Upper Rio Grande

Upper Rio Grande Counties

Brewster	Culberson	El Paso	Hudspeth	Jeff Davis	Presidio

About the Upper Rio Grande Region

Comprising the westernmost part of Texas, the Upper Rio Grande region runs along the U.S.–Mexico border to the state line between Texas and New Mexico, encompassing approximately 21,700 square miles, including the El Paso metropolitan area. The Upper Rio Grande region is home to Texas' most awe-inspiring sights, including Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks, both of which serve as popular tourist destinations. Visitors also flock to Marfa, a surprising hub for artists, culinary enthusiasts, and those seeking a unique escape from the hustle and bustle of big cities. With its proximity to Mexico, the region boasts some of the most diverse and flavorful cuisine in the state.

The Upper Rio Grande region's proximity to Mexico, particularly the Borderplex area containing the cities of El Paso and Juarez, make it a hub for international commerce. The Upper Rio Grande region has an extremely diverse economy — the top five most concentrated industry clusters in the region belong to different sectors, presenting opportunities for businesses and professionals of all types.

In line with its diversity of industry, the Upper Rio Grande region is experiencing growth in a wide range of job fields. Among them are computer and mathematics, life sciences, and architecture and engineering occupations. The region is served by The University of Texas at El Paso and Sul Ross State University as well as other higher education institutions.

Upper Rio Grande Fast Facts

	Population	Industry	Exports	Workforce
Magnitude	**0.9M** *Population (2021)*	**$39B** *Contribution to GDP (2021)*	**$4B** *Foreign Exports (2021)*	**0.5M** *Total Employment (2021)*
Share	**3%** *Share of Texas Population (2021)*	**2%** *Share of Texas GDP (2021)*	**2%** *Share of Texas Foreign Exports (2021)*	**3%** *Share of Texas Employment (2021)*
Growth	**5%** *Total Population Growth (2011–21)*	**14%** *Total GDP Growth (2011–21)*	**4%** *Total Foreign Export Growth (2011–21)*	**10%** *Total Employment Growth (2011–21)*

Quantitative and qualitative research was performed May 2023 through May 2024; data cited reflects the then-most current and/or granular information for the time periods noted.

Data Sources: IMPLAN, Data Library, Texas, (2011-21); Guidehouse Analysis.

Upper Rio Grande

Business and Industry

Top 5 Industry Clusters by LQ (2021)	LQ (2021)	Emp. (2021)	GDP (2021)
Footwear	26.83	1,030	$37M
Apparel	5.09	1,440	$50M
Petroleum Refining	4.64	610	$1,020M
Upstream Metal Manufacturing	3.05	2,150	$526M
Leather and Related Products	3.01	230	$10M

Top 5 Industry Clusters by Emp. Growth (2015-21)	Emp. Growth (2015-21)	Emp. (2021)	GDP (2021)
Medical Devices	341%	550	$71M
Information Technology and Analytical Instruments	77%	590	$75M
Automotive	64%	1,250	$180M
Transportation Manufacturing	62%	1,390	$194M
Oil and Gas Production and Transportation	49%	4,670	$1,011M

Note: Industry clusters consisting of less than 0.1% of total regional employment are not shown in tables.

Workforce

Top Occupations by LQ (2021)	LQ (2021)	Emp. (2021)
Preschool, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Special Education Teachers	1.35	13,010
Other Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	1.25	4,950
Motor Vehicle Operators	1.22	13,120
Vehicle and Mobile Equipment Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	1.11	5,070
Other Teachers and Instructors	1.11	2,720

Top Occupations by Emp. Growth (2018-21)	Emp. Growth (2018-21)	Emp. (2021)
Material Moving Workers	53%	16,110
Top Executives	39%	7,410
Business Operations Specialists	29%	13,260
Operations Specialties Managers	18%	3,840
Financial Specialists	12%	5,170

Note: Occupations that predominately serve the local community and occupations consisting of less than 0.5% of total regional employment not shown in tables.

Regional Opportunities

Strengths	Opportunities
Increasing Productivity The Upper Rio Grande's GDP growth outpaced employment growth from 2011–21 (14% and 10%, respectively), indicating that the regional workforce is becoming more productive.	The Upper Rio Grande can build on recent productivity gains by investing in the expansion of higher value-add industries like advanced manufacturing and information technology.
Consumer Goods Industries producing consumer goods, including footwear, apparel, and leather products have a strong presence in the Upper Rio Grande region.	The Upper Rio Grande can continue to grow existing strengths in consumer goods while also targeting emerging industries such as medical devices, artificial intelligence, and automotive and transportation manufacturing.
Diversity of Occupations The Upper Rio Grande has a diverse set of workforce strengths, with concentrations in a wide variety of technical occupations.	The region can focus workforce development efforts on preparing its technical talent pool for occupations supporting emerging industries such as advanced manufacturing.

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