# URBAN STRESS TEST

Contrary to popular belief, the U.S. population is still growing. In fact, this nation has the fastest growing population of all industrialized countries. By the turn of the century, the U.S. population is expected to reach 270 million, double the number in 1945.

Not so surprising is that the bulk of this growth is occurring in urban areas. In the past 40 years, for instance, the number of cities with populations over 100,000 has almost doubled. Some city's populations have doubled in less than a decade. And these trends are expected to continue. Since 1980, the U.S. has added a seventh and eighth city to its "One Million Plus Club."

How is this unprecedented growth affecting the quality of life in our cities, where 75 percent of our citizens live?

ZPG's *Urban Stress Test* is designed to examine how cities are coping with the environmental, economic and social stresses that can result from uncontrolled population growth. The survey puts 192 cities to the test, using 11 interrelated criteria. These criteria include: population change, crowding, education, violent crime, births, community economics, individual economics, hazardous wastes, sewage, water, and air quality.

An analysis of "urban stress" by geographic region, by city population size, by individual rating category, and by environmental indicators is presented in this briefing paper, along with the best and worst cities across the nation. A full description of the *Urban Stress Test* and the complete city-by-city rankings can be found in the inside accompanying report.
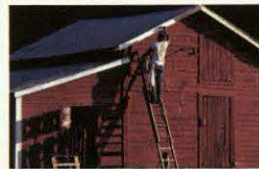
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# Highlights & Findings



" Cedar Rapids, Iowa has the best overall score of any of the 192 cities in the survey; Gary, Indiana has the worst score. "

" The Midwest boasts more winning cities than any other region. "





" Colorado is the only state with more than one city that rates tops for education. "



" Phoenix is the only city which gets the worst score possible on all 4 environmental test indicators. "



How does your city rate?

# The Best and the Worst

## The Winners!

Of the 192 cities surveyed, the 22 cities which score the highest marks (2.3 or lower overall) are scattered from California to Connecticut, but the majority are located in the Midwest. Most are relatively small cities, with an average population of 115,881 and an average density of 3,679 people per square mile. The cities are characterized by a lack of crowding, low crime rates, strong community economics and low levels of hazardous waste.

| | Population | Overall Score |
|---|---|---|
| Cedar Rapids, IA | 108,370 | 1.6 |
| Madison, WI | 175,830 | 1.7 |
| Ann Arbor, MI | 107,800 | 1.8 |
| Lincoln, NE | 183,050 | 1.8 |
| Fargo, ND* | 68,020 | 1.9 |
| Livonia, MI | 100,540 | 1.9 |
| Concord, CA | 105,980 | 2.0 |
| Alexandria, VA | 107,800 | 2.1 |
| Eugene, OR | 105,410 | 2.1 |
| Roanoke, VA | 101,900 | 2.1 |
| Worcester, MA | 157,770 | 2.1 |
| Berkeley, CA | 104,110 | 2.2 |
| Billings, MT* | 80,310 | 2.2 |
| Fremont, CA | 153,580 | 2.2 |
| Stamford, CT | 101,080 | 2.2 |
| Topeka, KS | 118,580 | 2.2 |
| Boise, ID | 108,390 | 2.3 |
| Cheyenne, WY* | 53,960 | 2.3 |
| Hampton, VA | 126,000 | 2.3 |
| Manchester, NH* | 97,281 | 2.3 |
| Sioux Falls, SD* | 97,550 | 2.3 |
| Yonkers, NY | 186,080 | 2.3 |

*City has a population of less than 100,000, but was included in the survey because it is the largest city in the state.

## The Losers!

The 20 cities receiving the worst marks have overall scores of 3.8 and above. Almost one-half of the cities on this list are located in California and Texas. Most of the cities have either large populations or are located near a large metropolitan area. The average population size is 1,154,299 and the average density is 8,228 people per square mile—that's more than twice the density of our winning cities. Many of the cities are characterized by large population changes, overcrowding, high crime rates and unemployment. Their environmental indicators, particularly for hazardous waste levels and water, warn of increased risk.

| | Population | Overall Score |
|---|---|---|
| Gary, IN | 136,790 | 4.2 |
| Baltimore, MD | 752,800 | 4.1 |
| Chicago, IL | 3,009,530 | 4.1 |
| Houston, TX | 1,728,910 | 4.1 |
| Jersey City, NJ | 219,480 | 4.1 |
| Pomona, CA | 115,540 | 4.1 |
| El Paso, TX | 491,800 | 4.0 |
| Cleveland, OH | 535,830 | 3.9 |
| Fort Worth, TX | 429,550 | 3.9 |
| Inglewood, CA | 102,550 | 3.9 |
| Los Angeles, CA | 3,259,340 | 3.9 |
| St. Louis, MO | 426,300 | 3.9 |
| Detroit, MI | 1,086,220 | 3.8 |
| Miami, FL | 373,940 | 3.8 |
| Newark, NJ | 316,240 | 3.8 |
| New York, NY | 7,262,700 | 3.8 |
| Pasadena, TX | 118,050 | 3.8 |
| Philadelphia, PA | 1,642,900 | 3.8 |
| Phoenix, AZ | 894,070 | 3.8 |
| Stockton, CA | 183,430 | 3.8 |