

The Best-Performing Cities (BPC) rankings provide valuable insights into the growth and access to economic opportunities in metropolitan areas (or cities) across the US. Given their focus on economic performance, however, the rankings offer limited information on the characteristics of the populations in these cities. To complement the BPC rankings, we invite you to use the Milken Institute’s [Community Explorer tool](#), which provides detailed information on the populations in counties within the metropolitan areas covered in the BPC report.

The Community Explorer synthesizes 751 socioeconomic, demographic, and behavioral traits of the US population into 17 community profiles classified into five groups: Urban, Industry-Driven, Graying, Extremely Vulnerable, and Noncontiguous America. The 17 community profiles can be combined with the BPC rankings by matching¹ US counties to BPC’s metropolitan areas. Doing so allows us to explore how a city’s growth interacts with its population’s core characteristics and how this interaction has changed over time.

EXPLORING COMMUNITIES IN THE BEST-PERFORMING CITIES

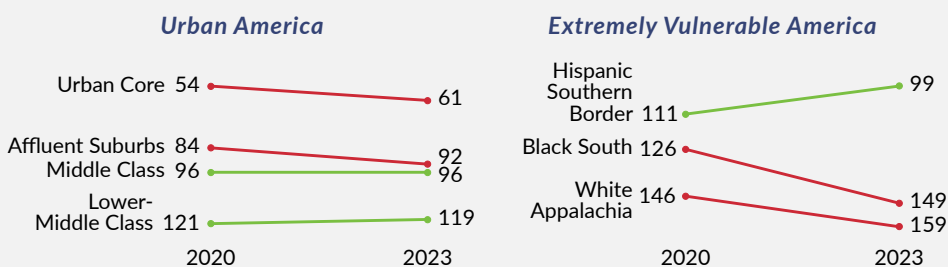
SAMPLE FINDINGS

- Despite the pandemic-driven population reshuffling across large cities and suburbs, metropolitan areas that contain Urban Core counties maintain their average top-rank among Urban America communities.
- Cities with economically vulnerable populations have mostly dropped in the rankings since the onset of the pandemic; yet the Hispanic Southern Border stands out among vulnerable communities, rising in the ranks.
- Somewhat unexpectedly, metropolitan areas with counties in the Retiree Community outperformed cities with counties in the other 17 communities in this year’s BPC report.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

- What are the population traits of Urban Core cities that emerged as “winners” and “losers” from the pandemic? How do these traits relate to metropolitan areas’ ability to maintain their growth?
- What distinguished residents of the Hispanic Southern Border community? Which of their unique traits allowed their cities to fare better (relative to other vulnerable communities) over the pandemic?
- Early retirement became popular during the pandemic; what are the traits of these early retirees that drove the relatively strong economic growth of their cities in recent years?

Figure 1. Change in Average Ranking of Cities in Urban and Extremely Vulnerable America



Source: Milken Institute (2023)

For questions or comments, please email us at research@milkeninstitute.org

To view the full report, visit <https://milkeninstitute.org/report/best-performing-cities-2023>



¹ This can be done using publicly available MSA to county crosswalks such as that offered by the National Bureau of Economic Research (see <https://www.nber.org/research/data/census-core-based-statistical-area-cbsa-federal-information-processing-series-fips-county-crosswalk>).

