



Hibbs Newsletter

Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research

Economic Drivers in East Texas — July 2025

This issue of the **Hibbs Newsletter** offers a snapshot of the economic engines powering growth across East Texas, with a focus on industry performance, employment trends and high-wage occupations in the region.

Key Findings

- Between 2015 and 2023, the real gross domestic product (GDP) for East Texas increased by **32.4%** and employment grew by **5.62%**, or by about **26,000 workers**.
- Within the three MSAs of Tyler, Longview and Texarkana, the main contributors to their GDP were **Healthcare and Social Assistance**; **Manufacturing**; and **Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction**.
- The **top 10 highest-paid occupations** in the Tyler, Longview and Texarkana MSAs are all **healthcare professions**. This trend highlights the wage premium that healthcare professionals receive in the region.

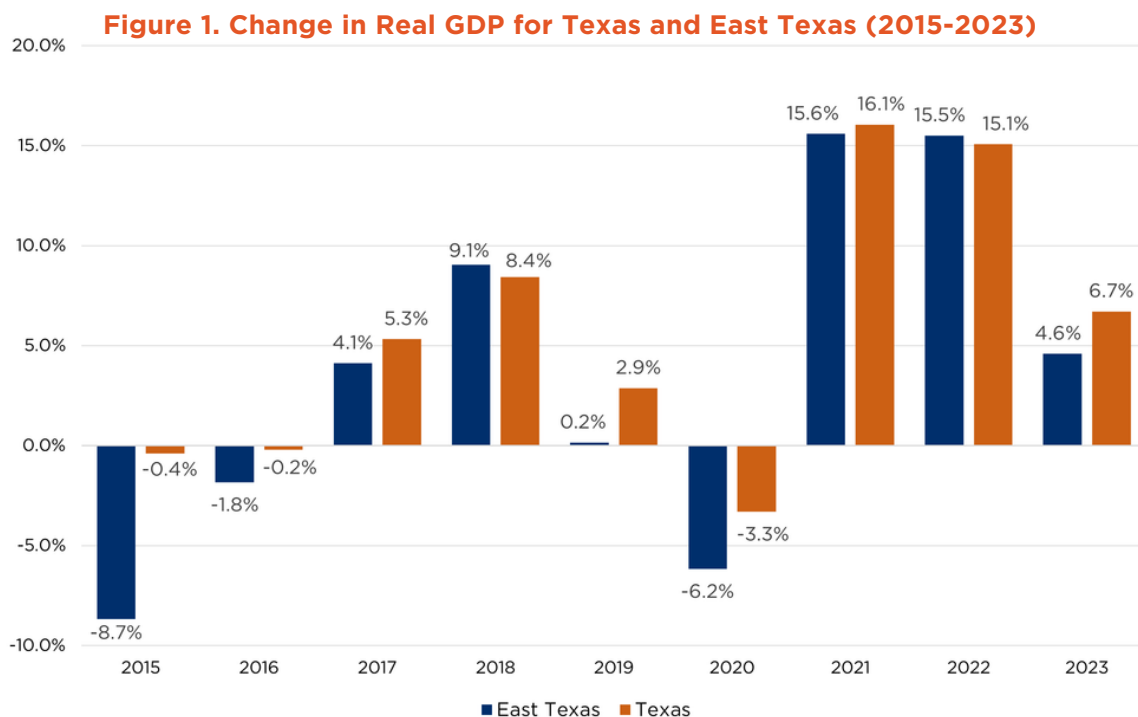


Figure 1 illustrates the annual percentage change in real GDP* for East Texas and Texas overall from 2015 to 2023. Both regions experienced declines in 2015 and 2016, with East Texas seeing sharper contractions — 8.7% in 2015 and 1.8% in 2016 — compared to Texas's 0.4% and 0.2%. From 2017 to 2018, both areas rebounded with modest growth.

In 2018, East Texas grew by 9.1%, slightly ahead of Texas at 8.4%. Growth slowed in 2019, with East Texas expanding by just 0.2% and Texas by 2.9%. The 2020 pandemic caused major declines: 6.2% for East Texas and 3.3% for Texas. Both regions rebounded strongly in 2021 and 2022. East Texas grew by 15.6% in 2021 — just behind Texas at 16.1% — and surpassed the state in 2022 with 15.5% growth compared to Texas's 15.1%. In 2023, growth moderated to 4.6% for East Texas and 6.7% for Texas.

*Real GDP is the inflation-adjusted value of all goods and services produced by an economy in a specific period, typically a year.

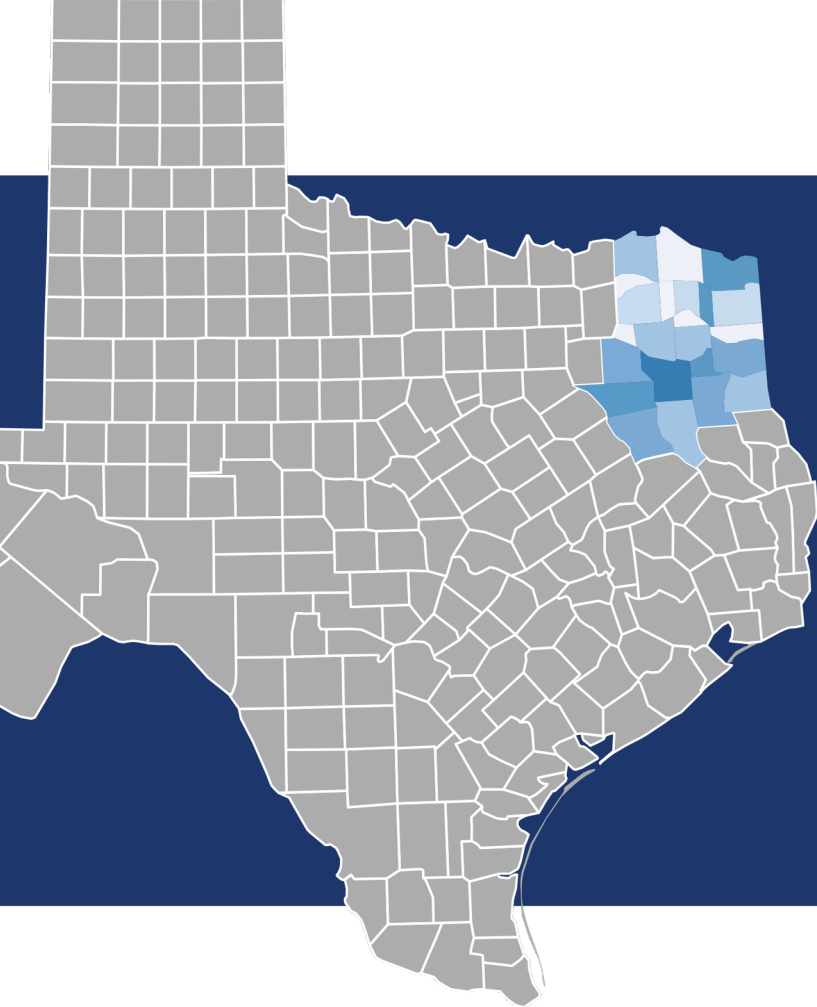
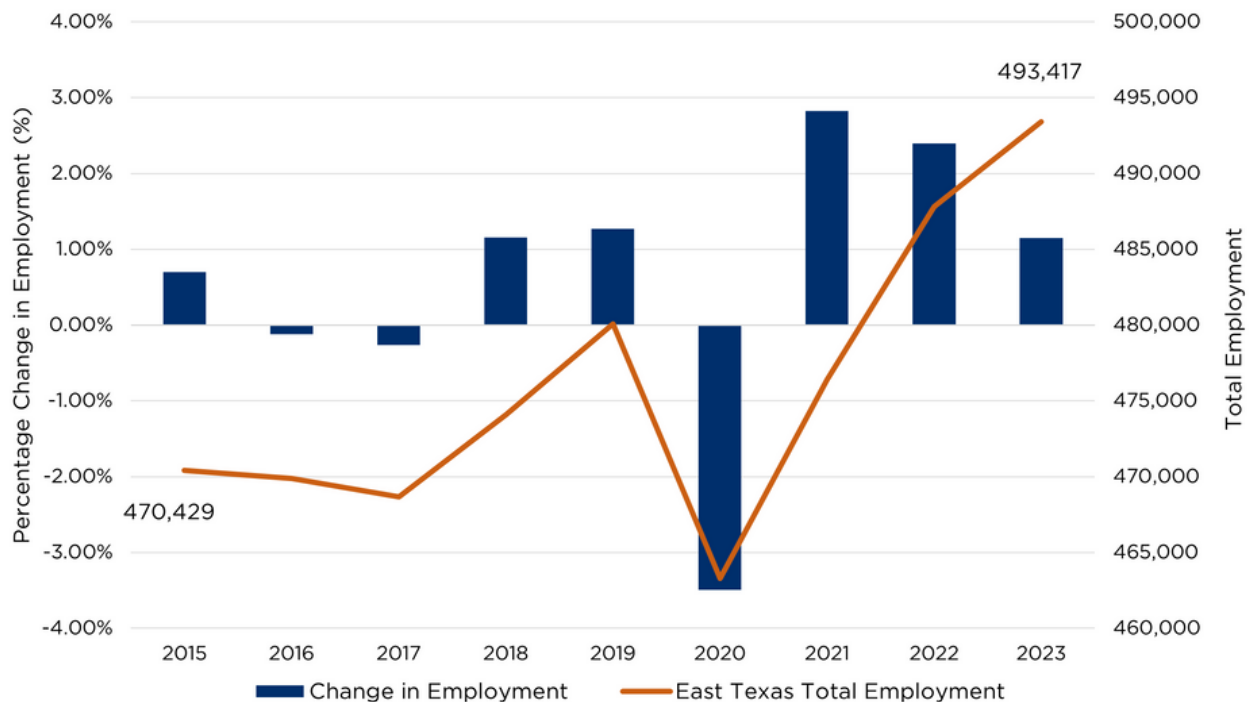


Figure 2 shows total employment and annual employment growth in East Texas from 2015 to 2023. Over this period, employment increased by 22,988 jobs, a 4.89% gain. The region saw slight employment declines in 2016 and 2017, followed by modest growth in 2018 and 2019, with increases of more than 1% each year.

In 2020, employment dropped nearly 4%, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, marking the lowest point of the period. A strong rebound followed in 2021 and 2022, with growth rates of 3% and 2%, respectively. Growth slowed to just over 1% in 2023, but total employment still reached a record high of 493,417.

Figure 2. East Texas Total Employment and Percent Change in Employment (2015-2023)



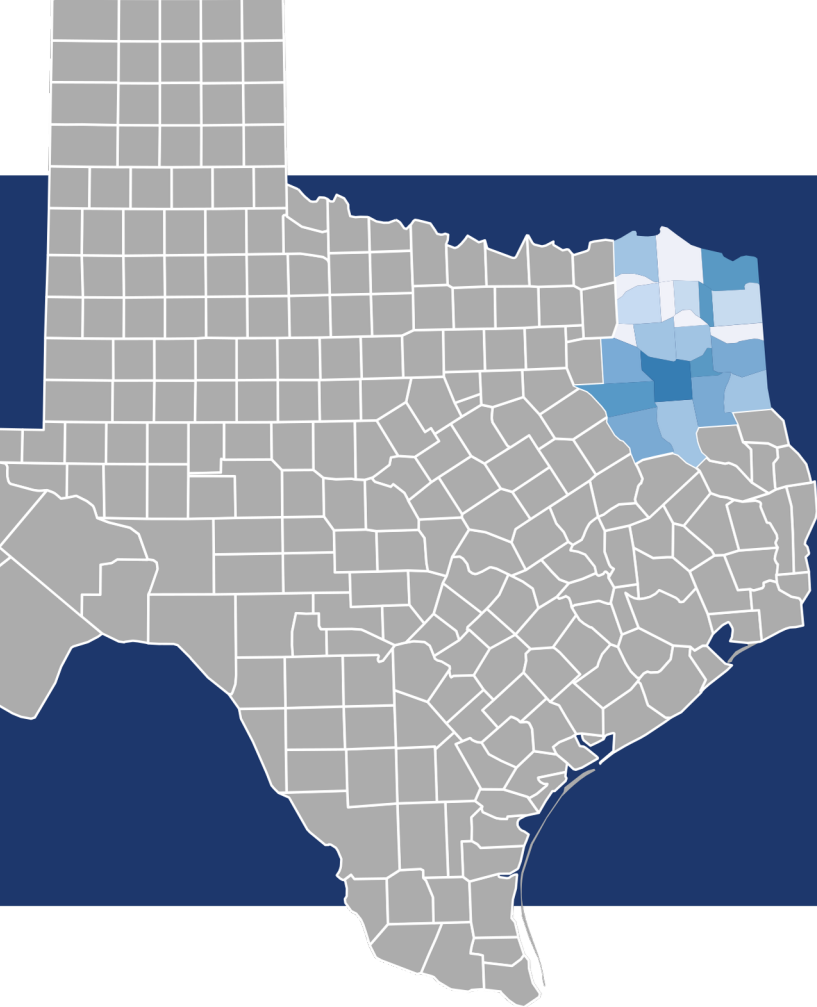


Figure 3 shows real wage* growth in East Texas and the state of Texas from 2015 to 2023. Both regions saw steady increases, though Texas consistently maintained higher wage levels. In 2015, the average real wage was \$52,270 in Texas and \$39,583 in East Texas — a gap of over \$13,000.

Wages grew modestly through 2018, then accelerated after 2019. By 2023, average real wages reached **\$69,968** in Texas and **\$51,270** in East Texas. Despite steady gains, East Texas still trails the state average by approximately \$18,700.

*Real wages are nominal wages adjusted for inflation to reflect the actual purchasing power — goods and services that can be bought with that money.

Figure 3. Real Average Annual Wages in Texas and East Texas (2015-2023)

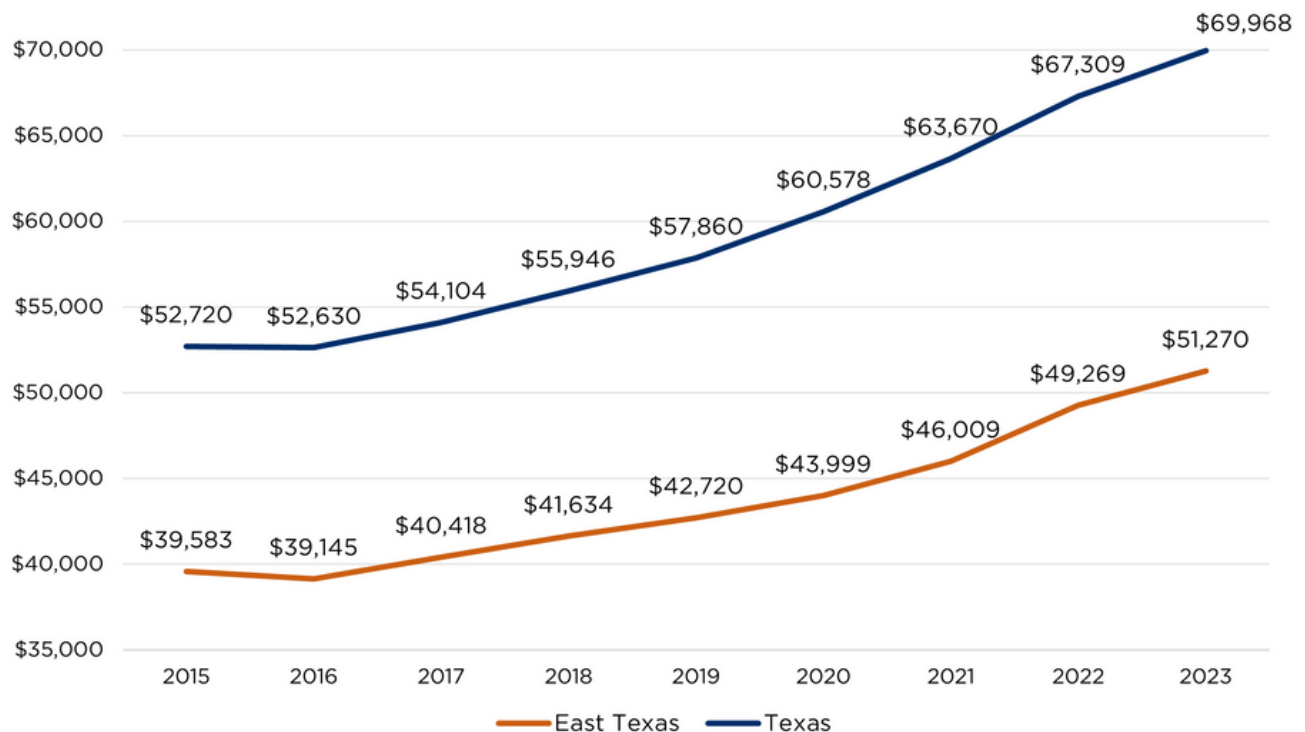




Figure 4 shows the top 10 industries in the Tyler MSA based on their contribution to the region's GDP in 2023. Healthcare and social assistance leads all sectors, accounting for **17.5%** of the MSA's GDP, highlighting its role as the region's economic anchor. It is followed by mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction at **14.6%** and manufacturing at **9.9%**.

Other key industries include real estate and rental and leasing (8.6%), retail trade (8.5%) and wholesale trade (7.0%). Rounding out the list are professional and business services (4.7%), construction (4.5%), educational services (4.2%), and transportation and warehousing (3.5%). This distribution reflects the Tyler MSA's diverse economic base.

Figure 4. Top 10 Industries in the Tyler MSA by Contribution to GDP (2023)

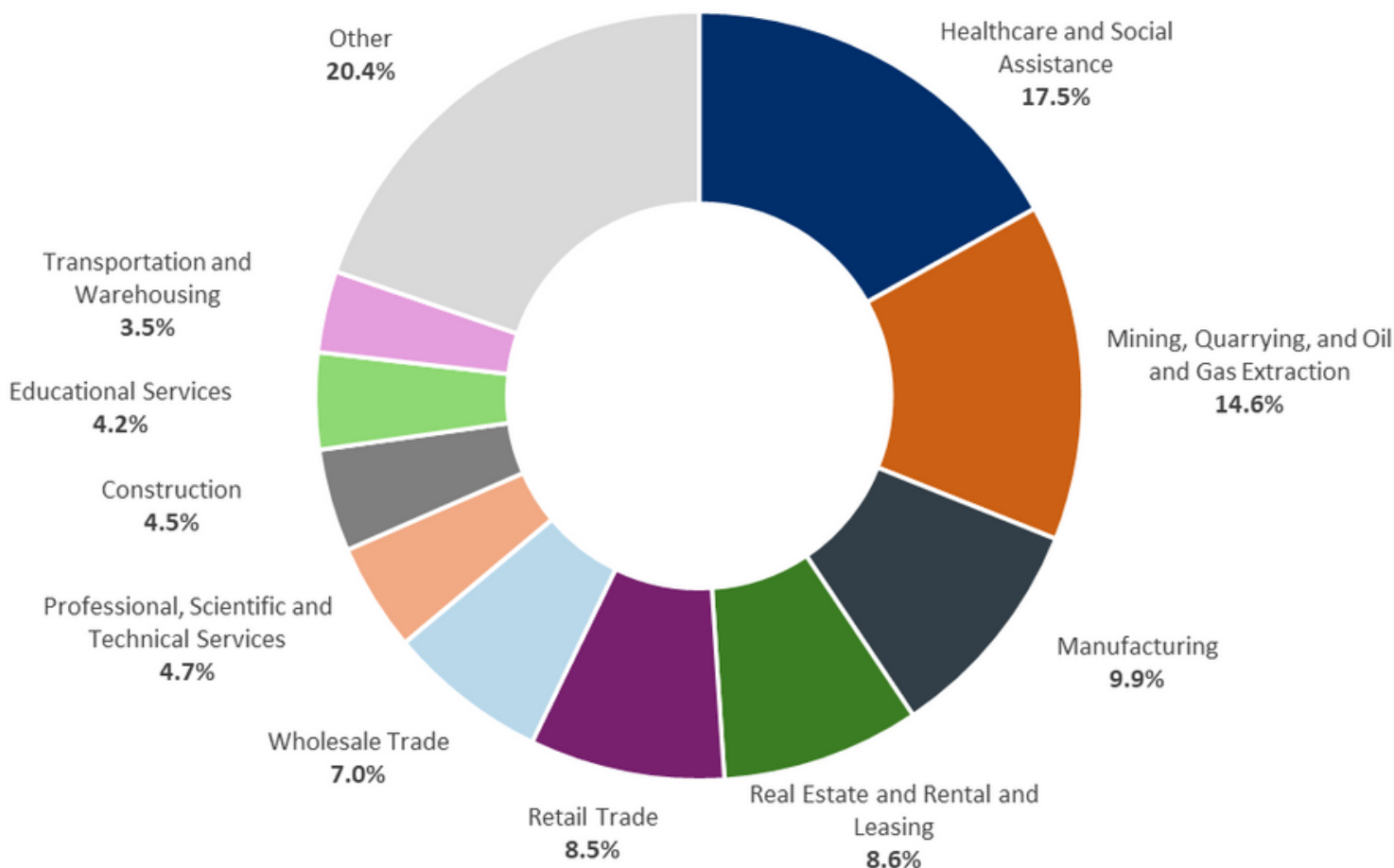




Figure 5 presents the top 10 fastest-growing occupations in the Tyler MSA from 2015 to 2024, led by Managers (257.7%), Project Management Specialists (76.7%) and Personal Care Aides (68.0%).

Figure 6 displays the top 10 highest-paying occupations in 2024, with Pediatric Surgeons earning a median of **\$360,500**, followed by Orthopedic Surgeons at **\$284,200**, and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons at **\$275,100**.

Figure 5. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Growth Rate in the Tyler MSA (2015-2024)

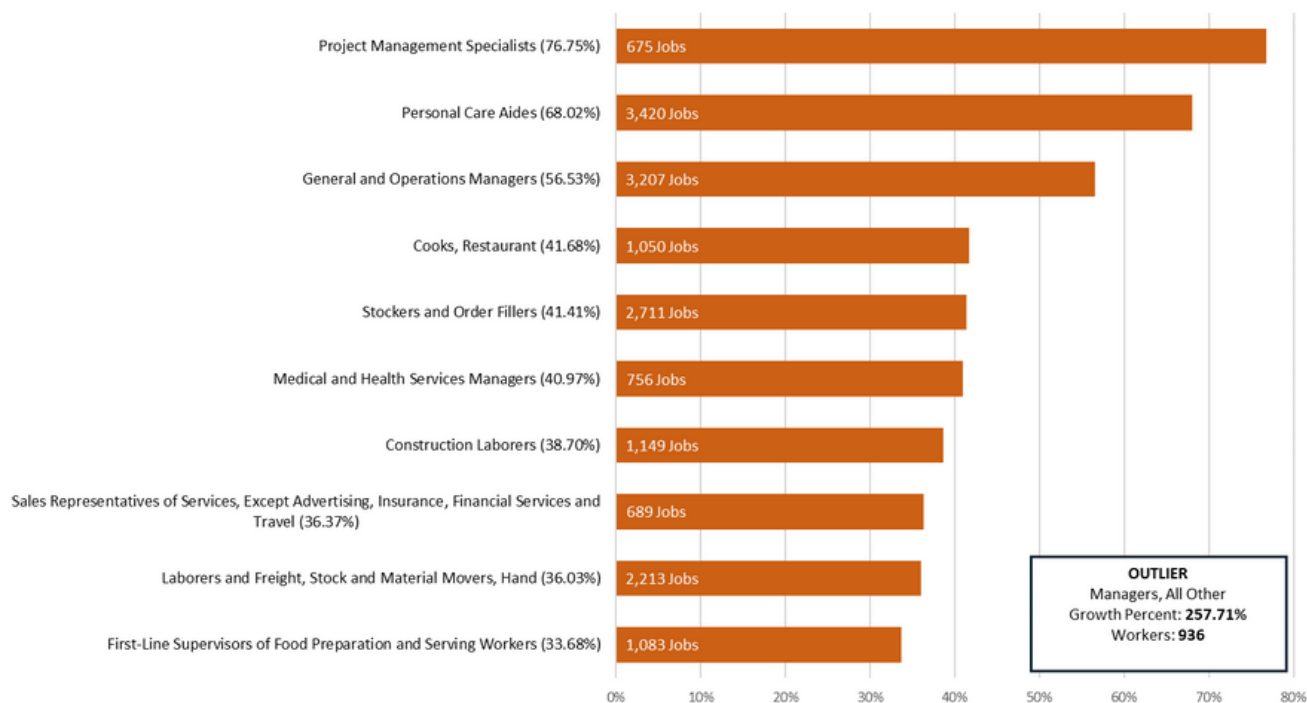


Figure 6. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Median Wages in the Tyler MSA (2024)

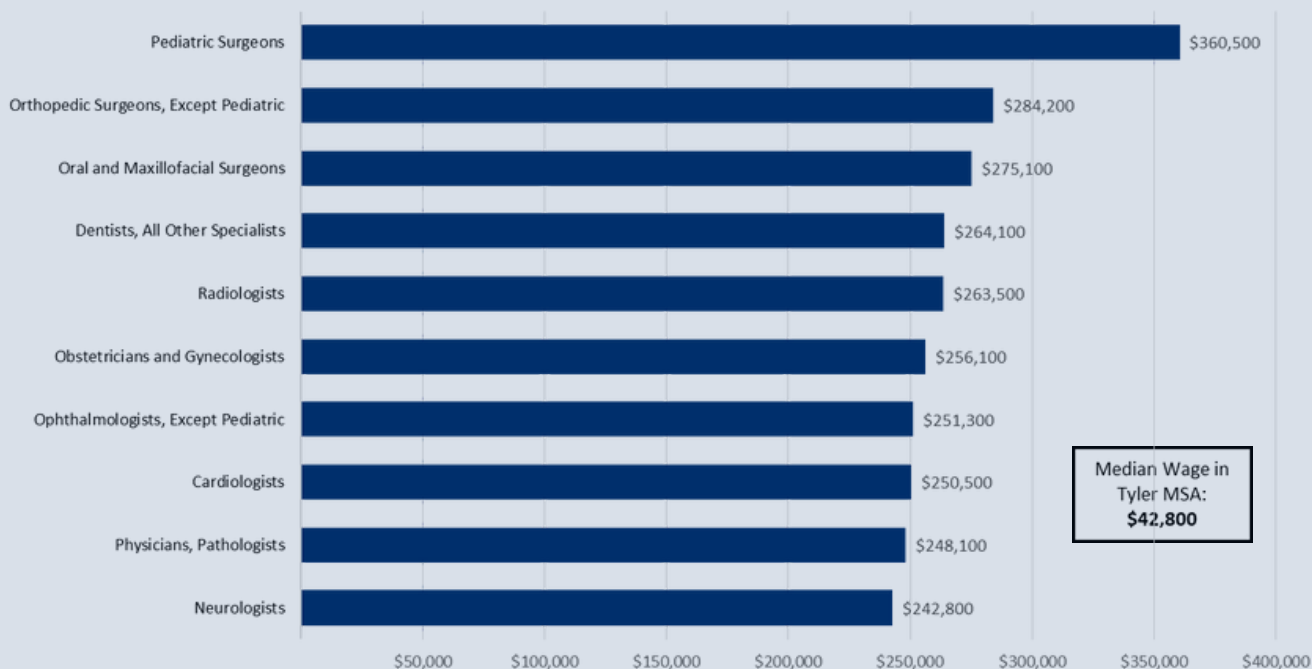




Figure 7 shows the top 10 industries in the Longview MSA by their contribution to the region's GDP in 2023. Manufacturing leads with an **18.3%** share, followed by mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction at **16.9%**, and real estate and rental and leasing at **8.0%**.

Other major contributors include healthcare and social assistance (7.3%), retail trade (7.1%), wholesale trade (6.6%) and construction (6.1%). Rounding out the top 10 are educational services (4.6%), transportation and warehousing (3.9%), and utilities (3.8%). Together, these sectors reflect the Longview MSA's diverse economic base, anchored by manufacturing and oil-related industries.

Figure 7. Top 10 Industries in the Longview MSA by Contribution to GDP (2023)

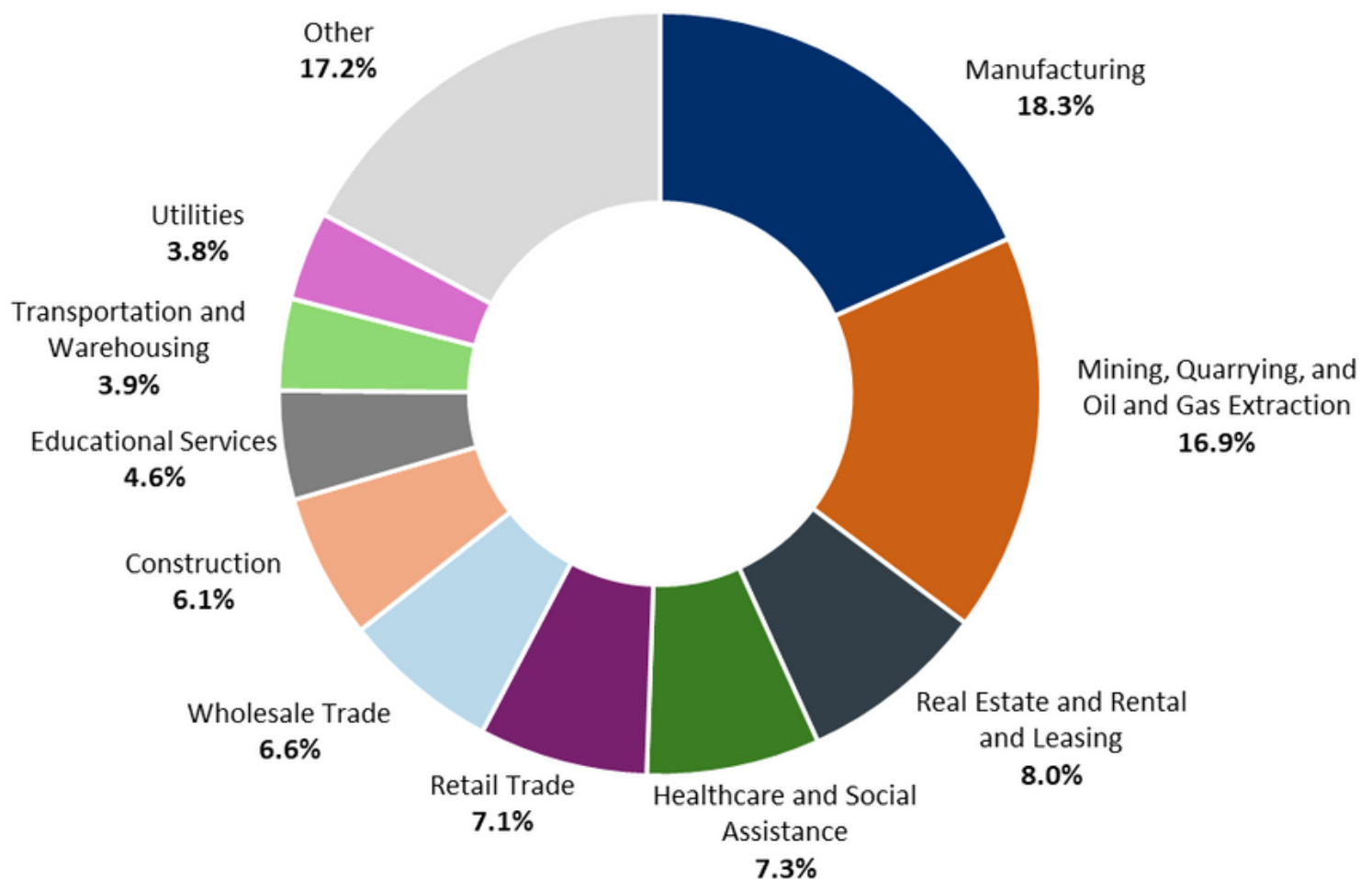




Figure 8 illustrates the top 10 fastest-growing occupations in the Longview MSA from 2015 to 2024, led by managers (197.8%), medical assistants (92.2%), and medical secretaries and administrative assistants (52.9%).

Figure 9 displays the highest-paying occupations in 2024, with pediatric surgeons earning a median salary of **\$373,900**, followed by orthopedic surgeons at **\$294,700**, and oral and maxillofacial surgeons at **\$285,400**.

Figure 8. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Growth Rate in the Longview MSA (2015-2024)

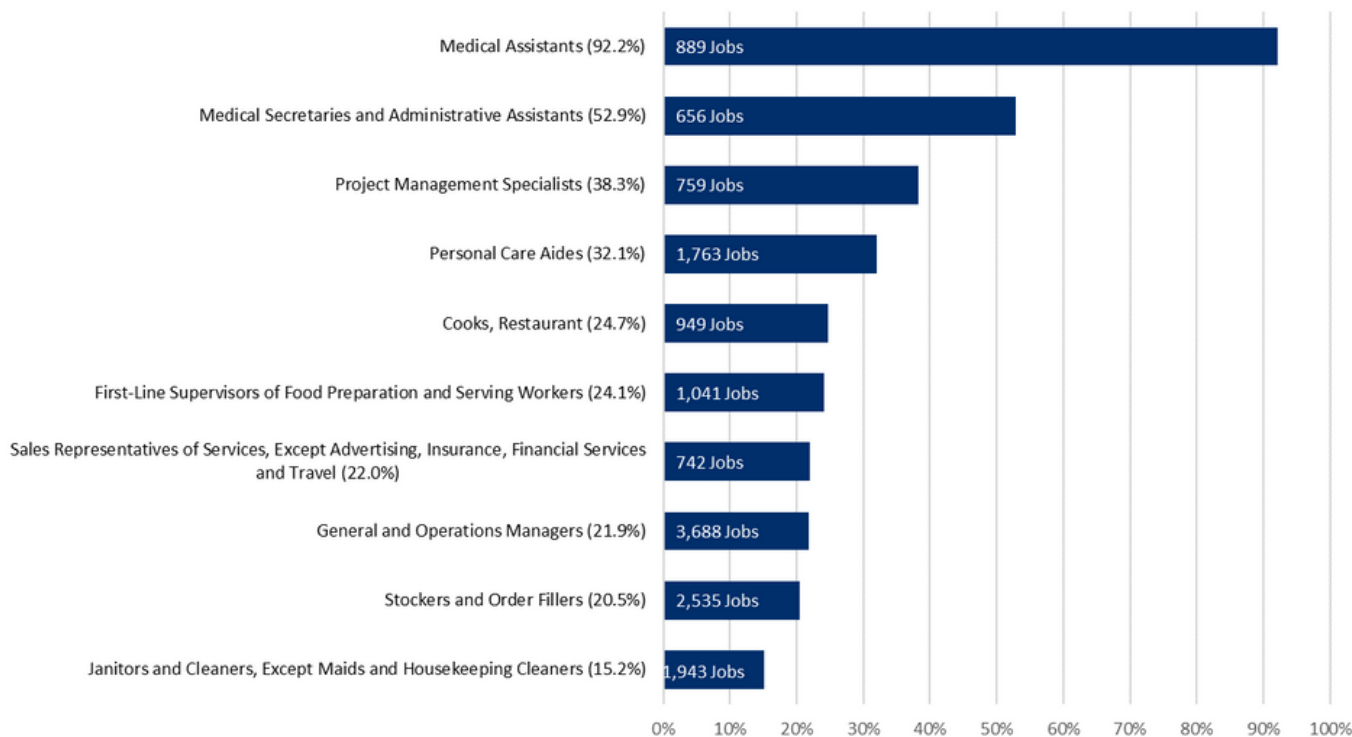
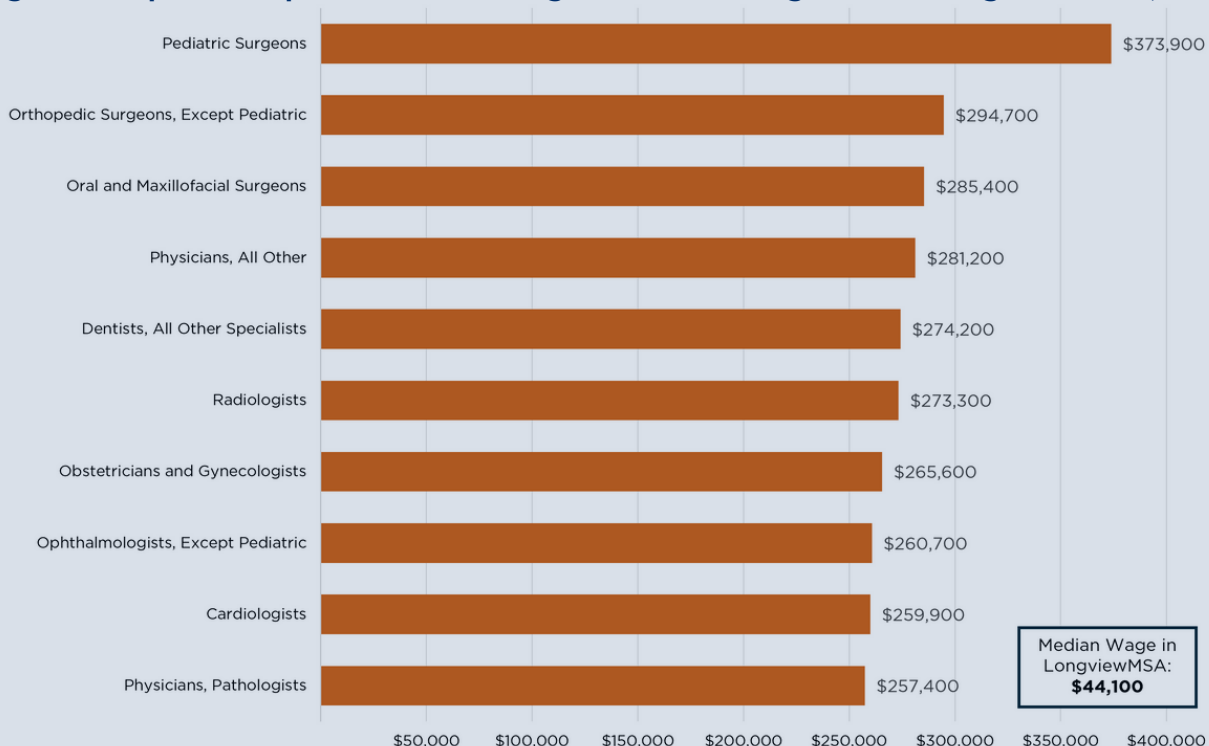


Figure 9. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Median Wages in the Longview MSA (2024)



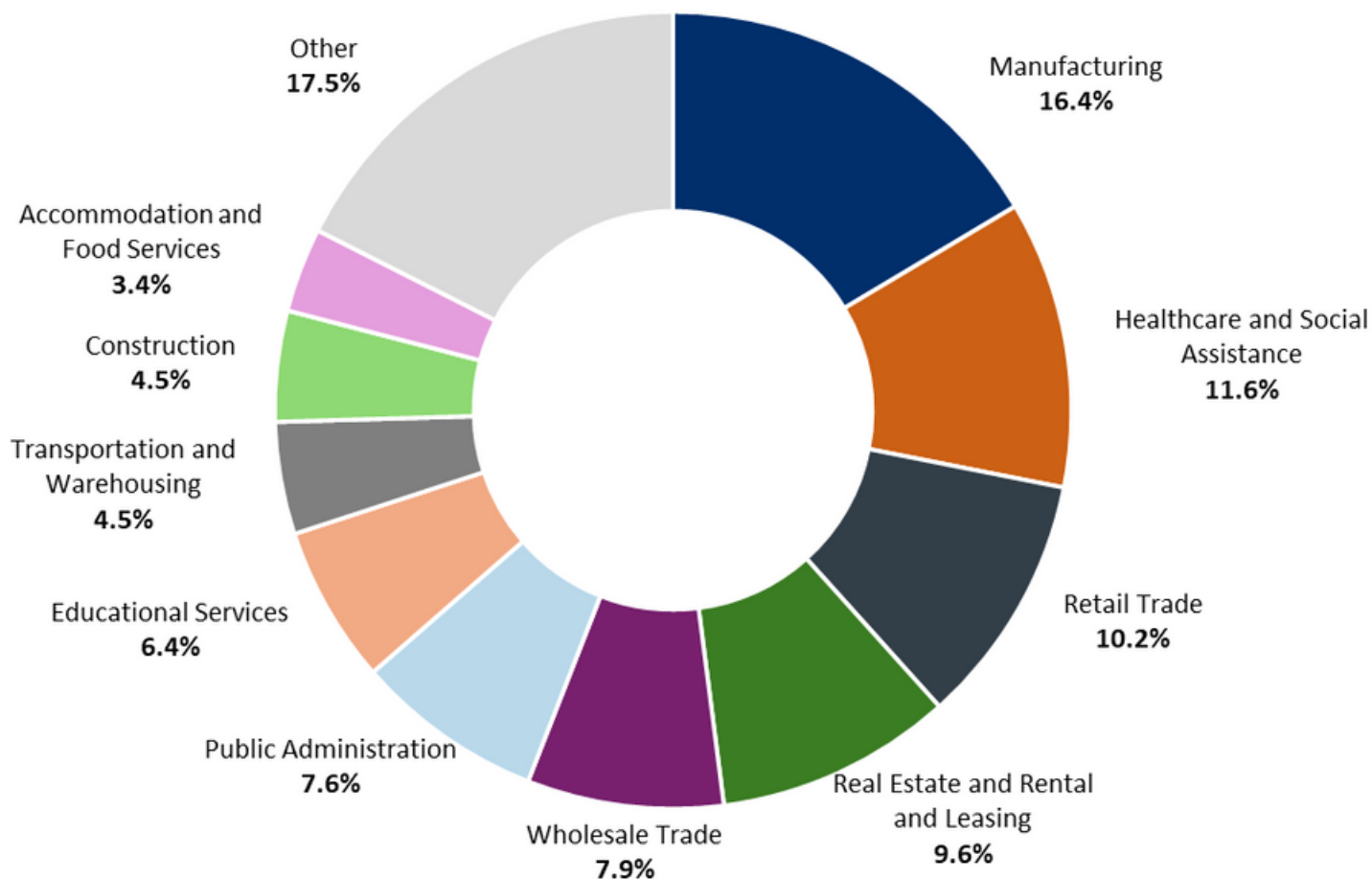
Median Wage in LongviewMSA: **\$44,100**



Figure 10 depicts the top 10 industries in the Texarkana MSA by their contribution to regional GDP in 2023. Manufacturing leads with the largest share at **16.4%**, followed by healthcare and social assistance at **11.6%**, and retail trade at **10.2%**.

Other major contributors include real estate and rental and leasing (9.6%), wholesale trade (7.9%), public administration (7.6%) and educational services (6.4%). Rounding out the top 10 are transportation and warehousing (4.5%), construction (4.5%), and accommodation and food services (3.4%).

Figure 10. Top 10 Industries in the Texarkana MSA by Contribution to GDP (2023)



TEXARKANA MSA

Figure 11 shows the top 10 fastest-growing occupations in the Texarkana MSA from 2015 to 2024, led by Managers (91.7%), Personal Care Aides (36.8%), and General and Operations Managers (35.2%).

Figure 12 highlights the region's highest-paying occupations for 2024, led by Physicians at **\$354,400**, Pediatric Surgeons at **\$350,200** and Cardiologists at **\$299,500**.

Figure 11. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Growth Rate in the Texarkana MSA (2015-2024)

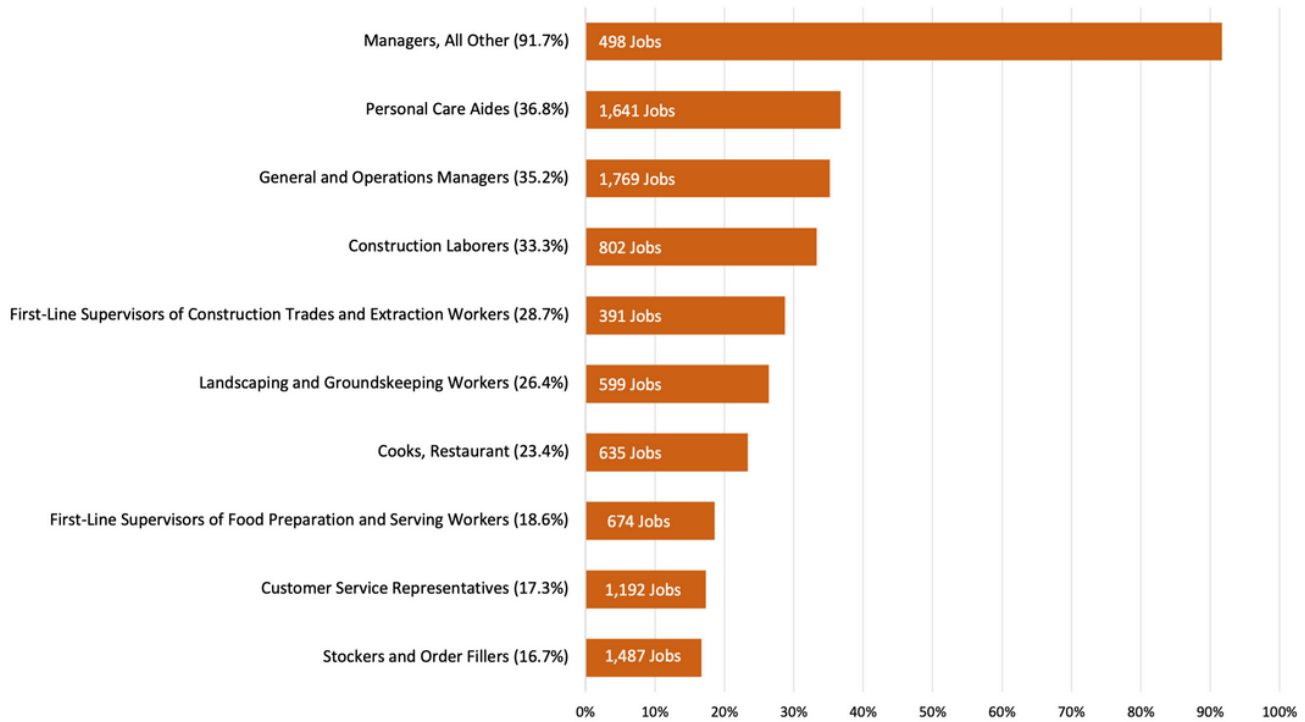
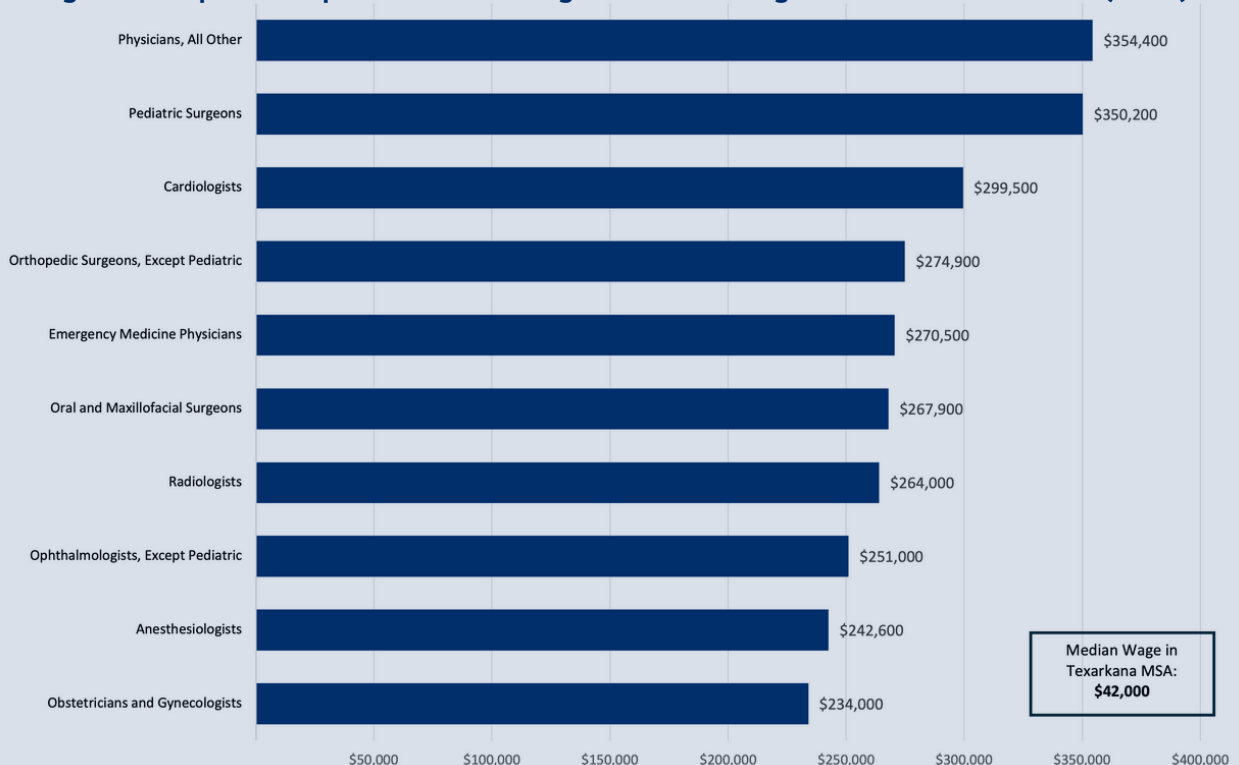


Figure 12. Top 10 Occupations with the Highest Median Wages in the Texarkana MSA (2024)



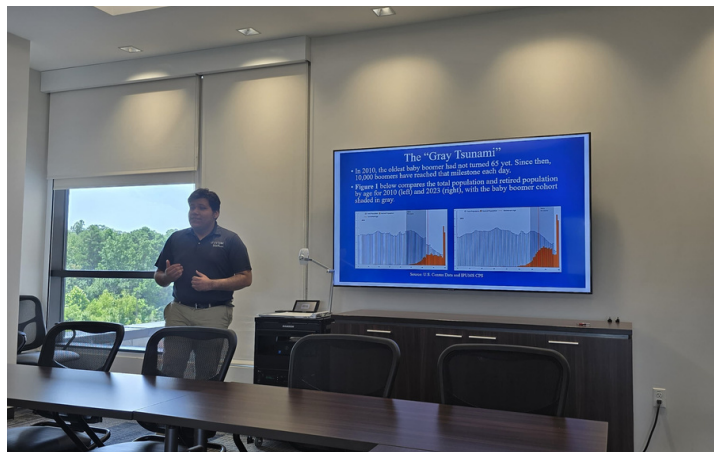
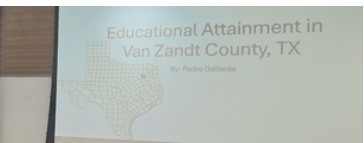
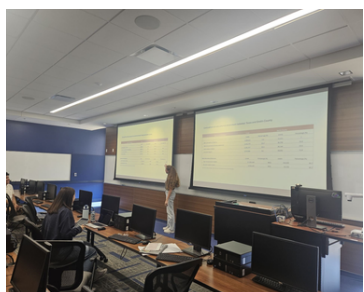


In fall 2024, the **Hibbs Institute for Business and Economic Research** launched the Hibbs Internship Program — an intentional investment in cultivating the next generation of regional researchers and leaders. The program provides undergraduate students with hands-on experience in economic analysis, allowing them to engage with real-world data and contribute to applied research focused on East Texas.

One of the program's first participants, **Pedro Gallardo-Toledo**, played a key role in this project. Reflecting on his experience, he shared:

"As a native of East Texas, I am proud to contribute to this report and highlight the region's strengths. It's truly remarkable to observe how industries like healthcare, energy and manufacturing drive the economy and provide jobs for the community. As someone who has lived in East Texas my whole life, I am glad and grateful for the opportunity to shine a light on the place I call home."

Pedro's story — and those of the thousands of workers driving East Texas' economy — serve as a powerful reminder of what is at stake. The region has grown. The next challenge is to ensure that growth continues and benefits everyone.





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