

2018

## Douglas and Sarpy Counties | Omaha Area | Voter Turnout | 2014, 2016, 2018 | Executive Summary

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

# CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

## Douglas and Sarpy Counties

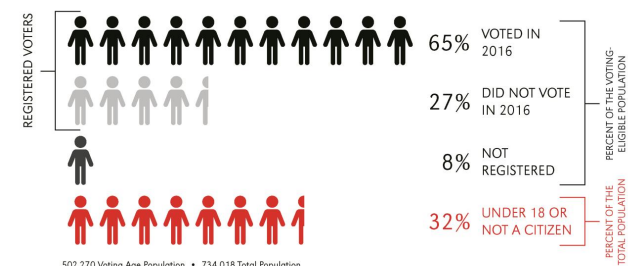
| Omaha Area | Voter Turnout | 2014, 2016, 2018 |

### Executive Summary

The **Center for Public Affairs Research** at the University of Nebraska at Omaha acquired the “Voter Files” for years 2014, 2016, and 2018 from the Office of the Nebraska Secretary of State in August 2018 to provide original calculations of voter turnout across a range of geographies and variables. We use data from the U.S. Census Bureau to provide context for our analysis.

This report focuses on **Douglas and Sarpy counties in Nebraska**.

**65%** of the eligible voting population turned out to vote in 2016, which is below state averages.



= 30,000 PEOPLE

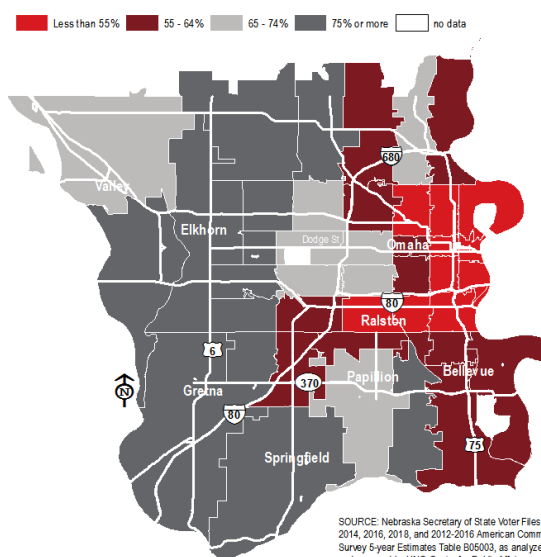
Sources: 2016 Voter Turnout File, Nebraska Secretary of State's Office; Table B06003, 2016 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau; Prepared by: UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Voter turnout was **39%** in 2014 for the last midterm election.

The lowest voter turnout in both 2014 and 2016 was among 18-29 year-olds.

Over **96,000** 18-29-year-olds did not vote in the 2014 midterm election.

Voter turnout varies across ZIP codes in Douglas and Sarpy counties.



Lower voter turnout also correlates with lower education, percent Hispanic population, lower household income, and percent black population.

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# **Douglas and Sarpy Counties | Omaha Area | Voter Turnout | 2014, 2016, 2018**

## **Why Vote?**

Voting is a fundamental act of civic life in the United States. Those that vote send a clear signal to elected officials about what matters most to them. That signal, especially when combined with other vital acts of political engagement, such as directly contacting elected representatives, joining political or advocacy organizations, contributing resources, volunteering, publicly speaking out, or even running for office, helps to shape and define the future of our towns, counties, state, and nation.

Voting is essential to the American system of government—a democratic, constitutional republic—and the right to vote is part of the historic fabric of these United States. As a result, the level of voter turnout warrants our attention.

## **Data**

This report focuses on voter turnout in 2014, 2016, and 2018 primaries in Douglas and Sarpy counties in Nebraska.

The Center for Public Affairs Research in the College of Public Affairs and Community Service at the University of Nebraska at Omaha acquired the “Voter Files” or “Voter Registration Records” for years 2014, 2016 and 2018 from the elections unit of the Office of the Nebraska Secretary of State in August 2018.

The main purpose of the report is to provide original calculations of voter turnout across a range of geographies and voter characteristics. We use data from the U.S. Census Bureau to provide context for our analyses, including, the Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement, American Community Survey, and the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Because these are original calculations, our results may be slightly different from other sources using similar data but all should be within a small margin of error.



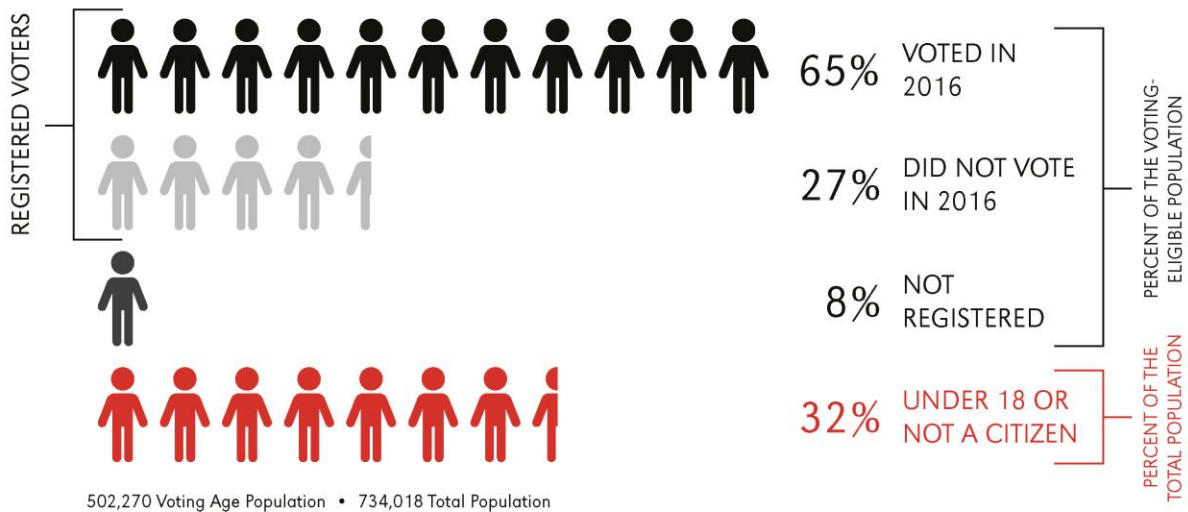
## Registered Voters

In Nebraska, all citizens age 18 years and over, who have not been convicted of a felony, may register to vote. In order to vote, a person must be registered within approximately two weeks of the election. **October 26, 2018, is the registration deadline for the November 6, 2018, midterm election.**

In 2016, the total population of Douglas and Sarpy counties was 734,018; of those 231,748 were either under 18 years or not a citizen. This leaves a citizen, voting-age population of 502,270. Of those, 460,397 registered to vote.

**Figure 1**

**In 2016, 8% of the voting age population had not registered to vote in Douglas and Sarpy counties**



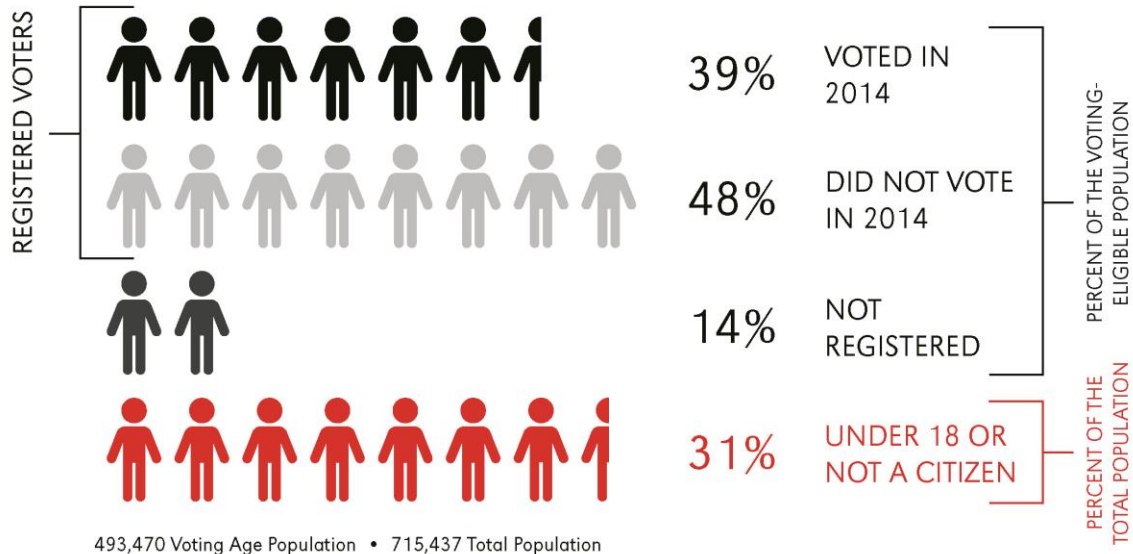
= 30,000 PEOPLE

Sources: 2016 Voter Turnout File, Nebraska Secretary of State's Office;  
Table B05003, 2016 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau  
Prepared by: UNO Center for Public Affairs Research



Figure 2

In 2014, 14% of the voting age population had not registered to vote in Douglas and Sarpy counties



= 30,000 PEOPLE

Sources: 2014 Voter Turnout File, Nebraska Secretary of State's Office;  
Table B05003, 2014 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau  
Prepared by: UNO Center for Public Affairs Research



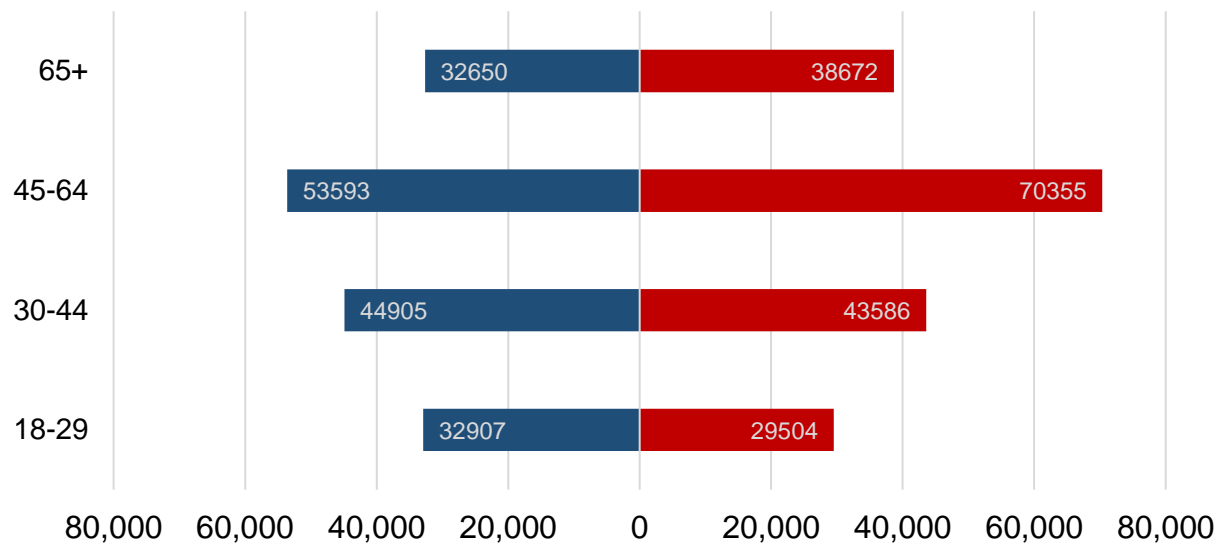
When a person registers to vote, he or she may choose to register with a political party. In 2016, Douglas and Sarpy counties combined had more registered Republicans than Democrats, as can be seen in Figure 3. Although, there are more registered Democrats than Republicans in Douglas County alone. Statewide, there are more registered Republicans than Democrats.

**Figure 3**

**In the Omaha area there are more registered Republicans than Democrats**

Number of registered voters 2016

■ Democrat ■ Republican



Source: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter File 2016



## Voter Turnout

Voter turnout tends to vary by election type, as can be seen in Table 1.

**General elections**, like 2016 in which a president is chosen tend to have greater turnout than **general, mid-term elections**, as November 2018 will be. In midterm elections, many local, state, and national representatives are chosen, but not the president. Finally, **primary elections**, in which persons vote on who the candidates will be in the general elections, have the lowest voter turnout.

**Table 1**

**Voter turnout in Douglas and Sarpy counties varies across election type**  
*% of eligible population*

General Midterm 2014	Primary 2016	General Presidential 2016	Primary 2018
39%	18%	65%	19%

Sources: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter Files 2014, 2016, 2018 and TableB05003, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Douglas and Sarpy counties overall voter turnout rates are close to the statewide and national averages.

**Table 2**

**2016 voter turnout in Douglas and Sarpy counties is similar to state and national turnout**  
*% of eligible population*

Omaha Area	Nebraska	United States
65%	62%	62%

Sources: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter File 2016 and Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement, U.S. Census Bureau

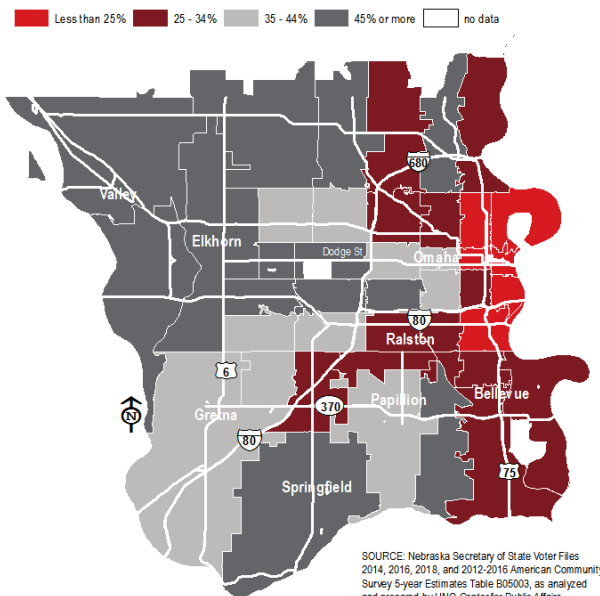


Voter turnout also varies across the ZIP codes that comprise Douglas and Sarpy counties. The lowest voter turnout rates were along the east end of both counties.

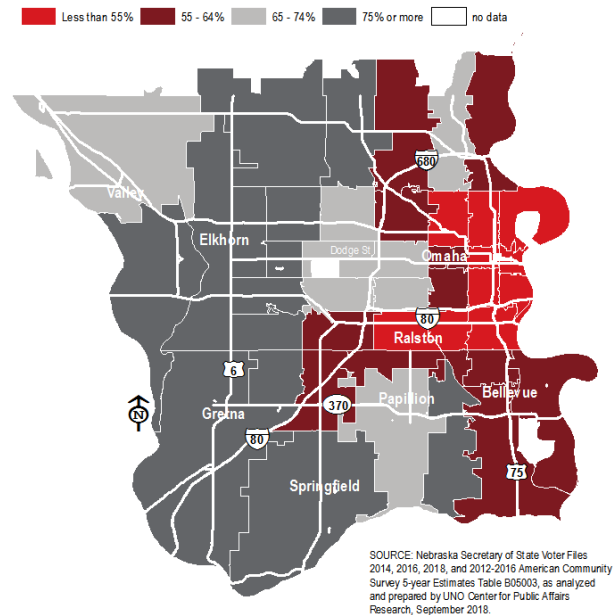
**Figure 4**

**Voter turnout varies across Douglas and Sarpy counties ZIP codes**

*2014 voter turnout as % of eligible population*



*2016 voter turnout as % of eligible population*







## Who Votes?

Next, we examine voter turnout by age, political party, education, ethnicity, income, and race.

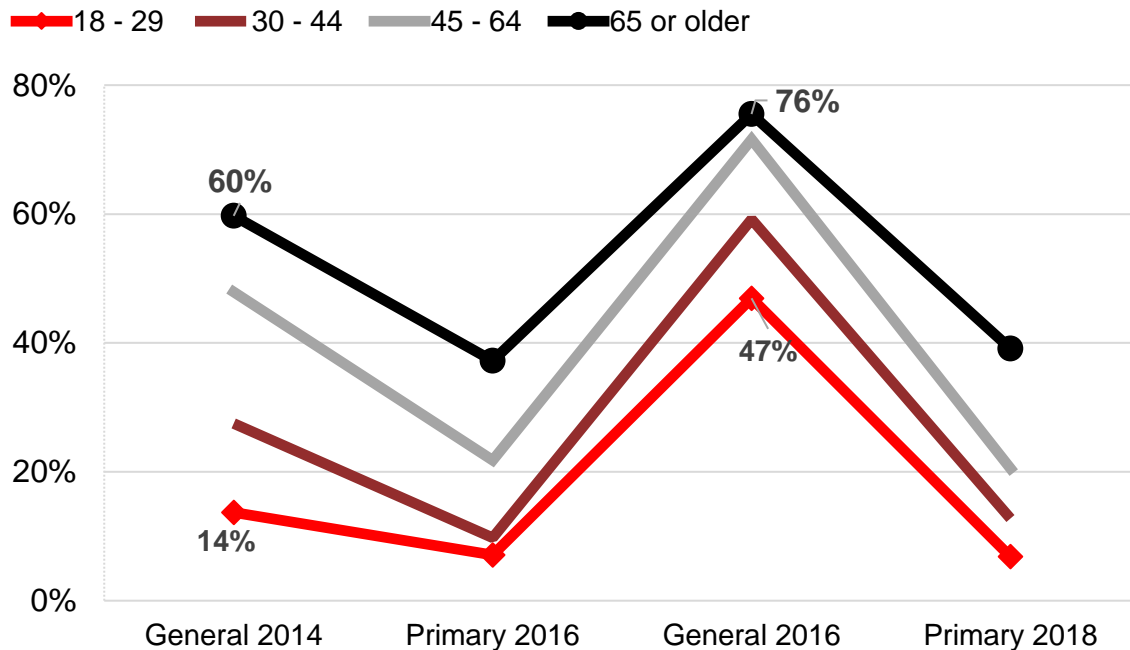
### Age

In Douglas and Sarpy counties, voter turnout varies by age groups, with those ages 18-29-years-old being the least likely to vote in general elections as well as primaries.

**Figure 5**

**Persons over age 65 vote most often**

*Douglas and Sarpy counties voter turnout as % of eligible population*



Sources: Nebraska Secretary of State's Voter Files and Table S2901, 2017 American Community Survey U.S. Census Bureau



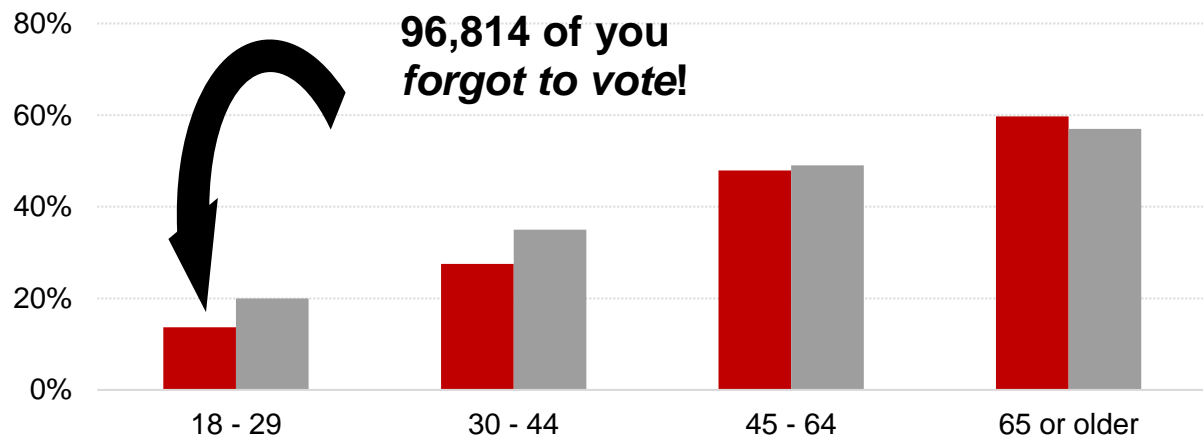
Voter turnout among 18-29-year-olds in the Omaha area, for the 2014 midterm election, was below the rate of the same age group nationwide. Figure 6 demonstrates 14 percent of 18-29-year-olds in Nebraska voted compared to 20 percent of 18-29-year-olds nationwide. That means over 96,000 18-29-year-olds in Douglas and Sarpy counties did not vote.

Figure 6

**2014 midterm voter turnout is a good indicator for the November 2018 elections, unless you VOTE!**

*Douglas and Sarpy counties voter turnout as % of eligible population*

■ Omaha Area ■ United States



Source: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter Files 2014, 2016, 2018 and U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement

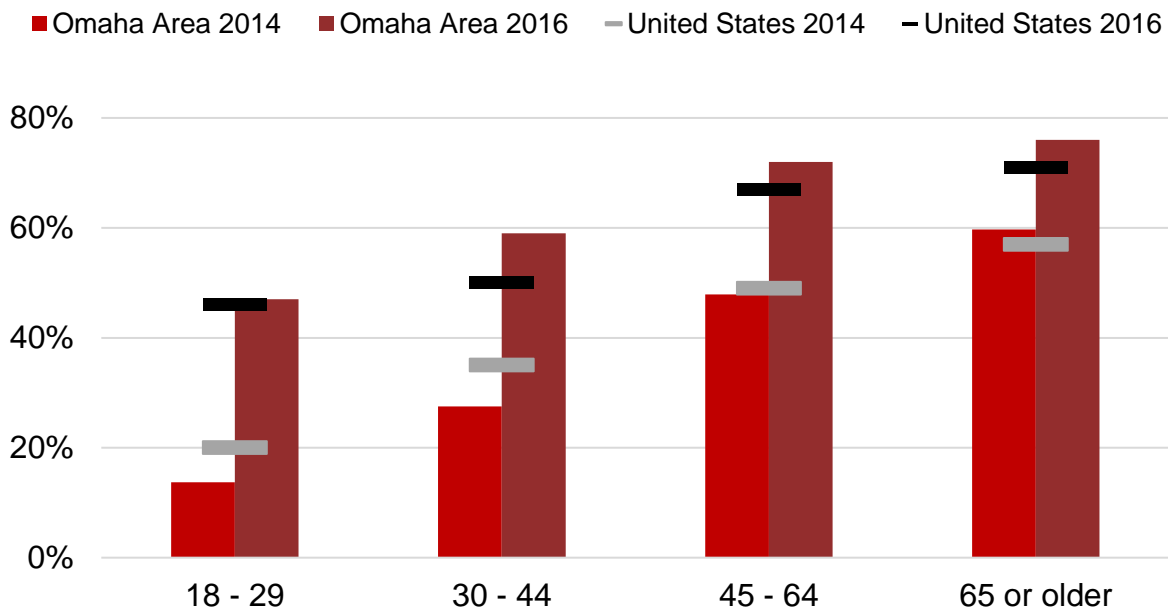


When we compare Douglas and Sarpy counties turnout to nationwide voter turnout those age 65 years and older turn out more than national peers. For instance, Figure 7 illustrates that 60 percent of those 65 or older voted in 2014 compared to 57 percent nationwide. In 2016, 76 percent of those 65 or older voted compared to 71 percent nationwide.

**Figure 7**

**65 and older in Omaha area vote more than United States average**

*Douglas and Sarpy counties voter turnout as % of eligible population*



Source: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter Files 2014, 2016, 2018 and U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement



## Political Parties

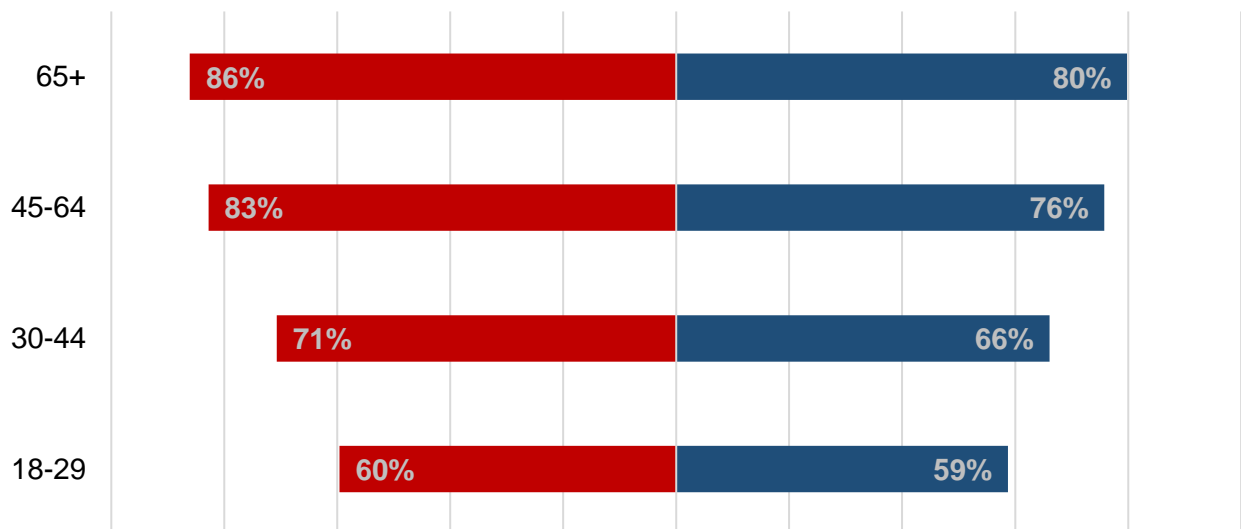
In Douglas and Sarpy counties, there are more registered Republicans than Democrats; however, in 2016, Republicans turned out to vote more than registered Democrats did.

**Figure 8**

### **Voter turnout in Douglas and Sarpy counties is higher for Republicans**

2016 voter turnout as % of registered voters

■ Republican ■ Democrat



Source: Nebraska Secretary of State Voter File 2016



## Education

In Douglas and Sarpy counties, we found education to be a predictor of voter turnout.

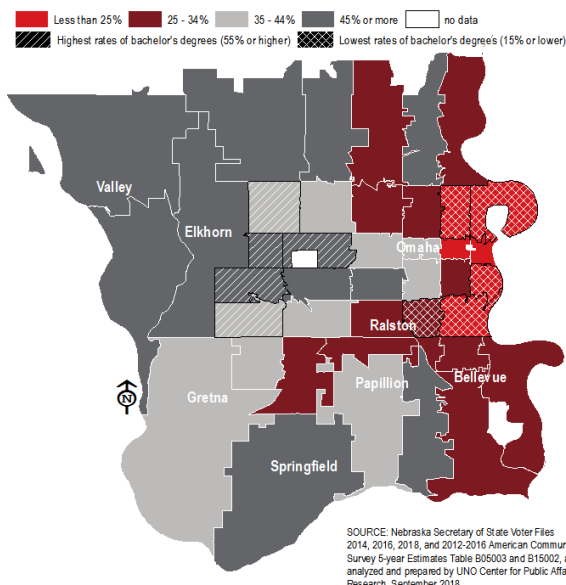
Figure 10 identifies the five ZIP codes with the highest percentages of the population with a bachelor's degree and the five ZIP codes with the lowest percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree. We overlay education with voter turnout and see some clear patterns.

For instance, in 2016, the five ZIP codes with the lowest rates of bachelor's degree, 15 percent or less of the population, also had the lowest voter turnout, 55 percent or less. ZIP codes with the highest rates of bachelor's degrees had higher voter turnout.

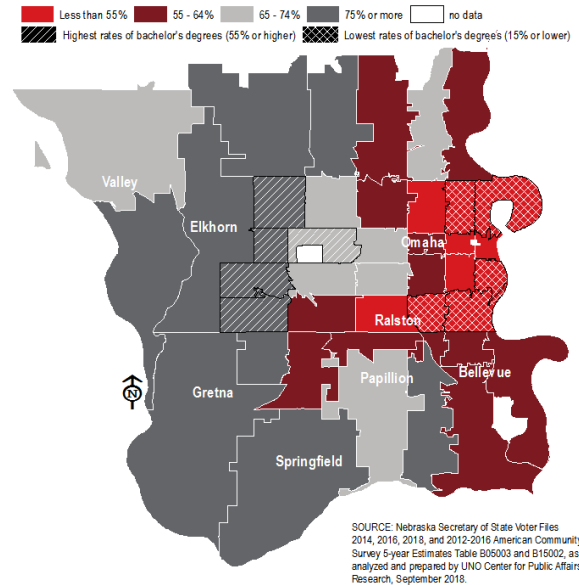
**Figure 10**

**Douglas and Sarpy county ZIP codes with more educated population have high voter turnout**

*2014 voter turnout as % of eligible population*



*2016 voter turnout as % of eligible population*





## Hispanic

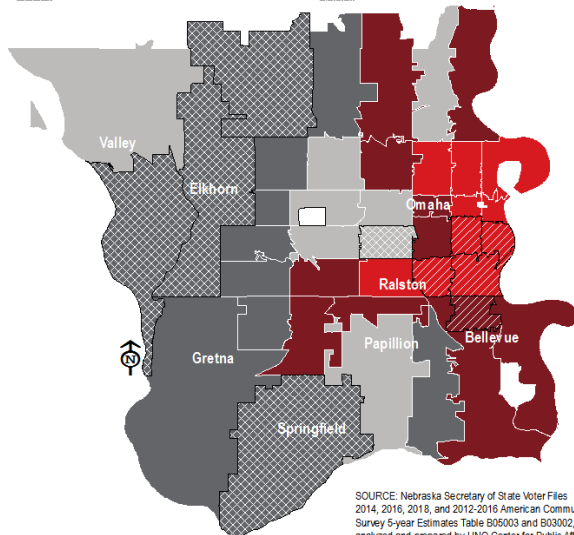
Figure 11 identifies the ZIP codes with the highest and lowest rates of Hispanic population and voter turnout. The data shows that ZIP codes with a higher percentage of Hispanic population had average to low voter turnout in 2014 and 2016.

**Figure 11**

**Douglas and Sarpy county ZIP codes with the highest % Hispanic population have low voter turnout**

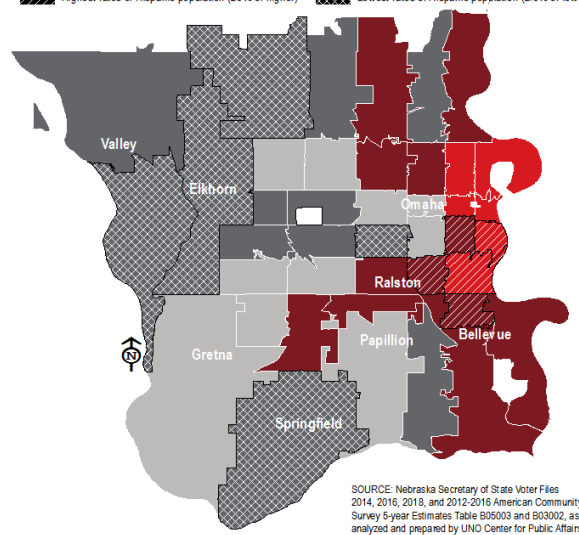
*2014 voter turnout as % of eligible population*

Less than 55% 55 - 64% 65 - 74% 75% or more no data  
Highest rates of Hispanic population (25% or higher) Lowest rates of Hispanic population (2.5% or lower)



*2016 voter turnout as % of eligible population*

Less than 25% 25 - 34% 35 - 44% 45% or higher no data  
Highest rates of Hispanic population (25% or higher) Lowest rates of Hispanic population (2.5% or lower)





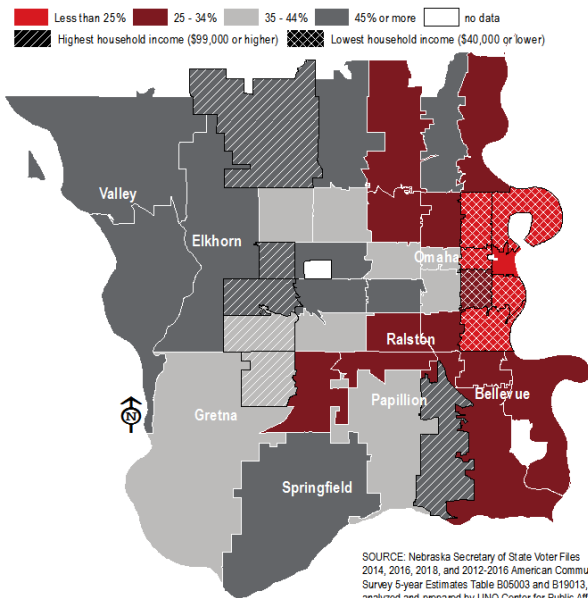
## Income

Figure 12 identifies the ZIP codes with the highest and lowest median household incomes, \$99,000 or higher and \$40,000 or lower, respectively, and voter turnout. Those ZIP codes with the highest median household income turn out to vote at higher rates compared to other ZIP codes.

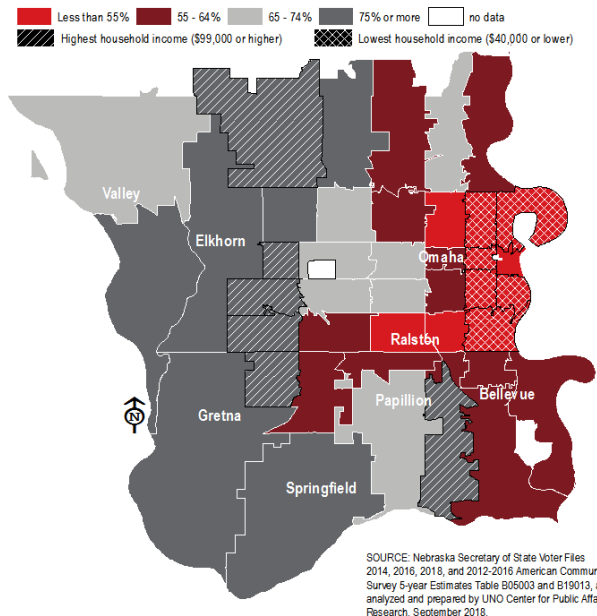
**Figure 12**

**Douglas and Sarpy county ZIP codes with high income have high voter turnout**

*2014 voter turnout as % of eligible population*



*2016 voter turnout as % of eligible population*





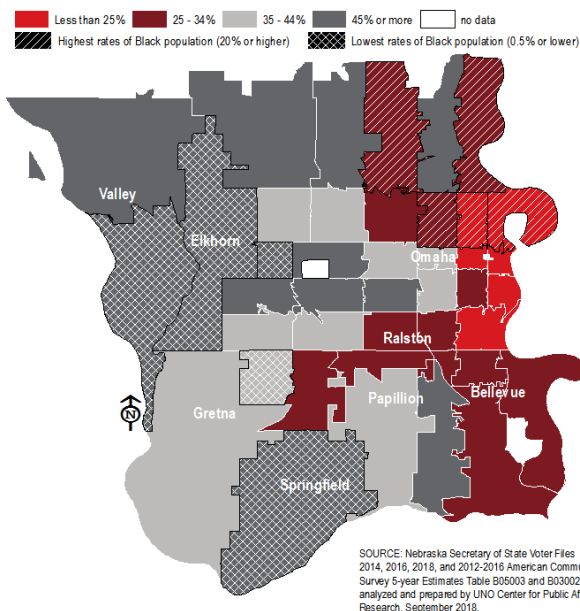
## Black

Figure 10 identifies the ZIP codes with the highest and lowest percentages of black population and voter turnout. The data shows that zip codes with a higher percentage of black population had average to low voter turnout in 2014 and 2016.

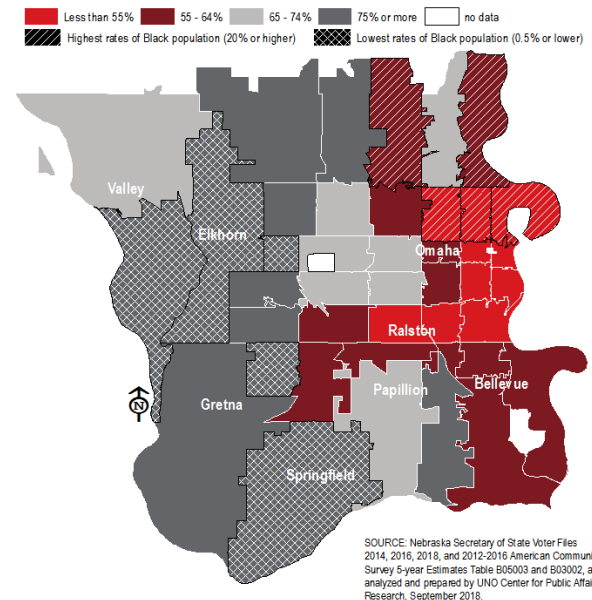
**Figure 13**

**Douglas and Sarpy counties ZIP codes with highest % black population have lower voter turnout**

*2014 voter turnout as % of eligible population*



*2016 voter turnout as % of eligible population*







## Conclusions

Citizens in Nebraska are part of the fabric of American democracy in many ways, but in particular, through exercising the right to vote. Consistent with nationwide patterns, there is a fair amount of variation in voter turnout across Douglas and Sarpy counties.

The most striking findings from this report are:

1. Low voter turnout in the midterm election of 2014. November 2018 will also be a midterm election. If past voter turnout is any indicator for November, we should be concerned that eligible voters will not exercise their civic right and responsibility to vote.
2. 18-29-year-old voter turnout in 2014 was below national averages. This November election, and all elections, shape the leadership of our country for years to come. When young people exercise their right to vote they help to create the country they want to see and be a part of throughout their lifetime.
3. In 2014 and 2016, voter turnout varied across Douglas and Sarpy counties; the lowest voter turnout rates were along the east end of both counties.
4. Low voter turnout correlates with low education, low income and percent of population that identify as black or Hispanic.
5. While Omaha area young voters are less likely to vote than national peers are, Douglas and Sarpy counties' overall voter turnout rates are similar to national rates.

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