

How Much Do New York’s Workers Need? At Least \$15 per hour – Both Upstate and Down

Do workers in New York really need \$15 per hour? Opponents of Governor Cuomo’s proposed \$15 minimum wage argue that it is excessive – especially for upstate communities where living costs are lower. However, analysis of regional living costs across New York State shows that by 2021, even in the most affordable upstate regions, a single worker will need at least \$15 per just to afford the basics. And workers supporting children and in the more expensive downstate regions will need even more.

The cost of living analysis presented in this fact sheet is based on the Economic Policy Institute’s (EPI) *Family Budget Calculator*.¹ EPI’s calculations include major expenses, such as housing, child care and health care, together with other essentials like food, clothing and transportation.

1. Basic Family Budgets and Wages Needed for Select Upstate Cities. Analysis of a basic family budget for a single worker in three representative upstate cities – Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse – illustrates this reality. In those cities – which are among the least expensive places to live in New York State – a single worker will by 2021 need \$32,689 in Buffalo, \$33,535 in Rochester, and \$33,791 in Syracuse just to cover basic living costs at a modest level. These living costs mean that a single, full-time worker will need to earn at least \$15.72 per hour in Buffalo, \$16.12 in Rochester and \$16.25 in Syracuse by 2021 just to cover the basics.

Basic Family Budgets & Wages Needed for a Single Worker as of 2021 in Selected Upstate Cities			
	Buffalo-Niagara Falls	Rochester	Syracuse
Housing	\$626	\$656	\$654
Food	\$316	\$316	\$316
Transportation	\$554	\$554	\$562
Health Care	\$331	\$339	\$351
Other Necessities	\$455	\$470	\$469
Taxes	\$443	\$459	\$465
Total (Monthly)	\$2,724	\$2,795	\$2,816
Total (Annual)	\$32,689	\$33,535	\$33,791

**Basic Family Budgets & Wages Needed for a Single Worker
as of 2021 in Selected Upstate Cities**

Hourly Wage Needed (for a full-time worker)	\$15.72	\$16.12	\$16.25
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2. Wages Needed for Basic Family Budgets Across New York State. The tables below present similar cost of living analyses for fifteen regions across the state (known as metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and non-MSAs of New York²). They show the hourly wage that workers will need in each region by 2021 in order to earn a basic family budget for each of the following selected household types: a single adult with no children; a single parent with one child; and two parents with one child. All calculations assume that each adult works full-time; hourly wage rates are per adult in the household.

The tables show that by 2021, single adults everywhere in the state will need more than \$15 to meet basic needs – and adults in downstate regions and supporting children will need even more.

Albany-Schenectady-Troy (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$15.17	\$15.21	\$15.52	\$15.91	\$16.33	\$16.77	\$17.22	\$17.68
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$28.13	\$28.22	\$28.78	\$29.50	\$30.28	\$31.09	\$31.93	\$32.78
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$16.25	\$16.30	\$16.62	\$17.04	\$17.49	\$17.96	\$18.44	\$18.93

Binghamton (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.96	\$14.00	\$14.28	\$14.64	\$15.03	\$15.43	\$15.85	\$16.27
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$26.23	\$26.31	\$26.84	\$27.51	\$28.24	\$28.99	\$29.78	\$30.57
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.62	\$15.67	\$15.98	\$16.38	\$16.81	\$17.26	\$17.73	\$18.20

Buffalo-Niagara Falls (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.48	\$13.53	\$13.80	\$14.14	\$14.52	\$14.91	\$15.31	\$15.72
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$24.85	\$24.93	\$25.43	\$26.06	\$26.75	\$27.47	\$28.21	\$28.96
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$14.66	\$14.70	\$15.00	\$15.37	\$15.78	\$16.20	\$16.64	\$17.08

Elmira (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.48	\$13.53	\$13.80	\$14.14	\$14.52	\$14.91	\$15.31	\$15.72
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$24.85	\$24.93	\$25.43	\$26.06	\$26.75	\$27.47	\$28.21	\$28.96
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$14.66	\$14.70	\$15.00	\$15.37	\$15.78	\$16.20	\$16.64	\$17.08

Elmira (MSA)								
Single Adult	\$13.95	\$13.99	\$14.27	\$14.63	\$15.02	\$15.42	\$15.83	\$16.26
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$27.74	\$27.83	\$28.38	\$29.09	\$29.86	\$30.67	\$31.49	\$32.33
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$16.54	\$16.59	\$16.93	\$17.35	\$17.81	\$18.29	\$18.78	\$19.28

Glens Falls (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$14.79	\$14.84	\$15.14	\$15.51	\$15.92	\$16.35	\$16.79	\$17.24
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$28.89	\$28.98	\$29.56	\$30.30	\$31.10	\$31.93	\$32.79	\$33.67
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$16.55	\$16.61	\$16.94	\$17.36	\$17.82	\$18.30	\$18.79	\$19.29

Ithaca (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$16.79	\$16.84	\$17.18	\$17.61	\$18.07	\$18.56	\$19.06	\$19.57
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$31.71	\$31.81	\$32.44	\$33.25	\$34.14	\$35.05	\$35.99	\$36.95
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$18.23	\$18.28	\$18.65	\$19.11	\$19.62	\$20.15	\$20.69	\$21.24

Kingston (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$15.08	\$15.13	\$15.43	\$15.82	\$16.24	\$16.67	\$17.12	\$17.58
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$29.87	\$29.96	\$30.56	\$31.33	\$32.15	\$33.02	\$33.91	\$34.81
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$17.13	\$17.19	\$17.53	\$17.97	\$18.45	\$18.94	\$19.45	\$19.97

Nassau-Suffolk (HUD Metro FMR Area)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$19.51	\$19.57	\$19.96	\$20.46	\$21.00	\$21.56	\$22.14	\$22.73
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$37.73	\$37.85	\$38.61	\$39.58	\$40.62	\$41.71	\$42.84	\$43.98
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$20.71	\$20.78	\$21.19	\$21.72	\$22.30	\$22.90	\$23.51	\$24.14

New York (HUD Metro FMR Area)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021

New York (HUD Metro FMR Area)								
Single Adult	\$20.92	\$20.99	\$21.41	\$21.94	\$22.52	\$23.13	\$23.75	\$24.38
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$35.38	\$35.49	\$36.20	\$37.10	\$38.09	\$39.11	\$40.16	\$41.23
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$19.65	\$19.71	\$20.10	\$20.61	\$21.15	\$21.72	\$22.30	\$22.90

Poughkeepsie-Newburgh-Middletown (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$17.77	\$17.82	\$18.18	\$18.63	\$19.13	\$19.64	\$20.17	\$20.70
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$32.53	\$32.63	\$33.28	\$34.11	\$35.02	\$35.96	\$36.93	\$37.91
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$18.28	\$18.34	\$18.71	\$19.17	\$19.68	\$20.21	\$20.75	\$21.31

Rochester (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.83	\$13.88	\$14.15	\$14.51	\$14.89	\$15.29	\$15.70	\$16.12
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$26.70	\$26.78	\$27.32	\$28.00	\$28.74	\$29.51	\$30.31	\$31.11
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.45	\$15.50	\$15.81	\$16.20	\$16.63	\$17.08	\$17.54	\$18.01

Rural New York								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$14.75	\$14.80	\$15.09	\$15.47	\$15.88	\$16.31	\$16.75	\$17.19
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$25.21	\$25.29	\$25.80	\$26.45	\$27.15	\$27.87	\$28.62	\$29.39
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.12	\$15.16	\$15.47	\$15.85	\$16.27	\$16.71	\$17.16	\$17.62

Syracuse (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.94	\$13.98	\$14.26	\$14.62	\$15.01	\$15.41	\$15.82	\$16.25
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$26.48	\$26.57	\$27.10	\$27.78	\$28.51	\$29.28	\$30.07	\$30.87
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.41	\$15.46	\$15.77	\$16.17	\$16.59	\$17.04	\$17.50	\$17.96

Utica-Rome (MSA)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$13.94	\$13.98	\$14.26	\$14.62	\$15.01	\$15.41	\$15.82	\$16.25
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$26.48	\$26.57	\$27.10	\$27.78	\$28.51	\$29.28	\$30.07	\$30.87
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.41	\$15.46	\$15.77	\$16.17	\$16.59	\$17.04	\$17.50	\$17.96

Utica-Rome (MSA)								
Single Adult	\$14.86	\$14.91	\$15.21	\$15.59	\$16.00	\$16.43	\$16.87	\$17.32
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$27.06	\$27.15	\$27.69	\$28.38	\$29.13	\$29.91	\$30.72	\$31.54
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$15.93	\$15.98	\$16.30	\$16.71	\$17.15	\$17.61	\$18.09	\$18.57

Westchester County (Statutory Exception Area)								
Household Size	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Single Adult	\$19.00	\$19.06	\$19.44	\$19.92	\$20.45	\$21.00	\$21.57	\$22.14
1 Parent / 1 Child	\$35.76	\$35.88	\$36.59	\$37.51	\$38.50	\$39.53	\$40.60	\$41.68
2 Parents / 1 Child	\$19.84	\$19.90	\$20.30	\$20.81	\$21.36	\$21.93	\$22.52	\$23.12

Endnotes

1. Cost of living calculations are based on the Economic Policy Institute's *Family Budget Calculator*, which lists basic expenses in 2014 dollars (<http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>). Projections to 2021 are based on unpublished composite Consumer Price Index projections by the New York State Division of the Budget.
2. For a definition of MSA and other regions in the Family Budget Calculator, please see *The Economic Policy Institute's 2015 Family Budget Calculator: Technical Documentation* (<http://www.epi.org/publication/family-budget-calculator-technical-documentation/>).

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