

# Milestone One: Sustainability Assessment

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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*GreenPrint -- Our Design for a Sustainable Future* is being developed to serve as an overarching sustainability plan to reaffirm, establish and synchronize our government and community goals, initiatives and measures. GreenPrint will integrate with existing County efforts and additional community plans. It will not only make County government operations greener, but also improve the community's overall sustainability and quality of life. It is not the County's plan; it is the **entire community's** plan. An overview of the planning process and background is provided immediately after this Executive Summary.

The first milestone of the sustainability planning process is the development of this Assessment Report, which assesses environmental, economic, and social equity challenges within Miami-Dade, and the programs in place to address these issues. While this published assessment is used to gather baseline data and to identify the challenges to be addressed in the plan, it is **not final**.

The Core Planning Team acknowledged that the assessment includes gaps, unanswered questions and open issues; from County operations to municipal input. It was available for public comment and input in December 2009 and January 2010. Comments are important for the plan's development, from the assessment milestone and as we move forward with the other milestones of the sustainability plan.

The Interdepartmental Team is responsible for developing the plan, including completing a sustainability assessment, under the direction of the Sustainability Plan Leader and with the assistance of the Core Team. Throughout the process, the Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Board provides expertise on the sustainability challenges facing the community and offers strategic direction and advice for GreenPrint's development. Since August 2009, the Core Planning Team has met with Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Board and the Interdepartmental Team over 20 times to gather information for the assessment (see *Acknowledgments*).

This assessment is organized in the following manner. First, it provides a general overview of the Miami-Dade's demographics and economy. It also frames the overarching theme of Climate Change as an assessment area which is affected and influenced by the 12 other areas identified and reviewed for the assessment. These areas are:

Energy (Electricity & Fuel)	Local Business & Industry
Environment	Public Safety
Government Operations	Schools
Health	Solid Waste & Recycling
Housing	Transportation
Land Use	Water

Under Government Operations, several specific areas are examined including the consumption of fuel, electricity and water for all county operations, and the scope of county purchasing. It also examines airport and seaport operations and their importance as an economic engine for the local economy.

Information may be presented in more than one section of this assessment report due to the cross-cutting nature of the issues.

Appendices to the assessment include a comprehensive list of sustainability related County legislation and acknowledgements.

The assessment areas will include the following sections:

- *Summary of Key Sustainability Challenges* - Presents main challenges identified through collaborative stakeholder analysis of assessment data and indicators.  
*Assessment Data and Indicators* - Provides data and analysis to identify key challenges establish a sustainability baseline.
- *Existing Efforts* - Consolidates current plans, goals, and initiatives related to the specific assessment area. The information serves as a reference tool to guide and educate participants through the planning process.
- *Community Feedback* - Shares feedback and results gathered through the planning process or surveys related to the assessment area.

Next steps include completing milestone one by finalizing the assessment and beginning milestone two where we set sustainability goals that will define the overarching objectives and scope of GreenPrint. Following are milestone three which includes the development of the plan, milestone four which is the plan's implementation and milestone five which is monitoring and evaluating the plan's progress.

## **PLANNING PROCESS & BACKGROUND**

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Miami-Dade County is one of America's most vulnerable communities to climate change. While the County has made great strides in moving toward a resilient and sustainable future, now it's time to focus on how to effectively achieve our aggressive energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals, and how to address climate change and sea level rise.

Sustainability is a relatively new term for many, and agreement as to what it means or how to achieve it remains an issue for debate. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) District Council in San Francisco is currently developing a succinct statement of what sustainability is and how to accomplish it in an effort to help focus the efforts of developers, public officials, environmentalists, citizens and businesses on how to build better places to live.

In summary, the ULI believes that sustainability responds to global conditions with local action. Therefore, the most important principle of sustainability is that ***it starts with community commitment***. That means developing a common language and involving citizens, developers, businesses, environmentalists—all stakeholders, in other words—in a dialogue about why change must happen and what needs to change. It means educating the stakeholders and asking them to develop community consensus on what needs to change and how. It means creating long term policies that are consistent and reliable and not subject to change based on whim. And it means recognizing that sustainability is not about one piece of how to build our communities. It is about all the pieces of the puzzle.

In March 2009, Miami-Dade County was selected as one of three communities nationwide to participate in a sustainability planning toolkit pilot program through ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI). The pilot toolkit is based on New York City's PlaNYC, an ambitious yet achievable plan that Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability put together to address the major challenges facing New York City. Miami-Dade's plan will be used as a model to replicate throughout local communities worldwide. It is quite an honor to have been chosen as a pilot community; but with it comes great responsibility.

For years the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners (Board) and County departments have been implementing policies and initiatives to address climate change and other important sustainability issues. For example, Miami-Dade was one of the first local governments to voluntarily participate in Cap & Trade through its membership in the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) for fuel reduction. In addition, Miami-Dade was the first in the region to create a Climate Change Advisory Task Force to study climate change and sea level rise and make recommendations to the Board.

Now is the time to elevate and intensify our efforts, better coordinate our plans and resources and raise awareness in our community for a sustainable future. Our plan will be the framework to evaluate and integrate environmental, social and economic benefits in the policy decisions we make, programs and initiatives we implement and services Miami-Dade County delivers.

### ***Our Plan***

*GreenPrint -- Our Design for a Sustainable Future* is being developed to serve as an overarching sustainability plan to reaffirm, establish and synchronize our government and community goals, initiatives and measures. GreenPrint will integrate with existing County efforts and additional community plans. It will leverage present sustainability goals and initiatives and develop new ones where needed. A central component of GreenPrint is the measures and targets associated with each initiative.

## **Milestones**

The planning process is comprised of ICLEI's five key milestones. By following these milestones we will be able to evaluate and integrate the environmental, social and economic benefits in the policy decisions we make, the programs and initiatives we implement, and the services we deliver.

- *Milestone One: Conduct a sustainability assessment*  
To begin the planning process, a local government needs to first research and assess environmental, economic, and social equity baselines and challenges within the jurisdiction, and the programs in place to address these issues. ***This is milestone one.***
- *Milestone Two: Set sustainability goals*  
The sustainability goals define the overarching objectives and scope of the sustainability plan. The goals should address the challenges identified in Milestone One.
- *Milestone Three: Develop a sustainability plan*  
The local government then develops a sustainability plan, ideally with robust public input from all stakeholders. The plan details the policies and measures that the local government will take to improve local sustainability and achieve the goals defined in Milestone Two.
- *Milestone Four: Implement the sustainability plan*  
The local government implements the policies and measures in the sustainability plan.
- *Milestone Five: Monitor and evaluate progress*  
Monitoring and verifying implementation progress is an ongoing process. Achieving Milestone Five involves annually reporting on implementation progress and monitoring the overall sustainability of the jurisdiction using the sustainability indicators identified in Milestone One.

## **Core Sustainability Team**

Prior to launching into the five milestone process, a Sustainability Plan Leader and Coordinator were appointed by the County Manager to coordinate the development of the plan, and a Core Sustainability Team from the Department of the Environmental Resource Management (DERM), Department of Planning and Zoning, Government Information Center (GIC), Office of Strategic Business Management (OSBM), and Office of Sustainability (OOS), was established to assist with the plan's coordination.

The planning process and GreenPrint will adhere to the following guiding principles:

- The County will lead by example
- The concept of sustainability will guide County policy and decision-making
- Metrics and targets will be used to define goals and measure progress
- The County will collaborate with local municipalities to create a sustainability movement among all jurisdictions in the County
- Partnerships between jurisdictions and between the public and private sector are necessary to achieve sustainability goals
- Transparency and accountability will guide the County's sustainability actions
- Initiatives in the plan will be designed to be aggressive but achievable
- The County will ensure the benefits of sustainability policies are equitably distributed to county residents.

- The plan will reflect community demographics and the economy and include the following key sustainability components addressing both County operations and the community as a whole:

Air quality	Land use
Biscayne Aquifer and Bay water quality	Local food sources
Climate change mitigation/adaptation	Parks and open space
Civic engagement	Public safety
Ecosystems and habitat	Public health
Energy supply and demand	Schools and education
Government operations	Transportation fleets and transit
Green businesses and jobs	Water and sewer capacity
Green procurement	Water-use efficiency
Housing affordability	Waste capacity and recycling

### ***Sustainability Interdepartmental Team***

While every County department is charged with defining initiatives to make their operations more sustainable or "green,"; under the direction of the Sustainability Leader, the Sustainability Interdepartmental Team is responsible for developing the plan, as well as coordinating the County's efforts to ensure that the collective objective for all County activities is smart and sustainable investments are a normal part of doing business. Specific roles of the Interdepartmental Team include:

- Completing a sustainability assessment to obtain a baseline understanding of the major sustainability goals, initiatives and challenges,
- Identifying new goals and initiatives, and
- Providing feedback throughout the process.

Throughout the four month assessment process, every County department participated on the Interdepartmental Team in varying degrees.

### ***Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Board***

The Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Board serves as a key stakeholder group for the development and implementation of GreenPrint. It represents diverse constituents, which include: elected officials, business and real estate leaders, community designers, environmental and advocacy groups, academia, and regional planners. The role of the Board is to provide expertise on the sustainability challenges facing the County and offer strategic direction and advice for GreenPrint's development. Additionally, experts in the field of sustainability and staff from the Miami Dade County Public Schools provided valuable insight.

### ***City Sustainability Liaisons***

GreenPrint, will not only make our government operations greener, but also improve the community's overall sustainability and quality of life. This collaborative plan will not be accomplished without the partnership of all municipalities in Miami-Dade. While cities are being represented on the Mayor's Sustainability Advisory Board by the Miami-Dade County League of Cities, the County created a City Sustainability Liaisons group to provide feedback on the plan's assessment and development and share with us any city green or sustainability plans. Currently, cities are in different stages of climate change awareness and planning. Links to municipal websites are available at [www.miamidade.gov/greenprint](http://www.miamidade.gov/greenprint) .

## **GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE**

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This section is provided as background, to establish a common understanding of our local history and to set the backdrop for the data we are reviewing and the plan we are developing. The County has operated since 1957 under a unique metropolitan system of government known as a "two-tier federation." This was made possible when Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment in 1956 that allowed the people of the County to enact a *home rule charter*. At that time, the electors of Miami-Dade County were granted the power to revise and amend the Charter from time to time by countywide vote. The most recent amendment was in January 2008. The County has home rule powers, subject only to the limitations of the Constitution and general laws of the State. The County has, in effect, a County government with certain powers effective throughout the entire county, including 35 municipalities located within the county, and a municipal government for the unincorporated area of the county. Unlike a consolidated city-county, where the city and county governments merge into a single entity, these two entities remain separate. Instead there are two "tiers," or levels, of government: city and county. The County can take over particular activities of a city's operations if the services fall below minimum standards set by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) of Miami-Dade County or with the consent of the governing body of a particular city.

Of the county's total population (2,466,827), approximately 1.081 million or 43.8 percent live in the unincorporated area, the majority of which is heavily urbanized. For residents living in the Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA), the County fills the role of both tiers of government. Residents within UMSA pay a property tax for municipal-type services provided by the County such as police, parks, public works, and zoning. Residents of municipalities do not pay UMSA tax. There are currently 35 municipalities in the county, the City of Miami being the largest and the Town of Cutler Bay being the most recently incorporated.

A recent amendment to the Miami-Dade County Charter, approved on January 23, 2007, created a Strong Mayor form of government, with further charter amendments approved on November 4, 2008. The Mayor is elected countywide to serve a four-year term. The Mayor, who is not a member of the Board, serves as the elected executive or administrative head of County government. In this role, the Mayor is responsible for the management of all administrative departments and for carrying out policies adopted by the Commission. The Mayor has, within ten days of final adoption by the Board, veto authority over any legislative, quasi-judicial, zoning, and master plan or land use decision of the Board, including the budget or any particular component, and the right to appoint the County Manager and all department directors unless disapproved by a two-thirds majority of those Commissioners then in office at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Mayor is limited to two four-year terms in office.

The Board is the legislative body, consisting of 13 members elected from single-member districts. Members are elected to serve four-year terms (with no term limits) and elections of the membership are staggered. The full Board chooses a Chairperson, who presides over the Board, as well as appoints the members of its legislative committees. The Board has a wide array of powers to enact legislation, create departments, and regulate businesses operating within the County. It also has the power to override the Mayor's veto with a two-thirds vote.

Florida's Constitution provides for five elected officials to oversee executive and administrative functions for each county: Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, and Clerk. Through the Home Rule Charter, the first three of these offices were reorganized and became subordinate County Departments. The most visible distinction between Miami-Dade and other Florida counties is the title of its law enforcement agency. It is the only county in Florida that

does not have an elected sheriff, or an agency titled "Sheriff's Office." Instead, the equivalent agency is known as the Miami-Dade Police Department and its chief executive is known as the Director of the Miami-Dade Police Department.

On January 29, 2008, a charter amendment was approved to make the Property Appraiser an elected position. November 4, 2008 was the first election for a Property Appraiser in Miami Dade County. The Clerk of the Board is a separate, duly elected constitutional officer as mandated by Article V, Section 16 of the Constitution of the State of Florida. The Clerk is elected to a four-year term by the electorate of Miami-Dade County. In this capacity, the Clerk serves as the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners, County Recorder, County Auditor, custodian of all County funds, and custodian of all records filed with the Court.

*(Source: FY 2009-10 Proposed Resource Allocation and Multi-Year Capital Plan)*

## **COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS & OUR ECONOMY**

Miami-Dade County is the largest county in the southeastern United States and the ninth largest in the nation by population (per US Census Bureau Annual Population Estimates – July 1, 2008). Miami-Dade County is often referred to as the "Gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean." The County's population is estimated to be 2,466,827. Population figures used are from the Florida Estimates of Population (April 1, 2008) prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, College of Business Administration at the University of Florida and are certified by the Governor of Florida. The population density is 5,830 people per square mile within the urban area.

The racial makeup of the County is 62 percent hispanic, 18 percent white, 18 percent black, two percent other races. Approximately one half of the people living in Miami-Dade County in 2004 were foreign born. Among County residents, 29.3 percent speak English, 62.4 percent speak Spanish, 4.9 percent speak Creole, and 3.4 percent speak other languages. The per capita income in the County is \$23,125 and the median family income is \$49,894. Of the County's total population, 11.8 percent of the families live below the poverty line.

Approximately 418 square miles (excludes Bay and Coastal Water) of the County are within the urban development boundary while the total county land area currently covers a total of 2,431 square miles (1,946 square miles of land and 485 square miles of water) and is bound by Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Everglades National Park to the west, the Florida Keys to the south, and Broward County to the north. Miami-Dade County is the only metropolitan area in the United States that borders two national parks: Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park.

The Greater Miami area is the center for international commerce in the southeastern United States and its proximity to the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America makes it a natural center of trade to and from North America. In addition, the international background of many of its residents is an essential labor force characteristic for multi-national companies which must operate across language and cultural differences.

The County had the highest concentration of international bank agencies on the east coast south of New York City, with a total of 27 foreign chartered banks and over \$12 billion on deposit as of September 30, 2008, according to the Florida Department of Financial Services, Office of Financial Regulations. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, as of September 30, 2008, there were 13 Edge Act Banks throughout the United States; five of those institutions were located in the County with over \$12.5 billion on deposit. Edge Act Banks are federally chartered organizations offering a wide range of banking services, but limited to international transactions only. The favorable geographic location of the County, a well-trained labor force and the favorable transportation infrastructure have allowed the economic base of the County to expand by attracting many national and international firms doing business in Latin America.

The Greater Miami area is also the leading center for tourism in the state. Miami ranks second behind Orlando as a destination for non-residential air travelers according to the Florida Division of Tourism of the Department of Commerce. It is also the principal port of entry in the State for international air travelers. During 2008, 78 percent of international air travelers entering the State arrived through Miami International Airport, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The County's economy has been transitioning from mixed service and industrial in the 1970s to one dominated by services in the late 1990s primarily due to the expansion in international trade,

the tourism industry, and health services. Wholesale trade and retail trade have and are projected to become stronger economic forces in the local economy. This reflects the County's position as a wholesale center in Southeast Florida, which is serving a large international market. The tourism industry remains one of the largest sectors in the local economy.

*(Source: FY 2009-10 Proposed Resource Allocation and Multi-Year Capital Plan)*

## **KEY CHALLENGES & INDICATORS**

The following overarching indicators were considered in determining the key challenges of the assessment areas.

- Expected population growth by 30,000 people per year, a million every three decades.
- 68 percent hispanic by 2020
- There are more persons lacking a high school degree in Miami-Dade County relative to the state and nation. In fact, 12.7 percent, the share of the population in the County with less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education is almost twice compared to the nation's 6.5 percent.
- The percentage of those with less than a high school degree for hispanics and blacks is more than three times than that for non-hispanic whites.
- Foreign born persons have the lowest level of educational attainment, while those from other states are mostly highly educated.
- Per capita income steadily becoming less than national average.
- Increasing unemployment rate – from 6.8 percent in January to 11.8 percent in October 2009. However, November figures are at 10.5 percent.

*(Source: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation)*

### **Population Growth**

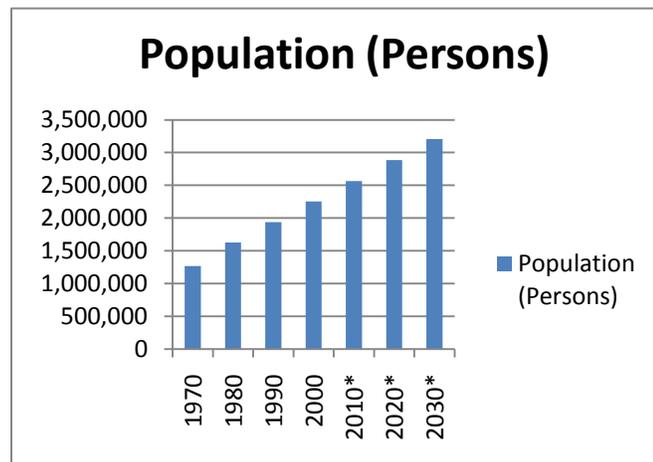
The County's population has grown significantly in the past three decades. As shown in Table 1, between 1970 and 2000, the population increased by nearly one million. And while the numbers indicate that the state population is not growing, county population it is expected to increase another million by 2030. With population growth averaging around 30,000 persons per year, the population for 2030 is projected to be 3,206,287.

**Table 1**  
Miami-Dade County  
Population  
(Historic and Projected)  
1970 - 2009

Year	Population (Persons)
1970	1,267,792
1980	1,625,781
1990	1,937,094
2000	2,253,362
2010*	2,563,885
2020*	2,885,439
2030*	3,206,287

\*Projected

*(Source: Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Section, 2009)*



## Race

In 1970, approximately 62 percent of the County's population was white, 15 percent black and 23 percent hispanic. In 2000 approximately 23 percent were white, 20 percent black and 57 percent hispanic. In three decades, the demographic profile of the County shifted from predominantly white to predominantly hispanic. This trend is expected to continue; it is projected that by 2020 the County will be approximately 12 percent white, 20 percent black and 68 percent hispanic.

## Age

As shown in Table 2, the County's median age has remained steady in the past three decades.

**Table 2**  
Miami-Dade County  
Median Age  
1970 – 2000

YEAR	Median Age
1970	34.2
1980	34.7
1990	34.2
2000	35.6

## Educational Attainment

Over the past four decades, improvements in the educational attainment level in the County were achieved, most significantly during the 1970's and since 2000. The percent of the population 25 years and above not completing high school decreased from 53.4 percent in 1960 to 23.8 percent in 2006, while college graduates increased from 8.4 percent to 34.4 percent in the same period. Please note that for this report, the data on educational attainment includes only persons 25 years and above.

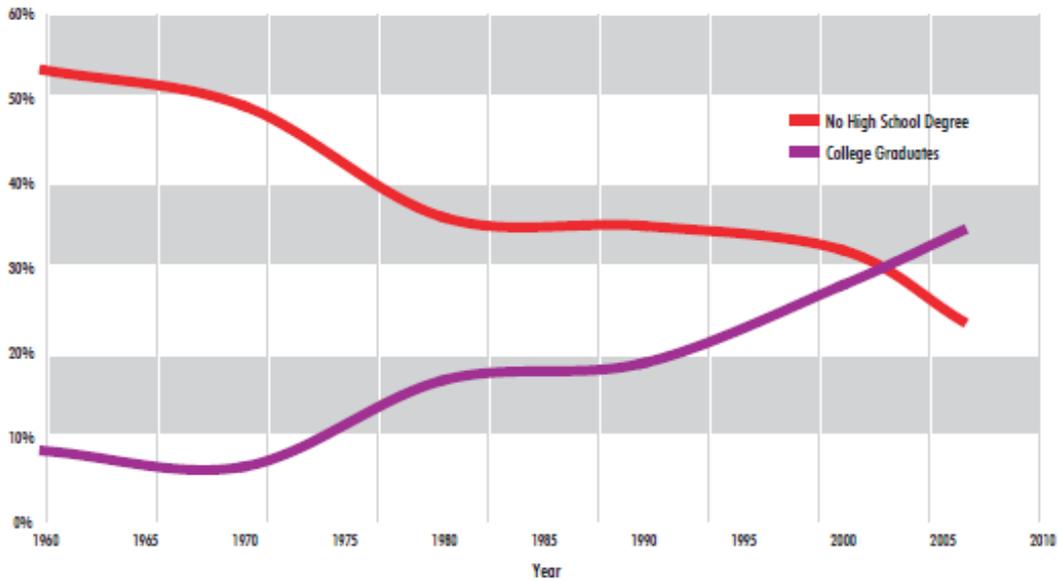
When comparing Miami-Dade, the proportion of the population with higher education degrees is similar to that of the state and nation. However, when compared to persons lacking a high school degree, the County ranks higher, with 12.7 percent of the population having less than a 9th grade education. This is almost twice the share for the nation at 6.5 percent (see Charts 1 and 2).

Marked differences are present when comparing different ethnic groups within the County. In 2006, 54.7 percent of non-hispanic whites had a college degree or higher, compared to 32 percent hispanics and 20 percent non-hispanic blacks. The difference in the share of college graduation rates between the above groups has grown since the 1970s (see Charts 3 and 4). The percentage of those with less than a high school degree for hispanics and blacks is more than three times than that of non-hispanic whites. For blacks the figure is 29.8 percent, hispanics 27.1 percent and white non-hispanics 7.8 percent.

In terms of gender, the differences are not significant. Although, in the future we expect to see higher levels of education for females given the trends observed in the school enrolment data. Those persons that are foreign born have the lowest level of educational attainment, while those from other states are the mostly highly educated.

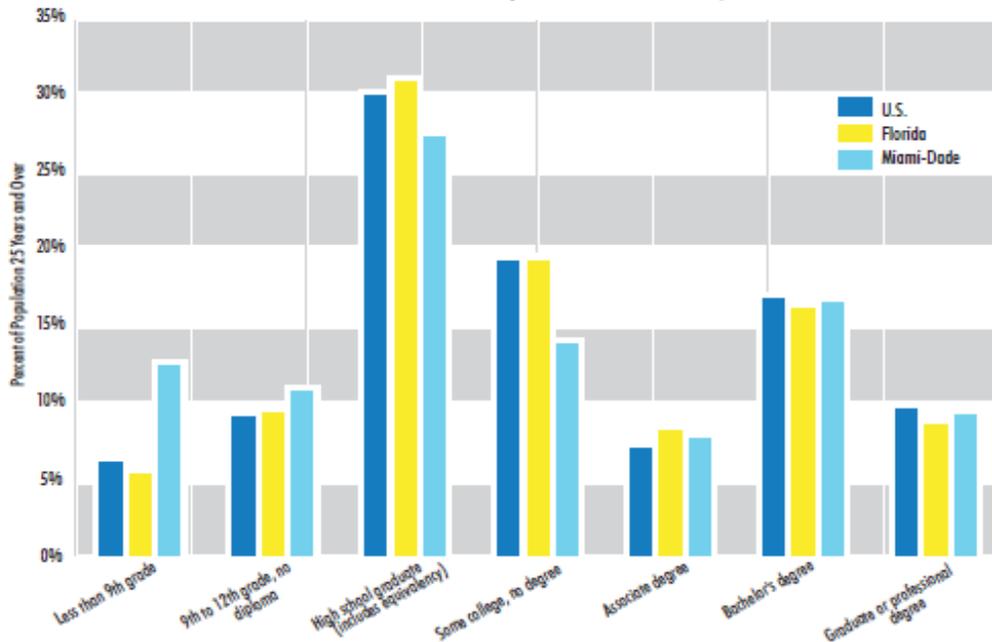
*(Source: "Miami-Dade County at a Glance, Educational Attainment" - Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Section)*

Chart 1:  
Educational Attainment Levels for Persons 25 and Above  
Miami-Dade County, 1960 - 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1960 - 2000, American Community Survey 2006 . Prepared by Miami-Dade County, Department of Planning and Zoning 2008.

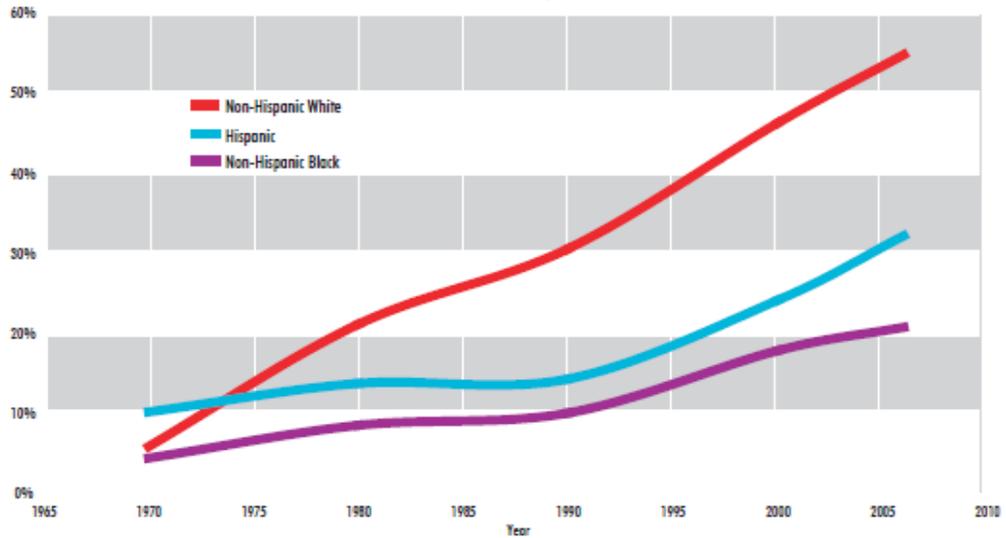
Chart 2:  
Comparative Educational Attainment  
Miami-Dade County and United States, 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006. Miami-Dade County, Department of Planning and Zoning 2008.

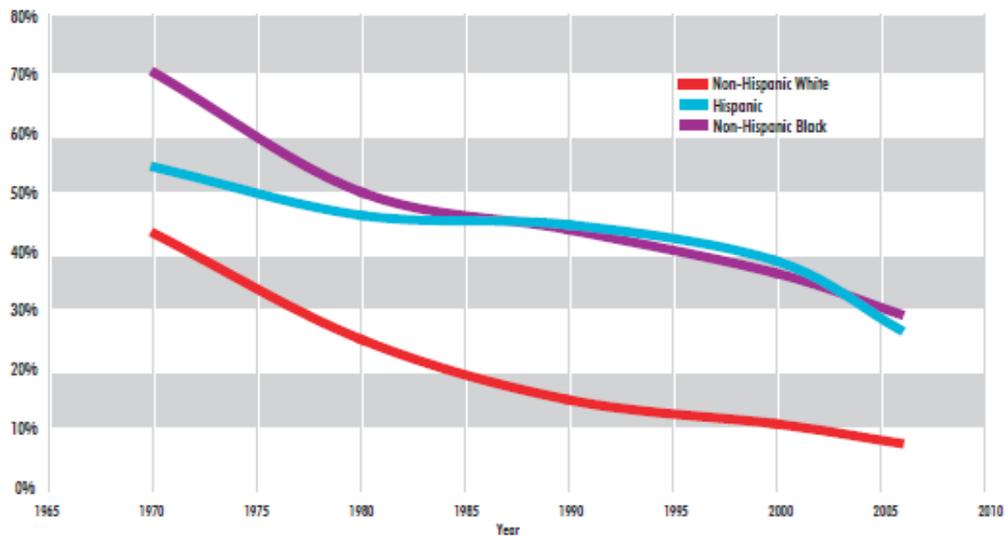
Note: Data are estimates based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability

Chart 3: Persons 25 Years and Above, with College Degree or Higher by Ethnicity, Miami-Dade County, 1970 - 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1970 - 2000, American Community Survey 2006. Prepared by Miami-Dade County, Department of Planning and Zoning 2008.

Chart 4: Persons 25 Years and Above with Less Than High School Degree, by Ethnicity, Miami-Dade County, 1970 - 2006



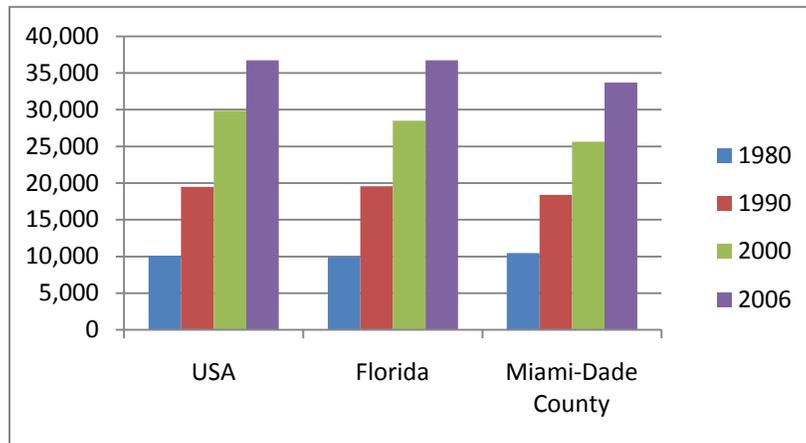
\* All People excluding Blacks and Hispanics.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1970 - 2000, American Community Survey 2006. Prepared by Miami-Dade County, Department of Planning and Zoning 2008.

## Income

Chart 5 shows the per capita personal income in the United States, Florida and the County in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2006. In 1980, the County's per capita personal income was higher than that of the state and nation. Since then, though, the County's per capita personal income has been lower than that of the state and nation. In 1990, the County's figure was \$1,103 less than that of the nation, \$4,214 in 2000, and \$3,002 in 2006.

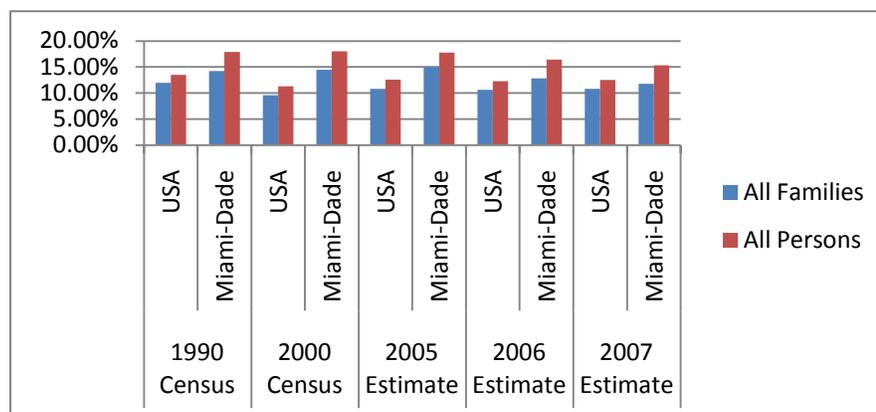
**CHART 5: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY  
PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME (\$)  
1980 - 2006**



## Poverty

As illustrated in Chart 6, the County's poverty level figures have steadily lagged behind those of the nation. The 2000 census showed a slight increase in poverty over 1990 census figures. The 2006 and 2007 estimated numbers, showed an overall decrease in the number of poor families and individuals over the 2000 census figures. Given the current economic conditions, these figures are expected to worsen during the 2010 census reporting period.

**CHART 6: PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE  
WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE  
POVERTY LEVEL**



**Employment**

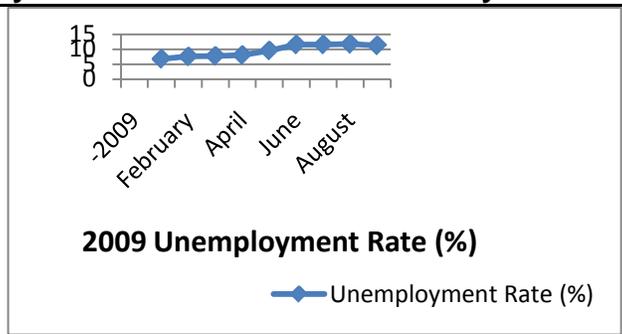
As illustrated in Table 3, unemployment rates have fluctuated historically from an approximate rate of 8 percent during the 1990s to a rate of 4.6 percent during 2005. With the current economic downturn, the County’s unemployment figures have changed drastically. As shown in Table 4 and Chart 7, the County’s 2009 monthly unemployment rate has increased considerably from 6.8 percent in January 2009 to 11.8 percent in October 2009. However, November 2009 figures are at 10.5 percent.

**Table 3  
Employment Statistics for Miami-Dade County  
1990 to 2008**

Year	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate percent
1990	987,269	909,877	77,392	7.8
1995	1,048,926	964,401	84,525	8.1
2000	1,103,485	1,046,900	56,585	5.1
2005	1,133,274	1,081,204	52,070	4.6
2008	1,212,446	1,142,665	69,781	5.8

**Table 4 & Chart 7  
2009 Monthly Unemployment Rate for Miami-Dade County**

Month (2009)	Unemployment Rate (percent)
January	6.8
February	7.6
March	7.8
April	8.1
May	9.6
June	11.6
July	11.6
August	11.8
September	11.3



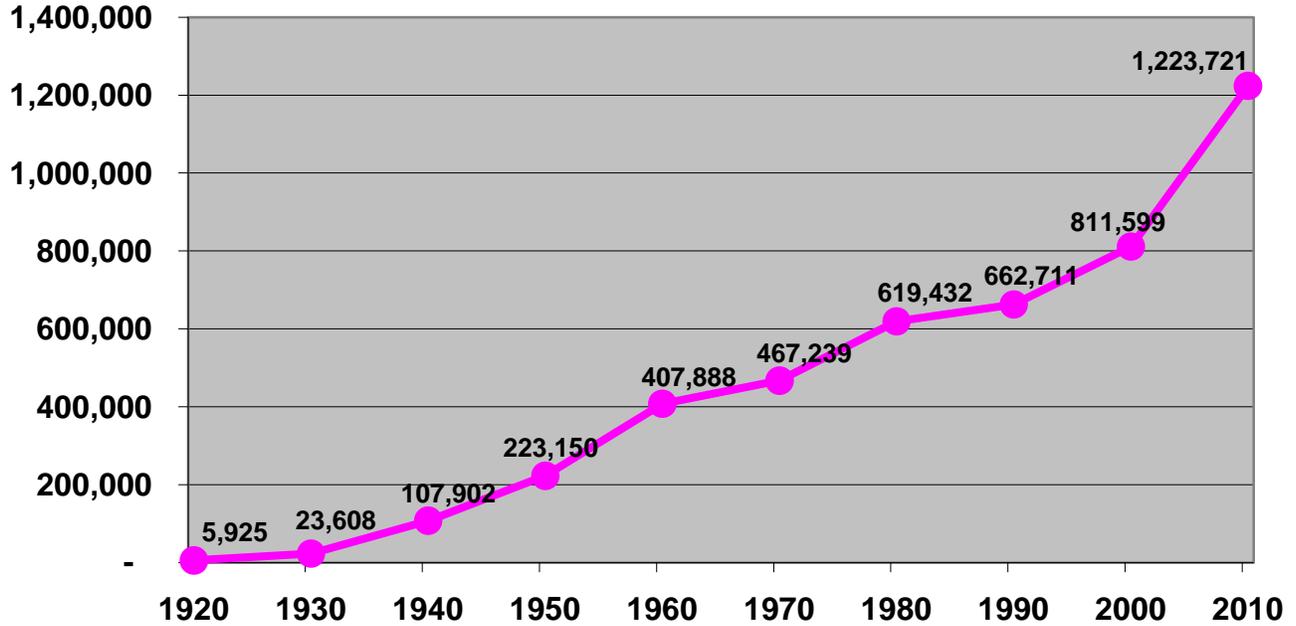
(Source: Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Section, 2009)

**Voter Population**

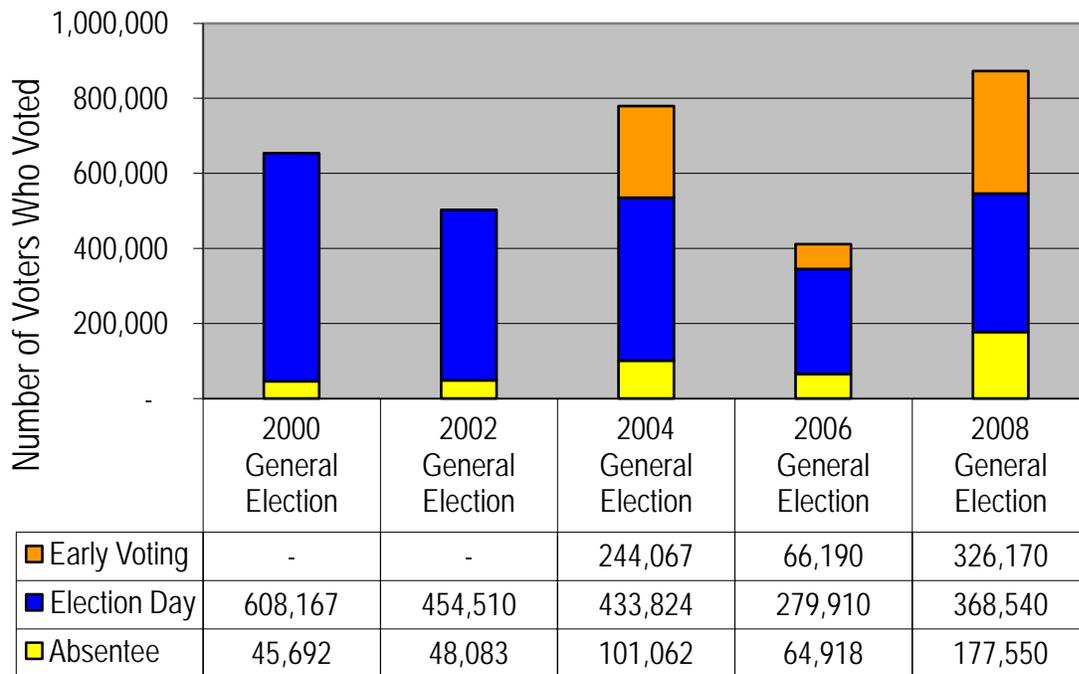
Miami-Dade County serves 1,258,727 registered voters across 836 precincts at 574 polling places on Election Day. Miami-Dade has the most complex elections operation in the State of Florida, only county that does not have a consolidated elections calendar for municipalities. Over 20 countywide and/or municipal elections are conducted a year, offering three ways to vote: absentee voting, early voting and in-precinct voting on Election Day. Not only does Miami-Dade have the largest number of voters in the state, but it is also the largest county in terms of population and geography, demographics, and demand for multi-lingual services.

The number of registered voters has steadily increased with population growth and currently stands at 49 percent (Chart 8). We have experienced changes in voting patterns due to new accessibility to voting. In fact, since 2000 we have seen a steady increase in absentee or early voting, as well as voter turnout (Chart 9).

**Chart 8 - Miami-Dade County Elections Department  
Registered Voters, 1920 to 2010**



**Chart 9 - Miami-Dade County Elections Department  
Voter Turnout by Voting Method, 2000 to 2008 General Elections**



Note: Early Voting was introduced in November 2002, therefore, it was not offered in the 2000 and 2002 General Election.