



Survey Highlights: “Your Two Cents” Budget Survey & the 44th Kinder Houston Area Survey

Presentation for the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Committee

City of Houston
June 3, 2025



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Kinder Institute for Urban Research

Mission

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

Vision

Inclusive prosperity

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



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Innovative research approach



Population



Education



*Housing &
Neighborhoods*



*Economic
Mobility*



*Community
Health*



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“Your two cents” Budget Survey Findings



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Budget survey overview

- “Your Two Cents” budget survey open from April 16-May 30
 - Received about 1,200 responses
 - Convenience sample of city residents participating in an open-access survey
 - Respondents were invited to participate at meetings, through social media, and word-of-mouth
- Survey asked residents about preferences for city spending, focused on:
 - Major city-provided programs and services
 - Public safety services
 - City-funded community programs and services
- Residents were asked about their willingness to support increased taxes and/or fees to improve city services



Major city-provided programs and services

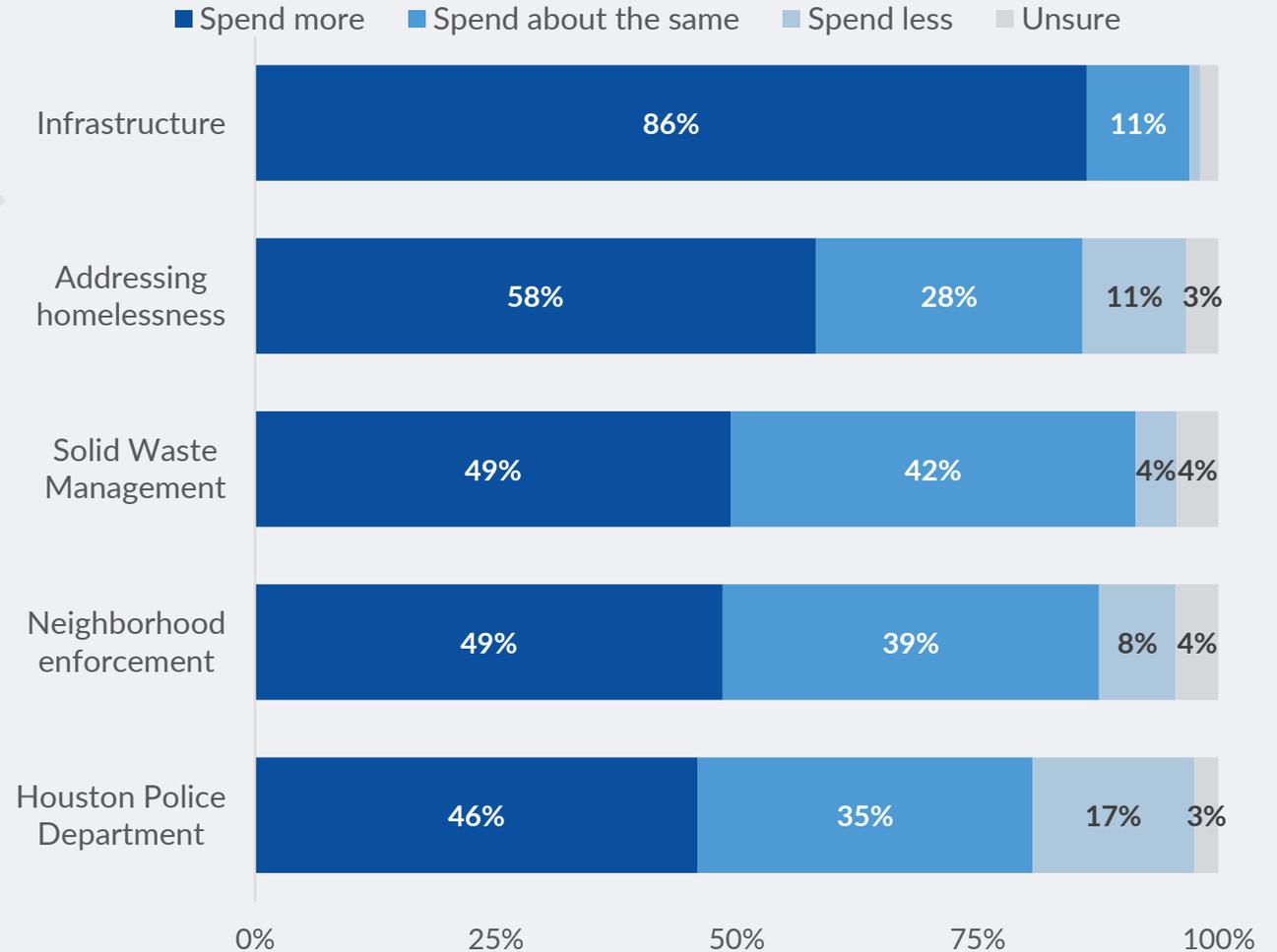
- 13 categories of major city-provided programs and services
- Respondents were asked whether they would like to see the city spend more, spend less, or spend about the same amount in the next fiscal year for each category

- Addressing homelessness
- Animal welfare
- Development services & permitting
- Economic & workforce development
- Health services
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Library services
- Neighborhood enforcement
- Houston Fire Department
- Houston Parks & Recreation Department
- Houston Police Department
- Houston Solid Waste Management



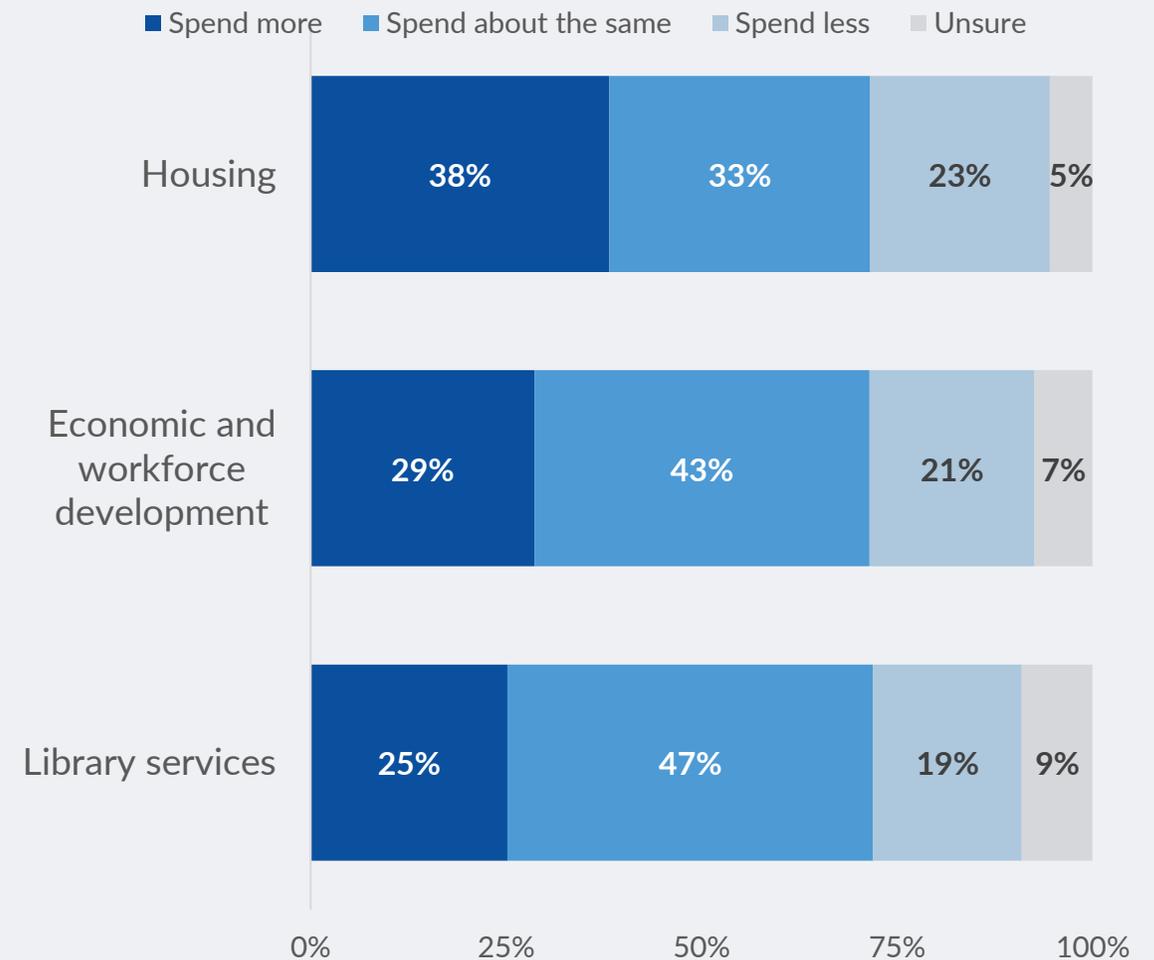
Top 5 city-provided programs and services with the highest levels of support for **increased** spending

- For two service categories, a majority of respondents support increased funding
 - Nearly **9 in 10** respondents said they want to see more spending on **infrastructure**
 - Nearly **6 in 10** want the city to spend more on programs **addressing homelessness**



For all city-provided programs and services, the level of support for **decreased** spending was lower than for **increased** spending

- Categories with the highest levels of support for decreased spending were housing, economic and workforce development, and library services
 - Nearly 4 in 10 respondents said the city should spend **more** on **housing**, while 1 in 4 said the city should spend less
 - About 1 in 4 want to spend **more** on **library services**, compared to 1 in 5 who want to spend less



Public safety services

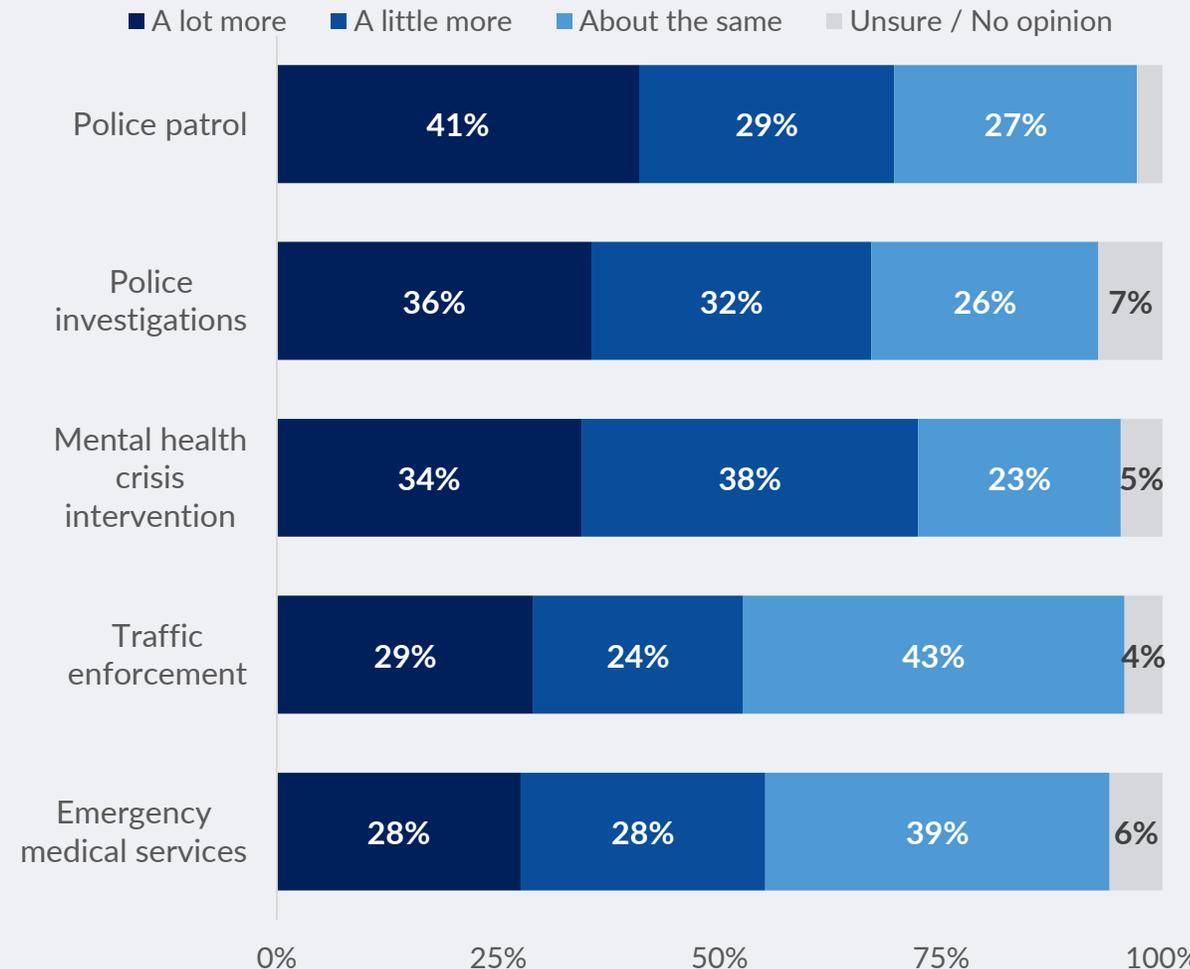
- Separately, respondents were also asked about spending preferences for 9 categories of public safety services if the city were to increase public safety spending overall
 - Response were asked if they would like to see the city keep spending about the same amount, spend a little more, or spend a lot more on each

- Community-based crime prevention programs
- Emergency medical services (EMS)
- Fire prevention
- Mental health crisis intervention
- Noise abatement
- Police investigations
- Police patrol
- Technology initiatives like license plate readers
- Traffic enforcement



About 7 in 10 respondents want to see more spending on police and mental health crisis intervention

- 5 public safety services received majority support for increasing spending
- About 4 in 10 respondents want the city to spend a lot more on **police patrols** and **police investigations**
 - Another **3 in 10** want to spend a little more on these services
- More than 3 in 10 want the city to spend a lot more on **mental health crisis intervention**
 - Another 4 in 10 want to see a little more spent on these services



City-funded community programs and services

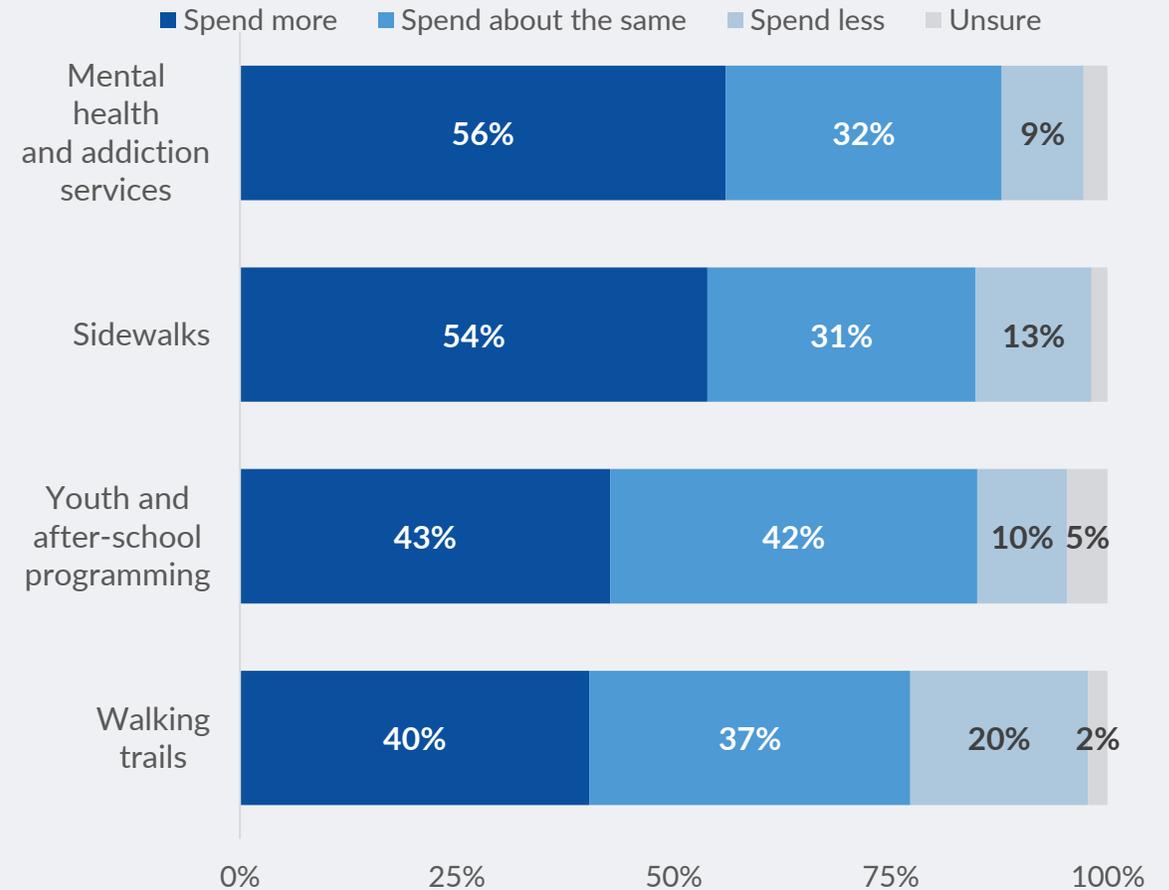
- Respondents were also asked about spending preferences for 8 categories of city-funded programs and services
 - Again, they were asked whether they would like to see the city spend more, spend less, or spend about the same amount in the next fiscal year for each

- Arts and culture
- Bike lanes
- Mental health and addiction services
- Senior citizen services/programming
- Sidewalks
- Small business support
- Walking trails
- Youth and after-school programming



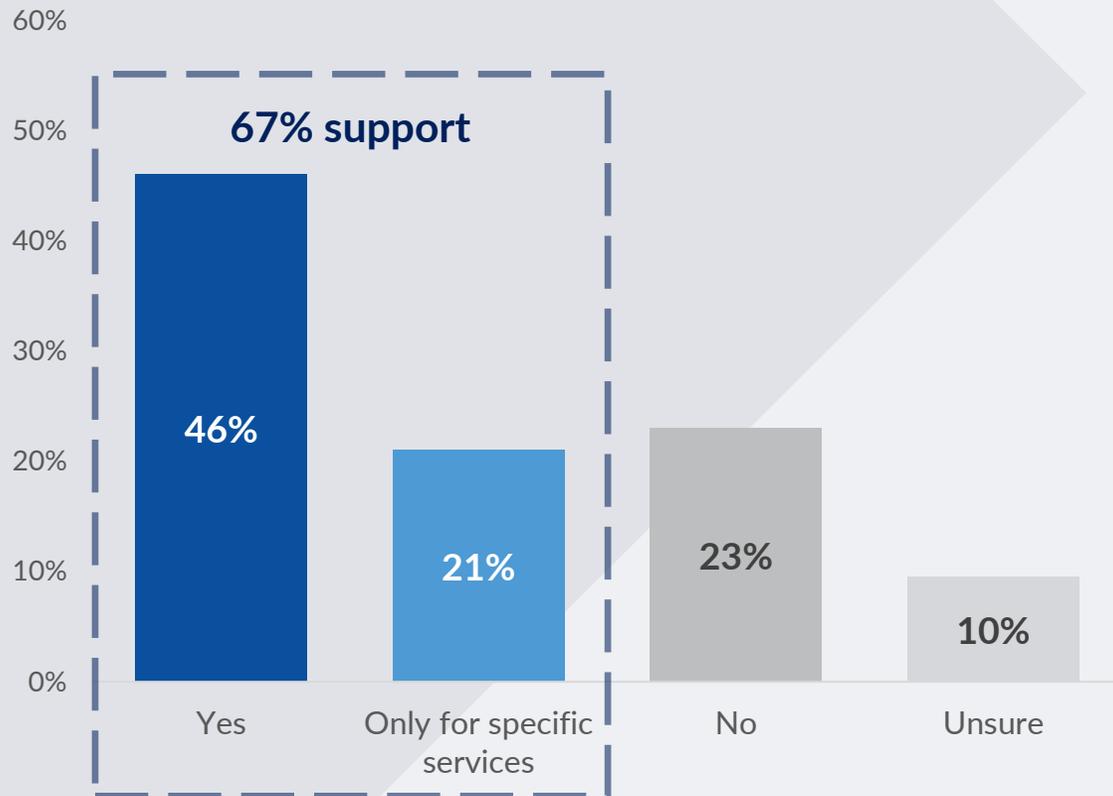
City-funded community programs and services with the highest levels of support for **increased** spending

- More than 5 in 10 respondents want the city to spend more on **mental health/addiction services** and **sidewalks**
- About 4 in 10 want the city to spend more on **youth and after-school programming** and **walking trails**

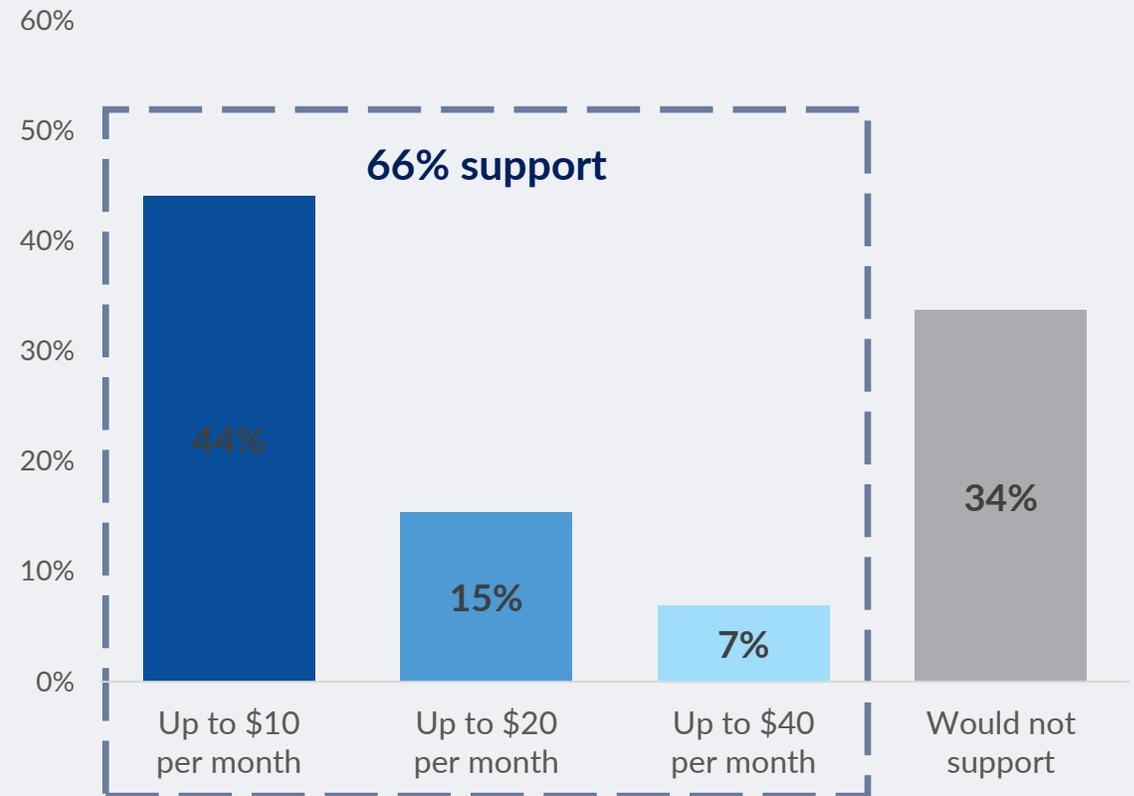


About 2 in 3 respondents support increasing taxes/fees to improve services

Would you support an increase in taxes/fees to better fund essential city services?



What is the maximum amount you would be willing to pay for a garbage fee?*



*Note: Data from respondents who indicated such a fee would not apply (e.g., not a homeowner, have private/non-city trash collection services, etc.) are not included



Highlights of 44th Kinder Houston Area Survey



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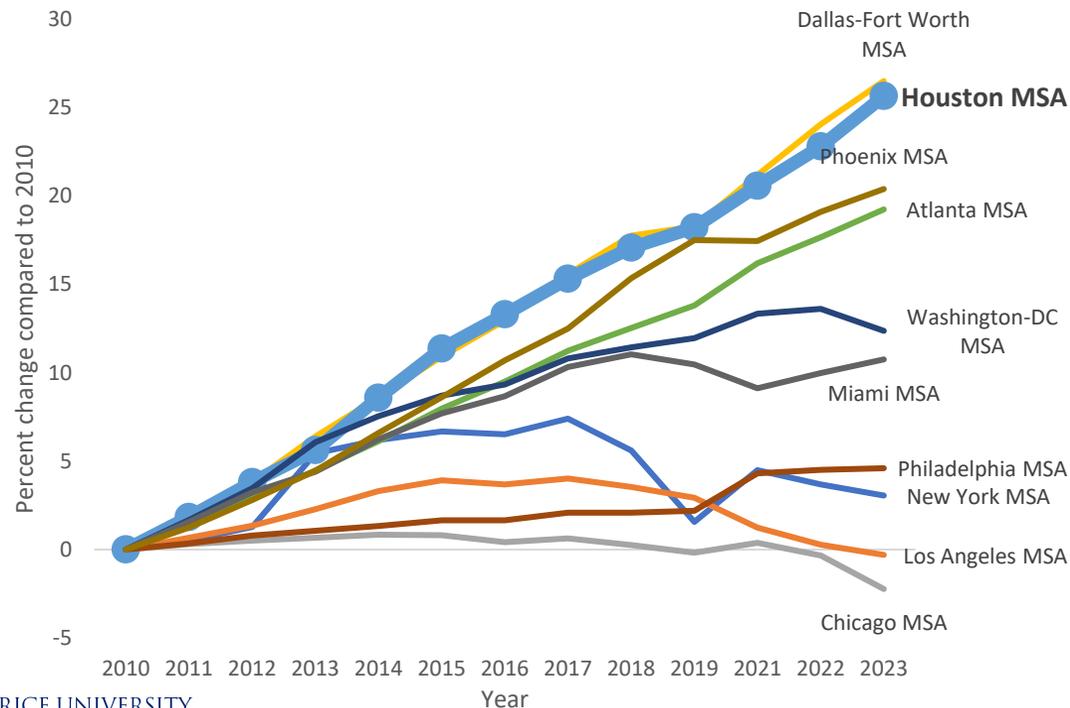
GHCP2501 – Survey information

- 44th annual Kinder Houston Area Survey was the largest ever conducted
 - Over 9,800 respondents from Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery counties
 - Nearly 5,000 respondents from Houston and Harris County
 - More than 2,500 respondents from Fort Bend County
 - More than 2,300 respondents from Montgomery County
- Survey conducted online using Qualtrics, offered in English and Spanish
 - Fort Bend and Harris County invited via email and text; Montgomery County by mail
- Survey topics included: 2025 KHAS, state legislative items, and a focus on mass deportation
- Sampling weights constructed to provide regional and county-specific estimates

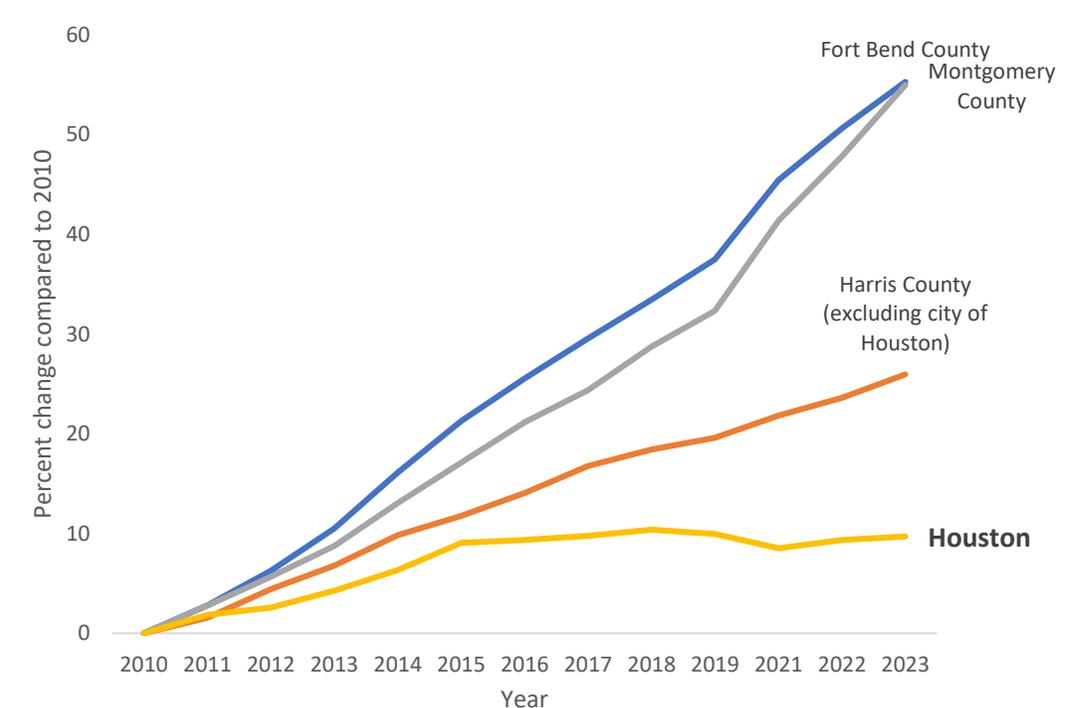


Houston unlike most other major metro areas in the nation

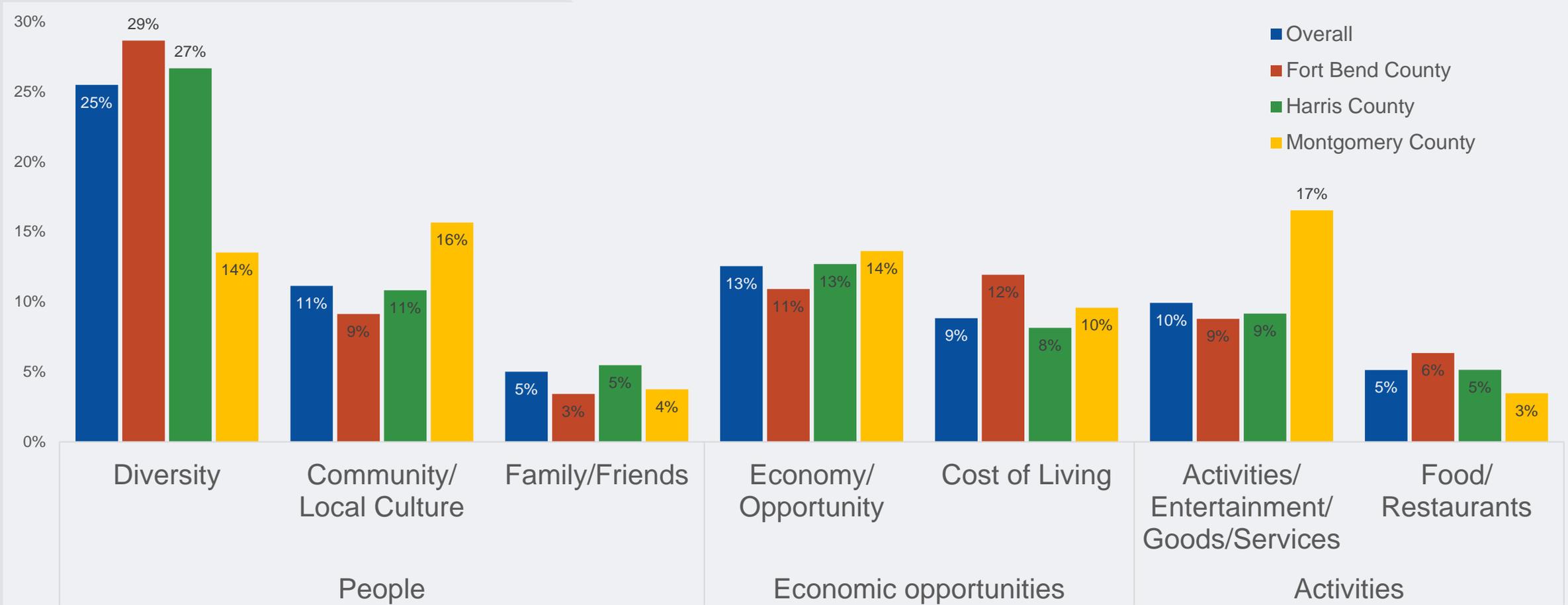
Percent change in population of major metro areas compared to 2010



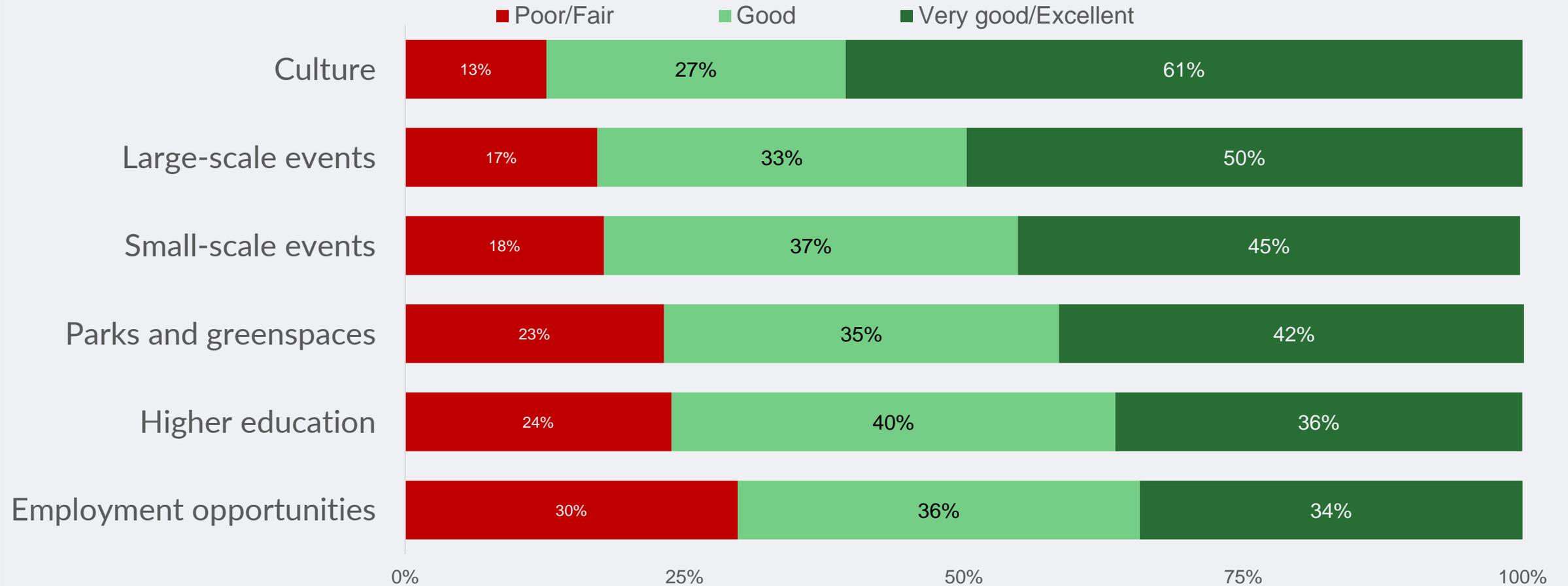
Percent change in population within Houston area compared to 2010



Best thing about living in the Houston area: The people, the economic opportunities, and the activities (and food)

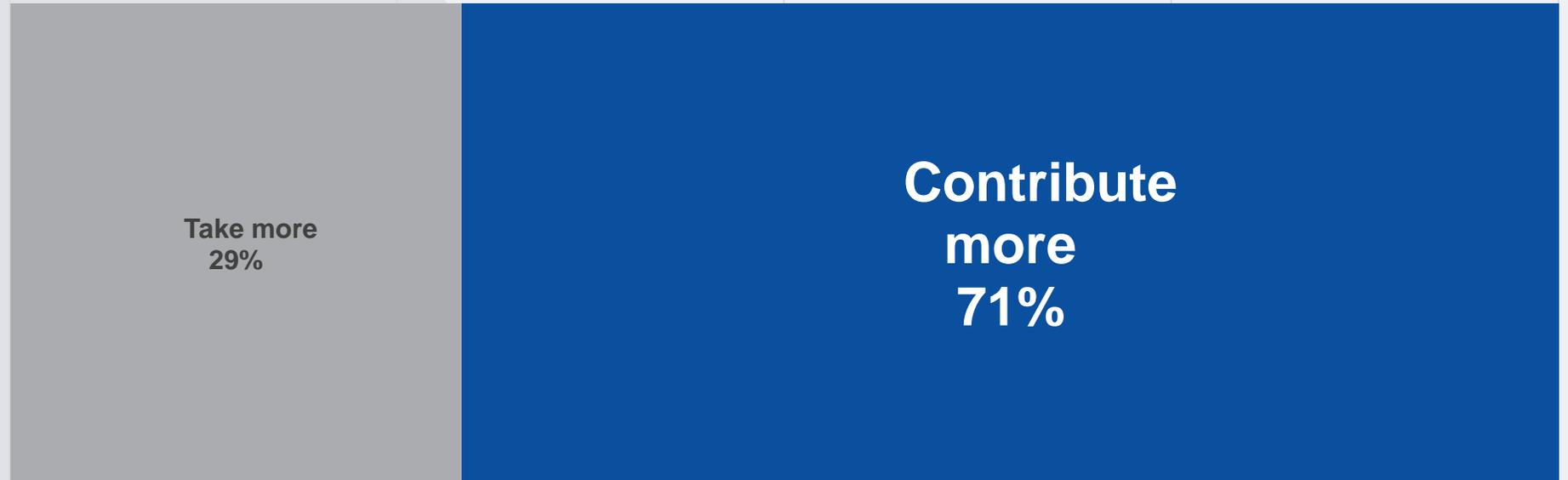


People, events/activities, and employment all rated good or very good/excellent by super majority of residents



Immigration is a large source of the growth in the Houston area, and residents love our diversity and value the contributions many different individuals make to our economy

Immigrants
(regardless of
legal status) contribute
more or take more

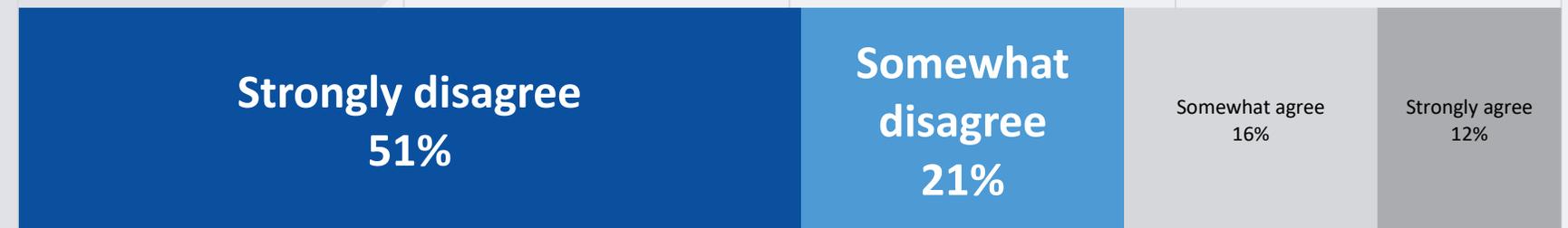


Residents view undocumented immigrants as assets not threats

Undocumented immigrants contribute more or take more



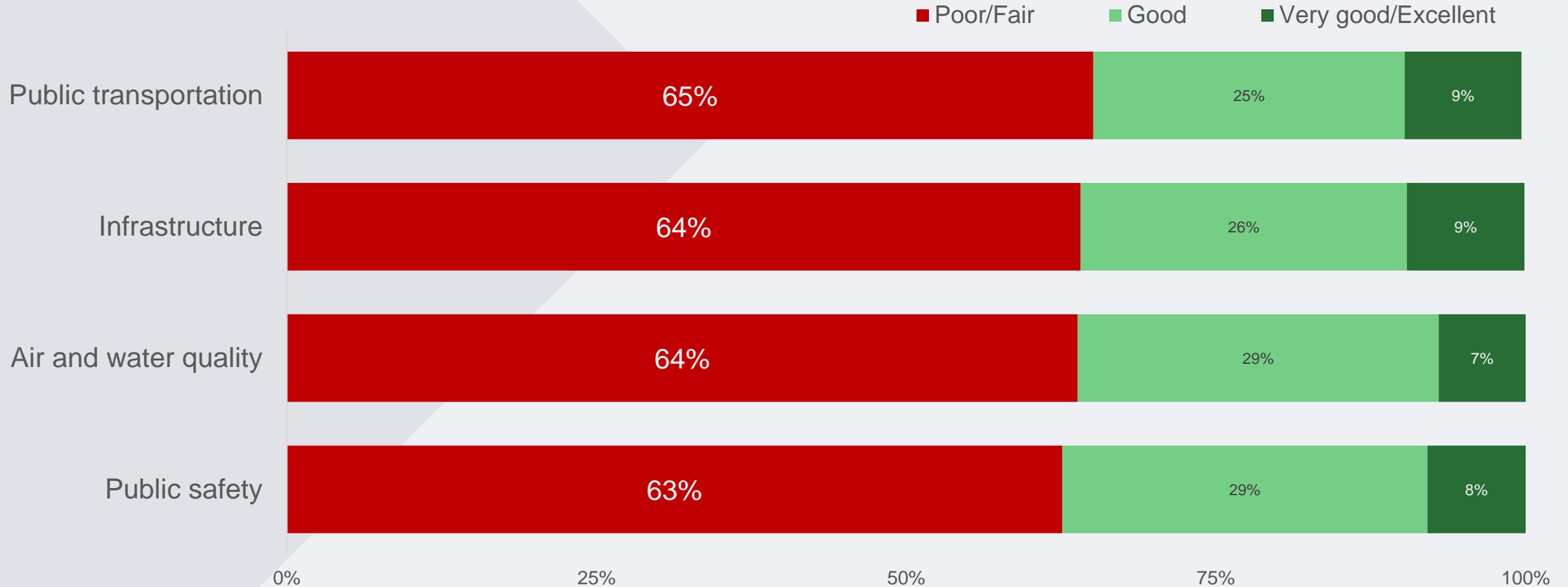
The Houston area would be better off if all undocumented immigrants were deported



Undocumented migrants are a major cause of unemployment in Houston



More residents giving a “poor” or “fair” rating to public transportation, infrastructure, air/water quality, and public safety



Biggest problems reflect items residents rated lower

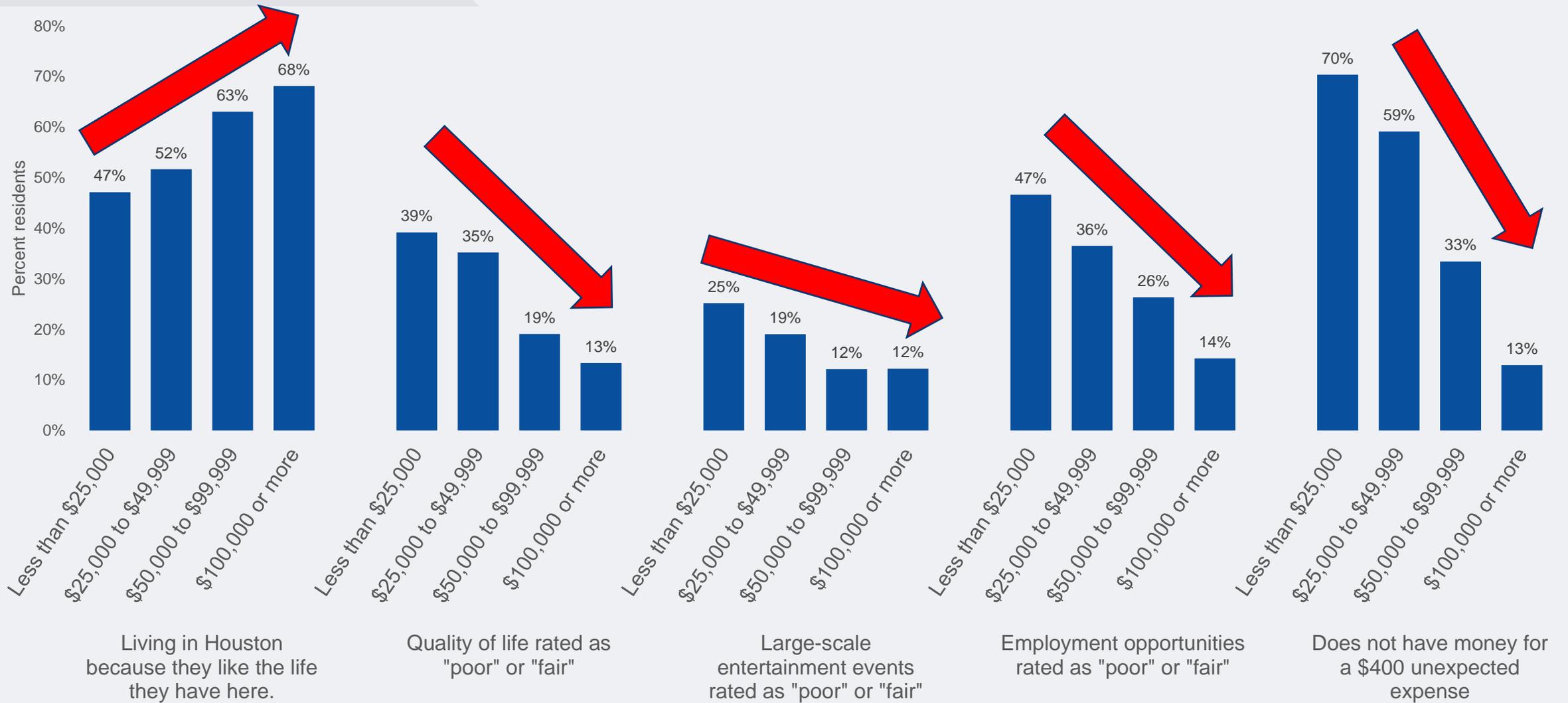
- Houston and Harris County residents identified “Crime & safety” as the biggest problem for the third straight year
- Cost of housing still a concern among residents
- Traffic increased as a “biggest problem” for the first time in a few years, but still lower than 2018

Houston and Harris County

Biggest problem	Percent
Crime & safety	24%
Economy	17%
Cost of housing	15%
Traffic	14%
Infrastructure	9%



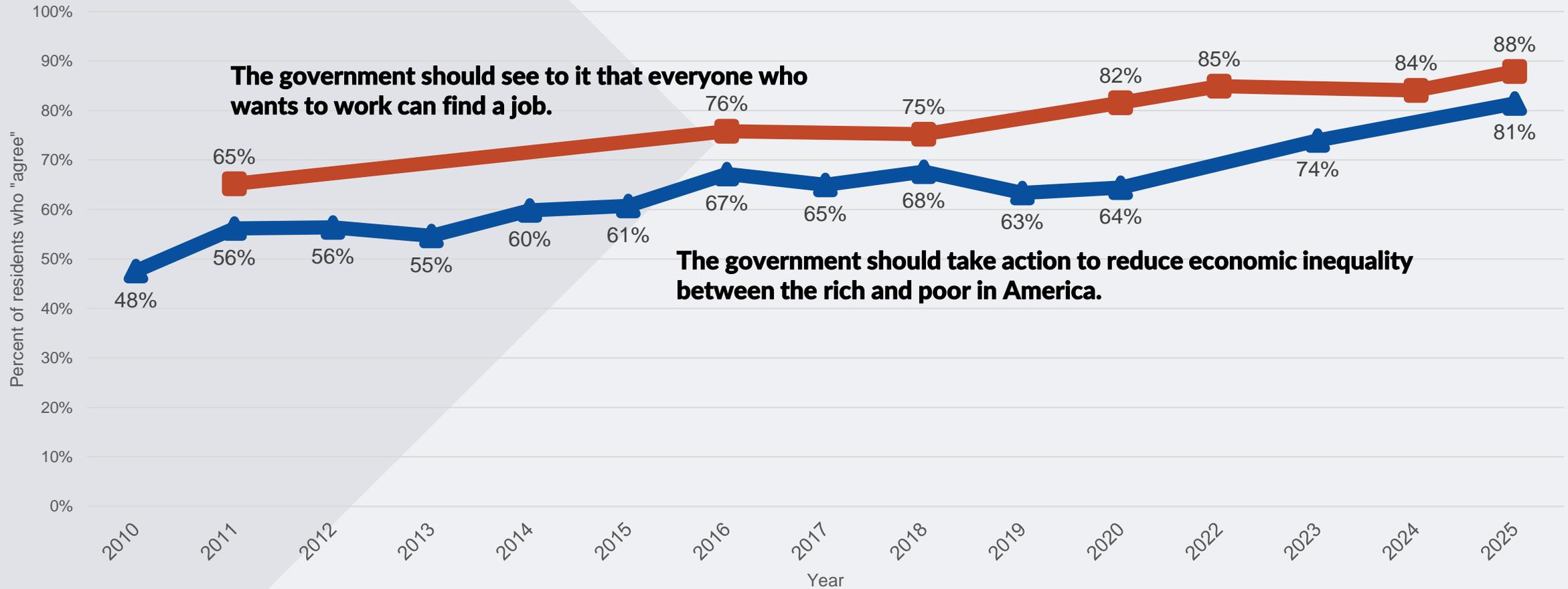
Economic inequality creating different Houston-area experiences



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Mandate from residents to attack economic inequality

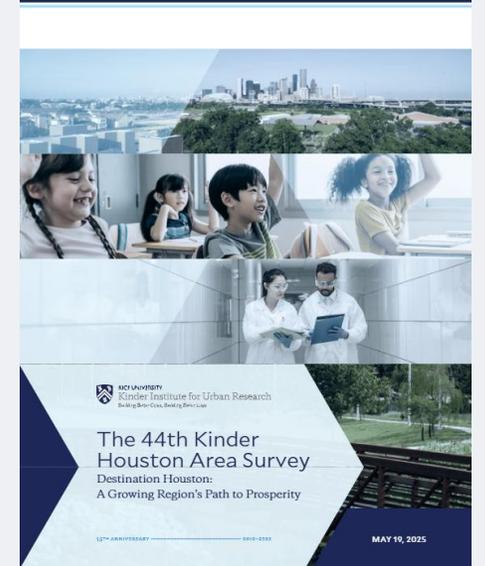
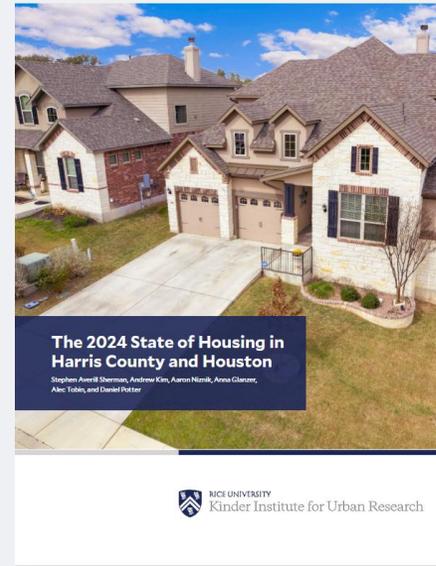
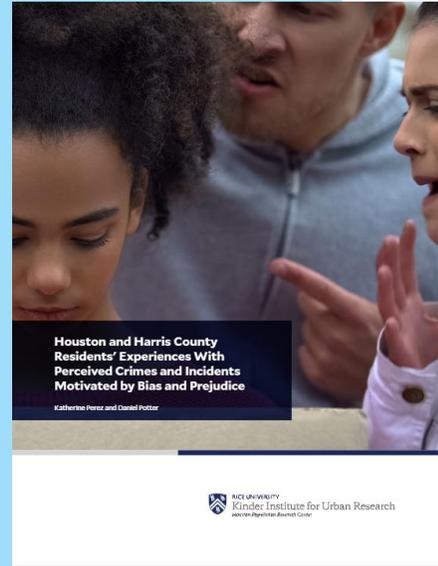
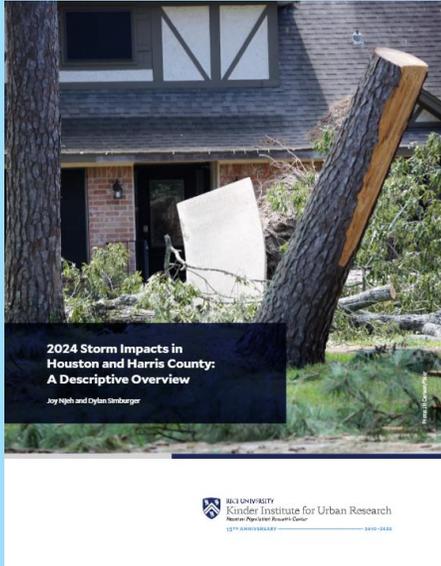


Summary

- Funding priorities identified by budget survey respondents were infrastructure and addressing homelessness
 - Majority also supported spending more on police and mental health services
 - About 2 in 3 residents are willing to pay more in taxes/fees for improved services
- The Houston area is growing faster than most other major metro areas in the nation
- Residents love the people, the economic opportunities, and the activities
- Challenges with public transportation, infrastructure, and public safety are all local issues residents feel have room for improvement
- Economic inequality is both a local and beyond issue that residents want to see more done to address and eliminate



Some of our research



Explore more at
kinder.rice.edu/research



Questions & Thank you!

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