
Structure of Maryland Local Government

**Presentation to the
Task Force to Modernize County and Municipal
Revenue Structures**



July 31, 2026



Structure of Local Governments in Maryland

- Maryland's structure is relatively simple
- Maryland has 341 units of local government
 - Counties (23)
 - Baltimore City
 - Municipalities (156)
 - Special districts (161)
- Maryland does not have townships or independent school districts
- Local funding for public schools, libraries, and community colleges is determined by the county government
- Baltimore City is considered a county under State law



Structure of Local Governments in Surrounding States

Comparison of Number of Local Government Units

	<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Maryland</u>	<u>Pennsylvania</u>	<u>Virginia</u>	<u>West Virginia</u>
Counties	3	24	66	95	55
Municipalities	57	156	1,014	227	230
Townships	0	0	1,544	0	0
School Districts*	19	0	514	0	55
Special Districts	255	161	1,688	199	296
Total	334	341	4,826	521	636
Rank	46th	45th	3rd	44th	38th

*School districts in Maryland and Virginia are dependent on another unit of local government for funding and are not classified as a separate unit of local government. Baltimore City is often classified as a county since the city functions as a county for most purposes of State law.



Local Government Services More Consolidated in Maryland

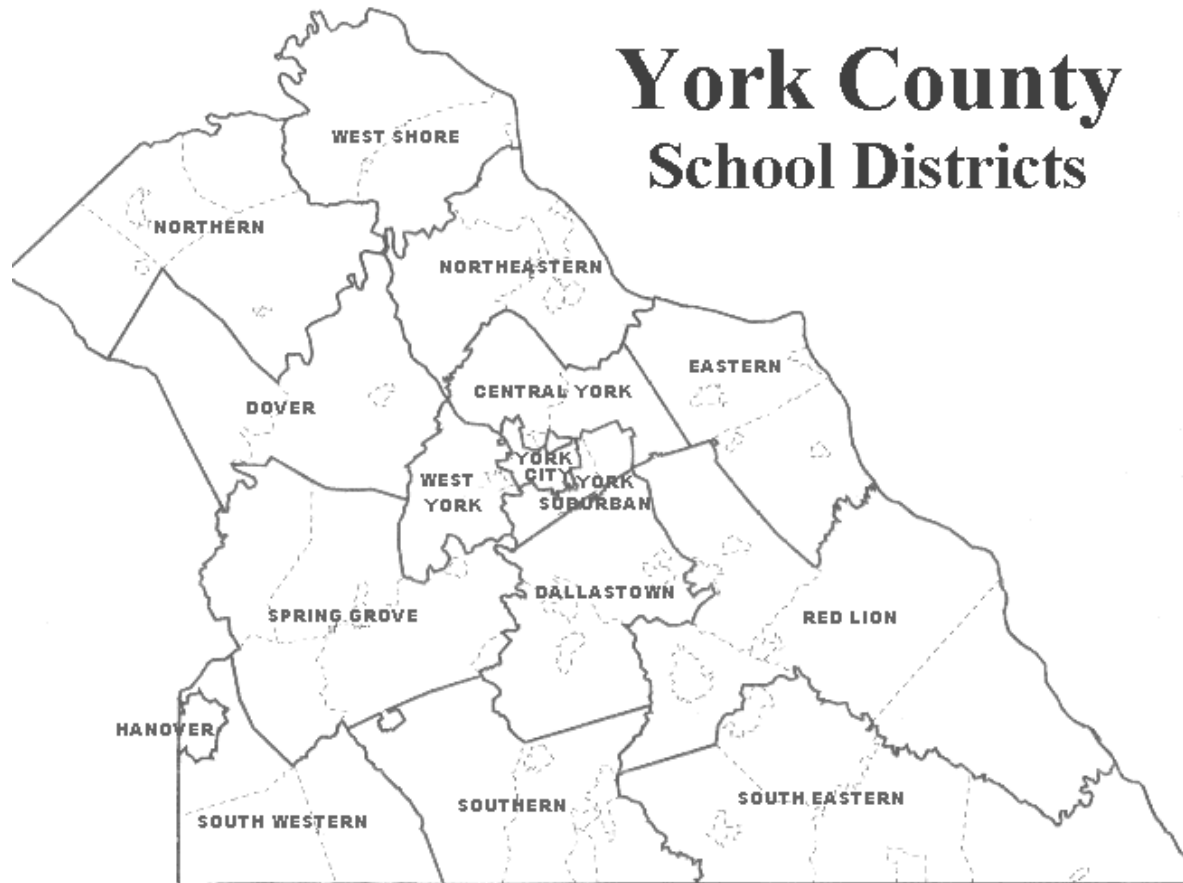
Comparison of Number of Local Government Units in Selected Jurisdictions in Maryland and Pennsylvania

	Maryland		Pennsylvania	
Counties	Baltimore	Frederick	York	Adams
Population	847,650	302,883	473,197	107,594
<i>Sub-county Units</i>				
Municipalities	0	12	37	13
Townships	0	0	35	21
School Districts	0	0	15	6
Special Districts	1	2	42	24
Total	2	15	130	65

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Adams County, Pennsylvania; York County, Pennsylvania; Baltimore County, Maryland; Frederick County, Maryland; U.S. Census Bureau, 2025 Census of Government; July 2025 Population Estimates



School Districts in York County, Pennsylvania

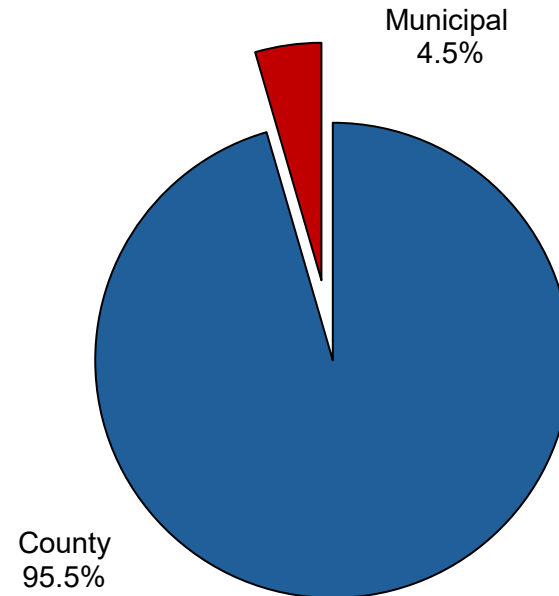




Counties in Maryland Responsible for Most Basic Services

- Counties are the primary unit of local government in Maryland
- Counties directly provide most basic local services such as police, fire, local corrections, sanitation, local highways, health, and parks and recreation
- Counties also provide local funding for public schools, libraries, local community colleges, and the circuit courts

Share of Local Government Expenditures – FY 2024



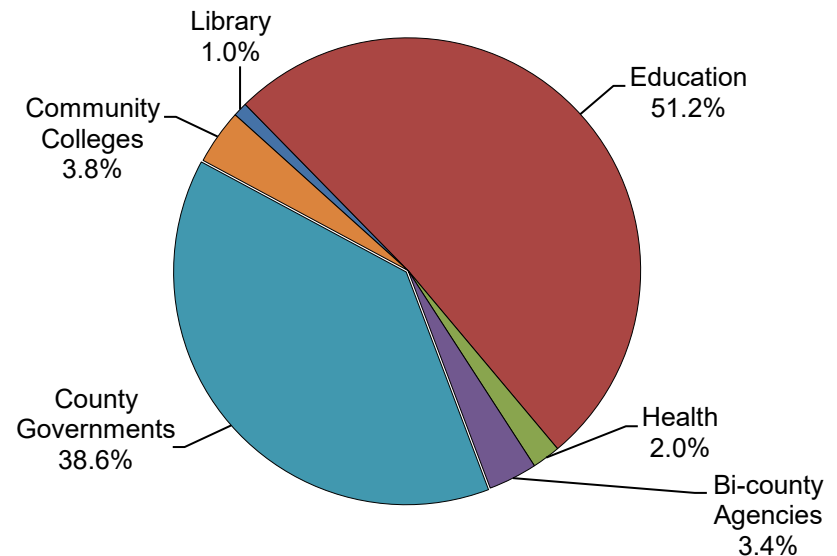


County Level Services Provided by Various Governmental Units

Types of Government Units at the County Level

- County Governments
- Boards of Education
- Library Boards
- Community Colleges
- Health Departments
- Bi-county Agencies

Share of County Expenditures FY 2024





Municipalities in Maryland Provide Limited Array of Public Services

- Public works and public safety are the two largest functions of municipal governments, accounting for approximately 64% of municipal expenditures
- Unlike counties, municipalities do not fund local school systems and community colleges, which account for over 50% of local spending
- In FY 2024, expenditures at the municipal government level totaled \$2.0 billion, or 4.5% of total local spending
- In Allegany, Dorchester, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester counties, municipal governments account for over 15% of local spending



Municipalities in Maryland Are Relatively Small

- 15.9% of State population resides in municipalities
- Only 9 municipalities have more than 25,000 residents
- 58% of municipalities have fewer than 2,500 residents
- Eastern Shore and Western Maryland have a higher percentage of residents living in a municipality

Population Range	Number	Share of Total
More than 25,000	9	5.8%
10,000 – 24,999	13	8.3%
5,000 – 9,999	22	14.1%
2,500 – 4,999	22	14.1%
Less than 2,500	90	57.7%
Total	156	100.0%



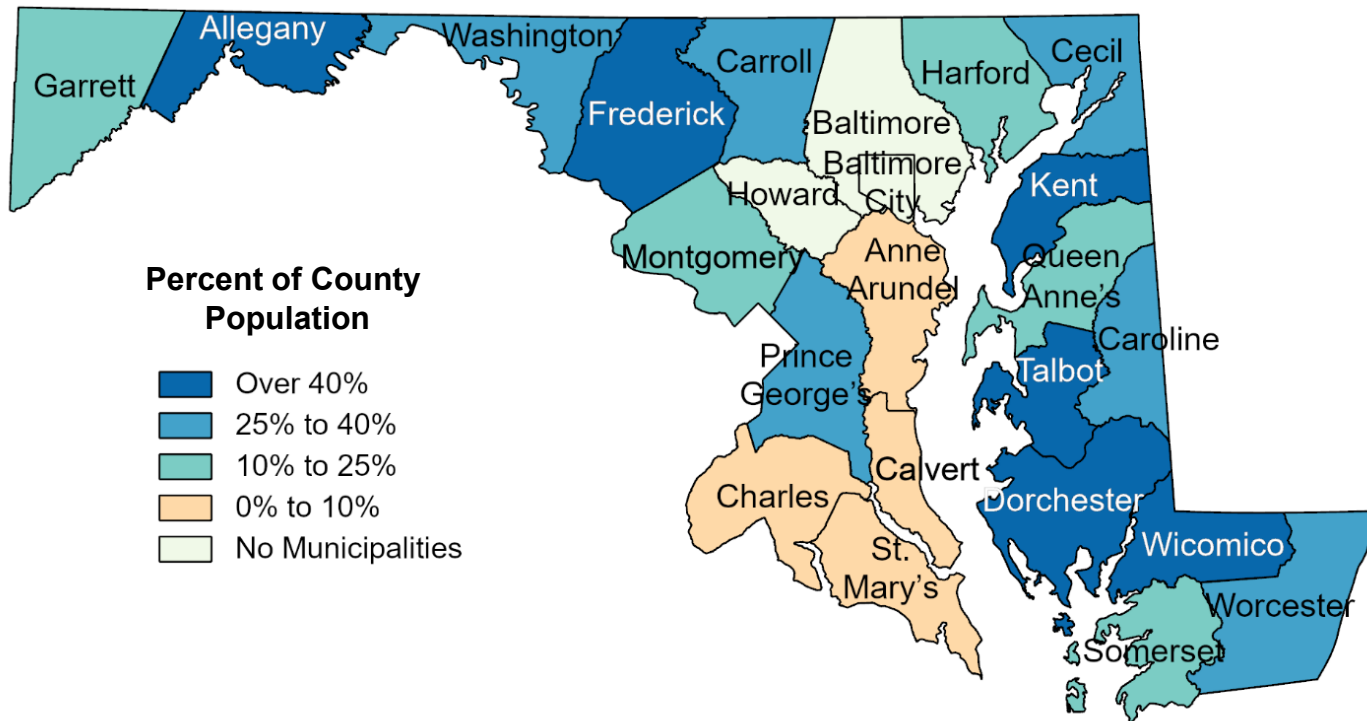
Municipal Share of County Population

- Municipal residency varies considerably across the 24 jurisdictions
- Half of the counties have at least 25% of residents living in municipalities
- Six counties have relatively high levels of municipal residency, with more than 40% of residents living within municipalities, while four counties have less than 10% of residents living in municipalities
- Baltimore and Howard counties have no municipalities. Baltimore City is grouped with the 23 counties in Maryland

Population Range	Number of Counties
More than 40%	6
25% – 40%	6
10% – 25%	5
0% – 10%	4
No Municipalities	3
Total	24

Residents Residing in Municipalities

July 2023





Residents Residing in Municipalities

July 2023

County	County Population	Municipal Population	Percent of County	Rank
Allegany	67,084	29,496	44.0%	4
Anne Arundel	599,327	40,574	6.8%	20
Baltimore City	567,952	0	0.0%	24
Baltimore	846,378	0	0.0%	24
Calvert	94,753	8,670	9.2%	18
Caroline	33,768	12,781	37.8%	7
Carroll	176,625	54,210	30.7%	10
Cecil	105,789	31,111	29.4%	11
Charles	172,174	15,056	8.7%	19
Dorchester	32,981	16,781	50.9%	2
Frederick	293,742	124,003	42.2%	5
Garrett	28,485	6,729	23.6%	14
Harford	264,739	43,235	16.3%	16
Howard	336,321	0	0.0%	24
Kent	19,448	8,171	42.0%	6
Montgomery	1,064,369	176,424	16.6%	15
Prince George's	954,813	254,438	26.6%	12
Queen Anne's	52,624	7,239	13.8%	17
St. Mary's	115,242	4,908	4.3%	21
Somerset	24,596	6,130	24.9%	13
Talbot	38,019	20,378	53.6%	1
Washington	155,437	57,328	36.9%	8
Wicomico	106,024	48,887	46.1%	3
Worcester	54,237	18,948	34.9%	9
Total	6,204,927	985,497	15.9%	

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, Department of Legislative Services



Expenditures Limited in Most Municipalities

Expenditure Range FY 2024	Number of Municipalities	Percent of Total
More than \$50 million	11	7.1%
\$25 to \$50 million	10	6.4%
\$10 to \$25 million	16	10.3%
\$5 to \$10 million	25	16.0%
\$1 to \$5 million	49	31.4%
Less than \$1 million	45	28.8%
Total	156	100.0%



Expenditures in the State's 10 Largest Municipalities

Fiscal 2024

Rank	Municipality	Population	Expenditures \$ in Millions	Per Capita Expenditures
1	Frederick	86,251	\$174.0	\$2,018
2	Gaithersburg	70,268	81.6	1,161
3	Rockville	67,966	154.7	2,276
4	Bowie	57,783	72.0	1,246
5	Hagerstown	43,637	131.3	3,008
6	Annapolis	40,633	144.9	3,565
7	College Park	34,434	29.9	868
8	Salisbury	33,372	81.8	2,450
9	Laurel	29,685	57.3	1,929
10	Greenbelt	24,596	44.0	1,787



Local Government Expenditures

Fiscal 2024

- Local expenditures totaled \$45.6 billion in FY 2024
- County level expenditures totaled \$43.6 billion, or 95.5% of the total
- Municipal level expenditures totaled \$2.0 billion, or 4.5% of the total
- Municipal share of local expenditures relatively higher in several counties

Municipal Share of Total Local Expenditures

Share of Expenditures	Number of Counties	Percent of Total
More than 25%	2	8.3%
15 to 24.9%	3	12.5%
5 to 14.9%	8	33.3%
1 to 4.9%	8	33.3%
None	3	12.5%
Statewide	24	100%

Source: Local Government Finances FY 2024, Department of Legislative Services



Local Government Expenditures Exclusive of Local Board Expenditures Fiscal 2024

- Local expenditures exclusive of local board expenditures totaled \$22.5 billion in FY 2024
- County level expenditures exclusive of local board expenditures totaled \$20.4 billion, or 90.9% of the total
- Municipal level expenditures totaled \$2.0 billion, or 9.1% of the total
- Municipal share of local expenditures relatively higher in several counties

Municipal Share of Total Local Expenditures Exclusive of Local Board Expenditures

Share of Expenditures	Number of Counties	Percent of Total
More than 25%	6	25.0%
15% to 24.9%	6	25.0%
5% to 14.9%	8	33.3%
1% to 4.9%	1	4.2%
None	3	12.5%
Statewide	24	100%

Source: Local Government Finances FY 2024, Department of Legislative Services



County Level Expenditures

Fiscal 2024

(\$ in Millions)

Governmental Unit	Amount	Percent of Total
Public Schools	\$21,174.7	51.2%
Libraries	411.4	1.0%
Community Colleges	1,578.9	3.8%
Health Departments	813.5	2.0%
County Governments	15,955.8	38.6%
Bi-county Agencies	1,401.7	3.4%
Subtotal	\$41,336.0	100.0%
Debt Service	2,258.1	
Total	\$43,594.1	



County Government and Bi-county Expenditures

Fiscal 2024

(\$ in Millions)

	Amount	Percent of Total
Public Works	\$4,657.8	17.1%
Public Safety	5,287.3	19.4%
General Government	2,856.0	10.5%
Community/Econ. Dev.	1,326.1	4.9%
Parks and Recreation	1,101.0	4.0%
Health/Social Services	965.6	3.5%
Other	1,163.7	4.3%
Subtotal	\$17,357.5	63.7%
Transfers to Boards	9,897.0	36.3%
Total	\$27,254.5	100.0%



Municipal Government Expenditures

Fiscal 2024

(\$ in Millions)

	Amount	Percent of Total
Public Works	\$814.5	40.1%
Public Safety	487.1	24.0%
General Government	321.2	15.8%
Parks and Recreation	157.7	7.8%
Community/Economic Development	95.0	4.7%
Miscellaneous	79.3	3.9%
Debt Service	78.7	3.9%
Total	\$2,033.5	100.0%



Responsibility for Delivering Major Local Government Services

Rank	Government Service	Percent of Local Expenditures	Percent County	Percent Municipal
1	Public Schools	46.4%	100.0%	0.0%
2	Water/Sewer	7.5%	87.0%	13.0%
3	Police	6.0%	87.0%	13.0%
4	Transportation	4.3%	84.8%	15.2%
5	Community Colleges	3.5%	100.0%	0.0%
6	Health/Social Services	3.9%	100.0%	0.0%
7	Fire Protection	3.9%	95.6%	4.4%
8	Community/Economic Development	3.1%	93.3%	6.7%
9	Parks/Recreation	2.8%	87.5%	12.5%
10	Corrections	1.3%	100.0%	0.0%
11	Libraries	0.9%	100.0%	0.0%