

Chapter 3 Demographic Characteristics of Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses population characteristics and settlement patterns of Thayer County and its Nonmetropolitan Region. These demographic data are reported for the county and its communities and region.

Information for this chapter was obtained from publicly available decennial data products prepared by the U.S. Bureau of the Census; and the Regional Economic Information System, prepared by the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis. Population projections are from the University of Nebraska Bureau of Business Research.

The regional setting of Thayer County, for the purpose of this study, is a nine county nonmetropolitan area in southeast Nebraska. This area includes the counties of Thayer, Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Polk, Saline, Seward and York. The county of Lancaster is not included in the area review due in part to it being a metropolitan county and its demographics both of which are dissimilar to the other counties which as a group represent an interrelated region within the larger area of southeast Nebraska.

Within this nine county area, separate multi-county combinations have been formed to organize specialized service areas. Examples have included health districts, council of governments, law enforcement coalitions and agency statistical districts for agricultural, economic and labor areas.

The influence of the Lancaster County economy is a given. Including it within the region of study, however, would mask socio-economic linkages rather than illuminate the ties among the nine counties included in the specified region.

3.2 Population Analysis

The population in Thayer County and the region has grown at a slower rate than in the State of Nebraska as a whole. Thayer County has recorded losses in population over the last three decennial surveys.

Population trends in the Nonmetropolitan Region, its constituent counties and communities are examined below. The urban population in the region has been increasing but the rural population has steadily declined. The median age of the population in both Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region has been increasing since 1980. Within the region, the minority population has more than doubled between 1990 and 2000.

3.2.1 Population Trends

Thayer County has lost population each decade over the past thirty years. The 2000 Census reported a population of 6,055 compared to 7,779 residents enumerated by the 1970 Census, a loss of over 1,700 residents (Table 3.1). Although Thayer county recorded a population loss of nearly nine percent during the 1990s, this rate of decline was less than that recorded during the 1980s.

The nine county Nonmetropolitan Region that includes Thayer County gained population during the 1990s. Although population in the region increased by 1.2 percent between 1990 and 2000, this rate was less than the Nebraska statewide rate of growth (8.4 percent). As a result, the region's share of the state population declined from 7.3 percent of all Nebraskans in 1970 to 6.0 percent in 2000.

Table 3.1
Population, 1970 to 2000
Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	Percent Change		
					1970-80	1980-90	1990-2000
Nebraska	1,483,493	1,569,825	1,578,385	1,711,263	5.7	0.5	8.4
Nonmetropolitan Region	108,966	109,143	102,160	103,358	1.2	-4.0	1.2
Butler County	9,461	9,330	8,601	8,767	-1.4	-7.8	1.9
Fillmore County	8,137	7,920	7,103	6,634	-2.7	-10.3	-6.6
Gage County	25,731	24,456	22,794	22,993	-4.9	-6.8	0.9
Jefferson County	10,436	9,817	8,759	8,333	-5.9	-10.8	-4.9
Polk County	6,468	6,320	5,675	5,639	-2.3	-10.2	-0.6
Saline County	12,809	13,131	12,715	13,843	2.5	-3.2	8.9
Seward County	14,460	15,789	15,450	16,496	9.2	-2.1	6.8
Thayer County	7,779	7,582	6,635	6,055	-2.5	-12.5	-8.7
York County	13,685	14,798	14,428	14,598	8.1	-2.5	1.2

Source: Decennial Census, various years, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

While all nine counties lost population in the decade of the 1980s, five counties in the region reversed the population declines during the 1990s. While the other four counties lost population between 1990 and 2000 the rate of decline of their population was less than that during the 1980s. Saline and Seward counties recorded the largest gains, both in absolute number and percentage change. Thayer County experienced the largest decline, 580 persons or -8.7 percent, during the last decade.

3.2.2 Communities

There are eleven incorporated cities and villages in Thayer County; there are no unincorporated communities. The total 2000 population of incorporated communities in Thayer County was 4,090.

Within the Nonmetropolitan Region there are 84 incorporated cities and villages and seven unincorporated communities. The total 2000 population of incorporated communities within the region was 71,681.

The population gains of incorporated communities within the 9-county Nonmetropolitan Region drove the overall growth of the region between 1990 and 2000, recording a net increase of 3.9 percent for the period. The population of the unincorporated areas decreased 4.5 percent over the same period. Communities increased their relative share of the Nonmetropolitan Region's total population from 67.5 percent in 1990 to 69.4 percent in 2000.

The region's incorporated communities gained population at a faster rate than the statewide average for communities in nonmetropolitan Nebraska (3.9 percent compared to 1.1 percent) between 1990 and 2000. The relative share of the state population in all incorporated communities represented by these same communities, however, declined from 5.8 percent in 1990 to 5.4 percent in 2000. The population growth of incorporated communities in metropolitan counties was 22.2 percent over the period, far out pacing the growth of nonmetropolitan communities. (See Table 3.2)

Table 3.2
Population of Incorporated Areas

	1990	2000	Change
All Communities	1,179,404	1,322,727	12.2%
Metropolitan Communities*	616,457	753,426	22.2%
Nonmetropolitan Communities*	562,947	569,301	1.1%
Southeast Nebraska**	119,232	124,158	4.1%
Nine-County Nonmetropolitan Region	68,990	71,681	3.9%
Thayer County	4,440	4,090	-7.9%

*Metropolitan areas as defined in 1990 by OMB.

**Southeast Nebraska defined as the counties of Butler, Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer and York but excludes Lancaster.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Only Gage and Seward counties recorded gains in their unincorporated areas. Fillmore County experienced the largest loss of population in its unincorporated area, recording a decrease of 14.0% between 1990 and 2000.

The population of incorporated communities in the Nonmetropolitan Region increased during the 1990s, reversing the decline experienced in the 1980s. Among the 84 incorporated communities in the region, 39 gained population between 1990 and 2000, nearly double the number of towns (22) that experienced population gains between 1980 and 1990. (See Table 3.3)

Rural, incorporated areas gained population in six of the nine Nonmetropolitan Region counties. Only Butler, Fillmore, and Thayer Counties recorded fewer total residents in non-urban towns in 2000 than in 1990.

Table 3.3
Community Population by Size
Nine County Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000
All Communities in Region	67,999	72,403	68,990	71,681
Communities of 2,500+	34,170	38,598	37,570	39,958
Share of Total Community Population	50.3%	53.3%	54.5%	55.7%
Thayer County Share	- -	- -	- -	- -
Communities with 1,500 to 2,499	9,958	9,879	9,099	9,267
Share of Total Community Population	14.6%	13.6%	13.2%	12.9%
Thayer County Share	2.5%	2.6%	2.6%	2.2%
Communities with 500 to 1,499	10,511	10,680	9,111	9,348
Share of Total Community Population	15.5%	14.8%	13.2%	13.0%
Thayer County Share	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%
Communities with 250 to 499	7,623	8,411	8,254	8,415
Share of Total Community Population	11.2%	11.6%	12.0%	11.7%
Thayer County Share	1.8%	1.7%	1.5%	1.3%
Communities with 100 to 249	4,903	4,215	4,226	3,896
Share of Total Community Population	7.2%	5.8%	6.1%	5.4%
Thayer County Share	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%
Communities with less than 100	834	620	728	797
Share of Total Community Population	1.2%	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%
Thayer County Share	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Five of the six urban centers (communities with a population of 2,500 or more) in the Nonmetropolitan Region recorded gains in population between 1990 and 2000. The City of Crete (Saline County) experienced the largest increase, 1,148 persons (23.7%). Thayer County does not have an urban center in the county.

Five communities had a population of 1,500 to 2,499 persons in 2000. Three of these five communities experienced gains in population between 1990 and 2000. The City of Wilber (Saline County) recorded the largest increase, 239 persons (15.7%). The City of Hebron (Thayer County) experienced the largest decrease, 190 persons (-10.8%).

There are 11 communities that had a population of 500 to 1,499 persons in 2000. Seven of these eleven communities experienced the gains in population between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Utica (Seward County) experienced the largest increase, 120 persons (16.7%). The Village of Deshler (Thayer County) recorded the largest decrease, 30 persons (-3.4%).

Twenty four communities had a population of 250 to 499 persons in 2000. Fourteen of these 24 communities experienced gains in population between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Cortland (Gage County) recorded the largest increase, 99 persons (25.2%). The Village of Chester (Thayer County) experienced the largest decrease, 89 persons (-25.4%).

There are 24 communities that had a population of 100 to 249 persons in 2000. Ten of these 24 communities experienced gains in population between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Hubbell (Thayer County) experienced the largest increase, 52 persons (94.6%). The Village of Bruno (Butler County) recorded the largest decrease, 40 persons (-28.4%).

Thirteen communities had a population of less than 100 persons in 2000. Only one of these communities, the Village of Gilead (Thayer County) gained population between 1990 and 2000, 5 persons (13.5%). The Village of Swanton (Saline County) experienced the largest decrease, 62 persons (-42.7%). The Village of Strang in Fillmore County lost 38.1 percent of its population during the same period.

Population counts for communities in each county within the region are presented below in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Population Incorporated Communities, 1970 to 2000
Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 1990-2000
Nonmetropolitan Region	108,966	109,143	102,160	103,358	0.2%	-6.4%	1.2%
Region Communities	67,999	72,403	68,990	71,681	6.5	-4.7	3.9
Thayer County	7,779	7,582	6,635	6,055	-2.5	-12.5	-8.7
Alexandria	225	255	224	197	13.3	-12.2	-12.1
Belvidere	162	158	117	83	-2.5	-25.9	-29.1
Bruning	315	330	332	307	4.8	0.6	-7.5
Byron	171	154	140	169	-9.9	-9.1	20.7
Carleton	163	160	144	136	-1.8	-10.0	-5.6
Chester	459	435	351	262	-5.2	-19.3	-25.4
Davenport	427	445	383	350	4.2	-13.9	-8.6
Deshler	937	997	892	862	6.4	-10.5	-3.4
Gilead	60	69	37	42	15.0	-46.4	13.5
Hebron	1,667	1,906	1,765	1,575	14.3	-7.4	-10.8
Hubbell	83	71	55	107	-14.5	-22.5	94.6
Butler County	9,461	9,330	8,601	8,767	-1.4	-7.8	1.9
Abie	78	107	106	141	37.2	-0.9	33.0
Bellwood	361	407	395	469	12.7	-2.9	18.7
Brainard	309	275	326	374	-11.0	18.6	14.7
Bruno	142	154	141	101	8.5	-8.4	-28.4
David City	2,380	2,514	2,522	2,638	5.6	0.3	4.6
Dwight	224	221	227	225	-1.3	2.7	-0.9
Garrison	60	68	71	65	13.3	4.4	-8.5
Linwood	108	119	91	126	10.2	-23.5	38.5
Octavia	97	127	132	149	30.9	3.9	12.9
Rising City	344	392	341	369	13.9	-13.0	8.2
Surprise	77	60	55	51	-22.1	-8.3	-7.3
Ulysses	312	270	256	229	-13.5	-5.2	-10.6
Fillmore County	8,137	7,920	7,103	6,634	-2.7	-10.3	-6.6
Exeter	759	807	661	701	6.3	-18.1	6.1
Fairmont	761	767	708	702	0.8	-7.7	-0.9
Geneva	2,275	2,400	2,310	2,203	5.5	-3.8	-4.6
Grafton	128	185	167	143	44.5	-9.7	-14.4
Milligan	319	332	328	302	4.1	-1.2	-7.9
Ohoiwa	156	135	146	139	-13.5	8.2	-4.8
Shickley	385	413	360	371	7.3	-12.8	3.1
Strang	47	59	42	26	25.5	-28.8	-38.1

Table 3.4, continued
 Population Incorporated Communities, 1970 to 2000
 Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 1990-2000
Gage County	25,731	24,456	22,794	22,993	-4.9	-6.8	0.9
Adams	463	395	472	475	-14.7	19.5	-0.6
Barneston	149	155	122	138	4.0	-21.3	13.1
Beatrice	12,389	12,891	12,354	12,482	4.0	-4.2	1.0
Blue Spring	506	521	431	381	2.9	-17.3	-11.6
Clatonia	224	273	296	277	21.9	8.4	-6.4
Cortland	326	403	393	492	23.6	-2.5	25.2
Filley	138	172	157	139	24.6	-8.7	-11.5
Liberty	118	105	74	57	-11.0	-29.5	-23.0
Odell	349	322	291	319	-7.7	-9.6	9.6
Pickrell	118	184	201	176	55.9	9.2	-12.4
Virginia	83	90	94	73	8.4	4.4	-22.3
Wymore	1,790	1,841	1,611	1,659	2.9	-12.5	3.0
Jefferson County	10,436	9,817	8,759	8,333	-5.9	-9.2	-20.2
Daykin	192	207	188	150	8.4	-4.2	-7.7
Diller	287	311	298	275	18.6	-17.7	-22.7
Endicott	167	198	163	126	-7.2	-11.3	-1.5
Fairbury	5,265	4,885	4,335	4,271	13.6	32.0	-10.6
Harbine	44	50	66	59	6.8	-31.4	15.0
Jansen	191	204	140	161	19.3	-10.1	-0.2
Plymouth	424	506	455	454	8.7	-16.8	-11.5
Reynolds	115	125	104	92	-22.2	-26.3	-16.8
Steele City	176	137	101	84	-10.7	-8.9	-8.5
Polk County	6,468	6,320	5,675	5,639	-2.3	-10.2	-0.6
Osceola	923	975	879	929	5.6	-9.9	5.7
Polk	413	440	345	335	6.5	-21.6	-2.9
Shelby	647	724	690	724	11.9	-4.7	4.9
Stromsburg	1,215	1,290	1,241	1,243	6.2	-3.8	0.2
Saline County	12,809	13,131	12,715	13,843	2.5	-3.2	8.9
Crete	4,444	4,872	4,841	5,989	9.6	-0.6	23.7
DeWitt	651	642	598	573	-1.4	-6.9	-4.2
Dorchester	492	611	614	617	24.2	0.5	0.5
Friend	1,126	1,079	1,111	1,170	-4.2	3.0	5.3
Swanton	160	131	145	83	-18.1	10.7	-42.8
Tobias	124	138	127	161	11.3	-8.0	26.8
Western	344	336	264	291	-2.3	-21.4	10.2
Wilber	1,483	1,624	1,527	1,766	9.5	-6.0	15.7

Table 3.4, continued
 Population Incorporated Communities, 1970 to 2000
 Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region, 1970 to 2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 1990-2000
Seward County	14,460	15,789	15,450	16,496	9.2	-2.2	6.8
Beaver Crossing	400	458	448	444	14.5	-2.2	-0.9
Bee	156	192	209	201	23.1	8.9	-3.8
Cordova	141	129	147	118	-8.5	13.9	-19.7
Garland	244	257	247	256	5.3	-3.9	3.6
Goehner	113	165	192	195	46.0	16.4	1.6
Milford	1,846	2,108	1,886	2,064	14.2	-10.5	9.4
Pleasant Dale	258	259	253	221	0.4	-2.3	-12.7
Seward	5,294	5,713	5,634	6,381	7.9	-1.4	13.3
Staplehurst	227	306	281	291	34.8	-8.2	3.6
Tamora	93	50	51	--^	-46.2	2.0	NA
Utica	602	689	718	838	14.5	4.2	16.7
York County	13,685	14,798	14,428	14,598	8.1	-2.5	1.2
Benedict	209	228	230	286	9.1	0.9	24.4
Bradshaw	347	373	330	354	7.5	-11.5	7.3
Gresham	248	320	253	282	29.0	-20.9	11.5
Henderson	901	1,072	999	989	19.0	-6.8	-1.0
Lushton	34	33	28	23	-2.9	-15.2	-17.9
McCool Junction	289	404	372	399	39.8	-7.9	7.3
Thayer	78	70	64	59	-10.3	-8.6	-7.8
Waco	214	225	211	248	5.1	-6.2	17.5
York	6,778	7,723	7,884	8,197	13.9	2.1	4.0

^ The Village of Tamora, Seward County, abolished its incorporation effective September 1, 1997.
 Sources: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 Decennial Census, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

3.2.3 Urban and Rural Population

Table 3.5 presents the urban and rural population in Thayer County and the region. This comparison is based on the Bureau of the Census classification of urban and rural areas.

Table 3.5
Urban and Rural Population, 1970 to 2000
Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1970-80	% Change 1980-90	% Change 1990-2000
Nebraska	1,483,493	1,569,825	1,578,385	1,711,263			
Urban	912,598	987,859	1,043,984	1,192,706	8.2	5.7	14.2
Rural	570,895	581,966	534,401	518,557	1.9	-8.2	-3.0
Nonmetropolitan Region	108,966	109,143	102,160	103,358			
Urban	36,550	38,598	37,570	39,958	5.6	-2.7	6.4
Rural	72,416	70,545	64,590	63,400	-2.6	-8.4	-1.8
Thayer County	7,779	7,582	6,635	6,055			
Urban	0	0	0	0	--	--	--
Rural	7,779	7,582	6,635	6,055	-2.5	-12.5	-8.7
Butler County	9,461	9,330	8,601	8,767			
Urban	2,380	2,514	2,522	2,638	5.6	0.3	4.6
Rural	7,081	6,816	6,079	6,129	-3.7	-10.8	0.8
Fillmore County	8,137	7,920	7,103	6,634			
Urban	0	0	0	0	--	--	--
Rural	8,137	7,920	7,103	6,634	-2.7	-10.3	-6.6
Gage County	25,731	24,456	22,794	22,993			
Urban	12,389	12,891	12,354	12,482	4.1	-4.2	1.0
Rural	13,342	11,565	10,440	10,511	-13.3	-9.7	0.7
Jefferson County	10,436	9,817	8,759	8,333			
Urban	5,265	4,885	4,335	4,271	-5.9	-10.8	-4.9
Rural	5,171	4,932	4,424	4,062	-4.6	-10.3	-8.2
Polk County	6,468	6,320	5,675	5,639			
Urban	0	0	0	0	--	--	--
Rural	6,468	6,320	5,675	5,639	-2.3	-10.2	-0.6
Saline County	12,809	13,131	12,715	13,843			
Urban	4,444	4,872	4,841	5,989	9.6	-0.6	23.7
Rural	8,365	8,259	7,874	7,854	-1.3	-4.7	-0.3
Seward County	14,460	15,789	15,450	16,496			
Urban	5,294	5,713	5,634	6,381	7.9	-1.4	13.3
Rural	9,166	10,076	9,816	10,115	9.9	-2.6	3.0
York County	13,685	14,798	14,428	14,598			
Urban	6,778	7,723	7,884	8,197	13.9	2.1	4
Rural	6,907	7,075	6,544	6,401	2.4	-7.5	-2.2

The Bureau of the Census defines places with a population of 2,500 or more outside of *Urbanized Areas* as urban population. By this standard, Thayer County does not have an urban community. Within the region there are six urban areas: Beatrice (12,482), York (8,197), Seward (6,381), Crete (5,989), Fairbury (4,271) and David City (2,638).

Growth in the region's urban population has been positive, unlike the rural population which has experienced a steady decline (Figure 3.1). In fact, urban population gains in actually off set the losses in the rural areas in all but the 1980s when the region's urban and rural areas both lost population.

Figure 3.1



The rural population continues to account for the majority of the population in the region, even though its share has steadily decreased from 66.5 percent in 1970 to 61.3 percent in 2000. Rural is not just "nonurban", however. It includes several types of settlement patterns, such as residents of farms, unincorporated areas, and incorporated areas. Between 1970 and 1990, unincorporated rural nonfarm residential growth recorded the greatest gains (130.0 percent), surpassing gains in urban areas (9.3 percent), and rural incorporated areas (0.9 percent). The rural farm population had the largest decline, falling 63.7 percent between 1970 and 2000. (See Table 3.6)

Rural municipalities (incorporated areas) accounted for 31 percent of the region's total

population in 2000, increasing from 29 percent in 1970. Rural municipalities have maintained this nearly one-third share of the population since 1980.

Table 3.6
Settlement Pattern of the Nonmetropolitan Region

Population of Area	1970	1980	1990	2000
Nonmetropolitan Region	108,966	109,143	102,160	103,358
Rural	72,416	70,545	64,590	63,400
Urban	36,550	38,598	37,570	39,958
Rural Unincorporated	40,967	36,740	33,170	31,677
Rural Incorporated	31,449	33,805	31,420	31,723
Farm	32,291	24,145	16,991	11,723
Nonfarm Rural Unincorporated	8,676	12,595	16,179	19,954

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

It should be noted that in June 2003, Seward County was added to the Lincoln Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as a contiguous county (fringe county). The designation is assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) based upon commuting statistics, an indicator of Seward County's economic and social integration with the central county, i.e., Lancaster County. Counties with at least 25 percent of their workers commuting to the central county of the metropolitan area are included in an MSA.

Another new designation developed by the OMB is the "micropolitan area." This area must include a town that has a population of more than 10,000 but less than 50,000, the cut-off for metropolitan areas. Micropolitan areas also can include contiguous counties based on commuting patterns. One community in the study area, the City of Beatrice, has been assigned the micropolitan area designation. The Beatrice Micropolitan Area encompasses Gage County; it does not include any contiguous counties.

3.2.4 Median Age

The median age of the population in both Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region has been increasing since 1980. The average resident of both areas is older than the average Nebraskan and this age disparity is increasingly widening.

There is a large difference between the median age in the individual counties. In 2000, the highest median age was recorded in Thayer County while the lowest was in Seward County, 44.1 years and 35.7 years. (See Table 3.7)

Based upon estimates published by the University of Nebraska Bureau of Business Research, the median age in Thayer County will be 47.1 years in 2010. The median age in the Nonmetropolitan Region will increase to 40.8 years in 2010. Among the nine counties in the region, the median age will range between 36.1 years (Saline County) and 47.1 years (Thayer County).

Table 3.7
Median Age, 1970 to 2010
Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Nebraska	28.6	29.7	33.0	35.3	35.8
Nonmetropolitan Region	34.4	33.9	36.7	39.2	40.8
Butler County	35.6	35.2	37.0	38.8	40.9
Fillmore County	37.0	36.2	38.3	41.4	44.5
Gage County	33.5	34.9	37.2	39.9	41.8
Jefferson County	38.4	37.8	39.9	42.9	45.7
Polk County	38.6	35.4	39.4	41.6	43.4
Saline County	36.9	34.1	35.7	36.4	36.1
Seward County	27.0	28.5	33.1	35.7	37.8
Thayer County	39.9	39.1	41.8	44.1	47.1
York County	31.8	31.2	34.8	38.8	40.0

Sources: Bureau of the Census; 2010 median age based on University of Nebraska, Bureau of Business Research 2002 data.

3.2.5 Minority Population

The minority population of the Nonmetropolitan Region more than doubled between 1990 and 2000. The number of persons identifying themselves as a member of minority a race increased to 1,901 from 1,004. An even larger increase was recorded for persons identifying themselves as *Hispanic* - 601 in 1990 compared to 1,490 in 2000, an increase of 148 percent.

It is important to note a change in how the 2000 Census identified race and ethnicity. The Office of Management and Budget issued revised federal standards for collecting and reporting data on race and ethnicity. Respondents were allowed to "mark or select one or more races." This makes it very difficult to compare historical data with the current 2000 decennial census data.

With that caveat, it is interesting to note that among the minority classifications the *Other* category recorded both the largest absolute number and percentage increase. This category captures a race not specified singularly and respondents reporting two or more races. According to the Bureau of the Census, there are 67 possible race combinations identifiable in the 2000 Census.

Table 3.8
Minority Population - Race and Ethnic Origin in Year 2000
Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	Total Population		Percent of 2000 Population					
	1990	2000	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Other	Hispanic
Nebraska	1,578,385	1,711,263	89.6	4.0	0.9	1.3	4.2	5.5
Nonmetropolitan Region	102,160	103,358	97.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	1.6	1.9
Butler County	8,601	8,767	98.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.7
Fillmore County	7,103	6,634	97.8	0.2	0.4	0.1	1.5	1.7
Gage County	22,794	22,993	97.7	0.3	0.6	0.3	1.1	0.9
Jefferson County	8,759	8,333	98.4	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.9	1.3
Polk County	5,675	5,639	98.9	--	0.3	0.1	0.7	1.1
Saline County	12,715	13,843	93.0	0.4	0.4	1.7	4.5	6.6
Seward County	15,540	16,496	98.0	0.3	0.2	0.3	1.2	1.1
Thayer County	6,635	6,055	98.7	--	0.3	0.1	0.9	1.0
York County	14,428	14,598	96.8	1.0	0.3	0.5	1.4	1.4

Note: Race shows persons only selecting that race alone. Other includes some other race and two or more races. Minority is defined as not white alone or Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

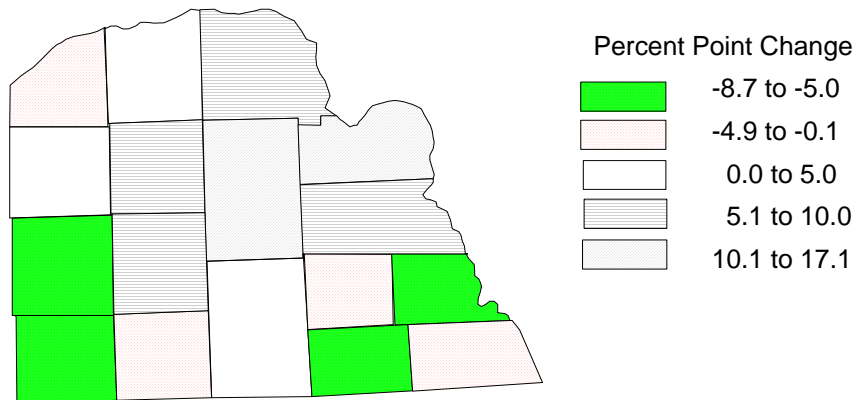
The largest minority group in 2000, just as in 1990, is the *Hispanic* category. The largest minority race was *Asian* in 1990 and *Other* in 2000.

Racial/ethnic minorities accounted for 3.3 percent of the region's population (3,391 people) in 2000. While almost 63 percent of the *Hispanic* population (age five years and over) resided in Nebraska in 1995, the individual county *Hispanic* populations varied widely. For example, while 84 percent of the *Hispanic* population in Jefferson County in 2000 resided in that county in 1995, the opposite was true in Polk County where 84 percent of the *Hispanic* population resided outside of Nebraska (50 percent outside the United States) in 1995. This has implications for public officials and employers, such as school boards and public health officials.

Three race categories recorded a decrease in population between 1990 and 2000. The number of respondents in the region who identified themselves as *White*, *Black*, and *American Indian* decreased 0.5, 0.5, and 18.1 percent, respectively.

Historically, Thayer County (and both the region and Nebraska) has been a predominantly white, non-Hispanic, state. The 2000 population of this majority group in the county was 6,480, a decrease of 8.0 percent from 1990. All nine counties in the region experienced negative percentage point changes in the white, non-Hispanic share of county populations.

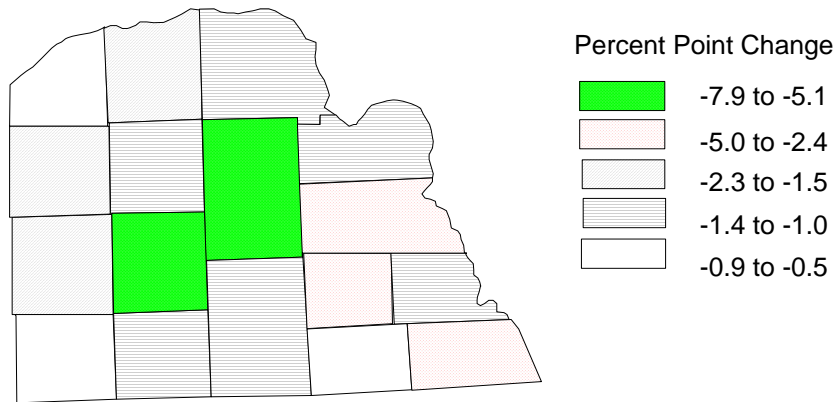
Figure 3.2
Percentage Point Change in Total County Population, 1990-2000



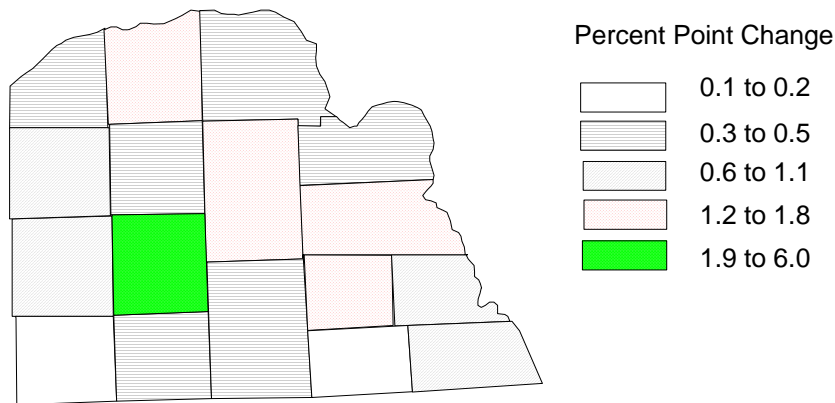
The *Hispanic* population increased from 36,969 individuals in 1990 to 93,872 people in 2000, an increase of about 154 percent. Almost all counties in the nonmetropolitan region gained *Hispanic* population from 1990 to 2000. Only Jefferson and Thayer counties experienced small decreases in absolute number but they too recorded increases in *Hispanic* share of the county population. The change in *White* and *Hispanic* share of county population is displayed in the below figures.

Figure 3.3

Percentage Point Change in White, Nonhispanic Share of County Population, 1990-2000



Percentage Point Change in Hispanic Share of County Population, 1990-2000



3.3 Demographics

Distribution of the total population within the region is a significant factor for planning purposes. It does not, however, provide a picture of the shifts in the composition of the population. Information about the natural population change, age structure, and migration must be incorporated into the planning process, too. These demographic characteristics are present below.

The most volatile component of population change is migration. Migration is a function of age, but also of economics and attitudes. Migration is most affected by the economic performance of the local and regional area.

3.3.1 Vital Statistics

The annual number of resident live births in Thayer County has stable in recent years. A total of 56 live births were recorded among Thayer County women in 2003; 56 live births were recorded in 2000.

Table 3.9 presents the births and deaths recorded for residents of Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region. The 2003 birth rate of 9.9 and 11.9 per 1,000 estimated population is lower than the Nebraska state birth rate for 2003 of 14.9.

Table 3.9 Births by Place of Residence Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region						
	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Nebraska	24,362	23,221	24,643	24,818	25,381	25,900
Nonmetropolitan Region	1,233	1,121	1,221	1,181	1,041	1,225
Thayer County	83	54	56	62	39	56

Deaths by Place of Residence Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region						
	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Nebraska	14,751	15,216	14,979	15,171	15,721	15,439
Nonmetropolitan Region	1,310	1,301	1,281	1,154	1,273	1,229
Thayer County	106	102	89	94	97	101

Source: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Birth rates observed throughout Nonmetropolitan Region vary considerably from county to county. In 2003, Polk County had the highest birth rate among the nine counties in the region, with a rate of 13.9 live births per 1,000 population. The lowest birth rate was recorded by Jefferson County, 9.3 live births per 1,000 population.

The crude birth rates for all three areas have decreased since 1990; the county and region birth rates decreased at a faster rate than that of the state. Birth rates are a key factor in future labor force growth.

A total of 1,229 deaths occurred in the Nonmetropolitan Region in 2003, which translates into a rate of 11.9 deaths per 1,000 population. The 2003 crude death rate is lower than the rate recorded at the beginning of the decade (12.4 deaths per 1,000 population in 2000). The crude death rate in the region has been consistently higher than the Nebraska statewide death rate.

Death rates observed throughout the Nonmetropolitan Region vary considerably from county to county, too. Thayer County and Polk County have the highest death rates, 17.5 and 13.7 deaths per 1,000 population, respectively. The lowest crude death rate was recorded in York County at 9.5 deaths per 1,000 population.

3.3.2 Population Change

The results from Census 2000 showed that the population of Thayer County decreased by 580 persons or 8.7 percent between 1990 and 2000. The population of an area can grow by two demographic processes -- natural increase (that is, an excess of births over deaths) and/or net immigration. Reliable data on births and deaths are available from the state Health and Human Services System. Migration can be estimated by a 'residual' method, which is calculated as follows: *Net Migration 1990-2000 = Population 2000 - Population 1990 - Natural Increase 1990-2000*. Negatives denote outmigration.

During the 1990 to 2000 period Thayer County recorded 652 births and 1,017 deaths, which equals a natural decrease of 365 persons. According to the above formula, the remainder of the population change, 215 persons, was net outmigration. Thus, 62.9 percent of the population loss of Thayer County between 1990 and 2000 was due to natural decrease and 37.1 percent to migration.

Natural decrease of population represents the primary factor in population change in Thayer County, while in the nine county surrounding Nonmetropolitan Region net immigration accounts for the net increase in total population.

Table 3.10
 Components of Population Change: 1990 to 2000
 Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region

	Population 2000	Population 1990	Population Change	Natural Change			Net Migration
				Births	Death	Net	
Nebraska	1,711,263	1,578,385	132,878	235,211	150,599	84,612	48,266
Nonmetropolitan Region	103,358	102,160	1,198	11,641	12,923	-1,282	2,480
Butler County	8,767	8,601	166	1,060	1,085	-25	191
Fillmore County	6,634	7,103	-469	789	969	-180	-289
Gage County	22,993	22,794	199	2,602	2,983	-381	580
Jefferson County	8,333	8,759	-426	854	1,246	-392	-34
Polk County	5,639	5,675	-36	653	799	-146	110
Saline County	13,843	12,715	1,128	1,476	1,702	-226	1,354
Seward County	16,496	15,450	1,046	1,748	1,599	149	897
Thayer County	6,055	6,635	-580	652	1,017	-365	-215
York County	14,598	14,428	170	1,807	1,523	284	-114

Sources: Bureau of the Census and Nebraska Health and Human Services System.

Figure 3.4 shows overall population change from 1990 to 2000 and the respective contributions of natural increase (or decrease) and net migration by county in the surrounding nonmetropolitan area. The population of the nine county nonmetropolitan area grew by 1.2 percent from 1990 to 2000, with the entire population growth due to net immigration.

Figure 3.4

Overall Population Change and Its Components
 Thayer County and Nonmetropolitan Region, 1990 to 2000

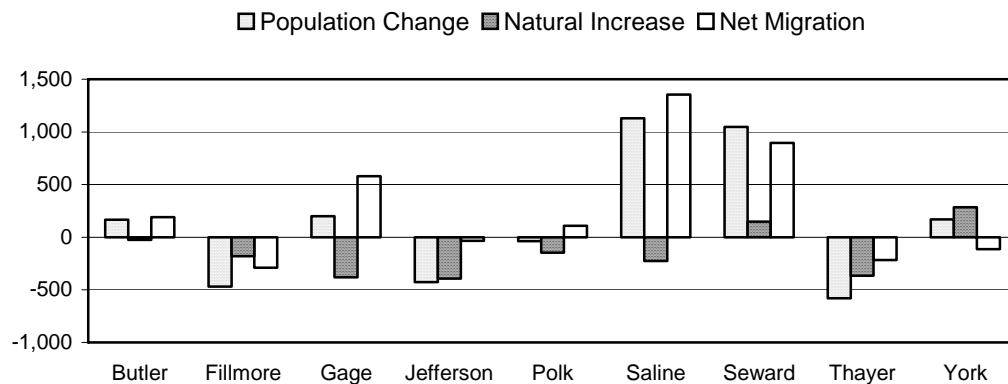


Figure 4 illustrates that nearly the entire population growth for Butler, Gage, Saline and Seward counties was due to net immigration. Natural increase accounts for the population gain in York County and only played a minor role in Seward County. The other seven counties in fact recorded an excess of deaths over births between 1990 and 2000.

3.3.3 Age Structure

Within the Nonmetropolitan Region, Saline County experienced the largest immigration of population with a gain of 1,354 persons. Four other counties recorded positive immigration, too. Four counties, Fillmore, Jefferson, Thayer and York counties recorded net out migration of population.

Historically, migration in Nebraska and the region has been largely undertaken by younger residents. This trend has resulted in an aging population in the region and is accompanied by a decline in birth rates. Between 1990 and 2000, deaths exceeded births in all but two counties in the Nonmetropolitan Region (Seward and York), however, the positive immigration counts suggests future declines may be mitigated or even reversed in several of the other seven counties.

Only Seward County recorded a positive gain in both its natural population change and immigration counts. Over 36 percent of the net immigration into the region is accounted for by Seward County; Saline County accounts for over 54 percent of net immigration.

As noted above, out migration is often associated with an older remaining population. There is a high concentration of elderly residing within Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region. In 2000, the populations of all nine counties in the region had a higher percentage of persons aged 65 years and older than Nebraska. While 13.6 percent of the State's population was age 65 years or older, the figure for the region's counties ranged from 15.2 percent in Seward County to 24.5 percent in Thayer County.

Table 3.11 presents the population age distribution for the Thayer County and other specified areas. Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region have a smaller percentage of persons in all age cohorts other than the 45+ years age cohorts compared to the State.

Only Seward and Saline Counties have a higher percentage of their population in both 5-to-19 and 20-24 age groups (33.4 percent and 31.2 percent, respectively) that captures students and new workers. Both of these counties are home to a private college or university. The respective share of these age groups in York County and Gage County, which also are home to institutions of higher education, are 28.7 percent and 25.8 percent.

Table 3.11
Population by Age Group, 2000

	Under 5 years	5 to 19 years	20 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	65+ years
Nebraska	117,048 6.8%	387,288 22.6%	120,331 7.0%	223,273 13.0%	263,834 15.4%	367,294 21.5%	232,195 13.6%
Southeast Region	11,237 6.0%	42,456 22.6%	9,445 5.0%	19,435 10.4%	28,701 15.3%	42,819 22.8%	33,507 17.9%
Nonmetropolitan Region	6,049 5.9%	23,170 22.4%	5,763 5.6%	10,611 10.3%	15,164 14.7%	23,228 22.5%	19,373 18.7%
Thayer County	343 5.7%	1,239 20.5%	171 2.8%	533 8.8%	819 13.5%	1,464 24.2%	1,486 24.5%

Southeast Nebraska Region includes 16 counties: Butler, Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Johnson, Jefferson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer and York but not Lancaster County.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

The working age population of Thayer County increased as a relative share of its total population between 1990 and 2000, as did that of the State as a whole. The percentage of residents aged 16 to 64 years of age in Thayer County increased from 52.1 to 54.8 during this period. The growth of the working age population in Thayer County increased at a faster rate than that of the State and the Nonmetropolitan Region.

Table 3.12
Working Age Population (Percent)

	2000	1990
Nebraska	63.3	61.4
Southeast Region	59.8	57.2
Nonmetropolitan Region	59.6	59.9
Thayer County	54.8	52.1

This suggests that both the aging population and affects of migration are contributing to a growing share of working age persons in Thayer County's total population. The declining dependency ratio in Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region evidences this trend.

The dependency ratio is a measure of the number of persons in the total population who are less than 20 years of age and those 65 years and older relative to the number of persons who are in the prime working age group, between 20 and 64 years of age. (See Table 3.13) For every 100 persons of prime working age in Thayer County in 2000, there were about 103 persons not in this age category.

Table 3.13
Dependency Ratio, 1990-2000
[Per hundred adults age 20 to 64 years]

	2000	1990
Nebraska	75.6	79.6
Southeast Region	86.9	93.0
Nonmetropolitan Region	88.7	95.2
Thayer County	102.7	110.2

The dependency ratio for both the State of Nebraska and the Nonmetropolitan Region decreased between 1990 and 2000, also. During this period, the dependency ratio fell 4.0 percentage points for the state and 6.5 percentage points for the region.

Overall population growth for this period was 8.4 percent for the state, 1.2 percent for the Nonmetropolitan Region, and -8.7 percent for Thayer County. Based on current trends, the dependency ratio is projected to continue to decrease in Thayer County where in 2010 there will be 94.9 youth and elderly persons per 100 adults; by comparison, the dependency ratio in York County and the Nonmetropolitan Region will decrease to 75.1 and 77.8, respectively. Two factors driving this decline will be the decreasing share of persons in the less than 20 years of age cohort and the 65 years of age and older cohort.

3.3.4 Age-Sex Composition

Table 3.14 presents the age-sex composition estimates for the Thayer County and each county in the Nonmetropolitan Region. These estimates may differ from that presented in Table 3.11 due to estimation methods used by the Bureau of the Census.

Table 3.14 Age-Sex Composition of the Population, 2000 Constituent Counties of the Nonmetropolitan Region									
Age Cohort	Butler	Fillmore	Gage	Jefferson	Polk	Saline	Seward	Thayer	York
Total Pop.	8,767	6,634	22,993	8,333	5,639	13,843	16,496	6,055	14,598
Male	4,472	3,205	11,149	4,073	2,827	6,845	8,379	2,963	6,974
Female	4,295	3,429	11,844	4,260	2,812	6,998	8,117	3,092	7,624
Under 5 years									
Male	335	212	694	226	157	462	472	177	396
Female	264	175	659	214	169	401	452	166	418
5 to 14 years									
Male	674	492	1,580	600	437	993	1,188	414	1,084
Female	674	475	1,520	514	353	976	1,150	393	1,051
15 to 19 years									
Male	401	245	862	274	245	657	1,032	226	561
Female	294	284	847	292	192	599	752	206	633
20 to 24 years									
Male	207	106	579	176	100	564	769	95	422
Female	170	97	548	154	102	535	621	76	442
25 to 34 years									
Male	472	327	1,289	399	292	758	856	266	740
Female	427	310	1,233	401	273	726	800	267	775
35 to 54 years									
Male	1,279	945	3,334	1,210	828	1,865	2,293	846	2,086
Female	1,193	894	3,260	1,150	768	1,798	2,208	807	2,106
55 to 64 years									
Male	408	323	1,045	409	262	586	709	312	642
Female	416	338	1,129	425	254	545	692	318	709
65 and Older									
Male	696	555	1,766	779	506	960	1,060	627	1,043
Female	857	856	2,648	1,110	701	1,418	1,442	859	1,490

Source: 2000 Census, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

3.4 Population Projections

The Bureau of Business Research, an office of the College of Business Administration of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, develops demographic and economic projections, among other business-related research and education activities. It has been preparing population projections for Nebraska and its counties for many years. The most recent population projections, which are presented below, were published in October 2002.

Population forecasts are based upon three primary factors: births, deaths, and migration. Deaths are fairly predictable. Births are also somewhat predictable based on the analysis of past rates by age of mother, but birth rates are also affected by changing attitudes about having children and family size. Both births and deaths are easily monitored because of reporting requirements. The most volatile component of a forecast is the migration factor.

The projections presented in Table 3.15 are based on current trends. Given the small populations in several counties, a small reversal of a current trend could significantly affect the projected population. With that caveat, it is important to assess future population changes within Thayer County and the Nonmetropolitan Region in order to assist with economic development strategies. Future public policy decisions by the constituent governments will greatly influence the most volatile component of population change in the region, that is, migration.

Table 3.15
Population Projections
Nebraska, Nine County Nonmetropolitan Region and Counties

	Census	Projections			Population Growth Rates (%)		
	2000	2005	2010	2020	2005/2000	2010/2005	2020/2010
Nebraska	1,711,263	1,789,942	1,877,214	2,085,210	4.6	4.9	11.1
Nonmetro. Region	103,358	104,007	105,181	109,225	0.6	1.1	3.8
Butler County	8,767	8,867	9,010	9,448	1.1	1.6	4.9
Fillmore County	6,634	6,417	6,219	5,969	-3.3	-3.1	-4.0
Gage County	22,993	23,205	23,554	24,763	0.9	1.5	5.1
Jefferson County	8,333	8,083	7,853	7,437	-3.0	-2.8	-5.3
Polk County	5,639	5,594	5,557	5,576	-0.8	-0.7	0.3
Saline County	13,843	14,507	15,300	17,125	4.8	5.5	11.9
Seward County	16,496	16,844	17,267	18,298	2.1	2.5	6.0
Thayer County	6,055	5,738	5,443	4,949	-5.2	-5.1	-9.1
York County	14,598	14,752	14,978	15,660	1.1	1.5	4.6

Sources: Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, October 2002.

The population projection for Thayer County is one of continued decline in population for the 2005 to 2020 period. This projection is based upon recent trends and the assumption of no change in the circumstances that are driving the loss.

Saline County is projected to grow by nearly 12 percent over the next fifteen years; surpassing its growth rate experienced during the 1990s (8.9 percent). Seward County will see an increase of six percent for the same period. Both of these counties will lead the Nonmetropolitan Region's growth over the next fifteen years.

Overall, population growth rate for the Nonmetropolitan Region, although positive, is projected to be less than that of the state between 2005 and 2020. The Nonmetropolitan Region is projected to have a population of 109,225 by 2020.