

Hibbs Brief

Hibbs Institute for Business & Economic Research

The Best Places to Raise a Family in Texas: Developing the Hibbs Institute Family Index

By Manuel Reyes, D.E.D. and Cecilia Cuellar, Ph.D.

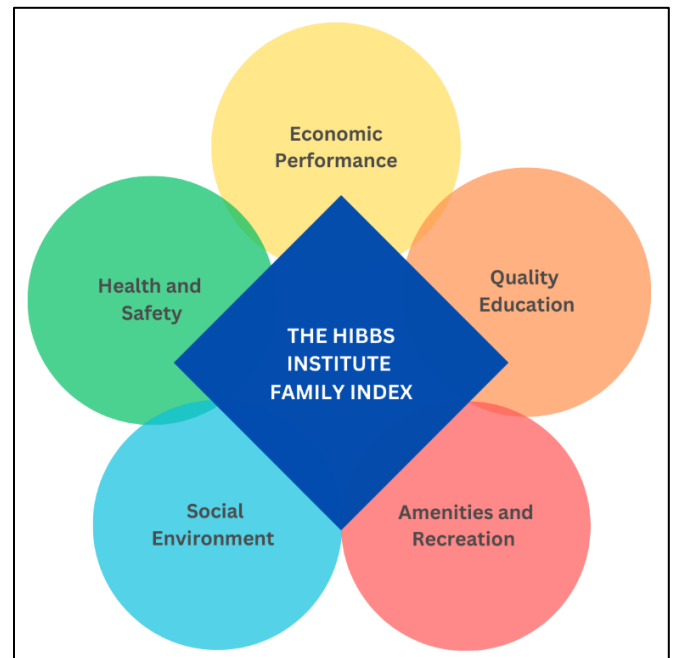
In this edition of the [Hibbs Brief](#), we present the Hibbs Family Index, a ranking of the metropolitan areas in Texas based on their family-friendliness.

Every day, we make decisions — some more important than others. As young adults, we choose what to study and where. Later, we choose a job, a partner in life, our first house and much more.

One important decision we make is where to raise a family.¹ In the past few years, the way we make this decision has changed. For instance, the change in labor market dynamics — from in-person jobs to fully remote or hybrid models — has placed greater emphasis on other factors that may influence our decision about where to live. Rather than being tied to a worksite location, factors such as access to health care, high-quality education systems, economic stability and safety have become essential in creating an environment where families can thrive.² Our residential location can substantially impact our quality of life and future growth — professional, emotional, financial and more.

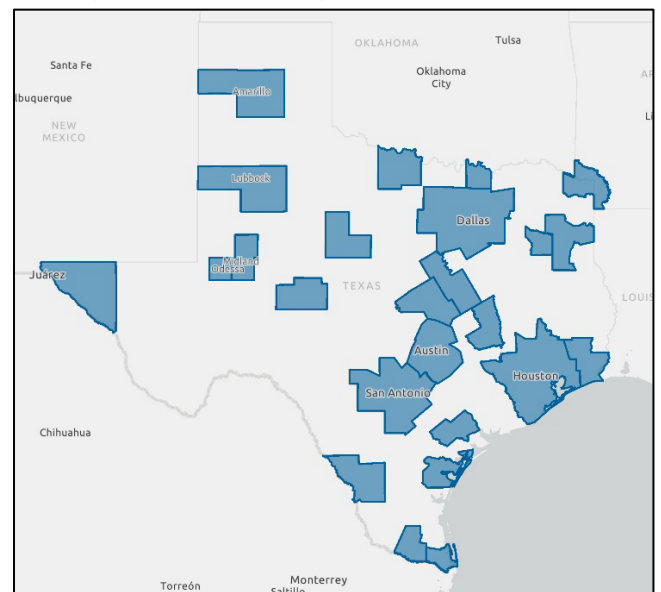
The Hibbs Institute has developed the Hibbs Institute Family Index. This methodology examines 18 factors that we identified as the most important for family well-being. These factors are thoroughly analyzed and weighted to produce a score between 0 and 100 (the higher the score, the better the conditions), and are grouped into five categories: Health and Safety, Economic Performance, Quality Education, Amenities and Recreation, and Social Environment ([Figure 1](#)). The index was applied to compare the 25 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in Texas ([Figure 2](#)).

Figure 1. Hibbs Institute Family Index Categories



Source: Hibbs Institute for Business and Economic Research.

Figure 2. Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas



Source: Hibbs Institute for Business and Economic Research using ESRI Business Analyst.

The corresponding weights for the categories and factors are as follows:

Health and Safety (30%)

- Primary Care Physicians (10%)
- Registered Nurses (10%)
- Uninsured Children (5%)
- Crime Rates (5%)

Economic Performance (25%)

- Unemployment Rate (10%)
- Basic Needs Affordability Ratio (5%)
- Per Capita Income (5%)
- Housing Affordability Index (5%)

Quality Education (20%)

- Highschool Diploma Rates (10%)
- Bachelor's Degree Rates (5%)
- School Enrollment Rates (2%)
- Student Per Teacher Ratio (3%)

Amenities and Recreation (15%)

- Food and Grocery Stores (5%)
- Recreation and Entertainment Places (5%)
- Restaurants, Bars and Clubs (5%)

Social Environment (10%)

- Children in Poverty (5%)
- Income Inequality (3%)
- Children in Single-Parent Households (2%)

Table 1 depicts the Hibbs Institute Family Index calculations arranged by total scores (last two columns). Other columns in the table depict the MSAs rankings for different factors examined in the index (where 1 represents the best and 25 the worst).

Tyler is at the top of the list, excelling in several factors. In health care, it ranks first with the highest number of primary care physicians and registered nurses per 100,000 inhabitants. Additionally, Tyler benefits from strong economic performance, particularly in its unemployment rate and per capita income. **Wichita Falls** landed in second place, showing very good numbers in housing affordability and unemployment rates. Furthermore, a low cost of living and robust health care access strengthens its position as an attractive metropolitan area for families. **Abilene** is third on the list, with the lowest percentage of uninsured children from the assessed group and a solid overall economic performance.

On the other hand, **El Paso** and **Laredo** obtained the lowest scores of the group. Factors such as high crime rates, a large number of uninsured children, and considerable income inequality position these two cities at the end of the list.

Large metro areas in Texas ranked lower than expected. **Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos** is 12th on the list with low housing affordability and significant income disparities. **Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington** and **Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands** are 19th and 21st on the list, respectively, with substantial challenges in health care access and social issues. **San Antonio-New Braunfels** comes in 14th, facing similar difficulties and challenges.

In East Texas, **Texarkana** and **Longview** obtained 8th and 13th, respectively. Texarkana excels in education, leading the index in high school diploma attainment rates and ranking second in student enrollment rates. Texarkana's housing affordability indicator also positively contributed to its score. Longview is positioned in the middle of the list, showing acceptable economic performance factors in housing affordability and basic needs affordability but struggling with social environment factors like child poverty and income inequality.

The Hibbs Institute Family Index highlights the strengths and areas for improvement of Texas metropolitan areas. Families can use this data to identify the quality-of-life indicators that match their priorities and find the location that best fits their needs and lifestyle. For the complete ranking, detailed analysis and calculations, and a full list of sources, visit the working papers section at the **Hibbs Institute** website: uttyler.edu/hibbs-institute.

End Notes

¹ Torkamani, A. (2019). Study Finds Where To Live To Be Most Important Parenting Decision. <https://esquireeb.com/where-to-live-most-important-parenting-decision>

² Legally Sociable (2022). The importance of the decision of where to raise a child. <https://legallysociable.com/2022/05/09/the-importance-of-the-decision-of-where-to-raise-a-child/>

Data Sources

Health and Safety

- **Primary Care Physicians and Registered Nurses:**
Chmura Economics and Analytics. <https://www.chmura.com/>
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>
- **Share if Uninsured Children:**
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>
- **Criminality Rates:**
Federal Bureau of Investigation (2019). Table 8. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-8/table-8-state-cuts/texas.xls>

Economic Performance

- **Unemployment Rate and Per Capita Income:**
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>
- **Basic Needs Affordability:**
Amy K. Glasmeier, "Living Wage Calculator," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2024. Accessed on October 2024, <https://livingwage.mit.edu>
- **Housing Affordability Index:**
Texas Real Estate Research Center. <https://trerc.tamu.edu/data/housing-affordability/>

Quality Education

- **Highschool Diploma Rates, Bachelor's Degree Rates and School Enrollment:**
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>
- **Student per Teacher Ratio:**
Chmura Economics and Analytics. <https://www.chmura.com/>
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>

Amenities and Recreation

- **Food and Grocery Stores, Recreation and Entertainment Places, Restaurants, Bars & Clubs:**
ESRI Business Analyst. <https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-business-analyst/overview>

Social Environment

- **Children in Poverty, Income Inequality and Children in Single-Parent Households:**
2023 ACS 1-year estimate, U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/table>

The Hibbs Institute has created a [LinkedIn](#) page that frequently releases business and economic information. Follow our page for future brief updates, announcements and links to our periodic publications.

[Hibbs Brief](#): **The Best Places to Raise a Family in Texas: Developing the Hibbs Institute Family Index (December 2024)**

Table 1. Hibbs Institute Family Index Ranking for Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in Texas

Metropolitan Areas	Health and Safty				Economic Performance				Quality Education				Amenities and Recreation			Social Environment			Total Score	Ranking
	Primary Care Physicians	Registered Nurses	Share of Uninsured Children	Criminality Rates	Unemployment Rate	Basic Needs Affordability Ratio	Per Capita Income	Housing Affordability Index	Higschool Diploma Rates	Bachelor's Degree Rates	School Enrollment Rates	Student per Teacher Ratio	Food & Grocery Stores	Recreation & Entertainment Places	Restaurants, Bars & Clubs	Children in Poverty	Income Inequality	Children in Single-Parent Households		
Tyler, TX	1	1	14	12	8	7	8	19	20	8	15	7	5	10	6	10	14	13	65.2	1
Wichita Falls, TX	6	5	12	8	3	9	16	1	7	15	20	19	6	8	5	21	6	6	63.4	2
Abilene, TX	2	3	1	7	7	15	19	9	5	10	21	6	2	6	20	3	4	10	61.8	3
Amarillo, TX	4	12	22	21	5	10	6	4	11	12	13	13	7	7	14	8	13	8	57.2	4
Midland, TX	23	23	2	6	2	2	3	8	10	5	4	25	15	9	15	9	19	23	56.0	5
Sherman-Denison, TX	19	8	23	3	4	25	7	21	6	14	11	4	9	11	4	7	8	7	55.8	6
San Angelo, TX	5	4	6	11	6	23	17	7	13	16	12	1	10	4	13	11	22	5	55.6	7
Texarkana, TX-AR	10	13	7	16	19	24	23	3	1	22	2	15	1	13	2	16	24	15	55.4	8
Lubbock, TX	3	6	10	24	11	19	9	5	14	7	24	3	12	1	8	17	23	18	53.7	9
Victoria, TX	21	17	16	17	13	8	14	12	3	23	1	17	8	2	1	4	10	20	52.7	10
Waco, TX	13	14	5	15	9	13	15	10	16	9	23	11	11	12	3	15	15	12	52.4	11
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	17	22	8	20	10	1	1	18	25	1	22	14	18	3	19	2	16	3	51.9	12
Longview, TX	8	24	15	10	14	11	13	6	9	21	5	8	4	14	10	18	18	4	50.6	13
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	12	16	9	18	16	6	5	14	19	6	19	20	17	16	16	12	7	11	47.7	14
Killeen-Temple, TX	11	2	3	5	21	4	18	16	12	11	16	22	23	25	12	6	3	2	46.7	15
College Station-Bryan, TX	7	11	4	4	20	22	11	22	21	3	25	2	14	15	22	13	25	1	45.3	16
Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX	22	21	20	19	23	12	20	2	24	8	21	3	18	17	19	5	14	14	44.8	17
Odessa, TX	25	25	25	25	1	16	10	15	4	25	6	23	13	17	7	1	1	24	44.3	18
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	14	19	13	2	12	5	2	11	24	2	17	24	24	22	25	5	12	9	43.5	19
Corpus Christi, TX	9	10	11	22	17	18	12	20	8	17	9	10	20	5	21	22	9	17	43.0	20
Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands, TX	18	18	18	13	22	3	4	13	22	4	14	18	21	23	24	14	21	16	35.4	21
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	16	7	17	1	25	20	25	24	18	20	7	12	16	21	11	25	20	22	35.3	22
Brownsville-Harlingen, TX	15	9	19	14	24	21	24	25	15	19	10	9	19	19	18	24	17	19	33.8	23
Laredo, TX	24	20	24	9	18	14	22	17	23	18	3	5	22	20	9	23	2	25	30.7	24
El Paso, TX	20	15	21	23	15	17	21	23	17	13	18	16	25	24	23	20	11	21	29.6	25

Source: Indexes calculated by the Hibbs Institute for Business and Economic Research.