



Texas Lyceum Poll Reveals Texans' Concerns About Economy, Democracy

AUSTIN, Texas — Texans are increasingly pessimistic about the direction of the country, more concerned about their families' financial situations, and losing confidence in democracy, according to the results of the 2023 Texas Lyceum Poll.

The annual nonpartisan poll of 1,200 Texans explores the most pressing issues facing the state, providing the public with specific data while tracking attitudes and opinions in Texas over time. The 2023 results are being released as the Texas Lyceum holds its annual Public Conference, this year focused on educating the public about election-related issues, in Austin in the early weeks of the 2023 session of the Texas Legislature.

Overall, 62% of Texans say the country is on the wrong track, which is largely unchanged from 2021 and 2022, with just 28% saying the country is headed in the right direction.

“The 2023 Lyceum Poll reveals deeply ingrained concerns about the current and future direction of the state and nation,” said Texas Lyceum Research Director Joshua Blank. “Significantly, we found a striking erosion in Texans’ attitudes towards democracy. Fewer than half of all Texans now strongly agree that democracy is the best form of government, and that sentiment has dropped by double digits in just four years.”

Specific findings in those and other areas include:

- **Economic Outlook:** Only 15% of Texans say the national economy is better this year compared to last year, and a majority, 59%, say it is getting worse. Just 21% say Texas’ economy is doing better than the rest of the country.
- **Personal Economics:** 46% of Texans say that their families’ economic situation has become worse since last year, 35% say it remains unchanged, and only 15% say that they are doing better financially — the most negative response to this question in yearly

Lyceum polling since 2009. Meanwhile, more Texans believe their children will be worse off financially (34%) than they are, significantly more than those who believe their children will be better off financially (28%).

- **Democracy and Elections:** 68% of Texans agree with the statement that democracy is the best form of government, a 14-point decline from 2019. This includes just 40% who “strongly agree.” Among political independents, the belief in democracy as the best form of government dropped from 89% in 2019 to just 45% today.
- **Population growth:** Texans' response to the state's rapid population growth is mixed, even as elected leaders hail steady increases in the state's population as a cause and consequence of economic growth. 44% of Texas adults say that population growth has had a positive impact on Texas, but 34% say that this growth has had a negative effect. While 54% of Democrats view growth as a positive force, just 40% of Republicans agree.
- **Public Education:** 55% of Texans say K-12 education in their communities is either “good” or “excellent,” with 39% rating it as either “poor” or “terrible.” A year ago, only 23% rated local public schools as “poor” or “terrible.”

“Texans’ rapidly changing attitudes towards their local schools suggest that the long tail of COVID-induced changes to education — and, likely, the increased politicization of public education — has contributed to declining confidence in local schools,” said Blank.

The poll revealed partisan differences across a range of issues, including potential election reforms. Democrats were more supportive of proposals to expand voting access, such as making Election Day a national holiday and automatically registering all eligible citizens to vote, while Republicans prioritized preventing ineligible people from voting. However, more than three-quarters of Democrats and Republicans in Texas said it is “very important” to make sure that all eligible voters are permitted to vote.

“At the opening of the 88th Legislative Session, it’s clear that Texas is facing significant and rapid change. It is a time of great uncertainty but also a great opportunity,” said Texas Lyceum President Reda Hicks. “Guided by the data from this poll, the Texas Lyceum is uniquely suited to help our communities, and our state as a whole, navigate change and thrive in it.”

In addition to its public conference on elections this week, the Texas Lyceum will host a quarterly meeting later this spring looking at the “State of Texas Women.” Several poll questions addressed the types of gender equity issues that will be discussed there. The findings reinforce the existence of a gap in uncompensated household work, with women more likely to bear those responsibilities than men (61% compared to 42%) and that male and female Texans hold differing views about the causes of gender inequality.

The poll also measured public support among Texans for various officeholders. It found that:

- 55% disapprove of the job President Joe Biden is doing, including 36% who say that he is doing a “very poor job.”

- 46% approve and 48% disapprove of Gov. Greg Abbott's job performance, the lowest approval rating of his governorship
- 40% approve and 35% disapprove of Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick's job performance
- 40% approve and 34% disapprove of Attorney General Ken Paxton's job performance

About the Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum is the only nonprofit, nonpartisan, stateside leadership organization focused on identifying the state's next generation of leaders and providing a forum for civil discourse. The Texas Lyceum hosts meetings and conferences, publishes a nationally acclaimed annual poll, and offers scholarship and fellowship programs all focused on bringing together diverse opinions and expertise to emphasize constructive private-sector, public-sector and individual responses to the issues facing the state and the nation.

Methodology

From January 6-12, 2023, The Texas Lyceum conducted a 1,000-person telephone survey of adult citizens from the state of Texas. The survey utilized a stratified probability sample design, with respondents being randomly selected at the level of the household and questioned by live interviewers. The survey also employed a randomized cell phone supplement, with 60 percent of completed telephone interviews being conducted among cell phone-only or cell phone-dominant households. A Spanish-language instrument was developed, and bilingual interviewers offered respondents a chance to participate in English or Spanish. To ensure an appropriate sub-sample of unregistered citizens, a supplement of 200 interviews among Texas adults confirmed as unregistered was completed online. This yielded a total statewide sample of 1,202 adults, 915 of whom are registered voters, according to self-reports. The final data set is weighted to the joint distribution of race/ethnicity, age, and gender to achieve representativeness as defined by the Texas Demographic Center's 2022 population projections. The overall margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.83 percentage points, with a larger margin of error for sub-samples.