

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

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DIVISION OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

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INTERCITY DIFFERENCES  
IN COSTS OF LIVING IN  
MARCH 1935, 59 CITIES

**BLISSCARD**

by

Margaret Loomis Stecker

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**Research Monographs**  
**of the Division of Social Research**  
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- I. Six Rural Problem Areas, Relief—Resources—Rehabilitation
  - II. Comparative Study of Rural Relief and Non-Relief Households
  - III. The Transient Unemployed
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  - XII. Intercity Differences in Costs of Living in March 1935, 59 Cities
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# Letter of Transmittal

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION,  
Washington, D. C., July 23, 1937.

Sir: I have the honor to transmit the findings of a study of the costs of living of industrial, service, and other manual workers at a basic maintenance level and under emergency conditions, initiated by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and completed by the Works Progress Administration. The figures show the dollars and cents outlay necessary in each of 59 cities in the United States with a population of over 25,000 and relative costs among these cities. The findings provide a large body of basic information which will be of value not only in handling the unemployment relief problem but also in many other fields where facts are required regarding the costs of living and intercity cost differences.

The average cost of living for a 4-person family at the maintenance level in the 59 cities combined was \$1,261 per year in 1935. Costs were so nearly alike in the separate cities that only in five did the difference from the average exceed 10 percent. The budget of goods and services priced does not represent the content of a satisfactory American standard of living, nor does its cost indicate what families would have to spend to secure an American standard. It should be noted, however, that according to studies by the Brookings Institution, 4 out of every 10 families in the United States had annual incomes of less than \$1,500 in 1929 at the period of our greatest productivity, and 1 out of 5 had less than \$1,000.

The study was made in the Division of Social Research under the direction of Howard B. Myers, Director of the Division. Margaret Loomis Stecker supervised the investigation, analyzed the data, and wrote the report. The field work, which was done in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, was under the supervision of John H. Cover, who also had charge of tabulating the data. Henry B. Arthur, then Assistant Director of the Division of Social Research, supervised the tabulations. John N. Webb, Coordinator of Urban Surveys, assisted in editing the report.

Acknowledgment is made of the assistance of Elizabeth K. Morrison and Glenn Steele in preparing the quantity budgets which were priced; of Harry D. Wilson, Francis E. Wilcox, and Wilson E. Sweeney in conducting the field work and tabulating the data; and of Joel C. Hawkins in checking the analysis. Many others, too numerous to mention separately, assisted in collecting and analyzing the data; their services are acknowledged with appreciation.

Respectfully submitted.

CORRINGTON GILL,  
*Assistant Administrator.*

HON. HARRY L. HOPKINS,  
*Works Progress Administrator.*

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**Intercity Differences in Costs of Living  
in March 1935, 59 Cities**

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FIG. 1-SIZE AND LOCATION OF 59 CITIES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY OF COSTS OF LIVING  
March 1935

