

Chapter 1 – Demographics of the Border Region

This report, "Texas Borderlands - Frontier of the Future," will examine in depth various areas of daily life in Texas' 43-county Border region. To offer a current overview of the region, each chapter will detail the challenges and opportunities of Texas' vibrant, fast-growing and ever-changing Border. In 2004, Texas became a majority-minority state.¹ In 2025, Texas will be a majority Hispanic state. In so many ways, the Texas Borderlands of today represent the Texas of tomorrow. What happens in this vibrant region will define the frontier of our future. Chapter One presents the demographics of the Border region.

The Texas-Mexico Border region covers 1,254 miles from El Paso-Ciudad Juarez to Brownsville-Matamoros. Texas' 43 Border counties are currently home to nearly 4.1 million Texans.² Moreover, the population on both sides of the Border is rapidly growing. In the 1990s, the populations of El Paso-Ciudad Juarez grew by 38 percent, Laredo-Nuevo Laredo by 48 percent, and the McAllen-Reynosa area by 38 percent.³

With its fast growing, young population, one of the Border's primary assets is its vast labor force, which leads to a robust manufacturing sector. Trade with Mexico accounts for one in every five jobs in the state, and exports make up 14 percent of the state's gross product.⁴ Mexico is by far Texas' largest trade partner, and Chihuahua is the largest trading state.⁵ Moreover, strong trade relations with Mexico and Canada have allowed Texas to play a significant role in the national economy, surpassing California and New York as America's top exporting state. Texas' exports totaled 117.2 billion in 2004, accounting for over 14.3 percent of total U.S. exports.⁶

Despite strong trade relations, the Border presents serious challenges in key socioeconomic indicators. If it made up a "51st" state, the 43 Border counties would rank last in per capita personal income and first in poverty and unemployment.⁷ Under current policies, the state demographer predicts that the average Texas household income will decline up to \$6,000 by 2040.⁸ Fortunately, strong leadership, well-researched policies, and public and private initiatives can help reverse this trend. As one of Texas' leading economists points out, leadership and investment will make the difference. In a briefing to Texas legislators, Dr. Ray Perryman stated that the Border region is a "social, economic, and demographic time bomb. It demands immediate attention, with both the gains from doing something and the consequences of doing nothing being enormous."⁹

Population Growth

U.S. Border Region Growth

Between 1970 and 2000, both sides of the Border experienced rapid population growth due to a young population, relatively high birth rates, and migration fueled by economic development.¹⁰ The Texas Border region is characterized by high rates of migration, north and south. In Texas alone, 60 million legal pedestrians, trucks, autos and rail cars crossed into the United States from Mexico from October 2004 to September 2005.¹¹ Moreover, the percentage

of Texas Border residents born in Mexico is more than double that of Border counties in the other three Border states of California, Arizona and New Mexico.¹²

The 2000 Census data showed that El Paso is home to 13.5 percent more young people than the Texas average and nearly one-quarter more than the United States average. In 2000, 43 percent of El Paso's population was under the age of 25, compared to 35 percent for the nation. Comparatively, in Hidalgo and Webb Counties, the percentage of the population under the age of 18 is even higher.¹³

Mexico's Northern Border Region Growth

Both Texas and Mexico are affected by changes that occur across the Border, including changes in the population levels. The population of the Mexican Border states grew by 26 percent during the 1990s, with an annual growth rate of 2.4 percent.¹⁴ Further, a relatively young population is present on the Mexican side of the Border, as it is in the United States. In fact, 35 percent of the Mexican Border population was under 15 years old in 2000, thus showing the potential for explosive population growth in the near future.¹⁵ For all of Mexico, 33 percent of the population was under 15 years old.¹⁶

NAFTA led to a rapid increase in trade between the U.S. and Mexico, as well as a growing number of maquiladoras - foreign manufacturing plants located in Mexico that import raw materials or components and export their finished products. The increase in maquiladoras has particularly affected population growth on the Mexican side of the Border due to the industry's demand for labor.¹⁷ For example, in 1960, Juarez had a population of 278,995; by 2000, Juarez's population had grown to 1,218,817.¹⁸ The chart, *Population along U.S.-Mexico Border, 2000*, illustrates where the primary growth is and the large numbers of Hispanics in this region.

Population Along U.S.-Mexico Border, 2000

	Borderplex Population	Population	Hispanics	Percent Share
San Diego, California	4,026,065	2,813,833	750,965	27%
Tijuana, Baja California		1,212,232		
El Paso, Texas	1,898,439	679,622	531,654	78%
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua		1,218,817		
McAllen, Texas	989,926	569,463	503,100	88%
Reynosa, Tamaulipas		420,463		
Calexico, California	906,963	142,361	102,817	72%
Mexicali, Baja California		764,602		
Brownsville, Texas	753,368	335,227	282,736	84%
Matamoros, Tamaulipas		418,141		
Laredo, Texas	504,032	193,117	182,070	94%
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas		310,915		
Nogales, Arizona	198,168	38,381	31,005	81%
Nogales, Sonora		159,787		
Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, El Paso Branch, <i>Business Frontier, Issue 2, 2001</i> (El Paso, Texas, January 2, 2002), p. 1-2.				

**Crude Birth and Death Rates, per 1,000
Population, 2000**

Border County	Birth Rate	Death Rate
Atascosa	16%	8%
Bandera	11%	9%
Bexar	17%	7%
Brewster	13%	9%
Brooks	16%	10%
Cameron	25%	6%
Crockett	13%	10%
Culberson	14%	7%
Dimmit	16%	10%
Duval	15%	9%
Edwards	10%	7%
El Paso	21%	6%
Frio	17%	8%
Hidalgo	26%	5%
Hudspeth	11%	5%
Jeff Davis	8%	11%
Jim Hogg	15%	9%
Jim Wells	16%	9%
Kenedy	19%	9%
Kerr	12%	14%
Kimble	12%	14%
Kinney	11%	12%
Kleberg	17%	8%
La Salle	17%	9%
Live Oak	10%	9%
McMullen	5%	7%
Maverick	22%	6%
Medina	14%	8%
Nueces	17%	8%
Pecos	13%	7%
Presidio	20%	6%
Real	9%	13%
Reeves	16%	8%
San Patricio	18%	8%
Starr	27%	5%
Sutton	15%	9%
Terrell	6%	11%
Uvalde	19%	9%
Val Verde	20%	7%
Webb	30%	5%
Willacy	20%	5%
Zapata	21%	7%
Zavala	18%	9%
TEXAS	17%	7%

Source: Derived from Texas Department of Health
Data by the Texas State Data Center

Birth/Death Rates

In 2000, the total fertility rate in Texas Border counties was 3.1 children per woman of reproductive age, which was 50 percent higher than the national rate, and significantly higher than the state rate of 2.5. Surprisingly, the rate in the Mexico Border region was only 2.0, lower than Mexico's national rate of 2.4.¹⁹ According to the Texas Comptroller, birth rates for the 43-county Border region in 2001 were about 20 per 1,000 population, with 17 per 1,000 as the Texas average; and, the death rate was 661 per 100,000 population for the Border, and 714 per 100,000 for Texas, showing a significant difference in both of these categories.²⁰ The Border's low death rate can largely be attributed to its young population. If the 43 Border counties formed a "51st" state, it would rank third in the nation in the percent of population that is five to 17 years of age.²¹ Texas as a whole ranks fifth, but without the Border region, it would rank 24th.²²

The chart, *Crude Birth and Death Rates, 2000*, shows that health levels remain below state averages, with 30 of the area's counties having crude death rates that are higher than those for the State in 2000.²³

The growth of the Border region is the result of a number of factors, such as a young population and a high birth rate coupled with a low death rate, migration fueled by economic development and quality of life issues, and the advent of NAFTA.²⁴ The young, fast growing population of Border counties creates serious need for investment in public education, university programs, workforce skills, health programs, and vital basic infrastructure.

Socioeconomic Challenges of Border Residents

As the following chart *Comparative Facts and Figures about the Texas Border Region* illustrates, if the Border region made up a “51st” state, the 43 Border counties would rank dead last in the U.S. in per capita personal income. Without the Border counties, Texas would rank 18th in the nation. This is but one of the indicators that suggests that as prosperity in Texas north of I-10 increases, south of I-10, Texans still face daily challenges to improve their standard of living.

Comparative Facts and Figures about the Texas Border Region

Indicator	Year	If the Texas Border were the 51st State, it would rank:	Where Texas ranks:	Where Texas would rank without the Border:
Poverty rate	1997	1st - 26.8%	6th - 16.7%	12th - 14.3%
Schoolchildren in poverty	1997	1st - 33.8% of 5 to 17 year olds	9th - 22.1% of 5 to 17 year olds	17th - 78.9% of 5 to 17 year olds
Unemployment rate	1999	1st - 7.5%	16th - 4.6%	27th - 4.0%
Population	1999	24th - 4.1 million	2nd - 20.0 million	3rd - 16.0 million
Percent of population that is 5 to 17 years old	1999	3rd - 22.8%	5th - 20.4%	24th - 19.0%
Average annual population growth during the 1990s	1990 - 1999	6th - 2.2%	7th - 2.0%	9th - 1.9%
Birth rate	1999	2nd - 21 live births per 1,000 population	2nd - 17.1 births per 1,000 population	4th - 16.3 births per 1,000 population
Infant mortality rate	1999	47th - 5.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births	39th - 6.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births	39th - 6.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births
Death rate from diabetes	1998	3rd - 32.7 deaths per 100,000 population	21st - 24.8 deaths per 100,000 population	33rd - 22.8 deaths per 100,000 population
Death rate from hepatitis and other liver diseases	1998	3rd - 14.3 deaths per 100,000 population	10th - 10.0 deaths per 100,000 population	24th - 8.8 deaths per 100,000 population
Per capita personal income	1998	51st - \$18,390	26th - \$25,803	18th - \$27,165
Total personal income	1998	29th - \$74.2 billion	3rd - \$508.6 billion	3rd - \$425.9 billion
Average annual pay	1999	46th - \$25,287	15th - \$32,254	11th - \$33,712
Average annual pay in manufacturing	1999	49th - \$28,802	15th - \$42,341	10th - \$44,175
Average annual pay in construction	1999	49th - \$26,450	24th - \$32,761	24th - \$33,869
Average annual pay in services	1999	47th - \$22,801	12th - \$31,195	11th - \$32,814
Total area	n/a	16th - 72,423 square miles	2nd - 267,277 square miles	2nd - 187,854 square miles
Source: John Sharp, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, <i>Bordering the Future</i> Report, 1998; Carole Keeton Rylander, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, January 2001 Update.				

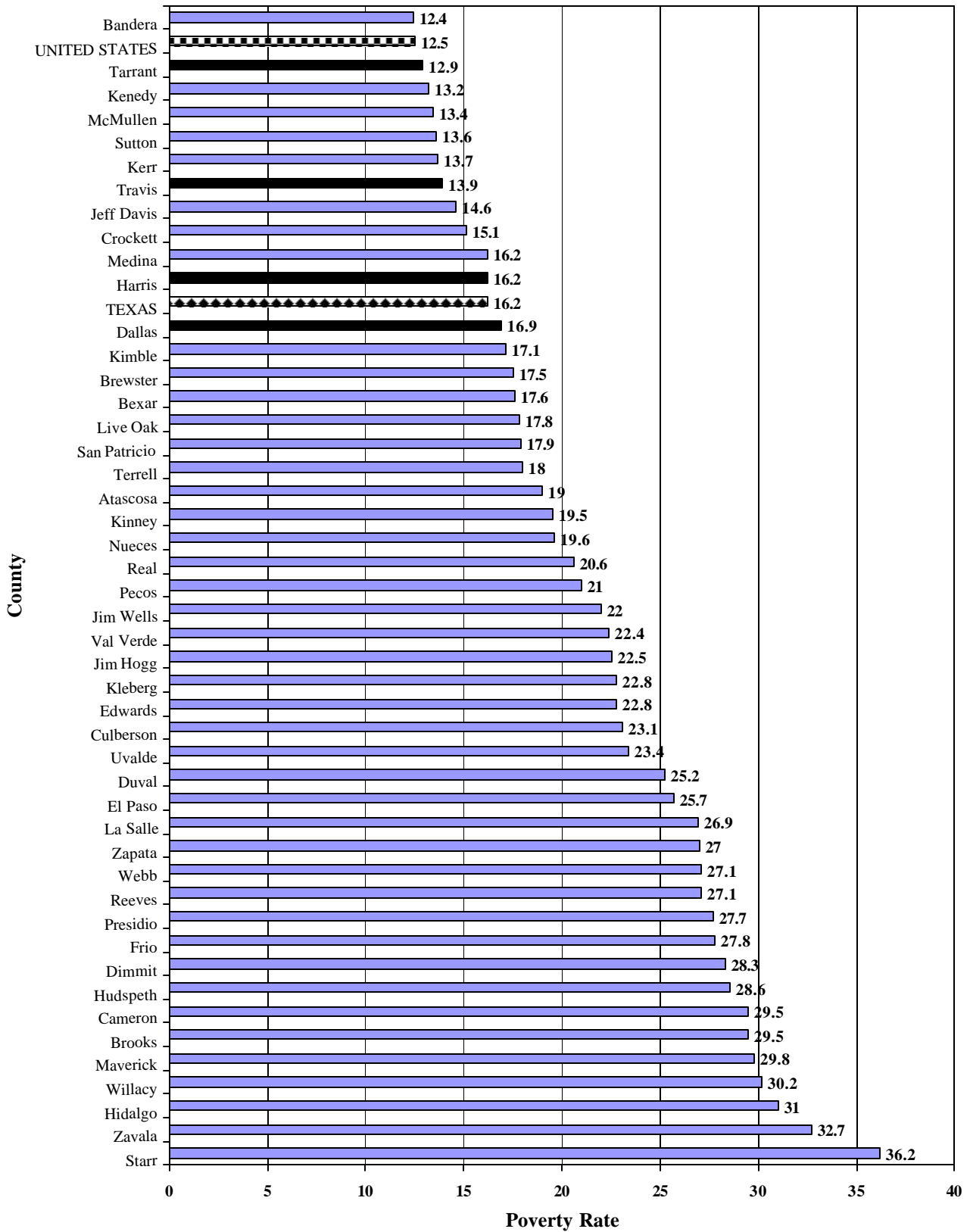
Poverty

The Border regions of both the U.S. and Mexico include a mix of very poor and relatively affluent areas. The Northern Border of Mexico is one of the wealthier regions of Mexico.²⁵ The opposite, however, is true for the Texas Border. Consistently high poverty rates indicate a pervasive cycle of poverty that becomes overwhelmingly difficult to break. In 2004, the national poverty rate rose to 12.7 percent, up from 12.5 percent in 2003.²⁶ This increase means that more than 1.1 million more people lived under conditions of poverty in 2004 than in 2003.²⁷

The Border region has historically been the most economically disadvantaged area of Texas, with poverty rates that, in general, exceed the state average and, in some cases, more than triple the state poverty rate. As the chart *Poverty Rates, All Ages, 1999* demonstrates, Texas's 43 Border counties are the center of poverty in America today. In 1999, of the 43 Border counties, only one, Bandera County, had a poverty rate lower than the national average. Additionally, only five Border counties fared better than the state average of 15.4 percent. The other 38 Border counties saw at least 15.9 percent of their population living in poverty. Starr County had the most pervasive poverty conditions, with a poverty rate of over 50 percent in 1999. To contrast, counties from other parts of Texas had significantly lower poverty rates.

Poverty affects all portions of an individual's life and, in turn, affects all of the socioeconomic indicators that are discussed in this report. Indeed, poverty is closely linked to a number of undesirable outcomes in areas such as health, education, and housing.²⁸ The failure to adequately invest in poverty-stricken areas will put the Border region and all of Texas at a significant competitive disadvantage in the economy of the future.

Poverty Rate, All Ages, 2003



Educational attainment and wage earning

The educational attainment level of United States Border residents is lower than the national average. The opposite, however, is true for Mexican Border residents.²⁹ In the Texas Border region, 33.6 percent of residents age 25 or older had fewer than nine years of education, as compared to 24.3 percent of the state as a whole.³⁰ Only 11.2 percent of the Border region population have a bachelor's degree and only 6.3 percent have a postgraduate degree, while the state average for adults with a bachelor's degree is 15.6 percent and postgraduate degree is 7.6 percent.³¹

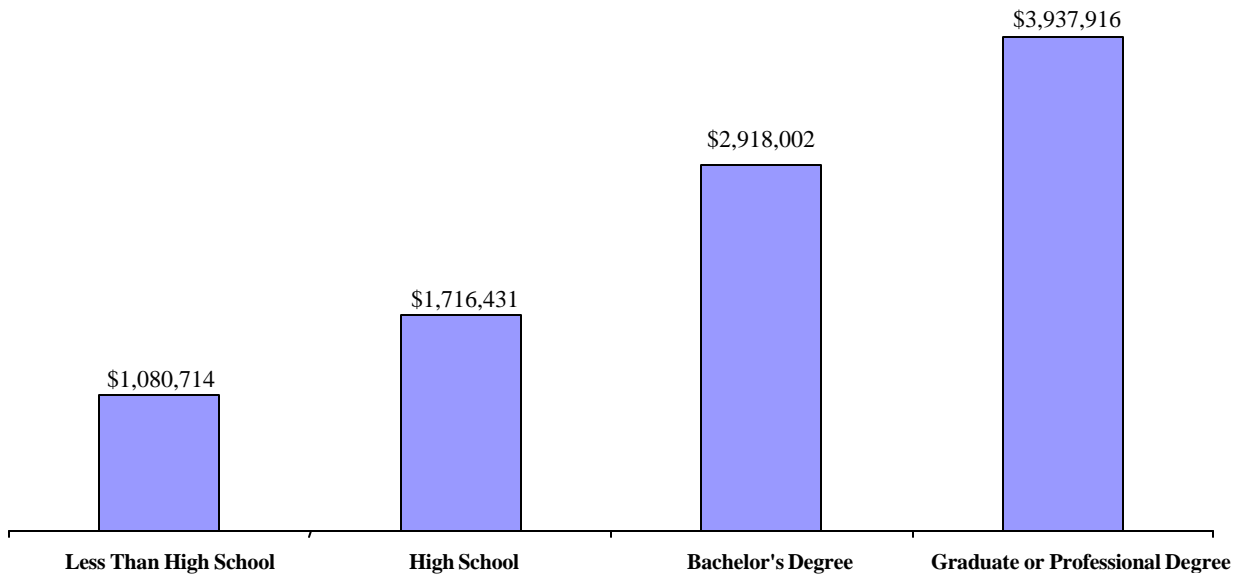
Educational Attainment Levels in the Borderlands for 2000

Population (25 yrs. and older)	43-County Texas Border Region	Texas	211-County Non-Border Region
WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	33.6%	24.3%	22.2%
WITH SOME COLLEGE BUT NO DEGREE	20.7%	22.4%	22.7%
WITH AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	4.9%	5.2%	5.3%
WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE	11.2%	15.6%	16.6%
WITH A POST GRADUATE DEGREE	6.3%	7.6%	7.9%

SOURCE: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, The Border: Snapshot, November 2003, using data from the 2000 U.S. Census.

As a result of these low levels of educational attainment, it becomes more difficult for individuals to break the cycle of poverty that often engulfs low income families. As the chart *Average Lifetime Income by Educational Attainment* shows, for individuals with less than a high school diploma, the average lifetime income is \$1,080,714, while the average lifetime earnings are \$1,716,431 for high school graduates. On the other hand, a person with a bachelor's degree, on average, earns \$2,918,002 over the course of their lifetime, compared to \$3,937,916 for an individual with a graduate or professional degree.³² Increased educational attainment delivers clear economic benefits.

Average Lifetime Income by Educational Attainment



SOURCE: Steve Murdock, The Population of Texas: Historical Patterns and Future Trends Affecting Education, June 19, 2002, from U.S. Census Bureau population figures.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas commissioned a study to determine the impact on the Border region's income due to high school noncompletion.³³ Please note that the study only examines the fourteen Texas counties which actually border with Mexico, unlike the 43 county Border region to which this document often refers. As indicated in the chart *Implied Income Losses Due to High School Noncompletion* indicates, the Border region suffers an enormous negative economic impact due to high levels of residents failing to complete high school. Collectively, the study estimates the 14 county region lost out on more than \$3.6 billion in income due to high noncompletion rates.

Implied Income Losses Due to High School Noncompletion

County	Per capita impact	Aggregate impact (in millions)
Brewster	Not calculated	Not calculated
Cameron	\$3,143	\$744.7
El Paso	1,195	643.8
Hidalgo	3,627	1,262.5
Hudspeth	3,413	9.2
Jeff Davis	\$370	0.7
Kinney	2,261	6.6
Maverick	5,177	170.4
Presidio	4,011	24.5
Starr	5,760	210.2
Terrell	825	1.1
Val Verde	2,276	80.1
Webb	3,456	413.8
Zapata	3,129	26.3
Fourteen counties bordering Mexico	\$2,260	\$3,593.9
Note:	All impacts calculated in dollars for 1990 completion rates relative to the Texas average. Border zone estimate is a weighted average net of Brewster County.	
Source:	Thomas M. Fullerton, Jr., "Educational Attainment and Border Income Performance," <i>Economic and Financial Review</i> (3rd quarter, 2001), p. 7.	

Without an education system in the Border region that delivers higher graduation rates and better education to meet the needs of employers, lower wages will persist, and the entire state—particularly the Border—will suffer the consequences.

Race and wage earning

The Border's huge income disparities are also affected by the region's large Hispanic population. As described below in the chart *Median Income in the United States by Race (1999 Dollars)*, Hispanics, on average, earn a lower income than non-Hispanic whites.³⁴ The numbers reflected in the chart are disturbing. By 1999, the median income of Hispanic males of \$18,324 actually fell \$3,477 from the level of earnings enjoyed in 1972, as measured in 1999 dollars. Over the same time period, Hispanic females' incomes have remained essentially flat at around \$10,000, although there is evidence of recent growth. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, the state will rely on a more Hispanic workforce to provide funds for state services.³⁵

Median Income by Race and Hispanic Origin in the United States (1999 Dollars)

Year	Non-Hispanic White		Hispanic	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1972	\$29,654	\$9,906	\$21,711	\$9,932
1973	\$30,263	\$10,176	\$21,884	\$9,361
1974	\$29,022	\$10,506	\$20,682	\$9,656
1975	\$28,203	\$10,719	\$20,090	\$9,492
1976	\$28,381	\$10,807	\$19,773	\$9,421
1977	\$28,517	\$11,029	\$20,553	\$9,672
1978	\$28,569	\$10,611	\$20,683	\$9,349
1979	\$28,286	\$10,147	\$19,972	\$9,343
1980	\$27,694	\$10,081	\$19,553	\$8,917
1981	\$27,129	\$10,388	\$18,866	\$9,356
1982	\$26,358	\$10,709	\$18,248	\$8,957
1983	\$26,358	\$10,709	\$18,865	\$9,036
1984	\$27,190	\$11,320	\$17,800	\$9,348
1985	\$27,393	\$11,516	\$17,704	\$9,321
1986	\$28,687	\$11,995	\$17,529	\$9,634
1987	\$28,882	\$12,756	\$17,936	\$9,723
1988	\$29,156	\$13,120	\$18,350	\$9,844
1989	\$29,101	\$13,453	\$18,004	\$10,274
1990	\$27,989	\$13,487	\$17,170	\$9,601
1991	\$27,123	\$13,456	\$16,902	\$9,802
1992	\$26,598	\$13,373	\$15,921	\$9,865
1993	\$26,715	\$13,373	\$15,783	\$9,339
1994	\$27,117	\$13,428	\$16,300	\$9,682
1995	\$27,855	\$14,000	\$16,223	\$9,760
1996	\$27,915	\$14,349	\$16,391	\$10,070
1997	\$28,606	\$14,936	\$16,832	\$10,650
1998	\$30,522	\$15,553	\$17,638	\$11,102
1999	\$30,594	\$15,922	\$18,234	\$11,314

Source: Institute for Policy and Economic Development, The University of Texas at El Paso, *Educational Trends and Income in El Paso: A Longitudinal Perspective* (El Paso, Texas, August 2001), p.40

The continued growth of an under-educated Hispanic population will have serious consequences for Texas' future workforce. As the State Demographer argues,

*If the current relationships between minority status and educational attainment, occupations of employment, and wage and salary income do not change in the future from those existing in 1990, the future workforce of Texas will be less educated, more likely to be employed in lower-level state occupations, and earning lower wages and salaries than the present workforce. Preparing Texas workers to compete more effectively in the increasingly competitive international workforce of the future will require changing current patterns of relationships between minority status and other characteristics by improving the educational and skill levels of Texas minority workers.*³⁶

Income Inequality

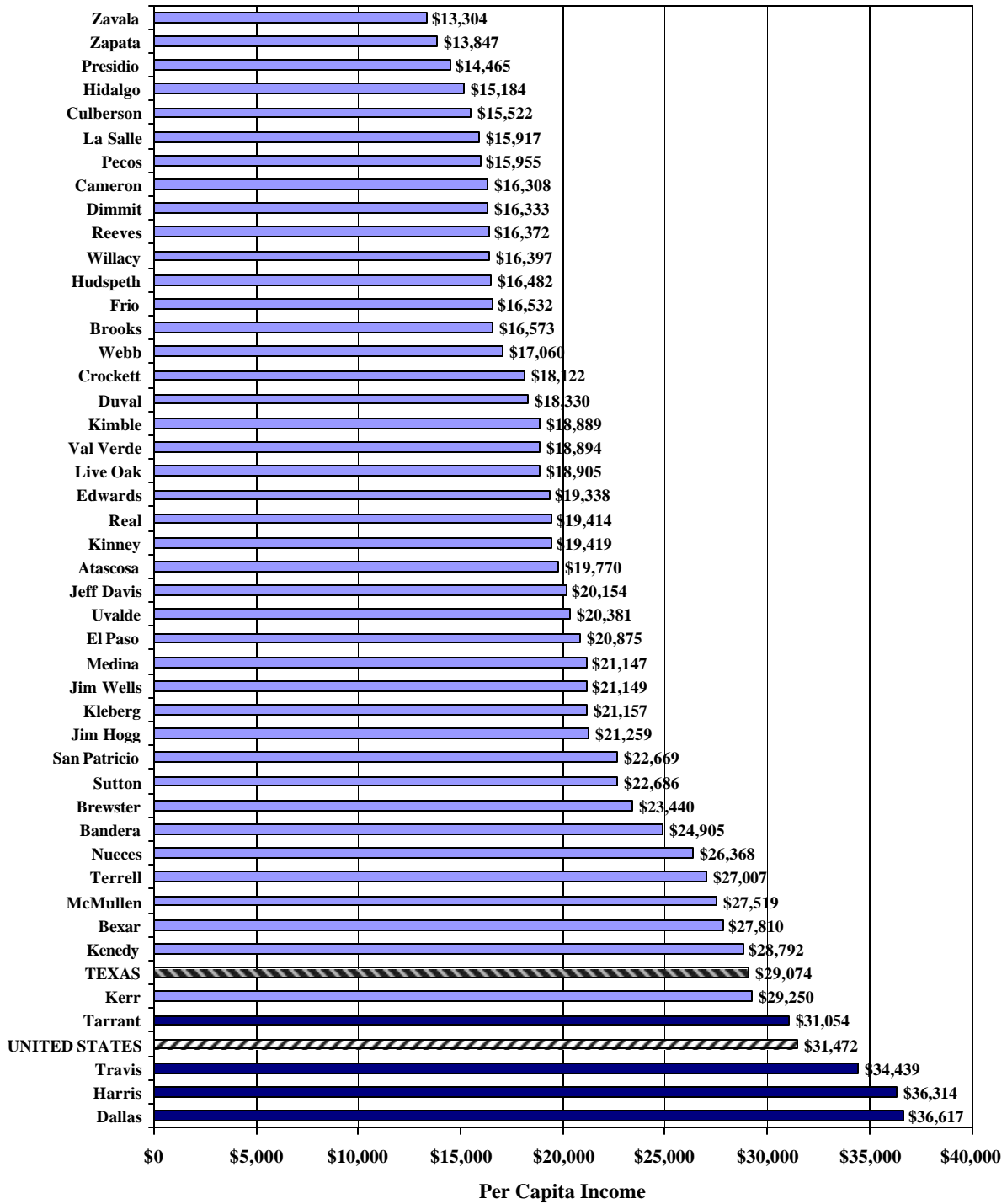
Per capita income is one measure of community success. Lower per capita income indicates that, on average, families are struggling to earn money and break the cycle of poverty. Unlike median income, which reflects the middle range of income—with 50 percent of households making more and 50 percent earning less—per capita income is the average earnings of the total population in that area. The Border's per capita income is astoundingly low. For example, of the area's 43 counties, 40 had per capita incomes lower than the State average.³⁷ Indeed, the Border area's per capita income is among the lowest in the nation, ranging from 38 percent of the U.S. per capita income in Eagle Pass to 60 percent in El Paso.³⁸ As a state, Texas averages 94 percent of the U.S. per capita income.³⁹

The entire state has suffered from an increase in income inequality. In Texas, the gap between the rich and the rest of us is unlike any other state in the nation. Texas had the greatest income inequality between the top fifth and the middle fifth in the early 2000s.⁴⁰ During the same time period, the gap between the richest 20 percent of families and the poorest 20 percent was second in the entire country, behind only New York.⁴¹

Texas is not alone. Across the entire United States, the rich have been getting exceedingly richer for some time now, while the middle and lower classes continue to struggle. Between 1979 and 2002, for example, the average after-tax income of the top one percent of the population more than doubled, rising from \$298,000 to \$631,700.⁴² That's an astounding increase of \$333,700, or 111 percent. Meanwhile, during the same period, the middle class's income rose only \$5,700, or fifteen percent.⁴³

When comparing the Border counties' per capita income with other counties around the state, the Border again struggles to keep in line. As the chart *Per Capita Income, 2003* shows, per capita income in every county along the Border hovered below or near Texas's per capita income in that year. Just three years ago, the state per capita income average was \$29,074; however, only one of the 43 Border counties had a higher average.⁴⁴ In fact, three Border counties had an average per capita income that was less than 50 percent of the state average and less than 46 percent of the national per capita average of \$31,472.⁴⁵

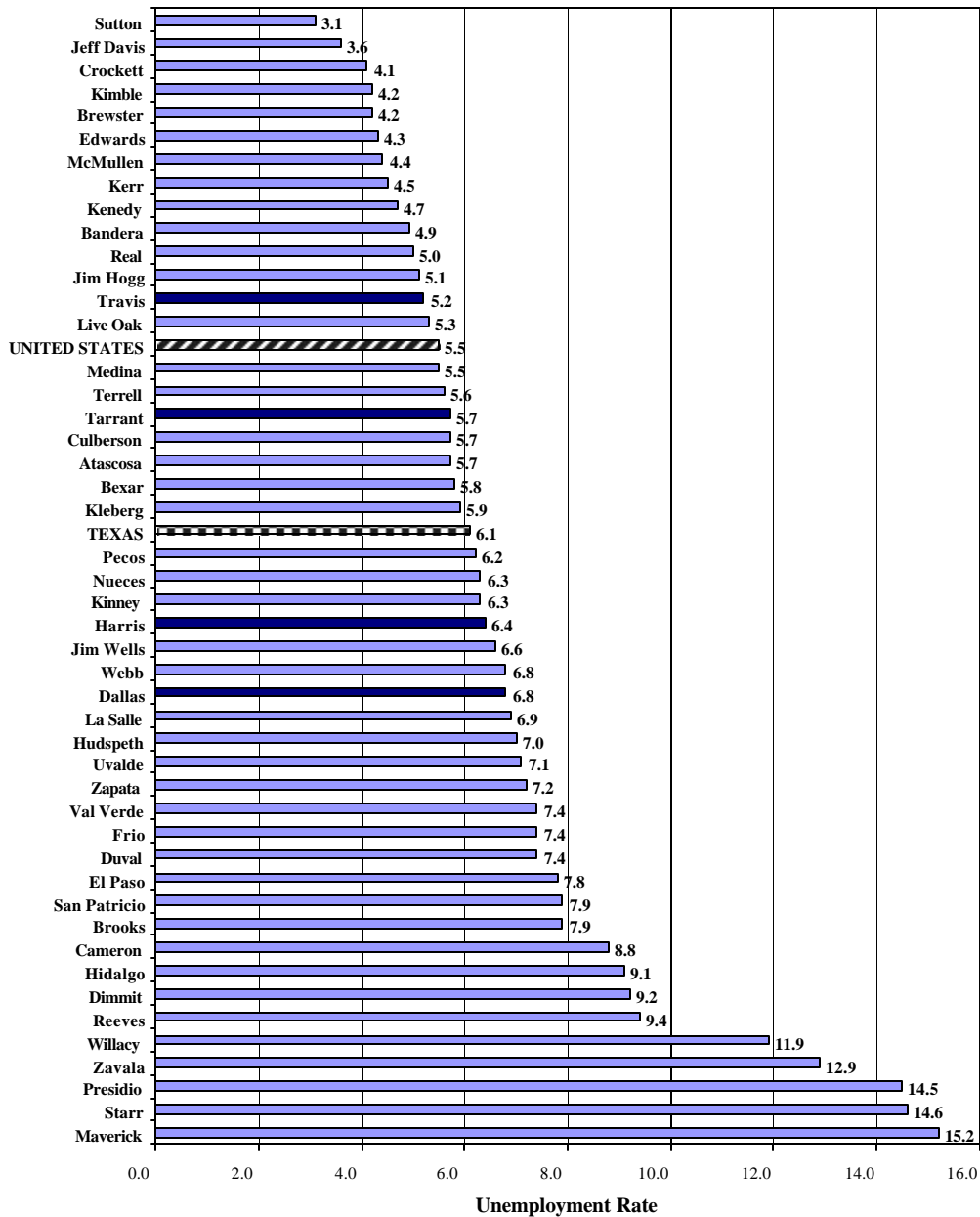
Per Capita Income, 2003



Employment

While high poverty rates are the result of various conditions, one important contributor is the rate of unemployment. The Border had unemployment rates that were higher than that for the State as a whole in 2000. Unemployment rates are based on the number of people searching for work, thus a high rate indicates that opportunities to earn money are unavailable. The chart below, *Unemployment Rate by County, 2004*, outlines the unemployment rates for the 43 Border counties.

Unemployment Rate by County, 2004



Language Barriers

Language barriers can create and exacerbate numerous problems for people who immigrate from Mexico into the U.S. Border area. Data on language use suggest that many in the region lack the basic English language skills necessary to effectively compete in the labor force and access services. In 2000, 38 of the region's 43 counties showed higher proportions speaking non-English languages at home than the State as a whole, and in 19 counties the percentage speaking a language other than English at home matched or exceeded 70 percent. Even more important, as the chart *Percentage of Residents Who Speak Primarily Spanish at Home, and Proficiency in English* illustrates, is the fact that in nearly a third of the counties, more than 20 percent of those speaking Spanish at home either do not speak English at all or do not speak the language well.⁴⁶

Percentage of Residents who Speak Primarily Spanish at Home, and Proficiency in English

Border County	Percent that speak primarily Spanish at home	Ability to speak English			
		Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at All
Atascosa	45%	64%	24%	11%	2%
Bandera	14%	73%	16%	9%	3%
Bexar	43%	66%	20%	10%	4%
Brewster	43%	70%	18%	10%	2%
Brooks	78%	64%	23%	9%	3%
Cameron	79%	55%	20%	14%	11%
Crockett	48%	60%	26%	10%	4%
Culberson	73%	63%	20%	9%	8%
Dimmit	77%	62%	24%	10%	5%
Duval	78%	66%	23%	9%	2%
Edwards	47%	62%	21%	12%	5%
El Paso	73%	55%	21%	14%	10%
Frio	61%	63%	24%	10%	3%
Hidalgo	83%	54%	21%	12%	13%
Hudspeth	74%	46%	16%	19%	19%
Jeff Davis	37%	59%	18%	18%	6%
Jim Hogg	82%	66%	22%	10%	3%
Jim Wells	63%	65%	24%	10%	2%
Kenedy	85%	57%	19%	15%	8%
Kerr	18%	59%	25%	12%	4%
Kimble	18%	63%	13%	18%	7%
Kinney	47%	58%	24%	13%	5%
Kleberg	55%	69%	21%	8%	2%
La Salle	70%	60%	27%	9%	4%
Live Oak	30%	71%	18%	9%	2%
McMullen	27%	68%	17%	14%	1%
Maverick	92%	49%	23%	14%	14%
Medina	37%	68%	22%	8%	3%
Nueces	43%	68%	20%	9%	3%

Pecos	56%	62%	22%	12%	5%
Presidio	84%	46%	20%	13%	21%
Real	20%	70%	17%	9%	4%
Reeves	68%	56%	23%	12%	8%
San Patricio	39%	67%	20%	10%	3%
Starr	91%	43%	27%	13%	17%
Sutton	48%	62%	21%	9%	9%
Terrell	53%	69%	15%	13%	3%
Uvalde	60%	60%	22%	11%	6%
Val Verde	70%	57%	21%	13%	9%
Webb	92%	52%	24%	14%	11%
Willacy	78%	59%	24%	11%	6%
Zapata	79%	54%	24%	10%	12%
Zavala	85%	51%	30%	12%	7%
TEXAS	31%	54%	20%	16%	10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3

Conclusion

If the Border population continues to grow at the rate recorded between 1990 and 2000, the population of the Mexican Border states will increase to almost 9 million inhabitants in 2010, and to 13 million in 2020.⁴⁷ In 2020, if present trends continue, the 43-county Texas Border region will grow by over 2 million inhabitants. With a total of 6,128,171 inhabitants, the Border region would be larger than South Carolina, Colorado and Minnesota. In fact, it would rank as the 20th largest state in population.

The time to face the challenge of our Texas Border region is now. In public education, university programs, workforce skills, health access, and basic infrastructure, all areas critical to building a sound economy, Texas has failed to allocate appropriate financial resources based on population growth and need. All along the Texas-Mexico Border, as the state's share of public education spending has dropped from 65 percent to 36.3 percent, local governments are forced to rely on the lowest per capita tax base in the U.S. to provide for the most essential state service: a quality public education.⁴⁸ In a 21st century economy, the undereducated citizen of Brownsville will soon become the unskilled worker of Dallas. With the dramatic growth ahead, our state has a choice: make the necessary investment and succeed, or continue failed policies of underinvestment and, for the first time in Texas history, our next generation will be less prosperous than the generation of today. Simply put, the human capital of the Border is the key to prosperity for all our state, not just the Texas Borderlands.

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