



Josie Gatti Schafer, Ph.D.  
Director, CPAR  
jgschafer@unomaha.edu  
402.554.2134

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

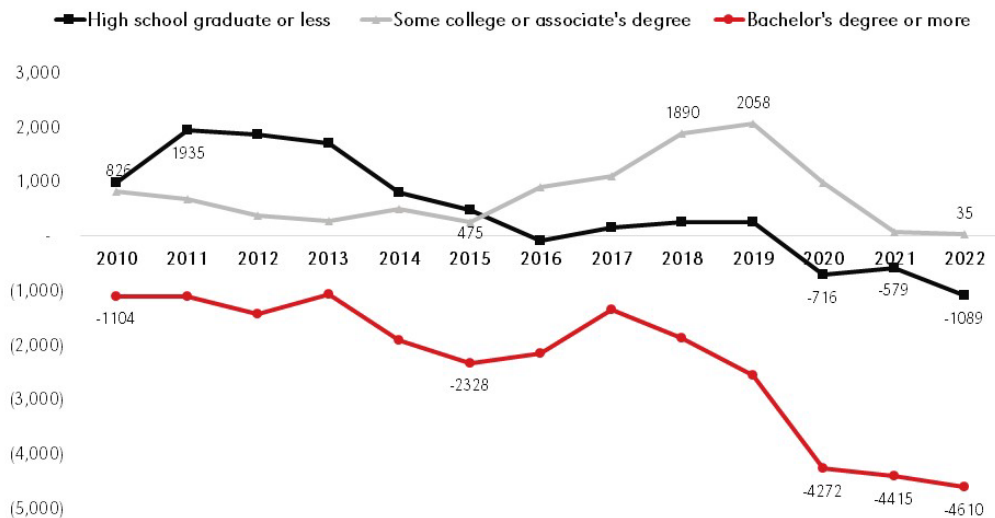
## Nebraska Faces Ongoing Brain Drain According to Latest 2022 American Community Survey Data from the United States Census Bureau

OMAHA, NEBRASKA – The recently released data from the 2022 American Community Survey from the United States Census Bureau reveals a persistent challenge for Nebraska as brain drain continued and increased from the previous year.

Brain drain, defined as the outmigration of individuals with a bachelor’s degree or more, remains a critical issue for Nebraska. The Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, a trusted partner of the U.S. Census Bureau for disseminating census data in the state, has been monitoring the trend since 2010. The December release demonstrates the sustained trend in Nebraska with a net loss of 4,610 individuals with a bachelor’s degree, graduate degree, or professional degree. The 2022 number is a slight increase from the 2021 number of 4,415. This trend has been on the rise since 2010, signaling a concerning pattern according to Josie Schafer, director of CPAR and an expert on economic and workforce development. However, she noted “in the state right now there are over 400,000 individuals with a bachelor’s degree or more.”

Brain drain, or net-outmigration of persons with a bachelor’s degree or more, has persisted since 2010

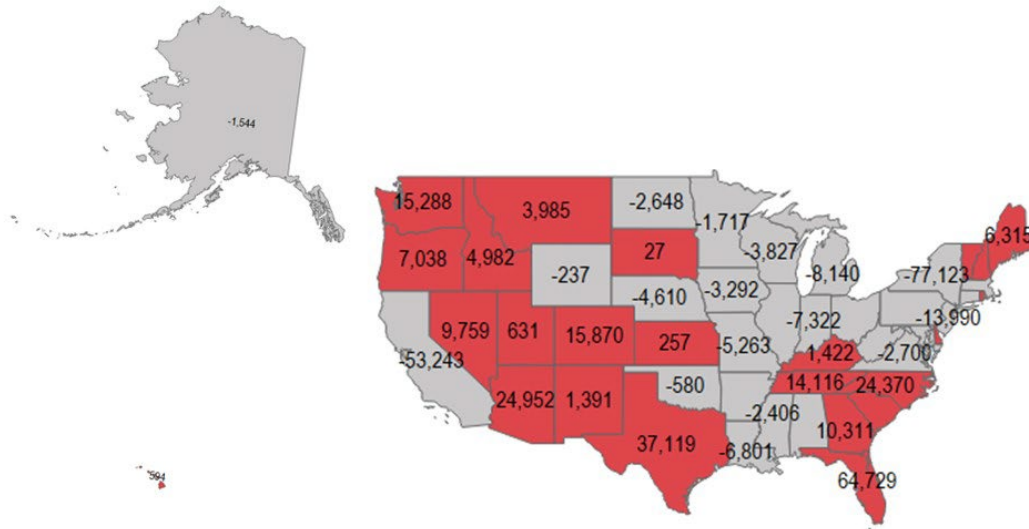
*Net migration by educational attainment annually 2010 to 2022*





Notably, the data reveals that individuals 25 years and older with other levels of educational attainment are also leaving the state. In 2022, approximately 1,000 people with a high school degree or less net left the state. This marks a shift from previous years when Nebraska attracted individuals in this education group. Those with some college or an associate degree are still net movers into Nebraska, but the overall number, 35, is considerably smaller compared to years past. Schafer attributes outmigration to changing workforce dynamics, including job availability, opportunities, and pay. She emphasizes, “Even with numerous job opportunities available in the state currently, individuals opting to relocate will try to secure their future and a job is critical to their long-term success. It is likely they perceive more opportunities elsewhere.” Additionally, CPAR has found that housing was a contributor to out-migration in 2022, see that report [here](#). Overall, about 26,000 people 25 years and older did move into Nebraska in 2022, but about 31,600 left.

Nebraska is not alone in the Midwest for brain drain  
*Net migration of persons 25 years and older with a bachelor’s degree or more. States with brain gain in red.*



Among neighboring states, Nebraska is not alone in grappling with brain drain. Iowa, Missouri, and Wyoming all experienced net loss of their more educated population. Kansas, Colorado, and South Dakota all had brain gain; however, the gains for both Kansas and South Dakota were relatively small. Iowa, which had a slight positive brain gain in 2021, lost that advantage in 2022.

**ABOUT CPAR**

CPAR collaboratively produces and disseminates high-quality public scholarship about topics that impact the lives of Nebraskans. Ongoing projects from CPAR include policy analyses for the Planning Committee of the Nebraska State Legislature, the Nebraska Rural Transit Project, [governing.unomaha.edu](http://governing.unomaha.edu), and designation by the U.S. Census Bureau as a statewide liaison for disseminating a range of data products. Visit [cpar.unomaha.edu](http://cpar.unomaha.edu) to access CPAR’s extensive data resources on state and local issues in Nebraska.