

## Section 3

### Reversing the Net Out-Migration of College-Educated Nebraskans

#### **Priority 3. Reduce, eliminate, and then reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment.**

The third priority recommended by the 2003 LR 174 Task Force is to reduce, eliminate, and then reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment. This priority was advised because data from the 2000 U.S. Census showed that Nebraska lost more college-educated adults than the state attracted between 1995 and 2000. Furthermore, during the same period, Nebraska attracted a significant net in-migration of adults with less than a high school education. The results of this analysis underscore the importance of developing more employment opportunities for individuals who are educated at Nebraska's colleges and universities.

The migration analysis presented in the *2004 Baseline Report* was based on the U.S. Census Bureau's estimates of the numbers of *adults aged 22 to 64* who left and entered the state during the five-year period preceding the 2000 census. These estimates and the resulting estimates of net migration were based on responses to questions asked on the 2000 Census long-form, completed by a one-in-six sample of U.S. households.

Migration estimates based on 2000 census data were included in the *2004 Baseline Report* with the intention that they would later be compared to data collected through the 2010 decennial census. However, the U.S. Census Bureau no longer collects migration data comparable to the data collected in 2000. Instead, the Census Bureau replaced the long-form of the decennial census with the annual American Community Survey (ACS).

First conducted in 2005, the ACS is an ongoing survey that provides annual population estimates for the United States. The ACS is collected monthly over the course of the survey year, and migration estimates are obtained by asking if members of a household lived in a different residence one year ago.

Compared to the decennial census, the major advantage of the ACS is that it provides new estimates of interstate migration every year, rather than only once every ten years. For the purposes of this report, the major disadvantage of the annual ACS is that it provides estimates of the numbers of 22- to 64-year-olds who migrated to and from Nebraska based on small samples of individuals who entered or left the state. As a result, the migration estimates for 22- to 64-year-olds developed from ACS data can vary dramatically from one year to another, not because any significant changes in migration patterns have occurred, but because estimates based on small samples commonly fluctuate as a result of sampling error. In contrast, the migration data collected through the long-form of the decennial census in 2000 were from large samples of respondents, thus resulting in estimates with small margins of error.

In 2018, the nationwide ACS had an initial sample of approximately 3.54 million housing unit addresses. Using the total ACS sample, the U.S. Census Bureau publishes estimates of the number of adults 25 years of age or older that move in to or out of each state. However, the only way to obtain migration estimates for 22- to 64-year-olds is to develop them based on a smaller sample of ACS data that is available for public use, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

The ACS PUMS files include the survey responses obtained from an annual sample of about 1% of Nebraska's households. However, only a small fraction of the individuals surveyed report that they lived in Nebraska for less than a year or that they moved out of Nebraska within one year of the survey. When these groups of respondents are classified by level of education, sample sizes are further reduced, thereby decreasing the reliability of the migration estimates by education level.

Even though migration estimates based on ACS data can be expected to vary quite dramatically from one year to another, they are currently the *only* available statistics for monitoring Nebraska migration patterns. Consequently, the Coordinating Commission has reported the estimates for 22- to 64-year-olds by education level since ACS data first became available for public use.

Generally, only limited conclusions can be drawn from one-year migration estimates, due to the small samples on which the estimates are based each year and the relatively high margin of error associated with each estimate. Theoretically, by calculating average annual migration estimates based on the combined data collected through five consecutive ACS surveys, these limitations may be reduced. Therefore, average annual migration estimates presented in this section are calculated using five-year ACS PUMS files.

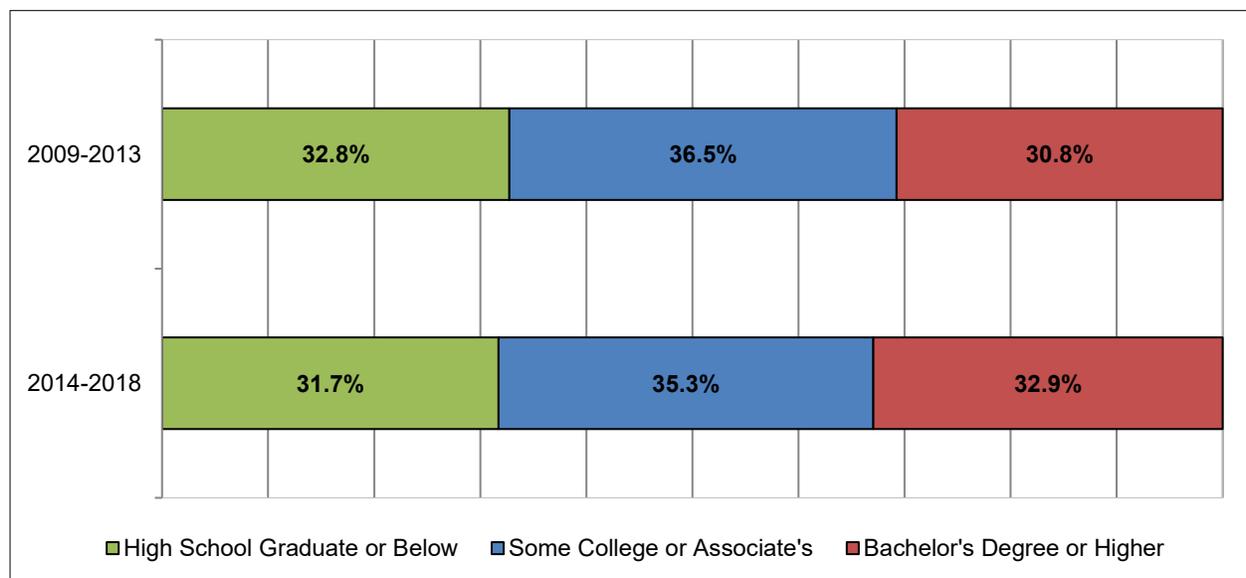
This section summarizes the average annual migration estimates based on the 2014-2018 ACS data collected from samples of 22- to 64-year-olds that migrated to and from the state, and compares these estimates to those based on average annual estimates based on 2009-2013 ACS. To provide context to the average annual migration estimates, the educational attainment of 22- to 64-year-olds is also discussed. While out-migration of Nebraskans with at least a bachelor's degree continues to be a serious issue that Nebraska must address, it is worth noting that the educational attainment of 22- to 64-year-olds continues to increase, albeit less than it would have if out-migration were curtailed.

## **Educational Attainment for 22- to 64-Year-Olds**

- Between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018, Nebraska’s estimated population of 22- to 64-year-olds increased 1.6% (from 1,019,205 to 1,035,358). (See [Table A13.1](#) in [Appendix 13](#).)
- Analysis by education level reveals that between 2009-2013 and 2014-2018, Nebraska’s estimated population of 22- to 64-year-olds:
  - Decreased 1.1 percentage points for high school graduates or below.
  - Decreased 1.2 percentage points for those with some college or an associate’s degree.
  - Increased 2.1 percentage points for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- As shown in [Figure 3.1](#), the result of these increases and decreases is that overall, educational attainment in Nebraska is increasing.

**Figure 3.1**

**Nebraska Educational Attainment of 22- to 64-Year-Olds  
Based on the 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 American Community Survey**



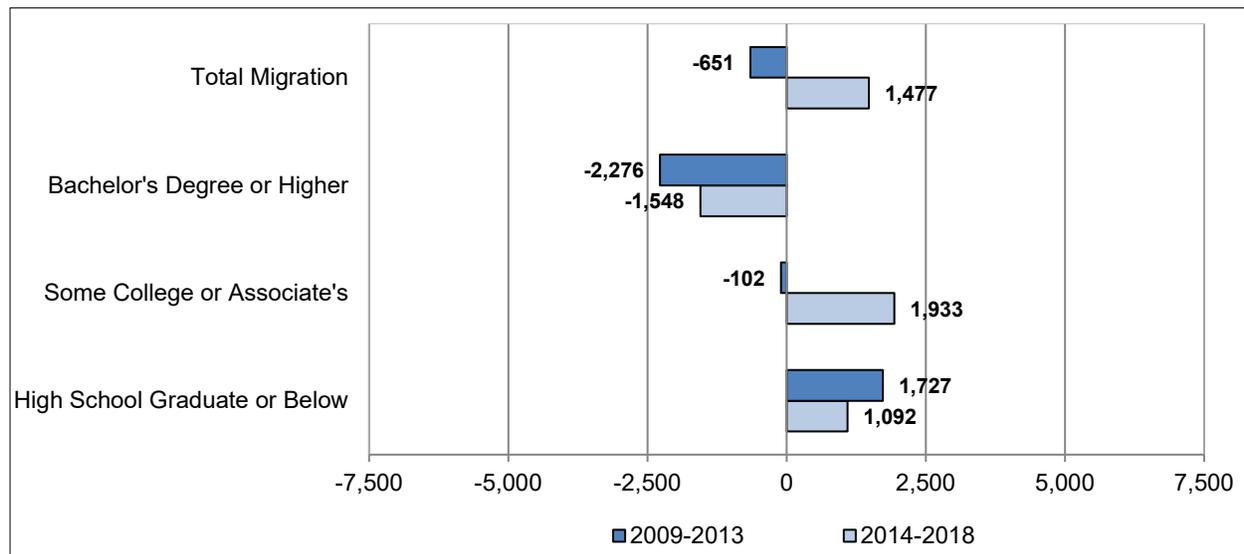
*Note.* See [Table A13.1](#) in [Appendix 13](#) for supporting data. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. Compiled and prepared by: David Drozd, Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska Omaha.

## **Migration Estimates for 22- to 64-Year-Olds**

- [Figure 3.2](#) summarizes the average annual net migration estimates for Nebraska by education level, based on the results of the 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 ACS.<sup>32</sup>
- Analysis by education level reveals that between 2009 and 2013, Nebraska had an average annual net out-migration of 2,276 working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or higher. Furthermore, it is estimated that between 2014 and 2018, Nebraska had an average annual net out-migration of 1,548 working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or higher. The result of this continued pattern of net out-migration over the last 10 years is that Nebraska has lost an estimated 19,120 working-age adults with high levels of education.
- [Figure 3.2](#) demonstrates that the net out-migration of highly educated working-age Nebraskans has not been eliminated since the 2003 LR 174 Task Force prioritized the issue.

**Figure 3.2**

### **Nebraska Average Annual Net Migration of 22- to 64-Year-Olds by Education Level Based on the 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 American Community Survey**



*Note.* See [Table A13.2](#) in [Appendix 13](#) for supporting data. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. Compiled and prepared by: David Drozd, Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska Omaha.

<sup>32</sup> Net migration is the difference between the estimated numbers of individuals who moved to or from Nebraska. If net migration is positive, the number of people who moved to the state is higher than the number who left Nebraska. If net migration is negative, the number of people who left the state exceeded the number who moved to Nebraska. Migration estimates from the ACS PUMS surveys are based on survey responses from a small number of working-age adults that moved in to or out of Nebraska. As shown in [Table A13.2](#) in [Appendix 13](#), the 2014-2018 ACS PUMS data reveals that only 523 highly educated, working-age adults were surveyed that moved in to or out of Nebraska (approximately 100 survey respondents per year).

## **Migration Estimates Compared to Educational Attainment for 22- to 64-Year-Olds**

Although currently available estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau do not reveal a clear picture of overall Nebraska migration patterns at all levels of education, there is still reason to be concerned about the net migration of working-age adults, particularly at the bachelor's degree and above level. In fact, using a slightly different population (age 25+ rather than 22-64) the University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research calculates that Nebraska ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> best in the net loss of people age 25 or older with a bachelor's degree or higher over the past five years.<sup>33</sup>

As illustrated in [Figure 3.3](#), the latest available average annual net migration estimate at each education level is small relative to the corresponding total estimated working-age population of the state. Nevertheless, repeated positive or negative net migration will have a corresponding positive or negative effect on the size and quality of the state's labor force over the long run.

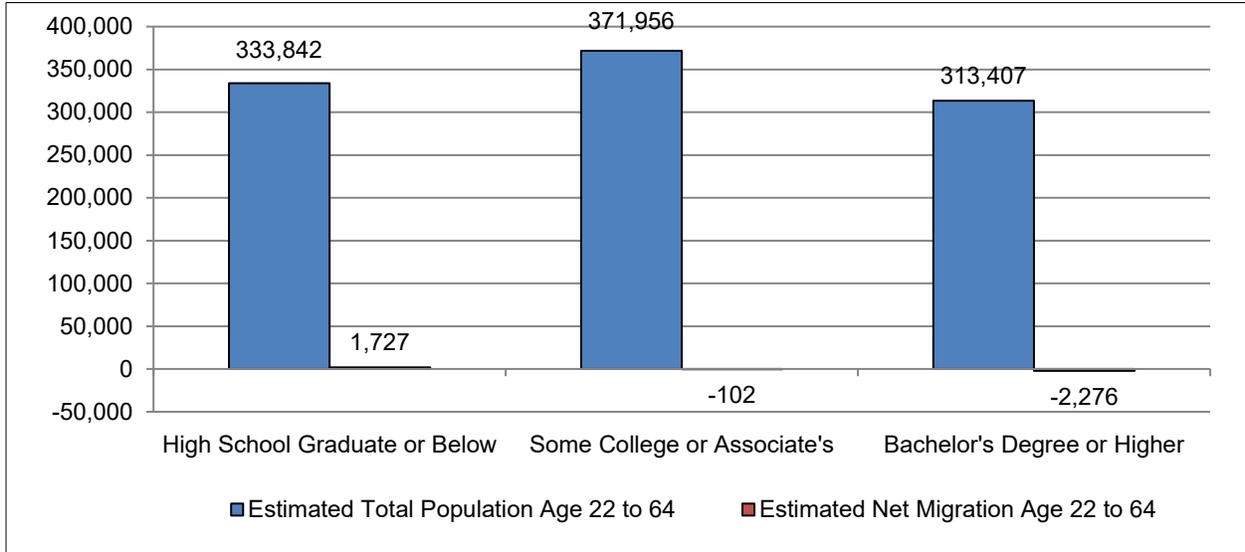
- Analyzing the overall educational attainment and the overall net migration of 22- to-64-year-olds reveals that for every 10,000 people in Nebraska with a high school education or below, there was an average annual net in-migration of 33.3 people for 2014-2018, compared to an average annual net in-migration of 51.7 people for 2009-2013.
- For every 10,000 people in Nebraska with some college or an associate's degree, there was an average annual net in-migration of 52.8 people for 2014-2018, compared to an average annual net out-migration of 2.7 people for 2009-2013.
- For every 10,000 people in Nebraska with a bachelor's degree or higher, there was an average annual net out-migration of 45.4 people for 2014-2018, compared to an average annual net out-migration of 72.6 people for 2009-2013.
- As previously discussed, only limited conclusions can be drawn about the net migration of 22- to-64-year-olds due to the small samples on which the estimates are based each year and the relatively high margin of error associated with each estimate. Caution should be exercised when interpreting the migration estimates based on American Community Survey data.
- A better future measure to analyze the net migration of Nebraskans with high levels of education attainment would be to obtain data from the postsecondary institutions related to where their recent college graduates are employed.

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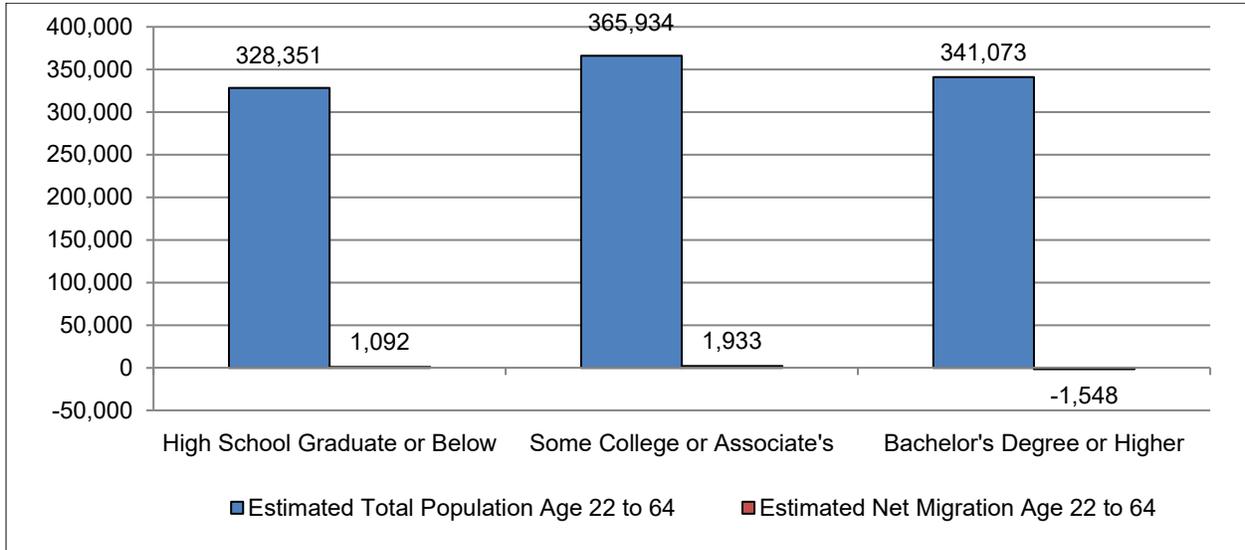
<sup>33</sup> 2014-18 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau analyzed by David Drozd, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research.

**Figure 3.3**  
**Nebraska Educational Attainment of 22- to 64-Year-Olds Compared to the**  
**Nebraska Average Annual Net Migration of 22- to 64-Year-Olds by Education Level**  
**Based on the 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 American Community Survey**

**Part A: 2009-2013**



**Part B: 2014-2018**



*Note.* See Table A13.1 and Table A13.2 in Appendix 13 for supporting data. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. Compiled and prepared by: David Drozd, Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska Omaha.