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Toys, Tinsel, and Trade: The Outlook for the 1991 Holiday Shopping Season

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John Austin and Lisa Darlington

"What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em...presented dead against you?" (from A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens)

Scrooge's pessimism notwithstanding, the holiday shopping season is once again upon us and with it comes the perennial question: What is the outlook for retailers this season? While the ghosts of Dickens' tale had clear views of what was, what is, and what is to come, we can claim no such clarity of vision. We can, however, examine a set of factors thought to correlate with holiday shopping trends and compare them to a forecast based on historical trends, in an attempt to shed some light on the coming season.

Based on historical trends, December 1997 other net taxable retail sales[1] are expected to total $1.8 billion—7.8 percent above December 1996 levels (Table 1). This is a marked contrast to the previous two December versus year ago[2] increases of 3.2 and 3.3 percent, but compares favorably to December sales activity in the early 1990s. Between 1991 and 1994, the average December over December increase was 8.4 percent. The 1995 and 1996 holiday seasons have been classified as *dismal* and *mediocre*; the earlier period was characterized by relatively strong holiday sales. The projected sales advance for 1997, therefore, signals a strong holiday season in our future.

Now let's examine what can alter the forecast.

Table 1
Forecasting December Other Net Taxable Retail Sales

The most recent annual forecasts of other net taxable retail sales prepared by the Nebraska Business Forecast Council are multiplied by the 1994 to 1996 average December shares of annual totals.

Annual forecast of sales **x** December share of sales **=** December forecast of sales

$15.6 billion x 11.25% = $1.8 billion *(other retail sales, December 1997)*

The estimated total for December 1997 is 7.8 percent above the total for December 1996.

[1]Other net taxable retail sales comprise the nonmotor vehicle component of total net taxable retail sales. Other net taxable retail sales account for approximately 88 percent of total net taxable retail sales.
[2]December 1996 versus December 1995, and December 1995 versus December 1994.

Christmas Past

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

Based on an examination of holiday sales over the past few seasons, we have identified several factors, both national and specific to Nebraska, which appear to influence holiday retail performance in the state. These include interest and inflation rates, employment and wages, and weather (Table 2).

Low interest rates imply easy credit and, therefore, stimulate spending. High interest rates have the opposite effect. High levels of consumer confidence can stimulate the purchase of big ticket items such as motor vehicles. Low inflation rates lead to low nominal sales (not adjusted for inflation), but may stimulate high levels of real (inflation-adjusted) spending. High inflation rates boost nominal sales, but may dampen real spending. Motor vehicle purchases may coincide with an increase in other retail sales or may divert sales away from other items leading to a decrease in other retail sales. Solid gains in employment, inflation-adjusted wages, nonfarm and farm income, and total deposits in banks and savings and loans all signal positive economic performance in the state. Such gains contribute to strong sales performance.

Finally, the weather is a tricky phenomenon, both for meteorologists attempting to predict its daily course and for economists attempting to predict its influence on shoppers' behavior. Relatively warm fall weather can chill early holiday sales, leading to dismal, but inaccurate, forecasts. Sudden cold, icy snaps in the weeks immediately preceding Christmas day can put the freeze on earlier sunny predictions. Additional factors which should be considered but are difficult to assess include the appeal of post-Christmas sales versus the drawing power of pre-Christmas sales. Consumers may actually delay purchases of Christmas presents, in anticipation of deep discounts immediately following the big day. On the other hand, retailers may effectively offset this trend via pre-Christmas sales which offer a greater selection of merchandise than the post-holiday bargain bashes. It is also important to note that the day after Thanksgiving may no longer be the barometer of the season that it once was. Indications from recent years are that last minute shopping may be a more accurate gauge of overall holiday sales performance. Finally, the impact of catalog sales may be growing, but solid data on Nebraska consumers' catalog purchases are not available to us.

Table 2
Factors Influencing Holiday Sales

- Interest rates
- Consumer confidence
- Inflation
- Net taxable motor vehicle retail sales
- Employment
- Wages
- Nonfarm income
- Net farm income
- Total deposits
- Weather

Composition of Other Net Taxable Retail Sales

"The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!" (the ghost of Jacob Marley)

Other net taxable retail sales, which form the basis of the forecast, are not drawn exclusively from traditional retail outlets such as department stores, restaurants, and hardware stores. While businesses classified as retail trade firms, the so called *retail* retailers, account for slightly more than half of the state's other net taxable retail sales, sizable portions of taxable retail dollars are derived from service establishments, electric and gas utilities, wholesalers, phone and cable companies, and manufacturers.

Proportion of Other Net Taxable Retail Sales by Selected Sector, 1995

Retail Trade	53%
Services	15%
Utilities	8%
Wholesale Trade	8%
Communications	5%
Manufacturing	4%

Christmas Yet to Come

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued.

Ebenezer Scrooge was able to view the future that resulted from his dreary past. In a similar manner, we can forecast future retail sales based on historical trends. Scrooge's preview of the future, however, enabled him to alter its course. Alas, we can avail ourselves of no such power! But, we can attempt to predict how the forecast—the future based on the past—may be altered by current trends in the factors discussed above.

"...the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour possible."

What can alter the *present future*? Interest rates are low and consumer confidence is quite high. Wages have advanced nearly 5 percent so far this year, despite low inflation. Growth in net farm income is strong. These factors combined can exert strong positive influence on the December forecast (Table 3). The relatively low inflation rate may have a negative impact on nominal sales performance, as discussed above. Nonfarm income growth will be only a half percentage point ahead of last year's rate (5.9 versus 5.4 percent). Such a small increase in the growth rate will not greatly impact the forecast. The potential impact of current motor vehicle sales is unclear. Total deposits thus far in 1997 have increased at a lower rate than in the comparable period in 1996. Year-to-date employment gains merely echo last year's gains. Since last year's retail performance was mixed in the sense that some retail sectors performed well and others did not, the latter two factors could dampen 1997 performance.

Summing it all up, we predict (without being so foolish as to stake our reputations on this prediction!) that on Christmas morning 1997, the good merchants of Nebraska will arise to a glorious day with purses 7.8 percent fatter than they were on Christmas morning just past. On the other hand...

"The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold."

The Nebraska Business Forecast Council will update its annual forecast in November with data not yet available. The updated forecast will be presented in the November/December issue of *Business in Nebraska*. Stay tuned!

"A merrier Christmas...than I have given you for many a year!"

Table 3
Potential Impact of Factors on the Forecast

Factor	*Current Situation*	*Impact*
Interest rates	low	+
Consumer confidence	very high	++
Inflation	low*	--
Motor vehicles sales	growth ahead of last year	?
Nebraska employment	gains running at last year's pace	--
Wages	advancing strongly	++
Nonfarm income	gains running only slightly higher than last year's pace	-
Net farm income	growth strong	+
Total deposits	growing slower than last year	--
Weather	who knows!	?

* Note: See text discussion of nominal and real impact.

Where People Shop: Trade Centers in Nebraska

Lisa Darlington

Local economies vary in their ability to capture retail trade customers. While the primary driver of retail trade activity is population, other factors, such as proximity to major highways, geographic isolation, availability of specialty goods and presence of regional malls, affect the viability of a community's retail base. The pattern of retail activity within and across geographic boundaries results in the formation of trade centers—communities that attract or capture a surplus of retail customers from surrounding communities and regions. The retail trade sector in trade center communities is an export industry due to the capture of outside dollars. The capture of retail dollars has both direct and indirect impacts on employment.

It is important to note that taxable retail sales are not drawn exclusively from traditional retail outlets such as department stores, restaurants, and hardware stores. While businesses classified as retail trade firms account for slightly more than half of the state's total net taxable sales, sizable portions of taxable retail dollars are derived from service establishments, electric and gas utilities, wholesalers, phone and cable companies, and manufacturers.

To locate the trade centers across Nebraska, other[1] net taxable retail sales by community were analyzed. Data for the years 1994 to 1996 form the basis of the analysis.

To determine whether a local economy was either capturing, breaking even, or losing retail dollars, state per capita retail sales were multiplied by the population of each community. This resulted in an estimate of the average potential of each community's retail activity based on the size of its population. A three-year average of actual retail sales for each community was then subtracted from the population-based estimate to determine the magnitude of capture or loss. The equations for those calculations are shown in Figure 1.

The assumption underlying the equations shown in Figure 1 is that per capita consumption expenditures in communities are equivalent to per capita consumption expenditures at the state level. While this probably is not true in each community analyzed, due to differences in per capita incomes and consumer preferences, the state per capita expenditure figure can be assumed to be a reasonable proxy for Nebraska communities in general.

Some important issues must be noted before moving into the analysis. First, the data presented on retail trade capture are estimates based on a hypothetical volume of retail activity that one would expect to see at the community level, and as such, are subject to error. Second, the activity generated by new retail facilities, e.g. those built in the latter half of 1996 or in 1997, will not be fully reflected in the data. Finally, it is important to note that the trade capture figures presented are in net terms. The actual capture by a community from external consumers is offset by leakage of internal dollars to other communities. For example, it seems reasonable to assume that individuals in Wahoo do some portion of their shopping in Fremont, and that individuals in Fremont periodically travel to Omaha to shop.

Figure 1
Retail Trade Capture Calculations

A x B = C
D - C = estimated trade capture or loss

Where:
A = 3-year average (1994-1996) state per capita other net taxable retail sales
B = July 1, 1994 estimate of community population
C = Community's estimated average other net taxable retail sales potential based on state per capita average
D = 3-year average (1994-1996) of actual community other net taxable retail sales

[1]Taxes on the sales of motor vehicles are collected by county treasurers. Data on motor vehicle net taxable sales cannot be allocated to the communities where purchases occur and, therefore, are not included in this analysis.

Levels of Trade Centers

Hierarchies, or levels of retail trade activity, are based on the availability and affordability of a variety of goods, ranging from basic need items such as hardware and personal care products to highly specialized items such as furniture, electronics, and specialty clothing. The larger a community, the more levels of retail activity it is capable of supporting. The leakage of retail dollars is a function of the different levels of trade centers present in a given region.

For the purpose of this analysis, trade centers are defined as communities with an estimated $1 million[2] or more in trade capture (e.g., retail activity in excess of what would be expected based on the state-level per capita average) annually during the time period examined. Trade centers are divided into four categories based on the magnitude of estimated trade capture (Table 1).

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the estimated geographic reach of the major and large trade centers. The areas attributed to each trade center are approximations based on factors including size of trade capture and geographic location. The areas should not be viewed as absolute trade boundaries. Figure 4 shows the location of the intermediate and small trade centers.

Since population is the main determinate of retail activity, it is not surprising that some of the most prosperous trade centers identified in this analysis are the largest communities in the state. The cities of Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha each captured substantial surpluses of retail activity during the study period. The magnitude of retail trade dollars captured by a community, however, is not entirely a function of community size. For example, the city of McCook with a population of 7,800 captured more trade dollars than did the cities of North Platte, Fremont, and Hastings, each with populations above 20,000. The town of Ceresco, with a population of 838, netted more surplus trade dollars than did communities such as Beatrice and South Sioux City, with populations totaling over 10,000.

Table 1
Trade Center Hierarchy, 1994-1996 Period

	Trade Capture ($mil)[3]	*1994 Population*	*Level*
Omaha	1892.6	345,033	Major
Lincoln	223.2	203,076	Major
Grand Island	183.6	41,147	Major
Norfolk	118.0	22,435	Major
Scottsbluff	105.6	14,070	Major
Kearney	100.4	26,216	Major
Columbus	50.0	20,514	Large
McCook	47.4	7,871	Large
North Platte	44.7	23,171	Large
Fremont	36.4	23,755	Large
Hastings	35.1	22,956	Large
York	28.9	8,020	Large
Sidney	26.2	6,015	Large
Gretna	21.1	2,303	Large
Ogallala	18.5	5,041	Intermediate
Valentine	17.5	2,827	Intermediate
Broken Bow	16.6	3,830	Intermediate
O'Neill	16.1	3,774	Intermediate
Lexington	10.8	8,702	Intermediate
West Point	10.4	3,444	Intermediate
Blair	9.0	7,099	Intermediate
Elkhorn	7.1	1,424	Intermediate
Ceresco	5.9	838	Intermediate
Beatrice	5.7	12,329	Intermediate
Nebraska City	5.4	6,617	Intermediate
Ainsworth	5.1	1,839	Intermediate
Hartington	5.0	1,612	Intermediate
Gordon	5.0	1,771	Small
Albion	4.8	1,848	Small
Hebron	4.7	1,709	Small
Seward	4.6	5,894	Small
Holdrege	3.9	5,842	Small
South Sioux City	3.5	10,285	Small
Waterloo	3.0	478	Small
Imperial	2.4	1,928	Small
Humphrey	2.2	681	Small
Creighton	2.0	1,131	Small
Thedford	1.6	237	Small
Sutton	1.4	1,382	Small
Osceola	1.3	835	Small
Stromsburg	1.2	1,185	Small

[2]The $1 million figure is arbitrary. The fact that a community captured less than $1 million annually does not imply that its trade sector was unhealthy during the time period examined.

[3]Derived from the trade capture calculation presented in Figure 1.

Figure 2
Estimated Reach of Major Trade Centers

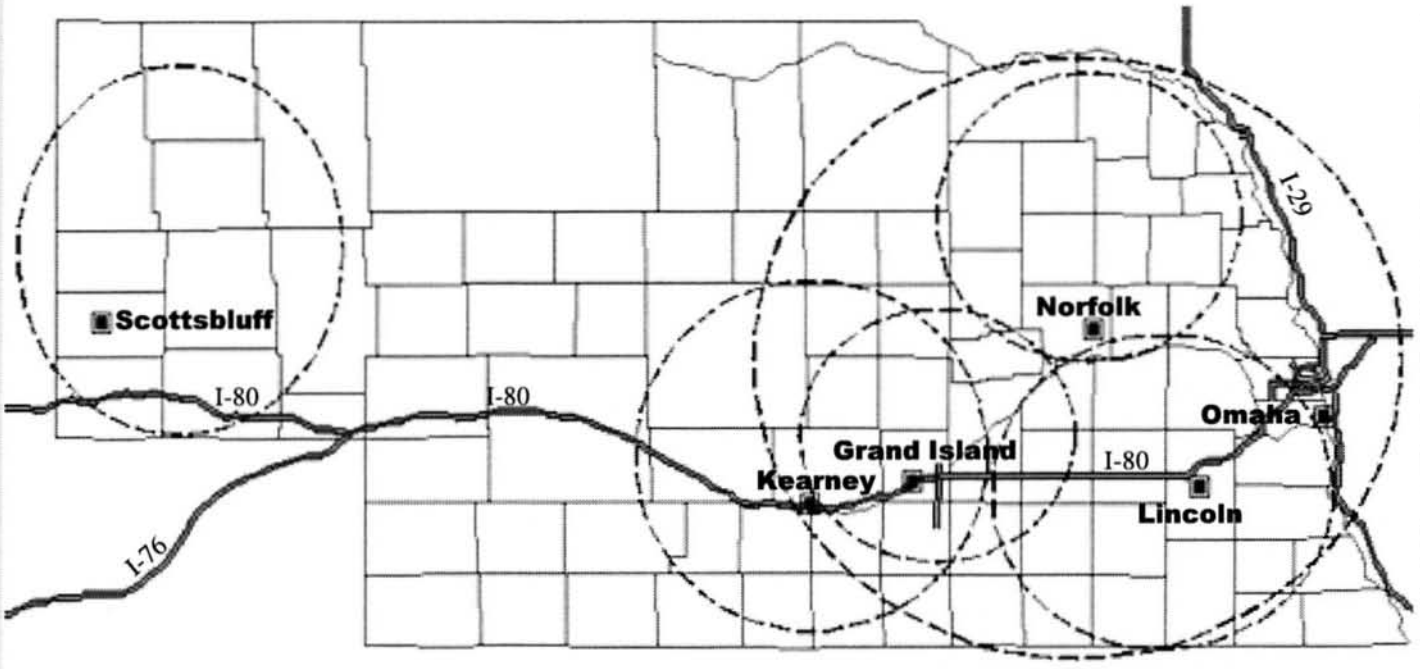


Figure 3
Estimated Reach of Large Trade Centers

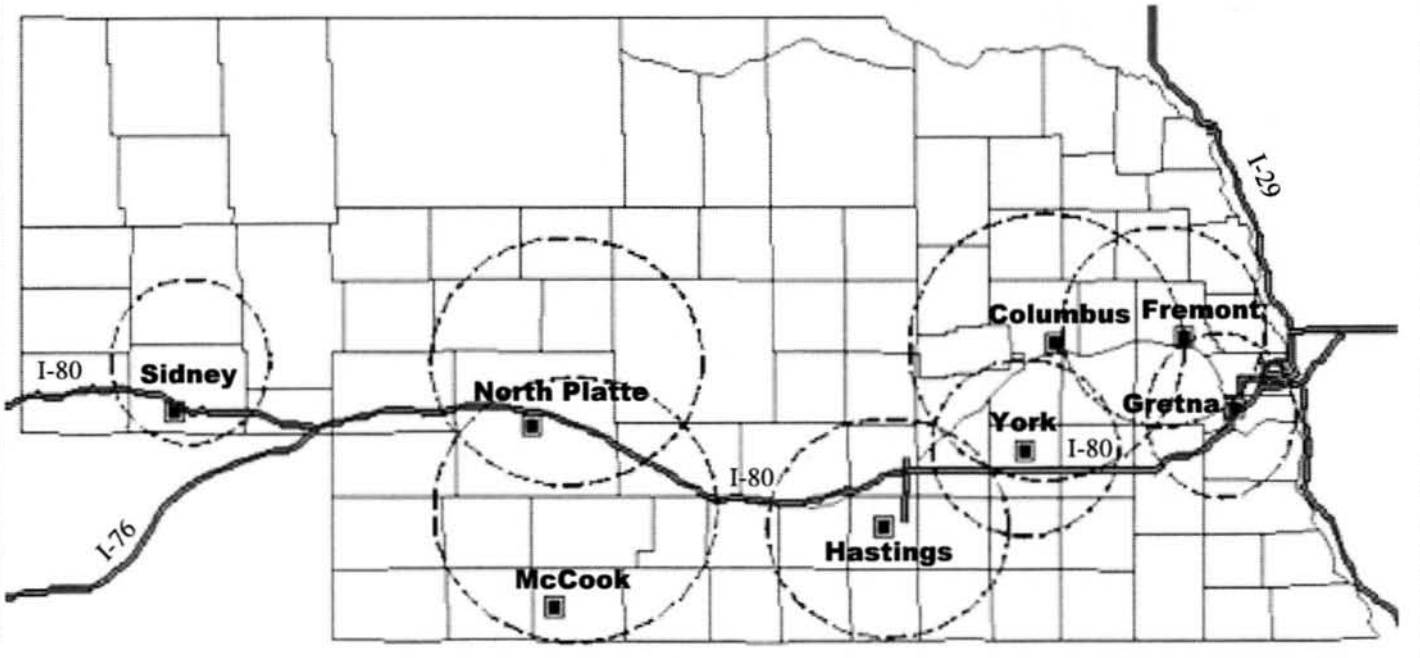
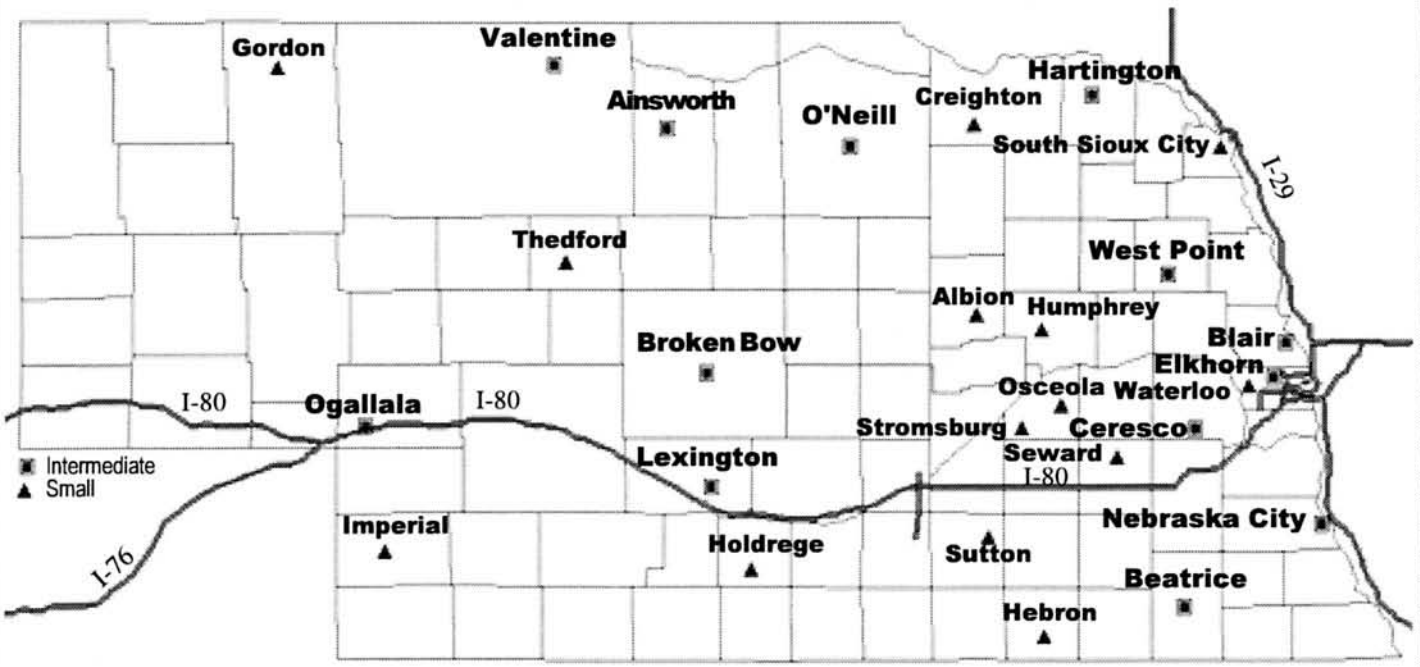


Figure 4
Intermediate and Small Trade Centers



Clearly, factors in addition to absolute population levels combine to generate retail activity. Ceresco, for example, is home to a major furniture retailer. Geographic isolation, that is, relatively long distances from Interstate 80 and other communities with populations above 2,500 also works in favor of certain communities. The cities of McCook, O'Neill, Broken Bow, and Valentine can be considered retail *oases* in that they are geographically isolated (relative to similar sized and larger communities) and capture substantial amounts of trade.

Proximity to Interstate 80 also has clear benefits as can be seen in the retail trade capture in communities such as Grand Island, North Platte, Ogallala, and York. Proximity to large cities can be detrimental to local retail potential. For example, it can be inferred from this analysis that retail dollars flowed from communities in Sarpy County to Omaha. Non-store retailing (catalog and internet purchases, for example) may also have a significant negative effect on local retail activity, particularly in geographically isolated communities.

The presence of a major or large trade center in a particular region does not mean that other communities in the region are net losers of retail activity. In eastern Nebraska, for example, a number of communities within the estimated Omaha trade area capture substantial amounts of trade themselves. Gretna, home to a regional outlet mall, is one example. Clearly, the availability and affordability of particular types of goods, as well as the convenience of access to particular communities, combine to influence where people shop.

Trade capture can also be examined on a per capita basis. The community of Gretna had the highest total trade capture per capita in the 1994-1996 period (Table 2). Gretna's per capita total of $9,162 was more than $1,600 higher than the total for Scottsbluff which ranked second in per capita capture. Per capita trade capture was not a factor of community size. The populations of the ten communities capturing the highest amounts of trade dollars per capita ranged from 237 in Thedford to 345,033 in Omaha.

Trade Capture Employment Impact

Table 2
Top 10 Communities in Terms of Per Capita Trade Capture

	Total Capture ($)	*1994 Population*	*Per Capita Capture ($)*
Gretna	21,099,472	2,303	9,162
Scottsbluff	105,626,242	14,070	7,507
Ceresco	5,933,810	838	7,081
Thedford	1,560,700	237	6,585
Waterloo	2,955,079	478	6,182
Valentine	17,473,687	2,827	6,181
McCook	47,416,258	7,871	6,024
Omaha	1,892,574,544	345,033	5,485
Norfolk	118,032,294	22,435	5,261
Elkhorn	7,079,541	1,424	4,972

The capture of retail trade dollars has both a *direct impact* on retail employment and an *indirect impact* on employment in other sectors of the local economy. Direct impact occurs at the retail establishment level—the more sales generated by an establishment, the more employees the firm can support. Indirect impact results primarily from the household expenditures of retail employees, and secondarily from the goods and services purchased by retail establishments, which have a multiplying effect as they flow through the local economy.

Table 3
Employment Impact of Trade Capture

	Direct Impact	*Total Impact*
Omaha	24,450	32,519
Lincoln	2,883	3,835
Grand Island	2,372	3,155
Norfolk	1,525	2,028
Scottsbluff	1,365	1,815
Kearney	1,296	1,724
Columbus	646	859
McCook	613	815
North Platte	577	768
Fremont	471	626
Hastings	454	604
York	373	497
Sidney	338	449
Gretna	273	363
Ogallala	240	319
Valentine	226	300
Broken Bow	214	285
O'Neill	208	277
Lexington	140	186
West Point	135	180
Blair	116	155
Elkhorn	91	122
Ceresco	77	102
Beatrice	74	98
Nebraska City	69	92
Ainsworth	66	88
Hartington	65	86
Gordon	64	85
Albion	62	82
Hebron	61	81
Seward	59	79
Holdrege	51	68
South Sioux City	45	60
Waterloo	38	51
Imperial	31	42
Humphrey	28	37
Creighton	25	34
Thedford	20	27
Sutton	18	23
Osceola	17	23
Stromsburg	15	20

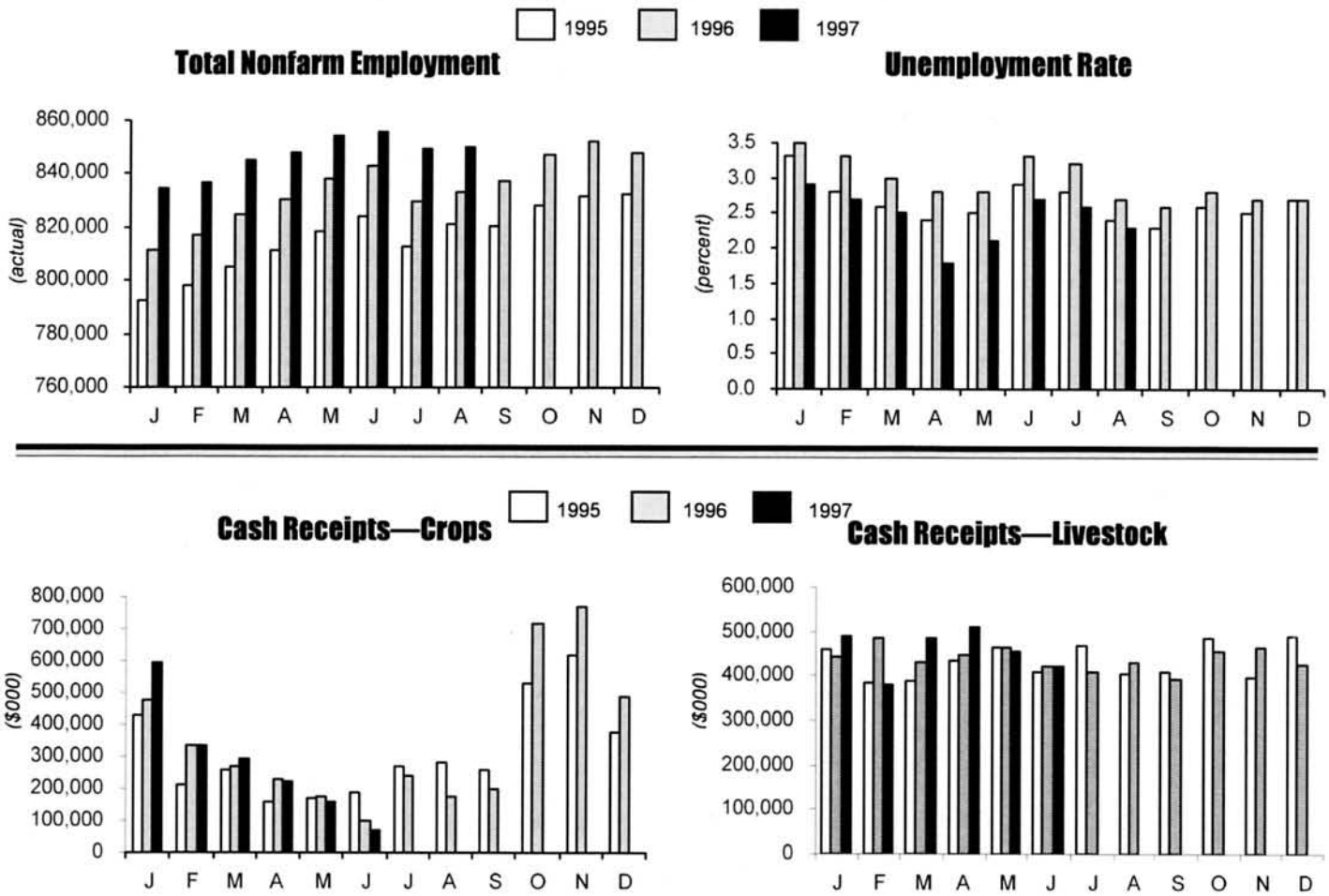
The employment impact of trade capture for each trade center community was derived in the following manner:

- Calculated average sales per retail employee at the state level by dividing the state's 3-year average (1994-1996) retail sales figure by an average of 1994 and 1995 state annual employment in retail trade.
- Divided by each community's trade capture amount by average sales per retail employee to produce the *direct* employment impact.
- Applied a multiplier of 1.3 to the direct employment impact to calculate the *total* employment impact of the trade capture for each community.

The multiplier determines that for every one retail trade job created directly by the trade capture, an additional 1/3 job is indirectly supported in the local economy. Total impact is, in effect, the sum of *direct* and *indirect* impact.

The surplus trade captured in Omaha, for example, supports over 24,450 retail jobs in the community (direct impact) (Table 3). In addition, the household expenditures of retail employees in Omaha, combined with the expenditure of the retail establishments themselves, supported approximately 8,000 additional jobs in the Omaha economy (indirect impact) for a total impact of over 32,500 jobs.

No single factor in isolation governs the ability of a community to capture trade dollars from outside its borders. Communities of varying sizes and in varying proximity to metropolitan areas and major highways throughout Nebraska enjoyed healthy doses of retail trade activity in the mid-1990s. The excess retail trade dollars captured in these communities boosted their economies in the form of additional jobs and income.



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

	June 1997 ($000)	YTD ($000)	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago
Ainsworth, Brown	1,943	10,280	9.9
Albion, Boone	1,913	9,912	-12.6
Alliance, Box Butte	6,527	35,098	8.0
Alma, Harlan	786	3,876	-0.5
Arapahoe, Furnas	822	4,107	10.4
Arlington, Washington	176	1,088	5.1
Arnold, Custer	319	1,561	3.1
Ashland, Saunders	1,648	6,732	27.9
Atkinson, Holt	1,199	5,330	18.8
Auburn, Nemaha	2,535	14,458	2.9
Aurora, Hamilton	2,837	15,392	1.3
Axtell, Kearney	111	466	-9.9
Bassett, Rock	584	2,458	0.2
Battle Creek, Madison	727	3,782	5.4
Bayard, Morrill	480	2,393	0.9
Beatrice, Gage	11,010	61,398	12.9
Beaver City, Furnas	175	714	11.4
Bellevue, Sarpy	19,336	100,751	3.7
Benkelman, Dundy	666	3,151	5.7
Bennington, Douglas	560	2,342	8.5
Blair, Washington	6,605	37,241	10.3
Bloomfield, Knox	790	3,629	12.1
Blue Hill, Webster	478	2,590	14.7
Bridgeport, Morrill	1,184	6,418	21.5
Broken Bow, Custer	3,996	22,314	-16.6
Burwell, Garfield	1,030	4,052	11.3
Cairo, Hall	336	1,303	24.7
Cambridge, Furnas	743	5,087	-27.8
Central City, Merrick	1,974	10,012	7.5
Chadron, Dawes	3,822	20,030	13.4
Chappell, Deuel	514	2,436	13.0
Clarkson, Colfax	505	2,622	6.1
Clay Center, Clay	342	1,719	17.2
Columbus, Platte	20,222	114,662	1.5
Cozad, Dawson	3,266	17,335	12.4
Crawford, Dawes	768	2,904	25.7
Creighton, Knox	926	5,436	-0.4
Crete, Saline	3,363	18,880	-1.3
Crofton, Knox	522	2,244	-2.0
Curtis, Frontier	342	1,747	9.4
Dakota City, Dakota	463	2,405	-28.9
David City, Butler	1,491	8,064	-4.7
Deshler, Thayer	236	1,276	-1.6
Dodge, Dodge	394	1,402	7.2
Doniphan, Hall	647	4,225	42.0
Eagle, Cass	741	2,130	23.4
Elgin, Antelope	446	2,558	8.4
Elkhorn, Douglas	2,647	12,087	21.4
Elm Creek, Buffalo	328	1,710	7.6
Elwood, Gosper	609	2,316	9.9
Fairbury, Jefferson	2,835	17,261	0.4
Fairmont, Fillmore	223	981	28.4
Falls City, Richardson	2,629	15,172	6.4
Franklin, Franklin	545	2,510	-6.7
Fremont, Dodge	21,281	114,748	-3.5
Friend, Saline	460	2,934	7.0
Fullerton, Nance	522	3,229	16.4
Geneva, Fillmore	1,811	10,600	6.0
Genoa, Nance	272	1,385	-5.4
Gering, Scotts Bluff	3,464	18,430	0.1
Gibbon, Buffalo	825	4,798	17.9
Gordon, Sheridan	1,982	10,315	10.1
Gothenburg, Dawson	2,368	12,484	14.7
Grand Island, Hall	49,149	273,714	5.7
Grant, Perkins	1,161	6,119	16.8
Gretna, Sarpy	3,677	18,317	0.8
Hartington, Cedar	1,726	9,297	14.6
Hastings, Adams	20,235	116,370	1.7
Hay Springs, Sheridan	357	1,889	0.2
Hebron, Thayer	1,982	11,079	25.1
Henderson, York	734	3,384	-11.1
Hickman, Lancaster	261	1,268	2.3
Holdrege, Phelps	5,192	27,073	1.8
Hooper, Dodge	397	2,032	14.0
Humboldt, Richardson	505	2,934	2.3
Humphrey, Platte	857	4,142	1.5
Imperial, Chase	2,179	11,028	17.2
Juniata, Adams	239	1,354	10.4
Kearney, Buffalo	30,034	165,297	4.1
Kenesaw, Adams	114	587	-5.6
Kimball, Kimball	1,711	9,125	13.5
La Vista, Sarpy	7,885	43,301	4.5
Laurel, Cedar	369	2,138	4.2
Lexington, Dawson	7,357	41,201	-3.0
Lincoln, Lancaster	189,215	1,059,303	6.6
Louisville, Cass	628	3,150	57.7
Loup City, Sherman	698	3,335	2.8
Lyons, Burt	594	2,652	14.3
Madison, Madison	659	4,308	1.7
McCook, Red Willow	11,084	62,686	7.0
Milford, Seward	857	5,251	10.9
Minatare, Scotts Bluff	207	1,279	18.8
Minden, Kearney	2,013	10,063	17.3
Mitchell, Scotts Bluff	882	5,412	33.1
Morrill, Scotts Bluff	526	2,650	20.4
Nebraska City, Otoe	6,608	34,623	14.2
Neligh, Antelope	1,794	8,785	31.9
Newman Grove, Madison	299	1,973	4.6
Norfolk, Madison	29,491	163,601	6.6
North Bend, Dodge	579	2,949	4.3
North Platte, Lincoln	22,093	119,548	1.6
O'Neill, Holt	4,656	24,423	-2.6
Oakland, Burt	721	3,701	6.0
Ogallala, Keith	6,391	30,482	1.9
Omaha, Douglas	457,224	2,513,573	4.1
Ord, Valley	2,130	11,165	11.8
Osceola, Polk	808	4,279	5.9
Oshkosh, Garden	445	2,393	-0.3
Osmond, Pierce	551	2,204	4.2
Oxford, Furnas	610	3,406	100.4
Papillion, Sarpy	6,869	35,041	22.4
Pawnee City, Pawnee	298	1,841	10.2
Pender, Thurston	865	4,204	14.2
Pierce, Pierce	769	3,814	6.1
Plainview, Pierce	731	4,234	27.0
Plattsmouth, Cass	3,655	19,124	13.5
Ponca, Dixon	546	2,888	0.8
Ralston, Douglas	3,199	18,264	10.6
Randolph, Cedar	476	2,187	4.8
Ravenna, Buffalo	786	4,309	21.0
Red Cloud, Webster	787	4,520	27.5
Rushville, Sheridan	581	3,005	-1.5
Sargent, Custer	203	1,150	1.5
Schuyler, Colfax	2,121	11,011	1.5
Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff	21,347	121,274	10.5
Scribner, Dodge	619	2,717	5.8
Seward, Seward	4,970	27,781	6.3
Shelby, Polk	420	1,970	5.2
Shelton, Buffalo	636	3,224	-4.2
Sidney, Cheyenne	7,456	38,297	12.7
South Sioux City, Dakota	8,115	46,400	-0.4
Springfield, Sarpy	382	1,632	5.3
St. Paul, Howard	1,383	7,347	15.7
Stanton, Stanton	642	3,392	7.9
Stromsburg, Polk	1,176	6,045	26.3
Superior, Nuckolls	1,740	9,710	19.7
Sutherland, Lincoln	399	1,682	0.1
Sutton, Clay	950	6,091	-18.7
Syracuse, Otoe	1,263	6,081	8.7
Tecumseh, Johnson	967	5,717	-3.2
Tekamah, Burt	1,258	6,316	8.8
Tilden, Madison	480	2,523	0.5
Utica, Seward	242	1,277	-6.7
Valentine, Cherry	4,546	21,959	7.8
Valley, Douglas	1,632	7,358	22.0
Wahoo, Saunders	2,746	15,156	13.2
Wakefield, Dixon	377	2,120	2.1
Wauneta, Chase	310	1,836	-9.4
Waverly, Lancaster	652	4,401	25.0
Wayne, Wayne	3,150	17,938	5.4
Weeping Water, Cass	713	3,757	21.9
West Point, Cuming	4,056	22,825	11.6
Wilber, Saline	483	2,698	11.8
Wisner, Cuming	788	3,654	20.5
Wood River, Hall	508	2,494	-1.7
Wymore, Gage	461	2,461	6.9
York, York	9,328	51,633	8.2

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

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

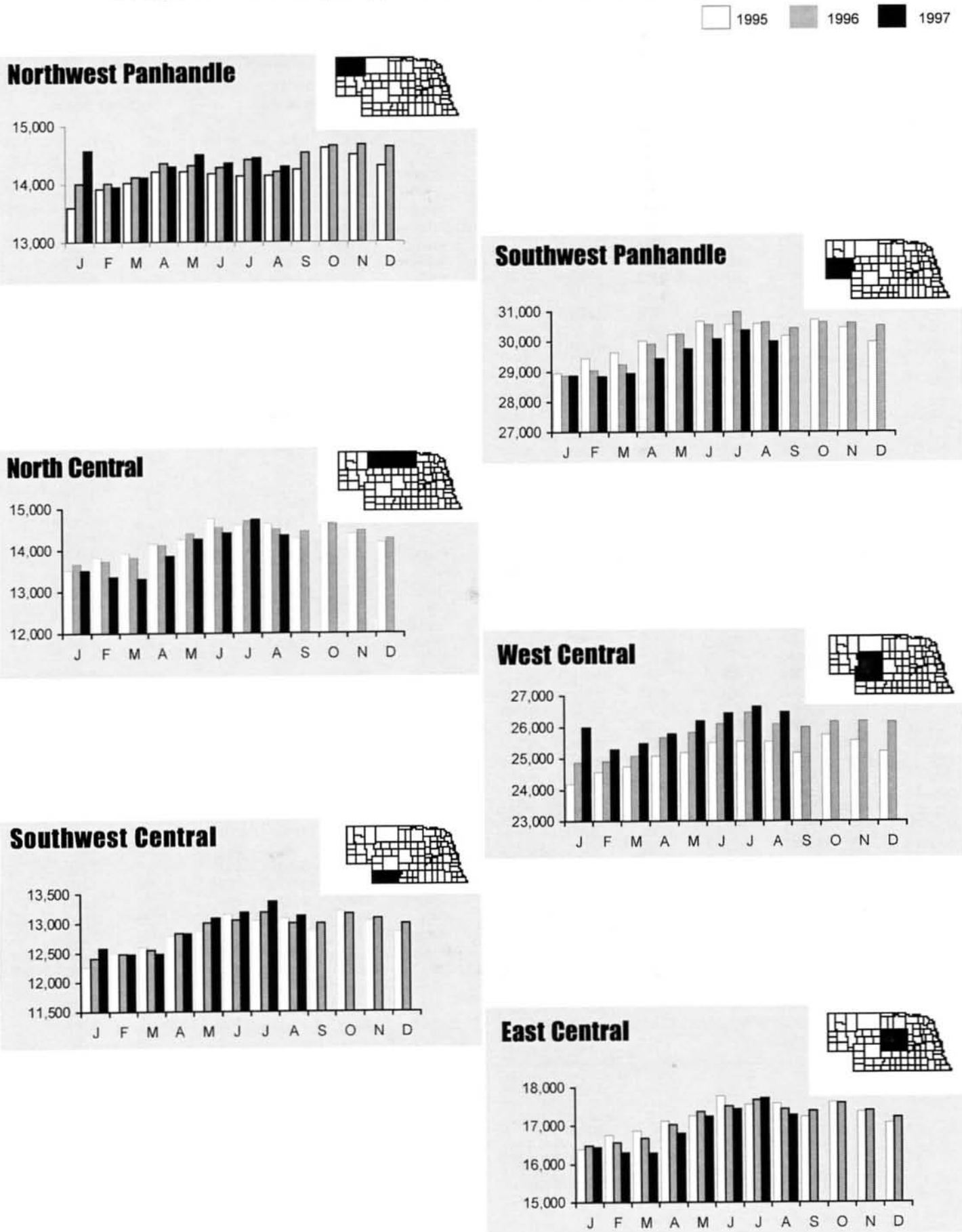
Net Taxable Retail Sales for Nebraska Counties ($000)

	Motor Vehicle Sales			Other Sales		
	June 1997 ($000)	YTD ($000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago	June 1997 ($000)	YTD ($000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago
Nebraska *	194,807	1,083,362	7.0	1,340,145	7,285,245	4.8
Adams	3,170	19,217	6.6	21,029	119,938	1.9
Antelope	1,061	6,387	14.0	2,844	13,586	20.5
Arthur	104	294	1.4	54	78	-20.4
Banner	93	837	10.4	(D)	(D)	(D)
Blaine	135	589	74.3	108	487	160.4
Boone	606	5,293	15.1	2,563	13,144	-7.6
Box Butte	1,828	8,800	-2.6	6,850	36,782	8.1
Boyd	286	1,282	14.4	770	3,495	2.5
Brown	475	2,269	34.5	2,078	10,701	10.3
Buffalo	4,611	26,309	4.5	33,123	181,329	4.7
Burt	1,105	6,099	17.9	2,818	13,808	8.2
Butler	954	5,582	-4.8	2,108	10,980	-1.3
Cass	2,845	18,032	8.4	7,394	35,821	18.0
Cedar	1,267	7,012	13.9	3,009	15,542	10.9
Chase	804	4,088	23.9	2,578	13,137	12.5
Cherry	841	4,703	33.4	4,820	23,060	6.6
Cheyenne	1,179	6,994	-4.4	7,827	39,962	12.2
Clay	933	5,711	12.0	2,242	12,674	-8.2
Colfax	1,114	6,603	11.4	3,120	16,103	1.5
Cuming	1,257	8,467	19.2	5,547	29,788	12.4
Custer	1,590	8,507	24.2	5,171	27,721	-13.3
Dakota	2,093	11,423	-1.7	9,495	53,771	-0.5
Dawes	856	4,088	4.7	4,593	22,946	14.9
Dawson	2,566	17,427	17.6	13,614	73,432	3.7
Deuel	215	1,721	3.7	969	4,642	7.8
Dixon	893	4,386	23.4	1,084	5,727	2.4
Dodge	4,278	23,231	18.8	23,642	125,561	-2.7
Douglas	50,064	262,456	1.4	467,821	2,565,654	4.2
Dundy	269	2,034	-8.3	701	3,336	4.4
Fillmore	894	5,622	14.3	2,851	15,913	4.9
Franklin	443	2,622	19.9	857	3,966	-7.6
Frontier	484	2,653	25.1	754	3,709	7.7
Furnas	738	4,050	7.7	2,531	14,405	2.7
Gage	2,239	14,256	10.4	12,402	68,284	12.8
Garden	252	1,704	-4.8	729	3,261	-0.6
Garfield	187	1,061	-3.8	1,030	4,052	11.3
Gosper	256	1,825	6.4	674	2,646	8.9
Grant	131	593	32.7	336	1,012	7.2
Greeley	277	1,882	16.5	827	3,817	3.4
Hall	6,282	33,027	-3.8	51,073	283,796	6.1
Hamilton	1,201	7,850	7.2	3,361	17,808	0.8
Harlan	361	2,700	-3.8	1,127	4,955	-2.0
Hayes	155	947	17.3	104	181	75.7
Hitchcock	458	2,230	5.4	753	3,626	5.6
Holt	1,606	8,821	28.5	6,712	33,348	0.3
Hooker	65	450	-13.0	453	1,439	2.6
Howard	834	5,045	25.3	1,833	9,439	11.8
Jefferson	841	6,078	15.0	3,675	22,306	4.4
Johnson	533	2,865	1.7	1,347	7,661	-4.1
Kearney	823	5,944	16.6	2,329	11,363	13.7
Keith	1,148	6,753	23.2	7,163	33,282	2.3
Keya Paha	128	590	-6.9	102	499	6.2
Kimball	641	3,128	12.9	1,788	9,388	13.9
Knox	1,008	6,253	8.1	3,011	14,896	3.5
Lancaster	25,316	131,384	8.3	191,628	1,072,055	6.7
Lincoln	3,825	20,033	1.1	23,236	124,612	1.4
Logan	103	558	11.4	139	272	23.6
Loup	73	610	60.9	(D)	(D)	(D)
McPherson	68	354	-14.1	(D)	(D)	(D)
Madison	4,281	22,131	4.1	31,717	176,585	6.2
Merrick	1,031	5,662	-3.5	2,652	13,117	6.6
Morrill	621	4,051	23.9	1,689	9,028	15.3
Nance	433	3,006	21.8	884	4,831	9.5
Nemaha	1,089	5,008	7.1	2,784	15,969	3.0
Nuckolls	731	3,860	12.3	2,384	12,832	15.2
Otoe	2,025	10,913	11.4	8,410	43,213	13.4
Pawnee	274	2,008	-0.2	539	3,038	5.0
Perkins	423	2,783	-5.3	1,461	7,362	12.0
Phelps	1,309	9,302	7.9	5,547	28,521	1.9
Pierce	1,197	6,101	17.4	2,189	10,773	13.0
Platte	4,323	22,581	8.9	21,860	122,688	2.0
Polk	890	5,139	15.0	2,516	12,994	15.0
Red Willow	1,131	7,658	4.6	11,523	64,616	7.1
Richardson	1,147	6,007	11.7	3,491	19,939	5.8
Rock	254	1,366	48.0	630	2,543	-0.6
Saline	1,615	8,299	-5.9	4,737	26,881	1.8
Sarpy	14,476	75,481	6.6	39,046	203,045	7.3
Saunders	2,200	14,582	8.9	6,700	34,017	11.5
Scotts Bluff	3,857	22,653	7.4	26,525	149,564	10.0
Seward	1,791	10,727	8.6	6,383	35,829	6.6
Sheridan	635	4,206	4.9	3,291	16,825	6.1
Sherman	329	2,394	9.1	924	4,283	0.8
Sioux	128	1,241	0.5	188	833	11.2
Stanton	587	4,120	5.0	813	4,337	3.0
Thayer	696	4,996	26.6	2,971	15,793	16.6
Thomas	114	563	-17.1	387	1,946	-0.8
Thurston	494	3,218	4.0	1,078	5,163	15.1
Valley	426	3,082	17.1	2,349	12,140	10.5
Washington	2,866	14,221	2.1	7,340	41,053	10.1
Wayne	1,139	6,080	19.2	3,355	18,890	5.4
Webster	511	3,026	28.3	1,424	7,783	20.8
Wheeler	244	1,203	49.4	162	646	-9.3
York	1,552	11,656	20.9	10,619	57,813	6.7

*Totals may not add due to rounding
(D) Denotes disclosure suppression

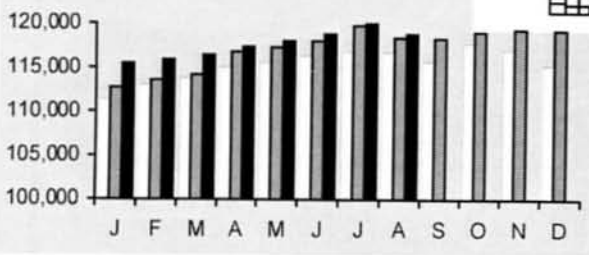
Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

Regional Employment—1995 to August 1997

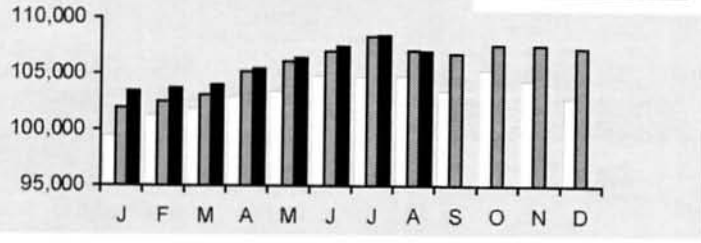


Regional Employment—1995 to August 1997

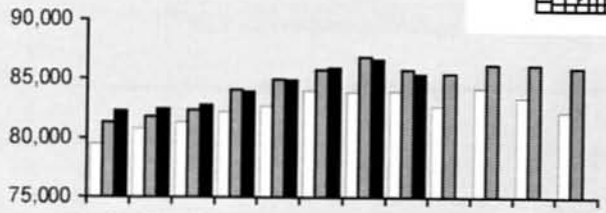
Southeast Central



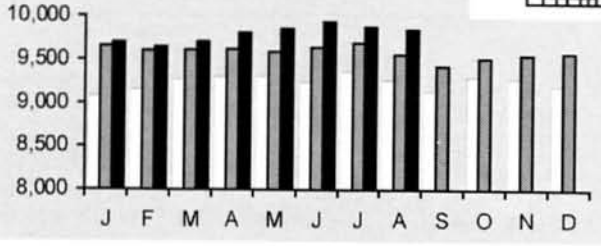
Northeast



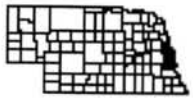
Southeast

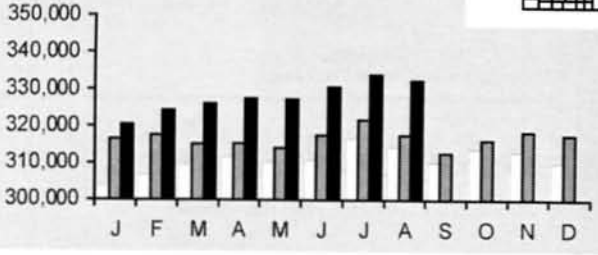


Sioux City MSA

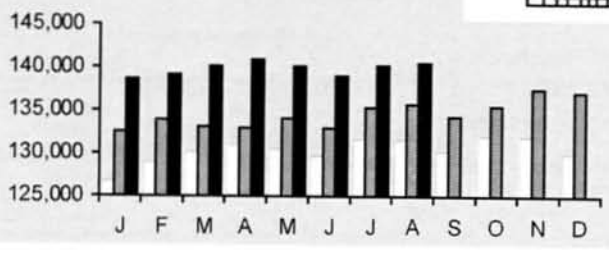


Omaha MSA

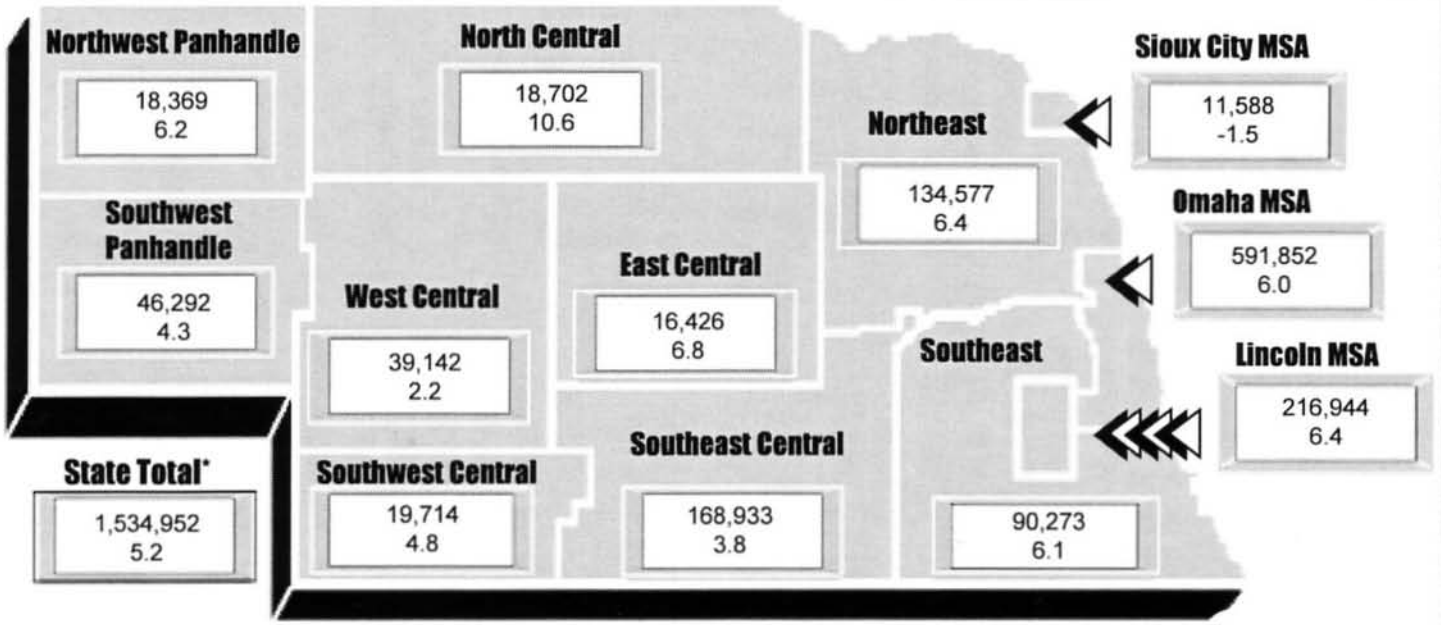




Lincoln MSA



June 1997 Regional Retail Sales ($000)
Percent Change from Year Ago



*Regional values may not add to state total due to unallocated sales

Employment by Industry

	Revised July 1997	*Preliminary August 1997*	*% Change vs Yr. Ago*
Place of Work			
Nonfarm	849,439	849,909	2.0
Construction & Mining	41,899	42,110	1.4
Manufacturing	115,942	115,310	1.6
Durables	56,669	56,242	3.5
Nondurables	59,273	59,068	-0.3
TCU*	52,804	52,763	4.2
Trade	208,431	209,383	-0.5
Wholesale	54,523	54,747	0.0
Retail	153,908	154,636	-0.7
FIRE**	55,454	55,444	4.1
Services	229,178	229,652	3.9
Government	145,731	145,247	1.5
Place of Residence			
Civilian Labor Force	940,623	930,434	2.3
Unemployment Rate	2.6	2.3	

* Transportation, Communication, and Utilities
** Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate
Source: Nebraska Department of Labor

Price Indices

*Consumer Price Index - U**
(1982-84 = 100)

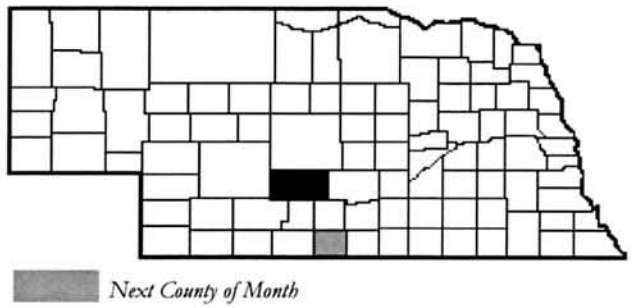
	September 1997	*% Change vs Yr. Ago*	*YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago*
All Items	161.2	2.2	2.5
Commodities	142.1	1.4	1.7
Services	180.6	2.9	3.1

*U = All urban consumers
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

County of the Month

Dawson

Lexington—County Seat



Next County of Month

License plate prefix number: 18
Size of county: 982 square miles, ranks 16th in the state
Population: 23,126 in 1996, a change of 16.0 percent from 1990
Per capita personal income: $18,994 in 1995, ranks 35th in the state
Net taxable retail sales ($000): $177,798 in 1996, a change of 1.0 percent from 1995; $90,859 during January-June 1997, a change of 6.1 percent from the same period one year ago
Number of business and service establishments: 703 in 1994, 57.5 percent had less than five employees
Unemployment rate: 2.7 percent in Dawson County, 2.9 percent in Nebraska for 1996

	State	Dawson County
Nonfarm employment (1996):	834,336	10,662
	(percent of total)	
Construction and Mining	4.5	4.7
Manufacturing	13.6	37.7
TCU	6.0	2.3
Wholesale Trade	6.4	5.3
Retail Trade	18.5	18.3
FIRE	6.4	3.1
Services	26.4	11.2
Government	18.2	17.4

Agriculture:

Number of farms: 876 in 1992, 974 in 1987
Average farm size: 752 acres in 1992
Market value of farm products sold: $322.6 million in 1992 ($368,300 average per farm)

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

bulletin board

Data Series Update

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) County Annual (CA) Series has been updated on NU *ONRAMP* to include 1995 data. The CA series contains information about Personal Income, Population, Employment, Wages and Salaries, Transfer Payments, and more.

Visit BBR's website to access NU *ONRAMP*. Follow the instructions for downloading the software to run NU *ONRAMP* (first-time users only) and browse the many data sets that are available.

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Visit BBR's home page for access to NU*ONRAMP* *and much more!*

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Population Projections Report Available

Nebraska Population Projections to 2010 are now available. This report contains county level projections by age category. The cost is $15 per copy which includes postage and handling. Contact the Bureau of Business Research (BBR) to order.

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