

Life In Wichita



Veterans/Disabled Veterans Quality of Life & Cost of Living Analysis

Wichita, Kansas

Overview: Located in the heart of the Midwest along the banks of the Arkansas River, Wichita, Kansas, started out as an 1860s trading post and has since grown into a bustling metropolitan area.

Wichita's growth and success over the last century can be attributed to the cattle, grain, oil and aviation industries, as well as the spirit and determination of its founders. Although its cowboy roots are still celebrated, Wichita has since embraced higher education, world-class health care and technological innovation. In fact, many companies including Cessna and Learjet got their start here, earning the region the nickname "Air Capital of the World."

Demographics: Population as of April 1, 2020, 397,070 (White 70.6%, Hispanic/Latino 17.6%, Black/African American 10.3%). Veteran population estimated at 20,913 (2017-2021). Age distribution: under 20: 28.1%; 20-24: 6.7%; 25-34: 13.7%; 35-44: 12.2%; 45-64: 24.4%; 65+: 15%.

Geography/Climate: Wichita is in south-central Kansas at the junction of Interstate 35 and U.S. Route 54. Part of the Midwestern United States, it is 157 miles north of Oklahoma City, 181 miles southwest of Kansas City, and 439 miles east-southeast of Denver. The city lies on the Arkansas River near the western edge of the Flint Hills in the Wellington-McPherson Lowlands region of the Great Plains. The area's topography is characterized by the broad alluvial plain of the Arkansas River valley and the moderately rolling slopes that rise to the higher lands on either side.

Wichita lies within the humid subtropical climate zone, typically experiencing hot, humid summers and cold, dry winters. Located on the Great Plains, far from any large moderating influences such as mountains or large bodies of water, Wichita often experiences severe weather with thunderstorms occurring frequently during the spring and summer. These occasionally bring large hail and frequent lightning. Winters are cold and dry. The average temperature in the city is 57.7 °F. Wichita receives on average about 34.31 inches of precipitation a year, most of which falls in the warmer months, and experiences 87 days of measurable precipitation. The average relative humidity is 80% in the morning and 49% in the evening. Annual snowfall averages 12.7 inches. Measurable snowfall occurs an average of nine days per year with at least an inch of snow falling on four of those days. Snow depth of at least an inch occurs an average of 12 days per year. The average window for freezing temperatures is October 25 through April 9.

Economy: Wichita's principal industrial sector is manufacturing, which accounted for 21.6% of area employment in 2003. Aircraft manufacturing has long dominated the local economy, and plays such an important role that it has the ability to influence the economic health of the entire region; the state offers tax breaks and other incentives to aircraft manufacturers.

Healthcare is Wichita's second-largest industry, employing about 28,000 people in the local area. Since healthcare needs remain fairly consistent regardless of the economy, this field was not subject to the same pressures that affected other industries.

Koch Industries and Cargill, the two largest privately held companies in the United States, both operate headquarters facilities in Wichita. Koch Industries' primary global corporate headquarters is in a large office-tower complex in northeast Wichita. Cargill Meat Solutions Div., at one time the nation's third-largest beef producer, is headquartered downtown. Other firms with headquarters in Wichita include roller-coaster manufacturer Chance Morgan, gourmet food retailer Dean & DeLuca, renewable energy company Alternative Energy Solutions, and Coleman Company, a manufacturer of camping and outdoor recreation supplies.

Real Estate Market: In December 2022, Wichita home prices were up 8.8% compared to last year, selling for a median price of \$210K. On average, homes in Wichita sell after 11 days on the market compared to 48 days last year. There were 368 homes sold in December this year, down from 523 last year.

Transportation:

- **Bus:** Wichita Transit operates 53 buses on 18 fixed bus routes within the city. Greyhound Lines provides intercity bus service northeast to Topeka and south to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Bus service is provided daily north towards Salina and west towards Pueblo, Colorado by BeeLine Express (subcontractor of Greyhound Lines).
- **Air:** The Wichita Airport Authority manages the city's two main public airports, Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport and Colonel James Jabara Airport. Located in the western part of the city, Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport is the city's primary airport as well as the largest airport in Kansas. Seven commercial airlines (Alaska, Allegiant, American, Delta, Frontier, Southwest & United) serve Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport with non-stop flights to several U.S. airline hubs. Jabara Airport is a general aviation facility on the city's northeast side.

Entertainment:

- **Arts & Culture:** Wichita is a cultural center for Kansas, home to several art museums and performing arts groups. The Wichita Art Museum is the largest art museum in the state of Kansas and contains 7,000 works in permanent collections. The Ulrich Museum of Art at Wichita State University is a modern and contemporary art museum with over 6,300 works in its permanent collection. Small art galleries are scattered around the city with some clustered in the districts of Old Town, Delano and south Commerce street. Wichita is the music hub of central Kansas, and draws major acts from around the world, performing at various concert halls, arenas, and stadiums around the area. Most major rock'n'roll and pop-music stars, and virtually all country music stars, perform there during their career. Music Theatre Wichita, Wichita Grand Opera (both nationally renowned), and the Wichita Symphony Orchestra perform regularly at the Century II Convention Hall downtown. Concerts are also regularly performed by the nationally noted schools of music at Wichita's two largest universities. The Orpheum Theatre, a classic movie palace built in 1922, serves as a downtown venue for smaller shows. The Cotillion, a special events facility built in 1960, serves a similar purpose as a music venue.
- **Sports:** Wichita is home to several professional and collegiate sports teams. Professional teams include the Wichita Thunder ice hockey team (farm club of the San Jose Sharks of the NHL) and the Wichita Force indoor football team. The Wichita Wind Surge, a Minor League Baseball team (Minnesota Twins of MLB) of the Double-A Central play at Riverfront Stadium. The city hosts the Air Capital Classic, a professional golf tournament of the Korn Ferry Tour. Collegiate teams based in the city include the Wichita State University Shockers, Newman University Jets, and the Friends University Falcons. The WSU Shockers are NCAA Division I teams that compete in men's and women's basketball, baseball, volleyball, track and field, tennis, and bowling. The Newman Jets are NCAA Division II teams that compete in baseball, basketball, bowling, cross country, golf, soccer, tennis, wrestling, volleyball, and cheer/dance. The Friends Falcons compete in Region IV of the NAIA in football, volleyball, soccer, cross country, basketball, tennis, track and field, and golf.

Education: Wichita has several colleges, universities, technical schools and branch campuses of other universities around the state. These include the following: Wichita State University, Friends University, Newman University, University of Kansas - School of Medicine Wichita Campus (KU Wichita), Wichita Technical Institute, WSU Tech, National Institute of Culinary and Hospitality Education (NICHE), National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT), and Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Crime & Safety: As of 2020, the Wichita metropolitan area's violent crime (rape/sexual assault, robbery, assault, murder) rate and property crime (burglary, theft, vandalism, arson) rate were higher than the national rate. Severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are the biggest natural disaster risks. Kansas is part of tornado alley, and some of the strong twisters can happen here. Wildland fires are another risk, along with flooding and winter weather.

Healthcare: Ascension via Christi Hospital, AMG Specialty Hospital, Ascension via Christi St. Teresa Hospital, Kansas Heart Hospital, Kansas Medical Center, Kansas Spine and Specialty Hospital, Kansas Surgery and Recovery Center.

- **VA Healthcare Facilities:** Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center. Main campus provides primary care and specialty health services, including audiology and speech, mental health care, prescriptions, weight management services, women's health care, and more.

Military Installations: McConnell AFB. The 22nd Air Refueling Wing is the host unit at McConnell AFB and part of the Air Mobility Command. The 22nd ARW is one of the Air Force's three core tanker wings. The Wing's fleet of KC-135 and KC-46 aircraft provides in-flight all-weather aerial refueling for U.S. and allied military aircraft, as well as airlift for global reach projection of troops, equipment and supplies worldwide. The Wing's 17 squadrons (16 at McConnell, one at Pease Air National Guard Base in New Hampshire) combine for a force of approximately 3,500 active duty military members. The base's tenant units are the 931st Air Refueling Wing Air Force Reserve and the 184th Wing Air National Guard units.

Cost of Living:

- **Housing:** The cost of living in Wichita, KS is 3% higher than the state average and 11% lower than the national average. Wichita, KS housing is 32% cheaper than the U.S average. The average monthly rent in Wichita is \$811, while home prices circle around \$274,788.
- **Utilities:** Both owning and renting come with utility expenses. These costs include basic services such as energy and telecommunications. In Wichita, energy bills (heating/cooling, water, garbage) cost around \$159.15 per month. Internet expenses average \$50.00 per month.
- **Groceries:** Food is the most important necessity and its cost varies around the country. This section includes the prices of everyday foods such as produce, meat and dairy. Milk (per gallon) hovers between \$2.50-\$3.25/gallon; eggs are in excess of \$4.00/dozen (large AA); beef and pork prices have risen dramatically, with chicken prices increasing due to both inflation and the Bird Flu outbreak.
- **Fuel:** Gas prices rise and fall according to a variety of factors. Gas prices in the Wichita area have reached as high as \$4.59/gallon (regular unleaded) to as low as \$2.89 during the past twelve months.
- **Income:** Median household income in Wichita is \$56,374.00.