

Most-Educated Cities in the United States

According to a Census Bureau study, Seattle tops the list of America's most educated cities, with more than half its population 25 years and older holding at least a bachelor's degree.

Data collected by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey shows that 52.7 percent of 25-and-over Seattleites have a bachelor's degree or higher, closely followed by San Francisco (50.1 percent), Raleigh, North Carolina (50.1 percent), Washington, D.C. (45.3 percent), and **Austin, Texas (44.1 percent)**. **These same cities ranked--in the same order--as the top five most educated cities in last year's Census Bureau data as well.**

The national college graduation rate is 27.2 percent, up from last year's figure of 25.9 percent.

Education levels bode well for a city's economic success. The top five most educated cities also made the list of the top 25 most prosperous cities.

With a median household income of \$70,921, residents of San Jose, California, earn more, on average, than those in any other city in the country. San Jose residents are also well-educated. With 36.1 percent of its population holding a bachelor's degree or higher, San Jose ranks in the top 15 on America's list of most-educated cities.

The connection between higher education and higher earning is not surprising given that college graduates earn an average of nearly \$2.1 million in their lifetimes, almost twice as much as those with only a high school diploma.

Those smarty Seattleites? They have the eighth highest median household income in the United States. San Francisco ranks fourth.

Here's how educational attainment compares to median household income in the 20 most-educated cities in America, listed in order of education rank:

City, in order of education rank	Percent of population with college degree or higher	Median household income
1. Seattle, WA	52.7	\$49,297
2. San Francisco, CA	50.1	\$57,496
3. Raleigh, NC	50.1	\$48,131
4. Washington, DC	45.3	\$47,221
5. Austin, TX	44.1	\$43,731
6. Minneapolis, MN	43.2	\$41,829
7. Atlanta, GA	42.4	\$39,752
8. Boston, MA	40.9	\$42,562
9. San Diego, CA	40.4	\$55,637
10. Lexington-Fayette, KY	39.5	\$42,442
11. Denver, CO	39.0	\$42,370
12. Charlotte, NC	38.8	\$47,131
13. Portland, OR	38.8	\$42,287
14. St. Paul, MN	36.5	\$44,103
15. San Jose, CA	36.1	\$70,921
16. Colorado Springs, CO	34.9	\$47,854
17. Honolulu, HI	34.7	\$50,793
18. Oakland, CA	33.8	\$44,124
19. Pittsburgh, PA	32.3	\$30,278
20. New York, NY	32.2	\$43,434

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Based on the industries that the cities on this list are known for, the concentration of educated citizens makes sense. Seattle is the manufacturing hub for the engineer-rich aircraft company Boeing, software giant Microsoft, and the pioneering online retailer Amazon. All three employers require an educated workforce. San Francisco and Raleigh both have high-tech industries as well. In addition, San Francisco also acts as a West Coast center for the finance and publishing industries, while Raleigh is home to several universities.

The university factor links the remaining cities that round out the top five: Washington, D.C., and Austin. Of course, Washington has the distinct advantage of being the nation's capital, thus attracting a larger-than-average population of college graduates.

But it's important to understand that the industries that helped put these cities on this list employ highly educated workers for a reason. Engineering, law and policy-making, high finance, university teaching and research, and publishing demand skilled workers who have a bachelor's degree--and often post-graduate degrees--directly related to the profession.

The contributions of the educated workforce boost the success of the companies that employ them, in turn boosting the economy of the cities where these companies are based, which attracts more educated job-seekers. If there's a downside at all, the cities on this chart generally have a higher cost of living. But that should ultimately act as a motivator. Get educated, and your earnings are likely to increase.

Of course, many factors will determine a city's relative prosperity. But just as a well-educated individual has a leg up in the workforce, high educational achievement among a city's population seems to give it clear advantages in developing its civic and financial health.