

2020 NEBRASKA THRIVING INDEX



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LETTER FROM PROJECT TEAM

Dear Reader,

Our purpose in creating the *Nebraska Thriving Index* is to provide residents of rural Nebraska with detailed benchmarks for key measures of their economy, to guide decision-making and to provide an authentic measure of progress.

We are happy to provide this report and welcome an opportunity to work with you to build on its findings. We also encourage you to utilize the interactive resources published online at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

The *Nebraska Thriving Index* was developed by a team of social scientists at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and University of Nebraska at Kearney with guidance from Nebraska Extension. The *Nebraska Thriving Index* provides the residents of non-metropolitan and small metropolitan Nebraska with the same detailed benchmarks of success that are available for large metropolitan areas in Nebraska and around the country. Benchmarks are derived from comparisons with like economies and reveal areas of strength or concern that can support policy decisions and economic development strategies, and answer the basic question: “How is our economy doing?”

The *Nebraska Thriving Index* reflects a current understanding about the sources of economic growth through sub-indexes measuring education & skill, demographic growth & renewal, infrastructure & the cost of doing business,

quality of life and social capital. Economic outcomes are measured through sub-indexes encompassing measures of economic growth, economic opportunity & diversity and general prosperity. 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 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* marks the second year that the index has been developed and released. The 2020 edition drops two measures, adds one new measure, and contains improved definitions and data sources for several others. Revised results for the 2019 *Nebraska Thriving Index* are available online at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu, and reflect these changes as well as revisions to the data and corrections to the first year index. The online feature also allows for year-to-year comparison.

We continue to welcome your feedback about the *Nebraska Thriving Index*. Please share feedback with us at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu. This is where you can also find our upcoming in-person presentations and webinars.

Thank you for your time and your impact on the future of Nebraska.

Sincerely,

The Nebraska Thriving Index Project Team

A TOOL FOR A THRIVING RURAL FUTURE

The *2020 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?”

Large metropolitan regions in Nebraska and throughout the United States benefit from benchmarking studies that compare their growth and economic performance with peers from around the country. To provide these same insights for non-metropolitan and small metropolitan Nebraska, the University of Nebraska has convened and funded a research team to develop and annually update the *Nebraska Thriving Index*. That research team includes economists and political scientists from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Bureau of Business Research and the University of Nebraska at Kearney College of Business & Technology with input from Nebraska Extension. The *2020 Nebraska Thriving Index* is an output of this work, serving as a benchmarking tool for eight non-metropolitan and small metropolitan regions. The eight Nebraska regions of North 81, Northeast, Panhandle, Sandhills, Siouxland, Southeast, Southwest and Tri-Cities are compared with peer regions located throughout the northern plains states.

The *Nebraska Thriving Index* is a tool for Nebraska residents, economic developers, policy-makers, businesses and others to track the progress of rural and small city Nebraska. In all, the Index tracks the performance of 47 measures which reflect key economic resources related to economic growth, as well as recent growth and other measures of prosperity.

The *2020 Nebraska Thriving Index* represents the second year of release. The 2020 edition drops two measures, adds one new measure, and contains improved definitions and data sources for several others. Revised results for the *2019 Nebraska Thriving Index* are available online at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu, and reflect these changes as well as revisions to the data and corrections to the first year index. These corrections had the largest impact on results for the Siouxland and North 81 regions. The online feature also allows for year-to-year comparisons. Trends in regional economic performance will become more evident as third and fourth editions of the *Nebraska Thriving Index* are added in future years.

Online Interactive Comparison Tool

RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu

- ▶ Drill down into the measures for your region to see where you can focus your efforts.
- ▶ Provide feedback, so we can continue to make this tool relevant for you and your community.



Nebraska regions are compared* with peers according to three indexes of economic prosperity:



Growth Index

Includes multiple measures of growth, primarily over the 2015 to 2018 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. See Table 1 on page 8 and Appendix 1 online.



Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

Measures entrepreneurial activity, industry diversity, occupation diversity and share of telecommuters. See Table 2 on page 8 and Appendix 2 online.



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. See Table 3 on page 9 and Appendix 3 online.

**Comparisons are made for the year 2018 or the most recent years available.*

Nebraska regions also are compared with peers on five indexes of economic conditions:



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

Measures long-run population growth, dependency ratio, median age, millennial and Gen Z balance change and population diversity. See Table 4 on page 9 and Appendix 4 online.



Education & Skill Index

Measures high school, community college and 4-year college attainment, labor force participation and employment in knowledge-based occupations. See Table 5 on page 10 and Appendix 5 online.



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. See Table 6 on page 10 and Appendix 6 online.



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. See Table 7 on page 11 and Appendix 7 online.



Social Capital Index

Measures involvement with volunteer organizations, programs to build the community environment, and voter participation. See Table 8 on page 11 and Appendix 8 online.

All data available via appendices and the online interactive tool at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Component Measures with 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, 2015 and 2018.
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, 2018.
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, 2015 and 2018.
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, 2009-2013 period and 2014-2018 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, 2015 and 2018.

Table 2: Measures of the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

Entrepreneurial Activity	Business births and deaths per person. Measures entrepreneurial vigor. Source: Census Bureau, Statistics of U.S. Businesses, Employment Change, 2015-2016.
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, 2018.
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, 2018.
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, 2017.
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, 2017.
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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-18 period.

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, 2018.
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, 2004-2018.
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, 2014-2018 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, 2018.

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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 and 2009-2013 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 period.

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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 period.

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), June 2019.
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, 2019.
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 2019.
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, 2020.
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.

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, 2014-2018 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, 2014-2018 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 2019.
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, 2017.
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.

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, 2020.
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, 2018.

THRIVING INDEX REGIONS & 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 are already produced by the Bureau of Business Research in reports for the Greater Omaha Chamber and the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development.

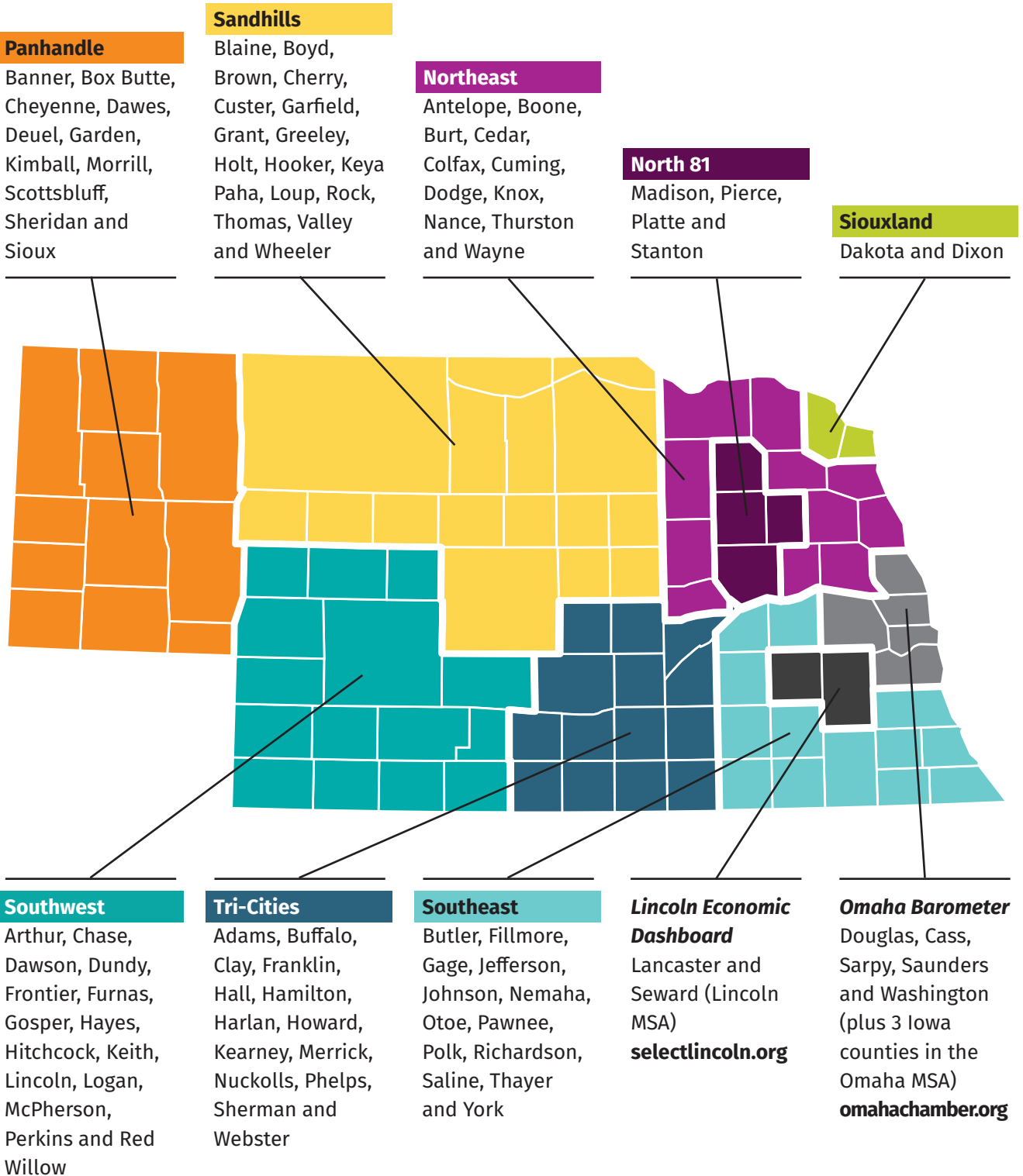
Western and central Nebraska regions largely follow Nebraska Economic Development Districts, as seen in the regional definitions for the Panhandle, Sandhills and Southwest regions. The Tri-Cities region also largely follows the Nebraska Economic Development District definition and contains the counties 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 Siouxland 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.

Comparison region details are provided in a supplemental document at RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

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



2020 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 2020 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.

The micropolitan and small metropolitan North 81 and Tri-Cities regions rank 1st and 2nd among their peers, respectively. North 81 has a 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index value of 133 indicating that, on average, across all measures North 81 is 0.33 standard deviations above its peers. The Tri-Cities region is 0.26 standard deviations above its peers.

Four other non-metropolitan Nebraska regions had index values near their peer average. The Southeast region had a 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index value of 103 and ranked 4th among its peers. The Sandhills region, which had an index value of 102, also ranked 4th. The Northeast region had an index value of 98 and ranked 2nd among its peers. The Southwest region had an index value of 96 and ranked 4th.

Figure 2: 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within Peer Group

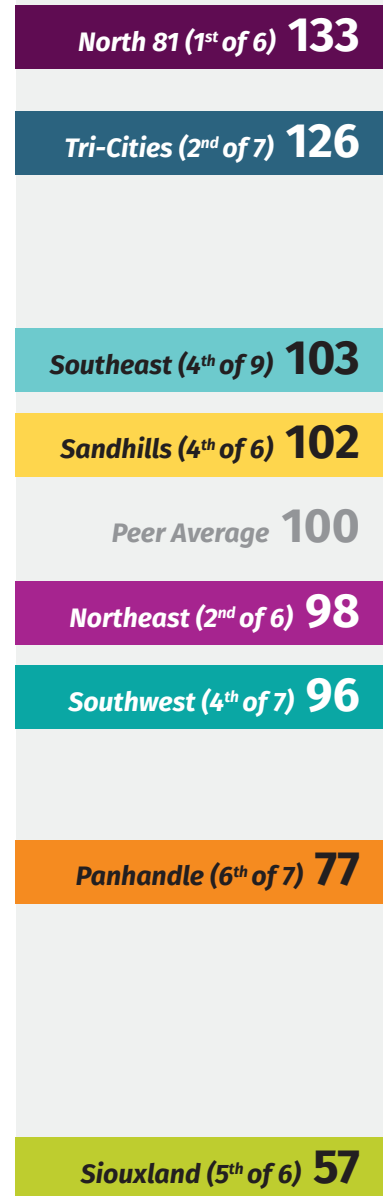


Table 9: Nebraska Thriving Index Rank by Component & Region

	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	3	4	2	2	5	1	2
Northeast (6)	2	2	5	3	2	3	3	5	6
Panhandle (7)	6	7	2	7	5	5	5	3	2
Sandhills (6)	4	5	1	2	6	3	6	6	1
Siouxland (6)	5	2	6	6	1	6	6	1	4
Southeast (9)	4	2	4	3	5	7	8	4	3
Southwest (7)	4	4	2	6	5	7	1	3	3
Tri-Cities (7)	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	1	4
Statewide Average	3.50	3.25	3.13	4.38	3.38	4.63	4.50	3.00	3.13

Region (Number of Comparison Regions)

The Panhandle and Siouxland regions ranked 6th and 5th, respectively, among their peers and had 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* values below their peer average. The Panhandle region had an index value of 77, indicating that on average, the Panhandle region is 0.23 standard deviations below its peers. The Siouxland region had a rank of 57 indicating the region is 0.43 standard deviations below the average of its peers.

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.

2020 RESULTS

REGIONAL PATTERNS

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

Strength

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

Concerns

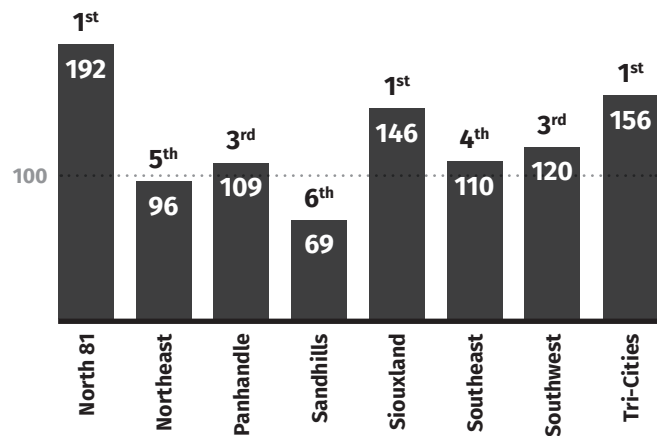
Nebraska regions are relatively weak for the Education & Skill Index, the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index and the Other Prosperity Index. That is, the average rank for these indexes is below 4th place.

STRENGTH Quality of Life

Micropolitan and small metropolitan regions had the highest ranks and values for the Quality of Life Index. North 81, Siouxland and Tri-Cities 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 above the peer average. Only the Sandhills region was well below the peer average and ranked last.

Figure 3: Quality of Life Index Rank by Region

Rank vs. Comparison Regions, Value



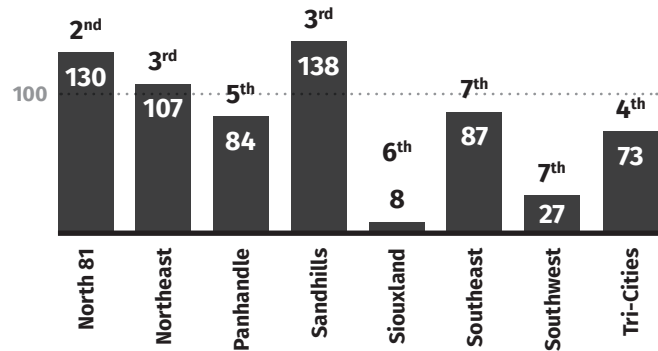


CONCERN #1 Education & Skill

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. The Southeast, Panhandle and Tri-Cities regions have index values below 100 and rank in the bottom half of their peer regions. On the positive side, the North 81, Sandhills and Northeast regions have Education & Skill Index values above 100.

Figure 4: Education & Skill Index Rank by Region

Rank vs. Comparison Regions, Value

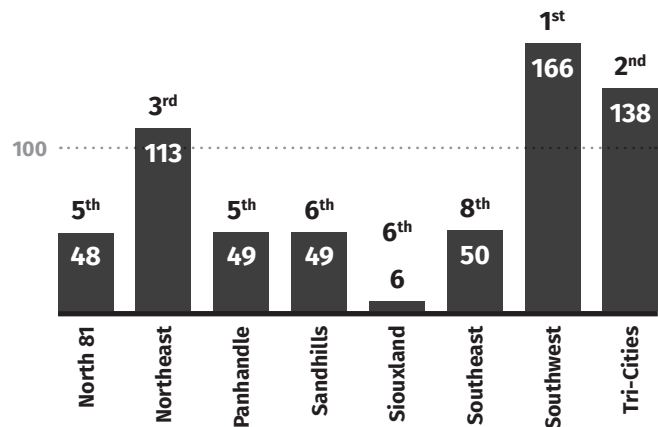


CONCERN #2 Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business

A majority of Nebraska regions are well below their peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, with the Siouxland region nearly one standard deviation below its peer average and the North 81, Panhandle, Sandhills and Southeast regions all approximately 0.5 standard deviations below their peer average. On the positive side, the Southwest and Tri-Cities regions have values well above 100 and rank 1st and 2nd among their peers, respectively. The Northeast region also has an index value above the peer average.

Figure 5: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index Rank by Region

Rank vs. Comparison Regions, Value

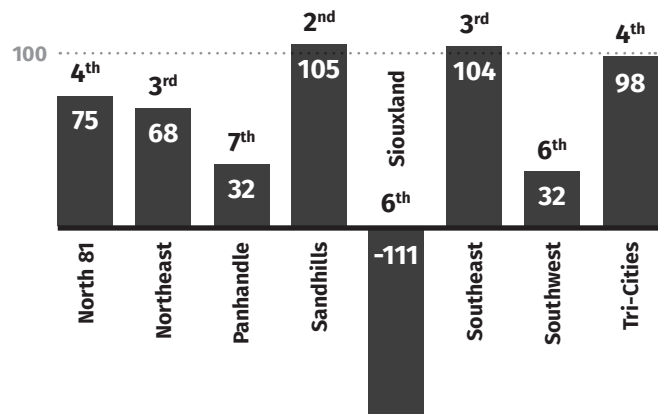


CONCERN #3 Other Prosperity

Three quarters of Nebraska's regions are below their peer average for the Other Prosperity Index. The Siouxland region is more than two standard deviations below its peer average and ranks last. The Panhandle and Southwest regions also rank last and are each 0.68 standard deviations below their peer average. On the positive side, the Sandhills and Southeast regions are slightly above their peer average and the regions rank 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

Figure 6: Other Prosperity Index Rank by Region

Rank vs. Comparison Regions, Value





RESULTS BY REGION

NORTH 81 REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 133 Ranks 1st Among Peers

1st Growth

1st Quality of Life

2nd Social Capital

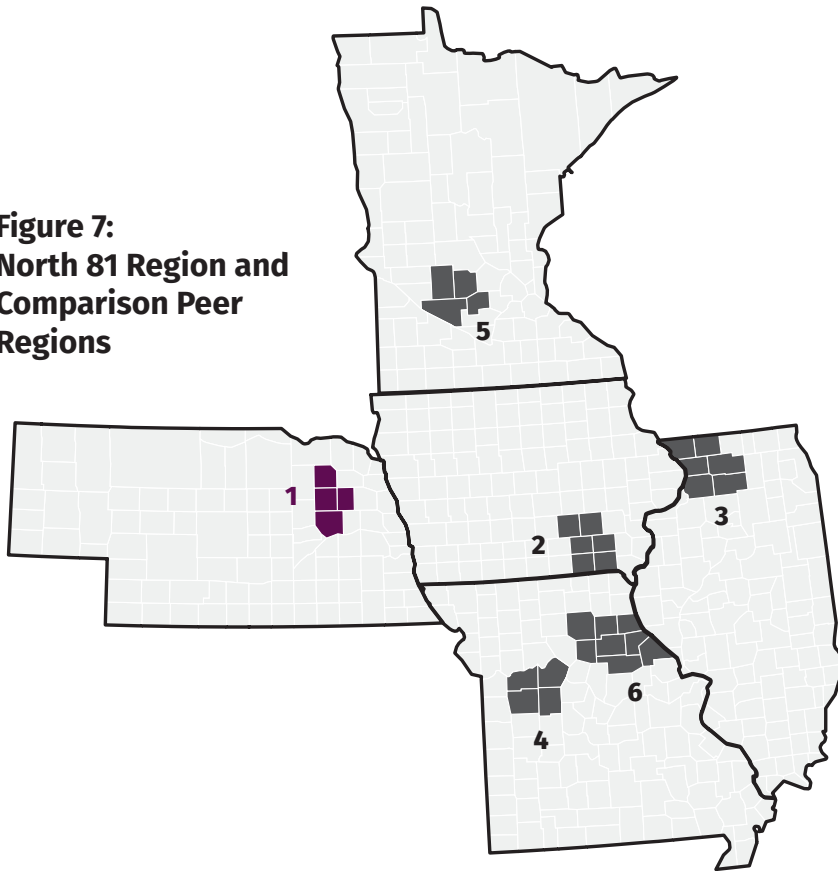
2nd Education & Skill

2nd Demographic Growth & Renewal

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 7.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 7:
North 81 Region and
Comparison Peer
Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

- 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

North 81 (1st) 133

Peer 5 (2nd) 130

Peer 4 (3rd) 114

Peer 2 (4th) 105

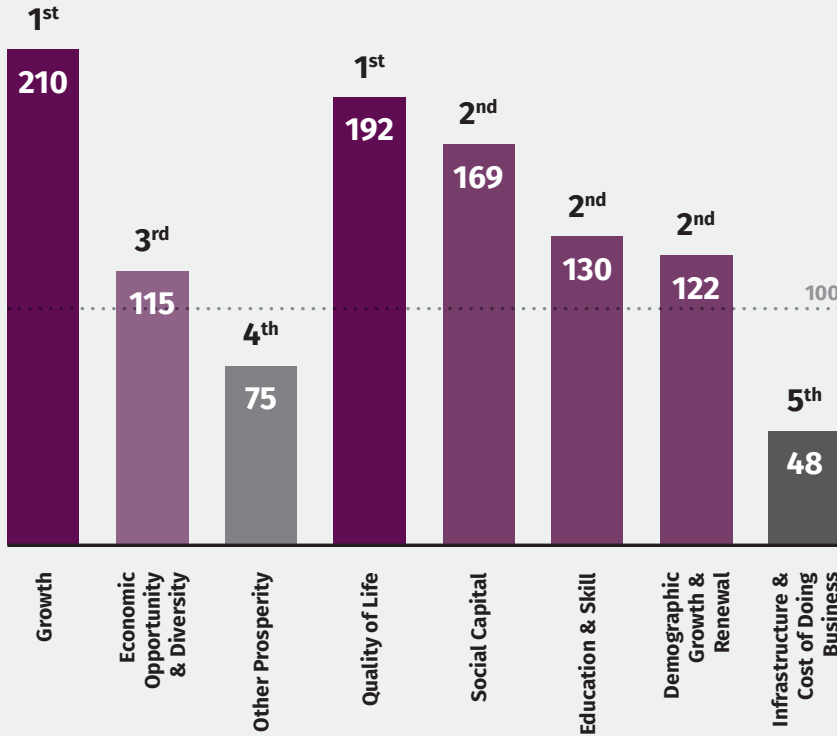
Peer Average 100

Peer 6 (5th) 81

Peer 3 (6th) 73

Figure 8:
Nebraska Thriving
Index Value & Rank
within the North 81
Region Peer Group

Figure 9: Nebraska Thriving Component Index Rank and Value for 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 192 for Quality of Life indicates that quality of life is 0.92 of a standard deviation above the average quality of life among the peer regions.

Figure 9 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 133 value on the aggregate 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index (see Figure 8) 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 two of the three outcome measures, ranking 1st for the Growth Index and 3rd for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index. Quality of Life, Social Capital, Education & Skill, and Demographic Growth & Renewal are other areas of strength for the North 81 region as it ranks 1st and 2nd for these indexes.



Norfolk, Nebraska

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

Figure 10: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

58 Peer 6	62 Peer 3	94 Peer 4	101 Peer 2	153 Peer 5	210 North 81
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The North 81 region ranks 1st among its peers and is more than one standard deviation above its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 10).

Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st or 2nd on four of five indicators. However, it ranks 5th on private employment (see Figure 11).

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



Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

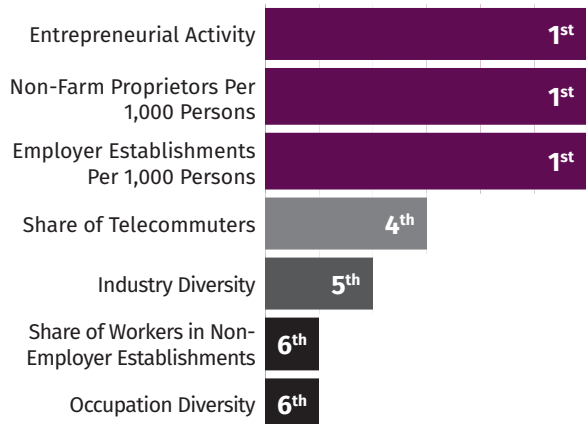
Figure 12: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

63 Peer 3	85 Peer 5	105 Peer 6	115 North 81	125 Peer 4	143 Peer 2
--------------	--------------	---------------	-------------------------	---------------	---------------

The North 81 region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting (see Figure 12).

Results are mixed within this index as the North 81 region ranks 1st on three of seven indicators but also ranks last on two of seven indicators (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



Quality of Life Index

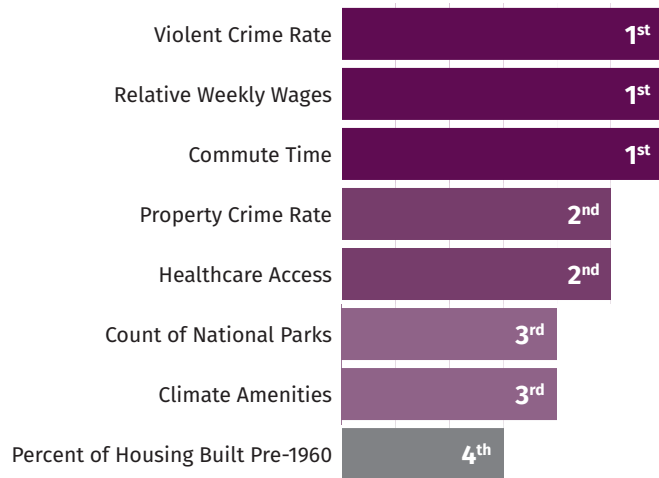
Figure 14: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

65 Peer 2	74 Peer 3	76 Peer 6	115 Peer 5	124 Peer 4	192 North 81
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The North 81 region ranks 1st among its peers and is nearly one standard deviation above its peers for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 14). 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 15).

Figure 15: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



Social Capital Index

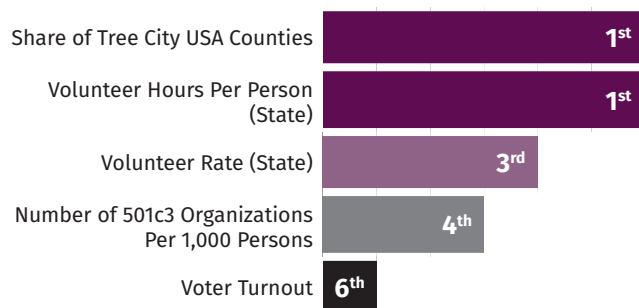
Figure 16: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

18 Peer 3	62 Peer 4	97 Peer 6	143 Peer 2	169 North 81	226 Peer 5
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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 (see Figure 16).

Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 1st on the share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person and 3rd on the volunteer rate. However, it ranks last on voter turnout (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



Education & Skill Index

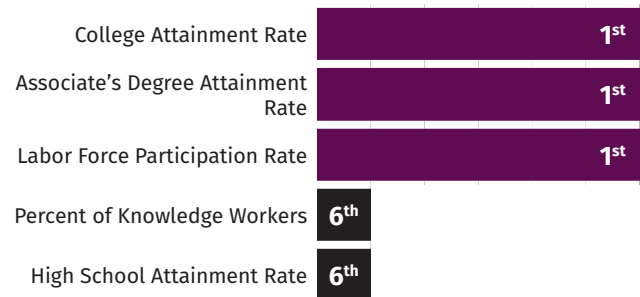
Figure 18: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

54 Peer 6	81 Peer 3	97 Peer 4	125 Peer 2	130 North 81	153 Peer 5
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The North 81 region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is above the peer region average (see Figure 18).

Results are mixed within this index as the North 81 region ranks 1st for college attainment, associate’s degree attainment and labor force participation, but 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 19).

Figure 19: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

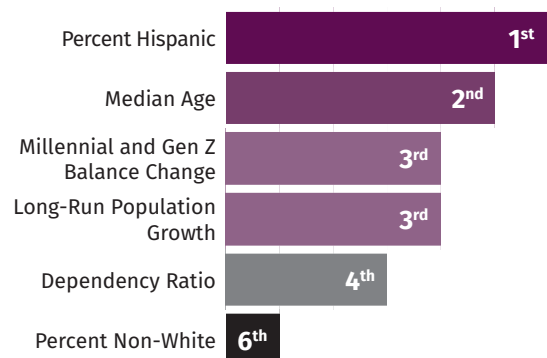
Figure 20: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

18 Peer 3	90 Peer 5	92 Peer 6	119 Peer 2	122 North 81	213 Peer 4
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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 (see Figure 20).

Within this index, the North 81 region ranks in one of the top three places for four of six indicators. However, it ranks last for percent non-white (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region





Norfolk, Nebraska

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

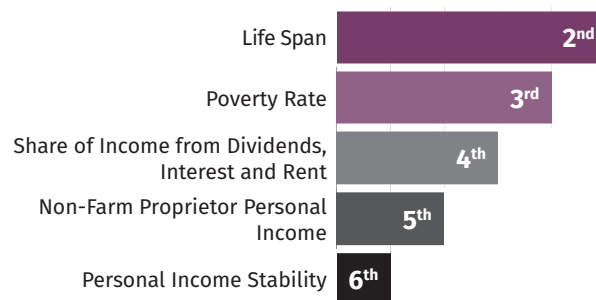
Figure 22: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

32 Peer 4	63 Peer 6	75 North 81	96 Peer 2	119 Peer 3	217 Peer 5
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The North 81 region ranks 4th among its peers and 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 (see Figure 22).

Within this index, the North 81 region ranks 2nd and 3rd for life span and poverty rate, respectively; however, it ranks more poorly on the remaining three indicators (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Other Prosperity 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.

Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

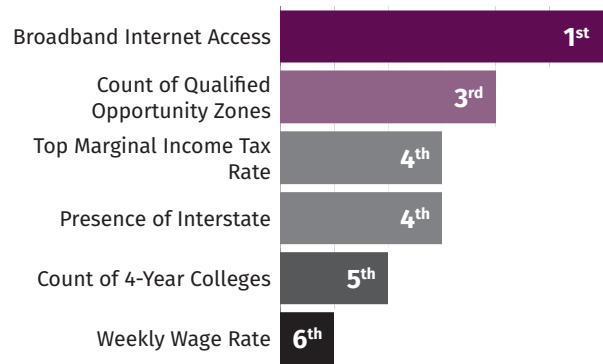
Figure 24: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

-2 Peer 5	48 North 81	49 Peer 2	103 Peer 6	152 Peer 3	161 Peer 4
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The North 81 region ranks 5th among its peers and is slightly more than one-half 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 (see Figure 24).

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 25).

Figure 25: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the North 81 Region





RESULTS BY REGION

NORTHEAST REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 98 Ranks 2nd Among Peers

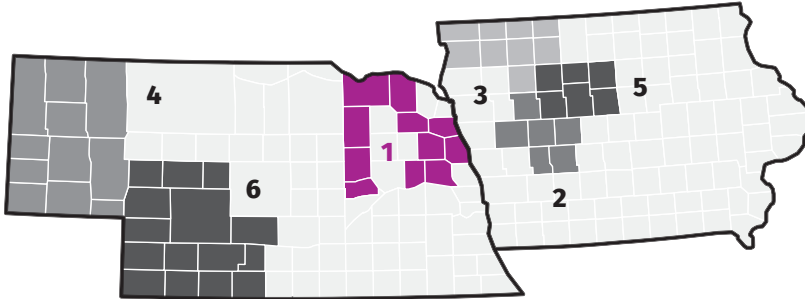
2nd Growth

2nd Demographic Growth & Renewal

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 26).

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 26: Northeast Region and Comparison Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

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

Peer 3 (1st) **140**

Peer Average **100**

Northeast (2nd) 98

Peer 6 (3rd) **94**

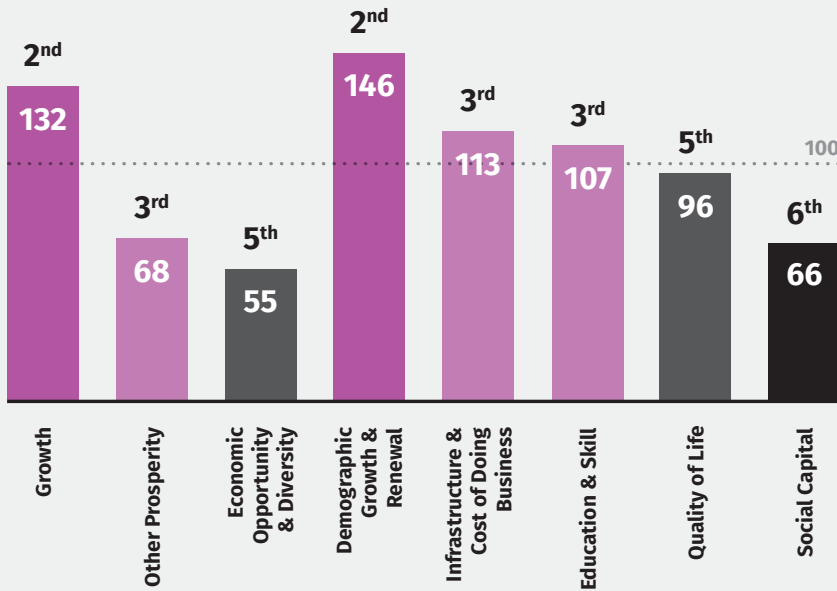
Peer 4 (4th) **91**

Peer 2 (5th) **89**

Peer 5 (6th) **65**

**Figure 27:
Nebraska Thriving
Index Value &
Rank within the
Northeast Region
Peer Group**

Figure 28: 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 132 for Growth indicates that growth is 0.32 of a standard deviation above the average growth among the peer regions.

Figure 28 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 98 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 27) 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 outcome measures, ranking 2nd 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.



West Point, Nebraska

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

Figure 29: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-17 Peer 4	44 Peer 2	80 Peer 5	88 Peer 6	132 Northeast	197 Peer 3
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The Northeast region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 29).

Within this index, the Northeast region ranks in one of the top three places for four of the five indicators. However, it ranks 5th on growth in dividends, interest and rent (DIR) income (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Other Prosperity Index

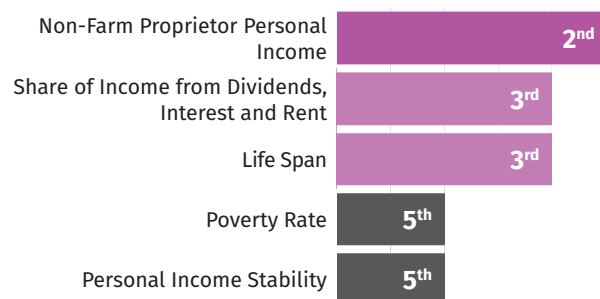
Figure 31: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

6 Peer 4	45 Peer 6	54 Peer 5	68 Northeast	137 Peer 2	235 Peer 3
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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 (see Figure 31).

Within this index, the Northeast region ranks 2nd or 3rd for non-farm proprietor personal income, share of income from dividends, interest and rent and life span. However, it ranks 5th on both poverty rate (high) and personal income stability (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

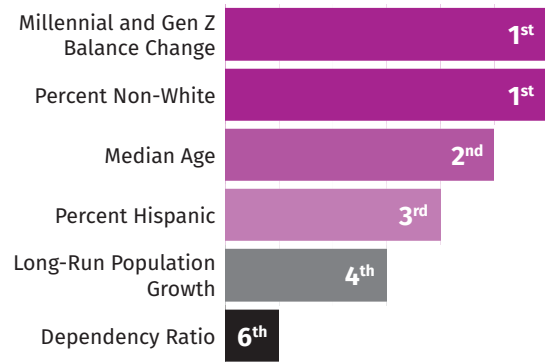
Figure 33: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

17 Peer 2	51 Peer 5	62 Peer 6	132 Peer 4	146 Northeast	147 Peer 3
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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 (see Figure 33).

Within this index, the Northeast region ranks in one of the top three places for four of six indicators. However, it ranks last on the dependency ratio (see Figure 34).

Figure 34: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

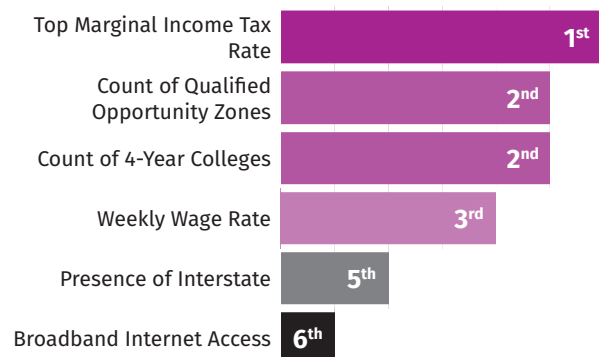
Figure 35: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

57 Peer 3	65 Peer 2	77 Peer 5	113 Northeast	127 Peer 4	168 Peer 6
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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 (see Figure 35).

Within this index, the Northeast region ranks 1st on top marginal income tax rate (lowest) and 2nd on two of the six indicators. However, it ranks last on broadband internet access (see Figure 36).

Figure 36: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region





Wayne, Nebraska

Education & Skill Index

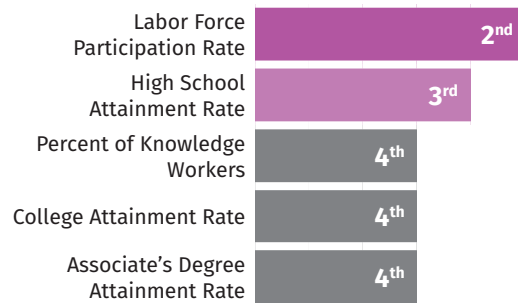
Figure 37: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

22 Peer 6	70 Peer 4	94 Peer 5	107 Northeast	112 Peer 2	168 Peer 3
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The Northeast region ranks 3rd among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is above the peer region average (see Figure 37).

Although the region ranks 2nd on labor force participation and 3rd on high school attainment, it ranks lower (4th) on the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations), college attainment and associate’s degree attainment (see Figure 38).

Figure 38: Education & Skill 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

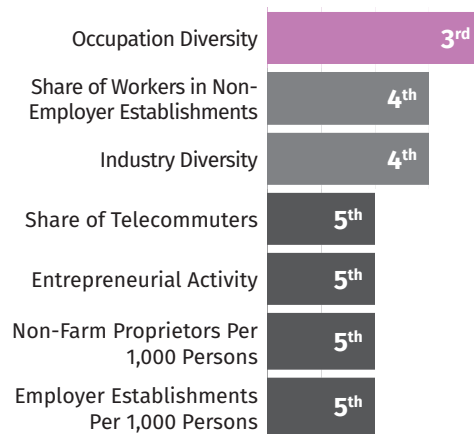
Figure 39: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

12 Peer 5	55 Northeast	76 Peer 2	115 Peer 3	148 Peer 6	191 Peer 4
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The Northeast region ranks 5th among its peers and is nearly 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 (see Figure 39).

Although the Northeast region ranks 3rd on occupation diversity, it ranks much lower on the remaining six of seven indicators, particularly those related to the business and entrepreneurial environment (see Figure 40).

Figure 40: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Quality of Life Index

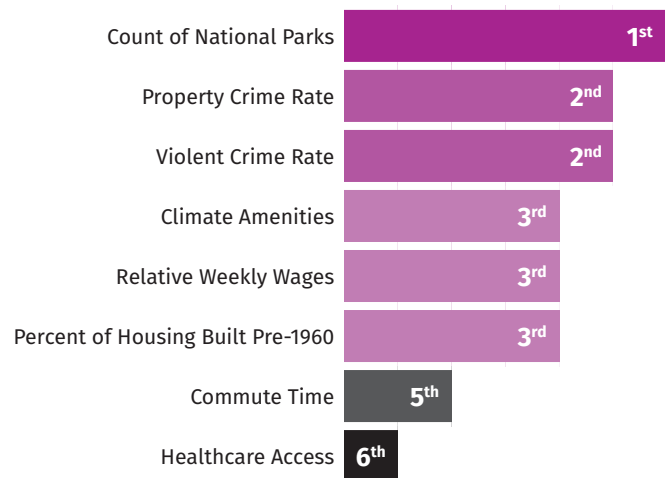
Figure 41: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

39 Peer 5	96 Northeast	100 Peer 2	112 Peer 6	120 Peer 3	124 Peer 4
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The Northeast region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 41). 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 six of the eight indicators of quality of life. However, it ranks last on healthcare access (see Figure 42).

Figure 42: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region



Social Capital Index

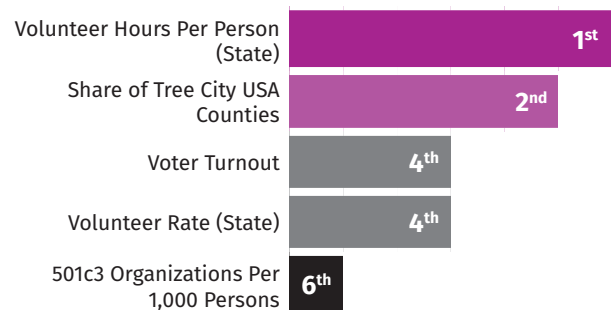
Figure 43: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

66 Northeast	83 Peer 3	96 Peer 4	107 Peer 6	113 Peer 5	162 Peer 2
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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 (see Figure 43).

Results are mixed within this index as the Northeast region ranks 1st on volunteer hours per person and 2nd 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 44).

Figure 44: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Northeast Region





RESULTS BY REGION

PANHANDLE REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 77
Ranks 6th Among Peers

2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity

2nd Social Capital

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 45.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

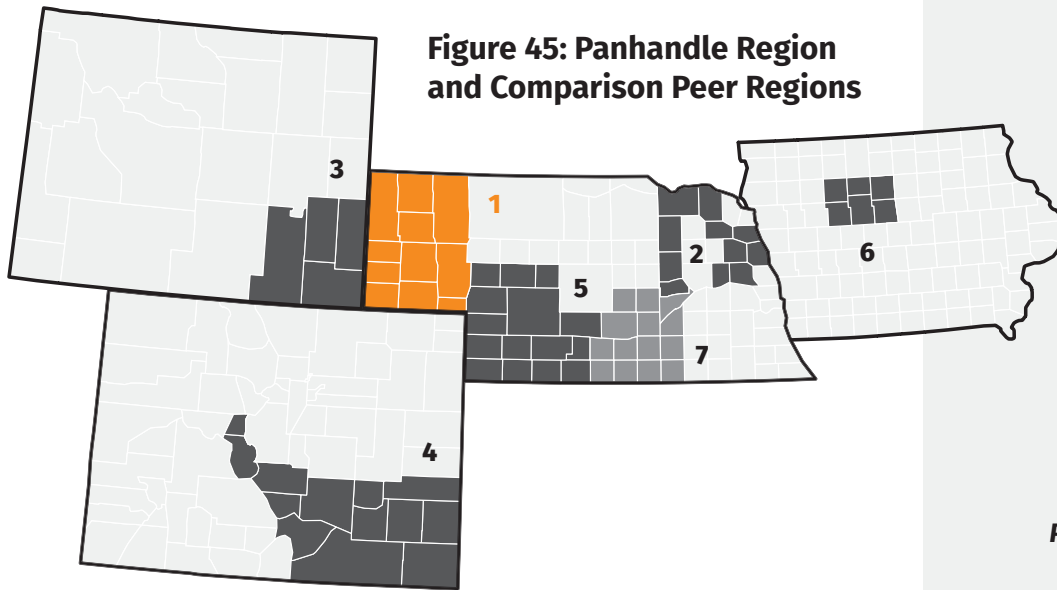


Figure 45: Panhandle Region and Comparison Peer Regions

Comparison Peer Region Key

- 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

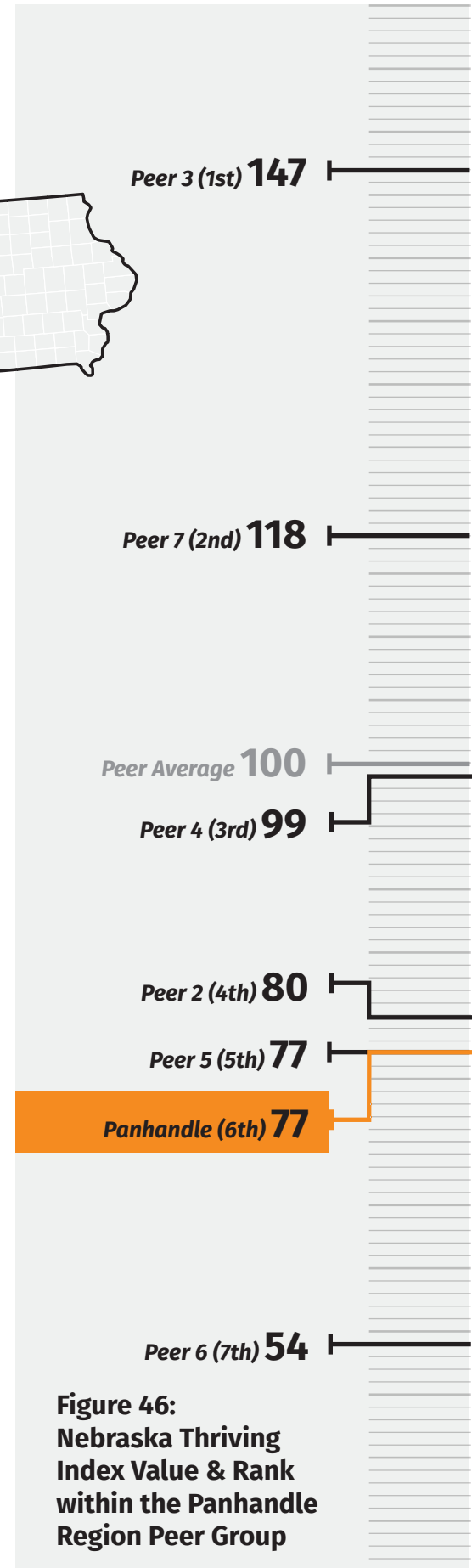
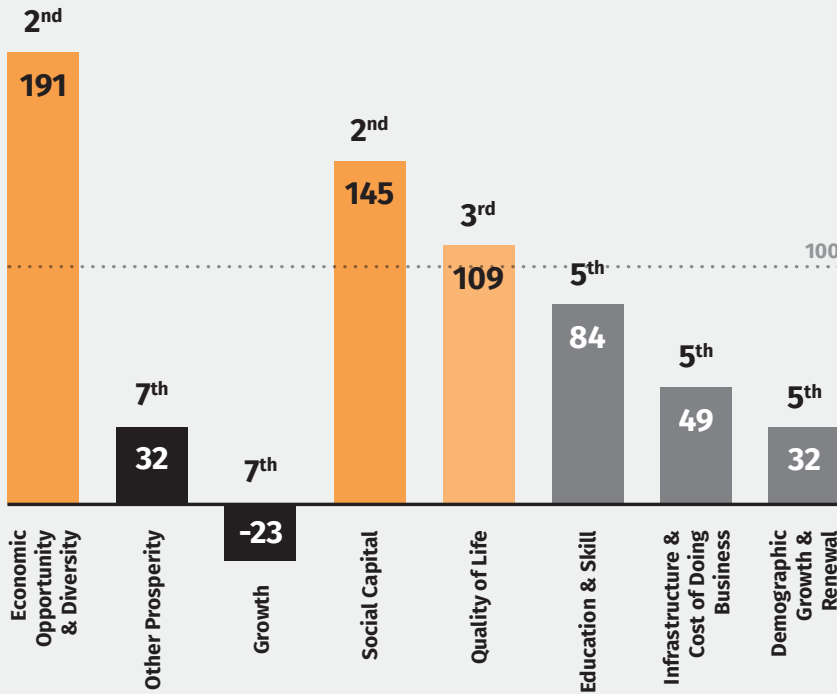


Figure 46: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within the Panhandle Region Peer Group

Figure 47: 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 145 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 0.45 of a standard deviation above the average social capital among the peer regions.

Figure 47 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Panhandle region compared to its peers. The Panhandle region’s 6th place ranking and 77 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 46) is due to poor performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Panhandle region is weak compared to its peers on two of the three outcome measures, ranking last for the Growth Index and the Other Prosperity Index. Other areas of poor performance for the Panhandle region are Education & Skill, Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business and Demographic Growth & Renewal as it ranks 5th for all of these 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.



Lewellen, Nebraska



Oshkosh, Nebraska

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

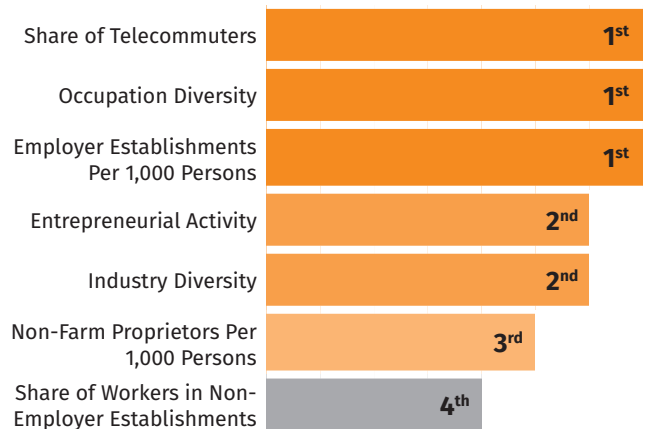
Figure 48: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

5 Peer 6	31 Peer 2	75 Peer 4	78 Peer 7	110 Peer 5	191 Panhandle	225 Peer 3
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The Panhandle region ranks 2nd among its peers and is nearly one standard deviation above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting (see Figure 48).

Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks in one of the top three places for six of the seven indicators, and three are 1st place rankings (see Figure 49).

Figure 49: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Social Capital Index

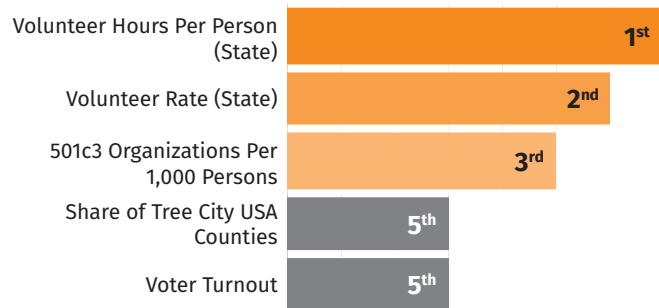
Figure 50: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

60 Peer 4	84 Peer 6	90 Peer 3	101 Peer 7	144 Peer 2	145 Panhandle	163 Peer 5
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The Panhandle region ranks 2nd 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 (see Figure 50).

Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks 1st on volunteer hours per person, 2nd on volunteer rate and 3rd on the number of 501c3 organizations per 1,000 persons. However, it ranks 5th on the remaining two indicators (see Figure 51).

Figure 51: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Quality of Life Index

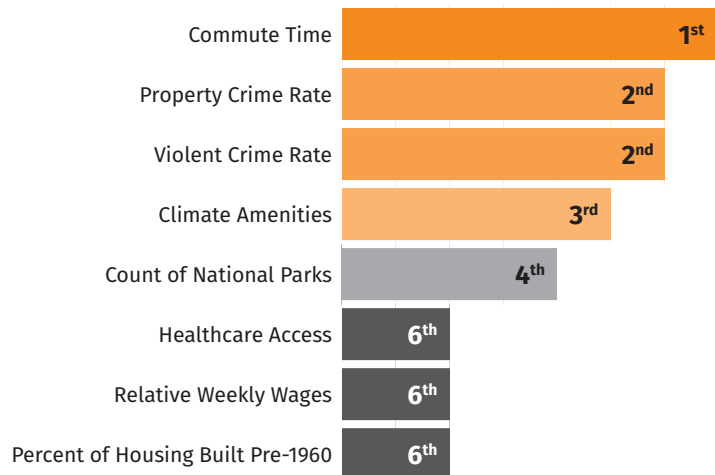
Figure 52: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

53 Peer 6	64 Peer 4	81 Peer 2	104 Peer 5	109 Panhandle	135 Peer 7	158 Peer 3
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The Panhandle region ranks 3rd among its peers and is slightly above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 52). 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 53).

Figure 53: Quality of Life 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

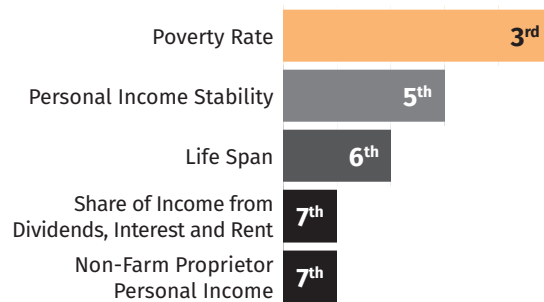
Figure 54: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

32 Panhandle	56 Peer 5	75 Peer 6	78 Peer 4	80 Peer 2	117 Peer 3	193 Peer 7
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The Panhandle 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 (see Figure 54).

Although the Panhandle region ranks 3rd on poverty rate, it has much lower rankings on the remaining four of five indicators, two of which are a last place ranking (see Figure 55).

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



Growth Index

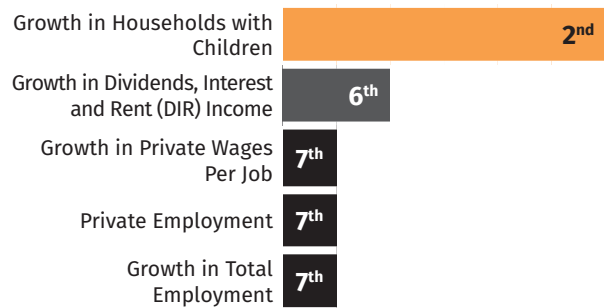
Figure 56: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-23 Panhandle	46 Peer 6	58 Peer 5	100 Peer 2	109 Peer 3	116 Peer 7	148 Peer 4
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The Panhandle region ranks last and is nearly one-and-a-quarter standard deviations below its peer average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 56).

Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks last on three of the five indicators; however, it ranks 2nd on growth in households with children (see Figure 57).

Figure 57: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Education & Skill Index

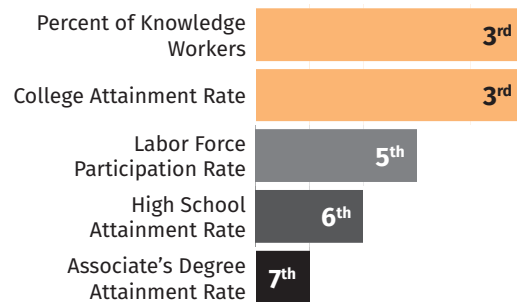
Figure 58: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

65 Peer 4	78 Peer 5	84 Panhandle	106 Peer 7	123 Peer 2	141 Peer 3	148 Peer 6
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The Panhandle region ranks 5th among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is below the peer region average (see Figure 58).

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 labor force participation (5th), high school attainment (6th), and associate’s degree attainment (last). (See Figure 59.)

Figure 59: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

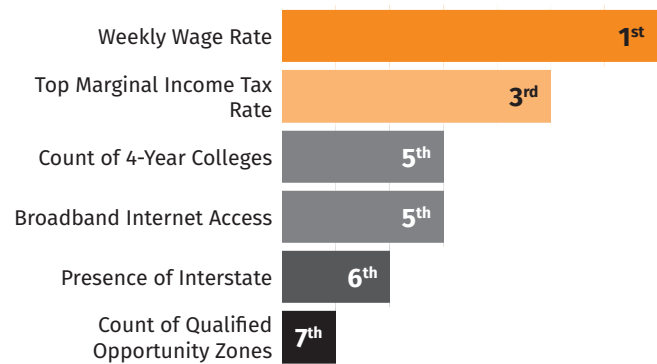
Figure 60: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

18 Peer 6	21 Peer 2	49 Panhandle	59 Peer 5	101 Peer 7	138 Peer 3	160 Peer 4
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The Panhandle region ranks 5th among its peers and is one-half 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 (see Figure 60).

Within this index, the Panhandle region ranks in one of the bottom three of seven places for four of the six indicators. However, it ranks 1st on weekly wage rate which indicates that Panhandle region employers pay relatively lower wage rates than employers in similarly situated peer regions (see Figure 61).

Figure 61: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

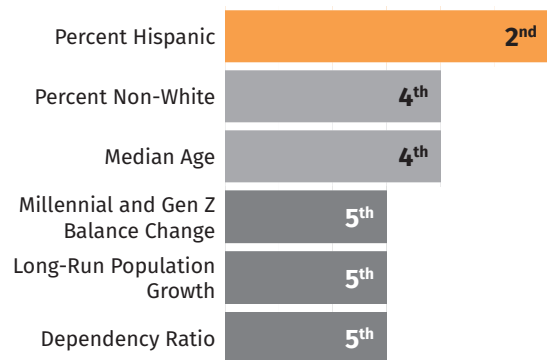
Figure 62: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

-10 Peer 5	7 Peer 6	32 Panhandle	63 Peer 2	113 Peer 7	138 Peer 4	195 Peer 3
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The Panhandle region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity (see Figure 62).

Although the Panhandle region ranks 2nd for percent Hispanic, it ranks 4th or 5th on the other five of six indicators (see Figure 63).

Figure 63: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Panhandle Region





RESULTS BY REGION

SANDHILLS REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 102 Ranks 4th Among Peers

1st Economic Opportunity & Diversity

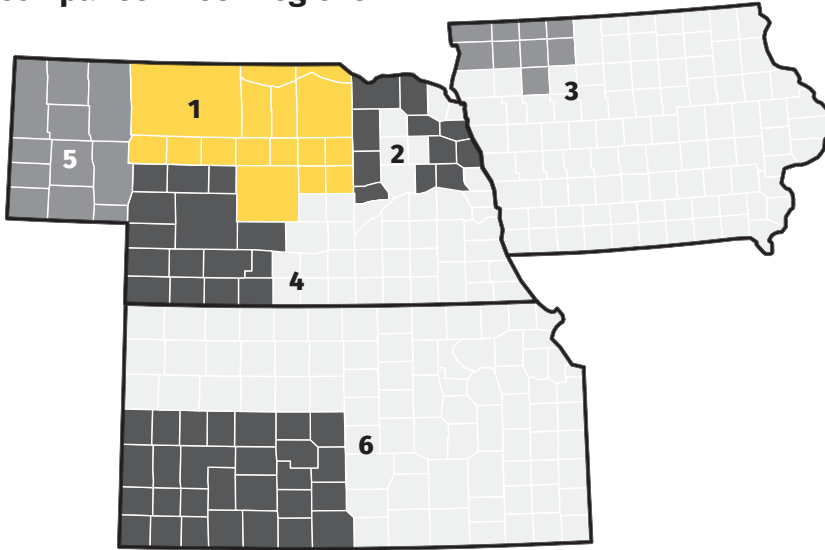
1st Social Capital

2nd Other Prosperity

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 64.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 64: Sandhills Region and Comparison Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

- 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.

Peer 3 (1st) **132**

Peer 2 (2nd) **105**

Peer 4 (2nd) **105**

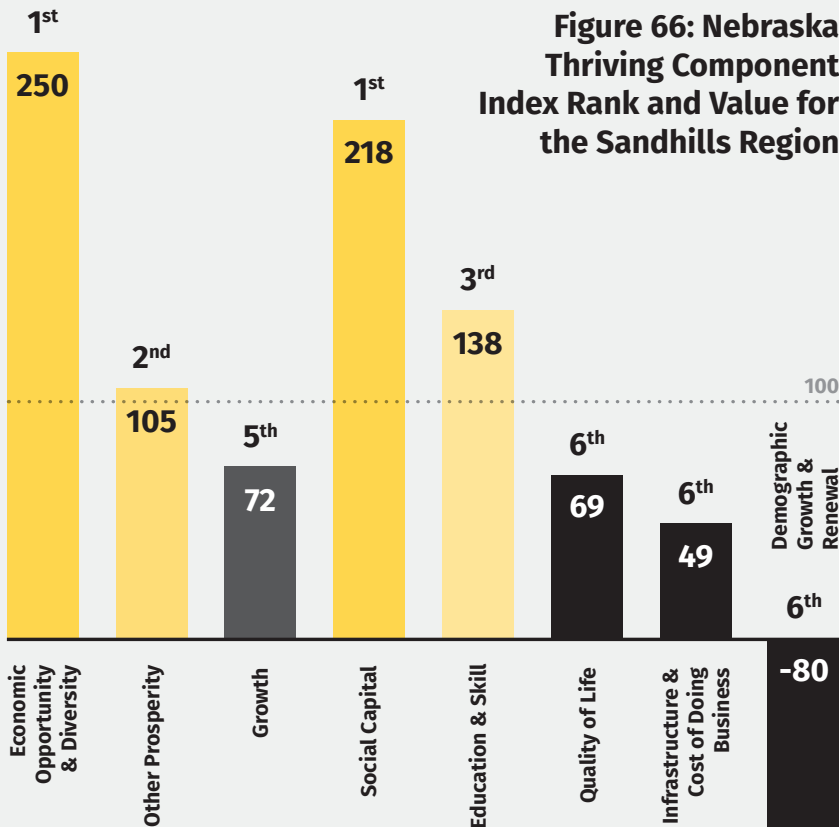
Sandhills (4th) 102

Peer Average **100**

Peer 5 (5th) **90**

Peer 6 (6th) **78**

Figure 65: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within the Sandhills Region Peer Group



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 218 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 1.18 standard deviations above the average social capital among the peer regions.

Figure 66 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Sandhills region compared to its peers. The Sandhills region’s 4th place ranking and 102 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 65) 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 two of the three outcome measures, ranking 1st for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index and 2nd for the Other Prosperity Index. Social Capital and Education & Skill are other areas of strength for the Sandhills region as it ranks 1st and 3rd 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.



Broken Bow, Nebraska



Ord, Nebraska

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

Figure 67: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

53 Peer 6	56 Peer 2	99 Peer 3	131 Peer 4	160 Peer 5	250 Sandhills
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The Sandhills region ranks 1st among its peers and is one-and-a-half standard deviations above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting (see Figure 67).

Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 1st for five of the seven indicators of economic opportunity and diversity; however, it ranks last for occupation diversity (see Figure 68).

Figure 68: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region

Share of Workers in Non-Employer Establishments	1st
Share of Telecommuters	1st
Entrepreneurial Activity	1st
Non-Farm Proprietors Per 1,000 Persons	1st
Employer Establishments Per 1,000 Persons	1st
Industry Diversity	4th
Occupation Diversity	6th

Other Prosperity Index

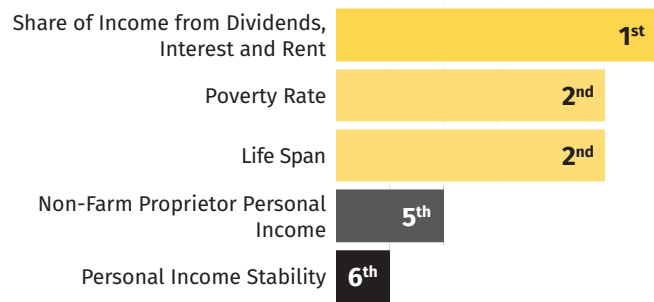
Figure 69: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

47 Peer 6	65 Peer 5	93 Peer 4	100 Peer 2	105 Sandhills	207 Peer 3
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The Sandhills region ranks 2nd among its peers and is slightly above the peer average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate (see Figure 69).

Results are mixed within this index as the Sandhills region ranks 1st for share of income from wealth and 2nd on poverty rate (lower) and life span, but has much lower rankings on the amount and stability of personal income (see Figure 70).

Figure 70: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Social Capital Index

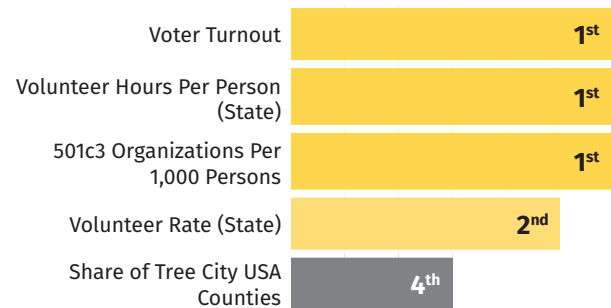
Figure 71: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

5 Peer 6	97 Peer 3	143 Peer 2	151 Peer 5	158 Peer 4	218 Sandhills
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The Sandhills region ranks 1st among its peers and is more than one standard deviation above the peer average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region (see Figure 71).

Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 1st or 2nd on four of the five indicators (see Figure 72).

Figure 72: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Education & Skill Index

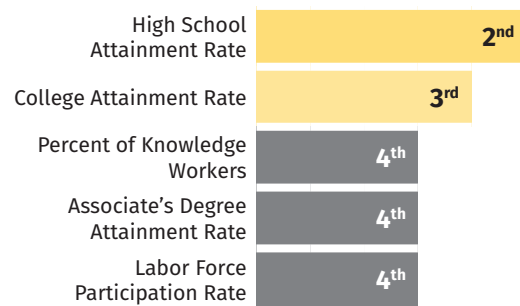
Figure 73: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

4 Peer 6	79 Peer 4	89 Peer 5	138 Sandhills	154 Peer 2	214 Peer 3
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The Sandhills region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index (see Figure 73).

Within this index, the Sandhills region ranks 2nd and 3rd on high school and college attainment, respectively, and 4th for the remaining three indicators (see Figure 74).

Figure 74: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Considerations

An area of consideration would be identified as the Sandhills region ranking 4th among its peers and having neither an area of strength or concern. However, the Sandhills 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 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

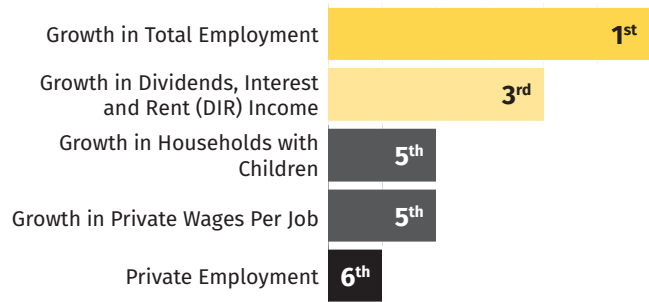
Figure 75: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-18 Peer 5	72 Sandhills	81 Peer 6	95 Peer 4	139 Peer 2	183 Peer 3
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The Sandhills region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 75).

Although the Sandhills region ranks 1st for growth in total employment and 3rd for returns on wealth, it placed second-to-last and last on growth in households with children and private wages per job, and private employment, respectively (see Figure 76).

Figure 76: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

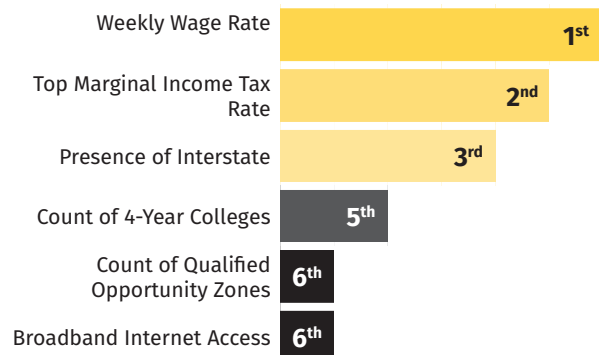
Figure 77: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

49 Sandhills	50 Peer 3	97 Peer 2	112 Peer 5	119 Peer 6	147 Peer 4
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The Sandhills region ranks last among its peers and is one-half 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 (see Figure 77).

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 78).

Figure 78: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Quality of Life Index

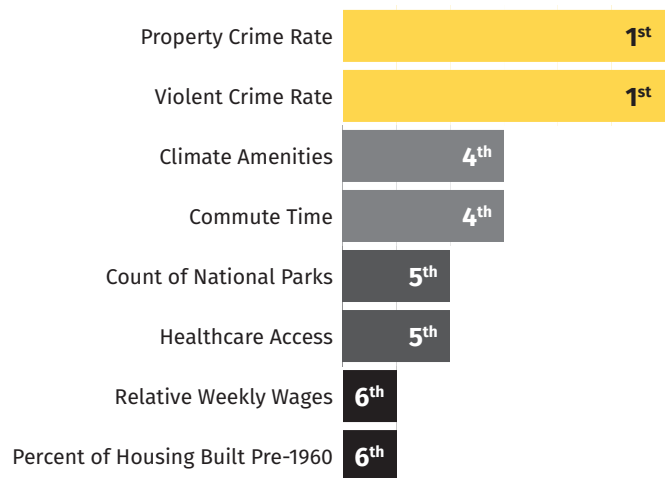
Figure 79: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

69 Sandhills	71 Peer 2	100 Peer 4	103 Peer 5	107 Peer 3	116 Peer 6
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The Sandhills region ranks last among its peers and is below the peer average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 79). 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 80.)

Figure 80: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

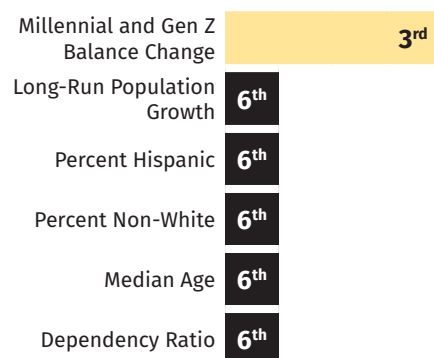
Figure 81: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

-80 Sandhills	35 Peer 4	62 Peer 5	78 Peer 2	97 Peer 3	199 Peer 6
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The Sandhills region ranks last among its peers and is nearly two standard deviations below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity (see Figure 81).

Although the Sandhills region ranks 3rd for Millennial and Gen Z balance change, it ranks last on the remaining five of the six indicators (see Figure 82).

Figure 82: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Sandhills Region





RESULTS BY REGION

SIOUXLAND REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 57 Ranks 5th Among Peers

1st Demographic Growth & Renewal

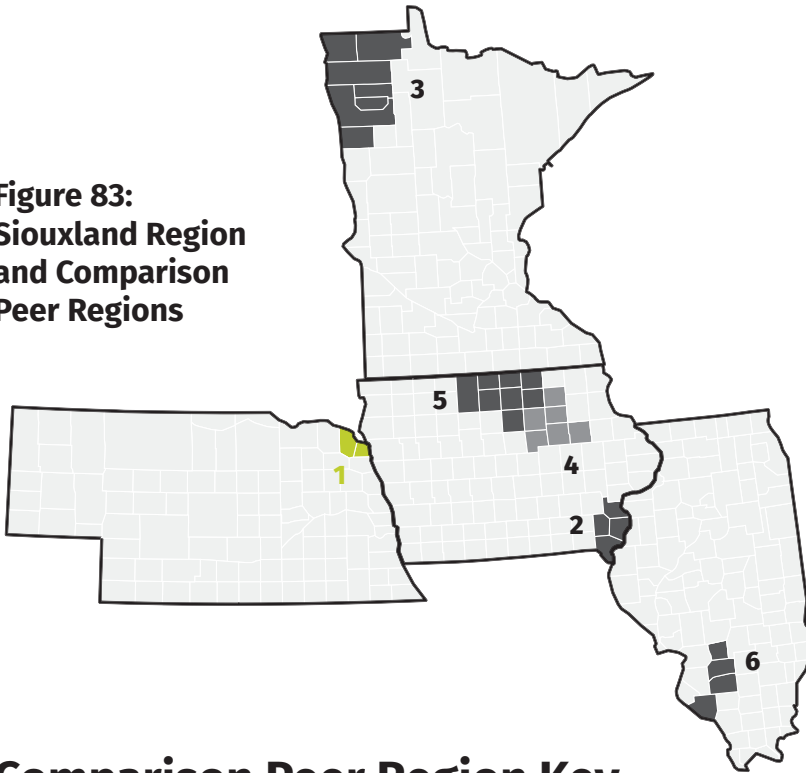
1st Quality of Life

2nd Growth

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 83.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 83:
Siouxland Region
and Comparison
Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

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 Planning Commission

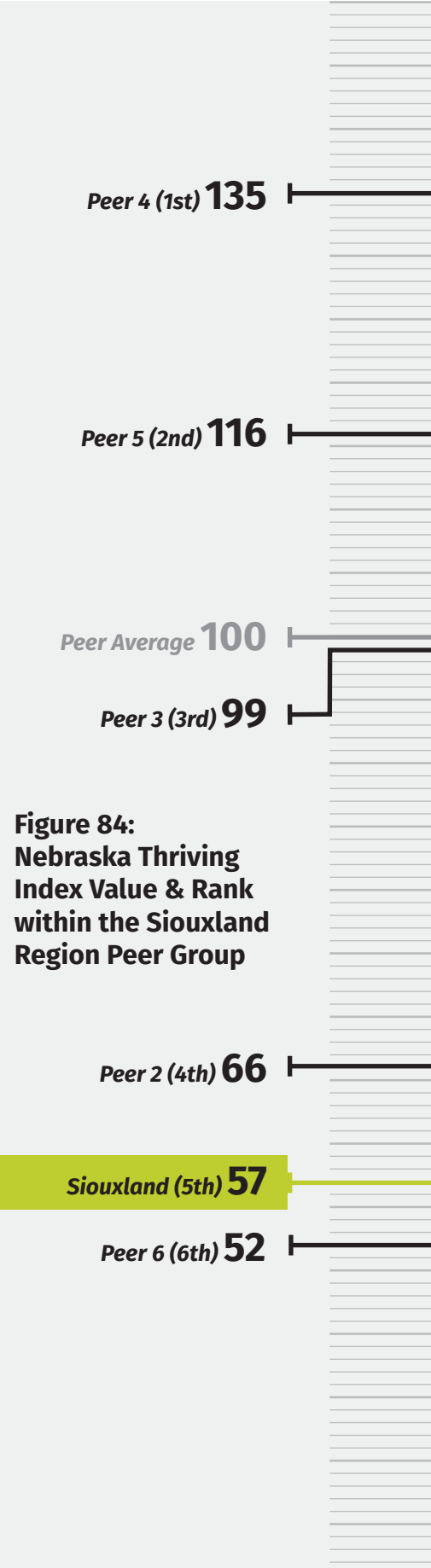
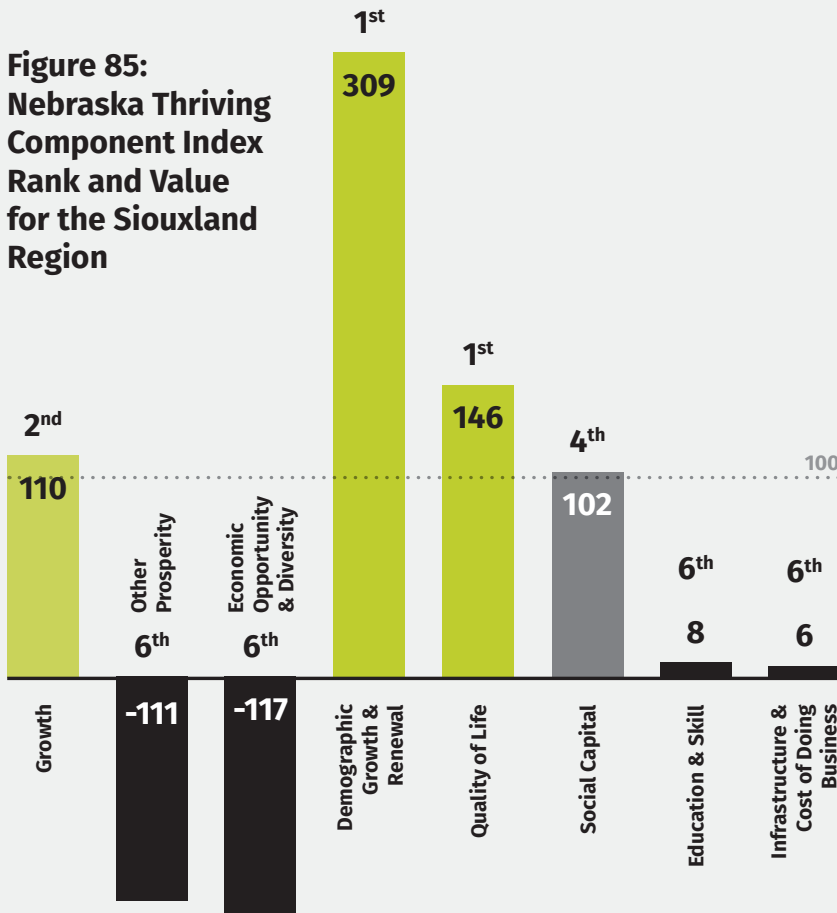


Figure 84:
Nebraska Thriving
Index Value & Rank
within the Siouxland
Region Peer Group

**Figure 85:
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 146 for Quality of Life indicates that quality of life is 0.46 of a standard deviation above the average quality of life among the peer regions.

Figure 85 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Siouxland region compared to its peers. The Siouxland region’s 5th place ranking and 57 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 84) is due to poor performance in several of the economic prosperity indexes and the economic conditions indexes. Specifically, the Siouxland region is weak compared to its peers on two of the three outcome measures, ranking last 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 as well. On a positive note, the Siouxland region ranks 2nd for the Growth Index and 1st for both the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index and the Quality of Life Index.



South Sioux City, Nebraska



South Sioux City, Nebraska

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

Figure 86: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

11 Peer 6	64 Peer 3	80 Peer 2	99 Peer 5	110 Siouxland	164 Peer 4
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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 (see Figure 86).

Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks 1st on growth in private wages per job and growth in total employment. However, it ranks last on returns to wealth and the level of private employment (see Figure 87).

Figure 87: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region

Growth in Private Wages Per Job	1st
Growth in Total Employment	1st
Growth in Households with Children	3rd
Growth in Dividends, Interest and Rent (DIR) Income	6th
Private Employment	6th

Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

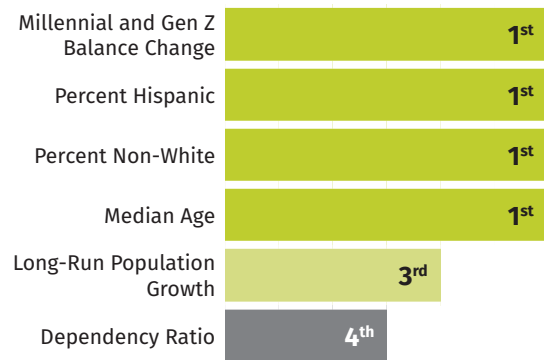
Figure 88: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

29 Peer 5	43 Peer 2	68 Peer 3	92 Peer 6	159 Peer 4	309 Siouxland
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The Siouxland region ranks 1st among its peers and is more than two standard deviations above the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity (see Figure 88).

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 89).

Figure 89: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Quality of Life Index

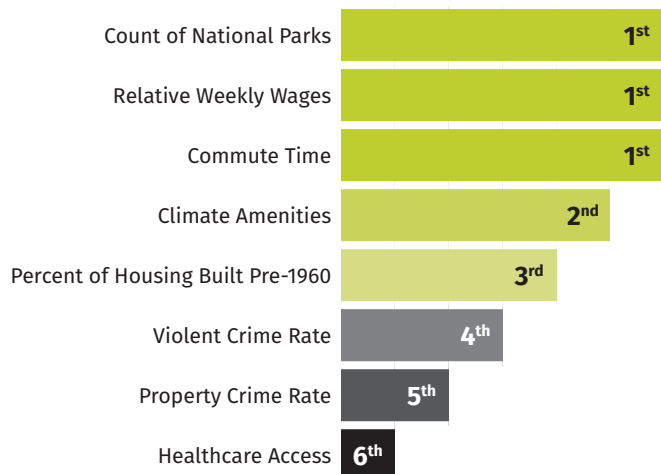
Figure 90: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

77 Peer 2	89 Peer 6	96 Peer 3	103 Peer 5	111 Peer 4	146 Siouxland
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The Siouxland region ranks 1st among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 90). 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 91).

Figure 91: 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 Siouland region is identified as having neither an area of strength or concern. An area of consideration is identified as the Siouland region ranking 4th among its peers.

Social Capital Index

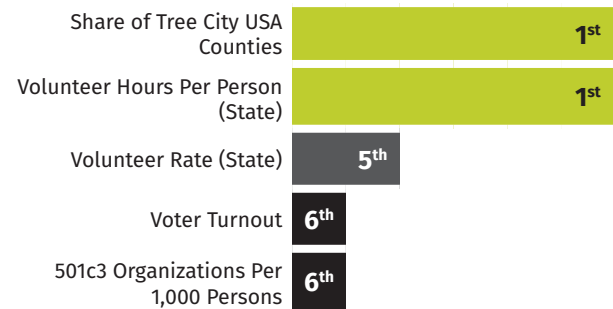
Figure 92: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-36 Peer 6	69 Peer 2	102 Siouland	119 Peer 4	148 Peer 5	180 Peer 3
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The Siouland region ranks 4th among its peers and is at the peer average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region (see Figure 92).

Results are mixed within this index as the Siouland 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 93).

Figure 93: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Siouland Region



Concerns

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

Other Prosperity Index

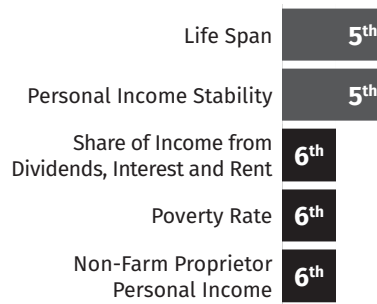
Figure 94: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-111 Siouxland	54 Peer 2	63 Peer 6	75 Peer 3	138 Peer 4	164 Peer 5
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The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is more than two 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 (see Figure 94).

Within this index, the Siouxland ranks 5th or last on all five indicators (see Figure 95).

Figure 95: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

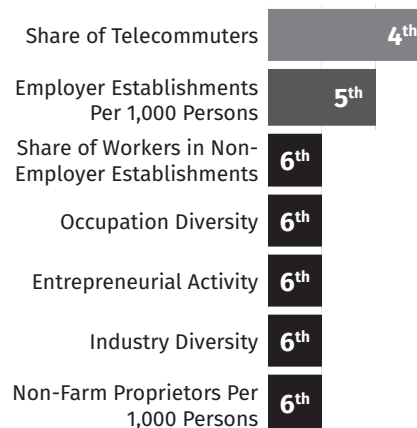
Figure 96: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

-117 Siouxland	28 Peer 2	49 Peer 6	113 Peer 4	173 Peer 5	177 Peer 3
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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 (see Figure 96).

Within this index, the Siouxland region ranks last on five of the seven indicators and 4th and 5th on the share of telecommuters and employer establishments per 1,000 persons, respectively (see Figure 97).

Figure 97: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Education & Skill Index

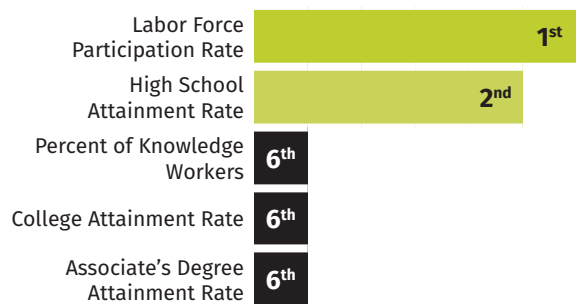
Figure 98: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

8 Siouxland	37 Peer 6	80 Peer 2	95 Peer 3	123 Peer 5	139 Peer 4
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The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is nearly one standard deviation below the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index (see Figure 98).

Results are mixed within this index as the Siouxland region ranks 1st on labor force participation rate and 2nd on high school attainment, but 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 99).

Figure 99: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

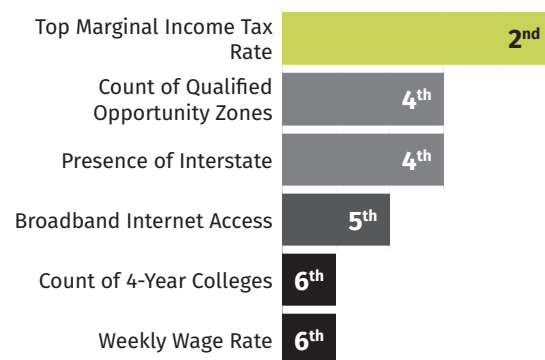
Figure 100: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

6 Siouxland	34 Peer 3	88 Peer 5	95 Peer 2	110 Peer 6	142 Peer 4
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The Siouxland region ranks last among its peers and is nearly 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 (see Figure 100).

Similar to other indexes, there are mixed results for this index. The Siouxland region ranks 2nd for top marginal income tax rate (lower); however, it ranks 5th on broadband internet access and last on the count of 4-year colleges and weekly wage rate (highest). (See Figure 101.)

Figure 101: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Siouxland Region





RESULTS BY REGION

SOUTHEAST REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 103 Ranks 4th Among Peers

2nd Growth

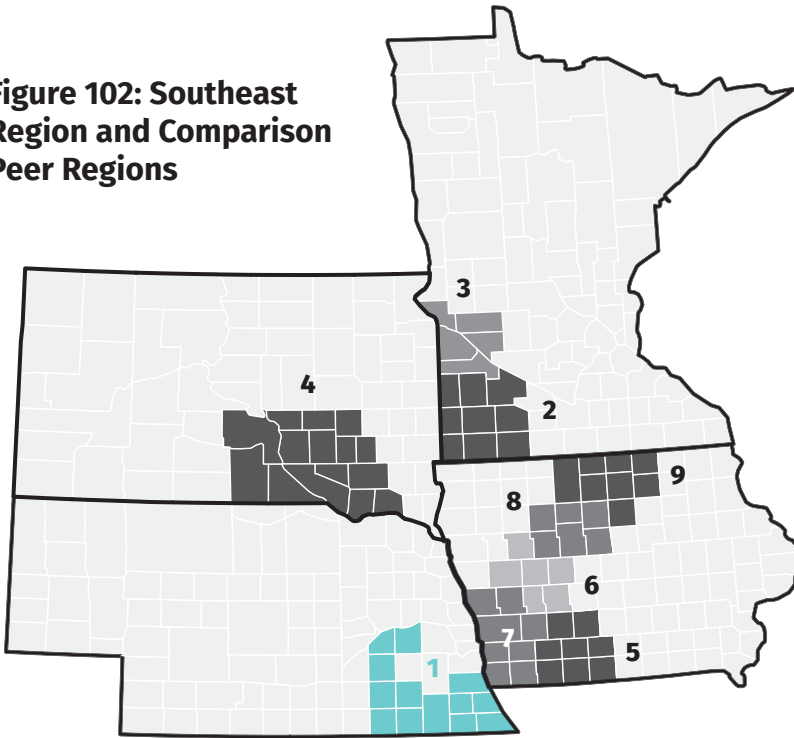
3rd Social Capital

3rd Other Prosperity

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 102.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 102: Southeast Region and Comparison Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

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**

Peer 4 (1st) **131**

Peer 2 (2nd) **112**

Peer 9 (3rd) **105**

Southeast (4th) 103

Peer Average **100**

Peer 7 (5th) **100**

Peer 6 (6th) **90**

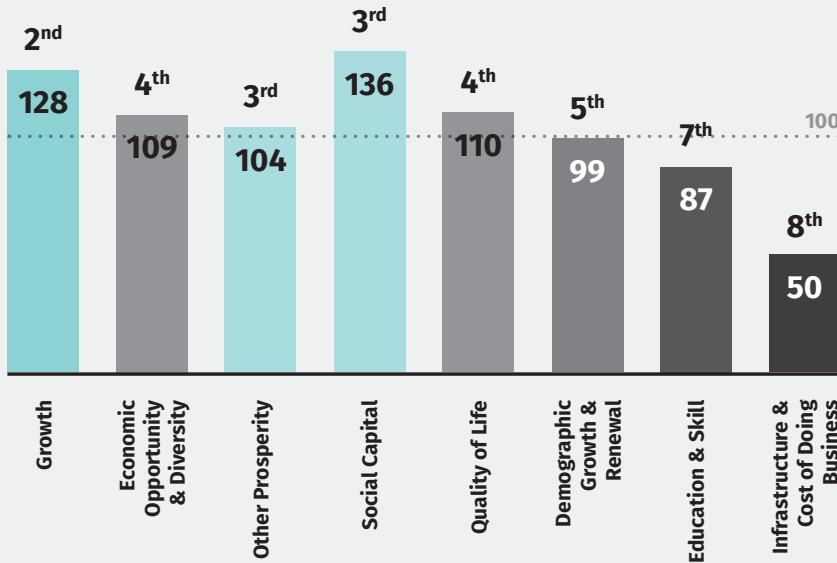
Peer 3 (7th) **89**

Peer 5 (8th) **87**

Peer 8 (9th) **62**

Figure 103: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within the Southeast Region Peer Group

Figure 104: 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 136 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 0.36 of a standard deviation above the average social capital among the peer regions.

Figure 104 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 103 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 103) 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 two of the three outcome measures, ranking 2nd for the Growth Index and 3rd for the Other Prosperity Index. Social Capital is another area of strength for the Southeast region as it ranks 3rd for this index as well. However, areas of poor performance for the Southeast region are Demographic Growth & Renewal, Education & Skill, and Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business, as it ranks 5th or lower for these indexes.



Falls City, Nebraska

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

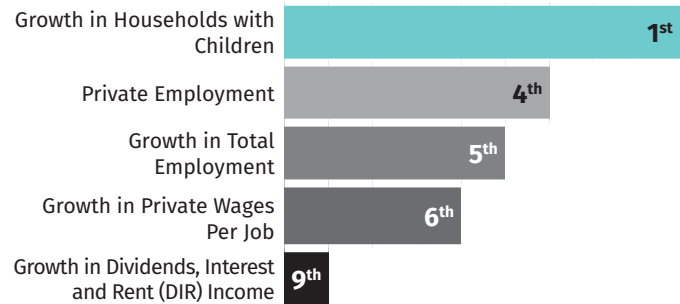
Figure 105: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

29 Peer 6	55 Peer 5	73 Peer 8	82 Peer 2	95 Peer 3	112 Peer 9	115 Peer 4	128 Southeast	136 Peer 7
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The Southeast 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 (see Figure 105).

Within this index, the Southeast region ranks 1st on growth in households with children and is more than two standard deviations above the peer average. However, it performs more poorly on three of the five indicators and ranks last on growth in dividends, interest and rent income (see Figure 106).

Figure 106: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



Other Prosperity Index

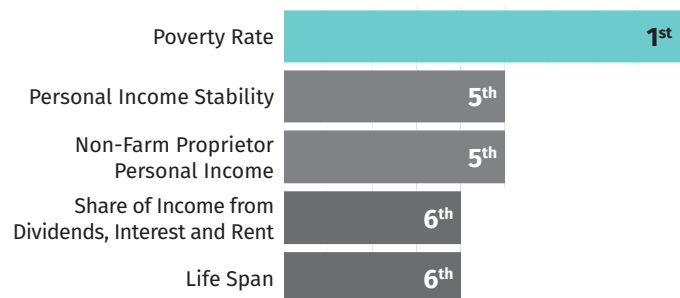
Figure 107: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

38 Peer 8	52 Peer 5	85 Peer 4	96 Peer 6	96 Peer 3	99 Peer 7	104 Southeast	118 Peer 2	168 Peer 9
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The Southeast region ranks 3rd among its peers and is slightly above the peer average for the Other Prosperity Index, which measures life span, non-wage sources of income, income stability and the poverty rate (see Figure 107).

Results are mixed within this index as the Southeast region ranks 1st on poverty rate (lowest), but has much lower rankings on the remaining four of five indicators (see Figure 108).

Figure 108: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



Social Capital Index

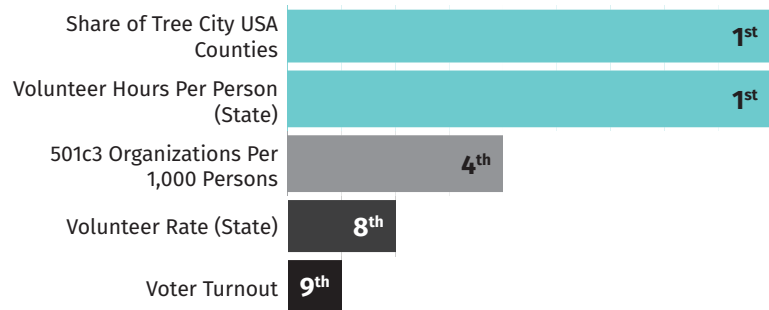
Figure 109: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

48 Peer 7	57 Peer 5	73 Peer 4	80 Peer 8	109 Peer 9	119 Peer 6	136 Southeast	153 Peer 2	190 Peer 3
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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 (see Figure 109).

Again, 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 110).

Figure 110: 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.

Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

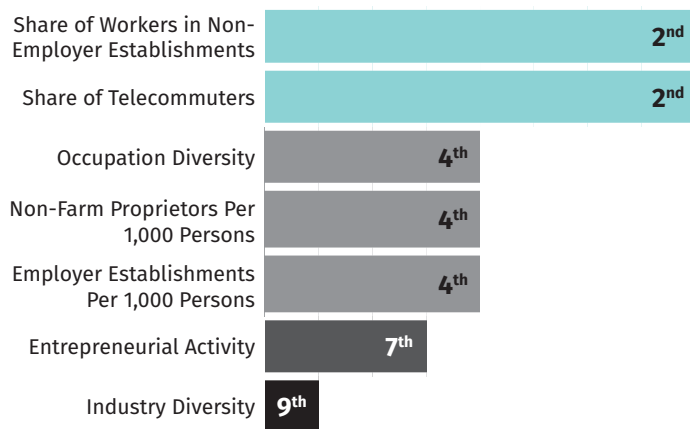
Figure 111: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

59 Peer 8	67 Peer 7	87 Peer 2	92 Peer 9	105 Peer 5	109 Southeast	120 Peer 3	134 Peer 6	174 Peer 4
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The Southeast region ranks 4th among its peers for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting (see Figure 111).

Although the Southeast region ranks 2nd on the share of workers in non-employer establishments and the share of telecommuters, it ranks 7th on entrepreneurial activity and last on industry diversity (see Figure 112).

Figure 112: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



Quality of Life Index

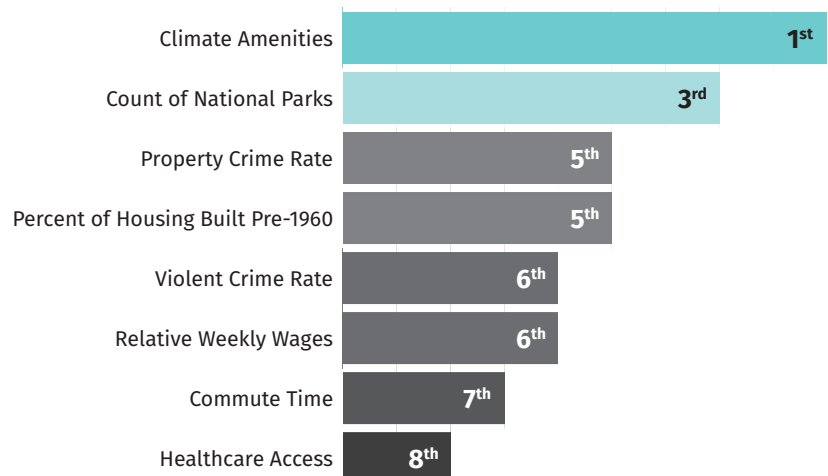
Figure 113: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

63 Peer 8	77 Peer 5	77 Peer 9	83 Peer 3	98 Peer 7	110 Southeast	111 Peer 2	119 Peer 6	149 Peer 4
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The Southeast region ranks 4th among its peers and is slightly above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 113). 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 114).

Figure 114: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region





York, Nebraska

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.

Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

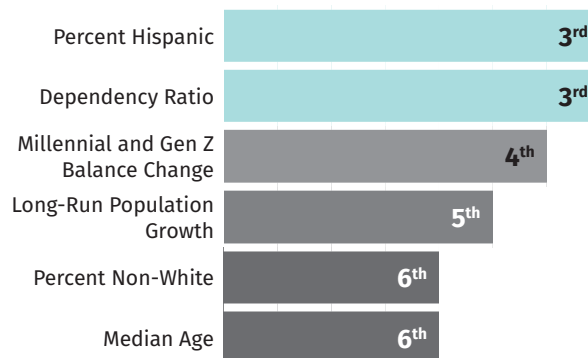
Figure 115: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

-13 Peer 3	37 Peer 9	80 Peer 6	84 Peer 8	99 Southeast	105 Peer 7	109 Peer 5	150 Peer 4	178 Peer 2
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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 (see Figure 115).

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 116).

Figure 116: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



Education & Skill Index

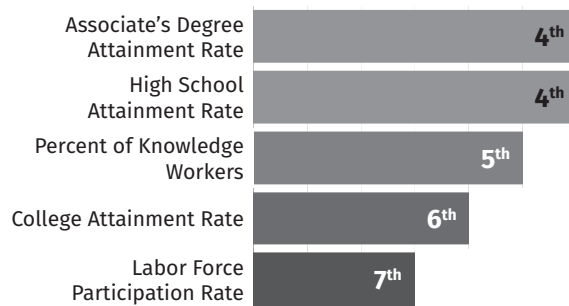
Figure 117: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

48 Peer 8	84 Peer 3	87 Southeast	90 Peer 2	104 Peer 6	109 Peer 4	113 Peer 7	122 Peer 9	130 Peer 5
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The Southeast region ranks 7th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Education & Skill Index (see Figure 117).

Within this index, the Southeast region is at a 4th place ranking or lower for all five indicators (see Figure 118).

Figure 118: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

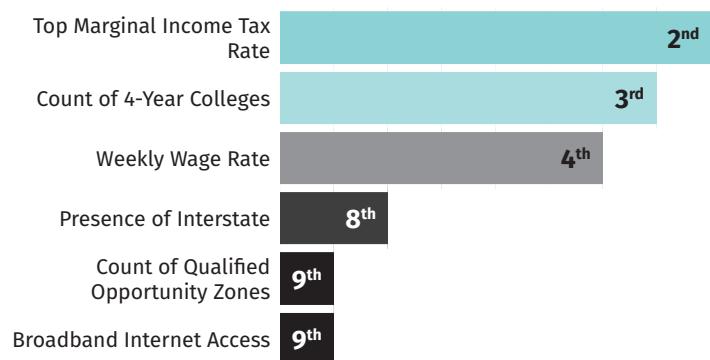
Figure 119: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

43 Peer 6	50 Southeast	53 Peer 8	60 Peer 3	77 Peer 2	112 Peer 5	118 Peer 9	136 Peer 7	193 Peer 4
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The Southeast region ranks 8th among its peers and is one-half 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 (see Figure 119).

Similar to other indexes, there are mixed results for this index. The Southeast region ranks 2nd and 3rd for top marginal income tax rate (low) and count of 4-year colleges, respectively. However, it ranks 8th on presence of interstate and last on both count of qualified opportunity zones and broadband internet access (see Figure 120).

Figure 120: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Southeast Region





RESULTS BY REGION

SOUTHWEST REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 96 Ranks 4th Among Peers

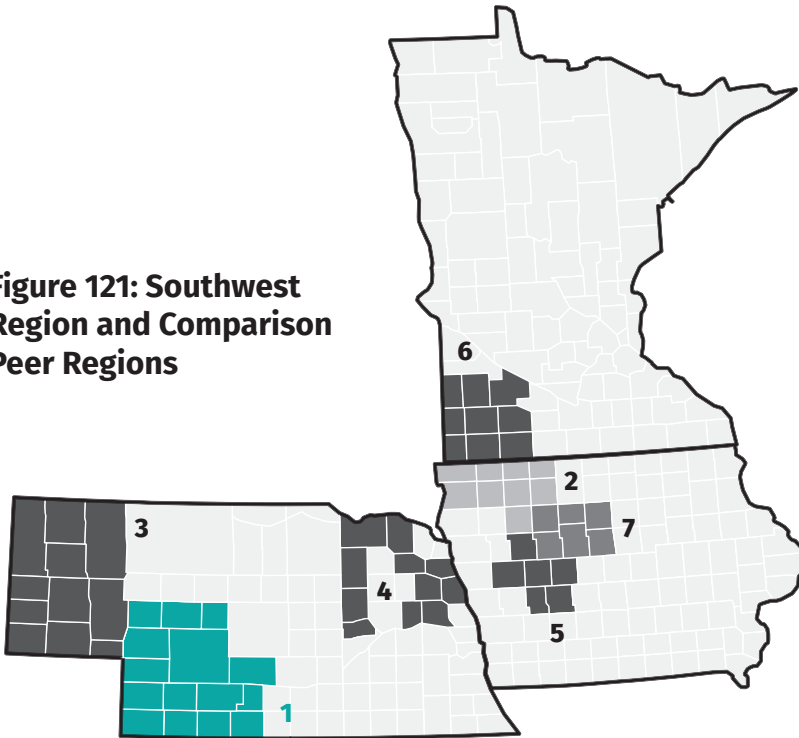
1st Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business

2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity

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 121.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 121: Southwest Region and Comparison Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

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

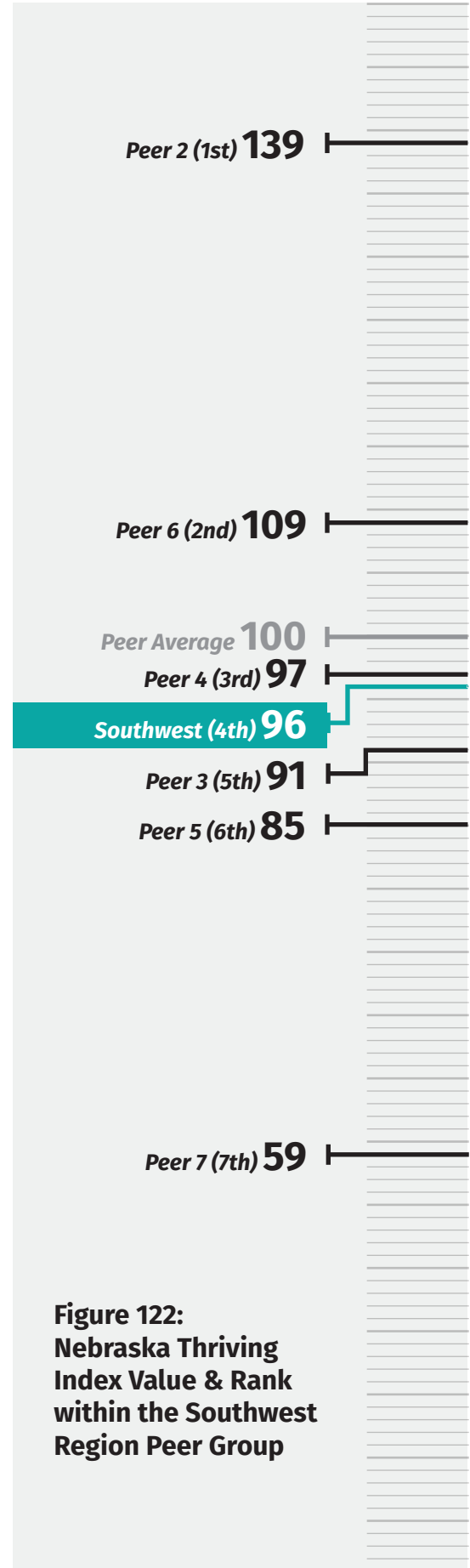
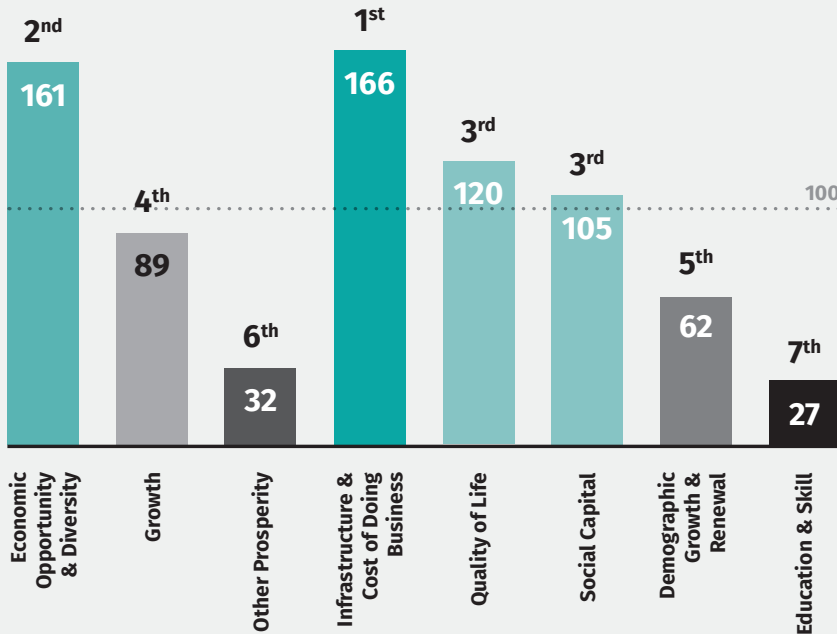


Figure 122: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within the Southwest Region Peer Group

Figure 123: 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 105 for Social Capital indicates that social capital is 0.05 of a standard deviation above the average social capital among the peer regions.

Figure 123 shows the value and ranking of the Nebraska Thriving Component Indexes for the Southwest region compared to its peers. The Southwest region’s 4th place ranking and 96 value on the aggregate 2020 *Nebraska Thriving Index* (see Figure 122) 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 outcome measures, 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 1st 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 5th place for these indexes.



Lexington, Nebraska



McCook, Nebraska

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

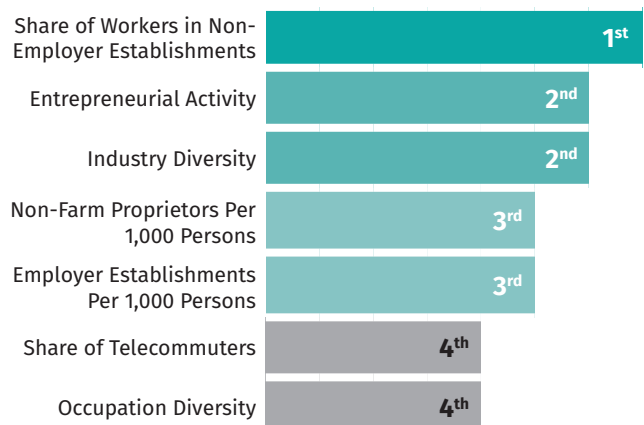
Figure 124: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

22 Peer 7	34 Peer 6	67 Peer 4	90 Peer 5	130 Peer 2	161 Southwest	204 Peer 3
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The Southwest region ranks 2nd among its peers and is more than one-half of a standard deviation above the peer average for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index, which measures entrepreneurial activity, industry and occupation diversity and telecommuting (see Figure 124).

Within this index, the Southwest region ranks in one of the top three places for five of the seven indicators (see Figure 125).

Figure 125: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

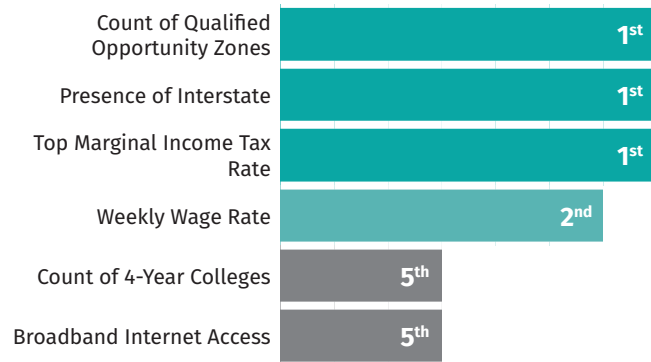
Figure 126: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

62 Peer 2	69 Peer 5	80 Peer 7	96 Peer 6	108 Peer 4	125 Peer 3	166 Southwest
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The Southwest region ranks 1st among its peers and is more than one-half of a standard deviation above the peer average for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region (see Figure 126).

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 both the count of 4-year colleges and broadband internet access (see Figure 127).

Figure 127: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



Quality of Life Index

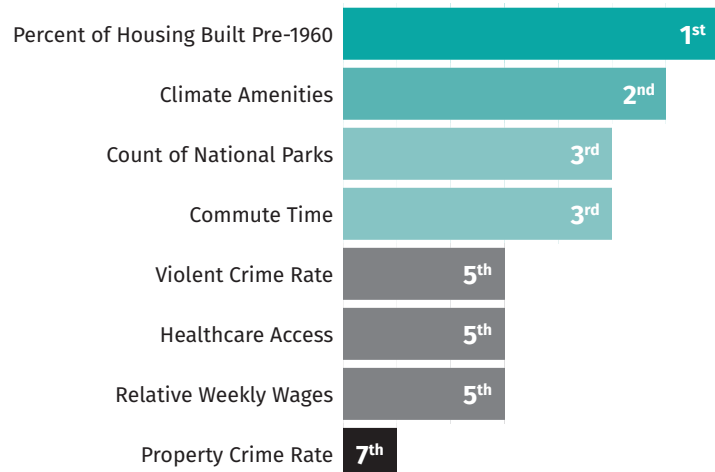
Figure 128: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

25 Peer 7	92 Peer 6	98 Peer 5	99 Peer 4	120 Southwest	121 Peer 2	134 Peer 3
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The Southwest region ranks 3rd among its peers and is above the peer region average for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 128). 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 129.)

Figure 129: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



Social Capital Index

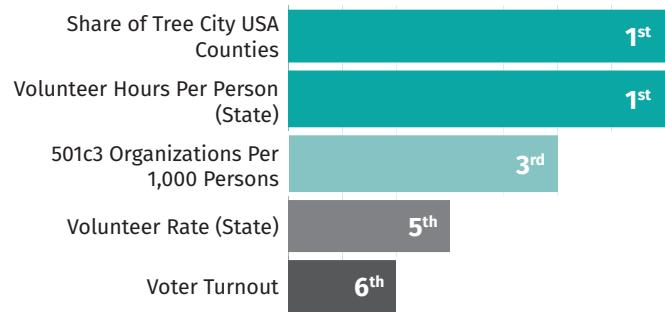
Figure 130: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

55 Peer 2	70 Peer 4	84 Peer 7	94 Peer 3	105 Southwest	129 Peer 5	176 Peer 6
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The Southwest region ranks 3rd among its peers and is at the peer region average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region (see Figure 130).

Within this index, the Southwest region has a mix of rankings across the five indicators, ranging from a 1st place ranking on the share of Tree City USA counties and volunteer hours per person to a 6th place ranking on voter turnout (see Figure 131).

Figure 131: 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

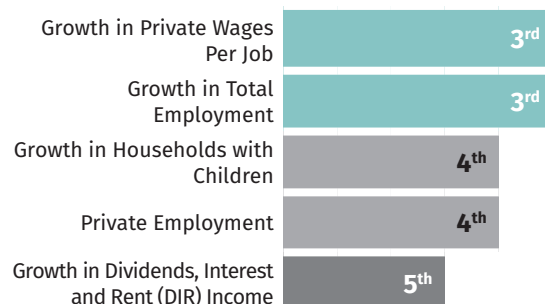
Figure 132: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-24 Peer 3	46 Peer 5	80 Peer 7	89 Southwest	93 Peer 6	137 Peer 4	201 Peer 2
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The Southwest region ranks 4th among its peers and is slightly below its peer average for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 132).

Although it ranks 3rd on both growth in private wages per job and total employment, it ranks lower on the remaining three indicators (see Figure 133).

Figure 133: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region





North Platte, Nebraska

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

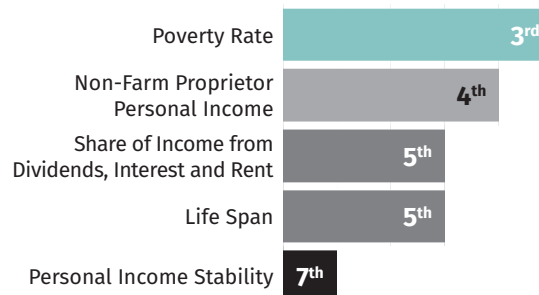
Figure 134: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-4 Peer 3	32 Southwest	45 Peer 7	52 Peer 4	120 Peer 5	163 Peer 6	225 Peer 2
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The Southwest 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 (see Figure 134).

Although the Southwest region ranks 3rd on poverty rate, it has much lower rankings on the remaining four of five indicators, one of which is a last place ranking (see Figure 135).

Figure 135: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

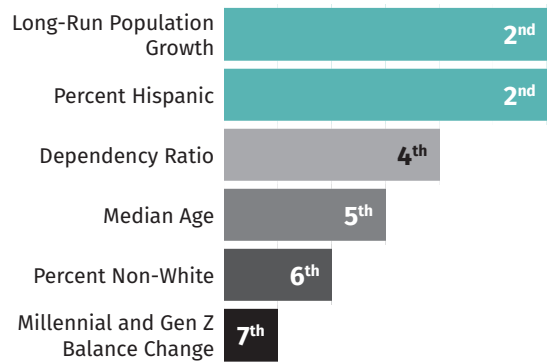
Figure 136: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

11 Peer 5	40 Peer 7	62 Southwest	125 Peer 3	133 Peer 6	135 Peer 4	142 Peer 2
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The Southwest region ranks 5th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Demographic Growth & Renewal Index, which measures long-term population growth, age structure and diversity (see Figure 136).

Although the Southwest region ranks 2nd for long-run population growth and percent Hispanic, it ranks at or below the 4th place on the other four of six indicators (see Figure 137).

Figure 137: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region



Education & Skill Index

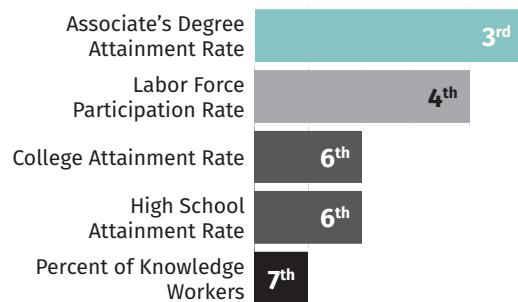
Figure 138: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

27 Southwest	70 Peer 3	81 Peer 6	96 Peer 7	110 Peer 4	115 Peer 5	175 Peer 2
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The Southwest region ranks last among its peers and is nearly three-quarters of a standard deviation below the peer average for the Education & Skill Index (see Figure 138).

Within this index, the Southwest region ranks 6th on college and high school attainment and last for the share of the workforce in knowledge occupations (e.g., STEM occupations, financial occupations, management occupations, teachers and health care occupations). However, it ranks 3rd on associate’s degree attainment (see Figure 139).

Figure 139: Education & Skill Index indicator rankings for the Southwest Region





RESULTS BY REGION

TRI-CITIES REGION

Nebraska Thriving Index: 126 Ranks 2nd Among Peers

1st Demographic Growth & Renewal

1st Quality of Life

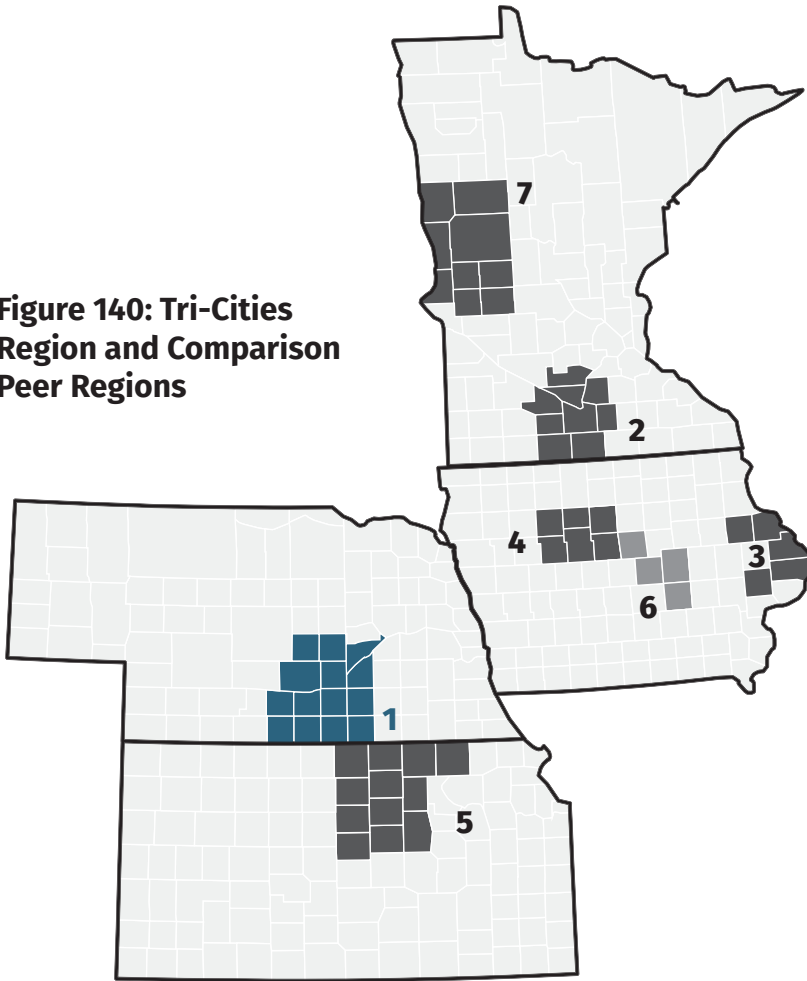
2nd Economic Opportunity & Diversity

2nd Infrastructure & Cost of Doing
Business

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 140.)

To explore individual scores and rankings for each of the component measurements (including previous years) and download the Comparison Region Supplement visit RuralProsperityNE.unl.edu.

Figure 140: Tri-Cities Region and Comparison Peer Regions



Comparison Peer Region Key

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**

**Based on discussions with economic developers and others in the Tri-Cities region, Peer 5 was changed from KANSAS: Flint Hills Economic Development District.*

Peer 7 (1st) **131**

Tri-Cities (2nd) 126

Peer 2 (3rd) **122**

Peer Average **100**

Peer 3 (4th) **93**

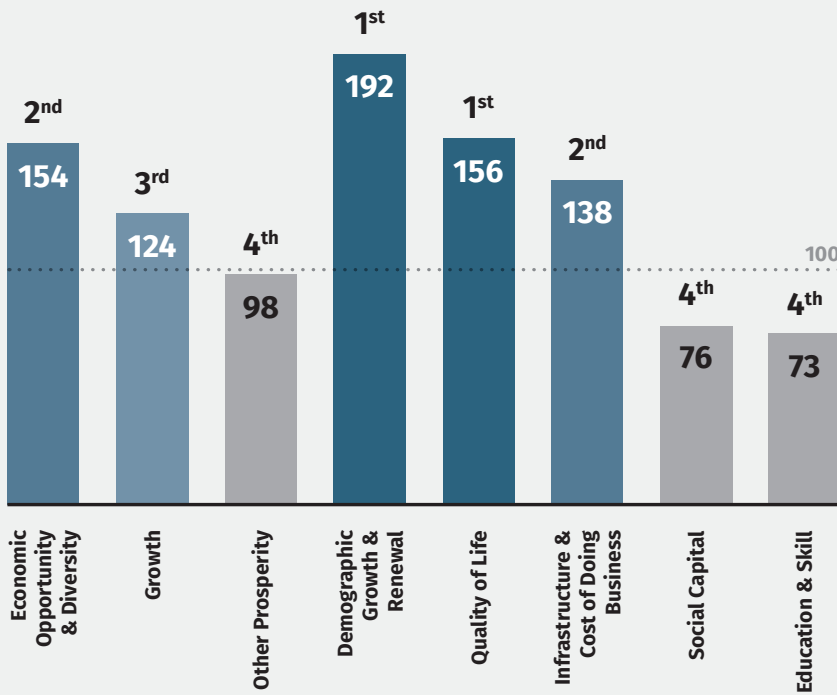
Figure 141: Nebraska Thriving Index Value & Rank within the Tri-Cities Region Peer Group

Peer 5 (5th) **63**

Peer 4 (6th) **42**

Peer 6 (7th) **37**

Figure 142: 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 156 for Quality of Life indicates that quality of life is 0.56 of a standard deviation above the average quality of life among the peer regions.

Figure 142 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 2nd place ranking and 126 value on the aggregate 2020 Nebraska Thriving Index (see Figure 141) 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 outcome measures, ranking 2nd for the Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index and 3rd for the Growth 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 2nd for these indexes.



Kearney, Nebraska



Aurora, Nebraska

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.

Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index

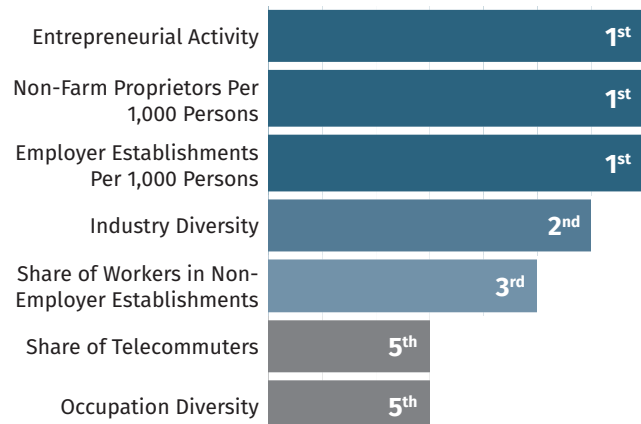
Figure 143: Ranking from 7 Component Measurements

-56 Peer 6	63 Peer 4	68 Peer 3	77 Peer 2	127 Peer 5	154 Tri-Cities	166 Peer 7
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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 (see Figure 143).

Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 1st on three of seven indicators and 2nd or 3rd on another two of seven indicators (see Figure 144).

Figure 144: Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Growth Index

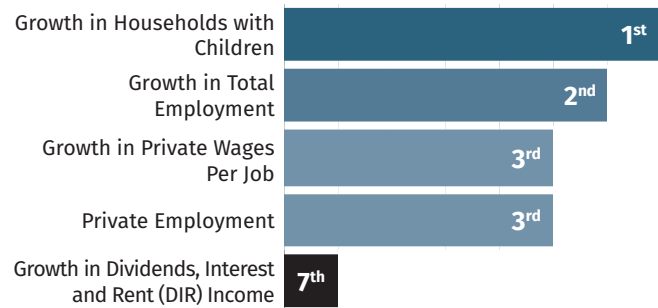
Figure 145: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-4 Peer 6	11 Peer 5	62 Peer 4	91 Peer 3	124 Tri-Cities	144 Peer 7	151 Peer 2
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The Tri-Cities region ranks 3rd among its peers for the Growth Index, which measures growth in employment, wages, population and returns on wealth (see Figure 145).

Within this index, the Tri-Cities region ranks 1st and 2nd for growth in households with children and total employment growth, respectively and 3rd for both private wage growth and private employment. However, it ranks last for growth in dividends, interest and rent income (see Figure 146).

Figure 146: Growth Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

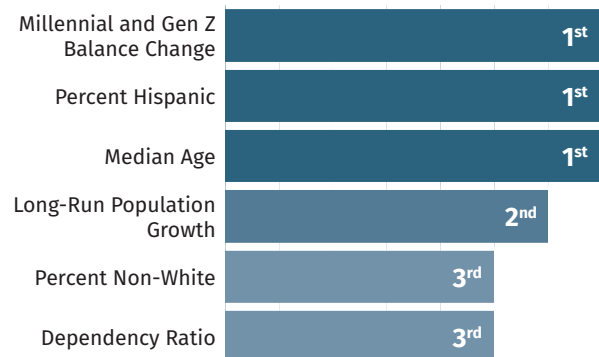
Figure 147: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

16 Peer 5	18 Peer 4	49 Peer 3	91 Peer 7	120 Peer 6	145 Peer 2	192 Tri-Cities
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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 (see Figure 147). This index is nearly 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, three of which are 1st (see Figure 148).

Figure 148: Demographic Growth & Renewal Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Quality of Life Index

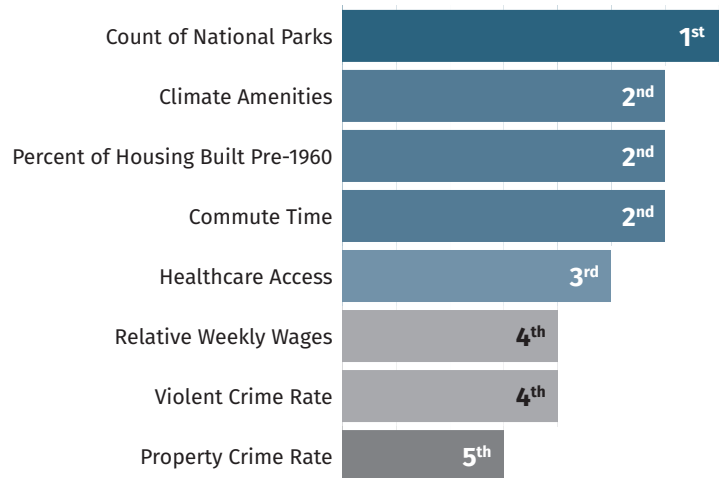
Figure 149: Ranking from 8 Component Measurements

67 Peer 3	70 Peer 4	81 Peer 5	92 Peer 2	104 Peer 7	115 Peer 6	156 Tri-Cities
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The Tri-Cities region ranks 1st among its peers for the Quality of Life Index (see Figure 149). 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 150).

Figure 150: Quality of Life Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

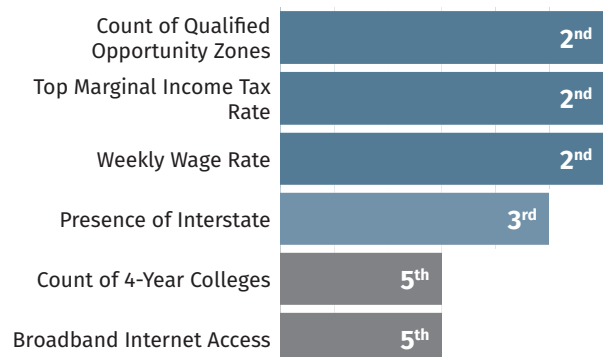
Figure 151: Ranking from 6 Component Measurements

22 Peer 6	50 Peer 4	52 Peer 2	98 Peer 7	136 Peer 5	138 Tri-Cities	155 Peer 3
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The Tri-Cities region ranks 2nd among its peers for the Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index, which measures the cost of operating businesses in a region (see Figure 151).

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 152).

Figure 152: Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business 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

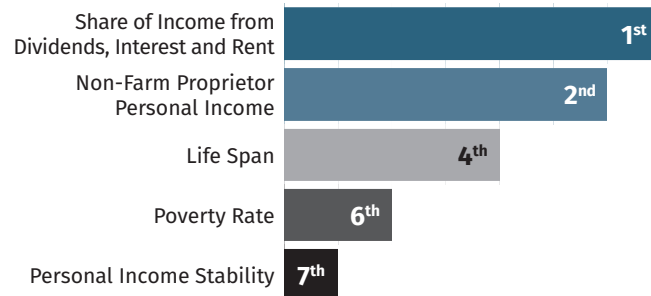
Figure 153: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

-31 Peer 4	37 Peer 5	66 Peer 6	98 Tri-Cities	115 Peer 3	135 Peer 2	157 Peer 7
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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 (see Figure 153).

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 more poorly on poverty rate and personal income stability (see Figure 154).

Figure 154: Other Prosperity Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Social Capital Index

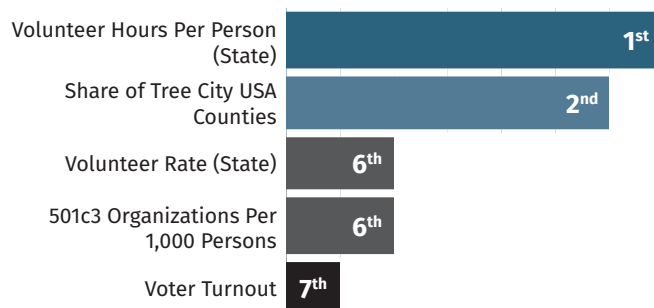
Figure 155: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

14 Peer 6	58 Peer 5	67 Peer 4	76 Tri-Cities	87 Peer 3	129 Peer 7	176 Peer 2
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The Tri-Cities region ranks 4th among its peers and is below the peer region average for the Social Capital Index, which captures social networks and a shared sense of identity within the region (see Figure 155).

Within this index, the Tri-Cities region is below the peer region average on three of the five indicators. However, it ranks 1st and 2nd on volunteer hours per person and the share of Tree City USA counties, respectively (see Figure 156).

Figure 156: Social Capital Index indicator rankings for the Tri-Cities Region



Education & Skill Index

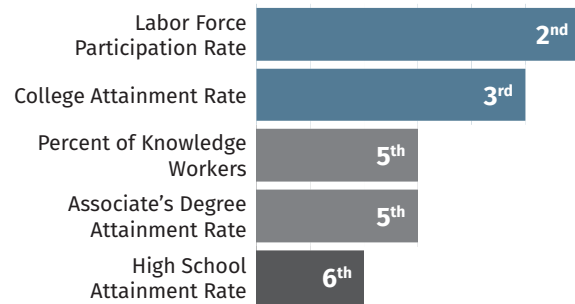
Figure 157: Ranking from 5 Component Measurements

19 Peer 6	36 Peer 5	42 Peer 4	73 Tri-Cities	110 Peer 3	148 Peer 2	160 Peer 7
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The Tri-Cities region ranks 4th among its peers for the Education & Skill Index and is below the peer region average (see Figure 157).

Although the region ranks 2nd for labor force participation and 3rd for college attainment, the region ranks 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 158).

Figure 158: 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.



UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska

