Penta Policy Insiders

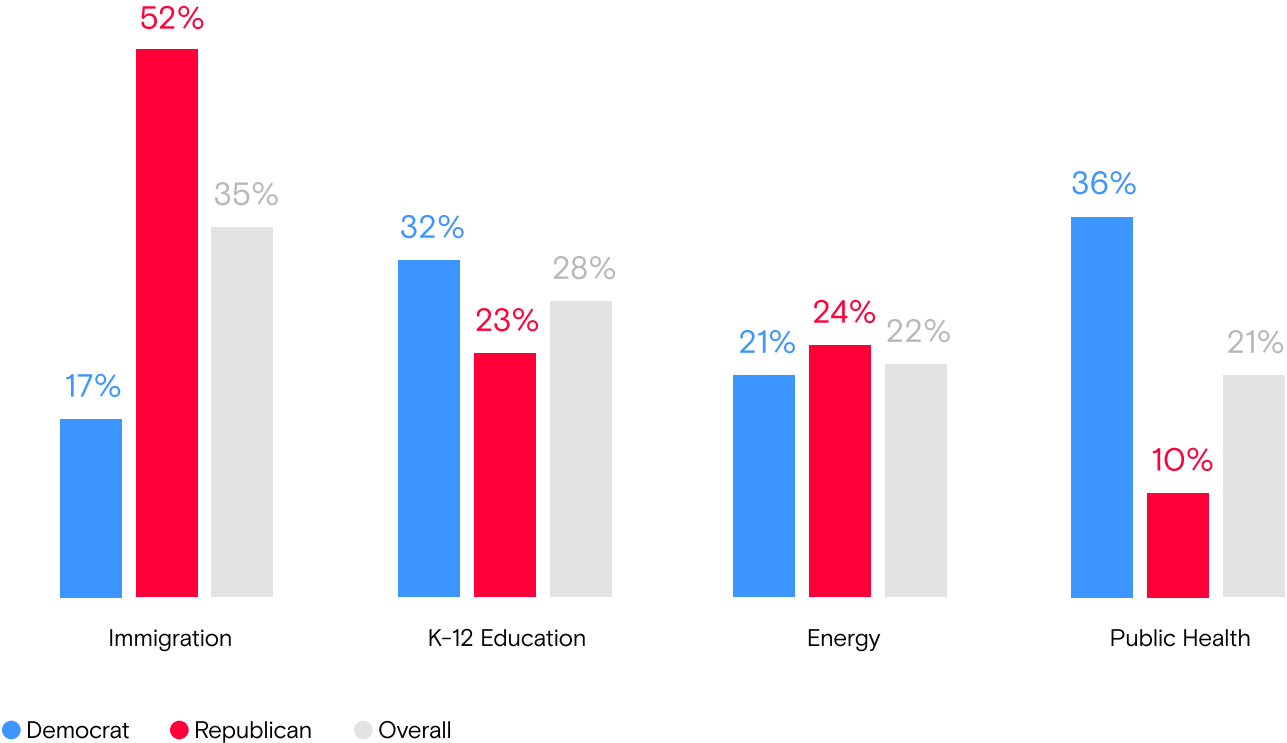# Texas Insights Review Series

Top Issues

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 first in a series that examines Texas policymakers' top policy priorities of 2022. This review examines top issues in the state.

Top policy priorities in Texas

Top issues in 2022

Immigration

Over a third of the policymakers we spoke to – about 35% – say immigration is a top issue in Texas. While it is a top bipartisan priority, policy leaders have different views on border policy and how immigrants should participate in the workforce.

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We need a way for people to work in the States that are coming from different countries, and to have protections to do so legally. That would help out our labor shortage issue a lot.

External Relations Director, Executive, D

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The border security situation is a national security situation. In my perspective, when you see the amount and volume of people coming across the border— I mean, **I'm all for legal immigration**...We need the help.

Director, Executive, R

K–12 education

Policymakers identify K–12 education as a top priority, with both Democrats and Republicans citing challenges with teacher shortages and funding. Policy leaders are conflicted on possible solutions, however, with some arguing in favor of a voucher program and others advocating for more investment in the school systems.

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Giving parents more options in educating their children will lead to **better academic outcomes, a more prepared workforce, and a stronger Texas.**

Chief of Staff, Texas House of Representatives, R

Energy

Policymakers are prioritizing energy issues, especially with inclement weather impacting power sources in the state. Many policy leaders feel that the electrical grid needs improvements and want to explore renewables that could help provide more reliable energy.

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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.

External Relations Manager, Texas Executive Branch, D

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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

Public health

Healthcare is a top concern in Texas, and policymakers identify high uninsured rates as one of the main challenges. Policy leaders want to provide more affordable healthcare, with some calling for increased emphasis on mental health services specifically.

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Texas remains— one way to look at it is basically the uninsured capital of the U.S. in terms of the amount of folks that do not have health care coverage in the state....

Legislative Director, Texas State Legislature, D

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We see a lot of times that people don't have enough income to afford to pay for healthcare services... even some of the marketplace insurances, or insurance that's available through someone's employer, doesn't always cover [everything].

Program Specialist, Texas State Municipality, R

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.

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