

2021 Impact Report

Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality

University of Houston, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

In 2021, Houston's second year of living dangerously with Covid, IRWGS has been on the ground documenting the wide range of difficulties experienced by so many, while playing an active part in the community response. Due to your support, we have been growing both our projects and our personnel.

In April 2019, the Institute launched to an audience of Houston policy makers, community members, businesspeople, students, researchers, and non-profit leaders, to provide an intersectional look at our city's gender and sexuality dynamics, with an eye to what's needed and what's next. In March 2020, everything changed—and IRWGS was poised to track and analyze intersectional Covid-19 data on multiple fronts. That work has continued across 2021, with direct positive impact on our city.

TEAM

Our research staff has expanded to include five analysts with diverse strengths: **Elizabeth Gregory**, PhD; **Aishwarya Lakshmi**, PhD; **Claire Chi-Hung Kang**, PhD **Itzel Martinez**, MEd; **Audrey Miller**, PhD—and we're hiring!

Reports

Second Annual Houston/Harris County Report

In 2021 we published our [second annual report](#) on gender and sexuality data, based on 2019 American Community Survey data for H/HC, as well as CDC birth data, Gallup LGBT data and other sources. The report documents and explores diverse elements of gendered experience and their interaction here, including:

- the dynamics of women's 44% greater poverty levels than men in Houston (a bigger gap than in other cities), the role of low wages, children and single motherhood in women's poverty, the much higher rate of Hispanic women's poverty (21.1%) than that of Hispanic men (11.9%) and both women and men of other groups.
- the continuing larger-than-the-national wage gaps between men and women of all racial groups compared to NH white men in Houston.
- the marked fall in the fertility rate in Texas, especially among teens since 2007, from 63.26 births per thousand women ages 15-19, to 23.87 (though that is higher than the national average of 16.65, or the lowest state average—6.64, in New Hampshire).

- the expanding identification as LGBTQ of the national population, with each generation (data on Houston is in development).
- the continuing expansion of female representation in the Texas Congressional delegation and the Texas legislature.
- the negative effects of Texas policy on birth control and abortion access on women's lives, as part of the wider gendered hardship matrix, interacting with lack of access to healthcare and mental health care; underfunding of schools, foster care and domestic violence refuges; the particularly precarious situation of undocumented women; etc.

These situations have only worsened in the intervening two years, due to the pandemic and the wide ineligibility of undocumented Houstonians for unemployment or stimulus payments. Policies passed here in 2021 on access to abortion and transgender health care further endanger the welfare of Texans.

This report's laying out of the stark scene here was instrumental in initiating the Women's Commission currently in development in the Harris County Commissioners Court, and data from our report was featured at the inaugural meeting of the City of Houston's Women's Commission in August 2021. Only when the data is out there, can the city begin to respond to it – and that is now happening!

Census Household Pulse Survey Data Analysis for Houston/Harris County

IRWGS postdoc Claire Kang is leading analysis of the Household Pulse Survey data for our region, which comes in biweekly (that is a flood of data!). We published a [report on first quarter 2021](#) data, and further reports are forthcoming.

HAWC Domestic Violence Interview Study

IRWGS began developing a study of residents of the Houston Area Women's Center in 2020, based in qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data. In August 2021 we launched, with 99 completed to date. A report on our findings will be forthcoming later in 2022. Researchers: Gregory, Kang, Martinez, Miller.

Montrose Center Intake Digitization Study

Our digitization and analysis of Montrose Center intake data project was ready to start in March 2020, then delayed until 2021, when vaccinated students could feel comfortable working on site. That study is ongoing with a report forthcoming in 2022. Lead researcher: Audrey Miller.

Houston Data Files Podcast

To showcase the work of the many excellent service providers working in the gender/sexuality and related health realms in Houston, IRWGS developed a [podcast](#), with co-hosts Dr. Elizabeth Gregory (UH) and Dr. Shreela Sharma (UT-School of Public Health). Please check it out!

Houston Women's Commission

IRWGS's Elizabeth Gregory was among the 25 Houstonians appointed to Mayor Turner's inaugural Women's Commission, and IRWGS supplied the data on Houston women's status for its initial meeting. Dr. Gregory is on the Wage Equity subcommittee.

Collaborative data streams on Domestic Violence (DV) data

We continue to collect data through our partnership with the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and other DV touchpoint agencies. Much has evolved in the DV scene in the past 2 years, and we continue to work with agencies to collect, clean and analyze their data most effectively, and evolve policy.

Though it occurs in all classes and identity groups, DV's frequency is linked to gendered economic, race/ethnicity and care inequities. An intersectional societal issue, it often links to women's dependency due to low wages and children. While short term solutions involve housing and travel funds, longer term solutions will be linked to changes in women's economic status and civic voice. The many vulnerable undocumented here also differentiates the DV scene in Houston from that elsewhere.

Agencies providing DV data include:

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse
(AVDA)
Bay Area Turning Point
The Bridge Over Troubled Water
The City of Houston Domestic Violence
& Human Trafficking office
DAYA
Fort Bend Women's Shelter
Fresh Spirit Wellness
Harris County Bail Bond Reform
Consent Decree Study

Harris County District Attorney's Office
Harris County Domestic Violence
Coordinating Council
Harris County Sheriff's Office
Houston Area Women's Center
Houston Police Department
Montgomery County Women's Shelter
Northern Alliance Ministries
Pasadena DV High Risk Team

Pandemic Gender Snapshots

The big Covid-19 mortality difference between men and women (59%/41% in Harris County currently) led us to study local Covid-19 death data at the granular level, for a better record and understanding of who is vulnerable and where there are gaps in the data and in services. We've so far published [10 detailed Pandemic Gender Updates](#), based on local death certificate data from the Houston Health Department and Harris County Public Health, analyzing it in more detail by gender, race/ethnicity and age than state data allows. Because death certificate data takes a while to be processed, the numbers are behind the current state totals, but the analysis allows us to see the disparities in fatalities in Houston, by race/ethnicity, gender and age.

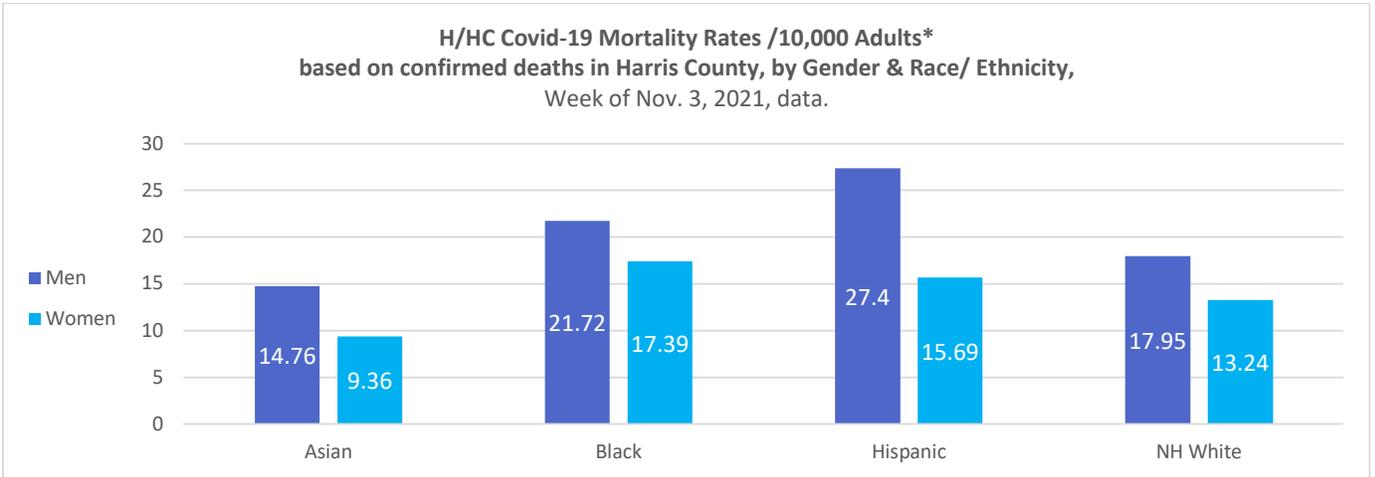


Figure 1 *Adults = 20 and over in the Harris County population (per 2019 ACS). Mortality Data per HHD & HCPH, as of Nov. 3, 2021.

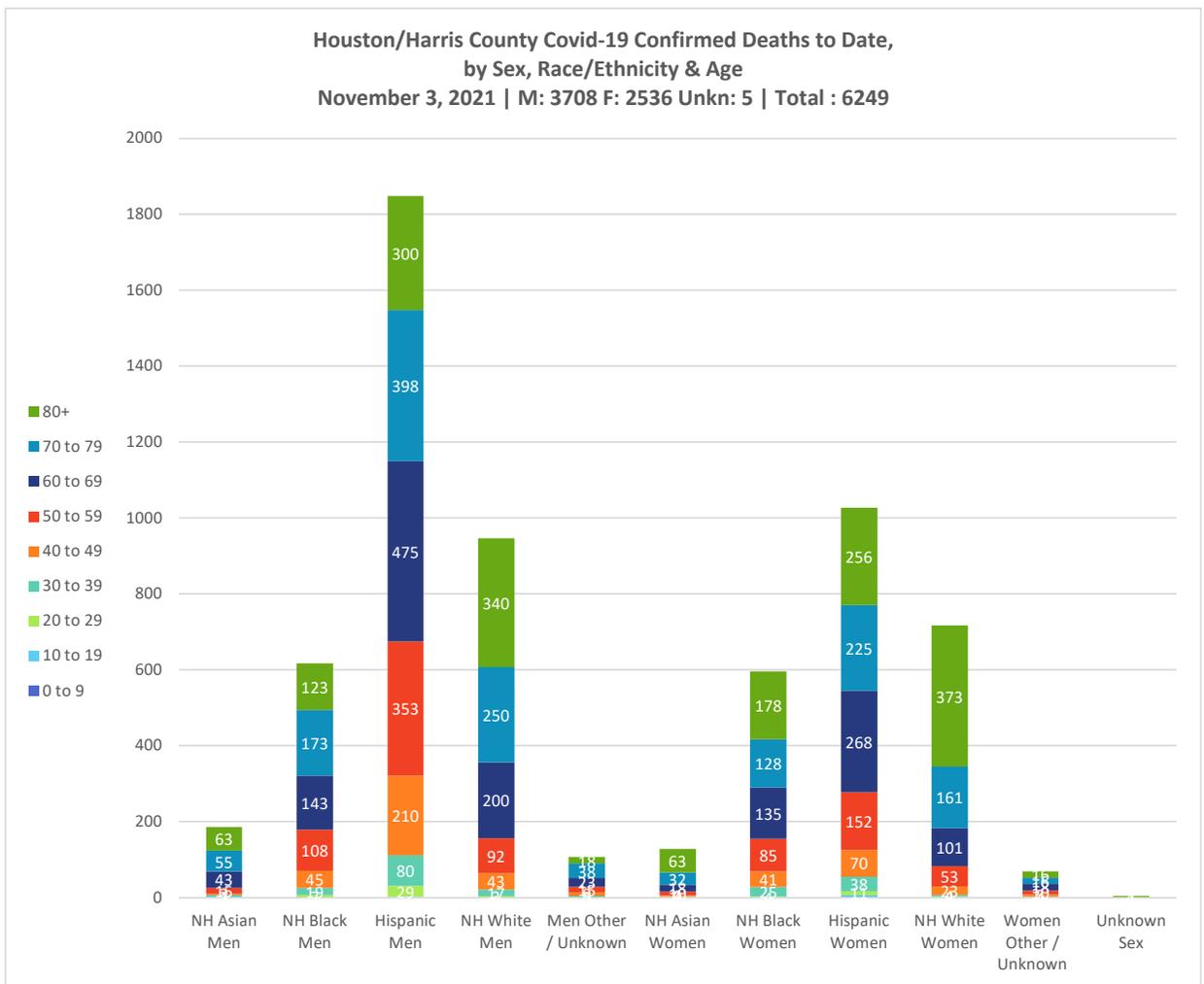


Figure 2 HHD – 3659 | HCPH– 2590 Mortality Data per HHD & HCPH, as of Nov. 3, 2021.

Health and Economic Data sources include:

Harris County Public Health	Houston Health Department
American Community Survey	Current Population Survey
UT School of Public Health – Epidemiology	Texas Workforce Commission
Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (Morgue)	CDC Wonder, etc.
US Census - Household Pulse Surveys	

Additional collaborators include:

The Montrose Center, Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce, HISD, City of Houston, Children at Risk, Harris County Head Start, I’ll Have What She’s Having, Connect Community childcare initiative, Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Mexican Consulate, Collaborative for Children, Black LGBT Migration Project, Sharing Stories from 1977, etc.

New Local Funds for Improved Services

The influx of federal funds to address Covid, Harvey and other local issues, including the expanded Child Tax Credit (while it lasted), ESSER funds for the school districts, and funds for the city and county, have assisted many. The incoming Infrastructure funds will do so as well, though unfortunately the Build Back Better funds have not been approved so far. (See [op ed](#) on the gendering of this.) These funds may also provide opportunities for IRWGS research, in collaboration with recipient agencies.

Civic Voice

Op-eds

Opinion pieces by IRWGS personnel appear regularly in local and national papers (the [Houston Chronicle](#), the [Nation](#), etc.) and in media stories, adding innovative ideas to address gender inequities backed with clear data and analysis.

Media

IRWGS research/researchers have been cited/interviewed by/on the *Houston Chronicle*, the LBJ School of Public Affairs, KUHF, KTRK, KPFT, KPRC and other outlets.

Growth Areas, Funding

Our First \$1 Million Gift!!

We were thrilled to announce our first \$1 million donation in July 2021, by MaryRoss Taylor. This visionary gift endowed the Taylor Professorship in Gender and Sexuality Studies for the IRWGS director, and provides current operating funds for the Institute, allowing us to expand. More good news to come soon.

Current Research Resources

We expanded our team with a third Research Analyst this Fall; we've added both graduate and undergraduate student interns to several research projects, with assistance from UH DOR; we invested in helpful software; and we've expanded community data sources and IRWGS research areas, while growing expertise in areas established to date.

Upcoming projects include:

Continuing the work outlined above, and expanding to meet demand with:

- Infographics for community dialogue, in collaboration with Langrand
- Symposia and webinars on current G/S topics and IRWGS research
- Faculty research support
- Student research support
- Graduate and undergraduate assistantships to work with community agencies

Upcoming Panels

We are grateful for a grant from the Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation, for upcoming panels on Domestic Violence response innovation in Houston, and IRWGS research.

Thank You!

We hope that you are proud of what we've accomplished to date with your support. Your gifts allow us to expand to meet the expanding demand for our collaboration to make positive change in our region.

If you have thoughts or questions, please be in touch!

DV – HAWC Study representative Narrative excerpts

- **“The pandemic changed a lot, and not even just my household. Even my neighbors, where I was living. It’s like, everybody was having the same issues. And that was even more traumatizing. I would sometimes hear – ‘cause there was one couple that lived right next door to me, and he would tell his wife that, “It’s a pandemic; the cops aren't coming.” And that, that's heartbreaking to hear.”**
- **“My children's father lost his job. There were days that he did not work all week, there were times that he worked 1, 2, or 3 days. And well, being at home, the aggressions were more constant, and the fighting was more constant... And the truth is, it [pandemic] did affect [the situation] by a lot because... [before] I only had to put up with it in the afternoon or on weekends, but when the pandemic hit it was every day, at all hours.”**
- **“You know I wasn't working, I wasn't allowed to work, and he made it to where I was very - mostly dependent on him. ... if I left I'm not gonna have a job, I don't have any money and how am I gonna, you know, take care of my kids? So it became as me staying there because, you know, number one, I was scared to leave because I knew how violent he can get. And number two because of the financial you know situation I was in with him, and he controlled every aspect of that. So, to know - he knew that I was fully dependent on that.”**