

Florida Focus

Volume 1, No. 1



Doing Business in Florida: Florida Statistical Data Resources

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With a population of over 17 million residents, Florida is the fourth most populous and the third fastest growing state in the nation.¹ It garners national and international interest in demographic, economic, and social statistics from people interested in moving to or visiting the state, starting businesses, financing business ventures, or planning for the state's growth.

What is BEBR?

The Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) is an excellent first stop for data about Florida. Founded in 1929, BEBR is an applied research bureau located in the Warrington College of Business at the University of Florida. BEBR plays a number of roles within the state, the college, and the university. Its research provides decision makers with data and analyses that contribute to a deeper understanding of Florida's rapidly changing economic and demographic climate. Much of the data sought from BEBR revolves around Florida's population, housing, and retail sales.

¹ Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau (2004, December 22), "Cumulative Estimates of Population Change for the United States and States, and for Puerto Rico and State Rankings: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004" (NST-EST2004-02), retrieved February 4, 2005 from <http://eire.census.gov/popeststates/tables/NST-EST2004-02.xls>.

BEBR's mission is to: 1) collect, analyze, and generate economic and demographic data on Florida and its local areas; 2) conduct economic, demographic, and public policy research on topics of particular importance to the State of Florida; and 3) distribute data and research findings throughout the state and the nation. BEBR accomplishes its mission through three research and two support services programs.

BEBR Programs

Population. Contracted by the State of Florida, BEBR's Population Program annually produces and publishes the state's official population estimates and projections. State estimates are published for counties, cities, and unincorporated areas. Population projections for counties include age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin breakdowns through the year 2030.

BEBR began making population estimates for Florida and its counties in the 1950s. The Population Program was formally established in 1972, when BEBR received the first of a continuous series of annual contracts from the State of Florida to produce the state's official city and county population estimates. These estimates are used for revenue-sharing and a variety of

other planning and analytical purposes. The Population Program has expanded its scope of analysis over time. Currently, it produces population estimates for each county and incorporated city in Florida; population estimates and projections by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin for the state and each of its counties; and estimates of households and average household size for the state and each of its counties.

Members of the Population Program work on a variety of demographic research projects and publish the results in books, monographs, scholarly journals, and technical reports. They also make presentations on Florida's demographic trends to business, government, and civic groups throughout the state and respond to many telephone requests for demographic data and analysis. BEBR is Florida's representative to the Federal-State Cooperative Programs for Population Estimates and Projections, and works closely with the U.S. Census Bureau to improve the quality of demographic data in Florida. In recent years, staff members have served on the U.S. Census Bureau Advisory Committee, the National Research Council's Panel to Evaluate Alternative Census Methodologies, the Board of Directors of the Southern Demographic Association, and the Population Association of America's Committee on Applied Demography.

Economic Analysis. The Economic Analysis Program was formed in 2002 through the merger of two longstanding BEBR programs: Forecasting and Policy Studies. Staff members conduct research on a variety of economic issues that have policy implications for the state of Florida. Recent topics have included economic conditions that affect the demand for transportation infrastructure; the relationship between income growth, population growth, and

regional physical characteristics; and regional differences in price level indexes. The Economic Analysis Program annually produces and publishes the *Florida Price Level Index* (FPLI) for the state Department of Education comparing price levels among Florida's 67 counties. Categories include food, health care, housing, personal goods and services, and transportation. The FPLI is available on the BEBR web site at www.bebr.ufl.edu/Publications/Data_Series.shtml.

The Economic Analysis Program receives research contracts from a variety of state and federal agencies and often collaborates with research centers at other universities in Florida. Its research is published regularly in scholarly journals and as technical reports for government agencies. Staff members make presentations on Florida's economy to business, civic, and government groups throughout the state and often provide analytical insights to members of the media. Over the years, staff members have served on the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors, the Post-Secondary Education Finance Task Force, and the Trends and Conditions Group of the Florida Department of Transportation.

Survey Research. The Survey Program was established in 1979 to conduct research on consumer attitudes and buying behavior in Florida. It operates the **UF Survey Research Center (UFSRC)**, a 75-station computerized lab operating seven days a week. The UFSRC conducts a regular monthly survey of some 500 households in Florida and generates an index that measures changes in Floridians' consumer confidence. Staff members conduct research on a variety of survey-related topics, publish the results in scholarly journals, and make presentations at professional conferences.

The UFSRC also conducts customized surveys for a variety of government agencies, university research centers, and businesses. Recent clients have included the UF Department of Anthropology, the UF Department of Forestry, the UF Department of Parks and Recreation, the UF Institute for Child Health Policy, the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the Florida Department of Health, the Florida Public Service Commission, the Kansas Health Institute, and the National Science Foundation.

The Survey Program accepts proposals for funded survey research from outside sources. Staff members can provide assistance in sample design, wording of questions, survey implementation, and data analysis.

Support Services Programs. BEBR's **Information/Publication Services** Program produces and publishes three annual statistical reference volumes, a series of county-level reports, manages the BEBR web site, and is responsible for marketing all of BEBR's publications and products. In addition, Information/Publication Services publishes monthly and annual state and county building permit, housing start, and gross and taxable sales data from the BEBR database.

The **Administrative and Information Technology** Program provides operational background support for all of BEBR's programs. BEBR's database and network are managed through this program.

Additionally, the staff handles publication orders, distribution, and promotion mailings.

Where to Look for Florida Data: BEBR First

BEBR offers a variety of demographic and economic subject reports of interest to persons conducting business in Florida. Users are referred to the BEBR web site (www.bibr.ufl.edu) for a complete list of publications, summaries, and price and ordering information. Table 1 offers a snapshot of some of the data provided by BEBR in some of its publications. BEBR produces an annual population report, *Florida Estimates of Population* which features statewide population estimates for counties, cities, and unincorporated areas and includes figures from the 2000 census for comparison. Components of population change, persons per square mile, age and race, and ranked data are also presented.

Household data and population projections (Figure 1) can be found in the BEBR series *Florida Population Studies*. Persons interested in Florida's construction industry may find what they need in the monthly and annual publication, *Building Permit Activity in Florida*, which provides single- and multifamily residential unit permit issuance data along with estimated costs of construction for the state, counties, municipalities, and unincorporated areas. BEBR offers additional county-level construction permit and housing start data in unpublished form from the BEBR database. BEBR also distributes Florida's monthly and annual gross and taxable sales data presented by county or by kind of business as reported by the state Department of Revenue. BEBR's UF Survey Research Center publishes a monthly online *Florida Consumer Confidence Index* on or around the 25th of each month.

Three statistical compendiums are produced by BEBR: the *Florida Statistical*

