



# Budget Survey Findings and Highlights from the 45th Kinder Houston Area Survey

Presentation for the Budget and Fiscal Affairs Committee

*City of Houston*  
June 2, 2026



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Kinder Institute for Urban Research

## **Mission**

*To improve lives through data, research, engagement, and action.*

## **Vision**

### **Prosperity for all**

*Ensuring everyone has an opportunity to build and share in Houston's prosperity.*



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## Education



## Population



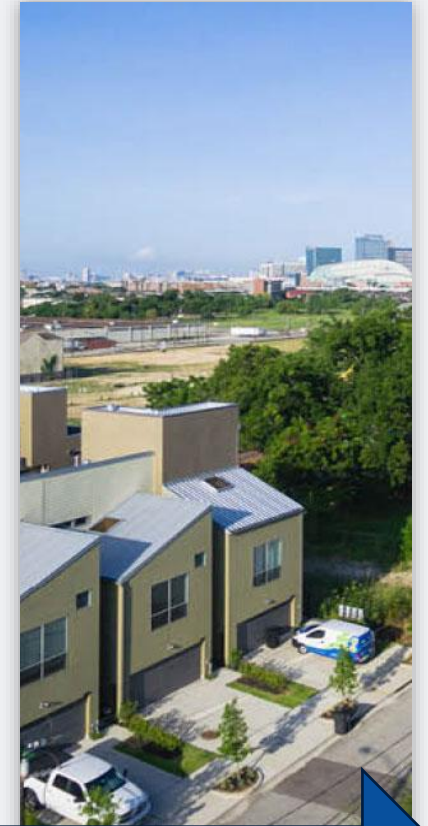
## Community Health



## Economic Mobility



## Housing



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# “Your Two Cents” Budget Survey

## 2026 Findings



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# Budget survey overview

- “Your Two Cents” budget survey open from April 14-May 27
  - Received about 920 responses
  - Convenience sample of city residents participating in an open-access survey
  - Respondents were invited to participate at meetings, through social media, and word-of-mouth
- Survey asked residents about preferences for city spending, focused on:
  - Major city-provided programs and services
  - Public safety services
  - City-funded community programs and services
- Residents were also asked about their willingness to support increased taxes and/or fees to improve city services

Respondent Characteristics	%
<b>Respondent type</b>	
City resident	86%
Business owner	1%
Both	12%
Prefer not to say	2%
<b>Age category</b>	
18-29 years	5%
30-44 years	27%
45-64 years	33%
65 years or older	35%



# Respondents by City Council District

- Location of respondents was determined by asking them what city council district they lived in.
  - Respondents were provided a link to the City of Houston’s “Who Is My Council Member?” webpage to assist in finding their district.

City Council District	Number of responses
District A	79
District B	29
District C	269
District D	66
District E	100
District F	23
District G	125
District H	83
District I	59
District J	30
District K	24
Did not answer question	40



# Major city-provided programs and services

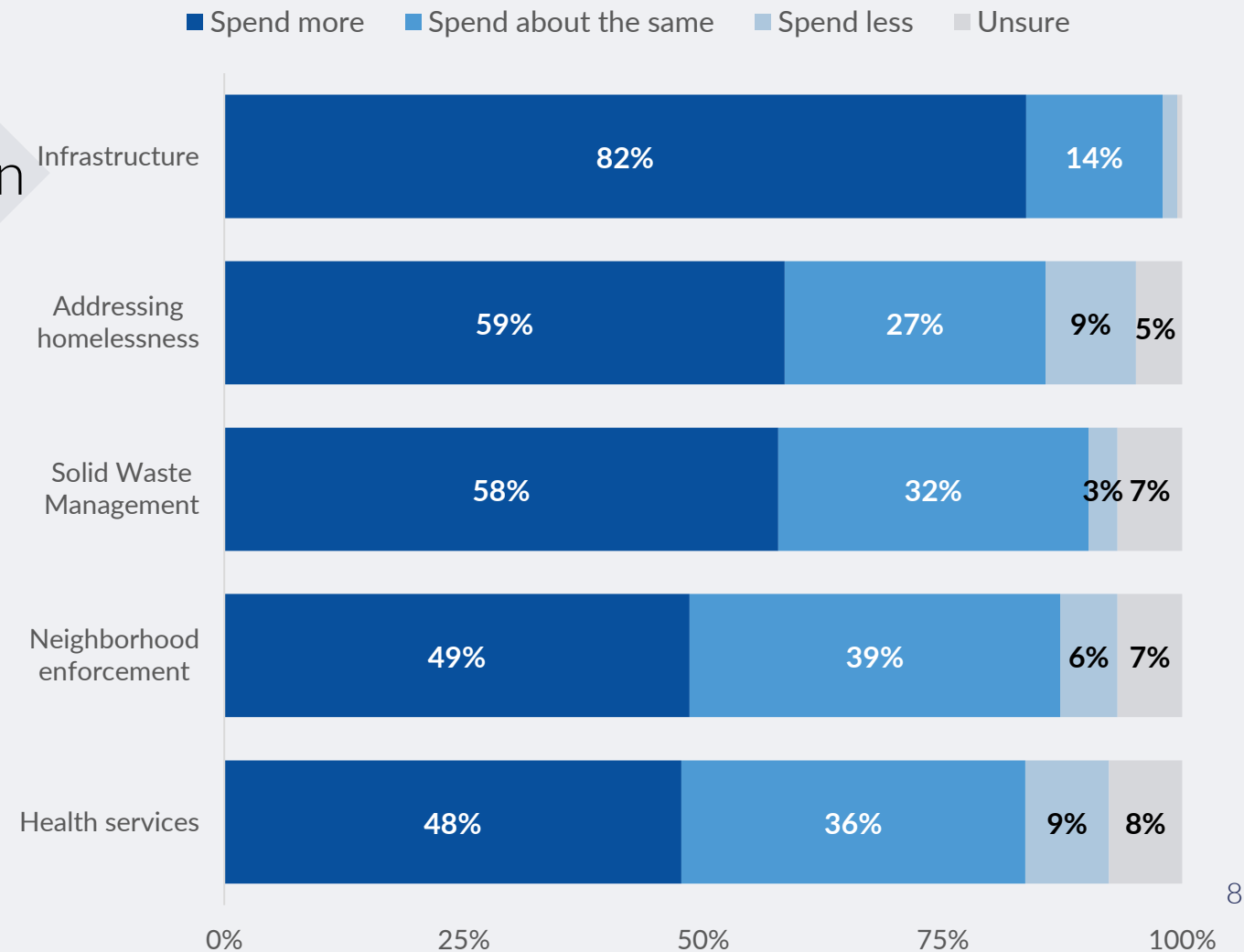
- Respondents were asked whether they would like to see the city spend more, spend less, or spend about the same on 13 categories of major city-provided programs and services

- Addressing homelessness
- Animal welfare
- Development services & permitting
- Economic & workforce development
- Health services
- Housing
- Houston Fire Department
- Houston Parks & Recreation Department
- Houston Police Department
- Houston Solid Waste Management
- Infrastructure
- Library services
- Neighborhood enforcement



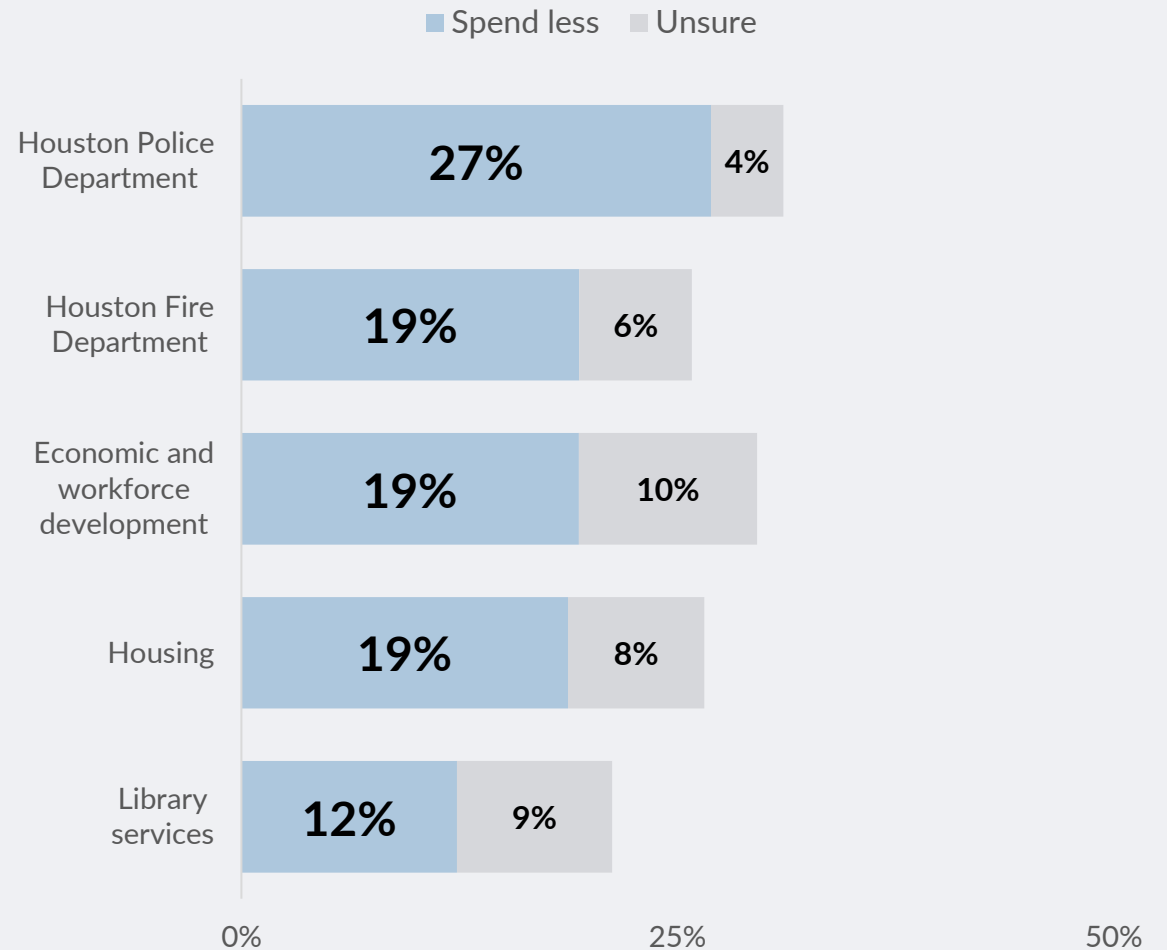
# Top 5 city-provided programs and services with the highest levels of support for **increased** spending

- About **8 in 10** respondents said they want to see more spending on **infrastructure**
- Nearly **6 in 10** want the city to spend more on **Solid Waste Management** and programs addressing homelessness



# Top 5 city-provided programs and services with the highest levels of support for decreased spending

- About 1 in 4 respondents said the city should spend less on the Houston Police Department
- About 1 in 5 respondents said the city should spend less on the Houston Fire Department, Economic and workforce development, and Housing programs



# Even though they may not want to, most respondents were okay with **decreased** spending on economic and workforce development programs

- Needing respondents to grapple with the budget constraints faced by the city, after asking what they wanted to see the city spend, respondents were asked if they would be okay with the city spending less on certain programs and services as well

Program or service	Spend more or about the same	Okay with spending less
Economic and workforce development	70%	70%
Parks and Recreation	90%	50%
Library services	79%	48%
Housing	73%	45%
Development services and permitting	78%	44%
Animal services	79%	41%
Neighborhood enforcement	87%	39%
Addressing homelessness	86%	31%
Health services	84%	30%
Solid Waste Management	90%	18%
Infrastructure	96%	10%



# Public safety services

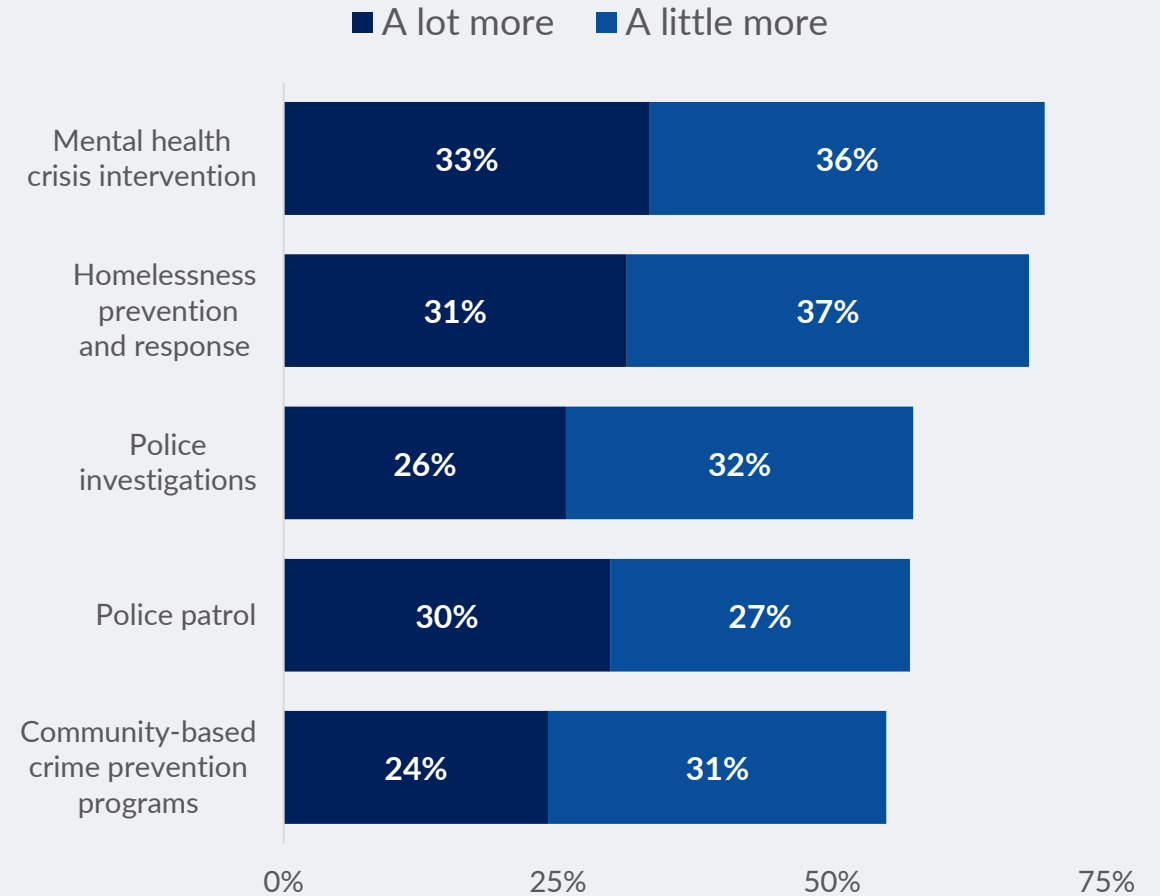
- Supposing the city was going to spend more on public safety, respondents were asked if they wanted to see more, less, or about the same spent on 10 categories of public safety services

- Community-based crime prevention programs
- Homelessness prevention and response
- Emergency medical services (EMS)
- Fire prevention
- Mental health crisis intervention
- Noise abatement
- Police investigations
- Police patrol
- Technology initiatives like license plate readers
- Traffic enforcement



# If more gets spent on public safety, 7 in 10 respondents would like to see more spent on mental health and homelessness programs

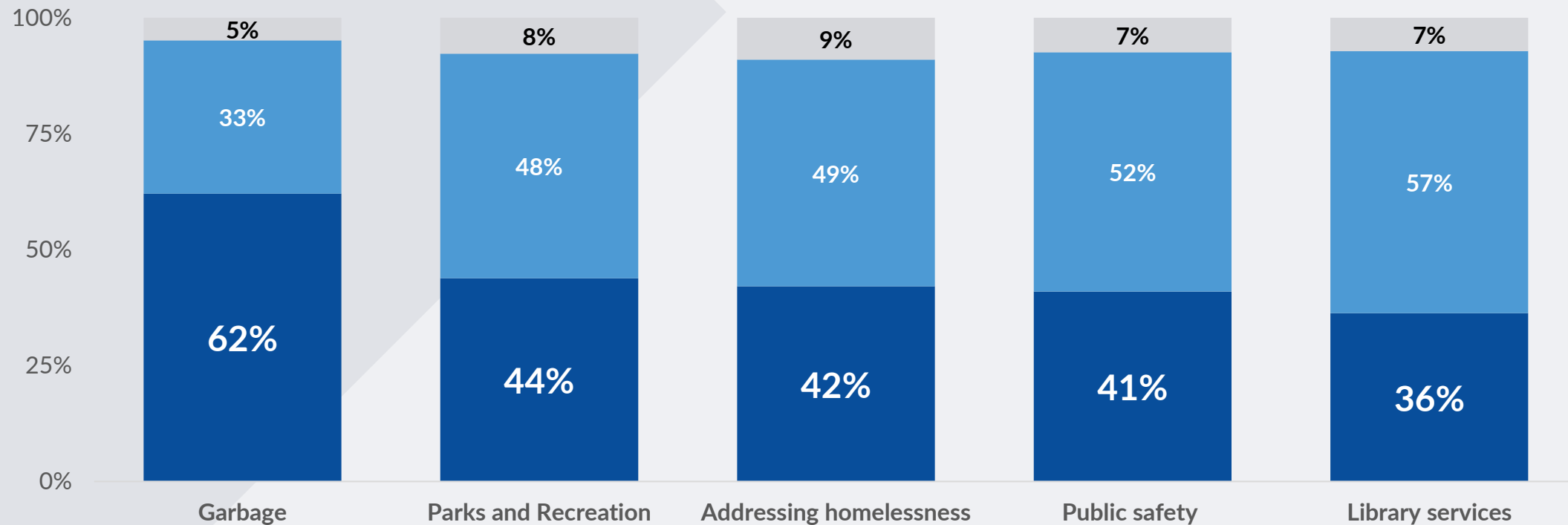
- About 3 in 10 want a lot more spent on mental health crisis intervention and homelessness prevention and response
  - Another 4 in 10 want a little more spent
- About 3 in 10 want a lot more spent on police investigations and police patrols
  - Another 3 in 10 want a little more spent



# About 2 in 3 respondents said they would support increasing taxes/fees to improve garbage services; other fees had less support

Would you support raising taxes or enacting a fee to fund the following city services?

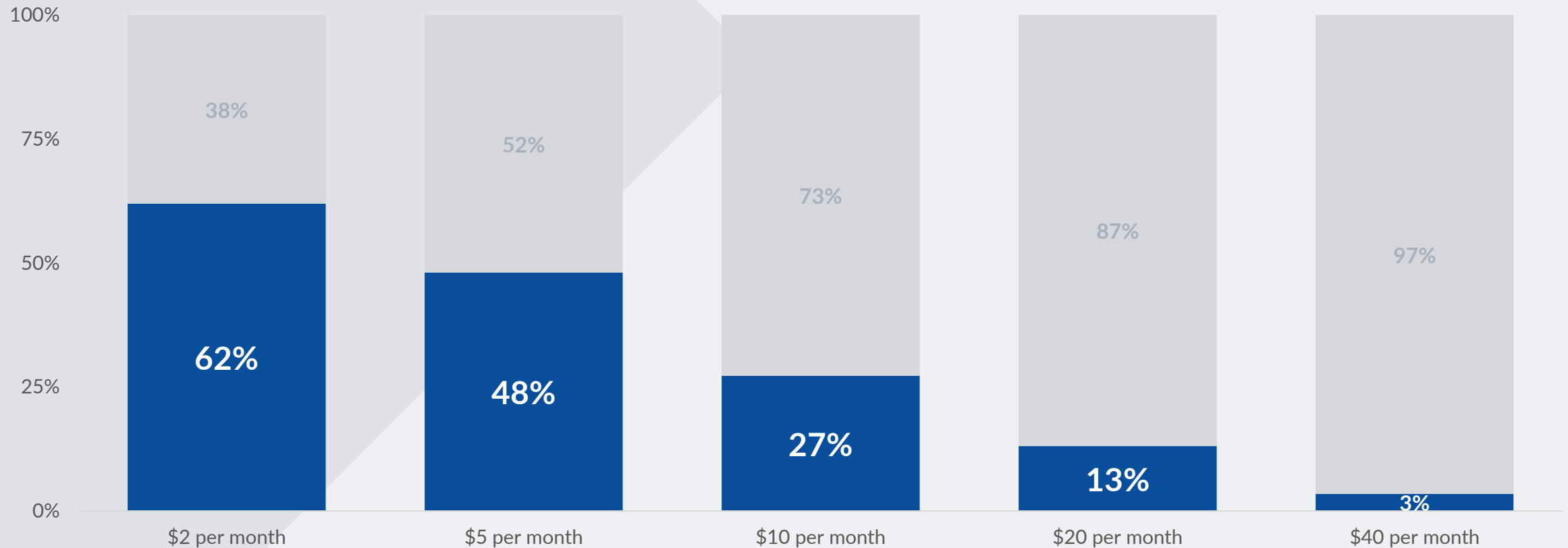
■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure



# About half of respondents would pay \$5 for a garbage fee with much lower levels of support for higher dollar values

What is the most you would be willing to pay per month in additional taxes or fees to fund garbage services?

■ Supports garbage fee amount    ■ Does not support this fee amount



## In summary

- Infrastructure is a priority for respondents
- Support for public safety investments geared toward mental health services and addressing homelessness
- Respondents were okay with budget cuts to very few city programs and services, and cuts are not what people want
- Some openness to paying more for improved garbage services, but highest support only around the lowest fee amounts



# **The 45th Kinder Houston Area Survey**

**The Economy, the Environment,  
and the Importance of Social Connections**



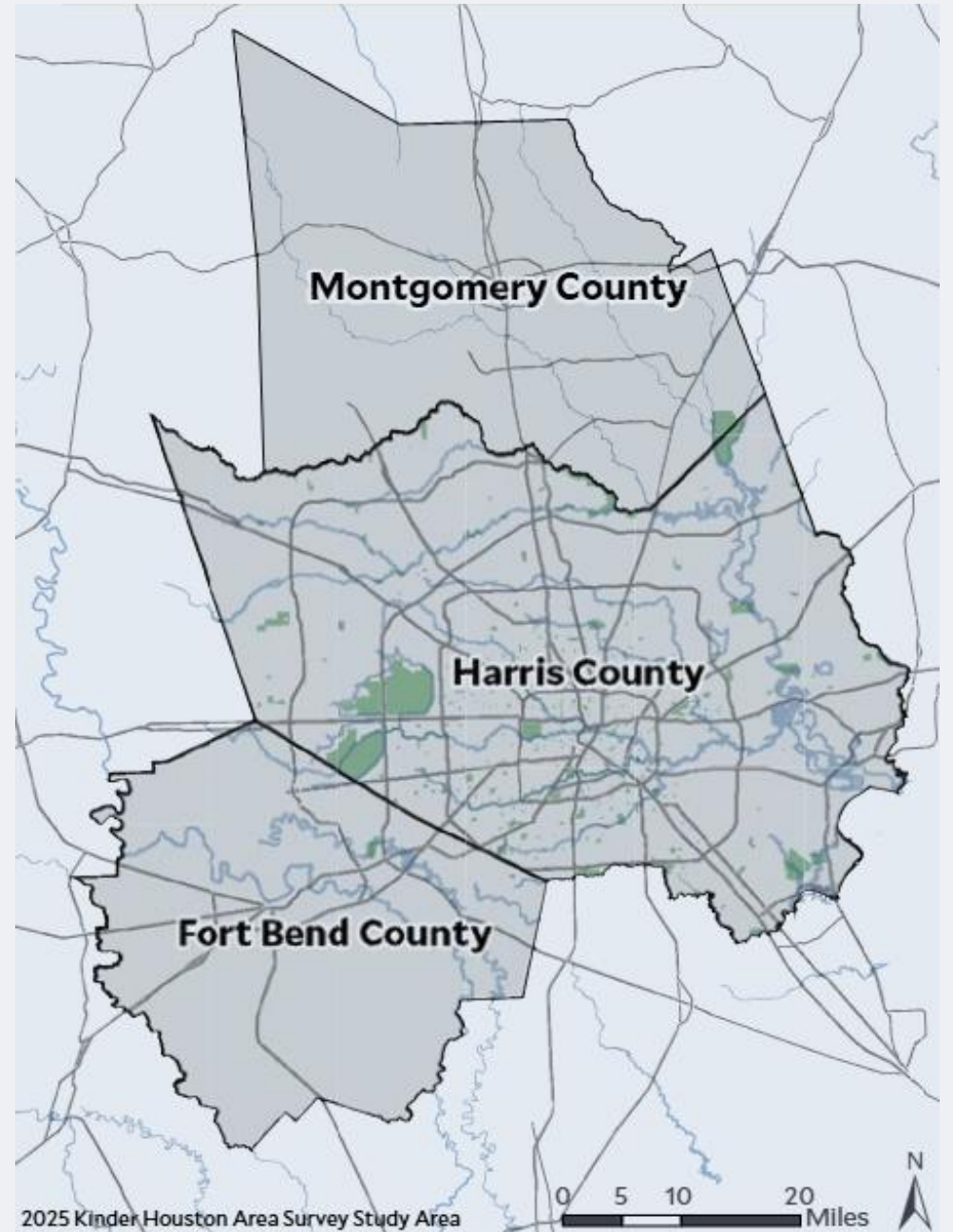
# Greater Houston Community Panel

- Heard from nearly 9,000 residents living in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, including the city of Houston
- Follows same adults over time with surveys administered online throughout the year
- Respondents provided an incentive for each survey they complete



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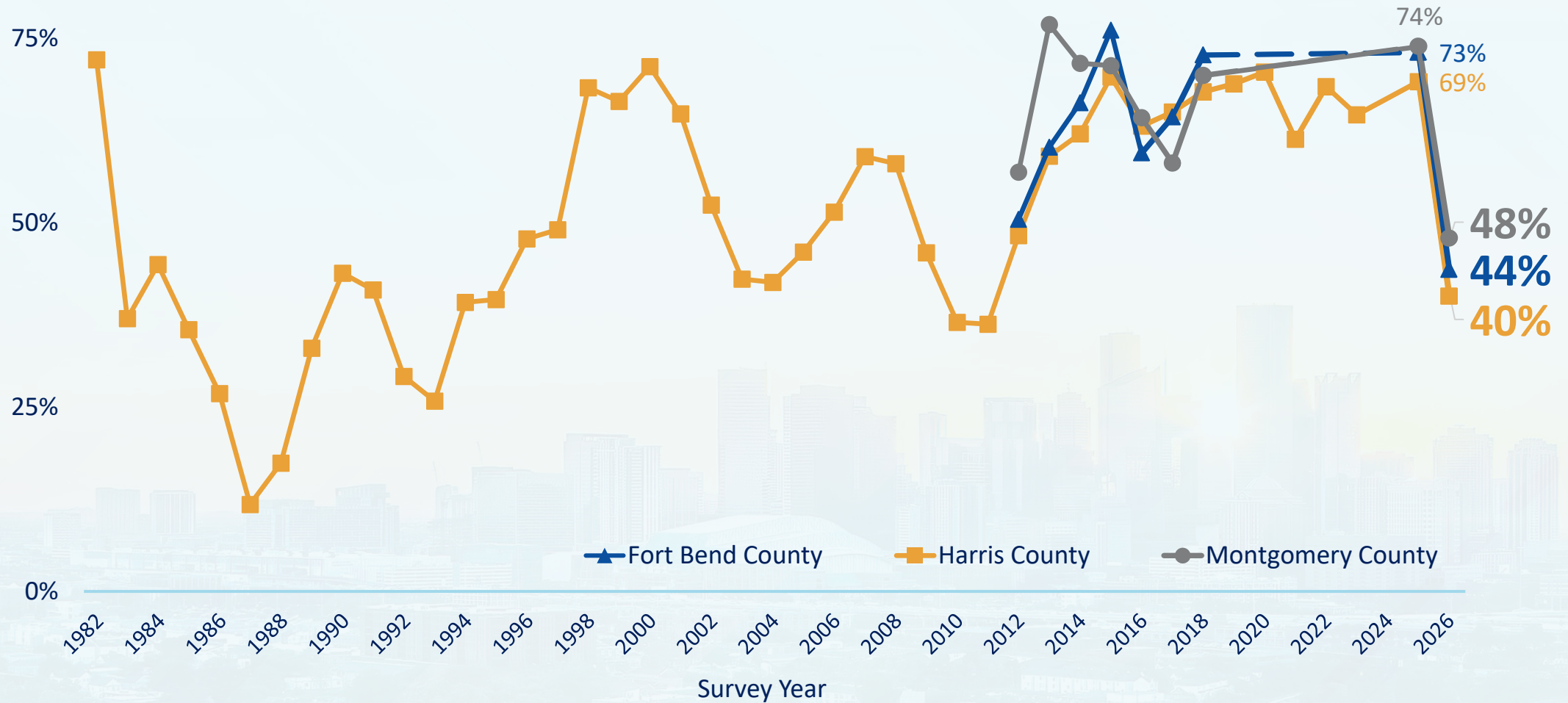


## KEY TAKEAWAY

**We're much more  
concerned about  
the economy**



# Percent rating job opportunities as good or excellent



# Biggest problems facing the region

Economy



25%

Crime and Safety



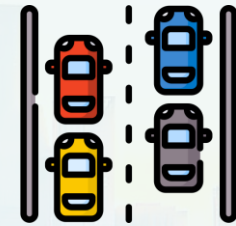
20%

Cost of Housing



13%

Traffic



12%

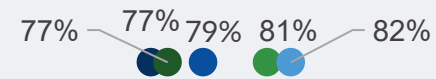
# **Houston-area residents concerned about the environment and environmental exposures affecting their health**



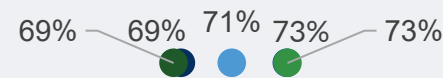
# Residents concerned about extreme weather in their local community, and this was consistent across income groups

● Less than \$25,000 ● \$25,001-\$49,999 ● \$50,000-\$99,999 ● \$100,000-\$149,999 ● \$150,000 or more

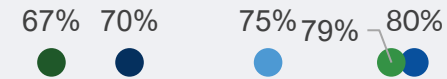
## Flooding



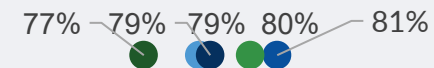
## Wind or hail damage



## Cold or freeze events



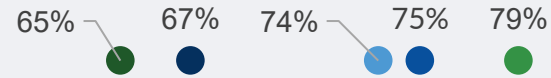
## Extreme heat



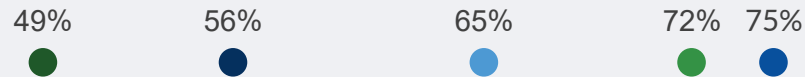
# Residents concerned about environmental contaminants in their local community, but this varied by income

● Less than \$25,000 ● \$25,001-\$49,999 ● \$50,000-\$99,999 ● \$100,000-\$149,999 ● \$150,000 or more

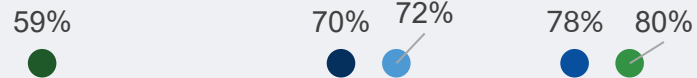
## Broken or aging city/municipal water pipes



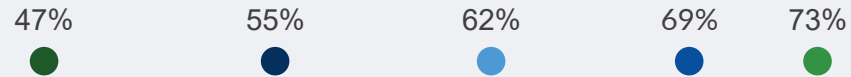
## Lead exposure from paint or old pipes



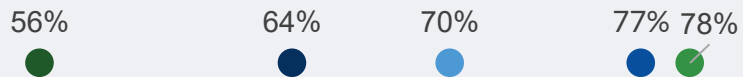
## Illegal dumping of trash and waste



## Nearby waste management or water treatment facility



## Having access to clean drink water



# Houston-area residents are concerned about the environment's effects on their health

# 70%

of residents moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the environment's effects on their health

## KEY CONCEPTS

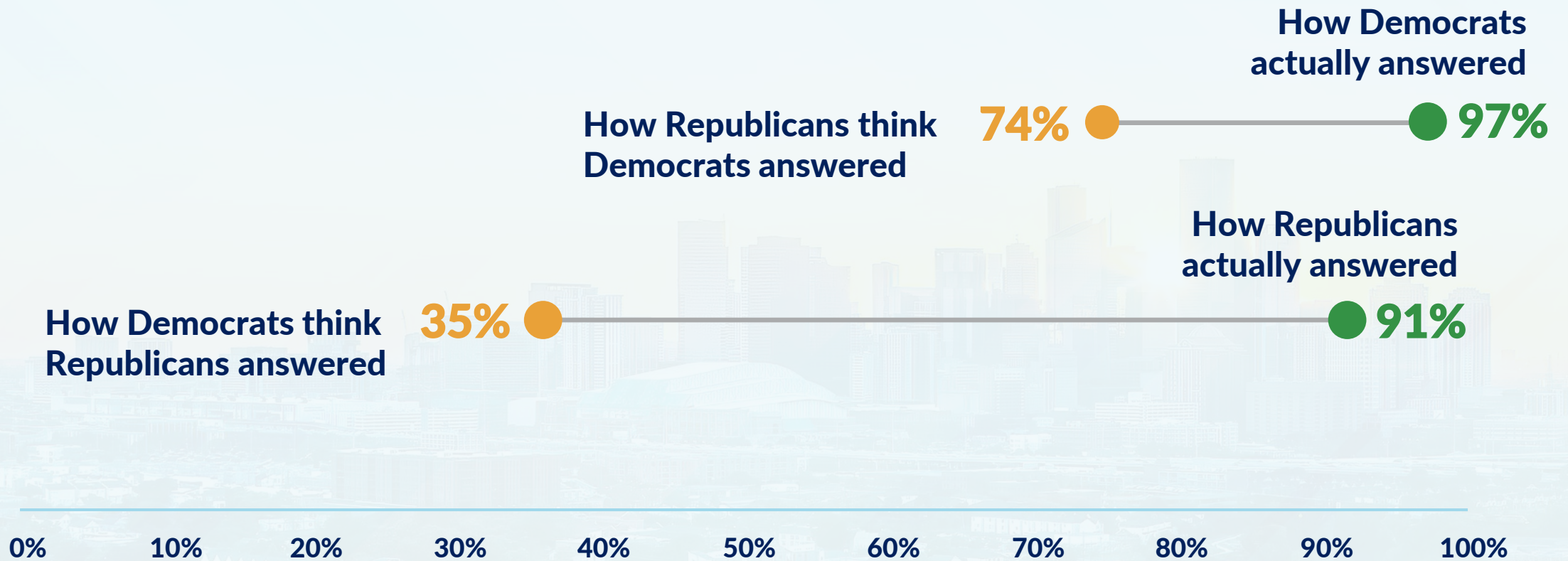
**Knowing one another**

**Personal & professional connections**

**Social cohesion**



# Favors Universal Criminal Background Checks For All Gun Sales



# The Power of Social Connections

High levels of social cohesion and connections matter for...

**Wealth**



**Health**



**Safety**



# Wealth



## How much control do you have over your financial situation?

### Likelihood of reporting "some" or "a lot"

"I have enough personal or professional connections that can help me find a better job, get promoted, or advance my career."

Strongly agree

85%

\$150,000 or more

69%

49%

Household income below \$25,000

36%

Strongly disagree

# Health



## Likelihood of reporting “very good” or “excellent”

**In general,  
how would  
you rate your  
physical  
health?**

Household income  
\$150,000 or more

**70%**



**41%**

Less than \$25,000

Higher  
social cohesion

**60%**



**41%**

Lower  
social cohesion

# Safety



**“I feel safe walking alone at night in my neighborhood”**

## Likelihood of agreeing

**“How often do you feel unsafe in your day-to-day life?”**

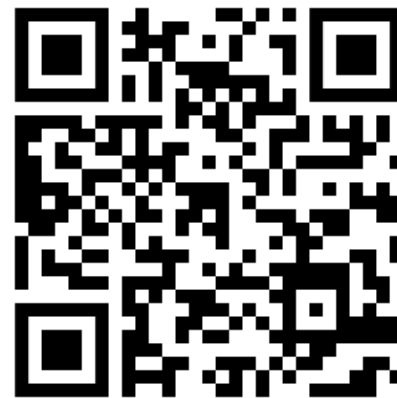
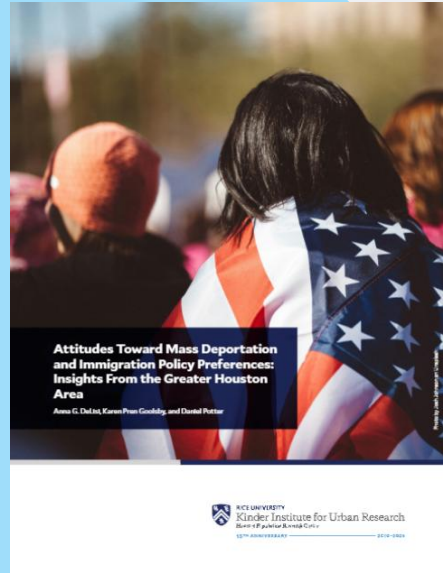


## KEY TAKEAWAY

**Social connections  
are more important  
than many other factors**



# All of the Kinder Institute's research is made available for free on our website



Explore more at  
[kinder.rice.edu/research](https://kinder.rice.edu/research)



# Questions & Thank you!

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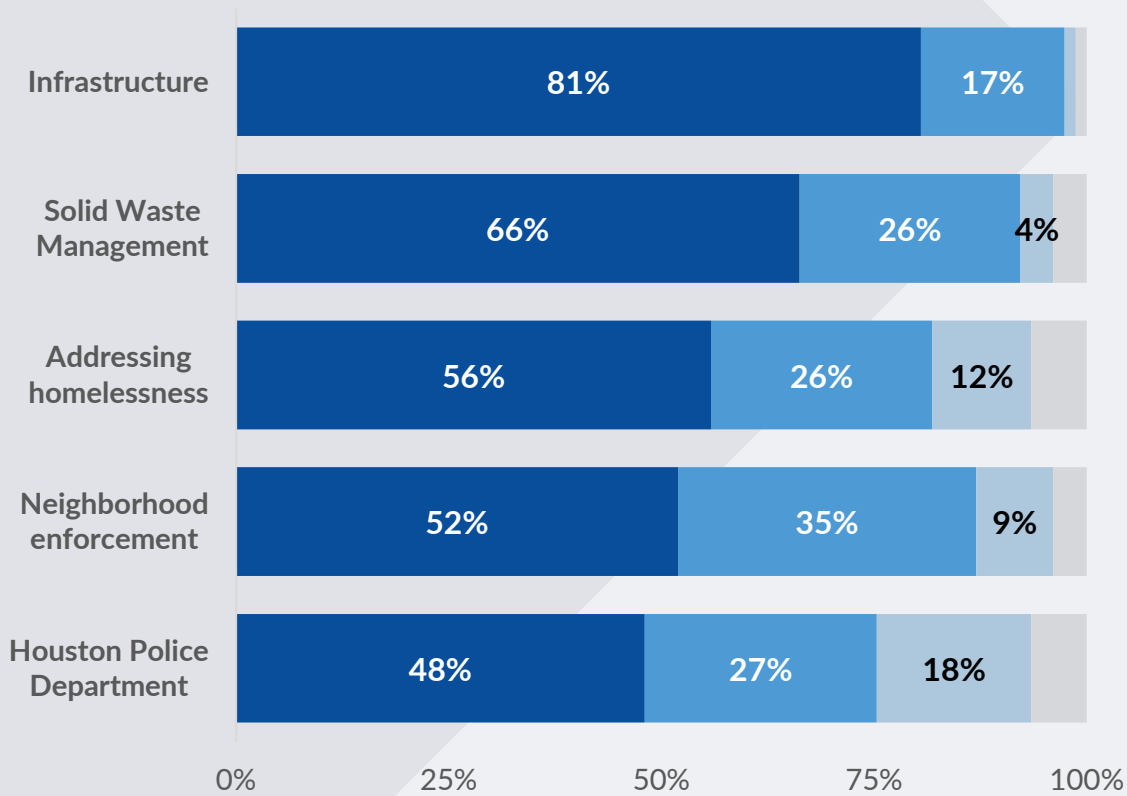
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# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

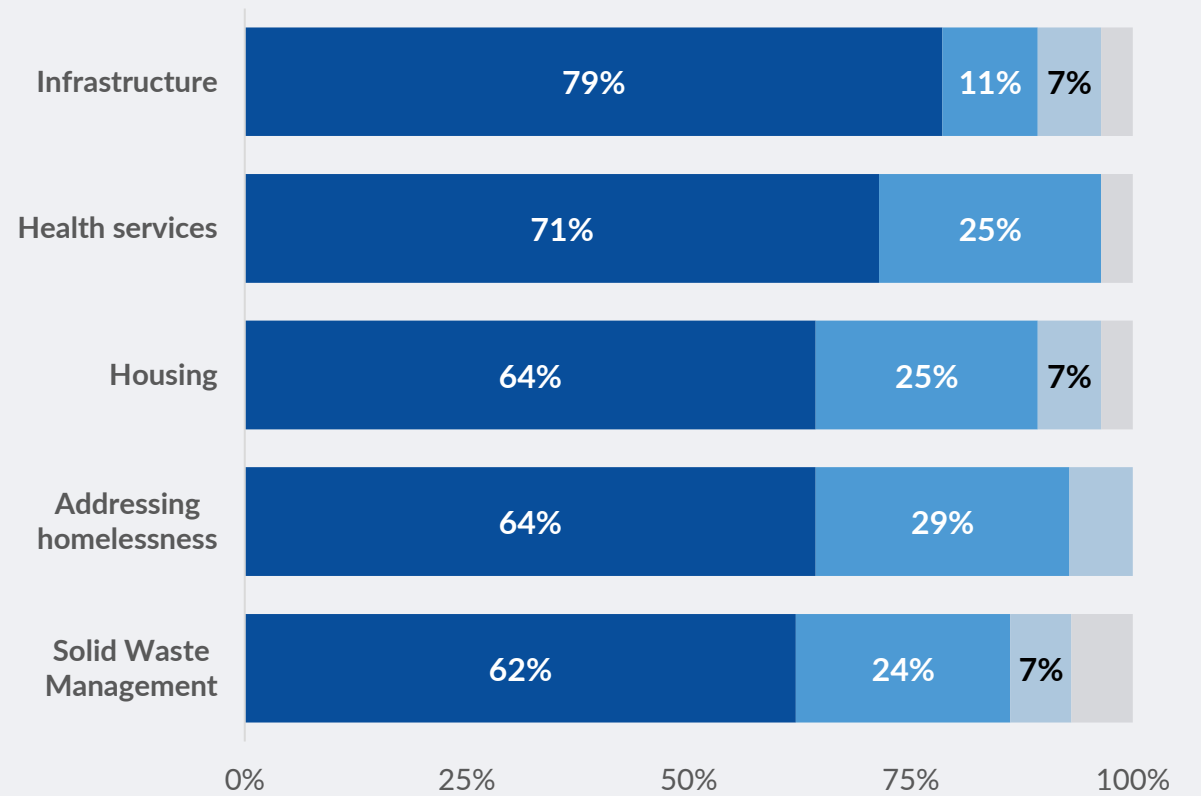
## District A

■ Spend more ■ Spend about the same ■ Spend less ■ Unsure



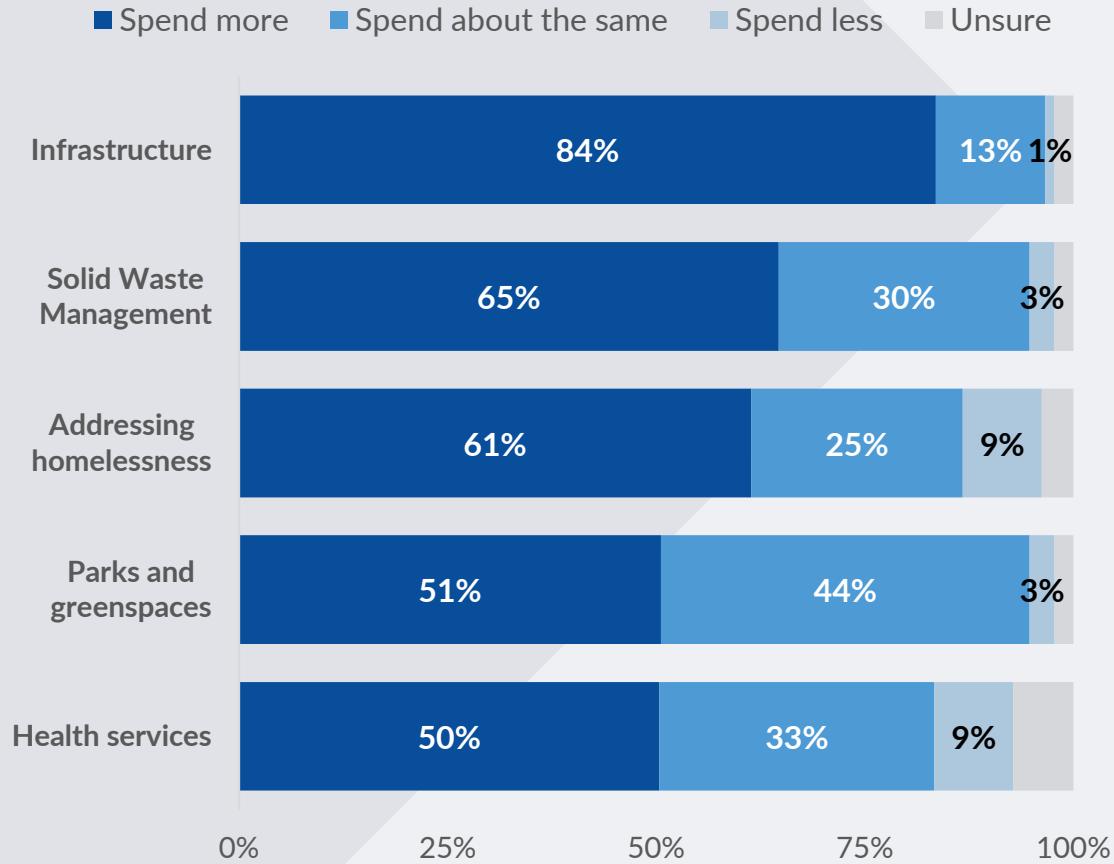
## District B

■ Spend more ■ Spend about the same ■ Spend less

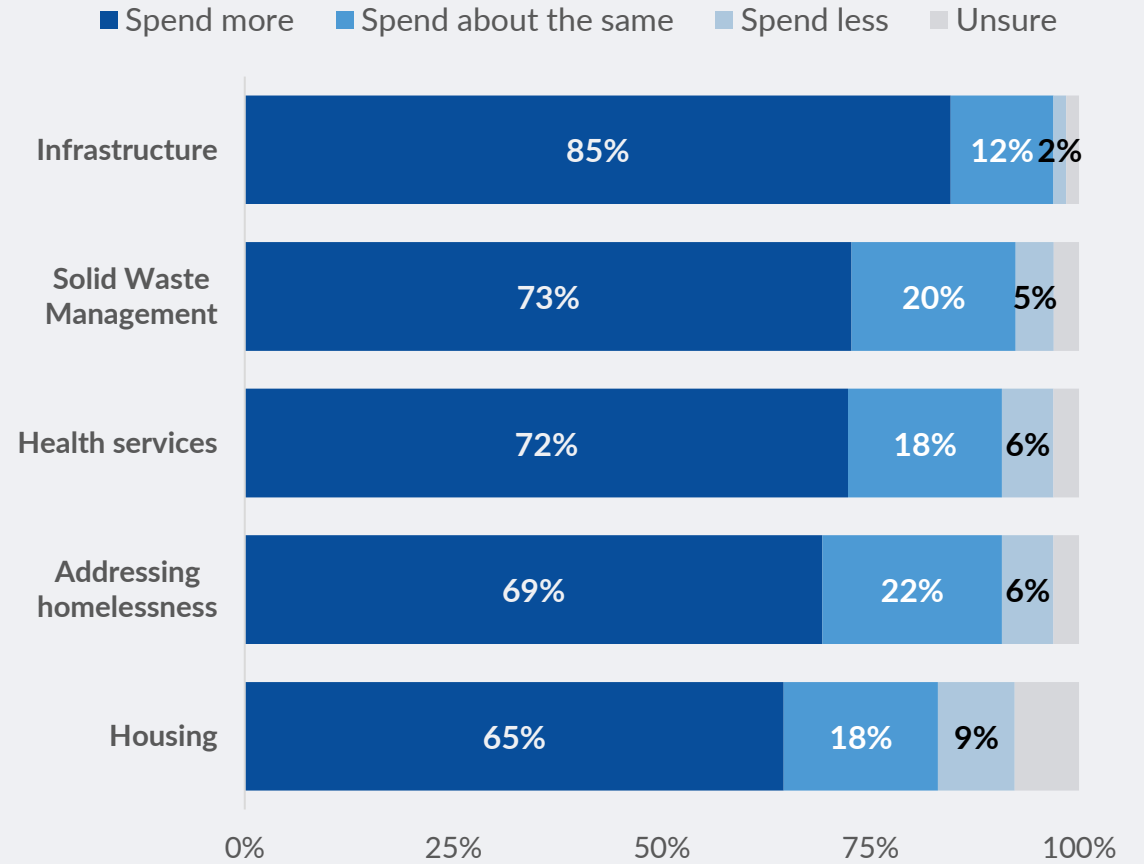


# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

## District C

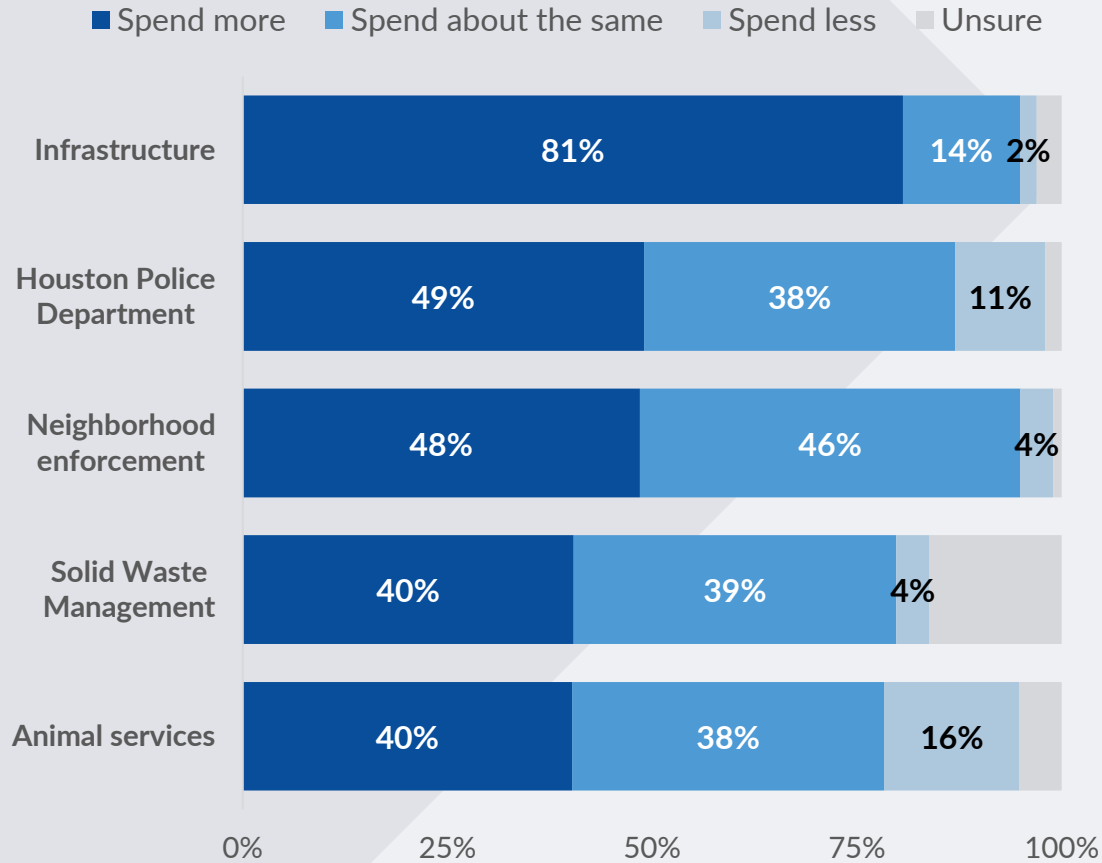


## District D

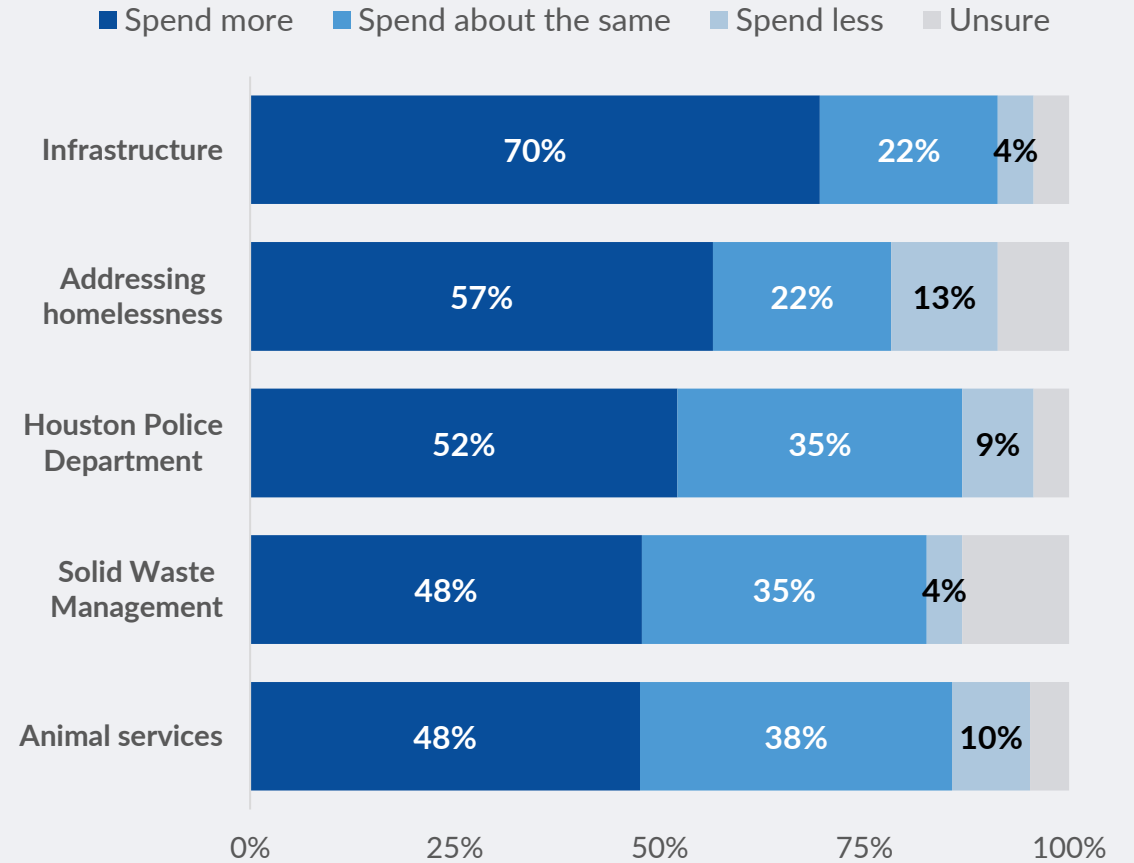


# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

## District E

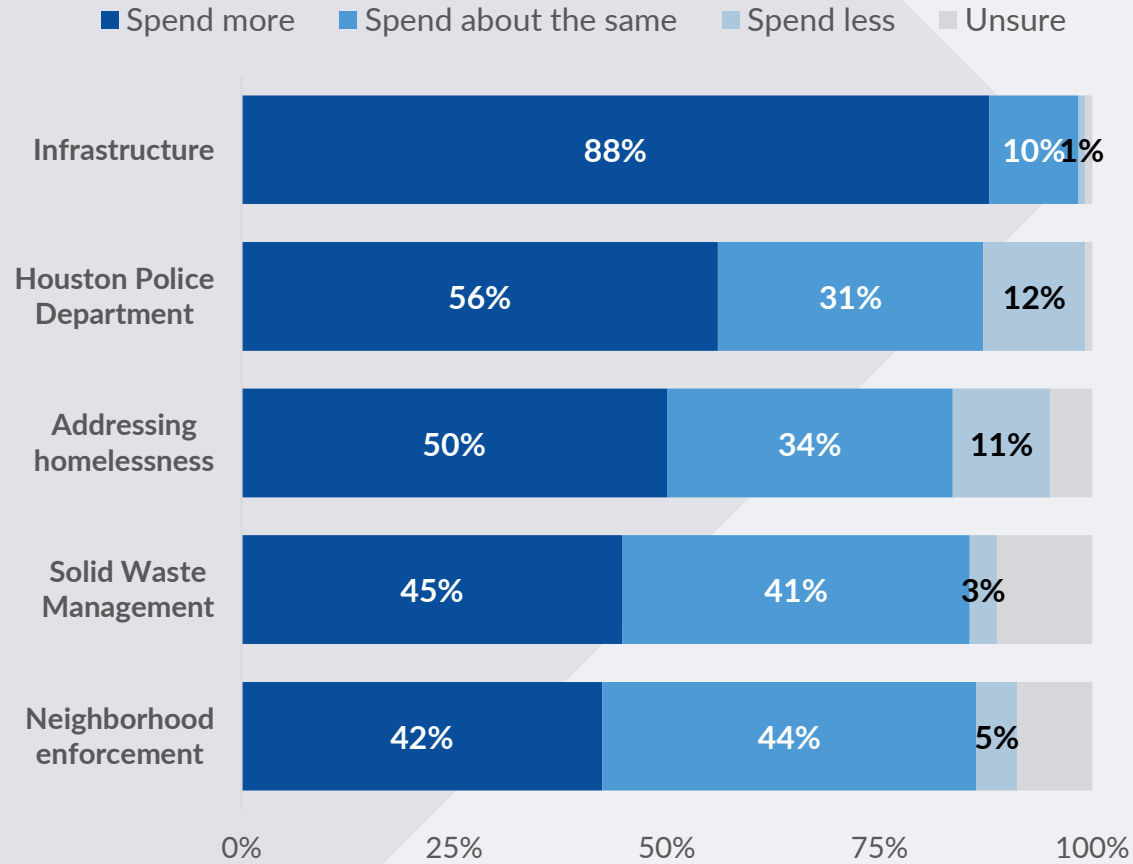


## District F

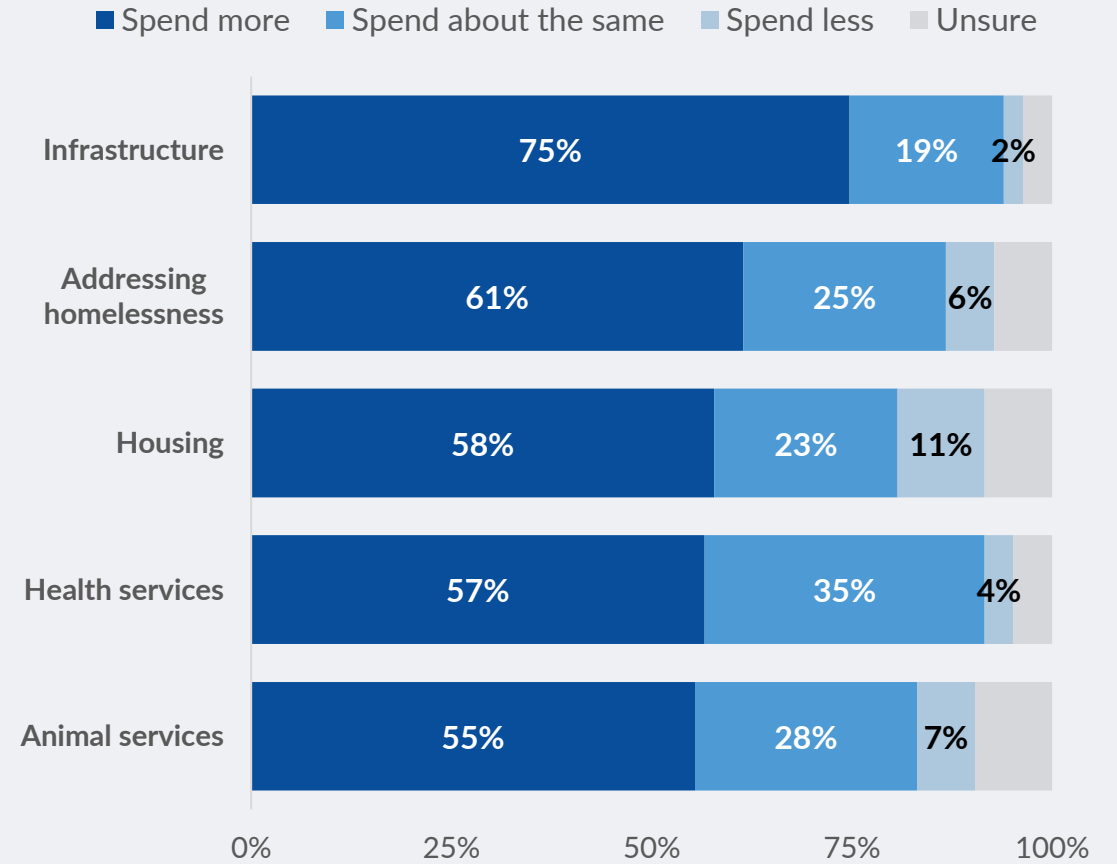


# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

## District G



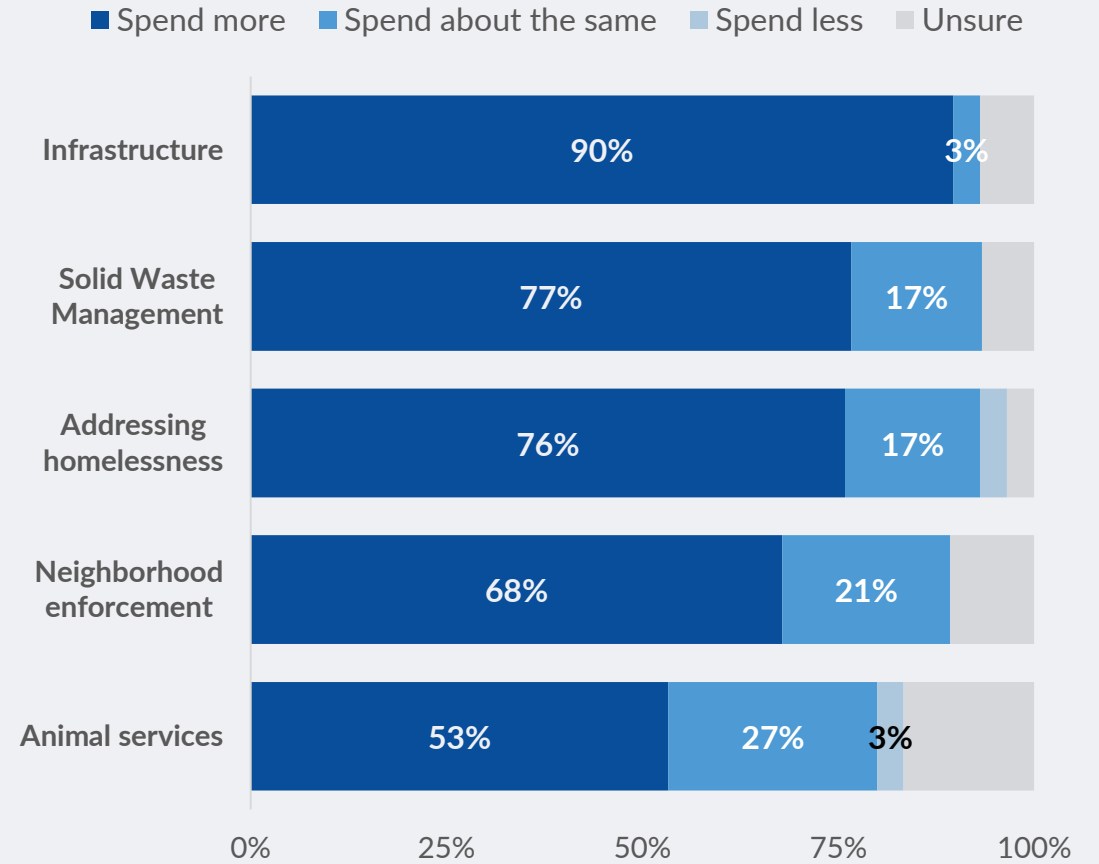
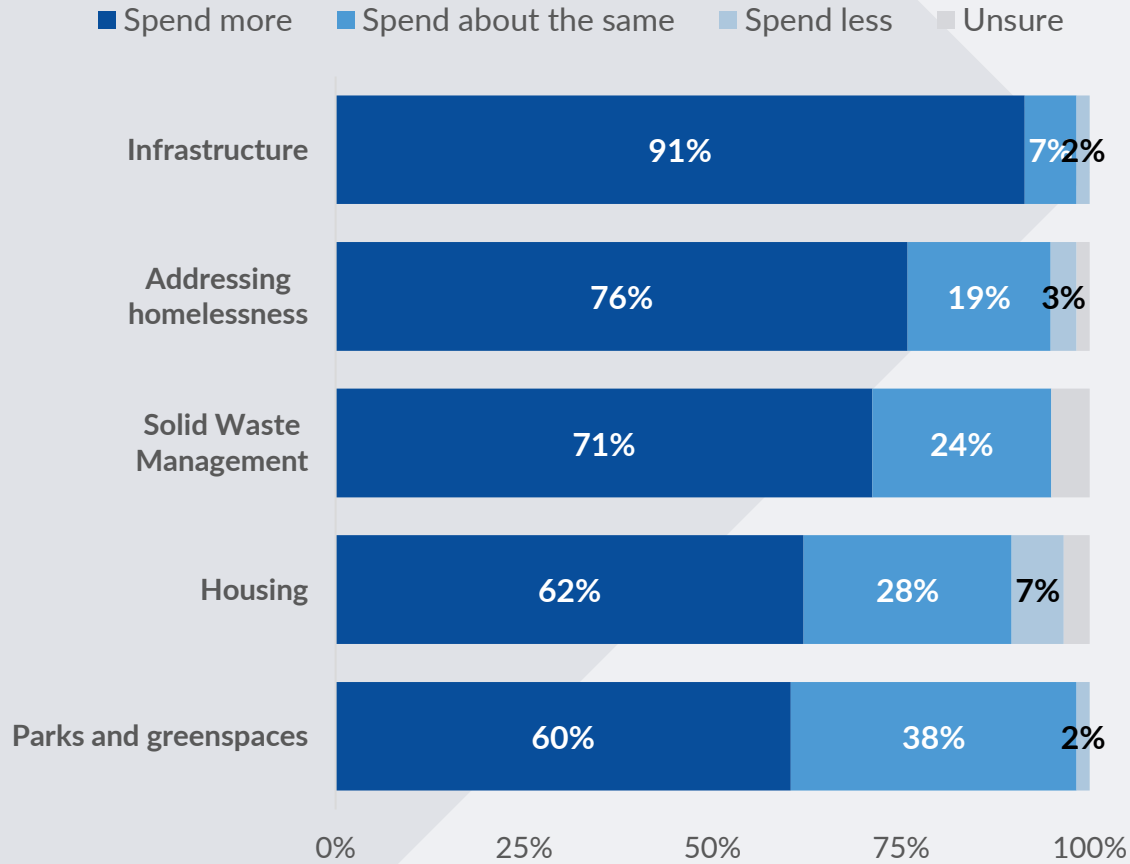
## District H



# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

## District I

## District J



# Top 5 categories by Council Districts

