

Many local governments across New York State - particularly small town and village governments - rely on fine and fee revenue as part of their annual budget, with more than 30 towns and villages having a reliance of ten percent or greater on this type of revenue.¹ Much of it is generated through Justice Courts which have jurisdiction over vehicle and traffic violations, evictions, small claims, and certain criminal offenses.

- For 23 towns, Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 fine and fee revenue made up ten percent or more of their total local revenues. This represents three percent of all towns reporting fine and fee revenue for that year.
- For eight villages, 2019 fine and fee revenue made up ten percent or more of their total local revenues. This represents nearly two percent of all villages reporting fine and fee revenue for that year.²

Among these towns and villages, per capita fine revenue was higher than average, reaching **\$537 in the Town of Red House, Cattaraugus County, and \$525 in the Village of Old Westbury, Nassau County**. The per capita average for towns was \$15 and \$28 for villages.

Examination of multi-year³ town and village annual financial report filings and Justice Court Fund revenue data revealed that 27 towns and villages consistently collect fine and fee revenue in excess of their local share of Justice Court revenue.⁴

Towns and Villages with Large Amounts of Municipal Fine Revenue

Entity Name	County	Justice Court Revenue	Municipal Fine Revenue	Court Revenue as a Share of Fine Revenue
Town of Adams	Jefferson	\$247,797	\$834,099	30%
Town of Bridgewater	Oneida	\$27,605	\$130,832	21%
Town of Champion	Jefferson	\$68,720	\$284,947	24%
Town of Ellisburg	Jefferson	\$218,001	\$891,318	24%
Town of Green Island	Albany	\$360,967	\$756,418	48%
Town of Ithaca	Tompkins	\$201,850	\$717,348	28%
Town of Parma	Monroe	\$201,076	\$496,982	40%
Village of Catskill	Greene	\$183,070	\$435,225	42%
Village of Horseheads	Chemung	\$159,052	\$376,374	42%

FIG 1 Source: FPI analysis of OSC Justice Court Fund Revenue data and Financial Data for Local Governments, Fiscal Years 2018-2016.

As New York State and municipal governments continue to navigate the economic and public health harms caused by the coronavirus pandemic, fiscal reliance on fines and fees must be avoided. Using fines and fees as revenue to support government operations can cause economic harm, extracting wealth from those most impacted by the pandemic: low-income and Black and brown communities and people. As New York State and its local governments rebuild from the pandemic, more sustainable and less harmful sources of revenue must be identified.

¹ Mai, C., & Rafael, M. (2020, December). The High Price of Using Justice Fines and Fees to Fund Government in New York. Retrieved March 01, 2021, from Vera Institute of Justice website: <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/the-high-price-of-using-justice-fines-and-fees-new-york.pdf>

² FPI analysis of Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2019 Financial Data for Local Governments.

³ Years examined include FY 2012 – FY 2018. These 27 towns and villages showed up in all or in a majority of those fiscal years. 2019 Justice Court Fund revenue data was not available for this analysis.

⁴ Only those towns and villages where revenue from the justice court comprises 70 percent or less of their total reported fine and fee revenue were examined. Financial reports filed with the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) do not detail the sources of the fine and fee revenue, nor do many of the available, publicly posted town and village budgets. We are therefore unable to determine how these towns and villages fully derive their fine and fee revenue outside of what is collected through the local Justice Court.