Penta Policy Insiders

Texas Insights Review

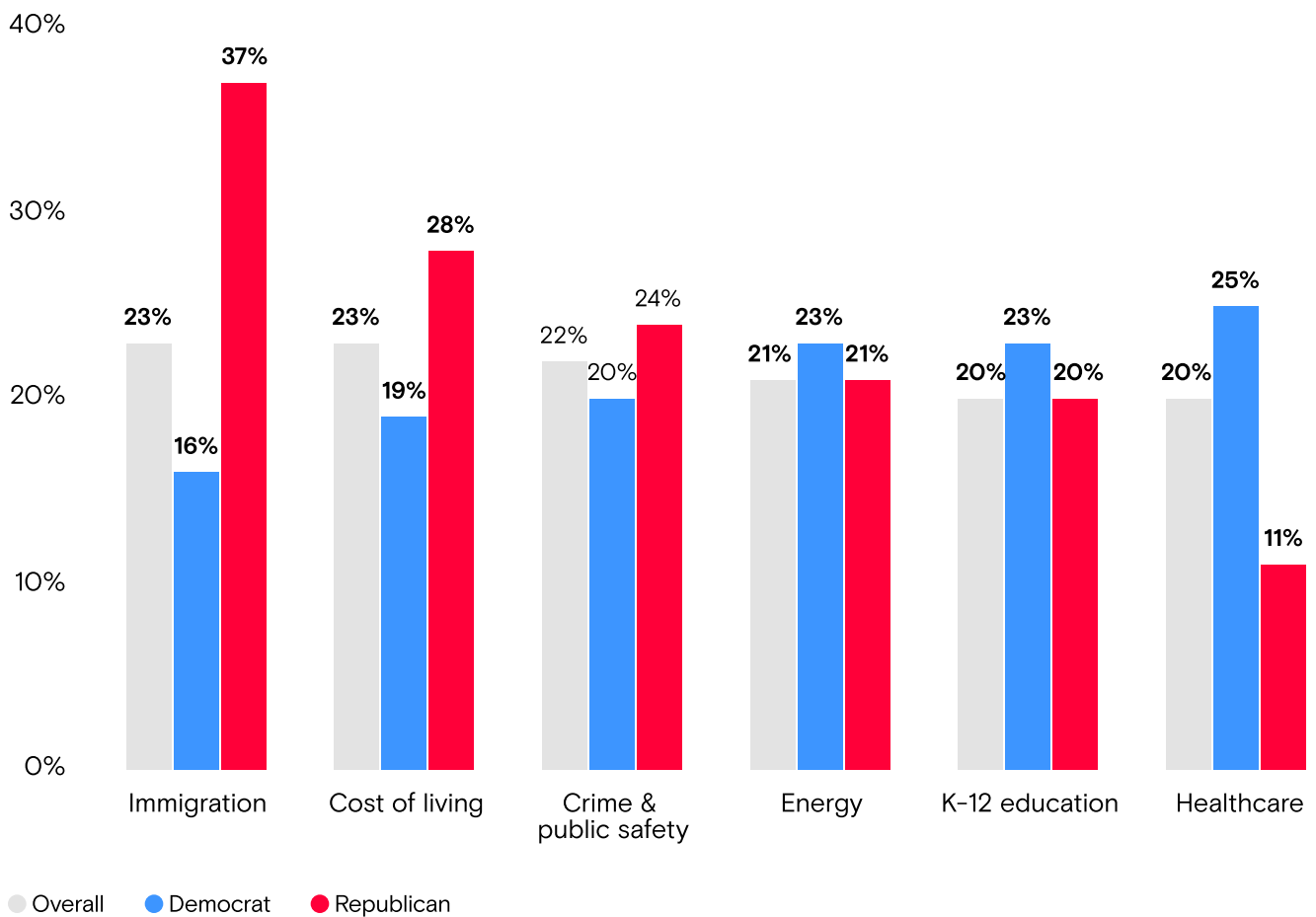**Crime & Immigration**

Executive summary

We are pleased to share our findings in this year's Texas Insights Review. From May to July 2023, we spoke to over 240 policymakers in the state to learn about their policy priorities and the top issues facing their communities.

Immigration and the cost of living are the top concerns among Texas policymakers, with almost a quarter of policy staff identifying the issues as individual leading priorities. Both issues are higher priorities for Republicans in the state. Crime and public safety is also a significant issue for the Lone Star state, with policymakers on both sides of the aisle identifying challenges, particularly in relation to immigration concerns. Energy, K–12 education, and healthcare are other top priorities for policymakers across the state of Texas.

This report is the first in a series that examines four of Texas policymakers' top priorities, which include (i) crime and immigration (ii) cost of living (iii) energy and (iv) K–12 education.
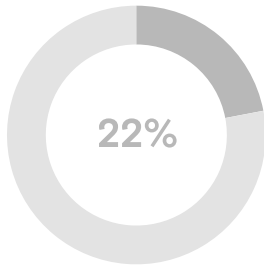
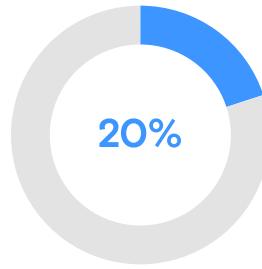**Top policy priorities in Texas**
Multiple selections permitted

Crime & Immigration

Crime and public safety is a top issue amongst Texas policymakers, with almost of a quarter of policy leaders – 25 percent – citing it as a critical problem. When it comes to crime, many Republicans point to illegal immigration as a driver of increased public safety concerns, while Democrats express worries over mass incarceration and gun policy.
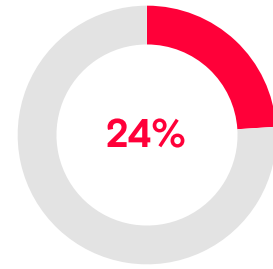
Policymakers who selected crime and public safety as a top policy priority:

22%	20%	24%
Overall	Democrat	Republican

Parties point to different public safety priorities

> Today, there's up to about over seven million illegal aliens and come across. **They're starting to permeate the culture. They're causing problems with crime…** these are desperate people and they're ransacking a lot of our businesses and stuff along the border.
>
> **Representative, Texas State House, Republican**

> For us, **passing sensible gun legislation is a priority, [along with] reforming access to assault rifles, which we don't really need here in Texas anyway.** Gun control would be number one.
>
> **Representative, Texas House of Representatives, D**

> **I think we should…reduce some of the over-criminalization that's going on.** Just the drain it has on our society, those families are getting separated, **and the cost to the government to hold everybody,** all those people that are detained pre-trial.
>
> **Chief of Staff, Texas House of Representatives, D**

Concerns over illegal immigration loom large for Republicans

Immigration is a top concern for Texas policymakers, though it is a stronger priority for Republicans than Democrats (37 percent versus 17 percent, respectively). Policy leaders in the state, specifically Republicans, convey that securing the border is crucial to reducing crime and bolstering Texas' communities.

This increased emphasis on immigration comes as Texas Governor Greg Abbott continues to advance Operation Lone Star – a multi-agency initiative touted to curb illegal immigration.[1] Adding to this discourse is the Biden administration's recent announcement that it has waved 26 federal laws in South Texas to allow for the construction of physical barriers at the Texas-Mexico border, an action that has been met with controversy, particularly as some Democrats believe that the Biden administration has walked back on campaign promises to not fund a border wall.[2]

Securing the border is top-of-mind for Texas Republicans

Republican policy leaders are concerned about rising crime which they believe is a result of increased illegal immigration across the Southern border.

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Today, there's up to about over seven million illegal aliens and come across. They're starting to permeate the culture. They're causing problems with crime… these are desperate people and they're ransacking a lot of our businesses and stuff along the border. And then just the [illegal immigration] is a burden on our healthcare system in Texas.

Representative, Texas State House, Republican

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We have these real needs now. **We have an immigration crisis from our southern border where people are just illegally immigrating to this state and this country.**

Representative, Texas State House, R

"

Number one, **we did not secure our Texas border. I believe it's the number one issue. We should have done that before we did anything else. We have an invasion. We have human and drug trafficking at an all-time high at our Texas border**. And HB-20, which would have alleviated a lot of — really the tension between the federal government and not protecting our southern border was killed on a point of order on the House floor. And so we have to do something about that.

Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R

Conclusion

For almost a quarter of Texas policymakers, crime is a top issue. While policymakers in both parties want to see safer communities, there are differences across the aisle on which public safety policy priorities to focus on. Republican leaders emphasize illegal immigration as a considerable contributor to crime, while Democrats believe gun reform and mass incarceration to be central factors to the ongoing discourse around public safety.

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

Citation

1. https://www.texastribune.org/2023/08/07/texas-border-eagle-pass-abbott-operation-lone-star/

2. https://apnews.com/article/biden-immigration-border-wall-trump-2024-democrats-646f656dbfecf268f0cb182c74ad47ca

Qualitative n: 25 | Quantitative n: 221