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10 Best States to Raise a Family 2019

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Introduction

There are plenty of factors to consider when deciding to relocate, from job opportunities to climate. For parents, though, the impact your new environment could have on your children should be high on the list.

As you look around the United States, some stark regional differences could affect the conditions for raising your children. These

factors could determine both the present-day safety and happiness of your family members as well as their ability to get an education to help them succeed in the future.



Conditions for raising children differ dramatically

The study revealed not only the deep differences that exist from state to state but also the distinct strengths and weaknesses of each state. For example, crime and education may be part of a national discussion, but to a large extent these issues are also very localized. Here's how widely these things can vary from state to state:

- Vermont has the lowest rate of violent crime in the nation, at just under 100 incidents per 100,000 residents. In contrast, seven other states - Alaska, Florida, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina and Tennessee - have violent crime rates that are at least

five times as high as Vermont's.

- While Vermont may be the best state to live in when it comes to safety from violent crime, it is also the most expensive state for sending kids to college. Annual in-state tuition at a four-year public college averages \$16,610 in Vermont, more than three times the \$5,400 it would cost in Wyoming, which is the best state for college affordability.
- Neighborhoods in Colorado are nearly four times as likely as those in Mississippi to have kid-friendly amenities such as parks, recreational centers and libraries.
- On the other hand, Mississippi is the least expensive state to live in with a cost of living that is less than half that of Hawaii, the most expensive state.

Not only do conditions vary widely from state to state; but as the examples of Vermont and Mississippi show, a state may be one of the best states to raise a family in some respects and one of the worst in others. Weighing each state's strengths and weaknesses across all seven categories allowed MoneyRates.com to come up with a list of the ten best states to raise a family.

Methodology

Good parenting is a big determinant of children's success, but it helps to have the support and resources of a good local environment.

To help parents get a feel for where they might expect to find the best locations for their families, MoneyRates.com has taken a quantitative approach to determine the best states for raising children in the U.S.

This study was first conducted in 2011, using four criteria. Last year, the study was expanded to consider seven factors in order to arrive at an updated list of the ten best states for raising children. The same seven categories and methodology were used to determine the ten best states in 2019.

Methodology determining the top 10 states to raise a family

1. **Personal safety** Keeping children safe is a top priority, so MoneyRates.com included each state's violent crime rate from the Department of Justice's Uniform Crime Reporting database as a factor in this study.
2. **Academics**
The U.S. Department of Education uses National Assessment of Educational Progress tests to assess academic performance at a variety of grade levels. MoneyRates.com looked at average scores for math, reading and science at the eighth-grade level to

determine its ranking of states for childhood academic performance.

3. **General affordability**

Any parent can tell you that children are expensive to rear, so living in an area with a reasonable cost of living is a plus. Using data from the Council for Community and Economic Research, MoneyRates.com calculated and ranked the cost of living for each state, and then ranked them according to affordability.

4. **College affordability**

Living in a state with affordable tuition for in-state students can give parents a leg up on paying for college, so MoneyRates.com used data from the College Board to determine the four-year college costs in each state.

5. **Access to youth/student checking accounts**

Given its focus on the banking industry, MoneyRates.com felt it was appropriate to add a banking element to this survey, and student bank accounts can be an excellent way to teach children some basics for managing finances. Student checking accounts typically have characteristics such as low minimums and low (or no) monthly maintenance fees, which can help make these accounts accessible to young people with low balances. This data is from the MoneyRates.com [Checking Account Fee Survey](#).

6. **Health**

The overall health of children is a function of environmental conditions and access to health care; so to capture this factor, MoneyRates.com used data from the 2016-2017 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), accessed via the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health.

7. **Access to neighborhood amenities**

Also using NSCH data, MoneyRates.com ranked states according to the percentage of children who live in neighborhoods with kid-friendly amenities such as safe walking areas, parks, recreation centers, and libraries.

Each state was ranked according to these seven categories, and then the average rankings across all categories were used to determine the overall ranking. Based on this analysis, what follows are the ten best states for raising children in 2019.

1: Utah

This is a repeat win for Utah, which placed at the top of last year's list as well. Utah's greatest strength in this year's study was college affordability, for which the state ranked third nationally with an average annual in-state public tuition of \$6,990. This was considerably cheaper than the average state's college tuition figure of \$10,202.



Utah also scored top-ten rankings for childhood education, safety from violent crime, child health and kid-friendly neighborhood amenities. However, no state is perfect, and Utah was slightly worse than most states for general affordability and access to [youth/student checking accounts](#).

2: Wyoming

This second-place finish represents a slight improvement for Wyoming from last year when it tied for third in this study. As noted above, Wyoming has the cheapest public college tuition for in-state students, and also scored top-ten rankings for childhood education, general affordability and safety from violent crime.



Wyoming fell below median in two categories: child health and access to youth/student checking accounts.

3: New Jersey

Moving up from eighth place overall last year, New Jersey ranked second in the nation for both kid-friendly neighborhood amenities and access to youth/student checking accounts. It also scored top-ten results for childhood education and health.



However, New Jersey is an expensive place to live, ranking as one of the most costly states for both general affordability and college tuition.

4: Virginia

After not making the top ten last year, Virginia rises to number four largely on the strength of tying for second in the child-health category. Virginia also placed in the top ten for safety from violent crime, access to youth/student checking accounts and childhood education.



In general, Virginia has a higher cost of living than most states, especially in terms of college tuition.

5: Idaho

Though it slipped from second place last year, Idaho remains one of the ten safest states in terms of violent crime, and it also has one of the ten lowest college-tuition rates in the nation.



Its weak points were placing a little below median for access to youth/student checking accounts and kid-friendly neighborhood amenities.

6: Minnesota

This marks a slight improvement for Minnesota from placing seventh in last year's study. Minnesota ranked in a second-place tie for childhood health and third for education. However, it is a little more expensive than most states in general and for college education in particular.



7: Iowa

Though it slipped down from a tie for third last year, Iowa still did better than most states in five of seven categories. In particular, it scored well for affordability, with a cost of living that is 8.5 percent lower than the national average.



8: Ohio

A newcomer to the top ten, Ohio's strongest category is a top-ten ranking for access to youth/student checking accounts. All in all, Ohio is considered one of the best states to live in because it was better than most states for education, general affordability, safety from violent crime and neighborhood amenities.



9: Wisconsin

This is a repeat of last year's ninth-place ranking for Wisconsin. Though it did not place in the top ten for any individual category, Wisconsin performed well overall by doing better than most states in six out of seven categories.



10: South Dakota

This tenth-place finish is another repeat performance from last year's ranking. South Dakota tied for second nationally for child health; and it is also a good place for academics, outperforming most states for educational results and affordability of college.



Full ranking - Where does your state rank?

Don't see your state? Here's the full list of states according to how they ranked in the 2019 Best States to

Raise a Family study:

Rank	State
1	Utah
2	Wyoming
3	New Jersey
4	Virginia
5	Idaho
6	Minnesota
7	Iowa
8	Ohio
9	Wisconsin

10	South Dakota
11	Missouri
12	Kansas
13	North Dakota
14	Massachusetts
14	Washington
16	Vermont
17	Colorado
18	Indiana
19	Connecticut
20	Pennsylvania
21	Maryland
21	New York
23	Michigan
24	New Hampshire
25	Georgia
26	Florida
26	Kentucky
28	Nebraska
29	Maine
30	Oregon
31	Illinois
32	New Mexico

32	North Carolina
34	West Virginia
35	Rhode Island
35	Texas
37	Montana
38	California
39	Hawaii
40	Nevada
40	Tennessee
42	Arizona
42	Mississippi
44	Arkansas
45	Oklahoma
46	Alaska
47	Delaware
47	Alabama
49	South Carolina
50	Louisiana