

NYC Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice



NYC True Cost of Living Measure

Inaugural Report

Measuring What New Yorkers Need to Live with Dignity

March 2026

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Mayor's Office
of Equity & Racial Justice

About the NYC True Cost of Living Measure

Background

In November 2022, New York City voters made history by passing three racial justice ballot measures to advance equity. The third ballot measure voters passed by a margin of 81 percent, mandated the creation of New York City's True Cost of Living (TCOL) measure—a comprehensive standard for determining what it actually costs to live in New York City. This inaugural report delivers on that mandate. New York City has long been a leader in measuring economic need. The NYCgov poverty measure, developed in 2008 with data extending back to 2005, assesses whether families are currently meeting their most basic needs, accounting for government assistance and non-discretionary expenses. It has become a vital instrument for tracking economic hardship, guiding resource allocation, and evaluating the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs.

The NYC TCOL builds on this foundation but answers a different question. While the NYCgov poverty measure assesses whether families have the resources to meet a locally adjusted poverty threshold, the TCOL assesses the resources necessary for individuals and families to be independent of public and private assistance. These two metrics offer complementary perspectives rather than direct comparisons. They both contribute to a better understanding of New York City's economic conditions and provide a multi-dimensional view.

Development

The NYC TCOL measure adapts the Urban Institute's True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) framework, which found that more than half of all Americans lack the resources needed to be economically secure, to New York City's unique context.

The NYC TCOL was developed through a partnership between the NYC Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice (MOERJ), the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYCO), and the Urban Institute. Using the Urban Institute's Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security (ATTIS) model, the measure calculates the total annual costs families face in various expense categories, including housing, food, health care, child care, transportation, taxes, savings, and other necessities. It then compares these costs against all available resources, including market income (earnings, pensions) and non-market support (government transfers, tax credits, subsidies).

A family is considered to not meet the NYC TCOL threshold when their total resources fall short of that threshold. Unlike the federal poverty line (FPL), which applies a single national standard, the TCOL is calibrated specifically for New York City's economy and accounts for the actual costs families face based on their size, composition, and location.

About This Report

This report presents the inaugural findings of the City's official True Cost of Living measure. As a first-year baseline, it establishes the foundation for future tracking and evaluation, examining the following:

- How much it costs for different types of families to live in New York City, broken down by housing, health care, food, child care, transportation, and other essentials.
- What share of New Yorkers cannot cover those costs with their available resources and the gap between costs and resources.
- How economic insecurity varies by race, borough, family size and structure, age, as well as disability status.
- The role that government programs play in helping families narrow or close the gap and understanding the extent of a remaining gap.

All estimates are derived from the Urban Institute's ATTIS model, applied to 2018 American Community Survey data and projected to 2022. Population figures reflect 8.16 million NYC residents.

Key Terms in this Report

NYC True Cost of Living (TCOL) Measure: A framework that calculates what families in New York City need to spend across at least eight cost categories to fully participate in the economy and save for the future and compares those costs against all available resources.

TCOL Threshold: The total annual cost a specific family must cover to be economically secure, based on their location and exact composition (the number and ages of adults and children). There is no single threshold — it varies for every family type.

TCOL Rate: The percentage (or share) of people living in families whose total resources don't meet their TCOL threshold.

TCOL Resource Gap: The dollar difference between a family's total costs and total resources. A family has a resource gap when their resources do not meet their threshold.

Market Resources: Earnings, investment income, and private transfers (like child support and pensions), plus the value of employer-sponsored health insurance and parent-provided child care.

Non-Market Resources: Government supports that help families meet their needs, including cash assistance, tax credits, in-kind benefits (like SNAP and public housing), subsidies, and local programs like Pre-K/3-K.

Total Resources: Everything a family has available to meet their costs, counted together. This includes **market resources** (wages, self-employment income, pensions, investment income, child support, and the value of employer-sponsored health insurance and parent-provided child care) as well as **non-market resources** (government supports like Social Security, SNAP, tax credits, public housing subsidies, Medicaid, and NYC-specific programs like CityFHEPS, SCRIE/DRIE, and free Pre-K/3-K). The 62 percent TCOL rate already accounts for all of these resources. It reflects the share of New Yorkers whose total resources, including government support, still fall short of their costs.

Family (vs. Household): For this measure, a family includes all related persons in a household, plus unmarried partners and their relatives. A single household can contain more than one TCOL family for example, unrelated roommates who share an apartment are calculated as separate families.

Executive Summary

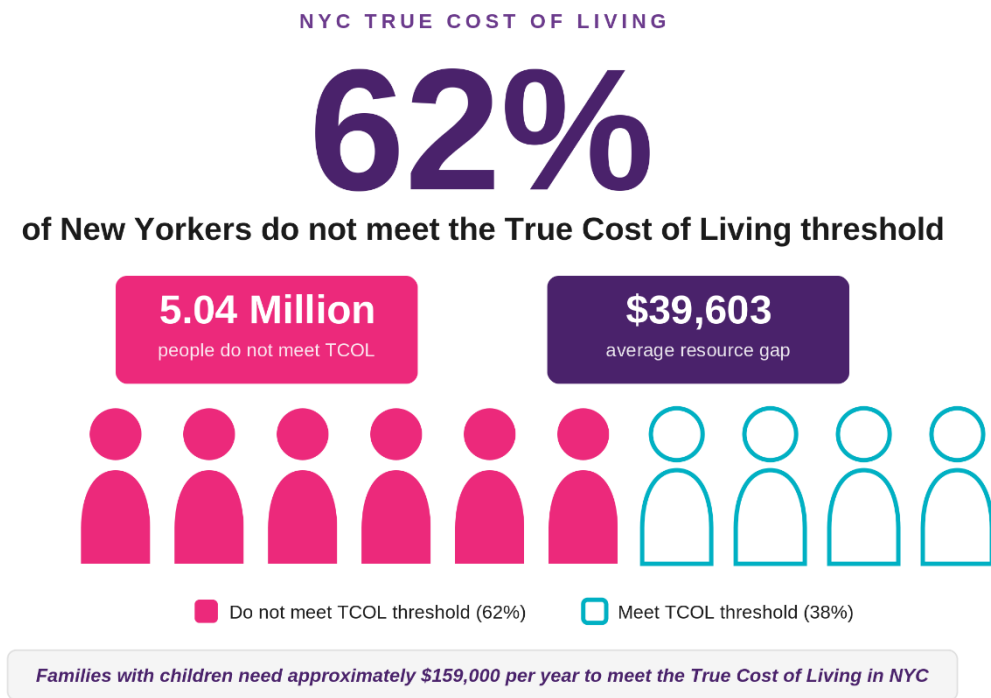


Figure 1. Share of New York City Residents Not Meeting the True Cost of Living Threshold, 2022

The inaugural NYC True Cost of Living (TCOL) measure reveals 62 percent of New York City residents, approximately 5.04 million people, do not have the resources to meet the cost of living in New York City. This finding represents a departure from traditional poverty measures, which in 2022, identify only approximately 18 percent of New Yorkers as experiencing poverty.¹

The TCOL threshold represents the total annual costs a family must cover across eight categories: housing, food, health care, child care, transportation, taxes, savings, and other necessities. A family faces a resource gap when their total resources, both market income and non-market support, do not meet these combined costs. The annual resource gap measures the dollar difference between a family's total costs and total resources, representing the additional amount needed to reach economic security. For a family with children with adults under 65, the median annual TCOL threshold is \$159,197.

Among the 62 percent of New Yorkers whose resources do not meet their TCOL threshold, approximately 8 percent can meet all cost categories except savings, placing them just short of economic security, but unable to build financial reserves. Meeting the TCOL threshold represents a starting point on the pathway toward economic security and prosperity.

The TCOL measure indicates a structural pattern affecting New Yorkers across virtually every demographic category. From the 36 demographic groups analyzed, 29 face resource gaps clustered between \$30,000 and \$50,000 annually—regardless of race, borough, or family composition. This consistency demonstrates that the gap

between income and costs operates as a systemic feature of New York City's economy rather than a reflection of individual circumstances.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

The TCOL indicates substantial disparities across racial and ethnic groups. Hispanic New Yorkers face the highest TCOL rate at 78 percent, meaning more than three in four of those residents currently do not have the resources needed to meet their true cost of living. Black New Yorkers face a TCOL rate of 66 percent, followed by Asian and Pacific Islanders at 63 percent. White New Yorkers have the lowest rate at 44 percent. The 34-percentage point gap between Hispanic and White New Yorkers represents the largest racial disparity identified in this analysis, underscoring the structural inequities this measure was designed to illuminate. Hispanic families face an average annual resource shortfall of approximately \$9,500 larger than white families.

Geographic Disparities Across the Five Boroughs

TCOL rates differ significantly across boroughs. The Bronx has the highest rate at 75.1 percent, meaning three out of four Bronx residents do not meet their true cost of living. Brooklyn (61.5 percent) and Queens (61.1 percent) align with the citywide average, while Manhattan (55.6 percent) and Staten Island (48.2 percent) are below the citywide average. The 27-percentage point difference between the Bronx and Staten Island highlights how economic security varies significantly by location. Notably, the Bronx has the lowest costs but also the least resources.

True Cost of Living by Household Type

Single-earning households face escalating economic insecurity as family size increases. Among single adults with one child, 84 percent face a TCOL resource gap. This rises to 94 percent with two children and 99 percent with three or more children, representing near-universal economic insecurity. The contrast with two-adult households is stark: couples with one child have a rate of 59 percent, a 25-percentage point reduction.

Children and Intergenerational Impact

Children bear one of the heaviest burdens of economic insecurity. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of New York City's children, approximately 1.2 million young people, live in families with a TCOL resource gap. This rate exceeds both working-age adults (59 percent) and adults 65+ (61 percent), raising serious concerns about intergenerational transmission of economic hardship. In the Bronx, 87 percent of children live in families with a TCOL resource gap, and nearly half are in critical need, with resources meeting less than 75 percent of their costs.

Disability

New Yorkers with disabilities face the highest TCOL rates of any population. Among working-age adults with self-care disabilities (difficulty bathing, dressing, etc.), 92 percent face a TCOL resource gap, the highest rate in this analysis, with an average resource gap of \$76,178 annually, nearly double the citywide average.

Government Supports Lower the Cost of Living for New Yorkers

Government programs and tax credits play a critical role in supporting New Yorkers to meet their cost of living. Without non-market resources such as stabilized housing, public benefits such as Universal Pre-K/3-K and tax credits, 67 percent of New Yorkers would face a TCOL resource gap rather than the 62 percent shared in this report. This means existing public benefits programs—including Universal Pre-K/3-K, stabilized housing, SNAP and tax credits-- bring approximately 5 percent of New Yorkers up to meet their true cost of living threshold, demonstrating their importance in addressing substantial resource gaps families face.

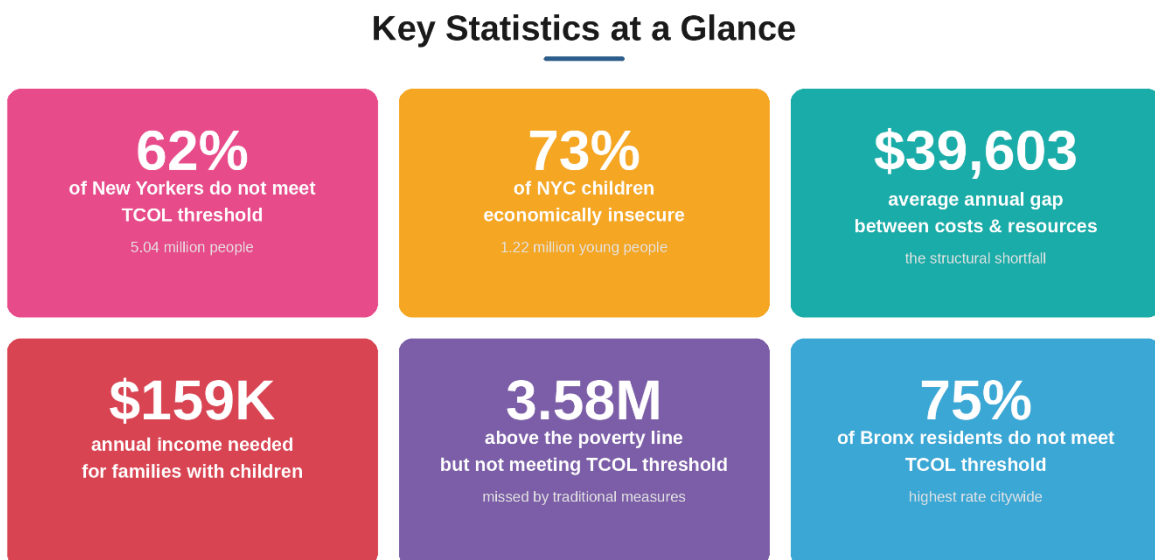
Wage Adequacy and the Resource Gap

The scale of the gap underscores the need for sustained, multi-sector approaches to ensure that every family type in New York City meets their true cost of living. The 2022 wage structure illustrates the scale of the challenge: a single adult without children under 65 needed to earn \$34 per hour to meet their TCOL through market income alone. At the 2022 minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour (since increased to \$17 as of 2026), a single adult earning the minimum wage would have needed to work 90 hours per week — the equivalent of more than two full-time jobs — to meet their true cost of living in New York City. This gap between wages and costs underscores the structural nature of the challenge.

Looking Ahead

With this inaugural report, New York City delivers on the mandate approved by 81 percent of voters and establishes the framework for measuring progress in the years ahead to understand the cost of living with dignity in New York City.

Figure 2. Key Findings at a Glance, New York City True Cost of Living, 2022



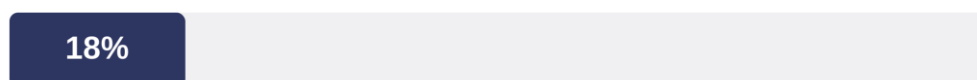
Data Year: 2022 | NYC Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice

Section 1: What Is the True Cost of Living Measure?

1.1 What the NYC TCOL measure shows us.

Who doesn't meet the True Cost of Living in NYC?

Federal Poverty Rate



True Cost of Living Measure



3.58 million
of those New Yorkers are missed by traditional poverty measures

Data Year: 2022 | NYC Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice

Figure 3. Comparing the Federal Poverty Rate and the True Cost of Living Measure, New York City, 2022

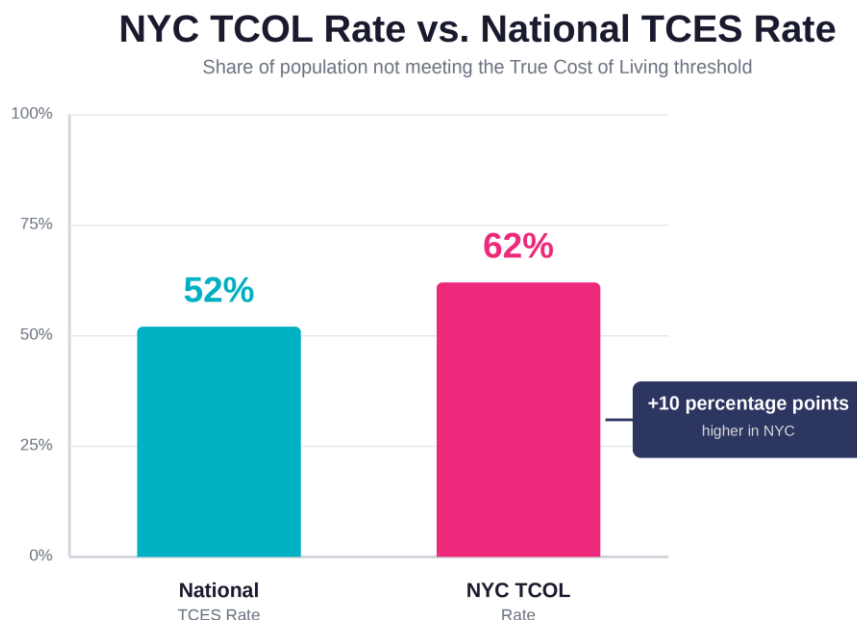
The True Cost of Living measure was developed to answer a fundamental question: What does it actually cost to live with financial security and dignity in New York City? The threshold is set above traditional poverty measures because it captures costs that traditional measures do not, going beyond acute need, including, but not limited to, health care, child care, housing, savings for emergencies and retirement, taxes, transportation, and more.

This means the NYC TCOL measures what it costs to live with dignity, not just necessities for survival. When we report that 62 percent of New Yorkers don't meet their TCOL threshold, we identify residents who cannot meet the cost of living in New York City. Many in this 62 percent are housed, employed, and meeting their basic needs. Still, they are doing so by relying on public benefits, support from extended family, reduced consumption, and/or by accumulating debt.

Approximately 44 percent of New Yorkers are not captured in existing traditional poverty measures and currently struggle to meet the cost of living in New York City. An additional 3.58 million New Yorkers are identified as struggling to meet the cost of

living in New York City and represent the spectrum of economic need among people unable to meet it.

1.2 New York City and National Comparison



Source: Urban Institute | Data Year: 2022

Figure 4. NYC TCOL Rate Compared to National True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) Rate, 2022

Figure 4 compares the NYC TCOL rate to the national True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) rate. The New York City rate (62 percent) exceeds the national rate (52 percent) by 10 percentage points, reflecting the city's higher cost of living.

This difference reflects New York City's cost structure relative to national averages. Housing costs in New York City are significantly higher than the national median housing costs. Child care costs exceed national medians. Health care premiums and out-of-pocket expenses are elevated in the regional market. These factors contribute to higher TCOL thresholds for New York City families compared to families in other metropolitan areas.

New York City's higher rate reflects elevated costs, particularly for housing, child care, and health care, relative to U.S. national averages. The median NYC TCOL cost threshold for families with children (\$159,197) exceeds the national TCES median, driving higher rates of economic insecurity even among employed residents.

1.3 Key Findings at a Glance

The TCOL measure identifies 3.58 million New Yorkers not captured by the federal poverty measure. These are New Yorkers whose incomes exceed federal poverty thresholds, but whose resources fall short of what is needed to meet the cost of living in New York City. Many are employed, housed, and meeting immediate needs,

but do so by relying on extended family support, reduced consumption, or accumulated debt.

Table 1 presents summary findings from the 2022 NYC True Cost of Living measure. These metrics establish the baseline for future annual measurement.

Table 1. Key TCOL Findings, New York City, 2022

Metric	2022 Finding
Citywide Summary	
New Yorkers Not Meeting their TCOL Threshold	5.04 million (62%)
Additional New Yorkers identified beyond federal poverty measure	3.58 million people
Median TCOL Cost threshold for Families with Children, adults under age 65	\$159,197
Populations with Higher TCOL Rate	
Single Parents with children	91%
Hispanic/Latine residents	78%
Children in Families Not Meeting their TCOL Threshold	1.2 million (73%)
The Resource Gap	
Average Annual Resource Gap	\$39,603
Geographic Range	
Bronx	75%
Brooklyn	62%
Queens	61%
Manhattan	56%
Staten Island	48%

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022.

Future annual TCOL measures will track changes in these metrics, enabling assessment of:

- Year-over-year changes in the citywide TCOL rate
- Changes in the size of the population between federal poverty measure and TCOL measure
- Changes in the aggregate resource gap across all New Yorkers not meeting the TCOL threshold and the average gap per person
- Whether more or fewer New Yorkers meet the True Cost of Living Threshold
- Year-over-year changes in cost elements

Section 2: What it Costs to Live in New York City

Section one established that 62 percent of New Yorkers do not have the resources to meet their True Cost of Living threshold. This section examines the specific costs families must cover to meet the cost of living in New York City.

The TCOL threshold is not a single number. It varies by family composition, reflecting differences in housing needs, health care costs, child care requirements, and other expenses. A single adult faces a different cost structure than a family with multiple children. A household with adults over 65 faces different costs than a working-age household.

This section examines the components of the TCOL threshold, including the relative contribution of housing, child care, health care, food, transportation, and other essential expenses. Understanding how the threshold is constructed—and which cost categories exert the greatest pressure on household budgets—provides insight into why so many New York City residents face a True Cost of Living resource gap.

2.1 TCOL Thresholds by Family Type

Table two presents the annual TCOL threshold for selected family types in New York City. The threshold represents the total resources a family requires to meet the full cost of living without reliance on external support, debt, or reduced consumption.

Thresholds vary substantially by family composition. A single adult without children requires \$70,334 annually to meet the TCOL threshold. A family of four (two adults, two children) requires \$166,279—more than double the single-adult threshold. Families with adults 65+ have lower thresholds, reflecting different cost structures.

The last column showing median resources indicates resources families in each category typically has available. For most family types, median resources fall short of their threshold, indicating that more than half of families in that category do not meet their full cost of living.

Table 2. Median Costs and Resources of True Cost of Living by Family Type, New York City

Family Type	Median Costs	Median Resources
Families with Adults Under Age 65		
One Adult, No Children	\$70,334	\$57,680
One Adult, 1 Child	\$97,527	\$66,026
One Adult, 2 Children	\$114,108	\$67,701
One Adult, 3+ Children	\$138,235	\$73,765
One Adult, 1+ Children	\$114,568	\$68,500
Families with Adults Ages 65 and Older		
One Adult, No Children	\$55,545	\$41,326
Two Adults, No Children	\$90,516	\$80,544
One Adult, 1+ Children	*	*
Two Adults, 1+ Children	\$134,891	\$88,853
Three+ Adults	\$171,599	\$163,564

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022. Asterisks represent Data suppressed due to sample size limitations.

Key Finding: The only family type in New York City to meet their cost of living is two adults, no children. Their median costs are \$131,993, and median resources are \$133,089. No other family type is able to meet the median cost of living in New York City.

2.2 What Drives the NYC TCOL Threshold: Cost Components

Table 3 presents the components of the TCOL threshold for three broad family types. Housing and health care together account for the largest share of family costs across all family types.

Table 3. Median Costs and Resources by Family Type, New York City, 2022

	Families with Adults Under 65		Adults 65+
	No Children	With Children	
Total Cost*	\$106,346	\$159,197	\$123,089
Housing	\$22,002	\$26,704	\$24,500
Health Care	\$19,031	\$27,489	\$19,912
Food	\$7,041	\$14,567	\$10,336
Transportation	\$7,737	\$9,754	\$9,754
Child Care	\$0	\$13,416	\$0
Student Debt	\$0	\$0	\$0
Disability Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0
Savings	\$9,667	\$14,472	\$10,073
Taxes	\$18,289	\$15,637	\$9,429
Other Costs	\$16,723	\$24,493	\$16,723
Total Resources*	\$97,341	\$124,007	\$105,500
Market Resources	\$90,367	\$95,277	\$66,539

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.
 Note: Individual cost and resource category medians are computed independently and may not sum to the total cost median due to the statistical properties of medians. The eight core cost categories apply to all families.
 Student debt costs and disability care costs are additional components included in the TCOL threshold for families experiencing those costs. For families with disability-related costs, the TCOL threshold is higher. See Table four for median costs by disability status.

For families with children, housing (\$26,704) and health care (\$27,489) together account for approximately 34 percent of the total threshold.

Median TCOL Threshold and Resources by Family Type, New York City, 2022

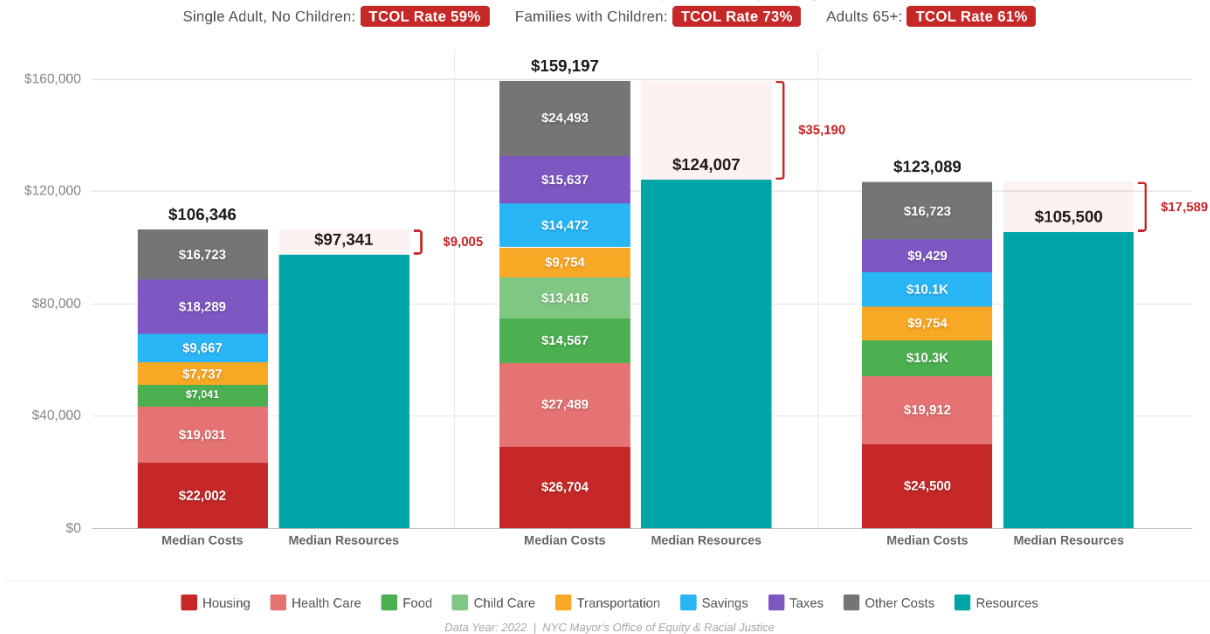


Figure 5. Median TCOL Threshold and Resources by Family Type, New York City, 2022

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022.

Housing

Housing represents one of the two largest cost components across all family types, ranging from \$22,002 annually for adults without children to \$26,704 for families with children.

The TCOL methodology calculates housing costs using data from the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), which captures a full range of housing arrangements in New York City, including rent-stabilized units. This approach reflects actual housing costs at the median rather than market-rate rents alone. Housing costs vary across boroughs, ranging from \$24,500 in the Bronx to \$42,381 in Manhattan.

Health Care

Health care is one of the two biggest cost components for all family types, costing over \$19,000 annually for adults without children and over \$27,000 for families with children.

The TCOL methodology considers the full cost of health care, including employer-sponsored insurance premiums. Traditional income measures often exclude employer premium contributions because they do not appear in household paychecks. However, economic research shows that workers ultimately pay employer premium costs through reduced wage growth. The TCOL methodology includes these costs to reflect the total resources needed for health care coverage.

This approach indicates that health care costs within the TCOL threshold may exceed what families pay out-of-pocket. The difference represents the portion of health care expenses paid on behalf of workers, which still impacts household economic resources.

Child Care Costs

For all families consisting of adults under 65 with children, the median child care costs add \$13,416 annually—a cost not faced by families without children or by families with adults over 65. Cost of living thresholds increase with each additional child. For single-adult households, the first child adds \$27,193 to their threshold. For two-adult households, the first child adds \$15,529. This difference may reflect variation in child care arrangements and household cost structures across family types.

The savings component, \$14,472 for families with children, reflects the resources families need to build emergency reserves. This component distinguishes the TCOL from traditional poverty measures, which do not account for long-term financial security.

Total resources fall short of total costs for all three family types. For families with children, total resources of \$124,007 cover 78 percent of the total costs of \$159,197, leaving an average gap of \$35,190. Market resources alone (\$95,277) cover only 60 percent of costs, indicating the role of government transfers and other non-market resources in closing the gap.

Understanding the NYC TCOL Child Care Figure

The NYC TCOL reports a median annual child care cost of \$13,416 for families with children. This figure may appear lower than other commonly cited estimates of child care costs in New York City, which often range above \$20,000 per year. The difference is driven by three factors:

Population Scope. The NYC TCOL calculates child care costs for all families with at least one child—including families with older, school-age children, who often require less expensive after-school care, and families with teenagers who may require no formal care at all. Other estimates typically focus on a narrower population, such as families with children under age five, where care costs are highest. The NYC TCOL’s broader scope reflects the full diversity of child care needs across New York City families.

Type of Care. The NYC TCOL uses a blend of center-based and home-based care costs (approximately two-thirds and one-third, respectively) to reflect how New York City families actually access care.

Data Year. The NYC TCOL’s child care costs are based on 2022 market rates from the Department of Labor. Child care costs have risen meaningfully since 2022, and future updates to the NYC TCOL will incorporate more current pricing data.

Disability Costs

Table four presents NYC TCOL thresholds for families with members who have disabilities. The American Community Survey (ACS) identifies six types of disability: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulties. "Any disability" indicates that at least one family member reported one or more of these difficulties. "Self-care disability" indicates difficulty with basic activities such as dressing or bathing—typically the most severe form of disability requiring assistance with caregiving. Families with a member who has a self-care disability face substantially higher thresholds than other family types.

Table 4. Median Costs and Resources for Four Special Family Types, New York City, 2022

Family Type	No Disability	Any Disability	Self-Care Disability
Adults under 65	\$106,346	\$141,419	\$190,677
Adults 65 and older	\$123,089	\$137,809	\$178,837

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022. Select Characteristics.

For working-age adults (under 65), the presence of any disability increases the threshold by \$35,073, from \$106,346 to \$141,419. A self-care disability increases the cost of living threshold by \$84,331, from \$106,346 to \$190,677.

In families with adults 65 and older, the disability cost differential is smaller but still substantial. Any disability adds \$14,720 to the threshold. A self-care disability adds

\$55,748, increasing the threshold from \$123,089 to \$178,837. The disability cost differential reflects several factors: additional health care expenses, including specialist care and medical equipment, specialized transportation costs, potential home modifications for accessibility, and personal care assistance.

Taxes

The TCOL threshold, including taxes, is \$15,637 for families with children. This is a cost excluded from traditional poverty measures. This component reflects payroll taxes, income taxes, and other tax obligations that reduce household resources available for other expenses.

Other Costs

The "Other Costs" component is \$24,493 for families with children. Other costs include clothing, personal care, household supplies, telecommunications, and other necessities not captured in the preceding categories.

Section 3: Who Faces a True Cost of Living Resource Gap

In Section two, we established the cost components that various family types of experience in New York City. This section examines which groups of New Yorkers face resource gaps relative to those thresholds.

The TCOL rate reflects the share of the population whose resources do not meet their TCOL threshold. The threshold varies substantially across demographic groups. Family structure, age, race, and ethnicity are each associated with different rates of economic insecurity. This section presents TCOL rates for these groups, identifying which populations face the highest rates and largest resource gaps.

3.1 TCOL Rates by Age and Family Type

Table 5 presents TCOL rates and average resource gaps by age and family type. Overall, 62 percent of New Yorkers have resources that do not meet the TCOL threshold, with an average resource gap of \$39,603.

Table 5. TCOL Resource Gap Rates and Average Resource Gap by Age and Family Type, New York City

Category	% Not Meeting TCOL	Average Family Resource Gap
All	61.8%	\$39,603
By Age Range		
Children (under age 18)	72.5%	\$48,955
Adults age 18-64	58.7%	\$37,468
Adults age 65 and older	60.7%	\$33,585
By Family Type		
Families <65, no children	53.9%	\$30,795
Families <65, with children	70.1%	\$46,758
Families with adults 65+	60.0%	\$37,526

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Children have the highest TCOL rate among all age groups at 73 percent—about 1.2 million children in New York City live in families that struggle to afford the cost of living. The average resource gap for families with children (\$48,955) is \$9,352 higher than the citywide average.

Adults ages 65 and older have a TCOL rate of 60.7 percent, comparable to the citywide overall rate. However, their average resource gap, \$33,585, is \$6,000 below the citywide average, indicating that while many older adults face a resource gap, their gap is narrower than average.

3.2 TCOL Rates by Detailed Family Composition

Table six presents TCOL rates by detailed family composition. Single-adult households with children face substantially higher rates than two-adult households with children.

Table 6. TCOL Resource Gap Rates and Average Gaps by Family Type, New York City

Family Type	% People who do not meet TCOL	Average Family Resource Gap
Families with Adults Under Age 65		
One Adult, No Children	63.6%	\$25,928
One Adult, 1 Child	83.8%	\$36,596
One Adult, 2 Children	93.8%	\$48,569
One Adult, 3+ Children	98.5%	\$66,561
One Adult, 1+ Children	91.0%	\$49,473
Two+ Adults, No Children	47.3%	\$35,208
Two+ Adults, 1 Child	59.5%	\$38,972
Two+ Adults, 2 Children	64.6%	\$45,349
Two+ Adults, 3+ Children	78.9%	\$54,546
Two+ Adults, 1+ Children	66.5%	\$46,134
Families with Adults Ages 65 and Older		
One Adult, No Children	71.3%	\$26,678
Two Adults, No Children	56.5%	\$34,884
One Adult, 1+ Children	*	*
Two Adults, 1+ Children	79.5%	\$51,332
Three+ Adults	55.5%	\$44,012

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022. Asterisks represent data suppressed due to sample size limitations.

The data indicates a clear pattern: TCOL rates increase with each additional child, and single-adult households face higher rates than two-adult households at every family size.

For single-adult households, the TCOL rate rises from 63.6 percent (no children) to 83.8 percent (one child), 93.8 percent (two children), and 98.5 percent (three or more children). Nearly all single adults with three or more children face a TCOL resource gap. The rise in TCOL rates can be attributed to additional costs families with

children face, which include child care expenses. Increases in food and health care costs also contribute to more families with children facing a TCOL resource gap.

For two-adult households, the progression is less steep: 47.3 percent (no children) to 59.5 percent (one child) to 64.6 percent (two children) to 78.9 percent (three or more children). Two-adult households with no children are the only family type with a TCOL rate under 50 percent.

The resource gap also increases with family size. Single adults with three or more children face an average gap of \$66,561. This resource gap is \$27,000 higher than the citywide average.

3.3 TCOL Rates by Race and Ethnicity

Table seven presents TCOL rates and average resource gaps by race and ethnicity. TCOL rates vary substantially across racial and ethnic groups, ranging from 43.7 percent for white residents to 77.6 percent for Hispanic residents.

Table 7. TCOL Resource Gap Rates and Average Resource Gap by Race and Ethnicity, New York City

Race/Ethnicity	% People who do not meet TCOL	Avg Family Resource Gap
All Persons	61.8%	\$39,603
Asian and Pacific Islanders	63.3%	\$40,348
Black People	65.6%	\$36,966
Hispanic People	77.6%	\$43,824
White People	43.7%	\$34,313
Other Racial/Ethnic Groups	56.4%	\$41,119

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Hispanic residents face the highest TCOL rate at 77.6 percent—nearly 16 percentage points above the citywide average and 34 percentage points above white residents. Black residents face a 65.6 percent TCOL rate and Asian and Pacific Islander residents have a TCOL rate of 63.3 percent, both slightly above the citywide average.

The average resource gap ranges from \$34,313 for white New Yorkers to \$43,824 for Hispanic New Yorkers. While racial and ethnic groups differ substantially in who faces a resource gap, the depth of the shortfall is similar across groups. This consistency suggests that structural economic conditions help determine the size of the resource gap families face.

3.4 Special Populations: Disability

Table eight presents NYC TCOL rates for people in families where at least one member has a disability. As previously mentioned, the American Community Survey (ACS) identifies six types of disability: hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulties.

"Any disability" indicates that at least one family member reported one or more of these difficulties. "Self-care disability" indicates difficulty with basic activities such as dressing or bathing—typically requiring daily personal assistance

Table 8. TCOL Resource Gap Rates for Four Special Family Types

	Three-Gen	Student Debt	Disability (Any)		Self-Care Disability	
	Families	w/Children	<65	65+	<65	65+
% Not Meeting TCOL	64.2%	58.9%	80.3%	68.1%	92.0%	82.6%
Avg Resource Gap	\$31,107	\$25,280	\$39,109	\$31,545	\$76,178	\$59,860

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Families with Disability

People in families with any disability face a NYC TCOL rate of 80.3 percent for adults under 65. For people in families with any disability, adults 65 and older, the NYC TCOL rate is 68.1 percent. The rates for persons with disabilities unable to meet the cost of living are substantially higher than the citywide rate of 62 percent.

People in families with a self-care disability face the highest rates in this analysis: 92 percent for adults under 65 and 83 percent for adults 65 and older. The average resource gap for working-age adults with a self-care disability is \$76,178, nearly double the citywide average of a family resource gap of \$39,603.

This disparity reflects the challenges of facing high costs with limited resources. As noted in Section two, people with self-care disabilities face higher thresholds due to additional health care, transportation, and personal assistance costs. This community also experiences limited access to resources due to employment barriers and earnings limitations.

Three-Generation Families

Three-generation families—households containing grandparents, parents, and children—face a TCOL rate of 64.2 percent, modestly above the citywide average. However, their average resource gap (\$31,107) is smaller than the citywide average, suggesting that while these families frequently face a resource gap the multi-generational pooling of resources reduces the depth of the shortfall. The TCOL rate for this population indicates that, with even combined resources, families frequently fall short of the TCOL threshold.

Families with Student Debt

Families with student debt and children face a TCOL rate of 58.9 percent—slightly below the citywide average. Their average resource gap (\$25,280) is the lowest among the special populations examined. This population has higher median resources than the citywide average, which offsets the additional cost burden that student debt represents in the TCOL threshold calculation.

Section 4: TCOL Rates by Borough

Section three examined who faces a NYC TCOL resource gap by demographic characteristics. This section examines how TCOL rates and resource gaps vary across the five boroughs.

New York City's boroughs differ substantially in housing costs, labor markets, and demographic composition. These differences produce variation in TCOL thresholds and resource levels, resulting in different rates and gaps across the city.

TCOL Rates by Borough

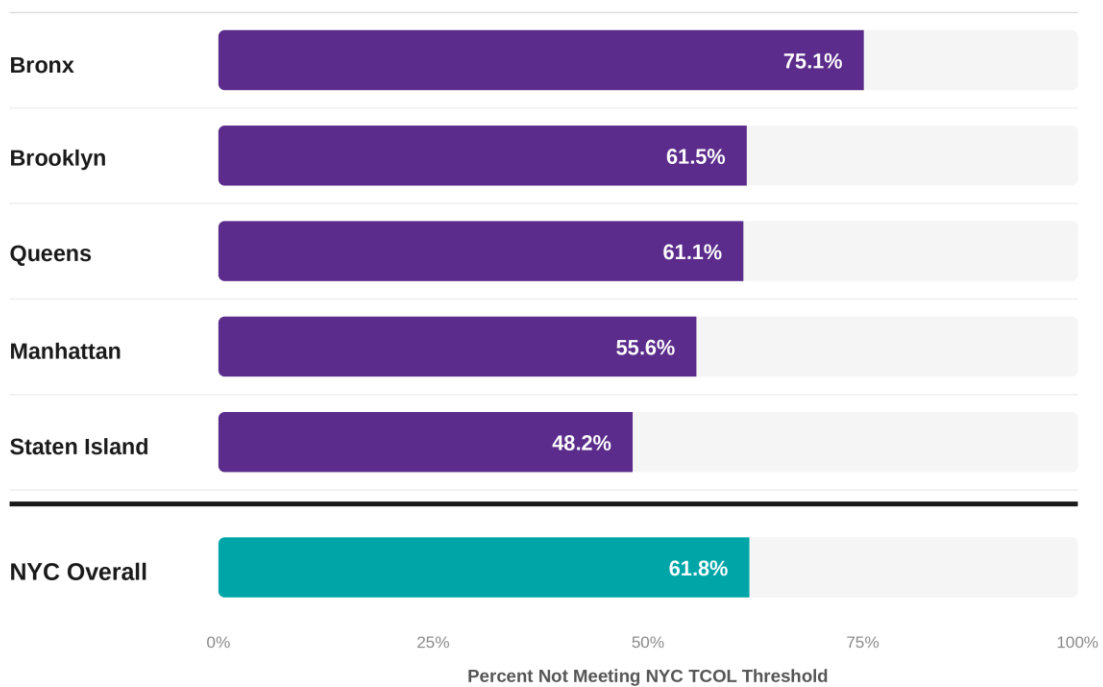


Figure 6. TCOL Rates by Borough, New York City, 2022

4.1 TCOL Rates by Borough

Table nine presents TCOL rates and average resource gaps by borough. Rates range from 48.2 percent in Staten Island to 75.1 percent in the Bronx—a spread of 27 percentage points.

Table 9. TCOL Resource Gap Rates by Borough, New York City, 2022

Borough	Percent Not Meeting TCOL	Adults, no children, Percent Not Meeting,TCOL	Families with Children, Percent Not Meeting TCOL	Average Resource Gap
Bronx	75.1%	67.8%	84.7%	\$39,692
Brooklyn	61.5%	51.2%	70.9%	\$38,208
Queens	61.1%	54.3%	69.8%	\$37,953
Manhattan	55.6%	51.4%	52.9%	\$44,529
Staten Island	48.2%	38.7%	55.6%	\$39,861
NYC Overall	61.8%	53.9%	70.1%	\$39,603

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022. MOERJ compilation from borough-level data.

The Bronx has the highest TCOL rate at 75.1 percent—three-quarters of Bronx residents have resources that do not meet their threshold. Brooklyn (61.5 percent) and Queens (61.1 percent) are near the citywide average. Manhattan (55.6 percent) and Staten Island (48.2 percent) have the lowest rates.

Children face higher TCOL rates than the overall population in every borough. In the Bronx, 86.8 percent of children live in families with a TCOL resource gap—nearly 9 in 10 children. Manhattan and Staten Island have the lowest rates for children at approximately 57-58 percent, though even in these boroughs, more than half of children live in families with a resource gap.

Average resource gaps are relatively consistent across boroughs, ranging from \$37,953 (Queens) to \$44,529 (Manhattan). Manhattan's higher gap reflects the borough's higher thresholds; families who face a resource gap in Manhattan fall further away in dollar terms, though fewer families face a gap overall.

4.2 TCOL Rates by Family Composition Across Boroughs

In most boroughs, families with children face substantially higher NYC TCOL rates than adults without children. In the Bronx, 84.7 percent of families with children face a resource gap, compared to 67.8 percent of adults without children—a difference of 17 percentage points. Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island follow similar patterns, with families with children facing TCOL rates 15-20 percentage points higher than adults with no children.

Manhattan presents a different pattern. The TCOL rate for families with children, 52.9 percent is nearly identical to the rate for adults without children, which is 51.4 percent. This represents a difference of only 1.5 percentage points. The data reflect Manhattan's demographic composition: families with children tend to have higher incomes than the borough's average, while the borough's large population of single adults includes many with lower incomes.

4.3 Racial Disparities by Borough

Racial disparities exist in every borough, but the magnitude varies substantially. Table ten presents NYC TCOL rates by race and ethnicity for each borough.

Table 10. TCOL Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Borough, New York City, 2022

TCOL Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Borough

Percent of residents not meeting the TCOL threshold, 2022

Borough	Hispanic	Black	Asian/PI	White
Bronx	81.8%	69.7%	72.0%	46.5%
Brooklyn	75.1%	64.8%	64.7%	50.3%
Manhattan	85.3%	79.7%	54.5%	32.9%
Queens	71.1%	56.2%	65.3%	48.4%
Staten Island	63.9%	62.8%	55.2%	39.6%
NYC Overall	77.6%	65.6%	63.3%	43.7%



Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022. MOERJ compilation from borough-level data.

Manhattan has the largest racial disparity of any borough. Hispanic residents in Manhattan face a NYC TCOL rate of 85.3 percent, compared to 32.9 percent for white residents—a gap of 52 percentage points. Black residents in Manhattan face a rate of 79.7 percent, also substantially higher than the citywide average for Black residents (65.6 percent).

The Bronx has high TCOL rates across all racial and ethnic groups. Hispanic residents face the highest rate at 81.8 percent. White residents in the Bronx face a 46.5 percent TCOL rate—slightly higher than the citywide average for white residents (43.7 percent). The range between highest and lowest rates in the Bronx (35 percentage points) is narrower than Manhattan's, reflecting the borough's more uniformly high rates across groups.

Queens has the narrowest racial disparities among the boroughs, with rates ranging from 48.4 percent (white) to 71.1 percent (Hispanic)—but still a gap of 23 percentage points. Brooklyn and Staten Island fall between these extremes, with gaps of approximately 25 percentage points.

4.4 Bronx: Housing Costs and TCOL Rates

Despite having the lowest housing costs among the five boroughs—median annual housing costs of \$24,500 compared to \$42,381 in Manhattan—the Bronx has the highest NYC TCOL rate at 75.1 percent. Manhattan, with housing costs 73 percent higher than the Bronx, has a TCOL rate 20 percentage points lower.

This pattern indicates that the cost side of the TCOL equation does not determine economic security by itself. Resource levels—earnings, income, and wealth—play an

equally important role. The Bronx has lower costs but also lower resources, resulting in the highest TCOL rate despite lower cost thresholds. Economic security requires adequate resources relative to costs; lower costs alone do not guarantee security.

Figure seven presents median total costs and median total resources for families with children by borough. In families with children and no adults 65 and older, the Bronx has the lowest median cost (\$142,560) across the five boroughs but the highest TCOL rate (85 percent). Manhattan has the highest median cost (\$201,442) but one of the lowest TCOL rates (53 percent).

True Cost of Living

Costs vs. Resources by Borough (Families with Children and No Adults 65+)

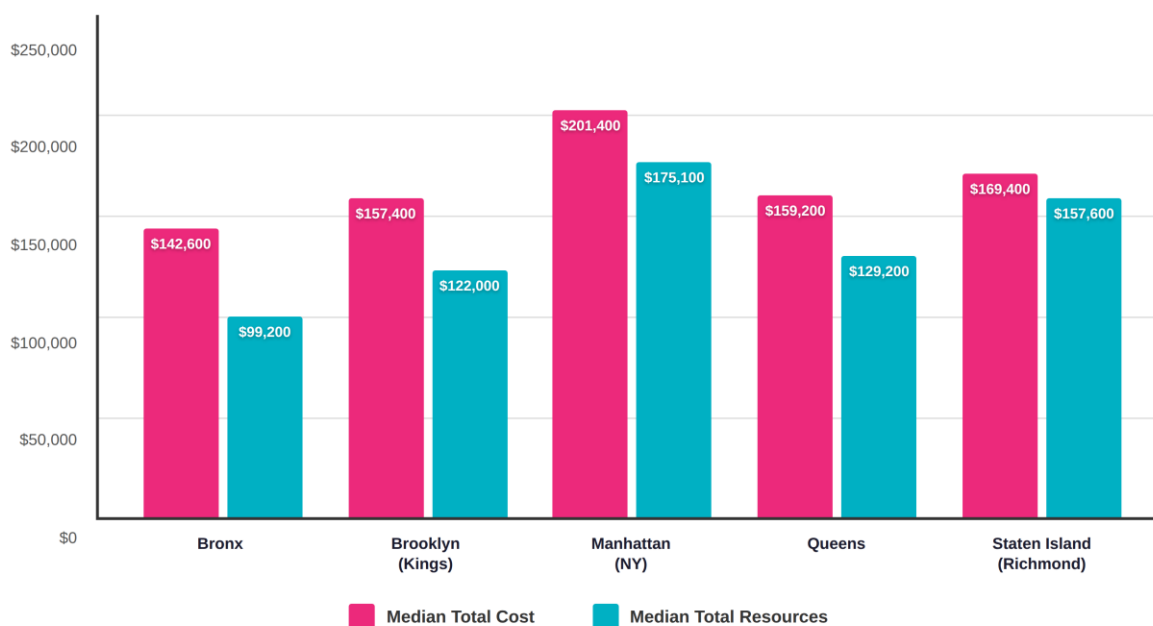


Figure 7. Median Total Costs and Resources for Families with Children by Borough, New York City, 2022

4.5 Resource Gap Consistency

Despite substantial variation in NYC TCOL rates across boroughs, average resource gaps remain relatively consistent. TCOL rates vary by 27 percentage points across boroughs (from 48.2 percent in Staten Island to 75.1 percent in the Bronx), but average resource gaps vary by only \$6,576 (from \$37,953 in Queens to \$44,529 in Manhattan).

This pattern mirrors the demographic gap consistency identified across boroughs in New York City. The labor market and cost structures families experience produce similar gaps regardless of where they live.

Manhattan is a partial exception, with an average gap \$5,000 higher than the citywide average. This reflects Manhattan's higher cost structure; families not meeting the TCOL threshold in Manhattan face larger absolute gaps due to higher housing and other costs.

Section 5: Severity and Depth of the Resource Gap

Section four examined NYC TCOL rates by borough. This section examines how far below—the severity and depth of economic insecurity across New York City.

Not all households with a TCOL resource gap face the same degree of hardship. A family at 95 percent of the threshold experiences a different budgetary and economic situation than a family at 40 percent of the TCOL threshold. This section presents the severity distribution among those with a resource gap and the consistency of resource gaps across demographic groups.

5.1 Severity Distribution

Table eleven presents the distribution of New Yorkers by their resources relative to the NYC TCOL threshold. Among the 62 percent of New Yorkers with a resource gap, severity of the gap varies substantially.

Table 11. Distributional Analysis of TCOL Resource Gaps Among Persons in Families, New York City

Category	Share of NYC	Avg % of TCOL	Avg Gap	Median Costs	Median Resources
Total Below TCOL	61.8%	66.5%	\$39,603	\$122,919	\$78,993
Within 100-110% of TCOL	7.7%	n.a.	n.a.	\$142,753	\$149,131
Within 90-100% of TCOL	8.3%	94.9%	\$7,254	\$140,417	\$133,645
Within 75-90% of TCOL	15.0%	82.2%	\$23,342	\$131,617	\$106,791
Within 50-75% of TCOL	25.4%	63.7%	\$45,423	\$124,261	\$77,902
Less than 50% of TCOL	13.0%	35.6%	\$67,726	\$98,888	\$36,014

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022.

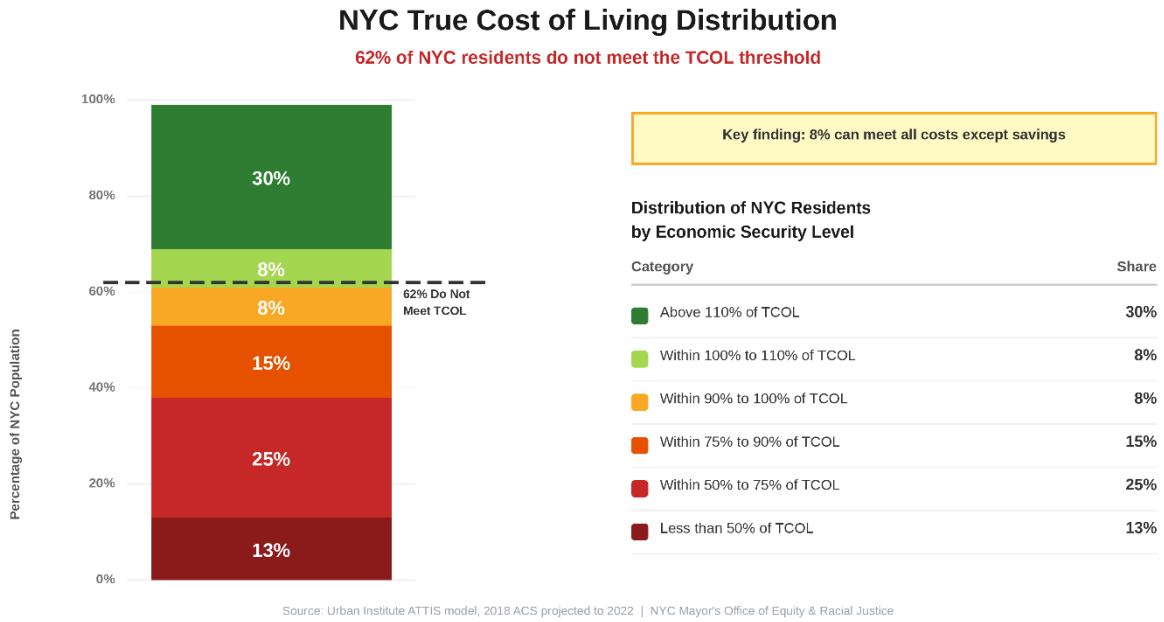


Figure 8. Distribution of New York City Residents by Resources Relative to their TCOL Threshold, 2022

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2018 ACS projected to 2022.

New Yorkers with Resources Under 50 Percent of the TCOL Threshold

Thirteen percent of New Yorkers, approximately 1 million New Yorkers live with resources below 50 percent of the TCOL threshold. These families have median resources of \$36,014 against median costs of \$98,888, leaving an average gap of \$67,726.

Deep hardship rates vary by borough, ranging from 9.0 percent in Staten Island to 15.6 percent in the Bronx. Manhattan has the second-highest rate at 15.2 percent, reflecting the borough's economic polarization between high-income and low-income residents.

New Yorkers with Resources between 50-75% of Resources to meet TCOL

The largest group with a resource gap, which encompasses 25.4 percent of New Yorkers, or approximately 2.07 million people, falls in the severe gap category, with resources between 50 and 75 percent of the threshold. These families have median resources of \$77,902 against median costs of \$124,261, leaving an average resource gap of \$45,423.

New Yorkers with Resources Between 75 and 90 Percent of the TCOL Threshold

Fifteen percent of New Yorkers, approximately 1.2 million people, have resources between 75 and 90 percent of the TCOL threshold. These families have median resources of \$106,791 and median costs of \$131,617, resulting in an average resource gap of \$23,342. This group covers more of their costs than any other below-threshold band yet remains meaningfully short of meeting their true cost of living.

Together with the 8.3 percent near the threshold (90–100 percent), this group represents nearly one in four New Yorkers with a resource gap whose resources cover at least 75 percent of their costs.

New Yorkers with Resources Between 90 and 100 Percent of the TCOL Threshold

As seen in Figure eight, at the other end of the spectrum, 8.3 percent of New Yorkers have resources that sit just under their threshold, with resources between 90 and 100 percent of what they need. Their average gap of \$7,254 represents a relatively small gap—approximately \$600 per month.

An additional 8 percent of New Yorkers have resources between 100 and 110 percent of the threshold. These households meet their NYC TCOL threshold and are economically secure but have limited margin for unexpected expenses or economic disruption.

5.2 The Resource Gap Pattern: Gap Consistency Across Demographics

The preceding sections examined TCOL rates across demographic groups. A consistent pattern emerges: while rates vary substantially, average resource gaps cluster within a relatively narrow range.

Figure nine presents average resource gaps for 36 demographic categories. Twenty Nine of 36 categories (81 percent) fall within a \$30,000 to \$50,000 annual resource gap range. The mean family resource gap across all categories is \$39,603.

The Structural Floor: Consistent Resource Gaps across thirty-six demographic categories

New York City, 2022. Average family resource gap for those not meeting the True Cost of Living threshold.

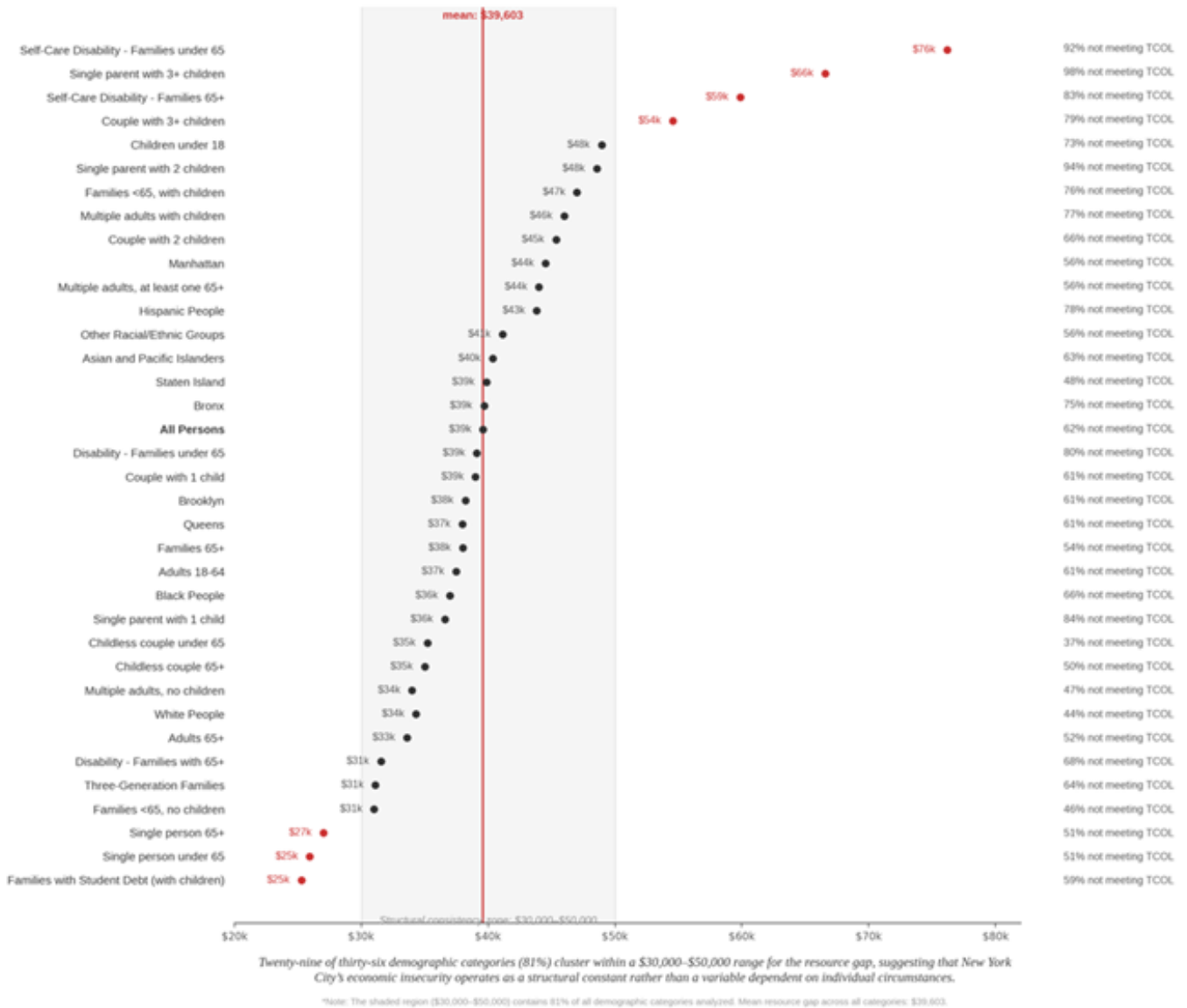


Figure 9. Average Resource Gap by Demographic Category, New York City, 2022

Note: Shaded region (\$30,000 to \$50,000) contains 81 percent of demographic categories analyzed. Mean resource gap across all categories: \$39,603.

NYC TCOL rates across these categories range from 37 percent to 98 percent, a spread of 61 percentage points. Yet resource gaps range from \$25,280 to \$76,178, with the large majority clustering near the mean. This pattern indicates that demographic characteristics influence who faces a resource gap, while structural economic conditions determine the depth of the gap. This pattern is consistent across race and ethnicity. Hispanic families face an average gap of \$43,824; Black families, \$36,966; Asian and Pacific Islander families, \$40,348; and White families, \$34,313. The pattern is also consistent across geography: gaps range from \$37,953 in Queens to \$44,529 in Manhattan, with the Bronx (\$39,692), Brooklyn (\$38,208), and Staten Island (\$39,861) falling within this range.

Seven categories fall outside the \$30,000–\$50,000 range. Four face larger gaps: families with self-care disabilities under 65 (\$76,178), single parents with three or more children (\$66,561), families with self-care disabilities 65 and older (\$59,860), and couples with three or more children (\$54,546). Three face smaller gaps: single persons under 65 (\$25,928) and families with student debt with children (\$25,280).

Section 6: Market Resources and Government Supports

The preceding sections defined the TCOL threshold, those who face a resource gap, geographic patterns, and the severity of resource gaps to meet the cost of living in New York City. This section examines the composition of family resources, distinguishing between market resources and government support.

6.1 Market Resources and Total Resources

The NYC TCOL methodology distinguishes between market resources and total resources. Market resources include earnings, investment income, and private transfers. Total resources add government transfers such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, public assistance, SNAP, and tax credits. The difference between total resources and market resources represents the contribution of government support to family budgets.

Table 13. Median Costs and Resources by Family Type, New York City, 2022

Family Type	Median Cost	Total Resources	Market Resources	Non-Market Resources
Adults under 65, no children	\$106,346	\$97,341	\$90,367	\$6,974
Adults under 65, with children	\$159,197	\$124,007	\$95,277	\$28,730
Adults 65 and older	\$123,089	\$105,500	\$66,539	\$38,961

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022.

For families with children, market resources (\$95,277) cover 60 percent of the median TCOL threshold (\$159,197). Government transfers add \$28,730, bringing total resources to \$124,007 and coverage to 78 percent of the threshold. The remaining gap of \$35,190 represents 22 percent of the threshold.

For adults without children, market resources cover 85 percent of the threshold. Government transfers add \$6,974, bringing total resources to 92 percent of the threshold.

For adults 65 and older, market resources (\$66,539) cover 54 percent of the threshold. Government transfers, primarily Social Security, add \$38,961, bringing total resources to \$105,500 and coverage to 86 percent of the threshold. Non-market resources account for 37 percent of total resources in older adult households, the highest share among the three family types.

6.2 Wage Adequacy

The preceding sub-section identified that market resources cover 85 percent of the TCOL threshold for adults without children. This section examines how minimum-wage employment contributes to that coverage.

Table 14. Minimum Wage Coverage of TCOL Threshold, Single Adult Without Children, New York City, 2022

	Annual Amount	Share of Threshold
TCOL Threshold Single Adult No Children	\$70,334	100%
Full-Time Minimum Wage Earnings	\$31,200	44.4%

Note: Based on NYS minimum wage of \$15.00/hour and 2,080 annual work hours. The NYS minimum wage increased to \$17/hour effective January 2026.

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022 (threshold); NYS Department of Labor (minimum wage).

At the 2022 NYS minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour (the minimum wage has since increased to \$17 per hour as of January 2026), a full-time worker earns \$31,200 annually. This covers 44 percent of the TCOL threshold for a single adult without children (\$70,334). Meeting the threshold through minimum-wage work alone would require 90 hours per week, equivalent to more than two full-time jobs.

The gap between full-time minimum wage earnings and the TCOL threshold is \$39,134 annually. This gap persists for the family type measured. Looking at the median for families with children, where the threshold is \$159,197, full-time minimum wage earnings cover 20 percent of the threshold.

6.3 Non-Market Resources and Supports Bring Families in New York Over the Cost of Living threshold

Government supports help increase total resources, bringing people closer to meeting their threshold. Figure ten presents NYC TCOL rates with and without non-market resources by borough. Citywide, non-market resources reduce the TCOL rate by 5 percentage points, from 67 percent to 62 percent. The reduction ranges from 2 percentage points in Manhattan to 8 percentage points in Staten Island. Across all boroughs, non-market resources reduce the share of residents facing a TCOL resource gap, but the majority still face a resource gap in four of five boroughs even after accounting for government supports. The data indicate current non-market resources help to better meet the cost of living families experience in New York City.

Impact of Non-Market Resources on the Share of People in Families Not Meeting the True Cost of Living by Borough

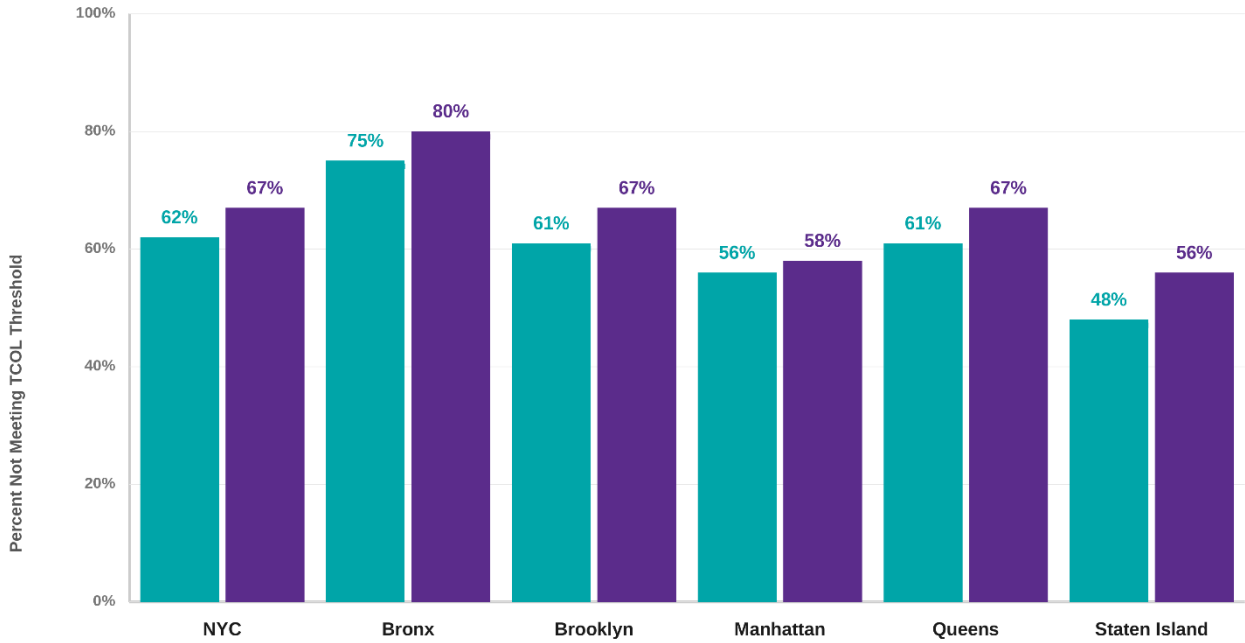


Figure 10. TCOL Rates With and Without Non-Market Resources by Borough, New York City, 2022

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2018 ACS projected to 2022.

These baseline estimates establish a foundation for monitoring the effectiveness of government support over time. Future TCOL reports will enable assessment of whether program expansions or contractions affect the share of the population that can meet the True Cost of Living threshold.

Methodology for NYC True Cost of Living Measure

Methodology

The following methodology was developed by the Urban Institute in partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice (MOERJ) and City partners. This section briefly discusses each of the cost elements used to determine the thresholds for the NYC TCOL and the resources that are available to families. Additional details on the data underlying this analysis and the process for estimating costs and resources can be found in Appendix B.

Costs

The TCOL measure attempts to account for all the costs a family needs to meet to be economically secure, including paying for adequate housing, health care, caregiving, transportation, schooling, and insurance, as well as saving for unexpected expenses. It also accounts for differences in circumstances between families based on their location in NYC and family structure. Below, we describe the data we use to measure each of these costs.

Housing

The TCOL uses data on rental costs from the New York City Housing Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS) to estimate expenses in 2022.^{2,i} The NYCHVS is a supplement to the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS) and provides information on the rental costs for both occupied and vacant units, and the characteristics of units available for occupancy. We use the survey to estimate median rents for all units and accessible units, and we add on the cost of utilities for each unit size.³

The total housing cost for a family depends on their borough, household composition, disability status, and the age and gender of the children in the unit. Single person households are assumed to require a studio apartment, and one bedroom is needed per adult or couple in the household. For units with children, households require one bedroom for every two children of the same gender under age 12 and one additional bedroom per child ages 12 to 18.⁴ For example, a family with two parents and three children, two girls ages 4 and 16 and one boy aged 10, would be assigned the household rent for a standard four-bedroom unit. The NYC TCOL also considers the differential housing expenses families may face if they have a household member with a disability. To account for these potential expenses, if a household includes an individual with a mobility limitation, we instead assign that

² The source data reflect rental prices in 2023. We use the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers for rent of primary residence to adjust the costs to 2022 dollars. See “Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Rent of Primary Residence in New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 17, 2025,

https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUURS12ASEHA?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true

³ See appendix for additional details.

⁴ Households are capped at a maximum of 4 bedrooms.

household the cost of rent for an accessible unit (units that can be accessed without climbing steps or stairs).⁵

Food

Food costs are based on the Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) June 2022 Low-Cost Food Plan (LCFP).ⁱⁱ The LCFP represents the amount a family must spend to meet their nutritional needs on a modest budget in the 48 contiguous states.⁶ We capture county-level variability in food costs by modifying the LCFP-estimated food expenses using an adjustment factor developed from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap (MMG) data.ⁱⁱⁱ The MMG calculates the average per-meal costs for food-secure households in the five NYC counties (Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond) and we create a county-level adjustment factor by inflating food costs by the ratio of each county’s MMG meal cost to the national meal cost. We further adjust the FNS data by calculating the mean food plan costs across “males” and “females” and for four age groups: 0–5, 6–11, 12–18, and 19 and older. The total food costs for a family are the sum of food costs across all individual family members (based on the county where they live) and adjusted by the USDA’s recommended family size adjustment factors.⁷

Health Care

The TCOL factors in two types of health expenses: monthly health insurance premiums and additional medical out-of-pocket expenses, including the cost of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medical supplies, co-payments, and deductibles.

Insurance Premiums

Health insurance premiums are based on the cost of the second lowest-cost silver plan (SLCSP) in the health insurance marketplace as of 2022. The second lowest-cost silver plan provides essential health benefits at a moderate cost and is the standard against which premium subsidies are determined. The cost data are obtained from Kaiser Family Foundation’s (KFF’s) Health Insurance Marketplace Calculator.^{8,iv} In New York, health insurance premiums vary by geographic location and across four family types (individuals, with and without children and couples, with and without children). Health insurance costs are determined based on the health insurance unit, which is defined

⁵ The ACS asks six questions about disability limitations. Individuals that have difficulty walking or climbing stairs require accessible housing in the TCOL. See "How Disability Data are Collected from The American Community Survey," US Census Bureau, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html>.

⁶ FNS’s Thrifty Food Plan is one step below the Low-Cost Food plan and is the original basis of the federal poverty line. The more generous Low-Cost Food Plan represents the cost of food in the 25th to 50th percentile of food spending.

⁷ The base food plans estimate costs for individuals in four-person households. Costs for additional household sizes can be calculated using USDA’s recommended adjustment factors: 1-person household—add 20 percent; 2-person household—add 10 percent; 3-person household—add 5 percent; 4-person household—no adjustment; 5- or 6- person households—subtract 5 percent; 7- (or more) person households—subtract 10 percent.

⁸ The source data reflect premium prices in 2024. We use the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers for medical care to adjust the costs to 2022 dollars. See “Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Health insurance in U.S. city average, All urban consumers, Not seasonally adjusted,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/CUUS0000SEME>.

as individuals and married couples plus their children under age 26; therefore, a single family may include more than one health insurance unit. The family's total health insurance expenses are equal to the sum of health insurance premiums across all individual family members.

Medical Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Estimates of medical out-of-pocket (MOOP) spending are based on data from the Current Population Survey's Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC). We tabulate median MOOP spending on over-the-counter supplies, and non-over-the-counter items, including co-payments and deductibles, by state and age group in 2022.⁹ We then impute this data to the American Community Survey data and adjust the state MOOP expenses using a Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) level adjustment factor.^{10,v} Each individual is assigned MOOP expenses based on their age and PUMA. A family's total MOOP spending is the sum of MOOP costs across all individual family members.

Caregiving

The NYC TCOL considers expenses related to two types of caregiving: child care and care for people with self-care limitations.

Child Care

We obtain data on the cost of home-based and center-based care in 2022 from the Department of Labor's National Database of Child care Prices.^{vi} Prices are based on market rate survey data in each state and vary by type of care (home- or center-based), age of the child, and location. About a third of families in New York City use home-based child care and we capture this variation by applying weights to the cost of center and home-based care in New York City.^{11,vii} The NYC TCOL uses the weighted cost of home- and center- based care to determine child care expenses for each child aged 11 or younger and each child ages 13-18 with a disability.¹² Costs are applied based on the ages of children in the family. The cost of infant care is used for infants and 1-year-olds, the cost of toddler care is used for children aged 2, the cost of pre-school care is applied for children aged 3 or 4, and the care expenses for school-age children is applied for all children aged 5 and older.

⁹ Median MOOP expenses are based on people who are not enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP and do not receive marketplace coverage with a subsidy.

¹⁰ Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are Census-defined geographic areas. They represent non-overlapping, statistical geographic areas in each state with at least 100,000 people. See "Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)," US Census Bureau, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/pumas.html>.

¹¹ The weights are based on estimates from the Early Childhood Poverty Tracker. The costs of home- and center-based care are available by age group for infants, toddlers, pre-school, and school-age children. For each age group, we multiply the cost of home-based care by 0.3333 (1/3) and the cost of center-based care by 0.6667 (2/3), then sum the home- and center-based values to compute total child care costs by age group.

¹² Disability status is determined by receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

Disability

The NYC TCOL also attempts to factor in costs that families caring for a person with a disability may incur. The ACS does not provide information on caregiving needs; therefore, we must make assumptions about who needs care, how much care they require, and the cost of the care.

First, we determine which individuals need care. The NYC TCOL assumes that all individuals with self-care difficulties require caregiving assistance. We focus on this limited group because these individuals have identified that they have difficulty independently caring for themselves (e.g. bathing and dressing) and therefore are most likely to require support from a caregiver.

Even among those with a self-care limitation, individuals may have different caregiving needs based on the severity of their disability. We attempt to capture varying levels of severity by developing a two-tier care model for families in the ACS. We generate these tiers of care by conducting a review of data describing care needs and hours of unpaid care provided by family members.¹³ The data generally shows that a larger share of individuals do not receive full-time care, but this can vary substantially across the population. The two-tier approach allows us to model the higher cost of care for some families, rather than applying the lower average hours of care to all people with disabilities. Based on the ranges in the data, we estimate that a majority (60 percent) of adults with self-care disabilities require a lower level of care (20 hours per week) and the remaining 40 percent of adults with self-care disabilities require a higher level of care (40 hours per week). We assume that all children with self-care disabilities require full-time care.

Finally, we estimate the cost of care using data on the hourly rate for home-health aides from Genworth's Cost of Care Survey.^{viii} The median rate for a home health aide in New York City was \$31.98/hour in 2022.¹⁴ Using the two-tier model and the hourly cost of care, we assume that 60 percent of adults with disabilities have caregiving costs of about \$33,000 a year and 40 percent of adults with disabilities (and all children with disabilities) have annual caregiving costs of about \$67,000.¹⁵

Transportation

Transportation costs are derived from the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index.^{ix} The data source provides information on the annual cost of auto ownership, auto use, and transit use for households in each county in 2022.^x We assign transportation expenses based on the costs for households at 80 percent of the area median income. Each family is assigned the median cost of transportation for households in their borough.

¹³ We reference a variety of sources to guide our two-tier caregiving model. See the Appendix for additional discussion of the report findings.

¹⁴ We begin with data on the hourly cost of care for a home health aide in 2023 (\$33/hour), then deflate the hourly rate to 2022 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U). See "Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Not Seasonally Adjusted," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 17, 2025.

¹⁵ Some children with self-care disabilities will incur both child care and disability caregiving expenses. We assume that the combined cost of caregiving for these children does not exceed \$67,000.

Technology

Families rely on access to technology for employment, education, and social connection, therefore the NYC TCOL factors in these costs using reasonable estimates of broadband and cell phone service. We set monthly internet expenses at \$60 per household.^{16,xi,xii} The TCOL assumes each person aged 13 and older requires a cell phone. The cost of the first phone is \$65 per month, and the cost of each additional phone is 50 percent of the base cost (e.g. a family with three individuals would have a monthly cell phone bill of \$130).

Student Debt

Estimates of debt payments are developed using Urban Institute's Debt in America tool.^{xiii} The tool provides county level data on median monthly debt payments in 2022, and we use this information to impute debt expenses onto a portion of adults ages 19-45 who have completed at least some college education. We select a portion of adults in each county to assign student debt expenses; the share of adults with monthly payments is equal to the number of student debt holders in a county as a percentage of adults with any college education in the county. Each adult that is imputed to have debt expenses is assigned the median debt payment for their county.

Taxes

The ATTIS model includes a tax calculator that simulates each family's tax liability, including federal income taxes, state income taxes, New York City income taxes, and payroll taxes.¹⁷ Taxes are factored into the family budget as costs. Families with higher incomes will have higher tax liabilities and, as a result, higher TCOL thresholds.

Miscellaneous

We assume all families require additional funds for expenses that are not otherwise captured in the above cost categories. Miscellaneous expenses are estimated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey.¹⁸ We obtain data on aggregate consumer costs in the New York City metro area in 2021-2022 for five categories of expenses: apparel and services, housekeeping supplies, personal care products and services, food away from home, and civic engagement.^{19,xiv} We then use national consumer expenditure data that varies by family size to develop a household size adjustment factor.^{xv} We apply the adjustment factor to the NYC metro area-specific costs to develop estimates of miscellaneous expenses for households with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more people.

¹⁶ A single household may contain multiple families. In these circumstances, the cost of broadband is divided between the families.

¹⁷ The TCOL does not account for other types of taxes, including property taxes or sales taxes.

¹⁸ This approach is based on a process developed for MIT's Living Wage Calculator.

¹⁹ Civic engagement includes data across three consumer expenditure cost categories: entertainment, reading, and education.

Savings

Economically secure families must be able to save for unexpected expenses, like medical bills or car repairs. To account for these costs, the NYC TCOL sets a savings target for all families with any adults ages 18 to 64 (we assume adults ages 65 and older are dissaving).

Standard financial guidance recommends saving at least 20 percent of pre-tax income each year.^{xvi,xvii} The NYC TCOL savings rate is conservative; we assume families must save 10 percent of all other costs assigned to the family. The NYC TCOL bases the savings rate on costs, rather than income, to avoid setting too-low savings thresholds for families with low earnings. For example, a family with \$30,000 in earnings would save only \$3,000 a year with a 10 percent income-based savings rate, which is unlikely to set them up to meet the cost of living, while a family earning \$500,000 would be expected to save \$50,000 a year to meet the TCOL. Setting the savings rate as a share of costs ensures families with similar compositions and needs have comparable savings targets to cover their expenses and achieve financial security.

Resources

Once we have established the expenses families face, we factor in the resources available to them to meet the NYC TCOL thresholds. Information on resources is obtained using income and characteristics reported in the ACS and additional resource estimates simulated by the Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security model (ATTIS), including:

- annual earnings, including wages, salary, commissions, bonus, or tips, from all jobs,
- positive self-employment income,
- interest, dividends, rent, royalties, and income from estates or trusts,
- pension income and distributions from retirement savings accounts,
- other cash income, including child support received, veterans' benefits, workers' compensation, alimony, and any other regularly received cash income,
- the value of employer or government provided health insurance, as well as subsidies that reduce premium or out-of-pocket expenses,
- the value of family-provided care for children and people with disabilities,
- the value of state, federal, and city tax credits (computed by ATTIS based on family composition and earnings),
- the value of cash transfers from social insurance and public assistance programs, including unemployment compensation, Social Security, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and other cash assistance (under-reported benefits are aligned with administrative data using ATTIS),
- the cash value of in-kind public supports including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the value of public housing and housing vouchers, energy assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and child-care subsidies (under- and non-reported benefits are aligned with administrative data using ATTIS),

- the cash value of NYC-specific in-kind public supports, including housing assistance from City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS), Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE), and child care assistance through free Pre-K and 3-K programs (these non-reported benefits are aligned with administrative data using ATTIS).

Estimating the True Cost of Living in New York City

We estimate the New York City True Cost of Living by combining data on costs and resources to determine whether families have sufficient resources to meet the TCOL in the city. To do this, we first use ATTIS to identify the demographic, financial, health, and geographic information for each person in the ACS. We use this information to determine each family's unique costs thresholds, based on the size and characteristics of each person in the family. Next, we determine each family's total resources; this includes information reported in the ACS, like earned income; resources estimated by ATTIS, including receipt of safety net benefits and tax credits; and the resources we assign to families, including the value of health insurance and caregiving provided by family members.²⁰ We then compare each family's total costs and resources. We consider the cash value of most resources. For example, a family that receives a housing subsidy of \$1,000 would have their costs compared to that subsidy amount. However, some resources, like Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), do not have a clear monetary value. We factor in these resources by fully offsetting the cost of health insurance premiums for individuals that receive benefits from these programs. Families with total costs in excess of their total resources are determined to face a TCOL resource gap.

Limitations of the NYC True Cost of Living Measure

While the NYC True Cost of Living measure represents a significant advancement in understanding economic security in New York City, several important limitations must be acknowledged to ensure appropriate interpretation and application of the findings. These limitations reflect the constraints of available data sources and the methodological choices necessary to create a comprehensive yet feasible measurement framework.

²⁰ The family is defined as all related persons in a household, plus cohabiters and their relatives, and any unrelated children in the household who are cared for by the family. Households may include more than one family, and some families may consist of a single individual.

Data Limitations

The data reflect 2022, not today.

The NYC TCOL is built on 2018 American Community Survey data projected forward to 2022 economic conditions. It does not capture the effects of post-pandemic inflation, recent policy changes (like expanded child tax credits or NYC Care), or shifts in the housing market since 2022. This is a baseline year. Future reports will use more current data and allow year-over-year comparison.

Borough-level.

The geographic analysis covers the five boroughs but doesn't reflect within borough variation. The borough-level rates smooth over these differences within borough.

Not all taxes or informal resources are captured.

On the cost side, the NYC TCOL includes income and payroll taxes but excludes property and sales taxes. On the resource side, it does not capture informal supports like help from community organizations, religious institutions, or extended family networks that some families rely on. Some government benefits may also be underreported in the survey data, though the ATTIS model corrects for known underreporting in several major programs.

This is a family-level measure, not individual.

The NYC TCOL is calculated at the family level. It assumes resources are shared within a family. It does not capture unequal distribution of resources within households, which can affect individuals differently, particularly women, children, and elderly family members.

Looking Ahead

The NYC True Cost of Living measure will continue to evolve to better capture the economic realities facing New Yorkers. In partnership with the Urban Institute, future reporting will refine existing cost estimates and may incorporate additional resources. Future reporting may also include analysis of wages and occupations that provide the resources needed to meet the True Cost of Living in New York City.

Appendix A

Data Tables

Table 2. Median Costs and Resources of True Cost of Living by Family Type, New York City

Family Type	Median Costs	Median Resources
Families with Adults Under Age 65		
One Adult, No Children	\$70,334	\$57,680
One Adult, 1 Child	\$97,527	\$66,026
One Adult, 2 Children	\$114,108	\$67,701
One Adult, 3+ Children	\$138,235	\$73,765
One Adult, 1+ Children	\$114,568	\$68,500
Two Adults, No Children		
Two+ Adults, 1 Child	\$147,522	\$130,449
Two+ Adults, 2 Children	\$166,279	\$141,449
Two+ Adults, 3+ Children	\$186,554	\$138,243
Two+ Adults, 1+ Children	\$166,034	\$136,766
Families with Adults Ages 65 and Older		
One Adult, No Children	\$55,545	\$41,326
Two Adults, No Children	\$90,516	\$80,544
One Adult, 1+ Children	*	*
Two Adults, 1+ Children	\$134,891	\$88,853
Three+ Adults	\$171,599	\$163,564

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022. Asterisks represent Data suppressed due to sample size limitations.

Table 3. Median Costs and Resources by Select Costs and Resources and Family Type, New York City

	Families with Adults Under 65		Adults 65+
	No Children	With Children	
Total Cost	\$106,346	\$159,197	\$123,089
Housing	\$22,002	\$26,704	\$24,500
Health Care	\$19,031	\$27,489	\$19,912
Food	\$7,041	\$14,567	\$10,336
Transportation	\$7,737	\$9,754	\$9,754
Child Care	\$0	\$13,416	\$0
Student Debt	\$0	\$0	\$0
Disability Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0
Savings	\$9,667	\$14,472	\$10,073
Taxes	\$18,289	\$15,637	\$9,429
Other Costs	\$16,723	\$24,493	\$16,723
Total Resources	\$97,341	\$124,007	\$105,500
Market Resources	\$90,367	\$95,277	\$66,539
Market + SS/Medicare	\$91,167	\$96,377	\$88,543

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 4. Median Costs and Resources for Four Special Family Types in NYC

	Three-Gen	Student Debt	Disability (Any)		Self-Care Disability	
	Families	w/Children	<65	65+	<65	65+
Total Cost	\$191,216	\$177,767	\$141,419	\$137,809	\$190,677	\$178,837
Housing	\$28,419	\$26,704	\$26,685	\$26,112	\$26,704	\$26,704
Health Care	\$42,302	\$27,770	\$26,961	\$27,541	\$26,322	\$28,624
Food	\$19,552	\$15,624	\$12,337	\$10,562	\$11,744	\$10,562
Transportation	\$9,754	\$9,754	\$9,754	\$9,754	\$9,754	\$9,754
Child Care	\$11,093	\$13,416	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student Debt	\$0	\$2,046	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Disability Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$55,425	\$33,259
Savings	\$17,371	\$16,161	\$12,856	\$11,580	\$17,334	\$15,942
Taxes	\$19,156	\$25,716	\$6,689	\$6,726	\$4,330	\$4,648
Other Costs	\$24,883	\$24,493	\$20,276	\$20,276	\$20,276	\$20,276
Total Resources	\$168,578	\$160,984	\$94,986	\$104,214	\$101,261	\$111,822
Market Resources	\$123,138	\$136,412	\$52,688	\$61,319	\$53,436	\$63,001
Market + SS/Medicare	\$140,897	\$139,831	\$58,311	\$84,018	\$65,321	\$86,241

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 5. TCOL Resource Gap Rates and Average Gaps by Age and Family Type, New York City

Category	% Not Meeting TCOL	Avg Family Resource Gap
All	61.8%	\$39,603
By Age Range		
Children (under age 18)	72.5%	\$48,955
Adults age 18-64	58.7%	\$37,468
Adults age 65 and older	60.7%	\$33,585
By Family Type		
Families <65, no children	53.9%	\$30,795
Families <65, with children	70.1%	\$46,758
Families with adults 65+	60.0%	\$37,526

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 6. TCOL Resource Gap Rates and Average Gaps by Family Type in NYC

Family Type	% Not Meeting TCOL	Average Family Resource Gap
Families with Adults Under Age 65		
One Adult, No Children	63.6%	\$25,928
One Adult, 1 Child	83.8%	\$36,596
One Adult, 2 Children	93.8%	\$48,569
One Adult, 3+ Children	98.5%	\$66,561
One Adult, 1+ Children	91.0%	\$49,473
Two Adults, No Children	47.3%	\$35,208
Two+ Adults, 1 Child	59.5%	\$38,972
Two+ Adults, 2 Children	64.6%	\$45,349
Two+ Adults, 3+ Children	78.9%	\$54,546
Two+ Adults, 1+ Children	66.5%	\$46,134
Families with Adults Ages 65 and Older		
One Adult, No Children	71.3%	\$26,678
Two Adults, No Children	56.5%	\$34,884
One Adult, 1+ Children	*	*
Two Adults, 1+ Children	79.5%	\$51,332
Three+ Adults	55.5%	\$44,012

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022. Asterisk represents Data suppressed due to sample size limitations.

Table 7. Share of People With Resources Not Meeting The True Cost of Living and Resource Gap by Race and Ethnicity, New York City, 2022

Race/Ethnicity	% Not Meeting TCOL	Avg Family Resource Gap
All Persons	61.8%	\$39,603
Asian and Pacific Islanders	63.3%	\$40,348
Black People	65.6%	\$36,966
Hispanic People	77.6%	\$43,824
White People	43.7%	\$34,313
Other Racial/Ethnic Groups	56.4%	\$41,119

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 8. TCOL Resource Gap Rates for Four Special Family Types, New York City, 2022

	Three-Gen	Student Debt	Disability (Any)		Self-Care Disability	
	Families	w/Children	<65	65+	<65	65+
% Not Meeting TCOL	64.2%	58.9%	80.3%	68.1%	92.0%	82.6%
Avg Resource Gap	\$31,107	\$25,280	\$39,109	\$31,545	\$76,178	\$59,860

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 9. Share of People with Resources Not Meeting the True Cost of Living and Resource Gap by Age and Family Type, New York City, 2022

	Percent not meeting TCOL	Average Family-Level Resource Gap
All	62%	\$39,603
By age range		
Children (under age 18)	73%	\$48,955
Adults age 18-64	59%	\$37,468
Adults age 65 and older	61%	\$33,585
By family type		
Families with only adults under age 65, no children present	54%	\$30,795
Families with only adults under age 65, children present	70%	\$46,758
Families with adults ages 65 and older	60%	\$37,526

Sources: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS (Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security) model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org, projected to 2022.

Notes: The determination of whether resources are meeting or not meeting the TCOL level is made at the family level, not the person level. Family is defined as all related persons in a household, plus cohabiters and their relatives, and any unrelated children in the household who are cared for by the family. Households may include more than one family, and some families may consist of a single individual. The average family resource gap is the mean difference between families’ costs and resources. Estimates do not include unhoused people or people living in nursing homes, homeless shelters, or other group quarters.

Table 9a. TCOL Resource Gap Rates by Borough, New York City, 2022

Borough	Percent Not Meeting TCOL	Persons in Families with Children Not Meeting TCOL	Average Resource Gap
Bronx	75.1%	86.8%	\$39,692
Brooklyn	61.5%	73.1%	\$38,208
Queens	61.1%	71.5%	\$37,953
Manhattan	55.6%	57.8%	\$44,529
Staten Island	48.2%	57.1%	\$39,861
NYC Overall	61.8%	72.5%	\$39,603

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022. MOERJ compilation from borough-level data.

Table 10. TCOL Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Borough, New York City, 2022

Borough	Hispanic	Black	Asian/PI	White
Bronx	81.8%	69.7%	72.0%	46.5%
Brooklyn	75.1%	64.8%	64.7%	50.3%
Manhattan	85.3%	79.7%	54.5%	32.9%
Queens	71.1%	56.2%	65.3%	48.4%
Staten Island	63.9%	62.8%	55.2%	39.6%
NYC Overall	77.6%	65.6%	63.3%	43.7%

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022. MOERJ compilation from borough-level data.

Table 11. Distributional Analysis of TCOL Resource Gaps Among Persons in Families, New York City

Category	Share of NYC	Average % of TCOL	Average Resource Gap	Median Costs	Median Resources
Total Below TCOL	61.8%	66.5%	\$39,603	\$122,919	\$78,993
Within 100-110% of TCOL	7.7%	n.a.	n.a.	\$142,753	\$149,131
Within 90-100% of TCOL	8.3%	94.9%	\$7,254	\$140,417	\$133,645
Within 75-90% of TCOL	15.1%	82.2%	\$23,342	\$131,617	\$106,791
Within 50-75% of TCOL	25.4%	63.7%	\$45,423	\$124,261	\$77,902
Less than 50% of TCOL	13.0%	35.6%	\$67,726	\$98,888	\$36,014

Source: Urban Institute, applying the ATTIS model to the 2018 American Community Survey, IPUMS USA, projected to 2022.

Table 12. Median Costs and Resources by Family Type, New York City, 2022

Family Type	Median Cost	Total Resources	Market Resources	Non-Market Resources
Adults under 65, no children	\$106,346	\$97,341	\$90,367	\$6,974
Adults under 65, with children	\$159,197	\$124,007	\$95,277	\$28,730
Adults 65 and older	\$123,089	\$105,500	\$66,539	\$38,961

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022.

Table 13. Minimum Wage Coverage of TCOL Threshold, Single Adult Without Children, New York City, 2022

	Annual Amount	Share of Threshold
TCOL Threshold Single Adult No Children	\$70,334	100%
Full-Time Minimum Wage Earnings	\$31,200	44.4%

Note: Based on NYS minimum wage of \$15.00/hour and 2,080 annual work hours.

Source: Urban Institute, ATTIS model, 2022 (threshold); NYS Department of Labor (minimum wage).

Appendix B

This appendix includes detailed information on the process to estimate the True Cost of Living in New York City. We describe how we use the Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security (ATTIS) microsimulation model in this analysis and provide additional information regarding the determination of certain costs and resources.

ATTIS and the American Community Survey

We use the Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security model (ATTIS) to determine the social and economic characteristics of families in NYC, assign cost thresholds, and estimate their total resources.²¹ ATTIS uses data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to simulate the economic conditions and receipt of government assistance among US households.²² The ACS provides comprehensive information on households' demographic characteristics, like age and race, the presence of physical or cognitive limitations, various sources of earned and unearned income, employment status, and health insurance status. This analysis uses data from the 2018 ACS, adjusted to reflect the demographics of the population and the economic conditions in 2022.²³

Using the projected 2022 data, we determine each family's unique cost threshold and their total resources. ATTIS provides a comprehensive picture of family resources, as it estimates eligibility and benefits for various safety net programs. These include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), child care subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and public and subsidized housing. To do this, ATTIS applies the detailed federal and state rules of each program to the household population in the US.²⁴ The model then determines who is eligible for each program and uses administrative data to align total recipients to the true program caseloads in 2022. For those determined to receive assistance, ATTIS also models their total benefit amount based on their income and other characteristics. We further modify ATTIS to estimate receipt of certain city-wide programs and model city tax liabilities for the TCOL (described in the Cost and Resources sections below).

²¹ Additional information on ATTIS can be found here: "ATTIS Microsimulation Model," Washington, DC: Urban Institute, <https://www.urban.org/tags/attis-microsimulation-model>.

²² The version of the ACS data that we use comes from the University of Minnesota's Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUMS) project. See Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, José Pacas, and Matthew Sobek. 2020. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis: IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V10.0>.

²³ Additional information on the projected 2022 file can be found in Giannarelli and Werner (2022). See Giannarelli, Linda, and Kevin Werner. 2022. Simulating the Effects of a \$15 an Hour Federal Minimum Wage on Poverty and Resources. Washington, DC: Urban Institute

²⁴ Estimates do not include people who are unhoused or living in nursing homes, homeless shelters, or other group quarters.

Costs

The TCOL aims to capture as much variation as possible in the expenses faced by families based on their location in NYC and certain characteristics, like disability status. To adequately capture tax liabilities, housing expenses, and caregiving costs, we use ACS data, ATTIS capabilities, and additional information to establish costs for families in NYC.

Housing

The TCOL estimates housing costs using data from the 2023 New York City Housing Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS). The NYCHVS is a biannual, citywide, representative survey of occupied and vacant units in New York City. The TCOL expenses are based on NYCHVS estimates produced by staff at New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

Data universe. The tabulations produced by HPD reflect the median utility expenses, by borough and unit size (studio to 3-bedroom), and the median unit contract rent by borough, unit size, and accessibility. Families require a clean, safe living environment; therefore, we limit the tabulations of rent and utilities to units with fewer than three housing problems, and, for utilities, we limit the tabulations to units with regular AC use. We also exclude units operated by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Housing Choice Voucher units, as we aim to capture the full, unsubsidized cost of housing for families. With these criteria, we create one set of household utility costs and two sets of household rents (rents for all units and rents for accessible units) by borough and unit size. Housing costs for accessible units reflect the median rent for apartments that can be accessed without climbing any steps or stairs.²⁵ We then make several additional adjustments to the data from the NYC HVS, described below.

Imputations for missing data. Some data on median rents and utility costs in Staten Island were suppressed due to sample size limitations. To obtain complete data on housing costs in Staten Island, we impute missing costs for studio apartments, accessible units, and monthly utility expenses. For studio units, we average the increment in cost between studio apartments and one-bedroom units in each of the four other boroughs. The average cost of a one-bedroom across the other boroughs is 16 percent higher than a studio apartment's rent. Based on this, we calculate the studio apartment cost by proportionally decreasing the rent for a one-bedroom unit in Staten Island, so the rent for the one-bedroom is 16 percent higher than the studio apartment. For accessible units, we imputed missing rental costs by taking the simple average rent for accessible units across the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens for each unit size. We follow this process to impute the cost of monthly utilities. We also estimate the cost of four-bedroom units in NYC. The NYCHVS estimates reflect unit rents and utility costs for studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units. We impute rental and utility expenses for four-bedroom units in each

²⁵ Rents for accessible units are sometimes lower than the rents for all units. This occurs because some accessible units are in smaller, older ground-floor units, which tend to be cheaper than other units. To avoid setting a higher rent "budget" for non-disabled people, we set a floor on rents for people with disabilities; the cost for an accessible unit cannot be less than the rent for comparable standard unit.

borough. To adjust the data, we compute the increment in rental costs between a three- and four-bedroom unit based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Fair Market Rents in the New York City metropolitan area.²⁶ We apply that adjustment factor to the cost of three-bedroom rents in each borough.

Inflation Adjustments. The TCOL reflects the circumstance of families in NYC in 2022. The most recent NYCHVS data available are for 2023, therefore we deflate 2023 rental estimates to 2022 dollars using the rental Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area.²⁷

Computing annual rent. The final monthly housing costs are equal to the sum of median rent and utilities for each unit size and in each borough. We apply these rental costs to families based on their family composition, accessibility needs, and borough. The monthly costs are then multiplied by 12 to generate annual costs for 2022.

Caregiving

A primary challenge in setting the threshold for caregiving expenses was determining the number of hours of care required by people with disabilities. The literature provides broad estimates on the number of hours of care received by people with disabilities and the number of hours of care provided by caregivers. We use various reports to inform the TCOL disability expense thresholds.

Our review of the literature shows that care estimates varied. The AARP and National Alliance for Caregiving estimated that caregivers provided an average of 24 hours of care per week in 2020 and a separate AARP report estimated an average of 18 hours of care in 2021.^{xviii,xix} About 68 percent of caregivers provided up to 20 hours of care and 32 percent provided 21+ hours of care per week. Other analyses indicate that care needs may be even higher. According to a 2002 report, older recipients of unpaid help averaged 155 hours of assistance per month (about 35 hours per week), and recipients of paid help averaged 138 hours of assistance (about 31 hours per week).^{xx}

The provision of care also varied by the age of the recipient. Caregivers of adults ages 18-to-49 provided an average of 33 hours of care per week, compared to an average of 22 hours of care per week for caregivers of adults ages 50 and older.^{xxi,xxii} About three fifths of caregivers of people ages 18 to 49 provided between 0 and 20 hours of care and nearly two-fifths provided at least 41 hours of care per week.

²⁶ See US Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Schedule of Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Fair Market Rents,”

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmr2022/FY2022_FMR_Schedule.pdf.

²⁷ The source data reflect rental costs in 2023. We use the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers for rent of primary residence to adjust the costs to 2022 dollars. See “Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Rent of Primary Residence in New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 17, 2025,

https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUURS12ASEHA?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true

Seventy percent of caregivers of older adults (50 or older) provided between 0 and 20 hours of care and about one fifth provided at least 41 hours of care per week. The data generally show that many individuals do not receive full-time caregiving assistance. However, data from these reports reflect the hours of care provided by caregivers or received by people with disabilities, and do not necessarily capture their true care needs. People with disabilities and older adults may receive less care than they need to manage daily activities, and some individuals may forgo caregiving assistance entirely due to the high cost or low availability of caregivers.^{xxiii,xxiv} Care needs can also vary substantially across the population. Because individuals may have different caregiving needs based on the severity of their disability, we employ a two-tier approach to reflect the higher cost of care for some families, rather than applying the lower average hours of care to all people with disabilities. Based on the ranges in the data, we estimate that a majority (60 percent) of people with disabilities require a lower level of care (20 hours per week) and the remaining 40 percent of people with disabilities require a higher level of care (40 hours per week). All children with self-care disabilities require full-time care because both disabled and non-disabled children are unable to care for themselves. Some children may be assigned both full-time caregiving and standard child care expenses; in these cases we cap total disability care and child care expenses at the cost of full-time caregiving (about \$67,000 per child).

We opt for a modest approach when determining who requires caregiving assistance, and we limit assignment of this cost to those with self-care limitations.²⁸

Taxes

The ATTIS model simulates income taxes and credits at the federal, state, and New York City levels, and also simulates payroll taxes. Payroll taxes are simulated on a person-by-person basis, and are computed based on a person's earnings, capturing the different rates for wages and for self-employment earnings. For purposes of income taxes and credits, the model applies all the steps that a family would follow in filling out their taxes, to the greatest extent feasible with the data. First, a household is divided into tax units. (For example, in a complex household, a married couple and their young children might be one tax unit while an adult relative co-residing with them but not dependent on them would be a separate tax unit.) For each tax unit, taxable income is determined, deductions are applied as appropriate, and taxes and credits are computed. The model captures the major state and federal policies that are relevant to most families.

Resources

The NYC TCOL uses ACS data and ATTIS capabilities to compute resources for earnings, interest, dividends, and federal and state public assistance and social insurance programs. In addition, we use supplemental information to capture resources families have for health care costs and the implied resources families may have to meet caregiving needs. Further, we capture additional resources for NYC-

²⁸ The ACS asks six questions about disability limitations. We consider an individual to have caregiving expenses if they have difficulty bathing or dressing. See "How Disability Data are Collected from The American Community Survey," US Census Bureau, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html>.

specific benefits, caregiving, and health care. Below we describe our procedure for identifying resources not routinely captured in the ATTIS model with a special focus on resources that are unique to NYC.

Housing

Several resources are available to support families in need of affordable housing in New York City. The TCOL considers the value of three NYC-specific programs—the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE), and the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS)—in addition to the value of federally-administered public housing. While NEW YORK CITY has many programs that provide rental assistance to struggling families, we focus on SCRIE, DRIE, and CityFHEPS because they serve a substantial number of households, the eligibility criteria can be reasonably modeled, and estimates of the benefits received are available.

Public Housing and Housing Vouchers

Receipt of housing subsidies is not reported in the ACS. However, the ATTIS model can simulate eligibility and receipt of subsidies families may receive through public housing or housing vouchers. For families that are simulated to receive public or subsidized housing under the federal programs, housing costs are offset by the monthly value of the subsidy amount.

SCRIE and DRIE

SCRIE and DRIE are rent freeze programs meant to ensure that older adults and people with disabilities do not pay more than one-third of their incomes in rent.²⁹ The ACS does not model enrollment in either program, but we use ATTIS to identify eligible households and impute receipt of the programs. We determine eligibility for each program based on the following criteria:

- SCRIE Eligibility
 - Household head or spouse is age 62 or older;
 - Combined household cash income is less than or equal to \$50,000; and
 - Household members do not receive federal Section 8 housing assistance.
- DRIE Eligibility
 - Household head or spouse is age 18 or older;
 - Combined household cash income is less than or equal to \$50,000;
 - Household members do not receive federal Section 8 housing assistance; and

²⁹ Additional information on these programs can be found here: "Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE)," New York City Department of Finance, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/finance/property/landlords-scrie.page>; "Rent Freeze for People with Disabilities: Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE)," ACCESS NYC, June 13, 2025, <https://access.nyc.gov/programs/disability-rent-increase-exemption-drie/#how-it-works>.

- Household head or spouse receives Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, disability-related Medicaid, or a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or United States Postal Service disability pension or disability compensation.

Once ATTIS determines who is eligible for each program, the model randomly selects from eligible households in the ACS to hit enrollment targets by borough and housing tenure.³⁰ All households selected to receive benefits are assigned an annual benefit amount.

Annual benefits for SCRIE and DRIE are based on data from the New York City Department of Finance.^{xxv31} The true benefit amounts for SCRIE and DRIE depend on the household's actual rent, their income, and their length of time in the programs. However, information on rent and income upon entry into the program is not readily available, and the rent freeze amount is constant throughout the entire time in the program. Because of this, the longer an individual is in the program the higher the benefit they receive, even if the actual rent they pay remains constant.

This can be observed with a simple example: In the first year of the SCRIE program, a unit costs \$1,100 and an individual has a \$1,000 rent freeze amount, for a benefit of \$100. After three years in the program, it is likely the landlord would have increased the rent over time. In the third year, rent may cost \$1,500, but the rent freeze amount remains at \$1,000 and the benefit amount has increased to \$500.

While many factors affect the benefit amount, data on benefits is limited to average SCRIE/DRIE amounts across boroughs. To account for differences in benefits over time, we develop adjustment factors based on median benefit amount for recipients in the programs for less than 5 years, 5-10 years, and 10 or more years. We multiply the average annual benefit amount in each borough by the appropriate adjustment factor based on each eligible householder's length of time in their unit. For example, a family selected to receive SCRIE/DRIE that has resided in their unit for four years would receive the benefit amount for SCRIE/DRIE recipients in the program for less than five years.

CityFHEPS

The CityFHEPS program provides rental assistance to individuals and families at risk of homelessness.³² In 2022, the program served over 30,000 households across the

³⁰ Enrollment targets are based on 2020 program enrollment data from the New York City Department of Finance. We estimate about 46,000 units received SCRIE benefits and 12,000 units received DRIE benefits in 2022. See Niblack (2022).

³¹ Benefit amounts are inflated from 2020 using the rental Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area. See "Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Rent of Primary Residence in New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA, All Urban Consumers, Not Seasonally Adjusted," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 17, 2025,

³² Additional information on CityFHEPS can be found here: "CityFHEPS," New York City Department of Social Services, Human Resources Administration, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/cityfheps.page>

five boroughs.³³ While the program is large, the eligibility rules factor in several criteria that are unable to be modeled in ATTIS. For example, a family may be eligible for CityFHEPS if they are facing eviction, but we are unable to identify whether a family is at risk of eviction based on their characteristics in the ACS data. To capture resources from this program, we consider families eligible for CityFHEPS if they meet the eligibility criteria for the Section 8 program but are not receiving Section 8 or other housing assistance. We randomly select from eligible households in the ACS to hit enrollment targets by borough and then calculate a subsidy amount for each household using Section 8 program rules. Housing costs are then offset by the monthly value of the subsidy amount.

Health Care

Many families are also eligible for resources that help them afford health insurance. The NYC TCOL considers three types of health insurance related resources available to families: the value of employer- or government-sponsored health insurance, the value of premium tax credits for plans purchased on the marketplace, and the value of cost-sharing reductions for deductibles and copays.

Insurance Premium Resources

Many families may have health insurance at little to no cost to them. For families that receive health insurance (as reported in the ACS) through their employer or through government-sponsored programs, like Medicaid, CHIP, Medicare, and insurance for active duty or retired military members, we fully offset the cost of their health insurance premiums.

Premium Tax Credits

The ACS reports on type of health insurance for each individual. If an individual has non-group coverage, we assume they purchased health insurance in the Marketplace. To determine the value of their premium tax credit (PTC), we first determine which individuals in the family would be part of the health insurance unit (HIU). Next, we apply the overall premium tax credit eligibility rules to the HIU, with some modifications:

1. Unauthorized non-citizens are never eligible for the PTC.
2. People who are not authorized to be in the country are ineligible for a subsidy. If the head of the unit is unauthorized, other household (HIU) members who are citizens or legally-present in the US may still receive a subsidy.
3. HIUs with income less than 100 percent of the federal poverty guideline are ineligible for a subsidy unless the head is a legal permanent resident in the US for less than 5 years. (This is a simplification in ATTIS. The actual rule allows HIUs with income less than 100 percent of poverty to be eligible if the

³³ Overall enrollment data was provided by New York City's Department of Social Services, Human Resources Administration. We use zip code-level data on the CityFHEPS caseload in October 2023 to establish the distribution of vouchers across the NYC boroughs. See New York City Human Resources Administration, "I1145-Report for CY2023Q4," dataset for October 2023, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/news/i1145-report-cy2023q4-oct-23.pdf>.

HIUs contain at least one person who is potentially eligible for the PTC and is ineligible for Medicaid based solely on their noncitizen status.)

4. If these criteria are met, we then approximate the HIU's annual Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) and determine the unit's approximate-MAGI income as a percentage of poverty for their income size. We use this to determine the value of their PTC based on the sliding scale in IRS Form 8962.^{xxvi} Finally, we calculate the resource value of each individual's PTC by dividing the value of the HIU's PTC by the number of members in the HIU.

Cost-sharing Reductions

We estimate medical out-of-pocket (MOOP) resources for two groups: people who receive Medicaid/CHIP and people with private insurance coverage. People receiving Medicaid/CHIP generally have low cost-sharing requirements (copays, etc.) and those who purchase insurance in the Marketplace may be eligible for additional cost-sharing reductions that reduce their out-of-pocket costs. We estimate the value of resources for these individuals based on the reduction in the cost of doctor visits when people receive these benefits (at different income levels) and an assumed number of doctor visits. First, we must determine the number of visits people require each year and the cost-sharing reduction for these visits. We assume that children under age 18 require four doctor visits per year and adults ages 18 and older require three visits.^{xxvii} We also estimate that people with MAGI less than 150 percent of the federal poverty guideline have a \$40 reduction in cost per visit, and people with MAGI between 150 and 200 percent of poverty have a \$25 reduction in cost per visit. Based on this information, an adult with MAGI under 150 percent of poverty with either marketplace or Medicaid coverage would have an estimated cost-sharing reduction of \$120 annually (three visits multiplied by \$40). Finally, we offset MOOP costs for all individuals with Medicaid/CHIP or non-group health coverage by the value of their cost-sharing reduction.

Caregiving

Families may have additional resources available to them that alleviate caregiving expenses. The TCOL factors in three types of caregiving resources that may offset costs: the value of care provided by a stay-at-home parent or an adult caring for a disabled family member, subsidies received through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and free 3-K and pre-K through New York City programs.

Parental Care

Parents and caretakers who choose to provide direct care to their children do not incur child care costs. To account for this resource, we use the ACS to identify families in which there is an additional, non-working, non-disabled parent or caretaker present in the household.³⁴ Families have their child care costs fully offset

³⁴ Individuals with a self-care disability and those who are identified as disabled by ATTIS's SSI module are considered unavailable to care for a child.

for the portion of the year in which they meet these criteria. The TCOL accounts for child care provided by a parent or caretaker residing in the household only; we are unable to capture the value of care provided by other relatives or parents living outside of the household.

CCDF Subsidies

Receipt of child care subsidies is not reported in the ACS. However, the ATTIS model can simulate eligibility and receipt of subsidies families may receive through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. For families that are simulated to receive subsidies, we offset child care costs by the difference between their child care costs and their CCDF copayment amounts.

Free 3K and pre-K Programs

New York City offers free pre-kindergarten programs for three- and four-year-olds in each of the boroughs. Children are able to receive full-time, full year care or part-time, school year care. The ACS does not include information on this New York-specific program, therefore we use ATTIS to simulate receipt of this program by adjusting participation to align with administrative enrollment targets.^{35,xxviii,xxix} We randomly assign three- and four-year-old children to partial-year care or full-year care, up to the enrollment targets in each borough. If a child is assigned to full-year care, we offset the full cost of care for a three- or four-year-old child. Families with a child enrolled in only part-time care will have child care expenses during the summer months. Therefore, if a child is assigned to partial-year care, we offset only 75 percent of their expenses (equal to school year care for 9 months of the year). We also assess whether the child in partial-year care has an adult caretaker available to provide care during the summer months. If an adult is available, we offset the monthly cost of care from June through August.

Care for People with Disabilities

Families with a person with a disability may choose to provide care themselves or receive support from friends or relatives outside of the household. To account for some of these resources, we use the ACS to identify families in which there is an additional, non-working adult present in the household. We assume adults are able to provide care for themselves and the disabled family member if they are not disabled and if they are between ages 21 and 75.³⁶ Families have their caregiving costs fully offset for the portion of the year in which they meet these criteria. Like the

³⁵ The enrollment data were obtained from the Citizens Committee for Children (CCC) and NYC Open Data. The enrollment data from CCC provide information for the 2019-2020 school year for both full-time, full year and part time, school year enrollment in 3K and pre-K. NYC Open Data has more recent figures for the 2021-2022 school year, but the enrollment figures are not broken out by full-time/full year and school day/school year care. To adjust the 2021-2022 school year data, we calculate the distribution of children enrolled in full-time, full year and part time, school year care based on the 2019-2020 data.

³⁶ Individuals with a self-care disability and those who are identified as disabled by ATTIS's SSI module are considered unavailable to care for a person with a disability.

resource estimates for child care, the TCOL is unable to capture the value of care provided by other individuals living outside of the household.

Resource Caps

In some cases, families have government-provided resources that exceed their costs but are not necessarily available to them for other expenses. To address this challenge, certain resources for child care, housing, or food expenses are adjusted to cap the resources at the total value of the expense.

Housing resource caps. There are two modeling challenges that result in excess housing resources for certain families. First, ATTIS assigns Section 8 and CityFHEPS housing subsidies based on the value of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) in NYC. The ATTIS-estimated housing subsidy equals the difference between the FMR and the household's required rental payment. If the FMR is ever greater than the cost of rent based on the NYCHVS, then the housing resources from subsidies could also exceed the costs. In those cases, we cap the resource at the level of the cost.

There may also be a disconnect between the housing subsidy someone receives and the cost we assign them. For example, if the ACS data indicates that a single person lives alone in a one-bedroom, the ATTIS model would assign their subsidy based on a one-bedroom, not a studio. However, we would still assign the individual's cost as the rent for a studio, because the TCOL determines this to be sufficient housing for a single person unit. Because the cost of the studio apartment may be less than the subsidy (as determined by FMRs) the individual would have a housing resource in excess of their cost for a studio. The excess costs are not necessarily available to the unit; they cannot use the remaining value of the housing subsidy to purchase other items, like food, clothing, or medical care. We address this issue by capping each household's total housing subsidy resource value at the cost of rent for their unit size.³⁷

Food and child care resource caps. Food resources from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) may be higher than the costs assigned to a family for food because SNAP benefits do not vary based on the age of children in the unit, but the food costs assigned to families in the TCOL do vary based on the ages of each person in the family. Likewise, CCDF benefits are determined based on the maximum rate for center-based care, but the child care expenses for families are calculated based on both home- and center-based costs. Because of these mismatches between cost and resource data for food and child care, the total SNAP or CCDF subsidies could exceed the cost of each expense. However, families would be unable to use their additional SNAP benefits or CCDF subsidies to pay for other needs. We address this issue by capping each household's total SNAP and CCDF resource value to the cost of food or child care for their unit size.

³⁷ This aligns with methodology used for the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). In the SPM, housing resources may not exceed the housing portion of the SPM poverty threshold because individuals are unable to use the additional subsidy-value to purchase other items or services. See Dalaker, Joseph. 2022. [The Supplemental Poverty Measure: Its Core Concepts, Development, and Use](#). Report R45031. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Glossary of Key Terms

Core Concepts

Term	Definition
True Cost of Living (TCOL)	The total annual amount a family needs to cover all basic expenses including housing, food, health care, childcare, transportation, taxes, savings, and other necessities, without relying on public assistance, family help, or debt. This is the minimum needed for economic security.
TCOL Threshold	The specific dollar amount a given family type needs to be economically secure. It varies by family size, composition, borough, and disability status. For a median family with children in NYC, the threshold is approximately \$159,000 per year.
TCOL Rate	The percentage of people in a given group (citywide, by borough, by race, etc.) whose family resources fall below their TCOL threshold. A rate of 62% means 62 out of every 100 people in that group live in families that cannot independently cover their costs.
Costs (Total Costs)	The combined annual expenses a family faces across all eight cost categories: housing, health care, food, childcare, transportation, taxes, savings, and other necessities. Costs are calculated based on each family's specific size, location, and composition, not self-reported spending.
Resources (Total Resources)	Everything a family has available to meet their costs. This includes two types: market resources (wages, self-employment income, pensions, investment income, child support) and non-market resources (government transfers like Social Security, SNAP, tax credits, public housing subsidies, Medicaid, and NYC-specific programs like CityFHEPS, SCRIE/DRIE, and free Pre-K/3-K).
Market Resources	Income a family earns or receives from private sources: wages, salaries, self-employment, pensions, investment returns, child support, and other cash income. This is what a family has before any government assistance.
Non-Market Resources	The value of government programs and tax credits that help families meet their costs. Includes cash transfers (Social Security, SSI, TANF, unemployment), in-kind benefits (SNAP, WIC, housing vouchers, Medicaid), tax credits (EITC, Child Tax Credit), and NYC-specific programs (CityFHEPS, SCRIE/DRIE, Pre-K/3-K).
Resource Gap	The dollar difference between a family's total costs and their total resources, for families who do not meet the TCOL threshold. It represents how much additional income or support a family would need to reach economic security. The citywide average resource gap is \$39,603 per year.

Cost Categories

Term	Definition
Housing	Annual cost of rent and utilities, based on median rents from the NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey. Varies by borough and family size (number of bedrooms needed). Includes accessible housing costs for families with mobility disabilities.
Health Care	The full cost of health insurance premiums (including employer-paid portions) plus out-of-pocket medical expenses like copays, prescriptions, and supplies. Traditional poverty measures often exclude

	employer premiums; the TCOL includes them because workers ultimately pay these costs through reduced wages.
Food	Annual food costs based on the USDA Low-Cost Food Plan, adjusted for local meal costs in each NYC borough using Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap data. Varies by age and gender of family members.
Child Care	Annual cost of care for children under 13 (and children 13–18 with a disability), based on weighted average of home-based and center-based care prices in NYC. Only applies to families with children. Costs vary by the age of each child.
Transportation	Annual transportation costs including transit use and auto ownership costs, based on the Center for Neighborhood Technology’s Housing and Transportation Affordability Index. Assigned at borough level.
Savings	A target amount families need to save for emergencies. Set at 10% of all other costs for working-age families. Adults 65+ are assumed to be drawing down savings, not accumulating them.
Taxes	Federal income taxes, New York State income taxes, NYC income taxes, and payroll taxes, calculated by the ATTIS model based on each family’s earnings and composition. Does not include property taxes or sales taxes.
Other Costs	Clothing, personal care, household supplies, phone and internet, and other daily necessities not covered by the categories above. Estimated from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey for the NYC metro area.

Analytical Terms Used in the Report

Term	Definition
Federal Poverty Line (FPL)	The federal government’s official poverty threshold. In 2022, the FPL was approximately \$27,750 for a family of four. The TCOL identifies 3.58 million New Yorkers who are above the poverty line but still cannot meet their true cost of living.
NYCgov Poverty Measure	New York City’s existing poverty measure, in use since 2008. It assesses whether families are meeting basic needs. The TCOL is complementary but asks a different question: what it takes to be economically secure, not just meeting minimum needs.
ATTIS Model	The Analysis of Transfers, Taxes, and Income Security model, developed by the Urban Institute. It is the microsimulation engine that calculates TCOL costs and resources for each family in the data.
American Community Survey (ACS)	A large annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The TCOL uses 2018 ACS data (the most recent available with necessary detail), projected forward to 2022 conditions.
Median	The middle value in a set of numbers. When the report says, “median costs,” it means the cost level for a specific cost category where half of families pay more and half pay less.
Family	As defined in this report: all related persons in a household, plus cohabiters and their relatives, plus any unrelated children cared for by the family. A family can be a single individual.
Borough	New York City’s five geographic divisions: the Bronx, Brooklyn (Kings County), Manhattan (New York County), Queens, and Staten Island (Richmond County). TCOL costs and rates vary significantly across boroughs.

Self-Care Disability	Difficulty with basic personal activities like bathing and dressing, as reported in the ACS. Families with a member who has a self-care disability face substantially higher TCOL thresholds due to caregiving costs, specialized medical expenses, and accessibility needs.
Three-Generation Family	A household containing grandparents, parents, and children. These families have a TCOL rate of 64.2% — above the city average — but a smaller resource gap, suggesting that pooling resources across generations reduces the depth of shortfall.

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- Department of Small Business Services (SBS)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)
- Deputy Mayor's Office for Economic Justice (DMEJ)
- Human Resources Administration / Department of Social Services (HRA / DSS)
- Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity
- Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)
- Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP)
- Mayor's Office of Public Engagement
- Mayor's Office of Workforce and Talent Development
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