jobs as the equivalent time period in 2011 (3,084).**

Factoring in cannabis-related employment would of course transform the perception of Trinity County’s economy. Until official government employment data incorporates cannabis jobs, however, any economic analysis of county trends will have to include a very large asterisk.

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT INDEX, SEPTEMBER 2011 TO SEPTEMBER 2021



Note: Data for September 2021 are preliminary and subject to revision

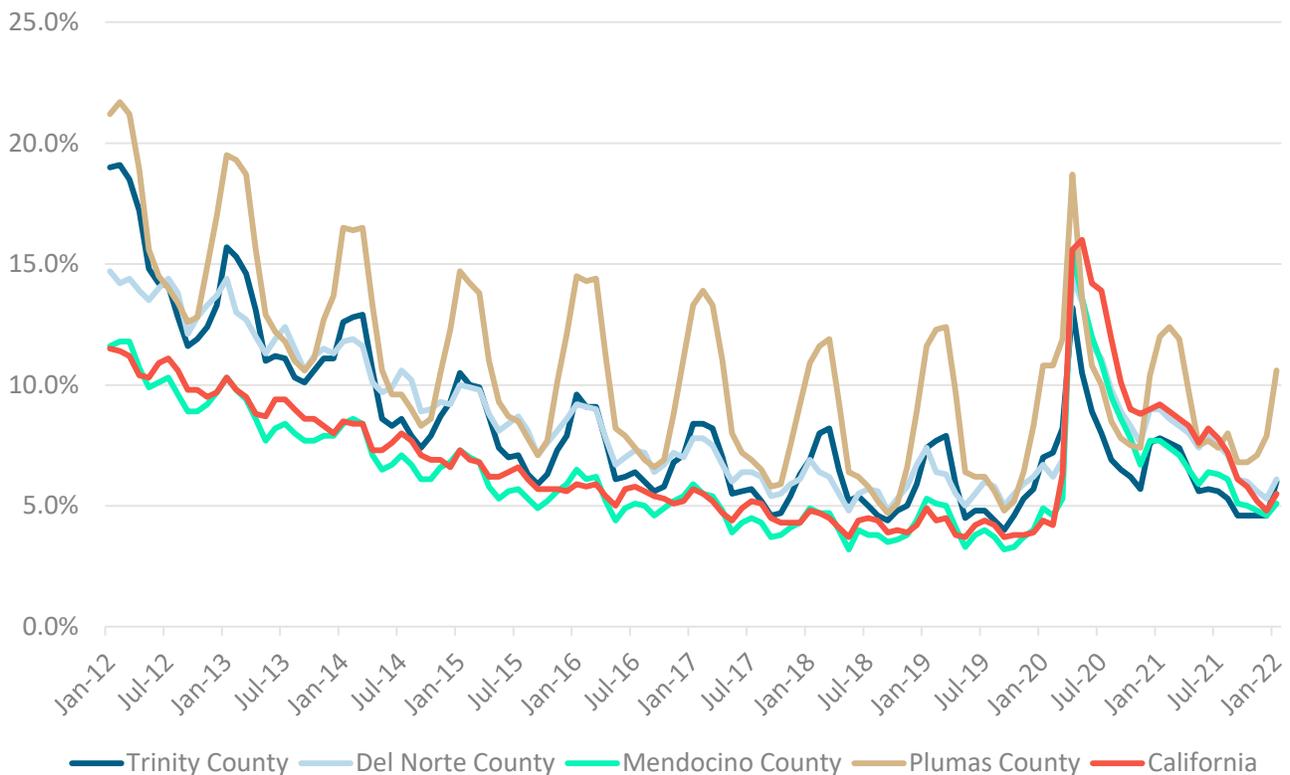
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

All four comparison counties experienced economic growth below the state and national levels, although Mendocino County is regaining much of the momentum lost around the middle of the decade.

The economies of all the profiled geographies are nearing pre-pandemic job totals. **Trinity County has regained 96.9 percent of its September 2019 jobs as of the start of Q3 2021, the largest share of the comparison counties.** California has regained 97.1 percent of its jobs and the U.S. 97.4 percent.

Seen over a ten-year period, unemployment rates for the comparison counties and California have declined slightly but experience the same cyclical trends as the labor force based on seasonal spikes.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, JANUARY 2012 TO JANUARY 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Local stakeholders have strong opinions about the current state and future opportunities of Trinity County’s economy. One survey respondent noted, “In my opinion we are 20 to 30 years behind in equinox economic development activities that would put us front and center, such as broadband throughout the county, adequate housing to meet our workforce needs and homeless needs, competitive salaries to attract experienced employees or skilled labor, (and) progressive and innovative thinking to move things forward.”

A stakeholder commented in a visioning session that limited capital availability and reluctance of banks to loan in Trinity County means that the cost to permit new development or redevelop small businesses exceeds their revenue potential.

However, many survey respondents also feel Trinity County has distinct advantages, including its lower cost of living than coastal California’s crowded metro areas. One recommended “reaching out to industry, like Silicon Valley, and other high-cost areas with incentives to bring larger employers into the county for warehousing, assembly, etc. Plenty of land here to develop and make available to increase

jobs, but (you need) to take the initiative. People in the Bay Area and other outlying areas cannot afford to purchase homes and would be incentivized to move to an area with lower home purchase costs, and jobs that have longevity.”

Through our analysis of occupational structure we were able to determine the strengths and challenges of Trinity County’s labor force. Similarly, we will explore the structure of the county’s employment to identify industry sectors that currently support economic growth and hold the potential to create quality, family-sustaining jobs in the future. While occupational SOC codes relate to workers’ roles within a company, employment NAICS codes correspond to the type of work done by the company itself. For example, the SOC code for janitorial services would count the number of workers holding these jobs at all local companies. Conversely, the NAICS code would report all the companies providing janitorial services as their principal line of business regardless of what jobs their workers have.

It must be stressed again that the data reported by the federal government captured by JobsEQ (the proprietary data provider used for this analysis) does not include cannabis industry jobs.

Location quotient calculations utilized in employment structure analysis convey the same type of relationships and specializations to national averages as those in the occupational analysis.

While the greatest number of Trinity County jobs are in Public Administration, Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services (Tourism), and Educational Services, the most specialized sectors by LQ are Public Administration, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, Utilities, and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. Public Administration in Trinity County is both large and specialized, testament to its outsized role in the local economy.

Of Trinity County’s largest sectors, only Health Care and Social Assistance grew in the five years prior to Q3 2021. Growth in the high paying sector of Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services was a bright spot for Trinity County, as were increases in Construction and the sector that includes Forestry.

As we have seen, if cannabis-related employment was included in government reports, Trinity County’s Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector would be the county’s largest and most specialized industry.

EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE (2-DIGIT NAICS), Q3 2021

Sector	Location Quotient	Employment	# Change	5-yr % Change	5-yr US % Change
Public Administration	 4.02	618	-6	-1.0%	1.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	 0.94	440	32	7.9%	4.8%
Retail Trade	 1.15	381	-33	-7.9%	-3.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	 1.21	299	-22	-6.9%	-11.8%
Educational Services	 1.01	256	-65	-20.2%	-2.6%
Manufacturing	 0.87	224	-22	-8.9%	-0.7%
Construction	 0.89	168	14	9.1%	8.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	 3.76	165	13	8.2%	-4.8%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	 0.93	127	3	2.6%	-3.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	 0.55	124	24	24.4%	9.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	 1.48	79	11	16.9%	-14.8%
Administrative / Support / Waste Management Svcs.	 0.33	68	23	52.8%	-0.3%
Utilities	 3.74	62	7	11.7%	-1.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	 0.29	46	1	1.7%	18.7%
Finance and Insurance	 0.24	32	-6	-15.7%	4.9%
Information	 0.49	31	-1	-1.7%	-1.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	 0.41	23	-2	-8.6%	3.0%
Wholesale Trade	 0.16	19	-4	-16.5%	-3.9%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	 0.83	9	5	146.4%	-19.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	 0.00	0	---	---	---
Total - All Industries	1.00	3,170	-36	-1.1%	0.5%

Source: JobsEQ

The following table looks at projected ten-year growth for Trinity County employment sectors but at finer-grained level of detail than the previous table. These 4-digit NAICS categories are sub-components of broader sectors (i.e., Grocery Stores is a sub-set of the Retail Trade sector).

At this more specific level of detail, we can see that **Sawmills and Wood Preservation, a sub-category of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, is Trinity County's most specialized employment sector with an astronomical LQ of 74.55**. This means that the county has almost 75 times more jobs

in this sector than the average U.S. community. We are also able to see that Administration of Environmental Quality Programs, a sub-set of Public Administration, is the most specialized component of that industry category with an LQ of 31.36.

Trinity County's most concentrated four-digit NAICS employment sectors are not projected to grow in the coming ten years. Instead, based on both total job growth and percentage increase, **Individual and Family Services is projected to be the strongest growth driver for Trinity County's future economy.** This sector is a sub-component of the Health Care and Social Assistance industry.

PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (4-DIGIT NAICS), Q3 2021

NAICS	Sector	Employment	LQ (4Q Mov Avg)	10-Yr. Forecast Growth #	10-Yr. Forecast Growth %
9211	Exec., Legislative, & Other General Gov. Support	333	5.35	-39	-11.8%
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	252	1.57	-27	-10.8%
9241	Administration of Environmental Quality Programs	215	31.36	-37	-17.0%
6241	Individual and Family Services	204	3.39	48	23.6%
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	161	0.82	8	4.8%
3211	Sawmills and Wood Preservation	145	74.55	-17	-11.7%
4451	Grocery Stores	141	2.46	-36	-25.8%
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	136	1.10	-14	-10.0%
7211	Traveler Accommodation	70	2.35	2	2.4%
9221	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	68	1.75	-11	-16.4%
4441	Building Material and Supplies Dealers	57	2.21	-13	-22.5%
2211	Electric Power Generation, Trans. & Distribution	57	5.83	-15	-26.0%
4471	Gasoline Stations	56	2.90	-12	-22.1%
7139	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	55	2.07	12	20.8%
5617	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	55	1.00	-8	-14.3%
2361	Residential Building Construction	51	2.01	-7	-14.6%
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	42	0.83	-6	-14.0%
8133	Social Advocacy Organizations	41	8.34	3	7.1%

Source: JobsEQ

The stark reality is that **most of the highest-paying national growth sectors in knowledge and technology-based production and services industries are not prominent features of Trinity**

County's economy. While some solace can be taken in the fact that many of Trinity County's largest employment sectors, including public administration, health care, education, and utilities have long-term stability, they do not have the potential to create significant community wealth or retain/attract top talent. Even if cannabis jobs were factored into the analysis, these positions are typically lower paying, especially if they are in cultivation.

When asked during visioning sessions about Trinity County's greatest strengths in economic development, stakeholders identified creative industries, agrarian/small scale agriculture and biodiverse farming, skilled trades, expertise in forestry and land management, recreation and eco-tourism, and electricity-dependent industries as key opportunities. Others cited the potential to attract telecommuters and remote workers as a potential strategy, albeit along with efforts to improve local broadband capacity. Online survey respondents feel that Tourism, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Accommodation and Food Services are Trinity County's top three opportunity sectors for future growth.

Regardless of the type of jobs pursued strategically, Trinity County can leverage its strong entrepreneurial capacity as a key lever to launch and grow companies in these sectors. Current data and recent trends measuring entrepreneurship show that **Trinity County features outsized rates of self-employment and has higher percentages of small and younger firms than this report's comparison geographies.**

In Q3, 2021, 13.5 percent of Trinity County workers identified as self-employed, a proxy term for sole proprietorships. This was well above the nearest comparison area (Mendocino County at 10.8 percent) and roughly double the state and national averages.

Despite a slight five-year decline in self-employment, it is clear that one-person firms play a major role in Trinity County's economy. Again, these data do not reflect sole-proprietorships in the cannabis industry, of which there are likely many in Trinity County. The Revised Draft EIR for the Trinity County Cannabis Program bears out this assumption.

MEASURES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, Q3 2016 TO Q3 2021

Quarter / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
% of all workers who are self-employed						
Q3 2016	14.2%	6.0%	10.3%	8.9%	6.4%	6.2%
Q3 2021	13.5%	6.4%	10.8%	9.0%	6.8%	6.6%
% pt. change	-0.7%	0.4%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%	0.4%
% of private employment in firms with 19 or fewer employees						
2016 Q1	48.0%	36.5%	44.1%	51.4%	22.0%	18.1%
2021 Q1	58.4%	33.5%	40.9%	55.7%	22.5%	17.9%
% pt. change	10.4%	-3.0%	-3.2%	4.4%	0.5%	-0.3%
% of private employment in firms aged 5 years or less						
2016 Q1	13.8%	14.6%	15.5%	14.1%	13.4%	10.1%
2021 Q1	20.9%	13.3%	16.4%	17.8%	13.4%	10.3%
% pt. change	7.1%	-1.3%	0.9%	3.7%	-0.1%	0.1%

Source: JobsEQ, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Most Trinity County private employment is in firms with under 19 employees; this includes sole-proprietorships. While Plumas County has similar small business dynamics, most of the peer geographies feature much less economic dynamism from small employers. Notably, the percentage of Trinity County's economy comprised by firms under 19 workers grew by 10.4 percentage points from Q1 2016 to the same quarter in 2021. This could reflect small business dynamism as well as job losses at larger firms.

Finally, Trinity County has a higher percentage of firms in business less than five years than all the comparison geographies. With an increasing amount of its total employment comprised by younger companies, Trinity County has experienced either a spike in new business creation, the closing of longer-tenured firms, or a combination of the two. Regardless, it shows that **the local population has an industriousness and bootstrap mentality that compels them to do whatever it takes to succeed in Trinity County**. This bodes well for future economic prospects if the right mix of opportunities can be captured strategically in Trinity County's Placemaking Playbook.

Small business dynamism and resourcefulness could also be a legacy of Trinity County's place in the Emerald Triangle and its historically vibrant cannabis economy. **During stakeholder input, every conversation at some point included a discussion of cannabis and its role in the community and**

economy. According to one resident, “Cannabis touches every single person’s life here in Trinity.” Another said, “I don’t know a single person whose income isn’t dependent on cannabis in some way or another.”

According to the November 2020 Revised Draft EIR for the Trinity County Cannabis Program, there were nearly 4,000 cannabis cultivation sites on just over 1,100 acres in Trinity County in 2016.

TRINITY COUNTY CANNABIS CULTIVATION ESTIMATES, 2016

Certainty Level ¹	High Certainty	Medium Certainty	Low Certainty	Total
Number of sites	1,959	849	1,119	3,927
Acreage	696	175	236	1,109

1 The term “certainty level” is based on the professional evaluation of North State Resources on the likelihood that the sites identified were cultivating cannabis.

Source: North State Resources 2017

Because Trinity County did not permit commercial cannabis cultivation until the adoption of Ordinance 315-816 EXT (A1) in August 2016, these were all illegal operations. From the time of the ordinance’s adoption to December 2018, the county issued 286 commercial cannabis operation licenses. The Revised Draft EIR states that, “Comparison of the 2016 mapping to 2018 satellite imagery of portions of the county shows that, despite the presence of a licensing program, the number of sites and acreage in unlicensed and illegal cannabis cultivation has increased since 2016.”

The outsized presence and impact of cannabis – especially illegal – operations in Trinity County, combined with proponents’ beliefs in the industry’s immense economic potential, have a polarizing effect on public discourse.

Typical of many online survey and visioning comments, one stakeholder noted that “the (Trinity) County government is resisting, and/or impeding through dysfunctional planning, cannabis licensure and the resultant development of hundreds of small businesses that could add more than 1,000 jobs to the county. Assist these businesses, don't discourage them.” However, an equal number of residents stated that cannabis was a root cause of Trinity County’s housing, homelessness, and blight challenges, among other negative impacts.

Dissatisfaction with the status quo around cannabis has sometimes led to legal action. In a lawsuit filed in Trinity County Superior Court, the Trinity Action Association, a local citizen’s group, said cannabis

cultivation licenses issued by Trinity County officials do not comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Pro-cannabis forces have also used legal means to compel action. In October 2020, a prominent law firm filed a lawsuit on behalf of a local group of commercial cannabis growers against Trinity County. The suit alleges that the county failed to act on the growers' pending cannabis cultivation license applications without good cause, among other issues.

Multiple online survey respondents encouraged the county to significantly increase its licensing of commercial cannabis operations. One commenter noted that, "Having a licensing program (with) the capacity to encompass all existing cultivation sites. That would be at least 5000 licenses, not 500." Another poster argued that "taxation and regulations are suppressing family farms' ability to profit and allowing black markets to persist."

Regardless of Trinity County's policies around cannabis, the industry's challenges in California extend well beyond local regulation. Five years after California voters decriminalized recreational marijuana by approving Proposition 64, the legal market has been pushed to the brink of collapse by a steep price drop many believe is caused by high taxes and regulatory constraints that raise the price of legal marijuana by as much as 50 percent. The cannabis industry argues that these taxes unfairly advantage the state's robust illicit cannabis market. An industry publication estimated that legal sales in California reached \$4.4 billion in 2020, half as much as the illegal market. In addition, Proposition 64 required local governments to opt in, so recreational sales are still blocked in about two-thirds of jurisdictions. There are 866 licensed dispensaries in California, along with 374 licensed marijuana delivery businesses – a fraction of the per capita number in other states where cannabis is legal.²

Legislative fixes have stalled due to infighting between industry groups and a failure to successfully lobby statewide elected officials for policy reforms. As a result, **California's licensed cannabis industry is lagging other states where recreational marijuana is legal.** As the leader of a California cannabis trade association remarked, "You don't have a real cannabis industry if the dominant portion of it has no interest in being legal."³

² Koseff, Alexei. "Gavin Newsom was the face of legal cannabis in California. Can he fix its problems?" CAL Matters, January 2022. (<https://calmatters.org/politics/2022/01/california-cannabis-newsom/>)

³ Barcott, Bruce and Whitney, Beau. "The US cannabis industry now supports 428,059 jobs." February 2022. (<https://www.leafly.com/news/industry/cannabis-jobs-report#california>)

A prominent California-based cannabis grower explained, “Whenever you combine a relaxed policy enforcement with a high tax regime, what you get is a fair amount of circumvention, and that’s really what the illicit market is all about... Most cannabis consumers are being trained in America, and certainly California’s the epicenter, that they can find better, or at least less expensive, weed on the illicit market.”⁴

In the Emerald Triangle, the issue is compounded by the fact that, **long before legalization, Mendocino, Humboldt and Trinity counties established themselves as the base of marijuana cultivation for the entire country, making the transition to a regulated system uniquely challenging.** Many long-standing farmers have been reluctant to enter the legal market.

The proliferation of illegal cannabis operations in the Emerald Triangle led the state to award Humboldt, Mendocino, and Trinity counties \$1.5 million in 2021 to help stem the tide of illegal marijuana grows. The money is intended to assist local law enforcement with eradicating large, unpermitted cannabis growing operations that involve organized crime or are causing environmental degradation, including illegal water diversions and threats to endangered wildlife.

There is also a bill circulating in the California Legislature that would classify unlicensed cannabis cultivation as a felony, rolling back part of the state’s 2016 voter-approved initiative that legalized adult-use. Under the proposed bill, growing more than six plants without a permit would be reclassified as a felony offense, punishable by up to three years in jail. Because it amends a voter-approved initiative, the legislation must be approved by a two-thirds majority in the Legislature.

⁴ Mentz, Zack. “A View From The Golden State: Q&A with Lowell Farms Chairman George Allen.” Cannabis Business Times, April 2022. (<https://www.cannabisbusinesstimes.com/article/q-and-a-lowell-farms-chairman-george-allen/>)

PLACE-BASED TRENDS

The conventional thinking in economic development used to be that jobs attract people. In other words, talent will remain in or locate to the communities that provide them with the best employment opportunities. In the past two decades, that belief has been upended as individuals and families increasingly decide where they want to live first and look for a good job second. Of course, this is not universal, but the importance of quality of place has grown to the degree that destination amenities and the “stickiness” of a community for talent are now principal economic development concerns.

Trinity County certainly has much going for it on this count, with beautiful natural scenery, ample outdoor activities, charming Main Streets, a vibrant arts community, and other assets. However, according to stakeholders, **many challenges remain before the county can be more competitive not only for people looking for a place to live and work but so-called “digital nomads”** who now have more location options than ever.

A key determinant of place-based competitiveness is cost of living. Early data show that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to greater than average migration away from high-cost metropolitan areas to medium-to-smaller-sized regions and rural communities. This is especially true for San Francisco and other expensive coastal California cities. Because many of these pandemic-related moves have been to communities in relative proximity to high-cost cities, places like Trinity County have seen a spike in interest from domestic in-migrants.

Cost of living data show that Trinity County is a lower-cost alternative to the average California community but does not have a significant advantage over its peer counties. Compared to the U.S. average, Trinity County is actually an expensive option for talent looking for a more affordable destination. The index estimates the relative price levels for consumer goods and services, meaning that cost of living is 14.8 percent higher in Trinity County than the U.S. average.

Trinity County’s lower average wages and incomes mean that existing residents’ dollars do not go as far in the county as the comparison areas. Mendocino County residents were the only peers whose purchasing power was lower than Trinity County.

COST OF LIVING INDEX, Q3 2021

Geography	Cost of Living Index (COLI)	Average Annual Salary	Purchasing Power (relative to nation)
Trinity County	114.8	\$45,527	\$39,655
Del Norte County	110.2	\$47,943	\$43,520
Mendocino County	120.9	\$47,489	\$39,294
Plumas County	102.6	\$49,533	\$48,256
California	142.4	\$82,400	\$57,851
United States	100	\$64,555	---

Source: JobsEQ, C2ER

Cost of living is often a factor determining where talent lives versus where they work. In higher-cost, job-rich regions, this often means that most workers live in suburbs and exurbs of a principal city and commute to their places of work. Dynamics in Trinity County are a bit different in that the community is not economically tied to a major job-creation center, but **data nevertheless show that residents are increasingly traveling longer distances to access employment.** This is partially a factor of the less diverse job mix in Trinity County and the lack of higher-paying careers.

Based on American Community Survey estimates from 2015 to 2020, **nearly a third of Trinity County commuters travel at least 30 minutes to work, the highest of all the peer counties, and that rate has increased by 10.4 percent** over the five years examined.

Trinity County workers also spend more time commuting than the peer counties; this statistic has risen by 37.2 percent from 2015 to 2020, well above every benchmark geography. Clearly, it has become increasingly difficult for Trinity County workers to find employment close to where they live.

COMMUTING DATA, 2015-2020

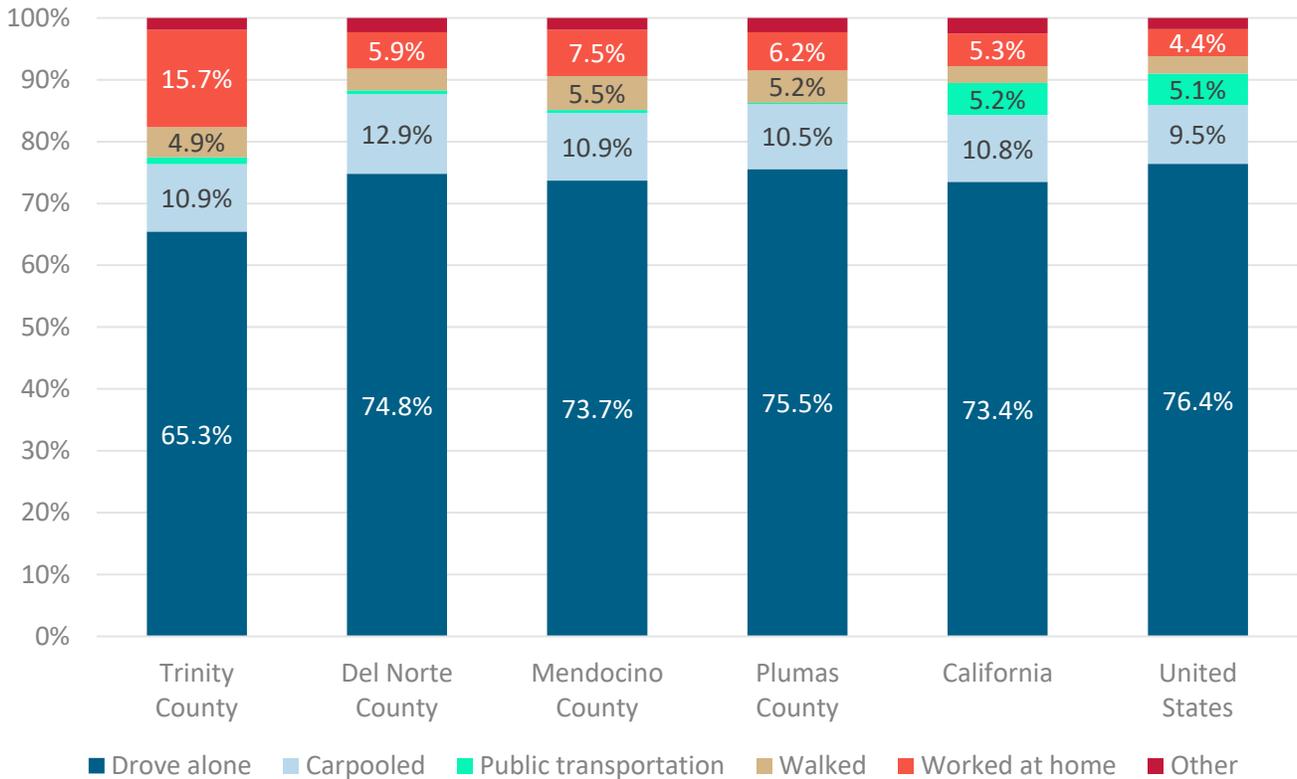
Year / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
Mean travel time to work in minutes						
2015	18.0	14.1	18.9	23.0	28.0	25.9
2020	24.7	15.6	20.7	19.4	29.8	26.9
% change	37.2%	10.6%	9.5%	-15.7%	6.4%	3.9%
% of commuters travelling at least 30 minutes to work						
2015	22.9%	11.4%	20.2%	29.6%	40.9%	36.6%
2020	31.4%	14.7%	23.3%	25.2%	43.9%	38.4%
% pt. change	10.4%	-3.0%	-3.2%	4.4%	0.5%	-0.3%
% of workers 16 years and over in households without access to a vehicle						
2015	0.4%	3.1%	2.1%	1.7%	3.5%	4.5%
2020	3.4%	1.7%	2.0%	1.3%	3.2%	4.2%
% pt. change	3.0%	-1.4%	-0.1%	-0.4%	-0.3%	-0.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

What is interesting about Trinity County is the dichotomy between where residents are employed. While close to a third of workers spend over 30 minutes commuting to their jobs, **over 15 percent work from home, over twice the closest comparison area** – and this data is pre-pandemic!

One could argue that this high work-from-home percentage could be related to the cannabis industry, but the Emerald Triangle community of Mendocino County has only half of Trinity’s home-based workers. However, Mendocino also has a larger and more diverse job base than Trinity, so that could explain this disparity. Regardless, Trinity County’s high rates of entrepreneurship and home-based employment again demonstrate that those who choose to live in the county do whatever it takes to be able to remain in the community.

MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK, 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

If Trinity County wants to increase its percentage of residents who work from home and be more competitive for remote workers and digital nomads, it will have to increase its accessibility to high-speed broadband internet connectivity. This was a major theme of the public input process and frequently mentioned as one of Trinity County’s greatest challenges in workforce and economic development. Quite simply, quality broadband access has become an essential infrastructure component in today’s wired world.

Census estimates underscore stakeholders’ assessments that Trinity County is underserved for broadband. Just over 70 percent of local households have broadband internet subscriptions, the lowest rate of all the comparison areas. While this could also be a function of Trinity County’s lower average incomes and higher poverty rates, it nevertheless must be improved if the community is to take better advantage of opportunities in the new economy. Poor broadband capacity is also a major issue for retention and attraction of high-value employers.

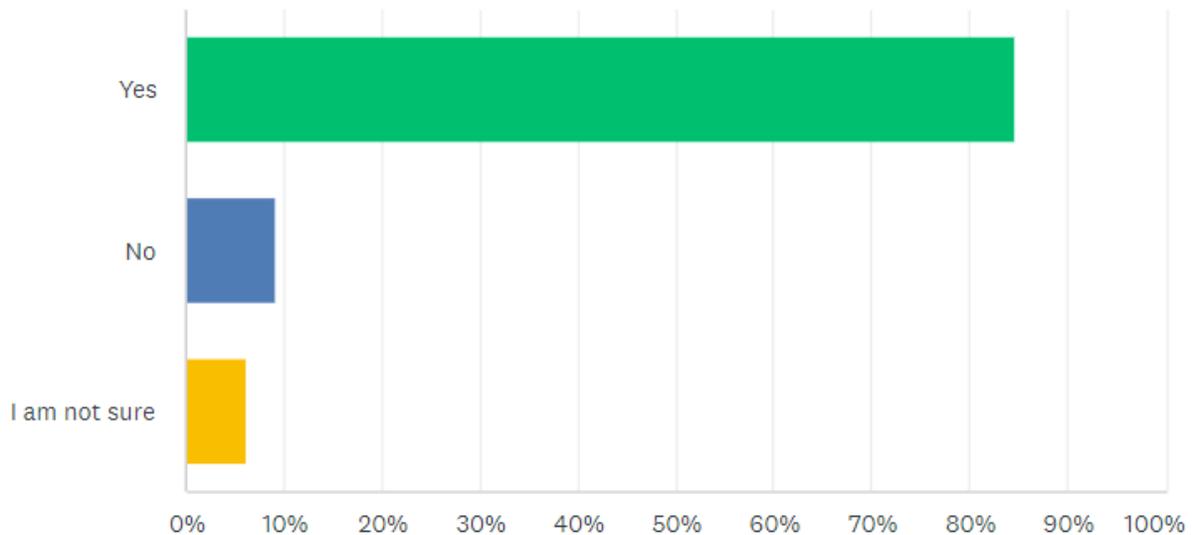
TECHNOLOGY ACCESS, 2020

Geography	Households w/ a computer	Households w/ a broadband internet subscription
Trinity County	83.8%	70.9%
Del Norte County	91.7%	83.5%
Mendocino County	88.9%	82.4%
Plumas County	91.0%	81.3%
California	94.3%	88.9%
United States	91.9%	85.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

In addition to broadband, another critical place-based competitive concern for Trinity County is its housing sector. **In addition to cannabis, housing was the most prevalent theme discussed in Trinity County’s public input process.** The following chart is from the process’ online survey.

HAVE YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU PERSONALLY KNOW, STRUGGLED TO FIND APPROPRIATE HOUSING IN TRINITY COUNTY?



Nearly 85 percent of survey respondents have had difficulties finding appropriate housing or know someone who has. One input participant summed up the situation: “There is no place to live.”

Multiple challenges were referenced in public input, including low inventories of available housing and a scarcity of rentals, poor condition of many for-sale houses, an inability to get homeowners insurance

because of new fire-safety regulations, and slow turnaround rates for fire inspections. Stakeholders also identified challenging topography, limited public services and utilities, and a lack of developable land, local developers, and investment capital as limitations for new housing development.

Trinity County recently received a \$1.0 million housing grant it was forced to give back because of lack of suitable land per the grant requirements. The closest Habitat for Humanity office is in Shasta County and, according to one stakeholder, “they are tapped out.”

When asked about Trinity County’s greatest housing challenges, online survey respondents identified lack of affordable properties to rent, outdated properties/not well maintained, and lack of affordable properties to buy as their principal concerns. Lack of variety of housing styles and types was also a key issue. When asked what type of housing is most needed in Trinity County, survey participants said single family homes, housing units for rent, and apartments as the top preferred categories.

A Trinity County leader said housing is a “chicken and egg issue... Recruit possible new job opportunities but have no housing for the employees or build new housing and then hope employment comes. Ramping up for either of these two issues is very difficult.”

The most recent data from the American Community Survey reinforces residents’ beliefs that local housing costs and affordability are more prohibitive than comparison areas. Though housing values increased more slowly in Trinity County than the other benchmarks, local prices were higher than Del Norte and Plumas counties and the U.S. Importantly, **because of Trinity County’s low average incomes, home affordability is more of an issue than every comparison geography except Mendocino County and California.**

HOME VALUE, 2015-2020

Geography	Median Owner-Occupied Housing Unit Value			Home Affordability Ratio, 2020
	2015	2019	% chg.	
Trinity County	\$263,100	\$285,700	8.6%	6.84
Del Norte County	\$183,700	\$227,500	23.8%	4.55
Mendocino County	\$308,400	\$388,500	26.0%	7.34
Plumas County	\$217,200	\$259,300	19.4%	4.53
California	\$385,500	\$538,500	39.7%	6.84
United States	\$178,600	\$229,800	28.7%	3.54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Per the following table, homeowner vacancy rates are comparatively high in Trinity County, perhaps an indication that available units are sub-standard in some way. Conversely, **availability of rental properties has declined markedly in Trinity County**, leaving overall vacancies lower than all comparison areas except Del Norte County. These trends echo stakeholder feedback that rental units are very hard to come by in Trinity County.

OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING DATA, 2015 TO 2020

Year / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
% of Occupied Housing Units that are Owner-Occupied						
2015	68.9%	60.6%	57.9%	72.3%	54.3%	63.9%
2020	68.5%	68.4%	60.3%	72.9%	55.3%	64.4%
% pt. chg.	-0.4%	7.8%	2.5%	0.6%	0.9%	0.5%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate						
2015	3.1%	3.6%	0.8%	5.9%	1.4%	1.9%
2020	3.3%	1.0%	1.2%	3.3%	1.1%	1.4%
% pt. chg.	0.2%	-2.6%	0.4%	-2.6%	-0.3%	-0.5%
Rental Vacancy Rate						
2015	5.7%	2.8%	3.4%	11.8%	4.1%	6.4%
2020	1.4%	0.1%	1.8%	5.5%	3.7%	5.8%
% pt. chg.	-4.3%	-2.7%	-1.6%	-6.3%	-0.4%	-0.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Interestingly, Census estimates do not show a corresponding increase in Trinity County’s rental costs comparable to the comparison areas. Both Trinity County’s average monthly rents and cost increases were below all the benchmarks.

Encouragingly, the percentage of Trinity County residents paying more than 30 percent of income on rent (considered to be the affordability threshold) declined from 2015 to 2020. But over half the population still spends more on rent than their incomes can accommodate.

RENTAL HOUSING DATA, 2015-2020

Year / Metric	Trinity County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Plumas County	California	United States
Median Gross Rent						
2015	\$786	\$808	\$960	\$836	\$1,255	\$928
2020	\$813	\$946	\$1,134	\$944	\$1,586	\$1,096
% chg.	3.4%	17.1%	18.1%	12.9%	26.4%	18.1%
Percentage of Renters Spending 30 Percent or More of Household Income on Rent						
2015	59.4%	51.4%	60.2%	50.1%	56.9%	51.8%
2020	54.1%	59.9%	57.6%	46.8%	54.2%	49.1%
% pt. chg.	-5.3%	8.5%	-2.6%	-3.3%	-2.7%	-2.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Census housing data does not take into account the devastating effect of recent wildfires on Trinity County’s housing stock and natural landscapes. Not only were homes lost, but more stringent fire code requirements add unwelcome costs to home rebuilds and ownership.

The Monument Fire began in the Shasta Trinity National Forest and burned for nearly three months, eventually consuming 223,124 acres. **It was the second largest fire in all of California in 2021**, behind only the Dixie Fire which burned 963,309 acres in Butte, Plumas, Shasta, Lassen, and Tehama counties.⁵

In the online survey, respondents recommended that the U.S. Forest Service allow more local control over forest management in Trinity County to thin out potentially hazardous fire threats, create more logging employment, and better control illegal cannabis grows.

Another reason wildfires are so damaging to Trinity County is their impact on the area’s outdoor recreation amenities and industries. **The Trinity River is a principal showpiece for the county and offers plentiful opportunities for fishing and whitewater rafting.** Designated a Wild and Scenic River, the Trinity flows for 154 miles through the mountains and valleys of Trinity County. The watershed encompasses nearly 3,000 square miles, most of which is habitat for anadromous salmon and steelhead.⁶ A local resident has been working on a project to create a whitewater park along the Trinity where visitors could surf, kayak, standup paddle board, and innertube.

⁵ <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2021/>

⁶ <https://trinityriver.org/>

Complementing the county's waterborne activities, a group of residents started an educational and charitable non-profit called the [Trinity Trail Alliance](#) to create, enhance, and preserve memorable trail experiences for mountain bikers and other non-motorized trail users in Trinity County.

In addition to outdoor amenities, **Trinity County is home to a small but active arts community**, largely centered in the town of Weaverville. Notable arts and cultural assets include multiple galleries as well as the [Highland Arts Center](#). Serving Trinity County for over 50 years, the Center is a cultural arts campus in downtown Weaverville that includes a main gallery, arts library, formal gardens, large events meadow, and artist's studios. The Center sees its mission as serving the local community, showcasing and promoting arts, and supporting artists in advancing their careers.

As with local trails, the community has a non-profit organization serving as a resource hub to develop and enhance the county's arts community. The [Trinity County Arts Council](#) was formed in 1995 and provides art education for children and adults, assists the professional and financial development of local artists, and advances cultural tourism by partnering in live performances and festivals.

Strategic Implications

The analysis in this report speaks to a community with notable assets that is struggling to transition from the past to the future. In this way, Trinity County is like many places in the U.S. adrift between the industries that sustained them for decades and a new economy that values a different set of strengths and skills. Moving forward successfully is a both/and proposition: strengthen and capitalize on the advantages that differentiate you and develop new capacity where it is currently lacking.

One thing many stakeholders hope will come from this Placemaking Playbook is a clear vision of where Trinity County must go strategically to become a more competitive, thriving community.

The county's general plan is over 50 years old and a new visioning effort, Trinity 2050, has stalled. Trinity County must find its guiding star – a collection of consensus-based, actionable priorities that can help elected officials make informed, defensible decisions on policy and spending and bring stakeholder groups together behind shared goals and objectives. This is never easy, especially in a community with polarizing issues and conflicting factions, but the alternative is continued underperformance and decline.

Based on the results of the Community Assessment's look at Trinity County's trends and competitive issues in the categories of Population, Talent, Economy, and Place and the feedback of hundreds of local stakeholders, the following strategic implication categories have emerged.

Cannabis

Despite the current challenges of succeeding in California's legal cannabis industry, Trinity County has long-established cultivators and a wealth of intellectual property, skills, expertise, and knowledge on the growth and sale of this crop. Unofficial estimates show the county's cannabis-related employment dwarfing all other local job sectors. Trinity County's association with the nationally and internationally renowned Emerald Triangle provides immediate cachet and marketing legitimacy for Trinity County's product. Efforts to associate the county's crop with a geographic indicator or appellation of origin model (similar to wine and spirits) could brand Trinity County cannabis as a top-shelf strain in dispensaries around the world.

As more U.S. states legalize recreational cannabis and alternative uses for the cannabis plant continue to proliferate, Trinity County would be losing out on billions of dollars in future sales if it disregards the legitimacy of this industry or its competitive position within it. These opportunities do not discount the polarized opinions about cannabis in Trinity County nor the concerns of opponents who worry about its

impact on the local environment and population. However, the fact remains that a tremendous amount of unlicensed marijuana is being grown in Trinity County and causing significant degradation to natural systems, structural blight, and the risk of organized criminal elements in the market. Many believe that regulatory reform in California's cannabis industry is imminent as these issues become more prominent at the state level. Trinity County can get ahead of this change by pursuing a functional licensed cannabis program that acknowledges the economic windfall of this crop for the county's coffers and addresses the concerns of local anti-cannabis factions.

Housing

Quite simply, if a community does not have the capacity to offer its residents quality, affordable housing, it will be difficult to attract and retain the talent that will power the local economy. That said, housing scarcity is a national (and international) crisis right now, and easy solutions are not forthcoming. That makes it incumbent for localities like Trinity County to do everything they can to support the development, redevelopment, and improvement of for-sale and rental housing. This could take the form of low cost permitting or assistance with development fees. In addition, policies to lower the cost of housing development in Trinity County could pay dividends as more investors become aware of opportunities in the county and understand that local government is a partner not an inhibitor of quality growth. Other proven strategies include helping with maintenance and efficiency upgrades or allowances for housing down payments. Zoning could be adjusted to accommodate more housing that is sensitive to existing development patterns and environmental conditions but still provides more options for housing-constrained residents.

Any housing effort must start with community education and outreach on existing conditions, opportunities for future development, and alternative building and materials options.

Broadband

The provision of sufficient broadband capacity to enable residents and businesses to connect to the internet at necessary speeds and reliability is no longer a choice for communities – it is a mandate. Data and stakeholder feedback indicate that Trinity County has much work to do to ensure it is a viable destination for knowledge-intensive businesses, technology entrepreneurs, digital nomads, remote workers, and other elements that can create quality jobs and improve the county's capacity to provide governmental and public services.

There are currently millions of dollars available through state and federal grant programs to enhance rural broadband connectivity. Trinity County must work with state and federal elected officials and agencies to ensure it is getting its fair share of this funding. Certainly, the county can demonstrate that the need is urgent to upgrade its broadband infrastructure or risk falling further bending more connected communities.

Fire Prevention

As the impacts of climate change create greater risks for environmental calamities like wildfires, especially in communities like Trinity County largely comprised of forested woodlands, it is nevertheless incumbent on localities to take all necessary and preventive measures against the most damaging effects of these natural disasters.

Many Trinity County stakeholders feel more could be done to work with the U.S. Forest Service to enact and enhance policies and programs to lower the county's risk for devastating wildfires. Solutions could also potentially benefit the logging industry and free up private land for hospitality and residential development. Ultimately, solutions must be consensus-driven and made in the best long-term interest of Trinity County residents.

Creative Industries

Trinity County has an enduring core of arts and cultural assets, especially in Weaverville, that could potentially be leveraged for enhanced tourism and growth in creative industries. Established organizations, some staffed, have built capacity to assist artists with commercializing their work and establishing businesses that could take Trinity County's arts sector to the next level. Cheaper living costs (housing is of course a potential limiting factor) would be a compelling attractor for creatives looking to escape the prohibitively expensive enclaves of coastal California.

Beyond the galleries, arts spaces, and programming in Weaverville, there is likely a contingent of craftspeople and folk artists – hobbyists or full-time practitioners – located throughout Trinity County that could add to the county's market potential as an arts destination. In this way, Trinity County could be like communities in Appalachia and other rural areas that have embraced folk art as a growth opportunity and tourism asset.

Outdoors and Adventure Tourism

Trinity Lake and the Trinity River are already key draws for whitewater rafters, fishing enthusiasts, and others who enjoy an unspoiled experience on the water. Biking and hiking trails in protected parkland and elsewhere in the county add to the marketable aspects of Trinity County as a destination for adventure tourism, along with ample big-game hunting in unspoiled wilderness.

To fully capitalize on the potential for outdoors tourism, Trinity County could pursue strategies to build out a supportive industry of outfitter companies, tour planners and hospitality agencies, lodging providers, guide services, and other small businesses that typically enhance the visitor experience. There are numerous models from across the country for how to monetize outdoor recreation assets into lucrative employment sectors, but it will take collaboration and commitment from government, entrepreneurial support organizations, and existing leaders in Trinity County's adventure tourism sector to make process on this opportunity.

Governmental Capacity

A prominent and recurring theme of Trinity County's stakeholder input process was the challenges faced by county government to effectively fulfill its mission of administering, regulating, and supporting public services and economic development responsibilities for its citizens. As one stakeholder noted, "Our county government simply cannot hold up what it needs to." From high turnover rates to multiple unfilled staff positions, the capacity for Trinity County government to function effectively is compromised.

Certainly, lack of resources is a major issue. An insufficiently funded tax base due to high poverty rates and a lack of major industry is a concern. Therefore, any enhancement of county government will go hand in hand with strategies to make Trinity County more competitive for jobs and talent. But there is also an opportunity for existing personnel to work better together. An online survey respondent commented, "Trinity County can be competitive. But there is not enough staffing to make Trinity County competitive for anything unless workers are compensated fairly and have department heads that are communicative."

In one of Trinity County's visioning sessions, a participant answered that the county's number one priority should be to "support rural business development with functioning, streamlined, low barrier/simple regulatory frameworks." To accomplish this, county staff must be given the tools, time, mandate, and

authority to achieve these results. Ultimately, the Placemaking Playbook will not be successful if local government cannot be a fully committed and functioning partner.

* * *

The next step in Trinity County’s planning process is to take the issues, findings, and strategic implications that emerged from this Community Assessment and confirm priorities and actionable opportunities to pursue through the Placemaking Playbook.