



2025 NEBRASKA RURAL POLL RESEARCH REPORT

Trade Policy



The Rural Poll now offers a way for you to find the exact data you're looking for, for your research, policy decisions, or business proposals.

To purchase questions for the 2026 Poll, contact Survey Manager Becky Vogt at rvogt2@unl.edu.

Nebraska Rural Poll Research Report 25-1, October 2025.

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All of the research reports detailing Nebraska Rural Poll results are located on its webpage at: <http://ruralpoll.unl.edu>

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The demographic profile of **Rural Poll Respondents** can be found at allthingsnebraska.unl.edu

KEY FINDINGS



This report details 943 responses to the 2025 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 30th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about trade policy. Trends for this question are examined by comparing data from the 2024 Poll to this year's results. In addition, comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- Rural Nebraskans' ratings of the importance of various items in determining trade policy are very similar to last year. However, a couple of items showed slight changes. This year, more rural Nebraskans rate lower prices for consumers as very important. The proportion rating this item as very important increased from 51 percent last year to 56 percent this year. Similarly, this year more rural Nebraskans rate strengthening economic relationships with other countries as very important as compared to last year (increasing from 41 percent to 47 percent).
- Overall, most rural Nebraskans think protecting American jobs, lower prices for consumers, and creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses are very important considerations in determining trade policy. Almost six in ten think both protecting American jobs (57%) and lower prices for consumers (56%) should be very important in determining trade policy. Just over one-half think creating new export opportunities for the state's agricultural producers and other businesses (54%) should be a very important consideration.
 - Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration in determining national trade policy. Eight in ten persons with these types of occupations (80%) say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration, compared to just over four in ten persons with management, professional, or education occupations (42%).
 - Younger persons are more likely than older persons to view lower prices for consumers as a very important item for determining national trade policy. Just over three-quarters (77%) of persons aged 19 to 29 think this item should be a very important consideration, compared to just under one-half (49%) of persons aged 65 and older.
 - Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses should be a very important part of determining national trade policy. Over six in ten Panhandle residents (64%) think this should be a very important consideration, compared to just under one-half of the residents of the Southeast region (45%).
 - Persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to believe using trade policies to pressure countries that challenge national economic and political priorities should be very important in determining national trade policy. Just over four in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (43%) believe this should be a very important determinant, compared to one in ten persons with sales or office support occupations.

REPORT



INTRODUCTION

International trade is an important part of the economy in Nebraska. What items do rural Nebraskans think are important to consider when determining US trade policy? This paper provides a detailed analysis of these questions.

This report details 943 responses to the 2025 Nebraska Rural Poll, the 30th annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about trade policy.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 943 responses from Nebraskans living in 86 counties in the state.¹ A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in June and July to 6,745 randomly selected households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward and Washington. The 14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, energy resources, agricultural security, trust in institutions, algorithms, and trade policy. This paper reports only results from the trade policy section.

A 14% response rate was achieved using the total design method (Dillman, 1978). The sequence of steps used follow:

1. A pre-notification letter was sent requesting participation in the study.
2. The questionnaire was mailed with an informal letter signed by the project manager approximately two weeks later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to

those who had not yet responded approximately two weeks after the questionnaire had been sent.

4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 30 days of the original mailing were sent a replacement questionnaire.

Appendix Table 1 shows demographic data from this year's study and previous rural polls, as well as similar data based on the entire nonmetropolitan population of Nebraska (using the latest available data from the 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey). As can be seen from the table, there are some marked differences between some of the demographic variables in our sample compared to the Census data. Thus, we suggest the reader use caution in generalizing our data to all rural Nebraska. However, given the random sampling frame used for this survey, the acceptable percentage of responses, and the large number of respondents, we feel the data provide useful insights into opinions of rural Nebraskans on the various issues presented in this report. The margin of error for this study is plus or minus three percent.

Since younger residents have typically been under-represented by survey respondents and older residents have been over-represented, weights were used to adjust the sample to match the age distribution in the nonmetropolitan counties in Nebraska (using U.S. Census figures from 2020).

The average age of respondents is approximately 50 years. Sixty-seven percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 64 percent live within the city limits of a

¹ In the spring of 2013, the Grand Island area (Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties) was designated a metropolitan area, though Howard County was no longer considered a metropolitan county in 2023. To facilitate comparisons from previous years, these four counties are still included in our sample. In addition, the Sioux City area

metropolitan counties of Dixon and Dakota were added in 2014 because of a joint Metro Poll being conducted by the University of Nebraska at Omaha to ensure all counties in the state were sampled. Although classified as metro, Dixon County is rural in nature. Dakota County is similar in many respects to other "micropolitan" counties the Rural Poll surveys.

town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 43 years and have lived in their current community 26 years. Fifty percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000. Ninety-seven percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Sixteen percent of the respondents report their 2024 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$40,000. Seventy percent report incomes over \$60,000. Seventy-eight percent were employed in 2024 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Seventeen percent are retired. Twenty-eight percent of those employed reported working in a management, professional, or education occupation. Ten percent indicated they were employed in agriculture.

TRADE POLICY

Respondents were asked how important they think various considerations should be in determining US trade policy. This question was also asked in 2024. Rural Nebraskans' ratings of the importance of various items in determining trade policy are very similar to last year. However, a

couple of items showed slight changes. This year, more rural Nebraskans rate lower prices for consumers as very important. The proportion rating this item as very important increased from 51 percent last year to 56 percent this year (Figure 1). Similarly, this year more rural Nebraskans rate strengthening economic relationships with other countries as very important as compared to last year (increasing from 41 percent to 47 percent).

Overall, most rural Nebraskans think protecting American jobs, lower prices for consumers, and creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses are very important considerations in determining trade policy. Almost six in ten think both protecting American jobs (57%) and lower prices for consumers (56%) should be very important in determining trade policy (Figure 2). Just over one-half think creating new export opportunities for the state's agricultural producers and other businesses (54%) should be a very important consideration.

These perceptions are examined by community size, region, and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 2).

Figure 1. Perceptions of Importance of Items in Determining US Trade Policy, 2024 and 2025

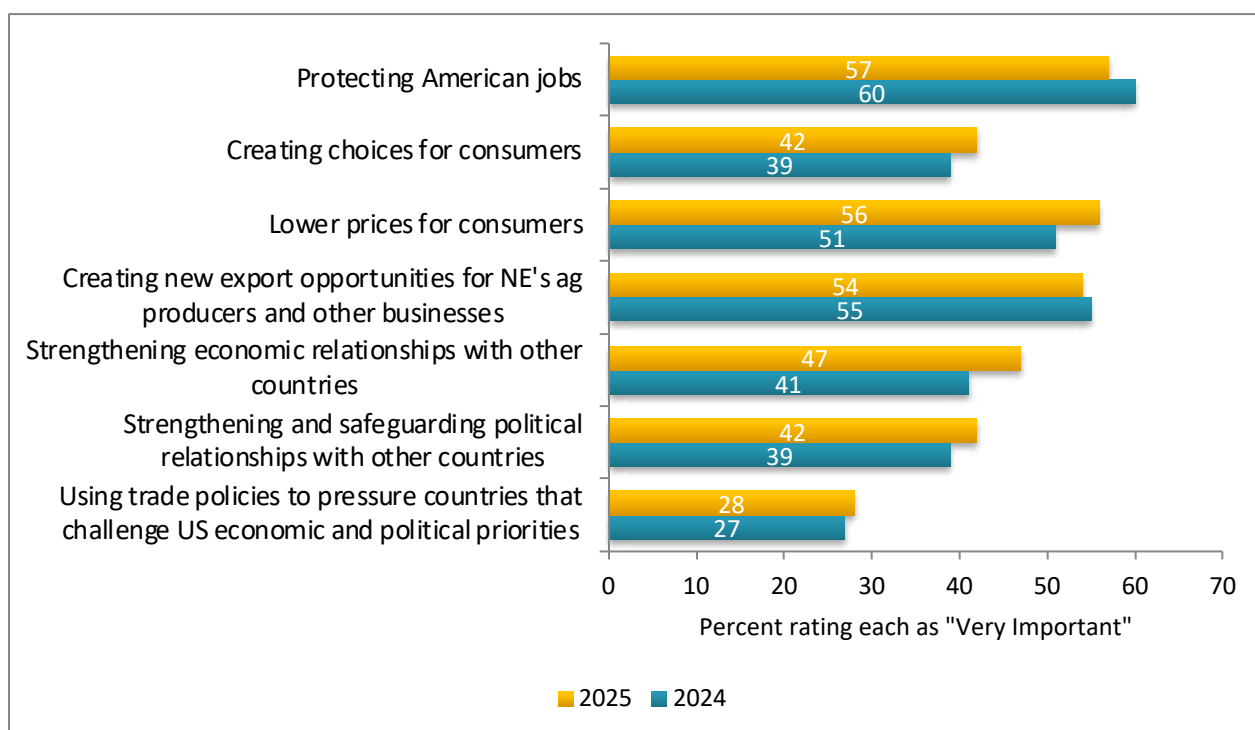
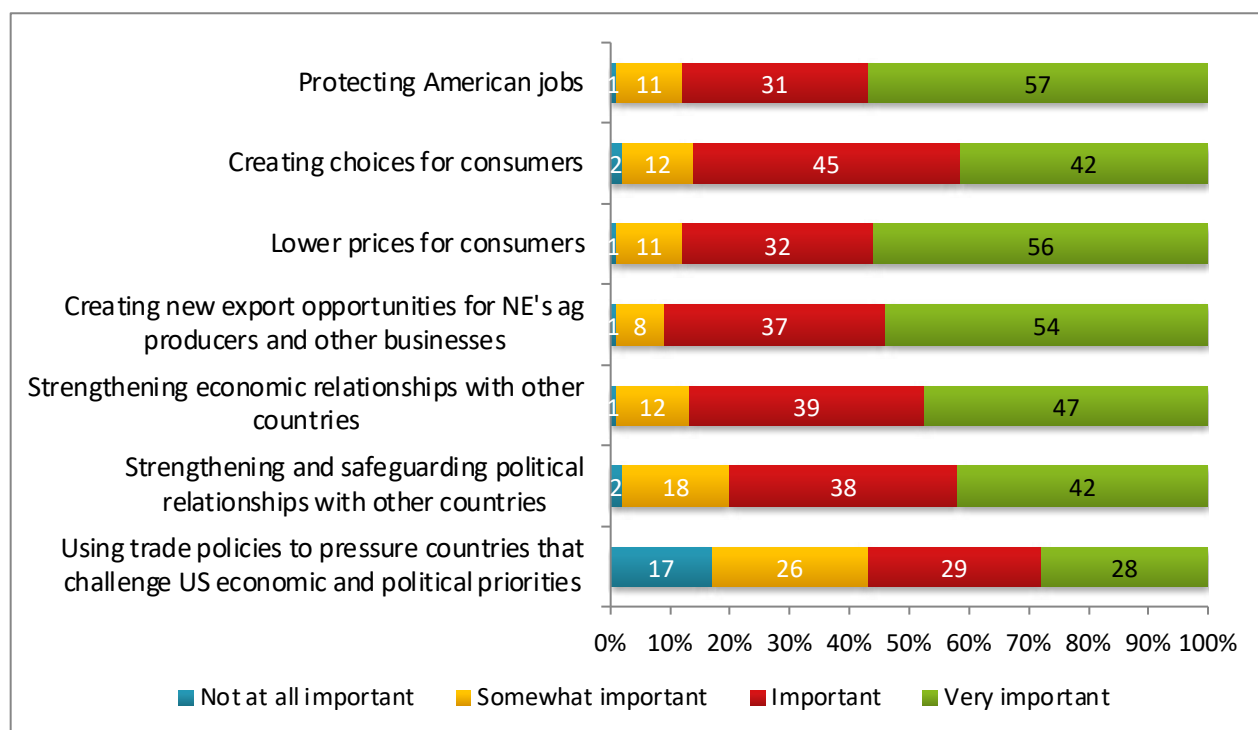


Figure 2. Perceptions of Importance of Items in Determining US Trade Policy



Many differences are detected. Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration in determining national trade policy. Eight in ten persons with these types of occupations (80%) say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration, compared to just over four in ten persons with management, professional, or education occupations (42%).

Persons with less than a four-year college degree are more likely than persons with at least a four-year degree to think protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration. Just over six in ten persons without a four-year degree say this item should be a very important consideration, compared to one-half of persons with at least a four-year degree.

Other groups most likely to say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration for determining national trade policy include persons living in or near the smallest communities, persons living in the North Central region (see

Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region), and persons between the ages of 50 and 64.

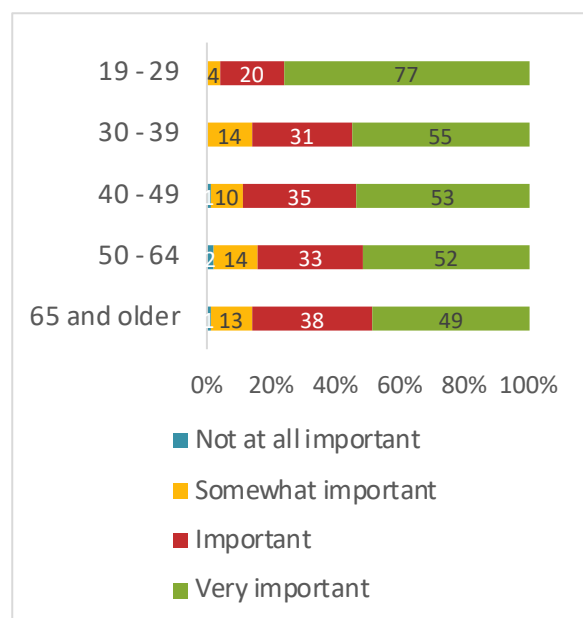
Persons with production, transportation, or warehousing occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to think creating choices for consumers should be a very important consideration. Just over two-thirds of persons with these types of occupations (68%) think this should be a very important consideration, compared to one-quarter of persons with sales or office support occupations (25%).

Other groups most likely to say creating choices for consumers should be a very important consideration for national trade policy include persons with lower household incomes and persons with less than a four-year college degree.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to view lower prices for consumers as a very important item for determining national trade policy. Just over three-quarters (77%) of persons aged 19 to 29 think this item should be a very important consideration, compared to just under one-half (49%) of persons aged 65 and older (Figure 3).

The other groups most likely to say lower prices for consumers should be a very important consideration for determining national trade policy include: persons living in the Northeast region, persons with lower household incomes, persons with less than a four-year college degree, and persons with production, transportation or warehousing occupations.

Figure 3. Importance of Lower Prices for Consumers in Determining Trade Policy by Age



Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses should be a very important part of determining national trade policy. Over six in ten Panhandle residents (64%) think this should be a very important consideration, compared to just under one-half of the residents of the Southeast region (45%).

The other groups most likely to think creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses should be a very important consideration include: persons living in or near communities with populations ranging from 500 to 999, persons aged 65 and older, persons with less than a four-year college degree, persons with occupations in

agriculture, and persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations.

Younger persons are more likely than older persons to say strengthening economic relationships with other countries should be a very important consideration for national trade policy. Six in ten persons aged 19 to 29 (60%) think this should be a very important consideration, compared to just under four in ten persons aged 50 to 64 (39%).

Persons with lower household incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to think strengthening economic relationships with other countries should be a very important consideration.

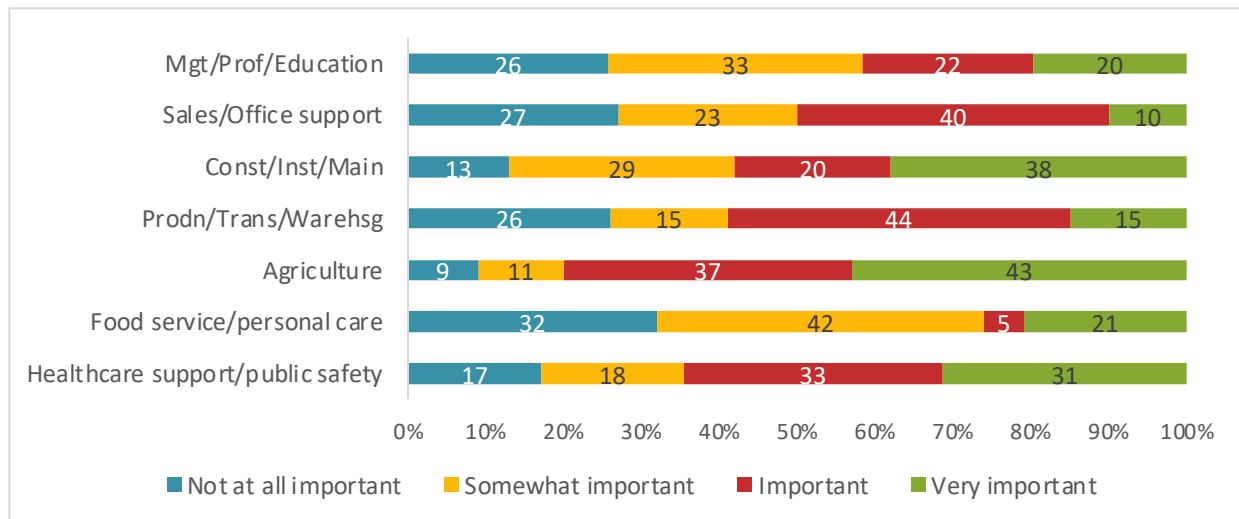
The groups most likely to say strengthening and safeguarding political relationships with other countries should be a very important consideration for determining trade policy include: persons living in or near the largest communities, persons with lower household incomes, persons with an education of a high school diploma or less, and persons with food service or personal care occupations.

Persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to believe using trade policies to pressure countries that challenge national economic and political priorities should be very important in determining national trade policy. Just over four in ten persons with occupations in agriculture (43%) believe this should be a very important determinant, compared to one in ten persons with sales or office support occupations (Figure 4).

Persons aged 65 and older are more likely than younger persons to say using trade policies to pressure countries that challenge national economic and political priorities should be very important. One-third (33%) of persons aged 65 and older say this item should be very important, compared to just over two in ten persons aged 19 to 29 (23%).

Other groups most likely to say using trade policies to pressure countries that challenge national economic and political

Figure 4. Importance of Using Trade Policies to Press Countries that Challenge US Economic and Political Priorities by Occupation



priorities should be very important in determining trade policy include: persons living in or near smaller communities, persons with lower household incomes, males, and persons without a four-year college degree.

CONCLUSION

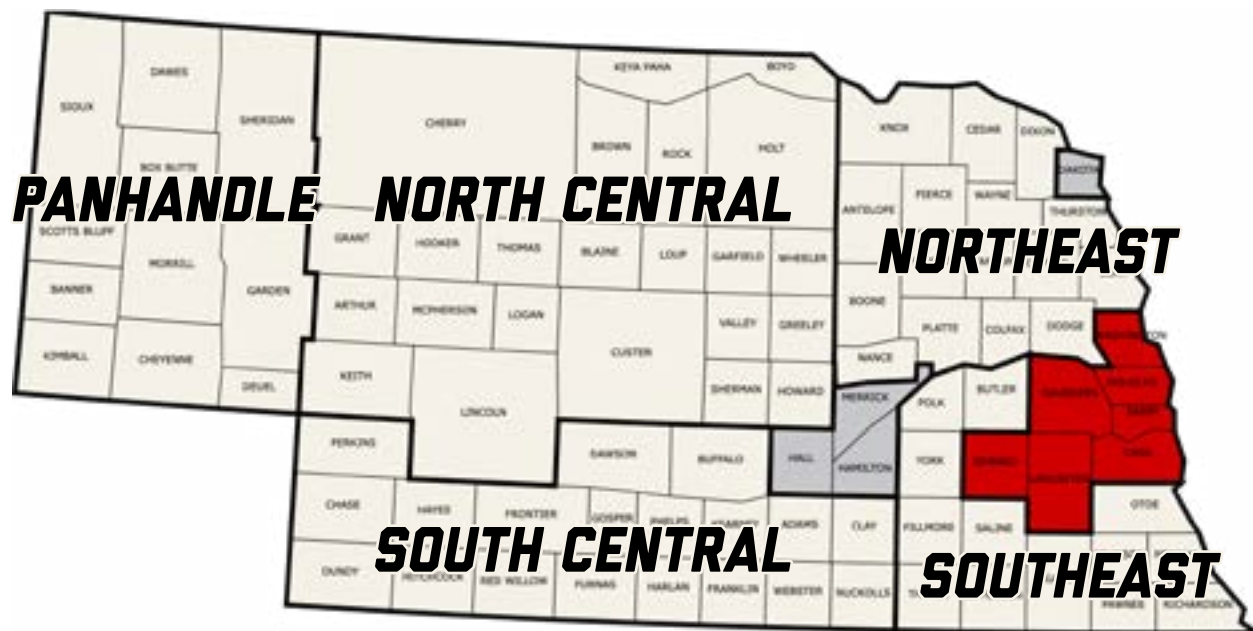
Rural Nebraskans' ratings of the importance of various items in determining trade policy are very similar to last year. However, a couple of items showed slight changes. This year, more rural Nebraskans rate lower prices for consumers as very important. Similarly, this year more rural Nebraskans rate strengthening economic relationships with other countries as very important as compared to last year.




Overall, most rural Nebraskans think protecting American jobs, lower prices for consumers, and creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses are very important considerations in determining trade policy. However, various groups had differing opinions about what should be important in determining trade policy. Persons with construction, installation, or maintenance occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to say protecting American jobs should be a very important consideration in determining national trade

policy. Younger persons are more likely than older persons to view lower prices for consumers as a very important item for determining national trade policy.

Residents of the Panhandle are more likely than residents of other regions of the state to say creating new export opportunities for Nebraska's agricultural producers and other businesses should be a very important part of determining national trade policy. And, persons with occupations in agriculture are more likely than persons with different occupations to believe using trade policies to pressure countries that challenge national economic and political priorities should be very important in determining national trade policy.

NEBRASKA RURAL POLL REGIONS



-  Nonmetropolitan county surveyed in Rural Poll
-  Metropolitan county not surveyed in Rural Poll
-  County classified as metropolitan but surveyed in Rural Poll



RURAL POLL

**Nebraska Rural Poll
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