



2020's Best College Towns & Cities in America

Adam McCann, Financial Writer • Dec 9, 2019



High school seniors face a laundry list of tasks when getting ready for college. Between standardized tests, essays and financial-aid applications, the final months before orientation can be difficult. One of the most important steps in the process is the campus visit, which often includes a tour of the city or town that will serve as the student's home for the next several years. Experts have argued that a school's geographical location is just as important as a strong curriculum and supportive school environment to a student's academic success and personal development. As student living expenses can reach [up to \\$27,200](#) for a 12-month period, students should try to find the most bang for their buck.

To help prospective college students narrow down their school choices and to follow up our report on [2020's College & University Rankings](#), WalletHub compared more than 400 U.S. cities of varying sizes

GET YOUR FREE CREDIT SCORE & REPORT



ranges from cost of living to quality of higher education to crime rate. Below are our findings, additional expert commentary and a full description of our methodology.

1. OVERALL RANKING

3. ASK THE EXPERTS

2. RANKING BY CITY SIZE

4. METHODOLOGY

Overall Ranking

11415415

[EMBED ON YOUR WEBSITE](#)

Best College Towns & Cities

Overall Rank (1=Best) ↕	City ↕	Total Score ↕	'Wallet Friendliness' Rank ↕	'Social Environment' Rank ↕	'Academic & Economic Opportunities' Rank ↕
1	Austin, TX	66.49	196	2	54
2	Orlando, FL	65.67	73	3	91
3	Scottsdale, AZ	63.13	309	42	2
4	Tampa, FL	63.02	179	5	103
5	Ann Arbor, MI	62.64	245	49	25
6	Seattle, WA	60.55	376	7	24
7	San Diego, CA	60.2	341	1	85
8	Las Vegas, NV	60.03	94	4	249
9	Salt Lake City, UT	59.93	136	43	105
10	Provo, UT	59.75	10	112	121
11	Reno, NV	59.5	153	34	118
12	Pittsburgh, PA	59.45	188	16	166
13	Raleigh, NC	59.15	204	47	94
14	Minneapolis, MN	59.05	238	26	106
15	Gainesville, FL	58.94	53	82	120
16	Atlanta, GA	58.82	272	9	146
17	Denver, CO	58.79	285	8	128
18	Rexburg, ID	58.74	6	193	53
19	Charleston, IL	58.69	27	58	190

20	Los Angeles, CA	58.5	343	15	71
21	Columbus, OH	58.14	106	44	163
22	Stevens Point, WI	57.83	47	114	145
23	Sacramento, CA	57.58	250	20	150
24	Cincinnati, OH	57.52	74	21	255
25	West Lafayette, IN	57.45	32	89	165
26	Tucson, AZ	57.28	84	40	212
27	Miami, FL	57.25	203	11	253
28	Nashville, TN	56.92	273	48	99
29	St. Louis, MO	56.91	169	38	179
30	Houston, TX	56.89	72	27	254

Show All

Lowest Cost of Living for Young People

- 1. Edinburg, TX
- 2. Muncie, IN
- 3. Laredo, TX
- 4. McAllen, TX
- 5. Wichita Falls, TX



Best Cities vs Worst Cities

Highest Cost of Living for Young People

- T-397. Brookline, MA
- T-397. Newton, MA
- T-397. Sunnyvale, CA
- T-397. San Francisco, CA
- T-397. Santa Monica, CA
- T-397. Stanford, CA

3x Difference

Highest Share of Rental Units

1. Isla Vista, CA
2. New Brunswick, NJ
3. State College, PA
4. Statesboro, GA
5. Ithaca, NY



Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

Lowest Share of Rental Units

411. Pearland, TX
412. Chino Hills, CA
413. Port St. Lucie, FL
414. Rio Rancho, NM
415. Stony Brook, NY

16x Difference

Lowest Cost of Higher Education

1. Savannah, GA
2. Laredo, TX
3. Provo, UT
4. Boone, NC
5. Laramie, WY



Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

Highest Cost of Higher Education

272. Orange, CA
273. Medford, MA
274. Ithaca, NY
275. Hartford, CT
276. Evanston, IL

4x Difference

Most Students per Capita

- T-1. Stony Brook University, NY
- T-1. East Lansing, MI
- T-1. West Lafayette, IN
- T-1. State College, PA
- T-1. College Park, MD
- T-1. Pullman, WA



Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

Fewest Students per Capita

411. Thornton, CO
412. Kansas City, KS
413. Pasadena, TX
414. McKinney, TX
415. Cape Coral, FL

22x Difference

Most Nightlife Options per Capita



Fewest Nightlife Options per Capita

T-1. Las Vegas, NV

T-1. New York, NY

T-1. San Francisco, CA

T-1. Orlando, FL

T-1. Portland, OR

T-1. Seattle, WA



410. Miami Gardens, FL

411. Kendall, FL

412. Compton, CA

413. East Los Angeles, CA

414. Rexburg, ID

Highest Share of Part-Time Jobs

1. Stony Brook, NY

2. Storrs, CT

3. Amherst Center, MA

4. Isla Vista, CA

5. Durham, NH



Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

Lowest Share of Part-Time Jobs

411. Kendall, FL

412. Plano, TX

413. Alexandria, VA

414. McKinney, TX

415. Pearland, TX

5x Difference

Lowest Brain Drain

T-1. Isla Vista, CA

T-1. Ypsilanti, MI

3. Somerville, MA

4. Santa Barbara, CA

5. Davie, FL



Highest Brain Drain

411. Brookings, SD

412. Durham, NH

413. Oxford, OH

T-414. Amherst Center, MA

T-414. Clemson, SC

Highest Quality of Higher Education

1. Princeton, NJ

2. Stanford, CA

3. Cambridge, MA

4. Pasadena, CA

5. Evanston, IL



Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

Lowest Quality of Higher Education

272. San Angelo, TX

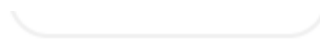
273. Montgomery, AL

274. Bowling Green, KY

275. El Paso, TX

276. High Point, NC

2x Difference



Ranking by City Size

Rank (1=Best) ↕	Large City Name (Score) ↕	Rank (1=Best) ↕	Midsize City Name (Score) ↕	Rank (1=Best) ↕	Small City Name (Score) ▲
				160	Abilene, TX (44.48)
		140	Hialeah, FL (42.64)	140	Albany, GA (46.08)
		87	Santa Rosa, CA (47.37)	87	Albany, NY (48.87)
				184	Alhambra, CA (42.47)
				169	Allentown, PA (43.77)
		65	Amarillo, TX (48.86)	65	Ames, IA (50.21)
		83	Visalia, CA (47.66)	83	Amherst Center, MA (49.24)
1	Austin, TX (66.49)	1	Orlando, FL (65.67)	1	Ann Arbor, MI (62.64)
				159	Antioch, CA (44.48)
		97	Concord, CA (46.94)	97	Arden-Arcade, CA (48.55)
	Columbus,				

12	OH (58.14)	12	Cary, NC (55.12)	12	Asheville, NC (55.58)
19	San Francisco, CA (56.02)	19	Boise, ID (54.35)	19	Athens, GA (54.19)
51	Aurora, CO (49.32)	51	Oceanside, CA (49.90)	51	Athens, OH (51.68)
		90	Joliet, IL (47.26)	90	Auburn, AL (48.77)
				180	Azusa, CA (42.96)
		147	Yonkers, NY (40.62)	147	Beaumont, TX (45.59)
48	Anaheim, CA (49.90)	48	Des Moines, IA (50.31)	48	Bellingham, WA (51.87)
15	Miami, FL (57.25)	15	Irvine, CA (55.03)	15	Berkeley, CA (55.06)
		81	Warren, MI (47.92)	81	Bethlehem, PA (49.31)
21	Louisville, KY (55.55)	21	Knoxville, TN (53.97)	21	Blacksburg, VA (53.90)
36	Fort Worth, TX (53.40)	36	Cape Coral, FL (51.30)	36	Bloomington, IN (52.60)
18	Houston, TX (56.89)	18	Roseville, CA (54.61)	18	Boca Raton, FL (54.25)
	Colorado		Fort Collins,		Boone, NC

26	Springs, CO (54.45)	26	CO (52.96)	26	(53.57)
		75	Lubbock, TX (48.16)	74	Boulder, CO (49.56)
		128	Fayetteville, NC (44.18)	128	Bowling Green, KY (46.88)
64	Oakland, CA (44.77)	64	Sioux Falls, SD (48.90)	64	Bowling Green, OH (50.23)
50	Honolulu, HI (49.63)	50	Lincoln, NE (50.01)	50	Bozeman, MT (51.73)
		130	Palmdale, CA (43.86)	130	Brandon, FL (46.68)
		142	Jersey City, NJ (42.26)	142	Brookings, SD (45.93)
				166	Brookline, MA (44.06)
		74	Chula Vista, CA (48.22)	74	Bryan, TX (49.56)
				183	Burbank, CA (42.61)
		118	Simi Valley, CA (45.26)	118	Burlington, VT (47.69)
9	Atlanta, GA (58.82)	9	Tempe, AZ (56.18)	9	Cambridge, MA (55.87)
		93	Winston- Salem, NC (47.10)	93	Carbondale, IL (48.61)

				190	Carson, CA (41.67)
		123	Columbus, GA (44.67)	123	Cedar Falls, IA (47.29)
46	Fresno, CA (50.35)	46	Chattanooga, TN (50.52)	46	Champaign, IL (51.90)
16	Nashville, TN (56.92)	16	Plano, TX (54.90)	16	Chapel Hill, NC (55.01)
4	San Diego, CA (60.20)	4	Reno, NV (59.50)	4	Charleston, IL (58.69)
7	Raleigh, NC (59.15)	7	Henderson, NV (56.67)	7	Charlottesville, VA (56.54)
		92	Brownsville, TX (47.15)	92	Chico, CA (48.67)
		103	Kansas City, KS (46.59)	103	Chino Hills, CA (48.13)
40	Baltimore, MD (51.70)	40	Bellevue, WA (50.85)	40	Clemson, SC (52.47)
53	Corpus Christi, TX (49.00)	53	McAllen, TX (49.75)	53	Clovis, CA (51.27)
		117	Mesquite, TX (45.61)	117	College Park, MD (47.70)
14	Tucson, AZ (57.28)	14	Vancouver, WA (55.05)	14	College Station, TX (55.09)

				161	Columbia, MD (44.47)
		126	Thousand Oaks, CA (44.24)	126	Columbia, MO (46.98)
				196	Compton, CA (40.12)
		95	Ontario, CA (47.07)	95	Conway, AR (48.59)
				152	Coral Gables, FL (45.19)
		98	Chesapeake, VA (46.90)	98	Corvallis, OR (48.54)
62	Stockton, CA (45.98)	62	Huntsville, AL (49.06)	62	Costa Mesa, CA (50.45)
				189	Daly City, CA (41.88)
				167	Davenport, IA (44.01)
		125	Pembroke Pines, FL (44.54)	125	Davie, FL (47.03)
45	Albuquerque, NM (50.39)	45	Torrance, CA (50.57)	45	Davis, CA (51.99)
		85	Salem, OR (47.46)	85	Daytona Beach, FL (49.02)
		114	Coral Springs, FL	114	Dearborn, MI (47.81)

			(45.82)		
		67	Lakewood, CO (48.76)	67	DeKalb, IL (50.09)
				179	Downey, CA (43.06)
		86	Mobile, AL (47.41)	86	Duluth, MN (48.91)
				172	Durham, NH (43.55)
25	Jacksonville, FL (54.72)	25	Pasadena, CA (53.17)	25	East Lansing, MI (53.68)
				197	East Los Angeles, CA (39.60)
		84	Garland, TX (47.48)	84	Eau Claire, WI (49.16)
59	Wichita, KS (47.78)	59	Sunnyvale, CA (49.20)	59	Edinburg, TX (50.63)
56	Memphis, TN (48.18)	56	Syracuse, NY (49.41)	56	Edmond, OK (50.83)
				170	El Cajon, CA (43.58)
				175	El Monte, CA (43.45)
				165	Elgin, IL (44.40)
		148	Augusta, GA (40.35)	148	Erie, PA (45.49)
	Tulsa, OK		Fullerton, CA		Evanston, IL

55	(48.55)	55	(49.43)	55	(50.92)
		136	Rockford, IL (43.20)	136	Fairfield, CA (46.35)
60	Arlington, TX (47.62)	60	Rancho Cucamonga, CA (49.18)	60	Fargo, ND (50.56)
37	Washington, DC (52.40)	37	Denton, TX (51.07)	37	Fayetteville, AR (52.59)
54	Riverside, CA (48.61)	54	St. Petersburg, FL (49.44)	54	Flagstaff, AZ (51.07)
				191	Flint, MI (41.12)
				200	Germantown, MD (38.16)
		111	Aurora, IL (46.09)	111	Grand Forks, ND (47.85)
		121	Dayton, OH (44.81)	121	Greeley, CO (47.38)
27	Omaha, NE (54.36)	27	Rochester, NY (52.66)	27	Green Bay, WI (53.43)
				155	Greenville, NC (44.88)
		78	Laredo, TX (48.10)	78	Harrisonburg, VA (49.41)
			Lancaster,		Hartford, CT

		134	CA (43.42)	134	(46.37)
		100	Cedar Rapids, IA (46.79)	100	Hattiesburg, MS (48.43)
		146	Paterson, NJ (41.54)	146	Hawthorne, CA (45.62)
				195	High Point, NC (40.20)
				186	Huntington, WV (42.15)
61	Detroit, MI (47.41)	61	Santa Clarita, CA (49.15)	61	Huntsville, TX (50.47)
				158	Indiana, PA (44.49)
				185	Inglewood, CA (42.31)
		89	Corona, CA (47.29)	89	Iowa City, IA (48.79)
58	St. Paul, MN (48.10)	58	Savannah, GA (49.25)	58	Isla Vista, CA (50.74)
38	Milwaukee, WI (52.35)	38	Providence, RI (50.87)	38	Ithaca, NY (52.54)
		96	Norfolk, VA (46.98)	96	Johnson City, TN (48.58)
		129	Oxnard, CA	129	Jonesboro, AR

			(44.06)		(46.87)
		91	Akron, OH (47.20)	91	Kalamazoo, MI (48.69)
				199	Kendall, FL (38.50)
		127	Toledo, OH (44.22)	127	Kenosha, WI (46.97)
		101	Fort Wayne, IN (46.71)	101	Kent, OH (48.41)
		82	Grand Prairie, TX (47.73)	82	La Crosse, WI (49.26)
		80	Springfield, MO (48.03)	80	Lakeland, FL (49.33)
		122	Worcester, MA (44.77)	122	Lansing, MI (47.36)
		94	Stamford, CT (47.08)	94	Laramie, WY (48.60)
		110	Anchorage, AK (46.14)	110	Las Cruces, NM (47.86)
		68	Birmingham, AL (48.74)	68	Lawrence, KS (50.00)
		113	Macon-Bibb County, GA (45.83)	113	Lawton, OK (47.81)
		73	Fremont, CA (48.24)	73	Logan, UT (49.69)

				153	Lowell, MA (45.01)
		132	Garden Grove, CA (43.47)	132	Lynchburg, VA (46.55)
		144	Montgomery, AL (42.08)	144	Manchester, NH (45.81)
		77	Olathe, KS (48.10)	77	Manhattan, KS (49.49)
		99	Little Rock, AR (46.88)	99	Mankato, MN (48.50)
		71	New Haven, CT (48.57)	71	Medford, MA (49.79)
		108	Pasadena, TX (46.25)	108	Merced, CA (47.92)
				188	Miami Gardens, FL (41.91)
		124	Lafayette, LA (44.59)	124	Missoula, MT (47.14)
		106	Newport News, VA (46.37)	106	Moorhead, MN (47.95)
63	Santa Ana, CA (45.73)	63	Eugene, OR (49.05)	63	Morgantown, WV (50.36)
28	Chicago, IL (54.30)	28	Peoria, AZ (51.85)	28	Moscow, ID (53.40)
	Charlotte,				Mount

22	NC (55.01)	22	McKinney, TX (53.92)	22	Pleasant, MI (53.76)
44	Oklahoma City, OK (50.93)	44	Alexandria, VA (50.61)	44	Muncie, IN (52.08)
		70	Modesto, CA (48.62)	70	Murrieta, CA (49.88)
		133	Moreno Valley, CA (43.44)	133	Nacogdoches, TX (46.49)
		138	Miramar, FL (42.75)	138	New Brunswick, NJ (46.14)
				198	New Rochelle, NY (39.57)
57	Cleveland, OH (48.17)	57	Columbia, SC (49.27)	57	Newark, DE (50.82)
				194	Newton, MA (40.52)
		151	Shreveport, LA (38.77)	151	Normal, IL (45.20)
		72	Metairie, LA (48.52)	72	Norman, OK (49.78)
		131	Salinas, CA (43.60)	131	North Charleston, SC (46.56)
				164	Norwalk, CA (44.41)
	Minneapolis,		Madison, WI		Orem, UT

8	MN (59.05)	8	(56.45)	8	(56.49)
43	New York, NY (50.97)	43	Fort Lauderdale, FL (50.62)	43	Oshkosh, WI (52.11)
17	St. Louis, MO (56.91)	17	Buffalo, NY (54.66)	17	Oxford, OH (54.57)
34	San Jose, CA (53.50)	34	Spokane, WA (51.33)	34	Pearland, TX (53.07)
				154	Peoria, IL (45.00)
				182	Portsmouth, VA (42.94)
33	Phoenix, AZ (53.69)	33	Sterling Heights, MI (51.52)	33	Princeton, NJ (53.28)
2	Tampa, FL (63.02)	2	Scottsdale, AZ (63.13)	2	Provo, UT (59.75)
				181	Pueblo, CO (42.95)
39	Lexington- Fayette, KY (51.84)	39	Huntington Beach, CA (50.86)	39	Pullman, WA (52.53)
				162	Quincy, MA (44.47)
41	Indianapolis, IN (51.66)	41	Murfreesboro, TN (50.81)	41	Radford, VA (52.44)
			Arlington, VA		Redding, CA

		145	(41.67)	145	(45.79)
		141	Springfield, MA (42.30)	141	Redlands, CA (46.08)
3	Seattle, WA (60.55)	3	Salt Lake City, UT (59.93)	3	Rexburg, ID (58.74)
				156	Rialto, CA (44.76)
47	Bakersfield, CA (50.24)	47	Irving, TX (50.41)	47	Richardson, TX (51.88)
				187	Richmond, CA (42.06)
		135	Hampton, VA (43.41)	135	Richmond, KY (46.37)
		137	Escondido, CA (42.91)	137	Rio Rancho, NM (46.24)
29	San Antonio, TX (54.27)	29	Carrollton, TX (51.81)	29	Rochester, MN (53.34)
				163	Rock Hill, SC (44.46)
				177	San Angelo, TX (43.30)
		119	Kent, WA (44.97)	119	San Buenaventura (Ventura), CA (47.68)
13	Sacramento, CA	13	Tallahassee, FL	13	San Luis Obispo, CA

	(57.58)		(55.08)		(55.53)
		66	Thornton, CO (48.84)	66	San Marcos, CA (50.16)
11	Los Angeles, CA (58.50)	11	Charleston, SC (55.15)	11	San Marcos, TX (55.68)
10	Denver, CO (58.79)	10	Durham, NC (55.19)	10	Santa Barbara, CA (55.78)
		105	Hollywood, FL (46.42)	105	Santa Clara, CA (48.05)
		104	Pomona, CA (46.54)	104	Santa Cruz, CA (48.08)
35	Mesa, AZ (53.41)	35	Grand Rapids, MI (51.33)	35	Santa Monica, CA (52.95)
				173	Scranton, PA (43.53)
				193	Silver Spring, MD (40.62)
		79	Tacoma, WA (48.09)	79	Somerville, MA (49.33)
		88	Topeka, KS (47.34)	88	Springfield, IL (48.84)
		116	Hayward, CA (45.69)	116	St. Charles, MO (47.70)
		109	Fontana, CA (46.20)	109	St. Cloud, MN (47.89)

		69	Naperville, IL (48.73)	69	Stanford, CA (49.92)
49	New Orleans, LA (49.68)	49	Glendale, AZ (50.09)	49	Starkville, MS (51.74)
20	Long Beach, CA (55.88)	20	Chandler, AZ (54.07)	20	State College, PA (53.93)
24	Philadelphia, PA (54.74)	24	Richmond, VA (53.28)	24	Statesboro, GA (53.68)
5	Las Vegas, NV (60.03)	5	Gainesville, FL (58.94)	5	Stevens Point, WI (57.83)
52	El Paso, TX (49.15)	52	North Las Vegas, NV (49.79)	52	Stillwater, OK (51.61)
				168	Stony Brook University, NY (43.86)
23	Dallas, TX (54.89)	23	Overland Park, KS (53.43)	23	Storrs, CT (53.74)
				174	Sunrise, FL (43.48)
42	Virginia Beach, VA (51.21)	42	Port St. Lucie, FL (50.76)	42	Temecula, CA (52.32)
		143	Orange, CA (42.20)	143	Terre Haute, IN (45.88)
				171	Towson, MD (43.56)

		102	Greensboro, NC (46.70)	102	Troy, NY (48.14)
		112	San Bernardino, CA (45.91)	112	Tuscaloosa, AL (47.83)
				157	Tyler, TX (44.74)
		76	Elk Grove, CA (48.11)	76	Urbana, IL (49.50)
		120	Newark, NJ (44.95)	120	Valdosta, GA (47.42)
		149	Jackson, MS (40.22)	149	Vallejo, CA (45.39)
		150	Bridgeport, CT (39.52)	150	Victorville, CA (45.37)
		139	Glendale, CA (42.66)	139	Waltham, MA (46.09)
				178	West Covina, CA (43.17)
6	Pittsburgh, PA (59.45)	6	Cincinnati, OH (57.52)	6	West Lafayette, IN (57.45)
		115	Baton Rouge, LA (45.72)	115	West Palm Beach, FL (47.76)
				176	Westminster, CA (43.39)
	Kansas City,				Whitewater,

31	MO (53.85)	31	Waco, TX (51.74)	31	WI (53.30)
				192	Whittier, CA (40.88)
		107	Clarksville, TN (46.26)	107	Wichita Falls, TX (47.92)
30	Portland, OR (54.21)	30	Gilbert, AZ (51.77)	30	Wilmington, NC (53.32)
32	Boston, MA (53.75)	32	Killeen, TX (51.62)	32	Ypsilanti, MI (53.30)

Ask the Experts

Colleges and universities drive their surrounding areas culturally, economically and intellectually, making those places an ideal place to live for both students and nonstudents. We asked a panel of experts to share their insight and advice on the various roles of college towns. Click on the experts' profiles to read their bios and responses to the following key questions:

1. In deciding which college to attend, how important is the surrounding city/town?
2. What are the benefits nonstudents get by living in a college city/town?
3. Are college cities/towns a good option for retirees? What about families?
4. How can parents prepare their children for managing finances in college (e.g., student loans, credit cards, etc.)?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of going to college in-state versus out-of-state?
6. How can local authorities make their cities/towns more appealing to both new students and other potential residents?

Wendy Miner

Education Department
Chair/Professor of Education, MAE
Elementary, Truman State
University

David Labaree

Lee L. Jacks Professor of
Education, Emeritus, Stanford
University

Cecilia M. Orphan

Ph.D. – Assistant Professor,
Morgridge College of Education

Robert J. Birgeneau

Arnold and Barbara Silverman
Distinguished Professor of
Physics, Materials Science and
Engineering, and Public Policy,
University of California, Berkeley
Goldman School of Public Policy

Methodology

In order to determine the best college towns and cities in America, WalletHub examined 415 cities of varying sizes across three key dimensions: 1) Wallet Friendliness, 2) Social Environment and 3) Academic & Economic Opportunities.

We evaluated those three key dimensions using 31 relevant metrics, which are listed below with their corresponding weights. Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale, with 100 representing the most favorable conditions for college students. For metrics marked with an asterisk (*), we used the square root of the population to calculate the population size in order to avoid overcompensating for minor differences across cities.

Finally, we determined each town and city's weighted average across all metrics to calculate its overall score and used the resulting scores to rank-order our sample.

In this report, including the above tables, "cities" refers to both cities and towns for simplicity. We limited our selection of cities to those with a university or college population of at least 7,500 students. Some cities that met the college-population criterion were excluded from the analysis due to lack of available data. The cities were categorized based on the following population-size guidelines:

- Large Cities: More than 300,000 people
- Midsize Cities: 125,000 to 300,000 people
- Small Cities: Fewer than 125,000 people

Please note that we considered only the city proper in each case and excluded any cities in the surrounding metro area.

Wallet Friendliness – Total Points: 25

- Housing Costs: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)

Note: This metric measures the price of a two-bedroom apartment rental.

- Adjusted Cost of Living for Young People: Double Weight (~6.67 Points)
- Share of Rental Units: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)
- Average Monthly Fitness-Club Fee: Half Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Average Cost of Pizza & Burgers: Half Weight (~1.67 Points)

- **Movie & Bowling Cost: Half Weight (~1.67 Points)**

- **Cost of Higher Education: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)**

Note: This metric measures the average tuition fee weighted by the number of students.

- **Student Loan Debt per Person: Full Weight (~3.33 Points)**

Social Environment – Total Points: 25

- **Students per Capita: Double Weight (~3.03 Points)**

- **Share of Population Aged 18 to 35 Years: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Share of Single Persons: Half Weight (~0.76 Points)**

- **Student Gender Balance: Half Weight (~0.76 Points)**

- **Nightlife Options per Capita*: Double Weight (~3.03 Points)**

- **Cafés per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Breweries per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Food Trucks per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Shopping Centers per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Sports Clubs per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- **Presence of NCAA Division 1 Sport Teams: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

Note: This binary metric measures the presence or absence of a NCAA Division 1 sport team in a city.

- **City Accessibility: Half Weight (~0.76 Points)**

Note: This metric measures the share of workers who bike, walk or use public transportation.

- **Festivals per Capita*: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)**

- Number of Attractions: Full Weight (~1.52 Points)
- Crime Rate: Double Weight (~3.03 Points)

Academic & Economic Opportunities – Total Points: 50

- Quality of Higher Education: Triple Weight (~13.64 Points)
- Earning Potential for College Graduates: Full Weight (~4.55 Points)

Note: This metric measures the median earnings of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher.

- Share of Part-Time Jobs: Full Weight (~4.55 Points)
- Median Income of Part-Time Workers: Double Weight (~9.09 Points)
- Unemployment Rate: Full Weight (~4.55 Points)
- Entrepreneurial Activity: Full Weight (~4.55 Points)

Note: This metric measures the four-year average net change in the number of businesses per capita.

- Brain Drain: Full Weight (~4.55 Points)

Note: This metric measures the annual change in the share of the population holding a bachelor's degree or higher.

- Job-Growth Rate (2015-2018): Full Weight (~4.55 Points)

Videos for News Use:

- [YouTube \(for web embedding National\)](#)
- [Raw files \(for editing into clips\)](#)

Sources: Data used to create this ranking were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Center for Education Statistics, Numbeo, U.S.