



**New Americans Task Force  
Immigrant and Refugee Survey Report**

## Executive Summary

In 2019, the Lincoln New Americans Task Force (NATF) conducted a first-of-its-kind survey of Lincoln's immigrant and refugee community regarding health and wellness, civic engagement, housing, education/English, economic development and community social spaces. Over 20 partner agencies and institutions affiliated with NATF participated in the survey creation and distribution in the Lincoln community. More than 500 immigrants and refugees living in Lincoln completed the survey, which was administered both on paper and online in English, Vietnamese, Arabic, Spanish and Karen.

Overall, the findings affirm that many immigrants and refugees value living in Lincoln and trust many of the city's key institutions. They are eager to learn English, and many bring professional credentials and related skills from their work abroad. However, Lincoln's immigrant and refugee community also faces significant economic and social barriers related to income, housing, access to effective healthcare and employment.

### In particular, the 2019 Lincoln NATF Immigrant and Refugee Survey finds:

- **Respondents value and trust components of Lincoln's public infrastructure**
  - 70% of respondents indicate they have trust in Lincoln's schools
  - 74% of respondents attend events that celebrate their own culture
  - 68% report indicate they have trust in police
  - 50% of respondents indicate they utilize and feel part of City parks
- **English acquisition is important to immigrants and refugees and for their long-term goals**
  - Nearly all respondents, 99.8%, agreed or strongly agreed that English is important in their everyday lives
  - 99% of respondents indicated English is important to their long-term goals
- **A majority of respondents have educational and professional experience they are not currently utilizing**
  - 64% of respondents came to the U.S. with a high school degree or higher—of those, 30% have post-secondary education but are not employed in their field of training
  - Nearly 60% of respondents said they do not currently work in and want to return to their professional field of study/expertise
- **Respondents experience barriers that prevent them from self sufficiency and economic mobility**
  - 52% of respondents indicated they cannot always pay their monthly expenses
  - 20% of respondents indicated their housing is either unsafe or uncomfortable; health and family obligations are the two largest barriers to workforce participation for respondents
  - 30% of respondents stated they are unable to understand and communicate comfortably with their health care providers

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## Introduction

NATF is a network of nearly 70 public and private organizations and community members, dedicated to supporting Lincoln’s immigrant and refugee community members. NATF members strive to welcome all newcomers, assisting them in building the lives they seek through the removal of barriers and the provision of culturally competent support services.

To foster our community’s potential as we move forward, NATF is developing an Immigrant and Refugee Integration Plan that will be presented to and utilized by the City of Lincoln, as well as other NATF collaborating agencies, that emphasizes components of health, civic and social engagement, education, employment, social housing. To better understand the demographics, life experiences and engagement of our valued immigrant and refugee population, NATF conducted a survey to collect information and feedback directly from immigrant and refugee community members in Lincoln.

## Methodology

The survey is a convenience sample of 505 self-identified immigrants and refugees in the Lincoln community collected from February 2019 through June 2019. NATF member agencies requested that their clients complete the survey, as well as self-identifying immigrant and refugee friends and family members. The survey was presented in both online and paper formats and translated from English into commonly spoken languages in Lincoln, including Arabic, Spanish, Karen and Vietnamese. Volunteers from NATF agencies translated the non-English survey responses and compiled the information into a data set. Data analysis includes descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis (analysis of variance, a commonly used statistical modeling technique) to understand differences between groups. To view the survey, please refer to Appendix A. While the survey results are not a representative sample, the data collected offers significant insight into the experiences, successes and challenges faced by many immigrants and refugees who call Lincoln home.

# NEW AMERICANS TASK FORCE





# Results

## Immigration Status

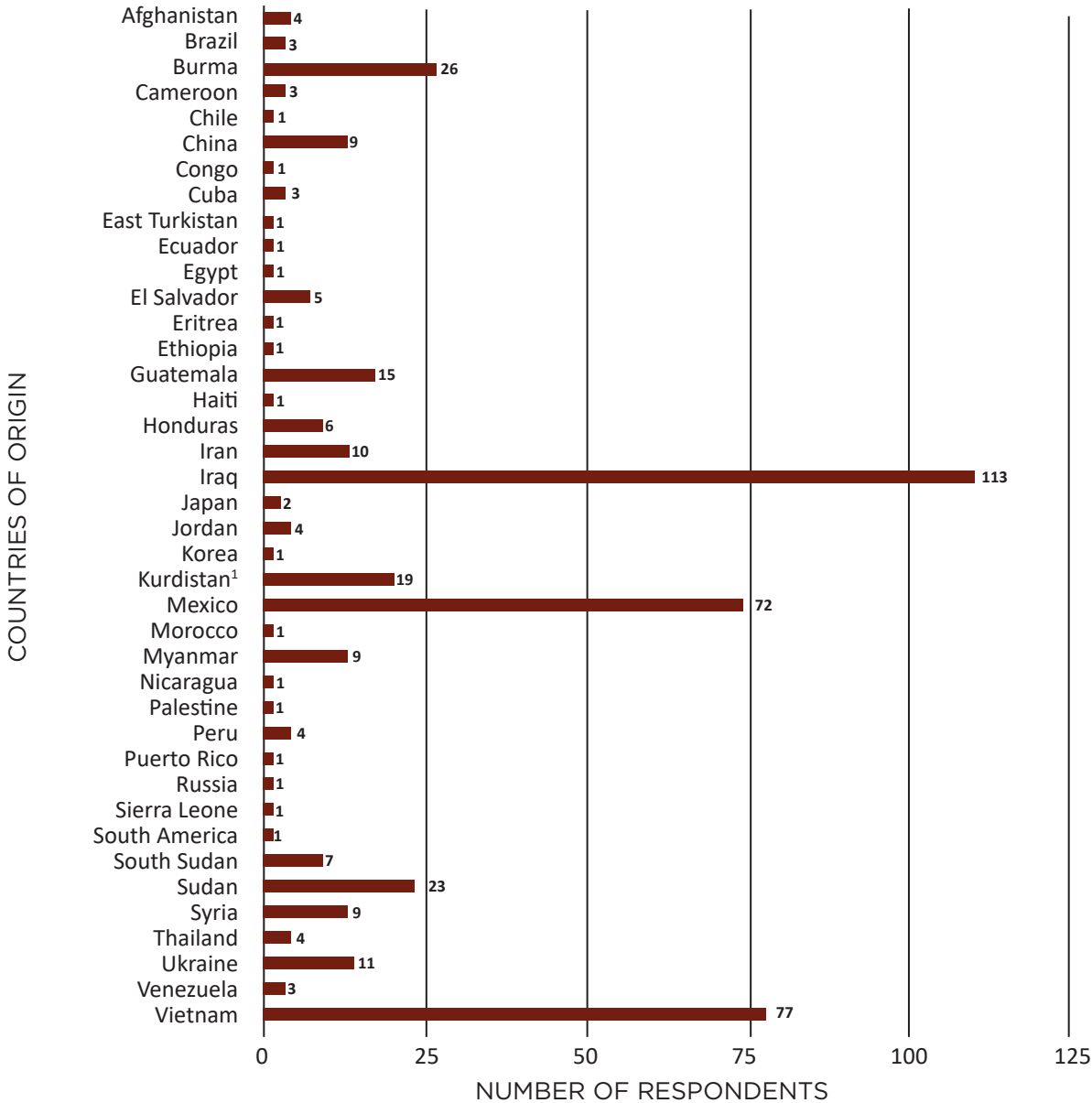
All 505 respondents self-identified and reported that they are an immigrant or refugee.

## Country of Origin

Lincoln, Nebraska is home to over 30,000 immigrants and refugees from approximately 150 different countries. Nebraska has a long history of resettling refugees and, in 2016, Nebraska resettled more refugees per capita than any other state in the United States.

While survey results are not representative of the population of Lincoln as a whole, respondents represented a significant number of nationalities and/or countries of origin from around the world. Respondents noted Iraq, Vietnam, Mexico, Myanmar, Sudan, Kurdistan and Guatemala as the most common countries of origin in the survey. Respondents also report many other countries of origin, illustrating Lincoln’s growing diversity.

FIGURE 1  
(N=457)

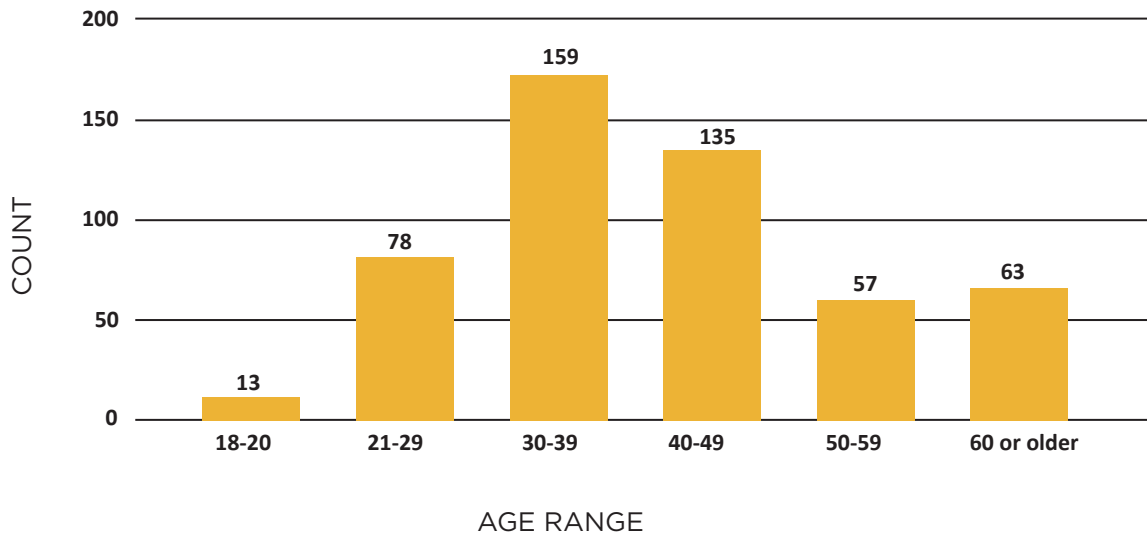


<sup>1</sup>Respondents self-reported their country of origin and their responses are indicated in Figure 1; however, it is important to note that Kurdistan is an autonomous province of Iraq and most people from this area consider it an independent nation—for this reason, it is considered separately in this report. Additionally, Burma was renamed Myanmar in 1989 by military leadership; however, not all recognize the name change—and for this reason, they were reported differently. And, although South America was listed as an individual response, several countries in South America and Central America were represented in the survey responses.

## Age

Of all survey respondents, the most common age represented was 30-39 years old. After the 30-39 group, 40-49, 21-29, 60 or older, 50-59 and 18-20 follow in descending order. Most of the data collection occurred at NATF partner agencies, a factor that reflects the adult age majority of data results. In the future, an additional survey of college-age students at Southeast Community College, area four-year colleges, and/or Lincoln Public Schools could improve the level of data from the youngest age group.

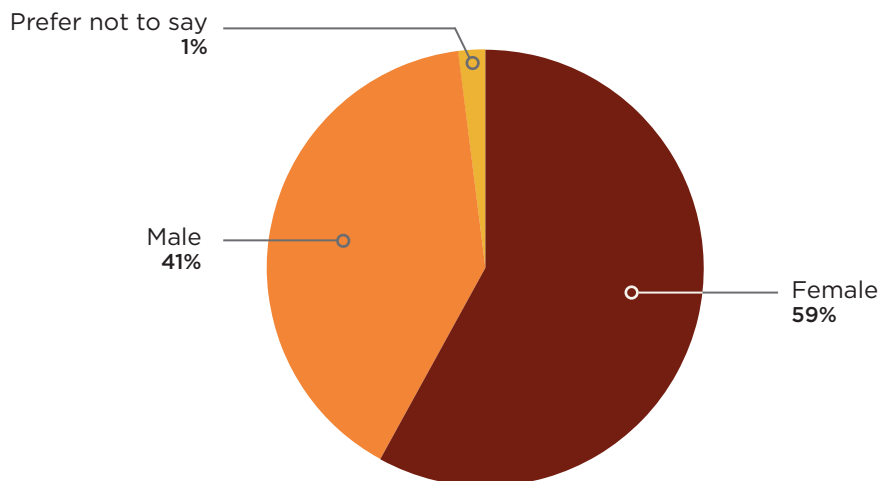
FIGURE 2  
(N=505)



## Gender

Most respondents identified as female (59%), while 41% identified as male. One respondent did not indicate a binary gender.

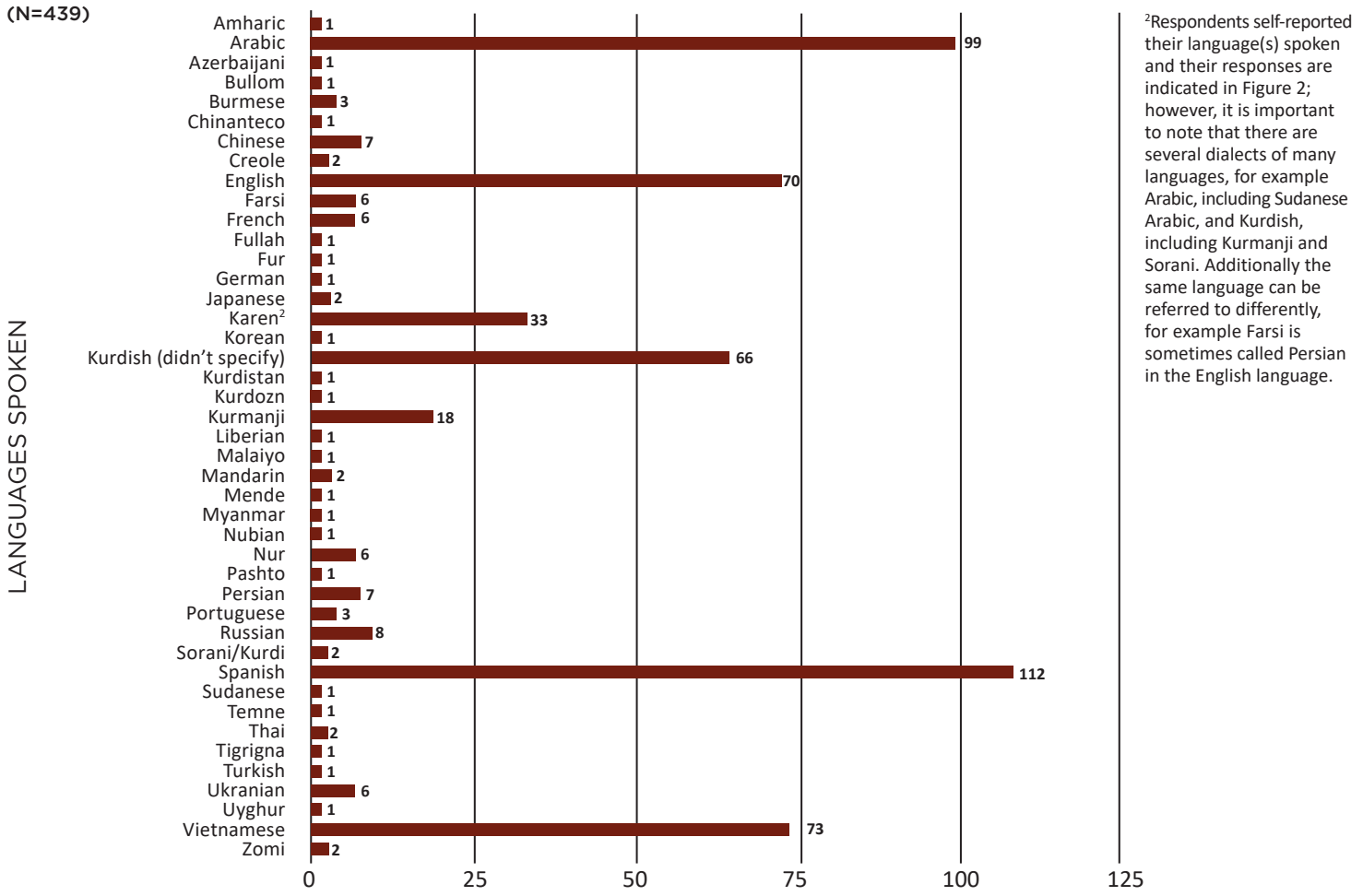
FIGURE 3  
(N=494)



## Languages Spoken

Survey participants had the option of reporting one or more languages spoken, based on personal preference. Many refugees and immigrants that responded to the survey reported more than one language spoken. The graph below illustrates the diversity of languages spoken among respondents. The most common languages included Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Vietnamese, English and Karen.

FIGURE 4  
(N=439)



## Length of Time in Lincoln

Survey respondents indicated the duration of time that they have been living in Lincoln. More than one-third (35%) of immigrated refugees that responded to the survey have lived in Lincoln less than three years. This represents the largest group, followed by those of 15 or more years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, and 10-15 years.

FIGURE 5  
(N=493)

Number of Years Living in Lincoln	Percentage
0-3	35%
3-5	18%
5-10	15%
10-15	10%
15 or more	22%

### Importance of English in Everyday Life

Nearly all respondents, over 99%, indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that English is important in their everyday lives.

FIGURE 6  
(N=493)

English is important in my everyday life (ex: shopping, doctor’s appointment, functioning at work, communicating with school)	Percentage
Strongly agree	84%
Agree	16%
Disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	0%

### English Importance in Everyday Life in Relation to Gender

ANOVA analysis indicates that males report English importance in everyday life at a higher rate than females. This trend is likely the result of a number of factors. Still, both females and males reported English as important for their everyday life.

FIGURE 7  
(N=492)

English is important in my everyday life (ex: shopping, doctor’s appointment, functioning at work, communicating with school)	Mean (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)
Female	3.78 (n=291)
Male	3.88 (n=201)
Total	3.82 (n=492)

### Importance of English for Long-Term Goals

Nearly all respondents, over 99%, agreed or strongly agreed that English is important to their long-term goals including citizenship, higher education and career advancement.

FIGURE 8  
(N=494)

English is important in my long-term goals (ex: citizenship, higher education, and career advancement)	Percentage
Strongly agree	83%
Agree	16%
Disagree	1%
Strongly disagree	0%



### Importance of English for Long-Term Goals by Number of Years in Lincoln

The longer people had lived in Lincoln, the more likely they were to respond that English was important to their long-term goals. It is likely that this is because individuals who have recently arrived in the U.S. are more preoccupied with the challenge of navigating short-term survival. Results indicate that settling in a certain place is likely connected to investment in developing and attaining goals and developing English skills. All groups emphasized the high importance of English with Agree or Strongly Agree responses.

FIGURE 9  
(N=493)

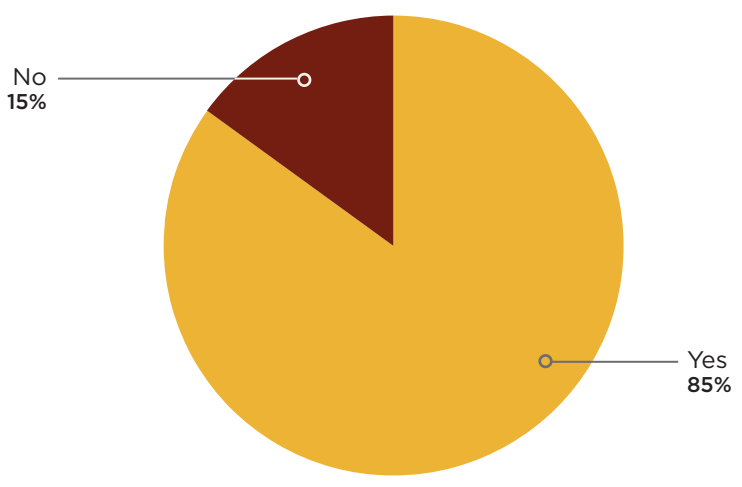
English is important in my long-term goals (ex: U.S. citizenship, higher education and career advancement)	Mean (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)
0-3 years	3.81 (n=171)
3-5 years	3.67 (n=88)
5-10 years	3.84 (n=74)
10-15 years	3.82 (n=50)
15 or more years	3.94 (n=110)

### Participation in English Class

Lincoln’s immigrant and refugee community is already voting with their actions in demonstrating their belief in the value of English classes, with a majority of survey respondents (nearly 85%) reported having taken an English class. Results also indicate that more than 15% of immigrants and refugees have not taken an English class, which is an opportunity for improvement with community partners.

FIGURE 10  
(N=494)

Have you taken English classes?



### Participation in English Classes by Age

Across all age groups, most respondents report participating in English classes. However, two groups were slightly less likely to have participated in English classes: those who are ages 21-29 and those ages 60 or older. The results indicate possible value in conducting outreach to the lower reporting groups to ensure that they know English classes are available or to identify barriers they may be facing in accessing classes.

FIGURE 11  
(N=494)

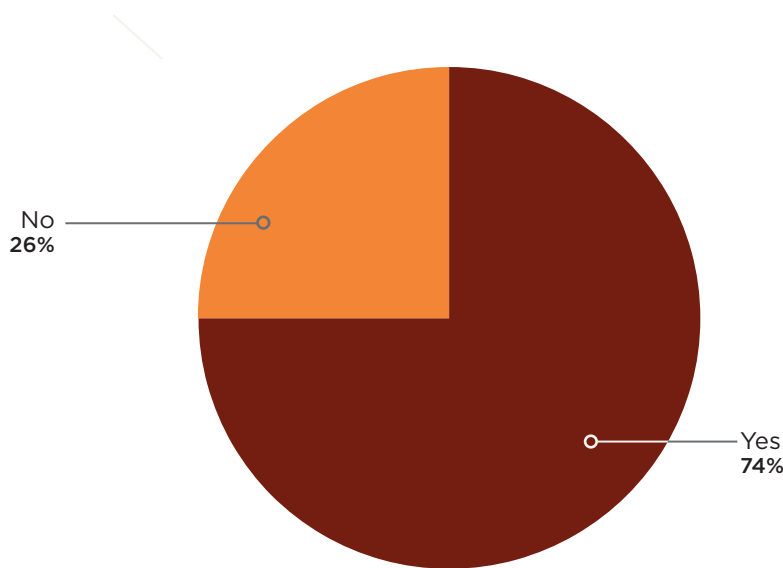
Age Group	Mean (1=Yes, 0=No)
18-20	3%
21-29	15%
30-39	31%
40-49	27%
50-59	11%
60 or older	12%

### Participation in Cultural Events

Nearly three-fourths of respondents, 74%, reported participating in an event celebrating cultures and traditions of their countries of origin. The results indicate that families are aware of and have access to the ability to celebrate culture and connect with members of their particular communities. Significance testing revealed no difference between age, gender, years in Lincoln and years in the U.S. on participation in cultural events.

FIGURE 12  
(N=492)

Do you participate in local events that celebrate your culture?



## How People Learn About Community Events

If respondents answered that they participated in cultural events, they were asked about how they learned of them. Most respondents learned about cultural events through friends and family. In addition, respondents cited social media, community and cultural centers and places of worship as places where they receive information about cultural community events.

FIGURE 13  
(N=490)

<b>If people participated in cultural events, where did they learn about them? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Friends/family	78%
Social media	37%
Community and Cultural Centers	36%
Place of Worship	27%
Television	11%
Radio	10%
Newspaper	8%
Coworker	<1%
Other	<1%

## Cultural Events that Immigrants and Refugees Participated In

If respondents answered that they participated in cultural events, they were asked about which type of events they participated in within the community. Respondents were able to select as many as they participated in and could write in additional events.

FIGURE 14  
(N=453)

<b>If people participated in cultural events, which specific events did they participate in? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
4th of July Celebration	48%
School activities	35%
Faith community events	34%
Lincoln Farmers Market	22%
Sports Leagues	15%
I don't participate in a cultural event	16%
Lincoln Unites!	5%
Juneteenth	4%
Write-in responses: New Year Celebration, YMCA, New Years, Maybe in the future, Church, I don't know, None	1%

## How Immigrants and Refugees Learned About Events They Participated In

As a follow-up to the question on specific event attendance in the Lincoln community, respondents indicated how they learned about events they attended. Respondents were free to select multiple answers.

FIGURE 15  
(N=395)

<b>If people participated in cultural events, where did they learn about them? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Friends/family	81%
Social media	42%
Community and Cultural centers	28%
Place of worship	26%
School	24%
Television	16%
Radio	13%
Newspaper	13%
Write-in answers: Community leader, don't know, work	1%

## Obstacles to Attending Community Events

As a follow-up to the question on specific events that immigrants and refugees attended, respondents noted why they did not attend or were not able to attend the cultural events. Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

FIGURE 16  
(N=255)

<b>If no, what prevents you from participating in these events? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Work schedule	36%
Didn't know about the events	31%
Family responsibilities	29%
Transportation	20%
Childcare	15%
Health reasons	14%
Cost	13%
Other	5%
Bad weather	1%

## Where Immigrants and Refugees Feel Like They Belong

A newcomer’s sense of belonging is a critical component of both integration into a community and long-term positive economic and social outcomes. Respondents provided responses on public places where they feel they belong in the community. Respondents also provided several write-in responses and could select multiple answers.

FIGURE 17  
(N=470)

What places in Lincoln do you feel like you’re a part of? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
Parks	50%
Places of worship	44%
Places of education	39%
Community and Cultural centers	36%
Libraries	27%
Fitness centers	23%
Write-in answers: Church, home, workplaces, bike club, none	1 (less than 1%)

## Trust in Community Institutions and Organizations

Respondents provided responses on which organizations they trust in the community. Respondents also provided several write-in responses and could select multiple answers.

FIGURE 18  
(N=467)

What organizations do you trust? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
School	70%
Police	68%
Fire department	57%
Ambulance	57%
City Government	53%
Write-in answers: Church, God	2 each (less than 1%)
Write-in answers: Family and friends, non-profit organizations, family and friends, none, people	1 each (less than 1%)

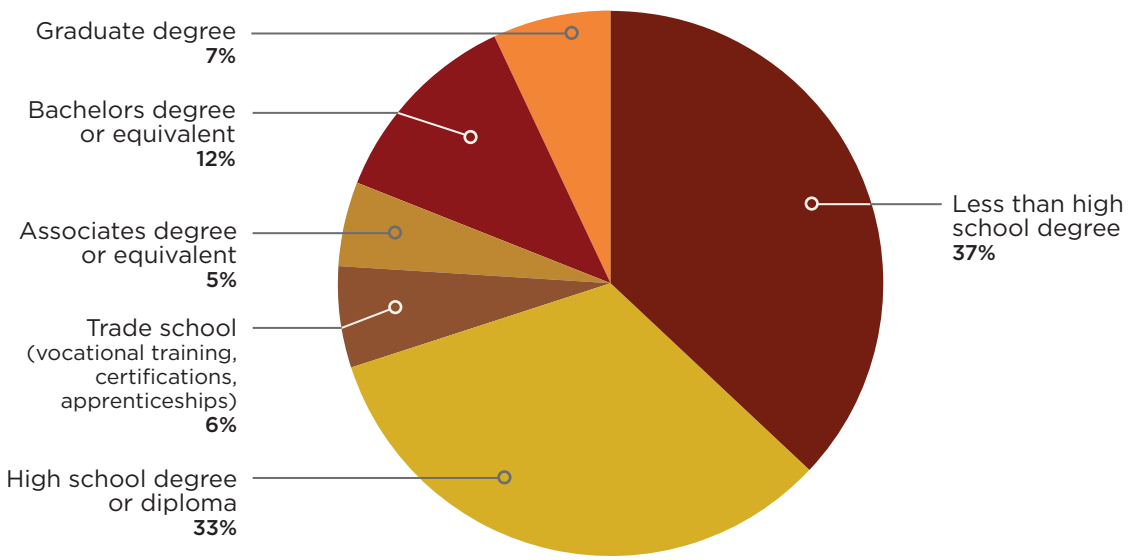
## Educational Attainment

Many immigrants and refugees move to the U.S. after completing education or other significant professional experiences in their countries of origin. Due to professional license or educational requirements for professions in the U.S., many foreign-educated immigrants and refugees are unable to utilize their credentials to continue work in their careers. Immigrants and refugees facing this challenge may opt to enter into another career path, complete another educational degree in a U.S. institution, or work to re-enter their careers in an alternative, informed way. Data collection regarding both foreign education and U.S. education is an important tool to inform community involvement in breaking down barriers for foreign-trained immigrants and refugees.

### Educational Attainment in Country of Origin

Because many of Lincoln's immigrants and refugees came to the U.S. as adults, they often completed education abroad. Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) report having a bachelor's degree or higher. In particular, respondents provided information on their highest level of education completed in their home country. Thirty-seven percent have less than a high school diploma, 33% have a high school diploma or equivalent, 6% attended trade school, 5% received an associate degree, 12% received a bachelor's degree or equivalent and 7% received a graduate degree or equivalent. No significant differences were found between education received abroad and age, country of origin, gender or years in Lincoln or years in the U.S.

FIGURE 19  
(N=481)

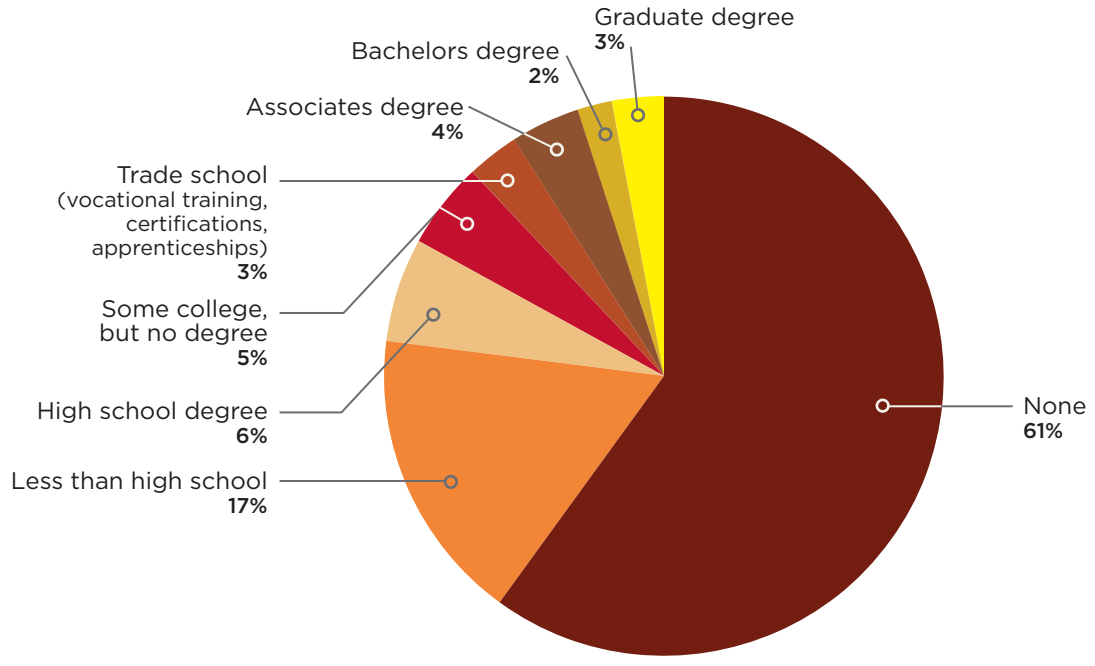




## Education Attainment after Arriving in the U.S.

Respondents provided information on their highest level of education completed in the U.S.

FIGURE 20  
(N=448)



Of respondents, 61% have not yet achieved a credential in the U.S., 17% have not yet earned their high school diploma, 6% have earned their high school diploma, 5% have attended some college but not yet graduated, 4% have earned their associate degree, 3% have earned a graduate degree and 3% have earned a trade school degree.

## United States Educational Attainment in Relation to Number of Years Living in the U.S.

When looking at U. S. educational attainment and age, country of origin, gender, and years in Lincoln, no significant differences were found. A positive, significant difference was found between U.S. educational attainment and years in the U.S. Not surprisingly, results indicate that the longer immigrants and refugees are living in the United States, the greater quantity of education that they will complete in the U.S.

FIGURE 21  
(N=154)

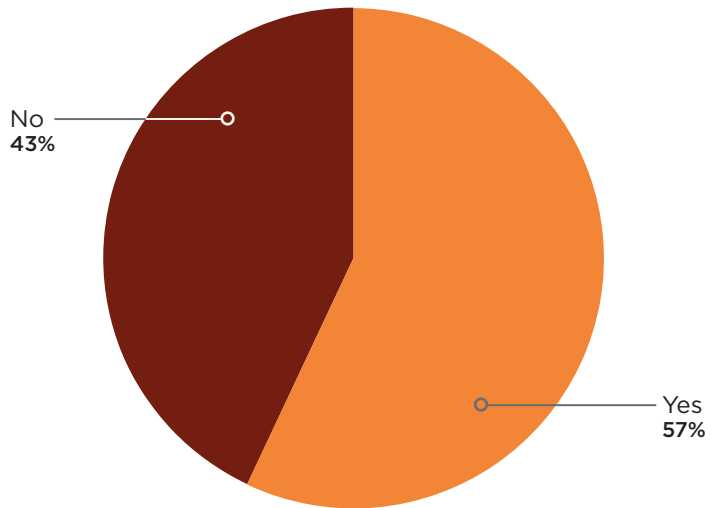
U.S. Educational Attainment	Mean (1 - 0-3 years; 2 - 3-5 years; 3 - 5-10 years; 4 - 10-15 years; 5 - 15 or more years)
Less than high school	2.79 (n=68)
High school degree/diploma	3.70 (n=23)
Some college but no degree	3.20 (n=20)
Trade School	3.80 (n=10)
Associate degree	3.73 (n=15)
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	4.0 (n=4)
Graduate degree	2.86 (n=14)

### Current Paid Employment

Respondents reported whether they are currently working for pay. Responses indicate that 57% are working for pay, while 43% are not. Results collected in this survey are somewhat lower than statistically significant data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, which indicated that 72% of foreign-born adults living in Nebraska were employed in 2017, at least three points higher than the employment rate of U.S.– born Nebraskans. No significant differences were found comparing paid employment by age, country of origin, gender, years in Lincoln or years in the U.S.

FIGURE 22  
(N=487)

Are you employed (for pay)?

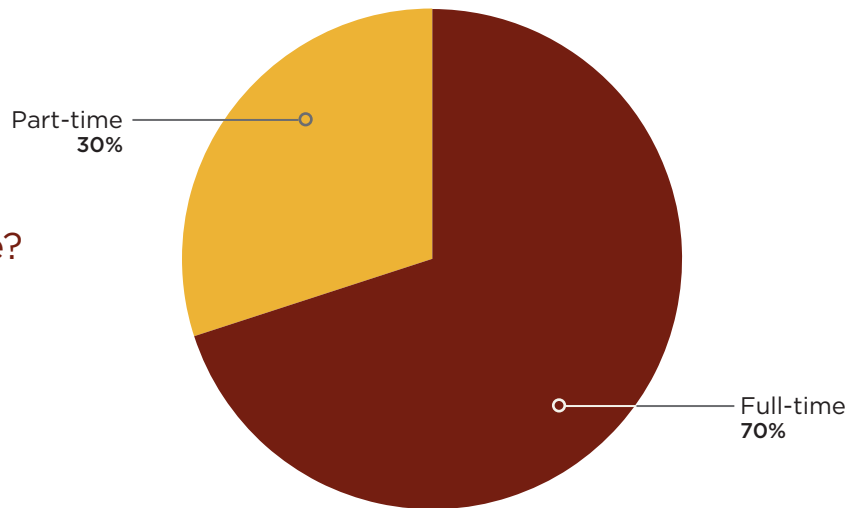


### Current Part-Time or Full-Time Work Schedule

Among respondents who were employed, two-thirds (70%) reported working full-time, with the remainder working part-time. No significant differences were found comparing part-time or full-time work schedules to age, country of origin, gender, or years in Lincoln. A significant difference was found when comparing to years lived in the U.S. The results indicate that people who work full-time report being in the U.S. longer than people who are employed part-time.

FIGURE 23  
(N=289)

If yes, do you work full-time or part-time?

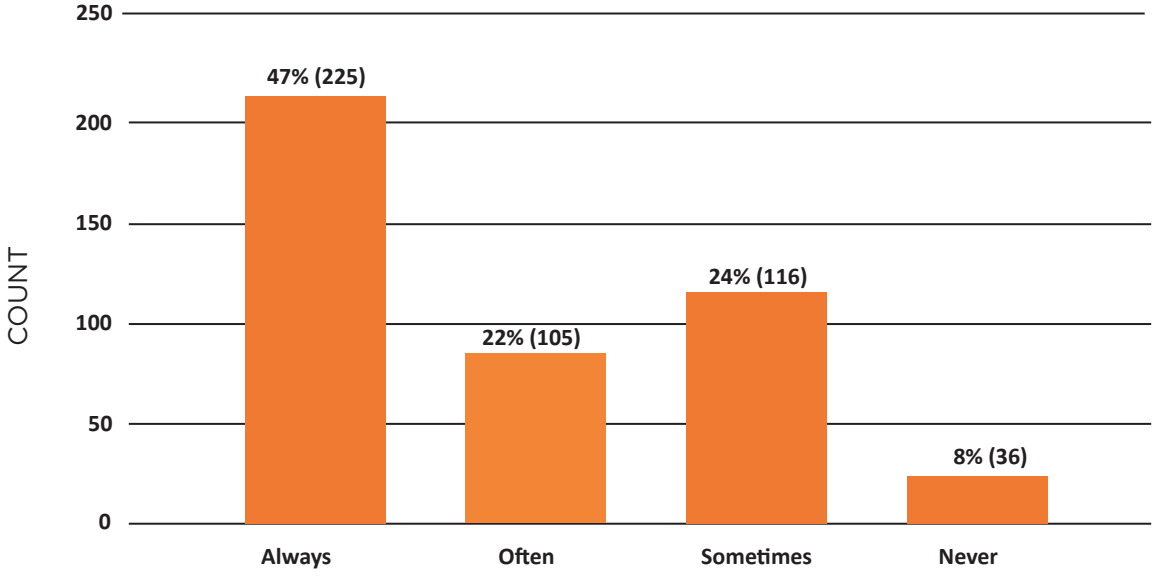


<sup>3</sup>State Workforce Data - NE." Migrationpolicy.org, Migration Policy Institute, 2019, migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/workforce/NE.

### Ability to Pay Monthly Expenses

Respondents described whether or not they are able to pay for their monthly needs with 225 (47%) reporting that they are always able to pay their monthly expenses, 105 (22%) reporting often, 116 (24%) reporting sometimes, and 36 (8%) reporting never. **No significant differences were found when comparing ability to pay expenses to age, country of origin, gender, years in Lincoln or years in the U.S.** The results indicate the continued need to remove barriers immigrants and refugees face in achieving career and financial stability.

FIGURE 24  
(N=482)

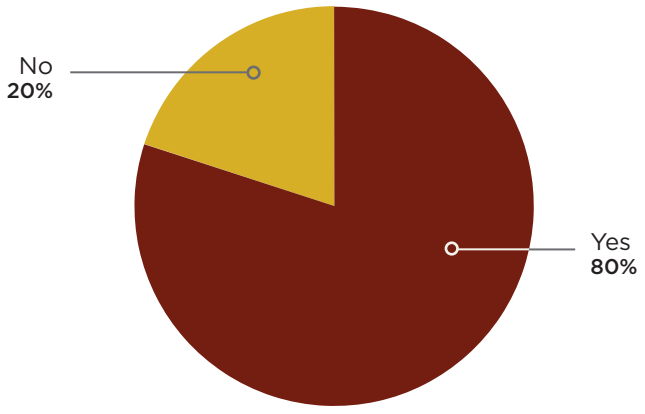


### Underemployment Among Immigrants and Refugees

Among people who are working, under-employment can be a significant challenge. Underemployment takes many forms, including involuntary part-time status. Respondents included 80% who reported that they currently work part-time and would like to work full-time. Only 20% of respondents stated that they do not want to work full-time. Some common reasons for voluntary part-time work is to accommodate family obligations, which often includes providing care for school-age children.

FIGURE 25  
(N=379)

If you do not work full-time now, would you like to in the future?



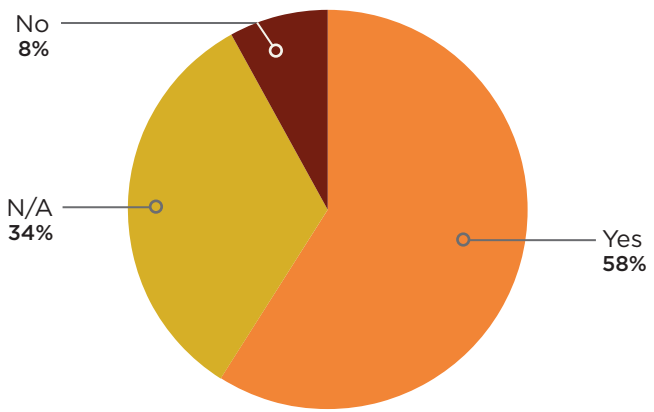
No significant differences were found when comparing desire to work full-time by country of origin or gender. A marginal difference was found according to years lived in Lincoln. Results indicate that people who have been in Lincoln longer than people who have just arrived have a higher likelihood of wanting to work full-time. A significant difference was also found between desire to work full-time and age. Respondents who indicated that they want to work full-time are in a younger age-range category than those that said they do not want to work full-time.

### Educational Displacement

Despite the international credentials and professional experience that many immigrants bring to Lincoln, a different type of underemployment is also common. This is the “educational displacement” in which they are not working in fields that draw on their education and expertise. Respondents reported whether or not they currently work in their field of training/experience. Nearly 60% of respondents, (58%), reported that they do not work in their field of training/experience and would like to do so, while 34% did not have training/expertise and 8% reported that they do not want to work in their original field of training/expertise.

FIGURE 26  
(N=449)

If you do not work in your field of training/education, would you like to in the future?



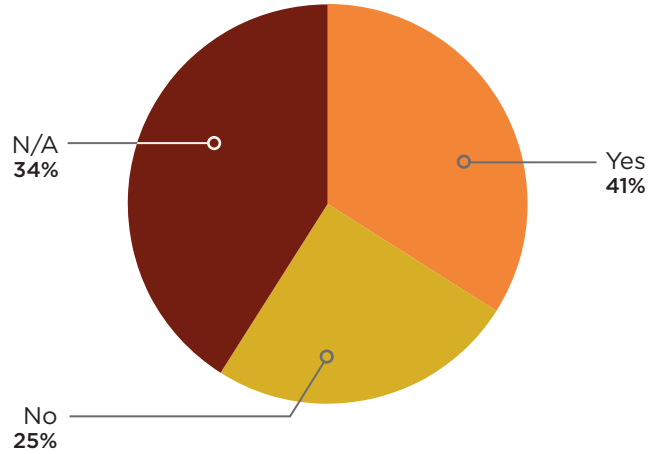
No significant relationships were found when comparing desire to work in the respondents’ prior fields of training in relation to country of origin, gender, years in Lincoln and years in the United States. A statistically significant relationship was found when comparing age and desire to work in prior field of training/experience, with younger respondents maintaining a higher frequency of reporting that they wanted to work full-time in their field.

### Barriers to Working in Former Careers

For many immigrants and refugees seeking to re-enter their former careers, several potential barriers pose a challenge to working in their original fields. In Lincoln, of survey respondents who indicated having a prior field of training, 41% reported that there are barriers that prevent working in their field of training.

FIGURE 27  
(N=450)

Are there barriers that prevent you from working in your field of training (ex. your degree doesn’t transfer to the US)?



## Barriers to Full-Time Employment

FIGURE 28  
(N=40)

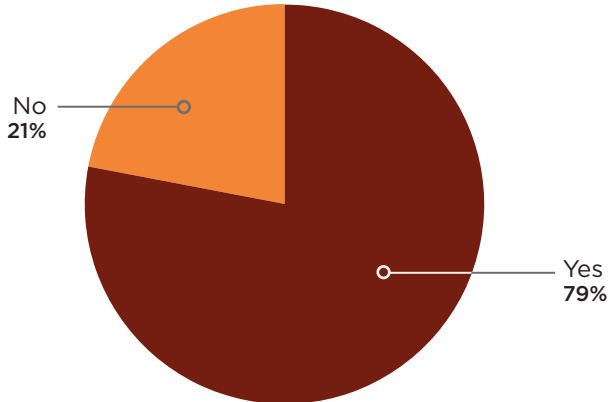
Barrier	Number of Respondents
Health (self or care-giving for family)	15
Family Responsibilities	11
Retired/Age	6
Other	3
Need to maintain full-time employment above prioritizing professional development	6
Currently a student	1

### Health

Respondents reported whether or not they regularly see a primary care provider and/or doctor. Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported that they regularly see a primary care provider and/or doctor and 21% report that they do not.

FIGURE 29  
(N=490)

Do you have a primary care provider or doctor that you see on a regular basis?



No significant differences were found when comparing the likelihood of having a primary care provider and country of origin, gender, years in Lincoln or years in the U.S. People who are older report having a primary care provider more often than younger people.

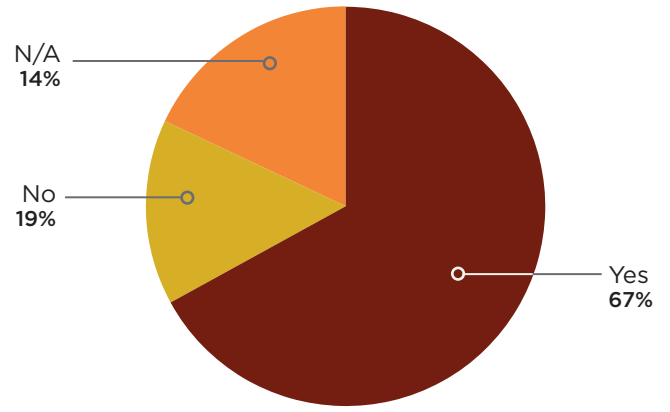
### Health Interpretation Availability

Respondents reported on the availability of language interpretation for health services. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that language interpretation services are available, 19% stated that they are not available, and 14% indicated they did not need interpretation services. With one-fifth of respondents reporting that interpretation services are not available, there is an opportunity for improvement to provide additional information and resources regarding health interpretation in the Lincoln community.

No significant differences were found when comparing health interpretation availability in relation to age, country of origin, gender or years in Lincoln. A marginal difference was found between health interpretation availability and years in the U.S. People who have been in the U.S. longer reported that health interpretation services were marginally less available than people who have been in the U.S. for a shorter amount of time.

FIGURE 30  
(N=476)

Are in-person interpreters provided to you when access health care services?

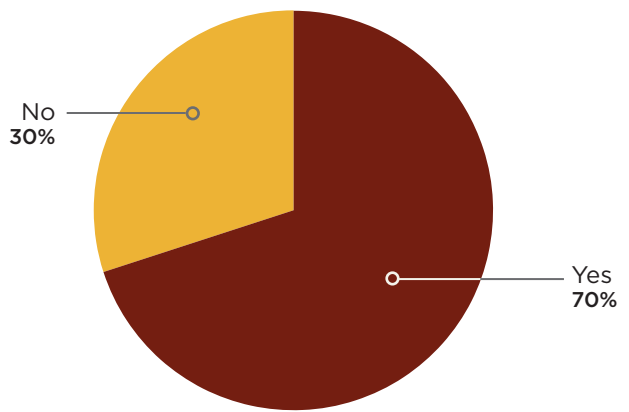


### Communication with Doctors

Just over two-thirds (70%) of respondents stated that they are able to understand and communicate comfortably with their doctor(s). This means that 30% reported that they could not communicate comfortably, and this is an opportunity to improve services in the health care setting. No significant difference was found when comparing communication with doctors by age, country of origin or gender. A significant relationship was found regarding comfort in communication with a doctor and years in Lincoln. People who report that they are comfortable with their doctor are more likely to have been in Lincoln for less time than people who report that they are not comfortable in communication with their doctor. This may be due in part to additional support available to certain demographics of immigrants and refugees who have recently arrived in the U.S., such as the support of a caseworker or in-person interpreter from a similar cultural background.

FIGURE 31  
(N=478)

Are able to understand and communicate comfortably with your doctor(s)?





### Transportation for Health Appointments

Nearly 90% of respondents reported using their car to attend doctor appointments. Twenty percent of respondents reported riding with a family/friend, 6% utilized the bus, 2% received transportation from a caseworker, 1% utilized IntelliRide,<sup>4</sup> and one each utilized a taxi or Uber/Lyft. Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

FIGURE 32  
(N=478)

Type of transportation for health appointments (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
Car	88%
Family/Friend	20%
Bus	6%
Case worker	2%
IntelliRide	1%
Taxi/Uber/Lyft	1%

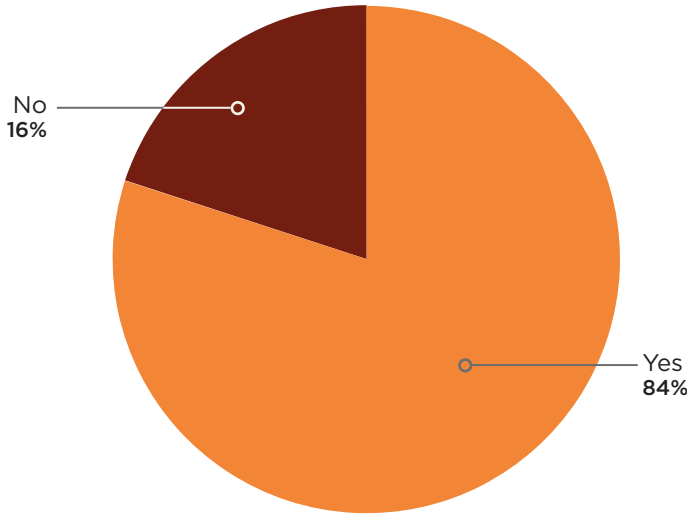
### Support for Emotional Challenges

Respondents reported on the availability of a person that they could talk with if they needed emotional support. This question provides insight into both actual and perceived social isolation in the immigrant and refugee community. A significant barrier both personally and economically, isolation can not only prevent community members from putting down roots and investing in their ties to the community, but it can also have tremendous costs regarding mental health, professional development and resilience.

Eighty-four percent of immigrants and refugees reported having someone to talk to if they are sad compared to 16% who reported that they do not.

FIGURE 33  
(N=479)

If you are sad or worried about something, do you have someone to talk to?



<sup>4</sup>IntelliRide is a medical appointment transportation service provider, see <http://www.iridenow.com/Home/Nebraska.aspx>.

## Who Respondents to Talk to for Emotional Support

When asked about the people that they talk with when in need of emotional support, respondents cited friends or family members in the US, friends or family members in their countries of origin, faith/religious leaders, community leaders, medical providers and/or support groups. Respondents were able to select multiple answers for this question.

FIGURE 34  
(N=408)

If yes, who do you talk to? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
Friend or family member in the US	63%
Friend or family member in home country	37%
Faith/religious leader	12%
Medical provider	7%
Community leader	7%
Support group	4%
Write-in answers: Family member, support group, spouse, caseworker, prayer	1%

No significant differences were found when comparing the likelihood of having someone to talk to for emotional support when compared to age, country of origin or years in Lincoln.

Significant differences were found when comparing results to gender and years in the U.S. Fifty-seven percent of females reported having someone to talk to when they are sad compared to 43% of males. The difference is significant (.054). This finding is complementary to results found in U.S.-born adults, indicating that women are more likely to have social networks and support systems than men.<sup>5</sup>

When comparing the number of years in the U.S. to the likelihood of having someone to talk to, people were more likely to report that they have someone to talk to if they have lived in the U.S. for a shorter time than those that have been in the U.S. for longer. The mean result, 3.35 (n=75), who said that they do not have someone to talk to, have been in the U.S. for 5-10 years. This outcome is concerning and suggests the need for further studies and investigation. Further, these results also indicate the need for additional outreach to immigrants and refugees that have been in the U.S. for longer periods of time with the provision of referrals for resources for counseling and other support available in the community.

<sup>5</sup>Moore, Gwen. "Structural Determinants of Mens and Womens Personal Networks." American Sociological Review, vol. 55, no. 5, 1990,

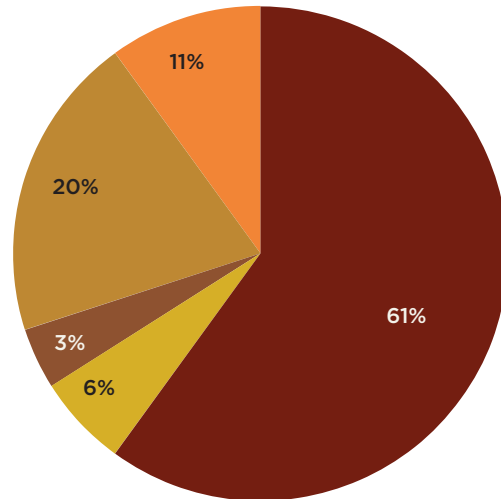
## Housing Quality

Nearly 80% of respondents reported that the quality of their housing is safe and comfortable or very safe and very comfortable, 11% reported that their housing was safe but not comfortable and 6% reported that their housing is somewhat unsafe. Fourteen respondents, or 6%, reported that their housing is very unsafe. No significant differences were found comparing housing quality by age, gender, country of origin or time in Lincoln or the U.S.

FIGURE 35  
(N=472)

### How do you feel about the quality of your housing?

- 61% My housing is safe and comfortable
- 11% My housing is safe but not comfortable (too small, dirty, etc.)
- 20% My housing is great! It's very safe and very comfortable
- 3% My housing is very unsafe (ex. gas leaks, rodent and insect infestations, dangerous neighbors). I fear for the health and safety of myself and my family
- 6% My housing is somewhat unsafe.



## Housing Information Requested

Respondents indicated what information about housing that they would like to know more about, including: home ownership, RentWise<sup>6</sup> classes, tenant rights, financial information and fire/home safety. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

FIGURE 36  
(N=395)

What if anything, would you be interested in learning about housing? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Count and Percentage
Home ownership	52%
Fire/home safety	37%
Financial information	35%
RentWise classes	29%
Tenant rights	32%
None	<1%

In addition, several respondents provided answers in the comments section including: How to build credit – I need to a buy a home in the future; yard care; please print pamphlet that teaches about housing; rent methods; home buying information in native language; information on building homes; home interior architecture; and real estate in general.

<sup>6</sup>Nebraska RentWise is a program to help renters obtain and keep rental housing and to be successful renters through education, see [rentwise.org](http://rentwise.org).

## Resolving a Housing Problem

Respondents provided information on who they would talk with in order to resolve a housing problem. Respondents were able to check multiple options for this question. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that they would talk to their landlord/housing provider, followed by 41% that would talk with a friend or family member. This could be indicative of a cultural or language preference where the tenant enlists a friend or family member to translate or provide support.

FIGURE 37  
(N=429)

<b>If you need to solve a housing problem, who do you talk to? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Landlord	55%
Family/friend	41%
Community agency	19%
Caseworker	17%
Teacher or school	4%
Other	2%

## How Immigrants and Refugees Receive News

Respondents provided information on how they receive news in the community. Most commonly, immigrants and refugees receive their news from family/friends, social media, and television. Respondents were able to select multiple options for this question.

FIGURE 38  
(N=473)

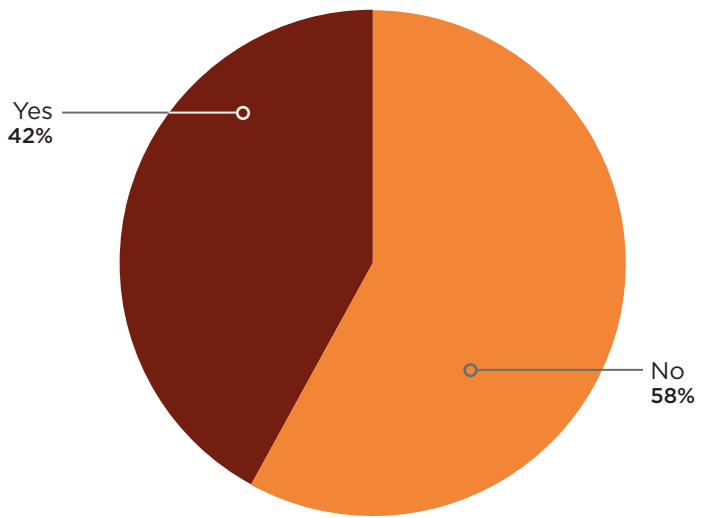
<b>How do you receive news? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Family/friend	61%
Social media	53%
Television	45%
Radio	26%
Community center	24%
School teacher	22%
Newspaper	19%

## Volunteer Experience

Of respondents, 42% of immigrants and refugees reported having volunteered or provided voluntary community service for no pay compared to 58% who stated that they have not volunteered. This is an opportunity to increase awareness of and connection to volunteer opportunities at the neighborhood and community levels. Volunteering and community engagement is one critical method to build social capital, the networks of social relationships maintained by an individual. In particular, “bonding social capital is within a group or community whereas bridging social capital is between social groups, social class, race, religion or other important socio demographic or socioeconomic characteristics.”<sup>7</sup> Volunteering and community engagement creates opportunities for community members to bridge social capital and develop relationships with other groups, an important component of integration within a community.

FIGURE 39  
(N=471)

Have you volunteered or done any voluntary community service for no pay?



## Where Respondents Volunteer

Of those that reported volunteering (n=214), the most common places for volunteering activities were civic or community organizations involved in health or social services and religious groups.

FIGURE 40  
(N=214)

If yes, where? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
Civic or community organization involved in health or social services	49%
Religious group	44%
An organization for youth or children	25%
Environmental organization	14%
Sports or coaching	7%

<sup>7</sup>Putnam, Robert D. BOWLING ALONE: *The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster, 2020.

## Expressing Opinion in the Community

Respondents reported their experiences of sharing their opinion in the community through media and with elected officials. Forty immigrants and refugees indicated that they had not contacted anyone to share their opinion while 39 reported contacting television, 32 reported contacting local government, 29 reported contacting radio and 27 contacting reported newspaper.

FIGURE 41  
(N=169)

Have you ever contacted any of the following to express your opinion on an issue? (Respondents were able to select multiple answers)	Percentage
Television	23%
Local government	19%
Radio	17%
Newspaper	16%
No	17%
Write-in (varies)	8%

One respondent said that they had contacted their Congressperson.



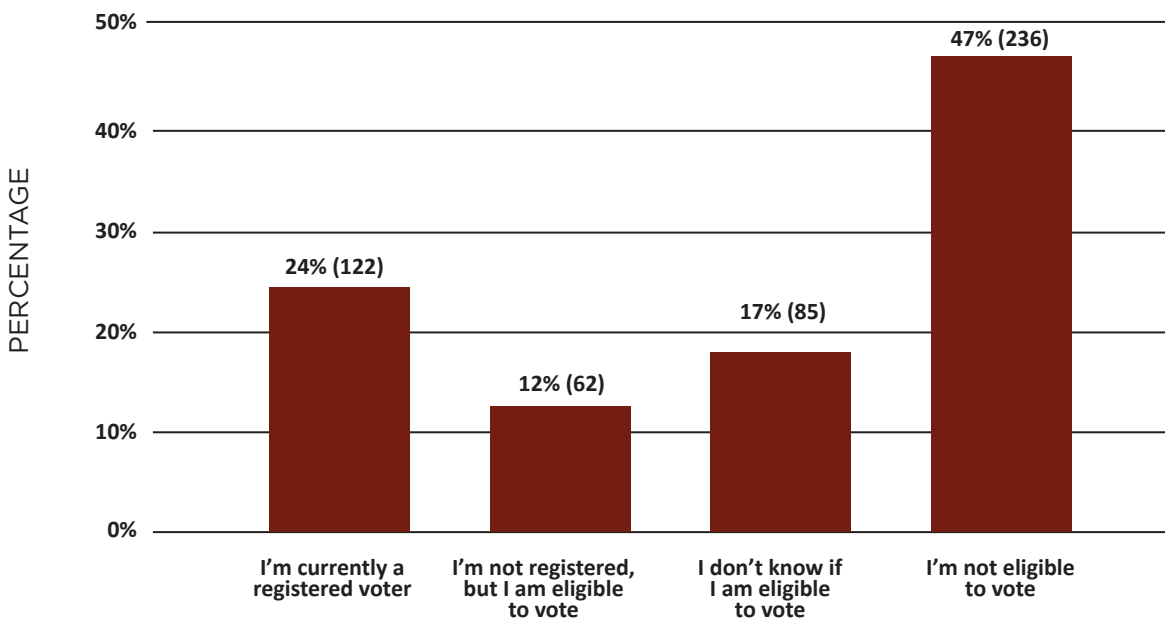


## Voting History

Respondents who self-identified as being a registered voter or being eligible to register to vote were asked to respond to additional questions regarding voting behavior in Lincoln and the U.S. as a whole. Respondents who self-identified as being unable to vote or being unsure if they were able to vote were not asked these questions and were not invited to complete the remainder of the survey questions.

Respondents indicated whether or not they are currently eligible to vote. In total, 36% of respondents indicated that they are eligible and are either currently registered or not currently registered. Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated that they are either not eligible to vote or did not know if they were eligible. The results indicate an opportunity for work to be done educating immigrants and refugees about their right to vote, how to register and educating people on issues.

FIGURE 42: CURRENT ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE  
(N=505)



Statistically significant differences were found when comparing voter registration eligibility and age, gender, years in Lincoln and years in the U.S. Older respondents reported a higher rate of voting at their current address than younger people.

## Gender and Voting Knowledge

There were notable differences among men and women when it came to their awareness of voting eligibility and their current voter registration status. Statistical analysis of voter registration eligibility and gender shows a discrepancy between male and female voter registration. Nearly 22% of females who responded to the questions said they were currently registered to vote, while 28% of males said they were currently registered. Respondents also indicated a significant difference in voting eligibility awareness and current registration. More than one-fifth, 20%, of females said they did not know if they were eligible compared to only 11% of men who said that they did not know if they were eligible to vote. This survey did not delve into the reasons behind these discrepancies, which could be driven by differences in English language ability or other factors that are correlated with characteristics such as U.S. citizenship or voting behavior.

## Years in U.S. and Voting

There is a significant relationship between the number of years living in the U.S. and whether an immigrant or refugee is registered to vote. People who have lived in the U.S. longer are more likely to be registered to vote.

FIGURE 43  
(N=505)

Registered voter at current address?	Mean (Years in U.S.: 1 - 0-3 years; 2 - 3-5 years; 3 - 5-10 years; 4 - 10-15 years; 5-15 or more years)
I'm currently a registered voter	24% (n=122)
I'm not registered to vote but I'm eligible to register	12% (n=62)
I am not eligible to vote	17% (n=85)
I don't know if I am eligible	47% (n=236)

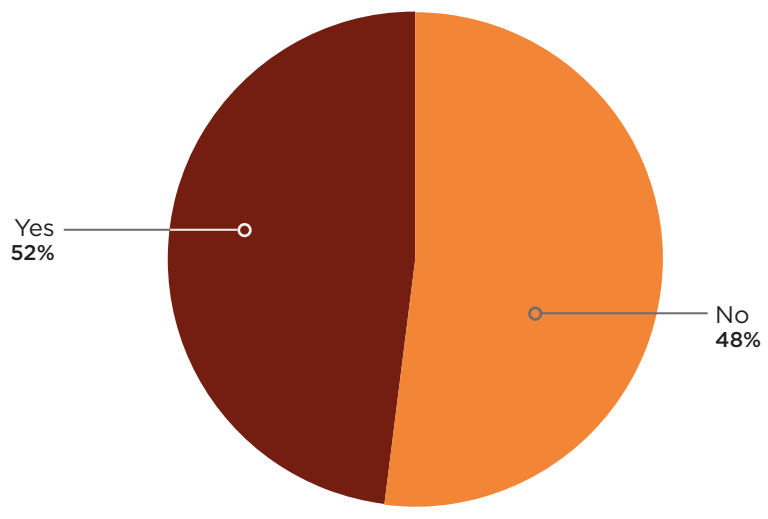


### Voting in Lincoln

Respondents were asked whether they had voted in an election since coming to live in Lincoln, with 52% of respondents reporting voting in Lincoln and 48% reporting not voting.

FIGURE 44  
(N=178)

Have you ever voted since living in Lincoln?

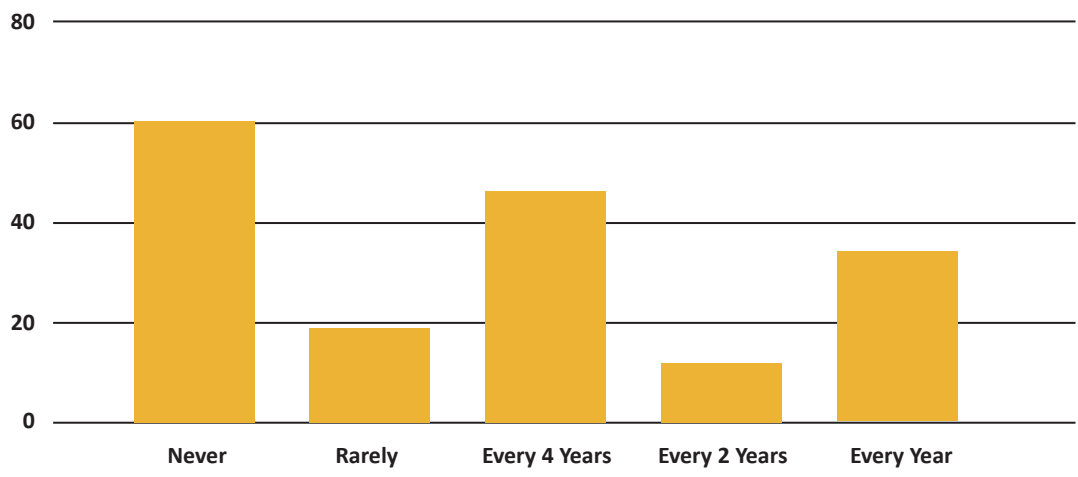


Significant differences were found comparing voting in Lincoln by age but no differences were found compared to gender or years in Lincoln. Older refugees and immigrants reported voting significantly more than younger refugees and immigrants.

### Voting Frequency

When asked how often they vote in elections, immigrants and refugees provided a mixed response. The highest number of respondents reported never voting followed by voting every four years. Only 35 people voted every year.<sup>8</sup>

FIGURE 45  
(N=174)



### Voting Frequency in Relation to Age

When looking at age, young respondents vote significantly less than older immigrants and refugees that completed the survey. This trend is consistent with data collected from voting rates of U.S.-born residents.<sup>9</sup>

FIGURE 46  
(N=174)

How often do you vote?	Mean (Years in US: 1 - 0-3 years; 2 - 3-5 years; 3 - 5-10 years; 4 - 10-15 years; 5 - 15 or more years)
Never	3.90 (n=61)
Rarely	3.26 (n=19)
Every four years	4.18 (n=44)
Every two years	4.13 (n=15)
Every year	5.03 (n=35)
TOTAL	4.15 (n=174)

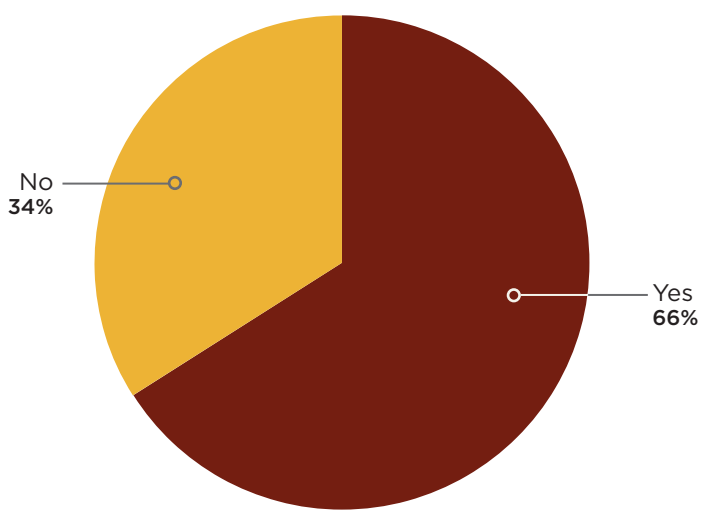
No significant differences were found comparing voting and country of origin.

### Information about Voting

Respondents feel confident that they have the information needed to vote in federal, state, and local elections as 66% of respondents reported confidence in their information needed to vote. Younger respondents reported having less information about voting compared to older respondents.

FIGURE 47  
(N=172)

Do you feel that you have the information you need to vote in local, state and/or federal elections?



## Whether Respondents Feel They Have the Information Needed to Vote in Relation to Years Lived in U.S.

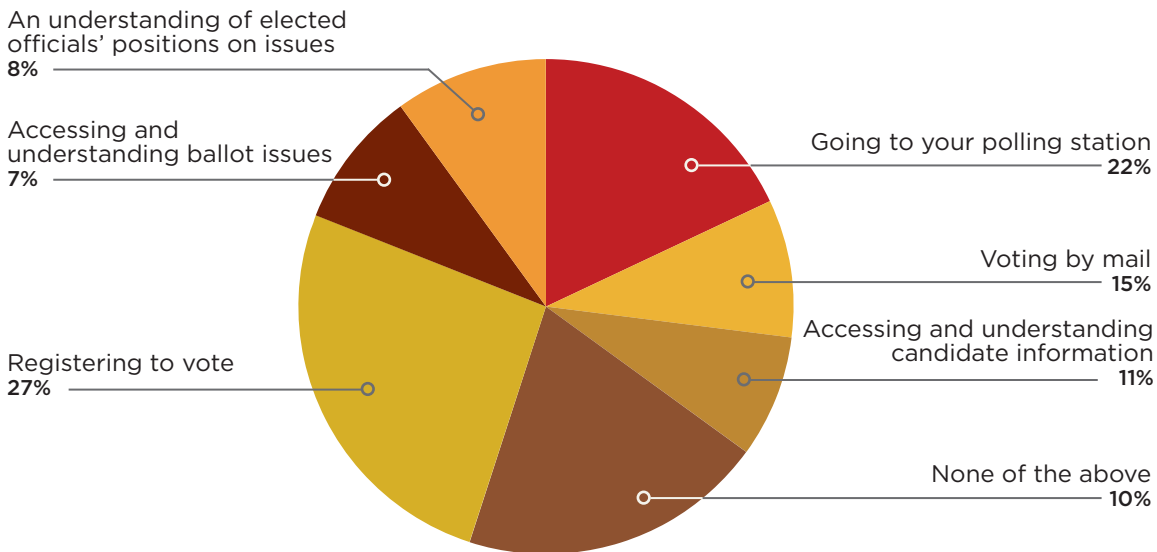
FIGURE 48  
(N=172)

Feel like you have information you need to vote	Years in U.S. (1 - 0-3 years; 2 - 3-5 years; 3 - 5-10 years; 4 - 10-15 years; 5-15 or more years)
No	3.83 (n=59)
Yes	4.24 (n=113)
TOTAL	4.10 (n=172)

### Confidence Navigating U.S. Voting Processes

Respondents were also asked about their confidence in their own civic knowledge on topics such as registering to vote, understanding elections and voting by mail. Only 27% of respondents reported confidence in registering to vote. Twenty-two percent expressed confidence in going to their polling station and only 15% reported confidence in voting by mail. In terms of information, 7% expressed confidence in accessing and understanding ballot issues and 11% expressed confidence in accessing and understanding candidate information. Only 8% expressed confidence in an understanding of elected officials' positions on issues. This data suggests a need for the Lincoln community to invest in additional resources and information for immigrant and refugee community members to engage confidently with elections and voting.

FIGURE 49  
(N=289)



## Conclusion

### Leading the Pack? Lincoln's Findings in Light of its Competitors

Lincoln stacks up well next to many cities with comparable characteristics, but several are making headway on immigration and related economic and social inclusion issues. Most notably, Salt Lake City (and its associated County) have funded a staff position dedicated to immigrant and refugee issues. Des Moines was a fellow winner (alongside Lincoln) of the WES Skilled Immigrant Integration Program and has moved ambitiously to pull together diverse civic and government partners under the leadership of its Chamber of Commerce. Madison, which like Lincoln is a state capital, college town and mid-sized city, has made robust investments in its Human Rights workforce.

### Lincoln/Lancaster County can take the lead by investing in proven models that address issues identified in its 2019 New Americans Task Force Immigrant and Refugee Survey by:

- Ensuring sustainable funding and institutionalized policies will endure across administrations.
- Investing in the implementation of a My City Academy program, which will capitalize on immigrant and refugee community members' trust in civic institutions to build a corps of ambassadors who can educate and connect advocates within their cultural communities.
- Supporting a Professional Connector program can help foster support networks for immigrant and refugees and tackle issues of under-employment.





## The following organizations invested in the creation of the survey:

- Asian Community & Cultural Center
- Catholic Social Services
- Lutheran Family Services
- LPS Bilingual Liaisons
- Nebraska Appleseed
- Civic Nebraska
- El Centro de las Américas
- Yazidi Cultural Center

## The following individuals completed data analysis or supported creation of the report:

- Dr. Janell Walther, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center
- Heather Engdahl, Nebraska Appleseed
- Jeannie Mutum, Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development
- Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, National Skills Coalition

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- Asian Community & Cultural Center - Lee Kreimer and Sheila Dorsey Vinton
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- Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development - Bryan Seck
- Civic Nebraska - José Lemus
- Nebraska Appleseed - Christa Yoakum
- Lutheran Family Services - Marni Newell, Bashar Karim and Haefaa Hasan
- Catholic Social Services - Katie Patrick, Carmen Lopez and Drew Miller

