

Social Security and SSI: The Affordable Rent Gap in Florida

Social Security benefits provide vital support for Florida's retirees and persons with disabilities. Over 3.18 million Floridians receive Social Security retirement benefits averaging \$1,353 per month. Nearly 272,000 Florida nonelderly adults with disabilities receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits of \$733 per month.

For older adults and persons with disabilities seeking to live independently, these benefits provide a lifeline. However, they do not meet the costs of one of the basic components of independent living: an affordable apartment. Housing is generally considered affordable if it costs no more than 30 percent of income. This equals \$406 per month for the average Social Security retirement benefit and \$220 per month for the SSI benefit.

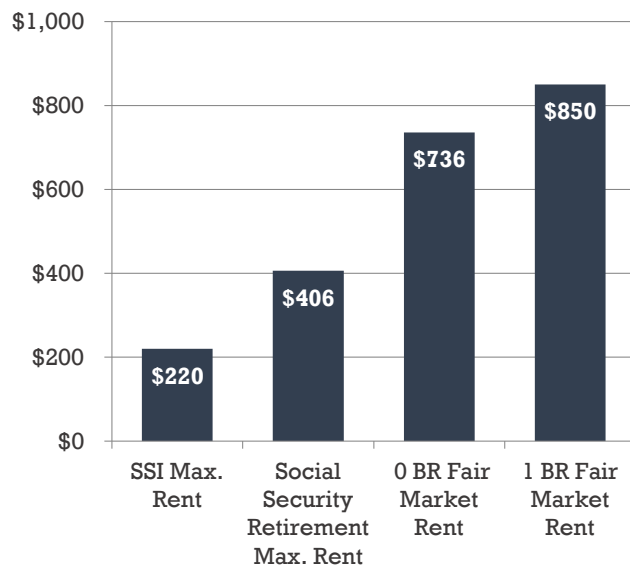
A typical studio apartment in Florida costs \$736 per month and a one-bedroom unit costs \$850 per month, well above the affordable level for Social Security recipients (Figure 1). In fact, the *entire* SSI benefit falls short of these rent levels.

The Floridians most affected by this gap are renters who rely on Social Security for most or all of their income. Statewide, over 92,000 elderly renters live alone and list Social Security benefits as their sole source of income. Nearly 23,000 nonelderly adults with disabilities list SSI as their sole income source.

The rent gap extends throughout the state.

As Figure 2 shows, market rent for a studio apartment exceeds the affordable rent payment for Social Security retirees and SSI recipients in every county in the state. The rent for a one-bedroom apartment exceeds the entire SSI benefit in 26 out of Florida's 67 counties.

Figure 1. Social Security Affordable Rents vs. Fair Market Rents, Florida



Shimberg Center for Housing Studies
University of Florida
P.O. Box 115703
Gainesville, Florida 32611-5703
(352) 273-1192
<http://www.shimberg.ufl.edu>

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Figure 2. Social Security/SSI Rent Comparisons, Florida Counties

County	HUD OBR Fair Market Rent	HUD 1BR Fair Market Rent	SSI Recipient				Social Security Retiree			
			Average Monthly Benefit	Maximum Affordable Rent (30% of Income)	% Income Needed for OBR @ FMR	% Income Needed for 1BR @ FMR	Average Monthly Benefit	Maximum Affordable Rent (30% of Income)	% Income Needed for OBR @ FMR	% Income Needed for 1BR @ FMR
Alachua	\$637	\$719	\$733	\$220	87%	98%	\$1,382	\$415	46%	52%
Baker	\$452	\$626	\$733	\$220	62%	85%	\$1,286	\$386	35%	49%
Bay	\$657	\$755	\$733	\$220	90%	103%	\$1,308	\$392	50%	58%
Bradford	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,258	\$377	41%	44%
Brevard	\$538	\$688	\$733	\$220	73%	94%	\$1,383	\$415	39%	50%
Broward	\$773	\$980	\$733	\$220	105%	134%	\$1,326	\$398	58%	74%
Calhoun	\$471	\$474	\$733	\$220	64%	65%	\$1,216	\$365	39%	39%
Charlotte	\$606	\$634	\$733	\$220	83%	86%	\$1,394	\$418	43%	45%
Citrus	\$608	\$612	\$733	\$220	83%	83%	\$1,338	\$401	45%	46%
Clay	\$616	\$787	\$733	\$220	84%	107%	\$1,363	\$409	45%	58%
Collier	\$720	\$851	\$733	\$220	98%	116%	\$1,522	\$457	47%	56%
Columbia	\$682	\$755	\$733	\$220	93%	103%	\$1,267	\$380	54%	60%
DeSoto	\$545	\$548	\$733	\$220	74%	75%	\$1,264	\$379	43%	43%
Dixie	\$527	\$553	\$733	\$220	72%	75%	\$1,199	\$360	44%	46%
Duval	\$616	\$787	\$733	\$220	84%	107%	\$1,337	\$401	46%	59%
Escambia	\$690	\$706	\$733	\$220	94%	96%	\$1,290	\$387	53%	55%
Flagler	\$572	\$756	\$733	\$220	78%	103%	\$1,405	\$421	41%	54%
Franklin	\$588	\$625	\$733	\$220	80%	85%	\$1,267	\$380	46%	49%
Gadsden	\$693	\$733	\$733	\$220	95%	100%	\$1,217	\$365	57%	60%
Gilchrist	\$637	\$719	\$733	\$220	87%	98%	\$1,246	\$374	51%	58%
Glades	\$563	\$567	\$733	\$220	77%	77%	\$1,295	\$388	43%	44%
Gulf	\$543	\$638	\$733	\$220	74%	87%	\$1,340	\$402	41%	48%
Hamilton	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,250	\$375	41%	44%
Hardee	\$533	\$566	\$733	\$220	73%	77%	\$1,202	\$360	44%	47%
Hendry	\$619	\$647	\$733	\$220	84%	88%	\$1,229	\$369	50%	53%
Hernando	\$668	\$795	\$733	\$220	91%	108%	\$1,336	\$401	50%	59%
Highlands	\$524	\$556	\$733	\$220	71%	76%	\$1,299	\$390	40%	43%
Hillsborough	\$668	\$795	\$733	\$220	91%	108%	\$1,353	\$406	49%	59%
Holmes	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,167	\$350	44%	47%
Indian River	\$593	\$692	\$733	\$220	81%	94%	\$1,439	\$432	41%	48%
Jackson	\$516	\$527	\$733	\$220	70%	72%	\$1,231	\$369	42%	43%
Jefferson	\$693	\$733	\$733	\$220	95%	100%	\$1,289	\$387	54%	57%
Lafayette	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,260	\$378	41%	43%
Lake	\$748	\$835	\$733	\$220	102%	114%	\$1,365	\$410	55%	61%
Lee	\$681	\$730	\$733	\$220	93%	100%	\$1,445	\$433	47%	51%

Figure 2. Social Security/SSI Rent Comparisons, Florida Counties, continued

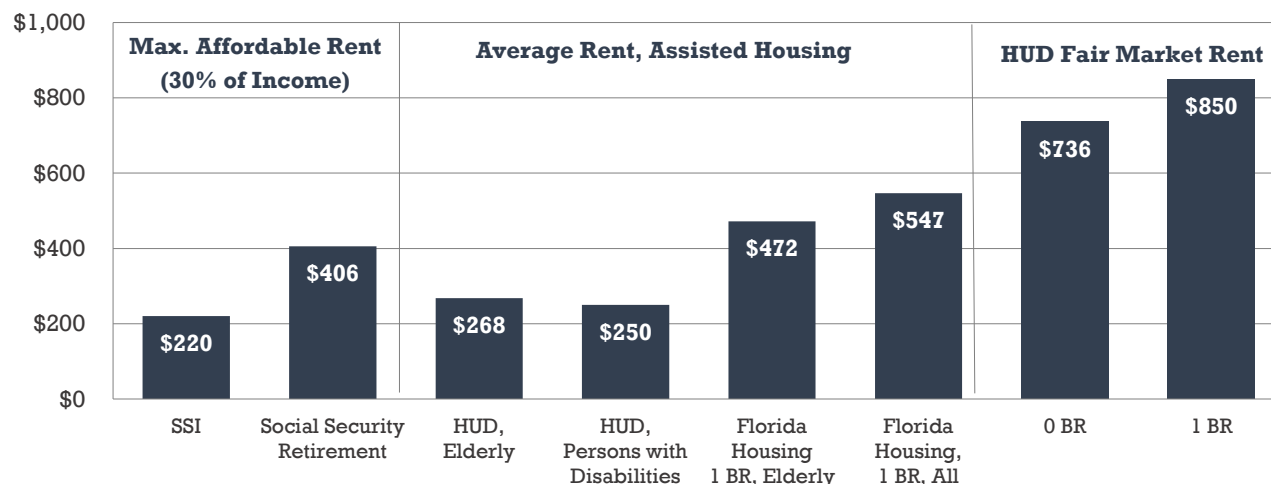
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Leon	\$693	\$733	\$733	\$220	95%	100%	\$1,443	\$433	48%	51%
Levy	\$522	\$543	\$733	\$220	71%	74%	\$1,245	\$373	42%	44%
Liberty	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,227	\$368	42%	45%
Madison	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,239	\$372	42%	44%
Manatee	\$711	\$751	\$733	\$220	97%	102%	\$1,436	\$431	50%	52%
Marion	\$546	\$634	\$733	\$220	74%	86%	\$1,331	\$399	41%	48%
Martin	\$698	\$748	\$733	\$220	95%	102%	\$1,478	\$444	47%	51%
Miami-Dade	\$774	\$975	\$733	\$220	106%	133%	\$1,119	\$336	69%	87%
Monroe	\$999	\$1,100	\$733	\$220	136%	150%	\$1,384	\$415	72%	79%
Nassau	\$616	\$787	\$733	\$220	84%	107%	\$1,451	\$435	42%	54%
Okaloosa	\$658	\$768	\$733	\$220	90%	105%	\$1,322	\$397	50%	58%
Okeechobee	\$520	\$524	\$733	\$220	71%	71%	\$1,297	\$389	40%	40%
Orange	\$748	\$835	\$733	\$220	102%	114%	\$1,306	\$392	57%	64%
Osceola	\$748	\$835	\$733	\$220	102%	114%	\$1,233	\$370	61%	68%
Palm Beach	\$765	\$991	\$733	\$220	104%	135%	\$1,475	\$442	52%	67%
Pasco	\$668	\$795	\$733	\$220	91%	108%	\$1,340	\$402	50%	59%
Pinellas	\$668	\$795	\$733	\$220	91%	108%	\$1,371	\$411	49%	58%
Polk	\$684	\$689	\$733	\$220	93%	94%	\$1,332	\$400	51%	52%
Putnam	\$492	\$495	\$733	\$220	67%	68%	\$1,265	\$380	39%	39%
St. Johns	\$616	\$787	\$733	\$220	84%	107%	\$1,475	\$443	42%	53%
St. Lucie	\$698	\$748	\$733	\$220	95%	102%	\$1,376	\$413	51%	54%
Santa Rosa	\$690	\$706	\$733	\$220	94%	96%	\$1,340	\$402	51%	53%
Sarasota	\$711	\$751	\$733	\$220	97%	102%	\$1,451	\$435	49%	52%
Seminole	\$748	\$835	\$733	\$220	102%	114%	\$1,412	\$424	53%	59%
Sumter	\$520	\$600	\$733	\$220	71%	82%	\$1,490	\$447	35%	40%
Suwannee	\$471	\$474	\$733	\$220	64%	65%	\$1,251	\$375	38%	38%
Taylor	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,301	\$390	40%	42%
Union	\$516	\$548	\$733	\$220	70%	75%	\$1,252	\$375	41%	44%
Volusia	\$553	\$720	\$733	\$220	75%	98%	\$1,344	\$403	41%	54%
Wakulla	\$617	\$635	\$733	\$220	84%	87%	\$1,298	\$390	48%	49%
Walton	\$635	\$666	\$733	\$220	87%	91%	\$1,375	\$412	46%	48%
Washington	\$471	\$474	\$733	\$220	64%	65%	\$1,215	\$364	39%	39%
Florida	\$736	\$850	\$733	\$220	100%	116%	\$1,353	\$406	54%	63%

Assisted housing helps close the gap.

Assisted housing developments provide affordable rental units through subsidies from local, state, or federal government. Florida's assisted housing inventory provides 67,565 units with below-market rents for elderly households and 3,023 units for persons with disabilities.

As Figure 3 shows, average rents in assisted housing units are much closer to the affordable rent levels for Social Security recipients than market rents.

Figure 3. Social Security Affordable Rents, Assisted Housing Average Rents, and HUD Fair Market Rents, Florida



Data Notes

- **Social Security retirement benefits** are provided to workers who paid Social Security taxes while working and have reached retirement age (62 for early retirement, 65 for full benefits). Average benefit levels come from the Social Security Administration's [OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2016](#) report.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** provides cash assistance to people who have limited income and are disabled, blind, or age 65 or older. This fact sheet focuses on adults age 18-64 receiving SSI due to disability. Benefit levels are the same for all recipients statewide. The 2016 SSI benefit amount and number of beneficiaries in Florida come from the Social Security Administration's [SSI Recipients by State and County, 2016](#) report. Statistics on Social Security and SSI as the sole source of income for renter households come from analysis of the 2016 American Community Survey.
- Market rent levels come from [2016 HUD Fair Market Rents](#) (FMRs) for counties and from the National Low Income Housing Coalition's [Out of Reach: Florida 2016 Archive](#) for the statewide average.
- Average assisted housing rents in Figure 3 come from the Shimberg Center's [Assisted Housing Inventory](#). "HUD, Elderly" and "HUD, Persons with Disabilities" figures refer to average tenant-paid rents in developments with project-based assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Florida Housing, 1 BR" figures refer to average tenant-paid rents for 1-bedroom units in developments funded by Florida Housing Finance Corporation. The "w/Elderly Household" column refers to units with at least one occupant age 62 or older.
- State- and county-level data from Figure 2 are available for download from the [Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse](#).