

Property Tax Burden by County



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This research brief estimates the total 2020 property tax burden by county utilizing income data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and property tax data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). For all counties, the property tax burden reflects the Homestead Exemption, which reduced school district property taxes by \$535 million in FY 2020-21. The **table on page 2** lists each county's total property taxes paid, computed property tax burden and burden rank. The property tax burden is defined as the ratio of total property taxes to total income.¹ (See final page for a description of the income metric used.) A rank of 1 indicates the highest property tax burden in the state. Notable results include:

- Pennsylvania residents paid \$21.5 billion in property taxes statewide, which represented 2.7% of total income.^{2,3}
- Monroe County (5.1%) had the highest property tax burden in the state, 0.8 percentage points higher than the second highest, Pike County (4.3%).
- Jefferson County residents paid 1.7% of their income on property taxes, the lowest rate in the state.

The **heat map on page 3** displays total property tax burden by county. There are several notable geographic trends, including:

- All counties in the top 10 (except Greene) are in the eastern region of the state. Many counties with the highest burdens border each other, such as Monroe, Pike and Northampton.
- All counties in the bottom 10 are in the central or western region of the state, several of which border each other. The notable exception is Philadelphia, which has the third-lowest property tax burden in the state. This result occurs because the county reported the highest level of personal income while also having a relatively low reliance on school property taxes compared to other counties.
- In general, rural counties had higher tax burdens because those counties have relatively larger elderly populations and lower per capita income levels. For those counties, Social Security, pensions and savings income (e.g., IRAs) comprise a larger share of total county income.

¹ The burden measure represents a county-wide average and reflects all property taxes paid by homeowners, renters, landlords and business owners. Property taxes include current-year and delinquent school district, county and municipal taxes.

² This amount does not account for property tax relief distributed by the Property Tax Rent Rebate program to income-eligible seniors and people with disabilities. In CY 2020, the program provided \$129.4 million in property tax relief to homeowners statewide. Including these relief amounts would modestly reduce the overall tax burden.

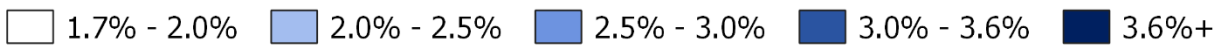
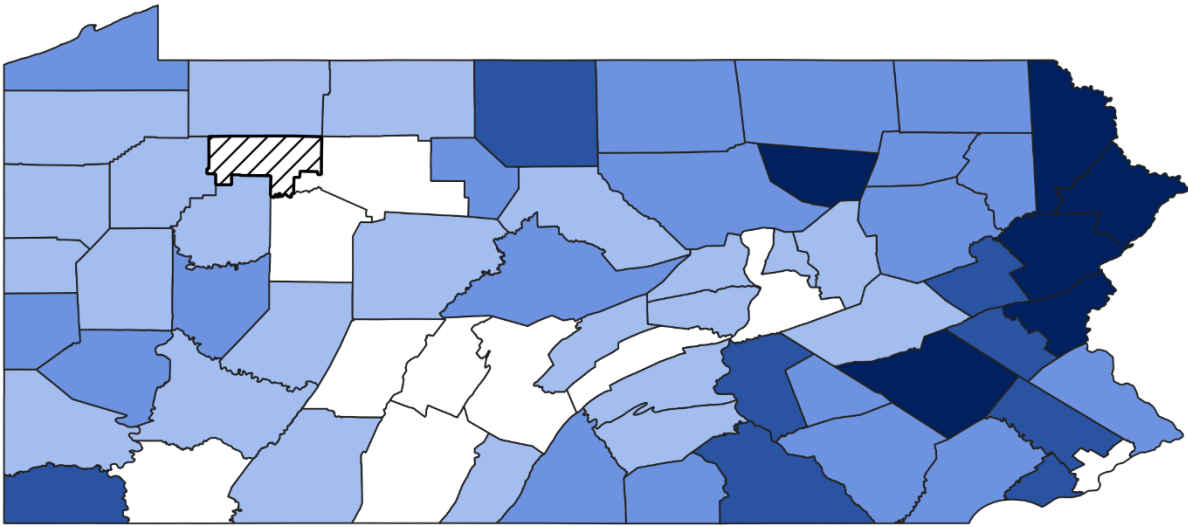
³ The computed property tax burden fell across the state compared to 2019 because income growth significantly outpaced property tax growth in all counties due to large federal stimulus programs and an estimated 20% increase in capital gains income.

Total Property Tax Burden by County (2020)

County	Property		Rank	County	Property		Rank
	Taxes	Tax Burden			Taxes	Tax Burden	
Adams	\$167	2.90%	15	Lackawanna	\$300	2.74%	25
Allegheny	\$2,355	2.85%	20	Lancaster	\$901	2.82%	22
Armstrong	\$87	2.60%	29	Lawrence	\$104	2.45%	36
Beaver	\$241	2.64%	28	Lebanon	\$211	2.81%	23
Bedford	\$43	1.91%	59	Lehigh	\$703	3.30%	8
Berks	\$835	3.61%	6	Luzerne	\$446	2.84%	21
Blair	\$117	1.89%	61	Lycoming	\$136	2.52%	32
Bradford	\$75	2.79%	24	McKean	\$43	2.30%	44
Bucks	\$1,520	2.87%	19	Mercer	\$118	2.31%	42
Butler	\$265	2.16%	54	Mifflin	\$48	2.37%	39
Cambria	\$119	1.90%	60	Monroe	\$427	5.14%	1
Cameron	\$6	2.59%	30	Montgomery	\$2,196	3.00%	14
Carbon	\$114	3.05%	11	Montour	\$22	2.17%	52
Centre	\$212	2.89%	16	Northampton	\$706	3.76%	4
Chester	\$1,306	2.65%	27	Northumberland	\$87	2.03%	57
Clarion	\$39	2.27%	46	Perry	\$53	2.20%	51
Clearfield	\$80	2.04%	56	Philadelphia	\$1,579	1.78%	63
Clinton	\$43	2.48%	34	Pike	\$139	4.33%	2
Columbia	\$70	2.30%	43	Potter	\$24	3.04%	13
Crawford	\$89	2.28%	45	Schuylkill	\$159	2.40%	38
Cumberland	\$376	2.35%	40	Snyder	\$42	2.21%	50
Dauphin	\$456	3.05%	12	Somerset	\$77	2.24%	48
Delaware	\$1,357	3.13%	10	Sullivan	\$13	4.10%	3
Elk	\$31	1.99%	58	Susquehanna	\$58	2.87%	18
Erie	\$370	2.66%	26	Tioga	\$53	2.88%	17
Fayette	\$109	1.76%	64	Union	\$47	2.35%	41
Forest	\$8	n.a.	n.a.	Venango	\$51	2.16%	53
Franklin	\$204	2.48%	35	Warren	\$39	2.14%	55
Fulton	\$17	2.41%	37	Washington	\$293	2.22%	49
Greene	\$54	3.15%	9	Wayne	\$97	3.71%	5
Huntingdon	\$37	1.87%	62	Westmoreland	\$472	2.27%	47
Indiana	\$91	2.49%	33	Wyoming	\$35	2.55%	31
Jefferson	\$35	1.67%	66	York	<u>\$877</u>	<u>3.47%</u>	7
Juniata	\$21	1.73%	65	Statewide	\$21,501	2.72%	--

Note: Dollar amounts in millions. Property taxes include actual current, interim and delinquent school district revenues for FY 2020-21 and CY 2020 county and municipal revenues. Tax burden is equal to total property taxes paid as a percentage of total income. Forest County's tax burden and rank are excluded due to various data anomalies.

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Technical Detail

This analysis uses two data sources for the county-level income metric: the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Non-farm personal income in CY 2020 by county reported by the BEA is the base for county income. That measure is then adjusted to account for several factors. The analysis adds capital gains income, IRA withdrawals and pension distributions to state personal income and deducts employer contributions to pension and health plans and imputed interest income.

For property taxes, the analysis uses actual FY 2020-21 current, interim and delinquent school district property tax revenues published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). School district revenues are summed to their respective counties based on how they are reported by PDE. The analysis does not attempt to apportion multi-county school districts across counties. County and municipal revenues are based on CY 2020 actuals reported by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

Forest County was excluded from the map and tax burden rankings because over 40% of its population is institutionalized, which resulted in unusually low property tax and income levels.

Staff Acknowledgments

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