

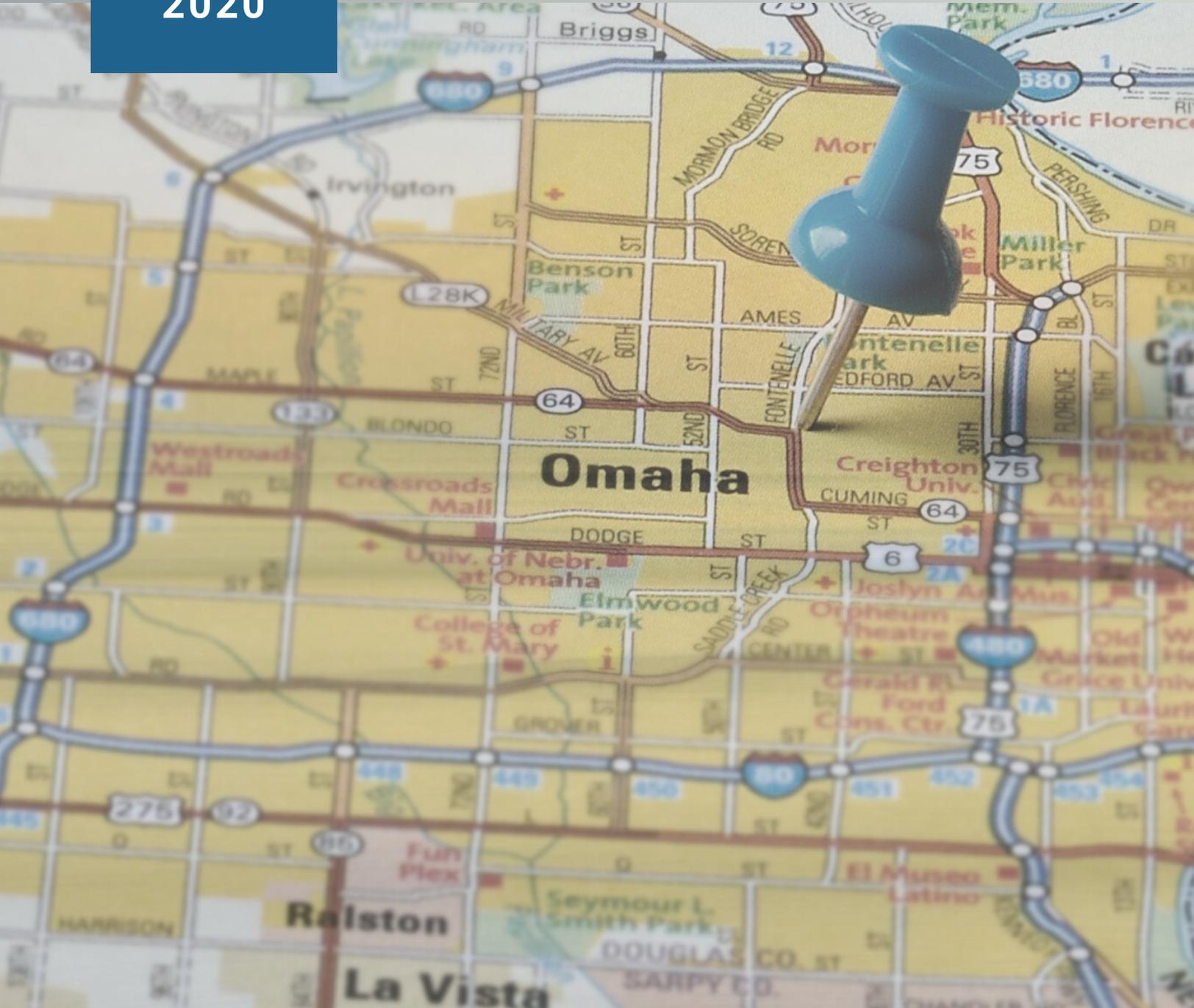


COMMUNITY  
REPORT

2020

# TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY CHALLENGES OF HOUSEHOLDS FACING POVERTY

*Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership*



PREPARED BY NICHOLE MURPHY, MSW, RESEARCH & EVALUATION MANAGER  
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OMAHA, NE SKYLINE

## INTRODUCTION

In early 2019, ENCAP completed a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment that detailed the needs of and resources available to individuals and families with low incomes in **Douglas County and Sarpy County**. Based on its findings, the staff and board created a 3-year strategic plan (2020-2022), which included improving the transportation resources of our clients as one of its primary focus areas.

Aiming to gain a deeper understanding of how transportation barriers can limit access to opportunity and socio-economic mobility, we administered a comprehensive Community Transportation Needs Survey in September 2019 in order to accomplish the following goals: **1) identify the specific types of transportation challenges experienced by residents in ENCAP's Service Delivery Area of Douglas and Sarpy County, 2) identify which population segments have the highest need, 3) evaluate the level of accessibility to key destinations; and 4) determine what resources will best meet residents' needs.** ENCAP recognizes that our work must be grounded in and respond to the needs and preferences of the communities we serve. Subsequently, we will use the information in this report to inform decision making, planning, and resource allocation.

Our findings provide a detailed picture of the transportation barriers individuals with low-incomes face. It is our intent that the results will promote action planning and improved service coordination at the systems level. We encourage community stakeholders, policymakers, experts in the field, local officials, and social service organizations to use the information in this report to develop and execute solutions that will have the greatest impact on the problem. **If your organization uses any of the information included in this document, please use the following citation when referencing information contained in this report: Murphy, N. B. (2020). Transportation & Mobility Challenges of Households Facing Poverty: Community Report (PDF). Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership. <https://encapnebraska.org/>.**

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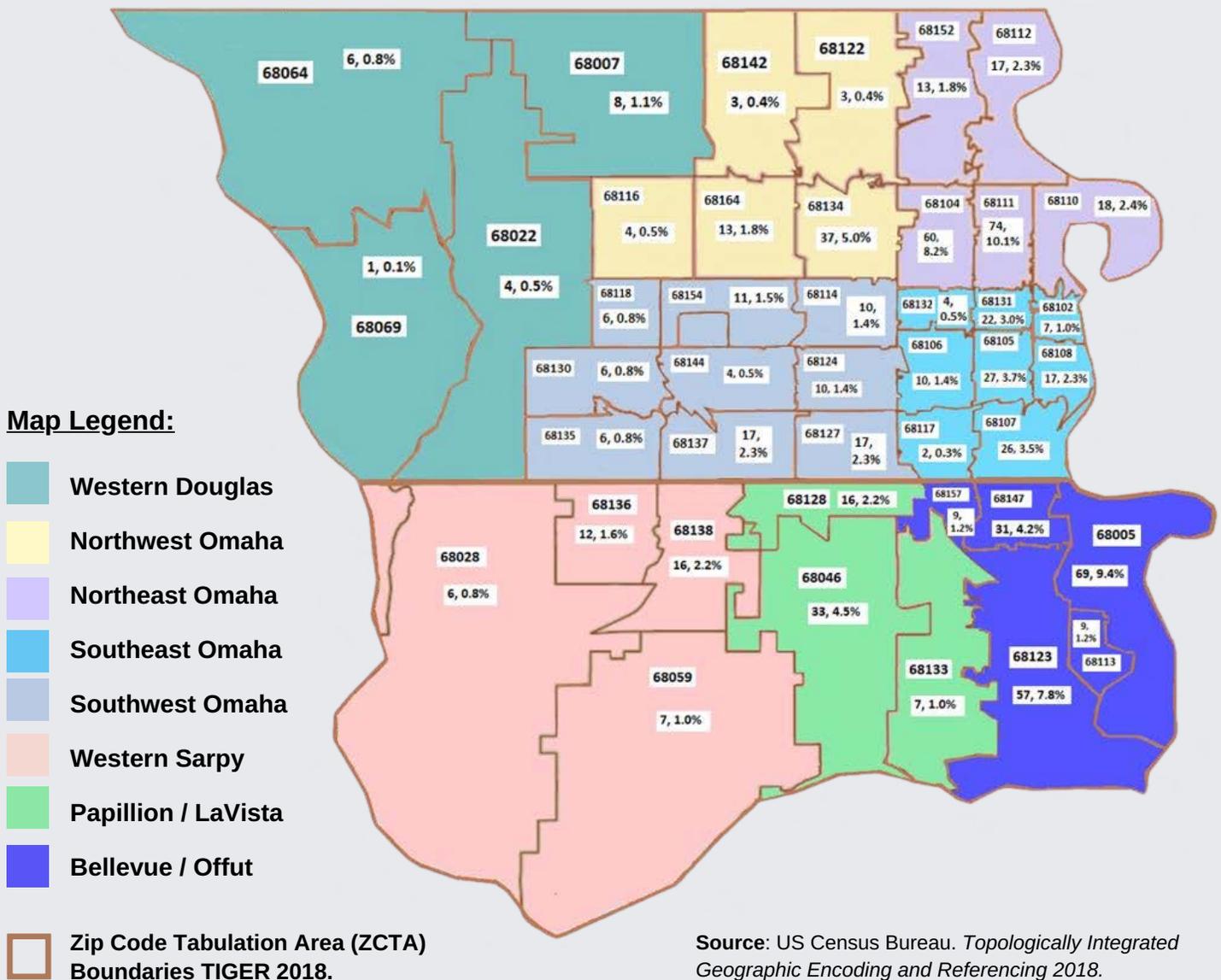
# I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership (ENCAP) is indebted to the 63 community partners who participated in survey administration and dissemination, without which this study would not be possible.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS: 63

Annie E Casey Foundation  
Avenue Scholars  
Bella Care, Inc.  
Bellevue Housing Authority  
Bellevue Public Schools  
Bethlehem House  
Bridge to Independence  
Center for Holistic Development  
Central Plains PALS  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
Clair Memorial United Methodist  
College Possible  
Community Alliance  
Consumer Credit Counseling Services  
Cross Training Center  
Douglas County General Assistance  
Douglas County Health Department  
Douglas County Housing Authority  
Douglas County Youth Center  
Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging  
First United Methodist Church  
GOALS Center  
Heartland Family Service  
Heartland Workforce Solutions  
Immanuel Pathways (PACE)  
inCOMMON Community Development  
Juvenile Probation  
KVC Nebraska  
Latino Center of the Midlands  
League of Human Dignity  
Legal Aid of Nebraska  
Lift Up Sarpy County  
Lutheran Family Service  
Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless  
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency  
Municipal Housing Agency  
National Federation of the Blind  
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation  
Nebraska Children's Home Society  
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
Nebraska Methodist College  
North End Teleservices  
Notre Dame Housing  
NOVA Treatment Community  
Omaha Community Foundation  
Omaha Public Schools  
Outlook Nebraska, Inc.  
Papillion-LaVista Schools  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Project Everlast  
Radio Talking Book Service  
Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare  
ResCare  
Sarpy County Cooperative Head start  
Sarpy/Cass County Health Department  
Simple Senior Solutions  
Springfield Platteview Schools  
The Simple Foundation  
Together, Inc.  
University of Nebraska Medical Center  
Wellness Council of the Midlands  
Women's Center for Advancement  
Youth Emergency Services

## II. GEOGRAPHIC DEFINITION & SURVEY INSTRUMENT



Source: US Census Bureau. *Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing 2018.*

## COMMUNITY:

The geographic area for this study includes Douglas and Sarpy counties in Nebraska. We further divided Douglas County into five geographical regions (Northeast Omaha, Southeast Omaha, Northwest Omaha, Southwest Omaha, and Western Douglas County); and Sarpy County into three geographic areas (Western Sarpy, Papillion/La Vista, and Bellevue/Offutt). This community definition is illustrated in the map above.



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## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument used for this study was based on input from ENCAP's leadership team as well as a review of several other transportation-related surveys and resources (See References). It was developed to reflect various mobility-related issues as found in the literature base. Questions were designed to elicit in-depth information regarding the type of challenges experienced, travel behaviors, views on how distance limits access to critical resources and services, and beliefs about potential solutions. The final survey contained 35 questions, including 28 multiple-choice items and seven open-ended items. Surveys were adapted to be fully accessible to members of the blind and vision-impaired community and made available online or in paper format in English and Spanish. Results of Flesch-Kincaid readability show an 8.4 reading grade level and reading ease of 55.7, making the survey content appropriate for persons with varying degrees of literacy.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This report incorporates data from both quantitative and qualitative sources, including primary research obtained through the Community Transportation Needs Survey and secondary research on the transportation needs of low-income individuals. This mixed-methods approach allows for comparisons at the county, state, and national levels.

We used a multipronged strategy involving e-mails, phone calls, postings on social media, and outreach at community events to administer surveys to residents in Douglas County and Sarpy County. ENCAP staff, in collaboration with partner agencies, began survey administration and data collection in September 2019. We first emailed partner agencies to introduce the purpose of the study and provide instructions on how to administer the surveys. ENCAP's Research and Evaluation Manager performed all data input and analyses. To increase participation from residents of all age groups and zip codes, we sent reminder emails and recorded all surveys, including hard copy and scanned submissions, via Survey Monkey.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This report answers the following research questions:

- What transportation challenges are reported most frequently by all respondents?
- Does age affect the type of transportation challenge experienced?
- Does household size affect the type of transportation challenge experienced?
- Does geographic area affect the type of transportation challenge experienced?
- What travel destinations are the least accessible to all respondents?
- What are the demographic characteristics of respondents with significantly different access to destination scores?
- Where do respondents who reported concerns with distance to key activities live?
- What travel destinations least accessible to respondents with distance concerns?
- What resources do respondents believe will meet their transportation needs?

## SAMPLE APPROACH & DESIGN:

A stratified random sample of 738 individuals age 16 and older residing in Douglas and Sarpy County, Nebraska. Surveys were respondent-driven and non-incentivized. A stratified random sampling technique increased representation by matching characteristics of the sample with characteristics of the population. This sample of residents includes 465 individuals in Douglas County and 273 individuals in Sarpy County. The higher sample within Douglas County reflects the greater population density within the county (1,574 people per square mile versus 664 people per square mile).[1] Quality control procedures were implemented throughout data collection to reduce self-reported bias, followed by oversampling after meeting the goal of 500 responses.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder. Population, Housing Units, Area, and Density, 2010.  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CFt>

## SURVEY MEASURES:

Survey measures include the independent variables of age, household size, age groups of household members, and zip code. \*Dependent variables include transportation challenges, access to travel destination, and travel distance. Yes or no questions measured transportation challenges by asking participants if they or someone in their household experienced one of fifteen challenges within the last 12 months. Participants selected either yes or no for each item. We applied codes of 1=yes and 2=no, with scores of 1 indicating higher need.

Twelve items measured access to travel destination by asking participants how often transportation challenges prevented them from reaching their destination within the last 12 months. For each destination, participants selected one response on a 4-point scale (zero times, 1-3 times, 4-6 times, or seven or more times). We applied codes of zero times=1, one to three times=2, four to six times=3, and seven or more times=4. The least accessible destinations were those with the most answers of 4 or more.

A yes or no question measured travel distance by asking respondents if they had concerns with distance to key activities, such as work or school. We applied codes of yes=1 and no=2 with scores of 1 indicating higher need.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSES:

A statistically significant result is a result that is not likely to occur randomly or by chance, but is instead attributed to a specific cause. For this study, statistical testing was necessary to determine whether there were any meaningful differences between the average scores of respondents in various groups, and to identify the demographic characteristics of those with the highest need. Findings were considered statistically significant if the significance level – the “p-value” – reached .05 or below (for example,  $p = .00$  or  $p < .05$ ), meaning there is less than a 1 in 20 chance that the differences occurred randomly.

Statistical analyses were both descriptive and inferential, with frequencies describing responses to survey questions and multivariate comparisons answering research questions. We compared the scores of respondents in age groups, household sizes, and geographic areas and determined which results were significant by conducting Pearson Chi-square tests, independent samples t-tests, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). For all statistically significant ANOVA results, Tukey post hoc tests determined where differences occurred and by how much. We provide the results of statistical tests throughout this report where appropriate. All analyses were conducted using SPSS and Excel.

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*\*A variable refers to a person, place, thing, or phenomenon that is measured in some way. The independent variable is the presumed cause of changes in the dependent variable.*

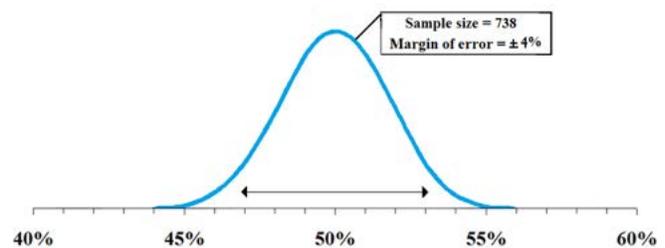
## STATISTICAL ANALYSES: CONTINUED

The likelihood of obtaining statistically significant results increases with a larger sample size. The margin of error associated with a sample size of 738 is  $\pm 4$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level. \*A 95 percent confidence interval with a 4 percent margin of error means that our statistic will be within four percentage points of the real population value 95 percent of the time. For example, if 50 percent of survey respondents answered a particular question with "yes," one could be 95 percent confident that between 45 and 55 percent of the general population would provide the same answer.

*\*The margin of error is the probability that the sample will accurately reflect the attitudes of the population.*

An "N" at the top of each chart or table indicates the total number of responses to questions. The abbreviations M and SD represent the mean (the average of each data set) and standard deviation (the variation in responses), respectively.

**Expected Margin of Error for a Sample of 738 Respondents at the 95 Percent Confidence Level**



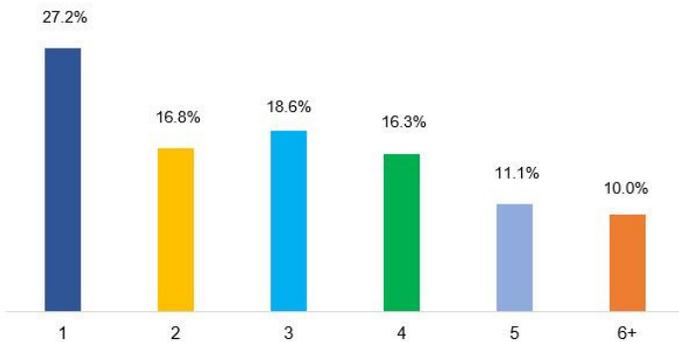
## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:

Primary methods of qualitative analyses include grounded theory and research on the transportation barriers of low-income individuals. We used the qualitative analysis software QDA Miner to examine written comments from open-ended responses line-by-line and separate them into broad categories of common themes. We then used an inductive open coding process to identify similarities among and differences between emerging categories of need. Breaking down categories into smaller units of meaning helped to identify subcategories, capture instances of variation, and develop new theories grounded in data from the field.

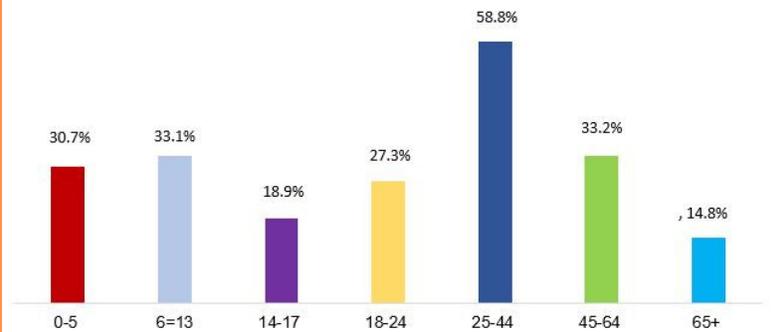
## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- The age of respondents in this survey ranged from 16 to 91 years.
- The majority, (47.4 percent) were between the ages of 25 and 44 years.
- The average age was 39 years.
- Respondents were asked to indicate the age group of all members in their household.
- The age groups of household members ranged from 0-5 to 65 and over.
- The most frequently reported age group was 25-44 (58.8 percent).
- Household sizes ranged from 1-6 or more.
- A larger share (27.2 percent) were from single-person households.
- Over half of all respondents lived in Douglas County (63.0 percent).

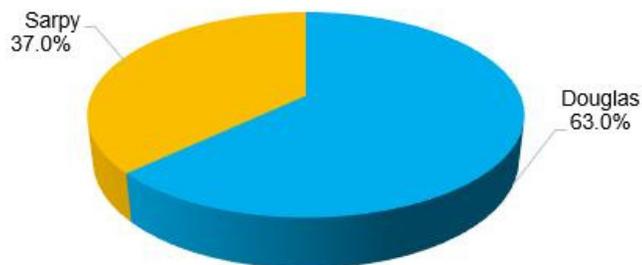
Respondents by Household Size



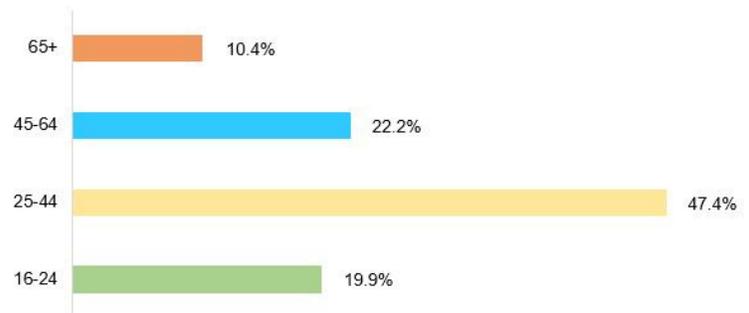
Age Groups of Household Members



Respondents by County

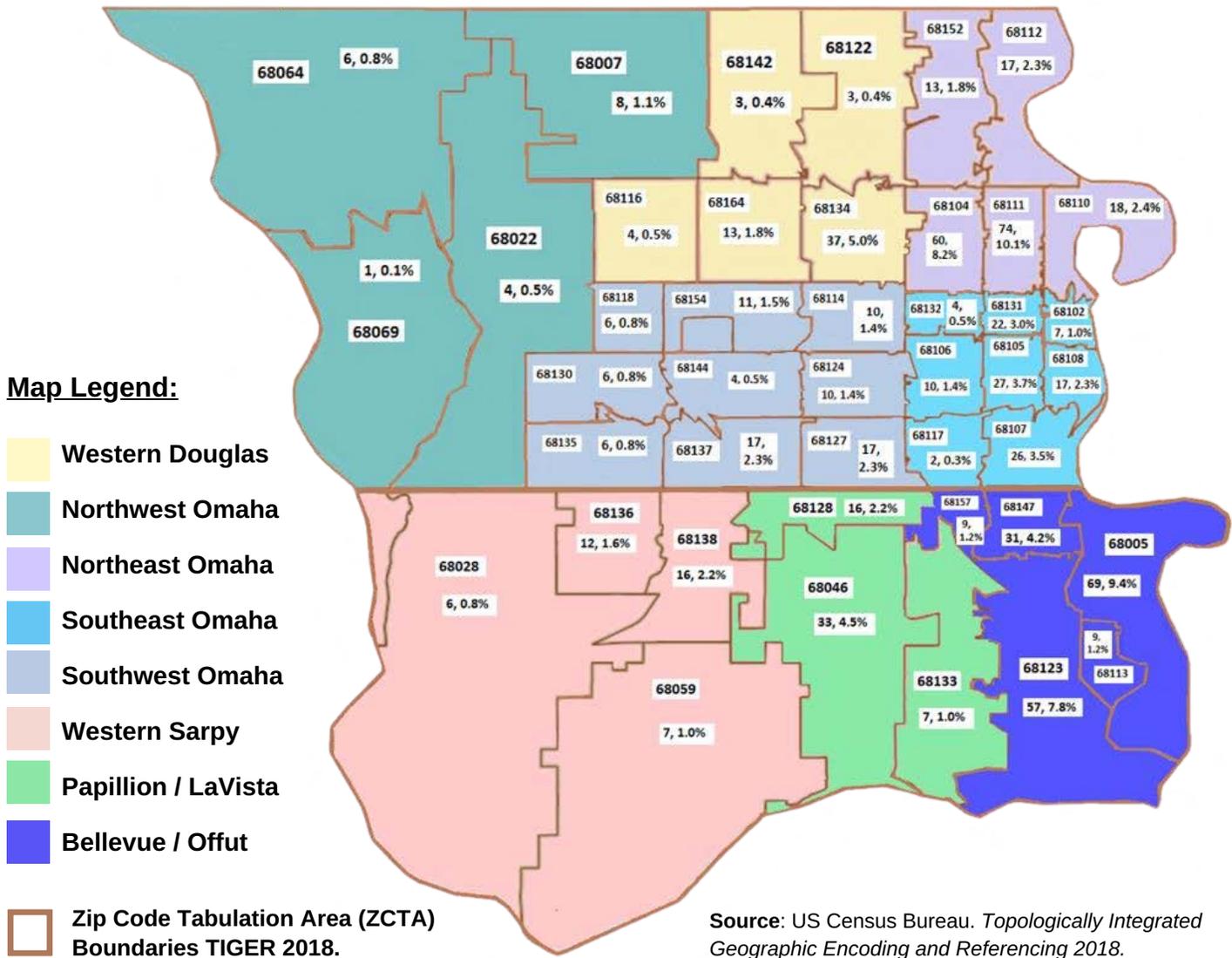


Respondents by Age Group



## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

Survey responses were obtained from every zip code in ENCAP's service delivery area with the highest in 68111 in Douglas County (10.1 percent), and 68005 in Sarpy County (9.4 percent).

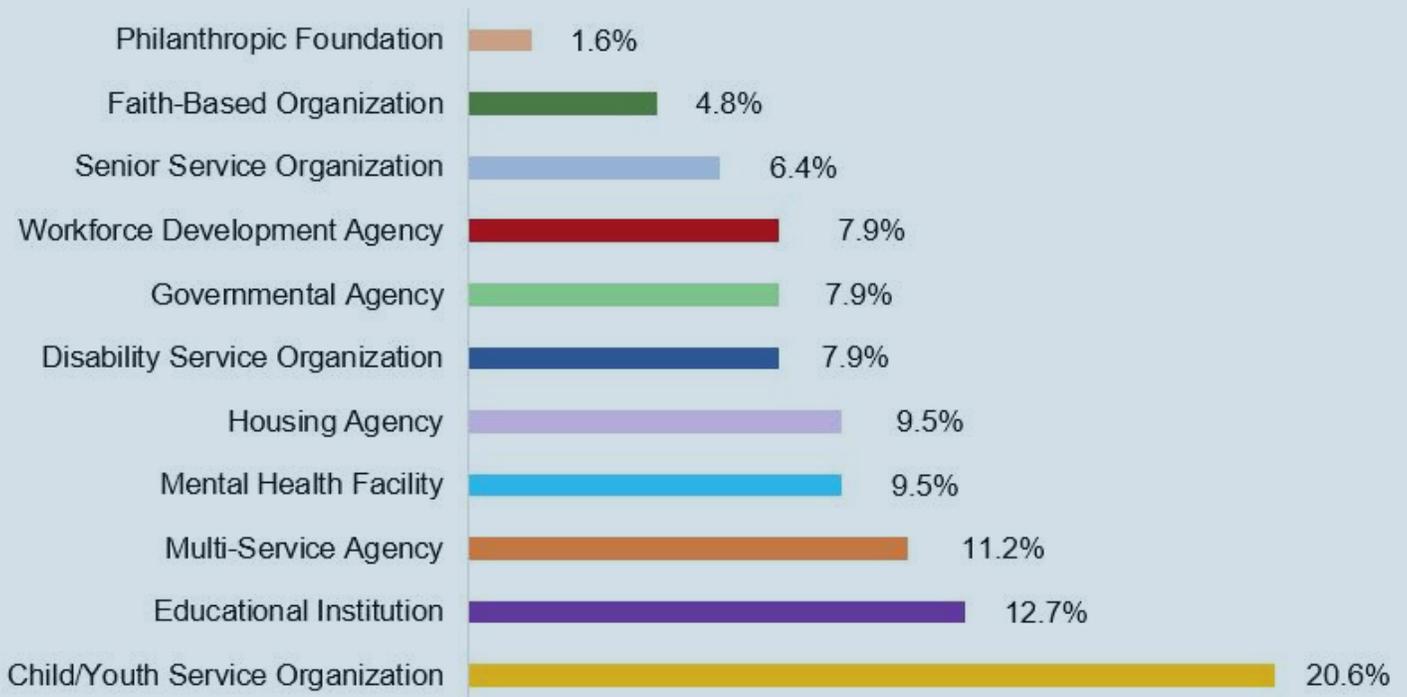




## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

Respondents were grouped into categories based on the organization they were receiving services from or that gave them the survey. Nearly a quarter were participating in a child or youth-serving organization (20.6 percent).

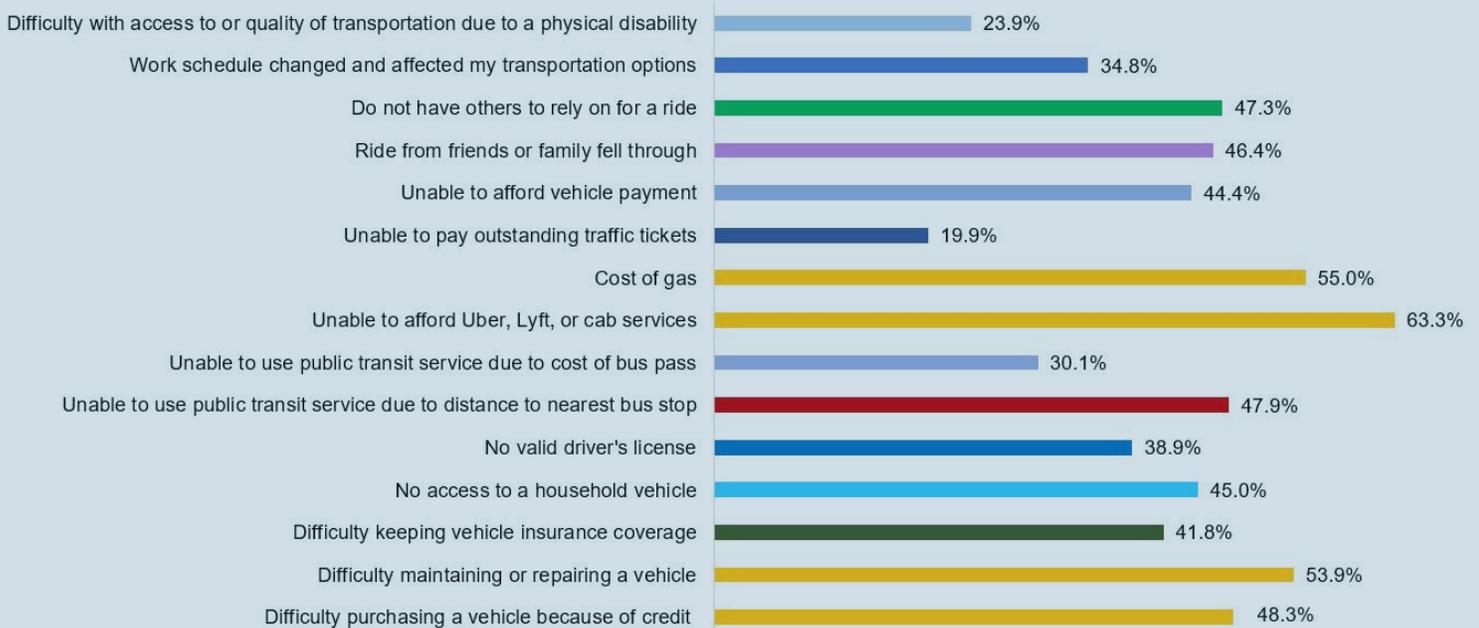
### Respondents by Participating Organization



# IV. TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

On average, respondents experienced six different types of transportation challenges, with a mean score of 1.57 (SD=.495). Scores ranged from 1-2, where 1=yes and 2=no. As the chart below demonstrates, the most frequently reported were the inability to afford Uber, Lyft, or cab services at 63.3 percent (n=465), cost of gas at 55 percent (n=404), and difficulty maintaining or repairing a vehicle at 53.9 percent (n=396). Just under half of all respondents had difficulty purchasing a vehicle due to credit (48.3 percent or 355) and using public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop (47.9 percent or 353).

**Percent of respondents who experienced each transportation or mobility challenge within the last 12 months (n=738)**



Thirty-seven respondents included the following additional challenges not listed on the survey: inability to use public transit due to lack of service and routes, inability to drive or use public transit due to a developmental, visual, behavioral, or mental health disorder, safety issues and language barriers using ride-sharing services, and unsafe walking or biking conditions.

Transportation challenges appeared to impact subgroups of respondents disproportionately. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of each age group. A p value of less than .05 was required for significance. The ANOVA was significant  $F(3,734)= 5.37, p= 0.001$ . The table below demonstrates a strong effect size, with age accounting for 47% of variance in scores.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	1.01511	3	0.33837	5.36	0.001	2.617
Within Groups	46.24289	733	0.063087			
Total	47.258	736				

Post hoc tests identified a significant relationship between age and the type of challenge experienced. 16-24 year olds were more likely to report not having a valid driver’s license ( $t=1.255, p<.05$ ); 25-44 year old’s were more likely to report difficulty purchasing a car due to credit ( $t=4.063, p<.05$ ); and 45-64 year old’s were more likely to report difficulty maintaining or repairing a vehicle ( $t=1.772, p<.05$ ). Difficulty accessing public transit due to a physical disability and an inability to access public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop was reported most frequently by the 65 and over age group ( $t=4.830, p<.05$ ). The table below displays frequency distributions.

**NOTE: bolded areas in the tables represent statistically significant differences, meaning the variation in responses was likely due to the independent variable and did not occur by random chance.**

Age Group	Difficulty purchasing a vehicle due to credit	Difficulty maintaining or repairing a vehicle	No valid driver's license	Unable to use public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop	Difficulty with access to or quality of transportation due to a physical disability
16-24 (n=147)	36.1%	47.6%	<b>46.3%</b>	36.7%	7.4%
25-44 (n=350)	<b>59.1%</b>	53.7%	36.9%	51.4%	20.3%
45-64 (n=164)	45.7%	<b>57.1%</b>	42.9%	45.1%	38.4%
65+ (n=77)	27.3%	50.6%	35.1%	<b>63.6%</b>	<b>66.2%</b>

Respondents with a household size of 1 (M=1.52, SD=.499) reported more challenges as compared to larger households (M=1.60, SD=.491). The type of challenge tended to vary by household size, as shown in the table below. Single-person households were significantly more likely to report no access to a household vehicle (t=-1.401), not having others to rely on for a ride (t=1.096), and difficulty with access to or quality of transportation due to a physical disability (t=-1.757). However, households of 6 or more were more likely to report challenges with the cost of gas (t=-0.251) and difficulty keeping vehicle insurance coverage (t=2.259).

Household Size	No access to a household vehicle	Do not have others to rely on for a ride	Difficulty with access to/quality of transportation due to a physical disability	Cost of gas	Difficulty keeping vehicle insurance coverage
1 (n=199)	<b>56.7%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	47.2%	53.7%	41.2%
2 (n=124)	50.8%	45.1%	27.4%	57.6%	41.9%
3 (n=137)	37.9%	49.6%	20.4%	53.2%	39.4%
4 (n=120)	30.0%	35.8%	16.6%	49.1%	37.5%
5 (n=82)	36.5%	40.2%	10.9%	54.8%	45.1%
6 (n=74)	50.0%	45.9%	0.09%	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>50.8%</b>

Analysis of independent samples t-test shows that respondents in Douglas County experienced more challenges (M=1.55, SD=.251) as compared to Sarpy County (M=1.62, SD=.246) (p =.000). There was a statistically significant difference in the means between geographic areas, as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA (F (6,612) = 5.70, p =.001). The need was much higher in Western Douglas County (M=1.39, SD=.489), followed by Western Sarpy County (M=1.52, SD=.223), and Northeast Omaha (M=1.52, SD=.246).

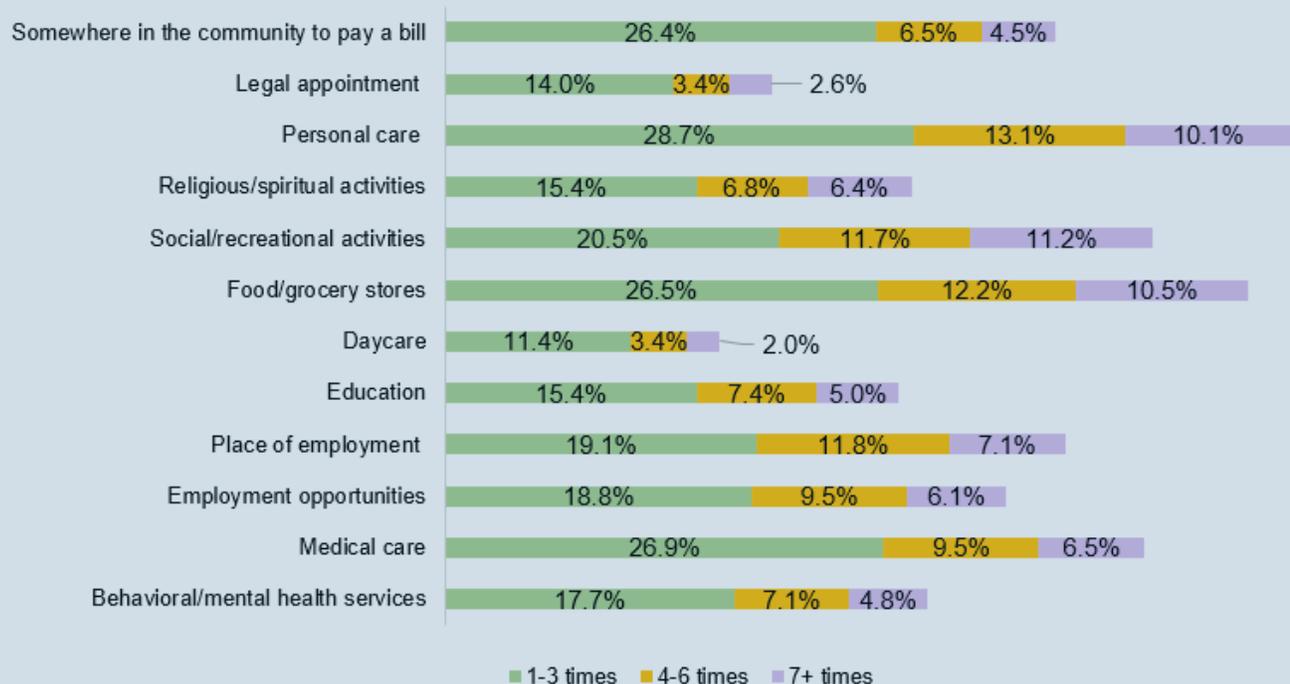
Geographic Area	Difficulty purchasing a vehicle due to credit	Difficulty maintaining or repairing a vehicle	No access to a household vehicle	Unable to use public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop
Western Sarpy (n=41)	39.0%	46.3%	56.1%	60.9%
Papillion/LaVista (n=56)	39.3%	42.9%	33.9%	64.3%
Bellevue/Offutt (n=176)	45.5%	47.7%	32.4%	63.6%
Northeast Omaha (n=182)	58.2%	62.6%	51.1%	34.6%
Southwest Omaha (n=87)	36.8%	52.8%	41.3%	41.3%
Southeast Omaha (n=115)	49.5%	53.0%	52.2%	35.7%
Northwest Omaha (n=60)	48.3%	56.6%	46.6%	36.7%
Western Douglas (n=21)	<b>61.9%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>85.7%</b>

Respondents from different geographic areas also had considerable variation in the type of challenge reported. Those in Bellevue/Offutt, Papillion/LaVista, Western Sarpy County, and Western Douglas County were significantly more likely to report an inability to use public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop ( $t=4.036$ ,  $p=.01$ ). No access to a household vehicle was reported most frequently by those in Western Sarpy and Western Douglas County ( $t=4.987$ ,  $p=.00$ ), whereas difficulty purchasing a vehicle due to credit and problems maintaining a vehicle were the primary challenges experienced in Western Douglas and Northeast Omaha ( $t=5.230$ ,  $p=.00$ ).

## ACCESS TO DESTINATION:

Survey results demonstrate that transportation challenges prevented respondents from reaching their travel destinations an average of 1.5 times within the last year ( $M=1.57$ ,  $SD=0.867$ ). Personal care was the least accessible, with 23.1 percent of respondents ( $n=170$ ) unable to access four or more times; followed by social or recreational activities at 22.9 percent ( $n=168$ ); food/grocery stores at 22.7 percent ( $n=167$ ); place of employment at 18.9 percent ( $n=139$ ); and medical care at 16.0 percent ( $n=119$ ).

**Number of times respondents were prevented from reaching their destination within the last 12 months (n=738)**



## ACCESS TO DESTINATION (CONTINUED):

There was wide variation found in destination accessibility between age groups  $F(3, 731) = 8.19, p = .00$ . Relative to all others, 16-24 year olds had the least access to employment, education, and employment opportunities ( $M = 1.64, SD = .863$ ). 25-44 year olds had the least access to food/grocery stores ( $M = 1.97, SD = 1.062$ ) and social or recreational activities ( $M = 1.83, SD = 1.044$ ). The 45-64 age group had slightly lower access to personal care than average ( $M = 1.98, SD = 1.045$ ), but this difference was not statistically significant at the .05 level. Individuals 65 and over had the least access to medical care ( $M = 2.01, SD = 1.013$ ). The table below displays the percent of respondents who were unable to reach their destination four or more times within the last year.

Age Group	Medical care	Employment opportunities	Place of employment	Education	Food/grocery stores	Social/recreational activities	Personal care
16-24 (n=84)	6.8%	42.6%	49.2%	49.1%	11.6%	17.0%	14.3%
25-44 (n=300)	15.7%	18.0%	21.1%	13.7%	28.0%	23.7%	25.4%
45-64 (n=43)	18.5%	14.8%	18.5%	8.0%	23.4%	23.4%	25.9%
65+ (n=25)	28.6%	3.8%	5.1%	2.5%	18.2%	18.2%	23.4%

Travel behavior is often a reflection of the resources available to the household. The US Department of Transportation defines trips for shopping, family or personal business, visits with friends or family, and social/recreational as "discretionary travel." In an auto-dominant society, access to a vehicle changes the destination opportunities and results in differences in discretionary travel. Results of the most recent National Household Travel Survey suggests that persons living in households with fewer vehicles than drivers reported fewer visits with friends and family and social/recreational trips, while those living in households with more vehicles than drivers reported the opposite.[2]

[2] US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. 2017 National Household Travel Survey Report. Trends in Discretionary Travel. 2019. [https://nhts.ornl.gov/assets/FHWA\\_NHTS\\_Report\\_3D\\_Final\\_021119.pdf](https://nhts.ornl.gov/assets/FHWA_NHTS_Report_3D_Final_021119.pdf)

## ACCESS TO DESTINATION (CONTINUED):

Poverty research demonstrates that financial constraints and social withdrawal that result from feelings of shame cause lower participation in activities such as organized sports, music, exercise, and social, cultural, or community events. According to one study, engaging in leisure activities and social or recreational programming contributes to a higher quality of life by serving as a coping mechanism to alleviate the stress caused by economic instability and marginalization.[3] Specific subsets of the population are more at risk for social deprivation and less likely to experience the positive outcomes associated with leisure and recreation. Data suggest that older adults who stop driving take 59 percent fewer shopping trips, and 65 percent fewer social, family, and other life-enhancing trips.[4] Other studies have found that 61.5 percent of adults with disabilities are unable to drive and make significantly fewer trips for social or volunteer purposes when family members are unavailable to transport.[5]

*Our findings are consistent* with research that suggests that low-income individuals are more likely to take public transit to work due to the high cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle. A study investigating barriers to employment among TANF participants found that approximately one in three individuals (35.5 percent) lost a job or a job opportunity due to transportation challenges. The likelihood of job loss increased with the use of a fixed-route bus service. Reliance on public transit became more complicated when combined with long travel times to and from home, child care arrangements, and work activities that required working non-traditional hours.[6]



[3] Trussell, D. and Mair, H. *Seeking Judgment Free Spaces: Poverty, Leisure, and Social Inclusion*. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2010, Vol. 42 (4), pp. 513–533.

[4] Broderick, A. *The Future of Rural Transportation and Mobility for Older Adults: Current Trends and Future Directions in Technology-enabled Solutions*. 2018.

[5] Jansuwan, S., Chen, A., & Christensen, K. *Assessing the transportation needs of low-mobility individuals: Case study of a small urban community in Utah*. 2013. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, 139 (2).

[6] ICF International, *Individualized Training and Technical Assistance for the TANF Program and Tribal TANF/Child Welfare Demonstration Projects. Overcoming Transportation Barriers: A Path to Self-Sufficiency*, 2009

## ACCESS TO DESTINATION (CONTINUED):

According to the *National Council on Aging*, one in six seniors living alone in the United States faces physical, cultural, and geographical barriers that isolate them from their peers and communities. This isolation can prevent them from receiving services that can improve the ability to live healthy, independent lives.[7] Lack of transportation can significantly impact physical health and wellbeing for older adults by disrupting the continuity of care and causing delays in the delivery of necessary medical services. A national study found that 25 percent of missed medical appointments were due to transportation issues and that patients relying on the bus were twice as likely to miss appointments compared to car users.[8] A recent needs assessment found that transportation barriers hindered doctor's visits for 4.3 percent of individuals in Douglas County and 1.6 percent in Sarpy County.[9] Results of this study show that 43.0% percent of all respondents and 53.2 percent of respondents 65 and older had transportation difficulties that caused them to miss necessary medical appointments at least once within the last year.

Without adequate transportation options, many individuals are denied equitable access to fresh, nutritious food. A national study conducted by the USDA found that households with limited access to supermarkets were more likely to purchase food low in nutrient density at nearby retailers such as convenience stores, fast-food restaurants, and dollar stores than non-access burdened households.



[7] *National Council on Aging, Senior Centers Reach the Hard-to-Reach. 2019.*

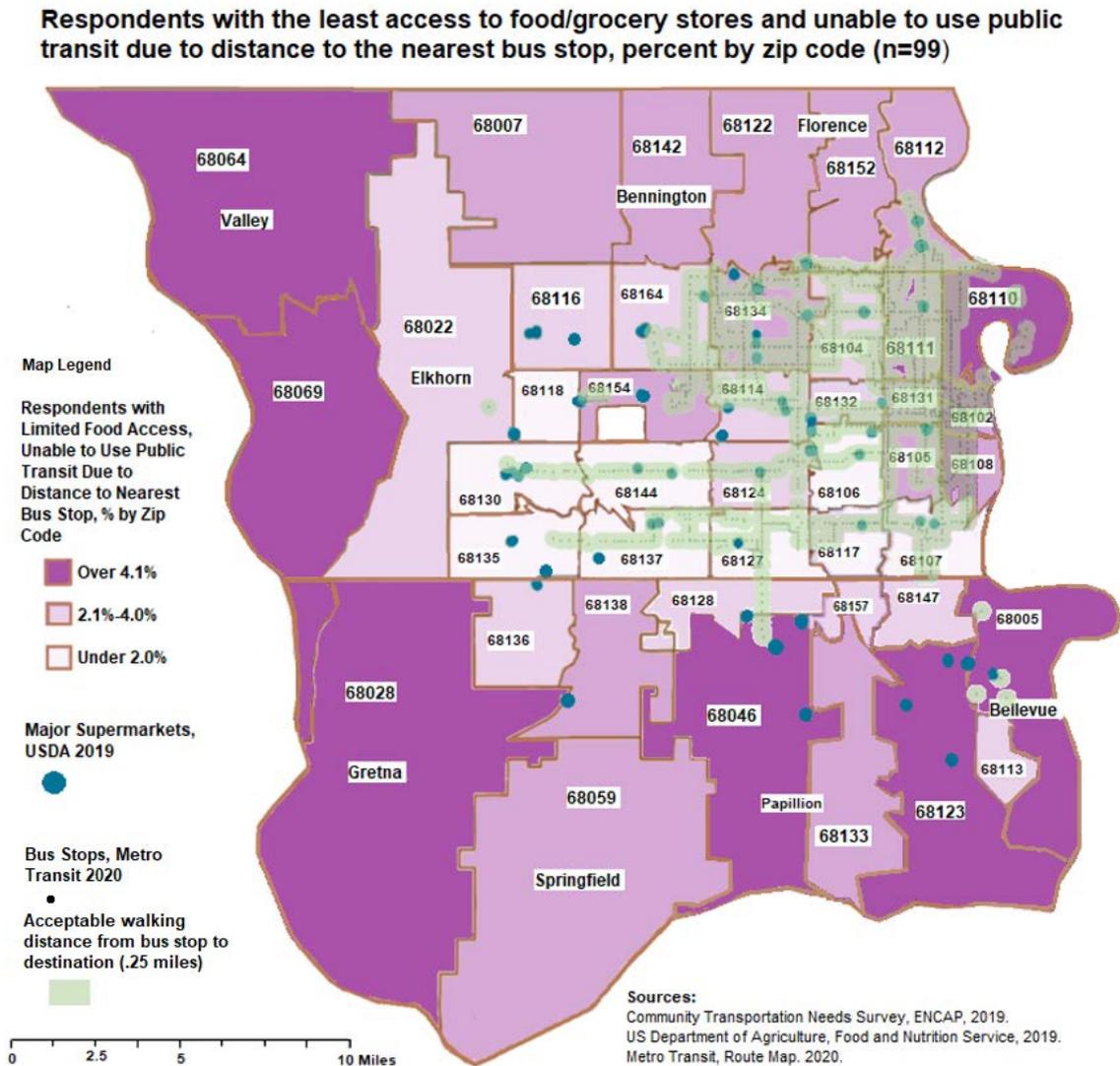
<https://www.ncoa.org/national-institute-of-senior-centers/tips-for-senior-centers/senior-centers-reach-the-hard-to-reach/>

[8] Lee, S., Wielunski, A., Spurgeon, L. and Hernandez, E. *Health Outreach Partners, Rides to Wellness Community Scan Project: 2017.* <https://outreach-partners.org/2017/06/23/rides-wellness-community-scan-project/>

[9] *Professional Research Consultants, Inc. Community Health Needs Assessment: 2018.*

## ACCESS TO DESTINATION (CONTINUED):

There is some evidence that suggests that residents with better access to supermarkets have healthier diets and lower levels of obesity.[10] Research on the local food environment indicates that 23 percent of zip codes in Douglas County (11) and 46 percent in Sarpy County (6) did not have a major supermarket.[11] \*Further analysis of survey respondents with the least access to food reveals that 59.3 percent were not within walking distance of a bus stop and lived the furthest away from a supermarket. According to public health research, an acceptable walking distance to or from a bus stop is .25 miles. The map below shows the unequal distribution of supermarkets relative to the location of bus stops. For example, respondents in Valley without access to a vehicle had to travel 8.8 miles to the closest bus stop in Elkhorn, and walk another two miles to reach the closest grocery store.



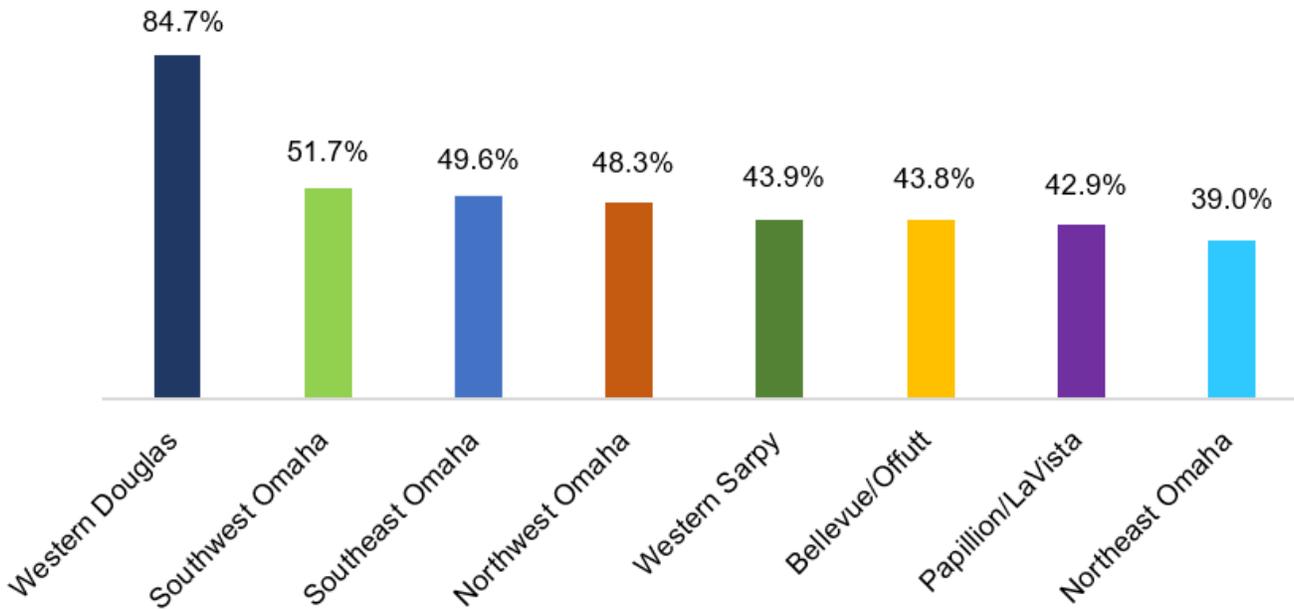
[10] Ver Ploeg, M., Larimore, E., & Wilde, P. *The Influence of Foodstore Access on Grocery Shopping and Food Spending*, US Department of Agriculture. 2017.

[11] US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service USDA - SNAP Retailer Locator. 2019.

\*Includes respondents who were unable to access food/grocery stores 4 or more times within the last year.

## TRAVEL DISTANCE:

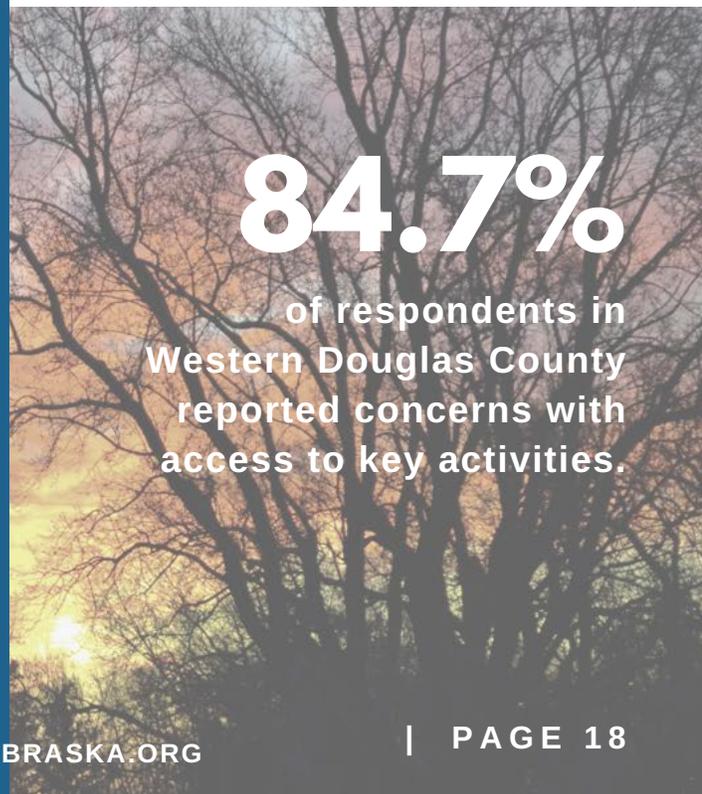
Geographic area of respondents who reported concerns with distance to key activities (n=337)



45.7 percent of all respondents (n=337) in the sample were concerned about the distance to key activities. Of those, the majority lived in Western Douglas and Southwest Omaha.

64.1 percent of respondents with the least access to personal care, social or recreational activities, food/grocery stores, place of employment, and medical care indicated that distance was a significant concern. A primary theme was difficulty accessing the public transportation system due to limited or inconsistent routes and long commute times.

Another pattern was having to shorten trips to save on gas costs and avoid excess mileage on older, unreliable vehicles.



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## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES:

Over half of 16-24-year olds reported concerns related to employment and employment opportunities. Many living in Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast Omaha stated that transportation barriers restricted them from pursuing jobs further away and made it difficult to maintain attendance or arrive on time at their current job sites.

***Below are select quotations related to distance concerns for illustrative purposes.***

- "I try to keep my driving limited to under 10,000 miles a year and go places that are close to home as much as I can to avoid the expense of gas, wear and tear, etc. but it's hard when the good/better-paying jobs are further away."
- "I live in Florence nowhere near a bus route, and work is all the way out west. I have no license, no car, and I sometimes have to take an Uber just to get to the bus stop."
- "There is no access to busses in Springfield, and I need to get to work in Omaha. It is hard to keep a job without transportation."
- "I live in Elkhorn and have to commute 22 miles each way for work. I drive an old truck belonging to my parents, and the cost of gas is astronomical. I have no other choice because the car I bought through a Buy Here Pay Here place broke down within six months. On the days I can't afford gas, I'm either late to work or have to call in sick."
- "I don't have the ability to apply to certain jobs because the distance is too great to walk, there are not enough bus routes available from Bellevue, and Uber/Lyft is too expensive. I'm currently looking for work that is close by, but my options are limited to entry-level only."
- "I found a job 20 minutes away, but sometimes friends and family can't come through for a ride, and I worry I'll get fired."
- "It is 21 miles round trip to get to my job five days a week in an old car that won't last much longer. My family can't afford to get another vehicle when this one finally breaks down."

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## **ACCESS TO SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PERSONAL CARE:**

Respondents in rural and suburban areas (Valley, Bennington, Elkhorn, and Florence in Douglas; Springfield, Bellevue, and Papillion in Sarpy) articulated a complete disconnect from public transit, few local community resources, and more difficulty commuting into urban areas to complete errands, shop, visit friends or family, and participate in other social activities.

- "Distance is too far due to the household's different schedules and routines. It would take all day on the public bus to get my kids to their sporting events or visit their grandparents in Omaha."
- "It is too far for me to get from 30th and Fort to ENCAP in my wheelchair, especially when it's really cold outside. I worry I will miss out on the knitting groups for seniors this winter."
- "I have trouble getting out to attend social events with my friends if they can't drive me. The number of bus stops between where I live and where I need to go is outrageous. To get from my house to the mall to go shopping, see a movie, or get a haircut is a 45-minute ride, and the mall is only 4-5 miles away."
- "When you don't have a car, it's hard to reach a lot of kid-centered indoor activities and spend time with family having fun."
- "There are not enough kid and family-friendly activities in Bellevue. Running errands and getting to events in Omaha takes a lot of gas and time on the road, and traffic is dangerous."
- "My friends don't want to drive all the way out to west Omaha so I can't get to the DMV to get my license renewed. But I can't afford a car, so even if I had a ride, I would still have problems getting places."
- "I try to keep my driving limited to places that are close to home as much as I can to avoid the expense of gas, wear, and tear, etc. This means I sometimes have to miss out on movies, AA meetings, and social gatherings that are further away."
- "It is not always easy to take my kids to their after-school activities, as the bus system in Bellevue is non-existent, and my car is often in need of repairs."
- "Shopping centers are not close by, and the buses don't take you there. I can't run errands, do most of my personal shopping, or even get to the bank or post office from Papillion when my vehicle breaks down."
- "All special needs activities and social events happen in Omaha. We are in Bellevue. It takes 30-45 minutes to get to an activity. At that point, we end up sitting in our car or hoping for a place to hang out and wait, because driving back and forth is not an option."



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## ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE:

Predominant themes among older respondents were limited ability to walk to a bus stop, get on and off a bus, difficulty driving in bad weather conditions, and challenges using ADA/Paratransit services. Most comments centered on the distance to medical services (primary care, specialists, and pharmacies), specifically among those living outside the Omaha Metro.

- "I have doctor's appointments that are almost an hour away from where I live due to specialized medical needs. I own a vehicle that does not run properly, so Medicaid will not transport to appointments. There is no public transit system in Bellevue, and the senior complex I live in no longer allows the apartment bus to leave the area."
- "I don't drive anymore due to poor eyesight and other disabilities. When the weather is really bad, it's not safe for me to walk to the doctor's office and places that are further than a block or two away."
- "MOBY does not offer same-day transportation if you miss your ride, so there are times when I am not able to get (from Valley) to Omaha for my dialysis treatments."
- "The bus station is too far of a distance to reach on foot and my doctor's office is 17 miles away in South Omaha. Sometimes family members are unable to transport so I have to cancel."
- "I was recently discharged from a skilled nursing facility after a bad fall in my home and now I have medical appointments 10 miles away that I'm afraid I can't get to."
- "It is hard to get to my daily cancer treatments because they are 20-25 minutes away and there is no access to medical transportation from Papillion into Omaha except the handicap van bus. The cost is too high for those on fixed incomes, and it is unreliable."

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## ACCESS TO CHILDREN'S EDUCATION:

Distance to children's education emerged as a primary theme among many parents in the 25-44 age group living in Bellevue and Papillion/LaVista who were unable to provide their own transportation or had difficulty accessing public transportation. Many cited issues with the school bus system, living outside of their child's school district, or safety concerns with their child walking or biking to school.

- "I live near Ralston and work in Northeast Omaha and Bellevue. I have to drop my last child off at school no earlier than 8, but I'm supposed to be at work at 8. If my kids had transportation to school, we'd have a lot more time together."
- "I have little to no access to good resources or educational opportunities for my child in North Omaha. My daughter's school is not in the neighborhood and I don't have a way to get her there."
- "My child rides his bike currently, but winter is coming very fast. I am not sure how I am going to get him to and from school, as it is a long distance. I am already worried about him crossing a busy road at an intersection that is a high accident area."
- "I have 4 kids, and they attend 3 different schools that are 1, 2, and 8 miles away from where we live. On top of that, I have a new job that is 12 miles away."
- "My daughter does not have a ride to school. She's too young to walk by herself, and I can't walk her because of health issues."
- "I have no working car right now. My children go to school in Bellevue, we live in Papillion, and the school bus is not an option for us."





## ACCESS TO FOOD/GROCERY STORES:

Distance to a healthy source of food was most concerning for those who did not have access to a car, lived in areas with no public transit service, or were not within walking distance to the nearest large retailer.

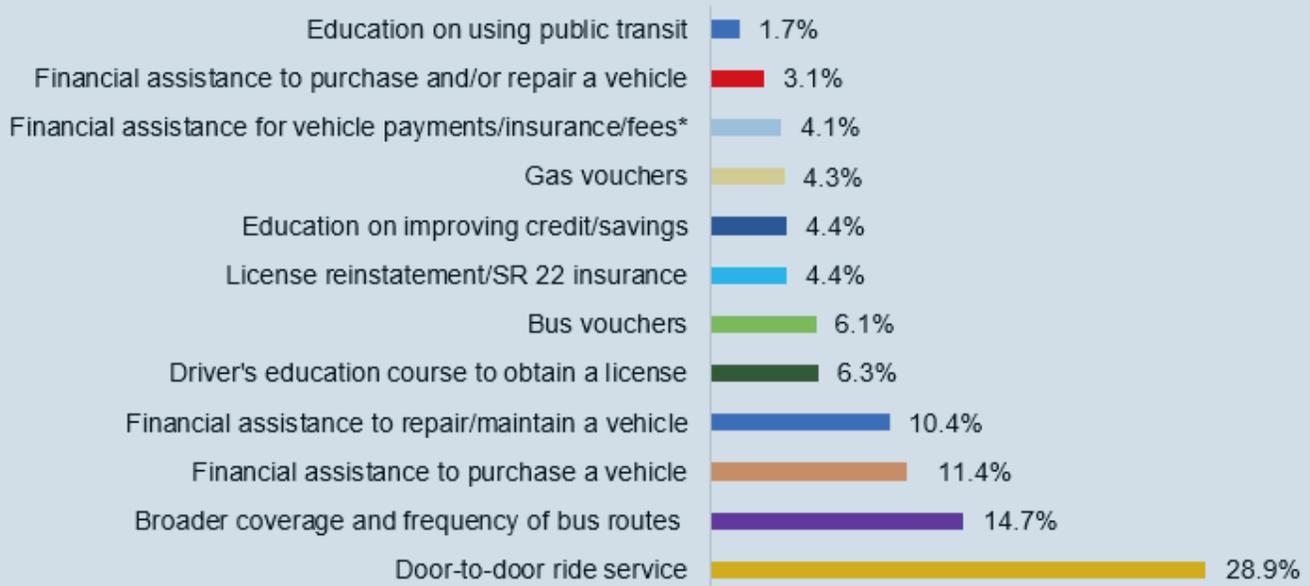
- "I do not have a car, and the bus doesn't run past 6 pm or on Sundays. These are the only times I have available to go grocery shopping, so it's difficult to get to the only store on the other side of North Omaha to buy food."
- "The healthier grocery stores I want to go to aren't located in my neighborhood (South Omaha), so I have to rely on other people to drive me 15 miles or so."
- "The grocery stores and shopping centers where I can buy decent, fresh food are too far away from the Florence area, and I have no reliable means of getting there."
- "Bennington is a small town, and all we really have here are convenience stores and fast-food restaurants. It's hard to find rides to do monthly grocery shopping when you're not connected to public transportation and further away from everything."
- "I can't afford a car due to my low Social Security check amount and I can't count on anyone to pick me up. There are no Wal Marts or Targets in Valley, and it's a struggle to find rides into Omaha to get groceries."
- "There are no buses in the Valley/Waterloo area. I find my freezer and refrigerator empty a lot because I have no rides to the store."



## TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES:

Over a quarter (28.9 percent or 202) identified door-to-door ride services as an effective resource to meet their needs. Respondents rated improvements to the public transit system second (14.7 percent or 103), followed by financial assistance to purchase a vehicle (11.4 percent or 80). The chart below represents the distribution of responses for each major qualitative theme.

**Percent of respondents who believe each type of resource will meet their transportation needs (n=700)**



\*includes car registration fees, vehicle modifications, and outstanding tickets





## RIDE SERVICES:

Almost half of respondents 65 and over (46.9 percent) requested rides to medical care and social activities. They described specific needs for flexible scheduling and transport in handicap or lift-equipped vehicles. Below are several illustrative quotations from respondents in this age group. Data suggest that access to reliable and affordable transportation for medical purposes is associated with increased utilization of health services, improved health outcomes, and a higher likelihood of primary care visits.[12]

- "Safe and reliable transportation to doctors' appointments, and that will also give rides on Sundays to social events."
- "A more affordable and dependable ride service like Med Tran or MOBY that can transport me in a wheelchair. Med Tran is sometimes late to pick me up or cancels my ride, and it is expensive to use."
- "I need someone to come to pick me up on days when the weather is bad and take me to the doctor's office, grocery stores, and shopping centers, and sometimes to go do things with my friends."
- "I use a wheelchair and need a van service that I can schedule a day ahead of time to come to west Omaha and transport me to social activities, haircuts, and doctor's appointments."
- "It would be great to schedule a driver to pick me up at home and take me to the YMCA for water therapy and to get a note from my doctor saying I qualify for MOBY."

[12] Lee, S., Wielunski, A., Spurgeon, L. and Hernandez, E. Health Outreach Partners, Rides to Wellness Community Scan Project: 2017.

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## RIDE SERVICES (CONTINUED):

Over a quarter of respondents in the 25-44 age group (25.1 percent) requested rides to school for their children. Requests were primarily related to the negative impact unreliable transportation has on their child's attendance. Data from the US Department of Education show that 13.5 percent or 1,368 students at Bellevue Public Schools were chronically absent in 2016.[13] According to a recent study on poverty and education, 76 percent of elementary and secondary teachers indicated that poor attendance was a concern for more than 25 percent of their students. Of those with attendance issues, 63 percent cited lack of transportation as a significant barrier.[14]

If poor attendance persists, the impact can undermine children's prospects for academic achievement. Another study released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that only 17 percent of students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade read proficiently by 3rd grade, and are four times more likely to drop out of high school compared to those with adequate attendance in the early years.[15]

- School busing-particularly during the colder months-would be so helpful! On the days I don't have a car, they have to miss because it's too far and unsafe to walk."
- "Free transportation to drop off or pick up my children at school. This would make it easier on my family because so often we have to decide whether to put gas in the car or pay utility bills."
- "I need help getting my son bussed to school on time during cold or bad weather. I want him to have good attendance and not get in trouble for truancy."
- "I have no car of my own due to financial difficulty. My kids attend BPS and need consistent rides to school. They don't qualify for the school bus and I am often not able to get them there on time or at all."

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[13] US Department of Education, *Civil Rights Data Collection: Chronic Absenteeism. Rate by School District. 2015-16.* <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>

[14] White, M., Hill, I., Kemp, S., MacRae, J., and Young, L. *Poverty and school attendance: Barriers and possible solutions.* 2016. <https://www.bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx>.

[15] Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters.* 2010. <https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/9013/8262/2751/AECFReporReadingGrade3.pdf>

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Respondents with developmental, neurological, mental, and visual disorders were among others who needed ride services to participate in social activities. Secondary analyses on those with a self-reported disability found that 50.2 percent did not have a driver's license and were unable to access or navigate public transit.

- 'Safe, affordable transport to more than just medical appointments. At times in the evening, not just 9-5. I have an intellectual disability and want a social life, but I have no way to get there.'
- "Rides between 72nd Giles going North so I can gain employment, make it to appointments, or classes without walking a long distance which is extremely hard for individuals with special needs like epilepsy."
- "Any type of ride service that is trustworthy and not overly expensive. I don't have a license due to mental illness and have PTSD and anxiety about riding the public bus because I get confused about what to do. Also, people have broken into my home when I'm gone too long."
- "There are not any safe and affordable transportation options for people who have autism and will never be able to drive. I need specialized transport so I can get around in the evenings and socialize. Right now, I can't get out unless a family member or caregiver takes me."



# V. KEY FINDINGS

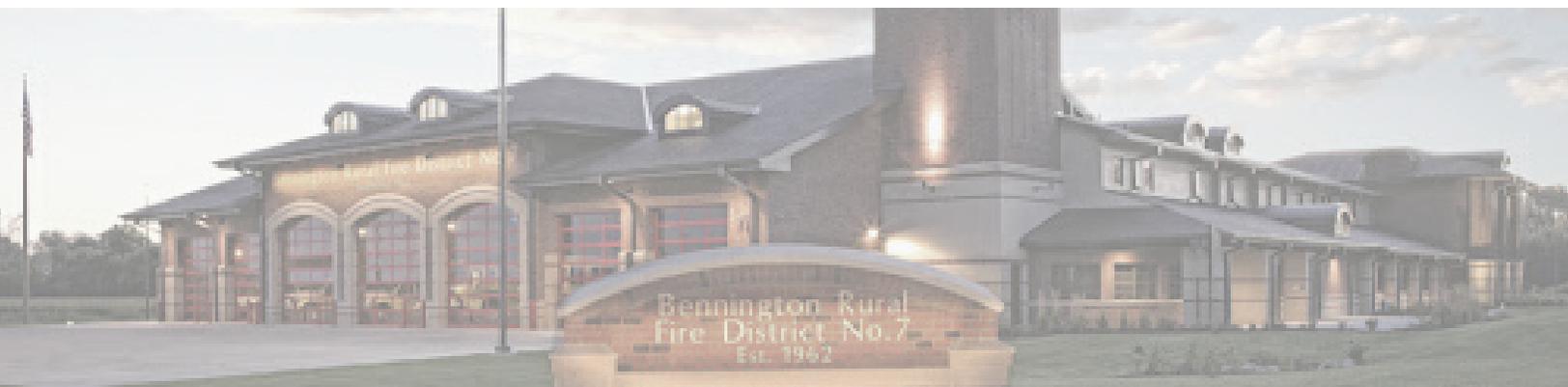
Characteristics of Respondents with the Highest Need and Primary Travel Destinations					
	Older adults (65+)	Residents in rural and suburban areas	Young adults (16-24)	Adults (25-44)	Individuals with disabilities
Medical care	X				
Employment opportunities		X	X		X
Place of employment		X	X		X
Food/grocery stores	X	X		X	
Education			X	(children)	
Social/recreational activities	X	X		X	X
Personal Care	X			X	

- Adults 65 and over were nearly three times as likely to have issues using public transit due to a physical disability (66.2 compared to 23.9 percent on average). Many reported difficulties walking to a bus stop, getting on and off a bus, and driving in adverse weather conditions. \*Some cited concerns with the cost and reliability of ADA/Paratransit services. This age group experienced the least access to medical care (28.6 percent missed a doctor’s appointment four or more times within the last year compared to 16.0 percent on average). 46.9 percent requested rides to health care appointments, social activities, and supermarkets with flexible scheduling and transport in handicap or lift-equipped vehicles.
- Respondents in rural and suburban areas (Bellevue/Offutt, Papillion/LaVista, Western Sarpy County, and Western Douglas County) were much more likely to report an inability to use public transit due to distance to the nearest bus stop (68.6 percent versus 47.9%) and no access to a household vehicle (56.1 percent versus 45.0 percent on average). Destination accessibility among respondents in these areas mirror those found in the literature. Respondents in Valley, Bennington, Elkhorn, Florence, Springfield, Bellevue, and Papillion reported a severe shortage of community resources and no access to public transit, resulting in decreased ability to travel to employment opportunities, major grocery stores, retail shopping, and social or recreational activities.

*\*MOBY ADA/Paratransit is a shared, advance reservation origin-to-destination complementary paratransit service for ADA certified residents who are unable to use Metro Transit’s conventional ADA accessible fixed-route network. MOBY service mirrors the geographic areas, days, and hours of the fixed bus routes.*

## KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED):

- 16-24 year olds were least likely to have a valid driver's license (46.3 percent versus 38.9 percent on average), and over half reported concerns related to job instability due to transportation barriers. 49.2 percent were unable to access employment, employment opportunities, and education four or more times in the last year. Of respondents with children under the age of five, 26.2 percent or 11 were unable to transport their child to daycare while they attended work or school activities. The results of the Transportation Pilot survey provide preliminary evidence that ENCAP's ride services effectively improve attendance rates at work and school and facilitate greater access to job opportunities. As a result, young adults have increased chances of maintaining employment and meeting their career and educational goals.
- Respondents age 25-44 experienced the most transportation challenges (1.54 verses 1.57 on average) and the least access to their destination (1.64 verses 1.57 on average). They also reported the most difficulty with the cost of gas (59.4 percent compared to 55.0) and purchasing a vehicle due to credit (59.1 percent compared to 48.3% on average). More respondents in this age group were unable to access grocery stores (28.9 percent compared to 22.7) and their children's' social/recreational activities. Although they were more likely to request improved public transit services than other groups, a large portion stated that rides in the evening to multiple destinations (running errands, grocery shopping, etc.) would reduce commute times and provide their family with healthier food options. The remainder—a quarter of parents in Bellevue and Papillion/LaVista—believed that transportation to school would improve their child's attendance rates.
- Individuals with developmental, mental, and visual disorders had one of the lowest rates of mobility compared to others in this study. Findings were consistent with previous research that suggest many individuals with disabilities are unable to drive and heavily reliant on family members to navigate their community. 50.2 percent of respondents with a self-reported disability did not have a driver's license, and public transportation and paratransit services were not accessible, reliable, or safe. The majority felt that rides to work would help to maintain employment, and rides to social activities in the evening and on weekends would result in stronger, more diverse social support networks and greater independence.





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## KEY FINDINGS (CONTINUED):

The two most frequently reported challenges were the inability to afford Uber, Lyft, or cab services (63.3 percent) and the cost of gas (55.0 percent). In Nebraska, gas costs an average of \$2,943, annually<sup>[16]</sup>, or 13.8 percent of the total income for a family of three living below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (\$21,330). To reduce expenses, many respondents use the public transit system. However, many of those who are transit-dependent live in areas that are not well connected. 63.8 percent of respondents in Sarpy County and 36.2 percent in Douglas County were not within walking distance of a bus stop. The most common reasons for using public transit include affordability, lack of a vehicle, and inability to drive. Many participants indicated that the current public transit system is inadequate in meeting their needs, citing these challenges in particular:

- No service in the early mornings, evenings, and Sundays.
- Inability to ride long distances (e.g., taking three hours to travel each way for work or health care).
- No service in smaller towns outside the Omaha Metro (Valley, Elkhorn, Bennington, and Florence in Douglas County; Gretna, Springfield, Papillion, and Bellevue in Sarpy County).
- Inconvenient transfers, especially when needing to make multiple stops.
- Difficulty planning trips due to discontinued routes and infrequent or inconsistent pick-up times.

### Specific challenges related to MOBY/Paratransit include:

- Drivers are frequently late to pick up.
- Rides are canceled.
- More expensive to use (\$2.50 each way).
- Curb-to-curb service creates barriers for members of the blind and vision-impaired community (i.e. difficulty navigating sidewalks).

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<sup>[16]</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology, *Housing and Transportation Affordability Index*. 2020.  
<https://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>.

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## VI. LIMITATIONS

While this study is designed to be comprehensive, certain population characteristics — such as rural areas and those who only speak a language other than English or Spanish — are slightly underrepresented in the data. The rural population in particular proved more difficult to reach due to the few service providers in Western Douglas and Sarpy County available to collect the data and the short duration the surveys were open. Having gained this insight, we intend to develop and implement more effective outreach strategies in future studies. Finally, the survey instrument developed for this study were not standardized measurement tools and have not undergone formal testing to establish validity or reliability. However, the use of a self-constructed tool was necessary due to the lack of existing surveys that would accurately measure all variables of interest.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study explored the travel behavior associated with transportation barriers and access to critical resources across various demographic characteristics. Responses successfully capture the diverse experiences of members of the low-income community, including but not limited to persons with disabilities, the visually impaired, persons at risk of homelessness, older adults, and youth aging out of foster care. Results strongly indicate that individuals with low incomes are confronted with numerous, complex, and multidimensional issues related to transportation. The availability and accessibility of transportation options affect access to employment, food, health care, and other community resources associated with daily living. Further empirical research is required to address gaps in the existing body of literature related to the efficacy of transportation initiatives in the United States, particularly those which promote increased access to services.

ENCAP will use the results of this study to explore new directions in programming that expands the transportation resources for individuals and families facing poverty. Although long-term transportation solutions are being developed through Douglas County and Sarpy County, the community needs to prioritize immediate actions to ensure that all members of the community have ready access to reliable and affordable transportation options. Without these options, populations facing poverty, and who are consistently underresourced, are not able to access the broad span of social and economic opportunities available in ENCAP's service area.

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# IX. APPENDICES

## APPENDICES A: COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS SURVEY

Within the last 12 months, did anyone in your household experience any of the following transportation and mobility challenges? (Check all that apply)	Yes	No
1. Difficulty purchasing a vehicle because of credit		
2. Difficulty maintaining or repairing a vehicle		
3. Difficulty keeping vehicle insurance coverage		
4. No access to a household vehicle		
5. No valid driver's license		
6. Unable to use public transit service due to distance to nearest bus stop		
7. Unable to use public transit service due to cost of bus pass		
8. Unable to afford Uber, Lyft, or cab services		
9. Cost of gas		
10. Unable to pay outstanding traffic tickets		
11. Unable to afford vehicle payment		
12. Ride from friends or family fell through		
13. Do not have others to rely on for a ride		
14. Work schedule changed and affected my transportation options		
15. Difficulty with access to or quality of transportation due to a physical disability		

Within the last 12 months, HOW OFTEN did transportation prevent you from getting to: (Check the response that applies to you)	None	1-3 times	4-6 times	7+ times
1. Behavioral/mental health services				
2. Medical care				
3. Employment opportunities				
4. Place of employment				
5. Education				
6. Daycare				
7. Food/grocery stores				
8. Social/recreational activities				
9. Religious/spiritual activities				
10. Personal care (hair, shopping, errands, etc.)				
11. Legal appointment (for example, getting to court date, meeting with attorney, etc.)				
12. Somewhere in the community to pay a bill				

If you have a transportation concern that is not listed above, please provide more details:

\_\_\_\_\_

What type of resource would help you meet your transportation needs (please be specific)?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

Is distance to key activities (work, school, etc.) a concern for you? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

If yes to above, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check ALL age groups included in your household.

0-5     6-13     14-17     18-24     25-44     45-64     65+

If you are not a current ENCAP client, please share the name of the agency that provided you with this survey:

\_\_\_\_\_