



The cost of living across America

BEA's regional price parities (RPPs) measure each state's price level against the national average (US = 100). Download, rank, and map.

STEP 1 Install the mapping tools

Free community add-ons.[†] One-time — but re-running is harmless:

```
ssc install maptile, replace
ssc install spmap, replace
maptile_install using "https://files.michaelstepner.com/geo_state.zip", replace
```

STEP 2 Get the data

Download BEA's regional price parities and load the state table:

```
copy "https://apps.bea.gov/regional/zip/SARPP.zip" sarpp.zip, replace
unzipfile sarpp.zip, replace
import delimited "SARPP_STATE_2008_2024.csv", varnames(1) clear
```

STEP 3 Keep each state's 2024 price level

That year imported as v25 (Stata can't use a bare number as a name). Keep all items, drop the national row, use the name the map expects:

```
rename v25 rpp
keep if linecode == 1
drop if geoname == "United States"
rename geoname statename
```

STEP 4 Rank the states, then fill in the table

```
gsort -rpp
list statename rpp in 1/3, clean noobs
list statename rpp in -3/1, clean noobs
list statename rpp if statename == "Michigan", clean noobs
```

Rank	State	RPP (US = 100)
Most expensive		
Cheapest		
Michigan		

STEP 5 Draw the map

```
maptile rpp, geo(state) geoid(statename) cutvalues(94 98 102 106) fcolor(Purples) ///
twopt(title("The cost of living across America, 2024")) ///
legend(lab(2 "Bargain (under 94)") lab(3 "Below average (94-98)") ///
lab(4 "Close to average (98-102)") lab(5 "Pricey (102-106)") ///
lab(6 "Very pricey (over 106)")))
```

What do you notice?

1. Count your observations: you have 51, not 50. Which "state" snuck into the data?
2. Where are the expensive states on your map — what do they have in common?
3. Roughly what percent more does \$100 buy in the cheapest state than in the priciest?
4. A friend weighs a \$75,000 offer in Michigan against \$85,000 in California. Which offer buys more?

[†] maptile and the state template are by Michael Stepner; spmap is by Maurizio Pisati. Thanks, both!