

NEBRASKA WORKFORCE TRENDS

FALL 2024 ISSUE | NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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in Nebraska

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Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) New 2024 Area Definitions

Manufacturing in Nebraska

Kermit Spade, Research Analyst

104,419

people in Nebraska working in the Manufacturing industry (3)



\$21.6 billion

Amount of money the manufacturing industry contributed to Nebraska's economy, Q2 2024 (1)

Nebraska is home to many different types of manufacturing establishments. The manufacturing industries with the most establishments in Nebraska were (2):

 **361** Food Manufacturing

 **301** Fabricated Metal Product

 **204** Machinery Manufacturing

Food manufacturing is Nebraska's largest manufacturing sub-sector, both in terms of number of establishments and number of employees. Food manufacturing employed 41,254 people in Nebraska as of the first quarter of 2024, accounting for 39.5% of all manufacturing employment statewide. Fabricated metal product manufacturing (9,391) and machinery manufacturing (8,844) each also accounted for more than 8.5% of total statewide manufacturing employment. (2)

41,254
people employed in food manufacturing

9,391
people employed in fabricated metal product manufacturing

8,844
people employed in machinery manufacturing

Highest-paying manufacturing sub-sectors Avg. Weekly Wage

Primary Metal Manufacturing	\$2,293
Chemical Manufacturing	\$1,768
Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	\$1,484

Lowest-paying manufacturing sub-sectors Avg. Weekly Wage

Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	\$613
Apparel Manufacturing	\$759

\$1,182

The average weekly wage for employees at food manufacturing establishments, Nebraska's largest manufacturing subsector. (2)

1,960

Total manufacturing establishments located throughout Nebraska in the first quarter of 2024. (2)

5.47%

Employment growth projected within Nebraska's manufacturing industries between 2020 and 2030. (3)

0.4%

Over-the-year change in nationwide manufacturing labor productivity from the second quarter of 2023 to the second quarter of 2024. (4)



Most counties in Nebraska

have at least one manufacturing establishment. (2)



29.7%

Women's share of statewide employment in production occupations (across all industries) as of 2023. (6)




Employment and Wages in Nebraska for Selected Production Occupations, Q2 2024

Job Title	Estimated Employment (May 2023)	Average Hourly Wage (Q2 2024)	Average Annual Wage (Q2 2024)
Production Occupations (Occupation Group Overall, All Industries)	71,600	\$23.32	\$48,521
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	6,620	\$22.37	\$46,540
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	3,810	\$25.49	\$53,025
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	5,000	\$22.51	\$46,825
Cutting, Punching, and Press Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	1,220	\$22.98	\$47,802
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	5,520	\$33.99	\$70,708

Table Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program. Q2 2024.

63,071

Total employment in production occupations in Nebraska in 2022. (5)

\$54.13

Median all-industries hourly wage for the highest-paid occupation within the production occupational sub-group, power distributors and dispatchers, working in Nebraska during the second quarter of 2024. (8)

Sources:

1. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Data, GDP and Personal Income. *bea.gov*. [Online] 2nd Quarter 2024. <https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1>.
2. Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 1st Quarter 2024.
3. Nebraska Department of Labor. Long-Term Industry Employment Projections (Statewide). [Online] July 2024. *neworks.nebraska.gov*.
4. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Major Sector Productivity and Costs. Series ID PRS30006091: Manufacturing: Labor productivity (output per hour): Percent change from same quarter a year ago. [Online] 2024. *bls.gov/lpc/*.
5. Nebraska Department of Labor. NEworks. Online advertised jobs data. [Online] October 2024. *neworks.nebraska.gov*.
6. U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2023 1-Year Estimates. Table S2401: Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over. [Online] *data.census.gov*.
7. Quarterly Workforce Indicators. QWI Explorer App. [Online] 2024. *qwexplorer.ces.census.gov/static/explore.html*.
8. Nebraska Department of Labor. Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS). [Online] Q2 2024. *neworks*.
9. Long-Term Occupation Employment Projections (Statewide). [Online] July 2024. *neworks.nebraska.gov/gsipub/index*.

3.3%

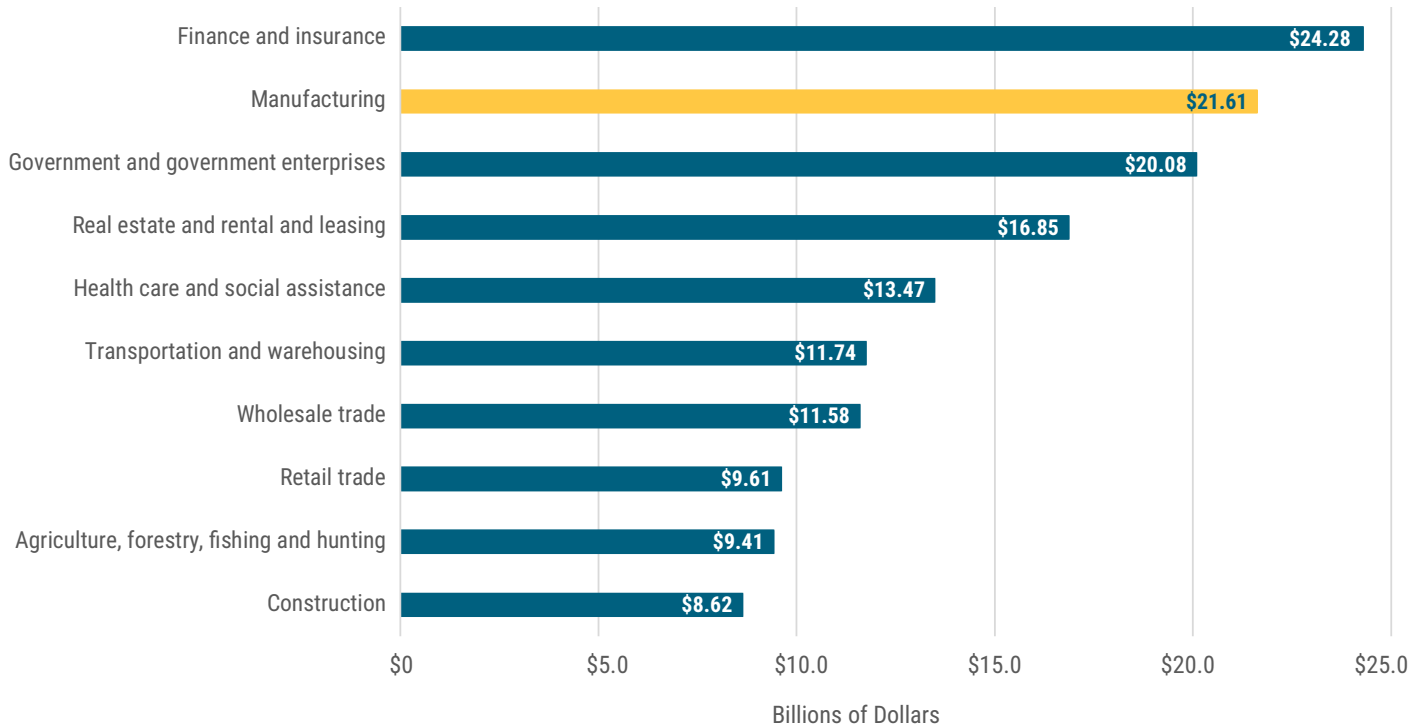
Overall employment growth projected in Nebraska for production occupations from 2022 to 2032. (9)

828

Total employment growth projected in Nebraska for Food Processing Workers, the specific occupation expected to see the greatest number of new job gains, between 2022 and 2032. This translates to a 5.67% increase in positions in this occupation statewide. (9)

Manufacturing Sector Trends

Top 10 Nebraska Industry Sectors by Contribution to State GDP (Billions of Dollars), Q2 2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. GDP and Personal Income by State. October 2024. [bea.gov](https://www.bea.gov).

In the second quarter of 2024, manufacturing was ranked the second largest industry sector in Nebraska in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), according to the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis. The manufacturing sector generated \$21.6 billion in economic activity in second-quarter 2024 alone. The largest sector by GDP was finance and insurance (\$24.3 billion). (1)

There were almost 2,000 manufacturing establishments in Nebraska as of the first quarter of 2024. These establishments employed more than 100,000 workers across the state. The largest specific industry within the manufacturing sector was food manufacturing, which accounted for 18.0% of all manufacturing establishments in Nebraska and 39.5% of manufacturing employment. The second-largest industry was fabricated metal product manufacturing, which made up 15.4% of manufacturing establishments and 9.0% of manufacturing employment statewide. (2)

Total Nebraska Manufacturing Employment, Q1 2024

Number of Employees

104,419

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. 2024. [networks.nebraska.gov](https://www.networks.nebraska.gov)

Total Nebraska Manufacturing Establishments, Q1 2024

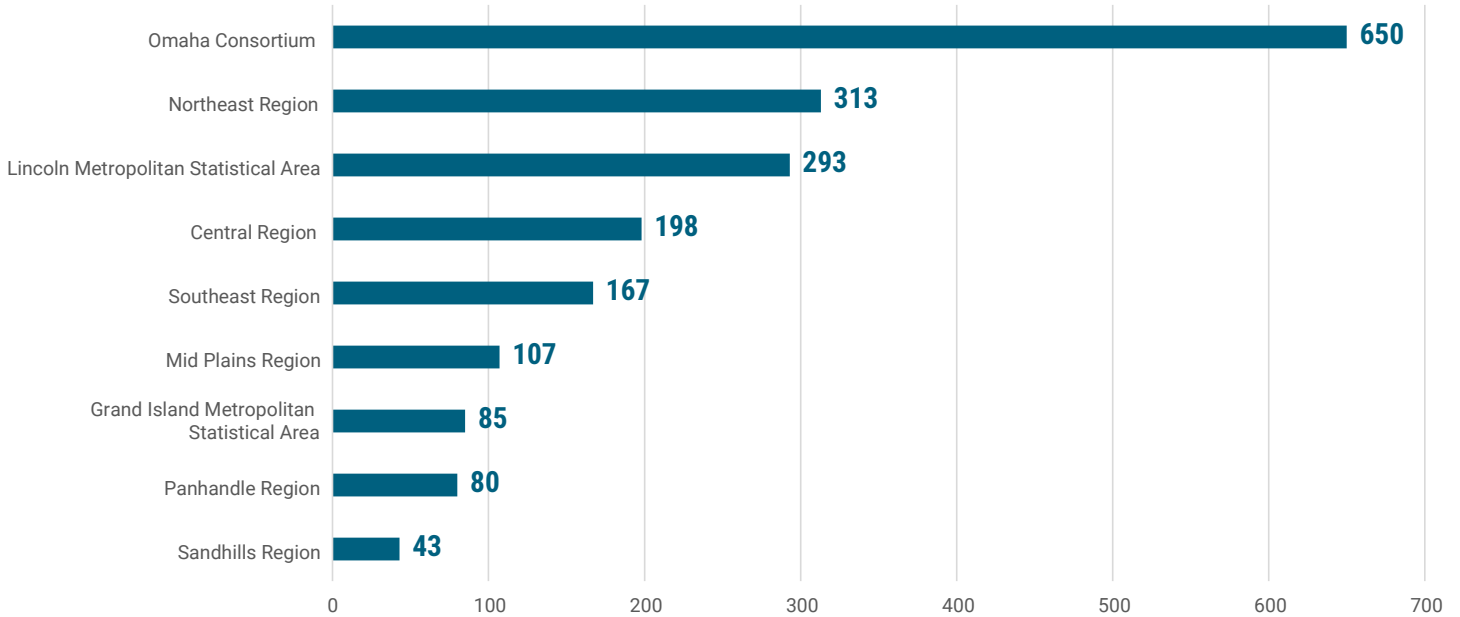
Establishments

1,960

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. 2024. [networks.nebraska.gov](https://www.networks.nebraska.gov)

The geographic distribution of employers in the manufacturing sector as of August 2024 is shown in the chart below. The Omaha Consortium (composed of all areas of the Omaha metropolitan statistical area located within Nebraska but excluding those located in Iowa) had the highest number of employers in manufacturing, while the Sandhills region had the least. (3)

Nebraska Manufacturing Establishments by Economic Region, 1st Quarter 2024



Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages 1st Quarter 2024.

The average hourly wage for workers in Nebraska’s manufacturing sector was \$31.58 in the first quarter of 2024. The average hourly wage for workers employed in primary metal manufacturing—the manufacturing industry with the highest average hourly wage— was almost 50% higher (\$57.33 per hour) during the same time period. Assuming a 40-hour work week, this translates into about \$65,000 per year for all manufacturing workers, and over \$119,000 per year for those employed in primary metal manufacturing. The table below shows the average earnings for the specific manufacturing industries with the top five highest average wages. (2)

Nebraska Manufacturing Industries by Highest Average Hourly Wages, Q4 2021

Industry	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage*
Primary Metal Manufacturing	\$57.33	\$2,293	\$119,236
Chemical Manufacturing	\$44.20	\$1,768	\$91,936
Computer and Electronic Product Mfg	\$37.10	\$1,484	\$77,168
Electrical Equipment and Appliances	\$35.53	\$1,421	\$73,892
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	\$35.25	\$1,410	\$73,320

* Assumes a 40-hour week worked the year round.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2023. networks.nebraska.gov

On October 30, 2024 there were 1,487 job openings listed on NEworks for positions in Nebraska's manufacturing sector. For people considering employment in these industries, NEworks also lists the most common job skills, tools and technology, and professional certifications that employers advertise in their job postings on the website. (4)

The following table details the top 10 most common occupations in Nebraska's manufacturing sector as of 2022. According to the Nebraska Department of Labor's long-term occupational projections, the most common occupations in manufacturing were laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand; meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers; and first-line supervisors of production and operating workers. (5)

Occupational Employment Distribution in NE Manufacturing Sector, 2022

Rank	Occupation	Estimated Employment
1	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,896
2	Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	5,536
3	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	4,204
4	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	3,537
5	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	3,257
6	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	3,091
7	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	2,894
8	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	2,849
9	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,933
10	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	1,898

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Long-Term Industry Employment Projections. October 2024. <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/gsipub/documentView.aspx?enc=gPg0mWJQASphok+Pe8+dnQ==>.

Between 2022 and 2032, the Nebraska Department of Labor projects that employment in the state's manufacturing sector will grow by 5.47%, or 0.53% annually. (5)

Projected Employment Growth in Nebraska's Manufacturing Sector, 2022 - 2030

	Employment
2022 Estimated Employments	103,490
2032 Projected Employment	109,149

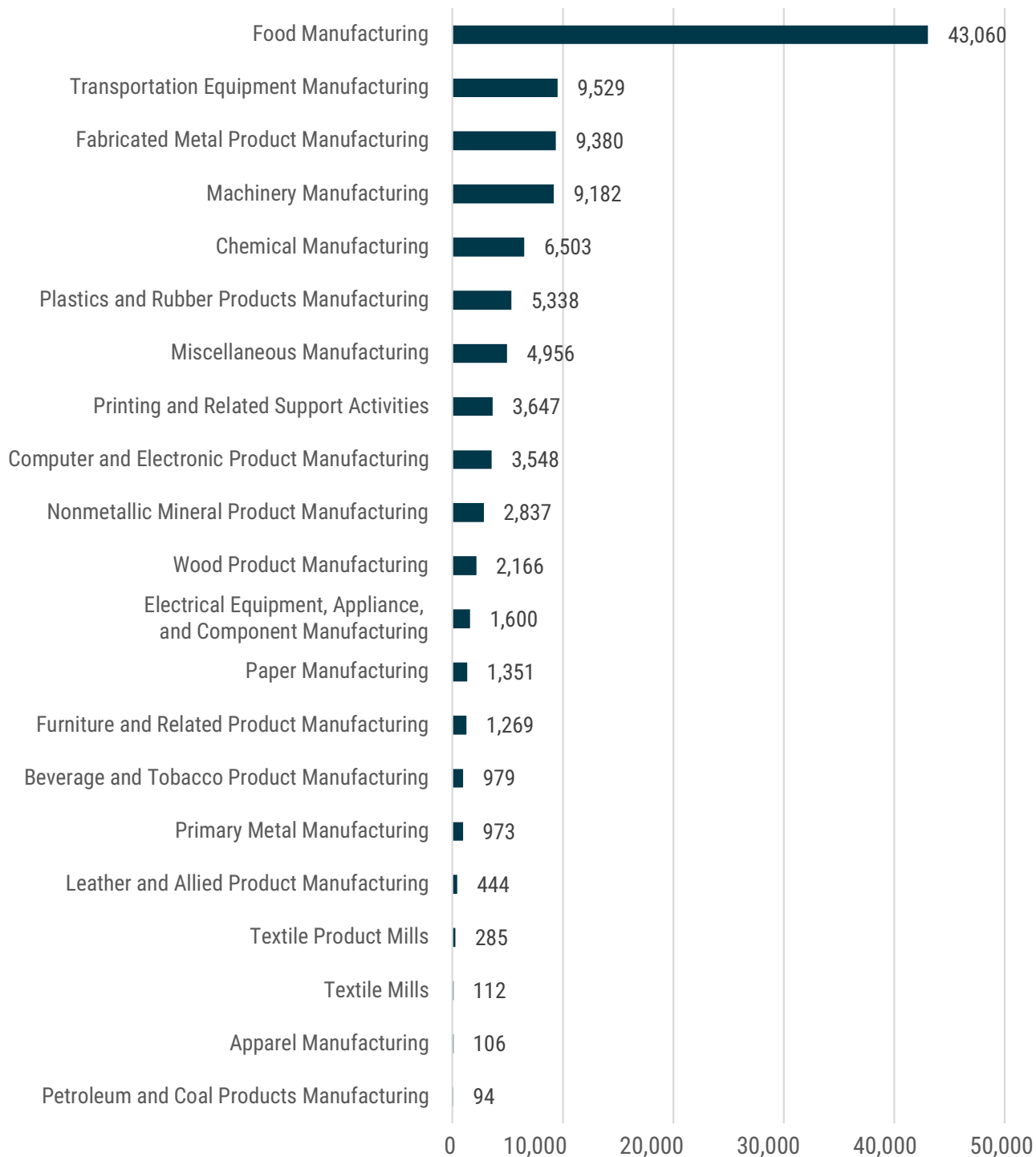
Source: Nebraska Department of Labor. Long-Term Industry Employment Projections. July 2024. neworks.nebraska.gov/gsipub/index.asp?docid=439.

The Industry Profile pages on NEworks provide prospective job-seekers a wealth of information regarding employment in these industries, including the most common occupations within a field; the advertised skills, tools and technology, and certifications needed to qualify for a certain position; employment growth projected within an industry; and wages.

Sources

1. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Regional Data, GDP and Personal Income. [bea.gov](https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1). [Online] 2nd Quarter 2024. <https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1>.
2. Nebraska Department of Labor. Industry Profile, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. neworks.nebraska.gov. [Online] 1st Quarter 2024. neworks.nebraska.gov.
3. -. Industry Profile, Employer information provided by Data Axle. neworks.nebraska.gov. [Online] 2024. neworks.nebraska.gov.
4. -. Industry Profile, Online Advertised Jobs Data. NEworks. [Online] October 2024. neworks.nebraska.gov.
5. -. Long-Term Industry Employment Projections (2022-2032). [Online] July 2022. <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/gsipub/documentView.aspx?enc=gPg0mWJQASphok+Pe8+dnQ==>.

Nebraska Manufacturing Employment by Industry



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 1st Quarter 2024

Nebraska Average Annual Earnings by Industry



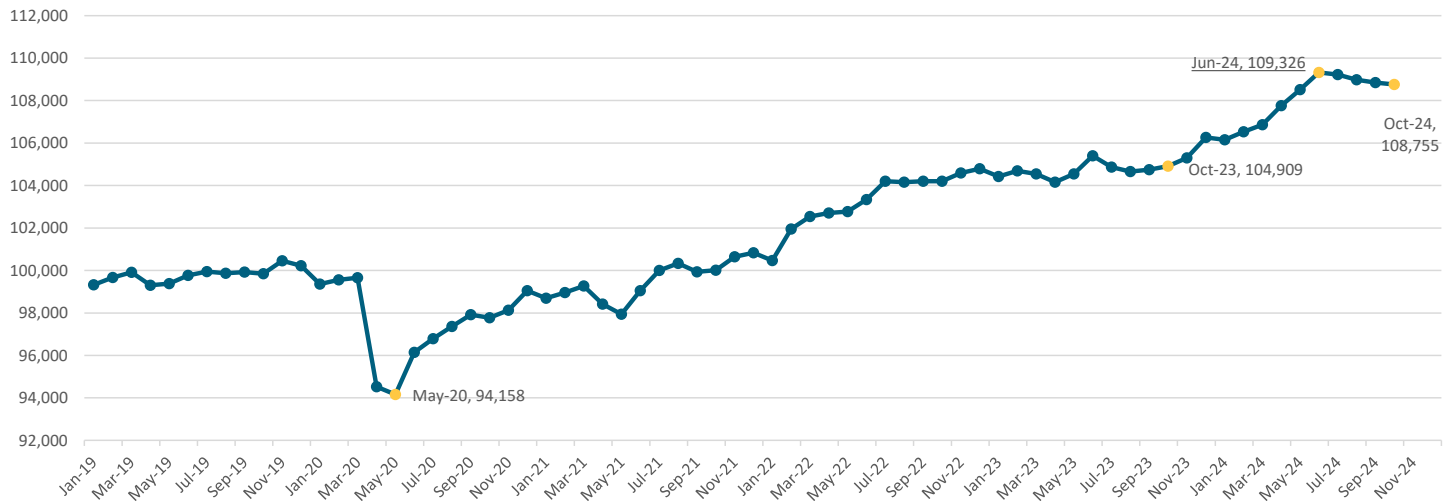
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 4th Quarter 2023

Top 20 Manufacturing Occupations by Employment

Occupation	2023 Estimated Employment	Average Annual Wage
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	6,520	\$46,688
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	4,970	\$46,907
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	4,750	\$44,582
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	4,580	\$43,002
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	4,440	\$67,836
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	2,980	\$51,746
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	2,740	\$50,091
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	2,570	\$38,962
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	2,260	\$46,822
Packers and Packagers, Hand	2,180	\$42,700
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	2,020	\$60,357
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	1,860	\$46,991
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,780	\$38,472
Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	1,770	\$47,094
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,680	\$52,704
General and Operations Managers	1,600	\$118,249
Printing Press Operators	1,550	\$44,602
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,520	\$55,105
Industrial Production Managers	1,510	\$113,198
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	1,490	\$45,552

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Program, 2nd Quarter 2024

Nebraska Manufacturing, Current Employment Statistics (Nonfarm)



Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Current Employment Statistics (CES) Program, October 2024

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) New 2024 Area Definitions

Brandon Jones, Research Supervisor

Starting with the 1st quarter 2024 preliminary publication, the Nebraska's Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) has updated its definitions of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), Micropolitan Statistical Areas (MC) and state Regional Areas. QCEW's procedure is to switch to new area definitions, which are usually published a few years after the decennial census is completed and recommendations come from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

This article is designed to help data users know the differences in the area definitions as well as how to extract industry employment and wage data correctly for a specific year or quarter. The latter is especially important dealing with data that crosses the new and old area definitions time frames. First, here is a brief overview of the QCEW program.

QCEW Data Overview

QCEW is a cooperative program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL). QCEW produces employment and wage information for workers covered by state Unemployment Insurance (UI) laws and federal workers covered by the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Data from this program includes the number of establishments, monthly and average employment, and quarterly wages for counties, metro areas, and other multi-county regions in the entire United States. (1)

Data from the QCEW program serve as an input to other Federal and State programs. The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) of the Department of Commerce uses QCEW data as the base for developing the wage and salary component of personal income. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the Department of Labor and the State workforce agencies use QCEW data to administer the employment security program. The QCEW data accurately reflects the extent of coverage of the State UI laws and are used to measure UI revenues; national, state, and local area employment; and total and UI taxable wage trends. (1)

QCEW data is not designed to be compared over time, meaning it is not a time series product. Switching to new versions of MSA definitions creates series breaks in the QCEW area data. These series breaks should be recognized when comparing different timeframes for areas that change.

Click here for more information regarding the [QCEW program](#).

What Changed? 2023 versus 2013 Area Definitions

Most areas across the nation did not change in composition, but among those that did, some area definitions and titles changed. Some areas changed status, moving up to an MSA or down to a Micropolitan Statistical Area (MC). Some MSAs were removed altogether.

1. Nationwide, 135 MSAs had boundary changes in terms of counties being added or dropped but kept their MSA status.

Nebraska publishes data at the statewide, county, MSA, MC, metro/non-metro, and Economic Development Region (EDR) levels. In total, the 2023 definitions changed nine areas in the state. Five areas dropped counties while three added counties. The biggest change came from Hamilton County dropping out of the Grand Island MSA, which impacted five of the nine areas as shown in the table below. The other four areas, Columbus MC, Hastings MC, North Platte MC, and Scotts Bluff MC added or dropped counties. (2)

Area Name	2013 def. (Counties)	2023 def. (Counties)
Grand Island MSA	Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick	Hall, Howard, Merrick
Grand Island EDR	Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick	Hall, Howard, Merrick
Central EDR	Blaine, Custer, Valley, Greeley, Sherman, Buffalo, Phelps, Kearney, Adams, Clay, Harlan, Franklin, Webster, Nuckolls	Blaine, Custer, Valley, Greeley, Sherman, Buffalo, Phelps, Kearney, Adams, Clay, Harlan, Franklin, Webster, Nuckolls, Hamilton
Metro	All MSA counties	All MSA counties minus Hamilton
Non-Metro	All Non MSA counties	All Non MSA counties adding Hamilton
Columbus MC	Platte	Platte, Colfax
Hastings MC	Adams	Adams, Clay, Webster
North Platte MC	Lincoln, Logan, McPherson	Lincoln, Logan
Scotts bluff MC	Banner, Scottsbluff, Sioux	Banner, Scottsbluff

Extracting QCEW Data from NEworks

Currently on the Nebraska Department of Labor’s [NEworks.nebraska.gov](https://neworks.nebraska.gov) website, you can find QCEW data dating back to first quarter 2007 and annual data going back to 2002.

- On the NEworks home page, click Labor Market Analysis. On the right side of the LMI home page click the link for “Industry Employment & Wages”. You will now be at the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data page and can start filtering for the data needed.

By default, NEworks displays the most current quarterly statewide data, though other timeframes or regions may be shown if you navigated to the QCEW page after searching for other information. Historical data was not reconstructed to match the new area definitions.

With the filtering options on the top left side of the page, you can filter for geography type, area name, industry levels and industry groupings, time period and ownership.



Since area definitions changed starting in 1st quarter 2024, website users will want to make sure to choose the correct area definition to correspond with each quarter of data.

- Start with the default (1st quarter 2024) and filter the geography type to Metro Statistical Area (2023 def.) and then pick the Grand Island MSA (2023 def.) from the Area Name filter.
- Leave the industry information and ownership alone and verify that the only time period selected is Q1 2024.
- If a geography and multiple quarters are selected, some with old area type data and some with new definitions, the system will only display the data associated with the geography/timeframe combination. For example, Grand Island MSA 2023 definition and 2023Q1, 2023Q4, 2024Q1, only the 2024Q1 data will display.

The resulting data table should show counts of establishments, employment and wages by industry sector for the Grand Island MSA (2023 definitions). Note that some rows may be marked as confidential to ensure confidentiality of the employers in that category. This is either because of a low number of establishments or large employers representing a high proportion of employment or wages.*

The NEworks website will allow you to choose both area definitions for the same area and get outputs for both. When filtering for the Grand Island MSA, and looking just at the Information sector, what the results are when using both the 2013 and 2023 definitions. The establishments are slightly less in the 2023 definition which is correct due to the fact it has one less county. When the 2013 definition is used the employment and wages become confidential. (3)

If you wanted multiple quarters that crosses the series break in the Grand Island MSA, you would need to filter for both the (2023 Def.) and the (2013 Def.) as well as select both area names. The NEworks system will pull the data correctly.

Area	Time Period	Industry	Estab	Month 1 Emp	Month 2 Emp	Month 3 Emp	Average Emp	Total Wage	Average Weekly Wage
GI MSA (2013 Def.)	Q2 2023	Information	31	309	293	290	297	\$4,739,375.00	\$1,227.00
GI MSA (2013 Def.)	Q3 2023	Information	32	307	311	293	304	\$4,724,227.00	\$1,195.00
GI MSA (2013 Def.)	Q4 2023	Information	32	304	299	298	300	\$6,356,653.00	\$1,630.00
GI MSA (2023 Def.)	Q1 2024	Information	28	178	173	173	175	\$2,567,236.00	\$1,128.00

As we can see from the table above, the establishment counts are stable over this time frame with the biggest difference coming in 1st quarter 2024 (-4) due to the drop of Hamilton County. Average monthly employment drops significantly more (42 percent) meaning those few establishments in Hamilton County had a large portion of the total employment in the Information sector. Total wages are highest in 4th quarter 2023 which is a normal trend for the Information sector and other industries where bonuses and other payments are given out. It is also noticeable the total wages drop in 1st quarter 2024 which corresponds with the large drop in employment. (3)

**If by chance data users pick the (2013 Def.) for 1st quarter 2024 the NEworks system will still provide you with data but in this case, NEworks rolls up county data on its own instead of being feed the aggregate data with the proper suppressions. When the system does this, it is programed to suppress any industry that was suppressed in any of the counties that make up the area. This leads to many of the industries being overly suppressed. For example, using the (2013 Def.) for the 1st quarter 2024 Grand Island MSA you will find 14 suppressed industry rows, while the (2023 Def.) for the same time period and area had 6 suppressed industry rows. (3)*

Final Word

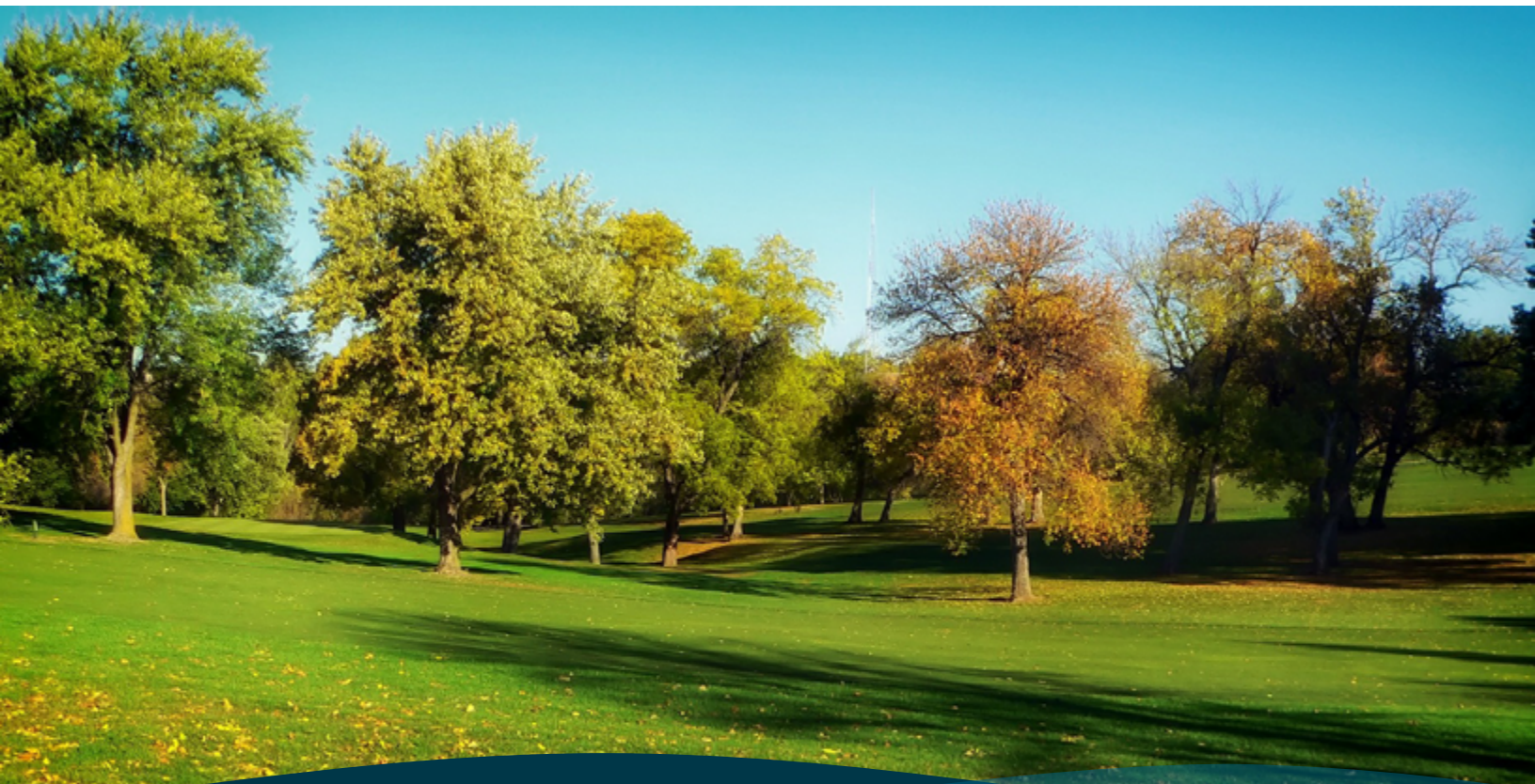
As the population changes around the nation and here in Nebraska, so will defined area definitions. Nebraska's publishable data saw nine area changes with the majority coming from Hamilton County dropping out of the Grand Island MSA.

When looking up or extracting QCEW data from NEworks, please take special consideration when filtering before and after 2024. Both definitions can be chosen for any quarter, but you must consider if you want the area definitions to stay the same or not if comparing data before and after the 2024 series break. One way will match the areas but could have less releasable data. The other way could provide you unmatched areas but more releasable data.

If you would like to know more information about this program or any of our labor market information data, please email us at NDOL.LMI_NE@nebraska.gov.

Sources

1. Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor. *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW Overview)*. bls.gov. [Online] September 24, 2024. <https://www.bls.gov/cew/overview.htm>.
2. (QCEW), Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)*. [Online] September 09, 2024. [Cited: October 09, 2024.] <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/analyzer/resultsNew.aspx?enc=WxhnJpW73xdC2UsP5jKg2Sl1N0fn70zfxOCqKBMEMGo=>.
3. Budget, Executive Office of the President Office of Management and. OMB Bulletin No. 23-001. OMB-Bulletin-23-01.pdf. [Online] July 21, 2023. [Cited: October 09, 2024.] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/OMB-Bulletin-23-01.pdf>.



1,085,139

Total Nonfarm Employment (filled jobs)

Not Seasonally Adjusted

for October 2024

Nonfarm employment was up 7,298 over the month and up 22,738 over the year. Private education and health services reached a record high of 172,155 and increased 8,321 from October 2023. Other private industries with the most over-the-year growth were manufacturing (up 3,846 jobs); and trade, transportation, and utilities (up 2,543 jobs). Private industries with the most growth month to month were private education and health services (up 2,217 jobs); trade, transportation, and utilities (up 1,587 jobs); and mining and construction (up 556 jobs).

Data Source:

NE- Nebraska Department of Labor. Current Employment Statistics. NWorks. neworks.nebraska.gov/ces.

34,662

Job count on NWorks as of

November 18, 2024

54,297

Total job count on NWorks for the
month of **October 2024**

This number reflects the number of job openings advertised on NWorks in Nebraska in October 2024.

Data Source:

NE- Nebraska Department of Labor. Online advertised jobs data. NWorks. neworks.nebraska.gov.

Helpful Links

[Labor Market Publications](#)

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NWorks.nebraska.gov

Labor market information is updated continuously.
For the latest data, visit neworks.nebraska.gov or contact us
at 800-876-1377 or email NDOL.Imi_ne@nebraska.gov.



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Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.