

Top 15 Most Expensive U.S. Cities for Recent College Graduates

Eligibility: city population of 100,000+; principal cities only; maximum two cities per state. Rank order follows the approved final list.

Rank	City	State	City Population	Zillow ZORI (Monthly Rent)	Zillow ZHVI (Typical Home Value)	2025 Unemployment Rate	Regional Cost Index (2023)	Average Federal Student Loan Balance (State)	Graduate Affordability Score (0–100)
1	San Francisco	CA	826,079	\$4,252.55	\$1,393,773	4.4%	118.23	\$39,980	29.31
2	New York	NY	8,584,629	\$4,048.82	\$817,745	4.8%	112.47	\$40,666	38.18
3	San Jose	CA	989,814	\$3,413.24	\$1,438,450	4.3%	112.87	\$39,980	41.35
4	Boston	MA	672,973	\$3,454.01	\$786,208	4.2%	111.57	\$37,086	46.75
5	Miami	FL	489,812	\$2,996.81	\$581,864	3.3%	111.82	\$41,162	55.18
6	Seattle	WA	784,777	\$2,195.93	\$865,273	4.6%	112.99	\$38,139	57.60
7	Washington	DC	693,645	\$2,496.62	\$581,881	3.8%	108.64	\$55,846	61.15
8	Honolulu	HI	341,868	\$2,624.41	\$759,215	2.3%	110.24	\$40,496	61.27
9	Boulder	CO	105,689	\$2,420.73	\$971,332	4.0%	99.85	\$38,844	63.90
10	Chicago	IL	2,731,585	\$2,405.57	\$325,887	4.7%	102.55	\$40,774	65.42
11	Providence	RI	195,310	\$2,262.83	\$433,831	4.7%	100.86	\$34,068	67.17
12	Portland	OR	635,109	\$1,725.04	\$540,664	4.9%	106.61	\$39,499	68.08
13	Phoenix	AZ	1,665,481	\$1,577.44	\$411,563	3.8%	105.52	\$37,114	74.00
14	Minneapolis	MN	430,324	\$1,686.22	\$338,937	3.7%	104.50	\$35,594	74.25
15	Nashville	TN	721,074	\$1,810.18	\$436,519	3.0%	97.43	\$38,664	78.26

Student loan balance is state-level and is shown for context only. It is not included in the Graduate Affordability Score.