Demographics Analysis for Polk County

Population

Polk County outpaced the state and nation in population growth between the July 2022 and April 2020 estimates, growing 8.60% as compared to 3.30% and 0.60% for the state and nation, respectively. Within the larger cities (populations greater than 5,000), growth is being led by Davenport (45.3%), Haines City (22.10%), and Auburndale (19.10%) since the last Census. While growth at the national level improved a bit this year, from last year, it remained very low compared to historical averages, leaving Polk County as a standout for attracting new residents. As some normalcy returns to labor markets, it is yet to be seen if the interstate population shifts will hold in the long run.

Population Proportion by City

	2022	2020
Auburndale	2.36%	2.15%
Bartow	2.53%	2.69%
Davenport	1.71%	1.28%
Fort Meade	0.66%	0.70%
Haines City	4.27%	3.80%
Lake Alfred	0.90%	0.90%
Lakeland	15.25%	15.54%
Lake Wales	2.13%	2.26%
Winter Haven	6.99%	6.92%
Other	63.20%	63.76%

Age

The county's age distribution reflects a larger portion of younger people (21.8%, under 18) than the state (19.3%) and a larger population of older people (19.6%, 65 and over) than the nation (17.3%). Both Florida (21.6%) and Polk County have older populations than the national average, and while this had been a growing portion of the population in prior years, that trend reversed during COVID-19 as older populations were disproportionally impacted. The gaps between county and national averages closed a bit over the past year, however. The larger portions of younger and older people negatively impact our economy as it results in a smaller population of working age people, as reflected in the smaller labor force population (56.0%, 59.0% and 63.1% for the county, state and nation based on 2017 – 2021 data, respectively). The long-run trend of an aging population will be partly responsible for the increasing strain on social security, other social services, and the medical system. It should be noted that we saw a decline in expected longevity over the past few years, reversing years of increasing longevity. This will likely stabilize and begin increasing again in the coming years. Amongst the higher growth cities, Auburndale, Davenport, and Haines City have the lowest portion of 65+ population, with 16.8%, 10.8% and 15.5%, respectively. This is likely due to the growth being driven by younger families continuing to move to the area and should contribute positively to economic growth.

Households

Polk County continues to have higher than average homeowner occupancy (69.1%, 66.5% and 64.6% for the county, state, and nation, respectively) and lower than average costs for both homeowners and renters. The lower property values during the survey years (2017 – 2021) reflect the relative affordability of ownership in Polk County. While that affordability gap closed somewhat in 2021, it remains significant. There is a wide range in average home values across the county during the period with a low of $117,400 in Fort Meade to a high of $234,600 in Davenport, in comparison to median values for the county, state and county of $177,900, $248,700, and $244,900, respectively.
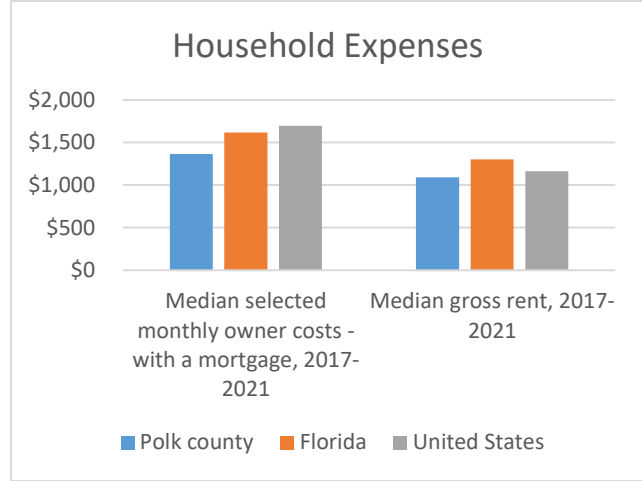
Polk County has also seen meaningful growth in taxable property values, with total value increasing from $51.4B in 2022 to $59.5B in 2023, with over $2.5B of that attributable to new construction. The largest dollar value of new construction growth came from Haines City ($285M), the largest percentage growth came from Eagle Lake (50.7%) and Davenport (37.6%). The large increases in taxable value that the county has experienced in recent years should provide a meaningful revenue increase which should mitigate the growing costs that come with the population growth the county has experienced.

Education

Polk County continues to trail the state and nation in both high school and college degrees. The portion of the population with bachelor's degrees or higher increased (0.4%) to 21.0% while the state has 31.5% (up 1.0%) and the nation has 33.7% (up 0.8%). Part of this is driven by the larger portion of the older population, but there remains a meaningful deficit. There is variation across the cities, with a couple below 15% and Lakeland just under 27%. Continued efforts to address education, both formal and career training, will be critical for maintaining a productive workforce in the county.
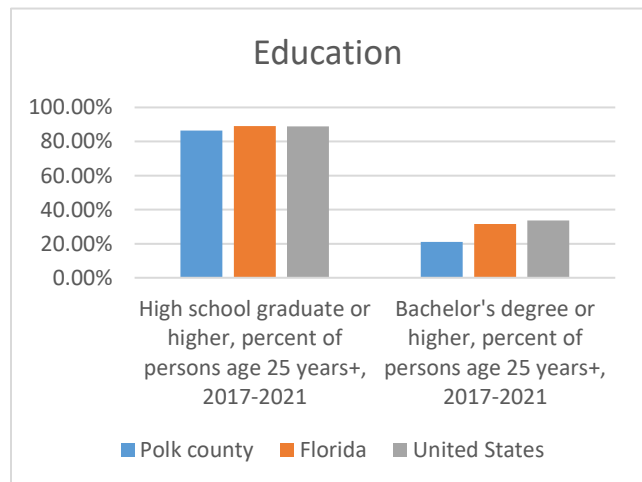
Medical

Both Polk County (16.9%) and the state (13.9%) trail the nation (9.3%) in the percentage of people without health insurance. While these rates improved for both the state and nation since the last survey, they worsened for the county. The size of the gap is partly driven by state policy to not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act as other states have and the state's lower income, however the county going in the opposite direction of the state and nation should be a cause for concern. The level of uninsured people in the county may drive up future medical costs and possible bad debts for local hospitals as many people cope with ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and other serious health conditions.

Business/Economy

As previously mentioned, Polk County lags the state and nation in labor force participation, partially due to a larger portion of older population, but partially due to other factors, including education. Per capita retail expenditures are roughly proportional to per capita income, as compared to national averages, albeit with lower per capita income. Polk County also has higher than average poverty, with 15.6% (up 1.2%) of the population living in poverty, as compared to 12.7% (down 0.4%) and 11.5% (down 0.1%) in the state and nation, respectively. Like health insurance coverage, this also seems to be moving in the wrong direction for the county. There is wide variation among the cities as well, with poverty reaching a high of 22.7% in Fort Meade and low of 9.8% in Davenport. The pullback of stimulus funds and rising inflation are likely contributing to the rising poverty rates. Federal Reserve action to slow down inflation has been slowly working, but the higher interest rates may also negatively impact household budgets and limit the ability for households to purchase durable goods (homes, cars, etc.).

Summary

Overall, Polk County, like much of the nation, is still feeling the ripple effects of the economics actions taken during COVID-19 and the follow up policy to combat the impacts. As the Federal Reserve has been attempting to slow down inflation without causing a massive recession, we are still experiencing very tight labor markets, which puts pressure on employers to increase wages, driving up production costs, further driving up prices and inflation. We have seen inflation finally begin to fall, but it remains stubbornly above target levels, and we remain at risk for increasing prices should the Federal Reserve reverse course too quickly. It will remain a tricky balancing act for the next year or so.

Census QuickFacts 2023

	Polk county	Florida	United States	Auburndale	Bartow	Davenport	Fort Meade	Haines City	Lake Alfred	Lakeland	Lake Wales	Winter Haven
Population												
Population Estimates, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	787,404	22,244,823	333,287,557	18,579	19,888	13,485	5,193	33,629	7,101	120,071	16,774	55,024
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2022)	725,041	21,538,226	331,449,520	15,605	19,518	9,281	5,100	27,532	6,535	112,640	16,350	50,203
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2022, (V2022)	8.60%	3.30%	0.60%	19.10%	1.90%	45.30%	1.80%	22.10%	8.70%	6.60%	2.60%	9.60%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	725,046	21,538,187	331,449,281	15,616	19,309	9,043	5,100	26,669	6,374	112,641	16,361	49,219
Age												
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.60%	5.00%	5.60%	6.40%	6.00%	7.10%	7.30%	6.20%	8.40%	5.50%	4.90%	6.60%
Persons under 18 years, percent	21.80%	19.30%	21.70%	23.10%	22.70%	29.60%	22.20%	24.30%	20.10%	19.70%	20.80%	22.70%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	19.60%	21.60%	17.30%	16.80%	15.30%	10.80%	27.70%	15.50%	17.10%	21.80%	27.00%	23.60%
Gender, Race, Military and Foreign Born												
Female persons, percent	50.60%	50.80%	50.40%	52.00%	49.90%	49.90%	50.00%	52.30%	56.40%	51.30%	55.00%	52.60%
White alone, percent	77.40%	76.80%	75.50%	81.40%	63.30%	57.20%	68.10%	50.00%	57.00%	67.80%	57.90%	59.20%
Black or African American alone, percent	17.10%	17.00%	13.60%	11.70%	21.80%	22.80%	18.00%	29.50%	18.90%	19.90%	20.20%	24.60%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.80%	0.50%	1.30%	0.20%	0.30%	0.00%	0.90%	0.10%	0.00%	0.40%	0.30%	0.20%
Asian alone, percent	2.00%	3.10%	6.30%	1.50%	3.20%	0.80%	0.10%	0.80%	8.80%	2.20%	0.50%	2.20%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.10%	0.10%	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%	0.10%
Two or More Races, percent	2.60%	2.40%	3.00%	2.90%	6.40%	7.40%	2.70%	9.00%	9.80%	5.00%	12.70%	8.30%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	28.90%	27.10%	19.10%	16.40%	17.40%	47.70%	28.50%	42.60%	17.70%	16.90%	27.60%	20.80%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	52.20%	52.30%	58.90%	69.70%	55.00%	28.50%	51.70%	27.00%	51.00%	58.70%	49.40%	50.30%
Veterans, 2017-2021	45,264	1,389,309	17,431,290	731	1,298	267	334	920	496	8,068	1,647	3,835
Foreign born persons, percent, 2017-2021	10.40%	21.00%	13.60%	9.20%	5.80%	15.90%	6.60%	18.70%	11.00%	10.40%	8.60%	8.10%
Households												
Housing units, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	340,760	10,257,426	143,786,655	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2017-2021	69.10%	66.50%	64.60%	65.70%	62.10%	90.10%	76.70%	65.60%	72.00%	54.70%	58.30%	59.10%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2017-2021	$177,900	$248,700	$244,900	$190,400	$166,400	$234,600	$117,400	$177,900	$180,800	$171,700	$189,700	$182,700
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2017-2021	$1,367	$1,618	$1,697	$1,376	$1,367	$1,643	$1,271	$1,477	$1,310	$1,323	$1,310	$1,397
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2017-2021	$451	$540	$538	$382	$394	$396	$397	$599	$352	$483	$520	$474
Median gross rent, 2017-2021	$1,090	$1,301	$1,163	$927	$918	$1,685	$814	$1,115	$975	$1,115	$930	$1,032
Building permits, 2022	12,211	211,962	1,665,088	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Households, 2017-2021	253,178	8,157,420	124,010,992	5,265	6,572	2,837	1,967	8,276	2,092	42,875	6,646	18,092
Persons per household, 2017-2021	2.77	2.57	2.6	2.95	2.76	3.17	2.6	3.18	2.95	2.46	2.38	2.66
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2017-2021	85.50%	85.20%	86.60%	89.70%	84.70%	85.90%	88.10%	86.10%	84.70%	79.90%	85.60%	85.00%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2017-2021	24.20%	29.80%	21.70%	19.30%	15.30%	58.70%	24.40%	46.30%	23.70%	17.60%	22.10%	22.50%
Education												
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	86.40%	89.00%	88.90%	82.90%	90.60%	89.50%	80.30%	81.40%	86.30%	89.80%	85.80%	88.30%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	21.00%	31.50%	33.70%	20.10%	22.60%	24.00%	12.70%	16.00%	14.60%	26.90%	20.30%	20.00%
Medical												
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2017-2021	10.30%	8.70%	8.70%	8.70%	12.00%	6.90%	11.60%	6.50%	13.70%	10.60%	11.50%	10.00%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	16.90%	13.90%	9.30%	17.50%	11.00%	9.40%	19.10%	21.80%	11.50%	14.00%	13.50%	16.50%
Business/Economy												
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2017-2021	56.00%	59.00%	63.10%	59.20%	62.00%	63.30%	47.20%	56.40%	60.80%	55.80%	47.80%	51.60%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2017-2021	51.40%	54.80%	58.70%	51.70%	57.30%	50.80%	39.10%	49.60%	59.00%	51.20%	46.10%	45.60%
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2017 ($1,000)	1,019,024	67,950,386	938,237,077	34,633	41,685	39,784	4,309	58,708	3,127	416,485	52,655	130,979
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2017 ($1,000)	3,505,936	155,283,578	2,527,903,275	23,326	248,147	32,335	D	256,582	D	1,897,206	145,007	644,431
Total transportation and warehousing receipts/revenue, 2017 ($1,000)	1,329,471	68,145,959	895,225,411	137254	92,435	37,153	3186	48,331	495	232,078	32641	34,100
Total retail sales, 2017 ($1,000)	8,333,421	333,134,553	4,949,601,481	376,520	286,724	385,229	74,737	355,299	119,265	3,221,360	579,557	1,082,853
Total retail sales per capita, 2017	$12,152	$15,881	$15,224	$23,718	$14,722	$85,322	$12,252	$14,795	$20,482	$29,894	$36,259	$26,472
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2017-2021	29.1	27.9	26.8	30.3	22.9	40.7	34.5	33	27.9	23.1	25.8	27.7
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	$55,099	$61,777	$69,021	$60,514	$53,593	$56,345	$37,515	$50,280	$48,203	$52,972	$49,226	$50,842
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	$27,909	$35,216	$37,638	$26,819	$27,053	$23,691	$23,919	$23,660	$23,950	$30,741	$25,469	$27,296
Persons in poverty, percent	15.60%	12.70%	11.50%	12.40%	16.90%	9.80%	22.70%	19.70%	16.20%	15.10%	16.90%	15.60%
Total employer establishments, 2021	13,164	616,961	8,148,606	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total employment, 2021	208,021	8,877,389	128,346,299	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total annual payroll, 2021 ($1,000)	9,698,378	492,355,693	8,278,573,947	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total employment, percent change, 2020-2021	2.20%	-2.30%	-4.30%	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total nonemployer establishments, 2020	59,485	2,651,805	27,151,987	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
All employer firms, Reference year 2017	9,105	438,491	5,744,643	307	464	308	82	407	120	2,524	318	1,075
Men-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	5,502	261,671	3,480,438	S	254	153	S	S	50	1,446	160	633
Women-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	1,392	93,163	1,134,549	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	146
Minority-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	1,465	102,627	1,014,958	S	S	S	S	123	41	267	S	147
Nonminority-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	6,638	309,451	4,371,152	S	251	147	S	S	72	1,750	178	713
Veteran-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	591	28,391	351,237	S	S	S	S	S	S	134	S	S
Nonveteran-owned employer firms, Reference year 2017	7,431	382,527	4,968,606	S	335	253	S	S	102	1,867	199	748
Geography												
Population per square mile, 2020	403.3	401.4	93.8	1,151.80	416.7	2417.9	623.20	1,422.00	688.5	1,702.70	868.2	1,515.30
Land area in square miles, 2020	1,797.76	53,652.17	3,533,038.28	13.56	46.34	3.74	8.18	18.75	9.26	66.15	18.85	32.48
FIPS Code	"12105"	"12"	"1"	"1202550"	"1203675"	"1216450"	"1224100"	"1228400"	"1237525"	"1238250"	"1238950"	"1278275"
FIPS Code	"12105"	"12"	"1"	"1202550"	"1203675"	"1216450"	"1224100"	"1228400"	"1237525"	"1238250"	"1238950"	"1278275"