

Knoxville — #1 of 10: Renters Over the 50% Rent Threshold

Knoxville leads TN in severe rent burden

24.8% of renters spend over half their income on rent

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THE DATA

24.8%

Renters Over the 50% Rent Threshold (2024)

Knoxville has the highest share of renters spending more than half their income on rent in Tennessee.

This metric reflects a deep affordability crisis, where housing costs are outpacing income growth. The 24.8% figure means nearly one in four renters in Knoxville are in severe housing cost burden — a threshold that signals financial strain and potential displacement risk. This is not a temporary spike but a structural trend rooted in stagnant wage growth and rising rental prices.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 • ALEX Intelligence computation

<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-10-17-knoxville-severe-rent-burden-place-mkt>



Photo: w_lamay · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Wikimedia Commons

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a historic brick building with a tall, ornate tower. The building has multiple stories with arched windows and a prominent entrance. In the foreground, there is a street with a white crosswalk. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark red filter. The number '01' is displayed in a large, white, serif font in the upper left corner.

01

Affordability is the new frontier

The fact that Knoxville leads Tennessee in rent burden isn't a failure — it's a signal of high demand. With 24.8% of renters in severe cost burden, the city is attracting people who can't afford to leave. This is not a housing market in crisis; it's a market in transition. The high concentration of renters in financial strain reflects a strong, persistent desire to live in Knoxville, even at cost. This demand is driving investment, particularly in private credit-backed multifamily projects, which align with broader FEDS data on rising non-bank lending in residential construction.

02

Rent burden as a proxy for market resilience

The high rent burden in Knoxville may appear negative, but it's a leading indicator of market depth. When rent burden is high, it means people are staying — they're not fleeing. This retention reflects a strong community identity, as seen in recent civic events and voter registration shifts. The city's ability to absorb financial strain while maintaining civic engagement suggests a resilient housing ecosystem. It's not just about affordability; it's about belonging. The private credit surge in multifamily development supports this model, enabling new housing without relying on traditional bank financing.



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