

Heidi Prior
Public Policy Analyst

Starting Out in Salt Lake City: Data on Young Adults

Over 1 in 6 residents are between 18 and 24 years old, shaping the city through distinct housing, employment, and college enrollment patterns.

March 2026

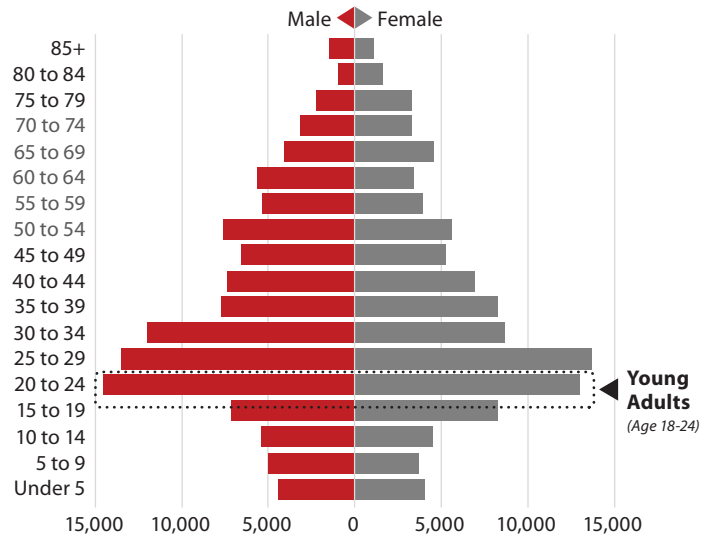
Starting Out in Salt Lake City: Data on Young Adults

Analysis in Brief

Salt Lake City is home to over 37,500 young adults ages 18 to 24, many of whom are enrolled at colleges and universities across the city. Young adults make up 17.6% of Salt Lake City's population and stand out from other age groups for their high mobility, high renter share, flexible living arrangements, and large share of newcomers to Utah.

- **Large young adult population** – Salt Lake City's population expands dramatically in the young adult years, with three times as many 22, 23, and 24-year-olds as 15, 16, and 17-year-olds.
- **Establishing independence** – Over half (56.9%) of young adults in Salt Lake City live alone or with roommates or partners, while just under a quarter (24.6%) live with family, and 18.3% reside in college housing.
- **Pursuing higher education** – Over half (57.6%) of 18-to-24-year-olds in Salt Lake City are currently enrolled in college or graduate school, a higher rate than any other age group.
- **Working part-time** – A majority of 20-to-24-year-olds work on a part-time basis (58.1%), while another 29.1% are employed in full-time, year-round positions.

Salt Lake City Population Pyramid, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

- **Geographically nimble** – Half (52.0%) of young adults report moving into their homes in the past 12 months, with 9.9% moving in from other counties in Utah, 9.3% relocating from other states, and 3.1% moving from outside the U.S.

Living Arrangements for Salt Lake City Residents Age 18 to 24, 2024



Note: Parent includes parent-in-law. Not shown, 0.1% of 18 to 24-year-olds in Salt Lake City lived in correctional facilities, juvenile facilities, or hospitals in 2024.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 1-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

Table of Contents

Introduction	3	Figure 8: Work from Home Rates by Age for Working Residents in Salt Lake City, 2024.....	5
Salt Lake City’s 18-to-24-Year-Old Population	3	Figure 9: Race of Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2020-2024	5
School Enrollment and Educational Attainment.....	3	Figure 10: Hispanic or Latino Share of Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024	5
Employment.....	4	Figure 11: Place of Birth for Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024.....	5
Race, Ethnicity, and Place of Birth.....	5	Figure 12: Poverty Rates by Age for Salt Lake City, 2024	6
Poverty and Health Insurance	5	Figure 13: Health Insurance Coverage by Age for Salt Lake City, 2024	6
Recent Movers.....	6	Figure 14: Geographic Mobility by Age in Salt Lake City, 2024.....	6
Living Arrangements	6	Figure 15: Living Arrangements of Residents Age 18 to 24 in Utah and Salt Lake City, 2024.....	7
Renters and Owners	6	Figure 16: Salt Lake City Renters and Owners by Age, 2024	7
Figures		Figure 17: Housing Cost-Burdened Homeowners in Salt Lake City by Age, 2024.....	7
Figure 1: Salt Lake City Population Pyramid, 2024.....	3	Figure 18: Housing Cost-Burdened Renters in Salt Lake City by Age, 2024.....	7
Figure 2: Salt Lake City 15-to-24-Year-Old Population by Age, 2024	3		
Figure 3: Salt Lake City 18-to-24-Year-Old Population by Age, 2019 to 2024	3		
Figure 4: School Enrollment by Age for Salt Lake City Population Age 15 to 34, 2024	4		
Figure 5: Educational Attainment for Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024	4		
Figure 6: Employment by Age for Salt Lake City Population Age 16 to 44, 2024	4		
Figure 7: Industry of Employment for Salt Lake City Residents Age 18 to 24, 2024.....	4		

Introduction

Over 1 in 6 Salt Lake City residents (17.2%) are between ages 18 and 24. This young adult age group, which includes students at the University of Utah, Westminster University, and other higher education institutions with campuses in the city, numbers 37,517 and stands out as one of the city's largest age groups.

Salt Lake City's 18-to-24-Year-Old Population

Salt Lake City's population expands markedly in the young adult years— defined here as ages 18 to 24. The city's modest teenage population expands into a much larger group of residents in their early 20's, with three times as many 22, 23, and 24-year-olds as 15, 16, and 17-year-olds. In fact, Salt Lake City residents age 20 to 24 are the city's largest 5-year age group.

Salt Lake City's 18-to-24-year-old population increased significantly between 2021 and 2022, growing from almost 28,000 to just over 37,000. During this year, the population of 18 and 19-year-olds grew especially fast, increasing 71.2%. Since 2022, the young adult population has fluctuated while remaining above 34,000 residents.

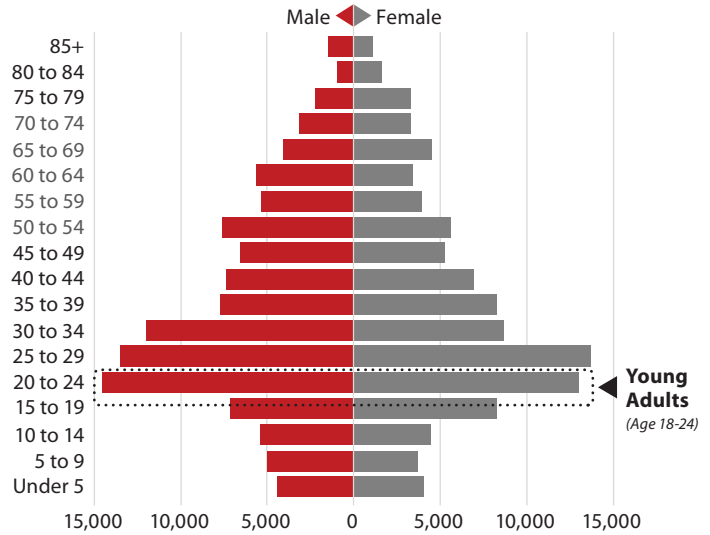
School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

Young adults enroll in post-secondary education at higher rates than any other age group in Salt Lake City. Over half (57.6%) of 18-to-24-year-olds in Salt Lake City are currently enrolled in college or graduate school. Another 2.2% are still completing high school, while 40.2% are not enrolled in any school (Figure 4). These elevated enrollment levels align with the concept of ages 18 to 24 as "college-age."

Educational attainment (or the highest level of education completed) for young adults is still in flux, as many 18-to-24-year-olds are actively pursuing higher degrees. This is evident in the small share of Salt Lake City's young adults who have earned bachelor's or higher degrees (14.1%) and the large share who have completed some college but have yet to earn a degree (42.9%). Within the 18 to 24 age group, 95.6% have graduated from high school, and 6.3% already completed an associate degree (Figure 5).

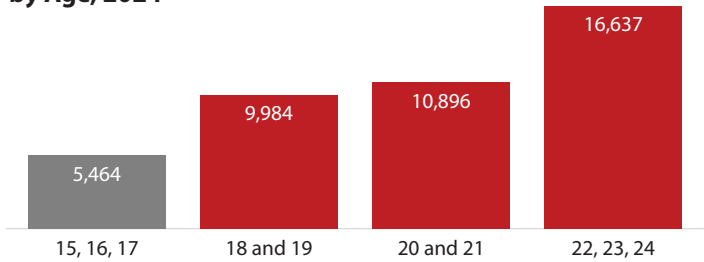
Compared to young adults statewide, Salt Lake City's 18-to-24-year-olds are more likely to be enrolled in school and to have completed a bachelor's degree or some college. Associate degree attainment is similar to the statewide rate.

Figure 1: Salt Lake City Population Pyramid, 2024



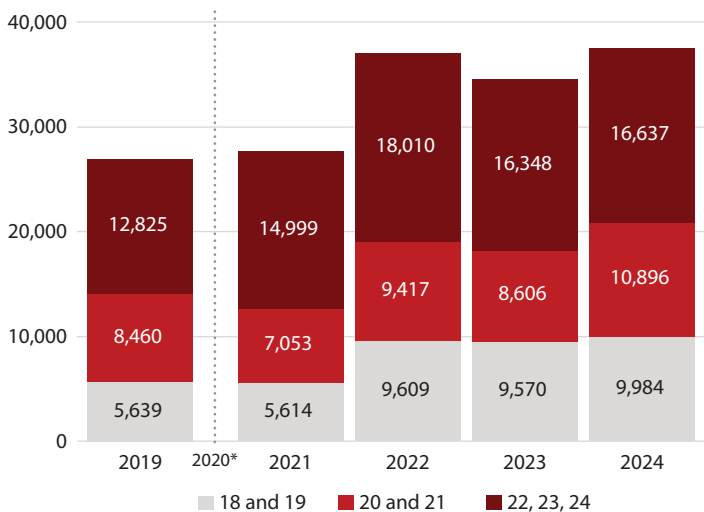
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 2: Salt Lake City 15-to-24-Year-Old Population by Age, 2024



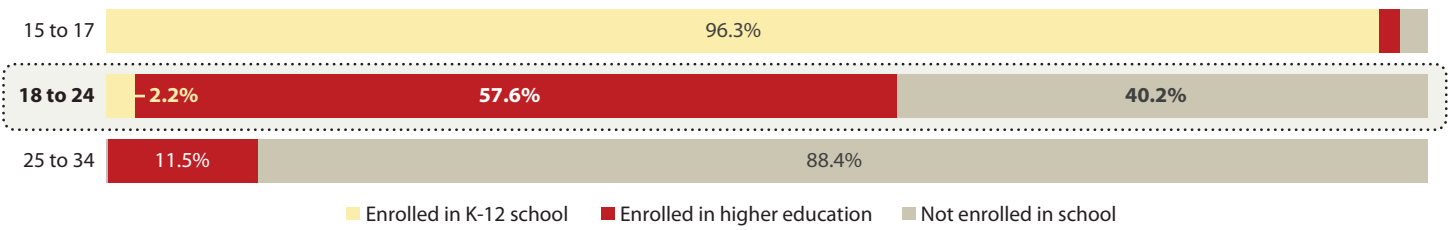
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 3: Salt Lake City 18-to-24-Year-Old Population by Age, 2019 to 2024



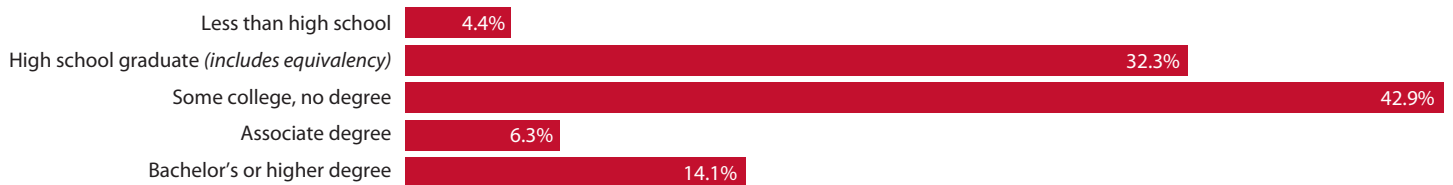
Note: Differences between the 2021 and 2022 populations of 18 to 24-year-olds prove statistically significant, while population sizes between 2022 and 2024 are statistically similar. *ACS data for 2020 is unavailable.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019, 2021 to 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 4: School Enrollment by Age for Salt Lake City Population Age 15 to 34, 2024



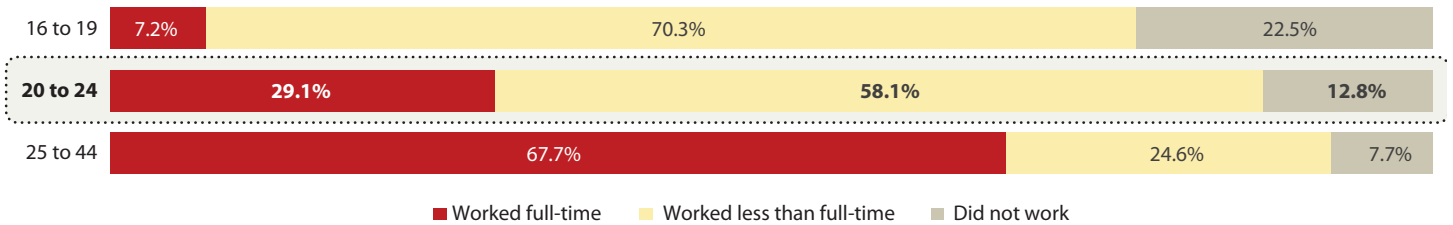
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 5: Educational Attainment for Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 6: Employment by Age for Salt Lake City Population Age 16 to 44, 2024



Note: ACS employment data is unavailable for the 18 to 24-year-olds as a stand-alone age group. Full time workers worked 35 or more hours each week, 50 to 52 weeks a year (including paid vacation and sick leave).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

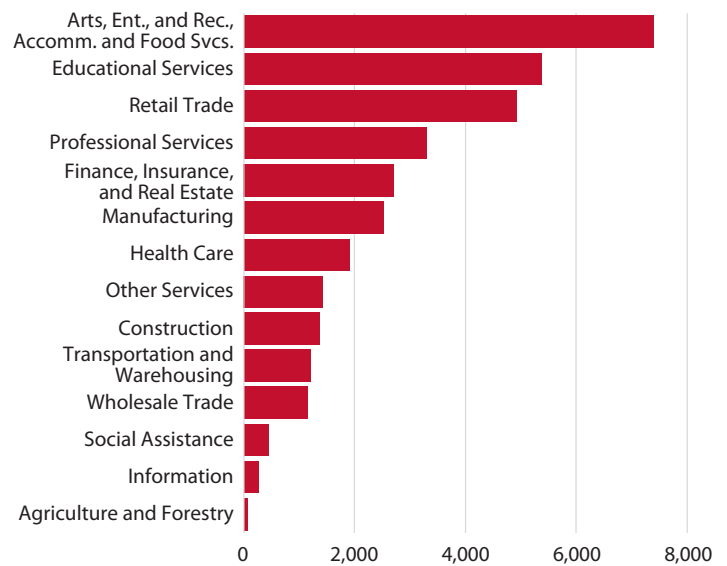
Employment

Nearly 9 in 10 (87.2%) Salt Lake City young adults ages 20 to 24 work. Most young adults work on a part-time basis (58.1%) while another 29.1% are employed in full-time, year-round positions.¹ Among the 16-to-19-year-old population, a smaller share (77.5%) work, with 70.3% employed part-time and just 7.2% holding full-time year-round jobs. After age 24, rates of full-time work increase substantially, with two-thirds (67.7%) of 25-to-44-year-olds working full-time year-round.

Salt Lake City's young adults work within various industries. The largest group, about 1 in 5 working 18-to-24-year-olds, are employed in the arts, entertainment and recreation, accommodation, and food service industry (7,404 young adults). High numbers also work in retail (5,378) and education services (4,918). These three industries accounted for over half of young adult employment in Salt Lake City in 2024 (52.0%).

Salt Lake City's young adults work from home at much lower rates than older workers. While 17.5% of working residents citywide work from home, only 8.1% of 20-to-24-year-olds and 6.7% of 16-to-19-year-olds do (Figure 8).

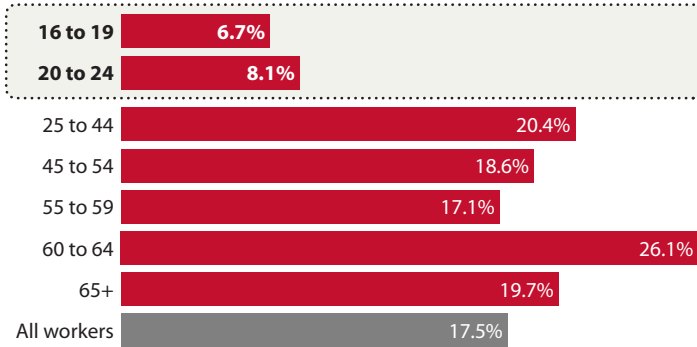
Figure 7. Industry of Employment for Salt Lake City Residents Age 18 to 24, 2024



Note: Reflects industry of most recent employment for any resident age 18 to 24 who worked during the previous five years. Mining, utilities, and military were each reported by zero young adults. Professional refers to Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services. Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate includes renting and leasing.

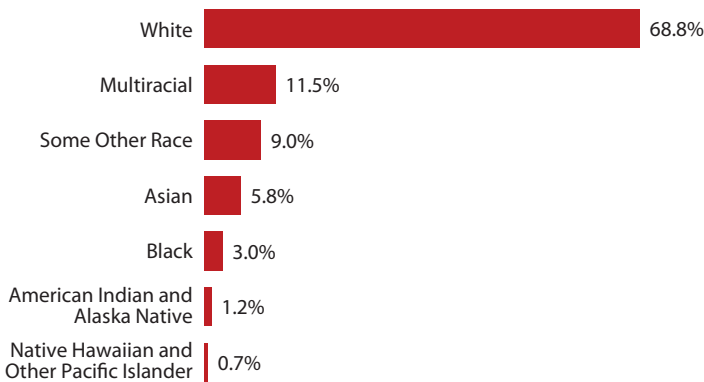
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 1-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

Figure 8: Work from Home Rates by Age for Working Residents in Salt Lake City, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 1-Year American Community Survey Public UseMicrodata Sample (PUMS)

Figure 9: Race of Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2020-2024



Note: All race groups include both Hispanic and non-Hispanic individuals and represent single-race alone groups (except for multiracial). Some Other Race is often selected by Hispanic residents.²

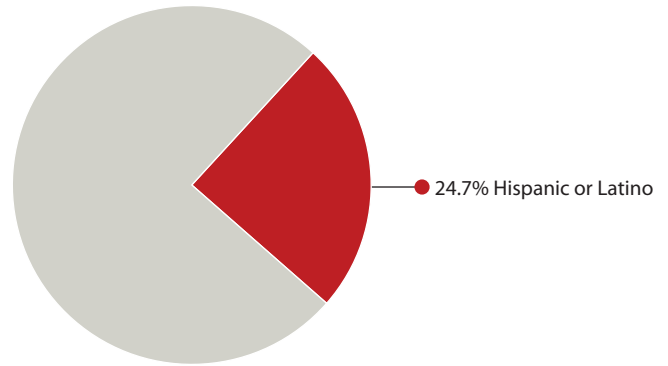
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates

Race, Ethnicity, and Place of Birth

About two-thirds (68.8%) of Salt Lake City’s young adults identify as White, the largest racial group in the city.³ Multiracial young adults make up 11.5% of the young adult population, followed by 9.0% who selected “Some Other Race.” Additionally, 5.8% identify as Asian, 3.0% identify as Black or African American, 1.2% identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.7% identify as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. About one quarter (24.7%) of Salt Lake City’s young adults identify as Hispanic or Latino in addition to their racial identity.

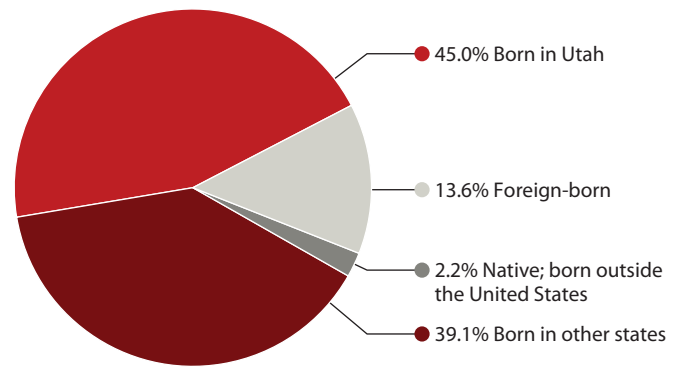
Among Salt Lake City’s young adults, 45.0% were born in Utah and 39.1% were born in other states. Another 13.6% are foreign-born, meaning they were born outside the United States and were not U.S. citizens at birth. These shares are similar to those for the city’s total population.

Figure 10: Hispanic or Latino Share of Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 11: Place of Birth for Salt Lake City Population Age 18 to 24, 2024



Note: Native; born outside the U.S. includes individuals born to American parents living abroad and those born in US territories and island areas. Foreign-born refers to anyone who was not a citizen at birth.

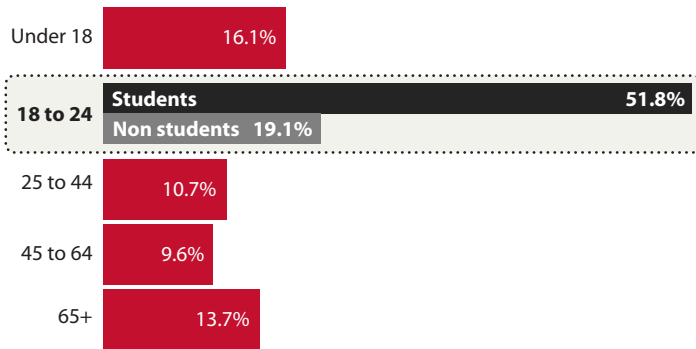
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Poverty and Health Insurance

Young adults experience poverty at higher rates than any other age group in Salt Lake City. Nearly one in three (31.2%) 18-to-24-year-olds in Salt Lake City earned an income below the poverty level in 2024. This elevated poverty rate is greatly impacted by the city’s young adult students, over half (51.8%) of whom reported incomes below poverty level (Figure 12). When college students are removed from poverty rate calculations, 19.1% of Salt Lake City’s young adults live below poverty level. This poverty rate better reflects the share of young adults who experience poverty as a result of unemployment, low wages, or generational poverty, and captures those most likely to participate in public assistance programs and services.⁴

Young adults benefit from high rates of health insurance coverage. More than 9 in 10 (92.2%) 19-to-25-year-olds in Salt Lake City report having health insurance, while 7.8% report being uninsured (Figure 13). This is similar to health insurance rates for children and adults between ages 25 and 64 city-wide.

Figure 12: Poverty Rates by Age for Salt Lake City, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates; student and non student data from 2024 1-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

Figure 13: Health Insurance Coverage by Age for Salt Lake City, 2024

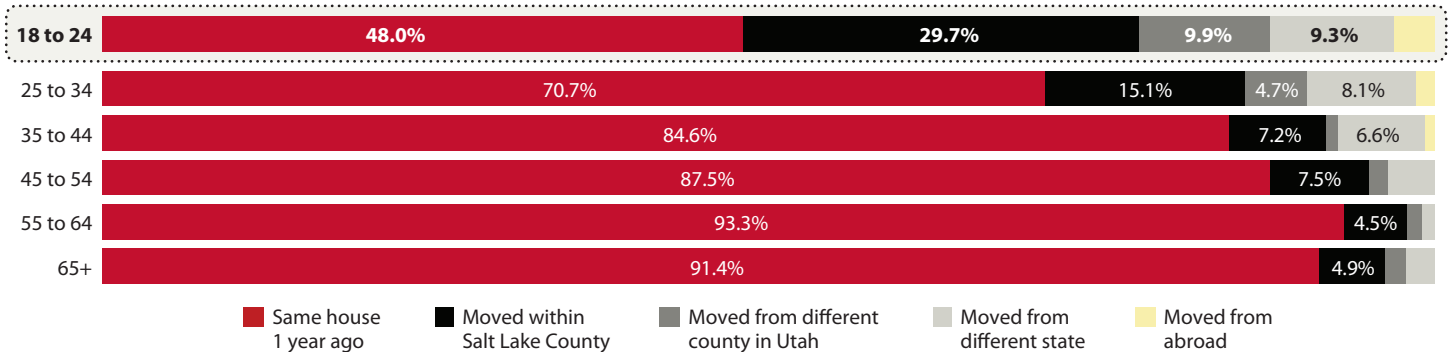


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Recent Movers

Salt Lake City’s young adults are highly mobile, relocating at higher rates than all other age groups in the city. Of the roughly 37,500 young adults living in Salt Lake City in 2024, about half (52.0%) moved into their homes during the previous 12 months. The largest group of movers, 29.7% of all 18-to-24-year-olds, relocated from other housing in the city or elsewhere in Salt Lake County. Another 9.9% of young adults moved from other counties in Utah, 9.3% moved to Salt Lake City from other states, and 3.1% came from outside the U.S in the past year.

Figure 14: Geographic Mobility by Age in Salt Lake City, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Living Arrangements

Nearly half (46.0%) of Salt Lake City’s young adults share housing with a roommate, spouse, or unmarried partner (Figure 15). Living with a spouse is the least common of these three arrangements, with 6.2% of Salt Lake City’s 18-to-24-year-olds being married.

Another quarter (24.6%) of Salt Lake City young adults live with family. One in five (20.7%) Salt Lake City residents age 18 to 24 live at home with a parent or parent-in-law.⁵ An additional 3.8% of young adults live in the homes of other relatives, usually a sibling or a grandparent.

A third large group of 18-to-24-year-olds reside in college or military housing, accounting for 18.3% of young adults in the city. Meanwhile, another 11.0% of young adults live alone.⁶

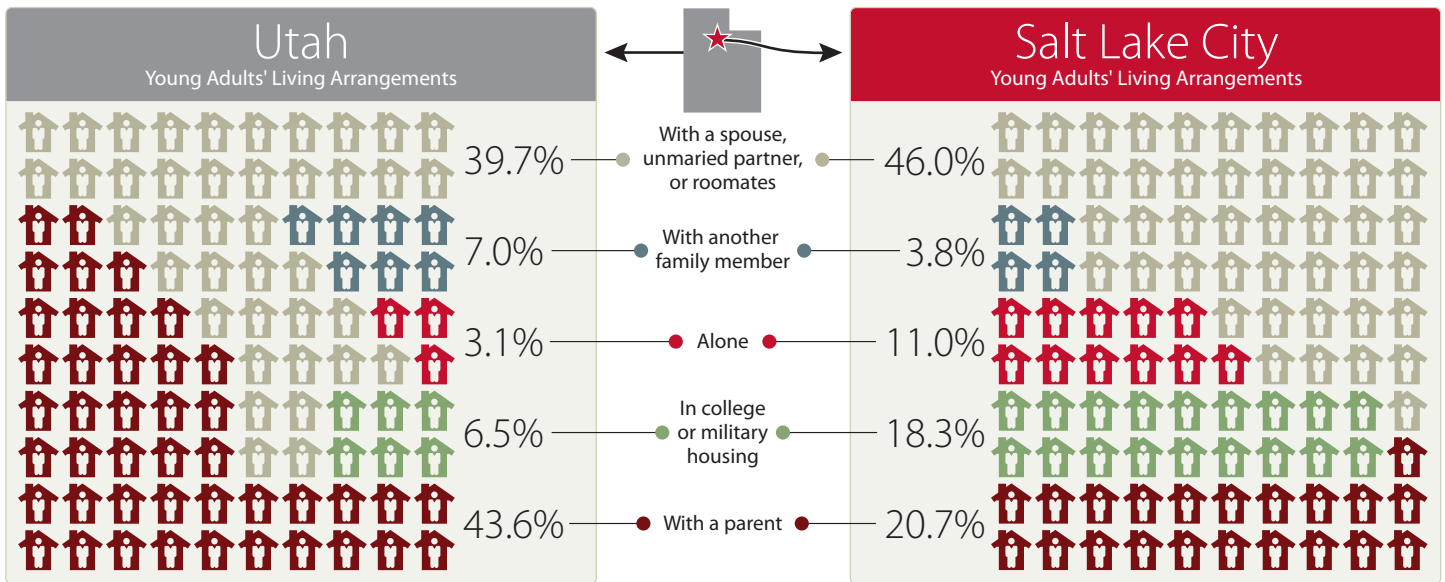
Salt Lake City’s young adults exhibit distinct living arrangements compared to their Utah peers. Statewide, young adults are twice as likely as those in Salt Lake City to live with their parents or other relatives (50.5% vs 24.6%). In addition to living independently from their parents, Salt Lake City’s 18-to-24-year-olds also stand out with higher shares living alone (11.0% vs. 3.1%) and in college housing (18.3% vs. 6.5%).

Renters and Owners

Nine in ten (90.7%) Salt Lake City householders between ages 15 and 24 rent their homes (Figure 16).⁷ This is the highest rental rate of any age group in the city. Statewide, a slightly smaller share of young Utahns rent— 84.4%.

Only about 1,000 homes in Salt Lake City are owned by young adults (ages 15 to 24), accounting for just 2.5% of the city’s owner-occupied housing. These young adult homeowners often struggle to cover the costs related to owning a home, including mortgage payments, utilities, and homeowners’ insurance. Two-thirds (67.5%) of homeowners under 25 are considered housing-cost burdened, allocating more than 30% of their household income to these expenses (Figure 17).

Figure 15: Living Arrangements of Residents Age 18 to 24 in Utah and Salt Lake City, 2024

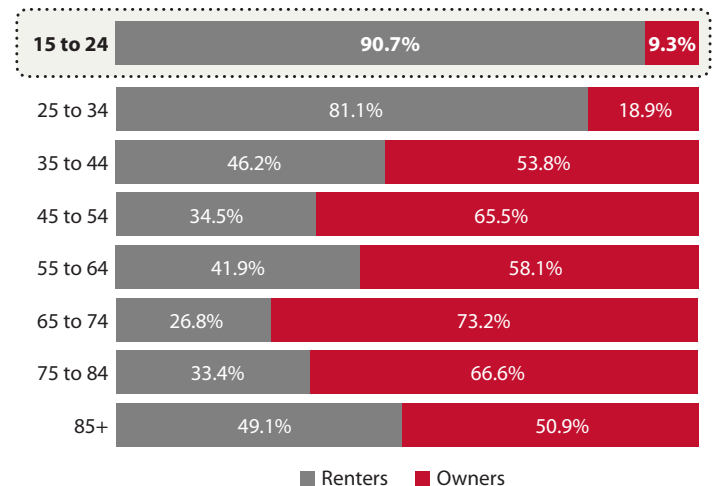


Note: Parent also includes parent-in-law. Not shown, 0.1% of 18 to 24-year-olds in Salt Lake City and 0.2% of 18 to 24-year-olds in Utah lived in correctional facilities, juvenile facilities (group homes and treatment centers), or hospitals in 2024.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 1-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

Statewide, an even smaller share of homes are owned by young adults (1.5%). However, young adult Utahns who own homes are less likely to be cost burdened by ownership expenses than those living in Salt Lake City, with 44.8% of 15-to-24-year-old owners statewide paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs.

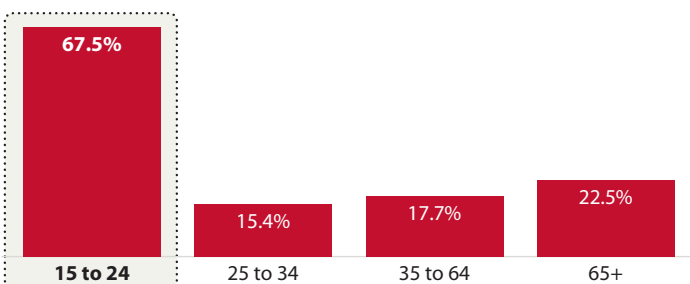
Young adult renters, the majority of young householders, also struggle to cover housing costs. Again, about two-thirds (65.8%) are considered cost-burdened, paying over 30% of their household income towards housing expenses (rent and utilities). Statewide, young adults are less likely to share these struggles, with half (51.9%) of Utah renters between ages 15 and 24 being cost-burdened.

Figure 16: Salt Lake City Renters and Owners by Age, 2024



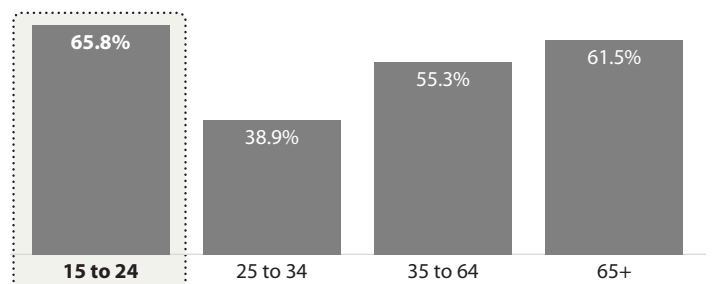
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 17: Housing Cost-Burdened Homeowners in Salt Lake City by Age, 2024



Note: Cost-burdened homeowners spend over 30% of their monthly income on housing costs, including utilities.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Figure 18: Housing Cost-Burdened Renters in Salt Lake City by Age, 2024



Note: Cost-burdened renters spend over 30% of their monthly income on housing costs, including utilities.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates

Endnotes

1. Full-time year-round work is defined as 35 or more hours of work a week for 50 to 52 weeks a year, including paid vacation, paid sick leave, and weeks of active service in the Armed Forces. https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2024_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf
2. Analysis of 2020 Census results revealed that nationwide about one-third of Hispanic or Latino residents selected "Some Other Race" alone as their race. Pena, J. E.; Coritz, A. C.; and Rios-Vargas, M. (December 2024). *Race Reporting Among the Hispanic Population: 2020*, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Working Paper No. 109. <https://www2.census.gov/library/working-papers/2024/demo/pop-wp109.pdf>
3. In order to present data for all seven race groups, 5-year ACS race data is presented in this section of the analysis. Findings regarding ethnicity and place of birth come from 2024 1-year estimates, aligning with the rest of the data in this report.
4. Students who report incomes below poverty level may be choosing to take a temporary break from full employment and may have access to resources other individuals in poverty lack, such as academic loans, college savings, or financial support from parents. For these reasons, demographic experts and census bureau researchers advise excluding students from measures of poverty, especially for smaller geographies. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2013/acs/2013_Bishaw_01.pdf; <https://www.coopercenter.org/research/how-modify-poverty-calculations-college-towns>
5. Here "parent" refers to a biological or adopted parent or a step-parent.
6. Not mentioned here are the 0.1% of 18 to 24-year-olds in Salt Lake City who reside in hospitals, correctional facilities, or juvenile facilities (including group homes, treatment centers, and juvenile correctional facilities).
7. Householder refers to the person in whose name a housing unit is owned or rented. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html#householder>

Partners in the Community

The following individuals and entities help support the research mission of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.

Legacy Partners

The Gardner Company
 Christian and Marie Gardner Family
 Intermountain Health
 Clark and Christine Ivory Foundation
 KSL and Deseret News
 Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation
 Mountain America Credit Union
 Salt Lake City Corporation
 Salt Lake County
 University of Utah Health
 Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity
 WCF Insurance
 Zions Bank

Executive Partners

The Boyer Company
 Clyde Companies

Sustaining Partners

Enbridge
 Salt Lake Chamber
 Staker Parson Materials and Construction
 Utah Chamber
 Wells Fargo

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Advisory Board

Conveners

Michael O. Leavitt
 Mitt Romney

Board

Scott Anderson, Co-Chair
 Gail Miller, Co-Chair
 Doug Anderson
 Deborah Bayle
 Roger Boyer
 Michelle Camacho
 Sophia M. DiCaro

Cameron Diehl
 Kurt Dirks
 Lisa Eccles
 Spencer P. Eccles
 Christian Gardner
 Kem C. Gardner
 Kimberly Gardner
 Natalie Gochnour
 Brandy Grace
 Jeremy Hafen
 Clark Ivory
 Ann Marie McDonald

Derek Miller
 Ann Millner
 Sterling Nielsen
 Jason Perry
 Ray Pickup
 Gary B. Porter
 Taylor Randall
 Jill Remington Love
 Josh Romney
 Charles W. Sorenson
 James Lee Sorenson
 Vicki Varela

Ex Officio (invited)

Governor Spencer Cox
 Speaker Mike Schultz
 Senate President
 Stuart Adams
 Representative
 Angela Romero
 Senator Luz Escamilla
 Mayor Jenny Wilson
 Mayor Erin Mendenhall

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Staff and Advisors

Leadership Team

Natalie Gochnour, Associate Dean and Director
 Jennifer Robinson, Chief of Staff
 Mallory Bateman, Director of Demographic Research
 Phil Dean, Chief Economist and Research Director
 Shelley Kruger, Director of Accounting and Finance
 Colleen Larson, Associate Director of Administration
 Nate Lloyd, Director of Economic Research
 Maddy Oritt, Director of Public Finance Research
 Laura Summers, Director of Public Policy Research
 Nicholas Thiriot, Communications Director
 James A. Wood, Ivory-Boyer Senior Fellow

Staff

Eric Albers, Senior Natural Resources Policy Analyst
 Samantha Ball, Dignity Initiative Research Director
 Parker Banta, Public Policy Analyst
 Melanie Beagley, Senior Health Research Analyst
 Kristina Bishop, Research Economist
 Andrea Thomas Brandley, Senior Education Analyst
 Kara Ann Byrne, Senior Health and Human Services Analyst
 Nate Christensen, Research Economist
 Moira Dillow, Housing, Construction, and Real Estate Analyst
 John C. Downen, Senior Research Fellow
 Dejan Eskic, Senior Research Fellow and Scholar
 Kate Farr, Monson Center Maintenance Specialist
 Chance Hansen, Communications Specialist

Emily Harris, Senior Demographer
 Michael T. Hogue, Senior Research Statistician
 Mike Hollingshaus, Senior Demographer
 Madeleine Jones, Dignity Initiative Field Director
 Jennifer Leaver, Senior Tourism Analyst
 Levi Pace, Senior Research Economist
 Praopan Pratoomchat, Senior Research Economist
 Heidi Prior, Public Policy Analyst
 Megan Rabe, Demography Research Associate
 Natalie Roney, Senior Public Finance Economist
 Shannon Simonsen, Research Coordinator
 Paul Springer, Senior Graphic Designer
 Gaby Velasquez, Monson Center Special Events Coordinator
 Cayley Wintch, Monson Center Building Manager
 David Witt, Dignity Initiative Program Associate

Senior Advisors

Jonathan Ball, Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst
 Ari Bruening, Community-at-Large
 Silvia Castro, Suazo Business Center
 Gary Cornia, Marriott School of Business
 Beth Jarosz, Population Reference Bureau
 Dianne Meppen, Community-at-Large
 Pamela S. Perlich, Community-at-Large
 Chris Redgrave, Community-at-Large
 Juliette Tennert, Community-at-Large