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RETAIL TRADE IN NEBRASKA, 1967-1977

While the dollar volume of retail sales per establishment has increased, the number of retail establishments has decreased over the interval 1967-1977. These findings are drawn from the 1977 Census of Retail Trade, the latest in a series conducted on a quinquennial basis in years ending in 2 and 7 by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

As part of the 1977 economic censuses, the 1977 Census of Retail Trade surveyed all establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise for personal or household consumption and providing services associated with the sale of such goods. For most of the very small retail firms, data were obtained from Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration records. Questionnaires were sent to medium- and large-size firms, and firms known to operate more than one establishment.

Census results indicate that, in both current and real dollars, retail sales in Nebraska have progressively increased over the past ten years. Table 1 depicts 1967, 1972, and 1977 retail sales for Nebraska by major Standard Industrial Code (SIC) classifications appropriate to the Census of Retail Trade. The real dollar sales figures for 1972 and 1977 in Table 1 have been deflated for price using the commodity price index.

Some caution must be used in interpreting comparative sales statistics for 1967, 1972, and 1977 because there was a modification of the SIC classifications between the 1967 and 1972 Censuses of Retail Trade. As a result, changes occurred in the definitions of some kinds of businesses for 1972 and subsequent retail census reports. After the 1967 Census of Retail Trade, electrical apparatus and equipment, plumbing and hydronic heating supplies, warm air heating and air conditioning, farm machinery and equipment, and farm supplies were classified as wholesale trade rather than retail trade. These SIC reclassifications affected the sales figures for (1) building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers, and (2) miscellaneous retail stores.

As is apparent in Table 1, these two major kinds of businesses were the only ones to register sales losses between 1967 and 1972. These losses can be attributed to the SIC reclassification. All of the other sales figures by kind of business for 1967-1972 register gains, as do all but one of the sales figures for 1972-1977, in real dollars.

Another discrepancy occurs in the sales data reported for the 1972 and 1977 Censuses of Retail Trade. Sales statistics reported as part of 1972 sales and not included (Continued on page 2)

Table 1
RETAIL SALES BY KIND OF BUSINESS
COMPARATIVE SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR NEBRASKA: 1977, 1972, AND 1967
(in millions)

Kind of Business	Current Dollars					Real Dollars (1967 = Base Year)			
	Sales		% Change			Sales		% Change	
	1977	1972	1967	1972-77	1967-72	1977	1972	1972-77	1967-72
Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	356.6	209.4	318.0	70.3	-34.2	204.1	173.2	17.9	-45.5
General merchandise group stores	685.8	449.4	287.6	52.6	56.3	392.5	371.7	5.6	29.3
Food stores	971.9	614.7	477.2	58.1	28.8	556.4	508.5	9.4	6.6
Automotive dealers	1094.0	630.2	424.6	73.6	48.4	626.2	521.2	20.1	22.8
Gasoline service stations	529.8	322.1	229.2	64.5	40.5	303.3	266.4	13.8	16.2
Apparel and accessory stores	235.5	158.0	107.3	49.0	47.3	134.8	130.7	3.1	21.8
Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores	261.4	175.8	110.7	48.7	58.8	149.6	145.4	2.9	31.4
Eating and drinking places	474.1	278.9	183.9	70.0	51.6	271.4	230.7	17.6	25.4
Drug and proprietary stores	138.7	108.8	82.1	27.6	32.5	79.4	90.0	-11.7	9.6
Miscellaneous retail stores	397.4	233.4	335.0	70.3	-30.3	227.5	193.0	17.8	-42.4
State total*	5145.3	3180.7	2555.5	61.8	24.5	2945.2	2630.8	12.0	2.9

*Subtotals may not add up to state total due to rounding.

(Continued from page 1) in 1977 tabulations are (1) sales or other taxes collected from customers, and (2) carrying or other credit charges. This discrepancy, however, does not appear to have affected the picture of consistent growth of retail trade in Nebraska.

For the state as a whole, the largest sales increases between census years occurred from 1972-1977, probably due to the consistency in classification of businesses included as part of the Census of Retail Trade for these census years. In real dollars, sales for the state over the entire ten-year period increased by 15.3 percent. From 1967 to 1977, automotive dealers and eating and drinking places registered the greatest increase in sales (47.5 percent), followed by general merchandise group stores (36.5 percent), furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores (35.2 percent), gasoline service stations (32.3 percent), apparel and accessory stores (25.6 percent), and food stores (16.6 percent). Types of businesses that registered losses over this ten-year period are building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers (-35.8 percent), miscellaneous retail stores (-32.1 percent), and drug and proprietary stores (-3.2 percent).

At the state level, the number of retail establishments decreased continuously from 1967 to 1977 (Table 2). When considered in conjunction with the increase in total sales over the ten-year period, this suggests that a consolidation of the retail sector is occurring, with fewer stores handling a higher volume of sales. This trend is especially apparent for general merchandise group stores, food stores, gasoline service stations, and eating and drinking places.

For the 1967-1977 decade, the greatest expansion in the number of establishments occurred for furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores (39.3 percent), automotive dealers (22.0 percent), and apparel and accessory stores (19.2 percent). Seven out of the ten major kinds of businesses listed in Table 2 registered decreases in the number of establishments from 1967-1977. For the five-year interval, 1972 to 1977, the largest decrease in number of establishments occurred for gasoline service stations (-23.5 percent). Many of these stations are privately owned and have a difficult time competing with the company-owned station

in times of rising prices, increasing demand, and decreasing supply. Despite the decrease in the number of gasoline service stations, however, their sales increased from 1972-1977. This increase in sales is probably due to the rapidly rising price of gas in both current and real dollars.

Other types of stores which experienced a loss in the number of establishments between 1972 and 1977 are: general merchandise group stores (-13.2 percent), drug and proprietary stores (-7.9 percent), food stores (-7.4 percent), and eating and drinking places (-4.7 percent). Of these four major types of stores, only one—drug and proprietary stores—recorded a corresponding decrease in sales volume from 1972-1977. Although furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores had a sales increase of only 2.9 percent for the 1972-1977 interval, the number of such stores increased by 21.9 percent during this five-year interval. It will be interesting to note whether the 1982 Census of Retail Trade will reveal any stabilization in the growth of these types of stores.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RETAIL SALES

Counties having the largest and smallest amount of retail sales in the state for 1977 correspond to those counties having the most and least number of retail establishments (Tables 3 and 4). The only county which ranks in the top ten in terms of number of establishments that does not rank in the top ten for amount of sales is Platte County (it ranks eleventh). A very consistent relationship appears to exist between number of retail establishments and retail sales.

Half of the counties comprising the top ten for 1977 retail sales—Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Madison, and Dodge—are located in the eastern part of the state. Four of the counties are spread across central Nebraska—Hall, Lincoln, Buffalo, and Adams, and only one county in the top ten for 1977 sales—Scotts Bluff—is in western Nebraska. In contrast to this trend, the majority of counties listed among those having the least amount of sales in the state are located in the western and west-central portions of Nebraska—Banner, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Grant, and Sioux counties. These trends are consistent with what would be expected given the distribution of Nebraska's population.

Table 2
NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS BY KIND OF BUSINESS
COMPARATIVE SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR NEBRASKA: 1977, 1972, AND 1967

Kind of Business	Number of Establishments			Percent Change		
	1977	1972	1967	1972-77	1967-72	1967-77
Building materials, hardware, garden supply, and mobile home dealers	1,142	1,090	1,679	4.8	-35.1	-32.0
General merchandise group stores	447	515	652	-13.2	-21.0	-31.4
Food stores	1,422	1,536	1,832	-7.4	-16.2	-22.4
Automotive dealers	1,258	1,129	1,031	11.4	9.5	22.0
Gasoline service stations	1,732	2,265	2,218	-23.5	2.1	-21.9
Apparel and accessory stores	988	907	829	8.9	9.4	19.2
Furniture, home furnishings, and equipment stores	1,191	977	855	21.9	14.3	39.3
Eating and drinking places	3,189	3,347	3,415	-4.7	-2.0	-6.6
Drug and proprietary stores	421	457	558	-7.9	-18.1	-24.6
Miscellaneous retail stores	3,459	3,116	3,838	-11.0	-18.8	-9.9
State total	15,249	15,339	16,907	-0.6	-9.3	-9.8

Among counties in the top ten for amount of sales, shifts occurred in the rankings of certain counties between 1967 and 1977. Although the top three counties—Douglas, Lancaster, and Hall—remained the same, Sarpy County jumped from eleventh place in 1967 to fourth place in 1977. In contrast to this, Dodge County moved from fourth place in 1967 to ninth place in 1977. This change in the distribution of sales may be attributed to population growth in the suburban areas of Omaha. Living (and perhaps working) in the fringe area of Omaha, shoppers will naturally tend to use retail facilities close to their place of residence. Counties comprising the ten having the smallest amount of sales in the state remained relatively constant from 1967-1977.

Adjusted dollar per capita sales for 1977 at the county level are presented in Figure 1 (p. 6). Counties having the lower levels of dollar per capita sales tend to be located in the central and border parts of the state. A low level of dollar per capita sales means that the county is getting a low net return on retail sales in

the area. In other words, the people are doing most of their shopping in another county. Most of those counties with a low level of dollar per capita sales—Sioux, Banner, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Hayes, Frontier, Sherman, Howard, Nance, Dixon, Thurston, and Clay—are adjacent to counties having the larger cities in the region and thus containing retail facilities capable of serving a multicounty area. Twenty-four Nebraska counties—the twenty-three which have per capita sales of \$2,000 or more, plus Custer County—rank above the state average dollar per capita sales. As would be expected, most of these counties contain a larger community that is a major retail center in the area.

Another indicator of return on retail sales in an area is sales as a percent of personal income (Figure 2, p. 6). Once again, counties in which sales constitute less than 30 percent of personal income tend to cluster in the central and border areas of the state and to lie adjacent to counties containing larger communities. Thirty-one Nebraska counties have a sales as

(Continued on page 6)

Table 3
RANKING OF COUNTIES WITH MOST
AND LEAST AMOUNT OF SALES, 1977*
(in millions)

COUNTIES WITH MOST SALES				COUNTIES WITH LEAST SALES			
County	Sales	Percent of State Total	1967 Rank	County	Sales	Percent of State Total	1967 Rank
Douglas	893.0	30.3	1	Banner	.06	0.002	1
Lancaster	385.7	13.1	2	Arthur	.20	0.007	2
Hall	120.9	4.1	3	McPherson	.24	0.008	3
Sarpy	88.6	3.0	11	Loup	.43	0.014	5
Scotts Bluff	87.4	3.0	5	Logan	.43	0.015	8
Lincoln	82.9	2.8	9	Wheeler	.52	0.018	4
Madison	75.8	2.6	6	Keya Paha	.63	0.022	9
Buffalo	75.4	2.6	7	Grant	.90	0.031	12
Dodge	74.3	2.5	4	Sioux	.91	0.031	7
Adams	70.8	2.4	8	Blaine	1.10	0.038	11
		66.4				0.186	
Balance of state:		33.6%		Balance of state:		99.814%	

*1977 figures are deflated dollars (1967 = base year).

Table 4
RANKING OF COUNTIES WITH MOST
AND FEWEST ESTABLISHMENTS, 1977

COUNTIES WITH MOST ESTABLISHMENTS				COUNTIES WITH FEWEST ESTABLISHMENTS			
County	Number	Percent of State Total	1967 Rank	County	Number	Percent of State Total	1967 Rank
Douglas	2,998	19.7	1	McPherson	4	0.03	3
Lancaster	1,400	9.2	2	Banner	5	0.03	2
Hall	512	3.4	3	Arthur	8	0.05	1
Scotts Bluff	441	2.9	5	Wheeler	8	0.05	4
Sarpy	383	2.5	15	Logan	9	0.06	7
Buffalo	383	2.5	7	Loup	9	0.06	8
Dodge	382	2.5	4	Blaine	11	0.07	5
Madison	364	2.4	6	Sioux	12	0.08	8
Lincoln	355	2.3	8	Hayes	14	0.09	6
Platte	319	2.1	9	Keya Paha	16	0.10	10
Adams	311	2.0	9	Grant	18	0.12	9
		51.5		Hooker	18	0.12	12
Balance of state:		48.5%		Thomas	18	0.12	11
				Gosper	21	0.14	11
						1.12	
				Balance of state:		98.88%	

Review and Outlook

April was generally a poor month for the Nebraska economy, with declines in most of the major economic indicators for the state. Because cash farm marketings for Nebraska and the United States were unavailable before this article was written, overall indexes and indexes for the agricultural sectors could not be computed.¹ Based upon the physical volume index for the nonagricultural sectors, however, real output for the state fell 0.9 percent from its March level and was 5.3 percent below its value of last year. Comparable national figures indicate losses of 1.4 percent

¹The chart at the bottom of the page estimates physical volume by using changes in the nonagricultural sectors only and will be revised when cash farm marketings data are available.

and 3.0 percent, respectively.

The March-to-April loss in nonagricultural activity was broadly based, as all sectors recorded declines. The month-to-month losses for these sectors were distributive, -0.2 percent; government, -0.4 percent; manufacturing, -2.0 percent; and construction, -7.0 percent.

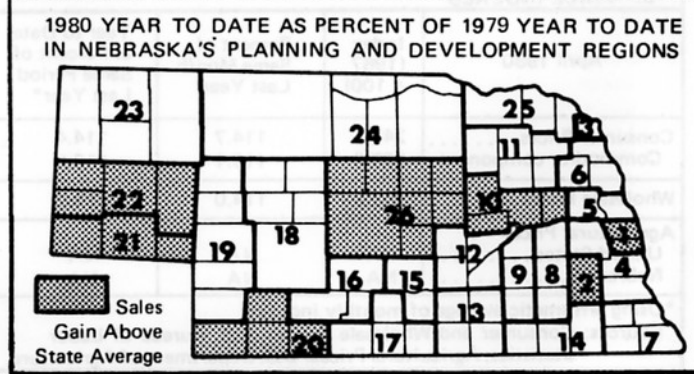
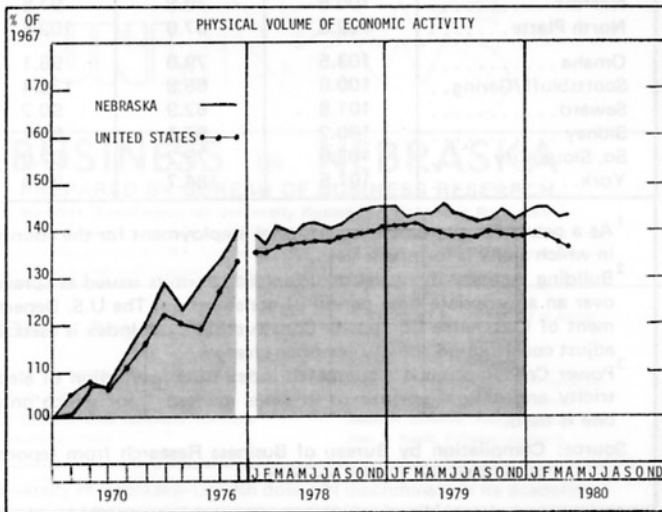
Nonagricultural activity showed definite signs of slipping in April, as its index fell for the fourth consecutive month. During the first three months of 1980 all of the sectors experienced some loss, but April was the first month in which all four non-agricultural sectors declined. So far, with the exception of construction and retail sales, losses have been mild. Evidence at the national level doesn't point to (Continued on page 5)

Notes for Tables 1 and 2: (1) The "distributive" indicator represents a composite of wholesale and retail trade; transportation, communication and utilities; finance, insurance, and real estate; and selected services. (2) The "physical volume" indicator and its components represent the dollar volume indicator and its components adjusted for price changes using appropriate price indexes—see Table 5, page 5.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS: NEBRASKA AND UNITED STATES				
1. CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR				
April 1980	Current Month as Percent of Same Month Previous Year		1980 Year to Date as Percent of 1979 Year to Date	
	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Indicator	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Dollar Volume	NA	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nonagricultural	106.1	109.3	109.0	111.1
Construction	70.5	102.4	80.0	110.3
Manufacturing	112.7	112.6	117.4	114.9
Distributive	107.9	109.0	110.4	110.4
Government	102.5	105.8	101.9	106.6
Physical Volume	NA	NA	NA	NA
Agricultural	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nonagricultural	94.7	97.0	97.1	98.3
Construction	65.2	94.8	73.0	100.7
Manufacturing	100.2	98.0	103.3	99.4
Distributive	94.1	95.1	96.5	96.6
Government	98.1	103.3	97.4	102.2
2. CHANGE FROM 1967				
Indicator	Percent of 1967 Average			
	Nebraska	U.S.		
Dollar Volume	NA	NA		
Agricultural	NA	NA		
Nonagricultural	332.3	313.6		
Construction	218.6	295.2		
Manufacturing	352.8	290.1		
Distributive	346.4	331.6		
Government	302.9	300.9		
Physical Volume	NA	NA		
Agricultural	NA	NA		
Nonagricultural	142.5	136.3		
Construction	78.1	105.4		
Manufacturing	167.8	134.9		
Distributive	142.8	136.7		
Government	138.0	149.6		

3. NET TAXABLE RETAIL SALES OF NEBRASKA REGIONS AND CITIES (Adjusted for Price Changes)			
Region Number ¹ and City	City Sales*	Sales in Region*	
	April 1980 as percent of April 1979	April 1980 as percent of April 1979	Year to date '80 as percent of Year to date '79
<i>The State</i>	93.6	89.5	92.0
1 Omaha	95.4	92.2	92.5
Bellevue	96.6		
2 Lincoln	96.8	94.1	92.8
3 So. Sioux City	86.2	76.4	88.1
4 Nebraska City	88.2	81.4	84.0
5 Fremont	84.2	78.5	85.4
Blair	92.6		
6 West Point	77.1	68.6	82.4
7 Falls City	85.0	80.2	87.3
8 Seward	80.1	79.4	87.4
9 York	94.3	81.7	89.5
10 Columbus	86.5	78.9	92.6
11 Norfolk	85.6	76.8	88.9
Wayne	62.9		
12 Grand Island	88.1	80.4	89.1
13 Hastings	92.7	84.7	89.6
14 Beatrice	104.2	85.8	90.1
Fairbury	85.1		
15 Kearney	90.1	85.6	89.4
16 Lexington	88.8	89.2	89.7
17 Holdrege	87.1	83.7	88.9
18 North Platte	84.3	82.3	86.1
19 Ogallala	86.5	88.1	89.4
20 McCook	86.5	86.2	91.0
21 Sidney	105.8	105.4	96.5
Kimball	133.9		
22 Scottsbluff/Gering	98.2	94.2	91.8
23 Alliance	97.0	95.2	90.4
Chadron	101.5		
24 O'Neill	86.1	78.5	85.5
25 Hartington	66.5	70.3	84.5
26 Broken Bow	90.0	76.5	91.1

*State totals include sales not allocated to cities or regions. The year-to-year ratios for city and region sales may be misleading because of changes in the portion of unallocated sales. Region totals include, and city totals exclude, motor vehicle sales. Sales are those on which sales taxes are collected by retailers located in the state. Compiled from data provided by Nebraska Department of Revenue.



(Continued from page 4) any major revival in construction or retail sales, but it does suggest that the worst declines are over, as falling interest rates have been accompanied with a resurgence in credit-related consumer buying.

Construction has been hardest hit by the current slowdown. Even though this sector has not shown an increase since May 1979, the first four months of 1980 have been especially devastating. Since last May the index has fallen 35.8 percent, with half of this drop occurring during 1980. All segments of the construction industry—residential, non-residential, and non-building—have experienced declines. Compared to April 1979, the number of housing units authorized in Nebraska fell nearly 50 percent.

April employment data show an increase of 0.9 percent (7,000 persons) compared to April 1979. Despite this increase, there are indications of softness in Nebraska's employment situation. Not only was April's increase the smallest year-to-year increase since last May, but there was also a 6,900 person growth in the number of unemployed, pushing the unemployment rate to 3.4 percent. This increase in unemployment was the largest since November 1975. Nebraska's unemployment rate, however, stands well below the U.S. rate of 6.6 percent.

The April growth in employment occurred primarily in the distributive sectors, with services leading the way. The three remaining nonagricultural sectors all recorded declines compared to April 1980, as durable manufacturing, building construction, and local government recorded the greatest losses in their respective sectors. Twenty-one of the twenty-six reporting cities recorded employment gains in April.

Retail sales dropped substantially in April, continuing a trend which began in January. After adjustment for price changes, net taxable sales fell 10.5 percent below those of April 1979. Much of the loss was due to a 27.9 percent decline in motor vehicle sales, but non-motor vehicle sales fell 6.4 percent. Nationally, retail sales were down 6.9 percent from last April. Compared to April 1979, only one of the state's twenty-six planning regions (Region 21) recorded an increase in total sales. In addition, only four of thirty-two principal trading centers in the state had non-motor vehicle sales above those of last March. The cities with increases were Kimball, Sidney, Beatrice, and Chadron.

Relative to April 1979, the city business indexes fell an average of 3.2 percent and represented the fourth consecutive decline. Weakness in retail sales and building activity was responsible for this month's poor showing, as twenty-one of the twenty-six cities registered losses. Alliance posted the largest gain in economic activity, with an increase of 3.2 percent. Other cities with April-to-April increases were Beatrice, Scottsbluff, Lincoln, and Sidney.

J. A. D.

	-15	-10	-5	0	5
Alliance					
Beatrice					
Scottsbluff/Gering					
Lincoln					
Sidney					
York					
Falls City					
Omaha					
Bellevue					
STATE					
Chadron					
Fairbury					
Columbus					
Hastings					
South Sioux City					
McCook					
North Platte					
Kearney					
Nebraska City					
Norfolk					
Fremont					
Blair					
Grand Island					
Broken Bow					
Lexington					
Holdrege					
Seward					

Source: Table 3 (page 4) and Table 4 below.

The State and Its Trading Centers	Percent of Same Month a Year Ago		
	Employment ¹	Building Activity ²	Power Consumption ³
<i>The State</i>	102.2	72.9	98.8
Alliance	115.1	58.6	107.2
Beatrice	102.8	112.9	96.3
Bellevue	103.5	86.0	78.1
Blair	99.9	44.1	85.9
Broken Bow	101.6	45.2	86.6
Chadron	100.5	33.4	100.3
Columbus	100.7	106.1	95.7
Fairbury	100.1	124.4	102.2
Falls City	102.5	311.5	100.5
Fremont	100.1	72.9	103.6*
Grand Island	100.4	43.9	101.9
Hastings	100.0	49.9	99.5
Holdrege	98.4	46.8	100.2
Kearney	102.0	44.2	98.6
Lexington	99.9	34.3	102.9
Lincoln	104.1	128.3	99.8
McCook	99.9	61.2	111.6
Nebraska City	102.0	54.2	96.7
Norfolk	100.8	70.8	97.5
North Platte	102.8	67.0	102.8
Omaha	103.5	79.0	96.1
Scottsbluff/Gering ..	100.6	65.8	138.4
Seward	101.8	62.9	90.2
Sidney	100.2	87.1	88.1
So. Sioux City	102.6	79.2	92.0
York	101.5	184.7	90.0

¹ As a proxy for city employment, total employment for the county in which a city is located is used.

² Building Activity is the value of building permits issued as spread over an appropriate time period of construction. The U.S. Department of Commerce Composite Construction Cost Index is used to adjust construction activity for price changes.

³ Power Consumption is a combined index of consumption of electricity and natural gas except in cases marked * for which only one is used.

Source: Compilation by Bureau of Business Research from reports of private and public agencies.

April 1980	Index (1967 = 100)	Percent of Same Month Last Year	Year to Date as Percent of Same Period Last Year*
Consumer Prices	242.5	114.7	114.4
Commodity component	229.9	113.1	113.5
Wholesale Prices	262.3	114.0	115.2
Agricultural Prices			
United States	NA	NA	NA
Nebraska	NA	NA	NA

*Using arithmetic average of monthly indexes.
Sources: Consumer and Wholesale Prices: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Agricultural Prices: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(Continued from page 3) a percent of personal income that is higher than the state average. Interestingly, Thomas County has the highest sales as a percent of personal income (82.3 percent), followed closely by Keith (79.2 percent), Sheridan (73.8 percent), and Hall (70.8 percent) counties.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS

Although retail sales increased in both current and real dollars from 1967-1977, the number of retail establishments decreased during this time period. Only three of Nebraska's ninety-three counties—Arthur, Hall, and Washington—recorded a continual increase in number of retail establishments from 1967-1972 and 1972-1977. From 1967-1972, sixty-eight counties recorded a decrease in the number of establishments, and from 1972-1977 this number increased to seventy-nine. Over the entire ten-year period, fifty-seven counties experienced a continual decline in the number of establishments.

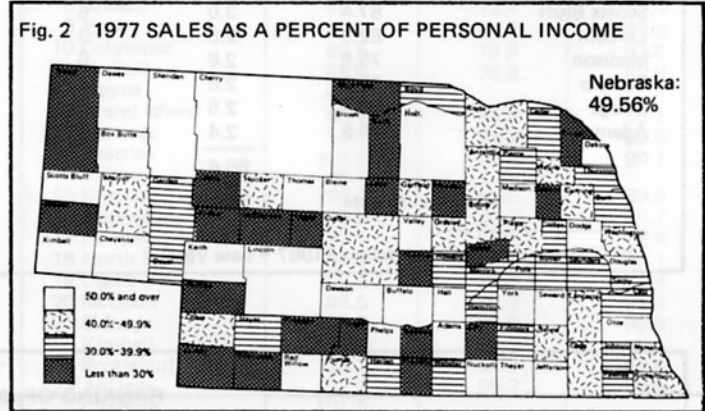
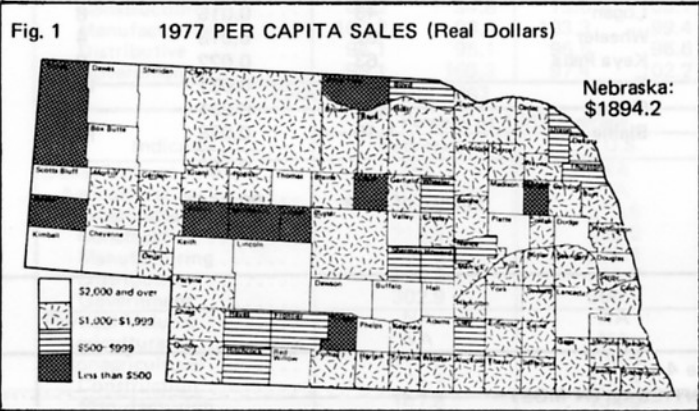
The ten counties with the most and the ten with the least number of establishments for 1977, and their rank, are listed in Table 4. As would be expected, most of the counties which ranked as having the largest number of retail establishments were also the most populated. Platte is the only county among the top ten in terms of retail establishments that did not rank among the ten most populated (it ranked eleventh), according to the Federal-State Cooperative Program population estimates. Of the counties with the least number of retail establishments, all but Gosper (which ranked seventeenth) also ranked among the fourteen counties having the smallest population.

Counties having the largest number of retail establishments, however, did not necessarily have the greatest rate of increase in number of establishments from 1967 to 1977. Only three of the counties which ranked among the ten having the largest number of retail establishments also ranked among the ten having the fastest rate of growth. The counties, their rank, and growth rates are: Sarpy, second, 69.5 percent; Lancaster, fifth, 10.6 percent; and Hall, ninth, 2.8 percent.

Furthermore, three counties that ranked among the top ten in terms of percentage growth of the number of retail establishments also ranked among the ten counties having the fewest number of retail establishments. These counties, their rank, and growth rates are: Arthur, first, 100.0 percent; Wheeler, fourth, 14.3 percent; and Blaine, sixth, 10.0 percent. Although each of these three counties is estimated to have a population of 1,000 or less and is a small county located in central Nebraska, they have recorded increases in number of establishments and retail sales for the 1967-1977 interval.

Not all of the counties which experienced an increase in the number of retail establishments, however, had a corresponding increase in retail sales. For example, Gosper County recorded a 5.0 percent increase in the number of retail establishments from 1967 to 1977. This gain was offset by a decrease in real dollars in the amount of retail sales (-56.9 percent) between 1967 and 1977. Such a discrepancy may be misleading, given the change in the SIC classification after 1967, and is a good example of the difficulty in assessing trends from these censuses.

A. M. R.



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UNL News

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