

The Paycheck and State Tax Guide

The same salary is worth thousands more or less depending on the state. Here is what comes out of your paycheck and how to compare across the map.

Your salary is not your paycheck. Three big deductions come out before you see a dime, and one of them, state income tax, can swing your take-home by thousands of dollars a year on the very same salary. Understanding the pieces is the key to comparing job offers and thinking clearly about a move.

What actually comes out

Every paycheck loses three things to taxes. Federal income tax, based on your income after the standard deduction and your bracket. FICA, the 7.65 percent that funds Social Security and Medicare, the same in every state. And in most states, a state income tax on top.

On a 100,000 dollar salary for a single filer, federal income tax is about 13,170 dollars and FICA is 7,650, so 20,820 dollars is gone before any state tax. In a no-income-tax state that leaves 79,180 dollars of take-home. The federal and FICA pieces do not change by state, so the whole difference between states is the third piece.

Why the state matters so much

Nine states levy no income tax on wages at all, which is why they feature so heavily in relocation decisions. The rest range from a flat rate to graduated brackets that reach 13.3 percent at the top in California.

On that same 100,000 dollar salary, a Texan keeps 79,180 dollars, a Coloradan pays a flat 4.4 percent and keeps about 75,488, and a Californian, after the state brackets, keeps about 73,956. That is a spread of more than 5,000 dollars a year on the identical wage, decided entirely by the state. The Take-Home Pay by State calculator shows the gap for your salary.

Comparing offers the right way

A higher salary in one state can leave you with less than a lower one elsewhere. The only fair comparison is take-home, not gross. Convert each offer to what you actually keep, then reframe it further with the Reverse Paycheck calculator, which tells you the gross a state demands to hit a target take-home.

But take-home is only half the story. No-income-tax states often lean on higher property or sales taxes, and cost of living, especially housing, usually matters far more than income tax. A raise that looks huge can be eaten entirely by rent. Compare take-home first, then weigh it against what it actually costs to live in each place.

The catch with local taxes

State income tax is not always the end of it. Some cities, like New York City and Yonkers, and many localities in Ohio and Pennsylvania, add their own income tax on top of the state. A New York City resident owes city tax that a resident of upstate New York does not, on the same state return.

These calculators cover federal, FICA, and state income tax, which is the large majority of the burden for most people. If you live or plan to live in a taxing city, add a bit more for the local layer. And remember pre-tax benefits like a 401(k) and health premiums lower your taxable pay, softening the total, which is worth factoring into any comparison.

Key takeaway. Compare job offers on take-home, not gross. The federal and FICA pieces are the same everywhere, so the state tax layer is what makes the same salary worth thousands more or less.

Assumptions

- Take-home is gross pay minus federal income tax, Social Security and Medicare, and state income tax. State tax is from the brackets and standard deduction only.
- Local city income taxes, credits, and pre-tax deductions are not included, so a real paycheck can differ, especially in a taxing city.

Sources

- Tax Foundation, 2026 State Individual Income Tax Rates and Brackets
- IRS, tax withholding

Educational only. Not financial, tax, or investment advice. Figures use the assumptions stated above and ignore taxes, fees, and inflation unless noted.