

2020's Cities with the Highest & Lowest Credit Scores

Adam McCann, Financial Writer • February 5, 2020

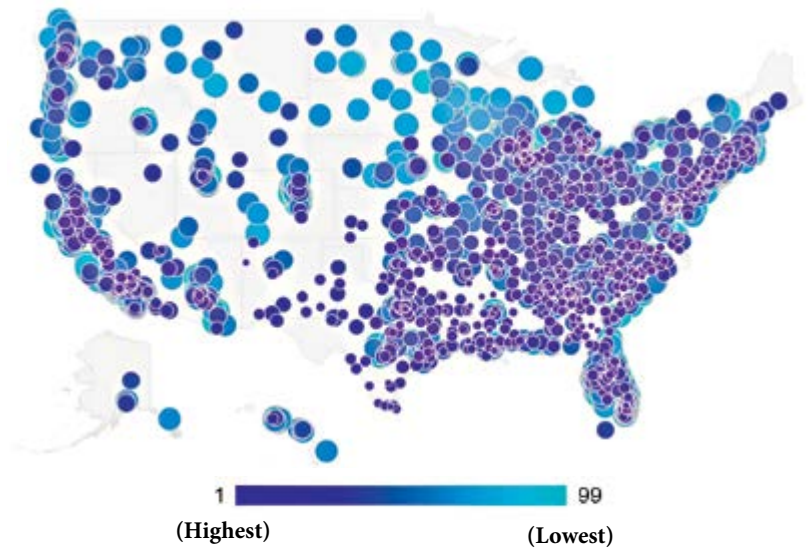


If you've ever applied for a loan or credit card, you know that your credit score is more than just a three-digit number: it's a representation of your financial habits. And it tends to speak volumes, especially about how well you manage your debts.

But have you ever wondered how well your neighbors, your coworkers or perhaps your local Starbucks barista handle their finances? Are they as responsible – or irresponsible – as you are when it comes to paying bills or knowing when to use or refrain from using a credit card?

WalletHub compared the median credit scores of residents in 2,572 U.S. cities to give credit where credit is literally and figuratively due.

Main Findings



Cities with the Highest & Lowest Credit Scores

Rank (1=Highest)	Percentile Rank*	City	Median Credit Score
1	99	The Villages, FL	805
2	99	Sun City West, AZ	789
3	99	Sun City Center, FL	783
3	99	Green Valley, AZ	783
5	99	Los Altos, CA	782
6	99	Saratoga, CA	781
6	99	Estero, FL	781
6	99	Laguna Woods, CA	781
9	99	Leawood, KS	780
10	99	Lexington, MA	779
10	99	Pittsford, NY	779
12	99	Lafayette, CA	778
13	99	Potomac, MD	776
13	99	Winchester, MA	776
13	99	Sammamish, WA	776

Rank (1=Highest)	Percentile Rank*	City	Medaian Credit Score
16	99	San Carlos, CA	775
16	99	Cupertino, CA	775
19	99	Needham, MA	774
19	99	Colleyville, TX	774
19	99	Mequon, WI	774
19	99	Danville, CA	774
23	99	Zionsville, IN	773
24	99	Bainbridge Island, WA	772
25	99	Southlake, TX	771
25	99	Plainview, NY	771
25	99	Chesterfield, MO	771
25	99	Garden City, NY	771
25	99	Arlington, MA	771
30	99	Wilmette, IL	770
30	99	Scarsdale, NY	770
30	99	Hudson, OH	770
30	99	Belmont, CA	770
34	99	Manhattan Beach, CA	769
34	99	Mercer Island, WA	769
34	99	Newton, MA	769
34	99	Edina, MN	769
34	99	Fairport, NY	769
34	99	Muskego, WI	769
34	99	Millbrae, CA	769
41	98	Westfield, NJ	768
41	98	Libertyville, IL	768
41	98	Newtown, PA	768
41	98	Reading, MA	768
41	98	Bethesda, MD	768
41	98	Gibsonia, PA	768
41	98	Sequim, WA	768
41	98	Syosset, NY	768
49	98	Los Gatos, CA	767
49	98	Palo Alto, CA	767
49	98	Foster City, CA	767
49	98	Belmont, MA	767
49	98	Vienna, VA	767
49	98	Huntley, IL	767
49	98	Park Ridge, IL	767
186	93	West Hartford, CT	755
813	68	New York, NY	721
2120	18	East Hartford, CT	659
2535	1	Hartford, CT	602
2555	1	Newark, NJ	587

*Best = 99th Percentile

Percentile Ranking by City Size

Percentile	Large City
98	San Francisco, CA
97	Seattle, WA
95	Honolulu, HI
94	San Jose, CA
92	Portland, OR
91	Boston, MA
89	Minneapolis, MN
88	New York, NY
88	Pittsburgh, PA
85	St. Paul, MN
83	San Diego, CA
82	Austin, TX
80	Omaha, NE
78	Colorado Spring, CO
78	Raleigh, NC
75	Denver, CO
74	Oakland, CA
72	Washington, DC
71	Virginia Beach, VA
69	Anaheim, CA
68	Aurora, CO
66	Nashville, TN
65	Sacramento, CA
63	Tucson, AZ
62	Los Angeles, CA
62	Albuquerque, NM
62	Mesa, AZ
62	Long Beach, CA
62	Santa Ana, CA
62	Riverside, CA
62	Lexington-Fayette, KY
48	Atlanta, GA
46	Louisville, KY
45	Kansas City, MO
43	Miami, FL
43	Wichita, KS
40	Charlotte, NC

Percentile	Midsize City
99	Highlands Ranch, CO
99	Fremont, CA
99	Cary, NC
99	Sunnyvale, CA
98	Naperville, IL
98	Centennial, CO
98	Boulder, CO
96	Ann Arbor, MI
96	The Woodlands, TX
95	Arlington, VA
95	Carisbad, CA
95	Santa Clara, CA
93	Rochester, MN
93	Berkeley, CA
93	Thousand Oaks, CA
93	Cambridge, MA
92	Overland Parks, KS
91	Irvine, CA
91	Frisco, TX
90	Torrance, CA
90	Arvada, CO
89	Plano, TX
89	Fort Collins, CO
89	Huntington Beach, CA
89	Roseville, CA
88	Madison, WI
75	Stanford, CT
57	Jersey City, NJ
55	Rochester, NY
46	Yonkers, NY
34	Syracuse, NY
24	Buffalo, NY
16	New Haven, CT
8	Elizabeth, NJ
2	Paterson, NJ
1	Hartford, CT
1	Newark, NJ

Percentile	Small City
99	The Villages, FL
99	Sun City West, AZ
99	Sun City Center, FL
99	Green Valley, AZ
99	Los Altos, CA
99	Estero, FL
99	Saratoga, CA
99	Laguna Woods, CA
99	Leawood, KS
99	Lexington, MA
99	Pittsford, NY
99	Lafayette, CA
99	Sammamish, WA
99	Potomac, MD
99	Winchester, MA
99	Cupertino, CA
99	Oro Valley, AZ
99	San Carlos, CA
99	Danville, CA
99	Needham, MA
99	Colleyville, TX
99	Mequon, WI
99	Zionsville, IN
99	Bainridge Island, WA
99	Chesterfield, MO
24	Norwich, CT
23	Utica, NY
23	West Haven, CT
17	East Hartford, CT
17	Central Islip, NY
7	Hempstead, NY
6	Mount Vernon, NY
5	Perth Amboy, NJ
3	Atlantic, NJ
2	Plainfield, NJ
1	Trenton, NJ
1	New Brunswick, NJ

Ask the experts

Improving one's credit score is a different process for everyone, depending both on circumstances and spending habits. For advice on how to start we turned to a panel of experts. Click on the experts' profiles to read their bios and responses to the following key questions:

- What tips do you have for a person trying to increase their credit score in a short amount of time?
- What are some commonly held misconceptions about how credit scores are calculated?
- What are the most common mistakes people make when trying to improve their credit score?
- What is the best way for a young person to build credit?



Jae Min Lee

Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Consumer Studies, Department of Family Consumer Science, College of Allied Health and Nursing, Minnesota State University, Mankato

What tips do you have for a person trying to increase their credit score in a short amount of time?

Having a credit card, not spending too much on the card and paying off a balance regularly. Many recommend that you do not spend more than 30% of a limit on your credit card.

Your payment history, the amounts owed, and the length of credit history are the three most influential factors that determine your credit scores. Credit scores reflect your creditworthiness. How reliable are you in handling credit and debt obligation? You demonstrate it through your credit discipline shown in the payment history. It helps you improve your credit scores more quickly.

What are some commonly held misperceptions about how credit scores are calculated?

Let alone well known big five factors that construct credit scores, it is important to have some more accurate understanding of the difference between soft inquiries and hard inquiries.

Hard inquiries typically occur when you apply for a new credit card, loan, etc. Before making a lending decision of your application, your lender or credit card issuer checks your credit. Hard inquiries affect your credit scores and can lower your credit scores.

Soft inquiries generally occur when you see your credit report, or a credit company looks for your credit information to check your eligibility before its credit offer is provided to you. Soft inquiries do not impact credit scores. Many people are concerned about hurting credit scores because of soft inquiries and try not to check their credit scores or reports. You may check your credit scores every day and it does not hurt your credit scores.



Which are the most common mistakes people make when trying to improve their credit score?

You could be tempted to apply for newly advertised top credit cards to take advantage of card offers that mainly come with sign up bonuses. However, if you do not want to hurt your credit scores, the number and timing of credit applications should be more strategically determined.

For example, if you have low or average scores, you should wait a couple of more months than those with good scores before applying for a new credit card to avoid lowering credit scores and to increase your chances of being approved. Make sure that multiple hard inquiries within a short time can not adversely affect your credit scores.

Which is the best way for a young person to build credit?

Credit cards are a good method for building up credit to young adults as long as they are used wisely and responsibly. Before applying for a credit card as a young adult, you should try to be aware of the credit card specific terminologies and rules, e.g., APR, billing cycle, fees, rewards. While using it, you build self discipline by accepting the responsibility for what is expected of reliable credit card users, e.g., using a credit card up to a certain portion of the credit limit paying off a balance on time.

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Robert Bob DeYoung

Koch Foundation Distinguished Professor and Harold Otto Chair, KU School of Business, University of Kansas, Co-Editor, Journal of Money, Credit and Banking

Which is the best way for a young person to build credit?

Perhaps, ironically, the best way to build credit is by saving a portion of each paycheck. To a potential creditor, a record of regular savings signals both personal discipline and the capacity to pay back what you borrow. And the down payment you need to buy a car or to get a favorable home mortgage loan, are built by saving regularly.



Brenda J. Cude

Ph.D. - Georgia Athletic Association Professor in Family and Consumer Sciences, Undergraduate Coordinator, Department of Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics, The University of Georgia, Athens

What tips do you have for a person trying to increase their credit score in a short amount of time?

Your credit score can change quickly if you increase or decrease the amount you charge to existing credit cards. If I charge more than 30% of my available limit to my cards in one month, my score likely will go down. If I pay my credit card balance in full, my credit score will go up.

Credit scores are dynamic; they can change as often as credit information is reported. But, if you haven't yet used credit, it

likely will be 6 months from the time you first get a credit card or another form of credit until you have a credit score.

What are some commonly held misperceptions about how credit scores are calculated?

Many people seem to intuitively know that having more credit cards is "bad" and somehow indicates you're not financially responsible, that your credit score will be lower than the credit score of someone who has fewer credit cards. That's just not true. Your credit score is a reflection of how you manage the credit you have and it can be easier to have a high score if you can successfully manage more than one credit card.

Another misperception is that credit scores are based on anything other than objective "numbers". Credit scorers don't know WHY you were late with a payment and can't take any of these factors into account when calculating a credit score.



Louann Cummings

DM, CPA - Professor of Business, University of Findlay

Which is the best way for a young person to build credit?

Building (and maintaining) your credit reputation is a lifelong endeavor. Years of a proven track record can be compromised or even ravaged if you make one bad decision that impacts your credit standing.

- If you are a parent, educate your children at an early age on the power of saving and the privilege and responsibilities of borrowing.

- If you are a young adult, create a documented track record of prudent borrowing and quick repayment. For example, always pay your total credit card bills within the current billing cycle to avoid ridiculous interest payments and to provide evidence of your bill paying ethic.
- Don't bounce any checks if you use them!
- Always pay any outstanding loan(s) on time and endeavor to retire those debts as soon as possible after graduation.
- Consider refinancing or consolidating loans if a better interest rate can be secured.
- Do everything in your power to NEVER default on a loan. That may well mean building up a generous and accessible nest egg to dip into as legitimate needs arise.

CATEGORY	RANGE
PERFECT	800-850
EXCELLENT	750-799
GOOD	700-749
FAIR	640-699
POOR	571-639
VERY POOR	500-570
BAD	400-499
VERY BAD	300-399

