



BTC Brief

BUDGET & TAX CENTER

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ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT: ORANGE COUNTY

The Budget and Tax Center's Economic Snapshots provide a look at how well counties in North Carolina are faring across key indicators of economic well-being and opportunity.

Orange County is a Tier 3 county and has a population of 142,634.¹

UNEMPLOYMENT²

- Orange County's unemployment rate was 4.6% in January 2014, down from 6.2% in January 2013.
- 73,339 workers were a part of the county's labor force in January 2014. This is an increase of 295 since January 2013.
- The number of employed persons in the county increased by 1,442 persons from January 2013 to January 2014.

POVERTY

- 16.4% of the county's residents (21,094 people) lived in poverty in 2012; the state poverty rate was 18%.³
- 33.7% of the county's residents were low-income on average from 2010 to 2012, meaning their incomes were less than twice the federal poverty level (\$46,100 for a family of four in 2012).⁴

WAGES & INCOME

- The county's average weekly wage of \$946 equaled 113.2% of the statewide wage of \$836 in the first three quarters of 2013.⁵
- Median household income in the county was \$53,026, which equaled 117.3% of the statewide household income of \$45,195 in 2012.⁶
- The richest 5% of the county's households had an average income that was 46 times greater than that of the poorest fifth of households and 8 times greater than that of the middle fifth of households on average from 2010 to 2012.⁷

AUTHOR & MEDIA
CONTACT:

TAZRA MITCHELL

919/861-1451
tazra@ncjustice.org

Budget & Tax Center

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JUSTICE CENTER

P.O. Box 28068
Raleigh, NC 27611-
8068

www.ncjustice.org



HOUSING⁸

- 53% of renters in this county were unable to afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom housing unit.
- The minimum wage falls far short of what's needed to afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom housing unit in this county—the housing wage needed is 2.2 times higher than the minimum wage.

HEALTH

- 12% of the county's residents did not have health insurance, compared to 16.6% of all North Carolinians on average from 2010 to 2012.⁹
- The life expectancy rate for an African-American child born in the county was 77.3 whereas the rate is 81.4 for a white child on average from 2010 to 2012. The average life expectancy for all children born in this county was 81.1.¹⁰
- 11,766 people were eligible for Medicaid in this county in December 2013, an increase of 27.7% since December 2007.¹¹

EDUCATION

- The 4-year cohort graduation rate in 2012-2013 for this county was 88.7% compared to the state rate of 82.5%.¹²
- The 4-year cohort graduation rate in 2012-2013 for African-Americans in this county was 80.9% compared to 78.3% for Hispanics and 89.7% for whites.¹³
- 55% of adults in this county had a Bachelor's degree or higher on average from 2010 to 2012.¹⁴

SUPPORTS FOR WORKING FAMILIES

- 6,518 of the county's residents received assistance from the food and nutrition or food stamp program in December 2007 when the Great Recession began. By December 2013, the number increased by 88.1% to 12,262 and the share of residents receiving assistance reached 8.7%.¹⁵
- In 2012, 6,912 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which is a tax credit that goes to people who work but earn low wages. The benefits totaled \$685,705—dollars that supported local businesses and helped these workers make ends meet, allowing them to keep more of what they earn and support their children. Lawmakers eliminated this tax credit in 2013.¹⁶

Sources: ¹NC Department of Commerce and NC Office of State Budget and Management, July 2013; ² Local Area Unemployment Statistics, not seasonally adjusted; ³Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2012; ⁴American Community Survey, 2010-2012; ⁵Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, First Three Quarters of 2013 (the latest data available at the time of publication); ⁶Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2012; ⁷American Community Survey, 2010-2012; ⁸ National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2013 Out of Reach Report; ⁹American Community Survey, 2010-2012; ¹⁰NC State Center for Health Statistics, 2010-2012; ¹¹NC Division of Medical Assistance, 2007 and 2013; ^{12,13}NC Department of Public Instruction, 2012-2013; ¹⁴American Community Survey, 2010-2012; ¹⁵NC Division of Social Services, 2007 and 2013; ¹⁶NC Department of Revenue, 2012.