

# US in the WORLD

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES TO ENSURE A HEALTHY PLANET

## Nebraska



Comparison at same scale

**Nebraska**  
Area: 77,355 sq. miles  
Population: 1.7 million

**Mali**  
Area: 478,841 sq. miles  
Population: 9.9 million

**Largest metropolitan areas by population (1996):** Omaha (681,698), Lincoln (231,765)

## Mali



**Largest urban area by population (1995):** Bamako (919,000)

Nebraska's "lifeblood," the Platte River, is being drained by the many demands humans place upon it. Similarly, western Africa's Niger River sustains the people of Mali, a nation unfamiliar to many Americans except for its historic trading city of Timbuktu. Both Mali and Nebraska are lands of uncertain rainfall, and their people's needs are straining land and water resources.

Landlocked and largely semiarid, both regions are dominated by rolling grasslands. Although northern Mali reaches into the Sahara Desert, the remainder of the nation has annual rainfall amounts similar to Nebraska's. Both areas suffer periodic droughts, and both use their available water overwhelmingly for agriculture. Corn and sorghum are important crops in both places.

Although Mali is larger, its population density (21 people per square

mile) is nearly identical to that of Nebraska. Large portions of both regions are even more sparsely settled and devoted to livestock grazing. Yet despite their interior locations, both have played significant historical roles because they are located along important trails and trading routes. The powerful Mali Empire of the 14th century controlled major North African trading routes for caravans carrying gold, salt, and other goods. Nebraska developed in the 1800s around the Oregon Trail, the major pioneer trail to the West. While Mali's trading routes declined with time, the Oregon Trail's route along the Platte River has grown in importance, as railroads, highways, and communications lines have followed the same corridor.

The greatest natural resources of both Mali and Nebraska are soil and water, which form the basis of their agricultural economies. But their dif-

ferences reflect the contrasts between a poor developing economy and a prosperous developed one. Over 90 percent of Mali's population works in agriculture and 75 percent lives in rural areas and small villages. They are largely subsistence farmers and most of their work is done by hand.

Only 8 percent of Nebraska's population farms or ranches; nearly 66 percent of the people live in urban areas. Yet through mechanization and massive irrigation development, Nebraska cultivates almost 50 times as much cropland per capita as Mali, much of it for export. Nebraska's population is growing at less than 1 percent annually, but most of this growth is occurring along the Platte River/Interstate 80 corridor. Unplanned growth in Omaha and Lincoln is producing sprawl that degrades parks, wildlands, and wetlands. The greatest threat to

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## Demographic and Health Trends

- Nebraska grew 5 percent from 1990 to 1997, more than 2 percentage points below the national average. During the 1990s, about 78,000 people were added to the state's population.
- Natural increase has accounted for the bulk of Nebraska's growth in the 1990s, and for more than 90 percent of its growth from 1996 to 1997.
- The cities of Omaha and Lincoln grew faster than the state itself during the 1990s. Omaha, the home base of the ConAgra food company and 24 telemarketing centers, grew 6 per-

cent, while Lincoln grew 9 percent due to the presence of state government, the University of Nebraska, and an expanding telemarketing industry.

- The populations of nearly one-half of Nebraska's 93 counties shrank between 1990 and 1996, with 12 counties shrinking by more than 5 percent. Most of these areas are in the western two-thirds of the state, where the population has been declining for decades.

## Natural Resources and Wildlife Issues

- Recent legislation addresses environmental threats posed by the influx of large hog confinement facilities. One bill calls for the state's Environmental Quality Council to adopt new standards for operation of these facilities and for waste disposal, as well as better management practices to reduce runoff and improve groundwater monitoring.
- Some agricultural organizations have begun to advocate the planting of vegetative buffer strips around surface water resources to impede the

runoff of sediment and chemicals into Nebraska's wetlands, lakes, rivers, and streams.

- In 1997, the three Platte River Basin states and the federal government signed a cooperative agreement to restore flows and habitat to the Platte River.
- Nebraska's endangered and threatened species include the whooping crane, the Eskimo curlew, the black-footed ferret, and the Western prairie fringed orchid.

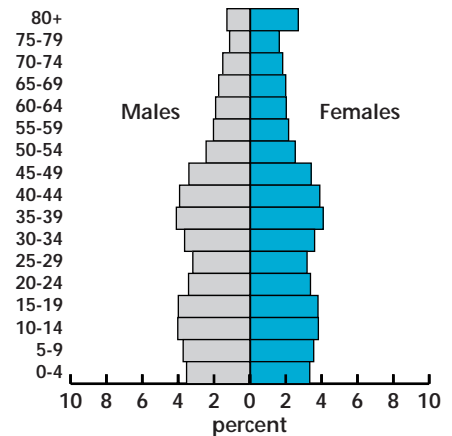
## Socioeconomic Factors

- Agriculture has remained an important employer in Nebraska and accounted for 8 percent of the state's jobs in 1994. Food processing, led by the fast-growing ConAgra food company, also has been a key economic mainstay.
- Growing telemarketing and data processing industries have helped fuel an economic boom in Nebraska.

Omaha has become the nation's telecommunications capital, with 24 telemarketing centers employing more than 10,000 people.

- Nebraska has one of the nation's lowest poverty rates. From 1994 to 1996, 9.5 percent of the state's residents lived in poverty, as opposed to 14 percent for all Americans.

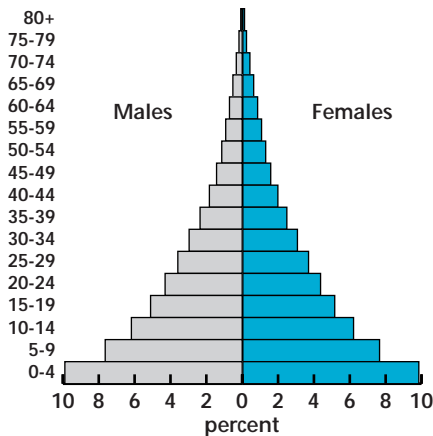
## POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX



## NEBRASKA FACTS

- Population, 1997: 1.7 million
- Projected population, 2025: 1.9 million
- Annual growth rate: 0.5%
- Doubling time (at current rate): 140 years
- Average number of children per woman: 2.0
- Infant deaths per 1,000 live births: 7.4
- Life expectancy: 74 (male), 80 (female)
- Persons per square mile: 22
- Percent urban: 66
- Endangered/threatened animals: 9 species
- Endangered/threatened plants: 3 species
- Percent of land protected: 1
- Wetlands loss, 1780-1980: 35%
- Daily water use per capita: 6,405 gallons
- Water use for domestic purposes: 3%
- Water use for agriculture: 73%
- Water use for industry: 2%
- Water use for energy production: 22%
- Cropland per capita: 28.2 acres
- Energy use per capita: 61.0 barrels of oil equiv.
- Persons per motor vehicle: 1.1
- Adults who are high school graduates: 87%
- Elected officials who are women: 25%
- Labor force in agriculture: 8%
- Labor force in industry: 16%
- Labor force in services: 77%
- Gross State Product, 1994: \$25,442 per capita

## POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX



## MALI FACTS

Population, 1997: 9.9 million
Projected population, 2025: 23.7 million
Annual growth rate: 3.0%
Doubling time (at current rate): 23 years
Average number of children per woman: 6.7
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births: 134
Life expectancy: 44 (male), 48 (female)
Persons per square mile: 21
Percent urban: 26
Threatened animals: 20 species
Threatened plants: 14 species
Percent of land protected: 3.2
Wetlands loss, through 1980s: n.a.
Percent with access to safe water: 45
Percent with adequate sanitation: 31
Daily water use per capita: 117 gallons
Water use for domestic purposes: 2%
Water use for agriculture: 97%
Water use for industry: 1%
Cropland per capita: 0.6 acres
Energy use per capita: 0.2 barrels of oil equiv.
Persons per motor vehicle: 308
Percent of girls in secondary school: 6
Percent of boys in secondary school: 12
Women as % of national legislature: n.a.
Labor force in agriculture: 93%
Labor force in industry: 2%
Labor force in services: n.a.
GDP per capita, 1995: US\$259

## Demographic and Health Trends

- Mali's population is growing at 3 percent annually. It is projected to increase 52 percent by 2010 and will continue growing well into the 21st century as today's youth enter their childbearing years (see figure).
- Only six countries in the world have a lower life expectancy than Mali. An infant born today in Mali can expect to live 46 years. One of every five children will die before before his or her fifth birthday.
- Less than one-half of 1-year-old

## Natural Resources and Wildlife Issues

- Mali's farmers often plant using slash-and-burn techniques that raze forests. This method of cultivation contributes to soil erosion, thereby reducing the amount of arable land. It also increases silt in waterways, which harms fisheries.
- Deforestation and overgrazing spurred by the need for agricultural land and energy contribute to widespread desertification in Mali. Traditional fuels supply 88 percent of the energy consumed in Mali.

## Socioeconomic Factors

- Only 31 percent of adults in Mali are literate. These rates are low, even for the sub-Saharan region, which has lower rates than the rest of the world.
- Agriculture provides work for about four out of five Malians in the labor force, mostly at the subsistence level. Cotton and livestock are the largest exports. Mali's agricultural production is very vulnerable to persistent and severe droughts as well as

children are fully immunized against diphtheria, polio, and measles. Only 40 percent of the population has access to health services.

- There is significant seasonal migration of agricultural workers to Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, and France during Mali's off-season.
- The only significant agglomerations of population are in the national capital of Bamako and in other cities along the Niger River corridor.

■ By 1990, deforestation had left just 10 percent of the country's land area in forests. Between 1990 and 1995 the forested areas were reduced by another 5 percent, or 2,196 square miles.

■ Drought, poaching, and loss of habitat endanger wildlife in Mali. Threatened species include the chimpanzee, African elephant, slender-horned gazelle, marbled teal, and lesser kestrel.

to fluctuations in the world market.

■ Fishing on the Niger contributes to the economy but is very vulnerable to drought and the effects of large upstream dams.

■ Imports to Mali chronically exceed exports. Foreign aid and remittances from Malians abroad are important in offsetting the country's trade deficit.

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the Platte from urban growth, though, is occurring upstream in the Front Range cities of Colorado, one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. Upstream water withdrawals for urban needs and irrigation have diminished the Platte's flows in central Nebraska to only 30 percent of their historic magnitude.

Mali's Niger River remains deep and navigable. Beyond its floodplain, the demands of the growing population for more crops, firewood, and livestock have led to serious soil erosion, deforestation, and desertification. Overuse of the land aggravated serious droughts in the 1970s and 1980s, causing widespread famine and massive livestock mortality. The damage to natural ecosystems threatens the future of Mali's wildlife, which includes elephants, giraffes, leopards, and lions.

Nebraska's prosperity, on the other hand, has exacted an even greater toll on its native wildlife. No longer do bison and elk roam free; gone are the large predators, grizzly bears and wolves. The state's last great wildlife assemblage, the great migrating flocks of cranes and waterfowl, are threatened by loss of habitats along the Platte and other rivers. This also threatens tourism, the state's third largest economic sector. Yet only 1 percent of Nebraska's land is set aside as protected areas,

compared with more than 3 percent in Mali.

## Responding to Challenges

The Platte River Endangered Species Partnership is a voluntary effort involving Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, and the U.S. Department of the Interior to manage the Platte's water to meet the needs of the central Platte's endangered wildlife. It involves not only these representatives, but also nongovernmental organizations representing environmental and water development interests, such as the Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, Audubon Nebraska, and the Nebraska Water Users.

In Mali, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has funded child survival and HIV/AIDS prevention projects, a revision of the country's forestry code as well as work in agricultural research and extension. This work has resulted in considerable increases to production and has influenced farmers to adopt environmentally appropriate technolo-

gies for increasing their production. A recent USAID-funded project, known as SPARC, Strengthening Research Planning and Research on Commodities, helped Mali develop sustainable approaches to small-scale farming. Expertise came from the International

**P**eople in Nebraska and Mali, along with all other living creatures, need clean and healthy air, water, and land, and a stable climate. But as people strive to meet these fundamental needs and improve their lives, they make demands on Earth's resources—and leave footprints. No species demands as much and leaves as many footprints as humans do. The number of people on the planet has a direct impact on the environment and how resources are used. But the level of consumption and the ways in which natural resources are used also directly affect the health of the planet—locally, regionally, globally.

No matter where one lives, the activities of *all* humans will ultimately determine the well-being of *all* humans.

Service for National Agricultural Research, Texas A&M University, Michigan State University, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Hawaii. In addition, the U.S. Peace Corps currently supports the work of 167 volunteers in Mali. ■

**DEFINITIONS:** **Doubling Time:** The number of years it will take for a population to double, assuming a *constant* rate of natural increase. **Average Number of Children Per Woman:** Known as the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) or the average number of children a woman would have in her lifetime, assuming that birth rates remained constant throughout her childbearing years. **Endangered Species:** Any species in danger of extinction throughout all, or a significant portion of its habitat. **Threatened Species:** Any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all, or a significant portion of its habitat. **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The value of all goods and services produced within a nation in a given year. **Gross State Product (GSP):** The value of all goods and services produced within a state. It is the state counterpart of the nation's GDP.

**SOURCES:** Major sources are International Labour Organization; National Center for Health Statistics; UNICEF; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Geological Survey; The World Conservation Union (IUCN); and World Resources Institute. For a complete list of sources, contact PRB.

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## FACT SHEETS PRODUCED BY:

**PRB** Population Reference Bureau, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20009; Phone: 202-483-1100; Fax: 202-328-3937; Web site: <http://www.prb.org>

**National Audubon Society, Population and Habitat Campaign;** Phone: 303-442-2600; Web site: <http://www.earthnet.net/~popnet>

**Population Coalition of local Leagues of Women Voters;** Phone: 909-625-5717; Web site: <http://popca.org>