understanding HOUSTON

community context

HOW DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, SAFETY, AND FAMILY DYNAMICS SHAPE OUR REGION

Houston is attracting thousands of people a year from within and outside the U.S. This growth is central to our robust economy, but it also tests our infrastructure and public services. Across Houston's three-county area, the population has more than doubled since 1980, from 2.7 million to almost 6 million in 2017.[1]

The three-county region is also at the forefront of the demographic change that is sweeping the nation. One in four residents is foreign born. Harris and Fort Bend counties have been comprised primarily of people of color since 2000. We celebrate our diversity and residents hold increasingly positive attitudes toward immigrants. Our communities are also increasingly integrated, with modest declines in racial and ethnic segregation since 2010. While immigration fuels our diversity, the growth rates for foreign-born populations have declined considerably in recent years. Similarly, in 2017, the number of naturalized citizens was the lowest it has been since 2010, a sign that long-time immigrant residents are not able to fully integrate into our economy or democracy.[2]

The changing makeup of our region is also reflected in the changing nature of our family and household structures. Families are the bedrock of any community. Changes within households can alter needs and require new forms of both public and private assistance. For example, one of the fastest growing groups in all three counties is residents who are 65 years of age or older. This aging population brings both opportunities and challenges to our families and institutions. Similarly, single-parent households are on the rise. Nationwide and statewide, the number of single-parent households is declining. However, the number of single-parent households grew by 6.5% since 2010 in the three-county area and in each county, with nearly 1-in-3 single-parent households with children living in poverty in 2017. Ensuring all individuals and families have the support they need is a challenge not just for friends and extended family, but also for public and private support systems.

A strong sense of safety and security in the world outside of the home is one of the most important indicators of a healthy community. Improving safety means addressing a bevy of challenges—from unsafe roadways to violent crimes. Of particular worry, the violent crime rates tracked by the Houston Police Department show a disturbing upward trend since 2015. The three-county area has also seen an increase in gun-related deaths—with 758 deaths in 2017 compared to 594 in 2010. There is also an increasing annual firearm fatality rate that is higher than either the state's or nation's. Finally, hate crimes are on the rise in Houston, the state, and the nation, leaving multiple ethnic, racial, and religious groups feeling targeted and unsafe.

Creating and enforcing laws through a fair criminal justice system is a critical role of government and one essential to protecting our rights and promoting safety. While there has been a decline in criminal charges and incarcerated populations across the three-county area for many types of crimes, black men and youth continue to be disproportionately impacted compared to white counterparts—charged at three times the rate for marijuana possession among adults, for example. Counter to the overall trend, incarceration rates in Montgomery County for both jails and prisons have risen, including among the female population, which saw a doubling in its prison incarceration rate between 2005 and 2015.

The deeper we understand our community context, the more equipped we are to tackle emerging challenges today through solutions that help everyone live to their fullest potential.

6 Subtopics of Community Context

POPULATION GROWTH

↑ **6.3 million people**

living in the three-county area in 2017. By 2045, total population is expected to grow to nine million across the three counties.

DIVERSITY

53%

of Harris County children under the age of 5 are Hispanic.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

6.5% growth

*in the number of **single-parent households**. The number of single-parent families with children grew to over 209,000 in the three-county area in 2017, while we see shrinking figures across the nation.*

IMMIGRATION

About 1 in 5

undocumented immigrants are young. *Between 15-23% of undocumented immigrants are under the age of 24 across the three-county area.*

PUBLIC SAFETY

Nearly 13 annual *gun-related deaths per* 100,000 population.

In the three-county area, we see higher gun-related deaths than the state and the nation, and they're increasing.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

2x to 3x

*higher **rates of juvenile referrals**. Across all three counties, **black youth** are referred to the juvenile justice system at more than two-to-three times the rate of white youth.*

EXPLORE ALL SIX SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

36% INCREASE IN SENIORS LIVING ALONE

Growth in the number of three-county area older adults living alone is nearly twice the national rate, reaching 134,198 seniors living alone in the three-county area in 2017. While most seniors report wanting to remain in their present home and communities as they age, seniors who live alone are at a much greater risk of premature health issues, due to loneliness, memory lapses, home safety issues and more. For this reason, we show our regional trends as "worse" to reflect the potential challenge for those living independently to do so safely and with adequate support from social and healthcare systems.
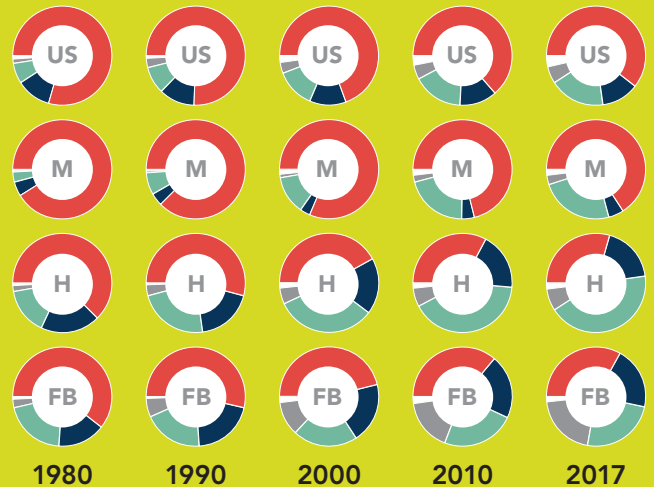
Trend over time: 👎
Compared to nation: 👎

IMMIGRATION

Just 15,120 residents naturalized across the Houston metro area in 2017, despite 288,223 immigrants eligible for naturalization across the three-county area.

Trend over time: 👎
Compared to nation: ⊘

DIVERSITY

1980 1990 2000 2010 2017

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian □ Other

The three-county region has experienced dramatic demographic change and population growth between 2000 and 2017, becoming among the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country.

Trend over time: 👍
Compared to nation: 👍

A significant portion of residents qualify for naturalization across the three-county area, yet the number of residents naturalizing has dropped to their lowest levels since 2010 across the Houston metro area.

LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: **FB** Fort Bend **H** Harris **M** Montgomery **US** United States

COMPARISONS: 👍 Better 👎 Worse ✊ Same ⊘ No Info

See page 30-33 of 2019 Summary Report for references and data sources.