



NEBRASKA STATE GEOINQUIRIES

NEBRASKANS AT THE POLLS

Summary: News agencies often like to classify states as “red states” or “blue states,” but often understanding the political learnings of a state are much more complicated. Nebraska has been no different, especially during the 2020 General Election for the U.S. Presidency. By completing *Nebraska At the Polls* students will investigate voting patterns across the state, and hopefully understand a need for civic participation through acts like voting.

Nebraska State Social Studies Standards

This activity has been designed to meet the following Nebraska State Standards...

Primary:	Secondary:
SS HS.1.2.a Investigate how individuals and groups can effectively use the structure and functions of various levels of government to shape policy.	SS HS.3.5.a Apply geographic knowledge and skills to interpret the past and present in order to plan for the future.

Lesson Objectives:

By completing this activity students will have the ability to...

- *evaluate voting patterns for different portions of Nebraska by interpreting data from the 2020 Presidential General Election.*
- *identify areas where Democrats and Republicans have support bases and determine how that information could be used to plan for future elections.*

URL: <https://arcg.is/LGarf>

Activity:

Follow these steps to complete the Geoinquiry



= A Mapping function students will need to complete



= A piece of information or background students will need to know



= A question, or set of questions, for students to answer

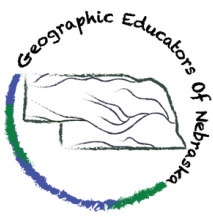
Ask a Question: **How can we track Nebraska’s voting patterns geographically?**

? In your mind is Nebraska a “red state” or a “blue state” when it comes to politics? *[answers will vary depending on where in Nebraska you live]*

? What makes a state a red state or a blue state? *[answers will vary but should be along the lines of most people in the state vote one way or another, people from the state have consistently voted for a particular political party]*



A geographic inquiry question is rooted in the questions of “where?”, “Why there?”, “Why care?”, or “what can be done to fix it?”




NEBRASKA STATE GEOINQUIRIES

NEBRASKANS AT THE POLLS

? What type of geographic question could you ask as a starting point to help determine whether Nebraska is a “red” state or a “blue” state? *[answers will vary - but should be along the lines of “How do people living in different parts of the state tend to vote?” (“why there?” connection), “Where in Nebraska do Republican candidates have the most support? Where do Democrats have the most support?” (“Where?” connection)]*

Collect New Information: What can we learn about Nebraska politics from examining geographic data from the 2020 Presidential Election?


 Click the link above to open the web map


 Take a moment to navigate around the web map by zooming and scrolling through the map, and by clicking on some of the different circles to see what information is included in the popups

? How does this map present information about the 2020 Presidential election? *[The map shows the winner of the General Election in each county as red dots for Donald Trump or blue dots for Joseph Biden - the bigger the dots the more votes they had than their opponent]*

? Based on this map does it appear that Nebraska is more of a red state or a blue state? *[More of a red state since most counties voted for Trump, but the large cities (Lincoln and Omaha) more voted for Biden]*


Analyze for Trends and Patterns: What voting patterns are evident in the state of Nebraska?


 In the Details sidebar on the left side of the map open up the contents menu to view all the layers that are included in the map

 Hover your cursor over the *2020 General Election by County (Nebraska)* layer and select the Cluster Points Icon (4th icon) to open the Cluster Menu. Try moving the slider around to see how that changes the map.

? What pattern is revealed when there is more clustering? *[Nebraska is a solidly republican state]* When there is less clustering? *[remains solidly Republican in rural areas but mixed Democratically in urban areas]*

 Make sure the clustering slider is all the way towards less and select ok to close the menu.

 In the content menu deselect the check box *2020 General Election by County (Nebraska)* to turn the layer off, and turn on the *Nebraska Electoral Voting Districts* and the *Nebraska General Election Results (by Country)* layers.

 Nebraska is not a “winner take all” state, in that the state’s 5 electoral votes can be divided. Two of the five electoral votes go to the overall winner in the state, then the remaining three votes are given to the winner in each of the congressional districts

? Based on this map, how does it appear Nebraska’s Electoral votes were divided? *[Trump won the two state votes and the 1st and 3rd congressional districts, Biden won the 2nd district]*

Share what You Have Found: Does Nebraska lean politically one way or the other?

? Where did Trump seem to have the strongest support? *[Rural areas - especially central Nebraska, the 3rd Congressional District]*

? Where did Biden have the most support? *[In urban areas, the I-80 corridor between Grand Island and North Platte, near Sioux City (Thurston County)]*



NEBRASKA STATE GEOINQUIRIES

NEBRASKANS AT THE POLLS

🌐 Sort through the different layers provided in the webmap to analyze for trends and patterns from the 2020 Presidential General Election.

? Based on the data included in the different maps layers is Nebraska a “Republican” state, a “Democrat” state, or a mixture of both? Explain your answer using data from the map layers [answers will vary, but students should see that it is more of a mixture of both, all around the state there are many supporters of both candidates, even in counties where they did not win]

Develop an Action Plan: What are the potential “battleground” areas where either party could pick up votes?

? Which county/counties do Democrats appear to have the best chance of flipping them from supporting Republicans in 2020? [Sарy or Thurston counties]

? Which county do Republicans appear to have the best chance of flipping their support from the Democrats? [Douglas County]

? In Which Electoral District should both parties focus their attention? [answers will vary but generally both parties focus on District 2 since it has the best chance of flipping either way]

? Why is this good knowledge for political parties to have when it comes to campaigning? [Helps them to determine where to spend their money, lets them know where they have a chance to grow, parties can plan where to get out and encourage people to vote]

Necessary Skill(s):

Use these directions to help you complete the skill in the **Analyze for Trends and Patterns** section

Performing a Cluster Analysis

- In the Contents menu in the Details pain hover your mouse over the layer you want to perform the cluster on
- New options should appear; move your cursor over each of the symbols to see what each of them do
- Select the Cluster Points symbol to open the cluster menu
- Move the slide back and forth to cluster the points more or less
- When finished, select the ok button to close the cluster menu

Sources and Additional Readings:

Be sure to check out these resources to learn more

- 270 to Win (2020), *Split Electoral Votes in Maine and Nebraska*, <https://www.270towin.com/content/split-electoral-votes-maine-and-nebraska/>
- Nebraska Secretary of State (2020), *Official Results: General Election - November 3rd, 2020*, <https://electionresults.nebraska.gov/resultsCTY.aspx?type=PRS&rid=11232&osn=90&map=CTY>

This activity was developed by the Geographic Educators of Nebraska for free distribution and use for educational purposes.