

Omaha Conditions Survey: 1998



Special Topics

by:

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Introduction

This is the fifth report from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1998. Previous reports described the metropolitan area labor force,

population movement to and from the Omaha area, the North Omaha area labor force, and the South Omaha area labor force. This report covers the following special topics included in the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1998.

respondents but also for another 1,006 persons living in those households (2,206 total persons). For a detailed description of survey methodology, see page 20 of the metropolitan area labor force report.

Geographic Area

Questions were asked of persons residing in the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Omaha MSA is composed of Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Cass counties in Nebraska along with Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

Population Estimates

According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimate (1997), 521,425 persons aged 16 and older reside in the five-county Omaha MSA. By applying the survey percentages to this figure, we estimate the total number of persons with specific characteristics. The reader is cautioned to note that these are simply approximations, not exact counts.

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- Journey to Work
- Personal Computer Access and Use
- Comments About the Job Market
- Households Receiving Government Assistance

Survey Sample

Information in this report is based on telephone interviews with persons 19 years and older from a random sample of area households. The survey sample consists of 1,200 completed interviews conducted between May 7 and July 13, 1998. Some of the questions pertained only to respondents. Other questions pertained to all persons in the household age 16 and older. Thus the sample contains some data for not only the 1,200 actual

Journey to Work

This section addresses the following questions: How many Omaha area residents work at home, and how many work outside the home? How long does it take people to get to work? How do they travel to work?

Where do people work in relation to where they live?

Travel Time to Work

An estimated 389,463 persons in the Omaha MSA have jobs.

Just under one in twenty (4.6 percent) work at home. Another 4.2 percent travel on the job and do not have a fixed place of work. About one third (33.7 percent) work at a fixed site away from home that they can get to in under fifteen minutes. Only about one in seven workers (13.7 percent) have a commute of 30 minutes or more (see table 1).

Table 2 summarizes travel time to work according to area of residence. Workers from South Omaha were least likely to work at home and were also least likely to travel as part of their job. Workers residing in Washington County were most likely to work at home, at least in part due to farming. Workers from Cass and Pottawattamie counties were most likely to have jobs involving travel. The median commute time for workers living in North Omaha, South Omaha, the balance of Douglas County, and Sarpy County was 15 minutes. The median commute time for workers living in Pottawattamie County was 17.5 minutes. Workers living in Washington County had a median commute of 20 minutes, and workers living in Cass County had a median commute of 30 minutes.

Key Findings

- About one out of twenty employed persons in the Omaha MSA (4.6 percent) worked at home.
- About half of employed persons in the Omaha MSA (52.3 percent) commuted to work in under 20 minutes each way. About three-quarters (77.5 percent) had a commute of under 30 minutes each way.
- The median commute times for workers living in Douglas and Sarpy counties was 15 minutes. The median commute time for workers living in Pottawattamie County was 17.5 minutes; Washington County, 20 minutes; and Cass County, 30 minutes.
- The vast majority of workers who traveled to work (92.3 percent) drove alone in their own cars. Only 2.4 percent rode the bus, 2.0 percent car-pooled, 2.0 percent walked, and the rest used some other means to get to work.
- Workers living in North and South Omaha were less likely than persons living elsewhere to get to work by driving alone in their own vehicles. About one out of ten North Omaha workers (11.5 percent) rode the bus to work, and another 8.1 percent used some means other than the bus or driving alone in their own vehicle. In South Omaha, 4.3 percent of workers rode the bus and another 11.8 percent used some means other than the bus or their own vehicle to get to work.
- About nine out of ten Douglas County residents with jobs worked in Douglas County. About half of Sarpy and Washington County residents with jobs also worked in Douglas County.

Table 1. Travel Time to Work, Omaha MSA

	Number	Percent of total
Persons 16 years and older with jobs (total)	389,463	100.0
Works at home	17,915	4.6
Travels, work site varies	16,357	4.2
Fixed work site away from home	355,190	91.2
Usual travel time from home to work (minutes)		
Less than 10	62,314	16.0
10 to 14	68,935	17.7
15 to 19	72,440	18.6
20 to 24	75,945	19.5
25 to 29	22,199	5.7
30 to 39	33,104	8.5
40 or more	20,252	5.2

Table 2. Travel Time to Work by Area of Residence, Omaha MSA

	Percent of total			Median usual travel time from home to work (minutes)
	Works at home	Travels, work site varies	Fixed work site away from home	
Persons 16 years and older with jobs	4.6	4.2	91.2	15.0
Area				
North Omaha	5.0	6.3	88.7	15.0
South Omaha	2.4	1.8	95.8	15.0
Balance of Douglas County	4.0	3.6	92.4	15.0
Sarpy County	4.4	2.0	93.6	15.0
Pottawattamie County	6.7	8.2	85.1	17.5
Cass County	4.2	10.4	85.4	30.0
Washington County	10.0	6.0	84.0	20.0

Transportation to Work

The vast majority of workers in the Omaha MSA (92.3 percent) get to work driving alone in their own vehicle. Approximately 2.4 percent ride the bus, 2.0 percent car pool, and another 2.0 percent walk to work. Table 3 summarizes how people get to

work and provides an estimate of the number of persons using each mode of transportation.

Table 4 shows differences in the mode of transportation to work by area of residence. Workers living in North Omaha were much more likely than workers living elsewhere to rely on bus service to get to work. Over one in ten North Omaha

residents jobs (11.5 percent) traveled to work by bus, and another 8.1 percent relied on some means other than the bus or driving alone in their own car to get to work. In South Omaha, 11.8 percent got to work using some means other than driving alone in their own vehicle or the bus, and another 4.3 percent used the bus.

Table 3. Transportation to Work, Omaha MSA

	Number	Percent
Persons 16 years and older with jobs, fixed work site away from home	355,190	100.0
Drive alone in own vehicle	327,788	92.3
Bus	8,573	2.4
Car pool	7,242	2.0
Walk	7,251	2.0
Employer's vehicle	1,117	0.3
Family member drives	2,069	0.6
Self-propelled vehicle (bicycle, skateboard)	695	0.2
Other	457	0.1

Table 4. Transportation to Work by Area of Residence, Omaha MSA

	Percent of total		
	Drive alone in own vehicle	Bus	Other
Persons 16 years and older with jobs, fixed work site away from home	92.3	2.4	5.3
Area			
North Omaha	80.4	11.5	8.1
South Omaha	83.9	4.3	11.8
Balance of Douglas County	94.0	1.4	4.6
Sarpy County	97.5	0.7	1.8
Pottawattamie County	94.6	n/a	5.4
Cass County	87.8	n/a	12.2
Washington County	100.0	n/a	n/a

“n/a” indicates survey sample contained no persons in this category.

Usual Place of Work

Table 5 looks at the place of work for Omaha area residents who have jobs at fixed sites away from home. Overall, about three out of four residents (76.0 percent) of the Omaha MSA work in Douglas County, 11.3 percent work in Sarpy County, and 7.8 percent work in Pottawattamie County. Other places of work are Washington County (1.8 percent of working

metro area residents), Cass County (1.1 percent), Lancaster County (0.8 percent), Dodge County (0.4 percent), Iowa other than Pottawattamie County (0.4 percent), and other area (0.2 percent).

Table 6 shows usual place of work by area of residence. The vast majority of North Omaha residents with jobs (94.0 percent) work in Douglas County. Likewise, 91.4 percent of South

Omaha residents and 91.0 percent residents of the balance of Douglas County work in Douglas County. In contrast, only 40.8 percent of Sarpy County residents work in Sarpy County while 53.4 percent work in Douglas County. Washington County follows a similar pattern: 39.5 percent of Washington County residents work in Washington County, and 51.2 percent work in Douglas County. About half of

Pottawattamie County residents (52.4 percent) work in Pottawattamie County, and another 39.2 percent work in Douglas County. About one in four Cass County residents (27.5 percent) work in Cass County, 40.0 percent work in Douglas County, 15.0 percent work outside the metro area, and 12.5 percent work in Sarpy County.

Table 5. Usual Place of Work for Residents of Omaha MSA

	Number	Percent
Persons 16 years and older with jobs, fixed work site away from home (total)	355,190	100.0
Douglas County	270,102	76.0
Sarpy County	40,160	11.3
Pottawattamie County	27,797	7.8
Washington County	6,484	1.8
Cass County	4,006	1.1
Lancaster County	2,947	0.8
Dodge County	1,563	0.4
Iowa other than Pottawattamie County	1,598	0.4
Other	533	0.2

Table 6. Usual Place of Work by Area of Residence, Omaha MSA

	Place of Work						Total
	Douglas	Sarpy	Pottawattamie	Washington	Cass	Other	
Number:							
Area of Residence							
North Omaha	33,725	957	239	718	n/a	239	35,878
South Omaha	35,399	2,870	239	n/a	n/a	239	38,748
Balance of Douglas County	140,880	5,980	4,066	718	239	2,870	154,753
Sarpy County	35,399	27,028	1,913	957	478	478	66,254
Pottawattamie County	15,547	1,913	20,809	239	478	718	39,705
Washington County	5,262	239	n/a	4,066	n/a	718	10,285
Cass County	3,827	1,196	478	n/a	2,631	1,435	9,567
Percent of total:							
Area of Residence							
North Omaha	94.0	2.7	0.7	2.0	n/a	0.7	100.0
South Omaha	91.4	7.4	0.6	n/a	n/a	0.6	100.0
Balance of Douglas County	91.0	3.9	2.6	0.5	0.2	1.9	100.0
Sarpy County	53.4	40.8	2.9	1.4	0.7	0.7	100.0
Pottawattamie County	39.2	4.8	52.4	0.6	1.2	1.8	100.0
Washington County	51.2	2.3	n/a	39.5	n/a	7.0	100.0
Cass County	40.0	12.5	5.0	n/a	27.5	15.0	100.0

“n/a” indicates survey sample contained no persons in this category.

Personal Computer Access and Use

Respondents were asked if they had a personal computer at home. They were also asked whether they had used a personal computer to access the Internet, send or receive electronic mail, or do word processing, spreadsheet, or similar tasks within the last month.

Characteristics of Persons with Personal Computers at Home

About half of Omaha area adults (52.7 percent) had a personal computer at home. There were significant differences in the proportion of persons having a computer by

sex, age, race, education, and area. Men were slightly more likely than women to have a personal computer at home (55.4 percent versus 50.2 percent). Persons in younger age groups were more likely to have a personal computer than were persons in older age groups. Roughly three out of five persons under age 50 had computers at home compared to about half those age 50 to 64 and one out of five persons age 65 and over. Just over half of white, non-Hispanic persons (55.2 percent) had computers as did 52.9 percent of persons of other races (neither white, African-American, nor Hispanic). About one third of African-Americans (32.3 percent) had computers at home, and 28.1 percent of Hispanics had computers. The proportion of persons with computers at home increased with education level. Persons living in Sarpy (66.6 percent) and Washington (57.4 percent) counties were most likely to have computers at home. Persons living in North Omaha (39.0 percent) and South Omaha (39.5 percent) were least likely to have computers at home. For more details, see table 7.

Key Findings

- About half of Omaha MSA residents age 19 and over (52.7 percent) had a personal computer at home.
- Only about one out of five persons age 65 and older had a personal computer at home. About half of persons age 50 to 64 had a personal computer at home, and about three out five persons age 19 to 49 had a personal computer at home.
- Hispanic and African-American adults were less likely to have a personal computer at home than were persons of other races. African-Americans were less likely than persons of other races to have used a personal computer in the last month to access the Internet or transmit e-mail.
- Sarpy County had the highest percentage of adults with a personal computer at home (66.6 percent) and the highest percentage (69.5 percent) that had used a personal computer in the last month to do word processing, work on a spreadsheet, or do similar tasks. In addition, Sarpy County was the only area where over half the adults had used the Internet and e-mail in the last month.
- Households with children were more likely than households without to have a personal computer. Over two-thirds of households with school-age children had a personal computer at home.

Table 7. Personal Computer Access and Use by Selected Population Characteristics and Area, Omaha MSA

	Percentage with a personal computer at home	Percentage who in the last month have used a personal computer to:		
		access the Internet world-wide web	send or receive electronic mail	do word processing, work on a spreadsheet, or do similar tasks
All persons 19 years and over	52.7	37.6	39.0	48.8
Sex				
Male	55.4*	43.6*	42.1	51.8
Female	50.2*	32.6*	36.7	46.8
Age				
19 to 24	62.3*	59.0*	56.4*	66.7*
25 to 34	58.2*	58.0*	56.7*	65.2*
35 to 49	64.8*	47.5*	48.7*	61.3*
50 to 64	49.2*	25.7*	31.4*	42.7*
65 and over	20.5*	5.5*	7.3*	10.5*
Race				
Hispanic	28.1*	41.4*	36.7*	34.5*
White, not Hispanic	55.2*	39.0*	41.1*	51.1*
African-American	32.3*	20.0*	21.1*	32.6*
Other	52.9*	50.0*	36.0*	46.2*
Education				
Less than high school	21.1*	4.8*	6.5*	6.5*
High school or GED	37.9*	19.0*	21.7*	27.5*
Some college, but no degree	57.8*	40.9*	41.4*	52.5*
Associate degree	63.2*	49.1*	39.6*	52.8*
Bachelor's degree	68.0*	54.4*	57.5*	70.6*
Advanced degree	68.9*	60.4*	64.7*	81.3*
Area				
North Omaha	39.0*	27.1*	25.6*	34.6*
South Omaha	39.5*	30.3*	31.0*	35.5*
Balance of Douglas County	56.1*	43.1*	44.8*	53.1*
Sarpy County	66.6*	52.8*	56.1*	69.5*
Pottawattamie County	46.3*	22.1*	22.1*	35.6*
Cass County	53.3*	29.3*	27.5*	42.5*
Washington County	57.4*	24.2*	36.4*	53.1*

*Differences across categories are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Characteristics of Persons Using Personal Computers

This section addresses the question of who has experience using personal computers whether at home, at work, or somewhere else. Overall, the 37.6 percent of Omaha area adults reported accessing the Internet world-wide web within the last month. Similarly, 39.0 percent reported sending or receiving electronic mail, and 48.8 percent reported doing word processing, spreadsheet work, or similar tasks (see table 7).

Men were more likely than women to have accessed the Internet, but there was no significant difference in the proportion of men and women using e-mail or doing word processing, spreadsheet, or similar work. Although Hispanics were less likely than white, non-Hispanic persons to have a computer at home, the proportion of Hispanics using Internet and e-mail was similar to the proportion of white, non-Hispanics. African-Americans were least likely to have used a personal computer within the last month for any of the purposes asked. The proportion of persons using computers increased with education level. Only about one out of twenty persons with less than a high school education had used a computer in the last month for any of the three purposes

asked. Among those with a high school diploma only, about one in five had used a personal computer in the last month. More than half of those with college degrees had used a personal computer in the last month. Looking at different areas, Sarpy County residents were most likely to have used a personal computer in the last month. Sarpy County was the only area where over half the residents had accessed the Internet (52.8 percent), used e-mail (56.1 percent), and done word processing, spreadsheet, or similar tasks (69.5 percent). In contrast, only 22.1 percent of Pottawattamie County residents had accessed the Internet or used e-mail. North Omaha had the smallest proportion of residents doing word processing,

spreadsheet, or similar tasks (34.6 percent).

Characteristics of Households with Personal Computers

About half of all households in the Omaha MSA (48.3 percent) had a personal computer. Table 8 shows the proportion of households with personal computers by the presence of children and by household income.

Households with children were more likely to have computers than were households without children. About three out of five households with children age 5 or younger (59.4 percent) had a personal computer. Among households with children age 6 to 13, 69.8 percent had a personal computer. Similarly, 72.7 percent

Table 8. Personal Computer Presence by Selected Household Characteristics, Omaha MSA

	Percentage with a personal computer
All households	48.3
Children in household	
Age 5 or younger	59.4*
Age 6 to 13	69.8*
Age 14 to 18	72.7*
Household income (annual)	
Under \$25,000	23.3*
\$25,000 to 44,999	45.2*
\$45,000 to 64,999	66.0*
\$65,000 or more	75.0*

*Differences across categories are statistically significant (p < .05).

of households with children age 14 to 18 had a personal computer. Since households can naturally have children falling into more than one age group, some households are counted more than once in this tabulation.

Not surprisingly, households with higher incomes were more likely to have a personal

computer than were households with lower incomes. About one out of four households (23.3 percent) with incomes under \$25,000 per year had a personal computer. Three out of four households (75.0 percent) with incomes of \$65,000 or more had a personal computer.

Where People Use Personal Computers

Table 9 shows where people use personal computers. More persons access the Internet and use e-mail at home than at work. The proportion of persons doing word processing, spreadsheet, and similar tasks at work and at home is roughly the same.

Table 9. Where Personal Computer Used, Omaha MSA

	Percentage who in the last month have used a personal computer to:		
	access the Internet world-wide web	send or receive electronic mail	do word processing, work on a spreadsheet, or do similar tasks
All persons 19 years and over	37.6	39.0	48.8
Where done			
At home	41.8	40.2	33.0
At work	20.2	25.1	27.9
Both home and work	30.5	30.4	34.7
Somewhere else	7.5	4.3	4.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Comments About the Omaha Area Job Market

At the conclusion of the Omaha Conditions Survey: 1998 interview, respondents were asked if they had any additional comments about the job market in the Omaha area. Any comments were recorded verbatim. About one-third of respondents (35.7 percent) made a comment of some sort. The remaining 64.3

percent offered no comment at all. Respondent comments were classified into categories: “generally positive” (with seven sub-categories), “generally negative” (with 11 sub-categories), “other” (comments that either were too vague to categorize or did not pertain to the job market), and “don’t

know.” Comments were classified as positive or negative from the viewpoint of a job seeker, not an employer. Consequently, a statement such as “There are not enough workers” was considered positive although an employer would probably consider such a situation negative.

Table 10 summarizes respondent comments about the Omaha area job market. Overall, there were slightly more positive than negative comments (18.7 percent of respondents made positive comments, and 14.3 percent made negative comments). The most frequently mentioned positive comments were that the job market was good or that there were many jobs available. The most frequently mentioned negative comment was that jobs were low paying.

Table 11 summarizes just the positive and negative responses by selected population characteristics. Comments from males were more likely to be positive than were comments from females. About three out of five comments from males were positive (62.7 percent), compared to about half the comments from females (50.5 percent). The proportion of positive and negative comments did not vary significantly by age group. It did,

Key Findings

- About two-thirds of adults interviewed offered no comment when asked about the Omaha area job market. From the one-third that did comment about the job market, there were slightly more positive (56.7 percent) than negative (43.3 percent) comments.
- The most frequently mentioned positive comment was that the job market was good, it was easy to find jobs. The most frequently mentioned negative comment was that jobs were low paying.
- Men were more positive about the Omaha area job market than women.
- While 60.2 percent of comments from white, not Hispanic adults were positive, only 33.3 percent of comments from Hispanics, 22.2 percent of comments from African-Americans, and 40.0 percent of comments from persons of other races were positive.
- Adults with bachelor's or advanced degrees were more likely than those without to offer positive comments about the Omaha area job market.
- North Omaha was the only area where fewer than half the comments about the Omaha area job market were positive.

Table 10. Any additional comments about the job market in the Omaha area?

	Number of Sample Responses	Percent
Generally positive comments (total)	224	18.7
Good, great	74	6.2
Many jobs available, easy to find jobs	70	5.8
Not enough workers	29	2.4
Not enough qualified workers	26	2.2
Low unemployment	16	1.3
Positive comment about specific industry/occupation	7	0.6
Other positive comment	3	0.2
Generally negative comments (total)	171	14.3
Low wages, benefits	61	5.1
A lot of low paying, low skilled jobs	26	2.1
Need specific type of job	13	1.1
Discrimination	13	1.1
Need training, assistance	13	1.1
It is poor, could be better	10	0.8
Can't find job	8	0.7
Need more jobs	6	0.5
Too many part-time, no benefit, temporary jobs	4	0.4
Poor location of jobs, transportation problems	4	0.3
Other negative comment	13	1.0
Other	23	1.9
Don't know, haven't looked	10	0.8
No comment at all	772	64.3
Total	1,200	100.0

however, vary significantly by race. Comments from white, non-Hispanic persons were more positive than negative, but comments from racial/ethnic minorities were more negative than positive. Only 22.2 percent of the comments from African-American respondents were positive compared to 60.2 percent of the comments from white, non-Hispanic respondents. Looking at education, persons with higher levels of education were more likely to make positive comments than were persons with lower levels of education. The

proportion of positive to negative comments did not vary greatly by area with the exception of North Omaha where only about one-third of the comments were positive and two-thirds were negative. Not surprisingly, all comments from unemployed persons were negative.

Table 11. Comments About the Job Market in the Omaha Area: Positive or Negative

	Number of Sample Responses	Percent	
		Generally Positive Comments	Generally Negative Comments
All persons 19 years and over	396	56.7	43.3
Sex			
Male	204	62.7*	37.3*
Female	192	50.5*	49.5*
Age			
16 to 24	21	61.9	38.1
25 to 34	73	58.9	41.1
35 to 49	150	58.7	41.3
50 to 64	80	47.5	52.5
65 and over	63	57.1	42.9
Race			
Hispanic	9	33.3*	66.7*
White, not Hispanic	344	60.2*	39.8*
African-American	27	22.2*	77.8*
Other	10	40.0*	60.0*
Education			
Less than high school	18	44.4*	55.6*
High school or GED	108	46.3*	53.7*
Some college, but no degree	100	54.0*	46.0*
Associate degree	33	45.5*	54.5*
Bachelor's degree	88	68.2*	31.8*
Advanced degree	48	75.0*	25.0*
Area			
North Omaha	42	35.7	64.3
South Omaha	48	60.4	39.6
Balance of Douglas County	177	59.9	40.1
Sarpy County	69	56.5	43.5
Pottawattamie County	42	59.5	40.5
Cass County	9	66.7	33.3
Washington County	8	62.5	37.5
Labor Force Status			
Employed	295	56.6*	43.3*
Unemployed	7	0.0*	100.0*
Not in the Labor Force	91	60.4*	39.6*

*Differences across categories are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Households Receiving Government Assistance

Respondents were asked if anyone in their household was currently receiving government assistance. If yes, respondents

were asked what kind of assistance they received and what was the approximate dollar value per month.

Overall, 8.1 percent of all households reported receiving some type of government assistance. The most common types of assistance received were medicare/medicaid (4.8 percent of all households) and social security, SSI, disability (4.4 percent). North Omaha, South Omaha, Cass County, and Pottawattamie Counties had higher percentages of households receiving government assistance than did Washington, Sarpy, and the balance of Douglas County. For additional details, see table 12.

Key Findings

- About one out of twelve households (8.1 percent) reported receiving some type of government assistance.
- The most frequently reported types of government assistance received were medicare/medicaid (4.8 percent of all households) and Social Security, SSI, disability (4.4 percent).

Table 12. Households Receiving Government Assistance

	Percent of all households
Households receiving any type of government assistance	8.1
Households receiving:	
Medicare/medicaid	4.8
Social Security, SSI (Supplemental Security Income), disability	4.4
Food stamps, food commodities	1.6
Rental/housing assistance	1.3
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	1.0
Child care	0.6
General assistance (cash)	0.6
Utilities	0.3
TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)	0.2
Households receiving any type of government assistance by area	
North Omaha	16.8
South Omaha	14.1
Balance of Douglas County	4.8
Sarpy County	4.1
Pottawattamie County	11.3
Cass County	14.3
Washington County	3.1

When asked what was the approximate dollar value per month of government assistance, about one-third of respondents (32.8 percent) either were unable to say or refused. Another one-fourth (25.6 percent) said \$700 or more. Table 13 shows the complete breakdown of responses.

**Table 13. Households Receiving Government Assistance:
Monthly Dollar Value of Assistance**

	Percentage of All Households Receiving Assistance
Less than \$100	10.7
\$100 to just under \$200	4.0
\$200 to just under \$300	5.0
\$300 to just under \$400	10.1
\$500 to just under \$600	9.7
\$600 to just under \$700	2.2
\$700 or more	25.6
Don't know/refused	32.8