

Metropolitan Immigration in Texas



Included in this Brief:

- Immigration is an important source of urban population growth.
- Among all in-migrants, immigrants are the most likely to settle in the most populated areas of MSAs.
- Asian immigration is outpacing Mexican immigration in the state's metro areas.
- Immigration has the potential to realign political and cultural boundaries within the state's largest urban areas.

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The Texas Demographic Center is responsible for interpreting and communicating information on demographic and socioeconomic issues for the State of Texas to the public and the legislature.

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Immigration is an important source of metropolitan population growth.

With each decennial census since 1850, the metropolitan share of the total population in Texas has increased [1]. Most recently, the leading source of urban growth has been migration from outside of Texas. Domestic migration and immigration are the two sources of this external migration. Domestic migrants originate in other U.S. states while immigrants originate in foreign countries [2].

As shown in Figure 1 below, 12.1 percent of all external Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in-migrants are immigrants (please refer to Appendix A for a map of Texas MSAs). By contrast, 5.7 percent of all non-MSA external in-migrants are immigrants. Furthermore, the state's metropolitan areas contain about 89 percent of the Texas population but receive around 97 percent of all Texas immigrants.

Immigration inflows typically are smaller than domestic migration inflows. Even so, immigrants are more likely to settle in an MSA's most populated county than are domestic migrants. Thus, in spite of smaller inflows, immigrants are playing an important role in the state's urban development patterns.

In this brief, we describe:

- The role of immigration in Texas' urban population growth.
- The origins of particular immigrant groups.
- The settlement patterns of particular immigrant groups.

We conclude that immigrants opt for the MSAs' most populated areas and, with the continuation of recent trends, this selection could shift political and cultural boundaries in the state's largest urban areas.

Figure 1. Immigrants as a Percent of All External In-Migrants for Texas MSAs, 2011-2015*

Austin-Round Rock	8.2%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington	11.1%
El Paso	28.8%
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land	16.8%
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission	29.6%
San Antonio-New Braunfels	10.2%
All Metro Areas	12.1%
All Non-Metro Areas	5.7%
State of Texas	11.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016, 5-Year ACS Summary Data, 2011-2015

Note: *MSAs with 2010 populations of 500,000 or more.

How does migration affect metropolitan population growth?

A migrant is a current resident that lived in a different county or country one year ago. An area grows from migration when there are more people moving in (in-migrants) than there are people moving out (out-migrants). Population loss occurs when there are more out-migrants than in-migrants. Local moves within an area do not change its overall population size.

Immigration is one of three kinds of migration that can affect an area's population:

- (1) *Internal Migration*: Migration from one Texas county to another Texas county.
- (2) *Domestic Migration*: Migration between a Texas county and a U.S. county outside of Texas.
- (3) *International Migration (Immigration)*: Migration to a Texas county from outside of the U.S.

Immigration favors urban areas over rural areas.

In a prior brief, we noted that immigration favors urban over rural growth in Texas ([White et al., 2017](#)).

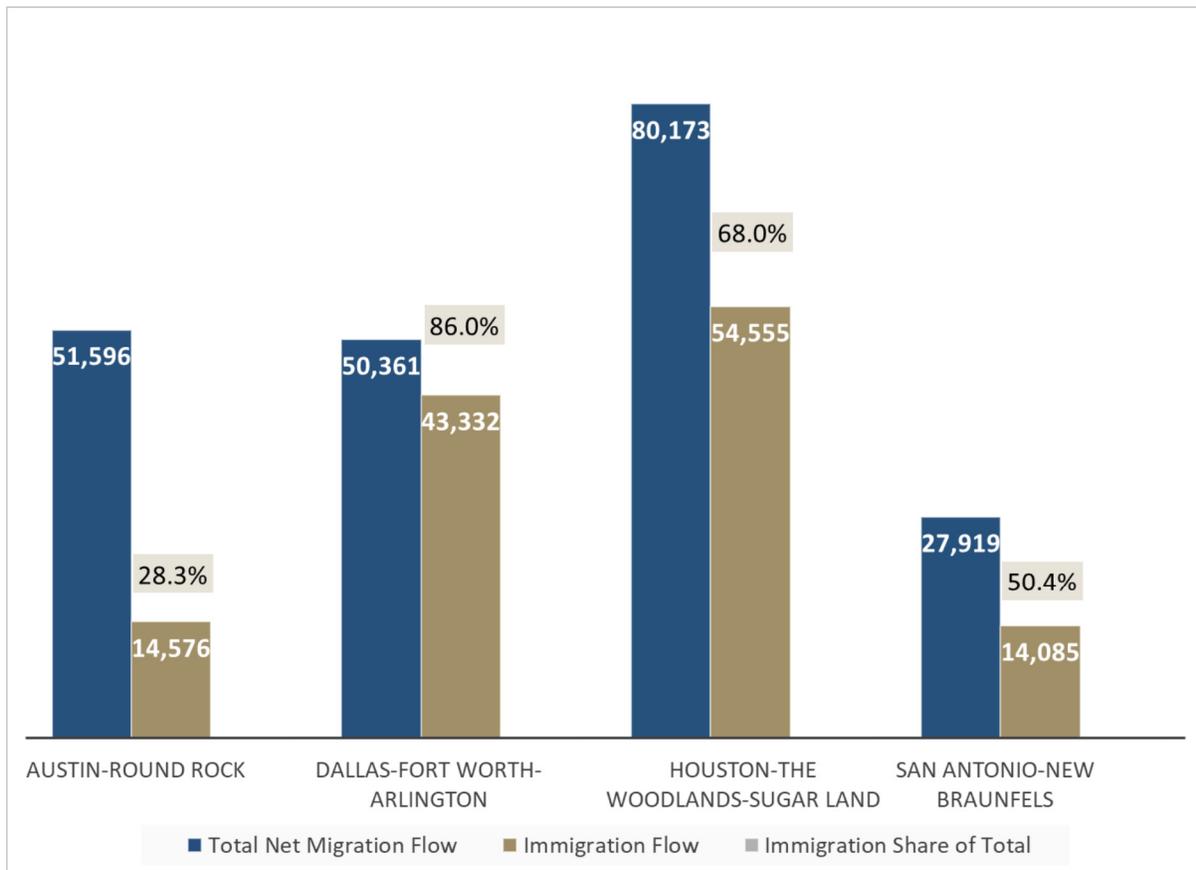
Immigration is most concentrated in the state's metropolitan areas. In terms of volume, Texas' metropolitan areas received around 14 times more immigrants than the non-metropolitan areas. More telling, the metropolitan immigration rate was almost twice as high as that for the non-metropolitan areas.

Immigration is playing a significant role in the state's urbanization.

Our discussion of immigration centers on the 'Big Four' – the four metropolitan areas in Texas that had at least one million residents in the 2010 Census. The Big Four are the Austin - Round Rock, Dallas - Fort Worth - Arlington, Houston - The Woodlands - Sugar Land, and San Antonio - New Braunfels MSAs. In three of these, the number of new immigrants exceeded the number of net internal and net domestic migrants combined. The exception to this pattern was Austin-Round Rock.

Figure 2 shows that immigration was especially important for the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA where it comprised 86.0 percent of the total net migration flow. While not the majority flow in the Austin-Round Rock MSA, immigration still contributed to 28.3 percent of the total net migration flow. Thus, immigration is playing a significant role in the growth of the state's most urbanized areas.

Figure 2: Total Net Migration and Immigration Flows and Immigration Share of Total Net Migration Flow for the Four Largest Texas MSAs, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016. ACS County-to-County Migration Flows, 2010-2014

Asian immigration is on the rise.

For much of the 20th century, Mexico was the predominant source of immigration to Texas. This pattern began to change appreciably in the early 21st century. Most notably, Mexican immigration has declined while immigration from Asia has increased.

Figure 3 shows that during the 2010-2014 period, Texas' metropolitan areas had more Asian immigrants (37.6 percent of all immigrants) than immigrants from Mexico and Central America (33.1 percent of all immigrants). By contrast, in the non-metropolitan areas almost 70 percent of all immigrants arrived from Mexico and Central America. Thus, while the non-metropolitan counties received only 6.5 percent of the state's total immigrants, they received 12.6 percent of all Mexican and Central American immigrants.

Urban areas have a more diverse mixture of immigrants.

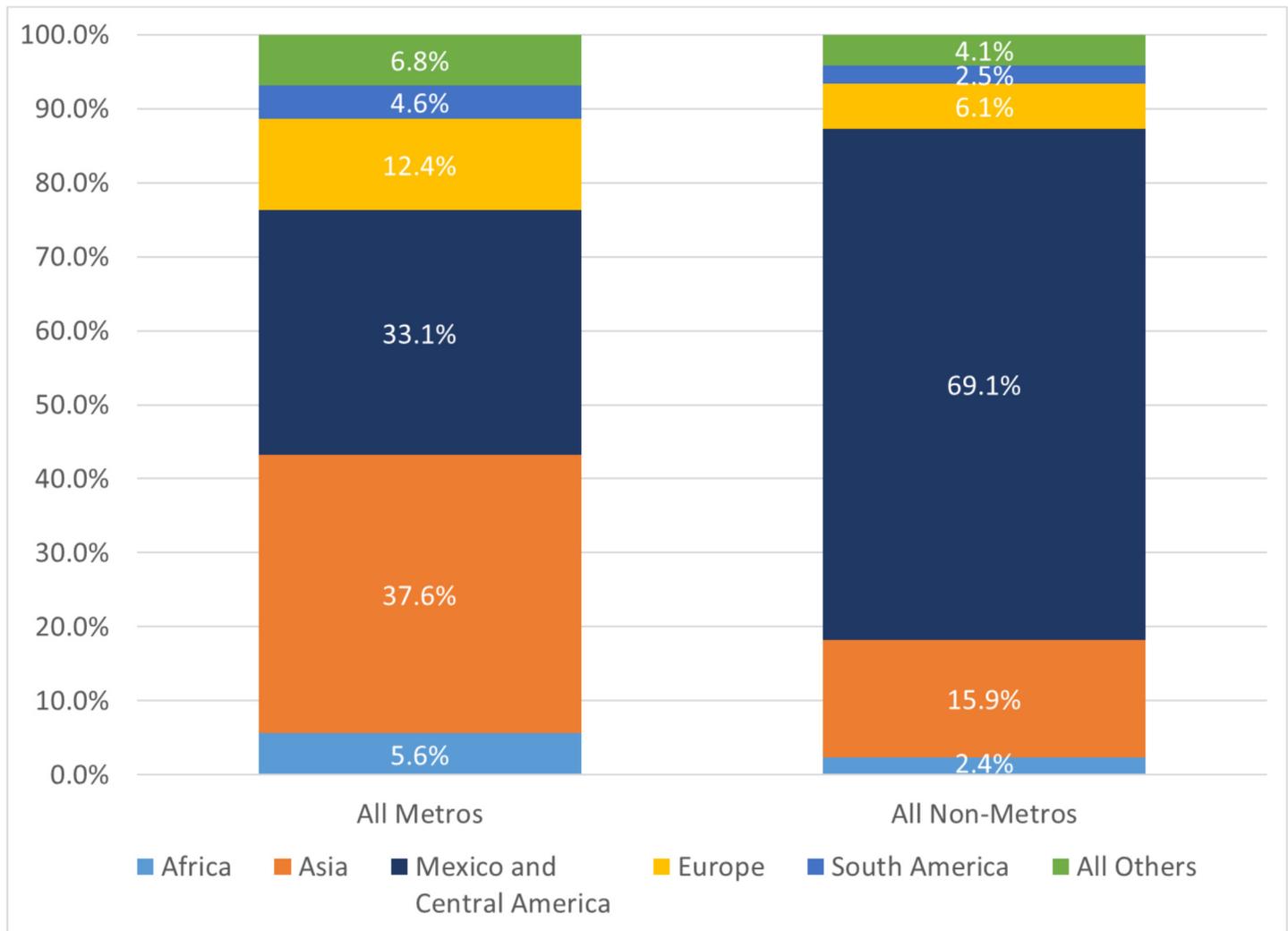
Figure 3 also shows that, in addition to receiving the vast majority of immigrants, Texas' metropolitan areas also receive a more diverse mixture of immigrants than the non-metropolitan areas. In non-metropolitan areas, Mexican and Central American immigrants are a large majority, making up 69.1 percent of all immigrants. As a result, shares for the other immigrant groups are smaller than in the metropolitan areas.

By contrast, in the metropolitan areas, no single immigrant group is a majority. Consequently, the immigrant shares are more equally distributed and this provides a more diverse mixture of immigrants in the urban areas.

Metro areas have different immigrant mixes.

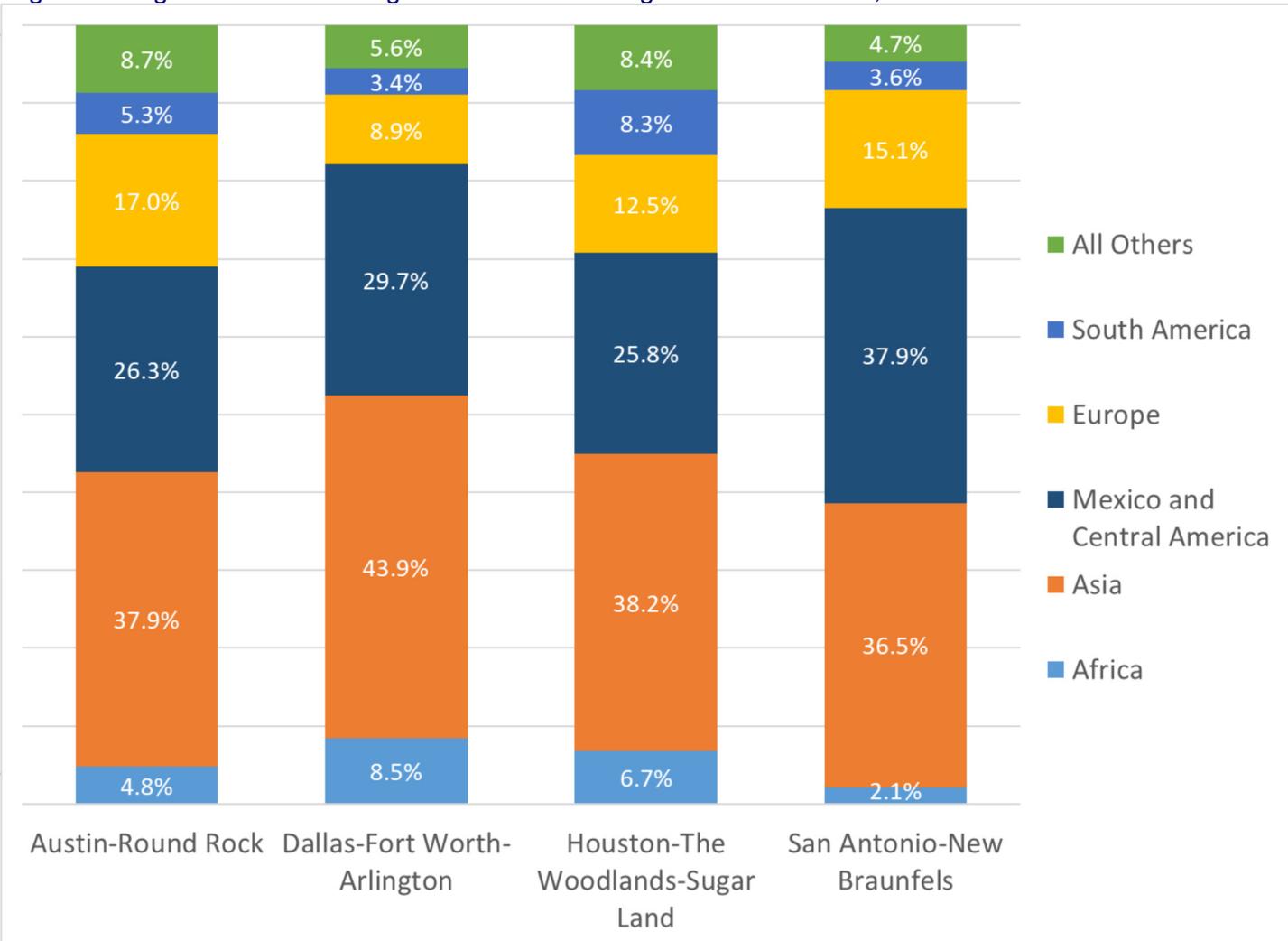
When we examine the 'Big Four' alone in Figure 4, there are differences in their immigrant mixes.

Figure 3: Origins of Recent Immigrants to Texas by Metropolitan Status, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a. ACS County-to-County Migration Flows, 2010-2014

Figure 4: Origins of Recent Immigrants to the Four Largest MSAs in Texas, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a. ACS County-to-County Migration Flows, 2010-2014

These differences reflect selectivity in recent immigrants' choices of destinations. Among the Big Four:

- The Dallas MSA has the highest proportion of immigrants originating in Asia, at 43.9 percent.
- The San Antonio MSA receives the highest percent of Mexican and Central American immigrants, with 37.9 percent.
- African immigrants have the highest proportion in the Dallas MSA, at 8.5 percent.
- The Austin MSA has the highest share of European immigrants, at 17.0 percent.
- The Houston MSA has the highest proportion of South American immigrants, with 8.3 percent.

When compared to the overall MSA immigrant distribution in Figure 3, Figure 4 indicates considerable variation among the state's most populous metro areas. Figure 3 shows that immigrants as a whole are more likely to settle in

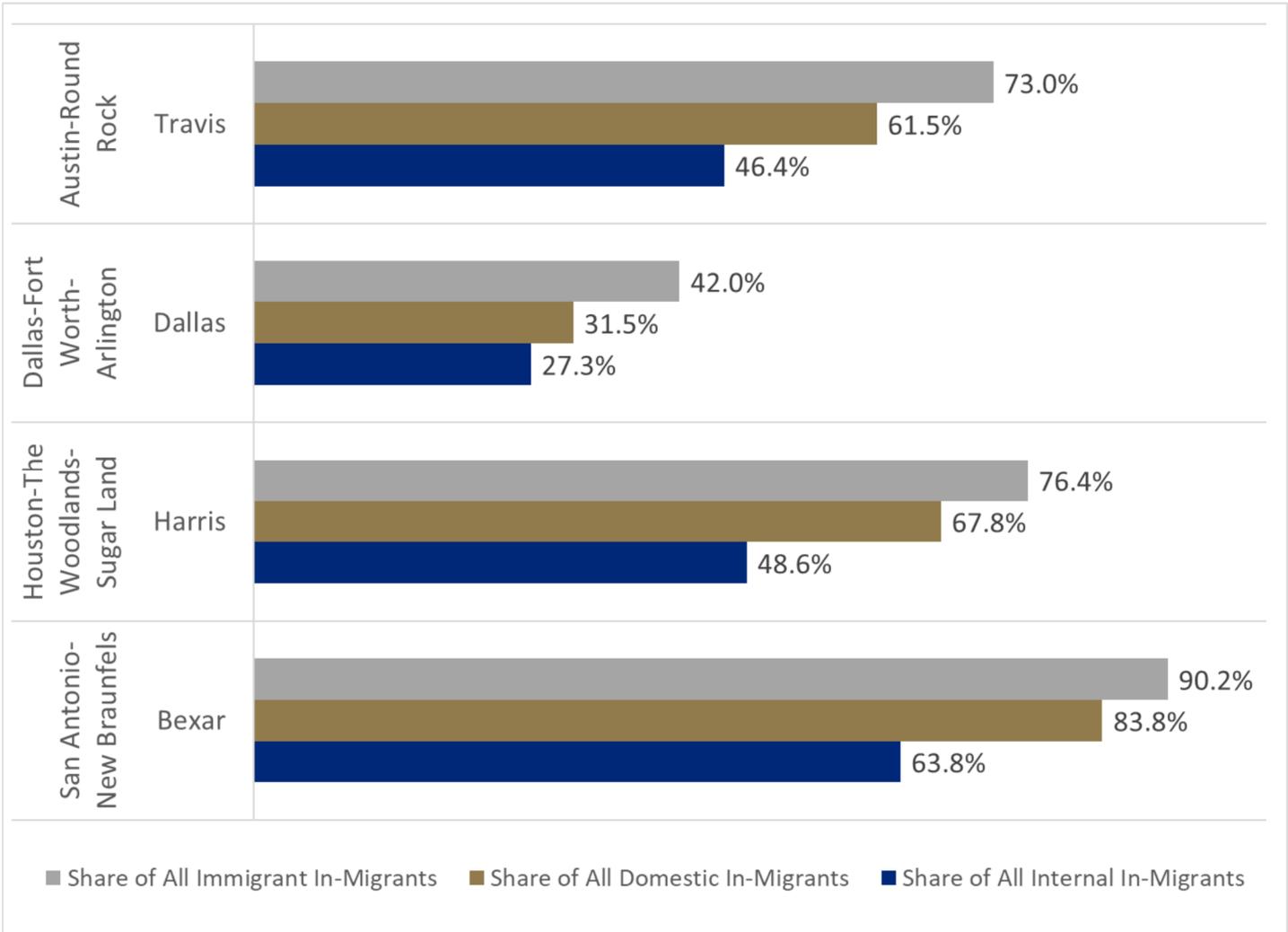
the metro areas of Texas. Figure 4 shows that particular immigrant groups are more likely to settle in one metro area over another. Overall, these data suggest that the state's largest metro areas have become the primary destinations for a diverse mixture of immigrants.

Immigrants prefer the principal county of an MSA.

We have seen that large metro areas are the primary destination for immigrants to Texas. In addition, immigrants typically prefer to settle in an MSA's principal county (i.e., the MSA's most populated county). Figure 5 shows that in three of the Big Four MSAs, the vast majority of immigrants settled in the principal county. In all four of these one-million plus MSAs, the principal counties' shares of immigrants were larger than their shares of internal in-migrants and domestic in-migrants.

In the Austin-Round Rock MSA, 73.0 percent of the immigrants located in Travis County. By contrast, Travis County received 61.5 percent of the

Figure 5: Shares of In-Migration Streams for the Principal Counties in the Four Largest MSAs in Texas, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a. ACS County-to-County Migration Flows, 2010-2014

MSA's domestic in-migrants and only 46.4 percent of the MSA's internal in-migrants.

Similarly, in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA, 76.4 percent of the immigrants, 67.8 percent of the MSA's domestic in-migrants, and 48.6 percent of the internal in-migrants located in Harris County.

In the San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA, Bexar County received, 90.2 percent of the MSA's immigrants compared to 83.8 percent of the domestic in-migrants, and 63.8 percent of the internal in-migrants. With this, Bexar County had the highest principal county immigrant concentration among the Big Four.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA, the principal county did not receive the majority of immigrants. Dallas County had only 42.0 percent of the MSA's immigrants. This is because 24.4 percent of the MSA's immigrants went to Tarrant County, the second most populous county in the Dallas-Fort

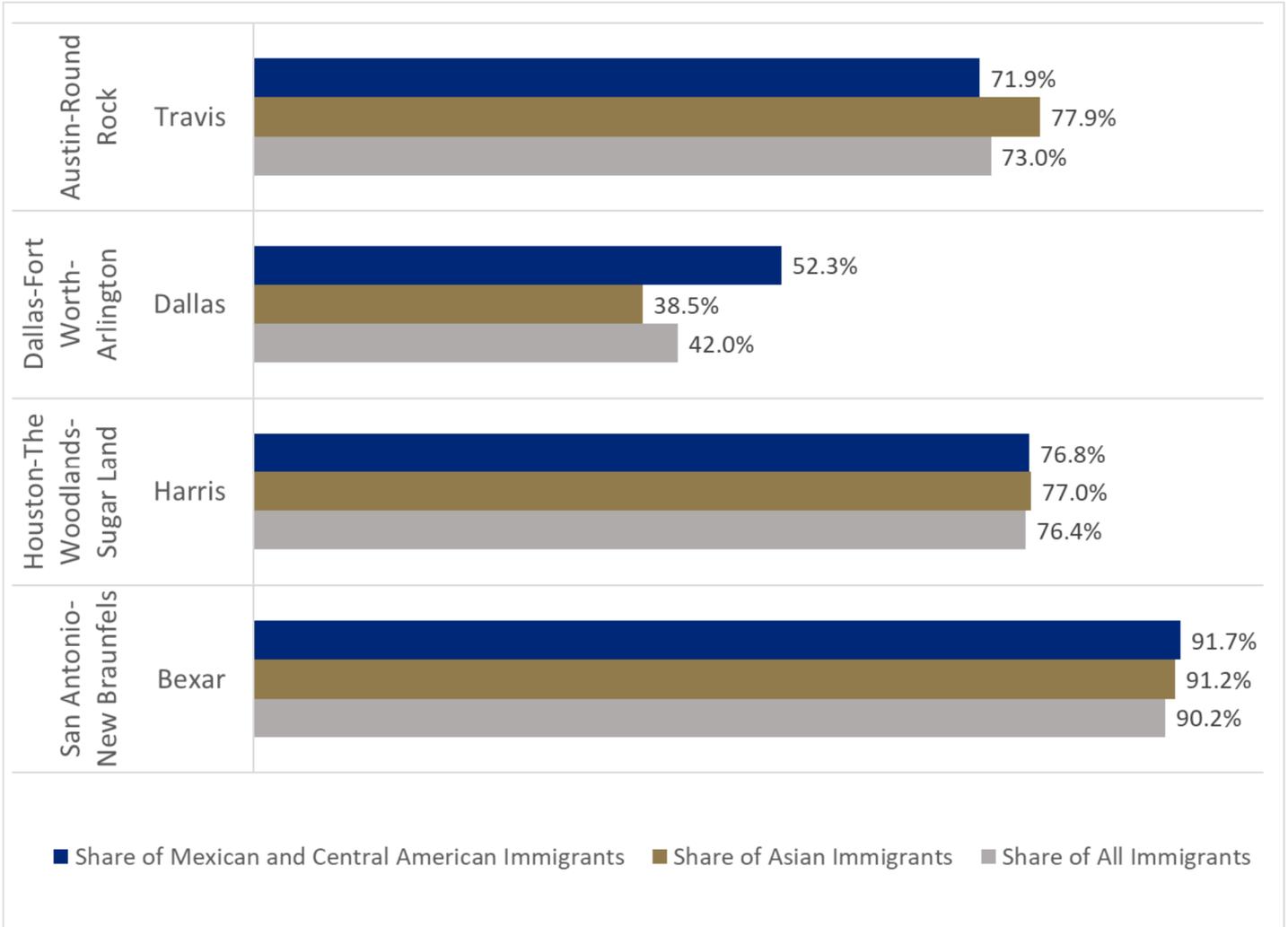
Worth-Arlington MSA. Nonetheless, the immigrant concentration of 42.0 percent in Dallas County was greater than the domestic in-migration share (31.5 percent) and the internal in-migrant share (27.3 percent).

Overall, the data in Figure 5 suggests that while internal and domestic migrants tend to disperse within the MSA, immigrants are more likely to concentrate in the principal county.

There is immigrant selectivity within the MSAs.

The Big Four MSAs show varying degrees of immigrant selectivity for location within the MSA. Figure 6 shows that in the Austin-Round Rock MSA, the principal county (Travis) received 73.0 percent of the MSA's total immigration. Travis County's share of the MSA's Asian immigrants was proportionately larger (77.9 percent) while its share of Mexican and Central American immigrants was proportionately smaller (71.9 percent). With this,

Figure 6: Immigration Shares for the Principal Counties in the Four Largest MSAs in Texas, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016. ACS County-to-County Migration Flows, 2010-2014

Note: *MSAs with 2010 populations of 500,000 or more.

Travis County had a higher concentration of Asian immigrants and a lower concentration of immigrants from Mexico and Central America than the Austin-Round Rock MSA as a whole.

A large degree of immigrant selectivity also is apparent in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA. Here the principal county (Dallas) was the destination for 42.0 percent of the MSA's total immigration. Dallas County's share of the MSA's Asian immigrants was proportionately smaller (38.5 percent) while its share of immigrants from Mexico and Central America was proportionately larger (52.3 percent). Consequently, Dallas County's concentration of Asian immigrants was lower and its concentration of immigrants from Mexico and Central America was higher than the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA as a whole. This pattern is opposite of what was seen in the Austin-Round Rock MSA.

For both the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land and San Antonio-New Braunfels MSAs,

immigrant selectivity is less striking. Compared to their baseline shares of total immigration, the principal counties in these two MSAs have only slightly higher proportions of Asian and Mexican-Central American immigrants. Nevertheless, this suggests that these two immigrant groups are more likely to settle in the principal counties than is the typical immigrant.

Thus, where Figure 5 showed that immigrants in general are more likely to settle in the principal county, Figure 6 indicates this tendency can vary among different immigrant groups. Overall, Figure 6 suggests immigrant selectivity for location within the MSA. That is, particular immigrant groups are more likely to live in the principal county. This selectivity could reflect geographical differences in housing and employment choices as well as the past settlement patterns of particular immigrant groups.

Immigration is becoming more concentrated in the state's most populous areas.

We have seen that immigrants to Texas tend to locate in the most populous counties within the MSAs. Figure 7 suggests that this tendency has increased over time. These data show the percentages of total annual immigrants that settled in the state's five most populous counties. While there is some year-to-year fluctuation, the general trend between 2008 and 2016 is an increasing concentration of immigrants in these large urban areas. For example, in 2008, 47.3 percent of all Texas immigrants settled in the five most populous counties and this increased to 54.6 percent in 2016. By comparison, these five counties had less than 45 percent of the state's total population between 2008 and 2016. Accordingly, these large counties received more than their proportionate shares of immigrants.

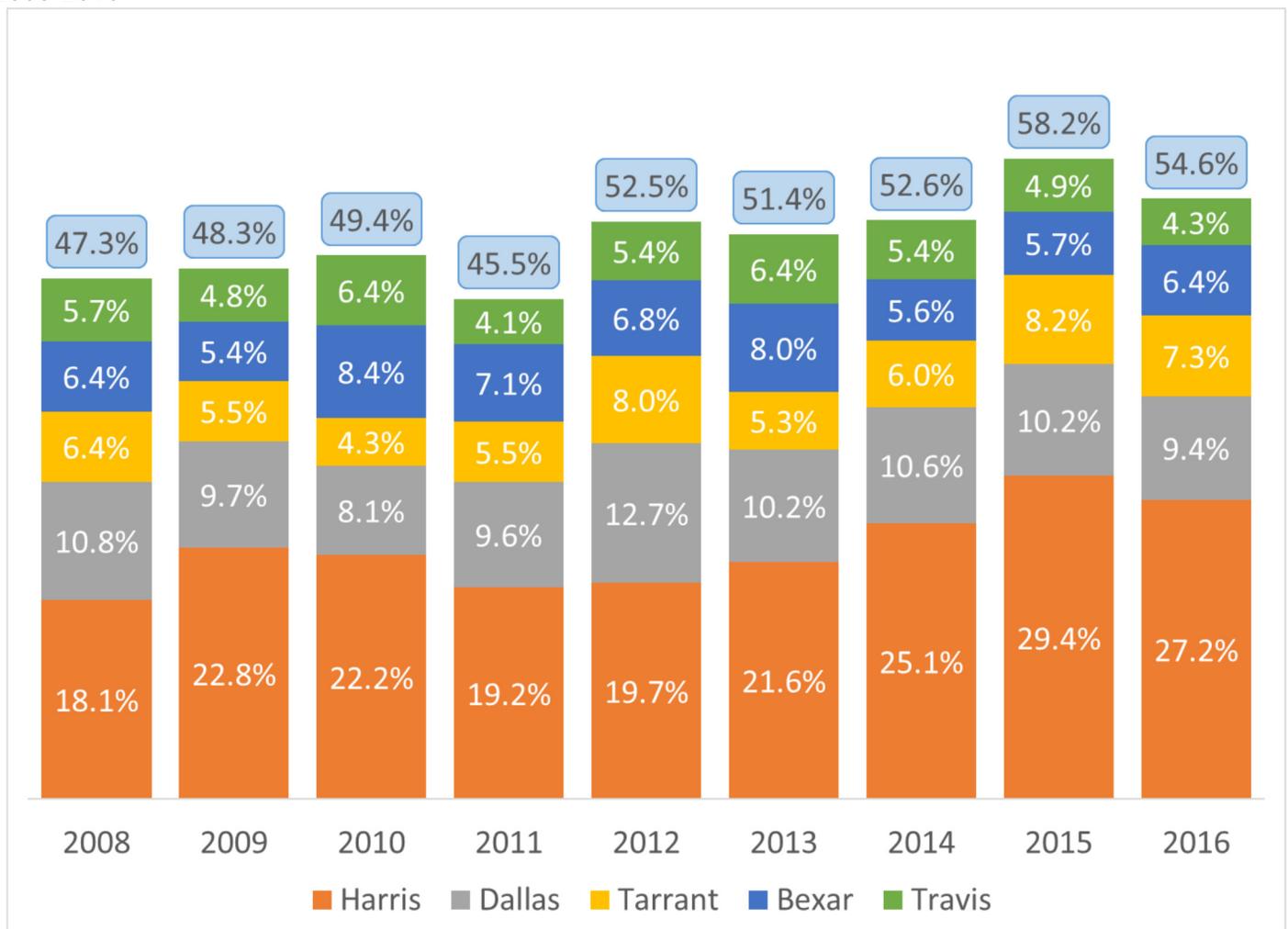
Immigrant concentration is most apparent in Harris County, the principal county of the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA. With around 16.4 percent of the total Texas population, Harris County attracted 27.2 percent of all Texas

immigrants in 2016. Thus, both numerically and proportionately, Harris County has been the leading destination for immigrants to Texas.

Compared to domestic migrants, immigrants are more likely to reside in Texas' major metropolitan areas. In 2008, the state's five most populated counties received 47.3 percent of all immigrants compared to 32.5 percent of all domestic in-migration. By 2016, 54.6 percent of all Texas immigrants settled in the state's five most populated counties compared to 45.7 percent of all domestic in-migrants. Thus, while both types of external migration have become more concentrated in large counties, this concentration has been greatest among immigrants.

Although the annual number of immigrants is less than the annual number of domestic in-migrants, immigrants are becoming more concentrated in the state's most populous counties. This concentration not only increases the size of the urban immigrant population but also leads to

Figure 7: Individual and Collective Shares of Annual Texas Immigration for the Five Most Populous Counties, 2008-2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016c. ACS 1-Year Summary Data, 2008-2016

greater ethnic and cultural diversity in the state's largest metro areas.

Who are the foreign-born?

So far, we have examined recent immigrants who migrated during the past year. In this section, we look at the foreign-born. A comparison of foreign-born migration and native-born migration provides another way to distinguish immigrant settlement patterns. The foreign-born population represents immigrants regardless of when they entered the United States. While all foreign-born were once immigrants, they also can be long-term residents of the United States. Thus, foreign-born migrants can be internal migrants, domestic migrants, or recent immigrants.

Newly arrived immigrants represent the majority of foreign-born migrants to Texas. However, internal and domestic migration of the foreign-born can be substantial. For example, recent research shows that the foreign-born comprise almost 25 percent of all net domestic migration to Texas (White et al., 2015). Thus, even in the absence of immigration, it is possible for the state's foreign-born population to grow.

Foreign-born migrants are more likely to settle in the principal county.

Table 1 shows the nativity of recent net internal migrants, net domestic migrants, and immigrant in-migrants. The table shows that, compared to native-born migrants, foreign-born migrants are more likely to settle in the principal counties of the major MSAs.

- In the Austin MSA, around 25 percent of total net migration was due to foreign-born migrants but for the principal county (Travis), the figure was almost 45 percent. As a result, around 40 percent of the MSA's foreign-born migrants

settled in Travis County compared to around 22 percent of the MSA's native-born migrants.

- In the Houston MSA, 69.0 percent of the total net migration involved foreign-born migrants but for Harris County (the principal county), almost 90 percent of the net migration was due to foreign-born migrants. About 42 percent of the MSA's foreign-born migrants moved to Harris County compared to around 16 percent of the MSA's native-born migrants.
- In the San-Antonio MSA, 40.4 percent of the total net migration involved foreign-born migrants and this rose to 45.5 percent in Bexar County (the principal county). Forty-seven percent of the MSA's foreign-born migrants settled in Bexar County versus about 42 percent of the MSA's native-born migrants.
- Among the Big Four, Dallas County in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA had a unique pattern. From Table 1, around 71 percent of the MSA's net migration was due to foreign-born migrants. However, for the principal county (Dallas), the foreign-born accounted for all of the net migration. This is because native-born net migration was negative at -15,511 while foreign-born net migration was a positive 11,356.

These data indicate that foreign-born migrants were much more likely than native-born migrants to settle in the principal county of a major MSA. This is especially evident in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA and is discussed in more detail below.

Small changes in net migration can conceal large population shifts.

In Table 1, the population change from native-born and foreign-born net migration in Dallas County was modest and negative at -4,155. In this case, a

Table 1: Population Change from Migration by Nativity for the Four Largest MSAs in Texas and Their Principal Counties, 2010-2014

	Native-Born		Foreign-Born		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Austin-Round Rock MSA	38,389	74.4%	13,207	25.6%	51,596	100.0%
Travis County	10,645	55.4%	8,582	44.6%	19,227	100.0%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA	14,655	29.1%	35,706	70.9%	50,361	100.0%
Dallas County	-15,511	<i>na</i>	11,356	<i>na</i>	-4,155	<i>na</i>
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA	24,879	31.0%	55,294	69.0%	80,173	100.0%
Harris County	4,594	10.2%	40,428	89.8%	45,022	100.0%
San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA	16,640	59.6%	11,279	40.4%	27,919	100.0%
Bexar County	11,985	54.5%	9,989	45.5%	21,974	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016b. ACS 1-Year Summary Data, 2010-2014

relatively small change in net migration masks a relatively significant shift in population composition. The county lost more than 15,000 existing native-born residents while it simultaneously gained more than 11,000 new foreign-born residents. The net change in population size was small but the underlying population redistribution was sizable. Thus, even as existing residents in the principal county re-located to the suburbs and beyond, immigrants settled in Dallas County, stemming the negative migration that would have otherwise occurred.

Immigration is increasing diversity in the Big Four MSAs.

Census Bureau projections indicate that the foreign-born will represent an increasing share of the future U.S. population. By 2060, it is estimated that almost one in five people in the United States will be foreign-born (Colby and Ortman, 2015). Recent immigration trends suggest that for Texas this means an increasing portion of the state's foreign-born population will be living in the principal counties of the largest MSAs.

Recent trends also suggest that the foreign-born population in Texas will become more diverse. Traditionally, the majority of Texas immigrants originated in Mexico. This no longer is the case. Currently, the decline in Mexican immigration is being offset by increases in the numbers of Asian and other international migrants. If this pattern continues, Texas can expect an increasingly diverse mix of immigrants to reside in its major metropolitan areas.

What are the implications of continuing urban immigration?

In addition to affecting population size, immigration can bring languages, cultures, and customs that differ from those of the destination community. The mixing of people from various origins is often a catalyst for social change. In contemporary Texas, the state's large metropolitan areas are the focal points of this fusion.

Foreign-born migrants, in general, and recent immigrants, in particular, are more likely to settle in the most populous counties of the state's most populous metropolitan areas. In the largest MSAs, the concentration of foreign-born in the MSA core occurs alongside the outmigration of existing residents to nearby suburbs. This is not to suggest that immigration fuels 'suburban flight'. Rather, it indicates that the migration decisions of recent immigrants and established residents are different. Migration decisions are based on many factors such as housing availability, employment opportunities,

family ties, and social networks. Whatever the causes, current migration patterns suggest a continuing process of population redistribution inside the state's major MSAs. In time, this redistribution has the potential to realign existing political and cultural boundaries within Texas' largest urban areas.

About This Report

Metropolitan Immigration in Texas is the fourth in a series of reports that examine the relationships between population change and urban development in Texas. The report examines the origins and settlement patterns of recent immigrants to Texas. It describes the increasing diversity of contemporary Texas immigrants and how immigrants prefer the MSAs' most populated areas. The report concludes that a continuation of current immigration trends could shift political and cultural boundaries in the state's largest urban areas.

Subsequent urbanization reports in the series include Migration within Texas MSAs and, Urban Futures in Texas.

Previous urbanization reports in this series include Urban Texas, Components of Population Change in Urban Texas, and Recent Metropolitan Migration Patterns in Texas.

The Texas Demographic Center produced this report. The report's authors are Steve White, Lloyd B. Potter, Helen You, Lila Valencia, Jeffrey A. Jordan, and Sara Robinson.

Endnotes

[1] This report uses the terms urban and metropolitan interchangeably. Technically, these are similar but distinct concepts. While both are based on population size thresholds, urban areas also have density thresholds. In this report, metropolitan refers to Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). MSAs have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more people. In terms of geography, urban areas are based on Census tracts and Census blocks. For MSAs, the primary geography is the county.

This report also uses rural and non-metropolitan interchangeably. Again, these are similar but distinct. Rural refers to all territory that is not in an urban area (as defined above) and non-metropolitan refers to all counties not classified as MSAs.

[2] Here we use the terms international migration and immigration interchangeably. The American Community Survey (ACS) is the primary Census source that links migration origins and destinations. However, ACS does not have data on net international migration. The U.S. Census Bureau produces several annual reports that include the mobility patterns of Americans. Two of the primary sources are surveys: The American Community Survey and the annual supplement to the Current Population Survey. The other primary source, Population Estimates, is not a survey. The Population Estimates Program uses various data sources to produce annual estimates of the population and

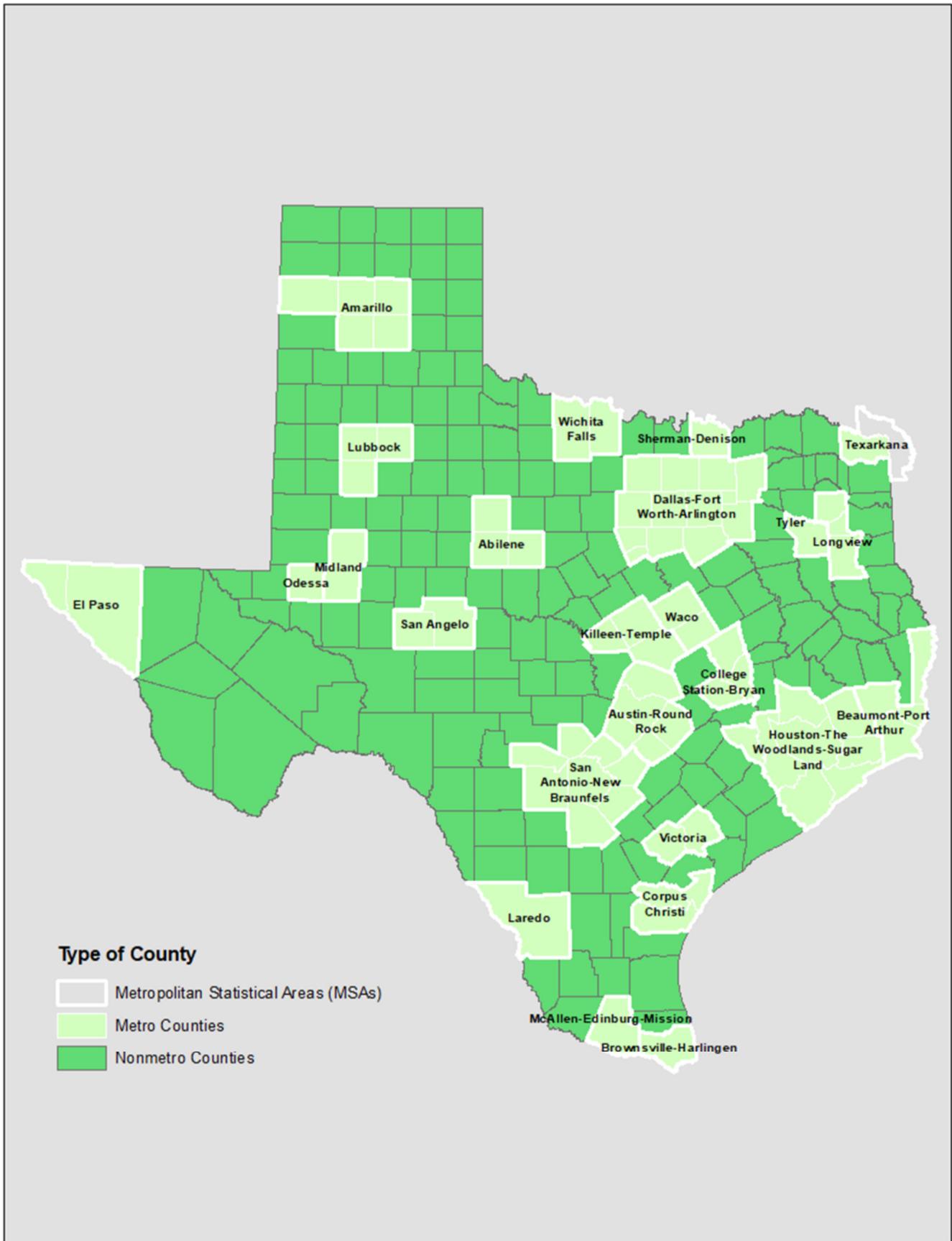
components of population change. Using various estimation techniques, the Population Estimates are able to calculate Net International Migration as well as Net Domestic Migration. By contrast, the surveys are based on respondents' answers. Because these surveys are administered only in the United States and its territories, they do not provide information on persons who emigrate from the U.S. to other countries.

[3] Eighteen of the state's 25 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are comprised of two or more counties. In this report, we treat multi-county MSAs as single entities. Consequently, statistics on internal migration do not capture county-to-county movements within the MSAs.

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Appendix A: Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Counties in Texas



Source: Texas Demographic Center



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