

Local Government Council

United Way – Peak Progress QLI

August 18, 2021

Overview

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Data Points

- Government Employment per Capita per 1000
- Total Taxes Per Capita
- Property Taxes Per Capita
- Expenditures Per Capita
- (Voter Turnout)

Notes About Data Sources

- *City and County Extra: Annual Metro, City, and County Data Book* (2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020).
- Population estimates used in Employment Per Capita utilized the U.S. Census Bureau's Annual Population Estimates updated by Bruce Fogarty.
- The taxes and expenditures per capita figures were already calculated by the editors of *County and City Extra*.
- Dollar amounts are from the time of publication of the datasets.

Notes About Jurisdictions

- County Jurisdictions: Boulder County, CO; El Paso County, CO; Larimer County, CO; Teller County, CO; Ada County, ID; Bernalillo County, NM; Travis County, TX
- City Jurisdictions: Boulder, CO; Colorado Springs, CO; Fort Collins, CO; Boise, ID; Albuquerque, NM; Austin, TX

Government Employment

Two sets of data: FTE Employees and Government Employment

- FTE Employees. This specific measure was not included in *County and City Extra* until 2014. It comes from the Census of Governments survey which is completed every five years in years ending in 2 or 7. For counties and MSAs, this measure “includes data for all local governments (i.e., counties, municipalities, townships, special districts, and school districts) located within the county.” For cities, this measure only includes data for “municipal governments only. They do not include any special district government entities within the city.”
- Government Employment – State and Local. This data comes from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis – Regional Economic Accounts. “Employment is measured as the average annual sum of full-time and part-time jobs. The estimates are on a place-of-work basis. State and local government employment includes person employed in all state and local government agencies and enterprises.”
- City Government Employment. This data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau– Survey of Governments, Employment Statistics. “The data are from an annual survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census and represent paid employment by city governments.”

Taxes and Expenditures - Counties

Data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau – Census of Governments-produced every five years.

- “For each county area, the financial data comprise amounts for all local governments—not only the county government, but also any municipalities, townships, school districts, and special districts within the county.”
- “Revenue and expenditure items include all amounts of money received and paid out, respectively, by a government and its agencies (net of correcting transactions such as recoveries of refunds), with the exception of amounts for debt issuance and retirement and for loan and investment, agency, and private transactions.”
- “Payments among the various fund and agencies of a particular government are excluded from revenue and expenditure items as representing internal transfers. Therefore, a government’s contribution to a retirement fund that it administers is not counted as expenditure, nor is the receipt of this contribution by the retirement fund counted as revenue.”
- “Total general revenue includes all revenue except utility, liquor stores, and insurance trust revenue. All tax revenue and intergovernmental revenue, even if designated for employee retirement or local utility purpose, are classified as general revenue...”

Taxes and Expenditures - Counties

- “...Taxes consist of compulsory contributions exacted by governments for public purposes. However, this category excludes employer and employee payments for retirement and social insurance purposes, which are classified as insurance trust revenue; it also excludes special assessments, which are classified as non-tax general revenue. Property taxes are conditioned on ownership of property and assessed by its value.”
- “General government expenditure includes capital outlay, a major portion of which is commonly financed by borrowing. Government revenue does not include receipts from borrowing.”
- “Direct general expenditure comprises all expenditures of the local governments, excluding utility, liquor stores, insurance trust expenditures, and any intergovernmental payments.”

Taxes and Expenditures - Cities

This data came from two sources. For the years 1996, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2006 it came from U.S. Census Bureau – Survey of Governments, Finance Statistics. For the years 2007, 2012, and 2017 it came from U.S. Census Bureau – Census of Governments.

- For cities, “revenue and expenditure data are for city governments only. The data does not include funds of any special district governments located in the city.”
- “Total general revenue includes all revenue except utility, liquor stores, and insurance trust revenue. All tax revenue and intergovernmental revenue, even if designated for employee retirement or local utility purpose, are classified as general revenue...”

Taxes and Expenditures - Cities

- “Taxes consist of compulsory contributions exacted by governments for public purposes. However, this category excludes employer and employee payments for retirement and social insurance purposes, which are classified as insurance trust revenue. All tax revenue is classified as general revenue and comprises amounts received (including interest and penalties but excluding protested amounts and refunds) from all taxes imposed by a government. Note that local government tax revenue excludes any amounts from shares of state-imposed and collected taxes, which are classified as intergovernmental revenue.”
- “Property taxes are based on ownership of property and measured by its value. They include general property taxes related to property as a whole—real and personal, tangible and intangible—whether taxed at a single rate or at classified rates. Also included are taxes on selected types of property, such as motor vehicles or certain or all intangibles.”

Findings

Surprise: in 2012, Colorado Springs had some of the highest number of full-time employees per capita amongst cities but dropped to the lowest in a 5-year time frame.

El Paso County also experienced the greatest decrease in FTE per capita during that same timeframe amongst counties. Consequently, both organizations ended up as having among the least number of employees per capita among their peer groups.

Findings

Citizens in El Paso County have among the lowest tax burdens per capita out of the 7-county group, with the lowest growth in tax burden over the past 15 years.

Supporting this assertion is the relatively low tax burden as a percent of personal income per capita – citizens in El Paso County spend approximately 3.1% of their personal income on taxes, which is amongst the lowest of the Counties and less than the average of 4.0%.

Findings

Relative to property taxes, citizens in El Paso County and Colorado Springs pay the least amount of property taxes per capita amongst their peer groups, with Colorado Springs residents paying half of the property taxes per capita as the next lowest City.

El Paso County residents are paying approximately 10% less per capita than the next lowest County (Bernalillo, NM) and over 70% less in property taxes per capita than the highest (Travis County, TX). Additionally, El Paso County had – by far – the lowest increase in property taxes per capita over the 15-year time period in the survey.

Findings

When looking at the difference between per capita expenditures and per capita total taxes, it's interesting to note that Colorado Springs had the lowest difference between the tax-related revenues it brings in and the funds they expend – indicating that they have a heavier reliance on tax-related revenues and have not relied on other sources of revenue (fees, grants, intergovernmental funds, charges for service, etc.) as much as other cities.

Perhaps then, it's not surprising that their expenditures per capita are the lowest amongst all the cities in the peer group, with 2017 expenditures per capita actually 10% *less* than they were back in 1996.

Findings

While El Paso County didn't have the lowest figure showing the difference between per capita expenditures and per capita taxes, they were below the median, indicating that services in the County also have a slightly heavier reliance on tax-related revenues than several in their peer group.

They were also among the lowest in Expenditures per capita.

Observations

Our local jurisdictions take great pride in being able to deliver high quality public services while keeping tax burdens relatively low.

It's also important to remember that all of the various entities in the survey likely provide a broad range of services that others do not provide and have varying levels of service while they do it.

This survey didn't get to the level of detail to make any qualitative analysis as to "why" there are differences between organizations. Rather, it provides a window into these various metrics to show where similarities and differences do exist and leaves it up to the reader to dig deeper to determine why that is the case.

Observations

While property taxes have been kept relatively low, at the same time, the voters have been willing to support separate dedicated tax/fee measures for specific public needs where necessary:

- Stormwater management
- City roadway improvements (2C)
- Parks / open space
- Public safety

Observations

We have a very large number of special service districts in place throughout the county, often providing services that otherwise are delivered by local government (water and wastewater service, maintenance of parks, open space and roadways, etc.)

Special districts have their own taxing authority that is separate from county and local government.

Likely allows us to keep tax rates relatively low in local government.

Observations

There's been a strong history of regional collaboration by the local jurisdictions, which likely saves us all money while operating/coordinating in an efficient manner. Examples include:

- Regional Building Department
- Regional Office of Emergency Management
- Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority