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A Livable Wage: What Does it Take to Get By in Nebraska?

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Welfare reform in the 1990s brought a renewed interest in the working poor, prompting analysts around the country to develop basic family budgets. Basic family budgets attempt to measure the amount of income families require to meet their basic needs without public assistance. It is generally accepted that the basic needs of a family include food, shelter, health care, transportation, childcare, and household and personal expenses (clothing, etc.), as well as a minimal amount of leisure activity.

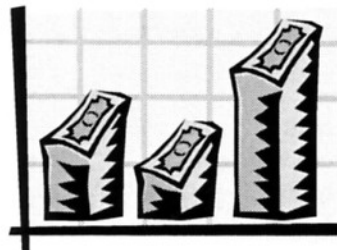
This study estimates the level of income, or livable wage, required to cover the basic needs and taxes¹ of individuals and families in Nebraska, independent of public income and housing assistance. In addition, the study examines whether full-time jobs in Nebraska pay livable wages.

The livable wage estimates encompass the *minimum* necessary expenditures for nine basic needs in metro and nonmetro Nebraska. (See page 5 for a discussion of individual basic need cost estimates.) Every attempt was made to produce conservative estimates and to reflect regional (metro versus nonmetro) cost differences. The estimates do not include contributions to savings, which arguably are important for long-term needs, payments for life insurance, or debt service on credit cards and other revolving accounts.

Data gathered by federal and state agencies, including the USDA, Nebraska Health and Human Services System, and the Nebraska Public Service Commission, as well as insurance industry data, were used to develop these estimates. Wherever possible, Nebraska and/or Midwest specific data were used. Where data for 1999 were not available, the figures were adjusted to 1999 levels.

Basic Family Budget

Basic needs are food; housing; childcare; transportation; health care; clothing and household items; miscellaneous personal expenses, including minimal entertainment and recreation; renter's insurance; and telephone.



Cost of Basic Needs

+

Taxes

=

Basic Family Budget

¹The livable wage estimates account for federal and state income tax and social security tax withholding.

Livable wage estimates for 1999 were developed for five family unit types in metro² and nonmetro Nebraska.

It was assumed that:

- All wage earners work full time (40 hours per week) year round, with 2 weeks paid vacation.
- No income other than wages, including tips and commissions, is received.
- Single parents are women age 20 to 50 who receive no child support. (Note: While child support enforcement efforts in recent years have increased the percentage of support collected, child support for many families remains an unreliable source of monthly income.)

Family Unit Types

1. Single adult (male or female), no children
2. Single parent; 1 child, age 4
3. Single parent; 2 children, ages 4 and 6
4. Two parents; 2 children, ages 4 and 6; 1 wage earner
5. Two parents; 2 children, ages 4 and 6; 2 wage earners

The livable wage hourly estimates revealed that the current and proposed new minimum wages—\$5.15 and \$6.15 per hour, respectively—are inadequate to sustain individuals and families in Nebraska, even families with two income earners (Table 1). The annual estimates also reveal that the federal poverty thresholds fall far below what is needed to meet basic needs (Table 2). Finally, the estimates of costs by category (not shown) indicate that childcare costs are a significant burden, particularly on single parents, and can negate much of the income earned by a second wage earner in a two-parent family.

The minimum wage is too low to meet basic needs, but what do jobs in Nebraska actually pay and how do those wages compare to the livable wage estimates? Results from the 1999 Nebraska Quarterly Business Conditions Surveys³ show that a substantial portion of all full-time jobs filled during the year paid below livable wages (Table 3). Percentages ranged from 45 to 90 percent across family types and regions. Hardest hit were single mothers with two children and two-parent families with one wage earner in both metro and nonmetro Nebraska. Metro jobs were more likely to pay above the livable wage than nonmetro jobs, but the differences across family types were not substantial.

A notable variation was seen when comparing the results for new jobs versus existing jobs (i.e., replacement hires). New jobs were more likely to pay above livable wage levels. However, the proportion of new jobs paying above livable wages was below 50 percent across every family type, except single adults with no children. In addition, new jobs comprised only about 30 percent of all hires during 1999.

**Table 1
Livable Hourly and Annual Wage per
Family Unit Type, 1999**

	<i>Livable Wage per Earner</i>	<i>Total Livable Annual Income</i>
Metro		
1. Single, no children	\$ 8.67	\$18,038
2. Single parent, 1 child	14.66	30,483
3. Single parent, 2 children	18.10	37,645
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	15.33	31,879
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	11.35/earner	47,196
Nonmetro		
1. Single, no children	\$ 7.72	\$16,057
2. Single parent, 1 child	12.19	25,362
3. Single parent, 2 children	14.85	30,882
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	14.01	29,146
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	9.55/earner	39,717

**Table 2
Poverty Thresholds, 1999**

1 person (under 65 years)	\$ 8,667
2 persons including 1 child	11,483
3 persons including 2 children	13,423
4 persons including 2 children	16,895

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshold/thresh99.html

²Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington Counties comprise the metro region.

³The survey collects wages for new and replacement full-time job hires on a quarterly basis.

Table 3
Livable Hourly Wage and Percent of 1999 Full-Time Hires Below Livable Hourly Wage by Family Unit Type

	<i>Livable Wage per Earner</i>	<i>Percent of Jobs Hiring at Below Livable Hourly Wage</i>		
		<i>All Jobs</i>	<i>New Jobs</i>	<i>Replacement Jobs</i>
Metro				
1. Single, no children	\$ 8.67	45%	31%	56%
2. Single parent, 1 child	14.66	83%	71%	87%
3. Single parent, 2 children	18.10	90%	82%	94%
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	15.33	84%	73%	89%
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	11.35	68%	51%	75%
Nonmetro				
1. Single, no children	\$ 7.72	48%	38%	52%
2. Single parent, 1 child	12.19	86%	78%	89%
3. Single parent, 2 children	14.85	91%	85%	94%
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	14.01	90%	83%	92%
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	9.55	75%	64%	79%

Nonmetro wages for jobs filled during 1999 were *least* likely to fall below the livable wage level in the Southeast region (Table 4). Nonmetro wages were *most* likely to be below the livable wage level in the Panhandle region. In the metro portion of the state, the percentages below livable wage were slightly higher in the Lincoln MSA than in the Omaha MSA for all family unit types, except the single adult with no children. Regardless of these comparisons, however, the majority of jobs filled during 1999 paid wages below the estimated basic needs levels.

Most jobs filled in 1999 were in the occupations traditionally referred to as blue collar and pink collar jobs. These occupations comprised 84 percent of all metro and 91 percent of all nonmetro hires (Table 5). Even in the so-called white collar occupational category—executives, managers, and professional specialists—livable wages were fairly dominant for only two family unit types: single adults with no children, and two-parent/two wage earner families.

Table 4
Percent of 1999 Full-Time Hires Below Livable Hourly Wage by Region

	<i>Livable Wage per Earner</i>	<i>Percent of Jobs Hiring at Below Livable Hourly Wage</i>				
		<i>Lincoln</i>		<i>Omaha</i>		
		<i>MSA</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>MSA</i>
Metro						
1. Single, no children	\$ 8.67	45%	45%			
2. Single parent, 1 child	14.66	86%	81%			
3. Single parent, 2 children	18.10	93%	89%			
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	15.33	88%	83%			
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	11.35	69%	67%			
Nonmetro						
1. Single, no children	\$ 7.72	31%	39%	58%	44%	72%
2. Single parent, 1 child	12.19	71%	88%	89%	87%	90%
3. Single parent, 2 children	14.85	75%	94%	94%	95%	95%
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	14.01	74%	93%	92%	93%	94%
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	9.55	59%	73%	81%	73%	84%

Table 5
Percent of 1999 Full-Time Hires Below Livable Hourly Wage by Occupational Category

	Livable Wage per Earner	Percent of Jobs Hiring at Below Livable Hourly Wage	
		Exec./Mgr./Prof.	All Other Occupations ¹ (blue/pink collar)
Metro			
1. Single, no children	\$ 8.67	6%	57%
2. Single parent, 1 child	14.66	35%	92%
3. Single parent, 2 children	18.10	58%	96%
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	15.33	38%	93%
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	11.35	17%	78%
Nonmetro			
1. Single, no children	\$ 7.72	10%	52%
2. Single parent, 1 child	12.19	40%	91%
3. Single parent, 2 children	14.85	56%	95%
4. Two parents, 2 children, 1 earner	14.01	51%	94%
5. Two parents, 2 children, 2 earners	9.55	18%	74%

¹84 percent of all metro hires and 91 percent of all nonmetro hires in 1999

Bridging the Gap

These livable wage estimates are conservative, reflecting only the minimum income required to meet basic needs, without public assistance, for the family types profiled. The question that remains unanswered is what families in Nebraska can and may be doing to bridge the gap between income and the estimated cost of basic needs.

Unfortunately, some families probably cut costs in areas that expose them to physical and financial risks. The purchase of health insurance, even at the reduced rates available in group plans, may be one of the first expenses eliminated by families struggling to meet basic needs. Opting out of health insurance plans may lead families to forego preventative and other forms of nonacute care that, in turn, may lead to the need for more costly forms of care in the future. Families also may bridge the gap with credit and other forms of personal debt that burden family budgets and inhibit contributions to long-term savings.

Low-income families may draw from a host of earned and unearned income sources in attempting to make ends meet. Multiple job holding may be necessary to meet a portion of basic needs. Parents in two wage earner families may work different shifts or one parent may seek home-based employment in order to eliminate all or part of childcare expenses. In-kind support from family members or close friends may be common for young families, especially low income families. An example is child care, a task frequently undertaken by grandparents. By accepting this responsibility, grandparents contribute an amount equivalent to the cost of outside childcare toward the parent's basic needs budget. Not all families enjoy such a support network; nonetheless, for many families unable to achieve a livable income through wages, in-kind support may be a vital coping strategy.

Nationally, nearly half of all female-headed households receive child support or alimony payments. The amount of support received varies greatly depending on the income level of the noncustodial parent and the number of children in the family. For those who regularly receive child support, it serves as an important income supplement. A serious problem exists, however, in the area of child support delinquency, particularly among low-income individuals. In conjunction with welfare reform, state social service agencies have stepped up efforts to enforce child support agreements. Despite these efforts, however, child support remains an unreliable source of regular income for many families.

Finally, numerous government programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, public housing and rental assistance, subsidized childcare, and heating assistance help families meet their basic needs.

Conclusion

Despite strong growth in the state's economy and the creation of many new jobs over the last decade, there is a strong indication that wages in Nebraska, overall, are falling short of what is needed for self-sufficiency at the most basic level. If the success of welfare reform efforts depends in large part on the ability of individuals and families to earn livable wages, these findings suggest that Nebraska policymakers may have to wrestle more with the issue of job quality (e.g., wage levels) than job quantity, in the future.

A future study will attempt to identify which industries provide livable wage opportunities and the competitive position of those industries in the region.

Basic Needs Estimates

Food: Adequate nutrition is necessary not only for basic subsistence but also for quality of life. Neither adults nor children should be expected to go hungry, but meeting the nutritional needs of children is especially important, since nutrition will affect their physical health for the rest of their lives. The USDA Low-Cost Food Plan was used to estimate food costs. This plan represents what families of varying sizes need to spend to achieve nutritionally adequate diets and includes only the cost of purchased food prepared at home.

Housing: Like food, housing is widely considered a basic necessity, and safe, decent housing is a key condition for meeting a family's basic needs. Although it is not uncommon for low-income families to own their homes (about 40 percent), the cost of rental housing is sufficient to define the most basic housing needs. Rental costs (including utilities) were estimated, based on average Fair Market Rents (reported monthly by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) by county within the metro and nonmetro portions of the state. The study assumed that all family types live independently, not as subunits of larger households. The criteria for determining the size of rental units by family type were: 1) parent(s) having a separate bedroom from children and 2) a maximum of two persons per bedroom. It was assumed, therefore, that single persons with no children (type 1) live in one-bedroom units and all other family unit types live in two-bedroom units.

Childcare: Child care is a necessity for working single parents or couples where both parents work. Generally, analysts use prices for moderate quality services in formulating basic family budgets. Price data from the 1999 Nebraska Childcare Market Rate Survey, Nebraska Health and Human Services System was used to determine childcare costs for both the metro and nonmetro areas of Nebraska. Family units requiring childcare (types 2, 3, and 5) were assumed to pay for childcare fifty weeks per year. Some families can rely on extended family members for no-cost childcare. Reducing the average costs to account for no-cost care, however, would substantially understate the costs for those who must pay for childcare. The ages of the children used in this study (4 and 6) were chosen to reflect the need for both full-time year round care for a preschool-age child, and part-time school year care and full-time summer care for a school-age child.

Transportation: Transportation costs represent an obvious work-related expense associated with paid employment. Transportation costs also are associated with other household tasks such as shopping for groceries, taking children to childcare and other necessary appointments. The spatial mismatch of most places of residence and places of work, along with inadequate and virtually nonexistent public transportation in metro and nonmetro areas, respectively, provides a strong rationale for personal automobile based transportation costs in the calculation of basic family budgets. The IRS cost-per-mile estimate of 31 cents, which includes depreciation, maintenance and repairs, gasoline, oil, insurance, and vehicle registration fees, was multiplied by conservative estimates of annual miles driven, by family type and region, for work and nonwork related trips to derive annual budget estimates for transportation costs.

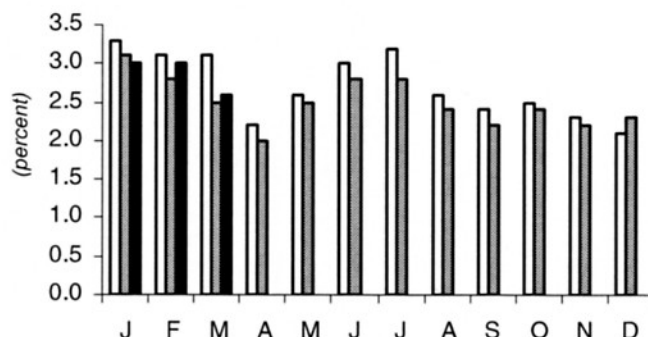
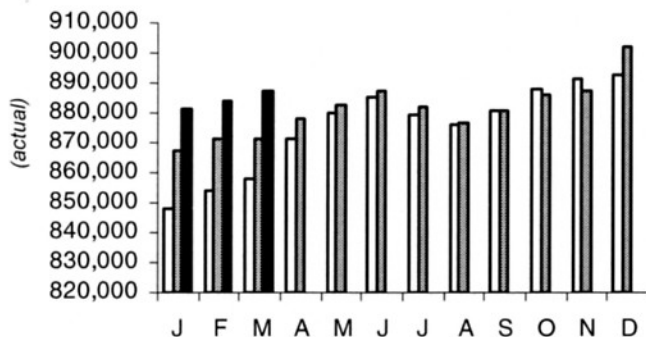
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Nebraska Stats

1998
 1999
 2000

Total Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment

Unemployment Rate

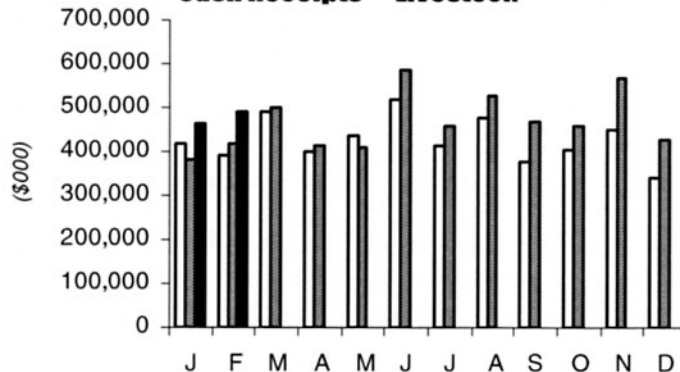
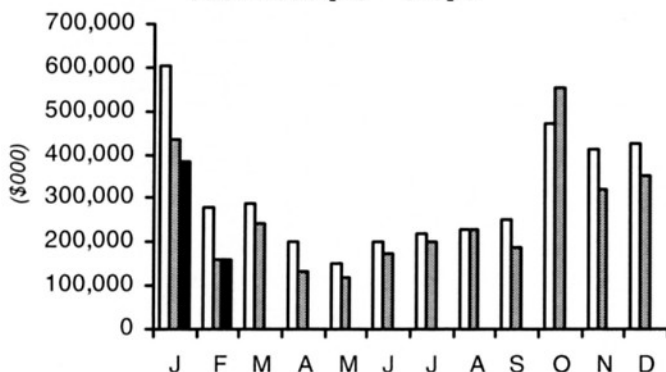


Note: All 1999 and 2000 monthly employment data are considered estimates until benchmarked. Data shown for 1999 and 2000 are the most current revised estimates available. Final benchmarked monthly data for 1999 are expected to be released by the Nebraska Department of Labor in mid-2000.

1998
 1999
 2000

Cash Receipts—Crops

Cash Receipts—Livestock



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

	February 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Chg. vs Yr. Ago	
Ainsworth, Brown	1,451	2,725	-11.0	1,460	4,185	-10.8	Kenesaw, Adams	294	590	-15.6	263	853	-13.0
Albion, Boone	1,520	2,868	-2.5	1,767	4,635	-0.7	Kimball, Kimball	1,482	2,888	0.4	1,700	4,588	-6.4
Alliance, Box Butte	5,175	10,201	-1.6	5,650	15,851	-0.6	La Vista, Sarpy	8,900	17,523	13.9	10,317	27,840	14.7
Alma, Harlan	414	793	-28.9	673	1,466	-18.2	Laurel, Cedar	308	573	1.6	465	1,038	15.0
Arapahoe, Furnas	639	1,346	9.6	789	2,135	9.7	Lexington, Dawson	6,921	13,526	4.1	7,681	21,207	6.9
Arlington, Washington	217	446	22.9	231	677	19.0	Lincoln, Lancaster	197,988	393,674	8.5	220,197	613,871	7.3
Arnold, Custer	230	708	65.0	335	1,043	54.7	Louisville, Cass	406	730	-15.2	453	1,183	-12.2
Ashland, Saunders	946	1,836	11.8	1,202	3,038	13.6	Loup City, Sherman	344	723	-37.4	459	1,182	-33.4
Atkinson, Holt	829	1,638	2.5	1,116	2,754	3.0	Lyons, Burt	294	626	-20.3	384	1,010	-15.6
Auburn, Nemaha	2,170	4,335	8.3	2,740	7,075	9.4	Madison, Madison	595	1,449	1.2	865	2,314	5.4
Aurora, Hamilton	1,966	3,973	-17.4	2,624	6,597	-14.7	McCook, Red Willow	10,612	20,727	3.6	12,164	32,891	8.6
Axtell, Kearney	50	90	-2.2	67	157	11.3	Millford, Seward	636	1,862	3.3	1,162	3,024	5.1
Bassett, Rock	299	630	1.9	443	1,073	1.9	Minatare, Scotts Bluff	130	268	10.7	167	435	20.8
Battle Creek, Madison	640	1,267	-2.1	577	1,844	-4.9	Minden, Kearney	1,444	2,888	-2.3	2,032	4,920	0.6
Bayard, Morrill	442	878	7.5	507	1,385	12.1	Mitchell, Scotts Bluff	676	1,320	-5.4	714	2,034	-6.4
Beatrice, Gage	10,854	20,781	11.6	12,343	33,124	13.1	Morrill, Scotts Bluff	437	856	17.6	562	1,418	17.2
Beaver City, Furnas	113	234	7.3	125	359	0.3	Nebraska City, Otoe	5,369	10,322	-0.4	6,763	17,085	1.1
Bellevue, Sarpy	17,395	34,594	4.8	20,393	54,987	6.8	Neligh, Antelope	1,183	2,262	-1.5	1,373	3,635	-0.6
Benkelman, Dundy	537	1,042	13.6	619	1,661	7.4	Newman Grove, Madison	300	554	10.6	340	894	6.0
Bennington, Douglas	608	977	39.4	588	1,565	23.1	Norfolk, Madison	28,261	55,824	10.0	31,398	87,222	8.3
Blair, Washington	6,611	12,893	8.3	7,381	20,274	9.7	North Bend, Dodge	452	839	7.3	560	1,399	0.4
Bloomfield, Knox	434	848	-13.0	548	1,396	-13.3	North Platte, Lincoln	20,157	40,203	3.5	24,223	64,426	4.6
Blue Hill, Webster	430	818	0.6	619	1,437	9.4	O'Neill, Holt	3,808	7,854	9.9	4,365	12,219	7.4
Bridgeport, Morrill	985	1,913	4.9	1,150	3,063	2.8	Oakland, Burt	536	1,064	-17.8	749	1,813	-14.4
Broken Bow, Custer	3,819	7,182	8.7	3,864	11,046	8.1	Ogallala, Keith	4,644	9,477	5.6	5,229	14,706	2.3
Burwell, Garfield	550	1,184	-0.9	785	1,969	5.5	Omaha, Douglas	441,195	924,208	7.4	515,164	1,439,372	6.6
Cairo, Hall	181	357	20.2	248	605	20.3	Ord, Valley	1,728	3,422	2.4	2,019	5,441	1.6
Central City, Merrick	1,585	3,150	6.7	1,977	5,127	6.3	Osceola, Polk	415	861	-29.4	476	1,337	-33.5
Ceresco, Saunders	1,209	2,542	6.7	1,417	3,959	7.8	Oshkosh, Garden	415	789	-7.4	390	1,179	-6.0
Chadron, Dawes	4,059	8,478	3.6	4,429	12,907	2.1	Osmond, Pierce	303	642	33.8	578	1,220	33.8
Chappell, Deuel	421	877	8.1	596	1,473	10.6	Oxford, Furnas	432	875	-9.5	484	1,359	-9.1
Clarkson, Colfax	346	641	10.5	479	1,120	19.4	Papillion, Sarpy	6,177	12,744	2.0	7,938	20,682	0.4
Clay Center, Clay	391	814	7.7	394	1,208	9.8	Pawnee City, Pawnee	306	607	4.7	349	956	-4.1
Columbus, Platte	18,799	37,407	7.2	21,664	59,071	7.8	Pender, Thurston	576	1,175	9.1	716	1,891	2.3
Cozad, Dawson	2,956	5,752	3.2	3,337	9,089	3.8	Pierce, Pierce	514	1,099	0.7	660	1,759	-0.1
Crawford, Dawes	394	757	3.4	496	1,253	2.5	Plainview, Pierce	668	1,311	7.7	732	2,043	7.6
Creighton, Knox	892	1,860	-15.6	952	2,812	-21.1	Plattsmouth, Cass	2,944	5,823	0.6	3,434	9,257	0.8
Crete, Saline	2,329	4,988	-10.1	2,778	7,766	-12.7	Ponca, Dixon	226	414	-53.7	289	703	-49.8
Crofton, Knox	279	556	-11.0	348	904	-6.3	Ralston, Douglas	2,887	5,735	3.8	3,850	9,585	7.9
Curtis, Frontier	296	599	-6.4	421	1,020	-1.2	Randolph, Cedar	381	739	0.8	439	1,178	0.7
Dakota City, Dakota	325	642	4.2	472	1,114	-23.2	Ravenna, Buffalo	550	1,086	-15.5	658	1,744	-16.3
David City, Butler	1,381	2,813	8.4	1,515	4,328	2.1	Red Cloud, Webster	597	1,189	2.6	770	1,959	2.6
Deshler, Thayer	279	546	-8.7	312	858	-4.0	Rushville, Sheridan	373	742	-22.8	504	1,246	-19.9
Dodge, Dodge	168	358	0.6	416	774	17.8	Sargent, Custer	171	339	8.3	261	600	14.5
Doniphan, Hall	1,185	2,836	78.7	1,113	3,949	75.9	Schuyler, Colfax	1,652	3,328	4.2	2,032	5,360	5.8
Eagle, Cass	195	369	-6.3	261	630	1.1	Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff	19,592	38,919	8.0	22,068	60,987	7.5
Elgin, Antelope	352	766	8.8	467	1,233	6.1	Scribner, Dodge	310	627	-2.3	469	1,096	5.1
Elkhorn, Douglas	1,418	2,829	-19.2	2,287	5,116	-7.2	Seward, Seward	4,406	8,849	3.5	4,773	13,622	4.4
Elm Creek, Buffalo	298	687	1.0	389	1,076	-10.1	Shelby, Polk	313	634	21.5	441	1,075	22.2
Elwood, Gosper	217	429	-41.1	227	656	-40.8	Shelton, Buffalo	422	794	-36.1	427	1,221	-36.0
Fairbury, Jefferson	2,950	5,903	-1.5	3,338	9,241	-0.9	Sidney, Cheyenne	7,934	15,122	27.7	8,233	23,355	27.3
Fairmont, Fillmore	142	301	19.4	169	470	16.3	South Sioux City, Dakota	7,338	14,419	1.0	8,224	22,643	2.0
Falls City, Richardson	2,283	4,371	1.7	2,729	7,100	1.0	Springfield, Sarpy	619	1,116	44.2	655	1,771	36.9
Franklin, Franklin	511	988	1.4	644	1,632	0.1	St. Paul, Howard	1,073	2,119	0.9	1,231	3,350	0.7
Fremont, Dodge	20,641	42,291	8.8	23,979	66,270	8.2	Stanton, Stanton	542	1,092	-1.5	612	1,704	-1.7
Friend, Saline	419	837	-9.4	490	1,327	-4.4	Stromsburg, Polk	605	1,285	5.0	937	2,222	8.2
Fullerton, Nance	508	1,026	3.4	619	1,645	1.9	Superior, Nuckolls	1,335	2,627	-4.7	1,566	4,193	-2.5
Geneva, Fillmore	1,178	2,403	-11.8	1,627	4,030	-10.2	Superland, Lincoln	366	729	15.0	378	1,107	10.5
Genoa, Nance	280	549	-0.5	353	902	0.4	Sutton, Clay	796	1,504	-7.8	985	2,489	-1.2
Gering, Scotts Bluff	3,836	7,596	17.5	4,291	11,887	17.8	Syracuse, Otoe	1,060	1,991	1.6	1,169	3,160	2.2
Gibbon, Buffalo	731	1,440	-4.5	873	2,313	-0.9	Tecumseh, Johnson	823	1,602	6.2	900	2,502	2.8
Gordon, Sheridan	1,472	2,818	-3.7	1,647	4,465	-3.0	Tekamah, Burt	953	1,810	-8.0	1,035	2,845	-9.5
Gothenburg, Dawson	1,932	3,842	-5.7	2,431	6,273	-2.3	Tilden, Madison	253	594	-26.8	283	877	-30.5
Grand Island, Hall	47,478	93,745	9.3	56,507	150,252	9.3	Utica, Seward	291	563	-2.9	367	930	-0.5
Grant, Perkins	854	1,751	-2.0	1,120	2,871	0.5	Valentine, Cherry	3,766	7,308	4.7	4,149	11,457	7.4
Gretna, Sarpy	2,010	3,945	-9.2	3,045	6,990	-4.9	Valley, Douglas	1,105	2,052	65.0	1,520	3,572	72.9
Hartington, Cedar	1,266	2,801	-7.8	1,514	4,115	-7.9	Wahoo, Saunders	1,930	4,119	8.6	2,365	6,484	5.5
Hastings, Adams	19,231	37,270	5.0	22,256	59,526	5.7	Wakefield, Dixon	302	625	11.0	333	958	13.2
Hay Springs, Sheridan	321	673	4.3	421	1,094	8.3	Wauwata, Chase	339	678	9.7	361	1,039	10.4
Hebron, Thayer	1,587	3,097	-12.0	1,577	4,674	-12.9	Waverly, Lancaster	776	1,481	11.4	776	2,257	9.8
Henderson, York	515	967	-1.8	687	1,654	-4.5	Wayne, Wayne	3,212	6,480	-5.2	3,723	10,203	-2.0
Hickman, Lancaster	237	489	7.5	249	738	-0.7	Weeping Water, Cass	514	1,013	-0.8	699	1,712	-0.8
Holdrege, Phelps	3,913	7,610	3.4	4,666	12,276	4.2	West Point, Cuming	3,339	6,416	-3.5	3,653	10,069	-0.1
Hooper, Dodge	350	758	19.6	449	1,207	14.7	Wilber, Saline	410	861	6.3	510	1,371	2.2
Humboldt, Richardson	247	544	-40.0	486	1,030	-30.0	Wisner, Cuming	525	997	4.9	688	1,685	7.7
Humphrey, Platte	620	1,207	19.3	757	1,964	11.8	Wood River, Hall	308	620	-3.6	456	1,076	-1.6
Imperial, Chase	1,575	3,052	-10.8	1,828	4,880	-10.4	Wymore, Gage	419	854	7.0	461	1,315	7.9
Juniata, Adams	243	471	12.4	253	724	6.0	York, York	9,204	18,322	4.7	9,950	28,272	2.4
Kearney, Buffalo	30,408	60,825	7.7	35,744	96,569	8.8							

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

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

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

	Motor Vehicle Sales				Other Sales				Motor Vehicle Sales				Other Sales				
	February 2000 (\$000)	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February 2000 (\$000)	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February 2000 (\$000)	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February 2000 (\$000)	March 2000 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	
Nebraska	200,623	246,811	637,034	12.5	1,287,706	1,516,500	4,137,454	7.0	Howard	841	997	2,655	8.2	1,382	1,690	4,423	1.7
Adams	3,449	4,159	11,151	8.6	20,029	23,306	62,246	5.6	Jefferson	1,162	1,314	3,480	12.9	3,834	4,460	12,127	0.3
Antelope	1,022	1,209	3,431	34.4	1,798	2,268	5,839	-3.2	Johnson	430	581	1,589	-2.7	1,230	1,260	3,583	2.8
Arthur	96	66	244	-7.2	(D)	62	62	-45.1	Kearney	1,235	1,346	3,500	51.1	1,566	2,253	5,380	0.0
Banner	214	131	501	99.6	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	Keith	1,181	1,632	4,380	12.5	4,985	5,738	15,889	1.4
Blaine	90	138	382	49.8	(D)	57	57	-68.7	Keya Paha	158	184	484	66.3	81	99	271	11.5
Boone	928	1,046	2,778	40.7	1,870	2,343	5,922	0.3	Kimball	682	626	1,754	15.5	1,513	1,776	4,720	-5.9
Box Butte	1,393	1,696	4,780	16.8	5,451	5,966	16,693	-0.5	Knox	1,206	1,233	3,726	23.5	2,144	2,500	6,890	-11.9
Boyd	257	361	809	6.9	462	668	1,587	8.8	Lancaster	25,880	30,815	78,919	9.8	200,378	223,135	621,367	7.3
Brown	572	376	1,556	24.3	1,507	1,555	4,397	-9.1	Lincoln	3,963	4,551	12,120	-0.8	20,967	25,216	67,149	4.6
Buffalo	4,813	6,045	15,938	17.9	32,709	38,475	103,885	6.9	Logan	101	107	441	17.0	83	151	234	95.0
Burt	1,097	1,301	3,302	2.5	1,971	2,401	6,312	-9.6	Loup	121	68	307	8.9	(D)	30	30	0.0
Butler	1,181	1,331	3,612	-0.4	1,773	2,108	5,759	0.3	McPherson	73	65	316	127.3	(D)	0	0	0.0
Cass	3,493	3,890	10,174	-0.5	5,430	6,544	17,239	3.8	Madison	3,873	4,562	11,838	3.7	30,111	33,525	93,342	7.3
Cedar	1,381	1,546	3,962	10.7	2,154	2,723	7,040	-3.2	Merrick	1,170	1,301	3,830	21.0	2,073	2,730	6,853	8.0
Chase	771	926	2,488	17.6	1,929	2,238	6,199	-4.2	Morrill	905	809	2,687	27.2	1,438	1,683	4,497	4.3
Cherry	740	1,010	2,667	7.2	3,941	4,382	12,016	6.8	Nance	548	709	1,845	45.7	799	1,011	2,606	1.5
Cheyenne	1,563	2,208	5,068	42.9	8,209	8,609	24,280	26.8	Nemaha	1,056	1,186	3,035	20.6	2,422	3,119	7,998	10.0
Clay	1,016	1,529	3,627	12.3	2,046	2,572	6,607	3.7	Nuckolls	666	631	2,298	28.1	1,844	2,226	5,899	-1.8
Colfax	1,152	1,265	3,586	10.0	2,425	3,021	7,866	10.4	Otoe	1,894	2,352	5,988	5.7	6,814	8,513	21,598	2.2
Cuming	1,284	1,962	4,542	48.1	4,295	4,953	13,246	0.5	Pawnee	282	533	1,232	21.0	461	593	1,515	-3.6
Custer	1,511	2,178	5,512	27.6	4,703	5,159	14,398	11.2	Perkins	705	714	2,244	-2.2	1,032	1,387	3,483	1.9
Dakota	2,182	2,877	6,944	2.0	8,204	9,364	25,520	0.1	Phelps	1,430	1,734	4,774	22.6	4,163	4,977	13,076	4.2
Dawes	877	813	2,631	14.9	4,454	4,930	14,166	2.1	Pierce	1,125	947	3,023	16.9	1,530	2,078	5,217	8.5
Dawson	3,055	4,196	10,622	32.4	12,179	13,913	37,777	4.9	Platte	3,954	5,334	13,324	15.6	20,060	23,255	62,931	8.1
Deuel	356	441	1,123	30.3	902	1,154	3,045	8.3	Polk	882	1,170	3,319	31.6	1,478	2,005	5,104	-6.9
Dixon	752	891	2,365	3.0	619	756	2,001	-21.8	Red Willow	1,691	1,951	5,221	39.4	10,897	12,538	33,837	8.6
Dodge	3,886	5,335	12,908	13.3	22,181	26,183	71,577	8.1	Richardson	1,105	1,239	3,437	38.5	2,785	3,496	8,915	-3.1
Douglas	48,707	59,672	150,486	6.3	448,717	525,079	1,463,834	6.6	Rock	308	305	846	41.9	308	479	1,128	1.9
Dundy	345	464	1,204	5.4	552	638	1,705	7.7	Saline	1,737	1,683	5,286	18.2	3,488	4,288	11,684	-9.5
Fillmore	950	1,049	3,348	22.5	1,901	2,515	6,463	-5.9	Sarpy	14,437	18,686	45,515	16.3	36,723	46,794	120,095	10.1
Franklin	495	705	1,711	19.8	735	870	2,273	-2.3	Saunders	2,979	3,231	8,910	20.1	5,462	6,326	17,509	17.0
Frontier	302	808	1,750	26.5	540	792	1,863	-4.1	Scotts Bluff	4,013	5,052	13,362	18.1	24,741	27,902	77,005	8.9
Furnas	780	1,274	2,797	45.4	1,857	2,323	6,184	-3.0	Seward	1,763	2,687	6,278	6.3	5,538	6,643	18,347	4.4
Gage	2,349	3,604	8,696	18.5	11,922	13,782	36,702	12.6	Sheridan	658	734	2,525	27.8	2,435	2,894	7,653	-4.0
Garden	174	306	789	12.2	547	620	1,700	4.0	Sherman	429	451	1,310	1.8	433	624	1,538	-27.8
Garfield	131	266	644	-7.9	550	785	1,969	5.5	Sioux	240	261	952	43.8	87	95	283	-1.7
Gosper	299	493	1,221	16.6	274	290	834	-34.5	Stanton	514	1,159	2,245	1.9	706	765	2,153	-5.9
Grant	190	198	515	21.7	218	285	699	27.1	Thayer	988	1,253	3,182	31.9	2,326	2,594	7,244	-6.4
Greeley	352	407	1,151	9.3	539	712	1,769	4.0	Thomas	177	172	573	61.9	188	283	673	2.3
Hall	5,812	7,946	19,512	11.6	49,401	58,749	156,796	10.3	Thurston	503	482	1,433	-2.9	703	894	2,320	1.5
Hamilton	1,613	1,495	4,691	23.4	2,256	2,968	7,503	-13.4	Valley	690	698	2,013	52.3	1,911	2,216	5,983	0.1
Harlan	540	698	1,873	27.4	529	916	1,940	-12.0	Washington	2,899	3,421	8,688	8.0	7,232	8,169	22,353	9.2
Hayes	165	288	646	42.3	0	78	78	-4.9	Wayne	950	1,097	3,033	5.6	3,337	3,877	10,669	-1.5
Hitchcock	556	587	1,697	48.7	584	662	1,787	14.1	Webster	529	791	2,029	90.7	1,107	1,537	3,706	5.4
Holt	1,517	1,595	4,775	11.5	5,174	6,229	16,789	6.7	Wheeler	169	229	473	40.4	70	77	208	-7.6
Hooker	114	152	361	-6.7	200	235	624	18.2	York	1,813	2,006	5,956	7.9	9,021	11,249	31,257	2.4

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

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

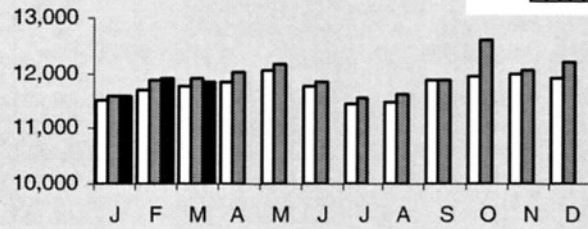
Note on Net Taxable Retail Sales

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

Regional Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment* 1998 to March** 2000

1998 1999 2000

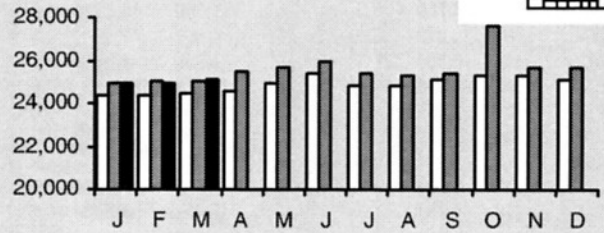
Northwest Panhandle



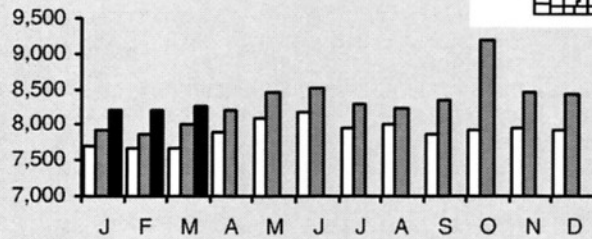
Note to Readers

The charts on pages 8 and 9 report nonfarm employment by place of work for each region.

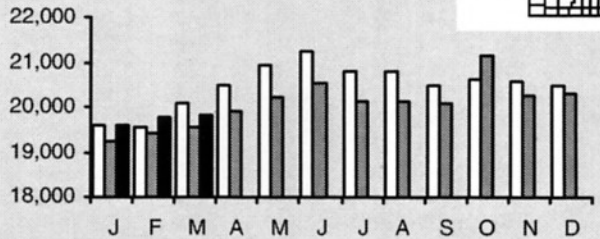
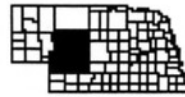
Southwest Panhandle



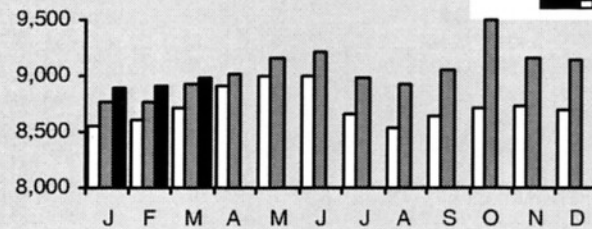
North Central



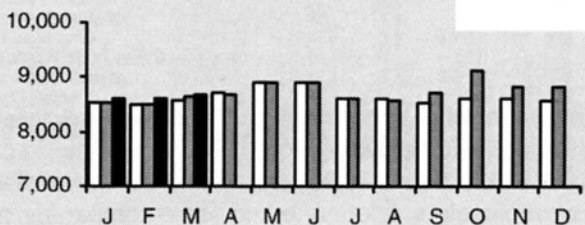
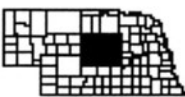
West Central



Southwest Central



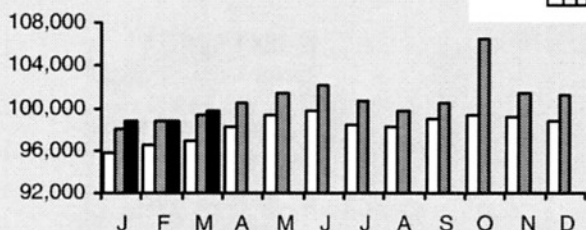
East Central



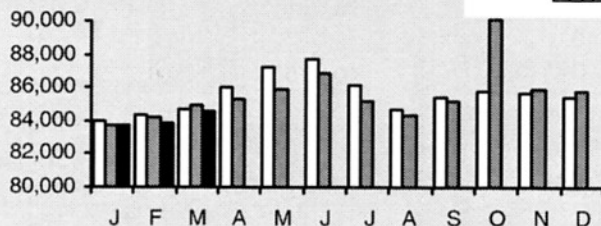
Regional Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment* 1998 to March** 2000

1998 1999 2000

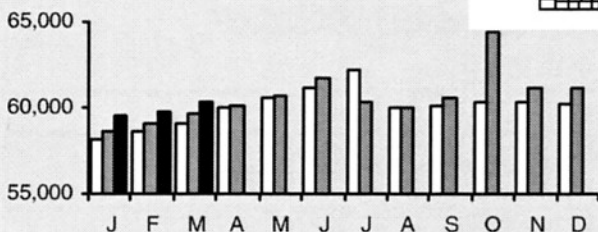
Southeast Central



Northeast

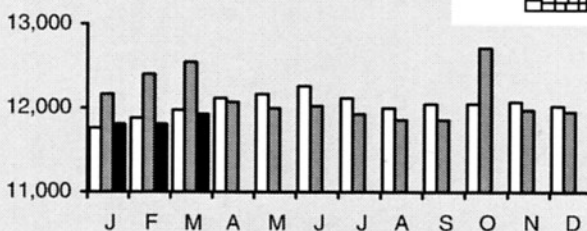


Southeast



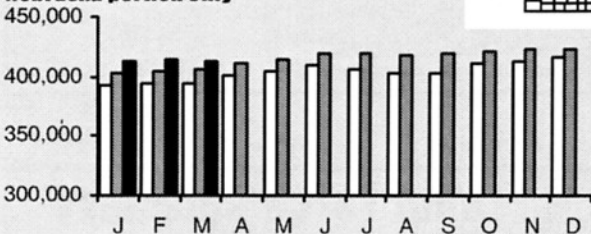
Sioux City MSA

Nebraska portion only

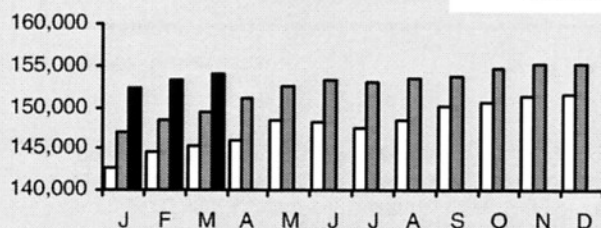
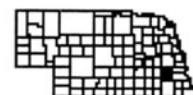


Omaha MSA

Nebraska portion only



Lincoln MSA



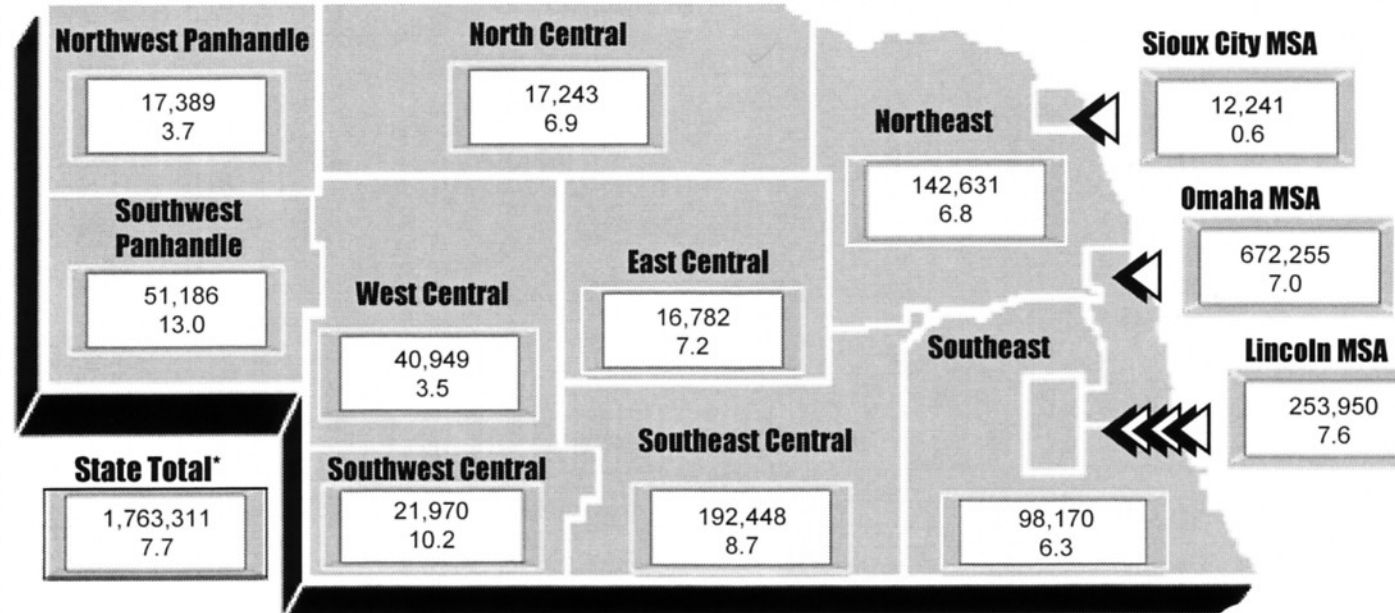
*By place of work

**Current month data are preliminary and subject to revision

Note: All 1999 and 2000 monthly employment data are considered estimates until benchmarked. Data shown for 1999 and 2000 are the most current revised estimates available. Final benchmarked monthly data for 1999 are expected to be released by the Nebraska Department of Labor in mid-2000.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information - Kathy Copas and Tammy Johnson

March 2000 Regional Retail Sales (\$000) YTD Change vs Yr. Ago



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

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

State Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment by Industry*

	March 2000
Nonfarm Emp (W&S)	887,298
Construction & Mining	41,645
Manufacturing	117,136
Durables	56,461
Nondurables	60,675
TCU**	57,774
Trade	211,281
Wholesale	55,540
Retail	155,741
FIRE***	61,195
Services	242,005
Government	156,262

*By place of work

**Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

***Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

Consumer Price Index

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

	May 2000	% Change vs Yr. Ago	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago (inflation rate)
All Items	171.3	3.1	3.1
Commodities	149.2	3.3	3.5
Services	193.6	3.0	2.9

*U = All urban consumers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Inflation Rate

3.1

State Labor Force Summary*

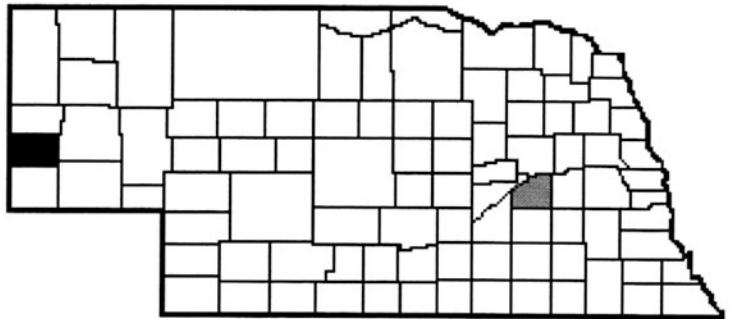
	March 2000
Labor Force	932,690
Employment	908,821
Unemployment Rate	2.6

*By place of residence

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

Note: All 2000 monthly employment and labor force data are considered estimates until benchmarked. Data shown for 2000 are the most current revised estimates available. Final benchmarked monthly data for 2000 are expected to be released by the Nebraska Department of Labor in mid-2001.

Banner Harrisburg - County Seat



License plate prefix number: 85

Size of county: 747 square miles, ranks 30th in the state

Population: 878 in 1998, a change of 3.1 percent from 1990

Per capita personal income: \$11,075 in 1997, ranks 87th in the state

Net taxable retail sales (\$000): \$1,726 in 1998 change of -12.4 percent from 1997

Unemployment rate: 2.5 percent in Banner County, 2.7 percent in Nebraska for 1998

	State	Banner County
Nonfarm employment (1998)¹:	875,352	90
(wage & salary)	(percent of total)	
Construction and Mining	4.8	10.0
Manufacturing	13.6	(D)
TCU	6.4	(D)
Wholesale Trade	6.2	(D)
Retail Trade	18.0	(D)
FIRE	6.6	(D)
Services	27.2	(D)
Government	17.2	76.7
(D) = disclosure suppression		

Agriculture:

Number of farms: 220 in 1997; 200 in 1992; 212 in 1987

Average farm size: 2,029 acres in 1997; 2,038 acres in 1992

Market value of farm products sold: \$48.8 million in 1997 (\$221,591 average per farm); \$36.1 million in 1992 (\$180,475 average per farm)

¹By place of work

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

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Basic Needs Estimates (cont'd)

Health care: Good health is a central component of an adequate standard of living. Therefore, health insurance is viewed as a necessity for parents, as well as children, because parents who are not able to prevent or treat their own health problems will not be able to work to support their families. Given the current set of health insurance options, the optimal health coverage for the working-age population in the U.S. is employer sponsored health coverage. It generally is cheaper than nongroup policies, is a more efficient way to provide insurance, and is less likely to impose exclusions for preexisting conditions. Because family budgets typically consider what income is sufficient for a family with at least one full-time worker, most assume that the representative family will have employer sponsored health care. This study assumes that all family types are covered by employer provided health insurance with employee co-payments.

Clothing and household items: Clothing and household items are widely accepted as necessary expenses. Itemized consumer expenditure data from the 1998 *Consumer Expenditures Survey (CES)* from the U.S. Department of Labor, adjusted for 1999 prices and modified for metro and nonmetro areas of Nebraska, were used to develop budgets for Nebraska households.

Miscellaneous personal expenses, including minimal entertainment and recreation: Most basic family budgets include a limited allowance for miscellaneous expenses for personal care items and services such as cosmetics and haircuts, as well as for entertainment and recreation such as reading materials, video rentals, etc. A frugal allowance of 3 to 6 percent of the total of all other expenses was used for the Nebraska study, depending on the size of the family unit.

Renter's insurance: Many basic family budgets include renter's insurance as part of miscellaneous expenses. It was treated separately in this study because it can be easily calculated from insurance industry reports and because it is likely to be cut when income does not meet budget. The cost of a basic renter's insurance policy provided by American Family Insurance was used for this cost estimate.

Telephone: Most analysts agree that a telephone is an essential item in a basic needs budget. Immediate access to a telephone is essential for possible emergency calls, especially for families with children. An annual budget estimate for minimum telephone expenses was determined from the 1999 *Annual Report of Telecommunications* published by the Nebraska Public Service Commission.

Taxes: Because the purpose of a family budget is to assess how much a family requires for meeting basic needs and because taxes reduce a family's ability to consume basic goods, taxes should be included in a family budget. A large share of a family's tax burden is from federal and state income taxes and federal payroll taxes. Other taxes such as property and sales taxes also are important; but, they are already included in other budget expenditures such as rent, telephone, transportation cost, clothing, etc. Federal and Nebraska income tax rates were used to calculate taxes for each of the family unit types. Family units were assumed to have custodial care of the children and were assumed to take the standard income tax deduction allowed on federal and state income tax returns.

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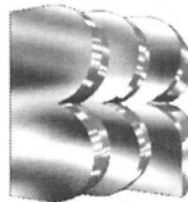
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