

# NerdWallet's cost of living calculator

NerdWallet helps you compare the cost of living in two cities

I currently live in:

San Diego, CA

I want to live in:

San Antonio, TX

My current pre-tax household income:

\$50,000

To maintain your standard of living in San Antonio, TX, you need to earn:

## \$31,542

The cost of living is 37% lower in San Antonio, TX

### Housing Costs

**62% lower**

|                                 | San Diego, CA | San Antonio, TX |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Median 2-bedroom apartment rent | \$2,393       | \$1,276         |
| Median home price (3BR, 2BA)    | \$798,964     | \$250,921       |

Do these housing costs seem low to you? That's probably because we're measuring average costs for the larger metro area, not just the city limits.

### Transportation Costs

**30% lower**

### Food Costs

**25% lower**

### Entertainment Costs

**8% lower**



## Afford the city you want to live in

Get free guidance on changes you can make to afford more home, without spending more.

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### Where does the data come from?

- Core cost of living data is from [ACCRA Cost of Living Index](#) from the Council for Community and Economic Research. Price collection by city is conducted in strict conformance with standard specifications at specified times.
  - Demographics data (including population, age, ethnicity, education and gender breakdown) were compiled from the [U.S. Census](#).
  - Quality of life data (gyms, bars and beauty salons per 1,000 residents) were collected from the Yellow Pages. Walkability and public transit scores were obtained from [Walk Score](#).
  - Monthly bus pass costs were obtained from the individual websites of the public transit system for each city. For example, the cost of an unlimited MetroCard in New York was obtained from the [MTA website](#).
  - Education data was provided courtesy of [GreatSchools](#), a nationwide ratings system that evaluates schools based on performance on state achievement tests. Private school data was obtained from the Department of Education, and average private tuition was compiled by averaging tuition across randomly selected schools in each city.
  - NerdWallet excluded state and local tax data because tax rates vary by state and metropolitan area, and sometimes within metropolitan area as well. Due to the plethora of state taxes, local taxes, jurisdictions and assessment procedures involved in the assessment of income, property and sales taxes, local tax rates cannot be accurately calculated.
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### How is this tool different from other resources out there?

While other resources provide basic cost comparisons, [NerdWallet's cost of living calculator](#) and accompanying city life tool go one step further by offering information on schools, quality of life and demographics, giving users a one-stop shop to explore new cities.



## What is 'cost of living'?

One of the most important determinations you need to make before moving to a new city or town is how much it will cost to live there. "Cost of living" is the amount of money you need to sustain a certain lifestyle in a given place.

Because the price of goods and services varies from one city to the next, calculating the cost of living will determine how affordable it is to live in a certain area. The expenses that factor into cost of living can include housing affordability, transportation expenses, food prices and entertainment costs. Cost of living is also tied to income, as salary levels in a geographic area are measured against these expenses.

## What is the breakdown of the cost of living?

- **Housing costs:** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the largest bill consumers pay each month is for housing. Whether that's a mortgage or rent, a large percentage of your salary will go toward your housing expenses each month. Home prices, property taxes and monthly rents vary from state to state, city to city, town to town and even neighborhood to neighborhood.

For homeowners, there are more expenses to consider than just the monthly mortgage payment. There's also maintenance, upgrades, taxes and fees to take into account when deciding where to live.

- **Transportation:** Unless you're lucky enough to work from home, you will need to factor in transportation costs when deciding where to live. According to the BLS, transportation is the second-largest expense consumers have.

For some, these costs include taking public transportation. For others, it involves driving your car, and that means factoring in car repairs, gas, tolls and parking. Proximity to employment is an important consideration because it can drastically impact your cost of living.

- **Food:** Weekly trips to the grocery store can add up, especially if food costs are high where you live. According to the latest BLS data, consumers average over \$7,000 per year on food expenses. There are ways to trim that down. You could eat out less, cut back on takeout and cook more often. But even then, the price of groceries is going to significantly influence your cost of living.
- **Entertainment:** A movie ticket, a pint of beer, box seats at a baseball game — they can all come with a different price tag depending upon where you live. And it adds up. Americans spend nearly the same amount each year on entertainment as they do on health insurance, according to the BLS. Just like with food costs, you can curb how much you spend on entertainment by altering your behavior.

## What is a cost of living index?

A cost of living index allows you to directly compare what it costs to live in one area against another, helping you understand how far your money can go in each place. For example, the cost of living in San Francisco is twice that of Boise, Idaho. Whether you use a cost of living index or a cost of living calculator, each will help you feel more confident in deciding where to live.

## About the calculator

NerdWallet's cost of living calculator is powered by data from The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER). According to the council, "C2ER produces the Cost of Living Index to provide a useful and reasonably accurate measure of living cost differences among urban areas. Items on which the index is based have been carefully chosen to reflect the different categories of consumer expenditures."

C2ER was founded in 1961, and continues to exist today as a nonprofit organization, "comprising research staff of chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and agencies, and related organizations throughout the United States." C2ER has published its quarterly Cost of Living Index since 1968. It is comprised of "nearly 100,000 data points gathered primarily by C2ER members located in 400 cities."