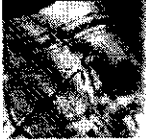


Home News Entertainment Communities Jobs Automotive Real Estate Classifieds Customer Service



**Business**  
floridatoday.com



*Weekly Specials!!!*

We Search the World for the Best Quality Products  
click here

**MAIN NEWS**

[Home Page](#)

[Local](#)

[Space](#)

[National/World](#)

[Elections 2004](#)

[Sports](#)

[Outdoors](#)

[Business](#)

[Life](#)

[Editorial Page](#)

[Columnists](#)

[Obituaries](#)

[Weather](#)

[Storm Season](#)

[Community News](#)

[About Me](#)

[Health](#)

[Inside Racing](#)

[The Verge](#)

[Technology](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[Florida Lottery](#)

[USA Weekend](#)

[7-Day Archive](#)

Complete FLORIDA TODAY coverage delivered to your door. [Subscribe now.](#)

[Email this page to a friend.](#)

Jul 4, 8:03 PM

## Florida family income tumbles

7 percent drop among worst in U.S.

BY SCOTT BLAKE  
FLORIDA TODAY

In a disturbing trend for workers, income levels in Florida have dropped since 2000 more than in almost every other state in the country, new government and economists' figures show.

The estimated median household income in Florida for this year is \$36,125, down 7 percent from four years ago, when adjusted for inflation.

Only Mississippi (\$31,280, down 8.8 percent) and Missouri (\$41,595, down 7.8 percent) had greater income drops during that time, according to U.S. Census Bureau figures and estimates from consulting firm Economy.com.

The firm estimates the national median household income fell to \$41,666, down 0.8 percent, since 2000, when adjusted for inflation. The median means half the households earn more and half earn less.

Economists see the growth of jobs in Florida's low-wage hospitality and tourism industry and the decline of higher-paying industrial jobs as the main reason for slumping income levels.

Experts said that Americans' impressions about how well they are doing financially could affect the outcome of the 2004 presidential election.

"For all the talk in the state by political leaders and the economic-development agencies about diversifying our economy, the successes haven't been that great," said David Scott, director of the Phillips Institute for the Study of American Business at the University of Central Florida.

"This is really just a continuation of what Florida is," Scott said about the hospitality and tourism industry. "But the deepness of the (decrease in income) does bother me."



**Nationwide**  
Wheelchairs • Scooters • E  
**Great buy on pre-own  
scooters \$300-\$500**

### national business headlines

- [PeopleSoft Shares Reach 52 Week Low](#)
- [Iraqi Oil Exports Rebound After Repairs](#)
- [Stocks Fall on New Tech Earnings Warnings](#)
- [Virgin Mobile Plans First Public IPO](#)
- [Pfizer: China Overtakes Viagra Patent](#)
- [Accenture Profit Surges 59 Percent](#)
- [Knight Trading Paying \\$79M to Settle Probe](#)
- [Ex-Yukos CEO Offers His Stock to Pay Bill](#)
- [Russia's Guba Bank OKs Offer to Sell](#)
- [Siemens Nominates Member to Replace CEO](#)

**Try us FREE  
for 2 weeks!**



**CLICK HERE**  
to get a FREE two-week  
sample of  
FLORIDA TODAY  
delivered to your home

(Or Call 259-5000 Today!)

**ENTERTAINMENT**

[It's All Here!](#)

[Movies](#)

[Attractions](#)

[Dining/Taste](#)

[Music & Nightlife](#)

[Arts & Literature](#)

[Surf Scene](#)

[Lodging](#)

[Shopping](#)

In addition to the shift toward low-wage jobs, professor David Denslow of the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research said the state's falling income levels can be traced to an increase in part-time jobs; a drop in capital-gains income from the stock market decline that began in 2000; and historically low interest rates on bank deposits since then.

The loss in capital gains especially affected retirees, who play a prominent role in Florida's economy, Denslow said.

"The state doesn't want to rely on a retiree strategy for growth. It wants to attract industry with high-wage jobs," he added. "Now, I think we're giving away the state to retirees. I think we could do better."

The competition between states for high-paying jobs is greater now than before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which hurt the economy, said Lynda Weatherman, president of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast.

"Every state wants something like that," Weatherman said.

For a company to relocate, "there has to be the right blend of factors, including labor, the facilities and an incentive package."

The Economic Development Commission was involved in offering tax incentives that persuaded banking firm Washington Mutual to announce last year that it would open a financial-services call center on Babcock Street in Melbourne that would employ 500 to 700 people. The center originally was scheduled to open early this year, but the company has said the project will be delayed until later this year.

In recent years, the commission also tried to persuade aviation giant The Boeing Co. to open an aircraft-manufacturing plant in Brevard that would have created many jobs. Boeing was considering Brevard and a number of other sites in Florida and other states, but the company decided to keep the operation in Washington state, Weatherman said.

"It would have pretty massive," she said.

Still, Brevard County's job market is better off than some places in Florida because there's a greater percentage of manufacturing jobs here than in the state as a whole, Weatherman said.

"We have to fight a lot of the misconceptions that are held about Florida -- that we're only service (industry) driven; we're only a tourism economy; and we don't have a high-tech base," she said.

Contact Blake at 242-3644 or [sblake@flatoday.net](mailto:sblake@flatoday.net)

>>>> We want to hear from you <<<<

[Story Feedback](#) [Submit a letter to the Editor](#) [Subscribe to FLORIDA TODAY](#)