



Report of 2021 Loss Ratio
Experience for Insurance
Companies, Nonprofit Health
Service Plan Corporations, and
Health Maintenance Organizations

June 2022

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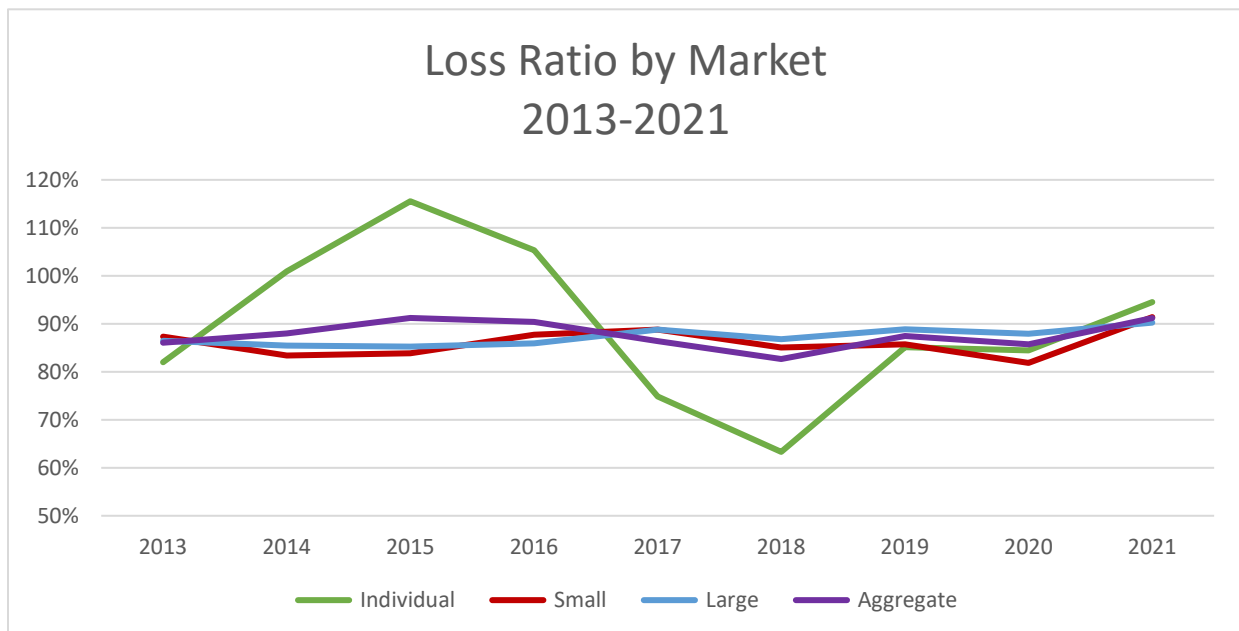
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Introduction

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 62A.021, subdivision 1(h), the Minnesota Departments of Health and Commerce (the Departments) are required to issue a public report each year listing, by health plan company, the actual loss ratios experienced in the individual and small employer markets in Minnesota. This report includes loss ratios for the calendar year ending December 31, 2021, for health plan companies regulated by the Departments. The report retains the structure and information provided in previous years' reports for consistency and comparability.

A loss ratio is a measure of how much premium revenue collected by a health plan company was spent on medical care. Revenue not used to pay medical expenses is used for health plan administration, marketing, taxes, other expenses, and net income. State law establishes minimum loss ratios for small group and individual plans to ensure a minimum value to the consumer.

Historically, overall aggregate loss ratios have been relatively stable, as shown on the chart below. The individual market's enrollment and premiums have been stable in the past few years and loss ratios have become more predictable. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, introduced a level of uncertainty to all health insurance markets, and it is too early to know the full impact of the pandemic on future loss ratios at this time. The overall increase in loss ratios between 2020 and 2021 may be partially attributed to increased costs for services which were deferred due to the pandemic.



Definitions

Individual Market

The individual market is available to people who wish to purchase health insurance but do not have access through their employer or through public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and MinnesotaCare. For purposes of this report, the individual market includes individual policies that converted from group coverage and individual certificates issued to members of associations; however, health plan companies offering only those policies are not included in this report, because state loss ratio requirements do not apply to them.

Small Employer Group

The small employer group insurance market generally provides coverage to entities actively engaged in business (including political subdivisions of the State) that employed less than 50 workers who worked at least 20 hours per week on business days during the preceding calendar year and employs at least two current employees on the first day of the health plan year. Minnesota laws affecting eligibility for small employer group insurance coverage are actually more nuanced than this description and are summarized in the Small Group Counting guide available on the Minnesota Department of Commerce website.¹

Large Employer Group

The large employer group includes a person, firm, corporation, partnership, association, or other entity actively engaged in business in Minnesota (including a political subdivision of the State) that employs more than 50 employees.

Uninsured

The uninsured population are those who do not have health plan coverage through the individual market, an employer, Medicare or public programs. According to the 2019 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census, in 2019, the uninsured population in Minnesota was approximately 4.9 percent, with a margin of error of 0.2 percent.² Many of those who are uninsured are eligible for public programs but have not enrolled.

A recent study by the Minnesota Department of Health in 2021 showed that the uninsured rate had fallen to 4.0 percent; the lowest-ever measured level. By utilizing state and federal funding, Minnesota took steps to prevent coverage losses in 2020 and 2021, including government efforts to maintain coverage for low-income Minnesotans and premium subsidies in the individual market. Data from the Minnesota Health Access Survey found that 34,000 fewer Minnesotans went without health insurance in 2021 compared to 2019. However, many government programs that added financial supports to families, increased subsidies to make insurance more affordable, or allowed people to stay on Medicaid longer ended or are set to expire later in 2022, which may lead to an increase in the uninsured population.³

¹ <http://mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/small-group-counting.pdf>

² <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/health-insurance/acs-hi.html>

³ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2022/uninsured042122.html>

Loss Ratio

The loss ratio is the ratio of incurred claims to earned premiums. On the annual Supplemental Health Care Exhibits, health plan companies report total earned premium, incurred claims, and loss ratio for the year ending December 31, 2021, by individual, small employer, and large employer fully-insured health plan markets in Minnesota.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) created payment streams that affect loss ratios but are not finalized until after financial statements and this report are due. There are often accounting adjustments caused by prior year mis-estimations that materially affect the accuracy of the loss ratio data presented in this report. The largest items that commonly cause such accounting adjustments are risk adjustment receivables/payables (individual and small group markets), claims that are paid to providers after the year in which services occurred (all markets), state-based reinsurance receivables (individual market only), drug rebate receivables (all markets), and consumer rebate payables (not common, but can occur in all markets). When annual financial statement loss ratio data does not appear to be reasonable, the Minnesota Department of Commerce contacted health plan companies about the financial statement data. When transitions of enrollment between affiliates and prior year adjustments caused unreliable results, affiliate data was aggregated so that the overall market experience was represented. As noted on the tables shown at the end of this report, at times the values are different from the financial statement data in order to provide data that is relevant to the current year under evaluation.

It is also important to keep in mind that the federal website that collects loss ratio information directly from health plan companies will publish more current information than the data presented in this report, though that information will not be published until several months after the statutory deadline for this report.

Federal Medical Loss Ratio as Defined by the Affordable Care Act

The data in this report reflects the Minnesota Medical Loss Ratio. However, the ACA also uses the term Medical Loss Ratio (MLR). The ACA was passed by Congress and signed into law on March 23, 2010. The ACA requirements for MLRs are provided under Section 2718 of the ACA. More detailed information regarding these requirements may be found in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, Part 158. Note that the calculation of the MLR under the ACA is different than the state loss ratio. We describe these differences in detail below.

Starting in calendar year 2011, the federal government required that a health plan company that does not spend enough of its premium dollars on health care must provide a rebate paid the following year to the insured individual or to the policyholder, which may be the employer that purchased the insurance.

Under the ACA, the federal MLR is the ratio of the health plan company's payments for medical services and activities that improve health care quality to premium revenue (minus the issuer's federal and state taxes, licensing, and regulatory fees). In other words, a federal MLR is the amount of health insurance premiums that a health plan company spends on health care and activities to improve health care quality, as opposed to profits and administrative costs, including executive salaries, overhead, and marketing. The federal MLR is expressed as a percentage: a MLR of 90 percent means 9 out of 10 of all premium dollars that the health plan company receives are spent on health care and quality improvement, with the other money spent on overhead, profits, and administrative costs.

Under the ACA requirements, health plan companies must provide a rebate to consumers if the most recent three year weighted average MLR is less than 85 percent in the large group market and 80 percent in the small group and individual markets, generally averaged over three years. This rule does not apply to employers that operate a self-insured plan. In addition, the experience of very small health plan companies with less than 1,000 people enrolled cannot sufficiently confirm that they have or have not met the MLR standard; as a result, those health plan companies are deemed non-credible and are not required to provide rebates. A health plan company with 1,000 to 75,000 people enrolled is considered to have partially-credible experience and a “credibility adjustment” is applied to its MLR under the ACA.

The amount of rebate to each enrollee is the total amount of premium revenue received by the issuer from the enrollee after subtracting federal and state taxes, licensing, and regulatory fees, multiplied by the difference between the MLR required by ACA and the health plan company’s MLR, subject to the applicable credibility adjustment. Effective January 1, 2011, health plan companies must report MLRs for all fully-insured plans to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). A “Plan Year” is defined as the calendar year. The first report, covering plan year 2011, was filed on June 1, 2012. Health plan companies were required to make the first round of rebates to consumers in 2012. Starting in the summer of 2012, HHS posted health plan companies' reports and MLRs online.³

The Centers for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) is responsible for enforcement of the ACA’s Federal MLR reporting and rebate requirements. After working with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) on procedures for the MLR audit program, CCIIO has begun to conduct examinations nationally.

Recent Rebates

HMO Minnesota dba Blue Plus, paid rebates in 2021 amounting to \$33,466,589 to 26,692 members based on aggregate gains that occurred from 2018 to 2020, which was an average \$1,254 annual rebate per enrollee and approximately 19 percent of Blue Plus’ 2020 premiums. Blue Plus was still relatively new to the individual market in 2018.

Medica Insurance Company paid rebates in 2021 amounting to \$7,496,508 to 26,398 members based on aggregate gains that occurred from 2018 to 2020, which was an average \$284 annual rebate per enrollee for and approximately 4 percent of Medica’s 2020 premiums.

UCare paid rebates in 2021 amounting to \$4,710,652 to 36,414 members based on aggregate gains that occurred from 2018 to 2020, which was an average \$129 annual rebate per enrollee and approximately 2.5 percent of UCare’s 2020 premiums.

While rebates payable in 2022 based on aggregate gains that occurred from 2019 to 2021 will not be known for several months, Blue Plus has reserved for \$710,000 in rebates (approximately 0.35 percent of 2021 premiums). Blue Plus is the only plan company that has reserved for Minnesota consumer rebates in their 2021 financial statement. It is possible that other health plan companies may also be required to pay a rebate based on aggregate 2019 to 2021 experience if there are material misestimates of items such as risk adjustment receivables/payables, claims that are paid to providers after the year in which services occurred, state-based reinsurance receivables, and drug rebate receivables.

³ <http://www.cms.gov/apps/mlr/mlr-search.aspx>

Health Insurance Rates Regulation in Minnesota

Minnesota Statutes § 62A.02 requires all health plan rates to be approved by Commerce or Health before becoming final for purchase. Minnesota has an effective rate review process, which means a health plan company must supply actuarial justification and data demonstrating that the benefits are reasonable in relation to the premiums. Commerce reviews all rates to verify reasonableness and compliance with state and federal law. Rate restrictions for individual plans are specified in Minnesota Statutes § 62A.65, and small employer plans are specified in Minnesota Statutes § 62L.08.

Medical Loss Ratio as Defined by Minnesota Law

Minnesota has had loss ratio requirements for more than 20 years. Individual states may require a higher minimum loss ratio for health plan companies operating within their state and may calculate the loss ratio differently from the ACA definition. Minnesota law requires that individual, small employer, and large employer health plan rates meet the specific minimum loss ratio standards in Minnesota Statute § 62A.021 and the requirements in Minnesota Statute § 62A.02 Subd. 3.

Minnesota’s loss ratio is calculated differently than the ACA Federal MLR shown above. Minnesota’s loss ratio is defined as claims divided by premium:

$$\text{Minnesota MLR} = \text{Incurred Claims} / \text{Earned Premium}$$

The Minnesota MLR standard is only prospective in nature and Commerce reviews Actuarial Memorandums and past loss ratio experience for demonstrations of compliance. Unlike Minnesota’s state loss ratio standard, which is prospective, the federal MLR standard is retrospective in nature and carries with it rebates to customers if the minimum MLR is not met in each marketplace.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MINNESOTA LOSS RATIO AND FEDERAL MINIMUM LOSS RATIO STANDARDS

Loss Ratio Considerations	Minnesota	Federal MLR
Timing Perspective	future / actuarial	hindsight / actual data
Timing Considered	upcoming year	prior three years, weighted
Consequences of Missing Threshold	if future loss ratio believed to be below threshold, rates are disapproved	if past loss ratio is below threshold, rebates are paid to consumers
Claims Adjustments (Numerator)	risk adjustment (+ / -) drug rebates (-) state-based reinsurance (-) federal cost sharing reductions (-)	risk adjustment (+ / -) drug rebates (-) state-based reinsurance (-) federal cost sharing reductions (-) quality improvement expenses (+)

Premium Adjustments (Denominator)		state and federal taxes assessments and licensing fees
Rebate Adjustments	not applicable	past rebates reduce rebate
Small Enrollment Allowance	loss ratio threshold decreased	statistical credibility stops or reduces rebate payment

For Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and nonprofit health service plan corporations, Minnesota law requires that:

- Individual plans have rates that are expected to achieve a minimum MLR of 68 to 72 percent.
- Small employer group plans have rates that are expected to achieve a minimum loss ratio of 71 to 82 percent.
- Large employer group plans are not subject to explicit state minimum thresholds, because this market is generally viewed as competitive with well-informed, discerning customers. That said, rates are expected to be fair, reasonable, justified, and equitable, in line with Minnesota Statute § 62A.02 Subd. 3. Large group loss ratios are relatively high in relation to other insurance markets because of federal minimum loss ratio rebate implications if the actual loss ratio is less than 85 percent.

For insurance companies, Minnesota law requires that individual, small group, and large group plans have rates that are set to achieve a minimum MLR of 60 percent. In practice, the MLRs for health insurance companies are similar to those for health maintenance organizations and nonprofit health service plan corporations.

Loss Ratio is Not the Same as Value

The loss ratio can be a valuable tool in comparing two health plan companies, assuming that they provide similar benefits. In general, the plan with the higher loss ratio may provide better value to consumers; however, this is not always the case. For example, one health plan company may reduce the cost of claims by preventing payment of fraudulent claims, and subrogating claims (Workers Comp and Auto Insurance) to other insurers. While these actions may result in a higher loss ratio, they may not provide additional value to the policyholder. Alternatively, a health plan company may reduce their loss ratio because they have greater expenses related to negotiating and contracting for lower charge levels with doctors and hospitals, which may result in greater value to the policyholder.

Any change to a health plan company’s business environment could affect the loss ratio. Examples include enrollment increases or decreases, federal actions to defund subsidies, specialty drug releases, material rate level changes, benefit coverage changes (whether voluntarily or due to state or federal law changes), and competitor actions.

Also, every prospective policyholder is different, with different health care needs. In order to compare health plan companies, it is necessary to review other aspects of the company which affect its value, such as availability of particular medical care providers, quality of patient service, and quality of care management.

Individual Market Subsidization History

Health Insurance Premium Subsidy

In January 2017, a 25 percent insurance premium subsidy was provided to Minnesotans purchasing health insurance in the individual market whose income exceeded 400 percent of the federal poverty level. This subsidy resulted in health insurance that was more affordable, and more enrollees with incomes over 400 percent than expected remained in the individual market. Unfortunately, 2017 rates were finalized prior to the legislative enactment of the premium subsidy. While this fortunately encouraged healthier people to remain in the individual market, it also reduced overall loss ratios from what they would have otherwise been had the program been anticipated in the rate setting process. This program was available only for 2017.

Minnesota Premium Security Plan (Minnesota Reinsurance Program)

In 2017, the Minnesota legislature enacted a law that created the Minnesota Premium Security Plan (MPSP). This state-based reinsurance program is designed to stabilize premiums in Minnesota's individual health insurance market by partially reimbursing health plan companies for high-cost claims. The state law authorized up to \$271 million per year in 2018 and 2019 for the reinsurance program, and it called for the Minnesota Department of Commerce to submit a State Innovation Waiver application to secure partial federal funding. This Section 1332 waiver application was approved by the federal government in September 2017, and the federal government agreed to provide \$130,719,696 for plan year 2018 and \$84,757,861 for plan year 2019. The MPSP was extended to the 2020 and 2021 plan years by legislation passed in May of 2019, and the federal government agreed to provide \$86,063,821 for plan year 2020 and \$142,727,404 for plan year 2021. The 2021 pass-through funding amount includes additional funding as a result of the American Rescue Plan (ARP). No additional state appropriation was provided for this extension as there were funds remaining from the original state appropriation.

The waiver allows Minnesota to use federal funds to cover a significant portion of the annual reinsurance costs and hold down rates for Minnesotans who buy their own health insurance coverage. MPSP covered 80 percent of any individual market enrollee's annual claims that fell between \$50,000 and \$250,000 in 2018. As a result, 2018 through 2021 premiums for Minnesota consumers in the individual health insurance market have been approximately 20 percent lower on average than what they otherwise would have been without reinsurance. For 2022, the coinsurance amount tied to reinsurance was changed from 80 percent to 60 percent, which resulted in individual health insurance market premiums being roughly 15.5 percent lower than they would have been without reinsurance. A continuation of reinsurance was approved on April 1, 2022, extending the program for plan years 2023-2027 and reverting the coinsurance parameter back to 80 percent.

Notes on Using the Data

Source

The earned premiums, incurred claims, and loss ratios listed in this report were provided by the health plan companies. The loss ratios have not been independently audited and may include unintentional errors.

Statistical Fluctuation

Loss ratios are subject to statistical fluctuation. Each individual's health care costs and the total incurred claims of a health plan company are more or less unpredictable. Having a high or low loss ratio may be due to fluctuations and may not be repeated in a future time period. In general, statistical fluctuation in markets decrease with more enrollees. However, it is difficult to predict claims when enrollment changes significantly.

Data Table Descriptions

In the data shown in Tables 1 through 3:

- The column titled Group Number is a unique number assigned by the NAIC in order to identify affiliated groups of companies. The number aids in research of financial data available through the NAIC.
- The column titled State Loss Ratio is based on the Minnesota definition of MLR.
- The column titled Preliminary ACA MLR shows the preliminary estimate of the ACA MLR from the health plan company's annual statement. For the small and large group markets, this is shown in the Supplemental Health Care Exhibit. For the individual market, an adjustment was made to the MLR shown in the Supplemental Health Care Exhibit to account for Minnesota's reinsurance program
- The column titled Covered Lives is the number of people insured, including dependents, as reported by the health plan company as of the end of the year.

Table 1: 2021 Individual Loss Ratio Data

Health Plan Company Supplemental Health Care Exhibits for 2021 (except where noted)

Group Code	Name	Earned Premium	Incurred Claims	State Loss Ratio	Preliminary ACA MLR*	Covered Lives
4380	UCare MN (UCare Health Inc aggregated)	\$214,706,551	\$216,795,074	101%	102%	49,649
1258	Group Hlth Plan Inc (HPIC and HPI aggregated)	\$207,615,739	\$200,358,905	97%	97%	47,648
461	HMO dba Blue Plus	\$202,645,648	\$181,078,912	89%	90%	32,759
1552	Medica Ins Co	\$179,145,112	\$161,427,095	90%	90%	25,185
707	PreferredOne Ins Co	\$10,184,812	\$10,425,454	102%	104%	3,297
4870	Quartz Hlth Plan MN Corp	\$4,000,529	\$3,266,604	82%	82%	1,151
	Total	\$818,298,391	\$773,352,044	95%	95%	159,689

Table 1 lists the loss ratios experienced in the individual health plan market in 2021 by companies that cover individuals in that market. Not all health plan companies with individual health plans in force are shown above. Any non-aggregated health plan company with premium volume lower than \$300,000 is not included.

The Minnesota loss ratios for 2021 ranged from 82 percent to 102 percent. The total Minnesota loss ratio for 2021 is 95 percent, versus 84 percent in 2020.

**Values for the ACA MLR are marked above as preliminary because, due to the late timing of risk adjustment and MPSP processing, health plan companies must estimate financial entries.*

Table 2: 2021 Small Employer Group Loss Ratio Data

Health Plan Company Supplemental Health Care Exhibits for 2021 (except where noted)

Group Code	Name	Earned Premium	Incurred Claims	State Loss Ratio	Preliminary ACA MLR*	Covered Lives
461	BCBSM Inc	\$527,450,779	\$467,357,394	89%	89%	72,899
1258	Healthpartners Inc	\$448,726,040	\$424,929,773	95%	95%	72,893
1552	Medica Ins Co	\$294,400,045	\$251,512,131	85%	85%	42,208
707	PreferredOne Ins Co	\$171,688,887	\$175,765,890	102%	103%	32,047
461	HMO dba Blue Plus	\$27,599,663	\$25,061,971	91%	92%	6,079
1258	Healthpartners Ins Co	\$22,743,775	\$22,321,150	98%	98%	2,496
707	UnitedHealthcare Ins Co	\$19,443,875	\$15,527,757	80%	80%	3,956
4870	Quartz Hlth Plan MN Corp	\$2,833,122	\$2,248,616	79%	79%	660
1246	Sanford Hlth Plan of MN	\$843,361	\$766,178	91%	92%	264
707	UnitedHealthcare of IL Inc	\$437,827	\$208,430	48%	46%	240
	Total	\$1,516,167,374	\$1,385,699,290	91%	92%	233,742

Table 2 lists the loss ratios experienced in the small employer health plan market in 2021 by health plan companies that cover small employer groups. Not all health plan companies with small employer health plans in force are included. Any non-aggregated health plan company with premium volume lower than \$300,000 is not included. Also excluded are self-funded small employer health plans.

The Minnesota loss ratios for 2021 ranged from 48 percent to 102 percent. The total Minnesota loss ratio for 2021 for health plan companies is 91 percent. The total Minnesota loss ratio for the previous year was 82 percent.

**Values for the ACA MLR are marked above as preliminary because, due to the late timing of processing, health plan companies were forced to estimate financial entries for risk adjustment.*

Table 3: 2021 Large Employer Group Loss Ratio Data

Based on Health Plan Company Supplemental Health Care Exhibits for 2021 (except where noted)

Group Code	Name	Earned Premium	Incurred Claims	State Loss Ratio	Preliminary ACA MLR*	Covered Lives
461	BCBSM Inc	\$1,475,684,544	\$1,348,847,589	91%	92%	218,324
1552	Medica Ins Co	\$727,704,342	\$645,895,267	89%	89%	125,723
1258	Healthpartners Ins Co	\$703,902,557	\$623,800,302	89%	89%	247,196
1258	Healthpartners Inc	\$112,546,246	\$97,053,102	86%	86%	12,853
707	UnitedHealthcare Ins Co	\$94,379,552	\$83,388,892	88%	89%	19,431
707	PreferredOne Ins Co (PCHP Aggregated)	\$73,582,857	\$72,898,035	99%	100%	13,730
1	Allina Hlth & Aetna Ins Co	\$23,023,171	\$24,904,153	108%	110%	4,324
1246	Sanford Hlth Plan of MN	\$10,164,998	\$10,420,865	103%	103%	2,237
707	UnitedHealthcare of IL Inc	\$2,566,537	\$1,455,708	57%	55%	632
1	Aetna Life Ins Co	\$2,451,190	\$2,683,924	109%	111%	1,041
901	Cigna Hlth & Life Ins Co	\$1,252,344	\$1,321,391	106%	106%	159
4870	Quartz Hlth Plan MN Corp	\$1,122,691	\$913,628	81%	81%	154
	Total	\$3,228,381,029	\$2,913,582,856	90%	91%	645,804

Table 3 lists the loss ratios experienced in the large employer health plan market in 2021 by health plan companies that cover large employer groups. Not all health plan companies with large employer health plans in force are included. Any non-aggregated health plan company with premium volume lower than \$300,000 is not included. Also excluded are large employers with self-funded health plans.

The Minnesota MLRs for 2021 ranged from 57 percent to 154 percent. The total Minnesota loss ratio for 2021 for health plan companies is 90 percent. The total Minnesota MLR for the previous year was 88 percent.

**Values for the ACA MLR are marked above as preliminary due to the late timing of certain claims payments that were unknown at the time when financial statements were filed, in contrast to the time of MLR final reporting.*

Additional Reference Sources

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute § 3.197: This report cost approximately \$578.09 to prepare, including staff time.

For information about insurance companies and nonprofit health service plan corporations, please contact the Commerce Department at:

Minnesota Department of Commerce

Insurance Division

85 7th Place East, Suite 280

St Paul, MN 55101-2198

651-539-1600; 800-657-3602

<https://mn.gov/commerce/industries/insurance/>

For information about health maintenance organizations, please contact the Health Department at:

Minnesota Department of Health

Managed Care Systems

Section 85

7th Place East

P.O. Box 64882

St. Paul, MN 55164-0882

651-201-5100; 800-657-3916

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/hmo>

HMO Financial Reports as Reported to the Minnesota Department of Health

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/insurance/managedcare/reports/financial.html>