

For Immediate Release

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New ALICE Data Shows Rising Cost of Basics Historically Outpaces Overall Inflation in Florida ***Research zeroes in on households living paycheck to paycheck, priced out of survival***

Pensacola, Fla. (June 18, 2026) – The cost of household necessities in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties rose faster than inflation for more than 15 years, leaving many households vulnerable to the growing affordability crisis, according to new data from United For ALICE, in partnership with United Way of West Florida.

The latest State of ALICE report for Florida examines the cost of the six essentials families need to live and work: housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care and technology. Between 2007 and 2024, the cost of these essentials continued to increase significantly across Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, reflecting the growing financial pressure on working households.

The report highlights the ongoing challenges faced by households known as ALICE® (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These are households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but still cannot afford basic household expenses. In 2024, **47% of Escambia County households** and **36% of Santa Rosa County households** were below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival.

“Behind these numbers are families making impossible choices every day — between groceries and utilities, childcare and rent,” said Laura Gilliam, United Way of West Florida President and CEO. “The ALICE data helps guide our work with partners across Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, so we can respond to immediate needs and help build stronger paths to stability.”

The crux of the struggle for ALICE households is the gap between wages and expenses. In 2024, a family of four in Escambia County needed approximately **\$88,800** annually just to cover the essentials, while a similar household in Santa Rosa County needed approximately **\$90,000** — nearly three times the Federal Poverty Level of \$31,200. Yet even with both parents working full time in two of the state’s most common jobs — a cook and a teller — this family’s combined income still fell short of the cost of basics by approximately **\$35,000 to \$37,000 per year**, depending on county.

The State of ALICE in Florida also reveals that in 2024:

- Florida ranked 47th out of 50 states plus the District of Columbia in financial hardship, reflecting one of the highest levels of household financial strain in the nation.
- ALICE households were found in every major industry statewide, with the highest levels of hardship in food service and accommodation (72%), health care and social assistance (54%), and retail trade (52%).
- Poverty rates in Florida have remained relatively flat since 2010, while the number of ALICE households has steadily increased.

- Minimum-wage workers in Florida earned \$13.00 per hour in 2024, up from \$12.00 in 2023. Yet for one full-time adult worker with one school-age child, that wage still was not enough to support the ALICE Household Survival Budget, the minimum cost of basics, in any county across the state.

“The ALICE research shows that the affordability crisis is not new,” said Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D., National Director at United For ALICE. “Already stretched thin, ALICE families have no cushion for rising gas or utility costs — forcing tough tradeoffs with other necessities. That’s the insight policymakers and community leaders need to build a stronger future for ALICE and all.”

More state and local data is available through the interactive dashboards on UnitedForALICE.org/State.

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About United Way of West Florida

United Way of West Florida (UWWF) mobilizes communities to action so all can thrive in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. True to its founding spirit, whenever there is a need in our communities, UWWF is there. The nonprofit organization brings a comprehensive approach to every challenge, actively listening and responding to local needs. From strengthening local resilience to advancing health, youth opportunity, and financial security, UWWF works towards a future where every person in the community can reach their full potential. To learn more, visit uwwf.org.

About United For ALICE

United For ALICE is a U.S. research organization driving innovation, research and action to improve life across the country for **ALICE**[®] (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed) and for all. Through the development of the ALICE measurements, a comprehensive, unbiased picture of financial hardship has emerged. Harnessing this data and research on the mismatch between low-paying jobs and the cost of survival, ALICE partners convene, advocate and collaborate on solutions that promote financial stability at local, state and national levels. This grassroots ALICE movement, led by United Way of Northern New Jersey, has spread to 41 states and the District of Columbia and includes United Ways, corporations, nonprofits and foundations in Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawai‘i, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Washington, D.C., West Virginia and Wisconsin; we are United For ALICE. For more information, visit: UnitedForALICE.org.