

Overview

The Florida Retirement System (FRS) was created December 1, 1970, with consolidation of the Teachers' Retirement System, the State and County Officers and Employees' Retirement System, and the Highway Patrol Pension Fund. Since then, the Judicial Retirement System and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Supplemental Retirement Program have also been consolidated into FRS. The system provides retirement, disability, and survivor benefits for participating public employees in the state of Florida.

A defined benefit (DB) pension is a retirement plan that typically offers a modest but stable monthly retirement income that lasts the remainder of the retiree's life. Public sector pensions usually employ a shared financing model whereby both employees and employers contribute to the pension fund over time to manage costs. In contrast, private sector pensions almost always are funded solely by the employer.

FRS members are offered a choice between a traditional defined benefit (DB) pension and a defined contribution (DC) plan. Approximately 75% of FRS members choose the DB plan.

Defined benefit (DB) pension benefits often are a function of an employee's years of service and salary at the end of one's career. The benefits are financed by a combination of employer contributions, employee contributions, and investment earnings. Contributions typically are pooled among all employees and invested, with investment decisions made by professional asset managers overseen by trustees. School district employees make up about 48.8% of the active membership in FRS.

Key Facts

- Teachers and general employees contribute 3.0% of salary to the fund.
- Employers contribute 4.91% to the fund for teachers and general employees.
- Each dollar invested by Florida taxpayers in the pension supported \$4.89 in total economic activity in the state.



▶ Key Florida Data¹

The chart below summarizes the key data for the Florida Retirement System, as of July 1, 2012:

Total active employees	623,011
Total annuitants	334,682
Average annual retirement benefit	\$18,625
Employer contribution rate*	4.91%
Employee contribution rate	3.0%
Actuarial value of assets	\$12.7.9 billion
Funded ratio	86.4%
Unfunded actuarial accrued liability	\$20.2 billion

* Employer rate for general employees and teachers. Rate includes 1.11% contribution for the Retiree Health Insurance Subsidy, a 0.03% fee for administration of the Florida Retirement System Investment Plan and provision of educational tools for both plans, and any applicable Unfunded Actuarial Liability rates.

▶ The Economic Impact of Florida Pensions²

Expenditures made by retirees of state and local government provide a steady economic stimulus to Florida communities and the state economy. Within the state of Florida, 2012 expenditures stemming from state and local pensions supported:

- 99,520 jobs that paid \$4.4 billion in wages and salaries
- \$13.4 billion in total economic output
- \$1.9 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues

Each dollar paid out in pension benefits supported \$1.81 in total economic activity in Florida.

Each dollar “invested” by Florida taxpayers in these plans supported \$4.89 in total economic activity in the state.



¹ All data, unless otherwise noted, as of July 1, 2012.

² Rhee, N. 2014. *Pensionomics 2014 Measuring the Economic Impacts of DB Pension Expenditures*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Retirement Security.

The following provides a snapshot of key data relative to the **Florida Retirement System (FRS)**. FRS provides retirement benefits for public school employees in Florida. The system provides a defined benefit (DB) pension, a retirement plan that typically offers a modest but stable monthly retirement income that lasts the remainder of a retiree's life.

\$4.89 The total economic activity in Florida for each dollar invested by Florida taxpayers in FRS.

\$13.4 billion Total economic output in Florida created in 2012 when public sector retirees spent their pension income.

\$1.9 billion Federal, state and local tax revenues generated by spending of Florida public pension income.

99,520 Jobs created from pension income spending by Florida state and local government retirees.

623,011 Total active members of FRS.

\$18,625 Average annual pension income for a FRS retiree.

3.0 Percentage of salary that employees contribute from every pay-check to their pension benefit to share the funding responsibility. Nationally, the median employee contribution rate is 5%.

48 Percentage of pre-retirement income replaced by the defined benefit (DB) plan for an employee with 30 years of service. A replacement ratio of 80% from all income sources is considered adequate for a secure retirement.

905 The number of teachers retained each year solely due to the defined benefit (DB) plan.

\$10 million Teacher turnover cost savings generated by the retention effect of the defined benefit (DB) pension.

All data come from either the Florida Retirement System or the National Institute on Retirement Security.



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As early as the turn of the 20th century, American legislators seemed to understand the importance of teacher quality to students' education. A 1917 report on public education noted that, "A school teacher's work is personal, direct, and positive. It works for the good or the ill of each pupil."¹

Key Facts

- Employees contribute 3% of salary out of each paycheck to the pension fund.
- The average retirement benefit is \$18,625 per year, or \$1,552 per month.
- FRS covers 623,011 active school employees and 334,682 retirees and beneficiaries.
- Teachers are paid 14.3% less than comparable private sector workers.
- The FRS pension replaces 48% of pre-retirement income for a teacher with 30 years of service.
- Most experts find that a replacement ratio of 80% or more, from all income sources, is adequate for a secure retirement.

Defined benefit (DB) pension plans were first introduced for teachers in the United States to help with the recruitment of high quality educators, and as an incentive to keep those educators in the teaching profession. By 1916, some form of retirement plan was available to public schoolteachers in 33 states. It was thought that such a retirement system might serve two purposes: 1) bringing more diverse, and highly qualified teachers into the profession; and 2) creating a more productive workforce that actually saves public employers money, as one dollar in pension benefits was seen as worth more than a dollar in salary.²

Public school teachers in Florida have pension coverage through the Florida Retirement System (FRS).

FRS covers 623,011 active employees and 334,682 retirees and beneficiaries. School district employees make up about 48.8% of the active membership in FRS. Employees contribute 3.0% out of each of their paychecks to the pension fund. The average retirement benefit is \$18,625 per year, or \$1,552 per month.

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▶ Teachers Receive Lower Compensation

Public employees receive lower wages than their private sector counterparts. Even after accounting for pensions and other benefits, on average, state and local workers receive 7% less than those in the private sector.³ More specifically, teachers are paid 14.3% less than comparable private sector workers—and this pay gap has increased in the last decade.⁴ Teacher pensions play an important role in offsetting the financial impact of lower salaries.

Research shows that pensions are reliable and relieve retirement anxiety. Some 82% of Americans indicated that those with pensions are more likely to have a secure retirement, and 82% believe all workers should have access to a pension plan.⁵

▶ Pensions Help Retain Quality Teachers in Florida⁶

Better teachers are experienced teachers. DB pensions help to retain highly productive teachers longer, as compared with individual defined contribution (DC) accounts. Moreover, the cost of teacher turnover is quite high, both in terms of financial cost and loss of productivity to the school district.

In Florida:

- The cost of turnover in Florida is \$11,017 per teacher.
- 905 teachers are retained each year due to the defined benefit (DB) plan.
- The defined benefit (DB) pension system saved \$10 million in teacher turnover costs in 2003 in school districts across the state.

About NRTA

NRTA: AARP's *Educator Community* is a national umbrella organization for the nation's largest network of retired educators. For nearly 65 years, NRTA has worked with state and local Retired Educators Associations (REAs) across the country on areas of mutual interest in advocacy and community outreach.

Collectively, NRTA and REAs engage and advocate on behalf of nearly one-million retired educators. Our shared priorities are to protect earned pension benefits and to assure access to affordable retiree healthcare. Additionally, NRTA helps inspire and honor the work of REA volunteers through NRTA's With our Youth! national recognition program.



^{1, 2} Graebner, W. 1978. Retirement in education: The economic and social functions of the teachers' pension. *History of Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 397-417.

³ Heywood, J., and K. Bender. 2010. *Out of Balance: Comparing Public and Private Sector Pay over Twenty Years*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Retirement Security.

⁴ Allegretto, S., S. Corcoran, and L. Mishel. 2008. *Teachers' Pay Continues to Slide*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

⁵ Oakley, D., and K. Kenneally. 2013. *Pensions and Retirement Security 2013: A Roadmap for Policy Makers*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Retirement Security.

⁶ Boivie, I. 2011. *The Three Rs of Teacher Pension Plans: Recruitment, Retention, and Retirement*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Retirement Security.