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Aging Without a Car

Living Alone and Household Vehicle Availability Among Older Adults in Eight U.S. Study Areas



Aging Without a Car: Living Alone and Household Vehicle Availability Among Older Adults in Eight U.S. Study Areas

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Data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020–2024 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).[4] Study areas, in alphabetical order: Boise PUMA region, Las Vegas, Orlando, Phoenix, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Stockton and Tampa.

At a glance

An estimated 112,207 people 65 and older in eight U.S. study areas live alone in a household with no vehicle. Among older adults without a vehicle, 65.1% live alone. People 65 and older who live alone are about 6 times as likely to have no household vehicle as those who live with others, about 5 times after adjusting for age.

These estimates do not directly measure missed medical appointments, transportation demand, wheelchair use, or unmet transportation needs. Independent living difficulty is a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments. Figures are ACS 2020–2024 5-year estimates: period averages for 2020–2024, not single-year values. They cover people 65+ living in housing units; nursing homes and other group quarters are excluded. ± is the 90% margin of error.

Summary

This report estimates how many adults 65 and older live alone in a household with no vehicle in eight U.S. study areas, using person-level Census microdata. An estimated 112,207 ±3,075 people 65+ in housing units live alone in a household with no vehicle, 4.09% ±0.11 of all people 65+ in the eight areas. The report describes who these older adults are, how the pattern differs by age, how the no-vehicle share differs between people who live alone and people who live with others, and how often living alone with no vehicle occurs together with serious walking difficulty. These estimates do not directly measure missed medical appointments, transportation demand, wheelchair use, or unmet transportation needs.

Key findings

1. **112,207 older adults live alone in a household with no vehicle.** Across the eight study areas, an estimated 112,207 ±3,075 people 65+ live alone in a household with no vehicle: 4.09% ±0.11 of all people 65+ in housing units (Table 4).
2. **Living alone is common among older adults without a vehicle.** 65.12% ±1.21 of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle live alone, compared with 21.58% ±0.23 of those with a vehicle (Tables 3 and 4).
3. **The no-vehicle share is higher for people who live alone, before and after age adjustment.** 16.82% ±0.43 of people 65+ who live alone have no household vehicle, compared with 2.89% ±0.13 of those who live with others (ratio 5.81 ±0.29, about 6 times). Adjusted for age, the shares are 15.44% ±0.41 and 2.96% ±0.13 (ratio 5.21 ±0.27, about 5 times). The age-adjusted difference remains after Holm adjustment in each of the eight study areas and in the eight areas combined (Table 5).[23]
4. **The pattern is stronger at older ages.** 13.36% ±0.59 of all people 85+ live alone in a household with no vehicle, compared with 2.46% ±0.11 at 65–74. Among people 85+ with no household vehicle, 76.73% ±2.07 live alone (Table 4a).
5. **About half also report serious walking difficulty.** An estimated 53,976 ±2,254 people 65+ live alone, have no household vehicle and report serious walking difficulty: 48.10% ±1.34 of the living-alone, no-vehicle group (Table 7).
6. **Independent living difficulty is more common without a vehicle.** 36.39% ±1.39 of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle report independent living difficulty, compared with 11.13% ±0.19 of those with a vehicle (difference 25.25 ±1.41 points; Table 8). Independent living difficulty is a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments.
7. **Context from Version 1.0.** Version 1.0 of the Senior Transportation Access Report estimated that 172,313 ±4,153 people 65+ in the same eight study areas live in a household with no vehicle (6.28% ±0.15 of all people 65+). That figure is reused as published, not re-estimated (Table 1).[6]

Terms used in this report

- **No household vehicle:** no car, van or truck (1 ton or less) kept at home for use by household members (ACS item VEH = 0). It describes household vehicle availability. It does not show whether a person drives, and it is not a measure of transportation access.
- **Living alone:** the only person in the household (NP = 1), for people 65+ in housing units. Living alone is measured from the household roster; the survey does not record whether relatives or friends live nearby or help with rides.
- **Serious walking difficulty:** the ACS ambulatory difficulty item (serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs), self- or proxy-reported; a functional-difficulty measure, not a clinical diagnosis.
- **Independent living difficulty:** a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments.
- **Age-adjusted (age-standardized):** directly standardized to the age mix of all people 65+ in housing units in the eight study areas combined (65–74, 75–84, 85+), so that groups and areas with different age mixes can be compared. An age-adjusted share is a summary measure, not the share actually observed.

Older adults in a household with no vehicle (reused from Version 1.0)

Tables 1 and 2 are reused from Version 1.0 of the Senior Transportation Access Report and were reproduced exactly from the same Census files as a check; they are not new estimates.[6] Study areas are listed in alphabetical order.

Table 1. People 65+ in a household with no vehicle (reused from Version 1.0)

Study area	People 65+ in a household with no vehicle	Share of all people 65+
Boise PUMA region	5,496 ±649	4.16% ±0.49
Las Vegas	25,495 ±1,485	6.96% ±0.41
Orlando	19,184 ±1,549	6.01% ±0.49
Phoenix	40,826 ±2,101	5.63% ±0.29
Sacramento	23,244 ±1,199	7.26% ±0.38
Salt Lake City	10,669 ±1,143	5.96% ±0.63
Stockton	6,088 ±704	5.88% ±0.68
Tampa	41,311 ±1,913	6.90% ±0.32
Eight areas combined	**172,313 ±4,153**	**6.28% ±0.15**

Table 2. Share of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle, by age (reused from Version 1.0)

Study area	65–74	75–84	85+
Boise PUMA region	2.45% ±0.53	5.11% ±1.15	13.72% ±3.22
Las Vegas	5.70% ±0.54	7.26% ±0.75	14.55% ±2.04
Orlando	4.56% ±0.57	6.50% ±0.84	13.27% ±2.08
Phoenix	3.70% ±0.28	5.17% ±0.46	17.90% ±1.40
Sacramento	4.84% ±0.42	7.08% ±0.80	20.13% ±2.12
Salt Lake City	4.03% ±0.64	6.21% ±1.29	18.07% ±3.11
Stockton	3.56% ±0.65	6.97% ±1.44	15.85% ±3.29
Tampa	4.57% ±0.33	6.66% ±0.55	19.42% ±1.46
Eight areas combined	**4.35% ±0.15**	**6.27% ±0.33**	**17.41% ±0.71**

Source: Version 1.0 of the Senior Transportation Access Report (data files `joint_estimates.csv` and `age_specific.csv`), https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24210261. Area comparisons of these shares were tested in Version 1.0 and are cited there as published; they are not re-tested here.

Who lives in a household with no vehicle

Table 3. Profile of people 65+ in a household with no vehicle and with a vehicle, eight study areas combined (descriptive)

Characteristic	Category	No household vehicle	With a household vehicle
Sex	Male	33.81% ±0.99	46.12% ±0.07
Sex	Female	66.19% ±0.99	53.88% ±0.07
Living arrangement	Lives alone	65.12% ±1.21	21.58% ±0.23
Living arrangement	Lives with others	34.88% ±1.21	78.42% ±0.23
Poverty	Below 100% of poverty threshold	29.72% ±1.07	8.83% ±0.19
Poverty	100–149% of poverty threshold	18.41% ±1.08	7.05% ±0.19
Poverty	150% or more of poverty threshold	51.86% ±1.23	84.12% ±0.26
Tenure	Owner	39.39% ±1.36	84.60% ±0.27
Tenure	Renter or occupied without paying rent	60.61% ±1.36	15.40% ±0.27
Tenure detail	of which rented	58.01% ±1.35	14.23% ±0.26
Tenure detail	of which occupied without payment of rent	2.60% ±0.40	1.17% ±0.07
Serious walking difficulty	With	43.33% ±1.16	18.67% ±0.24
Serious walking difficulty	Without	56.67% ±1.16	81.33% ±0.24
Independent living difficulty	With	36.39% ±1.39	11.13% ±0.19
Independent living difficulty	**Without**	**63.61% ±1.39**	**88.87% ±0.19**

Shares of each group, in percent; ± is the 90% margin of error. Descriptive only: no statistical tests. Poverty is measured against the official poverty threshold. Study-area profiles are in the fact sheets and in `data/t3_profile_no_vehicle_vs_with_vehicle.csv`; cells based on fewer than 30 sample records are shown as "— (sample too small)", and cells marked "indicative only" should not be quoted on their own.

Living alone in a household with no vehicle

Table 4. People 65+ who live alone in a household with no vehicle

Study area	People 65+ living alone with no vehicle	Share of all people 65+	Share of no-vehicle older adults who live alone
Boise PUMA region	3,851 ±523	2.92% ±0.40	70.07% ±7.69
Las Vegas	16,240 ±1,078	4.43% ±0.30	63.70% ±3.39
Orlando	11,419 ±1,120	3.58% ±0.35	59.52% ±4.64
Phoenix	26,230 ±1,579	3.62% ±0.22	64.25% ±3.15
Sacramento	15,137 ±904	4.73% ±0.28	65.12% ±3.37
Salt Lake City	7,030 ±818	3.93% ±0.46	65.89% ±5.57
Stockton	3,480 ±423	3.36% ±0.40	57.16% ±5.98
Tampa	28,820 ±1,735	4.81% ±0.29	69.76% ±2.40
Eight areas combined	**112,207 ±3,075**	**4.09% ±0.11**	**65.12% ±1.21**

Table 4a. Eight study areas combined, by age

Age	People living alone with no vehicle	Share of all people in the age group	Share of no-vehicle older adults in the age group who live alone
65–74	39,865 ±1,771	2.46% ±0.11	56.51% ±2.09
75–84	34,662 ±1,977	4.13% ±0.23	65.82% ±1.97
85+	**37,680 ±1,738**	**13.36% ±0.59**	**76.73% ±2.07**

Counts mainly reflect population size. Study-area figures by age are in the fact sheets and in `data/t4_living_alone_no_vehicle.csv`; every study area keeps all three age groups (each age cell has at least 50 sample records).

Living alone and the no-vehicle share

Table 5. Share of people 65+ with no household vehicle, living alone vs living with others

Study area	Living alone	Living with others	Living alone, age-adjusted	Living with others, age-adjusted	Age-adjusted difference (points)	Age-adjusted ratio	Holm-adjusted p
Boise PUMA region	12.37% ±1.77	1.63% ±0.50	11.51% ±1.65	1.75% ±0.53	+9.77 ±1.78	6.58 ±2.45	<0.001
Las Vegas	18.84% ±1.07	3.30% ±0.41	18.51% ±1.06	3.36% ±0.42	+15.15 ±1.16	5.50 ±0.77	<0.001
Orlando	17.44% ±1.47	3.06% ±0.47	16.53% ±1.41	3.07% ±0.47	+13.46 ±1.49	5.39 ±0.93	<0.001
Phoenix	14.90% ±0.83	2.66% ±0.30	13.44% ±0.74	2.76% ±0.31	+10.68 ±0.84	4.86 ±0.64	<0.001
Sacramento	18.89% ±1.09	3.38% ±0.41	16.68% ±0.97	3.40% ±0.42	+13.28 ±1.10	4.91 ±0.71	<0.001
Salt Lake City	17.25% ±1.90	2.63% ±0.57	15.95% ±1.99	2.90% ±0.65	+13.05 ±2.05	5.50 ±1.41	<0.001
Stockton	15.94% ±1.90	3.19% ±0.67	14.02% ±1.77	3.29% ±0.69	+10.73 ±1.83	4.26 ±1.02	<0.001
Tampa	17.40% ±0.92	2.88% ±0.25	15.63% ±0.86	2.91% ±0.26	+12.72 ±0.93	5.37 ±0.59	<0.001
Eight areas combined	**16.82% ±0.43**	**2.89% ±0.13**	**15.44% ±0.41**	**2.96% ±0.13**	**+12.48 ±0.42**	**5.21 ±0.27**	**<0.001**

Shares in percent; ± is the 90% margin of error. Age-adjusted figures are directly standardized to the eight-area 65+ age mix.[2] The age-adjusted difference (living alone minus living with others) was tested in each study area and in the eight areas combined (9 tests, Holm-adjusted at a 10% familywise level).[3] All 9 remain after adjustment and none is borderline; all 9 are unchanged under the alternative age standard S2. Ratios are less stable where the share among people living with others is small, so shares and differences are the better basis for local statements.

Comparing study areas

Each study area is compared only with the other seven areas combined, using the age-standardized share of all people 65+ who live alone in a household with no vehicle; p-values are Holm-adjusted across the 8 comparisons at a 10% familywise level (more lenient than the common 5%). Study areas are not ranked.

Table 6. Age-standardized share of all people 65+ who live alone in a household with no vehicle, each study area vs the other seven combined

Study area	Age-standardized share	Difference from the other seven combined (points)	Holm-adjusted p	Result	Sensitivity note
Boise PUMA region	3.14% ±0.42	-0.99 ±0.43	<0.001	lower than the other seven combined	Under the alternative age standard S2 the result still remains but is borderline: it remains at the 10% familywise level, not at 5% (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.063).
Las Vegas	4.54% ±0.30	+0.53 ±0.32	0.0178	higher than the other seven combined	Changes under the alternative age standard S2: not distinguishable from the other seven combined (S2 difference -0.01 points; Holm-adjusted p 1.0).
Orlando	3.63% ±0.36	-0.52 ±0.38	0.0486	lower than the other seven combined	Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.0164). Its Holm-adjusted p under the main standard (0.0486) is close to the 0.05 level that marks a borderline result.
Phoenix	3.60% ±0.21	-0.67 ±0.26	<0.001	lower than the other seven combined	Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.0163).
Sacramento	4.58% ±0.27	+0.56 ±0.30	0.00889	higher than the other seven combined	Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.00277).
Salt Lake City	4.06% ±0.47	-0.03 ±0.48	0.909	not distinguishable from the other seven combined	Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p 1.0).
Stockton	3.35% ±0.41	-0.77 ±0.41	0.00854	lower than the other seven combined	Under the alternative age standard S2 the result still remains but is borderline: it remains at the 10% familywise level, not at 5% (S2 Holm-adjusted p 0.0757).
Tampa	4.67% ±0.28	+0.75 ±0.30	<0.001	higher than the other seven combined	Unchanged under the alternative age standard S2 (S2 Holm-adjusted p <0.001).
Eight areas combined	**4.09% ±0.11**	—	—	**not a test**	—

± is the 90% margin of error. A result "remains" after adjustment when its Holm-adjusted p is at or below the 10% familywise level; a result that would not remain at 5% is labeled borderline. None of the 8 results is borderline under the main age standard. The sensitivity note reports the rerun with the alternative age standard S2.

Three results remain after adjustment and hold up under every sensitivity check: Phoenix (lower), Sacramento (higher), Tampa (higher) than the other seven areas combined. The other results are reported in Table 6 with their sensitivity notes and are not summarized elsewhere: a result that changes or becomes borderline under the alternative age standard, or whose Holm-adjusted p is close to the 0.05 borderline level, is kept out of headlines, summaries and fact sheets.

Living alone, no vehicle and serious walking difficulty

Table 7. People 65+ who live alone, have no household vehicle and report serious walking difficulty (descriptive)

Study area	People	Share of all people 65+	Share of the living-alone, no-vehicle group
Boise PUMA region	1,956 ±387	1.48% ±0.29	50.79% ±7.41
Las Vegas	8,193 ±728	2.24% ±0.20	50.45% ±3.61
Orlando	4,717 ±627	1.48% ±0.20	41.31% ±4.03
Phoenix	13,066 ±1,237	1.80% ±0.17	49.81% ±3.23
Sacramento	7,067 ±641	2.21% ±0.20	46.69% ±3.82
Salt Lake City	3,758 ±703	2.10% ±0.39	53.46% ±6.25
Stockton	1,727 ±353	1.67% ±0.34	49.63% ±7.12
Tampa	13,492 ±1,248	2.25% ±0.21	46.81% ±3.11
Eight areas combined	**53,976 ±2,254**	**1.97% ±0.08**	**48.10% ±1.34**

Descriptive only: no statistical tests and no comparisons between study areas. Every study area has at least 50 sample records for this group, so all eight are shown.

Independent living difficulty and household vehicle availability

Table 8. Share of people 65+ reporting independent living difficulty, with no household vehicle vs with a vehicle (descriptive)

Study area	No household vehicle	With a household vehicle	Difference (points)
Boise PUMA region	42.41% ±6.67	8.44% ±0.71	33.97 ±6.59
Las Vegas	34.23% ±3.25	11.83% ±0.46	22.40 ±3.26
Orlando	34.94% ±3.63	12.65% ±0.61	22.29 ±3.68
Phoenix	34.88% ±2.41	9.12% ±0.33	25.76 ±2.48
Sacramento	38.89% ±3.01	13.60% ±0.56	25.29 ±2.98
Salt Lake City	43.87% ±5.74	8.94% ±0.60	34.93 ±5.85
Stockton	47.83% ±6.53	16.44% ±0.94	31.39 ±6.66
Tampa	34.04% ±2.26	11.38% ±0.39	22.66 ±2.31
Eight areas combined	**36.39% ±1.39**	**11.13% ±0.19**	**25.25 ±1.41**

Independent living difficulty is a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments. Descriptive only: no statistical tests and no comparisons between study areas.

Sensitivity checks

1. **Poverty cut.** Table 3 was rerun with below 150% of the poverty threshold in place of below 100%: in the eight areas combined, 48.14% ±1.23 of people 65+ with no household vehicle and 15.88% ±0.26 of those with a vehicle are below 150%. Table 3 is descriptive, so no test result can change.
2. **Age standard.** The study-area comparisons (Table 6) and the living-alone contrasts (Table 5) were rerun with the alternative age standard S2, the age mix of people 65+ with serious walking difficulty used in Version 1.0. All 9 living-alone contrasts are unchanged. The Table 6 results that change or become borderline are noted beside each result.

Limitations

- These estimates do not directly measure missed medical appointments, transportation demand, wheelchair use, or unmet transportation needs. They count people and shares; they do not measure trips, service supply, or whether transportation services are adequate. A household without a vehicle may still get rides from family, friends, transit or paratransit.
- Living alone is measured from the household roster; the survey does not record whether relatives or friends live nearby or help with rides.
- Independent living difficulty is a self-reported difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping; it is not a record of missed appointments.
- Differences between groups are associations, not causes. Nothing here shows that living alone leads to having no vehicle, or the reverse.
- Study-area figures describe the population of each study area as a whole. They should not be applied to individual people, to neighborhoods within an area, or to cities and counties outside the study-area definitions.
- Figures are ACS 2020–2024 5-year period averages, not single-year values; they include pandemic-era years. They cover people 65+ in housing units; nursing homes and other group quarters are excluded.
- These are survey estimates with sampling error; ± is the 90% margin of error. Age-adjusted figures depend on the chosen standard population; results that are sensitive to that choice are noted beside each result.
- The comparison plan was written and approved before any estimate in this study was run. The rule that keeps sensitive comparison results out of headlines and summaries was set after the results were produced; it limits where results are summarized, not which results are reported.

Geography

Study areas are core counties chosen for this study series, not official metropolitan areas; they are the same areas as in Version 1.0. Seven areas are exact unions of Census 2020 PUMAs within their counties. Boise is reported as the **Boise PUMA region**: the six PUMAs covering Ada and Canyon counties, ID, which also include parts of Gem, Owyhee, Payette and Washington counties, so the figures are not Ada plus Canyon county totals.[5] PUMA lists for every area are in `data/study_areas.csv`.

Methods in brief

Person records are linked to their household records in the ACS 2020–2024 5-year PUMS. No household vehicle is household `VEH=0`; living alone is household size `NP=1`; serious walking difficulty is `DPHY=1`; independent living difficulty is `DOUT=1`. Estimates use person weights. 90% margins of error come from the 80 Census replicate weights using the successive-difference replicate method (MOE90 = 1.645 × SE).[1] Age-adjusted figures use direct standardization to the eight-area 65+ age mix.[2] Comparisons use two-sided z-tests with Holm adjustment within each family of tests at a 10% familywise level.[3] Every estimate is assigned a reliability tier from its unweighted sample count and coefficient of variation before its value is read. Full details: `methodology/aging-without-a-car-technical-appendix-v1.0.md`.

Data, license and reuse

Datasets (CSV, one file per table, with a data dictionary) and a workbook with tier flags and notes are in `data/`.

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Version note. Version 1.0. Publication date: November 17, 2026. Corrections will be logged with dates and before/after values. Underlying analysis: run v1.2 under the locked analysis plan (Gate 1, approved 13 November 2026).

Study-area fact sheets

- Boise PUMA region: `fact-sheets/01-boise-puma-region-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/boise-puma-region/)
- Las Vegas: `fact-sheets/02-las-vegas-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/las-vegas/)
- Orlando: `fact-sheets/03-orlando-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/orlando/)
- Phoenix: `fact-sheets/04-phoenix-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/phoenix/)
- Sacramento: `fact-sheets/05-sacramento-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/sacramento/)
- Salt Lake City: `fact-sheets/06-salt-lake-city-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/salt-lake-city/)
- Stockton: `fact-sheets/07-stockton-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/stockton/)
- Tampa: `fact-sheets/08-tampa-v1.0.md` (https://seniormedrides.com/research/aging-without-a-car/tampa/)

Notes

[1] Standard errors use the successive-difference replicate method with the 80 ACS replicate weights: $SE = \sqrt{(4/80 \times \Sigma(X_r - X)^2)}$; $MOE90 = 1.645 \times SE$. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020–2024 5-year PUMS accuracy statement, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/pums/accuracy/2020_2024AccuracyPUMS.pdf. ↩

[2] Direct standardization: standardized share = Σ (standard weight × age-specific share) over 65–74, 75–84 and 85+. Standard weights (S1) are the age mix of all people 65+ in housing units in the eight study areas combined: 0.591331, 0.305893 and 0.102776. The alternative standard S2 (sensitivity check) is 0.409652, 0.354223 and 0.236126. ↩

[3] Holm, S. (1979). A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. Scandinavian Journal of Statistics, 6(2), 65–70. Holm-adjusted p-values are in `data/f1_area_vs_other_seven.csv` and `data/f2_living_alone_vs_not.csv`. ↩

[4] Source data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020–2024 5-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). The Census Bureau has not reviewed, endorsed or certified this analysis or its findings. ↩

[5] PUMAs were assigned with the Census 2020 tract-to-2020-PUMA relationship file, https://www2.census.gov/geo/docs/maps-data/data/rel2020/2020_Census_Tract_to_2020_PUMA.txt. ↩

[6] SeniorMedRides.com. (2026). *Senior Transportation Access Report: Walking Difficulty and Household Vehicle Access Among Older Adults in Eight U.S. Study Areas* (Version 1.0). https://seniormedrides.com/research/senior-transportation-access/ https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24210261 ↩