

ELECTION 2022 MINNESOTA GOVERNOR

# Shifts right not enough for GOP

By YUQING LIU and C.J. SINNER • Star Tribune staff

It's easy to look at election maps — a sea of red but for urban blue islands — and wonder how Republican candidates aren't winning. That trend was particularly true in this year's governor's race, where the margin of victory for the winning candidate in most counties was either less strong than in 2018 for the Democrat or was stronger for the Republican. Eight counties even flipped from Gov. Tim Walz in 2018 to Scott Jensen in 2022.

### MARGIN OF VICTORY, BY COUNTY

Walz won      Flipped      Jensen won

← More liberal since 2018      Tie      More conservative since 2018 →

2022 win margin, percentage points  
2018 win margin, pct. pts.

+50      +40      +30      +20      +10      Tie      +10      +20      +30      +40      +50

Six of the 13 counties that Walz won, including four large metro counties, moved further left with more support for the governor than when he first ran in 2018.

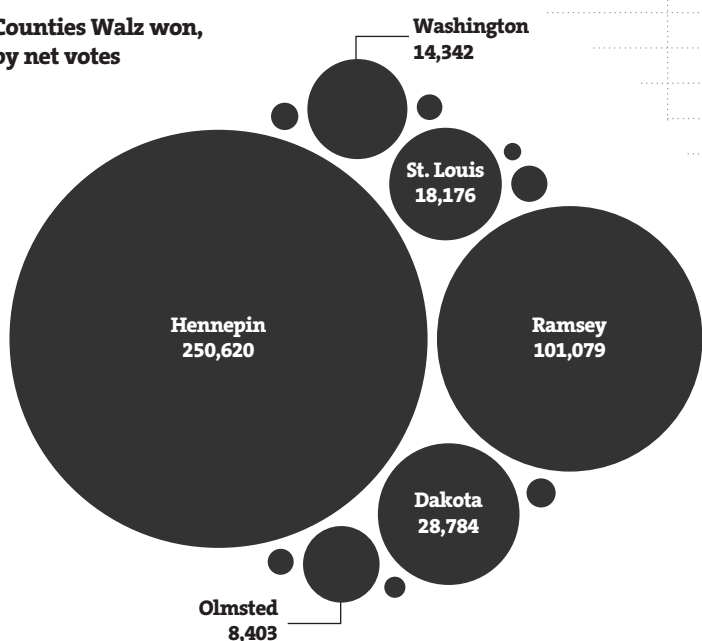
Several counties with sizeable outstate cities — including the Duluth-Cloquet area, Mankato and Moorhead — moved to the right by more than 5 points, but still ended up in Walz's favor.

Jensen managed to flip eight counties that went for Walz in 2018, most with sizeable shifts, although Winona and Anoka counties squeaked over the line.

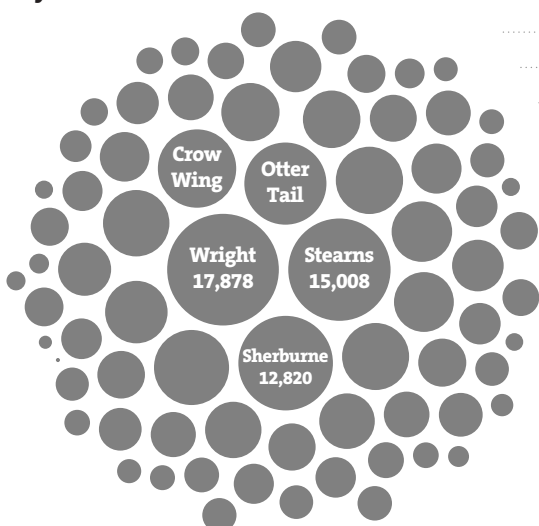
Seventeen counties had smaller shifts of less than 10 points in either direction, including two metro counties — Carver and Scott — that actually veered left despite ultimately backing Jensen.

A majority of Minnesota counties — 49 of them — saw sizeable shifts further right. A dozen counties handed Jensen a winning margin of more than 40 percentage points. But these counties all have relatively small populations, which means they are subject to larger swings from election to election.

#### Counties Walz won, by net votes



#### Counties Jensen won, by net votes



Beyond the core metro area and a handful of counties in the Arrowhead, it's tough for any Republican to win for one simple reason — there are fewer voters in reliably conservative areas of the state.

In places with sizable populations, there are smaller cities, especially college towns, that often have close margins or lean blue — enough to chip away at Republicans' chances.

When those same counties are measured by how many more votes Walz and Jensen had over each other — their net votes — it shows just how hard it is for greater Minnesota to overcome the large liberal Hennepin and Ramsey county electorate and growing suburbs.