These Are the Top 10 Most Expensive States For Single Earners to Meet Basic Needs



Life is expensive, and in these states, it’s even worse.

With the ongoing surge of the cost of living, the minimum income required for an individual to sustain themselves has risen across the entire nation. The July 2023 Consumer Price Index reported a 3.2% escalation in prices within the last 12 months on the “all items index.”

But if you’re looking to move or relocate for a job, there are some states you might need to avoid—or ask for more money—depending on your income.

Personal finance platform GOBankingRates recently conducted a survey on the living costs for a single person in all 50 states to find the average annual wage one needs to sustain

themselves in 2023 and found that Hawaii is the No. 1 state with the highest minimum living wage for singles to get by.

To calculate the yearly expenses for essentials, the researchers used data from the 2021 Consumer Expenditure Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, focusing on costs for a single person. After obtaining the essential cost data, researchers then doubled it to calculate a living wage, accounting for discretionary expenditures and savings.

In Hawaii, a single individual needs a six-figure income of $112,411 to meet basic needs. The state with the second highest is Massachusetts at $87,909, followed by California at $80,013, and New York at $73,226.

Given that housing constitutes a large portion comprising a living wage, it’s no accident that the states requiring the highest average income for an individual have all seen competitive and skyrocketing housing prices. According to a separate report by RentCafe released in August, the four states with the highest living wage requirements are also among the ranks for the most expensive average rent in the country.

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Here are the 10 states in the U.S. with the highest minimum living wages for an individual in 2023, according to the report, as well as the average rent, per RentCafe.

1. Hawaii

Income required: $112,411

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $2,532

2. Massachusetts

Income required: $87,909

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $2,737

3. California

Income required: $80,013

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $2,541

4. New York

Income required: $73,226

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $2,660

5. Alaska

Income required: $71,570

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $1,397

6. Maryland

Income required: $67,915

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $1,816

7. Vermont

Income required: $65,923

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $1,895

8. Oregon

Income required: $65,763

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $1,735

9. Washington

Income required: $65,640

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $1,988

10. New Jersey

Income required: $64,463

Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment: $2,228

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