



BTC

State Quick Facts

BUDGET & TAX CENTER

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ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT: NORTH CAROLINA

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.

North Carolina has a population of 10,264,353, which is an increase of 12.9% over the last decade.¹

AVAILABILITY OF JOBS²

- There were 239,489 people looking for work in the state compared to 216,494 job openings in December 2016.
- The state's unemployment rate was 4.9% in December 2016 compared to 5.2% in December 2015.
- There were 370,270 more employed people in the county in December 2016 than there were in December 2007 (when the Great Recession began).

POVERTY AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

- 16.4% of North Carolinians (1,607,249 people) lived in poverty and struggled to make ends meet in 2015. Among the state's 100 counties, the poverty rate ranged from 9.7% to 30.6%³
- 23.4% of children in the state (528,760 children) lived in poverty in 2015.⁴
- The poverty rate varies by race: 27.1% of African Americans, 28.8% of American Indians, and 33.2% of Latinos in the state lived in poverty compared to 13.5% of Asian Americans and 11.8% of whites on average from 2011 to 2015.⁵
- 38.5% of the state's residents were low-income on average from 2011 to 2015, meaning their incomes were less than twice the federal poverty level (\$48,500 for a family of four in 2015).⁶

ABILITY TO AFFORD THE BASICS

- The state's hourly median wage of \$15.91 equaled in 2016. This is a 15 cent drop since the recovery began in 2009, when adjusting for inflation.⁷

- For a family size of three it costs \$21.95 per hour to make ends meet in the state, but the hourly median wage only equals 72.5% of what's needed.⁸
- Median household income in the county was \$47,884 in 2015.⁹
- The richest 5% of the state's households had an average income that was 27 times greater than that of the poorest fifth of households and 6 times greater than that of the middle fifth of households on average from 2011 to 2015.¹⁰

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 50.6% of renters in the state spent 30% or more of their income towards rent—meaning their rent was unaffordable—on average from 2011-2015.¹¹
- Rent and utilities for a safe, modest two-bedroom unit at the state's fair market monthly rent was \$796.47 in 2016.¹²
- The two-bedroom housing wage in the state was \$15.32 in 2016, which far exceeds the state's minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. This means that a person earning the minimum wage would have to work 85 hours per week to afford a modest two-bedroom unit at fair market rent.¹³

HEALTHY LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

- 14.4% of the state's residents did not have health insurance on average from 2011 to 2015.¹⁴
- The life expectancy rate for an African-American child born in the state is 75.8 years whereas the rate is 78.8 for a white child. The average life expectancy for all children born in the state was 78 years on average from 2013 to 2015.¹⁵
- There was 1 mental health provider for every 490 residents in the state in 2016.¹⁶

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- The graduation rate for the state was 85.9% in 2014-15.¹⁷
- The graduation rate for Hispanics in the state was 80.1% compared to 82% for American Indians, 82.9% for African Americans, 88.6% for whites, and 93.4% for Asian Americans in 2015-16.¹⁸
- 28.4% of adults in the state had a Bachelor's degree or higher on average from 2011 to 2015.¹⁹
- 29% of women in the state had a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 27.6% of men on average from 2011 to 2015. Of those with this level of educational attainment, the median earnings for women was \$38,127 compared to \$56,664 for men.²⁰

WORK AND INCOME SUPPORTS TO AVOID POVERTY

- 14.6% of the state's residents (1,479,655 people) received assistance from the food and nutrition services (or food stamps) program in December 2016.²¹
- 1,982,087 people in the state were eligible for Medicaid in December 2016, an increase of 58.9% since December 2007 when the recession began. Estimates suggest that 477,997 North Carolinians would benefit from Medicaid Expansion, delivering \$\$13,688.90 in economic benefits to the county.²²
- In 2013, 927,029 tax filers in the state claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$100,761,405. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children.²³

- 1 NC Office of State Budget and Management, Population Estimates, July 2007 (actual) and 2017 (projected).
- 2 NCWorks Online, Advertised Job Data and Local Area Unemployment Statistics (not seasonally adjusted), December 2007, 2015, and 2016.
- 3,4 US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2015.
- 5,6 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- 7 NC Department of Commerce, Occupational Employment Statistics, 2016 and 2009.
- 8 Ibid and NC Budget and Tax Center, Living Income Standard, 2016.
- 9 US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2015.
- 10,11 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- 12,13 National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach, 2016.
- 14 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- 15 NC State Center for Health Statistics, 2013-2015.
- 16 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2016. This data comes from the National Provider Identification data file, which has some limitations and may result in an overestimate of active mental health providers in some counties.
- 17,18 NC Department of Public Instruction, 4-Year Cohort 2015-2016.
- 19,20 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- 21 NC Division of Social Services, FNS Individuals Data, December 2016 & NC Office of State Budget and Management, Population Estimates, July 2016.
- 22 NC Division of Medical Assistance, December 2007 and 2016; and Cone Health Foundation. "The Economic and Employment Costs of Not Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina: A County-Level Analysis." December 2014.
- 23 Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract.