



**2022**

**NEBRASKA  
THRIVING INDEX**

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## LETTER FROM PROJECT TEAM

The 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index provides economic developers, local elected officials and community leaders with economic outcome and resource indicators to identify thriving and lagging regions, support policy decisions and economic development strategies, and answer the basic question: “How is our economy doing?” In all, there are 47 individual measures. The Nebraska Thriving Index is calculated for eight non-metropolitan or small metropolitan regions of Nebraska, including all counties outside of the Omaha and Lincoln metropolitan areas.

The 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index marks the third year that the index has been developed and released. The 2022 edition includes the same measures that were used in the 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index and the revised 2019 Nebraska Thriving Index. There is an online interactive comparison tool ([RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu/thriving-index](https://RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu/thriving-index)) that allows for year-to-year comparisons.

Compared to 2020, the 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index result show that four of the eight non-metropolitan and small metropolitan regions improved by one ranking. These include the Panhandle, Sandhills, Siouland, and Tri-Cities regions. Three regions – the North 81, Northeast, and Southeast – maintained their 2020 ranking in 2022. The Southwest region was the only Nebraska region to drop in ranking.

When examining the regional patterns, we identified three areas of strength: growth, quality of life, and social capital. That is, across all the eight Nebraska regions, the average rank for these areas was at or above 3rd place. There are also three areas of concern: infrastructure & cost of doing business, education and skill, and other prosperity. Across all the eight Nebraska regions, the average rank for these areas was below 4th place.

Although each region has its own strengths and concerns, overall, the Nebraska regions are performing well relative to similarly situated peer regions. Five of the eight regions rank at the 3rd place or above with North 81 and Tri-Cities ranking 1st.

We hope you enjoy this latest version of the Nebraska Thriving Index.

Sincerely,

The Nebraska Thriving Index Project Team

## THRIVING INDEX COMPONENT MEASURES and DETAILS

Nebraska regions are compared with peers according to three indexes of economic prosperity and five indexes of economic conditions.

### Economic Prosperity Indexes

The **Growth Index** includes multiple measures of growth, primarily over the 2017 to 2020 period, including growth in total employment, private employment, growth in private wages per job, growth in households with children, and growth in dividends, interest and rent income. Table 1 includes measure descriptions.

Table 1: Measures of the Growth Index

Growth in Total Employment	Percent change in jobs (both wage and salary and self-employed) in the region. Job growth is a key measure of economic growth. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC5, 2017 and 2020.
Private Employment	Measure of the number of the private sector wage and salary jobs within a region. Larger economies have advantages for growth. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Private Employment, 2020.
Growth in Private Wages Per Job	Percent change in private sector wages earned per job in the region each quarter. Reflects growth due to changes in hours worked per quarter as well as changes in hourly wages. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Private Wages and Private Employment, 2017 and 2020.
Growth in Households with Children	Percent change in households with children. Implies sustainable regional growth, including future growth in the labor force. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1101, 2011-2015 period and 2016-2020 period.
Growth in Dividends, Interest and Rent (DIR) Income	Percent change in dividends, interest and rent income. Implies growing wealth in a community and provides a complementary source of private sector income along with employment income. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC5, 2017 and 2020.

The **Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index** measures entrepreneurial activity, industry diversity, occupation diversity and share of telecommuters. Table 2 includes measure descriptions.

Table 2: Measures of the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

Entrepreneurial Activity	Business births and deaths per person. Measures entrepreneurial vigor. Source: Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, 2019.
Non-Farm Proprietors Per 1,000 Persons	The number of proprietor businesses (with or without employees) per 1,000 persons. Reflects the formation and survival rate of businesses except corporations. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAEMP25, and Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties, 2020.
Employer Establishments Per 1,000 Residents	Number of establishments large enough to have employees per 1,000 persons. Reflects the formation and survival rate of employer establishments and transitions between employer and non-employer status. Source: Bureau of

	Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Private Annual Average Establishments, and Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties, 2020.
Share of Workers in Non- Employer Establishment	Self-employed individuals (in non-employer establishments) divided by total employed, whether in employer or non-employer establishment. Measures the frequency of self-employment. Source: Census Bureau, County Business Patterns and Nonemployer Statistics Combined Report, 2018.
Industry Diversity	An index capturing the degree to which the allocation of employment among industries in the regional economy matches the allocation in the U.S. economy. Measures the diversity of opportunities for a region’s workers by product market. Source: Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, 2019.
Occupation Diversity	An index capturing the degree to which the allocation of employment among occupations in the regional economy matches the allocation in the U.S. economy. Measures the diversity of opportunities for a region’s workers by type of work. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2401, 2016-2020 period.
Share of Telecommuters	Share of the population which works at home but is not self-employed (or an unpaid family worker). Reflects opportunities to work remotely. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B08128, 2016-2020 period.

The **Other Prosperity Index** measures non-farm proprietor personal income, personal income stability, life span, poverty rate and share of income from dividends, interest and rent. Table 3 includes measure descriptions.

Table 3: Measures of the Other Prosperity Index

Non-Farm Proprietor Personal Income	The amount of non-farm proprietor income in the region. Reflects the level of proprietor activity in the region outside of agriculture. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC5, 2020.
Personal Income Stability	A measure capturing the stability in total personal income in a region during a 15-year period. Stability in personal income is important along with the level of personal income in influencing the standard of living. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC5, 2006-2020.
Life Span	Measures life expectancy at birth. Reflects the expected length of life given characteristics of the region and its population. Source: University of Washington, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 1980-2014.
Poverty Rate	The share of the population in poverty. Reflects the share of the population concentrated at the lowest end of the income distribution. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1701, 2016-2020 period.
Share of Income from Dividends, Interest and Rent	Dividends, interest and rent income divided by total personal income. Income derived from wealth reflects the ability of the economy to supplement income from current work. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC5, 2020.

## Economic Conditions Indexes

The **Demographic Growth & Renewal Index** measures long-run population growth, dependency ratio, median age, millennial and Gen Z balance change and population diversity. Table 4 includes measure descriptions.

Table 4: Measures of the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

Long-Run Population Growth	Growth in the population since the year 2000. Captures long-run trends in population change. Source: Census Bureau, County Population Totals, 2000, and American Community Survey, Table S0101, 2016-2020 period.
Dependency Ratio	Ratio of the dependent population (below age 15 and above age 64) to the prime working age population (age 15 to 64). Reflects the concentration of the dependent population. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0101, 2016-2020 period.
Median Age	Fifty percent of the population is younger than the median age. A younger median age is consistent with faster natural population growth due to more births and fewer deaths. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0101, 2016-2020 period.
Millennial and Gen Z Balance Change	Five-year change in the share of the population born in 1985 or after. Reflects the rate of concentration of younger cohorts in the regional population. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Tables S0101 and B01001, 2016-2020 and 2011-2015 periods.
Percent Hispanic	Percent of the population that is Hispanic. A more diverse population and workforce brings a larger set of perspectives and experience to solving problems. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B03003, 2016-2020 period.
Percent Non-White	Percent of the population that is non-white. A more diverse population and workforce brings a larger set of perspectives and experience to solving problems. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B02001, 2016-2020 period.

The **Education & Skill Index** measures high school, community college and 4-year college attainment, labor force participation and employment in knowledge-based occupations. Table 5 includes measure descriptions.

Table 5: Measures of the Education & Skill Index

High School Attainment Rate	Share of population age 25 and over with a high school degree (or GED) as their highest level of education. High school graduates are better able to adjust to a changing economy than non- graduates. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1501, 2016-2020 period.
Associate's Degree Attainment Rate	Share of population age 25 and over with an Associate's degree as their highest level of education. Associate's degree graduates meet critical workforce needs throughout the economy. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1501, 2016-2020 period.
College Attainment Rate	Share of population age 25 and over with a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. College graduates have opportunities for careers in a variety

	of higher paying, knowledge-intensive occupations. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1501, 2016-2020 period.
Labor Force Participation Rate	Share of the population age 16 and over who are in the labor force. Workers gain job experience fastest in regions where a larger share of the population participates in the workforce. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table DP03, 2016-2020 period.
Percent of Knowledge Workers	Share of labor force employed in the information, financial services, professional and business services or health care and education industries. Workers in industries which employ a larger share of knowledge workers better maintain and grow their skills. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table DP03, 2016-2020 period.

The **Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index** measures access to broadband, interstate highways and 4-year colleges as well as wage rates, marginal income tax rates and the presence of opportunity zones. Table 6 includes measure descriptions.

Table 6: Measures of the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

Broadband Internet Access	Percent of the population with one or more broadband providers with 100/10Mbps capacity. Broadband infrastructure is critical for the efficient operation of business and attracting business and people to an area. Source: Federal Communications Commission, Broadband Availability in Different Areas (Broadband Technology=ADSL, Cable, Fiber, Fixed Wireless, Satellite, Other and Broadband Speed≥100/10 Mbps), December 2020.
Presence of Interstate	Share of the population in a county that contains an interstate highway. Presence of an interstate increases the access of local business and residents to the regional economy and enhances the potential location of manufacturing facilities. Source: Google Maps Interstate Map, 2018.
Count of 4-Year Colleges	Average number of 4-year colleges in the counties where regional residents live. Presence of 4-year colleges influences the probability of attracting or retaining young people in a region post- graduation. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, College Navigator, 2020-2021.
Weekly Wage Rate	Average weekly wage rate in the region, reflecting both the hourly wage rate and hours worked per week. Hourly wage rates influence the competitive conditions for business. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Average Weekly Wage (all industries, total covered, all establishment sizes), Quarter 2 2021.
Top Marginal Income Tax Rate	The highest marginal income tax rate in the state where the region is located. Tax rates influence the competitive conditions for business unless tax revenue is devoted primarily to the most essential public services. Source: Tax Foundation, 2022.
Count of Qualified Opportunity Zones	Average number of qualified opportunity zones in the counties where regional residents live. Qualified opportunity zones are helpful in attracting capital investment to a region. Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, 2018.

The **Quality of Life Index** measures the appeal of living and working in a region including commute times, age of housing stock, relative wage rates, public safety, climate amenities, access to healthcare and national parks. Table 7 includes measure descriptions.

Table 7: Measures of the Quality of Life Index

Commute Time	Average commuting time to work. Represents the cost of living in terms of time, providing insight into travel times to important destinations within a region. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S0801, 2016-2020 period.
Percent of Housing Built Pre-1960	Share of housing units built before 1960. Older housing units may lack contemporary design and are subject to depreciation. Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table DP04, 2016-2020 period.
Relative Weekly Wage	The ratio of regional quarterly wages per job to statewide quarterly wages per job. The measure reflects the relative earnings opportunities in the region. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Average Weekly Wage (all industries, total covered, all establishment sizes), Quarter 2 2021.
Violent Crime Rate	Annual violent crimes per 100,000 population. Personal safety is a critical factor in enjoying life. Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, Crime in the United States, 2018.
Property Crime Rate	Annual property crimes per 100,000 population. The safety of personal property is a critical component of enjoying life. Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, Crime in the United States, 2018.
Climate Amenities	An index capturing average temperatures in January and July, sunny days in January, and humidity in July. A more comfortable climate can reduce utility costs and increase the enjoyment of outdoor activities. Source: United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, Natural Amenities Scale, 1941-1970, last updated 1999.
Healthcare Access	Number of healthcare practitioners per person. Measures access to medical care or key institutions like hospitals where physicians work in large numbers. Source: Census Bureau, County Business Patterns and Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties, 2019.
Count of National Parks	Share of regional counties with one or more national parks, monuments, trails or other protected areas. A measure of local recreation options. Source: National Park Service, Find a Park, 2018.

The **Social Capital Index** measures involvement with volunteer organizations, programs to build the community environment, and voter participation. Table 8 includes measure descriptions.

Table 8: Measures of the Social Capital Index

Number of 501c3 Organizations Per 1,000 Persons	A count of non-profit organizations per 1,000 persons. Measures opportunities for volunteering and building a social capital network. Source: Tax Exempt World, 2022.
Volunteer Rate (State)	The share of the population volunteering time to non-profit organizations in the state where the region is located. Measures participation in networking



	opportunities related to volunteering. Source: Corporation for National & Community Service, 2017.
Volunteer Hours Per Person (State)	The number of volunteer hours per person. Represents the intensity of participation in networking opportunities related to volunteering. Source: Corporation for National & Community Service, 2017.
Voter Turnout	Percentage of registered voters who participated in the fall 2018 general election. Measures involvement in the community short of formally volunteering. Source: State by State Voter Turnout, 2018.
Share of Tree City USA Counties	Share of the regional population living in a county with at least one community enrolled in the Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City USA program. Measures social involvement related to the built environment. Source: Arbor Day Foundation, Tree City USA Communities, 2022.

**THRIVING INDEX REGIONS and COMPARISON REGIONS**

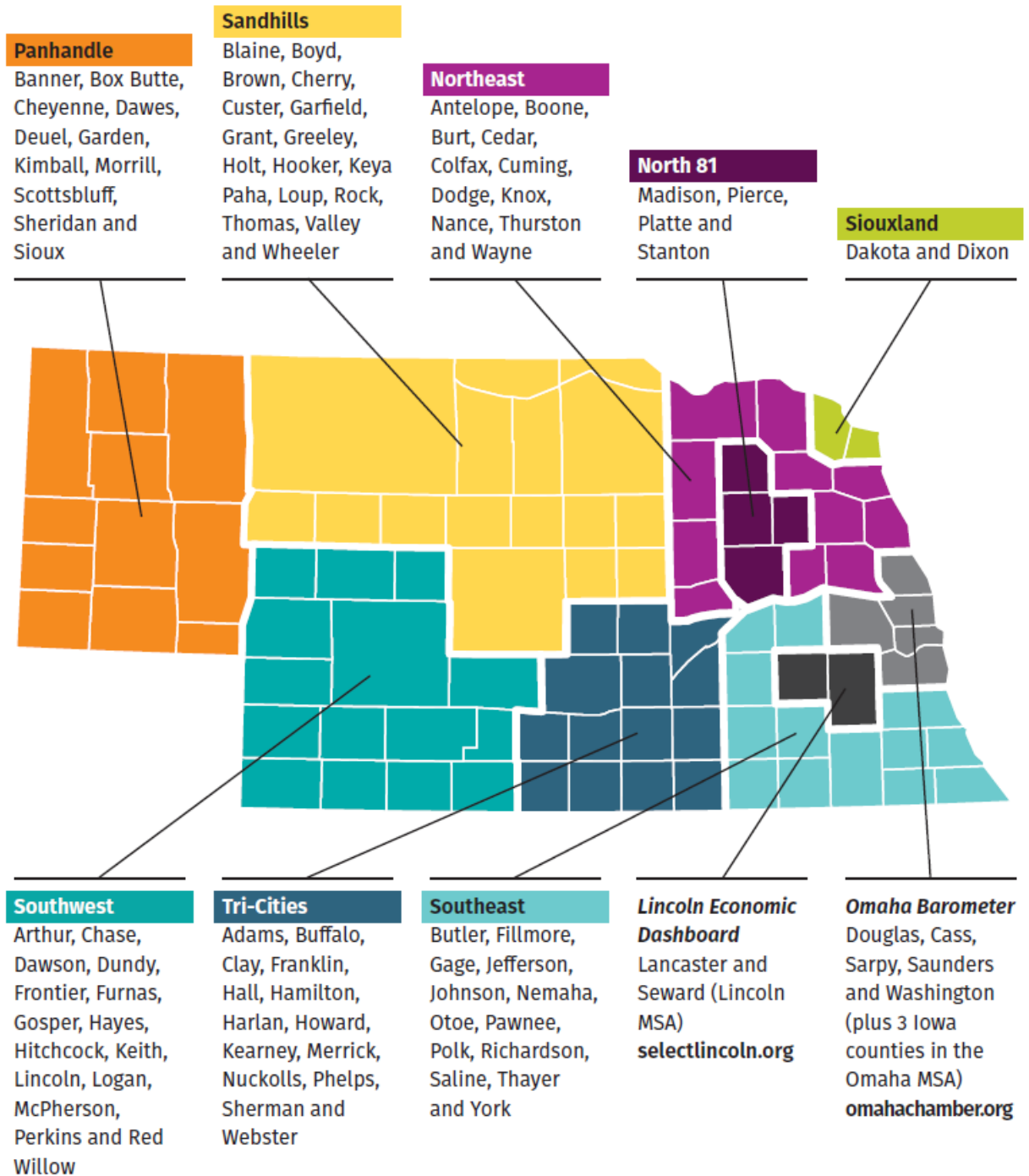
The Nebraska regions (Figure 1) were selected in an iterative process, which considered Nebraska Extension’s Community Vitality Initiative Accountability Regions, Nebraska Economic Development Regions, Nebraska Economic Development Districts, information from the Nebraska Department of Labor and the expertise of project participants.

Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Saunders, Washington, Lancaster and Seward counties are not included in any of the eight regions. Benchmarking comparisons for these metropolitan areas have been produced by the Bureau of Business Research in reports for the Greater Omaha Chamber and the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development.

Western and central Nebraska regions largely follow Nebraska Economic Development Districts, as seen in the regional definitions for the Panhandle, Sandhills and Southwest regions. The Tri-Cities region also largely follows the Nebraska Economic Development District definition and contains the counties of the Grand Island metropolitan area, the Kearney micropolitan area, the Hastings micropolitan area and surrounding counties. The Southeast region excludes the Lincoln metropolitan area but includes adjacent counties as well as counties bordering Kansas, Iowa and Missouri. The Siouland region includes Dakota and Dixon counties, which are part of the Sioux City, Iowa, metropolitan area. The North 81 region includes the counties within the Norfolk and Columbus micropolitan areas. Adjacent counties to the east were not part of the North 81 as these are influenced by the Omaha and Sioux City metropolitan areas. The Northeast region includes these counties as well as counties directly north and west of the North 81 region.

Each Nebraska region was compared to a set of benchmarking regions, either other Nebraska regions or U.S. Economic Development Administration regions located in another northern Plains state such as Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, (western) Illinois, (northern) Missouri, (eastern) Colorado and (eastern) Wyoming. Benchmarking regions were not selected in an ad hoc manner but via the Mahalanobis matching technique. The technique compares all regions according to the fundamental economic characteristics of each region such as total population, economic structure (ratio of farm revenue to total personal income, ratio of ranch revenue to total personal income, and manufacturing share of employment), and urban orientation (percent of population in a micropolitan area, distance to a small MSA (population <250,000) and distance to a large MSA (population >250,000)). A list of 5 to 8 benchmarking regions was selected based on the similarity according to these characteristics.

**Figure 1: Eight Non-Metropolitan and Small Metropolitan Nebraska Regions**

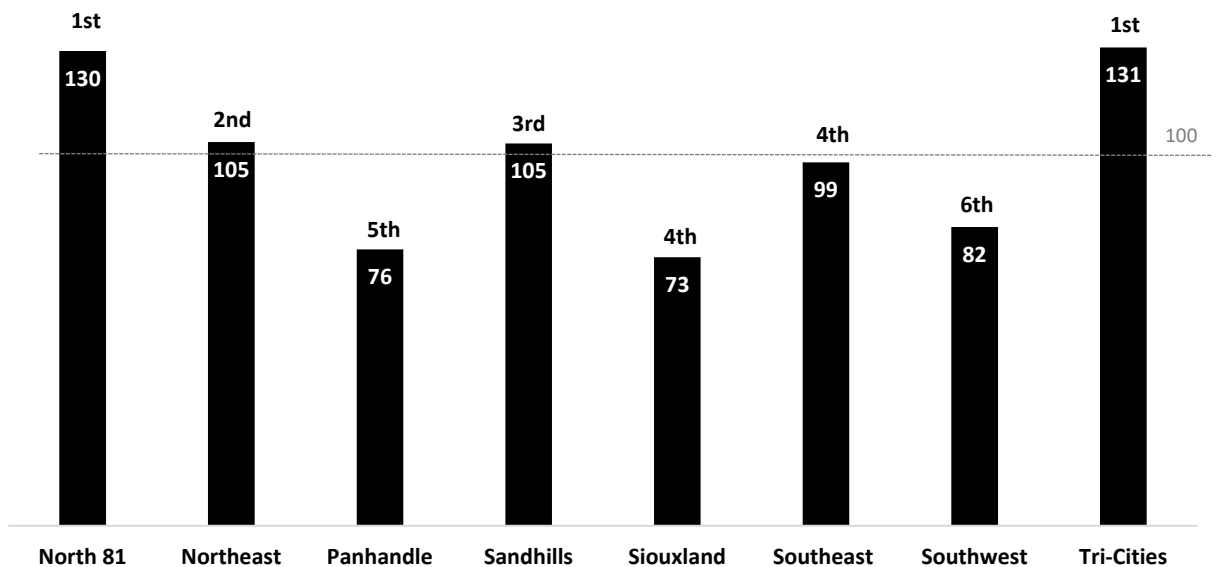


## 2022 RESULTS: REGIONAL RESULTS

Figure 2 shows the aggregate index value and rank for each of the eight Nebraska regions within their respective peer group in the 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index. The aggregate index value is the average of eight component indexes. Three indexes reflect measures of economic prosperity: the Growth Index, the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index and the Other Prosperity Index. Five indexes reflect the underlying economic conditions, that is, economic resources and sources of comparative advantage. These are the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, the Education & Skill Index, the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, the Quality of Life Index and the Social Capital Index.

A Thriving Index value of 100 means that the Nebraska region is at the average value of its peers, while a value of 0 means that a Nebraska region is one standard deviation behind its peers and a value of 200 means that a Nebraska region is one standard deviation ahead of its peers.

Figure 2: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within Peer Group



The micropolitan and small metropolitan North 81 and Tri-Cities regions both rank 1st among their peers. North 81 has a 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index value of 130 indicating that, on average, across all measures North 81 is 0.30 standard deviations above its peers. The Tri-Cities region is 0.31 standard deviations above its peers.

Three other non-metropolitan Nebraska regions had index values near their peer average. The Northeast region had an index value of 105 and ranked 2nd among its peers. The Sandhills region had a 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index value of 105 and ranked 3rd among its peers. The Southeast region, which had an index value of 99, ranked 4th.

The remaining three Nebraska regions ranked lower among their peers and had 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index values below their peer average. The Panhandle and Siouxland regions had index values of 76 and 73, respectively. These indicate that on average, the Panhandle and Siouxland regions are about one-quarter of a standard deviation below their peers. The Southwest region had an index value of 82 and ranked near the lowest of all regions among its peers at 6th of seven places.

## 2022 RESULTS: REGIONAL PATTERNS

Table 9 shows region ranks for each component index: the Growth Index, the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, the Other Prosperity Index, the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, the Education & Skill Index, the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, the Quality of Life Index and the Social Capital Index. There is great variation in the rankings of each component. Table 9 also shows the statewide average rank for each Index.

Table 9: Nebraska Thriving Index Rank by Component & Region

	Thriving Index Rank	Economic Prosperity Indexes			Economic Conditions Indexes				
		Growth Index	Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index	Other Prosperity Index	Demographic Growth & Renewal Index	Education & Skill Index	Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index	Quality of Life Index	Social Capital Index
North 81 (6)	1	1	5	4	2	2	4	1	2
Northeast (6)	2	1	5	3	2	2	3	5	6
Panhandle (7)	5	7	2	6	5	5	3	3	2
Sandhills (6)	3	5	1	4	6	2	6	5	1
Siouxland (6)	4	2	6	6	1	6	6	1	4
Southeast (9)	4	1	7	7	5	8	6	4	3
Southwest (7)	6	4	2	7	6	7	2	3	3
Tri-Cities (7)	1	1	2	4	1	4	3	1	3
Statewide Average	3.25	2.75	3.75	5.13	3.50	4.50	4.13	2.88	3.00

Several patterns emerge when the statewide average ranking of each component index is considered.

### Strengths

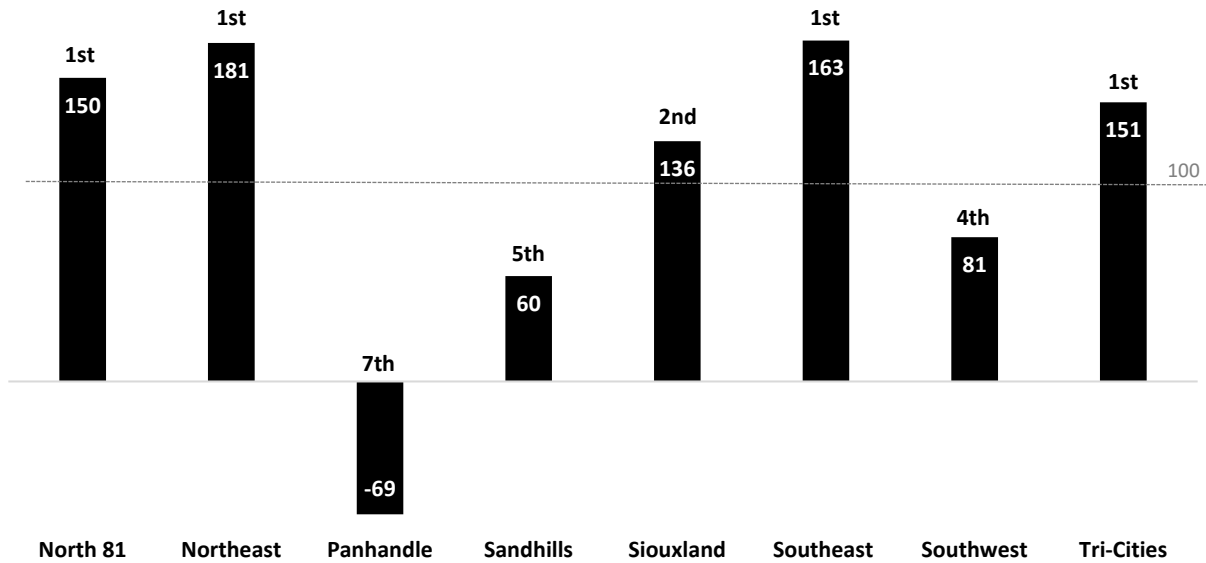
Nebraska regions are relatively strong for the Growth Index, the Quality of Life Index, and the Social Capital Index. That is, the average rank for this index is at or above 3rd place.

#### Strength #1: Growth

Nebraska regions from the Tri-Cities to the eastern border of the state had the highest ranks and values for the Growth Index (see Figure 3). The North 81, Northeast, Southeast, and Tri-Cities regions all ranked

1st among their peers for growth and the Siouxland region ranked 2nd. Regions in the western part of the state (Panhandle, Sandhills, and Southwest) were below the peer average and the Panhandle ranked last (see Figure 3).

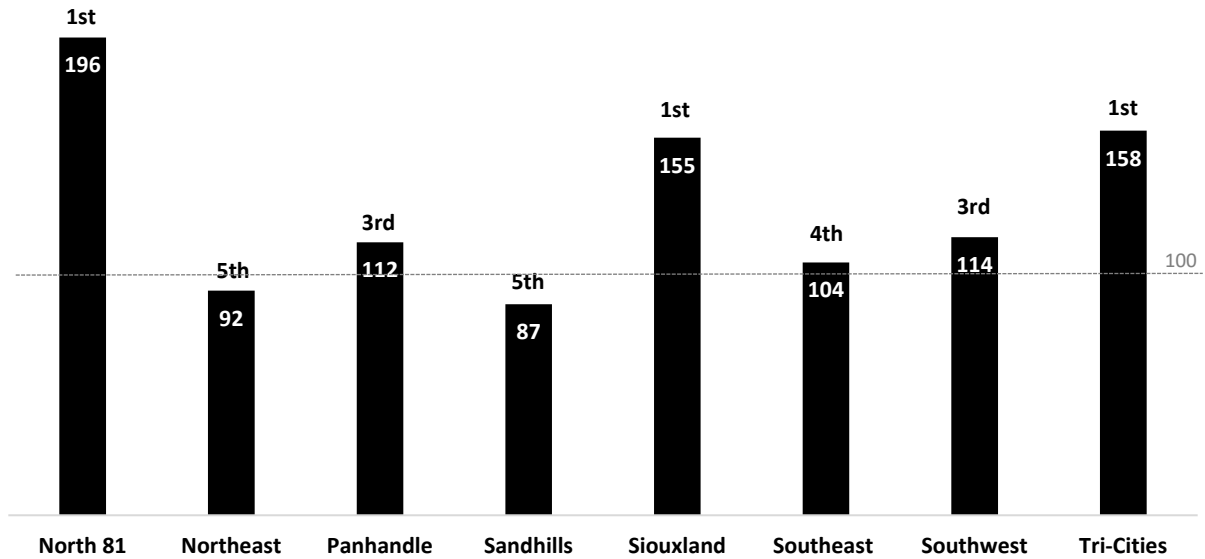
Figure 3: Growth Index, Rank and Value by Region



**Strength #2: Quality of Life**

Micropolitan and small metropolitan regions had the highest ranks and values for the Quality of Life Index. The North 81, Siouxland and Tri-Cities regions all ranked 1st among their peers for quality of life. The Panhandle and Southwest regions ranked 3rd, while the Southeast region had a Quality of Life Index value near the peer average. The Northeast and Sandhills regions were just slightly below the peer average (see Figure 4).

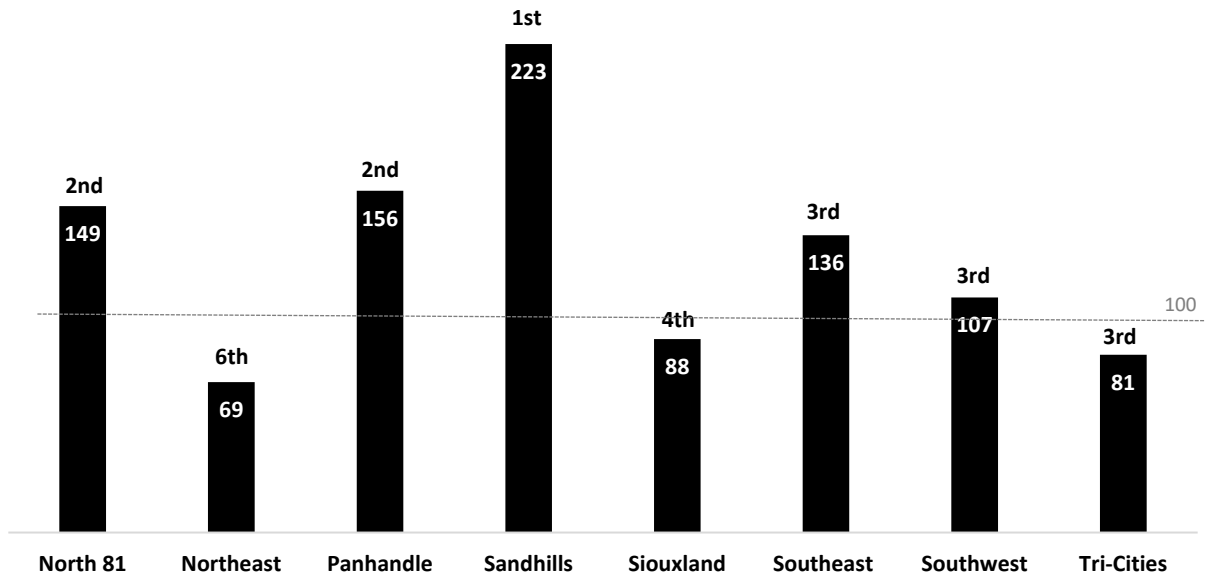
Figure 4: Quality of Life, Rank and Value by Region



Strength #3: Social Capital

The Sandhills region had the highest rank and value for the Social Capital Index and is the only region to rank 1st among the peers. The North 81 and Panhandle regions ranked 2nd and the Southeast, Southwest, and Tri-Cities ranked 3rd among peers. The Northeast region was the only region to rank last on social capital (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Social Capital, Rank and Value by Region



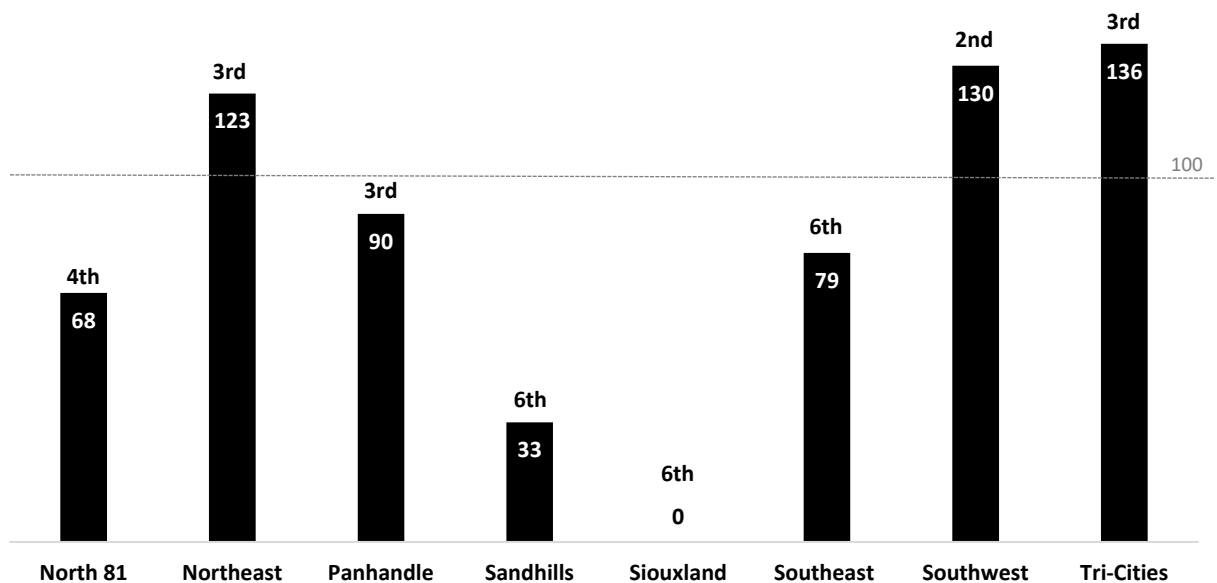
### Concerns

Nebraska regions are relatively weak for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, Education & Skill Index, and the Other Prosperity Index. That is, the average rank for these indexes is below 4th place.

#### Concern #1: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business

A majority of Nebraska regions are below their peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, with the Siouxland region one standard deviation below its peer average and the Sandhills region two-thirds of a standard deviation below its peer average. On the positive side, the Northeast, Southwest, and Tri-Cities regions have values above 100 and rank either 2nd or 3rd among their peers (see Figure 6).

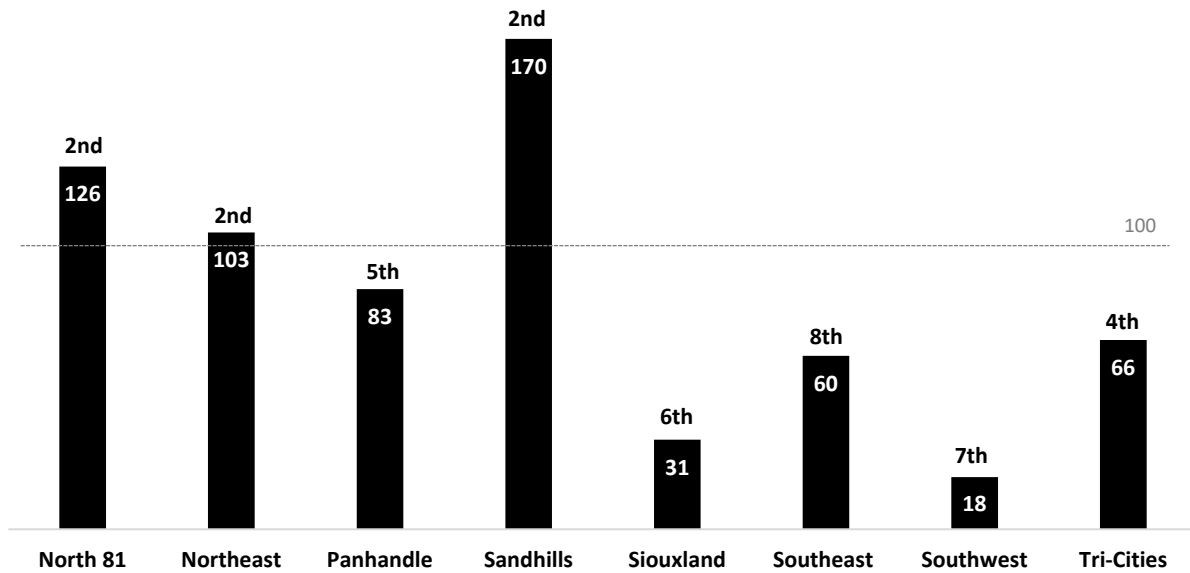
Figure 6: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business, Rank and Value by Region



#### Concern #2: Education & Skill

Most regions of Nebraska are below their peer average for the Education & Skill Index. The Siouxland and Southwest regions are nearly one standard deviation below their peers and rank last among their peers. The Southeast, Panhandle and Tri Cities regions have index values below 100 and rank at or below the 4th place ranking. On the positive side, the North 81, Northeast, and Sandhills regions have Education & Skill Index values above 100 and rank 2nd among their peers (see Figure 7).

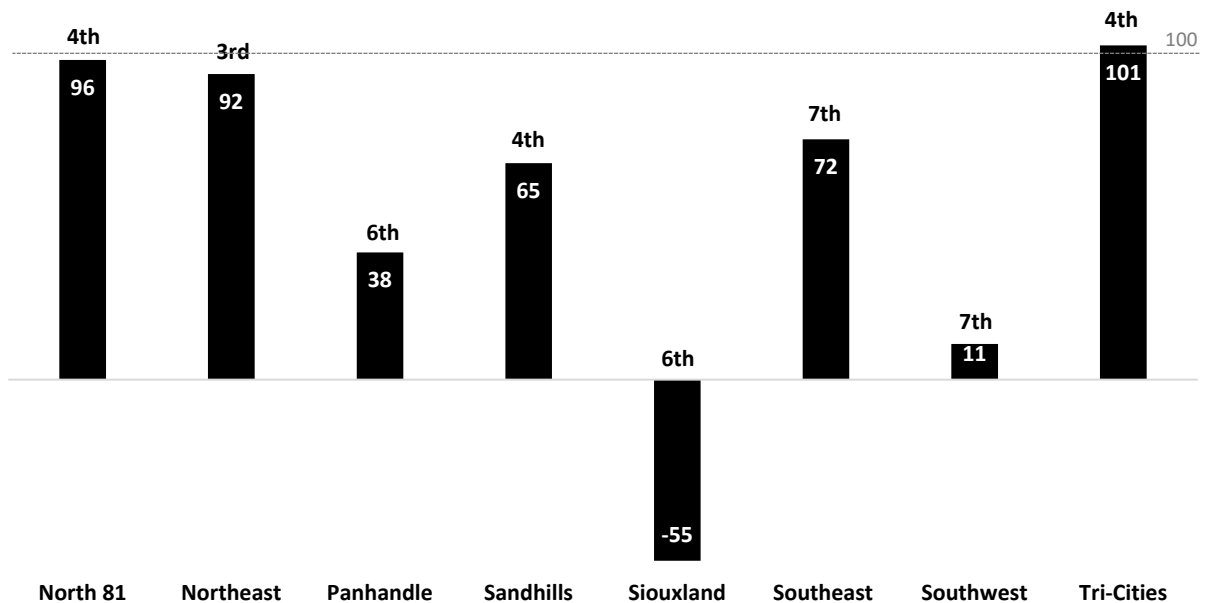
Figure 7: Education & Skill, Rank and Value by Region



Concern #3: Other Prosperity

All of Nebraska’s regions, except for the Tri-Cities, are below their peer average for the Other Prosperity Index. The Siouxland region is more than one-and-a-half standard deviations below its peer average and ranks last. The Panhandle and Southwest regions rank last or second last and are more than one-half of a standard deviation below their peer average. The Northeast region has the highest ranking at 3rd place but is below 100 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Other Prosperity, Rank and Value by Region





## RESULTS BY REGION

### NORTH 81 REGION

The North 81 region includes the counties within the Norfolk and Columbus micropolitan areas. The North 81 region is manufacturing-oriented and is located in proximity to the large metropolitan area of Omaha, Nebraska. There are five peer comparison regions for North 81, all located outside of the state of Nebraska. The comparison regions are located in Missouri (2), Illinois (1), Iowa (1) and Minnesota (1). (See Figure 9.)

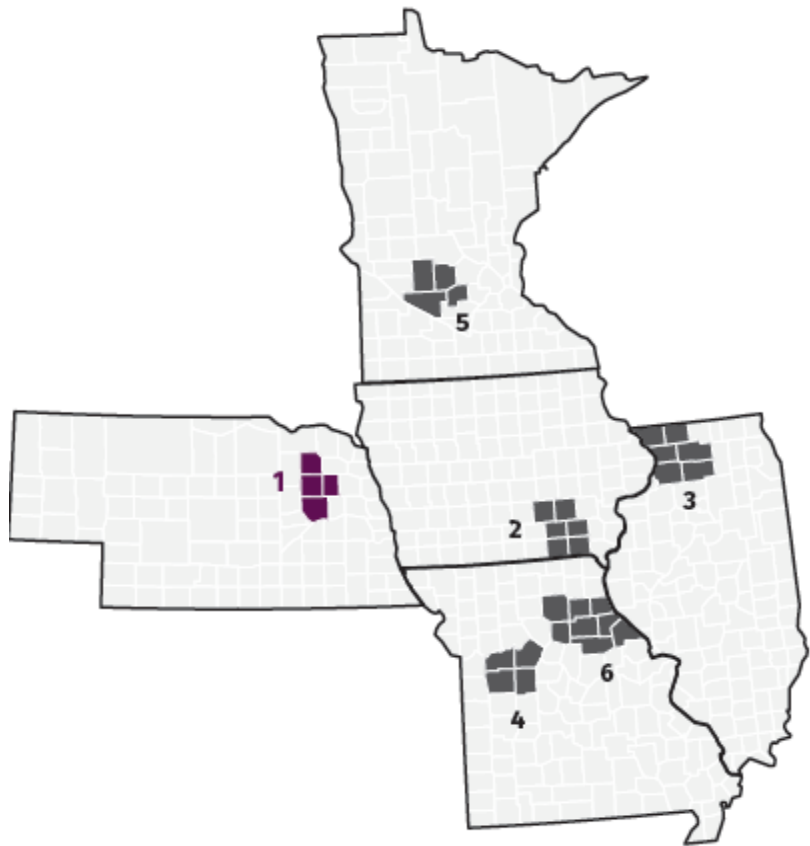
**Figure 9: North 81 Region and Comparison Peer Regions**

#### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 130

Ranks 1st Among Peers

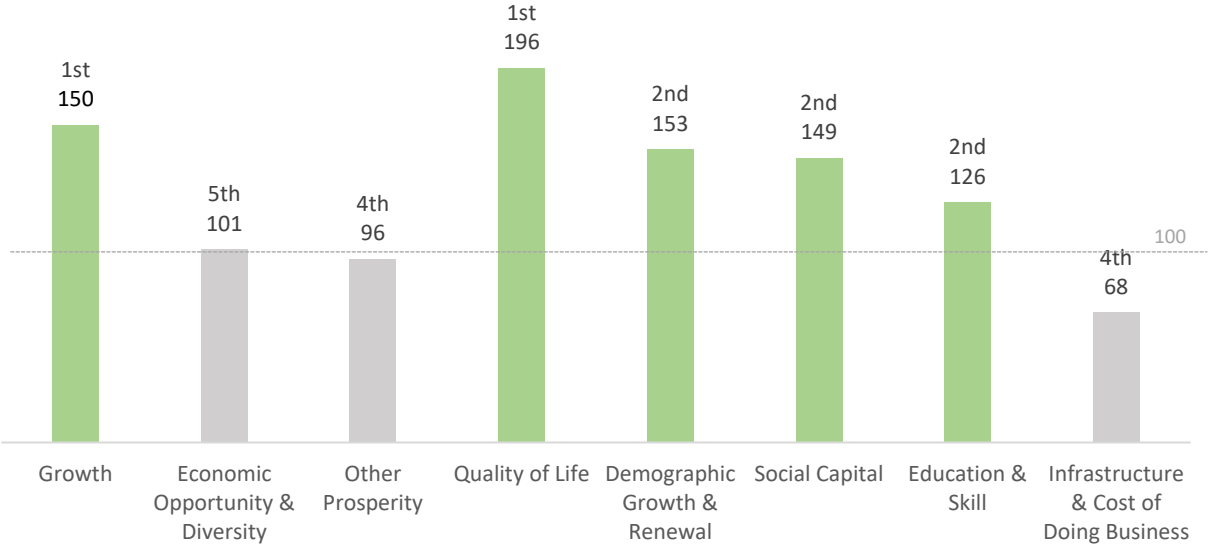
- ✓ 1st Growth
- ✓ 1st Quality of Life
- ✓ 2nd Demographic Growth & Renewal
- ✓ 2nd Social Capital
- ✓ 2nd Education & Skill



1. **NEBRASKA: North 81 Region**
2. **IOWA: Area 15 Regional Planning Commission**
3. **ILLINOIS: Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development**
4. **MISSOURI: Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission**
5. **MINNESOTA: Mid-Minnesota Development Commission**
6. **MISSOURI: Mark Twain Regional Council of Governments**

Figure 10 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the North 81 region compared to its peers. The North 81 region’s 1st place ranking and 130 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is driven by strong performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the North 81 region performs well relative to its peers on one of the three economic prosperity indexes, ranking 1st for the Growth Index. For the economic conditions indexes, the North 81 region performs well on four of the five measures, ranking 1st for the Quality of Life Index and 2nd for the Demographic Growth & Renewal, Social Capital, and Education & Skill Indexes.

Figure 10: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the North 81 Region



**Index Interpretation**

- <100 = BELOW the average of its peers
- 100 = AT the average of its peers
- >100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 196 for Quality of Life indicates that quality of life is 0.96 of a standard deviation above the average quality of life among the peer regions.

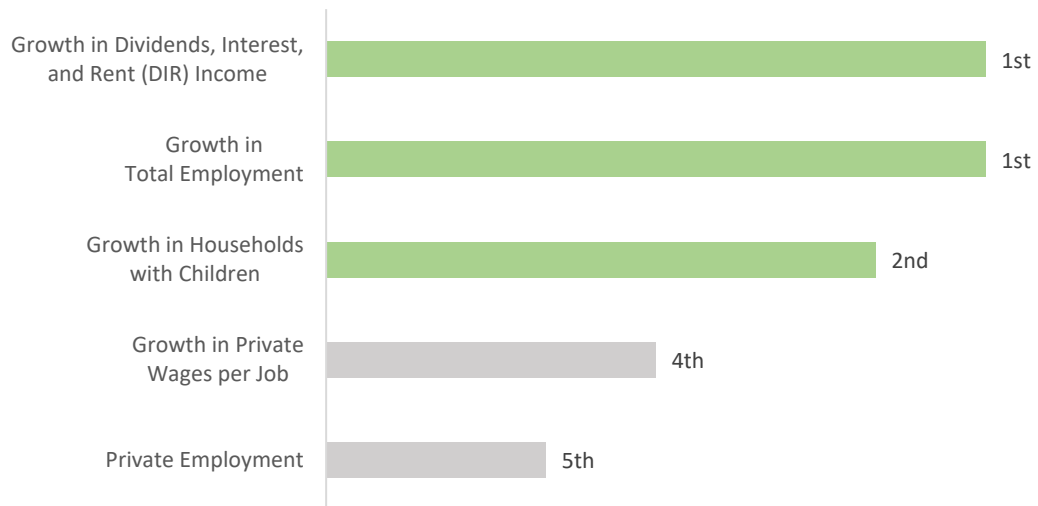
**Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the North 81 region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the North 81 region ranking in one of the top three of six places among its peers.

**Growth Index**

The North 81 region ranks 1st among its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st for growth in dividend, interest, and rent income and total employment growth and ranks 2nd for growth in households with children (see Figure 11).

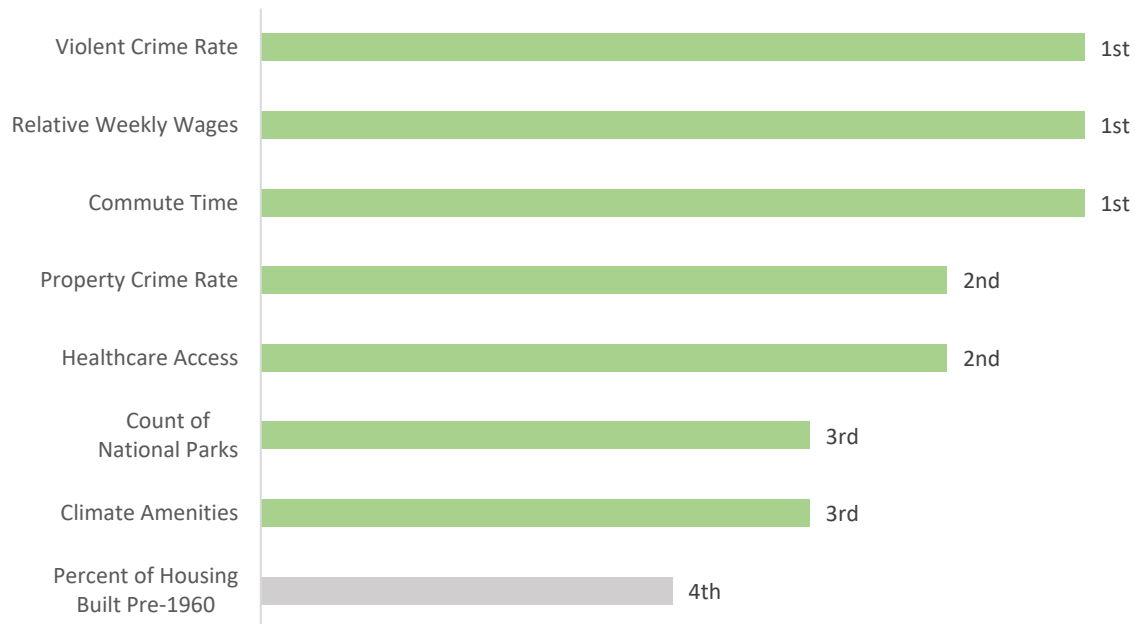
Figure 11: Growth Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



Quality of Life

The North 81 region ranks 1st among its peers and is nearly one standard deviation above its peers for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks in one of the top three places for seven of the eight indicators of quality of life (see Figure 12).

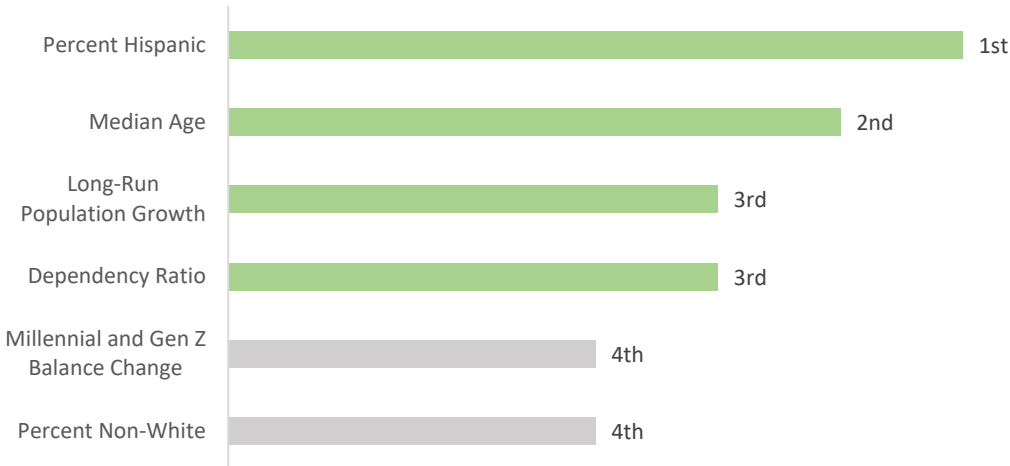
Figure 12: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



### Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

The North 81 region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks in one of the top three places for four of six indicators (see Figure 13).

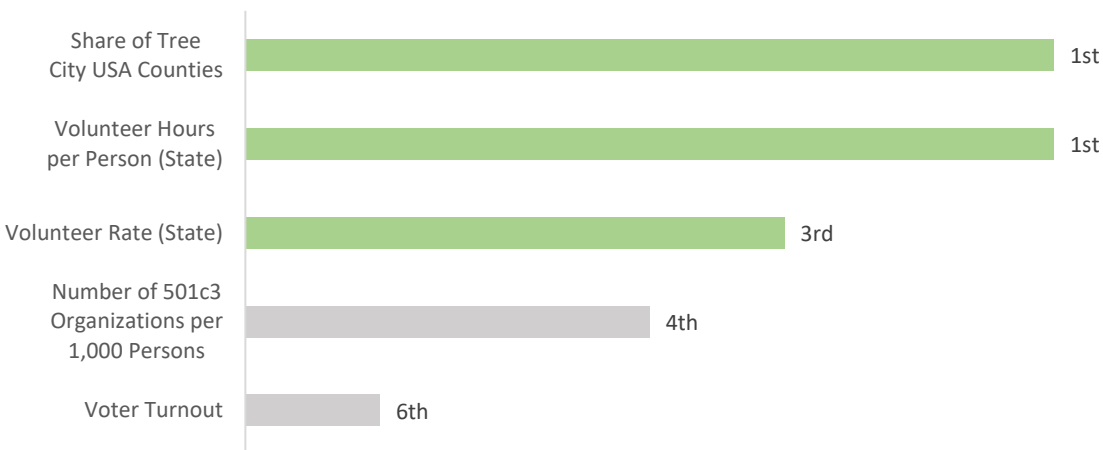
Figure 13: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



### Social Capital Index

The North 81 region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st for the share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person and 3rd for the volunteer rate. However, it ranks last on voter turnout (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region

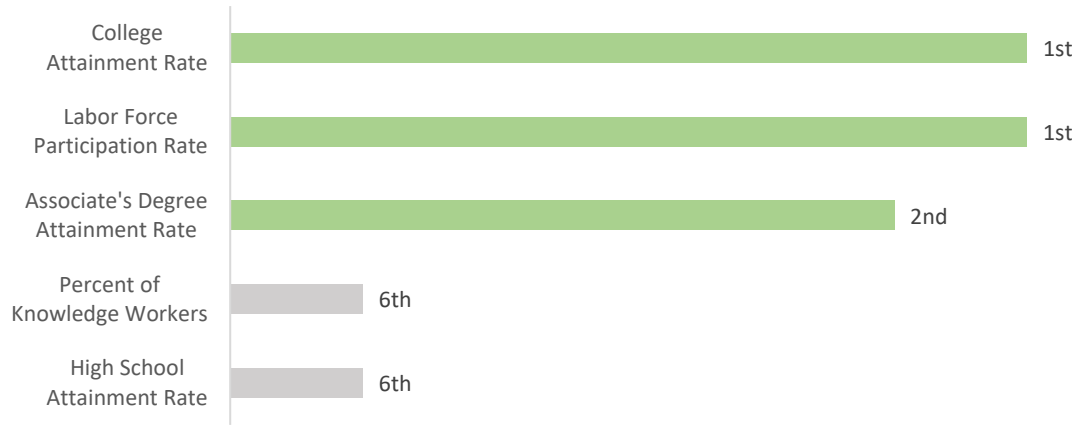


### Education & Skill Index

The North 81 region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is above the peer region average. Results are mixed within this index as the North 81 region ranks 1st for college attainment and labor force participation, and 2nd for associate's degree attainment. However, the North 81 region also ranks last for both the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g.,

STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations) and high school attainment (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



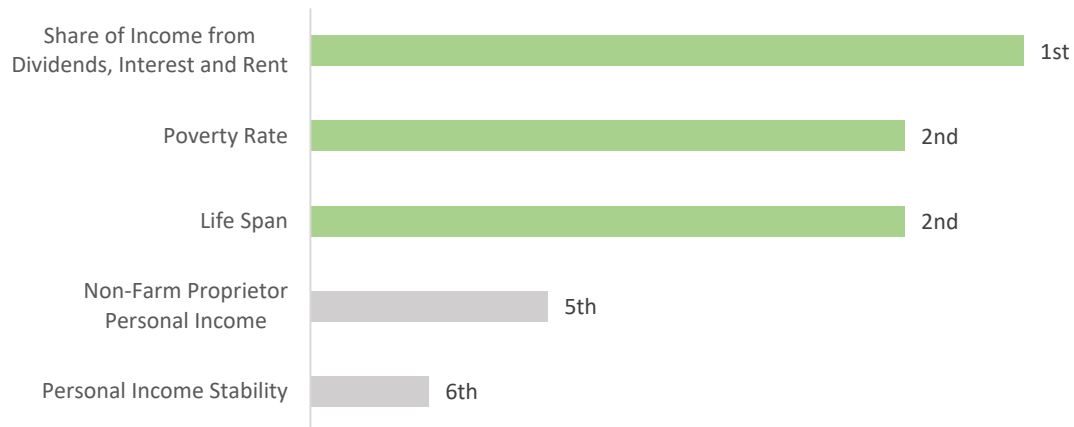
**Considerations**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the North 81 region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the North 81 region ranking 4th among its peers.

Other Prosperity Index

The North 81 region ranks 4th among its peers and is slightly below the peer region average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st for share of income from dividends, interest and rent and ranks 2nd for both poverty rate and life span; however, it ranks more poorly on the remaining two indicators (see Figure 16).

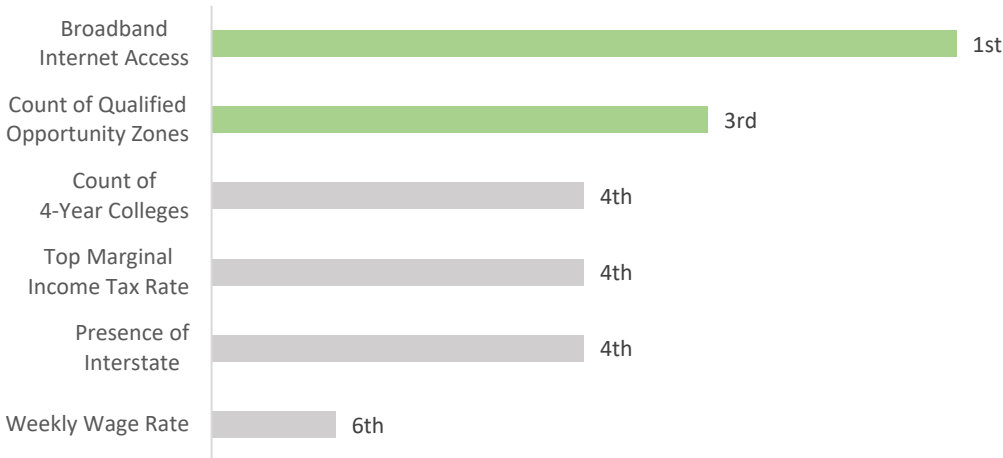
Figure 16: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



### Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

The North 81 region ranks 4th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st on broadband internet access but ranks more poorly on four of the six indicators. Particularly, it ranks last on the weekly wage rate which indicates that North 81 region employers pay relatively higher wage rates than employers in similarly situated peer regions (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



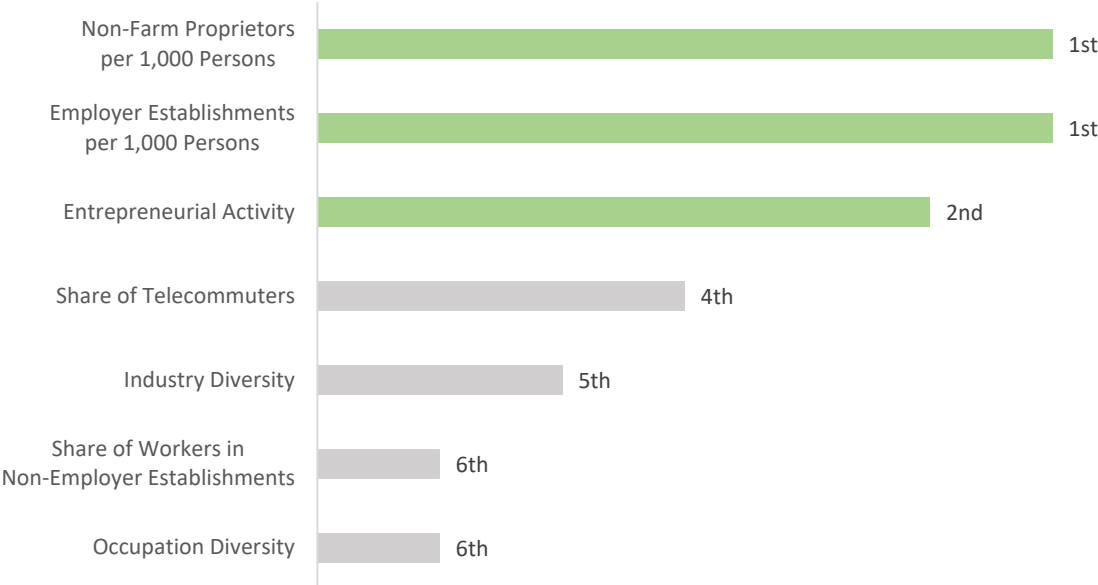
### **Concerns**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the North 81 region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the North 81 region ranking in one of the bottom two of six places among its peers.

### Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The North 81 region ranks 5th among its peers but is at the peer region average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Results are mixed within this index as the North 81 region ranks 1st or 2nd on three of seven indicators but also ranks last on two of seven indicators (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



## NORTHEAST REGION

The Northeast region includes the counties directly to the west and north of the Columbus and Norfolk micropolitan areas, as well as counties along the eastern border of Nebraska between the Sioux City and Omaha metropolitan areas. The Northeast region and peers receive a large share of income from farming and ranching and have a large share of employment in manufacturing. There are five peer comparison regions for the Northeast region including two Nebraska regions. The Nebraska regions are the Southwest and Panhandle regions. The remaining three comparison regions are located in Iowa. (See Figure 19.)

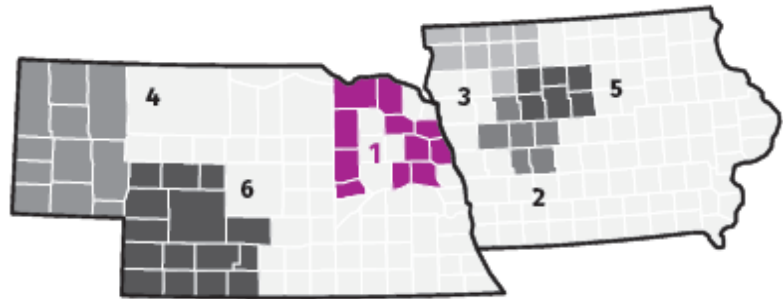
### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 105

Ranks 2nd Among Peers

- ✓ 1st Growth
- ✓ 2nd Demographic Growth & Renewal
- ✓ 2nd Education & Skill
- ✓ 3rd Other Prosperity
- ✓ 3rd Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business

**Figure 19: Northeast Region and Comparison Peer Regions**

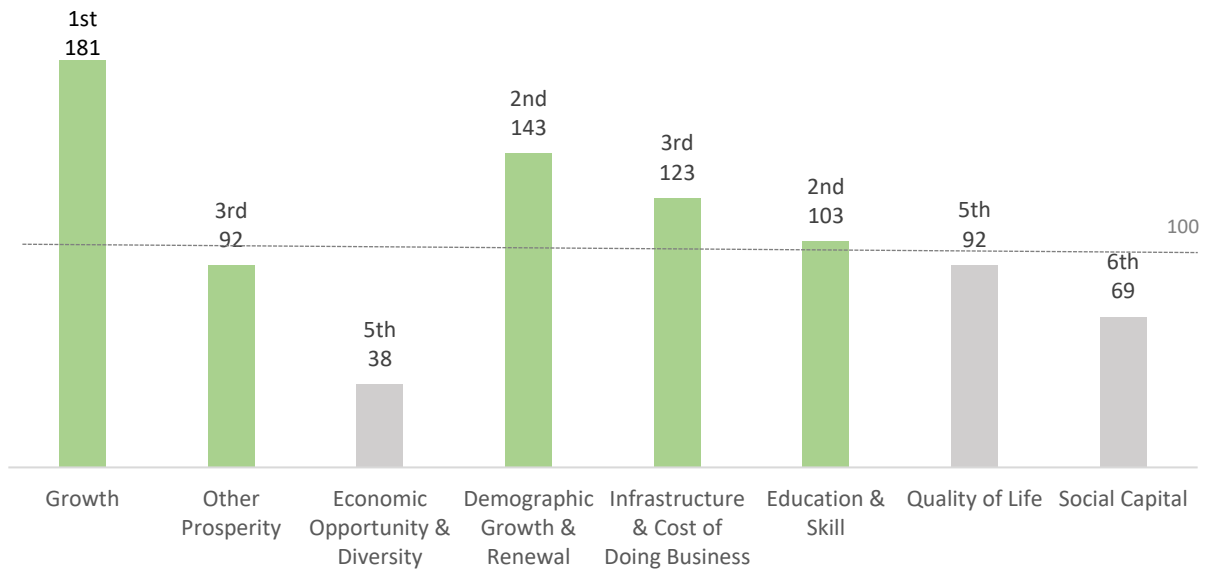


1. **NEBRASKA: Northeast Region**
2. **IOWA: Region XII Council of Governments**
3. **IOWA: Northwest Iowa Planning & Development Commission**
4. **NEBRASKA: Panhandle Region**
5. **IOWA: Mid-Iowa Development Association Council of Governments**
6. **NEBRASKA: Southwest Region**

Figure 20 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Northeast region compared to its peers. The Northeast region's 2nd place ranking and 105 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is driven by strong performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Northeast region performs well relative to its peers on two of the three economic prosperity indexes, ranking 1st for the Growth Index and 3rd for the Other Prosperity Index. Demographic Growth & Renewal, Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business and Education & Skill are other areas of strength for the Northeast region as it ranks 2nd and 3rd for these indexes.



Figure 20: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Northeast Region



**Index Interpretation**

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 181 for Growth indicates that growth is 0.81 of a standard deviation above the average growth among the peer regions.

**Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Northeast region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Northeast region ranking in one of the top three of six places among its peers.

**Growth Index**

The Northeast region ranks 1st among its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the Northeast region ranks in 1st or 2nd place for all five indicators (see Figure 21).

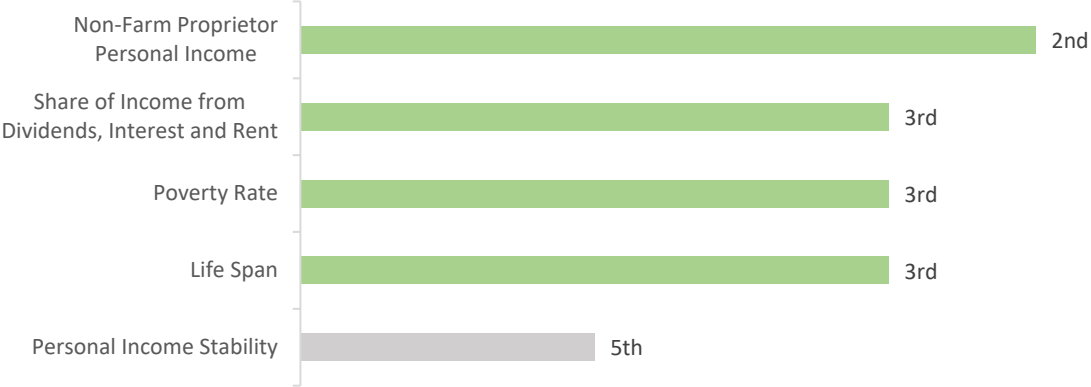
Figure 21: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Other Prosperity Index

The Northeast region ranks 3rd among its peers but is below the peer region average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Within this index, the Northeast region ranks 2nd or 3rd for non-farm proprietor personal income, share of income from dividends, interest and rent, poverty rate, and life span. However, it ranks 5th on personal income stability (see Figure 22).

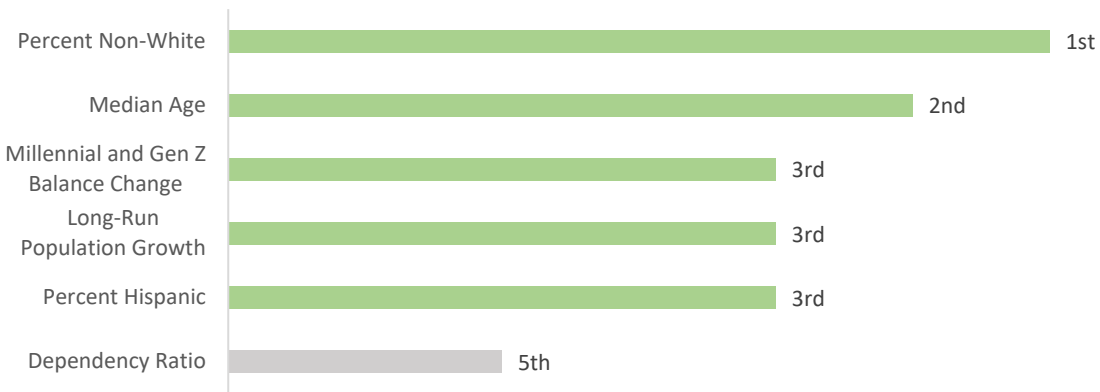
Figure 22: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

The Northeast region ranks 2nd among its peers and is nearly one-half of a standard deviation above the peer average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Within this index, the Northeast region ranks in one of the top three places for five of six indicators. It ranks 5th on the dependency ratio (see Figure 23).

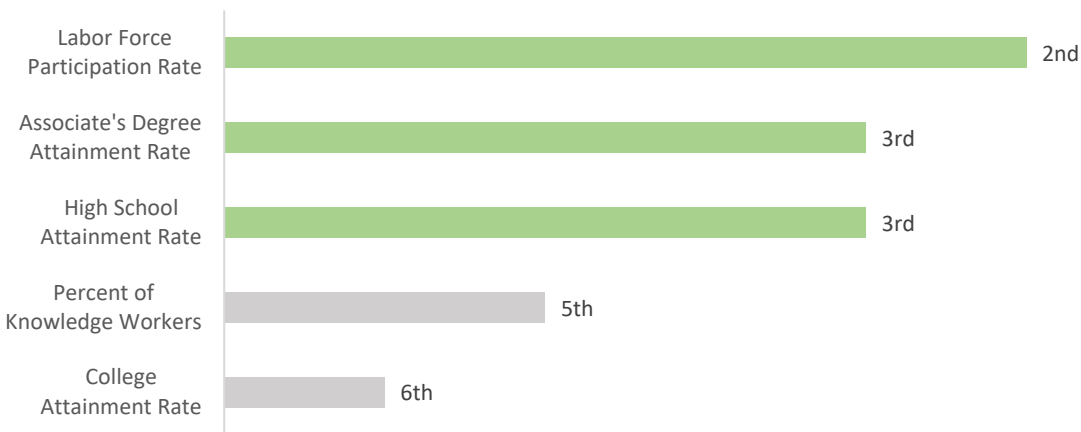
Figure 23: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



**Education & Skill Index**

The Northeast region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is above the peer region average. The region ranks 2nd on labor force participation and 3rd on associate’s degree and high school attainment. However, it ranks lower (5th) on the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations) and last on college attainment (see Figure 24).

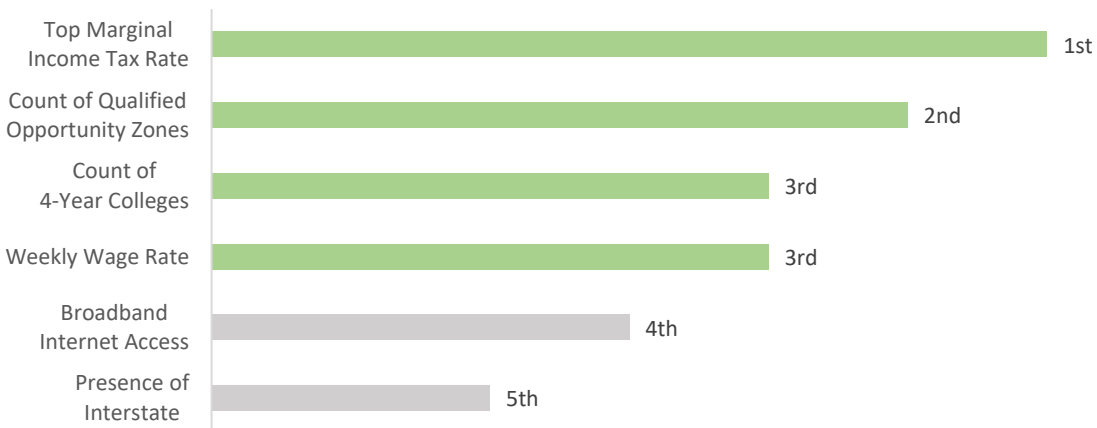
Figure 24: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



**Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index**

The Northeast region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Results are mixed within this index as the Northeast region ranks in one of the top three places for four of the six indicators but 4th for broadband internet access and 5th for presence of an interstate (see Figure 25).

Figure 25: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



**Considerations**

An area of consideration would be identified as the Northeast region ranking 4th among its peers and having neither an area of strength or concern. However, the Northeast region did not have a 4th place ranking on any of the eight Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes.

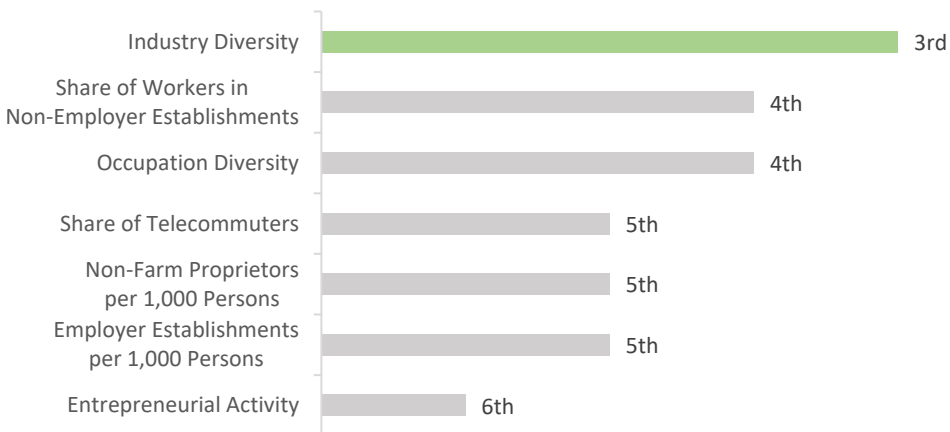
**Concerns**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Northeast region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Northeast region ranking in one of the bottom two of six places among its peers.

Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The Northeast region ranks 5th among its peers and is more than one-half of a standard deviation below the peer region average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Although the Northeast region ranks 3rd on industry diversity, it ranks much lower on the remaining six of seven indicators, particularly those related to the business and entrepreneurial environment (see Figure 26).

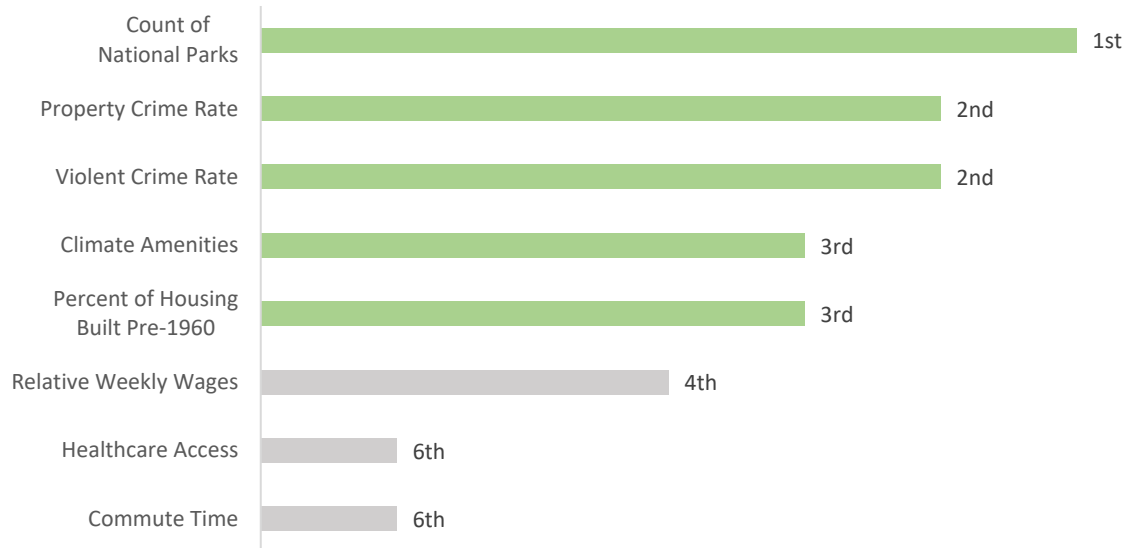
Figure 26: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



### Quality of Life

The Northeast region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the Northeast region ranks in one of the top three places for five of the eight indicators of quality of life. However, it ranks last on healthcare access and commute time (see Figure 27).

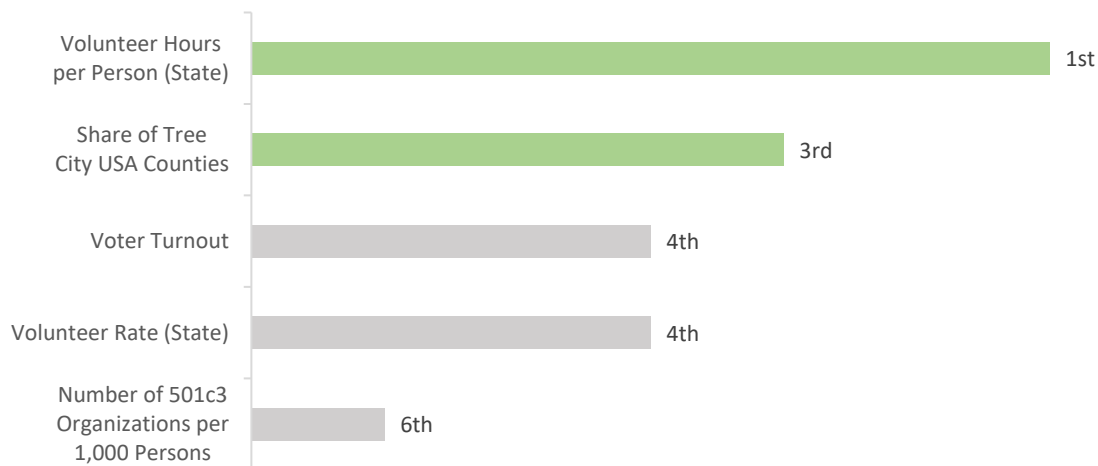
Figure 27: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



### Social Capital Index

The Northeast region ranks last among its peers for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. The Northeast region ranks 1st on volunteer hours per person and 3rd on the share of Tree City USA counties but ranks much lower on the remaining three of five indicators and is last on the number of 501c3 organizations per 1,000 persons (see Figure 28).

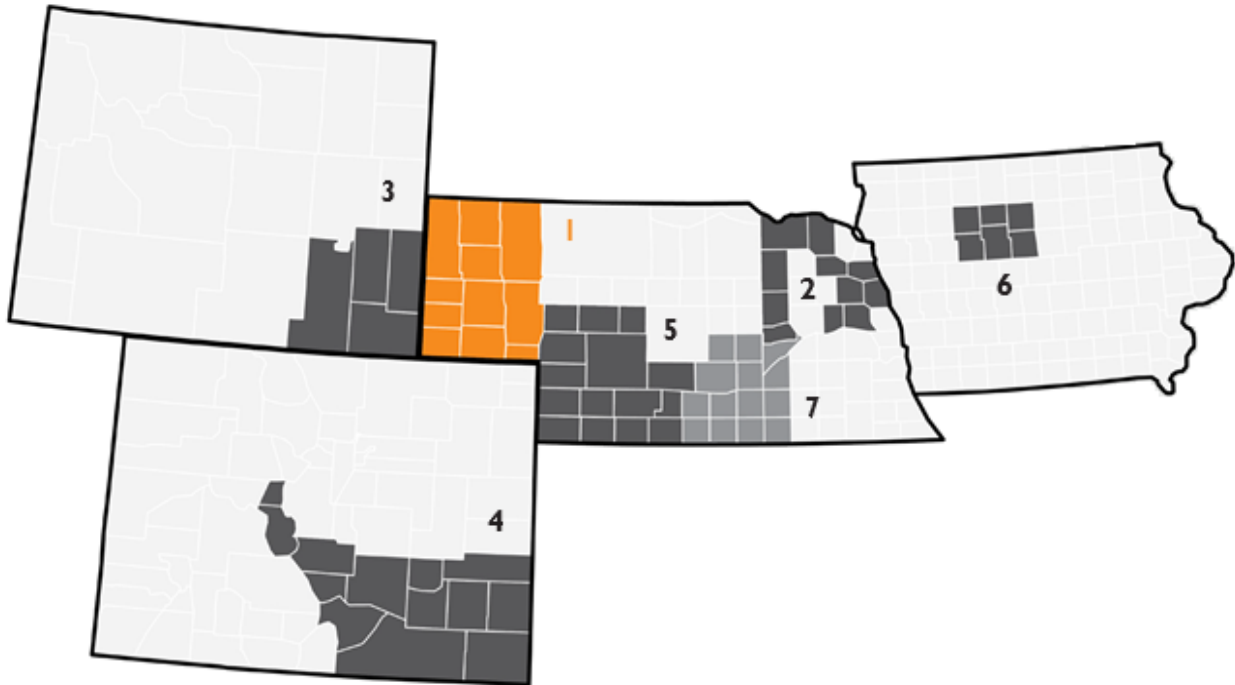
Figure 28: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



## PANHANDLE REGION

The Panhandle region contains the eleven most western Nebraska counties and includes the Scottsbluff-Gering micropolitan area as well as Alliance, Chadron, and Sidney. Nearly half of the regional population resides in a micropolitan area and ranching is a key component of the production economy. There are six peer comparison regions for the Panhandle region, including peer regions located in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska peers are the Northeast, Southwest and Tri-Cities regions. The other comparison regions are located in Wyoming (1), Colorado (1) and Iowa (1). (See Figure 29.)

**Figure 29: Panhandle Region and Comparison Peer Regions**



### Results at a Glance

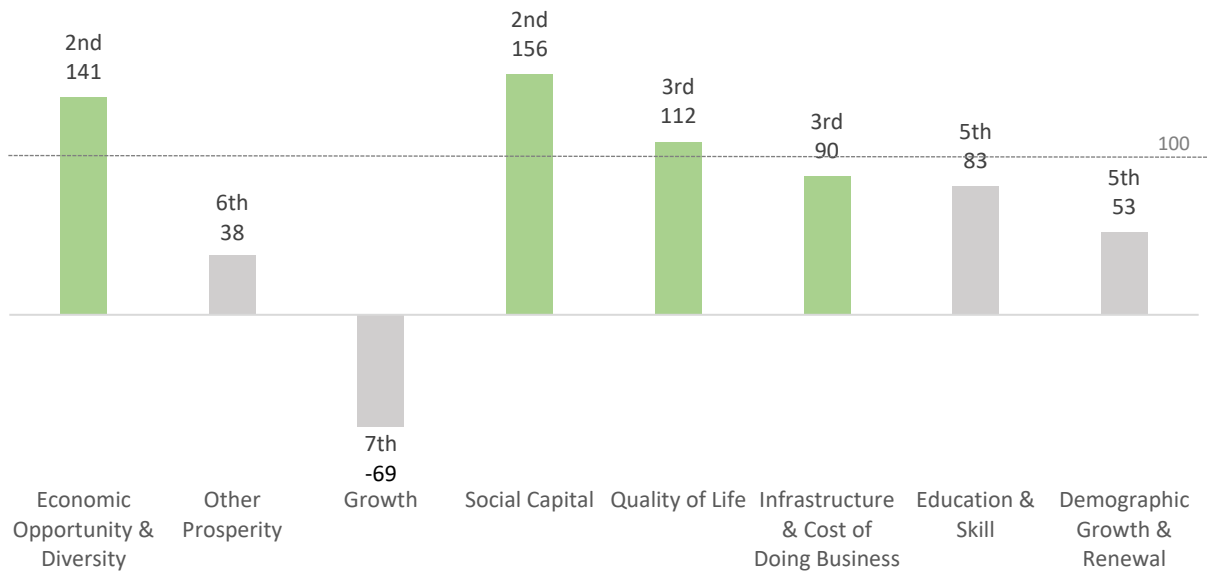
Nebraska Thriving Index: 76  
Ranks 5th Among Peers

- ✓ 2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity
- ✓ 2nd Social Capital
- ✓ 3rd Quality of Life
- ✓ 3rd Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business

1. **NEBRASKA: Panhandle Region**
2. **NEBRASKA: Northeast Region**
3. **WYOMING: Southeast Wyoming Economic Development District**
4. **COLORADO: Southern Colorado Economic Development District**
5. **NEBRASKA: Southwest Region**
6. **IOWA: Mid-Iowa Development Association Council of Governments**
7. **NEBRASKA: Tri-Cities Region**

Figure 30 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Panhandle region compared to its peers. The Panhandle region's 5th place ranking and 76 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is due to poor performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Panhandle region is weak compared to its peers on two of the three economic prosperity indexes measures, ranking 6th for the Other Prosperity Index and last for the Growth Index. Other areas of poor performance for the Panhandle region are Education & Skill and Demographic Growth & Renewal as it ranks 5th for these two indexes. On a positive note, the Panhandle region ranks 2nd on the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index and the Social Capital Index and 3rd on the Quality of Life Index and Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

Figure 30: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Panhandle Region



**Index Interpretation**

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 156 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 0.56 of a standard deviation above the average social capital among the peer regions.

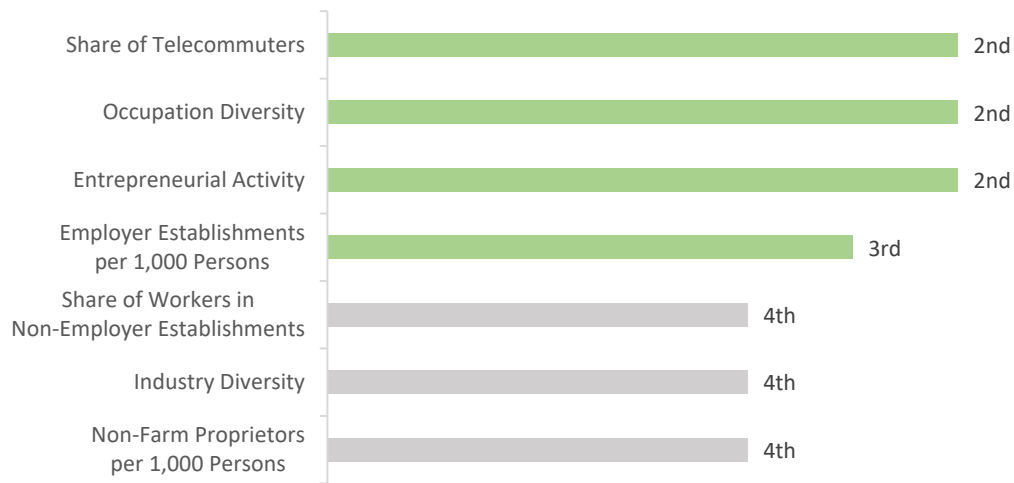
**Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Panhandle region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Panhandle region ranking in one of the top three of seven places among its peers.

Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The Panhandle region ranks 2nd among its peers and is above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 2nd or 3rd for four of the seven indicators, and 4th for the remaining indicators (see Figure 31).

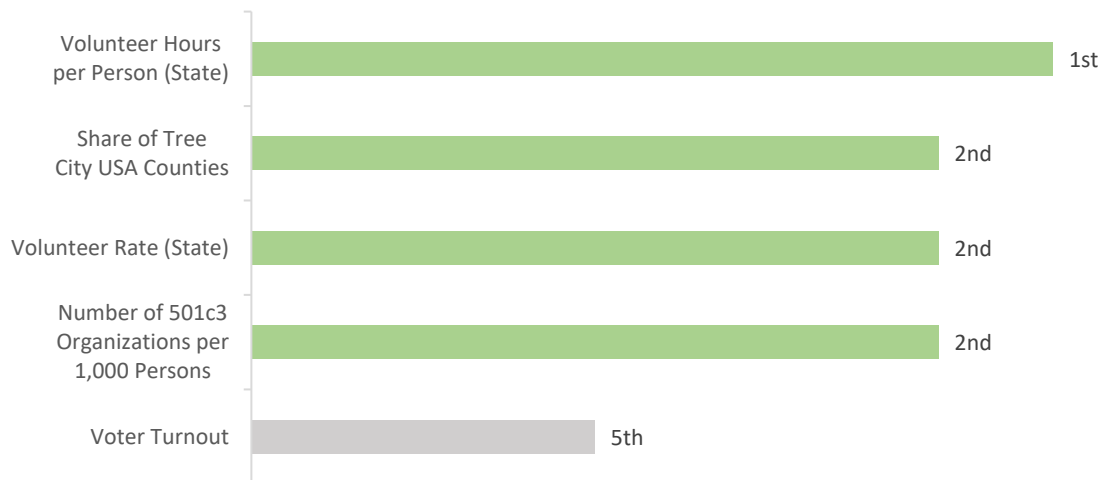
Figure 31: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



### Social Capital Index

The Panhandle region ranks 2nd among its peers and is more than a half of a standard deviation above the peer region average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 1st or 2nd on four of the five indicators. However, it ranks 5th on voter turnout (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region

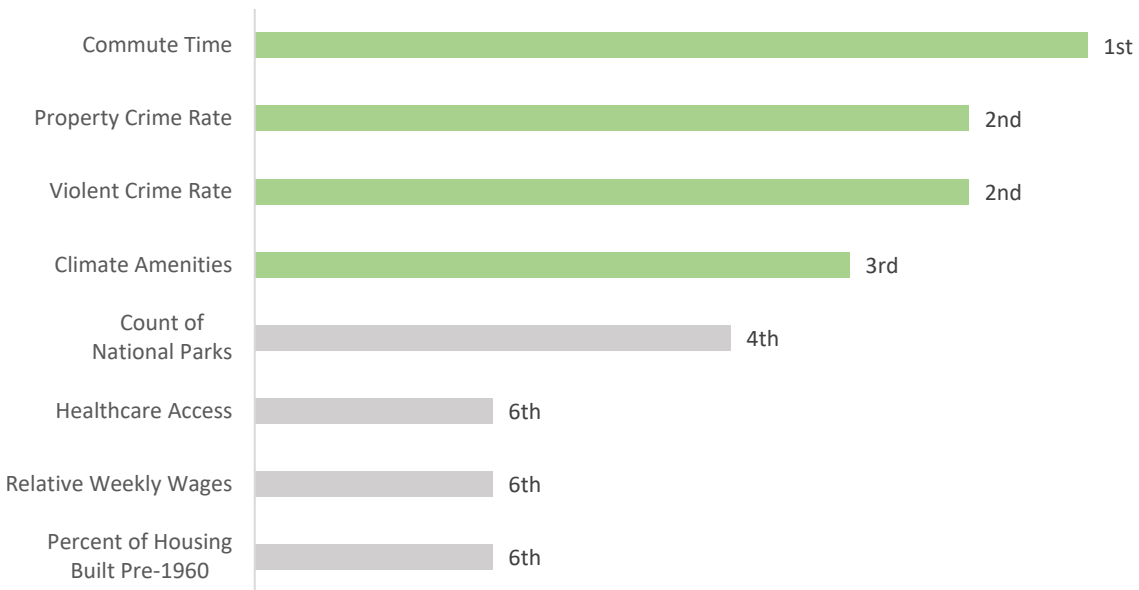


### Quality of Life

The Panhandle region ranks 3rd among its peers and is slightly above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Results are mixed within this index as the Panhandle region ranks in one of the top three places for four of the eight indicators of quality of life; however, it ranks 6th for healthcare access, (low) relative weekly wages, and (older) housing (see Figure 33).



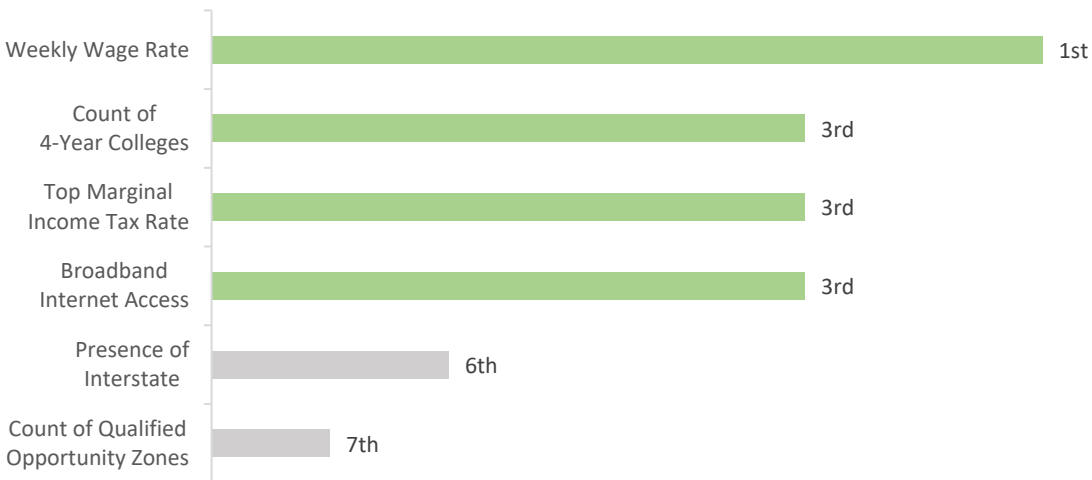
Figure 33: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

The Panhandle region ranks 3rd among its peers and is slightly below the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 1st on weekly wage rate which indicates that Panhandle region employers pay relatively lower wage rates than employers in similarly situated peer regions. It also ranks 3rd on three other indicators, but last on the count of qualified opportunities zones (see Figure 34).

Figure 34: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



### Considerations

An area of consideration would be identified as the Panhandle region ranking 4th among its peers and having neither an area of strength or concern. However, the Panhandle region did not have a 4th place ranking on any of the eight Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes.

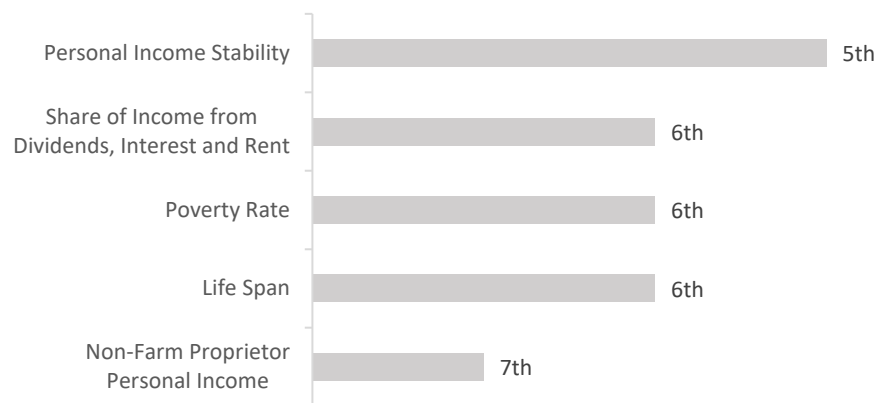
### Concerns

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Panhandle region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Panhandle region ranking in one of the bottom three of seven places among its peers.

### Other Prosperity Index

The Panhandle region ranks 6th among its peers for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 5th or lower on all the indicators, including last on non-farm proprietor personal income (see Figure 35).

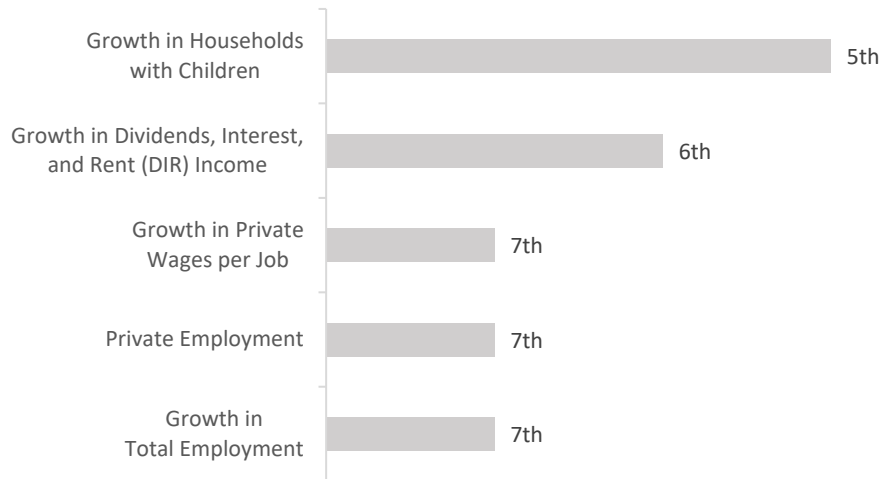
Figure 35: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



### Growth Index

The Panhandle region ranks last and is nearly 1.75 standard deviations below its peer average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 5th or lower on all the indicators, including last on three of the five indicators (see Figure 36).

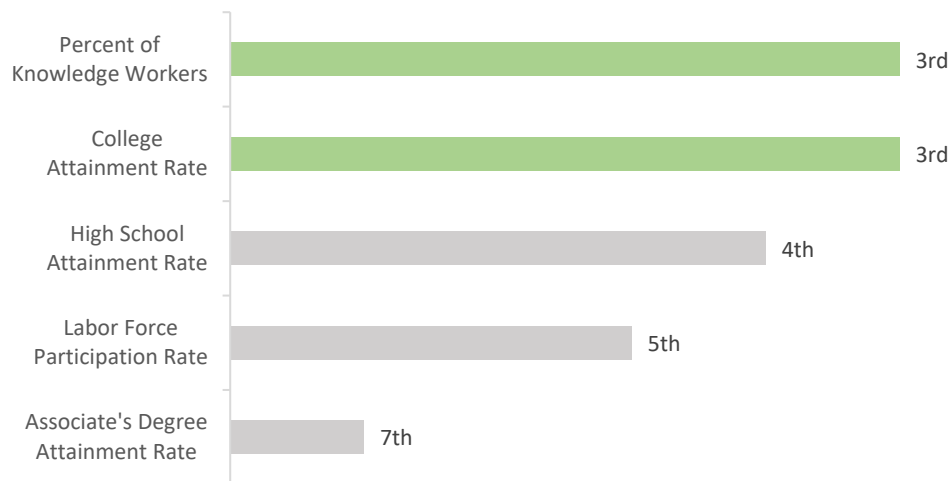
Figure 36: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



**Education & Skill Index**

The Panhandle region ranks 5th among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is below the peer region average. Although the Panhandle region ranks 3rd for both the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations) and college attainment, it ranks lower on high school attainment (4th), labor force participation (5th), and associate’s degree attainment (last). (See Figure 37.)

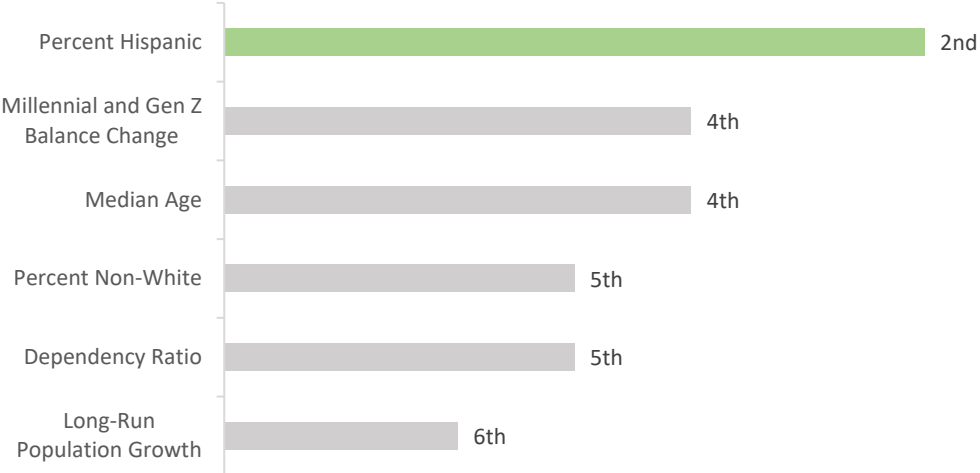
Figure 37: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



**Demographic Growth & Renewal Index**

The Panhandle region ranks 5th among its peers and nearly half of a standard deviation below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Although the Panhandle region ranks 2nd for percent Hispanic, it ranks 4th or lower on the other five of six indicators (see Figure 38).

Figure 38: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



## SANDHILLS REGION

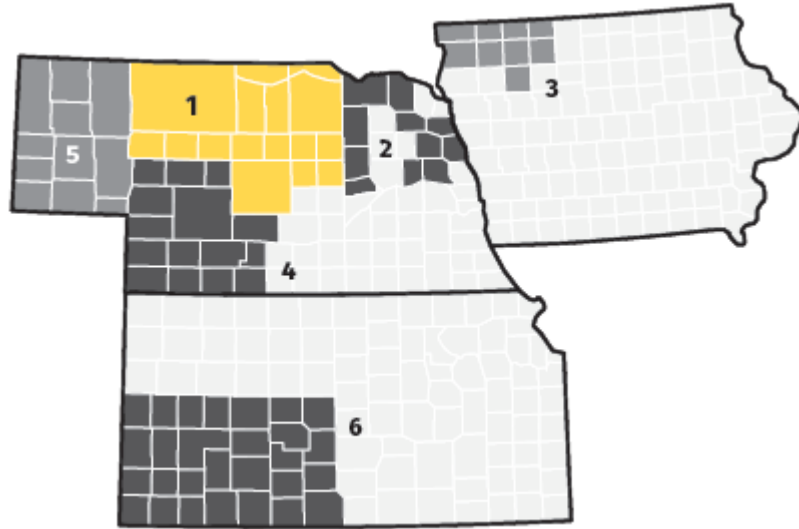
The Sandhills region contains the non-metropolitan counties of North Central Nebraska including Cherry, Holt, and Custer Counties. There are no micropolitan areas in the Sandhills region and ranching and tourism are key components of the regional economy. There are five peer comparison regions for the Sandhills region, including peer regions located in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska peers are the Panhandle, Southwest, and Northeast regions. The other comparison regions are located in Kansas (1) and Iowa (1). (See Figure 39.)

**Figure 39: Sandhills Region and Comparison Peer Regions**

### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 105  
Ranks 3rd Among Peers

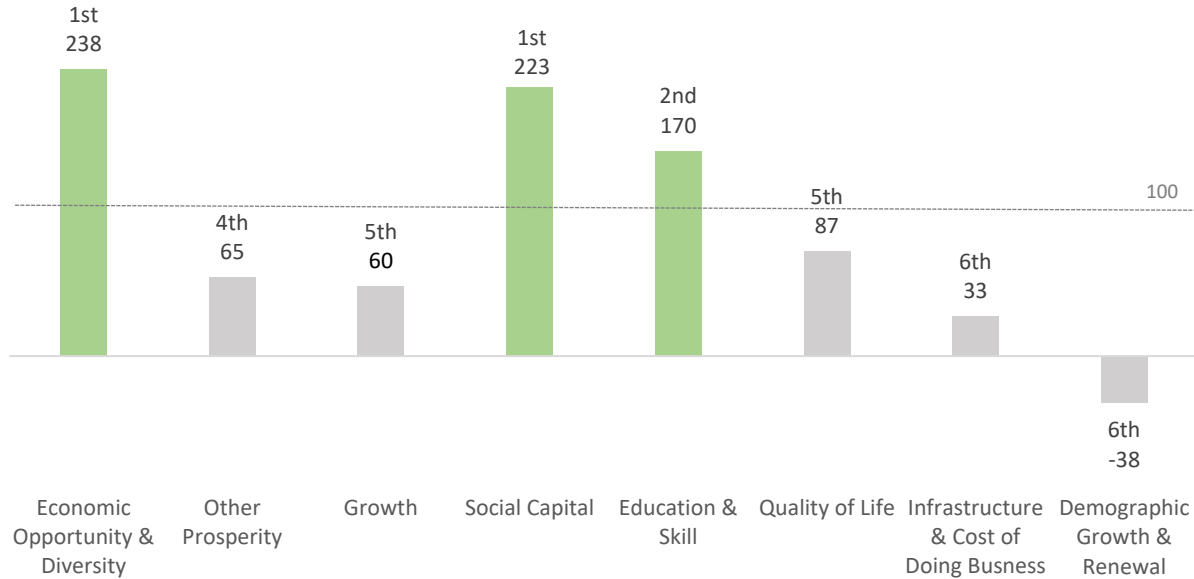
- ✓ 1st Economic Opportunity & Diversity
- ✓ 1st Social Capital
- ✓ 2nd Education & Skill



1. **NEBRASKA: Sandhills Region**
2. **NEBRASKA: Northeast Region**
3. **IOWA: Northwest Iowa Planning & Development Commission**
4. **NEBRASKA: Southwest Region**
5. **NEBRASKA: Panhandle Region**
6. **KANSAS: Great Plains Development Inc.**

Figure 40 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Sandhills region compared to its peers. The Sandhills region's 3rd place ranking and 105 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is due to a mixed performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Sandhills region performs well relative to its peers on one of the three economic prosperity indexes. It ranks 1st for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index and is more than one standard deviation above the peer average. Social Capital and Education & Skill are other areas of strength for the Sandhills region as it ranks 1st and 2nd for these indexes, respectively. However, areas of poor performance for the Sandhills region are Growth, Quality of Life, Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business, and Demographic Growth & Renewal as it ranks 5th or last for these indexes.

Figure 40: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Sandhills Region



**Index Interpretation**

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 223 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 1.23 standard deviations above the average social capital among the peer regions.

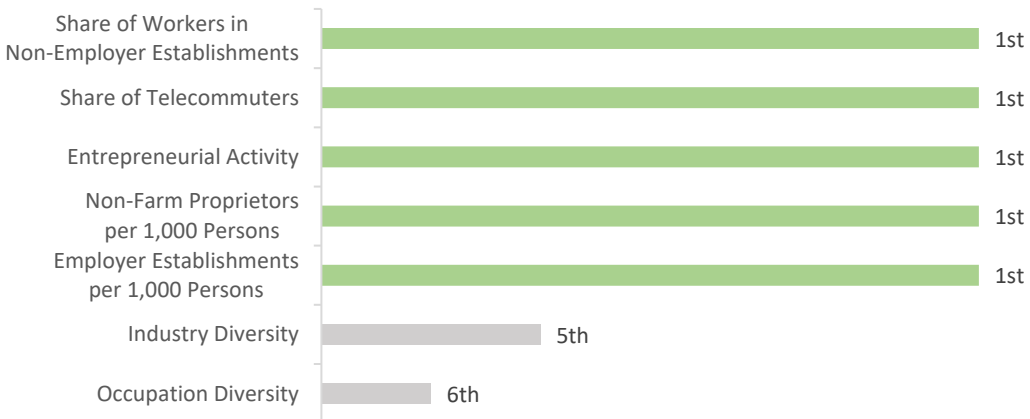
**Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Sandhills region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Sandhills region ranking in one of the top three of six places among its peers.

**Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index**

The Sandhills region ranks 1st among its peers and is 1.38 standard deviations above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 1st for five of the seven indicators of economic opportunity and diversity; however, it ranks 5th for industry diversity and last for occupation diversity (see Figure 41).

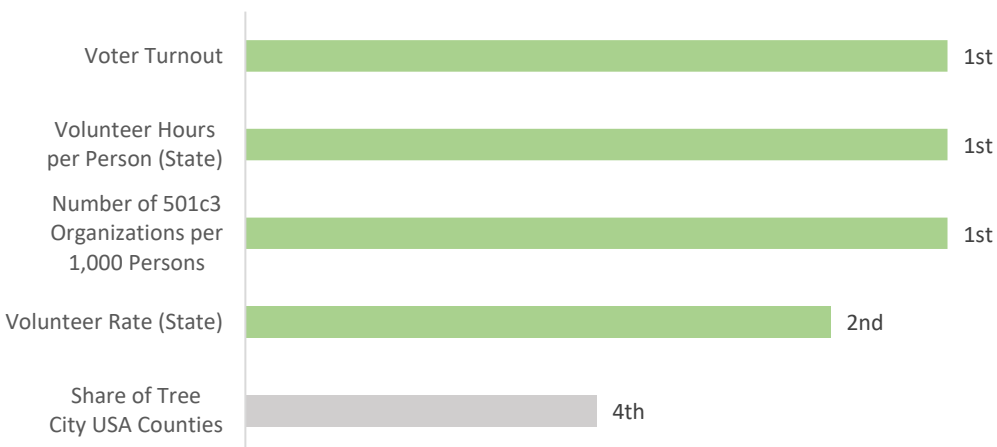
Figure 41: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



### Social Capital Index

The Sandhills region ranks 1st among its peers and is nearly one-and-one-quarter standard deviations above the peer average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 1st or 2nd on four of the five indicators (see Figure 42).

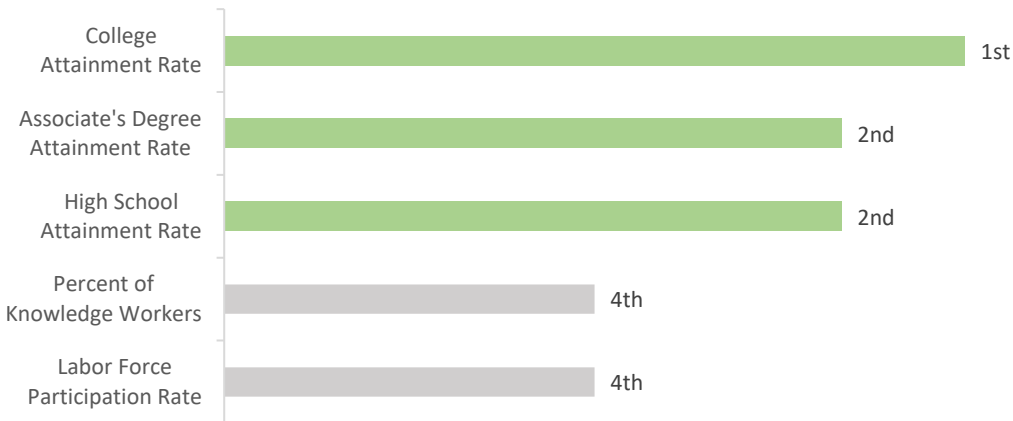
Figure 42: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



### Education & Skill Index

The Sandhills region ranks 2nd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index. Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 1st on college attainment and 2nd on both associate's and high school attainment, and 4th for the remaining two indicators (see Figure 43).

Figure 43: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



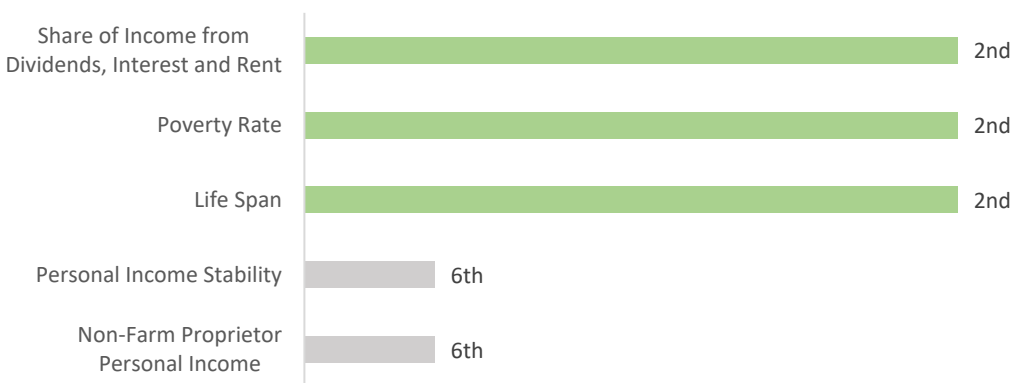
**Considerations**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Sandhills region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Sandhills region ranking 4th among its peers.

Other Prosperity Index

The Sandhills region ranks 4th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Results are mixed within this index as the Sandhills region ranks 2nd on three of the five indicators, but last for the remaining two indicators (see Figure 44).

Figure 44: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



**Concerns**

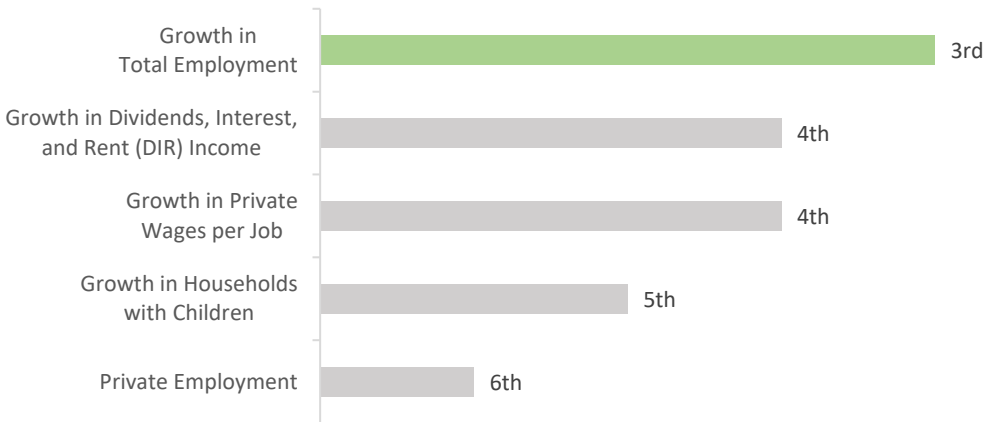
This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Sandhills region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Sandhills region ranking in one of the bottom two of six places among its peers.



### Growth Index

The Sandhills region ranks 5th among its peers and is nearly one-half of a standard deviation below the peer region average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Although the Sandhills region ranks 3rd for growth in total employment, it ranks 4th or lower on the remaining four of five indicators, including last on private employment (see Figure 45).

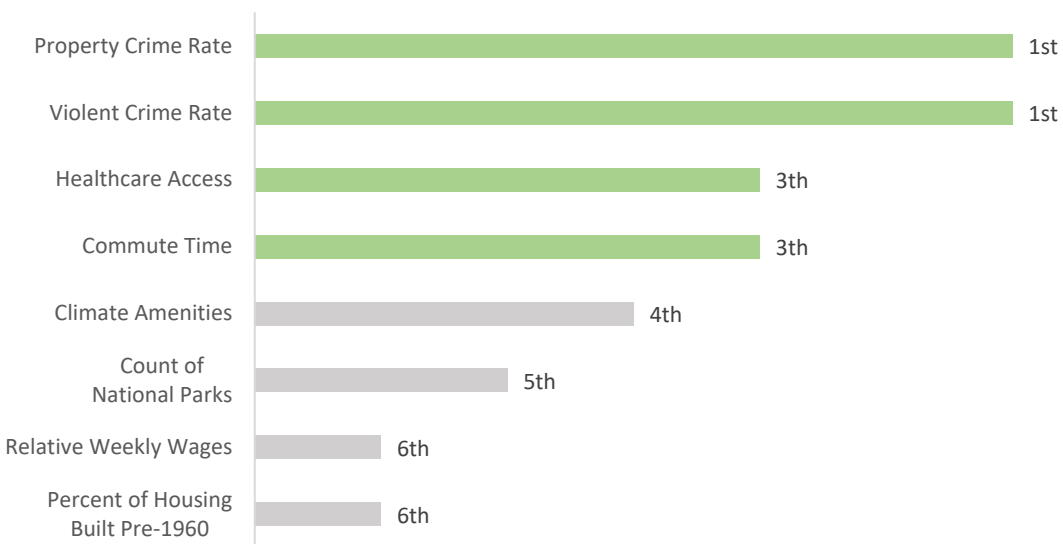
Figure 45: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



### Quality of Life

The Sandhills region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the Sandhills region has a mix of rankings across the eight indicators, ranging from a 1st place ranking on property and violent crime rates (low) to last place rankings on relative weekly wages (lowest) and housing (oldest). (See Figure 46.)

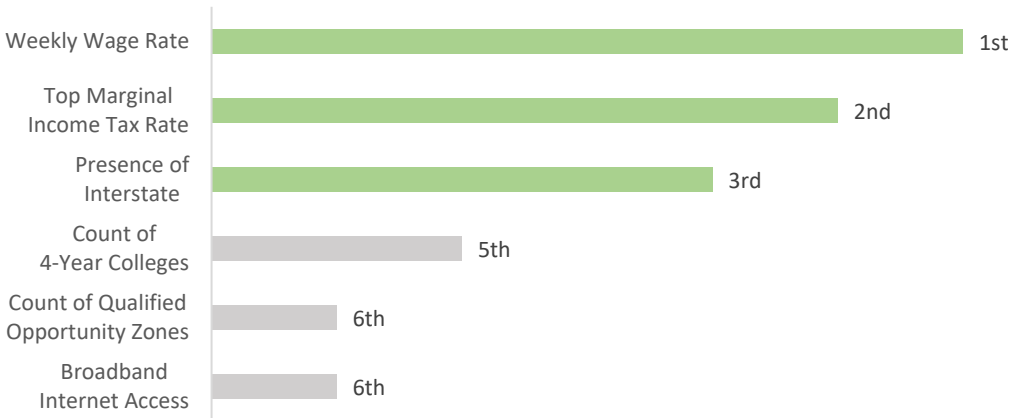
Figure 46: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



### Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

The Sandhills region ranks last among its peers and is two-thirds of a standard deviation below the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Results are mixed for the Sandhills region as it ranks 1st for weekly wage rate, 2nd for top marginal income tax rate, and 3rd for presence of interstate, but ranks last on both the count of qualified opportunity zones and broadband internet access (see Figure 47).

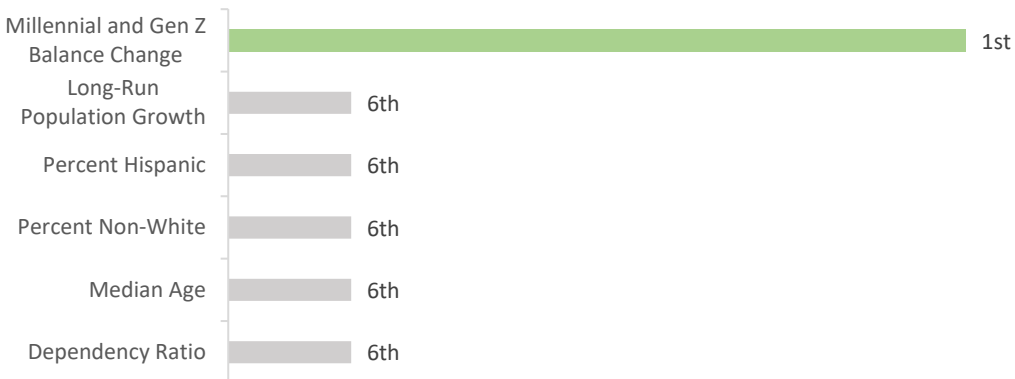
Figure 47: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



### Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

The Sandhills region ranks last among its peers and is more than one standard deviation below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Although the Sandhills region ranks 1st for Millennial and Gen Z balance change, it ranks last on the remaining five of the six indicators (see Figure 48).

Figure 48: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



## SIOUXLAND REGION

The Siouxland region contains Dakota and Dixon Counties, which are part of the Sioux City, Iowa metropolitan area. The Siouxland region and peers have an elevated share of employment in manufacturing but are not as heavily involved in farming and ranching. There are five peer comparison regions located in Iowa (3), Minnesota (1) and Illinois (1). (See Figure 49.)

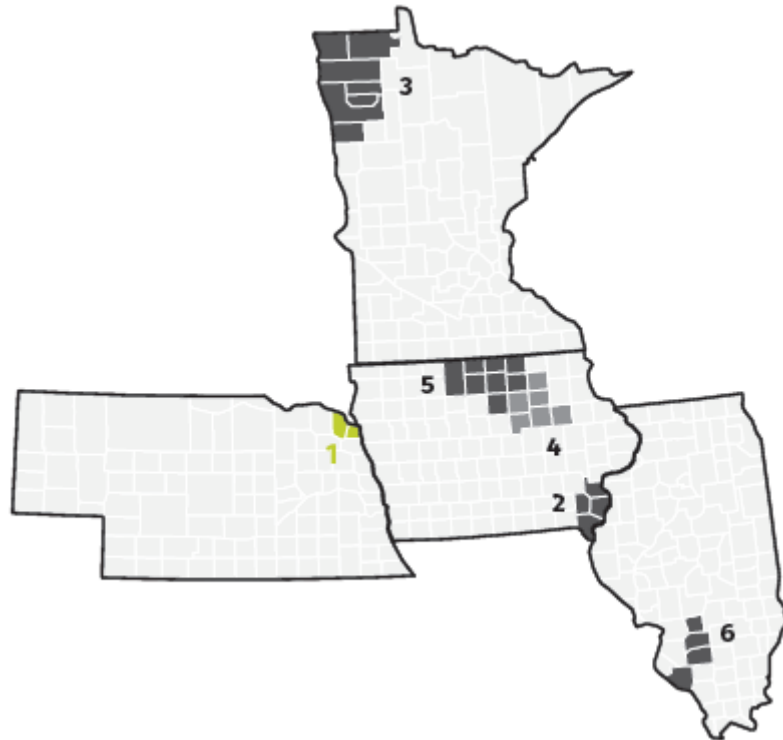
**Figure 49: Siouxland Region and Comparison Peer Regions**

### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 73

Ranks 4th Among Peers

- ✓ 1st Demographic Growth & Renewal
- ✓ 1st Quality of Life
- ✓ 2nd Growth

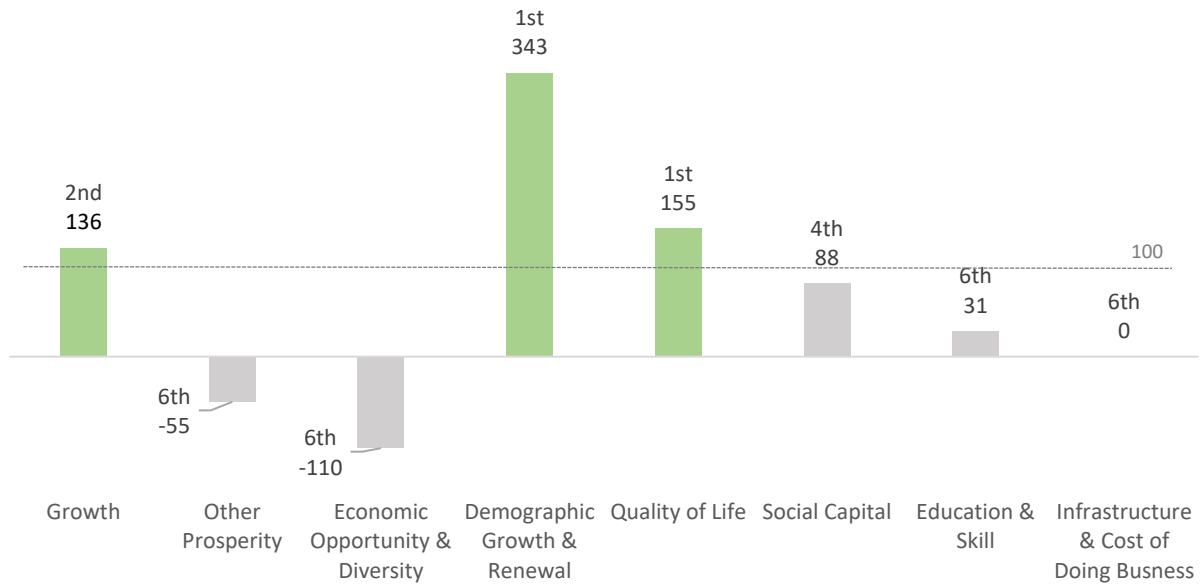


1. **NEBRASKA: Siouxland Region**
2. **IOWA: Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission**
3. **MINNESOTA: Northwest Minnesota Regional Development Commission**
4. **IOWA: Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments**
5. **IOWA: North Iowa Area Council of Governments**
6. **ILLINOIS: Southwestern Illinois Metropolitan & Regional**

Figure 50 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Siouxland region compared to its peers. The Siouxland region's 4th place ranking and 73 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is due to poor performance in two of the economic prosperity indexes as well as two economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Siouxland region is weak compared to its peers for the Other Prosperity Index and Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index. Other areas of poor performance for the Siouxland region are Education & Skill and Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business,

as it ranks last on these indexes. On a positive note, the Siouxland region ranks 1st for both the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index and the Quality of Life Index and ranks 2nd for the Growth Index.

Figure 50: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Siouxland Region



**Index Interpretation**

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 343 for Demographic Growth & Renewal indicates that demographic growth and renewal is 2.43 standard deviations above the average demographic growth and renewal among the peer regions.

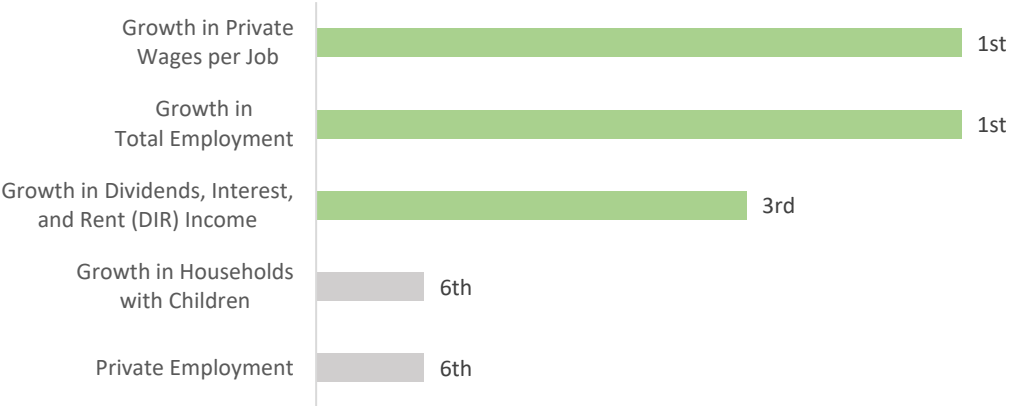
**Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Siouxland region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Siouxland region ranking in one of the top three of six places among its peers.

**Growth Index**

The Siouxland region ranks 2nd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks 1st on both growth in private wages per job and growth in total employment and 3rd on returns to wealth. However, it ranks last on both growth in households with children and the level of private employment (see Figure 51).

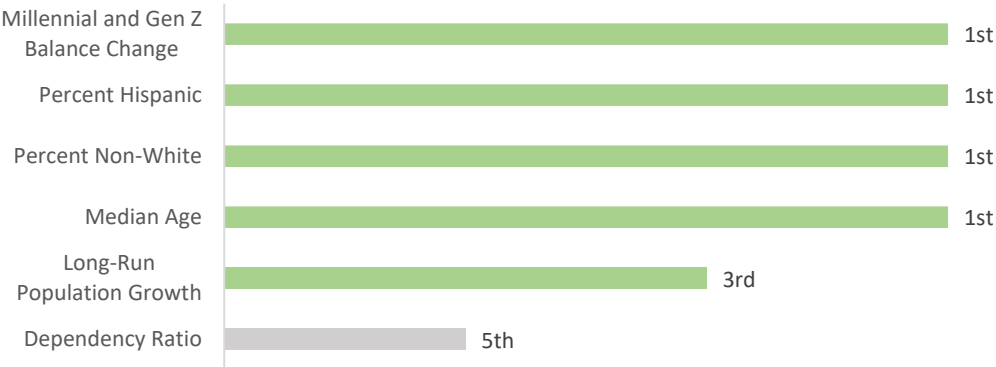
Figure 51: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

The Siouxland region ranks 1st among its peers and is nearly two-and-one-half standard deviations above the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks 1st on four of the six indicators, all of which are nearly three or more standard deviations above the peer average (see Figure 52).

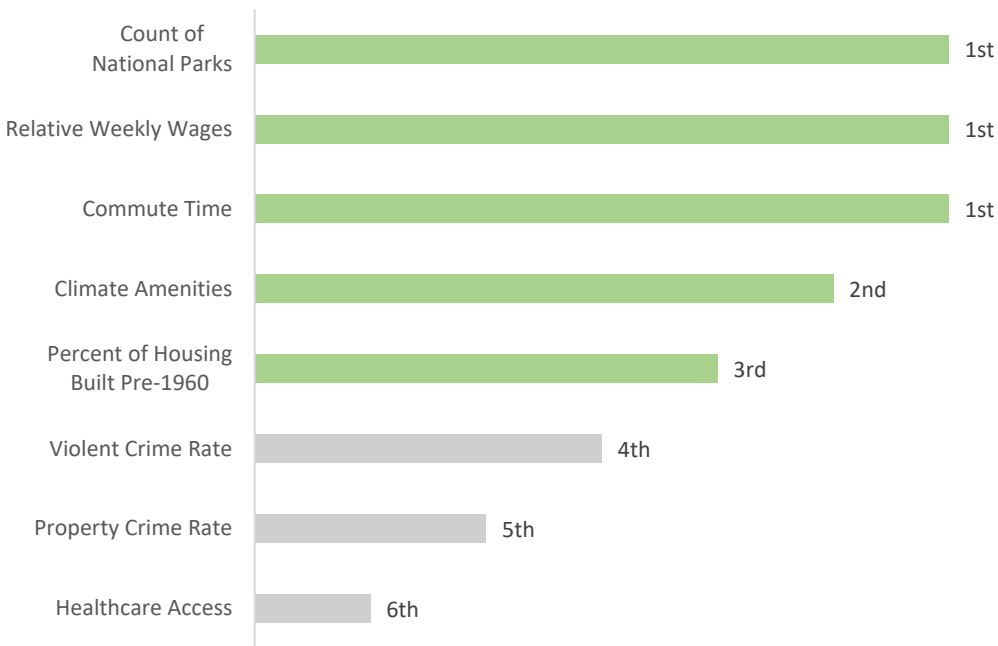
Figure 52: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Quality of Life

The Siouxland region ranks 1st among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks in one of the top three places for five of the eight indicators of quality of life, three of which are 1st place. However, it ranks last on healthcare access (see Figure 53).

Figure 53: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



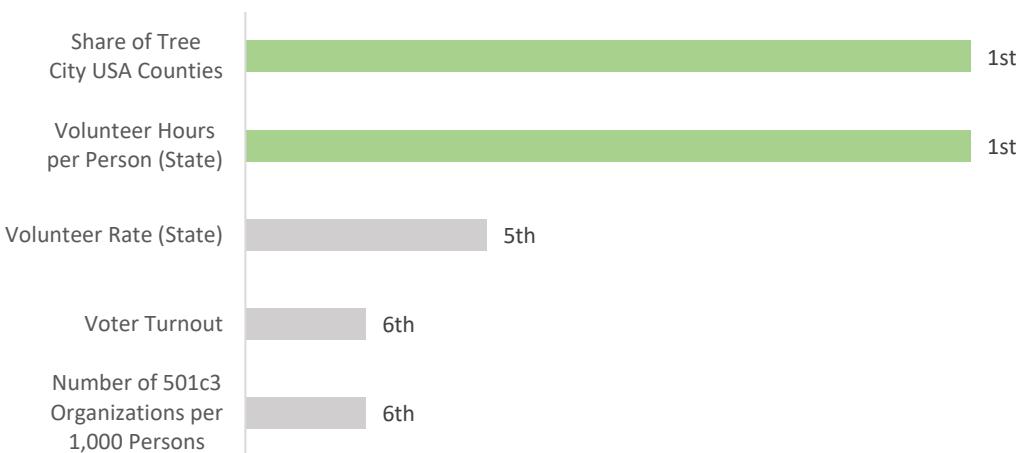
**Considerations**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Siouxland region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Siouxland region ranking 4th among its peers.

**Social Capital Index**

The Siouxland region ranks 4th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Results are mixed within this index as the Siouxland region ranks 1st on both the share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person, but last on both voter turnout and the number of 501c3 organizations per 1,000 persons (see Figure 54).

Figure 54: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



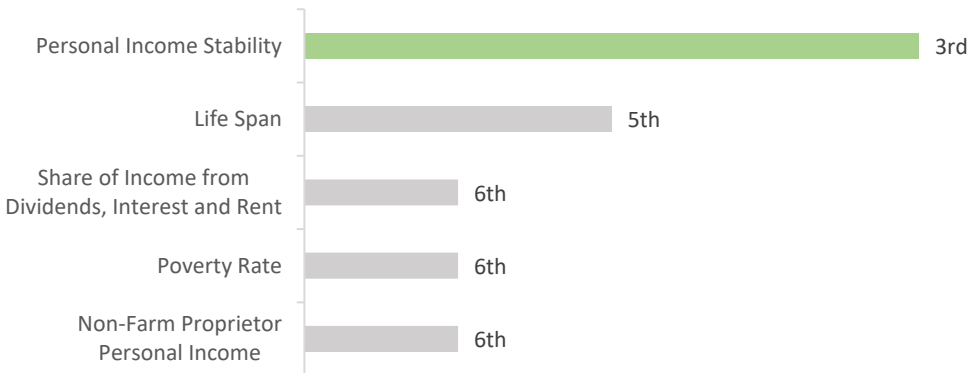
## Concerns

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Siouxland region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Siouxland region ranking in one of the bottom two of six places among its peers.

### Other Prosperity Index

The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is more than one-and-one-half standard deviations below the peer average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Within this index, the Siouxland ranks 5th or last on four of the five indicators (see Figure 55).

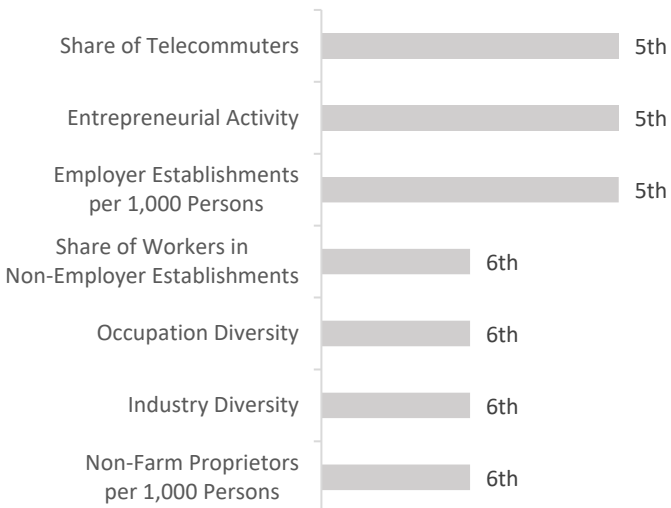
Figure 55: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



### Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is more than two standard deviations below the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks last on four of the seven indicators and 5th on the other three indicators (see Figure 56).

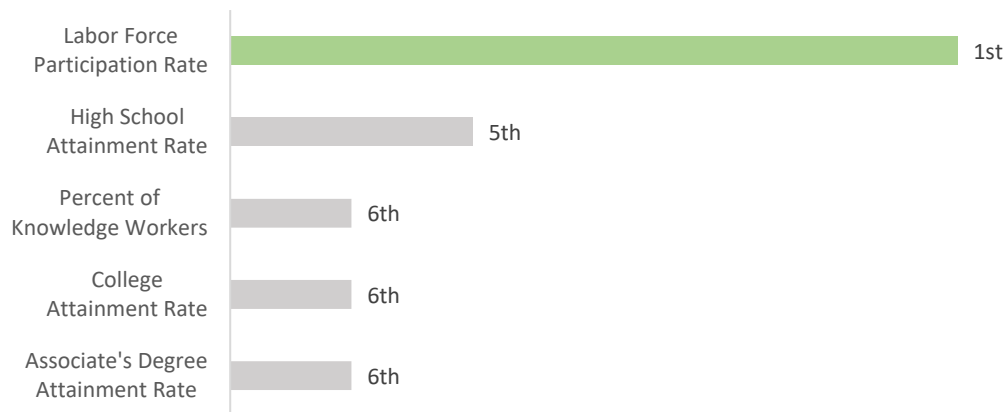
Figure 56: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



### Education & Skill Index

The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index. Although the Siouxland region ranks 1st on labor force participation rate, it ranks 5th on high school attainment and last on the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations) and college and associate's degree attainment (see Figure 57).

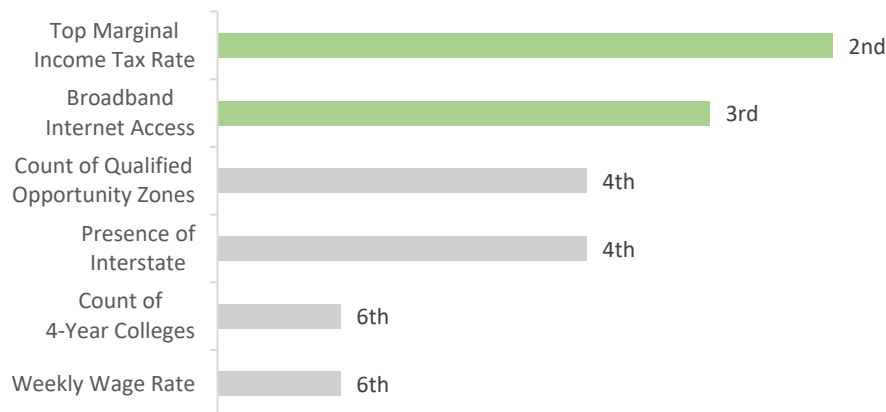
Figure 57: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



### Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is one standard deviation below the peer region average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Within this index, there are mixed results. The Siouxland region ranks 2nd for top marginal income tax rate (lower) and 3rd on broadband internet access; however, it ranks last on the count of 4-year colleges and weekly wage rate (highest). (See Figure 58.)

Figure 58: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region





## SOUTHEAST REGION

The Southeast region excludes the Lincoln metropolitan area but includes adjacent counties as well as counties bordering the nexus of Kansas, Iowa and Missouri. Many counties in the Southeast region benefit from commuting flows with the Lincoln metropolitan area, and Otoe County within the region also benefits from a commuting relationship with the Omaha metropolitan area. The Southeast region is manufacturing-oriented. There are eight peer comparison regions for the Southeast region, all located outside of the state of Nebraska. The comparison regions are located in Iowa (5), Minnesota (2) and South Dakota (1). (See Figure 59.)

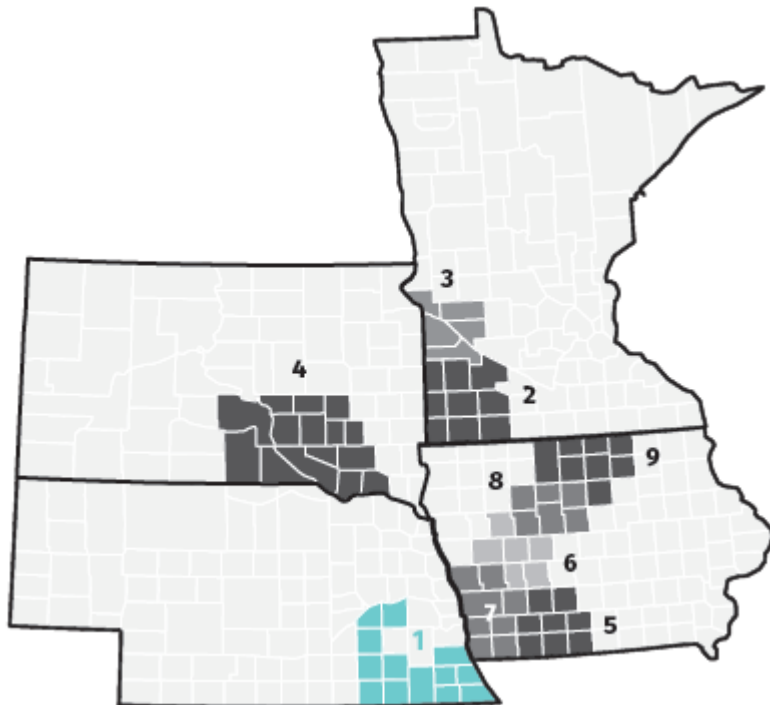
Figure 59: Southeast Region and Comparison Peer Region

### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 99

Ranks 4th Among Peers

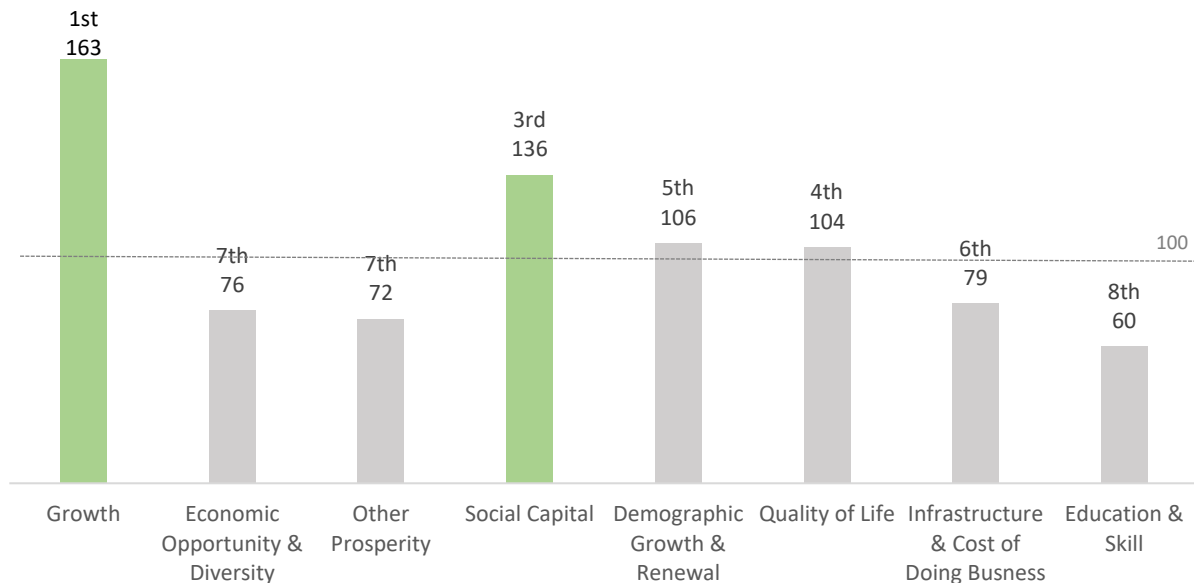
- ✓ 1st Growth
- ✓ 3rd Social Capital



1. **NEBRASKA: Southeast Region**
2. **MINNESOTA: Southwest Regional Development Commission**
3. **MINNESOTA: Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission**
4. **SOUTH DAKOTA: Planning & Development District III**
5. **IOWA: Southern Iowa Council of Governments**
6. **IOWA: Region XII Council of Governments**
7. **IOWA: Southwest Iowa Planning Council**
8. **IOWA: Mid-Iowa Development Association Council of Governments**
9. **IOWA: North Iowa Area Council of Governments**

Figure 60 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Southeast region compared to its peers. The Southeast region’s 4th place ranking and 99 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is due to a mixed performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Southeast region performs well relative to its peers on one of the three economic prosperity indexes, ranking 1st for the Growth Index. Social Capital is another area of strength for the Southeast region as it ranks 3rd for this index. However, areas of poor performance for the Southeast region are Economic Opportunity & Growth, Other Prosperity, Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business, and Education & Skill, as it ranks 6th or lower for these indexes.

Figure 60: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Southeast Region



### Index Interpretation

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 163 for Growth indicates that growth is 0.63 of a standard deviation above the average growth among the peer regions.

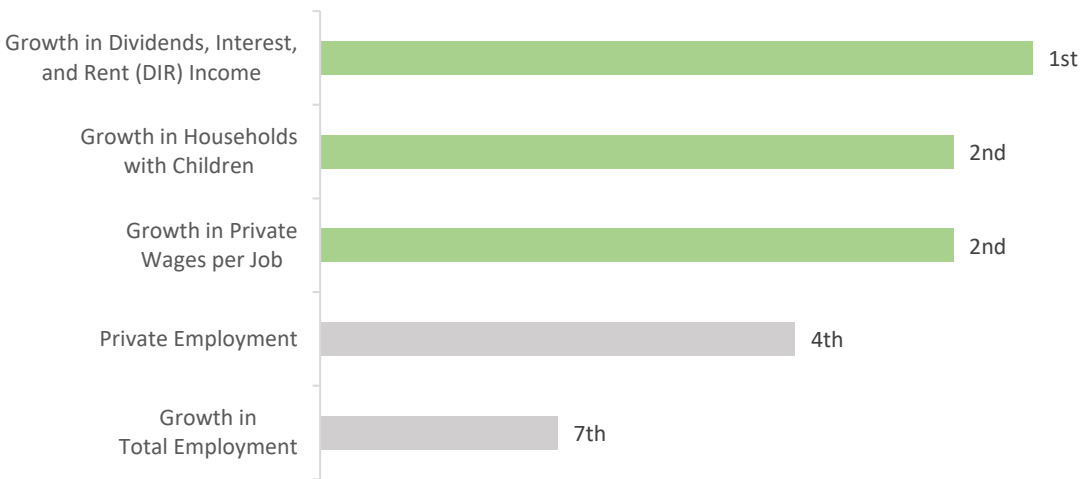
### **Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southeast region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Southeast region ranking in one of the top three of nine places among its peers.

### Growth Index

The Southeast region ranks 1st among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the Southeast region ranks 1st on growth in dividends, interest and rent income and 2nd on both growth in households with children and growth in private wages per job. It ranks 4th on the remaining indicators (see Figure 61).

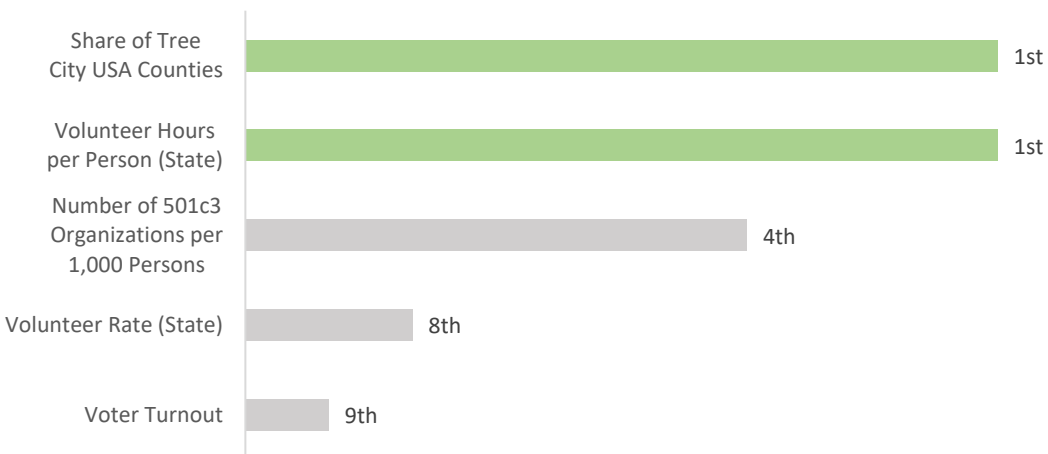
Figure 61: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



**Social Capital Index**

The Southeast region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Results are mixed within this index as the Southeast region ranks 1st on both share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person but second-to last and last on volunteer rate and voter turnout, respectively (see Figure 62).

Figure 62: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



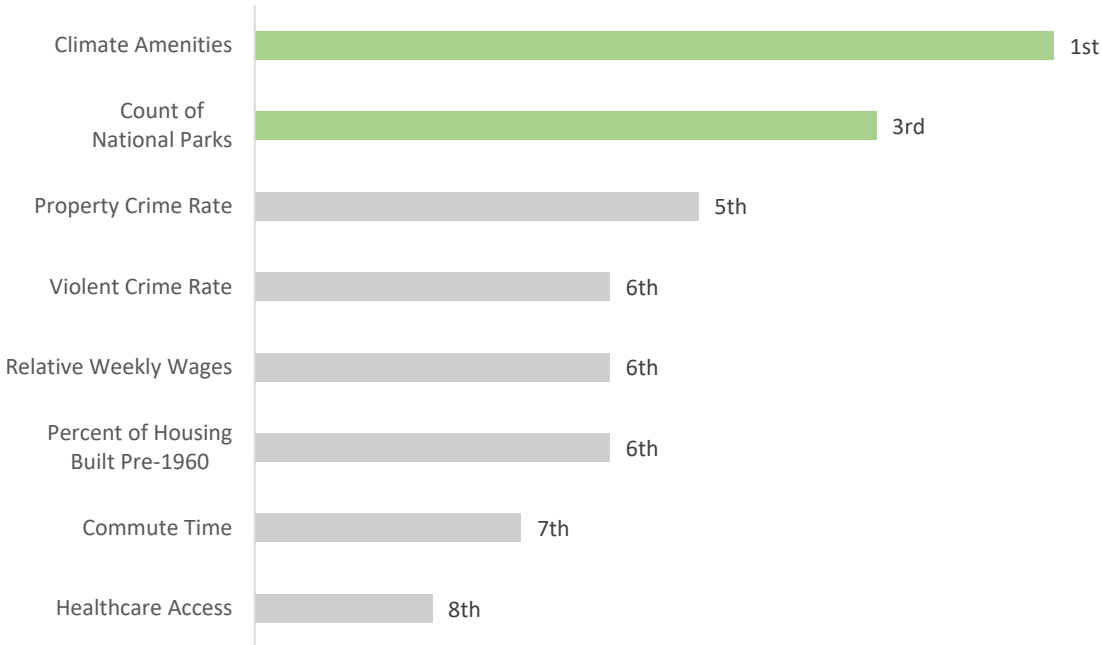
**Considerations**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southeast region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Southeast region ranking 4th among its peers.

### Quality of Life

The Southeast region ranks 4th among its peers and is at the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the Southeast region has a mix of rankings across the eight indicators, ranging from a 1st place ranking on climate amenities to a second-to-last place ranking on healthcare access (see Figure 63).

Figure 63: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



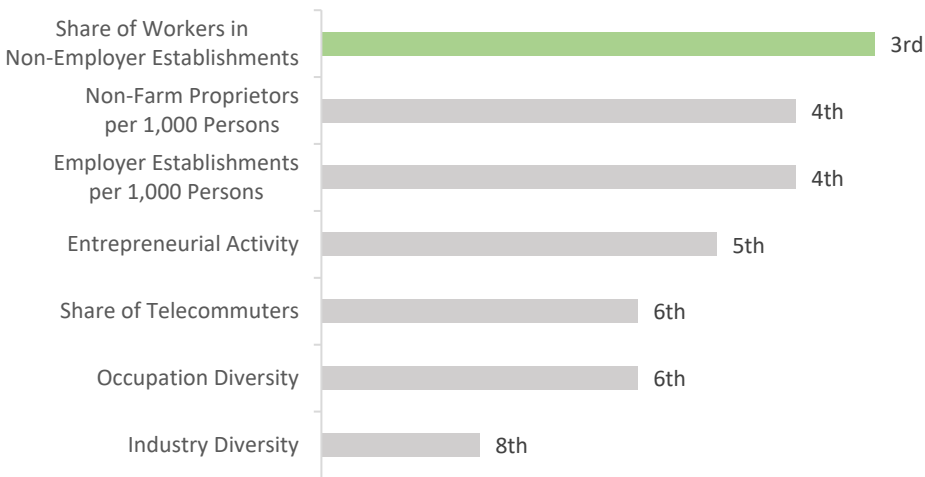
### **Concerns**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southeast region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Southeast region ranking in one of the bottom five of nine places among its peers.

### Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The Southeast region ranks 7th among its peers for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Although the Southeast region ranks 3rd on the share of workers in non employer establishments, it ranks much lower on the other indicators, including second-to-last on industry diversity (see Figure 64).

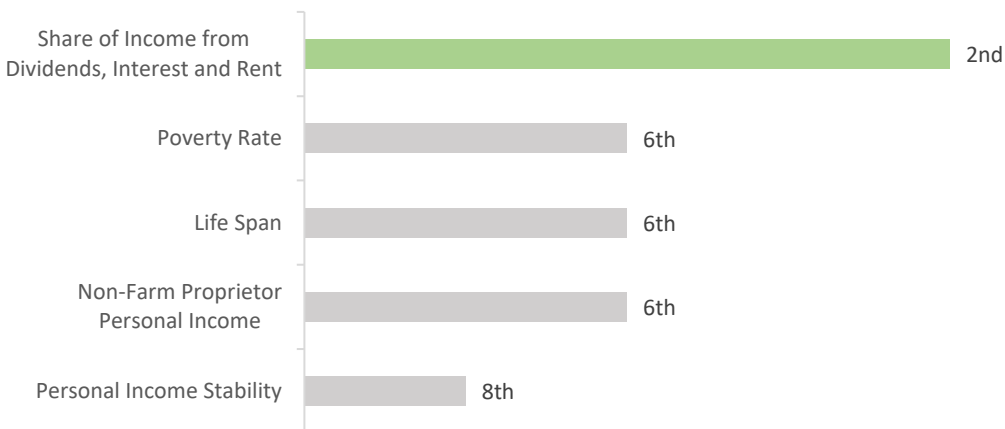
Figure 64: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



### Other Prosperity Index

The Southeast region ranks 7th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Although the Southeast region ranks 2nd on share of income from dividends, interest and rent, it ranks 6th or lower for the other four indicators (see Figure 65).

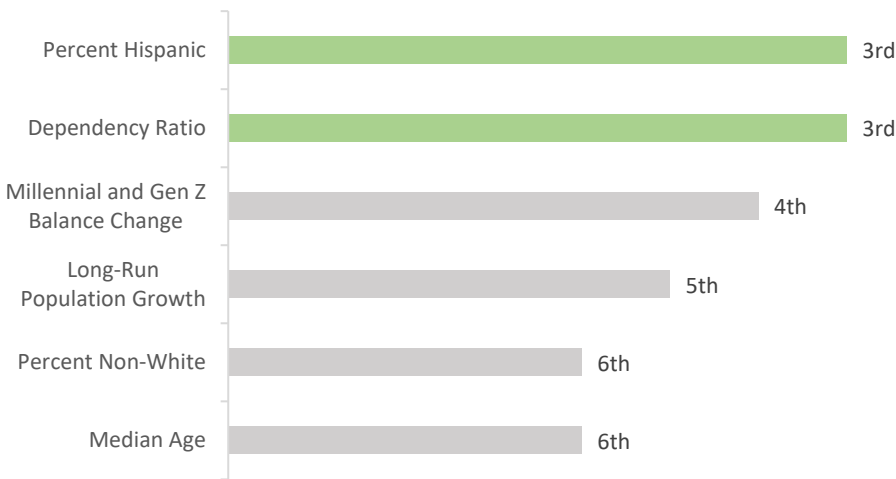
Figure 65: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



### Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

The Southeast region ranks 5th among its peers and is at the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Although the Southeast region ranks 3rd on percent Hispanic and the dependency ratio, it ranks lower on the remaining four of the six indicators (see Figure 66).

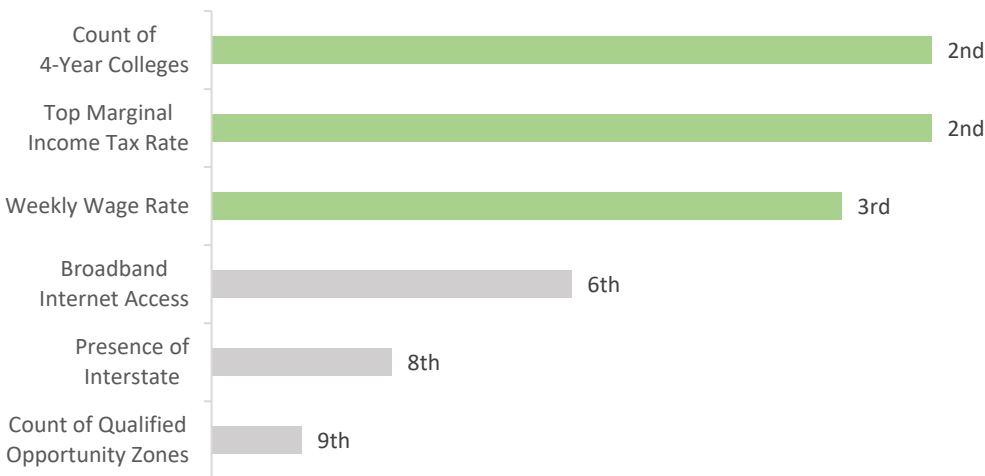
Figure 66: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



**Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index**

The Southeast region ranks 6th among its peers and is below the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. There are mixed results for this index. The Southeast region ranks 2nd for both count of 4-year colleges and top marginal income tax rate (low) and 3rd weekly wage rate. However, it ranks 6th on broadband internet access, 8th on presence of interstate, and last on count of qualified opportunity zones (see Figure 67).

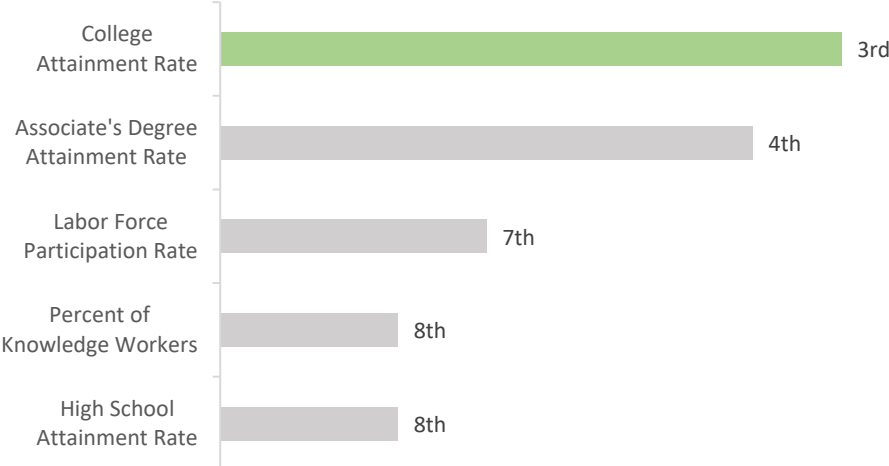
Figure 67: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



**Education & Skill Index**

The Southeast region ranks 8th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index. Within this index, the Southeast region is at a 4th place ranking or lower for all five indicators except college attainment where it ranks 3rd (see Figure 68).

Figure 68: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



## SOUTHWEST REGION

The Southwest region contains the North Platte micropolitan area, larger towns such as Lexington and McCook and the non-metropolitan counties of Southwest Nebraska. A significant share of the regional population resides in a micropolitan area and ranching and farming are key components of the production economy. There are six peer comparison regions for the Southwest region, including peer regions located in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska peers are the Panhandle and Northeast regions. The other comparison regions are located in Iowa (3) and Minnesota (1). (See Figure 69.)

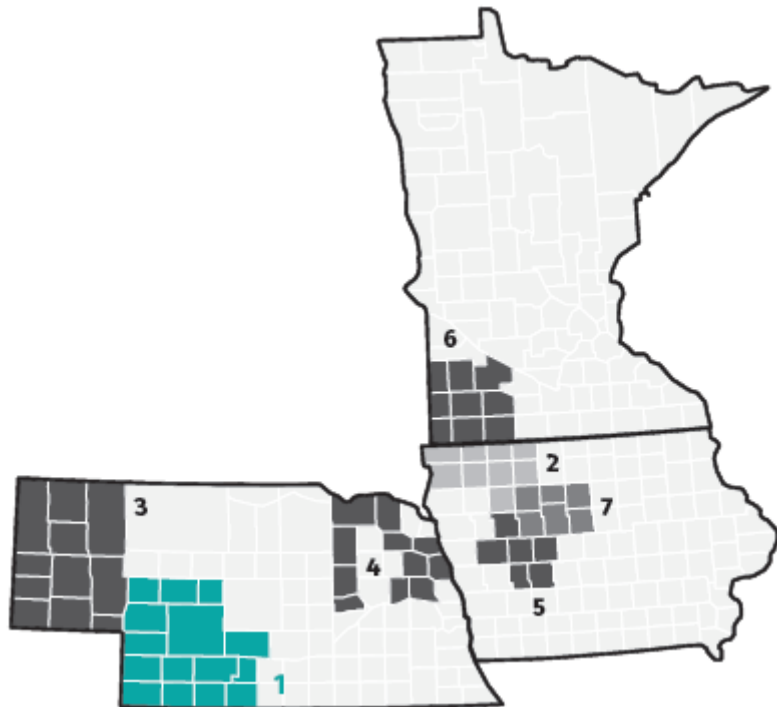
Figure 69: Southwest Region and Comparison Peer Regions

### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 82

Ranks 6th Among Peers

- ✓ 2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity
- ✓ 2nd Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business
- ✓ 3rd Quality of Life
- ✓ 3rd Social Capital



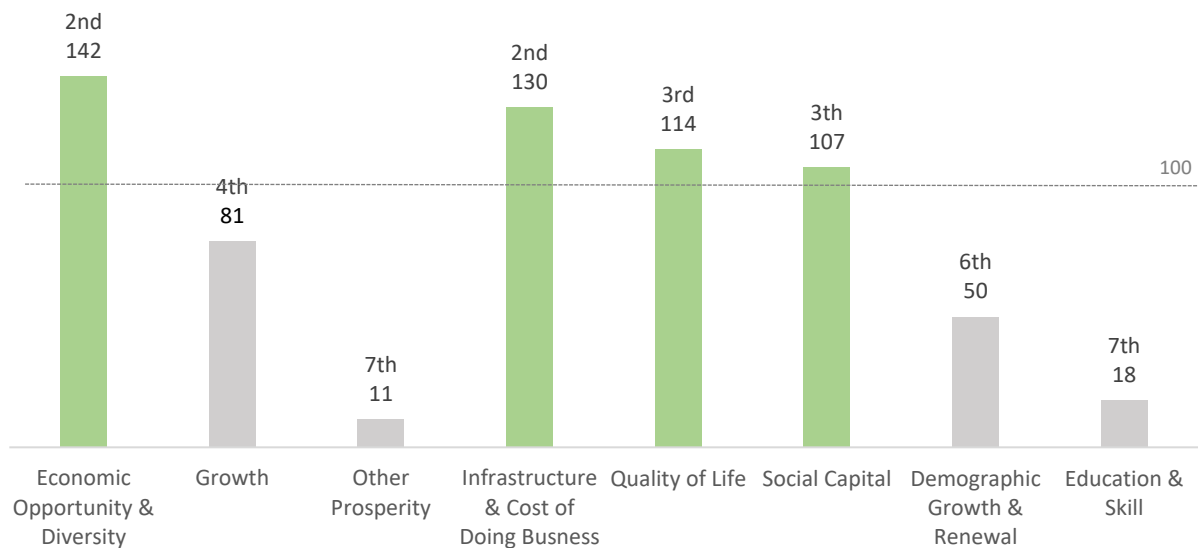
1. **NEBRASKA: Southwest Region**
2. **IOWA: Northwest Iowa Planning & Development Commission**
3. **NEBRASKA: Panhandle Region**
4. **NEBRASKA: Northeast Region**
5. **IOWA: Region XII Council of Governments**
6. **MINNESOTA: Southwest Regional Development Commission**
7. **IOWA: Mid-Iowa Development Association Council of Governments**

Figure 70 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Southwest region compared to its peers. The Southwest region's 6th place ranking and 82 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is due to mixed performance in several of the economic prosperity



indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Southwest region performs well relative to its peers on one of the three economic prosperity indexes, ranking 2nd for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index. Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business, Quality of Life, and Social Capital are other areas of strength for the Southwest region as it ranks 2nd and 3rd for these indexes, respectively. However, areas of poor performance for the Southwest region are Other Prosperity, Demographic Growth & Renewal, and Education & Skill, as it ranks at or below the 6th place for these indexes.

Figure 70: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Southwest Region



#### Index Interpretation

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 142 for Economic Opportunity & Diversity indicates that economic opportunity and diversity is 0.42 of a standard deviation above the average economic opportunity and diversity among the peer regions.

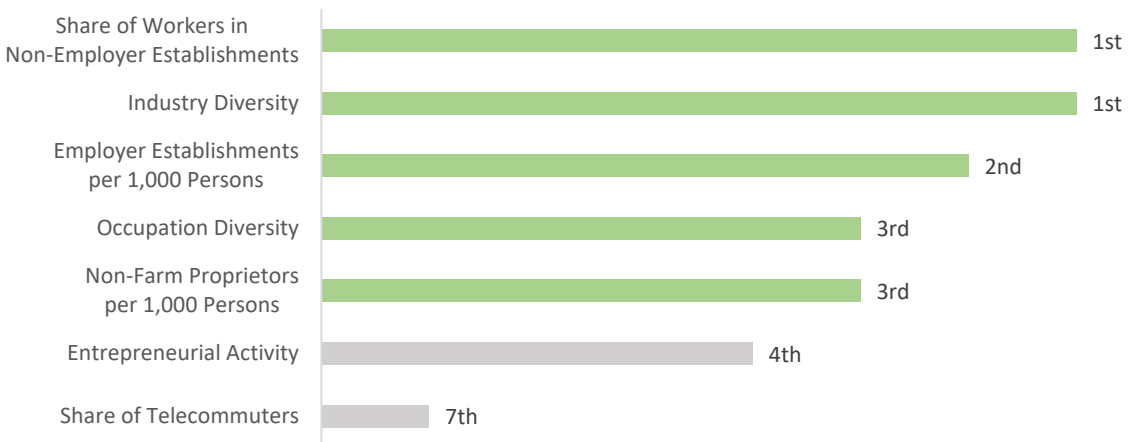
#### **Strengths**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southwest region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Southwest region ranking in one of the top three of seven places among its peers.

#### Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

The Southwest region ranks 2nd among its peers and is above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Within this index, the Southwest region ranks in one of the top three places for five of the seven indicators, including 1st on both the share of workers in non-employer establishments and industry diversity (see Figure 71).

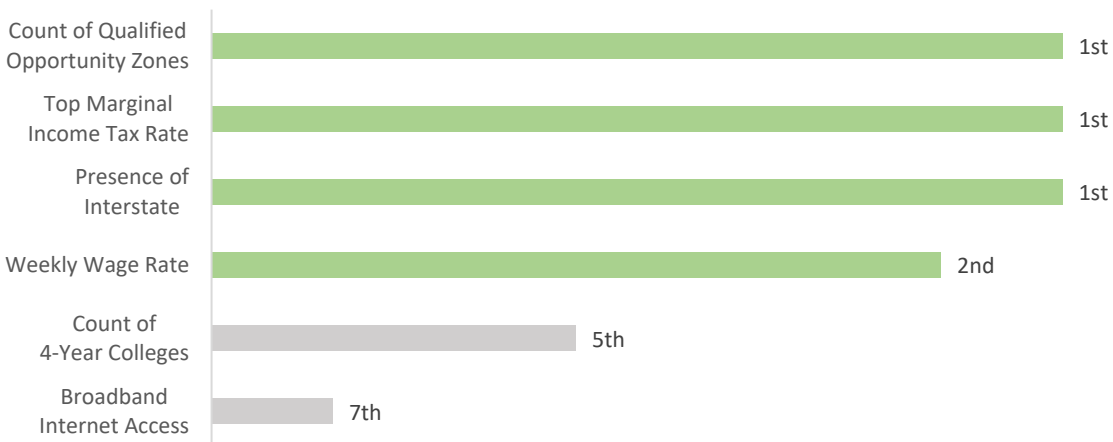
Figure 71: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



**Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index**

The Southwest region ranks 2nd among its peers and is above the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Within this index, the Southwest region ranks 1st for three of the six indicators and 2nd for weekly wage rate. However, it ranks 5th on the count of 4-year colleges and last on broadband internet access (see Figure 72).

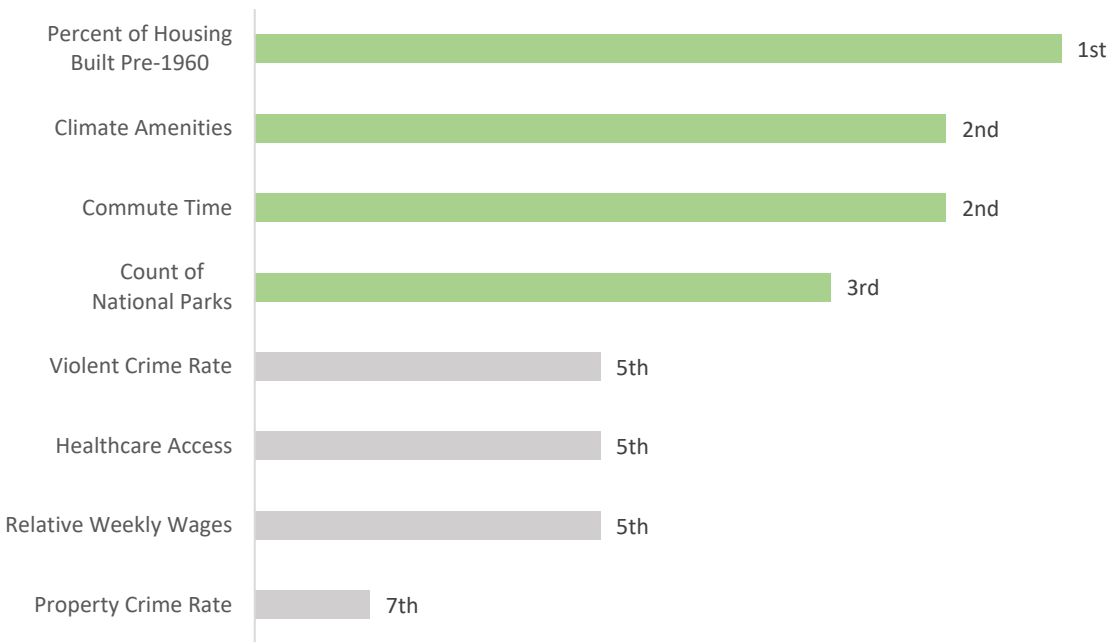
Figure 72: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



**Quality of Life**

The Southwest region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Results are mixed within this index as the Southwest region ranks in one of the top three places for four of the eight indicators of quality of life; however, it ranks much lower on the remaining indicators, including a last place ranking on property crime rate (highest). (See Figure 73.)

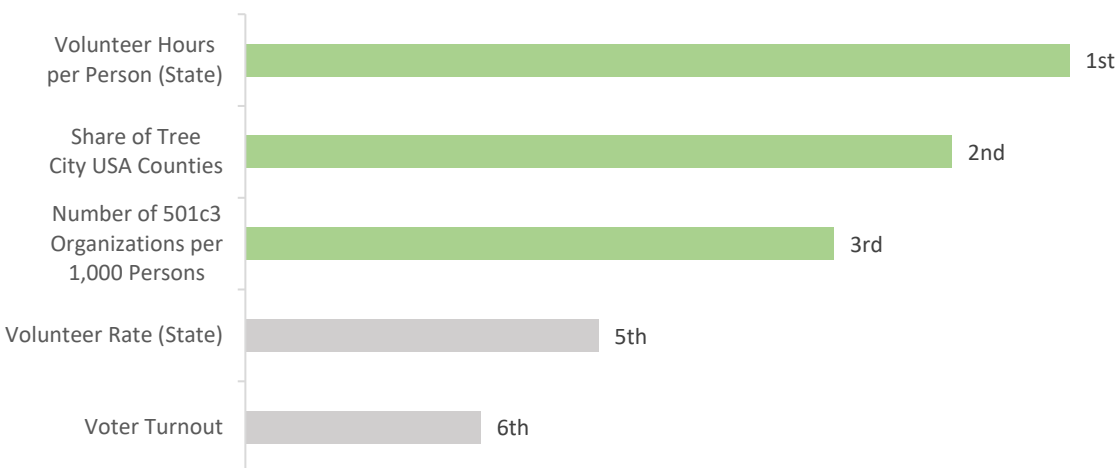
Figure 73: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



### Social Capital Index

The Southwest region ranks 3rd among its peers and is just above the peer region average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Within this index, the Southwest region has a mix of rankings across the five indicators, ranging from a 1st place ranking for volunteer hours per person to a 6th place ranking on voter turnout (see Figure 74).

Figure 74: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



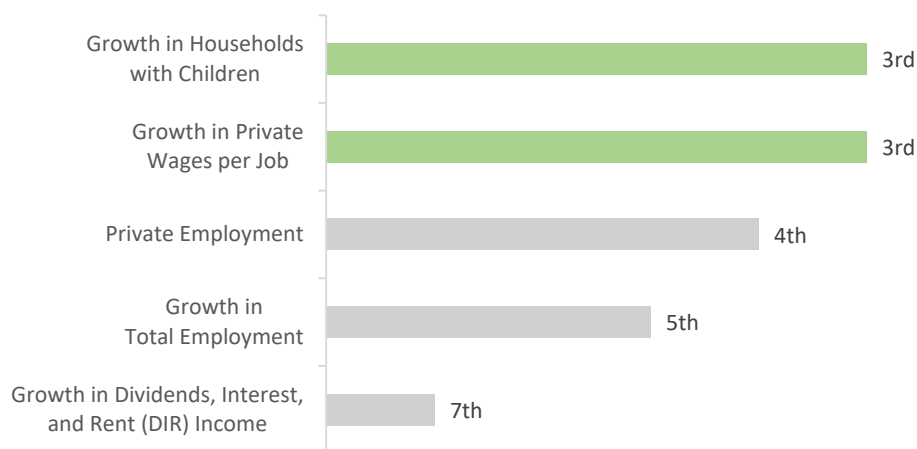
### **Considerations**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southwest region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Southwest region ranking 4th among its peers.

### Growth Index

The Southwest region ranks 4th among its peers and is below its peer average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Although it ranks 3rd on both growth in households with children and growth in private wages per job, it ranks lower on the remaining three indicators (see Figure 75).

Figure 75: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



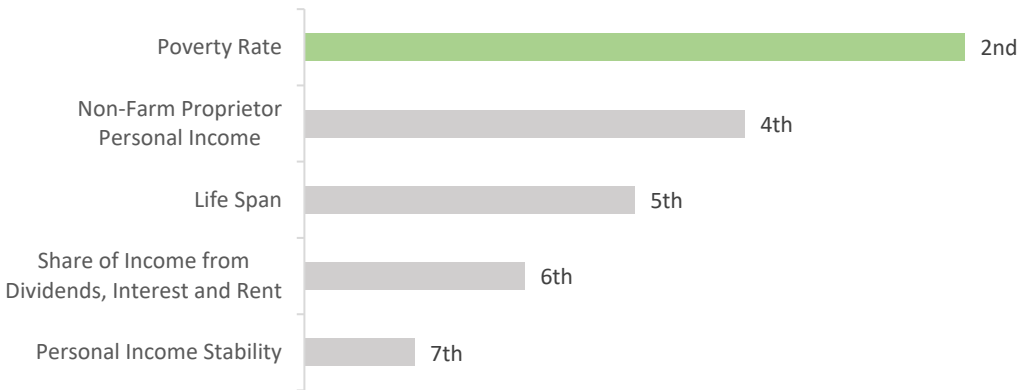
### **Concerns**

This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Southwest region is recognized as having an area of concern. An area of concern is identified as the Southwest region ranking in one of the bottom three of seven places among its peers.

### Other Prosperity Index

The Southwest region ranks last among its peers for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Although the Southwest region ranks 2nd on poverty rate (low), it has much lower rankings on the remaining four of five indicators, one of which is a last place ranking (see Figure 76).

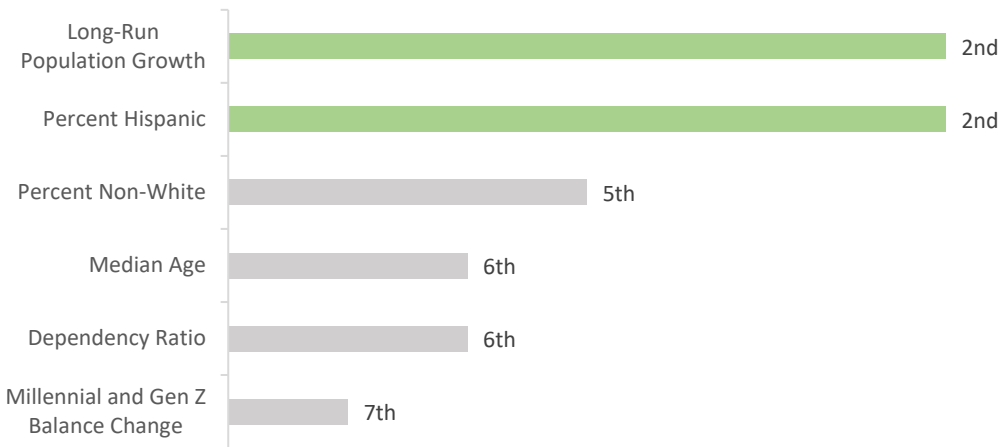
Figure 76: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



**Demographic Growth & Renewal Index**

The Southwest region ranks 6th among its peers and is one-half of a standard deviation below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. Although the Southwest region ranks 2nd for long-run population growth and percent Hispanic, it ranks at or below the 5th place on the other four of six indicators (see Figure 77).

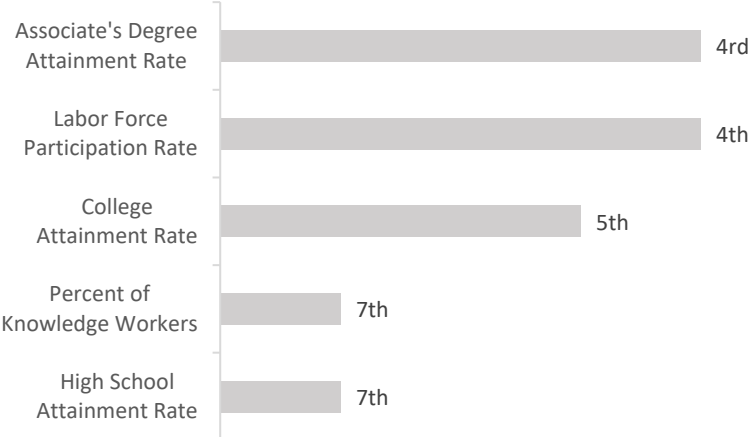
Figure 77: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



**Education & Skill Index**

The Southwest region ranks last among its peers and is more than three-quarters of a standard deviation below the peer average for the Education & Skill Index. Within this index, the Southwest region ranks at or below 4th place for all the indicators (see Figure 78).

Figure 78: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



## TRI-CITIES REGION

The Tri-Cities region contains the counties of the Grand Island metropolitan area, the Kearney micropolitan area, the Hastings micropolitan area as well as surrounding counties. The Tri-Cities region is manufacturing-oriented and has a large share of its population residing in micropolitan and small metropolitan areas. There are six peer comparison regions for the Tri-Cities region, all located outside of the state of Nebraska. The comparison regions are located in Iowa (3), Minnesota (2) and Kansas (1). (See Figure 79.)

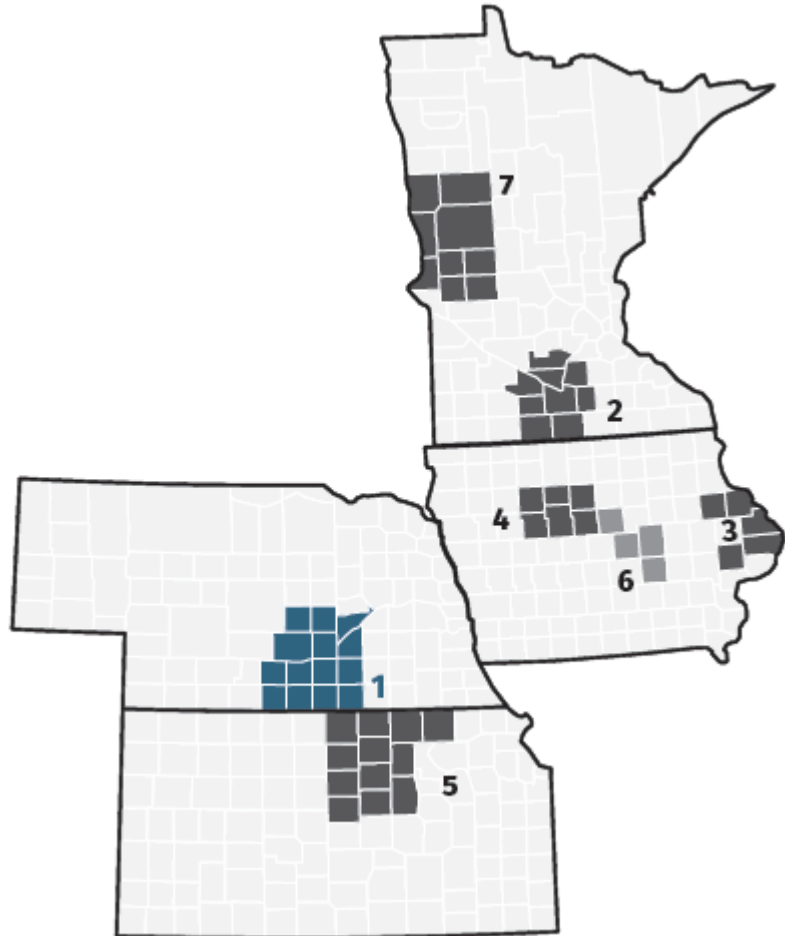
**Figure 79: Tri-Cities Region and Comparison Peer Regions**

### Results at a Glance

Nebraska Thriving Index: 131

Ranks 1<sup>st</sup> Among Peers

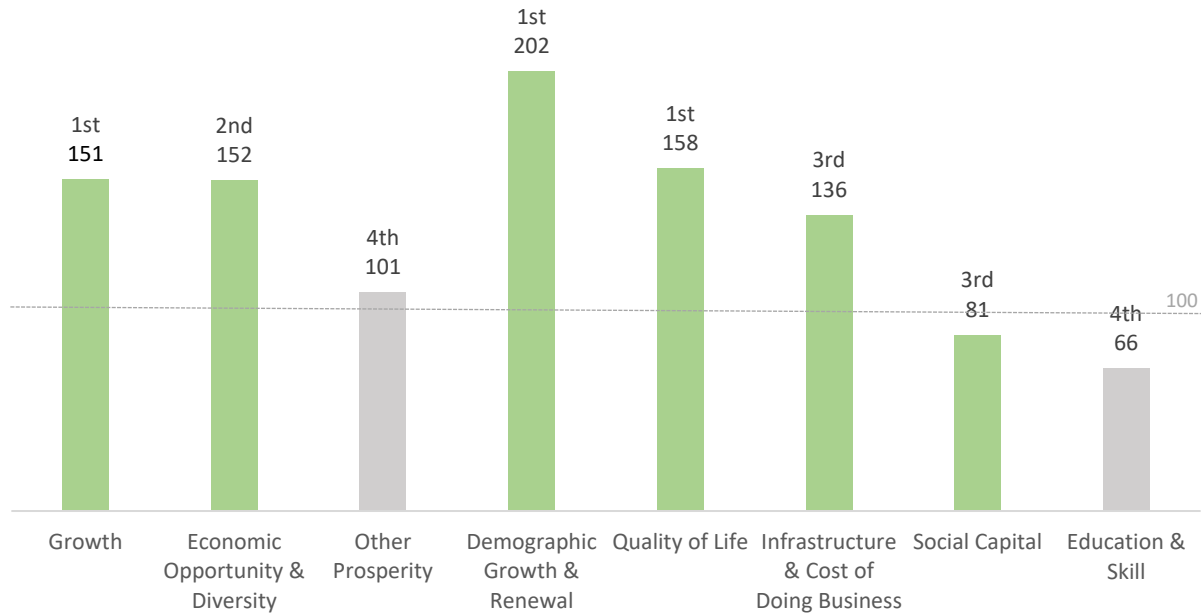
- ✓ 1st Growth
- ✓ 1st Demographic Growth & Renewal
- ✓ 1st Quality of Life
- ✓ 2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity
- ✓ 3rd Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business
- ✓ 3rd Social Capital



1. **NEBRASKA: Tri-Cities Region**
2. **MINNESOTA: Region Nine Development Commission**
3. **IOWA: East Central Intergovernmental Association**
4. **IOWA: Mid-Iowa Development Association**
5. **KANSAS: North Central Regional Planning Commission**
6. **IOWA: Region 6 Planning Commission**
7. **MINNESOTA: Minnesota West Central Initiative**

Figure 80 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Tri-Cities region compared to its peers. The Tri-Cities region's 1st place ranking and 131 value on the aggregate 2022 Nebraska Thriving Index is driven by strong performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Tri-Cities region performs well relative to its peers on two of the three economic prosperity indexes, ranking 1st for the Growth Index and 2nd for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index. Demographic Growth & Renewal, Quality of Life, and Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business are other areas of strength for the Tri-Cities region as it ranks 1st and 3rd for these indexes.

Figure 80: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for the Tri-Cities Region



### Index Interpretation

<100 = BELOW the average of its peers

100 = AT the average of its peers

>100 = ABOVE the average of its peers

Example: A value of 202 for Demographic Growth & Renewal indicates that demographic growth and renewal is 1.02 standard deviations above the average demographic growth and renewal among the peer regions.

### **Strengths**

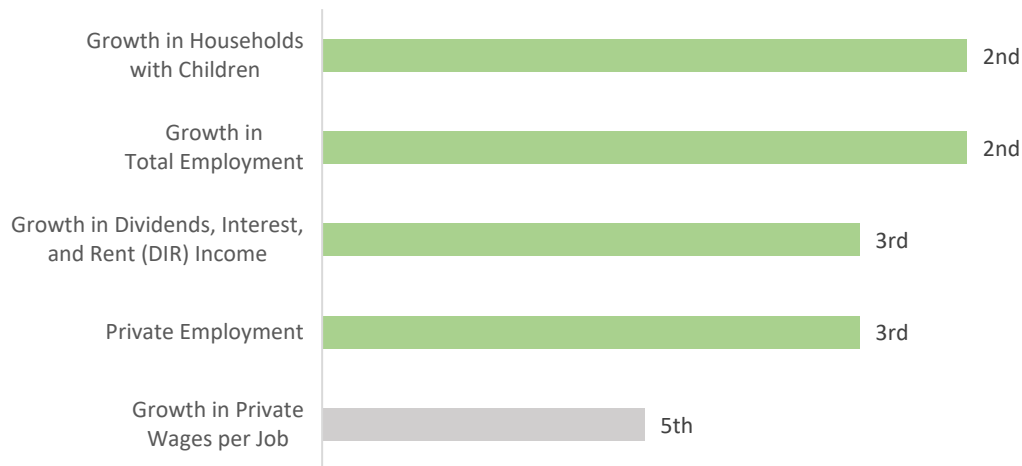
This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Tri-Cities region is recognized as having an area of strength. An area of strength is identified as the Tri-Cities region ranking in one of the top three of seven places among its peers.

### Growth Index

The Tri-Cities region ranks 1st among its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 2nd for both growth in households with children and total employment growth and 3rd for both growth in dividends, interest and rent income and private employment. However, it ranks 5th for private wage growth (see Figure 81).



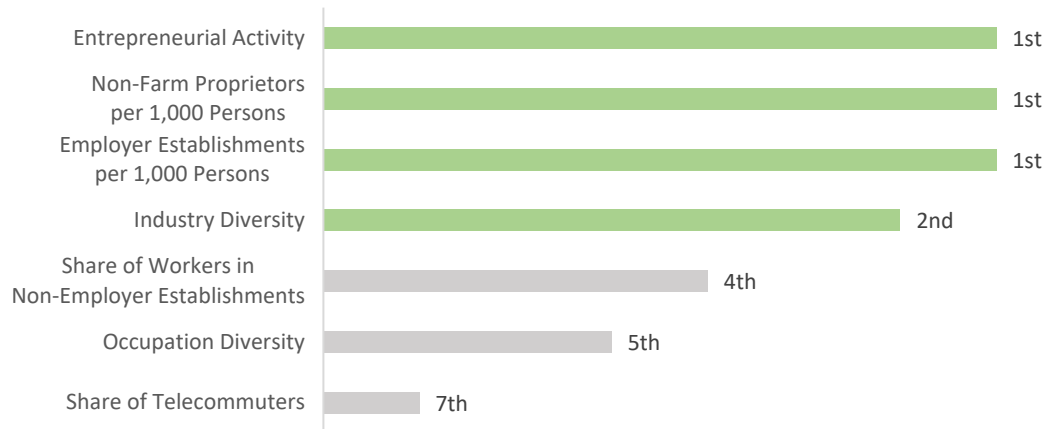
Figure 81: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 1st on three of seven indicators and 2nd on industry diversity. However, it ranks last on share of telecommuters (see Figure 82).

Figure 82: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Demographic Growth & Renewal Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 1st among its peers for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity. This index is more than one standard deviation above the peer average. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks in one of the top three places for all six indicators, two of which are 1st (see Figure 83).

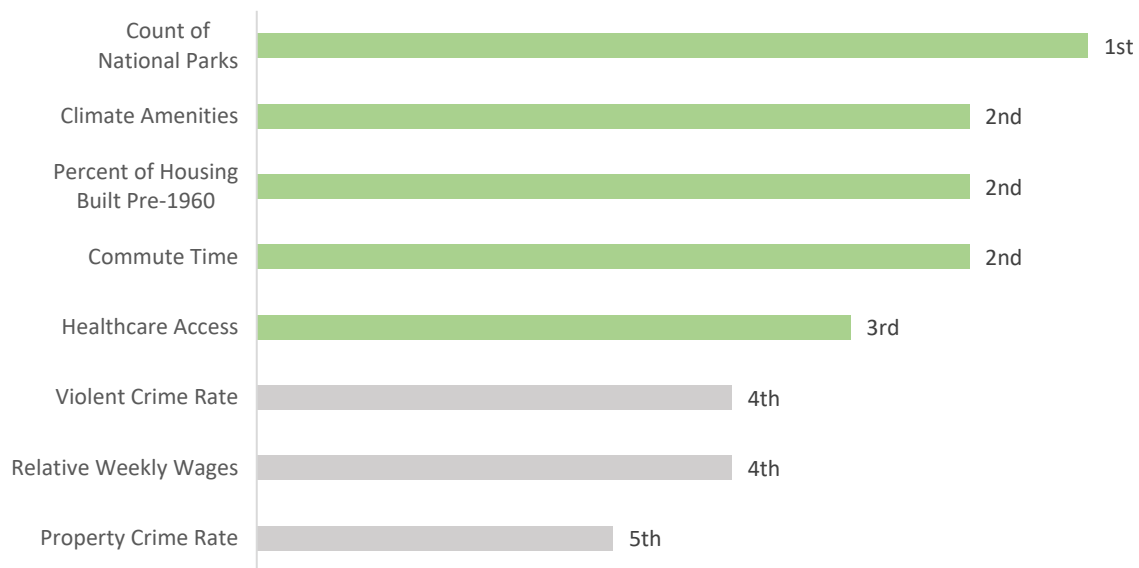
Figure 83: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Quality of Life**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 1st among its peers for the Quality of Life Index. The Index measures the appeal of living and working in a region. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks in one of the top three places for five of the eight indicators of quality of life (see Figure 84).

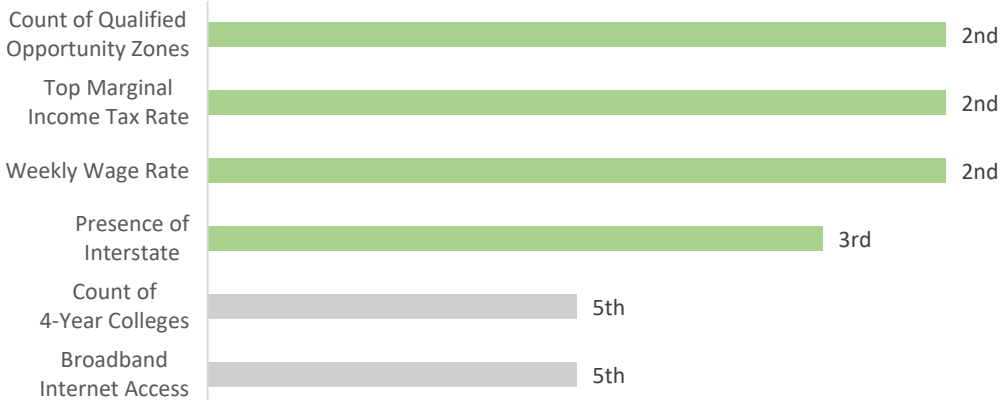
Figure 84: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 3rd among its peers for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 2nd or 3rd for four of the six indicators. However, it ranks 5th for the count of 4-year colleges and for broadband internet access (see Figure 85).

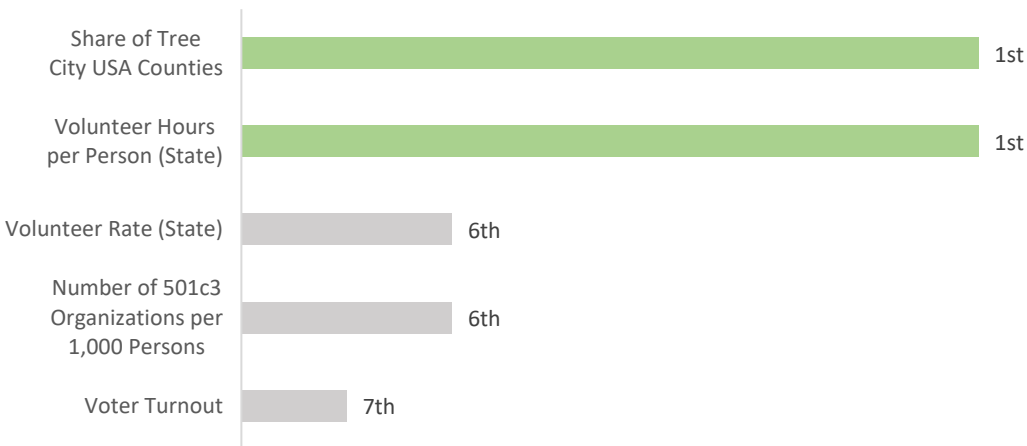
Figure 85: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Social Capital Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 3rd among its peers for the Social Capital Index but is below the peer region average. This index captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region. Results are mixed within this index as the Tri-Cities region ranks 1st for share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person but 6th for both volunteer rate and non-profit organizations per person and ranks last on voter turnout (see Figure 86).

Figure 86: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Considerations**

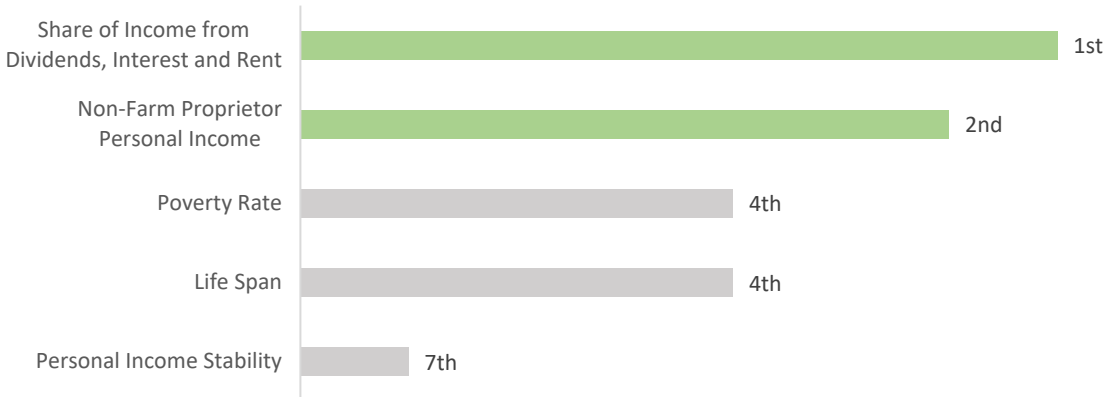
This section focuses on the underlying indicators of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes where the Tri-Cities region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Tri-Cities region ranking 4th among its peers.

**Other Prosperity Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 4th among its peers for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate. Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 1st and 2nd for the share of income from dividends, interest and rent income and non-farm

proprietor personal income, respectively. However, it ranks 4th on poverty rate and life span, and last on personal income stability (see Figure 87).

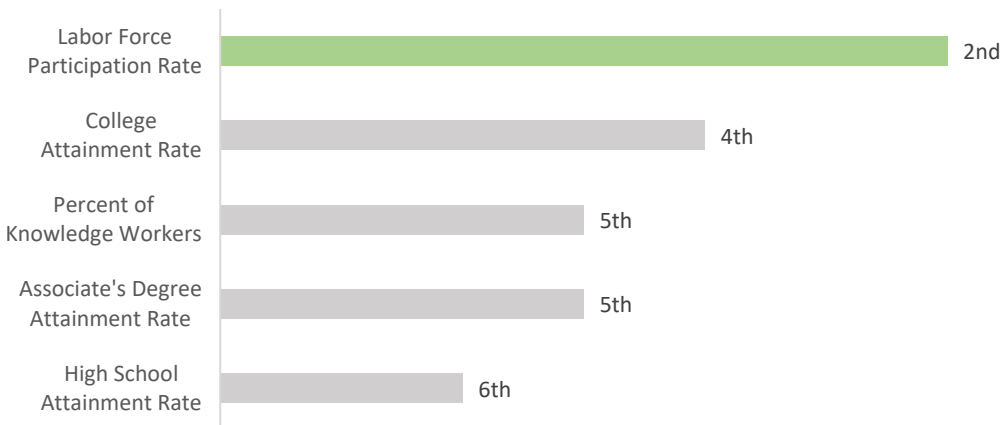
Figure 87: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Education & Skill Index**

The Tri-Cities region ranks 4th among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is below the peer region average. Although the region ranks 2nd for labor force participation, the region ranks 4th for college attainment, 5th for both the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations) and associate’s degree attainment, and 6th for high school attainment (see Figure 88).

Figure 88: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



**Concerns**

An area of concern would be identified as the Tri-Cities region ranking in one of the bottom three of seven places among its peers. However, the Tri-Cities region did not have a ranking below 4th place on any of the eight Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes.

## THE RESEARCH TEAM

### Dr. Eric Thompson



Dr. Eric Thompson is the department chair and Karl H. Nelson Professor of Economics, and the director of the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Thompson has conducted a broad group of economic impact studies including impact studies of Nebraska agriculture, Sandhill Cranes migration, the Nebraska childcare industry, the Omaha Zoo, the Nebraska horseracing industry, Husker Harvest Days, and the UNL Athletic Department. Dr. Thompson also works on demographic projections and analyses of economic development programs for Nebraska and cities in Nebraska. He also has conducted numerous economic impact studies for the Lincoln Department of Economic Development, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, the Nebraska

Department of Economic Development, various Nebraska industries, and Nebraska tourism attractions.

Dr. Thompson's research has received support from the United States Department of Labor, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Center for Economic Analysis, the Nebraska Health, and Human Services System, as well as Lincoln, Omaha, and Nebraska organizations and agencies. In his previous employment, Dr. Thompson served as the Director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and a Research Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Thompson received his Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1992. His research fields include regional economics, economic forecasting, and state and local economic development. His research has been published in *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, the *Journal of Regional Science*, the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, and the *Journal of Cultural Economics*.

### Dr. Mitchel Herian



Dr. Mitchel Herian serves as a project director through the Bureau of Business Research, a faculty fellow at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, and an adjunct professor in the Political Science department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Herian has worked for agencies such as the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Nebraska Supreme Court, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Kansas Department of Corrections.

His research has received support from agencies including the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Justice. Dr. Herian's research has been published in a variety of peer reviewed journals including the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *American Review of Public Administration*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *State and Local Government Review*, and *Ecology & Society*.

## Dr. Bree Dority



Dr. Bree Dority is the associate dean of curriculum and operations in the College of Business & Technology at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. In this role, her responsibilities are focused on curriculum management and assessment of undergraduate and graduate programs, accreditation reports and processes, transfer opportunities with community colleges and international schools, college recruitment and retention efforts, and college communications. She is a professor of finance and has taught a variety of classes for the economics, finance, and construction management programs.

Her research is primarily Nebraska focused. She has conducted economic impact, labor availability, and community revitalization studies, and has presented and published research on school consolidation and tobacco free laws. More recently her research has focused on private credit availability, equity crowdfunding, and relationship conflict in construction. Her research has been published in *Energy Economics*, *Contemporary Economic Policy*, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, *Studies in Economics and Finance*, and *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*.