

# REGIONAL SNAPSHOT: UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION

As the state's chief financial officer, I am charged with monitoring the economic health of our state. Therefore, it's vitally important that my office studies factors related to our regional economies.

The six counties comprising the Upper Rio Grande Region cover the westernmost portion of the state along the Rio Grande bordering Mexico, including the Big Bend.

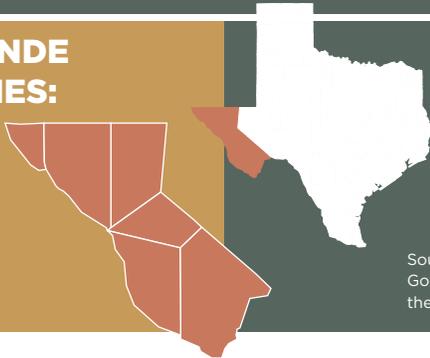
Below, we track regional trends in population growth, personal income, jobs and wages, education and economic development — a wildcard issue that, if left unaddressed, could curtail continued economic expansion.

**-GLENN HEGAR**

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

## UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION COUNTIES:

BREWSTER  
CULBERSON  
EL PASO  
HUDSPETH  
JEFF DAVIS  
PRESIDIO



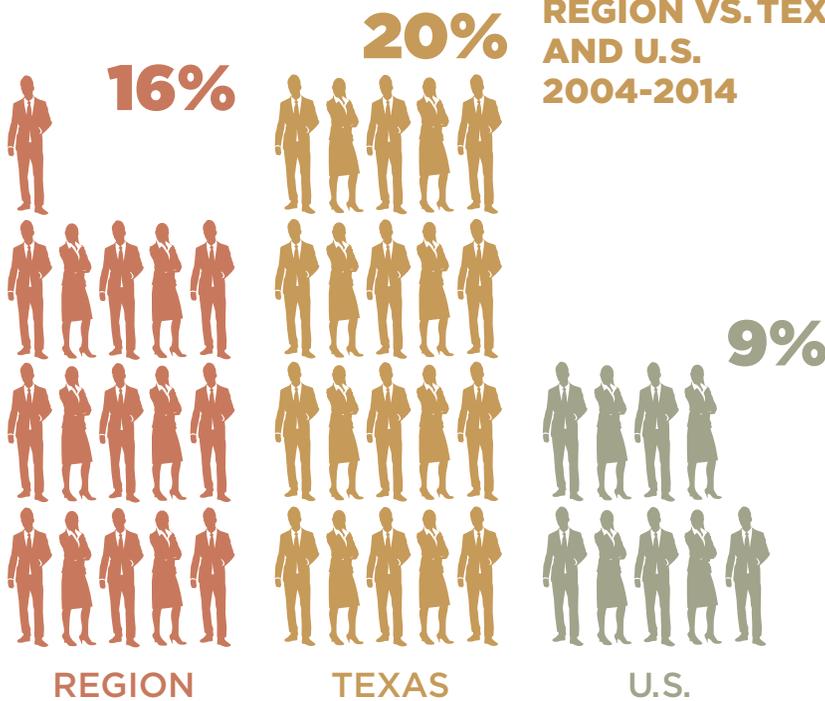
Most mountain ranges in Texas are located in the Upper Rio Grande Region.

Source: Rio Grande Council of Governments, SummitPost and the National Park Service

## KEY INDUSTRIES 2016:

- LEATHER AND ALLIED PRODUCT MANUFACTURING
- APPAREL MANUFACTURING
- TEXTILE MILLS
- FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (MILITARY)
- ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT, APPLIANCE AND COMPONENT MANUFACTURING
- DATA PROCESSING, HOSTING AND RELATED SERVICES
- CROP PRODUCTION
- TRUCK TRANSPORTATION

## POPULATION GROWTH



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

## UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION VS. TEXAS AND U.S. 2004-2014

EL PASO COUNTY IS THE REGION'S SMALLEST COUNTY IN LAND AREA BUT CONTAINS

**97%**

OF THE REGION'S POPULATION.

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK HOSTS AN AVERAGE **300,000 VISITORS EACH YEAR.** IN 2013, THEY SPENT NEARLY **\$27 MILLION.**

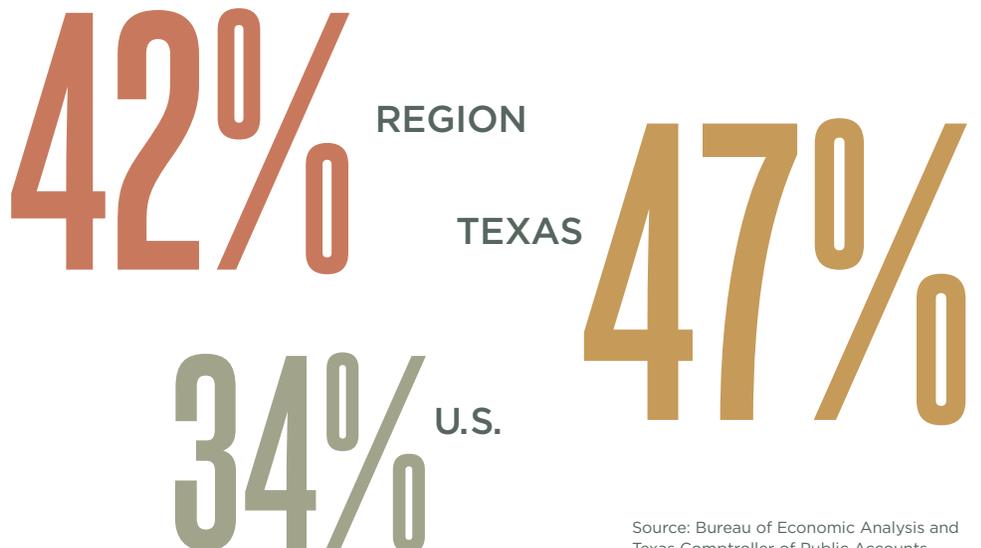
Source: Rio Grande Council of Governments and U.S. Census Bureau

Source: National Park Service and Headwaters Economics

## PERSONAL INCOME

## PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME GROWTH, 2004-2014

COUNTY	2014 PER CAPITA INCOME	10-YR PER CAPITA INCOME GROWTH
Brewster	\$40,576	37%
Culberson	\$36,353	99%
Jeff Davis	\$34,495	48%
Presidio	\$32,614	84%
El Paso	\$31,816	42%
Hudspeth	\$27,317	59%



Personal income in the Upper Rio Grande Region has risen from \$16.7 billion in 2004 to \$27.4 billion in 2014. It accounted for 2.2 percent of the state's \$1.23 trillion in personal income in 2014.

Per capita personal income grew 42 percent, lower than the state's 47 percent average.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis and Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

# JOBS & WAGES

## JOB GROWTH 2004-2014

The Upper Rio Grande Region added nearly 50,000 jobs from 2004 to 2014. El Paso County led this expansion, accounting for all of the region's net job gains.

At \$38,191, regional average wage was lower than the state average of \$52,537.



**EL PASO HAD THE LOWEST CRIME RATE RANKING FOR A U.S. CITY ITS SIZE FOR 4 CONSECUTIVE YEARS.**

Source: El Paso Times

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Intl.

# EDUCATION

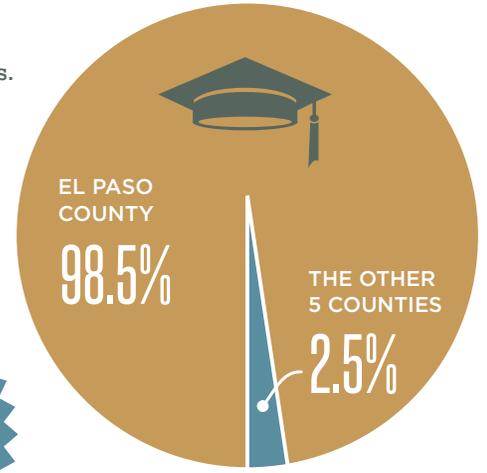
## UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, 2014

El Paso County produces 98 percent of the region's public high school graduates.

Only 9 school districts in the entire region had more than 100 graduates in 2014.

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO GENERATES AN ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF \$1.3 BILLION FOR EL PASO COUNTY.**

Source: The University of Texas at El Paso



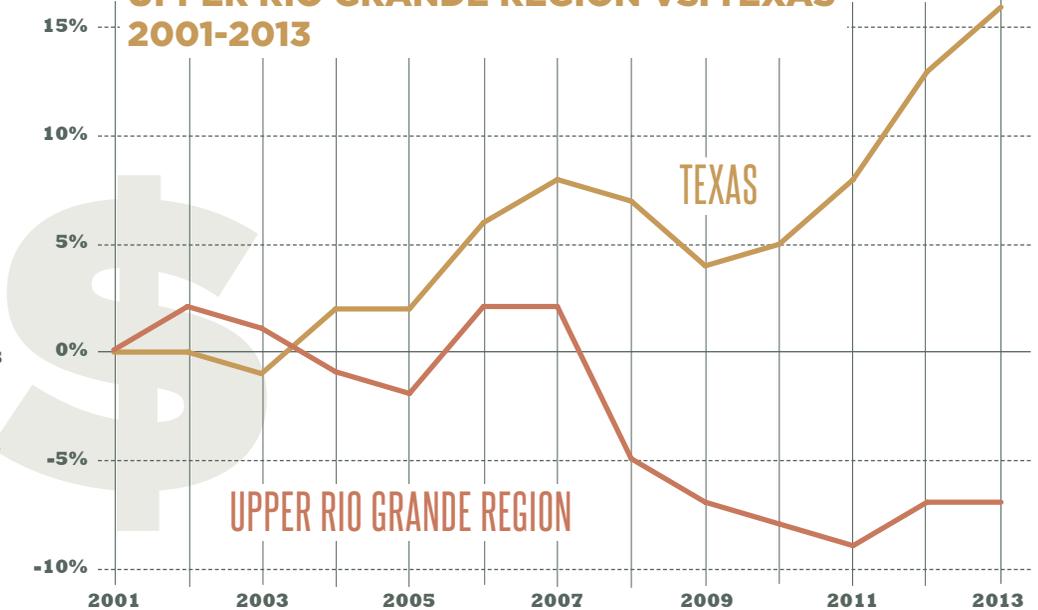
Source: Texas Education Agency and Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Upper Rio Grande Region lags behind the state in economic growth. It has the state's third-highest unemployment rate. Compensation in key industries declined by 24 percent from 2001 to 2014. El Paso, the region's largest city, is the only metropolitan statistical area in Texas to experience a decline in real per capita gross regional product (GRP).

A lack of economic diversity plays a key role in slowing the economy. Top industries claim a much greater share of jobs and GRP in the Upper Rio Grande than they do statewide. Government plays a particularly large role — it has three times the impact on the region's GRP than it does in Texas as a whole. Meanwhile, the economic contributions of most other sectors fall short of state averages.

## SHARE OF PER CAPITA REAL GRP\* UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION VS. TEXAS 2001-2013



\*Real chained 2001 dollars, indexed to 2001.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis and Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

# CONCLUSION

Despite the attraction of its magnificent mountains and iconic Texas landscape, the Upper Rio Grande Region saw nominal economic growth.

Visitors flock to places like Big Bend National Park and Marfa, which has emerged as a thriving art community. Guadalupe Peak

in Culberson County is the highest point in Texas.

El Paso County continues to drive regional job growth, but wages, though steadily increasing, lag behind those in the rest of the state.

The region's lack of business diversity hinders its economic development and could impede

its future prosperity. Investments in the workforce and private sector could stimulate growth in lagging industrial sectors, however.

Overall, the region has a strong public sector that will serve as a stable foundation for closing industrial gaps and driving prosperity.

**Glenn Hegar**

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

**THE UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION IS ONE OF THE COMPTROLLER'S 12 ECONOMIC REGIONS.**

To see a complete list of these regions, plus more in-depth county-by-county data, visit:

[TEXASAHEAD.ORG/REGIONALRPTS](http://TEXASAHEAD.ORG/REGIONALRPTS)