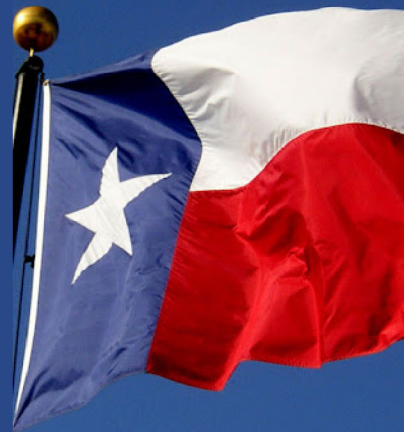




**VOTE**  
**2022**

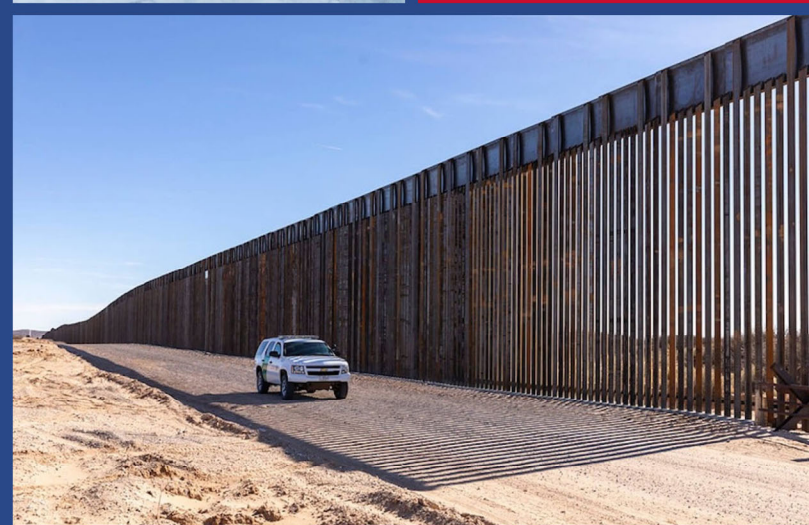


# Texas 2022 Elections & Issues

How Ready is Texas for  
Another Winter Storm?



**HOBBY**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON



## Texas 2022 Elections & Issues

### How Ready is Texas for Another Winter Storm?

The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texas registered voters to identify their preferences and opinions regarding 2022 primary candidates and policy issues. The survey was fielded between January 14 and 24, 2022 in English and Spanish, with 1,400 YouGov respondents who are registered to vote in Texas, resulting in a confidence interval of +/- 2.2%. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, presidential vote history, and education and are representative of the population of Texas registered voters.

The results of the survey will be presented in a series of reports. The [first report](#) examined the vote intention of Texans for the 2022 Republican and Democratic primaries and for the 2022 general election for governor. This report examines the opinions of Texans regarding the response by the Texas state government over the past year to the Winter Storm of 2021, their opinions about how well prepared we are to confront a new storm, how soon they expect a similar polar vortex to hit Texas, who they will blame if we experience a repeat of the February 2021 cold weather-induced power outage, and support for the expansion and reduction of the country's reliance on different energy sources.

### Executive Summary

Texans are split between those who believe (53%) and do not believe (47%) that the laws passed by the Texas Legislature during the 2021 legislative session improved the reliability of the state's electrical grid sufficiently to help ensure that Texans will not again suffer the loss of electrical power and heat as they did during the February 2021 winter storm.

Three-quarters (74%) of Texans believe that the owners of the state's electrical generation plants have adequately weatherized their facilities over the past year so that the loss of electrical power due to the failure of electricity generation plants is no longer a cause for concern. However, only 55% believe the upstream and midstream natural gas industry has carried out reforms such that Texans no longer have cause to be concerned about a loss of electrical power due to the failure of the natural gas industry to supply the electricity generation plants with fuel.

An absolute majority (57%) of Texans believe that Texas will experience another extended-period of below freezing temperatures similar to those in February 2021 at some point during the next three years, with 25% believing that Texas will experience a similar polar vortex either this year or next year. In contrast, nearly one-fifth (19%) of Texans believe that Texas will not have to again endure winter weather conditions similar to those of February 2021 for another 10 years or more.

If Texas were to experience another power outage due to cold weather similar to that in February 2021, Texans are clear on who they will hold responsible and who they will not hold responsible. More than two-thirds of Texans (70%) will hold the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) responsible if Texas experiences another winter-induced power outage, and nearly half (49%) will hold Texas

Governor Greg Abbott and the Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas (47%) responsible if they find themselves without heat and power amidst below-freezing temperatures again this year.

In contrast, in spite of its prominent role regulating the Texas oil and natural gas industry, only 17% of Texans will hold the Texas Railroad Commission responsible if they find themselves without electricity and heat again this winter, just as only 19% will hold the oil and natural gas exploration and production companies responsible. Similarly, Democratic state legislators (17%) and Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan (13%) would be held relatively harmless were the state to lose power amidst a polar vortex during 2022.

Nearly one quarter (24%) of Texans reported that how state elected officials responded to the February 2021 winter storm will be a very important factor influencing their voting decisions in 2022, with a third (32%) reporting that it would be one of several factors influencing their vote decision and 44% responding that how the officials responded to the February 2021 winter storm would not influence their vote decisions this year in any way.

More than one-half of Texans favor expanding U.S. reliance on five sources of energy, all of which are renewables. Nearly two-thirds (65%) favor expanding reliance on geothermal power plants and solar power plants while the expansion of hydrogen power plants (58%), wind turbine farms (56%) and hydroelectric dams (55%) also receive majority support. In contrast, a plurality of Texans favors reducing the country's reliance on coal mining and coal power plants (46%) and on hydraulic fracturing "fracking" for oil and natural gas (41%).

## **Survey Population Demographics**

Whites account for 52% of the survey population of registered voters, Latinos 32%, Blacks 12%, and others 4%. Women account for 53% of the population and men for 47%. In regard to generations, 36% of the population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomers (1946-1964) cohort, 26% to Generation X (Gen X) (1965-1980), and 38% to the combined Millennial (1981-1996) generation and Generation Z (1997-2012) cohort. The highest level of educational attainment of the respondents ranges from high school or less (29%), to some college or a two-year degree (32%) to a four-year degree or postgraduate degree (39%). Slightly more than two-fifths of the population identifies as Republican (42%) and as Democrat (42%), with 16% identifying as Independent. In the 2020 presidential election, 46% of the respondents voted for Donald Trump, 41% voted for Joe Biden, 2% voted for other candidates, and 12% did not vote. Among those who cast a ballot in 2020, 52% voted for Trump, 46% for Biden and 2% for other candidates.

## Reliability of the Texas Electric Grid

The respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that the laws passed by the Texas Legislature during the 2021 legislative session improved the reliability of the Texas electric grid to such an extent that they will help ensure that Texans do not experience the loss of heat and power as occurred during the February 2021 storm. Texas registered voters (henceforth referred to as Texans) are split relatively evenly between those who agree (strongly and somewhat) that the laws passed by the Texas Legislature in 2021 improved the reliability of the Texas electric grid and will help prevent a future winter-induced power outage as in 2021 and those who disagree (strongly and somewhat). See Figure 1. In sum, among those with an opinion (excluding the don't know responses, 18%), 53% agree that the reliability has been improved and will help prevent a repeat of the 2021 power outage debacle (19% strongly and 34% somewhat) while 47% disagree (19% somewhat and 28% strongly).

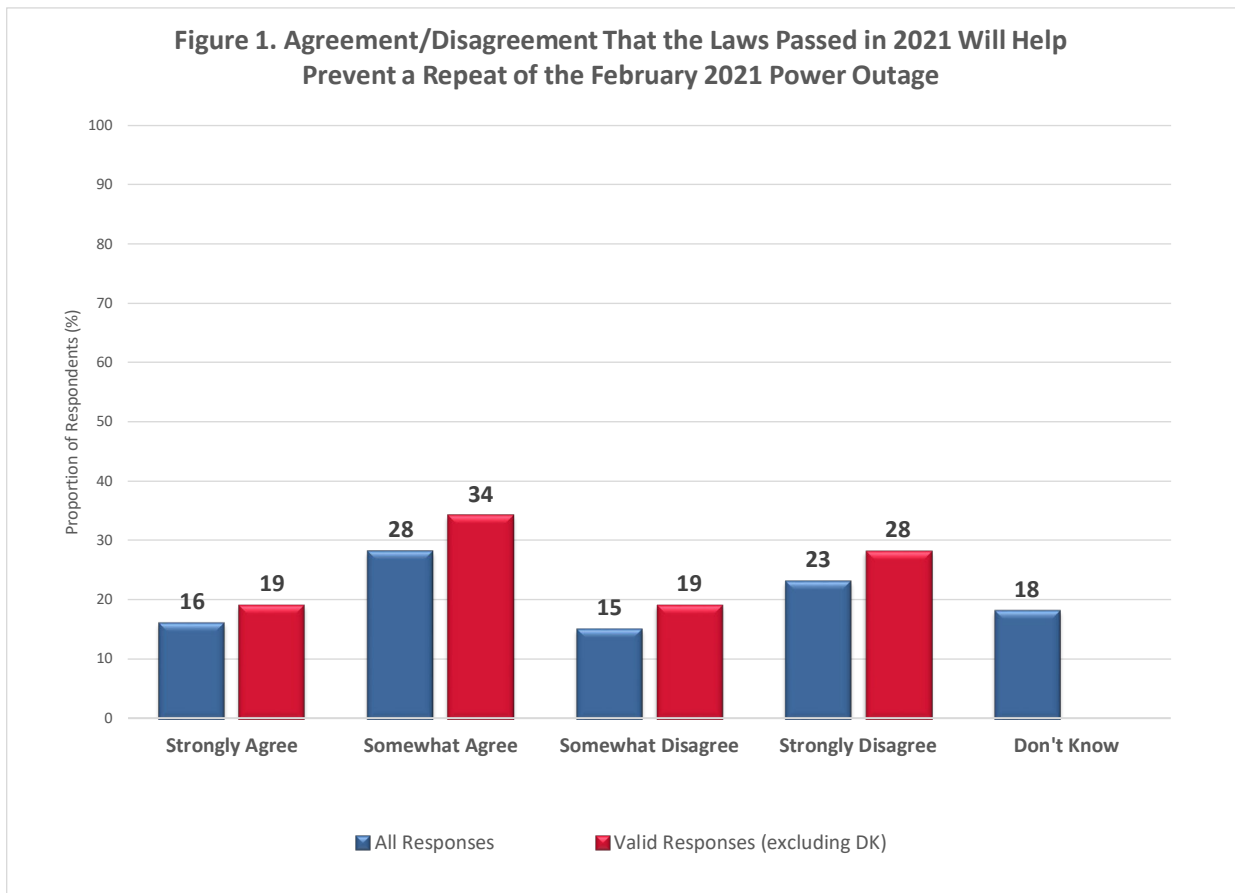


Figure 2 breaks down agreement and disagreement by ethnicity/race. The only noteworthy ethnic/racial difference is that Black Texans are moderately less likely to agree and more likely to disagree than either white or Latino Texans that the laws passed during 2021 improved the reliability of the Texas grid and will help prevent a repeat of the February 2021 power outages.

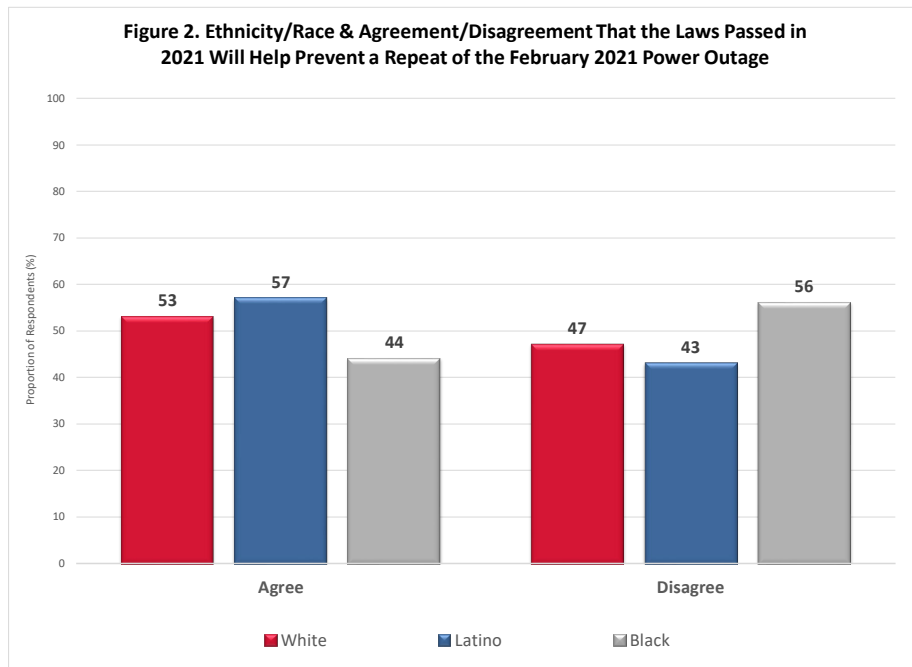
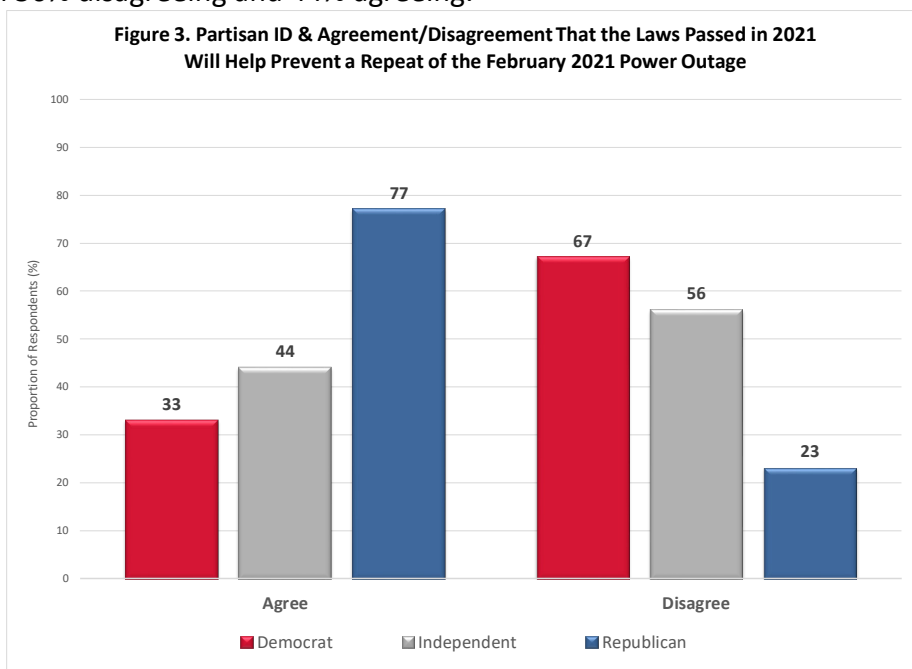


Figure 3 breaks down agreement and disagreement by partisan identification. Republicans are significantly more likely to agree (77%) than disagree (23%) that the laws passed in 2021 improved the reliability of the Texas grid and will help prevent a repeat of 2021. Conversely, Democrats are significantly more likely to disagree (67%) than agree (33%). Independents are split more equally down the middle, with 56% disagreeing and 44% agreeing.



## Addressing the Problems Identified in the FERC Report

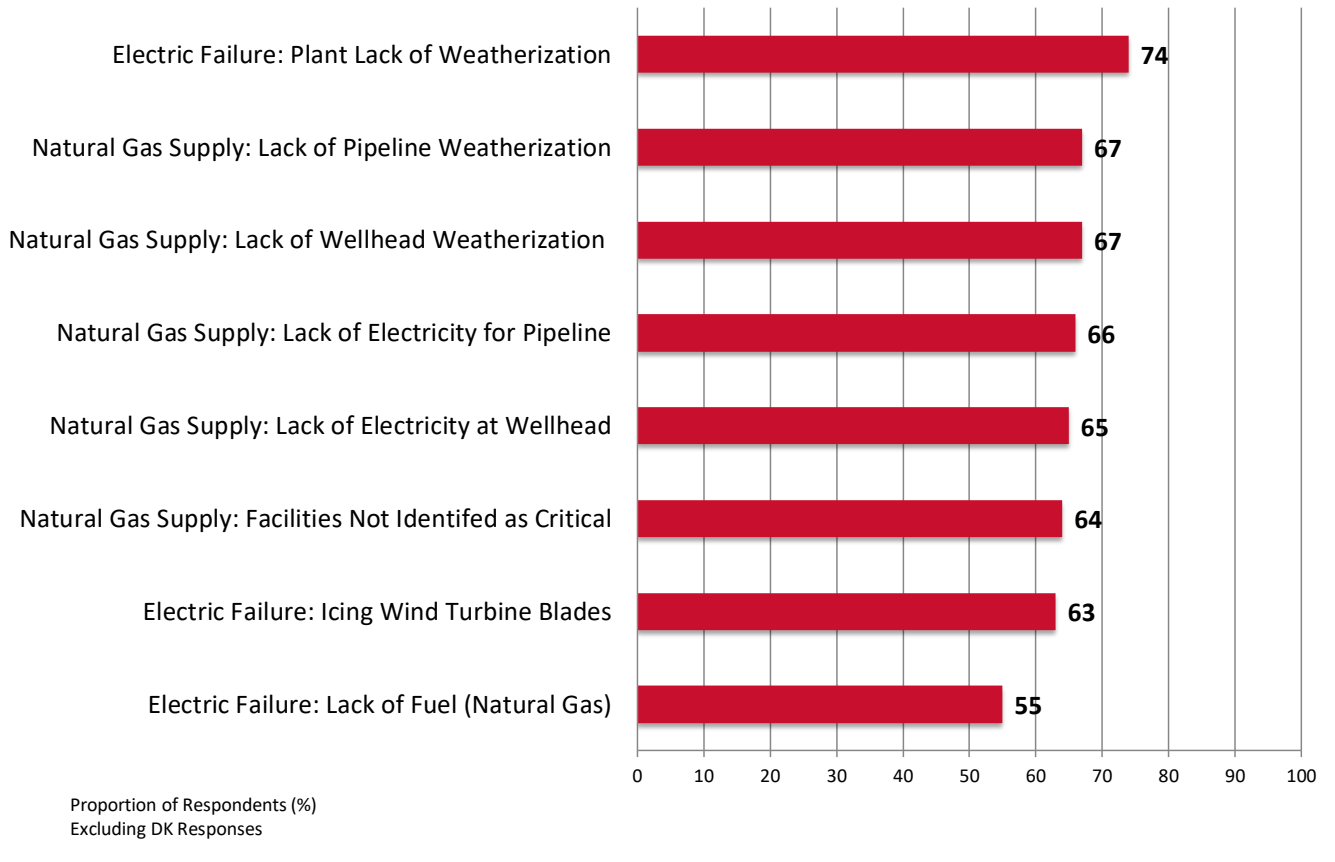
The respondents were presented with the following question:

“A 2021 Federal Energy Reliability Council (FERC) Report identified multiple things that went wrong with the Texas power grid during the February 2021 Winter Storm. To what extent do you agree that the problems below identified in the FERC report have been adequately addressed since the February outage such that they no longer are a cause for concern?” The response options were: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Don’t Know.

- Electricity generation failure due to insufficient weatherization of the electrical generation plants.
- Electricity generation failure due to a lack of fuel (87% Natural Gas).
- Electricity generation failure due to icing on wind turbine generator blades.
- Natural gas fuel supply issues due to lack of weatherization at wellheads.
- Natural gas fuel supply issues due to lack of electrical power at wellheads.
- Natural gas fuel supply issues due to lack of weatherization of processing facilities.
- Natural gas fuel supply issues due to lack of electrical power at processing facilities.
- Natural gas production and processing facilities not identified as critical and therefore not protected from programmed electricity outages (rolling blackouts).

Figure 4 on the next page provides the distribution of the proportion of Texans who agree (strongly or somewhat) that the eight problems identified by the [FERC Report](#) have been adequately addressed such that they no longer represent a cause for concern. The problems fall into three principal categories in regard to the proportion of the respondents who agree that the problem has been adequately addressed.

**Figure 4. Agreement That the Problems Identified in the FERC Report on the February 2021 Winter Storm Have Been Adequately Addressed**



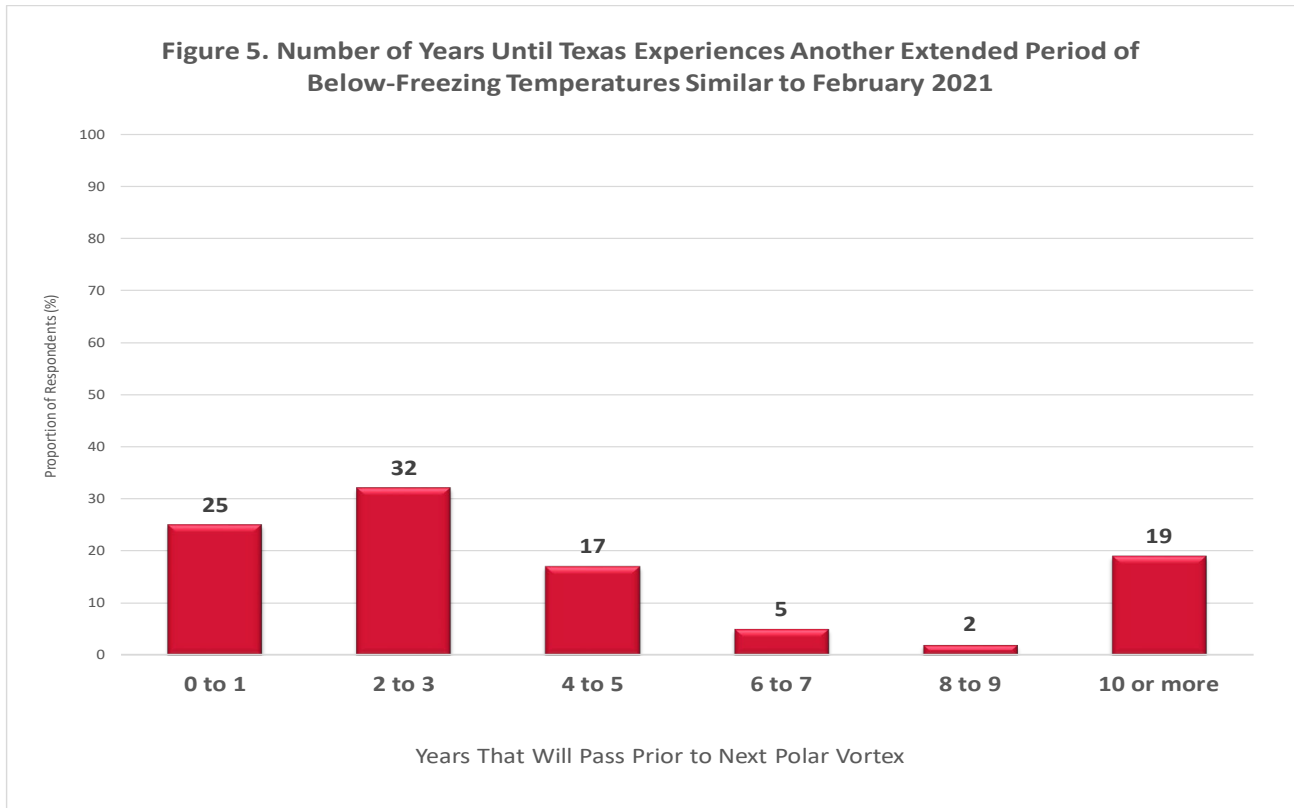
On one end of the spectrum, 74% of Texans agree that the problem of electricity generation failure due to insufficient weatherization of electrical generation plants has been adequately addressed so that it is no longer a cause for concern.

On the other end of the spectrum, only 55% of Texans agree that the problem of electricity generation failure due to a lack of fuel (natural gas) has been adequately addressed so that it is no longer a cause for concern.

The remaining six problems are located within a narrow band of agreement ranging from 63% to 67%.

## When Will the Next Polar Vortex Hit Texas

The respondents were also asked how many years they think will pass until Texas experiences another extended period of below-freezing temperatures similar to what occurred in February 2021. Excluding the 24% of respondents who answered “don’t know” to this question, Figure 5 provides the distribution of the responses.



One-quarter (25%) of the respondents believe that Texas will experience polar vortex weather conditions similar to those of February 2021 either this year or next year (0 to 1 years). Nearly one-third (32%) believe that Texas will experience another severe cold snap similar to that of 2021 in two or three years. In sum, more than one-half (57%) of the respondents believe that at the minimum, Texas will experience extreme cold weather similar to that of February 2021 within the next three years. Finally, close to one-fifth (19%) of Texans are of the opinion that Texas will not again experience such extreme winter weather conditions for 10 or more years.

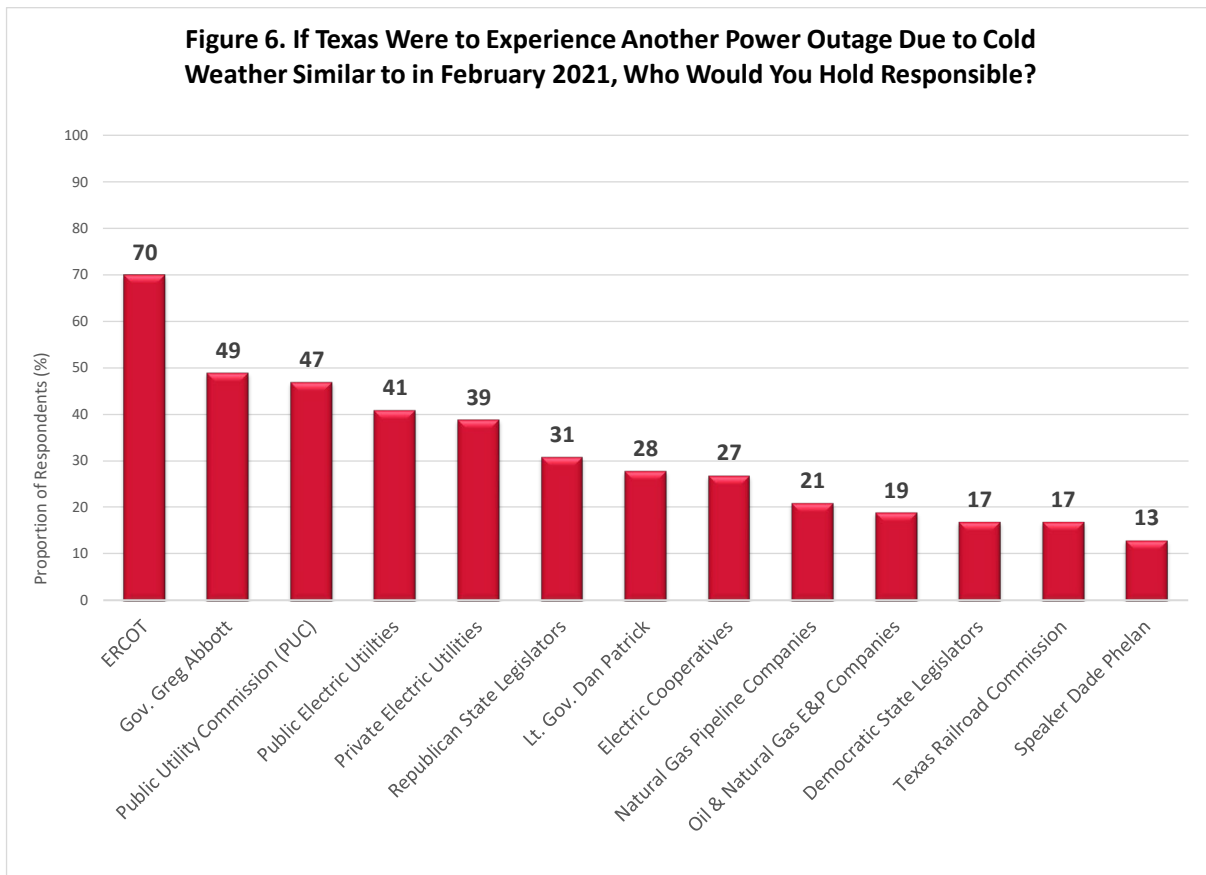


## If Another Cold Induced Power Outage Occurs, Who is Responsible?

The respondents were asked if Texas were to experience another power outage in 2022 due to cold weather similar to that in February 2021, which of the following individuals, groups and institutions (rotated in the survey instrument), if any, would they hold responsible for this power outage.

- Governor Greg Abbott
- Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick
- House Speaker Dade Phelan
- Republican state senators and state representatives
- Democratic state senators and state representatives
- ERCOT (Electric Reliability Council of Texas)
- Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas
- Texas Railroad Commission
- Private natural gas pipeline companies
- Private electric utility companies (AEP, CenterPoint, Oncor, TNMP)
- Private natural gas exploration & production companies
- Public utility companies (Austin Energy, CPS Energy, etc.)
- Electric cooperatives

Figure 6 displays the proportion of Texans who would hold the individual, group or institution responsible if Texas were to experience another power outage due to cold weather similar to that which took place in February 2021.



More than two-thirds (70%) of these Texans would hold ERCOT responsible, while close to half would hold Texas Governor Greg Abbott (49%) and the Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas (47%) responsible.

Between two-fifths and one-fifth would hold the public electric utility companies (41%), private electric utility companies (39%), Republican state legislators (31%), Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (28%), electric cooperatives (27%), and natural gas pipeline companies (21%) responsible.

Fewer than one-fifth of Texans would hold the oil and natural gas exploration and production companies (19%), Democratic state legislators (17%), the Texas Railroad Commission (17%) and Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan (13%) responsible.

### The 2021 Winter Storm and 2022 Voting Decisions

The respondents who planned to vote in 2022 were also asked to what extent would the way that public officials reacted to the winter storm of 2021 influence their voting decisions for governor, lieutenant governor and for Texas state legislators this year. Over two-fifths (44%) said it would not affect their vote at all, nearly one-third (32%) said it will be one of several factors that will influence their vote decision while close to one-fourth (24%) said it will be a very important factor influencing their vote decisions. See Figure 7. In [March of 2021](#) we asked a similar question, and notably more Texans said it would be a very important factor (32%) and notably fewer said it would not affect their vote (34%).

**Figure 7. Impact of Response by Texas Public Officials to the 2021 Winter Storm on 2022 Vote Decisions**

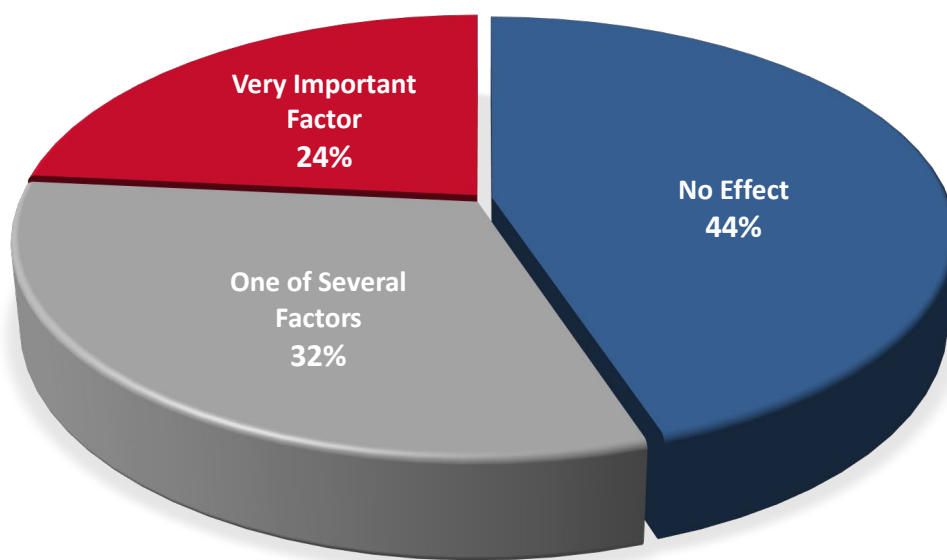


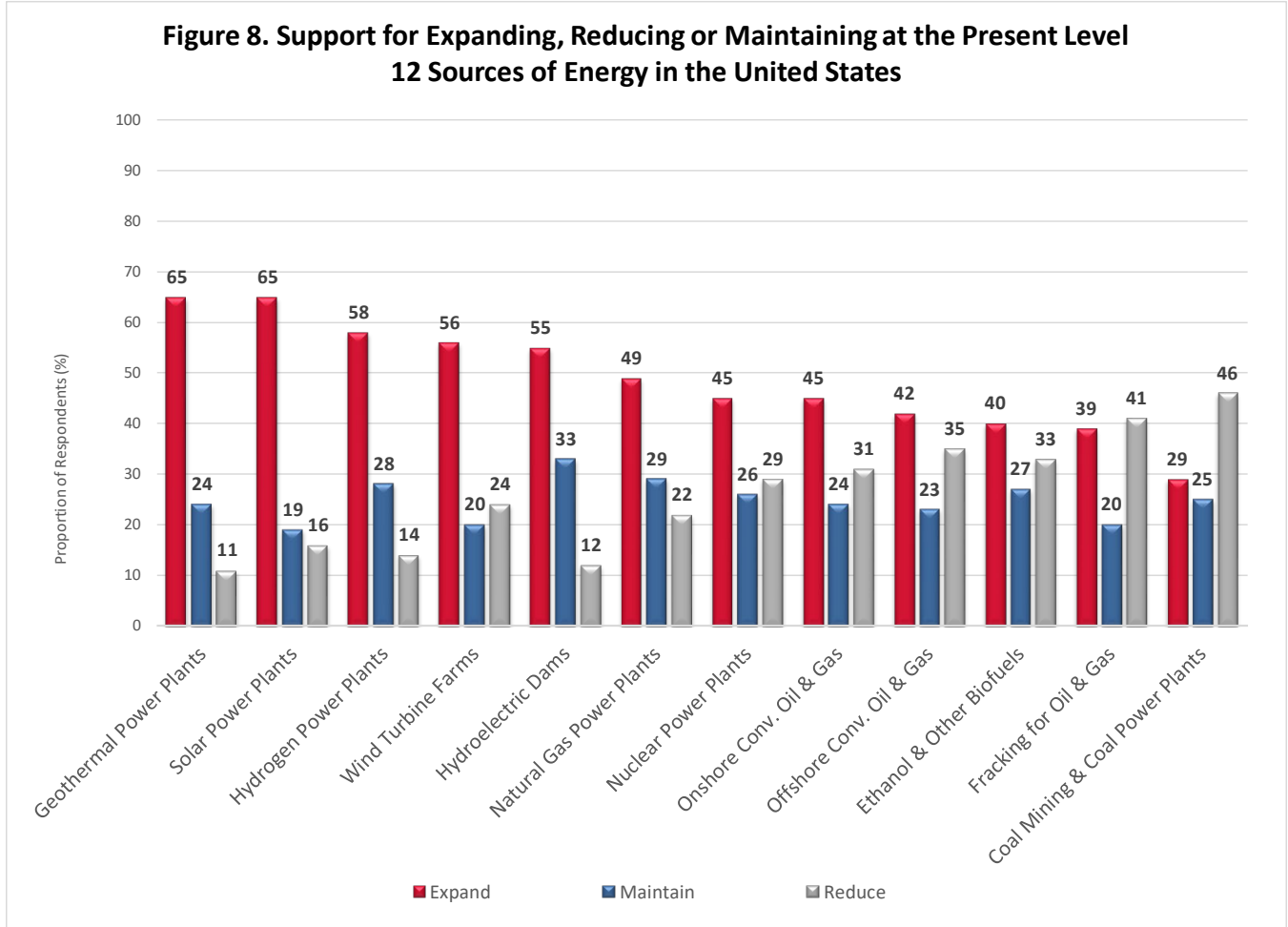
Table 1 provides the influence of the response to the 2021 winter storm by state officials on the vote decision of likely voters who intend to vote in the November 2022 gubernatorial election for Greg Abbott (Republican Party, 48% vote intention), Beto O’Rourke (Democratic Party, 43%), Mark Jay Tippetts (Libertarian Party, 2%), and Delilah Barrios (Green Party, 1%), as well as those who are unsure (6%). More than three-fifths (65%) of Abbott voters indicated the storm and officials’ responses to it would have no effect on their 2022 voting decisions, 25% said it would be one of several factors that will influence their vote decisions while 10% said it will be a very important factor influencing their 2022 vote decisions. More than two-fifths (43%) of O’Rourke voters indicated that the storm and officials’ responses to it would be a very important factor influencing their 2022 vote decisions, while close to one-fifth (18%) said it would have no effect and nearly two-fifths (39%) responded that it would be one of several factors influencing their 2022 vote decisions.

**Table 1. Impact of the Response by Texas Public Officials to the February 2021 Winter Storm on 2022 Gubernatorial Vote Decisions**

<b>Impact of Response to Winter Storm on Vote</b>	<b>Abbott</b>	<b>O'Rourke</b>	<b>Tippetts</b>	<b>Barrios</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
No Effect	65	18	50	42	44
One of Several Factors	25	39	24	24	40
Very Important Factor	10	43	26	34	16

## Expand, Reduce or Maintain Sources of Energy in the United States

The survey respondents were asked if they favored expanding, reducing or maintaining at the present level 12 different sources of energy in the United States. Figure 8 provides the distribution of Texans who favor expanding, reducing or maintaining each one of these energy sources.



More than half of the respondents favor expanding U.S. reliance on five sources of energy, all of which are renewable sources of energy. Nearly two-thirds (65%) favor expanding reliance on geothermal power plants and on solar power plants while the expansion of hydrogen power plants (58%), wind turbine farms (56%) and hydroelectric dams (55%) rounds out the list of energy sources that more than one out of every two Texans favors expanding.

When asked what they thought the most important priority for addressing America's energy supply should be, more Texans (55%) said the priority should be developing alternative sources such as wind, solar and hydrogen rather than expanding exploration and production of oil and natural gas (the preference of 45% of Texans).

In contrast to the support for expanding the country's reliance on renewables, a plurality of Texans favors reducing reliance on two energy sources. Nearly half (46%) of Texans favor reducing reliance on coal mining and coal power plants while more than two-fifths (41%) favor reducing reliance on hydraulic fracturing "fracking" for oil and natural gas.

Finally, a plurality (though not a majority) of Texans favors expanding reliance on natural gas plants (49%), nuclear power plants (45%), onshore conventional oil and natural gas (45%), offshore conventional oil and natural gas (42%) and ethanol and other biofuels (40%).

These results are by in large in line with those from a [March 2021](#) survey where we asked this same question. There were only two instances (out of a potential 24) where the proportions of support for expanding or reducing the energy source in the 2021 survey differed by 5 or more percentage points from those in Figure 8.

First, the percentage of Texans who favor expanding geothermal power as a source for energy in the United States increased from 60% to 65%. Second, the percentage of Texans who favor expanding offshore conventional oil and natural gas as a source for energy in the United States increased from 37% to 42%.

## Researchers

Renée Cross, Senior Director & Researcher, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Mark P. Jones, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy's Fellow in Political Science, Rice University;  
Senior Research Fellow, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Savannah Sipole, Research Associate, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Agustín Vallejo, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Hobby School of Public Affairs