



Nebraska's Labor Market Still Strong, but More People Working Multiple Jobs

by: John McCoy and Nate Kauffman

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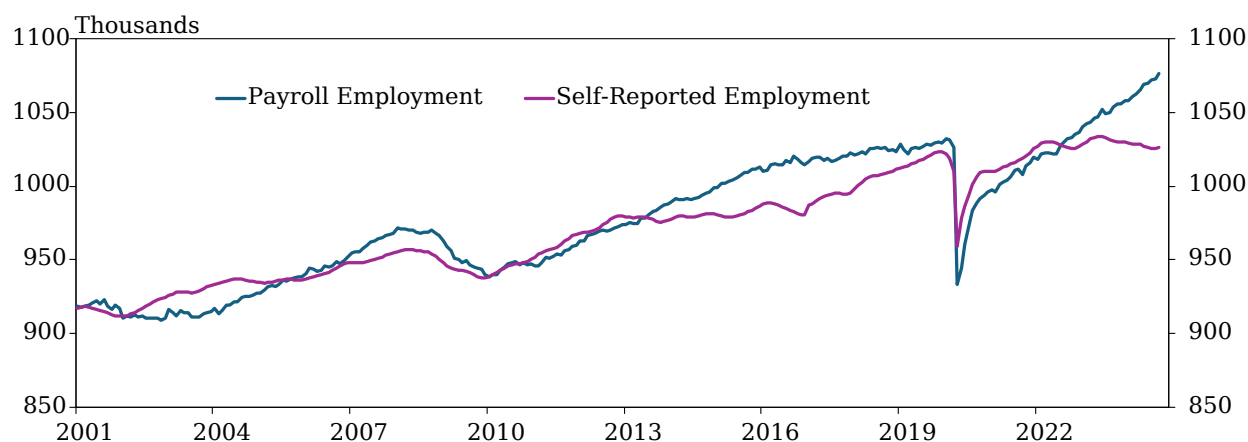
The labor market in Nebraska remains strong, but some emerging trends point to elements of softness important to monitor moving forward.

The labor market in Nebraska remains strong, but some emerging trends point to elements of softness important to monitor moving forward. In particular, the number of individuals working more than one job has increased in recent years. Over the last quarter century, multiple job holders have on average earned less and worked more hours per week than people working one job. Without gains to income from an additional job, an increase in the number of people working longer hours at more than one job could point to emerging financial weakness among some households in the state.

Businesses in Nebraska have continued to hire, but the number of people self-reporting as employed has flattened.

Employment data can come from two main sources: a survey of households – where respondents indicate whether they are employed – or a survey of establishments, who report the number of employees on payroll. These two data sources point to an increasing divergence between self-reported employment and payroll employment (Chart 1). Nearly 50,000 more jobs were on Nebraska payrolls in August 2024 compared to February of 2020 but the number individuals self-reporting as employed increased by less than 7,000 over that period.

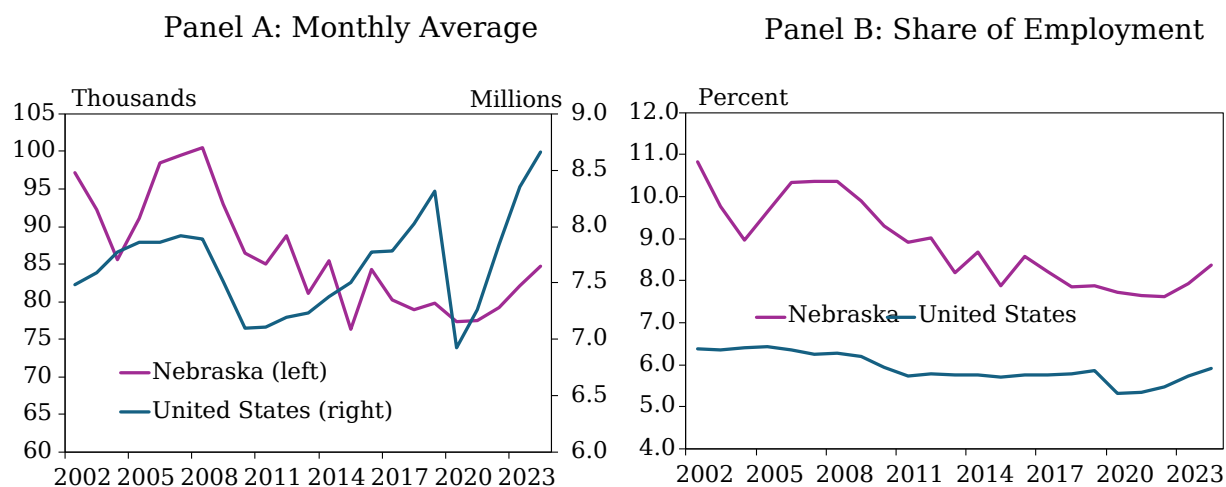
Chart 1: Employment in Nebraska



Sources: BLS, Haver Analytics.

An increase in the number of people holding multiple jobs might explain some of the discrepancy between payroll and self-reported employment. Following the pandemic, the number of people who hold more than one job began to increase in Nebraska, reversing a long-running trend (Chart 2, Panel A). The increase in the number of multiple job holders has also grown when expressed as a share of total employment (Chart 2, Panel B). The share of multiple job holders has begun to increase above its pre-pandemic level in Nebraska even as it only just reached 2019 levels for the nation as a whole. While other factors also likely influence the difference between employment surveys, such as differences in the statistical methodologies, nearly 5,300 additional Nebraskans held more than one job in 2024 compared to 2019.

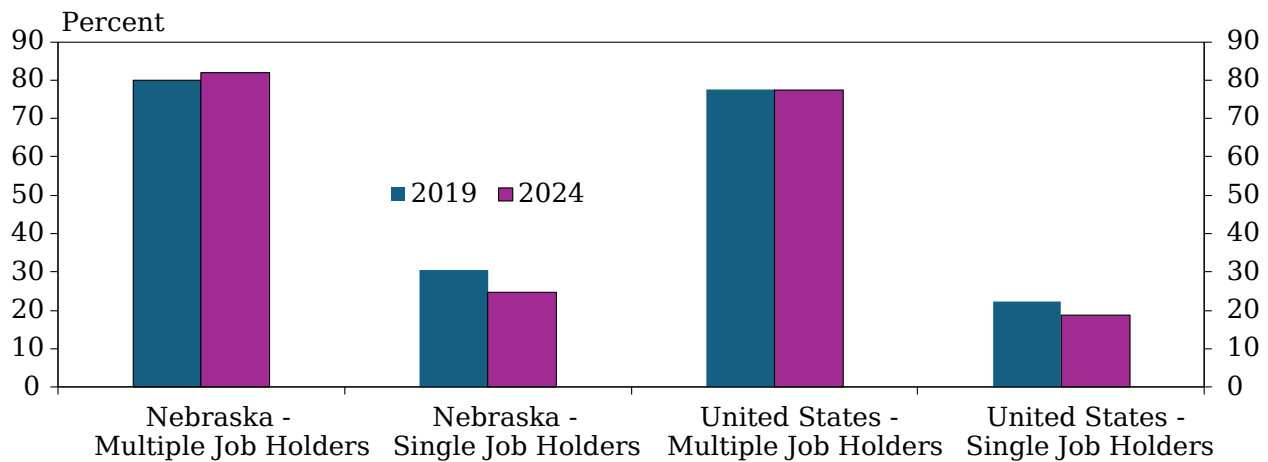
Chart 2: Multiple Job Holders in Nebraska and United States



Sources: BLS, Haver Analytics, staff calculations.

A potential explanation for why individuals may be pursuing multiple jobs is in an effort to reach full-time equivalence, but data show that multiple job holders actually work significantly more than those with only one full-time job. In Nebraska, more than 80 percent of multiple job holders work more than 40 hours per week compared to just 25 percent of those working only one job (Chart 3). On average, those holding more than one job work 51 hours per week in Nebraska compared to 38 hours per week for those with one job. These trends have been similar for the nation as a whole and have been very stable over the past 24 years.

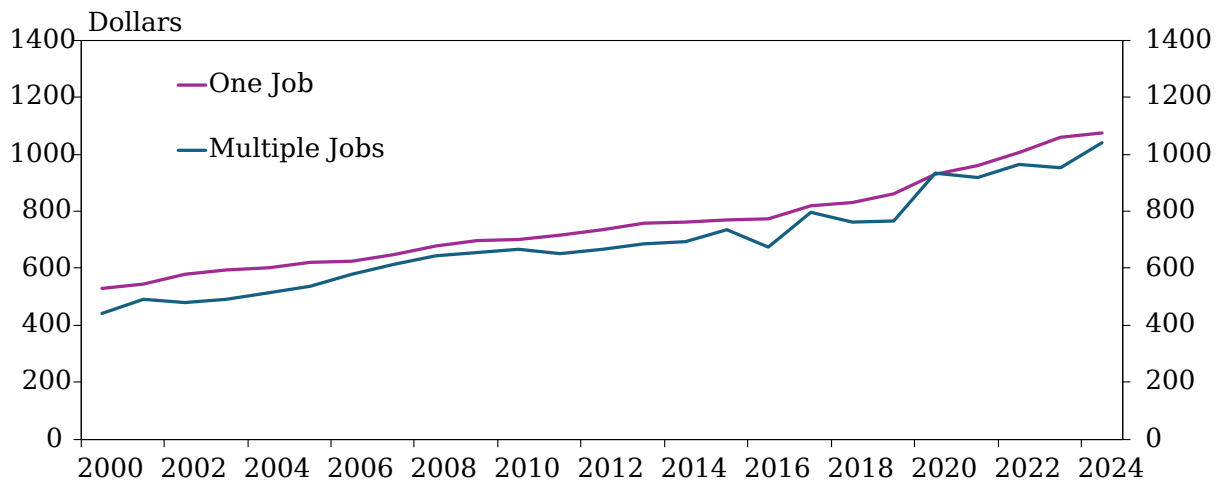
Chart 3: Share of Employment Working More than 40 Hours



Sources: BLS, staff calculations.

Instead, earnings data suggest that multiple job holders may be seeking to supplement wages from their primary job with additional earnings from another job. Despite working multiple jobs for longer-than-average hours, those holding more than one job have earned less on average per week than those with only one job. In fact, in Nebraska, average wages for those with only one job were higher than those working more than one job every year since 2000 (Chart 4). It is possible, in a state like Nebraska where [labor shortages are often a concern](#), some individuals might have taken on an additional open job to capitalize on economic opportunity and boost their income. However, since multiple job holders earn less on average than those with only one job, it is also reasonable to conclude that these individuals take additional work to supplement lower-than-average earnings from their primary job.

Chart 4 Nebraska Average Weekly Earnings



Sources: BLS, staff calculations.

While there have always been people working more hours at multiple jobs for lower pay, this number of individuals had been trending lower for years in Nebraska. The trend has reversed, however, in the years following the pandemic. Despite a strong job market and demand for labor, pay for individuals taking multiple jobs has not increased relative to those holding only one job. The increase in the number of multiple job holders could point to new financial difficulties for some households, potentially a sign of emerging softness to monitor in the coming months.

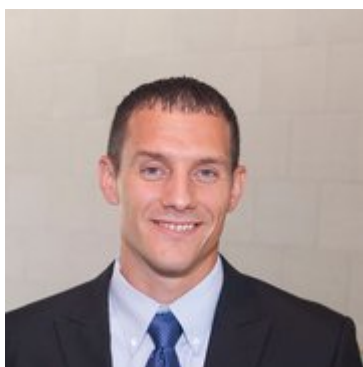
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