



Florida Trend Understands Florida Business.  
**SUBSCRIBE - SAVE \$44<sup>40</sup>**  
 Plus, Get a FREE Gift!

NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

LEARN MORE: CLICK HERE

[PRINT](#) | [CLOSE WINDOW](#)

## Palm Beach County

By Florida Trend Staff - 5/1/2010

Foreground: Island of Palm Beach. Background: City of West Palm Beach.  
 [Photo: [Palmbeachaerials.com](http://Palmbeachaerials.com)]

### Who Lives Here?

#### The Big Picture — Countywide

Population: 1.3 million

Palm Beach County is the state's third-most populous county and the 10th-most densely populated. In total square mileage, including part of Lake Okeechobee, it's the largest county in Florida. Some 40% of the population lives in unincorporated areas near the coast.

#### Ethnicity

- White, non-Hispanic: 63%
- Black: 16%
- Hispanic: 18%

#### Key Demographics

The county has a slightly higher percentage of foreign-born residents (22%) than the statewide average (19%) and a slightly higher percentage of people living alone (32% vs. 29%). Educational levels are also higher than statewide averages: Nearly a third of Palm Beach County's population has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26% of the population statewide.

The median age (43.4 years) is slightly older than the statewide average (40.3), but recent growth trends in younger demographic groups may be moving the population closer to the statewide average.

### Palm Beach County Community Portrait Quick links:

- » [Who Lives Here?](#) (This page)
- » [Communities](#) - Portraits
- » [Economic Life](#) - Overview
- » [Economic Engines](#) - What industries keep the population employed?
- » [Must-Know Contacts](#) - Meet the players

Median income: \$52,700 vs. the statewide average of \$47,778. The county ranks near the top in per capita income; in 2006, the county's per capita income was 150% of the U.S. average. Nearly 40% of the county's population receives Social Security. Historically, Palm Beach County has had a wide gap between average wages earned and average overall income, reflecting a small but extremely wealthy part of the population that derives most of its income from investment earnings. Poverty rates in the county match statewide averages.

Government & more

## Politics

Palm Beach County traditionally has been a Democratic stronghold, particularly in presidential elections. No Republican presidential candidate has received more than 40% of the vote since 1988.

Mizner Park in Boca Raton includes offices and apartments as well as upscale shopping. [Photo: John Ricksen]

## Communities

» **Boca Raton, population 84,823.** Famously upscale, Boca is over-whelmingly white (10% Hispanic), well-off, loaded with tech firms, financial firms and wealth managers. The city's business profile includes a history of boiler rooms and other financial shenanigans, but Boca also is the birthplace of the PC, home to corporate headquarters, Arvida community planning, FAU, Lynn University and the Boca Raton Resort & Club. In books and TV, it's Seinfeld's Del Boca Vista, but it's also thick with parks and busy youth sports leagues. The city has upgraded its downtown and has plans for a public space on its Intracoastal waterfront and a pedestrian promenade.

» **Boynton Beach, 66,978.** The Boynton Beach Club movie resonates in more than name. The city has experienced a boom in its Jewish population, which has quadrupled since 1987 — and is now larger than St. Louis' Jewish population. Yet Boynton also is more than a quarter African-American and one-tenth Hispanic.

» **Delray Beach, 63,789.** Delray's never had the glitz of its southern neighbor Boca. As a result, it kept a small-town downtown along Atlantic Avenue that's now been revived through smart planning. Home to a large Haitian and African-American population, Delray is more diverse than Boca. It has received national attention for the growth of an industry centered on addiction recovery — the place where the upscale go to work out their problems and then stay. Meanwhile, Delray leaders work on more economic development.

» **Jupiter, 50,275.** Named, so the story goes, for the Hobe Indians — after a series of map-translation errors — Jupiter like the rest of its north county neighbors is home to a slew of retired and current athletes. The community is a mix: Migrant workers waiting for day labor, upscale housing, spring training, bioscience centered on new kid Scripps Florida, an FAU campus and FAU's honors college. Burt Reynolds has made his home and theatrical pursuits here.

» **Lake Worth, 36,173.** Long a place for the modest in income, Lake Worth is at work on improving its oceanfront, including renovating the beachfront casino property. (The first casino was a milestone in Lake Worth's development.) The city's artistic scene has been underscored by the decision of the non-profit Palm Beach County Cultural Council to move its headquarters to Lake Worth. A disproportionately large share of Lake Worth's population comes from, of all places, Finland. But the 1,000 Finns — six of 10 born overseas, the Census says — have been swamped by newer arrivals from Latin America. Latin Americans outnumber Finns six-to-one. More than half the city population speaks a language other than English at home.

Art & Jazz on the Avenue is held six times a year on Atlantic Avenue in downtown Delray Beach. [Photo: Leonard Hellerman]

» **Pahokee/Belle Glade/South Bay, 27,921.** The towns on Lake Okeechobee's rim are agricultural, poor, heavily minority. Shattered buildings speak of a more prosperous past. High school football provides about the only uplift. Unlike other cities in the county, this is the place where NFL players come

from, not retire to. Unemployment levels are stunningly high — an estimated 27% in Belle Glade to 48% in tiny Canal Point.

» **Palm Beach, 9,650.** Almost from its founding by Henry Flagler, the mansion-dotted town of Palm Beach has been a byword for luxury. The residents of the island, the state's easternmost town, tend to be older — about half are over 65 — and wealthy, with a per capita income of well over \$100,000. The population is sprinkled with celebrities, and its philanthropic and cultural inclinations are well documented.

» **Palm Beach Gardens, 49,941.** Long before his foundation's eponymous genius grants, magnate John D. MacArthur secured thousands of acres and began Palm Beach Gardens. It is overwhelmingly white and about one-tenth Hispanic. This is a planned city: Wide roads, thought-through design, the PGA of America headquarters and residents that on average are much better educated and have higher incomes than the rest of the nation.

» **Wellington, 55,010.** Prince Charles and Tommy Lee Jones played polo here. Bruce Springsteen owns a home to be close to his kid's equestrian pursuits. But aside from the sprinkling of glitter from the horse crowd, Wellington is all about basic 'burb living. Wellington is that unusual Sunshine State place whose senior population is below the national average. The municipality is mostly white, but it's still south Florida — roughly one in five residents is foreign-born and doesn't speak English at home.

» **West Palm Beach, 103,150.** The place for Henry Flagler's "help" has helped itself with a two-decade-long, rolling reinvention of the blocks closest to its waterfront. Clematis Street was reborn as a shopping and hip destination, the public Dreyfoos School of the Arts came along, the Kravis Performing Arts Center was built, followed by the massive CityPlace mixed-use project, another rebirth of Clematis and now a major rebuild of the city waterfront with three new docks and a "Great Lawn" open space with nightly light shows. As you move farther west from the water, things fade into non-descript commercial and residential stock. The Palm Beach Mall is dead. Average income is below the national average.

Downtown West Palm Beach's new "Great Lawn" on the Intracoastal waterfront, where nightly light shows are held. [Photo: City of West Palm Beach]

Workers harvest celery on a Duda farm in Belle Glade. [Photo: John Bateman]

## Economic Life

Economic activity in Palm Beach County is diverse, with strong presences in sectors ranging from aerospace-related research and engineering firms to bioscience, medical manufacturing, healthcare, construction and tourism. The county has two Urban Enterprise Zones.

Economic development officials say each area of the county has a dominant industry sector:

» A cluster of bioscience and aviation businesses, including biomedical research heavyweights Scripps Florida and Max Planck, and Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne operate in and around Jupiter and the northern part of the county, which is also home to FPL, the state's largest utility. In addition, BioFlorida, the statewide trade association founded to advance Florida's bioscience industry, is headquartered in West Palm Beach.

» The central and south county area, including Delray and Boca Raton, house a number of corporate headquarters, including ADT Worldwide and Tyco Fire & Security; IBM's southern base; American Media (National Enquirer); Office Depot; Geo Group; Rexall Sundown; and Jarden Consumer Solutions (Sunbeam and Oster). Delray Beach is also home to a large number of in-patient, upscale alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities.

» Many business, financial services, law and accounting firms, along with venture capital firms, while scattered throughout the county, are concentrated in the West Palm Beach area, including Intech Investment Management, a large-cap equity management firm.

» The county's western region is dominated by small businesses, agriculture and the presence of agri-giants A. Duda and Sons, Florida Crystals and U.S. Sugar. The area is also home to several venues for polo and equestrian events.

#### Economic Engines

**Port of Palm Beach:** Florida's fourth-largest container port; supports 2,500 jobs; has an economic impact of \$261 million; half a million cruise passengers.

**Convention Center:** The 350,000-sq.-ft. Palm Beach County Convention Center includes a 100,000-sq.-ft. exhibit hall, a ballroom and 21,000 square feet of breakout space. The Related Cos. has been chosen to build a 15-story, 400-room hotel next to the center.

**Palm Beach International Airport:** Well-regarded smaller (28-gate) airport serves four-county area; 6 million passengers a year.

**Bioscience/Pharma:** Scripps Florida, Max Planck, Leinco Technologies, Rexall Sundown, Biotest

**Aerospace:** Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne; Sikorsky Aircraft; Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics

**Agriculture:** A. Duda and Sons, U.S. Sugar, Florida Crystals. The county is the country's leading producer of sugar and fresh sweet corn and the state's leading producer of radishes, bell peppers, lettuce, Chinese vegetables, rice and celery. Nearly a third of the county's land mass is devoted to sugar cane. The county produces about 18% of all sugar in the United States.

**Tourism:** More than 7 million visitors generate more than \$2.5 billion each year; the iconic Breakers and the Boca Raton Resort & Club alone employ 4,000 workers; the PGA headquarters and PGA National Resort and Spa are here.

**Healthcare:** Tenet Healthcare and HCA operate a number of large hospital facilities in the county; non-profit facilities like Bethesda Memorial Hospital, Boca Raton Community Hospital and Jupiter Medical Center are also big employers. In addition, the A.G. Holley State Hospital is one of the last public hospitals devoted to treating tuberculosis and is a leader globally in treating the most difficult cases.

**Manufacturing:** Jarden Consumer Solutions, Thermo Fisher Scientific, Biomet3i (dental implants), Anspach Cos. (surgical equipment)

**Security-Related:** G4S Wackenhut Corp.; ADT Worldwide and Tyco Fire & Security (manufacturers of electronic home and fire protection and safety devices); Cross Match Technologies (biometric identity systems); private prison operator Geo Group

**Construction/development:** The Related Cos.; concrete maker Cemex/Rinker; Ranger Construction; Hardrives; Catalfumo Construction; Suffolk Construction

**Philanthropy and Cultural Institutions:** Palm Beach's social elite generate a massive amount of giving across a wide range of activity. The county bills itself as Florida's Cultural Capital, with some 300 museums, performing arts venues, history and nature-based adventures comprising a \$209-million industry. As part of its Cultural Renaissance Program, the Lake Worth Community Redevelopment Agency paid \$700,000 to renovate a building in downtown Lake Worth that will serve as headquarters of the Palm Beach County Cultural Council.

**Finance:** The area's wealth has attracted a large number of financial institutions, from brokerages to wealth management companies [["Private Banking April, FloridaTrend.com"](#)] and banks. A recent report in the Palm Beach Post cited the county as one of the state's most competitive financial markets for banks.

#### Universities

Public higher-ed institutions and enrollment:

- » **Palm Beach State College**, 42,839

» **Florida Atlantic University**, 27,000

Private institutions:

- » **Kaplan University**, 48,000 online and on-campus students
- » **Nova Southeastern University**, 28,500 students throughout Florida, in 23 states and overseas
- » **Keiser University**, 10,000
- » **Barry University**, 9,300
- » **Palm Beach Atlantic**, 3,300
- » **Lynn University**, 2,700
- » **Lincoln College of Technology and Florida Culinary Institute**, 1,500
- » **Northwood University**, 1,000
- » **South University**, 370

Expansions and Relocations

**ChemPep**, which provides services for the bioscience industry, is relocating its headquarters from Miami to Wellington.

**GeoGlobal Partners**, a manufacturer of outdoor living products, is moving its headquarters and warehousing operations from New Jersey to West Palm Beach.

**RoboLabs**, a research and development company specializing in robots for personal, military and commercial applications, is moving from Pennsylvania to Boca Raton.

**TMS**, a Connecticut engineering and manufacturing company is expanding its West Palm Beach facility.

[Successories.com](http://Successories.com), a catalog and internet company, and **The Learning Experience**, which franchises child development centers, are moving to Boca Raton.

Must-Know Contacts

- » **Russell Allen**, president/CEO of BioFlorida
- » **Clarence E. Anthony**, lobbyist, former president of the Florida League of Cities
- » **Joseph Bain**, partner, Novak Druce law firm (intellectual property)
- » **David Baker**, attorney, Alley, Maass, Rogers & Lindsay law firm
- » **Michael Bakst**, Ruden McClosky
- » **Mark Bellissimo**, managing partner, Wellington Equestrian Partners

- » **Mitchell Berger**, founder, Berger Singerman law firm
- » **Richard Bernstein**, Bernstein and Associates (insurance)
- » **Rena Blades**, director, Palm Beach County Cultural Council
- » **Howard Bregman**, managing shareholder, Greenberg Traurig law firm
- » **Lisa Bright**, executive director, Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency
- » **Fabiola Brumley**, market president for Palm Beach County, Bank of America
- » **Tim Burke**, editor, Palm Beach Post; publisher, Palm Beach Newspapers Inc.
- » **Davide Carbone**, CEO, St. Mary's Medical Center
- » **Ray Celedinas**, Celedinas Insurance Group
- » **Frank Compiani**, managing partner, accounting firm RSM McGladrey
- » **Don DeWoody**, principal, WG Compass Realty; 2010 chairman, Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches
- » **Mark Elhilow**, principal, Blue Ocean Capital
- » **George T. Elmore**, president/owner, Hardrives
- » **Elizabeth Fago**, philanthropist
- » **The Fanjul family**, owners, Flo-Sun, Florida Crystals
- » **John Flanigan**, managing shareholder, Moyle, Flanigan, Katz, White and Doorakian law firm
- » **Dennis Gallon**, president, Palm Beach State College
- » **Bob Garvy**, chairman/co-CEO, Intech
- » **Jody Gleason**, executive director, Palm Beach County Education Commission
- » **Joan Goldberg**, cultural affairs adviser, City of West Palm Beach
- » **Dennis Grady**, president/CEO, Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches
- » **Lynda Harris**, shareholder, Carlton Fields law firm
- » **Tim Harris**, president, Esplanade Grand condos
- » **Lew Hay**, chairman/CEO, FPL; Don Kiselewski, area manager, FPL.
- » **Dale Hedrick**, owner, Hedrick Bros. Construction
- » **Todd Herbst**, partner, Big Time Restaurant Group

- » **Claudia Hillinger**, vice president for institute development, Max Planck
- » **Mike Jones**, president/CEO, Economic Council of Palm Beach County
- » **Rex Kirby**, president/general manager, Suffolk Construction Southeast
- » **Barbara Krantz**, CEO/medical director, Hanley Center
- » **Marti LaTour**, vice president/field sales, PepsiAmericas
- » **Patricia Lebow**, managing partner, Broad and Cassel law firm
- » **Paul Leone**, president, The Breakers
- » **Gary Lesser**, managing partner, Lesser, Lesser, Landy & Smith law firm
- » **Drew Levine**, president, G4S Wackenhut
- » **Wendy Sartory Link**, managing partner, Ackerman Link & Sartory law firm
- » **Tom Madden**, president, TransMedia Publishing
- » **Len Martling**, COO, Weitz Construction
- » **Michael F. McAuliffe**, state's attorney
- » **Troy M. McLellan**, president, Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce
- » **Bill Meyer**, chairman, Meyer Jabara Hotels
- » **Judy Mitchell**, CEO, Kravis Center for the Performing Arts
- » **Frank Newman**, regional president, Wells Fargo
- » **Carey O'Donnell**, president, Carey O'Donnell Public Relations Group
- » **Harry Orf**, vice president of scientific operations, Scripps Florida
- » **Harvey Oyer**, partner, Shutts and Bowen law firm
- » **Val Perez**, former city president at Regions Financial, now at CitiBank
- » **F. Martin Perry**, president, Perry & Taylor law firm
- » **H. William "Bill" Perry**, managing partner, Gunster law firm
- » **Jorge Pesquera**, president/CEO, Palm Beach County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- » **Rick Qualman**, state executive, IBM
- » **Nat Roberts**, managing partner, Callery-Judge Groves

- » **Stephen Ross**, chairman/CEO, The Related Cos.; owner, Miami Dolphins
- » **Mitch Rubenstein**, chairman/CEO, Hollywood Media
- » **Jonathan Satter**, principal, WGCompass Realty
- » **Gary Schweikhart**, president, Gold Coast PR Council
- » **Charlie Siemon**, chairman, Festival of the Arts BOCA
- » **Laurie Silvers**, founder, Hollywood Media, chair of the economic council
- » **Paul Singerman**, co-CEO, Berger Singerman law firm
- » **Kelly Smallridge**, president/CEO, Business Development Board of Palm Beach County
- » **Jiang Song**, CDM engineering
- » **Young Song**, Song & Associates Inc. architecture
- » **Mark Stevens**, executive vice president, PNC Wealth Management
- » **Jane Teague**, executive director, Enterprise Development Corp. of South Florida
- » **Brian K. Waxman**, co-founder/director of investments, Applefield Waxman commercial real estate
- » **Melissa Wohlust**, executive director, West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority

The internationally recognized Norton Museum houses 6,000 works of art.

#### Quality of Life

#### Biggest Strengths

Massive wealth; well-established philanthropic institutions and inclinations; great natural resources and climate; higher-than-average education levels; a large, diverse aerospace and growing high-tech industry sector that now includes bioscience; a savvy, engaged economic development effort; a major downtown resurgence in West Palm Beach.

#### Biggest Needs

History of quirky political climate that's not always business-friendly; cloud left by recent scandals involving county commissioners; the county's poor are very poor, particularly in the western agricultural areas; economic development along the coast is uneven. Suburban development patterns have produced congestion.

#### Crime

Palm Beach County's crime rate has been improving in recent years. The state's third-most populous county ranks 11th in crime rate per 100,000 population, according to FDLE statistics.

## Amenities

» The \$30-million creation of a public waterfront space in West Palm replaced the public library, which moved to a new city center a few blocks west, and is revitalizing downtown. Clematis Street is resurgent, and the presence of downtown condos, the CityPlace shopping center and the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts is establishing a vibrant residential, shopping, dining and entertainment scene, with a great deal of potential still untapped.

- » Mizner Park in Boca Raton and the Atlantic Avenue area in Delray offer shops, galleries, restaurants and entertainment in their parts of the county.
- » The county boasts 17 performing arts theaters. It is home to the Flagler (history) and the internationally known Norton (art) museums.
- » The four-block, ultra-lux Worth Avenue shopping district still epitomizes Palm Beach style.
- » The world-renowned Breakers resort is located here.
- » The Palm Beach Zoo, using a solar array donated by the FPL Group Foundation, has the first zoo animal hospital in the country to achieve LEED certification.
- » Jupiter hosts the Florida Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals for spring training and two single-A minor league teams during the summer.
- » The county has more than 40-plus miles of beaches and is home to more than 150 golf courses — the most per capita of any county in the country — and the headquarters of the PGA of America. The area hosts the Honda Classic at PGA National.
- » During the winter, equestrian facilities feature polo, dressage and steeplechase.

The Kravis Center for the Performing Arts opened in West Palm Beach in 1992.

## Health

The county's population ranks worse than the national average in the number of people who are overweight; in the number of people who are linguistically isolated; in the number of family physicians per 100,000 population; in the incidence of melanoma and HIV; in the fetal death rate; and in the number of homicides.

It ranks above the national average in terms of the number of people getting vigorous physical activity; in the number of people who are obese; in the number of people who smoke; in the number of dentists per capita; in the number of women over 40 who get mammograms.

## Cost of Living

Traditionally, home prices have been the biggest factor in the county's high cost of living. But the median home price has fallen recently to \$238,600, according to the Florida Association of Realtors.

## Tax Burden

Palm Beach County ranks 12th in the state in total taxes levied per capita.

## Schools

An "A" graded district, the K-12 school system, with nearly 170,000 students, features a number of magnet and other programs, including a well-regarded Science, Technology, Engineering and Math program (STEM) started in 2004-05 at Boca Raton High. Among 24 traditional high schools with

FCAT grades during the 2008-09 school year, there were eight "A" schools, six "B" schools, four "C" schools and six "D" schools. The district, under superintendent Art Johnson, has attempted to boost standards with curriculum changes and increased use of standardized tests that were not well received by many teachers and parents and led to the demotion of the academic officer who had designed and attempted to implement the changes.

#### Government

The county's political scene is still bruised after three county commissioners and two West Palm Beach city commissioners were sent to prison on corruption charges. Officials have pushed for a package of ethics reforms including an inspector general and ethics commission. Meanwhile, the county has maintained its AAA bond rating and is implementing a number of green and energy-saving initiatives, including a waste-to-energy plant, a methane recovery system at a water plant that converts methane to electricity for on-site use and solar-powered street lights and warning flashers.

Notable: A number of non-profit organizations have partnered with the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties to create a "digital public square" — YourPBC.org — a social media experiment that the groups hope will promote civic engagement and help forge connections among the county's municipalities.

#### Why I Live Here

I was born and raised in Palm Beach County — in 1959 at Good Samaritan Hospital, to be specific. Life in this county has been perfect for me and our family. Growing up in Delray Beach, we spent countless hours at the beach. It was simply safe, beautiful and a great place to socialize and learn about the environment. The ocean is cleaned by the Gulf Stream current, and the underwater life is unbelievable. After high school, I attended college in North Carolina. One day in the middle of winter, when my car was encased in ice, I decided right then that I would never live north of where palm trees grow. I finished school in Tallahassee, moved back to Palm Beach County and raised two "surf rats" who now have a great appreciation of the ocean and the world around us. The climate and the community relationships that one builds from being local just can't be beat. I love it here.

— Lou Frazer

---

© Copyright 2010 Florida Trend All Rights Reserved.