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Despite Bigger Paychecks, the Number of Struggling Households in Florida Continues to Grow

New ALICE update shows wage growth was no match for inflation after a decade of falling behind

Though wages for the lowest paying jobs have risen across the country at the fastest rate in four decades, **the number of households struggling to get by in Florida grew by 189,614 from 2021 to 2022**. As a result, a total of **4,056,220 million households (or 46%) were living paycheck to paycheck**, according to a new update from United Way of Collier and the Keys and its research partner, United For ALICE.

That calculation includes the 1,125,129 Florida households in poverty as well as another 2,931,091 defined as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), earning above the Federal Poverty Level but less than what's needed to survive in the current economy. ALICE workers include nurses, teachers, servers, and cashiers — those working low-wage jobs, with little or no savings and one emergency away from poverty.

In Collier County, 42% of households were living paycheck to paycheck. In Monroe County, 43% can't afford the essentials.

ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Florida shows that while wages were increasing, so too were costs. For a family of four with an infant and a preschooler, the basic costs to live and work in Florida, excluding tax credits, rose from \$80,748 in 2021 to \$86,316 a year later. Compounding the issue in 2022 was the loss of up to \$15,000 in federal child tax credits and stimulus payments that this family had access to in 2021.

"There is no doubt, bigger paychecks helped, but inflation and the loss of pandemic supports converged to keep ALICE trapped," said United Way of Collier and the Keys President and CEO Tiffani Mensch. "This latest data is a reminder that while we have made some progress, our work is far from over."

The findings in this one-year period are consistent with a more than decade-long trend: Since the end of the Great Recession, despite some ups and downs, the number of ALICE households in Florida has been steadily growing. From 2010 to 2022, the total number of households rose by 25%, households in poverty increased by 8% — and the number of ALICE households grew by 27%.

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