

Study ranks Austin as one of the least stressful U.S. cities

Austin Business Journal - by [G. Scott Thomas](#) Contributing writer

Austin's beautiful weather and active lifestyle may make it one of the nation's least stressful cities. Austin ranked fifth in a recent study of least stressful cities done by Bizjournals.com.

We live in stressful times. Consider the evidence:

- Forty percent of Americans say they are frequently subjected to stress, and another 36 percent sometimes feel that way, according to a January survey by the Gallup Poll.
- Nearly half of U.S. adults believe the stress in their lives has escalated during the past five years, as reported in an October study by the American Psychological Association.
- Three of every 10 Americans say they experience persistent stress or have panic attacks, as documented in a November survey by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America.

These numbers reflect the dimensions of a "national pressure cooker," to use the American Psychological Association's term, and it's causing untold damage to physical and emotional well-being and relationships. Several factors contribute to the daily pressure felt by millions of Americans, ranging from finances and unemployment to traffic, crime and pollution. The intensity of this toxic mixture varies from market to market across the country, as does the level of stress.

The worst

Nowhere is the situation worse than in Detroit, which ranks as the most stressful metropolitan area in America, according to a new Bizjournals study.

Detroit is saddled with the highest unemployment rate, 7.2 percent, in any of the nation's 50 largest markets. It also has the group's worst murder rate. And it's among the 10 places with the most robberies, the slowest rates of income growth, the most heart attacks and the fewest sunny days.

Mix all of these factors together, and Detroit is cursed with America's ultimate recipe for stress.

Right behind Detroit on the stress index is another Great Lakes metro with its share of economic woes, Cleveland. It's burdened with the group's worst robbery rate, second-worst frequency of heart attacks and strokes, and fourth-worst unemployment rate.

Others in America's 10 most stressful markets include St. Louis, Los Angeles, Memphis, Philadelphia and Atlanta.

Bizjournals created a 10-part formula to rank the stress levels in 50 leading metros, using data collected by several government agencies and private firms.

The best, including Austin

The outlook is much sunnier in Virginia Beach-Norfolk, Va., which ranks as America's least stressful metropolitan area.

Virginia Beach's slogan is "Live the Life," emphasizing its reputation as a relaxing destination for seashore vacations. It ranks among the nation's five best markets for healthy air, freedom from crime, stable employment and strong income growth.

Salt Lake City is the runner-up in the low-stress derby. It enjoys America's smallest unemployment rate, 2.6 percent, as well as light traffic, healthy citizens and low crime rates.

Other less stressful metros included Phoenix, Austin, Denver, San Diego, and Jacksonville, Fla.

Bizjournals cast a broad statistical net to identify the metros that subject their residents to unusually high or low amounts of stress.

Indicators such as air quality, days of sunshine, robberies, murders, unemployment, income growth and commuting times were evaluated to rank the cities.

Most stressful cities

1. Detroit
2. Cleveland
3. St. Louis
4. Riverside-San Bernardino, Calif.
5. Los Angeles

Least stressful cities

1. Virginia Beach-Norfolk
2. Salt Lake City
3. Phoenix
4. Oklahoma City
5. **Austin**

Courtesy of JB Goodwin