

community context

HOW DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION SHAPE AND DEFINE HOUSTON'S THREE-COUNTY REGION.

Understanding a region as large and diverse as Houston requires a deep look at the foundational factors that shape our society — the community context. Exploring and analyzing critical indicators like population growth, transportation access, and public safety provide valuable insights into our region's health.

Population growth brings economic growth, innovation, and — in Houston's case — delicious food from across the globe. At the same time, growth can also stretch the capacity of social services and the limits of aging infrastructure. To thrive, people need access to safe, reliable, affordable, and convenient transportation options, and to live in safe communities that facilitate social connections, housing stability, and economic opportunity.



The population in Houston's three-county region has grown 134% since 1980 to 6.2 million in 2021. Primarily driven by domestic and international migration, this population growth is part of a decades-long trend that has positioned Houston as an economic and cultural hub of the South. During this time, Houston became more diverse as well. Currently, people of color (i.e., people who do not identify as non-Hispanic white) comprise 73% of the population in Harris County, 71% in Fort Bend, and 39% in Montgomery County. By 2050, that figure is expected to increase to 78% in Harris, 79% in Fort Bend, and 59% in Montgomery counties.

Despite rapid population gains, the rate of traffic fatalities has declined significantly in the suburban

counties. The rate of deaths from collisions in Fort Bend and Montgomery counties fell by more than half between 2000 and 2020. Montgomery County reduced its vehicle fatality rate to 13.6 per 100,000, and Fort Bend County's rate fell to 6.7 per 100,000 people in 2020. That same year, the vehicle death rate in Harris County dipped to 12.3 per 100,000 — marginal improvement since 2000 when 15 people died on the roads out of every 100,000 people.

While Houston-area roads have become safer over the last two decades, gun violence has become a larger threat. The rates of firearm fatalities in Harris and Fort Bend counties have risen sharply, surpassing respective vehicle death rates in 2020. The number of deaths per 100,000 people in Montgomery County that involved a firearm in 2020 had not improved from 2000. And a pressing threat for our most marginalized neighbors is the prevalence of hate crimes and human trafficking. The latter for which the Houston region is known as a hub because of our central location and vast network of interconnected roads and highways.

It is this same physical infrastructure which strongly incentivizes car ownership in the region. Houstonians overwhelmingly rely on private vehicles to get around our vast metropolis — over 9 out of 10 residents in the three-county region own a private vehicle. Further constraining transit options, over 95% of households in Fort Bend and Montgomery counties live more than a quarter mile from the nearest public transit stop. While not a common mode of commuting to work or running errands, cycling in the region is a popular form of recreation with the expansion of dedicated trails and bike lanes. While future investments in public transportation could change access to transportation for Houstonians, the car remains king, shaping how we interact with the larger region and one another.

Every community has its own set of strengths, assets, and valuable history. The deeper we understand our community context, the more equipped we are to tackle persistent and emerging challenges through solutions that allow everyone to live to their fullest potential.

3 Subtopics of community context

POPULATION & DIVERSITY



Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery counties grew each decade between 1980 and 2021.

GROWTH BETWEEN 1980 & 2021

FORT BEND **↑ 6X**

HARRIS **↑ 2X**

MONTGOMERY **↑ 5X**

TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

<5% **OF HOUSEHOLDS**

are located within ¼ mile of a public transit stop.



Only 4% of households in Harris County and 3% in Fort Bend and Montgomery counties live within a quarter mile of a public transit stop. Consequently,

OVER 95% OF HOUSTONIANS lack access to public transportation.

PUBLIC SAFETY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE



83% ↓

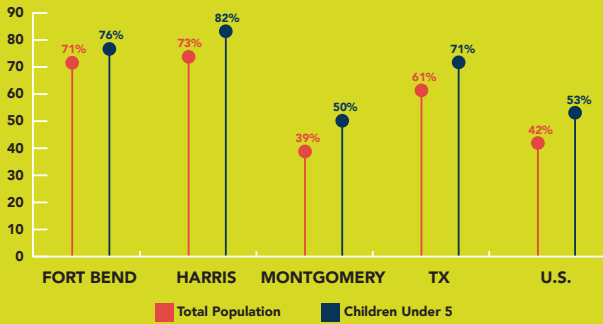
In 2021, just over 600 per 100,000 young people received referrals to juvenile probation, an 83% decline from 3,600 in 2010. Even prior to pandemic-related school closures in 2021, the referral rate was trending downward.

EXPLORE ALL THREE SUBTOPICS FURTHER ON WWW.UNDERSTANDINGHOUSTON.ORG

DIVERSITY

At least half of children under 5 in the region identify as a person of color, with the largest percentages in Fort Bend and Harris counties.

Percent of population that identifies as a person of color, 2021

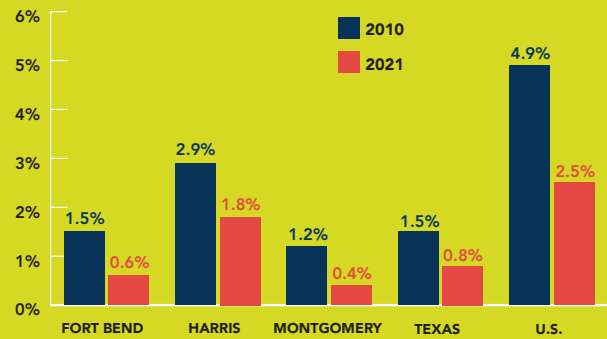


Regional trend over time: **👍**
Region compared to nation: **👍**

TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Less than 5% of Houston-area workers use public transportation to get to work. The majority drive alone with a substantial portion working from home.

Percent of workers who took public transportation to work, 2021

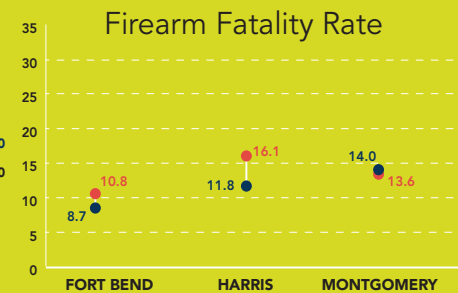
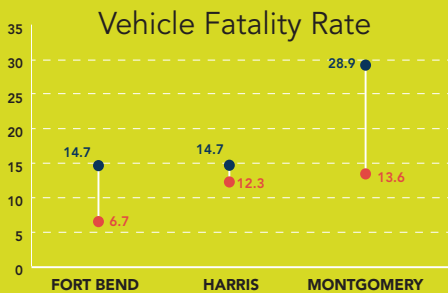


Regional trend over time: **👎**
Region compared to nation: **👎**

PUBLIC SAFETY

Between 2000 and 2020, the vehicle death rate declined while the firearm fatality rate increased.

Rate of people who died in incidents involving vehicles or firearms per 100,000 population



Trend over time:



Compared to nation:



LEGENDS

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

COMPARISONS: **👍** Better **👎** Worse **👉** Same **🕒** No Info

See next page for references and data sources.

references

community context

DATA SOURCES

SUBTOPICS

Population & Diversity: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey Estimates

Transportation Access: Houston-Galveston Area Council, by request

Public Safety & Criminal Justice: Harris County Juvenile Probation Department

INDICATORS HIGHLIGHTED

Population & Diversity: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey

Transportation Access: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey

Public Safety & Criminal Justice: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Mortality Data on CDC WONDER (Wide-ranging ONline Data for Epidemiologic Research), Current Final Multiple Cause of Death Data