

What \$100K rents: A house in Memphis, a one-bedroom apartment in San Jose

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A six-figure income supports a rental budget of \$2,500 per month, enough to access 77% of rentals nationwide, but just 13% in the most expensive market

- A \$100K income unlocks nearly 20% more living space compared to a median income renter, a Zillow analysis shows.
- Of rentals on Zillow that are affordable on a \$2,500 budget, 30% are single-family homes, 18% are condos, and 52% are apartments.
- In Memphis, a six-figure income rents a 2,100-square-foot, single-family home; in San Jose, where rents are among the highest in the country, it secures a 650-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment.

SEATTLE, Oct. 7, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- A \$100,000 salary is a meaningful advantage in today's rental market, translating directly into more space, more options and more financial breathing room. But earning six figures doesn't offer the same lifestyle for renters everywhere. [New Zillow® research](#) shows that where a six-figure earner lives can be the difference between renting a four-bedroom house with a yard and a 650-square-foot apartment.

Following the standard guideline of spending no more than 30% of gross income on rent, a household with a combined income of \$100,000 has a maximum monthly budget of about \$2,500, compared to roughly \$1,450 for the typical renter household earning \$58,000. Nationally, the typical market rent is \$1,932 per month, according to the Zillow Observed Rent Index, though smaller units list more frequently, pulling the median listed rent in 2026 to \$1,750. Either way, a six-figure earner is shopping well above the median and could access 77% of all listings available on Zillow in August, more than double the share accessible to the typical renter.

At that price point¹, renters can expect nearly 20% more living space and greater potential for more bedrooms,

along with 63% more single-family homes within budget compared to what the typical renter can comfortably afford. Often, that higher budget also puts renters in slightly denser neighborhoods, meaning easier access to stores, schools and public spaces.

"The variation we see in what a \$100,000 income rents across markets is ultimately a supply story," said Treh Manhertz, a senior economic research scientist at Zillow. "In markets that have built enough housing to meet demand, six figures rents real comfort and choice. In markets that haven't, even high earners feel the squeeze."

Where \$100K goes furthest, and where it doesn't

Oklahoma City has the lowest median rent among the 50 largest metros at just \$1,250, and that affordability shows what a \$2,500 budget unlocks: 77% of listings are single-family homes, a median of 2,000 square feet and at least three bedrooms. Memphis goes even further, with a median of 2,119 square feet and four bedrooms. Raleigh, San Antonio and Houston tell a similar story, with high-earning renters consistently landing three-bedroom homes and more than 1,800 square feet.

In San Jose, where the median list rent is \$3,539, a \$2,500 budget puts a \$100,000 earner at the bottom of the market. The typical affordable unit is just 650 square feet, one bedroom, one bath, with 95% of options being apartments or condos. San Francisco and Boston tell a similar story, as do Los Angeles, San Diego and New York, where the same salary that rents a house in Memphis barely covers a one-bedroom apartment.

For families, the calculus is especially stark. When small apartments dominate the affordable options, many renters are pushed past the 30% rule simply to access the space they need. Even within expensive metros, searching in lower-cost neighborhoods can yield roughly 250 additional square feet for the same \$2,500 budget. **Zillow's portable rental application** can help reduce the upfront cost burden: one form, one flat fee and 30 days to apply to as many participating properties as needed.

The bigger picture

America's **housing affordability crisis** is largely a supply problem. In markets where builders responded to pandemic-era demand, particularly across the Sun Belt, a construction boom has added significant new inventory, giving renters more options and helping moderate rent growth. Where new supply has lagged, even a competitive salary leaves renters with fewer choices and higher costs than they might expect.

Zillow has long supported policies that make it easier to build, including modernizing zoning to allow more types of housing, streamlining permitting, and expanding access to ADUs and manufactured homes. Recently, Zillow has joined **Let America Build**, a national campaign to **bring attention to the local policies** that would unlock more housing supply.

Metro area*	Median listed rent (Jan.–Aug. 2026)	Median square footage for \$100K+ earners**	Median number of bedrooms for \$100K+ earners**	Share of rentals for \$100K+ earners that are single-family homes**	Share of rentals for \$100K+ earners that are 1-bedroom or smaller**
United States	\$1,750	1,152	2	30 %	27 %
New York, NY	\$3,175	801	1	6 %	52 %
Los Angeles, CA	\$2,748	750	1	5 %	58 %
Chicago, IL	\$2,095	950	2	12 %	44 %
Dallas, TX	\$1,531	1,490	3	43 %	10 %
Houston, TX	\$1,495	1,848	3	62 %	7 %
Washington, DC	\$2,258	900	2	9 %	49 %
Philadelphia, PA	\$1,800	1,100	2	25 %	28 %
Miami, FL	\$2,600	1,000	2	15 %	35 %
Atlanta, GA	\$1,680	1,644	3	48 %	9 %
Boston, MA	\$3,000	758	1	3 %	64 %
Phoenix, AZ	\$1,599	1,546	3	55 %	7 %
San Francisco, CA	\$3,000	729	1	5 %	60 %
Riverside, CA	\$2,400	973	2	20 %	27 %
Detroit, MI	\$1,405	1,400	3	33 %	6 %
Seattle, WA	\$2,069	900	2	8 %	42 %
Minneapolis, MN	\$1,599	1,300	2	31 %	9 %
San Diego, CA	\$2,830	726	1	5 %	58 %
Tampa, FL	\$1,816	1,299	3	46 %	15 %
Denver, CO	\$1,775	1,151	2	21 %	17 %
Baltimore, MD	\$1,814	1,174	2	36 %	16 %
St. Louis, MO	\$1,365	1,340	2	39 %	13 %
Orlando, FL	\$1,795	1,474	3	49 %	2 %
Charlotte, NC	\$1,600	1,555	3	41 %	9 %
San Antonio, TX	\$1,308	1,874	3	57 %	3 %
Portland, OR	\$1,682	1,233	3	42 %	10 %
Sacramento, CA	\$2,045	1,101	2	35 %	12 %
Pittsburgh, PA	\$1,495	1,152	2	29 %	30 %
Cincinnati, OH	\$1,495	1,422	3	38 %	3 %
Austin, TX	\$1,480	1,462	3	44 %	14 %
Las Vegas, NV	\$1,595	1,796	3	67 %	4 %
Kansas City, MO	\$1,442	1,450	3	41 %	12 %
Columbus, OH	\$1,405	1,492	3	42 %	5 %
Indianapolis, IN	\$1,405	1,598	3	44 %	1 %
Cleveland, OH	\$1,390	1,330	2	34 %	15 %
San Jose, CA	\$3,539	650	1	5 %	77 %
Nashville, TN	\$1,681	1,321	2	39 %	23 %
Virginia Beach, VA	\$1,740	1,410	3	47 %	2 %
Providence, RI	\$2,070	1,025	2	12 %	21 %
Jacksonville, FL	\$1,564	1,674	3	63 %	2 %
Milwaukee, WI	\$1,595	1,272	2	16 %	10 %
Oklahoma City, OK	\$1,250	2,000	3	77 %	3 %
Raleigh, NC	\$1,559	1,885	3	57 %	7 %
Memphis, TN	\$1,285	2,119	4	73 %	3 %
Richmond, VA	\$1,625	1,409	3	46 %	3 %
Louisville, KY	\$1,289	1,649	3	56 %	2 %
New Orleans, LA	\$1,500	1,568	3	49 %	5 %
Salt Lake City, UT	\$1,540	1,500	3	36 %	8 %
Hartford, CT	\$1,895	1,159	2	20 %	21 %
Buffalo, NY	\$1,410	1,320	3	34 %	6 %
Birmingham, AL	\$1,300	1,408	3	44 %	2 %

*Table ordered by market size

**Columns reflect listings at the top of a \$100,000 household income budget, \$2,333-\$2,500/month.

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¹ This analysis considers the renter shopping only near the top of their budget, \$2,333–\$2,500/month.

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