

Where Americans Pay Most In Property Taxes

Francesca Levy, 01.15.10, 04:40 PM EST

A national look at costs by county.

In Depth: Where Americans Pay Most In Property Taxes

No one looks forward to the day their annual [property tax](#) bill arrives. But those in affluent [Westchester County](#), a suburban swath of New York that includes areas like Rye and Armonk, most likely dread it more than most. That's because homeowners fork over a median \$8,404 per year to live there. That's seven times more than the \$1,180 national average, and on a dollar basis, the highest in the nation.

Across the country, [Marin County, Calif.](#), holds a similar distinction. While not as lofty as [Westchester's](#), the region's \$5,233 median annual property taxes are the highest in the West. Residents of [Loudon County, Va.](#), a wealthy suburb of Washington, D.C., pay most in the South, or \$4,844 annually. And in the Midwest, those in [Lake County, Ill.](#), lay out \$6,050 a year to own a home.

Behind the Numbers

In ranking each county, we used the 2008 U.S. Census' American Community Survey, which is conducted every year with a smaller sample of Americans than the decennial census (one home in every 40 receives the ACS, as opposed to the one in six that receives the 10-year census). The survey asked property owners how much they spent per month in property taxes. Researchers then used the median number per county over three years: 2006 through 2008. We separated the data into the four Census-defined regions: West, Midwest, Northeast and South, and ranked counties by their percentage above the national average property tax. ([Click here for a full list.](#))

Photos: Priciest Property Tax Counties By Region

Video: America's Highest Property Taxes

Three of country's top five highest-taxed counties--Westchester, Nassau and Rockland--are in [New York state](#). Homes in these areas are pricey--in Westchester the median home value is \$581,900, three times the national average, according to Census numbers--which naturally helps drive up those bills. But there is another factor at play here: Counties in the Census-defined Northeast region tend to be carved into an array of towns, villages and municipalities that don't derive their property taxes from state-wide levies. This results in a greater dependence on property taxes for local

revenue. Because the region also has highly concentrated pockets of wealth, it takes 19 out of the top 20 spots for highest-taxed counties.