



# Texas Election 2020

The Most Pressing Policy Issues Affecting the Lone Star State  
In the Eyes of the 2020 Texas Voters

**HOBBY**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

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# Research Team

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# Introduction

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The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey among likely Texas voters to identify leading candidates in the 2020 election and to examine opinions about voting during a pandemic and media bias in political reporting. The survey was fielded in English and Spanish between October 13 and October 20 with 1,000 YouGov respondents, resulting in a confidence interval of  $\pm 3.1\%$ .

The results of this survey have been presented in four separate reports. The first report focused on vote intention as well as favorability ratings and confirmation of the next U.S. Supreme Court Justice. The report projected that Donald Trump would defeat Joe Biden by a 5.3% margin. The preliminary vote tally indicates this projection was quite close to the actual vote result on November 3, where Trump defeated Biden by a 5.6% margin in Texas. The second report concentrated on the 2020 voting experience in Texas and potential elections reforms. The third report examined the sources that voters rely on for information about candidates and elections and explored attitudes about media bias. This fourth report examines the policy issues identified by these likely Texas voters as the most pressing ones affecting the Lone Star State. All of these reports are found at [www.uh.edu/hobby/election2020](http://www.uh.edu/hobby/election2020).

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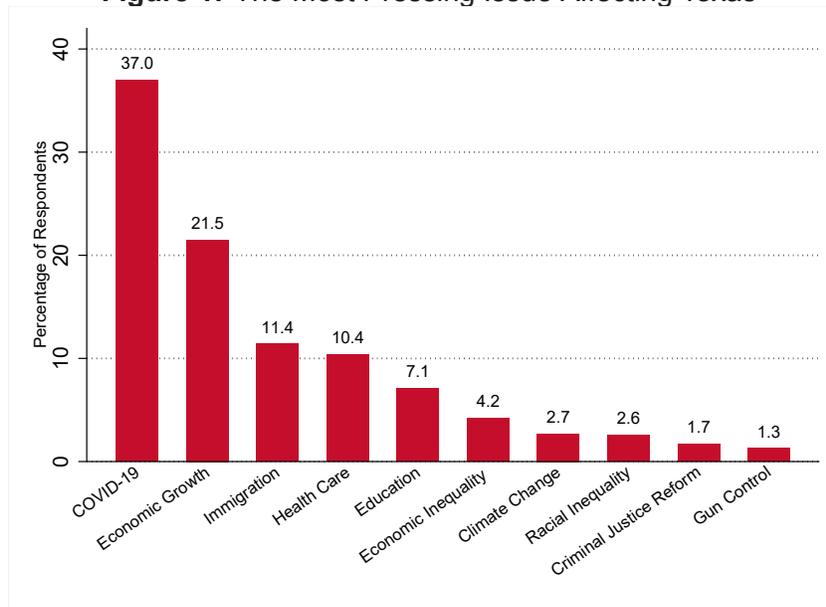
# THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE AFFECTING TEXAS

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In the survey, the respondents were asked which of 10 salient current issues they considered to be the most pressing one affecting Texas. The ten options were: COVID-19, Economic Growth, Immigration, Health Care, Education, Economic Inequality, Climate Change, Racial Inequality, Criminal Justice Reform, and Gun Control.

Figure 1 displays the proportion of likely Texas voters who listed each one of the 10 issues as the most pressing issue affecting Texas. COVID-19 was considered to be the most pressing issue by 37.0% of the likely voters, followed by Economic Growth (21.5%), Immigration (11.4%) and Health Care (10.4%) with proportions in the double digits. The remaining issues ranged from 7.1% for Education to 1.3% for Gun Control.

**Figure 1: The Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas**



## 2.1 Partisanship and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

Table 1 details the proportion of Democrats (31.6% of the respondents), Independents (31.9%) and Republicans (32.6%) who listed the 10 issues as the most pressing issue affecting Texas. Significant partisan differences are present for four of the 10 issues.

**Table 1:** Partisan Identification and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
COVID-19	37.0	58.9	27.6	26.7
Economic Growth	21.5	4.1	25.7	31.6
Immigration	11.4	0.8	12.9	20.2
Health Care	10.4	15.4	9.4	6.9
Education	7.1	2.0	9.0	10.7
Economic Inequality	4.2	6.8	5.6	0.5
Climate Change	2.7	4.8	3.0	0.4
Racial Inequality	2.6	3.7	3.2	1.1
Criminal Justice Reform	1.7	1.8	3.1	0.4
Gun Control	1.3	1.8	0.6	1.6

First, Democrats (58.9%) were significantly more likely than either Independents (27.6%) or Republicans (26.7%) to list COVID-19 as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Second, Republicans (31.6%) and Independents (25.7%) were both significantly more likely than Democrats (4.1%) to list Economic Growth as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Third, Republicans (20.2%) and Independents (12.9%) were both significantly more likely than Democrats (0.8%) to list Immigration as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Fourth, albeit in small numbers, Democrats (4.8%) and Independents (3.0%) were significantly more likely than Republicans (0.4%) to list Climate Change as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

## 2.2 Ethnicity/Race and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

Table 2 details the proportion of Anglos (58.1% of the respondents), Latinos (23.4%) and African Americans (13.1%) who listed the 10 issues as the most pressing issue affecting Texas. Significant ethnic/racial differences are present for four of the 10 issues.

**Table 2:** Ethnicity/Race and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Anglos	African Americans	Latinos
COVID-19	37.0	28.9	56.8	45.8
Economic Growth	21.5	27.8	7.0	14.5
Immigration	11.4	14.8	0.3	10.7
Health Care	10.4	9.6	13.4	7.5
Education	7.1	10.1	0.0	4.8
Economic Inequality	4.2	3.0	9.0	4.2
Climate Change	2.7	1.7	3.8	5.0
Racial Inequality	2.6	1.3	5.5	4.1
Criminal Justice Reform	1.7	1.9	2.4	1.2
Gun Control	1.3	1.0	1.9	2.1

First, African Americans (56.8%) and Latinos (45.8%) were both significantly more likely than Anglos (28.9%) to list COVID-19 as the most pressing issue affecting Texas, with almost twice as many African Americans as Anglos citing COVID-19 as the most pressing issue facing the state.

Second, Anglos (27.8%) were significantly more likely than African Americans (7.0%) to list Economic Growth as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Third, Anglos (14.8%) and Latinos (10.7%) were significantly more likely than African Americans (0.3%) to list Immigration as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Fourth, Anglos (10.1%) were significantly more likely than African Americans (0.0%) to list Education as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

## 2.3 Generation and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

Table 3 details the proportion of the members of the combined Silent Generation (those born before 1946) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort (45.0% of the respondents), Generation X (1965-1980) cohort (23.8%), and combined Millennial (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2012) cohort (31.3%) who listed the 10 issues as the most pressing issue affecting Texas. There are relatively few significant generational differences, with generations splitting in a significant way on only two of the 10 issues.

**Table 3:** Generation and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials & Generation Z
COVID-19	37.0	36.8	34.6	39.2
Economic Growth	21.5	24.1	23.8	16.1
Immigration	11.4	16.0	10.1	5.8
Health Care	10.4	9.2	11.0	11.6
Education	7.1	6.6	6.1	8.7
Economic Inequality	4.2	2.9	5.1	5.5
Climate Change	2.7	1.5	1.0	5.7
Racial Inequality	2.6	1.4	3.3	3.9
Criminal Justice Reform	1.7	0.9	2.8	2.0
Gun Control	1.3	0.7	2.2	1.5

First, the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (16.0%) were significantly more likely than Millennials and Generation Z (5.8%) to list Immigration as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

Second, albeit in small numbers, Millennials and Generation Z (5.7%) were significantly more likely than both Generation X (1.0%) and the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (1.5%) to list Climate Change as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

## 2.4 Gender and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

Table 4 details the proportion of Women (51.8% of the respondents) and Men (48.2%) who listed the 10 issues as the most pressing issue affecting Texas. On only one issue was a significant gender difference detected.

**Table 4:** Gender and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Men	Women
COVID-19	37.0	34.5	39.4
Economic Growth	21.5	25.4	17.9
Immigration	11.4	11.1	11.7
Health Care	10.4	9.1	11.6
Education	7.1	6.4	7.9
Economic Inequality	4.2	5.2	3.4
Climate Change	2.7	2.7	2.8
Racial Inequality	2.6	2.0	3.2
Criminal Justice Reform	1.7	2.0	1.4
Gun Control	1.3	1.8	0.8

Men (25.4%) were significantly more likely than women (17.9%) to list Economic Growth as the most pressing issue affecting Texas.

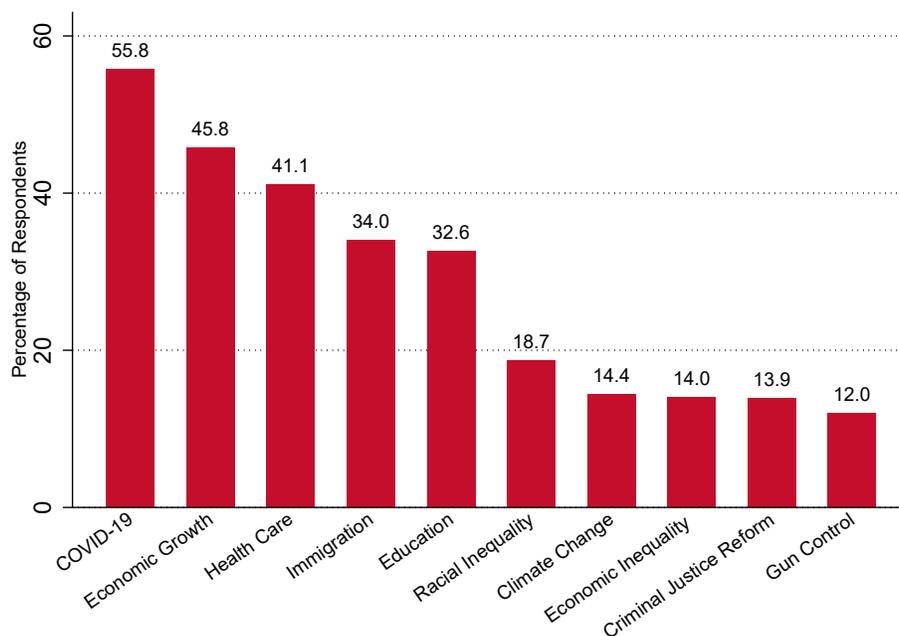
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# THE THREE MOST PRESSING ISSUES AFFECTING TEXAS

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After being queried about what they considered the most pressing issue affecting Texas to be, the respondents were asked what remaining issues they considered the second and third most pressing (the respondents could answer none in addition to the nine and then eight issues which remained for them to choose from). These results were combined to create Figure 2, which contains the proportion of respondents who listed the issue as one of the top three pressing issues affecting Texas.

**Figure 2: The Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas**



More than half of the respondents (55.8%) considered COVID-19 to be one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas, followed by more than two-fifths that cited Economic Growth (45.8%) and Health Care (41.1%), and slightly more and less than one-third that cited Immigration (34.0%) and Education (32.6%). Racial Inequality

(18.7%) was cited by almost one-fifth of respondents, with relatively equal shares of respondents listing Climate Change (14.4%), Economic Inequality (14.0%), Criminal Justice Reform (13.9%) and Gun Control (12.0%) as one of the top three issues facing the state.

### 3.1 Partisanship and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

Table 5 details the proportion of Democrats, Independents and Republicans who listed the 10 issues as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Significant partisan differences exist for eight of the 10 issues.

**Table 5:** Partisan Identification and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
COVID-19	55.8	77.9	47.2	43.9
Economic Growth	45.8	19.1	53.9	63.2
Health Care	41.1	57.0	39.6	28.3
Immigration	34.0	7.3	36.4	58.0
Education	32.6	19.1	33.7	43.9
Racial Inequality	18.7	33.5	15.0	8.4
Climate Change	14.4	26.1	13.3	4.0
Economic Inequality	14.0	20.5	17.4	3.9
Criminal Justice Reform	13.9	16.4	14.9	11.3
Gun Control	12.0	16.5	8.9	11.2

First, Democrats (77.9%) were significantly more likely than both Independents (47.2%) and Republicans (43.9%) to list COVID-19 as one of three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Second, Republicans (63.2%) and Independents (53.9%) were both significantly more likely than Democrats (19.1%) to list Economic Growth as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Third, Democrats (57.0%) were significantly more likely than both Independents (39.6%) and Republicans (28.3%) to list Health Care as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Fourth, Republicans (58.0%) were significantly more likely than both Independents (36.4%) and especially Democrats (7.3%) to list Immigration as one of the three most

pressing issues affecting Texas. Independents were also significantly more likely than Democrats to list Immigration as well.

Fifth, Republicans (43.9%) and Independents (33.7%) were both significantly more likely than Democrats (19.1%) to list Education as one of three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Sixth, Democrats (33.5%) were significantly more likely than both Independents (15.0%) and Republicans (8.4%) to list Racial Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Seventh, Democrats (26.1%) were significantly more likely than both Independents (13.3%) and especially Republicans (4.0%) to list Climate Change as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas, with Independents significantly more likely than Republicans to list Climate Change as well.

Eighth, Democrats (20.5%) and Independents (17.4%) were both significantly more likely than Republicans (3.9%) to list Economic Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

### 3.2 Ethnicity/Race and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

Table 6 details the proportion of Anglos, Latinos, and African Americans who listed the 10 issues as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Significant ethnic/racial differences are present for six issues.

**Table 6:** Ethnicity/Race and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Anglos	African Americans	Latinos
COVID-19	55.8	46.9	71.0	65.6
Economic Growth	45.8	51.5	30.9	40.5
Health Care	41.1	35.9	50.9	44.1
Immigration	34.0	42.6	9.3	31.5
Education	32.6	40.1	16.0	24.3
Racial Inequality	18.7	12.1	43.3	21.9
Climate Change	14.4	12.6	12.1	21.5
Economic Inequality	14.0	10.9	24.8	15.3
Criminal Justice Reform	13.9	12.5	23.5	9.8
Gun Control	12.0	12.6	8.7	15.1

First, African Americans (71.0%) and Latinos (65.6%) were both significantly more likely than Anglos (46.9%) to list COVID-19 as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Second, Anglos (51.5%) were significantly more likely than African Americans (30.9%) to list Economic Growth as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Third, Anglos (42.6%) and Latinos (31.5%) were both significantly more likely than African Americans (9.3%) to list Immigration as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Fourth, Anglos (40.1%) were significantly more likely than African Americans (16.0%) to list Education as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Fifth, African Americans (43.3%) were significantly more likely than Anglos (12.1%) to list Racial Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Sixth, African Americans (24.8%) were significantly more likely than Anglos (10.9%) to list Economic Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

### **3.3 Generation and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas**

Table 7 details the proportion of the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials and Generation Z who listed the 10 issues as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Significant generational differences are present for three issues.

First, the members of the Silent Generation and Baby Boomer cohort (46.0%) were significantly more likely than the members of the Millennial and Generation Z cohort (17.2%) to list Immigration as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Second, members of the Millennial and Generation Z cohort (26.6%) were significantly more likely than the members of the Silent Generation and Baby Boomer cohort (8.2%) to list Climate Change as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

Third, members of the Millennial and Generation Z cohort (20.8%) were significantly more likely than the members of the Silent Generation and Baby Boomer cohort (7.2%) to list Economic Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

**Table 7:** Generation and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millenials & Generation Z
COVID-19	55.8	56.1	54.8	56.2
Economic Growth	45.8	47.7	51.1	39.2
Health Care	41.1	44.2	35.9	40.7
Immigration	34.0	46.0	33.4	17.2
Education	32.6	37.6	28.9	28.3
Racial Inequality	18.7	14.8	19.2	24.0
Climate Change	14.4	8.2	10.0	26.6
Economic Inequality	14.0	7.2	18.0	20.8
Criminal Justice Reform	13.9	11.4	15.5	16.3
Gun Control	12.0	13.6	14.1	8.1

### 3.4 Gender and the Most Pressing Issue Affecting Texas

Table 8 details the proportion of Women and Men who listed the 10 issues as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. As was the case in the previous section, on only one issue was a significant gender difference detected.

Men (53.7%) were significantly more likely than women (38.9%) to list Economic Growth as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas.

**Table 8:** Gender and the Three Most Pressing Issues Affecting Texas

	All Voters	Men	Women
COVID-19	55.8	51.1	60.2
Economic Growth	45.8	53.7	38.9
Health Care	41.1	38.1	43.9
Immigration	34.0	36.2	32.1
Education	32.6	35.3	30.1
Racial Inequality	18.7	15.2	22.1
Climate Change	14.4	12.5	16.1
Economic Inequality	14.0	14.1	14.0
Criminal Justice Reform	13.9	15.2	12.7
Gun Control	12.0	10.4	13.5

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# CONCLUSION

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When asked to identify the most pressing issues affecting the state of Texas, likely Texas voters differed notably based on their partisanship and their ethnicity/race. In contrast, relatively few generational differences exist in terms of the salience of these issues, with even fewer gender differences.

In terms of partisan differences, the partisan chasm was deepest in regard to the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic was seen as a pressing issue affecting Texas. Democrats were significantly more likely than Independents and Republicans to list COVID-19 as both the most pressing issue affecting Texas and as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. The next most salient difference was in the area of Economic Growth, which was significantly more likely to be mentioned as both the most pressing issue as well as one of the three most pressing issues by both Republicans and Independents than by Democrats. The same divide was present for Immigration, with Republicans and Independents both significantly more likely than Democrats to list it as the most pressing issue as well as one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Finally, among the lower salience issues from Figures 1 and 2, there existed a stark partisan divide on the issue of racial inequality, which was significantly more likely to be viewed by Democrats as one of the top three issues facing the state than by either Independents and especially by Republicans.

In terms of ethnic/racial differences, the ethnic/racial chasm was deepest in regard to COVID-19 where African Americans and Latinos were significantly more likely than Anglos to list the COVID-19 pandemic as both the most pressing issue and one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Immigration was also much more likely to be mentioned by Anglos and Latinos than by African Americans as the most or one of the three most pressing issues affecting Texas. Finally, African Americans were significantly more likely than Anglos to list Racial Inequality as one of the three most pressing issues affecting the state, while Anglos were significantly more likely than African Americans to list Economic Growth as both the most and one of the three most pressing issues affecting the Lone Star State.