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LMI Administrator
Phil Baker
Editors
Rachel Stevens
Grace Johnson
Scott Hunzeker
Graphic Designer
Hillary Lee

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# Openings & Expansions | January

*Kermit Spade, Research Analyst*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Category</th>
<th>Business Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Banking &amp; Finance</strong></td>
<td>First National Bank (New Ownership)</td>
<td>Fairbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food &amp; Entertainment</strong></td>
<td>Brewery 719</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cody’s Mexican Grill</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Round 1 Bowling</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health &amp; Fitness</strong></td>
<td>Anytime Fitness (Expansion)</td>
<td>Beatrice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ascend Chiropractic</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faith Regional Physician Services</td>
<td>Humphrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Priority Family Medicine</td>
<td>Plainview</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SilverRidge Assisted Living (New Ownership)</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Therapeutic Wellness</td>
<td>Crete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail/Sales</strong></td>
<td>All Fired Up</td>
<td>North Platte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bomgaars</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tredz Central (Expansion)</td>
<td>Cortland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manufacturing</strong></td>
<td>Valmount</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
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<td><strong>Real Estate &amp; Rental</strong></td>
<td>Great Plains Realty</td>
<td>North Platte</td>
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<td>RE/MAX Home, Farm, &amp; Ranch</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Black Hills Energy</td>
<td>York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First State Insurance</td>
<td>North Platte</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkedIn (Expansion)</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RailCrew Xpress (Expansion)</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xpanxion</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Nebraska Department of Labor

Openings and expansions listed are a sampling of activity reported for that month. Some activity may have occurred outside the month. If you have an opening or expansion to report, contact us at LMI_NE@nebraska.gov.
As of the first quarter of 2018, Nebraska’s lodging industry employed more than 9,500 people statewide. The counties with the highest employment in the lodging industry were Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Buffalo, with 500 or more employees in each county. Lodging industry employees earned an average weekly wage of $350. Across the state, the lodging industry created over $21 million in economic activity in 2015, which equates to approximately $1.3 million in state taxes and $270,000 in federal taxes. (1; 2)

The map to the right shows the number of lodging establishments operating in each of Nebraska’s 93 counties. The map’s figures include all commercial lodging establishments except casino hotels, RV parks and recreational camps, and rooming and boarding houses.

Douglas and Lancaster Counties had the most lodging establishments as of the first quarter of 2018, followed by Sarpy, Buffalo, and Hall Counties. Twenty-two Nebraska counties had no commercial lodging establishments, and 27 had only one. Unsurprisingly, counties with larger populations tended to have greater numbers of lodging establishments than those that were more sparsely populated. (1)

Looking at the map to the right, travelers can rest assured that, whatever sites they may choose to visit, there will be somewhere nearby for them to stay the night. A listing of lodging options can be found online on the Nebraska Tourism Commission website, visitnebraska.com.
Sources:
Whether it’s savoring a gourmet feast at an upscale bistro or grabbing a burger from the local fast food drive-through, dining out is a part of life for most Americans. As of 2016, there were more than 553,000 restaurants and other eating places open for business nationwide, reaching an estimated $825 billion in sales in 2018. (1; 2)

With so many hungry mouths to feed, it’s no surprise that dining establishments have a large economic footprint. In this article, we will explore the role of the food services and drinking places industry subsector in Nebraska’s economy, including the types and locations of dining establishments found statewide, ownership and employment data, typical wages in the industry, and consumer spending patterns.

### Industry Overview

According to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), the food services and drinking places industry subsector includes businesses that “prepare meals, snacks, and beverages to customer order for immediate on-premises and off-premises consumption,” including “full-service restaurants; limited-service eating places; special food services, such as food service contractors, caterers, and mobile food services, and drinking places.” (3)

In 2016, food services and drinking places made up 8.2% of all business establishments in the United States, and employed about 9.2% of all working Americans. (1)

In Nebraska, there were approximately 4,120 establishments in the food service and drinking places subsector as of the second quarter of 2018, according to the Nebraska Department of Labor’s Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Together, these provided roughly 70,000 jobs, accounting for about 7.1% of total employment statewide. (3) By 2026, food service and drinking places are projected to add more than 5,000 additional jobs to Nebraska’s economy, for a 10.2% increase over 2016 employment levels. Despite the strong growth anticipated within the subsector, however, food service and drinking places’ share of total statewide employment is projected to drop a full percentage point, from 7.1% in the second quarter of 2018 to 6.1% in 2026, as several other industries are expected to expand even more rapidly. (4)
Out of all 50 states and Washington, D.C., Nebraska ranked #20 in terms of food service and drinking place establishments per capita, at 2.10 businesses in this subsector per 1,000 residents. Washington, D.C. led the country in most food service and drinking places per capita, with 3.81 per 1,000 residents—a substantially higher number even than second-place Rhode Island, which trailed D.C. at 2.73 food service and drinking places per capita. (1)

Establishments per Capita

Out of all 50 states and Washington, D.C., Nebraska ranked #20 in terms of food service and drinking place establishments per capita, at 2.10 businesses in this subsector per 1,000 residents. Washington, D.C. led the country in most food service and drinking places per capita, with 3.81 per 1,000 residents—a substantially higher number even than second-place Rhode Island, which trailed D.C. at 2.73 food service and drinking places per capita. (1)

Food Service & Drinking Places per 1,000 Residents: US States, 2016

In Nebraska, Wheeler County led the state in most food service and drinking places per capita, with 4.97 establishments per 1,000 residents. Although Wheeler County was home to just four food service and drinking place businesses in 2016, its small population size (805 residents) pushed it to the top of the list. In contrast, Thurston County, which had three food service and drinking place establishments operating in 2016, placed last in the statewide per capita rankings, with just 0.43 food service and drinking places per 1,000 residents. Douglas County had the most total food service and drinking places of any county in the state, at 1,280 such establishments; it came in as #20 of the 90 Nebraska counties for which data was available, with 2.36 food service and drinking places per 1,000 residents. (1)

Food Service & Drinking Places per 1,000 Residents: NE Counties, 2016

Map Source: U.S. Census Bureau. County Business Patterns. (2016.)
Types of Establishments

As of 2016 data, full-service restaurants made up 38.5% of businesses in Nebraska’s food service and drinking places subsector. (1) Full-service restaurants are those where patrons “order and are served while seated (i.e., waiter/waitress service) and pay after eating.” (5) Limited-service restaurants, which include establishments where patrons order from a counter, such as fast-food and takeout shops, accounted for another 36.6% of the subsector. The balance was composed of bars and alcoholic beverage drinking places (14.8%); snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars (9.0%); and cafeterias, grill buffets, and buffets (1.0%). (1)

Every five years, the Census Bureau conducts their Economic Census of the United States, which collects extensive data on the operational details of businesses nationwide. The most recent Economic Census took place in 2017, but its results will not be released to the public until September of 2019. For many specific queries, therefore, the most current available data on business operations comes from the 2012 Economic Census. (6)

Among limited-service restaurants, according to the 2012 Economic Census, 61.5% provided patrons the option to dine in the store, while 35.1% offered only takeout or drive-through service, 2.8% were delivery-only, and 0.7% had some other type of business model. (7)

The largest share of Nebraska’s food service establishments, 39.1%, charged an average of $7.00 to $9.99 per meal in 2012. Businesses charging $5.00 to $6.99 per meal (29.8%) or $10.00 to $14.99 per meal (17.0%) were also common. Just 1.6% of Nebraska restaurants charged less than $5.00 per meal in 2012, and even fewer—0.2%—charged $50.00 or more. (7)
When analyzed according to type of cuisine served, Nebraska’s largest category of food service establishment as of the 2012 Economic Census was hamburger restaurants (24.4%), followed by restaurants with no particular menu specialty (18.3%). Mexican (10.8%), pizza (10.0%), and sandwich/sub shops (8.0%) also made up significant shares of the state’s restaurants. (7)

**NE Restaurants: Primary Menu Type, 2012**

![Chart of NE Restaurants: Primary Menu Type, 2012](Chart Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Economic Census of the United States. (2012.)

Although Italian restaurants represented just 3.2% of all dining establishments in Nebraska, they had the state’s highest average per-establishment sales, at approximately $1,193,716 each in 2012. Nebraska’s Chinese restaurants brought in the lowest average total sales figures of all cuisine types, at about $381,244 per establishment in 2012. Altogether, the average 2012 per-establishment sales total for all businesses in Nebraska’s restaurants and eating places industry group was $771,305. (7)

**NE Restaurants: Average Sales per Establishment by Primary Menu Type, 2012**

![Chart of NE Restaurants: Average Sales per Establishment by Primary Menu Type, 2012](Chart Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Economic Census of the United States. (2012.)
Ownership & Employment

Compared to all firms with paid employees statewide, businesses in Nebraska’s accommodation and food services sector were more likely to be wholly or partially owned by women or people of minority races, according to 2016 data. Women owned or co-owned just over 41% of accommodation and food service establishments in Nebraska as of 2016, a full percentage point higher than women’s ownership rates for firms in all sectors. More strikingly, almost 22% of accommodation and food service businesses statewide had owners or co-owners of minority racial backgrounds, compared to just 5.5% of businesses overall. (8)

Ownership of NE Business Establishments, 2016

There were also more women and people of minority races working as employees in Nebraska’s accommodation and food services sector than statewide workforce as a whole.

In 2018, women made up 50.2% of Nebraska’s total working population, but 56.0% of its accommodation and food service employees. While women continued to outnumber men within this sector, the gap has narrowed over time. In 2000, women accounted for 59.3% of accommodation and food service workers—a 5.6% higher share of the total than in 2018. (9)

Minority racial groups constituted 10.4% of Nebraska’s employed population across all sectors as of 2018, but made up 16.0% of the state’s accommodation and food service workers. Employment in this sector has also been growing steadily more diverse since 2000, with workers of all races except white alone making up a 54.5% larger share of its total workforce in 2018 than in 2000. This change is most likely driven primarily by broader, underlying shifts in Nebraska’s demographic makeup as the population as a whole becomes more racially diverse, so too does its workforce. (9)

Accommodation and food services employees tended to be younger and less educated than Nebraska’s working population overall. In 2018, 27.4% of workers in this sector were 21 or younger, and 38.1% were under 25. These age groups respectively made up just 7.6% and 13.5% of overall statewide employment. (9)
Educational attainment data is not available for people under the age of 25, who make up a large share of Nebraska’s accommodation and food services workforce, limiting the ability to analyze employment in this sector by level of education. Looking only at workers age 25 and older, however, it becomes clear that a substantially larger share of people with lower levels of educational attainment are employed within Nebraska’s accommodation and food services sector than in the state’s labor market as a whole.

While 25.9% of all Nebraska workers age 25 and up had a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2018, and 11.7% had less than a high school diploma or equivalent, just 16.8% of accommodation and food services employees age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 18.5% had less than a high school education. (9)

### Occupations & Wages

The most common occupations performed by workers employed in Nebraska’s food services and drinking places subsector were combined food preparation and serving workers (17,471 statewide), waiters and waitresses (13,411), and first-line supervisors of food preparation and serving workers (5,045). Cooks (4,892) and bartenders (4,301) rounded out the top five. (3)

As of the second quarter of 2018, the statewide average hourly wage for workers in this subsector was $7.63*, for an average weekly wage of $305, or an average annual wage of $15,860. Tips earned by these employees are not included in these figures. (3)

The Nebraska region with the highest average weekly wage for food services and drinking places employees as of the second quarter of 2018 was the Omaha Consortium, at $337/week. The lowest average weekly wage was found in the Sandhills region, at $222/week. Although average wages tended to be higher in the state’s urban areas than in its rural regions, differences in cost of living between areas may offset the differences in wages received. (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Average Weekly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omaha Consortium</td>
<td>$337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln MSA</td>
<td>$293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Island MSA</td>
<td>$292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panhandle</td>
<td>$281</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>$276</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid Plains</td>
<td>$269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>$253</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>$232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandhills</td>
<td>$222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW). (Q2 2018.)

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*QCEW data reflects only wages paid directly from employer to employee; tips paid to the employee by customers are excluded. While Nebraska law requires employers to pay most employees a minimum wage of $9.00/hour, the minimum wage for tipped employees (e.g., waiters/waitresses, bartenders, etc.) is $2.13/hour, as long as the sum of the employee’s tips and hourly wage total at least $9.00 per hour worked. Because the food services and drinking places industry subsector includes a large concentration of workers who receive a significant amount of their total compensation from tips, the available wage data is unlikely to reflect the actual average total take-home pay received by people employed within this subsector. The figures provided should be understood to depict the average wages paid out by the employer, rather than average total earnings brought in by the employee. (10)
Consumer Spending

Each year, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE), which tracks Americans’ spending habits across a variety of categories of goods and services. While the CE does not provide data at the state level, it can be broken down by region.

In the Midwest region, where Nebraska is located, consumers spent an annual average of $3,149 on dining out in 2017, up from $2,541 in 2007 and $1,892 in 1997. Accounting for inflation, however, consumers’ spending on eating outside the home has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, moving from an annual average of $3,103 in 1997 to $3,209 in 2017, when adjusted to December 2018 dollars based on the Consumer Price Index. (11; 12)

Average Annual Consumer Spending on Dining Away From Home: Midwest Region, 1997 – 2017

Dining out accounted for an average of 41.6% of Midwest consumers’ total annual spending on food from 1997 to 2017. It peaked at 44.2% of overall food spending in 2000, and was lowest, at 37.5%, in 2013. (11)

Unsurprisingly, consumers’ annual spending on dining out varied by income. Generally speaking, those who earned more tended to spend more on food away from home. Consumers in the highest-earning income bracket ($70,000 per year or more) spent, on average, nearly three times as much on dining out in 2017 as those in the lowest-earning income group (consumers making less than $5,000 per year). However, Midwestern consumers of all income levels spent relatively similar shares of their total annual spending on dining out: between 6.7% (consumers earning $5,000 to $9,999 per year) and 4.5% (consumers earning $20,000 to $29,999 per year), or an overall regional average of 5.6% of total annual spending. (11)
Accounting for more than 7% of total employment statewide, Nebraska’s food services and drinking places subsector plays a substantial role in the state’s economy. This is evidenced by examining the types of restaurants present in Nebraska and their geographical distribution throughout the state, analyzing their ownership and employment patterns, considering typical wages for workers in the industry, and reviewing the data on consumer spending. Nebraska’s 4,120 food and drink establishments are definitely serving up more than just a delicious meal.

The Final Word

Sources:
Travel & Tourism in Nebraska

**Travel**

**49,360**

The estimated total number of Nebraska jobs generated by domestic and international travel to the state. (1)

**19.4 cents**

On average, every dollar spent by travelers to Nebraska produced 19.4 cents in payroll income for Nebraska residents, according to a 2013 study conducted by the U.S. Travel Association for the Nebraska Tourism Commission. (2)

**200,000**

The number of “Visit Nebraska” travel guides printed by the Nebraska Tourism Commission in 2018. Requests for these guides came from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries. (1)

**884,301,401**

The estimated number of people reached by media coverage of the Nebraska Tourism Commission’s “Honestly, it’s not for everyone” ad campaign, which debuted in 2018. (1)

**0.34%**

The percentage of all U.S. commercial airline passengers whose destination was an airport in Nebraska, according to data from the second quarter of 2018. Nebraska ranked #35 of 52 U.S. destinations (including territories and possessions). Only five states—California (12.6%), Texas (9.6%), Florida (9.6%), Georgia (5.9%), and Illinois (5.6%)—individually accounted for more than 5% of total domestic air travel. (4)

**$71.5 million**

The estimated total economic activity generated by motorcoach travel in Nebraska in 2018. (1)

**Transportation**

**19.3 billion**

The total number of vehicle miles traveled on Nebraska highways in 2013, the most recent year of available data. (5)

**17,744**

The estimated number of workers employed in Nebraska’s air, rail, ground, and sightseeing transportation industries, and associated transportation support activities, in 2016. (3)
**Attractions**

**$18.5 million**

The estimated total spending of the 389,441 visitors to Nebraska’s five National Park Service lands during 2017. Their expenditures supported approximately 288 Nebraska jobs, $7.7 million in labor income, and $23.8 million in overall economic activity statewide. (9)

**28,951**

The number of guestrooms available in Nebraska’s hotels, motels, and other traveler accommodation facilities as of the most recent Economic Census of the United States, conducted in 2012. (7)

**#1**

Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo boasts the world’s #1 largest indoor rain forest, as well as the world’s largest indoor desert. More than two million visitors to Henry Doorly enjoyed these and other attractions in 2017. (8; 11)

**8**

The number of state parks located throughout Nebraska. Nebraska is also home to two national forest areas, two national monuments, and numerous other attractions and recreation facilities. (8)

**749**

The number of Nebraska Passport participants who visited all 70 Passport stops in 2018. That year, almost 49,000 people representing 46 states and 418 Nebraska communities requested Nebraska Passport booklets, and visited an average of 31 stops per person. The UNL Dairy Store in Lincoln was 2018’s most-visited Passport stop. (12)

**$14.3 million**

The estimated total 2017 economic impact of tourism related to the annual sandhill crane migration through Central Nebraska. Crane-watching activity also supported approximately 182 year-round equivalent jobs. (13)

**10**

2019 will be the tenth year of the Nebraska Passport program, which encourages travelers to visit Nebraska’s “hidden gems,” including museums, parks, restaurants, and other unique destinations. Participants receive a stamp for each location they visit, which they can then turn in to the Nebraska Tourism Commission and receive prizes. (12)

**$5.7 million**

The estimated total spent throughout Nebraska by travelers participating in the Nebraska Passport program in 2017. State and local tax revenue from this spending totaled $469,500. (12)

**The number of National Register of Historic Places sites located throughout Nebraska. (10)**

**$18.5 million**

The number of Nebraskas five National Park Service lands during 2017. Their expenditures supported approximately 288 Nebraska jobs, $7.7 million in labor income, and $23.8 million in overall economic activity statewide. (9)

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NE Recreation & Tourism Attractions

Map Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information. (2019)
## Attendance at Selected NE Attractions, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Attendance 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agate Fossil Beds National Monument</td>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>13,264*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbor Lodge State Historical Park &amp; Arboretum</td>
<td>Nebraska City</td>
<td>164,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ash Hollow State Historical Park</td>
<td>Lewellen</td>
<td>23,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bluestem State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Sprague</td>
<td>95,972</td>
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<td>Branched Oak State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Raymond</td>
<td>134,749</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park</td>
<td>North Platte</td>
<td>16,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calamus State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Burwell</td>
<td>340,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carhenge</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>80,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chadron State Park</td>
<td>Chadron</td>
<td>231,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimney Rock</td>
<td>Bayard</td>
<td>27,367*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto Chute National Wildlife Refuge</td>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>164,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Kearny State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>74,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Robinson State Park</td>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>570,536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fremont State Recreation Area</td>
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<td>932,500</td>
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<td>Front Street and Cowboy Museum</td>
<td>Ogallala</td>
<td>50,453*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Doorly Zoo &amp; Aquarium</td>
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<td>Homestead National Monument of America</td>
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<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
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<td>Shubert</td>
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<td>Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Ogallala</td>
<td>1,773,385</td>
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<td>Lewis and Clark Lake State Recreation Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lincoln Children's Zoo</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>245,012</td>
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<td>Louisville Lakes State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>594,500</td>
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<td>Mahoney State Park, Eugene T.</td>
<td>Ashland</td>
<td>791,865</td>
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<td>Niobrara State Park</td>
<td>Niobrara</td>
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<td>Omaha Children's Museum</td>
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<td>324,078</td>
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<td>Pawnee State Recreation Area</td>
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<td>Platte River State Park</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>525,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponca State Park</td>
<td>Ponca</td>
<td>893,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center</td>
<td>Gibbon</td>
<td>28,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotts Bluff National Monument</td>
<td>Gering</td>
<td>152,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer</td>
<td>Grand Island</td>
<td>72,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagon Train State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Hickman</td>
<td>303,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Willa Cather Center</td>
<td>Red Cloud</td>
<td>10,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Creek State Recreation Area</td>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>231,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Source: Nebraska Tourism Commission. 2017 Annual Attraction Attendance.
* Attendance totals for these attractions are unavailable for 2017; figures shown are from 2015 data published in the 2017-2018 Nebraska Blue Book.

## Fast Facts Sources:

For over a century, movie theaters have served communities in Nebraska, contributing to local economies and strengthening the social fabric of the surrounding areas. Even today, in the midst of technological change and competing entertainment options, most Americans still enjoy going to the movies. A variety of trends can be observed when looking at the current landscape of commercial movie theaters in Nebraska, including customer demographics and spending patterns, establishments per capita, and current data on employment and wages in the state’s movie theater industry. (1)

Demographics & Attendance

According to a 2018 report by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), over 1.2 billion movie tickets were sold in 2017, generating approximately $11.1 billion in revenue for theaters operating throughout the United States and Canada. People age 12-17 had the highest per capita attendance rates, at 4.9 movies per year, followed by people age 18-24 (4.7 movies/year), and 25-39 (4.4 movies/year). The population age 60 and over had the lowest per capita attendance, at 2.5 movies a year, followed by children age 2-11 (2.9 movies/year), and people age 50-59 (3.0 movies/year). (2)

An analysis of age and population data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control suggests that, between 2016 and 2030, the percentage of Nebraska’s population under the age of 19 will fall by an estimated 0.2 percentage points, and the share of the population age 20-24 will increase by about the same amount. The percentage of the total Nebraska population between the ages of 25-44 is projected to decrease by 1.7 percentage points, while the population age 65 and over will increase its share of the state’s total by 5.1 percentage points. The total population of Nebraska is projected to increase by just 1.6%. This suggests that overall population growth alone may not result in substantially higher movie theater attendance. (3)
As technological innovations expand entertainment options, spending on specific forms of entertainment shift accordingly. Data from the MPAA show annual 2013-2017 spending in the U.S. for three categories of entertainment: theatrical, physical home entertainment (DVD/Blu-ray), and digital home entertainment (streaming services, such as Netflix or Hulu). Adjusted for inflation and population growth, combined annual per capita spending in these three entertainment categories increased by 5.8% during this time period, from $93.29 in 2013 to $98.68 in 2017. Per capita spending on physical home entertainment dropped from $37.38 in 2013 to $21.32 in 2017, while digital home entertainment spending increased from $20.84 in 2013 to $42.64 in 2017. This suggests that, as the number of entertainment options available to consumers increase, spending in individual categories may fluctuate, while overall entertainment spending may increase. Spending on theatrical entertainment, however, has held steady, with only minor fluctuations, from $35.07 in 2013 to $34.76 in 2017, representing a change of less than 1% over a five year period. (2)
According to data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), consumers’ average annual expenditures on entertainment fees and admissions, including movie theaters, movie rentals, sporting events, concerts, and other similar recreational expenses, increased each year from 2013 and 2017. Annual spending in this category ranged from an average of $569 in 2013 to $750 in 2017, representing a 31.8% increase. (4)

Movie Theater Establishments

In the second quarter of 2018, there were 4,593 commercial movie theater establishments doing business throughout the United States, according to the BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.* Forty-eight of these theaters were located in Nebraska. Nationally, there were 216 operating drive-in theaters, two of which were in Nebraska. (5) (6)
Commercial Movie Theaters in Nebraska by Economic Development Region, 2017

Based on 2017 population estimates, Nebraska had one movie theater for every 40,002 residents, ranking #8 in the U.S. by most theaters per capita. Nebraska also ranked #8 for lowest population density, which is a measure that seemed to generally correlate to movie theaters per capita for all 50 states. For example, South Dakota ranks #5 by both movie theaters per capita and lowest population density, while Florida comes in at #43 for both measures. (7)

Among Nebraska’s nine economic development regions, the Sandhills region had the greatest number of theaters per capita, with one theater per 8,990 residents, followed by the Panhandle region, which had one per 12,185, and the Southeast region, with one per 17,737. The Grand Island MSA had the lowest number of theaters per capita, with just one theater for 85,045 residents.

* This article does not include an analysis of non-profit movie theaters operating in the state, which are often run by local community foundations or educational institutions, and whose operating expenses may include a mix of volunteer or student labor. Many non-profit theaters operate only on weekends or limited days during the week, serving small communities.
**Wages & Employment**

Between 2014 and 2017, annual employment in Nebraska’s movie theaters grew by 2.6%, from 860 employees in 2014 to 882 in 2017, with a peak employment of 937 in 2015. (8) (5)

Movie theater employers in Nebraska paid a total of $7.97 million in wages in 2017, compared to $7.09 million in 2014, a 12.4% increase. The average weekly wage paid to movie theater employees in Nebraska rose by 9.4% from 2014 to 2017, from an average of $159 per week in 2014 to $174 per week in 2017. During the first two quarters of 2018, movie theater employees’ average weekly wages were 11.4% higher than during the first two quarters of 2017. (8)

As of May 2017 estimates, the occupations with the highest employment numbers in Nebraska’s motion picture and sound recording industry, the subsector that includes movie theaters, are food preparation and serving-related occupations (380 employees); counter attendants, cafeteria, food concessions, and coffee shop workers (370 employees); personal care and service occupations (240 employees); ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers (170 employees); cashiers (130 employees); and motion picture projectionists (40 employees). (9)

**NE Movie Theaters: Total Annual Wages Paid, 2014 – 2017**

![Chart showing total annual wages paid to movie theater employees in Nebraska from 2014 to 2017. The wages increased from $7.09 million in 2014 to $8.1 million in 2015, peaked at $8.3 million in 2016, and then decreased to $8.0 million in 2017.]


**NE Movie Theaters: Average Hourly Wage by Occupation, May 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation &amp; Serving-Related Occupations</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>$10.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter Attendants, Cafeteria, Food Concession, &amp; Coffee Shop</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>$10.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care &amp; Service Occupations</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>$11.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushers, Lobby Attendants, &amp; Ticket Takers</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>$10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>$10.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion Picture Projectionists</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$12.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Office of Labor Market Information. Occupational Employment Statistics. (November 2018.)*
No article on the movie theater industry would be complete without mentioning popcorn! Popcorn was first served in movie theaters as early as 1931. Popcorn sales helped keep theaters afloat through the Great Depression and steep declines in movie attendance during the 1950s caused by the advent of television. Today, concessions sales make up to 85% of movie theater profits. (10)

Nebraska is the top producer of popcorn in the United States. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Nebraska’s 242 popcorn-producing farms harvested approximately 353.7 million pounds of shelled popcorn that year. This represented 45% of the total crop in the U.S., the largest contribution of any state, followed by Indiana (19.3%), Illinois (11.7%), and Ohio (11.4%). (11)

In spite of demographic, economic, and technological challenges, the movie theater industry in Nebraska has endured. Nebraska enjoys a high per capita number of movie theater establishments, and employment and wages show a general upward trend. As the country’s leading producer of popcorn, Nebraska’s economic stake in the movie theater industry at large is substantial. Time will tell how Nebraskans reacts to new challenges in the industry, but, with over a century of experience to draw from, it looks like we’ll be enjoying the experience of watching movies in theaters for some time to come.

Sources:


Economic Indicators

Consumer Price Index
Rachel Stevens, Research Analyst

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.” (1)

The CPI “is the most widely used measure of inflation and is sometimes viewed as an indicator of the effectiveness of government economic policy. It provides information about price changes in the nation’s economy to government, business, labor, and private citizens,” and is often used “as a guide to making economic decisions. In addition, the President, Congress, and the Federal Reserve Board use trends in the CPI to aid in formulating fiscal and monetary policies.” (2)

CPI data are also used to determine the purchasing power of consumers’ dollars. As BLS explains, “The purchasing power of the consumer’s dollar measures the change in the value to the consumer of goods and services that a dollar will buy at different dates. In other words, as prices increase, the purchasing power of the consumer’s dollar declines.” (2)

Currently, the CPI tracks the spending patterns of two population groups: all urban consumers (CPI-U) and urban wage earners and clerical workers (CPI-W). The CPI-U is the broader of the two, covering all urban consumers, and representing about 93% of the nation’s total population. (2) It is derived from “the expenditures of almost all residents of urban or metropolitan areas, including professionals, the self-employed, the poor, the unemployed, and retired people, as well as urban wage earners and clerical workers.” (3) The CPI-W is based on the expenditures of a smaller subset of the CPI-U population, namely “households in which more than one-half of the household’s income comes from clerical or wage occupations, and at least one of the household’s earners has been employed for at least 37 weeks during the previous 12 months.” (3) This group represents about 29% of the total U.S. population. (2)

CPI data is produced for the nation as a whole, as well as for the four U.S. Census regions, with Nebraska represented in the Midwest region. (2)

In January 2019, the U.S. CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was 251.71, a rise of 0.2% over December 2018 and 1.6% over January 2018. The U.S. CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), at 245.13, was flat from December 2018, but up 1.3% on the year. The Midwest CPI-U fell 0.2% from December 2018, to 233.84—a 0.8% increase since January 2018. All three CPI metrics were down slightly from their all-time highs, which were all reached in October of 2018. (1)
Consumer Price Index (CPI)

### Change Over Last Quarter/Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Current Time Period</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Midwest Region</th>
<th>Nebraska</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Weekly Manufacturing Hours</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-0.1*</td>
<td>-0.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Unemployment Claims</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>-16.5%</td>
<td>-36.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value of Manufacturers' New Orders for Consumer Goods</td>
<td>November, 2018</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISM Manufacturing: New Orders Index©</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>+13.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value of Manufacturers' New Orders: Nondefense Capital Goods Excluding Aircraft</td>
<td>December, 2018</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>S&amp;P 500©</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>+4.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Year Treasury Constant Maturity Minus Federal Funds Rate</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>+0.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Michigan, Consumer Sentiment Index</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>-7.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Price Index, not seasonally adjusted</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>+0.2%</td>
<td>+0.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Cost Index</td>
<td>4th Quarter, 2018</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Producer Price Index: All Commodities</td>
<td>December, 2018</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate, seasonally adjusted</td>
<td>December, 2018</td>
<td>+0.2%</td>
<td>+0.1%</td>
<td>+/-0.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real GDP, billions of chained 2009 dollars</td>
<td>3rd Quarter, 2018</td>
<td>+3.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Taxable Sales</td>
<td>November, 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrel of Crude Oil, WTI-Cushing, Spot Price</td>
<td>January, 2019</td>
<td>+$1.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Account Balance (millions of dollars)</td>
<td>3rd Quarter, 2018</td>
<td>+23.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading Economic Index</td>
<td>November, 2018</td>
<td>-31.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>-10.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* State-level data release schedule lags national data by one month; January 2019 data for Nebraska reflects activity from December 2018.

### Sources:
