The 2020 Kinder Houston Area Survey

Tracking the Changes in Public Perceptions — on the Brink of a Health Pandemic, an Economic Shutdown, and a Collapse in Oil Prices
The Houston Economy before the Pandemic
Positive ratings of job opportunities in the Houston area (1982-2020)

Percent rating job opportunities as “excellent” or “good.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (1982-2020)
The prevalence of economic hardship among Harris County residents (2018-2020)

- Could not come up with $400 to deal with an emergency (2019): 39%
- Family has no health insurance (2020): 24%
- Household income of less than $37,500 (2020): 31%
- Had a problem paying for food in the past year (2020): 35%
- Had a problem paying for housing in the past year (2018): 35%

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2018-2020)
Ethnic-group disparities in economic vulnerability (2017-2020)

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2017-2020)
Disparities in health-care access and outcomes (2017-2020)

Could not come up with $400 to meet an emergency expense

Family has no health insurance

Current state of health is "fair" or "poor"

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2017-2020)
The current population of Harris County by age group and ethnicity (ACS, 2014-2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Whites</th>
<th>All Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 years</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+ ...</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rethinking Poverty and the Public Schools
Support for programs to reduce the inequalities in American society (2009-2020)

--- The government should take action to reduce income differences in America.
--- The government should see to it that everyone who wants to work can find a job.
--- Most people who receive welfare benefits are really in need of help.
--- Favor: Federal health insurance to cover the medical costs of all Americans.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2009-2020)
The adequacy of funding for the Houston public schools (1995-2020)

Which comes closer to your opinion about the public schools in the general Houston area: “The schools have enough money, if it were used wisely, to provide a quality education”; or: “In order for the schools to provide a quality education, significantly more money will be needed.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (1995-2020)
Support for more taxes to provide preschool education for all children in Houston (2018, 2020)

“What about increasing local taxes in order to provide universal preschool education for all children in Houston?”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2018, 2020)
The Growing Sense of Community Solidarity
An increase in generalized trust and a declining fear of crime (2010-2020)

--- Believe that most people can be trusted.
--- “Very worried” about being the victim of a crime.
--- Death penalty, not life imprisonment, for murder.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)

“The possession of small amounts of marijuana should not be treated as a criminal offense.”

Favorable feelings toward immigrant communities (2010-2020)

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)
Support for gay rights across the years (2010-2020)

Favor: “Homosexuals being legally permitted to adopt children.”

Agree: “Homosexual marriages should be given the same legal status as heterosexual marriages.”

Ratings of 7-10, describing feelings about “gays and lesbians.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)
Paradoxical Perspectives on Abortion Rights
Anti-abortion and pro-choice attitudes among Houston-area residents (1988-2020)

--- Believe abortion is morally wrong.
--- Opposed to a law making it more difficult to obtain an abortion.
--- Agree: Abortion should be legal for any reason.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (1988-2020)
Single-issue voting among “pro-choice” and “pro-life” respondents (2016, 2020)

Could you still vote for a candidate “whose views you mostly agreed with, but who took a position on abortion rights that you disagreed with completely?”

“\[\text{It should be legal for a woman to obtain an abortion if she wants to have one for any reason.}\]”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2016, 2020)
The Enduring Impact of Hurricane Harvey
The rise and fall and rise again of spontaneous concerns about flooding (2017-2020)

“What would you say is the biggest problem facing people in the Houston area today?”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2017-2020)
The likelihood of future storms and support for flood mitigation efforts (2018-2020)

Agree: “It is almost certain that the Houston area will experience more severe storms during the next 10 years compared to the past 10 years.”

Favor: “Prohibiting any additional construction in areas of Houston that have repeatedly flooded.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2018-2020)
The primary cause of climate change is "human activities," and not "normal climate cycles."

The threat of climate change or global warming is: a “very serious problem.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)
The Preference for Walkable Neighborhoods
The preference for walkable urbanism among Harris County residents (2013-2020)

A single-family residential area.
An area with a mix of developments, including homes, shops, and restaurants.
A single-family home where you would need to drive almost everywhere.
A smaller, more urbanized home within walking distance of shops, workplaces.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2013-2020)
Some predictors among Anglo respondents of the preference for walkable urbanism (2018, 2020)

Views of those preferring a smaller home in walking distance of shops and workplaces, vs. those preferring a big single-family home with the need to drive almost everywhere:

- Immigrants to the U.S. generally contribute more to the American economy than they take.
- Favor: Homosexuals being legally permitted to adopt children.
- Spend more taxpayer money to improve rail and buses rather than expand existing highways.
- Household consists of one or two people.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2018, 2020)
The problem of stray dogs and cats in Harris County neighborhoods (2020)

Thinking about where you live, are stray dogs or cats a problem in your neighborhood?

- Not a problem: 52%
- Not very serious: 21%
- Somewhat serious: 17%
- Very serious problem: 8%

What about spending more to reduce the number of stray dogs and cats in Houston neighborhoods?

- Strongly oppose: 16%
- Slightly oppose: 17%
- Slightly favor: 33%
- Strongly favor: 31%

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2020)
• The surveys have documented significant changes in area residents’ understanding of the major challenges and in their support for initiatives to improve the city’s prospects. Now, especially, as the region comes to grips with a health pandemic, an economic shutdown, and a collapse in oil prices, it is important to keep a focus on the broader considerations.
Area residents increasingly support government programs to reduce the inequalities and to improve the public schools. They are embracing the diversity and feeling more at home in a world of thriving friendships across ethnic populations, religious groups, and sexual orientations. And they have developed a deeper sense of trust and community solidarity.
Concluding Notes

• It remains to be seen whether Houston’s business and civic leaders can build on these attitude changes to make the critical investments. As the city copes with the major short-term challenges, it is good to be reminded of the way area residents have changed over the years in their broader concerns and in their support for the longer-term initiatives that will determine Houston’s future.

Stay tuned. Thank you very much!