



Residents' views of the economy, environment, housing and other aspects of life in Fort Bend County

Findings from the Greater Houston Community Panel

The George Foundation
August 26, 2026



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Kinder Institute for Urban Research

Mission

To improve lives through data, research, engagement, and action.

Vision

Prosperity for all

Ensuring everyone has an opportunity to build and share in the Houston region's prosperity.



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Education



Population



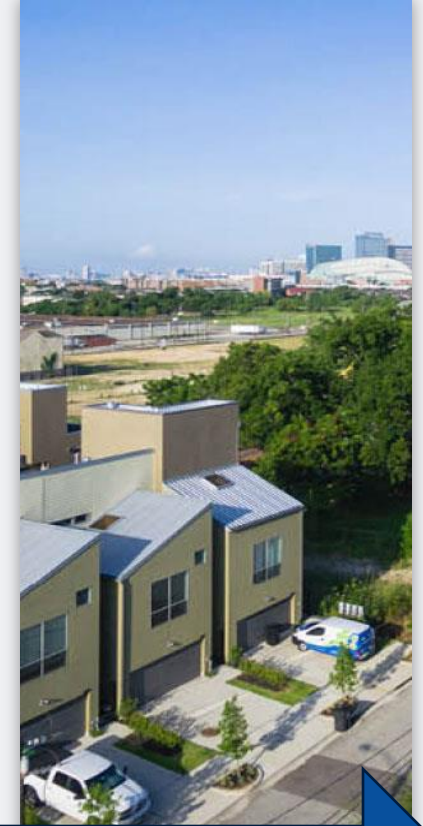
Community Health



Economic Mobility



Housing



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Our approach

Research-practice partnerships



UNITED WAY
Greater Houston



+7 other
school
districts



Harris County
Public Health
Building a Healthy Community



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Today's agenda

- Overview of the Greater Houston Community Panel (GHCP)
- Findings from research done in the past year with the GHCP focused on results in Fort Bend County, including:
 - Attitudes on the economy and residents' financial situations
 - Concerns about the environment and its impacts on health
 - Housing affordability and experiences with temporary homelessness
 - The power of social connectedness
 - And more...



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Greater Houston Community Panel



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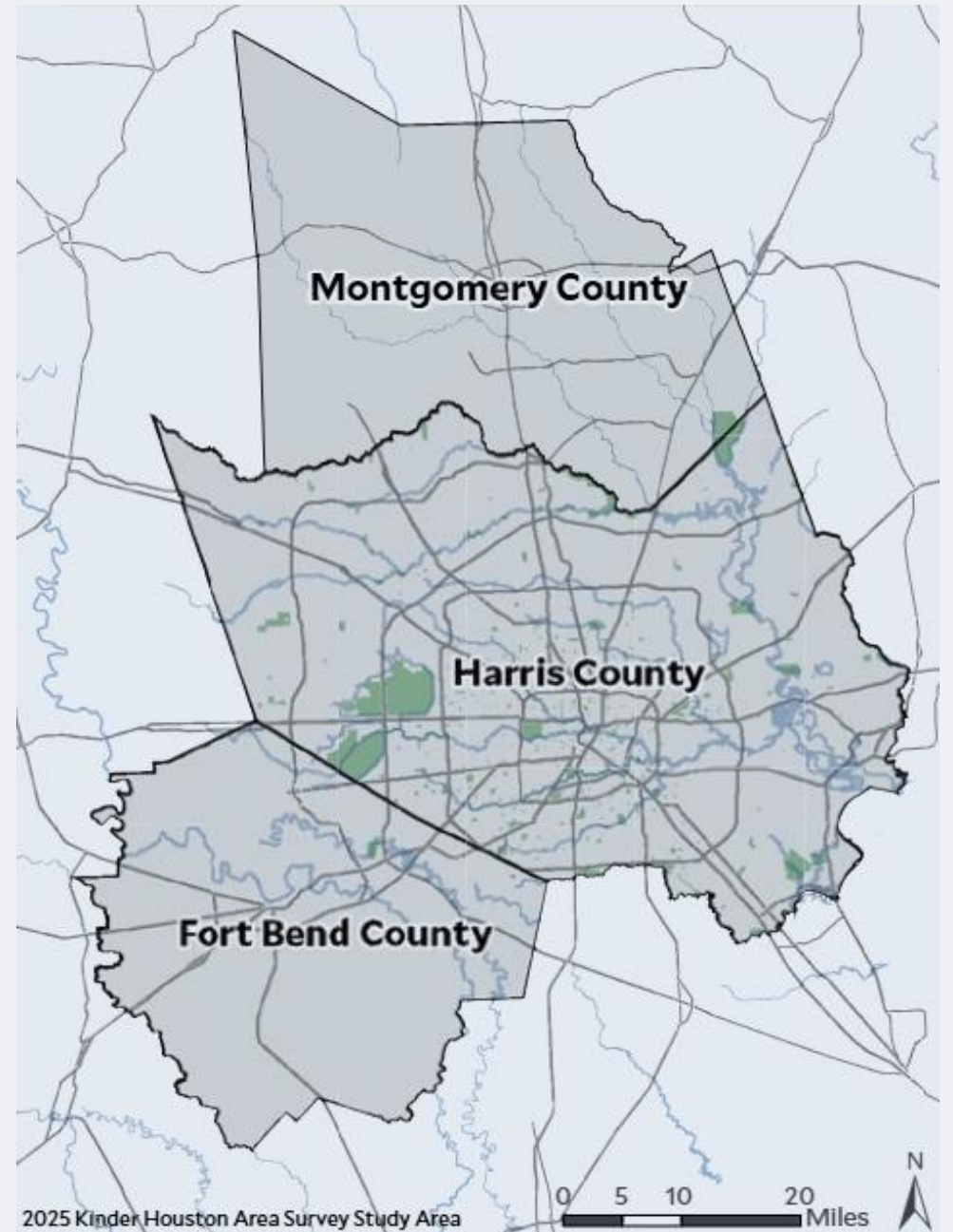
Greater Houston Community Panel

- Study includes more than 10,000 residents from Houston, Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties
- Follows same adults over time with surveys administered online throughout the year
- Provides respondents with an incentive for each survey they complete
- In total, 16 surveys administered in the past 4 years, more than 1,200 surveys questions asked, over 12 million data points gathered



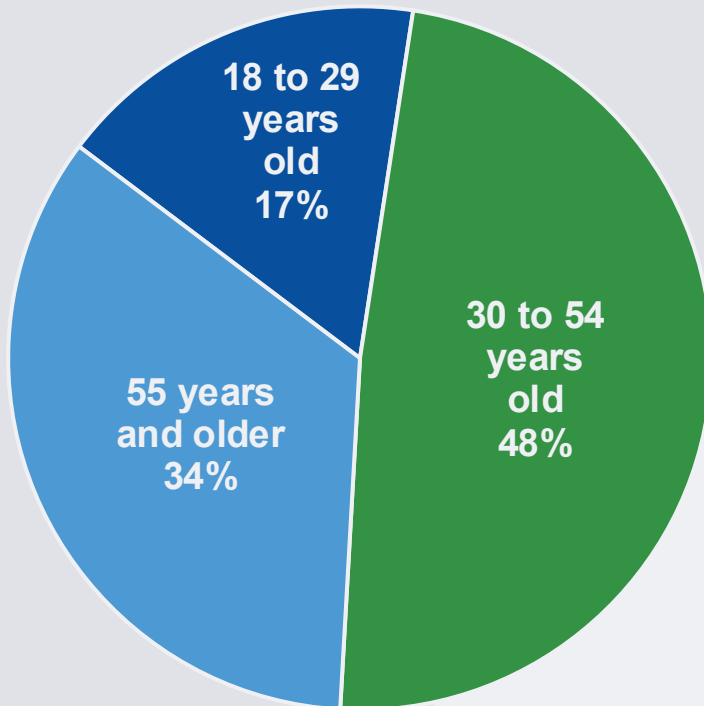
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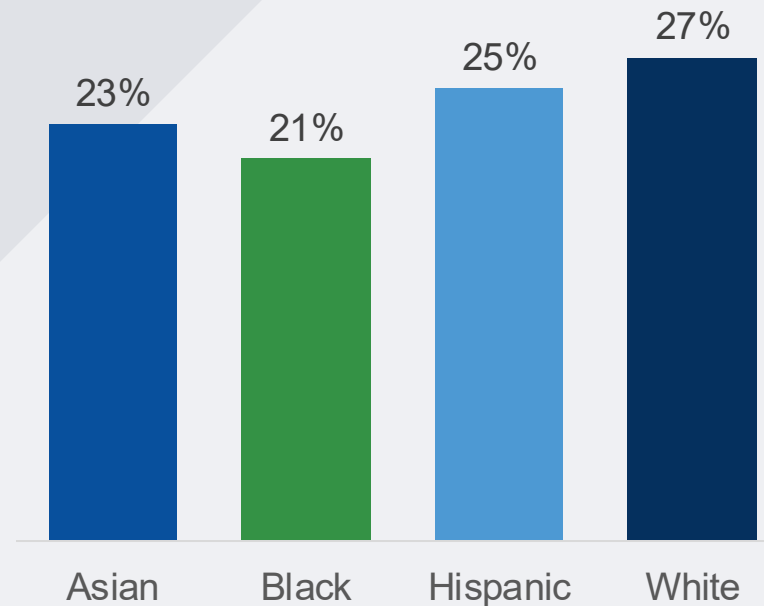


Who's in the GHCP from Fort Bend County

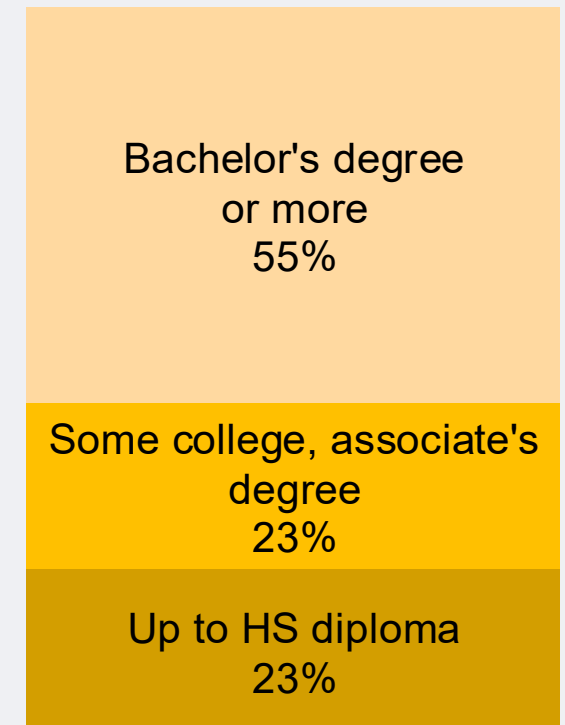
Ages of respondents



Race and ethnicity groups



Education levels



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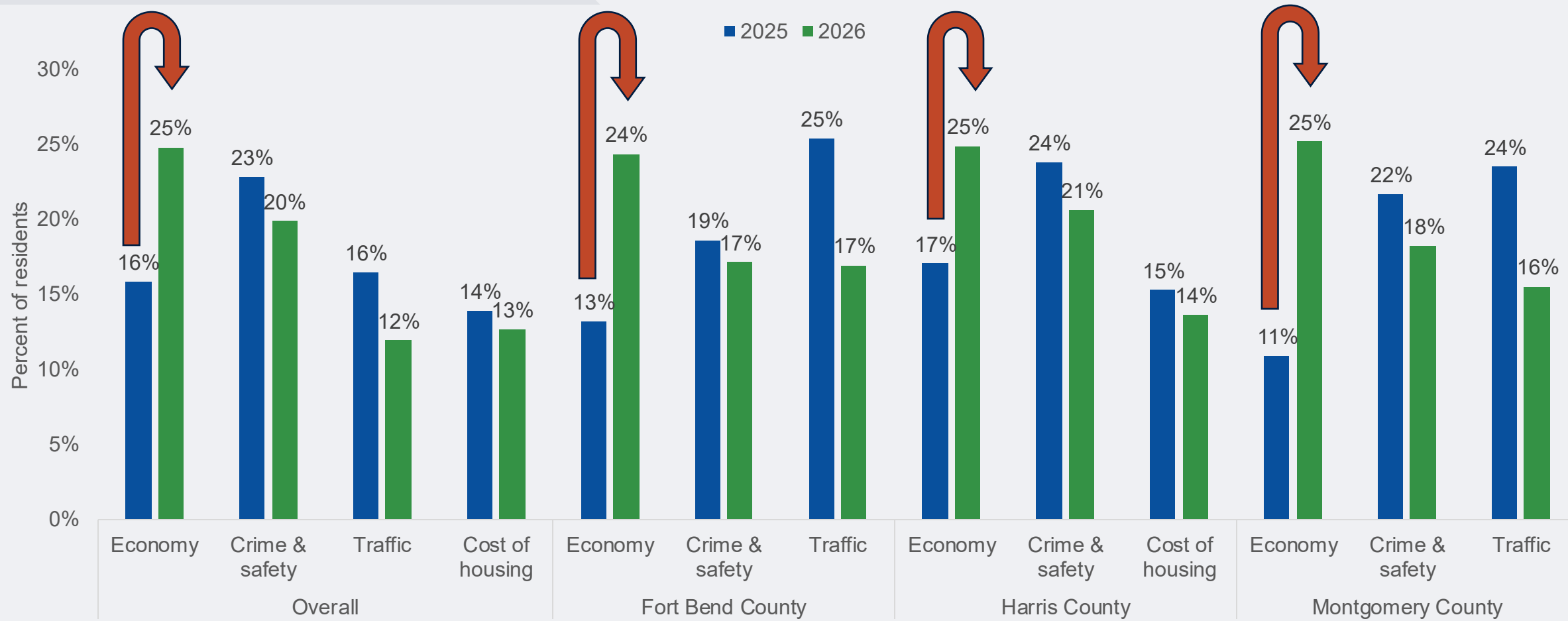


Concern about the economy and what the future holds



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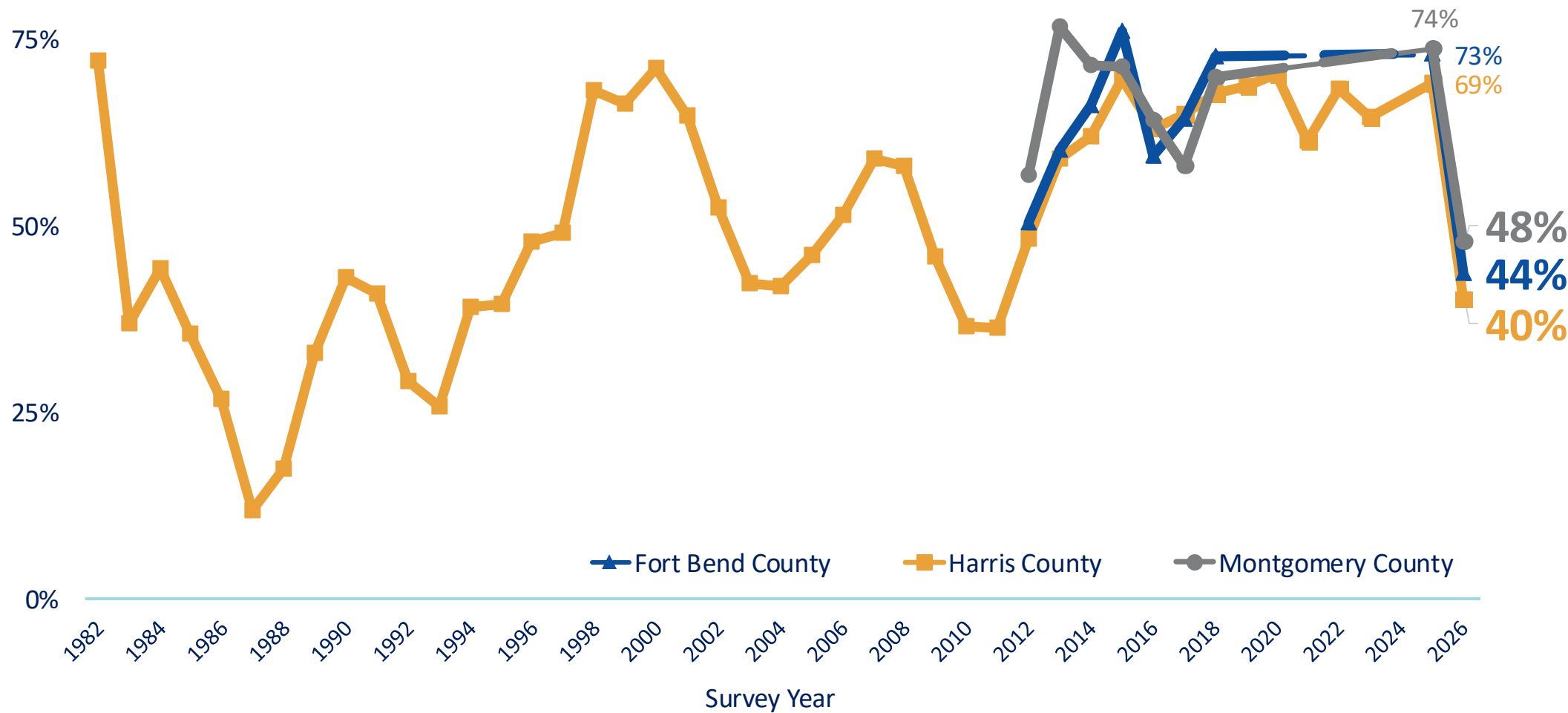
The economy was the most commonly identified “biggest problem” facing the Houston area in all three counties, including Fort Bend – almost doubling in 1 year



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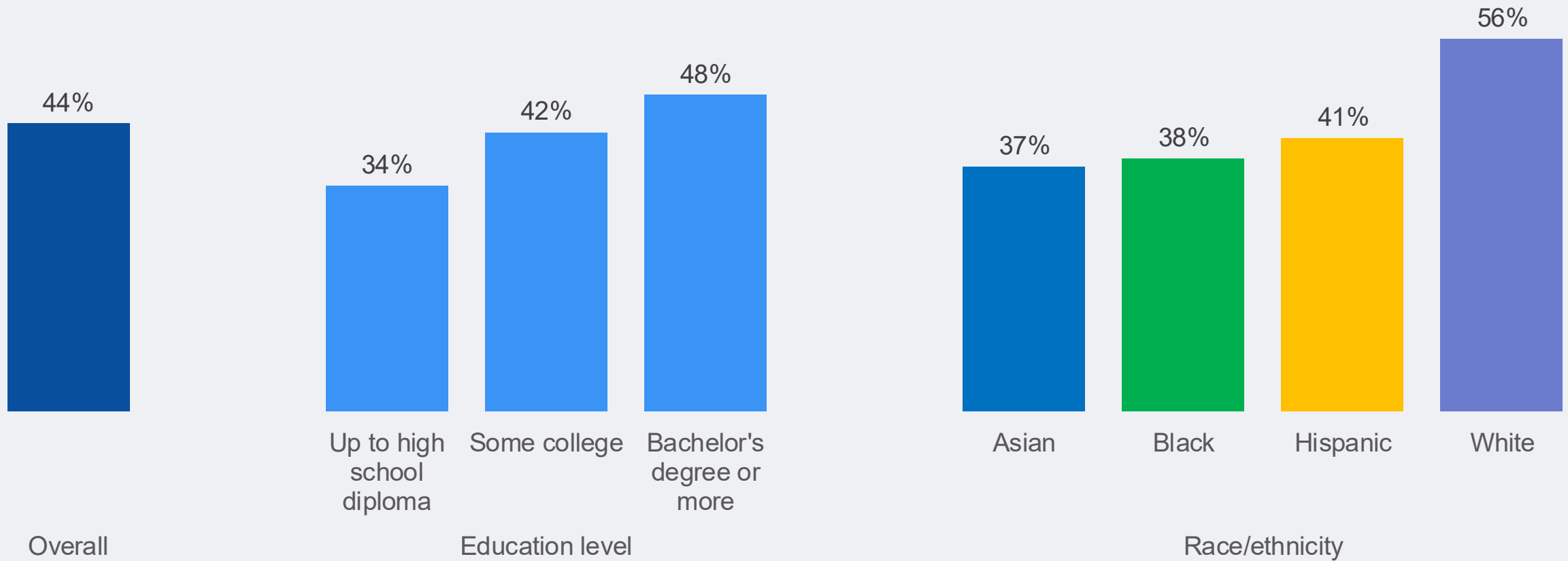
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Largest single-year drop in the percent rating job opportunities as good or excellent ever detected in Fort Bend County



In addition to lower perceived opportunities there's still a gap by education level and race/ethnicity

People thinking they have “good” or “excellent” job opportunities



Around one quarter of Fort Bend residents reported experiencing financial strain or a worsening financial situation

**Finding it difficult
or just getting by**

1 in 4

**Unable to cover a
\$400 unexpected
emergency**

27%

**Household's financial
situation has worsened
in the past 12 months**

22%



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More than half of residents have a positive economic outlook, and slightly more feel in control of their financial situation

Have opportunities to improve financial situation

57%

Be better off in the next 3 to 4 years

55%

Have control over future financial situation

6 in 10



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Concerns with and wanting to clean up the environment

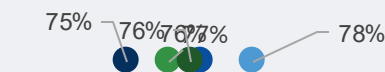


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Residents concerned about extreme weather in their local community, and this was pretty consistent across income groups

● Less than \$25,000 ● \$25,001-\$49,999 ● \$50,000-\$99,999 ● \$100,000-\$149,999 ● \$150,000 or more

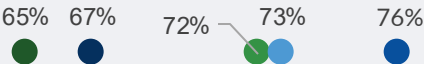
Flooding



Wind or hail damage



Cold or freeze events



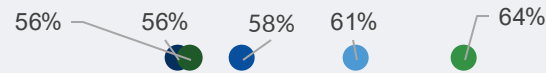
Extreme heat



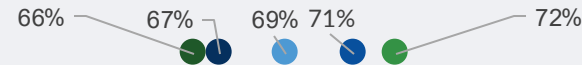
Residents concerned about pollutants in their local community, and this varied a little bit across income groups

● Less than \$25,000 ● \$25,001-\$49,999 ● \$50,000-\$99,999 ● \$100,000-\$149,999 ● \$150,000 or more

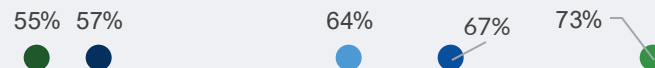
Air pollution from burning fossil fuels



Nearby industry releasing pollutants into the air, water, or soil



Unpleasant or offensive smells



Noise pollution



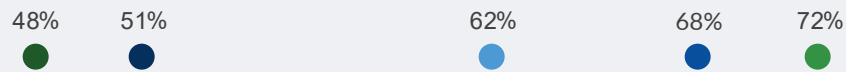
Residents concerned about contamination from built environment in their local community, and this varied a bit more by income group

● Less than \$25,000 ● \$25,001-\$49,999 ● \$50,000-\$99,999 ● \$100,000-\$149,999 ● \$150,000 or more

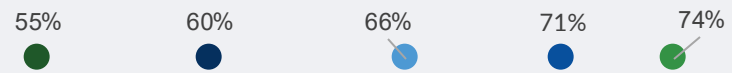
Broken or aging city/municipal water pipes



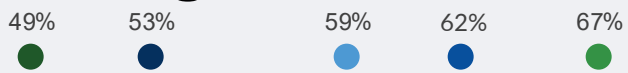
Lead exposure from paint or old pipes



Illegal dumping of trash and waste



Nearby waste management or water treatment facility



Having access to clean drink water



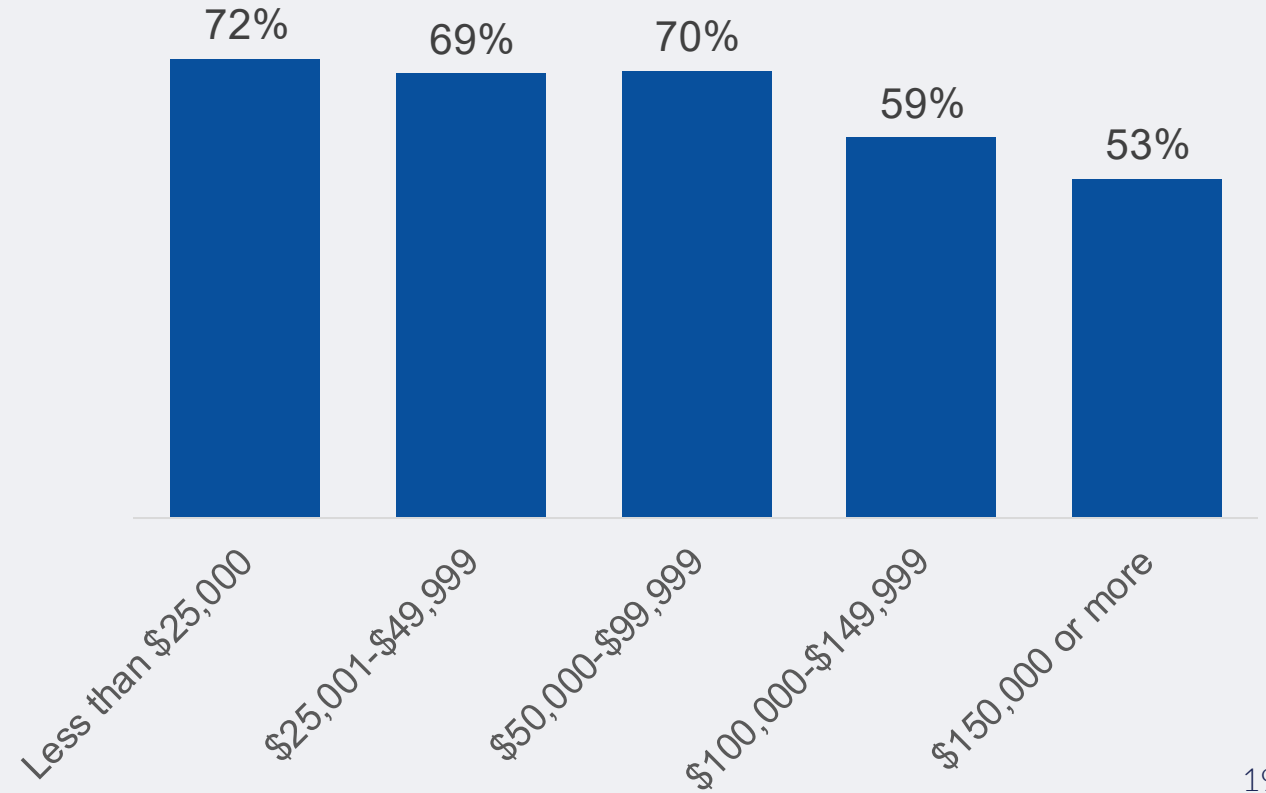
Residents want brownfields cleaned up and many are concerned about the impact of the environment on their health

Clean up brownfields

84%

of residents say it is either
important or very important to
clean-up of brownfields

Concern about the impacts of the
environment on their health varied by
income



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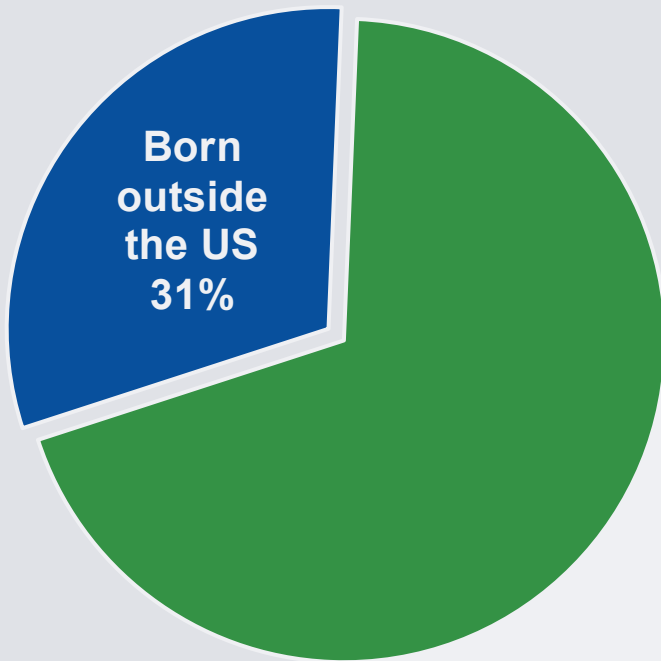
Attitudes towards immigration and experiences with discrimination



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Fort Bend's diversity often comes from outside the United States, and residents see the contributions immigrants make

About 1 in 3
residents born
outside the US



Residents agree
immigrants contribute
more to the American
economy than they
take

78%

Also agree that
undocumented
immigrants contribute
more than they take

6 in 10



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Residents reject false narratives, mass deportation, and the idea that Houston would be better without undocumented immigrants

Disagree that undocumented immigrants contribute to unemployment

76%

Low support for mass deportation efforts

21%

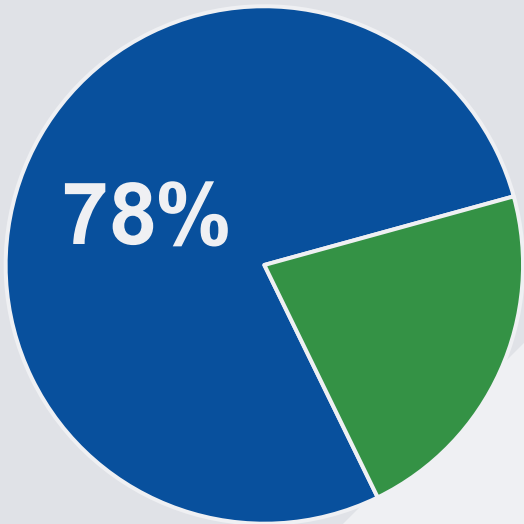
Disagree that Houston would be better if all undocumented immigrants were removed

7 in 10



Residents see the immigration system as broken and want the issue of undocumented immigration solved with more pathways

Disagree that the US immigration system is working well



Solve the issue of undocumented immigrants by increasing pathways to citizenship

71%

Ensure undocumented immigrants have the right to attend public schools

8 in 10



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Even as Fort Bend embraces its diversity, we do not always get it right when interacting across differences

Personal experience with
discrimination

More than
4 in 10

residents reported at least one personal experience feeling like they had been discriminated against in the past 12 months

Vicarious experience with
discrimination

36%

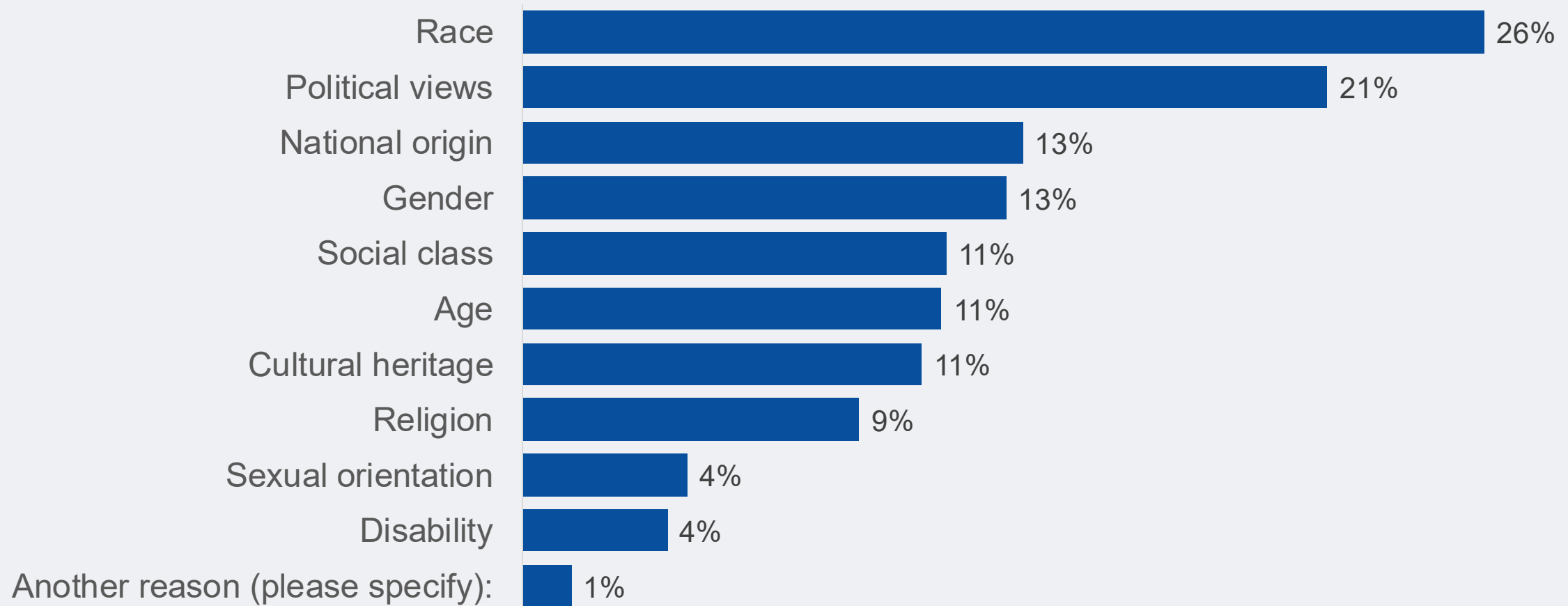
of residents reported at least one vicarious experience of discrimination in the past 12 months. Vicarious discrimination was when a resident was aware of a friend or family member who had been discriminated against. 24



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Most common types of personal discrimination were experienced because of race and political views



Personal discrimination about doubled the likelihood of residents reporting poor or fair physical and mental health

Poor or fair physical health

15% v. **7%**

Likelihood a resident reported their physical health as either poor or fair was more than doubled if they had experienced personal discrimination in the past year.

Poor or fair mental health

19% v. **11%**

Likelihood a resident reported their mental health as either poor or fair was almost doubled if they had experienced personal discrimination in the past year.



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Feelings about crime and safety



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Many see crime as a big problem facing the Houston area

How big of a problem is crime in the Houston area?

72%

of residents rated the problem a 7 or higher
on a scale of 0 = Not at all a problem to 10 =
A very big problem



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Residents see their neighborhood as a safe place to live, but are less likely to share that same view of the Houston area

Think their neighborhood is a safe place to live

95%

of residents either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed their neighborhood is a safe place to live

Think the Houston area is a safe place to live

56%

of residents either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed the Houston area is a safe place to live



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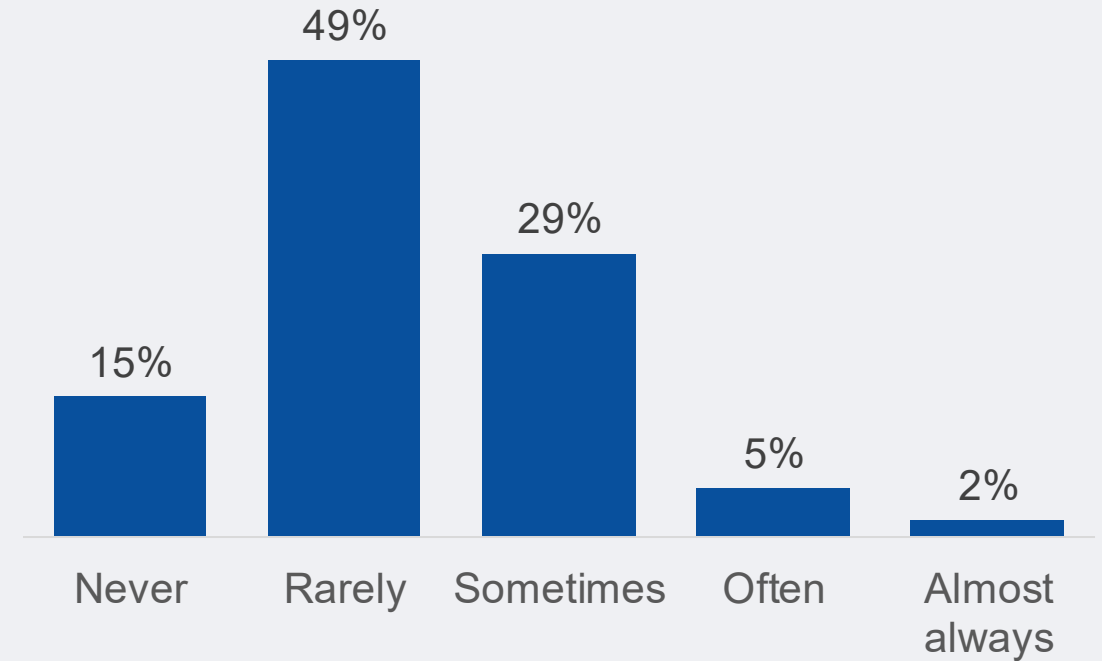
Most residents feel safe walking around their neighborhood (even at night), and rarely feel unsafe in their daily lives

Walk alone in their neighborhood at night without fear

85%

of residents either agreed or strongly agreed they could walk alone in their neighborhood at night without fear of being attacked or harassed.

How often resident feels unsafe in their day-to-day lives?



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**About half of residents
reported being the victim of
some sort of criminal or
unwanted activity in the past
year, most often road rage**

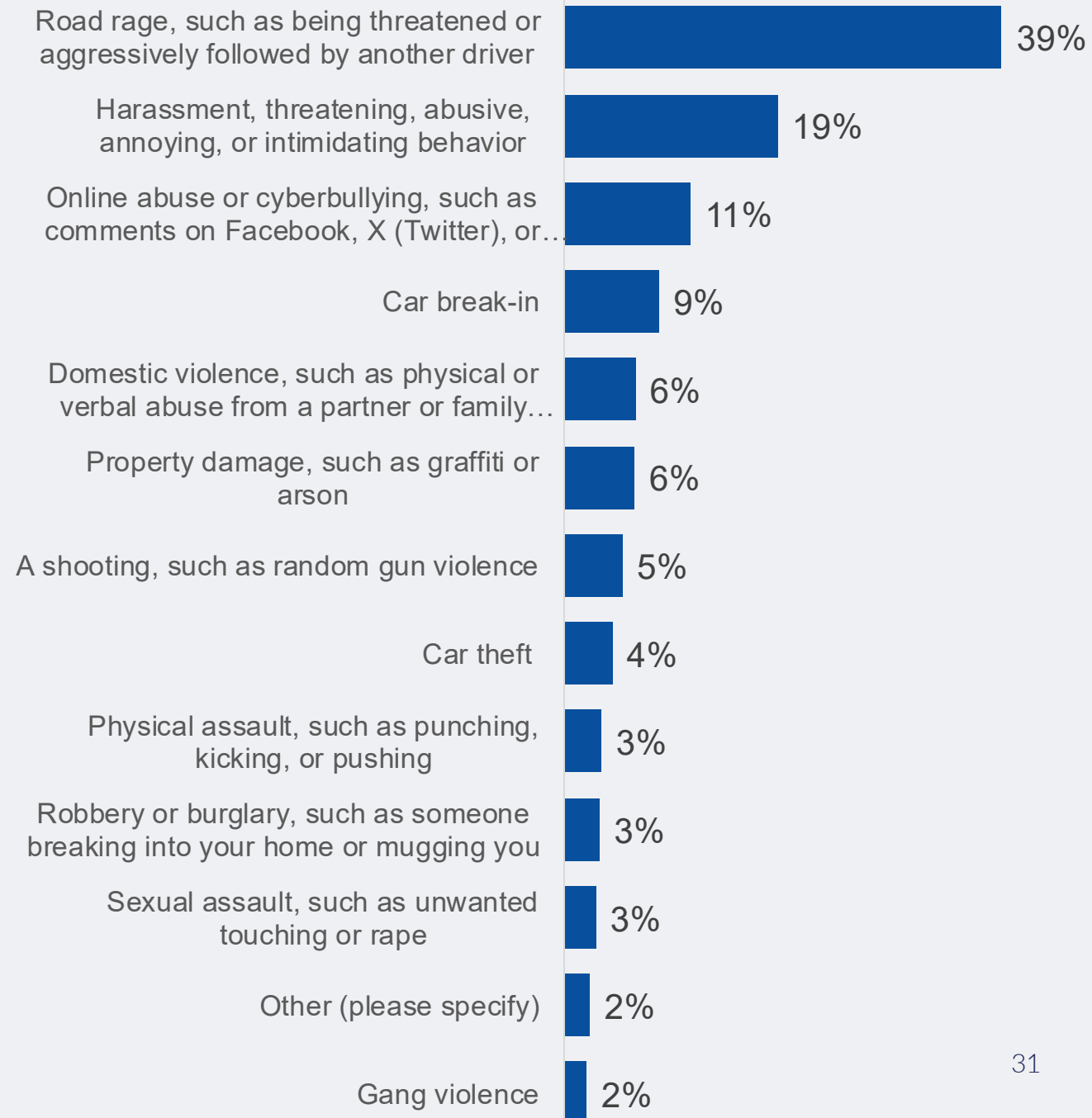
50%

of residents reported being the victim of at
least one criminal or unwanted activity in the
past year



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Housing affordability and temporary homelessness



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Large percent of Fort Bend County residents are homeowners

77%

of housing units are owner-occupied in Fort Bend County



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About half of residents reported finding it difficult to pay for their housing, and this was higher among renters

Find it at least a little difficult to pay
for housing

5 in 10

residents said it was at least a little difficult,
and the same amount also reported worrying
about being able to pay for their housing

Renters who find it difficult to pay
for their housing

74%

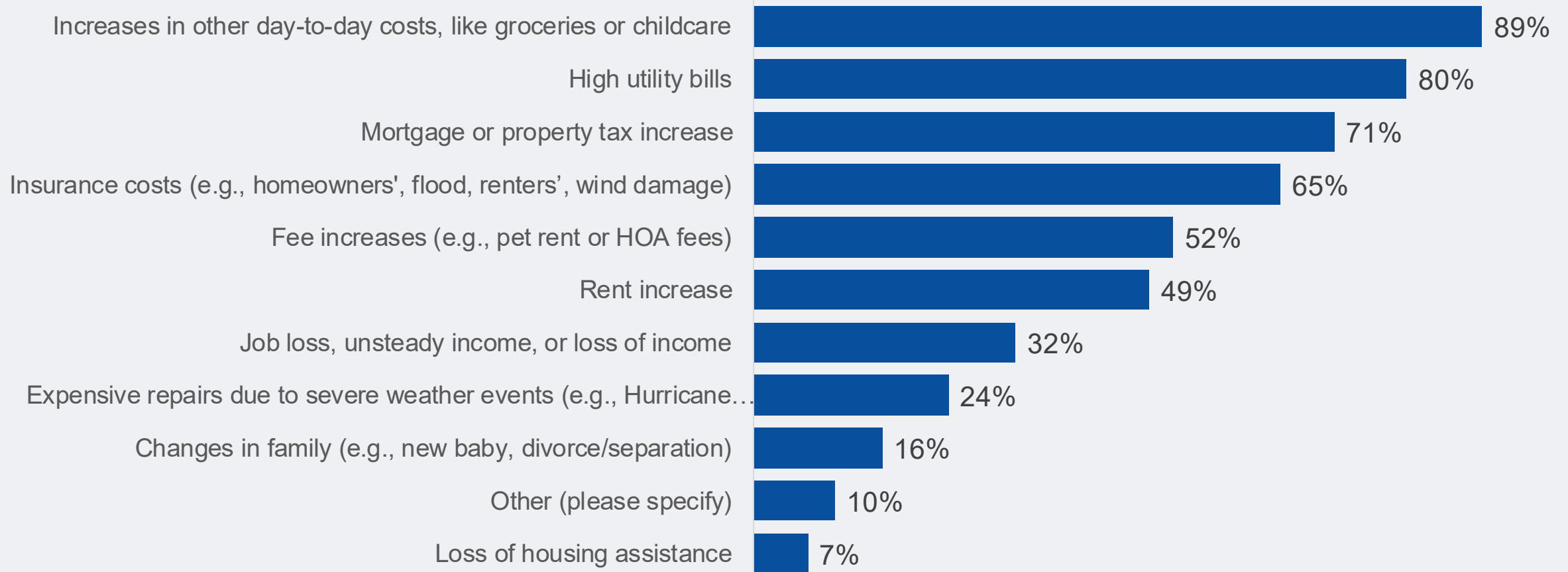
of renters reported it was at least a little
difficult to pay for their housing, and **1 in 8**
reported moving in the past year as a result



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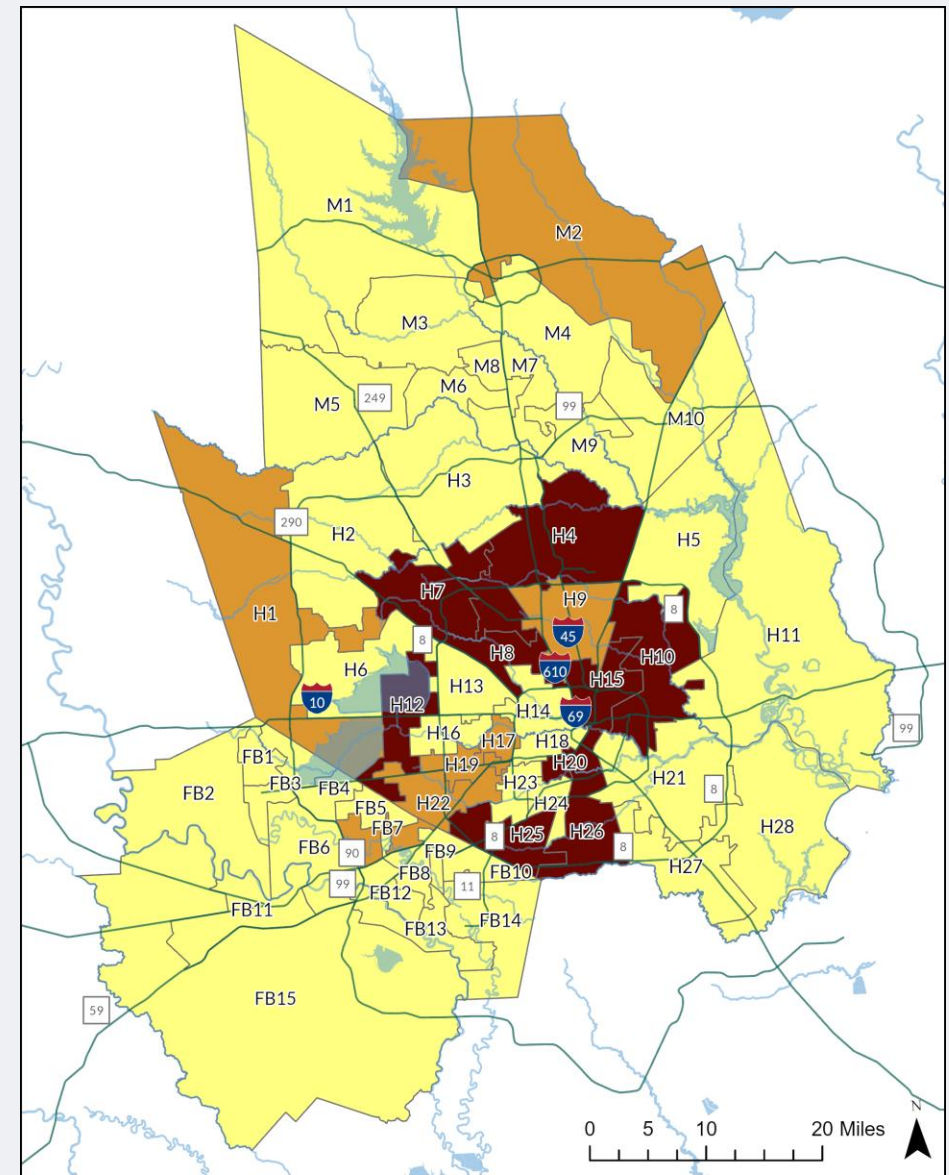
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Most common reasons for affordability challenges was increases in day-to-day expenses and higher utility bills



Less than 10% of residents have been forced to move in most areas

- Most areas in Fort Bend County had fewer than 10% of residents saying they had to move in the past year because they could no longer afford where they lived
- The Meadows Place, Woodbridge, and Pheasant Creek area had slightly higher levels: 11%



Percent of residents who had to move in the past year because they could no longer afford the place where they lived

- Less than 10%
- 10% to 15%
- More than 15%



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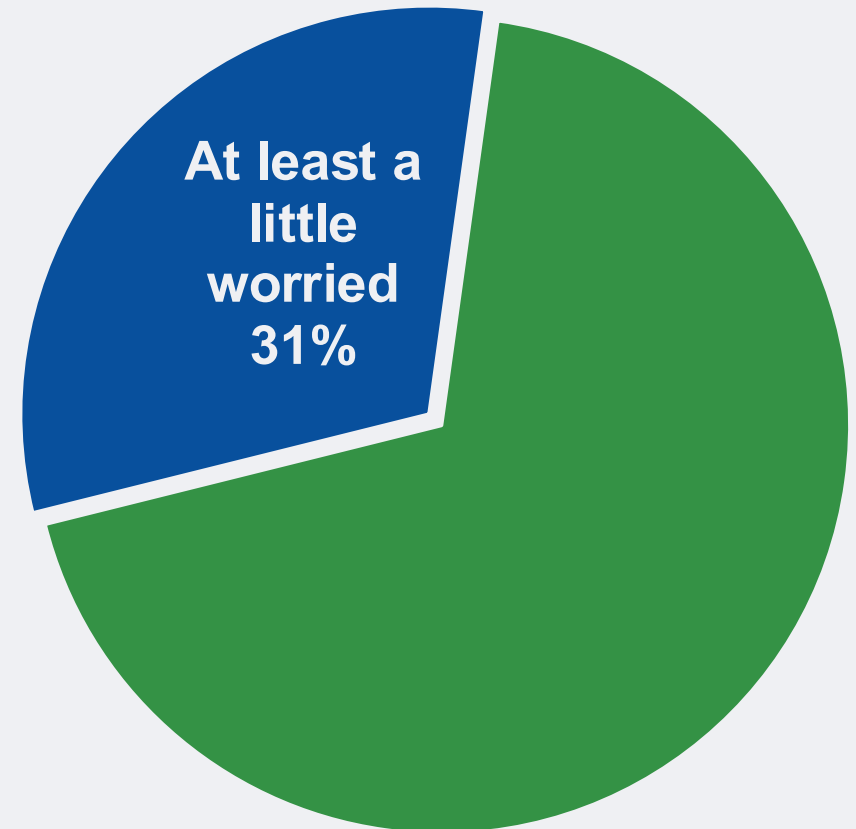
Residents are also worried about being priced out and forced to move in the future

Worried they will be priced out of their current home in the next 12 months

5 in 10

residents said they were at least a little worried they will be priced out of their current home in the next 12 months, including **75% of renters**

One-third of residents worried they will be forced to move in the next 12 months

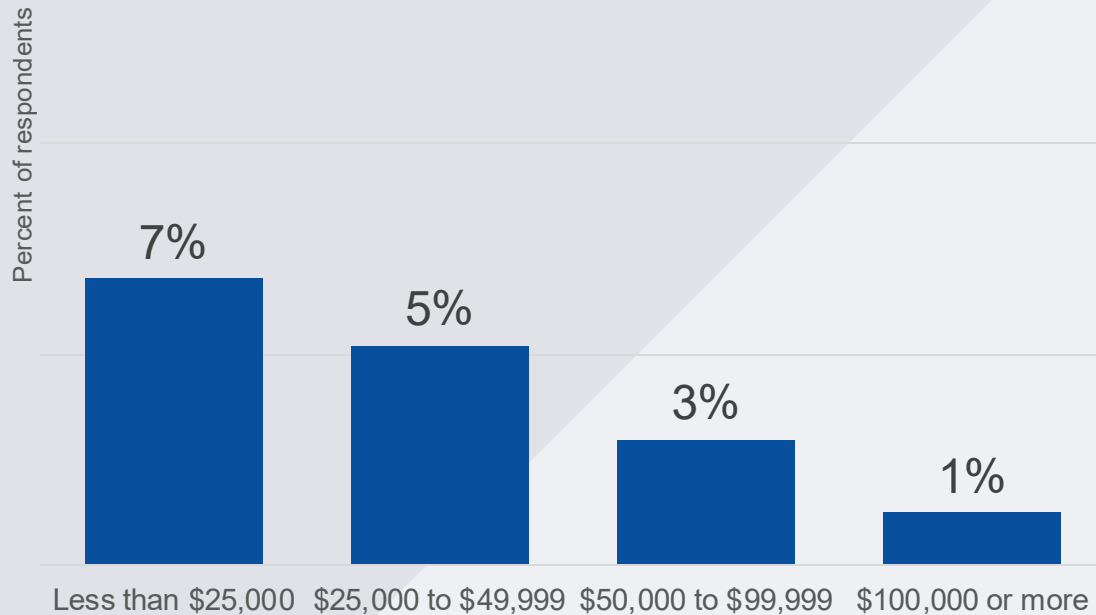


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Couch-surfing, doubling-up, and other forms of temporary homelessness in Fort Bend County

Percent of Fort Bend County residents experiencing temporary homelessness in the past 12 months by annual income



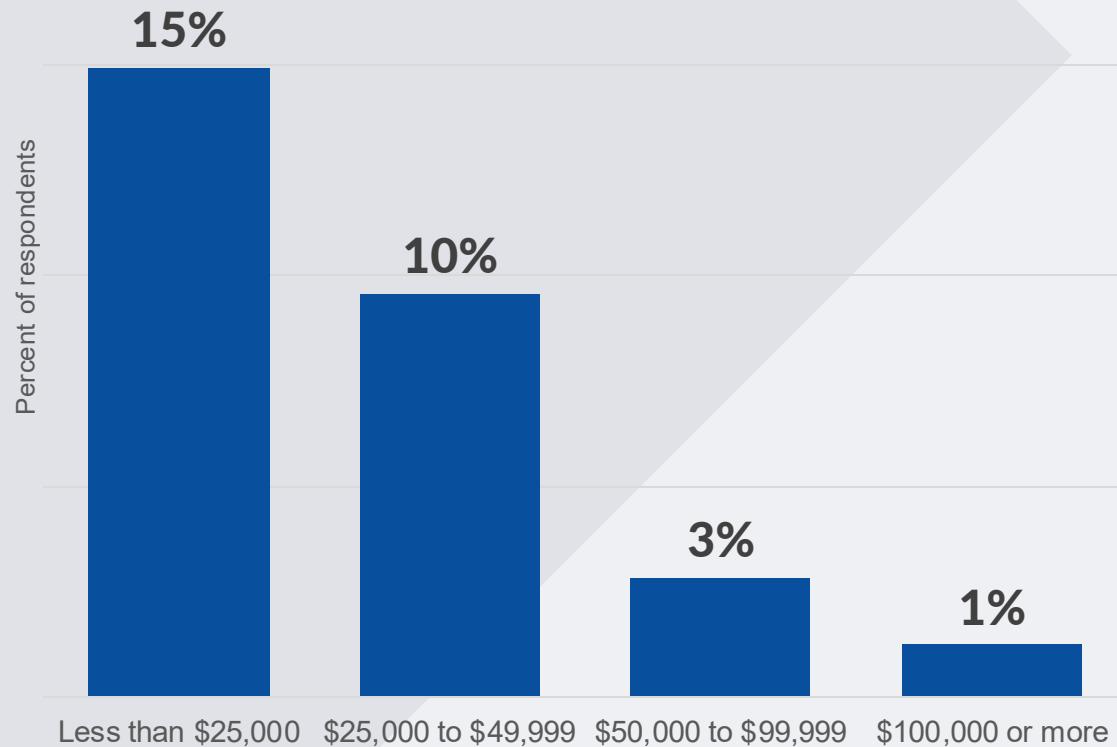
Approximately

6,120

Fort Bend County residents who experienced temporary homelessness in the past 12 months

Couch-surfing, doubling-up, and other forms of temporary homelessness across the Houston region

Houston-area residents experiencing temporary homelessness in the past 12 months by annual income



Approximately

141,000

Houston-area residents who experienced temporary homelessness in the past 12 months



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The importance of social connections in Houston



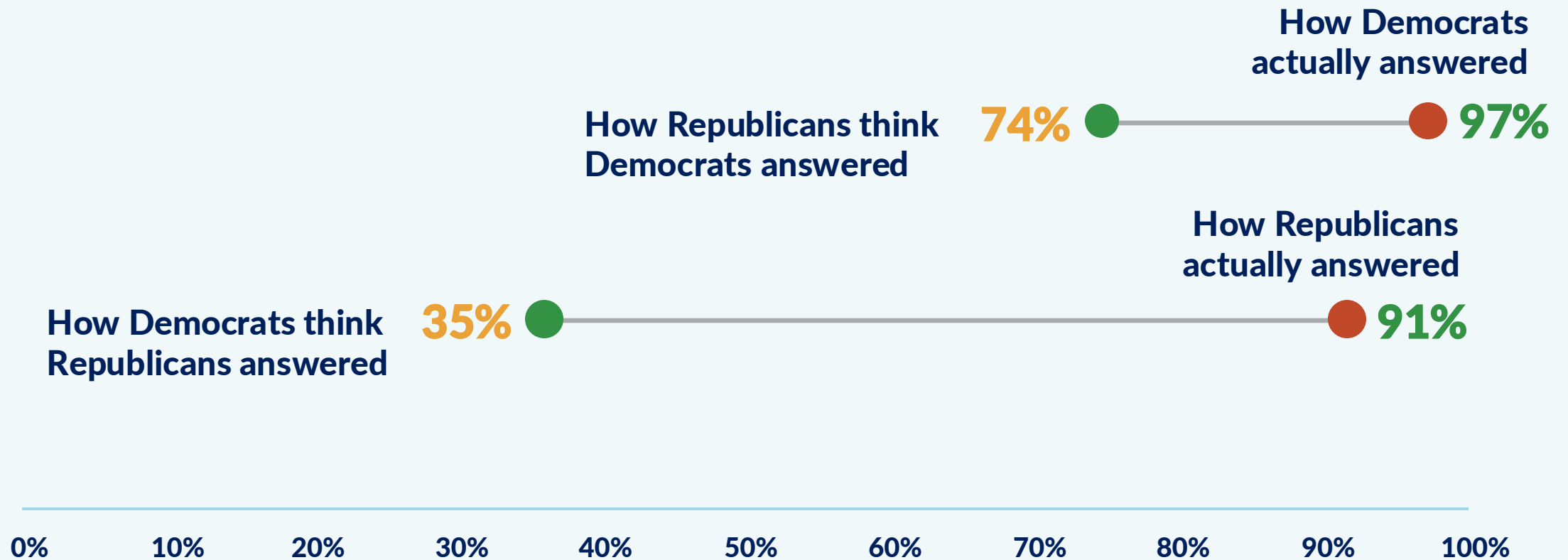
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Key concepts for social connectedness

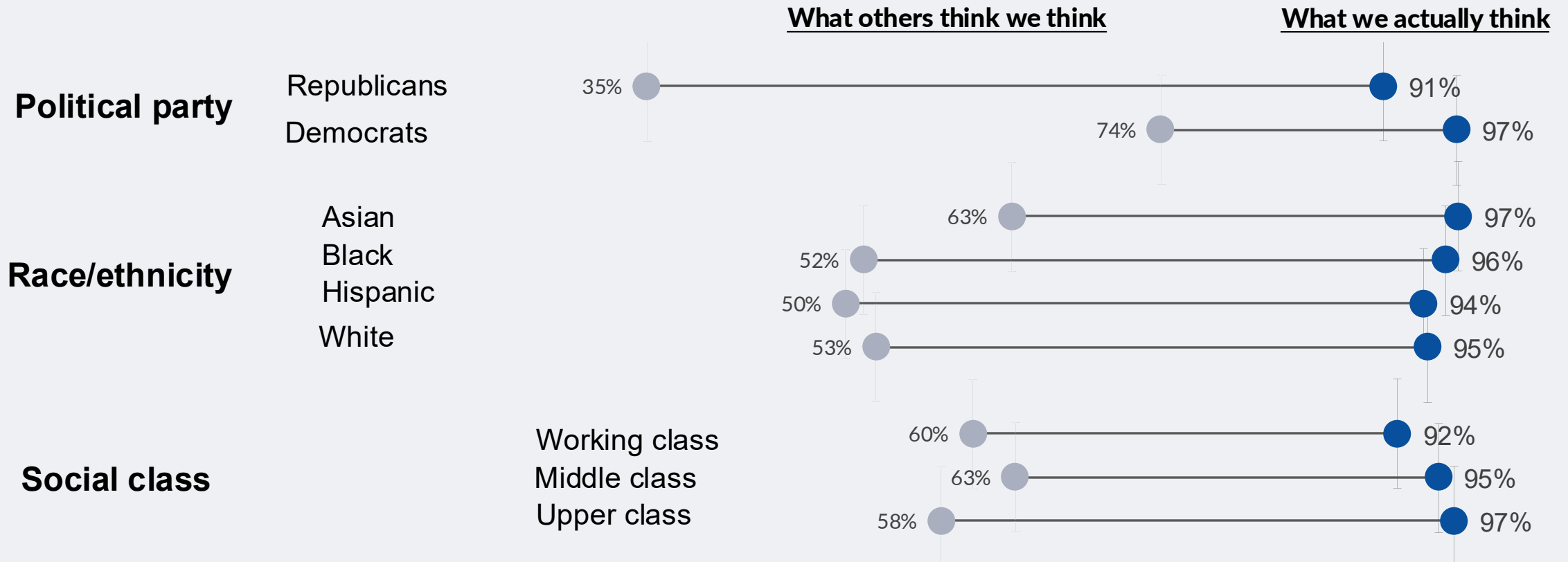
- Knowing one another
- Personal & professional connections
- Social cohesion



Knowing others has policy implications, such as passing universal criminal background checks for all gun sales



Nearly universal support for universal criminal background checks across all groups, and we don't know it



The Power of Social Connections

High levels of social cohesion
and connections matter for our...

Wealth



Health



Safety



Wealth



How much control do you have over your financial situation?

Likelihood of reporting “some” or “a lot”

"I have enough personal or professional connections that can help me find a better job, get promoted, or advance my career."

Strongly agree

85%



36%

Strongly disagree

\$150,000 or more

69%



49%

Household income below \$25,000

Health



**In general,
how would
you rate your
physical
health?**

Likelihood of reporting “very good” or “excellent”

Household income
\$150,000 or more

70%



41%

Less than \$25,000

Higher
social cohesion

60%



41%

Lower
social cohesion

Safety



“I feel safe walking alone at night in my neighborhood”

Likelihood of agreeing

“How often do you feel unsafe in your day-to-day life?”

**Never
84%**



50%
Almost always

**Higher
social cohesion
83%**



58%
**Lower
social cohesion**



Takeaways and looking to the future



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Key takeaways about the economy

- Residents' concern about the economy has grown in the past year
- Single biggest decline in perceived job opportunities ever detected
- Many residents doing well, while a segment continues to experience strain, which is concentrated among certain groups
- Outlook remains positive for a majority of residents



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Key takeaways about the environment

- Widespread concern about the environment, including natural disasters, pollutants, and exposure to contaminants
- Some concerns vary by income, but more than half of highest earners (\$150,000+) reported concern
- Residents want actions to clean brownfields and protect against environmental impacts on their health



Key takeaways about immigration and discrimination

- Fort Bend is one of the most diverse counties in the country
- Residents value the contributions of immigrants, recognize Houston is better for having immigrants, and want to see the broken immigration system fixed to allow for expanded pathways to citizenship
- Don't always get it right across differences with half of residents reporting either personal or vicarious experiences of discrimination



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Key takeaways about crime and safety

- Most Fort Bend County residents see crime and safety as a big issue for the Houston area
- Residents feel safe in their neighborhoods and in their daily lives
- Half of residents experienced some sort of criminal or unwanted activity in the past year, most often road rage



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Key takeaways about housing affordability and temporary homelessness

- Fort Bend remains a predominantly homeowner county
- Many residents report some difficulty and worry in paying for their housing, something that is particularly true for renters
- An estimated 6,120 residents experienced temporary homelessness in the past year in Fort Bend County, and about 141,000 experienced it overall in the region



Key takeaways about the power of social connectedness

- We are more aligned than we think on key social issues, like gun control
- Social connections matter for our wealth, health, and sense of safety
- Social connectedness often matters as much or more than a person's annual income for these things as well, and we can all build better connections with one another



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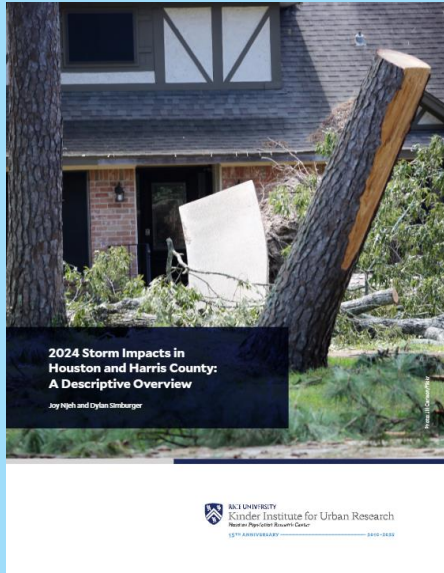
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Looking ahead

- Who else needs to see this information?
- What additional information is needed?
- Data and information that lives on shelves does nothing to improve the lives of our area's residents, so what can we all be doing to bring this information to life?



All of the Kinder Institute's research is made available for free on our website



Explore more at
kinder.rice.edu/research



Questions & Thank you!

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Est. 1945

Please take a moment to complete
The Fort Bend Thrive Survey

