

2024 TEXAS STATE COMPTROLLER REGIONAL REPORT

Feb 12, 2024



THE SOUTHEAST REGION

2022 Regional Report

Southeast Region Snapshot

The 15-county Southeast region covers about 12,800 square miles in easternmost Texas, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to Nacogdoches along the Louisiana border.

The Southeast region contains one metropolitan statistical area (MSA), the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA. It comprises Hardin, Jefferson, Newton and Orange counties. The region's other 11 counties are not associated with an MSA.

This report examines regional economic information and trends regarding population, personal income, jobs and wages, and education, as well as economic conditions unique to the Southeast region.

Demographics

Population

According to the 2020 Census, the Southeast region has a total population of more than 769,000, or 2.6 percent of the state's total population. An estimated 33 percent of the region's population is concentrated in Jefferson County. In 2020, the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA accounted for 52 percent of the region's population.

The region's population has grown by 0.2 percent (or about 1,400 people) since the 2010 Census, compared to 15.9 percent growth statewide. Despite overall population consistency over the last 10 years, nine of the 15 counties in the region lost population during this time (**Exhibit 1**).

The median age in the Southeast region was 38.5 years in 2019, older than the state median age of 34.6 years. The Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA's median age of 36.9 years was older than the state. Nacogdoches (30.9 years) was the youngest county in the region and Sabine (53 years) was the oldest. An area's age distribution can reveal specific challenges. A younger county may prioritize education and workforce

development, for example, while an older county might face retirement issues and higher health care costs

EXHIBIT 1

Southeast Region Population by County, 2010 and 2020					
County	Population 2010 Census	2020 Census	Change 2010 to 2020	Percent Change	Median Age
Angelina	86,771	86,395	-376	-0.4%	37.5
Hardin	54,635	56,231	1,596	2.9%	39.2
Houston	23,732	22,066	-1,666	-7.0%	44.5
Jasper	35,710	32,980	-2,730	-7.6%	40.5
Jefferson	252,273	256,526	4,253	1.7%	36.2
Nacogdoches	64,524	64,653	129	0.2%	30.9
Newton	14,445	12,217	-2,228	-15.4%	44.3
Orange	81,837	84,808	2,971	3.6%	37.9
Polk	45,413	50,123	4,710	10.4%	43.7
Sabine	10,834	9,894	-940	-8.7%	53.0
San Augustine	8,865	7,918	-947	-10.7%	49.3
San Jacinto	26,384	27,402	1,018	3.9%	44.9
Shelby	25,448	24,022	-1,426	-5.6%	38.0
Trinity	14,585	13,602	-983	-6.7%	48.6
Tyler	21,766	19,798	-1,968	-9.0%	42.4
Southeast Region Total	767,222	768,635	1,413	0.2%	38.5
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	388,745	397,565	8,820	2.2%	36.9
Texas Total	25,145,561	29,145,505	3,999,944	15.9%	34.6

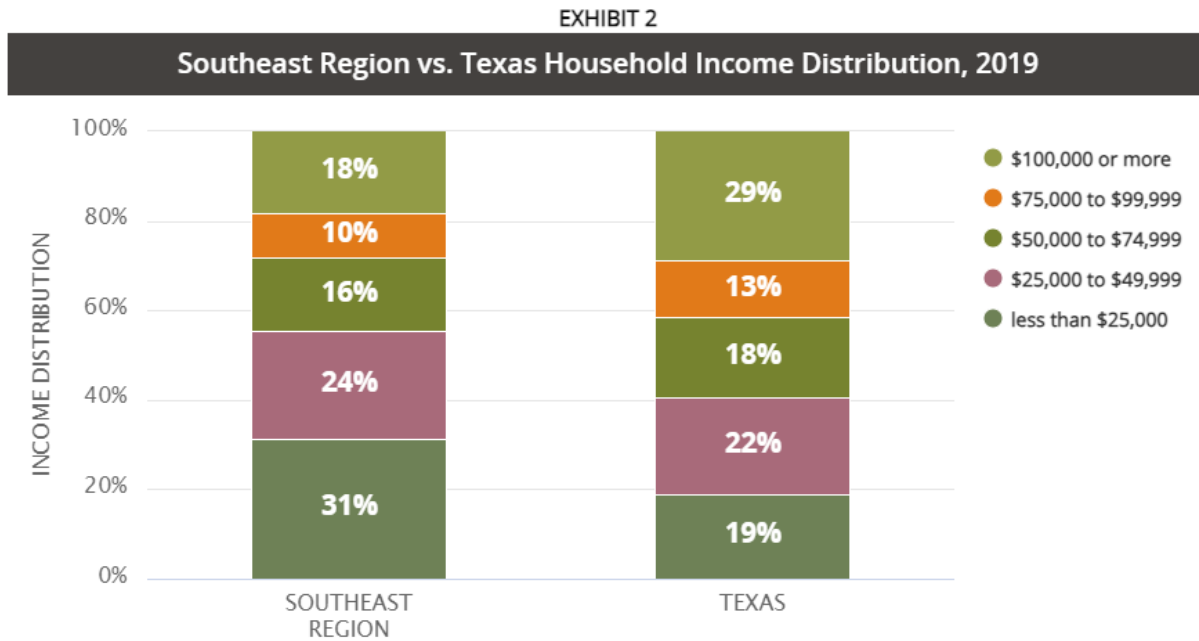
Note: Median age data for the counties are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015 to 2019; region median age calculations are from JobsEQ.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Median Household Income and Income Distribution

The Southeast region had a median household income of \$49,781 in 2019, up from \$40,566 in 2010, a 23.7 percent increase. Median household income in Texas, by comparison, was \$61,874 in 2019, up 24.6 percent from 2010.

The region’s income distribution finds proportionally fewer households in the top quintiles when compared to Texas as a whole (**Exhibit 2**).



Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Income distribution derived by JobsEQ using data from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2015 to 2019.

Education

Occupational Earnings by Educational Attainment Requirements

A strong educational foundation provides a cornerstone for growth and competitiveness in the global economy. Postsecondary education delivers a good return on investments of time and tuition.

Data for 2021 indicate that occupations in the Southeast region requiring at least an associate degree or certificate paid an average of \$2,167 more annually than those requiring less than a postsecondary education. Occupations requiring at least a bachelor’s degree paid an average of \$34,867 more (**Exhibit 3**).

EXHIBIT 3

Occupational Levels and Average Annual Wages by Educational Attainment Requirements, Southeast Region and Texas, 2021						
Educational Attainment	Number Employed, Region	Percent of Region	Average Annual Earnings, Region	Number Employed, Texas	Percent of Texas	Average Annual Earnings, Texas
No Postsecondary Award	292,819	75.0%	\$41,333	9,051,532	61.8%	\$44,733
Associate Degree or Certificate	32,303	8.3%	\$43,500	1,120,514	7.6%	\$47,600
Bachelor's Degree	47,144	12.1%	\$76,200	2,987,310	20.4%	\$88,800
Postgraduate Degree	17,894	4.6%	\$105,900	1,509,671	10.3%	\$110,300

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Sources: JobsEQ; education requirement category assignments are from the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Regional Institutions of Higher Education

A postsecondary education also offers opportunity for greater job prospects, workplace advancement, higher wages and the development of a richer world view. The Southeast region offers a variety of options for higher educational achievement, including two universities and four junior and community colleges (**Exhibit 4**).

EXHIBIT 4

Southeast Region Institutions of Higher Education and Enrollments, Fall 2020		
Institution	Type of Institution	Fall 2020 Enrollment
Lamar University	University	15,799
Stephen F. Austin State University	University	12,488
Angelina College	Junior or Community College	4,073
Lamar Institute of Technology	Junior or Community College	4,402
Lamar State College-Orange	Junior or Community College	2,382
Lamar State College-Port Arthur	Junior or Community College	2,566

Health Care

Availability of Hospital Services

Residents of the Southeast region have access to a variety of hospital services. General hospitals offer a comprehensive range of services and facilities for medical diagnoses and treatments, including surgical services. Special hospitals provide clinical laboratory facilities, diagnostic X-ray facilities, treatment facilities or other definitive medical treatments (**Exhibit 5**).

For a [list of facilities offering services](#) other than hospitals – such as rural health clinics, community mental health centers and birthing centers – visit [Texas Health and Human Services](#).

EXHIBIT 5

Major Health Care Facilities, Southeast Region, 2021			
Facility Type	Number of Facilities	Total Number of Beds	Average Number of Beds Per Facility
General Hospital	12	1,959	163.3
Special Hospital	14	468	33.4
Private Psychiatric Hospital	1	24	24.0
State Psychiatric Hospital	0	0	0.0

Health Care Access

Access to health care facilities adds to the viability of a community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the share of Texans without health insurance — 18.4 percent in 2019 — was twice the national average of 9.2 percent.

In 2019, the rate of uninsured in the Southeast region ranged from a low of 16.2 percent in Hardin County to a high of 25.8 percent in Shelby County; the overall rate for the region was 20.7 percent (**Exhibit 6**). (For additional information, see [Uninsured Texans](#), *Fiscal Notes*, October 2020.)

EXHIBIT 6

Southeast Region, Uninsured by County, 2019		
County	Uninsured Population	Percent Uninsured
Shelby	5,297	25.8%
Polk	8,609	23.0%
San Jacinto	5,018	22.6%
Angelina	15,329	22.0%
Newton	2,176	21.8%
Houston	3,283	21.7%
Jefferson	42,811	21.6%
Trinity	2,283	21.5%
Nacogdoches	10,678	21.2%
San Augustine	1,240	21.1%
Sabine	1,450	20.1%
Tyler	2,983	20.1%
Jasper	4,859	17.6%
Orange	11,627	16.8%
Hardin	7,772	16.2%
Southeast Region	125,415	20.7%

Regional Economy and Employment

In 2020, the Southeast region had a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$36.9 billion, about 2.1 percent of Texas' statewide GDP of \$1.8 trillion. Between 2010 and 2020,

GDP rose by an average annual rate of 0.7 percent, less than the statewide average annual rate of 3.6 percent. In 2020, GDP fell from the previous year by 10.4 percent, more than the state’s GDP fall of 4.7 percent. (GDP values not adjusted for inflation.) Preliminary data for the first two quarters of 2021, however, suggest a significant economic rebound in many industries and regions.

Regional Employment Levels

Of the 280,316 people employed in the Southeast region in 2020, 57.1 percent were in the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA. Between 2010 and 2020, employment declined in the region by 4.2 percent, in contrast to positive growth in the state (17.1 percent) and the U.S. (7.8 percent) (**Exhibit 7**).

EXHIBIT 7

Southeast Region Employment, 2020			
Region	Total Employed, 2020	Change 2010 to 2020	Percent Change 2010 to 2020
United States	150,028,344	10,838,037	7.8%
Texas	13,164,072	1,924,421	17.1%
Southeast Region	280,316	-12,145	-4.2%
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	160,025	-8,207	-4.9%

Regional Industries

In the five-year period between 2015 and 2020, jobs in the Southeast region decreased by 5.6 percent, or about 16,700 jobs. During this period, by comparison, jobs rose by 3.3 percent in Texas and fell by 0.5 percent in the U.S.

The Southeast region’s largest industries by employment levels are in restaurants, education and health care. Public safety and building and utility construction also employ many workers in the region (**Exhibit 8**).

EXHIBIT 8

Top 10 Southeast Region Industries by Employment, 2020					
Industry	Employment	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment Change, 2015 to 2020	Percent Employment Change, 2015 to 2020
Elementary and Secondary Schools	21,536	\$40,774	1.48	-289	-1.3%
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	20,474	\$17,848	1.22	-882	-4.1%
Home Health Care Services	7,967	\$25,803	2.63	-1,194	-13.0%
Justice, Public Order and Safety Activities	7,852	\$61,465	2.19	-532	-6.3%
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	7,683	\$55,267	0.69	-302	-3.8%
General Merchandise Stores, including Warehouse Clubs and Supercenters	5,959	\$26,206	1.53	-49	-0.8%
Grocery Stores	5,591	\$23,990	1.09	-120	-2.1%
Utility System Construction	5,259	\$85,896	5.15	30	0.6%
Offices of Physicians	4,988	\$80,284	0.97	-657	-11.6%
Nonresidential Building Construction	4,968	\$71,429	3.16	308	6.6%
Total - All Industries	280,316	\$49,439	1.00	-16,685	-5.6%

Building services, outpatient care and courier services were among the leaders in regional job gains between 2015 and 2020 (Exhibit 9).

EXHIBIT 9

Southeast Region Industries with Largest Total Growth, 2015 to 2020					
Industry	Employment	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment Change, 2015 to 2020	Percent Employment Change, 2015 to 2020
Services to Buildings and Dwellings	4,513	\$25,611	0.93	560	14.2%
Outpatient Care Centers	1,615	\$50,888	0.83	444	37.9%
Couriers and Express Delivery Services	1,023	\$39,890	0.63	424	70.8%
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	1,039	\$58,032	0.24	400	62.6%
Individual and Family Services	3,944	\$26,568	0.74	353	9.8%

Using the location quotient (LQ) — a measure of an industry’s relative size in a region compared to its average size in the nation — petroleum and chemical manufacturing, rail transportation, logging, and paper and wood products manufacturing stand out as highly concentrated and unique to the regional economy. An LQ of 1.25 or higher indicates that the region has a comparative advantage in the industry (Exhibit 10).

EXHIBIT 10

Top Southeast Region Industries by Location Quotient, 2020					
Industry	Employment	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment Change (2015 to 2020)	Percent Employment Change (2015 to 2020)
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	4,849	\$148,252	23.55	-145	-2.9%
Support Activities for Rail Transportation	1,301	\$59,712	19.84	272	26.4%
Pipeline Transportation of Crude Oil	314	\$101,029	13.57	-242	-43.6%
Basic Chemical Manufacturing	3,730	\$137,069	13.39	-533	-12.5%
Veneer, Plywood and Engineered Wood Product Manufacturing	1,634	\$52,687	10.89	286	21.2%
Resin, Synthetic Rubber, and Artificial Synthetic Fibers and Filaments Manufacturing	1,548	\$119,488	9.06	-412	-21.0%
Logging	1,092	\$49,760	8.99	52	5.0%
Sawmills and Wood Preservation	1,514	\$51,956	8.72	122	8.7%
Timber Tract Operations	124	\$43,493	8.19	-74	-37.3%
Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Mills	1,137	\$115,745	6.61	29	2.6%

Occupations

Occupations with high levels of employment and relative concentration reflect the industrial composition of the region. The Southeast region has large numbers of people in labor, fast food, health care and retail occupations. The region also has many cashiers, building cleaning workers and truck drivers (**Exhibit 11**).

EXHIBIT 11

Top Southeast Region Occupations by Employment, 2020					
Occupation	Employment	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment Change, 2015 to 2020	Percent Employment Change, 2015 to 2020
Laborers and Material Movers	9,636	\$29,200	0.84	-363	-3.6%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	8,708	\$19,900	1.36	-386	-4.2%
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	8,388	\$19,400	1.31	-293	-3.4%
Retail Salespersons	8,046	\$33,700	1.13	-796	-9.0%
Cashiers	7,572	\$23,200	1.19	-291	-3.7%
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	6,744	\$37,800	1.05	-31	-0.5%
Building Cleaning Workers	5,942	\$24,800	0.99	159	2.8%
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	5,865	\$35,400	0.95	-956	-14.0%
Office Clerks, General	5,781	\$33,800	1.08	-331	-5.4%
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	5,139	\$52,100	1.46	-85	-1.6%

Southeast Regional Infrastructure

Housing Affordability

The Texas Housing Affordability Index (THAI) from the Texas A&M Real Estate Center measures the ability of a household earning the median family income to purchase a median-priced home. An index ratio greater than 1 means that the median family income is more than the income required to purchase the median home in a specific area. The calculations for the index assume that consumers are making a down payment of 20 percent and have a family income that is 25 percent of the price of the median home.¹¹

According to the THAI, a median-income family in the Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA would have about twice the income needed to afford the median home (**Exhibit 12**). Home prices in this area are more affordable than in the state as a whole.

EXHIBIT 12

Texas Housing Affordability Index, Southeast Region, 2019 and 2020		
Locality	2019	2020
State of Texas	1.43	1.78
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	1.75	2.29

Regional Transportation

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are federally mandated policymaking organizations created to coordinate transportation planning in urbanized areas. One MPO operates transportation planning in the Southeast region, the Beaumont-Port Arthur MPO/Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission. Roadways within the region make up parts of the Beaumont and Lufkin Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) districts. Road miles and vehicle miles traveled for the region’s roadway network, as of 2019, are listed by road type (**Exhibit 13**).

EXHIBIT 13

Southeast Region Road Miles and Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled, 2019				
Road Type	Centerline Miles	Lane Miles	Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled	Daily Truck Miles Traveled
Certified County Roads	8,409.1	16,821.4	1,074,043.4	37,202.0
City Streets	2,834.6	5,833.9	2,557,117.8	93,297.0
Farm or Ranch to Market Roads and Spurs	2,524.8	5,156.9	3,432,409.9	273,098.5
Federal Roads	707.2	1,407.5	30,216.5	932.3
Frontage Roads	172.8	347.5	663,000.2	22,081.2
Interstate Highways	49.5	251.6	3,074,375.9	662,916.6
Pass, Park and Recreation Roads	68.0	136.1	68,593.6	10,495.7
State Highways, Spurs, Loops, Business Routes	1,106.5	2,752.2	5,716,456.5	661,515.3
U.S. Highways	662.4	2,093.4	7,741,248.8	1,277,924.4
Total	16,535.0	34,800.5	24,357,462.7	3,039,463.0

Transit authorities and transit districts are governmental entities or companies that coordinate public transit in an area. The Beaumont and Port Arthur areas are served by their respective urban public transit districts, and rural transit is provided by Brazos Transit District and the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (**Exhibit 14**).

EXHIBIT 14

Southeast Region Transit Districts, Revenue and Ridership Statistics, 2019						
Transit District	Type	Total Operating Expense	Total Revenue	Unlinked Passenger Trips	Passenger Trips Per Capita	Operating Expense Per Trip
Beaumont Transit System	Urban	\$5,143,422	\$2,643,604	426,294	2.88	\$12.07
Port Arthur Transit	Urban	\$2,501,177	\$1,026,792	116,444	0.76	\$21.48
Brazos Transit District	Rural	\$4,444,632	\$634,790	201,532	0.25	\$22.05
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission	Rural	\$1,516,047	\$644,732	53,364	0.61	\$28.41

The state of Texas has 27 commercial service airports offering passenger service. One of those commercial service airports is in the Southeast region (**Exhibit 15**).

EXHIBIT 15

Southeast Region Commercial Airports and Enplanements for 2019 and 2020					
Airport Name	City	U.S. Rank	2019 Enplanements	2020 Enplanements	Percent Change
Jack Brooks Regional (BRT)	Beaumont	307	29,068	15,792	-45.7%

Amtrak interstate passenger rail service runs three routes through the state (Texas Eagle, Heartland Flyer and Sunset Limited). Texans can get direct service to Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Oklahoma City, with numerous stops along the way and connections to the rest of the country. Amtrak's station stop in the Southeast region is in the city of Beaumont.

Ports of entry within Texas account for 17 percent of all U.S. international trade, and each region contributes to international trade in direct and indirect ways. The Southeast region has five official ports of entry (**Exhibit 16**).

EXHIBIT 16

Southeast Region Official Ports of Entry 2020 Trade Data		
Port of Entry	Exports	Imports
Beaumont	\$9,812,796,724	\$944,241,073
Orange	\$133,037	\$0
Port Arthur	\$5,364,800,680	\$5,760,315,036
Sabine	\$4,932,776,753	\$207,846
Texas City	\$5,102,285,016	\$2,022,123,185
Texas	\$311,223,000,000	\$326,324,000,000

Region vs. Texas

If the Southeast region were a state, it would be the 42nd largest in terms of area and 48th in terms of population (**Exhibit 17**). For more information on how Texas and its distinct, diverse regions compare to the U.S. and other states, visit [TexIndex](#).

EXHIBIT 17

Southeast Region Compared to the U.S.					
Measure	Southeast Region	Rank as a State	Texas	State Rank	U.S.
Square Miles	12,772	42	268,597	2	3,531,905
Population, 2020 Census	768,635	48	29,145,505	2	331,449,281
Population Percent Change, 2010 to 2020	0.2%	48	15.9%	3	7.4%
Population over 25 with at Least a High School Diploma, 2019	84.0%	49	83.7%	49	88.0%
Population over 25 with Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 2019	17.0%	51	29.9%	28	32.1%
Per Capita Income, 2019	\$42,018	50	\$52,813	26	\$56,490
Median Household Income, 2019	\$49,781	46	\$61,874	22	\$62,843
Population Age 65 or Over, 2019	17.5%	19	12.9%	48	16.5%
Population Under Age 18, 2019	23.3%	13	25.5%	2	22.3%

Southeast Region Economic Development Highlights

- The Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA had a total GDP of nearly \$30 billion in 2019, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.^[2]
- A Texas Enterprise Fund grant of \$278,000 was extended to Corrigan OSB, a wood-products manufacturing company. Corrigan is building its newest production facility in Polk County. The project will create 50 new jobs and \$211 million in capital investment.^[3]
- ExxonMobil proposed a \$1 billion investment in Beaumont Independent School District (ISD) in Jefferson County. The project consists of constructing a world-class, high-performance polyethylene plant with an annual processing capacity of 650,000 tons of polyethylene using control technology to minimize emissions.^[4]
- A Texas Enterprise Fund grant of \$485,000 was extended to Optimus Steel. Optimus is establishing a new rebar line and coil handling facility in Orange County. The project will create more than 50 new jobs and \$40 million in capital investment.^[5]
- The Chevron Phillips Chemical Company is constructing a world-scale ethylene processing facility on 1,700 acres in Orange County. The plant will break down hydrocarbons into ethylene to be processed at other units into resin, which is used in products like plastic pipes and containers. The \$5.56 billion proposed total investment will benefit West Orange-Cove Consolidated ISD and Bridge City ISD. The completed construction is estimated for 2024.^[6]
- The Port of Beaumont is the fifth largest port in the U.S. in terms of tonnage^[7] and was recently awarded a \$1.57 million grant from TxDOT to fund a new truck terminal. In 2019, the port supported more than 67,000 jobs and contributed around \$4.4 billion to the state's GDP.^[8]
- Lamar University, founded in 1923 and a member of the Texas State University System since 1995, had an economic impact of \$246.7 million on the region during the 2018-19 school year and supported nearly 3,750 jobs during the same period.^[9]