

Living Wage Update Report: Chengdu, China, 2023

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 <p>Cost of decent standard of living for a family</p> <p>RMB 4,373 (USD 611)</p>	 <p>Living wage per month</p> <p>RMB 3,166 (USD 442)</p>
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Photo courtesy of Social Accountability International.

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Abstract:

This report provides updated estimates of family living expenses and living wage for workers in Chengdu, China. The update for 2023 takes into account inflation and changes in payroll deductions since the original Anker living wage study carried out in August 2015 (Chuanbo & Xingyue, 2015).

Keywords: Living costs, living wages, Anker Methodology, China

JEL classifications: J30, J50, J80.

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1. BACKGROUND

This report updates the Anker living wage and family living expenses for Chengdu, China, to 2023. The update incorporates inflation that has occurred since the original study in August 2015 (Chuanbo & Xingyue, 2015). This is done by updating the August 2015 net living wage and living income expenses to June 2023 by inflation. Without accounting for inflation, the net living wage estimated in 2015 would not be sufficient for workers to maintain a basic yet decent standard of living in 2023, as the purchasing power of the living wage would have decreased. The gross living wage (aka living wage) for 2023 also considers income taxes and mandatory deductions that workers would be required to pay, based on the relevant laws in effect in June 2023.

2. LIVING WAGE ESTIMATE IN ORIGINAL COUNTRY REPORT FROM AUGUST 2015

The original living wage country report estimated the net living wage in August 2015 to be RMB 2,161. This amount represented the required take-home pay for workers in Chengdu to have a decent standard of living in August 2015. The gross living wage, which also included income taxes and mandatory deductions from pay for social security and union dues, was estimated to be RMB 2,635 in August 2015. In addition, the living expenses for a reference family to have a basic yet decent standard of living in the original country report were estimated at RMB 3,846 in August 2015 (Chuanbo & Xingyue, 2015).

3. INFLATION RATE USED FOR UPDATE

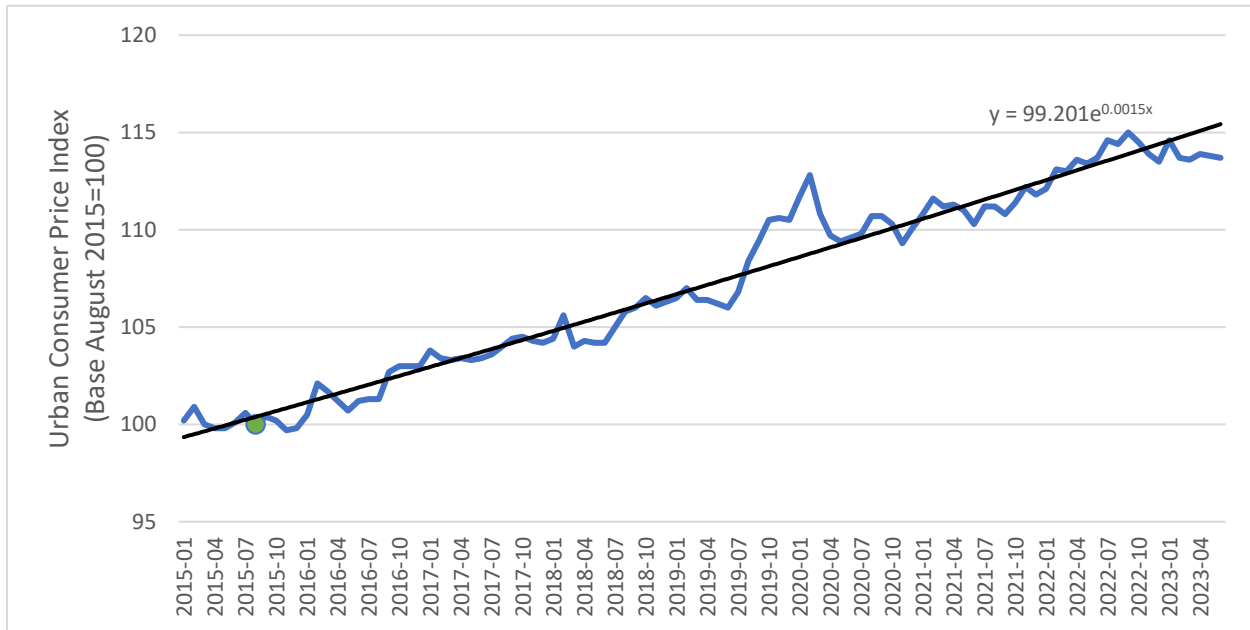
The National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC) is the government agency responsible for computing and publishing price indices in China. The NBSC reports several different consumer price indices, including the national average, urban and rural price indices at the national and provincial levels, as well as specific price indices for each of the 70 main cities. For this update, we use the Household Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the city of Chengdu.¹

4. RECENT LEVEL OF INFLATION

The inflation rate in Chengdu is modest and relatively stable. Between August 2015 and June 2023, total inflation for Chengdu was 13.70% (see Figure 1).

¹ See <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0104>. Accessed 23 July 2023.

Figure 1: Consumer Price Index for Chengdu, China from January 2015 to June 2023



Notes: The green circle indicate the month of the original study. The black line is the fitted exponential trendline.

Source: Authors' calculations based on CPI data from NBSC.

5. MANDATORY DEDUCTIONS

On August 30, 2018, the National People's Congress passed an amendment to the Individual Income Tax Law of the People's Republic of China.² The current Individual Income Tax (IIT) in China follows a progressive tax system, with rates ranging from 3% to 45%. In 2023, workers earning a living wage in Chengdu fall into the range from RMB 3,000 to RMB 12,000 per month, which is subject to a 10% tax rate minus a so-called 'quick deduction' of RMB 210. However, due to various tax deductions (a standard basic deduction of RMB 5,000 per month, plus specific additional deduction for child education, rental expenses, and more), workers earning a living wage are usually not required to pay income tax.³

Social security contributions for housing, pension, medical, and unemployment funds are mandatory in China. According to several online tax calculators,⁴ in 2023, mandatory payroll deductions in Chengdu amount to 22.4% (12% for housing, 8% for pension, 0.4% for unemployment, and 2% for medical funds) of an employee's salary.⁵

² See http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-09/01/c_1123362911.htm?baike.

³ See <https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/peoples-republic-of-china/individual/taxes-on-personal-income> and <https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/peoples-republic-of-china/individual/deductions>.

⁴ See <https://salary.directhr.cn/> and <https://hizdm.cn/city/chengdu/>.

⁵ We include employee contributions to the Housing Provident Fund when calculating the amount of mandatory payroll deductions. This is similar to what was done in the original study, but different from the 2022 update (see Andersen et al., 2022), as pandemic flexibilization had made it easier to make withdrawals from the Fund. This

6. UPDATED LIVING WAGES AND FAMILY EXPENSES FOR 2023

The updated family living expenses for 2023 are RMB 4,373 per month. The gross living wage (aka living wage), which takes into account mandatory payroll deductions, is RMB 3,166 per month for 2023. These are average estimates for the year 2023. Table 1 provides details of the original and the updated living wages and family living expenses.

Table 1: Living Wages and Living Expenses for Chengdu, China (in RMB and US Dollars)

Item	August 2015 Original Study Date		2022 Update Report		2023 Update Report	
	RMB	USD	RMB	USD	RMB	USD
Currency						
Living Expenses for Reference Family Per Month	3,846	601	4,364	652	4,373	611
Net Living Wage Per Month	2,161	338	2,452	366	2,457	343
Income Taxes and Payroll Deductions Per Month on Living Wage	474	74	285	43	709	99
Gross Living Wage Per Month	2,635	412	2,736	409	3,166	442
Exchange Rate to USD	6.40		6.69		7.16*	
Source of Exchange Rate	Original Report		IMF Archive		IMF Archive	

Note: * Average exchange rate for June 2023, according to IMF.

(<https://www.imf.org/external/np/fin/ert/GUI/Pages/CountryDataBase.aspx>).

Source: Authors' calculations.

7. REFERENCES

Andersen, L. E., Gonzales, A., Medinaceli, A., Anker, R. & Anker, M. (2022). Living Wage Update Report: Chengdu, China, 2022. Global Living Wage Coalition. Available online:

https://www.globallivingwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Updatereport_China_Chengdu_2022_7July2022.pdf

Chuanbo, C., & Xingyue, C. (2015) *Living Wage Report: Urban Chengdu, China with focus on hi-tech manufacturing*. Global Living Wage Coalition. Available online: <https://bit.ly/30DQtYA>

flexibilization has now ended, and contributions to the fund are mandatory for most urban workers. Some exceptions exist (e.g., workers close to retirement and workers who already own a house), but these are not considered to be important for workers on a living wage.