

Prepared February 2021 by the:



Final report to the Fresno County
Civic Engagement Table Partner
Organizations:



Faith in the Valley

FRESNO SPEAKS 2020

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Representative sample study of 2,397 City of Fresno voters and their opinions on major issues
- COVID-19 PANDEMIC
- PUBLIC SAFETY / POLICE REFORM
- CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

FRESNO SPEAKS 2020

Covid-19, Public Safety, and Civic Engagement in Fresno. Final Report to the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table

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Study Highlights

- ▶ In the summer of 2018, Communities for a New California (a Fresno Table Member) carried out a massive pilot study with a door-to-door survey of 432 households in City Council District 3. The study showed that residents viewed crime, economic stress, and social services as the issues with the largest impact on their lives. The pilot study also demonstrated the importance of the neighborhood meeting as a pathway to increase civic engagement by residents. These findings set the stage for the 2020 Fresno Speaks representative survey of registered voters across the entire city.
- ▶ The 2020 Survey is the first and only representative sample study questioning Fresno voters about the multiple crises of 2020, including the coronavirus pandemic, public safety concerns, and civic engagement.
- ▶ **Half (50%) of Fresno voter households experienced job loss or reduced work hours** following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. This is 8% higher than the national average.
 - ▷ More Latina/o/xs (57.0%), African-American (54.6%) and Asian American (54.5%) households experienced income reduction than white households (42.0%).
 - ▷ Extremely low-income residents were impacted the most, with 60.5% of households making less than \$25,000 per year reporting job loss or reduced work hours.
- ▶ 76% of Respondents stated that affordable housing is a major problem in the city.
- ▶ Between 85.6 to 92.5 percent of voters engaged in public health behaviors to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, including social distancing, avoiding crowds, and wearing a face mask.
- ▶ The City of Fresno's registered voters expressed strong support for police reform. **Most (77.9%) stated they would support elected officials who advocated for police reform.** This support was consistent across all 7 city council districts in the city.

- ▶ Over-policing was viewed as a problem for 24% of all respondents. **African American, Latina/o/xs, and low income residents reported over-policing as an issue at even higher rates.**
- ▶ The most popular **solutions to gangs were proactive.** These solutions included providing jobs to people with records (30.4%), jobs for youth (28.9%), and public funding for community and violence prevention programs (18.4%).
- ▶ Voters in all 7 city council districts expressed strong support (between 87% and 91%) for the city to continue funding the **Advance Peace** gun violence prevention program.
- ▶ Fresno registered voters also expressed strong support for policy reform through voting and grassroots civic participation. Support was strongest for addressing issues of racism (54.8%), quality of public education (52.0%), and police reform (50.4%).
- ▶ People who have participated in a past community meeting showed a greater willingness to participate in a wide range of civic activities.

Introduction

The Fresno County Civic Engagement Table (FCCET) or “Fresno Table” provides support for increasing electoral participation through the lens of social justice. FCCET acts as a multi-racial and multigenerational coalition focusing on integrated voter engagement, voter education, and get out the vote (GOTV) efforts within historically marginalized and excluded communities. Through active training workshops and organizing at the neighborhood level, the Fresno Table educates residents about voting rights and voter registration, while at the same time building civic capacity through grassroots organizing around priority issues, providing leadership development, and opportunities for participation in local institutions and civic engagement with city and county agencies..

Fresno is the fifth largest city in the state of California. In 2019, it had an estimated population of 531,576, with more than one in four (28.8%) residents under the age of eighteen.² Nearly half (49.4%) of residents were Latina/o/x; Asian (13.7%) or Black (7.6%). One in five (20.6%) residents are immigrants, and 43.6% of households speak a non-English language.

At the same time, Fresno also ranks high on indices of inequity. Between 2014 and 2018, Fresno’s median household income was merely \$47,189, far below the state average of \$71,228. More than one in four households (26.9%) lived below the poverty line, more than double the state average (11.8%). More than one in ten (10.4%) persons under the age of 65 lack health insurance (Flores 2019).

On March 8, 2020, Fresno officials confirmed the first COVID-19 case. In the following months, as the disease spread throughout the city and region and became one of the nation’s top hotspots, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed some of Fresno’s most pressing inequities. Fresno’s experience accelerated an already-global public health and economic crisis due to the combinations of a large, low-wage workforce of immigrants, and people of color that lacked safety nets; an absence of health and safety regulatory enforcement in essential agricultural and meatpacking industries prone to COVID-19 outbreaks (Padilla and Flores 2020); and local government transparency in the spending of COVID-19 related funding.³

This report presents the findings of a representative city-wide survey of the impact of COVID-19 on Fresno registered voters’ income; attitudes towards public health, public safety, and police

¹ An earlier and condensed version of this report was published as: Almeida, Paul, Edward Flores, Ana Padilla, Venise Curry, and Rodrigo Alariste-Diaz. 2020. *Fresno Speaks 2020: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Registered Voters and their Positions on Major Issues*. Merced: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.

² See United States Census Bureau (2020).

³ See Ho (2020a, 2020b) and Amaro (2020a, 2020b).

reform; and voting and civic participation. The survey is also representative of registered voters at the level of city council districts.

The study examines Fresno registered voters' responses to multiple national crises afflicting the city and region, from the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession to long-standing issues with local policing and civic engagement at the community level. In recent years, internal audits and public records have revealed issues in Fresno's Police Department, high rates of officer-involved shootings, and lawsuits costing the City millions of dollars.⁴ In 2020, as Black Lives Matter protests spread nationally in support of police reform and racial justice, Fresno residents voiced concerns with policing and called for a civilian Police Commission.⁵

The survey also demonstrates the important work of community-based organizations (CBOs) in the city. One of the strategies of the partner organizations constituting the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table involves organizing and holding neighborhood meetings about quality of life issues. This investigation found that such community meetings increase civic engagement by voters between election cycles by enhancing awareness of common concerns, and co-creating action plans. Community meetings and neighborhood level organizing increase social interaction and willingness to participate in a wide range of local activities, from attending a training to meeting with a local elected official.

4 See Fresno Office of Independent Review (2018) and Coleman et al. (2017).

5 See Tsutsui (2020).

Fresno County Civic Engagement Table



First joint canvass event of the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table Held at Mary Ella Brown Community Center City Council District 3 (October 2018)

Member Profiles and Statements on the Importance of the Study



Communities for a New California (CNC):

CNC was founded in 2011 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) human rights organization. Communities for a New California promotes economic prosperity and community health for residents in the rural areas of California. CNC brings residents together to champion the needs of poor and working-class families through community organizing, integrated leadership development, and mass non-partisan voter engagement. Headquartered in Sacramento, with offices in Fresno, Merced, and Coachella Valley, chapters are in constant contact with residents in 13 California counties, from Yolo to Imperial – with an emphasis on the San Joaquin, Imperial and Coachella Valleys.

“This research confirms voter consensus for achieving safe neighborhoods is through public program investment—not more police.”

– **Pablo Rodriguez,**
Executive Director,
Communities for a New California



Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP):

HIP is a community-based organization whose mission is to strengthen the power of the Hmong and disenfranchised communities through innovative civic engagement and strategic grassroots mobilization. HIP campaigns involve youth leadership, voter engagement, educational equity, and coalition building.



Faith in the Valley

Faith in the Valley (FIV):

Faith in the Valley is a faith-based grassroots community organization in California's Central Valley representing families in Fresno, Kern, Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties. Their work is led by volunteer leaders who are among the people most impacted by equity issues: low-wage workers, young people, immigrants and the formerly incarcerated. FIV is a federated member of PICO California, the largest faith based community organizing network in California, with an institutional membership of 485 congregations from more than a dozen faith traditions across the state.

"These survey results reinforce what we already know: a vast majority of Fresnoans of all backgrounds support real commitments to parks and programs--not the status quo of reactive policing. If we had acted on these understandings a year ago, we could have saved lives. Now is truly our time to reimagine public safety in Fresno."

**– Marcel Woodruff,
Lead Organizer,
Faith in the Valley-Fresno**



Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability:

Leadership Counsel strives to shift the dynamics that have created the stark inequality that affects California's low income, rural regions. Based in the San Joaquin and Eastern Coachella Valleys, Leadership Counsel works alongside the most impacted communities to advocate for sound policy and eradicate injustice to secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income, and place. Through community organizing, research, legal representation, and policy advocacy, Leadership Counsel influences land use and transportation planning, guides environmental policy, and promotes the provision of basic infrastructure and services.



Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce (FMBCC):

The Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce is a locally-based membership organization with a global reach advancing the interests of the greater African-American community through the creation of opportunities, advocacy, business and economic development. We also provide educational programming for entrepreneurs of all ages that leads to financial responsibility, sustainability, and job growth. FMBCC engages, educates, and empowers Black-owned businesses through promotion, technical assistance, and capacity building services.



Jakara Movement:

The Jakara Movement is a grassroots community-building organization working to empower, educate, and organize Punjabi Sikhs, and other marginalized communities; to advance their health, education, and economic, social, and political power. Jakara Movement strives to create a Gurmat-inspired community, rooted in the struggle of our foremothers and forefathers, to develop powerful, informed, and organized youth leadership, locally-rooted residential power, and community capacity that will be a key partner in building a better future for all.

“COVID-19 has been devastating for Fresno families. Members of our community shared stories of lost income, callous employers, and long-term effects for their families. While the City and County have placed some safeguards, this study allows the public to hear community needs directly and gives us a better idea of what programs are most critical.”

**– Kamaljit Kaur,
Director of Development,
Jakara Movement**

DATA AND METHODS

This study was designed to capture voter public opinion on major issues at the level of the City of Fresno and in each of the city's seven council districts with a representative survey of registered voters. Between August 18 and September 14, 2020, the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table (FCCET) conducted a random phone survey of 2,397 Fresno registered voters with landlines and cell phones. FCCET is composed of a multi-racial coalition, including representation from Black, Latino, and Asian American populations. Communities for a New California accounted for 77% of surveys conducted, while other table partners accounted for the remaining 23%. The randomized list of registered voters included 48.3% Democrat voting households, 24.2% Republican, and 27.5% as "other." This distribution is consistent with the California Secretary of State's data for all registered voters (with or without phone numbers) in the City of Fresno as of July 2020.⁶ The highest number of surveys completed in this study came from Council District 6, where a plurality of registered voters identify as Republican.

Research teams from the FCCET organizations participated in two separate trainings on phone survey implementation and respondent documentation on August 17 and August 28, 2020. The UC Merced Community and Labor Center led the training sessions in partnership with Communities for a New California (CNC). The pre-existing phone banking infrastructure and experience of the CNC in the San Joaquin Valley were used to survey registered voters.

The survey team reached 12.3% of the randomly selected respondents and 32.8% of those contacts completed the survey. The phone survey response rates are much higher than the national average, which were reportedly as low as 6% in 2018.⁷ This provides one indicator that Fresno voters are more willing to provide opinions about critical issues and/or they felt comfortable with the FCCET phone survey teams. The sample has a margin of error of 2.5 percent for the City of Fresno level results and 6 percent at the City Council District level.⁸ Table 1 and Figure 1 below show the distribution of surveys by city council district. Respondents were asked about changes in income; attitudes towards COVID-19 public health practices; policing and police reform; city budget preferences; and potential solutions for social issues and civic engagement activities.

6 The official state voter registry for all voters in the City of Fresno is 43% Democrat, 27.4% Republican, and 29.3% Other.

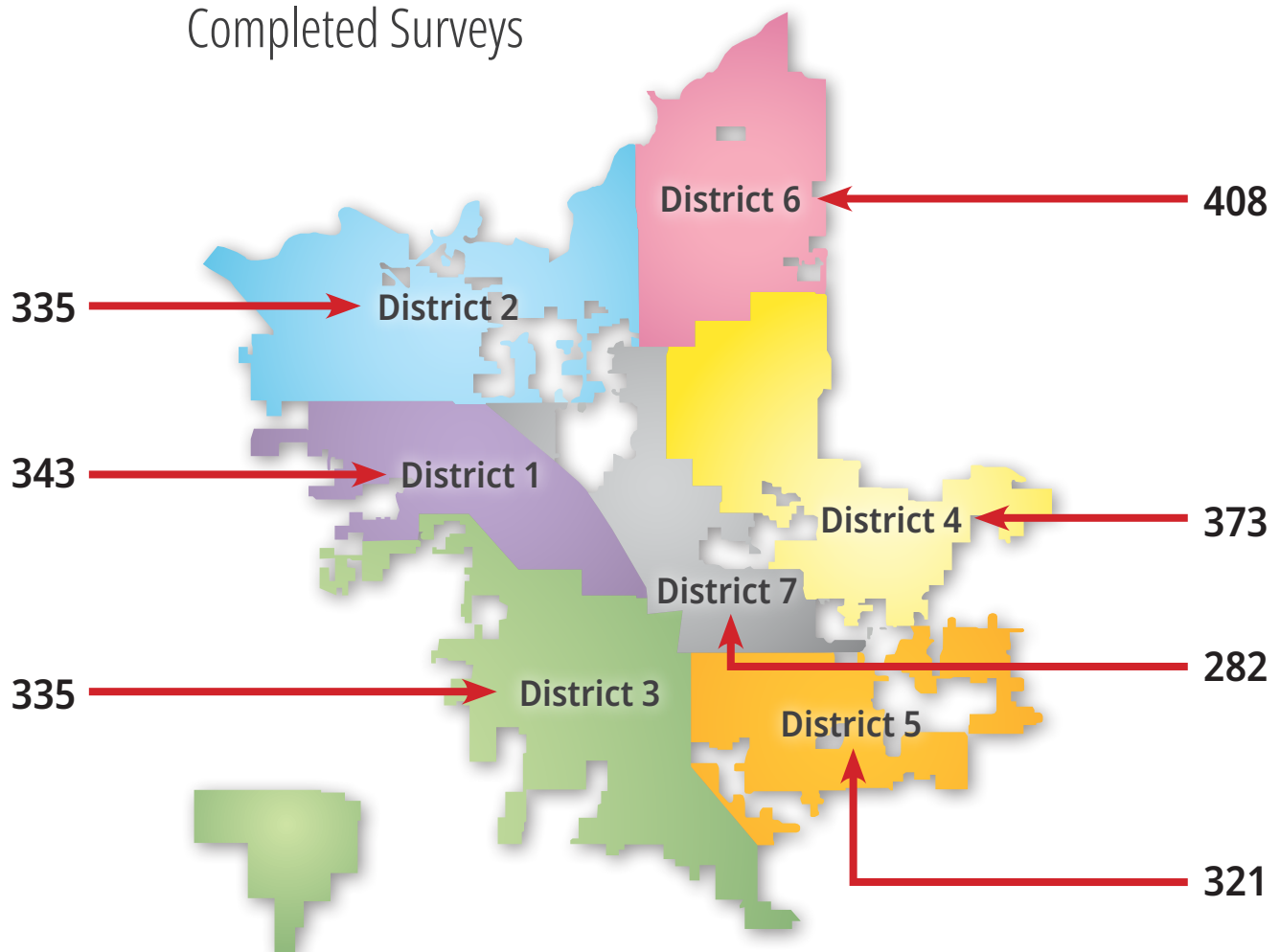
7 Kennedy, Courtney and Hannah Hartig. 2019. "Response rates in telephone surveys have resumed their decline." PEW Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/27/response-rates-in-telephone-surveys-have-resumed-their-decline/>

8 The sampling error is ± 2.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted sample of 2,397 registered voters. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2.5 percentage points of what they would be if all registered voters with phone numbers within the City of Fresno were interviewed. For results within individual city council districts, the sampling error is ± 6 percent at the 95 percent confidence level for the total unweighted city council district samples of between 282 and 408 registered voters. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 6 percentage points of what they would be if all registered voters with phone numbers within a particular Fresno City Council District were interviewed.

Table 1. Distribution of Completed Surveys by Fresno City Council District

City Council District	Survey Respondents	Percent
1	343	14.31%
2	335	13.98%
3	335	13.98%
4	373	15.56%
5	321	13.39%
6	408	17.02%
7	282	11.76%
Total	2,397	100.00%

Figure 1. Map of City Council Voting Districts and Number of Completed Surveys





First joint canvass event of the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table held at Mary Ella Brown Community Center in City Council District 3 (October 2018)

BACKGROUND PREPARATION: THE 2018 FRESNO NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

In the summer of 2018, Communities for a New California (CNC) conducted a house-to-house survey in City Council District 3 in Fresno. The findings were used to inform the design of the current Fresno Speaks 2020 survey, especially in terms of the most pressing issues affecting residents and civic engagement.

The Communities for a New California Educational Fund (CNCEF) canvassers implemented a needs assessment and civic participation survey in south central Fresno, in census tracts 6-7 and 21-24 (see Figure 2). The final sample size for the study involved 432 respondents. The canvassers went door-to-door and conducted in-person

surveys. The purpose of the survey was to determine the most significant quality of life issues for the residents of south central Fresno and their experience and readiness to participate in community and civic engagement. Table 2 compares the ethnic composition of the Fresno sample to the 2018 US Census' American Community Survey (a representative sample estimate of the population) in the same census tracts. The CNC sample has less Latina/o/x and Asian American representation than the American Community Survey (ACS). At the same time, the CNC sample has overrepresentation from individuals identifying with multiple ethnicities.

Figure 2. Census tracts where 2018 CNC survey was implemented

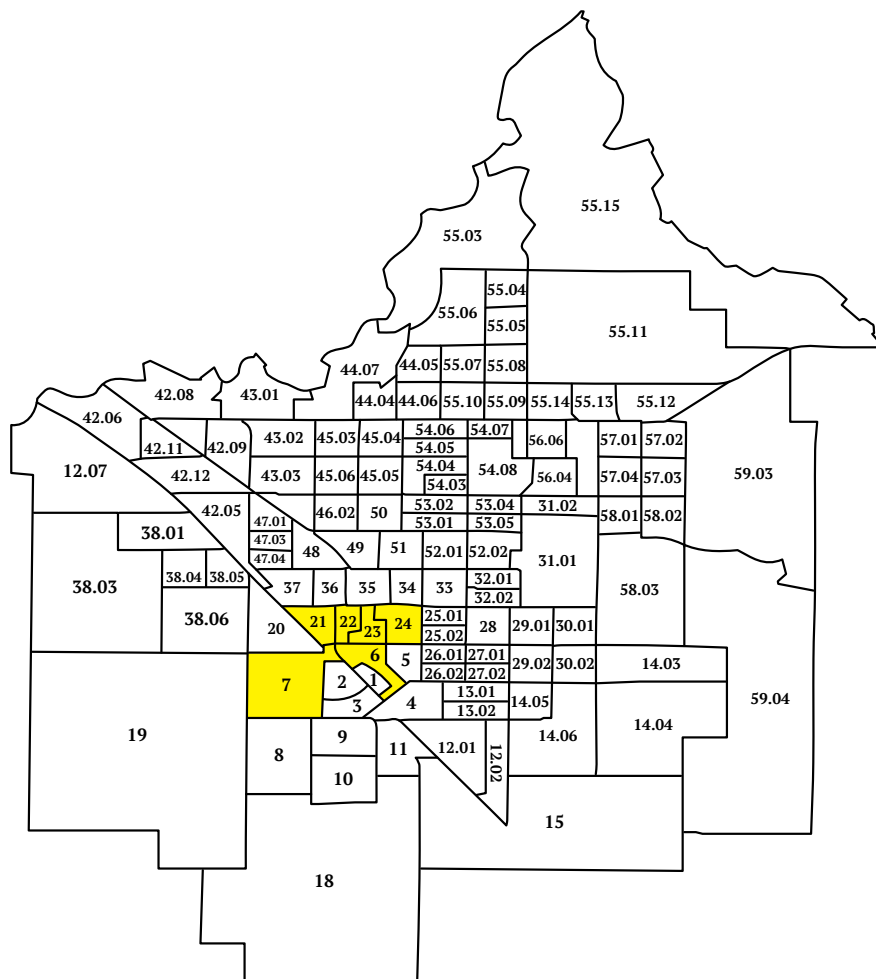


Table 2. Ethnic Identification

	Latino/a	African American	Asian	White	Native American	More than One Ethnicity
American Community Survey 2018	62.2%	9.2%	5.7%	21%	.083%	3.7%
CNC 2018 Fresno Sample (N = 432)	53%	9.1%	3%	21%	.063%	10%

The Most Pressing Social Issues for the Community

Residents were asked to state which social issue from a list of 18 items had the largest impact on their household. The most frequent responses reported by the community involved crime, social and economic issues, and public safety. Table 3 summarizes the responses by grouping the 18 items into thematic categories. Nearly 30 percent of residents reported crime-related problems as the major issue for their families, especially gang activities and violence. Over half of respondents reported some kind of social (25.6%) or economic

(25.4%) issue as having the biggest influence on their households. Within the social services category, residents reported access to quality food/grocery stores and addiction/substance abuse most frequently. In the economic category, access to affordable housing and good jobs were the issues most commonly selected. This is especially troublesome, given the salience of social and economic issues prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting unemployment and loss of income taking place in 2020 throughout the region.

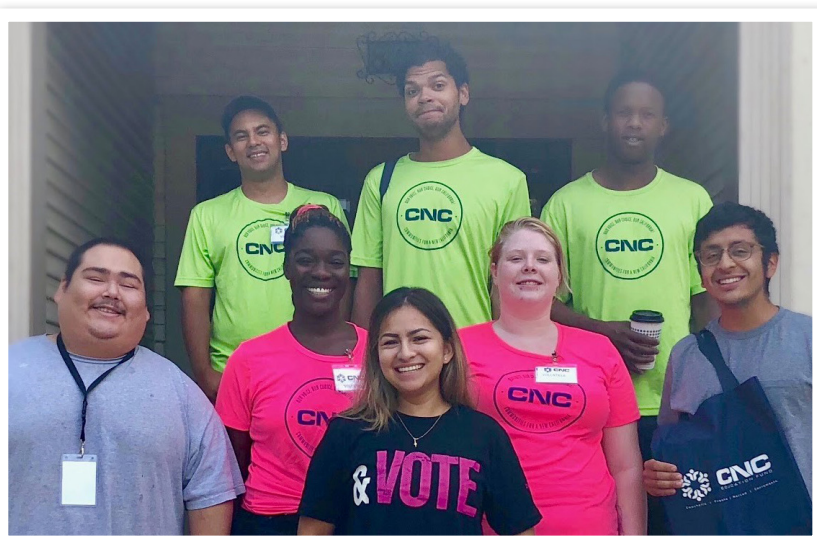
Table 3. If you look at this list of issues for a moment, which issue has had the largest impact upon your household?

Issue Category	% of Responses
Crime (gang activity, crime and violence, theft)	29.7% (116)
Social Services (access to quality food/grocery stores, addiction/substance abuse, school quality, youth recreation, bus service, domestic violence, childcare)	25.6% (100)
Economic (affordable housing/rent costs/homelessness, access to good jobs, healthcare access)	25.4% (99)
Public Safety (unsafe streets, sidewalks, street lights)	12.6% (49)
Pollution/Environment (smell/trash, air or neighborhood pollution, animal extinction)	6.7% (26)
Total	100% (N = 390)

*Excludes category "other" and non-responses (n = 42)

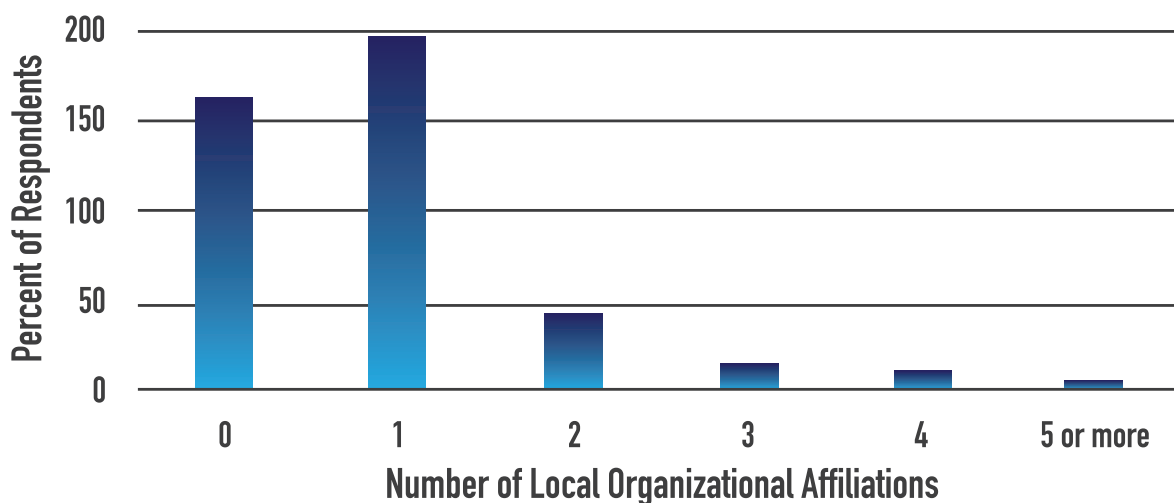
Willingness to Participate in Civic Engagement and Community Change associations and willingness to participate in local civic engagement activities.

60 percent of respondents reported participating in one or more local institutions or associations from a list of 8 organizations/associations and “other” categories (see Figure 3). Over one third (37%) reported participating in a local church. Other options included school volunteer, non-profit organizations, labor union, and self-help groups.



2018 CNC Canvassers working on Needs Assessment Survey in neighborhoods in Fresno's City Council District 3.

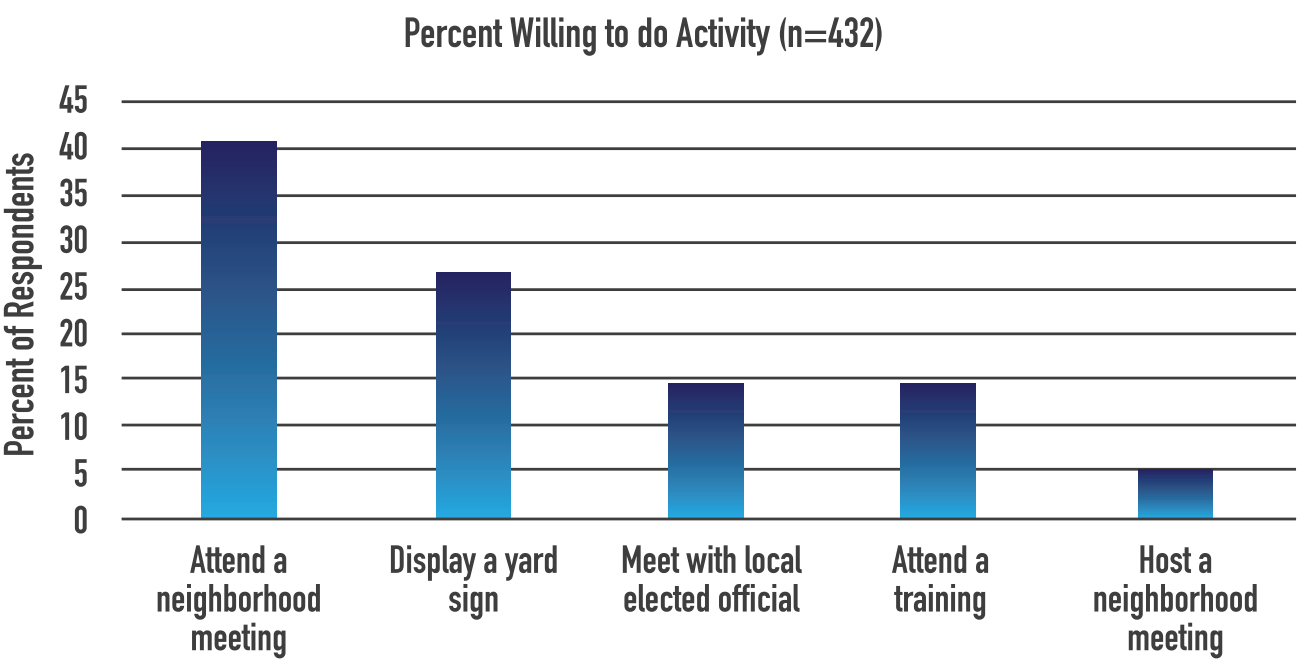
Figure 3. Number of Local Organizational Affiliations of Respondents (2018)



We found that respondents' willingness to participate in civic activities was partially determined by time constraints (see Figure 4). Attending a local meeting or displaying a yard sign were activities that more residents stated interest in carrying out. Even taking time to attend a local meeting is often a huge sacrifice for working families.

Other time-consuming events showed lower levels of willingness to participate, for example, 15% of respondents were willing to meet with a local elected official or attend a training. Only 6% responded affirmatively to the most time-consuming and demanding event of hosting a neighborhood meeting.

Figure 4. Willingness to Participate in Civic Activities (2018)



To make local policy changes that we have discussed, which of the following would you be willing to do?



CNC Canvassing for needs assessment survey in Neighborhoods in District 3 in the Summer of 2018.

We also observed that those with community engagement experience and local organizational ties were more willing to participate in the civic activities listed in Figure 4. For example, 60% of respondents that had attended a neighborhood meeting

about quality of life issues in the past were willing to attend a future neighborhood meeting compared to only 37% that had never attended this kind of meeting (see Table 4).

Table 4. Willingness to Attend a Local Neighborhood Meeting

Have You Ever Attended a Meeting about Local Quality of Life Issues?	To make policy changes on local issues we discussed, would you attend a neighborhood meeting?	
	NO	YES
NO	221 (63%)	129 (37%)
YES	33 (40%)	49 (60%)

N=432

A general pattern in the 2018 Fresno community survey was that people with past experience in civic engagement or with local organizational ties were more willing to participate in the proposed future civic activities listed in Figure 4. People participating in neighborhood meetings in the past reported a greater inclination to not only attend an upcoming community gathering (compared to people who had never attended these gatherings) (Table 4), but they were also more willing to participate in several other community-engaged activities in the future, such as a civic training (32% versus 11%); meet with a local elected official (33% versus 10.6%), and even host a neighborhood meeting (13% versus 4%).

Local organizational ties also mattered. Those with one or more local organizational affiliations presented in Figure 3 more often reported a willingness to attend upcoming civic activities than those reporting no organizational affiliations. In comparing the two groups (those with local organizational ties versus those without), those embedded in local institutions were more willing to: attend a local neighborhood meeting (43% versus 38%); meet with a local elected official (20% versus 7%); and participate in a civic training session (18.5% versus 9%).

These findings have implications for community organizing and overall civic engagement.

- 1 **The important exercise of organizing and creating conditions for neighbors to meet – a neighborhood meeting – can reap substantial benefits. The experience of participating in the local meeting makes residents more inclined to engage in a wide variety of future civic activities.**

- 2 People who are already affiliated in local organizations may act as influencers in their networks to facilitate organizing drives.**
- 3 These local organizing efforts and neighborhood meetings by trusted messengers may successfully serve as an entry point for community engagement.**

It may be more beneficial for community-based organizations (CBOs) to make greater investments into organizing and recruiting new individuals and groups that can attend neighborhood meetings which appears to increase their willingness to participate in other civic activities. These efforts can broaden the supportive base, activate unorganized allies and create conditions for increased and sustained issue-based community campaigns. These same findings are confirmed below in the 2020 Fresno Speaks representative survey of registered voters in the entire city.

In summary, the 2018 community survey of over 400 residents in the south central region of Fresno showed that violence and public safety, access to social services, housing costs, and job opportunities were the most significant issues faced by local residents. These pre-existing problems have been compounded in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic and growing mass unemployment (*see Tables 13-16 below*). A majority of respondents were members of at least one local institution or association. People were more willing to attend a neighborhood meeting than any other type of community engagement activity. Those with past participation in civic activities and civic organizations/institutions were much more willing to attend future civic events than those who had not participated in civic engagement or local organizations. Greater emphasis on organizing neighborhood meetings and growth in local organizational participation may create the building blocks for enhanced civic engagement and community campaigns. Monthly general membership meetings within specific localities contribute to these processes of encouraging community participation. The 2018 study also served as a pilot study for the much larger and more comprehensive city-wide survey implemented by the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table in 2020.

THE 2020 FRESNO SPEAKS STUDY:

COVID, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The 2018 pilot needs assessment study paved the way for the 2020 representative survey of registered voters in Fresno at the district and city-wide levels. The survey was designed as a partnership between the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table and the UC Merced Community and Labor Center. The 2020 survey is also the first systematic empirical assessment of how the covid-19 pandemic is impacting residents of the city. By employing a random sample survey design of all registered voters reporting phone numbers, we can evaluate public opinion and attitudes on the major social issues affecting the households of voters in the city. Specifically, the survey focused on concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic, public safety, housing, the city budget, and civic engagement.

Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Sample of Registered Voters

The survey sample represents the diversity of registered voters in the city in terms of race, age, class, gender, and education. Tables 5 to 9 in Appendix A summarize the demographic characteristics of survey respondents. In terms of race and ethnicity, 80 percent of survey respondents identified as Latina/o/x or white. 9 percent identified as African American, and 5.3 percent as Asian American/Pacific Islander.¹⁰ Figure 5 in Appendix A provides an illustration of the most common ethnic identities provided by respondents in their own words, with the most common being Mexican. Slightly more women participated in the study than men. Educational attainment is close to the United States average. In 2019, high school was the highest level of education completed by 28.1% of the population age 25 and older and 22.5% had finished four years of college.¹¹ 61% of respondents live in households that make \$50,000 or less a year. Fresno ranks among the highest for cities with residents living in extreme poverty in the United States (PEW 2016).¹² The majority of registered voters in Fresno fall well below the median household income in the United States of \$62,000 and even further than the California median household income of \$71,228 mentioned above. The survey respondents were well-distributed across age groups, with adults 26 to 35 and senior citizens most accessible, and middle-age adults the least available to complete the survey.

10 The lower representation of Asian Americans in the survey compared to the general population is likely due to voter registration rates. According to the California Civic Engagement Project, as of 2018, only 50% of eligible Asian American voters were registered in Fresno County compared to 64.3% of Latino eligible voters and 86.8% of non-Latino/non-Asian American voters.

11 See, "U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data." United States Census Bureau, March 30, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20high%20school%20was,from%2029.9%25%20to%2036.0%25>

12 Stebbins, Samuel. 2018. "Despite overall sustained GDP growth in US, some cities still hit hard by extreme poverty." USA Today, April 23. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/economy/2018/04/23/cities-hit-hardest-extreme-poverty/528514002/>

THE PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

Respondents were asked questions related to how the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession impacted their daily lives, and about the adjustments they were making to cope with these challenges. One such question asked respondents which one issue had the most negative impact on the household. The options were based on the most frequent responses given to a longer-list version of the question in the 2018 needs assessment survey reported above in addition to the coronavirus. Two-thirds (66%) responded that the coronavirus was the most important issue negatively affecting them (see Figure 6). Another

8% stated that affordable housing and rent costs affected them most negatively. Other important issues included crime and violence (8%), unsafe streets/sidewalks/street lights (6%), access to good jobs (6%), and access to quality food/grocery stores (3%). We also asked respondents which one issue had the second most negative impact on the household with the same options. These are reported in Figure 7. Similar to the pre-coronavirus study in 2018, registered voters stated that crime and safety issues were the second largest concern for their households.

Figure 6. Which Issue has had the largest negative impact on your household? (N =2,365)

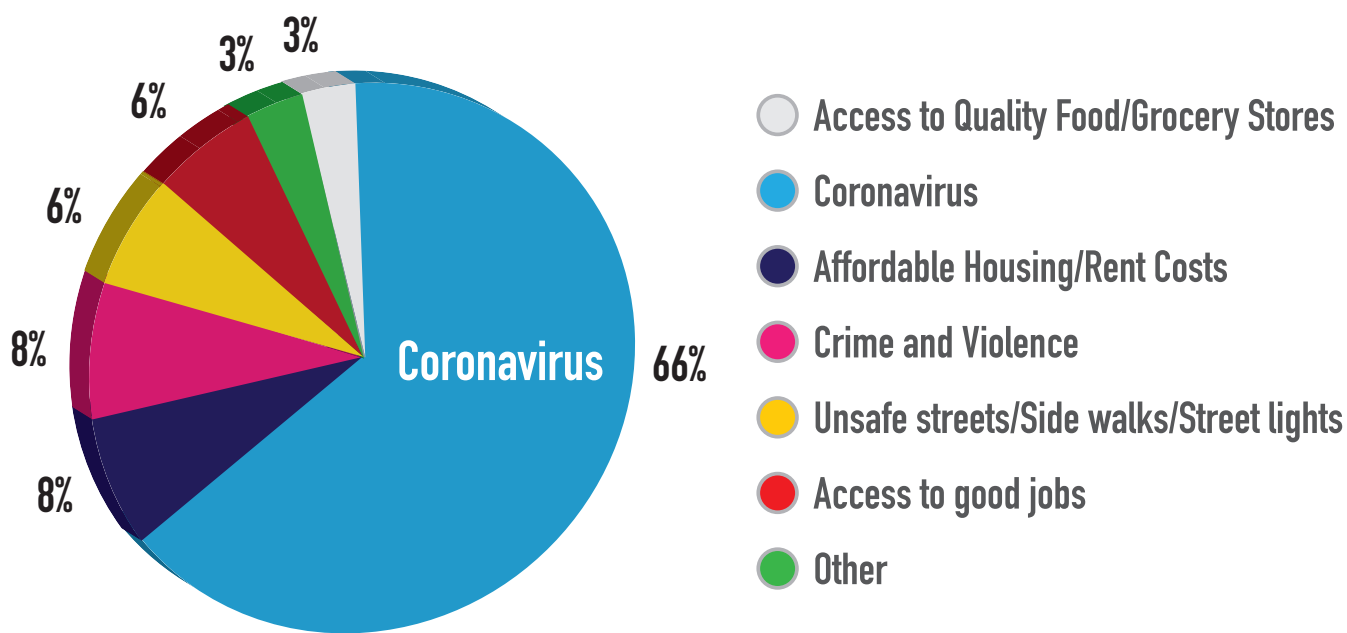
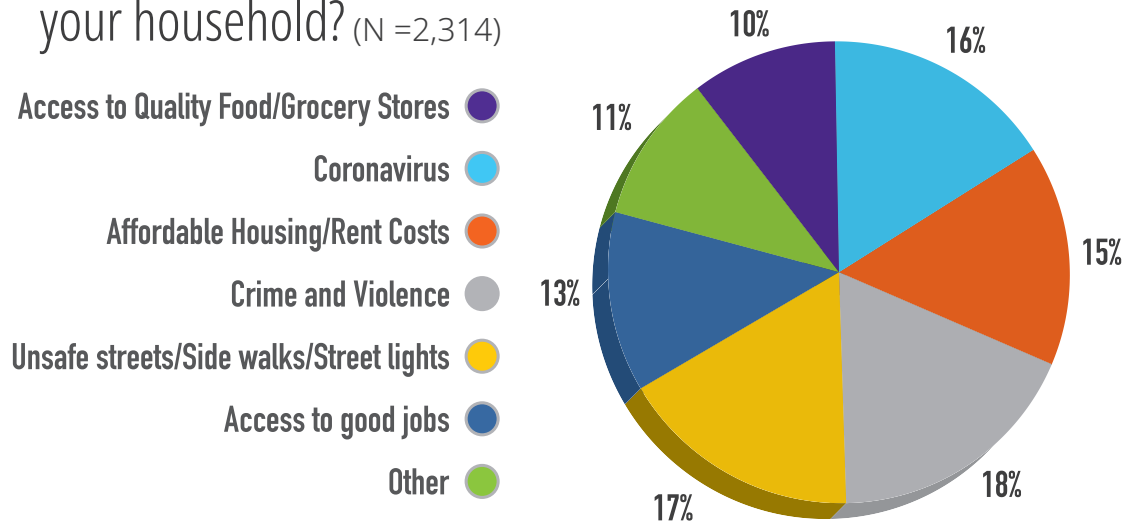


Figure 7. Which Issue has had the second largest negative impact on your household? (N =2,314)



Tables 10 and 11 examine the negative impacts on Fresno households within the seven city council districts. While the coronavirus dominates as the most pressing issue across all regions of the city, there are some interesting differences. Economic issues of job access, affordable housing and crime are together the second largest concerns in district 3, while crime and violence are the second biggest issue in district 7. Table 11 reports the second largest concern across city council districts, and beyond the coronavirus, affordable housing, crime and violence, and unsafe streets appear with the greatest frequency.

Table 10. Which Issue has had the largest negative impact on your household? (N=2,365) (by City Council District)

City Council District	Access to food/ Groceries	Access to jobs	Affordable housing	Corona-virus	Crime and Violence	Unsafe Streets	Other	Total
1	9 2.7%	19 5.7%	26 7.8%	204 60.9%	25 7.5%	32 9.6%	20 6.0%	335 100%
2	5 1.5%	19 5.7%	27 8.2%	230 69.5%	27 8.2%	14 4.2%	9 2.7%	331 100%
3	10 3.0%	27 8.2%	33 10.0%	200 60.4%	32 9.7%	19 5.7%	10 3.0%	331 100%
4	13 3.5%	21 5.7%	27 7.4%	256 69.8%	20 5.5%	18 4.9%	12 3.3%	367 100%
5	10 3.2%	23 7.3%	25 7.9%	216 68.1%	13 4.1%	23 7.3%	7 2.2%	317 100%
6	10 2.5%	17 4.2%	25 6.2%	279 68.9%	34 8.4%	24 5.9%	16 4.0%	405 100%
7	5 1.8%	18 6.5%	20 7.2%	172 61.7%	32 11.5%	24 8.6%	8 2.9%	279 100%

Table 11. Which Issue has had the second largest negative impact on your household? (N=2,314)

City Council District	Access to food/ Groceries	Access to jobs	Affordable housing	Corona-virus	Crime and Violence	Unsafe Streets	Other	Total
1	35 10.6%	47 14.3%	50 15.2%	56 17.0%	58 17.6%	54 16.4%	29 8.8%	329 100%
2	39 12.2%	48 15.0%	39 12.2%	49 15.3%	56 17.5%	51 15.9%	38 11.9%	320 100%
3	36 11.1%	44 13.5%	48 14.8%	72 22.2%	55 16.9%	44 13.5%	26 8.0%	325 100%
4	32 8.7%	34 9.3%	67 18.3%	65 17.8%	64 17.5%	62 16.9%	42 11.5%	366 100%
5	35 11.3%	42 13.6%	43 13.9%	55 17.7%	59 19.0%	50 16.1%	26 8.4%	310 100%
6	35 9.0%	34 8.7%	72 18.4%	44 11.3%	72 18.4%	71 18.2%	63 16.1%	391 100%
7	24 8.8%	43 15.8%	36 13.2%	32 11.7%	56 20.5%	60 22.0%	22 8.1%	273 100%

The study also queried registered voters with an open-ended version of Figures 6 and 7 by asking, “what is the most important issue facing your household”? Expressing themselves in their own words, half of the respondents (50.43%) stated an issue related to the coronavirus. Figure 8 analyzes

the responses to this open-ended question with a word cloud based on the frequency of phrases mentioned. Coronavirus and health were mentioned more than any other issue (987 times), with the economic issues of finances, employment, income, rent, and bills totaling 603 mentions.¹³

13 See Flores and Padilla (2020a) on the relationship between Covid-19 and low wage workers in California.

Figure 8. What is the most important issue facing your household?
(N=2233)

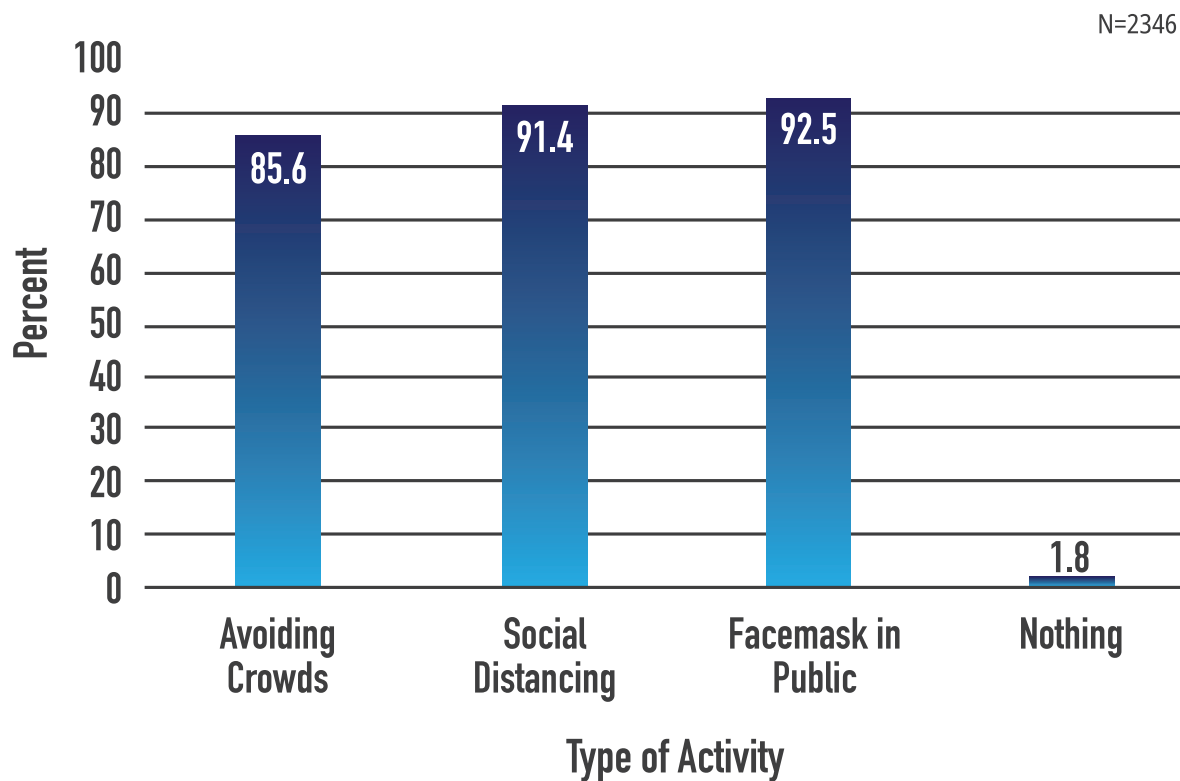


Pro-Public Health Behaviors

Respondents also expressed support for personal protection; they reported high rates of engaging in social distancing (91.4%), avoiding crowds (85.7%), and wearing a face mask in public (92.5%) (see Figure 9). In contrast, the national average for mask wearing in public is lower, at 85%.¹⁴ Such support for precautionary behaviors is reflective of populations in some of the nations with the lowest rates of COVID-19 infection, and bodes well for efforts to mitigate COVID-19 spread that rely on resident participation as the population awaits the delivery of a universal vaccination program in 2021. It also shows a willingness to take seriously the state-mandated orders to wear a mask in public and responsibility to fellow residents of the city.

¹⁴ See Stephanie Kramer, "More Americans say they are regularly wearing masks in stores and other businesses," PEW Research Center, August 27, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/27/more-americans-say-they-are-regularly-wearing-masks-in-stores-and-other-businesses/>

Figure 9. Which of the Following Activities do you use to protect yourself from the Corona Virus? (%)



Registered voters also reported relatively high levels of health insurance for their households. At the city level, the average household had 89.5% of family members covered by health insurance. This is slightly below the state average of 93%. At the level of city council districts households averaged between 85.2% to 92.6% of members with healthcare coverage (see Table 12). These high rates are likely due to MEDI-CAL, Covered California and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) first established in the state in 2010. MEDI-CAL provides

coverage to half of the residents of Fresno County, the second highest in the state. As recently as 2013, only 82.5% of Californians had health coverage.¹⁵ High levels of enrollment in health insurance programs provide at least a minimal level of protection for Fresno residents during the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, the new conservative majority on the US Supreme Court acts as a new threat to achieving universal coverage, or even maintaining high rates of basic coverage.

15 Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). 2018. "Uncertainty about federal health policy has California exploring state options." January.

Table 12 also includes several indicators of health and environmental threats in the city council districts of Fresno. The data were compiled by the CalEnviroScreen program at the census tract level. We have aggregated the indices to the City Council district level. The residents of Fresno face some of the highest rates of environmental risks in the state, including for air pollution, drinking water, and health outcomes such as low birth rates and asthma. Relatively wealthier districts, such as district 6, have lower rates of asthma, fewer instances of low birth weight babies, and

toxic releases. Nonetheless, the widespread dispersion of the health hazards and the proximity of regions make avoidance of the dangers difficult within the city limits. All city council districts also rate low on California's Healthy Places Index, with the exception of district 6 (data not shown). Increased COVID 19 vulnerability is also correlated with co-morbidity of chronic diseases (diabetes, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, etc.), all made more likely by over exposure to PM2.5 and poor air quality.

Table 12. Health Insurance Coverage and Environmental Hazards (by District)

City Council District	Mean % of Household with Health Insurance (n=2286)	Particulate Matter - PM 2.5 (2018)	Toxic Releases (2018)	Ozone (2018)	Drinking Water (2018)	Asthma (2018)	Low Birth Weight (2018)
1	86.2	96.9	71.5	90.4	82.9	88.45	78.95
2	89.8	96.58	71.68	88.16	86.32	68.11	62.89
3	91.1	97	82.39	94.5	84.86	92.25	82.30
4	89.8	97	69.57	97.67	85.76	79.05	76.05
5	90.6	97	81.31	98	85.75	84.44	80.56
6	92.6	97	69	96.53	88.16	50.42	54.61
7	85.2	97	72	96.92	82.89	90.12	85.65
Entire City	89.5						

Covid and Economic Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic's massive economic disruptions negatively affected a significant number of Fresno registered voters. **Half of all households sampled in Fresno (50.0%) reported a job loss or reduction of hours during the pandemic** (See Table 13). Fresno voter households maintain a much higher level of economic loss caused by covid-19 according to nationally representative surveys taken at around the same time period, which report 42% of all U.S. households with job loss or reduced work hours (Parker et al. 2020). At the national

level, half of those reporting job loss because of the coronavirus remain unemployed (ibid). COVID-19 related income losses were especially acute among low income households. Table 14 documents economic loss by household income. Three in five (60.5%) households earning less than \$25,000 per year experienced an income decline during the pandemic, and a majority (54.3%) of households with annual incomes of \$25,000-\$49,999 suffered an income decline. Middle-income households also suffered pandemic income decline at a significant rate. A large minority (43.2%) of households earning \$50,000-\$74,999 suffered income decline, as did one in three (33.4%) of households with incomes at or above \$75,000 per year. In geographic terms, City Council District 3 reported the largest economic losses, while households in City Council District 6 fared slightly better off relative to other districts (see Table 16). These findings are consistent with a number of national and state reports on the economic consequences of the pandemic. One recent study found that 45 percent of the California labor force has filed for unemployment insurance since the onset of the pandemic (McCullough 2020).

Table 13. Has someone in your household lost a job or had work hours reduced because of the economic slowdown caused by the Coronavirus in the past months?

Entire City	Yes	No
	1,173 (50.02%)	1,172 (49.98%)

Table 14. Job Loss or Work Hours Reduced by Income

Household Income	Yes	No
\$0-24,999	285 (60.51%)	186 (39.49%)
\$25,000-49,999	438 (54.34%)	368 (45.66%)
\$50,000-74,999	213 (43.20%)	280 (56.80%)
\$75,000 and above	112 (33.43%)	223 (66.57%)

Latina/o/x, African-American and Asian American respondents all reported much higher rates of pandemic-related income loss than whites (See Table 15). More than half of Latina/o/x (57.0%), African-American (54.6%), and Asian American and Pacific Islander (54.5%) respondents in Fresno reported household income decline following the pandemic. African American and Latina/o/x households have had to draw from savings and retirement to

pay bills more than other groups since the arrival of the pandemic (Parker et al. 2020). The economic burden for Latinos is compounded by the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus in terms of mortality. In California, Latinos have experienced a greater increase in pandemic-era deaths than any other group, especially immigrants (Padilla 2020).

In another survey study of rural households in Merced, Fresno, and Tulare counties, where two thirds of respondents identified as Latino, 44% lost income since the pandemic, and 30 percent reported running out of food or relying on food stamps or a foodbank (Flores 2020). McCullough (2020) reports that an astounding 85% of the Black workforce in California has applied at some point for unemployment since March of 2020.¹⁶

Table 15. Job Loss or Work Hours Reduced by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No
Latino/a	499 (57.03%)	376 (42.97%)
African American	106 (54.64%)	88 (45.36%)
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	61 (54.46%)	51 (45.54%)
Native American	15 (48.39%)	16 (51.61%)
White	356 (41.98%)	492 (58.02%)
Two or More	34 (44.74%)	42 (55.26%)
Other	5 (35.71%)	9 (64.29%)

Respondents were additionally asked what they thought was the percentage chance of their family running out of money in the next three months. Among all respondents living in households with an income, the average response was a 23% chance of running out

Table 16. Job Loss or Work Hours Reduced because of Pandemic (by City Council District)

City Council District	Yes	No
1	159 48.18%	171 51.82%
2	174 52.89%	155 47.11%
3	178 54.94%	146 45.06%
4	185 50.00%	185 50.00%
5	153 48.11%	165 51.89%
6	178 44.95%	218 55.05%
7	146 52.52%	132 47.48%
Total	1,173 50.02%	1,172 49.98%

of money in the next three months. Among registered voters with the lowest annual household income—less than \$25,000—the number rises to a 36% average chance of running out of money in the next three months.

¹⁶ See also Flores and Padilla (2020b).

The Issue of Affordable Housing

The cost of housing was another major economic issue of concern to Fresno residents, especially in the context of the economic stress unleashed by the pandemic. 76 percent of those surveyed thought that the city of Fresno has an affordable housing problem (Table 17). This concern with affordable housing in Fresno appears much higher than the California state-wide average of 63% and the Central Valley-wide average of 48% in response to affordable housing as a “big problem” (Baldassare et al. 2020).

Table 17. Do you believe residents in the city of Fresno have an affordable housing problem?

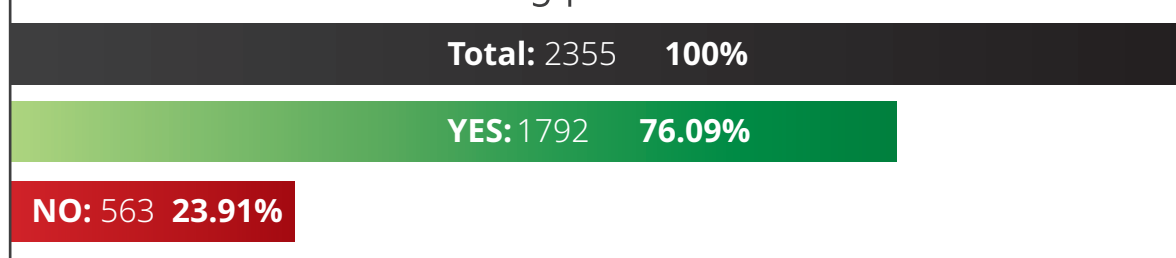


Table 18. Do you believe residents in the city of Fresno have an affordable housing problem? (by city council district) with Structural Measures of Housing and Income¹⁷

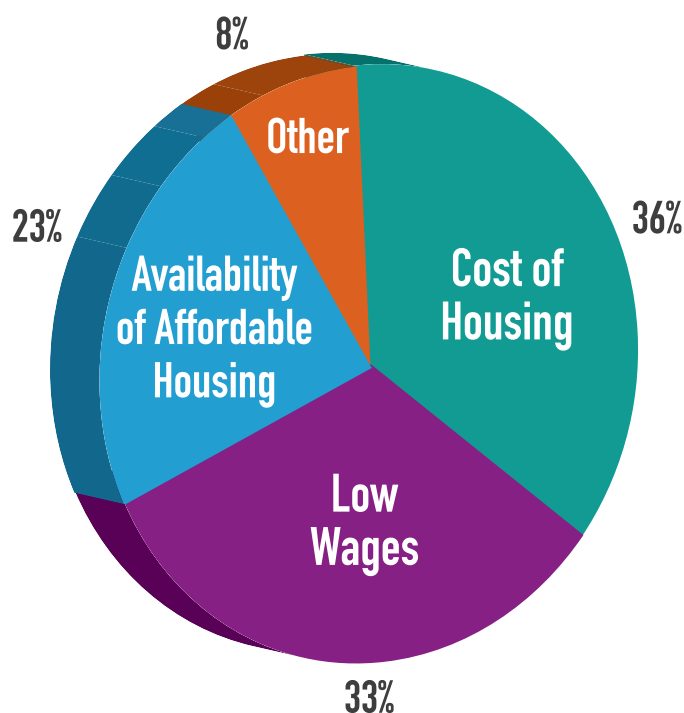
City Council District	Yes	No	Housing Burden Index (2018)	Live in Renter Occupied Units (2018)	Number of persons living in household (2018)	Household income (2018)
1	260 77.38%	76 22.62%	62.55	50%	3.1	\$48,829
2	246 74.55%	84 25.45%	29.37	42%	2.7	\$69,420
3	262 80.12%	65 19.88%	65.18	60%	3.4	\$35,763
4	270 73.17%	99 26.83%	61.05	59%	3.1	\$43,879
5	242 76.10%	76 23.90%	70.13	58%	3.7	\$40,856
6	293 74.18%	102 25.82%	25.90	44%	2.7	\$76,427
7	219 78.21%	61 21.79%	79.23	63%	3.3	\$33,757
Total	1,792 76.09%	563 23.91%				

¹⁷ The additional housing data was aggregated to the City Council District level by taking the grand average of census tract level data within district boundaries.

When we break the responses down by city council district (Table 18), we see that the same perceptions remain with residents in districts 3 and 7 reporting housing expenses as a problem at even higher rates (80 and 78 percent, respectively). Table 18 also shows the housing burden index by city council district – a measure by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of households that are

both low income and highly burdened by housings costs (higher scores represent a higher burden). In 5 out of 7 City Council Districts, 50% or more of voters are renters and do not own their homes. Table 18 shows that there is a general correspondence between concern for affordable housing and the empirical data on the structural burden by district.

Figure 10. What do Fresno Residents See as the Most Important Cause of the Housing Problem?



Citizens were also asked what they thought were leading causes of the problem of affordable housing (Figure 10). The leading answer was the cost of housing (36%), followed closely by low wages (33%).

The city was already facing serious price inflation for rentable housing in the years just prior to the pandemic. Fresno Table

Partners, such as the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, focus much of their work on advocating for affordable housing. 60 percent of renters in Fresno County are rent burdened, using a minimum of 30% of their monthly earnings to pay for housing. 20 percent of Fresno County residents spend half or more of their income

on rent. The crisis reaches emergency levels for the poor with 69% of extremely low-income households using more than half of their income for housing costs.¹⁸ One recent report concludes, “renters in Fresno County need to earn \$19.66 per hour — 1.5 times the state minimum wage — to afford the average monthly asking rent of \$1,022.”¹⁹

In just a one-year period between 2018 and 2019, apartment rent in the city of Fresno increased by 6.2 percent, the second highest out of the 10 largest cities in the state.²⁰ The homelessness rate in the city increased 23 percent in this same short time frame.²¹ The economic hardship accompanying the pandemic has only exacerbated the city’s housing affordability crisis, and the voter responses reflect this sentiment.

The City of Fresno carried out its own community-based research on housing in the City in 2019 and early 2020 with a multi-method approach of focus groups, stakeholder and intercept interviews, neighborhood meetings, and an online convenience-sample survey.²² Residents in the community meetings and focus groups emphasized affordable housing and the need for more single-family homes, as well as the severe barriers caused by demands for security deposits and first and last month’s rent paid in advance to property owners and managers. In the survey portion of the study of 500 respondents, housing affordability was the most frequently stated problem related to housing, and half of respondents reported housing discrimination as an issue.

18 See, California Housing Partnership. 2020. “Fresno County 2020 Affordable Housing Needs Report.” <https://chpc.net/resources/fresno-county-housing-need-report-2020/>

19 Ibid.

20 See Laura Bliss, “California’s Poorest Big City Faces a Different Kind of Housing Crisis.” Bloomberg CityLab, September 30, 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-30/once-affordable-fresno-faces-a-new-housing-crunch>

21 Ibid

22 See, City of Fresno. 2020. “Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.” <https://www.fresno.gov/darm/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/02/Draft-2020-Analysis-of-Impediments-to-Fair-Housing-Choice.pdf>

PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE CITY BUDGET

The Fresno Speaks survey covered several dimensions of public safety and priorities for city investment, including gangs, reducing violence, and police reform. The survey began by asking registered voters what public safety and feeling safe meant to them as an open-ended question. The results are presented in the word cloud of phrase density in Figure 11. The most commonly occurring words were police, community, people, and street. The phrases with the greatest frequency included: keeping public safe; being safe; safe streets; and safe community.

Figure 11. What does public safety mean to you, what makes the public feel and stay safe?



When asked their top choice to invest city revenue to reduce gang violence, Figure 12 demonstrates respondents first preferred more job opportunities for persons on probation, parole, or formerly incarcerated

(30.4%), followed closely by more youth job opportunities (28.9%). Figure 13 shows these same trends across city council districts.

Figure 12. Best solution to end gang violence? (N=2327)

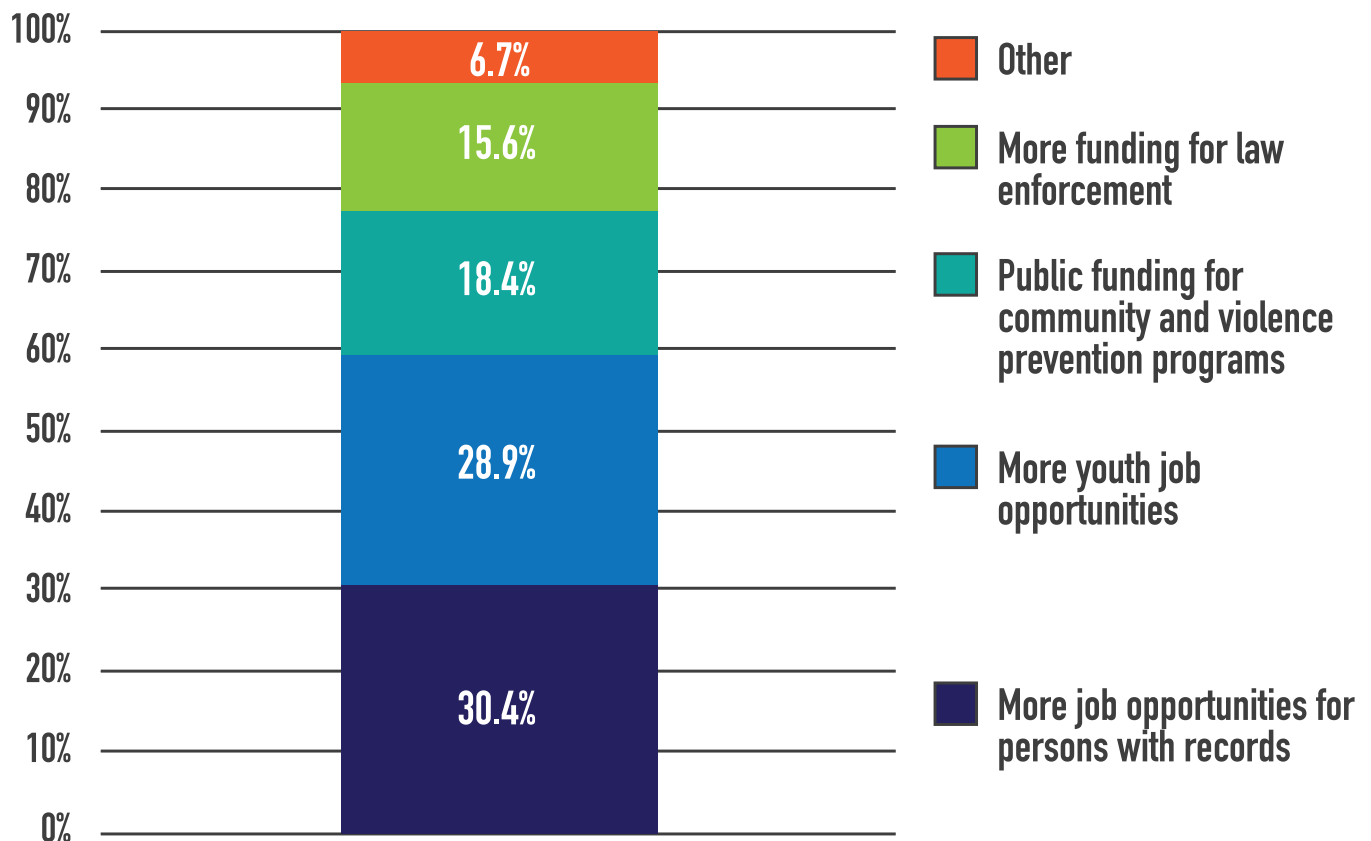


Figure 13. Best Solution to Successfully Reduce Gang Violence?

(by City Council District)

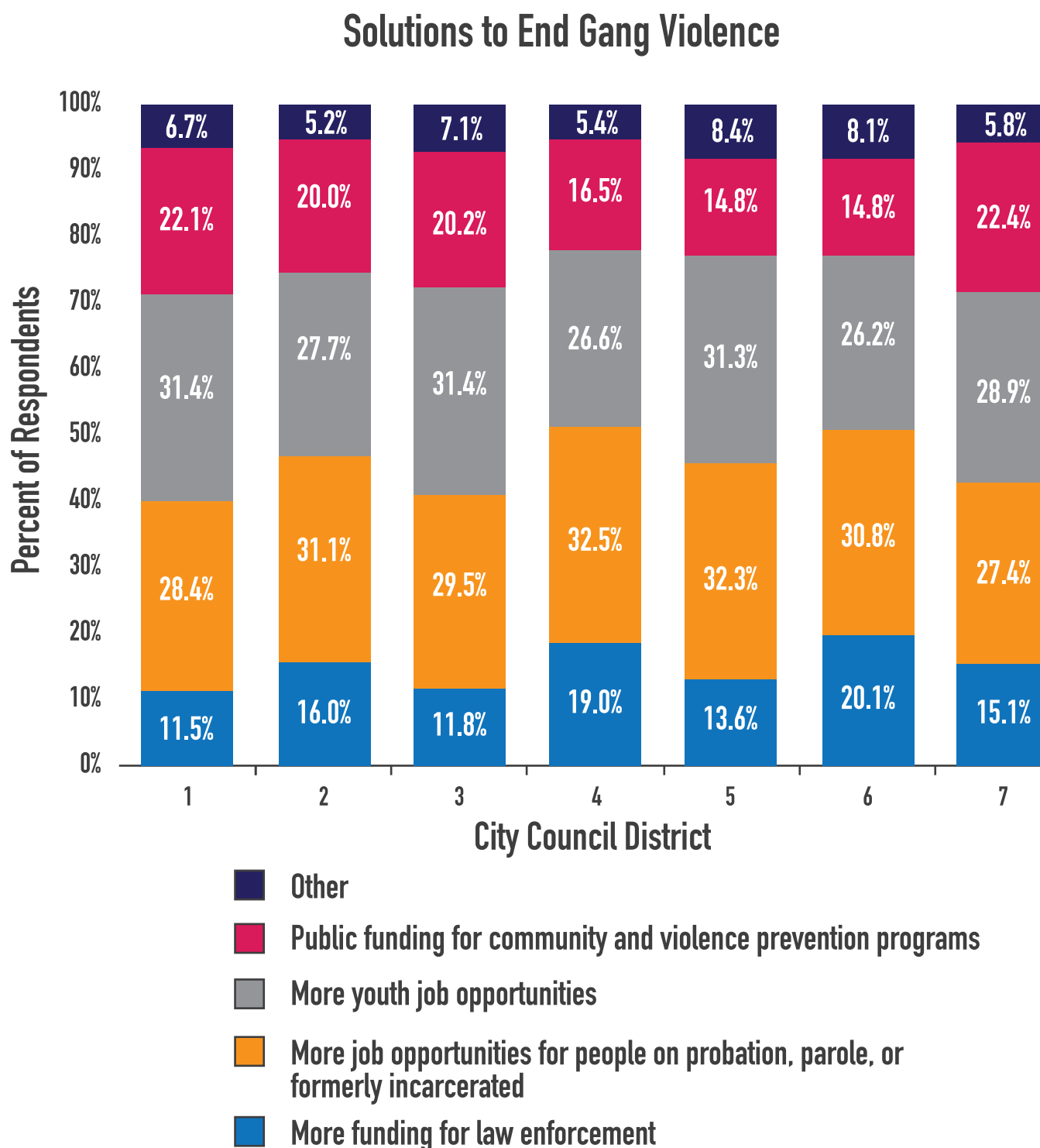
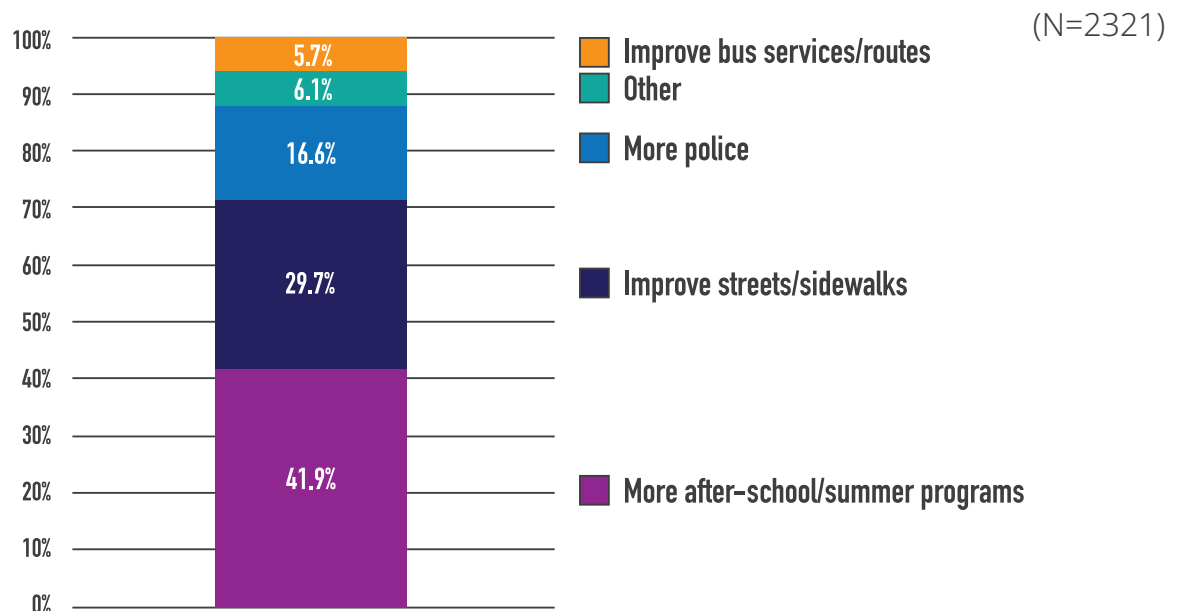


Figure 14. Best use of Measure A “Cannabis Tax” to benefit own household



Respondents also weighed in on the distribution of the new “Measure A” Cannabis tax. When asked for their top choice for use of Measure A funds (to best benefit the family members in their household), respondents selected “more after school and summer youth services” (41.9%) far above any other

options (see Figure 14). Spending cannabis tax revenues on “improving streets, sidewalks, and streetlights” was the second most popular preference (29.7%), with “additional funding for police” third (16.6%). These preferences held up across all seven city voting districts (Table 19).

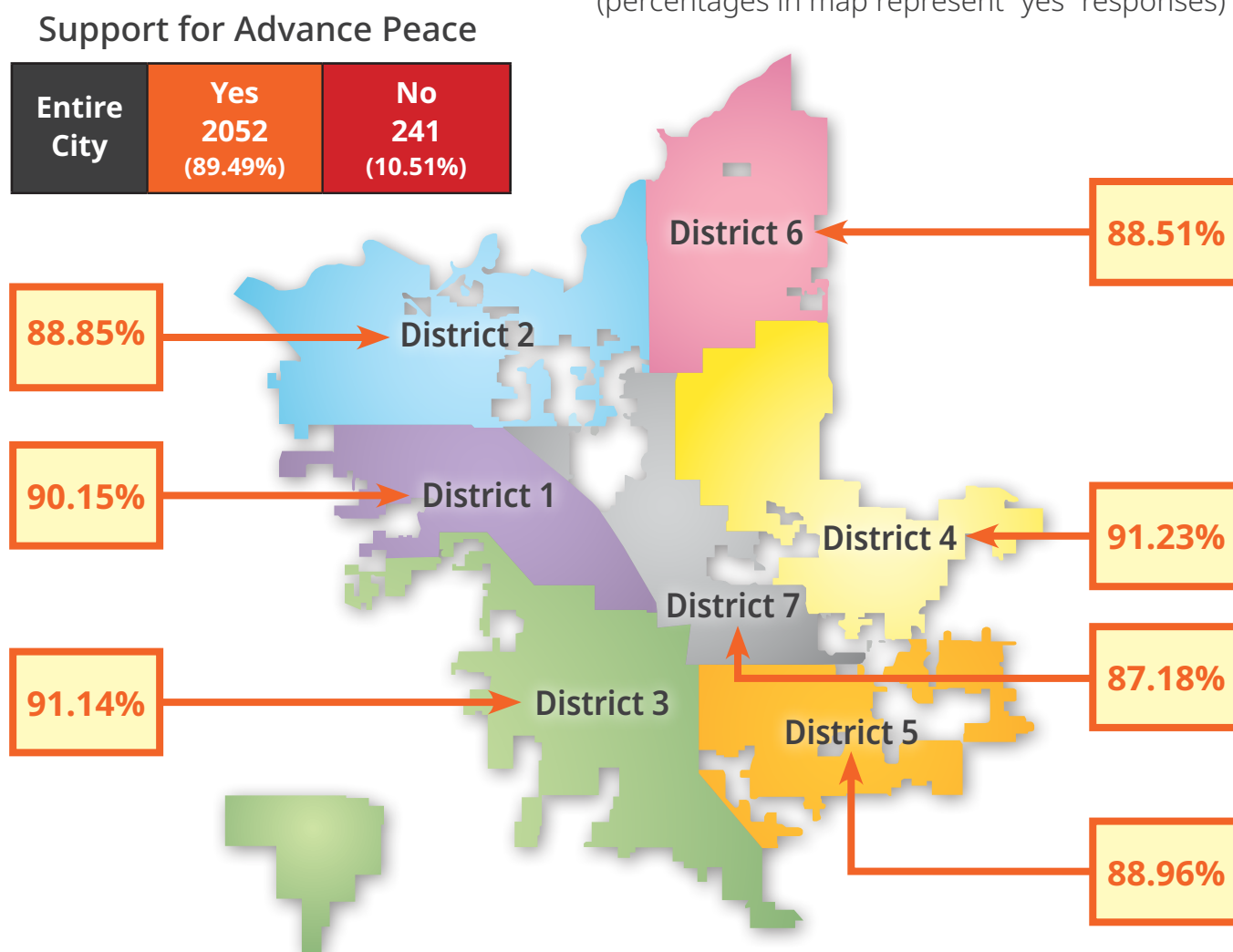
Table 19. Best use of Measure A “Cannabis Tax” by City Council District

City Council District	Improve bus service/ routes	Improve streets/ sidewalks	More after school/ summer programs	More police	Other	Total
1	15 4.6%	112 33.9%	133 40.3%	53 16.1%	17 5.2%	330 100%
2	24 7.5%	89 27.6%	128 39.8%	58 18.0%	23 7.1%	322 100%
3	14 4.4%	99 30.7%	142 44.1%	42 13.0%	25 7.8%	322 100%
4	19 5.2%	96 26.2%	162 44.1%	70 19.1%	20 5.5%	367 100%
5	18 5.8%	97 31.3%	122 39.4%	48 15.5%	25 8.1%	310 100%
6	24 6.1%	114 28.8%	164 41.4%	75 18.9%	19 4.8%	396 100%
7	18 6.6%	83 30.3%	121 44.2%	40 14.6%	12 4.4%	274 100%

Advance Peace

In addition to asking voters about where to invest city funds to reduce gang violence, the survey also queried residents about a specific violence prevention – Advance Peace. It is a new initiative passed by the city council in June of 2020, after the Mayor had previously vetoed its approval in 2019. The program has reduced homicides and firearm-related violence in the cities of Richmond, Sacramento, and Stockton.²³ Grassroots and community-based organizations have advocated in the city of Fresno for the implementation of Advance Peace for the past couple of years.²⁴

Figure 15. Support for the Advance Peace Violence Prevention Program²⁵
(percentages in map represent “yes” responses)



²³ See, <https://www.advancepeace.org/about/learning-evaluation-impact/>

²⁴ <https://www.thetrace.org/2019/12/fresno-gun-violence-advocates-advance-peace/>

²⁵ The entire question on Advance Peace, read as follows, “The Advance Peace program provides resources — such as education, job training, addiction services, and counseling — to those most at risk of being a perpetrator or victim of gun violence. Academic research indicates that such a prevention program may reduce gun violence. The Fresno City council voted to support “Advance Peace.” Would you favor the city of Fresno continuing to support Advance Peace Program?”

The Fresno City Council supported partial financing of the program with \$125,000 in October of 2020. Other funding will come from the Economic Opportunities Commission, with the goal of reducing gun violence by 10% over the next year. Advance Peace connects at risk populations with social services and job opportunities. Fresno voters strongly supported the continuance of the new program to reduce violence with 89.5 percent backing this new and creative initiative. These same trends held up across all seven city council districts with firm preferences for the city of Fresno to continue funding this novel violence prevention program (See Figure 15).

Police Reform and Voter Preferences

As issues of public safety and law enforcement practices reached center stage in the national spotlight in 2020, Fresno registered voters expressed concerns with local policing. In the city of Fresno, a new police commission was formed in June of 2020. In October of 2020 the commission released its 73 recommendations for reform and the report was approved by a vote of 31-1.²⁶ In November of 2020, the Fresno City Council unanimously approved the Police Reform Commission's report.²⁷ Several community-based organizations (CBOs) were involved in advocating for police reform and serving on the commission, such as Barrios Unidos, Building Healthy Communities, Youth Organize California, NAACP, and Fresno County Civic Engagement Table partners Faith in the Valley and Jakara Movement.

In our study, respondents expressed strong support for elected officials advocating for police reform. When asked if they would support elected officials that advocated for police reform, more than three in four (77.9%) responded affirmatively. This high support for reform in Fresno is consistent with the national sentiment on altering current models and practices of policing.²⁸ Strikingly, support for elected officials championing police reform is found across all regions of the city. Respondents in all seven city council voting districts expressed a firm preference for police reform (See Figure 16). These views are similar to national surveys that show strong support for major police reforms in a variety of specific dimensions (e.g., training, more diverse recruitment, community relations, stop and frisk, etc).²⁹

26 To see all 73 recommendations, link here: <https://www.yourcentralvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2020/10/OLB-Final-Ballot-2-word-2.pdf>

27 <https://www.kvpr.org/post/what-s-next-after-fresno-city-council-accepts-police-reform-commission-s-report#stream/0>

28 See, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-poll/public-agenda-hidden-common-ground-police-reform>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/12/us/gallup-poll-police.html>; and <https://www.businessinsider.com/majority-americans-say-some-police-reform-is-needed-gallup-2020-7>

29 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/315962/americans-say-policing-needs-major-changes.aspx>;
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/06/29/us-police-reform-poll-finds-support-more-training-transparency/3259628001/>;
<https://www.publicconsultation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PoliceReformReport0720.pdf>

Figure 16. Would you support elected officials that advocated for police reform? (percentages in map represent “yes” responses)

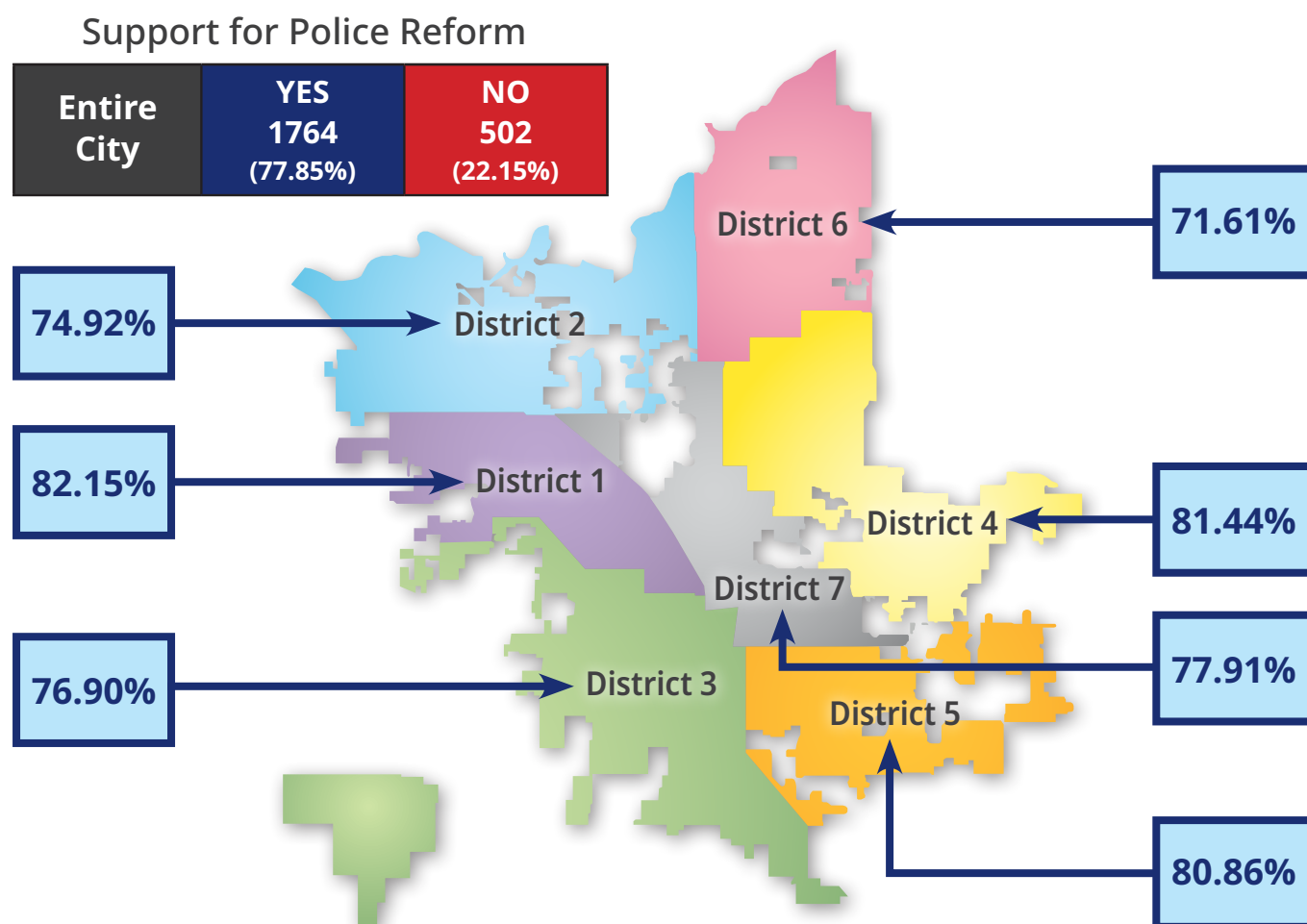
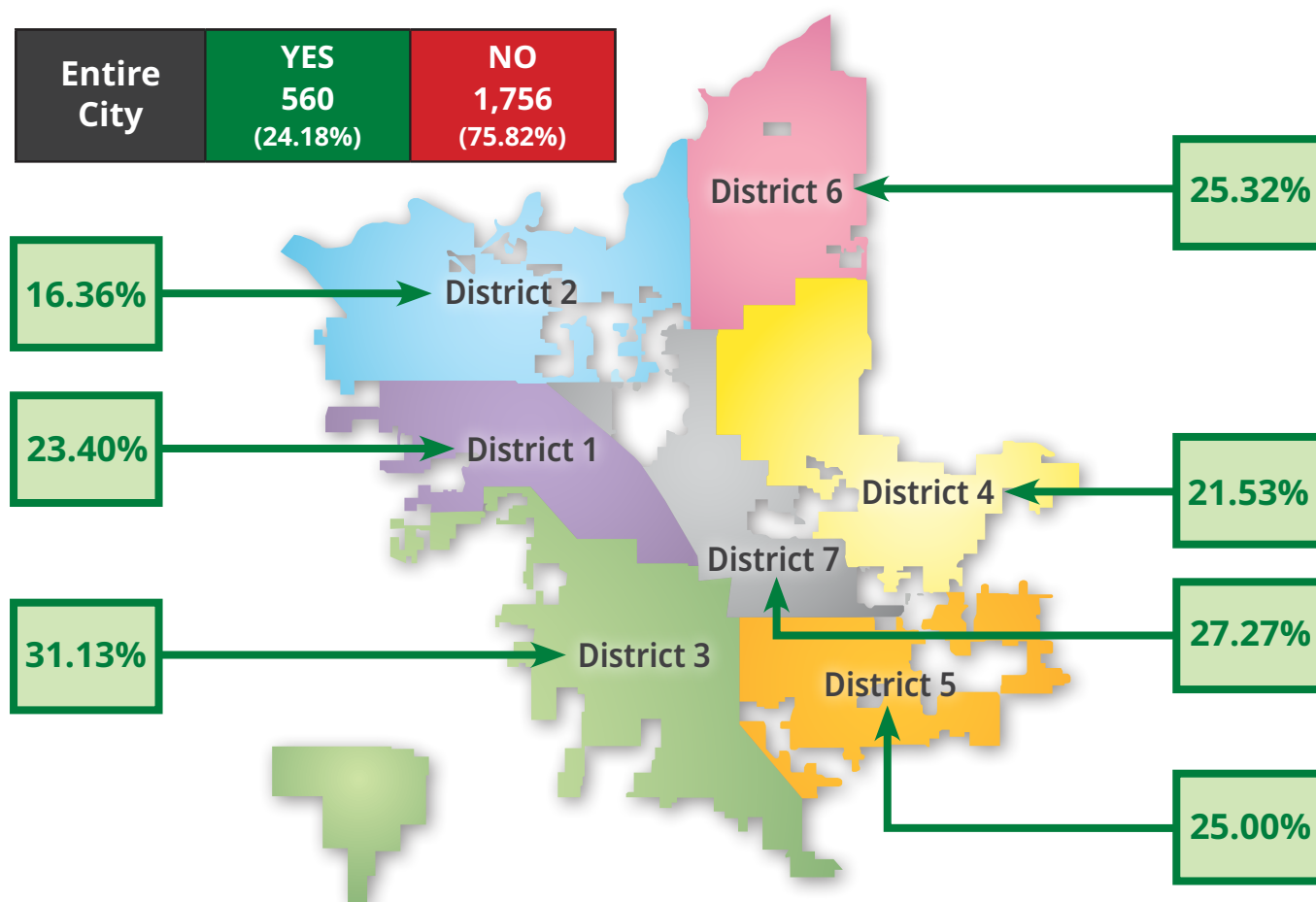


Figure 17. What does Police Reform Mean to You?



The study also asked an open-ended question on what police reform meant by expressing voters thoughts in their own words. The relative density of the responses appears in Figure 17. The most common responses focused on training and accountability.

Figure 18. Do you view over-policing as a problem in your neighborhood?
(percentages in map represent “yes” responses)



Another issue addressed at the local level centered on over-policing. Registered voters were specifically asked if they perceived over-policing as a problem in their neighborhood (Figure 18, Tables 20-21). Slightly less than a quarter of citizens city-wide reported over-policing as a serious issue. Figure 18 shows that city council districts with lower-income households report over-policing at higher

rates. Table 20 reveals that African American and Latino respondents view over-policing as a problem over other groups (34.5% and 25.9%, respectively). Finally, Table 21 shows a clear pattern of concern with over-policing by household income, with excessive law enforcement viewed negatively by working-class and low-income households at higher rates.

Table 20. Do you view over-policing as a problem in your neighborhood?
(by race/ethnicity)

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No	Total
African American/ Black	67 34.54%	127 65.46%	194 100%
Latino/a	226 25.86%	648 74.14%	874 100%
Asian American/ Pacific	20 18.35%	89 81.65%	109 100%
White	163 19.22%	685 80.78%	848 100%
Native American	8 27.59%	21 72.41%	29 100%
Other	3 21.43%	11 78.57%	14 100%
Two or more	14 18.42%	62 81.58%	76 100%
Total	501 23.37%	1,643 76.63%	2,144 100%

Table 21. Do you view over-policing as a problem in your neighborhood?
(by income)

Household Income	Yes	No	Total
\$0-24,999	178 37.71%	294 62.29%	472 100%
\$25,000-49,999	205 25.47%	600 74.53%	805 100%
\$50,000-74,999	83 16.84%	410 83.16%	493 100%
\$75,000 and above	45 13.47%	289 86.53%	334 100%
Total	511 24.29%	1,593 75.71%	2,104 100%

Figure 19. What Percent of the General City Budget Should be Dedicated to Law Enforcement?

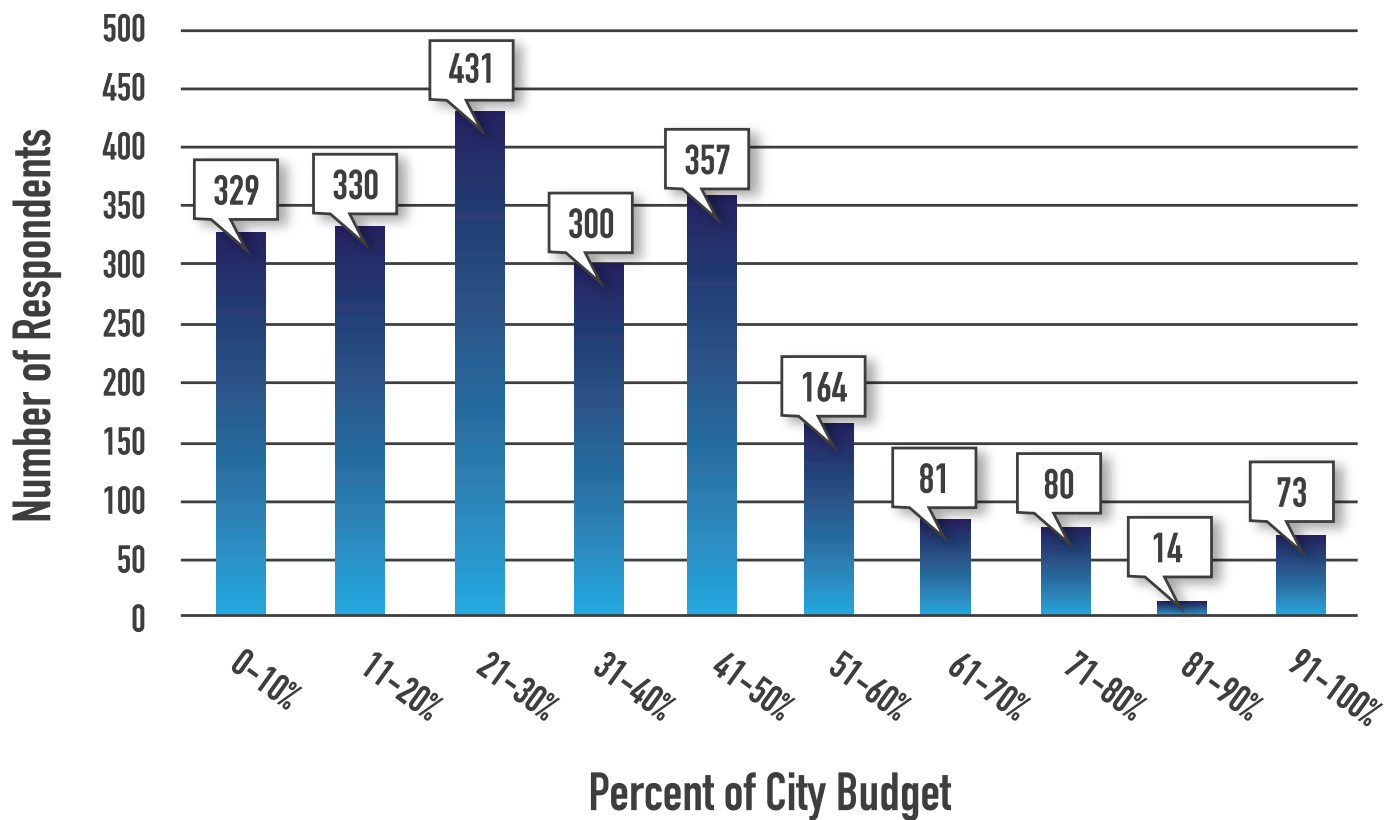


Figure 19 asks voters on what the contribution of the city budget should be to law enforcement. It currently stands at around 52 percent.³⁰ The mean response was 36.4% of the city budget should be apportioned for law enforcement, while the median was 30%. 64% of respondents stated that 40% or less of

the city budget should be allocated to the police department. These findings should be given careful consideration in the context of the 2020 police reform commission recommendations, in terms of regions and groups to target to assist in building better models of community safety and well-being.

³⁰ It should be noted, that when respondents were queried about the police budget, they were not given information on the current level of funding.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Voting

Respondents reported actively engaging to address the major social issues negatively impacting communities in 2020. More than three-fourths (78.6%) of respondents reported voting in the primary elections in March of 2020, while nearly all (95%) stated they intended to vote in the November 2020 general elections (Table 22). These are much higher rates of voting than in the 2012 or 2016 general elections in the city of Fresno,³¹ and consistent with the national trend in 2020, with a record in voter turnout for the presidential elections. In Fresno County, 74.65% of eligible voters cast ballots in the November 2020 elections, up from 66.7% in 2016 presidential elections, and 63.8% in the 2012 general elections.³²



First joint canvass event of the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table held at Mary Ella Brown Community Center in City Council District 3 (October 2018)

Table 22. Voting in Primary and General Elections in 2020

	Yes	No	Total
Did You Vote in March 2020 Primary Elections?	1792 (78.60%)	488 (21.40%)	2280 (100%)
Do You Plan to Vote in the November 2020 Elections?	2146 (95.04%)	112 (4.96%)	2258 (100%)

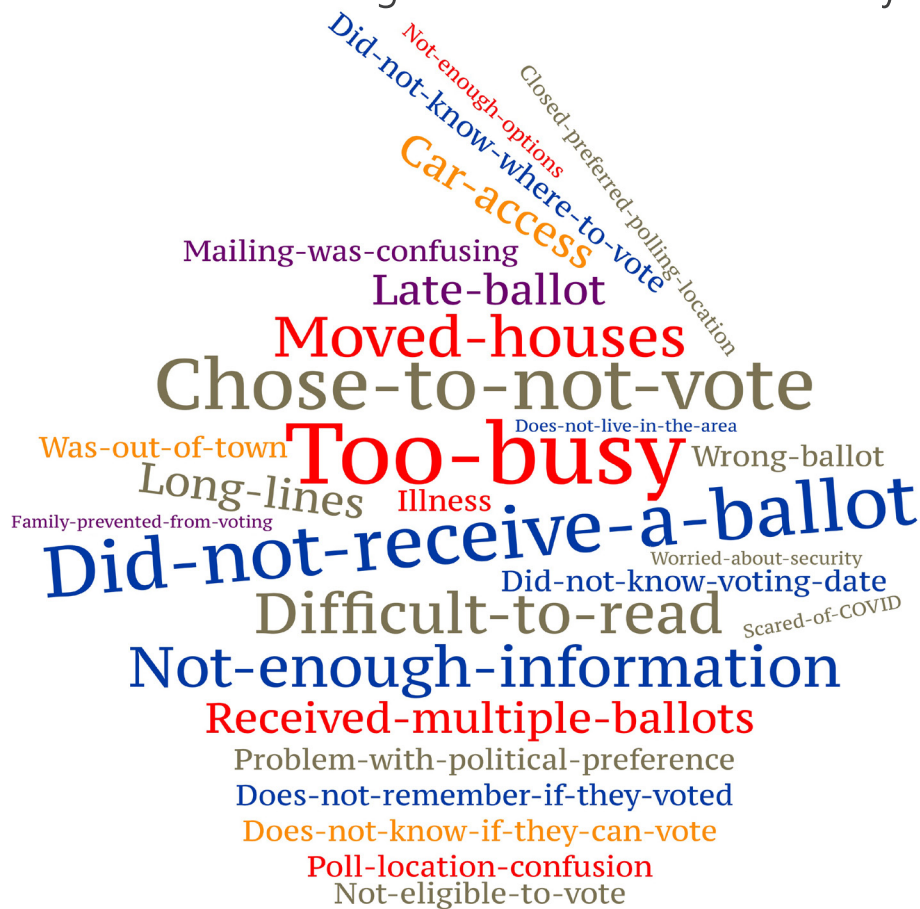
31 See, Berkeley Statewide Database <https://covid19.healthylivesindex.org/> Year: 2016

32 County of Fresno Consolidated General Election, November 3, 2020, Final Official Results. <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters/election-information/election-results/results-of-november-3-2020-presidential-general-election>

We also asked respondents if they had any difficulty voting in the March 2020 primary elections. 4.25% of survey participants stated they had a problem voting. Figure 20 provides a word cloud on the most

common problems mentioned for this group. The most common response included: Too-busy; Did-not-receive-a-ballot; Moved-houses; Difficult-to-read; Late-ballot; and Not-enough-information.

Figure 20. Difficulties in Voting in the March 2020 Primary Elections



Civic Participation

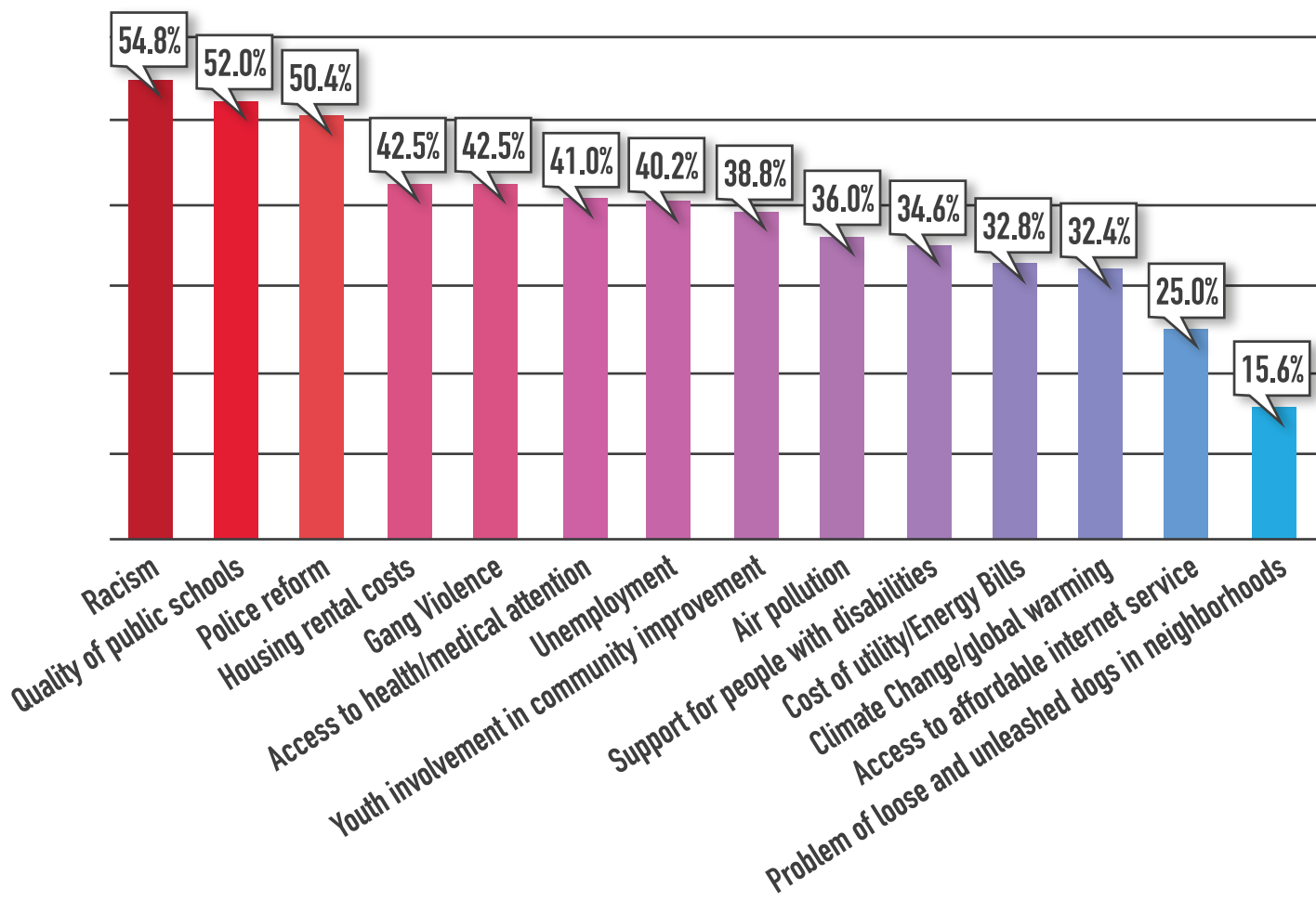
Besides electoral participation, respondents also expressed a desire to engage in grassroots civic participation. Respondents were asked about their willingness to attend a meeting to improve the situation from a list of 14 issues. The top issues in which respondents expressed willingness to collectively seek solutions included racism (55%), quality of education (52%), and police reform (50%) (See Figure 22).

Community organizers understand how difficult organizing work is to encourage neighborhood residents to attend a local meeting. The results of Figure 21 show that there is a large interested pool in the city willing to consider joining a local meeting to improve the quality of life in the region. Roughly one third of respondents or more stated they were willing to attend a meeting on most issues. The next task for community

based organizations (CBOs) will be to take advantage of this potential pool for civic engagement and move people from a

general interest in participating to actually showing up at a neighborhood meeting (Almeida 2019).

Figure 21. Percentage willing to attend a local meeting to strategize on how to improve the situation by issue.



A related question deals with outreach, how do CBOs best communicate with the public to let residents know about upcoming issues and gatherings. Figure 22 shows the responses of asking voters about the best way to improve youth outreach for civic engagement. The most common responses focused on the everyday institution of the

public schools (30%), followed by the heavy use of social media (23%). The survey also asked respondents on how they would like to receive information about issues discussed. Text messaging was the most common response with a phone call and email as the second and third preference (see Figure 23).

Figure 22. The Best way to get youth involved in civic activities in Fresno (n=2283)

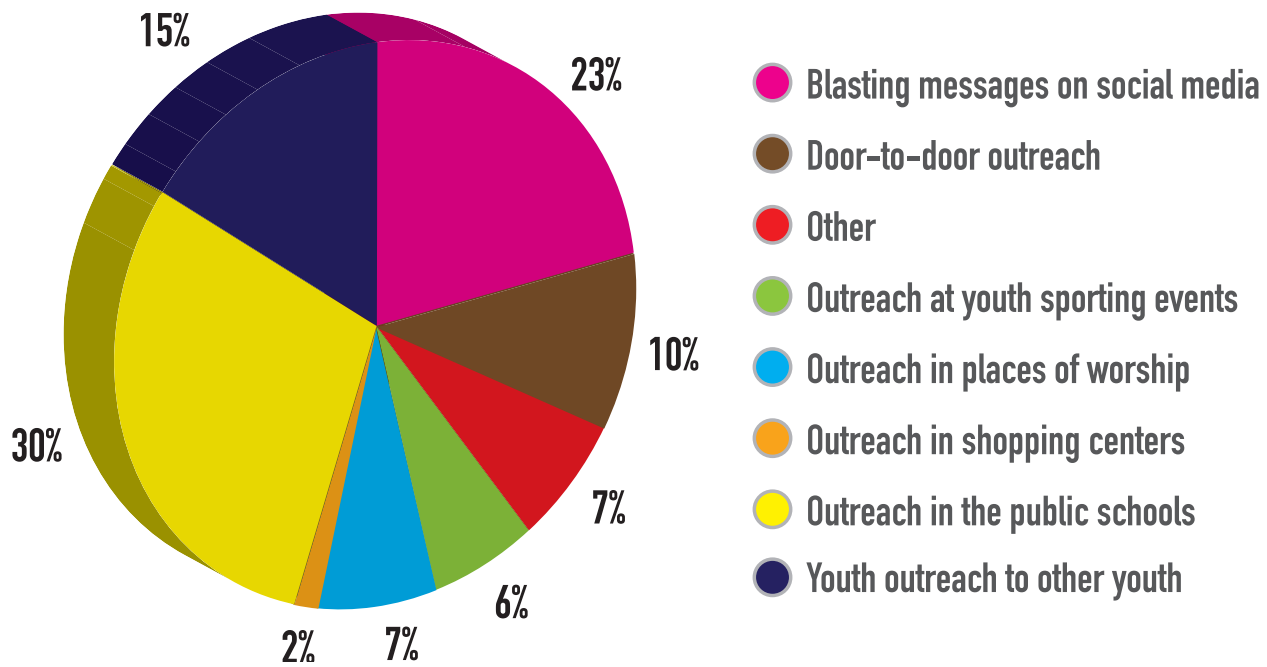


Figure 23. How Do you Prefer to Get Your Information? (n=2151)

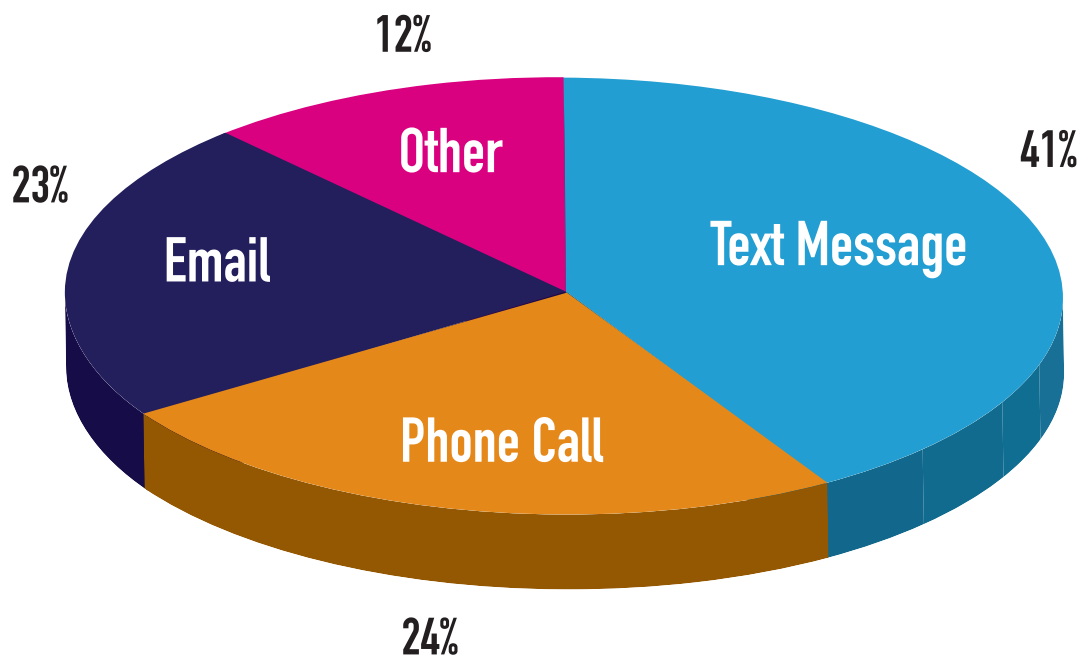
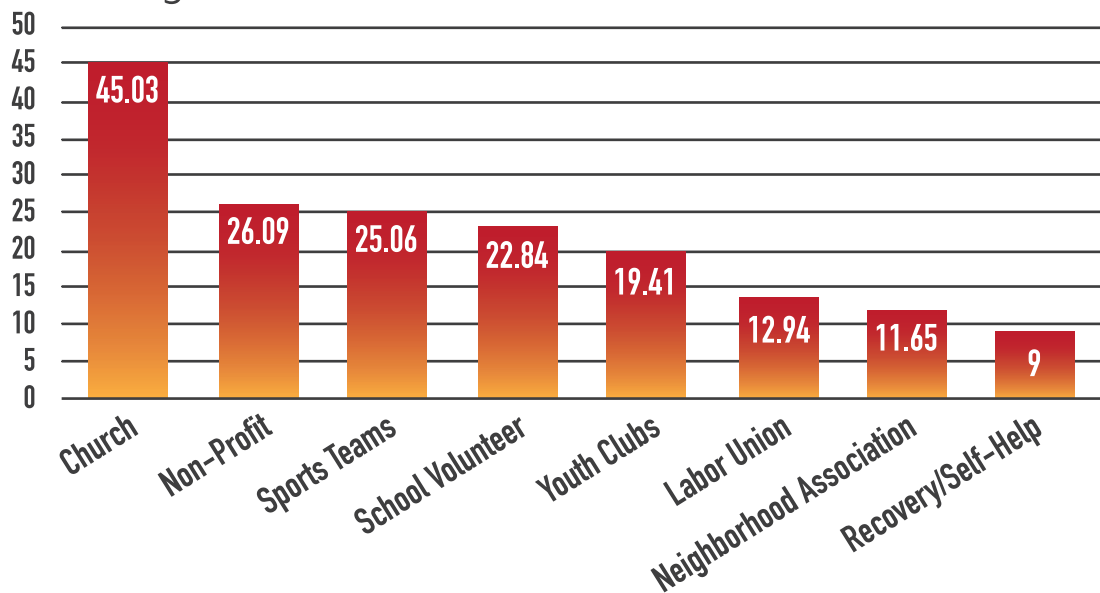


Figure 24. Percent Participating in the Following Community Organizations



Figures 24 and 25 share a similar pattern to the 2018 pilot survey in city council district 3. The largest number of respondents (31.4%) belong to one local organization based on the options in Figure 24, and the most common organization is a church. An additional 21% are or were affiliated with two local organizations. In a world with

so many demands on time, voters tend to focus their attention on one organization. The affiliation with a labor union at 12.9% is consistent with the California average of 15% in 2019 and higher than the national average of around 10%, given that some respondents were unemployed or retired.

Figure 25. Number of Local Organizational Affiliations of Respondents (n=2366)

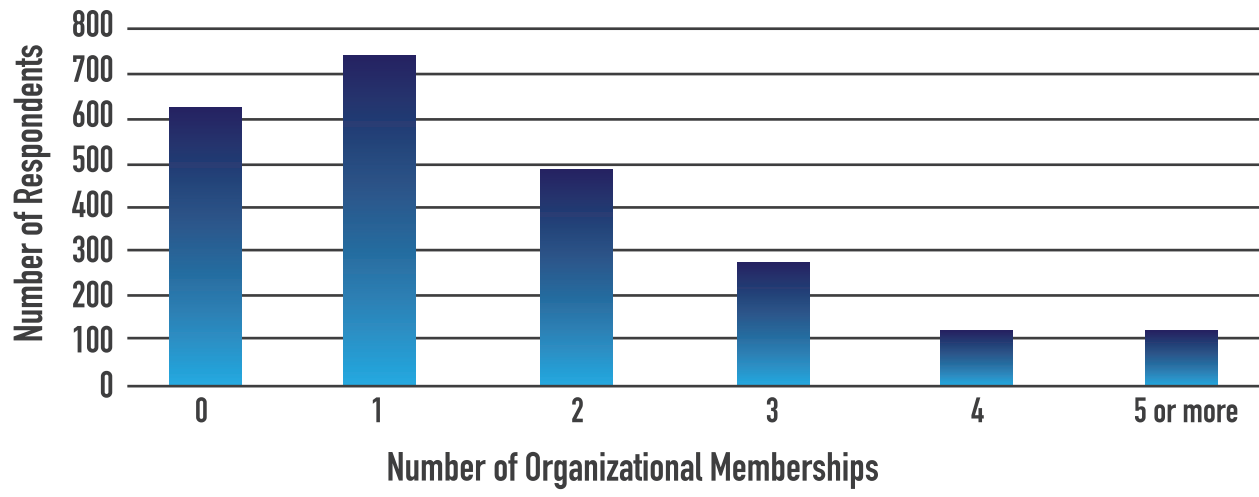
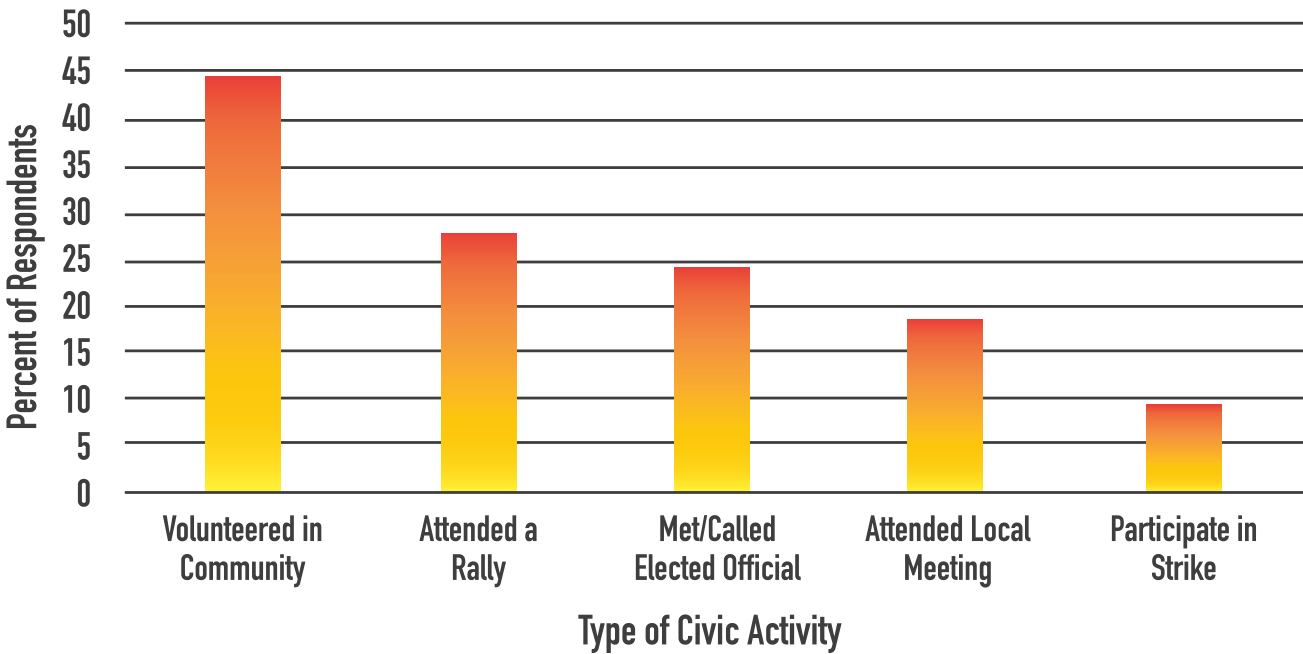


Figure 26. Past Participation in Civic Activities (n= 2319)



Figures 26 and 27 report the types of past civic activities respondents stated that they have participated in the past. Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) participated in some form of civic engagement. The most common activity involved volunteering for community service. The number of people that stated they have attended a rally (27.8%) is much higher than the US average. In a meta-analysis of survey research on protest attendance, the range varied from 7% to 22% of Americans stating they had ever attended a demonstration (Caren et al. 2011). Perhaps the heightened protest

climate of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the summer of 2020 gave a boost to the reporting among Fresno residents, as well as the organizing work of community-based organizations (CBOs) in the city. By late August of 2020, over 10,500 protest events had occurred nationally since the police murder of George Floyd on May 25. Political scientists categorized 95 to 97 percent of these protest events as nonviolent actions.³³ Over this same time period, at least 5 major anti-racism demonstrations took place in the city of Fresno, and several more in towns and cities in the County of Fresno.

33 See, “Demonstrations and Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020.” ACLED, September 2020. and Erica Chenoweth and Jeremy Pressman, “This summer’s Black Lives Matter protesters were overwhelmingly peaceful, our research finds,” Washington Post, October 16, 2020.

Figure 27. Number of Types of Past Civic Activities Reported by Respondents (n=2,323)

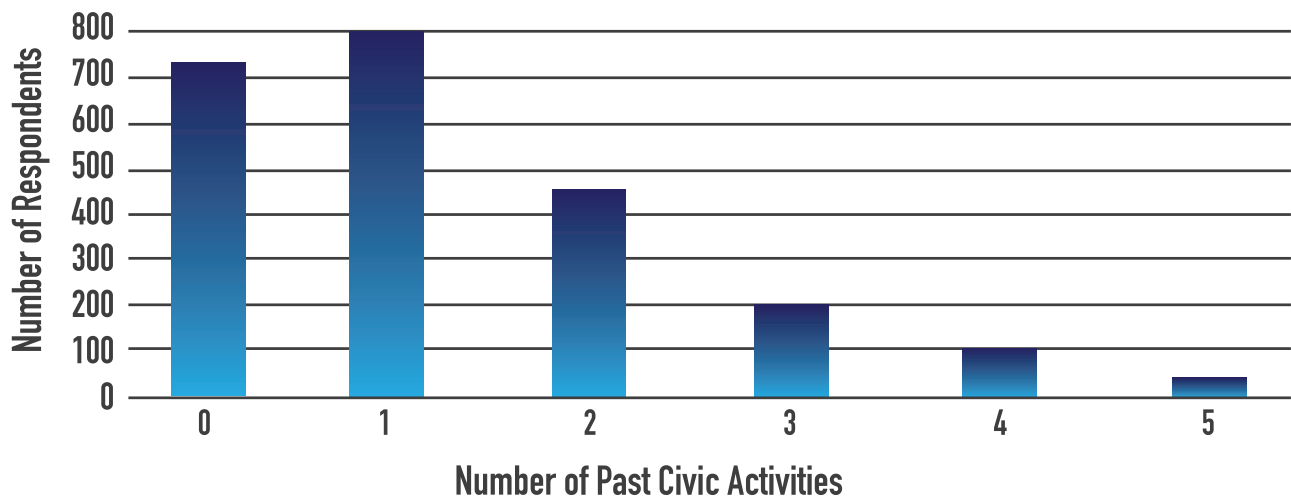
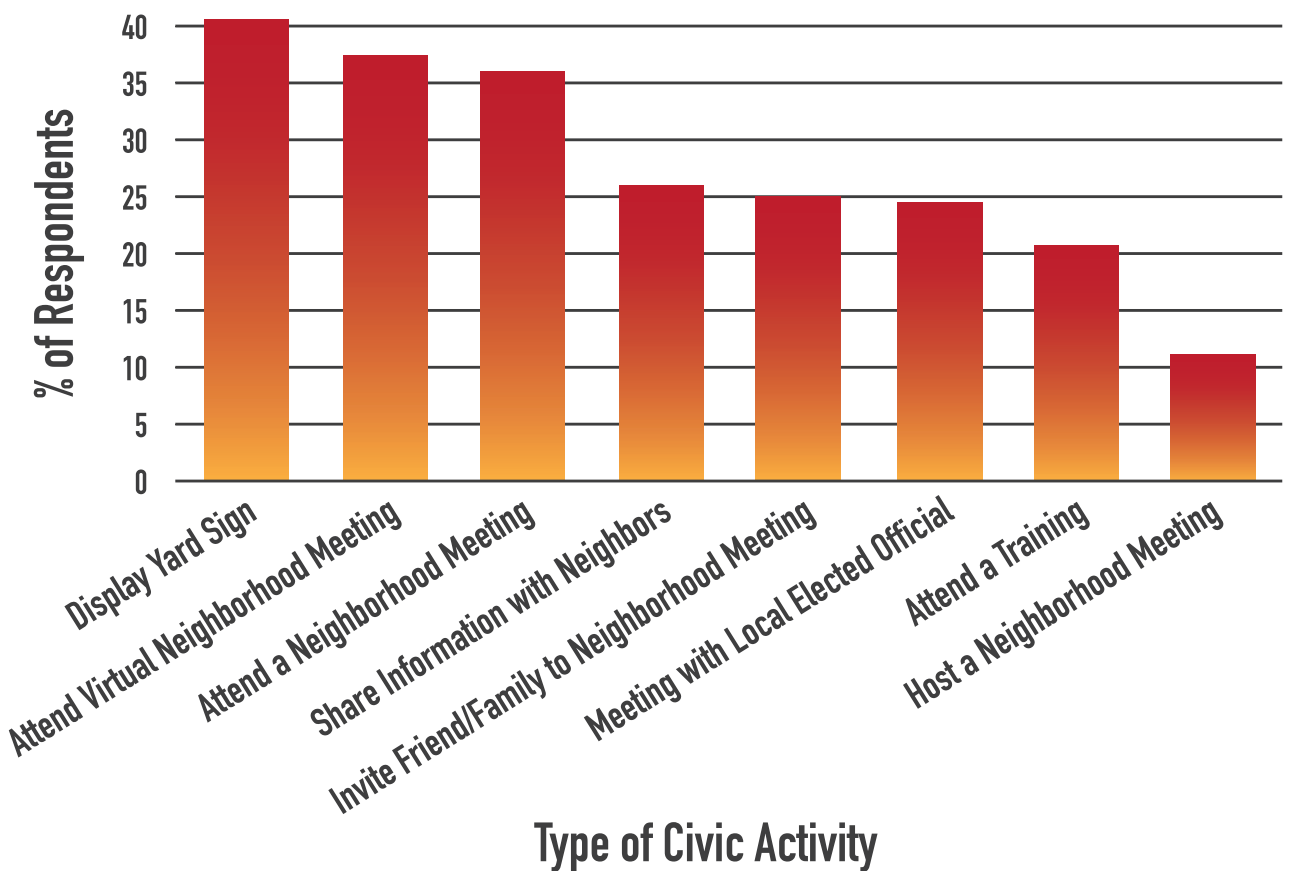


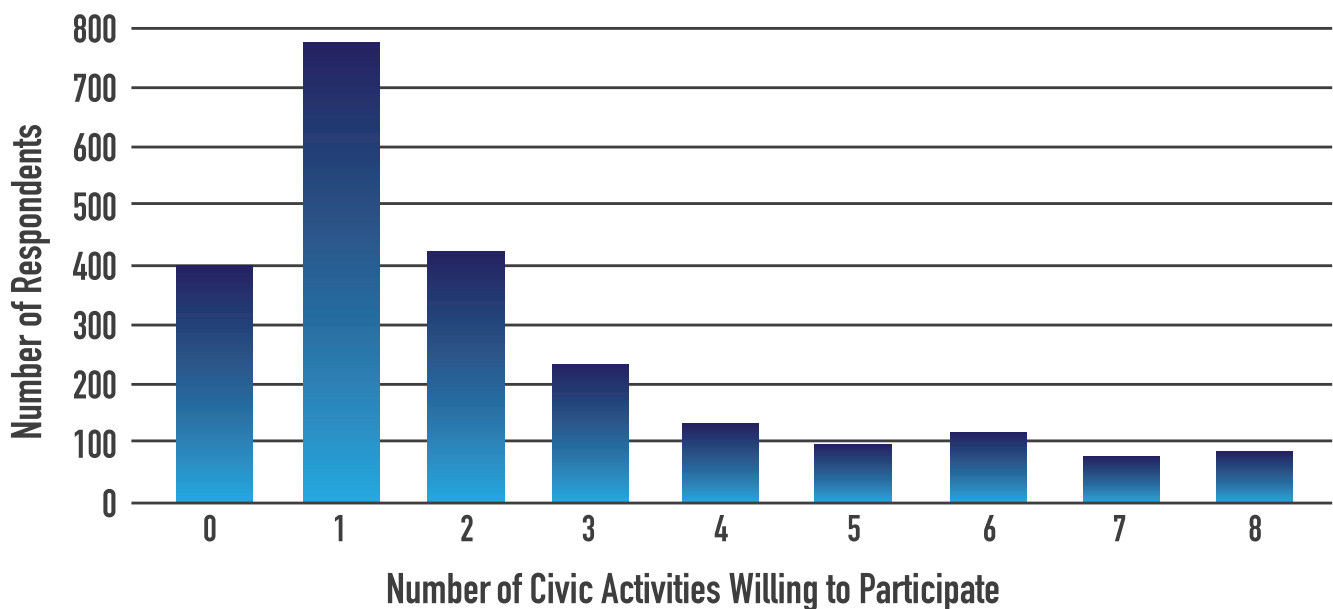
Figure 28. To make policy changes on the issues we have discussed, which activities would you be willing to join? (N=2303)



Figures 28 and 29 explore the types and number of civic activities voters are willing to join in Fresno. There is a slight difference with the 2018 survey here. Residents were more willing to post a yard sign and attend a virtual meeting in 2020 based on the representative sample (Figure 28). In the pilot study, the most common response was to attend a neighborhood meeting (Figure 4). Perhaps

the coronavirus pandemic has modified behaviors for safety concerns. Despite these obstacles, a greater percentage of respondents stated that they would meet an elected official, attend a training, or even host a neighborhood meeting in 2020 than respondents stated in 2018. The pandemic and the social crises of 2020 may have created stronger desires for community engagement in Fresno.

Figure 29. Number of Types of Civic Activities Respondent Willing to Participate (n=2307)





CNC February 2020 Neighborhood Meeting in City Council District 3.

Table 23. Willingness to Engage in Civic Activity Based on Past Community Meeting Experience³⁴

Type of civic activity respondents reported they would be willing to attend or engage to make local policy changes	Past participation in a local meeting about quality of life issues	Never participated in a local meeting about quality of life issues
Display a Yard Sign	47.2%	39.51%
Attend a Virtual Neighborhood Meeting	50.23%	34.67%
Attend a future Neighborhood Meeting	53.27%	32.12%
Share Information with Neighbors about Policies Affecting your Community	38.79%	23.32%
Invite a Friend or Family Member to a Neighborhood Meeting?	41.12%	21.58%
Meet with a Local Elected Official	47.90%	19.67%
Attend a Training	34.58%	17.5%
Host a Neighborhood Meeting	18.69%	9.40%

N=2268

34 All comparisons are statistically different with Pearson Chi-Square tests ($p < .01$)

Critical Role of the Neighborhood Meeting

Table 23 combines insights from questions about past civic activity and willingness to participate in future civic engagements. Here we combine our survey sample into two groups: 1) respondents who have participated in a local neighborhood meeting in the past, and 2) respondents that have never participated in a community meeting. The neighborhood meeting acts as a central strategy for community-based organizations, including several of the members of the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table. Table 23 shows the multidimensional outcomes of the community meeting for potential civic engagement and civic capacity building.

To summarize Table 23, people that have attended a local meeting about quality of life issues in the past are much more likely to take part in the following civic activities than those who have not attended a community gathering:

- ▶ **display a yard sign**
- ▶ **attend a virtual community meeting**
- ▶ **attend a regular in-person neighborhood meeting**
- ▶ **share information with neighbors**
- ▶ **invite a friend or family member to a neighborhood meeting**
- ▶ **meet with an elected official**
- ▶ **attend a training**
- ▶ **host a neighborhood meeting**

Hence, there are multiple positive outcomes to organizing individuals to attend community meetings in terms of increasing overall civic engagement. The inviting of friends and family to a meeting along with sharing information with neighbors about policies affecting the community alone builds social trust networks in the localities in which they take place. Finally, those attending a local meeting in the past were also more likely to want to receive monthly messages from the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table (52%).



Fresno County Civic Engagement Table Joint Phone Banking effort February 2020.

Table 24. Willingness to Meet on Local Issues Based on Past Community Meeting Experience³⁵

Issue voter stated they would attend a local meeting	Past participation in a local meeting about quality of life issues	Never participated in a local meeting about quality of life issues
Racism	66.35%	52.16%
Quality of Public Education	61.81%	49.78%
Police Reform	64.20%	47.18%
Housing/Rental Costs	50.36%	40.71%
Gang Violence	51.79%	40.32%
Access to Healthcare/Medical Attention	51.31%	38.61%
Unemployment	47.49%	38.5%

³⁵ All comparisons are statistically different with Pearson Chi-Square tests ($p < .001$)

(Table 24 cont.)

Issue voter stated they would attend a local meeting	Past participation in a local meeting about quality of life issues	Never participated in a local meeting about quality of life issues
Youth Involvement in Community	56.80%	34.62%
Air Pollution	50.6%	32.58%
Support for People with Disabilities	46.78%	31.80%
Cost of Utility/Energy Bills	42.0%	30.7%
Climate Change	47.49%	28.87%
Internet Access	35.32%	22.57%
Unleashed Dogs	25.78%	13.27%

N=2227

Table 24 shows a similar dynamic to Table 23. In this case, we compare the same groups of past community meeting participants and non-participants on their willingness to attend future local meetings on specific issues. People that have attended a local meeting about quality of life issues in the past are more willing to attend a meeting to strategize for change over the following issues:

- ▶ **Racism**
- ▶ **Quality of Public Education**
- ▶ **Police Reform**
- ▶ **Housing/Rental Costs**
- ▶ **Gang Violence**
- ▶ **Access to Healthcare/ Medical Attention**
- ▶ **Unemployment**
- ▶ **Youth Involvement in Community**
- ▶ **Air Pollution**
- ▶ **Support for People with Disabilities**
- ▶ **Cost of Utility/Energy Bills**
- ▶ **Climate Change**
- ▶ **Internet Access**
- ▶ **Unleashed Dogs**

Once again, people that have participated in a neighborhood meeting exhibit a greater willingness to attend future meetings on issues discussed in the survey. The community

CONCLUSION

Fresno has been at the epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis in the State of California—the world’s fifth largest economy—and has laid bare how the pandemic has acutely impacted low-income and non-white communities. The Central Valley region not only accounts for the highest rates of COVID-19 in the state, but nearly half of the state’s agricultural and meat packing workers, the highest rate of worker households living below a living wage, and the majority (7 of 10) of the state’s counties with a Latina/o/x majority—all factors particularly associated with the pandemic (Padilla 2020).

Our survey captures registered voters’ stance on issues related to the multiple crises of health, public safety and the economy affecting Fresno households in late 2020 in the COVID-19 era. In our study, respondents reported high rates of social distancing, avoiding crowds, and wearing face masks, to protect themselves and others from being infected with the coronavirus. **While the pandemic has negatively affected half of the households of registered voters in Fresno with job loss or reduced work hours, these trends were most severe for registered voters who were low-income and people of color.**³⁶ Three in five households that earned less than \$25,000 per year suffered pandemic income decline,

as did more than half of Latina/o/x, African-American and Asian American households.

While the findings of this survey indicate that Fresno’s low-income and non-white households have been at the center of major issues of inequity in the pandemic era, the survey’s findings also point towards the potential for transformation in the region. Amid national Black Lives Matter protests, and long-standing criticisms of policing, registered voters expressed strong support for police reform. **Most respondents stated they would support elected officials who advocated for police reform,** and most favored directing city funds to publicly-funded social programs, and job opportunity initiatives for youth and persons with records, as well as overwhelming support across city council districts for the novel Advance Peace program.

This study also dramatically demonstrated the critical incubator role of the community meeting – a major strategy of the members of the Fresno County Civic Engagement Table. The convening of a neighborhood meeting has multiple positive outcomes for civic engagement. Such gatherings broaden the sympathy pool of residents interested in civic engagement. Across the

³⁶ See Flores and Padilla (2020c) for the impacts of covid-related job loss for non-citizen workers in California.

board, those respondents with experience in participating in a neighborhood meeting showed much more willingness to engage in a wide variety of civic activities and over an equally wide range of issues to improve the quality of life in Fresno.

Lastly, while the City of Fresno has been at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis in the world's fifth largest economy, Fresno

registered voters have not lost hope in democratic participation as a promising way to address the range of race, health and safety issues in the pandemic era. Respondents expressed strong support for voting and grassroots civic participation to address issues in the areas of racism, quality of public education, and police reform.

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Appendix A. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample

Table 5. Ethnic Identification 2020 Survey of Registered Voters and Fresno General Population

	Latino/a	African American	Asian American/ Pacific Islander	White	Native American	More than One Ethnicity	Other
2020 Survey of Adult Registered Voters	40.7%	9.0%	5.3%	39.5%	1.4%	3.5%	0.65%
Fresno General Population (2019)	49.4%	7.6%	13.8%	27.1%	1.2%	4.2%	N/A

Figure 5. Word Cloud Results for Responses to Identity with a Specific Ethnic Group or Country of Origin



Table 6. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	1,224	54.0%
Male	1,034	45.6%
Other	9	0.4%
Total	2,267	100%

Table 8. Household Income

	Frequency	Percent
\$0-24,999	473	22.4%
\$25,000-49,999	812	38.4%
\$50,000-74,999	494	23.4%
\$75,000 and above	336	15.9%
Total	2,115	100%

Table 7. Educational Attainment

	Frequency	Percent
None/incomplete primary	18	0.8%
Primary/elementary	21	1.0%
Junior High/ middle school	40	1.8%
High School	686	31.1%
AA Community College	764	34.6%
Bachelor's Degree	549	24.9%
Masters degree or more	130	5.9%
Total	2,208	100%

Table 9. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-25	364	16.3%
26-35	489	21.9%
36-45	380	17.0%
46-55	284	12.7%
56-65	301	13.5%
Over 65	419	18.7%
Total	2,237	100%

Appendix B. Selected Survey Responses

Selected Results from the UC Merced Community and Labor Center and Fresno County Civic Engagement Table- Fresno Speaks 2020 Survey

QUALITY OF LIFE/ECONOMIC, HEALTH, SAFETY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

August-September 2020

2,397 Fresno Registered Voters with Phone

English, Spanish

MARGIN OF ERROR +/-2.5 AT CITY LEVEL AND +/- 6 AT VOTING DISTRICT LEVEL

PERCENTAGES MAY NOT ADD UP TO 100 PERCENT DUE TO ROUNDING, SURVEY QUESTIONS CORRESPOND TO THOSE USED IN REPORT

Section A: Quality of Life/Economic Issues

4. If you take a look at this list of issues and think for a moment, which issue has had the largest negative impact upon your household?

- 66% Coronavirus
- 7% Unsafe streets/Side Walks/Street lights
- 3% Access to Quality Food/Grocery Stores
- 8% Crime and Violence
- 8% Affordable Housing/Rent Costs
- 6% Access to good jobs
- 3% Other

9. The city of Fresno voted to approve a tax on Marijuana sales in 2018 (Measure A). How might funds from this tax best be spent to improve the lives of members of your household? (Choose One)

- 17% More police
- 42% More after school and summer youth services
- 30% Improving streets, sidewalks, and streetlights
- 6% Improve bus services and routes
- 6% Other

Section B: Coronavirus and Health Issues

10. Has someone in your household lost a job or had work hours reduced because of the economic slowdown caused by the Coronavirus in the past months?

50% Yes

50% No

12. What is the percent chance your household will run out of money because of the Corona- virus in the next three months? 0 to 100%

23% Mean of percent change

14. Which of the following activities do use to protect yourself from the coronavirus?

91% Social Distancing

86% Avoiding Crowds

93% Wearing a Facemask in Public

2% Nothing

Section C: Community-Based Issues

15. In order to successfully reduce gang violence, what do you think would be the best solution?

- 29% More Youth Job Opportunities
- 16% More funding for law enforcement
- 30% More job opportunities for on parole/probation/formerly incarcerated
- 18% Public funding for community and violence prevention programs
- 7% Other

16a. Support for the Advance Peace Violence Prevention Program

	Support for Advance Peace	
	Yes	No
Entire City	2052 (89.49%)	241 (10.51%)
District 1	293 (90.15%)	32 (9.85%)
District 2	287 (88.85%)	36 (11.15%)
District 3	288 (91.14%)	28 (8.86%)
District 4	333 (91.23%)	32 (8.77%)
District 5	274 (88.96%)	34 (11.04%)
District 6	339 (88.51%)	44 (11.49%)
District 7	238 (87.18%)	35 (12.83%)

18a. Do you view over-policing as a problem in your neighborhood?

City Council District	Yes	No	Total
1	77 23.40%	252 76.60%	329 100%
2	53 16.36%	271 83.64%	324 100%
3	99 31.13%	219 68.87%	318 100%
4	79 21.53%	288 78.47%	367 100%
5	78 25.00%	234 75.00%	312 100%
6	99 25.32%	292 74.68%	391 100%
7	75 27.27%	200 72.73%	275 100%
Entire City	560 24.18%	1,756 75.82%	2,316 100%

20a. Would you support elected officials that advocated for police reform?

Support for Police Reform

	Yes	No
Entire City	1764 (77.85%)	502 (22.15%)
District 1	267 (82.15%)	58 (17.85%)
District 2	239 (74.92%)	80 (25.08%)
District 3	243 (76.90%)	73 (23.10%)

	Yes	No
District 4	294 (81.44%)	67 (18.56%)
District 5	245 (80.86%)	58 (19.14%)
District 6	275 (71.61%)	109 (28.39%)
District 7	201 (77.91%)	57 (22.09%)

Section D: Civic Engagement Issues

24. For which of the following issues would you be willing to attend a local meeting to strategize on how to improve the situation?

- 36% Air pollution
- 55% Racism
- 52% Quality of public schools
- 50% Police Reform
- 32% Climate change/global warming
- 39% Youth involvement in community improvement
- 43% Housing/rental costs
- 42% Gang violence
- 40% Unemployment
- 41% Access to health care/medical attention
- 35% Support for people with disabilities
- 33% Cost of utility/energy bills
- 25% Access to affordable internet service
- 16% Problem of loose and unleashed dogs in neighborhood

26. Did you vote in the March 2020 primary elections in Fresno?

- 79% Yes
- 21% No

28. Do you plan to vote in the November 2020 elections?

- 95% Yes
- 5% No

Section E: Demographic Characteristics

29. What race/ethnicity do you identify?

9%	African American/Black
5%	Asian American/Pacific Islander
41%	Latino/a
1%	Native American
39%	White
4%	Two or more
1%	Other

31. How do you identify in terms of your gender?

4%	Female
45.6%	Male
0.4%	Other

32. What is your highest level of education completed?

1%	None/incomplete primary
1%	Primary/elementary
2%	Junior High/middle school
31%	High School
35%	AA Community College
25%	Bachelor's Degree
6%	Master's degree or more

33. Which of the following categories best describes your current annual household income?

22%	\$0-24,999
38%	\$25,000-49,999
23%	\$50,000-74,999
16%	\$75,000 and above

34. What is your age?

16%	18-25	13%	56-65
22%	26-35	13%	46-55
17%	36-45	19%	Over 65

