

Is South Florida still a good place to retire? See where it ranks in U.S. News' annual report



The Miami metro region moved up nine spaces — from No. 30 to No. 21 — in U.S. News' ranking of best retirement places. Still, South Florida fell below regions such as No. 6 Grand Rapids, Mich. and No. 18. Allentown, Pa. (Getty images)



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The South Florida region was named the 21st best place to retire in the U.S. News and World Report's second annual ranking of the nation's 100 largest metros.

While the ranking might seem low for a region known for more than a century for its appeal to snowbirds and retirees, it's an improvement over the No. 30 rankings both in the magazine's inaugural list **and in a survey** released by Bankrate.com last year. It falls well short of **Wallethub.com's** rankings of the best and worst retirement cities released in August, which put **Fort Lauderdale** at No. 5 and Miami No. 7.

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by Fort Myers and Sarasota. Also ranked ahead of Texas (No. 11); Daytona Beach (No. 13); and

Allentown, Pa. (No. 18) — the city singer Billy Joel told us was “closing all the factories down.” U.S. News explained that those factories have been converted into apartments and lofts.

Lancaster jumped to the top spot this year “due to increases in housing affordability and the overall happiness of its residents,” the magazine said in a news release.

But South Florida at least beat out Melbourne (No. 23); Jacksonville (No. 24); Tampa (No. 35) and Orlando (No. 36).

And even though the entire nation makes fun of the state’s weird crime, sweltering summers and scary invasive creatures, the U.S. News survey reinforces Florida’s overall status as a desirable retirement destination, snagging seven spots among the magazine’s 25 most desirable metros “largely due to affordable homes, low taxes and high ratings for happiness and desirability,” U.S. News reporter Emily Brandon wrote on the magazine’s website.

Those measures, along with job market and health-care quality, were weighted based on surveys of respondents ages 45 to 59 and retirement-age individuals 60 and older.

Data sources included the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and U.S. News rankings of the nation’s best hospitals.

A U.S. News spokeswoman said that South Florida’s nine-spot increase was attributable largely to an improvement in the region’s home affordability score. That doesn’t necessarily mean that housing has become less expensive here, but it could reflect housing cost appreciation in the other metro regions outpacing South Florida’s, she said.

Matt Saneholtz, senior financial advisor and co-owner of **Tobias Financial Advisors** in Plantation, said South Florida’s improved home affordability score could be tied to changes in the federal tax code that took effect in 2018 limiting deductions on outlays on real estate and state income taxes — making it even more expensive to retire in an area with a state income tax.

“People living in states with high income tax requirements may consider moving to a state with lower or no income tax,” he said. “It will be interesting to see how Florida ranks in the coming years with these new tax laws just taking effect.”

Michael Ross, founder and president of **Financial Connection Inc.** in Boca Raton, said that while South Florida housing costs seem to have risen to “very high levels,” they still seem affordable, with the state’s lower tax rate, to retirees from high-cost areas such as New York. “For those coming from a lower housing cost area, let’s say Pittsburgh, it may be a stretch.”

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