

1977 NEBRASKA POPULATION ESTIMATES

Evidence of increased population growth and stability has emerged in many areas of Nebraska since the 1970 census of population was taken, according to advance 1977 estimates for the state's ninety-three counties.¹ Population trends for non-metropolitan Nebraska, in particular, continue to show significant improvement since 1970, compared to the widespread population declines of the 1960 to 1970 decade. Population increased from 1970 to 1977 in forty-seven Nebraska counties, according to the estimates, whereas only twenty-six counties registered gains between the 1960 and 1970 census counts. Furthermore, about two-thirds of the state's ninety-three counties have attained either more rapid population growth rates or less rapid rates of decline since 1970 than those recorded for the preceding decade.

Every region of Nebraska appears to be sharing to some extent in the trend toward increased stability of the state's population. Compared to the estimated 5.1 percent state-level population growth from 1970 to 1977, increases for both the Omaha area (8.2 percent) and the south central region of Nebraska (6.2 percent) have been rapid (see Figure 1). Southeast Nebraska, while growing at somewhat less than the state rate since 1970, has shown a slightly accelerated rate of population growth during the 1970s, compared to the 1960 to 1970 period. Both the Panhandle and the northeast regions of Nebraska have shown population increases since 1970, reversing earlier patterns of population decline. According to the 1977 estimates, only north central Nebraska failed to show a population increase since 1970. But the negligible population loss (-0.8 percent) estimated for that sparsely settled region of the state represents a substantial improvement over the 11.0 percent decline recorded for the region during the 1960s.

POPULATION CHANGE BY REGION

The Omaha Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Douglas and Sarpy counties) and surrounding counties, comprising more than 37 percent of the total state population, increased by 8.2 percent since 1970. Despite its slowdown in the rate of population growth in the 1970s, the six-county Omaha region has accounted for a majority (more than 58 percent) of Nebraska's population growth since 1970. The region's growth has primarily (about 90 percent) been a result of natural increase, although the 1.4 percent net migration rate since 1970 was twice that of the state.

Douglas County's population growth has lagged recently, possibly reflecting lingering adverse effects from both the 1974-1975

recession and the court-ordered busing of school children in the Omaha area (see Table 1, pages 2 and 3, for county estimates). Yet according to preliminary demographic indicators to be used as direct input for 1978 Douglas County population estimates, next year's estimate will likely show resumption of population growth.

In contrast to Douglas County's lagging growth, neighboring Sarpy County's population growth rate since 1970 ranks second-highest of the ninety-three Nebraska counties. The rate of natural increase (excess of births over deaths) is higher for Sarpy County than for any other county in the state, and this natural increase—combined with a 14.4 percent rate of net migration—fueled the rapid population growth estimated since 1970.

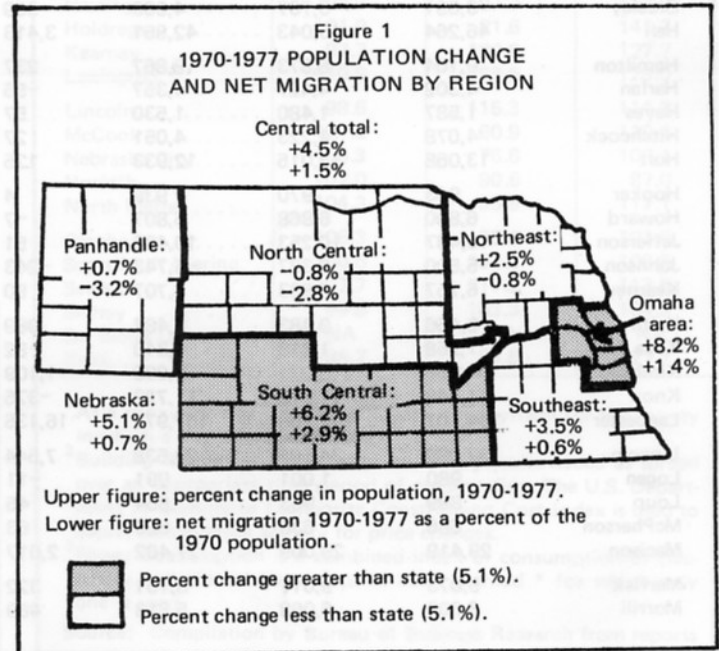
While both Douglas and Sarpy counties have shown slower rates of growth during the 1970s than they did during the 1960 to 1970 decade, accelerated growth has been estimated for three counties adjacent to the Omaha metro area: Cass, Washington, and Saunders. Dodge County's average population growth rate since 1970 is only slightly less than that recorded during the 1960s.

CENTRAL REGION

Central Nebraska ranked second in regional growth rates in the state since 1970, according to the 1977 estimates. The entire central Nebraska region population increased by 4.5 percent from 1970 to 1977, a dramatic change from the 0.7 percent population decline recorded from 1960 to 1970.

The area in the south central

(Continued on page 3)



¹The advance estimates which appear in this article are unofficial, and subject to later revision. For previous years' estimates, see *Business in Nebraska*, July, 1977, June, 1976, April, 1975, March, 1974, February, 1973, and April, 1972. Methods used to produce the estimates are described in *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, Nos. 427 and 460, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 1
1977 ADVANCE AND 1976 REVISED NEBRASKA POPULATION ESTIMATES

Area	Advance July 1, '77	Revised July 1, '76	Census April 1, '70	Change 1970-77		Components of Change 1970-77			
				Number	Percent	Births	Deaths	Net Migration	
								Number	Rate ¹
NEBRASKA	1,561,155	1,552,054	1,485,333	75,822	5.1	174,176	108,350	9,996	0.7
Adams	29,991	30,058	30,553	-562	-1.8	3,137	2,448	-1,251	-4.1
Antelope	9,164	9,252	9,047	117	1.3	1,012	863	-32	-0.4
Arthur	467	537	606	-139	-22.9	51	21	-169	-27.9
Banner	1,022	967	1,034	-12	-1.2	94	35	-71	-6.9
Blaine	887	841	847	40	4.7	89	62	13	1.5
Boone	7,800	7,839	8,190	-390	-4.8	809	710	-489	-6.0
Box Butte	11,159	10,707	10,094	1,065	10.6	1,194	875	746	7.4
Boyd	3,560	3,609	3,752	-192	-5.1	329	350	-171	-4.6
Brown	4,316	4,214	4,021	295	7.3	459	392	228	5.7
Buffalo	32,600	32,074	31,222	1,378	4.4	3,847	2,162	-307	-1.0
Burt	8,630	8,894	9,247	-617	-6.7	892	965	-544	-5.9
Butler	9,079	9,151	9,461	-382	-4.0	868	846	-404	-4.3
Cass	20,637	19,753	18,076	2,561	14.2	2,321	1,405	1,645	9.1
Cedar	11,764	11,750	12,192	-428	-3.5	1,275	943	-760	-6.2
Chase	4,707	4,691	4,129	578	14.0	481	404	501	12.1
Cherry	6,648	6,919	6,846	-198	-2.9	834	549	-483	-7.1
Cheyenne	10,414	10,447	10,778	-364	-3.4	1,140	862	-642	-6.0
Clay	8,199	8,124	8,266	-67	-0.8	891	753	-205	-2.5
Colfax	9,669	9,641	9,498	171	1.8	930	925	166	1.7
Cuming	11,817	11,657	12,034	-217	-1.8	1,233	931	-519	-4.3
Custer	14,021	13,859	14,092	-71	-0.5	1,495	1,409	-157	-1.1
Dakota	16,924	16,368	13,137	3,787	28.8	2,221	937	2,503	19.1
Dawes	8,861	9,207	9,761	-900	-9.2	1,006	783	-1,123	-11.5
Dawson	21,566	21,160	19,771	1,795	9.1	2,381	1,608	1,022	5.2
Deuel	2,668	2,611	2,717	-49	-1.8	263	274	-38	-1.4
Dixon	7,106	7,091	7,453	-347	-4.7	718	611	-454	-6.1
Dodge	35,851	35,631	34,782	1,069	3.1	3,963	2,681	-213	-0.6
Douglas	408,796	413,432	389,455	19,341	5.0	50,024	24,864	-5,819	-1.5
Dundy	2,856	2,830	2,926	-70	-2.4	294	315	-49	-1.7
Fillmore	7,918	7,992	8,137	-219	-2.7	744	869	-94	-1.2
Franklin	4,486	4,483	4,566	-80	-1.8	369	566	117	2.6
Frohtier	4,102	4,017	3,982	120	3.0	361	326	85	2.1
Furnas	6,691	6,765	6,897	-206	-3.0	633	853	14	0.2
Gage	23,524	23,619	25,731	-2,207	-8.6	2,209	2,232	-2,184	-8.5
Garden	2,963	2,892	2,929	34	1.2	244	264	54	1.8
Garfield	2,668	2,557	2,411	257	10.7	242	284	299	12.4
Gosper	2,580	2,435	2,178	402	18.5	194	136	344	15.8
Grant	880	854	1,019	-139	-13.6	109	61	-187	-18.4
Greeley	3,691	3,737	4,000	-309	-7.7	404	357	-356	-8.9
Hall	46,264	45,043	42,851	3,413	8.0	5,790	3,272	895	2.1
Hamilton	9,104	8,873	8,867	237	2.7	963	725	-1	0.0
Harlan	4,302	4,427	4,357	-55	-1.3	351	483	77	1.8
Hayes	1,587	1,480	1,530	57	3.7	146	91	2	0.1
Hitchcock	4,078	4,223	4,051	27	0.7	406	388	9	0.2
Holt	13,058	13,015	12,933	125	1.0	1,523	1,029	-369	-2.9
Hooker	943	970	939	4	0.4	84	110	30	3.2
Howard	6,800	6,868	6,807	-7	-0.1	772	604	-175	-2.6
Jefferson	10,487	10,253	10,436	51	0.5	864	1,028	215	2.1
Johnson	5,500	5,387	5,743	-243	-4.2	505	548	-200	-3.5
Kearney	6,757	6,833	6,707	50	0.7	674	544	-80	-1.2
Keith	9,456	9,483	8,487	969	11.4	1,032	632	569	6.7
Keya Paha	1,258	1,218	1,340	-82	-6.1	165	84	-163	-12.2
Kimball	4,900	5,271	6,009	-1,109	-18.5	653	338	-1,424	-23.7
Knox	11,348	11,313	11,723	-375	-3.2	1,092	1,050	-417	-3.6
Lancaster	184,107	182,958	167,972	16,135	9.6	19,285	9,677	6,527	3.9
Lincoln	37,082	34,588	29,538	7,544	25.5	4,073	2,162	5,633	19.1
Logan	980	1,001	991	-11	-1.1	119	73	-57	-5.8
Loup	899	953	854	45	5.3	83	76	38	4.4
McPherson	686	638	623	63	10.1	54	32	41	6.6
Macison	29,419	29,009	27,402	2,017	7.4	3,252	2,256	1,021	3.7
Merrick	9,073	9,011	8,751	322	3.7	1,019	693	-4	0.0
Morrill	6,302	6,068	5,813	489	8.4	611	520	398	6.8

Table 1 (continued)

Area	Advance July 1, '77	Revised July 1, '76	Census April 1, '70	Change 1970-77		Components of Change 1970-77			
				Number	Percent	Births	Deaths	Net Migration	
								Number	Rate ¹
Nance	4,727	4,702	5,142	-415	-8.1	505	521	-399	-7.8
Nemaha	7,938	8,124	8,976	-1,038	-11.6	834	767	-1,105	-12.3
Nuckolls	6,967	7,025	7,404	-437	-5.9	734	769	-402	-5.4
Otoe	15,175	15,089	15,576	-401	-2.6	1,497	1,466	-432	-2.8
Pawnee	3,997	4,048	4,473	-476	-10.6	289	487	-278	-6.2
Perkins	3,438	3,480	3,423	15	0.4	343	283	-45	-1.3
Phelps	10,207	9,934	9,553	654	6.8	1,018	890	526	5.5
Pierce	8,455	8,520	8,493	-38	-0.4	820	685	-173	-2.0
Platte	28,288	27,977	26,544	1,744	6.6	3,441	1,656	-41	-0.2
Polk	6,288	6,322	6,468	-180	-2.8	584	680	-84	-1.3
Red Willow	12,724	12,604	12,191	533	4.4	1,396	1,014	151	1.2
Richardson	11,550	11,576	12,277	-727	-5.9	1,096	1,397	-426	-3.5
Rock	2,396	2,307	2,231	165	7.4	266	231	130	5.8
Saline	12,924	12,880	12,809	115	0.9	1,147	1,285	253	2.0
Sarpy	84,265	80,178	66,200	18,065	27.3	10,206	1,683	9,542	14.4
Saunders	18,253	17,983	17,018	1,235	7.3	1,723	1,447	959	5.6
Scotts Bluff	37,819	37,046	36,432	1,387	3.8	4,580	2,388	-805	-2.2
Seward	14,898	15,011	14,460	438	3.0	1,449	1,043	32	0.2
Sheridan	7,496	7,477	7,285	211	2.9	877	722	56	0.8
Sherman	4,389	4,447	4,725	-336	-7.1	455	416	-375	-7.9
Sioux	1,943	1,947	2,034	-91	-4.5	186	88	-189	-9.3
Stanton	6,307	6,438	5,758	549	9.5	715	439	273	4.7
Thayer	7,535	7,497	7,779	-244	-3.1	673	784	-133	-1.7
Thomas	919	894	954	-35	-3.7	101	75	-61	-6.4
Thurston	7,219	7,254	6,942	277	4.0	976	652	-47	-0.7
Valley	5,355	5,409	5,783	-428	-7.4	577	589	-416	-7.2
Washington	15,118	14,633	13,310	1,808	13.6	1,503	1,048	1,353	10.2
Wayne	9,090	9,168	10,400	-1,310	-12.6	879	643	-1,546	-14.9
Webster	5,100	5,072	5,396	-296	-5.5	416	659	-53	-1.0
Wheeler	1,030	1,031	1,051	-21	-2.0	111	60	-72	-6.9
York	14,273	14,433	13,685	588	4.3	1,503	1,137	222	1.6

¹The net migration rate equals the difference between population change and natural increase (births minus deaths) expressed as a percent of the 1970 population.

(Continued from page 1) portion of the state, including those counties along and south of the Platte River (see Figure 1, page 1), increased 6.2 percent since 1970, surpassing the state population growth of 5.1 percent. More than four-fifths of the counties in south central Nebraska have shown improved population growth rates during the 1970s, compared to those of the 1960s. Accelerated population growth rates since 1970 have been estimated for Lincoln, Keith, Dawson, and Hamilton counties. Reversals from population declines in the 1960s to growth from 1970 to 1977 were estimated for eight south central counties: Gosper, Chase, Phelps, Red Willow, Hayes, Frontier, Hitchcock, and Perkins. Lesser rates of population declines since 1970 compared to the 1960s decade were estimated for Clay, Harlan, Franklin, Dundy, Furnas, Webster, and Nuckolls counties. Population growth would be difficult for these counties to attain, since—except for Clay County—each of these southern border counties has experienced natural decrease of population (excess of deaths over births) over the 1970 to 1977 period. Unless the subtraction from population caused by the excess of deaths over births is more than offset by net in-migration, population declines are inevitable. Natural decrease is observed in numerous counties of Nebraska, particularly in the south central and southeast regions.

Continued population growth, but at a slower rate this decade than last, has occurred in Buffalo and Hall counties, and Kearney

County's rate has shown little change. Adams County slipped from a position of growth during the 1960s to a slight loss of population since 1970, partly a consequence of institutional population declines.

Estimates for north central Nebraska indicate a decline of only 0.8 percent since 1970, a substantial improvement over the 11.0 percent population decline experienced from 1960 to 1970. Fifteen of the twenty-two north Central Nebraska counties show increased population growth during the current decade, compared to the 1960s. Only two very small counties (Arthur and Grant) are estimated to be experiencing comparatively less favorable growth trends.

SOUTHEAST REGION

Lancaster County recorded the most rapid growth of the southeastern counties, increasing by 9.6 percent from 1970 to 1977. Both Lancaster and York counties have shown accelerated rates of population growth during the 1970s, compared to those of the 1960s. Substantial net in-migrations of population have been estimated for both counties since 1970, reversing the net out-migrations observed from 1960 to 1970.

Seward, Saline, and Jefferson counties also showed population increases from 1970 to 1977. While the rates of population growth for Seward and Saline counties have slowed slightly since 1970, Jefferson County appears to have reversed the population declines registered during the 1960s.

(Continued on page 6)

Review and Outlook

Real output in Nebraska increased in March, with the state physical volume index recording a level which was 41.5 percent above its 1967 base-period level (see Table 2). Although this was the first increase in the index since last November, real output in the state during the first quarter of 1978 was 2.2 percent above the level for the comparable period last year.

Nonagricultural output in Nebraska was up 1.5 percent for the month, with sharp increases in the manufacturing and distributive sectors accounting for all of the gain. Manufacturing output was 2.0 percent higher in March; distributive sector output, 2.1 percent higher. The remaining two nonagricultural sectors recorded decreases for the month: construction (-3.7 percent) and govern-

ment (-0.1 percent). Agricultural output, down 7.7 percent, fell for the fourth consecutive month.

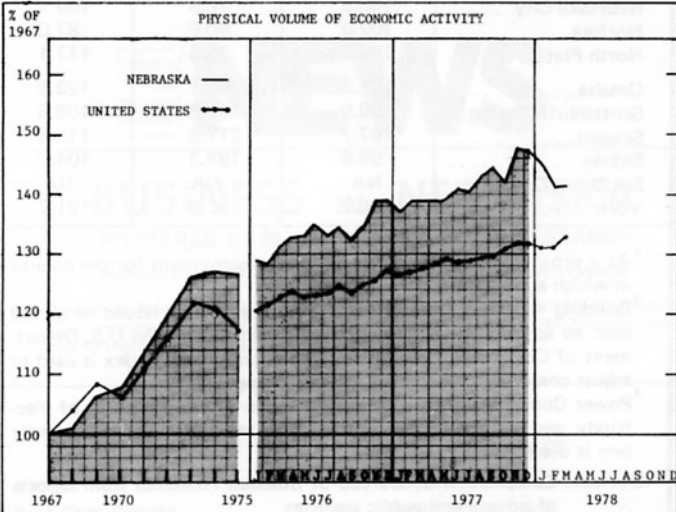
As was the case throughout most of the country in the first quarter of 1978, economic activity in Nebraska was sluggish. The state physical volume index was 2.9 percent lower than in the fourth quarter of last year. Despite this lackluster performance, three of the five sectors in the state economy registered increases for the quarter. The construction sector, where activity was up 4.6 percent, posted the largest gain. Increases in nonresidential and non-building construction were responsible for the growth in this sector. Tighter conditions in credit markets appear to be adversely affecting residential construction, which was down 9.9 percent in the first quarter of 1978. (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.

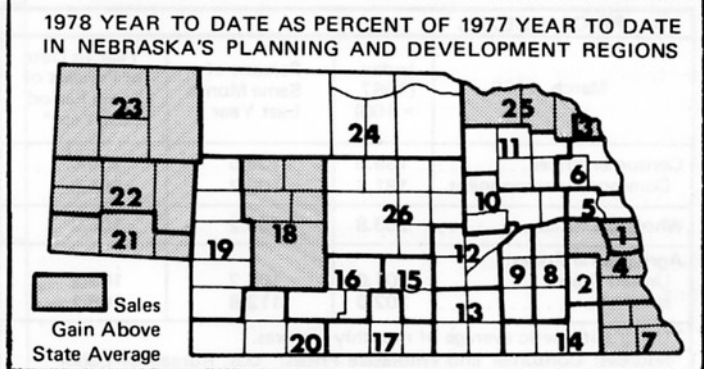
ECONOMIC INDICATORS: NEBRASKA AND UNITED STATES				
1. CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR				
March, 1978	Current Month as Percent of Same Month Previous Year		1978 Year to Date as Percent of 1977 Year to Date	
	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Indicator	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Dollar Volume	109.1	110.6	109.5	110.5
Agricultural	110.2	108.3	116.2	105.6
Nonagricultural	109.0	110.6	108.6	110.6
Construction	104.5	112.6	106.2	113.9
Manufacturing	113.9	111.3	111.1	111.6
Distributive	107.2	110.9	107.7	110.6
Government	111.1	107.6	109.3	107.7
Physical Volume	101.0	104.0	102.2	103.9
Agricultural	97.6	102.9	108.0	102.3
Nonagricultural	101.5	104.0	101.3	103.9
Construction	94.4	101.7	95.5	102.5
Manufacturing	106.7	104.6	104.0	104.7
Distributive	100.7	104.1	101.1	103.8
Government	100.5	103.3	100.6	103.1

2. CHANGE FROM 1967		
Indicator	Percent of 1967 Average	
	Nebraska	U.S.
Dollar Volume	278.2	255.7
Agricultural	244.3	247.6
Nonagricultural	284.1	256.0
Construction	314.2	230.0
Manufacturing	305.5	242.1
Distributive	274.8	267.1
Government	282.5	252.6
Physical Volume	141.5	132.8
Agricultural	120.9	123.2
Nonagricultural	145.1	133.1
Construction	139.0	101.8
Manufacturing	152.1	121.7
Distributive	144.8	140.7
Government	138.9	140.6

3. NET TAXABLE RETAIL SALES OF NEBRASKA REGIONS AND CITIES (Adjusted for Price Changes)			
Region Number ¹ and City	City Sales ²		Sales in Region ²
	Mar. 1978 as percent of Mar. 1977	Mar. 1978 as percent of Mar. 1977	Year to date '78 as percent of Year to date '77
<i>The State</i>	104.3	103.9	98.4
1 Omaha	109.6	108.7	105.4
Bellevue	116.4		
2 Lincoln	106.1	104.2	93.1
3 So. Sioux City	107.9	111.8	104.2
4 Nebraska City	100.8	108.9	102.5
5 Fremont	96.0	101.0	96.8
Blair	119.2		
6 West Point	114.3	102.6	96.9
7 Falls City	104.5	105.8	99.3
8 Seward	109.3	102.3	93.5
9 York	88.7	86.0	85.3
10 Columbus	108.7	100.8	95.8
11 Norfolk	102.0	95.2	94.5
12 Grand Island	101.3	96.0	92.0
13 Hastings	96.0	97.0	91.3
14 Beatrice	106.8	101.0	95.0
Fairbury	110.0		
15 Kearney	104.4	97.3	91.3
16 Lexington	97.7	93.6	91.6
17 Holdrege	99.8	97.8	94.3
18 North Platte	104.9	105.8	99.6
19 Ogallala	76.8	102.0	94.4
20 McCook	108.4	109.7	98.0
21 Sidney	111.4	105.9	105.0
Kimball	105.8		
22 Scottsbluff/Gering	107.0	114.2	101.2
23 Alliance	126.2	126.2	110.6
Chadron	118.7		
24 O'Neill	90.3	95.4	86.1
25 Hartington	106.5	111.3	104.0
26 Broken Bow	96.0	95.7	92.5



¹ See region map below.
² Sales on which sales taxes are collected by retailers located in the state. Region totals include motor vehicle sales; city totals exclude motor vehicle sales.
 Compiled from data provided by Nebraska Department of Revenue.



(Continued from page 4)

Growth of Nebraska manufacturing, which was a source of strength in the state economy last year, continued into 1978. First quarter output in this sector was 3.3 percent higher than the previous quarter. More than 90,000 workers in the state are employed in manufacturing, and their number is growing. For the first three months of 1978, manufacturing employment was 1.3 percent above that for the same period in 1977.

The index for the government sector rose 1.2 percent in the first quarter, although it registered little change in February or March. The March-to-March increase in government employment in Nebraska was only 0.5 percent. All of this increase was accounted for by a rise in local government employment.

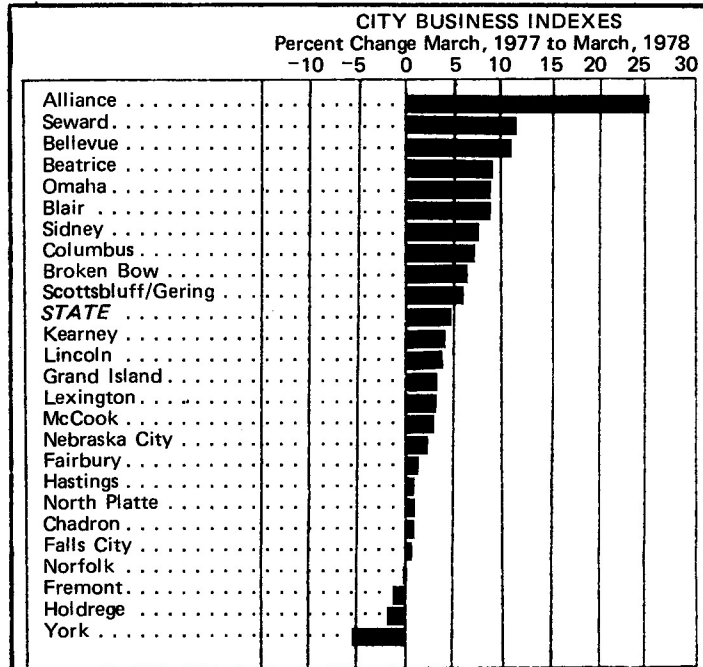
The physical volume index for Nebraska agriculture dropped sharply in the first three months of 1978 (-11.9 percent). This was largely due to the extraordinarily high level of the index in late 1977. Seasonally adjusted Nebraska cash farm marketings in the first quarter were down 5.3 percent from the previous quarter. However, they were 16.3 percent above marketings in the first quarter of last year. Prices received by Nebraska farmers rose for the sixth consecutive month. On a seasonally adjusted basis, they were 29.5 percent above their level of last September.

Distributive sector output fell 3.7 percent in the first quarter. This decline occurred despite a 1.2 percent increase in distributive sector employment. Sluggish retail sales contributed to the slower pace of economic activity in this sector. Total first-quarter retail sales in Nebraska were 4.1 percent above the level of sales in the first quarter of 1977. Given the 6.5 percent rise in the Consumer Price Index, however, retail sales on a price-adjusted basis were significantly lower (refer to Table 3 for retail sales data for Nebraska regions and cities).

The city business indexes reflected the higher level of state economic activity in March. Twenty-one of twenty-five reporting cities showed improvement relative to March, 1977. Alliance, where activity was up 25.3 percent, posted the largest gain. This was the fourth consecutive month in which this Panhandle city ranked first in the indexes. Indicative of the underlying strength of the Alliance economy were an 11.8 percent March-to-March rise in employment and 26.2 percent growth in price-adjusted retail sales for the same period. Other Nebraska cities with significant March-to-March growth were Seward (+11.5 percent), Bellevue (+11.0 percent), Beatrice (+8.7 percent), Omaha (+8.6 percent), and Blair (+8.6 percent).

The physical volume index for the U.S. economy was 1.1 percent higher in March.

W. D. G.



Source: Table 4 below.

4. MARCH CITY BUSINESS INDICATORS

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>	102.0	110.2	117.8
Alliance	111.8	455.5	134.7
Beatrice	99.6	151.2	143.8
Bellevue	106.3	79.9	129.4*
Blair	100.7	77.0	117.4
Broken Bow	101.4	480.7	106.0
Chadron	88.6	42.6	116.0
Columbus	103.5	70.7	139.0
Fairbury	98.4	56.1	106.6*
Falls City	97.5	102.9	95.7
Fremont	100.3	179.9	73.8*
Grand Island	100.8	111.8	122.4
Hastings	98.7	107.7	127.0
Holdrege	101.9	21.6	141.3
Kearney	97.7	120.8	127.7
Lexington	110.9	53.5	128.0
Lincoln	98.6	115.3	114.2
McCook	101.2	60.9	110.4
Nebraska City	105.3	76.6	109.1
Norfolk	102.0	90.6	87.0
North Platte	104.3	35.5	117.1
Omaha	106.3	96.1	123.8
Scottsbluff/Gering	100.6	162.8	108.5
Seward	107.7	217.2	113.5
Sidney	99.6	183.3	104.9
So. Sioux City	NA	NA	NA
York	99.7	53.6	121.7

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

²Building 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.

³Power 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.

5. PRICE INDEXES

March, 1978	Index (1967 = 100)	Percent of Same Month Last Year	Year to Date as Percent of Same Period Last Year*
Consumer Prices	189.8	106.5	106.6
Commodity component	181.6	105.7	105.8
Wholesale Prices	203.8	106.2	106.3
Agricultural Prices			
United States	201.0	105.2	103.2
Nebraska	202.0	112.8	108.1

*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)

Of the ten southeastern Nebraska counties where population decreases have been estimated from 1970 to 1977, eight are estimated to be experiencing either lesser rates of decline or little change from past trends. These eight counties are: Otoe, Fillmore, Polk, Thayer, Butler, Johnson, Richardson, and Pawnee counties. Most declining southeastern counties (all but Otoe and Butler) have shown stable or improved trends in spite of population losses resulting from natural decrease.

In the southeast region, only the Gage and Nemaha county estimates indicate accelerated rates of population decline, compared to those of the 1960s. Both counties have experienced substantial institutional population declines since 1970.

NORTHEAST REGION

Nebraska's most rapidly growing county, Dakota County, is located in the northeast region. Dakota County's population increased an estimated 28.8 percent from 1970 to 1977. As a result of a 1976 special census headcount, Dakota County's estimated population growth since 1970 should be quite accurate. Since 1970, the county has experienced a net in-migration of population of more than 19.0 percent of its 1970 population, compared to a net in-migration of just 0.7 percent for the state. There are signs, however, that Dakota County's growth rate stabilized from 1976 to 1977, perhaps as a result of a lengthy strike in the meatpacking industry.

Madison and Stanton counties' population growth reflects the rapid growth of Norfolk. Both Madison and Stanton counties have recorded net in-migration of around 4 percent since 1970, whereas during the 1960-1970 decade both counties registered net out-migration.

Of the four other northeast region growth counties, three appear to have reversed population declines recorded from 1960 to 1970: Thurston, Colfax, and Antelope. While Platte County continued to grow at a more rapid rate than the state (6.6 vs. 5.1 percent, respectively), its annual average growth rate has slowed slightly from that of the 1960s.

Population decreases from 1970 to 1977 were estimated for nine northeastern counties. For most, including Pierce, Cuming, Knox, Cedar, Dixon, Boone, and Burt counties, the 1970s rates of decline are somewhat less than, or about the same as, the 1960s rates. Only Nance County's rate of decline accelerated slightly during the 1970s, partly as a result of natural decrease of population.

Wayne County's post-1970 population estimates have reflected substantial declines in the institutional (college) population.

THE PANHANDLE

From 1960 to 1970 the Panhandle region's population declined by more than 9 percent. From 1970 to 1977, however, the population increased by slightly less than 1 percent (0.7 percent). With few exceptions, the counties in the Nebraska Panhandle are enjoying either increases in population or slower rates of population decline since 1970, a significant break from the widespread declines recorded during the 1960s.

Among the more rapidly growing counties in the eleven-county Panhandle area from 1970 to 1977 were Box Butte (10.6 percent), Morrill (8.4 percent), Scotts Bluff (3.8 percent), and Sheridan (2.9 percent). As recently as 1974, the population estimates for these four counties were below their 1970 census counts, and all but Scotts Bluff County also lost population during the 1960s.

The railroad industry "boom" in Alliance has been increasingly reflected in Box Butte County's population estimates. The increase in Box Butte's population has accelerated since 1973, as the impact of increased population has been more fully reflected in the data series used to produce the county estimates. Box Butte County's net in-migration rate of 7.4 percent since 1970 is the highest in the Panhandle region. A 1977 special census in Alliance showed growth of 16.4 percent since 1970, confirming rapid population growth in Box Butte County's largest city.

Of the six Panhandle counties experiencing population declines since 1970, four (Banner, Deuel, Sioux, and Cheyenne) appear to be repeating their 1960 to 1970 trends, but at slower rates of decline. The remaining two declining counties (Dawes and Kimball) have been affected by special circumstances. Dawes County population has been affected by a declining institutional (college) population since 1970. Kimball County's population estimate, which had shown growth in the earlier years of this decade, may currently reflect the winding down of major construction projects.

CONCLUSION

The population stability emerging in estimates for numerous Nebraska counties during the 1970s decade, if continued and if verified by the 1980 census count, represents a significant break with the past. The magnitude and permanence of nonmetropolitan population growth and stability, in particular, will be important indicators of Nebraska counties' future population trends. V.S.S.

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