

TEXAS VOTES

2024

**Harris County: Electricity Reliability,
Legislation & Weather**



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON





Texas Votes 2024
Harris County: Electricity Reliability, Legislation & Weather
November 2024

The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of likely Texas voters, with an oversample of Harris County voters, to assess their preferences and opinions about candidates and issues in the November 2024 election. The survey was fielded between September 26 and October 10, 2024, in English and Spanish, via a YouGov panel of registered voters who were considered likely to vote in the 2024 General Election. The likely voters were selected using a series of questions related to past and expected future voting behavior. The statewide analysis population of 1,329, with a margin of error of +/- 2.69%, was matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and partisanship, and is representative of the Texas likely voter population. The same process was followed for the analysis population of 491 Harris County likely voters, contained within this larger statewide population, which was utilized for all of the analysis contained in this report. This population is representative of the 2024 Harris County likely voter population. The margin of error for this report's Harris County population of 491 likely voters is +/- 4.42%. With a population of greater than 4.8 million, Harris County is the third most populous county in the United States, with more residents than 26 states.

The Texas Votes 2024 study includes five reports. This first report focused on the statewide races for president, U.S. Senate and the Texas Railroad Commission, along with issues influencing vote intention, and candidate favorability. The second report concentrated on county-wide non-judicial elections and candidates in Harris County along with policy issues affecting Harris County that are of concern to voters. The third report examined statewide attitudes toward election integrity and administration, threats to democracy, and election reforms. The fourth report analyzed Harris County voters' opinions about election integrity, administration and reforms. This fifth report explores attitudes about electricity reliability, proposed legislation related to CenterPoint, the Public Utilities Commission of Texas and the electrical grid, and the impact of weather-related events on people's consideration of moving out of the Houston metro region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

36% of Harris County voters list electricity service reliability as one of the top three issues of most concern in Harris County, more than any other issue, including rising property taxes (33%), housing affordability (32%), and flooding (30%).

86% of Harris County voters support legislation (65% strongly) which would require CenterPoint to cover from its own profits the \$800 million dollar cost of the unused large mobile generators it leased following the 2021 winter storm as well as reimburse ratepayers. Only 5% oppose this legislation.

Support for the legislation to require CenterPoint to pay the \$800 million dollar generator bill from its own profits transcends partisanship, ethnicity/race and gender:

88% of Democrats and 86% of Republicans support it.

89% of white voters, 84% of Black voters and 81% of Latino voters support it.

87% of men and 85% of women support it.

82% of Harris County voters support legislation (57% strongly) that would increase the power and authority of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) to ensure CenterPoint and other Texas electric utilities harden their distribution networks. Only 8% oppose this legislation.

Support for the legislation to empower the PUCT to be better able to ensure CenterPoint and other electric companies harden their grids transcends partisanship, ethnicity/race and gender:

83% of Democrats and 80% of Republicans support it.

87% of white voters, 77% of Black voters and 76% of Latino voters support it.

84% of men and 81% of women support it.

48% of Harris County voters have considered moving out of the Houston metro region during the past few years, while 52% have not considered moving.

Of those Harris County voters who have considered moving, 70% cite weather-related events as either a major or a minor reason why they have considered leaving Houston.

Overall, one-third (34%) of Harris County voters have considered leaving the Houston metro region over the course of the past few years due to weather-related events such as flooding and Hurricane Beryl.

23% of Harris County voters believe that their quality of life is better than that of people in other major U.S. metro regions, while 21% believe their quality of life is worse and 37% believe their quality of life in metro Houston is the same as that of people in other metropolises. 19% are unsure.

HARRIS COUNTY LIKELY VOTER POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

White likely voters account for 45% of this survey population of Harris County likely voters, Latino likely voters for 28%, Black likely voters for 21%, and others for 6%. Women represent 52% of this population, men 47%, and those who identify as non-binary or other 1%. Regarding generations, 33% of this population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 23% to Generation X (Gen-X) (1965-1980), 28% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation, and 16% to Generation Z (1997-2012). The highest level of educational attainment of 42% of the population is a four-year college degree or a post-graduate degree, of 31% of the population is a two-year college degree or some college, and of 27% of the population is a high school degree or less. Democrats account for 51% of this population, Republicans for 37% and Independents for 11%, with 1% unsure of their partisan identification.

CONCERN ABOUT ELECTRICITY SERVICE RELIABILITY

The Harris County likely voters were presented with a list of 12 issues affecting Harris County and asked to identify which issue they are most concerned about, second most concerned about, and third most concerned about. The 12 (rotated) issues are as follows: access to health care, condition of roads & streets, crime, economic inequality, electricity service reliability, ethnic/racial inequality, flooding, homelessness, housing affordability, public school quality, rising property taxes, and traffic congestion.

Figure 1 displays the proportion of the likely voters who listed each of the 12 issues as one of the three issues of most concern in Harris County. Close to two-fifths (36%) of Harris County likely voters listed electricity service reliability as one of the three issues facing Harris County about which they were most concerned. Electricity service reliability ranked ahead of other salient issues of concern such as rising property taxes (33%), housing affordability (32%), flooding (30%), the condition of roads & streets (26%), crime (23%), and public school quality (23%).

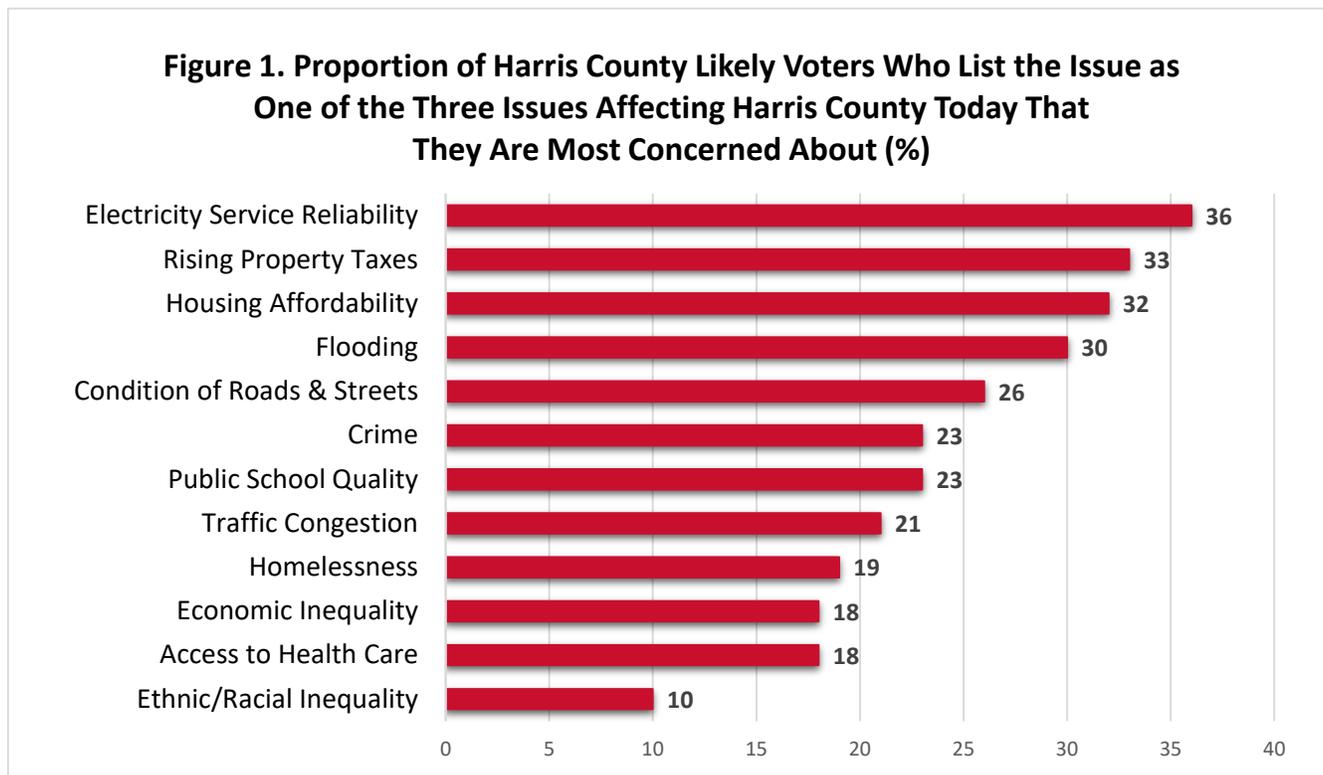


Table 1 provides the proportion of likely voters who listed electricity service reliability as one of their top-three concerns, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment and partisan identification.

Table 1. Proportion of Key Socio-Demographic Groups Citing Electricity Service Reliability as One of the Three Issues Affecting Harris County That They Are Most Concerned About (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Proportion Listing as Top 3 Concern (%)
Overall		36
Gender	Women	34
	Men	38
Ethnicity/Race	White	38
	Latino	37
	Black	31
Generation	Silent/Boomer	51
	Generation X	45
	Millennial	25
	Generation Z	13
Education	High School	34
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	39
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	35
Partisanship	Democratic	39
	Independent	20
	Republican	37

There are not any salient gender, ethnic/racial, educational or partisan differences in the proportion of likely voters who consider electricity service to be one of the top three issues of concern in Harris County. For example, electricity service is a top-three issue for 39% and 37% of Democratic and Republican voters, respectively, and also a leading priority of 38% of white voters, 37% of Latino voters and 31% of Black voters. However, there is a notable generational split. Older voters belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (51%) and to Generation X (45%) are significantly more likely to list electricity service reliability as a top-three concern than are the younger Millennials (25%) and Gen-Zs (13%).

SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE CENTERPOINT TO COVER \$800 MILLION GENERATOR BILL

The respondents were asked if when the Texas Legislature holds its biennial regular session this coming spring if they would support or oppose efforts by Houston-area legislators to pass legislation that would require CenterPoint to pay back its customers from its own profits the \$800 million it charged for large emergency generators that were not used during Hurricane Beryl (or any other storm), which contrary to CenterPoint's claims when obtaining approval for the lease from the Public Utility Commission of Texas, are not designed for mobile rapid response use. The response options were strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose, and don't know.

Figure 2 reveals that nearly nine out ten (86%) Harris County voters support this proposed legislation, with 65% strongly supporting it. In sharp contrast, one in twenty Harris County voters oppose it (5%), with only 1% strongly in opposition. The remaining 9% did not know if they support or oppose the legislation.

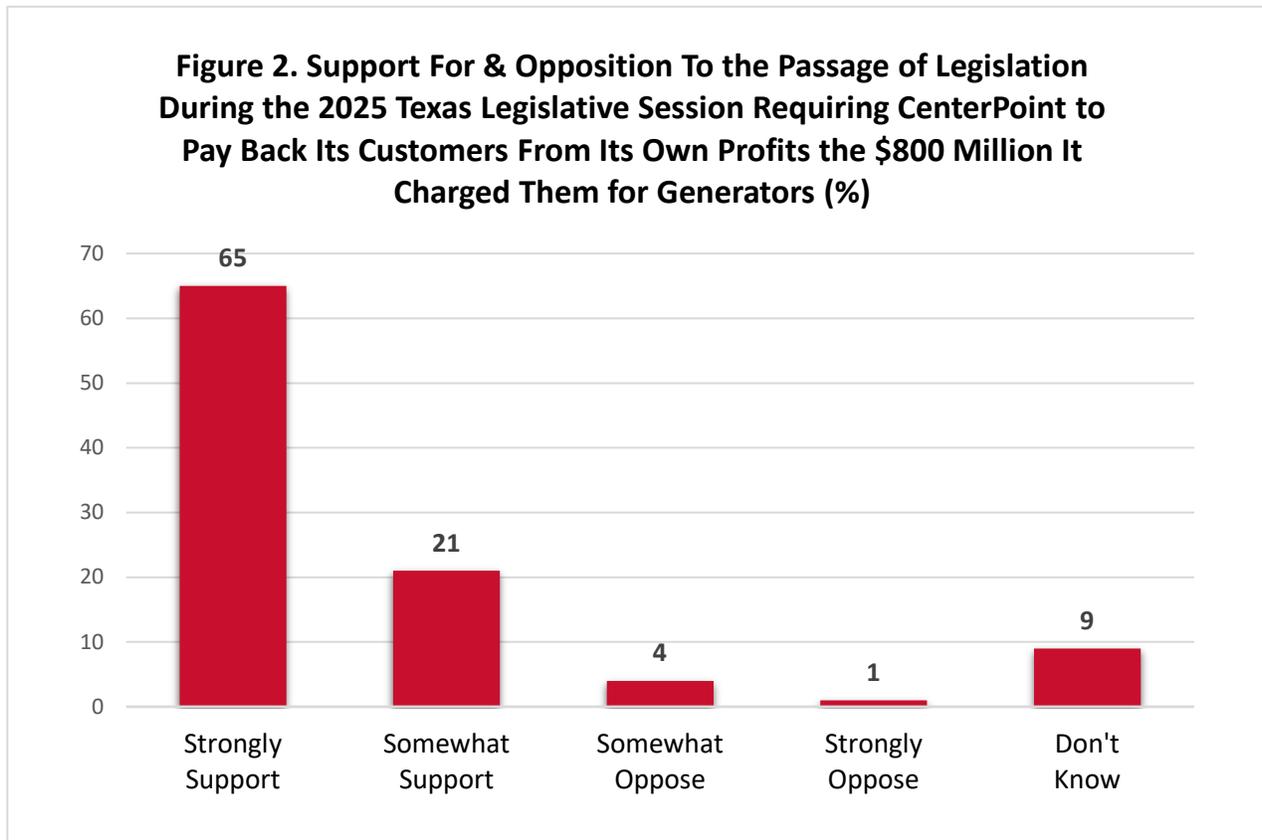


Table 2 provides the proportion of Harris County likely voters who support and oppose legislation to require CenterPoint to pay for the \$800 million dollar generator bill from its own profits, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment and partisan identification.

Table 2. Support For & Opposition To Legislation To Claw Back \$800 Million from CenterPoint Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Support	Oppose	Don't Know
Overall		86	5	9
Gender	Women	85	4	11
	Men	87	7	6
Ethnicity/Race	White	89	6	5
	Latino	81	6	13
	Black	84	6	10
Generation	Silent/Boomer	90	2	8
	Generation X	89	4	7
	Millennial	83	5	12
	Generation Z	79	12	9
Education	High School	75	8	17
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	93	3	4
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	88	5	7
Partisanship	Democratic	88	5	7
	Independent	78	9	13
	Republican	86	5	9

There are not any salient gender, ethnic/racial, generational, educational or partisan differences in the proportion of likely voters who support and oppose this proposed legislation which would require CenterPoint to cover the cost of these large generators from its own profits. In fact, there is a strong consensus in support of this legislation which transcends gender, ethnicity/race, generation, education and partisanship. For example, 88% of Democrats and 86% of Republicans support the legislation, as do 89% of white voters, 84% of Black voters and 81% of Latino voters, as well as 87% and 85% of men and women, respectively. Opposition to the proposed legislation is in the single digits for all 15 socio-demographic sub-groups, with the modest exception of Generation Z, 12% of whose members are in opposition.

SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION EMPOWERING THE PUCT TO ENSURE CENTERPOINT HARDENS ITS GRID

The respondents were asked if when the Texas Legislature holds its biennial regular session this coming spring if they would support or oppose efforts by Houston-area legislators to pass legislation which would increase the power and authority of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) to require CenterPoint and other Texas electric utility companies to harden their distribution network by moving away from the use of wooden utility poles, raising power lines above the tree line, and trimming trees for power lines that remain at tree level. The response options were strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose, and don't know.

Figure 3 reveals that more than eight out of ten (82%) Harris County voters support this proposed legislation, with 57% strongly supporting it. In sharp contrast just 8% oppose it, with only 2% strongly in opposition. The remaining 10% did not know if they support or oppose the legislation.

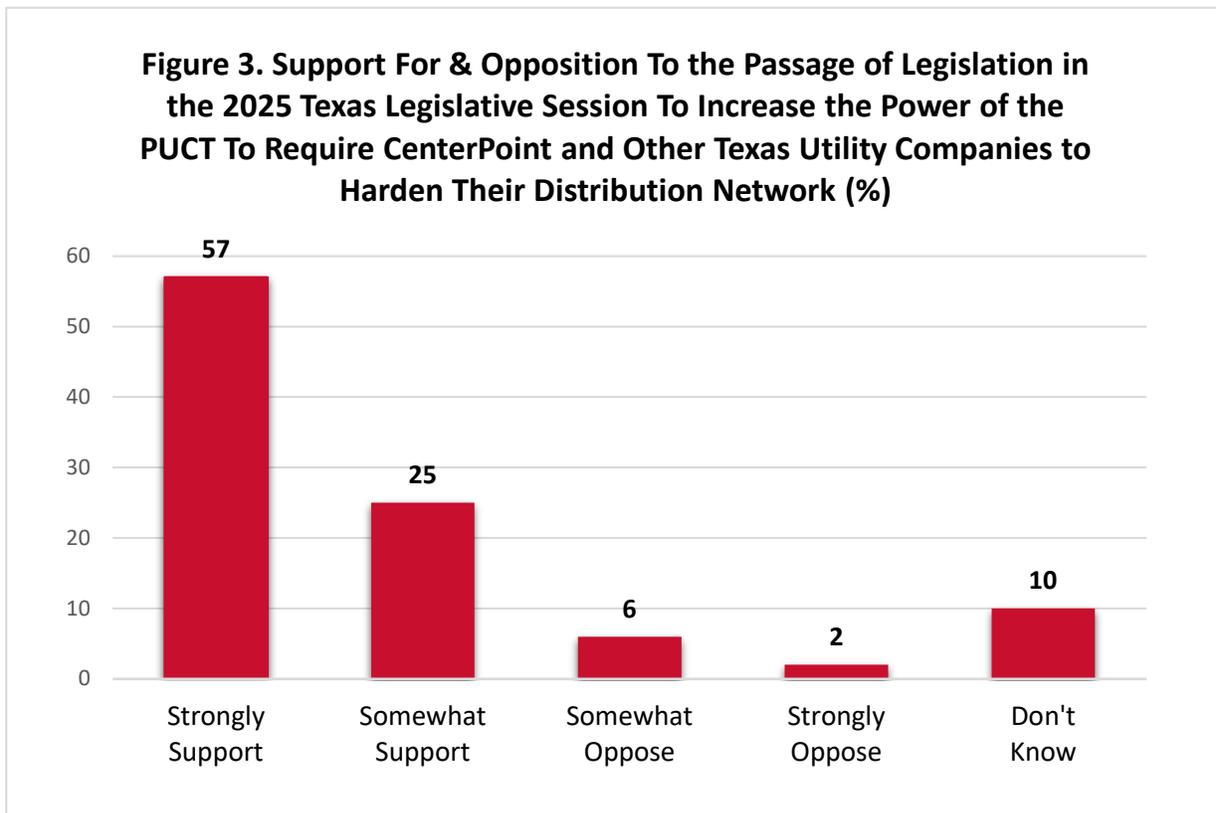


Table 3 provides the proportion of likely voters who support and oppose this legislation to give the PUCT more power to ensure CenterPoint and other electric utilities do the best that they can to harden their grid, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment and partisan identification.

Table 3. Support For & Opposition To Legislation To Empower PUCT To Ensure CenterPoint Hardens Its Grid Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Support	Oppose	Don't Know
Overall		82	8	10
Gender	Women	81	6	13
	Men	84	10	6
Ethnicity/Race	White	87	9	4
	Latino	76	9	15
	Black	77	7	16
Generation	Silent/Boomer	86	4	10
	Generation X	87	3	10
	Millennial	79	10	11
	Generation Z	73	19	8
Education	High School	72	10	18
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	86	6	8
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	86	9	5
Partisanship	Democratic	83	6	11
	Independent	88	2	10
	Republican	80	13	7

There are no salient gender, ethnic/racial, generational, educational or partisan differences in the proportion of likely voters who support and oppose this proposed legislation that would grant more power and authority to the PUCT to regulate the electric utilities in regard to grid maintenance and hardening. In fact, there is a strong consensus in support of this legislation which transcends gender, ethnicity/race, generation, education and partisanship. For example, 83% of Democrats and 80% of Republicans support the legislation, as do 87% of white voters, 77% of Black voters and 76% of Latino voters, and, 84% and 81% of men and women, respectively. Among the 15 socio-demographic sub-groups, opposition to the legislation ranges from a low of 2% among Independents to a high of 19% among Generation Z.

LEAVING THE HOUSTON METRO REGION DUE TO RECENT WEATHER EVENTS

The respondents were asked if over the past few years they have considered moving out of the Houston metro region. The 48% of respondents who answered yes (52% answered no) were then asked if weather events like flooding, the 2021 freeze, increasingly hot summers, and this year's experiences with the derecho in May and Hurricane Beryl in June were a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason for why they have considered moving.

Table 4 provides the proportion of Harris County voters who are considering, and who are not considering, moving out of the Houston metro region, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment and partisan identification. Overall, there are no salient gender, ethnic/racial, generational or educational differences in the proportion of likely voters who are thinking about leaving the Houston metro region. Republicans (55%), however, are significantly more likely than Democrats (41%) to have been considering a move out of the region.

Table 4. Proportion of Key Socio-Demographic Groups Who Recently Have Considered and Have Not Considered Moving Out of the Houston Metro Region (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Have Considered Moving	Have Not Considered Moving
Overall		48	52
Gender	Women	51	49
	Men	45	55
Ethnicity/Race	White	50	50
	Latino	46	54
	Black	40	60
Generation	Silent/Boomer	50	50
	Generation X	62	38
	Millennial	46	54
	Generation Z	29	71
Education	High School	44	56
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	52	48
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	48	52
Partisanship	Democratic	41	59
	Independent	58	42
	Republican	55	45

Figure 4 displays the proportion of the 48% Harris County voters who report they have considered moving for whom the weather events are a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason for why they are thinking about leaving Houston. More than two-fifths (42%) cite the weather events as a major reason for why they are thinking about moving, 28% cite the weather events as a minor reason, and 30% say the weather events are not a reason why they are thinking of moving out of the Houston area.

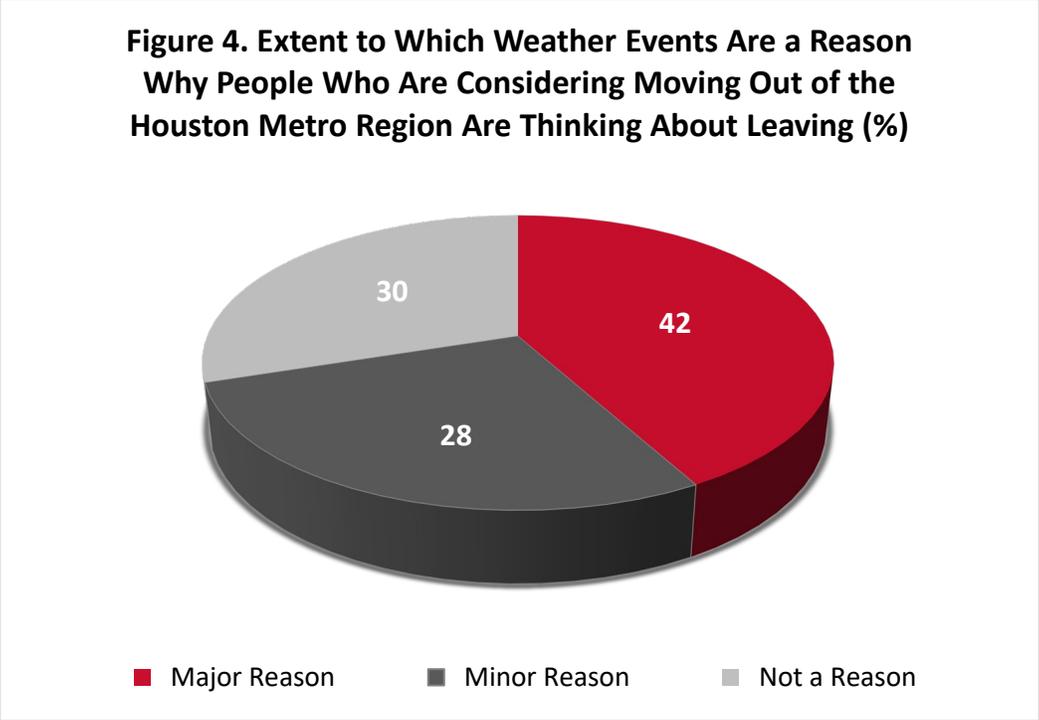


Table 5 provides the proportion of the 48% of Harris County voters who have considered leaving recently who cite weather as a major or minor reason for why they are thinking about moving as well as provides the proportion for whom weather is not a reason for their potential exodus, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment and partisan identification. Overall, there are not any salient gender, ethnic/racial, generational, or educational differences in the proportion of likely voters who cite the weather as a reason they are considering a move out of the Houston metro region, with one exception. There is a notable partisan difference, with Democrats (87%) significantly more likely than Republicans (56%) to say that weather events are a reason why they are thinking about moving, with an even larger gap (61% of Democrats vs. 24% of Republicans) in the proportion who say weather events are a major reason for why they are thinking about moving.

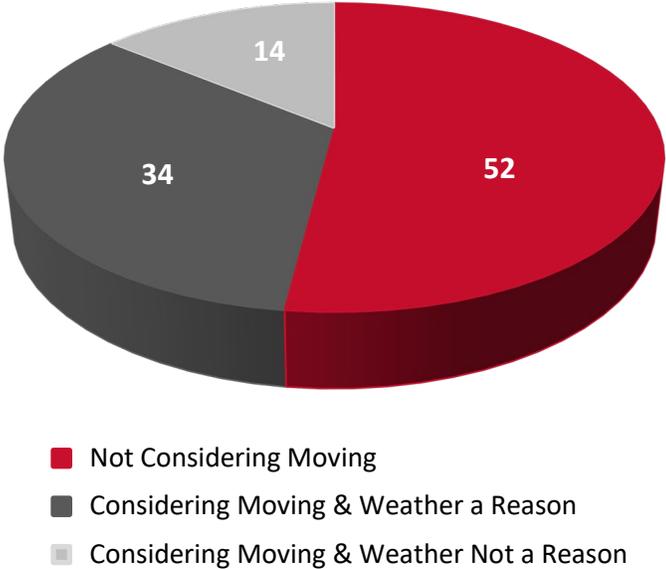
Table 5: Extent to Which Weather Related Factors Are a Reason For Consideration of Moving Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	A Reason	Not A Reason
Overall		70 (42)	30
Gender	Women	74 (47)	26
	Men	65 (35)	35
Ethnicity/Race	White	62 (36)	38
	Latino	73 (42)	27
	Black	77 (54)	23
Generation	Silent/Boomer	66 (39)	34
	Generation X	66 (34)	34
	Millennial/Gen-Z	78 (52)	22
Education	High School	69 (41)	31
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	70 (36)	30
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	70 (47)	30
Partisanship	Democratic	87 (61)	13
	Independent	60 (40)	40
	Republican	56 (24)	44

Note: Proportion Listing Weather as Major Reason in parentheses.

Figure 5 brings together the entire Harris County likely voter population on one graphic broken down into three groups: those Harris County voters who are not considering moving (52%), those who are considering moving and weather is a reason (major or minor) for why they are thinking about leaving (34%), and those who are thinking about moving but for whom weather has nothing to do with this decision (14%). Overall, the data reveal that a little more than one-third of Harris County residents are thinking about leaving the region at least in part due to weather events like flooding and Hurricane Beryl.

Figure 5: Distribution of the Harris County Population: Not Considering Moving, Considering Moving & Weather is a Reason, Considering Moving & Weather is Not a Reason (%)



COMPARING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HOUSTON TO THAT IN OTHER MAJOR METRO REGIONS

The respondents were asked if they believe their quality of life in the Houston metro region is better than, equal to, or worse than the quality of life of people in other major U.S. metro regions. The response options were better than, equal to, worse than, and don't know/unsure.

Figure 6 reveals that 23% of Harris County voters believe their quality of life in Houston is better than that of people in other major U.S. metro regions, while 21% believe their quality of life is worse, and 37% believe their quality of life is equal to that of people in other major U.S. metro areas. Nearly one in five (19%) of these Harris County voters were unsure about where their quality of life stands vis-à-vis that of people in other metropolises.

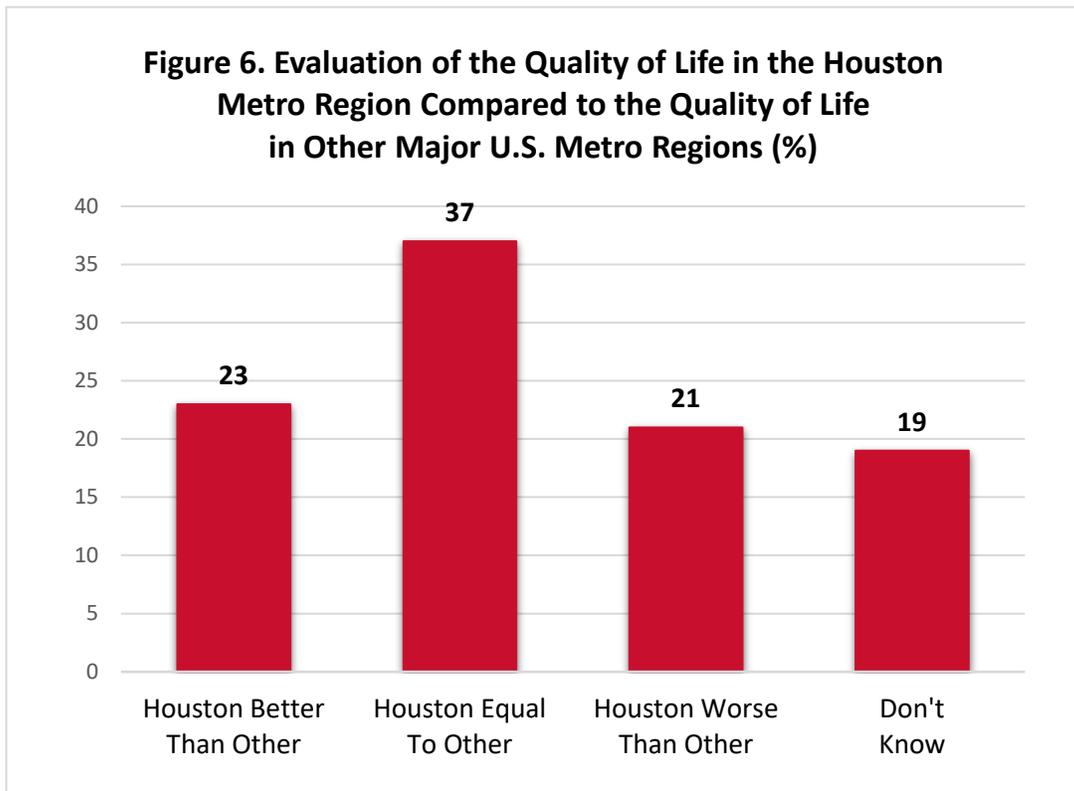


Table 6 provides the socio-demographic breakdown of the proportion of Harris County likely voters who believe their quality of life here in metro Houston is better than, equal to, and worse than that of people in other major U.S. metro regions, along with the proportion who were unsure how to respond to this question. Overall, there are no salient gender, ethnic/racial, generational, educational or partisan differences in the proportion of Harris County voters who believe their quality of life is better than, equal to, or worse than that of their peers in other major metro areas.

Table 6. Evaluation of the Quality of Life in Houston Compared to Other Major U.S. Metro Regions Among Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Better Than	Equal To	Worse Than	Don't Know
Overall		23	37	21	19
Gender	Women	18	35	21	26
	Men	28	40	20	12
Ethnicity/Race	White	26	42	20	12
	Latino	18	38	24	20
	Black	18	35	14	33
Generation	Silent/Boomer	26	38	19	17
	Generation X	21	33	25	21
	Millennial	24	34	20	22
	Generation Z	22	44	18	16
Education	High School	15	33	18	34
	Some College/2 Yr Degree	24	39	22	15
	4 Yr Degree/PostGrad	28	39	21	12
Partisanship	Democratic	20	38	23	19
	Independent	25	31	18	26
	Republican	28	38	17	17

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