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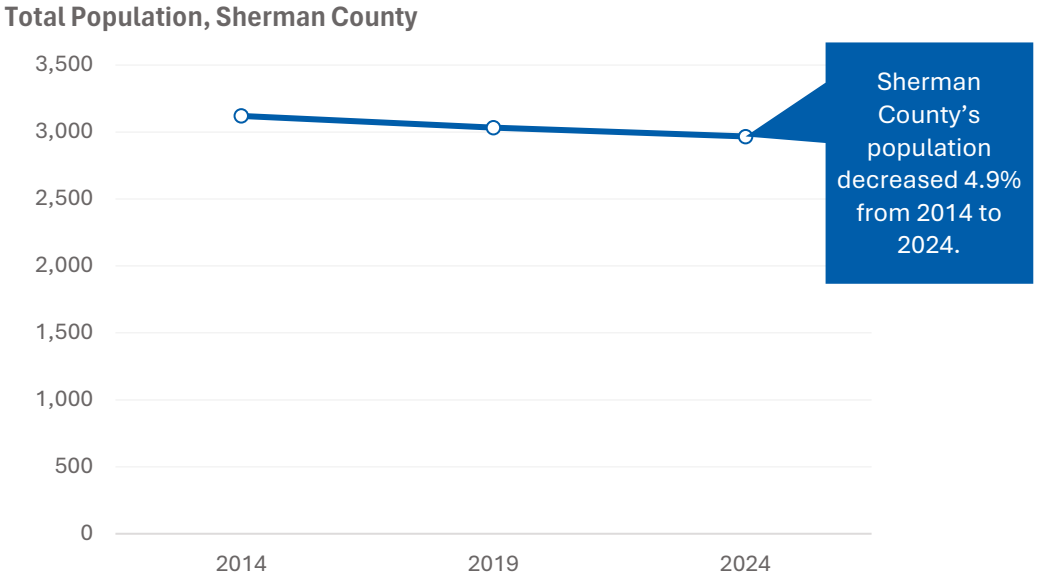
2026

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS REPORT

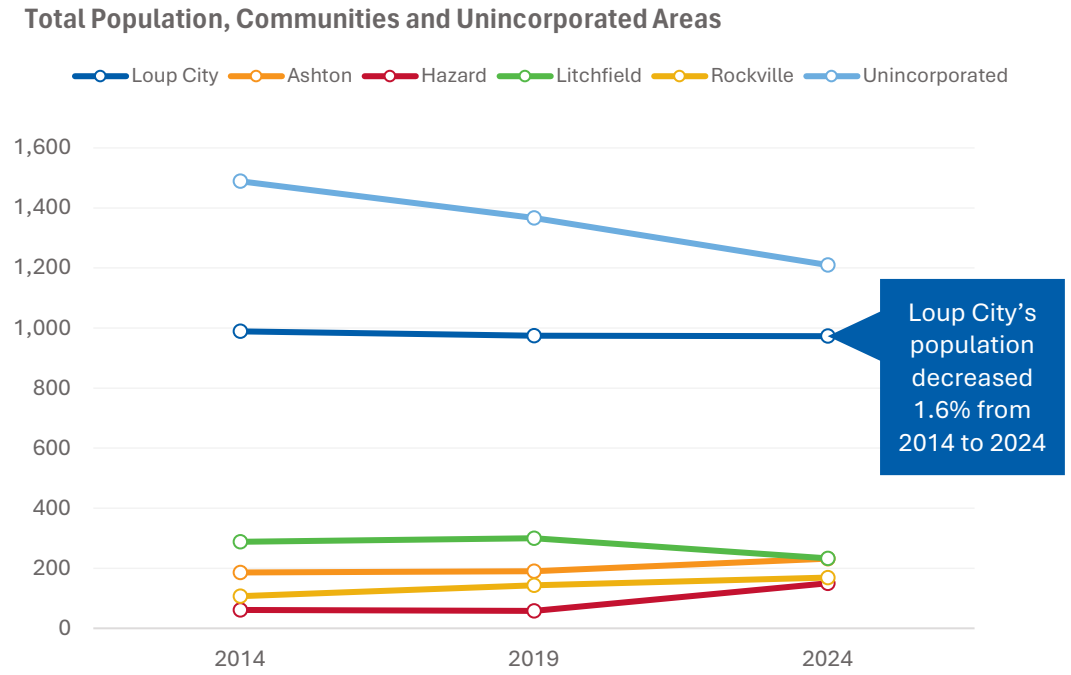
LOUP CITY, SHERMAN COUNTY

Population

Sherman County has experienced a decade of population contraction.



	2014	2019	2024	# Change 2014-2024	% Change 2014-2024
Ashton	186	190	232	46	24.7%
Hazard	61	58	150	89	145.9%
Litchfield	288	300	233	-55	-19.1%
Loup City	989	975	973	-16	-1.6%
Rockville	107	143	169	62	57.9%
Unincorporated	1,489	1,367	1,210	-279	-18.7%
County Total	**3,120**	**3,033**	**2,967**	**-153**	**-4.9%**



Sherman County is part of a pattern of rural contraction concentrated in central and western Nebraska.

- Sherman County's population is 2,967 as of 2024, a decrease of 4.9% (153 people) since 2014.
- Population in Loup City and the villages (Ashton, Hazard, Litchfield and Rockville) remained fairly steady, while the population in the unincorporated areas of the county decreased 18.7% (279 people) from 2014 to 2024.
- Nebraska experienced a population increase of 6.6% over the same period. However, 61 of its 93 counties lost population during the decade, Sherman County included.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates, Table DP05

Working-Age Population

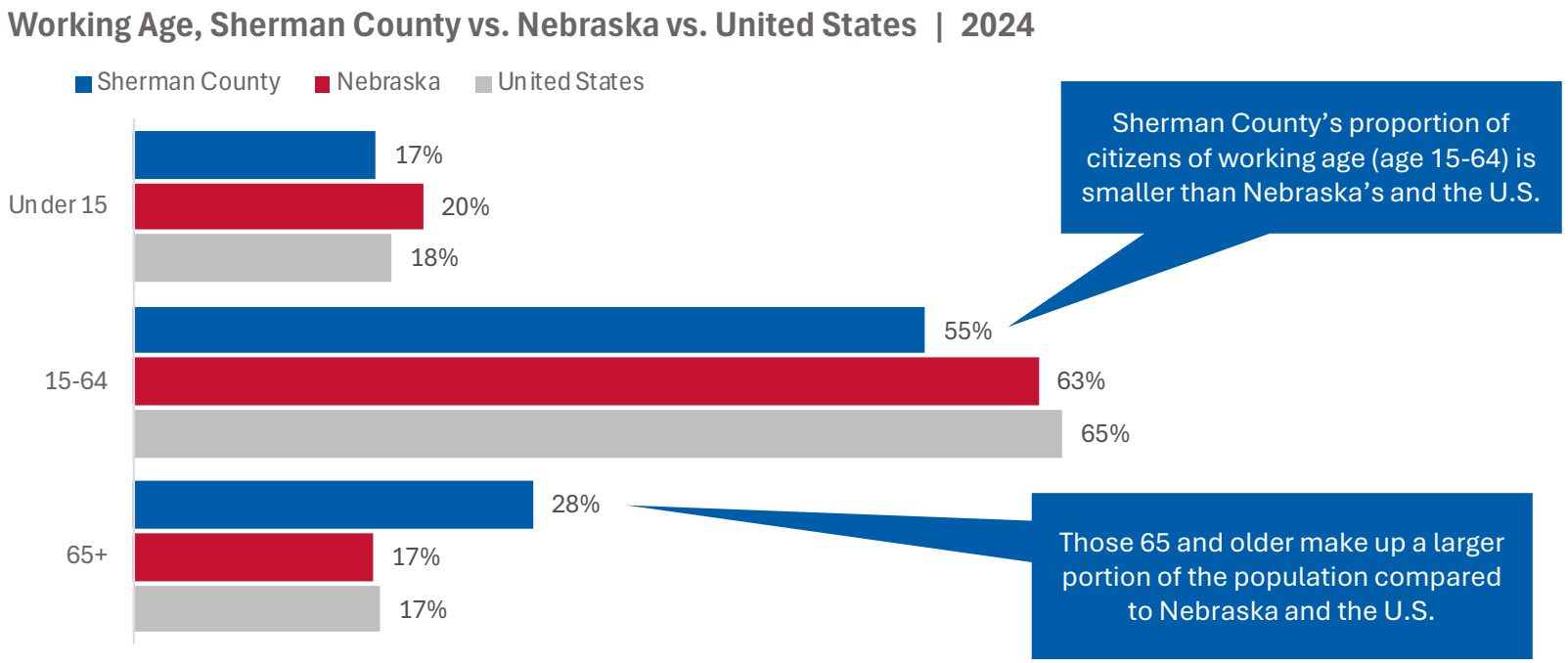
Sherman County experiences a high working-age ratio.

The working-age ratio, or more formally the age dependency ratio, measures the ratio of dependents (under 15 or over 64 years old) to the working-age population (ages 15–64). It shows the number of dependents per 100 working-age people, with a lower ratio indicating less economic burden on the working. **In Sherman County, the working-age ratio is 81.1, meaning that for every 100 working adults, there are 81.1 dependents under 15 or over 64 years of age.**

81.1
Dependency Ratio
Sherman County

58.5
Dependency Ratio
Nebraska

54.4
Dependency Ratio
United States



Why This Data is Important

1.Higher dependency burden: Nearly half of residents (45%) are outside prime working ages, which raises service demand (especially for aging-related needs) and concentrates economic and fiscal pressures on a smaller base of workers.

2.Tighter labor supply. If there are fewer working-age residents to fill roles, it can mean longer time-to-hire for employers, pressure on wages/benefits and a greater reliance on in-commuters.

3.Business succession risk. A larger share nearing retirement heightens the risk of closures or sales without transition planning.

4.Increased healthcare demand. A larger older population can mean more utilization of primary care, home health, rehabilitation, long-term care and transportation to care.

5.Enrollment pressure on schools. A smaller youth share often means flat or declining K-12 enrollment, stressing staff, facilities and programs.

6.Narrowing talent pipeline. Fewer local graduates narrows the future labor supply, especially if out-migration persists.

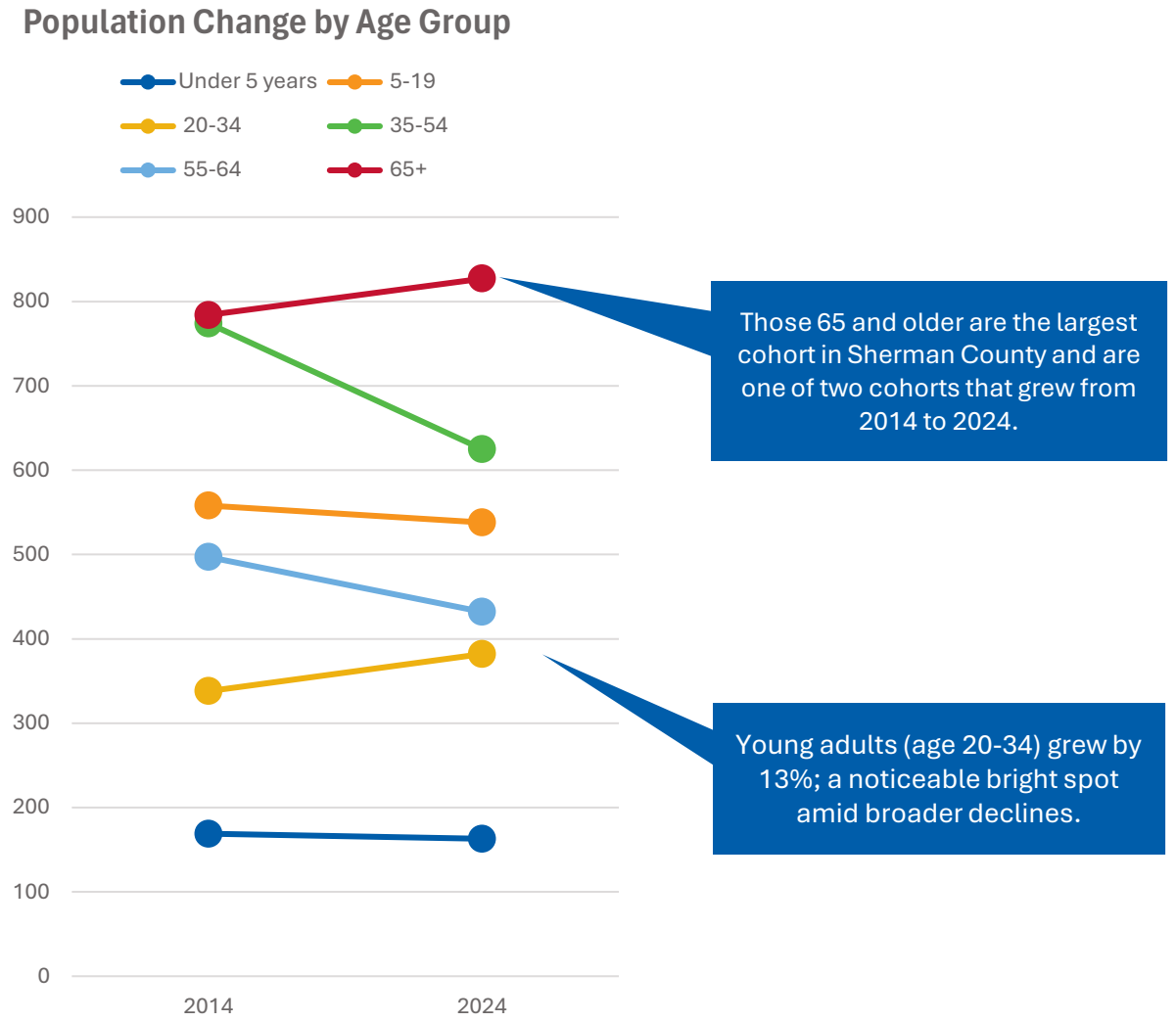
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates, Table S0101

Population Change by Age Group, 2014-2024

Sherman County sees major loss of mid-career adults as young adults and seniors grow.

	2014	2024	Population Change	Percent Change
Under 5	169	163	-6	-3.6%
5-19	558	538	-20	-3.6%
20-34	338	382	44	13.0%
35-54	774	625	-149	-19.3%
55-64	497	432	-65	-13.1%
65+	784	827	43	5.5%
Total	**3,120**	**2,967**	**-153**	**-4.9%**

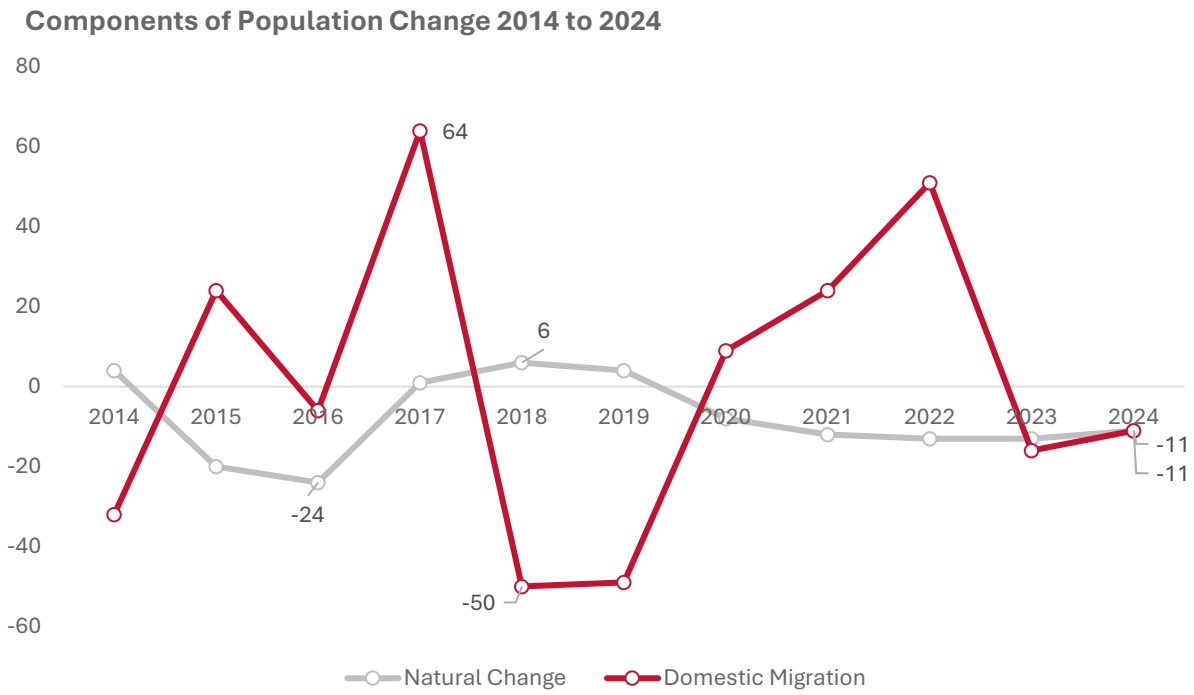
- **Largest decline:** The 35–54 age cohort fell by 149 (19.3%) and accounts for most of the net loss.
- **Second decline:** The 55–64 age cohort fell by 65 (13.1%) and contributes 43% of the net loss.
- **Young adults** (age 20–34) grew by 44 (13%); a notable bright spot amid broader declines.
- **Children and teens:** Under 5 (−6; −3.6%) and 5–19 (−20; −3.6%) experienced modest declines.
- **Older adults:** 65+ grew by 43 (5.5%), which increases the senior share given the overall population drop.
- **Offsets vs. losses:** Growth in the 20–34 and 65+ age cohorts (+87 total) offsets some of losses in other groups, but not enough to reverse the net decline.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates, Table S0101

Drivers of Population Change

Sherman County's population change driven by natural decline and volatile migration



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Births	32	25	25	33	48	34	35	34	31	30	31
Deaths	28	45	49	32	42	30	43	46	44	43	42
International Migration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic Migration	-32	24	-6	64	-50	-49	9	24	51	-16	-11
Net Change	**-28**	**2**	**-30**	**66**	**-43**	**-45**	**-3**	**11**	**36**	**-30**	**-21**

- **Persistent natural decrease:** Natural change is calculated by births minus deaths. Births consistently lagged deaths from 2014 to 2024.
  - Total natural change: −86 over 11 years (avg −7.8 per year).
  - Negative in 8 of 11 years; every year since 2020 is negative.
- **Domestic migration is the swing factor:**
  - Total domestic migration: +8 over 11 years (near balance overall).
  - Very volatile—large inflows in 2017 (+64) and 2022 (+51), sizable outflows in 2018 (−50) and 2019 (−49).
- **Net effect (from these two components):**
  - Overall net change: −78 (natural decrease dominates).
  - Positive years: 2015 (+4), 2017 (+65), 2020 (+1), 2021 (+12), 2022 (+38).
  - Largest gains: 2017 (strong in-migration).
  - Largest losses: 2018 (−44) and 2019 (−45) (migration outflows plus natural decline).
  - Recent trend: Return to decline in 2023 (−29) and 2024 (−22), with both natural decrease and out-migration contributing.
- **Demographic aging is structural:** The steady natural decrease indicates an older age profile, fewer births, and/or sustained out-migration of younger adults over time. Even modest migration inflows haven't offset this.
- **Migration drives short-term population swings:** Sharp inflows (2017, 2022) produced temporary gains, but were not sustained. Outflows in 2018–2019 and again in 2023–2024 erased much of those gains.

Why This Data is Important

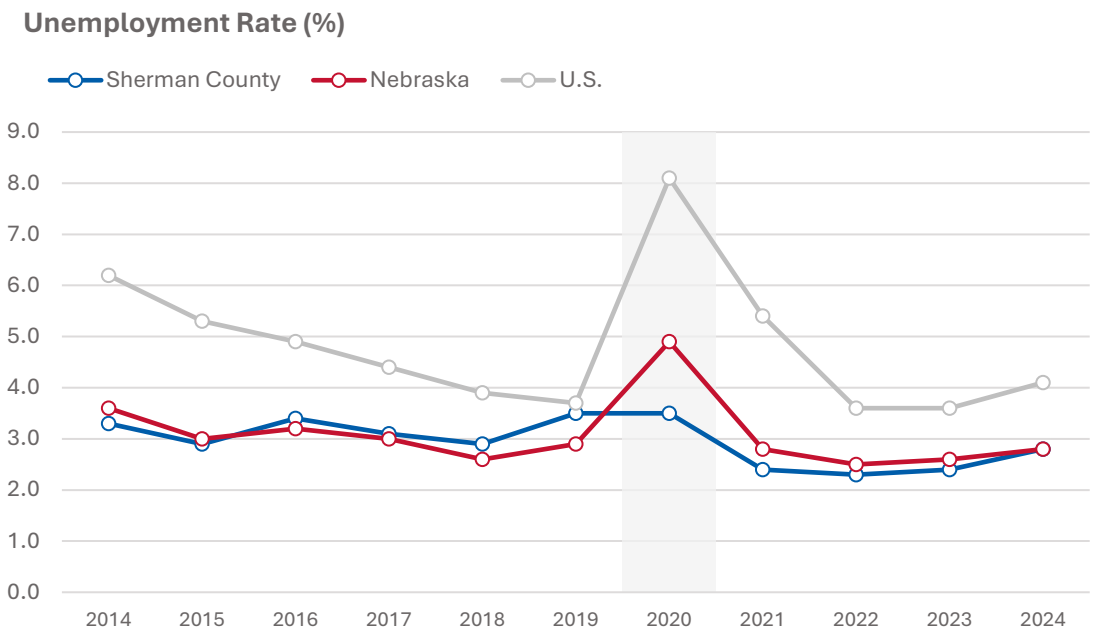
1.Workforce Challenges: Fewer residents may mean a shrinking labor pool, making it harder for local businesses to find workers and potentially limiting economic growth.

2.School Enrollment Declines: With fewer families or young people moving in, schools may see lower enrollment, which can affect funding and long-term planning.

3.Strain on Services: As the population ages and younger people move away, there may be increased demand for healthcare and senior services, while tax revenues decline.

Unemployment

Sherman County's labor market remains resilient compared to Nebraska and the U.S.

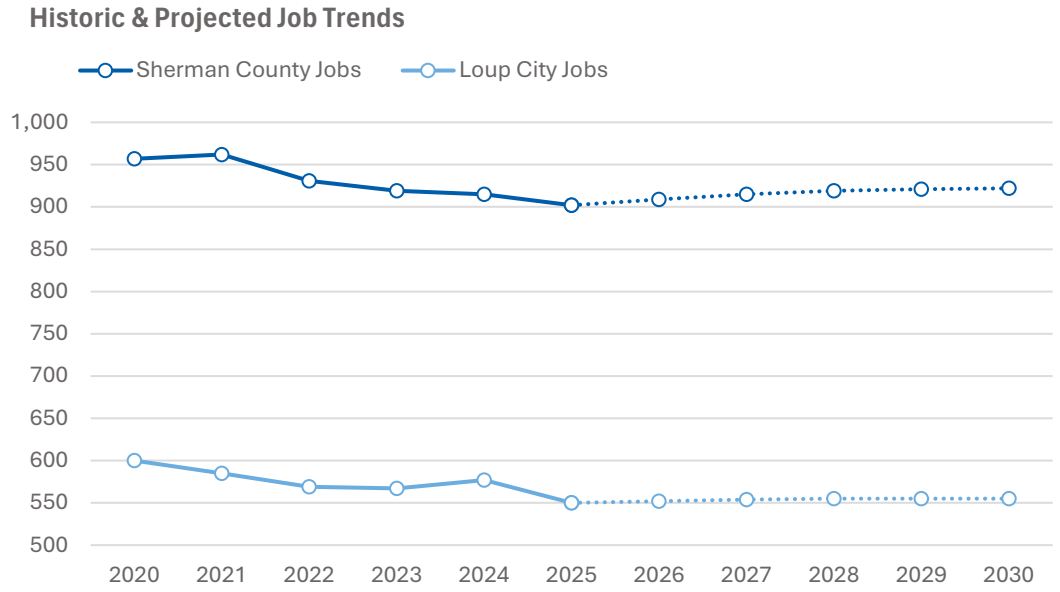


- Sherman County consistently maintains a lower unemployment rate than both Nebraska and the national average, reflecting a stable local economy rooted in agriculture, manufacturing and healthcare.
- Sherman County did not see as much of a bump in unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), and saw lower unemployment after 2020.
- Sherman County's unemployment rate decreased from 3.3% in 2014 to 2.8% in 2024.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment (LAU) Statistics.

Jobs

Loup City and Sherman County's job growth rate lags Nebraska's.



2020-2025

- From 2020 to 2025, jobs **declined by 5.7%** in Sherman County from 957 to 902.
- From 2020 to 2025, jobs **declined by 8.3%** in Loup City, NE from 600 to 550.
- This change **fell short of the Nebraska growth rate of 7.0% and the national growth rate of 10.6%.**

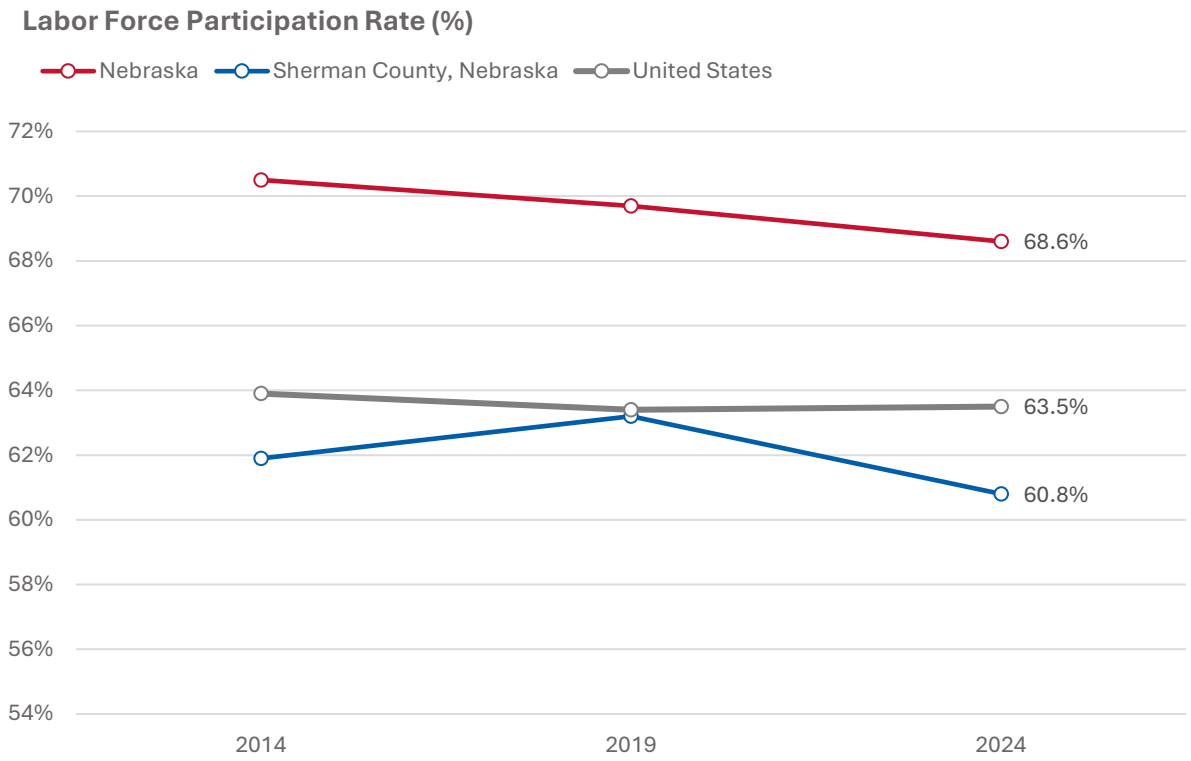
2025-2030

- Jobs in Sherman County are forecasted to **rise 2.2%** (+20) from 2025 to 2030.
- Jobs in Loup City are forecasted to **rise 0.9%** (+5) from 2025 to 2030.
- Jobs in Nebraska are forecasted to rise 3.4%; U.S. jobs are forecasted to rise 4.3% from 2025 to 2030.

Source: Lightcast, Q1 2026 Data

Labor Force Participation

Sherman County's workforce participation lags Nebraska's.



The workforce participation rate is the percentage of the population over 16 years old that is either working or actively looking for work.

- Sherman County's workforce average participation rate was 60.8% in 2024, below Nebraska (68.6%) and the U.S. (6.
- Sherman maintained a workforce participation rate above the national average every year since 2020, with a slight dip towards the end of 2025.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2301.

Why This Data is Important

1.A labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 60.8% can mean different things depending on context. Things like the population structure, local economy and long-term trends can tell more of the story.

2.A 63% LFPR generally indicates Sherman County residents have moderate engagement in the labor market. It suggests that most adults are engaged, but not at peak levels historically.

3.Possible drivers of LFPR. Demographic factors have an impact on LFPR. A large share of retirees, students, people with disabilities or stay-at-home caregivers can drive LFPR down. Given that 28% of Sherman County residents are 65 or older, this may have an impact on the LFPR.

4.LFPR can also be shaped by a less diverse job market and out-migration of young adults. Fewer industries often means fewer opportunities. Likewise, out-migration of younger people reduces the share of working-age residents.

Implications

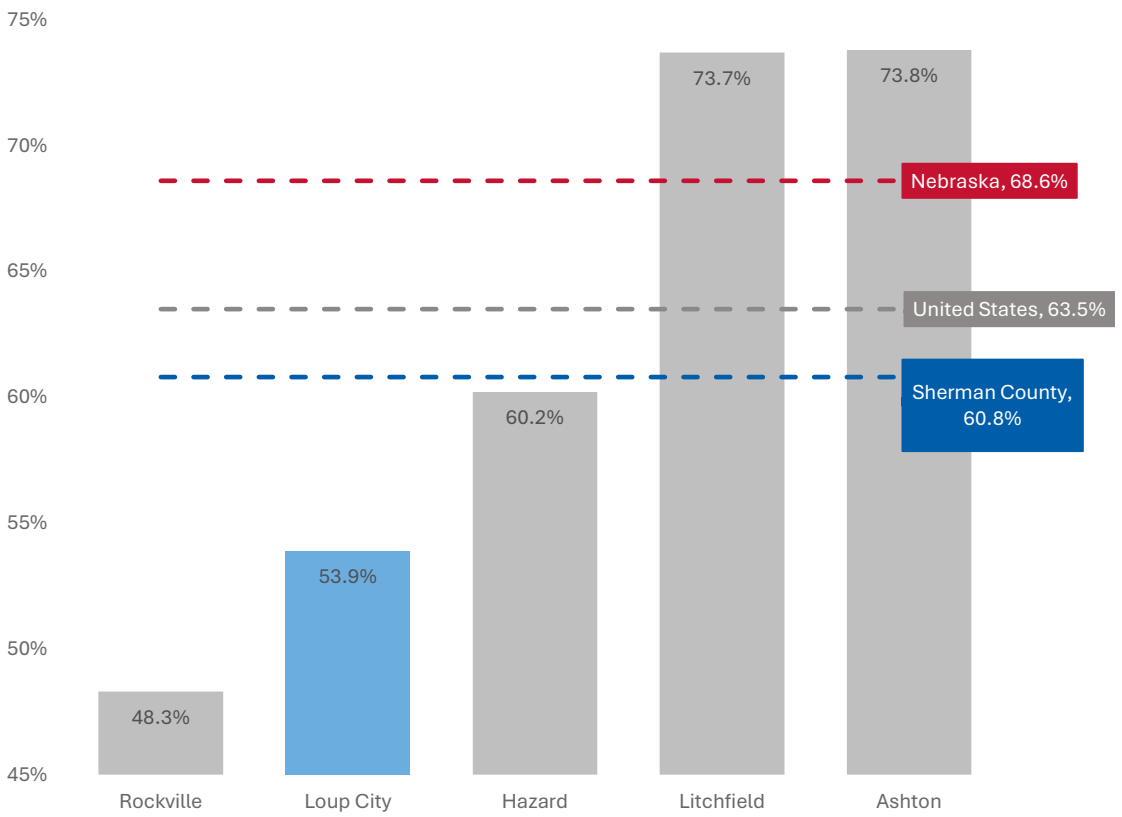
1.A LFPR at 63% may indicate a tight labor supply, which can make it harder for employers to hire, lead to wage pressure or constrain business expansion.

2.Lower LFPR means fewer employed adults, lower income tax revenues and reduced consumer spending

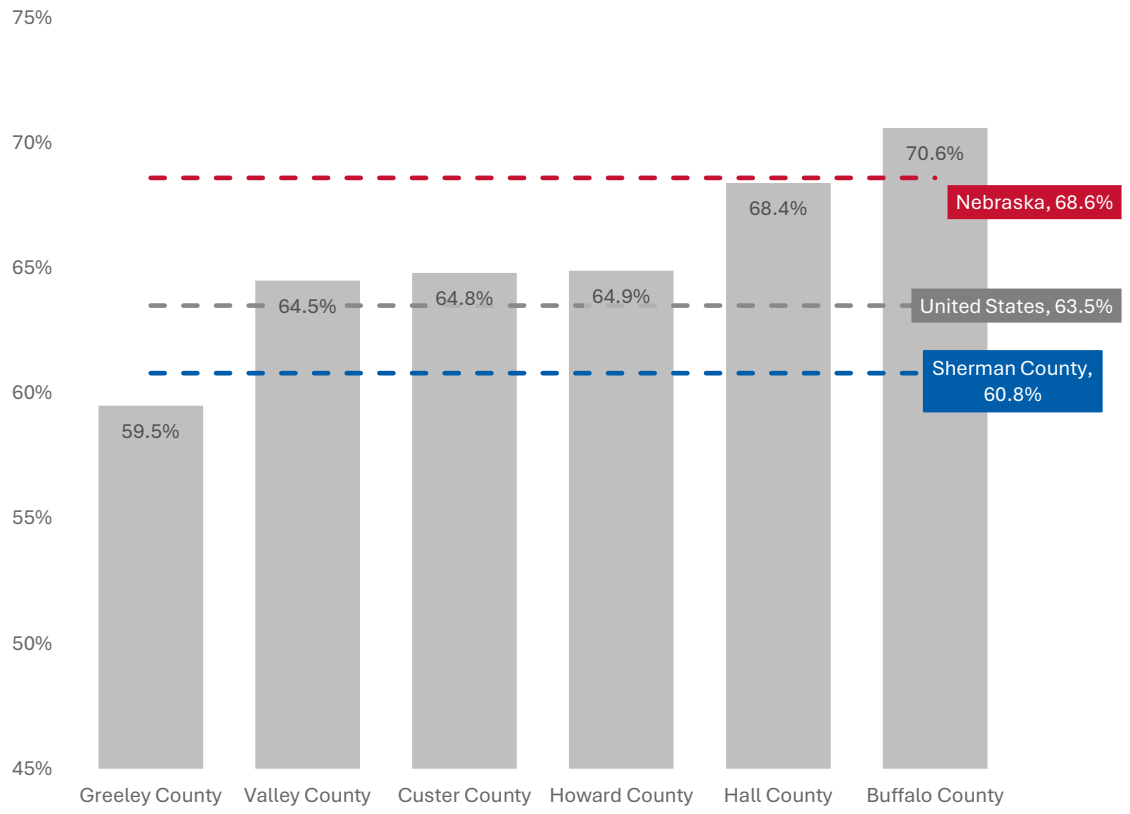
Labor Force Participation

Loup City has a labor force participation rate lower than the county; Sherman County's rate is lower than most of the region.

2024 Labor Force Participation Rate, Sherman County Communities



2024 Labor Force Participation Rate, Sherman County Contiguous Counties

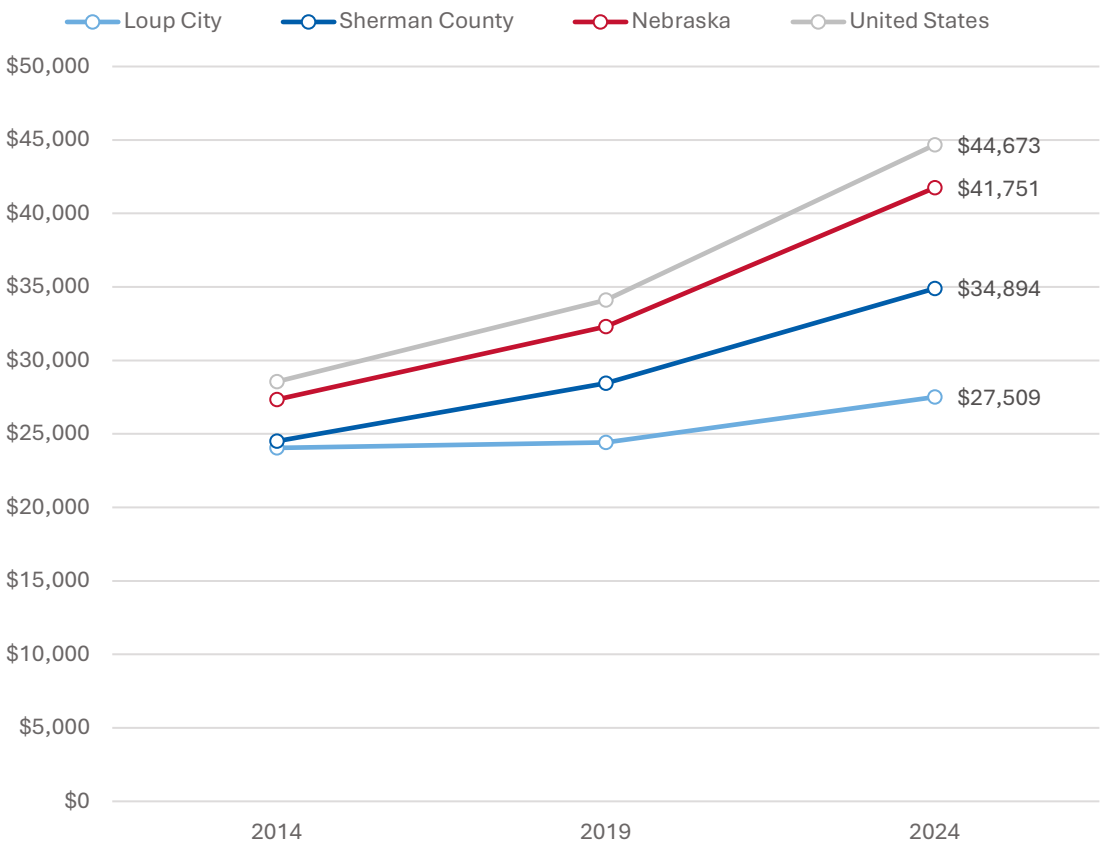


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S2301.

Per Capita Income

Loup City's per capita income grew 14.4% from 2014 to 2024, lagging regional and national growth.

Per Capita Income, 2014-2024



- **Loup City's income growth is far below all comparison regions.** Loup City's per capita income increased only **14.4%** over the decade. This is dramatically lower than **Nebraska** (+52.7%); **Sherman County** (+42.4%); and the **United States** (+56.4%).
- **Loup City's income stagnated for much of the decade.** From 2014 to 2019, Loup City's income barely moved, fluctuating around the mid-$24k range. The only meaningful jump came in **2024**, when income rose to **$27,509**. This late increase wasn't enough to catch up to broader regional or national trends.
- **Sherman County outperformed Loup City but still lagged the state and nation.** Sherman County's 42.4% growth is solid but still trails Nebraska and the U.S. The county's trajectory shows steady, moderate gains rather than stagnation.
- **Nebraska and the U.S. saw strong, consistent income growth.** Nebraska (+52.7%) and the U.S. (+56.4%) show nearly parallel, robust upward trends.
- **The income gap between Loup City and the broader economy widened.** In 2014, Loup City was only about **$4,500** below the U.S. average. By 2024, the gap had grown to **over $17,000**.

Why This Data is Important

1.Per capita income can signal the overall economic well-being of residents. Higher per capita income generally reflects stronger job markets, better wages, and more stable economic conditions. When it grows steadily, it suggests that people are benefiting from economic activity—not just businesses or institutions.

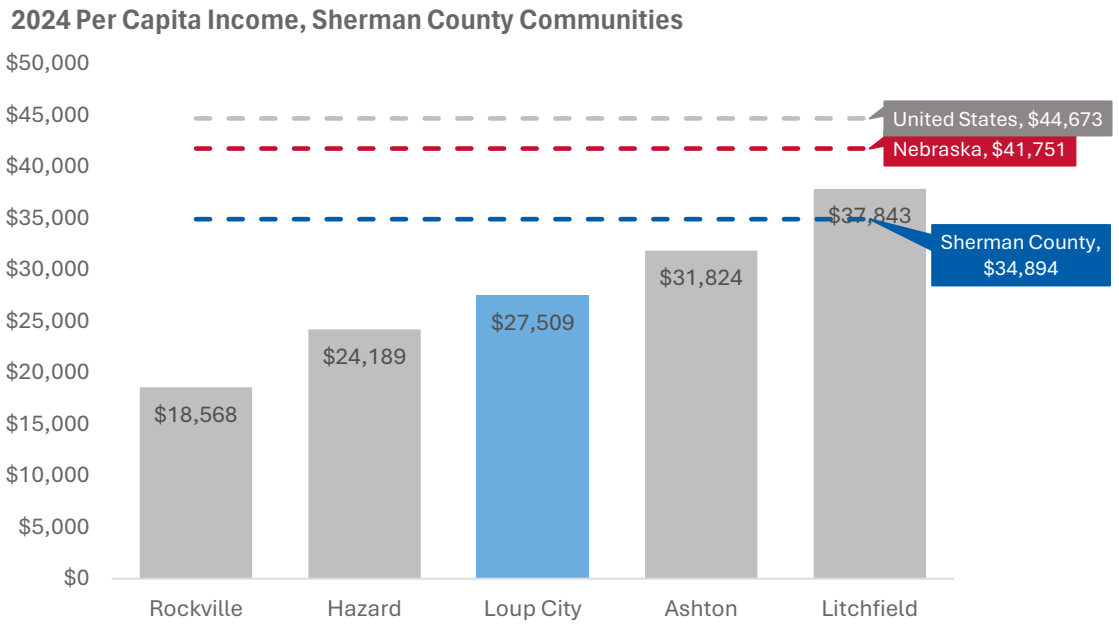
2.It can be an early indicator for economic stagnation or decline. If a region's per capita income grows much more slowly than surrounding areas, it can be a red flag for weakening labor demand, limited industry diversification, out-migration of working-age residents or wage stagnation.

3.Per capita income is helpful when comparing regions. Because population size can vary among geographies, per capita income normalizes the data, making it easier to compare rural vs. urban areas, counties vs. states and local communities vs. national trends.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table B19301.

Per Capita Income, Sherman County Communities

Loup City's per capita income aligns with the midpoint of peer towns but trails county, state, and national levels.

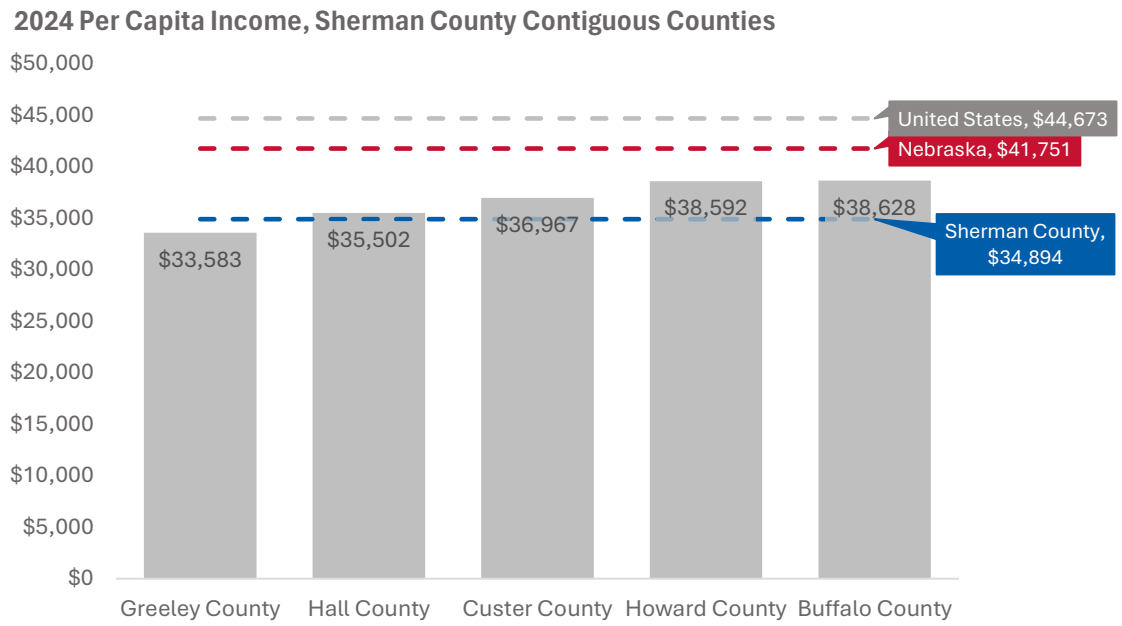


Loup City is in the middle of the pack. Loup City's per capita income is typical among Sherman County's towns—neither an outlier high nor low.

- **Below the county average, with a measurable gap.** Loup City's $27,509 is $7,385 lower than Sherman County's $34,894—~21.2% below the county. To reach the county average, Loup City would need a ~26.8% increase in per capita income.
- **Substantial distance to state and national benchmarks.** Compared with Nebraska ($41,751) and the U.S. ($44,673), Loup City is ~34.1% and ~38.4% lower, respectively.

Per Capita Income, Sherman County Contiguous Counties

Sherman County's per capita income is on par with neighboring counties.



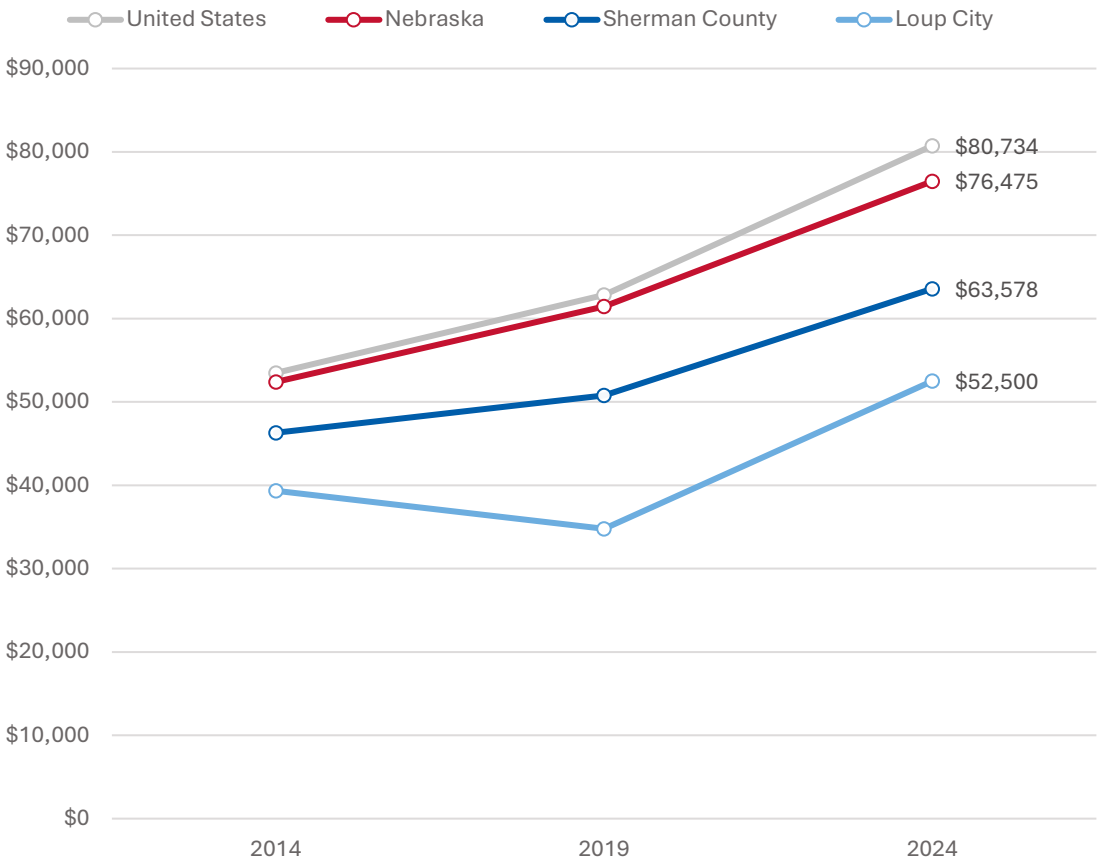
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Median Household Income

Loup City's median household income grew 33.5% from 2014 to 2024, lagging regional and national growth.

Median Household Income, 2014-2024



- **Loup City's median household income grew 33.5% from 2014 to 2024, but this growth lags the United States, Nebraska and Sherman County.**
- U.S., Nebraska and Sherman County all show stronger income growth over the same period.
- Loup City experienced a dip between 2014 ($39,333) and 2019 ($34,777) before rebounding by 2024 ($52,500).
- Loup City's local income growth is not keeping pace regionally or nationally.

Why This Data is Important

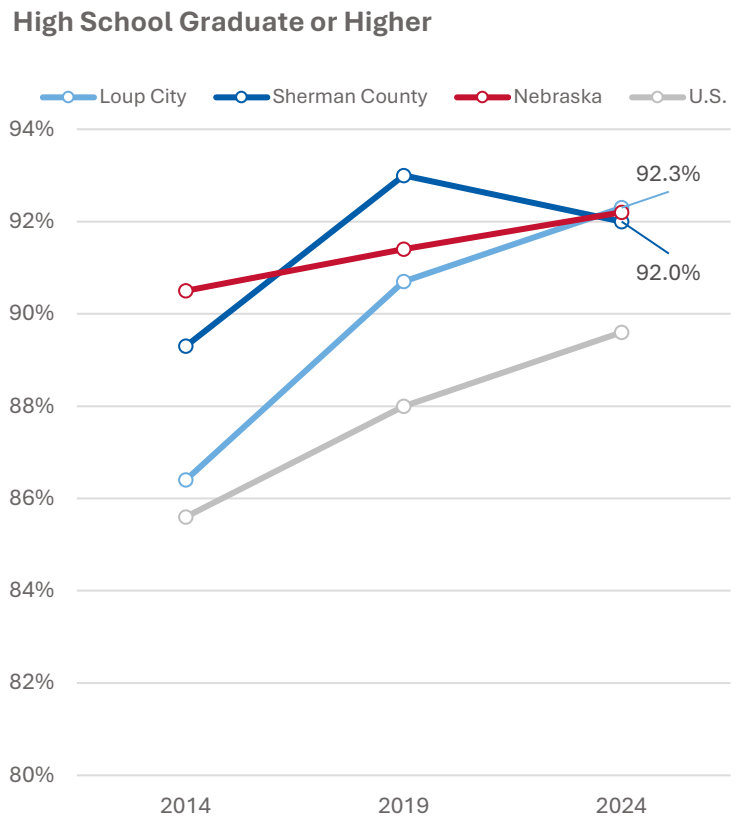
1. **Median household income isa core indicator of overall economic well-being.** Median household income tells you how typical families in a community are doing financially—not just high earners or low earners. It reflects the economic reality for the "middle" household.
2. **It provides insight into wages, job quality and labor market strength.** Low or slow-growing median household income can suggest issues such as limited high-wage industries, slower wage growth or out-migration of working-age residents.
3. **It influences local government revenue and service demand.** Household income affects everything from spending power (retail, housing, local businesses) to tax revenues (property, sales, income) to demand for public services and assistance programs.
4. **It highlights affordability challenges.** Understanding income levels helps determine whether housing, childcare, healthcare and transportation are in reach for typical local families.

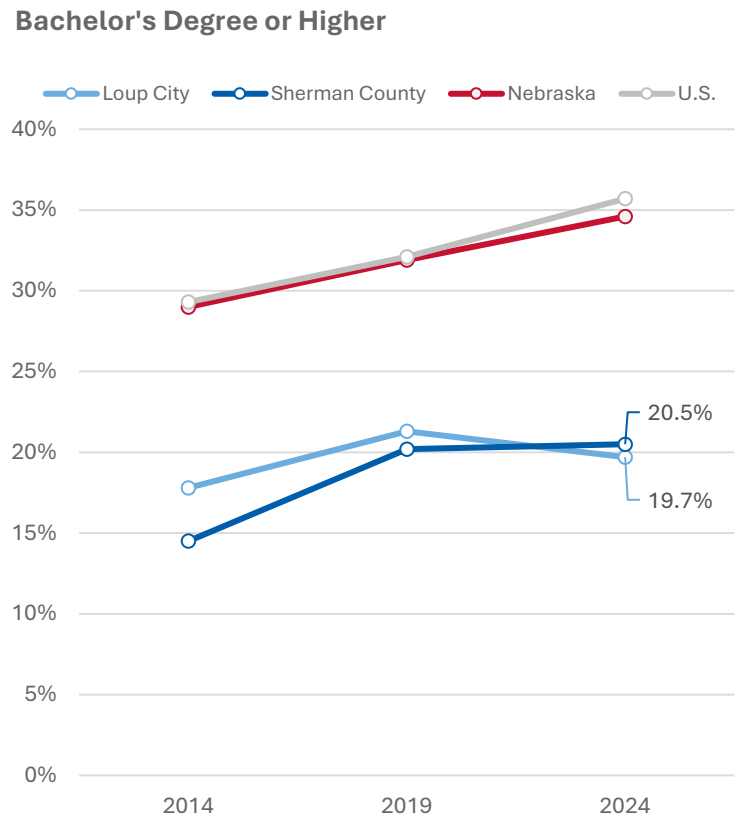
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Table S1901.

Educational Attainment

High school graduation tops 92% in Sherman County and Loup City.

- By 2024, Sherman County's high school graduation rate (92.0%) slightly exceeded the national average (89.6%) and closely tracked Nebraska's (92.2%).
- Sherman County's bachelor's degree attainment (20.5%) remains significantly lower than both Nebraska (34.6%) and the U.S. (35.7%).



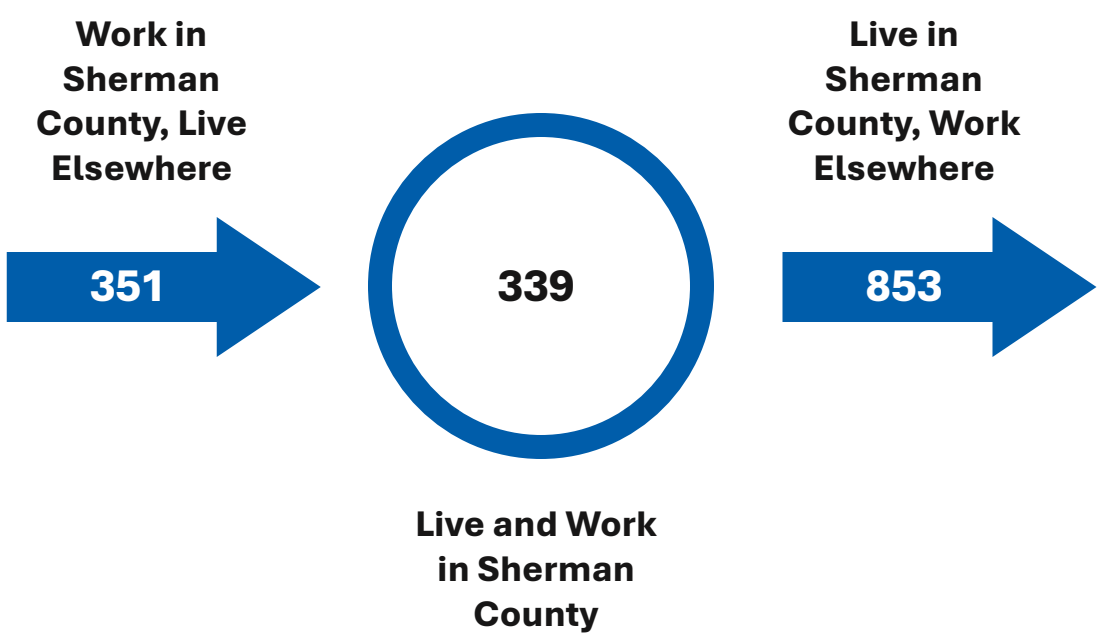


Commuting

- **Sherman County is a net importer of labor.** 853 workers commute in to jobs in Sherman County, while 351 residents commute out, yielding a net inflow of +502 workers.
- **Only 28.4% of people working in Sherman County live there (339 of 1,192).** In other words, 71.6% of the county's workforce lives outside the county.
- Among Sherman County residents with jobs (690 total), 49.1% work locally (339), while 50.9% work in other counties (351).

Top Counties where Sherman County Workers Live (2023)

County	Count	Share
Sherman County	339	49.1%
Custer County	68	9.9%
Buffalo County	52	7.5%
Valley County	41	5.9%
Hall County	26	3.8%
Howard County	22	3.2%
Douglas County	19	2.8%
Lancaster County	10	1.4%
Scotts Bluff County	10	1.4%
Greeley County	7	1.0%
All Other Locations	96	13.9%
Total	**690**	**100%**

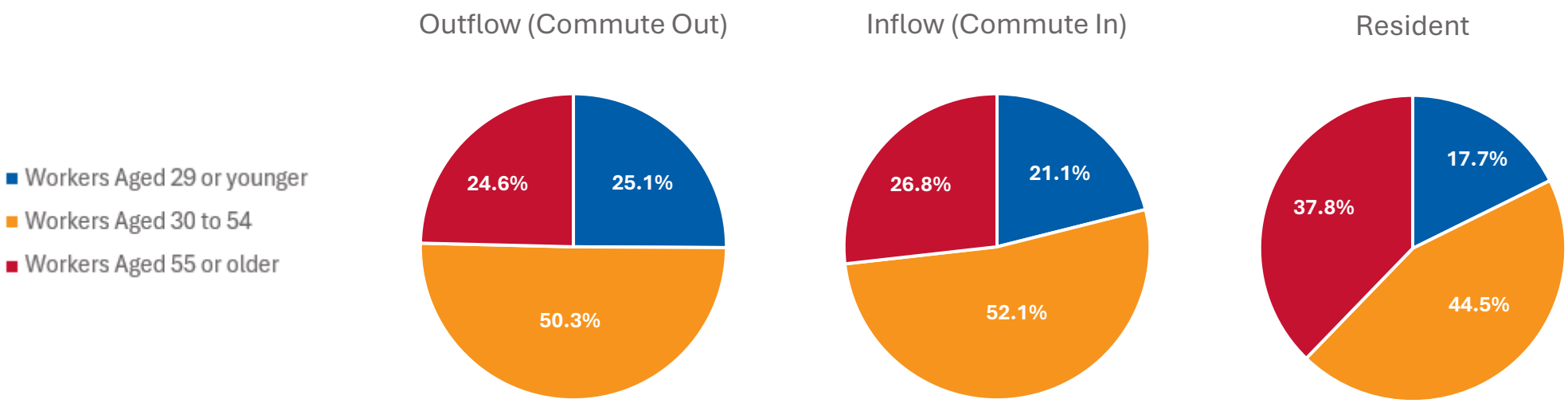


Top Counties where Sherman County Residents Work (2023)

County	Count	Share
Sherman County	339	28.4%
Buffalo County	204	17.1%
Hall County	144	12.1%
Valley County	73	6.1%
Lancaster County	52	4.4%
Custer County	51	4.3%
Douglas County	45	3.8%
Howard County	44	3.7%
Platte County	34	2.9%
Adams County	27	2.3%
All Other Locations	179	15.0%
Total	**1,192**	**100%**

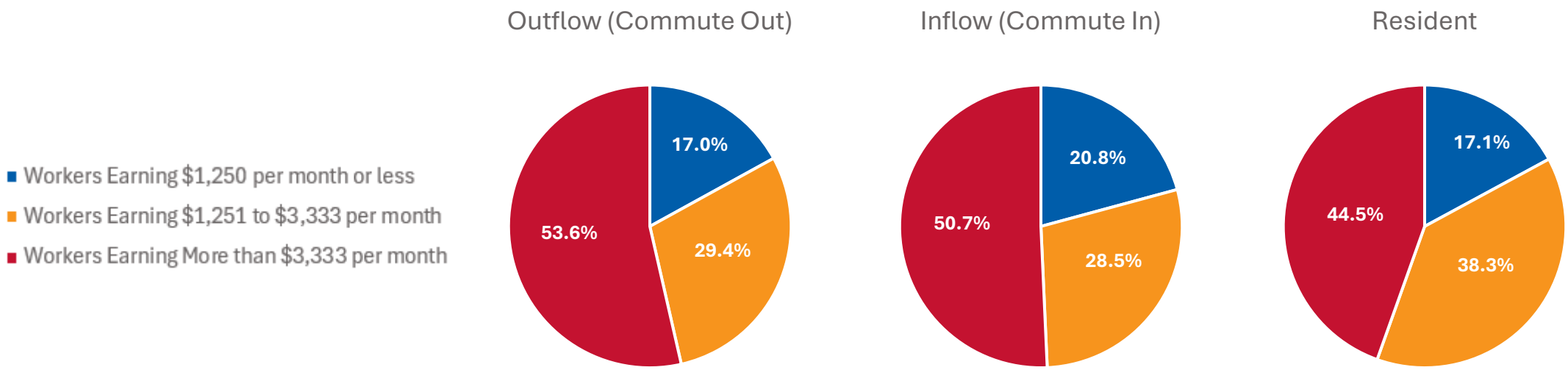
Commuting

- Sherman County workers under age 29 leave the county for work more than they stay in the county to work.
- Older Sherman County workers (age 55 or older) tend to stay in the county for work.
- Sherman County imports workers to the county who are in their mid-career (age 30-54).



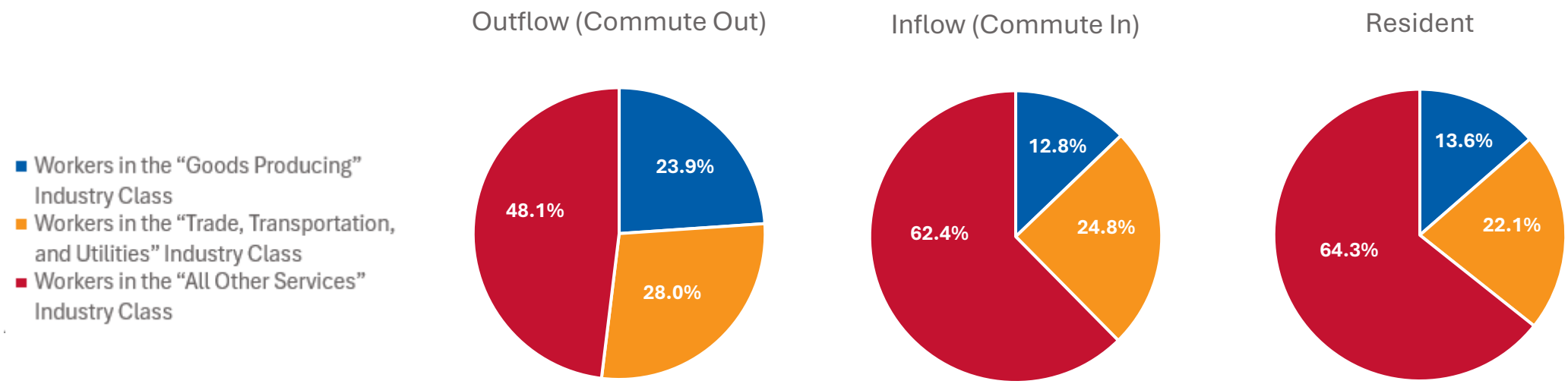
Commuting

- High wage earners (those making more than $3,333 per month) tend to commute out of Sherman County for work.
- Workers earning $1,251 to $3,333 per month tend to stay within Sherman County for work
- Sherman County imports workers from other counties who make less than $1,250 per month.



Commuting

- Almost 24% of Sherman County employed residents commute outside of the county for work.



Retail Pull Factor

Retail pull factor is a simple way to understand whether an area is attracting shoppers or losing them to other places. It compares how much people actually spend in local stores to how much we would expect them to spend based on the area's population.

How retail pull factor is calculated. The pull factor is computed by dividing the per capita taxable, non-motor vehicle (NMV) retail sales by the state average per capita NMV retail sales.

What the numbers mean. A pull factor above 1.0 means the town is drawing in customers from outside its borders, while a number below 1.0 suggests residents are shopping elsewhere. It's an easy, informative tool that helps communities see where they're doing well in retail and where they may be missing opportunities.

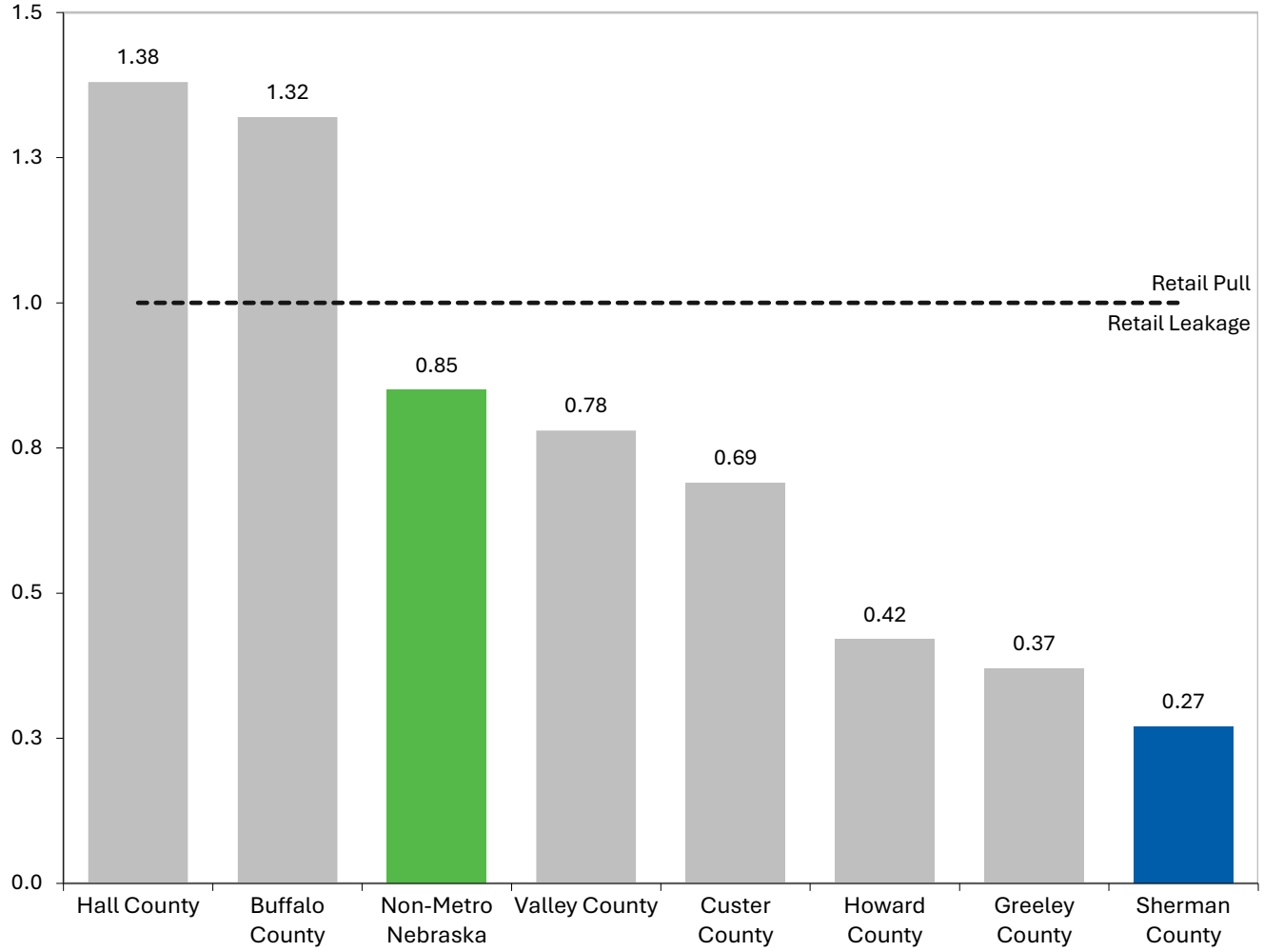
	2024 Population	2024 Retail Sales (x $1,000)	2024 Per Cap Sales ($)	2024 Pull Factor
Nebraska	2,005,465	31,974,282	15,944	1.00
Non-Metro Nebraska	776,701	10,563,838	13,601	0.85
Sherman County	**2,949**	**12,710**	**4,310**	**0.27**
Buffalo County	51,156	1,075,869	21,031	1.32
Custer County	10,487	114,556	10,924	0.69
Greeley County	2,197	12,933	5,887	0.37
Hall County	62,869	1,387,317	22,067	1.38
Howard County	6,572	44,112	6,712	0.42
Valley County	4,032	49,829	12,358	0.78

Sherman County experiences net retail leakages. The 2024 retail pull factor of 0.27 indicates, on a per capita basis, retail sales in Sherman County are 72.9% lower than the state's average per capita sales.

Distance from other large trade centers plays a major role in this phenomenon.

Retail Sales Non-Motor Vehicles Pull Factors · *2024*

Nebraska, Sherman County and Surrounding Counties



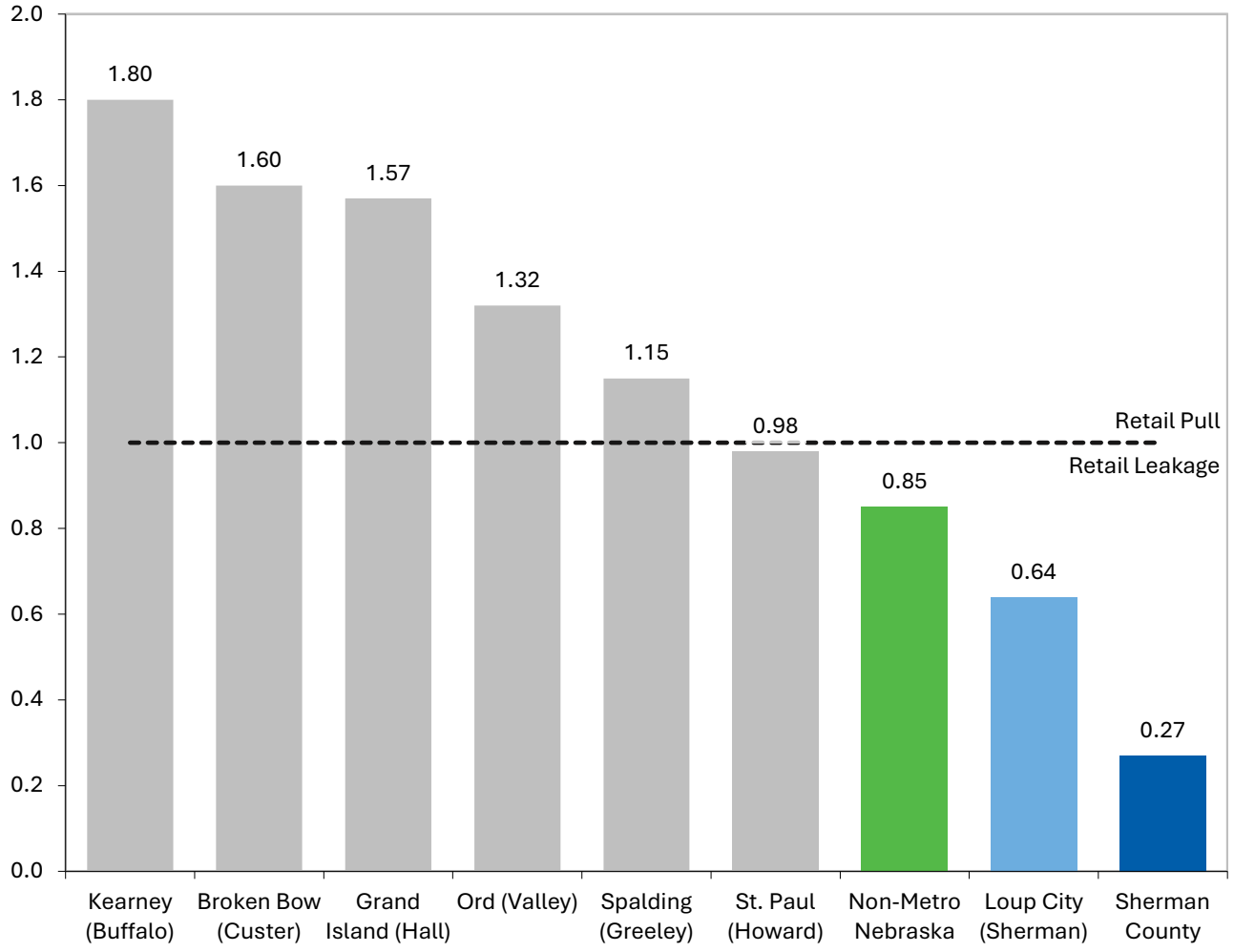
Retail Pull Factor

- **Kearney (Buffalo County) has the strongest retail pull (1.80) of the selected study area communities.** Its pull factor means that, on a per capita basis, non-motor vehicle retail sales are approximately 180% higher than the state's average per capita sales.

	2024 Population	2024 Retail Sales (x $1,000)	2024 Per Cap Sales ($)	2024 Pull Factor
Nebraska	2,005,465	31,974,282	15,944	1.00
Non-Metro Nebraska	776,701	10,563,838	13,601	0.85
Sherman County	**2,949**	**12,710**	**4,310**	0.27
Loup City (Sherman)	**1,044**	**10,610**	**10,163**	0.64
Kearney (Buffalo)	34,741	998,263	28,734	1.80
Broken Bow (Custer)	3,491	89,065	25,513	1.60
Spalding (Greeley)	424	7,781	18,351	1.15
Grand Island (Hall)	53,250	1,331,763	25,010	1.57
St. Paul (Howard)	2,441	38,284	15,684	0.98
Ord (Valley)	2,091	44,001	21,043	1.32

Retail Sales Non-Motor Vehicles Pull Factors · *2024*

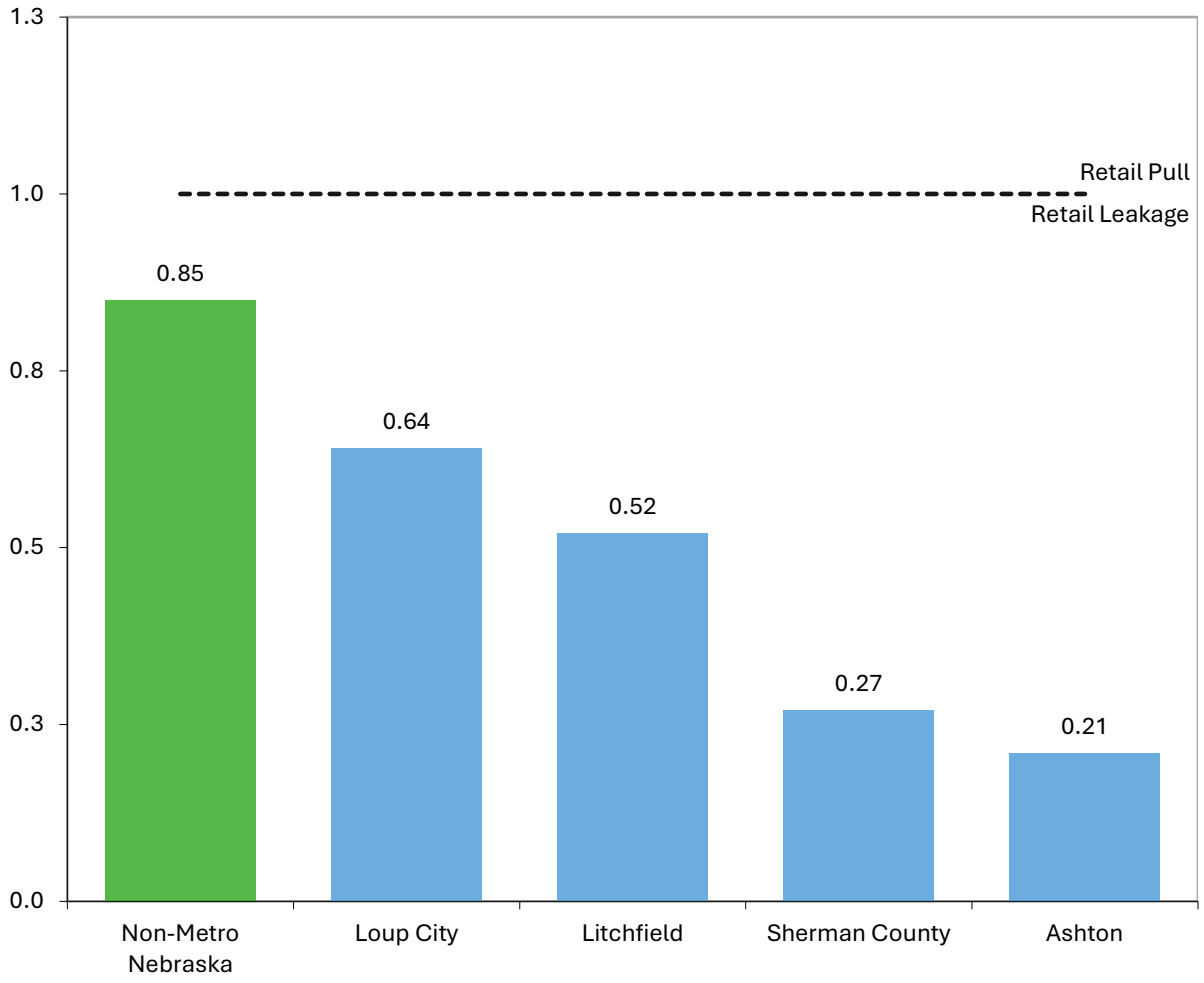
Nebraska and Selected Study Area Cities



Retail Pull Factor

- Of the available Sherman County communities, Loup City had the strongest pull factor (0.27) compared to other communities in the county.

	2024 Population	2024 Retail Sales (x $1,000)	2024 Per Cap Sales ($)	2024 Pull Factor
Nebraska	2,005,465	31,974,282	15,944	**1.00**
Non-Metro Nebraska	776,701	10,563,838	13,601	**0.85**
Sherman County	**2,949**	**12,710**	**4,310**	**0.27**
Loup City	1,044	10,190	9,761	**0.64**
Litchfield	215	1,773	8,248	**0.52**
Ashton	199	675	3,391	**0.21**



Retail Pull Factor

- Looking at the trend of retail pull factors for Loup City and Sherman County, Loup City shows retail pull fluctuating below the Nebraska and non-metro average.
- For the same time period, Sherman County was significantly below the Nebraska and non-metro average.

