



VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
CENTER *for* BUSINESS
& ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Cost of Living Comparisons: Valdosta, Georgia, and the Nation: First Quarter 2025 Report

Overview

Each quarter, the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER, formerly known as ACCRA) reports the Cost of Living Index data based on more than 90,000 prices covering 61 different items ranging from housing, utilities, grocery items transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods and services from communities across the U.S. The first quarter of 2025 survey comparing relative costs of living for “middle management” households among U.S. metropolitan areas and cities shows that it costs 8.3 percent less to live in Georgia communities, on average, than it does to live in the rest of the U.S. Therefore, for each dollar that is required to maintain the average standard of living across the country, Georgia residents are only required to spend about 91.7 cents.

Valdosta’s cost of living is slightly higher than the Georgia state average, with Valdosta residents required to spend about 92.8 cents for each dollar required to maintain the living standards of the average U.S. household. Among Georgia metropolitan areas and cities surveyed, Athens has the highest cost of living with a composite index of 101.2 which is slightly above the national average of 100. Valdosta is ranked as the third most expensive area among the 9 surveyed areas of Georgia.

Cost of Living Comparisons for the Nation

The *Cost of Living Index* measures regional differences in the consumer goods and services excluding taxes and non-consumer expenditures, for professional and managerial households in the top income quintile. Table 1 shows the ten most and least expensive urban areas that participated in the first quarter of 2025 Cost of Living Index. As shown in Table 1, among the 251 urban areas that participated in the first quarter 2025 Cost of Living Index, the after-tax cost for a professional/managerial standard of living ranged from more than twice the national average in New York (Manhattan) NY to more than 20 percent below the national average in Harlingen, TX. Not surprisingly, there is very little change in the top ten most expensive urban areas when compared to the previous periods. The list includes the “usual suspects”, such as New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, etc. Since the national average cost of living index equals 100, the cost to live in Manhattan, for example, is 232.6% of the national average.

Table 1 tabulates the ten least expensive urban areas participating in the cost-of-living index survey. Similarly, to previous quarters, Decatur, IL and Harlingen, TX continue to hold their places in the top 10 places with the lowest cost of living in the U.S. Consistent with the previous quarters, no metropolitan area from Georgia appears on either the ‘Least Expensive’ or ‘Most Expensive’ list. Valdosta ranks as the 143rd most expensive metropolitan area (out of 251 areas) with a composite index of 92.8.

Table 1: The Ten Most and Least Expensive Urban Areas in the Cost-of-Living Index (COLI)

First Quarter in 2025				
National Average for 251 Urban Areas = 100				
Ranking	Most Expensive	COL	Least Expensive	COL
	Urban Areas	Index	Urban Areas	Index
1	New York (Manhattan) NY	232.6	Harlingen TX	78.8
2	Honolulu HI	182.3	Tupelo MS	79.4
3	San Jose CA	181.2	Decatur IL	80.9
4	New York (Brooklyn) NY	163.3	Richmond IN	81.8
5	San Francisco CA	160.3	Oklahoma City OK	81.9
6	Orange County CA	160.1	Muskogee OK	82.0
7	New York (Queens) NY	152.1	Amarillo TX	82.9
8	Los Angeles-Long Beach CA	150.2	Benton Harbor MI	83.1
9	San Diego CA	146.3	Salina KS	83.3
10	Boston MA	145.1	Ponca City OK	83.6

What Do Groceries Cost?

The C2ER grocery index draws data from over 320 million grocery prices derived from 1.5 trillion historical data points collected across the country to generate the most accurate data possible. Dataassembly’s weekly collection covers 200 national and regional retailers and quick service restaurants representing over 150,000 brick and mortar locations across 30,000 zip codes. With food prices still being a big part of the national conversation, C2ER decided to feature those communities once again with the most and least expensive food costs as measured by the grocery item index number. The twenty-six items priced come from a variety of surrogate categories to represent the grocery item component of the index.

Table 2: The Five Most and Least Expensive Places for Grocery Items by Index Number in the Cost of Living Index (COLI)

First Quarter 2025				
National Average for 251 Urban Areas = 100				
Ranking	Most Expensive	COL	Least Expensive	COL
	Urban Areas	Index	Urban Areas	Index
1	Honolulu HI	182.3	Grand Forks ND	90.4
2	Juneau AK	129.8	Harlingen TX	79.2
3	Anchorage AK	124.8	Minot ND	88.7
4	New York (Manhattan) NY	232.6	Waco TX	91.1
5	San Francisco CA	160.3	McAllen TX	82.5

The Most Expensive and Least Expensive Cities for a Dozen Eggs

The price of a dozen eggs has continued to climb since early 2025, driven by the ongoing bird flu outbreak. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the average cost reached \$5.12 in April 2025. When compared with COLI data, this marks a significant increase from the \$4.50 average recorded across participating areas in January. However, with the [World Organization for Animal Health](#) reporting a decline in bird flu cases, egg supplies are expected to stabilize—potentially leading to a normalization of prices in the coming months.

Table 3: The Five Most and Least Expensive Places for a Dozen Eggs

First Quarter in 2025				
National Average for 251 Urban Areas = \$4.50				
Ranking	Most Expensive	COL	Least Expensive	COL
	Urban Areas	Index	Urban Areas	Index
1	San Juan-Bayamón-Caguas PR	\$5.42	Oakland CA	\$2.82
2	Spokane WA	\$5.02	Bakersfield CA	\$2.84
3	Honolulu HI	\$4.99	Sacramento CA	\$2.85
4	Las Vegas NV	\$4.99	Redding CA	\$2.86
5	Reno-Sparks NV	\$4.99	Orange County CA	\$2.87

Results for the Valdosta Metropolitan Statistical Area

Table 4 suggests that Valdosta has a cost of living that is approximately 7.2 percent below the national average. Valdosta’s cost of living remains relatively low, principally because of the low housing prices. It also must be noted that the housing index carries the largest weight in the composite index because of its relative importance in the average consumer’s budget. According to Table 4, the housing index for Valdosta is 82.0 suggesting that housing costs are 18.0 percent less than the national average house price (\$532,390) for all urban areas in this survey.

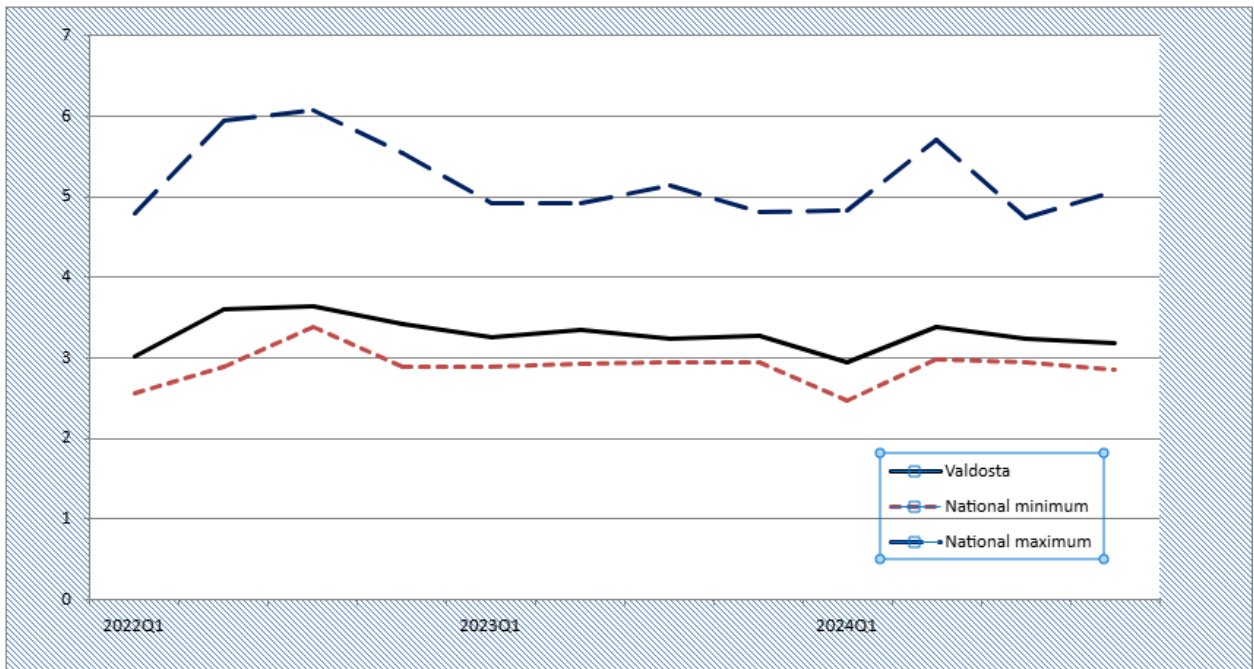
Table 4: Indices for Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Listed alphabetically by city name)

	<i>Composite Index</i>	<i>Grocery</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Utilities</i>	<i>Transportation</i>	<i>Health Care</i>
Athens	101.2	101.2	104.0	104.2	98.6	94.0
Atlanta	96.3	101.7	85.6	104.5	105.5	103.5
Augusta-Aiken GA-SC	87.2	96.3	67.3	107.4	96.0	84.0
Dalton	88.0	97.2	68.9	89.3	91.8	98.0
Douglasville-Douglas County	92.0	95.2	80.7	101.9	96.9	90.2
Dublin-Laurens County	88.6	97.1	75.3	102.7	97.1	103.6
Savannah	92.0	101.6	74.4	104.1	102.1	96.3
Statesboro-Bulloch County	87.6	93.8	79.2	104.4	91.4	91.4
Valdosta	92.8	95.1	82.0	104.7	98.6	92.5
Average	91.7	97.7	79.7	102.6	97.6	94.8

The Price of Gasoline: Average National versus Average Valdosta period from 2022-2024

Gas prices are obviously a concern for many people. Figure 1 shows the recent movement in the quarterly average price for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline for Valdosta (the solid black line), comparing it to the national minimum and maximum prices. The wide variation of gasoline prices is also apparent from the graph. However, Valdosta gas prices consistently stay within the minimum-maximum range, quite a bit closer to the minimum average price than the maximum average.

Figure1: Average Gas Prices - “National versus Valdosta”



Methodology and Data Limitations

The data presented in this report are based on a national survey analyzed by the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) at Valdosta State University. CBER conducts applied research for the business community and serves as a bridge between local businesses and the faculty expertise of the Langdale College of Business Administration. The survey itself is administered by the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER), a nonprofit professional organization based in Arlington, Virginia. Since 1968, C2ER has published quarterly measures comparing living costs across communities.

In the first quarter of 2025, 251 U.S. communities participated by submitting local price data. The average index value for all participating communities is set at 100. Each community's cost of living index reflects how its prices compare to this national average—expressed as a percentage. This index measures relative prices of consumer goods and services among the participating locations only; it does not reflect inflation or

general changes in price levels over time. For details on the methodology, visit <https://www.coli.org/>

Cost of living data are useful as indicators of local economic conditions but should be interpreted with caution. A relatively low cost of living is not necessarily a positive attribute for a community; and a relatively high cost of living is not necessarily negative. For example, relatively low prices may encourage job and population migration into the area; or relatively low prices may mean that the area is depressed, and jobs and individuals are moving out of the area.

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