

The best 35 countries to raise a family in 2020^[1]

THE BEST COUNTRIES FOR RAISING A FAMILY IN 2020

We ranked 35 OECD countries (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) to see which are the best for raising a family in 2020. We only used OECD countries because they have reliable data in a wide range of key topics useful for this study. Our definitive **"Raising a Family Index"** is comprised of 30 critical statistics from trusted international sources broken down into 6 categories identifying favorable conditions for raising a family. The categories include Safety, Happiness, Cost, Health, Education, and Time.

Please note: all data is based on country averages which means certain cities or regions within a country may be better or worse for raising a family. Additionally, all statistics are intended to measure the best qualities in each category for raising a family and do not necessarily reflect the best countries to live in overall. Lastly, all numbers are assuming you are a citizen or permanent resident of that country with an average local job, paying federal taxes and having the benefits of federal government policies.

	SAFETY INDEX		HAPPINESS INDEX		COST INDEX		HEALTH INDEX		EDUCATION INDEX		TIME INDEX		RAISING A FAMILY INDEX	GRADE
1 ICELAND	150	A+	193	A	105	A+	0	A+	439	B-	205	A-	1093.07	A+
2 NORWAY	99	B+	189	A-	109	A+	-1	A+	451	B+	244	A+	1090.50	A+
3 SWEDEN	103	A-	191	A	118	A+	-17	A+	456	B+	200	A-	1051.69	A+
4 FINLAND	115	A	179	A-	57	B	12	A+	468	A-	213	A-	1043.08	A+
5 LUXEMBOURG	131	A+	196	A	117	A+	-69	B	386	D	264	A+	1022.66	A+
6 DENMARK	120	A	196	A	100	A	-102	C-	466	A-	170	B	949.91	A
7 GERMANY	97	B+	191	A	58	B	-98	C	457	B+	210	A-	914.62	A-
8 AUSTRIA	109	A-	174	B+	47	B-	-92	C	419	C	238	A	896.63	B+
9 BELGIUM	97	B+	163	B+	47	B-	-87	C+	468	A-	154	B-	842.33	B+
10 CZECH REPUBLIC	112	A	79	D	55	B	-67	B	446	B	170	B	794.57	B+
11 NETHERLANDS	116	A	186	A-	-9	D+	-93	C	474	A	99	C-	772.18	B+
12 PORTUGAL	79	B-	161	B+	-32	D-	-75	B-	436	B-	193	B+	760.81	B
13 FRANCE	64	C+	164	B+	61	B+	-80	B-	435	B-	100	C	743.81	B
14 AUSTRALIA	89	B	174	B+	-77	F	-45	A-	472	A	114	C	742.54	B
15 SLOVENIA	110	A	95	D+	1	C	87	C+	481	A+	102	C	717.02	B-

15 SLOVENIA	119	A	95	D+	4	C-	-87	C+	484	A+	103	C	717.02	B
16 IRELAND	108	A-	184	A-	30	C+	-80	B-	458	B+	17	F	716.49	B
17 SPAIN	78	B-	172	B+	-3	D+	-76	B-	451	B+	86	C-	707.91	B
18 NEW ZEALAND	121	A	172	B+	-66	F	-79	B-	444	B	98	C-	688.86	B-
19 CANADA	93	B+	180	A-	-54	F	-53	B+	432	B-	39	D-	637.54	B-
20 POLAND	80	B	58	D-	-27	D	-121	D	458	B+	179	B	626.96	B-
21 HUNGARY	39	D+	39	F	50	B-	-144	F	422	C+	206	A-	611.57	B-
22 SWITZERLAND	107	A-	88	D+	-46	F	-88	C+	438	B-	97	C-	596.07	B-
23 UNITED KINGDOM	88	B	190	A	-64	F	-92	C	429	C+	26	D-	576.94	B-
24 ITALY	71	B-	84	D	34	C+	-98	C	422	C+	61	D+	574.02	C+
25 JAPAN	103	A-	29	F	-53	F	-121	D	470	A	138	F	567.78	C+
26 ISRAEL	-1	F	169	B+	13	C	-108	C-	369	F	75	D	516.51	C
27 SLOVAK REPUBLIC	79	B-	73	D	-1	D+	-136	D-	408	C-	75	D-	497.52	C
28 SOUTH KOREA	65	C+	-2	F	-62	F	-109	C-	471	A	118	C	481.97	C-
29 GREECE	30	D	61	D-	-6	D+	-123	D	436	B-	85	C-	481.71	C-
30 ROMANIA	62	C+	65	D-	-71	F	-240	F	397	D+	163	B	376.28	D+
31 BULGARIA	53	C	23	F	-118	F	-219	F	397	D+	166	B	301.62	D+
32 TURKEY	-36	F	48	F	-6	D+	-236	F	425	C+	62	D+	255.88	D
33 CHILE	49	C-	28	F	-60	F	-235	F	408	C-	34	D-	222.99	D-
34 UNITED STATES	-81	F	132	C+	-124	F	-130	D-	430	C+	-93	F	132.40	F
35 MEXICO	-136	F	40	F	-120	F	-416	F	346	F	-44	F	-279.56	F

SAFETY INDEX

HAPPINESS INDEX

COST INDEX

HEALTH INDEX

EDUCATION INDEX

TIME INDEX

RAISING A FAMILY INDEX

SAFETY THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES*

NI

HOMICIDE RATE
Per 100,000 people

LAW & ORDER INDEX
Gallup's global gauge of people's sense of personal security

GLOBAL PEACE INDEX
In terms of safety and security, ongoing conflict, and militarisation.






NUMBER OF SCHOOL SHOOTINGS
From 2009-2018 per 10 million people

HUMAN RIGHTS
Measuring the degree to which governments protect and respect human rights

SAFETY INDEX








ADE






RA		(Lower is better)	(Higher is better)	(Lower is better)	(Lower is better)	(Higher is better)		GR
	① ICELAND	0.73	85	1.07	0	4.94	150.89	A+
	② NEW ZEALAND	1.34	84	1.22	0	3.45	130.62	A+
	③ DENMARK	0.81	90	1.32	0	3.04	119.79	A
	④ SLOVENIA	0.98	89	1.36	0	3.16	118.70	A
	⑤ NETHERLANDS	0.73	93	1.54	0	4.00	115.87	A

*Luxembourg was omitted from this section due to missing data concerning the Global Peace Index.

THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES

	① MEXICO	34.1	60	2.60	0.62	-1.42	-135.89	F
	② UNITED STATES	6.12	83	2.40	8.70	0.24	-80.78	F
	③ TURKEY	2.12	76	3.02	0.12	-1.62	-35.86	F
	④ ISRAEL	2.09	81	2.74	0.00	-1.06	-1.45	F
	⑤ GREECE	1.25	78	1.93	0.96	0.72	29.71	D

HAPPINESS THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES

RANK		HUMAN FREEDOM INDEX Measures human freedom as the absence of coercive constraint (Higher is better)	WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX Measuring how happy citizens perceive themselves to be (Higher is better)	SUICIDE RATES Per 100,000 people (Lower is better)	LGBTQ+ ADOPTION RECOGNITION LAWS Measuring legal discrimination of LGBTQ+ families	FAMILY INCOME INEQUALITY Measuring the national income gap for families (Lower is better)	HAPPINESS INDEX ↓	GRADE
	① DENMARK	8.56	7.60	9.4	Joint & 2nd Parent Adoption	29.0	196.15	A
	② LUXEMBOURG	8.56	7.09	7.2	Joint & 2nd Parent Adoption	30.4	195.63	A
	③ ICELAND	8.41	7.49	9.7	Joint & 2nd Parent Adoption	28.0	193.55	A
	④ SWEDEN	8.50	7.34	11.4	Joint & 2nd Parent Adoption	24.9	191.37	A
	⑤ GERMANY	8.53	6.99	9.5	Joint & 2nd Parent Adoption	27	191.20	A







THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES

	① SOUTH KOREA	8.20	5.90	23	No rights	35.7	-2.47	F
	② CHILE	8.15	6.44	10.7	No rights	50.5	22.62	F
	③ JAPAN	8.28	5.89	14.9	No rights	37.9	28.20	F
	④ HUNGARY	7.65	5.76	15.1	No rights	28.2	29.17	F






 5 MEXICO	6.65	6.60	5.5	No rights	48.2	38.77	F
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COST

THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES

RANK		% OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME TOWARD NET CHILD CARE COSTS For a couple with an average wage (Lower is better)	PUBLIC SPENDING ON FAMILY BENEFITS E.g child care support and tax credits by % of GDP (Higher is better)	PRIVATE SPENDING ON EDUCATION From elementary through college by % of GDP (Lower is better)	OUT-OF-POCKET HEALTH SPENDING Per capita in USD (Lower is better)	PURCHASING POWER INDEX Cost of living vs. monthly income relative to the USA (Higher is better)	 COST INDEX	GRADE
 1 SWEDEN		5%	3.54%	0.18%	\$788	86.3	117.82	A+
 2 LUXEMBOURG		5%	3.37%	0.10%	\$544	100.8	116.57	A+
 3 NORWAY		8%	3.26%	0.09%	\$950	97.9	109.40	A+
 4 ICELAND		5%	3.40%	0.28%	\$744	79.7	104.71	A+
 5 DENMARK		11%	3.44%	0.10%	\$729	80.5	99.87	A







THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES*

 1 UNITED STATES	23%	0.64%	1.98%	\$1,150	100	-124.45	F
 2 NEW ZEALAND	36%	2.49%	1.61%	\$694	60.8	-66.46	F
 3 UNITED KINGDOM	38%	3.47%	1.91%	\$717	65.4	-64.49	F
 4 SOUTH KOREA	3%	1.18%	1.67%	\$1064	51.1	-62.60	F
 5 AUSTRALIA	23%	2.41%	2.00%	\$845	78.9	-61.21	F

*Mexico, Bulgaria, and Romania were omitted from this section due to missing data concerning childcare costs and public spending benefits.


HEALTH

THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES

RANK		MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE Deaths per 100,000 live births (Lower is better)	UNDER-FIVE CHILD MORTALITY RATE Deaths per 1,000 children (Lower is better)	UNMET DEMAND FOR FAMILY PLANNING Measures likelihood of unwanted pregnancies (Lower is better)	AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE Percent of population exposed above W.H.O. limits (Lower is better)	LIFE EXPECTANCY At birth in years (Higher is better)	 HEALTH INDEX	GRADE
 1 FINLAND		3	1.70	8%	0.0%	81.91	11.80	A+
 2 ICELAND		3	1.96	10%	0.0%	82.99	0.24	A+
 3 NORWAY		5	2.54	6%	6.1%	82.40	-1.40	A+
 4 SWEDEN		4	2.71	10%	0.0%	82.80	-16.98	A+
 5 AUSTRALIA		6	3.69	11%	0.9%	83.44	-45.50	A-







THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES

THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES

 1 MEXICO	38	12.73	13%	99.9%	75.05	-365.57	F
 2 ROMANIA	31	7.28	10%	100%	76.05	-240.31	F
 3 TURKEY	16	10.60	5.90%	100%	77.69	-236.28	F
 4 CHILE	22	7.19	13%	99.9%	80.18	-235.38	F
 5 BULGARIA	11	7.06	14%	100%	75.05	-219.33	F






EDUCATION

THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES*

EDUCATION THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES*		ENROLLMENT RATE AMONG STUDENTS Aged 15 to 19 (Higher is better)	ENROLLMENT RATE AMONG STUDENTS Aged 20 to 24 (Higher is better)	READING PERFORMANCE Of 15-year-olds International Student Assessment (Higher is better)	MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE Of 15-year-olds International Student Assessment (Higher is better)	SCIENCE PERFORMANCE Of 15-year-olds International Student Assessment (Higher is better)	EDUCATION INDEX	GRADE
RANK								
	1 SLOVENIA	93.4%	59.8%	495	509	502	484.42	A+
	2 NETHERLANDS	93.1%	53.9%	485	519	499	473.65	A
	3 AUSTRALIA	90.0%	55.6%	503	491	504	472.33	A
	4 SOUTH KOREA	87.4%	49.5%	514	526	521	471.36	A
	5 FINLAND	86.5%	50.9%	520	507	510	468.23	A

*Japan was omitted from this section due to missing data concerning enrollment rates.

THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES*

 1 MEXICO	61.1%	25.9%	420	409	424	345.72	F
 2 ISRAEL	66.0%	21.5%	470	463	452	368.64	F
 3 LUXEMBOURG	76.3%	20.3%	470	483	475	385.58	D
 4 CHILE	80.9%	43.5%	452	417	445	407.58	C-
 5 SLOVAK REPUBLIC	83.4%	32.0%	458	486	461	408.23	C-

*Romania and Bulgaria were omitted from this section due to missing data concerning academic performance.

TIME

THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES

TIME INDEX

THE 5 BEST COUNTRIES

RANK

LUXEMBOURG

HOURS WORKED PER WORKER
In a year
(Lower is better)

1 506

PAID MATERNITY LEAVE
In weeks based on full-pay equivalent
(Higher is better)

31.6

PAID PATERNITY LEAVE
In weeks based on full-pay equivalent
(Higher is better)

13.6

PAID SICK LEAVE
Based on full-pay for a 5-day flu, in days
(Higher is better)

5

PAID VACATION LEAVE
In days
(Higher is better)






40

263.54

A+

	1,000	51.0	10.0	5	35	200.00	A+
	1,416	43.0	9.4	5	35	244.29	A+
	1,511	49.4	6.6	5	38	238.39	A
	1,555	40.4	5.7	5	36	212.59	A-
	1,363	42.6	5.7	5	30	209.70	A-

THE 5 WORST COUNTRIES*

	1,786	0	0	0	0	-93.15	F
	2,148	12	1	0	13	-43.79	F
	1,782	6.9	0.5	0.7	29	16.69	F
	1,538	11.7	0.4	0.4	28	25.78	D-
	1,941	30	1	0	30	34.17	D-

*The United States is the only country on our list which does not mandate paid leave. According to a study by World at Work, only 38% of US organizations offer paid parental leave to all or some new-parent employees. Of the parents that receive paid parental leave, the average length at full pay, is 4.1 weeks (median: 3.0 weeks). US employers may also offer paid sick leave and vacation days at their discretion.

Sources:

SAFETY

- Homicide rate per 100,000 people (2017): <https://ourworldindata.org/homicides> (-1x weight)
- Gallup Law & Order Index (2019): <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/267869/gallup-global-law-order-report-2019.aspx> (1x weight)
- The Global Peace Index (2019): <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/07/GPI-2019web.pdf> (-1x weight)
- Number of school shootings from 2009-2018: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/us/school-shooting-us-versus-world-trnd/index.html>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:School_shootings_by_country (-1x weight)
- Human Rights Scores (2017): <https://ourworldindata.org/human-rights> (1x weight)

HAPPINESS

- The Human Freedom Index (2019): <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/human-freedom-index-files/2019-human-freedom-index-update-2.pdf> (1x weight)
- The World Happiness Index (2019): <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2019/> (1x weight)
- Suicide rates per 100,000 people (2018): <https://data.oecd.org/healthstat/suicide-rates.htm> (-1x weight)
- LGBTQ+ adoption recognition (2019): <https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws> (1x weight)
- Distribution of family income equality - The GINI Index (2017): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html> (-1x weight)

COST

- Percentage of household income toward net child care costs for a couple with an average wage (2020): <https://data.oecd.org/benwage/net-childcare-costs.html> (-1x weight)
- Public spending on family benefits by percent of GDP (2020): <https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/family-benefits-public-spending.html> (1x weight)
- Private spending on education from primary to tertiary by percent of GDP (2020): <https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/private-spending-on-education.html> (-1x weight)
- Out-of-pocket health spending, in dollars (USD) per capita (2019): <https://data.oecd.org/healthres/health-spending.htm> (-1x weight)
- Purchasing Power Index measuring cost of living vs. monthly income (2019): <https://www.worlddata.info/cost-of-living.php> (-1x weight)

HEALTH

- Maternal mortality rate (Deaths per 100,000 live births) (2015): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2223rank.html> (-1x weight)
- Under-five child mortality rate estimates (Deaths per 1,000) (2018): <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/under-five-mortality/> (-1x weight)
- Unmet demand for family planning by percent of women aged 15-49 (2020): http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (-1x weight)
- Share of population exposed to air pollution above WHO limits (2016): <https://ourworldindata.org/air-pollution> (-0.5x weight)
- World's Most Polluted Countries (PM2.5) (2019): <https://www.iqair.com/us/world-most-polluted-countries> (-0.5x weight)
- Life expectancy at birth (2019): <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy> (1x weight)

EDUCATION

- Enrollment Rate Among 15 - 19 year-olds (2017): https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_ENRL_RATE_AGE (1x weight)
- Enrollment Rate Among 20 - 24 year-olds (2017): https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_ENRL_RATE_AGE (1x weight)
- Reading performance of 15-year-olds (2018): <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/reading-performance-pisa.html> (1x weight)
- Mathematics performance of 15-year-olds (2018): <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/mathematics-performance-pisa.html> (1x weight)
- Science performance of 15-year-olds (2018): <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/science-performance-pisa.html> (1x weight)

TIME

- Yearly hours worked per worker (2020): <https://data.oecd.org/emp/hours-worked.htm> (-1x weight)
- Paid maternity leave in weeks (2019): http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf (1x weight)
- Paid paternity leave in weeks (2019): http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf (1x weight)
- Paid sick leave for a 5-day flu (2009): <https://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf> (1x weight)
- Minimum paid annual leave by country (2020): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_annual_leave_by_country (1x weight)
- Paid parental leave in the US (2017): <https://www.worldatwork.org/docs/research-and-surveys/survey-report-survey-of-paid-parental-leave-in-the-us.pdf>

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<https://www.asherfergusson.com/raising-a-family-index/>

Asher & Lyric

Author: Fergusson, Asher and Fergusson, Lyric

Source: Asher and Lyric

Format: Report

Publication Date: 24 Jul 2020

AVAILABILITY

Access interactive report online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

There's hearsay, there are anecdotes from other families, and there are stories shared by the media. Then, there is hard data. We've gathered critical statistics from 30 trusted international sources to create the "Raising a Family Index" that will help you find the best countries for raising children in 2020.

Methodology

We ranked 35 OECD countries (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) around the world to see which are the best to raise a family. Our definitive "**Raising a Family Index**" is made up of 6 categories, comprising a total of 30 factors identifying favorable conditions for raising a family. The categories include Safety, Happiness, Cost, Health, Education, and Time.

To access full data sources, interactive tables, the weighting of each category, and a full explanation of the methodology used in this study, **see the main website** ^[2].

The 35 best countries to raise a family

Not surprisingly, all the Scandinavian countries ranked very well for raising a family. Out of the 35 countries included in our analysis, Iceland narrowly beat Norway to claim the #1 spot on the list. Iceland achieved top-10 rankings in all categories and was #1 in safety. Below are the 35 best:

1. Iceland
2. Norway
3. Sweden
4. Finland
5. Luxembourg
6. Denmark
7. Germany
8. Austria
9. Belgium
10. Czech Republic
11. Netherlands
12. Portugal
13. France
14. Australia
15. Slovenia
16. Ireland
17. Spain
18. New Zealand
19. Canada
20. Poland
21. Hungary
22. Switzerland
23. United Kingdom
24. Italy
25. Japan

26. Israel
27. Slovak Republic
28. Korea
29. Greece
30. Romania
31. Bulgaria
32. Turkey
33. Chile
34. United States
35. Mexico

Why did the US rank so poorly?

Since the United States was in many ways an outlier, we felt it was necessary to give additional commentary, context and statistics on why the US ranked second to last on our list.

Additionally, Lyric shares her perspective on raising our family of two young kids, Kingsley and Aurora, in the USA. She goes through all six categories and reflects on her experience of being a mother but also her experience growing up in America.

Here are her thoughts:

The first time I looked at the data I was in disbelief. I thought there must be a mistake.

I know Americans are struggling, but how could the United States rank as the 34th best country to raise a family in 2020?

I said, "We have to check. We need to crunch the numbers again." We did. The data was undeniably correct.

This led me into a deep personal reflection. Would my anecdotal experience, growing up and raising two children in the US, remotely line up with the data?

I went one-by-one into each of the six categories. What I discovered, in many instances, was quite shocking. I had experienced trauma or notable challenges in each category.

In "Safety" alone, I experienced two violent incidents before I turned 20: one school shooting and one student homicide in my college cafeteria.

This study has been eye-opening for me. Even as a well educated, thoughtful individual, **I had become so numb to the country's inadequacies that I must have simply disregarded my personal experience for the rhetoric of the nation.**

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Below you'll find an elaboration on the most pertinent US raw data, additional important related statistics, plus my anecdotal experience growing up and raising a family here in the USA. Be sure to check out the "Click to expand" sections to see the my full write-up for each category.

Visit the Asher and Lyric [website for full analysis of raising a family](#) ^[2]

Related link:

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: family policy ^[4]
investment ^[5]
social infrastructure ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 13 Aug 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/08/best-35-countries-raise-family-2020>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/08/best-35-countries-raise-family-2020> [2] <https://www.asherfergusson.com/raising-a-family-index/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/international> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-policy> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/investment> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/social-infrastructure>