Cost of living in 1908?

The ‘cost of living’ (i.e. average rent plus cost of food and fuel) was affected by where you lived – e.g. in Blackburn it was around 20% lower than London.

- Rent was the main factor. Blackburn rents were on average 50% lower than London.
- The cost of food and fuel was on average around 10% lower than London.

RENT

Average rent for a two room dwelling in England and Wales was:

- In London  4s 6d – 7s 6d
- Provincial towns  3s – 3 6d

Average rent for a one room dwelling was

- In Scotland  2s – 2s 6d
- In Ireland  1s 6d – 2s 6d

COST OF FOOD AND FUEL (UK)

- Tea per lb  1s 4d – 2s
- Sugar per lb  2d
- Bread per 4lbs  4½d – 6d
- Butter per lb  1s – 1s 3d
- Potatoes per 7lbs  2½d - 3½d
- Cheese per lb  7d – 8d
- Bacon per lb  7d – 10½d
- Fresh Meat (UK) lb  7½d - 10d
- Milk per quart  2½d – 4d
- Coal per cwt  9½d – 1s

If we assume a pensioner in 1909 paid 2s in rent for one room, this would leave him or her with 3s for food, fuel etc which would buy:

- ½ cwt (approx 25 kilos) coal  = 6d
- 4 loafs of bread  = 6d
- ¼ lb tea  = 6d
- ½ lb sugar  = 1d
- quart milk  = 3d
- 7lbs potatoes  = 3d
- ¼ lb cheese  = 2d
- ½ lb meat  = 3d

leaving 6d over for beer, vegetables or other expenses

Source: Cd 3864 – Report of an enquiry of the Board of Trade into Working Class Rents, Housing and Retail Prices 1908. Rents and prices shown are as at 1905 – for London only, cost of commodities was estimated to have increased by 1% between 1905 and 1907.