THE LIVABILITY INDEX: THE 35 BEST U.S. CITIES FOR PEOPLE 35 AND UNDER

Our semi-exhaustive, largely scientific guide to America's most livable cities, updated for 2014

Authors: Matan Gilat, Billy Gil Posted: 12/09/14 09:10 EST

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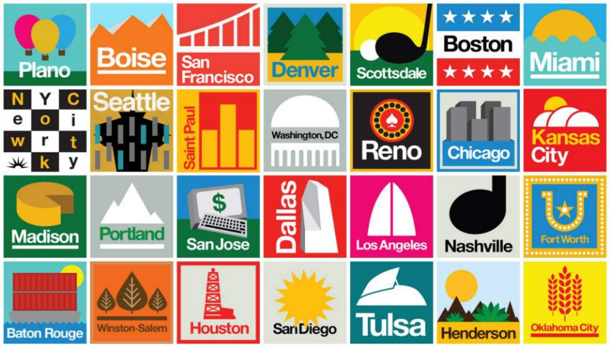

Living on ramen, crashing on a scavenged futon—that's no way to live (at least in the long term). Maybe you're itching for a change of scenery. Or even looking to start a family. Well, we've got you covered. Vocativ's second annual Livability Index was created specifically for people like you—young, ethnically diverse, overwhelmingly single and saddled with student loans—to measure what matters most when picking a place to call home. Jobs. Housing. Diversity. *Fun.*

To reach our top 35, we started with the 100 most populous cities in America and used open-source Internet data to measure vital stats like salary and employment rates, and the cost of rent and utilities, as well as everyday concerns like public transportation, weather and crime. We also considered lifestyle metrics such as the price of dinner at Buffalo Wild Wings and an ounce of high-quality weed—you know, the important stuff—as well as access to live music and sports.

After all the number crunching, a few surprises emerged. You'll see a lot of Texas on this list—the Lone Star State has cheap rent, gas and Wi-Fi, a ton of young people and a booming economy—while some of the country's biggest cities, like Miami, New Orleans and Philly, missed the cut entirely. Last year's top town, Portland, Oregon, fell all the way to No. 10, dethroned by New York. How did NYC come out on top? It's home to the country's best public transportation system, has umpteen takeout options for every taste and offers a racial diversity that rivals the U.N. OK, #TheRentIsTooDamnHigh, but that just means you'll have to grab at least two more friends to share your studio in Brooklyn.

#1. NEW YORK, NY

New York doesn't initially scream "livable." "Fun," sure, but how does anyone survive in the Big Apple? Ah, but that's the thing about NYC—it makes clear the difference between merely getting by and thriving. With the best public transit system in the country, more music festivals than anywhere else (including the new-ish Governors Ball Music Festival and too-cool-for-school All Tomorrow's Parties), an amazingly diverse and convenient food situation (seriously, the rest of America needs to get on the delivery bandwagon) and countless charming neighborhoods to explore (from rising 'hoods like Astoria to hipster-central Bushwick), New York attracts young singles like moths to a goddamn flame. Move to New York and swipe right to life.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 4	RANK: 91	RANK: 46	RANK: 4
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 5	RANK: 100	RANK: 1	RANK: 13

#2. ARLINGTON, TX

Literally everything is cheap in Arlington. First of all, you can get a two-bedroom apartment for under $900 a month. Two. Bedrooms. Also inexpensive: food, beer, even kombucha. (Just kidding, Texans outside of Marfa and Austin don't know what that is, but with what Arlingtoners save on rent, they can afford to have it delivered from L.A., on foot.) Jobs are on the rise in Arlington, too, although you might have to work at Six Flags. (Sounds pretty fun to us.) A night out in revamped downtown or at Division Street dives won't break the bank, so you and your fellow roller-coaster management professionals can run wild. Go see a Cowboys game, go to a country show—do anything. You have all the money.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 82	RANK: 9	RANK: 14	RANK: 5
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 36	RANK: 7	RANK: 51	RANK: 50

#3. SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The white-hot tech scene helps give San Francisco some of the best-paying jobs in the nation. The city also has the second highest percentage of LGBTQ folks among cities on our list, and while the Castro is a gay mecca, nearly every neighborhood is welcoming. There are great coffee shops, bars and restaurants all around town. Burma Superstar is a must, and taco stands like El Farolito won't break the bank. There's always something happening in Golden Gate Park, and the city is flush with music festivals, excellent museums and space to roam. Plus, housing is cheap! (LOL, JK, it's not even remotely affordable—the lone snag in San Francisco's bid to being the best city in the country.) The preposterous high prices have pushed the cool kids out to far-flung areas like Inner Richmond and Outer Sunset (Uber and Lyft help immensely), but if you can find a place to live, S.F. is pretty magical.

San Francisco

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 49	RANK: 99	RANK: 3	RANK: 2
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 42	RANK: 37	RANK: 10	RANK: 22

#4. DENVER, CO

Legalized weed! Now that's out of the way, we can talk about what a cool place Denver is to live, even if you don't touch the green. Arts district LoHi has rooftop bars like Linger, a killer music festival and enough coffee shops to give Seattle a run for its espresso beans. Denver is a great sports city, too, with teams in all four major sports. Something you can't account for in data is how pretty a place is, and in that regard, Denver's plentiful park space with places like Red Rocks, as well as the nearby snowcapped mountains, makes it pretty heavenly.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 53	RANK: 59	RANK: 23	RANK: 8
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 9	RANK: 19	RANK: 47	RANK: 26

#5. AUSTIN, TX

Arguably one of the best towns in the country for seeing live music, Austin serves music fans all year long, beyond SxSW and ACL. It lands second on our list in terms of jobs, with a nice mix of well-paying occupations in fields like government and a hot high-tech sector, as well as low unemployment and job growth. And it's also a great place to grab a cheap brew, a bite, a show or all three, at spots like Stubb's BBQ. But good weather, a great bike-share system, cheap gas and affordable housing make Austin appealing even if you don't care about ribs and rock bands.

Demographics
RANK: 39

Housing
RANK: 29

Jobs
RANK: 2

Food
RANK: 34

Entertainment
RANK: 54

Night Out
RANK: 15

Getting Around
RANK: 39

Appeal
RANK: 42

#6. MINNEAPOLIS, MN

The (larger) Twin City to Saint Paul, Minneapolis ranks tops for jobs on our list, with high salaries and low unemployment, fueled by a large presence of Fortune 500 companies like Target and 3M. Tons of park space and the 50-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway make Minneapolis a smart choice for urban dwellers who value nature, and it's extremely bikeable, with trails around the city for recreation or commuting. Mixology masters brew it up at downtown's Bradstreet Crafthouse, while thrift and record stores abound in Whittier and Uptown. Plus, Minnie has more live theater per capita than any other city except New York. Minneapolis weather can be rough—hot and humid in the summer, frigid in the winter—but its outdoorsy vibe makes up for that. So before you judge, know that Prince, Hüsker Dü, Bob Dylan (ask your mom) and The Replacements are all natives.

Demographics
RANK: 67

Housing
RANK: 50

Jobs
RANK: 1

Food
RANK: 66

Entertainment
RANK: 13

Night Out
RANK: 78

Getting Around
RANK: 14

Appeal
RANK: 58

#7. SEATTLE, WA

With a vibrant musical heritage, amazing food and more coffee houses than you could ever visit, Seattle ranks high for the urban experience it offers. Neighborhoods like Capitol Hill and Ballard are gay- and hipster-friendly, while Pioneer Square and SoDo offer state-of-the-art stadiums to catch Seahawks, Mariners and Sounders games. With the recent opening of a light rail and a huge fleet of buses and trolleys, Seattle's public transit options are strong, and though hilly in places, the city is one of the most walkable on this list. It's also a city where the tourist traps are actually fun—Pike Palace Market is a playground for foodies, and the Underground Tour is a fascinating look at the city's seedy past. One drawback: You might want to head to Seattle coupled up already—only 26 percent of its residents under the age of 35 are single, which we'll attribute to the romance of walking in the rain.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 97	RANK: 83	RANK: 15	RANK: 3
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 23	RANK: 47	RANK: 38	RANK: 29

#8. SAINT PAUL, MN

Another spot where the numbers are in your favor, Saint Paul has low unemployment (although the salaries are low, too, shockingly so when compared with neighboring Minneapolis), inexpensive housing, and cheap food and drinks. Though Saint Paul is better known for its beautiful Victorian homes than trendy 'hoods—which make it a great place to start a family—bohemians flock to Lowertown for its cheap rents, strong public transit and ethnic eats from places like Tanpopo Noodle Shop. You better like cold weather, though—it has the second coldest average temperature of any city on our list. The city gets over that with its annual Saint Paul Winter Carnival, featuring ice sculpting, sledding and an ice palace.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 54	RANK: 6	RANK: 16	RANK: 21
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 62	RANK: 16	RANK: 50	RANK: 52

#9. MADISON, WI

Wisconsin's capital ranks in the top 10 in both housing and jobs. The city has proved to be largely recession-proof over the years, keeping unemployment low and job growth high in sectors like technology and education. Groceries are a little pricey, but drinks aren't. It's Wisconsin, so beer and sausage are everywhere, especially in German areas like Essen Haus, and you'll need them to fatten up for those cold winters. But the City of Four Lakes has plenty of activities to help you work off the brats, with bike and walking trails winding throughout the city, as well as a bunch of great urban strolling areas like State Street, where folks are free to hit up cafés and shops with no cars. Madison is also a big sports town, and you can cheer on the University of Wisconsin Badgers at joints like Jordan's Big 10 Pub and Echo Tap & Grill. When the weather's nice in the summer, Madison comes alive with farmers markets, as well as food, music and beer festivals.

Demographics
RANK: 80

Housing
RANK: 8

Jobs
RANK: 7

Food
RANK: 79

Entertainment
RANK: 57

Night Out
RANK: 30

Getting Around
RANK: 64

Appeal
RANK: 34

#10. PORTLAND, OR

Portlandia jokes aside, a lot about Portland defies stereotypes. It's actually an older city (median age: 36) than some on our list, and it has better-paying jobs and more job growth than that 21st-ranked category would suggest (unemployment is a tad high). It's not as cheap to live in as you might hope, but the food and drink offerings make up for that, with great pizza and coffee options in hipster mecca the Pearl District and drinks 'n' arcade games at Old Town/Chinatown's Ground Kontrol—not to mention an actual, real bookstore with bound, ink-on-paper books in downtown's famous Powell's Books. Try one of Voodoo Doughnut's crazy confections or Teardrop Cocktail Lounge's mixology drinks and you might get the jokes about Portland, though you'll probably be having too much fun to care. No, Kyle MacLachlan isn't the mayor, but he should be.

Demographics
RANK: 91

Housing
RANK: 65

Jobs
RANK: 21

Food
RANK: 6

Entertainment
RANK: 46

Night Out
RANK: 14

Getting Around
RANK: 71

Appeal
RANK: 32

#11. BOISE, ID

Boise consistently ranks among the nicest, healthiest, most livable cities in the country, and it takes the No. 1 spot in our ranking for affordable night out—food and beer are insanely cheap. Work and inexpensive housing abound in Boise, with jobs in tech and medicine particularly well represented. Boise's North End has historic homes and hippie flair, with antique shops, as well as music and food at Hyde Park's Sun Ray Cafe and the Hyde Park Pub. Southwest Boise's Bench area is more affordable, with a lot of charm and young people. On the downside, don't look for much diversity, outside of the city's sizable Basque community. But Boise is a beautiful place to live, with real seasons and plenty of outdoorsy activities like skiing, hiking in Hull's Gulch and fishing in the Boise River.

Demographics RANK: 96	**Housing** RANK: 21	**Jobs** RANK: 38	**Food** RANK: 18
Entertainment RANK: 64	**Night Out** RANK: 1	**Getting Around** RANK: 81	**Appeal** RANK: 28

#12. FORT WORTH, TX

Far from its days as a seedy Western town, Fort Worth is a metropolis boomtown that's getting bigger and better by the day. Jobs are plentiful down here in Texas, thanks in part to the presence of major corporations like Lockheed Martin and American Airlines. Groceries and a night out on the town are among the most affordable on our list, while cheap gas and cab fares make it easy to get around. And if you think Forth Worth is a place where you'll find just steakhouses and saloons, you're only half right. Though it's not a foodie heaven, the Southside has great sushi at Shinjuku Station and vegan cupcakes from Spiral Diner and Bakery. Areas like the West Seventh Street Corridor and Sundance Square are becoming hipster-fied, and the stunning Kimbell Art Museum is a work of art in and of itself. Sushi and vegan cupcakes—clearly, this ain't the same Texas as before.

Demographics RANK: 63	**Housing** RANK: 48	**Jobs** RANK: 18	**Food** RANK: 10
Entertainment RANK: 65	**Night Out** RANK: 7	**Getting Around** RANK: 18	**Appeal** RANK: 61

#13. LOS ANGELES, CA

L.A. endures plenty of haters, but the fact is that the sprawling megalopolis is what you make of it. You can work in entertainment, shop at Whole Foods and nosh at gastropubs like Father's Office on the West Side, or you can aim artier, work at a boutique firm and live in a cool 'hood like Silver Lake or Echo Park, hitting up Intelligentsia for coffee, Short Stop and Akbar for drinks, and downtown and Chinatown for their art scenes. You can turn your back to the 405 and live a beach bum's life in affordable Long Beach or increasingly luxe Venice, or decamp inland to an adorable Highland Park cottage. No matter where you rest your head, you'll be stuck commuting, but public transit's not as bad as everyone says, if you can manage it. Employment numbers could be a lot better, too. But L.A. just offers more lifestyles and a chance at reinvention than any other place in the country. It is the movie capital of the world, after all.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 17	RANK: 71	RANK: 63	RANK: 24
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 6	RANK: 10	RANK: 74	RANK: 9

#14. DALLAS, TX

Dallas has one of the best job markets in the country, both in employment rates and options, with big banks and telecoms leading the charge. It's also an affordable place to live compared with other major metropolitan areas, with cheap food and gas. It's a huge, sprawling city that boasts a lot of ethnic, racial and sexual diversity, with many distinct districts and neighborhoods to consider and a thriving downtown to explore. A night out in Dallas' South Side could take you to the swanky NYLO rooftop and lounge, or a country bar like Gilley's. You'll have plenty of steak, Tex-Mex and barbecue joints to satisfy your cravings, and hot area Deep Ellum has tons of choices, from fancy Frank to down-home Uncle Uber's. For housing, Old East Dallas has historic homes that have staved off McMansionization, and North Oak Cliff is on the forefront of gentrification. There's a lot to take in with Dallas. It's perhaps your best bet if you're looking for the urban experience down south.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 18	RANK: 47	RANK: 12	RANK: 25
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 29	RANK: 69	RANK: 15	RANK: 57

#15. LUBBOCK, TX

You may be wondering what a place like Lubbock, Texas, is doing on this list. We'll tell you: The Hub City's median age is under 30, and more than a third of those folks are single. It has some of the cheapest housing and amenities on our list, too, with great jobs, cheap beer and gas, and sunshine most days of the year. And while it's a college town at heart (Texas Tech helps account for that youth quotient), Lubbock boasts some legit rock 'n' roll history as the hometown of Buddy Holly, not to mention the rumored return next year of the beloved-yet-canceled Lubbock Music Festival. Lubbock does have its share of dust storms, but you can head indoors to catch a game on TV, chow down on barbecue at places like Tom and Bingo's, or down a Red Bull margarita from Chimy's Cerveceria, and you won't mind.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 9	RANK: 4	RANK: 29	RANK: 43
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 78	RANK: 17	RANK: 36	RANK: 63

#16. HOUSTON, TX

Houston has amazing job growth, with jobs in aeronautics, energy and manufacturing, and it's a ton of fun to live in, with honky-tonk bars and swanky lounges on Washington Avenue, piano shows at midtown's Howl at the Moon and artier options in Montrose. Houston excels in the entertainment category, with plenty of music options serving country, Tejano, rock and dubstep acts, and it has major sports teams like the Astros, the Rockets and the Texans. The city also has a ton of cultural offerings like the Theater District, Museum District and Space Center, and it's one of the most diverse cities in America, with a huge South Asian population (and great ethnic food from these communities) and surprisingly large numbers of LGBTQ folks. Hit up the yearly gay rodeo and have a blast.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 11	RANK: 74	RANK: 6	RANK: 58
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 4	RANK: 42	RANK: 32	RANK: 80

#17. WASHINGTON, DC

D.C.'s diverse population helps make it one of the best cities in the country for food, with amazing Ethiopian and American cuisine, lots of delivery options, and thousands of coffee shops for politicians and those who serve them to gather and measure ambitions. The city has come a long way from its days as America's murder capital (thanks, gentrification!), and areas like the U Street and H Street corridors cater to young professionals and hipsters, while gays run the world in Dupont Circle, and drunk college kids just love Adams Morgan. Jobs pay well in D.C., though growth is stagnant. But land that sweet staffer job on the Hill and you're in a city that's easy to get around in (the Metro has carpet!) and has a steady influx of young blood pumping through its veins.

Demographics
RANK: 35

Housing
RANK: 84

Jobs
RANK: 56

Food
RANK: 1

Entertainment
RANK: 19

Night Out
RANK: 87

Getting Around
RANK: 3

Appeal
RANK: 79

#18. BOSTON, MA

It's not surprising that Boston ranks high in a number of our categories, chiefly in food, entertainment and transit options. The Massachusetts capital has a storied history as one of the oldest cities in the U.S., but its nearly 100 colleges also help make it one of the youngest in terms of residents' age. For those fresh out of school and starting out, the South End is the best bet, with low(er) rent, good public transit, a number of brunch and tapas joints, and wicked fun bahs for both sports fans and hipsters alike. For those whose wallets can't cut it within the city center at all, Cambridge and Allston beckon, while Brookline has beautiful homes for those starting families (and those with more cash to spend). As any bruh in a Red Sox hat will tell you, Boston is a sports fan's paradise, with the success of the Sawx, Patriots, Celtics and Bruins.

Demographics
RANK: 29

Housing
RANK: 86

Jobs
RANK: 42

Food
RANK: 13

Entertainment
RANK: 17

Night Out
RANK: 89

Getting Around
RANK: 5

Appeal
RANK: 30

#19. OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Don't sleep on Oklahoma City. There are plenty of jobs and cheap housing options, and it scores high in a number of other categories, including entertainment and ways to get around town. Parts of OKC are rough, but areas like the Plaza District offer many opportunities for the city's young 'n' hip, with coffee shops, vintage stores, art galleries and the like, and across town the housing stock is full of good-boned fixer-uppers that can be had for a song, by national standards. Downtown gives sports fans the Thunder to cheer for, and the Myriad Botanical Gardens' stunning cylindrical structure and tropical plants offer urban reprieve. Hold tight through tornado season and Oklahoma City will treat you well.

Demographics
RANK: 71

Housing
RANK: 11

Jobs
RANK: 10

Food
RANK: 54

Entertainment
RANK: 49

Night Out
RANK: 56

Getting Around
RANK: 28

Appeal
RANK: 74

#20. LINCOLN, NE

Similarly to OKC, Lincoln gets its high ranking from job security. With only 3 percent unemployment, you'll have to work at not finding a gig, while housing and services like Internet run extremely cheap. Music and fine dining might not seem to be priorities in Lincoln, but the downtown area near 14th and O streets offers options like Yia Yia's Pizza & Beer and the awesome Bourbon Theater. Though not as diverse as other major cities—this is Nebraska we're talking about—the left-leaning capital and university town attracts the state's hippies, gays and cool kids. Winters are cold, but with a median age of only 32, and a third of those people single, you should easily find someone to snuggle with come December—after all, Lincoln's 15-story capitol building is shockingly phallic, often referred to as the "penis of the plains."

Demographics
RANK: 50

Housing
RANK: 18

Jobs
RANK: 4

Food
RANK: 89

Entertainment
RANK: 59

Night Out
RANK: 86

Getting Around
RANK: 85

Appeal
RANK: 37

#21. IRVING, TX

Texas strikes again. Irving is more manageable than some other cities in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metropolitan area, and it has drawn a lot of singles under the age of 35 who are generally well-educated, career-minded folks. (Our research finds that about a third of adults living in Irving have college degrees.) It's more diverse than most Texas cities, with sizable black, Latino, Asian and LGBTQ communities. Irving's not the hippest place on our list, but a night out at Buffalo Wild Wings should cost you less than 20 bucks. And sun worshippers, take note: It's always sunny in Irving—around 85 percent of the year, at least.

Demographics
RANK: 25

Housing
RANK: 37

Jobs
RANK: 27

Food
RANK: 59

Entertainment
RANK: 84

Night Out
RANK: 48

Getting Around
RANK: 78

Appeal
RANK: 3

#22. WINSTON-SALEM, NC

Winston-Salem takes the top spot on our list for affordable housing. Here, you can get a nice two-bedroom place for around $245 a month. No, we are not missing a zero. $245! Though overall job growth and median income are stagnant, the medical and technology fields are booming in Winston-Salem—and it's so cheap to live and eat that you don't need a fancy job to get by. You can grab a bite and hit the town on 4th Street, head to Krankies Coffee for a concert, see an indie flick at A/perture Cinema or check out the arts district downtown. Winston-Salem's also a terrific family and retirement community, so you could move there for the cheap cost of living, end up falling in love and remain a Winston-Salemite for life.

Demographics
RANK: 43

Housing
RANK: 1

Jobs
RANK: 88

Food
RANK: 40

Entertainment
RANK: 55

Night Out
RANK: 72

Getting Around
RANK: 80

Appeal
RANK: 72

#23. PLANO, TX

Plano may not have the name recognition of New York or Chicago (hell, not even of Kalamazoo), but it's perhaps one of the safest major cities in America. And for those looking to start a famiy, its schools are among the best in the nation. With cheap housing and a median salary of more than $40,000 a year, it's a wise choice for those looking for a big bang for their buck. We won't pretend it's the coolest place to live—you won't find a single music festival or sports team here, though Dallas is only a half-hour drive away. But with clean, safe, affordable living, Plano puts the super in super suburb.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 93	RANK: 14	RANK: 28	RANK: 49
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 91	RANK: 69	RANK: 45	RANK: 18

#24. CHICAGO, IL

Chicago's one of the most diverse cities in the country, and it comes in at No. 1 on our list for entertainment options. If you're into music, joints like Wicker Park's Subterranean and Wrigleyville's the Metro offer a constant fix, while Lollapalooza brings huge acts in the summer. Museum buffs will have myriad choices—the Field Museum of Natural History and the Art Institute of Chicago are just the tip of the iceberg. And no downtown in America has prettier architecture than Chi-Town's Art Deco skyscrapers. Sports fans love da Bulls, da Bears, da Hawks and da Cubs. Lakeview is a gay and hipster mecca. We're not gonna say the weather is great—no one likes getting frostbite while waiting for the L (one of the country's most used transit systems)—but Chicago will never, ever leave you bored.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 5	RANK: 39	RANK: 72	RANK: 36
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 1	RANK: 90	RANK: 7	RANK: 65

#25. HENDERSON, NV

Henderson's chief selling point is that it's one of the safest cities in the United States. Like the rest of Nevada, Henderson can be brutally hot in the summer, but the weather is pleasant the rest of the year. And, like Vegas and Reno, there are casinos, but Henderson's the most livable of the bunch since it doesn't attract so many tourists. Jobs pay very well here and are on the rise—though the city's unemployment rate is still quite high, at more than 7 percent. It's an exceptionally walkable city, with more than 37 miles of trails. Beer, movies and groceries are cheap, though you'll run into a bit of trouble when it comes to dining out and finding affordable housing. But if settling down, buying a house and raising kids in a scenic city on the rise are in your immediate life plan, Henderson is ideal.

Demographics
RANK: 64

Housing
RANK: 73

Jobs
RANK: 26

Food
RANK: 57

Entertainment
RANK: 71

Night Out
RANK: 3

Getting Around
RANK: 90

Appeal
RANK: 8

#26. SAN JOSE, CA

Seen *Silicon Valley*? Here's where those guys live and work—and make tons of money. Only 45 miles from San Francisco, San Jose is warmer and drier, and though rent is expensive relative to the rest of the country, it's a lot cheaper than in San Fran. More pluses: Alcohol and weed are inexpensive, too. You might need those in copious amounts, as San Jose ain't the coolest place around, but the Willow Glen and Santana Row neighborhoods offer walkability and cool shopping, respectively. Unfairly overlooked when it comes to California cities, San Jose is a terrific alternative for those who want to work in tech and find San Francisco too pretentious or expensive.

Demographics
RANK: 95

Housing
RANK: 69

Jobs
RANK: 8

Food
RANK: 38

Entertainment
RANK: 51

Night Out
RANK: 22

Getting Around
RANK: 98

Appeal
RANK: 16

#27. SAN DIEGO, CA

When it comes to great weather and a strong job market, San Diego has just about any other city beat. It's an underrated culinary capital, particularly when it comes to Mexican food in Old Town and various 24-hour holes in the wall across the city. (Everyone should eat a french fry-stuffed California burrito before they die.) Downtown's Gaslamp district remains an ever-popular nightlife spot and tourist attraction (the hometown Padres play there, in Petco Park), neighborhoods like Hillcrest and North Park invite gays and cool kids, Pacific Beach is a playground for drunk college kids, and Hillcrest's huge Balboa Park offers days of museum visits. There are also the world-famous San Diego Zoo and Sea World, if watching animals skulk about confined spaces and perform on cue is your thing. Don't bother with public transit or the crazy expensive cabs here, and you might be SOL when it comes to housing—but in every other sense, San Diego is a nearly perfect city.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 33	RANK: 70	RANK: 25	RANK: 33
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 26	RANK: 33	RANK: 95	RANK: 19

#28. PITTSBURGH, PA

Just a couple of decades ago, Pittsburgh was the poster city of urban decay. Now it's reborn, cool and booming—an example to other Rust Belt towns that it can be done. For those getting started in life, the 'Burgh is one of the cheapest major U.S. cities in which to live: Food and rent are exceptionally affordable. It has more bars per capita than any other U.S. city, and cheaper cabs and more public transit than most. The museums here are superb—the contemporary art museum the Mattress Factory has a mind-blowing collection, and the Andy Warhol Museum (he's from Pittsburgh) is essential. There are big-time sports, too, with the Steelers, Pirates and Penguins all wearing the city's signature black and gold. More into quiet conversation than cheering? The Lawrenceville area serves the coffeehouse set, and the Duquesne and Monongahela inclines offer beautiful hikes with stunning views of the city. If you can deal with the relative lack of sunshine and the kooky accent, yinz smart to move to da 'Burgh.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 87	RANK: 25	RANK: 78	RANK: 9
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 11	RANK: 59	RANK: 4	RANK: 67

#29. SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Apparently people make bank in Scottsdale. At more than $50,000, Scottsdale's median income is the highest on our list. Along with health care, hospitality makes up a lot of those jobs, as Scottsdale has some ridiculously luxe hotels (such as the Phoenician and the Camelback Inn), not to mention more destination spas than any other city. With all those fancy hotels and spas have come more upscale restaurants, galleries and bars, including a place where you can golf at the bar while downing margaritas (Topgolf), meaning that Scottsdale's nightlife is on the pricier end—as is its housing, unfortunately. Although Scottsdale has the oldest residents on our list (median age: 45), more than 33 percent of those under the age of 35 are single—go fig. Maybe people just fall in love with Scottsdale's warm, wonderful weather and never leave. Or they can actually afford to settle down.

Demographics
RANK: 99

Housing
RANK: 89

Jobs
RANK: 11

Food
RANK: 30

Entertainment
RANK: 82

Night Out
RANK: 84

Getting Around
RANK: 20

Appeal
RANK: 11

#30. CHARLOTTE, NC

With ridiculously cheap housing and well-paying jobs, Charlotte draws plenty of under-35s. As the home of both the Panthers and the Hornets, it's a great sports town, but the city also has terrific museums like the Mint Museum and Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. (It also has the NASCAR Hall of Fame.) A high-ish unemployment rate of 7 percent mucks things up a bit, but we'll give Charlotte credit for its decent diversity, save for a relative lack of LGBTQ folks. You could start out living in NoDa, spending every night drinking yourself silly at pubs like Jack Beagles and stuffing your face with macaroons at 24-hour Amelie's French Bakery, then save up for a lovely brick home in Plaza-Midwood, a foodie's haven with the likes of Soul Gastrolounge and Bistro la Bon.

Demographics
RANK: 28

Housing
RANK: 16

Jobs
RANK: 30

Food
RANK: 70

Entertainment
RANK: 22

Night Out
RANK: 54

Getting Around
RANK: 63

Appeal
RANK: 73

#31. RALEIGH, NC

You need a job—Raleigh has them. Good jobs in research, banking, medicine and pharmaceuticals, and Raleigh offers more job growth than almost any other city we've tallied (tied with Houston). Plenty of young singles live in Raleigh, too, in cool neighborhoods like Boylan Heights. And the recently started Hopscotch Music Festival gives Raleigh a much-needed boost in coolness over nearby hipster-friendly Durham and Chapel Hill. If bearded fellows bobbing their heads to Panda Bear ain't your thing, Raleigh has a great hockey team in the Carolina Hurricanes, and a night out at Buffalo Wild Wings should cost you less than $20. For the practically minded, Raleigh has most other cities beat.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 90	RANK: 66	RANK: 5	RANK: 60
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 50	RANK: 74	RANK: 62	RANK: 48

#32. RENO, NV

Sure, Reno has been the butt of plenty of jokes, thanks to the hilarious *Reno 911!* (and being the wacky cousin to Las Vegas), but the Biggest Little City in the World has something great going for it that plenty of cities don't: affordable living. Your friends in L.A. and New York will cry into their overpriced coffee when they hear what you pay for a two-bedroom apartment, not to mention the fact that you could actually buy—buy!—a place to live one day, though it's a little pricey to get around and eat out. Like Vegas, Reno has neighborhoods that aren't bad to walk in once you're there, from the Casino District to hipper WeFi and midtown. Unlike Vegas, Reno is not overstuffed and there isn't a new casino popping up every week, which has helped it retain much of its Rat Pack cool. Of course, you can always avoid all that—close to Reno are the Truckee River, Pyramid Lake and a number of ski resorts, offering plenty to do all year long outside of watching someone's great aunt suck down Camel Lights with a few rum and Cokes at Harrah's.

Demographics	**Housing**	**Jobs**	**Food**
RANK: 65	RANK: 10	RANK: 55	RANK: 44
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 58	RANK: 41	RANK: 91	RANK: 25

#33. BATON ROUGE, LA

Baton Rouge

Louisiana's capital and primary university town constantly nabs a spot on lists of the best places for young people to live, thanks to its reputation for having tons of jobs and singles under the age of 35. Louisiana State University's main campus provides the city with a constant influx of youth, with plenty of boozing at bars like the Bulldog and the Cove, as well as delicious Cajun bites at Parrain's and Chimes. It's easy to explore the city's eclectic neighborhoods like Capital Heights, Garden District and Spanish Town by car or cab, and because Baton Rouge is an oil town, thanks to a huge ExxonMobil facility, gas is very cheap. It's not perfect—calling the city hot and muggy in the summer would be an understatement, and the area's not terribly walkable, gay-friendly or crime-free. But its Creole roots lend Baton Rouge cultural richness, the energy industry provides jobs, and tens of thousands of LSU kids keep things fun.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 13	RANK: 23	RANK: 22	RANK: 50
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 48	RANK: 60	RANK: 9	RANK: 83

#34. FORT WAYNE, IN

This Rust Belt city is a real Cinderella story, bouncing back in a major way after losing manufacturing jobs in the 1980s. The city diversified its workforce, transformed abandoned buildings into apartments and retail space, and opened new community-oriented places like Headwaters Park—and unemployment dropped to under 5 percent. Yet even with all these changes, it's still exceptionally cheap to rent or buy a home in Fort Wayne, so you'll have plenty of money left over after buying groceries (cheap), gas (cheap) and booze ($3 for a domestic, WTF!). Just what to do with that discretionary income remains a challenge for Fort Wayne's residents, but newer attractions like the African/African-American Historical Museum and the BBQ RibFest at Headwaters Park have helped. And there's always Chicago, only a three-hour drive away.

Demographics	Housing	Jobs	Food
RANK: 86	RANK: 13	RANK: 13	RANK: 62
Entertainment	**Night Out**	**Getting Around**	**Appeal**
RANK: 79	RANK: 79	RANK: 72	RANK: 53

#35. GARLAND, TX

Yet another Texan town takes the final spot in our 35-city ranking. Just northeast of Dallas lies the beatific, lakeside metro-burb of Garland, which lands on this list for a number of reasons: It's relatively cheap to live in, with inexpensive housing and gas (this is Texas, after all), crime is low, and it has sunny, subtropical weather, barring the occasional thunderstorm or tornado. (Toughen up! Again, this is Texas!) A number of new developments have bolstered the livability of Garland, from the recreational, such as the Hawaiian Falls Waterpark and Firewheel Town Center outdoor mall, to the transit-oriented, with the development surrounding Dallas' DART rail. Your suburban oasis awaits.

Demographics
RANK: 61

Housing
RANK: 30

Jobs
RANK: 35

Food
RANK: 65

Entertainment
RANK: 84

Night Out
RANK: 69

Getting Around
RANK: 17

Appeal
RANK: 24

Artwork by: Christopher Classens

Special thanks to: Ayo Aridegbe, Leury Hidalgo, Jenn Holmes, Nick Homyk, Julia Kastner, Metropoly, Elizabeth Rhodes, Rebecca Steinberg, Yoni Steinmetz, Asaf Zamir, data collected by Micah Luxen

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KIMBERLY WEYMER 12/16/14 16:46 EST

Why does no one ever give Seattle credit for having legalized weed as well?

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Since when has Lincoln become one of the top 100 populus cities?

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Here you go: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

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SURFGRL460 12/11/14 18:43 EST

I a from Boise Idaho. It is very low wage, uneducated, high cost of living for the poor wages, high housing for the wages, high gas prices compared to most of the country. Nothing to do unless you are outdoorsy. A lot of Mormons, cold most of the year, drug problems, ect. Idaho sucks. Our governer is a dummy.

REPLY NOW

JOSHUA SIEGEL 12/10/14 13:53 EST

How on earth did Philadelphia not make this list but Henderson and Reno did? Something is seriously amiss.

REPLY NOW

OBSERVANT 12/09/14 21:22 EST

I see NASHVILLE in the graphic, but not in the list?

1 REPLY - REPLY NOW

SCOTT COHEN 12/10/14 08:57 EST

Nashville scores in category rankings, like this one, but doesn't make the overall Top 35 http://www.vocativ.com/culture/society/livability-entertainment/

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BD121212 12/09/14 19:48 EST

I don't understand how Miami isn't on this list. Hell of a lot more fun than most of those cities.

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