

2017 Best Cities for New Grads

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Roanoke, Va., came in at No. 1 on the GoodCall list of Best Cities for New Grads.

Mid-sized cities dominate the list of top cities for recent graduates

New grads might find it harder to land that first job if they aren't willing to consider moving to a new place. But moving blindly, without considering how well the new city will fit with one's lifestyle and preferences, could lead to months or years of unhappiness.

GoodCall analysts crunched data from 589 cities and towns across the country to determine the best places for new graduates. Most of the cities at the top – more than half of the top 30 – were mid-sized, with less than 100,000 people. While the best places were generally scattered across the country, there were few Northeastern cities at the top.

Factors considered include affordability, relative salary, entry-level jobs available, and local amenities.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines housing costs as affordable when they account for less than 30% of family income, and all but one of the cities in the top 10 are better than that.

New grads likely will fare better in locations where their new degree is valued, so analysts considered each city's overall median salary and compared that with the median salary for those with a bachelor's degree. And, of course, going where companies are hiring is a smart move.

But a lot of new grads make the mistake of taking a well-paying job in a place that turns out to be a tiny town with no nightlife, arts scene, or dining options. So the GoodCall list also takes into account the number of amenities per capita.

Here's a look at the top 50 ranking cities:

2017 Best Cities for New Grads

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Rank	City	Population	Affordability (% household income spent on rent)	Amenities (per 1,000 residents)	Median Salary, Bachelor's Degrees	Increased Salary Potential*	Available Jobs (per 1,000 residents)
1	Roanoke, VA	99,897	28.7	3.6	\$42,898	48%	16.6
2	Canton, OH	71,895	29.3	2.7	\$41,638	56%	19.3
3	Fort Myers, FL	74,015	31.5	4.4	\$42,368	57%	45.4
4	Irving, TX	236,617	25.3	2.5	\$53,038	50%	12.0
5	Gastonia, NC	74,550	28.6	2.9	\$52,398	68%	11.7
6	Mountain View, CA	80,438	26.2	4.3	\$96,175	34%	14.4
7	Lansing, MI	114,110	29.0	2.4	\$41,989	49%	21.1
8	Beaverton, OR	96,577	29.8	3.9	\$56,694	55%	13.3
9	Dallas, TX	1,300,082	28.9	2.3	\$54,520	68%	12.7
10	Cedar Rapids, IA	130,405	29.1	3.3	\$53,909	45%	14.5
11	Santa Barbara, CA	91,852	29.9	5.6	\$55,139	49%	12.7

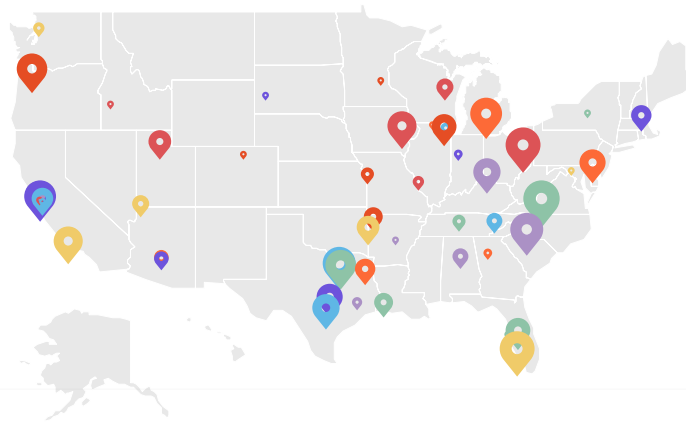
12	New Braunfels, TX	69,923	27.4	3.8	\$50,138	37%	12.2
13	Cincinnati, OH	298,537	30.7	2.9	\$45,831	44%	28.5
14	Round Rock, TX	115,839	28.0	2.7	\$60,758	46%	11.9
15	Wilmington, DE	71,957	32.6	3.5	\$51,254	60%	24.0
16	Schaumburg, IL	75,811	23.7	4.0	\$56,116	20%	24.8
17	Lakeland, FL	104,410	29.5	2.7	\$46,219	44%	17.5
18	Layton, UT	74,142	24.4	2.3	\$61,738	58%	8.5
19	Fort Smith, AR	88,195	28.3	3.1	\$41,828	57%	9.0
20	Milpitas, CA	77,617	31.0	3.9	\$75,299	49%	13.7
21	San Francisco, CA	864,816	25.5	5.3	\$72,016	24%	14.3
22	Nashua, NH	87,975	28.1	3.0	\$55,068	33%	16.8
23	Longview, TX	81,590	29.9	3.2	\$60,870	102%	9.7
24	Springdale, AR	80,454	22.9	1.9	\$56,667	88%	7.3
25	Lake Charles, LA	76,066	32.1	3.0	\$46,719	74%	14.1
26	Green Bay, WI	105,221	27.7	3.0	\$39,690	28%	22.0
27	St. George, UT	80,207	28.0	3.1	\$50,005	67%	7.6
28	Knoxville, TN	185,312	29.2	4.3	\$39,704	30%	22.6
29	Birmingham, AL	214,911	32.2	2.9	\$41,526	56%	16.4
30	Tempe, AZ	175,826	28.7	3.6	\$48,091	29%	18.0
31	Scottsdale, AZ	236,844	24.9	3.9	\$60,371	17%	20.1
32	Kansas City, MO	475,361	28.1	2.7	\$50,138	37%	12.8
33	Franklin, TN	72,635	24.8	5.3	\$62,426	12%	24.6
34	St. Louis, MO	315,685	30.5	3.7	\$42,940	33%	25.2
35	Everett, WA	108,012	31.0	3.5	\$56,454	52%	11.6
36	Arlington Heights, IL	76,996	23.6	2.4	\$70,185	34%	11.4
37	Conroe, TX	68,592	26.8	2.6	\$42,161	33%	12.5
38	Lafayette, IN	71,170	27.8	3.6	\$35,781	22%	25.4
39	Atlanta, GA	463,875	29.5	4.3	\$53,581	28%	26.8
40	Loveland, CO	75,188	26.8	3.0	\$53,302	34%	11.3
41	Largo, FL	81,007	27.9	2.6	\$41,863	37%	12.0
42	Boise City, ID	218,280	29.1	3.2	\$46,414	38%	11.9
43	Frederick, MD	69,482	31.6	2.1	\$54,546	48%	23.6
44	Santa Clara, CA	126,216	26.5	3.5	\$74,825	23%	15.2
45	Little Rock, AR	197,986	31.3	3.4	\$46,961	40%	16.3
46	Rapid City, SD	73,568	27.9	4.4	\$39,629	25%	14.9
47	Rockford, IL	149,346	29.8	2.6	\$42,411	55%	11.0
48	Plymouth, MN	75,928	22.4	2.0	\$71,103	29%	13.8
49	Syracuse, NY	144,152	32.2	3.0	\$46,471	48%	17.9
50	San Antonio, TX	1,434,846	27.5	3.2	\$55,555	22%	15.5

*Salary potential expresses the median salary for residents with a bachelor's degree as compared to the overall median for the area.

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View the full list here. (<https://www.goodcall.com/data-center/2017-best-cities-new-grads-full-rankings/>)

Most of the highest-ranking places on the list of Best Cities for New Grads are mid-sized cities scattered across the country, though there are fewer cities among the top 50 in the Northeastern U.S.



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1. Roanoke, Va.

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At the top of the GoodCall list was Roanoke, Va. The town of nearly 100,000 people in the beautiful Roanoke Valley ranked fairly highly for its amenities and the number of available entry-level jobs. There were 16.6 jobs posted on Indeed.com per 1,000 people in the area. People with bachelor's degrees tend to fare well in Roanoke, making about \$42,900, or 48% more than the area's median salary. And the area's arts and culture scene is strong, with more than 350 amenities. Roanoke has several performing arts and events centers, which draw an array of local, regional and national performers, as well as breweries and wineries, shopping, and dining.

2. Canton, Ohio

New grad still on the job hunt? Canton, Ohio, might be a good option. It has more than 19 entry-level jobs available per 1,000 people, and the median salary for people with a bachelor's degree is \$41,638 – 56% higher than its overall median salary. The town of about 72,000 people in northeast Ohio along Interstate 77 is considered affordable; rent accounts for about 29% of annual household income. And new residents won't be bored sitting at home each night; the area boasts nearly 200 amenities – including the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

3. Fort Myers, Fla.

Fort Myers, at No. 3, has lots of jobs available. In fact, it has the most entry-level jobs available in the country: about 45 per 1,000 people. It also ranks high for its availability of restaurants and arts and culture offerings – 4.4 amenities per 1,000 people – perhaps due to the town's abundance of colleges, including Florida Gulf Coast University. The town sits near the Gulf Coast on the Caloosahatchee River, and while rent is a bit higher compared with other cities in the GoodCall list's top 10, the generous pay should help: those with bachelor's degrees make about 57% more than those without a degree. The median salary for people with a college degree is about \$42,400.

4. Irving, Texas

Irving is an affordable place to live; median rent costs a little more than 25% of the median household income, well below the HUD standard of 30%. Higher salaries help, too. The median salary for those with a bachelor's degree is about \$53,000 per year – 50% more than the local median. The Dallas suburb has more than 236,000 residents and is home to several Fortune 500 companies' headquarters, including ExxonMobil, Kimberly-Clark, and Fluor. The area has about 12 entry-level job openings per 1,000 residents, nearly 25% more than the national average. The city also has almost 600 amenities.

5. Gastonia, N.C.

An affordable Charlotte suburb, Gastonia stands out for its high median salary for college graduates. Those with a bachelor's degree make 67% more than the city's overall median salary, or about \$52,400. With rent accounting for less than 29% of annual salary, that paycheck will go further. The area also ranks well on the number of amenities (2.9 per 1,000 people), so restaurants, shopping, and culture abound. The area was once a huge player in the textile industry, though that has shifted over the years as the industry declined in the U.S. However, Parkdale Mills continues to hold its headquarters there and employs about 1,000.

6. Mountain View, Calif.

Home to some of the world's largest tech companies, including Google, Mozilla, Symantec, and Intuit, Mountain View is a fun place for a new grad hoping for a job in the technology industry. While rent here is fairly high, the area's high salaries can offset some of that cost – those with a bachelor's degree make about \$96,000 a year, which is 34% higher than the city's overall median. With paychecks that high, rent only accounts for about 26% of household income. The town also has more than 300 amenities, including the Computer History Museum, and is growing fast – an estimated 8.6% population increase since 2010. And it's good to move to an area that's hiring: Mountain View has more than 14 job openings per 1,000 people.

7. Lansing, Mich.

If you're looking for a job, there's plenty of hiring in the capital city of Michigan. Lansing has more than 21 jobs posted per 1,000 residents, one of the highest rates in the country. Residents with a bachelor's degree make almost 50% more money than the overall median. The median salary for those with a degree is \$41,989. Rent costs about 29% of annual household income, making the area affordable by federal standards. The city of about 114,000 people in the central part of the state is near Michigan State

University as well as Western Michigan University, giving the area has a youthful vibe; the median age was about 32 in the 2010 census, significantly below the national median of 37.

8. Beaverton, Ore.

No. 8 on the GoodCall list, Beaverton ranks well on salary, amenities, and job availability. Residents with a bachelor's degree earn 55% more than those without, or about \$56,700. The city just outside of Portland boasts more than 370 restaurants, shopping options, and arts and culture venues. Beaverton is home to companies such as Nike, Leupold & Stevens, Tektronix, and Reser's Fine Foods. The city is hiring – about 13 jobs per 1,000 residents were posted on Indeed. Housing in the area is considered affordable; rent costs about 29.8% of annual household income.

9. Dallas, Texas

If you're looking to live in a large city where rent is fairly affordable and your paycheck can go far, consider Dallas. The salary especially stands out: Dallas residents with a bachelor's degree make about \$54,500, or 68% more than the overall median for the area. Jobs are available, too. Indeed.com listed 12.7 entry-level jobs per 1,000 residents. Nine Fortune 500 companies make their headquarters in Dallas, including AT&T, Southwest Airlines, Texas Instruments, and several in the energy industry. As a city of more than 1.3 million people, the area is full of amenities – more than 3,000 restaurants, shopping and entertainment venues.

10. Cedar Rapids, Iowa

At No. 10, Cedar Rapids ranks above average across the board. Median salary for those with a bachelor's degree is \$54,000, which is about 45% higher than the area's overall median salary. Businesses are looking for workers: about 14.5 entry-level jobs per 1,000 people were posted online. Rent accounts for about 29% of annual household income in the area. And

with more than 400 amenities in town, you'll never be short on ideas for dining and entertainment. The city in central Iowa has about 130,000 people and is split by the beautiful Cedar River.

Methodology

GoodCall analysts looked at 589 cities and town and weighed four metrics to determine the rankings for Best Cities for New Grads. Those metrics were:

- Affordability (the median gross rent as a percentage of household income from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates), which accounted for 30% of the score.
- Comparative salary – median earnings in the past 12 months for 25+ population with a bachelor's degree as a percentage of total median earnings for the area in the past 12 months – which made up 30% of the score.
- The number of available entry-level jobs posted on Indeed.com, which accounted for 30%.
- Amenities (the amount of accommodation and food services as well as arts, entertainment, and recreation sites) per 1000 people, which was 10%.

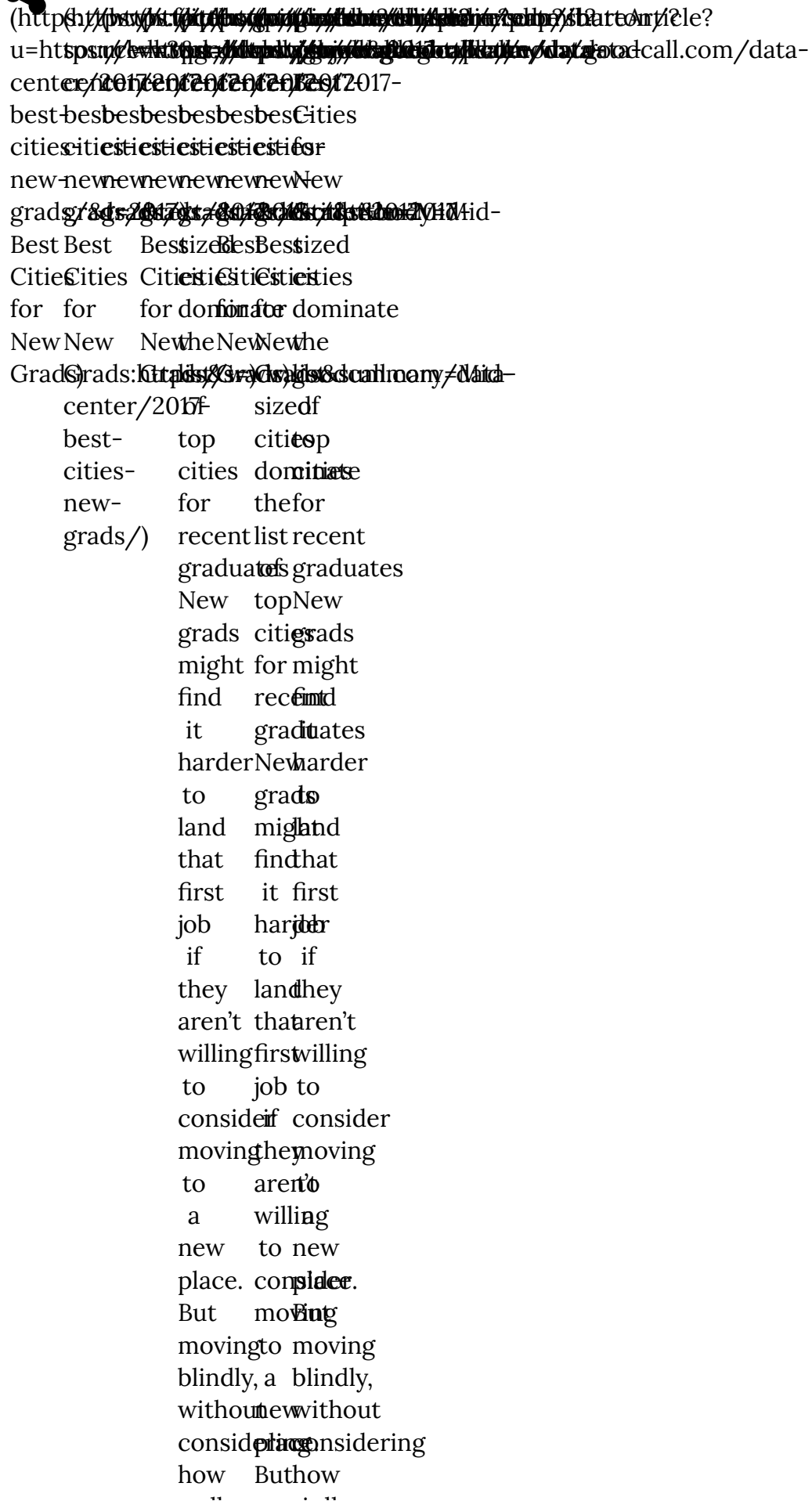
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