

## RECENT TRENDS IN SELECTED NEBRASKA ECONOMIC NUMBERS

Updated February 7, 2012

**LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT:** Numbers from the Nebraska Department of Labor show the state's labor force averaged 1,001,838 workers in November 2011. The annual average Nebraska unemployment rate has been among the lowest in the nation for years (Figure 1). In November 2011, U.S. labor data show the Nebraska not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.6 percent. The not seasonally adjusted Nebraska rate in November 2010 was 4.0 percent.

In November 2011, Douglas County (Omaha) had an unemployment rate of 4.1 percent. Lancaster County (Lincoln) had a rate of 3.2 percent. In November 2011, the highest rates in Nebraska were in Hooker County with 5.8 percent and 9.2 percent in Thurston County (see Map 1).

The annual average Nebraska unemployment rate was 3.8 percent in 2005; 3.2 percent in 2006; 3.0 percent in 2007; 3.3 percent in 2008; 4.7 percent in 2009; and 4.7 percent in 2010; compared to 5.1 percent; 4.6 percent; 4.6 percent; 5.8 percent; 9.3 percent, and 9.6 percent overall in the U.S.

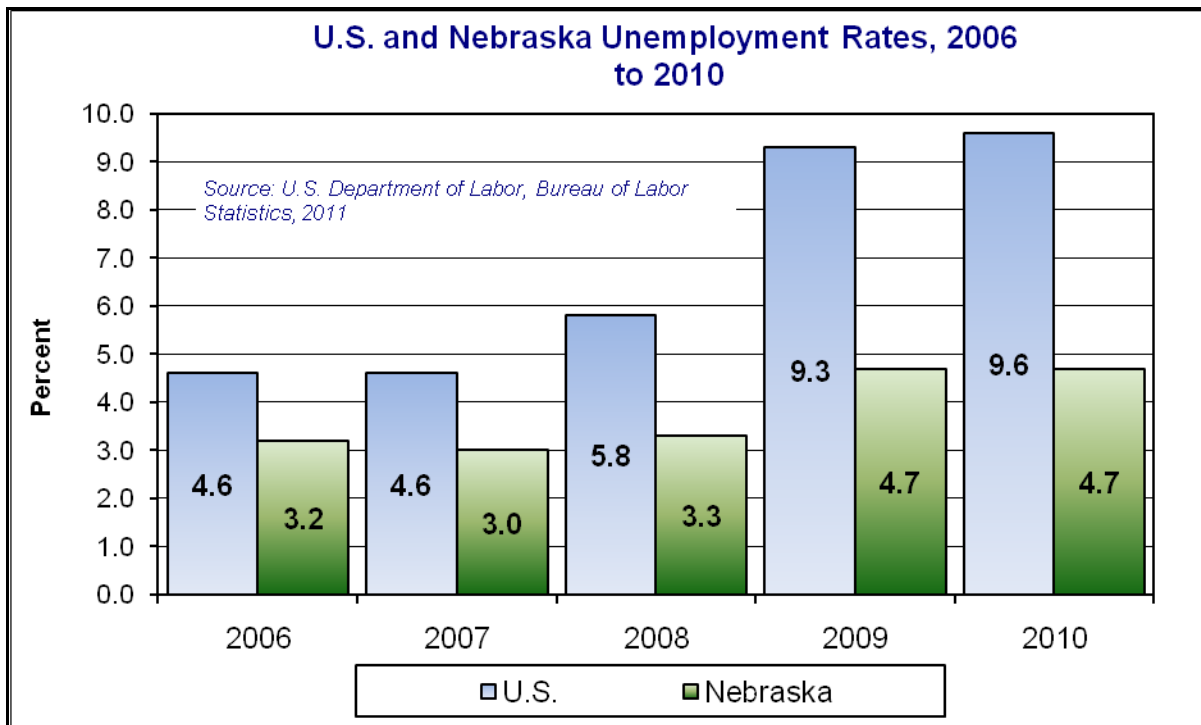
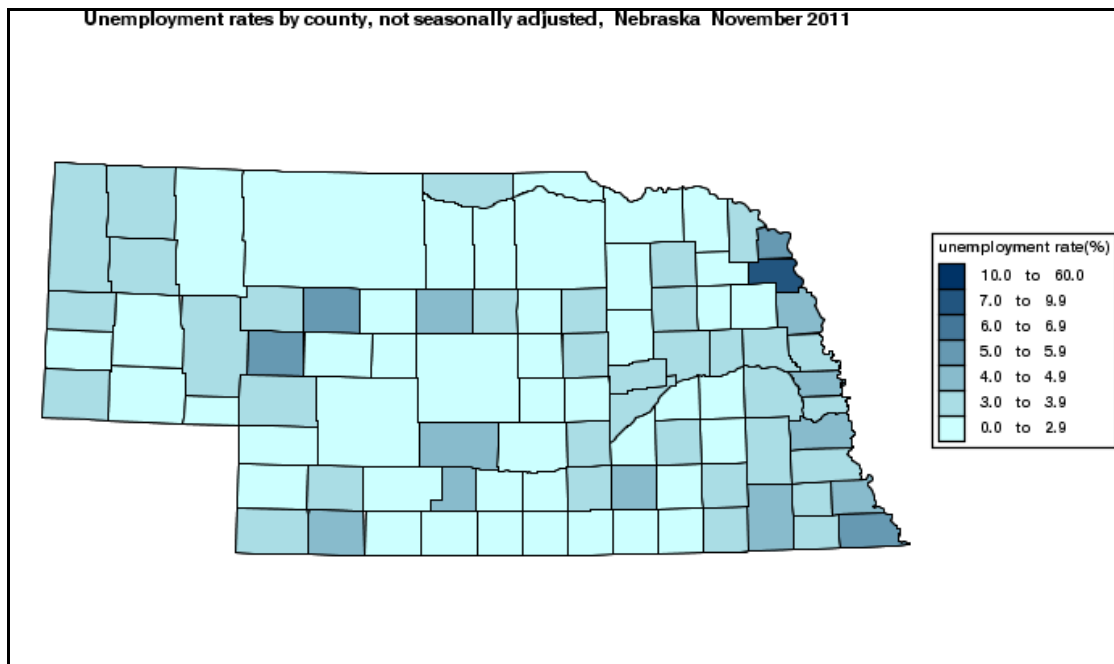


Figure 1

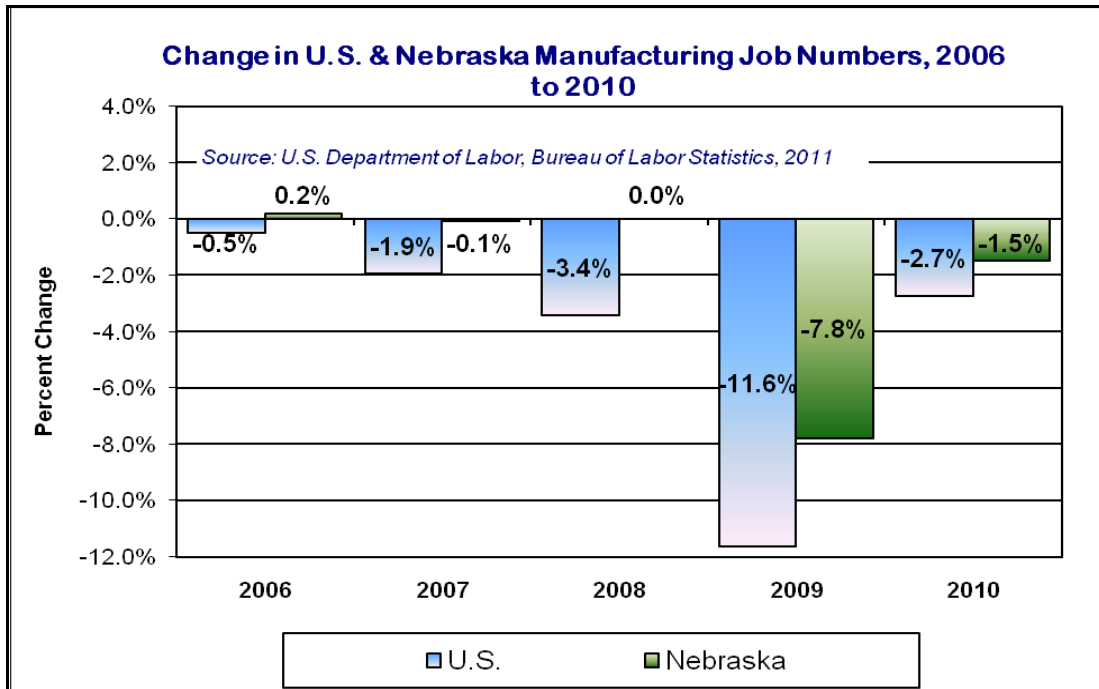
**JOB GROWTH:** The Nebraska growth in non-farm payroll employment (jobs) has generally been positive in recent years. Nebraska Department of Labor preliminary numbers show that, between October 2011 and November 2011, the number of non-farm payroll jobs decreased by 1,033 jobs. But that includes 14,674 more jobs that in November 2011. During November 2011, Nebraska non-farm jobs totaled 966,153 (see [Nebraska Databook table](#)).



*Map 1*

**MANUFACTURING JOB GROWTH:** Throughout the 1990s, the number of Nebraska manufacturing jobs increased each year, generally faster than the national rate. However, since 2006 (and, especially, during the recent recession) both the national and Nebraska manufacturing job growth rates have been largely negative (Figure 2). During November 2011, however, preliminary Nebraska Department of Labor estimates show the number of Nebraska manufacturing jobs averaged 94,561, or 178 more, than during October 2011. That number was also 2,514 more than November 2010.

The number of Nebraska manufacturing jobs decreased 0.1 percent in 2005; increased 0.2 percent in 2006; decreased 0.1 percent in 2007, neither increased nor decreased in 2008, decreased 7.8 percent in 2009, and, finally decreased 1.5 percent in 2010. Overall in the U.S., the number of manufacturing jobs decreased 0.6 percent in 2005; decreased 0.5 percent in 2006; decreased 1.9 percent in 2007; decreased 3.4 percent in 2008; decreased 11.6 percent in 2009; and decreased 2.7 percent in 2010.



*Figure 2*

**RESIDENTIAL BUILDING UNITS:** The U.S. Bureau of the Census' Construction Statistics Division reported that Nebraska permit-issuing places authorized the construction of 433 new residential units in October 2011. That represented a decrease of 28.8 percent compared to the number of units authorized in October 2010. The value of new residential permits decreased 23.5 percent from September 2011 to October 2011, or from \$87.9 million to \$67.2 million.

The number of Nebraska residential building permits decreased 11.7 percent in 2006; decreased 9.8 percent in 2007, decreased 17.2 percent in 2008, decreased 21.3 percent in 2009, and decreased 2.7 percent in 2010 (see Figure 3 and [Nebraska Databook table](#)). Nationally, the number of residential units fell 14.7 percent in 2006; 24.0 percent in 2007; 35.3 percent in 2008; 35.6 percent in 2009; and, preliminarily, increased 2.6 percent in 2010.

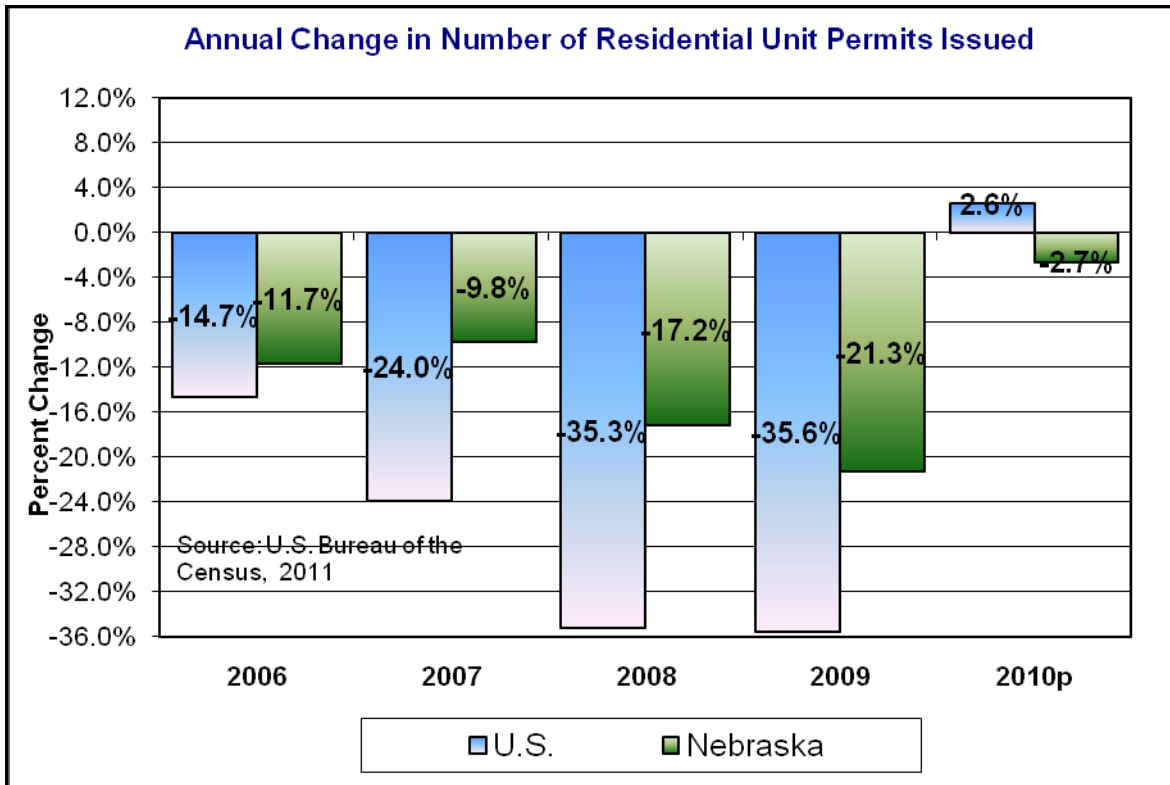


Figure 3

**NET TAXABLE RETAIL SALES:** Nebraska net taxable retail sales have generally increased steadily on a monthly and annual basis until the recent recession. But in November 2011, state taxable retail sales totaled \$2.1 billion, or 5.2 percent more, than during November 2010 (see Figure 4 and [table](#)). They were also up 6.8 percent year-to-date.

Total annual taxable retail sales increased 3.7 percent in 2003; 7.8 percent in 2004; 4.6 percent in 2005; 3.4 percent in 2006; 4.3 percent in 2007; increased 1.1 percent in 2008; decreased 3.4 percent in 2009; and rebounded to increase 3.4 percent in 2010. Both the 2004 month-to-month and year-to-date growth were, in part, a result of the expansion of the sales tax to some service sector activities in October 2003. In 2004, the state sales tax rate was set permanently at 5.5 percent and some service sales taxes were repealed.

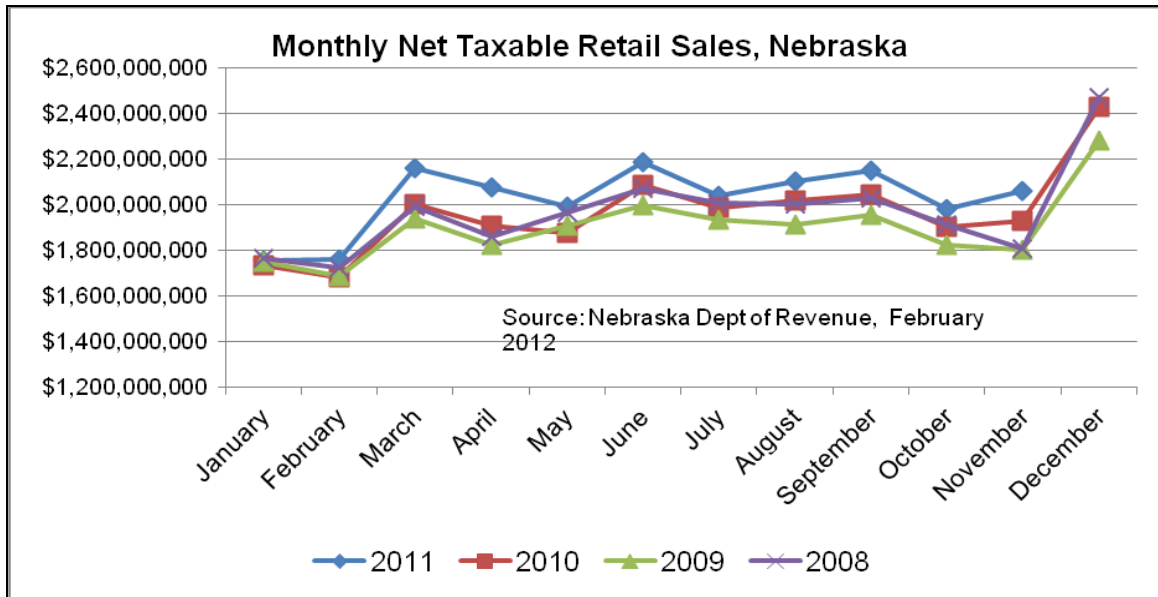


Figure 4

**MERCHANDISE EXPORTS:** Nebraska has been a major exporter of agricultural crop and livestock products for many years (see [Nebraska Databook table](#)). The state has also increased exports of other goods and services (see Figure 5). In October 2011, Nebraska goods exports were up 24.7 percent compared to September 2011, specifically, they were \$726.7 million compared to \$582.8 million in September 2011. But they were also 31.5 percent higher than in October 2010.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau began releasing estimates of the value of state imports. Those numbers suggest that monthly Nebraska imports generally average 40-50 percent of the value of state exports. In October 2011, state imports totaled an estimated \$302.3 million, 24.7 percent higher than in October 2010.

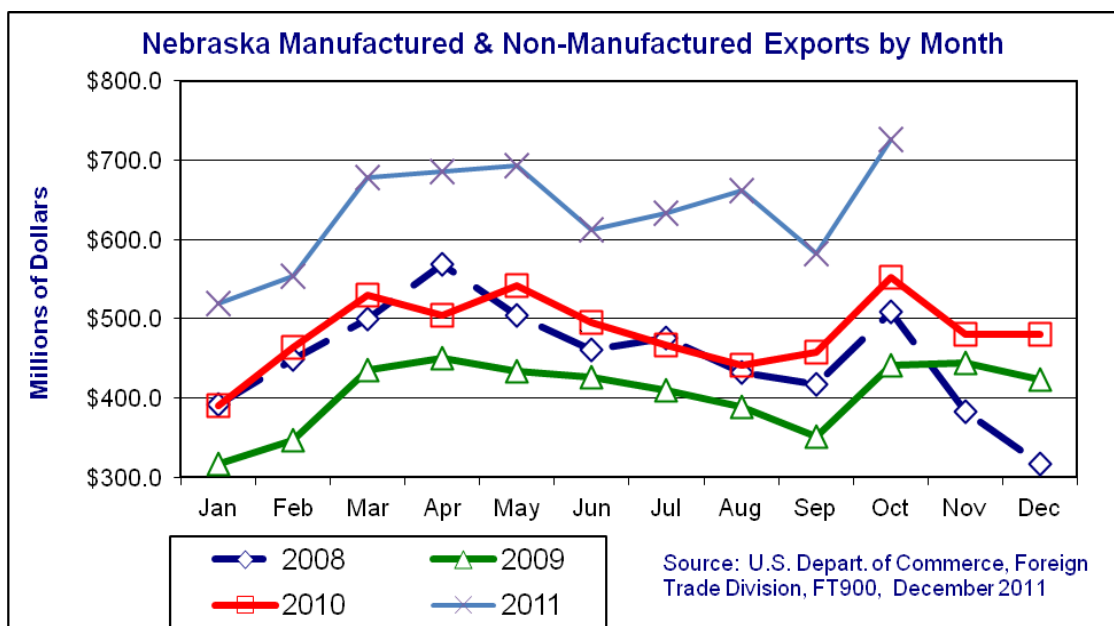


Figure 5

**INCOME:** Historically, Nebraska's per capita income (PCI) has been below the U.S. average (Figure 6). In 2001, Nebraska per capita income was 96.0 percent of the national average; but, in 2010, Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates show the state's PCI of \$39,557 was 97.5 percent of the U.S. figure. And, for the last 4 years, Nebraska PCI has exceeded the Plains' region average PCI.

Nebraska per capita personal income was \$35,679 in 2006, a 4.1 percent growth from 2005; increased to \$38,156 in 2007, a 6.9 percent growth; increased to \$40,116 in 2008, a 4.9 percent increase; fell to \$39,277 in 2009, a 2.1 percent decline; and increased to \$39,557 in 2010, a 0.7 percent increase. From 2009 to 2010, national per capita income increased an estimated 2.4 percent. Total personal income in Nebraska increased 2.2 percent in between 2009 and 2010, or from \$70,665,000,000 in 2009 to an estimated \$72,244,000,000 in 2010. Nationally, the growth rate was 3.0 percent between those years.

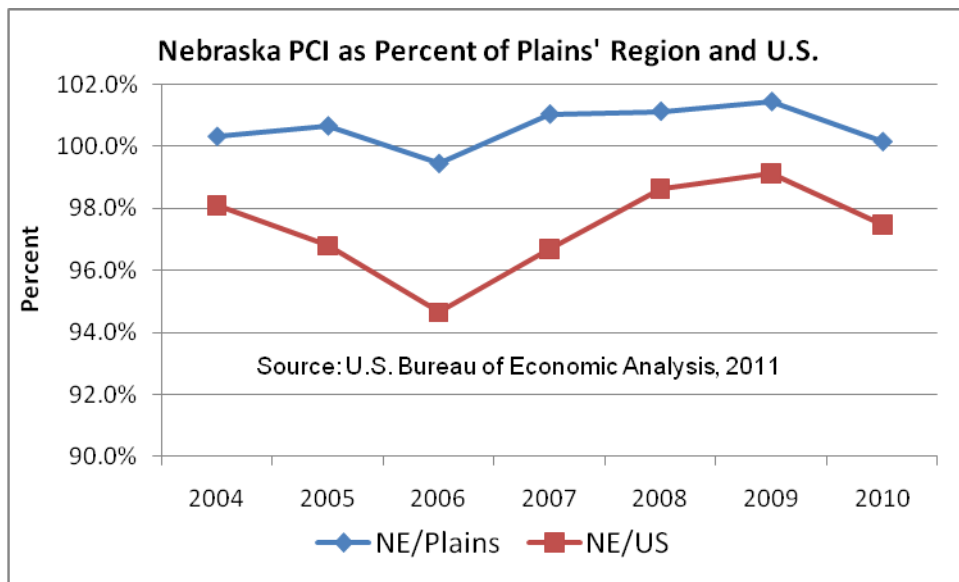
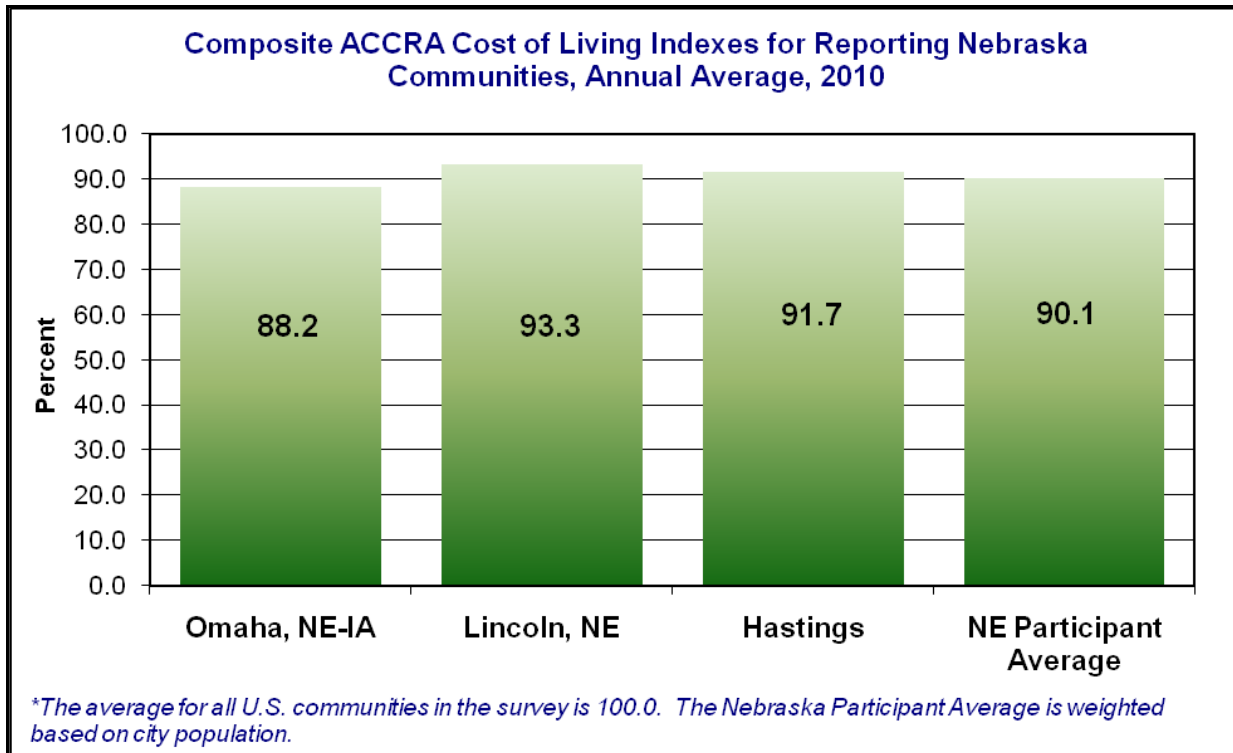


Figure 6

**COST OF LIVING:** In a quarterly community cost of living index compiled by ACCRA, Nebraska communities' cost of living has generally been below the national average. In the third quarter of 2011, the three Nebraska communities' annual composite index averaged 90.3 (Figure 7). In individual cost of living sectors, Omaha scored below the national average of 100.0 in all categories. Lincoln and Hastings were below the national average for all categories except for transportation.



*Figure 7*

**POPULATION:** From 1974 to 1990, Nebraska experienced a net out-migration of people. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that Nebraska's 2000 population was 1,711,263, or 132,846 persons higher than in 1990. Natural increases (births exceeding deaths) contributed to the state's 8.4 percent population growth, but a significant factor was international migration. The Census Bureau reported the state's 2010 population at 1,826,341 persons, or 6.7 percent higher than 2000 (see **Nebraska Databook** [table](#)).

County-level 2000 Census numbers showed population growth in 40 of Nebraska's 93 counties between 1990 and 2000 ([see map](#)), compared to only ten counties between 1980 and 1990. Between 2000 and 2010, 24 counties experienced population growth. Sarpy County at 29.6 percent growth and Lancaster County at 14.0 percent were the top two growth counties between 2000 and 2010.

**ECONOMIC FUTURE:** The Nebraska economy tends to follow the national economy. Despite that, "The outlook calls for solid employment and income growth in 2011, with job growth accelerating in 2013. Farm incomes will reach record levels in 2011, and will remain strong in 2012 and 2013" ([UNL Bureau of Business Research, "Business in Nebraska," September 2011](#)).

*For additional Nebraska economic and demographic information, see: <http://info.neded.org>*