

Penta

Texas Insights Review

Published September 2022



Executive Summary

From August to December 2021, we surveyed and spoke with state and local policymakers in Texas to understand how the government and private sector responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and what policymakers want to see from advocates during this time. This Review summarizes our findings on the top issues that policymakers would like to dedicate resources to, how the private sector has engaged with these issues throughout 2021, and what policymakers would like to see from the private sector moving forward.

This Report Includes Information From

268

Online Study Participants



35

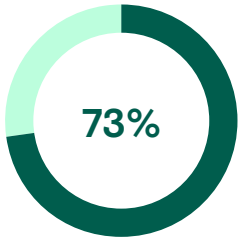
Policymaker Conversations

Resource Allocation Priorities in Texas

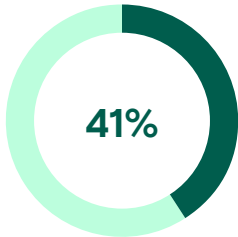
Texas policymakers identified utilities infrastructure and K-12 education as the top issues they would like to see resources allocated to in the coming year. At 73%, a notable majority emphasized the importance of focusing on infrastructure.

Top Issues to Allocate Resources

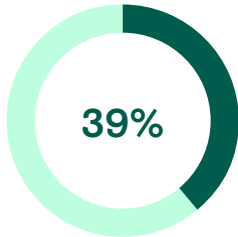
Where should state and local governments in Texas focus on allocating resources in 2021? Respondents permitted multiple selections. | n=180



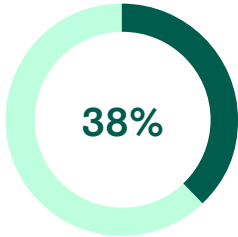
Utilities Infrastructure



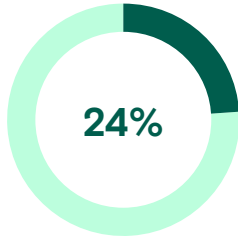
K-12 Education



First Responders



Access to Healthcare



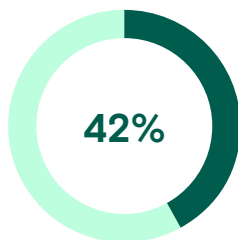
Public Health Capabilities (e.g. Vaccine Distribution and Testing)

Priority One:

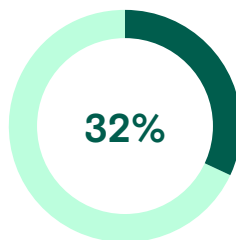
Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a major concern in Texas, as the state has had the largest population growth in the U.S. in the last decade. In 2021, more people moved into Texas than moved out, further increasing the size of the population. The winter storm of February 2021 caused Texas' electric grid to fail and resulted in billions of dollars of damages, highlighting the need for investment in the eyes of Texas policymakers.

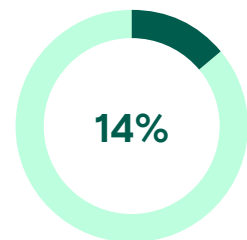
Reasons for Moving to Texas 2020-2021



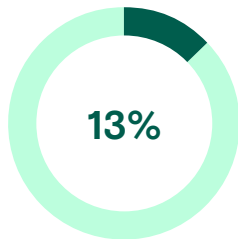
Job



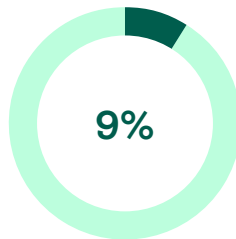
Family



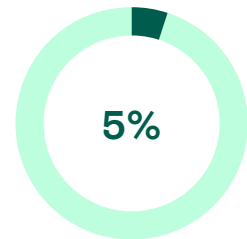
Lifestyle



Retirement



Cost



Health

Infrastructure Investment Required to Support Double-Digit Population Growth

According to the 2020 Census, Texas had a population growth of 16% - the most growth of any state in the country. Policymakers are concerned that the population and economic growth of Texas is not keeping pace with infrastructure maintenance and investment.

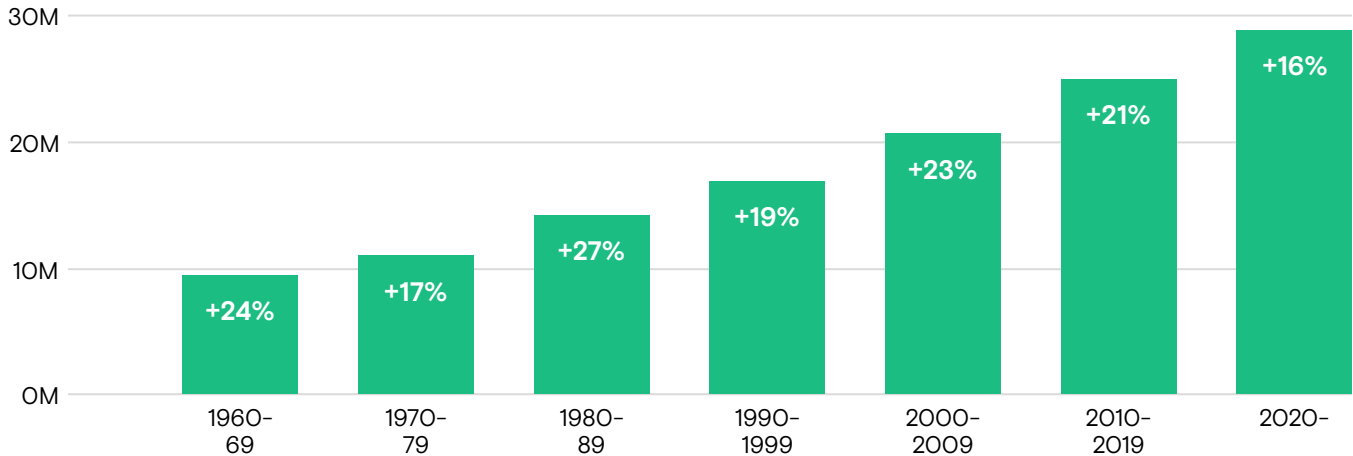
Source: <https://www.unitedvanlines.com/newsroom/movers-study-2021>

Texas Population Growth by Decade



...Infrastructure improvements throughout the state are vital especially as the state continues to expand and grow.

Council Member, Municipal, D



Policymakers View Comprehensive Infrastructure Investment as a Priority



...All of our cities have some infrastructure needs and where that overlaps with the state needs, I think there should be some focus there...

Council Member, Municipal, R

Energy Grid Reliability

The winter storm of February 2021 caused policymakers to become concerned about the reliability of Texas' independent energy grid.

Concerns That Texas' Grid Cannot Sustain Increased Electricity Demand



... I kind of go back to our winter storm again and, and really think that until we build and install more electric infrastructure—the thought of 30 million Texans having electric cars kind of scares me because I don't know if we can maintain the grid right now on that.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, R

Need for Energy Reliability



A lot of people are still clamoring for energy reliability. We had our grid shut down during a winter storm in February... And our grid was tested again in June when temperatures weren't even that warm. And ERCOT was saying you need to shut off your air conditioning in summer.

Senior Manager, Executive, D

Failing Grids Hurt Communities



If you lose power in a certain area, if you lose power at a hospital, you lose power at the railroad interchange, etc., right? The effects would be totally catastrophic. We saw what happens when it froze for a week here in Texas and costs billions of dollars of damages...but there were plenty of people where they never lost power. And so that's why the grid affects us in such profound ways because even though they had power, their community was still shut down.

Legislative Director, Legislative, D

EV Infrastructure

While policymakers note significant investments being made in Electrical Vehicles (EV) by auto manufacturers, many highlight the lack of charging infrastructure to support EVs in the state.

Infrastructure Needs to Catch Up to Investment Level of Auto Manufacturers



[Automanufacturers] have very strong, high level investments in electrification versus combustion. And their product lines reflect that... The infrastructure out there in the communities needs to catch up for the manufacturers.

City Manager, Municipal, I

Debate About Taxes to Pay for Infrastructure



Electric vehicles are going to be a big deal. In the Capitol this last session, there was even a lot of discussion about taxing gas for gas vehicles that use the roads. Now there's some other states that are taxing electric vehicles to help pay for infrastructure too, and there seems to be an interest on one side of the public policy debate about doing that. That's a sign that the industry is growing and I know it's going to be here for good.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, I

Legislative Changes to Support EVs



But for the first time in a decade, the legislature advanced the bill that would essentially be the first chink in the armor of the three-tier system that has blocked EVs from enjoying widespread success in the state of Texas. And in doing so, gave the signal to all of these companies who are down here that investment in Texas is a good idea...

Legislative Director, D

Policymakers See a Role for Private Sector in Advancing EV Infrastructure



I think they should also be a part of that debate about having those charging stations more available to the public. They're going to have a product...So I think the private sector should have a role, not just be sitting up looking for marketing spending—they're going to get a benefit out of it. They should also have some participation in making sure that, that infrastructure, that charging infrastructure, assists the government in the deployment of those.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D



... So we're not seeing a lot of charging stations go in and some of that other stuff that will become necessary, the infrastructure you're going to need to make electrical vehicles accessible real good... I'd certainly be encouraging the building of the infrastructure, that the electrical vehicles will need charging stations...

Emergency Coordinator, Municipal, R

Priority Two:

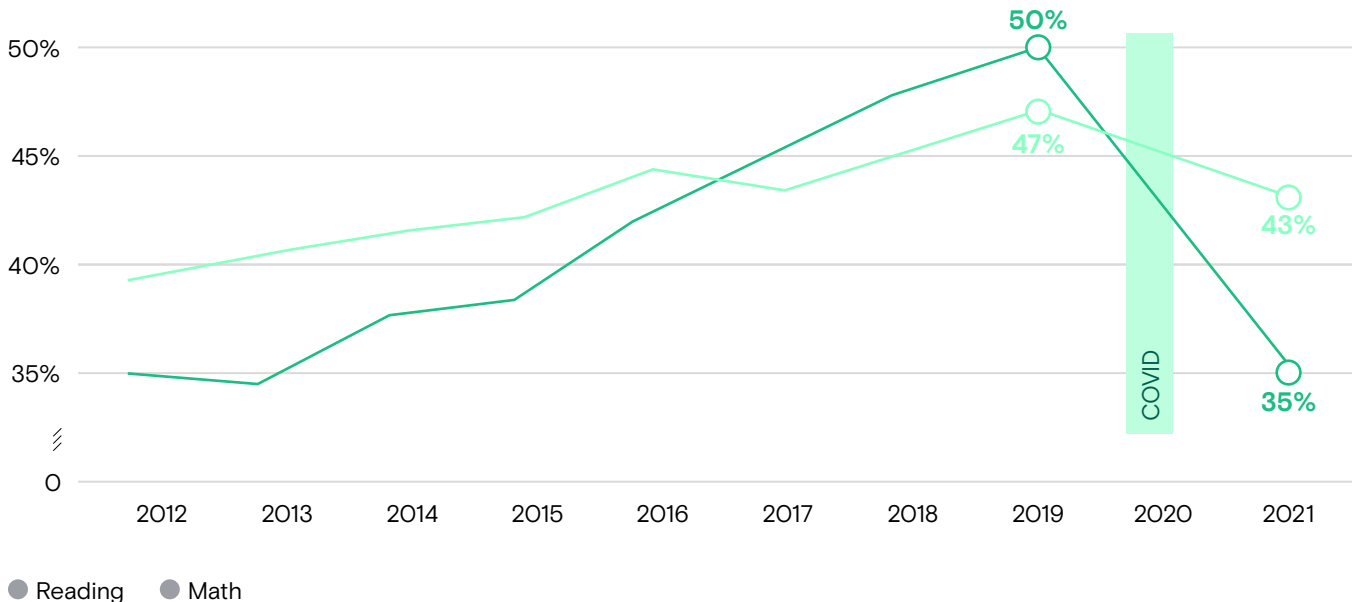
K-12 Education

Adequately resourcing of K-12 education is a concern, with 41% of policymakers stating local and state governments should allocate funding towards K-12 education.

Closing the Learning Gap Caused by COVID Virtual Instruction

As state education performance testing shows academic standards down year-over-year, there is an expressed need to catch students up to pre-pandemic standards.

Percent of Students (Grades 3-8) at Meets Grade Level or Higher



Source: Texas Education Agency

COVID Is To Blame for the Lost Year in Education



Kids were robbed of a year of instruction, and it was nobody's fault... It's just a fact...it's just not the same, so it's almost like a lost year for a lot of kids.

Senior Manager, Executive, D

Using COVID-Funds to Address Learning Gap



Public education that strides to continue closing educational gaps and that during COVID, when it's noted statistically by testing and so forth that there has been an academic lag, to make up for that lag so that this generation of students are able to be successful... COVID money should be used, number one, to try to alleviate the academic lag.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D

Quantifying COVID Impact and Adapting Instruction



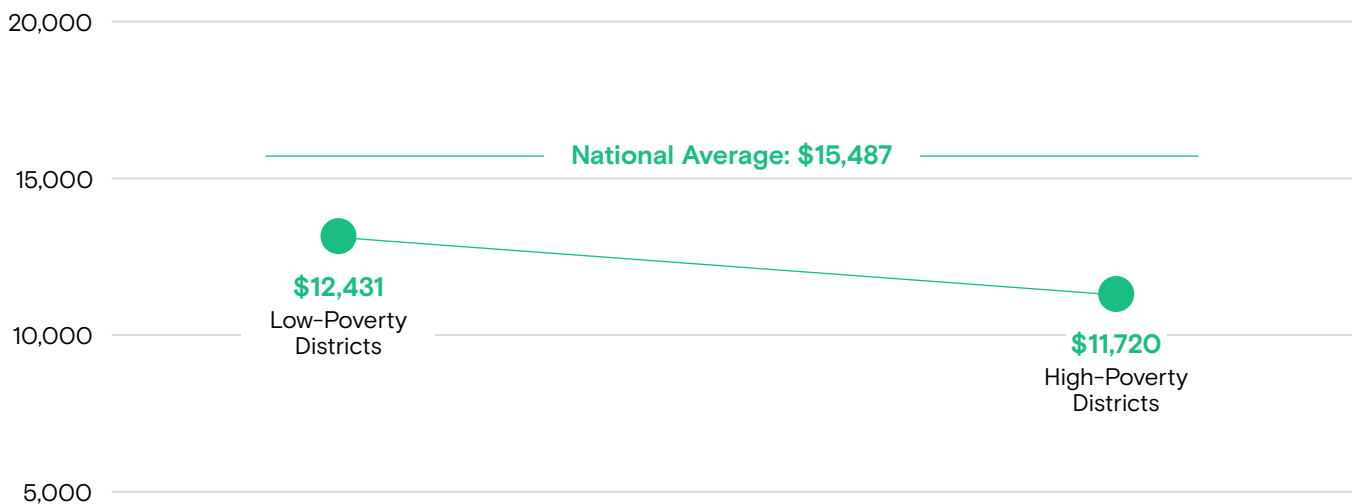
...They're measuring the impact of not having that in-person interaction with the teachers, seeing how detrimental it's actually been to students and they've been able to quantify it... How do we address those reported deficits in learning that have taken place over the last year, and how do we assist the kids in catching up?

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D

Education Disparities Exist Between Low and High-Poverty Districts

Ensuring schools in poorer areas have access to the same resources as schools in richer areas is a concern for policymakers. Texas ranks 40th in the nation with regards to public school funding.¹ Without adequately addressing disparities in education, many students risk falling further behind.

Pre-Pupil Funding Level



Source: Education Law Center

Not Enough Money For Public Education



Texas does not put enough resources into public education. And basically, that means not providing enough money to provide all of the resources that the public school system needs.

Council Member, Municipal, D

Ensuring A Certain Amount of Funding Per Student



...We've got a little bit more ways to go to make sure that if we say it's going to take a certain amount per student, generally, that's where all students start.

Representative, Legislative, R

Property Values Determine School Funding



... Leaders in the state just did not believe in putting public money into the public school system... So that just means there's not enough funding between the state and property taxes to provide the resources.

Council Member, Municipal, D

More Opportunities for Students Across Economic Levels



Texas education, overall, I think is adequate. But we need to offer more economic opportunities for our students, especially those that are working-class, middle-class... So finding ways for us to continue subsidizing education on all levels, whether it's college, whether it's public schools, having the state government pick up the slack more so than local governments through property taxes, I think is as important.

Council Member, Municipal, D

K-12 education should prepare students for success without needing a college education

Policymakers see a need for developing a workforce with a diverse skill set, and do not believe college should be the only path towards a successful career. Instituting more trade-skills building programs in k-12 education is a priority for policymakers.

Skills Programs for 11th and 12th grade



The biggest bill was to make vocational training available and be full-time for 11th and 12th graders because college isn't for everyone... In Texas we have about 200 industry-based credentials that you can earn in different degrees like welding, electrical, and so forth. We have about 225 that you can earn when you graduate from high school.

Representative, Legislative, R

Jobs Needed Across Industries and Skill Levels



When we talk about middle skills, what we're talking about are something beyond the high school level, but something less than the college level. Because of the fact that we don't graduate enough people in college to have everybody in college, doing manufacturing or doing plumbing or doing electrical wiring or things of that nature. But a lot of these things are very necessary and very required to be able for the economy to function, for people to have successful careers and lifestyles.

Director, Executive, D



Now, some folks go on to college, but then there are a lot of people who do not go on to college. We still need to get more people in college, but we also need to better prepare folks to enter the various trades and professions...

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D



... College is still a good level of attainment. But not everybody's made for college...What I've been trying to say is get rid of the stigma that every kid needs to go to college. It may be college, it might mean trade school. That's great. That's fine. That's where we need to be because we need all levels and all types of people doing jobs.

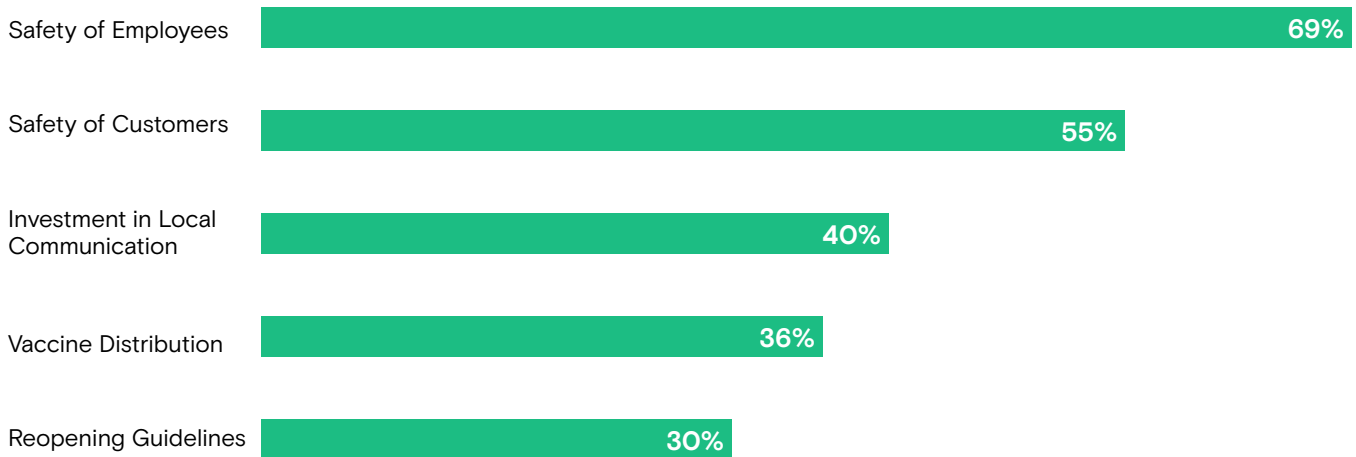
Council Member, Municipal, R

Policymaker Priorities for the Private Sector

Policymakers want to see the private sector take proactive steps to aid in the COVID-19 recovery by taking care of their employees and then their customers.

What to Prioritize to Support State Recovery

What should the private sector prioritize in 2021 for a COVID-19 recovery? Respondents permitted multiple selections. | n=183



Employee Development

Another opportunity for private organizations to take an active role is offering training and developing their employees. Providing skills training for workers and opportunities for advancement are imperative to policymakers' desired economic growth.

Developing Local Workforce Programs



They do a lot of the workforce training...They partner with the local colleges and you can get trained up pretty quick, and they do a lot of in-house training too...Just find good workers and help shape them in the way you want them to be... Same thing for any large Fortune 500 company that we know has a lot of money. If you're going to go into a smaller community, help fund the local community colleges for your workforce training.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, I

Partnering with Community Colleges



From a workforce perspective on the transition to electronic vehicles is the worker pipeline needs, and supporting community colleges while they build programs to shift.

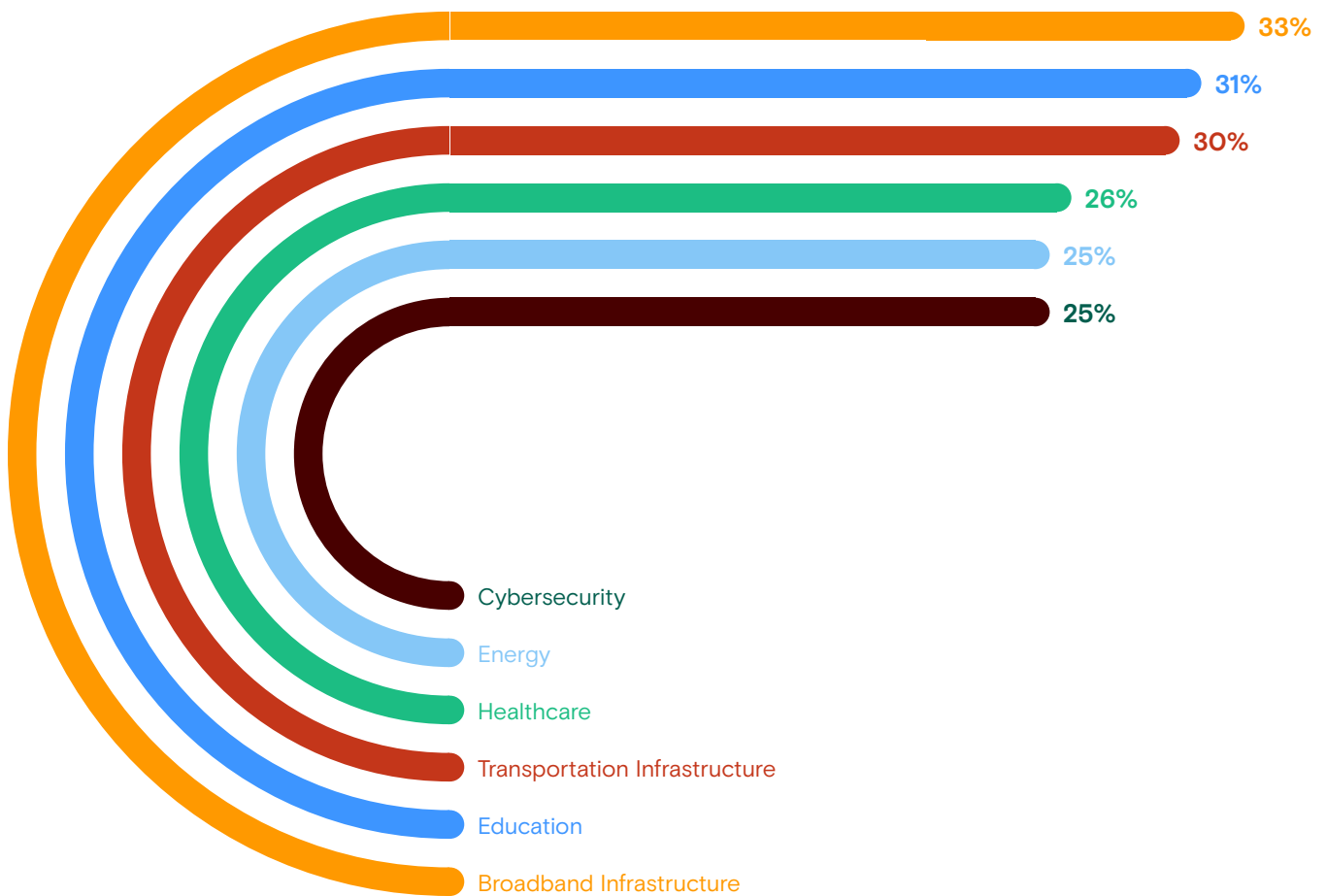
Director, Executive, R

Community Engagement & Corporate Social Responsibility

Policymakers encourage businesses to make community engagement a priority. 40% of policymakers desire to see greater investment in community development. Many see corporate social responsibility programs as an important source of engagement with policy priorities and offers opportunities for partnership with communities.

Other Issues to Prioritize Aside From COVID Recovery

Aside from a COVID recovery, what other issues should the private sector prioritize in 2021? Respondents permitted multiple selections. | n=179



Policymakers Appreciate Private Sector Partnership

Broadband



But when you don't have a computer at home or you don't have internet access, how can you even find that free extra help that's available on the internet? It's only some schools that have recently started to provide some assistance... but a lot of that is because private industry is donating additional money to do that.

Council Member, Municipal, D

Charging Infrastructure



The private should also have some participation in making sure that infrastructure, that charging infrastructure, assists the government in the deployment of those... They need to come do it directly. They should be involved in helping—and it's going to help them. It's going to help the industry in the long run as more people make their transition.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D

Education



There's nothing more that I appreciate than support for the educational aspect, whether it's providing scholarships for students, things of that nature. Just things channeling towards education.

Council Member, Municipal, D

Advocacy & Best Practices

Policymakers in Texas appreciate when advocates consider the impact of policies on policymaker's communities and provide genuine engagement. It is important to have data-based evidence before reaching out and approaching policymakers with good intentions.

Provide Accurate Data



Primarily with giving accurate data. We're such a data-driven society. And the Texas Legislature is like that as well. And I think providing the information on, not just that they're educating kids, but how they're doing it, how they're doing it differently, how they're doing it more efficiently, and how they're doing it with really less and less money, much less money...

Chief of Staff, Legislative, R

Inform about Impact on Policymaker's Community



I'd probably look at it as a big picture, kind of a macro, kind of how many people they employ, the taxes that they pay, the impact that they have in Texas. Those kinds of things I think play really well to us when constituents are asking us about industries in Texas. Those things are great for us to be able to have some knowledge on.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, R

Know Your Subject



Obviously the way to do that in some ways is, in terms of legislation, is to engage with their representatives. Which I mean sometimes they do but not a lot and definitely not about those issues. So it would need to look like meeting with someone who has a proven sort of track record and awareness about just general knowledge, legislative knowledge and otherwise.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D

Inform about Impact on Policymaker's Community



I think that hungry mouths get fed, right? And quiet mouths don't. So I think that the folks that are engaged on a community level, both with the schools and with their city councils, but also on the state level with the state legislature, that's the most important. That's some of the most effective... so somebody on staff if they were interested in actually kind of finding out about the district or ways in which we can work with them to kind of provide more opportunity for the district, whether it's like legislatively or in terms of our outreach efforts.

Chief of Staff, Legislative, D

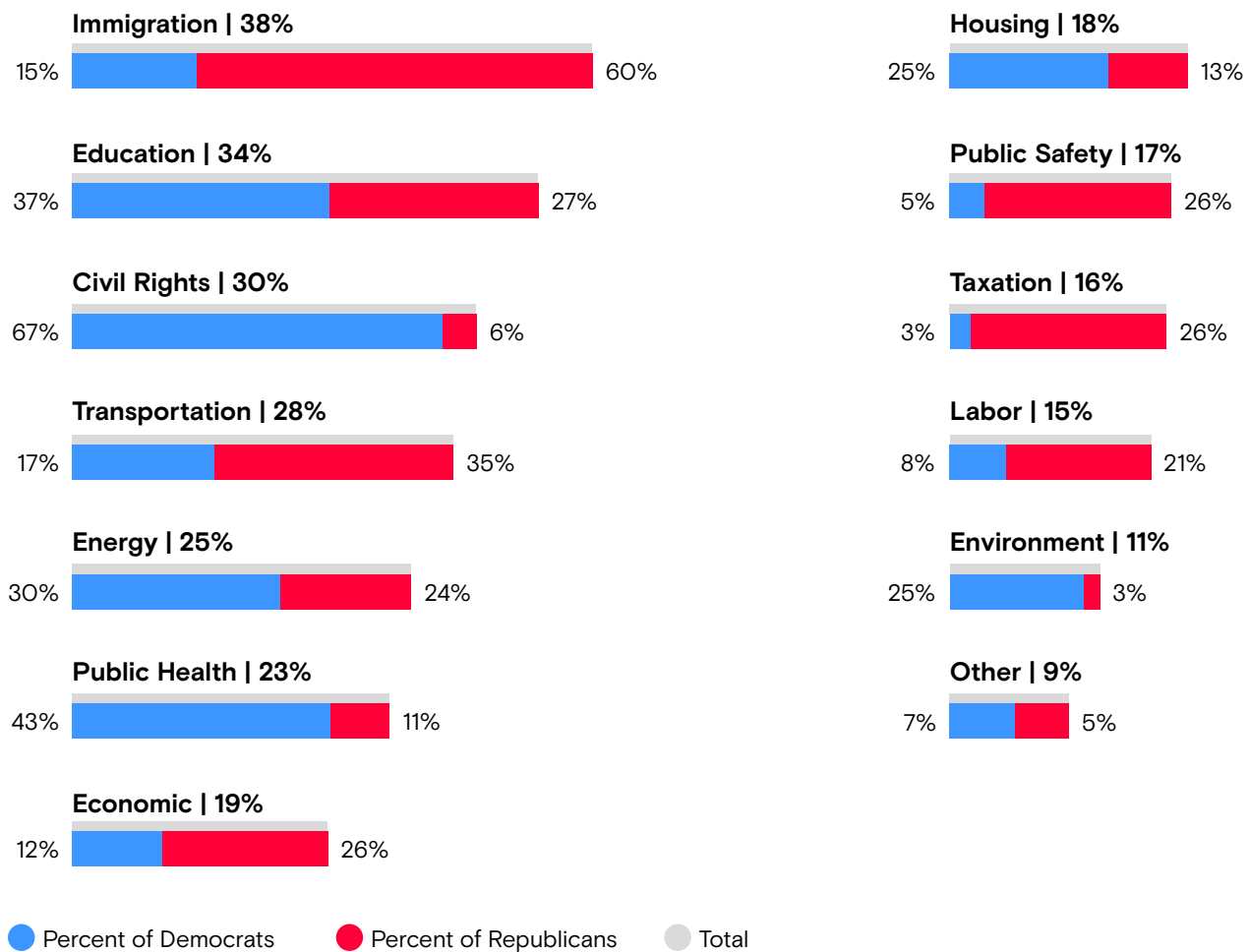
Appendix

Top Policy Issues in 2021

Texas policymakers across the political spectrum identify immigration, education, as well as civil rights & voting reform as three of the most pressing policy issues in the state.

Democrat and Republican Priorities

Which of the following do you view as the most pressing issues facing the state? Respondents permitted multiple selections. | n=183



The policy priorities of policymakers differ in Texas based on party. Democratic policymakers in Texas view civil rights & voting reform, public health & healthcare, and education as the top three most pressing issues, whereas Republican policymakers view immigration, education, and infrastructure as the top three priorities.

Government Partnerships

Executive Branch

Policy Professionals

Municipal Government

State Legislature

Our Clients

Trade Groups

Interest Groups

Professional Societies

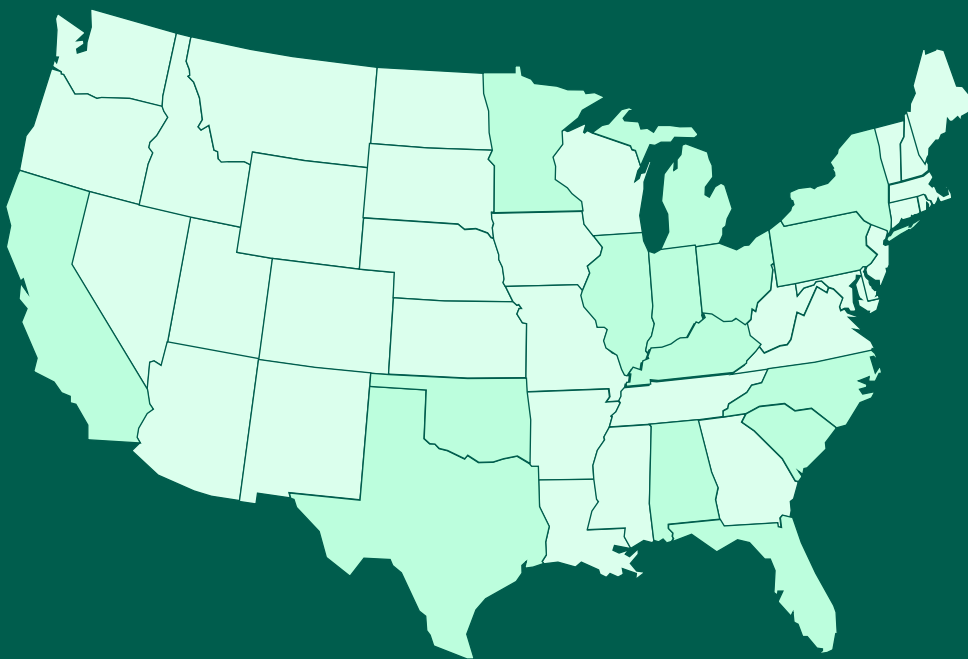
Companies & Associations

Penta

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Penta comprises over 200 professionals in New York, London, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco working to bring data-driven, tailored solutions to a majority of the Fortune 50 Companies and their associations.



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Citations

1. Bureau, U. S. C. (2021, October 8). Historical Population Change Data (1910–2020). Census.gov. Retrieved February 1, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/dec/popchange-data-text.html>
2. Education Law Center. (2021). Education law center. Making the Grade 2021 | Education Law Center. Retrieved February 1, 2022, from <https://edlawcenter.org/research/making-the-grade-2021.html>
3. 2021 National Movers Study. United Van Lines®. (2022, January 26). Retrieved February 1, 2022, from <https://www.unitedvanlines.com/newsroom/movers-study-2021>
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