



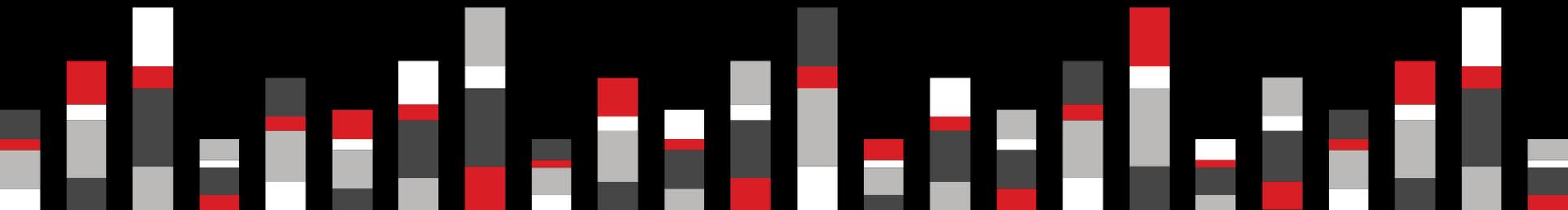
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Data and Research Series for Community Impact

PART TWO

SEPTEMBER 23, 2025





Local Challenges in Safeguarding Data Systems in Nebraska

Katie Thurber

Commissioner

Nebraska Department of Labor

What will it take to protect the credibility and availability of data in a time of rapid change and growing skepticism?

 The Hill

White House blasts BLS revision showing almost a million fewer jobs than first reported | RISING

Robby Soave and Lindsey Granger discuss the U.S. economy adding 911,000 fewer jobs over the 12 months ending in March than the Bureau of...

38 minutes ago



 CNBC

White House says jobs revision proves Biden economy a 'disaster,' BLS is 'broken,' Powell was 'too late'

The latest Labor Department report showed that the U.S. economy created fewer jobs than had been initially reported in the year ending March...

22 hours ago



 Tax Foundation

Taxpayers Need the BLS to Stay Out of Politics

But economic data affect government actions and could have surprising consequences. If nominee E.J. Antoni manipulates the statistics to make Mr...

2 weeks ago



 Competitive Enterprise Institute

BLS data is faulty, not rigged

BLS data is faulty, not rigged ... The federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has struggled in recent years to produce an accurate...

1 month ago



Growing Skepticism - Causes

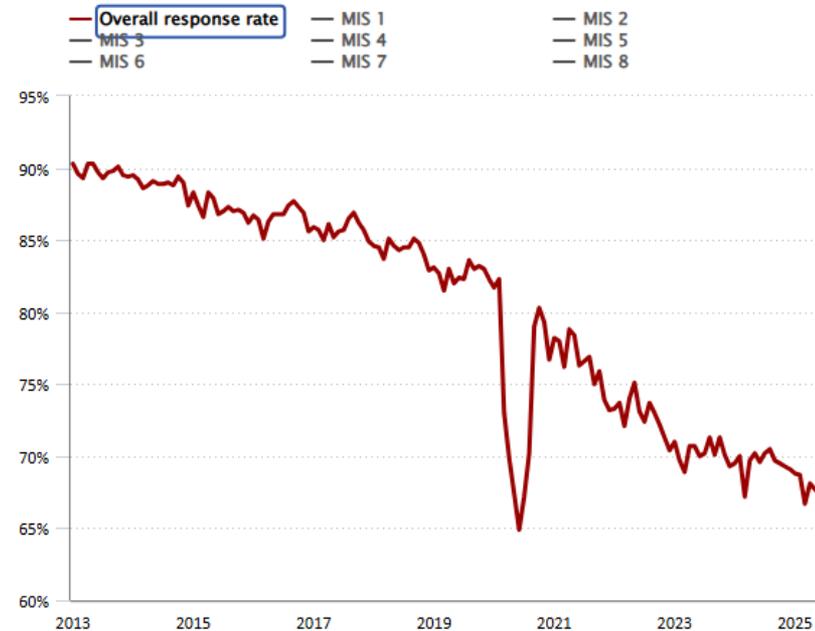
- Data collection issues
 - Fewer landlines
 - Blocking/ignoring calls to cell phones
 - Reluctance to click on email & text links
 - Cost of mailing & in-person visits
 - Participant burnout & fear of scams

Growing Skepticism – Causes Declining Response Rates

Current Population Survey (CPS) Response Rate

Chart:

CPS response rates, overall response rate and response rates by month in sample (MIS)



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data. Click and drag to zoom in.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Availability of Data

- **Pace of Data**

- **1 KB:** A tiny text file
- **1 MB (1,024 KB):** A small book or a high-quality photo
- **1 GB (1,024 MB):** A short video or a few hundred photos
- **1 TB (1,024 GB):** A large collection of movies, thousands of photos, or a significant amount of data for backup
 - In 2023, 402.74 Million Terabytes of data was created ***EVERY DAY***

<https://www.techbusinessnews.com.au/blog/402-74-million-terabytes-of-data-is-created-every-day/>

Availability of Data

- In 2023:
 - Facebook generated about 4,000 TB of data each day
 - X (Twitter) accounted for around 500 million tweets daily, translating to roughly 560 GB of data
 - TikTok users produced about 7.35 TB of data daily through video content
 - Google processed about 3.5 billion searches daily
 - NDOL processed over 37,000 thousand unemployment insurance claims, 232,000 thousand weekly certifications, posted tens of thousands of job openings, and managed millions of wage records

Availability of Data – cause of skepticism

- Information overload
 - Cut through the “noise” to find an answer
 - Ask the right questions & verify the source
- Skepticism due to inconsistent data
- Easier to find data to match a narrative

Availability of Data

What is the average wage in Nebraska

As of mid-2025, the average wage in Nebraska is approximately **\$25.80 per hour**, which translates to about **\$53,671 per year** ¹. If you look at weekly earnings, the average is around **\$1,082 per week**, though when adjusted for cost of living, that has the purchasing power of **\$1,197** ².

Here's a quick breakdown:

 Metric	 Value
Hourly Wage	\$25.80
Weekly Earnings	\$1,082
Adjusted Weekly Value	\$1,197
Annual Salary	\$53,671

Wages vary widely depending on the industry and location. For example:

- **Financial activities** sector tops the chart with weekly earnings around **\$1,584**.
- **Leisure and hospitality** workers earn much less, averaging **\$472 per week** ².

Protect the Credibility – Must understand the data

- What is the average wage in Nebraska?
 - \$29.98 per hour, total for all occupations, according to the Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics (OEWS) survey May 2024 estimates updated to 2nd quarter 2025 using the Employment Cost Index (ECI)
 - \$1,228 per week, total for all industries, according to the Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW) program 4th quarter 2024 preliminary data; QCEW is based on employer payroll records and publishes weekly wages since hours worked are not collected
 - \$32.43 per hour (for private employers) according to the Current Employment Statistics (CES) program June 2025 preliminary estimates; data is for private, non-farm jobs – totals including government are not published for Nebraska

Protect the Credibility

- Transparency with methodology
- Explanations of data & changes, available to answer questions
- Consistency*

* or open communication when changes occur

Rapid Change

- “Rapid” is relative
- Adapt and innovate, but systematic and intentional
- Seek efficiencies and use of data already available
- Maintain service levels and meet ongoing data needs

What will it take to protect the credibility and availability of data in a time of rapid change and growing skepticism?

NDOL:

- Maintain confidentiality and trust
- Good stewards of the data received
- Communicate clearly & effectively – transparency and available for questions

Data Users:

- Some skepticism is healthy - ask questions & verify data sources
- Understand limitations of the data

Nebraska Department of Labor Vision Statement:

To empower Nebraskans by being a trusted source of support and guidance throughout their career paths, meeting individuals where they are in their journey. We are dedicated to helping people develop valuable skills, pursue fulfilling careers, and access the resources needed for success. By creating lasting opportunities and offering personalized support at every stage, we contribute to the growth and prosperity of Nebraska, one career at a time.

Availability of Data

- Cuts to Data Collection May Erode Reliability of Economic Statistics - The New York Times
 - https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/30/business/bls-data-collection-cuts-cpi.html?unlocked_article_code=1.aU8.CFr-.0rxle2wqXH5W&smid=em-share

Websites showing response rate info

- See executive summary:
 - <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/255531/Decliningresponse.pdf>
- Current Population Survey (CPS) response rates were a recent topic of discussion
 - https://www.bls.gov/cps/methods/response_rates.htm
- What Is BLS Doing to Maintain Data Quality as Response Rates Decline?
 - <https://www.bls.gov/blog/2023/what-is-bls-doing-to-maintain-data-quality-as-response-rates-decline.htm>
- Office of Survey Methods Research – Establishment Surveys Unit Response Rates, April 2015-April 2025
 - <https://www.bls.gov/osmr/response-rates/establishment-survey-response-rates.htm>

Contact Information

- Katie.Thurber@nebraska.gov
- 402-471-9912