

**Iowa Voting Series, Paper 5:
An Examination of Iowa Turnout Statistics Since 1982 by Sex,
Age Group, and Party**

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Abstract

This is the fifth paper in a series examining aspects of voting in Iowa. In this paper I examine Iowa's turnout in presidential and midterm elections since 1982 with a focus on sex, age group, and party. Results show that the percentage of registered voters who are women is quite similar among four of the five age groups at just above 50%. The percentage jumps to over 55% for the oldest age group. There are clear differences between the parties for each age group. Democrats generally had the highest percentage of women, Republicans the lowest, and No Party registrants between the two. The differences were greatest in the two youngest age groups and were more compressed in the next two. In the oldest group the percentage was nearly the same for Republicans and No Party registrants, while Democrats were still the highest. In terms of turnout, a general pattern of women having a higher turnout percentage in presidential elections and men a higher percentage in midterm elections was fairly common across parties and age groups. The turnout percentages for both men and women increased for each age group except the oldest. Republican men and women tended to have the highest turnout percentages regardless of age group, but were closely followed by men and women Democrats. Consistent with prior papers in the series, the turnout percentages for men and women No Party voters were clearly below that of voters of either major party.

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Updates

Unlike most academic papers I plan to update the data for this paper as elections occur. Data updates lead to changes in the text as well. Below is a list of the updates as they occurred.

- April, 2014: Initial release
- May 2015: Update to include 2014 election data
- April 2017: addition of 2016 election data; extension of data back to 1982 with significant changes to the text; format changes for several figures
- May 2019: Update to include 2018 election data and related changes to the text
- May 2021: Update to include 2020 election data and related changes to the text

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In the second paper in this series¹ I examined Iowa's turnout statistics in midterm and presidential elections since 1982, in general and by party.² In the third paper in the series I examined the turnout statistics by sex and party. In the fourth paper in the series I examined the turnout statistics by age group and party. In this paper I dig a little deeper and examine the turnout statistics by sex, age group, and party. As with the prior papers in this series my focus will be on the statistics involved rather than theorizing about the reasons for particular turnout percentages. Nevertheless, the goal of this paper, like the others in the series, is to examine aspects of voting in Iowa with an eye to future elections and to provide some background and context to discussions about Iowa voters.

Data

As with the prior papers, data for this examination were gathered from the Election Results & Statistics page of the Iowa Secretary of State's website.³ This page provides links to election results for a variety of primary and general election contests in Iowa, including those for presidential and midterm elections. The turnout statistics examined here are obtained from the Statewide Statistical Reports links.⁴ The information in these

¹ The most recent versions of all papers in the series are currently available at <http://www.profhagle.com/papers/iowa-voting-series>. (This and other links were valid as of the date this paper was posted.) Although I make references to prior papers in the series, I would like each to stand on its own. Thus, some explanatory material will be repeated from one paper to the next to provide background or context.

² When I refer to turnout in "presidential elections" or "midterm elections" it is a shorthand way of referring to turnout in that year in general, not for a particular contest. Certainly some who vote in a particular election do not do so for every contest. As noted below, the data considered here are from statewide turnout statistics not from any particular contest except when a particular race is used as an example.

³ Election results and statistics from 2000 to the present can be found at <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/results/index.html>. Results for earlier elections can be found at <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/results/archive.html>.

⁴ For example, the turnout statistics for the 2000 presidential election can be found at <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/2000StateWithLinnDemo.pdf>. On February 8, 2017, an article in the *Des Moines Register* indicated that 5,842 absentee ballots in Dallas County went unreported. The article

reports is broken out by sex and party as well as by age group. For each subgroup, the number who voted absentee is also indicated.⁵

As in the prior paper, before proceeding I need to make an additional comment about the data for this paper. The information contained in the Statewide Statistical Reports links is not entirely complete with respect to party identification. The reports contain divisions for Democrat, Republican, and No Party voters,⁶ but do not include an “Other” category as they do for the registration statistics. In addition, the 2002 Report did not contain a category for the Green Party, which was official for that election, but did for the Libertarian Party for the 2018 election. Although this was not a problem for the 1982 through 2006 elections, for 2008 and beyond it means that the grand total of registrants and voters in any particular age group cannot be achieved by simply adding the Democrats, Republicans, and No Party voters in that group. In the first paper in this series I simply added registrants in the Other category to No Party registrants. I cannot do that for this paper, however, as I have neither an exact count of such Other registrants on election day nor an indication of how many voted. Nevertheless, although this number varies from about one hundred to a few thousand registrants or voters depending on the category or election, that number is small, relatively speaking, and I will only focus on the three main political parties for this paper.

Iowa Registered Voters

I begin by repeating Figures 1a and 1b from the second paper in the series.⁷ These figures show the number of registered Iowa voters and the turnout percentage in general elections from 1982 to 2018. This period covers 10 presidential elections and 10 midterm elections. The height of the bars represents the total number of registered voters. Except for slight declines in the late 1980s when Iowa was losing population, and a few more for midterm elections after voter list maintenance (2002, 2014, and 2018), the number of registered voters in Iowa has slowly increased in the last 38 years.⁸

seems to indicate that the missing ballots did not affect turnout statistics, only vote totals in the various races.

⁵ Without getting into the specifics, “absentee” voting in Iowa takes several forms, including traditional mail-in absentee voting plus early voting at satellite stations and at the offices of the county Auditors.

⁶ “No Party” is what Iowa calls its independents. It seems a little odd to refer to unaffiliated No Party voters as a party. In earlier versions of some papers in the series I referred to the party registration choices as “categories.” That proved somewhat cumbersome, so I may sometimes use “party” to include No Party voters.

⁷ It is a bit inconvenient for readers, but to make the figures larger I will put them at the end of the paper rather than within the text.

⁸ See the first paper in the series for more details. Interestingly, although 2012 was also a post-census adjustment year, the registration losses earlier in the year were made up by the time of the general election in November. As I mentioned in the fourth paper, this is an example how the resources available for get out the vote efforts in midterm (2002) versus presidential (2012) election years can make a difference.

Figure 1b shows that the turnout percentage for the elections has been relatively steady, particularly after 1994, though there is a clear difference between presidential and midterm years. The turnout in presidential elections has varied between 71.16% (2016) and 86.01% (1992). Although the turnout for midterm elections has also varied within a similar range of about 15 points (a low of 52.71% in 2006 and a high of 67.48% in 1982), that range is substantially below the range for presidential elections. The average turnout in presidential years was 75.63%, but only 58.55% in midterm years. Those who follow politics are well aware of the much lower turnout for midterm elections, but it is worth knowing just how substantial the difference is. This is particularly true in a state that is fairly evenly balanced between the two major parties. More specifically, knowing who turns out, especially in midterm elections, can aid parties and candidates in their get out the vote (GOTV) efforts.

The second paper in the series then examined turnout differences by party and found, in brief, that turnout for Republicans was consistently a few percentage points higher than that of Democrats for both midterm and presidential elections. In addition, turnout for both parties was several points lower in midterm elections. In contrast, turnout for No Party voters was much lower than either Democrats or Republicans, particularly in midterm elections.

The third paper examined registration and turnout differences by sex and party and found that women outnumbered men as registered voters in all 20 elections examined. By party, there were clearly more women than men registered as Democrat or No Party for the entire period. The sex difference for Republican registrations was much smaller, with women ahead through 2002 and men taking a lead in 2004 and beyond. As for turnout, women had a higher turnout percentage than men in all 10 presidential elections regardless of party. For midterm elections the turnout percentages of men and women were much closer and were mixed to varying degrees among the three parties.

In the fourth paper I looked at registration and turnout statistics for the five age groups for which turnout statistics are reported (18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, and 65 & Over) along with party differences. The data confirmed conventional wisdom that older registrants are more likely to vote. In addition, the differences in turnout between presidential and midterm election years were reduced as voters aged. For the most part, party differences shown in prior papers were evident across age groups. More specifically, No Party voters had consistently lower turnout than Democrats or Republicans, and Republican turnout was usually a bit higher than that of Democrats.

As I mentioned in the third paper, it is worth noting that there are different ways of calculating turnout percentage. Some use as the baseline the voting age population. Others use the number of those who are eligible to vote (i.e., not counting those who have lost their voting rights). For present purposes I use the number registered to vote.

How many Iowans are not registered, regardless of eligibility, is a separate matter.⁹ I am also not considering how Iowa compares to other states in terms of turnout.

Iowa Registered Voters by Sex, Age Group, and Party

Figures 1a and 1b show the overall voter registration numbers and turnout percentages for Iowa. These figures were discussed in prior papers and I include them here for comparison with the data in this examination.

Figure 2 breaks out those numbers by sex and age group as of the 20 election days included in the period. Each line represents the percentage of women in the indicated age group of registered voters. It is somewhat interesting that the results are as unremarkable as they are. There was little variation among the four youngest age groups as all stayed within a narrow range a few percentage points above 50% (with one exception). That women in the 65 & Over group were a few percentage points above the other groups is not surprising given normal estimates of life expectancy (i.e., women live longer than men on average). One interesting point to note is the downward trend for the 18-24 group that has occurred since 2004. Less pronounced is a similar downward trend for the 25-34 group since 2006. It is also interesting to note that the occasional increases for one election followed by a decrease in the next (1984 for the 50-64 group, 2006 for the 25-34 group, and 1994, 2004, and 2012 for the 18-24 group) did not all occur in presidential elections when outreach on “women’s issues” might be emphasized more heavily. Finally, notice the general downward trend for the 65 & Over group since the 2000 election. Keep in mind that these are all percentages, so it is not necessarily a matter of fewer women in these age groups, but rather more men or a combination of the two possibilities.

Figure 3 is divided into five parts, one for each age group. Each of the parts breaks out by party the percentage of women in that age group of registered voters. Each figure has the same scale on the vertical axis to make comparisons a bit easier.

In Figure 3a we see a pattern for the 18-24 group that will be essentially repeated for the next age group as well. There was a clear separation in the percentage of women registered for each of the three parties. It is not surprising that women had the highest percentage among Democrats, varying only slightly in the 20 elections between a low of 53.79% and a high of 60.30%. The line for Republican women was below 50% the entire period, but with about the same amount of variation (low of 40.48%, high of 47.36%).

⁹ Clearly the turnout efforts of campaigns focus on registering people to vote as well as getting them to cast a ballot. Nevertheless, those already registered are likely to be more interested in the political process and therefore more likely to vote, on average, than those who are not yet registered. Identifying and registering those who are eligible is an additional process that requires treatment separate from the focus of this paper.

Note that the low for Democrats came at the beginning of the period and the high at the end, while the opposite was the case for Republicans. The line for No Party women lies between the other two and most closely reflects the overall percentage for this age group. The percentage of women No Party voters hovered near or above 52% through 2004, but declined in all but one election since then to just under 50% for the last four elections.

Relative to the percentages in 2012, the percentage of women decreased for all three parties in 2014. The decrease was smallest for Republicans and was about half a percentage point for both Democrats and No Party voters. Aside from the fact that the decrease for No Party women voters put men in the majority, the much larger number of No Party voters in this group was what pulled the 18-24 group as a whole below the 50% mark for women.¹⁰ The decrease of women voters continued for Republicans and No Party voters for 2016, but the percentage of women Democrats increased by 1.62%, and increased again by 2.09% for 2018. The same trends continued for 2020. Since about 2006 the percentage of women Democrats has generally increased (though with ups and downs along the way), but the trend for both Republican and No Party voters shows a decrease in the percentage of women.

In Figure 3b we see that for the 25-34 group the lines for Democrat and No Party are a bit higher while that for Republican stays about the same. The percentage of women Republicans was closer to the other two parties at the start of the period, but steadily decreased over the next 15 or so years. This may be the result of the generational change. Women Republicans in the 18-24 group experienced a sharp decrease in their percentage in the late-1980s to early 1990s and about seven years later we see this decrease start in the 25-34 group.

For the 35-49 group (Figure 3c) the lines are similar to those of the prior two age groups, though the three parties start out even closer together. Republican women begin the period above 50% and with a higher percentage than No Party women. That quickly changed and the percentage of Republican women slowly and steadily decreased throughout the period from a high of 51.03% to a low of just below 46%. In contrast, the percentage of women Democrats steadily increased from a low of 52.93% to a high of 57.66% in 2020 (with a few very slight decreases along the way). No Party women in this age group generally increased their percentage from the start of the period until 2004. From then until the end of the period their percentage decreased very slowly. The sharp drop in the percentage of No Party women for the 2000 election seems odd. According to the data, the number of No Party women stayed about the same for the 1998, 2000, and 2002 elections, but the number of No Party men increased by about

¹⁰ Figures 3a-e of the fourth paper in the series show the number of Iowa registered voters by party and age group.

11,000 for the 2000 election (thus decreasing the percentage of women) and then decreased by almost the exact amount for 2002.

In Figure 3c the three lines started to take on a funnel shape and that shape is even clearer in Figure 3d for the 50-64 age group. For this group, all three parties start above 52% and Republican women actually have the highest percentage at 52.34%, though that was only slightly above Democrats (52.31%) and No Party women (52.25%). The lines continued to mix over the next two elections before beginning to separate. Despite the separation, Republican women still had a higher percentage than No Party women through the 1994 election. From 1996 on we see the same pattern as in the prior age group in that the percentage for Republican women steadily decreased, Democrat women steadily increased, and No Party women remained fairly steady.

The biggest difference among the five age groups appears in Figure 3e with those in the 65 & Over group. The first thing to notice is that the percentages for each of the three parties were higher than for those same parties in any of the other age groups. This is as expected given that women have a longer life expectancy on average than men. The second thing to notice is that at the beginning of the period the three lines were not as close together as for the 50-64 group. Although the percentages for the Republican and No Party women were nearly equal in 1982 (58.92% and 58.95%, respectively), women Democrats were lower at 56.73%. The three lines eventually converged and mixed a bit through the 1996 election. At that point Democrat women were at 59.27% and they stayed within 0.25% of that value for the rest of the period. In contrast, although the percentages for both Republican and No Party women began a slow decline from the mid-1990s through the end of the period, they were nearly equal and mixed several times until the 2008 election when No Party women had a higher percentage and maintained it through the rest of the period. Interestingly, both Republican and No Party percentages decreased over the period from just under 59% in 1982 to below 52% in 2020.

Iowa Voter Turnout by Sex, Age Group, and Party

Having briefly looked at Iowa registration statistics for the various divisions I now consider turnout statistics. Figure 4 looks at the turnout percentage for men and women for the last 20 general elections. Figure 4 is a bit busy, but plotting the lines for each age group divided by sex on the same figure allows for an easier comparison.

Consistent with the results from prior papers, we see that the youngest voters, men and women in the 18-24 group, had the lowest turnout percentages in nearly every election. The turnout percentage increased for each older group until the 65 & Over group where there is more of a mix with the 50-64 group. We also see a fairly clear separation of the two youngest groups (18-24 and 25-34) from the 35-49 group. There is also a separation,

though not as large, of the 35-49 group from the two oldest groups (50-64 and 65 & Over).

For the two youngest groups we see a clear separation of men and women in the 18-24 group from those in the 25-34 group through the 2002 election. During this period both men and women in the 25-34 group had higher turnout percentages than both men and women in the 18-24 group. After 2002, the separation continues for the midterm elections except for 2018 when women in the 18-24 group had a higher turnout percentage than men in the 25-34 group. In the presidential elections women in the 18-24 group had a higher turnout percentage than men in the 25-34 group for the 2004 election and a higher turnout percentage than both men and women in the older group for the next four presidential elections (2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020), though the difference was a percentage point or less each time. One factor explaining this is likely the emphasis Democrats put on college campuses, particularly in 2008. I will explore this more when discussing Figure 5 below.

For the two oldest groups there is a fair amount of overlap. In the fourth paper in this series we saw that the 50-64 group generally had a higher turnout in presidential elections than the 65 & Over group, but the latter had higher turnout in midterm elections. Separating the turnout for men and women for these two age groups shows more complexity. In nine of the 10 midterm elections and six of the 10 presidential elections men in the 65 & Over group had the highest turnout percentage. The midterm exception was in 1982 when both men and women in the 50-54 group had a slightly higher percentage. Of the four presidential elections when men in the 65 & Over group did not have the highest turnout percentage women in the 50-64 group had a higher percentage three times (1992, 2004, and 2008) and men in that group had the higher percentage three times (1984, 1992, and 2004).

Women in the 65 & Over group most frequently had the lowest turnout percentage of these two oldest age groups. They had the lowest percentage in five of the 10 midterm elections and in six of the 10 presidential elections. The exceptions were when they had a higher percentage than women in the 50-64 group eight times (1988, 1998, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020) and had a higher percentage than men in the 50-64 group eight times (1988, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020). Note that women in the 65 & Over group had a higher turnout percentage than both men and women in the 50-64 group in five of the last six elections. It will be interesting to see if the increased turnout on the part of this group continues.

Within each of these two oldest groups, men and women in the 50-64 group continue the pattern seen in younger groups of women generally having a higher turnout percentage in presidential years but lower in midterm years. Contrary to this pattern, for the 65 & Over group men had a clearly higher turnout percentage in all 20 elections.

Figure 5 is divided into five parts, one for each age group. Each of the five parts shows the turnout percentage of men and women in that age group broken out by party. As with prior divided figures, the scale on the vertical axis is the same for each of the parts to make comparisons between them a bit easier.

Figure 5a shows the turnout percentage for those in the 18-24 group. The pattern here is not unexpected. Men and women No Party voters had the lowest turnout percentages of the three parties in all 20 elections. No Party women came closest to having a higher turnout percentage than another subgroup in 2012 when they had their highest turnout, but were still 0.11% behind Democrat men (55.07% versus 55.18%). Between No Party men and women, the pattern of women having a higher turnout in presidential elections holds with women having the higher percentage in nine of the 10 elections (the exception being 1988). The pattern does not hold for the midterm elections with men having the higher turnout percentage only four of the 10 elections.

Democrats and Republicans in this age group tend to fit the general pattern of Republicans with higher turnout percentages and with women higher than men in presidential elections and men higher in midterms, but there are exceptions. Although Republican women had the highest turnout percentage in seven of the 10 presidential years, Democrat women beat them in 1988, 1992, and 2008. There were distinctive factors for each of these three elections. Prior figures, including those in previous papers,¹¹ have shown that 1988 was a particularly low turnout election for younger voters. That allowed both men and women Democrats to have a higher turnout percentage than Republican women. In contrast, we have also seen that turnout was much higher for all the parties in 1992. Although Republican women had their third highest turnout in 1992 at 69.24%, women Democrats had their second highest that same year at 70.92%. The emphasis of Democrats on the youth vote in 2008 makes it understandable that women in this category once again had a higher turnout percentage than Republican women, though the difference was less than a point (67.42% versus 66.89%).

The last thing to mention for Figure 5a is the much smaller drop in the midterm turnout for men and women of all three parties in 2018. For men and women Democrats and women Republicans the 2018 percentage was their highest midterm percentage for the period. For men Republicans and men and women No Party voters it was their second highest, with their 1982 percentages slightly higher for all three groups. The record percentages for men and women Democrats also allowed both groups to be above men and women Republicans for the first time since 1988.

Moving to Figure 5b and the 25-34 group we see that all the lines have shifted up by several percentage points. Even so, there is still a fairly clear separation between the No

¹¹ See Figure 4 of this paper and Figures 5 and 6 of the fourth paper in the series.

Party lines and those for men and women in the two major parties. We also see a bit more separation between the lines in this figure compared to the bunching evident in Figure 5a. The separation occurs at both the party and sex levels.

Prior papers in the series showed that Republicans tended to have higher turnout percentages than Democrats and we begin to see that difference here, particularly in midterm elections where both Republican men and women had higher turnout percentages than men and women Democrats in all but 2018 when women Democrats had the highest turnout percentage. (It is hard to see on the chart, but women Democrats' percentage was 50.02% to the 49.23% of women Republicans.) The only intersections of the lines for presidential elections occur for 1988, 2004, and 2008. In fact, 1988 and 2008 were the only presidential elections in which women Republicans did not have the highest turnout percentage for this age group, trailing women Democrats by about half a percentage point in both elections.

We also see a separation by sex within each of the two major parties for this age group. Republican women had higher turnout percentages than men of their party in all 20 elections. Democrat women had a higher percentage than the men in their party in 19 of the 20 elections, the lone exception was 1986 where men were 0.01% higher. We have seen that men often have higher turnout percentages in midterm elections, but that did not occur for the two major parties for this age group. For both Republicans and Democrats, women had a turnout percentage that averaged over 2% higher in the midterms. No Party women in this age group also averaged a higher turnout percentage than the men, but the difference was just over 1%.

One last item to note in Figure 5b is how much higher the turnout was for all three parties in the 1982 to 1992 period. Turnout percentages for this age group were higher than the younger age group for all the elections, but even more so in this 10-year period. There was an indication of this in Figure 4, but now we can see that the increased turnout occurred for all three parties. Note also that after this period of higher turnout, particularly for the 1984 and 1992 elections, turnout generally dropped and became a more regular pattern between the midterm and presidential elections.

Figure 5c shows the turnout percentages for the 35-49 age group. Here again we see a shift upwards for all three parties. The pattern of No Party voters having lower turnout percentages continues with a clear separation of the lines from those of the two major parties. For the No Party voters we also see the emergence of the pattern of women having higher turnout percentages in presidential years and men having higher percentages in midterm years. Although No Party women had a slightly higher turnout percentage in 1982 and 1986, No Party men had a higher turnout percentage in the remaining eight midterms. Republicans had higher turnout percentages than Democrats in all but 1988 and 2008 where women Democrats had a slightly higher turnout percentages than Republican men.

Within the major parties women Democrats had higher turnout percentages than their male counterparts in all but the 1986 and 1990 elections. On average, women Democrats had a 3.18% higher turnout in the presidential elections and only 1.09% more in the midterms. For Republicans, women had a higher turnout percentage in all but 2010, 2014, and 2018 where the differences were only 0.21%, 0.28%, and 0.35% respectively. On average, women Republicans had a 1.98% higher turnout in the presidential elections and only 0.71% more in the midterms.

Notice also for this figure that the lines for Democrats and Republicans of both sexes are beginning to “smooth out.” By this I mean that the drop in turnout percentage for midterms is beginning to be less dramatic. Compare the lines for Democrats and Republicans here with those of the No Party voters for this age group, as well as the lines for all the parties in Figures 5a and 5b. For the two younger age groups, even though Democrats and Republicans had higher turnout percentages than No Party voters, all three parties had rather dramatic drops in turnout percentage for midterm elections.

In Figure 5d, the 50-64 age group continues to show increased turnout percentages for all the lines. The lines are all above 50% for every election, and all presidential years are above 70% with the lone exception of No Party men in 2016. No Party voters still lag behind Democrats and Republicans. Republicans continue to have a higher turnout percentage than Democrats except for 2008 where women Democrats had a slightly higher percentage (0.07%) than Republican men.

Within each party, we see for No Party voters a continuation of the pattern of women having a higher turnout percentage in presidential years, but men in midterms. No Party men had a higher turnout percentage than women in eight of the 10 midterm elections and averaged 1.88% higher over the 10 elections. In contrast, No Party women led men in all 10 presidential elections and averaged 1.39% higher turnout. The average midterm turnout for men and women Republicans was nearly equal (81.86% versus 81.85%, respectively), but in the presidential elections Republican women had a 1.13% advantage. Similar differences occurred for men and women Democrats, but a turnout surge by women Democrats in 2018 pushed their midterm average to 75.49%, which is 0.03% above that of Democrat men. In presidential elections women Democrats averaged 1.77% higher than their male counterparts.

Finally, in Figure 5e we see that some of the prior patterns no longer hold for those in the 65 & Over age group. Consistent with the findings of the fourth paper in the series, the lines do not all move up for this age group. No Party voters still lag behind Democrats and Republicans, but the lines for the two major parties are more mixed. Republican men had the highest turnout percentage in all 20 elections with male

Democrats just behind them except for 1994 and until they dropped below the turnout percentage for Republican women in 2010 through 2016.

Within the parties, it is interesting to see that men had higher turnout percentages than their female counterparts for all three parties in all 20 elections and the gaps were some of the largest we have seen for any of the age groups. This is particularly so in the midterm elections where the average gap in turnout percentage between men and women was 4.70% for Democrats, 5.35% for Republicans, and 7.30% for No Party voters. In addition, we do not see the usual compression in midterm elections. For the other age groups the intra-party difference between men and women tended to be smaller in midterm than presidential years, but here the reverse is generally true.

Concluding Comments

For the most part, the results shown in this paper follow from what we saw in the prior papers in the series. From the results here it appears that party and age are more determinative of turnout percentages than sex. Even so, there are certain patterns in the registration and turnout percentages between men and women that generally remain regardless of party and age.

Regarding registration, it was no surprise that more women are registered than men for all age groups. What was a bit surprising was how close the percentage of women registrants was for the lower four age groups. For the 65 & Over group the percentage of women registrants was substantially higher, but this is likely explained by the higher life expectancy of women. It is also not surprising to see that Democrats have a higher percentage of women than Republicans (with No Party in between). This helps to explain the oft mentioned “gender gap” between the two major parties. The sex difference between the two major parties is largest in the two youngest age groups, compresses in the next two age groups, and is at its smallest for the 65 & Over group (though Democrats still have the highest percentage of women).

Regarding turnout percentages, a general pattern that is common across parties and four of the five age groups is that women have higher turnout percentages than men in presidential elections, but often lower in midterm elections. The exception is the 65 & Over group where men in all three parties and for all 20 elections had a higher turnout percentage. As noted previously, the greater life expectancy of women may account for the higher percentage of women registrants in the 65 & Over group. Along similar lines, if we assume that with greater age comes increased infirmity that makes it more difficult to get to the polls or cast a ballot, it is not particularly surprising that we might see women fall slightly behind men in terms of turnout percentage for this age group. Counties often have more detailed information on the exact age of those casting ballots, so this is a hypothesis that could be checked empirically.

At the other end of the age range, it is worth noting the particularly low turnout of No Party voters as shown in Figure 5a. In the midterm election of 1998 the turnout percentage for both men and women was barely over 12% and was under 20% in every midterm election from 1994 to 2014. That means fewer than one in five No Party voters in this age group cast a midterm ballot during that period. Although that number is distressing for those who work to increase turnout among younger voters it may not be quite as bad as it seems. Both major parties, but particularly Democrats, work hard to register voters on college campuses. Of course, college students tend to leave after a few years. Whether the move is in-state or to another state, the student's voter registration might not be immediately updated depending on the practices of the new location or if the former student even reregisters elsewhere. Thus, although it will still be true that younger voters have lower turnout rates than older voters, the percentages may undercount the actual turnout of those in that age group.

Finally, to simplify things a bit the emphasis here has been on turnout percentages, but we must remember that we also have to consider the registration numbers for each group as well. The 18-24 age group provides a good example of this. Although the turnout percentage of No Party voters in the 18-24 group was about half that of either major party, from the fourth paper in the series we saw that No Party registrants in this age group are twice that for either Democrats or Republicans. Thus, for example, in 2012 the number of No Party voters in the 18-24 group was more than the combined total for Democrats and Republicans (134,052 versus 131,431). Accordingly, political parties and campaigns will need to make strategic decisions as to where their resources can have the greatest effect based on a balance between turning out the base and tapping into low-turnout voters.

Figure 1a: Turnout numbers for Iowa Registered Voters in Elections Since 1982

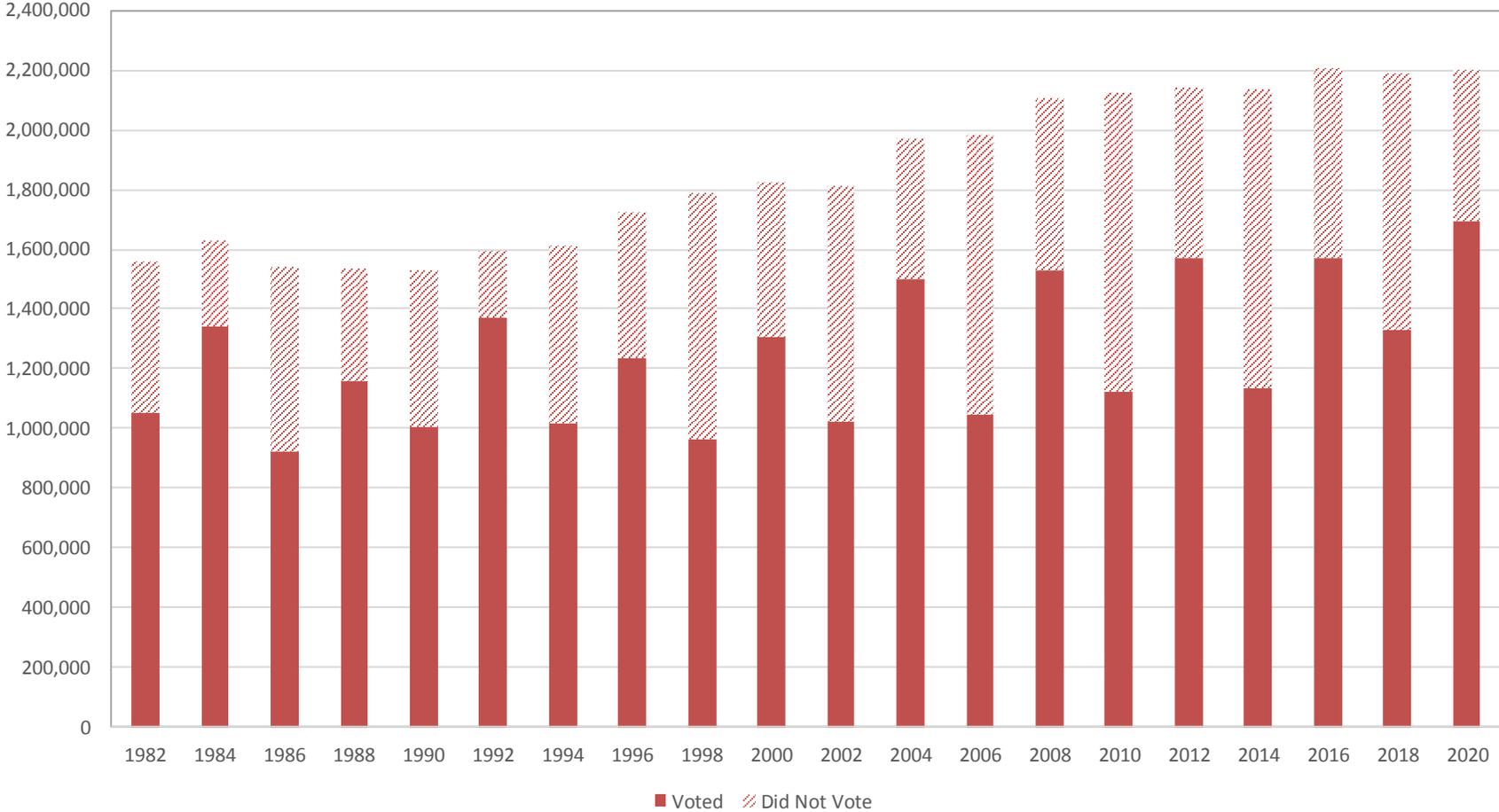


Figure 1b: Turnout Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters in Elections Since 1982

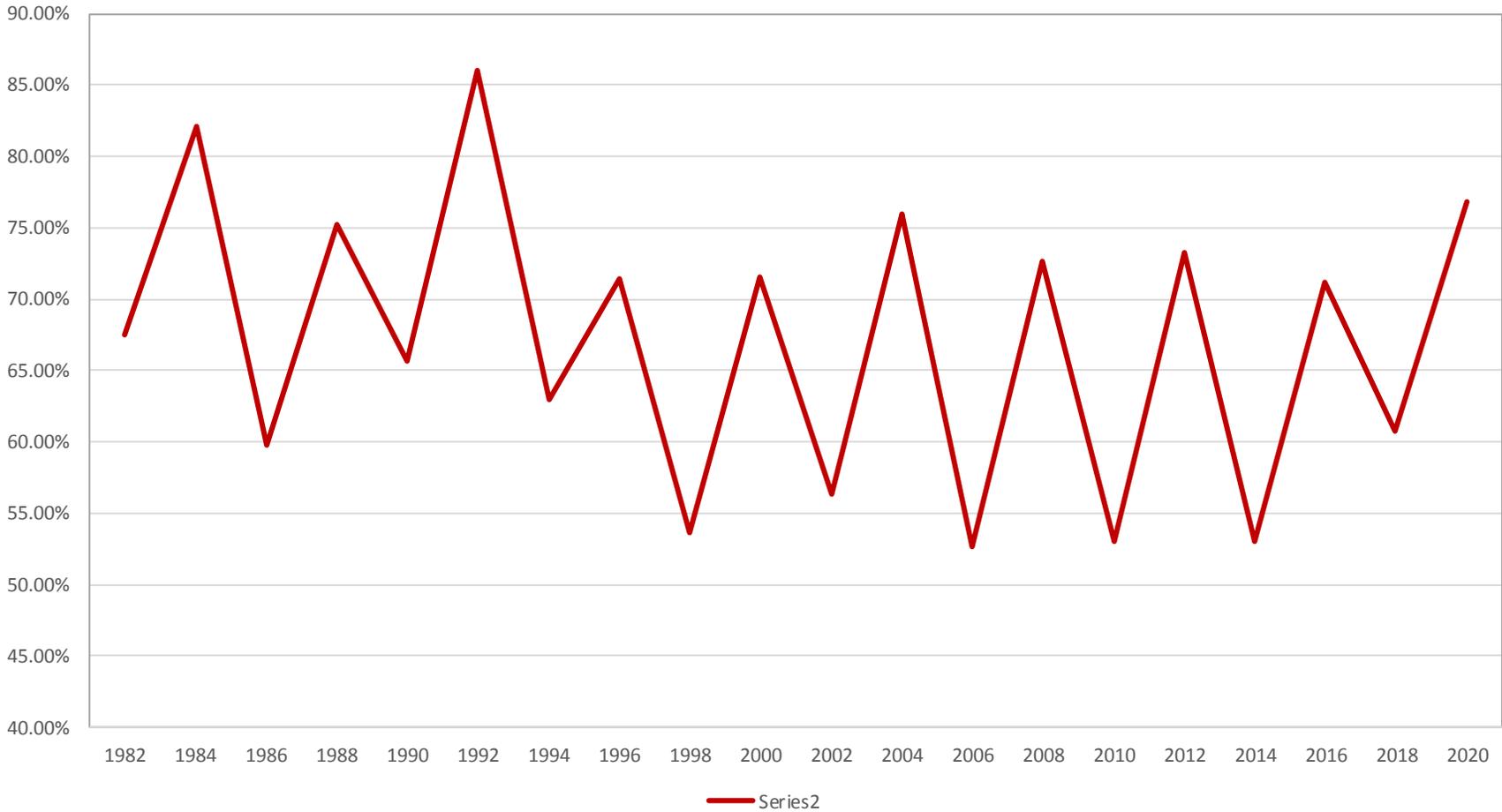


Figure 2: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women by Age Group in Election Years Since 1982

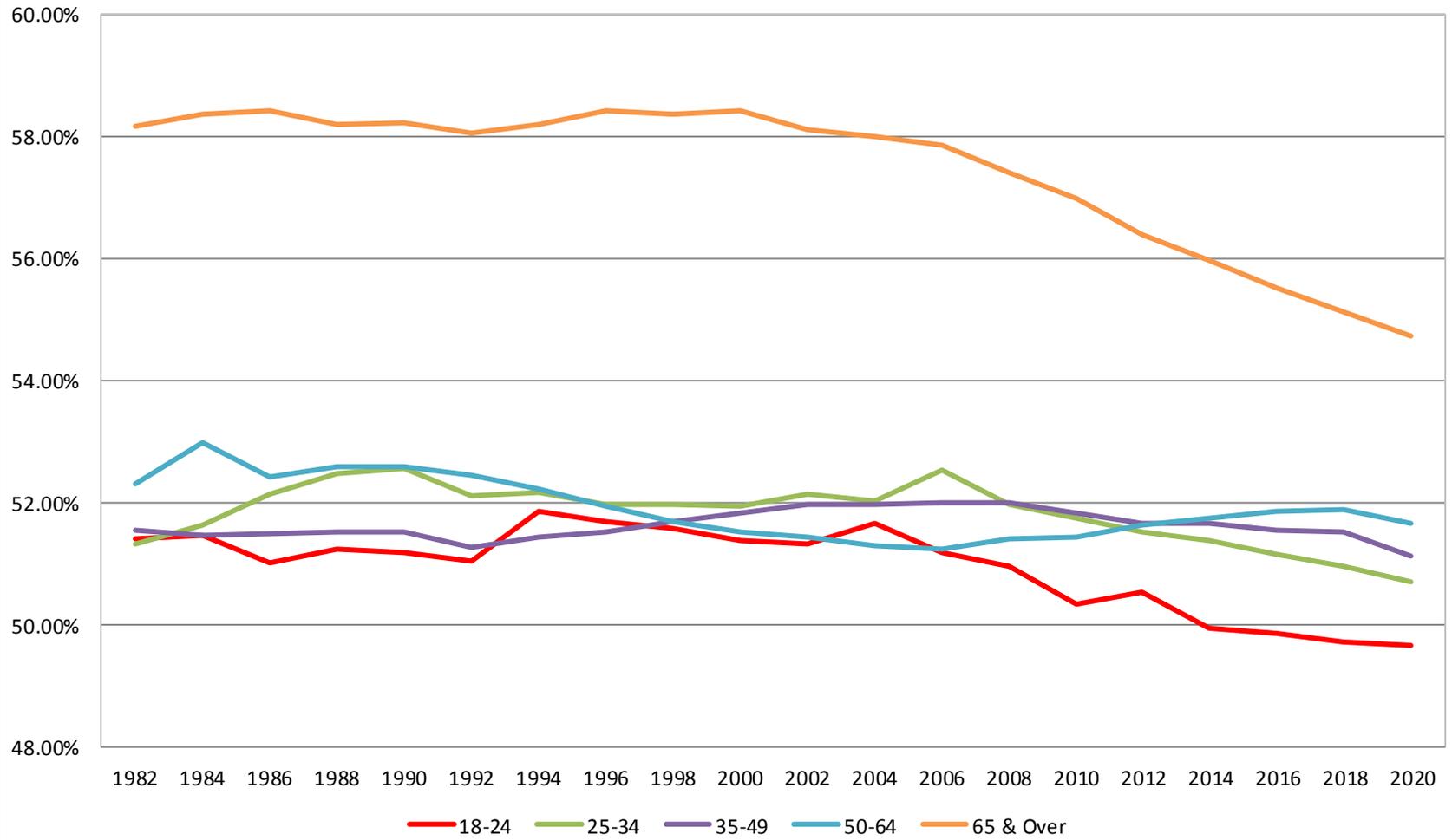


Figure 3a: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women in Age Group 18-24 for Election Years Since 1982 by Party

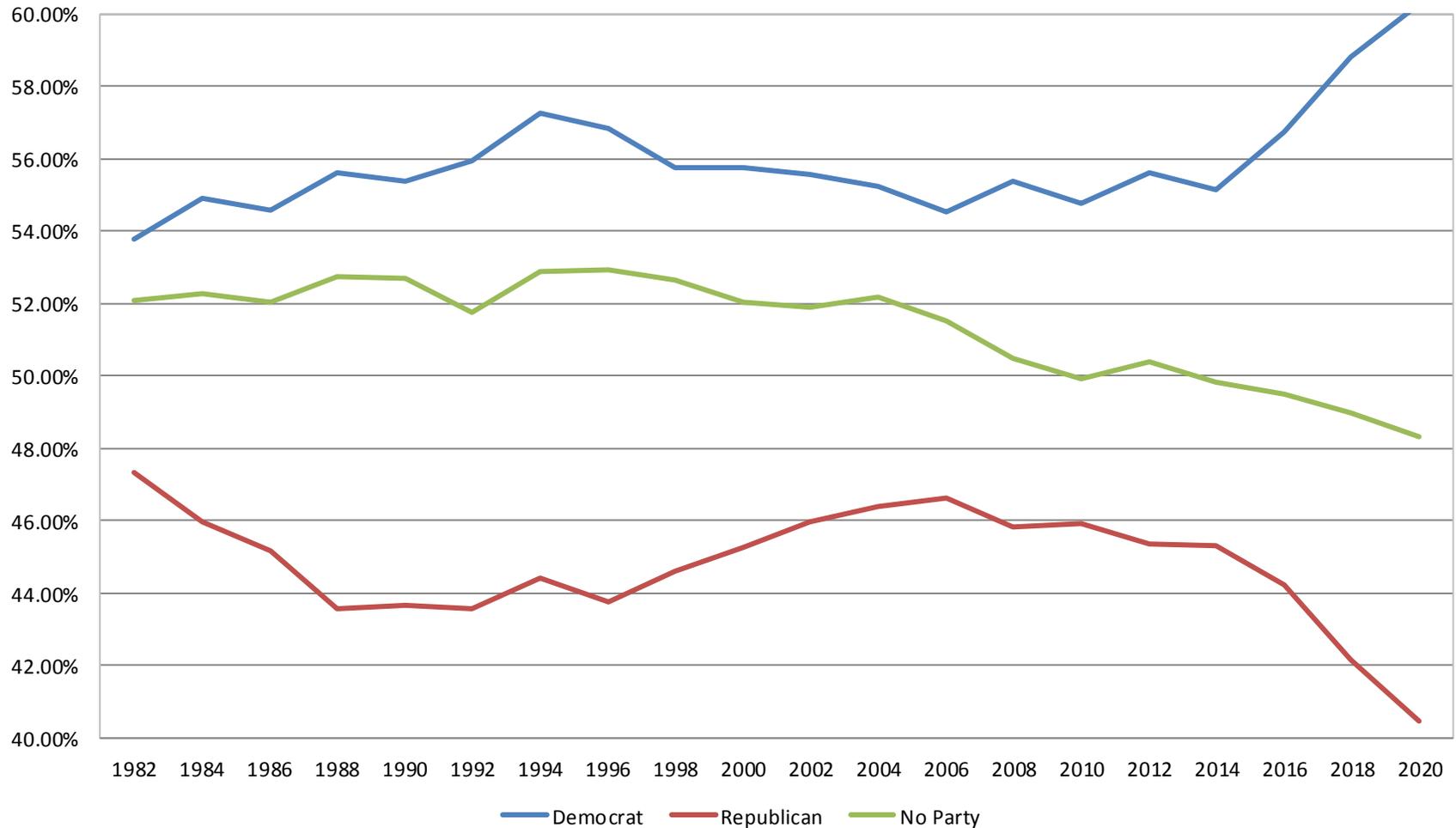


Figure 3b: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women in Age Group 25-34 for Election Years Since 1982 by Party

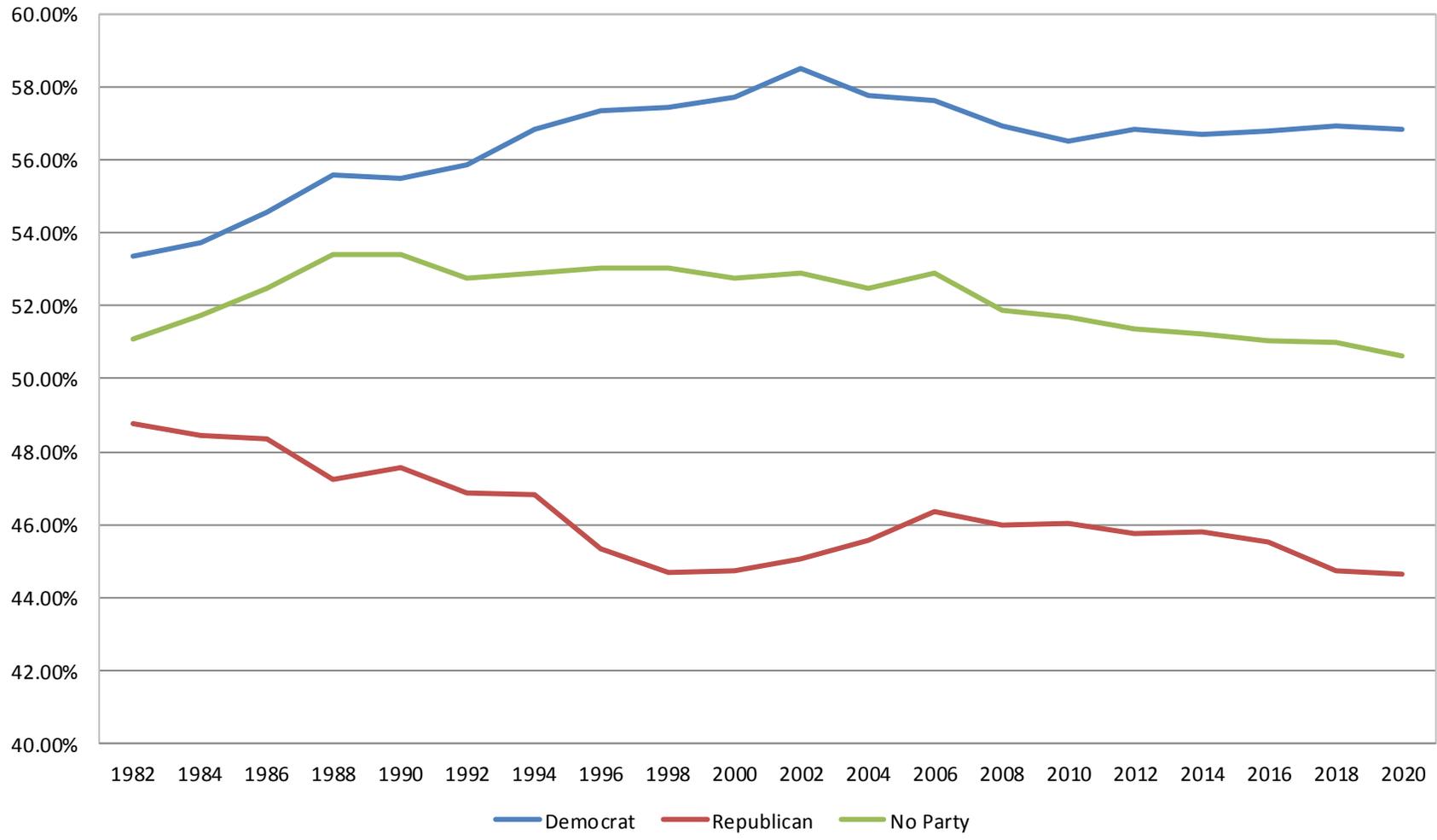


Figure 3c: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women in Age Group 35-49 for Election Years Since 1982 by Party

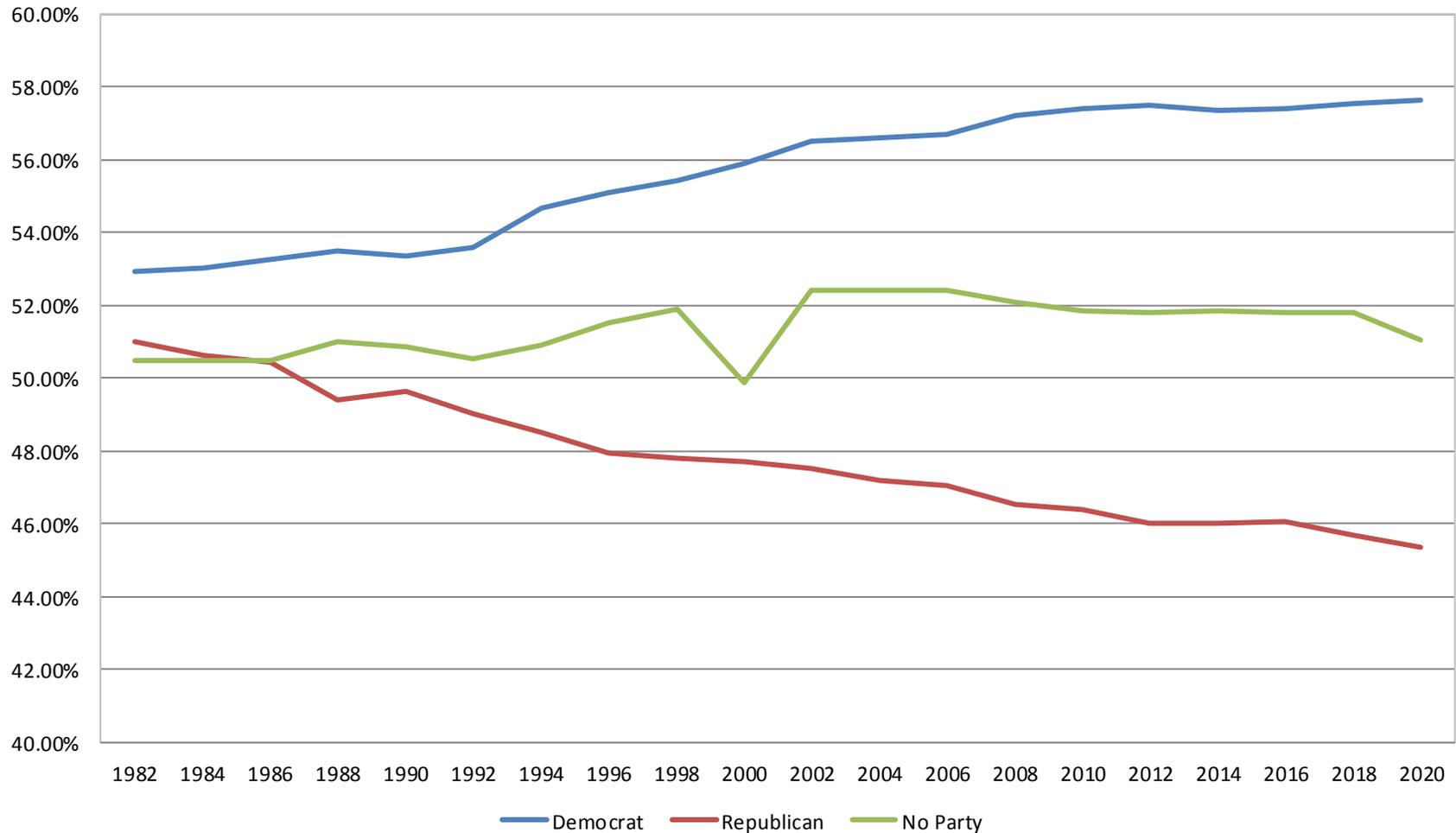


Figure 3d: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women in Age Group 50-64 for Election Years Since 1982 by Party

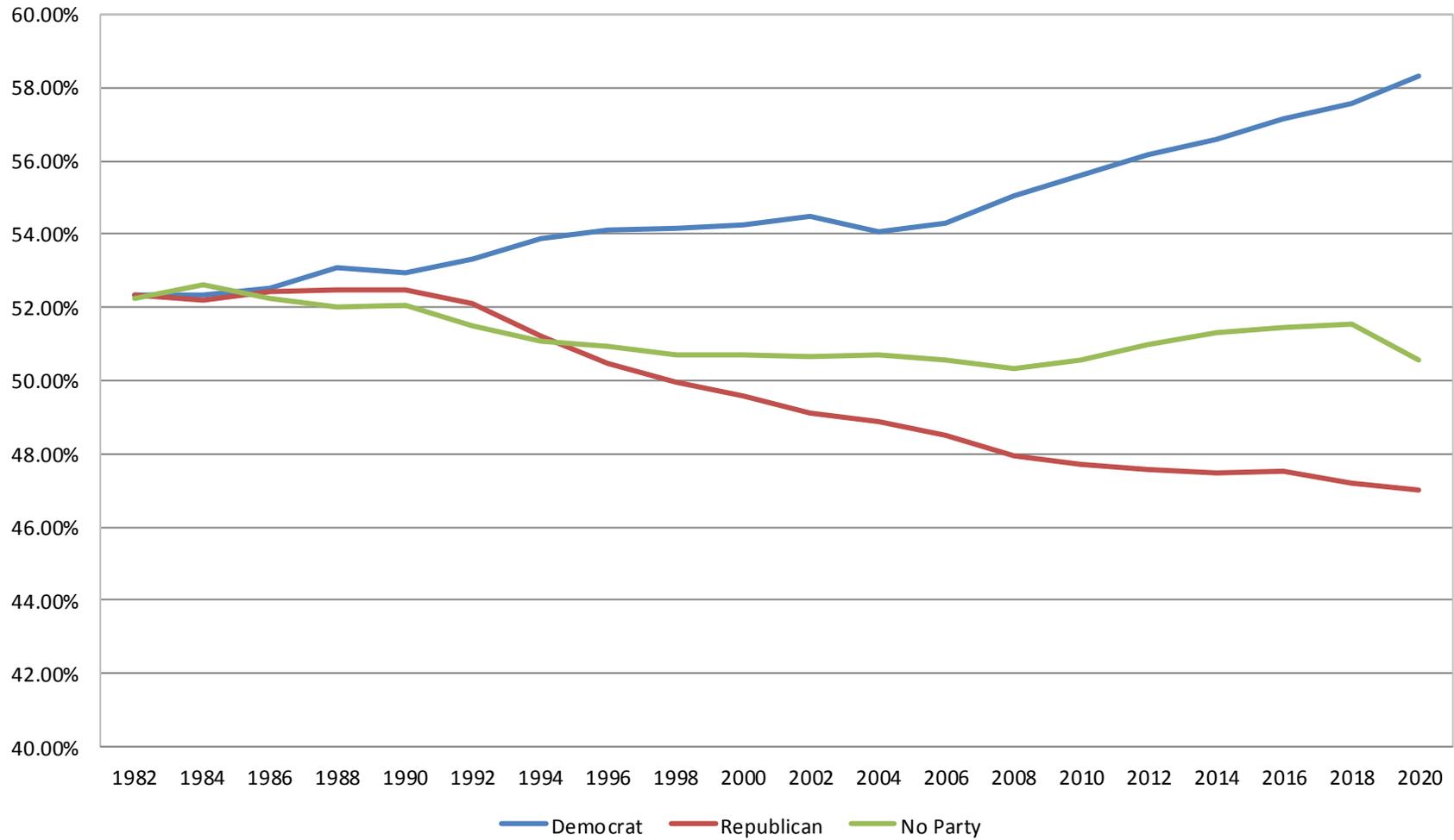


Figure 3e: Percentage of Iowa Registered Voters Who Are Women in Age Group 65 & Over for Election Years Since 1982 by Party

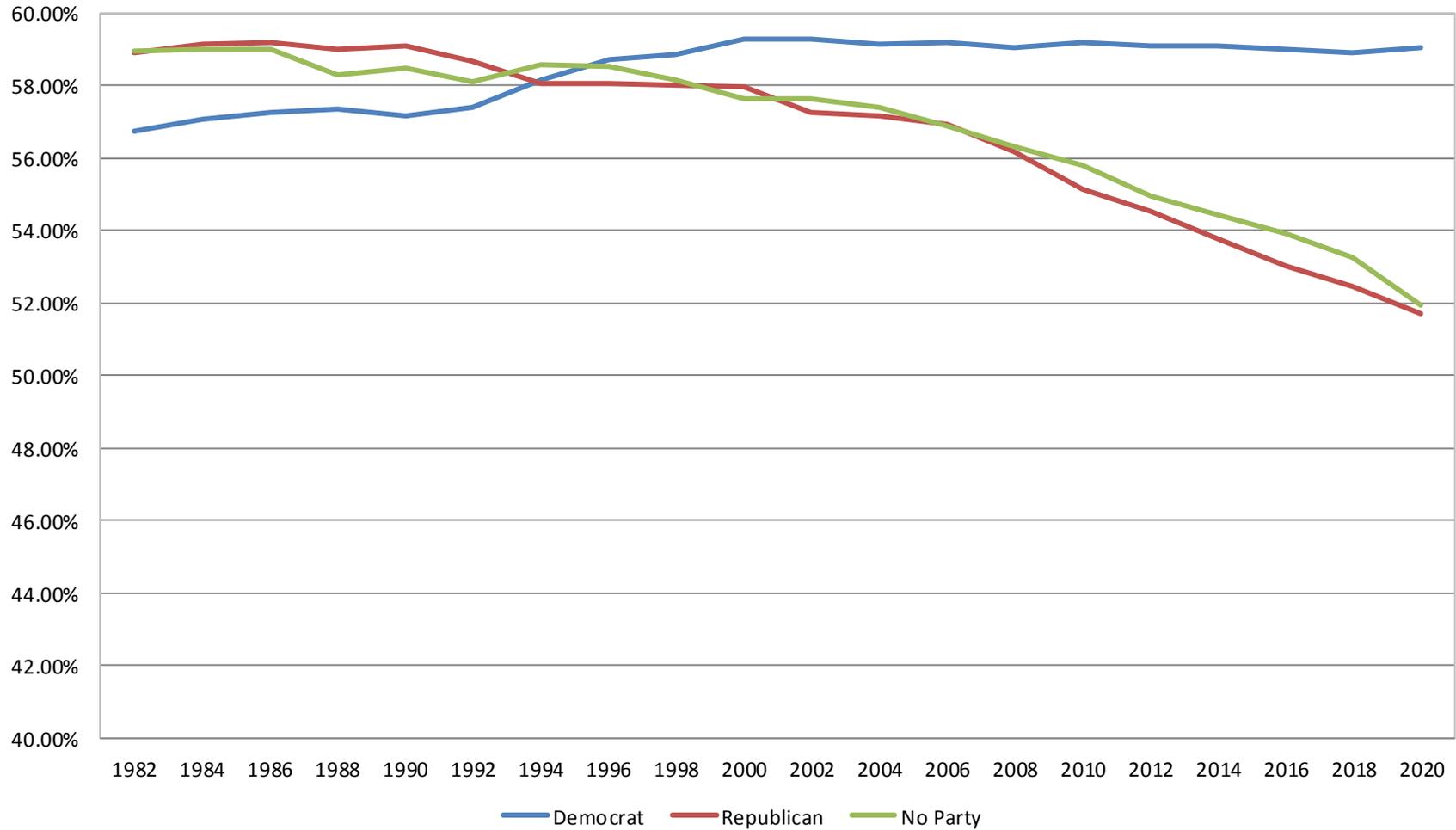


Figure 4: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage by Sex and Age Group in Election Years Since 1982

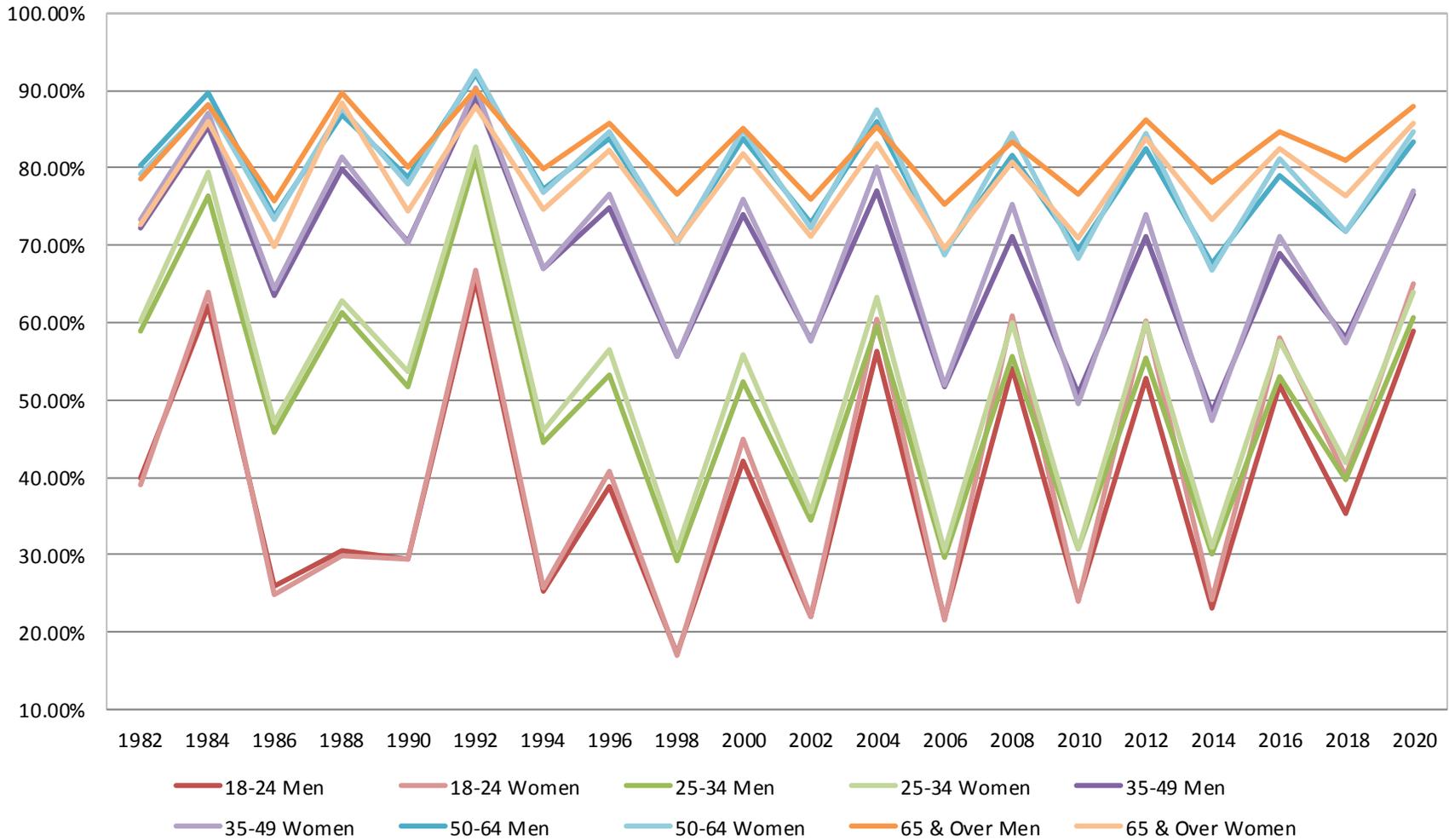


Figure 5a: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage for Age Group 18-24 by Sex and Party in Election Years Since 1982

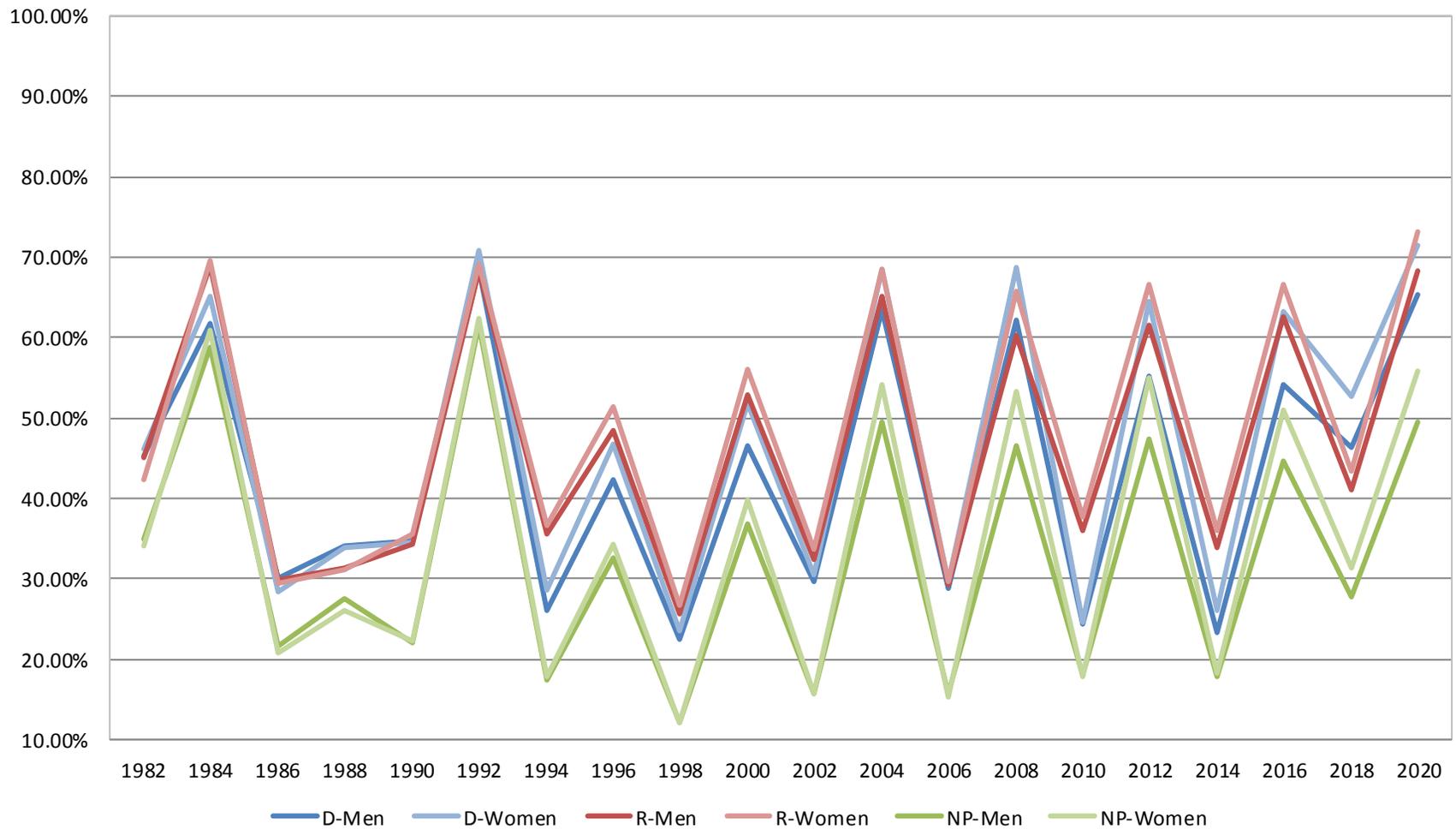


Figure 5b: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage for Age Group 25-34 by Sex and Party in Election Years Since 1982

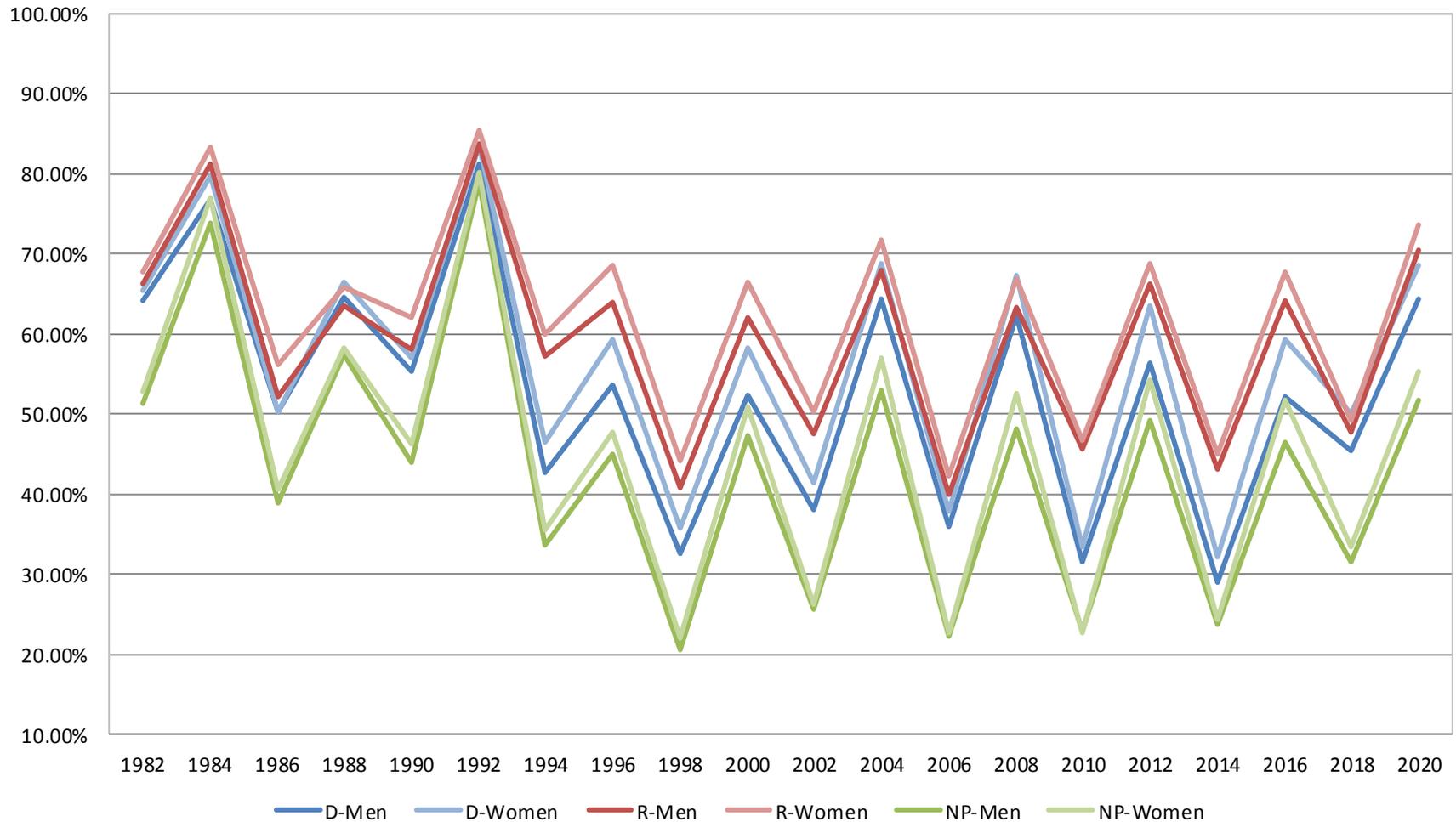


Figure 5c: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage for Age Group 35-49 by Sex and Party in Election Years Since 1982

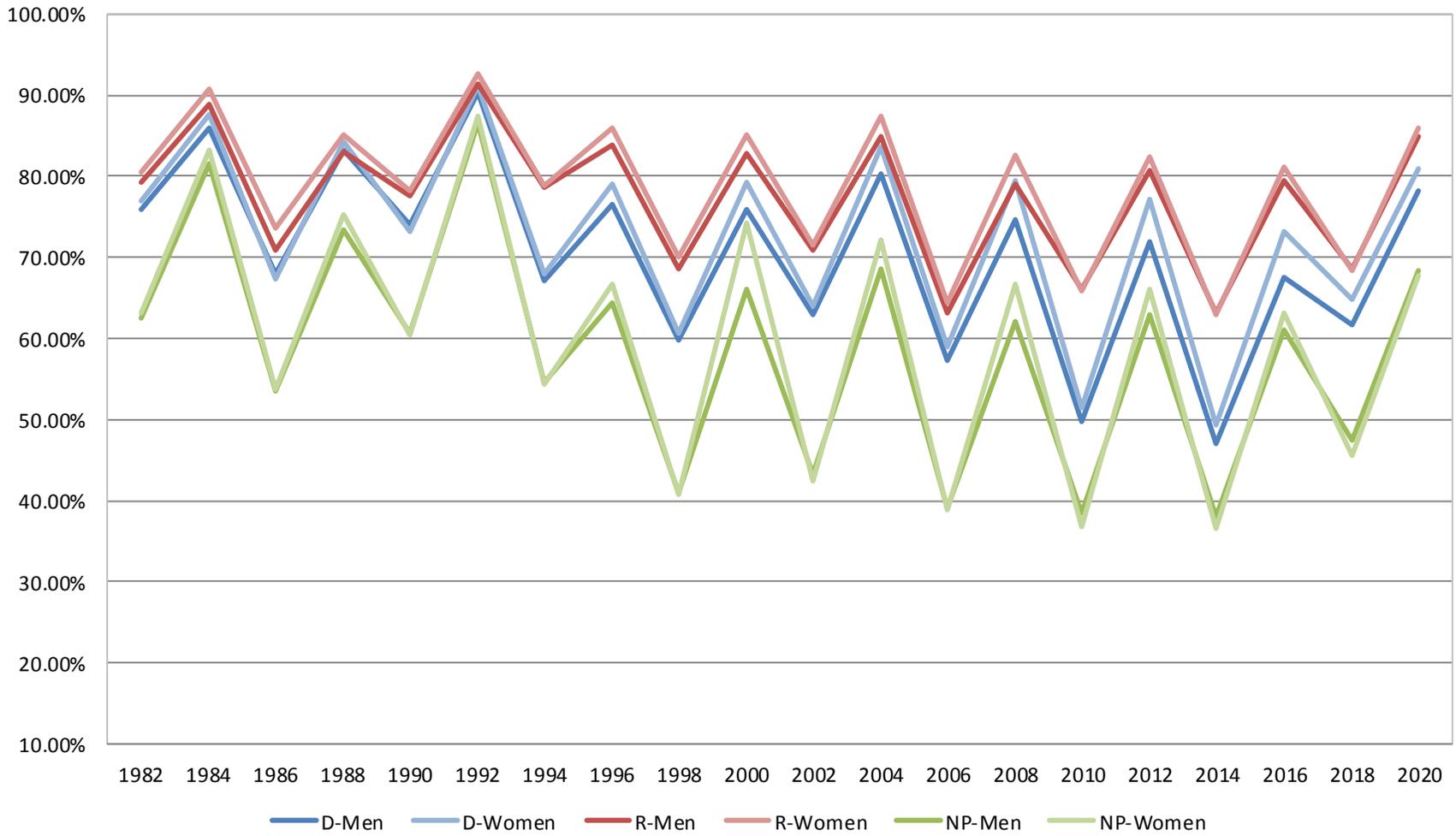


Figure 5d: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage for Age Group 50-64 by Sex and Party in Election Years Since 1982

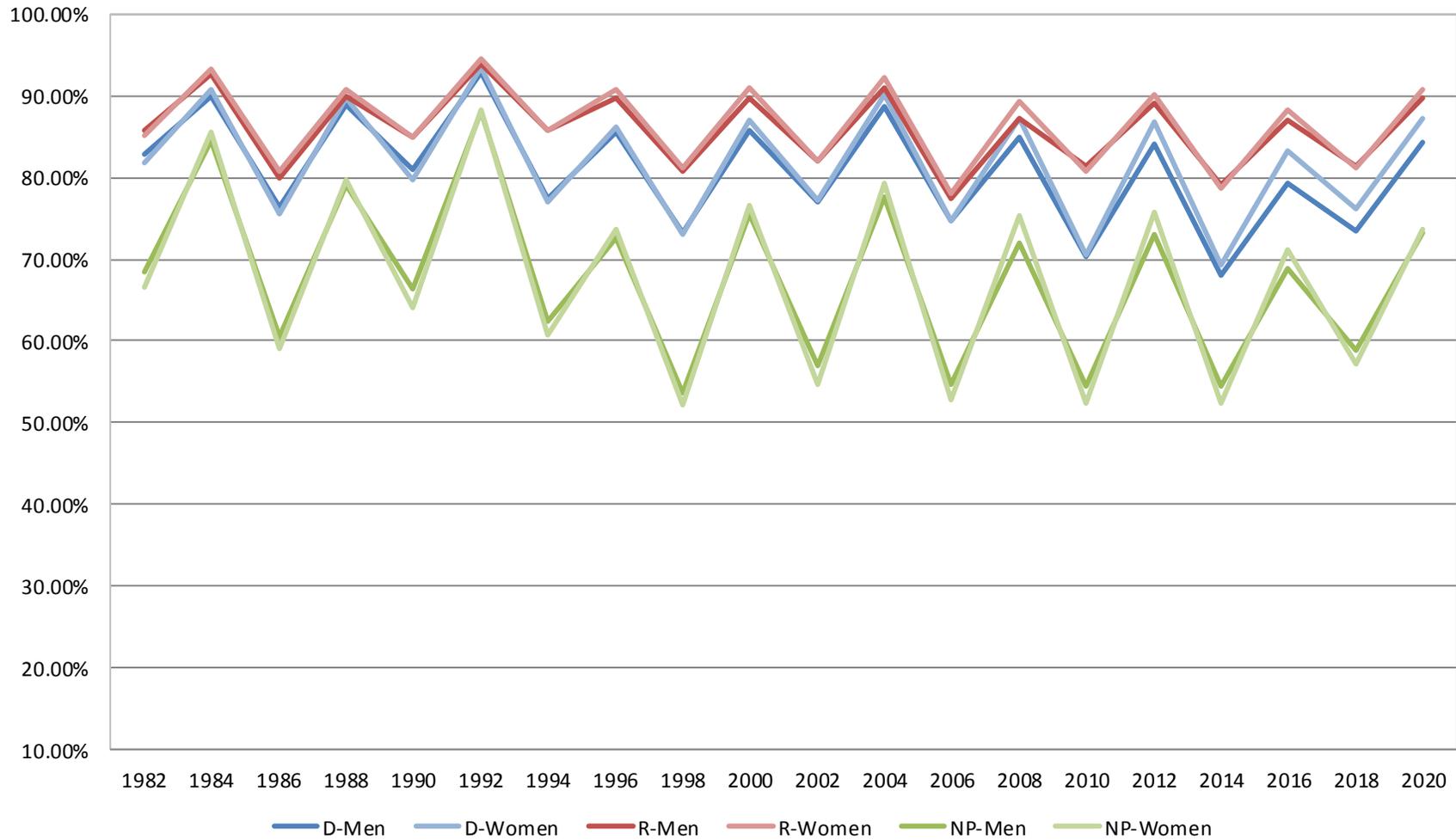


Figure 5e: Iowa Voter Turnout Percentage for Age Group 65 & Over by Sex and Party in Election Years Since 1982

