

2019's Best & Worst Places to Raise a Family

Jul 23, 2019 | John S Kiernan, Senior Writer & Editor

Families move often and for various reasons. In fact, the average American can expect to move an [estimated 11.4 times](#) during his or her lifetime. Moving can be a sign of opportunity, such as a new job or long-term wealth accumulation. But also move because of instability such as foreclosure or job loss. The key in either case is to choose an area that's both economically prosperous and a pleasant place to live. With that in mind, WalletHub compared more than 180 U.S. cities based on 47 key metrics that consider essential family dynamics, such as the cost of housing, the quality of local school and health-care systems, and the opportunities for fun and recreation. While obviously not perfect — given personal preferences and the limitations of publicly available data — our findings will hopefully give movers a sense of their options. This study aims to reveal the areas that offer the greatest opportunity to achieve [Wallet Fitness](#) and live a long and happy life. Read on for the results, additional insight from experts and a detailed description of our methodology.

Best Places to Raise a Family

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
1	Overland Park, KS	71.76	94	10	11	1	5
2	Fremont, CA	70.59	82	1	2	41	1
3	Irvine, CA	70.38	22	2	4	44	4
4	Plano, TX	67.88	101	3	40	7	2
5	South Burlington, VT	67.04	181	15	1	30	7
6	Bismarck, ND	65.77	141	22	27	6	16
7	Gilbert, AZ	65.26	56	13	44	15	11
8	Fargo, ND	65.25	104	20	10	22	34
9	Scottsdale, AZ	64.42	54	24	55	19	10
10	Boise, ID	64.20	17	17	166	5	40
11	Madison, WI	64.15	79	27	68	3	27
12	Seattle, WA	64.04	51	60	5	26	62
13	Columbia, MD	63.92	70	51	67	4	42
14	Lincoln, NE	63.55	55	28	64	12	36
15	Huntington Beach, CA	63.17	95	16	9	80	9
16	San Jose, CA	63.13	47	7	14	79	12
17	Chandler, AZ	62.34	60	37	74	25	13

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
18	San Diego, CA	62.21	4	21	18	96	59
19	Cheyenne, WY	62.18	120	84	70	11	22
20	Sioux Falls, SD	61.86	151	31	30	16	45
21	Virginia Beach, VA	61.82	133	4	45	31	24
22	Cedar Rapids, IA	61.80	137	44	100	2	52
23	Henderson, NV	61.08	48	14	103	49	18
24	Austin, TX	60.89	80	65	24	14	90
25	Colorado Springs, CO	60.66	28	78	113	27	57
26	Warwick, RI	60.56	182	26	39	13	15
27	Peoria, AZ	60.50	62	45	98	35	38
28	Billings, MT	60.20	139	119	17	18	49
29	Omaha, NE	59.91	74	69	49	20	71
30	Burlington, VT	59.64	168	5	8	62	91
31	Nashua, NH	59.45	161	35	94	23	26
32	Charleston, SC	59.43	45	43	122	36	66

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
33	Pembroke Pines, FL	59.17	121	36	13	98	14
34	Raleigh, NC	59.03	129	49	51	8	102
35	Pearl City, HI	59.01	178	33	3	93	6
36	Santa Rosa, CA	58.89	64	9	59	108	28
37	Juneau, AK	58.87	180	135	19	34	3
38	Minneapolis, MN	58.48	11	123	93	9	143
39	Santa Clarita, CA	58.47	88	6	42	110	54
40	San Francisco, CA	58.30	36	53	12	114	81
41	Rancho Cucamonga, CA	58.27	58	63	69	94	8
42	Chesapeake, VA	57.90	117	23	110	37	56
43	Honolulu, HI	57.76	39	18	36	141	17
44	Sacramento, CA	57.72	3	54	73	74	132
45	Portland, OR	57.67	46	105	15	58	110
46	Lexington-Fayette, KY	57.63	138	66	46	21	93

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
47	Portland, ME	57.54	157	11	34	60	94
48	Oklahoma City, OK	57.41	49	141	105	28	43
49	Denver, CO	57.12	13	58	132	48	114
50	Casper, WY	57.11	71	102	62	69	29
51	Salt Lake City, UT	57.10	53	130	128	38	37
52	Missoula, MT	57.08	109	111	6	71	96
53	Durham, NC	56.91	158	77	43	10	105
54	Pittsburgh, PA	56.80	106	86	28	29	138
55	Tampa, FL	56.67	5	75	112	54	150
56	Charlotte, NC	56.67	125	107	63	24	70
57	Aurora, IL	56.65	103	12	88	89	68
58	Columbus, OH	56.51	67	93	84	33	99
59	Las Vegas, NV	56.09	2	55	172	97	109
60	Chula Vista, CA	56.00	97	8	31	142	30
61	Grand Prairie, TX	55.94	44	76	111	85	39
62	Des Moines, IA	55.77	130	94	83	17	133

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
63	St. Paul, MN	55.72	75	80	104	32	122
64	Rapid City, SD	55.21	108	128	117	42	53
65	Lewiston, ME	55.20	149	41	59	75	75
66	Spokane, WA	55.09	78	112	51	53	129
67	Reno, NV	55.03	24	71	92	113	64
68	Vancouver, WA	54.42	147	52	21	112	95
69	Huntsville, AL	54.39	93	104	163	40	82
70	Orlando, FL	54.36	6	146	97	67	130
71	Modesto, CA	54.23	9	129	140	77	55
72	Fort Worth, TX	54.15	50	110	125	61	84
73	Garden Grove, CA	54.02	30	46	32	170	20
74	St. Petersburg, FL	54.02	87	109	141	39	92
75	Nampa, ID	53.92	12	34	181	76	83
76	Louisville, KY	53.75	152	82	89	43	80
77	New York, NY	53.67	8	32	7	177	125
78	Amarillo, TX	53.32	83	145	129	68	32

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
79	Tacoma, WA	53.18	170	115	25	50	136
80	Washington, DC	53.15	57	120	16	66	171
81	Glendale, CA	53.14	68	19	48	171	23
82	Tempe, AZ	53.12	35	127	136	72	85
83	Arlington, TX	52.92	92	95	99	88	61
84	Yonkers, NY	52.86	179	25	33	121	89
85	Jersey City, NJ	52.85	159	30	20	124	87
86	Oceanside, CA	52.67	113	40	78	147	35
87	Buffalo, NY	52.56	98	99	38	57	164
88	Jacksonville, FL	52.50	91	134	90	55	116
89	Salem, OR	52.49	144	61	77	105	69
90	Grand Rapids, MI	52.45	166	62	167	46	100
91	Atlanta, GA	52.44	15	163	102	47	161
92	Mesa, AZ	52.43	107	83	143	83	50
93	Nashville, TN	52.12	102	133	157	56	60
94	Tallahassee, FL	52.02	124	138	85	59	118

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
95	El Paso, TX	51.92	20	68	126	143	88
96	Los Angeles, CA	51.88	1	70	72	176	124
97	Anaheim, CA	51.77	34	39	81	174	25
98	Cape Coral, FL	51.67	153	59	135	107	51
99	Long Beach, CA	51.56	10	38	58	175	72
100	Boston, MA	51.50	73	42	26	144	156
101	Irving, TX	51.49	164	64	156	87	21
102	Kansas City, MO	51.46	59	172	86	45	142
103	Cincinnati, OH	51.43	27	136	57	73	173
104	Chicago, IL	51.28	23	100	65	131	155
105	Anchorage, AK	51.25	148	160	66	84	19
106	Manchester, NH	51.20	172	122	107	64	74
107	West Valley City, UT	51.09	31	142	176	100	44
108	Bakersfield, CA	51.00	19	156	147	103	78
109	Phoenix, AZ	50.85	7	147	155	92	144

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
110	San Antonio, TX	50.67	76	131	106	111	73
111	Worcester, MA	50.65	171	91	56	90	131
112	Fort Wayne, IN	50.17	173	87	159	52	79
113	Greensboro, NC	50.14	116	144	50	95	112
114	Port St. Lucie, FL	50.08	175	47	160	120	47
115	Tulsa, OK	50.02	52	174	138	65	108
116	Garland, TX	49.97	143	89	114	119	46
117	Albuquerque, NM	49.85	18	177	168	70	115
118	Fontana, CA	49.79	25	101	173	160	31
119	Oxnard, CA	49.78	21	29	144	173	65
120	Riverside, CA	49.67	61	98	142	148	41
121	Brownsville, TX	49.62	69	103	23	167	101
122	Newport News, VA	49.28	145	56	161	117	103
123	Fort Smith, AR	49.16	81	148	101	128	77

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
124	Charleston, WV	49.09	177	171	115	51	97
125	Tucson, AZ	49.02	16	140	127	136	134
126	Philadelphia, PA	48.82	32	85	71	145	172
127	Chattanooga, TN	48.81	155	154	137	63	98
128	Glendale, AZ	48.80	40	132	154	125	111
129	Aurora, CO	48.56	154	72	158	101	86
130	Oakland, CA	48.40	123	121	22	153	119
131	Providence, RI	48.39	77	81	54	155	158
132	Rochester, NY	48.23	132	73	37	99	179
133	Dallas, TX	48.21	84	90	108	138	140
134	Lubbock, TX	48.14	127	152	134	91	76
135	North Las Vegas, NV	48.04	37	88	182	139	106
136	Knoxville, TN	47.89	150	155	121	86	117
137	Ontario, CA	47.86	38	108	170	168	33
138	Winston-Salem, NC	47.86	105	114	118	118	121

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
139	Las Cruces, NM	47.85	14	157	150	129	126
140	Houston, TX	47.65	65	149	109	127	137
141	Corpus Christi, TX	47.64	134	159	120	116	58
142	Moreno Valley, CA	47.62	29	113	175	165	63
143	Laredo, TX	47.37	72	124	80	159	120
144	Springfield, MO	47.34	111	175	82	109	113
145	Fresno, CA	47.33	41	116	145	146	145
146	Dover, DE	47.20	176	57	148	115	128
147	Columbia, SC	46.88	33	125	178	106	163
148	Little Rock, AR	46.57	169	179	96	81	104
149	Indianapolis, IN	46.25	146	169	162	82	107
150	Santa Ana, CA	46.20	86	50	76	180	48
151	New Haven, CT	46.20	63	96	47	166	167
152	Akron, OH	46.06	160	74	130	132	166
153	Montgomery, AL	45.90	128	118	146	123	151

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
154	Columbus, GA	45.51	99	137	149	140	139
155	Wichita, KS	45.34	165	164	180	78	67
156	Stockton, CA	45.15	42	173	139	152	123
157	Norfolk, VA	45.11	110	92	164	151	135
158	Huntington, WV	44.94	122	143	169	122	146
159	Milwaukee, WI	44.90	100	153	87	130	168
160	Baton Rouge, LA	44.85	136	165	124	102	152
161	New Orleans, LA	44.79	43	126	171	164	148
162	Fayetteville, NC	44.69	118	166	79	157	127
163	Jackson, MS	44.66	66	139	75	156	175
164	Mobile, AL	43.80	131	150	151	137	147
165	Toledo, OH	43.34	114	170	119	126	162
166	Bridgeport, CT	42.89	140	79	61	172	170
167	Fort Lauderdale, FL	42.85	156	158	91	162	141
168	Gulfport, MS	42.81	119	168	95	158	157

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	Total Score	'Family Fun' Rank	'Health & Safety' Rank	'Education & Child Care' Rank	'Affordability' Rank	'Socio-economics' Rank
169	St. Louis, MO	42.52	90	181	152	104	165
170	Richmond, VA	42.30	162	106	116	135	169
171	Birmingham, AL	41.98	126	97	133	150	176
172	Miami, FL	41.43	89	67	29	182	174
173	Augusta, GA	41.01	135	161	174	154	149
174	Baltimore, MD	40.58	142	167	131	133	178
175	Hialeah, FL	40.00	174	48	41	181	159
176	San Bernardino, CA	39.91	26	176	165	178	154
177	Wilmington, DE	38.78	115	178	53	163	181
178	Shreveport, LA	38.74	112	180	177	149	160
179	Memphis, TN	38.32	167	182	153	134	153
180	Cleveland, OH	38.10	85	162	123	169	180
181	Newark, NJ	37.79	163	117	35	179	177
182	Detroit, MI	37.28	96	151	179	161	182

Most Playgrounds Per Capita

1. New York, NY
2. Chicago, IL
3. Madison, WI
4. Jacksonville, FL
5. Norfolk, VA



Best City
vs
Worst City

Fewest Playgrounds Per Capita

95. Jersey City, NJ
96. Santa Ana, CA
97. Newark, NJ
98. Gilbert, AZ
99. Hialeah, FL

19x Difference

Most Attractions

1. New York, NY
2. Los Angeles, CA
3. Chicago, IL
4. San Francisco, CA
5. Las Vegas, NV



Fewest Attractions

178. West Valley City, UT
179. Garden Grove, CA
180. Moreno Valley, CA
181. Fontana, CA
182. Pearl City, HI

Highest Median Family Salary (Adjusted for Cost of Living)

1. Scottsdale, AZ
2. Austin, TX
3. Virginia Beach, VA
4. Raleigh, NC
5. Plano, TX
6. Chandler, AZ



Best City
vs
Worst City

Lowest Median Family Salary (Adjusted for Cost of Living)

178. Bridgeport, CT
179. New York, NY
180. Miami, FL
181. Newark, NJ
182. Hialeah, FL

4x Difference

Most Affordable Housing

1. Cedar Rapids, IA
2. Pittsburgh, PA
3. Overland Park, KS
4. Akron, OH
5. Buffalo, NY



Least Affordable Housing

178. Los Angeles, CA
178. Glendale, CA
180. Boston, MA
181. San Francisco, CA
182. New York, NY

Highest % of Families with Young Kids

1. Aurora, IL
2. Laredo, TX
3. Irving, TX
4. Gilbert, AZ
5. West Valley City, UT



Best City
vs
Worst City

Lowest % of Families with Young Kids

178. San Francisco, CA
179. Cape Coral, FL
180. Honolulu, HI
181. Scottsdale, AZ
182. Pearl City, HI

2x Difference

Lowest Violent-Crime Rate per Capita

1. Irvine, CA
2. Gilbert, AZ
3. Port St. Lucie, FL
4. Warwick, RI
5. Cape Coral, FL



Best City
vs
Worst City

Highest Violent-Crime Rate per Capita

165. Little Rock, AK
165. Kansas City, MO
165. Memphis, TN
165. Baltimore, MD
165. Detroit, MI
165. St. Louis, MO

34x Difference

Lowest % of Families Living in Poverty

1. South Burlington, VT
2. Fremont, CA
3. Pearl City, HI
4. Overland Park, KS
5. Warwick, RI



Best City
vs
Worst City

Highest % of Families Living in Poverty

178. Laredo, TX
179. Brownsville, TX
180. Rochester, NY
181. Cleveland, OH
182. Detroit, MI

13x Difference

Lowest Divorce Rate

1. Fremont, CA
2. Pearl City, HI
3. Irvine, CA
4. Glendale, CA
5. San Jose, CA



Best City
vs
Worst City

Highest Divorce Rate

178. Rochester, NY
179. Wilmington, DE
180. Birmingham, AL
181. Detroit, MI
182. Cleveland, OH

4x Difference

Ask the Experts

Raising a family is a tall order. And with so many important decisions to make, it's often difficult to determine where to turn for help with family matters. We turned to experts in the fields of family studies, psychology and household finance for tips, insights and a few cautionary tales. Click on the experts' profiles below to read their bios and thoughts on the following key questions:

1. To what degree is child development and a family's quality of life influenced by the city they live in? How?
2. What advice do you have for young families looking to start their lives together on the right foot financially?
3. How can local officials make their cities more attractive to young families?
4. What should families consider when choosing a place to set down roots?
5. In evaluating the best cities for families, what are the top five indicators?

Methodology

In order to determine which cities are most conducive to family life, WalletHub compared 182 U.S. cities — including the 150 most populated U.S. cities, plus at least two of the most populated cities in each state — across five key dimensions: 1) Family Fun, 2) Health & Safety, 3) Education & Child Care, 4) Affordability and 5) Socio-economics.

We evaluated those categories using 47 relevant metrics, which are listed below with their corresponding weights. Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale, with a score of 100 representing the most favorable conditions for family life. Data for metrics marked with an asterisk (*) were available at the state level only. For metrics marked with two asterisks (**), we calculated population size using the square root of the population in order to avoid overcompensating for minor differences across cities.

Finally, we determined each city's weighted average across all metrics to calculate its overall score and used the resulting scores to rank-order our sample. Our sample considers only the city proper in each case and excludes cities in the surrounding metro area.

Family Fun – Total Points: 20

- Playgrounds per Capita^{**}: Full Weight (~1.11 Points)
- Ice Rinks per Capita^{**}: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)
- Skate Parks per Capita^{**}: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)
- Bike Rental Facilities per Capita^{**}: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)
- Mini Golf Locations per Capita^{**}: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)
- Parkland Acreage per Capita: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)
- Walkability: Full Weight (~1.11 Points)
- Bike Score: Full Weight (~1.11 Points)
- Number of Attractions: Full Weight (~1.11 Points)

Note: "Attractions" include, for instance, zoos, museums and theaters.

- Recreation-Friendliness: Double Weight (~2.22 Points)
- Sports-Fan-Friendliness: Double Weight (~2.22 Points)

Note: This metric is based on WalletHub's "[Best Sports Cities](#)" ranking.

- Ideal Weather: Quadruple Weight (~4.44 Points)

Note: This metric is based on WalletHub's "[Cities With the Best & Worst Weather](#)" ranking.

- Share of Families with Young Children: Triple Weight (~3.33 Points)

Note: "Young children" include the population aged 0 to 17 years.

- Average Commute Time: Half Weight (~0.56 Points)

Health & Safety – Total Points: 20

- Air Quality: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Water Quality: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Limited Access to Healthy Foods: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Pediatricians per Capita: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Share of Uninsured Children: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)

Note: “Children” include the population aged 0 to 17 years.

- Public Hospitals Ranking*: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Infant Mortality Rate: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Pedestrian-Fatality Rate: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Driving Fatalities per Capita: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Violent-Crime Rate per Capita: Double Weight (~2.86 Points)
- Property-Crime Rate per Capita: Double Weight (~2.86 Points)
- Family Homelessness: Full Weight (~1.43 Points)

Note: This metric measures the number of homeless people in families per total homeless population.

Education & Child Care – Total Points: 20

- School-System Quality: Double Weight (~5.71 Points)

Note: This metric is based on GreatSchools.org average score.

- High School Graduation Rate: Half Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Day-Care Quality*: Half Weight (~1.43 Points)
- Child-Care Costs*: Half Weight (~1.43 Points)

Note: This metric was adjusted for the median family income.

- Child Day-Care Services per Capita: Full Weight (~2.86 Points)
- Childcare Workers per Total Number of Children under 14 Years: Full Weight (~2.86 Points)
- Parental-Leave Policy Score*: Full Weight (~2.86 Points)
Note: This metric is based on the report card from [Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Laws That Help Expecting and New Parents](#).
- Summer Learning Opportunities per Capita**: Half Weight (~1.43 Points)

Affordability – Total Points: 20

- Cost of Living: Full Weight (~6.67 Points)
Note: This metric was calculated as follows: Median Annual Family Income / Cost-of-Living Index.
- Housing Affordability: Full Weight (~6.67 Points)
Note: This metric was calculated as follows: Median Annual Family Income / Housing Costs (accounts for both rent and home-sales prices).
- Wallet Wellness: Full Weight (~6.67 Points)
Note: This metric is based on WalletHub's "[Best & Worst Cities for WalletFitness™](#)" ranking.

Socio-economics – Total Points: 20

- Share of Two-Parent Families: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Separation & Divorce Rate: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Share of Families Living in Poverty: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Share of Families Receiving Food Stamps: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Unemployment Rate: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Underemployment Rate: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)

- Debt per Median Earnings: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Wealth Gap: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)
- Foreclosure Rate: Half Weight (~1.05 Points)
- “Social Ties” Ranking: Full Weight (~2.11 Points)

Sources: Data used to create this ranking were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Child Care Aware of America, Environmental Protection Agency, County Health Rankings, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Council for Community and Economic Research, The Trust for Public Land, Sharecare, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, National Partnership for Women & Families, TripAdvisor, Walk Score, Renwood RealtyTrac, Chmura Economics & Analytics, TransUnion, Yelp, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, GreatSchools.org and WalletHub research.