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60 Years of Service

## POVERTY OF NEBRASKA COUNTIES

The third in a series of five summary tape files from the 1980 census has been released for Nebraska. Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) contains sample data, that is, information contained on the long census form and obtained from a portion of the households in the state. The proportion of households sampled depended on the size of the governmental unit in which they were located. For counties, some townships (precincts), and communities which had fewer than 2,500 people, one of every two households received the long form. For the remainder of the state, only one out of six households received the long form. Because of the large number of lightly populated areas in the state, the overall sampling rate for Nebraska was 25 percent. As should be expected, the proportion ranged from approximately 50 percent for most of the state's less populated counties to around 16 or 17 percent for Douglas and Lancaster counties.

The information contained on STF 3 consists of more than 1,000 basic tabulations of sample population and housing data (e.g., income, poverty, education, employment, occupation, and detailed characteristics of housing units). These summaries of sample information are available on STF 3 for the state, counties, townships or precincts, places (cities or towns), census tracts or block numbering areas, and block groups. For areas that are not block numbered, enumeration districts are available.

The October 1982 issue of *Business in Nebraska* focused on one element from STF 3, median family income. This issue will focus on poverty status of families and persons in the state. Poverty levels for families and unrelated individuals<sup>1</sup> are based on incomes in 1979 by using a range of income cutoffs which vary by size of family, number of children, and age of the family householder or unrelated individual. Residents of institutions, members of armed forces living in barracks, college students living in dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years are excluded from poverty status calculations. The poverty thresholds for 1979 are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 (pp. 2-3) presents poverty status data of families and persons in Nebraska counties for 1979 with comparisons to 1969. Poverty statistics may not be directly comparable between 1969 and 1979 because in 1969 poverty thresholds also depended on sex of household head and whether the household was a farm or nonfarm household. Since the poverty thresholds were lower for farm households than they were for nonfarm households, there is the likelihood of a relative understatement of families and persons

below poverty when data from 1979 are compared to those from 1969 (especially in counties with large farm populations).

In 1979 there were 33,316 Nebraska families below the poverty level, representing 8.0 percent of the state's families. This compares favorably with the United States figure of 9.6 percent. Between 1969 and 1979, the number of Nebraska families below poverty fell both as a total and as a percentage. There were 37,868 families, or 10.1 percent of the state's families, below poverty in 1969.

The data in the second column indicate the variability of poverty rates among the state's counties. The lowest rates were found in Sarpy County where 4.2 percent of the families fell below the poverty level. Other counties with low rates were Hall, Box Butte, Lincoln, and Lancaster counties. On the other hand, 5 Nebraska counties reported levels of 20 percent or greater. The highest was Greeley with a rate of 24.3 percent, followed by Boyd, Logan, Blaine, and Thurston.

Figure 1 (p. 3) shows the relative dispersion of poverty among families throughout the state. In all, 25 counties were at or below the state average. These counties were among the state's most populous and nearly all contained a city larger than 5,000 persons. Almost all of the counties gained population during the 1970s and in most the major source of income and employment was something other than agriculture.

On the other hand, the 31 counties which recorded poverty rates of 13 percent or more exhibited (continued on page 6)

Table 1  
WEIGHTED AVERAGE POVERTY THRESHOLDS  
FOR 1979

Size of Family	Threshold
1 person:	
under 65 years	\$ 3,774
65 years and over	3,479
2 persons:	
householder under 65 years	4,876
householder 65 years and over	4,389
3 persons	5,787
4 persons	7,412
5 persons	8,776
6 persons	9,915
7 persons	11,237
8 persons	12,484
9 or more persons	14,812

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics*, PHC80-S1-1.

<sup>1</sup> An unrelated individual is typically a householder living alone or with nonrelatives only.

Table 2  
POVERTY STATUS OF FAMILIES AND PERSONS IN NEBRASKA COUNTIES

	1979				1969				Percentage Change** 1969-1979	
	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Number of Persons*	Percent of All Persons*	Percent of Persons* Under 65	Percent of Persons* 65 or Over	Percent of Families	Percent of Persons*	Percent of Families	Percent of Persons*
Adams	521	6.5	2,862	9.8	8.6	16.5	8.5	12.3	-24	-20
Antelope	467	19.6	1,986	23.1	22.1	28.1	16.1	18.5	22	25
Arthur	24	15.7	83	16.2	16.0	17.1	10.9	17.0	44	-5
Banner	53	17.9	183	19.9	22.2	2.0	13.1	22.8	37	-13
Blaine	51	20.9	244	28.1	30.5	15.7	11.0	12.2	90	131
Boone	341	16.7	1,443	19.9	19.3	22.6	17.8	20.9	-6	-5
Box Butte	191	5.2	963	7.1	5.9	16.5	12.4	18.6	-58	-62
Boyd	208	21.6	777	23.8	23.8	23.6	32.4	38.9	-33	-39
Brown	209	17.0	837	19.3	17.4	28.1	18.7	22.4	-9	-14
Buffalo	565	6.6	3,509	10.9	10.3	15.5	11.4	15.9	-42	-31
Burt	294	11.7	1,355	15.7	15.7	15.9	12.8	16.7	-9	-6
Butler	257	10.3	1,140	12.5	10.5	21.2	20.7	21.6	-50	-42
Cass	334	6.0	1,441	7.2	6.3	13.6	9.7	11.6	-38	-38
Cedar	421	14.7	2,198	19.7	19.3	21.7	27.7	32.5	-47	-39
Chase	191	14.6	789	17.0	15.8	24.1	13.5	16.8	8	1
Cherry	188	9.6	906	13.6	13.9	11.8	11.8	13.8	-19	-1
Cheyenne	242	8.6	1,215	12.2	11.9	13.7	11.7	12.9	-26	-5
Clay	206	9.0	960	12.1	10.8	18.6	12.8	15.2	-30	-20
Colfax	313	11.7	1,323	13.6	12.6	17.6	13.0	15.6	-10	-13
Cuming	326	10.6	1,530	13.4	12.9	15.8	17.1	19.6	-38	-32
Custer	478	12.2	2,066	15.1	13.9	20.6	14.3	17.5	-15	-14
Dakota	311	7.1	1,576	9.6	9.2	14.0	9.5	12.0	-25	-20
Dawes	221	9.4	1,350	15.4	14.5	20.4	13.2	16.5	-29	-7
Dawson	401	6.4	1,895	8.6	7.8	13.9	10.3	12.7	-38	-32
Deuel	58	8.1	267	11.0	11.5	8.9	4.3	6.5	88	69
Dixon	304	15.9	1,338	19.0	18.4	21.8	12.9	14.7	23	29
Dodge	700	7.1	3,042	8.8	7.7	15.3	9.3	10.9	-24	-19
Douglas	7,266	7.2	38,486	9.9	9.6	12.8	6.7	9.8	7	1
Dundy	113	13.3	484	17.3	16.5	20.6	10.9	15.4	22	12
Fillmore	199	9.0	842	11.0	9.8	16.3	12.5	15.8	-28	-30
Franklin	171	13.3	680	15.9	15.0	19.1	15.6	17.6	-15	-10
Frontier	116	11.2	555	15.5	15.3	16.6	14.5	18.6	-23	-17
Furnas	239	12.9	1,102	17.7	17.2	19.1	14.1	16.6	-9	7
Gage	537	7.9	2,411	10.4	9.3	15.3	10.5	13.2	-25	-21
Garden	74	8.7	301	11.1	10.9	11.5	17.9	21.9	-51	-49
Garfield	80	12.0	413	17.6	15.4	25.2	16.5	24.1	-27	-27
Gosper	81	13.0	321	15.4	14.3	21.5	16.2	18.5	-20	-17
Grant	31	13.0	132	15.1	15.6	11.8	9.4	7.8	38	94
Greeley	210	24.3	977	29.1	29.2	28.4	19.5	25.5	25	14
Hall	583	4.6	3,151	6.8	5.7	14.8	7.9	10.7	-42	-36
Hamilton	201	7.9	947	10.5	10.0	13.9	11.4	14.3	-31	-27
Harlan	195	15.6	776	18.4	18.3	18.8	11.2	14.2	39	30
Hayes	72	17.2	269	19.8	20.4	16.3	20.1	23.0	-14	-14
Hitchcock	147	12.5	619	15.5	15.8	14.1	18.0	22.9	-31	-32
Holt	554	15.2	2,425	18.2	17.4	23.2	21.3	25.2	-29	-28
Hooker	37	13.6	177	18.4	17.9	21.2	8.4	9.2	62	100
Howard	161	8.4	744	11.1	9.9	17.6	19.1	21.8	-56	-49
Jefferson	321	11.4	1,471	15.3	14.9	16.7	15.1	18.4	-25	-17
Johnson	227	15.0	932	17.9	18.1	17.2	16.2	18.9	-7	-5
Kearney	142	7.3	624	9.3	8.6	13.7	11.0	14.1	-34	-34
Keith	205	7.7	880	9.5	8.4	17.2	8.1	9.9	-5	-4
Keya Paha	54	14.2	214	16.5	16.7	15.6	31.7	33.2	-55	-50
Kimball	144	10.7	604	12.6	12.9	10.7	10.8	12.6	-1	0
Knox	491	15.9	2,266	20.2	19.9	21.6	27.7	30.5	-43	-34
Lancaster	2,570	5.4	15,453	8.6	8.4	9.9	5.9	9.6	-8	-10
Lincoln	525	5.3	2,636	7.3	6.4	14.6	9.1	11.8	-42	-38
Logan	59	21.1	243	25.5	27.3	15.9	8.3	11.4	154	124
Loup	29	11.6	114	13.3	12.7	16.0	19.0	21.2	-39	-37
McPherson	29	15.8	117	19.7	23.2	3.8	18.1	18.9	-13	4
Madison	543	6.7	2,823	9.3	7.9	18.3	8.5	11.6	-21	-20

Table 2 (continued)

	1979						1969		Percentage Change** 1969-1979	
	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Number of Persons*	Percent of All Persons*	Percent of Persons* Under 65	Percent of Persons* 65 or Over	Percent of Families	Percent of Persons*	Percent of Families	Percent of Persons*
Merrick	226	9.1	1,015	11.5	11.2	13.3	9.9	14.6	-8	-21
Morrill	307	17.7	1,330	22.3	22.9	19.1	23.7	27.0	-25	-17
Nance	200	15.8	968	20.8	19.9	24.8	13.7	18.0	15	16
Nemaha	252	10.8	1,239	15.5	14.3	21.0	10.4	12.1	4	28
Nuckolls	154	8.0	745	11.3	8.5	24.3	14.1	19.3	-43	-41
Otoe	369	8.6	1,657	11.2	10.4	15.0	8.0	10.8	8	4
Pawnee	174	15.1	747	19.3	18.5	22.2	19.9	24.3	-24	-21
Perkins	132	12.9	581	16.2	16.4	15.1	6.4	7.0	102	131
Phelps	201	7.3	932	9.8	8.7	15.2	9.5	11.3	-23	-13
Pierce	258	11.1	1,136	13.6	12.6	19.0	20.1	23.9	-45	-43
Platte	475	6.2	2,286	8.0	6.9	16.2	8.7	11.1	-29	-28
Polk	227	12.9	869	14.1	13.6	16.4	11.6	14.4	11	-2
Red Willow	223	6.5	1,191	9.6	8.6	15.0	9.6	12.9	-32	-26
Richardson	373	11.8	1,763	16.0	14.8	20.5	14.7	20.0	-20	-20
Rock	67	10.2	327	13.9	14.3	11.9	17.6	29.7	-42	-53
Saline	312	8.7	1,479	12.0	11.4	14.5	11.2	14.3	-22	-16
Sarpy	920	4.2	4,077	4.9	4.8	7.1	5.7	6.2	-26	-21
Saunders	379	7.5	1,780	9.6	8.9	13.8	13.4	16.2	-44	-41
Scotts Bluff	894	8.5	4,445	11.8	11.2	16.1	10.9	14.2	-22	-17
Seward	315	7.8	1,475	10.3	9.5	14.9	8.9	12.7	-12	-19
Sheridan	241	11.7	992	13.5	11.9	22.1	15.0	20.7	-22	-35
Sherman	176	15.2	831	20.0	19.0	24.3	22.7	26.6	-33	-25
Sioux	59	11.0	249	13.5	13.3	14.6	22.9	25.6	-52	-47
Stanton	207	11.7	960	14.8	13.8	22.7	20.5	24.7	-43	-40
Thayer	197	8.9	831	11.3	9.9	17.0	15.3	17.9	-42	-37
Thomas	32	11.3	101	10.4	8.7	22.7	10.2	9.3	11	12
Thurston	361	20.0	1,720	24.3	24.3	24.2	20.2	27.8	-1	-13
Valley	209	13.2	971	17.6	16.5	22.3	18.3	23.2	-28	-24
Washington	270	6.4	1,185	8.0	7.3	13.3	8.4	9.7	-24	-18
Wayne	293	11.8	1,449	16.8	16.8	16.5	13.3	17.0	-11	-1
Webster	158	11.5	725	15.3	12.1	27.4	21.2	26.6	-46	-43
Wheeler	50	16.7	222	20.9	22.0	14.0	20.6	24.6	-19	-15
York	324	8.0	1,444	10.1	9.5	13.9	8.3	10.7	-4	-6
Nebraska	33,316	8.0	163,189	10.7	10.0	15.5	10.1	13.1	-21	-18
United States	5,646,520	9.6	27,525,858	12.5	12.2	14.7	10.7	13.7	-10	-9

\*Persons include only those for whom poverty status has been determined.

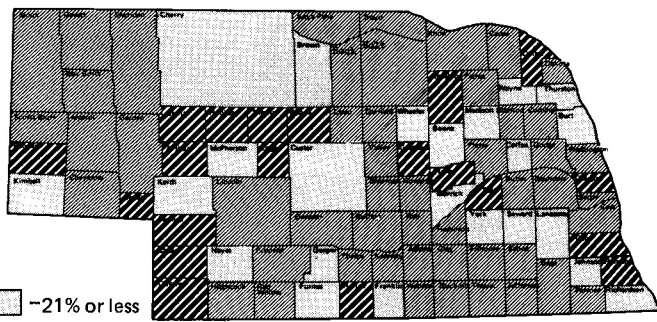
\*\*The percentage changes represent changes in the rates of families or persons below poverty and not changes in the numbers of families or persons.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *General Social and Economic Characteristics*, PC(1)-C-29, and unpublished data from STF 3.

Figure 1  
PERCENT OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY  
1979



Figure 2  
PERCENTAGE CHANGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY  
1969-1979



### Review and Outlook

Nebraska's net physical volume index increased 1.1 percent June-July 1982. This marks the second monthly increase in the index in 5 months. Despite the monthly increase, the Nebraska economy remains approximately 2 percent below the year-previous level as measured by this index.

The gain in the index is attributable to increased cash farm marketings and gains in the construction and distributive trade sectors of the economy.

The index's agriculture component was up 3.8 percent June-July 1982. Unusually heavy marketings were responsible for the gain. Cash marketing receipts were up nearly 24 percent in July 1982 compared with the year previous. On a month-to-month

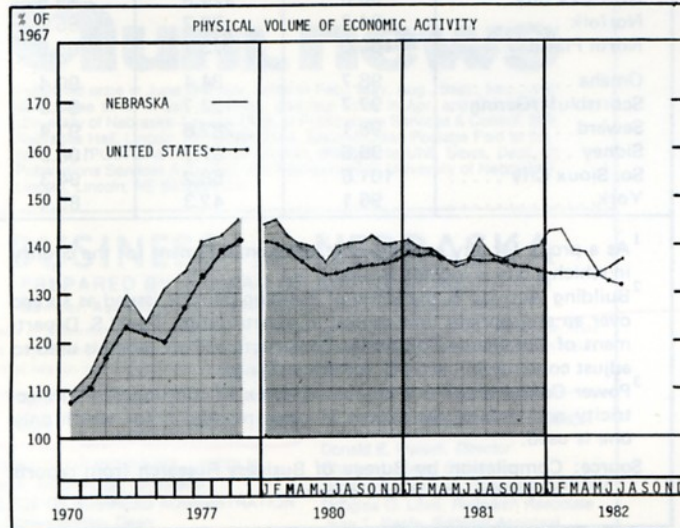
basis, cash farm marketings were up nearly 13 percent. Apparently the large cash farm marketings resulted from a movement of commodities from storage to the markets.

In July, Nebraska producers were more aggressive in marketing commodities than producers in other states. Nationally, cash farm marketings were 3 percent above year-ago levels. Nebraska producers recorded a 24 percent increase in marketings in the same period.

The nonagriculture sector of the Nebraska economy recorded a 0.6 percent increase June-July 1982. Construction led with an 8.6 percent increase on a month-to-month basis. Despite the rather sharp monthly increase, construction activity remains well below year-previous levels. (continued on page 5)

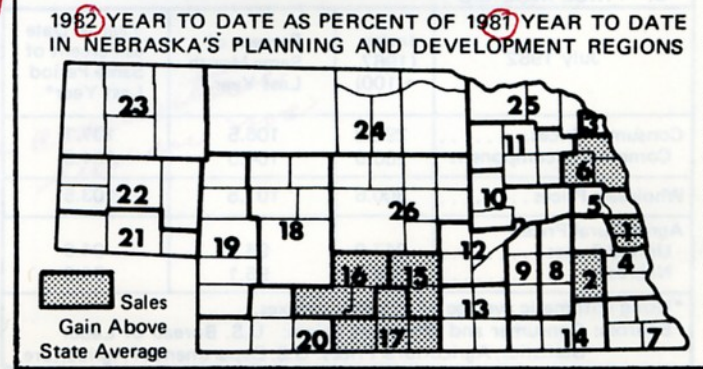
Notes for Tables 1 and 2: (1) The "distributive" indicator represents a composite of wholesale and retail trade; transportation, communication and utilities; finance, insurance, and real estate; and selected services. (2) The "physical volume" indicator and its components represent the dollar volume 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				
July 1982	Current Month as Percent of Same Month Previous Year		1982 Year to Date as Percent of 1981 Year to Date	
	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Indicator	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Dollar Volume	102.3	101.5	104.3	103.1
Agricultural	133.0	102.6	137.7	108.0
Nonagricultural	98.4	101.4	100.1	103.0
Construction	79.7	96.0	70.3	92.2
Manufacturing	81.3	90.4	89.9	94.6
Distributive	103.0	105.6	103.2	106.2
Government	107.4	108.0	110.1	110.0
Physical Volume	98.0	96.1	99.8	97.1
Agricultural	139.8	106.0	145.6	114.2
Nonagricultural	92.7	95.8	94.2	96.6
Construction	76.9	92.5	67.5	88.4
Manufacturing	79.9	88.3	87.8	91.8
Distributive	96.7	99.2	96.4	99.2
Government	99.5	99.3	101.5	98.3
2. CHANGE FROM 1967				
Indicator	Percent of 1967 Average			
	Nebraska	U.S.		
Dollar Volume	379.3	363.4		
Agricultural	415.9	353.7		
Nonagricultural	373.5	363.7		
Construction	210.0	304.3		
Manufacturing	311.3	291.6		
Distributive	406.4	407.1		
Government	400.9	373.2		
Physical Volume	137.0	132.1		
Agricultural	165.0	143.2		
Nonagricultural	132.7	131.8		
Construction	62.5	90.6		
Manufacturing	129.5	118.3		
Distributive	139.1	139.3		
Government	143.9	147.5		



3. NET TAXABLE RETAIL SALES OF NEBRASKA REGIONS AND CITIES (Adjusted for Price Changes)			
Region Number and City	City Sales*	Sales in Region*	
	July 1982 as percent of July 1981	July 1982 as percent of July 1981	Year to date '82 as percent of Year to date '81
<i>The State</i>	93.5	94.3	94.5
1 Omaha	92.8	93.8	97.1
Bellevue	96.5		
2 Lincoln	98.9	100.2	96.0
3 So. Sioux City	83.9	85.4	89.6
4 Nebraska City	96.6	101.5	94.1
5 Fremont	90.1	93.9	93.6
Blair	96.6		
6 West Point	100.4	102.6	97.7
7 Falls City	92.1	98.0	94.8
8 Seward	96.7	100.1	94.0
9 York	100.0	95.3	94.3
10 Columbus	99.8	93.2	91.6
11 Norfolk	94.2	93.0	92.0
Wayne	82.7		
12 Grand Island	96.1	95.0	91.2
13 Hastings	82.8	85.6	89.3
14 Beatrice	94.9	97.4	93.1
Fairbury	102.4		
15 Kearney	94.1	95.9	96.2
16 Lexington	95.3	88.9	95.0
17 Holdrege	101.3	100.0	95.5
18 North Platte	93.8	92.6	90.8
19 Ogallala	97.4	90.7	89.7
20 McCook	95.3	98.5	93.6
21 Sidney	96.5	86.8	93.0
Kimball	76.8		
22 Scottsbluff/Gering	92.1	93.1	90.1
23 Alliance	88.9	88.2	88.5
Chadron	91.4		
24 O'Neill	97.6	93.6	88.4
25 Hartington	96.3	96.4	94.1
26 Broken Bow	79.1	85.9	88.7

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



(continued from page 4) Data in Table 1 indicate that the construction index in July of 1982 was only 62.5 percent above the base average of 1967. On a year-to-date basis, this component of the Nebraska index was 67.5 percent of one year ago.

Output in the manufacturing sector as measured by the index declined 0.1 percent June-July 1982. The index has declined for 5 consecutive months and in July 1982 stood at approximately 80 percent of the previous year. This recession has impacted Nebraska manufacturing particularly severely. The physical volume index for Nebraska manufacturing is down more than for the nation. In the 1974-75 recession, Nebraska's manufacturing sector escaped the severity of the recession relatively unscathed. At the bottom of the recession, output had fallen less than 2 percent while nationally output was down approximately 13 percent.

The distributive trade sector component of the index increased 1 percent on a month-to-month basis. This sector is down approximately 3 percent from year-previous levels and, like manufacturing, distributive trade in Nebraska is being impacted somewhat more severely than nationally. The distributive trade component of the physical volume index in July 1982 was up 39 percent over the 1967 average.

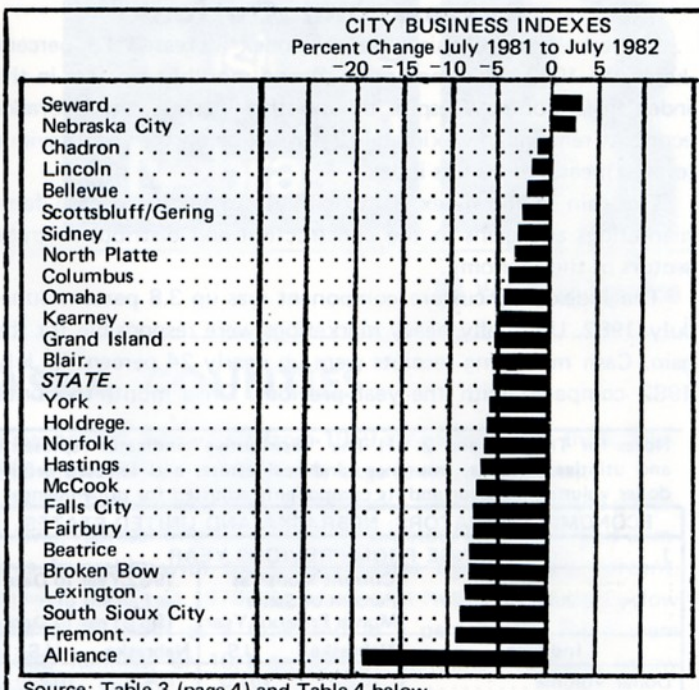
The government component of the net physical volume index declined 1.2 percent June-July 1982. This component of the index is up slightly more than 1 percent on a year-to-date basis. Caution is warranted in interpreting the government component, for in Nebraska electric utility employees are classified as a part of the government sector.

Nebraska's retail sales were down 1.5 percent on a dollar volume basis in July 1982 compared with year-previous levels. Non-vehicle sales were down 2.3 percent, while motor vehicle sales were up 5.8 percent. Dollar volume motor vehicle sales were approximately \$83 million in July 1982 compared with \$78 million a year ago. Nonvehicle sales were approximately \$704 million in July 1982 compared with \$720 million one year ago.

The commodity component of the Consumer Price Index increased 4.5 percent through July 1982. When adjustments are made for price changes, retail sales fell 5.7 percent. Nonvehicle sales were down 6.5 percent on a price-adjusted basis, while motor vehicle sales were up 1.2 percent on a price-adjusted basis.

Only two Nebraska cities, Seward and Nebraska City, managed to record increases in their respective city business indexes. Construction activity was important in both communities in pushing the indexes to the top.

Data in Table 3 indicate that only three Nebraska cities managed to record increases in real retail sales. Real retail sales were up 2.4 percent in Fairbury, 1.3 percent in Holdrege, 0.4 percent in West Point, and were unchanged in York. D. E. P.



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

The State and Its Trading Centers	Percent of Same Month a Year Ago		
	Employment <sup>1</sup>	Building Activity <sup>2</sup>	Power Consumption <sup>3</sup>
<i>The State</i> .....	97.3	73.6	91.3
Alliance .....	89.3	17.5	94.0
Beatrice .....	97.2	42.2	85.2
Bellevue .....	98.7	101.4	94.5
Blair .....	95.3	66.7	NA
Broken Bow .....	99.1	150.4	95.9
Chadron .....	102.6	129.8	87.3
Columbus .....	93.4	75.3	94.3
Fairbury .....	96.0	24.5	97.7
Falls City .....	97.4	55.7	80.5
Fremont .....	96.0	49.4	82.9*
Grand Island .....	97.4	58.0	97.6
Hastings .....	98.1	146.8	109.6
Holdrege .....	95.8	36.8	91.6
Kearney .....	96.7	82.5	96.8
Lexington .....	94.2	41.8	NA
Lincoln .....	99.0	85.3	88.4
McCook .....	92.3	67.6	97.7
Nebraska City .....	96.0	324.9	89.5
Norfolk .....	94.7	77.7	85.9
North Platte .....	100.0	73.7	95.5
Omaha .....	98.7	84.4	90.4
Scottsbluff/Gering ..	97.7	123.7	94.3
Seward .....	98.1	282.6	97.4
Sidney .....	96.6	87.7	108.3
So. Sioux City .....	101.6	58.2	94.3
York .....	96.1	42.3	85.4

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

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

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

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

July 1982	Index (1967 = 100)	Percent of Same Month Last Year	Year to Date as Percent of Same Period Last Year*
Consumer Prices .....	292.2	106.5	107.1
Commodity component	266.5	104.5	104.3
Wholesale Prices .....	300.6	101.5	103.5
Agricultural Prices			
United States .....	247.0	96.9	94.6
Nebraska .....	252.0	95.1	94.9

\*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 1) the opposite characteristics. These counties were less populated with almost no cities larger than 2,500, they had typically lost population for several decades, and were heavily dependent on agriculture.

In 1979, 10.7 percent of Nebraska's persons<sup>2</sup> were below the poverty level (163,189 persons). This compared with a 12.5 percent national rate and a 13.1 percent rate for Nebraska in 1969. The poverty rates varied considerably by age, as 10.0 percent of persons under 65 were below poverty compared to 15.5 percent of the persons 65 and older. Compared to 1969, all of the decline in relative poverty mentioned earlier occurred for persons 65 and older, as their rate fell from 28.3 percent to 15.5 percent. The rates for the younger group were virtually unchanged.

At the county level, a pattern very similar to family poverty emerged. Twenty-five counties were at or below the Nebraska rate. With a rate of 4.9 percent, Sarpy was by far the lowest. Other counties with relatively low poverty levels for persons were Hall, Box Butte, Cass, and Lincoln counties. The highest levels were recorded in Greeley, Blaine, Logan, Thurston, Boyd, and Antelope counties. In Greeley, Blaine, and Logan counties, more than one-fourth of the persons were below poverty.

Table 2 also shows poverty rates in 1969 for counties. When comparing 1969 to 1979 data it should be remembered that the definitions of poverty changed between those time periods, and counties with a relatively high farm population will have a built-in upward bias on year-to-year comparisons. Year-to-year comparisons of poverty or income data also should be viewed with extreme caution because of fluctuations in agricultural income. These fluctuations make it possible for any given year's figure to be unrepresentative of the longer-term situation.

The percentage changes listed are changes in the rates of poverty and not the numbers of families or persons. This is a more valid comparison, because between the 1970 and 1980 censuses some counties lost population and some grew. The growth or decline, therefore, would have a direct effect on the size of population below poverty.

As can be seen in Figure 2 (p. 3), most of the counties in the state experienced declines in family poverty rates. Overall, 73

<sup>2</sup>This includes only those persons for whom poverty status was determined.

counties recorded decreases in their poverty levels, and 23 of those reported declines equal to or greater than the state's decline of 21 percent. Counties in which poverty rates were cut in half were Box Butte, -58 percent; Howard, -56 percent; Keya Paha, -55 percent; Sioux, -52 percent; Garden, -51 percent; and Butler, -50 percent.

There is no apparent pattern to the distribution of changes in poverty status among counties. Counties whose poverty rates increased were spread throughout the state, although there were some pockets of counties in the Sandhills and along the Colorado border. With the exception of Douglas and Nemaha counties, these counties were predominately rural with agriculture-related economies. The counties exhibiting the largest drop in poverty rates also were scattered through the state but, compared to those with increasing rates, a higher proportion of them contained a community larger than 2,500 and fewer of them were as dependent upon agriculture.

In light of the poverty statistics collected from the 1980 census, it can be concluded that Nebraska has improved relative to 1969 and relative to the nation. For both families and persons there was relatively less poverty, with the largest improvement occurring for those persons 65 and over.

J. A. D.

## HOW TO OBTAIN CENSUS DATA

Under a voluntary agreement with the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Business Research receives copies of each publication, microfiche, and computer tape produced for Nebraska from the 1980 census. During the past two years, several issues of *Business in Nebraska* have looked at some of the census data at the state and county levels, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. There are an additional 7,000 geographic units in the state for which at least 1,450 data items are available—only a small portion of which will ever be published. Community-level census data have been used by businesses to help develop marketing strategies and determine site location and by governments to determine community profiles and identify areas of need. For more information concerning the content and cost of obtaining data products currently available from the 1980 census, contact the Bureau of Business Research at (402) 472-2334 or at Room 200 in the College of Business Administration.

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