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# Understanding Milwaukee's Affordable Housing Crisis

By [JOY POWERS \(/PEOPLE/JOY-POWERS\)](#) • 22 HOURS AGO

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10:21

*Researcher Joe Peterangelo speaking with Lake Effect's Joy Powers.*

Americans are facing an affordable housing crisis. In some cities, the main issues are availability and soaring housing prices. But in Milwaukee, the biggest issue seems to be income. While housing prices have steadily increased, wages have remained stagnant.

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**"We found in Milwaukee County ... after taking into account paying the median rent, the median income is \$45 short of**

"We found in Milwaukee County ... after taking into account paying the median rent, the median income is \$45 short of being able to afford that rent without going into burden. So, spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent," says Joe Peterangelo, a senior researcher with

## being able to afford that rent without going into burden."

the Wisconsin Policy Forum, which recently released a report on housing in Milwaukee.

"The Cost of Living" report  
([https://wispolicyforum.org/research/the-](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/the-cost-of-living-milwaukee-countys-rental-housing-trends-and-challenges/)

[cost-of-living-milwaukee-countys-rental-housing-trends-and-challenges/](https://wispolicyforum.org/research/the-cost-of-living-milwaukee-countys-rental-housing-trends-and-challenges/)) takes a comprehensive look at the affordable housing crisis in the city, which it says has been spurred by a mix of low-income renters and few affordable apartments. The report found that Milwaukee has a higher percentage of renting households than any other major city in the Midwest. More than 50 percent of Milwaukeeans rent their homes.

Peterangelo says, "The only [metropolitan areas] that had a higher percentage of renting households were in New York, San Francisco, LA, and Boston. So, the biggest metro-areas on the coasts."

He says this points to the high demand for rental homes in the area. Of those households that rent, the report found that more than half are considered "rent burdened." While more than 40 percent of renting households earned less than \$25,000 a year, just 9 percent of the rental properties in the Milwaukee-area were considered affordable for those households.

"It's a very low rent that those households could afford without being rent-burdened," says Peterangelo. "It's a \$500 rent ... And of course, in many cases those lower-income households are larger households with children, and the units that tend to be under \$500 are studios and things like that."

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The Cost of Living: Milwaukee County's Rental Housing Trends and Cha...