

Q3 2026 Private Domestic Professionals

In the New York Tri-State Area

The Cost of Living Has Changed the Math

By Charlie Ponger

2-minute read

\$50 an hour is about \$104,000 a year before taxes. But the real question is what's left.

As I do each quarter, I reviewed CPI, BLS, PCE and other government statistics. They're useful for what they measure, but they're not granular enough to show what daily life actually costs a private domestic professional. Prices are still rising at the cash register, in the monthly bills and in the ordinary cost of living. Can one full-time paycheck still support a stable life in the tri-state area?

I chose private professional housekeepers as the benchmark because they're generally at the lower end of private domestic compensation. If it doesn't work at the bottom, it doesn't work. Different roles pay differently, but the bills don't care what the title is.

\$104,000 is the gross number. It's not what's left to live on. That's why I regard \$50 an hour as rock bottom.

This is where my experience comes in. This isn't theoretical for me. I'm constantly interviewing domestic professionals across many different roles, and I'm having these conversations every day. For this piece, I'm staying with private professional housekeepers, and what I'm hearing is consistent. The cost of living has caught up with them. Whatever worked before simply doesn't work anymore. It usually comes down to something very simple. "I can't afford to live on this anymore." If the paycheck no longer works, people start looking because they need more money.

There are, of course, principals and family offices who already understand this and are absolutely spot on. However, there are also principals and family offices asking the wrong question. "Are we being competitive?" The better question is, "Does the compensation work?"

And by work, I don't mean can someone technically get by. I mean does the income allow them to live with stability.

Are we setting people up to wake up enthused about their work, or worried about how they're going to make it through the month?

If you expect the people taking care of your home to bring stability into yours, the job should provide stability in theirs. They still must afford lives of their own.

That's the reality