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Trends and Conditions of Nebraska's Most Rural Counties

Charles Lamphear and Stuart Severns

Nearly three out of five Nebraska counties are *most* rural. Most rural refers to counties having no towns with greater than 2,500 residents.

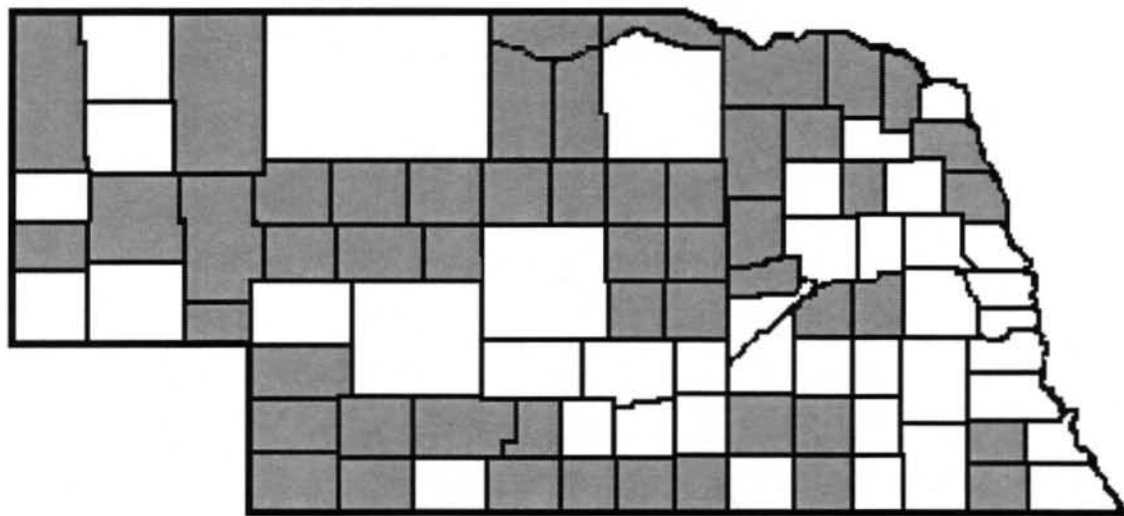
Figure 1 shows that in 1970, 52 counties were most rural. The total number has not changed since then. However, there has been one switch—Nuckolls County has replaced Butler County. The population of David City (Butler County) increased from 2,380 in 1970 to 2,552 in 1990. The population of Superior (Nuckolls County) declined from 2,779 in 1970 to 2,397 in 1990.

What has happened in the state's most rural counties since 1970? Have most experienced population growth? Have employment and income growth kept pace with state

rates? What does the future have in store for these counties? Answers to these questions are the focus of this article. The 1970 map of most rural counties (Figure 1) was used for the background research, and the study period was 1970 to 1996. However, some deviation from this period was necessary because of variation in reporting dates by the various data sources used in the study.

The 52 most rural counties shown in Figure 1 contain 51 percent of the state's total land area, 46 percent of total cropland, and 53 percent of total pasture land. The counties comprise about 13 percent of the state's total population. In 1996 the average population density for the most rural counties was 5.3 persons per square mile. For the rest of the state, the average population density was 37.8

Figure 1
Nebraska's Most Rural Counties (Based on 1970 Census)



persons per square mile. The most rural counties employ slightly less than 11 percent of the state's total workers. Their share of total personal income is slightly less than 11 percent of the state total. Their per capita income is 87 percent of the state average.

Population

Table 1 (column 2) shows the Census year when each county's population peaked. The populations of twelve of the 52 counties peaked by 1890. The populations of all but one county peaked by 1930. Rock County's population peaked by 1940. Column 3 of Table 1 shows 1997 county population estimates as a percent of peak population levels. In 1997 the populations of 34 of the 52 counties were less than half their peak levels. Only Chase and Stanton Counties had populations in 1997 that were more than three-fourths their peak levels. The last column shows population projections for 2010 as a percent of peak population levels. A comparison of columns 4 and 5 reveals those counties whose populations are expected to stabilize or increase during the next decade. Twenty counties are expected to see small increases in population by 2010.

Table 2 summarizes population data by age group for selected years. Population data for the rest of the state and Nebraska are included for comparison purposes. In the most rural counties, population declined in all age groups between 1970 and 1997. The largest percentage decline occurred in the 0 to 14 age group (negative 31 percent). Total population declined from 242,460 in 1970 to 205,695 in 1997 for a drop of 15 percent. For the rest of the state during the same period, population declined in two of the four age groups, but total population increased by 16 percent.

Between 1997 and 2010, the population of the state's most rural counties is projected to increase in two of the

Table 1
Peak Population Years and 1997 and 2010 Population Estimates as
Percents of Peak Population Years

	<i>Population Peak Census Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>1997 Estimate as Percent of Peak</i>	<i>2010 Estimate as Percent of Peak</i>
Antelope	1920	15,243	48%	47%
Arthur	1920	1,412	30%	27%
Banner	1890	2,435	35%	35%
Blaine	1920	1,778	37%	36%
Boone	1930	14,738	43%	43%
Boyd	1910	8,826	30%	28%
Brown	1920	6,749	54%	54%
Burt	1930	13,062	60%	63%
Butler	1900	15,703	55%	57%
Cedar	1930	16,427	60%	60%
Chase	1930	5,484	78%	79%
Clay	1890	16,310	44%	46%
Deuel	1930	3,992	51%	49%
Dixon	1920	11,815	54%	57%
Dundy	1930	5,610	41%	39%
Fillmore	1890	16,022	43%	45%
Franklin	1910	10,303	37%	35%
Frontier	1900	8,781	36%	37%
Furnas	1900	12,373	44%	42%
Garden	1930	5,099	43%	39%
Garfield	1920	3,496	59%	57%
Gosper	1900	5,301	43%	42%
Grant	1920	1,486	50%	49%
Greeley	1920	8,685	34%	35%
Hartan	1910	9,578	39%	37%
Hayes	1890	3,953	27%	24%
Hitchcock	1930	7,269	46%	40%
Hooker	1920	1,378	52%	49%
Howard	1910	10,783	60%	66%
Johnson	1900	11,197	41%	41%
Keya Paha	1890	3,920	25%	23%
Knox	1930	19,110	49%	49%
Logan	1930	2,014	44%	46%
Loup	1910	2,188	31%	33%
McPherson	1910	2,470	22%	23%
Morrill	1930	9,950	55%	56%
Nance	1910	8,926	47%	50%
Pawnee	1900	11,770	27%	26%
Perkins	1930	5,834	56%	56%
Pierce	1930	11,080	72%	75%
Polk	1890	10,817	52%	52%
Rock	1940	3,977	44%	40%
Sheridan	1930	10,793	61%	64%
Sherman	1930	9,122	39%	39%
Sioux	1910	5,599	27%	26%
Stanton	1930	7,809	80%	86%
Thayer	1910	14,775	42%	42%
Thomas	1920	1,773	45%	47%
Thurston	1930	10,462	70%	78%
Valley	1920	9,823	49%	47%
Webster	1910	12,008	33%	33%
Wheeler	1920	2,561	38%	39%

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

four age groups. A population decline of nearly 21 percent is expected for the 15 to 19 age group. A decline of over 10 percent is expected in the 65 and over age group. An increase—10 percent—is expected in the working-age population, ages 20 to 64. Total population is expected to increase from 205,695 in 1997 to 208,417 in 2010, or 1.3 percent. Table 1 indicates that about 3 out of 5 most rural counties will share in this expected population increase.

Between 1997 and 2010, the population of the rest of the state is projected to increase in all age groups (Table 2). Total population is expected to increase by slightly over 10 percent.

Contrary to popular opinion, the expected growth rate of the older population in the state's most rural counties is below the rate of the rest of the state. As already noted, the number of persons 65 and over is expected to decline between 1997 and 2010 in the most rural counties. The number of persons 65 and over is expected to increase by over 9 percent in the rest of the state.

Income

Table 3 summarizes per capita and total personal income data for the most rural counties, the rest of the state, and Nebraska for 1970, 1985, and 1996. The latest year for published county-level income data is 1996. The top portion of Table 3 presents per capita income in current dollars—unadjusted for inflation. The middle portion of the table presents per capita income for the two sub-state groups (i.e., most rural counties and the rest of the state) as a percent of state per capita income. The bottom portion of the table summarizes each sub-state group's share of state total personal income.

The top portion of Table 3 shows that per capita income for the state's most rural counties remains below comparable levels for the rest of the state. Further evidence of this condi-

Table 2
Historical and Projected Population Statistics by Age Group

	<i>Census Reports</i>		<i>Estimates</i>	
	1970	1980	1997	2010
Most Rural Counties				
0-14	66,210	53,754	45,829	46,370
15-19	21,350	20,013	16,189	12,867
20-64	113,490	117,866	102,369	112,197
65+	41,410	44,365	41,308	36,983
Total	242,460	235,998	205,695	208,417
Rest of the State				
0-14	355,200	308,256	334,802	341,464
15-19	122,930	126,697	112,025	118,073
20-64	626,690	739,844	818,121	936,439
65+	141,630	162,065	186,228	203,401
Total	1,246,450	1,336,862	1,451,176	1,599,377
Nebraska				
0-14	421,410	362,010	380,631	387,834
15-19	144,280	146,710	128,214	130,940
20-64	740,180	857,710	920,490	1,048,636
65+	183,040	206,430	227,536	240,384
Total	1,488,910	1,572,860	1,656,871	1,807,794

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

tion is indicated by the indexes given in the middle portion of the table. In 1970 per capita income for the most rural counties was slightly over 84 percent of the state average. The comparable indexes for 1985 and 1996 indicate that the trend has been positive, meaning that the per capita income for the most rural counties has moved closer to the state average. While the per capita income trend for the most rural counties has been positive, the trend in the most rural counties' share of state total personal income has been negative. The most rural counties' share of state total personal income was 13.7 percent in 1970. By 1996 the share had dropped to 10.9 percent.

Table 3
Summary of Per Capita and Total Personal Income

	1970	1985	1996
Per Capita Income (Actual Dollars)			
Most Rural Counties	\$3,197	\$12,062	\$19,971
Rest of the State	\$3,904	\$13,646	\$23,406
Nebraska	\$3,789	\$13,420	\$22,975
Per Capita Income Index (State = 100 percent)			
Most Rural Counties	84.4%	89.9%	86.9%
Rest of the State	103.0%	101.7%	101.9%
Total Personal Income (Share of State Total)			
Most Rural Counties	13.7%	12.8%	10.9%
Rest of the State	86.3%	87.2%	89.1%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Table 4 provides summary data on transfer payments. A brief coverage of transfer payments is useful because transfer payments represent a source of income other than employment and investment earnings. Transfer payments are one measure of income dependence. The main source of transfer payments is government payments to individuals, such as Social Security. The top portion of Table 4 presents transfer payments in actual dollars. The middle portion of the table shows the shares of total state transfer payments. The bottom portion of the table reports transfer payments on a per capita basis—total transfer payments divided by population. A per capita measure of transfer payments does not mean to imply that every resident actually received transfer payments, but is a way to compare levels of transfer payments. For the most rural counties, per capita transfer payments exceeded the state average for each of the three years shown in the table.

Agriculture

Census of Agriculture reports published by the U.S. Department of Commerce show that the number of farm operations (including ranch operations) declined statewide by 19,334 between 1969 and 1992. Slightly over 42 percent of the decline occurred in the 52 most rural counties.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce reports annual data on the number of farm proprietors and farm employees (salaried employees). Table 5 presents a summary of the 52 most rural counties, the rest of the state, and Nebraska for 1970, 1995, and 1996. For the most rural counties, between 1970 and 1996 the number of farm proprietors declined by 8,275, or 26 percent. Salaried employees in farming

operations in the most rural counties increased slightly during the 1970 to 1996 period, from 5,194 in 1970 to 5,850 in 1996. A similar pattern occurred in the rest of the state. For the rest of the state, the number of farm proprietors declined 25 percent and the number of salaried employees increased 10 percent during the 1970 to 1996 period. Overall, during the 1970 to 1996 period, the reported number of individuals who directly derived income from farm operations declined 21 percent in the most rural counties and 20 percent in the rest of the state.

Table 4
Summary of Transfer Payments

	1970	1985	1996
Total Transfer Payments (\$1,000)			
Most Rural Counties	\$93,627	\$434,289	\$780,167
Rest of the State	\$442,998	\$2,386,751	\$4,745,244
Nebraska	\$536,625	\$2,821,040	\$5,525,411
Share of State Total			
Most Rural Counties	17.4%	15.4%	14.1%
Rest of the State	82.6%	84.6%	85.9%
Per Capita Total			
Transfer Payments			
Most Rural Counties	\$386	\$1,924	\$3,774
Rest of the State	\$356	\$1,756	\$3,291
Nebraska	\$361	\$1,780	\$3,351

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Table 5
Farm Proprietors and Employees

	1970	1985	1996
Most Rural Counties			
Farm Proprietors	31,236	26,646	22,961
Farm Employees	5,194	8,020	5,850
Total	36,430	34,666	28,811
Rest of the State			
Farm Proprietors	41,912	35,820	31,374
Farm Employees	7,820	11,751	8,610
Total	49,732	47,571	39,984
Nebraska			
Farm Proprietors	73,148	62,466	54,335
Farm Employees	13,014	19,771	14,460
Total	86,162	82,237	68,795

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Nonfarm Private Operations

The reported number of nonfarm private operations or establishments in the state's 52 most rural counties increased from 5,194 in 1970 to 5,636 in 1995, a gain of 442 establishments (Table 6). Table 6 shows that 15,565 new establishments with paid employees were created statewide during 1970 and 1995. Slightly less than 3 percent of the 15,565 increase occurred in the 52 most rural counties.

(continued, pg. 6)

Table 6
Number of Nonfarm Business Establishments

	1970	1985	1995
Most Rural Counties			
Ag. Services, Forestry & Fisheries	109	113	164
Mining	39	32	26
Construction	376	410	514
Manufacturing	209	198	213
TCU ¹	292	264	411
Wholesale Trade	438	724	634
Retail Trade ²	2,223	1,587	1,543
FIRE ³	349	434	499
Services	1,111	1,156	1,543
Unclassified ⁴	48	885	89
Total	5,194	5,803	5,636
Rest of the State			
Ag. Services, Forestry & Fisheries	299	465	818
Mining	131	174	120
Construction	2,453	3,296	4,363
Manufacturing	1,425	1,632	1,858
TCU ¹	1,239	1,576	2,219
Wholesale Trade	2,554	3,193	3,360
Retail Trade ²	8,089	9,031	9,957
FIRE ³	2,542	3,159	4,067
Services	6,888	10,060	14,260
Unclassified ⁴	749	4,726	470
Total	26,369	37,312	41,492
Nebraska			
Ag. Services, Forestry & Fisheries	408	578	982
Mining	170	206	146
Construction	2,829	3,706	4,877
Manufacturing	1,634	1,830	2,071
TCU ¹	1,531	1,840	2,630
Wholesale Trade	2,992	3,917	3,994
Retail Trade ²	10,312	10,618	11,500
FIRE ³	2,891	3,593	4,566
Services	7,999	11,216	15,803
Unclassified ⁴	797	5,611	559
Total	31,563	43,115	47,128

¹Transportation, Communications, and Utilities

²In 1982 retail farm implement establishments were reclassified as wholesale trade establishments.

³Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

⁴Establishments not classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code.

Source: County Business Patterns, U.S. Department of Commerce

County Business Patterns report establishments with paid employees. Several government owned enterprises are included, such as liquor stores, wholesale liquor establishments, depository institutions, federal and federally sponsored credit agencies, and hospitals. Public utilities, such as Nebraska Public Power District, are not included in the statistical reports. An establishment is a single physical location at which business is conducted or services or industrial operations are performed. It is not necessarily identical to a company or enterprise, which may consist of one or more establishments. *County Business Patterns* reports are considered by most business and economic analysts as a reasonably accurate and complete account of local business establishments.

Table 7 summarizes nonfarm private employment data for the most rural counties, the rest of the state, and Nebraska for 1970, 1985, and 1996. For the most rural counties, private nonfarm employment grew by 17,045 jobs or 1.2 percent per year during 1970 and 1996. The number of jobs (employment) in the rest of the state increased by 380,491, or 2.5 percent per year. Between 1970 and 1996, nearly 96 percent of total job growth occurred in the rest of the state.

In 1970 the share of employment in the most rural counties was slightly under 10 percent of the state total. By 1996 the share had declined to slightly over 7 percent, a 25 percent drop.

Table 8 gives summary employment statistics for individual sectors.

Government

Total government employment in the state's most rural counties grew from 18,562 in 1970 to 20,562 in 1996, 0.4 percent per year (Table 9). The annual growth rate for the rest of the state was 0.8 percent, double the rate for the most rural counties. State and local government employment for the most rural counties grew from 14,261 in 1970 to 18,128 in 1996, 0.9 percent per year. The comparable rate for the rest of the state was 1.5 percent per year.

Conclusion

If current trends and conditions continue, the proportion of people, businesses, and jobs that reside in the state's most rural counties will decline further. Nearly all nonfarm private sector job growth during the 1970 to 1996 period occurred outside the 52 most rural counties. Most of that growth occurred in a handful of counties. With the exception of agriculture, most of the state's total business activity in the future will be centered in a few counties.

However, two key interrelated factors largely will determine what actually occurs in the state's most rural counties during the next decade—economic diversification and migration. Considerable effort will be required to find more profitable businesses to attract workers and, as a result, to limit outmigration. If competitive career opportunities are not realized, most rural counties could see further population decline; not a desirable outcome when a minimum critical mass is essential for maintaining efficient local services.

Table 7
Private Nonfarm Employment

	1970	1985	1996
Most Rural Counties	47,905	54,577	64,950
Rest of the State	447,641	611,045	828,132
Nebraska	495,546	665,622	893,082

¹Employment includes full- and part-time jobs.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Table 8
Private Nonfarm Employment by Sector

	1970		1985		1996	
	Employment	Percent Share	Employment	Percent Share	Employment	Percent Share
Ag. Services, Forestry, Fisheries, and Other						
Most Rural Counties	1,209	28.4%	2,168	26.4%	3,793	23.7%
Rest of the State	3,052	71.6%	6,030	73.6%	12,213	76.3%
Nebraska	4,259	100.0%	8,198	100.0%	16,006	100.0%
Mining						
Most Rural Counties	410	16.1%	458	11.9%	186	7.8%
Rest of the State	2,137	83.9%	3,402	88.1%	2,206	92.2%
Nebraska	2,547	100.0%	3,860	100.0%	2,392	100.0%
Construction						
Most Rural Counties	3,956	11.1%	4,169	10.1%	5,039	9.0%
Rest of the State	31,552	88.9%	36,962	89.9%	51,168	91.0%
Nebraska	35,508	100.0%	41,131	100.0%	56,207	100.0%
Manufacturing						
Most Rural Counties	3,383	3.9%	4,305	4.8%	5,598	4.8%
Rest of the State	83,609	96.1%	88,977	95.2%	111,761	95.2%
Nebraska	86,992	100.0%	93,282	100.0%	117,358	100.0%
TCU¹						
Most Rural Counties	2,819	6.6%	3,187	6.3%	3,591	6.1%
Rest of the State	39,609	93.4%	47,460	93.7%	55,041	93.9%
Nebraska	42,428	100.0%	50,647	100.0%	58,632	100.0%
Wholesale Trade						
Most Rural Counties	2,044	6.9%	5,302	10.6%	5,440	9.6%
Rest of the State	27,517	93.1%	44,768	89.4%	50,944	90.4%
Nebraska	29,561	100.0%	50,070	100.0%	56,384	100.0%
Retail Trade						
Most Rural Counties	16,701	13.5%	13,736	9.3%	16,143	8.3%
Rest of the State	107,347	86.5%	133,569	90.7%	177,750	91.7%
Nebraska	124,048	100.0%	147,305	100.0%	193,893	100.0%
FIRE²						
Most Rural Counties	4,015	9.2%	4,605	6.8%	5,191	6.5%
Rest of the State	39,822	90.8%	63,520	93.2%	74,191	93.5%
Nebraska	43,837	100.0%	68,125	100.0%	79,382	100.0%
Services						
Most Rural Counties	13,267	10.5%	16,798	8.3%	21,655	6.9%
Rest of the State	113,099	89.5%	186,206	91.7%	291,173	93.1%
Nebraska	126,366	100.0%	203,004	100.0%	312,828	100.0%

¹TCU represents transportation, communications, and utilities.

²FIRE represents finance, insurance, and real estate.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Table 9
Government Employment

	1970		1985		1996	
	Employment	Percent Share	Employment	Percent Share	Employment	Percent Share
Federal Government, including Military						
Most Rural Counties	4,301	10.0%	3,078	7.9%	2,434	7.5%
Rest of the State	38,817	90.0%	35,966	92.1%	29,999	92.5%
Nebraska	43,118	100.0%	39,044	100.0%	32,433	100.0%
State and Local Government						
Most Rural Counties	14,261	15.8%	16,583	14.4%	18,128	14.0%
Rest of the State	76,116	84.2%	98,726	85.6%	111,615	86.0%
Nebraska	90,377	100.0%	115,309	100.0%	129,743	100.0%
Total Government						
Most Rural Counties	18,562	13.9%	19,661	12.7%	20,562	12.7%
Rest of the State	114,933	86.1%	134,692	87.3%	141,614	87.3%
Nebraska	133,495	100.0%	154,353	100.0%	162,176	100.0%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce



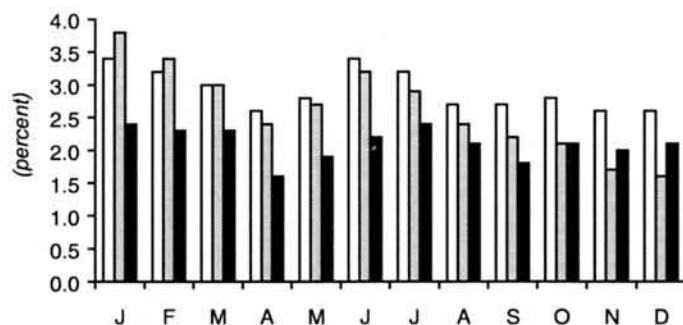
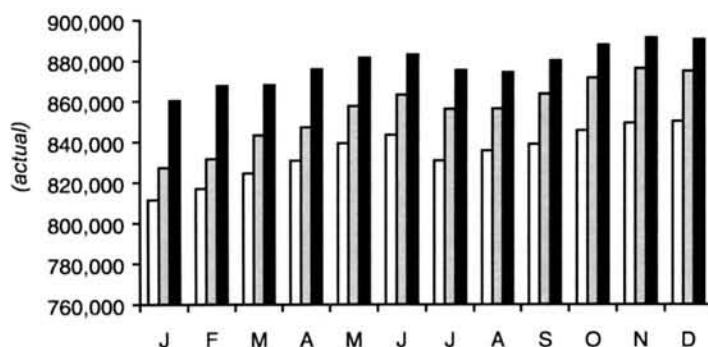
Race and Ethnicity Trends Pin Nebraska

	Total Hispanic	Total White	White Hispanic	White Non-Hispanic	Black	American Indian	Asian & Pacific Islander
Nebraska							
1990	36,969	1,495,071	34,242	1,460,829	57,862	12,855	12,629
1997	67,850	1,554,800	61,865	1,492,935	66,193	14,841	21,036
Percent Change	83.5	4.0	80.7	2.2	14.4	15.4	66.6
Central Region							
1990	4,054	210,971	3,868	207,103	549	615	995
1997	7,429	215,300	7,041	208,259	665	753	1,672
Percent Change	83.3	2.1	82.0	0.6	21.1	22.4	68.0
Lincoln MSA							
1990	3,938	204,230	3,558	200,672	4,717	1,306	3,388
1997	7,470	220,435	6,715	213,720	5,659	1,624	5,601
Percent Change	89.7	7.9	88.7	6.5	20.0	24.3	65.3
Mid-Plains Region							
1990	3,136	108,284	3,025	105,259	153	535	255
1997	5,627	111,227	5,433	105,794	202	611	405
Percent Change	79.4	2.7	79.6	0.5	32.0	14.2	58.8
Northeast Region							
1990	2,606	227,837	2,426	225,411	556	4,600	828
1997	5,053	231,423	4,579	226,844	734	5,162	1,446
Percent Change	93.9	1.6	88.7	0.6	32.0	12.2	74.6
Omaha MSA							
1990	15,050	496,144	13,528	482,616	51,359	3,172	6,277
1997	28,914	529,292	25,267	504,025	58,303	3,913	10,541
Percent Change	92.1	6.7	86.8	4.4	13.5	23.4	67.9
Panhandle Region							
1990	7,246	88,421	6,938	81,483	200	2,051	377
1997	11,621	87,554	11,186	76,368	273	2,105	552
Percent Change	60.4	-1.0	61.2	-6.3	36.5	2.6	46.4
Southeast Region							
1990	939	159,184	899	158,285	328	576	509
1997	1,736	159,569	1,644	157,925	357	673	819
Percent Change	84.9	0.2	82.9	-0.2	8.8	16.8	60.9

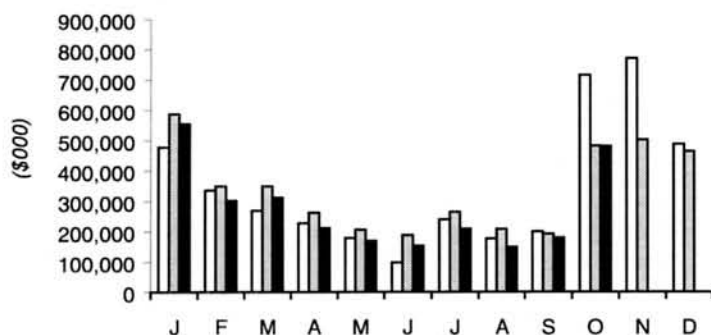
Source: Bureau of the Census

Nebraska Stats

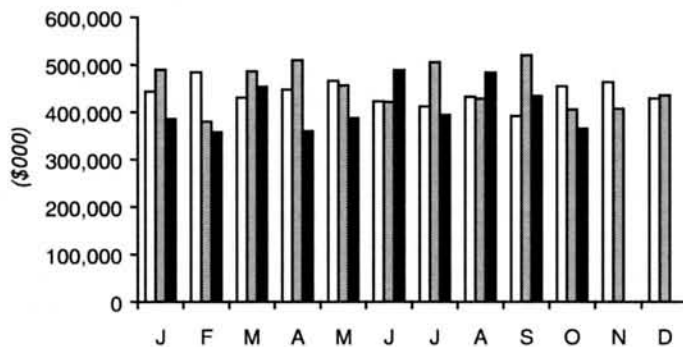
Total Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment 1996 1997 1998 **Unemployment Rate**



Cash Receipts—Crops



Cash Receipts—Livestock



Net Taxable Retail Sales* for Nebraska Cities (\$000)

	October 1998 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago		October 1998 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago
Ainsworth, Brown	1,765	18,401	3.8	Kenesaw, Adams	161	2,324	101.9
Albion, Boone	1,829	18,050	1.6	Kimball, Kimball	1,413	15,887	-1.5
Alliance, Box Butte	5,894	59,672	-0.8	La Vista, Sarpy	8,951	83,995	13.0
Alma, Harlan	546	6,872	2.0	Laurel, Cedar	400	3,399	-11.7
Arapahoe, Furnas	710	7,659	7.2	Lexington, Dawson	6,757	70,693	2.4
Arlington, Washington	223	1,881	2.5	Lincoln, Lancaster	198,202	1,949,882	7.0
Arnold, Custer	201	2,623	3.1	Louisville, Cass	746	7,838	35.0
Ashland, Saunders	1,209	12,477	4.6	Loup City, Sherman	590	6,349	10.7
Atkinson, Holt	807	10,035	9.0	Lyons, Burt	523	5,028	2.6
Auburn, Nemaha	2,325	23,736	-2.2	Madison, Madison	761	7,662	1.0
Aurora, Hamilton	2,495	26,138	0.5	McCook, Red Willow	11,456	111,402	4.6
Axtell, Kearney	73	686	-11.5	Milford, Seward	1,187	9,230	1.9
Bassett, Rock	470	4,742	4.6	Minatare, Scotts Bluff	134	1,533	-22.3
Battle Creek, Madison	535	6,222	-2.1	Minden, Kearney	1,663	17,316	-2.1
Bayard, Morrill	319	4,428	7.5	Mitchell, Scotts Bluff	681	7,060	-14.1
Beatrice, Gage	10,766	104,821	0.9	Morrill, Scotts Bluff	399	4,730	6.5
Beaver City, Furnas	131	1,380	10.7	Nebraska City, Otoe	6,958	64,752	6.4
Bellevue, Sarpy	19,035	184,384	6.2	Neligh, Antelope	1,464	13,958	-5.1
Benkelman, Dundas	497	5,724	6.0	Newman Grove, Madison	235	2,916	-12.7
Bennington, Douglas	498	4,468	14.7	Norfolk, Madison	28,775	283,922	0.7
Blair, Washington	6,133	64,553	3.6	North Bend, Dodge	452	4,943	1.8
Bloomfield, Knox	565	6,606	0.9	North Platte, Lincoln	21,112	216,787	4.7
Blue Hill, Webster	466	4,703	5.0	O'Neill, Holt	4,155	41,473	-0.7
Bridgeport, Morrill	1,025	10,889	-0.2	Oakland, Burt	662	7,001	8.3
Broken Bow, Custer	3,567	37,654	-0.5	Ogallala, Keith	5,240	56,797	5.8
Burwell, Garfield	720	7,755	2.9	Omaha, Douglas	463,169	4,604,918	6.8
Cairo, Hall	234	2,944	27.8	Ord, Valley	1,969	19,336	4.2
Central City, Merrick	1,677	17,376	3.6	Osceola, Polk	845	7,948	4.5
Chadron, Dawes	4,268	44,231	26.4	Oshkosh, Garden	476	4,766	14.2
Chappell, Deuel	409	4,378	6.2	Osmond, Pierce	494	4,695	12.1
Clarkson, Colfax	384	4,121	-10.1	Oxford, Furnas	354	4,193	-19.3
Clay Center, Clay	366	3,692	16.8	Papillion, Sarpy	6,022	64,821	10.3
Columbus, Platte	20,009	203,054	3.3	Pawnee City, Pawnee	294	3,012	0.9
Cozad, Dawson	2,985	29,833	0.8	Pender, Thurston	845	7,284	-2.3
Crawford, Dawes	446	5,471	-0.3	Pierce, Pierce	587	6,595	-1.8
Creighton, Knox	1,106	10,768	9.1	Plainview, Pierce	591	6,411	-7.1
Crete, Saline	3,410	31,623	0.0	Plattsmouth, Cass	3,422	33,436	3.1
Crofton, Knox	390	4,009	0.3	Ponca, Dixon	416	5,223	3.4
Curtis, Frontier	311	3,553	9.6	Ralston, Douglas	3,770	33,103	5.6
Dakota City, Dakota	338	3,760	-8.4	Randolph, Cedar	393	4,371	14.3
David City, Butler	1,660	14,057	3.2	Ravenna, Buffalo	634	7,678	-0.8
Deshler, Thayer	218	3,205	44.2	Red Cloud, Webster	673	6,972	-7.3
Dodge, Dodge	215	2,439	0.3	Rushville, Sheridan	479	5,158	-1.4
Doniphan, Hall	1,502	11,805	67.0	Sargent, Custer	206	1,922	0.6
Eagle, Cass	261	4,181	8.7	Schuyler, Colfax	1,749	19,085	2.1
Elgin, Antelope	335	4,064	-3.6	Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff	19,966	200,077	-3.1
Elkhorn, Douglas	2,293	23,747	12.2	Scribner, Dodge	455	4,747	-4.3
Elm Creek, Buffalo	460	3,600	16.5	Seward, Seward	5,112	46,602	-3.4
Elwood, Gosper	335	4,415	4.0	Shelby, Polk	331	3,173	-2.7
Fairbury, Jefferson	3,381	31,814	9.1	Shelton, Buffalo	559	6,610	18.2
Fairmont, Fillmore	169	1,679	7.6	Sidney, Cheyenne	8,845	74,317	2.0
Falls City, Richardson	2,701	25,065	-0.4	South Sioux City, Dakota	7,925	78,336	-0.7
Franklin, Franklin	529	5,680	24.6	Springfield, Sarpy	583	4,695	55.7
Fremont, Dodge	22,107	207,144	5.4	St. Paul, Howard	1,231	12,211	-2.6
Friend, Saline	459	4,458	-1.1	Stanton, Stanton	578	6,088	5.6
Fullerton, Nance	446	5,079	-6.0	Stromsburg, Polk	1,034	10,034	-6.7
Geneva, Fillmore	1,657	17,354	-0.5	Superior, Nuckolls	1,330	15,489	-1.9
Genoa, Nance	251	2,957	24.2	Sutherland, Lincoln	320	3,290	11.9
Gering, Scotts Bluff	3,413	34,945	7.3	Sutton, Clay	760	8,647	-11.7
Gibbon, Buffalo	871	8,420	5.1	Syracuse, Otoe	1,180	11,238	5.0
Gordon, Sheridan	1,645	16,826	-5.3	Tecumseh, Johnson	885	8,511	-7.9
Gothenburg, Dawson	2,158	22,146	2.0	Tekamah, Burt	1,142	11,076	0.7
Grand Island, Hall	48,905	494,276	5.6	Tilden, Madison	409	4,372	-0.3
Grant, Perkins	921	9,996	-0.1	Utica, Seward	286	2,846	24.8
Gretna, Sarpy	3,379	32,321	-1.0	Valentine, Cherry	4,005	40,691	6.2
Hartington, Cedar	1,561	16,274	0.3	Valley, Douglas	1,878	12,390	1.5
Hastings, Adams	20,038	202,638	3.4	Wahoo, Saunders	2,388	23,479	-9.6
Hay Springs, Sheridan	329	3,201	-2.3	Wakefield, Dixon	293	3,448	-5.0
Hebron, Thayer	1,696	18,809	-1.6	Wauneta, Chase	250	2,993	-0.5
Henderson, York	629	6,537	7.6	Waverly, Lancaster	654	8,153	10.9
Hickman, Lancaster	241	2,548	9.6	Wayne, Wayne	3,667	32,717	6.6
Holdrege, Phelps	4,013	43,227	-3.3	Weeping Water, Cass	695	6,778	5.8
Hooper, Dodge	329	3,470	0.9	West Point, Cuming	3,736	37,236	-2.3
Humboldt, Richardson	449	4,938	-2.3	Wilber, Saline	436	4,454	-3.5
Humphrey, Platte	767	7,781	5.5	Wisner, Cuming	650	5,968	-9.2
Imperial, Chase	1,984	20,384	7.2	Wood River, Hall	301	4,123	-6.9
Juniata, Adams	182	1,946	-9.8	Wymore, Gage	373	3,985	-3.7
Kearney, Buffalo	31,500	308,466	7.4	York, York	10,121	102,002	13.3

*Does not include motor vehicle sales. Motor vehicle net taxable retail sales are reported by county only.

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

Net Taxable Retail Sales for Nebraska Counties (\$000)

	Motor Vehicle Sales			Other Sales				Motor Vehicle Sales				Other Sales		
	October		YTD	October		YTD		October		YTD		October		YTD
	1998	YTD	% Chg. vs	1998	YTD	% Chg. vs		1998	YTD	% Chg. vs		1998	YTD	% Chg. vs
	(\$000)	(\$000)	Yr. Ago	(\$000)	(\$000)	Yr. Ago		(\$000)	(\$000)	Yr. Ago		(\$000)	(\$000)	Yr. Ago
Nebraska	201,551	2,048,638	8.5	1,332,861	13,367,518	6.8		772	7,871	-5.8		1,539	15,635	-2.7
Adams	3,171	34,264	4.8	20,585	209,650	3.7	Howard	972	10,989	8.0		4,434	41,548	8.6
Antelope	740	9,827	-7.8	2,274	22,406	-1.6	Jefferson	651	5,835	24.6		1,165	11,859	-4.7
Arthur	89	705	41.9	(D)	(D)	(D)	Kearney	637	9,609	-5.4		1,847	19,399	-2.5
Banner	168	1,153	-17.8	(D)	(D)	(D)	Keith	1,075	11,138	4.8		5,700	62,453	5.8
Blaine	132	1,060	17.3	(D)	(D)	(D)	Keya Paha	98	1,063	-11.0		84	915	7.5
Boone	580	8,190	-8.2	2,332	22,978	-1.5	Kimball	613	4,920	-7.6		1,441	16,302	-1.6
Box Butte	1,395	15,367	3.7	6,152	62,584	-0.7	Knox	1,037	9,935	-1.6		2,627	27,512	3.2
Boyd	192	2,394	-0.8	455	5,290	-8.0	Lancaster	26,936	266,531	14.5		200,354	1,974,466	7.1
Brown	334	4,134	9.9	1,826	19,291	3.5	Lincoln	4,067	41,276	16.7		22,029	225,996	4.7
Buffalo	5,009	49,828	6.9	34,392	338,432	7.3	Logan	97	1,402	49.6		(D)	(D)	(D)
Burt	1,013	10,398	1.4	2,504	24,891	2.5	Loup	101	897	-0.3		(D)	(D)	(D)
Butler	716	10,021	4.6	2,036	18,904	3.1	McPherson	58	658	3.0		(D)	(D)	(D)
Cass	3,754	35,009	11.2	6,386	65,435	5.9	Madison	3,939	41,189	5.2		30,758	305,597	0.3
Cedar	855	11,542	-9.4	2,662	27,483	-0.3	Merrick	1,000	9,921	7.5		2,266	23,551	4.8
Chase	773	6,224	-8.3	2,242	23,786	5.9	Morrill	691	6,093	-12.7		1,381	15,509	1.2
Cherry	837	9,165	14.5	4,196	42,801	6.3	Nance	385	4,860	-5.1		717	8,409	2.8
Cheyenne	1,089	11,829	1.1	9,108	77,021	1.8	Nemaha	991	9,716	10.2		2,562	26,371	-1.9
Clay	669	9,331	-1.4	1,952	21,390	0.0	Nuckolls	330	5,630	-12.5		1,898	21,236	-0.4
Colfax	1,031	11,670	6.1	2,542	27,262	-0.2	Otoe	1,743	19,962	7.2		8,491	80,007	5.6
Cuming	1,027	12,572	-12.4	4,984	49,052	-3.2	Pawnee	299	3,907	6.9		478	4,977	-0.9
Custer	1,025	14,172	-0.3	4,404	47,507	1.1	Perkins	492	5,160	4.4		1,097	11,951	-1.2
Dakota	2,131	21,892	6.8	8,880	88,340	-3.1	Phelps	1,122	13,586	-7.0		4,263	46,084	-2.7
Dawes	1,006	8,746	16.3	4,714	49,718	22.7	Pierce	730	9,083	-8.9		1,753	18,500	-0.9
Dawson	2,822	29,346	2.7	12,351	126,979	1.8	Platte	3,355	36,517	-5.6		21,232	216,784	3.0
Deuel	368	2,736	-3.3	1,005	9,907	15.4	Polk	751	8,143	-2.5		2,336	22,468	-1.6
Dixon	744	8,236	12.0	827	9,880	-0.6	Red Willow	1,459	13,255	4.5		11,732	114,733	4.5
Dodge	4,236	41,813	5.3	23,805	225,693	4.8	Richardson	889	10,490	5.2		3,381	32,367	-2.4
Douglas	57,608	542,471	14.6	473,383	4,695,522	6.7	Rock	158	2,373	1.6		479	4,883	4.6
Dundy	396	3,407	1.6	502	5,916	3.9	Saline	1,496	15,361	9.8		4,635	44,344	-0.6
Fillmore	732	9,337	1.4	2,242	25,537	-0.9	Sarpy	16,100	154,158	14.3		39,895	383,141	9.5
Franklin	330	4,300	-3.3	738	8,153	16.7	Saunders	2,556	27,738	8.3		5,181	57,885	-1.6
Frontier	275	4,466	6.4	587	6,645	2.3	Scotts Bluff	3,956	40,237	2.2		24,634	249,068	-2.2
Furnas	539	7,092	1.7	1,979	21,652	-5.8	Seward	1,967	21,063	13.3		6,806	61,155	-1.6
Gage	2,159	26,486	8.6	12,190	116,419	1.0	Sheridan	775	8,026	5.6		2,715	28,029	-3.3
Garden	238	3,355	12.2	642	6,458	13.2	Sherman	416	3,980	-3.8		673	7,565	4.0
Garfield	199	2,257	10.3	719	7,753	2.9	Sioux	108	2,441	6.0		133	1,374	-9.4
Gosper	286	3,143	9.2	389	4,926	2.1	Stanton	619	7,724	0.2		723	7,569	2.3
Grant	187	1,435	21.3	186	2,248	18.9	Thayer	603	7,966	-3.6		2,401	27,317	-0.6
Greeley	168	3,476	12.6	731	6,987	5.8	Thomas	97	957	-27.4		295	2,973	-30.5
Hall	6,449	64,486	11.1	51,265	516,462	6.5	Thurston	458	4,351	-21.6		938	8,492	-4.6
Hamilton	1,129	11,496	-7.1	2,900	30,154	0.0	Valley	431	5,194	0.4		2,173	21,583	5.6
Harlan	453	5,044	11.0	709	9,042	3.8	Washington	2,493	28,033	8.5		6,938	71,064	3.5
Hayes	144	1,486	-1.3	(D)	(D)	(D)	Wayne	952	10,231	-3.6		3,836	34,220	6.0
Hitchcock	350	3,914	7.4	524	5,768	-6.0	Webster	411	4,265	-12.0		1,253	12,798	-2.8
Holt	1,178	15,527	1.7	5,567	58,705	1.7	Wheeler	112	1,533	-3.6		93	1,005	-2.6
Hooker	142	1,286	53.1	337	3,579	12.3	York	1,812	18,915	0.3		11,169	113,224	12.1

*Totals may not add due to rounding

(D) Denotes disclosure suppression

*County values may not add to state total due to unallocated sales and disclosure suppression

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

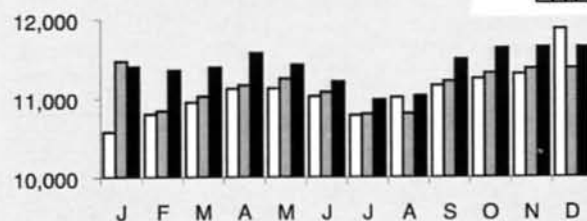
Note on Net Taxable Retail Sales

Users of this series should be aware that taxable retail sales are not generated exclusively by traditional outlets such as clothing, discount, and hardware stores. While businesses classified as retail trade firms account for, on average, slightly more than half of total taxable sales, sizable portions of taxable sales are generated by service establishments, electric and gas utilities, wholesalers, telephone and cable companies, and manufacturers.

Regional Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment* 1996 to December** 1998

1996 1997 1998

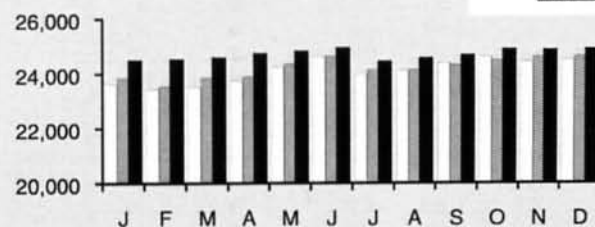
Northwest Panhandle



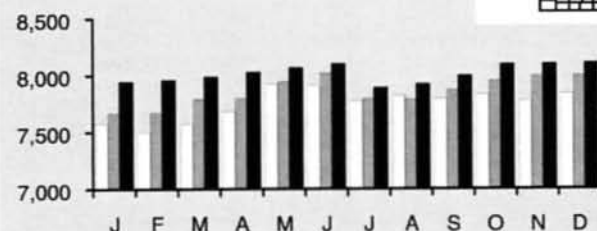
Note to Readers

The charts on pages 8 and 9 now report nonfarm employment by place of work for each region. Prior to the November December 1998 issue, employment was reported by place of residence.

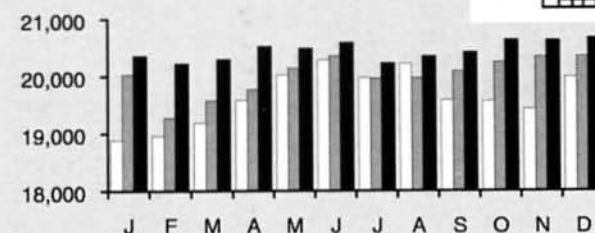
Southwest Panhandle



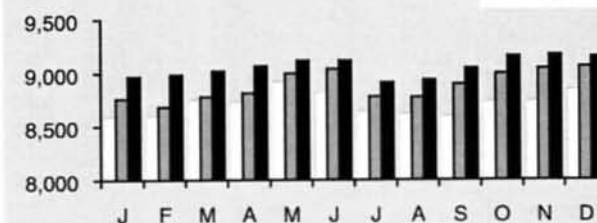
North Central



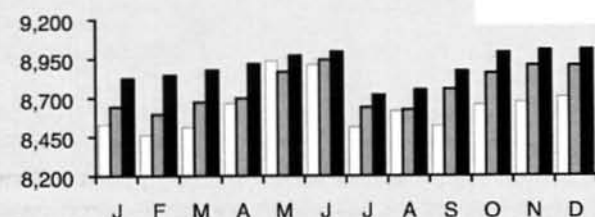
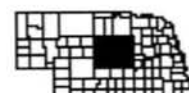
West Central



Southwest Central



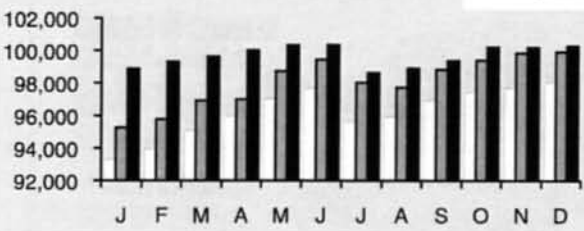
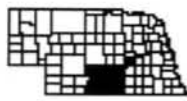
East Central



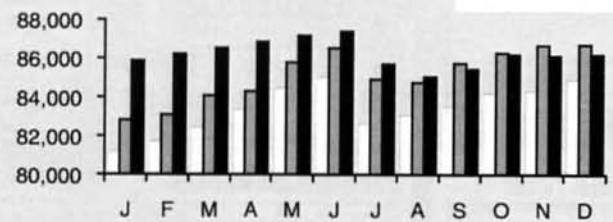
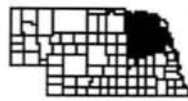
Regional Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment* 1996 to December** 1998

1996 1997 1998

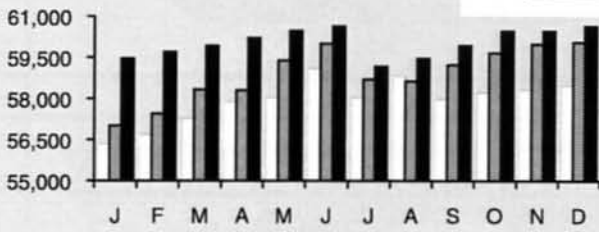
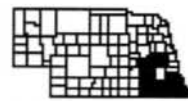
Southeast Central



Northeast

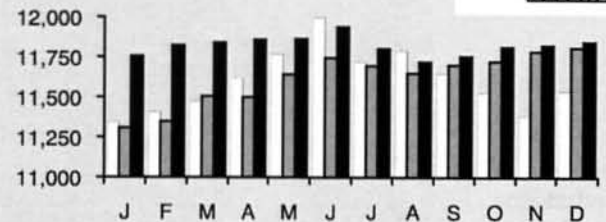


Southeast



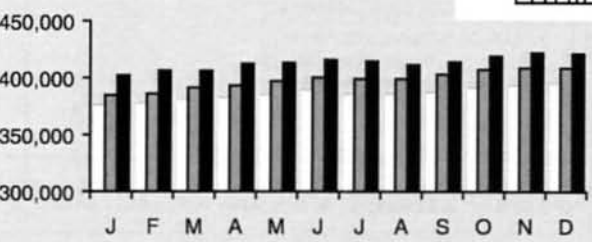
Sioux City MSA

Nebraska portion only

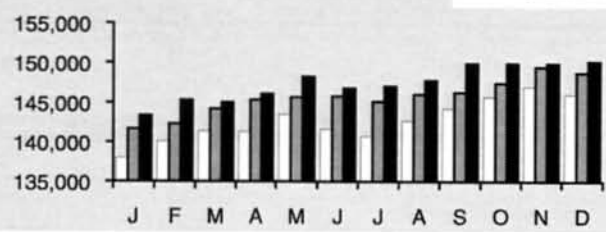


Omaha MSA

Nebraska portion only



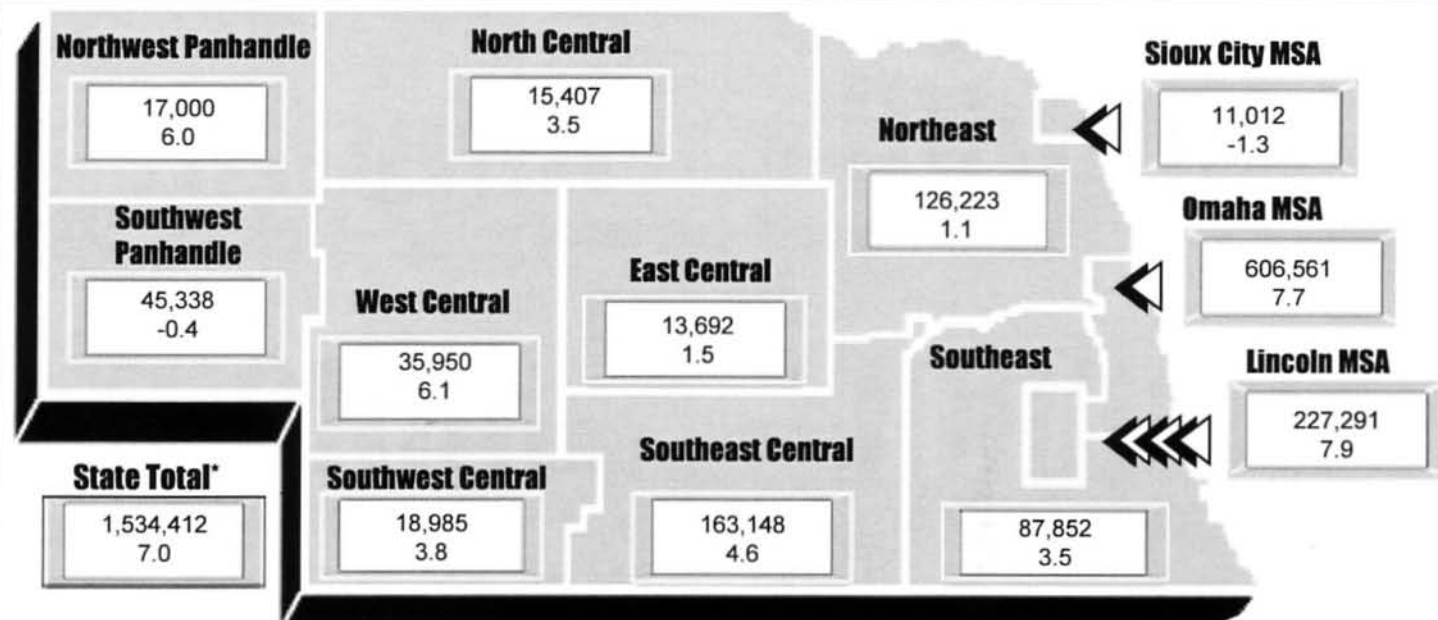
Lincoln MSA



*By place of work
**Current month data are preliminary and subject to revision
Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

October 1998 Regional Retail Sales (\$000)

YTD Percent Change vs Yr. Ago



*Regional values may not add to state total due to unallocated sales and disclosure suppression.

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

State Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment by Industry*

	Preliminary December 1998	Revised November 1998	November % Change vs Yr. Ago
Total	890,481	891,266	1.7
Construction & Mining	42,364	43,223	3.0
Manufacturing	117,663	117,840	0.5
Durables	56,380	56,506	-1.5
Nondurables	61,283	61,334	2.4
TCU	57,804	57,270	5.1
Trade	219,865	219,628	1.9
Wholesale	57,403	58,154	1.2
Retail	162,462	161,474	2.1
FIRE	58,419	58,397	5.1
Services	239,660	239,759	2.2
Government	154,706	155,149	-1.1

*By place of work

**Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

***Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

Inflation Rate

1.5

Consumer Price Index

Consumer Price Index - U*
(1982-84 = 100)
(not seasonally adjusted)

	December 1998	% Change vs Yr. Ago	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago (inflation rate)
All Items	163.9	1.6	1.5
Commodities	142.2	0.4	0.1
Services	185.7	2.6	2.7

*U = All urban consumers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

State Labor Force Summary*

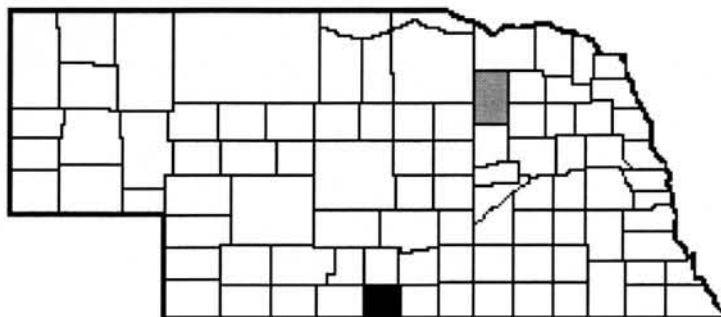
	Preliminary December 1998	Revised November 1998	November % Change vs Yr. Ago
Labor Force	929,798	936,091	1.7
Employment	910,061	917,128	1.3
Unemployment Rate	2.1	2.0	

*By place of residence

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

Harlan

Alma-County Seat



License plate prefix number: 51

Size of county: 555 square miles, ranks 68th in the state

Population: 3,773 in 1997, a change of -0.8 percent from 1990

Per capita personal income: \$21,203 in 1996, ranks 30th in the state

Net taxable retail sales (\$000): \$15,946 in 1997, a change of -3.8 percent from 1996; \$14,088 from January through October of 1998, a change of 6.3 percent from the same period the previous year.

Number of worksites¹: 133 in 1997

Unemployment rate: 2.2 percent in Harlan County, 2.6 percent in Nebraska for 1997

	State	Harlan County
Nonfarm employment (1997):	855,802	937
(wage & salary)	(percent of total)	
Construction and Mining	4.6	3.1
Manufacturing	13.6	(D)
TCU	6.2	0.5
Wholesale Trade	6.4	21.6
Retail Trade	18.1	23.7
FIRE	6.4	(D)
Services	26.8	14.4
Government	17.8	30.9
(D) = disclosure supression		

Agriculture:

Number of farms: 385 in 1992, 465 in 1987

Average farm size: 794 acres in 1992

Market value of farm products sold: \$74.4 million in 1992 (\$193,209 average per farm)

¹Worksites refers to business activity covered under the Nebraska Employment Security Law. Information presented has been extracted from the Employer's Quarterly Contribution Report, Nebraska Form UI-11. For further details about covered worksites, see the *Nebraska Employers' Guide to Unemployment Insurance*.

²By place of work

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Nebraska Department of Labor, Nebraska Department of Revenue.

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New

Nebraska County Population Projections to 2020 are now available. This report contains county-level projections by age category. The cost is \$15 per copy which includes postage and handling. Contact BBR to order.

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