



The often repeated maxim, “raising a kid is hard work” has become a banal platitude, but actually, it’s an understatement. Child rearing is one of the few responsibilities shared by most humans irrespective of nationality, wealth, or race, and we’ve been doing it for eons, yet nobody—including child psychologists with lofty degrees and gurus writing bestselling parenting guides—can seem to come to a consensus on the right way to go about it.

Parenting methods vary from culture to culture, and have evolved with the passage of time. Some approaches may have more success than others, but it’s unlikely that there is one “right” way to raise a kid. Different kids have different needs and ultimately, parents go it alone. It’s up to them to decide what they think is the best way to go about it.

While few would deny that parenting is deeply personal, with each couple adopting their own distinct approach influenced by their own cultural traditions and the unique needs of their child, mounting evidence suggests that one key factor in a child’s development has clear cut, predictable effects and it’s something that parents can control.

Environment--broadly defined as the surroundings in which a kid operates-- encompasses the household, neighborhood, school, climate, and even the political system a child grows up under, and plays a huge role in a child’s development, and as kids mature and spend more time out of the home, its influence only grows, affecting not only a kid’s personality, but the development of his body and brain.

A striking example are the physiological effects growing up in a poor in a poverty stricken area can have on a child. High levels of waste and pollutants endemic to poor areas have been shown to **dramatically increase the likelihood of a kid developing asthma at an early age**. Even more remarkably, **studies indicate that a childhood of poverty and hardship shapes the configuration of a kid’s brain**, increasing the size and sensitivity of the amygdala, the part of the brain associated with fear, anger and anxiety, while the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain tasked with reason and decision making, remains undeveloped. While these are extreme examples, they are proof that a kid’s surroundings can shape who she becomes, perhaps in ways we have yet to understand.

Obviously, not every family has the means to choose their ideal location to raise kids, but for those that do, choosing the city or town in which to plant your roots is a big decision. The quality of schooling, median income, safety, and opportunities for outdoor play and exploration in a given location all play a vital role in your kid’s development. Maybe Hillary Clinton was right. It does take a village.

With all of this in mind, we’ve compiled a list of the best cities in America to raise kids based on a number of important factors, including graduation rates (a key indicator of the quality of education in a given region) crime rates, health insurance coverage and median income (not to be classist, but the research supporting the influence of socioeconomic environment on a child’s development cannot be denied). Depending on your family’s circumstances and flexibility of movement, the cities on the list have the right blend of qualities that allow children to fulfill their potential. Look them over and give it some thought.

See the Top 100 Best Cities to Raise Kids in the U.S. [here](#).

1	San Ramon	California
2	Newton	Massachusetts
3	Newport Beach	California
4	Pleasanton	California
5	Flower Mound	Texas
6	Livermore	California



8	Cambridge	Massachusetts
9	Yorba Linda	California
10	Boulder	Colorado
11	Laguna Niguel	California
12	San Mateo	California
13	Berkeley	California
14	Naperville	Illinois
15	Irvine	California
16	Fremont	California
17	Kirkland	Washington
18	Woodbury	Minnesota
19	Ann Arbor	Michigan
20	Maple Grove	Minnesota
21	Milpitas	California
22	Alameda	California
23	Santa Clara	California
24	Somerville	Massachusetts
25	Folsom	California
26	Sunnyvale	California
27	Pearland	Texas
28	Evanston	Illinois
29	Tustin	California
30	Carmel	Indiana
31	Bellevue	Washington
32	Thousand Oaks	California
33	Ames	Iowa
34	Carlsbad	California
35	San Francisco	California
36	Daly City	California
37	Rochester Hills	Michigan
38	Seattle	Washington
39	Mountain View	California
40	Torrance	California
41	Camarillo	California



43	Farmington Hills	Michigan
44	Roseville	California
45	Redwood City	California
46	Broomfield	Colorado
47	Simi Valley	California
48	San Clemente	California
49	Charleston	South Carolina
50	Mount Pleasant	South Carolina
51	San Jose	California
52	Plymouth	Minnesota
53	Lakewood	California
54	Arlington Heights	Illinois
55	Edmond	Oklahoma
56	Santa Monica	California
57	Santa Clarita	California
58	Johns Creek	Georgia
59	Walnut Creek	California
60	Union City	California
61	Overland Park	Kansas
62	Oshkosh	Wisconsin
63	Vacaville	California
64	Hoover	Alabama
65	Toms River	New Jersey
66	Quincy	Massachusetts
67	College Station	Texas
68	Frisco	Texas
69	Bellingham	Washington
70	Livonia	Michigan
71	Troy	Michigan
72	Whittier	California
73	Upland	California
74	O'Fallon	Missouri
75	San Leandro	California
76	Waukesha	Wisconsin



78	Fargo	North Dakota
79	Allen	Texas
80	Redlands	California
81	Champaign	Illinois
82	Elk Grove	California
83	Pasadena	California
84	Burbank	California
85	Missouri City	Texas
86	Tuscaloosa	Alabama
87	Peoria	Arizona
88	Bloomington	Illinois
89	Chico	California
90	Missoula	Montana
91	Redondo Beach	California
92	Menifee	California
93	Clifton	New Jersey
94	Duluth	Minnesota
95	Virginia Beach	Virginia
96	Skokie	Illinois
97	Mission Viejo	California
98	Appleton	Wisconsin
99	Chino Hills	California
100	Fullerton	California

## 30. Carmel, Indiana

A rapidly growing suburb of 91,065 located smack dab in the middle of Indiana, just north of Indianapolis, Carmel holds the honor of being selected “Best Place to Live in the United States” by CNN Money. Carmel possesses small town Midwestern charm with modern accoutrements, like a \$24.5 million dollar water park and fitness center with state of the art features and attractions able to satisfy both kids and adults. What’s more, the school system has an excellent reputation.

## 29. Tustin, California

Tustin is a mid-sized suburb in Orange County, California. Residents of the town are afforded the dual pleasures of living in a peaceful community with great schools and also enjoying one of the shortest commutes in the region. Tustin residents are in a great location for taking the kids out to enjoy all of Southern California’s most exciting family friendly attractions.

## 28. Evanston, Illinois



them to Chicago's skyline on weekend trips to the city.

## 27. Pearland, Texas

With a population expanding from 37,640 in 2000 to a whopping 108,821 by 2015, Pearland is one of the fastest growing and in demand places to raise a family in Texas. Pearland's ethnically diverse population, fine public schools and excellent public recreational facilities make it a great place to raise kids.

## 26. Sunnyvale, California

Consistently named one of the safest cities in America, Sunnyvale is also notable for the progressive and forward thinking leanings of its inhabitants, many of which work in the Silicon Valley tech industry. Like many bay area communities, Sunnyvale is lush, green and overflowing with public parks, over 476 acres of them. If your family can afford it, raising kids in the utopic, ethnically heterogeneous community ensures that they experience very little unpleasantness in their early years, while simultaneously cultivating in them impossibly high standards.

## 25. Folsom, California

Famously known as the location of the prison where Johnny Cash recorded his famous live record, Folsom is also a great place to raise kids. The city is located on the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, offering a generous expanse of rolling hills, woods and a big lake for kids to explore and play in. The 32 miles of bike trails and hiking trails should please parents with a passion for the outdoors.

## 24. Somerville, Massachusetts

Somerville, population 75,754, has enough awards on its mantle to rival famed actress Meryl Streep. The Boston Globe named it the best run city in the state in 2006 and the city has thrice been bestowed with the All-America City Award. Somerville's median income of \$46315 is a bit lower than most cities on the list, but the city's art studios, theaters and busy schedule of festivals and events is impressive for a city its size. Somerville's high concentration of artistic venues and close proximity to several prestigious universities provide an intellectually stimulating, nurturing environment for children with creative predilections.

## 23. Santa Clara, California

Another clean, safe well-manicured, upper middle class bay area suburb with the ideal conditions for raising children, Santa Clara is notable for being the home of California's Great America, a fantastic amusement park that doesn't mess around when it comes to roller coasters. Santa Clara also boasts a number of museums including the Triton Museum of Art and the Intel Museum, which is presumably dedicated to the history of microchips.

## 22. Alameda, California

Yet another midsized, upper middle class Bay Area suburb with a substantial Asian population and a conspicuous number of driverless cars, Alameda is unique for its geography. The city occupies two islands and a chunk of the mainland, granting it the nickname, "The Island City". I know if I were a kid, I'd love to grow up in a place with such an unusual layout.

## 21. Milpitas, California

Milpitas is your run of the mill Silicon Valley bedroom community: clean, progressive, peaceful, safe and inhabited almost entirely by workers in the tech industry, i.e., a great place to live and raise kids. The city boasts a ridiculous amount of parks with facilities for paragliding and hang gliding and a couple of golf courses. Teenager kids should delight in the fact that Milpitas is home to the hugest mall in the Bay Area, the creatively named Great Mall of the Bay Area, which boasts over 200 stores.

## 20. Maple Grove, Minnesota

Voted the second best place to live in 2014 by Money Magazine, Maple Grove is the platonic ideal of the upper middle class Midwestern suburb.



Barn.

## 19. Ann Arbor, Michigan

Ann Arbor is a beautiful city of about 120,782, home to University of Michigan and renowned for its history of progressive politics and lushly forested parks and residential sections. For parents that want their children to grow up in an environment that balances Midwestern modesty with political and cultural open-mindedness, there's no better option than Ann Arbor.

## 18. Woodbury, Minnesota

Woodbury is an archetypical Minnesota suburb: peaceful, pleasant, with fine schools and a wealth of retail options. It may seem unremarkable but it's an undeniably suitable environment for child rearing. Notably, Woodbury's 45 parks encompass 3000 acres of lakes, woods and trails.

## 17. Kirkland, Washington

The first city in the top 30 located in the Pacific Northwest, Kirkland is a great little city on the waterfront offering up all of the bohemian charm characteristic of the region. Art galleries, coffee shops and ocean side parks abound. The city's median income of 60,000 indicates that residents are more down to earth and relatable compared to many cities on this list.

## 16. Fremont, California

A bay area community that stands out for its majority Asian population and quirky history, Fremont originated as a Spanish mission and boomed during the California gold rush. Around the turn of the century, it was the first home of the California film industry. Like other communities in the region, Fremont is forward thinking, tranquil and pricey. Undoubtedly a terrific place to raise kids if you can afford it.

## 15. Irvine, California

A sizable southern California city of nearly 250,000, a median income of 98,000 and the largest plurality of Asian Americans of any city in America. Irvine was planned in the 1960's by famous LA architect William Pereira who divided the city into separate townships with houses of similar design and nearly identical commercial centers, schools and places of worship. It sounds unusual, but Irvine is consistently ranked among the safest cities in America, best places to live in America, best run cities in America, cities with the happiest populace in America, and so on. It is a curio that could only exist in Southern California but any children lucky enough to grow up in a city as unique as Irvine are likely to live fruitful and prosperous lives.

## 14. Naperville, Illinois

A large suburb west of Chicago, Naperville is another community that regularly places high in best/safest/wealthiest city rankings. For those families wealthy enough to own a home and raise kids in Naperville, it is undeniably a fine place to live, offering all of the municipal, recreational, culinary, and retail options and services one could ask for. The school system has a fantastic reputation and its high schools regularly churn out excellent football teams. While many of the cities on this list lean left politically, Naperville is the conservative's option. Truly a model suburb and great community to bring up kids.

## 13. Berkeley, California

Famous for decades of being on the vanguard of progressive politics and philosophy, Berkeley is an eclectic and forward thinking community. Home to UC Berkeley, the oldest of all of the University of California campuses, and a number of historic landmarks, museums, theaters and vast parks, children raised in Berkeley are likely to be exposed to a varied cross section of art, culture and ideas at an early age.

## 12. San Mateo, California

San Mateo is a Silicon Valley suburb mostly inhabited by tech professionals with a little bit of everything. The city's three public libraries are likely to satisfy any bookworm, while the fifteen parks located in the city are enticing for lovers of the outdoors. The most notable park is Coyote Point Park, a rocky peninsula jutting out into the San Francisco Bay blanketed with eucalyptus trees. Coyote Point's variety of flora and fauna is



## 11. Laguna Niguel, California

Laguna Niguel is a planned community in Orange Country with an abundance of sprawling parks and nature reserves. While Californian suburbs are known for their excellent parklands, Laguna Niguel stands out for its sheer acreage of wilderness and trails, unique for community surrounded by suburbs in all directions. A great place to raise children if one can afford it.

## 10. Boulder, Colorado

Boulder is a small city with an excellent reputation and a lot going for it. Owing to its position in a basin just outside the Rocky Mountains, Boulder is a great base for outdoor activities like hiking, skiing, mountain biking. Kids growing up in the city will have no trouble developing an interest in outdoor sports at an early age, increasing the likelihood that he or she will be fit and active later in life. Boulder's hippie vibes, arty leanings and tolerant attitude towards all lifestyles can rub off on a kid, helping them develop a well-rounded, thoughtful perspective.

## 9. Yorba Linda, California

Yorba Linda is another upper middle class Orange Country suburb with all of the qualities intrinsic to communities in the county: low crime, good schools, good shopping, wonderful public parks, but with one distinctive feature: The city is both the birth place of Richard Nixon and home to the Richard Nixon presidential library. This is either a quirky bit of trivia, or major slight against the city, depending on how you look at it.

## 8. Cambridge, Massachusetts

In addition to being one of the most famously liberal cities in America, Cambridge is home to two of the nation's greatest universities in Harvard and MIT. Left leaning parents hoping to raise their kid(s) in a community that reflects the values they believe in can do no better than Cambridge. The embarrassment of museums and galleries connected to the city's universities are fun and educational destinations for weekend trips with the kids.

## 7. Davis, California

A suburb of Sacramento and home to UC Davis, Davis is a fine community in which to raise kids. The city's ethnically diverse population is among the best educated in the United States, which, along with the heavy student presence, contributes to a proactive and civic-minded atmosphere. This is expressed in Davis's many annual events and festivals, including the Whole Earth Festival, the Davis Transmedia Walk and Picnic Day, the largest student run event in the country. Picnic Day always kicks off with a parade and caps the festivities with a Battle of the Bands competition, with dozens of other events and activities in between. The event draws tens of thousands of people every year and is fun for the whole family.

## 6. Livermore, California

Livermore is a city of about 89,000 located 30 miles inland from the foothills enveloping the San Francisco Bay Area, and as such, it has its own unique identity distinct from its neighbors to the west. The city's origins as a loose conglomeration of ranches and vineyards has left its mark on Livermore, and the city has rugged, earthier vibe compared to communities in the Bay Area. Despite its blue collar heirs, the city's median income of \$96,632 certainly does not reflect a working man's salary. Though, if you can afford a house in the community, Livermore is terrific place to live, with sprawling parks, a smattering of nearby vineyards, a few golf courses and a terrific farmer's market. Livermore has the right mix of great schooling, palpable civic pride, and recreational opportunities that allows kids to thrive.

## 5. Flower Mound, Texas

While Flower Mound's name is probably its finest quality, the city is a family friendly community with a lot to offer. Like many Texas cities of its type, the population of Flower Mound has increased over the past fifteen years, though at around 65,000, the city's population remains modest. What sets Flower Mound apart is its innovative SMART program, a facet of the local government dedicated to controlling the growth and development of the city in a way that benefits its residents rather than allowing for chaotic, aimless expansion--a calamity plaguing many mid-sized Texan cities experiencing a population boom. The careful planning and regulation of the city's growth has resulted in a community with a fine tuned balance of commerce, public facilities, residential zones, and parkland. While Flower Mound may not seem remarkable in any distinct way, you'd be hard pressed to find a community of its type more accommodating to families.



Located six miles of Livermore (6.), Pleasanton once earned the distinction of being the wealthiest mid-sized city in the United States. Like most wealthy communities, Pleasanton is a really nice place to live. The city's prevalent attitude is that unique Northern Californian thing where the residents act rugged and salt of the earth, but are all secretly rich. Nevertheless, Pleasanton's wonderful Mediterranean climate, excellent school system (its high schools are top 400 in the nation!), and beautiful nature preserves make it a pretty great place to settle down and raise kids. Furthermore, the town takes its history and cultural legacy very seriously, taking pains to preserve the 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in its downtown and going all in on its annual festivals and parades.

### 3. Newport Beach, California

Newport Beach is an ocean side community in west Orange County with a storied history, one of the largest and most highly regarded harbors in the U.S., a passion for watersports, and a considerably wealthy population. While most families couldn't afford to buy into Newport Beach's notoriously expensive housing market, for those that can, the city is an excellent place to live and raise children. The weather stays beautiful all year round, the beaches are picturesque and great for surfing and Newport Harbor is the number one destination for watersports in the west; sailing, rowing, fishing, you name it. With so much sunshine and recreation to go around, it's hard to imagine a kid growing up in NB without developing an optimistic, sunny outlook on life.

### 2. Newton, Massachusetts

Newton is an exquisite, affluent suburb of Boston without any one defining characteristic but its all-around excellence reliably earns it a place in just about every "best cities to live in" countdown. Settled all the way back in 1630, Newton has a rich history and cultivated character that isn't common in the United States. Safe, tranquil and flush with historic homes and public buildings, Newton is the city of choice for those that work in Boston but desire a quiet environment after office hours. Newton is also great for kids as both the public and private schools are first class.

### 1. San Ramon, California

Topping our list for best cities to raise a kid is San Ramon, California aka "Tree City USA". San Ramon is a wealthy mid-sized city of 76,134 about 15 miles east of San Francisco and right inside the San Ramon Valley. What makes San Ramon such a great place to raise kids? Well, the weather is nice, the landscapes are beautiful and the public schools are top notch (two of San Ramon's high schools rank in the top 300 nationally). Perhaps you're thinking, "Sure, but that describes a lot of cities on this list." That's true, but its San Ramon's median family income of 132,339 that tipped the odds in its favor.

## Methodology

The ranking was calculated based on the following data from a total of 526 cities: **Education** (percentage of 18 to 24 y/o the did not graduate from high school); **Income** (median household income); **Crime** (number of violent crimes, population size); **Health Insurance**: (number of insured children 6-17).

