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Strong Metro Economy Prevents A Statewide Slowdown

Charles Lamphear

So far, strength, especially in the metro nonfarm business sector, has prevented the state's economy from slipping into a general slowdown due to the current farm problem. The farm problem is in its second year, but its impact still is mostly limited to a few industries, such as wholesale trade and agriculture services in nonmetro counties. Other nonmetro industries, such as manufacturing and construction, are doing reasonably well. All nonfarm industries in the state's metro counties are doing very well. In short, metro business activity is brisk.

The current depressed state of agriculture will continue to impact rural businesses. Agriculture is too big a part of the state's rural economy for its impact to rapidly dissipate. Survey results for the next several quarters should reveal the extent of the impact of the farm crisis on nonfarm businesses. However, the expectation is that most all the impact will be limited to businesses in the state's nonmetro counties. The current economic pace of the state's metro counties plainly is too brisk to be slowed down by the depressed farm economy.

What might be emerging in the state is a two-track economy—a rural economy struggling under the influence of a depressed farm sector, among other factors, and an urban economy benefiting from a strong national economy. The only major threat to the future activity of metro businesses is the lack of qualified workers, which is most acute in vocational occupations. However, the worker shortage problem is not limited to metro counties. It is adversely affecting all businesses across the state. Unfortunately for the rural economy, the worker shortage problem is adding to the impact of the farm crisis.

The 1st quarter 1999 Nebraska Quarterly Business Conditions Survey (NQBCS) represents about 1,450 nonfarm private sector businesses with a combined employment of slightly over 88,000 workers. The survey is almost evenly split between metro and nonmetro county businesses. The metro counties include Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington. The NQBCS is the only regular statewide gauge of current business conditions. Quarterly results of the NQBCS are reported in the January, March, June, and September issues of *Business in Nebraska (BIN)*. Regional summaries of the NQBCS results, along with regional definitions, are available on three internet sites listed at the end of this article.

Forty-four percent of the businesses statewide reported 1st quarter 1999 revenues above year-ago levels (Table 1). Forty percent of the respondents expect 2nd quarter revenues to exceed year-ago levels. The 44 percent for the 1st quarter is statistically equivalent to the average quarterly rates for 1997 and 1998 of 48 and 42 percent, respectively. This constant rate for an extended period shows that Nebraska's economy is prospering, and that its prosperity is steady going.

The highest percent of respondents reporting 1st quarter 1999 revenues above year-ago levels is in the TCU group at 52 percent (Table 1). Other industry groups that reported high rates include services (47 percent), FIRE (47 percent), retail trade (47 percent), and manufacturing (46 percent). These statistically equivalent rates show that the state's economic prosperity is not limited to a few industries. The prosperity is widespread, at least in the state's metro counties. Lower rates for 1st quarter 1999 were reported by wholesale trade (36 percent) and Other (34 percent). These

lower rates largely reflect the current impact of the farm crisis on businesses located mostly in nonmetro counties. Wholesale trade includes implement dealers and grain handlers, and the category called Other includes agriculture services.

There is a statistically significant difference in the 1st quarter 1999 response rates for metro and nonmetro counties (Table 2). Forty-nine percent of the metro county respondents reported 1st quarter 1999 quarter revenues above year-ago levels. The comparable rate for the nonmetro respondents was 39 percent. A significant difference also appeared in earlier quarterly surveys for 1997 and 1998 and exists in the expected revenues for 2nd quarter 1999. This consistent difference supports the notion that a definite two-track economy is emerging in Nebraska.

The estimated number of new full-time job hires in the state for 1st quarter 1999 is 11,226 (Table 3). Two out of three new job hires occurred in Omaha and Lincoln metro areas. Nebraska Department of Labor employment data indicate that 61 percent of nonfarm private sector employment is in these five metro counties. Table 3 shows that there has been a continual decline in new job hires for both metro and nonmetro counties since 1997. This downward trend is not consistent with the economy's capacity to expand. Most likely, the downward trend is a reflection of a very tight labor market. Most businesses can't expand without adding workers. In the comment section of the survey, one respondent noted that "We wanted to start a third shift at the beginning of March but had

no applicants." An increasing number of respondents are expressing concerns over the lack of qualified applicants and general worker availability.

The state estimate of full-time replacement hires for 1st quarter 1999 is 32,546 (Table 3). Nearly two out of three full-time replacement hires occurred in the metro counties. There has been a constant level of full-time replacement hires since 1997 and a nearly constant distribution of full-time replacement hires between metro and nonmetro counties since 1997.

The average hourly wage for new full-time hires continues to exceed the average hourly wage for full-time replacement hires (Figure 1). The spread is greatest for the metro counties. The 1st quarter 1999 average hourly wage for new full-time hires was \$13.22. The average hourly wage for full-time replacement hires was \$9.62, resulting in a \$3.60 difference. The average hourly wage spread between full-time new and replacement hires was approximately \$1.00 for nonmetro counties.

The average hourly wage for new hires in the metro counties has averaged \$2.00 to \$3.00 above the comparable average hourly wage for new hires in nonmetro counties. The difference in average hourly wages for new hires for metro and nonmetro counties was \$3.39 for 1st quarter 1999. That difference amounts to an annual income difference of approximately \$7,000. This significant income differential certainly needs to be considered as an important reason for the rural labor shortage.

Table 1
Revenue Activity, by Industry Group
1997, 1998, and 1st and 2nd Quarters 1999 (percent)

	1997		1998		1999			
	Quarterly Average		Quarterly Average		1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter ¹	
	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼
All Industries	48	26	42	27	44	27	40	14
Manufacturing	55	24	39	31	46	30	42	16
Wholesale Trade	47	26	38	36	36	41	33	26
Retail Trade	43	29	43	26	47	23	44	9
FIRE ²	59	18	53	18	47	19	44	9
TCU ³	59	22	46	20	52	20	42	16
Services	49	25	46	23	47	27	39	12
Other	42	23	31	34	34	29	35	13

Notes: ▲ = Increase in current quarter revenues over year-ago levels.

▼ = Decrease in current quarter revenues over year-ago levels.

¹Expected changes

²Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

³Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

Table 2
Revenue Activity, by Region
1997, 1998, and 1st and 2nd Quarters 1999 (percent)

	1997		1998		1999			
	Quarterly Average		Quarterly Average		1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter ¹	
	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼	▲	▼
Metro Counties²								
All Industries	51	26	46	24	49	23	47	10
Manufacturing	58	25	44	27	51	31	48	13
Wholesale Trade	47	30	45	27	39	31	48	15
Retail Trade	43	31	44	26	53	17	48	7
FIRE ³	71	14	54	21	63	15	57	7
TCU ⁴	65	19	52	18	55	21	47	16
Services	53	24	47	23	51	24	42	11
Other	40	25	45	22	34	25	47	2
Nonmetro Counties								
All Industries	46	25	38	29	39	31	34	17
Manufacturing	52	23	35	33	42	29	38	18
Wholesale Trade	48	23	32	42	34	49	22	34
Retail Trade	42	29	42	26	42	28	41	11
FIRE ³	45	22	51	15	30	23	28	11
TCU ⁴	55	24	41	21	50	19	38	17
Services	42	27	46	23	40	32	33	14
Other	45	21	23	38	35	32	25	23

Notes: ▲ = Increase in current quarter revenues over year-ago levels.

▼ = Decrease in current quarter revenues over year-ago levels.

¹Expected changes

²Includes Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington Counties

³Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

⁴Transportation, Communication, and Utilities

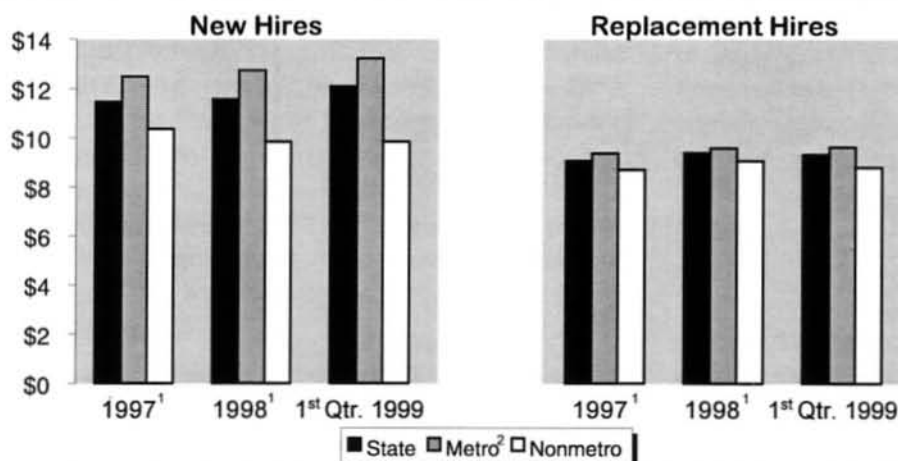
Table 3
Full-time Job Hires
1997, 1998, and 1st Quarter 1999¹

	1997 Quarterly Average	1998 Quarterly Average	1999 1 st Quarter
New Job Hires			
Metro ²	13,548	11,415	7,519
Nonmetro	9,595	6,642	3,707
State	23,143	18,057	11,226
Replacement Hires			
Metro ²	18,127	22,412	20,766
Nonmetro	12,712	11,228	11,780
State	30,839	33,640	32,546

¹State estimates based on Nebraska Quarterly Business Conditions Survey (NQBCS) results since 1997

²Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington Counties

Figure 1
Average Hourly Wages for Full-Time New and Replacement Hires
1997, 1998, and 1st Quarter 1999



¹Four quarter average

²Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington Counties

It has already been mentioned that unfilled jobs and the general lack of qualified applicants continue to be serious problems across the state. Table 4 shows that an estimated 13,475 jobs were unfilled during 1st quarter 1999. Sixty percent were unfilled because of the lack of qualified applicants. The rate was slightly higher for nonmetro counties at approximately 62 percent. Undoubtedly, these very high rates are adversely affecting the economy's capacity to grow. Businesses are

demonstrating that there are market opportunities, but many are unable to take advantage of these opportunities because of a lack of qualified applicants. This suggests a growing need for education and job training. The education and training needs are greatest in the vocational areas.

Detailed regional reports for the five nonmetro regions and two metro regions for the 1st quarter survey are available on the following internet sites:

www.bbr.unl.edu
www.ded.state.ne.us
www.dol.state.ne.us

Table 4
Total Full-time Unfilled Positions and Positions Unfilled Due to Lack of Qualified Applicants
1st Quarter 1999¹

Occupation	State		Metro ²		Nonmetro	
	Total Unfilled	Unfilled Due to Lack of Qualified Applicants	Total Unfilled	Unfilled Due to Lack of Qualified Applicants	Total Unfilled	Unfilled Due to Lack of Qualified Applicants
Executives/Administrators	194	73	121	48	73	25
Managers	424	187	277	155	147	32
Professional Specialists	1,605	945	953	652	652	293
Marketing/Sales	929	578	823	497	106	81
Administrative Support/Clerical	1,589	1,076	978	554	611	522
Service Workers	2,835	1,662	2,102	1,442	733	220
Transportation/Material Movers	1,149	913	505	367	644	546
Production/Craft/Repair	2,697	1,434	2,094	1,141	603	293
Operators/Fabricators/Laborers	2,053	1,238	1,540	921	513	317
Total	13,475	8,106	9,393	5,777	4,082	2,329

¹State estimates based on 1st quarter 1999 Nebraska Quarterly Business Condition Survey (NQBCS)

²Metro includes Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Washington Counties.

Regional Composition

Omaha MSA—Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington Counties

Lincoln MSA—Lancaster County

Northeast—Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Platte, Rock, Stanton, Thurston, and Wayne Counties

Southeast—Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, and York Counties

Central—Adams, Blaine, Buffalo, Clay, Custer, Franklin, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Howard, Kearney, Loup, Merrick, Nance, Nuckolls, Phelps, Sherman, Valley, Webster, and Wheeler Counties

Mid-Plains—Arthur, Chase, Cherry, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow, and Thomas Counties

Panhandle—Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, and Sioux Counties

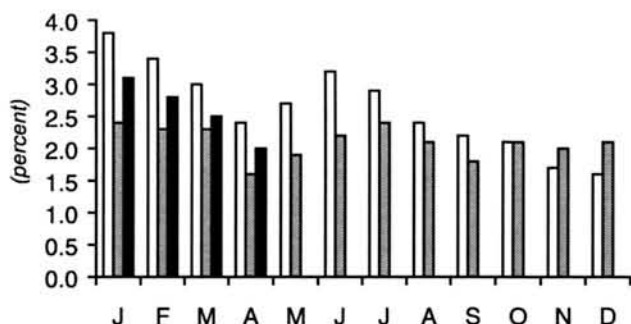
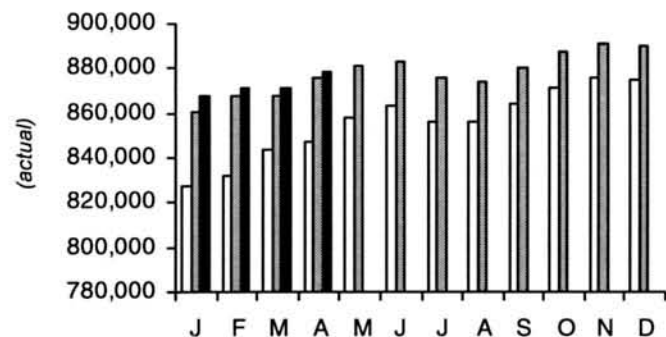
NQBCS is a joint project of the Nebraska Departments of Economic Development and Labor, and BBR. The following individuals contributed to the completion of this report: Phil Baker, Jolee Wheatley, Jane Sutherland, and Clarence Waldman, Nebraska Department of Labor; Tom Doering and Stu Miller, Nebraska Department of Economic Development; and David Bennett and Charles Lamphear, BBR.

Nebraska Stats

1997
 1998
 1999

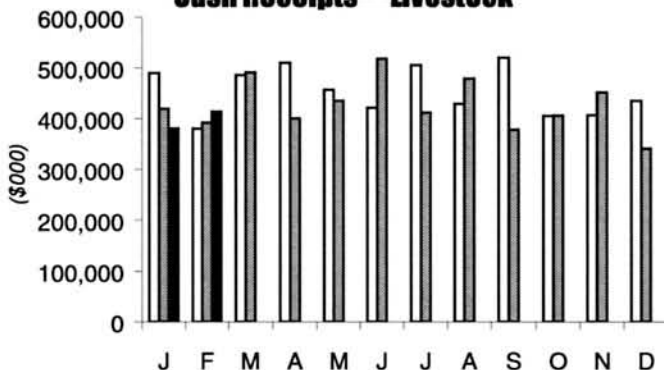
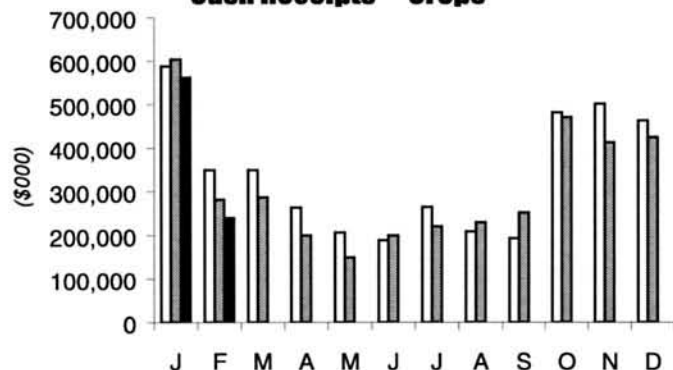
Total Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment

Unemployment Rate



Cash Receipts—Crops

Cash Receipts—Livestock



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

	February 1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago		February 1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago
Ainsworth, Brown	1,412	3,061	-2.5	Kenesaw, Adams	279	699	8.5
Albion, Boone	1,405	2,943	-4.2	Kimball, Kimball	1,436	2,876	6.5
Alliance, Box Butte	5,129	10,369	-2.2	La Vista, Sarpy	7,426	15,380	6.5
Alma, Hartan	551	1,116	-4.4	Laurel, Cedar	267	564	3.9
Arapahoe, Furnas	603	1,228	1.9	Lexington, Dawson	6,398	12,998	-1.6
Arlington, Washington	200	363	-0.8	Lincoln, Lancaster	177,403	362,676	4.3
Arnold, Custer	223	429	-19.2	Louisville, Cass	472	861	13.1
Ashland, Saunders	778	1,642	2.8	Loup City, Sherman	518	1,155	1.6
Atkinson, Holt	816	1,598	-1.2	Lyons, Burt	361	785	1.3
Auburn, Nemaha	1,998	4,001	-5.4	Madison, Madison	605	1,432	14.3
Aurora, Hamilton	2,368	4,812	3.2	McCook, Red Willow	9,653	20,010	2.1
Axtell, Kearney	42	92	-22.7	Milford, Seward	615	1,802	-2.9
Bassett, Rock	302	618	-6.1	Minatare, Scotts Bluff	121	242	-9.0
Battle Creek, Madison	602	1,294	7.6	Minden, Kearney	1,389	2,955	7.8
Bayard, Morrill	386	817	-6.7	Mitchell, Scotts Bluff	665	1,395	-3.5
Beatrice, Gage	8,948	18,613	-1.5	Morrill, Scotts Bluff	358	728	-6.1
Beaver City, Furnas	102	218	6.3	Nebraska City, Otoe	5,323	10,364	-4.8
Bellevue, Sarpy	16,198	33,008	8.8	Neligh, Antelope	1,140	2,297	-4.8
Benkelman, Dundy	451	917	0.9	Newman Grove, Madison	223	501	-0.6
Bennington, Douglas	392	701	23.9	Norfolk, Madison	24,551	50,735	-0.2
Blair, Washington	5,885	11,900	2.2	North Bend, Dodge	373	782	-2.0
Bloomfield, Knox	462	975	-20.5	North Platte, Lincoln	18,716	38,837	4.6
Blue Hill, Webster	378	813	-6.9	O'Neill, Holt	3,361	7,147	0.9
Bridgeport, Morrill	884	1,824	0.4	Oakland, Burt	604	1,294	6.1
Broken Bow, Custer	3,264	6,605	-3.7	Ogallala, Keith	4,330	8,975	3.9
Burwell, Garfield	574	1,195	-0.3	Omaha, Douglas	418,898	860,360	5.9
Cairo, Hall	151	297	-27.7	Ord, Valley	1,671	3,343	-2.7
Central City, Merrick	1,516	2,953	2.0	Osceola, Polk	615	1,219	-0.7
Chadron, Dawes	3,945	8,185	7.9	Oshkosh, Garden	405	852	1.3
Chappell, Deuel	412	811	-3.9	Osmond, Pierce	221	480	-12.7
Clarkson, Colfax	283	580	-23.9	Oxford, Furnas	492	967	13.8
Clay Center, Clay	342	756	6.9	Papillion, Sarpy	6,119	12,499	16.1
Columbus, Platte	16,852	34,892	-0.2	Pawnee City, Pawnee	278	580	2.1
Cozad, Dawson	2,756	5,571	2.1	Pender, Thurston	532	1,077	-4.4
Crawford, Dawes	343	732	-2.8	Pierce, Pierce	522	1,091	-5.2
Creighton, Knox	1,032	2,204	13.5	Plainview, Pierce	623	1,217	0.7
Crete, Saline	2,672	5,551	-1.6	Plattsmouth, Cass	2,839	5,790	0.7
Crofton, Knox	325	625	4.5	Ponca, Dixon	410	894	-3.8
Curtis, Frontier	302	640	2.9	Ralston, Douglas	2,775	5,524	-0.8
Dakota City, Dakota	289	616	-8.9	Randolph, Cedar	351	733	-7.0
David City, Butler	1,251	2,594	8.0	Ravenna, Buffalo	607	1,285	-14.2
Deshler, Thayer	310	598	3.8	Red Cloud, Webster	540	1,159	-1.1
Dodge, Dodge	176	356	6.3	Rushville, Sheridan	454	961	-3.4
Doniphan, Hall	698	1,587	-13.8	Sargent, Custer	147	313	2.6
Eagle, Cass	184	394	-1.7	Schuyler, Colfax	1,578	3,195	-11.0
Elgin, Antelope	343	704	-5.4	Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff	17,566	36,023	2.4
Elkhorn, Douglas	1,624	3,500	-2.6	Scribner, Dodge	290	642	-15.5
Elm Creek, Buffalo	270	680	20.4	Seward, Seward	4,273	8,551	4.4
Elwood, Gosper	333	728	-2.3	Shelby, Polk	261	522	-3.9
Fairbury, Jefferson	2,829	5,990	9.8	Shelton, Buffalo	227	1,243	2.2
Fairmont, Fillmore	109	252	10.0	Sidney, Cheyenne	6,031	11,846	0.0
Falls City, Richardson	2,141	4,296	-0.5	South Sioux City, Dakota	6,979	14,283	0.0
Franklin, Franklin	463	974	-10.1	Springfield, Sarpy	442	774	80.8
Fremont, Dodge	19,792	38,875	8.2	St. Paul, Howard	998	2,101	-4.3
Friend, Saline	475	924	5.0	Stanton, Stanton	545	1,109	0.4
Fullerton, Nance	426	992	-3.4	Stromsburg, Polk	644	1,224	-3.2
Geneva, Fillmore	1,334	2,725	-4.3	Superior, Nuckolls	1,341	2,758	4.0
Genoa, Nance	268	552	-2.6	Sutherland, Lincoln	313	634	12.0
Gering, Scotts Bluff	3,265	6,467	3.3	Sutton, Clay	754	1,632	0.3
Gibbon, Buffalo	755	1,508	-3.5	Syracuse, Otoe	1,034	1,959	4.1
Gordon, Shendan	1,503	2,926	4.1	Tecumseh, Johnson	716	1,509	2.2
Gothenburg, Dawson	2,006	4,076	3.3	Tekamah, Burt	967	1,967	4.6
Grand Island, Hall	42,047	85,807	-3.2	Tilden, Madison	341	812	5.3
Grant, Perkins	941	1,787	0.0	Utica, Seward	240	580	-1.0
Gretna, Sarpy	2,100	4,347	-3.6	Valentine, Cherry	3,496	6,977	4.4
Hartington, Cedar	1,247	2,820	-4.2	Valley, Douglas	648	1,244	-17.6
Hastings, Adams	17,423	35,499	0.9	Wahoo, Saunders	1,683	3,794	-6.0
Hay Springs, Sheridan	298	645	2.1	Wakefield, Dixon	265	563	-3.9
Hebron, Thayer	1,691	3,518	-0.8	Wauneta, Chase	304	618	-3.9
Henderson, York	515	985	7.9	Waverly, Lancaster	636	1,330	-11.7
Hickman, Lancaster	209	455	11.5	Wayne, Wayne	2,943	6,836	22.4
Holdrege, Phelps	3,521	7,360	-2.5	Weeping Water, Cass	523	1,021	-18.9
Hooper, Dodge	310	634	-2.3	West Point, Cuming	3,230	6,652	-2.7
Humboldt, Richardson	437	906	2.1	Wilber, Saline	402	810	-4.3
Humphrey, Platte	522	1,012	-5.6	Wisner, Cuming	487	950	-5.0
Imperial, Chase	1,657	3,421	1.5	Wood River, Hall	312	643	-8.5
Juniata, Adams	185	419	4.5	Wymore, Gage	394	798	7.5
Kearney, Buffalo	27,565	56,464	6.4	York, York	8,453	17,504	1.5

*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	YTD	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February	YTD	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February	YTD	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	February	YTD	% Chg. vs Yr. Ago	
	1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)		1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)		1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)		1999 (\$000)	YTD (\$000)		
Nebraska	176,580	347,348	3.9	1,196,074	2,437,747	2.6	Howard	819	1,462	-5.0	1,248	2,648	-4.8
Adams	3,524	6,389	11.0	18,054	36,959	1.1	Jefferson	884	1,918	-1.0	3,653	7,637	7.8
Antelope	675	1,609	-26.3	1,807	3,620	-2.0	Johnson	502	956	-11.6	1,007	2,120	1.8
Arthur	78	190	6.7	31	66	(D)	Kearney	765	1,598	-24.6	1,511	3,202	5.4
Banner	135	185	-32.2	(D)	(D)	(D)	Keith	1,372	2,612	40.1	4,733	9,710	3.9
Blaine	61	170	-4.0	46	106	-8.6	Keya Paha	100	192	-8.6	67	141	6.0
Boone	613	1,376	-25.1	1,725	3,650	-7.2	Kimball	605	1,002	30.8	1,462	2,919	5.4
Box Butte	1,457	2,559	-15.0	5,390	10,906	-1.7	Knox	1,155	2,060	-0.3	2,281	4,812	1.5
Boyd	216	463	-22.4	401	852	2.2	Lancaster	23,036	43,800	12.1	179,246	366,618	4.2
Brown	333	823	1.4	1,452	3,140	-2.7	Lincoln	3,975	7,631	18.5	19,560	40,505	4.6
Buffalo	3,859	8,733	-1.3	29,730	61,764	5.6	Logan	154	266	-15.3	(D)	(D)	(D)
Burt	1,244	2,072	16.5	2,090	4,358	4.8	Loup	151	258	15.7	(D)	(D)	(D)
Butler	1,283	2,328	12.7	1,663	3,498	10.6	McPherson	45	108	-42.6	(D)	(D)	(D)
Cass	2,971	6,200	18.2	5,179	10,382	2.5	Madison	3,440	7,163	9.7	26,376	54,906	0.4
Cedar	1,201	2,097	-15.8	2,044	4,515	-4.1	Merrick	929	1,899	-13.8	1,950	3,864	1.9
Chase	544	1,338	-0.3	1,970	4,057	0.6	Morrill	584	1,191	6.3	1,313	2,728	0.3
Cherry	592	1,652	-16.2	3,658	7,301	3.7	Nance	277	763	-29.2	699	1,555	-5.0
Cheyenne	962	2,114	22.4	6,276	12,329	0.4	Nemaha	852	1,612	-19.8	2,186	4,520	-4.8
Clay	723	1,935	-6.2	1,946	4,042	4.1	Nuckolls	541	1,185	3.1	1,828	3,800	4.1
Colfax	872	2,128	3.0	2,152	4,450	-12.1	Otoe	1,672	3,679	-3.1	6,709	13,008	-3.3
Cuming	1,098	2,075	-7.5	4,136	8,482	-2.7	Pawnee	332	574	-41.1	417	885	2.4
Custer	1,312	2,784	2.7	4,066	8,257	-4.1	Perkins	891	1,675	40.2	1,085	2,095	-0.5
Dakota	2,148	4,066	13.6	7,812	16,046	-0.4	Phelps	1,112	2,297	-11.1	3,728	7,807	-3.3
Dawes	657	1,317	-21.6	4,287	8,916	6.9	Pierce	777	1,612	-8.1	1,411	2,887	-4.2
Dawson	2,147	5,030	-12.7	11,443	23,195	0.1	Platte	3,387	7,514	5.1	17,782	36,703	-0.9
Deuel	312	613	13.7	852	1,752	3.9	Polk	596	1,425	-14.7	1,681	3,325	-1.4
Dixon	818	1,344	-24.5	747	1,625	-7.8	Red Willow	1,097	2,073	-19.9	9,868	20,467	1.5
Dodge	3,921	7,305	18.4	21,176	41,769	7.4	Richardson	615	1,381	-31.4	2,764	5,595	-0.4
Douglas	45,863	85,607	12.5	425,657	874,221	5.8	Rock	199	361	-39.9	307	629	-4.4
Dundy	495	888	22.3	462	939	0.5	Saline	1,152	2,701	-2.9	3,882	8,049	-1.1
Fillmore	803	1,789	-11.8	1,957	4,143	0.4	Sarpy	12,522	23,539	11.0	33,481	68,467	9.3
Franklin	556	1,040	1.2	690	1,377	-8.9	Saunders	2,132	4,676	-4.0	4,291	9,273	-4.8
Frontier	459	941	5.8	547	1,134	-1.6	Scotts Bluff	3,672	6,820	-0.8	22,034	44,967	2.2
Furnas	464	1,133	-23.8	1,951	4,020	6.0	Seward	1,821	3,559	4.6	5,334	11,347	2.3
Gage	2,069	4,611	-7.4	9,948	20,620	-1.5	Sheridan	668	1,357	-18.3	2,552	5,039	2.0
Garden	194	436	-48.3	502	1,075	4.7	Sherman	394	819	5.7	589	1,334	4.5
Garfield	221	372	-23.6	573	1,193	-0.4	Sioux	240	470	-23.7	87	171	-6.6
Gosper	364	791	53.3	381	838	0.6	Stanton	543	1,218	-13.5	653	1,455	8.7
Grant	142	351	17.0	158	303	-18.1	Thayer	570	1,592	-12.4	2,389	4,923	-1.3
Greeley	320	745	11.0	466	1,000	4.0	Thomas	126	237	-7.8	189	430	-11.7
Hall	5,681	10,604	3.4	43,437	88,831	-3.5	Thurston	451	938	-12.1	633	1,337	-3.0
Hamilton	1,174	2,446	4.2	2,635	5,339	1.2	Valley	344	865	-3.9	1,824	3,791	1.1
Harlan	405	802	-2.2	669	1,336	-3.8	Washington	2,525	4,826	16.5	6,528	13,159	3.1
Hayes	136	247	-38.6	(D)	(D)	(D)	Wayne	817	1,792	-5.5	3,076	7,104	21.3
Hitchcock	416	755	-9.4	465	921	-9.3	Webster	298	618	-32.1	986	2,123	-5.3
Holt	1,261	2,696	-16.4	4,625	9,806	1.4	Wheeler	117	225	-44.9	61	128	-11.7
Hooker	34	220	17.0	163	334	-2.9	York	1,865	3,428	-6.4	9,311	19,183	0.4

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

Source: Nebraska Department of Revenue

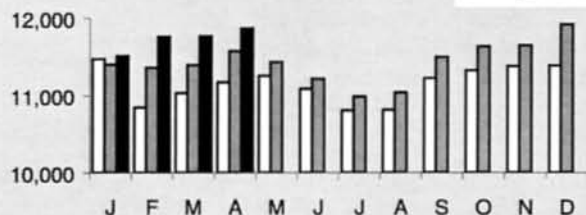
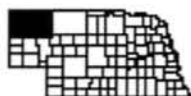
Note on Net Taxable Retail Sales

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* 1997 to April** 1999

1997 1998 1999

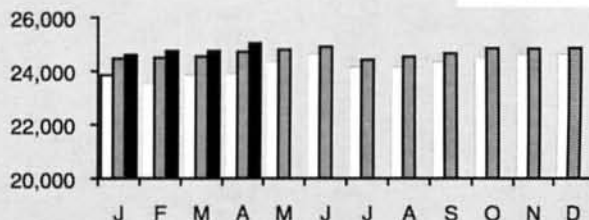
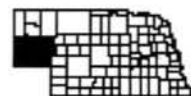
Northwest Panhandle



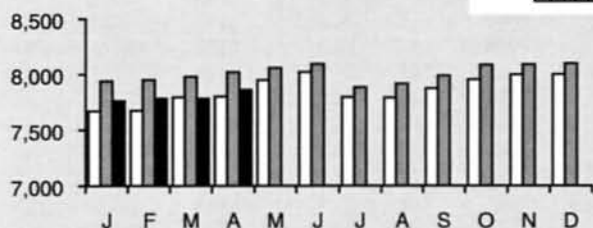
Note to Readers

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

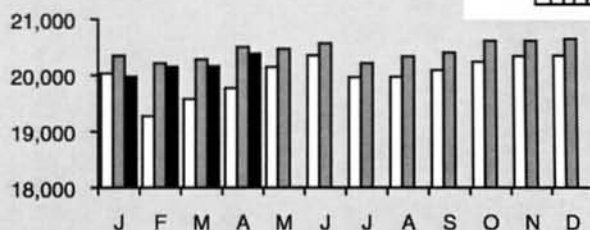
Southwest Panhandle



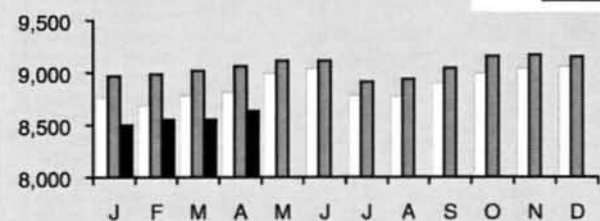
North Central



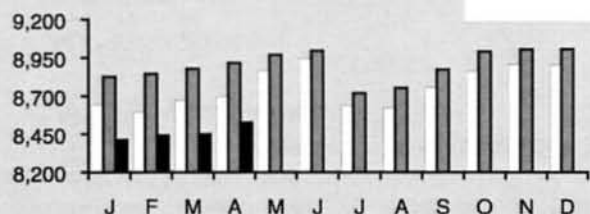
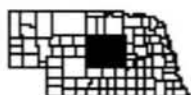
West Central



Southwest Central



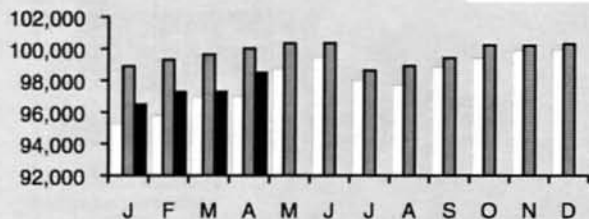
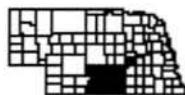
East Central



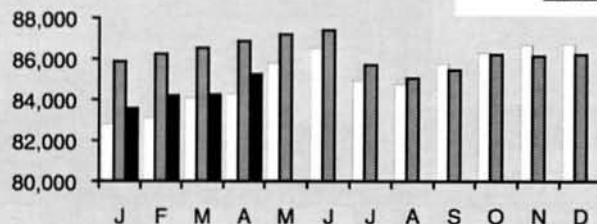
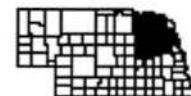
Regional Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment* 1997 to April** 1999

1997 1998 1999

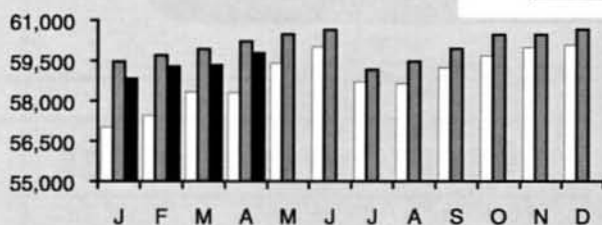
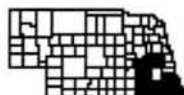
Southeast Central



Northeast

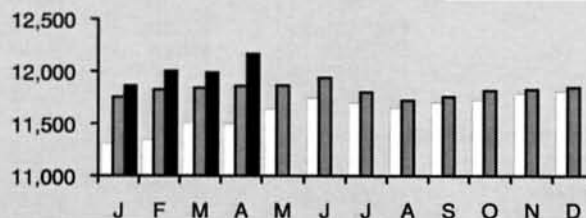


Southeast



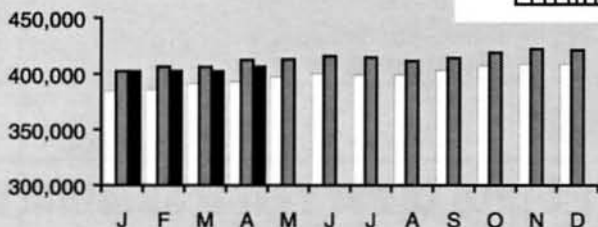
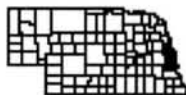
Sioux City MSA

Nebraska portion only

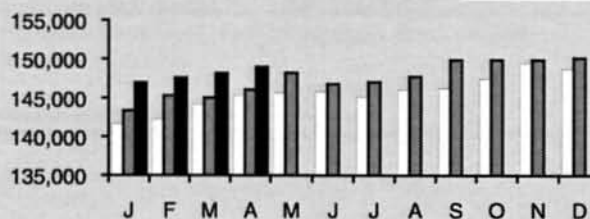


Omaha MSA

Nebraska portion only



Lincoln MSA



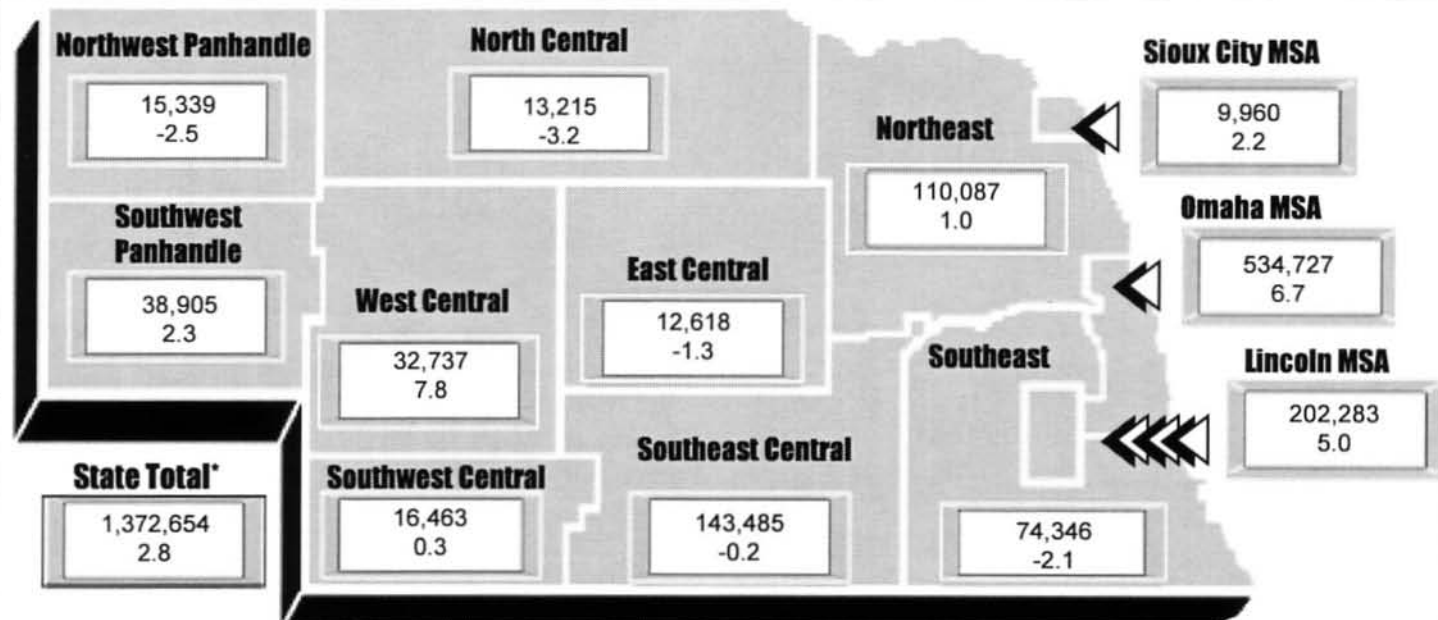
*By place of work

**Current month data are preliminary and subject to revision

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

February 1999 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*

	Preliminary April 1999	Revised March 1999	March % Change vs Yr. Ago
Total	878,619	871,538	0.4
Construction & Mining	41,714	38,571	0.6
Manufacturing	117,332	117,482	-0.5
Durables	56,931	56,795	-0.8
Nondurables	60,401	60,687	-0.1
TCU**	58,961	58,646	6.7
Trade	211,221	209,228	-0.8
Wholesale	55,392	55,055	-3.8
Retail	155,829	154,173	0.3
FIRE***	58,444	58,178	3.5
Services	239,574	237,907	1.3
Government	151,373	151,526	-2.1

*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)

	April 1999	% Change vs Yr. Ago	YTD % Change vs Yr. Ago (inflation rate)
All Items	166.2	2.3	1.9
Commodities	144.6	1.8	0.9
Services	187.8	2.5	2.5

*U = All urban consumers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Inflation Rate

1.9

State Labor Force Summary*

	Preliminary April 1999	Revised March 1999	March % Change vs Yr. Ago
Labor Force	925,299	923,262	0.5
Employment	906,792	900,042	0.3
Unemployment Rate	2.0	2.5	

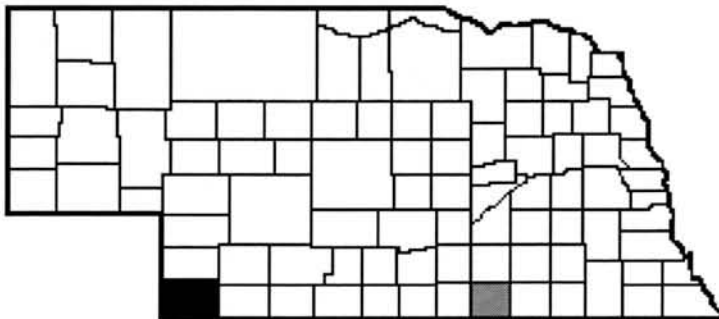
*By place of residence

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information

County of the Month

Dundy

Benkelman-County Seat



License plate prefix number: 76

Size of county: 920 square miles, ranks 20th in the state

Population: 2,302 in 1998, a change of -10.8 percent from 1990

Per capita personal income: \$23,646 in 1997, ranks 9th in the state

Net taxable retail sales (\$000): \$11,408 in 1998, a change of 3.6 percent from 1997; \$1,828 from January through February of 1999, a change of 10.1 percent from the same period the previous year.

Number of worksites¹: 96 in 1997

Unemployment rate: 1.4 percent in Dundy County, 2.6 percent in Nebraska for 1997

	State	Dundy County
Nonfarm employment (1997)²:	855,802	614
(wage & salary)	<i>(percent of total)</i>	
Construction and Mining	4.6	2.0
Manufacturing	13.6	(D)
TCU	6.2	7.5
Wholesale Trade	6.4	11.1
Retail Trade	18.1	15.1
FIRE	6.4	(D)
Services	26.8	21.0
Government	17.8	39.7

(D) = disclosure supression

Agriculture:

Number of farms: 308 in 1992, 389 in 1987

Average farm size: 1,717 acres in 1992

Market value of farm products sold: \$81.3 million in 1992 (\$264,002 average per farm)

¹Worksites refers to business activity covered under the Nebraska Employment Security Law. Information presented has been extracted from the Employer's Quarterly Contribution Report, Nebraska Form UI-11. For further details about covered worksites, see the Nebraska Employers Guide to Unemployment Insurance.

²By place of work

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

bulletin board

Recommended Reading for Inflation Watchers

Go to BBR's web page, www.bbr.unl.edu, and click on "Help Wanted." This informative article notes two important labor market indicators of inflationary pressures.

The article, written by Howard J. Wall of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, appeared in the May 1999 issue of *National Economic Trends*, published by the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank.

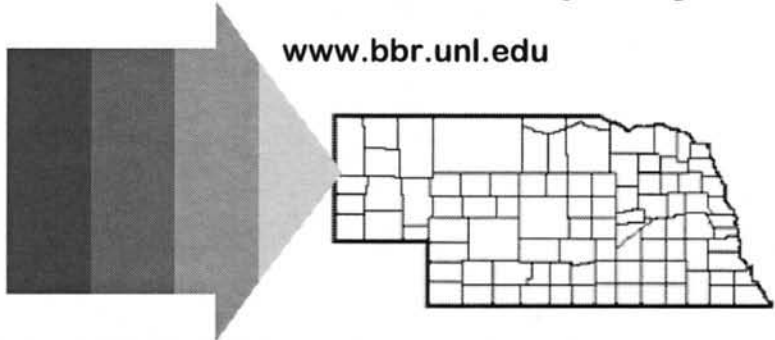
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