

The COVID-19 pandemic brought renewed attention to the vulnerabilities of local and state economies across the country. Over the last two years, the City of Austin has repeatedly acted to protect our most vulnerable workers, prevent displacement, and improve Austin's economic resilience.

Unemployment

- **Austin has the lowest unemployment rate among the 25 largest cities (tied in June 2021 with New York City) at 4.2%.**

- This June number was lower than the State of Texas' rate of **6.7%**, Denver's rate of **6.7%**, and equivalent to Seattle's rate of **4.5%**.

(Source: [Austin-American Statesman](#))

- **Throughout the pandemic, Austin's highest unemployment rates have been lower than comparable US cities — and the state average.**

- In 2020, Austin's highest unemployment rate was **12.1%**.
- This was lower than the State of Texas' rate of **12.9%**, Denver's rate of **12.4%**, and Seattle's rate of **17.1%**.

(Source: [YCharts](#))

- Adding jobs in 14 of the last 15 months, **Austin has regained all but 300 of spring 2020's pandemic-related job losses.**
- Austin ranks as the 2nd best performing major job market since the beginning of the pandemic.
- **Austin's leisure and hospitality industry added 5,100 jobs in July** and has seen 86% of the 61,500 jobs lost in March and April of 2020 return.
- Austin's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased from 4.8% in June to 4.2% in July.

(Source: [Austin Chamber of Commerce](#); [Workforce Solutions](#))

Workforce Development

In the last 12 months, **over 11,000 new “remote work” opportunities** opened in Austin, a significant spike compared to the **4,500 jobs posted the year prior**.

As workplaces changed over the last year to reduce employee exposure to COVID-19, the City of Austin's workforce development plans and resources adapted.

- **In October 2020, we helped advance RE: WorkNow**, a rapid job training program emphasizing remote/hybrid workplaces.
- Since the launch, **Workforce Solutions has experienced a 10-fold demand** for remote workforce training and **has enrolled more people in the first four months of 2021 than** they typically would have in **an entire year**.
- Since September 2020, 574 total individuals have enrolled in the program, with 209 individuals having completed their training so far. To date, 112 local jobs have been filled by applicants upon completion of training.

(Source: [WFS Proposal](#))

Child Care Labor Force:

- A recent study by the Child & Family Research Partnership at UT Austin found that **more than 40% of child care workers surveyed experienced high rates of food insecurity**.
 - This same group is on the front lines of providing face-to-face care for young children of essential workers even during the most restrictive COVID shutdowns.
- **The City of Austin has been unique from other Texas cities** by investing both CARES Act funds and local revenue to stabilize the child care sector early in the pandemic.
 - \$6M in Child Care Relief Grants were awarded, focusing on high quality centers that serve families relying on child care subsidies.
 - \$100k in Emergency Relief Grants for Family-Base Child Care Providers
 - Funding went to 200 child care sites, 75% of which accept child care subsidies.

Without the City's rapid and strategic response, many child care programs would have shuttered.

(Source: [CoA](#))

Cost of Living

- **The cost of living in Austin is much lower than in comparable US cities.** Recommended monthly grocery budget:

- Austin, TX: \$1,157.14
- Denver, CO: \$1,254.03
- Seattle, WA: \$1,560.52

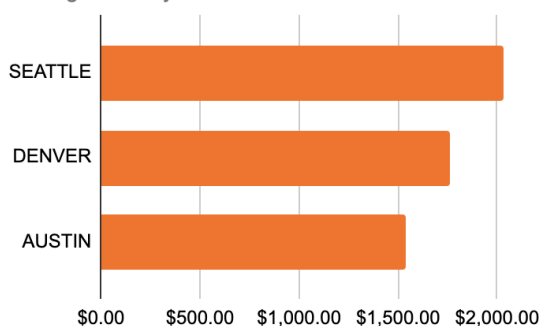
(Source: [Numbeo](#))

- **Renting a home in Austin is much cheaper than in comparable US cities.** Average monthly rent:

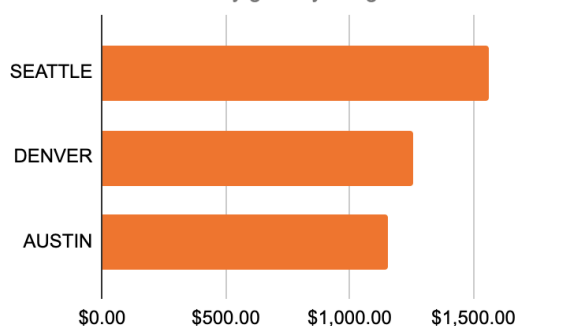
- Austin, TX: \$1,539.00
- Denver, CO: \$1,763.00
- Seattle, WA: \$2,203.40

(Source: [Rentcafe](#))

Average monthly rent



Recommended monthly grocery budget



(Source: [Rentcafe](#), [Numbeo](#))

Displacement Prevention Efforts

In 2021, Austin City Council voted to increase Austin's Homestead Exemption rate **from 10% to 20%** of the assessed value of a home. The senior and disabled exemption would increase **from \$88k to \$113k**.

- **This helps prevent displacement:**
 - Long-time Austinites, such as seniors, deserve the right to not be severed from their community due to high property taxes. This action helps them stay in their homes.
- **This helps homeowners with no practical impact on renters:**

- The typical median household is expected to pay \$141 per year less in property taxes than it would otherwise have paid without the exemption, and the experts say there is no practical impact on renters as a result of this increase.
- **The City of Austin also assisted 5,452 households in 2020** through the Austin Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) program, distributing over \$37M in assistance.

(Source: [CoA dashboard](#))