

REGIONAL Profile



Gulf Coast



Gulf Coast Counties

Austin Brazoria Chambers Colorado Fort Bend Galveston Harris
Liberty Matagorda Montgomery Walker Waller Wharton



About the Gulf Coast Region

Stretching along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and reaching up towards Southeast Texas, the Gulf Coast region covers about 12,300 square miles and encompasses the Greater Houston area. The region includes 13 counties, including Harris County, the third-most populous county in the U.S. The region's access to the coast makes it not only a popular tourist destination, but also a major trade hub with multiple ports.

The Gulf Coast region is served by many higher education institutions, including the University of Houston, Rice University, Prairie View A&M University, and Texas Southern University, among others. The region is also home to multiple industry hubs, including the Texas Medical Center, a national leader in medical research and innovation, and the Johnson Space Center, which has operated as one of NASA's primary centers for space flight and research since 1961.

As one of the largest regions by population, the Gulf Coast is home to a workforce as diverse as it is vast. The region is poised to accommodate growth across a wide array of sectors through a highly educated talent pool and a robust network of skilled trade workers, including construction workers, drafters, engineering technicians, and the other talented individuals who build the infrastructure needed to accommodate economic expansion.



Gulf Coast Fast Facts

	Population	Industry	Exports	Workforce
Magnitude	7.4M <i>Population (2021)</i>	\$575B <i>Contribution to GDP (2021)</i>	\$75B <i>Foreign Exports (2021)</i>	4.4M <i>Total Employment (2021)</i>
Share	25% <i>Share of Texas Population (2021)</i>	28% <i>Share of Texas GDP (2021)</i>	31% <i>Share of Texas Foreign Exports (2021)</i>	25% <i>Share of Texas Employment (2021)</i>
Growth	19% <i>Total Population Growth (2011–21)</i>	9% <i>Total GDP Growth (2011–21)</i>	10% <i>Total Foreign Export Growth (2011–21)</i>	20% <i>Total Employment Growth (2011–21)</i>

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.

REGIONAL Detail



Gulf Coast



Business and Industry

Top Industry Clusters by LQ (2021)	LQ (2021)	Emp. (2021)	GDP (2021)	Top Industry Clusters by Emp. Growth (2015-21)	Emp. Growth (2015-21)	Emp. (2021)	GDP (2021)
Industrial Chemical Products	6.18	23,680	\$20,313M	Biopharmaceuticals	90%	3,050	\$2,535M
Petroleum Refining	5.17	8,190	\$15,318M	Medical Devices	49%	2,730	\$394M
Oil and Gas Production and Transportation	3.10	199,040	\$79,559M	Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence	38%	84,020	\$10,951M
Chemical and Plastics Manufacturing	1.89	44,860	\$25,641M	AgTech	36%	140,280	\$17,897M
Metal Mining	1.87	3,770	\$5,045M	Biotechnology	31%	67,940	\$13,947M

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)	Top Occupations by Emp. Growth (2018-21)	Emp. Growth (2018-21)	Emp. (2021)
Extraction Workers	4.26	16,870	Material Moving Workers	41%	164,220
Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers	1.46	21,870	Top Executives	31%	80,520
Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	1.34	18,820	Business Operations Specialists	27%	133,880
Construction Trades Workers	1.29	129,470	Advertising, Marketing, Promotions, Public Relations, and Sales Managers	19%	17,910
Preschool, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Special Education Teachers	1.25	104,380	Operations Specialties Managers	14%	45,800

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

Export Driven

The Gulf Coast accounts for 31% of Texas' total foreign exports and 28% of the state's total GDP, indicating that the region has a comparative strength in exporting industries that grow the economy.

Economic Anchors

The Gulf Coast has notable strength in oil and gas and associated industries, including petroleum refining, chemicals, and plastics, which serve as an anchor for the regional economy.

Foundation for Growth

Occupations that support infrastructure and construction, including drafters, engineering and mapping technicians, and construction workers are highly concentrated in the Gulf Coast.

Opportunities

With strengths in foreign exports and access to international trade routes through the region's ports, the Gulf Coast can further cement its status as a trade hub by targeting growth in additional export-driven industries.

In addition to building on economic strengths in oil and gas, the Gulf Coast can diversify by spurring growth in growing industries such as life sciences clusters, including biopharmaceuticals, medical devices, and biotechnology.

The regional workforce is well-positioned to facilitate resilient economic growth through infrastructure expansion, including building, repairing, and maintaining infrastructure within the region and beyond.

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