



REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



The University of Texas at Austin
Moody College of Communication



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
The ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE
FOR CIVIC LIFE

The Texas Media & Society Survey report on
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Released February 14, 2017

Suggested citation: Texas Media & Society Survey. 2017. *Community Engagement*.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Texas Media & Society Survey

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Executive Summary

Based on a survey of just over one thousand Americans and just over one thousand Texans, this report provides an overview of community engagement. Here are some highlights from the report:

Opinions on Community

- Older Americans like living in their community more than Americans under the age of 45.
- Republicans in the U.S. and Texas like living in their community slightly more than Democrats.
- Only 47% of Americans and 50% of Texans say it is unlikely they will move out of their community in the next 5 years.
- Americans and Texans 45 years and older are more likely to think of their community as their real home than those under the age of 45.

Groups and Organizations

- Over half of Americans and Texans say they are not a member of any group or organization.
- The most common membership is with a religious organization. 26% of Americans and 28% of Texans report being a member of a church or other religious organization.
- For both Americans and Texans, higher levels of education attainment are associated with significantly higher levels of group membership.

Interactions with Community

- 50% of Americans and 43% of Texans report interacting with their neighbors at least once a week. Republicans for both groups are more likely to interact than Democrats.
- Only 22% of Americans and 18% of Texans have discussions about problems in their community at least once a week.

Talking Politics

- Both Americans and Texans list their significant other as the person they most frequently talk to about politics.
- Disagreement is rare: 61% of Americans and 65% of Texans say they rarely or never disagree with the person they talk to most about politics.

Introduction

After a year often described as divisive, it is important to consider the relationship Americans have with their communities, their habits of interaction and their feelings about one another in the context of civic and political life. Do Americans like where they live? Do they feel at home in their communities? What is the nature of their interactions with their neighbors? When do they talk about politics and with whom? This report summarizes findings of the Texas Media & Society Survey to provide insights and answers to these questions for both Americans and Texans.

The following pages report on the results of a survey conducted between May 24, 2016 and June 14, 2016 of 1,009 Americans and 1,006 Texans. The broad-ranging survey asked about journalism and the media, politics and civic engagement, and discussion networks and communities. In this report, we present the findings with respect to community engagement.

A few technical notes about this report are in order. First, we include data from all Americans and all Texans in the tables and charts. In the text, we also statistically compare Texans to those who live outside of the state to see if there are any differences. For these comparisons, we exclude Texans from the U.S. sample.

Second, we analyze how attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors differ across gender, age, education, and partisanship. Due to sample size constraints, we look at race/ethnicity differences for Texans only. We only note those instances in which the differences were statistically meaningful in the text. More details about the methodology and analysis conducted can be found in the Methodology section at the end of this report.

The results show many Americans and Texans have positive attitudes toward their community. Large majorities of each group like living in their community and feel as if it is their real home. Even though this is the case, roughly a third of both Americans and Texans realize it is likely they will move from their community over the next five years. This increased mobility, found especially in younger respondents, is associated with lower levels of membership in community groups and organizations. For younger individuals, membership in an organization is the exception, not the rule. Education and age are correlated with increased community engagement. Those with at least a college education are two to three times more likely to be members of various non-religious organizations and are also more likely to have frequent interactions with their neighbors.

There is evidence in this report that this level of disengagement, especially among the young and uneducated, may be related to divided and disconnected communities. A minority of people say they frequently talk to people about problems in their community. They also report that they rarely disagree with the person they talk to most about politics. While this report provides heartening news about respondents' perceptions of their community, it also provides evidence of a divided and partially disengaged country. Certainly, those working to unite and activate our communities have a lot of work to do.

Opinions on Community

Both Americans and Texans like where they live with 78% of Americans and 82% of Texans saying they either somewhat or very much like living in their community. Younger Americans are less positive about their community than older Americans, but in both age groups less than 10% say they dislike or somewhat dislike living in their community. Republicans in the U.S. and in Texas are slightly more likely to say they like living in their community.

Feelings about living in their community

% of Americans

	Like	Neither	Dislike
Total	78%	13%	8%
18-44	72%	17%	9%
45+	84%	9%	8%
Republican	83%	10%	7%
Democrat	78%	13%	8%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Those who like it very much or somewhat like, those who neither like nor dislike, and those who dislike very much or somewhat dislike. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

Hispanics in Texas are more likely than non-Hispanic white Texans to like living in their community with only 5% saying they dislike or somewhat dislike where they live. Non-Hispanic whites in Texas, on the other hand, say they dislike or somewhat dislike living in their community 10% of the time.

Feelings about living in their community

% of Texans

	Like	Neither	Dislike
Total	82%	9%	9%
White, Non-Hispanic	83%	7%	10%
Hispanic	85%	9%	5%
Republican	86%	6%	8%
Democrat	80%	9%	10%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Those who like it very much or somewhat like, those who neither like nor dislike, and those who dislike very much or somewhat dislike. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

As most Americans have positive feelings about their community, it is not surprising that most do not plan to leave their community any time soon. Just over a third (34%) of Americans and

Texans say they plan to move out of their community in the next five years. As you may expect, this percentage is much larger for the younger age groups. For Americans between the ages of 18 and 44, 43% say it is likely they will move from their community in the next five years and only 35% say it is unlikely. Of those Americans over the age of 44, only 25% say it is likely they will move in the next five years.

Likelihood of moving out of your community in the next 5 years
% of Americans

	Likely	Neither	Unlikely
Total	34%	18%	47%
18-44	43%	20%	35%
45+	25%	17%	57%
Republican	32%	17%	51%
Democrat	35%	19%	46%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: We have collapsed a five-point scale to a 3-point scale by combining the strongly/somewhat responses. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

The gap between American age groups is almost identical in our Texas sample with 43% of those 18 to 44 saying it is likely they will move and only 24% of those ages 45 and older plan to move in the next five years. Republicans in the U.S. are slightly less likely to say they will move compared to Democrats, but the difference is small with 32% of Republicans saying it is likely and 35% of Democrats. The Republicans in our Texas sample were also lower than the Democrats with a difference of 32% and 36% respectively saying it is likely they will move in the next five years.

Likelihood of moving out of your community in the next 5 years
% of Texans

	Likely	Neither	Unlikely
Total	34%	15%	50%
18-44	43%	16%	40%
45+	24%	15%	60%
Republican	32%	14%	54%
Democrat	36%	15%	48%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: We have collapsed a five-point scale to a 3-point scale by combining the strongly/somewhat responses. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

Next, respondents were asked if they think of their local community as their real home. Most Americans and Texans think of their community as their real home with 69% of Americans and 68% of Texans saying their local community feels like their real home. There were some differences between age and party groups for both of our samples. In the U.S. as a whole, 75% of those 45 and older say their community feels like their real home while only 61% of those 18 to 44 say the same. Republicans, more than Democrats, think of their community as their real home. There is over a 10% gap between the two groups with 76% of Republicans and 65% of Democrats saying their local community was their real home.

Local community as real home

% of Americans

	Real Home	Neither	Not real home
Total	69%	17%	13%
18-44	61%	19%	17%
45+	75%	15%	10%
Republican	76%	14%	10%
Democrat	65%	19%	15%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: We have collapsed a five-point scale to a 3-point scale by combining the strongly/somewhat responses. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

In Texas, 77% of those 45 and older say their community feels like their real home while only 59% of those 18 to 44 say the same. As in the U.S. Republicans in Texas, more than Democrats, think of their community as their real home. In our Texas-only sample, the gap between the two groups is only 4% with 71% of Republicans and 67% of Democrats saying their local community is their real home.

Local community as real home

% of Texans

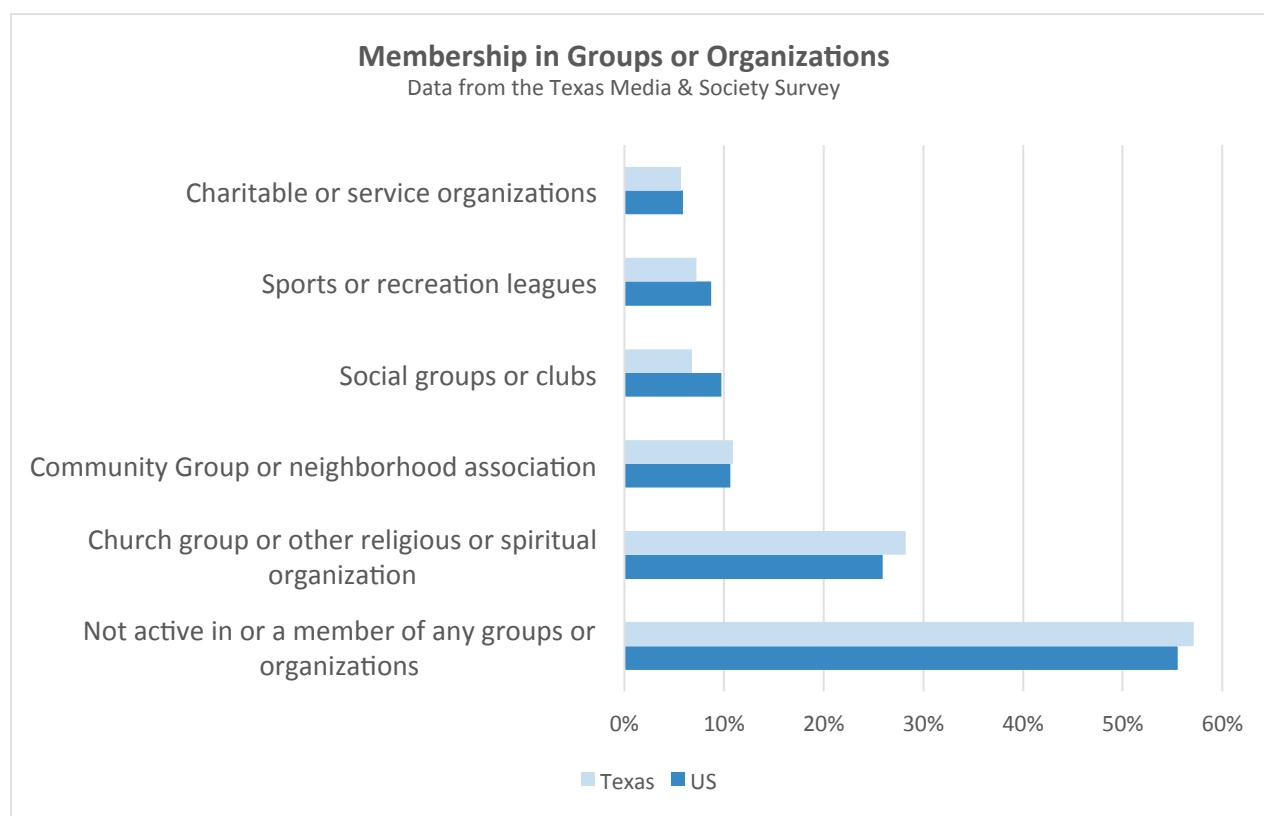
	Real Home	Neither	Not real home
Total	68%	16%	15%
18-44	59%	21%	19%
45+	77%	12%	11%
Republican	71%	17%	12%
Democrat	67%	15%	18%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: We have collapsed a five-point scale to a 3-point scale by combining the strongly/somewhat responses. Rows do not total to 100% due to non-response.

Groups and Organizations

The Texas Media & Society Survey also asked people about their membership in five different categories of groups or organizations. These categories were charitable or service organizations, sports or recreation leagues, social groups or clubs, community or neighborhood associations, and religious organizations. Respondents were asked to indicate if they were not a member of any group or organization. The chart below shows the results for both the U.S. and Texas. The group or organization with the highest percent of membership is religious organizations with 26% of Americans and 28% of Texans. All of the other categories of groups or organizations have memberships near or below 10% in both the U.S. and Texas. A majority of both Americans and Texans respond that they are not a member of any group or organization.



For Americans, there are some differences in group membership across age, education, and party identification. Those in the older age group are more likely than the younger group to be a member of a service organization (8% vs 3%), a community group (15% vs 6%), and a religious organization (33% vs 18%). It is also the case that respondents with a college degree or more are more likely than those with only some college or a high school education to be members of the various groups. The one exception is religious organization where there are no statistically significant differences between the education groups. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to join all groups except service organizations, where the difference between parties

is not statistically significant. The largest difference between the two parties was in religious organization membership. Thirty-five percent of Republicans are members of religious organizations while only 21% of Democrats have religious membership.

*Active in or a member of groups or organizations
% of Americans*

	Service Org	Sports Org	Social Club	Comm. Group	Religious Org	No Group
Total	6%	9%	9%	11%	26%	56%
18-44	3%	-	-	6%	18%	60%
45+	8%	-	-	15%	33%	52%
High school or less	3%	5%	5%	5%	-	64%
Some college	6%	8%	12%	10%	-	55%
College or more	10%	15%	15%	18%	-	44%
Republican	-	11%	12%	13%	35%	47%
Democrat	-	7%	8%	10%	21%	61%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Dashes indicate group difference is not statistically significant.

Many of the same patterns in membership across age, education, and party identification seen among Americans hold for Texans as well. One exception is Texans age 18-44 are more likely to be a member of a sports organization than those 45 and older. Another is that religious group membership is the only statistically significant difference between Republicans and Democrats in Texas.

*Active in or a member of groups or organizations
% of Texans*

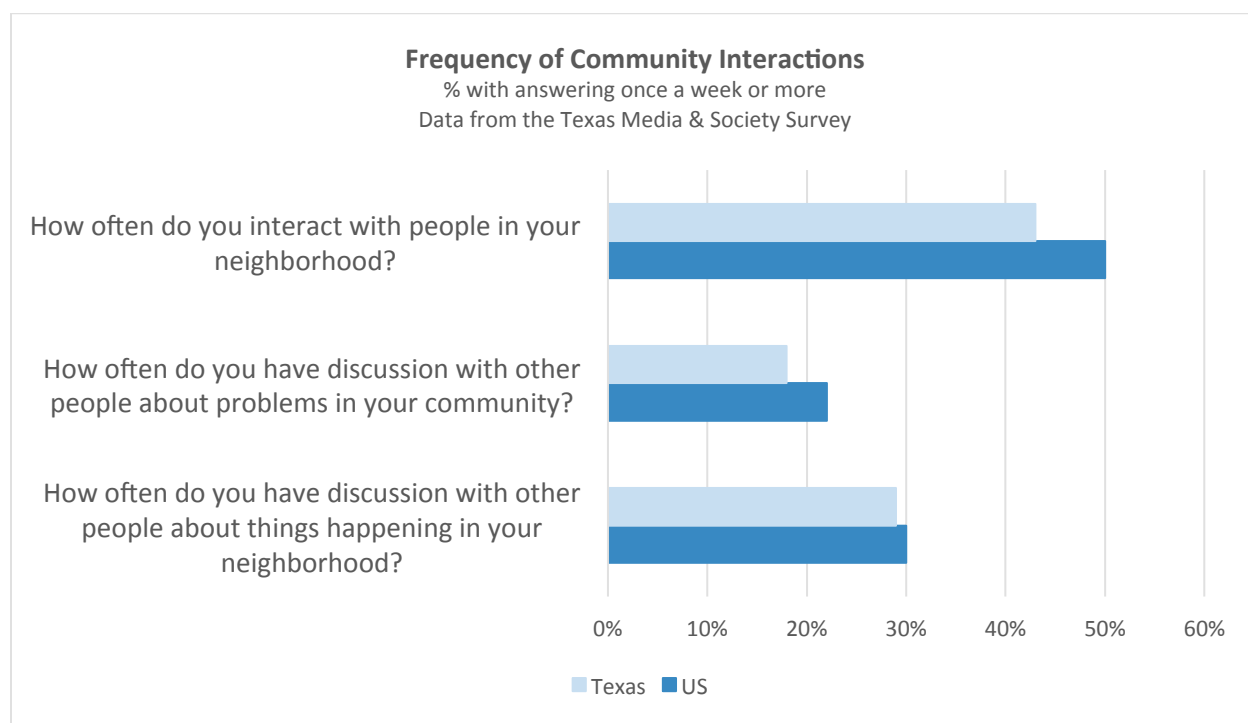
	Service Org	Sports Org	Social Club	Comm. Group	Religious Org	No Group
Total	6%	7%	7%	11%	28%	57%
18-44	3%	9%	-	8%	24%	62%
45+	9%	5%	-	14%	32%	52%
High school or less	1%	4%	5%	3%	19%	69%
Some college	6%	8%	5%	14%	28%	56%
College or more	13%	11%	12%	20%	43%	39%
Republican	-	-	-	-	39%	49%
Democrat	-	-	-	-	21%	62%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Dashes indicate group difference was not statistically significant.

Interactions with Community

The survey also asked about the type and frequency of interactions people had in their community. The chart below shows results from three different questions. The first asks respondents about the frequency of interactions in their neighborhood. In the U.S. sample, exactly half of all respondents say they interact with people in their neighborhood at least once a week. In our Texas sample, only 43% say they interact with people in their neighborhood at least once a week. Next, we asked how frequently people have discussions about problems in their community. Twenty-two percent of Americans say they have discussions with people about problems in their community at least once a week. Only 18% of Texans say the same. We also asked how often people discuss things happening in their neighborhood. Thirty percent of Americans and 29 percent of Texans say they discuss things happening in their neighborhood at least once a week.



Again, there are differences in the frequency of interactions between the age, education, and party identification subsets for both the U.S. as a whole and Texas. Those who are in the older age group more frequently report having interactions with their neighbors at least once a week. For the U.S., 43% of those 18-44 and 57% of those 45 and older report interacting with their neighbors at least once a week. For Texas, 38% of those 18-44 and 49% of those 45 and older interact with their neighbors at least once a week. Those with higher levels of educational attainment also report having more frequent interactions with neighbors. This is true for both Americans and Texans with 60% of Americans and 53% of Texans with a college degree or more education saying they have interactions with neighbors at least once a week. Republicans also

report more frequent interactions with neighbors than Democrats both in the U.S. (56% vs 48%) and in Texas (49% vs 39%).

Percent interacting with neighbors at least once a week

	US	Texas
Total	50%	43%
18-44	43%	38%
45+	57%	49%
High school or less	44%	35%
Some college	50%	46%
College or more	60%	53%
Republican	56%	49%
Democrat	48%	39%

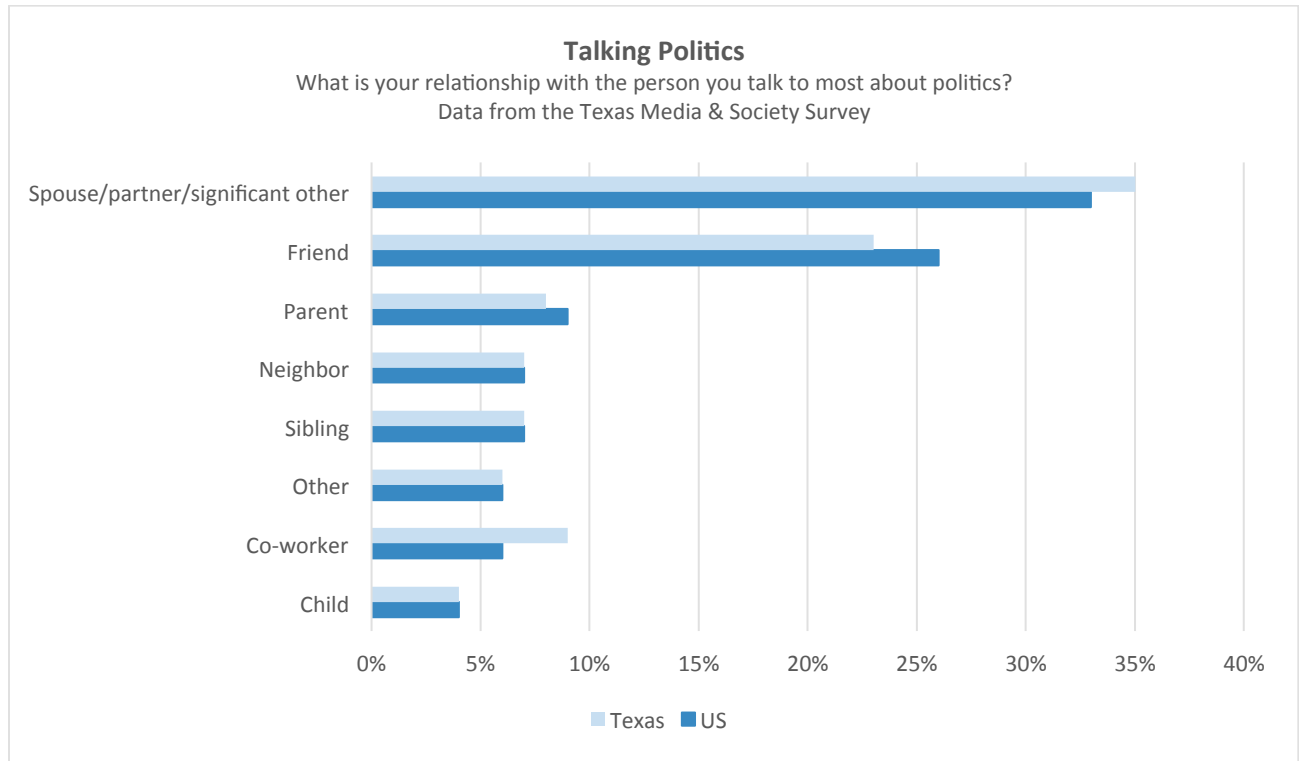
Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Columns are U.S. sample (including Texas) and Texas only sample.

It should be noted here that in order to test the difference between Texas and other U.S. States, we statistically compared the U.S. sample minus all Texas respondents to only Texas respondents. The differences between the two groups is not statistically significant on the frequency of interactions with neighbors.

Talking Politics

The Texas Media & Society Survey also asked respondents about the person with whom they talk politics most frequently. The chart below shows the types of people with whom Americans and Texans talk politics most frequently. Around a third of both Americans and Texans list their spouse, partner, or significant other as the person with whom they most frequently talk about politics. Around a quarter of Americans and Texans list a friend as the person with whom they most frequently talk about politics, and less than 10% of both Americans and Texans list a parent, neighbor, sibling, co-worker, child, or someone else.



Next, respondents were asked how frequently they have political disagreements with the person they talk to most about politics. Of Americans, 61% say they hardly ever or never disagree with this person. Of Texans, 65% say they hardly ever or never disagree with the person they talk to most about politics. There are no significant differences based on age or education, but there is a difference between the political parties in both the U.S. and Texas. In the U.S. 68% of Republicans say they hardly ever or never disagree while 58% of Democrats say the same. In Texas 68% of Republicans rarely disagree while 64% of Democrats rarely disagree.

*Disagreement is Rare: How often do
you disagree?*

% saying hardly ever or never

	US	Texas
Total	61%	65%
Republican	68%	68%
Democrat	58%	64%

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: Columns are U.S. sample (including Texas)
and Texas only sample.

Conclusion

This report provides a snapshot of community engagement among Americans and Texans. The results show a great deal of positivity toward local communities. Both Americans and Texans overwhelmingly like their communities, feel at home where they are, and do not plan to move. A level of disengagement counters this positivity. Most Americans are not active in any groups or organizations, and have very few conversations with their neighbors about what is going on in their community. When they do talk about politics it is frequently with a partner and disagreement is rare.

We analyzed the data for divides based on gender, age, education, partisanship, and in Texas, race/ethnicity. We also examined differences between Texans and Americans. No statistically significant differences between Texans and Americans appear in the data. Rather, the most persistent differences appear for age and education. Older Americans and Texans are happier with their communities and are more involved. Those with more education have more interactions in their community, have more memberships in organizations, and are generally more engaged with their community. The differences between political parties were small, but showed Republicans to be happier with and more engaged in their communities.

The Texas Media & Society Survey analyzed public attitudes, opinion, and behaviors about the news media and journalism, politics and civic participation, and their discussion networks and communities. This report focuses on community engagement and provides insight into how Texans and Americans oriented toward politics in 2016.

About the Institute and the Survey

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life exists to cultivate informed voters and active citizens. As an Organized Research Unit housed in the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin, the Institute sponsors research, education, and outreach programs focused on three key pillars: civic discovery, young people, and civil dialogue. In 2000, the Institute was founded on the belief that informed voters and active citizens are made, not born, and that democracy and society benefit when citizens participate and take action to improve their communities.

The Texas Media & Society Survey seeks to capture the voice of Texans and Americans on the media, civic engagement, and politics over time. Launched in 2015 as an endeavor of the Moody College of Communication, the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, and the School of Journalism, the survey reveals the attitudes of Texans and Americans on media and politics, measures habits of news consumption, and offers insight into how people become informed in the digital age. The release of annual survey results coincides with the annual Denius Symposium on News Integrity that invites students to engage in public dialogue and to explore the survey results.

For more information, or to request access to the survey data, visit TXMediaAndSociety.org

Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by the Cain Foundation, the Denius Chair for Press Integrity, the Moody Endowment for Excellence in Communication, and the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life.

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Thanks to Jeff Gottfried and Paul Lavrakas for providing feedback on the survey instrument.

Thanks to Roderick Hart, Founding Director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life and Professor of Communication Studies, for his vision in founding this survey and securing funding for its execution. Thanks also to Regina Lawrence, former Director of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, for her leadership in founding this survey.

Methodology

The Texas Media & Society Survey was created by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin. The survey was fielded by GfK Group (formerly Knowledge Networks). GfK employs a probability-based sampling strategy to recruit panelists to participate in surveys. They originally used random digit dialing to recruit panelists until 2009 when they moved to address based sampling methods. Those without Internet access are provided with a web-enabled device and free Internet service so that they can complete surveys online.

For this particular study, 3,743 were sampled for participation and 2,015 completed the survey. Non-responders were sent email reminders on day 3, 7, and 10 of the field period. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish. Taking into account all phases of obtaining respondents, the response rate for the U.S. sample is 4.6% and for the Texas sample, 3.7%. Data collection took place between May 24, 2016 and June 14, 2016. Respondents had to be over the age of 18 to participate.

The sample sizes and margins of error are shown in the table below. These calculations include the design effect. In theory, in 19 out of 20 cases, results for all American adults, for instance, will differ by no more than 3.3 percentage points, up or down, from the results of this survey. The margin of error does not include other sources of error, such as the question wording, question order, and the translation of survey questions.

Unweighted Sample Sizes and Margins of Error

	U.S.		TX	
	Sample size	Margin of Error	Sample size	Margin of Error
Total	1,009	3.3	1,006	3.8
Male	492	4.7	490	5.4
Female	517	4.6	516	5.3
18-44	389	5.3	322	6.7
45+	620	4.2	684	4.6
High school or less	371	5.5	376	6.2
Some college	274	6.3	283	7.2
College or more	364	5.5	347	6.5
White non-Hispanic	--		522	5.3
Hispanic	--		320	6.7
Republican	422	5.1	478	5.5
Democrat	530	4.3	480	5.5

Data from the Texas Media & Society Survey

Note: We do not report race/ethnicity data for the United States throughout this report because of the sample size.

The data reported here are weighted. The weights for the U.S. take into account gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, education, household income, household with Internet access, and primary language. For the Texas data, the weights take into account gender, age, race/ethnicity, metropolitan status, education, household income, and primary language.

For this report, we computed cross-tabulations comparing the question of interest with the above demographic variables and partisanship. Note that for partisanship, we include leaners as partisans in the data and exclude those who do not have any party leaning from the analysis. When the Rao-Scott chi-square statistic was statistically significant ($p < .05$), we report the data in text, otherwise we do not.

The full questionnaire and additional information about the survey are available at TXMediaAndSociety.org