Mapping Quality of Life in Nebraska: Migration Rates

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MAPPING QUALITY OF LIFE IN NEBRASKA:
MIGRATION RATES

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NEBRASKA’S MIGRATION RATES

Increasing rates of migration and mobility have shifted the population of Nebraska in recent years. Although not usually considered a major receiving state for immigrants, employment opportunities in several sectors have attracted people from across the country and around the globe to come to the state. This report presents an overview of Nebraska’s recent rates of domestic and international migration, as well as trends in the number of foreign-born population.

OVERALL NET MIGRATION RATES

Nebraska is a state with 93 counties, most of which have had population shifts that can be attributed at least in part to domestic and/or international migration. Note that in the census, migration is measured by asking where a person lived 12 months ago. Thus, a person who was born in another country will not be counted in the migration count if he has lived in the state for more than a year. Migration rates here can be more accurately described as “recent migrants.”

Net migration rate refers to the number of people per 1,000 coming into an area minus the number of people leaving. Thus, a net migration rate of 10.0 means that for every 1,000 people in that location, approximately 10 more people per thousand moved in than moved out.

The overall net migration rate for the state of Nebraska between 2015 and 2016 was 1.1. This means that for every 1,000 residents, there was about one more person moving into the state than moving out. Nationwide, the state that had the highest rate of net migration was Florida (16.0), whereas Illinois and Wyoming each had the lowest rate (-6.5). Thus, in general, population change in Nebraska due to migration was somewhat minimal – with outflow and inflow rates offsetting each other.

Below are a few key points. Figure 1 illustrates migration rates and percentage change by county between 2010 and 2015.

Lancaster, Sarpy, and Banner counties had the highest positive percent growth in population due to migration, with 3.00 to 6.81 percent change between 2010 to 2015.

• Majority of the remaining counties (69 of 93) have had a negative percent change in population due to migration, suggesting that there were more people moving out of these counties than people moving in (-12.68 to 0 percent).
Figure 1. Overall net migration and percent change in population by county from 2010 to 2015

PERCENT CHANGE IN COUNTY POPULATION DUE TO MIGRATION

-12.68% - (-6.00)%
-5.99% - (-3.00)%
-2.99% - 0.00%
0.01% - 0.99%
1.00% - 2.99%
3.00% - 6.81%

Domestic migration refers to the movement of people from state to state, or county to county. Figure 2 illustrates domestic migration rates between 2010 and 2015. Below are some key points.

- Lancaster, Sarpy, and Douglas counties topped the list of highest number of net domestic migrants, with 5,594, 4,435, and 926 respectively.
- In contrast, Dawson, Dakota, and Scotts Bluff counties had the highest number of people moving out to other places in the country, with 1,672, 1,651, and 1,196 people respectively.
- The counties of Sarpy, Garfield, and Banner (darker green shading) had the highest positive percent change in population due to domestic migration, with changes that ranged from 2.50 to 5.28%.
- Majority of Nebraska counties had more people moving out than moving in, resulting in negative percent population change (-12.68% -0.1%) due to domestic migration.
Figure 2: Domestic Net Migration and Percent Population Change by County from 2010 to 2015

Table: Percent Change in County Population Due to Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENT CHANGE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>NET MIGRATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(-12.68) - (-6.00)%</td>
<td>-151</td>
<td>Sheridan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-5.99) - (-3.00)%</td>
<td>-133</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-2.99) - 0.00%</td>
<td>-129</td>
<td>Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01 - 0.99%</td>
<td>-62</td>
<td>McPherson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 - 3.00%</td>
<td>-102</td>
<td>Custer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.01 - 5.28%</td>
<td>-124</td>
<td>Greeley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: County numbers represent domestic migration counts (the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants in each county, for movement within the United States).

International Net Migration Rates

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), there are 42.4 million immigrants living in the country. This number accounts for 13.3% of the population, the highest proportion in the last 104 years (Camarota & Zeigler, 2015). Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of international migrants and percent change in population per county. Numbers in the map refer to net change in number of international migrants from 2010 to 2015; color shadings refer to percent change in population due to international migration.

- From 2010 to 2015, the three southeast metropolitan counties of Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy each received the highest number of international migrants in the state, with 8,842, 5,200, and 2,156 migrants, respectively. These numbers raised each county’s population by 1.00% to 1.99%.
- Hall and Saline counties follow, with 1,740 and 351 migrants, respectively. Hall and Saline counties had the highest percent change in population driven by international migration (2.00% to 3.06%) although they had fewer migrants compared to Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy counties.
- On the other hand, six counties had a negative, though negligible population change due to international migration – Morrill, Chase, Clay, Dundy, and Cluster counties.
- Population change due to international migration were still at near zero from, -.20 to -.01%. Most of the counties in Nebraska have % population change due to international migration. That is, state population rates as a whole have not been affected significantly by international migration.
FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

The foreign-born population includes individuals who were/are not U.S. citizens at birth but are currently in the country. This group includes naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents (i.e., green card holders), temporary workers, and foreign students.

Figure 4 represents the relative concentration of foreign-born individuals across the state. For this figure, a ‘location quotient’ (LQ) is used to depict concentration. LQ is a ratio that contrasts the concentration within the county to the concentration in the broader state. Thus, a 1.00 LQ of foreign-born population in a particular county means that the concentration (e.g., percentage) equals that of the broader state. In this figure, we adjust for potential error and/or normal fluctuations in the population. The LQ values are further categorized as follows:

- **0 – 0.90** = below the average concentration across the state
- **0.91 – 1.10** = consistent with the average concentration across the state
- **1.11 – 2.00** = 11% to 100% above the average concentration across the state
- **2.01 and up** = 101% + above the average concentration across the state

Because the population is generally concentrated in just a few counties (e.g., Lancaster, Douglas, Sarpy) – counts are predictably higher for migration in those counties. Depicting percentage change can also be misleading because some counties with very low populations can emerge as having high percentage changes even when only one or two migrants are in those locations.
Below are a few key points from the data:

- The counties with the highest foreign-born population are Douglas (48,909), Lancaster (21,888), Sarpy (8,905), and Hall (8,467). Dawson, Dakota, Colfax, and Madison counties follow, with an estimate of 2,400 to 4,300 foreign-born residents per county.

- In 2015, there was a total of 123,451 foreign-born residents in Nebraska. Dawson, Hall, Colfax, and Dakota counties had the highest concentration of foreign-born, with LQ higher than 2.0. This indicates that the concentration of the foreign-born population in these counties are at least twice as high as the concentration of foreign-born population in the whole state.

**FIGURE 4. FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY COUNTY FROM 2011 TO 2015**

Note: Location Quotient values quantify how concentrated a demographic group (foreign-born) is within counties compared to the state as a whole ((Population for Demographic Group within the County/Total County Population) divided by (Population for Demographic Group within the State/Total State Population)).
KEY POINTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Nebraska is a state that is not often viewed as affected significantly by mobility and migration. As a state, the net migration rate of 1.1 from 2015 to 2016 is fairly low compared to others like Florida (16.0) or Nevada (14.4). However, data from this report suggests that there is, in fact, substantial movement of people moving in and moving out; as well as pockets within the state where there is higher than average influx of both domestic and international migrants.

In general, migration trends in the state mirror national trends of “rural flight” where people are moving out of the rural counties and moving into suburban or metropolitan areas. In fact, 69 of the 93 counties had a negative net migration. This is most likely due to greater economic opportunities associated with urban areas (Harris & Todaro, 1970). However, the population leaving is being offset by international migrants who do come to suburban and rural counties (e.g., Colfax, Dakota, Dawson). Thus, overall the state net migration rate has been minimal with a slight increase. Below are other key points of this fact sheet.

• The foreign-born population is highest in the metropolitan counties, particularly in Douglas (48,909) and in Lancaster (21,888). However, the highest concentration of foreign-born is found in micropolitan areas with lower overall population (i.e., at least 10,000 but less than 50,000), such as Dakota, Dawson, and Hall. Most likely, specific industries (e.g., meatpacking plants, industrial plants) in these areas are attracting migrant workers. This is consistent with recent scholars’ recognition of the importance of micropolitan areas in economic and social revitalization of states (e.g., Cantrell, 2007).

• The maps of overall net migration rates and domestic migration rates are almost identical. This suggests that domestic migration accounts for much of the population change compared to international migration. Nonetheless, caution must be used in interpreting this pattern. In fact, it may seem that Nebraska has few international migrants. However, international migrants are counted as domestic migrants when they moved within the state in the last 12 months. Thus, it is important to note that the numbers of international migrants are not similar to the numbers of the foreign-born population.

• Counties with high numbers of international migrants, particularly the metropolitan areas in the southeast part of the state, also have high numbers of ethnic minorities (e.g., Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy). Although there are migrants from all over the world who come to Nebraska, the numbers suggest that most of the migrants identify as ‘ethnic minorities’ or non-White (see Population Distribution by Race, Ethnicity, and Age by Taylor et al., 2017).

• International migrants are a diverse group and come to Nebraska for different reasons, such as to work and/or to study. The numbers presented above also include refugees, individuals who have been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Approximately 5,415 refugees from FY 2000 to FY 2010, and 818 refugees in FY 2010 settled in Nebraska. Additionally, as the census does not ask for immigration status, the migration rates and foreign-born population may also include undocumented immigrants, foreign-born individuals who do not have a legal right to live or remain in the country.

Overall, this report presents the migration rates and foreign-born population in Nebraska. Data and information in this report intend to inform policymakers and practitioners as they design guidelines and services that are sensitive to current migration trends and responsive to the characteristics of the population.
REFERENCES

