



Cities With the Best Career Opportunities

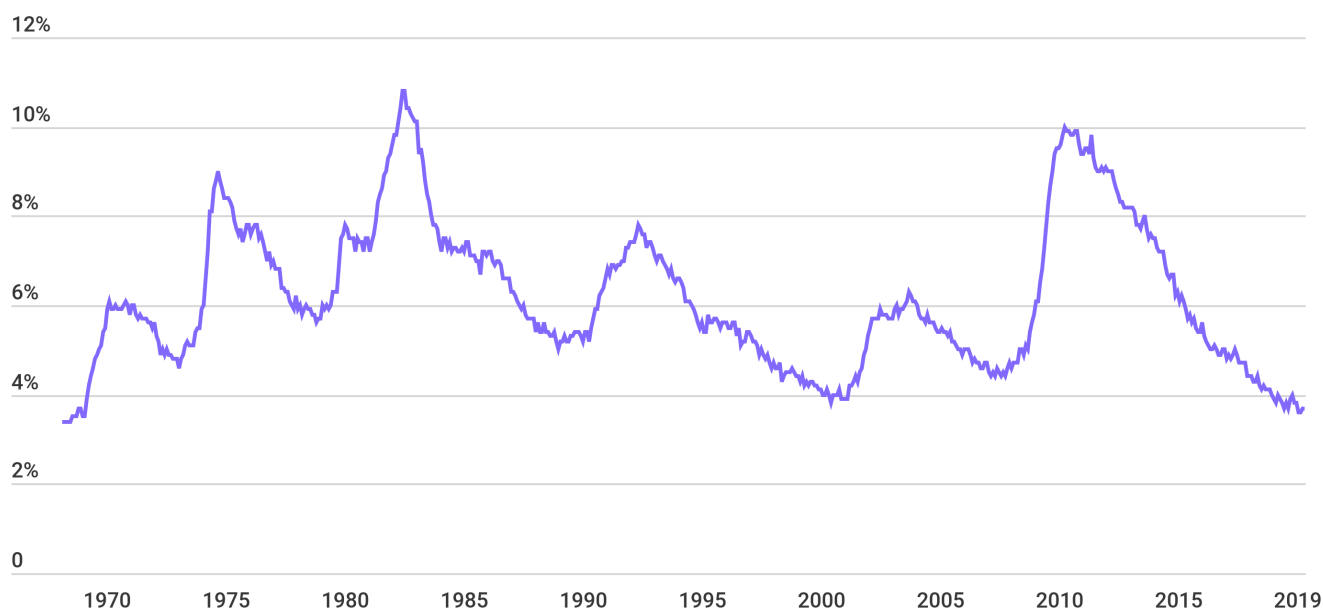
Introduction

It's not a bad time to be job hunting. The U.S. is currently undergoing the longest economic expansion in its history, and the unemployment rate is the [lowest it's been in almost 50 years](#). In this job seeker's market, now is an opportune time for workers to make career moves.



U.S. unemployment rate at historic low

Unemployment rate



Source: Volusion analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey

Despite the strength of the national labor market, some parts of the country are faring better than others when it comes to employment.



To find the best metropolitan areas for career opportunities, researchers at Volusion analyzed data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau to calculate a composite score based on the following metrics:

- Year-over-year total employment growth
- Year-over-year median wage growth
- Median annual wage
- Annual average unemployment rate
- Labor force participation rate
- Percentage of workers that are full-time
- Mean usual hours worked

Together, these metrics provide insight into the strength of each metro area's economy and employment situation. For the analysis, metros were grouped into the following categories based on population:

- Large: Metros with more than 1,000,000 people
- Midsize: Metros with 350,000-1,000,000 people
- Small: Cities with 100,000-350,000 people

Here's what Volusion found.



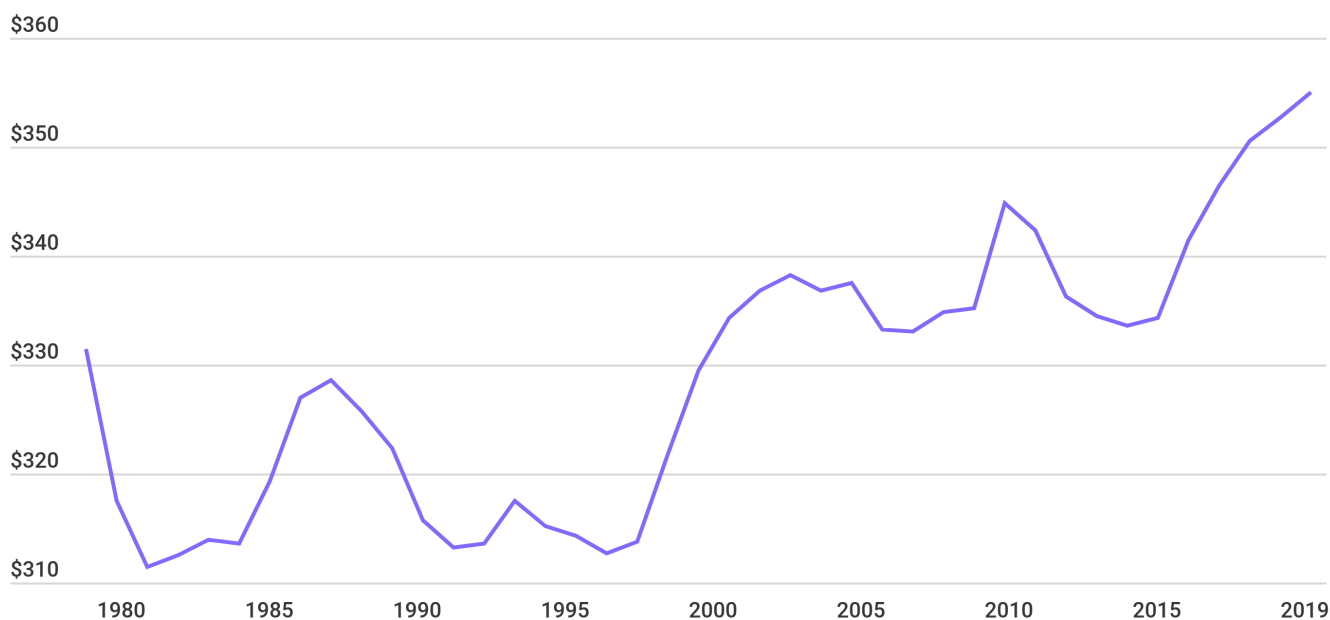
Wages & wage growth

Among all wage and salary workers, the national median annual wage in 2018 was \$38,640. However, this number tends to be higher in large metropolitan areas, with a majority offering wages higher than the national median. After years of stagnation, wage growth has also accelerated since 2013. Between 2017 and 2018, median hourly wages grew 2.5 percent nationally. In large coastal metros—especially major tech hubs like San Francisco, Seattle, and San Jose—wage growth is outpacing the national average.



Following period of stagnation, wages are growing

Median usual weekly real earnings



Source: Volusion analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey

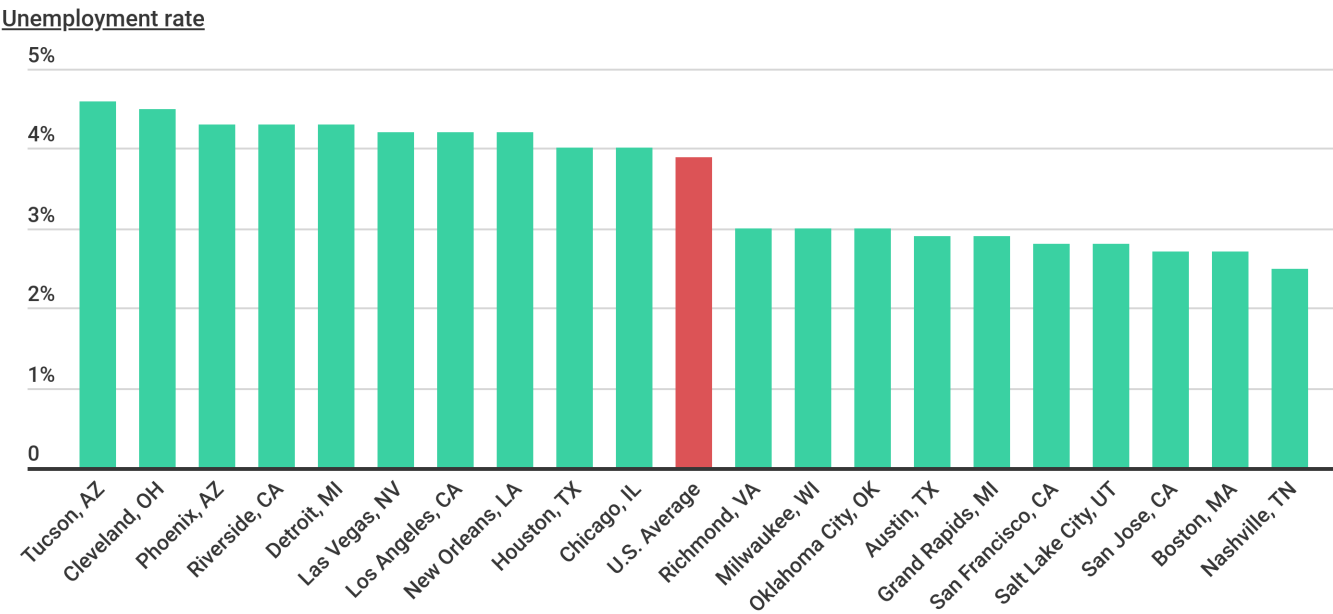


Unemployment

The annual average unemployment rate for 2018 was 3.9 percent nationally. As with median wages and wage growth, unemployment rates differ across large metros—from 2.5 percent in Nashville up to 4.6 percent in Tucson.



Large metros with the highest & lowest unemployment rates



Source: Volusion analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey



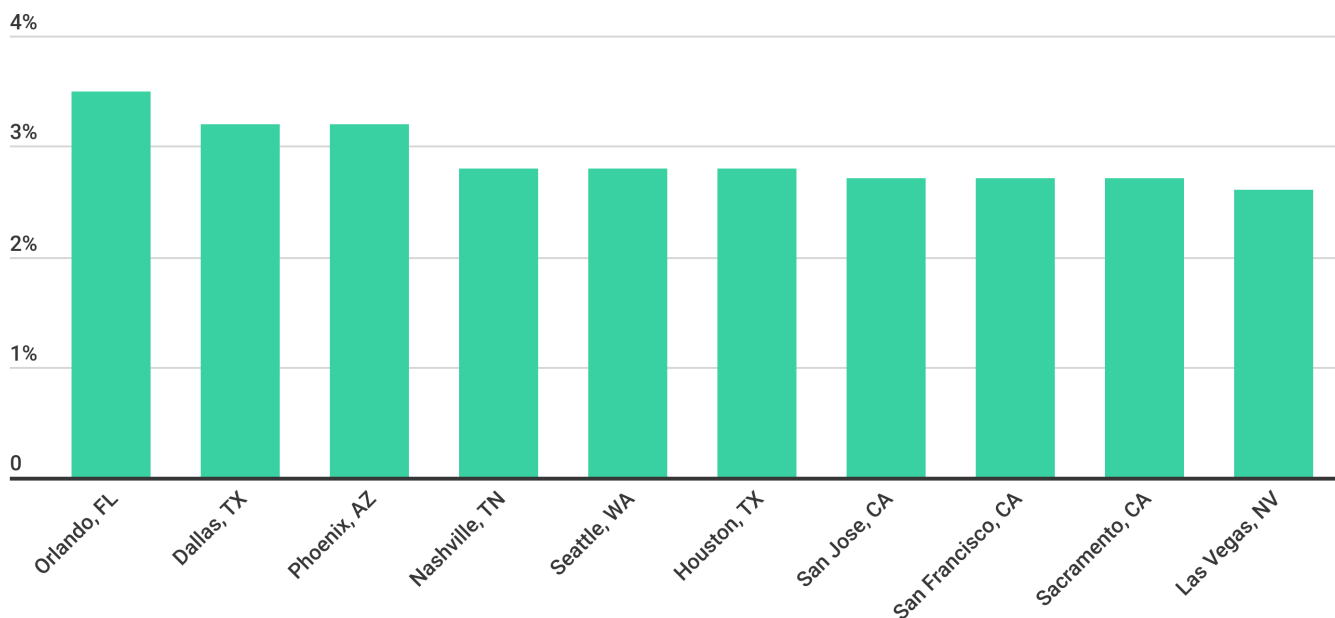
Employment growth

Although the national unemployment rate remains low, there was no significant change in total employment nationwide between 2017 and 2018. However, employment growth varies by industry and location. Some of the industries in the highest demand include healthcare, education, hospitality, and professional services. In addition, about half of large metros had significant increases in total employment year-over-year, with Orlando, Phoenix, and Dallas boasting growth rates of more than 3%.



Large metros with the most employment growth

Employment growth (2017-2018)



Source: Volusion analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics



Additional insights

Fortunately for job seekers, the best metropolitan areas for career opportunities are dispersed throughout the country with locations from both coasts, the South, the Midwest, and Mountain States all represented. Here are the best metros for career opportunities:



The best small & midsize metros for career opportunities

MIDSIZE METROS	SCORE	SMALL METROS	SCORE
1. Reno, NV	93.1	1. Sioux Falls, SD	93.1
2. Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA	91.6	2. Midland, TX	92.7
3. Ogden-Clearfield, UT	85.0	3. Gainesville, GA	90.1
4. Trenton, NJ	82.7	4. Odessa, TX	86.8
5. Boise City, ID	82.5	5. California-Lexington Park, MD	84.9
6. Urban Honolulu, HI	80.5	6. Bismarck, ND	83.6
7. Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	79.4	7. Jacksonville, NC	82.9
8. Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	78.7	8. Lake Charles, LA	80.2
9. Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO	78.5	9. Idaho Falls, ID	80.1
10. Manchester, NH	78.5	10. Norwich-New London-Westerly, CT-RI	80.0

Source: Volusion analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey



The 20 large metros with the best career opportunities

20. Miami - Fort Lauderdale - West Palm Beach, FL

- **Overall score:** 80.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.3%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.1%
- **Median annual wage:** \$35,780
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.4%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 62.4%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 69.1%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

19. Boston - Cambridge - Nashua, MA-NH

- **Overall score:** 80.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** No change
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Median annual wage:** \$51,510
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.7%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 69.0%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 64.4%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

18. Minneapolis - St. Paul - Bloomington, MN-WI

- **Overall score:** 80.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** No change
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.9%
- **Median annual wage:** \$45,520
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.0%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 72.0%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 66.2%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

17. San Diego - Carlsbad, CA

- **Overall score:** 80.6
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 1.4%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.4%
- **Median annual wage:** \$43,390
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.5%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 66.3%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 64.8%



16. Chicago - Naperville - Elgin, IL-IN-WI

- **Overall score:** 80.8
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 1.6%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.9%
- **Median annual wage:** \$41,210
- **Unemployment rate:** 4.0%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 66.6%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 66.9%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

14. Phoenix - Mesa - Scottsdale, AZ

- **Overall score:** 82.1
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 3.2%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 1.9%
- **Median annual wage:** \$37,980
- **Unemployment rate:** 4.3%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 62.8%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 68.4%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

15. Orlando - Kissimmee - Sanford, FL

- **Overall score:** 81.7
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 3.5%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.6%
- **Median annual wage:** \$33,150
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.2%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 63.9%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 66.4%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

13. New York - Newark - Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA

- **Overall score:** 82.5
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 1.4%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Median annual wage:** \$47,080
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.8%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 64.6%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 67.9%



12. Salt Lake City, UT

- **Overall score:** 82.8
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.3%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.3%
- **Median annual wage:** \$38,700
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.8%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 72.0%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 65.5%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

11. Charlotte - Concord - Gastonia, NC-SC

- **Overall score:** 83.4
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 1.4%
- **Median annual wage:** \$38,050
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.7%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 66.5%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 69.1%

10. Denver - Aurora - Lakewood, CO

- **Overall score:** 84.9
- **Employment growth (YoY):** No change
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.6%
- **Median annual wage:** \$45,420
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.2%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 71.2%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 69.3%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

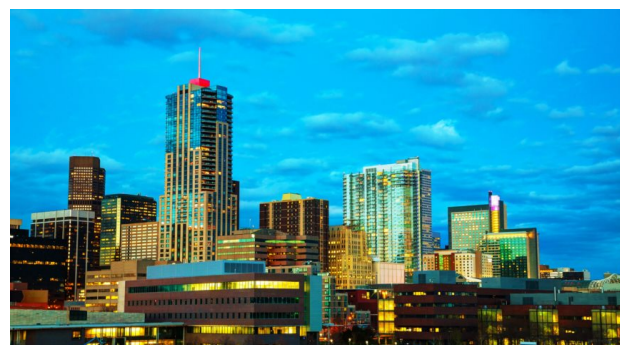


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9. Atlanta - Sandy Springs - Roswell, GA

- **Overall score:** 85.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 1.8%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.9%
- **Median annual wage:** \$39,080
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.7%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 67.4%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 70.1%



8. Houston - The Woodlands - Sugar Land, TX

- **Overall score:** 86.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.8%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 1.6%
- **Median annual wage:** \$39,630
- **Unemployment rate:** 4.0%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 66.0%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 68.8%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

6. Washington - Arlington - Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV

- **Overall score:** 89.6
- **Employment growth (YoY):** No change
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Median annual wage:** \$54,680
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.3%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 71.8%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 70.8%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

7. Nashville - Davidson - Murfreesboro - Franklin, TN

- **Overall score:** 88.8
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.8%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Median annual wage:** \$37,680
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.5%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 68.9%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 69.2%

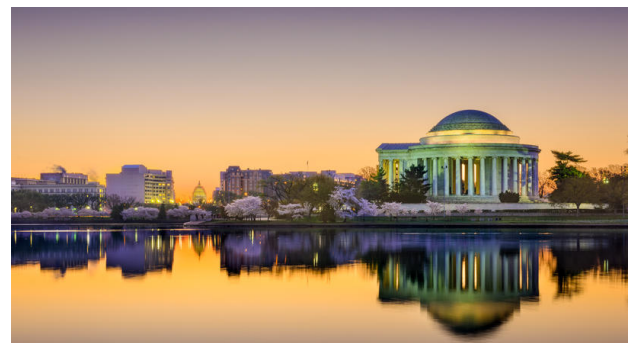


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5. Seattle - Tacoma - Bellevue, WA

- **Overall score:** 92.1
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.8%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.9%
- **Median annual wage:** \$50,860
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.9%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 68.4%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 65.9%



4. Austin - Round Rock, TX

- **Overall score:** 92.2
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.5%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.6%
- **Median annual wage:** \$40,070
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.9%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 70.4%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 70.4%



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2. San Francisco - Oakland - Hayward, CA

- **Overall score:** 95.5
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.7%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 4.3%
- **Median annual wage:** \$54,090
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.8%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 67.6%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 66.5%



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Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

3. Dallas - Fort Worth - Arlington, TX

- **Overall score:** 92.8
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 3.2%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 3.1%
- **Median annual wage:** \$39,230
- **Unemployment rate:** 3.4%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 68.4%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 70.9%



Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

1. San Jose - Sunnyvale - Santa Clara, CA

- **Overall score:** 100.0
- **Employment growth (YoY):** 2.7%
- **Wage growth (YoY):** 4.3%
- **Median annual wage:** \$60,110
- **Unemployment rate:** 2.7%
- **Labor force participation rate:** 67.8%
- **Percentage of workers that are full-time:** 68.3%



Methodology & full results

To identify the best metropolitan areas for career opportunities, a composite score was calculated based on the following metrics (weighted equally):

- Employment growth
- Wage growth
- Median annual wage
- Unemployment rate
- Labor force participation rate
- Percentage of workers that are full-time
- Mean usual hours worked

Employment growth, wage growth, and median annual wage are from the *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment Statistics* dataset. The 2018 average unemployment rate is from the *BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics* dataset. Labor force participation, the percentage of workers that are full-time, and mean usual hours worked are from the *U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*.

Metros were grouped into the following categories based on population:

- Large: Metros with more than 1,000,000 people
- Midsize: Metros with 350,000 - 1,000,000 people
- Small: Cities with 100,000 - 350,000 people

View the full results of the study [here](#).





About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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