



**Texans' Voices on the State Budget:  
A People's Budget Survey and Community Engagement Analysis**

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**Introduction**

Through the People’s Budget, we’re working to craft a budget that is more aligned with what real Texans want to see in our state. Through extensive outreach, our Community Engagement and Advocacy Team sought to understand what real Texans—especially those from historically marginalized communities—value most when it comes to how state resources are allocated. Over the past few months, we collected feedback from a wide cross-section of Texans through surveys, community meetings, and tele-townhalls. Our goal was to capture not only what Texans appreciate about their state, but also the changes they want to see in policies and leadership to build a more inclusive, equitable future. This report summarizes the insights gathered, highlighting the top concerns of respondents, their frustrations with current governance, and their vision for a better Texas.

## Executive Summary

We heard from a total of 1,467 Texans through our People’s Budget survey:

- 60% women Texans
- 46% Texans of color
- 32% Texan households earning less than \$50,000 per year
- 74% working age Texans (25-64)
- 626 Texas zip codes represented

In addition to our survey, we heard from 170+ Texans through 11 Community Conversations and 2 tele-townhalls.

**Respondents’ highest-ranked priorities for the state budget are:**

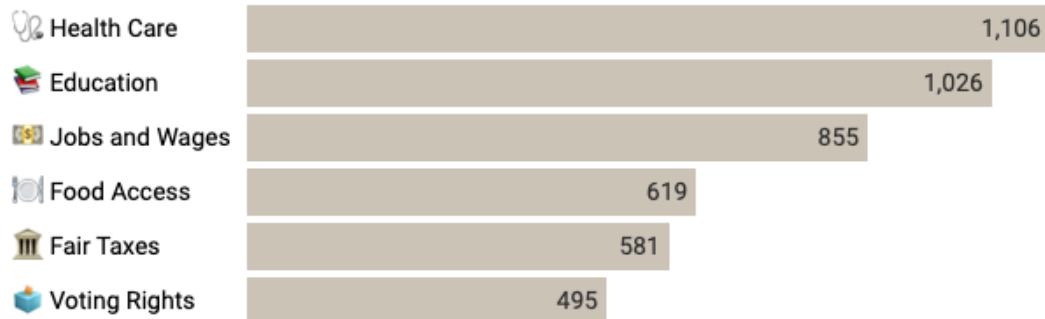
1. 🏥 **Health Care**
2. 📖 **Education**
3. 💰 **Jobs and Wages**

These top three priorities may change rankings, but they remain the top three across race, gender, income, and survey source. Respondents’ fourth-highest ranked priority overall is 🍷 **Food Access**, but changes to 🏛️ **Fair Taxes** for three groups: Men, households earning more than \$75k per year, and our Survey Monkey Audience.

Across all forms of engagement, these were Texans’ top six priorities ranked:

### Texans’ Top Six Priorities for the State Budget

From Surveys, Community Conversations, and Tele-Townhall Responses by Policy Topic



**Source:** Every Texan analysis of 2024 Survey, Community Conversation, and Tele-townhall Data

### Challenges: What holds us back?

- **State politicians are focused on the wrong things:** Respondents believe that state politicians are simply focused on the wrong things, from denying reproductive

- decision-making to women to divisive and dangerous laws that harm queer and transgender Texans.
- **Texans are not able to vote, or believe their vote doesn't matter.** Gerrymandering and Voter Suppression are a reality in Texas, which has created apathy among would-be voters.
  - **Advocates and communities are on the defensive:** In the midst of the statewide abortion ban and millions of Texas children losing coverage through Medicaid, we spend so much time defending civil liberties and protections that it is hard to think about a future vision for the state.
  - **State politicians do not care enough about working families and low-income Texans:** 3 out of 5 respondents (61%) believe that state lawmakers “care more about wealthy Texans or their donors than working families or low-income communities”
  - **State politicians spend too much time talking, and not enough time getting work done:** Half of respondents (52%) believe “there is too much talk and not enough action by state politicians”
  - **State politicians are spending too much time dividing us, and not enough time working together:** Not keeping religion out of state politics is a major concern for respondents, which they believe makes it hard for our legislators to pass laws that benefit all Texans, instead of posturing for sound bites.

#### **Solutions: How do we get there?**

- **We need new leadership or new politicians in charge:** Respondents mentioned that we need politicians who will put partisan posturing aside and actually work with each other to improve the lives of Texans. Some respondents believe Ranked Choice voting would be a good way to ensure more collaboration.
- **Politicians need to listen to people:** Respondents want to see more listening and community engagement from politicians to make sure they are actually representing their constituents' concerns instead of making decisions that are out of touch. Texans are tired of politicians who cater to party-line talking points instead of actually working for their constituents.
- **We need More Organizing/Voter Education:** Texans want their voice to be heard and want to believe their voice will shape what happens in the state. Respondents highlighted a need to get more organized and work in communities and coalitions across the state to encourage voter turnout.
- **Politicians need to Do Something:** An overwhelming number of respondents stated simply that they believe politicians should “do something.” Texans are frustrated with the lack of action on very real concerns that affect their lives and livelihoods.
- **Voting Should Be Easier:** Respondents are frustrated with how few people vote, and how hard it can be for people to vote.
- **Better Budgeting/Better Distribution of Resources/Budget Transparency:** Respondents want to understand where public dollars are going. They do not believe money is being spent on the right things.

- **Campaign Finance Reform + Accountability for Government:** Respondents are tired of seeing politicians only working for the wealthy few. They are ready to see a Texas where we actually make decisions that benefit our communities.
- **Focus on those most Vulnerable / Learn from Low-Income Communities:** A central theme is that we should focus on the people who are most in need in our state – those with lower incomes, disabilities, and people of color.

**Other Hopes for the Future include:**

- Better Transportation / Infrastructure / Utilities
- More Affordable Housing
- Policies that consider climate change / the environment
- More Affordable Childcare
- Better, more responsive, public services

**Community Conversation Attendees Agree on most priorities:** Of those who attended our community conversations, their top two priorities were Health Care and Education, but Infrastructure / Transportation / Utilities rose to the third spot for them.

**Tele-Townhall Attendees Agree on Priorities:** Overall, tele-townhall attendees agreed that policymakers should prioritize education, jobs and wages, and health care.

**Summary:** These findings underscore the urgent need for state leadership to address the priorities of healthcare, education, and jobs—issues that remain consistent across demographic groups. Additionally, the responses emphasize widespread frustration with political inaction, a lack of accountability, and the desire for more community engagement in the policymaking process. Texans are ready for change and are eager for leadership that listens and acts on their concerns.

**Methodology**

**Data Collection:** Between June and September 2024, we surveyed Texans from various regions of the state. We used a combination of Survey Monkey Audience, which allowed us to filter respondents by location (we chose the state of Texas) and balances by age and gender. We also worked on more targeted outreach through our community partners and existing networks in the state. This resulted in a total of 1,007 Survey Monkey Audience responses and 460 targeted outreach responses. The targeted outreach responses are a higher percentage women, people of color, and seniors, as shown in Figure 1.

*Figure 1: Demographics by Survey Response Type*

	Survey Monkey Audience	Targeted Outreach	Surveys Total	Texas Overall*
<b>GENDER IDENTITY</b>				
Male	44%	25%	<b>38%</b>	50%

Female	54%	72%	<b>60%</b>	50%
Non-Binary/3rd Gender	0%	1%	<b>0.7%</b>	n/a
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	<b>2%</b>	n/a
<b>POC/NON POC</b>				
Person of Color	44%	51%	<b>46%</b>	60%
White, Non-Hispanic	54%	44%	<b>51%</b>	40%
Declined to Answer	3%	4%	<b>3%</b>	n/a
<b>INCOME</b>				
Less than \$50k	32%	32%	<b>32%</b>	33%
\$50k-\$75k	25%	16%	<b>22%</b>	17%
\$75k+	36%	41%	<b>38%</b>	51%
Prefer Not to Say	7%	11%	<b>8%</b>	n/a
<b>AGE</b>				
Under 18	0%	1%	<b>1%</b>	25%
18-24	8%	3%	<b>7%</b>	10%
25-34	21%	12%	<b>18%</b>	14%
35-44	23%	20%	<b>22%</b>	14%
45-54	21%	20%	<b>21%</b>	12%
55-64	13%	15%	<b>14%</b>	11%
65+	13%	28%	<b>18%</b>	14%
Prefer not to say.	0%	2%	<b>1%</b>	n/a
<b>TOTAL RESPONSES</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>1,467</b>	

\*2023 1-Year American Community Survey Estimates

Of our targeted outreach responses, 206 were collected directly from the Every Texan website or through emails sent to our established contacts, 154 responses came from outreach with our community partner organizations, and 14 responses came from social media ad purchases. The survey was translated into Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese. We received 1 response in simplified Chinese, and 87 in Spanish. Only complete responses with verified Texas zip codes are included in our analysis.

In addition to the survey, we hosted 8 in-person community meetings with a total of 155 attendees, 13 virtual listening sessions with a total of 232 attendees, and two tele-townhalls with 6,232 English-speaking participants and 29 Spanish-speaking participants<sup>1</sup>. These conversations generated additional data points from conversations, feedback, and worksheets which are summarized later in this report.

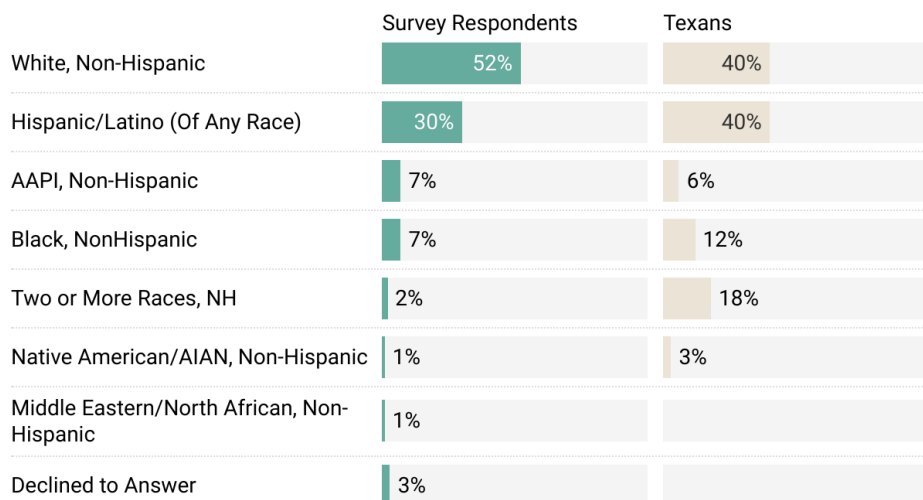
**Racial Representation:** We were not able to specify certain racial or ethnic groups for surveying in the Survey Monkey Audience responses, but made a concerted effort to engage with historically marginalized groups and rural areas through our targeted outreach. Still, our overall

<sup>1</sup> Final engagement metrics are pending confirmation.

survey responses are more White, Non-Hispanic than Texas Overall. Figure 1 provides a breakdown between percentages for People of Color vs. White, Non-Hispanic respondents, while Figure 2 provides a more detailed breakdown by race/ethnicity.

**Figure 2: Responses by Race/Ethnicity**

**People's Budget Survey Respondents by Race/Ethnicity**



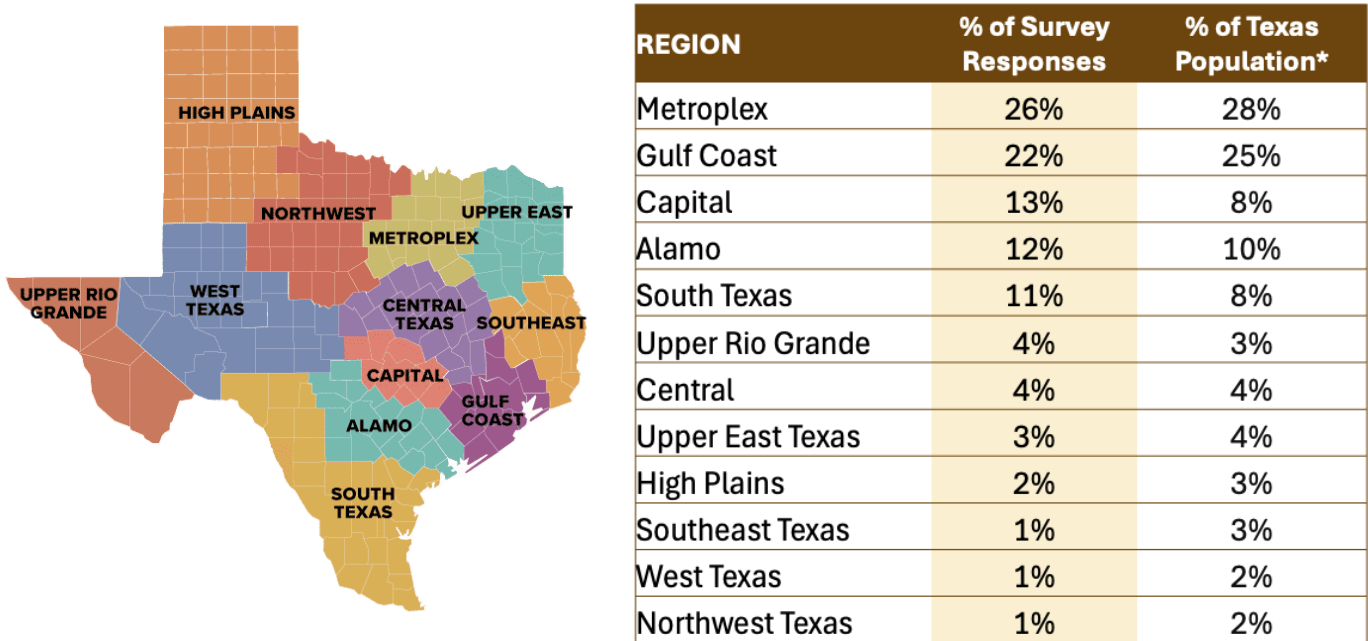
Source: Every Texan People's Budget Survey; 2023 1-Year American Community Survey Estimates



**Age Representation:** Due to the age balancing for the Survey Monkey Audience responses, our overall age distribution is relatively representative of Texans overall, as shown in Figure 1. Our targeted outreach through our partner organizations has slightly higher representation among those 65 years of age and older, likely due to our collaboration with Texas Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. A very small percentage of respondents are under 18 and likely not representative. The majority of our respondents are “working age Texans” between the ages of 25-64, making up 74% of responses.

**Gender Representation:** A higher share of respondents are women (60%) which is primarily driven by our targeted outreach. This could be because of the organizations we partnered with, or perhaps a likelihood for more women to fill out a survey of this sort. Our Survey Monkey Audience provides a more balanced gender breakdown with 54% of respondents identifying as female.

Figure 3: Responses by Texas Comptroller's Economic Regions



**Geographic Representation:** Shown in Figure 3, the distribution of responses generally aligns with the population distribution across the 12 economic regions of Texas, as defined by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. These regions, which were approximated using zip codes, each include at least one Census Bureau-defined metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with relatively high density and economic integration. This ensures a broad representation of the state’s areas both geographically and economically. The most populous regions (DFW Metroplex and Houston Gulf Coast) are where we had our highest numbers of responses. We had a slight over sampling for the Austin (Capital) Region and San Antonio (Alamo) Region, which likely reflects our existing networks and those who may be interested in state-level policy decisions. Additionally, our outreach in the Rio Grande Valley contributed to a higher representation of South Texas residents in our results.

**Open-Ended Responses:** All open-ended responses were carefully reviewed, coded, and analyzed for patterns and themes. Irrelevant or nonsensical answers, such as a lighthearted comment from a respondent in Helotes about discounting Taco Tuesdays, were excluded from the analysis. Responses were manually coded by analysts, and the categorized themes were quantified to identify the most prevalent topics. While this process was time-consuming, it proved to be the most effective method for conducting an in-depth analysis of this kind.

Although we explored the use of AI and sentiment analysis for the open-ended questions, manual coding ultimately provided more accurate results. Additionally, the CEA team categorized all responses from Community Conversations and the tele-townhall into thematic areas using a tracking spreadsheet created by Research and Data, which are discussed later in this report.

## Survey Results

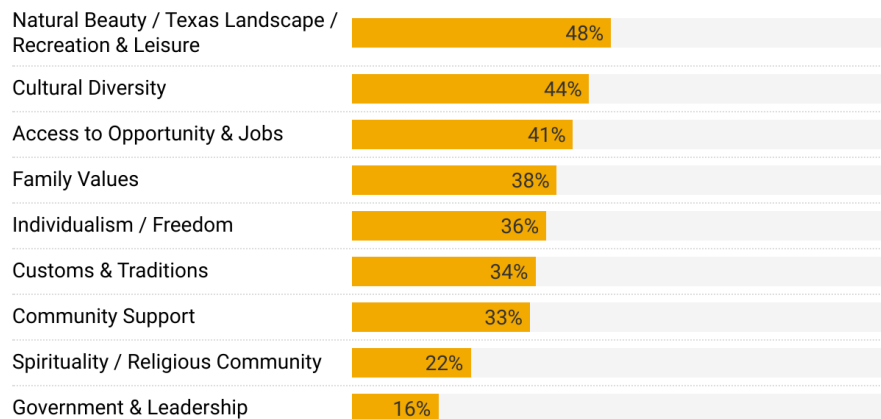
### What Respondents Like About Texas

**We asked respondents:** Before we get started, what do you value about living in Texas? (select your top 4)

As shown in Figure 4, the top response was “Natural Beauty / Texas Landscape / Recreation & Leisure” followed by “Cultural Diversity” and “Access to Opportunity / Jobs.” Only 16% of respondents chose “Government / Leadership.”

*Figure 4: What Respondents like about Texas*

#### What People's Budget Survey Respondents Like About Texas:



Source: Every Texan People's Budget Survey

Other examples of what folks like about Texas include:

- “Texas is the best place to live. It has the best climate and the best people. The food is the best. Texas is home and always will be. Texas is love. Texas is special.” - 78504
- “I would love to see how we invest in the community, focusing on similarity instead of division. Texas is a place we feel home, and home necessitates belonging and growth.” - 76513
- “Our resistance to inhumane immigration policies” - 79924
- “Ability to raise/speak your voice” - 78702
- “The many good people and organizations working to improve the lives of those living with less than they need and deserve.”- 78727
- “My family genealogy directly connected to the indigenous population of Texas”
- “Can-do spirit” - 78624
- “Authentic Mexican food AND reasonable cost of living” - 78537

Sixteen respondents said they don't like Texas much at all while others mentioned that they are considering moving. Below are some quotes from discouraged Texans:

- "In the past, I valued a lot of these components, but currently, it's not a lot I value because of the current Texas leadership...the leadership is so ineffective." - 78754
- "thanks, I hate it here." - 77002
- "I have gay friends making plans to leave the state because they fear for their rights and safety." – 78228
- "I love this state as a geographic place, but want to move because of the politics." – 79424
- "Honestly, none of the above. I wish I could at least say cultural diversity. I do love my life in Austin and my unapologetically progressive church and community. But I would love to move and take my adult children with me - especially the childbearing age women." - 78726
- "Deseo que Texas se convierta en un lugar donde todos nos siéntanos seguros y protegidos por nuestros derechos / I wish Texas would become a place where we all feel safe and protected by our rights" – 78744

#### **PRIORITIES: What should state lawmakers focus on?**

**We asked respondents:** "You can tell a state's priorities by the way it spends its money. Imagine you're speaking directly to a state lawmaker, guiding them on what issues to prioritize. Please rank (drag and drop) the following topics from 1 to 7, with 1 being your top priority and 7 being your lowest priority."

Respondents were presented with a list of six priority topic areas, with an option to add "something else." These options were presented to them in a randomized order in order to not influence selection bias in their ranking. As shown in Figure 5, the top three priorities for respondents are the same across the board as 1. Health Care, 2. Education, and 3. Jobs & Wages. The fourth highest-ranked priority overall is Food Access, followed by Fair Taxes.

### Ranked Priorities for State Budget

Medals denote 🏆 first, 🥈 second, and 🥉 third ranked priorities for each group.

Priority Areas <small>(in order by overall rank)</small>	Total	Race/Ethnicity		Gender		Income			Survey Source	
		POC	White, NH	Women	Men	Under \$50K	\$50-75K	\$75K+	SM Audience	Targeted Outreach
🏥 Health Care	🏆 4.95	🏆 5.01	🥈 4.92	🏆 5.16	🥉 4.62	🏆 4.96	🥈 4.82	🥈 5.00	🥈 4.78	🏆 5.32
📖 Education	🥈 4.87	🥉 4.72	🏆 5.01	🥈 4.96	🥈 4.73	🥉 4.59	🥈 4.85	🥈 5.13	🥉 4.60	🥈 5.47
💼 Jobs & Wages	🥉 4.62	🥈 4.75	🥉 4.49	🥉 4.61	🥈 4.65	🥈 4.67	🥈 4.77	🥈 4.50	🏆 4.78	🥉 4.26
🍽️ Food Access	4.02	4.12	3.95	4.08	3.91	4.19	3.98	3.9	4.06	3.92
🏠 Fair Taxes	3.95	3.96	3.92	3.73	4.29	4.00	3.98	3.91	4.24	3.30
🗳️ Voting Rights	3.73	3.62	3.84	3.65	3.86	3.63	3.73	3.81	3.63	3.94
🗑️ Something Else	1.86	1.83	1.86	1.82	1.93	1.96	1.88	1.75	1.9	1.78

Note: the higher the score, the higher the priority for respondents.

**Priorities by Race:** The overall top three priorities remained the top-ranked priorities when examining results by simplified race/ethnicity. Respondents of color ranked Health Care, Jobs & Wages, and Food Access slightly higher than White, NH respondents did. White, NH respondents ranked Education, Fair Taxes, and Voting Rights slightly higher than POC respondents did.

**Priorities by Gender:** When looking by gender, the top priorities change rankings. For Women, Health Care remained top priority. For men Education is top priority, though the strengths for all rankings are lower for men, suggesting less consensus. Men’s fourth-highest priority is Fair Taxes.

**Priorities by Income:** Top priorities differ by income, with respondents earning over \$50K in household income prioritizing Education over Health Care and Jobs & Wages. Respondents earning less than \$50K were more likely to prioritize Health Care, Food Access, and Something Else. Households with incomes \$50-75K were more likely to prioritize Jobs & Wages, while those with household incomes above \$75K+ were more likely to prioritize Health Care, Education, and Voting Rights

**Priorities by Survey Source:** Top priorities differ by the source of our survey responses, with Targeted Outreach respondents’ top priority being aligned with overall results (Health Care). For the Survey Monkey Audience, the top priority is Jobs and Wages, followed by Health Care, and then Education. But the same top three priorities remain.

**Other Priorities:** Most respondents (77%) did not provide any further detail into the “something else” box. Of those who provided more detail (336 or 23% of respondents) these were the most common themes provided:

- Transportation/Infrastructure/Utilities (mentioned by 46 respondents)
- Affordable Housing (mentioned by 40 respondents)
- Access to Abortion/Reproductive Freedom (mentioned by 27 respondents)
- Climate/Environment (mentioned by 26 respondents)
- Immigration (mentioned by 21 respondents)

### CHALLENGES: What is holding us back from the future Texas we dream of?

**We asked respondents:** “We believe we can achieve a future where all Texans are able to thrive. What challenges do you believe Texas faces in addressing social and economic issues across the state? (select all that apply)

As shown in Figure 6, most respondents (61%) believe that state lawmakers “care more about wealthy Texans or their donors than working families or low-income communities.” Over half (52%) believe “there is too much talk and not enough action by state politicians.”

#### Challenges: What is holding us back from the Texas we want?

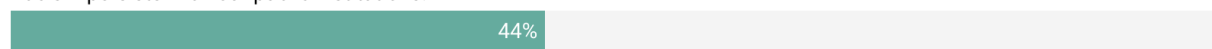
State politicians care more about wealthy Texans or their donors than working families or low-income communities.



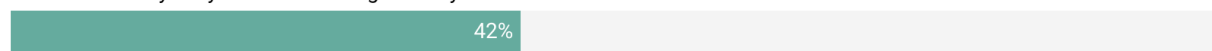
There is too much talk and not enough action by state politicians.



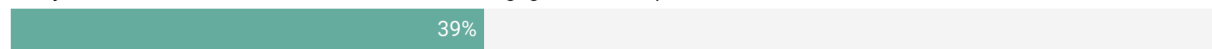
Racism persists in all our public institutions.



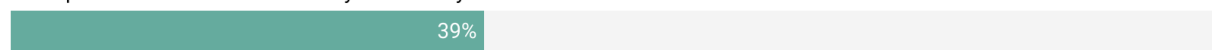
Politicians always say there isn't enough money.



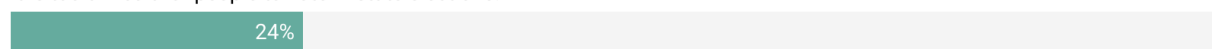
Many Texans don't have time and/or resources to engage with state politics.



State politicians don't care about my community.



It is too difficult for people to vote in state elections.



Source: Every Texan People's Budget Survey

From the open-ended portion of this question, the following themes were identified with selected quotes provided:

- **State politicians are focused on the wrong things.**
  - “Politicians don't seem to care about or understand the challenges faced by most Texans.” – 79705
  - “No one is seeking practical solutions” - 77345

- “Stop mudslinging, compromise and show that level headed approaches are more important than grandstanding to win back the confidence of the average voter. We’re tired of the real house representatives of Austin level drama.” - 77089
- “State politicians need to proactively address how climate crisis is already effecting Texas – dangerous storms (hurricanes, freezes, thunderstorm/hail), power outages, drought, fire, and more!” – 78723
- “Politicians worry about the bathrooms that students use instead of ensuring that they get a quality education” – 78759
- “I am concerned that conservative politics will enforce ideologies on the whole state, leaving many people feeling on the outside. It is alarming that legislation is moving backwards, which pushes the conservative agenda, but pushes all Texans backwards.” – 78218
- “It appears that Human Rights is going backwards.” – 78669
- “I am concerned that our conservative representatives cannot share our community views on education without fear of retaliation from the governor.” - 75961
- **State politicians do not care enough about working families and low income Texans**
  - “state legislators do not prioritize working families or low income communities and their access to healthcare” - 78132
  - “What can the ordinary person do? They don’t listen to us anyhow.” - 75069
  - “State politicians don't know about my community.” – 78572
  - “Demonizing poor people and chronically underfunding public education, SNAP, and restorative justice.” = 75216
  - “state politicians care more about party loyalty than truly helping people” – 79924
  - “Many Texans are struggling with providing for their family needs; cost of living has raised dramatically with little raise in pay. The physical and mental stress of daily living makes politics less of a priority.” - 76524
- **State politicians spend too much time talking, and not enough time getting work done**
  - “Do what is best for Texans and take their egos and power trips out of it.” - 77304
  - “saver gi los politicos san sevidores publicos - que su sueldo sale de nuestros impuestos. / Keep in mind that politicians are public servants - their salary comes from our taxes.” – 78542
  - “I’m tired of politicians, always asking for money and never Accomplishing anything” – 78023
  - “Politicians are liars on both sides and accomplish nothing. They should have to show what they actually did. Not what they “proposed”. Professional liars.” - 76087
- **State politicians are spending too much time dividing us, and not enough time working together**
  - “I am concerned with the divisiveness of cultural war issues and the use of them by state leaders to distract people from these real issues.” 76017
  - “Most of the time all it is is more identity politics that serve to divide which hinders progress.” – 77089
  - “Quit your fear mongering and actually tell us what your policies are.” – 77083

- “Quit trying to please everyone and do what needs to be done no matter if it is popular or not. Our government does not exist to be caretakers of the citizens. The citizens are responsible for themselves.” - 76087
- **Texans are not able to vote, or believe their vote doesn't matter.**
  - “Gerrymandering has entrenched the power class so the members of the legislature don't have to be responsive to others' issues.” - 78723
  - “Many Texans feel that their vote does not matter which results in low voter turnout.” - 78218

## SOLUTIONS: How Do We Get There?

**We asked respondents:** What potential solutions would you suggest, if any, for the challenges you identified in the last question?

756 respondents provided ideas on how we could get to solutions. However, they acknowledge it will be difficult – 45 respondents admitted they don't know what to do about the problems facing our state or believe they cannot be fixed. On the other hand, multiple respondents provided such detailed suggestions and are therefore provided in the appendix to this report (and more analysis will be done of these with policy staff). 36 respondents believed that we need more conservative policies or leaders in charge, but the vast majority of respondents were focused on more progressive action.

Here were some of the most common themes identified in respondents' answers:

- We need new leadership or new politicians in charge (143)
- Politicians need to listen to people (102)
- We need More Organizing/Voter Education (71)
- Politicians need to Do Something (59)
- Voting Should Be Easier (48)
- Better Budgeting/Better Distribution of Resources/Budget Transparency (38)
- Campaign Finance Reform (37)
- Accountability for Government (37)
- Focus on those most Vulnerable / Learn from Low-Income Communities (35)

Select Quotes for each of the above themes are provided below:

- **We need new leadership or new politicians in charge (143)**
  - Too much homophobic and transphobic rhetoric is spread by those in power – 78737
  - “It's a good old white boy institution and that is how things are governed. Out with the old and in with new - fresh perspectives, diversity, and inclusiveness. We need less judgement and more kindness.” - 79765
  - “Electing legislators who care more about the welfare of all Texans than their power.” - 75248
- **Politicians need to listen to people (102)**
  - “Each politician should have to shadow a teacher for a week when they come in to office. Not kidding.” - 76513
  - “Most adult Texans want women to have a right to chose” – 78701
  - “quiero que prospere todo tx. / I want all of TX to prosper.” - 78577












- "I'm not sure of exact solutions, but we need to make government more approachable, more understandable, and less intimidating to folks so that they can feel empowered to engage." - 78201
- "a los politicos mientras andan en compana prometen mucho. pero llegan al poder y se olvidan de las colonias marginadas. / to politicians while they are in company they promise a lot. but they come to power and forget about the marginalized neighborhoods." – 78542
- **We need More Organizing/Voter Education (71)**
  - "More public outreach and education followed by better voting patterns that lead to better public servants and fairer voting laws." - 78520
  - "Educar a la gente sobre los temas y decirles porque es importante que se haga un cambio. / Educate people about the issues and tell them why it's important to make a change." – 78537
  - "Organizarnos en las comunidades abogar por nuestras necesidades. Alzar nuestra voz. / Organize in the communities to advocate for our needs. Raise our voices." – 78516
  - "Get out there and talk to the people won't don't have time to go to the capital or attend political rallies, etc." – 79705
- **Politicians need to Do Something (59)**
  - "The roads and bridges are falling apart. Without roads we have no commerce just in case you were unaware." - 77089
  - "State politicians are extreme, and uncompromising" - 77006
  - "Compromise and working together across party lines seems to be more and more impossible - things are becoming more extremist in nature" - 76009
  - "Republicans need to work across the aisle to solve problems. There IS money and it should be used to improve the lives of the low income families in Texas." - 78750
- **Voting Should Be Easier (48)**
  - "Establecer más casillas para las Votaciones. Horarios más extensos y hasta fines de semana / Establish more polling stations for Voting. Longer hours and even weekends" - 78852
  - "Make voting more accessible so we don't have to stand hours in line." – 79938
- **Better Budgeting/Better Distribution of Resources/Budget Transparency (38)**
  - "Reprioritize the spending to address the States needs" – 75248
  - "Don't spend so much" – 78738
  - "Una mejor distribución de los recursos / Better distribution of resources" – 78612
- **Campaign Finance Reform (37)**
  - "Campaign finance reform would ensure more fairness and access to our elected officials." - 79902
  - "reduce the influence of money and corporate influence in elections. better educate the public about the influence of special interests on gov. policies." - 77006
- **Accountability for Government (37)**
  - "Texas must have an open system of accountability for all elected officials. Texans must vote out the politicians who get paid for voting in favor of rich billionaire and who fail to spend state funds on health, education and safety for all citizens." – 76131

- “Put your money where your mouth is and do what you say you are going to do for working class families.” – 75115
- “Do what you promised to be elected.” – 77061
- **Focus on those most Vulnerable / Learn from Low-Income Communities (35)**
  - “The top priority of the Texas Legislature always seems to be on tax cuts. I'm all for tax cuts, however, first we should adequately fund necessities like public education, health care, water, roads, law enforcement, etc.” - 76571
  - “Texas has money and it needs to be spent to improve the lives of the bottom 97%.” – 78750
  - “me gustaria mas apoyo para la gente que las lo necesita. / I would like more support for people who need it.” – 78577

## Community Conversation Results

Through the community conversations hosted by our Community Engagement and Advocacy team, we received an additional 763 datapoints to analyze. These were comments, conversations, or worksheets completed by attendees at our community conversations. We collected a total of 463 data points from breakout discussion notes and 300 data points from worksheets.

### Comments During Community Conversations by Topic

Topics	Comments	Percent of All
 Health Care	182	24%
 Education	145	19%
 Transportation / Infrastructure / Utilities	102	13%
 Jobs and Wages	66	9%
 Housing	58	8%
 Food Access	39	5%
 Public Safety	27	4%
 Childcare/Child Welfare	22	3%
 Climate / Environment	22	3%
 Fair Taxes	20	3%
 Voting Rights	8	1%
Something Else	72	9%

**Source:** Every Texan analysis of 2024 Community Conversation Data for Zoom and In-Person Engagement

The top three priorities highlighted in these community conversations mirror the top two priority areas for survey respondents of Health Care and Education, but Transportation / Utilities / Infrastructure is the third most common response. Jobs and Wages is the 4<sup>th</sup> priority for community conversation attendees, followed by Housing. Also noteworthy were the number of people who included Childcare and/or Child Welfare as well as the Climate/Environment.

**Note about Social Services:** The community conversations also included many comments on the accessibility of existing state and federal services.

## Tele-Townhall Results

We invited Texans to join us for a conversation about their experiences and priorities for the State Budget on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024. A total of **6,232 people** initially joined the tele-townhall. By the one-minute mark, there were 4,581 people on the call and by the five-minute mark there were 527 people remaining on the call. Overall, 43% of people who were called answered. For those who accepted the call, the average duration they stayed on the line was 4.79 minutes.

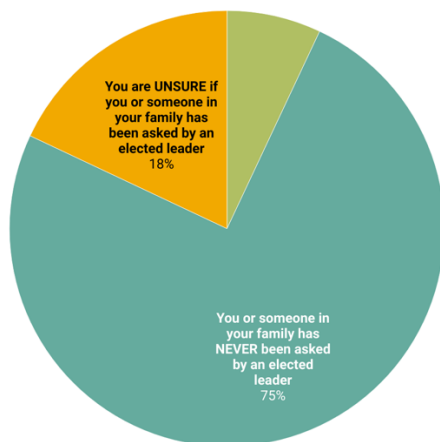
We also hosted a separate tele-townhall in Spanish. There were a total of 29 people who initially joined the tele-townhall in Spanish. By the one-minute mark, there were 23 people on the call and by the five-minute mark there were 3 people remaining on the call. Overall, 100% of people who were called answered. For those who accepted the call, the average duration they stayed on the line was 2.72 minutes. We did not receive any survey responses during the Spanish tele-town hall.

When asked if an elected official had ever reached out to them about the state budget, the vast majority of respondents (75%) said an elected official had never reached out to them or their family.

*Figure 7: Tele-townhall Respondents on Elected Officials*

**How often has an elected leader asked you or your family about your priorities for the State Budget that you help fund?**

- You or someone in your family HAS been asked by an elected leader
- You or someone in your family has NEVER been asked by an elected leader
- You are UNSURE if you or someone in your family has been asked by an elected leader



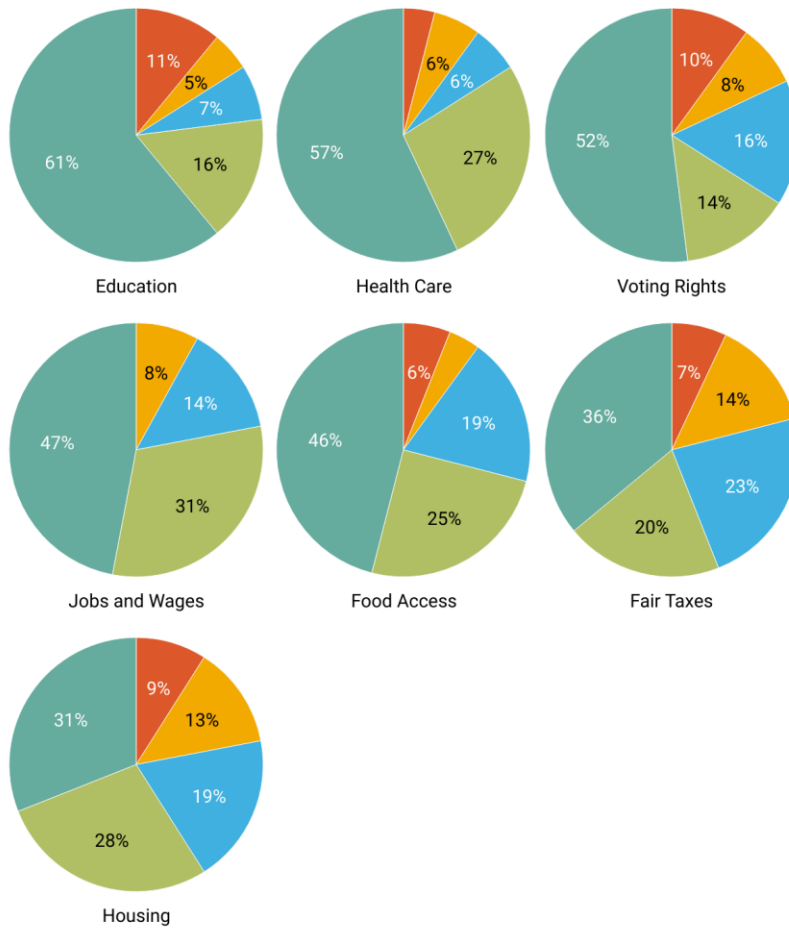
Source: Every Texan analysis of 2024 Tele-Townhall data.  
Notes: There were a total of 55 respondents.

When asked to rank policy areas on a scale of 1-5, 1 being not a priority at all and 5 being a top priority, people's answers ranged. Education had the highest share of people ranking it as a top priority, while housing had the lowest with 31% of people ranking it a top priority.

***Figure 8: Tele-townhall Respondents on Funding Priorities***

**On a scale of 1-5, how much of a priority is it for you to provide funding for the following policy areas in Texas?**

■ Not a priority at all 
 ■ Low priority 
 ■ Moderate priority 
 ■ High priority 
 ■ Top priority



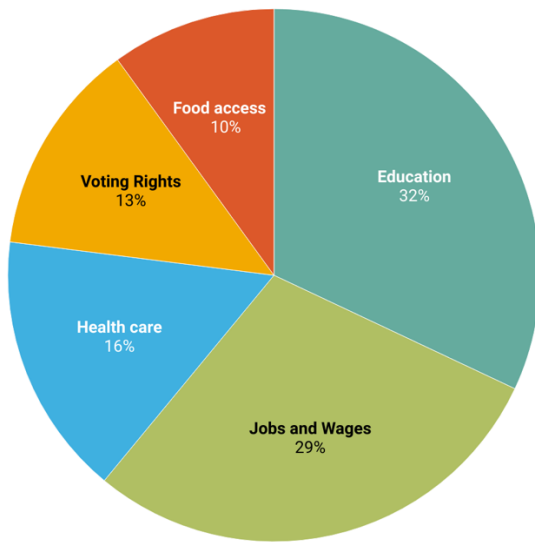
**Source:** Every Texan analysis of 2024 Tele-Townhall data.  
**Notes:** The total number of respondents for each question ranged from 32 to 56 people.

When asked which policy area was their top funding priority, almost a third (32%) of respondents chose education, followed by jobs and wages (29%), health care (16%), voting rights (13%), and food access (10%).

**Figure 9: Tele-townhall Respondents on Funding Priorities Overall**

### Which one of these is the top funding priority to you?

Education Jobs and Wages Health care Voting Rights Food access



Source: Every Texan analysis of 2024 Tele-Townhall.

Notes: There were a total of 31 respondents.

The following quotes are samples from voicemails left by attendees proceeding the tele-townhall. A total of 20 voicemails were left by attendees to the English tele-townhall and one voicemail was left for the Spanish language tele-townhall:

- *Why is our education for the state of Texas so poor? Nationally, we're one of the lowest ranked states when it comes to education.*
- *I wonder if there's a budget for helping pay for mortgages, you know? It's just so expensive nowadays and just trying to keep up with the bills and stuff, you know? Start following behind. Just every day living, you know? Got two boys, single fathers, and just need some help.*
- *How about some energy relief, personal energy relief, electric bills, stuff of that nature? I would like to see the state reduce some of our high energy costs.*

### Conclusion

The People's Budget Survey and community engagement efforts have provided an invaluable window into the concerns and priorities of Texans from diverse backgrounds, especially those who have historically been marginalized. The feedback reveals a deep frustration with the state's political leadership and the lack of meaningful action on issues that directly impact the lives of working families, people of color, and low-income communities.

Throughout this process, respondents consistently highlighted the importance of prioritizing healthcare, education, and jobs—key areas they believe are essential for a more equitable and prosperous Texas. However, they also expressed a strong desire for greater political accountability, transparency in the state budget, and solutions that address the growing divides in the state.

Our findings underscore the need for state leaders to focus on practical solutions that reflect the real concerns of their constituents. Texans want to see bold action to address the challenges they face, from expanding healthcare access to reforming voter laws and improving education. They are eager for leadership that listens, takes decisive action, and puts the needs of everyday Texans first.

As we move forward, these insights should help inform our ongoing advocacy and organizing efforts to create a Texas that works for all. We are committed to amplifying the voices of Texans, ensuring that their priorities shape the state's future policy decisions, and continuing the push for a state budget that truly reflects the needs and values of the people it serves.

## Appendix

### Other Themes, Quotes, and Areas of Interest

*Note: all responses will be provided to Policy Staff in a searchable format for topics of interest to include in any advocacy efforts.*

#### HOPE/ANXIETY FOR THE FUTURE:

- “The future of Texas should focus on what makes us great. We are a state rich with culture and history, and we shouldn't limit that by focusing solely on the beliefs of one group.” - 77523
- “We are going backwards instead of forward. We need to keep discrimination out of government. People vote against their own interests and I don't know what to do about it!” – 78726
- “A Texas where ALL Texans have a great public education available to them, healthcare access (abortion is healthcare, and access to livable daily expenses. Oh and it would be totally nice to have a reliable electric grid.” – 76092
- “Scared for my kids future - school resources and untruthful curriculums, no access to abortion (God forbid they would need it), no gun safety measures, no common sense limits on industry to curtail climate change, poverty wage jobs and no required benefits... its overwhelming some days” – 77080
- “Creo Texas es multicultural y necesitamos más el apoyo de los políticos para apoyar más las organizaciones / I think Texas is multicultural and we need more support from politicians to support organizations more” - 78610
- “Deseo que Texas se convierta en un lugar donde todos nos siéntanos seguros y protegidos por nuestros derechos / I wish Texas would become a place where we all feel safe and protected by our rights”
- “I believe in all things, just being fair. Treat people like you want to be treated. I love Texas.” - 77054

#### LONG/DETAILED FEEDBACK

Responses longer than 500 characters shared below

1. Community Engagement Initiatives: Encourage regular town hall meetings, forums, and surveys where residents can voice concerns and propose ideas directly to politicians. This ensures that community voices are heard and considered in policymaking.

Transparent Communication Channels: Establish transparent channels of communication where politicians regularly update the community on their actions and decisions. This fosters trust and keeps residents informed about developments affecting their city.

Collaborative Proposal Development: Create platforms or committees where both politicians and community members collaborate on developing proposals for city improvement. This ensures that proposals are inclusive and address real community needs.

Accountability Mechanisms: Implement mechanisms to hold politicians accountable for their promises and actions. This could include regular progress reports, public hearings, or feedback sessions to ensure that commitments to the community are fulfilled.

Education and Awareness Campaigns: Educate the community about the importance of civic engagement and voting. Empower residents to actively participate in local governance and hold politicians accountable through informed decision-making.

Cultural and Diversity Representation: Ensure that the voices of all community groups, including minorities and marginalized populations, are represented and considered in policymaking processes.

2. Solutions: restore full reproductive freedom; expand healthcare access and coverage under Medicare and Medicaid; enact campaign donation and spending limits; establish online voter registration and automatic – and portable—voter registration at age 18; drive-through voting; expand early voting, including later hours and weekends; create a state income tax; raise the basic allotment for public education by at least 25%; mandate automatic COLA and expanded teacher and staff salary schedules; mandate the same for all state employees; establish tuition-free community college education; expand tuition assistance and promise programs aimed at helping college students graduate debt-free or nearly debt-free; end ERCOT and join the Western or Eastern grid; emphasize alternative policing techniques with an aim toward reducing fatal encounters; reform the bail system with an eye toward reducing the number of people incarcerated— particularly for non-violent and drug-related offenses; encourage regional mass transit solutions that include light and heavy rail, BRT, and other modalities aimed at increasing density and walkability.

The challenge is Texas' current leadership and its cruel, corrupt, and immoral policies that are beholden to Christo-fascist billionaires.