Tennessee General Assembly

Fiscal Review Committee

Report on Local Governments

2012

Introduction

The Fiscal Review Committee conducts an annual study of local governments based largely on questions and topics arising from previous legislative sessions. Results of each annual survey are used to better analyze and identify the fiscal impact proposed legislation may have on local governments. All data within the survey is self-reported by local governments across the state.

New Approaches

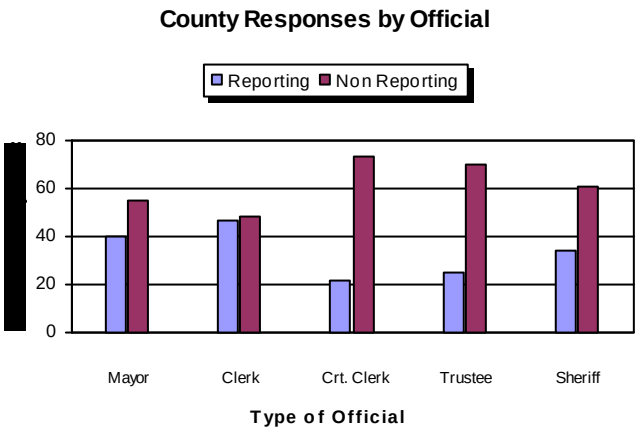
This year there were several changes to the creation, design, and distribution of the local government survey. First, open communication was established with local government associations such as the Tennessee Municipal League (TML), County Officials Association of Tennessee (COAT), and Association of County Mayors (ACM) as well as the County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS) regarding the survey. Their input and aid was enlisted at the start to ensure the survey was well received and distributed resourcefully.

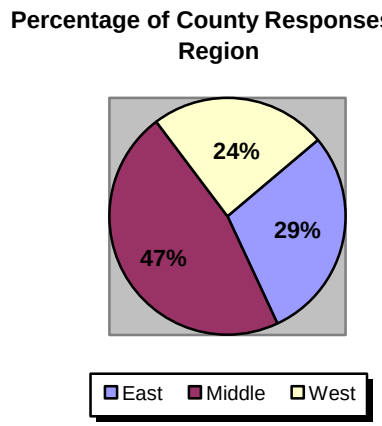
In previous years a copy of the survey was mailed to officials in all 438 local governments. In an attempt to increase efficiency and responses while decreasing production costs, the survey was completely web-based. In addition, the traditional single, large county survey was separated into smaller sections based upon question subject matter and sent directly to the county official best suited to answer. It was decided the municipal survey should remain intact for this year and be sent to the city manager/mayor for response.

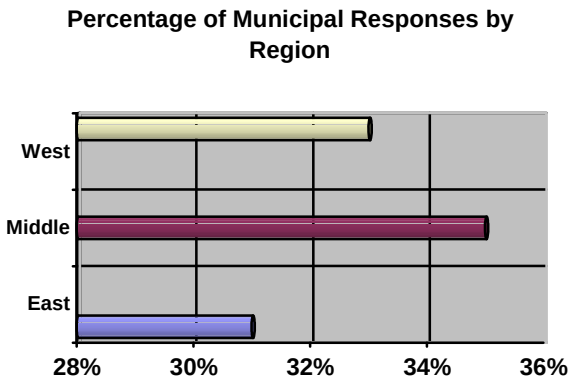
This year's local government survey was distributed to 343 municipal officials and 475 county officials comprised of the county mayor/executive, trustee, court clerk, county clerk, and sheriff for each of the 95 counties. Twenty-nine percent of municipalities responded and 33 percent of county officials responded from 89 percent of counties.

Our goal is that with each following year this survey will become something all local officials are familiar with and take the time to participate, thus building stronger relationships between the Fiscal Review Committee and local governments.

Reporting Figures & Tables



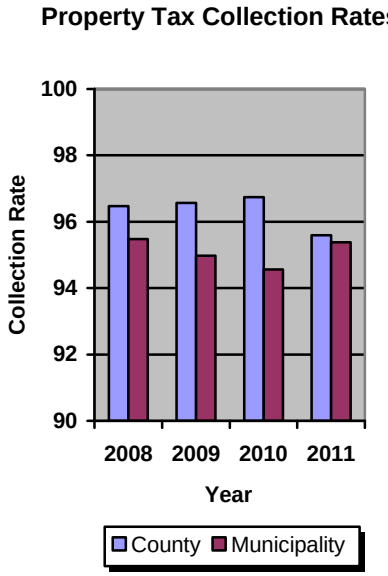




Taxes & Other Revenues

Property Tax Collections

Counties and municipalities were each surveyed regarding their average property tax collection rates over the past four years. Averages of those local governments reporting are shown in the table below.



Delinquent Tax Sales

Ninety-five percent of counties reporting hold three or fewer delinquent tax sales per year. Of those reporting, Davidson County held the most at 8 per year. Based on figures provided by counties there are on average 34 properties offered at each sale, with approximately 57 percent of all properties being sold.

Thirty-eight percent of municipalities report the county conducts sales, not the municipality, while the remaining municipalities have on average one tax sale per year. The cities of Knoxville and Oak Ridge have the highest number of properties offered at each sale with an average of 306 properties; the remaining municipalities average 18 properties at each sale. Approximately 42 percent of properties offered are sold at each sale.

Traffic Cameras

According to survey responses, 12 percent of municipalities indicate they utilize red light cameras with an average of 8 in each municipality. Knoxville reports the most cameras at 48 located at 15 intersections. Seven percent of municipalities reporting indicate they utilize speed cameras, with an average of four cameras per municipality. One-third of municipalities with traffic cameras use both red light and speed cameras. The average revenue collected yearly from citations issued via traffic cameras is approximately $294,200 per municipality.

Beer Permits

Based on survey response data, 100 percent of counties had a local beer board. Eighty-nine percent of counties reported issuing new beer permits in 2011. On average there were five new beer permits issued per county with a cost of $250 per new permit. Also assessed with beer permits is a $100 yearly privilege tax. On average there were 21 beer permits per county who "renewed" their beer permit by remitting this privilege tax to the county.

Only four counties reported suspending beer permits in 2011, with each only reporting one suspension. Five counties reported revoking beer permits, with one county revoking two permits and the remainder revoking one each. According to survey data the average cost per beer permit citation is $538.

Eighty-four percent of municipalities reported having a local beer board. Based on reporting totals, 631 new beer permits were issued by municipalities, with an average of 7 per municipality. On average each municipality renewed 34 beer permits in 2011. Five municipalities reported suspending beer permits, with one municipality suspending two permits and the other four suspending one. Only two municipalities reported revoking beer permits, with one revocation each. Based on survey data the average cost for a citation issued for a violation of a beer permit is $685.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

According to survey figures, there are on average 29 POST-certified law enforcement officers employed per municipality, with Knoxville reporting the most at 416, and 13 percent of municipalities reporting zero. There are on average 52 POST-certified law enforcement officers employed per county, with Shelby County reporting the most with 555.

Eighty percent of reporting counties and 58 percent of reporting municipalities provide service weapons to law enforcement officers.

Municipalities were surveyed regarding average salary and benefits offered to law enforcement officers. Based on survey responses the average yearly salary for a municipal law enforcement officer is $37,730; or for those municipalities reporting hourly wages the average wage was $15.75 per hour. Sixty-six percent of municipalities report benefits are provided to law enforcement.

Fire Protection

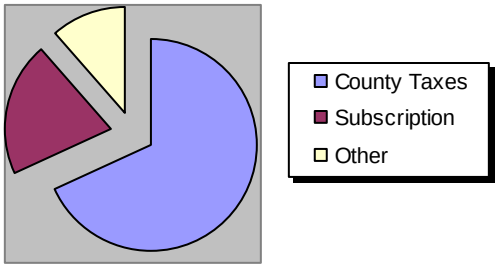
Twenty-eight percent of counties reporting have at least one full-time fire fighter, with Wilson County reporting the greatest amount at 34, while 50 percent of reporting municipalities employ full-time fire fighters with an average of 44 per municipality.

Ninety percent of counties utilize volunteer fire-fighters with an average of 137 volunteers per county; 25 percent of counties use both full-time and volunteer fire-fighters. Sixty-one percent of municipalities report an average of 17 volunteers per municipality, while 28 percent of municipalities use both full-time and volunteer fire fighters.

According to survey results, 60 percent of county fire departments offer county-wide service. 56 percent of municipal fire departments offer fire services beyond the municipal boundaries.

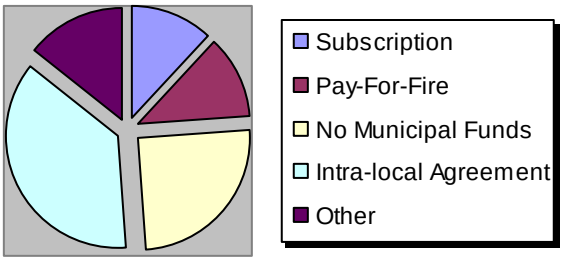
Based on survey responses provided by counties, 60 percent of fire departments are funded with county taxes, 18 percent are funded by subscription, and zero counties reported using a pay-for-fire agreement. The remaining counties reported using donations and four counties reported the use of fire or situs based taxes.

Funding Method for County Fire Department



Survey responses from municipalities regarding fire department funding indicate 11 percent are funded by subscription exclusively, 11 percent by pay-for-fire funding, 34 percent report using intra-local agreements, 23 percent report no municipal funding given to fire departments, and 13 percent report other types of funding. Eight percent of municipalities report using multiple sources of funding.

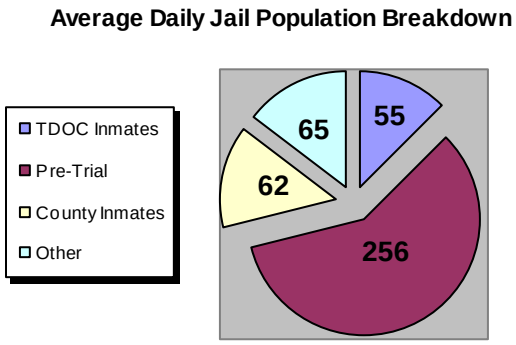
Funding Method for Municipal Fire Department



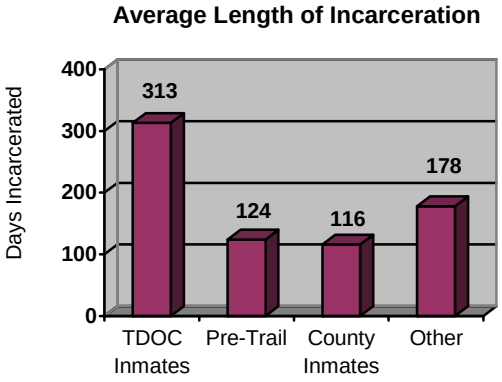
County Jails

Jail Operations

County Sheriffs were surveyed regarding daily jail functions, populations, inmate classifications, jail capacities, and costs. Based on survey results the average capacity of each county jail is 211 inmates. This figure excludes Davidson and Shelby Counties. Davidson County reports the jail capacity at 2,911 inmates while Shelby County reports a capacity of 3,195 inmates. Shown in the chart below is the average daily jail population based on inmate classification figures including Davidson and Shelby Counties.



The table below indicates the average length of incarceration for each classification of inmate.



Reimbursement & Daily Cost

The Department of Correction reimburses most county jails $47.16 per day for each TDOC inmate housed. Based on survey results, the average daily cost to house an inmate is $50.79, excluding daily costs from Davidson and Shelby Counties as they are reimbursed at a higher rate. Excluding Shelby and Davidson Counties, the counties with the highest cost are Bradley County with a daily cost of $73.77 and Madison County with a daily cost of $65.00. Counties reporting the lowest daily costs are McNairy County with $22.00; Trousdale County with $35.00; and Dickson County with $37.00.

Domestic Violence Charges

According to survey results there are on average 591 first time domestic violence offenders held in county jails annually. The average length of incarceration for a first time offender of domestic violence is seven days. On average there are 429 repeat domestic violence offenders housed annually in county jails for an average of 43 days. Chester County reported the longest length of incarceration at 12-18 months.

Bond, Bail, & GPS

Based on information provided by county sheriffs, on average 67 percent of persons incarcerated on misdemeanor charges are released on bail or bond. On average 46 percent of persons incarcerated on felony charges are released on bail or bond.

According to survey results, currently Davidson, Dickson, Putnam, Shelby, and Williamson Counties utilize GPS technology to track certain individuals released on bail or bond. No cost information was available from Davidson and Williamson Counties. Dickson County reports a daily cost of $12 to track an individual with GPS; Putnam County reports $10 daily cost; and Shelby County reports $50 daily. Dickson County monitors approximately 28 individuals annually with three individuals being declared indigent, Putnam County monitors 2, while Shelby County monitors 725.

Local Government Operations

Employment & Salaries

According to survey results, there are on average 324 full-time employees per county, with Hamilton County reporting the most with 1,600 and Houston County reporting the least with 72. Municipalities average 126 full-time employees with Knoxville reporting the most at 1,594. Forty-nine percent of municipalities report employing 25 or fewer full-time staff.

The average annual salary reported for city mayors is $14,127. The average annual salary reported for a municipal police chief is $59,138, and the average annual salary for fire chief is $54,851. Aldermen/city council members/town board members annually receive on average $2,811 per member. The average number of members on the city council or town board is six per municipality and 72 percent holding monthly meetings, 24 percent holding meetings twice a month.

Open Records Requests

Municipalities responding to the survey received a varied amount of open records requests. Forty-four percent of municipalities reporting indicate zero open records requests were received. Of the remaining municipalities reporting open records requests, on average each received 44 requests.

Four of the five types of county officials surveyed were asked to report the number of open records requests they received. Of the county mayors responding, each office received 41 requests each on average in 2011. Sevier County reported the most at 700. Thirty-eight percent of mayors reported receiving zero open records requests. Of county clerks reporting, there were approximately 1,656 open records requests received by 18 county clerks. Sixty percent of county clerks reported receiving no requests at all. County trustees report on average receiving 466 requests per year. The Shelby County court clerk reported the greatest number of requests received with 226,646 in 2011. Of the remaining court clerks the average number of requests was 295.

Legal Notices

Sixty-seven percent of municipalities surveyed reported publishing legal notices. On average each municipality published 35, with an average cost of approximately $142 per notice.

Four of the five types of county officials surveyed were asked about the number of legal notices each office published in 2011. Of those mayors responding, on average each office published 33 legal notices at an average cost of $233 per notice. Twenty-seven county clerks report on average eight notices published by each office at an average cost of $64 per notice. Seventy-six percent of county trustees reporting indicated on average three legal notices published by each office at an average cost of $147 per notice. Court Clerks reported publishing on average 56 legal notices at an average cost of $86 per notice.

Websites

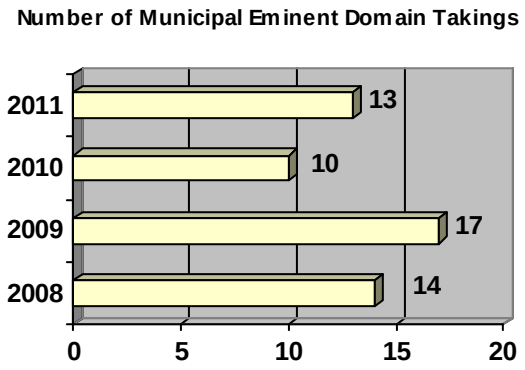
According to survey data, 71 percent of municipalities maintain a website. Seven municipalities employ a full-time staff person to maintain the website. Based on information provided by 49 municipalities, the annual average cost of operation and maintenance of the website is $5,820. Knoxville reports the highest cost at $100,000 annually.

Based on survey responses 80 percent of counties maintain a website. Seven counties employ a full-time staff person to maintain the website. Based on cost information provided by 25 counties, the average annual cost for operation and maintenance of a county website is $2,872. Franklin County reported the highest annual cost with $18,118.

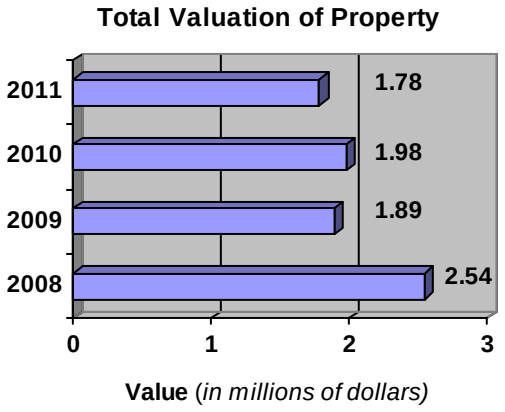
Local Planning & Development

Eminent Domain

Municipalities were surveyed regarding the number of times over the past four years eminent domain was used to obtain property. The total number reported by municipalities and are shown in the table below.



Municipals were also asked the total value of property that was acquired through the use of eminent domain over the past four years. The total value reported by municipalities are shown in the table below.



Industrial Development Corporation

Sixty-two percent of reporting counties indicate they have an industrial development corporation. On average there are eight members who serve on each. Only two responding counties reimburse board members for time and travel. Thirty-two percent of industrial development corporations meet once a month, twenty-seven percent meet once a quarter, and the remaining industrial development corporations average five meetings per year.

Local Planning

According to survey results, 38 percent of counties employ a local planner. Of those counties who do not employ a local planner, 64 percent utilize a development district. Eighty-two percent of counties have a planning commission. Of those, half reimburse commissioners for time and travel. Based on survey results, 76 percent of planning commissions meet once a month. The remaining 24 percent meet an average of eight times a year. Twenty-one of the reporting counties have a capitol improvement plan.

Forty-nine percent of municipalities employ a local planner while half of the remaining fifty-one percent utilize a development district for local planning purposes. Ninety-one percent of municipalities have a planning commission. Of those, 32 percent reimburse commission members for time and travel. Based on survey results, 76 percent of municipal planning commissions meet once a month. Forty-six reporting municipalities have a capitol improvement plan.

Zoning

Forty-nine percent of reporting counties indicate the presence of zoning within the county. Eleven reporting counties have special tax districts and twenty-nine counties report the existence of Tax Increment Financing or Payments In Lieu Of Taxes districts within the county.

Eighty-nine percent of reporting municipalities indicate the presence of zoning within the municipal boundaries. Thirty-three municipalities report the existence of TIF or PILOT districts within the municipality.

Municipalities were surveyed regarding the number of annexation ordinances passed since 2008. Municipalities reported 95 ordinances passed in 2008; 69 passed in 2009; 63 passed in 2010; and 117passed in 2011. Based on municipal survey results approximately 3,930 units have been annexed since 2008.

Comparisons

The following information is a comparison of survey responses from the 2011 and the 2012 Local Government surveys. *

Law Enforcement

Average Number of POST-Certified Officers

	2011	2012
County:	*88*	*52*
Municipality:	*23*	*29*

Percent Provided with Service Weapons

	2011	2012
County:	*76*	*80*
Municipality:	*61*	*58*

Fire Protection

Average Number of Full-Time Fire Fighters

	2011	2012
County:	*29*	*8*
Municipality:	*16*	*44*

Average Number of Volunteer Fire Fighters

	2011	2012
County:	*119*	*137*
Municipality:	*13*	*17*

County Jails

Average Number of Inmates Housed Daily

	2011	2012
TDOC:	*35*	*55*
Pre-Trial:	*170*	*256*
County:	*78*	*62*
Other:	*32*	*65*

Average Number of Days Incarcerated

	2011	2012
TDOC:	*243*	*313*
Pre-Trial:	*103*	*124*
County:	*128*	*116*
Other:	*103*	*178*

Reimbursement Rate

2011	2012
$43.85	*$47.16*

Beer Permits

New Permits Issued

	2011	2012
County:	*5*	*5*
Municipality:	*5*	*7*

Permit Renewals Issued

	2011	2012
County:	*22*	*21*
Municipality:	*17*	*34*

Traffic Cameras

Average Revenue Generated

2011	2012
$3,371	*$294,200*

Local Employment

Average Number of Full-Time Employees

	2011	2012
County:	*557*	*324*
Municipality:	*94*	*126*

Local Planning

Percentage With Planning Commission

	2011	2012
County:	*72%*	*82%*
Municipality:	*83%*	*91%*

Percentage with Zoning

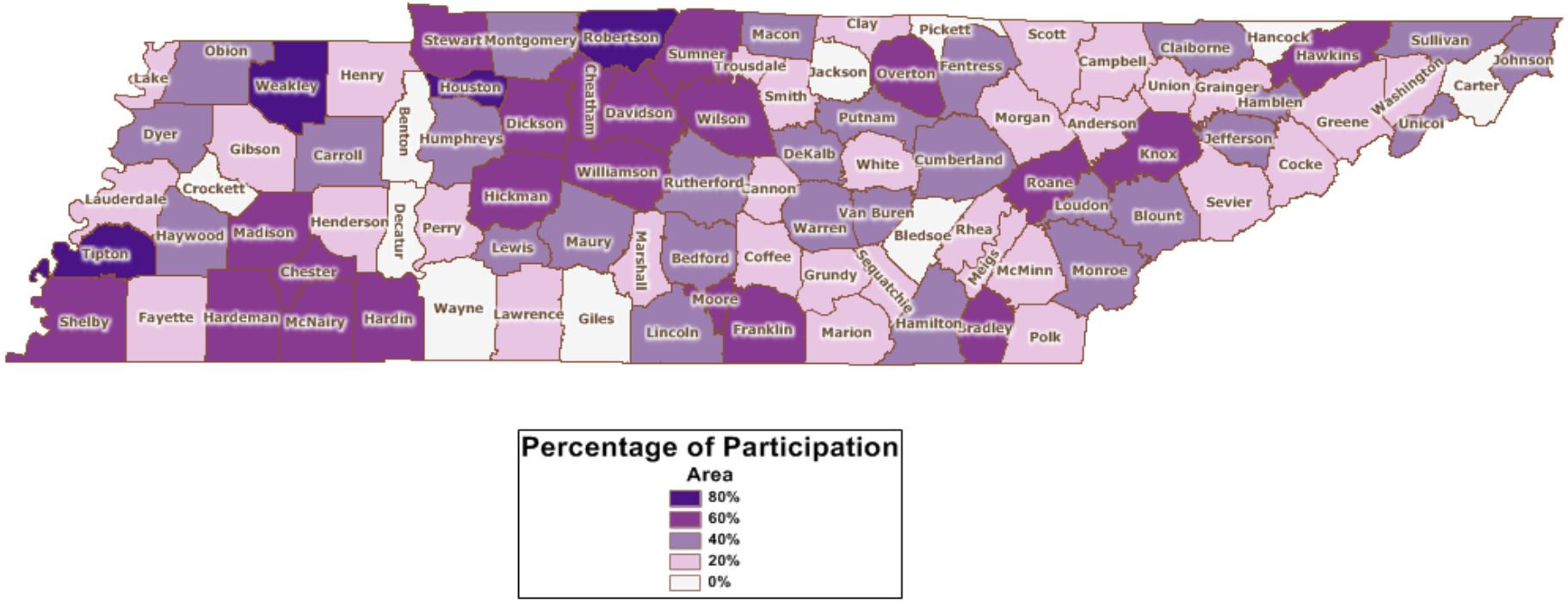
	2011	2012
County:	*54%*	*49%*
Municipality:	*86%*	*89%*

**Comparisons provided above may appear skewed due to the receipt of responses from different counties and municipalities survey to survey.*

Participating Municipalities

Alamo
Alcoa
Algood
Altamont
Ardmore
Ashland City
Athens
Atoka
Atwood
Bartlett
Bean Station
Belle Meade
Bethel Springs
Bluff City
Bradford
Brentwood
Bristol
Brownsville
Byrdstown
Cleveland
Clinton
Collegedale
Columbia
Cookeville
Coopertown
Covington
Cross Plains
Crossville
Crump
Dickson
Doyle
Dyersburg
Eagleville
Elizabethton
Erwin
Farragut
Fayetteville
Forest Hills
Franklin
Goodlettsville
Grand Junction
Graysville
Gruetli-Laager
Guys
Harrogate
Hollow Rock
Hornbeak
Humboldt
Huntingdon
Jackson
Jefferson City
Johnson City
Kingsport
Kingston
Kingston Springs
Knoxville
Lewisburg
Livingston
Maryville
McKenzie
Medina
Michie
Milan
Minor Hill
Mitchellville
Morristown
Mount Carmel
Murfreesboro
Nolensville
Norris
Oak Hill
Oak Ridge
Oakland
Paris
Parkers Crossroads
Piperton
Pleasant hill
Portland
Pulaski
Ridgely
Rockwood
Rossville
Sardis
Saulsbury
Shelbyville
Slayden
Spencer
Stanton
Sweetwater
Tazewell
Three Way
Trenton
Tusculum
Unicoi
Waynesboro
White Bluff
White House
Winfield
Woodland Mills

County Survey Participation



Percentage of Participation

Area

- 80%
- 60%
- 40%
- 20%
- 0%

Acknowledgements:

The success of this survey would not have been possible without the help of others:

Jason Dunnivant, Legislative Information Systems
Tennessee Municipal League
County Technical Assistance Service
County Officials Association of Tennessee
Association of County Mayors
All participating local officials

If you have questions, concerns, or would like to participate in this survey in the future please contact:

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