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College-Educated Young Adults in the Mountain West

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COLLEGE-EDUCATED YOUNG ADULTS IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST

Higher Education Fact Sheet No. 18 | July 2021

Prepared by: Eshaan Vakil, Olivia K. Cheche, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines data originally published in “The Young and Restless and the Nation’s Cities,” a report prepared by Joe Cortright for the *City Observatory*.¹ The original report explores the percentage of college-educated young adults (or individuals aged 25 to 34 with a bachelor’s degree), as well as the percentage these individuals made up of the total population in each metro area between 2000 and 2012. This fact sheet explores data for the following Mountain West places, as reported by the original source:

- Denver CSA (Combined Statistical Area)
- Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ Metro Area
- Las Vegas-Paradise, NV Metro Area
- Salt Lake City, UT Metro Area

ABOUT THE DATA:

The original report utilizes two separate publicly available data sets: the 2000 decennial census, and the 2012 American Community Survey (2012 ACS). In both, metropolitan-area-level data on age and educational attainment are compiled to identify the number of “college-educated young adults.” Population data are also provided for the total number of 25-to-34-year-olds and total number of residents in each place. The author also calculates the percentage change of college-educated young adults from the 2000 census to the 2012 ACS and reports the percent these residents make up of their age group, and within the total population for both data sets.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. In the Mountain West, the Las Vegas-Paradise, NV Metro Area saw the largest percent change in 25-to-34-year-olds with a bachelor’s degree between the years of 2000 and 2012 (+30.0%).
2. Within the Mountain West, places like the Salt Lake City, UT Metro Area (+19.7%) and the Las Vegas-Paradise, NV Metro Area (+30.0%) saw large increases of college-educated young adults between 2000 and 2012. During this time, the percentage of college-educated young adults as a proportion of the general population increased in the Denver CSA (+21.0%) and Salt Lake City, UT Metro Area (+26.2%).
3. The Las Vegas-Paradise, NV Metro Area has among the lowest percentages for both college-educated young adults as a percentage of all 25-to-34-year-olds (22.1% in 2012) and as a proportion of the entire population (3.3% in 2012). The Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ Metro Area also falls within the bottom quarter of the measured metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in these two measures.
4. The Denver CSA has one of the highest concentrations of college-educated young adults in the U.S., both as a percentage of all young adults (38.9% in 2012) and as a percentage of the total population (7.5% in 2012).

¹ Joe Cortright, “The Young and Restless and the Nation’s Cities,” October 2014 (<https://cityobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/YNR-Report-Final.pdf>)

Table 1 displays the percentages that college-educated young adults make up of 25- to 34-year-olds in each metro in 2000 and in 2012, as well as the percentage change between this time. Denver CSA’s college-educated young adult population saw the least change, with a 2.4% increase. The Las Vegas-Paradise, NV MSA saw the greatest increase of college-educated young adults, with a 30.0% increase between 2000 and 2012.

Table 1: Percent Change in College-Educated Young Adults in the Mountain West, as a percentage of all Young Adults, 2000 to 2012

Metro Area	Percent in 2000	Percent in 2012	Percent Change
Denver, CO CSA	38.0%	38.9%	+2.4%
Salt Lake City, UT MSA	26.4%	31.6%	+19.7%
Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ MSA	24.6%	27.7%	+12.6%
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV MSA	17.0%	22.1%	+30.0%

*Adapted from “The Young and Restless and the Nation’s Cities,” 2014. (<https://cityobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/YNR-Report-Final.pdf>).

Table 2 displays the percentages of college-educated young adults within the total population of each metro in 2000 and in 2012, as well as the percentage change between this time. As a percentage of the total population, the Salt Lake City MSA saw the largest increase in its share of college-educated young adults. Meanwhile, the percentage of college-educated young adults as a percentage of the total population in the Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ Metro Area did not change at all between 2000 and 2012 (+0.0%).

Table 2: Percent Change in College-Educated Young Adults in the Mountain West, as a percentage of the Total Population, 2000 to 2012

Metro Area	Percent in 2000	Percent in 2012	Percent Change
Denver, CO CSA	6.2%	7.5%	+21.0%
Salt Lake City, UT MSA	4.2%	5.3%	+26.2%
Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ MSA	3.9%	3.9%	+0.0%
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV MSA	2.8%	3.3%	+17.9%

*Adapted from “The Young and Restless and the Nation’s Cities,” 2014. (<https://cityobservatory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/YNR-Report-Final.pdf>).