



# The Nebraska Thriving Index

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# Outline

- About the Nebraska Thriving Index
- Methodology
- Variables
- Using the Interactive Web Application
- Conclusion



# About the Nebraska Thriving Index

- Thriving Index allows rural regions to measure their performance in relation to regions in Nebraska and other states
- Developed in a partnership between the Bureau of Business Research and Rural Prosperity Nebraska
- Similar barometers have been developed for urban areas of Nebraska



# Methodology

- First step was to find appropriate regions in Nebraska
  - Sought to identify meaningful groups of counties
  - Drew on several sources to identify regions in NE
  - Used those sources, as well as expertise from members of the Thriving Index team



### **North 81**

Madison, Pierce, Platte and Stanton



### **Northeast**

Antelope, Boone, Burt, Cedar, Colfax, Cuming, Dodge, Knox, Nance, Thurston and Wayne



### **Panhandle**

Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scottsbluff, Sheridan and Sioux



### **Sandhills**

Blaine, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Custer, Garfield, Grant, Greeley, Holt, Hooker, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Thomas, Valley and Wheeler



### **Siouxland**

Dakota and Dixon



### **Southeast**

Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Thayer and York



### **Southwest**

Arthur, Chase, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins and Red Willow



### **Tri-Cities**

Adams, Buffalo, Clay, Franklin, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Howard, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, Phelps, Sherman and Webster



# Methodology

Next step was to find appropriate comparison regions in other states (using EDA Regions)

- Colorado
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- North Dakota
- South Dakota
- Wyoming



# Methodology

- Used Mahalanobis Matching to identify comparison regions
  - Population
  - % of Population in Micropolitan Area
  - % of Farm and Ranch Income
  - % employed in Manufacturing
  - Distance from Metropolitan Areas

# Nebraska Thriving Index Variables

Compared according to three indexes of **economic prosperity**.



## **Growth Index**

Measures total employment growth, private employment, private wage growth, growth in households with children, and growth in dividend, interest and rent income.

(5 variables)



## **Economic Opportunity & Diversity Index**

Measures entrepreneurial activity, industry diversity, occupation diversity and share of telecommuters.

(7 variables)



## **Other Prosperity Index**

Measures non-farm proprietor personal income, total personal income stability, life span, percent in poverty and share of income from dividends, interest and rent.

(5 variables)



# Nebraska Thriving Index Variables

Compared according to five indexes of **economic conditions**.



## Demographic Growth & Renewal Index

Measures long-term population growth, dependency ratio, median age, millennial and Gen Z balance, and population diversity

(6 variables)



## Education & Skill Index

Measures high school and college education attainment, labor force participation and employment in knowledge-based occupations

(4 variables)



## Quality of Life Index

Measures the appeal of living and working in a region including commute times, housing, relative wages, public safety, climate and recreational amenities, access to health care, day care, parks, and arts and cultural activity

(10 variables)



## Social Capital Index

Measures involvement with volunteer organizations, programs to build the community environment, and voter participation

(5 variables)



## Infrastructure & Cost of Doing Business Index

Measures access to broadband, interstate highways and universities as well as wage rates, marginal tax rates and the presence of opportunity zones

(6 variables)



# Methodology

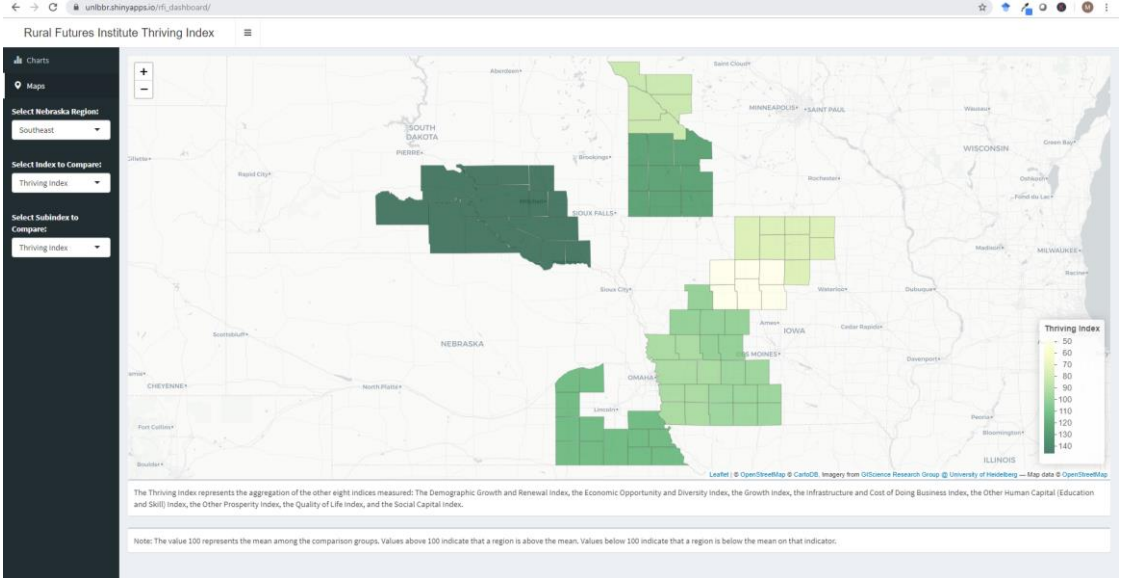
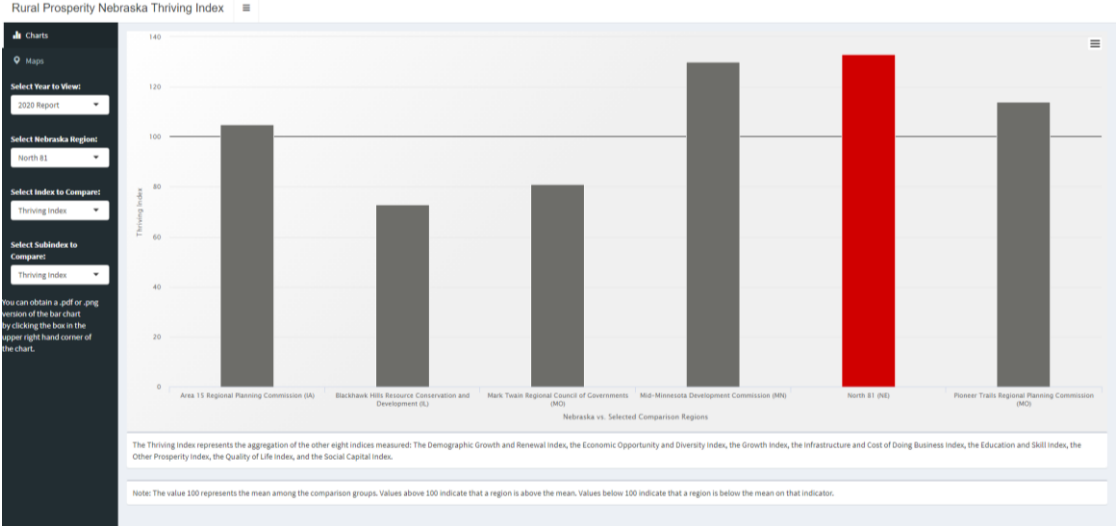
- All variables are indexed so that “100” represents the mean score on a metric.
- Values above 100 are above the mean. Values below 100 are below the mean.
- The “Thriving Index” is the average of the eight other indices presented on the previous two slides.



# Using the Interactive Web Application

<https://ruralprosperityne.unl.edu/thriving-index>

[https://unlbbr.shinyapps.io/rfi\\_dashboard/](https://unlbbr.shinyapps.io/rfi_dashboard/)





# Conclusion

- The Thriving Index will help to identify areas of economic strength in Nebraska's regions and areas where Nebraska regions lag
- Allows community and state leaders to develop future-focused strategies to build on regional advantages and address areas of concern
- Next report is tentatively scheduled to be released in Fall 2022



# Project Lead

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