

Penta Policy Insiders

Texas Insights Review Series

Energy

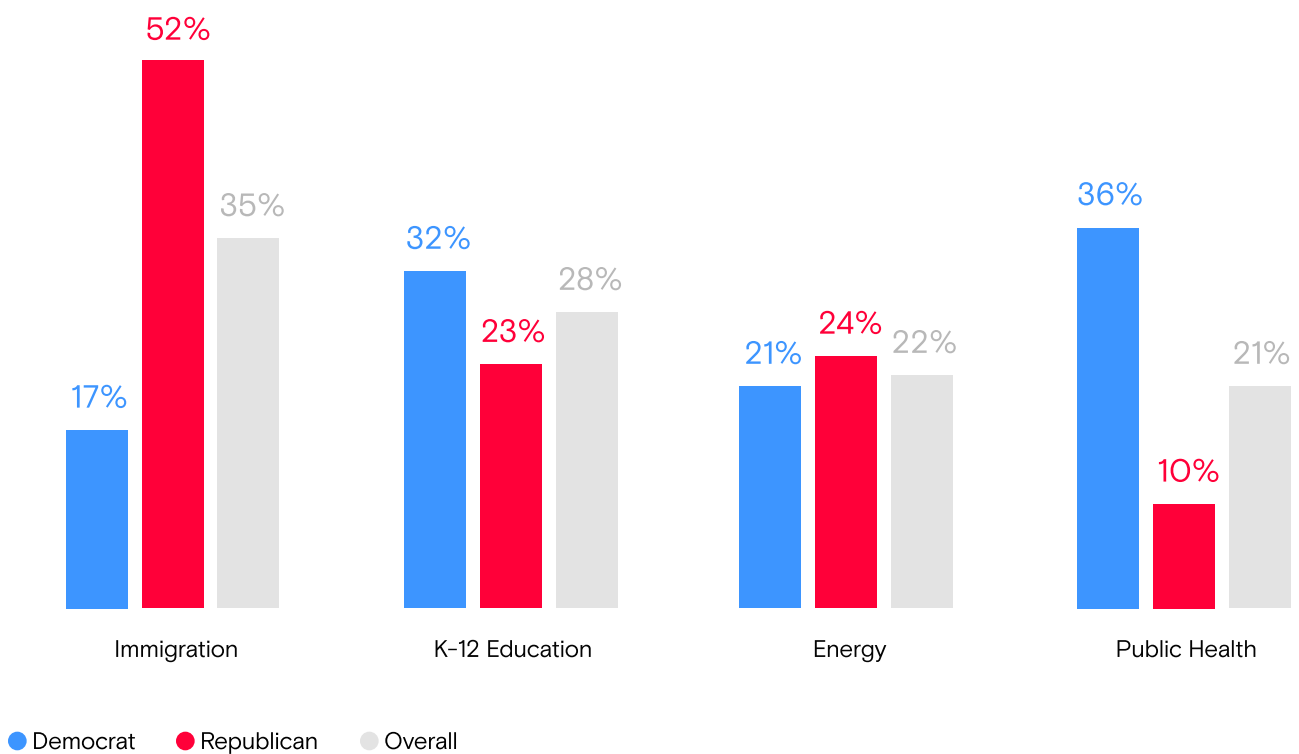
Executive summary

We are excited to share our findings from this year's Texas Insights Review. From September to December 2022, we surveyed and spoke with almost 300 state and local policymakers in Texas to understand their policy priorities as well as the top issues policy staff are facing across communities in the state.

Texas policy leaders we spoke to say immigration is a top challenge, with 35 percent of policy staff across both parties saying it is a main priority, particularly in relation to the state's labor force. When speaking on immigration, policy staff express viewpoints that vary across party lines. Democrats convey a need for increased legal pathways for immigrant workers in order to address the state's labor shortage, while Republicans emphasize the importance of curbing illegal immigration into the state. Improving K-12 education is also a top priority for Texas policy staff, with leaders citing the state's teacher shortage and school safety to be top concerns. Energy and public health are other issues at the forefront policy objectives for Democratic and Republican policy leaders we interviewed in the state.

This report is the third in a series that examines Texas policymakers' top policy priorities of 2022. This review examines energy in the state.

Top policy priorities in Texas

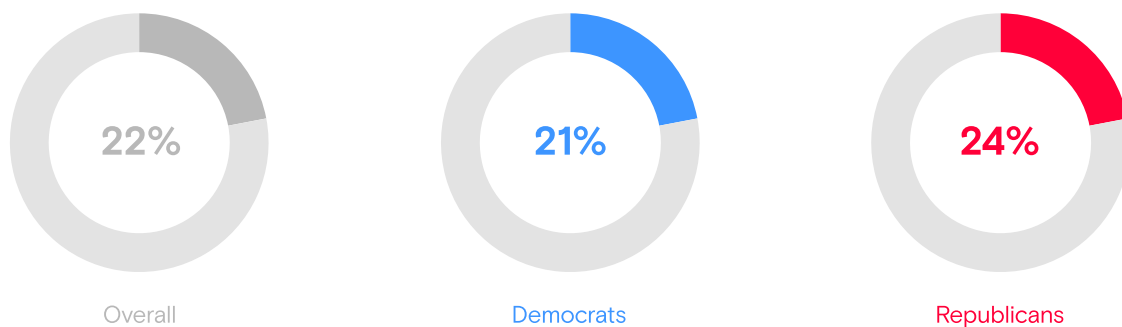


Texas deep dive

Energy

Texas is a leader in the energy industry, accounting for about a quarter of total energy production across the United States. In addition to having a high volume of oil and natural gas plants, Texas has an abundance of renewable energy resources and high potential for solar and wind energy production.¹ Moving forward, policymakers want to continue developing these resources and increase energy reliability in the state. In fact, almost a quarter of policymakers indicate energy is a top priority.

Policymakers who selected energy as a top policy priority:



According to policymakers, environmental concerns are particularly relevant to conversations about the future of energy in Texas. When asked about the top environmental priorities in the state, 52 percent selected natural disasters and 41 percent selected extreme climate shifts as a concern. In fact, policy staff note that climate shifts have created additional challenges with power distribution in the state, as the electric grid has been negatively impacted by changes in weather patterns. These concerns have led to increased conversations among policy leaders about renewable energy possibilities and the diversification of power as avenues that may help address these challenges.



Climate concerns

In 2022, Texas experienced one of its warmest summers on record. The state then went on to experience a winter that was colder than usual in 2023. Policymakers report that these uncharacteristic temperature fluctuations have impacted the state's electric grid, and left many residents without power for prolonged periods of time. Policy leaders believe there needs to be more developments in how the state utilizes energy to avoid potential problems in the future.



Texas did not do very well when it got cold... we had a cold snap for a good week where it was freezing. It knocked out power and the grid was just completely damaged. I just don't know if the grid is being held together by duct tape and band-aid or what, but that's a major deal.

Chief of Staff, Texas State Municipality, R



[A policy priority] is just energy reliability in general, and **we don't know how prepared our grid is for future weather related disasters, and we don't even know how resilient it is to long bouts of extreme heat or extreme cold...** we all sit there and wait for these weather events and hope that our grid is going to survive it. We're just lacking confidence in our grid.

External Relations Manager, Texas Executive Branch, D

Although policymakers are in agreement that changes in climate patterns are creating additional challenges in the state, there are conflicting opinions on what sources of energy will best prepare the state to sustain future instances of inclement weather.



[We also need to take care of] the grid and **continue to ensure that there aren't any weather related events [that] would take down the electricity grid.**

Chief of Staff, Texas House of Representatives, D



We have a lot of people investing in solar and wind. So **what we saw during the freeze was those propellers froze up.** They didn't work during that time. So they really didn't help us. I'm assuming solar did, I'm **not against renewables. Let's do it right.**

Mayor, Texas State Municipality, I



Anytime we've had weather events, it's been wind and solar that have been the most reliable. I think that that's the strongest case that we should make to expand our renewable base knowing that it's the most predictable, reliable, cleanest source of energy. So, yeah, I certainly want to **expand our efforts aggressively.**

External Relations Manager, Texas Executive Branch, D

Exploring energy sources

Policymakers are open to exploring different types of energy to determine what sources are most affordable and realistic for the state, but have also expressed concerns about the viability of current options. Some policymakers want to continue using fossil fuels, while others want to take further advantage of wind and solar energy.



People are moving here, and we need to keep up with the energy demands. Right? **I don't think that we should turn away any source of energy, especially if we can keep it reliable and affordable.**

Chief of Staff, Texas State Municipality, R



Wind and solar are great. I think those are technologies that we still need to be working on to advance, to change. The thing is, with wind and solar, **both of those are not a good baseload energy source... we need to have some sort of way to store that electrical energy.** Wind, it can be a toss-up.

Director, Texas Executive Branch, D



I don't think there is one single best source that I know of, although I think the efficiency with solar is getting huge, and maybe we ought to consider how we can double down on those efficiency gains. But wind is important, and then any other renewables that we can manage. **But wind and solar are kind of the top two.**

Director, Texas Executive Branch, D



I'm not one for cutting off our fossil fuels. I just never have been. They employ a lot of people. It's a very old practice and an old trade. I have a lot of respect for the people who work in that field. **That being said, I think that renewable energy does fit into our economy in some ways, and it's something that should be expanded upon.**

Councilman, Texas State Municipality, R

Conclusion

Fluctuations in weather have caused some concern about the reliability of Texas's energy sources during climate shifts, and policymakers want to ensure that the state's power supply is safeguarded. Policymakers are weighing the benefits and drawbacks of a variety of options including wind, solar, and fossil fuels to determine what will benefit the state in the future.

About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

Credits

Content Associate
Maddie Markenson

Senior Content Associate
Kinda Ahmed

**Associate Director, Government
Insights & Research Products**
Natalie Bahmanyar

Director, Research
Sehare Hemani

**Associate Director,
Quantitative Research**
Mackai Tapleshay

Chief Research Officer
Michael Griffin

President
Michael Gottlieb

Qualitative n: 33 | Quantitative n: 255

A Note on Use of These Materials

This document has been prepared by, and comprises valuable proprietary information belonging to Penta. It is intended for educational purposes only.

Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database retrieval system without the prior written permission of Penta. The use of copyrighted materials and/or images belonging to unrelated parties and reproduced herein is permitted pursuant to license and/or 17 USC § 107.

Citations

1. <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=TX>

Legal Caveat

Penta has worked to ensure the accuracy of the information it provides in this report. This report relies upon data obtained from many sources, however, and Penta is not able to guarantee the accuracy of the information or analysis contained in these materials. Furthermore, Penta is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or any other professional services. Penta specifically disclaims liability for any damages, claims or losses that may arise from a) any errors or omissions in these materials, whether caused by Penta or its sources, or b) reliance upon any recommendation made by Penta.

Confidentiality: All participation in our research is confidential and not for attribution.
