

How We Compare

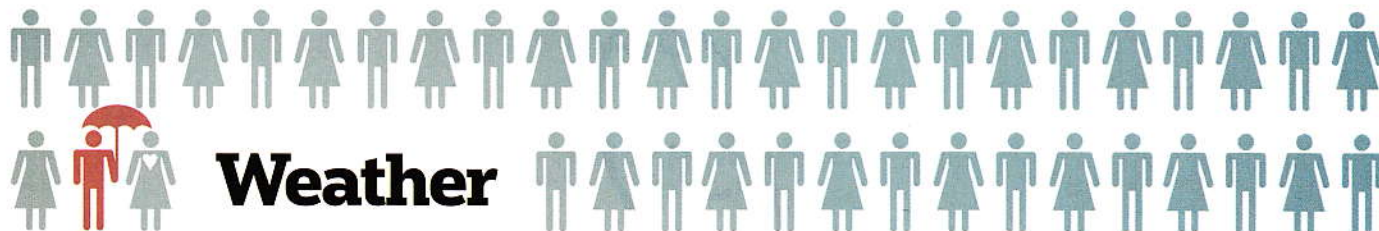
How Chicago ranks against the country's four other largest cities in everything from auto thefts to golf courses, Fortune 500 companies to sunny days

Not too many years

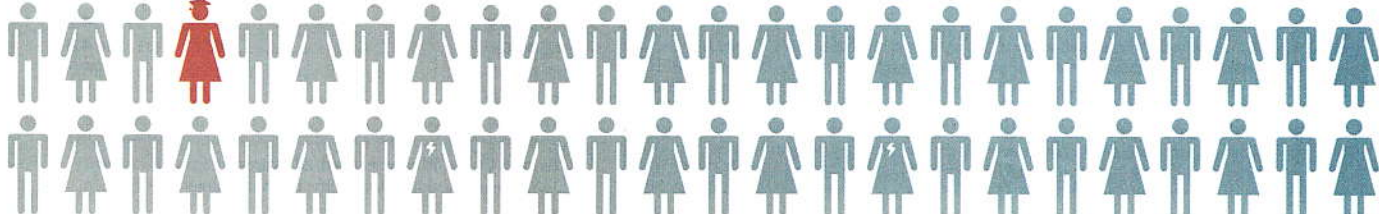
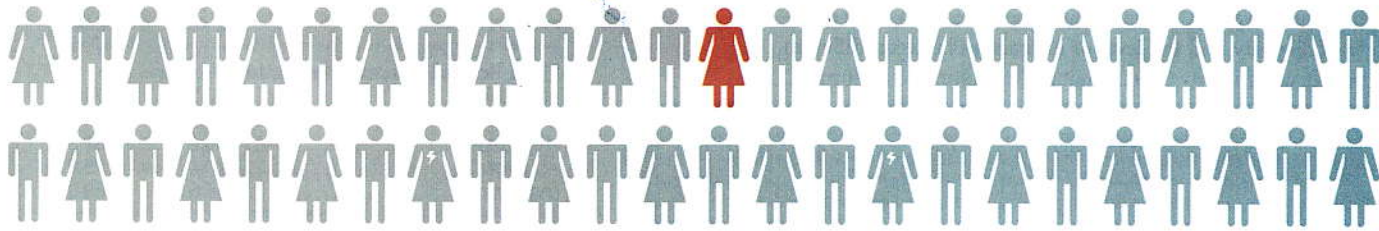
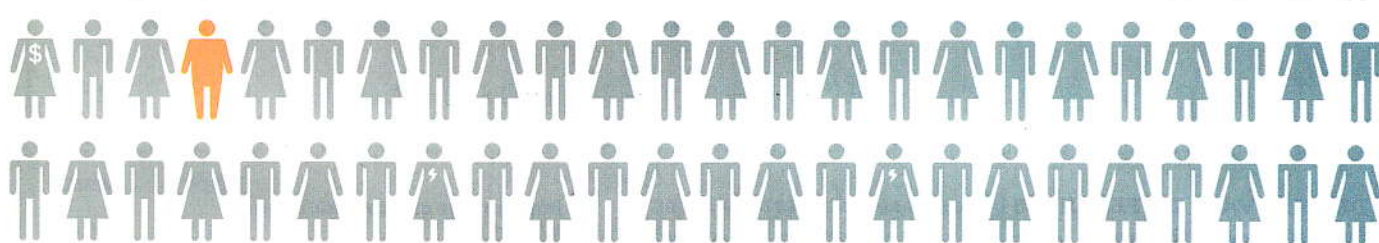
ago, an experienced linguist could listen to a local news broadcast and guess by the announcer's accent where the show originated. That's probably unlikely today. The relentless mobility of Americans and the booming mass media, among other things, have scoured many of the regional distinctions across the country. With that in mind, we thought it would be interesting to see how the nation's five biggest cities—New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia—compared across a range of business, social, and cultural categories. Most of the data we've used here refer to the cities themselves; in some instances (which we've indicated), we've looked at the larger metropolitan areas.

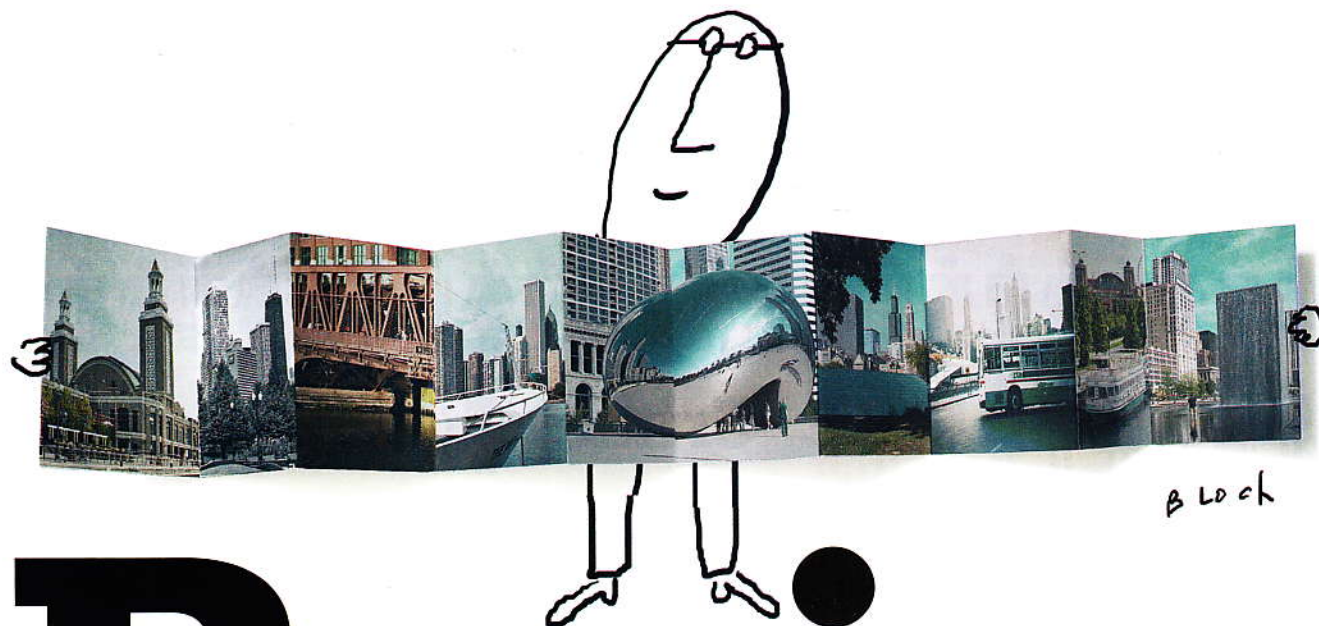
For the most part, we let the numbers and facts speak for themselves—you can decide what conclusions to draw. This isn't an exercise in trying to determine the *best* big city—a futile endeavor, given the vagaries of taste—or to bolster our hometown. Besides, everyone knows which city can claim a 2005 World Series champion.





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Basics

From population to public transportation to political leanings—here are the rudimentary facts that define the big U.S. metropolitan areas

DESPITE VAST DIFFERENCES in the sizes and locations of the country's five biggest cities, the profiles of their populations resemble one another in many ways. Median age is in the early 30s; household size is about the same; educational attainment is similar. Still, the numbers suggest some distinctions. Philadelphia has the largest percentage of African American residents; Houston has the fewest people over 65. Despite the vaunted traffic snarls in Los Angeles, residents there spend less time getting to work than people in Chicago. "These numbers tell us about the sheer size and influence of a city, as well as the scope of diversity within a city," says Kiljoong Kim, research director of the Egan Urban Center at DePaul University. "What we can't see in the data is the quality of diversity and the level of interaction between different people within a city. That's what makes culture so important."

>> The national average household size is 2.59 persons.

>>WHAT IS A METRO AREA? The U.S. government has frequently redefined what constitutes a metropolitan area—which means that the official boundaries have changed often. To cite the most recent example: the information from the 2000 census was assembled under a definition that has now been supplanted. For the data on this page (and, unless otherwise noted, throughout this feature), *Chicago* has used that earlier definition (the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area, or PMSA). For metropolitan Chicago, the 2000 PMSA included the following counties: Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. To find the components of other metropolitan areas used here, go to www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/99mflips.txt. Market research firms, such as Experian, report their data based on "designated market areas" that are similar but not identical to the metropolitan areas used by the U.S. Census Bureau. Most of the cultural data supplied in these pages rely on that marketing definition. Finally, in two instances—top high schools and Fortune 500 headquarters—*Chicago* has created its own informal definition, a region within about a 50-mile circumference of the primary city.

	CITY	METRO
Median Age of Population (years)		
PHILADELPHIA	34.2	36.4
NEW YORK	34.2	34.6
LOS ANGELES	31.6	32.0
CHICAGO	31.5	33.7
HOUSTON	30.9	31.6

>> National median age—35.3

	CITY	METRO
Average Household Size (number of persons)		
LOS ANGELES	2.83	2.98
HOUSTON	2.67	2.82
CHICAGO	2.67	2.73
NEW YORK	2.59	2.61
PHILADELPHIA	2.48	2.58

	CITY	METRO
High-School Graduate or Better (% of population)		
NEW YORK	72.3	74.0
CHICAGO	71.8	81.0
PHILADELPHIA	71.2	82.2
HOUSTON	70.4	75.9
LOS ANGELES	66.6	69.9

	CITY	METRO
Language Not English Spoken in Home (%)		
LOS ANGELES	57.8	54.1
NEW YORK	47.6	44.8
CHICAGO	35.5	26.5
HOUSTON	17.9	33.4
PHILADELPHIA	17.7	12.3

Source: Unless otherwise noted, all figures are from the 2000 U.S. census. Rankings are by city; metro rankings may differ.

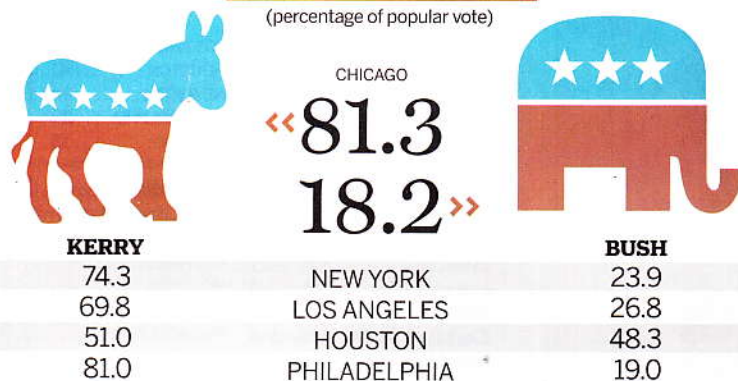
Total Population

■ CITY ■ METRO >> One figure = 250,000 people



2004 Presidential Election

(percentage of popular vote)



Sources: Local election boards

	CITY	METRO
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)		
NEW YORK	40.0	38.9
CHICAGO	35.2	31.5
PHILADELPHIA	32.0	28.7
LOS ANGELES	29.6	29.4
HOUSTON	27.4	29.0

	CITY	METRO
Public Transportation Use (% of population)		
NEW YORK	52.8	47.0
CHICAGO	26.1	12.5
PHILADELPHIA	25.4	9.7
LOS ANGELES	10.2	6.6
HOUSTON	5.9	3.6

	CITY	METRO
Population per square mile (number of people—metro)		
LOS ANGELES	7,068	
NEW YORK	5,309	
CHICAGO	3,913	
HOUSTON	2,951	
PHILADELPHIA	2,861	

	CITY	METRO
Area (square miles—city)		
HOUSTON	579.4	
LOS ANGELES	469.1	
NEW YORK	303.3	
CHICAGO	227.1	
PHILADELPHIA	135.1	

	CITY	METRO
Population over 65 (%)		
Philadelphia	13.6	
New York	11.7	
Chicago	10.3	
Los Angeles	9.7	
Houston	8.4	

>> Highest percentage among U.S. cities: Clearwater, Florida, 21.5

Population Growth 1990-2000

(% of increase—city)

	CITY	METRO
HOUSTON	15.1	
NEW YORK	9.4	
LOS ANGELES	6.0	
CHICAGO	4.0	
PHILADELPHIA	-4.3	

>> Highest growth rate among U.S. cities: Gilbert, Arizona, with 265%

Weekday Population Change (% of increase)

	CITY	METRO
HOUSTON	20.6	
NEW YORK	7.0	
PHILADELPHIA	5.9	
CHICAGO	4.9	
LOS ANGELES	3.5	

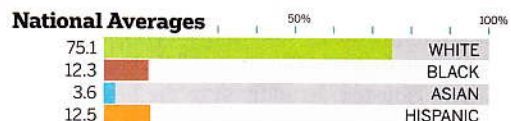
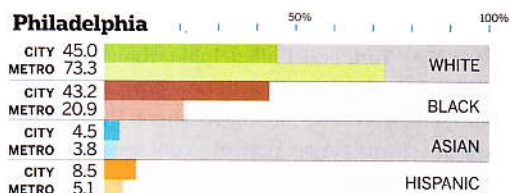
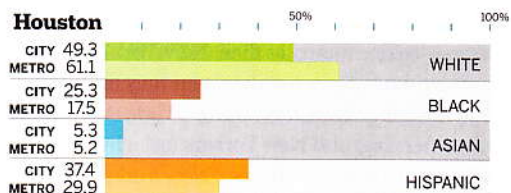
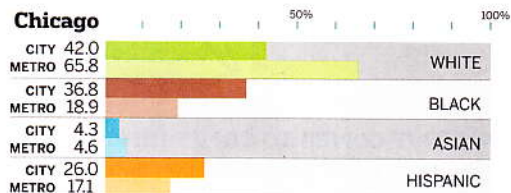
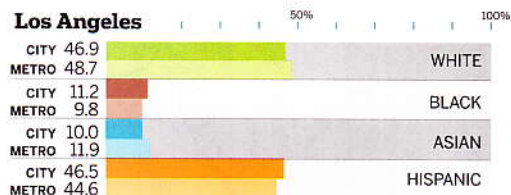
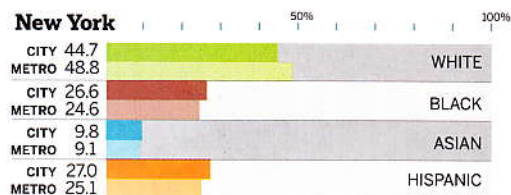
One Person in Household (% of homes)

	CITY	METRO
Philadelphia	33.8	
Chicago	32.6	
New York	31.9	
Houston	29.6	
Los Angeles	28.5	

>> Highest percentage among U.S. cities: Washington, D.C., 43.8

Race

(percentage of population)



>> Because some racial categories can overlap, the figures may add up to more than 100%.

Weather

Chicago is the coldest and grayest of the big U.S. cities, and Houston the rainiest, while heavenly L.A. is warm, sunny—and still smoggy



WHEN IT COMES TO COMPARING climates, it's hard to make a case for Chicago. "We have an appreciation for nice weather that's lost on Californians," says WGN-TV's chief meteorologist, Tom Skilling. Nice try, Tom.

Chicago ranks as the coldest of America's biggest cities, averaging about five degrees colder annually than New York and Philadelphia. Chicago temperatures hit freezing on 132 days, and they drop below five degrees Fahrenheit 20 days annually, on average. In New York, only 73 days fall below freezing, and New Yorkers feel a five-degree chill only about once per winter. "New Yorkers have never seen cold like we've got in Chicago," says Skilling.

Chicago also experiences many more snowy days than New York and Philadelphia, though, as Skilling points out, the East Coast snowstorms are typically more severe. It rains slightly less here. By contrast, Los Angeles seems almost perfect—cool ocean breezes, sunshine practically year-round, more than half the days warmer than 70, yet only five per year above 90. Still, Skilling reports that though ozone pollution in the Los Angeles region is improving, the area remains, along with Houston, one of the worst in the nation (not that Chicago is all that much better).

Ah, Houston. In addition to the high levels of smog, fog, and air pollution—and the most rain among the five cities—that Texas town contends with 96 days of temperatures above 90. Chicago averages about 17.

>> Experts say this accounts for the relatively high rate of SAD (seasonal affective disorder, or the winter blues) among Chicagoans.

Average Annual Temperatures (°F)

HOUSTON	68.8
LOS ANGELES	62.5
NEW YORK	54.7
PHILADELPHIA	54.7
CHICAGO	49.3

Record Highs and Lows (°F)

	HIGH	LOW
LOS ANGELES	110	16
HOUSTON	109	7
NEW YORK	106	-15
CHICAGO	104	-27
PHILADELPHIA	104	-7

Comfort Index (afternoon summer temperature and humidity; higher = better)

LOS ANGELES	43
CHICAGO	33
NEW YORK	31
PHILADELPHIA	31
HOUSTON	8

Average Annual Wind Speed (mph)

NEW YORK	12.2
CHICAGO	10.3
PHILADELPHIA	9.5
HOUSTON	7.6
LOS ANGELES	7.5

Average Number of Sunny Days per Year

LOS ANGELES	258
NEW YORK	232
PHILADELPHIA	205
HOUSTON	203
CHICAGO	197
NATIONAL AVERAGE	213

Average Annual Precipitation (inches)

	RAIN	SNOW
HOUSTON	46.9	0.1
PHILADELPHIA	46.7	23.0
NEW YORK	43.4	26.0
CHICAGO	35.6	39.0
LOS ANGELES	14.6	0.1
NAT. AVERAGE	34.6	24.3

Average Temperatures

(°F. January data reflect the average low temperature; July data reflect the average high)

	JAN.	JULY
LOS ANGELES	48	83
HOUSTON	41	93
NEW YORK	24	86
PHILADELPHIA	23	85
CHICAGO	15	83

UV Index (exposure to sun's ultraviolet rays, where 10 = greatest risk)

LOS ANGELES	6.2
HOUSTON	6.1
NEW YORK	3.8
PHILADELPHIA	3.8
CHICAGO	3.6

Air Quality Number of days unhealthy for sensitive groups / days unhealthy for general population (city—2005)

LOS ANGELES	38 / 3
HOUSTON	29 / 6
PHILADELPHIA	28 / 0
CHICAGO	20 / 2
NEW YORK	17 / 2

>> Recent research suggests that Chicago's notorious lake effect breezes increase air pollution in the city.

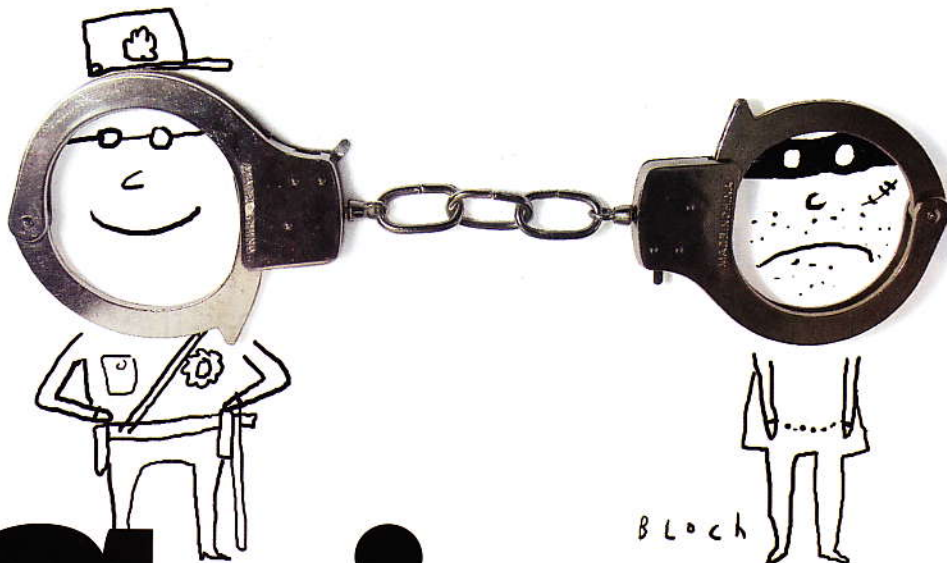
Water Quality

Using data provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Reader's Digest* rated water quality in 2005 for metro areas across the country. (50 = best)

HOUSTON	39
LOS ANGELES	38
PHILADELPHIA	22
CHICAGO	6
NEW YORK	2

>> According to the study, the quality of the water in the city of Chicago is excellent, but poor water quality in outlying areas brought down the metro score.

Sources: Argonne National Laboratory, Loyola University Chicago, National Climatic Data Center, *Reader's Digest*, Sperling's Best Places (2005), U.S. EPA



Crime

Murders are down, but the murder rate remains high in Chicago—still the crime capital among the largest U.S. cities

CHICAGO IS SAFER than it's been in a long time—overall crime has dropped for ten years straight, and by nearly a third in that time. But the city still has the dubious honor of being the crime capital of the five biggest cities.

In 2004, murders here hit a 38-year low. Yet Chicago's murder rate (the number of homicides per 100,000 people) is more than double that of New York and surpasses Los Angeles and Houston. Only Philadelphia's rate tops Chicago's. "If you look at the big picture, L.A. and New York are doing better," says Arthur Lurigio, a professor of criminal justice and psychology at Loyola University Chicago. "We're trying to catch up, but we have a long way to go."

Wesley Skogan, a criminologist at Northwestern University, says reducing violent crime in Chicago hasn't been easy, mainly because Chicago's gangs are so firmly entrenched. Although domestic and other kinds of killings have declined practically everywhere, gang violence is "a tougher nut to crack," says Skogan. "And Chicago has always been blessed with big, tough, nasty ones."

Progress, however, has been encouraging: the number of murders here dropped by more than 25 percent from 2003 to 2004—a "sea change" for any big city, says Lurigio. As 2005 wound down, however, the murder rate seemed to have leveled off. From January through November 2004, there were 418 murders in Chicago; through the first 11 months of 2005, there were 415.

Per capita, Chicago is second only to Houston in property crimes and to Los Angeles in assault. Philadelphia tops out in robberies and Houston in burglaries. In general, crime in Philly and Houston has not declined as dramatically as it has here, says Skogan.

So the crime news isn't so bad for Chicago. "I think overall it's a fairly safe city, given its size," Lurigio says.

>> The number of gang-related murders in Chicago fell from 242 in 2003 to 160 in 2004.

Murders (2004)

NEW YORK	570
LOS ANGELES	518
CHICAGO	448
PHILADELPHIA	330
HOUSTON	272

Murder Rate (per

100,000 population, 2004)	
PHILADELPHIA	22.2
CHICAGO	15.5
LOS ANGELES	13.4
HOUSTON	13.3
NEW YORK	7.0

Robbery Rate (per

100,000 population, 2004)	
PHILADELPHIA	657.4
CHICAGO	552.0
HOUSTON	498.3
LOS ANGELES	367.0
NEW YORK	300.9

Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Illinois Department of Corrections, local police departments, New York State Division of Parole. N/A = no answer (due to differences in tallying data)

>> The most commonly stolen car in all five cities is the Toyota Camry. Second on Chicago's list is the Oldsmobile Cutlass—even though General Motors stopped making Oldsmobiles in April 2004.

Auto Thefts (2004)

LOS ANGELES	29,973
CHICAGO	22,799
HOUSTON	21,563
NEW YORK	21,072
PHILADELPHIA	12,587

Burglary Rate (per

100,000 population, 2004)	
HOUSTON	1,326.7
CHICAGO	847.4
PHILADELPHIA	709.9
LOS ANGELES	599.9
NEW YORK	322.2

Firearms Seized/Recovered (2004)

CHICAGO	10,509
LOS ANGELES	8,459
PHILADELPHIA	5,044
HOUSTON	3,021
NEW YORK	N/A

Parolees in the City

NEW YORK	24,232
CHICAGO	16,042
HOUSTON	14,784
PHILADELPHIA	8,784
LOS ANGELES	N/A

Sex Offenders on Parole

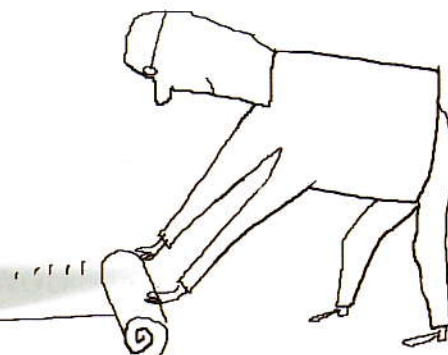
NEW YORK	648
HOUSTON	575
CHICAGO	452
PHILADELPHIA	423
LOS ANGELES	N/A

Number of Sworn Police Officers

NEW YORK	36,400
CHICAGO	13,500
LOS ANGELES	9,220
PHILADELPHIA	6,600
HOUSTON	4,720

Economy

Of the top five cities, Philadelphia has the greatest percentage of homeowners, Houston has the least expensive homes and the priciest property taxes, and Chicago rules as the nation's bankruptcy capital



THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA has the world's 16th largest economy—roughly the size of Australia's. Los Angeles (19th) ranks just below the United Kingdom. Chicago (23rd) falls just behind Sweden. In all, the five biggest American cities contribute 15 percent of the total gross domestic product of the United States. "All are big, large, mature economies that are doing fairly well right now," says Steven Cochrane, an economist at Moody's Economy.com, a research company.

New York's economy is fueled mainly by the banking, securities, and financial services industries. Businesses comprising several major professional services, namely advertising and law, also kick in. Los Angeles might be famous for Hollywood, but the city's economy is driven more by shipping and international financial services. Construction, defense, and aerospace industries also make up a big chunk of the city's economy. Chicago has the most diverse economy of the biggest cities, making it less volatile than the others. Of the big cities, Houston is the closest to being a one-industry town: energy, mainly oil and natural gas. The city is expected to get a substantial economic boost soon when Wal-Mart opens its largest U.S. warehousing and distribution center there. Philadelphia is a pharmaceutical and biotech manufacturing center. Health services and medical research are big, and construction and real estate are also vigorous there.

New York is by far the most expensive of the biggest cities, thanks mostly to whopping housing costs, which in Manhattan are about 134 percent higher than in Chicago. Bert Sperling, president of Sperling's Best Places, says people pay a premium to live in New York because "it's the center of the universe—at least to the people who live there." Among the biggest cities, the housing bargains are in Houston, where prices come in about 57 percent cheaper than in Chicago.

	CITY	METRO
Median Household Income		
NEW YORK	\$41,509	\$44,824
LOS ANGELES	40,682	45,958
CHICAGO	40,656	54,627
HOUSTON	37,483	46,252
PHILADELPHIA	30,631	51,980

Median Home Price (3rd quarter 2005)		
LOS ANGELES		\$553,200
NEW YORK		461,100
CHICAGO		274,700
PHILADELPHIA		230,600
HOUSTON		145,100

Homeownership Rate (%)		
PHILADELPHIA	53.1	68.9
HOUSTON	42.3	56.2
CHICAGO	41.3	66.5
LOS ANGELES	36.7	50.6
NEW YORK	28.7	45.7

Home Price Appreciation (% increase, 2nd quarter 2004 to 2nd quarter 2005)		
NEW YORK	15.57	15.57
PHILADELPHIA	15.41	15.62
CHICAGO	11.80	10.56
LOS ANGELES	10.20	25.55
HOUSTON	4.38	4.38
NATIONAL AVERAGE		13.62

Sources: Home prices, National Association of Realtors; all else, Sperling's Best Places (2005)



Number of Personal Bankruptcies (2004)

CHICAGO	45,789
NEW YORK	40,203
LOS ANGELES	33,796
HOUSTON	20,087
PHILADELPHIA	17,104

Property Tax Rate

(per \$1,000 of home value—metro)

HOUSTON	\$26.30
PHILADELPHIA	25.40
CHICAGO	20.70
NEW YORK	19.50
LOS ANGELES	10.60

Income Tax Rate

(combined state and city; % of \$50,000 income)

NEW YORK	10.5
PHILADELPHIA	7.8
LOS ANGELES	6.0
CHICAGO	3.0
HOUSTON	0.0
NATIONAL AVERAGE	4.6

Number of Fortune 500 Company Headquarters (metro)

NEW YORK	73
CHICAGO	30
LOS ANGELES	22
HOUSTON	21
PHILADELPHIA	16

» After Seattle, where Starbucks was founded, Chicago was the second U.S. market to get a Starbucks. It opened in the Gold Coast in 1987, where baristas helped create the Gold Coast Blend—now served nationwide.

Number of Starbucks Coffee Shops (city)

NEW YORK	106
HOUSTON	100
CHICAGO	72
LOS ANGELES	56
PHILADELPHIA	7



Number of McDonald's Restaurants (city)

NEW YORK	187
CHICAGO	129
HOUSTON	121
LOS ANGELES	80
PHILADELPHIA	51

Gross Metro Product (in billions, 2004)

NEW YORK	\$558.6
LOS ANGELES	401.5
CHICAGO	321.6
HOUSTON	226.7
PHILADELPHIA	153.1

» Economically, Los Angeles has outperformed the other biggest cities since 2001.



Total Retail Sales (metro, in billions)

NEW YORK	\$256.06
LOS ANGELES	185.44
CHICAGO	129.21
PHILADELPHIA	98.93
HOUSTON	85.39

Auto Insurance

(average annual premium for mid-size sedan)

PHILADELPHIA	\$1,960
NEW YORK	1,640
LOS ANGELES	1,450
HOUSTON	1,270
CHICAGO	1,190
NATIONAL AVERAGE	825

Tourism (2004)

MOST POPULAR ATTRACTION

NEW YORK	Central Park (25 million visitors)
CHICAGO	Navy Pier (8.75 million)
LOS ANGELES	Universal Studios Hollywood (5 million)
PHILADELPHIA	Liberty Bell Center (1.8 million)
HOUSTON	Space Center (705,000)

» AstroWorld, an amusement park near the Astrodome, was Houston's most popular tourist attraction until it was shut down last November.



Most Valuable Sports Franchise (2004, in millions)

	VALUE	REVENUES
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES	\$952	\$216
NEW YORK YANKEES	950	264
HOUSTON TEXANS	946	215
CHICAGO BEARS	871	193
LOS ANGELES LAKERS	510	170

» According to Forbes, the most valuable U.S. sports franchise is the Washington Redskins football team, with an estimated value of \$1.264 billion and estimated revenues of \$287 million.

Cost of Living

Salaries

If your salary in Chicago was \$50,000 or \$100,000, here's what you would need to earn elsewhere to have equal buying power:

\$50,000 \$100,000

NY (MANHATTAN)	\$81,197	NY (MANHATTAN)	\$162,394
NY (QUEENS)	52,609	NY (QUEENS)	105,219
LOS ANGELES	60,015	LOS ANGELES	120,031
HOUSTON	33,768	HOUSTON	67,536
PHILADELPHIA	45,549	PHILADELPHIA	91,097

Spending

Here's how spending for some common commodities and services in the other biggest cities exceeds or falls below the costs for those same items in Chicago.



Housing

NY (MANHATTAN)	+133.66%
NY (QUEENS)	+4.70
LOS ANGELES	+51.93
HOUSTON	-56.57
PHILADELPHIA	-25.15



Utilities

NY (MANHATTAN)	+37.78%
NY (QUEENS)	+28.83
LOS ANGELES	+8.12
HOUSTON	-7.46
PHILADELPHIA	+19.03



Groceries

NY (MANHATTAN)	+12.07%
NY (QUEENS)	+2.79
LOS ANGELES	+6.08
HOUSTON	-29.37
PHILADELPHIA	-0.25



Transportation

NY (MANHATTAN)	+7.84%
NY (QUEENS)	+10.98
LOS ANGELES	+5.90
HOUSTON	-4.89
PHILADELPHIA	-0.74



Health Care

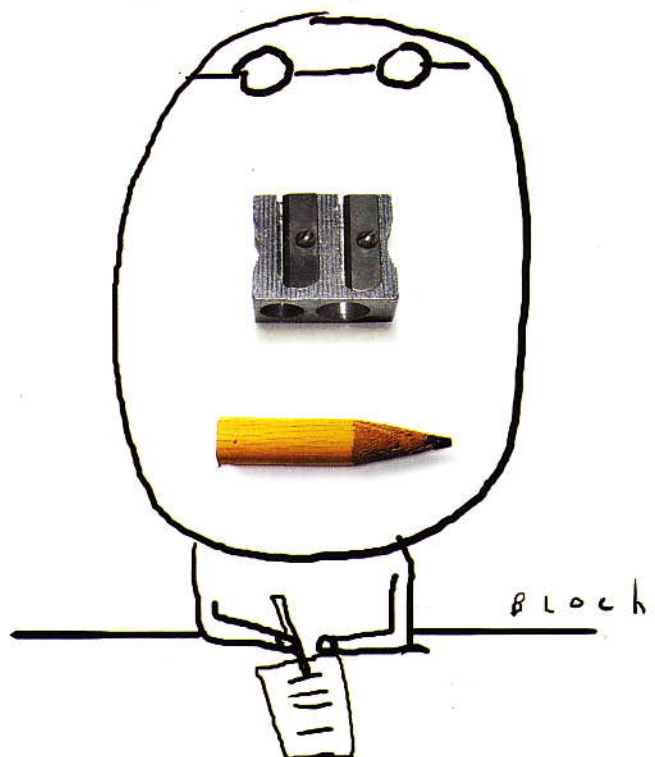
NY (MANHATTAN)	+10.64%
NY (QUEENS)	-19.33
LOS ANGELES	-17.86
HOUSTON	-20.50
PHILADELPHIA	-18.25

Sources: Forbes (2005), Fortune (April 2005), local tourist boards, McDonald's Corp. (November 2005), Moody's Economy.com, Sales & Marketing Management (2004), Sperling's Best Places (2005)

Source: ACCRA Council for Community and Economic Research (CNN/Money)

Education

Though Chicago's public schools have improved, they are not yet in the top tier of U.S. educational systems



EACH YEAR SINCE 2002, the Los Angeles-based Broad Foundation has distributed \$1 million among five big-city school systems that have made standout progress in educating students. Houston won in 2002, and New York City was a finalist in 2005. Chicago has yet to advance that far. "We're looking forward to the day when Chicago is in contention to be a finalist," says Dan Katzir, managing director of the Broad Foundation. "They're doing some great work there."

Chicago has come a long way since it was named the nation's worst public school system 15 years ago. Overall school size ranks in the middle among the big cities, and more than a dozen specialized charter schools have sprung up around the city. A handful of high-achievement college prep high schools have opened, four of the top ten high schools in the state are in Chicago, and last year, almost 50 percent of the city's grade school students were at or above the state standards in reading. "There are some terrific Chicago schools," says Glenn "Max" McGee, superintendent of Wilmette's District 39. "But the challenges [compared with the suburbs] are very different."

Educators say that there is no good comparative measure of all U.S. metro-area schools. But by one very specific measure—*Newsweek's* ranking of the country's top high schools—the New York metropolitan area came out far ahead of the other biggest cities.

By way of contrast with suburban districts, New Trier Township High School spends \$14,500 per student, and Oak Park & River Forest spends \$14,000.

Public School Student Enrollment K-12 (city)

NEW YORK	1,100,000
LOS ANGELES	747,000
CHICAGO	436,000
HOUSTON	212,000
PHILADELPHIA	193,000

>> Nationally, the five largest school districts are New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and two in Florida: Miami-Dade and Broward County.



Private School Popularity

(% of students enrolled in private schools—city)

PHILADELPHIA	23
NEW YORK	18
CHICAGO	17
LOS ANGELES	12
HOUSTON	7

Students Enrolled in Public Schools Who Are White (%—city)

NEW YORK	15
PHILADELPHIA	15
CHICAGO	9
HOUSTON	9
LOS ANGELES	9

Spending per Pupil on Public Schools (city)

NEW YORK	\$11,900
LOS ANGELES	8,300
PHILADELPHIA	8,000
CHICAGO	7,800
HOUSTON	6,900

School Size (average number of students—city)

LOS ANGELES	1,221
NEW YORK	902
CHICAGO	745
PHILADELPHIA	739
HOUSTON	733

Nation's Report Card Ranking: 4th Grade Reading (city)

NEW YORK	#3
HOUSTON	5
CHICAGO	7
LOS ANGELES (tie)	7

>> The National Assessment of Educational Progress is known as the Nation's Report Card; it allows comparisons between major cities on the same test. Philadelphia does not participate.

Nation's Report Card Ranking: 8th Grade Math (city)

NEW YORK	#3
HOUSTON	4
CHICAGO	5
LOS ANGELES (tie)	5

Number of Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools (metro)

NEW YORK	160
CHICAGO	82
LOS ANGELES	74
PHILADELPHIA	19
HOUSTON	18

Number of Schools on *Newsweek's* List of 1,062 Best High Schools (metro, 2004)*

NEW YORK	134
LOS ANGELES	95
CHICAGO	30
PHILADELPHIA	15
HOUSTON	14

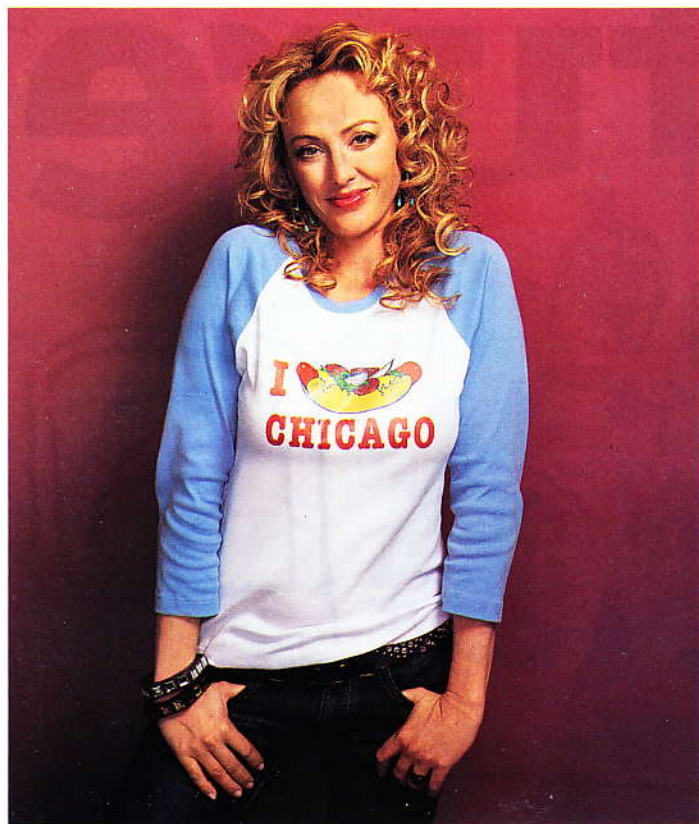
**Newsweek* explains that the rankings are based on "the number of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate tests taken by all students at a school in 2004 divided by the number of graduating seniors." Jay Matthews, the *Washington Post* education reporter who developed the *Newsweek* rankings, says the relatively low number of Chicago-area schools suggests that schools here "follow what you could call the New Trier model—restricting AP access to students with very good grades in previous courses." Hence, fewer AP tests are taken.

Sources: CNN/Money; *The Nation's Report Card* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005); *Newsweek.com*; *School Matters* (Standard & Poor's, 2004); U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Education

Looking Sideways at Chicago

Virginia Madsen compares the Windy City and Los Angeles

THE CHICAGO-BORN actress Virginia Madsen left for Los Angeles more than 20 years ago, but, at 42, she insists she's still a Windy City girl at heart. Her dad, a retired Chicago firefighter, lives here, and Madsen returns regularly—most recently to show her son, Jack, the Christmas windows at Marshall Field's. And she still dreams of owning a brownstone in Old Town. Nominated for an Oscar for her costarring role in Alexander Payne's 2004 hit *Sideways*—where she was love-matched with Paul Giamatti (below)—Madsen will soon be seen as Harrison Ford's wife in the thriller *Firewall* and as the Dangerous Woman in the Robert Altman version of *A Prairie Home Companion*. She recently spoke to Alexander Russo from Los Angeles.



Q: So, what are you—a South Sider, or a North Sider?

A: A little bit of both. I was born in Mount Greenwood on the South Side of Chicago near Evergreen Park, but then we moved to Evanston. I went to Noyes [Elementary School] and then we moved to Winnetka and I went to New Trier.

Q: Did you ever do a stint living right in the city?

A: Right after high school, I moved to Old Town into a really cool Deco building and studied acting for three years and worked as an underage cocktail waitress at P.S. Chicago. It was horrible, but it was character building.

Q: How has Chicago changed since you lived here?

A: It's certainly expanded in terms of the skyline, but in

many ways it hasn't really changed. It's still a mecca for architects and artists... and theatre and music. The big change is that there is a lot better access to good food. Now, Chicago can really brag about the restaurants—instead of just the pizza.

Q: How would you compare Chicago to Los Angeles?

A: Well, Chicago has culture. There's not an awful lot of that available here. We do have the Getty [Museum] and [the Los Angeles County Museum of Art], but it's not the Art Institute. L.A. is all about hidden treasures; in Chicago it's at your fingertips.

Q: How about favorite foods and places to eat in Chicago?

A: I just love Jays potato chips. They are the best in the world.

I also love White Castle hamburgers, and pizza, and Boz hot dogs. I like a chili dog with cucumbers. There's also this little pizzeria [Rosangela's, in Evergreen Park]. My son goes back in the kitchen and they let him cook.

Q: Are there things you wish that Chicago had more—or less—of?

A: I wish there was more warm weather—and less wind. It's insane that the Chicago weather could be considered normal. People don't believe me that they string ropes between the buildings downtown. But that's why people are so nice in Chicago—they have a common enemy. I feel like cold weather people are generally much nicer to one another, maybe because they need each other for survival.

Q: Why do you think *Sideways* was so popular in Chicago?

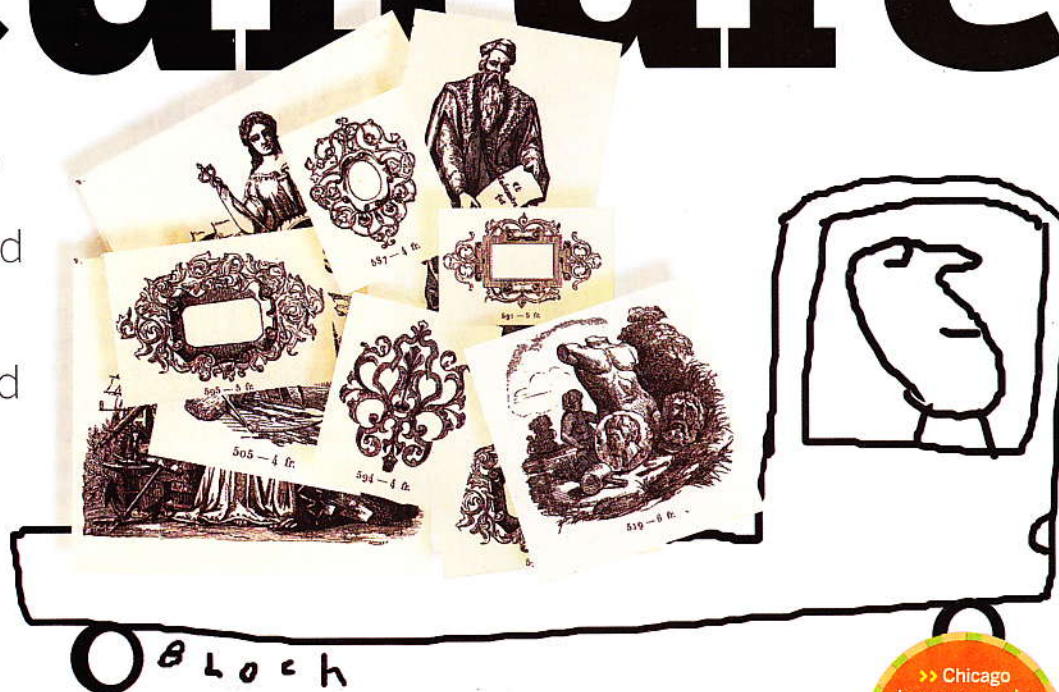
A: People from Chicago in my experience are great storytellers—my dad being the greatest of all time. *Sideways* was a good story about regular people, who looked like regular people. It was just a couple



of guys, going on a binge, meeting up with a couple of gals. Everybody can relate to that. They could share it with their best buddy as well as with their mom and dad. I don't think there are enough movies about that, about regular people. ■

Culture

Chicagoans love their theatre—and their bars—but on the whole, they'd rather be on the golf course



FOR ALL THE SAMENESS that TV and the Internet have spread over the land, differences remain as to how people like to spend their spare time and their recreational dollars. Despite the long winter months, Chicago has the largest number of public golf courses of all the major cities. If yoga's your thing, you're more likely to find a soulmate in New York. And far more people are surfing the Internet on the coasts than in Chicago.

Measuring the vibrancy of the cultural offerings is trickier. No city can compare with New York for dance troupes, for example. Andrew Patner, critic-at-large for WFMT, points out that Chicago has an extremely active theatre scene, featuring nearly 200 companies that put on two or more original shows a year. "Chicago, Hog Butcher to the World and all that, is really the theatre city," he says. But Cheryl Slover-Linett, a Chicago-based consultant to arts and cultural organizations, argues that for overall quantity and quality, there's no place that really compares with New York. Chicago is "probably more on par with L.A.," she says.

Rachel Shteir, a former New Yorker who heads the dramaturgy and criticism program at DePaul University, argues that—compared with New York—Chicago lacks some of the less tangible features of a vibrant cultural city. She finds fewer literary magazines, artistic quarrels, dinner parties, and good restaurants open late—a "necessity" for cultural life. She also thinks there's more conformity here, citing Chicago's successful effort to have everyone read the same book every year. "That didn't go over well in New York," she says.

Perhaps she can find solace on the corner—though far smaller in population, Chicago has only about 300 fewer bars than New York and almost twice as many as Los Angeles.

>> People in New York City buy nearly 7 percent of all albums of all kinds sold and 13 percent of all classical albums.

Number of Theatre Companies (metro, 2005)

NEW YORK	425
LOS ANGELES	210
CHICAGO	200
PHILADELPHIA	150
HOUSTON	113

>> These estimates include a variety of theatre organizations, including commercial, nonprofit, and even community theatre groups. Sources: Local theatre leagues and alliances

Number of Movie Theatres (metro)

NEW YORK	224
LOS ANGELES	215
CHICAGO	95
HOUSTON	63
PHILADELPHIA	60

Source: CNN/Money (2005)

Classical Record Sales (national ranking)

NEW YORK	1
LOS ANGELES	2
CHICAGO	3
PHILADELPHIA	4
HOUSTON	10

Source: SoundScan (Jan. 1 to Nov. 13, 2005)

>> Chicago dance companies named: Hubbard Street, Joffrey Ballet, Luna Negra, Mordine

Number of Major Dance Companies

NEW YORK	28
LOS ANGELES	4
CHICAGO	4
PHILADELPHIA	3
HOUSTON	2

Source: Dance/USA (2005)

Number of Libraries

(metro)	
NEW YORK	492
LOS ANGELES	257
CHICAGO	250
PHILADELPHIA	228
HOUSTON	109

Source: CNN/Money (2005)

Number of Museums

(metro)	
NEW YORK	37
PHILADELPHIA	18
CHICAGO	17
LOS ANGELES	16
HOUSTON	5

Source: CNN/Money (2005)

Number of Bars

New York	2,049
Chicago	1,748
Los Angeles	973
Houston	917
Philadelphia	747

Source: CNN/Money (2005)



1:1,657
CHICAGO



1:2,032
PHILADELPHIA



1:2,130
HOUSTON



1:3,797
LOS ANGELES



1:3,908
NEW YORK

Bars per Capita (city)

Best-Selling Books

>> While Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince reigned supreme in each of the biggest cities, there was some variance in sales (from January through November 2005) in the number-two slot at Amazon.com.

NEW YORK	<i>The World Is Flat</i>
LOS ANGELES	<i>You: The Owner's Manual</i>
CHICAGO	<i>Freakonomics</i>
PHILADELPHIA	<i>The World Is Flat</i>
HOUSTON	<i>The World Is Flat</i>

Number of Golf Courses (metro)

CHICAGO	262
LOS ANGELES	120
NEW YORK	113
PHILADELPHIA	104
HOUSTON	75

Source: CNN/Money (2005)



Residents Playing Team Sports (%-city)

CHICAGO	13
LOS ANGELES	10
NEW YORK	8
PHILADELPHIA	8
HOUSTON	6

Source: BIGResearch

>> Chicago's passion for 16-inch softball, as well as recreational leagues featuring everything from kickball to volleyball, make Chicago the team-sport capital.



Bowl (%)

PHILADELPHIA	24.6
CHICAGO	23.6
HOUSTON	23.1
NEW YORK	22.0
LOS ANGELES	20.4

Source: Experian

Participate in Yoga (%)

NEW YORK	10.7
LOS ANGELES	9.8
CHICAGO	9.7
HOUSTON	9.4
PHILADELPHIA	9.0

Source: Experian

Most Expensive Restaurants

(per person, exclusive of tip)

NEW YORK	Masa	\$366
CHICAGO	Alinea	\$192
PHILADELPHIA	Le Bec-Fin	\$120
LOS ANGELES	Bastide	\$101
HOUSTON	Tony's	\$64

Source: Forbes (2005)



Top-Rated TV Shows (Jan. to Oct. 2005)

NEW YORK	American Idol
LOS ANGELES	American Idol
CHICAGO	Desperate Housewives
HOUSTON	CSI
PHILADELPHIA	American Idol

>> Viewing differences are probably not aesthetic or cultural, says Ted Harbert, president and CEO of E Networks, but measures of the relative strengths of the local stations. In Chicago, the ABC affiliate WLS-TV, which carries Housewives, is particularly strong. Source: NielsenTV

Top Movie Rentals (Oct. 2004 to Oct. 2005)

NEW YORK	Ray, Hotel Rwanda, Collateral
LOS ANGELES	The Aviator, Hotel Rwanda, Collateral
CHICAGO	The Aviator, Sideways, Ray
HOUSTON	The Aviator, Collateral, Million Dollar Baby
PHILADELPHIA	The Aviator, Million Dollar Baby, Collateral

>> Chicago Tribune movie critic Michael Phillips says the popularity of Sideways here may suggest simply that Chicagoans have good taste and an affinity for flawed heroes. And see Virginia Madsen's theory, page 57. Source: Netflix

Internet Users/Time Spent Online per Month (metro)

	USERS	TIME ONLINE
NEW YORK	11.0 million	23 hours
LOS ANGELES	8.5 million	22 hours
CHICAGO	4.5 million	23 hours
PHILADELPHIA	3.9 million	21.5 hours
HOUSTON	2.7 million	22.5 hours

Sources: Nielsen/NetRatings (September 2005)

Most "Fun" Cities

(national rankings, 2003)

5	CHICAGO
22	PHILADELPHIA
26	LOS ANGELES
32	HOUSTON
41	NEW YORK

>> This ranking was done by the staffs of the game Cranium and Money magazine, using a variety of criteria, including the amount of a city's budget spent on recreation. Minneapolis-St. Paul ranked number one.



Match.com Members

NEW YORK	588,000
LOS ANGELES	475,000
CHICAGO	249,000
PHILADELPHIA	194,000
HOUSTON	141,000

Source: Match.com (Oct. 2005)

Don't Own a Car (%)

NEW YORK	20.0
PHILADELPHIA	12.0
CHICAGO	7.0
LOS ANGELES	6.0
HOUSTON	4.5

Source: BIGResearch

Overweight Residents

(% / 30-plus pounds)	
PHILADELPHIA	23.6
CHICAGO	22.5
HOUSTON	21.0
NEW YORK	20.0
LOS ANGELES	16.6

Source: Experian