

40 biggest US cities, 1870, with number of pre-1871 clubs (per Protoball, as of 10-26-2021) and clubs per population

City	Population (in thousands)	Clubs	Thousands Per Club (approximate)	Year of First Baseball
New York City	942	202	4,600	1831/45
Philadelphia	674	172	3,900	1858
Brooklyn ¹	396	225	1,700	1845
St. Louis	310	134	2,300	1859
Chicago	298	279	1,070	1856
Baltimore	267	99	2,700	1858
Boston	250	78	3,200	1853
Cincinnati	216	120	1,800	1858
New Orleans	191	136	1,400	1859
San Francisco	149	53	2,900	1858
Buffalo	117	82	1,400	1856
Washington DC	109	48	2,300	1859
Newark NJ	105	142	750	1855
Louisville	100	39	2,600	1858
Cleveland	92	50	1,800	1858
Pittsburgh	86	53	1,600	1860
Jersey City NJ	82	147	550	1855
Detroit	79	47	1,700	1859
Milwaukee	71	30	2,400	1859
Albany NY	69	62	1,100	1856
Providence	69	25	2,700	1857
Rochester	62	27	2,300	1858
Allegheny ²	53	12	4,400	1860
Richmond	51	45	1,100	1866
New Haven	50	53	900	1857
Charleston SC	49	49	1,000	1866
Indianapolis	48	39	1,200	1865
Troy ³	46	69	660	1859
Syracuse	43	27	1,600	1858
Worcester	41	13	3,150	1858
Lowell	40	29	1,400	1857
Memphis	40	30	1,300	1860
Cambridge	39	30	1,300	1857
Hartford	37	28	1,300	1860
Scranton	35	15	2,300	1865

Reading	33	24	1,400	1865
Paterson NJ	33	44	750	1857
Kansas City	32	10	3,200	1866
Mobile	32	17	1,900	1867
Toledo	31	10	3,100	1860

Obviously, clubs changed their names and the “same” club may be listed two or more times under these names. Also, number of clubs are not a perfect proxy for the growth of baseball in these towns. How many clubs we have found in each city depends on the newspaper coverage for that city, and whether a thorough search has been made to try and list all the clubs through 1870.

With all these caveats, a few patterns emerge.

- 1) Given sufficient local newspaper coverage, modern research can find about one pre-1871 club for every 1,500 residents of a major city.
- 2) The cities where baseball first was played have more clubs per thousand population. Which should come as no surprise. See the three NJ cities especially.
- 3) In clubs per thousand residents, Chicago stands out among the “later” cities (cities outside New York, where baseball started later), due in large measure to the local newspaper’s obsessive coverage of amateur baseball.
- 4) The Brooklyn, Philadelphia and NYC club totals would undoubtedly be greater if the Tholkes RIM were fully input into Protoball.
- 5) Given the above patterns, the clubs per thousand in these big cities are pretty comparable one city to the next.
- 6) The Southern cities (Richmond, Memphis, New Orleans, Charleston, Mobile) have about the same percentage of clubs to population as the Midwest cities. Which suggests a pre-1871 uniform growth of baseball outside Greater NYC.
- 7) The city boundaries were changing during this time, and do not correspond to modern boundaries. For example, Boston annexed Roxbury in 1868 and Dorchester in 1870, but the Boston club numbers don’t reflect Roxbury or Dorchester clubs. This fact should be taken into account when analyzing the numbers.
- 8) The numbers indicate which cities seem to have fewer clubs per thousand and where further research on baseball should be focused.

¹ At this time Brooklyn and New York City were separate cities.

² Pittsburgh and Allegheny were really one city (they combined in 1903). The combined city had 139,000 residents and 60 clubs, with 1 club to every 2,300 residents.

³ Troy’s numbers don’t include West Troy (now, Watervliet) which had 10,693 residents in 1870, or Green Island.