

2014

COUNTY WAGE PROFILE: Buncombe County

These County Profiles provide a look at how workers in North Carolina counties are faring in North Carolina's low-wage economy. Buncombe County is a Tier 3 county and has a working-age population of 161,651.¹

POVERTY,

17.7 percent of the county's residents (42,062) lived in poverty in 2012; the state poverty rate was 18 percent.³

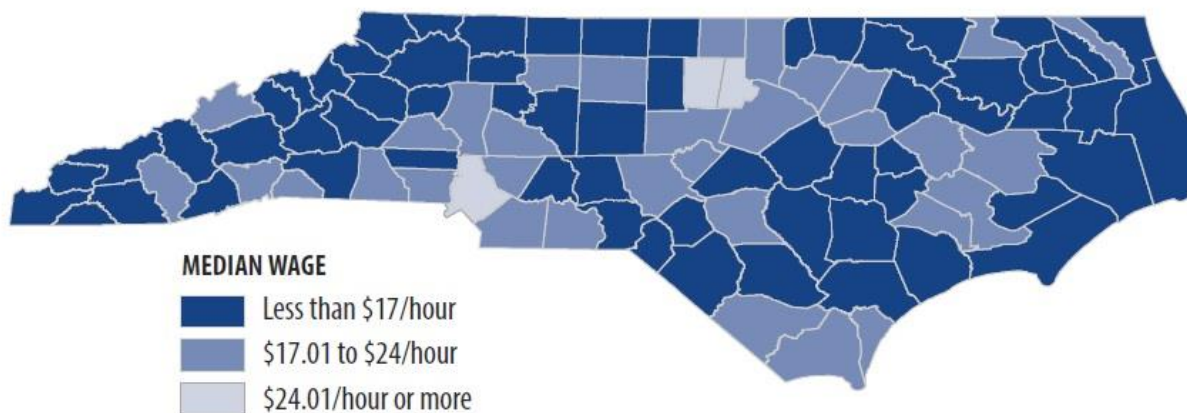
Poverty for people of color is significantly higher than for whites and for Asian Americans: 46.6 percent of African Americans and 40.1 percent of Hispanics live in poverty, while 14.7 percent of whites live in poverty.

38.5 percent 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

11.8 percent of working-age people in the county live below the poverty line (\$23,500 for a family of four), while 16.1 percent are considered near-poor—they earn 125 percent of the poverty line.

WAGES & INCOME

The county's median hourly wage, the wage of the worker in the middle of the distribution of all workers in Buncombe County, is \$14.26.



Source: Estimated Median Wage from Occupational Employment and Wages in North Carolina, 2013

Median household income in the county was \$43,146, which equaled 96 percent 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 almost 25 times greater than that of the poorest fifth of households and almost 6 times greater than that of the middle fifth of households on average from 2010 to 2012.⁷

WORK

The number of employed persons in the county grew by 3,669 persons from January 2013 to January 2014.

The percentage of working-age people with jobs—a better measure of the availability of work than the unemployment rate—is 75.2 percent in Buncombe County, which is 7.5 points above the state average.

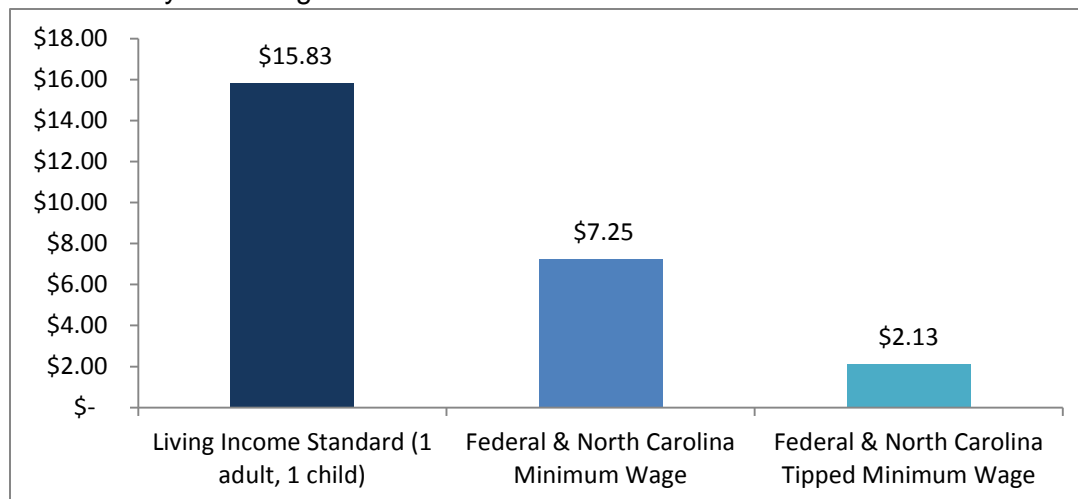
40 percent of occupations pay an average wage below the Living Income Standard for one adult, one child of \$15.84.

From 2012 to 2013, the following industries showed the fastest growth in Buncombe County.

Industry Name	Job Growth 2012-13	Average Hourly Wage 2013	Above LIS?
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	726	\$ 7.65	No
Employment Services	534	\$ 11.25	No
Clothing Stores	329	\$ 6.65	No
Grocery Stores	301	\$ 9.13	No
Power Generation and Supply	263	\$ 39.70	Yes
Outpatient Care Centers	258	\$ 19.93	Yes
Home Health Care Services	244	\$ 16.00	Yes
Architectural and Engineering Services	194	\$ 27.35	Yes
Special Food Services	191	\$ 9.68	No
Administration of Human Resource Program	190	\$ 21.53	Yes

LIVING WAGE MEASURES

There are various measures that seek to capture what it takes to make ends meet for working families. The figure below demonstrates that many of the federal measures being used fail to adequately provide a wage that allows a family to meet their basic needs in Buncombe County as measured by the Living Income Standard.



Data included in this profile is from publicly available sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Occupational Employment and Wages Survey from the Department of Labor and others. A full list of data sources can be found at www.ncjustice.org/countydata.

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