Prophetic City: The Houston Region on the Cusp of a Changing America

Tracking Responses to the Economic and Demographic Transformations through 39 Years of Houston Surveys

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The Kinder Houston Area Survey (1982-Present)

These 39 years of systematic interviews with successive representative samples of Harris County residents have explored the way the general public is responding to three fundamental new realities:

- The Rise of the Knowledge Economy
- The Epic Demographic Transition
- The New Salience of Quality of Place
Two contrasting economic eras (1949 to 1979; and 1980 to the present)

The 30 years after World War II (1949-1979) were a period of broad-based prosperity. The past 35 years have seen increasing inequalities in income and wealth.

The educational requirements for jobs across America (1970-2020)

By 2020, 65% of all American jobs will require education beyond high school.

The adequacy of funding for the Houston public schools (KHAS, 1995-2020)

Which comes closer to your opinion about the public schools in Houston: “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 prevalence of economic hardship among Harris County residents (KHAS, 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 groceries 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)
Support for government programs to reduce the inequalities in American society (2009-2020)

The graph shows the percentage of respondents supporting various government programs over the years from 2009 to 2020. The programs include:

- 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)
Between 1492 and 1965, 82% of all the immigrants who came to American shores came from Europe.

After reform of the restrictive laws in 1965, 88% of all the new immigrants have been non-Europeans.
Cities with the largest numbers of foreign-born residents (2010-2014)

Source: ACS 2010-2014 Five-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau © Dr. Stephen L. Klineberg and the Kinder Institute for Urban Research
Demographic changes in Harris County by decade (1960-2010) and the ACS estimates for 2012-2016

Source: U.S. Census. Classifications based on Texas State Data Center Conventions
The ethnic distribution across Harris County

1980

Anglo majority
Black majority
Latino majority
No majority

Source: Outreach Strategists, LLC. Color represents demographic group being a majority in that census tract. © Dr. Stephen L. Klineberg and the Kinder Institute for Urban Research
The demographics of the eight most diverse large metro areas in America (ACS, 2013-2017)

The demographics of Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties (U.S. Census, 1990-2016)

Population

Fort Bend County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Whites</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Hispanics</th>
<th>Asians/Others</th>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>2016</td>
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<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Hispanics</th>
<th>Asians/Others</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
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Montgomery County

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<th>Hispanics</th>
<th>Asians/Others</th>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Census data. Classifications based on Texas State Data Center Conventions
The current population of Harris County by age group and ethnicity (ACS, 2013-2017)

The current population of Fort Bend County by age group and ethnicity (ACS, 2013-2017)

Total Population: 632,946

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2009-2013 ACS 5-year estimates
© Dr. Stephen L. Klineberg and the Kinder Institute for Urban Research
The current population of the United States by age group and ethnicity (ACS, 2013-2017)

Non-Hispanic Whites  All Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Whites</th>
<th>All Others</th>
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<td>&lt;5 years</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>5 to 9</td>
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<td>10 to 14</td>
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<td>15 to 19</td>
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<td>20 to 24</td>
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<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 to 29</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
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<td>45 to 54</td>
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<td>65 to 74</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+ years</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The projected population of U.S. by age group and ethnicity in 2050, assuming no change in immigration

Favorable feelings toward immigrant communities (KHAS, 2010-2020)

“Refugees who are in danger in their home countries should always be welcome in Houston.”

Ratings of 7-10, describing feelings about “Muslims or followers of Islam”

Ratings of 7-10, describing feelings about “undocumented immigrants”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)
Attitudes toward immigrants among U.S.-born Anglos in Harris County (KHAS, 1994-2019)

Houston’s ethnic diversity will be a source of great strength for the region.

Immigrants contribute more to the American economy than they take.

The increasing immigration mostly strengthens American culture.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (1994-2019)
Attitudes toward immigration among three cohorts of Harris County Anglos, all aged 25-35


- "The increasing immigration into this country today mostly strengthens American culture."
- "Immigrants to the U.S. generally contribute more to the American economy than they take."
- "The U.S. should admit more or the same number of legal immigrants in the next ten years."

Source: Kinder Houston Area Surveys (1994-2017)
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“Have you ever been in a romantic relationship with someone who was not Anglo?”
(Percent saying, “Yes, I have”):

- 18-29: 58%
- 30-39: 61%
- 40-49: 52%
- 50-59: 42%
- 60-69: 29%
- 70+: 18%

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2007-2018)
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County differences in income, education, and the percent of foreign-born (KHAS, 2015-2018)

### Education

- **Bachelor's degree or more**
  - Harris: 30%
  - Fort Bend: 44%
  - Montgomery: 33%

- **Some college**
  - Harris: 27%
  - Fort Bend: 27%
  - Montgomery: 30%

- **High school or less**
  - Harris: 43%
  - Fort Bend: 29%
  - Montgomery: 37%

### Household Income

- **$75,000 or more**
  - Harris: 37%
  - Fort Bend: 59%
  - Montgomery: 46%

- **$25,000 to $74,999**
  - Harris: 41%
  - Fort Bend: 31%
  - Montgomery: 38%

- **Less than $25,000**
  - Harris: 22%
  - Fort Bend: 10%
  - Montgomery: 15%

### Place of Birth

- **Native-born**
  - Harris: 74%
  - Fort Bend: 73%
  - Montgomery: 87%

- **Foreign-born**
  - Harris: 26%
  - Fort Bend: 27%
  - Montgomery: 13%

County differences in religiosity and party affiliation (KHAS, 2015-2018)

Religious affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Harris</th>
<th>Fort Bend</th>
<th>Montgomery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</table>

Attended a religious service, in past 30 days

<table>
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<th>Montgomery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Declared or leaning toward which political party

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Montgomery</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rep.</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
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Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2015-18).
County differences in support for government programs to address the inequalities (2015-2018)

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2015-18).
Bayous
Transportation
Hiking, boating, birding
Arts, culture, sports
Air and water quality
Green spaces, trees
Urban centers
Quality of Place
The eleven major bayous of Harris County

Spring Creek
Cypress Creek
Willow Creek
White Oak Bayou
Buffalo Bayou
Brays Bayou
Greens Bayou
Halls Bayou
Hunting Bayou
Sims Bayou
Clear Creek
Concerns about climate change and the role of human activities (2010-2020)

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

Climate change is primarily caused by “human activities,” not “normal climate cycles.”

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2010-2020)
Houston’s urban sprawl

**Houston**
2.2 million
600 sq. mi.

**Chicago**
2.7 million
228 sq. mi.

**Baltimore**
0.6 million
81 sq. mi.

**Detroit**
0.7 million
139 sq. mi.

**Philadelphia**
1.6 million
134 sq. mi.

The nine-county Houston metropolitan area

- **Massachusetts**
  - Population: 6.7 million
  - Area: 10,550 sq. mi.

- **New Jersey**
  - Population: 8.9 million
  - Area: 8,729 sq. mi.

- **6.5 million**
  - **10,072 sq. mi.**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
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The preference for walkable urbanism among Harris County residents (2013-2020)

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2013-2020)
County differences in the perceived importance of transit, “walkability,” and land-use planning (2015-18)

A much improved mass transit system is "very important" for the future success of Houston.

Prefer a smaller home in a more urbanized area, over a larger home with the need to drive everywhere.

Prefer an area with a mix of developments, over a single-family residential area.

We need better land-use planning to guide development in the Houston area.

Source: Kinder Houston Area Survey (2015-18).
This research has documented significant changes over the years in area residents’ responses to the major issues facing the region:

• The survey participants are calling for more investments to improve the public schools and to redress the rising inequalities.

• They are more in support of new initiatives to mitigate future storms and to develop more walkable neighborhoods.

• They are increasingly embracing Houston’s diversity and feeling more comfortable with the region’s continuing immigration.
Concluding Notes (2)

- It remains to be seen whether Houston’s business and civic leaders can build on these attitude changes to make the sustained commitments needed for prosperity in the new era of economic, demographic, and technological transformation.

- As the region copes with the “triple whammy” of daunting short-term challenges, it is good to be reminded of the way area residents have changed in their broader concerns and their support for the longer-term investments that will ultimately determine Houston’s (and America’s) future.

Stay tuned. Thank you very much!
For further information:

To download the 2020 report: kinder.rice.edu/houstonsurvey2020

To purchase the new book: simonandschuster.com/books/Prophetic-City