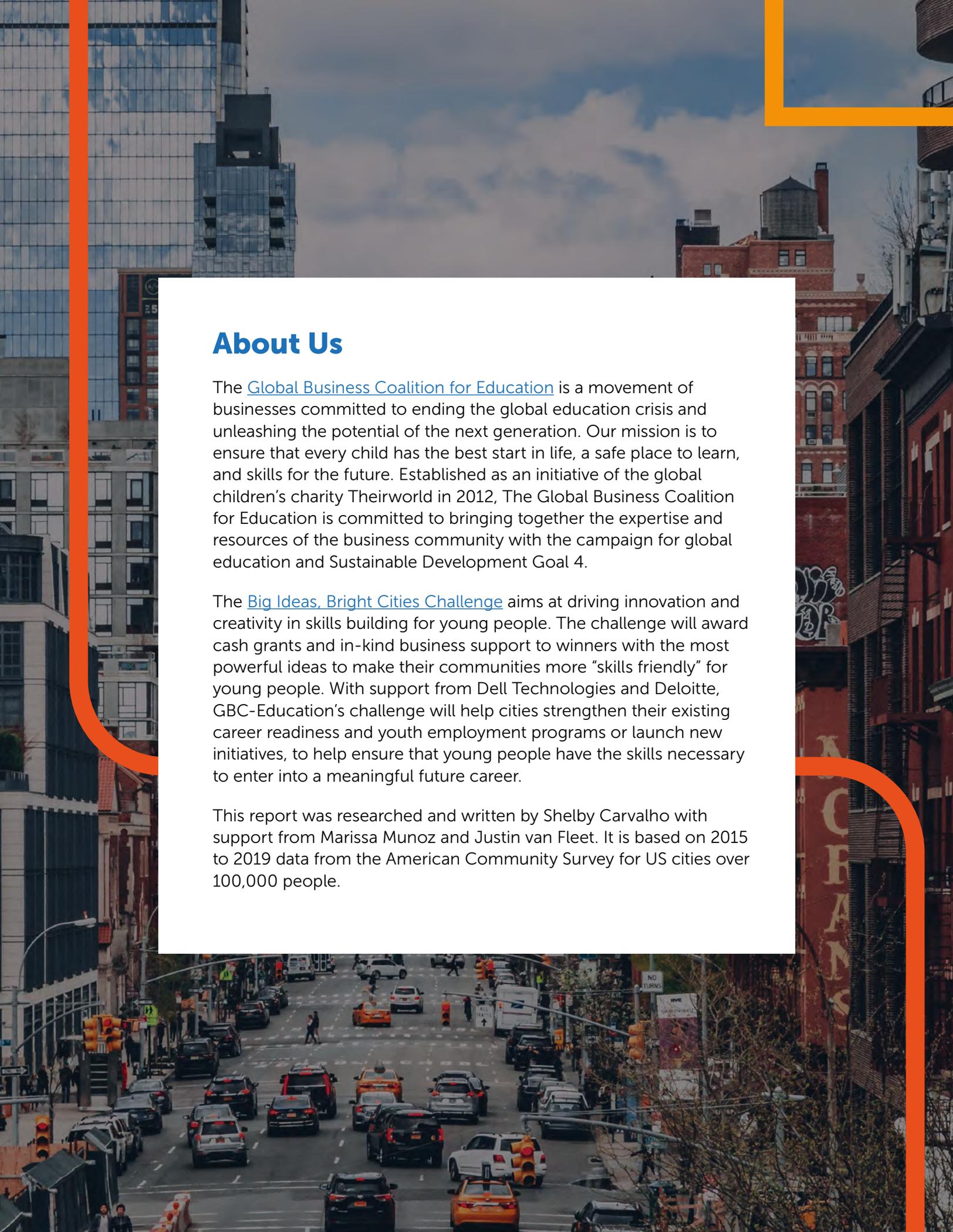


THE STATE OF US CITIES AND YOUTH SKILLS

The Top Skills Friendly Cities
for Young People



About Us

The [Global Business Coalition for Education](#) is a movement of businesses committed to ending the global education crisis and unleashing the potential of the next generation. Our mission is to ensure that every child has the best start in life, a safe place to learn, and skills for the future. Established as an initiative of the global children's charity Theirworld in 2012, The Global Business Coalition for Education is committed to bringing together the expertise and resources of the business community with the campaign for global education and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The [Big Ideas, Bright Cities Challenge](#) aims at driving innovation and creativity in skills building for young people. The challenge will award cash grants and in-kind business support to winners with the most powerful ideas to make their communities more "skills friendly" for young people. With support from Dell Technologies and Deloitte, GBC-Education's challenge will help cities strengthen their existing career readiness and youth employment programs or launch new initiatives, to help ensure that young people have the skills necessary to enter into a meaningful future career.

This report was researched and written by Shelby Carvalho with support from Marissa Munoz and Justin van Fleet. It is based on 2015 to 2019 data from the American Community Survey for US cities over 100,000 people.



By 2030, more than half of all young people globally will not be on track to have the most basic skills for employment. Today in the United States, one in 10 young people are not in school or work, indicating about four million youth are not developing their skills or making a positive contribution to their local economies or communities through employment.

To be a global economic leader, investing in the skills and talents of young people is essential. And this investment must start in cities and communities. Data demonstrates that investments in human infrastructure must start early, with the support of pre-kindergarten and other means of early childhood development and education. This investment must continue all the way through to adolescence and adulthood to fully develop the soft skills, technical skills, resilience and entrepreneurship required by employers.

Skills development is more than education and training. It's about creating an ecosystem of support which allows young people to gain relevant, good quality experiences, support and mentorship to fully participate in the world of work and drive the future of innovation. It requires school systems, governments – at national and local levels – to work alongside businesses and youth-serving organizations to increase opportunity for youth skills development and build pathways to meaningful employment.

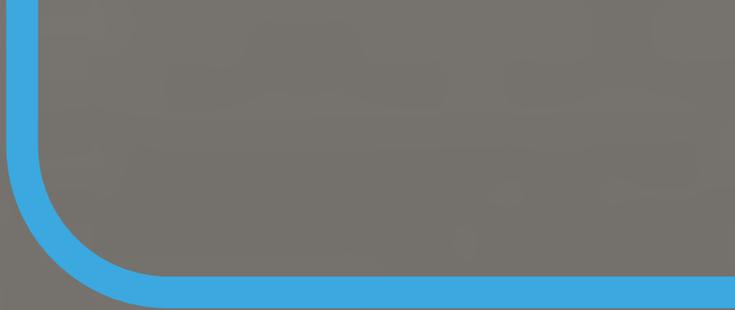


Effective action must start at the local level and should aim to include and nurture all young people, including from marginalized and underserved communities.

Cities are often considered the best place to generate wealth and improve living standards at a faster rate because of the higher degree of population density, interaction, and networks. Leaders of cities often have the power to influence educational institutions and contribute to their policies and practices. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the policies chosen by cities will become even more relevant as they have the capacity to react quickly to local trends and be responsive to large proportions of young people. This level of policy engagement could prove quite effective in adapting the future of work and sustainability for young people, though the differences between cities and the diversity within each city will require flexible and adaptive approaches to youth skills.

This policy brief outlines ten standards for Skills Friendly Cities. The standards together outline a collaborative ecosystem for young people age 15-25 bringing together comprehensive education and training opportunities alongside to strong public policy, engagement of local employers, and youth participation.

In this policy brief, data from the U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey as well as trend data for the years 2015 to 2019 is used to identify how U.S. cities are performing across key indicators associated with young people and skill development. The “Top Ten” ranking identifies some of the more promising locations where cities are preparing young people for the future of work. The rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000.



The rankings examine seven indicators:

Age of City Population: Which cities have the oldest population? And which cities are the youngest?

Trending older or younger: Which cities are seeing the median age increase and which cities are experiencing a more rapid increase in age?

Opportunity Youth: Where are young people most likely to be out of school and out of work – and where are most young people either studying or working?

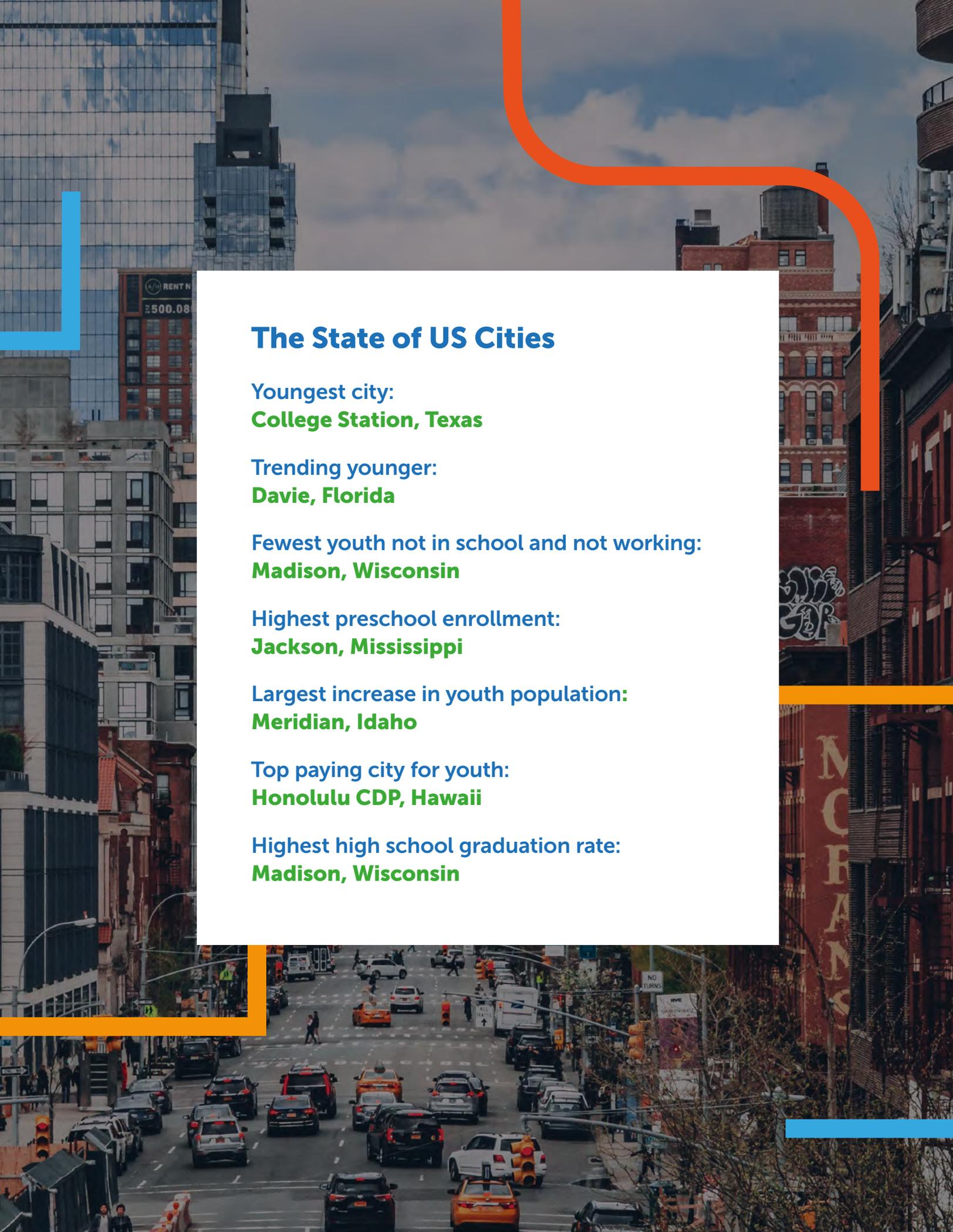
Pre-K Enrollment: Cities with higher preschool enrollment today are more likely to produce young people prepared for the workforce in 10-15 years. Which cities are investing in the future – and which cities are leaving the youngest children behind?

Youth Earnings: Not all cities offer strong starting salaries for young people. Which cities pay more than others?

Exodus of youth: Which cities have the largest number of young people leaving the city and heading for opportunity elsewhere?

High School Graduation: What proportion of young people in their early 20s have a high school diploma, and which cities have young people with lower levels of formal education?





The State of US Cities

Youngest city:

College Station, Texas

Trending younger:

Davie, Florida

Fewest youth not in school and not working:

Madison, Wisconsin

Highest preschool enrollment:

Jackson, Mississippi

Largest increase in youth population:

Meridian, Idaho

Top paying city for youth:

Honolulu CDP, Hawaii

Highest high school graduation rate:

Madison, Wisconsin



What does it mean to be a skills friendly city?

The Global Business Coalition for Education has outlined ten standards that create a skills friendly city, including critical activities and indicators that lead to a better prepared generation of youth ready to enter the workforce.

Skills Friendly City Standards



1. Direct engagement with young people.

Youth are engaged and involved in efforts related to their future, especially closing the skills and employment gaps.



2. A focus on underserved youth.

There is a commitment to identifying, monitoring and targeting underserved youth with opportunities for skills and employment.



3. Inclusive and equitable, quality education systems.

Local education systems are equitable, accessible, and sufficiently resourced.



4. Pathways from education to employment.

Clear pathways exist in the city at the high school and post-secondary level.



5. Curriculum adapted to future workforce skills.

Curriculum has explicit focus on 4IR skills (workforce readiness, soft skills, technical skills, entrepreneurship and resilience).



Skills Friendly City Standards, cont'd.



6. Employer engagement in building opportunity pipelines.

Employers proactively engage with public policy officials, school systems and government agencies to build pathways from education to employment.



7. Meaningful and equitable employment.

Employment is meaningful, pays a livable wage and respects the dignity and contributions of young people.



8. Youth-focused funding partnerships.

Local funding and philanthropy, from public to private, reflects the city's priority on youth futures through programs, subsidies, incentives, and scholarships.



9. Supportive ecosystem.

The design of public services and policies create an ecosystem of support for young people on the pathway from education to employment, including transportation, health care, mental health services, childcare and quality food.



10. Dedicated platform for opportunity dissemination and matchmaking.

The city has a central clearing house, platform, or other mechanisms for making information about skills training, employment and other opportunities available to youth.



The Youngest and Oldest US Cities

The median age of a city provides insight into employment pipelines as well as industry skills needed. The 2019 American Community Survey data shows older cities are clustered in warm-weather areas, primarily in coastal Florida. Many of these areas house retirement communities and are located near a larger city, such as **Scottsdale, Arizona**, which has the highest median age of 50 years old. As adults over 65 years of age are often considered dependent, cities with an older age distribution may also have higher dependency ratios. This may trigger adolescents and young adults to help take care of family members which may increase skill needs in care sectors.

College Station, Texas has the lowest median age at 23.6 years old. These younger cities are more geographically spread out than older cities and often have a large college student population. Higher education institutions and student populations present opportunities for local partnerships to help youth fill skill and education gaps, as well as for supporting school-to-work transitions into critical sectors.

Youngest Cities (Median Age)

1 College Station, TX	23.6
Pop. 117,911	
2 Provo, UT	23.6
Pop. 116,616	
3 Tallahassee, FL	26.8
Pop. 194,503	
4 Gainesville, FL	27.0
Pop. 133,990	
5 Ann Arbor, MI	27.6
Pop. 119,976	
6 Columbia, MO	28.5
Pop. 123,204	
7 Athens-Clarke County, GA	28.5
Pop. 126,718	
8 Columbia, SC	28.6
Pop. 131,323	
9 Santa Maria, CA	28.7
Pop. 107,273	
10 Boulder, CO	28.9
Pop. 105,670	

Oldest Cities (Median Age)

1 Scottsdale, AZ	50.1
Pop. 258,064	
2 Clearwater, FL	47.1
Pop. 116,938	
3 Cape Coral, FL	46.4
Pop. 194,504	
4 Pompano Beach, FL	46.3
Pop. 112,122	
5 Spring Hill CDP, FL	45.4
Pop. 113,787	
6 Hialeah, FL	44.9
Pop. 233,362	
7 Carlsbad, CA	44.6
Pop. 117,911	
8 St. Petersburg, FL	43.8
Pop. 265,358	
9 Henderson, NV	43.7
Pop. 320,190	
10 Palm Bay, FL	43.3
Pop. 115,560	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000.



Trending Younger and Older

Trends in the median age indicate that young people are moving to suburbs or smaller cities outside of bigger cities, likely drawn by the lower cost of living, but also the ability to work from home. Data shows that the biggest movement in age composition occurred outside of big cities, a trend that will likely continue with the increase in the ability for young workers to work remotely rather than at a central office. Smaller cities may continue to grow, making them good locations for youth skills programs.

Notably, several of the cities where the population has trended younger are suburbs or small cities near bigger cities. The city with the greatest decline in median age from 2015-2019 was **Davie, Florida** (13.7 percent decrease). Both Davie and **West Palm Beach** are in proximity to **Miami**. **Thousand Oaks, Murrieta, and Jurupa Valley** are all close to **Los Angeles**. This may indicate some movement of youth from big cities into the surrounding areas.

Programs targeting youth skill development will reach a larger number of young people if established in cities with populations that are getting younger.

Getting Younger (% Change)

1 Davie, FL	-13.7
Pop. 106,310	
2 Arden-Arcade CDP, CA	-11.8
Pop. 108,227	
3 Warren, MI	-11.6
Pop. 133,944	
4 Thousand Oaks, CA	-8.9
Pop. 126,815	
5 Allentown, PA	-6.9
Pop. 121,441	
6 West Palm Beach, FL	-6.8
Pop. 111,952	
7 Las Cruces, NM	-6.7
Pop. 103,436	
8 Murrieta, CA	-6.2
Pop. 116,223	
9 Huntsville, AL	-6.0
Pop. 201,594	
10 Jurupa Valley, CA	-5.9
Pop. 109,525	

Getting Older (% Change)

1 Lafayette, LA	18.6
Pop. 126,199	
2 Vista, CA	16.0
Pop. 101,639	
3 Peoria, AZ	15.2
Pop. 175,960	
4 Antioch, CA	14.1
Pop. 111,506	
5 Mesquite, TX	13.3
Pop. 140,795	
6 Aurora, IL	11.4
Pop. 198,827	
7 Escondido, CA	10.8
Pop. 151,619	
8 Eugene, OR	10.5
Pop. 172,614	
9 Lewisville, TX	10.4
Pop. 108,562	
10 Peoria, IL	10.3
Pop. 109,936	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000.



A Youth Exodus: Outflow Trends in Youth Population

According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey, the city with the biggest outflow of population aged 15 to 24 between 2015 and 2019 was **Torrance, California** (49.2%). The city with the biggest influx of population aged 15 to 24 was **Meridian, Idaho**.

Nine of the ten cities with the biggest outflow of youth populations are in California, Texas, or Florida, while cities with increasing youth populations are geographically spread out. Interestingly, **McAllen, Texas** (decreasing) and **Edinburg** (increasing) border each other, and Surprise, Arizona (increasing) is in the Phoenix metro area, which contains several cities with a relatively high median age. This indicates a shift in age distribution within larger metropolitan areas.

Programs targeting youth skill development will reach a larger number of young people if established in cities with growing youth populations. In larger metropolitan areas with localized youth migration, skills programs could target the entire area.

Decreasing Youth (%)

1	Torrance, CA	-49.2
	Pop. 143,589	
2	Clearwater, FL	-30.4
	Pop. 116,938	
3	Rancho Cucamonga, CA	-25.9
	Pop. 177,614	
4	Murrieta, CA	-23.3
	Pop. 116,223	
5	McAllen, TX	-20.6
	Pop. 143,258	
6	Beaumont, TX	-20.3
	Pop. 101,747	
7	Burbank, CA	-19.4
	Pop. 102,508	
8	Murrieta, CA	-6.2
	Pop. 116,223	
9	Norwalk, CA	-19.0
	Pop. 103,946	
10	Vacaville, CA	-19.0
	Pop. 100,669	

Increasing Youth (%)

1	Meridian, ID	26.7
	Pop. 114,161	
2	Edinburg, TX	24.5
	Pop. 101,168	
3	Concord, CA	23.2
	Pop. 129,320	
4	Surprise, AZ	23.0
	Pop. 141,674	
5	Huntington Beach, CA	19.1
	Pop. 199,228	
6	Arvada, CO	15.7
	Pop. 121,095	
7	Las Cruces, NM	15.4
	Pop. 103,436	
8	Akron, OH	14.8
	Pop. 197,597	
9	Pasadena, TX	14.3
	Pop. 151,230	
10	Berkeley, CA	13.8
	Pop. 121,353	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000.



Opportunity Youth: Out of School, Out of Work

Opportunity youth are those aged 16 to 24 who are out-of-school and out-of-work. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, the city with the lowest percentage of opportunity youth by population is **Madison, Wisconsin** (5.2%). The city with the highest percent of opportunity youth in the population is **McAllen, Texas** with nearly one in five young people not in school and not working (18%).

Cities with the highest rates of opportunity youth are spread geographically throughout the country and vary in population, suggesting that areas of opportunity are not limited to big cities. The cities with the lowest rates of opportunity youth are mostly in northern parts of the country. Rates of opportunity youth vary substantially. The range of values for the ten highest cities (18% – 13.4%) is almost twice as large as that of the ten lowest (5.2%-7.8%).

Opportunity youth would directly benefit from youth skills programs and training. While there are many reasons why a person may be out-of-school and out-of-work, opportunity youth in high percentage cities may benefit the most from opportunities to participate in skills training and job search support.

Lowest Proportion of Youth Not at School or Work (%)

1 Madison, WI	5.2
Pop. 259,673	
2 Boston, MA	5.7
Pop. 694,295	
3 Provo, UT	5.9
Pop. 116,616	
4 San Francisco, CA	6.5
Pop. 881,549	
5 Minneapolis, MN	6.6
Pop. 429,605	
6 Durham, NC	7.0
Pop. 279,447	
7 San Jose, CA	7.2
Pop. 1,021,786	
8 Pittsburgh, PA	7.4
Pop. 300,281	
9 Hartford, CT	7.6
Pop. 122,107	
10 Raleigh, NC	7.8
Pop. 474,708	

Highest Proportion of Youth Not at School or Work (%)

1 McAllen, TX	18.0
Pop. 143,258	
2 Bakersfield, CA	17.5
Pop. 384,159	
3 Jackson, MS	17.4
Pop. 160,532	
4 Memphis, TN	15.2
Pop. 651,088	
5 Fresno, CA	15.0
Pop. 531,581	
6 Las Vegas, NV	14.8
Pop. 651,297	
7 Augusta, GA	14.5
Pop. 197,325	
8 Salem, OR	14.3
Pop. 174,377	
9 New Orleans, LA	14.0
Pop. 390,144	
10 Lakeland, FL	13.4
Pop. 112,142	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000. Values represent overall metropolitan area values, which includes nearby towns and suburbs.

Preparing Today for the Future: Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment

About 90 percent of a child's brain develops before the age of five, making a child's preschool years a period of critical growth in vital life skills such as social, fine motor, listening, and communications just to name a few. Cities that have universal prekindergarten programs may likely have higher percentages of youth with greater skills and employment as a result, having a longer-term positive impact on the local economy.

According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey, the city with the lowest pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) enrollment among the population aged three to five is **Milwaukee, Wisconsin** at 24.4 percent. The city with the highest pre-K enrollment is **Jackson, Mississippi** at 59.9 percent. While there are likely many important differences between **Jackson** and **Milwaukee**, their Pre-K models stand out as potential factors shaping their large differences in Pre-K enrollment. The Jackson Public School District runs a large federally funded Title I pre-K program offered within existing elementary schools. **Milwaukee, WI** appears to offer primarily private or limited means-tested opportunities through Head Start. These Head Start programs are often offered at separate care sites outside of schools.

The availability of childcare and Pre-K can also have an impact on skills development of the caregiver, as it can often play a large role in a caregiver's ability to participate in employment or education. It would have a significant impact on women, as caregiving responsibilities disproportionately fall on women and older adolescents. As a result, policies aimed at making pre-kindergarten programs more accessible could benefit youth seeking work and continuing education, furthering their skills attainment.

Lowest Pre-K Enrollment (%)

1 Milwaukee, WI	24.4
Pop. 590,157	
2 Boise City, ID	28.4
Pop. 228,965	
3 Fresno, CA	29.0
Pop. 531,581	
4 Las Vegas, NV	30.0
Pop. 651,297	
5 McAllen, TX	30.4
Pop. 143,258	
6 Salem, OR	31.3
Pop. 174,377	
7 Bakersfield, CA	31.8
Pop. 384,159	
8 Phoenix, AZ	31.8
Pop. 1,680,988	
9 Augusta, GA	32.0
Pop. 197,325	
10 San Bernardino, CA	32.1
Pop. 215,780	

Highest Pre-K Enrollment (%)

1 Jackson, MS	59.9
Pop. 160,532	
2 San Jose, CA	54.5
Pop. 1,021,786	
3 St. Louis, MO	54.1
Pop. 300,576	
4 New Orleans, LA	54.1
Pop. 390,144	
5 Boston, MA	51.7
Pop. 694,295	
6 Miami, FL	51.6
Pop. 467,968	
7 Urban Honolulu CDP, HI	50.8
Pop. 345,055	
8 Cape Coral, FL	50.5
Pop. 194,504	
9 Virginia Beach, VA	50.0
Pop. 449,974	
10 Bridgeport, CT	49.5
Pop. 144,365	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000. Values represent overall metropolitan area values, which includes nearby towns and suburbs.



Top-Paying Cities: A look at youth salaries

The city with the lowest median salary for youth ages 15 to 24 is Syracuse, New York at \$6,635 per year, according to data from the 2019 American Community Survey. The highest median salary for youth occurs in **Honolulu, Hawaii**, at \$16,370 per year. Lower median earnings may indicate a lower hourly rate but may also reflect a lower percentage of youth population holding full- or part-time employment. Addressing gaps in skills may bring more youth into the workforce, helping to narrow this income gap.

Many of the cities with the highest median youth income are bigger cities, with seven of the top 10 having populations greater than 300,000. **Boston, Massachusetts** is the only city on the list of lowest median salaries with a population higher than 300,000. This may well reflect the inflated costs of living in larger urban areas. Young people have tended to find these large urban centers more desirable, though this trend appears to be shifting in recent years with youth migration to states like Idaho increasing.

Lowest Youth Earnings (Median)

1 Syracuse, NY	6,635
Pop. 142,310	
2 Springfield, MA	6,643
Pop. 153,599	
3 Greensboro, NC	7,122
Pop. 296,725	
4 Stamford, CT	7,248
Pop. 129,636	
5 Allentown, PA	7,361
Pop. 121,441	
6 Worcester, MA	7,744
Pop. 185,421	
7 Jackson, MS	7,827
Pop. 160,532	
8 Boston, MA	8,179
Pop. 694,295	
9 Rochester, NY	8,184
Pop. 205,704	
10 Columbia, MO	8,305
Pop. 123,204	

Highest Youth Earnings (Median)

1 Urban Honolulu CDP, HI	16,370
Pop. 345,055	
2 Las Vegas, NV	15,417
Pop. 651,297	
3 San Diego, CA	14,671
Pop. 1,423,852	
4 Charleston, SC	14,506
Pop. 143,151	
5 Stockton, CA	14,380
Pop. 312,682	
6 Seattle, WA	14,353
Pop. 753,655	
7 Colorado Springs, CO	13,921
Pop. 478,215	
8 Phoenix, AZ	13,720
Pop. 1,680,988	
9 Lakeland, FL	13,683
Pop. 112,142	
10 San Bernardino, CA	12,794
Pop. 215,780	

Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000. Values represent overall metropolitan area values, which includes nearby towns and suburbs.



Education Levels: How many graduates?

The city with the highest proportion of the population aged 20 to 25 with a high school diploma or equivalent is **Madison, Wisconsin** (97.9%), and the lowest is Jackson, Mississippi (87%).

There are geographic divides in high school completion. Cities with the lowest proportion of graduates tend to be in the southern part of the country, while cities with the highest proportions of high school graduates tend to be in the north and west. There is no clear correlation between the size of the cities and the proportion of graduates.

A low proportion of high school graduates indicates a need for youth to acquire skills necessary for formal employment or to continue education. This may also suggest a need for skills training and school-to-work transition interventions to be implemented earlier to help reduce dropout, as well as to target youth outside of formal systems who may lack basic qualifications for formal employment. Targeting skills programs that address basic skills deficiencies in these cities will help bridge the gap between cities with lower graduation rates and areas where more youth have graduated high school.

Lowest Proportion of Graduates (%)

1 Jackson, MS	87.0
Pop. 160,532	
2 Cape Coral, FL	88.4
Pop. 194,504	
3 Lakeland, FL	88.5
Pop. 112,142	
4 Bakersfield, CA	89.2
Pop. 384,159	
5 Las Vegas, NV	89.2
Pop. 651,297	
6 Salem, OR	90.2
Pop. 174,377	
7 Tucson, AZ	90.5
Pop. 548,082	
8 San Antonio, TX	90.5
Pop. 1,547,250	
9 McAllen, TX	90.6
Pop. 143,258	
10 Tampa, FL	90.7
Pop. 399,690	

Highest Proportion of Graduates (%)

1 Madison, WI	97.9
Pop. 259,673	
2 Provo, UT	97.3
Pop. 116,616	
3 Urban Honolulu CDP, HI	96.5
Pop. 345,055	
4 Buffalo, NY	96.4
Pop. 255,300	
5 St. Louis, MO	96.4
Pop. 300,576	
6 Boston, MA	96.3
Pop. 694,295	
7 Omaha, NE	96.2
Pop. 478,203	
8 Virginia Beach, VA	95.8
Pop. 449,974	
9 Pittsburgh, PA	95.8
Pop. 300,281	
10 San Diego, CA	95.7
Pop. 1,423,852	

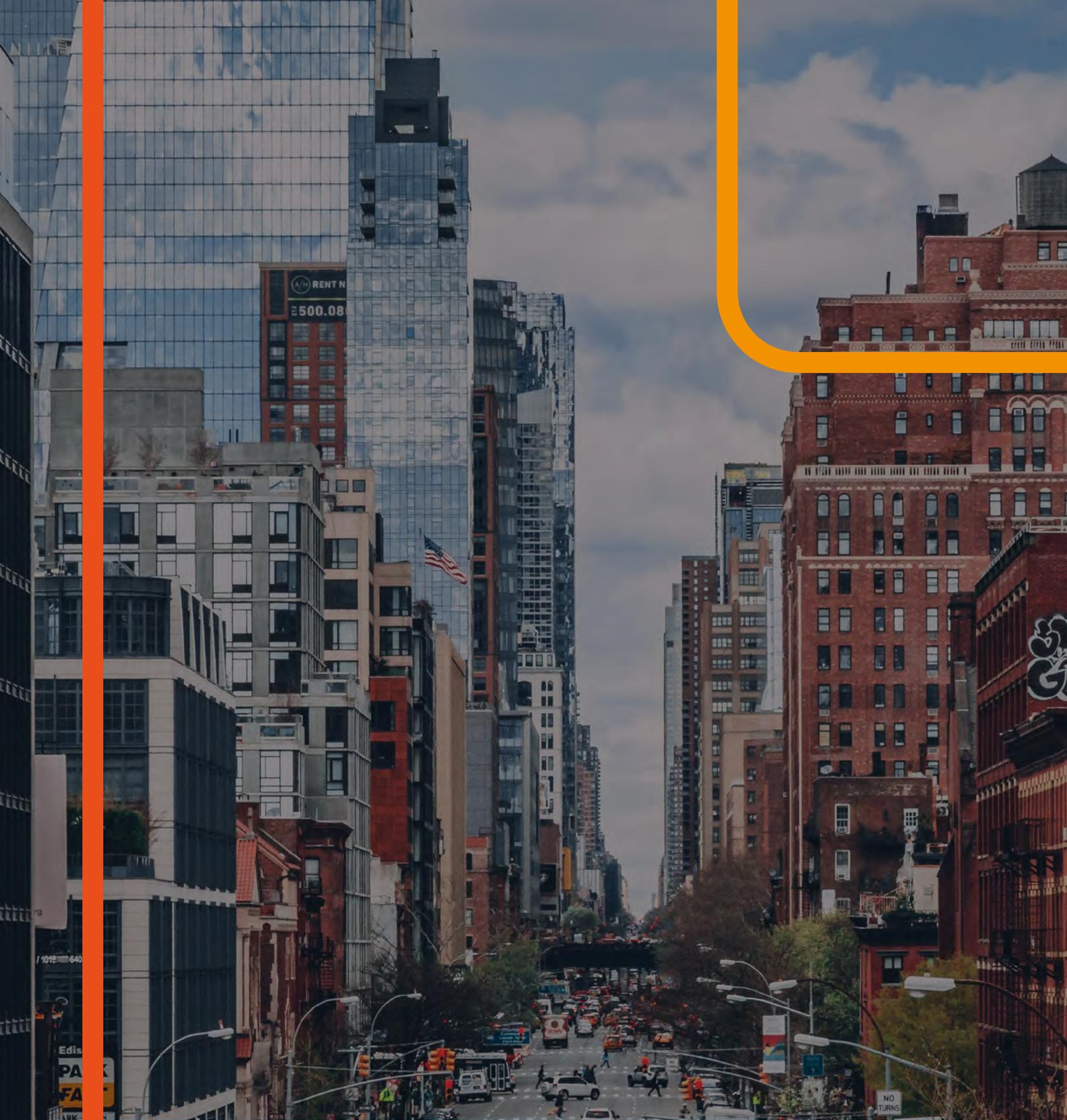
Rankings are limited to cities with populations of at least 100,000. Values represent overall metropolitan area values, which includes nearby towns and suburbs.

Conclusion

Building skills friendly cities is essential to creating the local ecosystems to prepare our youth the skills necessary to fill jobs for the future and meet growing industry demands by 2030. Data demonstrates that youth across the US are not being prepared in sufficient numbers with the education and skills necessary to obtain a living wage job and start on a career pathway. Although there are regional differences, there is room for improvement for all cities across the U.S.

For the United States to thrive economically, cities must address this future skills gap and invest more in developing youth skills now. This means increasing access to early childhood programming including pre-kindergarten, boosting graduation rates, creating workforce training and employment programs for opportunity youth, and ensuring living wages for youth, among others. Cities must work in partnership to develop policies and programs that equip young people with the skills necessary to obtain jobs quality jobs that not only meet growing industry demands but also provide a living wage and a career that allows for economic mobility.

We would like cities to ask themselves how they rank when it comes to pre-K enrollment, opportunity youth, youth wages, graduation rates, city median age? Ask yourself what you can do if you are a youth leader or a leader in city government, P-12 and higher education, or even a non-profit. How can you work in partnership with community leaders and youth to ensure the economic vitality of American cities and allow its young people to thrive? At the very least, every stakeholder can work to adopt the standards that we set forth, create community partnerships, engage youth in the planning process, and work to increase access to the vital skills, credentials, and employment opportunities that set cities on the pathway to success.



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