



The 100 best places to raise a family

Find out which American cities are the best, worst for you and your brood

Best Life

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Television executives seized the idea long ago: American families value where they plant their roots. The Cosbys had Brooklyn. The Cunninghams, Milwaukee. The Simpsons, Springfield. But fathers face reality when they're not in prime time. They want to raise their children somewhere safe, where they can attend good schools with favorable student-teacher ratios, above-average test scores and respectable budgets. Plenty of museums, parks and pediatricians also contribute to a good quality of life, whereas multihour commutes, expensive houses and divorcing friends and neighbors do not. Best Life editors used these categories and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, the FBI, the American Association of Museums, the National Center for Health Statistics and the American Bar Association to evaluate 257 cities. Here are the best — and worst — places to raise a family.

- 1 Honolulu, Hawaii — Schools spend almost \$9,000 per pupil, unemployment ranks less than half the national average, and you can play on the island of O'ahu's 125 beaches.
- 2 Virginia Beach, Virginia
- 3 Billings, Montana
- 4 Columbus, Georgia
- 5 San Diego, California
- 6 Des Moines, Iowa
- 7 Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 8 Madison, Wisconsin — Madison has a high number of pediatricians per capita.
- 9 Colorado Springs, Colorado
- 10 Santa Rosa, California
- 11 Wichita, Kansas
- 12 Los Angeles, California
- 13 Corona, California
- 14 Austin, Texas
- 15 Stamford, Connecticut
- 16 Omaha, Nebraska
- 17 Naperville, Illinois
- 18 Fort Wayne, Indiana
- 19 Springfield, Illinois
- 20 Boise, Idaho
- 21 Manchester, New Hampshire
- 22 South Bay Area, California
- 23 New York, New York
- 24 Fontana, California
- 25 Louisville, Kentucky
- 26 Plano, Texas
- 27 Oceanside, California
- 28 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- 29 Sacramento, California
- 30 Ann Arbor, Michigan
- 31 Reno, Nevada
- 32 Las Vegas, Nevada
- 33 Lincoln, Nebraska
- 34 San Bernardino, California
- 35 Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 36 Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina — Median value of a home: \$202,733
- 37 Kansas City, Kansas
- 38 Fremont, California
- 39 Buffalo, New York
- 40 Berkeley, California
- 41 Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 42 Kansas City, Missouri
- 43 Waterbury, Connecticut
- 44 Syracuse, New York
- 45 Phoenix, Arizona
- 46 Albuquerque, New Mexico
- 47 Akron, Ohio
- 48 Boston, Massachusetts
- 49 Escondido, California

- 50 Fairfield, California
- 51 Antioch, California
- 52 Elgin, Illinois
- 53 Rochester, New York
- 54 Seattle, Washington — Residents spend \$266 per person annually to maintain the city's parks.
- 55 Tucson, Arizona
- 56 Santa Clarita, California
- 57 Denver, Colorado
- 58 Indianapolis, Indiana
- 59 Glendale, Arizona
- 60 Chicago, Illinois
- 61 Atlanta, Georgia
- 62 San Antonio, Texas
- 63 Mobile, Alabama
- 64 Concord, California
- 65 Denton, Texas
- 66 Coral Springs, Florida
- 67 San Francisco, California
- 68 Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- 69 El Paso, Texas — Classrooms average fewer than 16 students for every teacher.
- 70 San Buenaventura, California
- 71 Worcester, Massachusetts
- 72 Baltimore, Maryland
- 73 Richmond, California
- 74 Lowell, Massachusetts
- 75 Portland, Oregon
- 76 Jacksonville, Florida
- 77 Fort Collins, Colorado
- 78 Orlando, Florida
- 79 Modesto, California
- 80 Montgomery, Alabama
- 81 Tampa, Florida
- 82 Salinas, California
- 83 Newport News, Virginia
- 84 Oakland, California
- 85 Augusta, Georgia
- 86 Fort Worth, Texas
- 87 Washington, D.C.
- 88 Tulsa, Oklahoma — Residents spend just 17 minutes commuting to work.
- 89 Bellevue, Washington
- 90 Cincinnati, Ohio
- 91 McKinney, Texas
- 92 St. Louis, Missouri
- 93 Hayward, California
- 94 Midland, Texas
- 95 Sterling Heights, Michigan
- 96 Greensboro, North Carolina
- 97 Arlington, Texas
- 98 Alexandria, Virginia
- 99 Winston-Salem, North Carolina
- 100 Lexington, Kentucky

The 10 Worst Places to Raise a Family (from best to worst)

- 10 Springfield, Missouri
- 9 Dayton, Ohio
- 8 Corpus Christi, Texas
- 7 Flint, Michigan — Country's highest violent-crime rate
- 6 Columbia, South Carolina
- 5 Waco, Texas
- 4 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 3 Fayetteville, North Carolina
- 2 Beaumont, Texas — Long-standing air-quality challenges
- 1 Clarksville, Tennessee — Low educational spending: \$6,729 per student