#1 of 10: 12-month change in the county unemployment rate (September 2026)

Waller County leads Houston MSA in unemployment drop

12-month decline of -0.5% in September 2026

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THE DATA

-0.5%

12-month change in the county unemployment rate (September 2026)

Waller County recorded the steepest decline in unemployment across the Houston MSA in the 12-month period ending September 2026.

This performance underscores a shift in labor market dynamics beyond Houston's core urban centers. While Harris County saw a modest -0.3% drop, Waller County's -0.5% decline signals a deeper structural recovery in a region traditionally reliant on agriculture and light manufacturing. The data suggests that economic diversification and workforce reintegration are gaining momentum in suburban and exurban zones.



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Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, September 2026 (county, seasonally unadjusted) · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-24-houston-msa-lab-bls-unemp-rate-chg-12m-county

01

Suburban labor markets are outpacing the city

The fact that Waller County leads in unemployment reduction—despite being outside the core urban corridor—reveals a growing divergence in labor market performance. This is not a sign of urban stagnation but rather a reconfiguration of opportunity: as Houston's central employment hubs face higher costs and congestion, workers are relocating to lower-cost, high-growth counties. This shift is likely driven by remote work adoption, rising housing prices in Harris County, and targeted industrial expansion in Waller's logistics and light manufacturing sectors.



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02

Unemployment gains are not evenly distributed

The ranking reveals that labor market improvements are concentrated in specific corridors. Waller County's lead is not matched by neighboring Liberty or Montgomery counties, which saw only -0.3% and -0.1% declines, respectively. This suggests that local economic development strategies—such as infrastructure investment, workforce training partnerships, and business retention programs—are having measurable, localized impacts. The data implies that policy focus should shift from broad regional initiatives to hyper-local economic catalysts in underperforming but high-potential counties.

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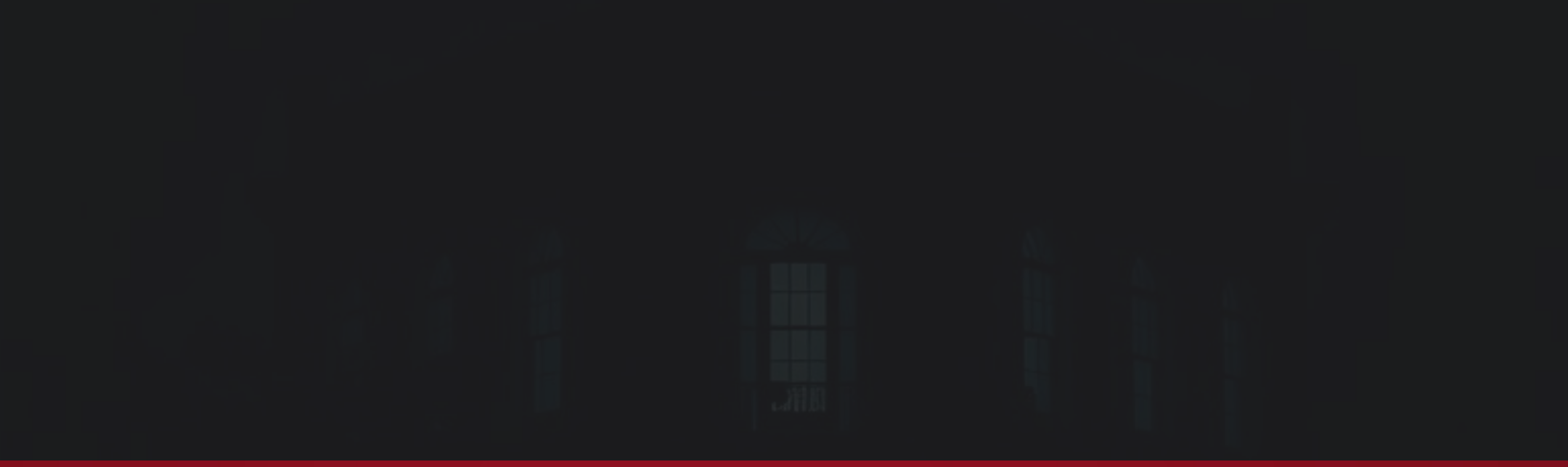

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