



Nebraska Voter Turnout

Civic Nebraska used its [TROVE](#) tool to map and analyze November 2022 election data in Nebraska to examine where voter turnout – as a function of total ballots cast out of the total number of registered voters – was higher, where it was lower, and what demographic characteristics of cities, towns, and neighborhoods were related to turnout.

About the data

The voter turnout data is from the Nebraska Secretary of State voter file, which list of every registered voter in the State of Nebraska and includes data on whether or not an individual cast a ballot in previous elections. Pulled in early December 2022, this data should very closely reflect the list of all registered voters at the time of the November 2022 election. By geocoding voter registration addresses as latitude and longitude points, voter turnout is able to be calculated for a variety of geographic subdivisions.

Demographic information was compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau's [2021 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates](#).

Overview

Statewide voter turnout

Statewide voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters was 54.93% for the November 2022 election. This is down 3% from the 2018 midterm election with 23,936 fewer votes cast in 2022 than in 2018. Voter turnout tends to be higher among older adults and lowest among 18- to 29-year-olds.

| 2018 November General Election | 2022 November General Election |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 57.95% 706,652 people voted 1,219,319 registered voters | 54.93% 682,716 voted 1,242,930 registered voters |

| Voter turnout by Age Group | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| 18-29 | 30-44 | 45-64 | 65+ |
| 29% | 45% | 62% | 75% |

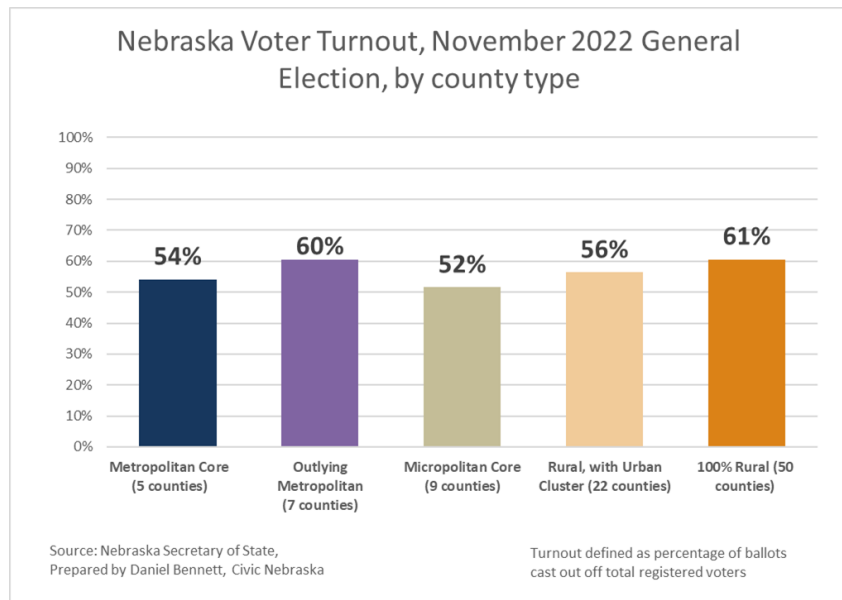
Source: Nebraska Secretary of State, Dec 2022 Voter File, Prepared by Daniel Bennett, Civic Nebraska

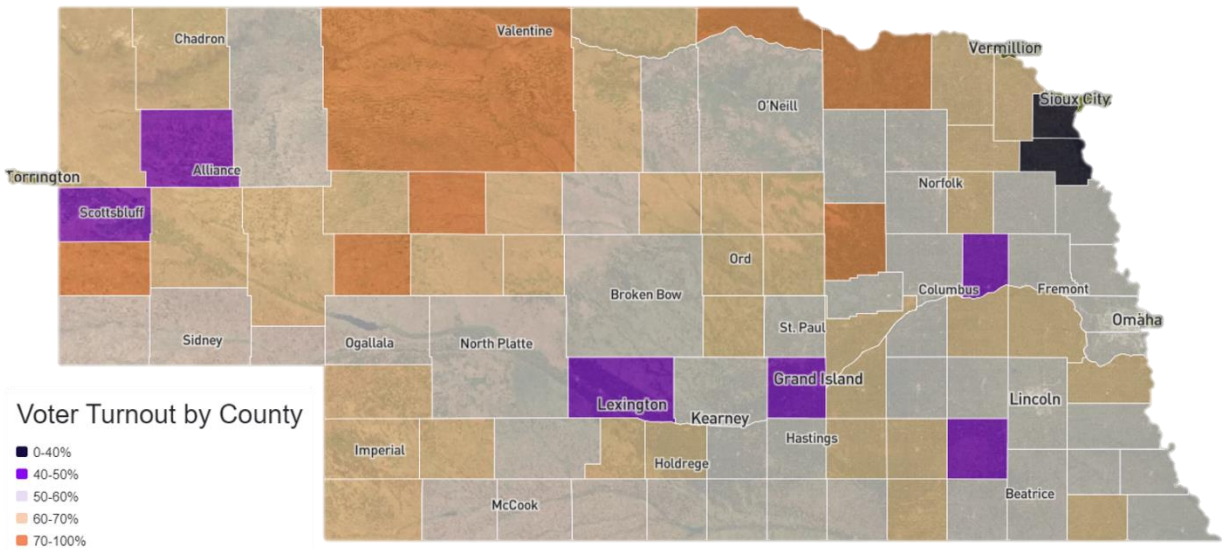
County Turnout

By county type, counties that are 100% Rural (50 counties) and Outlying Metro (7 counties) counties had the highest voter turnout, with Metropolitan (9 counties) and Metropolitan core (5 counties) counties having the lowest.

Many very small counties (less than 2,000 population) and counties with vote all-by-mail elections had the highest turnout. Only 8 counties had voter turnout under 50%.

These counties are found across the state and range in population from under 7,000 (Thurston County) to nearly 62,000 (Hall County).



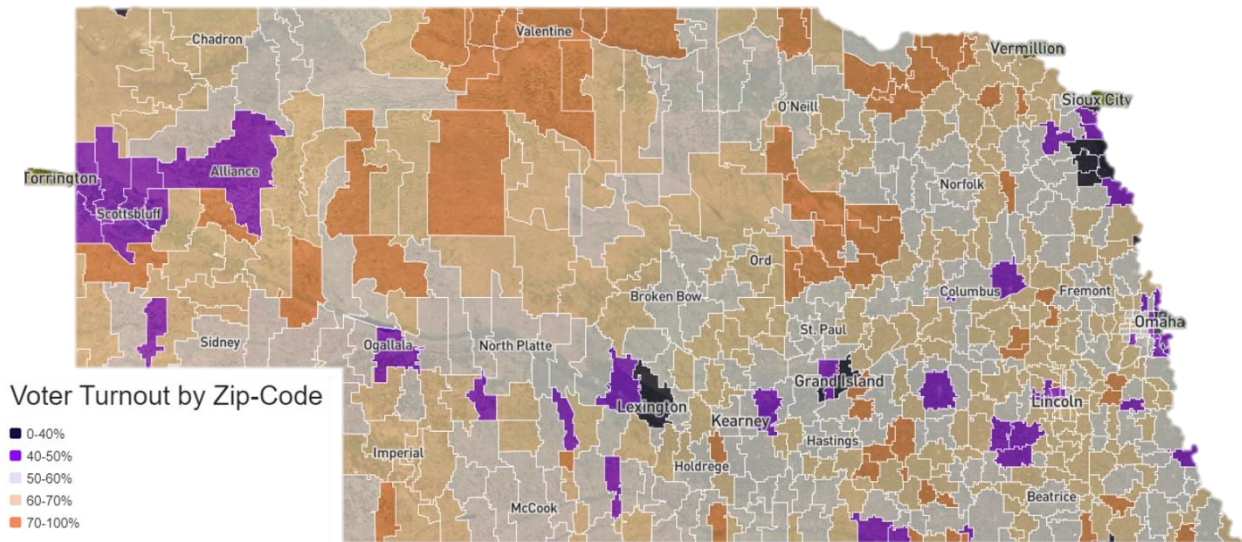


Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

Turnout by ZIP Code

Voter turnout by ZIP Code reveals more variation of voter turnout within counties. For example, while Dawson County as a whole had low voter turnout, Gothenburg had turnout close to the state average.

Clusters of high turnout ZIP Codes can be seen in the area around Boone, Greely and Wheeler Counties and in the northern Sandhills in Cherry and Key Paha Counties. Clusters of low turnout ZIP codes can be found in the Panhandle in Scotts Bluff County and Alliance, NE and in northeast Nebraska close to the Missouri River near the Winnebago and Omaha reservations, South Sioux City, Dakota City, and Decatur.



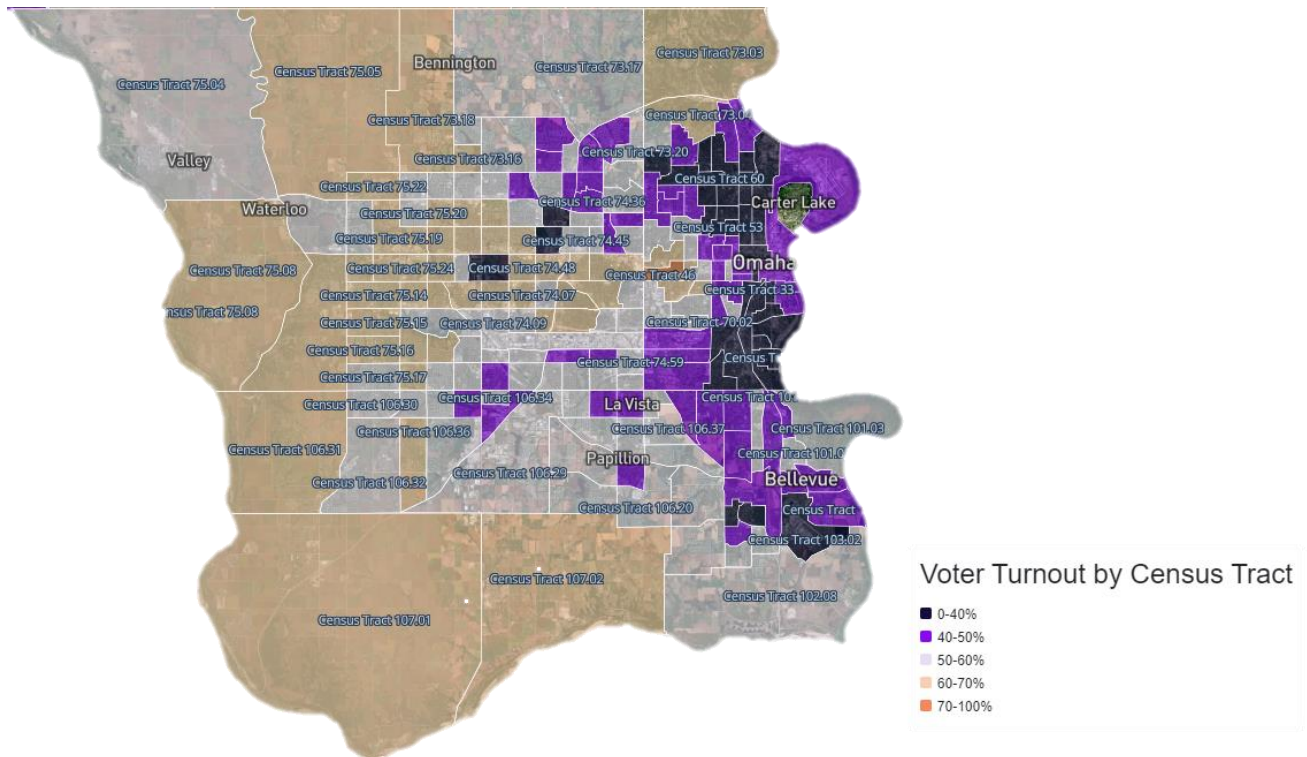
Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

Voter turnout by Census Tract

Metropolitan Areas

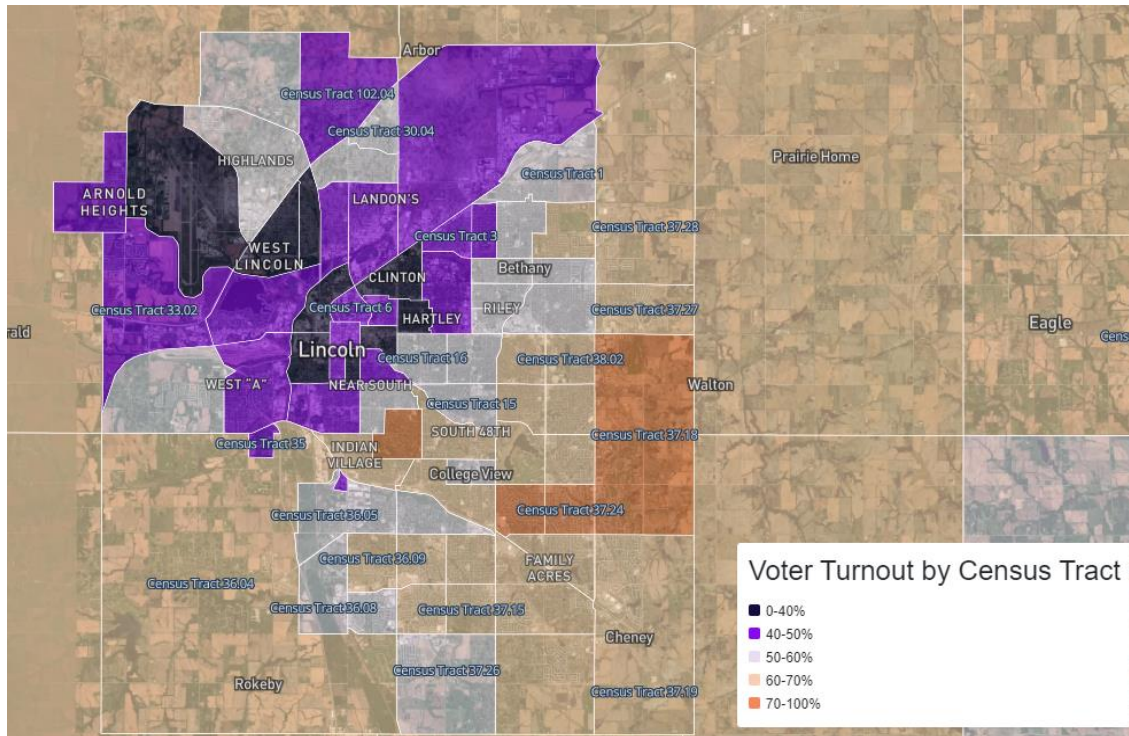
Viewing voter turnout by census tract reveals the most detail in metropolitan (over pop. 50,000) and micropolitan (around pop. 20,000) cities. Most cities have wide variation of voter turnout within their region.

In the **Omaha area** in Douglas and Sarpy Counties, higher voter turnout can be seen in the western suburbs and near the Dodge Street corridor with pockets of lower turnout near the I-680 and I-80 corridors and larger areas of low turnout in North Omaha, South Omaha, and Bellevue.



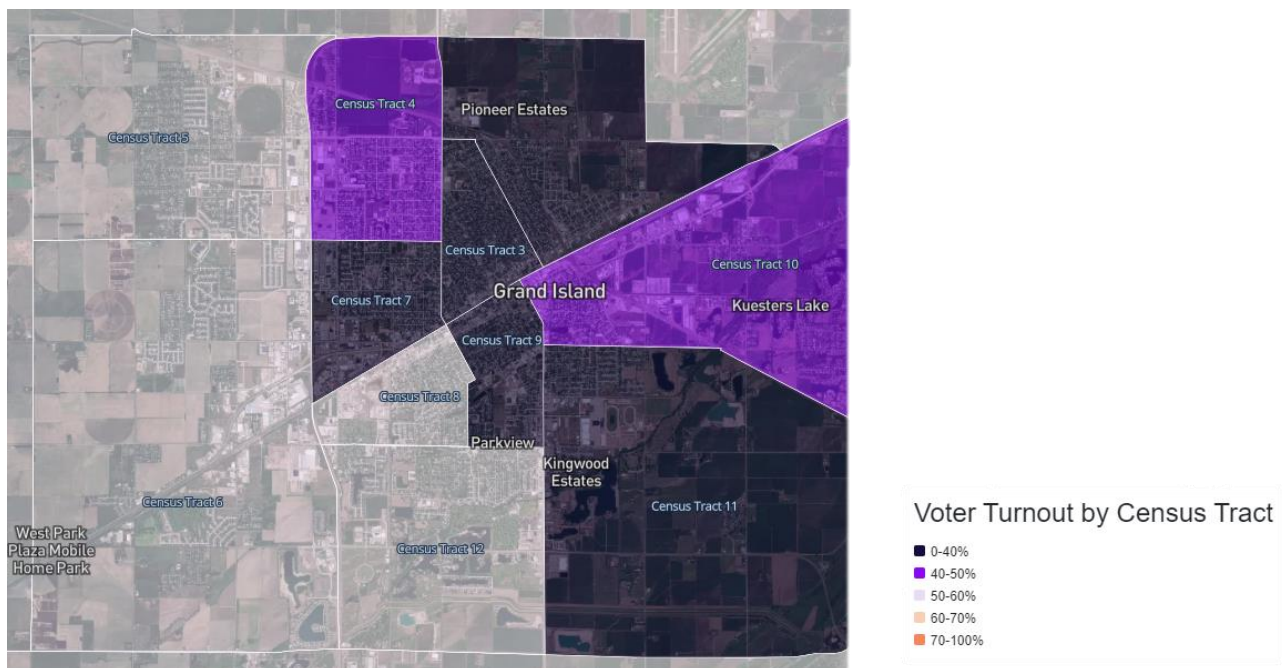
Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

In **Lincoln**, the north and west urban core had the lowest voter turnout rates with highest turnout found in the eastern and southern suburbs and the Country Club neighborhood.



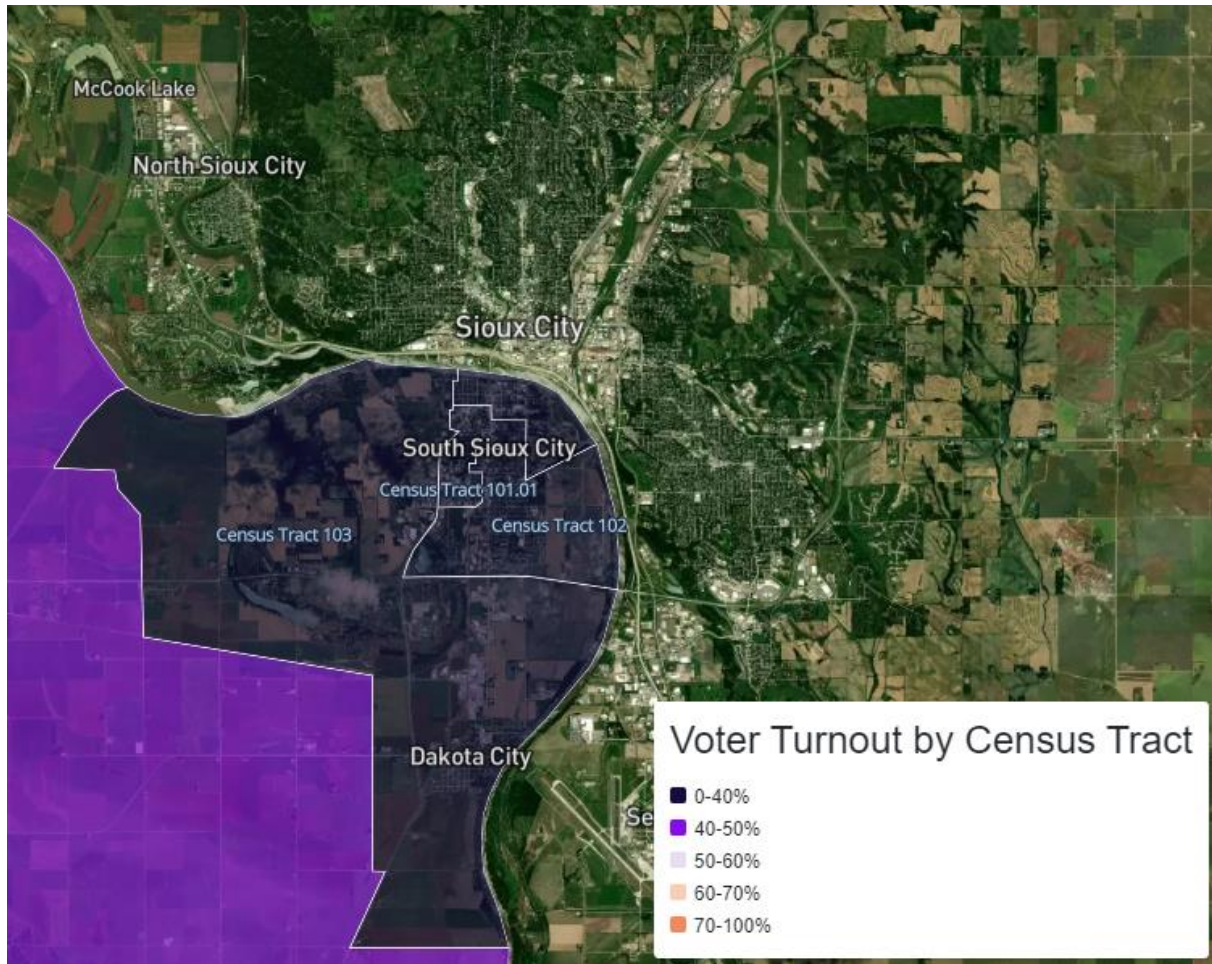
Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

In **Grand Island**, turnout was generally lower than Omaha and Lincoln, but the highest turnout areas can be seen in the far northwest and southwest parts of the city, with the rest of the city having turnout rates ranging from 25% to 45%.



Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

In **South Sioux City**, voter turnout was generally very low, with turnout ranging from around 21% in the northern two census tracts, to 29% in the southern part of the city and 39% in the census tract surrounding the city.

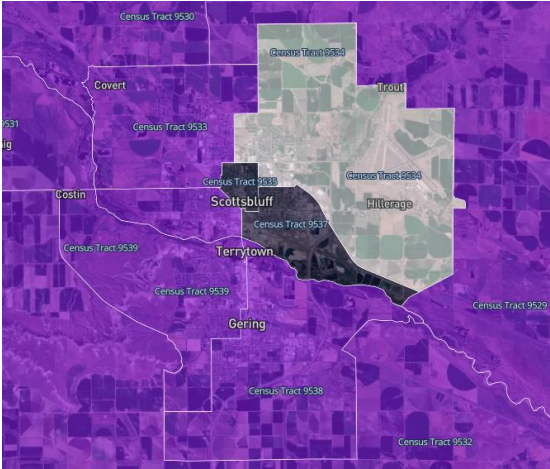


Source: NE Secretary of State Voter File, Dec 2022; prepared by Derek Juracek

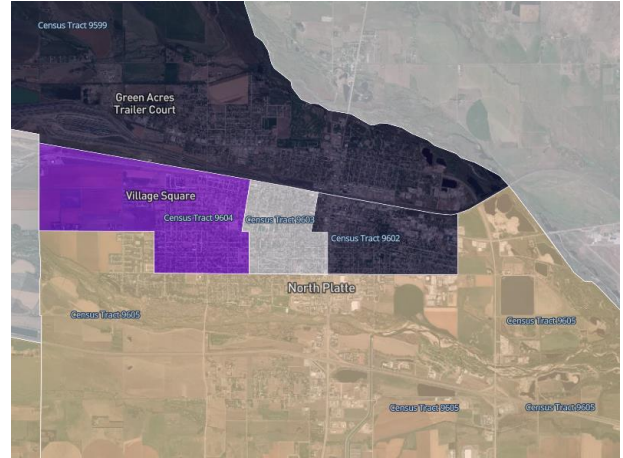
Micropolitan and Midsize Cities

In midsize cities of Scottsbluff-Gering, Kearney, Norfolk, Columbus, North Platte, and Hastings, the same variation of high turnout in areas and low turnout in others can be seen.

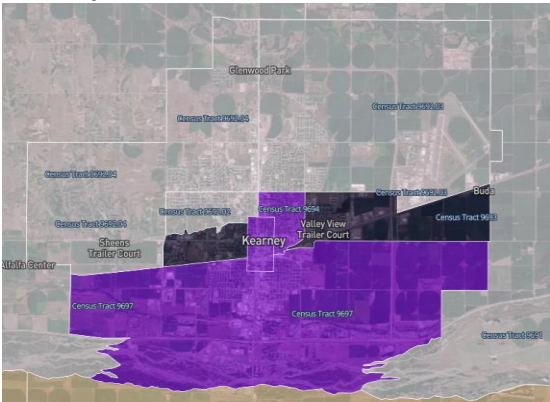
Scottsbluff-Gering



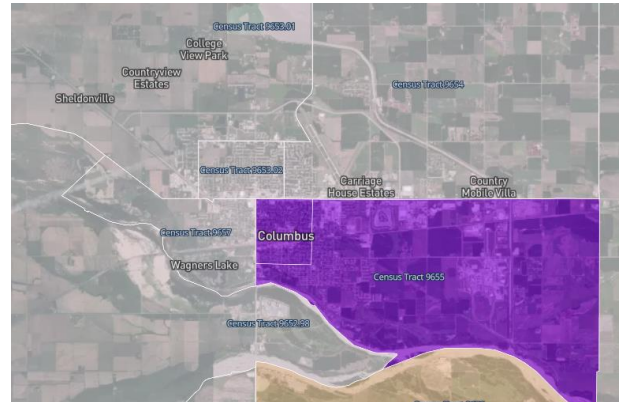
North Platte



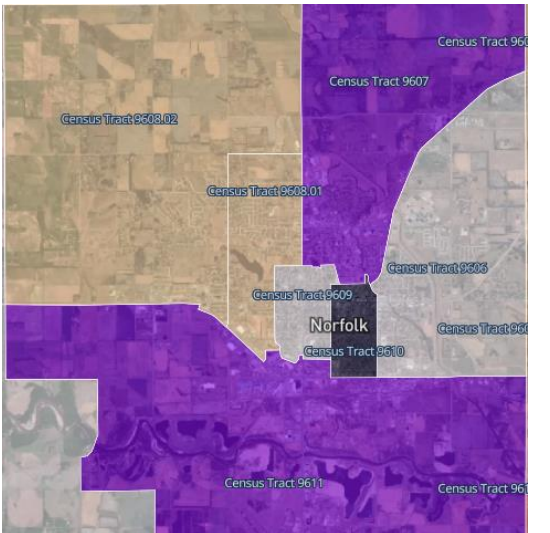
Kearney



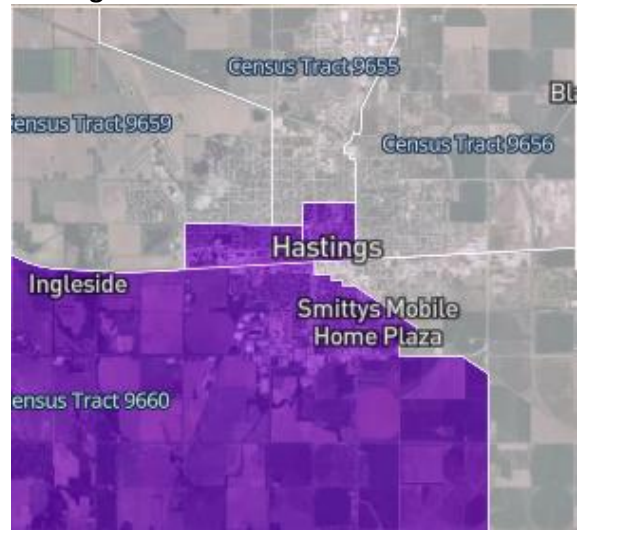
Columbus



Norfolk

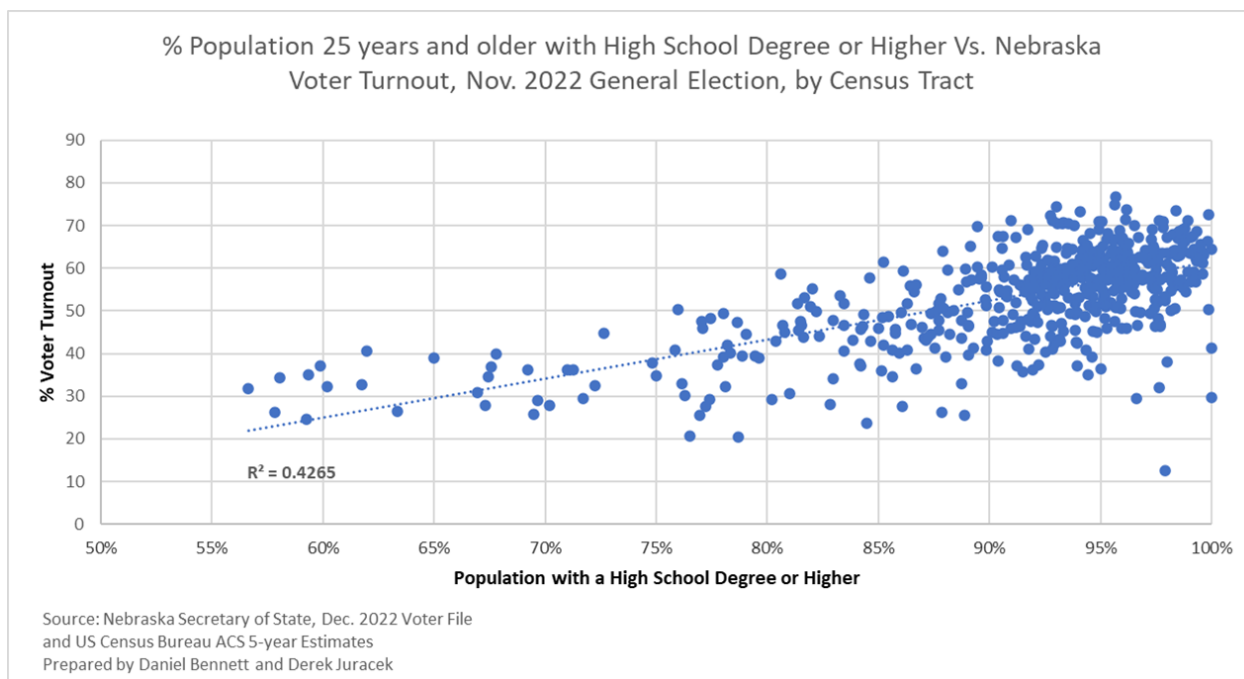


Hastings



Correlating variables

Demographic data within census tracts was compared against voter turnout data at the census tract level for possible correlation, or evidence of a relationship between the two variables. A correlation was thought to be significant if the *r squared* value was 0.35 or higher. Of the variables tested, two reached this threshold with a positive correlation: percentage of householders who identified as white alone and percentage of the population 25 and older with a high school degree or higher. This means that in census tracts with a higher percentage of householders who identify as white and areas with higher proportion of people who graduated high school, we could expect higher voter turnout.



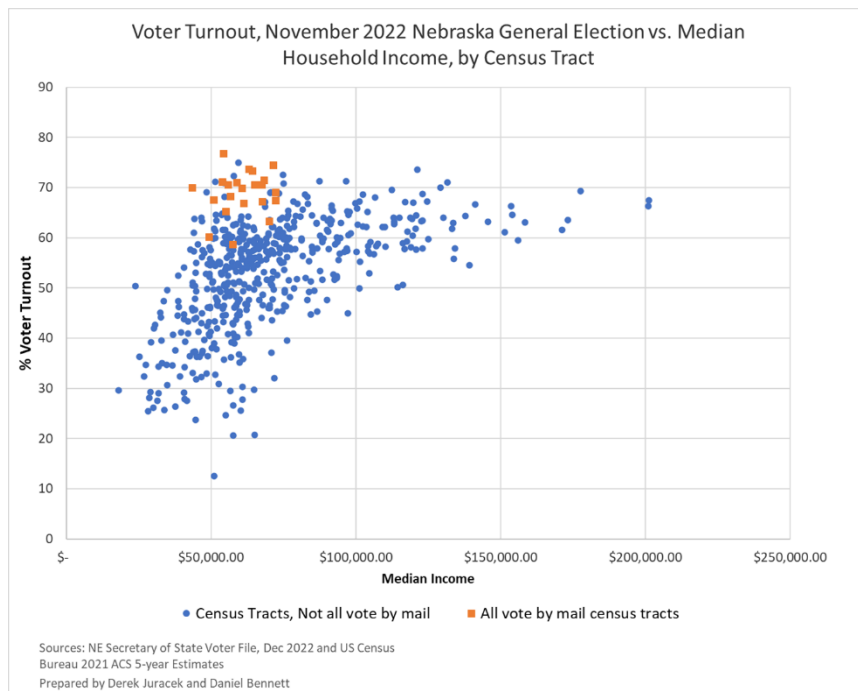
Percentage of householders who identified as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) and percentage of households with income below the poverty level negatively correlated with voter turnout, meaning census tracts with higher rates in those two variables tended to correspond to lower voter turnout.

Other variables tested that corresponded less to voter turnout at the census tract level included percent with a bachelor's degree or higher, median income, percentage of households with children under 18, percentage of households with persons over 60, and percentage of population with a disability. Locally, such as within Douglas County, other variables may have more significant correlation, such as higher percentage of renter occupied housing units and higher percentage black householders corresponding to lower voter turnout, but these variables did not have as significant correlation among census tracts at the statewide level.

Vote-by-mail boost

Many of the highest voter turnout census tracts were located in all vote-by-mail counties. Not all high-turnout census tracts were “all-vote-by-mail,” but all “all-vote-by-mail” census tracts had relatively high voter turnout compared to the areas that surround them and the rest of the state and

The figure at right shows the all vote-by-mail census tracts (marked in orange) all have relatively high voter turnout. While median household income had a weaker correlation to voter turnout than other variables overall, all vote-by-mail census tracts generally outperformed other census tracts with similar median household income.



Conclusion

Within counties and cities, a wide variation of voter turnout rates exist among localities. The towns and neighborhoods in Nebraska with the highest turnout tend to have very low poverty, have higher percentages of high school graduates, and have a higher percentage of householders who identify as white alone. Nebraska’s smallest rural counties and counties with all vote by mail elections generally had the highest voter turnout. In cities and counties across the state, census tracts with higher percentages of minority race or ethnicity householders, lower rates of high school graduates, and higher rates of poverty tended to vote less. The geographic concentration of low-turnout census tracts in specific areas of cities and counties suggests the collective voice and interests of these areas are under-represented in city, county, and state elections. Leaders and policymakers could discuss how race, poverty, a high school diploma, and geography relate to voter turnout in their communities and which actions and policies might help to boost turnout in historically lower turnout areas.

