MILKEN INSTITUTE

Best-Performing Cities 2024

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the post-pandemic economy reaches a new status quo, metropolitan areas (i.e., cities) remain at the heart of the nation's growth.[1] Almost 6 million new jobs were created across US metro areas during 2022. Simultaneously, interest rates on mortgages more than doubled, adding to the attractiveness of locations offering jobs with higher wages and lower costs of living.[2] Amid these conditions, the Best-Performing Cities (BPC) ranking provides an objective means for evaluating the performance of 403 metropolitan areas across the country.

Along with affordability, sustainability of growth is a matter of growing importance. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with recent weather-related events such as storms and floods, has focused attention on cities' resilience to natural and economic disasters. Recognizing the importance of sustainable and equitable growth, this year's BPC ranking incorporates measures of community resilience and income inequality (with cities with lower inequality ranked higher). The resulting ranking (reflecting 13 indicators) provides a comprehensive assessment of cities' performance. Analysis of the individual components of the ranking (possible through the BPC online tool) offers deeper insights into cities' strengths and areas of untapped potential.

Here are the highlights of the 2024 Best-Performing Cities ranking:

- **Austin–Round Rock, TX,** gains one position, becoming the best-performing large city for the first time since 2013. The metro area's ascent to the top is largely due to its rapid growth in jobs, wages, and high tech. Among small cities, **Idaho Falls, ID,** returns to the top position for the second year in a row and for the third time over the past five rankings. This metro area has experienced balanced growth, with a strong performance across all components of the ranking.
- After its remarkable three-year run as the top-ranked large metropolitan area, **Provo–Orem, UT,** forfeits the number one position but remains among the top five large metro areas. **Provo–Orem's** labor market has been impacted by recent tech layoffs, resulting in notable declines in its job and wage growth. Nonetheless, the metro area retains many advantages, with many new businesses being established in the area, providing signals of future growth.
- Most of this year's top-ranking metropolitan areas are in landlocked states, with only one top-tier city (**Charleston–North Charleston, SC**) along a coastline. In addition to Texas (home to the top-ranked large city), Utah stands out in this year's ranking of large cities, with two of the top five best-performing large metro areas in this state (**Salt Lake City** and **Provo–Orem**).
- Top-ranking small cities display a particular geographic concentration, with four of the seven top-tier small metros (**Idaho Falls, Coeur d'Alene, Twin Falls,** and **Pocatello**) located in Idaho. The strong performance of small cities in Idaho is due to their excellent five-year job and wage growth, bolstered by a small but growing high-tech sector and high rankings on resilience and income distribution metrics.
- Despite persistent differences in broadband coverage between large and small cities, a few small cities made remarkable improvements in this area between 2021 and 2022. Among the top-10 ranking small cities, **Wenatchee, WA,** showed the most progress, increasing its percentage of households with broadband internet by 7.0 percentage points (from 87.3 percent to 94.3 percent). **Twin Falls, ID,** came in second, increasing broadband coverage by 5.4 percentage points (from 87.8 percent to 93.2 percent), with **Coeur d'Alene, ID,** and **Jacksonville, NC,** also showing notable gains in this area.

- As the leisure and hospitality sector continues its recovery from the pandemic, three of the large metros with the biggest gains in this year's ranking (**Elgin, IL, Houston–The Woodlands–Sugar Land, TX,** and **Richmond, VA**) experienced growth in jobs and wages driven by the hospitality industry. In 2022, US cities continued to experience an influx of travelers, propelling the rise in jobs related to tourism. With employment in the leisure and hospitality sector still below its pre-pandemic level (based on a comparison of December 2022 to December 2019), recovery in this sector may continue to drive growth in years to come.

Best-Performing Large City:

AUSTIN-ROUND ROCK, TX

Austin–Round Rock, TX, ranks first among large metro areas, returning to the top spot for the first time since 2013. Austin–Round Rock's rise to the top was buoyed by its labor market performance, with the metro area ranking first in five-year job and wage growth. A robust and growing technology sector has bolstered the metro's remarkable growth in employment and wages. High-tech output increased 62.4 percent in Austin–Round Rock between 2017 and 2022, placing the metro area eighth in five-year high-tech gross domestic product (GDP) growth and seventh in high-tech GDP concentration (i.e., in terms of location quotient). The metro's technology expansion has been fast and balanced: Austin–Round Rock ranks fourth among large cities in high-tech diversification, with 14 well-established high-tech industries.

Although Austin–Round Rock faces affordability challenges similar to those of most high-performing large cities, the metro shows signs of improvement. Its percentage of households with affordable housing rose slightly during 2022, allowing the metro to advance 23 spots on this metric (while remaining in the bottom half of large cities). The city also ranked high in community resilience and above the median of large cities in income inequality, cementing its position as this year's top-performing large city.

Table 1. Tier 1 Large Cities

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
Austin–Round Rock, TX	1	2	+1
Raleigh, NC	2	3	+1
Boise City, ID	3	5	+2
Salt Lake City, UT	4	19	+15
Provo–Orem, UT	5	1	-4
Nashville–Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin, TN	6	4	-2
Fayetteville–Springdale–Rogers, AR–MO	7	9	+2
Dallas–Plano–Irving, TX	8	6	-2
Olympia–Tumwater, WA	9	42	+33
Charlotte–Concord–Gastonia, NC–SC	10	20	+10
Charleston–North Charleston, SC	11	24	+13

Source: *Milken Institute (2024)*

Best-Performing Small City:

IDAHO FALLS, ID

Idaho Falls, ID, ranks first among small cities for the second consecutive year. Idaho Falls' ability to retain its top spot is due to its robust labor market growth, coupled with strong performances across all components of the ranking. Drawing on the economic strength of the Idaho National Laboratory, one of the city's main employers, Idaho Falls has experienced consistent growth in employment, ranking third in medium-term (i.e., five-year) and ninth in short-term job growth. In addition to research jobs, the metro also has a high share of employment in medical services, with its health-care and social assistance sector growing 32.6 percent from 2017 to 2022.

The diversity of Idaho Falls' economy has allowed it to experience inclusive and sustainable growth, with the city ranking eighth in both income distribution and community resilience (relative to other small cities). Idaho Falls' strong and inclusive growth, however, has not been fully reflected in its wages. The city ranked 79th in wage growth from 2021 to 2022, the lowest ranking among all Tier 1 small cities.

Table 2. Tier 1 Small Cities

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
Idaho Falls, ID	1	1	0
Coeur d'Alene, ID	2	7	+5
Gainesville, GA	3	10	+7
St. George, UT	4	3	-1
Twin Falls, ID	5	15	+10
Bend–Redmond, OR	6	5	-1
Pocatello, ID	7	46	+39

Source: *Milken Institute (2024)*

INTRODUCTION

The US economy continues to grow despite ongoing inflation and rising interest rates, with metropolitan areas at the heart of the nation's growth. In 2022 (the main year covered in this report), the US labor market added more than 6 million jobs, 90.7 percent of which were in metropolitan areas. Although metros continue to drive the nation's growth, the geographic distribution of this growth has changed. Between 2019 and 2022, a few big metros (such as Los Angeles–Long Beach–Glendale and New York–Jersey City–White Plains) experienced a relative slowdown in job and wage growth accompanied by population loss, while economic and population growth took off in metros in Texas and neighboring states in the Sunbelt region. Among these demographic and economic changes, the Best-Performing Cities (BPC) ranking provides an objective benchmark to evaluate the performance of 403 metropolitan areas across the US.

In addition to serving as a benchmark, the BPC index offers a simple but comprehensive metric for businesses, policymakers, and government officials to track the economic vitality of their cities. The components of the index constitute key factors driving population growth, serving as a tool for understanding real estate, consumers, and business opportunities across US cities. The BPC's relevance as a metric of cities' attractiveness is reflected in this year's rankings: All top-performing (Tier 1) cities experienced a relative gain in population (compared to other metros) between 2019 and 2022, while 17 out of the 20 bottom-performing (Tier 5) cities experienced an absolute population drop.[3] (See the BPC methodology appendix explaining how performance tiers are calculated.)

This BPC report also analyzes the individual components of the index, offering insights into cities' strengths and areas of untapped potential. City officials and policymakers can use these findings to obtain a deeper understanding of the factors underlying their cities' competitiveness. Based on such shared understanding, communities can create an economic strategy focused on long-term and sustainable growth that leverages a city's strengths, while investing in its development areas.

Components of the Best-Performing Cities Index

The BPC index reflects metropolitan areas' effectiveness at promoting economic growth while remaining attractive to residents and businesses. Because the factors that determine the attractiveness of a metropolitan area depend on constantly evolving social and economic conditions, the BPC index incorporates new metrics as they become relevant. This year, two new metrics are incorporated into the index, for a total of 13 measures falling into three categories:

- **Labor market performance** includes short- and medium-term indicators of trends in employment and wages.
- **High-tech impact** captures the presence and growth of high-tech industries.
- **Access to economic opportunities** reflects cities' ability to remain attractive to residents by providing access to services and building inclusive and sustainable social structures.

Driven by steadily rising global temperatures, summer 2023 saw record-high heat levels across the US and the world.[4] Concerns about weather-related disasters are becoming an important factor impacting Americans' housing decisions, with more than 80 percent of recent home buyers considering at least one climate-related risk while shopping.[5] Major home insurers are also incorporating climate risks into their decision-making.[6]

Reflecting the growing importance of weather and natural disasters, this year's BPC ranking includes a community resilience metric that summarizes the ability of a metropolitan area to recover from various kinds of disasters.[7] Also incorporated into this year's index is a new measure of income inequality that accounts for the social sustainability of growth (with cities with lower inequality ranked higher). Finally, an updated definition of the high-tech sector is used to reflect changes by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.[8] Figure 1 illustrates the 13 measures used to calculate this year's BPC index and ranking, grouped by category.

Figure 1. BPC Components

Source: *Milken Institute (2024)*

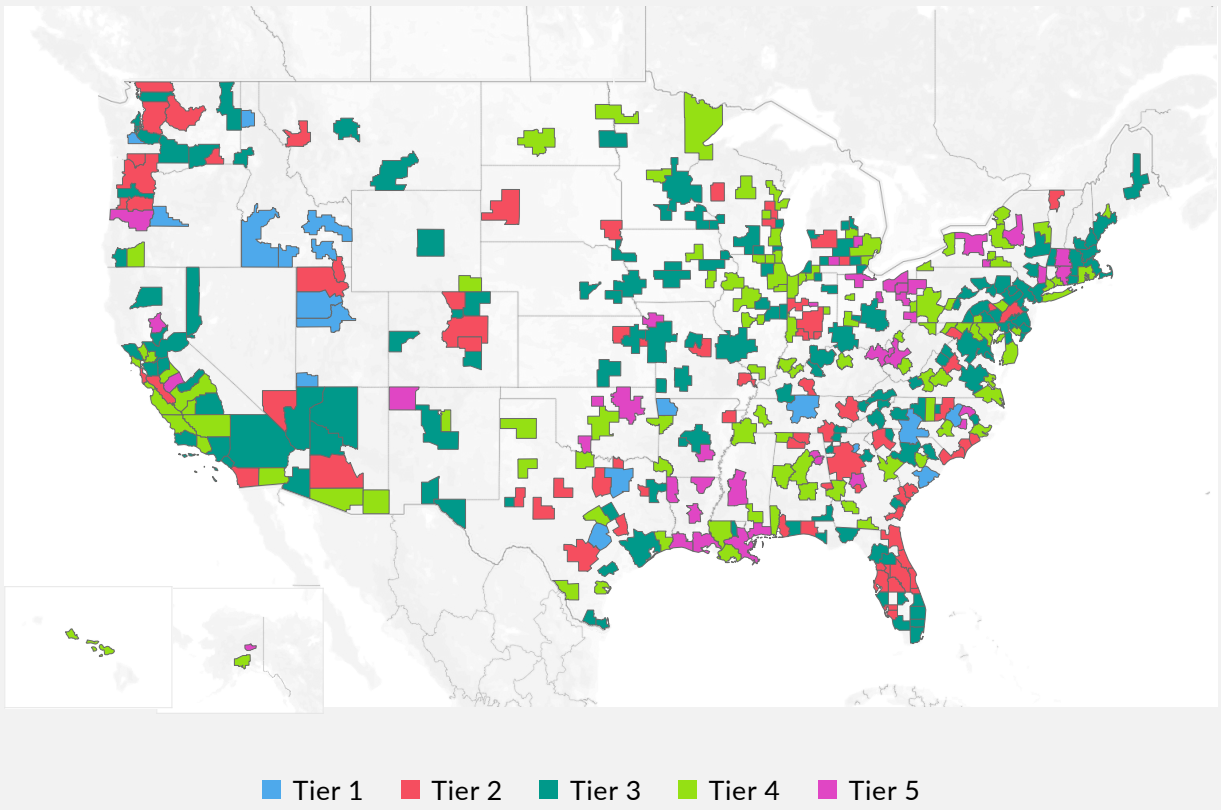
The changes incorporated in this year's BPC index ensure the ongoing relevance of the ranking, while maintaining the central goal of creating a comprehensive tool to evaluate regional performance. Indeed, a comparison of this and last year's ranking methodologies reveals that the performance categories (or "tiers," as described in the next section) of cities are robust to the methodological changes.[9] This finding supports the reliability of the BPC index, attesting to its usefulness as a tracker of cities' performance.

Breaking Down the Rankings

To account for the influence of population size on growth, the 403 metropolitan areas included in the BPC ranking are divided into 200 large and 203 small cities, with separate rankings calculated for each size category. Large and small cities are further divided into five tiers based on their relative performance, with top-ranking cities in Tier 1, and bottom-ranking cities in Tier 5.[10]

While Tier 1 large cities are geographically spread across nine states, top-ranked small cities are much more geographically concentrated, with four of the seven Tier 1 small cities in just one state (Idaho). Notably, most (13 out of 18) of the top-ranked large and small cities are in landlocked states (Figure 2). Coastal states, such as California and Florida, have increasingly more cities in Tier 3 (compared to last year), with several coastal cities dropping tiers in this year's ranking. In contrast, several cities in Texas moved up to Tier 2, having been in Tier 3 in last year's ranking.

Figure 2. 2024 BPC Cities by Tier



Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

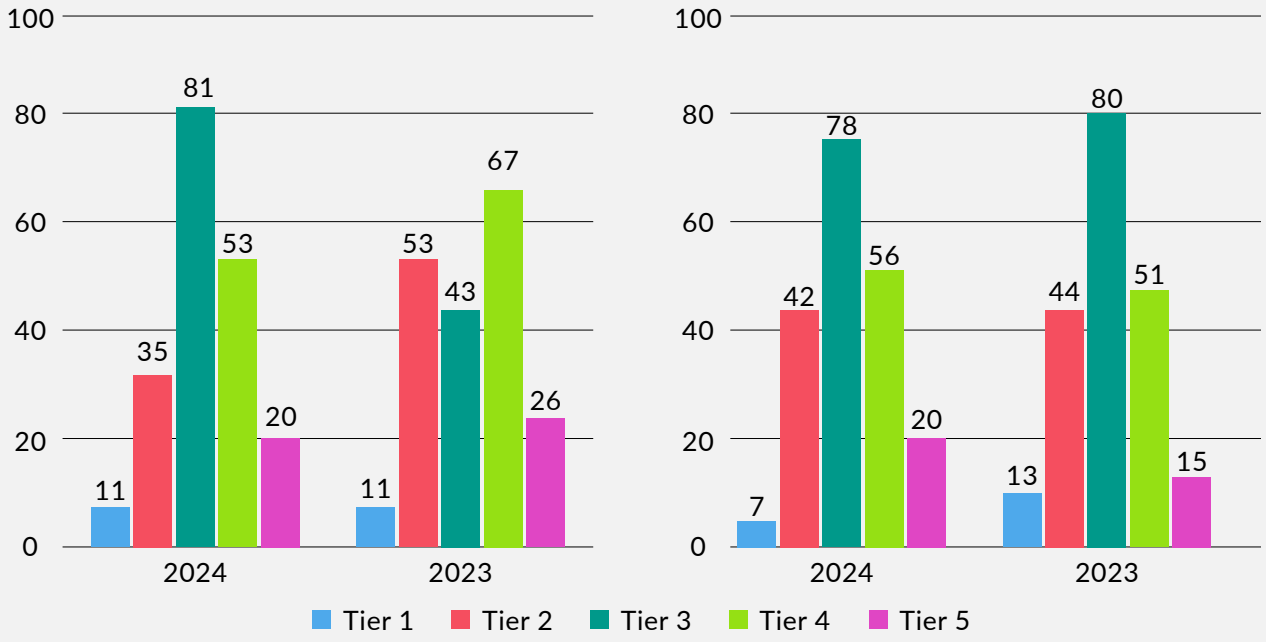
With respect to the overall distribution across tiers, this year is characterized by fewer cities in Tiers 2 and 4, and more cities in Tier 3 compared to last year (Figure 3). This trend is especially true among large metros, with almost double the number of large cities in Tier 3 in this year's ranking (81 compared to 43 last year). The relatively higher number of cities in the middle tier resembles more closely the pre-pandemic distribution of cities across tiers, signaling a normalization of cities' relative performances.

Changes in employment and wages continue to stand out as the main correlates of cities' rankings, with noticeable differences in job and wage growth across tiers. Interestingly, while job growth was clearly stronger in large cities (compared to small cities) between 2021 and 2022, the same is not true for wages (Figure 4). In fact, wages grew by the same amount (12.6 percent) in Tier 1 large and small cities, and Tier 2 small cities outpaced Tier 2 large cities in terms of wage growth, though the difference was not large (11.1 percent and 10.7 percent in small and large cities, respectively). The parity between small and large cities in wage growth indicates that while small cities are attracting businesses that have tended to have fewer new job openings over the past year, the wages offered by these businesses are competitive (in terms of growth) with those offered by businesses in large cities.

Figure 3. Number of Cities by Tier

3A. Number of Large Cities

3B. Number of Small Cities

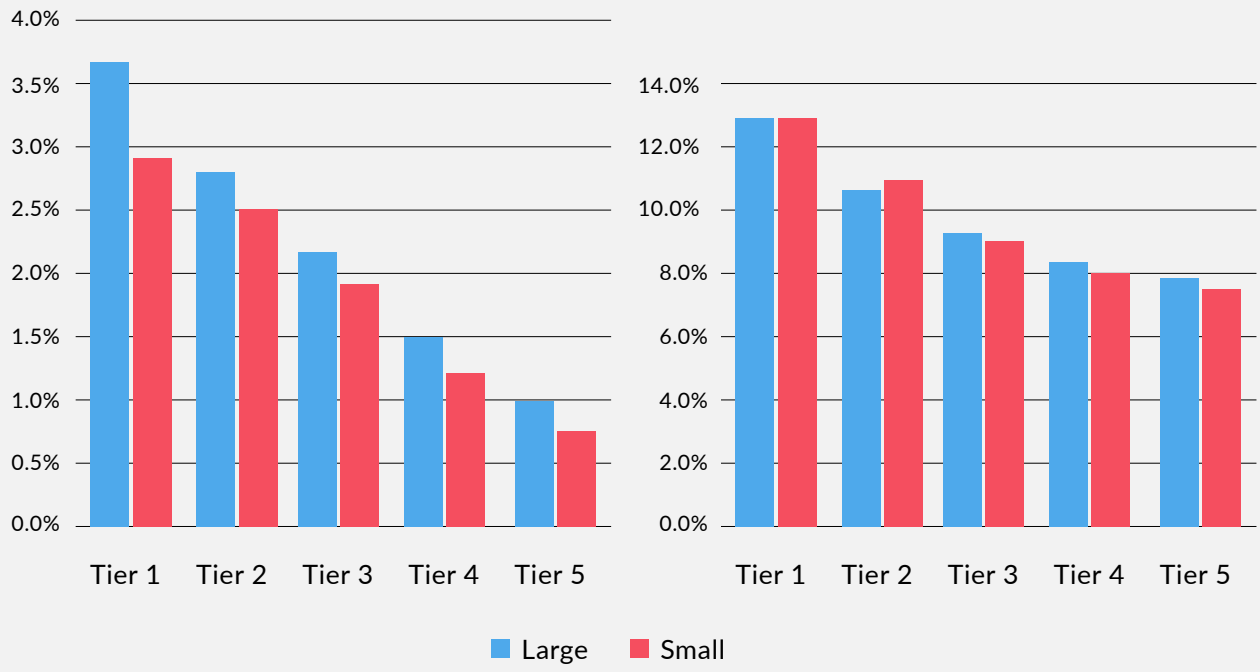


Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

Figure 4. Changes in Employment and Wages (2021 to 2022)

4A. Job Growth

4B. Wage Growth



Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

NATIONAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Economic Resilience amid Continued Inflation

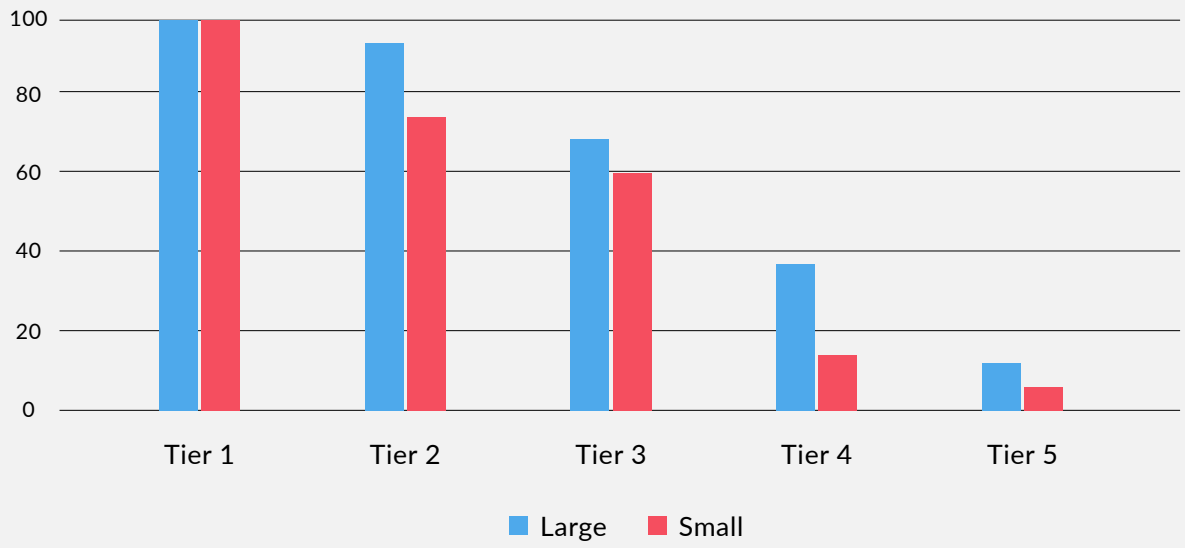
The US economy and labor market remained remarkably strong in 2022. After dropping during the first two quarters, real GDP bounced back, achieving annual growth of 1.9 percent by the end of 2022.[11] Simultaneously, the labor market maintained its strong performance: The US economy added 6.3 million jobs during 2022, with an unemployment rate in January 2023 of 3.4 percent (its lowest level in over a decade).[12] Amid this strong economic performance, inflation remained high, leading the Federal Reserve to continue raising the federal funds rate through early 2023. The high inflation also contributed to a drop of average real hourly wages, decreasing the extent to which existing employees benefited from the strength of the labor market.[13]

Beyond employment and compensation, the way work is performed has been permanently altered by the pandemic. The onset of COVID-19 led to an unprecedented uptake in remote work: In 2021, around 18 percent of employees reported working from home, more than triple compared to pre-pandemic levels (which hovered around 5 to 6 percent).[14] With return-to-office becoming a priority for many employers during 2022, the share of remote workers decreased to about 15 percent. This decline, however, did not signify a full return to pre-pandemic on-site work expectations. In the end, the gains in remote work have proven to be more modest than initially expected, but steady, with remarkably high levels of remote work remaining the norm in certain types of high-paying occupations (such as professional, financial, and information services jobs).

Post-Pandemic Employment Recovery

The remarkable strength of the labor market during 2022 was fueled in part by the recovery of sectors that were hit hardest during the pandemic (such as accommodation, leisure and hospitality, and food services). By the end of 2022, total US employment exceeded its December 2019 level by 1.1 percent (i.e., 1.7 million more jobs). The national employment numbers, however, mask differences across metropolitan areas. Of the 403 metros in the BPC ranking, only about half (52 percent) had reached or exceeded their pre-pandemic levels of employment by December 2022, with clear differences across metros of different tiers and sizes (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of MSAs That Reached or Exceeded Pre-Pandemic Employment Level (Total Nonfarm Employment, 12/2019 compared to 12/2022)



Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

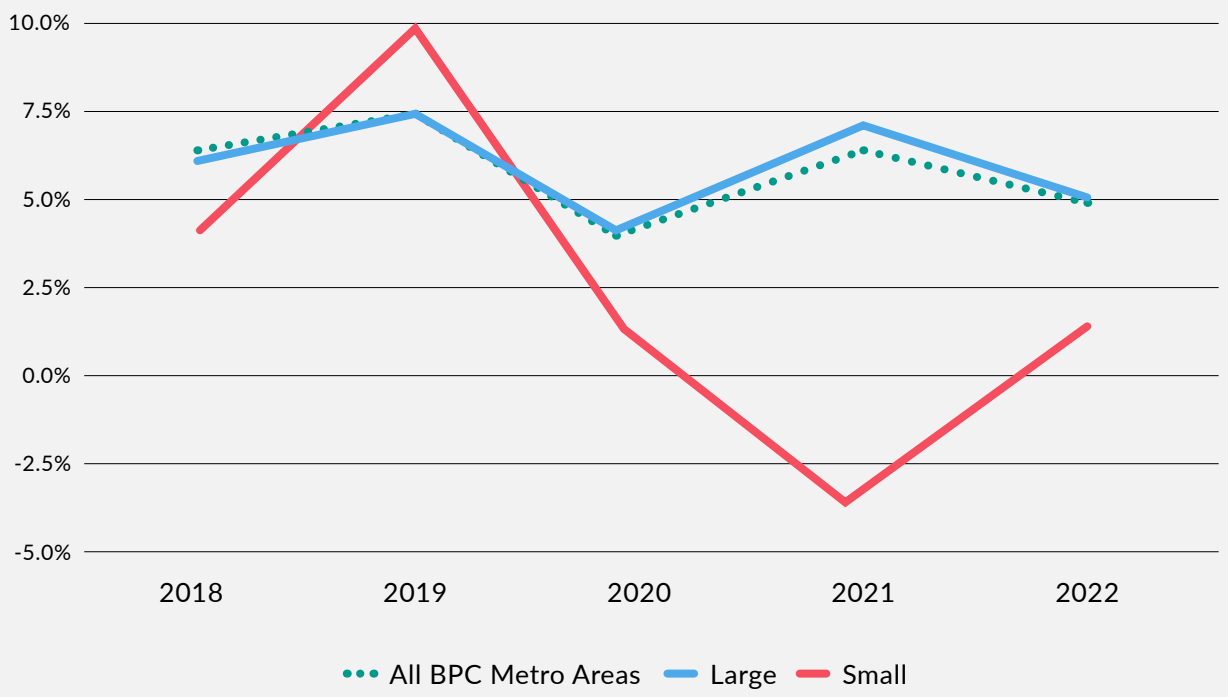
The recovery has been faster in large (relative to small) cities, with 58 percent of large and 46 percent of small metro areas back at or above 2019 employment levels by the end of 2022. Across tiers, all metros (large and small) in Tier 1 saw a full recovery in terms of employment, while many cities in lower tiers continued to struggle. Cities in Tiers 2 and 3 have mostly recovered jobs lost during the pandemic (with 50 percent or more metros in each of these tiers at or above pre-pandemic employment), but recovery has been slow in Tier 4 and Tier 5 cities. Only 14 percent and 5 percent of Tier 4 and Tier 5 small cities, respectively, have fully recovered. Many low-tier large cities also continue to struggle, with complete employment recovery in only 34 percent and 10 percent of Tier 4 and Tier 5 large cities, respectively.

The less-than-complete recovery of many cities signals that the pandemic has had long-lasting impacts on employment in several metropolitan areas. Cities with a large pre-pandemic leisure and hospitality sector might be experiencing a particularly slow recovery because national employment in this sector remained 4.4 percent below its pre-pandemic level by the end of 2022. Analysis of city-level performance reveals that only 23 percent of large and 33 percent of small cities had achieved (or exceeded) their pre-pandemic leisure and hospitality employment by December 2022. Although this finding could signal that these cities will see fast growth in future years (as their leisure and hospitality sectors continue to recover), it could also signal a permanent drop in jobs in the tourism industry.

High-Tech Performance across Large and Small Cities

After its impressive post-pandemic performance, real growth in the high-tech sector slowed down in 2022,[15] leading to layoffs among Big Tech giants (such as Meta and Amazon) in late 2022 and early 2023.[16] As a whole, the sector grew by 4.4 percent between 2021 and 2022. This general trend, however, disguised stark differences between large and small metropolitan areas (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Real High-Tech GDP Growth (2018 to 2022)



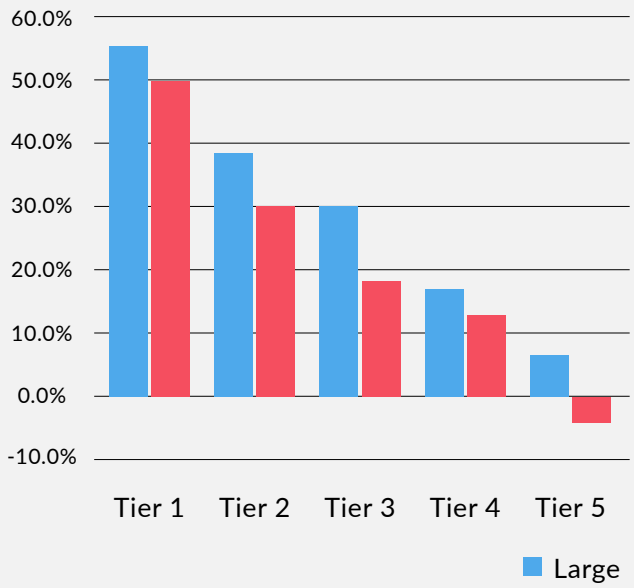
Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

Because most high-tech production is concentrated in large metropolitan areas, total growth of the high-tech sector is driven by growth in large cities. Small metropolitan areas have historically experienced slower high-tech growth, and the pandemic accentuated these disparities. Even as the overall high-tech sector experienced strong growth in 2021, high-tech GDP dropped by 3.8 percent in small cities. Although in 2022 real high-tech GDP increased in small metros, its growth remained well below that of large cities (1.3 percent compared to 4.6 percent).

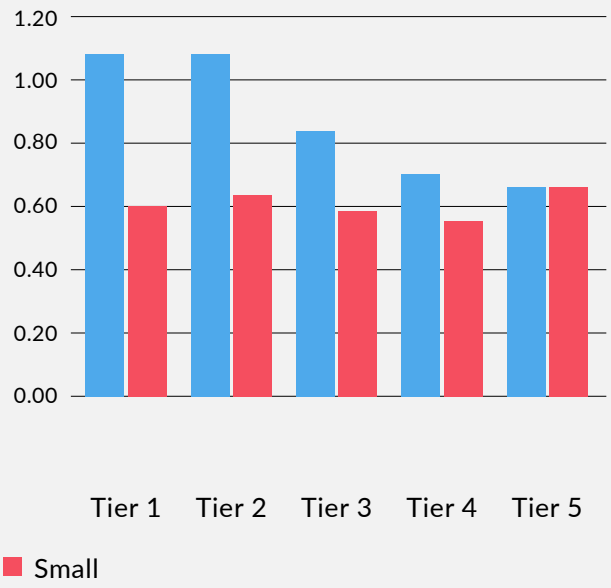
The relatively slow growth of small metros' high-tech GDP (compared to large metros) is consistent across all five BPC tiers (Figure 7A). This slower growth, coupled with already lower high-tech concentration (Figure 7B), implies a growing divide in high-tech presence between small and large metropolitan areas. Indeed, small metros have a uniformly low high-tech location quotient (LQ) across the five tiers, with even top-performing (Tier 1) small metros displaying lower high-tech concentration than large metros in the lowest-performing tier (Tier 5).

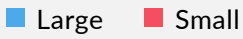
Figure 7. High-Tech Growth and Concentration

7A. Five-Year High-Tech Growth



7B. High-Tech Location Quotient





Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

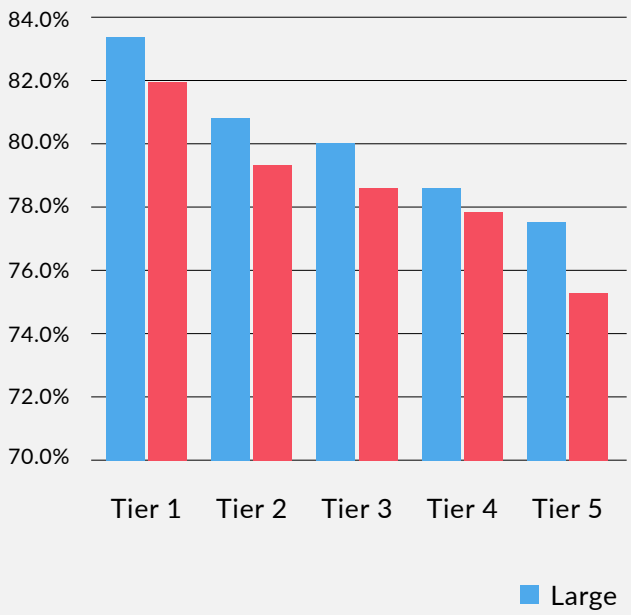
Climate Impacts: Where Families Choose to Plant Roots

With record high temperatures, extreme storms, and recurrent floods, weather-related natural disasters have become a common concern among the US population.[17] The community resilience measure included in this year's BPC ranking provides a metric of cities' ability to respond to disasters of any kind, measured as the percentage of a city's population that is highly resilient to external stressors (i.e., has fewer than three vulnerability risk factors).

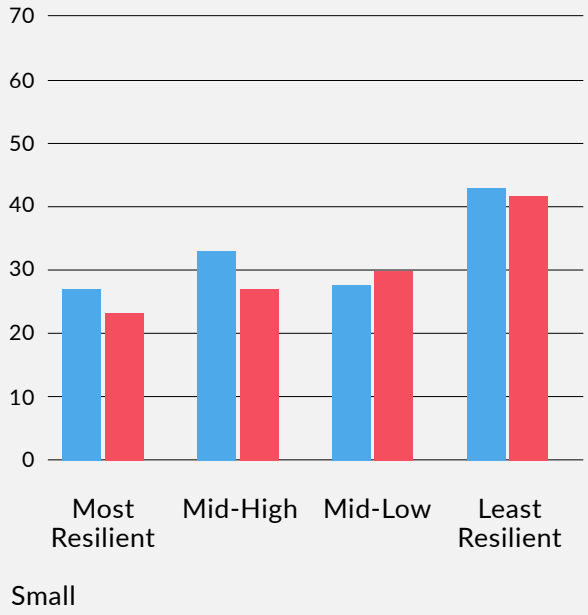
Large metro areas tend to have higher resilience than small metros, although the difference is small: On average, 79.7 percent of people living in large metros (78.3 percent in small metros) are resilient to natural disasters. A larger difference is noticeable across BPC tiers, with markedly higher resilience of cities in Tier 1 than Tier 5 (Figure 8A). In fact, on average, more than one-fifth of the population in Tier 5 cities is at high risk (i.e., not resilient) of being severely harmed by a natural disaster, which holds regardless of city size (22.5 and 24.7 percent of the population in large and small cities, respectively).

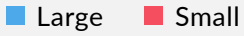
Figure 8. Patterns in Community Resilience

8A. Resilient Population (Percent)



8B. Extreme Heat Days by Resilience Quartile





Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

In addition to having low BPC rankings, the least resilient metropolitan areas also tend to be highly exposed to extreme heat. This fact is illustrated by the association between average number of extreme heat days and a metropolitan area's resilience quartile: In 2022, large and small metros in the least resilient quartile recorded, on average, 45.3 and 43.8 days of extreme heat, respectively; the averages for all large and small cities were 32.8 and 33.4, respectively (Figure 8B). This finding is alarming because it indicates that the cities least capable of responding to natural disasters are also the most likely to experience extreme heat events.

BIGGEST GAINS

Table 3. Biggest Gains among Large Cities

Metropolitan Statistical Area	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
Philadelphia, PA	52	182	130
Elgin, IL	65	156	91
Houston–The Woodlands–Sugar Land, TX	62	144	82
Richmond, VA	90	160	70
Wichita, KS	88	154	66

Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

The top-improving large metro areas in this year's report benefited primarily from robust employment growth between 2021 and 2023 (reflected in short-term and one-year job growth). In fact, the three metros with the biggest gains in the overall ranking experienced the most notable average improvements in one-year job growth. Three of the top five areas with the strongest gains (**Elgin, IL; Houston–The Woodlands–Sugar Land, TX;** and **Richmond, VA)** were led by the leisure and hospitality industry, with each area experiencing between 8 and 15 percent job growth in that segment of the economy.[18] This growth continues a trend from the 2023 BPC, when cities with the biggest gains were characterized by a post-pandemic recovery in tourism and hospitality. In 2022, large US cities continued to experience an influx of travelers, with corporate travel bookings increasing 121 percent, helping drive the rise in leisure and hospitality jobs.[19]

Table 4. Biggest Gains among Small Cities

Metropolitan Statistical Area	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
Manhattan, KS	27	187	160
Niles–Benton Harbor, MI	51	183	132
Lawrence, KS	30	159	129
Jefferson City, MO	38	163	125
Cape Girardeau, MO–IL	22	130	108

Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

The small cities with the largest gains have a remarkable commonality, in terms of both region and performance. These small Midwest metro areas all experienced remarkable short-term job growth between August 2022 and August 2023. As a result, each of these cities had a 90 to 190 increase in its short-term job growth rank. Job growth in the Midwest during that time was led by gains in the mining and logging, construction, and leisure and hospitality industries. Jobs in leisure and hospitality and mining and logging increased by between 4 and 6 percent but have yet to reach pre-pandemic levels, while jobs in construction exceeded their pre-pandemic level by the end of 2022 and continued to rise during 2023.[20] **Manhattan, KS**, and **Lawrence, KS**, were bolstered by high community resilience, ranking second and 15th, respectively, on this metric. **Jefferson City, MO**, and **Cape Girardeau, MO–IL**, both placed in the top 50 in housing affordability, with Jefferson City ranking first among all small cities on the metric.

BIGGEST DROPS

Table 5. Biggest Drops among Large Cities

Metropolitan Statistical Area	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
San Luis Obispo–Paso Robles–Arroyo Grande, CA	161	87	-74
Modesto, CA	165	92	-73
Merced, CA	193	132	-61
Oxnard–Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	135	79	-56
Greensboro–High Point, NC	164	108	-56

Note: Restricted to cities classified as large in both 2023 and 2024 rankings.

Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

The large cities that dropped most in this year's ranking tended to underperform in two areas: one-year wage growth and the metrics of city resilience and income inequality added to this year's BPC. Notably, four of the five cities with the largest drops in rankings are in California. **San Luis Obispo–Paso Robles–Arroyo Grande, CA,** experienced the largest drop, followed closely by **Modesto, CA,** with the former moving down 74 ranks (from 87 to 161) and the latter 73 ranks (from 92 to 165). Both cities experienced a sharp deceleration in wage growth during 2022. Leisure and hospitality was the sector with the most pronounced wage-growth slowdown in both cities. Modesto also experienced a drop in information sector wages, which reversed their trend from sustained growth to a 14.8 percent decrease from 2021 to 2022.

Table 6. Biggest Drops among Small Cities

Metropolitan Statistical Area	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	Change
El Centro, CA	147	33	-114
Morgantown, WV	183	69	-114
Lake Havasu City–Kingman, AZ	118	22	-96
Jackson, TN	140	47	-93
Gettysburg, PA	175	83	-92

Source: *Milken Institute analysis (2024)*

Like large cities, small cities with the highest drops in this year's BPC ranked low on economic resilience measures. **El Centro, CA,** and **Morgantown, WV,** both fell by 114 ranks (from 33rd to 147th, and from 69th to 183rd, respectively) marking the largest drops for small metros. Both cities' drops were driven in part by high economic disparities, with **El Centro** ranking 180th and **Morgantown** 145th on income inequality. In addition, **El Centro** ranked among the cities with the lowest community resilience, ranking 192nd on this metric. Among the five small metros with the largest drops, **Gettysburg, PA,** was the only one with above median ranks in both income inequality and community resilience. Instead, this small city's drop was largely due to a drop in its one-year job growth, with a slowdown (from 8.0 percent to 2.0 percent) in job growth in the city's retail trade sector, which accounts for 10.6 percent of **Gettysburg's** total employment.

LARGE CITIES' RANKINGS

TIER 1

1. AUSTIN

AUSTIN-ROUND ROCK, TX MSA

Austin–Round Rock, TX, ranks first among large metro areas, returning to the top spot for the first time since 2013. This is the sixth consecutive year that the Austin–Round Rock area has ranked in the top five best-performing cities. The metro area's continuously strong performance has been sustained by consistent job, wage, and high-tech growth. Bolstered by the presence of the University of Texas at Austin, the metro area ranks first in job and wage growth between 2017 and 2022 and fourth in high-tech industry diversification. The extensive number of high-tech industries with a high contribution to Austin's GDP (as indicated by the industries' LQs) is evidence of the city's ability to avoid over-reliance on a single high-tech activity, increasing its economic resilience. Between 2017 and 2022, Austin saw real growth in all except four of the 24 industries classified as high-tech.[22]

Austin's five-year wage growth has been the most impressive feature of the metro area's booming economy, with 73.1 percent wage increase from 2017 to 2022 (which is 6.9 percentage points higher than growth in San Francisco–Redwood City–South San Francisco, CA, the metropolitan area with the second-highest five-year wage increase). This rapid wage growth has not resulted in the high levels of income inequality that are common in comparable high-tech–rich areas, such as San Francisco. Austin's Gini index, a measure used to indicate income inequality, is middle-of-the-pack (ranked 85th), while the San Francisco metro area ranks among the worst large metros on this metric, at 192nd position, comparable to New York (199th) and Los Angeles (188th).

Austin, however, faces similar challenges in terms of affordability (especially of housing) to those of most high-performing large cities. A McKinsey & Company survey of 100 community leaders in central Texas revealed that 91 percent consider affordability to be a top challenge for Austin, with infrastructure, and workforce and education, not far behind (with 70 percent and 69 percent of community leaders naming these as challenges, respectively).[23] Analysis of the components of the BPC index supports this concern, with Austin ranking 120th in households with affordable housing. Among Tier 1 large cities, only Olympia–Tumwater, WA, and Austin's neighbor Dallas–Plano–Irving, TX, have lower housing affordability. Looking ahead, Austin's investment in affordable housing and infrastructure will largely determine the metro area's ability to maintain its top spot as America's best-performing large city.

Gained 1 rank	Indicator	Rank[21]
Job growth (2017–22)	22.8%	1st
Job growth (2021–22)	8.7%	3rd
Wage growth (2017–22)	73.1%	1st
Wage growth (2021–22)	15.8%	3rd
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.5%	22nd
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	62.4%	8th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	14.5%	12th
High-tech GDP location quotient	1.58	7th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	14	4th
Households with broadband	94.3%	24th
Households with affordable housing costs	68.1%	120th
Community resilience	82.1%	48th
Gini index (income inequality)	46.1	85th

Strengths

» Austin recorded the highest wage and job growth across all US metropolitan areas, bolstered by a robust and thriving tech sector.

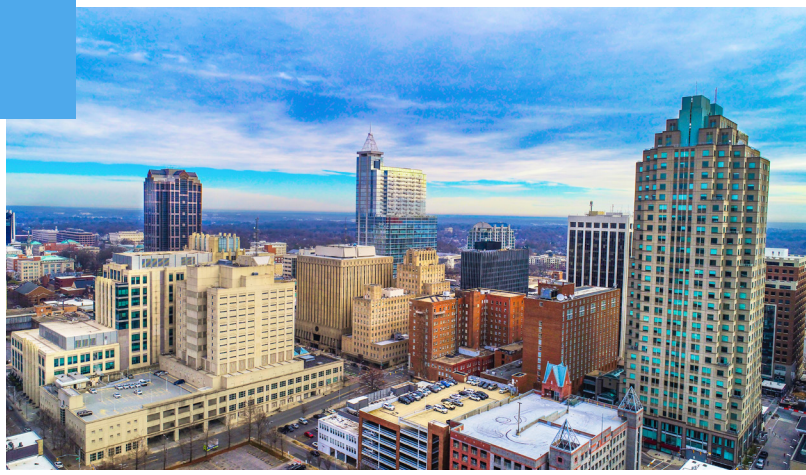
» A well-balanced assortment of tech industries positions Austin to maintain its growth, remaining one of America's best-performing metros.

Areas of Focus

» To sustain its rapid growth, Austin should invest in sustainable development, prioritizing housing affordability and infrastructure.

2. RALEIGH

RALEIGH, NC MSA



Raleigh, NC, gains one spot from last year, ranking among the top 20 best-performing metro areas for the 12th year in a row. Raleigh's high position is bolstered by its performance on wage, job, and high-tech concentration measures, as well as its strong position on all other metrics in the BPC ranking. Indeed, Raleigh places in the top quartile of every indicator on the index. The area has managed to attract high-tech firms and high-quality talent, driven by its proximity to three major universities located in Raleigh and the neighboring Durham–Chapel Hill metro areas: North Carolina State University, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Between 2021 and 2022, two segments of Raleigh's economy stood out as drivers of its job and wage growth: business and professional services and leisure and hospitality. With several industry groups classified as high-tech, growth of the business and professional services sector has provided the Raleigh area with a reliable increase in high-wage jobs. In fact, business and professional services jobs have grown by 83 percent in Raleigh since 2017.[24] However, the segment of Raleigh's economy with the largest one-year wage and job growth is leisure and hospitality, with its employment bouncing back to nearly pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022. During 2022, the 17.8 million visitors to Raleigh spent $2.9 million, exceeding expenditures in 2018 and 2019, and indicating a close to full rebound for its broader tourism industry.[25]

Raleigh also stands out among Tier 1 cities for its performance on access to economic opportunities indicators, such as housing costs and broadband, because it is the only Tier 1 large city to rank in the top quartile on both metrics. Building on the post-pandemic construction boom, the Raleigh metro has prioritized housing projects, ranking 12th among all US cities for new apartment construction.[26] Nonetheless, Raleigh still needs at least 17,000 more housing units to meet demand in 2023, according to a report by Zillow.[27] Whether new construction can keep pace with the demand for housing will play a large role in determining Raleigh's status as a best-performing city moving forward. But with low economic inequality (38th in the Gini index), high resilience (23rd in resilient households), and rising access to broadband (36th), Raleigh is on track to maintain its top spot in the ranking.

Gained 1 rank	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	14.5%	8th
Job growth (2021–22)	5.6%	24th
Wage growth (2017–22)	51.9%	6th
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.7%	21st
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.3%	28th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	43.1%	39th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	9.6%	43rd
High-tech GDP location quotient	1.52	9th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	14	4th
Households with broadband	93.7%	36th
Households with affordable housing costs	73.7%	38th
Community resilience	83.8%	23rd
Gini index (income inequality)	44.5	38th

Strengths

- Rapid job and wage growth have been driven by a broad range of high-tech industries and a continued rebound of the travel and tourism economy.
- Raleigh has exhibited strong performance on access to economic opportunities indicators, evidence of resilience to economic shocks and ability to maintain an affordable cost of living.

Areas of Focus

- Slowing GDP and job growth in 2022–2023 amid high commercial vacancy rates and a potential surplus of workers might present challenges as Raleigh continues to build the housing and infrastructure to support its growth.

3. BOISE

BOISE CITY, ID MSA

Boise City, ID, ranks in the top five for the second year in a row, gaining two positions from last year's index. Home to Idaho's state capital, the Boise City metro area accounts for 42 percent of Idaho's population, making it the largest metro in the state. Boise maintained its high ranking because of its ability to sustain strong job and wage growth, combined with a high place on the newly added resilience indicator and a notable increase in broadband internet coverage.

Between 2017 and 2022, Boise's wages grew by 61.8 percent, the fourth-highest growth rate among large metropolitan areas. Growth in the financial activities (101 percent) and professional and business services (92 percent) segments of the economy accounted for much of the increase, but the metro area experienced greater than 20 percent wage growth in every major economic sector grouping.[28] The information services sector led the way with 36 percent wage growth during 2022, bolstered by an increase in data processing (61 percent) and software publishing (30 percent) wages.

Entering 2022, however, there was significant concern about whether wages (despite their strong growth) could keep pace with rising housing costs in the Treasure Valley. Toward the end of 2021 Boise had an exceptionally hot housing market, with housing prices skyrocketing in response to the growth during and after the pandemic.[29] However, home prices stabilized in 2022 alongside a year-over-year decrease of 21 percent in home sales, with mortgage rate increases cooling the demand.[30] Among the 11 Tier 1 cities, Boise has the fourth-best rank on affordable housing (58th), dropping only two ranks from last year.

The two indicators of concern for Boise involve high-tech concentration and diversification, with the city dropping ranks on both high-tech GDP growth and on the variety of industries with a strong contribution to high-tech output. Only five industries contribute above the national average to Boise's high-tech GDP (i.e., have an LQ above 1), placing Idaho's capital as 90th among large cities on this metric. Only two other Tier 1 cities ranked below Boise on these measures, indicating room for improvement to ensure that Boise is resilient to downturns in the high-tech sector.

Gained 2 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	20.7%	3rd
Job growth (2021–22)	4.5%	59th
Wage growth (2017–22)	61.8%	4th
Wage growth (2021–22)	13.1%	13th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.1%	38th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	43.2%	38th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.3%	37th
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.77	91st
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	5	90th
Households with broadband	94.5%	19th
Households with affordable housing costs	72.3%	58th
Community resilience	84.1%	20th
Gini index (income inequality)	44.1	28th

Strengths

» Boise's fast and consistent wage growth, combined with relative housing affordability and broadband coverage, has been a major attraction for incoming tech workers and families looking for a new home.

Areas of Focus

» High-tech GDP contributions are concentrated in only a few industries, with Boise ranking 90th on high-tech industry variety and 91st on high-tech GDP concentration.

4. SALT LAKE CITY

SALT LAKE CITY, UT MSA

Salt Lake City, UT, returns to the top five, jumping 15 spots from last year's ranking. As a regional tech hub, Utah's state capital has benefited from strong wage and high-tech GDP growth since 2017, with much of that growth occurring before and during the 2020 pandemic. The area was a leader in remote work during the pandemic, and although the share of remote workers fell in 2022, Salt Lake City still outpaces the national average in teleworking share.[31]

Among the industries with above-average contributions to high-tech GDP, software publishing and technical consulting services have been the primary drivers of the metro area's outstanding performance. Both industries saw greater than 100 percent growth in real GDP from 2017 to 2022, with software publishing leading the way at 140 percent growth. In addition to strong medium-term job growth, rapid wage growth makes Salt Lake City stand out among other large metro areas: The city placed eighth in this metric, with a 51 percent increase in its wages during the past five years.

Salt Lake City has among the highest ranks for resilience, placing fifth among large cities on this metric, indicating that the metro area is well positioned to withstand economic or natural disasters. The metro area's rapid growth in industries with remote work capability, combined with its robust broadband coverage, enabled the city to maintain its economic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Salt Lake City also ranks in the top 10 percent of large cities in terms of low economic inequality, which provides further evidence of the metro area's access to economic opportunities and potential for sustainable growth.

During the past two years, Silicon Slopes (an area that includes both Provo and Salt Lake City) has experienced a downturn in job growth, partially attributable to recent high-tech layoffs. Tightening ahead of a potential 2023 downturn, tech firms laid off hundreds of workers in late 2022, and layoffs continued through early 2023.[32] This event is reflected in the relative cooling of job growth indicators in the area, with Salt Lake City dropping more than 40 ranks in one-year job growth in 2022 and ranking outside the top quarter of large cities in short-term job growth.

Gained 15 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	12.0%	24th
Job growth (2021–22)	4.2%	86th
Wage growth (2017–22)	51.2%	8th
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.2%	27th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	2.6%	62nd
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	61.9%	9th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.7%	31st
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.95	53rd
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	8	34th
Households with broadband	94.1%	28th
Households with affordable housing costs	71.6%	66th
Community resilience	85.9%	5th
Gini index (income inequality)	42.6	13th

Strengths

» Growth in high-tech GDP and wages over the past five years has rocketed Salt Lake City up in the rankings, surpassing neighboring Provo for the first time since 2012.

» Resilience and low economic inequality enabled Salt Lake City to grow during and after the 2020 pandemic, making the city likely to withstand any further economic shocks.

Areas of Focus

» A slowdown in job growth during the later part of 2022 and early 2023, partially caused by tech layoffs, is cause for concern for the Salt Lake City economy, which in the past has been bolstered by strong growth of the high-tech sector.

5. PROVO

PROVO-OREM, UT MSA

Provo–Orem, UT, ends its three-year run as the top-performing large metropolitan area but remains among Tier 1 large cities, placing fifth on the overall ranking. In the recent past, Provo had one of the fastest-growing job markets in the country, ranking second and third in five-year job and wage growth, respectively. This year's drop in Provo's position on the BPC ranking is due to notable falls in its one-year job and wage growth. The slowdown in Provo's labor market performance has extended into mid-2023 as signaled by its relatively low (compared to last year) performance in short-term job growth, which accounts for employment growth from August 2022 to August 2023.

Located in an area nicknamed Silicon Slopes because of its robust high-tech scene, Provo has maintained a thriving tech sector that hosts several tech giants such as Qualtrics and Vivint. Provo's high-tech sector remains strong relative to other large cities, with Provo ranking third and 17th in five-year and one-year high-tech GDP growth, respectively. Yet, the metro area has not been spared from the recent tightening in the high-tech sector.[33] In late 2022, several Utah tech companies laid off hundreds of staff, and in October 2023 Qualtrics announced it will lay off 14 percent of its workforce.[34]

Despite the relative slowdown in its labor market, many strong aspects of Provo's performance remain. Provo–Orem ranks highest across all US metropolitan areas in its resilience to economic and natural disasters, with 89.7 percent of its households having a good ability (as measured by the absence of risk factors) to absorb the external stresses of a disaster. The city also has a low income-inequality level, ranking second (among large cities) on this metric. The overall low levels of inequality in the Silicon Slopes stand in stark contrast to the much higher economic disparities observed in the area's close namesake, Silicon Valley.

In terms of growth, the Provo–Orem metropolitan area had the sixth-highest number of new business applications in 2022, ahead of Salt Lake City (Utah's capital), which ranked 22nd on this metric.[35] The high number of new businesses continuing to be established in Provo–Orem signals the likelihood that the metropolitan area will continue its growth and remain among Tier 1 large cities in future editions of the ranking.

Dropped 4 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	22.0%	2nd
Job growth (2021–22)	4.4%	73rd
Wage growth (2017–22)	63.1%	3rd
Wage growth (2021–22)	9.1%	101st
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	2.3%	82nd
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	71.2%	3rd
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	13.5%	17th
High-tech GDP location quotient	1.28	24th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	9	23rd
Households with broadband	93.0%	56th
Households with affordable housing costs	74.5%	28th
Community resilience	89.7%	1st
Gini index (income inequality)	40.3	2nd

Strengths

- Provo–Orem has experienced exceptional performance in five-year job, wage, and high-tech GDP growth. Despite recent cooling in its job and wage growth, Provo–Orem's high-tech GDP growth remained strong partially because of the metro's well-balanced tech environment.
- Provo–Orem ranks highest among all US metropolitan areas in its resilience to economic and natural disasters.

Areas of Focus

- Provo's labor market has been impacted by recent tech layoffs, with the metro area experiencing notable drops in its one-year job and wage growth rankings.

6. NASHVILLE

NASHVILLE–DAVIDSON–MURFREESBORO–FRANKLIN, TN MSA

Nashville–Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin, TN, drops just two ranks and maintains its Tier 1 status for the second year in a row. The Music City has demonstrated remarkable staying power as one of America's best-performing metros, with competitive wage growth, continued employment opportunities, and the fourth-strongest high-tech GDP growth among large cities. The continued rebound of the leisure and hospitality industry and a sharp increase in information services jobs accounted for 34 percent of Nashville's one-year job growth, with the industries in the information services sector also accounting for a substantial portion of high-tech GDP growth.

Nashville's population has grown rapidly in recent years, with the metro area adding more than 50,000 residents since 2019.[36] Nashville officials hope that the continued population growth helps fix the current workforce shortage: The Nashville area Chamber of Commerce reports that about two positions are currently open for every unemployed person.[37] The metro's population growth has been accompanied by record-high tourism propelling the economy of the Music City. The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development reported that visitors spent $27 million a day and nearly $10 billion total in 2022, a 35 percent increase from 2021.[38] The high inflow of tourists has resulted in a remarkable rebound in Nashville's hospitality industry, with employment in the metro's leisure and hospitality industry grouping exceeding its pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022.[39]

Although Nashville has experienced a remarkable rise in its high-tech sector (ranking fourth and 15th in five-year and one-year high-tech GDP growth, respectively), the size of its high-tech output continues to lag other top-performing cities. Among Tier 1 large cities, Nashville has the lowest high-tech GDP concentration, ranking 117th on this metric. With an LQ of 0.70, Nashville's high-tech contribution to the metro's overall GDP sits below the national average, indicating room for growth for Nashville's high-tech sector.

With above-average performance on all access to economic opportunities and resilience measures, Nashville offers a relatively affordable cost of living, a rare luxury in a growing metropolis. Looking ahead, maintaining low housing costs while capitalizing on its population inflow to fill current labor shortages will be the primary challenges for Nashville's policymakers.

Dropped 2 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	14.2%	11th
Job growth (2021–22)	6.7%	7th
Wage growth (2017–22)	48.2%	17th
Wage growth (2021–22)	13.4%	12th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.6%	19th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	70.0%	4th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	13.9%	15th
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.70	117th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	7	51st
Households with broadband	92.5%	73rd
Households with affordable housing costs	70.2%	91st
Community resilience	81.2%	71st
Gini index (income inequality)	45.6	68th

Strengths

- Nashville is home to a growing high-tech sector alongside a strong labor market, with rapid growth in its employment and wages.
- Ranking in the top half on all access to economic opportunities indicators, Nashville offers affordability paired with performance, increasing the city's attractiveness.

Areas of Focus

- Nashville falls behind other major cities in terms of high-tech sector size, ranking lowest in high-tech GDP concentration among Tier 1 large cities.

7. FAYETTEVILLE

FAYETTEVILLE-SPRINGDALE-ROGERS, AR-MO MSA

Fayetteville–Springdale–Rogers, AR–MO, gained two ranks from its last year's performance, ranking in the top 10 for the third consecutive year. The metro's post-pandemic job growth has landed it among the best-performing areas in the past three years after ranking 155th and 147th in the two years prior.

Located within the Ozarks region, the Fayetteville MSA, also referred to as Northwest Arkansas, is a collection of roughly 30 small to mid-size towns going through rapid growth and change.[40] The area has long benefited from the presence of the University of Arkansas, along with the home base of Walmart and two other Fortune 500 companies (Tyson Foods and JB Hunt Transport). In recent years, strong job and population growth, in large part driven by Fayetteville's transportation industries, has Northwest Arkansas hoping to become the next Silicon Valley of transportation.[41] With Walmart beginning construction on a new headquarters in Bentonville, and the region seeing record-high venture capital investments, the future looks bright for Fayetteville.[42]

As one of the fastest-growing metro areas, Fayetteville is on pace to be home to 1 million residents by 2045, which would result in almost doubling its size in just over 20 years.[43] Employment in the leisure and hospitality industries has partly driven Fayetteville's post-pandemic spike in job growth, but over a five-year period, growth in financial activities, professional services, and transportation has accounted for almost one-third of the metro area's employment gains. Job growth in the information industries has also taken off, with employment in the overall sector growing 34.3 percent during the past five years (albeit, from a low starting level). And although commercial vacancies are at an all-time high in many major cities, Fayetteville just hit a record-low commercial vacancy rate of 5.6 percent.[44] This can be compared to regional neighbors Austin, Dallas, and Houston, which have commercial vacancy rates greater than 20 percent.[45]

Despite its notable growth in high-tech industries, the Fayetteville area still lags all other Tier 1 cities in high-tech industry diversification, concentrating most of the metro area's high-tech GDP production in only four of the possible 24 technology industries. If Northwest Arkansas hopes to continue to compete with the major cities in its region for investment, its ability to develop a more robust high-tech sector will be key.

Gained 2 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	15.8%	6th
Job growth (2021–22)	6.2%	14th
Wage growth (2017–22)	41.8%	37th
Wage growth (2021–22)	9.8%	81st
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.4%	24th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	51.2%	23rd
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	18.8%	3rd
High-tech GDP location quotient	1.28	25th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	4	111th
Households with broadband	92.0%	93rd
Households with affordable housing costs	76.0%	13th
Community resilience	82.2%	46th
Gini index (income inequality)	45.5	62nd

Strengths

- With the most affordable housing market of all Tier 1 large cities, Fayetteville can attract incoming residents with more than just high-wage employment opportunities.
- The metro area features a rare combination of rapid population and job growth, one of the nation's fastest-growing high-tech sectors, and affordability.

Areas of Focus

- Fayetteville largely relies on four high-tech industries to propel its GDP growth and therefore has one of the least diversified high-tech sectors among Tier 1 large cities.

8. DALLAS

DALLAS-PLANO-IRVING, TX MSA

Dallas–Plano–Irving, TX, dropped two spots from last year's ranking but remains a Tier 1 large city for a third straight year, largely because of the continued strength of its labor market. Dallas ranked in the top 10 large cities in all job growth categories and in one-year wage growth. The metro area performs well in most components of the rankings, scoring above the large cities' median in all components, except housing affordability and income inequality (measured by the Gini index).

Dallas's excellent job performance is led by its professional and business services sector, which accounts for 20.9 percent of the city's workforce and grew by 28 percent from 2017 to 2022. However, overall, Dallas' economy is well balanced, with strong five-year job growth in several segments of the economy, including transportation and utilities (43.5 percent), financial activities (21.6 percent), and the information industry (9.9 percent).

The Dallas-Plano-Irving metro hosts a variety of Fortune 500 companies, including AT&T, McKesson, and American Airlines (although its former largest company, ExxonMobil, moved to Houston in 2023). The metro area also has one of the most diverse economies in the country, being a regional hub for information technology, finance, transportation, and defense. This sectoral diversity was key to Dallas' continued strong recovery from the COVID pandemic in 2022. According to a report by the Dallas Regional Chamber, Dallas has added back 157 percent of the jobs lost during the pandemic, trailing only Austin (our top-performing city this year) among Texas cities.[46]

Like many cities in Texas, the Dallas metro area has struggled to build enough housing to keep pace with its high population growth. An analysis by the Bank of America Institute identified Dallas as one of the country's three major cities with the most constrained housing supply,[47] which is reflected in the metro's performance on access to economic opportunities metrics. Dallas–Plano–Irving ranks last among Tier 1 large metropolitan areas in housing affordability. The metro also suffers from high levels of income inequality and a relatively high share of residents vulnerable to disasters, ranking second to last in the Gini index and last in resilience among Tier 1 large cities.

Dropped 2 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	14.5%	9th
Job growth (2021–22)	6.9%	5th
Wage growth (2017–22)	46.2%	24th
Wage growth (2021–22)	13.7%	9th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	4.1%	10th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	35.2%	58th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.2%	39th
High-tech GDP location quotient	1.34	18th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	9	23rd
Households with broadband	94.0%	30th
Households with affordable housing costs	65.3%	153rd
Community resilience	80.1%	92nd
Gini index (income inequality)	47.3	136th

Strengths

- Dallas ranks among the top 25 large cities across all job and wage growth categories partly because of its ability to attract businesses from a wide range of sectors.
- The metro area has maintained its high-tech GDP growth, despite already ranking high on high-tech concentration.

Areas of Focus

- Dallas has high levels of income inequality and a limited housing supply that is struggling to keep pace with strong population growth.

9. OLYMPIA

OLYMPIA–TUMWATER, WA MSA

Olympia–Tumwater, WA, gained 33 spots, positioning it among Tier 1 cities in this year's ranking. The largest factor in Olympia's recent ascent was the recovery of its labor market. The city moved up by 146 ranks (to the ninth position) in short-term job growth and experienced notable improvements in its one-year job and wage growth (where it jumped up by 90 and 51 spots, respectively). In addition, Olympia scores well in the new access to economic opportunities components of the rankings, landing at 56th in resiliency and fourth in income inequality (measured by the Gini index).

Olympia's improved labor market performance was propelled by its professional and business services sector, where employment grew by a remarkable 15.7 percent (or 10.1 percentage points above the sector's national growth) over 2022. The city also saw rapid employment growth in the information and government sectors. As Washington's capital, Olympia has a high proportion of government employees, with 32 percent of its workforce in local, state, and federal government occupations. A high proportion of government jobs brings advantages such as employment stability (because government jobs are less vulnerable to swings in the business cycle). In addition, Olympia's high government employment, along with its low share of workers in lower-paid service sectors, contributes to low levels of income inequality.

Olympia has a relatively small high-tech sector, ranking second to last among Tier 1 large cities in high-tech concentration and last in the number of high-tech industries with a strong contribution to its GDP (as measured by the industries' location quotient). However, Olympia is catching up, ranking first among all large cities in high-tech GDP growth. The city's excellent recent high-tech performance is led by its software publishing, data processing, and technical consulting industries, which saw five-year real GDP growth of 332.5 percent, 489.5 percent, and 133.9 percent, respectively.

Washington is facing housing affordability issues across the state, and Olympia is no exception to these struggles. An analysis by the Building Industry Association of Washington estimates that Washington needs more than 250,000 additional housing units to meet demand.[48] This issue is reflected in Olympia's housing affordability ranking, with the metro area ranking second to last among Tier 1 large cities (137th across all large cities) on this metric. In 2023, the state government passed a series of bills aimed at increasing housing supply.[49] The effectiveness of these bills in easing housing costs will be a key in maintaining Olympia's recent strong performance.

Gained 32 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	8.6%	47th
Job growth (2021–22)	5.5%	31st
Wage growth (2017–22)	46.7%	22nd
Wage growth (2021–22)	13.1%	14th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	4.3%	9th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	80.2%	1st
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	11.7%	23rd
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.73	105th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	4	111th
Households with broadband	93.9%	31st
Households with affordable housing costs	66.2%	137th
Community resilience	81.7%	56th
Gini index (income inequality)	41.3	4th

Strengths

- From 2017 to 2022, Olympia–Tumwater had the fastest high-tech GDP growth in the country.
- Olympia–Tumwater has remarkably low levels of income inequality, with the metro area ranking fourth among large cities in the Gini index.

Areas of Focus

- Like many other cities across the state of Washington, Olympia is struggling to maintain a sufficient supply of affordable housing.

10. CHARLOTTE

CHARLOTTE–CONCORD–GASTONIA, NC–SC MSA

Charlotte–Concord–Gastonia, NC–SC, enters the top 10 best-performing cities for the first time in over a decade, improving 10 ranks from last year's Tier 2 performance. The Queen City has consistently ranked in the top half of large metros, performing well on nearly every indicator, but recent job and wage growth have finally pushed it into Tier 1 in this year's ranking. Ranking 12th in this year's short-term job growth and 17th in one-year wage growth, Charlotte's remarkable labor market performance is attracting new residents, with the metro area experiencing a notable population increase since 2019 (3.7 percent as compared to 0.9 percent for all metropolitan areas).[51]

Both one-year wage and job growth were led by the leisure and hospitality sector. Recovery of the hospitality industry has been a major theme of the top-performing cities over the past two years, with many high-performing metro areas benefiting from the rebound of tourism. However, growth in Charlotte has been well balanced, with the metro area experiencing five-year job and wage growth in many major segments of its economy, including financial activities and professional and business services (which jointly account for about one-fourth of the metro area's employment). The same is true of Charlotte's high-tech sector, which is well balanced across industries. Wages have been growing in all of Charlotte's high-tech industries, and employment increased in all but three of 24 high-tech industries between 2021 and 2022. Information services and software publishing have been the main drivers of GDP growth in high-tech, with their real GDP increasing by 184.7 percent and 148.6 percent, respectively.

The Gini index is the only indicator on which Charlotte performs below the median for large cities. The Queen City ranks 148th on this metric, placing it at the bottom of Tier 1 large cities on this component of the ranking. Economic mobility in Charlotte is not an equally shared opportunity, although rising wages in industries such as leisure and hospitality are a promising development. With a fast-growing local economy, ensuring that growth is both equitable and sustainable will be a critical challenge to Charlotte's policymakers and local leaders in future years.

Gained 10 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	10.7%	32nd
Job growth (2021–22)	4.5%	67th
Wage growth (2017–22)	44.8%	28th
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.9%	17th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	4.0%	12th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	36.7%	53rd
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	9.9%	41st
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.99	47th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	10	14th
Households with broadband	93.2%	51st
Households with affordable housing costs	72.1%	60th
Community resilience	82.3%	44th
Gini index (income inequality)	47.7	148th

Strengths

- Significant employment growth during the second half of 2021 and early 2022 has rocketed the Queen City to its first-ever top 10 ranking.
- Strong and consistent wage growth combined with relatively affordable housing offers Charlotte a major competitive advantage over other burgeoning high-tech hubs.

Areas of Focus

- Charlotte has the highest income inequality among Tier 1 cities, with wide racial and economic disparities across the metro area.[50]

11. CHARLESTON

CHARLESTON–NORTH CHARLESTON, SC MSA

Charleston–North Charleston, SC, gained 13 positions, moving up to the 11th rank and placing among the top 15 large cities for the first time since 2013. Between August 2022 and 2023, the Charleston metro area experienced the fastest employment growth in the country (relative to other metropolitan areas), continuing its streak of consistent employment gains. The job gains come alongside major increases in wages, with the city moving up 33 ranks to the 15th position (among large cities) in one-year wage growth. During 2022, Charleston also experienced rapid high-tech GDP growth, placing fifth among large cities on this metric. The accelerated growth in high-tech output indicates that Charleston, South Carolina's most populous city, is becoming capable of competing with neighboring regional tech hubs such as Charlotte and Atlanta.

A notable portion of Charleston's residents work in government services, with the sector representing 17.0 percent of the metro's employment (compared to 9.3 percent nationwide). This is largely due to Charleston's strong military presence, with the city benefiting from the locations of the deepest port in the South Atlantic and the Air Force's Joint Base Charleston.[52] However, the city relies on more than just government and military jobs, with remarkable growth in its high-tech sector over the past five years. From 2021 to 2022, Charleston's high-tech growth was powered by information services and telecommunications, with real GDP in these two industries increasing by 40.8 percent and 33.5 percent, respectively.

Like regional neighbor Charlotte (and many southeastern metros), Charleston struggles with a high level of income inequality. Charleston has the third worst ranking among Tier 1 large cities on the Gini index, ranking 132nd out of all large cities. Charleston's high level of income inequality indicates the need for increased access to economic opportunities for less privileged communities in the metro. The Charleston metro area also performs poorly on the percentage of households with affordable housing, ranking 102nd on the metric. In 2022, around half of renters were paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent.[53] To ensure that any additional growth is both sustainable and equitable, addressing Charleston's housing crisis and inequality will continue to be a major priority for the metro.

Gained 13 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	11.6%	28th
Job growth (2021–22)	6.1%	17th
Wage growth (2017–22)	42.1%	35th
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.9%	15th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	5.2%	1st
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	47.4%	30th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	17.3%	5th
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.83	77th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	6	70th
Households with broadband	91.9%	98th
Households with affordable housing costs	69.5%	102nd
Community resilience	82.0%	49th
Gini index (income inequality)	47.2	132nd

Strengths

- With the highest short-term job growth of all US metropolitan areas and rapid job and wage growth over the past five years, the Charleston area has become a nationally competitive local economy.
- Although still small, Charleston's high-tech sector has grown relative to other large cities, with the metro area placing fifth in high-tech GDP growth from 2021 to 2022.

Areas of Focus

- The Charleston metro area struggles with high levels of income inequality and low availability of affordable housing, ranking 132nd and 102nd on these two metrics relative to other large cities.

COMPLETE RESULTS: 2024 BEST-PERFORMING LARGE CITIES

TIER 1 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021-22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Austin–Round Rock, TX	1	2	2	1	3	1	3	22	8	12	7	4	24	120	48	85
Raleigh, NC	2	3	16	8	24	6	21	28	39	43	9	4	36	38	23	38
Boise City, ID	3	5	15	3	59	4	13	38	38	37	91	90	19	58	20	28
Salt Lake City, UT	4	19	3	24	86	8	27	62	9	31	53	34	28	66	5	13
Provo–Orem, UT	5	1	1	2	73	3	101	82	3	17	24	23	56	28	1	2
Nashville–Davidson–Murfreesboro–Franklin, TN	6	4	25	11	7	17	12	19	4	15	117	51	73	91	71	68
Fayetteville–Springdale–Rogers, AR–MO	7	9	8	6	14	37	81	24	23	3	25	111	93	13	46	62
Dallas–Plano–Irving, TX	8	6	10	9	5	24	9	10	58	39	18	23	30	153	92	136
Olympia–Tumwater, WA	9	42	28	47	31	22	14	9	1	23	105	111	31	137	56	4
Charlotte–Concord–Gastonia, NC–SC	10	20	31	32	67	28	17	12	53	41	47	14	51	60	44	148
Charleston–North Charleston, SC	11	24	54	28	17	35	15	1	30	5	77	70	98	102	49	132

TIER 2 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Orlando–Kissimmee–Sanford, FL	12	13	57	27	2	18	4	36	28	21	75	70	47	181	108	166
Jacksonville, FL	13	27	24	22	44	44	62	3	21	14	118	143	66	110	69	57
Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA	14	26	47	42	36	59	40	112	54	53	33	34	34	100	52	83
Colorado Springs, CO	15	37	9	34	97	52	78	127	31	28	45	34	21	128	4	12
Huntsville, AL	16	40	12	17	82	41	95	17	72	98	15	34	100	7	88	107
Crestview–Fort Walton Beach–Destin, FL	17	22	29	19	94	16	106	46	16	36	92	90	23	108	103	16
Phoenix–Mesa–Scottsdale, AZ	18	8	4	12	60	19	57	110	49	82	57	51	67	103	61	65
Myrtle Beach–Conway–North Myrtle Beach, SC–NC	19	12	101	38	15	26	8	18	77	9	153	143	91	56	180	80
Denver–Aurora–Lakewood, CO	20	28	14	49	61	30	32	181	76	68	14	14	33	135	19	50
Wilmington, NC	21	7	21	21	39	10	48	160	73	49	64	70	62	119	43	74
Sioux Falls, SD	22	9	7	56	134	43	37	68	36	18	152	171	60	9	7	8
Tampa–St. Petersburg–Clearwater, FL	23	17	17	23	25	29	65	25	40	45	61	34	89	154	144	174
Seattle–Bellevue–Everett, WA	24	34	6	83	50	12	152	47	6	73	3	51	18	139	14	159
Palm Bay–Melbourne–Titusville, FL	25	10	5	20	141	27	64	51	66	123	12	23	29	95	140	43
Ogden–Clearfield, UT	26	18	13	29	162	36	93	125	26	32	140	111	5	18	2	1
San Francisco–Redwood City–South San Francisco, CA	27	35	35	71	4	2	196	50	2	90	2	12	14	147	73	192
Knoxville, TN	28	32	61	48	49	55	38	43	17	26	106	90	157	22	138	124
Fort Collins, CO	29	46	43	58	118	48	66	60	81	116	56	14	42	143	9	35
Lakeland–Winter Haven, FL	30	36	19	4	57	13	28	119	13	25	142	111	124	125	163	11
Cape Coral–Fort Myers, FL	31	21	27	13	26	15	10	16	33	51	164	171	77	138	171	140
Fort Worth–Arlington, TX	32	44	40	25	20	46	19	6	177	143	58	143	63	146	98	76
Savannah, GA	33	11	78	37	69	42	5	88	119	57	88	143	43	133	94	59
Montgomery County–Bucks County–Chester County, PA	34	51	94	94	56	98	137	42	115	149	13	9	12	47	15	81
San Antonio–New Braunfels, TX	35	65	37	50	21	62	23	48	135	95	68	34	75	152	168	71
Durham–Chapel Hill, NC	36	29	11	63	122	14	104	21	93	150	6	23	58	42	112	126
San Diego–Carlsbad, CA	37	38	42	75	9	70	125	70	43	175	11	9	16	196	45	79
Greenville–Anderson–Mauldin, SC	38	45	88	53	41	71	30	148	107	29	98	34	131	31	84	112
Las Vegas–Henderson–Paradise, NV	39	50	149	31	1	45	6	14	25	106	151	187	90	179	158	129

TIER 2 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021-22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Portland–Vancouver–Hillsboro, OR-WA	40	67	34	96	53	64	140	61	71	120	19	23	27	158	26	77
Indianapolis–Carmel–Anderson, IN	41	69	77	62	62	81	97	40	130	102	59	90	68	55	39	116
Grand Rapids–Wyoming, MI	42	77	110	113	66	95	45	78	69	60	144	143	105	15	30	27
Deltona–Daytona Beach–Ormond Beach, FL	43	58	39	46	71	40	35	2	64	94	171	143	107	115	176	48
San José–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara, CA	44	14	7	89	35	31	200	71	34	176	1	7	3	141	16	169
College Station–Bryan, TX	45	71	27	7	8	9	1	33	162	10	137	143	197	161	143	184
Chattanooga, TN–GA	46	72	59	70	90	61	34	31	45	13	187	171	129	6	153	97

TIER 3 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Boulder, CO	47	41	41	52	84	33	177	168	27	59	5	7	1	184	6	171
McAllen–Edinburg–Mission, TX	48	60	18	26	34	66	43	7	47	16	176	171	151	97	200	165
Reno, NV	49	16	20	16	33	7	135	30	10	140	147	171	118	149	82	147
Madison, WI	50	76	50	119	161	65	100	153	32	30	22	14	59	99	12	94
Trenton, NJ	51	109	51	67	54	56	69	13	94	129	28	51	134	163	137	169
Philadelphia, PA	52	182	136	98	16	106	33	39	29	2	40	90	142	166	195	194
Harrisburg–Carlisle, PA	53	86	127	104	68	111	107	20	158	119	73	70	113	48	54	36
West Palm Beach–Boca Raton–Delray Beach, FL	54	43	63	55	38	11	11	109	60	33	104	90	128	188	172	197
Miami–Miami Beach–Kendall, FL	55	63	98	64	13	20	2	23	18	20	156	187	180	200	187	196
North Port–Sarasota–Bradenton, FL	56	31	30	39	77	21	29	63	84	42	161	187	50	122	160	178
Ocala, FL	57	54	48	18	42	23	31	101	152	132	188	143	97	79	167	51
Sacramento–Roseville–Arden–Arcade, CA	58	52	44	41	52	69	162	73	63	170	81	51	32	180	63	82
Camden, NJ	59	59	78	92	37	103	91	99	87	173	95	51	40	121	76	41
Stockton–Lodi, CA	60	55	71	5	6	39	119	102	56	138	195	187	48	168	90	51
Asheville, NC	61	47	165	80	119	49	22	55	118	134	121	34	132	43	133	144
Houston–The Woodlands–Sugar Land, TX	62	144	145	57	23	107	20	53	192	190	8	51	52	148	162	164
Bremerton–Silverdale, WA	63	111	56	87	131	112	59	81	19	107	173	171	13	106	18	26
Kennewick–Richland, WA	64	62	36	40	43	88	173	15	169	164	107	143	53	88	72	17
Elgin, IL	65	156	148	147	29	154	73	49	173	56	170	90	37	82	41	19
Naples–Immokalee–Marco Island, FL	66	30	23	15	22	5	7	197	11	22	196	198	22	170	183	198
Kansas City, MO–KS	67	116	65	111	135	116	116	44	123	71	62	23	92	70	37	100
Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario, CA	68	15	22	10	30	34	102	175	70	172	159	111	46	191	83	24
Portland–South Portland, ME	69	25	82	91	156	63	130	188	7	35	83	70	44	84	22	74
Manchester–Nashua, NH	70	48	70	127	147	54	193	103	22	191	27	34	8	131	8	9
Rockingham County–Strafford County, NH	71	23	81	105	123	51	195	97	110	196	48	14	10	105	3	31
Lansing–East Lansing, MI	72	115	89	187	95	127	52	45	14	4	146	143	162	59	65	30
Fort Lauderdale–Pompano Beach–Deerfield Beach, FL	73	39	72	74	48	38	25	129	52	47	114	111	81	198	156	172
Ann Arbor, MI	74	98	97	126	63	152	192	11	35	44	46	51	49	130	31	185

TIER 3 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Tallahassee, FL	75	64	86	59	92	58	83	56	15	6	122	111	174	156	116	195
Salem, OR	76	95	33	72	127	50	126	32	51	78	179	143	95	144	115	10
Pensacola–Ferry Pass–Brent, FL	77	74	76	43	125	60	82	74	146	52	154	171	38	126	114	55
Anaheim–Santa Ana–Irvine, CA	78	56	69	106	32	114	175	83	68	171	23	4	2	192	59	146
Lancaster, PA	79	91	129	101	93	74	58	128	85	128	123	70	177	34	122	23
Port St. Lucie, FL	80	33	32	14	65	25	46	34	179	86	169	187	101	160	159	154
Cambridge–Newton–Framingham, MA	81	53	49	118	111	82	190	57	67	145	4	2	20	157	29	173
El Paso, TX	82	122	73	65	72	75	54	96	12	1	136	111	158	162	197	144
Tacoma–Lakewood, WA	83	138	131	61	81	68	155	122	111	65	177	187	15	150	13	6
Allentown–Bethlehem–Easton, PA-NJ	84	66	134	93	96	93	80	139	121	97	34	34	140	109	105	69
York–Hanover, PA	85	85	159	121	76	123	56	144	171	158	101	34	145	35	32	5
Winston–Salem, NC	86T	82	96	99	153	78	50	66	90	62	132	70	169	23	132	124
Fort Wayne, IN	86T	101	134	86	70	90	120	75	148	135	180	143	80	3	87	34
Wichita, KS	88	154	130	109	136	121	36	186	153	11	16	90	119	50	78	67
Atlantic City–Hammonton, NJ	89	53	184	129	10	110	41	58	61	76	168	171	109	159	157	87
Richmond, VA	90	160	123	100	101	86	44	121	124	72	108	143	133	78	74	96
Cincinnati, OH–KY–IN	91	113	111	102	129	108	148	54	116	89	69	70	112	26	75	130
Waco, TX	92	106	52	60	64	67	53	27	175	99	116	111	195	134	165	133
Greeley, CO	93	126	101	85	58	117	178	120	194	192	31	90	61	77	17	7
Santa Rosa, CA	94	73	68	166	40	84	191	85	55	182	65	12	4	183	55	102
Clarksville, TN–KY	95	105	120	45	87	141	180	84	20	7	199	171	103	87	127	3
Boston, MA	96	75	114	128	78	92	167	41	24	136	38	51	70	177	80	191
Springfield, MO	97	89	55	51	117	53	55	151	126	141	139	143	196	76	53	20
Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC–VA–MD–WV	98	134	67	134	160	128	172	94	82	111	29	70	7	104	34	40
Lincoln, NE	99	141	26	158	200	105	124	86	44	8	93	90	84	86	27	92
Albuquerque, NM	100	137	75	103	104	76	49	108	101	80	82	143	146	98	135	128
Santa Maria–Santa Barbara, CA	101	49	57	77	113	79	181	8	99	177	21	2	69	195	145	182
Minneapolis–St. Paul–Bloomington, MN–WI	102	103	119	157	163	142	123	134	108	103	41	51	39	68	11	54
Des Moines–West Des Moines, IA	103	117	95	82	116	115	186	143	65	79	167	143	72	24	10	45

TIER 3 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Brownsville–Harlingen, TX	104	70	109	35	55	32	16	159	92	131	198	187	200	67	199	85
Gainesville, FL	105	57	66	69	158	47	84	64	5	27	155	143	175	151	118	193
St. Louis, MO–IL	106	140	149	135	155	129	112	136	117	58	67	34	82	27	66	127
Columbus, OH	107	102	80	84	133	94	109	157	83	85	90	187	35	71	62	110
Worcester, MA–CT	108	94	85	146	138	118	76	150	79	157	36	23	87	136	36	90
Columbia, SC	109	127	100	95	114	109	71	170	143	24	135	90	125	54	106	78
Omaha–Council Bluffs, NE–IA	110	120	60	152	198	87	72	107	128	54	109	111	85	64	35	84
Spokane–Spokane Valley, WA	111	90	46	54	108	57	151	116	48	174	134	143	64	132	77	108
Oakland–Hayward–Berkeley, CA	112	61	53	133	88	138	194	77	75	181	10	1	6	173	47	161
Little Rock–North Little Rock–Conway, AR	113	145	126	76	103	135	134	65	136	46	110	90	147	29	141	143
Scranton–Wilkes-Barre–Hazleton, PA	114	130	164	162	47	132	70	37	151	159	96	111	170	65	148	57
Hickory–Lenoir–Morganton, NC	115	83	91	116	149	72	26	161	164	50	127	23	187	2	174	113
Newark, NJ–PA	116	107	133	131	46	158	145	105	50	112	26	14	55	169	128	189
Anchorage, AK	117	175	196	179	150	180	98	26	200	187	39	90	9	101	38	14
Kingsport–Bristol–Bristol, TN–VA	118	161	161	150	110	147	88	95	41	34	125	51	191	1	185	123
Wilmington, DE–MD–NJ	119T	184	172	114	99	170	94	133	161	124	85	111	79	63	64	33
Kalamazoo–Portage, MI	119T	114	103	149	100	136	74	111	62	70	84	51	179	96	79	163
Visalia–Porterville, CA	121	88	64	33	11	89	111	52	132	178	197	187	150	164	186	42
Los Angeles–Long Beach–Glendale, CA	122	68	87	124	28	113	158	89	57	161	49	14	71	199	155	188
Albany–Schenectady–Troy, NY	123	142	105	181	142	126	114	87	89	137	42	34	114	80	68	116
Spartanburg, SC	124	96	83	44	188	77	79	72	154	77	190	111	178	41	130	104
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY–IN	125	97	115	115	152	97	47	135	106	69	166	111	122	46	101	142
Cedar Rapids, IA	126	177	124	173	197	169	39	190	182	142	54	23	65	5	21	18
New York–Jersey City–White Plains, NY–NJ	127	93	116	125	12	101	122	93	37	63	74	111	138	197	198	199

TIER 4 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Salisbury, MD–DE	128	80	141	78	105	80	90	149	137	162	172	111	74	16	178	101
Warren–Troy–Farmington Hills, MI	129	78	168	165	126	188	176	152	103	66	66	51	41	33	42	70
Chicago–Naperville–Arlington Heights, IL	130	118	121	153	75	122	96	164	80	61	78	34	117	140	120	177
Lexington–Fayette, KY	131	159	163	112	80	173	153	29	102	55	150	90	104	114	107	187
Tucson, AZ	132	112	38	90	144	83	149	131	100	115	52	34	121	112	142	157
Killeen–Temple, TX	133	104	90	79	146	125	63	98	42	48	182	198	164	116	126	97
Dayton, OH	134	162	136	170	178	149	154	59	140	121	76	34	120	32	102	56
Oxnard–Thousand Oaks–Ventura, CA	135	79	158	120	83	166	197	80	160	189	37	9	25	190	67	121
Gary, IN	136	169	179	132	109	143	77	162	172	93	174	143	110	19	109	22
Salinas, CA	137	171	131	108	27	174	165	4	91	167	194	187	54	186	131	87
Fresno, CA	138	84	62	36	19	73	141	69	144	180	191	171	135	185	173	155
Syracuse, NY	139	133	175	177	124	165	133	155	104	155	44	14	102	61	117	73
South Bend–Mishawaka, IN–MI	140	136	144	197	176	91	18	118	183	101	163	143	130	37	100	61
Lubbock, TX	141	149	45	73	115	96	67	146	78	81	126	143	173	165	134	186
Green Bay, WI	142	151	92	156	170	133	113	165	155	122	131	111	106	14	33	37
Rockford, IL	143	172	184	182	51	190	24	196	174	75	160	70	136	40	152	53
Oklahoma City, OK	144	125	142	81	112	144	86	126	198	194	43	143	88	85	124	137
Lake County–Kenosha County, IL–WI	145	99	112	148	185	137	168	183	98	118	17	51	57	75	25	138
Bakersfield, CA	146	119	113	30	18	120	183	117	195	197	55	143	83	189	170	121
Silver Spring–Frederick–Rockville, MD	147	100	93	159	165	164	199	180	127	153	30	23	11	89	24	62
Pittsburgh, PA	148	124	153	184	159	155	163	79	159	160	20	14	155	11	81	134
Bridgeport–Stamford–Norwalk, CT	149	155	182	191	137	176	85	174	86	105	32	23	45	174	50	200
Montgomery, AL	150	165	167	145	181	162	129	114	125	67	120	143	78	21	191	64
Mobile, AL	151	139	122	117	143	119	99	100	166	19	102	143	199	83	188	175
Davenport–Moline–Rock Island, IA–IL	152	121	165	176	171	156	75	147	113	156	138	111	159	20	111	32
Evansville, IN–KY	153	167	173	168	167	157	60	154	142	127	97	90	143	53	104	115
Detroit–Dearborn–Livonia, MI	154	178	160	154	85	168	42	142	170	100	87	51	152	127	189	181
Baton Rouge, LA	155	194	193	137	128	172	51	106	181	179	63	111	149	74	164	139

TIER 4 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Nassau County–Suffolk County, NY	156	129	188	175	107	182	171	167	150	114	100	90	17	172	40	49
Reading, PA	157	185	190	164	89	167	121	145	180	96	113	70	166	92	150	66
Birmingham–Hoover, AL	158	110	104	88	164	104	89	179	147	91	119	143	144	52	161	176
Urban Honolulu, HI	159	152	191	200	45	199	143	90	129	64	175	171	108	193	60	59
Peoria, IL	160	192	192	178	130	198	174	137	114	110	86	70	154	17	96	90
San Luis Obispo–Paso Robles–Arroyo Grande, CA	161	87	139	130	106	134	198	5	188	185	128	111	26	178	123	190
Roanoke, VA	162	179	155	141	169	140	105	130	157	125	130	70	190	45	125	109
New Haven–Milford, CT	163	146	117	136	139	153	142	138	109	109	99	70	111	167	89	167
Greensboro–High Point, NC	164	108	138	139	177	124	144	140	163	113	94	34	163	69	119	150
Modesto, CA	165	92	74	68	79	85	187	177	131	193	192	171	76	175	136	43
Buffalo–Cheektowaga–Niagara Falls, NY	166	147	171	194	140	178	139	92	122	139	80	70	137	62	139	135
Duluth, MN–WI	167	153	180	195	192	131	61	166	145	147	143	90	167	72	95	29
Providence–Warwick, RI–MA	168	123	157	155	121	145	92	198	134	148	124	111	123	124	97	99
Augusta–Richmond County, GA–SC	169	168	106	107	191	100	87	187	189	74	162	90	176	36	146	151
Fort Smith, AR–OK	170	176	118	144	179	146	108	182	120	40	149	70	198	12	194	118
Columbus, GA–AL	171	188	152	140	168	163	127	67	74	108	141	111	188	107	177	159
Vallejo–Fairfield, CA	172	191	99	123	74	193	189	115	168	184	129	171	86	194	70	21
Corpus Christi, TX	173	195	183	172	132	192	68	76	59	199	72	111	193	142	193	148
Baltimore–Columbia–Towson, MD	174	131	106	163	182	151	170	184	133	163	50	51	116	113	57	104
Memphis, TN–MS–AR	175	135	128	110	145	102	160	193	96	38	185	90	153	117	179	157
Virginia Beach–Norfolk–Newport News, VA–NC	176	157	140	142	187	159	115	189	105	92	148	171	115	155	58	47
Hagerstown–Martinsburg, MD–WV	177	57	156	171	199	130	166	199	46	165	145	111	172	39	93	15
Milwaukee–Waukesha–West Allis, WI	178T	187	147	180	184	160	146	169	149	117	70	51	96	111	85	152
Beaumont–Port Arthur, TX	178T	190	185	190	91	200	103	35	199	188	115	111	182	51	184	153
Fayetteville, NC	180	163	174	122	196	139	132	191	95	87	184	171	165	123	86	39

TIER 5 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Springfield, MA	181	150	143	143	120	179	110	123	112	151	158	111	160	171	151	114
Gulfport–Biloxi–Pascagoula, MS	182	128	125	97	186	177	184	91	139	88	165	111	186	90	182	72
Hartford–West Hartford–East Hartford, CT	183	181	176	183	173	194	169	173	97	83	60	143	99	118	51	131
Eugene, OR	184	143	106	161	166	99	157	193	88	166	133	70	127	187	121	87
Tulsa, OK	185	166	169	138	180	175	131	158	197	198	35	70	161	57	154	110
Akron, OH	186	189	154	192	190	183	179	156	178	146	71	90	94	30	91	103
Cleveland–Elyria, OH	187	164	162	169	193	150	136	176	141	126	103	70	126	73	147	168
Rochester, NY	188	183	146	188	148	189	156	178	165	154	51	51	171	93	110	106
Toledo, OH	189	158	187	185	175	185	161	185	138	84	157	51	141	44	99	141
Flint, MI	190	180	194	151	102	196	164	104	176	130	193	171	156	94	149	120
Huntington–Ashland, WV–KY–OH	191	198	189	174	154	171	118	124	190	104	186	187	189	4	169	162
Canton–Massillon, OH	192	170	181	186	194	184	138	192	167	152	189	111	192	8	113	24
Merced, CA	193	132	84	66	98	148	188	141	184	169	200	198	148	176	192	95
Utica–Rome, NY	194	174	177	198	195	161	159	193	156	144	178	111	181	25	129	46
Jackson, MS	195	200	178	167	151	186	117	132	187	133	183	143	168	81	190	156
Lafayette, LA	196	186	186	160	183	195	182	113	193	195	79	111	184	49	166	180
Dutchess County–Putnam County, NY	197	196	195	196	174	187	185	200	185	186	89	90	139	182	28	93
Youngstown–Warren–Boardman, OH–PA	198	197	200	199	172	197	150	172	186	168	181	111	185	10	175	118
New Orleans–Metairie, LA	199	193	198	193	157	191	128	163	191	200	111	111	183	145	181	179
Shreveport–Bossier City, LA	200	199	199	189	189	181	147	171	196	183	112	70	194	129	196	183

Note: "T" next to a number implies a tie between cities

Source: *Milken Institute (2024)*

SMALL CITIES' RANKINGS

TIER 1

1. IDAHO FALLS

IDAHO FALLS, ID MSA

Idaho Falls, ID, tops the list of small cities for the second straight year. The metro has experienced a consistently robust labor market performance, ranking third in five-year job growth and ninth in short-term job growth. The metro's continuous top position on the ranking, however, is due to its strong performance across all components of the index, signaling that growth in Idaho Falls has been sustainable and inclusive.

Idaho Falls draws much of its economic strength from the Idaho National Laboratory (INL), which employs more than 6,000 researchers and support staff.[55] The metro's scientific research and development sector grew by a robust 6.6 percent in 2022. Because the INL's main research area is in nuclear energy, Idaho Falls has an unusually large and growing waste management sector, with waste management employment growing by 19.3 percent in 2022.

In addition to its research occupations, Idaho Falls has a high employment share in medical services, where it serves as a regional hub. The health-care and social assistance sector has been crucial in driving the city's five-year job growth, having grown 32.6 percent during that time frame. Beyond the health industry, employment in leisure and hospitality has also increased steadily in Idaho Falls, with its five-year job growth in this sector at 25.1 percent (compared to -1.3 percent nationwide).

The diversity of Idaho Falls' economy has contributed to its status as one of the least unequal cities in the country, with the metro area ranking eighth (relative to small cities) on the Gini index. The city also has one of the lowest shares of residents vulnerable to disasters among small cities, ranking eighth on community resilience. Idaho Falls' strong and inclusive growth, however, has not been fully reflected in its wages, with the metro ranked 79th in one-year wage growth (possibly because of relatively low growth in wages in the retail trade and government sectors, which jointly account for almost one-fourth of the metro's employment).

Maintained #1 rank	Indicator	Rank[54]
Job growth (2017–22)	20.5%	3rd
Job growth (2021–22)	4.4%	38th
Wage growth (2017–22)	48.7%	9th
Wage growth (2021–22)	9.9%	79th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	4.3%	9th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	49.5%	14th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	9.9%	43rd
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.87	27th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	3	98th
Households with broadband	92.1%	39th
Households with affordable housing costs	76.1%	37th
Community resilience	84.1%	8th
Gini index (income inequality)	40.8	8th

Strengths

- Idaho Falls enjoys a vibrant labor market fueled by the health-care sector and the Idaho National Laboratory.
- The metro has robust and equitable economic development, ranking in the top 10 on income distribution and resilience metrics.

Areas of Focus

- Wages have not grown on par with employment; the metro ranks last among Tier 1 small cities in one-year wage growth.
- The growth of the metro's technology sector has been concentrated in only a few high-tech industries.

2. COEUR D'ALENE

COEUR D'ALENE, ID MSA

Coeur d'Alene, ID, ranks second among small metropolitan areas, gaining five ranks from last year and continuing its six-year streak among the top 10 small metros. The metro area has experienced both economic and population growth in recent years. Since 1990, the city of Coeur d'Alene has nearly doubled in size, and the population of the entire metropolitan area grew by 8.4 percent from 2019 to 2022.[56] This population growth has been accompanied by a rapid increase in jobs and wages, as well as expansion of the high-tech sector: The metro ranked seventh, third, and sixth in five-year job, wage, and high-tech GDP growth, respectively, in this year's ranking. The area also saw a 3.9 percentage point increase in broadband access, jumping 69 ranks from last year's performance on this metric.

The information service sector stands out as an important driver of Coeur d'Alene's recent growth. Between 2021 and 2022, wages in this sector increased by 41.5 percent, while its employment grew by 11.1 percent. Growth in the information services sector has also boosted high-tech GDP growth in Coeur d'Alene. Between 2017 and 2022, high-tech GDP increased 64.1 percent (placing the metro sixth among small cities on this metric), with software publishing industries seeing a nearly 500 percent jump in real growth during this period.

Despite its strong five-year performance, the metro saw a relative slowdown in employment growth between 2021 and 2022, ranking below the median (120th) among small metro areas in one-year job growth. More recently, Coeur d'Alene ranked 45th in short-term job growth (from August 2022 to August 2023). This relative recovery signals that the comparatively poor 2021 to 2022 performance might have been an outlier in the metro's continued rise. Another area of concern is the metro's rising costs. Since 2016, the average price of a Kootenai County home has risen 160 percent.[57] Although the metro area improved by 34 ranks this year, to ensure its attractiveness to new talent, policymakers should work on expanding its affordable housing options going forward.

Gained 5 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	13.6%	7th
Job growth (2021–22)	2.6%	120th
Wage growth (2017–22)	59.2%	3rd
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.4%	22nd
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	2.8%	45th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	64.1%	6th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	12.0%	21st
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.59	72nd
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	6	15th
Households with broadband	92.9%	23rd
Households with affordable housing costs	69.2%	146th
Community resilience	81.7%	41st
Gini index (income inequality)	43.8	52nd

Strengths

» With a robust and thriving high-tech industry and competitive wage offerings, Coeur d'Alene is well set up to continue attracting high-quality talent and high-wage jobs to the North Idaho regional economy.

Areas of Focus

» Relative slowing in job growth during late 2021 and early 2022 provides a note of caution to area leaders.

» Coeur d'Alene has consistently performed below average on housing affordability, ranking 146th this year and 180th last year on the measure.

3. GAINESVILLE

GAINESVILLE, GA MSA

Gainesville, GA, gains seven positions, landing third in this year's ranking. Gainesville has been one of the most consistently high-performing metros in the country, remaining among the top 10 small cities for eight years running—largely because of Gainesville's ability to maintain an exceptionally strong labor market. The metro area ranked third and 15th in one-year (eighth and 11th in five-year) wage and job growth. Broadband coverage is also remarkably high in Gainesville, with 93.5 percent of households having a broadband internet subscription, which is four percentage points higher than the small city average.

Gainesville is nicknamed the "poultry capital of the world," and the poultry industry remains a major employer in the metropolitan area through firms such as Fieldale Farms and Victory Processing. In addition, the metro's strong manufacturing base employs 22.7 percent of its workers, more than double the national average (8.4 percent). Gainesville's job market has been boosted by its professional and business services, and its education and health-services sectors, which experienced job growth of 33.6 percent and 19.6 percent, respectively, from 2017 to 2022, jointly accounting for more than one-fourth (28.2 percent) of the metro's total employment in 2022.

Gainesville's consistently strong economy and high growth have strained the city's housing market. Roughly 29 percent of households in Gainesville spend at least one-third of their total income on housing costs, with the metro ranked 121st among small cities in housing-cost burden, largely because of high housing demand. A 2023 analysis by bankrate.com found Gainesville to have the hottest housing market of any city in the country.[58] Although partially reflecting the metro's vigorous job market, the strained housing market presents a challenge for city officials seeking to tame costs, which could limit the city's future growth.

Gained 7 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	12.2%	11th
Job growth (2021–22)	5.5%	15th
Wage growth (2017–22)	49.3%	8th
Wage growth (2021–22)	16.7%	3rd
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	2.1%	80th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	39.2%	27th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.8%	33rd
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.42	148th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	4	65th
Households with broadband	93.5%	14th
Households with affordable housing costs	71.4%	121st
Community resilience	80.7%	60th
Gini index (income inequality)	43.4	43rd

Strengths

- Led by its manufacturing and health services sectors, Gainesville ranks third and 15th in one-year wage and job growth.
- The metro enjoys robust internet coverage, ranking second among Tier 1 small cities (14th overall) in the percentage of households with a broadband subscription.

Areas of Focus

- Although the high-tech sector's recent growth has been solid, high-tech GDP concentration remains low.
- Gainesville has struggled with housing affordability, which could worsen with continued population growth.

4. ST. GEORGE

ST. GEORGE, UT MSA

St. George, UT, drops one spot to fourth place in the 2024 rankings, landing among the top 10 small cities for the eighth straight year. The city has experienced strong labor market performance in recent years, ranking second among small cities in five-year job and wage growth. St. George is a modern-day western boomtown; in 2022, the Census Bureau named it the fastest-growing metro area in the country for the second straight year.[59] This boom has contributed to a thriving construction sector, which accounts for 12.1 percent of employment (compared to a national metro average of 5.1 percent) and has grown by nearly 50 percent since 2017.

Located in a beautiful mountain setting and close to Zion National Park, St. George also has a high employment share in the leisure and hospitality sector, which accounts for 14.4 percent of its jobs. This sector has seen strong growth as it rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic, with employment growing by 7.2 percent from 2021 to 2022.

Although St. George has a relatively small high-tech sector (ranking 119th in high-tech GDP concentration, as measured by the location quotient), its high-tech GDP has grown rapidly. The city ranks first overall in five-year high-tech GDP growth, mainly attributable to excellent performance from its computer systems design sector and architectural/engineering sector, which grew by 121.9 percent and 73.6 percent, respectively, from 2017 to 2022.

St. George's rapid recent growth has brought challenges. Its housing supply has struggled to keep pace with demand, with the city ranking 125th among small cities in housing affordability. St. George also faces an uncertain water future. The city relies on the Virgin River (a tributary of the Colorado River) for the predominant share of its water supply. Recent droughts, combined with the area's high growth, have put an excessive burden on the Virgin River's capacity, leading city officials to warn that water shortages could limit the city's future growth.

Dropped 1 rank	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	25.9%	2nd
Job growth (2021–22)	4.8%	29th
Wage growth (2017–22)	62.2%	2nd
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.0%	26th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	2.0%	85th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	74.4%	1st
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.3%	41st
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.49	119th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	3	98th
Households with broadband	94.2%	7th
Households with affordable housing costs	71.0%	125th
Community resilience	83.2%	18th
Gini index (income inequality)	47.5	149th

Strengths

» From 2017 to 2022, St. George had the second highest job and wage growth, and the highest high-tech GDP growth among small cities.

» St. George enjoys robust broadband coverage and resilience to economic and natural disasters, ranking 7th and 18th in percentage of households with broadband and in community resilience, respectively.

Areas of Focus

» St. George has the highest income inequality of any Tier 1 small city because a high percentage of its population works in low-paid service sectors.

5. TWIN FALLS

TWIN FALLS, ID MSA

Twin Falls, ID, rises 10 spots, joining Tier 1 cities for the first time. The city's high position is driven by a well-balanced performance across most components of the ranking, with the metro area placing among the top 80 small cities in all but two components of the index. Twin Falls has experienced particularly strong wage performance. The metropolitan area ranked 13th in five-year wage growth, placing 10th among small cities in wage growth from 2021 to 2022.

Like several cities in Idaho, Twin Falls has experienced rapid population growth, which has stimulated increased construction across the metro area. Employment in the city's construction sector grew by 53.7 percent from 2017 to 2022, roughly quadruple that of the sector's national growth (11.2 percent) over the same period. Twin Falls' leisure and hospitality sector has further reinforced the city's growth, with employment increasing by 24.6 percent from 2017 to 2022 in this sector.

Twin Falls has a small but growing high-tech sector. It ranks in the bottom quartile in high-tech concentration but performs well in both one-year and five-year high-tech growth. Twin Falls' tech sector has been led by software publishing and computer system design, which have grown by 896.3 percent and 260.1 percent, respectively, during the past five years (albeit starting from low levels). Although these sectors still comprise a small share of the Twin Falls economy, their rapid growth offers future promise for the city's high-tech sector.

Twin Falls performs well in access to economic opportunities. It is one of the least unequal cities in the country, ranking 13th (among small cities) in income inequality. Moreover, Twin Falls has increased its percentage of households with a broadband subscription (from 87.8 percent last year to 93.2 percent this year), placing 18th on this metric. The city has also improved its ranking in access to affordable housing, signaling that, so far at least, growth in Twin Falls has been sustainable.

Gained 10 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	9.2%	17th
Job growth (2021–22)	2.2%	150th
Wage growth (2017–22)	44.3%	13th
Wage growth (2021–22)	13.5%	10th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.0%	33rd
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	43.7%	23rd
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.8%	32nd
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.41	152nd
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	4	65th
Households with broadband	93.2%	18th
Households with affordable housing costs	74.1%	73rd
Community resilience	79.9%	72nd
Gini index (income inequality)	41.7	13th

Strengths

- Twin Falls exhibited balanced performance across all categories of the BPC index, combining a strong labor market, solid high-tech growth, and widespread access to opportunities.
- The city enjoys a remarkably equitable distribution of income, placing second among Tier 1 small cities in the Gini index (13th across all small cities).

Areas of Focus

- Although growing, Twin Falls' high-tech sector remains relatively small, with the metro area ranking last among Tier 1 cities in its high-tech contribution to the city's GDP (i.e., location quotient).

6. BEND

BEND-REDMOND, OR MSA

Bend–Redmond, OR, drops one spot to the sixth position in this year's ranking but remains in Tier 1 and among the top 15 small cities for the eighth year in a row, largely because of its consistently strong labor market performance. This year, Bend ranks 13th in five-year job growth, 6th in five-year wage growth, and 19th in high-tech GDP growth. A tourist destination known for its natural beauty, Bend has a high employment share in the leisure and hospitality sector, which grew by 9.7 percent in 2022 as it continued to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Despite its continuously strong performance, however, Bend's labor market may be facing some turbulence ahead, as signaled by the metro area's drop to the 101st position on short-term job growth in this year's ranking.

Complementing its labor market performance, Bend ranks in the top quartile in all four high-tech components of the BPC index. Real GDP growth has been particularly strong in Bend's software publishing sector, which accounts for 3.5 percent of Bend's overall GDP and experienced a real growth of 66.1 percent from 2017 to 2022.

Bend has struggled to contain housing costs, ranking last in housing affordability among Tier 1 small cities (184th across all small metro areas). Bend's poor housing affordability may begin to affect its labor market. In a 2022 survey by the Bend Chamber of Commerce, 81 percent of surveyed companies reported that high housing costs have complicated efforts to attract new workers from outside the city.[60] This reporting aligns with Bend's relatively low ranking in short-term job growth. The ability of city officials to contain housing costs may determine the city's future labor market (and overall economic) performance.

Dropped 1 rank	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	10.3%	13rd
Job growth (2021–22)	3.5%	76th
Wage growth (2017–22)	50.8%	6th
Wage growth (2021–22)	11.0%	40th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	1.8%	101st
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	47.5%	19th
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	10.4%	38th
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.83	31st
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	5	33rd
Households with broadband	93.3%	16th
Households with affordable housing costs	65.1%	184th
Community resilience	82.3%	32nd
Gini index (income inequality)	47.0	133rd

Strengths

- Bend has experienced excellent five-year job and wage growth, ranking among the top 15 small cities on both these metrics.
- The metro area also ranks well in broadband access and resilience to disasters, placing 16th and 32nd on these two components of the ranking.

Areas of Focus

- Among Tier 1 cities, Bend ranks last in the percentage of households with affordable housing, and second to last in income inequality.

7. POCATELLO

POCATELLO, ID MSA

Pocatello, ID, lands in the seventh position among Tier 1 small cities, gaining 39 spots from last year. The metro area gained 100 spots in its short-term job growth. Now in 19th position, the metro is the second highest-ranking Tier 1 small city (behind Idaho Falls) on this metric. Overall labor market performance has been strong, with the city placing in or near the top quartile on all job and wage growth categories in the ranking.

Pocatello's labor market performance has been bolstered by the recovery of its leisure and hospitality sector. Following a drop in 2020, employment in this sector grew by 9.4 percent in 2021 and 7.4 percent in 2022. Wages in leisure and hospitality also rose, increasing by 17.9 percent during 2022. Other sectors with notable growth during 2022 included construction and management. Employment in the city's construction sector grew by 32.7 percent from 2017 to 2022, while management jobs grew by 71.6 percent (with an accompanying wage growth of 144.3 percent) during the same period.

In addition to its economic performance, Pocatello also ranks in the top quartile of small cities in resilience (44th) and income inequality (23rd). The city's strong performance on these metrics highlights the sustainability and inclusivity of its recent growth. However, one clear area of improvement for Pocatello is broadband access, where the city ranks last among Tier 1 small cities in the 129th position. With the rising prevalence of remote work and online services, Pocatello's city officials will need to expand its broadband coverage to ensure that growth reaches every community in Pocatello.

Gained 39 ranks	Indicator	Rank
Job growth (2017–22)	7.3%	28th
Job growth (2021–22)	4.0%	56th
Wage growth (2017–22)	36.6%	30th
Wage growth (2021–22)	12.7%	15th
Short-term job growth (8/2022–8/2023)	3.9%	19th
High-tech GDP growth (2017–22)	34.5%	41st
High-tech GDP growth (2021–22)	4.1%	110th
High-tech GDP location quotient	0.51	110th
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	3	98th
Households with broadband	89.0%	129th
Households with affordable housing costs	72.9%	95th
Community resilience	81.5%	44th
Gini index (income inequality)	42.5	23rd

Strengths

- Pocatello has recorded consistently good labor market performance, ranking among the top 30 small cities in five-year job and wage growth and in the top 20 in short-term job growth.
- Despite rapid growth, Pocatello has maintained a relatively equitable income distribution, ranking 23rd among small cities in the Gini index.

Areas of Focus

- Pocatello underperforms its peer Tier 1 small cities in providing high-performance internet service, with only 89.0 percent of households having a broadband subscription.

COMPLETE RESULTS: 2024 BEST-PERFORMING SMALL CITIES

TIER 1 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021-22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Idaho Falls, ID	1	1	5	3	38	9	79	9	14	43	27	98	39	37	8	8
Coeur d'Alene, ID	2	7	3	7	120	3	22	45	6	21	72	15	23	146	41	52
Gainesville, GA	3	10	8	11	15	8	3	80	27	33	148	65	14	121	60	43
St. George, UT	4	3	2	2	29	2	26	85	1	41	119	98	7	125	18	149
Twin Falls, ID	5	15	*	17	150	13	10	33	23	32	152	65	18	73	72	13
Bend–Redmond, OR	6	5	10	13	76	6	40	101	19	38	31	33	16	184	32	133
Pocatello, ID	7	46	31	28	56	30	15	19	41	110	110	98	129	95	44	23

TIER 2 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Wenatchee, WA	8	13	35	30	25	43	50	54	12	120	144	150	6	18	141	10
Jacksonville, NC	9	59	97	25	89	68	66	17	4	15	117	150	11	167	25	14
The Villages, FL	10	4	65	1	3	1	83	4	113	86	69	182	32	63	199	51
Punta Gorda, FL	11	6	20	10	11	7	34	50	8	5	172	182	35	141	193	47
Bellingham, WA	12	32	37	82	20	33	19	53	52	87	47	15	20	198	52	167
Daphne–Fairhope–Foley, AL	13	16	21	9	21	5	12	28	25	22	182	182	113	72	139	141
Auburn–Opelika, AL	14	26	39	18	27	25	17	15	87	8	150	33	166	147	84	178
Logan, UT–ID	15	2	1	5	73	4	142	155	7	145	59	65	12	116	1	16
Midland, TX	16	64	104	4	1	10	1	2	156	198	1	150	42	157	97	200
Bloomington, IN	17	12	18	58	19	23	16	127	18	20	33	33	118	155	101	168
Missoula, MT	18	8	25	40	96	11	9	95	3	93	116	98	38	161	14	164
Burlington–South Burlington, VT	19	78	114	139	65	84	45	162	33	28	20	5	22	163	10	33
Appleton, WI	20	48	73	97	129	89	119	89	10	27	89	98	25	13	3	11
Brunswick, GA	21	30	91	43	17	26	6	34	84	30	159	65	137	67	180	192
Cape Girardeau, MO–IL	22	130	61	83	141	62	44	7	49	76	64	33	164	43	74	75
Columbus, IN	23	104	127	131	24	106	18	103	60	18	108	15	79	68	7	178
Lebanon, PA	24	19	85	66	92	38	86	8	162	148	48	15	151	57	62	42
Fond du Lac, WI	25	56	72	116	139	87	69	139	55	16	43	6	44	79	22	28
Charlottesville, VA	26	67	81	75	59	71	127	47	48	48	34	6	65	118	65	184
Manhattan, KS	27	187	149	150	36	117	63	3	62	10	109	98	17	187	2	107
Abilene, TX	28	90	10	19	45	22	13	74	140	194	55	98	55	171	137	56
Lafayette–West Lafayette, IN	29	70	83	42	14	66	7	201	34	51	136	98	51	138	38	111
Lawrence, KS	30	159	88	118	13	97	53	14	83	116	46	98	37	177	15	152
Sebastian–Vero Beach, FL	31	31	19	20	28	14	14	138	22	6	124	98	102	126	175	201
Corvallis, OR	32	92	57	130	12	73	123	18	68	118	5	1	36	194	21	186
Warner Robins, GA	33	36	52	26	146	56	81	83	42	52	114	98	72	109	58	32
Homosassa Springs, FL	34	66	116	52	26	21	2	10	176	113	30	182	31	110	200	191
Albany, OR	35	79	59	35	42	45	71	159	71	14	145	98	70	158	82	17
Rapid City, SD	36	17	28	36	61	36	113	136	5	7	121	98	66	142	92	79
Decatur, AL	37	72	33	22	95	16	41	124	112	58	74	65	181	3	161	92
Jefferson City, MO	38	163	47	76	131	135	152	21	96	59	44	33	112	1	40	20

TIER 2 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021-22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Bowling Green, KY	39	103	146	84	48	75	8	12	108	34	126	150	98	75	144	156
Winchester, VA–WV	40	58	32	16	67	31	165	140	53	62	120	150	96	32	64	9
Eau Claire, WI	41	65	56	90	100	72	103	178	82	106	50	33	46	30	33	17
Longview, WA	42	52	42	41	53	32	149	105	38	137	113	33	40	175	76	48
Hilton Head Island–Bluffton–Beaufort, SC	43	40	94	23	64	19	25	92	44	155	158	182	24	80	115	166
Tyler, TX	44	29	22	32	51	39	30	121	153	166	32	98	69	131	158	38
Sherman–Denison, TX	45	35	64	47	127	27	100	24	51	154	40	65	78	159	99	120
San Angelo, TX	46	135	105	60	54	69	24	40	188	133	28	33	138	169	89	115
Jackson, MI	47	75	143	105	50	119	89	91	121	128	24	98	68	39	48	53
Jonesboro, AR	48	42	26	14	101	20	77	43	31	61	192	150	64	55	157	188
Walla Walla, WA	49	37	6	29	97	37	74	104	76	158	63	65	61	160	73	116

TIER 3 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Sebring, FL	50	85	87	50	22	59	21	70	69	25	178	182	184	27	202	104
Niles–Benton Harbor, MI	51	183	153	145	31	162	39	41	144	115	56	6	43	88	93	124
Janesville–Beloit, WI	52	98	71	101	147	83	121	90	134	80	52	6	74	93	31	4
Staunton–Waynesboro, VA	53	119	49	65	55	108	162	55	120	112	96	33	139	50	79	7
Carson City, NV	54	28	76	74	166	79	94	6	9	39	82	65	143	185	126	34
Monroe, MI	55	160	177	155	9	163	11	69	182	159	17	65	136	40	30	74
Mankato–North Mankato, MN	56	143	92	138	88	125	95	11	170	172	79	15	48	96	11	57
Elkhart–Goshen, IN	57	18	41	45	82	12	4	203	50	31	196	65	148	74	105	157
Grand Junction, CO	58	39	122	55	125	50	68	170	93	45	115	98	30	168	50	37
Blacksburg–Christiansburg–Radford, VA	59	41	108	51	58	34	58	172	117	77	83	65	114	69	110	154
Johnson City, TN	60	25	55	46	84	48	64	102	78	153	57	33	168	26	150	180
Champaign–Urbana, IL	61	45	9	49	44	67	124	77	80	64	99	65	106	149	63	198
Billings, MT	62	21	62	53	103	28	20	199	149	174	147	150	53	36	24	29
Greenville, NC	63	142	40	99	102	70	111	75	63	36	26	65	76	134	133	147
Yuba City, CA	64	49	12	6	8	44	181	13	163	167	165	15	94	199	109	98
Chambersburg–Waynesboro, PA	65	108	125	80	63	100	73	118	133	47	135	98	142	49	94	34
Joplin, MO	66	55	86	86	113	103	65	87	147	102	118	6	110	71	124	23
Bangor, ME	67	61	113	77	90	49	109	179	2	37	60	150	81	103	53	139
Fargo, ND–MN	68	51	15	63	104	42	75	180	81	71	71	98	60	124	12	175
Bloomsburg–Berwick, PA	69	172	135	100	72	156	138	51	66	68	21	15	178	58	104	106
Madera, CA	70	24	13	8	18	46	176	72	65	129	65	65	108	181	191	160
Yuma, AZ	71	27	23	15	33	17	23	157	101	56	174	182	157	154	188	73
Racine, WI	72	131	148	124	152	147	148	59	30	84	85	6	86	102	55	22
Redding, CA	73	20	4	39	108	53	191	56	47	127	73	33	100	193	100	91
Prescott, AZ	74	11	46	24	79	35	151	107	16	29	184	150	49	145	166	108
Burlington, NC	75	14	36	57	180	24	145	96	166	94	123	65	56	51	69	55
Mount Vernon–Anacortes, WA	76	84	75	110	78	60	91	71	106	135	131	98	10	188	120	39
Sioux City, IA–NE–SD	77	154	117	95	122	64	56	161	77	13	132	98	163	45	66	94
Columbia, MO	78	23	30	69	106	47	184	73	110	103	58	98	73	97	23	161
Las Cruces, NM	79	121	66	37	52	61	60	16	148	126	160	98	101	164	179	153
Barnstable Town, MA	80	60	141	144	57	127	168	30	58	149	54	15	3	165	51	163

TIER 3 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Topeka, KS	81	117	88	119	143	118	85	113	26	9	76	98	105	112	85	65
Altoona, PA	82	54	147	154	151	132	70	84	91	50	15	15	175	29	96	87
Dalton, GA	83	74	102	109	114	129	27	129	89	42	61	33	158	56	163	95
Morristown, TN	84	80	44	33	41	90	133	122	13	2	199	150	167	4	183	134
Rome, GA	85	88	124	67	62	102	76	5	199	53	153	98	162	129	148	89
Casper, WY	86	181	189	117	81	197	158	110	119	146	19	65	19	23	57	26
Dover, DE	87	94	67	78	137	80	174	66	20	40	181	182	58	104	91	3
Danville, IL	88	192	118	148	23	153	31	68	184	79	191	98	62	34	173	58
California–Lexington Park, MD	89	81	74	34	200	105	197	175	92	178	18	33	29	25	5	45
Florence, SC	90	145	129	48	66	94	98	42	122	46	105	65	188	122	172	187
Longview, TX	91	134	178	88	37	179	82	52	175	184	23	15	176	76	165	59
Great Falls, MT	92	118	137	81	75	29	5	193	174	49	203	200	109	64	47	121
Pittsfield, MA	93	147	136	176	34	161	42	131	32	132	41	33	52	140	88	194
Panama City, FL	94	44	119	91	68	52	78	94	105	104	146	150	4	172	127	164
Hinesville, GA	95	95	130	27	130	111	80	165	152	195	88	98	5	127	98	2
Bloomington, IL	96T	112	167	93	6	140	160	78	57	65	176	150	107	92	26	151
Kingston, NY	96T	107	173	180	98	110	37	112	46	124	90	33	15	189	46	185
Dubuque, IA	98	105	77	107	128	74	36	181	74	66	157	182	147	52	16	61
Grand Island, NE	99	114	95	121	167	58	52	76	137	19	193	98	127	94	125	46
Harrisonburg, VA	100	82	60	71	117	77	163	35	54	114	185	150	116	91	95	63
Norwich–New London, CT	101	151	175	193	43	196	196	60	100	73	6	3	41	148	36	113
Midland, MI	102	165	164	104	30	203	134	150	127	119	9	65	131	35	27	117
Yakima, WA	103	127	53	59	39	93	130	67	111	140	189	150	82	143	156	40
Bay City, MI	104	89	144	151	119	88	120	130	97	11	102	33	155	78	87	100
Dothan, AL	105	116	51	38	69	65	112	61	178	142	91	150	194	2	196	141
Lewiston, ID–WA	106	63	17	79	123	95	96	194	45	54	122	98	122	99	135	34
Elizabethtown–Fort Knox, KY	107	140	171	166	142	130	54	145	86	139	87	33	59	42	103	82
Hot Springs, AR	108	115	105	21	91	82	49	173	64	75	125	98	190	106	176	155
Muskegon, MI	109	77	199	140	49	164	33	144	130	96	129	33	156	90	123	54
Williamsport, PA	110	179	179	177	118	160	55	86	95	193	35	15	134	19	83	134
Odessa, TX	111	91	142	44	2	190	101	22	171	203	10	98	141	173	164	129

TIER 3 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Springfield, OH	112	146	186	146	107	138	92	25	39	157	166	150	104	44	128	76
La Crosse–Onalaska, WI–MN	113	155	157	134	157	133	189	81	128	67	77	65	85	86	29	30
Sheboygan, WI	114	137	80	133	170	141	131	142	103	92	143	65	83	12	19	19
State College, PA	115	184	100	157	35	152	110	98	102	88	39	15	154	178	86	141
Ocean City, NJ	116	68	195	112	116	51	88	1	185	164	200	182	2	137	102	128
Athens–Clarke County, GA	117	43	121	106	165	63	43	23	138	134	138	182	28	186	71	182
Lake Havasu City–Kingman, AZ	118	22	48	12	74	18	150	181	59	4	170	150	149	85	184	203
Pueblo, CO	119	87	63	87	110	78	170	181	29	23	49	33	165	180	132	96
Rochester, MN	120	38	50	89	185	92	187	44	167	180	134	98	45	59	6	67
Ames, IA	121	50	38	113	94	86	105	168	123	78	84	33	189	114	37	150
Flagstaff, AZ	122	144	98	102	10	177	104	29	17	3	195	200	195	170	151	108
Hammond, LA	123	76	43	70	144	40	61	31	146	199	167	150	150	115	152	87
Grants Pass, OR	124	34	16	72	177	15	155	39	56	197	111	33	26	200	168	196
Victoria, TX	125	200	193	161	60	185	28	36	193	191	8	33	198	119	195	31
East Stroudsburg, PA	126	71	134	149	111	151	167	177	61	138	25	65	21	152	9	44
Cleveland, TN	127	185	82	136	174	98	188	26	131	55	93	98	95	53	145	62

TIER 4 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Florence–Muscle Shoals, AL	128	141	120	98	124	76	29	62	158	82	201	200	191	33	181	76
Medford, OR	129	93	68	92	171	41	192	99	28	125	95	98	47	190	122	93
Amarillo, TX	130	148	24	54	83	114	201	120	151	143	45	15	119	151	111	101
Waterloo–Cedar Falls, IA	131	133	139	156	184	121	48	126	35	63	188	98	84	107	39	125
Springfield, IL	132	62	145	159	93	170	179	109	98	179	53	98	13	14	68	97
Oshkosh–Neenah, WI	133	138	58	135	138	183	178	133	94	101	42	15	123	66	20	69
Santa Cruz–Watsonville, CA	134	81	151	153	77	126	194	64	107	176	38	6	9	197	59	190
Napa, CA	135	86	158	108	4	115	114	58	132	190	183	182	8	203	67	162
Glens Falls, NY	136	122	156	192	148	159	136	32	88	121	78	98	88	135	75	21
Watertown–Fort Drum, NY	137	102	166	174	126	124	46	181	70	122	92	98	77	179	28	64
San Rafael, CA Metropolitan Division	138	126	45	179	87	146	203	48	75	185	4	3	1	201	43	202
Sumter, SC	139	128	131	128	183	101	93	152	155	131	81	33	103	48	160	49
Jackson, TN	140	47	69	62	160	55	67	154	21	136	202	150	146	111	182	71
Hattiesburg, MS	141	106	122	56	80	104	159	160	104	111	107	65	193	46	171	127
Lynchburg, VA	142	125	131	127	156	158	144	119	136	60	97	15	160	47	70	114
Hanford–Corcoran, CA	143	156	53	61	16	143	199	20	196	97	187	182	125	195	131	12
Lewiston–Auburn, ME	144	73	78	143	192	57	161	188	11	26	128	182	80	144	78	6
Santa Fe, NM	145	124	183	141	71	107	143	63	24	44	142	182	120	166	146	183
Tuscaloosa, AL	146	174	155	85	70	116	59	37	139	141	190	200	174	100	149	174
El Centro, CA	147	33	96	31	7	54	132	57	195	156	180	182	145	183	192	180
Cheyenne, WY	148	153	138	96	193	112	157	88	118	85	154	150	97	176	34	15
Michigan City–La Porte, IN	149	96	79	115	85	113	106	189	159	160	163	33	117	28	77	159
Wausau, WI	150	110	93	123	175	131	166	195	129	95	112	65	89	20	17	81
Parkersburg–Vienna, WV	151	109	190	160	115	137	115	149	187	24	173	98	126	11	117	68
Johnstown, PA	152	162	185	198	153	192	153	46	145	69	16	15	183	17	155	103
St. Cloud, MN	153	99	112	164	155	144	180	132	43	100	156	98	54	123	35	49
Grand Forks, ND–MN	154	191	181	197	159	175	137	65	36	35	130	98	128	156	54	90
Laredo, TX	155	173	170	64	40	91	102	135	125	108	139	150	177	182	201	141
Terre Haute, IN	156	180	151	170	133	157	90	106	150	81	80	65	169	89	118	118
Carbondale–Marion, IL	157	169	111	129	112	96	62	156	142	175	155	33	172	84	140	138
New Bern, NC	158	164	115	73	149	134	116	114	37	98	175	98	152	105	159	171

TIER 4 CITIES

	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Saginaw, MI	159	171	182	188	105	150	87	128	116	72	127	65	75	83	174	170
Muncie, IN	160	148	90	196	173	99	35	196	79	99	149	150	91	82	108	59
Iowa City, IA	161	123	99	152	134	142	97	167	115	91	98	98	130	153	4	140
Erie, PA	162	150	197	172	109	165	107	117	164	90	75	65	111	117	107	146
Kahului–Wailuku–Lahaina, HI	163	101	188	187	5	193	193	82	40	1	194	182	124	192	90	72
Vineland–Bridgeton, NJ	164	97	154	68	46	148	172	125	73	147	179	98	133	196	130	105
Albany, GA	165	111	70	137	132	85	57	108	72	151	86	150	196	174	178	119
Ithaca, NY	166	152	160	167	86	188	182	148	85	107	51	98	27	139	45	172
Bismarck, ND	167	149	165	122	186	182	171	171	141	70	67	33	71	77	42	137
Wichita Falls, TX	168	132	101	132	158	123	84	147	192	169	12	33	132	136	134	134
Kankakee, IL	169	168	34	175	168	172	173	174	135	181	29	15	33	65	80	78
Cumberland, MD–WV	170	167	159	162	47	181	154	49	189	74	168	98	153	60	154	157
Texarkana, TX–AR	171	158	161	142	181	155	72	26	67	12	162	98	201	162	190	193
Decatur, IL	172	157	161	194	135	173	108	158	173	171	103	15	90	10	162	70
Houma–Thibodaux, LA	173	182	196	186	191	184	51	181	99	200	14	33	144	5	147	131
Valdosta, GA	174	170	29	103	164	81	32	192	168	130	70	150	185	128	187	122
Gettysburg, PA	175	83	126	171	163	136	117	100	160	163	164	150	161	101	61	5
Lima, OH	176	173	133	169	178	166	125	197	165	161	106	98	67	7	119	25
Binghamton, NY	177	113	152	189	136	167	195	176	124	162	13	1	93	98	114	101
Fairbanks, AK	178	197	192	168	179	174	186	163	181	177	7	150	34	150	13	1
Sierra Vista–Douglas, AZ	179	129	14	94	195	145	200	200	109	152	62	33	170	16	169	80
Beckley, WV	180	190	194	165	145	120	38	93	161	165	171	150	197	15	198	177
Weirton–Steubenville, WV–OH	181	189	197	126	154	186	146	181	202	173	104	65	135	6	142	41
Owensboro, KY	182	120	168	125	172	149	118	181	169	150	197	98	92	24	116	99
Morgantown, WV	183	69	107	120	169	139	156	153	194	188	66	65	121	133	49	145

TIER 5 CITIES	2024 Rank	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	Job Growth 2017–22 Rank	Job Growth 2021–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2017–22 Rank	Wage Growth 2021–22 Rank	Short-Term Job Growth Rank	High-Tech GDP 2017–22	High-Tech GDP 2021–22	High-Tech Concentration Rank	LQ Count Rank	Broadband Access 2022 Rank	Housing Affordability 2022 Rank	Resilient Households 2022 Rank	Gini Index 2022 Rank
Battle Creek, MI	184	186	198	190	99	195	190	164	114	17	133	150	115	81	112	84
Rocky Mount, NC	185	177	140	163	198	109	141	137	186	196	37	6	199	38	189	131
St. Joseph, MO–KS	186	194	84	185	190	168	169	115	177	83	100	33	200	21	113	129
Chico, CA	187	100	110	181	121	169	202	97	90	117	140	65	87	202	81	169
Macon–Bibb County, GA	188	139	127	147	182	122	139	79	191	57	101	98	180	130	167	199
Farmington, NM	189	203	201	199	32	198	47	134	198	202	2	150	203	132	203	148
Mansfield, OH	190	161	172	178	189	171	164	123	200	192	161	65	63	70	136	27
Wheeling, WV–OH	191	196	200	200	194	200	126	191	15	187	11	65	187	22	143	176
Charleston, WV	192	166	187	191	187	189	147	151	197	105	36	33	179	8	129	196
Goldsboro, NC	193	175	150	173	201	128	140	141	179	168	137	65	99	113	170	85
Elmira, NY	194	136	161	183	140	178	185	198	126	144	94	6	140	120	106	126
Alexandria, LA	195	176	176	111	161	154	183	169	143	123	151	150	173	54	185	108
Lake Charles, LA	196	202	180	203	202	202	177	38	190	201	22	65	186	61	153	173
Kokomo, IN	197	188	109	202	203	201	129	202	183	182	177	98	50	41	56	83
Anniston–Oxford–Jacksonville, AL	198	178	103	114	176	176	198	116	180	109	186	182	159	9	194	111
Lawton, OK	199	193	169	182	199	187	175	165	154	183	141	150	57	87	121	85
Gadsden, AL	200	198	191	201	188	199	128	146	172	89	198	150	182	31	177	66
Enid, OK	201	195	*	195	197	194	99	190	203	186	3	98	171	62	138	189
Monroe, LA	202	201	174	158	162	191	122	111	201	189	68	33	202	191	186	195
Pine Bluff, AR	203	199	170	184	196	180	135	143	157	170	169	98	192	108	197	123

*Notes: The symbol * for Twin Falls, ID, and Enid, OK, means that rankings for 2022 are unavailable, since the cities were added in the 2023 ranking. "T" next to a number implies a tie between cities.*

Source: *Milken Institute (2024)*

ENDNOTES

1. Here and throughout the report we use the terms metropolitan areas, metros, and cities interchangeably. Regardless of the term used, the geographic boundaries of the metropolitan areas are based on the Office of Management and Budget delineations of metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and Metropolitan Divisions (MDs) adopted in 2018. For more information, consult the BPC methodological appendix.

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