

OUR COUNTY

Miami-Dade County has always been the center of cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. Early in our history, our region was a site of conflict between Native Americans and European explorers. Later, Miami-Dade County became a transportation hub serving as the end point of Henry Flagler's railroad that extended from Jacksonville to the Miami River and what later became Downtown Miami. Our recent history has been marked by people from all over the world making Miami-Dade County their home. Our community is representative of the American experience, reflecting both the conflict and concord that comes with bringing people together from all walks of life.

Dade County was created in 1836 and encompassed an area from present-day Palm Beach County to the Florida Keys. Interpretations of the name "Miami" include the Native American words for "very large lake," "sweet waters," and "friends." Major Francis Langhorne Dade, our County's namesake, was a soldier killed during the Second Seminole War. In 1997, the County electorate voted to combine the two names to become the current Miami-Dade County. With an estimated population of 2.8 million residents, Miami-Dade County is the seventh largest county in the nation by population.



Approximately 424 square miles (excluding bay and coastal waters) of the County are within the urbanized area, while the total county area currently covers a total of 2,431 square miles, 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 has the unique distinction of being the only metropolitan area in the United States that borders two national parks: Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park.

By learning more about the people who comprise our community and the economic realities they face, we can better prepare for the future. Indeed Miami-Dade County is a cosmopolitan, international community. More than half of the people living in Miami-Dade County in 2023 were foreign-born with more than 75 percent of residents speaking a language other than English at home. Moreover, individuals of Hispanic origin comprise 69 percent of the population of Miami-Dade County, followed by Black (14 percent) and White (13 percent) individuals.

In addition, recent data reveals important challenges presented by our local economic environment. For example, the median income of our residents is lower than that of the nation as a whole, and our rate of poverty is higher than the average for the United States. In 2023, the American Community Survey's (ACS) showed that the median family income nationwide was over \$96,000 while in Miami-Dade it was less than \$81,000. The ACS also estimated that approximately 14 percent of our residents lived below the poverty line while nationally, the poverty rate was 12.5 percent. Moreover, in 2023, the top five percent of Miami-Dade County households earned an average annual income of more than \$559,000, while the lowest 20 percent had an average of just over \$15,000 – a ratio of 37:1.

FY 2025-26 Adopted Budget and Multi-Year Capital Plan

An economic driver performing well is the tourism industry. Our beaches, events, attractions, and weather make us a desirable destination for both domestic and international visitors. In 2024, 28.2 million people visited greater Miami and the beaches, with 20.1 million of them staying overnight. Approximately 80 percent of all these visitors came from within the United States and 20 percent were international tourists. These visitors spent \$22 billion here. Furthermore, the cruise industry continues to be an important part of our local economy with total cruise passengers exceeding 8 million passengers in FY 2023-24.

Like many other regions in the world, Miami-Dade County faces a number of current and future challenges including aging facilities and transportation infrastructure, cost of housing and other economic challenges, cyber-attacks, terrorism and other natural and man-made disasters. To provide for a safer and stronger community, we need to continue our focus on these challenges including making wise infrastructure investments, providing affordable and workforce housing, developing a diverse economy, increasing community engagement and promoting public safety. Development of a well rounded economy is perhaps the most critical because a healthy economy can provide the resources needed to fund the other needs.