



# AUSTIN FUTURES 2019

Photo credit: Keith Shuley

## Why Equity Matters for Sustainability: Towards a More Equitable Austin

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An Annual Report by the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators



The University of Texas at Austin  
RGK Center for Philanthropy  
and Community Service  
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs



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Photo credit: Don Mason

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The data in this report and throughout the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators (A<sup>2</sup>SI) is a compilation of secondary data metrics and the results of primary data collected through a telephone-based community survey. Every data point in the report has a footnote that corresponds to the source of the information. For example, footnote 1 is the most frequently used source for the report: the Austin Community Survey (administered and analyzed by the RGK Center on a biennial basis, most recently August 2018) and footnote 2 is the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau). All data sources can be found in Appendix A. Even though the results presented in this issue brief are drawn from a scientifically rigorous sample of residents in the six-county Austin area, it is important to note that each data point has a small margin of error. Small numeric differences across groups of residents may not be statistically meaningful.

This report includes only a small subsection of indicators and data for each domain. Over 100 updated secondary data and primary survey indicators can be found at the A<sup>2</sup>SI<sup>2</sup> website, [www.austinindicators.org](http://www.austinindicators.org).

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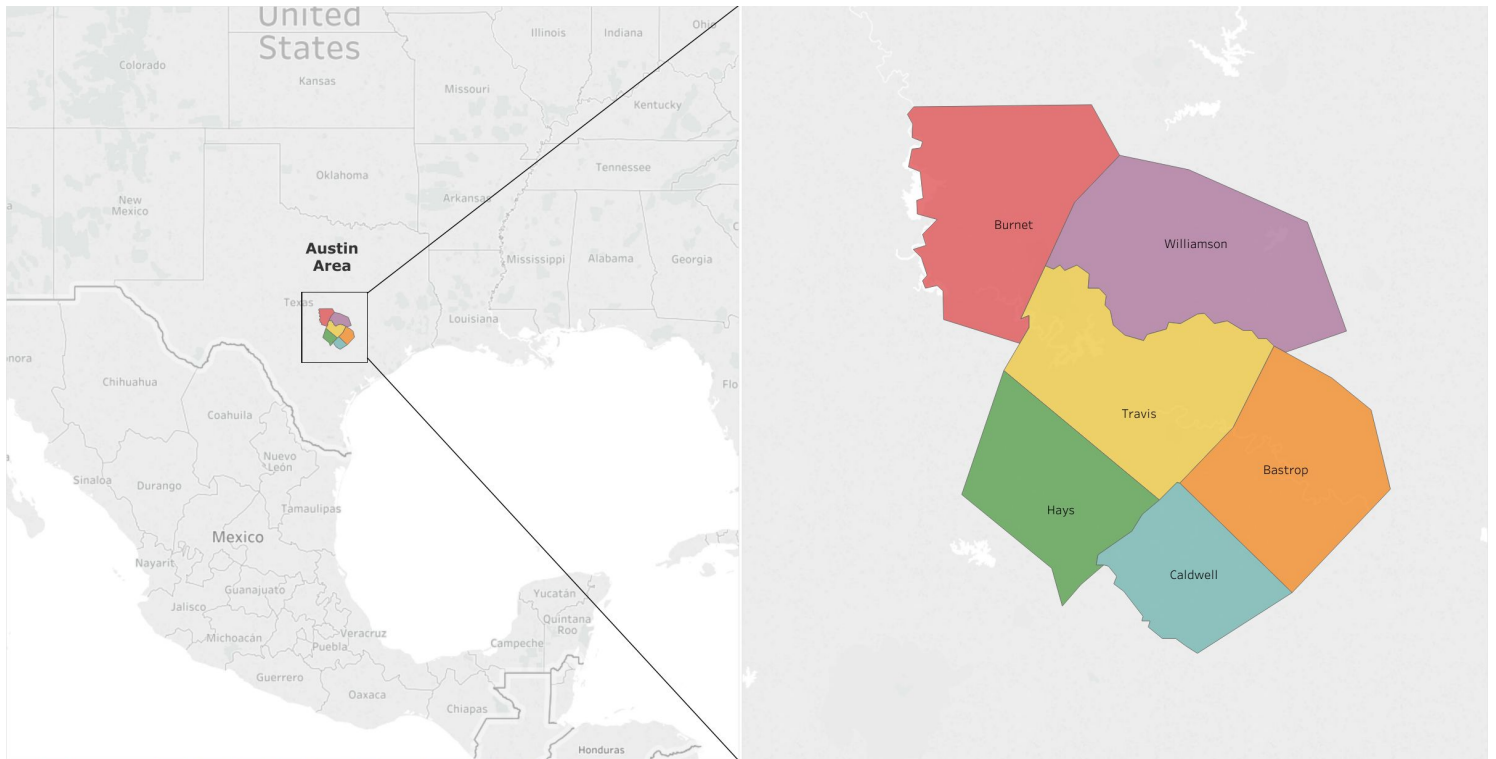
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# The Austin Area

Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties



## U.S. News Unveils the 2018 Best Places to Live

Austin, Texas, takes the No. 1 spot for the second consecutive year.

April 10, 2018, at 12:01 a.m.

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. News & World Report, the global authority in rankings and consumer advice, today unveiled the [2018 Best Places to Live](#) in the United States. The new list ranks the country's 125 largest metropolitan areas based on affordability, job prospects and quality of life.

[Austin, Texas](#), took the No. 1 spot for the second year in a row, with Colorado Springs, Colorado, taking the No. 2 spot, bumping [Denver, Colorado](#), to No. 3. Des Moines, Iowa, moved up 5 spots to No. 4, with [Fayetteville, Arkansas](#), rounding out the top five for the second year in a row.

# Statesman

Austin is America's best boom town, list says

## Study: Commuters driving into Austin face worst traffic in U.S.

February 22, 2017 (Filed in: Austin)



Flash-hour traffic flows through downtown Austin along I-35 heading towards the Riverside overpass and showing the Lady Bird Lake bridge Thursday morning, July 19, 2015.

The New York Times

TheUpshot

URBAN STUDIES

Seattle Climbs but Austin Sprawls:  
The Myth of the Return to Cities

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## Austin 'Cost To Live Comfortably' Increase Is Highest In Nation

Cities with biggest 'comfortability' cost hikes aside from capital include Arlington, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.

By [Tony Cantu](#) | Dec 10, 2016 4:40 am ET



AUSTIN, TEXAS — With the expense of holiday gift

Indicators Project History: two decades of work...

**1987:** Brundtland Commission report, "Our Common Future", popularized the term "Sustainable Development".

**1996:** Early conversations emerge in Austin regarding community sustainability indicators.

**1998:** A survey distributed in the grocery bags of HEB customers used to identify key indicators for the Austin area.

**1999:** Center for Sustainable Development at the University of Texas School of Architecture launches the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators project (CTSIP).

**2000:** Inaugural Indicators Report is released that includes Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties. Primary data is collected by the first CTSIP phone survey consists of 21 questions on 7 topics.

**2001:** CTSIP moves to Austin Community College and Jim Walker begins as Executive Director of the project. Second report is released.

**2002:** Third report is released.

**2004:** Fourth report released. Customer Research International, based in San Marcos, fields the survey for this report and continues to do so to this day.

**2006:** Fifth report released. Study area expands to include Bastrop and Caldwell counties.

**2008:** CTSIP leaves ACC and continues as an independent 501(c)3. Sixth report is released.

**2009:** Seventh report released. Burnet County is included to bring the counties in the study area to six.

**2010:** CTSIP returns to CSD at UT-Austin.

**2012:** Led by students at CSD, the eighth report is released.

**2015:** The RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs (UT-Austin) becomes the new home for the project.

**2016:** Project is renamed Austin Area Sustainability Indicators and the ninth report is released. The survey now includes 166 questions on 19 topics.

**2018:** Current report is released (tenth). Report diverges from past formats to take a "deep dive" on a specific issue. All of the indicators (charts, graphs, data points) remain available online.

# Austin Area Sustainability Indicators: An Introduction

Although the Austin Area frequently leads the nation on metrics of local economy and desirability, the reality of profound economic segregation and inequality limit the quality of life for too many residents.

The purpose of the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators (A<sup>2</sup>SI) program is to measure quality of life and sustainability trends and serve as the foundation for a systems approach to address the challenges in Austin and Central Texas (including Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties). With indicators spanning a broad range of topics - civic engagement, education and children, economy, environment, health, land use and mobility, public safety, and social equity - the project is a hub of information and analysis for the region.

The broad objectives of A<sup>2</sup>SI are best described by the categories (1) collect, (2) connect, and (3) catalyze. Collect refers to the "data" aspect of the project. Collecting, analyzing, and producing timely and salient reports on key issues in the region, and making the data publicly available, is the primary function of A<sup>2</sup>SI.

Yet, to actually be salient to key issues facing the region, it is critical to connect the indicators with key stakeholders across the region. Connect refers to this part of the program. To be successful, A<sup>2</sup>SI seeks to connect to key faculty and students at the LBJ School and across the forty acres of UT to elected officials and agency decision-makers in the City and surrounding counties; as well as key nonprofit and philanthropic leaders in the region. The program has demonstrated some key partnership successes, but must continue to expand its reach in the coming years.

The third component, catalyze, happens when partners leverage the data insights to create lasting impact in Austin and the surrounding region. To the degree that A<sup>2</sup>SI not only informs community impact initiatives but also measures impact through its research platform, the program will uniquely establish itself as a leading example across the nation.



# DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic indicators are critical to understanding the sustainability of an area as they highlight important population trends that shape policy, planning, and program implementation for the region. Indicators in this section include: population growth, density, distribution, housing composition and occupancy, age and ethnicity cohort populations and projects. Further data on these topics can be found at [www.austinindicators.org/demographics](http://www.austinindicators.org/demographics)

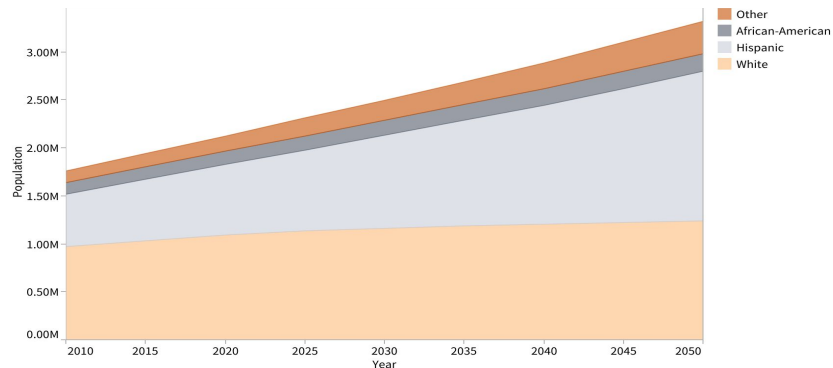


Figure 1. Austin Area population growth projections by race/ethnicity.<sup>3</sup>

Already one of the most diverse regions in the State, by 2020 the Austin Area will be a majority-minority region in which no ethnic group will exist as the majority of the region's population. Individuals with Hispanic backgrounds are forecasted to become the majority by 2040 and projected to increase to 50% of the population by 2050 (Figure 1). Residents of other race and ethnic categories will also increase, while the growth rate of white and African-American residents is projected to remain flat.

Although all counties in the Austin Area continue to grow at a significant rate (approximately 150 new people move to the Austin Area every day), the rate of growth has slowed over the past five years (Figure 2). For example, Travis County added 22,116 new residents in 2017, approximately 40% fewer new residents than Travis County added in 2011. Except for Hays and Caldwell County, the rate of growth has leveled off or declined in recent years.

Domestic migration patterns show that new Austin Area residents are moving from other Texas MSAs. New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago lead the out-of-state newcomers.

## MSAs with Most Migration to Austin-Roundrock, 2011-2015

Houston, TX	13,212
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	11,931
San Antonio, TX	9,484
Killeen-Temple, TX	3,190
New York-Newark, NY-NJ	3,096
Los Angeles, CA	2,509
Waco, TX	1,884
Chicago, IL-IN-WI	1,799
McAllen-Edinburg, TX	1,782
College Station, TX	1,749

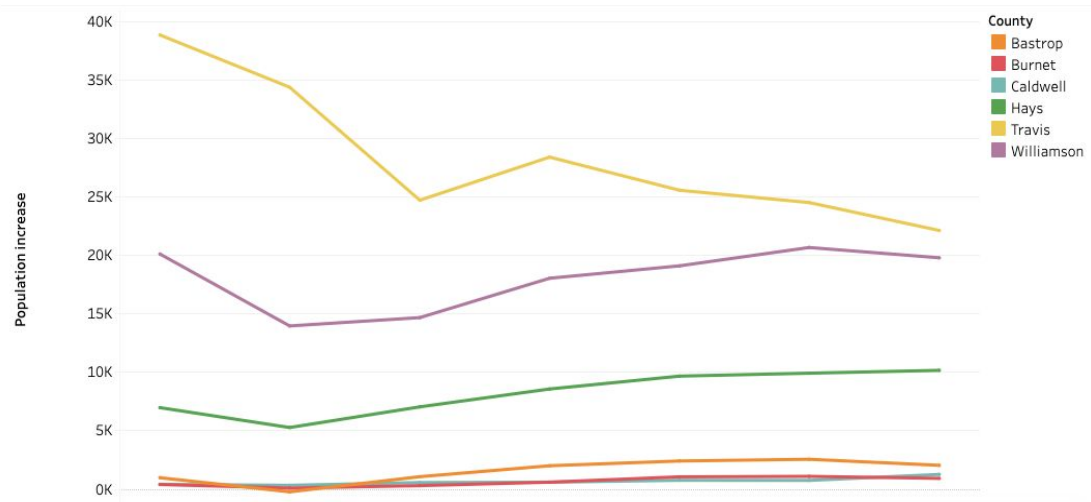


Figure 2. Population change by county, 2011-2017.<sup>3</sup>

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT** is broadly defined as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement is the platform for people to express their voice and to contribute to political, social, and cultural activities in the Austin Area. Generally, Austin performs well when compared to state and national trends, but disparities by income, race and ethnicity, and county persist. Additional information is available on the website for the indicators of civic participation, neighborliness, participation in the arts, and philanthropy and volunteerism.

Photo credit: Davidlohr Bueso

### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

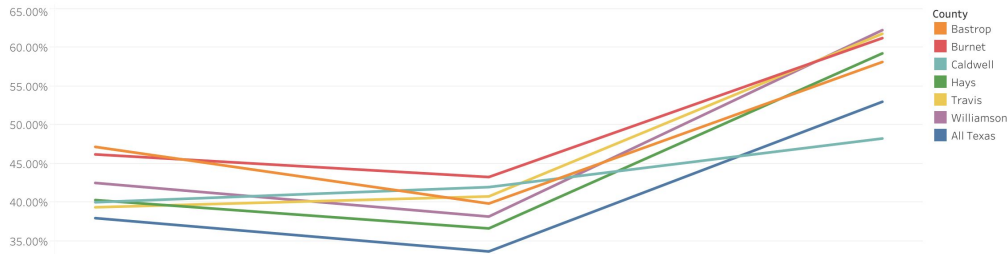


Figure 3. Voter turnout in midterm elections for the last three mid-term cycles, by county.<sup>4</sup>

Austin Area residents turned out to vote at a historically high rate for the 2018 midterm election. All counties in the Austin Area, except for Caldwell, had a turnout rate near or above 60%. The statewide turnout rate was 53%.

#### CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

In 2018, 68.2% of Austin Area residents report giving a minimum of \$100 to a charitable or political cause, religious or educational institution. This level of giving was higher than in previous years.

The percentage of people that report volunteering 5 or more hours (32.6%) is declining relative to past years.

### SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Those reporting having “something in common” with their neighbors is relatively stable over the past 15 years, although socio-demographic differences exist. On average, over 80% of Austin Area residents “trust their neighbors”.

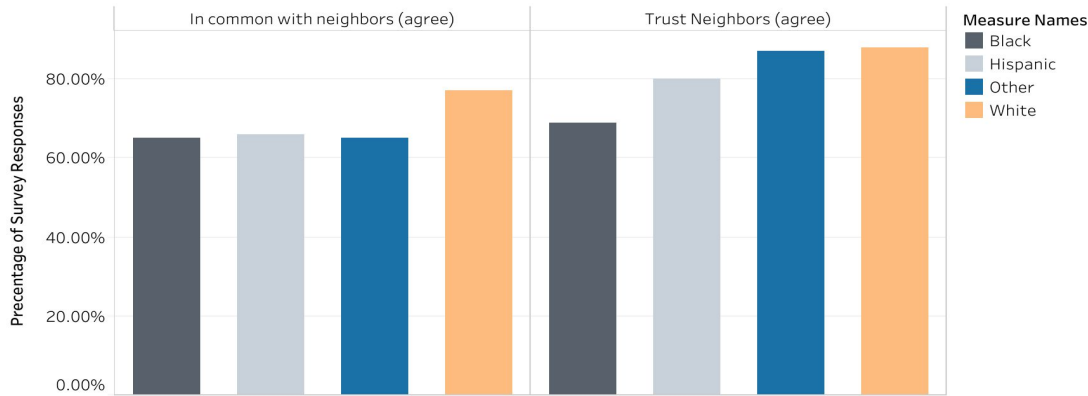


Figure 4. Perceptions of trust and commonality of neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT\*

\*Led by the RGK Center and using A<sup>2</sup>SI data, in collaboration with national and local civic and academic partners, an Austin Area Civic Health report was released in October of 2018. For more information visit: <https://rgkcenter.org/research/2018-greater-austin-civic-health-index>

Sustainability efforts can flourish if **ECONOMIC PROSPERITY** is distributed across sectors and socio-demographically diverse communities of a region. More than ever before, communities are actively involved in critically examining how their local economies work and how to plan and prepare for their economic future.

The broader set of economic indicators, available on the website, include: income, diversity of the economy, labor, exports, and entrepreneurship. In general, the Austin area has seen strong economic growth and increasing median incomes since the 2008 recession.

## Employment and Unemployment

The Austin Area economy remains robust, which is raising household income across the board. The most recent 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey found that 56.7% report household income above \$60,000, a 7% increase from 2010.

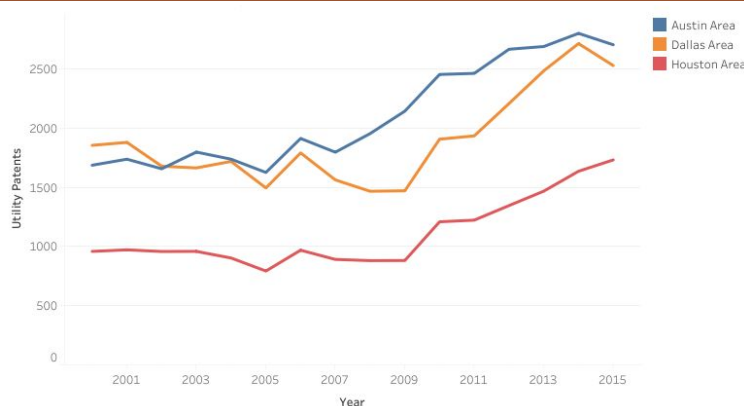


Figure 5. Utility patents filed in the Austin Area.<sup>5</sup>

The entrepreneurial spirit persists with increasing numbers of households reporting self-employment income. Over 14% of households report self-employment income; this is higher than Houston MSA (12%) and Dallas MSA (11.3%).

The steady increase in patent activity since 2010, despite the the dip from 2014 to 2015, suggests a solid base of innovation in the Austin Area. In 2015, 2705 patents were filed locally, more than in either Dallas or Houston.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics report the Austin Area unemployment rate of 2.7% for November of 2018, yet the longer term averages from the Census Bureau reveal interesting patterns. Travis and Williamson counties show broader decreasing patterns of unemployment (Figure 6). By contrast, Bastrop and Burnet unemployment rates are persistent or growing.. Disparities in unemployment across race/ethnicity categories continue to exist.

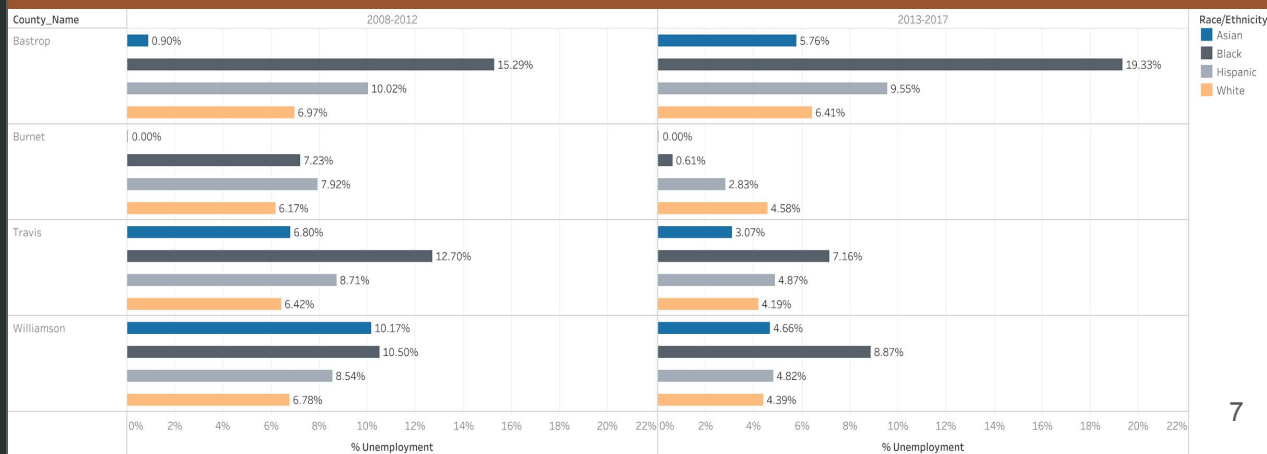


Figure 6. Unemployment by county and race/ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>

EDUCATION is a key driver of sustainability, both for individuals and for regions.

The benefits of education include higher productivity, higher wages, better health outcomes, and less need for publicly funded economic assistance. Indicators in this area include child care access, child care quality, higher education, school equity, school performance, and school quality. Further information and data can be found at [www.austinindicators.org/education](http://www.austinindicators.org/education).

Photo credit: Bodgar Mohora

## Schools: Equity

On most High School campuses in the Austin Area, bilingual and economically disadvantaged students graduate at significantly lower rates than the campus means as a whole. However, the gaps have narrowed over the past five years and in 2017 African American students graduated at a higher rate than white students.

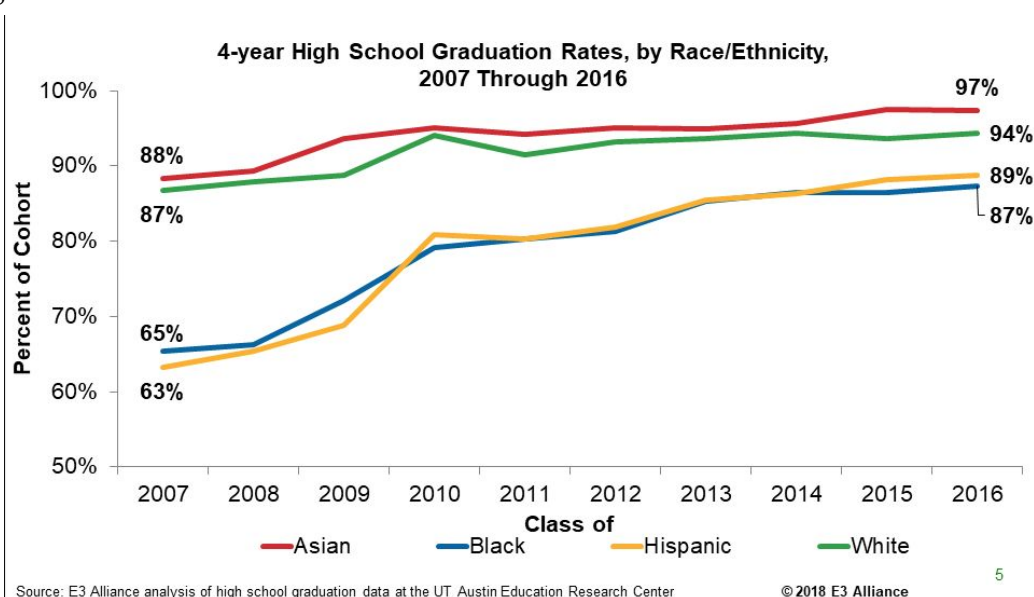


Figure 7. High school graduation rates by race and ethnicity.<sup>6</sup>

On average, there is about a 10% gap between the graduation and persistence rates for the ethnicity with the highest graduation rate (Asian) and the ethnicity with the lowest graduation rate (Black). In 2018, 30% of Austin Area residents strongly agreed that the public school system could better support students to ensure they perform well and graduate, although specific strategies were not discussed.\*

## Survey: The Public School System Isn't Working

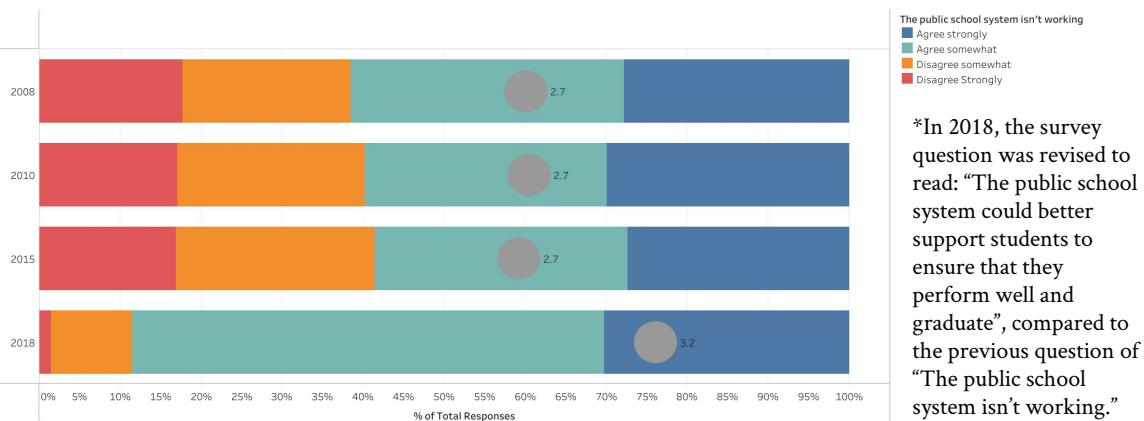


Figure 8. Austin Area perceptions of the efficacy of public school system.<sup>1</sup>

In its original form, sustainability was closely associated with the maintenance of **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**. Environmental sustainability is interdependent with quality of life and connected to outcomes in many of the other indicator areas. Questions of economy, mobility, or any other sustainability dimension are dependent on a healthy and functioning natural environment. Additional information available on the website includes air quality, energy use, hazardous waste, solid waste and recycling, water consumption and water quality.

Photo Credit: Keith Shuley

## Water Demand and Projections

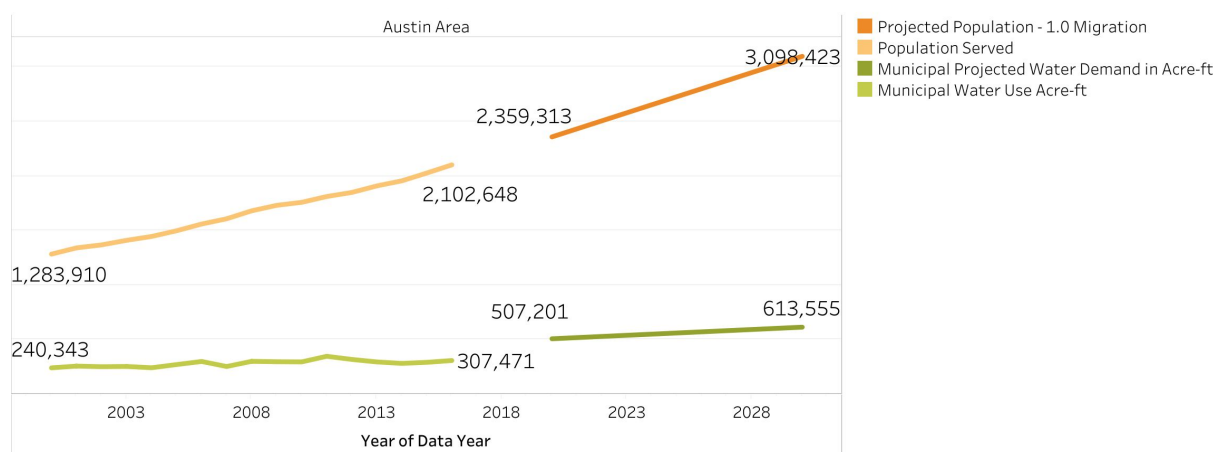


Figure 9. Population, water demand, and future projections <sup>7</sup>

Municipal demand for water is dramatically greater than all other uses combined. The combination of population growth and changing climatic patterns is potentially problematic for the Austin Area. By 2030, municipal demand is expected to double to service a projected population of three million residents.

In 2018, 58% of survey respondents noted that “we have enough water, but not much extra”. Residents are slightly less concerned about water in the future (25 years from now), than they were in 2015. In 2018, reservoir levels reached unprecedented levels after major rain events.

A significantly larger portion of residents, 32%, responded with a 10 to the question: “On a scale of 1-10, how concerned are you about climate change?”. This is a 10% increase from 2015 and nearly double from 2010. The percentage of people that answered with a 1 remained roughly the same, 11%, as compared to 2015. The data in Figure 10 shows a clear trends of increasing concern.

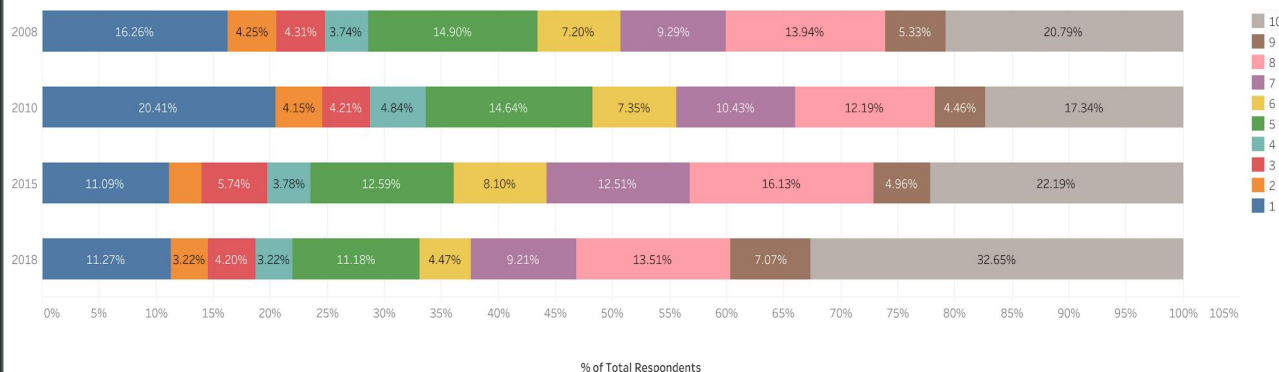


Figure 10. Concern about climate change. <sup>1</sup>

Promoting healthier communities is enhanced by data on the **HEALTH STATUS** of the population and information on a range of factors that can **INFLUENCE HEALTH OUTCOMES**. The health section identifies critical trends in the health and well-being of Austin Area residents. For a sustainable Austin Area, people's basic personal needs, such as health and health care, must be met. For more information, the website includes additional indicators on health access, mental health, and physical health.

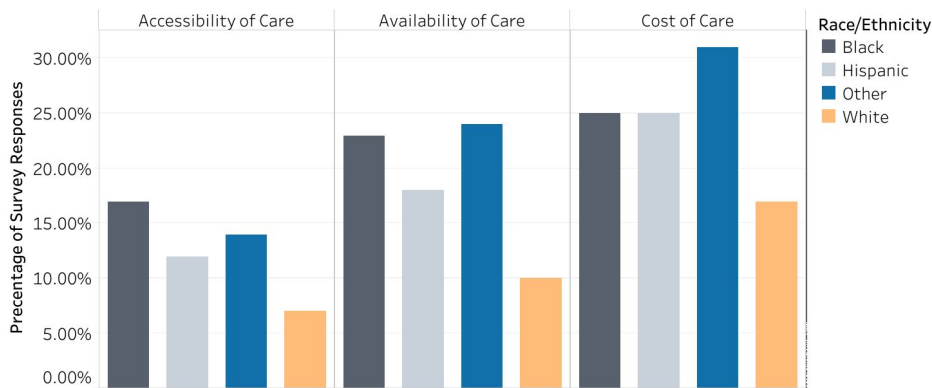


Figure 11. Barriers to health care, by race and ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 11 reports on answers to the question “I did not get medical care when I needed it because of ...

- Accessibility
- Availability
- Cost

Figure 11 shows survey response answers to barriers to health care. Approximately 22% of black, 18% of hispanic, 11% of white, and 23% of other race/ethnicity report some kind of barrier to health care.

In 2018, the Austin Area Community Survey asked about quality of life. Thirty-one percent of Austin Area residents rate their quality of life as an 8. The ratings generally improve across higher socioeconomic status categories. Similar to years past, Hays, Williamson and Travis counties have higher percentages of people reporting excellent and very good health.

Bastrop and Caldwell counties continue to have fewer primary care physicians than the state as a whole, or other counties in the Austin Area. The state and federal government have identified Bastrop and Caldwell as having an acute shortage of primary health care personnel (Figure 12).

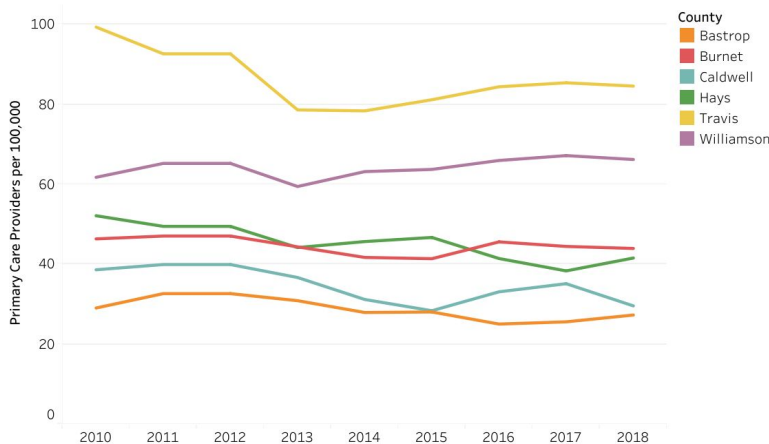


Figure 12. Ratio of primary care providers per 100,000 people.<sup>8</sup>

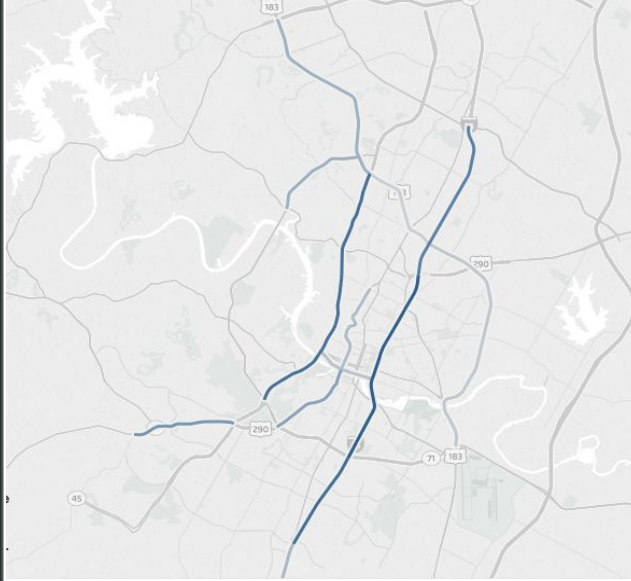


Figure 12. Congested roadways in the Austin Area.<sup>9</sup>

The Austin Area is home to 14 of the most congested roadways in the State of Texas. This includes three sections of I-35 that run through the City of Austin: downtown (ranked 3rd), south of downtown (19th), and north of downtown (36th). The estimated annual congestion costs of these three sections alone is over \$315,000,000.

54% disagree that they can travel around the metro area in a reasonable amount of time and nearly 50% of Austin Area residents agree that “A better commute or more travel options would significantly impact my quality of life”.

The **LAND USE AND MOBILITY** of a region reflects both quality of life and economic well-being. Longer commute times, congestion, and commuter stress can be indicative of a spatial mismatch between jobs and housing – a phenomenon that can especially impact low-income households, as their geographic mobility may be limited. Key indicators include: commuting, density of new development, public open space, rural land, and vehicle miles traveled. More information at [www.austinindicators.org/land-use-mobility](http://www.austinindicators.org/land-use-mobility)

Photo Credit: [Zack Stutts](#)

A growing percentage of Austin Area residents disagree that “we have plenty of room for growth”. Residents who live in Rural and Rural changing to Suburban areas were more likely to agree with the statement, however, at approximately 47%.

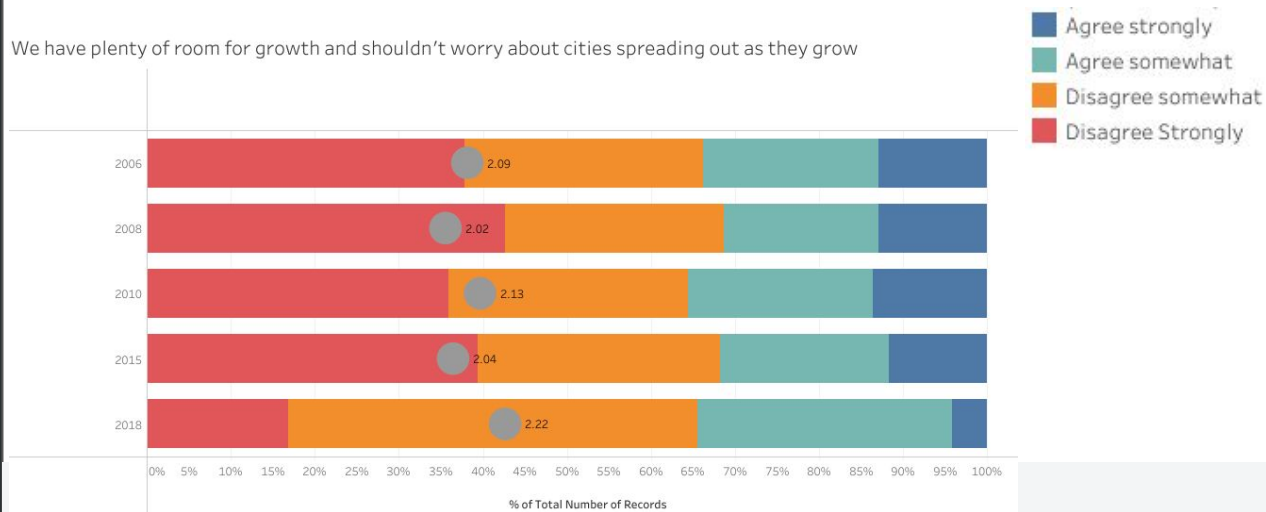


Figure 13. Concern regarding urban growth patterns.<sup>1</sup>

**PUBLIC SAFETY** indicators, such as crime rates, have important social and economic implications for the development of communities and regions. They can impact perceptions of resident safety and community involvement, and consequently demographic dynamics of a region. Crime and the fear of crime impose costs on residents and the sustainability of a region. Details on community safety and safe families can be found at [www.austinindicators.org/publicsafety](http://www.austinindicators.org/publicsafety)

Photo Credit: [ntumulac](#)

# PUBLIC SAFETY

The Uniform Crime Rate (including both violent and non-violent crimes) in the Austin Area has decreased since 2000, particularly in Travis County.

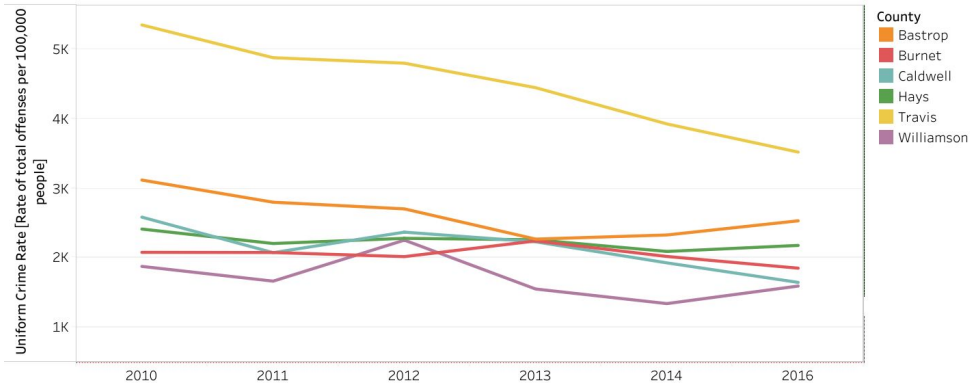


Figure 14. Uniform Crime Rates for the Austin Area.<sup>10</sup>

Although the highest of the six-county region, Travis County is at an all-time low of 3,500 crimes per 100,000 residents in 2016. Williamson County has the lowest rate at 1,597 crimes per 100,000 residents, although this is a 16% increase from 2014.

## PERCENTAGE OF ARRESTEES VS PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION

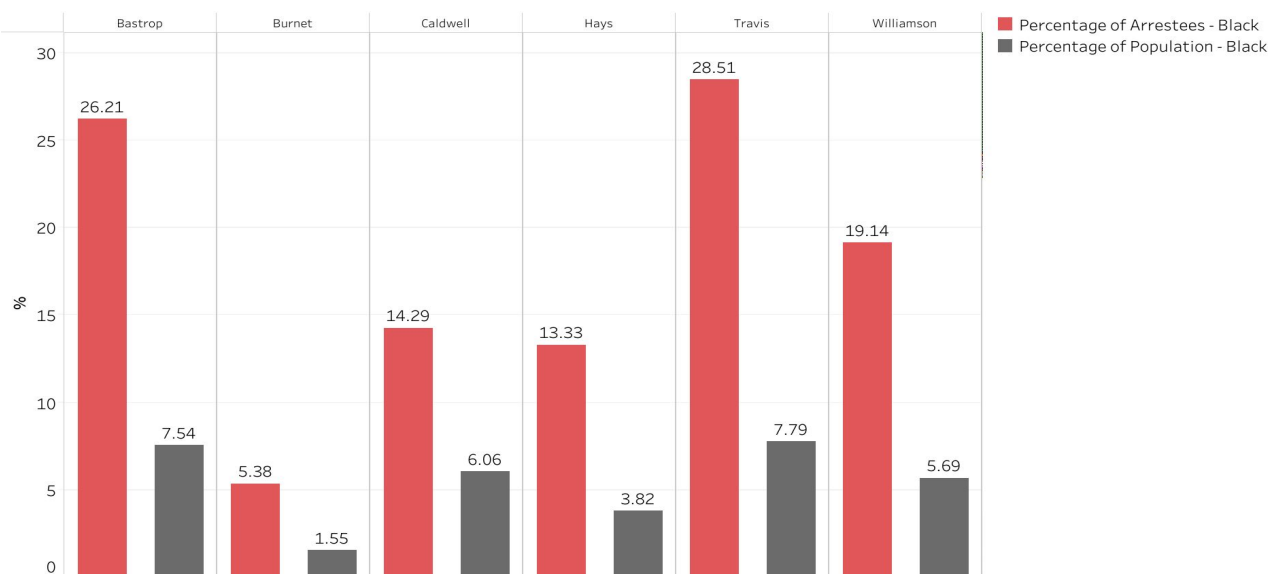


Figure 14. Percentage of arrestees compared to percentage of population in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

Although African American residents make up only 7.79% of residents in Travis County, they account for 28.51% of all arrestees in 2017. This represents a percentage uptick over the past three years (26.27% in 2014). Similar increasing percentages are being seen in Caldwell County and Bastrop County. Burnet, Hays, and Williamson are roughly the same.

# SOCIAL EQUITY

## A DEEP DIVE

### CONNECTING SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL EQUITY:

A sustainable Austin Area is an equitable one. The notion of Just Sustainability seeks to ensure a better quality of life for all, now, and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, while living sustainably within the environment (Agyeman et. al, 2003). In recent years, concepts such as environmental justice (e.g., the unequal impact of the water crisis in Flint, Michigan) and climate justice (e.g., the acknowledgment that some households, cities, or entire counties are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than others) have greatly informed conversations on sustainability. This deep dive on social equity in the 2018 Austin Futures report connects the data between sustainability and equity in the Austin Area.

### HOW DOES SOCIAL EQUITY CONNECT TO HOUSING?

Mapping the distribution of vulnerability – the characteristics of a person, household, or neighborhood, and their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from an economic, social, or environmental disturbance – has become an increasingly critical tool for sustainability (Eakin & Luers, 2006). The spatial pattern of demographic change in Austin is striking as neighborhoods surrounding downtown Austin are economically ascendant and vulnerable populations, that for decades have lived in these neighborhoods, are being displaced. Substantial housing price appreciation, driven by economic and housing market forces, is fundamentally impacting Austin Area communities, people of color, and vulnerable households.

**HEALTH:** Disadvantaged social groups systematically experience worse health conditions or greater health risks, much of which are a function of the environmental and social contexts.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY:** The environmental conditions that people are exposed to are largely dependent on location. Unsurprisingly, those most subject to pollution and negative environmental conditions are residents of economically marginalized communities.

**NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION:** Neighborhood cohesion and public safety can vary drastically across geography. Both contribute to the development of social capital which improves collective action, enhances community information flow, and reduces the likelihood of defensive behaviors.

**ECONOMIC SECURITY:** Access to opportunities and social mobility are greatly affected by economic equity and security which is severely limited for those who experience a high housing cost burden.

**HOUSING:** Many Austin Area residents are spending more than a third of their income on housing and many are vulnerable to displacement, especially minority neighborhoods in East Austin.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SOLUTIONS:** There are many important and ongoing conversations around equity in Austin. Collective impact requires an understanding of the issues (data) and building a structure for collective action. Get involved today!

# EQUITABLE HEALTH OUTCOMES

## Social Equity Deep Dive

A health disparity/inequality exists when a disadvantaged social group—such as the poor, racial/ethnic minorities, women, or other groups who have persistently experienced social disadvantage or discrimination—systematically experience worse health or greater health risks than more advantaged social groups (Braveman 2006).



Frequently, health disparities exist in the Austin Area between wealthier, white residents and lower income, minority residents. Many health disparities, particularly those that are driven by social determinants such as affordable housing, can be shaped by policies at the city or county level.

### HEALTH and ACCESS TO INSURANCE

Black residents in the Austin Area report not being able to get medical care because of the availability of care (e.g. office wasn't open, couldn't get time off work, etc.) at a much higher rate than other race/ethnicities. Relatedly, nearly 53% of residents making less than \$55,000 a year do not receive paid sick leave benefits, and rural residents report limited access to specialty medical care because of cost, availability, or accessibility. When considering economically disadvantaged households already struggling to make ends meet, challenges such as limited access to specialty care or not being able to get off of work to receive medical care compound the affordability crisis. Although access to health insurance has improved since the passing of the Affordable Care Act, many Austin Area residents still go without it (Figure 15). High uninsured rates persist in Caldwell County, as well as among Hispanic and Black residents.

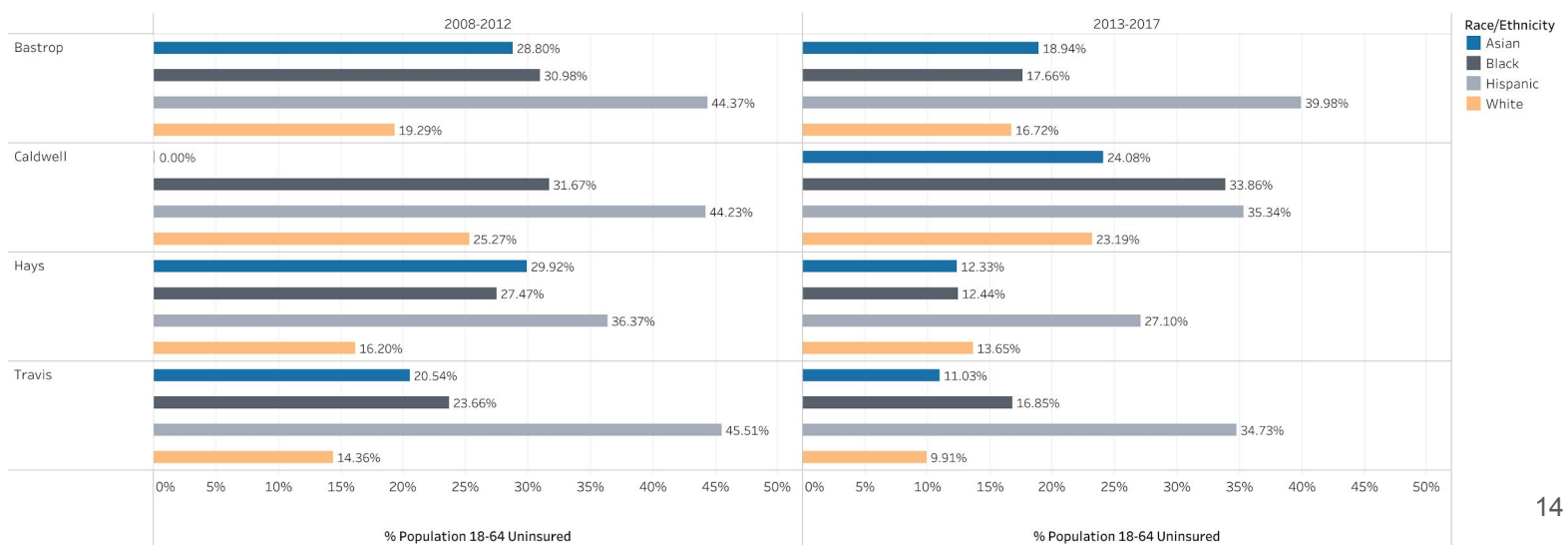


Figure 15. Access to insurance across counties by race /ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>

# ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY

## Social Equity Deep Dive

Photo Credit: Austin EcoNetwork

### TOXIC RELEASES

Since the 1980s, environmental justice research continues to support the claim that communities of color and low-income people are disproportionately exposed to environmental toxins through the siting of hazardous and toxic waste facilities in and near their communities. The EPA's environmental justice screening and mapping tool visualizes the connection between the siting of hazardous and toxic waste and census blocks that are predominantly minority race/ethnic communities.<sup>11</sup>

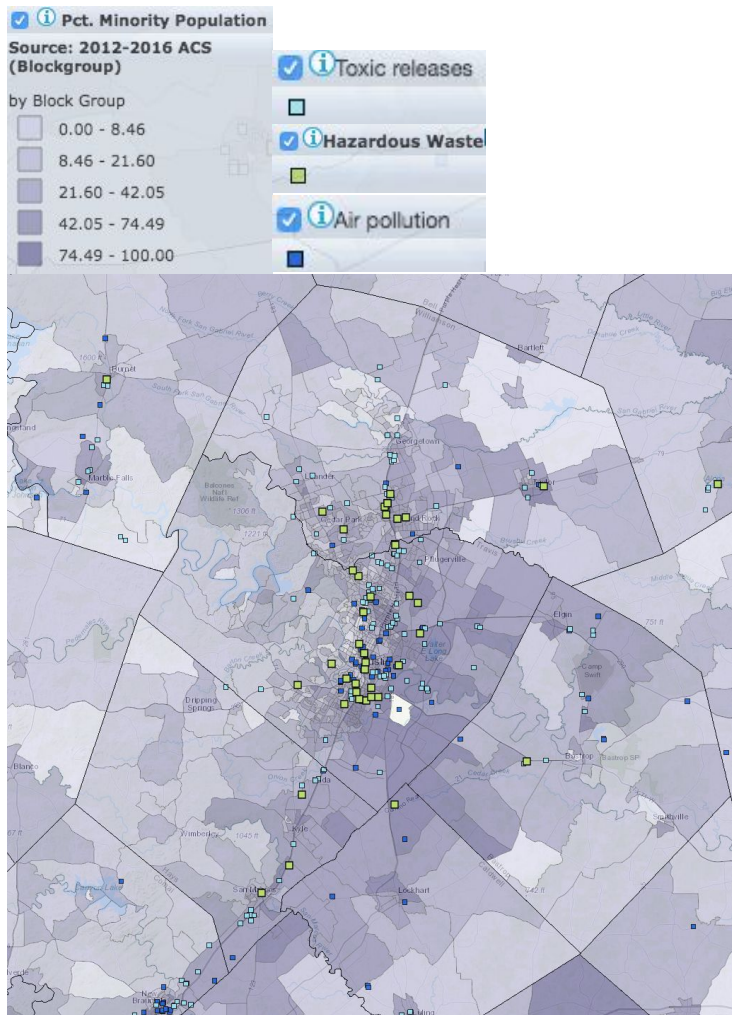


Figure 16. Map of toxic release, hazardous waste, and air pollution by percent minority census block.<sup>11</sup>

Environmental Equity means that no population is forced to bear an unequal share of negative human health or environmental impacts of pollution or environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations (Carolan 2016).

### ACCESS TO GREENSPACE

Austin Area residents have many reasons to be outside with Nature Preserves and State Parks such as McKinney Falls, Emma Long, Reimers Ranch, and Barton Creek Greenbelt nearby. Perhaps not surprisingly, nearly one in five (21%) of Austin Area residents report visiting or passing through outdoor greenspace 6-7 days a week.<sup>1</sup> However, the geographical distribution of greenspace and access to greenspace is not equal. Twenty-five percent of black residents report not having access to nature or greenspace in their neighborhood as compared to 8% of white residents.<sup>1</sup>

### ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

Our transportation options matter for human health and the environment, and an environmental equity perspective helps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse effects, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income populations.

In the Austin Area, nearly 70% of black residents say that more travel options would significantly impact their quality of life (with 62% of hispanic and 42% of white residents saying the same).<sup>1</sup>

# NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION

## SOCIAL EQUITY DEEP DIVE



### NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION

Social capital refers to the social networks and the norms of trust and reciprocity that come with frequent social interaction in neighborhoods and communities (Putnam, 2000). Social capital improves collective action, enhances information flow across the community, and reduces the likelihood of defensive behaviors, such as avoiding going for walks at night. An important dimension of social capital is neighborhood cohesion.

Within the past several years, a considerable body of research has focused on the importance of neighborhood cohesion for influencing a wide range of outcomes. The rationale is that neighborhood cohesion, as well as other constructs of social capital – interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity, social connectedness, and social networks – foster community and social participation. Similar to other kinds of “capital”, disparities in social capital exist.

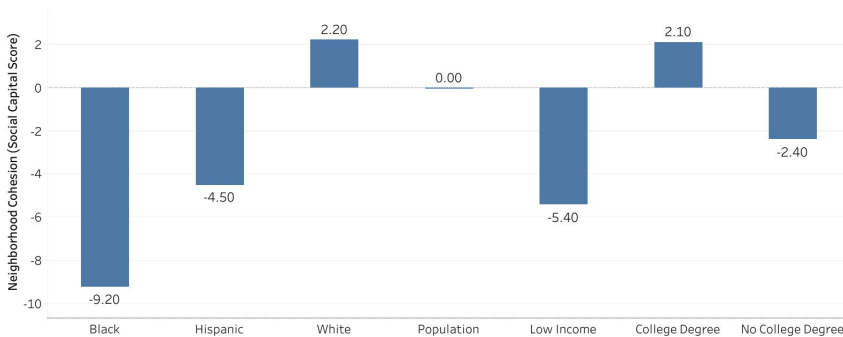


Figure 16. Disparities in neighborhood cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

In the Austin Area, race/ethnicity, income, and education are important and significant factors correlated with neighborhood cohesion and social capital. Figure 16 illustrates statistically significant disparities along race/ethnicity, education, and income categories. The figure above reports a standardized score of “neighborhood cohesion” as a component of a social capital.<sup>1</sup>

### SAFETY

There is a strong relationship between neighborhoods with high social capital, crime, and perceptions of public safety. On the whole, the percentage of Austin Area residents that report there are areas they are afraid to walk during the day or at night is declining. In 2018, 16.8% report that they do not feel safe walking at night in contrast to roughly 21% in 2010 and 2015. However, approximately 20% of black residents and 18% of Hispanic residents report this.

Moreover, 62% of all hate crimes that occurred between 2004 and 2014 were motivated by racial prejudice, of which 55% were targeted towards someone of Black or African-American descent.<sup>10</sup> Approximately one-fifth (21%) of all hate crimes targeted people of the LGBTQ community. The majority of hate crimes were committed by individuals of White racial background.



Photo Credit: Elyssa Dravis

## LIVING WAGE

Economic security is grounded in earning a living wage that is adequate to support the basic needs of everyone in the household. For all household scenarios, the living wage is significantly higher than minimum wage, and the living wage necessary for the Austin MSA is higher than in Texas as a whole (Figure 17). When asked if household income is adequate to support the basic needs of the household, 32% of black residents disagreed (compared to 19% of Hispanic and 13% of white respondents). Training for better jobs is one avenue to increase household income.

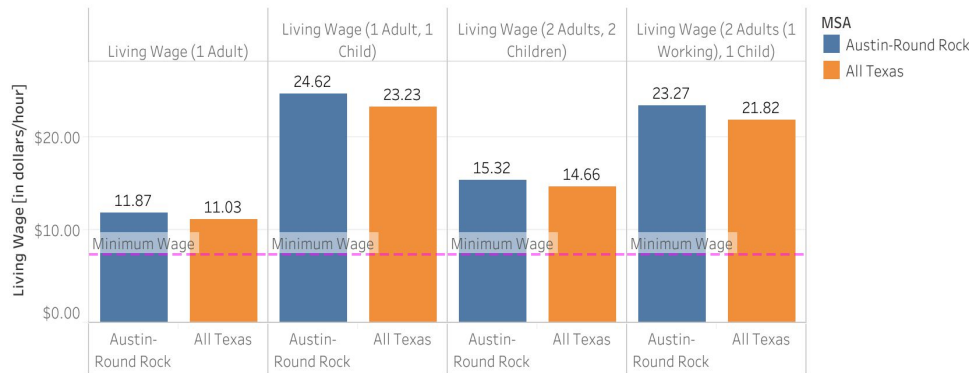


Figure 17. Living wage calculations for various household scenarios.<sup>13</sup>

**ECONOMIC SECURITY**, according to the International Labor Organization of the United Nations, is composed of basic social security, defined by access to basic needs infrastructure pertaining to health, education, dwelling, information, social protection and work-related security.

Economic equity is understood as the pursuit of equal opportunities and the avoidance of severe deprivation. Equity is not the same as equality in incomes or in any other specific outcome. It is the quest for a situation in which personal effort, preferences, and initiative—rather than family background, race or gender—account for the opportunities for prosperity. Economic equity and security greatly affect access to opportunities and social mobility. The high housing cost burden borne by most Austin Area residents exacerbates economic inequality.

## TRAINING FOR BETTER JOBS

The perception of the availability for quality education, professional development or training for jobs has remained roughly the same between 2008 and 2018, although a higher percentage of people (57%) view this kind of training as “usually available”, rather than “very available” than in past years<sup>1</sup>. A higher percentage of black (26%) and Hispanic (19%) residents don’t believe the kind of training for the kind of job they’d like to have is available, as compared to other race/ethnicity categories.<sup>1</sup>

# ECONOMIC SECURITY

## A DEEP DIVE

### AFFORDABILITY

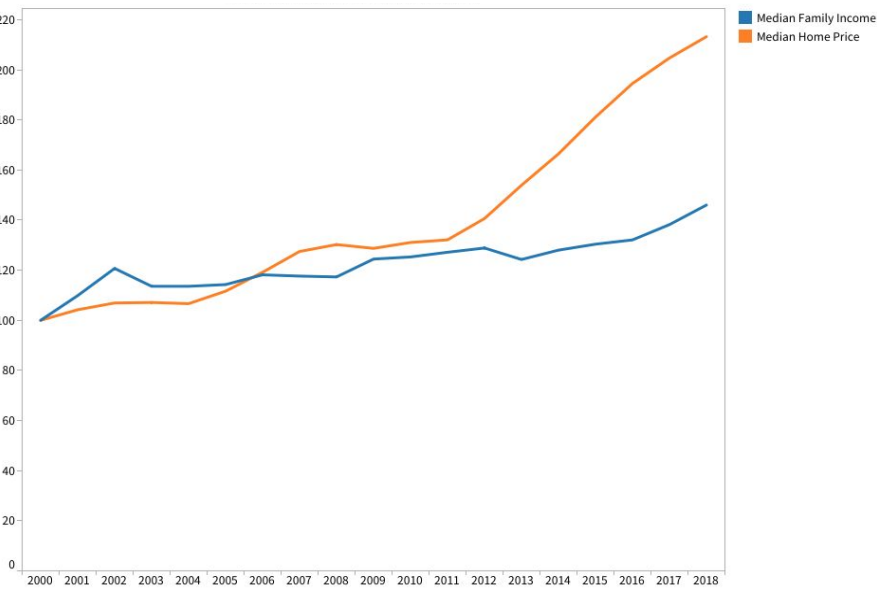


Figure 18. Median family income vs. median home price.<sup>14, 15</sup>

### Median Home Price v Median Family Income

Economic security and cost of living are frequently the first two indicators that come to mind when we think about inequality. In the Austin Area, vast and growing disparities exist in income and housing. Starting in 2011, the median home price started significantly outpacing median family income.

This dynamic has a displacement effect that moves lower income, frequently households below the poverty line, outside of the City of Austin and into surrounding suburbs. As figure 19 illustrates, the poverty rate in Manor has grown by more than 400% since 2009, poverty in Bastrop has doubled since 2012, and the poverty rate in San Marcos is 19% as of 2016. All the while, poverty in the City of Austin is declining.

The Austin Area has experienced a precipitous shift from poverty in the City of Austin to poverty in suburban communities over the past decade. The number of families living in poverty has declined in the City of Austin, yet surrounding communities such as Manor, Bastrop, and San Marcos have seen increases.

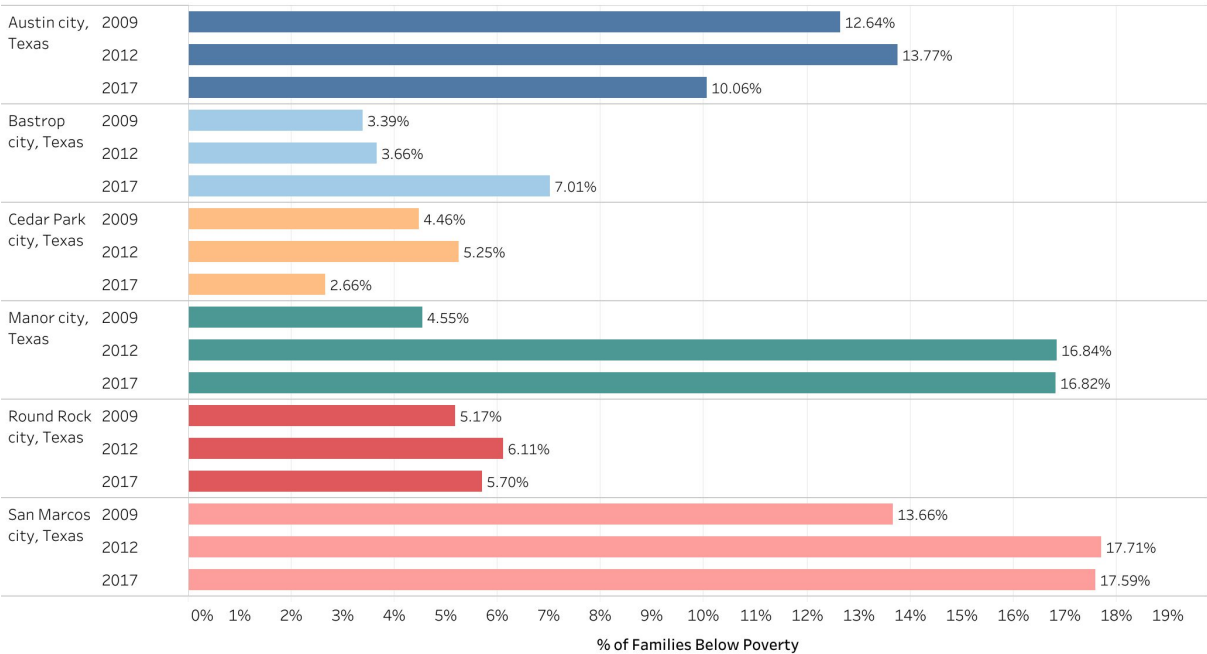


Figure 19. Poverty in the suburbs.<sup>2</sup>

# HOUSING

Housing is generally considered affordable and sustainable if a person spends no more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of their income on their rent or mortgage. As Figure 19 below illustrates, the housing stock is increasingly composed of units above \$250,000.

## AFFORDABILITY AND DISPLACEMENT

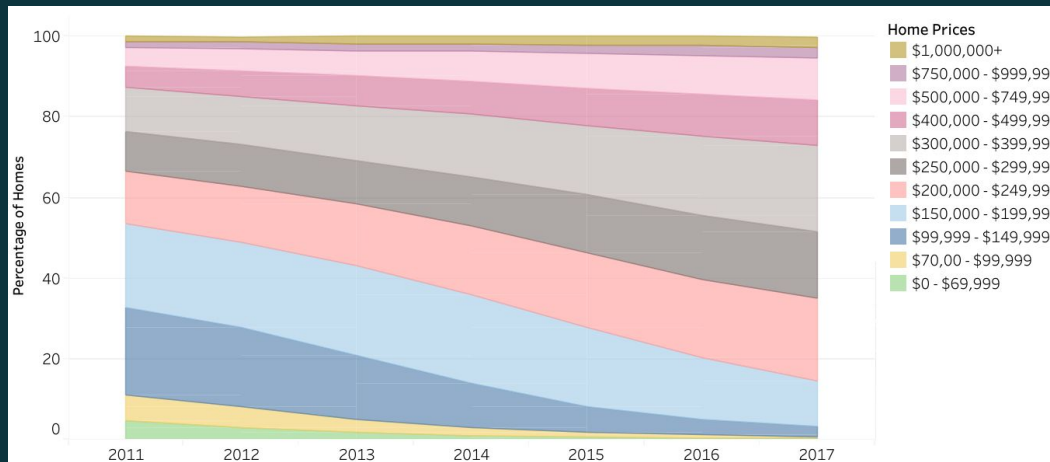


Figure 19. Home prices in the Austin-Round Rock MSA.<sup>14</sup>

### Most Vulnerable Census Tracts (2016)

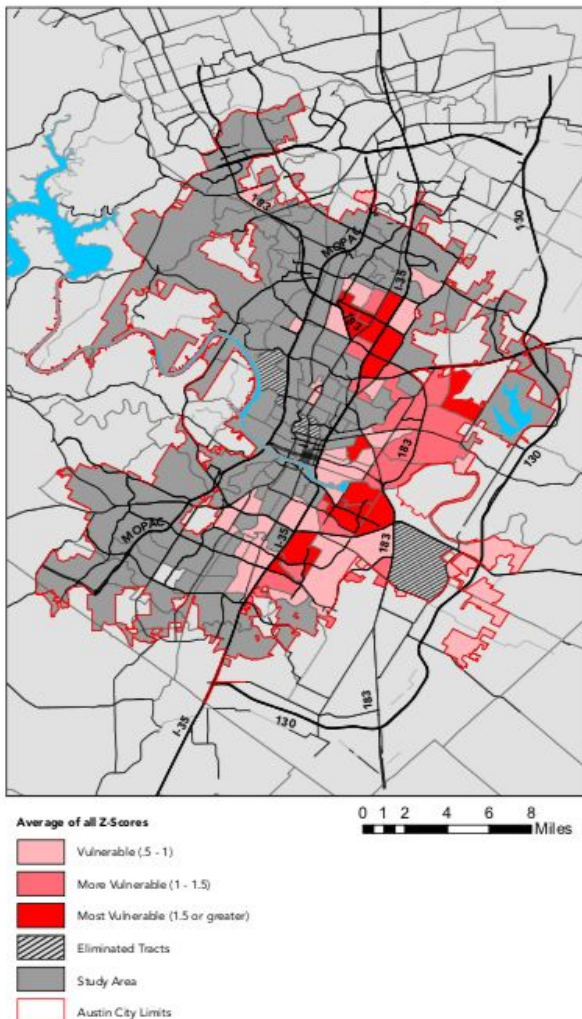


Figure 19. Census tracts vulnerable to gentrification in Austin.<sup>16</sup>

## Vulnerability

Housing continues to become unaffordable for most average Austin Area residents. Illustrated in Figure 19, the proportion of housing stock priced at or under \$300,000 has decreased by 20% since 2011.

Lower-income residents are being displaced at increasing rates, and the physical character of lower income neighborhoods is being rapidly transformed, mostly through the upgrading of its housing stock. Residents can no longer afford the rising rents and property values that result from these changes and are being forced farther and farther from city centers where access to amenities such as public transportation, education and workforce training opportunities, and employment are higher.

A recent study in the Community and Regional Planning program at UT-Austin identified census tracts in Austin most vulnerable to displacement (Way, Mueller, and Wegmann 2018). The map to the left is a vulnerability index, constructed using communities of color, people older than 25 with no college degree, renters, households making at or below 80% of Median Family Income, and Households with children in poverty.



# CONCLUSIONS & RESOURCES

## SOCIAL EQUITY DEEP DIVE

Photo Credit: Elyssa Dravis

The Deep Dive focus on Social Equity for the 2019 Austin Futures Report was a strategic decision to highlight this important and timely issue in the Austin Area. As is true across the country, racial and economic inequality is a persistent challenge in the Austin Area with historical, systemic, and institutional roots. On the one hand, focusing on equity is part of the long-game as systemic and institutional change will require patience. On the other hand, policies and programs that address affordability and displacement pressure on vulnerable and marginalized communities are needed now. A few high level considerations: .

- Balance economic growth with equitable opportunities for prosperity. Understand how families living in poverty are moving to the suburbs and consider policies and practices that maintain economic growth and reduce racial economic inequality for economically marginalized communities across the region.
- Support integrated workforce development programs and dedicate resources to not only education and training opportunities but also wrap-around services such as physical and mental health, childcare, transportation and affordable housing.
- Consider neighborhood cohesion and social capital. Public policies should incentivize investments in our community - whether private, philanthropic, or public - to understand impacts to neighborhood cohesion. Improving social capital among underserved communities can have direct benefits across a wide range of outcomes.
- Tune in and connect. A range of ongoing conversations around equity in the Austin Area are happening now (see below). Collective impact requires an understanding of the issues (data) facilitate collective action. Get involved today!
  - City of Austin Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities. City of Austin.
  - Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin's Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It. Community and Regional Planning Program at University of Texas.
  - The Racial Wealth Divide in Austin. Prosperity Now, Austin Community Foundation, and JP Morgan Chase.

# ABOUT

## THE RGK CENTER and THE LBJ SCHOOL

The RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service prepares the next generation of nonprofit and philanthropic leaders through graduate education and research. Our research addresses pressing issues in philanthropy, nonprofit management, social entrepreneurship, and global civil society. We train students through our university-wide graduate program in nonprofit studies and we engage the world of practice through executive education programs tailored to the needs of seasoned professionals in the field. As you explore the RGK Center, you will see that our collective work is focused on helping the nonprofit leaders of today and tomorrow make informed and innovative contributions to the public good.

<https://rgkcenter.org/>

The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs draws on the legacy of its namesake to empower the next “get it done” generation of public servants.

<https://lbj.utexas.edu/>

## OUR SPONSORS

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## THE TEAM

The team shown above developed this report under the leadership of Dr. Patrick Bixler, an Assistant Professor of Practice at the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service in the LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT-Austin. Dr. Bixler leads the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators project. Samer Atshan, a Research Associate at the RGK Center involved with A<sup>2</sup>SI since 2016 led the data team supported by interns Madeleine Richter-Atkinson (University of Texas, 2019) and Nathan Weiser (Stanford University, 2018). Intern Whitney Garris (University of Texas, 2019) designed, contributed, and edited the report. Becca Bice, a graduate research assistant and first year MPAff student at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, has led outreach, engagement, and conversations regarding impact for this report and the broader project. Visiting Fellow to the RGK Center, Nan Zhu, has contributed to understanding the role of data, indicators, and impact in the nonprofit sector.

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## Appendix A

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