WHITE PAPER

America's Most Expensive Car Key Cities

A twelve-month analysis of more than 117,000 car key transactions across 205 U.S. metro markets, revealing which cities pay the most — and least — for a replacement key.

KeyMe Locksmiths Research

Nationwide Transaction Data | 12-Month Metro Cost Analysis

Executive Summary

KeyMe Locksmiths analyzed more than 117,000 car key transactions completed over the past twelve months, spanning 205 metro markets (DMAs) nationwide, to identify where Americans pay the most, and the least, for a replacement car key.

The average transaction nationwide costs $71.62, and this twelve-month view shows busier markets tend to skew slightly more expensive rather than cheaper: eight of the ten highest-volume metro areas in the country price above the national average. The relationship is a modest one, not a hard rule, but it points in a clear direction.

117,321	$71.62	205	$86.80
Car key transactions analyzed nationwide	National average cost per transaction	Metro markets (DMAs) represented in the data	Avg. cost in the priciest market (Marquette, MI)

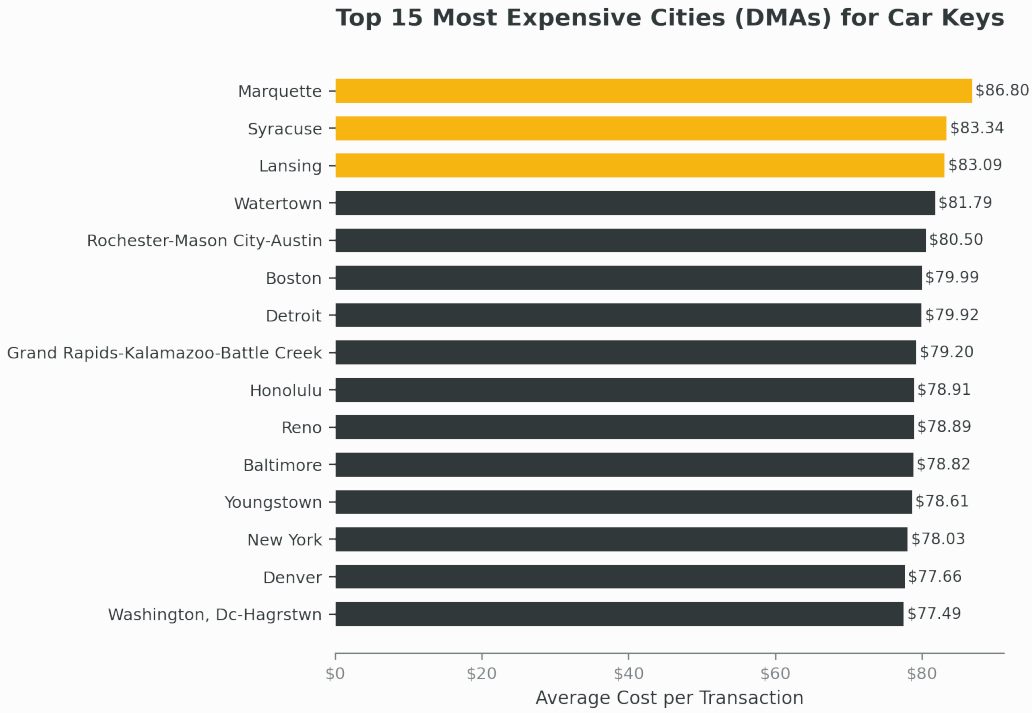
Key Findings

- **Marquette, Michigan is the most expensive reliable market for a car key**, averaging $86.80 per transaction among markets with at least 50 transactions — well above the national average.
- **Several mid-sized metro markets top the list**, including Syracuse ($83.34), Lansing ($83.09), and Watertown ($81.79), alongside major metros like Boston ($79.99) and Detroit ($79.92).
- **Quincy-Hannibal-Keokuk is the least expensive reliable market** at $52.19 per transaction, with Clarksburg-Weston, Parkersburg, Casper-Riverton, and Fairbanks rounding out the bottom five.
- **Atlanta is the single highest-volume market in the country**, with 4,417 transactions, and prices below the national average at $70.07 — making it more the exception than the rule among high-volume markets.
- **Busier markets tend to run slightly more expensive, not cheaper.** Eight of the ten highest-volume metro areas, including Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., price above the national average.

> *“The busiest markets in the country aren't discounting for volume. If anything, they're pricing slightly ahead of everywhere else, and that's a pattern that holds up across a full year of transactions.”*
>
> **KEYME LOCKSMITHS ANALYST**

The Most Expensive Cities for a Car Key

Looking at metro markets (DMAs) with at least 50 transactions over the trailing twelve months, Marquette, Michigan tops the list, with a mix of mid-sized Midwest and Northeast markets and several major metros close behind.

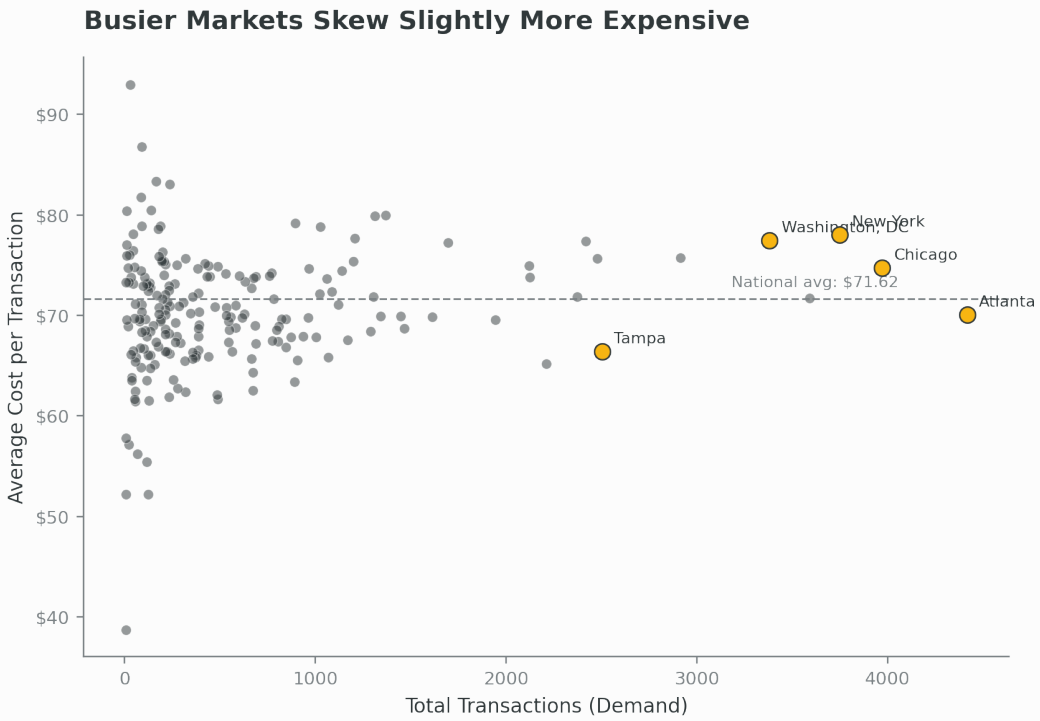


Rank	City (DMA)	Avg. Cost	Transactions
1	Marquette, MI	$86.80	91
2	Syracuse	$83.34	167
3	Lansing	$83.09	239
4	Watertown	$81.79	86
5	Rochester-Mason City-Austin	$80.50	138
6	Boston	$79.99	1,369
7	Detroit	$79.92	1,312
8	Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek	$79.20	896
9	Honolulu	$78.91	190
10	Reno	$78.89	91
11	Baltimore	$78.82	1,028
12	Youngstown	$78.61	178
13	New York	$78.03	3,751
14	Denver	$77.66	1,207
15	Washington, DC-Hagrstwn	$77.49	3,382

Ranking includes only metro markets (DMAs) with 50 or more transactions over the trailing twelve months, to avoid small-sample noise. See Methodology for details.

Do Busier Markets Cost More?

Plotting each city's transaction volume against its average cost shows a modest but real tendency: busier markets skew slightly more expensive, not cheaper. It's a weak relationship, not a hard rule, but it points in a clear direction across this twelve-month dataset.



Atlanta, the single highest-volume market in this dataset at 4,417 transactions, prices at $70.07, just below the national average, making it more the exception than the rule: eight of the ten highest-volume markets overall, including Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., price above the $71.62 national average. Tampa is the clearest low-price, high-volume market in the data, at $66.38 across 2,503 transactions. Overall, the relationship between volume and price across all 205 markets is weak but positive, suggesting busier metro areas may carry modestly higher costs of doing business rather than leveraging scale into lower prices.

> *“The busiest markets in the country aren't discounting for volume. If anything, they're pricing slightly ahead of everywhere else. Atlanta and Tampa are the exceptions here, not the rule.”*
>
> **KEYME LOCKSMITHS PRODUCT LEAD**

Consumer Insights

- **Don't assume a big city means a bargain.** Several of the highest-volume metro markets in the country, including Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., price above the national average.
- **Smaller and mid-sized metro markets can carry a real premium.** Marquette, Syracuse, Lansing, and Watertown all rank among the most expensive markets nationwide despite comparatively modest transaction volume.
- **Atlanta and Tampa stand out as high-volume, lower-price markets.** If you're in one of these metro areas, the data suggests you're likely paying less than the national average for a replacement key.
- **If you have flexibility on timing or location, it can pay to shop around.** The gap between the most and least expensive reliable metro markets is more than $34, a meaningful difference for a routine service.
- **Location matters more than volume.** The specific metro market you're in appears to matter more than how busy that market is — price varies by city more than it varies with demand.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Marquette, Michigan the most expensive city for a car key?

The data doesn't isolate a single cause, but smaller, more remote metro markets can carry higher costs of doing business, less price competition, and higher parts and labor costs than larger, denser metro areas.

Does higher demand drive higher prices in this data?

There's a modest tendency in that direction. Eight of the ten highest-volume markets in this twelve-month dataset price above the national average, though the overall relationship between volume and price across all 205 markets is weak, not a strong or reliable rule.

Why does this report use a minimum transaction threshold for rankings?

Markets with very few transactions can show extreme average costs driven by just one or two jobs. Setting a floor of 50 transactions keeps the rankings focused on markets with enough volume to reflect a real, repeatable pricing pattern.

Why doesn't this report include state-level or regional breakdowns?

State-level data was not available for this twelve-month analysis. This edition focuses on metro market (DMA) rankings; state and regional detail may be added in a future update if that data becomes available.

Is this data nationwide, or specific to certain markets?

This analysis covers 205 metro markets (DMAs) nationwide, based on KeyMe Locksmiths transactions completed over the trailing twelve months.

Methodology

This analysis is based on KeyMe Locksmiths transaction data covering 117,321 car key transactions completed over the trailing twelve months, reported at the designated market area (DMA), or metro, level across 205 distinct U.S. markets. Cost figures reflect the average cost per transaction before any discounts or promotional savings were applied.

To avoid small-sample distortion, city (DMA) rankings are limited to markets with 50 or more transactions over the period; 183 of the 205 markets in the dataset meet this threshold. The full, unfiltered dataset of 205 markets is reflected in the national average and the demand-versus-price analysis.

This update does not include state-level or regional breakdowns, as state-level data for this twelve-month period was not available at the time of this analysis. A future edition may reintroduce state and regional detail if updated state-level data becomes available.

Interpretive claims regarding the relationship between market volume and cost are presented as observations consistent with the data, not as causal findings verified through individual-market cost-of-service records.