

America's Cleanest and Dirtiest Cities, Ranked

Admin User · January 2, 2026

A recent study ranked 35 large U.S. cities on cleanliness based on seven factors. Find out how your city compares.

By **Samanda Dorger**

All cities have to manage cleanliness, whether it's monitoring air and water quality or handling trash pickup, litter, vandalism and vermin infestations.

But what makes a city truly "clean?"

There's no single answer. A combination of those elements, ranging from population density to the air we breathe, determines whether a city is hospitably tidy or or hazardous to your health.

A recent study ranked 35 large U.S. cities on cleanliness based on seven factors, including air and water quality, rats, cockroaches, vandalism, litter and population density. The ranking was conducted by franchised carpet cleaning company [OxiFresh](#), which boasts environmentally-friendly cleaning methods, using data from the Census Bureau's American Housing Survey, Environmental Working Group, the EPA and CensusReporter.org.

Here's what they learned about city cleanliness:

Rodents: In Boston, nearly 25% of housing units showed signs of mice, rats or other rodents inside the home in the past 12 months. Phoenix and Las Vegas had the fewest at 2.1%.

Cockroaches: In Houston, a whopping one third of housing units showed signs of cockroaches inside the home in the past 12 months. The figure for Portland, Ore., was less than 1%.

Vandalism: Raleigh, N.C., has the fewest homes with vandalism or abandoned buildings

within a half-block radius. Birmingham, Ala., had the most.

Litter: Raleigh also had the fewest homes without litter, trash, or junk on the streets or properties within a half-block radius. Los Angeles had the most. Raleigh scored a B grade in the overall ranking.

Air Quality: Portland scored highest for air quality. Phoenix scored lowest, with only 24 days of 'Good' air quality in a year, compared to Portland's 280 days.

Tap Water: Detroit scored the highest for water quality. Milwaukee scored lowest.

Population density: New York has the highest population density. More people means more waste to manage. New York scored a D overall.

These cities had the highest grades overall for cleanliness:

1. Portland Oregon: A+
2. Seattle: A
3. Rochester, New York: A-

These cities had the lowest grades for overall cleanliness:

New York: D

Los Angeles: D+

Philadelphia: D+

Several large metros were excluded due to lack of data. See the [full ranking and methodology here](#).
