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What's in a name? One-third of U.S. voters don't know candidates: Reuters/Ipsos poll

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Less than five weeks before elections that will determine control of the U.S. Congress for the next two years, about a third of registered voters do not know the name of their party's candidate for office, a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll found.

Name recognition is critical in motivating voters, is the reason candidates spend millions of dollars on TV ads and is a major factor in incumbents' advantage in fending off challengers.

But it may be slightly less critical on Nov. 6 as many voters may view their choices as referendums on a man whose name will not be on the ballot: Republican President Donald Trump.

"With the current party polarization, voters increasingly vote based on party (read: like or dislike Trump) rather than the local candidates," Robert Erikson, a professor of political science at Columbia University in New York City, wrote in an email.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Wednesday found that 34 percent of Republican registered voters and 32.5 percent of Democratic registered voters said they did not know the names of their party's congressional candidates in their districts.

The poll of 2,597 registered voters taken Sept. 24-30 had a credibility interval, a measure of precision, of 3 percentage points.

The level of congressional candidate name recognition is about in line with recent elections, said Marc Hetherington, a professor of political science at the University of

North Carolina. "People aren't voting for their side as much as they are voting against the other side," Hetherington said. "It really doesn't matter what the names are these days."

Generic party interest is not working to Republicans' advantage nationally. Some 54 percent of U.S. adults told Reuters/Ipsos they disapprove of the way Trump is handling the presidency and Democrats have a 9 percentage point lead in a generic question on which party they expect to vote for in Congress. manufacturing base without any repercussions (on national security). But now we know that's not the case," said one U.S. official familiar with the report, speaking on condition of anonymity.



FILE PHOTO: People cast their ballots for the 2016 general elections at a crowded polling station as early voting begins in Carrboro, North Carolina, U.S., October 20, 2016. REUTERS/Jonathan Drake/File

Democrats need to pick up 23 seats in the House to win a majority that they could use to more effectively oppose Trump's agenda. Beyond party and name recognition, gender may play a role in voters' decisions this year, said Michael Cornfield, an associate professor of political management at George

Washington University. The #MeToo movement and protests around Trump's Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh have played into that trend.

"In these cases, it's not just the name," Cornfield said in an email. "Gender relations may be the top issue."

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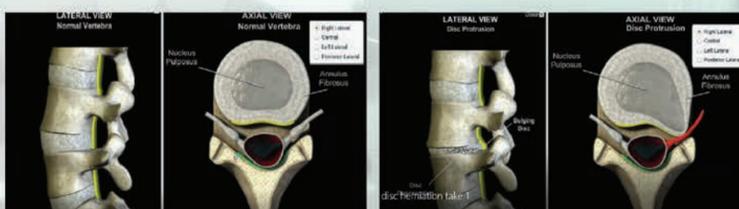
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Houston among cities with the best salary-to-rent comparison

Darla Guillen Gilthorpe

Houstonians looking to make their dollar stretch further are in the right place.

According to a new study by BusinessStudent.com, Houston is among the 65 U.S. cities where your salary will afford you more than just a place to live: you actually get to enjoy the local amenities, too.

The business research site reports that Houston is No. 7 on a ranking of the average business salary -- a hefty \$80,000 compared to a \$1,401 2-bedroom rental. That would leave approximately \$63,000 per year for other expenses.

Dallas is at No. 4 with a salary of \$83,000 and \$1,292 rental, which would total a difference of about \$65,000 left for food, fun and travel.

On the other hand, College Station is listed among the worst in this price comparison with an average \$55,086 salary and an average monthly rent of \$906.

Overall, Texas claimed the No. 11 spot for the states with the highest business job salaries.



This is an oh-mazing deal for anyone looking for zen on the cheap. Free yoga classes are offered at Hermann Park Saturdays at 8:15 a.m., and also at Discovery Green on Saturdays at 9 a.m.



Mattress Firm reportedly planning bankruptcy filing

By Katherine Blunt

Mattress Firm is planning to file for bankruptcy as early as this week, Reuters reported, a move that would likely result in store closures and operational restructuring as the company works to boost lagging sales.

The filing would cap off a tumultuous two years for Mattress Firm, which has struggled since its 2016 acquisition by South African retail conglomerate Steinhoff International. The company paid \$3.8 billion to acquire the Houston-based mattress chain, which had quickly grown to become the country's largest in the years before the deal.

Mattress Firm did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Steinhoff late last year became embroiled in an accounting scandal that called into question the value of more than \$7 billion in assets. The company has been working to restructure its debt and regain investor confidence amid an ongoing investigation into its finances.

Steinhoff said in a presentation last week that Mattress Firm's performance in 2017 and 2018 "reflects the requirement for a turnaround plan." It noted that the company has too many stores in certain markets following a series of rapid acquisitions that gave it more than 3,400 locations nationwide.

Former Mattress Firm CEO and president Ken Murphy stepped down earlier this year after two years at the helm. Steve Stagner, who served as the company's CEO from 2010 to 2016, resumed that role in March.

Steinhoff said that Mattress Firm's leadership is assessing means of securing funding to needed to carry out a turnaround plan to improve "financial accountability," advertising and merchandising. It noted the need to boost same-store sales by "optimizing" its store base by closing underperforming locations and perhaps opening new ones in cities such as Los Angeles and Detroit.

Mattress Firm, which now has about 3,300 stores, for years borrowed heavily to buy up dozens of competitors. Its \$3.8 billion purchase price included more than \$1 billion in debt.



Mattress Firm is planning to file for bankruptcy as early as this week, Reuters reported.

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Editor's Choice



A person holds a mobile phone with the screen showing the "Emergency Alert" sent by FEMA outside the White House in Washington



Trenely, paints cars with washable spray paint before members of the Teamsters Union participate in a tractor trailer caravan surrounding the LA Metro Detention Center in support of port truck drivers and others threatened by deportation if the courts or congress don't stop the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in Los Angeles, California, U.S. October 3, 2018. REUTERS/Kyle Grillot



Members of Teamsters Union participate in a tractor trailer caravan protest in Los Angeles



U.S. first lady Melania Trump sits as she meets with Fante chiefs to gain permission to visit Cape Coast castle, Ghana



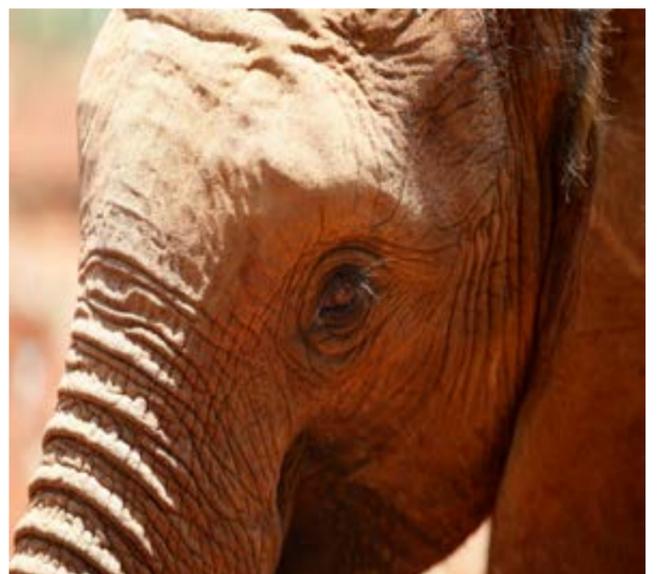
First responders and others fold an American flag following a prayer service during the one-year anniversary of the October 1 mass shooting, in Las Vegas



Models present creations by German designer Karl Lagerfeld as part of his Spring/Summer 2019 women's ready-to-wear collection show for fashion house Chanel during Paris Fashion Week



Dogs are seen on Anusara's desk as she works in an office of a digital advertising agency which promotes bring-your-dog-to-work in Bangkok



An orphaned baby elephant is seen after being bottle-fed, at the David Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage near Nairobi

Texas Cities Dominate List of U.S. 'Boomtowns'

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Aerial View of Austin, Texas. (Photo AP)

Magnify Money, a consumer finance website, released a new study this week that found Texas dominated the list of U.S. "boomtowns" and Austin scored the top spot. "Americans are flocking to and prospering in Texas," wrote Kali McFadden, a Magnify Money senior analyst. She said Lone Star State metros represented one-third of the top 15 spots on their rankings. Five of the six Texas cities on the list placed in the top 11. "We wanted to find out where Americans are gathering now to take advantage of growing prosperity and improved lifestyles to achieve the American dream," said McFadden.

Magnify Money researchers examined the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) over the five year period from 2011 to 2016 using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and County Business Patterns. Researchers focused on business growth, population and housing, and workforce and earnings. Boomtowns saw the biggest influx of people, work opportunities, and business growth. "Austin jumps way out ahead of all the metros we reviewed, showing the greatest five year growth in population and housing," said McFadden. The Texas capital earned a perfect population and housing score of 100. It added people and had jobs for them. The Austin metro area experienced a 23 percent drop in unemployment. The median wage increased by nearly nine percent. The number of businesses operating in Austin rose by 21 percent and new hires soared by 24 percent. Analysts identified one shortcoming — 10 percent housing unit growth lagged next to the almost 16 percent population boom.

Dallas (7), San Antonio (9), and McAllen (10) made the top 10. Houston (11) and El Paso (24) placed in the top 25. Business also boomed in Provo, Utah; Raleigh, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; and Nashville, Tennessee; ranking second through fifth, respectively. Provo got the highest score, 95.1, in the business growth category. Its population increased by 12 percent and housing rose eight percent. Although the workforce grew by 13 percent, median wages stalled, budging only 3.5 percent higher than five years earlier.

Raleigh, with a 13 percent surge in residents and a nine percent rise in dwellings, ranked second to Austin in the population and housing subset. The North Carolina capital was fifth in business growth. Nearby Durham ranked 16th. Charlotte took 13th. Charleston got the third highest marks for workforce and earnings, with a healthy 22 percent drop in joblessness. Its workforce grew by 11 percent. During this time, Charleston's population also increased 11 percent but the number of housing units fell short, stalled at slightly more than six percent.

Nashville firms grew staff by a healthy 21 percent. Their workforce grew nine percent. Unemployment dropped 25 percent. Median wages rose seven percent. McFadden suggested the boom "may be luring people to work" and noted the city diversified from its traditional country music roots. Housing, though, increased by five percent, not nearly enough for the influx of new people. Colorado's Denver ranked sixth while Colorado Springs placed 23rd. Boise, Idaho, took eighth, and Des Moines, Iowa, was 15th. Top 25 listers included Florida's Orlando (14),



Provo, Utah

Fort Myers (17), and Sarasota (25); Utah's Ogden (12) and Salt Lake City (18), and California's San Jose (19) and San Francisco (22). Riverside (40), San Diego (43) and Los Angeles (58) placed lower. (Courtesy <https://www.breitbart.com/texas>)

The study also identified the slowest growing places in the nation. Four of six Ohio metros shrunk their labor forces and number of businesses between 2011 and 2016. Only Columbus (34) saw appreciable growth. Connecticut and Pennsylvania MSAs landed in the bottom quarter of the findings as did metros in New York, except for New York City (62). Boston (46) was the sole northeastern city in the top half of the list.

Eight of 15 of the fastest-growing counties in the U.S. between 2016 and 2017 are in Texas

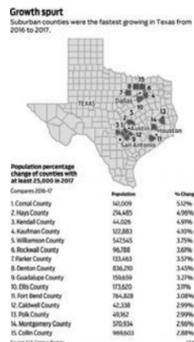
Suburban counties in Texas led the way nationwide in percentage growth in that one-year period. Suburban counties in the Austin and San Antonio metropolitan areas were among the fastest-growing in the nation between 2016 and 2017, according to figures the Census Bureau released late Wednesday.

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In the Austin area, Hays, Williamson and Caldwell counties were among the fast-growing at 4.96 percent, 3.75 percent and 2.99 percent, respectively.

Caldwell County, which abuts Travis County to the south, saw its largest growth rate this decade.; its previous annual growth rates since 2010 were under 2 percent.

Among metro areas with more than 1 million people, the five-county Austin area was the fastest-growing for the seventh consecutive year.

The agency estimated population changes between July 1, 2016, and July 1, 2017. Amelia Smith, who's worked in real estate in Caldwell County for more than 30 years, attributed the area's growth to lighter traffic and lower cost of living.

"The toll road is becoming increasingly popular," Smith said of Texas 130. "Even though it is expensive to drive, it is a flash trip from Austin to Lockhart. I live in Lockhart, and I can get to Onion Creek in about 18 minutes. It's fast."

"People in Austin, particularly in the east side, are seeing property values rise so much that the land their \$100,000 house sits on is worth \$700,000 or \$800,000, and they're being driven out by high taxes, and they're coming to Lockhart with proceeds from their sale and buying houses (with) cash. ... We're seeing a lot of that."

Also, under a new Lockhart school superintendent, the district is working toward becoming one of the best in Central Texas, which might be another draw, Smith said.



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Too Much Oil In Texas? Boom Outpaces Supply, Transport Networks

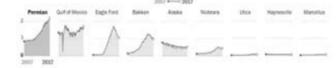
Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

MIDLAND, Texas (Reuters) - The west Texas drillers that drove the shale revolution have overwhelmed the region's infrastructure with oil production - driving up costs, depressing regional oil prices and slowing the pace of growth.

The U.S. government continues to forecast the country's oil output rising to fresh record. But competition for limited resources in Texas is making it harder for shale producers to turn a profit and encouraging some to invest elsewhere.

Texas is home to the Permian Basin, the largest U.S. oil field and the center of the country's shale industry. In the past three years, production from the Permian has risen a whopping 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) to 3.43 million bpd.

All that oil means pipelines from the shale patch are full, so producers are paying more to transport oil on trucks and rail cars. Shortages of labor, water and even the fuel used in fracking are driving up production costs.



At the same time, Permian producers are getting less for their oil, which in August traded as much as \$17 a barrel below the U.S. crude benchmark. Sellers have to offer the discount to compensate for the higher transport costs.

"We're our own worst enemy," said Ross Craft, chief executive of Approach Resources, a small west Texas oil producer which last year averaged about 11,600 barrels of oil equivalent daily output.

"We can drill, bring these wells on so quickly that we basically outpace the market. It is going to take a little bit of time," he said, for the infrastructure to catch up to producers.

Approach Resources is leaving some wells uncompleted. That means the firm drills the wells, but does not fracture the rock to produce the oil. Other shale producers are also leaving the oil in the ground, waiting for higher prices to make the drilling more profitable.

The number of uncompleted wells in the Permian jumped by 80 percent to 3,630 in



August compared with a year earlier, according to U.S. Energy Department data. For the rest of the United States, uncompleted wells are up 10 percent from the same period a year ago.



Some companies are reducing the scope of their operations in the Permian. ConocoPhillips <COP.N> and Carrizo Oil & Gas <CRZO.O> each moved a Permian drilling rig to another oilfield, and Conoco idled a second, the companies have said. Noble Energy <NBL.N> also has cut back on its well completions and said it is moving some drilling resources to Colorado. Global Drilling Partners, a drilling contractor based in the Woodlands near Houston, was set to drill seven wells with a Permian operator this July, but that has dropped to two wells starting in December due to lack of pipeline takeaway, said John Hopkins, a managing partner at the company.

"There will be a shift out of West Texas temporarily until they can solve their mid-stream problems," he said. Companies are looking to boost their drilling in other fields in Texas, Colorado and Oklahoma, he said.

Suppliers including sand and rail companies say they are hedging their bets by expanding elsewhere.

SHARES FALL ON HIGHER COSTS, LOWER REVENUE

The price discount on Permian oil has hurt the share price of shale producers such as Parsley Energy <PE.N>, which operates only in the Permian.

Parsley delivered an eight fold-rise in profits in the second quarter versus a year earlier, and boosted output by 57 percent over the same period.



But investors have dumped the stock on concern that plans to increase output by another 5 percent by spending 17 percent more will deliver diminishing returns. Parsley's shares are

down about 8 percent since the company reported results on Aug. 7.

Spending plans in 2018 by 53 independent U.S. producers have risen a combined 18 percent over 2017, to \$63.2 billion, according to investment firm Cowen & Co. The U.S. in August produced a record 11 million bpd and continued investment in the Permian should see the country's total output to hit an average of 11.5 million bpd in 2019.

But rising costs and bottlenecks have already slowed the pace of growth.

Consultancy Wood Mackenzie estimates Permian oil production in 2019 will be 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) less than it could be because of transport constraints. Permian output will be 3.9 million bpd next year, Wood Mackenzie estimates, but could have been 4.1 million bpd if more pipeline space were available.

"We've had a more significant increase in costs this year than we would have assumed," Timothy Dove, chief executive of Pioneer Natural Resources, one of the largest Permian oil producers, said in August.



TRANSPORTATION AND SUPPLY SHORTAGES

Smaller producers without contracts to use pipelines are getting hurt most because they are forced to use trucks and railcars. Shipping oil by truck to Gulf Coast refinery and export hubs costs \$15 to \$25 a barrel, compared to \$8 to \$12 a barrel by rail and less than \$4 a barrel by pipeline,

according to market sources.

The shift is leading to traffic jams on highways and rail crossings in far-flung parts of the Permian shale fields. It also means fuel for supply vehicles and fracking equipment can be in short supply locally. "Truck traffic is unlike anything we've ever seen," said James Walter, co-CEO of Colgate Energy, a Midland-Texas based oil producer, who adds his company has agreements to transport all of its crude and gas production via pipelines.

Rail capacity is unlikely to increase because oil producers are reluctant to sign up to long-term contracts to lease rail cars. They would prefer to wait for the new pipelines to be built. Planned pipelines out of the Permian will add about 3 million bpd of oil capacity by late 2020, estimates Wood Mackenzie.



Rail firms are reluctant to buy new oil railcars without long-term contracts.

"We do think it's a short-term situation," Union Pacific Executive Vice President Beth Whited said in July. "So we will not invest to support that."

Sand suppliers have moved quickly to alleviate one supply shortage by opening new operations. Some 15 sand mines have popped up in the Permian in the past year, creating a \$1.2 billion industry almost overnight, consultancy Rystad Energy estimates.

These mines sell sand for about \$40 a ton, saving producers nearly \$90 a ton compared with sand shipped in from other states.

Just as elsewhere in the Permian, however, the increase in activity is inflating costs. Preferred Sands, which has a sand mine in Monahans, Texas, is paying workers there about 30 percent more it does in other markets, said Chief Executive Michael O'Neill, prompting the firm to open its next sand mine in Oklahoma instead. (Courtesy yahoo.com)

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