

VITAL SIGNS

Aging in Central Oklahoma
June 2020 Research Brief

SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG SENIORS

Older adults enrich and serve their communities in measurable and meaningful ways. Seniors age 60 and older, both working and retired, demonstrate a high degree of social capital through contributions of their time and resources, benefiting their individual well-being as well as their communities.

What is Social Capital?

Capital is a term often used to describe value in economic terms. However, *social capital* refers to relationships and the qualities that allow individuals to build trust and achieve a sense of community.¹ The role of social capital for older adults is often specifically linked to its contribution to healthy aging.² While social capital includes a variety of components, this research brief highlights volunteering, charitable giving and civic engagement among seniors.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is the act of giving time, skills and labor to a community need.

27% of residents volunteer

31st among U.S. metropolitan areas³



Volunteerism in Oklahoma City

After reaching retirement age, many seniors frequently perform valuable volunteer work in their communities. Evidence shows that volunteering later in life can provide several benefits to seniors:

- **Better life satisfaction and higher frequency of positive emotions.**⁴
- **Improved self-reported health and well-being.**⁵
- **Reduced social isolation and new friendships or networks.**⁵

Physicians also recognize the importance of tailored volunteering to support seniors' engagement and mental health.⁶ Volunteer opportunities designed for seniors can provide them with opportunities to work with peers in their generation. An example is Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Central Oklahoma, a United Way Partner Agency that engages senior volunteers to provide companionship to homebound seniors as well as tutor and mentor younger generations.

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING SENIOR VOLUNTEERS



Senior Corps

927 senior volunteers across
135 service locations⁷
 Among Senior Corps participants:
88% report less frequent feelings of isolation⁸
78% report fewer symptoms of depression⁷



Retired Senior Volunteer Program

RSVP of Central Oklahoma United Way Partner Agency

510 senior volunteers⁹
86,335 hours of service per year⁹



Sunbeam Family Services United Way Partner Agency

Senior Companion Program

\$24,000 saved per year for each family unable to afford long-term care¹⁰
85,000 hours of service from senior volunteers per year¹⁰

GIVING

Older adults demonstrate high levels of giving to charitable causes, comprising a bedrock of financial support for the nonprofit sector. Research suggests that seniors in the baby boomer generation may remain the most “giving” generation for at least another five years, as Generation X transitions into their later working years. Baby Boomers represent the largest age cohort among all givers and are the only generation indicating plans to increase their future giving. During the most recent decade, finances were tighter for many Americans following the 2007-2009 Great Recession, and overall giving declined from 2000 to 2016.¹¹



\$1,500

Oklahoma's median amount given to charitable organizations during 2017.¹²



3 out of 4

members of the oldest two generations donated to causes in 2018.¹³

**50%
HIGHER**

rate of giving for two oldest generations compared to median giving rate for younger generations.¹³

Participation in Charitable Giving by Generation (2018)¹²

Other Age Groups (Average)

Baby Boomers

Mature (75+)



\$56.2 Billion
(per year)



\$58.6 Billion
(per year)



\$29 Billion
(per year)

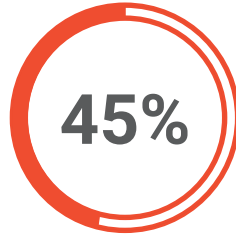
ENGAGEMENT IN VOTING

Regular participation in elections is critical to ensuring citizens are represented by their government. Higher rates of voting correlate with increased age, and seniors are one of the only age groups that consistently reach more than 50% voting participation in most elections.^{15,16}



1 out of 4

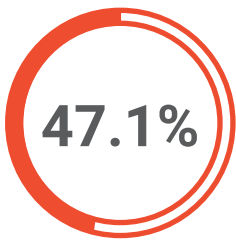
registered voters in Oklahoma are age 65 and older.



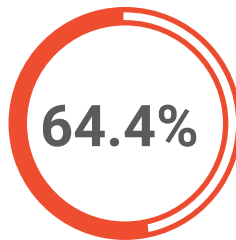
of registered voters are older than 55.¹⁵



Despite only making up 22% of population older than 18, seniors cast more than 30% of the votes in the 2018 elections.¹⁶



Overall, 47.1% of registered voters participated in Oklahoma's 2018 midterm elections.¹⁶

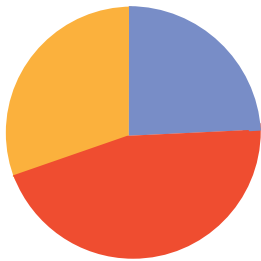


More than 64.4% of seniors with an active voter registration voted in Oklahoma's 2018 midterm elections.¹⁶



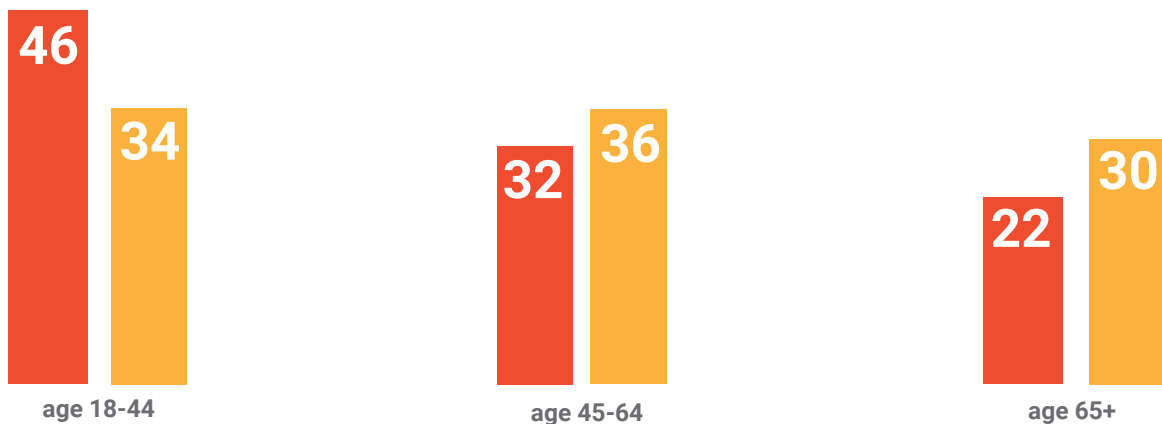
In Oklahoma County, more than 90% of citizens age 65 and older are registered to vote.^{15,17}

Percentage of registered voters by age in Oklahoma County¹⁵



- 44% are age 18-44
- 31% are age 45-64
- 25% are age 65+

Percentage of Total Citizens vs. Total Voters by Age Group¹⁶ 2018 Oklahoma Midterm Elections



- % of all citizens
- % of all voters

Interested in printed copies of our research publications or a presentation?

Contact United Way of Central Oklahoma's Community Impact Department at research@unitedwayokc.org or 405-236-8441



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An enduring community analysis of the health and human service needs in central Oklahoma.

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