



*summary*  
*report*  
**2019**

## *november 2019*

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# *table of contents*

<b>2-3</b>	— Letter
<b>4-5</b>	— About the Initiative
<b>6-11</b>	— The Big Picture
<b>12-13</b>	— Arts & Culture
<b>14-15</b>	— Civic Engagement
<b>16-17</b>	— Community Context
<b>18-19</b>	— Economic Opportunity
<b>20-21</b>	— Education
<b>22-23</b>	— Environment
<b>24-25</b>	— Health
<b>26-27</b>	— Housing
<b>28-29</b>	— Key Partners, GHCF Board, and Staff
<b>30-33</b>	— References



*fort bend county*



*harris county*



*montgomery county*

# *a letter*

**FROM MICHAEL DUMAS AND STEPHEN MAISLIN**

At the Greater Houston Community Foundation, we are committed to growing with and for our community. We are always striving to find new, innovative ways to help people connect to the causes they care about most and create meaningful, positive impact.

"Where can I make the biggest impact? How can I help? What matters most to my family and me?" As leaders and residents who care about our region and the people within it, we ask ourselves these questions. And if we aren't, we should be. We should be learning about *what matters* to do *what matters*. That's why, to help connect, inform, and inspire action across the Greater Houston area, we've launched Understanding Houston. Through the utilization of independent, verified, aggregated data, this initiative allows us all to better understand our community's strengths and challenges, big and small, so we can strengthen our community together.

**The following report features the initiative's high-level findings, delves into the eight major issue topics, and presents select indicators for each.** Our hope is that by reviewing this report, you are able to get a glimpse of just some of the valuable information that is accessible on the initiative's website.

We are grateful to all who have supported us leading up to the launch of this important initiative, and to our strategic research partner, Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research, for their critical work.

We strongly encourage all members of our community to visit the Understanding Houston website at **[www.understandinghouston.org](http://www.understandinghouston.org)**, where you can explore the data in depth and discover real stories from members in our community. You can also get involved by hosting a data party, voting on the issues that matter most to you, or by attending our Understanding Houston convenings.

Thank you for your continuous support. **Together, we're measuring *what matters* to do *what matters*.**

*sincerely,*



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael R. Dumas".

***Michael R. Dumas***  
Governing Board Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Maislin".

***Stephen D. Maislin***  
President & CEO

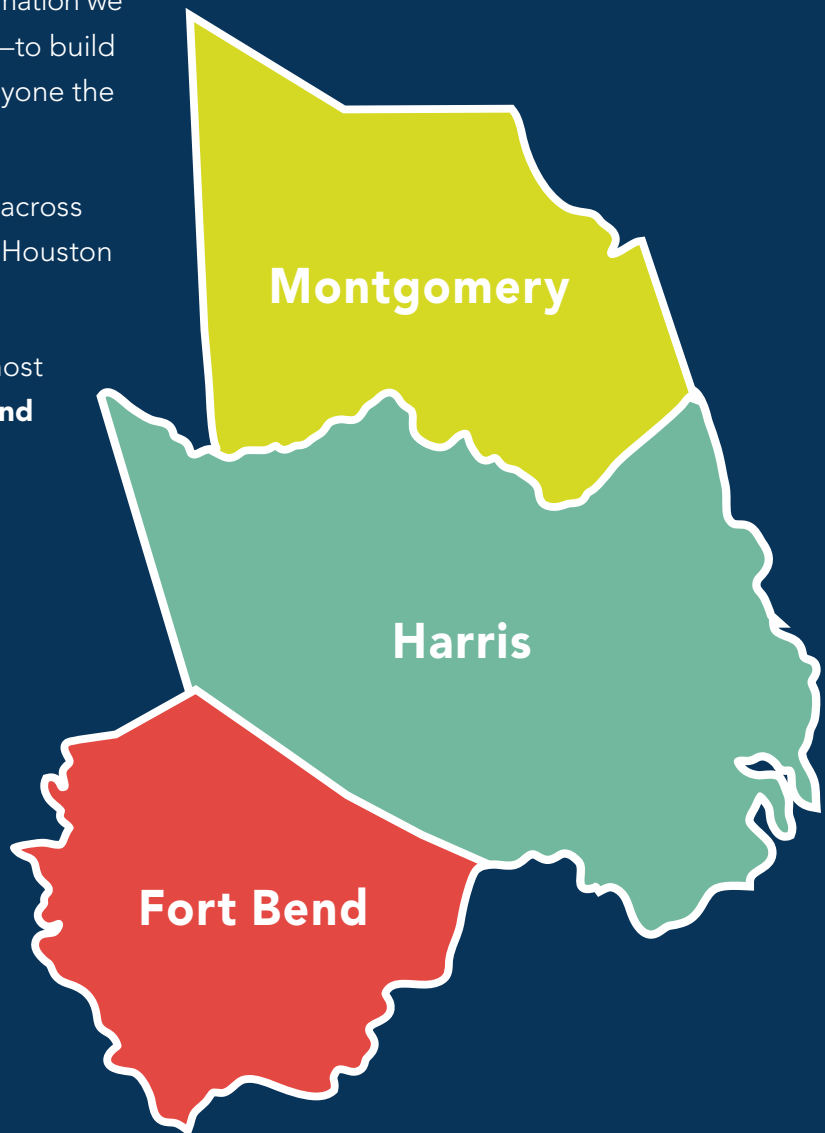
# *about the initiative*

**Building a more vibrant Houston region with opportunity for all. Together, we are measuring *what matters* to do *what matters*.**

**Understanding Houston** is a highly collaborative initiative led by the Greater Houston Community Foundation to empower us all with the information we need to act—individually and collectively—to build a more vibrant Houston that provides everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We believe informed, collaborative action across sectors can be a powerful force in making Houston a more vibrant and equitable region.

We're taking a look at our region's three most populous counties—**Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery.**



# our approach

## COLLABORATION

We believe in one community. As a philanthropic hub, the Greater Houston Community Foundation works with diverse stakeholders to grow effective philanthropy and convene resources to address important community needs.

To build Understanding Houston, we've worked collaboratively to aggregate data across 70 sources to provide an accessible, one-stop platform for understanding key quality-of-life issues in Houston's three most populous counties—Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery Counties. We will continue to work with others as we discover more about quality of life in our region and work in partnership to create a more vibrant region with opportunity for all.

## HELPING DONORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This initiative will also use this knowledge to directly engage with the Greater Houston Community Foundation's donors and other stakeholders in order to drive informed decision making on issues that matter.



# our first 3 years

## *year 1: start-up*

### **BUILD NEW TOOLS**

*Engage community leaders across three counties to inform the project*

*Aggregate credible data and build the website*

*Launch November 21, 2019*

## *year 2: engage*

### **BUILD CAPACITY AND CONVENE**

*Host educational opportunities across sectors*

*Offer nonprofit partners data capacity building*

*Convene to identify key focus issues for collaborative action*

## *year 3: catalyze*

### **TAKE ACTION AND ITERATE**

*Deepen learning through community engagement and discussion on focus issues*

*Develop and begin executing on key actions*

*Update website and reflect*



PLEASE LEAVE  
THE CLEANING  
TO THE  
SQUIRRELS





# *the big picture*

Understanding Houston is an endeavor that requires far more than a single report or a single data point. Houston's three largest counties contain millions of people with different backgrounds, experiences, strengths, and challenges. Our homes and our communities are situated in vastly different parts of a constantly changing region and, because of this, we all interact with various issues including housing affordability, mental health, and access to quality education, jobs, and transportation.

Having reliable, baseline information about these important trends across key data points allows us to identify ways to build on our strengths and enable improvement throughout our region. The entirety of the Understanding Houston website includes 200+ indicators; this report focuses on a smaller collection of key indicators that highlight positive trends worth celebrating, as well as pressing issues facing the Houston area, and the ways they interconnect. These indicators also help us compare trends in the three-county area to those happening at the state and national levels.

**Tying together these varied indicators is one common thread: people.** The lives Houstonians lead, the challenges we face, and the opportunities we seek are reflected in each data point. Understanding how they tie together and how they underpin or undercut progress and improvement, is critical for us to take into consideration as we move forward.

The diversity of our region's **community context** is one of its greatest strengths. The three-county population has grown at a faster rate than either the state or the nation since 2000. At the same time, Houston has become more ethnically and racially diverse, and increasingly so among younger generations. But racial and ethnic diversity is not the only way the three-county area's population has markedly changed. The number of people over the age of 65 who live alone is twice the national rate. While this is a testament to the desirability of our region as a place to age, it also presents a significant future challenge to ensure that this population is able to age in place and to access the support structures they will need to thrive.

Ensuring that the breadth of our diversity is represented, empowered, and celebrated is an area in need of continued focus. We can see this in elements of **civic engagement**. While rates of voter turnout in the last two presidential elections were on par with state and national rates, the number of immigrants eligible for naturalization in 2017



## *the opportunities people can access in the three-*

was at its lowest point since 2010, which means a huge number of residents cannot fully integrate into political and economic life. Increasing access to the **arts** in the Houston area enables artistic expression and exploration—further enriching our lives and economy. Across the three counties, we see arts investments and earnings that are higher than 80% of other counties across the country. The region’s demographic shifts call for an evolution within arts and cultural organizations as they already under-represent the diverse population in the workforce as well as audiences in the region.

**The opportunities people can access in the three-county region are not shaped by a single element.** A person’s education, income, state of health, and housing situation, among many other elements, all weave together to shape daily life and experiences. Often, these elements come together, in communities that do not provide access to good schools, affordable housing, and job centers that offer living wages.

The three-county area’s economy provides a solid foundation for **economic opportunity**. Between 2010 and 2017, the three-county area added 589,487 jobs, a 19% increase in job growth. Likewise, the region’s industry diversity means we offer jobs across multiple sectors and have greater economic resiliency during downturns. However, we need to ensure that all can access the opportunities available. Across the three-county area, we see low incomes and rising costs ripple into many other elements of life. Nearly 8% of workers in the three-county area have a job, but still live below the federal poverty line.

This percentage has declined since 2010, but, despite positive trends, a huge number of residents still struggle to make ends meet. With very modest growth in median household incomes, we see that over 800,000 working families struggle to afford basic living costs across the three-county area, according to a recent ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) study. As a result, routine costs such as **health** insurance, housing, and transportation become too much to afford.

This contributes to the high rate of uninsured in the three-county area. For those under 65, the uninsured rate inched upward from 19.4% in 2016 to 20.7% in 2017, for the first time since the Affordable Care Act went into effect. Even worse, 11% of children in the three-county area are uninsured, more than double the national average. Often exacerbated by economic stress, about one in eight adults in Harris County reports 14 or more days of poor mental health a month—higher than the national and state average. And while mental health problems are common, Texas ranks last in a national analysis for mental healthcare access. Despite these challenges there are several positive trends, across all three counties we see a major decline in the rate of new cancer cases and the three-county area has half the rate of drug overdoses compared to the nation.

Issues with inadequate incomes shape the **housing** system as well, with significant implications for access to good schools, jobs, and transit options. Despite the three-county area’s reputation for affordability, the percentage of households paying more than 30% of



## *county region are not shaped by a single element.*

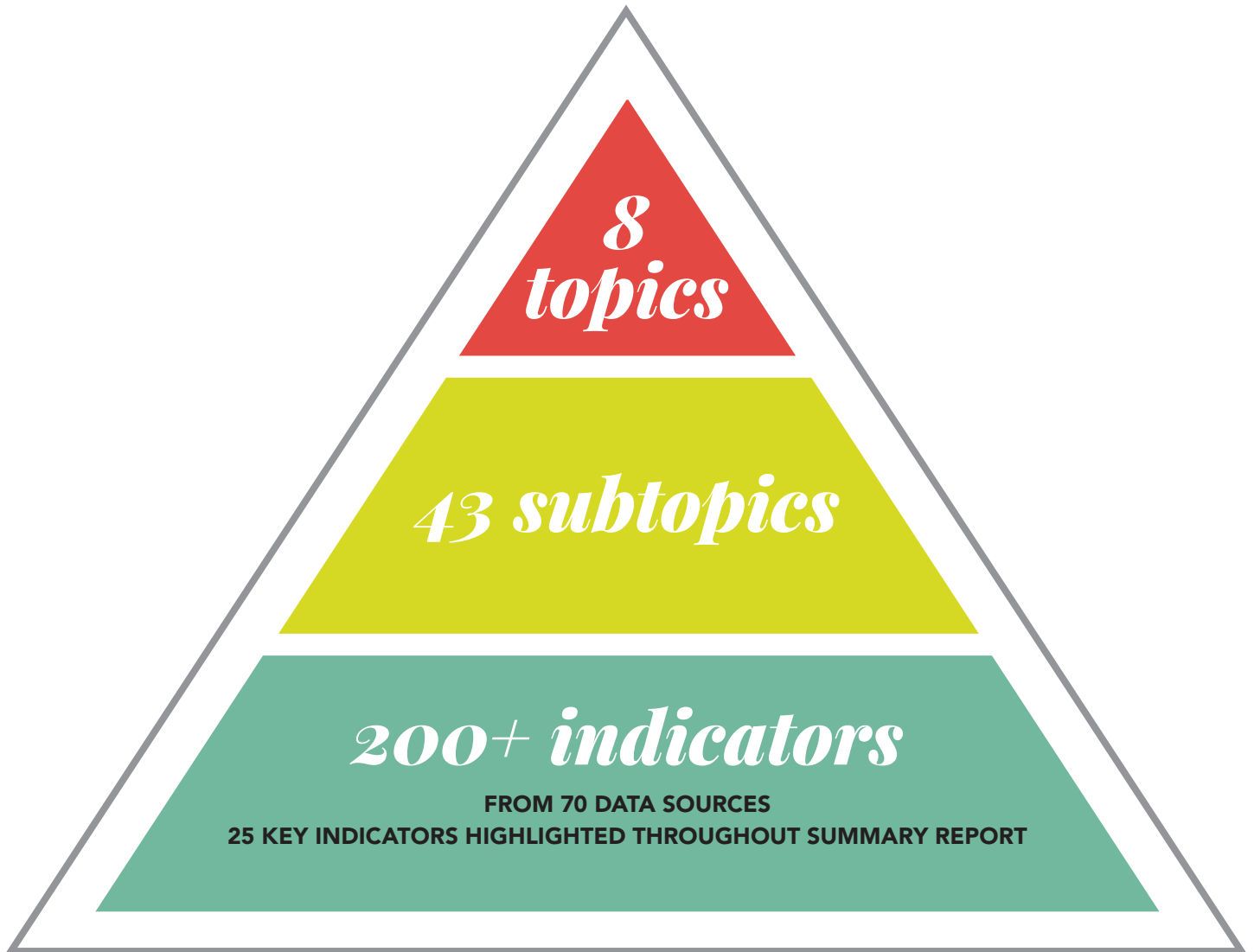
their income toward housing is in line with the national average, 21% for homeowners and 46% for renters. When factoring in transportation costs, households in Fort Bend spend 60% of their income on housing and transportation, while the combined cost drops to 52% in Montgomery and 47% in Harris Counties. Transportation costs are high on average because of the reliance on driving and lack of access to public transportation across the three counties, but particularly in Fort Bend and Montgomery. On a positive trend across the three-county area, we see a much sharper decline in the share of renters with an eviction filing than the nation and state since 2010.

Access to high-quality **education** is foundational to efforts to improve economic standing and access to opportunities for all Houstonians. However, outcomes for students in the three-county region are not desirable. For the most recent academic year, only 48% of assessed Kindergartners are considered Kinder-ready; and just 51% of Houston-area third-graders tested at or above grade level on STAAR reading tests. While these figures are disturbing, overall we do see increasing educational attainment for the three-county area. As of 2017, 82.9% of the three-county population 25 years and over had a high school diploma, below national rates (88.0%) and a tick below state rates (83.6%), but a significant improvement since 2000. However, while postsecondary completion measures are limited, a cohort analysis of eighth graders across the three-county area in 2007 shows that ultimately just 22.3% received a postsecondary credential from a Texas public college or university within six years.

Finally, undergirding all elements of quality of life are our **built and natural environments**. The three-county area's size also means that every resident experiences environmental issues differently. While broader challenges raised by climate change, such as the growing number of days above 95°F, will confront every resident, issues with air and water quality can be very localized. For example, 1,717 drinking water violations were reported from 1,878 active facilities in the three-county area in 2018, but many of those are repeat violations at specific locations. Similarly, while days with harmful ozone levels have dropped across the counties, the number of days in Harris County (17) is nearly triple those in Montgomery County (6), with Houston still not meeting national EPA standards.

*The more we know about quality of life—**arts & culture, civic engagement, community context, economic opportunity, education, environment, health, and housing**—the better equipped we are to work together and make informed decisions that build a more vibrant Houston region with opportunity for all.*

*We invite you to learn more about all eight quality-of-life areas explored in this report and in much greater depth on the Understanding Houston website, [www.understandinghouston.org](http://www.understandinghouston.org)*



## ***a note on scale***

With all these indicators, it is critical to remember scale. Harris County has a significantly larger population than either Fort Bend or Montgomery Counties, which means that even if some of the indicator percentages are the same or if the three-county average seems low, the sheer number of people impacted is often hugely different in each county.

As we review the numbers, we must consider how those percentages translate across all three counties and what they say about the scale of any issue or area of strength. On some

topics, addressing a problematic trend may be a smaller task for Fort Bend or Montgomery than it would be for Harris County. As the data here is used to underpin new initiatives and efforts, it is critical that we take both trends and overall numbers of impacted populations into consideration.

In addition, while we present data across place (counties) and often by demographics, there are common challenges and a common need for solutions that require regional collaboration and effort.

# 8 Topics for Understanding Houston



Access to the Arts  
Arts Attendance  
Employment in the Arts



Electoral Participation      Social Connectedness  
Non-Electoral Participation      Voter Participation  
Philanthropy & Volunteering



Criminal Justice      Immigration  
Diversity      Population Growth  
Family Structure      Public Safety



Credit & Debt      Poverty & Social Mobility  
Income & Inequality      Small Business  
Industry Dynamics & Job Growth      Unemployment & Underemployment



Academic Achievement      Postsecondary Education  
Early Childhood Education      Student Enrollment  
Educational Attainment      Teachers  
Funding and Expenditures



Air Quality      Commuting  
Climate Change & Clean Energy      Traffic  
Natural Resources      Urban Mobility  
Water Quality



Access to Healthcare      Health Outcomes  
Health Behaviors & Risks      Mental Health



Homeownership & Renting      Housing Stocks & Growth  
Housing Affordability      Housing Vulnerabilities  
Housing Conditions

# arts and culture

## HOW OUR REGION'S CREATIVE RESOURCES BENEFIT RESIDENTS—SOME MORE THAN OTHERS

Houston is more than just the energy capital of the world. In addition to our world-famous energy sector, medical center, and aerospace industry, Houston is one of the only U.S. cities with resident, year-round professional ballet, opera, symphony, and theater companies. In fact, Houston's Theater District alone contains more than 12,000 seats, second only to New York City in the number of theater seats located in a specific area.<sup>1</sup> All-in-all, these arts and cultural institutions are estimated to generate \$45.6 million per year in local tax revenues and \$51.8 million in state taxes for Harris County. Houston's artistic and cultural offerings also attract more than two million tourists annually, contributing roughly \$132 million to our local economy per year.<sup>2</sup>

understanding between people of different backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> The health of our arts and cultural programs is also vital to the continued success of our other industries. As our region continues its shift toward an information economy, the arts will play an increasingly important role in our ability to attract and retain the talent necessary for a modern workforce.

Consistent with the rest of the nation, designers (interior, graphic, etc.) represent the largest portion of working artists in our region at 32%.<sup>5</sup> However, Houston trails the national average when it comes to arts occupations' share of regional employment.<sup>6</sup> Within our region, opportunity gaps in both pay and employment persist between counties and races/ethnicities. Whites represent the majority of arts employees in all categories but one (performing arts), and the majority of these jobs are located in Harris County. While artists in our region generally make enough to meet their basic needs, many are still underpaid relative to their overall skill and education levels.<sup>7</sup>

Many of Houston's art and cultural programs primarily rely on the resources of nonprofit organizations to keep their work accessible to the public. And while these organizations are largely growing throughout our region, they aren't necessarily keeping up with our rapidly growing populations. Harris County boasts the most arts and cultural organizations with 11.6 organizations per 100,000 residents as of 2015 compared to 6.8 in Fort Bend County and 5.0 in Montgomery County. Harris County also leads the way in arts spending by both nonprofits and government organizations.

Similarly, attendance at artistic events and performances relies heavily on socioeconomic trends in the Houston area. While most residents report that they believe the arts are important and deserve support, attendance levels vary by household income and educational attainment.

*The more we know about arts and culture in Houston, the more we can enrich our lives, enhance our community, and support our creative economy.*



The benefits of arts and culture in Houston extend well past the economy. Arts and culture organizations play a key role in promoting neighborhood improvements, community connections, and civic engagement.<sup>3</sup> As our region becomes increasingly diverse, these organizations become even more valuable, as community-based arts programs have been shown to increase tolerance and

# 3 Subtopics of Arts & Culture

## EMPLOYMENT IN THE ARTS



**73% of Greater Houston writers are white**

Whites dominate every creative employment category in the Houston metro region except for performing arts.

**31% of Greater Houston media employees are Hispanic.**

The largest share of arts employment held by any non-white group in the Houston metro area.

## ACCESS TO THE ARTS

181 → 602

The three-county area had 602 art and culture nonprofits in 2015 compared to 181 in 1990.



## ARTS ATTENDANCE

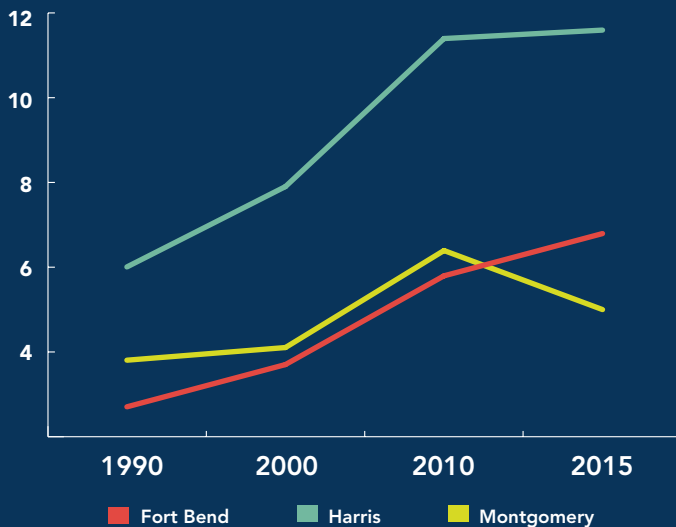
**29% of low-income Harris County residents attended an artistic performance**

Those earning \$37,500 or less attended artistic performances at half the rate of those earning \$100,000 or more in 2012.

EXPLORE ALL THREE SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.

## ARTS DENSITY

Number of Arts and Cultural Organizations per 100,000 Residents



Harris County nearly doubled in the number of total arts and cultural organizations per 100,000 residents between 1990 and 2015 (6.0 to 11.6, respectively). Fort Bend County experienced even greater growth while Montgomery County has seen less growth and less consistency with the number of arts and cultural organizations per 100,000 residents.

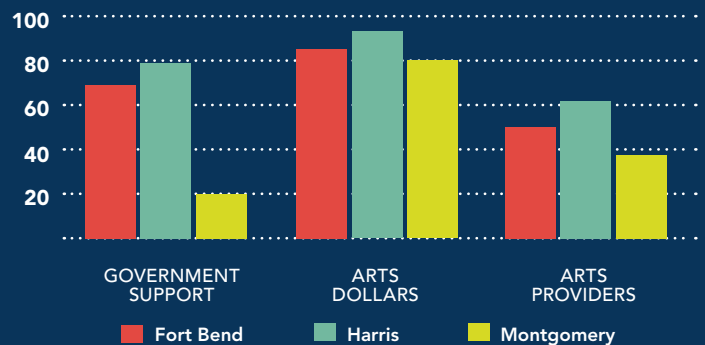
When compared to similarly sized communities throughout the country, all three counties fall near the middle or behind the pack with growth in arts access in Fort Bend and Montgomery not reflecting the rapid population growth in the area over the decades.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## ARTS VIBRANCY INDEX

SMU DataArts, a data partner of Understanding Houston, created the Arts Vibrancy Index to provide meaningful metrics about the health of the arts and culture sector in various geographies across the nation.

The Arts Vibrancy Index includes 12 measures that fall under three main rubrics: **total arts providers**, considering the number of independent artists, arts and culture employees, nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and arts, culture, and entertainment firms in the community; **total arts dollars** in the community, including earned revenue from program activities, contributed revenue supporting the arts, total compensation to artists and staff, and total expenses; and **public support** using state and federal arts funding.



The scores are on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 as the highest. The scores are akin to percentiles—i.e., if a county's score on a given parameter is 56, it means it did better than 56% of counties on that measure.

The three counties appear to be spending more than 80 to 93% of other counties across the country, although government support and the number of arts providers is less in comparison and varies considerably by county.

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: Fort Bend Harris Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 30 for references and data sources.

# *civic engagement*

## **HOW RESIDENTS CONNECT AND PARTICIPATE IN HOUSTON-AREA POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS**

When Houstonians stay connected and civically engaged, we grow, trust, and achieve more as a region. Places with high levels of civic vitality have lower levels of unemployment, better schools, stronger health, and more responsive governments.<sup>1</sup> Our rich social fabric represents a variety of needs and perspectives that benefit from strong civic engagement and more equitable representation. Civic engagement can be thought of as having five components, listed by the increasing level of participation: philanthropy and volunteering, social connectedness, non-electoral participation, voter participation, and electoral participation. Combined, they provide a way to document the state of civic life across Houston and a community's capacity to meet the needs of its residents.



While Greater Houston remains one of the most charitable metropolitan areas in the nation, overall rates of participation mirror national trends. About half of Greater Houston-area residents reported donating \$25 or more to a charitable organization in 2018. However, according to Charity Navigator, Houston-area charities top the list for receiving the highest total contributions out of 30 major metros in 2017. Additionally, local survey data indicate the three-county area outpaces the nation in volunteerism, with rates rising since Hurricane Harvey. During and after the storm, an estimated 101,296 Houstonians from all walks of life stepped up to help their communities recover, assisting over one million individuals and nearly 9,000 animals.<sup>2</sup>

Despite neighbors indicating their generous support of neighbors, residents throughout our region still lack opportunities to connect. Compared to the state and

nation, the Houston area is significantly behind in the number of civic and social organizations available to residents. This correlates with an overall lack of trust within our communities; although levels are improving, the level of trust between neighbors in the Greater Houston area is 2.5 percentage points lower than the national average.<sup>3</sup>

Using our generosity to effect positive change where it's most needed requires open communication and empathy between residents in our diverse communities. Unfortunately, levels of political discussion between friends and family are low throughout our region. Levels are especially low among millennials, non-native residents, and those without a college education. Further, we lag behind the nation when it comes to contacting our public officials—one of the trademark features of American democracy.

Despite low levels of political communication, voter registration and participation rates are mostly increasing throughout the three-county area. Despite falling slightly throughout the state, the percentage of residents registered to vote and the percentage of total voters has increased in all three counties in both presidential and midterm elections in the past decade. However, certain barriers still keep some residents away from the polls, as Hispanic and non-college educated residents both report lower voter turnout.

What's more, the socioeconomic makeup of elected officials in Harris County often fails to reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of our communities. Despite their strong presence throughout our region, both female and Hispanic residents remain underrepresented among elected officials, especially in positions of significant influence like county commissioners court or municipal mayors.

*The more we know about civic engagement in the Houston region, the more we can build trust and connection among our neighbors and ensure that the needs of all people are fairly represented in our political system.*

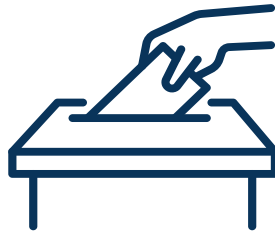


# 5 Subtopics of Civic Engagement

## NON-ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

**Only 15.8%**

of Houston millennials frequently discuss politics with friends and family.



## VOTER PARTICIPATION

**52.3%**

of Hispanic citizens in the Greater Houston area are registered to vote.

## PHILANTHROPY AND VOLUNTEERING

**56%**

of three-county area residents report volunteering.

Volunteer rates have spiked following Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

## ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION



**21% Women**

Despite making up about half the population, just **21%** of Harris County Commissioner elections included a female candidate and only **5%** of elections were won by a woman between 2004 and 2016.



## SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Only 43% say "most people can be trusted." Though still low, Houston-area residents' level of trust has grown eight percentage points between 2014 and 2018.

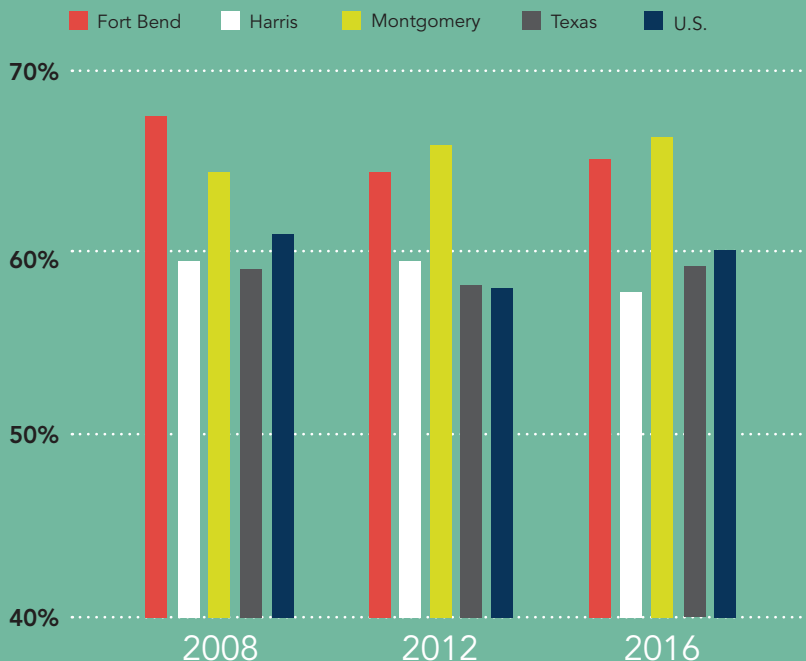
EXPLORE ALL FIVE SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.

## VOTER TURNOUT

Between 58% and 66% of registered voters turned out to vote in the last two presidential elections across the three counties.

Trend over time:  M  H  FB  H  FB  H  
 Compared to nation:  FB  M  H  FB  H

Percent of Registered Voters who Voted in Presidential Elections



**50% Give**

## PHILANTHROPY

About 50% of residents in the Greater Houston area give \$25 or more to charity each year, on par with the national average for rates of charitable giving.

*Fort Bend County residents are more likely to give at nearly every income bracket, outpacing the state average by significant margins.*

Trend over time:    
 Compared to nation:

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS:  FB Fort Bend  H Harris  M Montgomery

COMPARISONS:  Better  Worse  Same  No Info

See page 30 for references and data sources.

# 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.<sup>1</sup>



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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

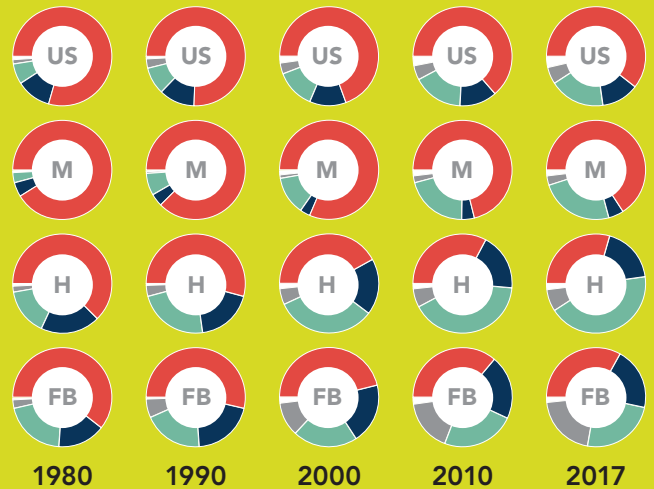
Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## 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



■ 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 30-31 for references and data sources.

# *economic opportunity*

## **HOW OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY FLOW THROUGH OUR REGION**

Healthy communities are built on a strong economic base. Access to fundamental elements of financial stability such as jobs, credit, and entrepreneurial resources is essential to ensuring that all Houstonians can contribute to the building of a vibrant, equitable Houston. While Houston remains vital to the national economy, we're still working toward greater and more equal access to opportunity at home. By taking steps to reduce income inequality in our region, we can make lasting improvements to our neighborhoods, education systems, and financial systems—improving quality of life for all residents.



Houston is home to one of the most vibrant economic engines in the country. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated Houston metro's GDP at \$490 billion in 2017, ranking it 7<sup>th</sup> among the top 50 metropolitan areas in the country. Once dependent on oil and gas, the Houston metro area is now more industrially diverse than the nation and other major Texas cities, although industrial diversity has declined since 2012.<sup>1</sup> Between 2010 and 2017, the three-county area added 589,487 jobs, a 19% increase. In addition, Houston's small business ecosystem continues to grow.

Houston's strong economy provides the foundation for economic opportunity for residents, but we must identify levers to ensure all have the ability to build on that foundation. Labor participation and unemployment rates have largely rebounded since the downturn between 2015 and 2017, now indicating the healthiest labor market since the Great Recession of 2008, despite an oil and gas industry that has yet to fully bounce back. Our region also struggles with a skills gap, making it challenging for residents and employers to match current skills to employment opportunities that are in demand.

While real median household incomes continue to be higher for the three-county area compared to the state and nation across racial and ethnic groups, income growth was modest since 2010 at 4.3%, compared to 8% for the state and 7% for the nation. Taking into account those living in poverty and those who are asset-limited, income-constrained, and employed (or ALICE), 40% of households, over 800,000 altogether, struggle to afford basic living costs across the three-county area.<sup>2</sup> Family financial stability is further put at risk with about a third of three-county residents having subprime, high-risk credit and lower levels of access to credit than the national average. And while poverty rates are on the decline, about one in five children is living in poverty in the three-county area—resulting in early challenges that make it abundantly difficult for children to succeed academically and climb the economic ladder.

Despite these challenges, one of Houston's most concerning trends is growing income inequality. Wealth remains heavily concentrated among a small proportion of households. Nearly 50% of all income was distributed to the top 20% richest households in all three counties. Further, median household income growth trends indicate widening disparities across racial and ethnic groups.

*The more we know about economic opportunity in Houston, the more we can do to build a region that provides the economic foundation for all people to prosper.*

# 6 Subtopics of Economic Opportunity

## INDUSTRY DYNAMICS AND JOB GROWTH

**19%**  
job growth

Houston's three-county area outpaces the nation (13%) in new job creation since 2010.

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

**4.3%**  
unemployment rate

The three-county area achieved a near all-time low in 2018 since before the Great Recession.

## INCOME AND INEQUALITY

**about 1/2**

of all income in each of the three counties is held by only 20% of its households.

## POVERTY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

**819,024**  
households struggle financially

Combining households living at or below the poverty line and those who are ALICE, 819,024 households (40%) are struggling financially across the three-county area.

## CREDIT AND DEBT

**\$\$\$\$\$\$**

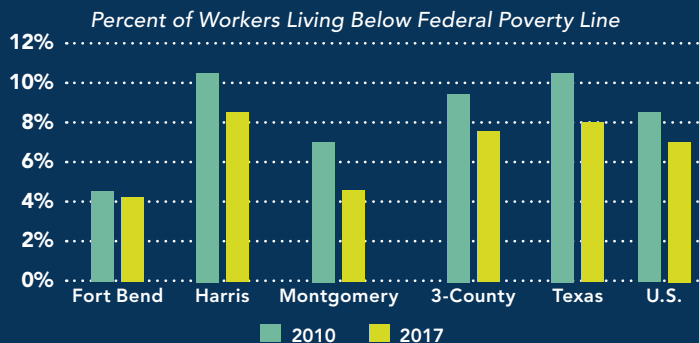
29-44% of residents in the three-county area were in debt collections in 2017.

## SMALL BUSINESS

**38%**  
of Houston-area small businesses are **minority-owned**, **six percentage points more than the state average.**

**EXPLORE ALL SIX SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.**

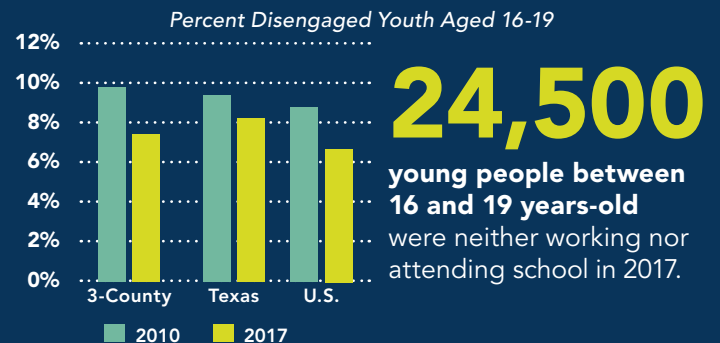
## POVERTY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY



**7.7% of workers (237,705)** across the three-county area have at least one job but still live below the poverty level. The working poor population has decreased since 2010 across the nation, state, and three-county area. However, regional figures remain higher than national averages, largely due to the working poor population within Harris County.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## DISENGAGED YOUTH



Disengaged youth are those between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not enrolled in school and who are unemployed or not in the labor force. The overall percentage of disengaged youth dropped since 2010 in the nation, across Texas, and across the three-county area. Harris and Montgomery counties see higher shares of disengaged youth.

See page 31 for data note.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## ACCESS TO CREDIT AND HOUSEHOLD DEBT



**About 35% of residents across the three-county area have subprime credit**, with rates declining at a pace similar to the state and nation. Poor credit impacts households across all three counties—41% in Harris, 33% in Montgomery, and 31% in Fort Bend. While access to credit is only slightly below the nation, we see a larger percentage of three-county residents with subprime credit and in debt collections compared to the nation, indicating higher financial stress on our region's families.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: **FB** Fort Bend **H** Harris **M** Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 31 for references and data sources.

# education

## HOW SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS, EVOLVING NEEDS, AND DISPARATE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AFFECT HOUSTON-AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As Houston continues its transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, higher levels of educational attainment are essential for competing in the job market. By 2020, 65% of Houston-area jobs will require education past high school, and 47% will require a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>1</sup> Every child needs to be prepared for success in college or career, and the work starts well before students reach school.

High-quality pre-K programs can increase the likelihood of graduation and even shrink socioeconomic achievement gaps for eligible children who attend.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, accessibility remains an issue, while 48,209 three-county area children were enrolled in pre-K in the 2017-18 school year, just 55% of students were enrolled in a full-day pre-K program despite research indicating high-quality full-day programs reap the most benefits. Furthermore, just 48% of Kindergartners who began school in 2018-2019 were considered Kinder-ready and demonstrated appropriate literacy skills, lower than the state.

Fortunately, the recent passage of House Bill 3 (HB3) contributes \$9 billion to Texas public schools over the next two years, with \$6.3 billion earmarked for additional district funding. HB3 will increase funding for full-day pre-K programs; teacher pay and reward higher experience levels; promote college readiness levels through bonus programs; and add support for special education programs.

However, HB3 will take effect amidst a challenging public education landscape in Texas. As of 2017, Texas ranks 49<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in high school graduation rates, although the percent of the adult population with at least a high school diploma has steadily increased since 1990—reaching 83% of the population in the three-county area in 2017. Despite this positive trend, significant achievement gaps persist across socioeconomic status.

Third-grade reading is an important indicator that has a strong relationship to academic success in upper grades.<sup>3</sup> Just 51% of Houston-area third-graders tested at or above grade level on STAAR reading tests. And, the growing Hispanic and economically disadvantaged



student populations fared worse with 41% and 36% of third-graders testing at or above grade level respectively. In addition, Texas and the three-county area both lag behind in aspects of career and college readiness. By the most generous standard of “college ready,” we see less than half of high school graduates in the three-county area meet the criteria, with larger shares of Asian and white students college ready, while black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students remain behind their peers.

Finally, while postsecondary completion measures are limited, a cohort analysis shows that of the 67,579 students across the three-county area who began eighth-grade in 2007, ultimately just 22.3% received a postsecondary credential within six years of their anticipated high school graduation. These rates indicate slow progress, as a similar analysis of eighth graders begun in 1998 found that about 21% received some sort of postsecondary credential within six years of high school graduation.<sup>4</sup>

The challenges facing Houston-area students are tied to the increasing demands placed on our public schools.

Despite enrollment growth, overall spending per student remains well below the national average. Public schools also face a teacher shortage, both in quantity and quality. A stunning 39% of teachers in the three-county area have less than five years experience, with data clearly indicating that teacher qualification is one of the strongest correlations of student achievement in reading and mathematics.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to passing HB3, Texas launched the 60x30TX, the state's higher education plan that aims to educate the next generation of Texans and maintain the state's global competitiveness. This ambitious effort will require collective support and work.

*The more we know about our public schools in the Houston area, the better equipped we are to work toward an education system that prepares every Houston-area child to thrive and contribute to Houston's vibrant future.*

# 7 Subtopics of Education

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



**33%** of the total adult population has a bachelor's degree

Across the three-county area, the share of the adult population with a bachelor's degree is slightly higher than across Texas and the nation, seeing a 7.5 percentage point increase since 1990.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**Only 55%**

of enrolled pre-K students were in a full-day program.

## STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**61.6%** economically disadvantaged

students across the three-county area, growing 3.3 percentage points in one year alone.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

**88.6%**  
graduated

Four-year longitudinal graduation rates in the three-county areas were two percentage points lower than the state average for the class of 2018.

## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

**Less than half**



of high-school graduates are college ready across the three-county area, slightly more than the state.

## FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

**\$9,284**  
average per-student spending

across three-county area public schools, lower than the state (\$9,500) and national average (\$12,201).

## TEACHERS

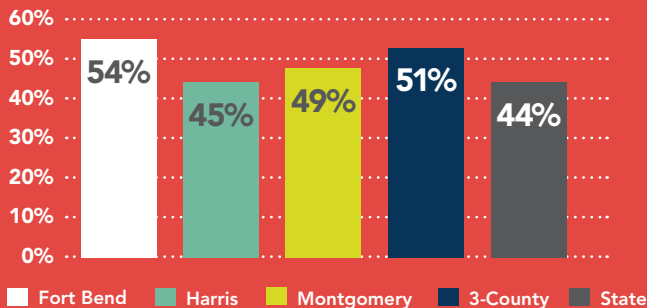
**Nearly 40%**  
of teachers have limited experience

with major implications on student achievement.

**EXPLORE ALL SEVEN SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.**

## THIRD-GRADE READING

Percent of 3rd-graders who achieve "Meets Grade Level or Above" on STAAR Reading Test (2018-2019)



By third grade, about half (51%) of all students in the three-county-area public schools were meeting grade level standards for reading comprehension during the 2018-2019 school year.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to state:

## HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR MORE

**83% vs. 88%**

Despite gains in higher educated populations outpacing the nation, just **82.9% of the population in the three-county area had a high school diploma** or more in 2017, compared to 88% across the nation and 83.6% in the state.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## KINDERGARTEN READINESS

**48%**

Across the three-county area, 78% of Kindergarteners were assessed for literacy skills upon entering school in the 2018-2019 school year; **just under half (48%) scored well enough to indicate they were Kinder-ready**, about 4 percentage points less than the state average and **2 percentage points higher than the year prior**.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to state:

## POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

**67,579** students began eighth grade in 2007 at the age of 13

**77%** of whom graduated from high school | **54%** enrolled in a Texas university/college

**22%** received postsecondary credentials from a Texas public college or university within 6 years of their anticipated high school graduation.

\*See page 32 for important data note.

Trend over time:   
 Compared to nation:

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: **FB** Fort Bend **H** Harris **M** Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 31 for references and data sources.

# environment

## HOW THE INTERCONNECTION OF NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS SHAPES OUR WORLD

The environment of an urban region consists of natural ecosystems and the many human-made, built systems that interact with natural landscapes. In Houston, the choices we make about the native prairies, waterways, and forests are connected to those we make about our homes, our businesses, and our infrastructure networks.



Access to affordable and safe mobility is a central need for every Houstonian. Every day we move across our region to access jobs, education, recreation, and to meet fundamental needs. In Houston, transportation infrastructure is shaped by and caters to the car. The reach of our public transit systems is inadequate, with just 38% of households in Harris County and fewer than 5% of households in Montgomery and Fort Bend Counties being within a quarter mile of a public transit stop. Driving alone, Houston's most popular form of commuting, has significant environmental and health impacts for individuals and society. Fuel-inefficient cars also threaten environmental sustainability and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>1</sup> Driving-related emissions for households living in location-efficient urban neighborhoods are half or less of what they are for households in the least-efficient, car-dependent neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> In addition, our streets and highways are dangerous for all users. Across the three-county area the crash rate for incidents involving pedestrians and people on bikes is double the state rate.

Further, not every Houstonian has equal access to the current car-dependent system. Over 100,000 households across the three counties simply don't have any vehicles. Among working families, the majority of household

income is spent on housing and transportation. Building an effective transportation system with multi-modal options, including investments in safe pedestrian and bike infrastructure, can contribute to the success of the local economy, minimize congestion, reduce transportation costs, and ease environmental pollution.<sup>3, 4</sup>

Continued growth and urbanization is also putting pressure on natural environments via pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the depletion of natural resources.<sup>5</sup> The three-county area is losing valuable natural and undeveloped land cover. Agricultural, wetland, and forest land uses have all declined as urbanization continues to expand. This loss not only reduces natural flood control mechanisms, but also removes valuable ecosystems and recreational opportunities. Our air and water quality feel the effects of our industrialized economy and car dependence. The region is the 9<sup>th</sup> worst for ozone pollution and the amount of particulate matter in the air remains higher than the state and national averages.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, local waterways are contaminated at alarming rates.

Houston's location, topography, and local climate also make us particularly vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather conditions such as flooding, storms, and hurricanes, which occur at greater intensities and with more regularity. One potentially under-recognized challenge for Houston is the urban heat island effect.<sup>7</sup> With temperatures rising, urban areas are holding heat for longer, causing energy usage to skyrocket, and compounding greenhouse gas emissions challenges. Climate change is bringing unforeseen and severe negative outcomes to the region and putting the lives of Houstonians, the health of our natural environments, and the functioning of our economy at risk.<sup>8</sup> Embracing greater use and development of clean energy and investing in more environmentally sustainable transportation systems will help protect natural resources and lower Houston's contributions to global climate change.

*The more we understand the choices we all make about our daily lives, our built environment, and our economy, the better we can balance the need for positive growth and the conservation of irreplaceable natural resources.*



# 7 Subtopics of Environment



## URBAN MOBILITY

**94.7%**  
owned at least one vehicle

Vehicle ownership in the Houston area grew steadily from 2010 to 2017.

## TRAFFIC

**\$1,490**  
per automobile

The annual cost of congestion for Houston drivers exceeds that of other major Texas cities.

## COMMUTING

**30 min.**  
one way

Houston drivers had higher-than-average commute times in 2017.

## WATER QUALITY

**60%**  
of water streams  
are contaminated



across the three-county area, considered impaired due to bacterial contamination.

EXPLORE ALL SEVEN SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**14% → 32%**  
developed land

The amount of developed land in Montgomery County more than doubled between 2001 and 2018.

## AIR QUALITY

 **high ozone days**

Between 2010 and 2016, the number of **high ozone days in Harris County** **dropped** from 34 to 17 per year. However, Houston still does not meet EPA ozone standards.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLEAN ENERGY

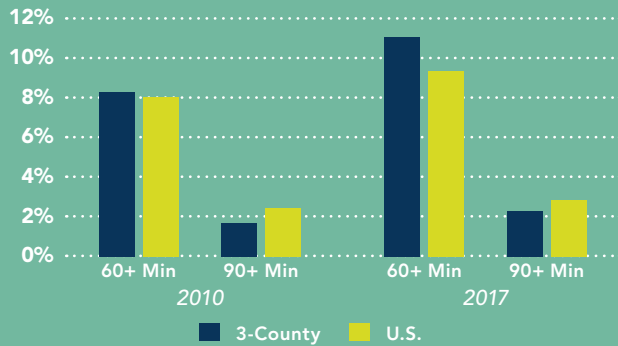


**17% renewable energy sources**

As of 2018, 17% of energy generated in Texas came from renewable sources, up from just 0.6% in 2001.

## COMMUTING

Percent of Workers Commuting 60+ & 90+ Minutes One Way





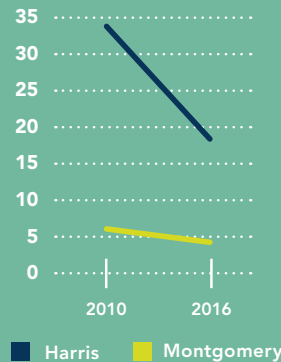
In particular, nearly 18% of Montgomery residents spend an hour commuting to work one way. Research has shown that longer commutes can lead to reductions in health and happiness.

Trend over time:  Compared to nation: 

## DRINKING WATER VIOLATIONS

Across the three-county area, there were **1,717 drinking water violations** out of 1,878 active facilities in 2018.



Trend over time:  Compared to nation: 



## OZONE



**Days with Ozone Levels Above EPA Standards**

Despite decreasing days where ozone levels are above EPA standards, the **Houston area still doesn't meet EPA ozone standards, and decreases have largely leveled off.**

Trend over time:  Compared to nation: 

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Less than 5% of households in Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties are within a quarter mile of a public transit stop.** 38.2% of Harris County households are within a quarter mile of a public transit stop.

Trend over time:  Compared to nation: 





## HEAT VULNERABILITY

**Total Days in 2016 Surpassing 95°F**

Fort Bend = 75  
Harris = 68  
Montgomery = 73

Projections indicate an increase to 100+ days a year by 2050 for all three counties.

Trend over time:  Compared to nation: 

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: **FB** Fort Bend **H** Harris **M** Montgomery

COMPARISONS:  Better  Worse  Same  No Info

See page 32 for references and data sources.

# health

## HOW CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND ENVIRONMENT AFFECT HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICE NEEDS IN HOUSTON

Good health is an essential component in quality of life for both individuals and a community as a whole. As our region and population continues to grow, it is important to evaluate public-health challenges and needs deriving from shifting demographics, changing social and physical environments, and growing prevalence of illness so that we can better identify and prioritize opportunities for better health in our communities.

Despite the region's renowned healthcare resources, many Houston-area residents have no health insurance coverage and have difficulty accessing needed care. Although the number of uninsured has decreased since the Affordable Care Act coverage provisions went into effect and health insurance coverage numbers in Houston remain lower than the state and national averages, the incidence of uninsured increased between 2016 and 2017. The number of uninsured among children under 19 was nearly 11% for the three-county area in 2017, more than double the national average (5%). Hispanic children have a much higher rate of uninsured (15.9%), nearly three times that of white children.<sup>1</sup>

Daily habits, lifestyle choices, and risky behaviors also have a significant impact on the overall state of health in our region. While individuals may be responsible for making healthy choices, the ability to choose and make changes also depends on the physical and cultural environment available to them. Unfortunately, factors like high crime rates, lack of sidewalk access, pollution, and poor housing in our communities only add to the challenge.

Our region faces several challenges associated with health behaviors and risk factors. One in five adults aged 20 years and over across the three-county area had no leisure-time physical activity—even though almost 82% of households in the region have easy access to parks—contributing to high rates of obesity in our region. Food insecurity remains a substantial problem affecting more than 911,000 people in our region, including more than 350,000 children. School-aged children struggling with access to food are more likely to have poor academic performance and more social and behavioral problems.<sup>2</sup>



Additionally, teen pregnancy has significant impact on health outcomes for mothers, children, families, and our community. Although improving since 2008, the teen birth rate remains higher than the national average with major differences across counties and by race/ethnicity. On a more positive note, the drug overdose death rate in the region is only half of the national rate.

Health gaps persist not only by location, but also by race and income. In general, adults living in Fort Bend and Montgomery counties are healthier than those in Harris County. Racial disparities in life expectancy remain in Harris County, with black residents' life expectancies averaging about four years less than those of white residents. Most of the black-white gap in life expectancy at age one can be accounted for by differences in socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.<sup>3</sup> Other public health concerns include the prevalence of diabetes in Harris County, low birth weight in Fort Bend and Harris counties, and cancer mortality in Montgomery. Fortunately, across all counties we see a major decline in new cancer incidence rates that is worth highlighting.

Closely connected with physical health, mental health is also a vital part of our lives. Positive mental health can promote productivity and allow people to cope with adversity; while mental disorders may cause disability, pain, or even death.<sup>4</sup> Mental illnesses are common and vary in severity. Harris County has a higher percentage of adults reporting 14 or more days of poor mental health (12.3%), compared to 9% in Fort Bend County and 10% in Montgomery. Additionally, suicide rates are on the rise, particularly in Montgomery County. On average, the suicide rate for males is about four times the rate for females. More education is needed to reduce stigma toward persons with mental illness and ultimately improve mental health in everyday life.

*The more we understand the public health challenges and needs, the better we can bridge health disparities and promote good health for all.*

# 4 Subtopics of Health



## MENTAL HEALTH

# 988:1

One mental health provider for every 988 residents in the three-county area, **less than half the access compared to the national average.**



## HEALTH BEHAVIORS AND RISKS

### 1 in 5 adults aged 20+ had no leisure-time physical activity

Prevalence of exercise and other extracurricular physical activity correlates strongly with race and income.

**EXPLORE ALL FOUR SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.**

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

### 1,522:1 → 1,180:1

Ratio of population to primary care providers has improved steadily in Fort Bend County, surpassing state and national averages. Meanwhile, primary care ratios in Harris County are worse than national and state averages.

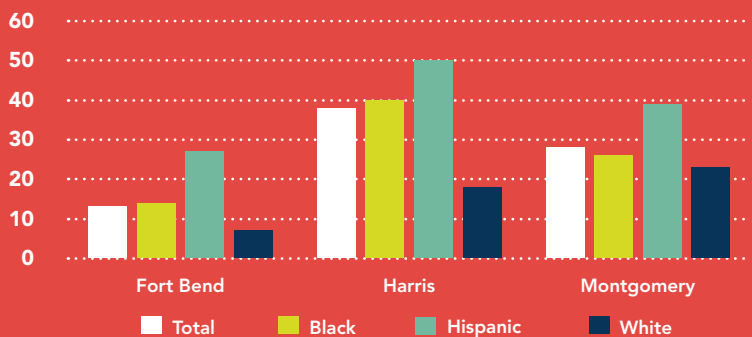
## HEALTH OUTCOMES

### ↓12-15%

decrease in the number of new cases of cancer per 100,000 people between 2012 and 2016 across the three counties, a much faster decline than the state rate (6%) and the national rate (4%).

## TEEN BIRTHS

Teen Birth Rate By Race/Ethnicity (Per 1,000 Females Aged 15-19)



Teen birth rates declined steadily since 2008 for all three counties. However, when looking at combined 2011-2017 data, teen **birth rates among Hispanic and black teens were about two to three times higher** than the rate for white teens in Fort Bend and Harris counties. **The birth rate among white teens in Montgomery County is much higher** than that in Fort Bend and Harris Counties.

Trend over time: Compared to nation: &

## UNINSURED RATES

### 19.4% ↑ 20.7% uninsured

Between 2016 and 2017, the share of uninsured residents under 65 **increased across the three-county area** for the first time since the Affordable Care Act went into effect.

In 2017, **1-in-4 adults ages 19 to 64 were uninsured** across the three-county area.

Among **children under 19, nearly 11% were uninsured** in the three-county area in 2017—more than **double the U.S. average.**

Trend over time: Compared to nation:

## FOOD INSECURITY

### 911,000+ people, including more than 350,000 children food insecure in 2017

Across the three-county area and for each county, we see higher rates of food insecurity compared to the nation. Though slow, we are seeing declining food insecurity rates across the region.

Trend over time: Compared to nation:



## FREQUENT MENTAL DISTRESS

### 12.3% reported 14 or more poor mental health days a month in Harris County.

In 2018, more Harris County residents reported having two weeks or more of poor mental health a month than the national average. A smaller share of Fort Bend County (9%) and Montgomery County (10%) residents reported such frequent mental distress.

Trend over time: Compared to nation:

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: Fort Bend Harris Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 33 for references and data sources.

# housing

## HOW RESIDENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AFFECTS OUR REGION'S GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

Shelter is essential for human life. When there is enough affordable housing available for everyone who needs it and in places where people can access opportunities, communities can thrive.

Houston has always had a reputation as a place with ample, affordable housing. However, the truth is more complicated than that reputation. Between 2010 and 2017, Houston's overall supply of housing grew at a much faster rate than both the state and national averages, in line with our growing population. At the same time, however, the rate of building permits issued was below the state or national averages, indicating that the local housing market and economic conditions may not be as favorable as other areas. Disasters and flooding events like Hurricane Harvey also contributed to a drop in vacancy rates, which points to fewer homes available to meet the needs of people across income levels. Finally, as supply of available housing units shrinks, prices rise for both those looking to buy or rent homes, which contributes to affordability issues.



For many, homeownership is a critical form of wealth building and remains a central part of the American Dream.<sup>1</sup> Since 2010, homeownership has increased 12% across the three-county area. However, due to lower incomes on average, discriminatory practices, and predatory lending, among other factors, only 36% of black householders owned their own homes in Harris County, compared to 80% of white householders. More broadly, many low-to-median-income households and first-time homebuyers in the region have barriers to accessing sustainable homeownership, such as saving for a down payment, lack of credit access, along with rising

entry-level home prices and interest rates. These issues, in addition to delayed home purchasing for younger populations, are likely contributing to the growth in renter-occupied housing units, which was up 22% across the three counties between 2010 and 2017.

Houston is particularly struggling to provide adequate housing for residents at the lower end of the income spectrum. Housing is the single largest expense for families and households, and over 600,000 households in the Houston area spend too much for housing, particularly low-income households and people of color. Overall, renters have a higher housing-cost burden than homeowners. In the three-county area, nearly a third of all households are housing-cost burdened, spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. In Fort Bend County in particular, the average household spends 60% of their income on housing and transportation costs combined. High housing and transportation costs result in fewer resources available for other expenses for families, including investments in health care, savings, or educational opportunities. Houston also has far fewer government subsidized units available than many other large cities and counties to help the lowest-income households afford rising rent costs.<sup>2</sup>

Adding to affordability issues and poor conditions, many residents are facing greater instability in housing whether through homelessness, eviction, or displacement. High housing costs mean that low-income families are less able to weather sudden changes or costs, which can often lead to eviction and temporary homelessness if rent goes unpaid. The three-county area's eviction rate is higher than the nation's, although we've seen an improvement in the number of eviction filings and actual eviction cases since 2010. Finally, while permanent homelessness has declined in Harris County since 2011, 4,000 people were homeless on any given night in 2018.

*The more we understand affordable and safe housing as a basic need, the more we can do to ensure quality housing options are available for people across our growing region.*

# 5 Subtopics of Housing



## HOUSING STOCK AND GROWTH

**13%** growth in housing supply

across the three-county area from 2010-2017, compared to 9% statewide and 4% nationally.

## HOUSING CONDITIONS

**5.3%** of housing is overcrowded

The three-county area average is higher than the state (4.8%) and national (3.4%) averages.

## HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTING



**Homeownership increased by 12%**

across the three-county area in 2017. However, just 41% of black households and 52% of Hispanic households are homeowners compared to 71% of white households.

## HOUSING VULNERABILITIES

**4,000**

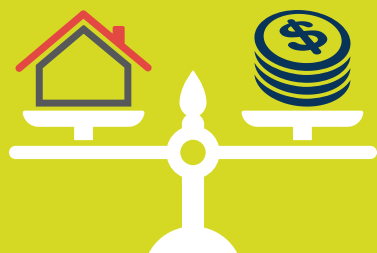
homeless people on any given night in the Houston area.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**About \$500 more than the national average**

In median monthly costs among Fort Bend County homeowners with a mortgage. **Median monthly homeowner costs**—including utilities, mortgage, and other associated costs—across the three counties are **higher** than the national and state averages.

EXPLORE ALL FIVE SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON OUR WEBSITE.



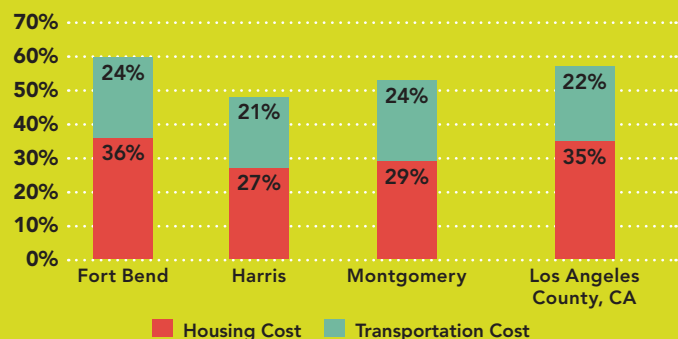
## HOUSING-COST BURDEN

About one in five homeowners, and nearly one in two renter households, across the three counties is **housing-cost burdened**, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs on a monthly basis.

Trend over time: Owners: / Renters:   
Compared to nation:

## LOCATION AFFORDABILITY

Percent of Household Income on Housing & Transportation Costs

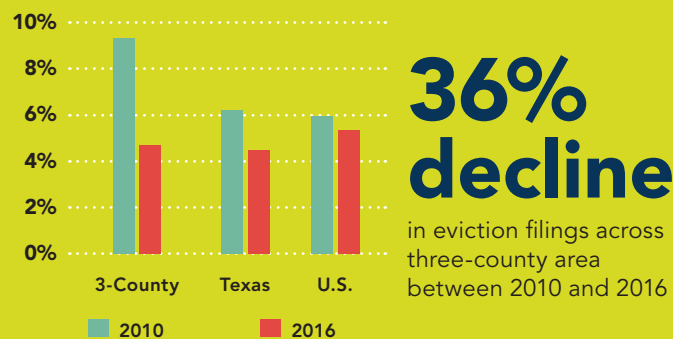


According to 2015 data, **Fort Bend County residents spent approximately 60% of household income on combined housing and transportation costs**—the highest across the region.

Trend over time:   
Compared to nation:

## EVICITIONS

Eviction Filing Rate as a Percentage of Renter Households



**36% decline**

in eviction filings across three-county area between 2010 and 2016

Across the three-county area, we see a much sharper decline in the share of renters with an eviction filing than the nation and state since 2010—dropping from 63,276 cases in 2010 to 40,218 cases in 2016 across the three counties.

Trend over time:   
Compared to nation:

## LEGENDS

LOCATIONS: Fort Bend Harris Montgomery

COMPARISONS: Better Worse Same No Info

See page 33 for references and data sources.

# *strategic research partner*



*“As someone who cares deeply about Houston, I am excited for the Kinder Institute to be a part of this important work and to see our collective efforts unfold over the years to come.”*

**WILLIAM FULTON**  
**DIRECTOR, RICE UNIVERSITY'S KINDER INSTITUTE FOR URBAN RESEARCH**

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### DATA SOURCES

#### INDICATOR HIGHLIGHTS

**Arts density:** National Center for Charitable Statistics

#### ADDITIONAL FEATURE

**Arts Vibrancy Index:** SMU DataArts Arts Vibrancy Index, 2018 (<https://www.culturaldata.org/>)

### SUBTOPICS

**Employment in the arts:** U.S. Census Bureau, EEO Tables

*Note: Some racial categories in the U.S. Census EEO tables were suppressed. For this reason, the Producers and Directors occupational category does not appear to reach 100 percent in the above chart.*

**Access to the arts:** National Center for Charitable Statistics

**Arts attendance:** The Houston Arts Survey, 2012

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3. Lappie, et. al. (2018)

### DATA SOURCES

#### INDICATOR HIGHLIGHTS

**Philanthropy:** 2018 Houston Civic Health Index Report, CPS Supplemental Survey, Pooled 2013 to 2016

**Voter turnout:** Texas Secretary of State Office, United States Elections Project

### SUBTOPICS

**Philanthropy and volunteering:** Kinder Houston Area Survey (2012-2018)

**Social connectedness:** Kinder Houston Area Survey (2014-2018)

**Non-electoral participation:** 2018 Houston Civic Health Index Report, CPS Supplemental Survey, Pooled 2013 to 2016

**Voter participation:** Texas Secretary of State Office, United States Elections Project

**Electoral participation:** 2018 Houston Civic Health Index Report, Harris County

## community context

1. "2017 American Community Survey Single-Year Estimates," *United States Census Bureau*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2018/acs-1year.html>



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## DATA SOURCES

### INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Diversity:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010; American Community Survey 2017, 1-year estimates

**Family structure:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

**Immigration:** "SUSC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) analysis of the 2016, 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata, covering the years 2012 through 2016," IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org)

### SUBTOPICS

**Population growth:** U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010; American Community Survey 2017, 1-year estimates

**Diversity:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017, 1-year estimates

**Immigration:** Migration Policy Institute

**Family structure:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017, 1-year estimates

**Public safety:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death

**Criminal justice:** Fort Bend County, Harris County, Montgomery County Juvenile Probation Departments, 2017; ACS, 1-year, 2017

## *economic opportunity*

- "Economic and Employment Impact of the Decline in Oil Prices," Texas Tech University Center for Public Service (2016) <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/politicalscience/mpa/cps/documents/finalreport1-23.pdf>
- "ALICE Data by County." *United Way of Texas* (2016)

## DATA SOURCES

### INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Working poor:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

**Disengaged youth:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

*Note: Data is not available for the 16-to-24-year-old youth population, so this represents a younger sub-population of disengaged youth.*

**Access to credit and household debt:** New York Federal Reserve (2010, 2016)

### SUBTOPICS

**Industry dynamics and job growth:** U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

**Unemployment and underemployment:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Income and inequality:** American Community Survey, 2017, 1-year estimates. Adjusted to 2017 dollars

**Poverty and social mobility:** ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Texas, United Way of Greater Houston, and United Way of Texas (2018)

**Access to credit and household debt:** Urban Institute (2017)

**Small business and entrepreneurship:** U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Total SBA Registered Small Businesses, 2019

## *education*

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### INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Kindergarten readiness:** Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Public Education Information Resource (TPEIR)

**Third-Grade reading:** TEA Academic Performance Report (TAPR) 2018-19

**High school diploma or more:** U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2017, 1-year estimates

**Postsecondary completion:** Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), TEA FY2008 8th Grade Cohort.

*Note: Because datasets contained records only for students who enrolled in institutions in the State of Texas, the statistics presented are likely underestimates of postsecondary completion.*

#### SUBTOPICS

**Educational attainment:** U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2017, 1-year estimates

**Early childhood education:** TEA TPEIR

**Academic achievement:** TEA TAPR (Class of 2018)

**Postsecondary completion:** TEA TAPR 2018 (Class of 2017)

**Enrollment:** TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Standard Reports

**Teacher:** TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Standard Reports

**Funding and expenditures:** TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Standard Reports (2016-17)

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#### DATA SOURCES

##### INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Commuting:** American Community Survey (2010 & 2017) 1-year estimate

**Public transit:** Houston-Galveston Area Council

**Ozone:** CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

**Heat vulnerability:** Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Environmental Health (CDC) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce

**Drinking water violations:** Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) Federal

##### SUBTOPICS

**Commuting:** American Community Survey (2010 & 2017) 1-year estimate.

**Urban mobility:** American Community Survey (2017) 1-year estimate

**Traffic and street safety:** Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Urban Mobility Report

**Climate change and clean energy:** The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)

**Air quality:** CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

**Water quality:** Houston-Galveston Area Council

*Note: Streams are tested for bacteria in segments. Miles of impaired streams is a sum of miles of segments that are impaired.*

**Natural resource:** Land Cover Data, Houston-Galveston Area Council

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INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Uninsured rates:** American Community Survey (2017) 1-year estimate

**Frequent mental distress:** Texas Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System

**Food insecurity:** Feeding America

**Teen births:** County Health Rankings. 2011-2017 combined

SUBTOPICS

**Access to healthcare:** American Medical Association

**Health behaviors and risks:** Texas Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (2016)

**Health outcomes:** U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool, based on November 2018 submission data (1999-2016): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; [www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz), June 2019. Texas Cancer Registry, <https://www.cancer-rates.info/tx/>

**Mental health:** County Health Rankings (2018)

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### DATA SOURCES

INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

**Housing-cost burden:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

**Location affordability:** H+T Index

**Evictions:** 2010 and 2016 Eviction data, Eviction Lab

SUBTOPICS

**Housing stock:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

**Housing conditions:** American Community Survey, 2017, 1-year estimates

**Homeownership and renting:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates

**Housing affordability:** American Community Survey, 2010 & 2017, 1-year estimates. Inflation adjusted

**Housing vulnerabilities:** Coalition for the Homeless, 2019



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