

4-14-2021

## America's Best Cities: Mountain West Cities

Katie M. Gilbertson

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*, [katelin.gilbertson@unlv.edu](mailto:katelin.gilbertson@unlv.edu)

Olivia K. Cheche

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*, [olivia.cheche@unlv.edu](mailto:olivia.cheche@unlv.edu)

Caitlin J. Saladino

*Brookings Mountain West & The Lincy Institute*, [caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu](mailto:caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu)

William E. Brown Jr.

*Brookings Mountain West*, [william.brown@unlv.edu](mailto:william.brown@unlv.edu)

Fatma Nasoz

*The Lincy Institute*, [fatma.nasoz@unlv.edu](mailto:fatma.nasoz@unlv.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw\\_lincy\\_cities](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw_lincy_cities)



Part of the [Growth and Development Commons](#), [Human Geography Commons](#), [Public Affairs Commons](#), [Public Policy Commons](#), [Social Welfare Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies Commons](#)

### Repository Citation

Gilbertson, K. M., Cheche, O. K., Saladino, C. J., Brown, W. E., Nasoz, F. (2021). America's Best Cities: Mountain West Cities. *Cities & Metros Fact Sheet No. 2 1-2*.

Available at: [https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw\\_lincy\\_cities/2](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw_lincy_cities/2)

This Report is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Report in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Report has been accepted for inclusion in Cities & Metros by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

## AMERICA’S BEST CITIES: MOUNTAIN WEST CITIES

Cities & Metros Fact Sheet No. 2 | April 2021

Prepared by: Katie M. Gilbertson, Olivia K. Cheche, Caitlin J. Saladino, William E. Brown, Jr., and Fatma Nasoz

### PURPOSE:

This fact sheet reports the rankings of Mountain West cities, based on perceived desirability for living, visiting, and investment. *Resonance Consultancy’s* “America’s Best Cities 2020,” report examines the nation’s largest cities on six key metrics: “Place,” “Prosperity,” “People,” “Product,” “Programming” and “Promotion.”<sup>1</sup> Nine Mountain West cities are ranked within the top 100 in the United States.

### ABOUT THE DATA:

Resonance Consultancy utilizes qualitative evaluations and quantitative statistics to compare and rank American cities. The advising firm has studied tourism, real estate, and economic development for more than a decade, and this is the fifth year of their “America’s Best Cities” report series. American cities are defined as “principal cities” (the largest city in each metropolitan statistical area) of metropolitan areas with populations of more than 500,000.<sup>2</sup> The rankings of 26 metrics are grouped into six categories:

“Place”	“Product”	“Programming”	“Prosperity”	“People”	“Promotion”
<i>A city’s physical sense of place</i>	<i>Key institutions, attractions, &amp; infrastructure</i>	<i>Experiential pillars based on food, shopping, &amp; nightlife</i>	<i>Income of citizens, standard of living, &amp; presence of large corporations</i>	<i>Strength of human capital and diversity</i>	<i>Number of references &amp; recommendations shared online about a city</i>
1. Parks & Outdoors 2. Safety 3. Sights & Landmarks 4. Weather 5. COVID-19 Infections	1. Airport Connectivity 2. Attractions 3. Convention Center 4. Museums 5. Pro Sports Teams 6. University Rankings	1. Culture 2. Dining 3. Nightlife 4. Shopping	1. Employment 2. Fortune 500 Companies 3. Household Income 4. Income Equality	1. Educational Attainment 2. Foreign-Born Residents	1. Facebook Check-ins 2. Google Search 3. Google Trends 4. Instagram Hashtags 5. TripAdvisor Reviews

The impact of COVID-19 is factored into the rankings for the 2020 report. For instance, the “Prosperity” metric includes the employment rate and the Gini Index of Income Equality for each city.<sup>3</sup> The “Place” metric accounts for the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000, as of July 8, 2020 for each city.<sup>4</sup> These new metrics are included to reflect impact of the current public health and economic crises affecting our nation.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Five Mountain West cities are ranked within the top 30 overall best cities in the nation: Las Vegas, NV (7<sup>th</sup>); Phoenix, AZ (13<sup>th</sup>); Denver, CO (16<sup>th</sup>); Provo, UT (24<sup>th</sup>); and Salt Lake City, UT (29<sup>th</sup>).
- Three Utah cities appear within the top 10 nationally for the category of “Prosperity” - Provo (1<sup>st</sup>), Ogden (2<sup>nd</sup>), and Salt Lake City (9<sup>th</sup>).
- Las Vegas ranks within the top 10 nationally in 4 of 6 categories: “Place” (6<sup>th</sup>), “Product” (4<sup>th</sup>), “Programming” (4<sup>th</sup>), and “Promotion” (4<sup>th</sup>); despite this, Las Vegas performs poorly in “Prosperity” (104<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Resonance Consultancy, “America’s Best Cities Report 2020,” 2020, (www.bestcities.org/rankings/americas-best-cities/)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

Table 1 displays the overall national rankings of nine Mountain West cities. Within the Mountain West, Las Vegas, NV achieves the highest rank (7<sup>th</sup>), and Ogden, UT receives the lowest (57<sup>th</sup>). Seven of the nine Mountain West cities rank above the median (50<sup>th</sup>); Albuquerque, NM and Ogden, UT rank below the median. Las Vegas ranks as one of the top 10 best cities nationwide in this report when all metrics are considered.

**Table 1: Overall “Best City” Rankings, Mountain West Cities**

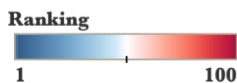
Mountain West City	Overall Rank
Las Vegas, NV	7
Phoenix, AZ	13
Denver, CO	16
Provo, UT	24
Salt Lake City, UT	29
Colorado Springs, CO	37
Tucson, AZ	41
Albuquerque, NM	54
Ogden, UT	57

\*Adapted from “America’s Best Cities 2020” by Resonance Consultancy.

Table 2 displays rankings in the six categories and the overall ranking for each of the nine Mountain West cities appearing in the top 100 cities in the U.S. The scale is on a gradient: blue indicates a higher rank and performance (closer to 1<sup>st</sup>); red indicates a lower rank and performance (closer to 100<sup>th</sup>); white represents the value in the middle (50<sup>th</sup>). Darker shades of either blue or red indicate a more extreme value. For instance, Provo, UT ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the “Prosperity” category (dark blue), while Ogden, UT ranks 106<sup>th</sup> in the “Programming” category (dark red). Although all cities included appear within the top 100 for overall rankings, some cities perform below the top 100 in particular categories (e.g., Provo, UT is ranked 101<sup>st</sup> nationally for “Programming” and “Promotion,” but high rankings in “Place” (7<sup>th</sup>) and “Prosperity” (1<sup>st</sup>) boost the city’s “overall” rank). The table demonstrates that Mountain West cities have the most extreme values in the “Prosperity” category, as seven of the nine cells in that column are dark blue. Mountain West cities have more median values in the “People” category, with seven of the nine cells in lighter shades of blue and red. Within the Mountain West, Las Vegas, NV most frequently ranks within the top ten nationally: 6<sup>th</sup> in “Place,” and 4<sup>th</sup> in “Product,” “Programming,” and “Promotion.”

**Table 2: “Best City” Rankings by Category, Mountain West Cities**

	Overall	"People"	"Place"	"Product"	"Programming"	"Promotion"	"Prosperity"
Las Vegas	7	42	6	4	4	4	104
Phoenix	13	43	11	9	15	20	16
Denver	16	14	38	14	21	17	11
Provo	24	30	7	83	101	101	1
Salt Lake City	29	31	62	27	49	52	9
Colorado Springs	37	44	30	52	48	40	14
Tucson	41	50	26	42	25	49	42
Albuquerque	54	63	33	47	29	56	56
Ogden	57	85	46	104	106	104	2



\*Adapted from “America’s Best Cities 2020” by Resonance Consultancy.