TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Private Enterprise
Research Center

ECONOMIC INDICATORS
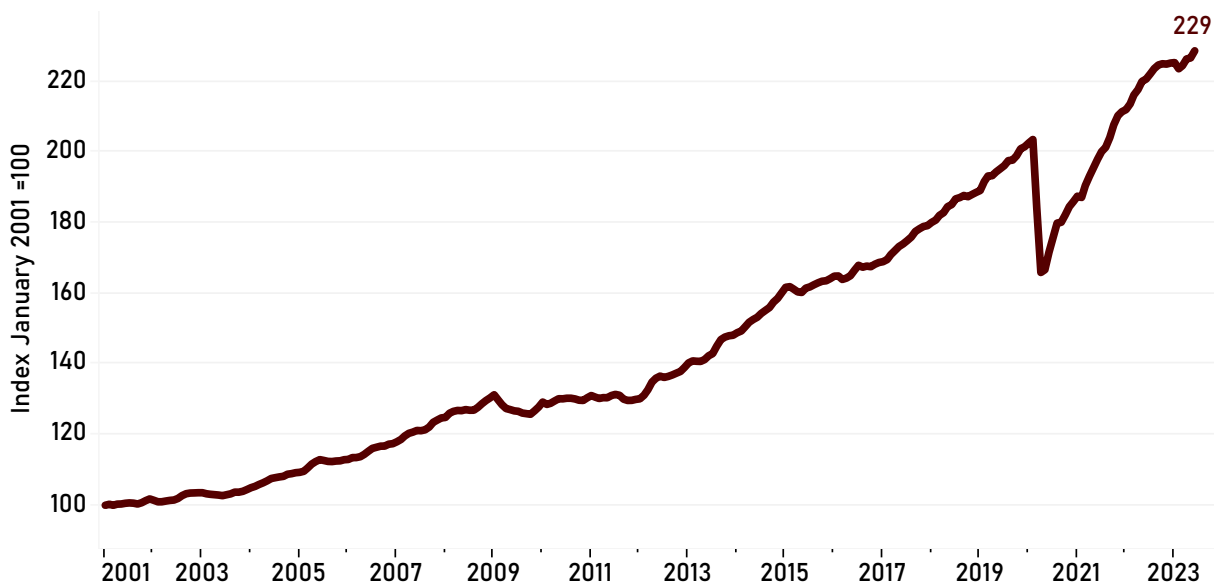OF THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN MSA

AUGUST 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Business-Cycle Index increased from 226 in May 2023 to 228 in June 2023.
- The local unemployment rate decreased from 3.4% in May 2023 to 3.3% in June 2023.
- Local nonfarm employment increased by 0.3% from May to June.
- June's inflation-adjusted taxable sales were down by 1.2% from May.
- By using a modified poverty measure that adjusts for college students, the poverty rate in Brazos County drops from 25% to 18%.

THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE INDEX

The Business-Cycle Index for June 2023 rose to 228 compared to 226 in May, a 0.9% increase. This increase results from an increase in nonfarm employment, a decrease in the unemployment rate, and despite a decrease in inflation-adjusted taxable sales. Inflation-adjusted quarterly wages, the fourth variable used in the model, was unchanged this month. The next data release for quarterly wages will be available in September.
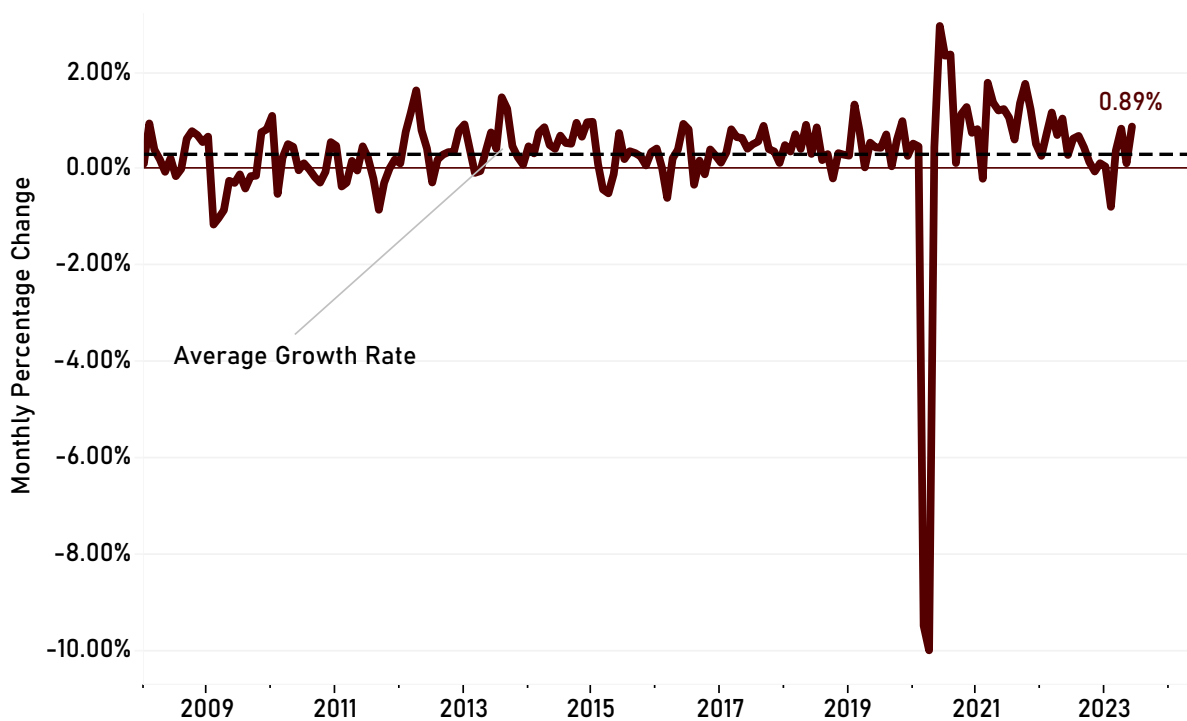
FIGURE 1. COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE INDEX

Last reported data point: June 2023 (monthly). Source: Private Enterprise Research Center.

THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE

The 0.9% increase in the CSB Business-Cycle from May 2023 to June 2023 is shown in Figure 2. The increase was driven by the rise in nonfarm employment and a decrease in the unemployment rate. Nonfarm employment rose by 394 workers from 137,219 in May 2023 to 137,613 in June. The local unemployment rate experienced a 0.1 percentage point decrease to 3.3% in June compared to 3.4% in May 2023. The third monthly indicator used to estimate the business-cycle, inflation-adjusted taxable sales, is more volatile than the other series and declined 1.2% from May to June. The decrease in the unemployment rate, along with the increase in nonfarm employment, led to the monthly increase in the Index.
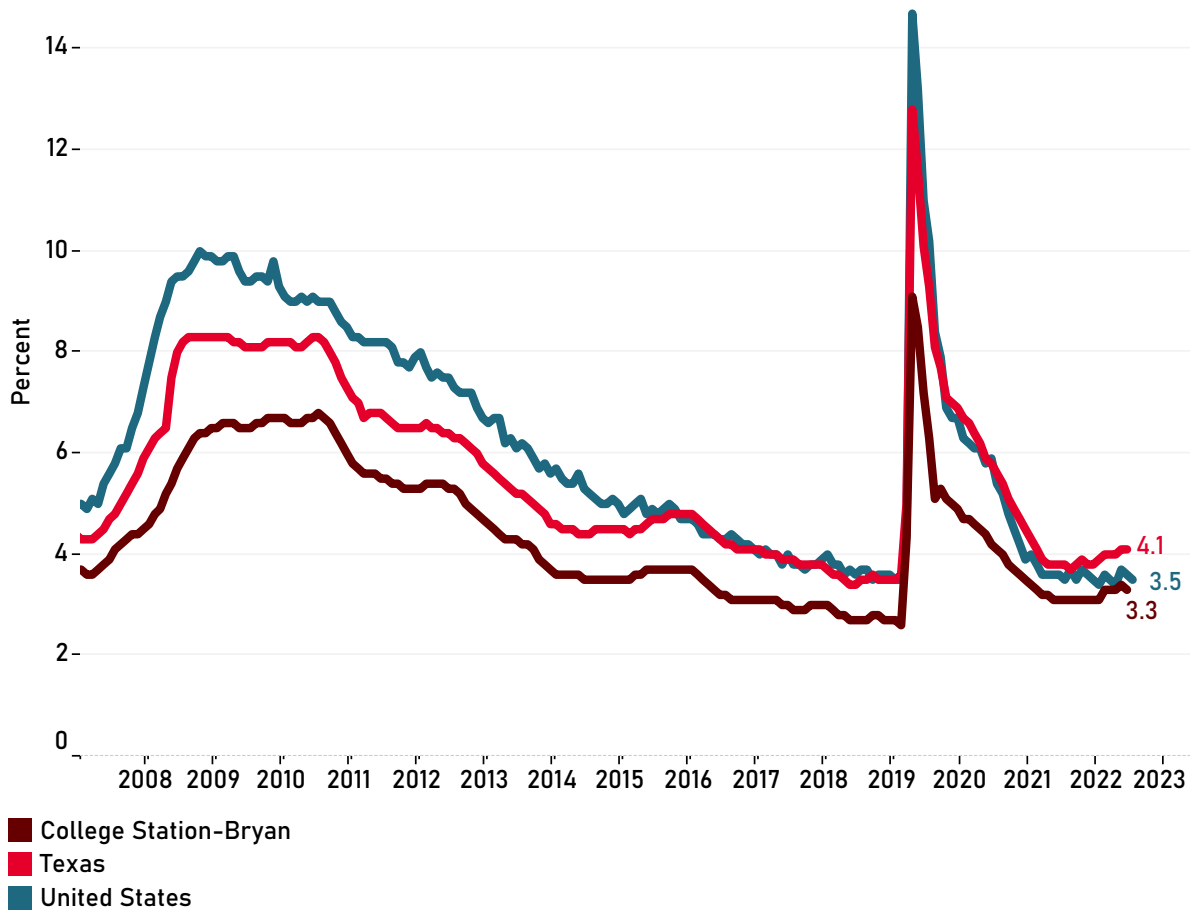
FIGURE 2. COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN BUSINESS-CYCLE

Month-to-month growth rates. Last reported data point: June 2023 (monthly). Source: Private Enterprise Research Center.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Figure 3 shows the unemployment rates for College Station-Bryan and Texas from January 2008 to June 2023, and for the nation as a whole through July 2023. The unemployment rate in College Station-Bryan decreased to 3.3% in June compared to 3.4% in May. The Texas rate remained unchanged at 4.1% between May and June. At the national level, the rate also decreased from 3.6% in June to 3.5% in July. The state and metropolitan area unemployment rates for July will be available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on August 18 and August 30, 2023, respectively.

FIGURE 3. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

College Station–Bryan
Texas
United States

Seasonally Adjusted. Last reported data point: June 2023 for College Station - Bryan and Texas, July 2023 for the United States. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.
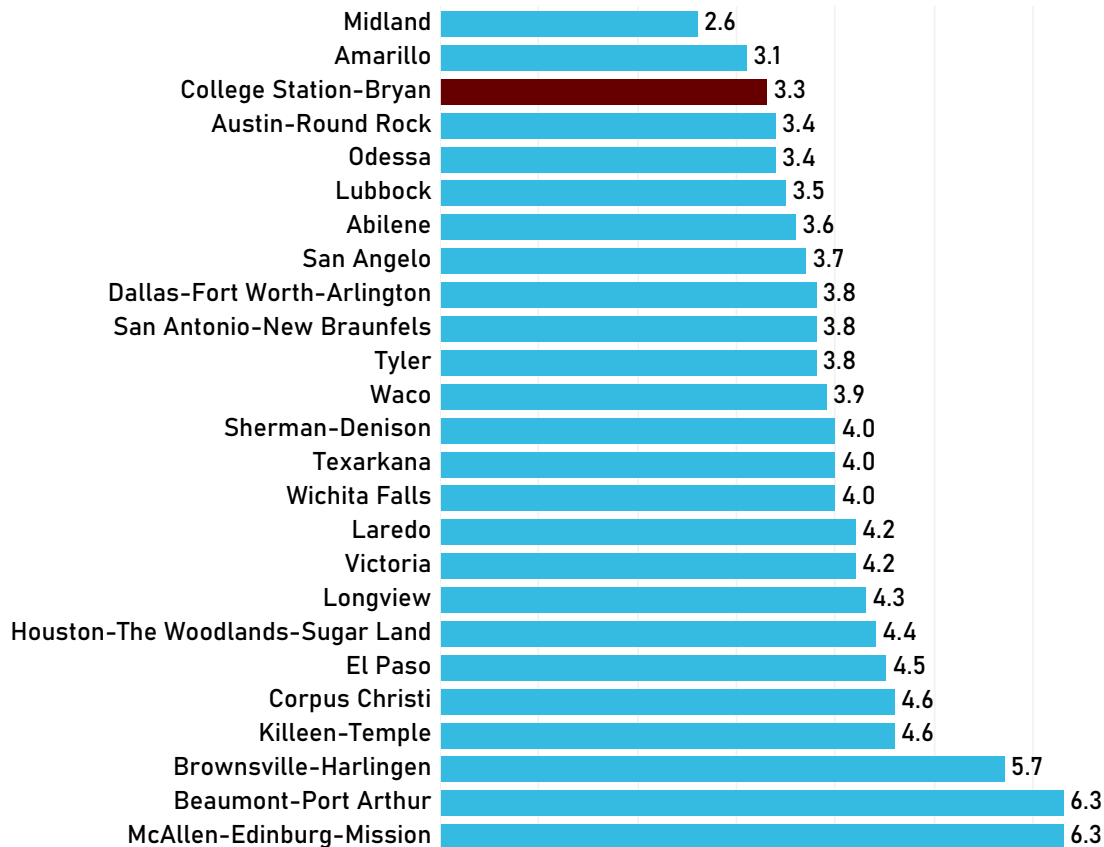
FOCUS ON THE COLLEGE STATION-BRYAN MSA

This month, we present the unemployment rates in the Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) for the month of June. The official poverty rates in Brazos County and other select Southeastern Conference Universities are compared to a modified measure that takes into account college students.[1] The composition of the population by age groups in Brazos County from 2006 to 2021 is also discussed.

TEXAS MSA UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Figure 4 depicts the local unemployment rates for all Texas MSAs for June 2023. College Station-Bryan's rate of 3.3% was the third lowest, behind the 2.6% rate for Midland and 3.1% rate for Amarillo. McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Beaumont-Port Arthur, and Brownsville-Harlingen again had the three highest unemployment rates at 6.3%, 6.3%, and 5.7%, respectively. Austin-Round Rock had the lowest unemployment rate among the four largest MSAs at 3.4%, while the rate in Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington and San Antonio-New Braunfels was 3.8%. Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land again had the highest unemployment rate in this group at 4.4%. Of the 25 MSA's reported here, 24 had decreased or unchanged unemployment rates in June compared to May. San Angelo is the only MSA with an increased unemployment rate for the month of June.

FIGURE 4. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN TEXAS MSAs, JUNE 2023

MSA	Rate
Midland	2.6
Amarillo	3.1
College Station-Bryan	3.3
Austin-Round Rock	3.4
Odessa	3.4
Lubbock	3.5
Abilene	3.6
San Angelo	3.7
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington	3.8
San Antonio-New Braunfels	3.8
Tyler	3.8
Waco	3.9
Sherman-Denison	4.0
Texarkana	4.0
Wichita Falls	4.0
Laredo	4.2
Victoria	4.2
Longview	4.3
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land	4.4
El Paso	4.5
Corpus Christi	4.6
Killeen-Temple	4.6
Brownsville-Harlingen	5.7
Beaumont-Port Arthur	6.3
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission	6.3

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, seasonally adjusted, June 2023.
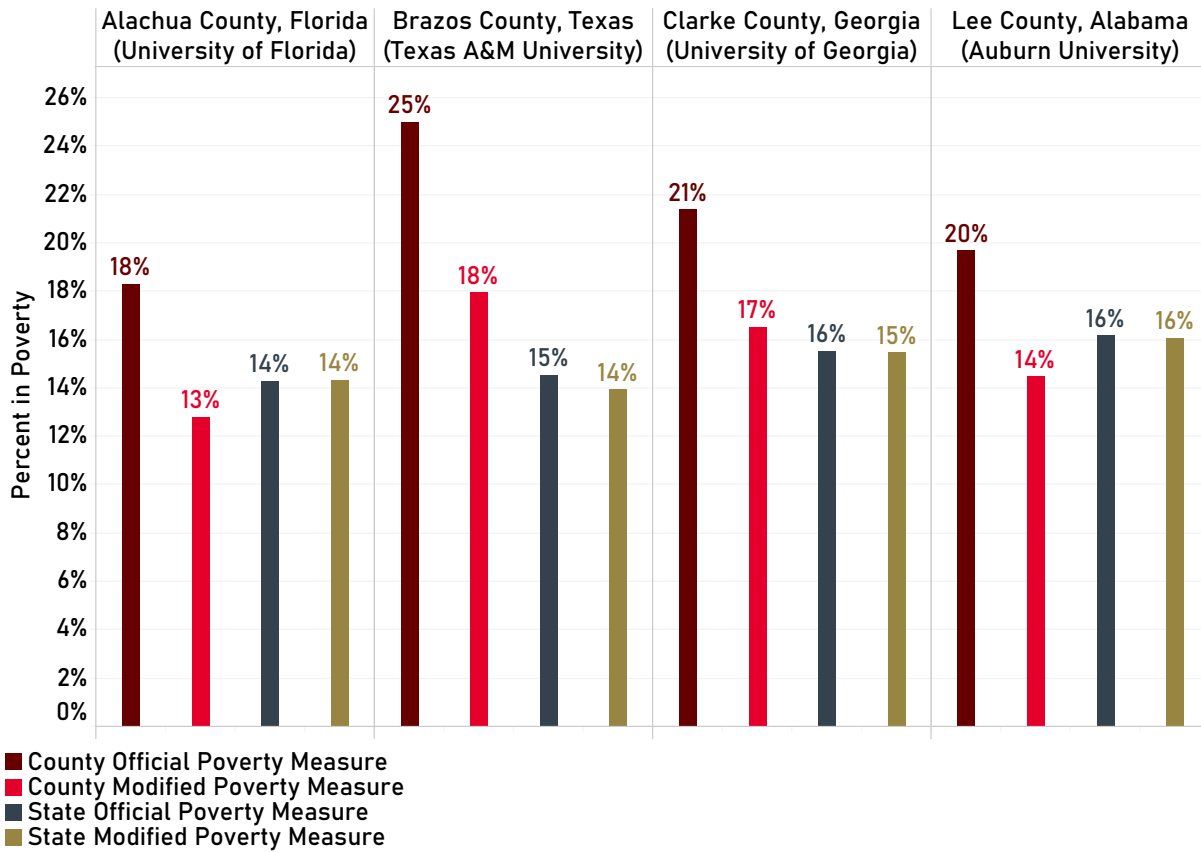
MEASURES OF POVERTY

The U.S. Census Bureau identifies poverty rates based on a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition.[2] For example, in 2022, the poverty threshold for a family of 4 with two children under 18 years of age was $29,678. The poverty threshold for a family of 1 (e.g., a single college student) was $15,225.[3]

Figure 5 depicts the official poverty rate and a modified poverty rate for four counties that are home to select Southeastern Conference universities: Alachua County, Florida, home of the University of Florida; Brazos County, Texas, home of Texas A&M University; Clarke County, Georgia where the University of Georgia is located; and Lee County, Alabama, home of Auburn University.[4] Also included are official and modified poverty rates for their respective state. Here, the modified poverty rates are calculated after excluding college students. The maroon bars in Figure 5 depict poverty rates for the four counties based on the official poverty measure from the U.S. Census Bureau. In Brazos County, the official poverty rate was 25% in 2021. The red bar in Figure 5 shows the modified poverty rate, which in Brazos County was 18%, or 7 percentage points lower than the official measure. The official poverty rate for Texas is depicted by the gray bar at 15%. The modified poverty measure for the state of Texas is depicted by the gold bar at 14%.

Brazos County has a 4-percentage point higher poverty rate than the Texas state average when excluding college students. The official Brazos County poverty rate is 10-percentage points higher than the Texas state average. A similar pattern can be found in the three other select counties, where official poverty rates for the county far exceed their respective state averages, while the modified poverty rates are much closer to, and sometimes below, the respective state averages.

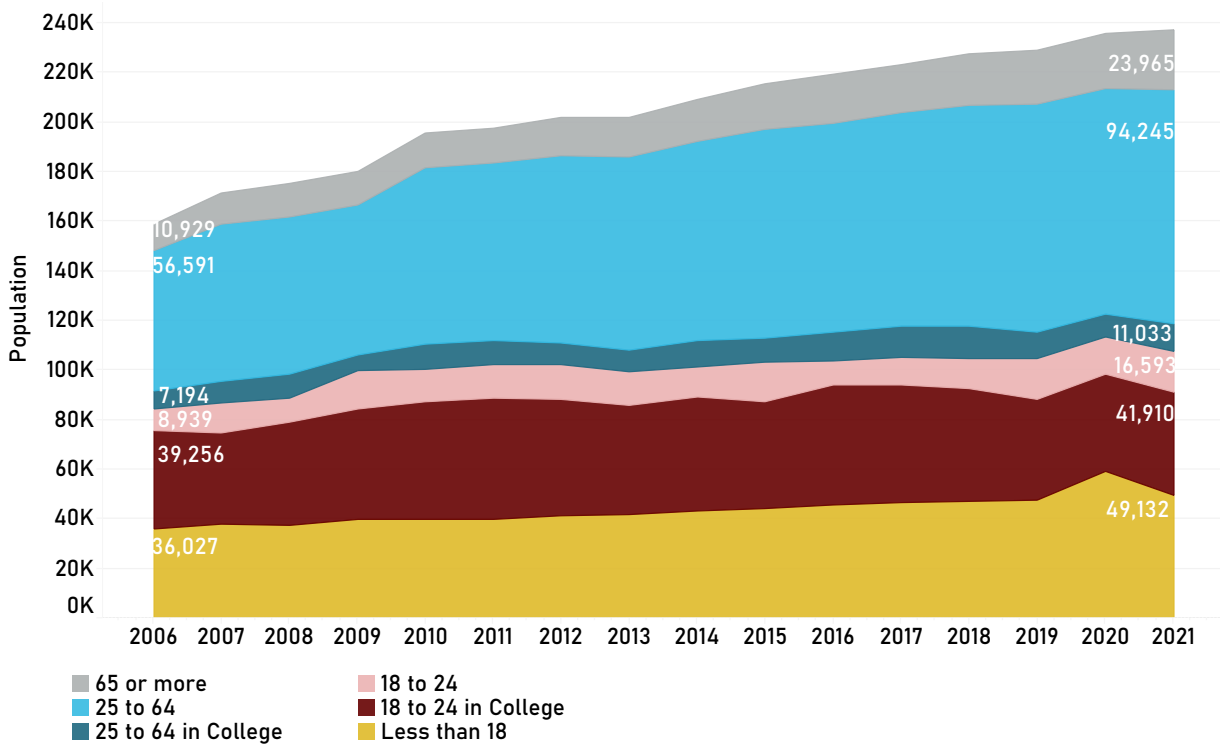## FIGURE 5. POVERTY RATES IN SELECT COUNTIES WITH UNIVERSITIES

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey. Private Enterprise Research Center for modified poverty measure.

POPULATION AND AGE IN BRAZOS COUNTY

Based on 2021 estimates by the American Community Survey, a product of the U.S. Census Bureau, there were over 52,900 individuals attending college in Brazos County, including graduate and undergraduate students. Figure 6 illustrates the population in Brazos County from 2006 to 2021 by age group and college attendance. College students represented 29% of the total population of 158,936 in 2006. In that year, 85% of the 46,450 college students were between 18 to 24 years old. In 2021, college students represented 22% of the total population of 236,878. Of the 52,943 college students living in Brazos County in 2021, 79% were between the ages of 18 and 24. Between 2006 and 2021, the number of college students grew 14% while the total population grew 49%. Of note, Texas A&M University reported 65,006 enrolled undergraduate and graduate students for the Fall 2021 semester at the combined Blinn-Brenham, Bryan and College Station campus sites.[5]

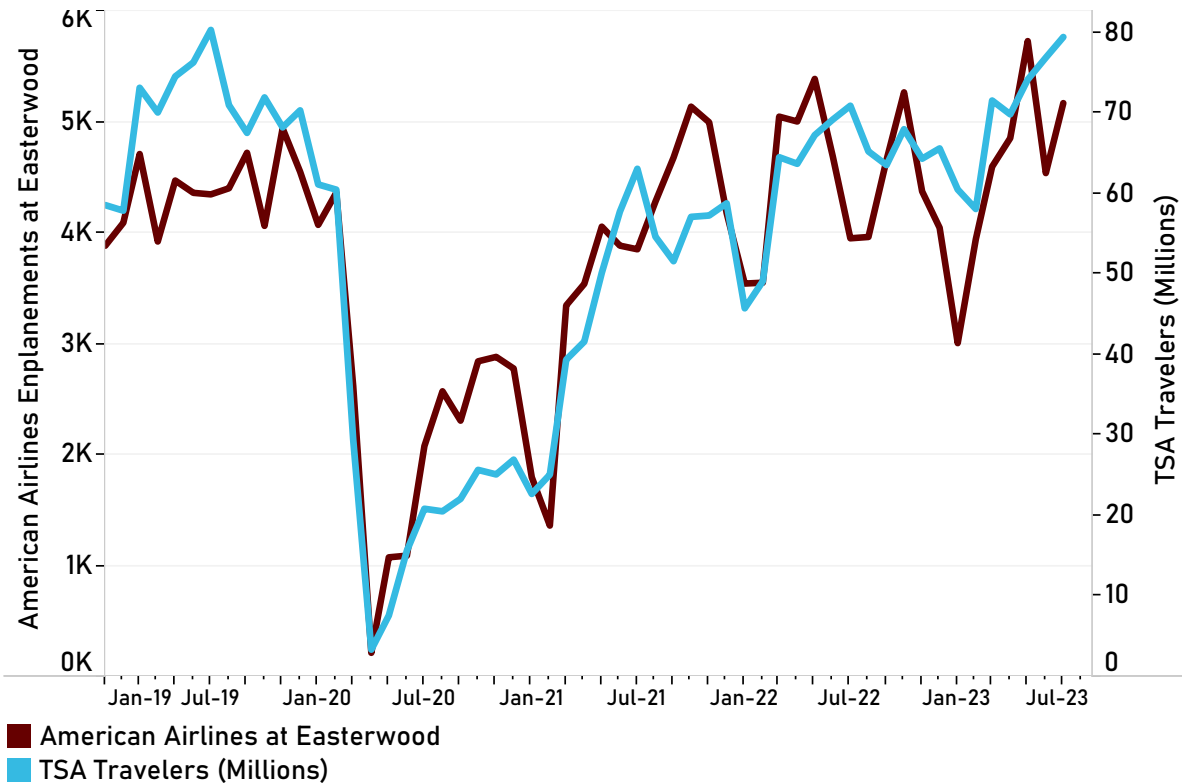### FIGURE 6. POPULATION BY AGE IN BRAZOS COUNTY, 2021

Source: U.S. Census bureau, 2006-2021 American Community Survey. Last reported data point: 2021 (annual).

AIR TRAVEL

Figure 7 depicts the enplanements at Easterwood Airport on American Airlines (left axis) and the number of travelers nationwide passing through Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints (right axis) from January 2019 to July 2023. As seen in the figure, the national and local passenger counts have followed similar patterns from the beginning of 2019 to the present. National air travel was up 12% in the twelve months from July 2022 to July 2023. Locally, air travel out of Easterwood Airport on American Airlines in July 2023 was 30% higher than in July 2022.

FIGURE 7. AMERICAN AIRLINES ENPLANEMENTS AT EASTERWOOD AIRPORT & TOTAL TRAVELERS THROUGH TSA CHECKPOINTS

Last reported data point: July 2023 (monthly). Sources: Texas A&M University System and Transportation Security Administration.

NOTES AND LINKS

The extent of the College Station-Bryan MSA is defined by the Census Bureau and includes Brazos, Burleson, 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.*

ENDNOTES

[1] Poverty Universe excludes children under the age of 15 unrelated to a reference person within the household, people living in institutional group quarters, college dormitories and military barracks. Additionally, the Modified Poverty Measure depicted above excludes all college students (individuals of any age attending undergraduate or graduate school).

[2] For more information on how the Census Bureau measures poverty, visit How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty

[3] Poverty Thresholds, United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historicalpoverty-thresholds.html

[4] Gainesville, Fl and Auburn-Opelika, Al are two of several cities the Brazos Valley Economic Development Corporation has identified as market comparison communities.

[5] Texas A&M enrollments also include students enrolled in distance education programs and courses. The U.S. Census intends to count college students as living 'where they live and sleep most of the time.'

DATA SOURCES

American Community Survey
U.S. Census Bureau (2023). American Community Survey. Retrieved from https://usa.ipums.org/ Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 13.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2023. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V13.0

Enplanements at Easterwood Airport
Texas A&M University System based on email request. Received August 7, 2023.

Enrollment
Official student enrollment figures retrieved from https://accountability.tamu.edu/All-Metrics/Mixed-Metrics/Student-Enrollment-Distribution

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

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.

Travelers through TSA Checkpoints
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

Wages
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Total Quarterly Wages in College Station-Bryan, TX (MSA) [ENUC177830010SA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ENUC177830010SA.

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.

979.260.1755 | brazosvalleyedc.org

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Private Enterprise
Research Center

Founded in 1977 through the generosity of former students, corporations and foundations, the Private Enterprise Research Center pursues a dual mission of supporting academic research at Texas A&M University and developing market-oriented solutions to public policy problems.

979.845.7559 | perc.tamu.edu