



Homestead Exemptions

General Overview

Homestead exemptions are a commonly-used tool to lower property tax burdens on homeowners in response to increasing home values in growing communities. Exemptions, particularly senior exemptions, are growing more commonplace across the country and the state. Exemptions types include senior citizen exemptions, floating exemptions or valuation freezes, veteran exemptions, and disability exemptions. They can affect the collections for county, city, and/or school general taxes or taxes to pay for bonded indebtedness.

In addition to the exemptions offered by the state, local jurisdictions can implement their own exemptions through the passage of local legislation. Senior exemptions and valuation freezes have been trending in the General Assembly in recent sessions. Proponents of senior homestead exemptions note that seniors have paid into the community and school system for years and may now have a limited income source; however, critics point out that many senior households typically do not have mortgages and still benefit from a strong community or school system. Moreover, millage rates may need to be increased to make up for the revenue shortage, which will affect all other homeowners.

Jurisdictions with Age-Specific Exemptions

Jurisdiction Type	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Counties	0%	3.1%	19.5%	35.9%	41.5%
County School Districts	0.6%	6.3%	33.3%	46.5%	54.7%
Cities	3.6%	15.7%	19.6%	31.3%	36.9%
City School Districts	3.9%	19.2%	37%	53.9%	61.5% ¹

Types of Local Exemptions

County	Type	Amount	Restriction	Income Cap
Bartow	School	\$40,000	65 and older	N/A
Jasper	County	\$10,000	65 and older	\$18,000
Putnam	County	Valuation Freeze	70 and older	N/A
Walker	County	100%	70 and older	\$15,000
Worth	School	\$8,000	62 and older; disabled	\$10,000

Seniors may take property tax rates into account when choosing where to live or retire; however, low crime rates, robust amenities and services, and access to health care are also considerations. A study shows that a government would need to dramatically reduce these taxes for the changes to have any significant effect. A similar study shows that an increase in property taxes does lead to a rise in senior migration. Generally, senior exemptions in Georgia are aimed toward lowering the property tax burden instead of incentivizing migration.

A local valuation freeze ensures a homeowner will not pay higher property taxes even if the value of the home increases. The home valuation is "frozen" at the "base year valuation".

State Exemptions

- The state offers seven exemptions, including:
- \$2,000 exemption from county and school taxes for each person's primary residence.
- \$4,000 exemption from all county taxes for those 65 and older if the owner and spouse's income does not exceed \$10,000.
- Full exemption for all taxes for educational purposes within an independent school district and each county school district for those 62 and over if the income of the owner and spouse does not exceed \$10,000.
- Floating, inflation-proof county exemption for those 62 and older if the appraised value of the home has increased by more than \$10,000; household income may not exceed \$30,000.
- \$60,000 exemption from city, county, and school taxes, plus an additional sum determined by an index rate set by the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs for any qualifying disabled veteran or unremarried surviving spouse.
- \$60,000 exemption from city, county, and school taxes, plus an additional sum determined by an index rate set by the United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the unremarried surviving spouse of a member of the armed forces who was killed during an armed conflict.
- Full exemption for the unremarried surviving spouse of a peace officer or firefighter killed in the line of duty.

Recent iterations of valuation freezes include the ability to raise the valuation of the home each year by the inflation rate or Consumer Price Index, in addition to adjusting the value of the home if real property is added or reduced. According to the Georgia Department of Revenue, at least 36 counties have a valuation freeze. Finally, homestead exemptions can have restrictions attached, including age, income, and/or land size.