

Business in Nebraska

In This Issue

Women & Work in Nebraska—Trends	1
Review and Outlook	5
County of the Month	8

Prepared by the Bureau of Business Research, College of Business Administration,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1700 Y St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0406, 402/472-2334

Women and Work in Nebraska—Trends in Labor Force Participation, 1940 to 1960

Lisa Valladao

This is the second in a series of articles on women and work in Nebraska. The first article (BIN, June 1993) focused on the period 1920 to 1940. All data presented in this article pertains to women in Nebraska.

The period 1940 to 1960 saw a continued steady increase in female labor force participation in the state. Twenty percent of all women age 14 and over were labor force participants in 1940. By 1960, 33 percent of women age 14 and over were in the labor force (Figure 1). As a proportion of the total labor force (male and female), women also gained consistently during the period, rising from 20 percent in 1940 to 30 percent in 1960.

Age Distribution of the Female Labor Force

In 1940, women age 14 to 17 accounted for 3 percent of the total female labor force. By 1960, this proportion rose to 6 percent (Figure 2). While these changes may not seem striking, when compared to the change in total female population in this group to the change in labor force participants, an interesting trend appears (Table 1).

From 1940 to 1950, the number of females age 14 to 17 dropped 22 percent, while the number of labor force participants in this group increased 78 percent. (The change in populations across age groups generally results from normal demographic flows over time, resulting from births, deaths, and migration.) From 1950 to 1960 there was a 10 percent increase in the group population, and a 57 percent increase in labor force participants. From 1940 to 1960, the number of females age 14 to 17 decreased 14 percent, while the number of labor force participants increased 180 percent. Corresponding with the increasing number of participants, labor force participation rates among 14 to 17 year olds increased significantly, moving from 7 percent in 1940 to 22 percent in 1960.

Keeping the Terms Straight . . .

Labor force participation rate—the percentage of working age persons participating in the labor force. Labor force participants are either employed or are unemployed and actively seeking work. During the period examined in this article, the female working age population consisted of women age 14 years and older.

Number of participants—specific number of working age persons participating in the labor force (employed or unemployed and seeking work).

Proportion of labor force—the percent of the total labor force that is comprised of one particular group of persons, i.e. women constituted 20 percent of the total labor force (male and female) in 1940.

Figure 1
Female Labor Force Participation Rate, and Women as Proportion of Total Labor Force—1940-1960

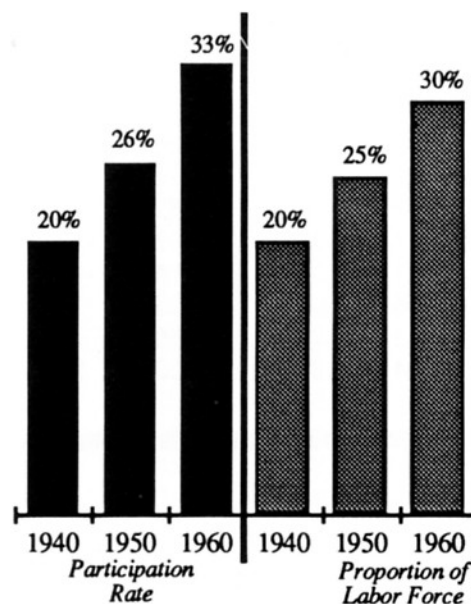
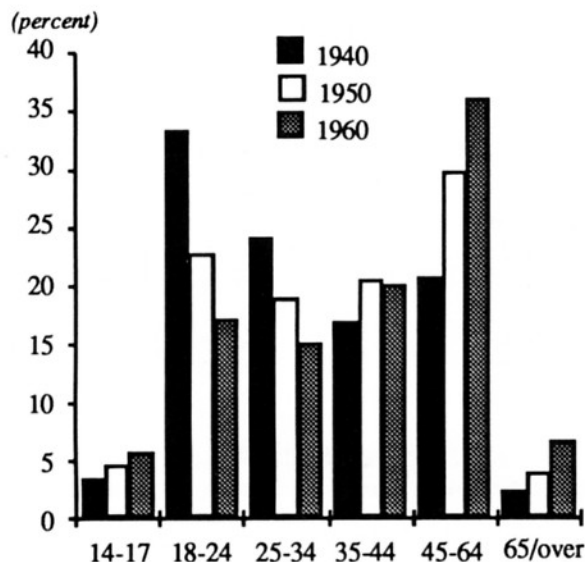


Figure 2
Distribution of Female Labor Force
by Age—1940-1960



In 1940, the majority of female labor force participants (33 percent) were age 18 to 24. By 1960, the proportion of the female labor force in this age group had dropped to 17 percent. The decline in labor force participants from 1940 to 1950 corresponded exactly with the change in total female population in this age group. Over the entire study period, however, the decrease in the total female population in this group was proportionally larger than the decrease in labor force participants (24 percent versus 15 percent). Labor force participation rates in this age group remained highest overall, ranging from 42 to 47 percent.

Women age 25 to 34 also comprised a decreasing proportion of the female labor force during the study period, dropping from 24 percent in 1940 to 15 percent in 1960. While the total population in this age group decreased steadily, the number of labor force participants increased 4 percent over the period. The labor force participation rate also increased, from 24 to 30 percent, in this age group.

Moving on to the upper half of the age scale, we find that 35 to 44 year old females comprised a slightly increasing proportion of the female labor force over the period, moving from 17 to 20 percent of the labor force. In terms of total numbers, the population in this group decreased 2 percent over the period while the number of labor force participants increased 99 percent. The participation rate of 34 to 44 year old women jumped from 19 percent in 1940 to 39 percent in 1960.

More striking trends are evident among women age 45 to 64. As a proportion of the female labor force this age group moved from 21 percent in 1940 to 36 percent in 1960. Total population in the age group increased 11 percent over the period while the number of labor force participants increased 193 percent. The labor force participation rate of women age 45 to 64 jumped from 16 percent in 1940 to 41 percent in 1960.

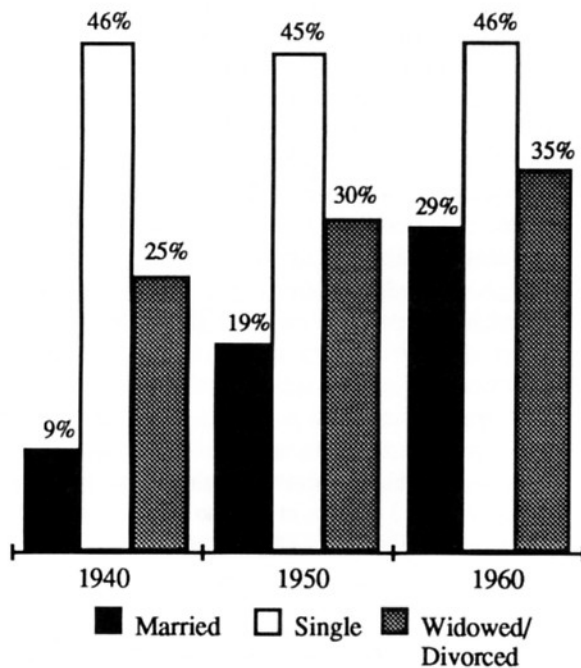
Finally, women age 65 and over moved from 2 percent of the female labor force in 1940 to 7 percent in 1960. Their total numbers increased 70 percent over the period, while the number of labor force participants in this group increased four fold (415 percent). The labor force participation rate of elderly women jumped from 4 percent in 1940 to 13 percent in 1960.

Clearly the increasing number of women in the labor force in the youngest and the oldest age categories cannot be attributed simply to the trend in the total population of these age groups, but rather resulted from increased labor force participation.

Table 1
Change in Female Labor Force Participants by Age
Compared to Change in Total Females by Age—1940 to 1960
(percent)

	<u>Change</u> <u>1940 to 1950</u>		<u>Change</u> <u>1950 to 1960</u>		<u>Change</u> <u>1940 to 1960</u>	
	Labor Force	Total Females	Labor Force	Total Females	Labor Force	Total Females
Total	28	0	31	2	67	2
14 to 17	78	-22	57	10	180	-14
18 to 24	-13	-13	-2	-12	-15	-24
25 to 34	1	-4	4	-10	4	-14
35 to 44	56	0	28	-2	99	-2
45 to 64	83	6	60	4	193	11
65/over	134	31	120	30	415	70

Figure 3
Labor Force Participation Rates
by Marital Status—1940-1960



Participation by Marital Status

The increasing participation of married women was notable during the period 1940 to 1960, rising from 9 percent in 1940 to 29 percent in 1960 (Figure 3). The participation rate of single women remained constant at around 45 percent over the period, while the participation of widowed and divorced women rose, although less precipitously than that of their married counterparts.

Occupations

Table 2 shows the number of women employed by occupational category as reported in each of the three censuses. Clerical and service occupations employed the largest number of women in 1950 and 1960, while clerical and professional/technical occupations dominated in 1940. Clerical occupations alone accounted for 23 percent of all employed females in 1940, rising to 28 percent in 1960 (Figure 4). Service occupations (other than private household) jumped from 14 percent of employed women in 1940 to 18 percent in 1960. By 1960, almost half of all employed women were found in clerical and service occupations.

Within the clerical occupations category, the number of secretaries and stenographers increased 71 percent from 1940 to 1960, with the largest increase coming between 1950 and 1960. Under the subheading "other clerical workers" which included occupations such as bank tellers, bookkeepers, receptionists, medical assistants, and telephone operators, the number of women employed jumped 177 percent over the period.

Within the service category, the number of women employed as food service workers (waitresses, cooks, etc.) jumped 148 percent from 1940 to 1960. Food service workers constituted 45 percent of all service workers (female) in 1960. The number of women employed in the subcategory of "other service" occupations, which included such diverse jobs as midwives, ushers, hotel maids, and elevator operators, jumped 129 percent over the period.

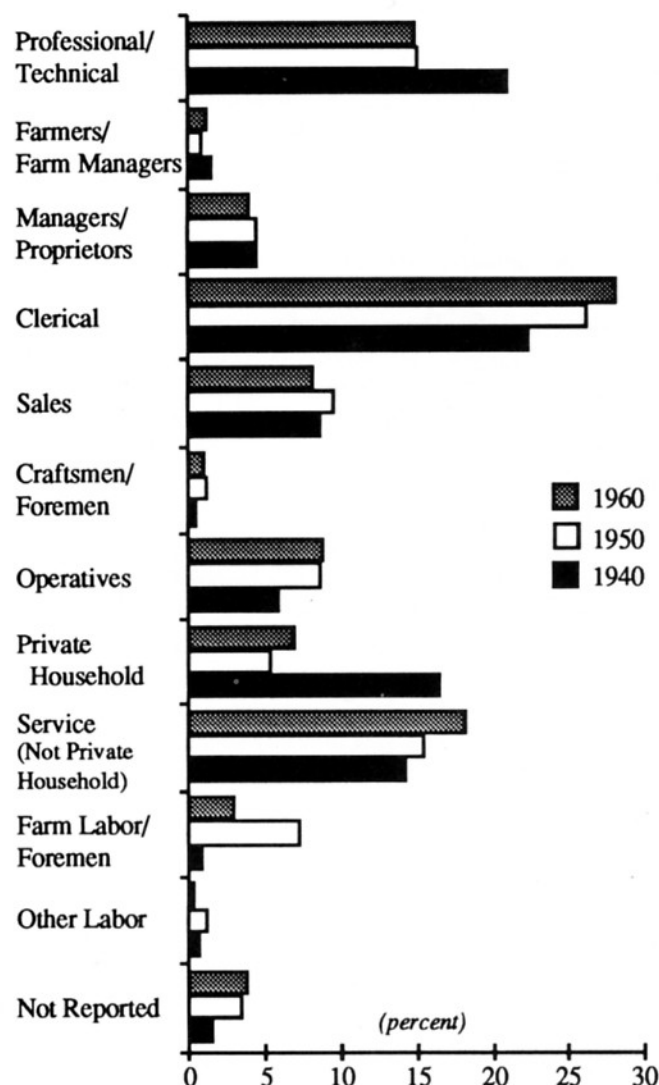
Participation and Occupations by Race

In a previous article, we indicated that the participation of black women in Nebraska's labor force declined markedly between 1930 and 1940, dropping from 43 percent to 32 percent. Unfortunately, the 1950 and 1960 censuses eliminated the distinct racial categories in the labor force participation tables, lumping the population instead into "white" and "nonwhite" categories. Since black women comprised the largest minority segment of the female population, approximately 80 percent over the period 1940 to 1960, a look at the participation of "nonwhite" women provides some insight into the change in this measure.

Table 2
Number of Women Employed
by Occupation—1940 to 1960

	1940	1950	1960
Total Labor Force	100,642	128,590	168,472
Total Employed	87,798	126,298	162,615
Professional/Technical	18,578	19,121	24,321
Farmers/Farm Managers	1,518	1,210	2,124
Managers/Proprietors	4,103	5,723	6,688
Clerical	19,829	33,165	46,031
Sales	7,719	12,140	13,462
Craftsmen/Foremen	617	1,609	2,004
Operatives	5,310	11,184	14,644
Private Household	14,518	6,968	11,476
Service (Not Private Hshld.)	12,545	19,559	29,727
Farm Labor/Foremen	876	9,447	4,869
Other Labor	769	1,652	856
Not Reported	1,416	4,487	6,413

Figure 4
Occupational Distribution of Employed Women—1940-1960

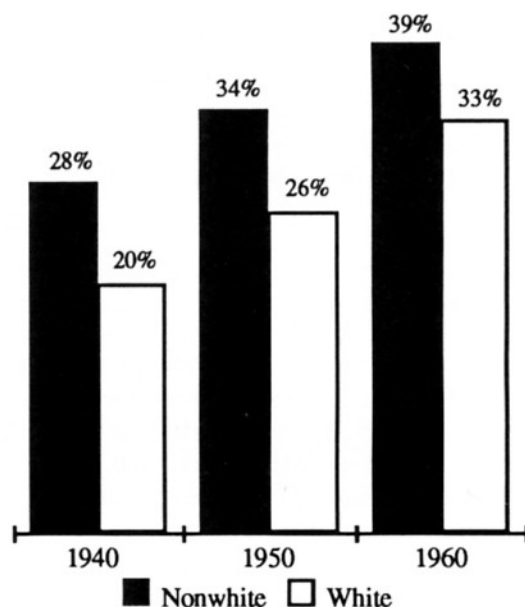


The labor force participation rate of all "nonwhite" women in 1940 (black plus other races) was 28 percent. (The participation rate among "other race" women alone in 1940 was 11 percent.) As Figure 5 shows the participation rate of this group rose to 39 percent in 1960. Taking into account the traditionally low participation rates among women of races other than black, we can infer that it wasn't until 1960 that the labor force participation rate of black women had climbed back to the 1930 level. As indicated by the previous study (BIN, June 1993) the factors accounting for drops in participation by black women are not explained by census data, although lack of job opportunity likely played a significant role.

The occupational distribution of black and white women varied considerably (Table 3) and exhibited differing patterns of change over the period. (Occupational data presented in the 1950 and 1960 censuses provide detail on employed black women separate from women of other nonwhite races.)

In 1940, 48 percent of employed black women served as private household workers, versus only 16 percent of white women. As a proportion of total employed, private service occupations declined in both groups. The proportion among black women dropped from 48 percent to 22 percent in 1960. Among white women the proportion dropped from 16 percent in 1940 to 7 percent in 1960. Clerical occupations jumped from 2 percent of employed black women to 10 percent in 1960. Among white women, the proportion employed in clerical occupations rose from 23 percent in 1940 to 29 percent in 1960. A substantially higher proportion of black women were employed in other service occupations (approximately 38 percent over the period) than were white women with a range of 14 to 18 percent. The proportion of black women employed as operatives increased from 3 percent in 1940 to 16 percent in 1950, and then fell slightly to 12 percent in 1960. (Persons

Figure 5
Labor Force Participation Rates by Race—1940-1960



employed as operatives worked in such diverse occupations as dressmakers, launderers, and semiskilled labor in manufacturing plants.) The proportion of white women employed as operatives ranged from 6 to 9 percent over the period. The proportion of black women employed as professional or technical women rose from 2 percent to 5 percent over the period, while the proportion of these occupations among white women dropped from 21 percent in 1940 to 15 percent in 1960, and remained the same in 1960.

Some specific trends stand out in a review of the Census data on employment during this period. First, the shift in the distribution of female participants to the youngest and oldest age groups corresponding to increases in labor force participation in these groups rather than increases in population; second, the jump in participation among married women; and third, the growth in clerical occupations held by women, particularly those in the occupational classification "other clerical occupations".

The next article in this series will examine the labor force activity of women in Nebraska from 1960 to 1980.

Review & Outlook

John S. Austin

Nebraska Outlook

Roy Frederick of UN-L recently has estimated that when numbers are finalized for 1993 it is likely that Nebraska net farm income will drop 15.0 percent to 20.0 percent from 1992's highs. Let us not take this report as one of gloom and doom. A drop of 20.0 percent from the 1992 level of farm income still results in a high level of net farm income. While prices have been good for grains, especially corn, crops were small. U.S. corn production dropped 31.4 percent. The fall in year-end corn stocks was even more dramatic. U.S. stocks fell from 2,113 million bushels at the end of 1992 to an estimated 886 million at the end of 1993.

The high grain prices that are such good news for the grain farmer have been bad news for the cattle feeder. There are anecdotal reports of feeders losing \$100 per head over the last six months. With Nebraska's total cattle on feed at 2.1 million head, we can see the size of exposure to per head losses.

The outlook for 1994 will depend largely on weather. In the first several months of the year there probably will be little change in grain prices until weather patterns become clear. Cattle feeders will continue to experience cost pressures. Once we have a better handle on weather patterns, one of two scenarios will unfold. If there are weather problems, then high grain prices will continue and feeders will continue to battle slim or negative margins. If the weather is favorable, then grain prices should begin to fall and margins on feed lot operations will improve.

Table 3
Occupational Distribution of Employed Women
by Race—1940 to 1960
(percent)

	1940		1960	
	Black	White	Black	White
Professional/Technical	2%	21%	5%	15%
Farmers/Farm Managers	0	2	0	1
Managers/Proprietors	2	5	2	4
Clerical	2	23	10	29
Sales	1	9	1	8
Craftsmen/Foremen	0	1	1	1
Operatives	3	6	12	9
Private Household	48	16	22	7
Service (Not Private Household)	38	14	38	18
Farm Labor/Foremen	0	1	0	3
Other Labor	2	1	2	0
Not Reported	1	1	8	4
Total	100	100	100	100

A Correction

We need to correct figures given in the last issue of *Business in Nebraska*. The lower right hand portion of Table 3 on page 2 should read:

Percent Change	Total Employment
1990	3.1
1991	1.3
1992	1.8
1993	1.4
1994	1.4
1995	1.3

We regret the error. These figures now match the corresponding figures in Table 2.

We wish to amplify previous comments on the employment data. The 1992 figures we presented are our own estimates of what soon-to-be-revised data will reveal for 1992. The 1993 employment data are our own forecasts. It is necessary to correct the data because the initial reports on employment suggested low levels of employment gain for 1992 and early 1993. Others have relied on those initial data and consequently have described the Nebraska economy as flat. But flatness is not consistent with other data. Personal income is growing nicely in Nebraska, as are retail sales. We remain optimistic that when the data are released employment growth in Nebraska will be well over 1.0 percent in both 1992 and 1993.

How do we Compare to Neighboring States?

By focusing too narrowly on Nebraska, we may lose sight of how we are doing in comparison to our neighbors. Table 1 presents a long-term view of Nebraska's relative position. We have gathered data on personal

Table 1
A Comparison of Nebraska and Surrounding States Income and Population in Millions
and Average Annual Percentage Changes

	Total Personal Income		Population		Per Capita Income		Gross State Product	
	1992 \$ millions	1992/1970 % change	1992 millions	1992/1970 % change	1992 \$/person	1992/1970 % change	1990 \$ millions	1990/1977 % change
Nebraska	30,438	8.0	1,606	0.4	18,957	7.6	33,375	4.2
Colorado	71,654	9.9	3,470	2.1	20,648	7.7	71,470	5.0
Iowa	52,103	7.4	2,812	0.0	18,526	7.5	56,099	3.5
Kansas	48,808	8.3	2,523	0.5	19,348	7.7	51,112	4.3
Missouri	98,963	8.1	5,193	0.5	19,058	7.6	103,674	4.3
South Dakota	12,147	8.2	0,711	0.3	17,081	7.9	13,078	4.3
Wyoming	8,545	9.1	0,466	1.5	18,330	7.4	12,594	3.7
United States	5,130,617	8.7	255,082	1.0	20,114	7.6	5,498,793	4.8

Sources: U. S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis

income, population, and per capita income for the period from 1970 to 1992. We also have presented data on Gross State Product (GSP) from 1977 to 1990, the latest data available. We first observe that Nebraska is one of the smaller states in the group, ahead of only South Dakota and Wyoming. That ranking holds for total personal income, population, or GSP.

We are toward the bottom in growth rates as well. Nebraska is generally third from the bottom in growth rates. The exception is per capita income growth, where we are in the middle of the pack. Per capita income growth rates are fairly close. One other feature of the table is the evident growth of Colorado over the long term. Colorado had the highest rate of growth in all categories except per capita income where it ranked second.

And what of the future? Table 2 presents forecasts for the neighboring states for personal income and employment growth. The forecasts were gathered from sources within the respective states.

Comparison between forecasts based on different approaches is difficult at best. We tentatively can state that Nebraska's forecast is near the middle for employ-

ment growth. We rank high for personal income growth for 1994 and low in 1995. Recall from the November/December *Business in Nebraska* article that the forecast rebound in Nebraska net farm income was, in part, an explanation of the differences in Nebraska's personal income growth in 1994 and 1995.

Table II
City Business Indicators
September 1993 Percent Change from Year Ago

The State and Its Trading Centers	Employment (1)	Building Activity (2)
NEBRASKA	0.9	21.8
Alliance	0.6	13.1
Beatrice	2.0	40.4
Bellevue	1.6	82.1
Blair	1.6	260.1
Broken Bow	0.1	14.7
Chadron	3.4	267.5
Columbus	3.3	68.7
Fairbury	1.6	-47.9
Falls City	1.5	-74.9
Fremont	3.4	58.0
Grand Island	4.1	-3.8
Hastings	3.0	282.8
Holdrege	1.7	-2.8
Kearney	3.8	72.3
Lexington	2.4	-4.9
Lincoln	3.3	-21.9
McCook	2.1	58.0
Nebraska City	2.0	146.0
Norfolk	3.6	31.7
North Platte	2.0	-27.7
Ogallala	2.2	-48.8
Omaha	1.6	42.9
Scottsbluff/Gering	3.4	-64.6
Seward	2.4	-13.8
Sidney	1.0	-22.3
South Sioux City	3.7	-35.1
York	1.4	152.5

(1) As a proxy for city employment, total employment (labor force basis) for the county in which a city is located is used

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

Sources: Nebraska Department of Labor and reports from private and public agencies

Table I
Employment in Nebraska

	Revised October 1993	Preliminary November 1993	% Change vs. Year Ago
Place of Work			
Nonfarm	760,861	762,432	0.5
Manufacturing	103,707	103,267	2.2
Durables	48,944	49,192	4.2
Nondurables	54,763	54,084	0.5
Mining	1,559	1,509	0.1
Construction	31,391	30,948	8.1
TCU*	46,886	47,332	0.0
Trade	189,534	190,442	-0.1
Wholesale	53,716	54,054	1.6
Retail	135,818	136,388	-0.7
FIRE**	48,809	48,869	-0.1
Services	189,726	189,715	1.1
Government	149,249	150,341	-1.7
Place of Residence			
Civilian Labor Force	885,224	872,946	4.4
Unemployment Rate	2.4	2.2	

* Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

** Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor

Table 2
Growth Rates for Surrounding States
(percent change)

	Employment		Personal Income	
	1994	1995	1994	1995
Nebraska	1.4	1.3	5.6	5.1
Colorado	2.1	na	6.5	na
Iowa	2.1	2.7	5.1	5.9
Kansas	1.2	1.4	5.4	5.1
Missouri	3.2	2.6	5.9	5.9
South Dakota	na	na	na	na
Wyoming	0.0	0.1	3.0	2.4
na—not available				

Colorado continues its high growth rates in 1994. Both Missouri and Iowa growth rates reflect rebounds from flood induced lows in 1993. The Kansas growth rates match ours. Wyoming continues to experience difficulties in its energy sector. How Nebraska and the surrounding states will rank when the actual data for the next two years are reported remains to be seen.



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Table III
Price Indices

	November 1993	% Change vs. Year Ago	YTD % Change vs. Year Ago
Consumer Price Index - U* (1982-84 = 100)			
All Items	145.8	2.7	3.0
Commodities	132.3	1.5	1.9
Services	159.6	3.6	3.8

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

Table IV
Net Taxable Retail Sales of Nebraska Regions and Cities

Region Number and City (1)	City Sales (2)			Region Sales (2)		
	September 1993 (000s)	% Change vs. Year Ago	September 1993 (000s)	% Change vs. Year Ago	Year to Date % Change vs. Year Ago	
NEBRASKA	1,100,259	8.1	1,251,284	9.2	4.9	
1 Omaha	378,116	6.9	467,090	7.7	6.1	
Bellevue	14,188	0.7	*	*	*	
Blair	5,447	4.6	*	*	*	
2 Lincoln	156,506	10.0	178,259	10.5	8.4	
3 South Sioux City	7,167	5.4	10,140	9.3	8.3	
4 Nebraska City	4,636	6.7	24,058	14.5	7.4	
6 Fremont	20,402	8.3	35,393	4.7	0.1	
West Point	3,378	-1.6	*	*	*	
7 Falls City	2,429	8.9	10,425	6.4	2.1	
8 Seward	5,713	21.4	18,136	15.4	4.0	
9 York	8,100	11.3	16,980	11.2	-0.4	
10 Columbus	18,220	7.9	30,802	5.6	-1.5	
11 Norfolk	23,574	8.0	39,351	3.7	2.8	
Wayne	3,608	-1.0	*	*	*	
12 Grand Island	41,841	10.5	57,774	10.3	3.7	
13 Hastings	18,508	8.4	28,367	7.4	2.0	
14 Beatrice	8,801	-0.6	21,367	12.3	4.5	
Fairbury	3,877	33.5	*	*	*	
15 Kearney	24,832	8.1	34,651	9.1	4.4	
16 Lexington	7,348	2.3	18,407	0.6	-0.1	
17 Holdrege	4,824	-9.9	9,117	0.7	-1.5	
18 North Platte	18,901	8.2	23,805	6.8	2.2	
19 Ogallala	5,011	1.4	10,447	3.7	-11.0	
20 McCook	8,477	2.0	12,104	3.4	0.5	
21 Sidney	6,310	13.5	11,093	17.8	7.8	
Kimball	1,855	7.2	*	*	*	
22 Scottsbluff/Gering	21,944	8.5	30,708	9.3	3.0	
23 Alliance	5,189	0.0	15,192	1.3	4.4	
Chadron	3,067	2.0	*	*	*	
24 O'Neill	3,982	3.7	15,140	5.4	0.5	
Valentine	3,283	12.5	*	*	*	
25 Hartington	1,733	-5.5	9,017	-1.6	2.8	
26 Broken Bow	3,997	7.2	12,789	8.5	0.2	

(1) See Figure II of previous *Business in Nebraska* issues for regional composition

(2) Sales on which sales taxes are collected by retailers located in the state. Region totals include motor vehicle sales

*Within an already designated region

Compiled from data provided by the Nebraska Department of Revenue

1994 Annual Economic Outlook Report for Nebraska Nebraska's Position In the Global Economy

This report is designed to provide businesses and policy makers with key information about the potentials and pitfalls of participating in the global marketplace and the condition of the state's economy as it moves into the 21st century.

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County of the Month

Buffalo



Next County of Month

Kearney—County Seat

License plate prefix number: 9

Size of county: 975 square miles, ranks 17th in the state

Population: 37,447 in 1990, a change of +7.6 percent from 1980

Median age: 28.6 years in Buffalo County, 33.0 years in Nebraska in 1990

Per capita personal income: \$14,891 in 1991, ranks 76th in the state

Net taxable retail sales (\$000): \$335,631 in 1992, a change of +4.4 percent from 1991; \$227,399 during January-August 1993, a change of +4.2 percent from the same period one year ago

Number of business and service establishments: 1,124 in 1990; 52.6 percent had less than five employees

Unemployment rate: 2.4 percent in Buffalo County, 2.9 percent in Nebraska for 1992

Nonfarm employment (1992):	Buffalo State	County
Wage and salary workers	746,985	18,248
	(percent of total)	
Manufacturing	13.4%	18.0%
Construction and Mining	3.9	4.2
TCU	6.3	3.0
Retail Trade	18.2	24.1
Wholesale Trade	7.0	5.1
FIRE	6.6	3.0
Services	24.8	24.0
Government	19.8	18.6
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Agriculture:

Number of farms: 1,175 in 1987, 1,191 in 1982

Average farm size: 495 acres in 1987

Market value of farm products sold: \$122.4 million in 1987 (\$104,165 average per farm)

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

Merlin W. Erickson

Business in Nebraska

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