

Civilian Labor Force

In November 2020, the Hickory MSA's unemployment rate equaled 6.1%. As pandemic recovery continues, the region's unemployment rate has declined to 3.1% as of November 2021 (Figure 1). Between November 2020 and November 2021, the estimated number of employed persons increased from 163,029 to 170,815 (7,786), while the civilian labor force grew from 173,644 to 176,284 (2,640). In November 2021, the Hickory MSA had the fifth lowest (eleventh highest) unemployment rate among North Carolina MSAs (Table 1). November 2021 unemployment rates by county were Alexander 2.8%, Burke 3.1%, Caldwell 3.3% and Catawba 3.1%.

Table 1.

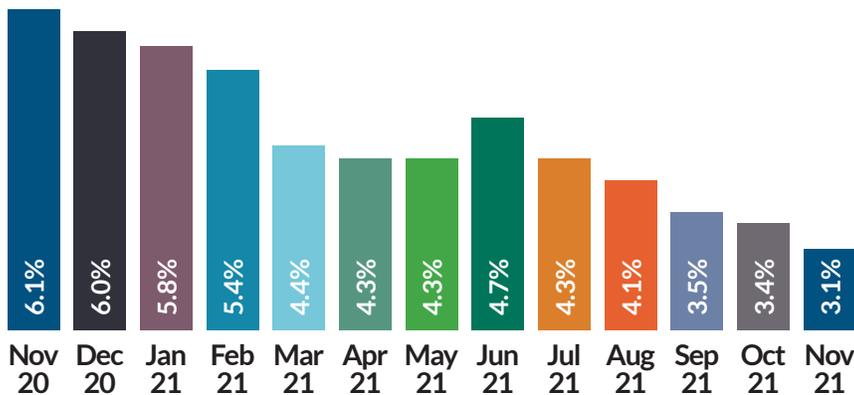
MSA Unemployment Rate, November 2021

Durham-Chapel Hill	2.7%
Asheville	2.8%
Raleigh	2.8%
Wilmington	2.9%
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton	3.1%
Burlington	3.3%
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	3.3%
New Bern	3.3%
Winston-Salem	3.3%
Greenville	3.4%
Jacksonville	3.5%
Goldsboro	3.6%
Greensboro-High Point	3.9%
Fayetteville	5.1%
Rocky Mount	5.2%

Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2021.

Figure 1. MSA Unemployment, Nov. 2020 - Nov. 2021

Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2021.



Hickory Metro Average Annual Wages

Average annual Hickory MSA wages grew from \$38,116 in 2016 to \$44,148 in 2020 (Figure 2). The percentage increase in Hickory MSA average yearly salaries between 2016 and 2020 (15.8%) was 8.1 percentage points higher than the US inflation rate between 2016 and 2020 (7.7%) (Table 2). The Hickory MSA's wage growth rate from 2016 to 2020 was lower than the NC average (19.0%) and the national average (19.4%). The Hickory Metro's average annual wage growth rate from 2019 to 2020 (5.6%) was more than the US inflation rate (1.0%) but was less than the NC salary growth rate (7.3%). The growth in Hickory MSA wages between 2019 and 2020 is partly due to job growth in higher-paying sectors, such as transportation and warehousing (954 workers) and health care (952 workers).

Figure 2. Hickory MSA Average Yearly Wages per Worker



Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2021.

Table 2. Change in Wages Versus Inflation, 2016-20

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Census and NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2021.

County	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2016-2020
US Inflation Rate	1.7%	3.0%	1.8%	1.0%	7.7%
Hickory MSA Wages	4.0%	3.4%	2.2%	5.6%	15.8%
NC Wages	3.5%	3.8%	3.2%	7.3%	19.0%
US Wages	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%	8.1%	19.4%

EIN Spotlight – Hickory MSA “OntheMap” Job Flow Trends

The “OntheMap” application (www.onthemap.ces.census.gov), provided through a partnership between the US Census Bureau and Local Employment Dynamics (LED), provides data showing “where people work and where working people live.” The software can generate reports on business characteristics, commuting patterns, employment, and residential area comparisons and workflows. This EIN Spotlight will focus on commuting patterns through 2019 (the most recent data available-released on November 2, 2021) for each Hickory MSA County (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba) based on results from the “OntheMap” application.

OntheMap collects information on commuting patterns from a variety of data sources. Unemployment insurance wage records, which are provided by employers and maintained by the states, include data on employees/jobs for the private sector and state and local governments. Data for federal workers, however, is not included in the 2019 data.

Information on the location of business establishments and local and state government offices is offered through the Quarterly Census for Employment and Wages. The States assign employer locations as part of the Quarterly Census for Employment and Wages, while the Census Bureau identifies worker residence locations. Census Bureau staff then perform the final calculations and confidentiality protections.

Tables 3 and 4 (on page 3) analyze Hickory MSA job flow patterns. Table 3 shows the number of jobs (job count) in the Hickory Metro in which 1) the job is located in the same Hickory MSA county as the worker, 2) the job is located in a Hickory MSA County, but the worker lives in a different Hickory MSA County and 3) the job is located outside the Hickory MSA, but the worker lives in the Hickory MSA.

In 2019, Hickory MSA residents worked a total of 158,231 jobs or 14,703 more jobs than in 2010. Hickory MSA residents taking positions inside the Hickory MSA contributed to only 34.4% of the employment increase between 2010 and 2019. The majority (9,641 or 65.6%) of Hickory MSA resident job growth came from new positions outside the Hickory MSA. Between 2010 and 2019, total job counts of positions where the worker lived in one Hickory MSA county but worked in another Hickory MSA county grew from 27,873 to 31,695. As of 2019, one-in-five jobs (20.0%) worked by Hickory MSA residents are jobs that are located in a Hickory MSA County, but the worker lives in a different Hickory MSA County.

Table 3. Hickory MSA Resident-County to Job-County Workflows (All Jobs*), 2010-2019

Job/Resident Location	2010 Job Count	% of Jobs	2019 Job Count	% of Jobs	Change in Jobs 2010-2019	Change in % of Jobs 2010-2019
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located in same county as worker’s residence	83,273	58.0%	84,513	53.4%	1,240	-4.6%
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located in other Hickory MSA County**	27,873	19.4%	31,695	20.0%	3,822	0.6%
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located outside of Hickory MSA***	32,382	22.6%	42,023	26.6%	9,641	4.0%
Total Job Count of Hickory MSA residents	143,528	100.0%	158,231	100.0%	14,703	0.0%

*Includes primary and secondary jobs. Workers can have only a primary job, or have a primary job plus secondary job(s). **Means job located in a Hickory Metro County, but lives in a different Hickory Metro County. ***Means person lives inside the Hickory MSA, but job is located outside the Hickory MSA. To reduce error, job counts from outside the MSA residents was calculated by only adding the number of jobs, as reported by OntheMap, from counties within 75 miles of the Hickory MSA. The remaining jobs were considered as jobs located in the same county as worker’s residence, since it is unlikely that workers will travel more than 75 miles for a job.
Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

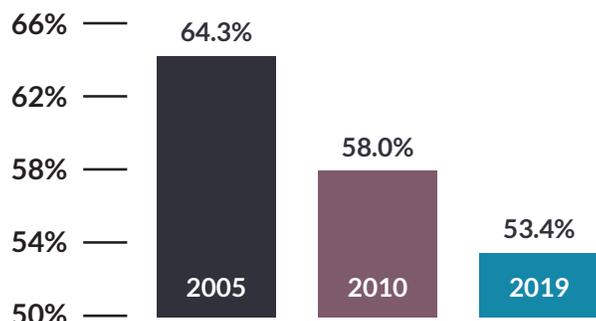
The percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in which the job is in the same county as the worker’s residence has fallen from 64.3% in 2005 to 53.4% in 2019 (Figure 3, page 3), which indicates that many workers have increased the number of miles they are willing to commute over the past 14 years. As the percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in the same county where they live has declined, the percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents outside of the Hickory MSA has been steadily growing (Figure 4). In 2019, more than one-quarter (26.6%) of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents were outside the region. In comparison, just 16.0% of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in 2005 were outside the region. There are several reasons behind these trends, including residential growth in southeastern Catawba County (many of these residents take jobs in Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties) and the need or desire to find jobs outside the region to match the skill sets of Hickory

MSA residents.

Table 4 displays the number of Hickory Metro jobs in which 1) the worker lives in the same Hickory MSA County that the job is located in, 2) the worker lives in a different Hickory MSA County than the job is located in and 3) the worker resides outside of the Hickory MSA. The number of jobs in the Hickory MSA has increased by 15,341 between 2010 and 2019. Of the 15,341 new positions, 10,279 (67.0%) are jobs in the Hickory MSA in which the worker resides outside the region. In 2019, about 23.3% of Hickory MSA jobs were worked by persons outside the region compared to 18.4% in 2010.

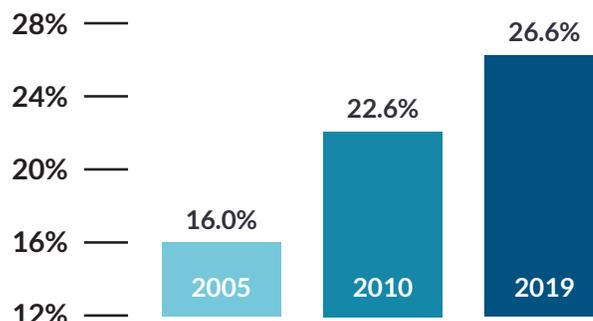
Data from the OntheMap application reveal a total of 151,505 jobs in the region in 2019 and 158,231 jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents, for a net outflow of 6,726 jobs. In 2005, the region had a net job inflow of 1,305, while in 2010, the Hickory MSA had a net job outflow of 7,364. OntheMap results indicate that the 2008-2010 economic recession caused the region to become a net job outflow region instead of a net job inflow region. Since 2010, the region has managed to reduce net job outflow by having more residents within the Hickory MSA taking jobs in the region and more workers from outside of the region taking jobs inside the region.

Figure 3. Percentage of Jobs Worked by Hickory MSA Residents in which the Job is Located in the Same County as the Worker's Residence



Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Figure 4. Percentage of Jobs Worked by Hickory MSA Residents in which the Job is Located Outside the Hickory MSA



Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Table 4. Hickory MSA Job-County to Resident-County Work Flows (All Jobs*), 2010-2019

Job/Resident Location	2010 Job Count	% of Jobs	2019 Job Count	% of Jobs	Change in Jobs 2010-2019	Change in % of Jobs 2010-2019
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides in same county as job	83,273	61.1%	84,513	55.8%	240	-5.3%
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides in other Hickory MSA County**	27,873	20.5%	31,695	20.9%	3,822	0.4%
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides outside of the Hickory MSA***	25,018	18.4%	35,297	23.3%	10,279	4.9%
Total Number of Jobs in Hickory MSA	136,164	100.0%	151,505	100.0%	15,311	0.0%

*Includes primary and secondary jobs. Workers can have only a primary job, or have a primary job plus secondary job(s). **Means job located in a Hickory Metro County, but lives in a different Hickory Metro County. ***Means person lives inside the Hickory MSA, but job is located outside the Hickory MSA. To reduce error, job counts from outside the MSA residents was calculated by only adding the number of jobs, as reported by OntheMap, from counties within 75 miles of the Hickory MSA. The remaining jobs were considered as jobs located in the same county as worker's residence, since it is unlikely that workers will travel more than 75 miles for a job.
Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Results seen in Table 5 (page 4) show that all four Hickory MSA counties had greater job inflows (occurs when a job is located in the County, but the worker resides in a different County) in 2019 than in 2010. In Alexander County, job inflows more than doubled between 2010 and 2019 to 5,036. Total job inflows in Burke County grew from 8,240 in 2010 to 10,415 in 2019. Caldwell County job inflows equaled 8,671 in 2019 compared to 7,608 in 2010. Catawba County job inflows increased from 34,708 in 2010 to 42,870 in 2019. All four Hickory MSA Counties had greater job inflows from both other Hickory MSA Counties and counties outside the Hickory MSA in 2019 compared to 2010.

Table 5. Hickory MSA Job Inflows by County, 2010-2019 (Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

County	2010 Job Count				2019 Job Count			
	Alexander	Burke	Caldwell	Catawba	Alexander	Burke	Caldwell	Catawba
Job located in same county as worker	6,122	17,751	17,499	41,901	6,066	17,302	16,848	44,297
Job located in County, worker resides in other Hickory MSA County	1,872	4,856	5,243	15,902	3,004	5,639	5,548	17,504
Job located in County, worker resides outside the Hickory MSA	463	3,384	2,365	18,806	2,032	4,776	3,123	25,366
Total Jobs in County	8,457	25,991	25,107	76,609	11,102	27,717	25,519	87,167
Total Job inflows (+)	2,334	8,240	7,608	34,708	5,036	10,415	8,671	42,870

The number of job outflows (occurs when a resident has a job outside the county they live in) grew substantially in all four Hickory MSA Counties between 2010 and 2019 (Table 6). Catawba County experienced the largest job outflow increase (5,352), from 21,736 in 2010 to 27,088 in 2019. Job outflows in Caldwell County rose by 3,860 workers between 2010 (14,680) and 2019 (18,540). Burke County job outflows grew from 14,640 to 18,052 in 2019. Job outflows in Alexander County exceeded 10,000 in 2019.

Among Hickory MSA Counties, Alexander has the highest percentage of residents taking jobs in other counties (Figure 5, page 5). As of 2019, more than three out of five workers that live in Alexander County work outside the county. In 2005, less than 40% of Burke County residents had jobs in other counties. The 2008-2010 economic recession caused the percentage of Burke County residents having jobs in another county to increase to 45.2% in 2010 (Figure 6, page 5). In 2019, more than half of working residents in Burke County were employed in other counties.

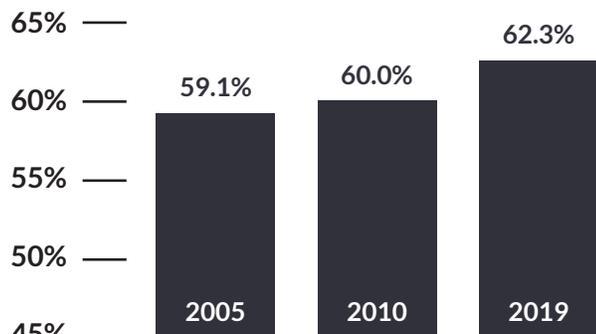
Table 6. Hickory MSA Job Outflows by County, 2010-2019 (Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

County	2010 Job Count				2019 Job Count			
	Alexander	Burke	Caldwell	Catawba	Alexander	Burke	Caldwell	Catawba
Job located in same county as worker	6,122	17,751	17,499	41,901	6,066	17,302	16,848	44,297
Job located in other Hickory MSA County, worker resides in County	5,251	7,948	8,722	5,952	5,377	8,884	10,455	6,979
Job located outside the Hickory MSA, worker resides in County	3,948	6,692	5,958	15,784	4,661	9,168	8,085	20,109
Total Jobs worked by County residents	15,321	32,391	32,179	63,637	16,104	35,354	35,388	71,385
Total job outflows (-)	-9,199	-14,640	-14,680	-21,736	-10,038	-18,052	-18,540	-27,088

The percentage of Caldwell County residents working in other counties in 2019 equaled 52.4% (Figure 7, page 5). Caldwell had the greatest percentage increase of residents working in other counties between 2010 and 2019, perhaps due to the lingering effects of the economic recession along with new job opportunities in nearby counties. The percentage of Catawba residents taking jobs in other counties has risen from 28.8% in 2005 to 37.9% in 2019 (Figure 8, page 5). The change is due to the increase of Catawba County residents taking new jobs in Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties over the past 14 years.

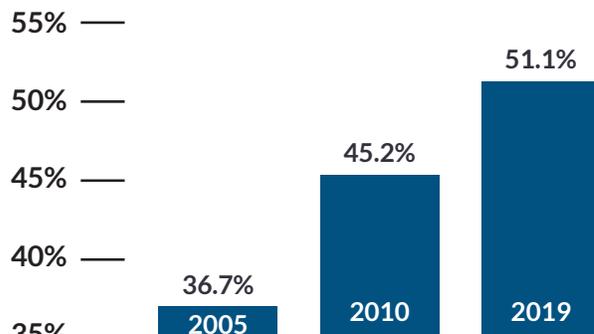
Net job flows for Hickory MSA counties are revealed in Table 7. Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell had net job outflows in 2019, meaning that more county residents took jobs in other counties than county jobs worked by out-of-county residents. Catawba is a net job inflow County. Between 2010 and 2019, net job inflows in Catawba County grew from 12,972 to 15,782. Net job outflows in Caldwell County grew by more than 2,797 positions from 2010 to 2019. A decrease in net job outflows (1,826) occurred in Burke County from 2010 to 2019, while net outflows have fallen by more than 1,900 jobs in Alexander County since 2010.

Figure 5. Percentage of Alexander County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties



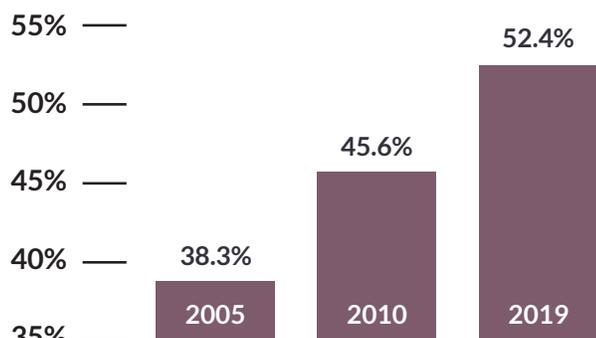
Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Figure 6. Percentage of Burke County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties



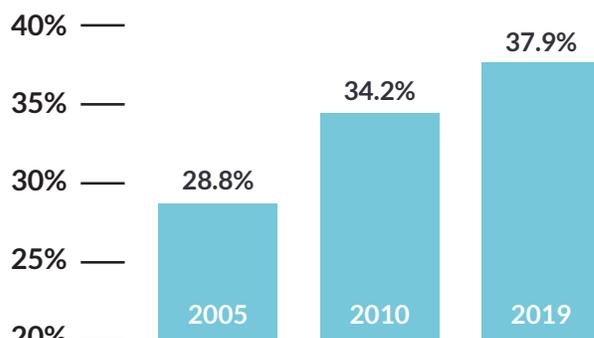
Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Figure 7. Percentage of Caldwell County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties



Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Figure 8. Percentage of Catawba County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties



Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Table 7. Hickory MSA County Level Job Flows (All Jobs*), 2010-2019

County	2010 Job Inflows (+)	2010 Job Outflows (-)	2010 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	2019 Job Inflows (+)	2019 Job Outflows (-)	2019 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	Chg. 2010-19 Job Inflows	Chg. 2010-19 Job Outflows	Chg. 2010-19 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)
Alexander	2,334	-9,199	-6,865	5,036	-9,991	-4,955	2,702	3,126	1,910
Burke	8,240	-14,640	-6,400	10,415	-14,989	-4,574	2,175	349	1,826
Caldwell	7,608	-14,680	-7,072	8,671	-18,540	-9,869	1,063	3,860	-2,797
Catawba	34,708	-21,736	12,972	42,870	-27,088	15,782	8,162	5,352	2,810

*Includes primary and secondary jobs. Workers can have only a primary job, or have a primary job plus secondary job(s). Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.

The map (Figure 9) to the right shows 2010 job flows among Hickory MSA counties and counties that border the Hickory MSA. The map (Figure 10) on page 7 displays 2019 job flows among Hickory MSA counties and counties that border the Hickory MSA. The thicker the arrows on the maps, the stronger the job inflow or outflow tie between those two counties.

Most job inflows to **Alexander County** come from **Catawba County**. Catawba to Alexander job inflows grew from 1,103 in 2010 to 1,759 in 2019 (Table 8). More than 15% of persons who worked in Alexander County in 2019 were Catawba County residents. In 2019, 7.3% of persons who work in Alexander were Iredell County residents, while 7.2% were Caldwell County residents.

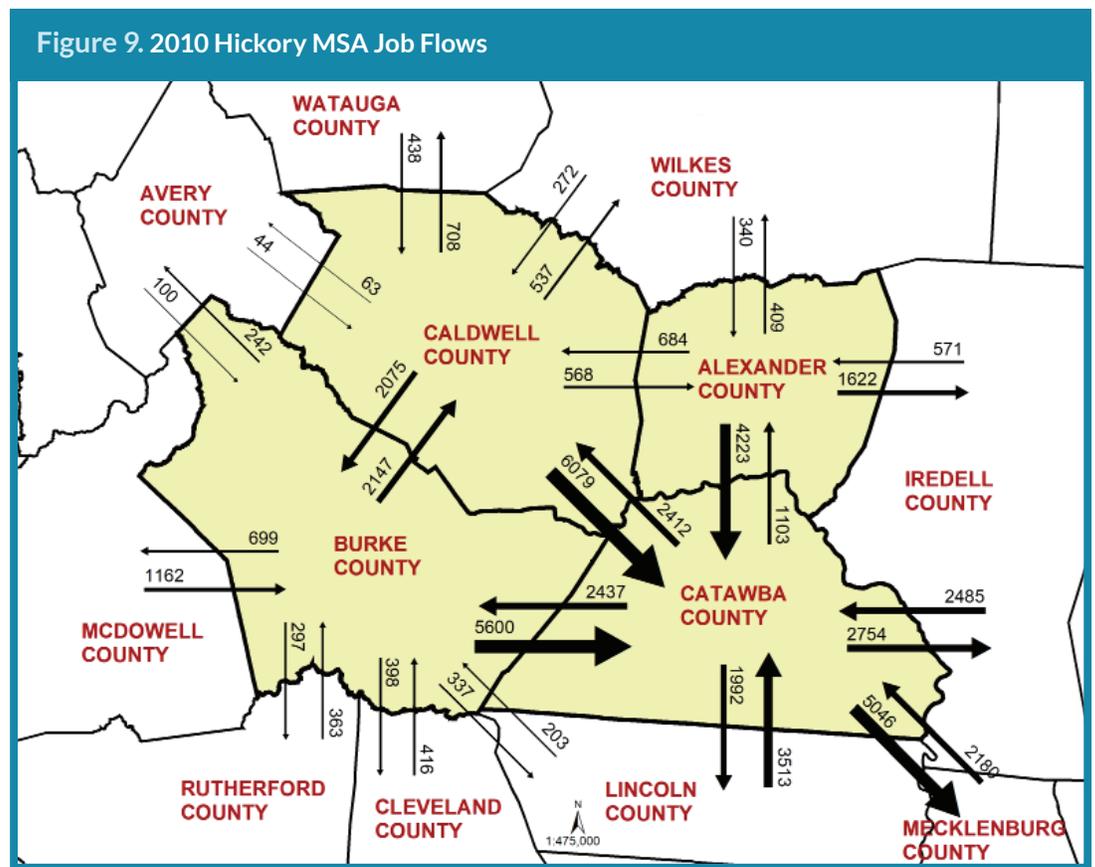
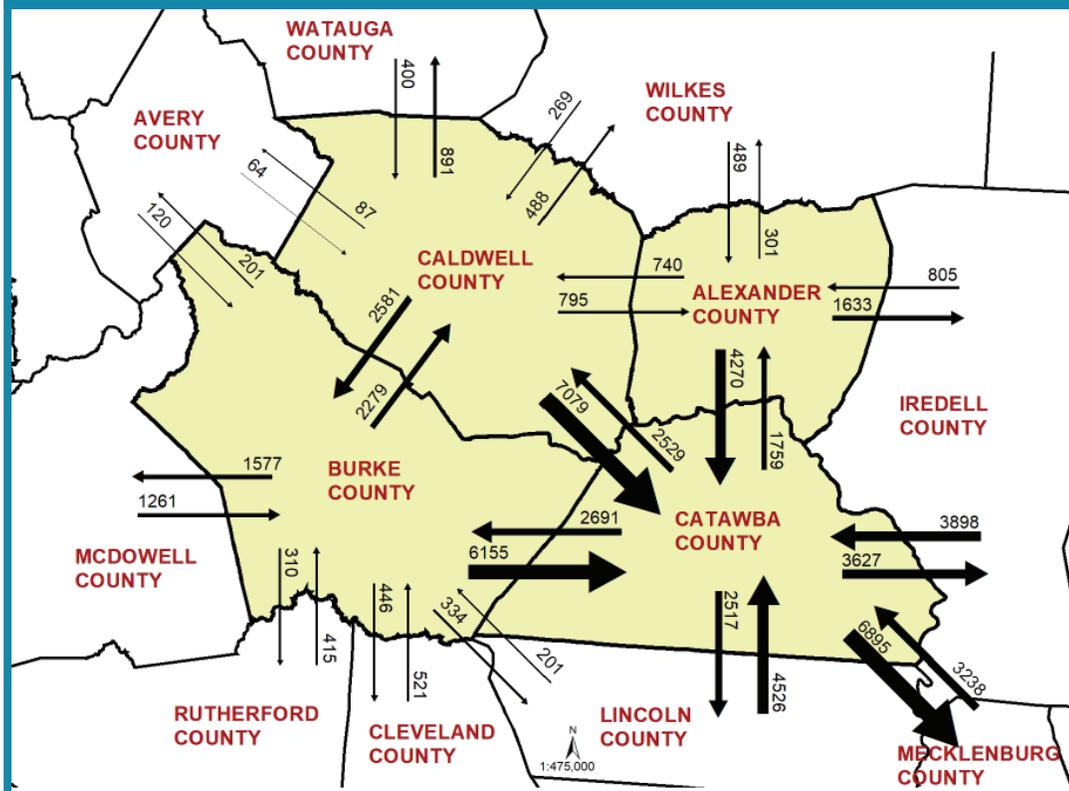


Table 8. Alexander County Job Flows, 2010 to 2019 (Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

Job Inflows					Job Outflows				
Residence County	2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	County Job is Located in	2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	1,103	13.0%	1,759	15.8%	Catawba	4,223	27.6%	4,270	26.5%
Iredell	571	6.8%	805	7.3%	Iredell	1,622	10.6%	1,633	10.1%
Caldwell	568	6.7%	795	7.2%	Mecklenburg	559	3.6%	863	5.4%
Wilkes	340	4.0%	489	4.4%	Caldwell	684	4.5%	740	4.6%
Burke	201	2.4%	450	4.1%	Burke	344	2.2%	367	2.3%
Mecklenburg	66	0.8%	148	1.3%	Buncombe	175	1.1%	344	2.1%
Gaston	64	0.8%	135	1.2%	Wilkes	409	2.7%	301	1.9%
Buncombe	31	0.4%	122	1.1%	Forsyth	159	1.0%	192	1.2%
Other	503	5.9%	333	3.0%	Other	1,024	6.7%	1,281	8.0%

Alexander residents traveling to work in Catawba and Iredell Counties dominate Alexander County's job outflows. More than 25% of working persons that live in Alexander County are employed in Catawba County, although job outflows to Catawba County increased by only 47 workers between 2010 and 2019. Alexander County also has a strong job outflow bond with Iredell County, as more than 10% of working residents are employed in Iredell County.

Figure 10. 2019 Hickory MSA Job Flows



Burke County had more job inflows from Catawba (2,691 or 9.7% of all jobs) in 2019 than any other county (Table 9, page 6). Buncombe, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, McDowell, Mecklenburg, and Rutherford Counties had more job inflows to Burke County in 2019 than in 2010. Except for Catawba, Caldwell, and McDowell, all other counties that border Burke (Avery, Cleveland, Lincoln, and Rutherford) had job inflow rates to the County of less than 2.0% each.

During 2019, 17.4% of Burke County working residents traveled to Catawba County for employment. The 6,155 job outflow to Catawba County from Burke County in 2019 is higher than in 2010 (5,600) due to improving economic conditions. The number of job outflows to Caldwell County also grew between 2010

(2,147) and 2019 (2,279). Burke's job outflows to McDowell County more than doubled from 699 in 2010 to 1,547 in 2019.

Table 9. Burke County Job Flows, 2010 to 2019 (Source: OnTheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

Residence County	Job Inflows				County Job is Located in	Job Outflows			
	2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs		2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	2,437	9.4%	2,691	9.7%	Catawba	5,600	17.3%	6,155	17.4%
Caldwell	2,075	8.0%	2,581	9.3%	Caldwell	2,147	6.6%	2,279	6.4%
McDowell	1,162	4.5%	1,261	4.5%	Mecklenburg	1,310	4.0%	1,946	5.5%
Mecklenburg	522	2.0%	563	2.0%	McDowell	699	2.2%	1,577	4.4%
Cleveland	416	1.6%	521	1.9%	Buncombe	432	1.3%	817	2.3%
Buncombe	428	1.6%	516	1.9%	Iredell	616	1.9%	708	2.0%
Gaston	378	1.8%	425	1.5%	Forsyth	386	1.2%	494	1.4%
Rutherford	363	1.4%	415	1.5%	Gaston	326	1.0%	437	1.2%
Others	459	1.8%	1,075	3.9%	Others	3,124	9.6%	2,905	10.5%

In 2019, Caldwell County had the highest number of job inflows from Catawba County (2,529), followed by Burke (2,279) and Alexander (740) (Table 10, page 8). Catawba, Burke, Alexander, Mecklenburg, Cleveland, Iredell, and Gaston Counties had more job inflows to Caldwell in 2019 compared to 2010. The number of job inflows from Catawba County to Caldwell County was 117 more in 2019 than 2010. Job inflows from Burke to Caldwell grew by 132 workers between 2010 and 2019.

Table 10. Caldwell County Job Flows, 2010 to 2019 (Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

Residence County	Job Inflows				County Job is Located in	Job Outflows			
	2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs		2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	2,412	9.6%	2,529	9.9%	Catawba	6,079	18.9%	7,079	20.0%
Burke	2,147	8.6%	2,279	8.9%	Burke	2,075	6.4%	2,581	7.3%
Alexander	684	2.7%	740	2.9%	Mecklenburg	1,221	3.8%	1,731	4.9%
Mecklenburg	302	1.2%	606	2.4%	Iredell	564	1.3%	891	2.5%
Cleveland	271	1.1%	425	1.7%	Watauga	708	2.2%	891	2.5%
Watauga	438	1.7%	400	1.6%	Alexander	568	1.8%	795	2.2%
Iredell	332	1.3%	376	1.5%	Buncombe	383	1.2%	739	2.1%
Gaston	307	1.2%	343	1.3%	Wilkes	537	1.7%	488	1.4%
Others	715	2.8%	973	3.8%	Others	2,545	7.9%	3,345	9.5%

One out of five (or 20%) Caldwell County working residents are employed in Catawba County. As economic conditions improved, the number of job outflows from Caldwell to Catawba County rose from 6,079 in 2010 to 7,079 in 2019. About 7.3% of Caldwell County working residents (2,581) are employed in Burke County, while 4.9% (1,731) work in Mecklenburg County.

As the job center for the region, **Catawba County** receives large numbers of job inflows from all neighboring counties (Table 11). Workers that live in either Burke or Caldwell Counties hold about one in seven Catawba County jobs. In 2019, Caldwell County had the most job inflow to Catawba County (7,079), followed by Burke (6,155), Lincoln (4,526), and Alexander (4,270). Job inflows of more than 3,000 workers each occurred between Catawba County and Iredell and Mecklenburg Counties in 2019. Results in Table 11 also show that all of Catawba County's neighboring counties had greater job inflows to Catawba County in 2019 than in 2010. The biggest increase was in the number of job inflows from Iredell County, which rose from 2,485 in 2010 to 3,898 in 2019.

Table 11. Catawba County Job Flows, 2010 to 2019 (Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2021.)

Residence County	Job Inflows				County Job is Located in	Job Outflows			
	2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs		2010 Jobs	% of Jobs	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs
Caldwell	6,079	7.9%	7,079	8.1%	Mecklenburg	5,046	7.9%	6,895	9.7%
Burke	5,600	7.3%	6,155	7.1%	Iredell	2,754	4.3%	3,627	5.1%
Lincoln	3,513	4.6%	4,526	5.2%	Burke	2,437	3.8%	2,691	3.8%
Alexander	4,223	5.5%	4,270	4.9%	Caldwell	2,412	3.8%	2,529	3.5%
Iredell	2,485	3.2%	3,898	4.5%	Lincoln	1,992	3.1%	2,517	3.5%
Mecklenburg	2,180	2.8%	3,238	3.7%	Alexander	1,103	1.7%	1,759	2.5%
Gaston	1,928	2.5%	2,508	2.9%	Gaston	873	1.4%	1,287	1.8%
Cleveland	1,037	1.4%	1,121	1.4%	Forsyth	891	1.4%	948	1.3%
Others	7,656	10.0%	10,075	11.6%	Others	4,221	6.6%	4,835	6.7%

Catawba County job outflows to Mecklenburg, Iredell, Burke, Caldwell, Lincoln, Alexander, Gaston and Forsyth Counties increased between 2010 and 2019. Catawba had more job outflows to Mecklenburg County in 2019 than any other County. About 9.7%, or nearly one in ten Catawba County residents with a job, are going to work in Mecklenburg County. Job outflows from Catawba to Mecklenburg County grew from 5,046 in 2010 to 6,895 in 2019, as the completion of the NC 16 By-Pass in Catawba and Lincoln Counties has made it easier to commute to the Charlotte area. In 2019, the job outflow from Catawba to Mecklenburg County (6,895) was nearly equal to the job inflow from Caldwell to Catawba County. Job outflows from Catawba to Iredell County, meanwhile, grew from 2,754 in 2010 to 3,627 in 2019.

Summary

Data from the US Census Bureau’s OntheMap application reveals that the Hickory MSA has more job outflows than job inflows. In 2019, the region had 151,505 jobs, while the number of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents equaled 158,231. The results yield a net job outflow of 6,726. In comparison, the region had a net job inflow of 1,305 in 2005 and a net job outflow of 7,361 in 2010. In addition, the percentage of Hickory MSA employees that live and work in the same county declined from 64.3% in 2005 to 53.4% in 2019. This trend is partly due to residential growth in southeastern Catawba County (residents in southeastern Catawba County often have jobs in Iredell, Lincoln, or Mecklenburg Counties) and economic conditions over the past decade leading to more commuting between counties.

Within the Hickory MSA, Catawba County is the “job magnet” of the region, drawing more than 42,000 workers from surrounding counties. Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties have more job outflows than job inflows. More than 60% of employed residents in Alexander County have jobs in other counties. More than 50% of employed residents in Burke and Caldwell Counties have jobs in other counties. The analysis also showed a significant increase in job outflows since 2010 between Catawba and Mecklenburg County. As of 2019, the job outflow from Catawba to Mecklenburg County (6,895) was nearly equal to the job inflow from Caldwell to Catawba County (7,079).

Hickory MSA Migration Patterns Based on IRS Returns

The 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) included a question asking if the individual had moved to a different residence during the past 12 months. ACS results revealed that about 11.5% of residents moved to a different house between 2018 and 2019 (Table 12). In addition, approximately 5.6% of 2019 residents remained in the same county but changed homes in the past year, while another 5.9% moved in from other counties, mostly within North Carolina.

While Table 12 provides basic migration information, it lacks several important details. However, it does not show which specific county in North Carolina a person has moved from, nor does it tell from which part of the country (which US region) a person was from that recently moved into the Hickory MSA. The data also covers a short span of time—just the past 12 months. Finally, it does not reveal any data on where people that have left the Hickory MSA are currently residing.

One way to answer these questions is by looking at Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax returns. The IRS database generates county-by-county migration profiles showing movements into and out of the chosen county based on tracking address changes reflected in IRS returns over consecutive years. The number of “tax returns” is about equal to the number of households moving in and out of a given county. Therefore, an analysis of “tax exemptions” data can estimate the number of persons involved in the migration. This EIN article will analyze migration patterns into and out of the Hickory MSA between 2016 and 2019 based on IRS returns for each Hickory MSA county. However, one must use caution in interpreting the results since all people do not fill out tax returns and, thus, would not be included in the results.

Hickory MSA migration trends based on IRS tax returns are revealed in Table 13 on page 10. In terms of total net migration, IRS data reveals a Hickory MSA net in-migration of 2,618 tax returns (assumed households) and 6,314 exemptions (assumed population) between 2016 and 2019. The number of tax returns from households that migrated to the Hickory MSA from 2016 to 2019 totaled 18,661 with 36,048 exemptions, while the number of returns from households that migrated out of the Hickory MSA equaled 16,043 with 29,734 exemptions.

Hickory MSA net-migration trends between 2016 and 2019 by national region are shown in Figure 11, page 10. The biggest net in-migration occurred between other North Carolina counties and the Hickory MSA, with a gain of 662 returns with 2,014 exemptions. Iredell County had a net in-migration to the Hickory MSA of 189 returns/491 exemptions, while Mecklenburg County had a net in-migration to the Hickory MSA of 419 exemptions. Gaston and McDowell County had net in-migration of 315 and 283 exemptions.

Table 12. Residence One Year Ago of Hickory MSA Population, 2019

Group	Population	% of Population
Population 1-year & over	363,352	100.0
Same house	323,719	88.3
Different house in the US	42,171	11.5
Same county	20,681	5.6
Different county	21,490	5.9
Same state	15,383	4.2
Different state	6,107	1.7
Abroad	818	0.2

Source: 2019 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, 2021.

Table 13. Hickory MSA Migration Flow from IRS Returns, 2016-2019 (Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2021.)

Migration Flow (From/To) Area	Migration Into the Hickory MSA		Migration Out of the Hickory MSA		Net Hickory MSA In (+) or Out (-) Migration	
	Number of Returns	Number of Exemptions	Number of Returns	Number of Exemptions	Number of Returns	Number of Exemptions
Total- US & Foreign	18,661	36,048	16,043	29,734	2,618	6,314
US Only	18,661	36,048	16,043	29,734	2,618	6,314
Same State	10,267	19,662	9,605	17,648	662	2,014
Avery County	40	74	61	126	-21	-52
Brunswick County	44	85	89	177	-45	-92
Buncombe County	401	665	356	535	45	130
Cabarrus County	163	303	136	258	27	45
Cleveland County	193	369	210	419	-17	-50
Forsyth County	190	332	215	369	-25	-37
Gaston County	541	1,091	424	776	117	315
Guilford County	198	333	250	435	-52	-102
Iredell County	1,410	2,888	1,221	2,397	189	491
Lincoln County	1,460	3,069	1,375	2,901	85	168
McDowell County	539	1,062	377	779	162	283
Mecklenburg County	1,276	2,319	1,211	1,900	65	419
New Hanover	51	87	61	102	-10	-15
Rowan County	105	211	103	188	2	23
Rutherford County	42	84	73	140	-31	-56
Wake County	288	493	350	556	-62	-63
Wilkes County	305	509	242	406	63	103
Watauga County	271	541	224	439	47	102
Other Flows - Same State	2,750	5,147	2,627	4,745	123	402
Different State	8,394	16,386	6,438	12,086	1,956	4,300
Northeast	1,425	2,711	698	1,223	727	1,488
Midwest	1,134	2,200	772	1,479	362	721
South	4,748	9,303	4,149	7,877	599	1,426
West	1,087	2,172	819	1,507	268	665

The analysis of IRS records revealed that 24% of the net in-migration to the Hickory MSA from 2016 to 2019, in terms of exemptions (1,488), came from the Northeast US. The Hickory MSA also had a substantial in-migration (599 returns with 1,426 exemptions) with other Southern States such as South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

The largest net out-migrations away from the Hickory MSA, with respect to the number of IRS returns, came from Wake (Raleigh area-62), Guilford (Greensboro area-52), Brunswick (between Wilmington and Myrtle Beach-45), Rutherford (31), and Forsyth (Winston-Salem area-25) Counties. The largest net out-migrations from the Hickory MSA to neighboring counties, in terms of exemptions, came from Guilford (102), Brunswick (92), Wake (63), Rutherford (56), and Avery (52) Counties (Figure 12, page 11).

Figure 11. Hickory MSA Net Migration (based on Number of IRS Tax Exemptions) by State/US Region, 2016-2019 (Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2021.)

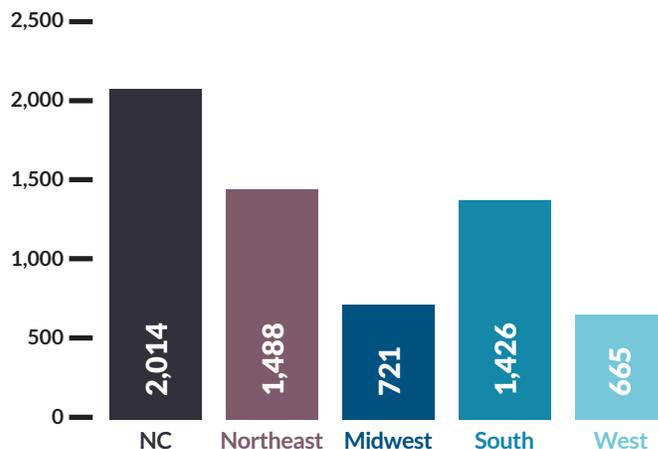
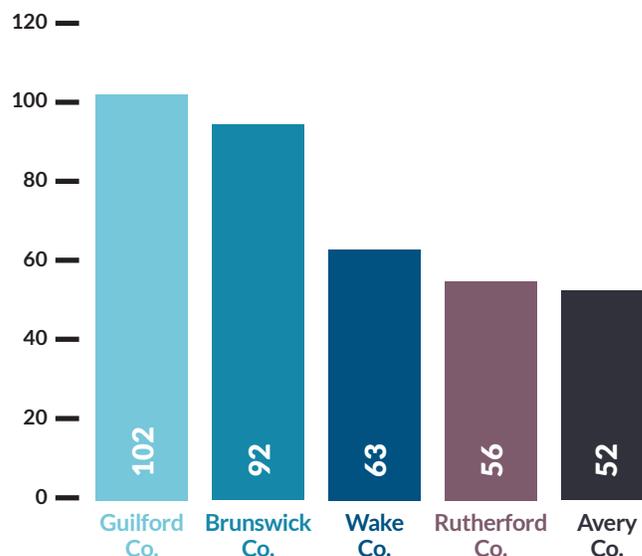


Table 14 displays IRS returns net migration flows for each of the four Hickory MSA counties. **Alexander County** tallied a net in-migration of 290 returns/730 exemptions between 2016 and 2019. From 2016 to 2019, Alexander County had a net in-migration from other Hickory MSA Counties of 67 returns and 160 exemptions. As for other North Carolina Counties, Alexander County experienced a net in-migration of 109/368 exemptions. IRS results reveal a net in-migration of 165 exemptions from the Northeast United States and 138 exemptions from the Western US.

Between 2016 and 2019, **Burke County** had a net in-migration of 573 returns/1,246 exemptions. The analysis revealed a net in-migration of 203 returns/462 exemptions from Southern States and 134 returns/243 exemptions from the Northeast US. Burke did have a net out-migration of 137 returns/344 exemptions to other Hickory MSA counties, mostly to Catawba County (85 returns/284 exemptions). However, as for the rest of the State, Burke saw a net in-migration of 265 returns/621 exemptions.

Caldwell County had a net in-migration of 395 returns/987 exemptions from 2016 to 2019. IRS returns data indicated a net in-migration of 141 returns/337 exemptions between Caldwell and Southeastern States as well as a net in-migration of 119 returns/232 exemptions between Caldwell and Northeastern States. The County gained a net of 87 returns/264 exemptions from households moving to Caldwell from other North Carolina counties. Most of the gains came from Burke, Catawba, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties.

Figure 12. Largest Hickory MSA Net Out-Migrations (Based on Number of IRS Tax Exemptions) by North Carolina County, 2016-2019



(Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2021.)

Table 14. Hickory MSA Net Migration Flows from IRS Returns, 2016-2019 (Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2021.)

Migration Flow (From/To) Area	Alexander		Burke		Caldwell		Catawba	
	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions
Total- US & Foreign	290	730	573	1,246	395	987	1,360	3,351
US Only	290	730	573	1,246	395	987	1,360	3,351
Same State	109	368	128	277	87	264	338	1,105
Other Hickory MSA Counties	67	160	-137	-344	59	155	11	29
Other Flows - Same State	42	208	265	621	28	109	327	1,076
Different State	181	362	445	969	308	723	1,022	2,246
Northeast	86	165	134	243	119	232	388	848
Midwest	28	40	77	184	32	99	225	398
South	2	19	203	462	141	337	253	608
West	65	138	31	80	16	55	156	392

Catawba County had a net gain of 1,360 returns/3,351 exemptions between 2016 and 2019. Catawba experienced a net gain of only 11 returns/29 exemptions from other Hickory MSA counties, but a net gain of 327 returns/1,076 exemptions from other North Carolina counties. Much of the in-State net in-migration came from Iredell (131 returns/299 exemptions), Gaston (83 returns/233 exemptions), and Mecklenburg (65 returns/339 exemptions) Counties. In terms of exemptions, about two-thirds (67%) of net migration to Catawba County from 2016 to 2019 came from other US States. Catawba County experienced a net in-migration of 388 returns/848 exemptions from the Northeast and 253 returns/608 exemptions from the Southeast. Catawba County also had significant net in-migration from the Midwest (225 returns/398 exemptions) and out West (156 returns/392 exemptions).

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Future EIN Topics

- Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA Employment Trends
- Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA Age Group Projections
- More Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA Census 2020 Results

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