

# *Ten Gallon Economy: Sizing Up Texas' Growth*

## Las Colonias: Life Along the Texas-Mexico Border

**Nov 7, 2014 • Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas**

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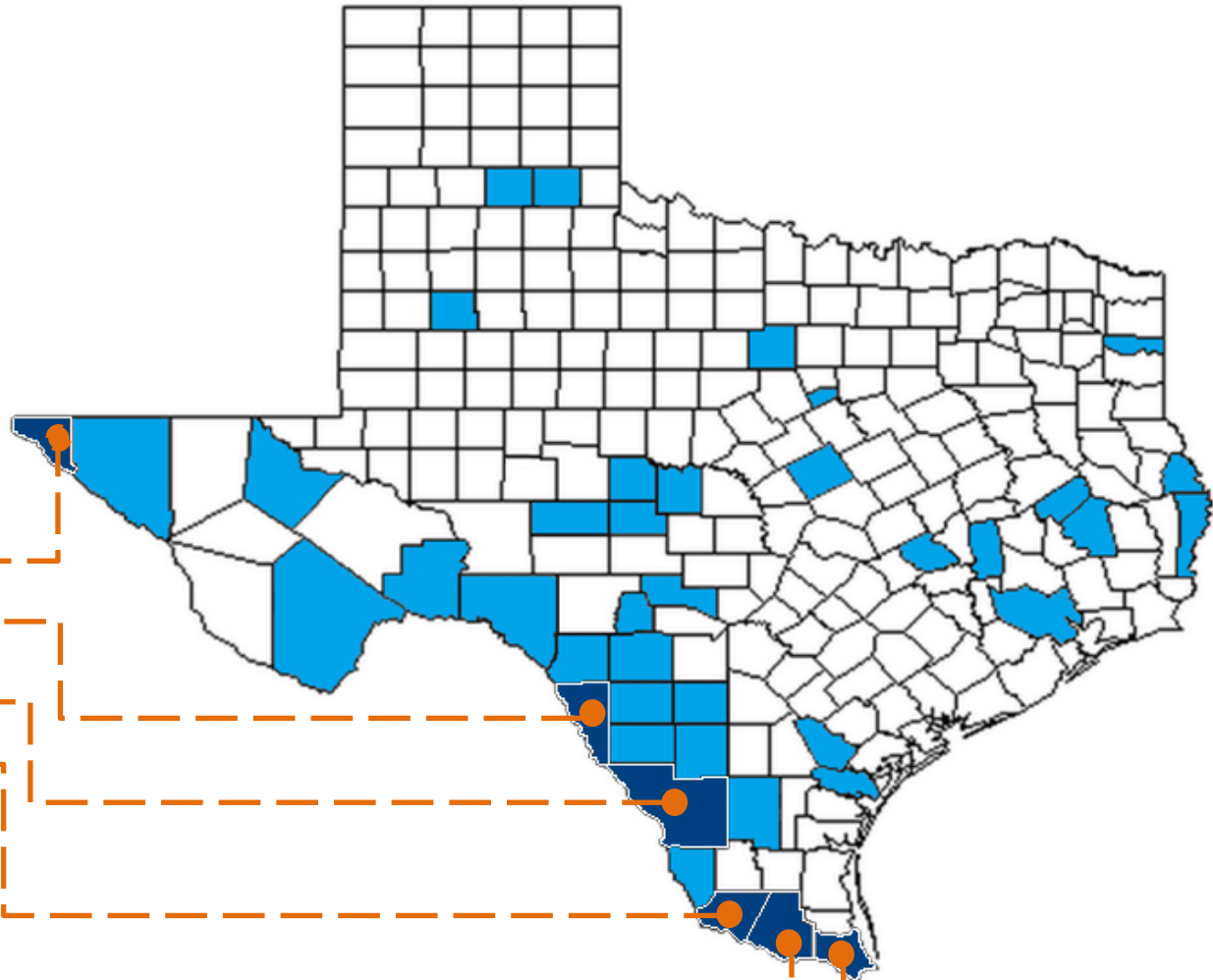
# Counties with Colonias in Texas

## “Colonia”

Spanish term for  
a community or  
neighborhood

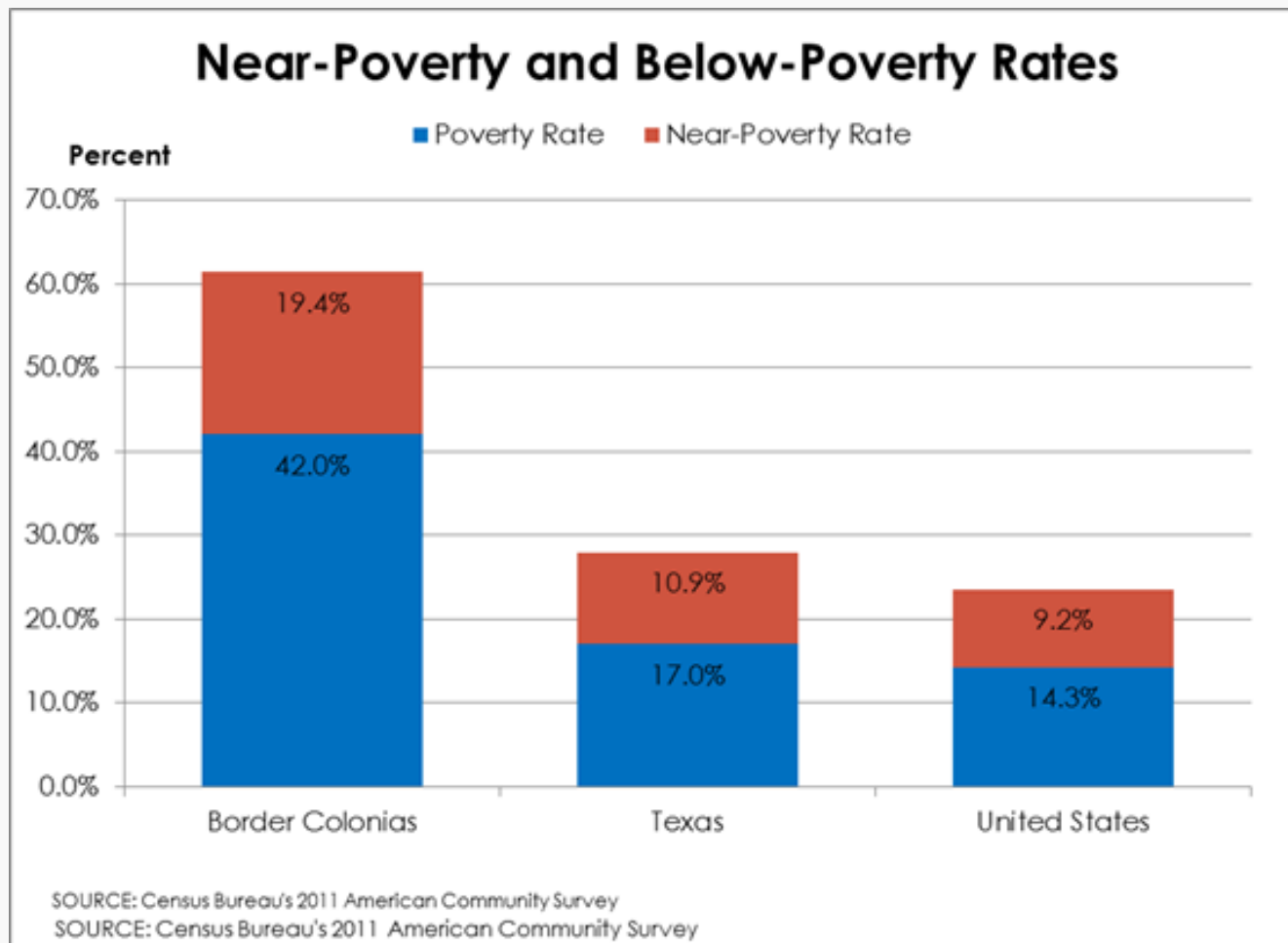
## Counties with highest concentration of colonias

- El Paso ●
- Maverick ●
- Webb ●
- Starr ●
- Hidalgo ●
- Cameron ●

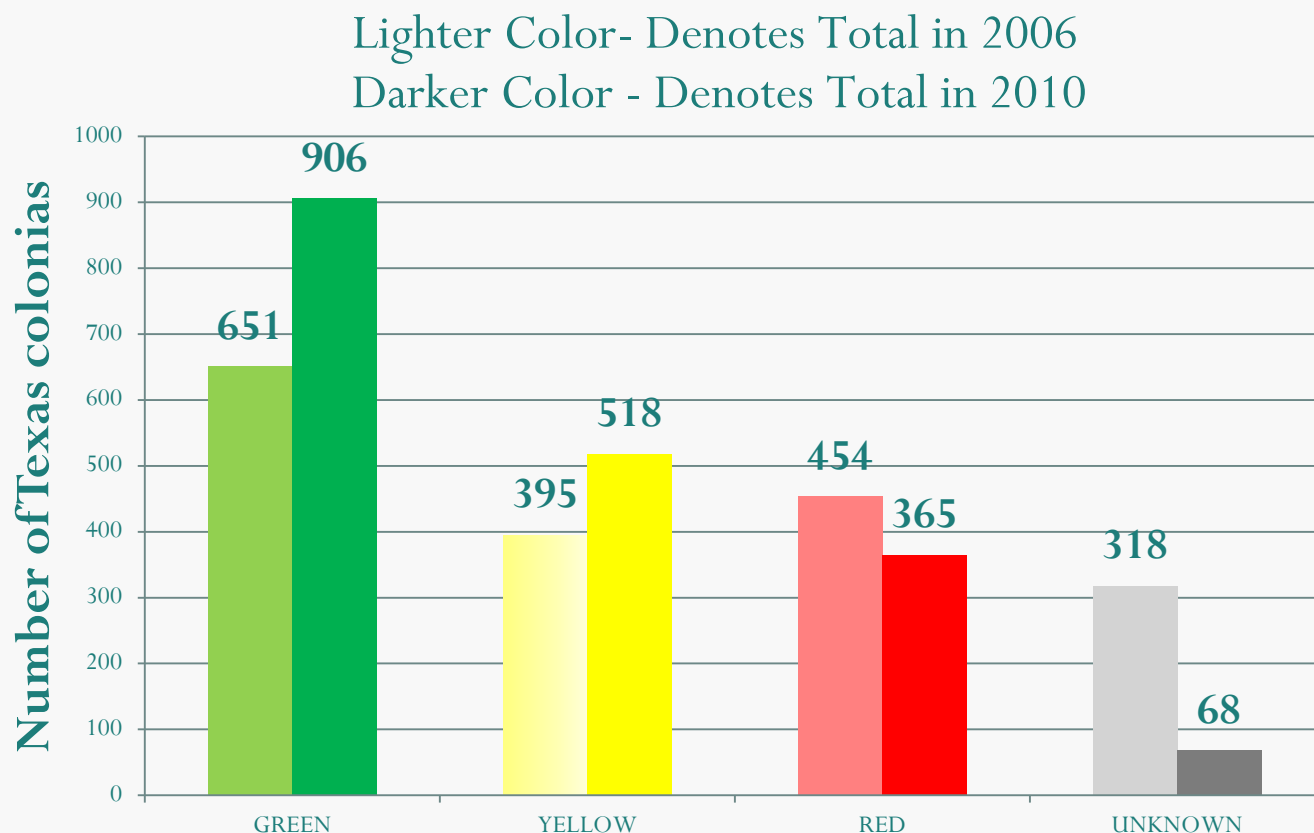


SOURCE: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, 2013.

# Poverty in the Colonias



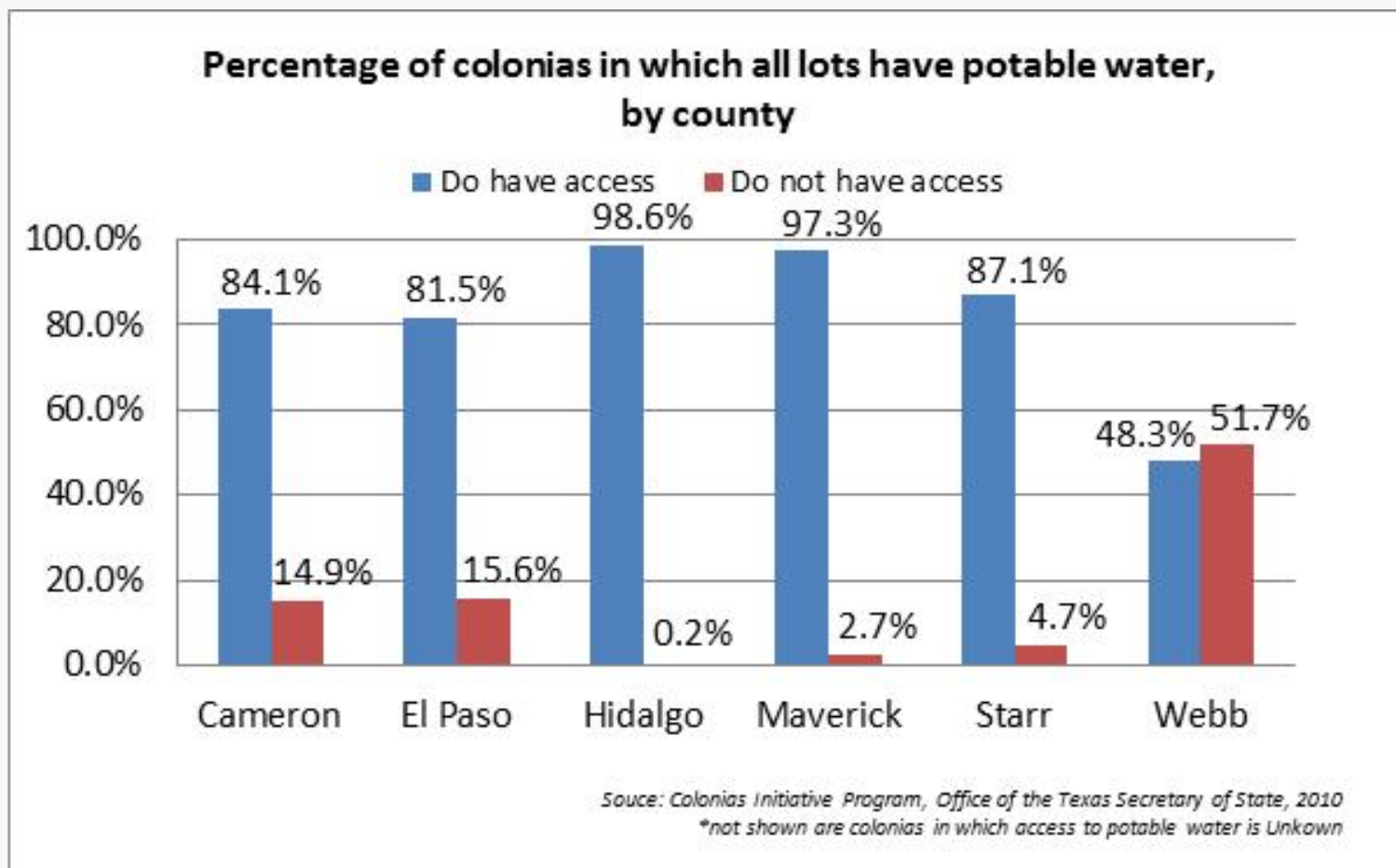
# Infrastructure Progress in Texas Colonias\*



Source: Colonias Initiative Program, Office of the Texas Secretary of State, 2010

NOTE: This chart represents data only for six counties: Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr and Webb Counties.

# Infrastructure: Potable Water



# Infrastructure: Potable Water

- 51.7% of colonias in Webb County do not have access to potable water.
- Texas A&M Colonias Program works with colonia residents on water filtration through ceramic filters made out of clay and saw dust. These filters can purify 2.5 liters of water each hour, making it 99.9% clean and 100% drinkable.



Juan Galvan, Project Coordinator in the Texas A&M Colonias Program -Laredo, and Jordana Barton, Senior Advisor in Community Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, display a Texas A&M Proyecto de Agua ceramic water filter.

# The Model Subdivision Rules:

## *Negative Consequences*

- The increased price of lots leading to unsafe and substandard housing
- Legal subdivisions with homes not able to connect to infrastructure
- Increased financial burden on already financially strapped residents to bring their homes up to code and pay fees for noncompliance



The owner of this RV, located in a legal subdivision in Hidalgo County, has built a small pipeline connecting the home to the subdivision's water line. This subdivision has access to water, sewage, electricity, and paved roads.



A home in Little Mexico, an area with several colonias south of Alamo in Hidalgo County. This photo is an example of multiple dwellings in one lot.



# The Colonias Today:

## *Hybrid Homes*



In the colonias, the typical homeownership process begins with a family purchasing land and then building their house incrementally with their own money.

It is common for the housing structure to start as a RV/trailer home or a 1- or 2-room house and later have additions made from wood and/or cinder blocks.



## The Colonias Today: *Mixed Quality Housing*



Las Lomas, a colonia in Starr County, where one can see a high quality typical middle class home on a cement foundation next to the resident's salvage yard business (left). Across the dirt road (right) is Fina's Stand, a resident-owned snack stand in front of the resident's home.

# Growing Need for Affordable Housing



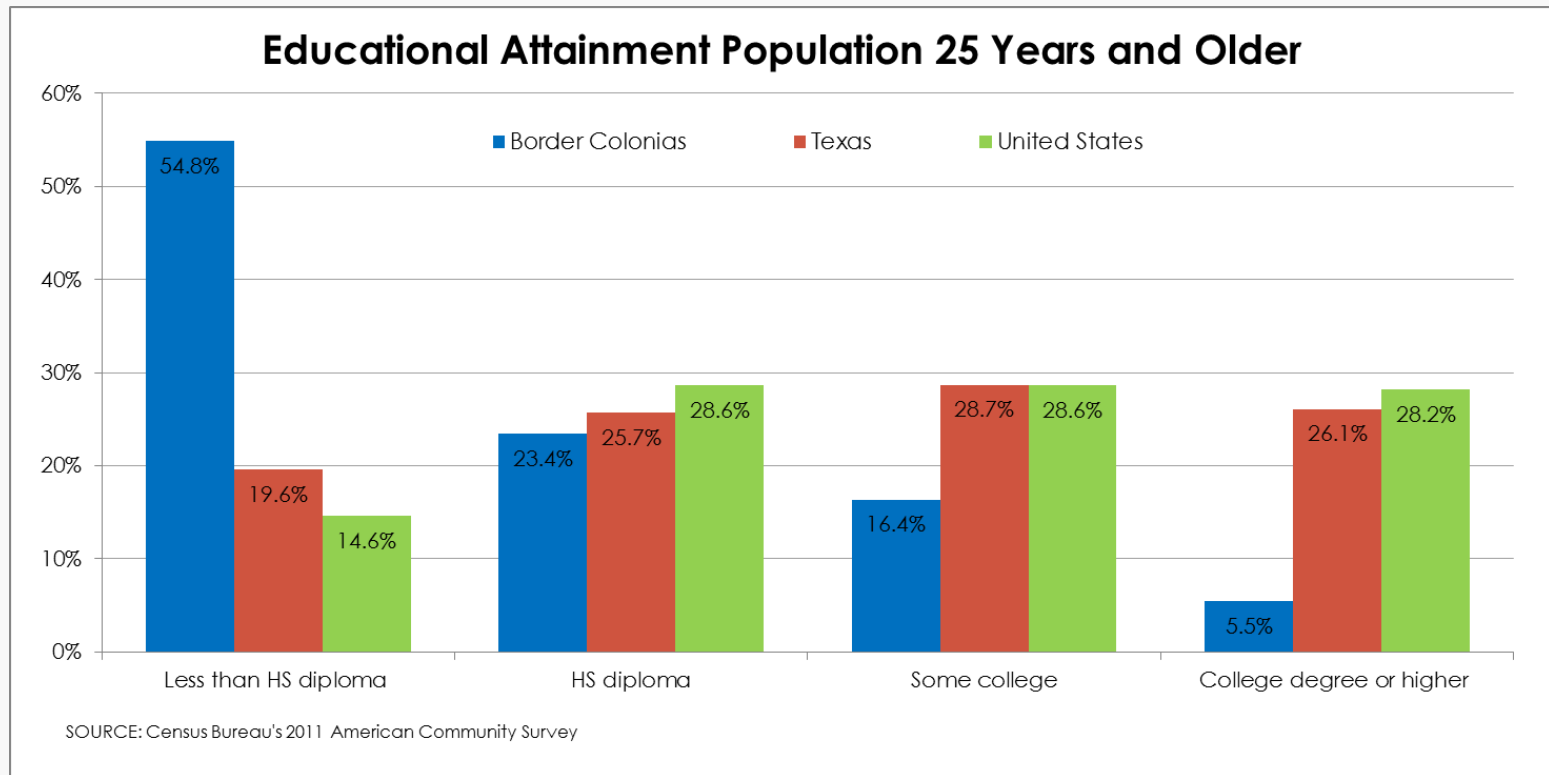
Residents working on a Lower Valley Housing Corp. home. Neighbors help each other build 65% of their house.

- The need for safe, affordable housing currently exceeds the capacity of housing organizations to build due primarily to a lack of capital.
- Community Housing Development Organizations serving the colonias:
  - *Lower Valley Housing Corporation (El Paso County)*
  - *AYUDA (El Paso County)*
  - *Community Dev. Corp. of Brownsville (Cameron County)*
  - *Proyecto Azteca (Hidalgo County)*
  - *El Paso Collaborative (El Paso County)*
  - *Architectural Charities of Texas (Cameron County)*
  - *Habitat for Humanity-Laredo (Webb County)*



TDHCA Bootstrap Program home, completed by AYUDA, in El Paso, Texas

# Education in the Colonias



# Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD: *An Asset-Based Approach*



PSJA ISD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Daniel P. King walks the PSJA ISD neighborhoods with staff from Aida C. Escobar Elementary to recover dropouts and non-completers during the district's annual Countdown to Zero Dropout Recovery Walk.

Photo credit: PSJA ISD



PSJA ISD parents take the parent volunteer oath during the district's festivities for National Parent Engagement Day last November.

Photo credit: PSJA ISD



PSJA Thomas Jefferson T-STEM Early College HS student receives his Associate's Degree from South Texas College two weeks prior to his high school graduation.

Photo credit: PSJA ISD



# ARISE's PTA Comunitario (Community PTA)



Lourdes Flores, Executive Director of ARISE, facilitating the PTA Comunitario at their monthly meeting.

Photo credit: ARISE



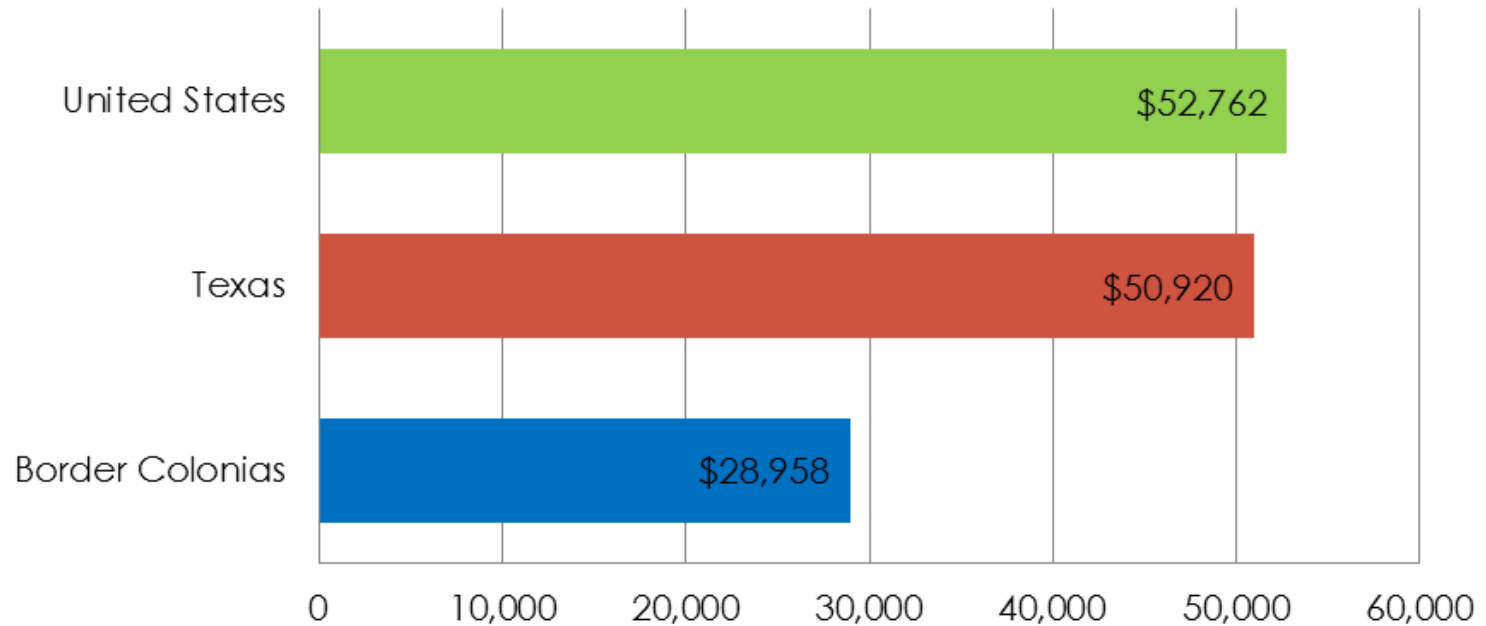
Members of the PTA Comunitario present the goals and recommendations for their organization.

Photo credit: ARISE



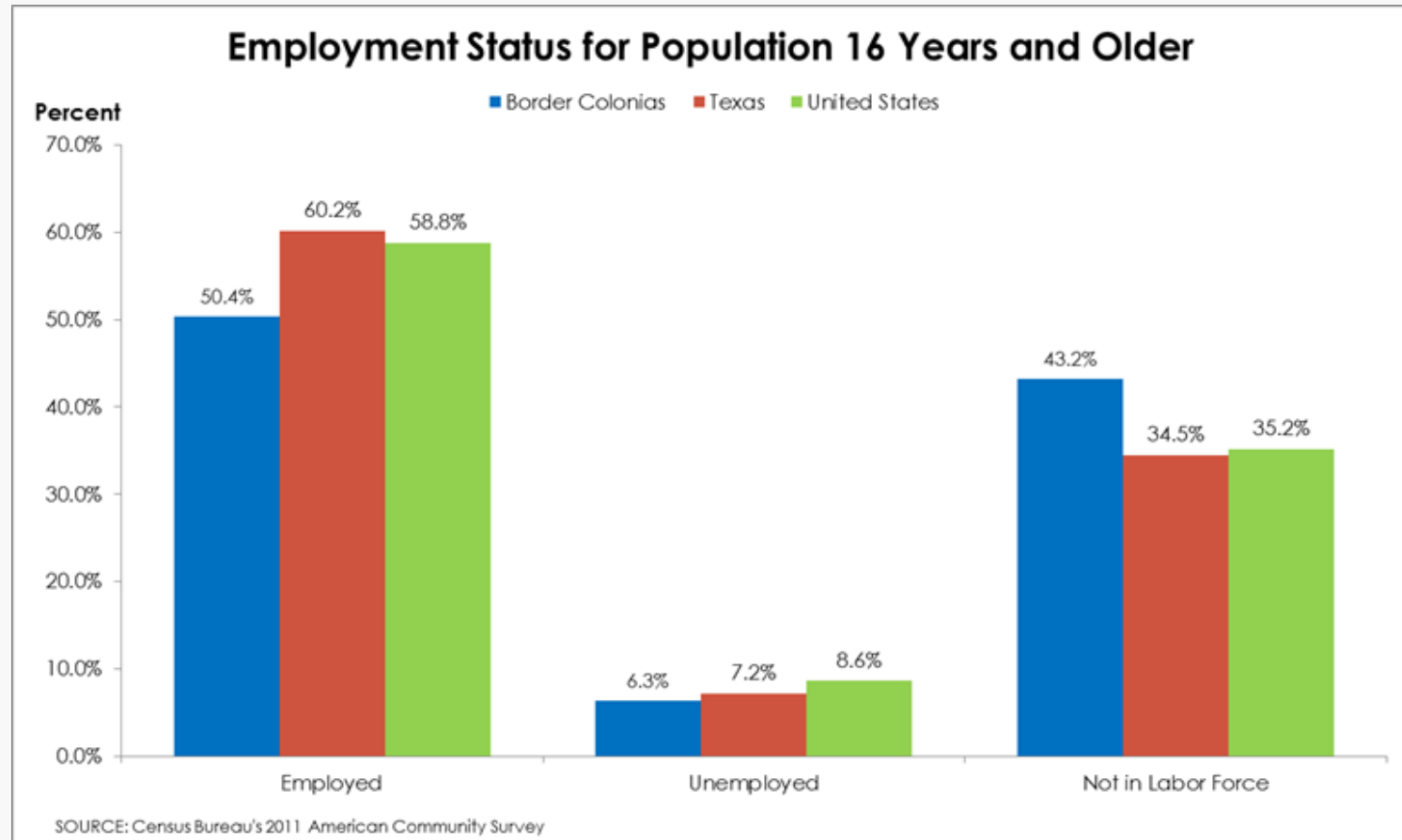
# Income in the Colonias

## Median Household Income



SOURCE: Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey

# Employment in the Colonias



# The Informal Economy: *Pulgas*



Photo credit: Accion Texas, Inc.



Photo credit: Accion Texas, Inc.



Photo credit: Accion Texas, Inc.

# Colonia Resident Entrepreneurship



At AYUDA in colonia San Elizario, El Paso County. In the forefront is a planter the colonia residents make from tires that are routinely dumped near San Elizario. From left: Olivia Figueroa, AYUDA; Elvira Valles, Accion Texas; Edith Lopez Estrada, FRB Dallas; Jordana Barton, FRB Dallas; Raquel Marquez, UTSA

Photo credit: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas



Leticia Jones in the kitchen of her restaurant, Leticia's Comida Casera, in Garciasville, Starr County

Photo credit: Accion Texas, Inc.



# Eagle Ford Shale: *A Source of Economic Opportunities*



Photo credit: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.



# Building and Protecting Assets: Deep South Texas Financial Literacy Alliance



# Promising Practices

1. Facilitate resident-led efforts to improve their communities.
2. Take an integrated approach instead of addressing issues in silos.
3. Take an asset-based approach, building upon people's and communities' assets rather than a deficiency-based approach.
4. Create and support more opportunities for residents to be owners of production and capital in the formal economy.

# Q&A

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