



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Initial unemployment claims over the last 17 weeks topped 50 million nationally. The number of claims per week have declined since the week ending on March 14.
- Over the same time period, 2.8 million workers in Texas filed claims.
- Locally, 13,794 initial unemployment claims were filed between the weeks ending on March 14 to June 27.
- Air travel both nationally and out of Easterwood Airport increased in June relative to May.
- Measures of local and statewide vehicle traffic indicate that vehicle miles driven increased from early April to the middle of June but have declined modestly since.
- The May unemployment rate of 8.9% in College Station-Bryan was tied for the lowest rate among Texas metro areas.
- Nonfarm employment in College Station-Bryan was 125,300 in January and by April had dropped to 116,900. May saw an increase to 118,700.
- Inflation-adjusted taxable sales declined 16.6% between January and April. In May, they rebounded 12.8% relative to April, to \$333 million.
- The Business-Cycle Index exhibited a monthly decrease of 3.5% for the month of May.

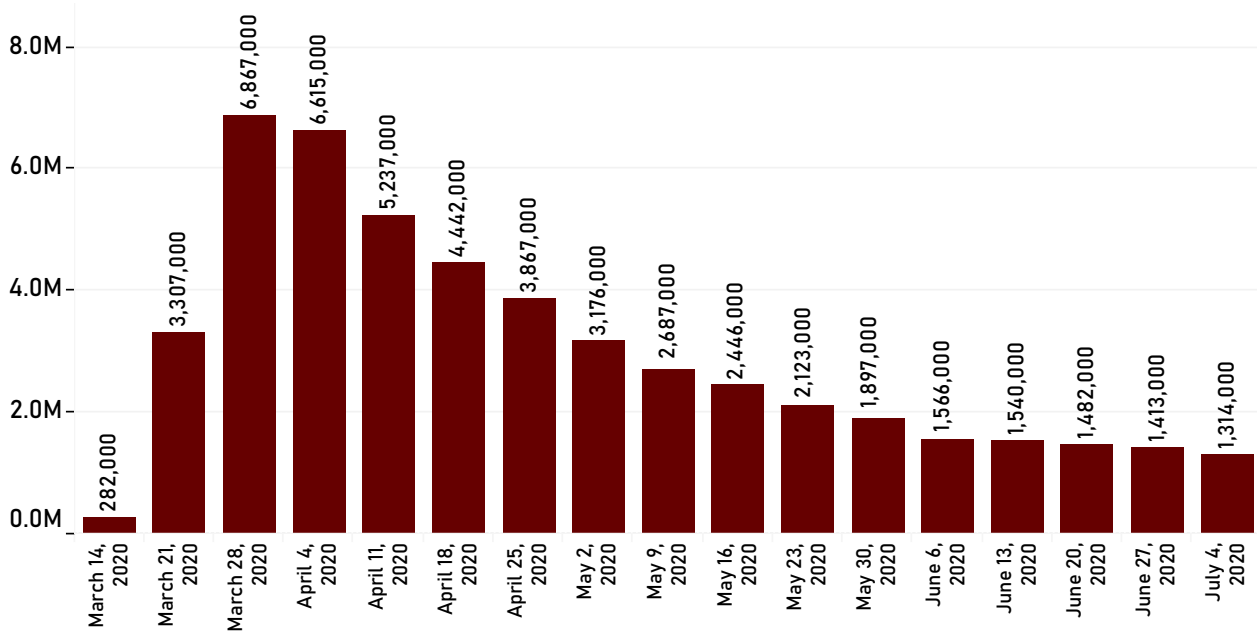
## FOCUS ON THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN MSA

With the rapidly changing economic environment due to the response to the coronavirus, we continue with our reformatted *Economic Indicators* that begins with higher frequency and more up-to-date national, state, and local indicators of economic activity. We present our index and business-cycle at the end of this document. It is important to note that the business-cycle index has mostly caught up with current events and has begun to more accurately mirror the current situation in the College Station-Bryan MSA.

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS

Figures 1 and 2 depict the initial weekly unemployment insurance (UI) claims as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor. Figure 1 depicts the seasonally adjusted series for the United States beginning with the week ending on March 14, 2020. Over the past 17 weeks, over 50 million initial claims have been filed. For the week that ended on July 4, 2020, 1,314,000 workers filed UI claims. This was the fourteenth week in a row that the initial weekly claims have declined since the highest number was recorded for the week ending on March 28 when they reached 6,867,000 initial claims.

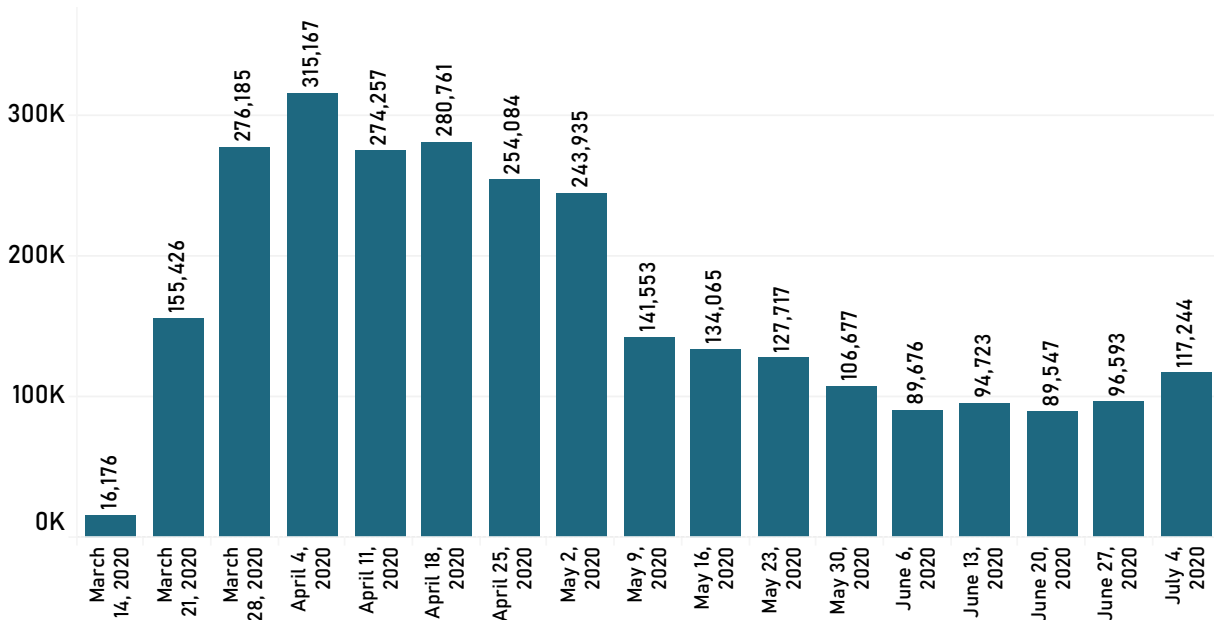
**FIGURE 1. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS IN THE UNITED STATES BY WEEK**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

Figure 2 depicts the initial weekly UI claims in Texas. The Texas series is not seasonally adjusted and is therefore more volatile. For the week ending on July 4, 117,244 initial claims were made in the state, an increase of 20,651 from the prior week and the second weekly increase in claims in Texas. The highest number of weekly claims in Texas occurred during the week ending on April 4, when they reached 315,167. Over the last 17 weeks, claims totaled 2,813,786. The number of workers in Texas receiving unemployment benefits for the week ending on June 27 was 1,270,086.

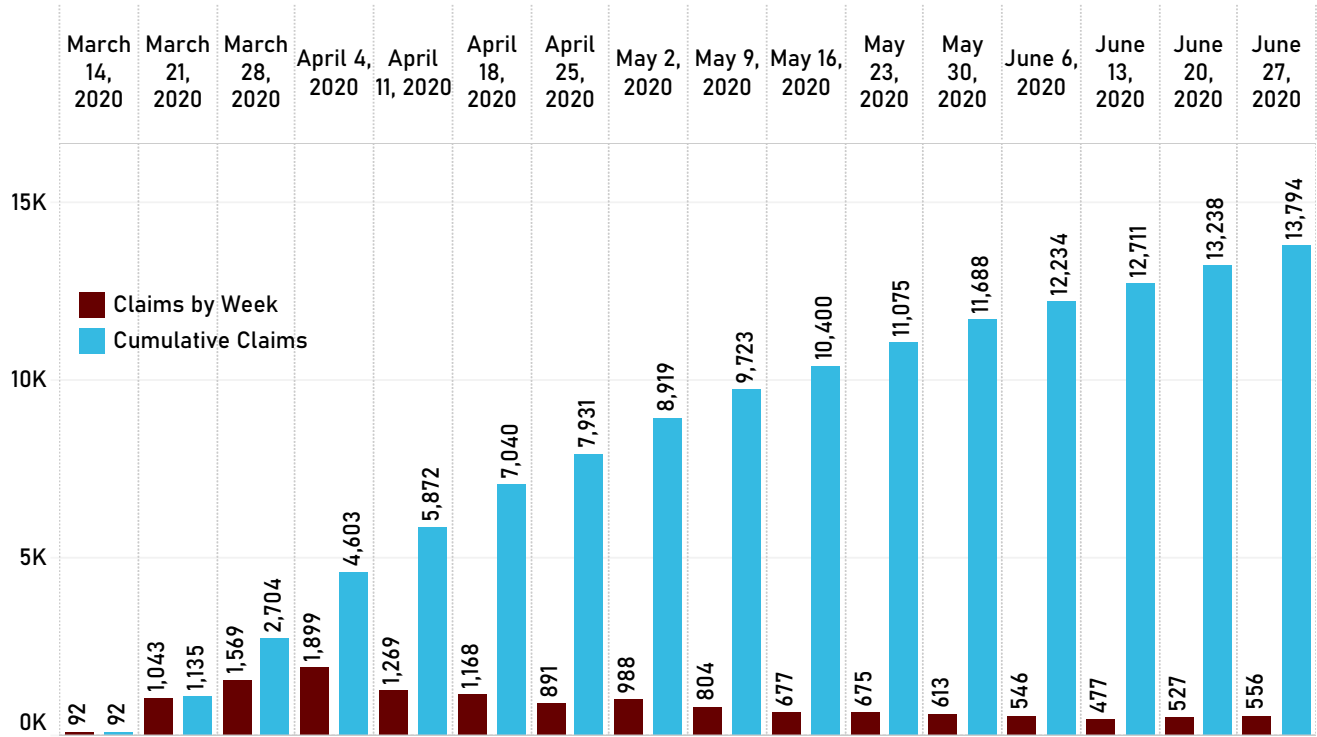
**FIGURE 2. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS IN TEXAS BY WEEK**



Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

Figure 3 depicts the weekly and cumulative unemployment claims in College Station-Bryan for the sixteen weeks from March 14 to June 27, 2020. The data are from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The highest number of claims in the local area were made during the week ending on April 4 when they reached 1,899. Initial claims generally declined between April 4 and the week ending on June 13 when claims were 447. For the last two weeks, reported claims have risen and for the week ending on June 27, they totaled 556. Over the sixteen weeks depicted in the figure, 13,794 initial claims have been made in the local area.

**FIGURE 3. WEEKLY AND TOTAL UI CLAIMS IN COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN**

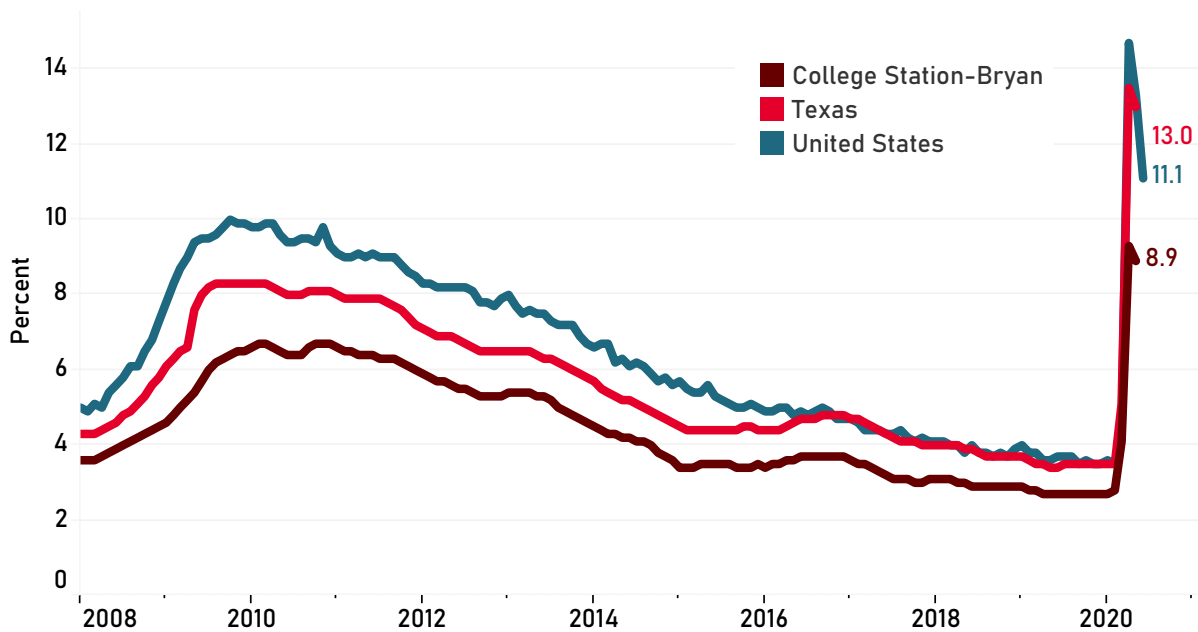


Source: Texas Workforce Commission.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Figure 4 depicts the unemployment rate in College Station-Bryan, along with the rate for Texas and the U.S. In May 2020, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in College Station-Bryan declined to 8.9% from a revised rate of 9.3% in April. The rate in the state of Texas for May was 13.0%, down from a revised rate of 13.5% in April. The unemployment rate for the U.S. was 13.3% in May, down from 14.7% in April. The U.S. rate fell further in June, to 11.1%. The state and metropolitan area unemployment rates for June are not yet available; they will be released on July 17 and July 29, respectively.

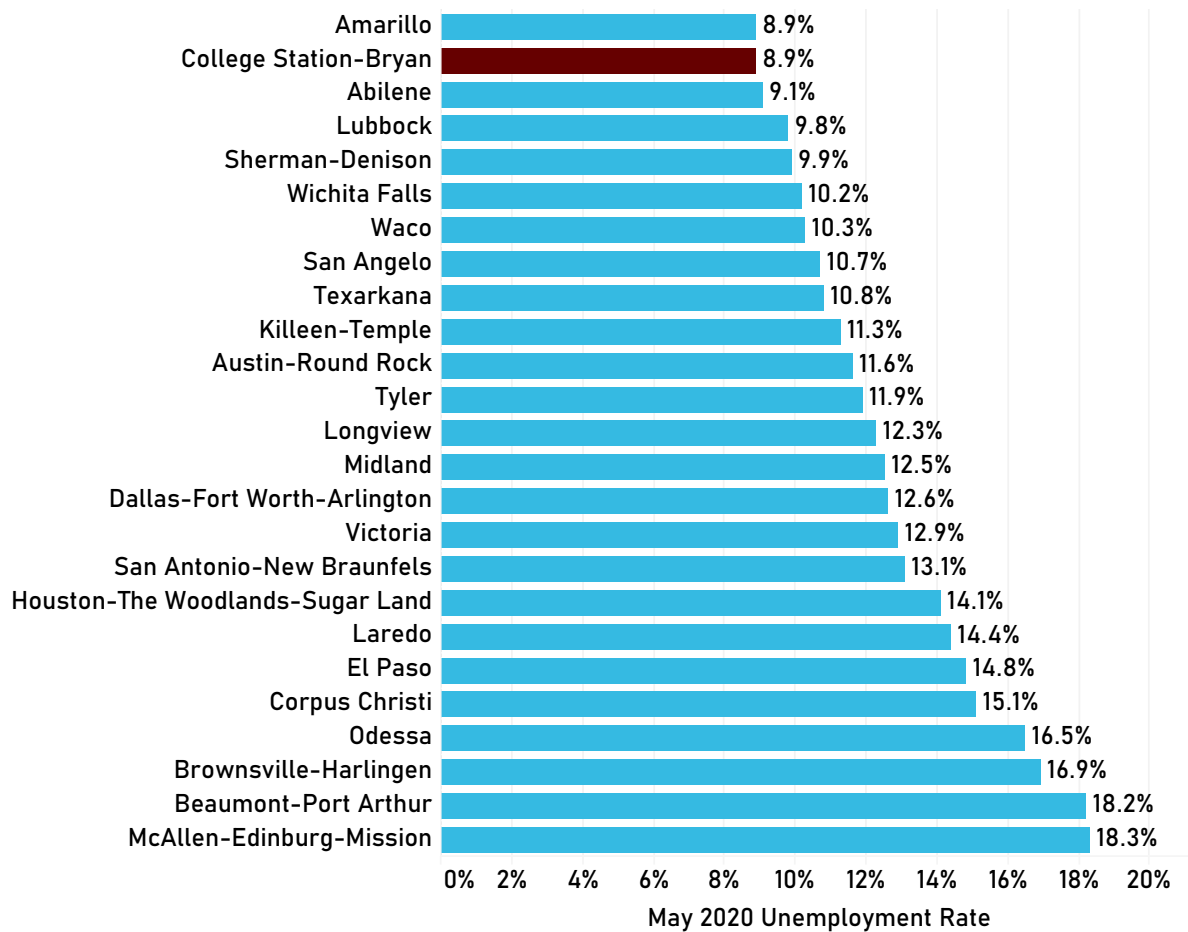
FIGURE 4. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Seasonally adjusted. Last reported data point: May 2020 for Texas and College Station-Bryan; June 2020 for the United States. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The May unemployment rates for all of the Texas metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are shown in Figure 5. College Station-Bryan’s rate of 8.9% tied Amarillo’s rate for the lowest in the state. As in April, the three MSAs with the highest unemployment rates in May were McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Beaumont-Port Arthur and Brownsville-Harlingen. Among the four largest MSAs, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land had the highest May unemployment rate at 14.1%. The rate in San Antonio-New Braunfels was 13.1% and in Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington it was 12.6%. Austin’s unemployment rate of 11.6% was the lowest among the four largest MSAs.

**FIGURE 5. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN TEXAS MSAs  
MAY 2020**

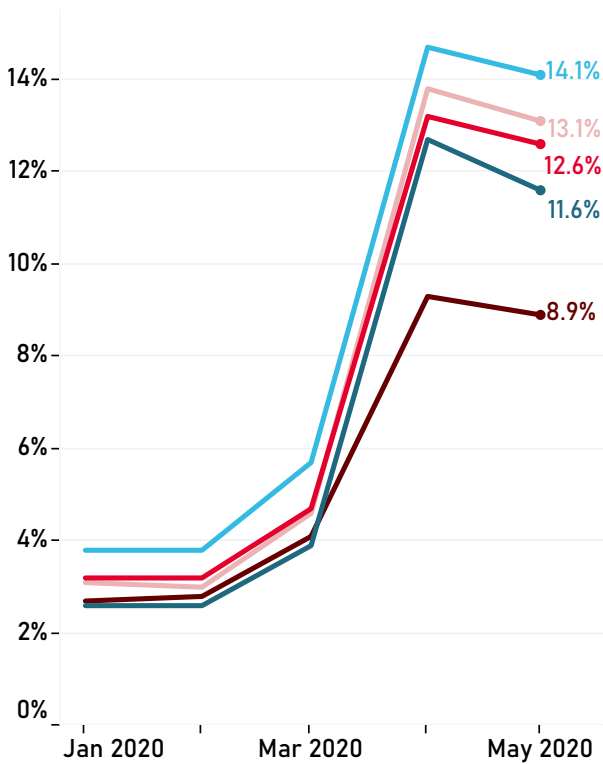


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The graph on the left side of Figure 6 depicts the unemployment rates in select Texas MSAs for the first five months of 2020. As mentioned above, the local unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in April and fell to 8.9% in May. It had been 2.7% at the beginning of the year. The Austin-Round Rock rate fell the most between April and May, 1.1 percentage points. The graph on the right side of Figure 6 shows how nonfarm employment has changed since January 2020 in each of the MSAs depicted. May's nonfarm employment in College Station-Bryan was 94.7% of the number of employees in January, rising from 93.3% in April. The local area has had the smallest percentage decline in employment during the current economic downturn.

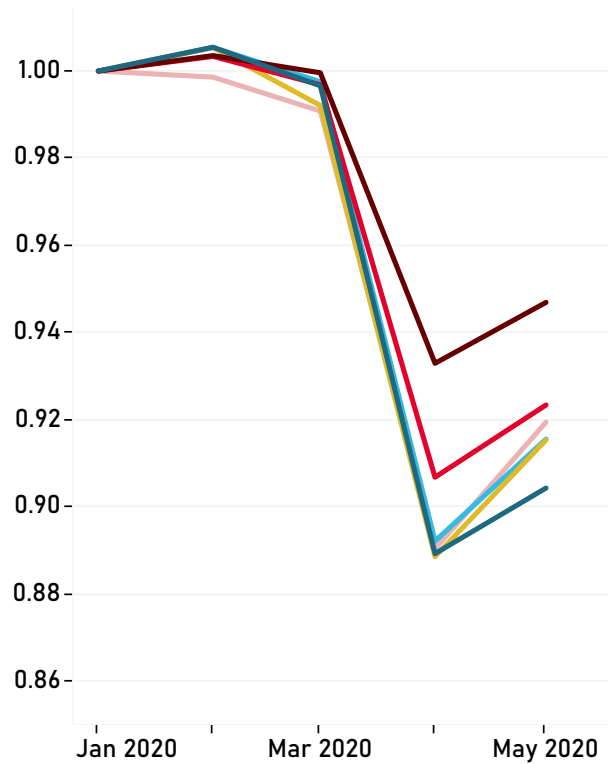
**FIGURE 6. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AND INDEXED EMPLOYMENT IN SELECT TEXAS MSAs  
JANUARY- MAY 2020**

**Unemployment Rates**



- Austin-Round Rock
- College Station-Bryan
- Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington
- Houston-The Woodlands
- San Antonio-New Braunfels

**Nonfarm Employment**



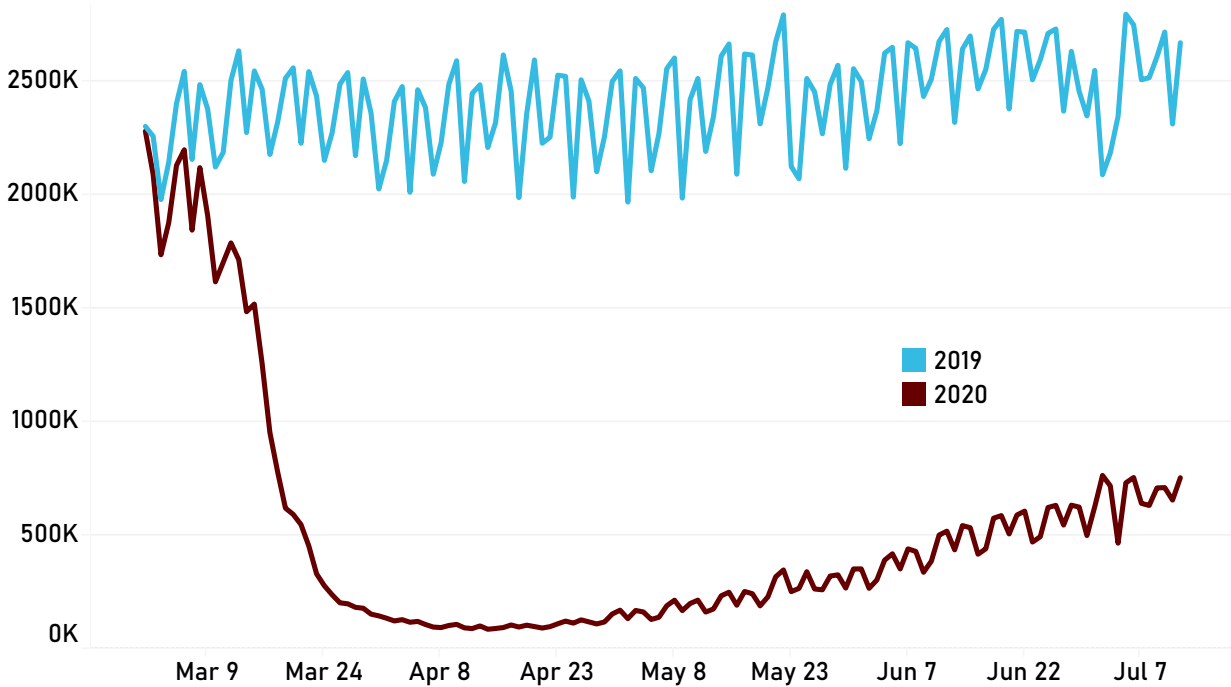
- Austin-Round Rock
- College Station-Bryan
- Dallas-Plano-Irving
- Fort Worth-Arlington-Grapevine
- Houston-The Woodlands
- San Antonio-New Braunfels

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Index values by Private Enterprise Research Center.

**AIR TRAVEL**

Figure 7 depicts the number of travelers screened by the TSA from March 2, 2020 to July 12, 2020, along with a series from 2019 for the same day of the week. The traveler count for the month of March 2020 was 48.3% of the traveler count for the same month in 2019. The counts in April, May, and June of 2020 were 4.7%, 9.6%, and 18.9%, respectively, of the same monthly counts from 2019. Air travel is clearly picking up, but gradually. During the first twelve days of July, the number of travelers was 27.2% of the 2019 numbers.

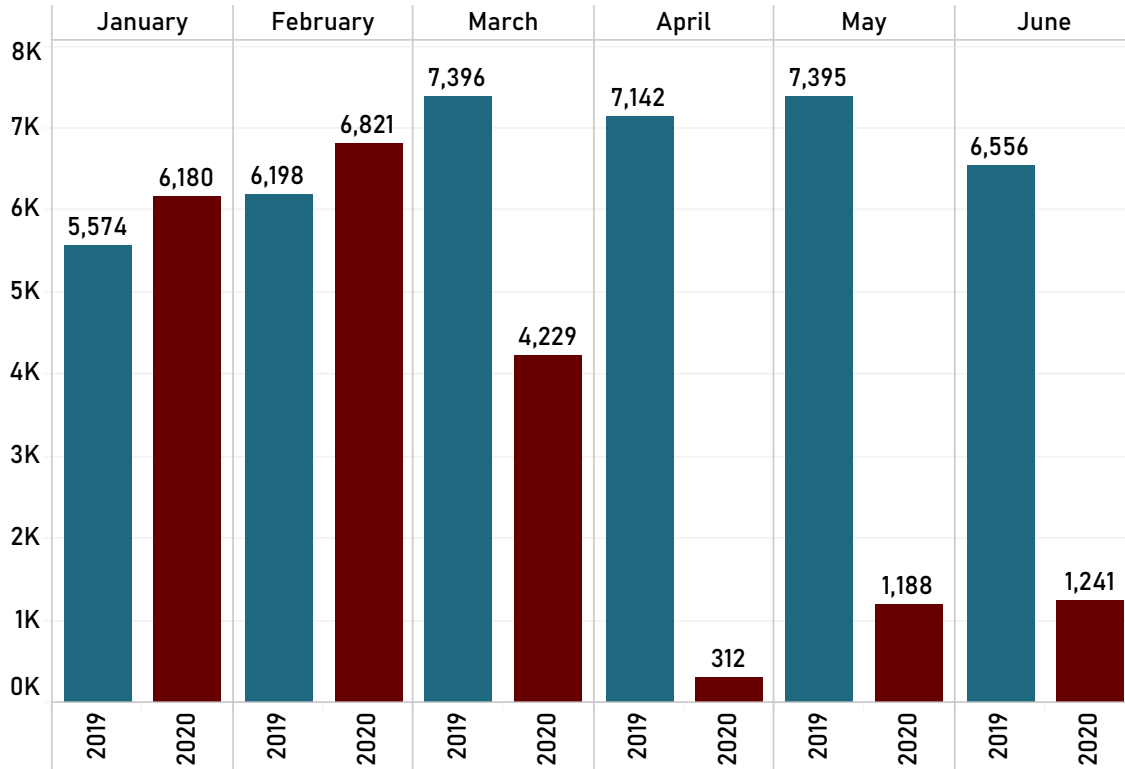
FIGURE 7. TSA TRAVELER THROUGHPUTS 2019 VS 2020



Source: Transportation Security Administration. Data from 2019 is 1 year apart on the same weekday.

The number of passengers traveling out of Easterwood Airport during the first six months of 2019 and 2020 are shown in Figure 8. Similar to the national pattern, total enplanements out of Easterwood for March 2020 were 57% of enplanements from March 2019. In April, the 312 passengers who flew out of Easterwood were 4.3% of the enplanements during April 2019. May's count of 1,188 passengers was 16.1% of the count from May 2019. June's 1,241 enplanements were 18.9% of June 2019 enplanements.

**FIGURE 8. ENPLANEMENTS AT EASTERWOOD AIRPORT, 2019 VS 2020**



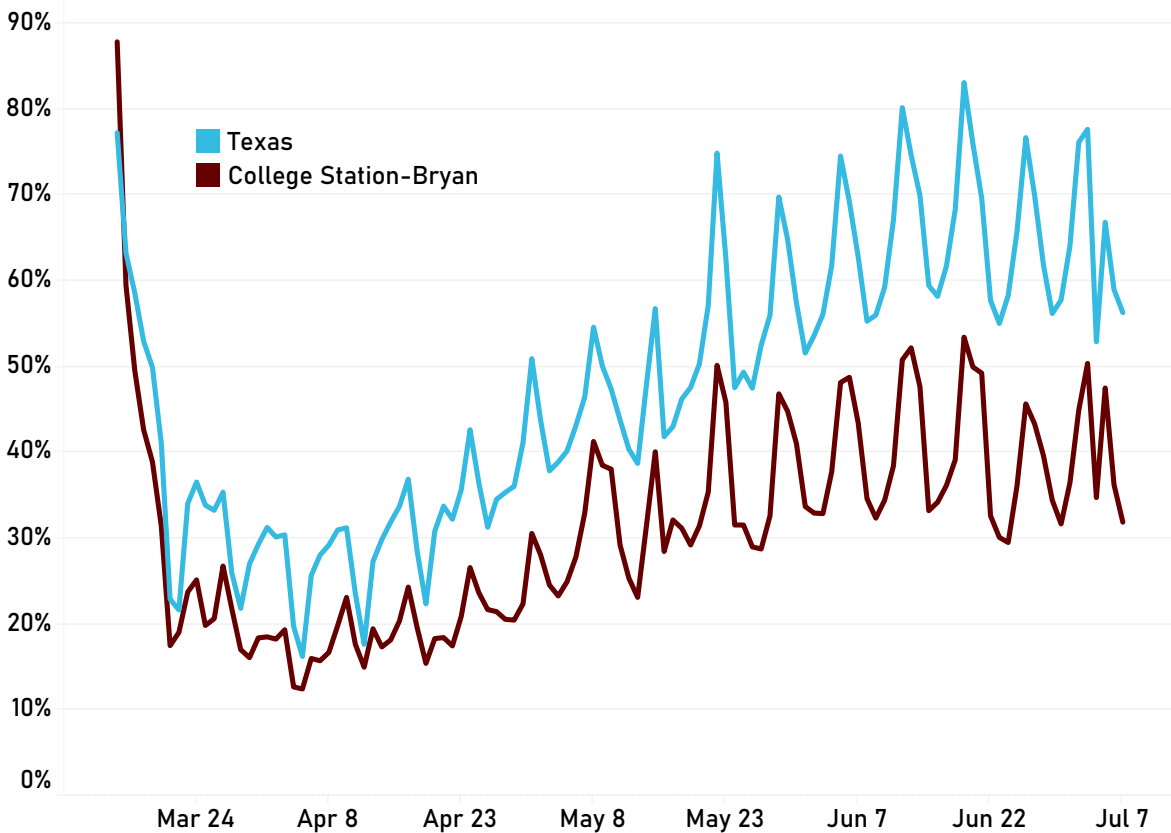
Source: Texas A&M University System.

### TEXAS TRAFFIC

Figure 9 depicts the vehicle miles driven in College Station-Bryan relative to the average miles driven during the first week of March. Also depicted are the vehicle miles driven in Texas relative to the average miles driven during the first week of March. The two series begin on March 15 and end on July 7. The series are derived from StreetLight Data which aggregates cell phone and navigation device data. The decline in traffic is evident in the first week of data shown in the figure. State and local traffic was the lowest during the beginning of April, then increased through the middle of June, but has since declined slightly.



**FIGURE 9. VEHICLE MILES DRIVEN RELATIVE TO THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH**



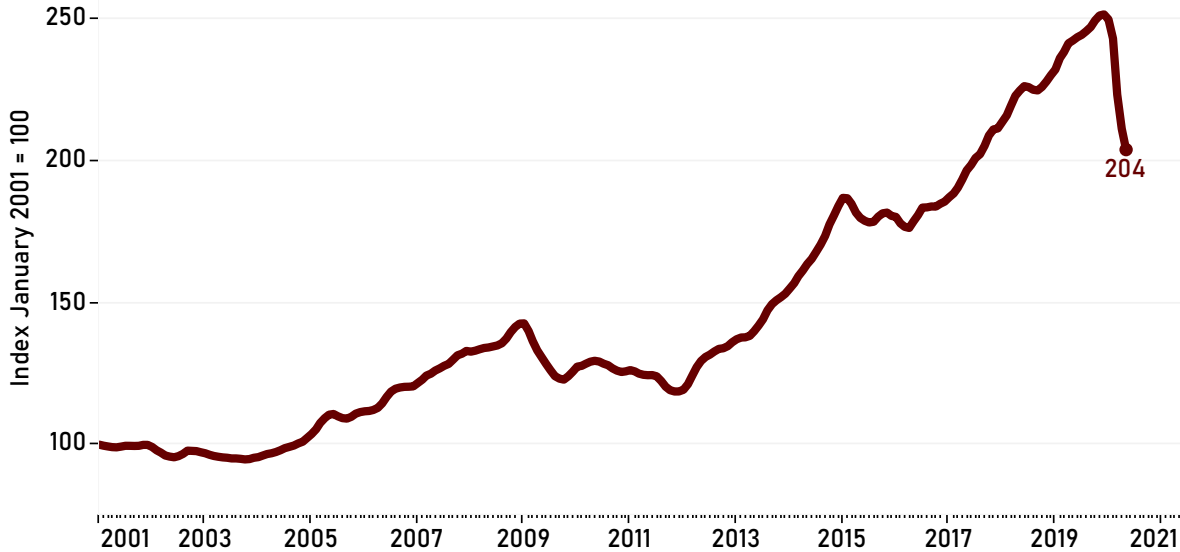
Source: StreetLight Data, Inc. Copyright © 2020 StreetLight Data, Inc.

### **THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE INDEX**

Figure 10 depicts the College Station-Bryan Business-Cycle Index. The economic variables used in the estimation of our Business-Cycle Index are the monthly value of the local unemployment rate, nonfarm employment, and taxable sales, and quarterly values of aggregate wages.

We made a change in the way we treat the unemployment rate data we use to construct the index. The unprecedented spike in the unemployment rate in March, and especially in April, necessitated a change from our previous method to account for the immediacy of changing economic conditions, so we no longer smooth the series. This makes the business-cycle a bit more variable, or noisy, month-to-month, but it improves the timeliness of the business-cycle estimates. The May estimate of the CSB Business-Cycle Index is down 18.4% since the beginning of the year.

**FIGURE 10. COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE INDEX**

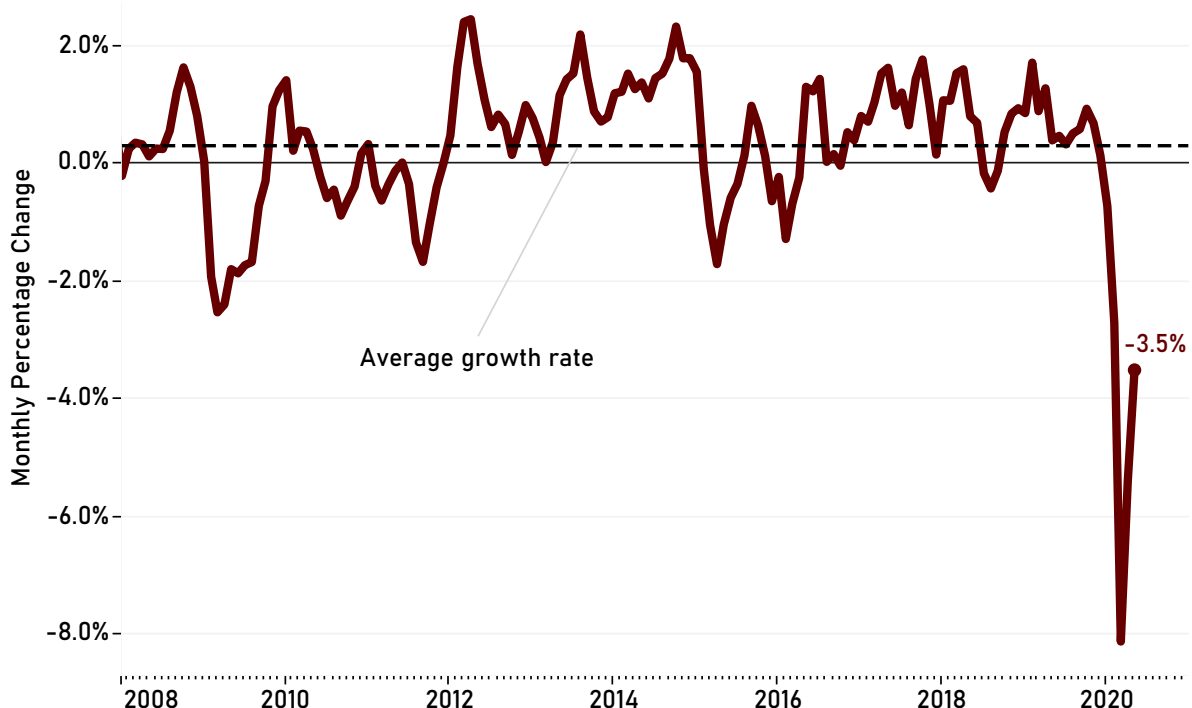


Last reported data point: May 2020 (monthly). Source: Private Enterprise Research Center.

**THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE**

The CSB Business-Cycle in Figure 11 shows a decrease of 3.5% from April to May, however this decline was not as steep as the revised decline from March to April. This month’s estimate of the business-cycle shows declines for the five most recent months. As mentioned, the local unemployment rate rose from 4.1% in March to 9.4% in April and was 8.9% in May. Nonfarm employment in the local economy was 125,300 in January and by April, it had dropped to 116,900. May saw an increase to 118,700. A similar pattern was seen with inflation-adjusted taxable sales which declined 16.6% between January and April. In May, they rebounded 12.8% relative to April, to \$333 million. The remaining variable, quarterly aggregate wages, did not change this month.

**FIGURE 11. COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE**



Month-to-month growth rates. Last reported data point: May 2020 (monthly). Source: Private Enterprise Research Center.

## NOTES AND LINKS

The extent of the College Station-Bryan MSA is defined by the Census Bureau and includes Brazos, Burlleson, and Robertson counties. The Business-Cycle Index is re-estimated each month using the most recent data for the four economic variables included in the model: the unemployment rate, nonfarm employment, real wages, and real taxable sales. The real wage series is released on a quarterly basis and the other three are released monthly. The underlying data series are subject to revision. With new monthly data and revisions of past data, each month the Index and the Business-Cycle will differ from previous estimates.

For more details about the CSB Business-Cycle Index see: *Methodology for Constructing an Economic Index for the College Station-Bryan Metropolitan Statistical Area*.

## DATA SOURCES

### **County Level Unemployment Insurance Claims**

Texas Workforce Commission, weekly claims by county, <https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/unemployment-claims-numbers#claimsByCounty>

### **Enplanements at Easterwood Airport**

Texas A&M University System based on email request. Received July 13, 2020.

### **Inflation**

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items [CPIAUCSL], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CPIAUCSL>. Wages and Taxable Sales are converted to real dollars (inflation-adjusted) using the CPI-U.

### **Nonfarm Employment**

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Texas Workforce Commission, and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Total Nonfarm Payroll Employment for Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas, two-step Seasonally Adjusted, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, <https://www.dallasfed.org/research/econdata/brysa.aspx>

### **Taxable Sales (Sales and Use Tax Allocation)**

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Allocation Payment Detail, Current Period Collections. Data available through Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts: <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/allocation/AllocDetail> . Historical data prior to 2016 from Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Seasonal Adjustment by Private Enterprise Research Center.

### **Transportation Security Administration Traveler Throughput**

Transportation Security Administration <https://www.tsa.gov/coronavirus/passenger-throughput>

### **Unemployment Rate**

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment by Metropolitan Area, Seasonally Adjusted, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, retrieved from Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/lau/metrossa.htm>

### **Unemployment Insurance Claims**

United States Department of Labor, Office of Unemployment Insurance, Weekly Claims: [https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claims\\_arch.asp](https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/claims_arch.asp)

### **Vehicle Miles Driven**

Data provided by Streetlight Data, Inc. Copyright © 2020 StreetLight Data, Inc.

### **Wages**

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Total Quarterly Wages in College Station-Bryan, TX (MSA), retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/cew/datatoc.htm>. Quarterly files by area. Seasonal Adjustment by Private Enterprise Research Center.

## CONTACT



**BRAZOS VALLEY**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

The Brazos Valley Economic Development Corporation serves Brazos County, the City of Bryan, the City of College Station, Texas A&M University, the surrounding region and private sector investors through the Invest Brazos Valley program. BVEDC helps companies launch, grow, and locate in the Brazos Valley.

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