

Table 1.
MSA Unemployment Rate, March 2025

1. Raleigh	3.1%
2. Durham-Chapel Hill	3.2%
3. Pinehurst-Southern Pines MSA	3.3%
4. Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton	3.6%
5. Burlington	3.6%
6. Goldsboro	3.6%
7. Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	3.7%
8. Jacksonville	3.7%
9. Wilmington	3.7%
10. Winston-Salem	3.7%
11. Greenville	3.9%
12. Greensboro-High Point	4.1%
13. Fayetteville	4.6%
14. Rocky Mount	4.7%
15. Asheville	4.8%

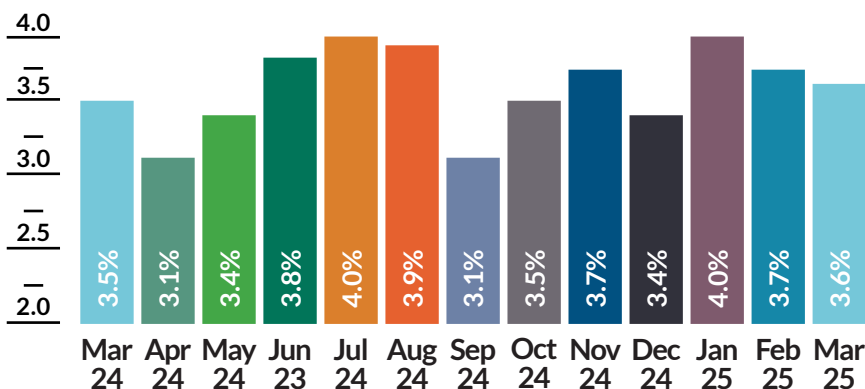
Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2024.

Civilian Labor Force

The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate equaled 3.6% as of March 2025 (Figure 1). Between March 2024 and March 2025, the estimated number of employed persons decreased from 172,035 to 170,417 (-1,618), while the civilian labor force fell from 165,991 to 164,248 (-1,743). In March 2025, the Hickory MSA was tied for fourth lowest (tenth highest) unemployment rate among North Carolina MSAs (Table 1). March 2025 unemployment rates by county were Alexander 3.7%, Burke 3.8%, Caldwell 3.7%, and Catawba 3.5%.

Figure 1. MSA Unemployment, Mar. 2024 - Mar. 2025

Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2025.



Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI)

Hickory MSA Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) grew from \$44,497 in 2020 to \$52,213 in 2023 (Figure 2). The Hickory MSA's 17.3% PCPI growth was slightly lower than the United States inflation rate (18.0%) between 2020 and 2023. The Hickory MSA's PCPI growth rate from 2020 to 2023 was also lower than the North Carolina PCPI average growth rate (18.9%) and the national average PCPI growth rate (17.4%). In 2023, the Hickory MSA ranked 297 of 384 US metro areas in PCPI with the fifth lowest PCPI among North Carolina's 15 metro areas. The Fayetteville MSA's PCPI (\$47,604) was the lowest among the State's metro areas in 2023.

Figure 2. Hickory MSA Per Capita Personal Income, 2020-2023

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2025.

2020 \$44,497

2021 \$48,835

2022 \$50,195

2023 \$52,213

PCPI increases occurred in each of the four Hickory MSA counties between 2020 and 2023. Three-year PCPI changes (2020-2023) by County were Alexander 17.5%, Burke 16.2%, Caldwell 17.8%, and Catawba 17.4% (Table 2). In 2023, PCPI exceeded \$57,000 in Catawba County.

Table 2. Per Capita Personal Income, 2020 – 2023

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2025.

County	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alexander	\$42,280	\$46,187	\$48,883	\$49,694
Burke	\$40,933	\$44,608	\$45,654	\$47,560
Caldwell	\$40,253	\$44,280	\$45,684	\$47,398
Catawba	\$49,068	\$53,990	\$55,175	\$57,624

EIN Spotlight | Hickory MSA Current Employment Statistics

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces the Current Employment Survey (CES). Each month the program surveys about 145,000 businesses and government agencies across the United States. The survey, which covers approximately 555,000 individual worksites, provides detailed data by industry on employment patterns, as well as hours and earnings of workers on nonfarm payrolls for all 50 states and all metropolitan areas. CES data is not available at a county or municipal level.

This EIN Spotlight will focus on current employment trends in the Hickory MSA based on CES results from March 2005 to March 2025. In particular, the analysis will determine the extent of employment changes for both goods-producing and service-providing sectors over the past two years (defined as March 2023 to March 2025) in order to analyze if employment in the Hickory MSA has continued to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

As shown in Figure 3, in March 2005, the region had an estimated 162,900 jobs. An economic recession between 2008 and 2010 led to a 20,600 decrease in regional employment. In other words, the region suffered a loss of nearly one in eight workers (12.6% employment decline) between 2005 and 2010.

CES results reveal that Hickory MSA total employment grew from 142,300 in March 2010 to 155,400 in March 2020 (Figure 4). Most of that employment growth took place from March 2015 to March 2020 (net gain of 9,600 jobs). While the Covid-19 pandemic caused employment in the region to decrease by 2,900 jobs from March 2020 (155,400) to March 2021 (151,500), the Hickory MSA fully regained all the jobs lost by March 2023 (158,900). Since March 2023, the region has experienced a net job loss of 1,000 workers. It should be noted, however, that the region did gain a net of 300 jobs between March 2024 (157,600) and March 2025 (157,900).

Figure 3. Hickory MSA Estimated Employment, March 2005-March 2025*

* Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

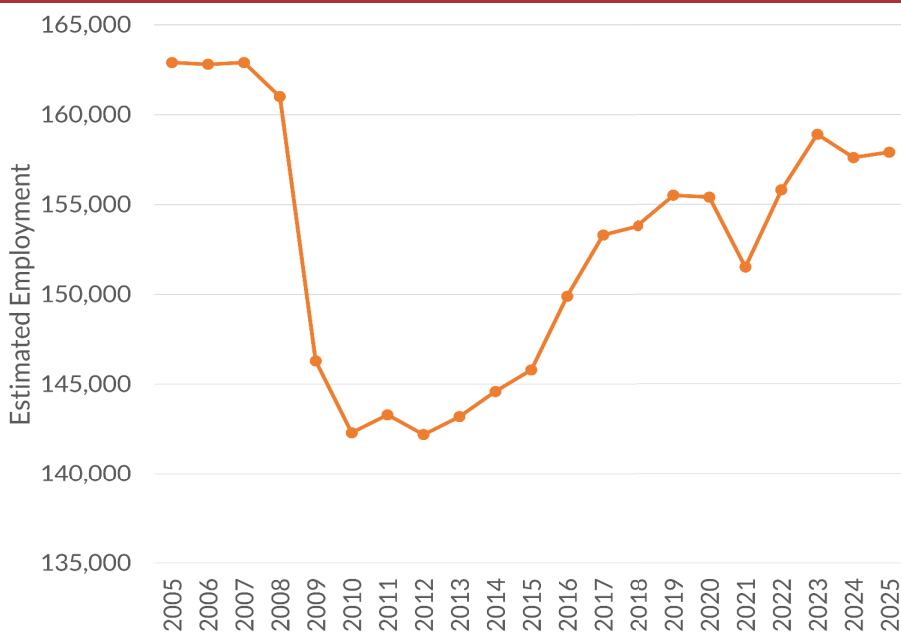
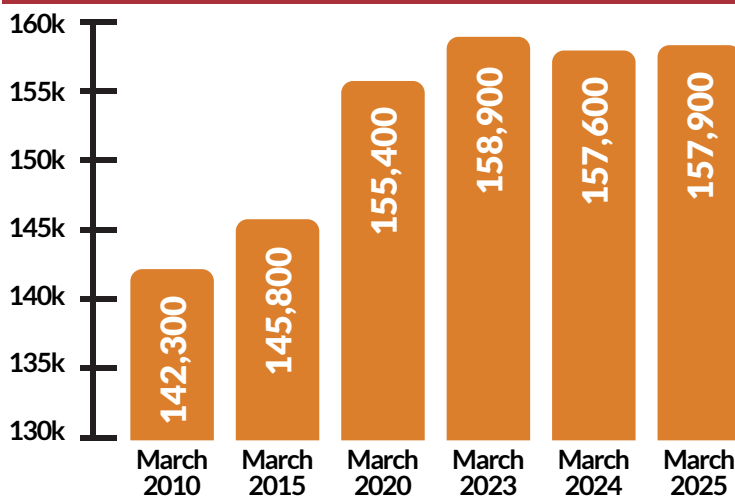


Figure 4. Hickory MSA Estimated Employment Totals, March 2010-March 2025*

* Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.



Hickory MSA Goods-Producing Employment Trends

Hickory MSA Current Employment Survey data is divided into two sectors: "goods-producing" and "service-providing" employment. Goods-producing employment includes jobs in the agriculture, mining, construction, and manufacturing industries. An analysis of CES data shows that the number of goods-producing jobs in the Hickory MSA is significantly less in 2025 than in 2005 (Figure 5, page 3). In March 2005, there were over 59,900 goods-producing workers in the region, with the majority of those jobs in furniture and textiles manufacturing. Between 2005 and 2010 a severe economic recession led to a loss of nearly one-third of all goods-producing employment. From 2005 to 2010, 19,000 goods-producing jobs (or 31.7% of all goods-producing jobs) were eliminated in the Hickory MSA. Many of the job losses were in furniture and related manufacturing sectors.

Goods-producing employment growth occurred between March 2010 and March 2023, as the region's economy recovered from the recession of the previous decade (Figure 6). From 2010 to 2023, the number of goods-producing jobs grew by 6,100 (or 14.9%) to 47,000. The majority of these gains took place in food, furniture, and plastics manufacturing. Since March 2023, the Hickory MSA has seen a net loss in goods-producing employment due in part to the closing of the Mitchell Gold furniture plant in Alexander County, as well as losses in other durable goods and textiles. The March 2025 goods-producing employment estimate of 44,800 is 2,200 less than the number of goods-producing jobs in March 2023 (47,000).

Figure 5. Hickory MSA Estimated Goods-Producing Employment Trends, March 2005-March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

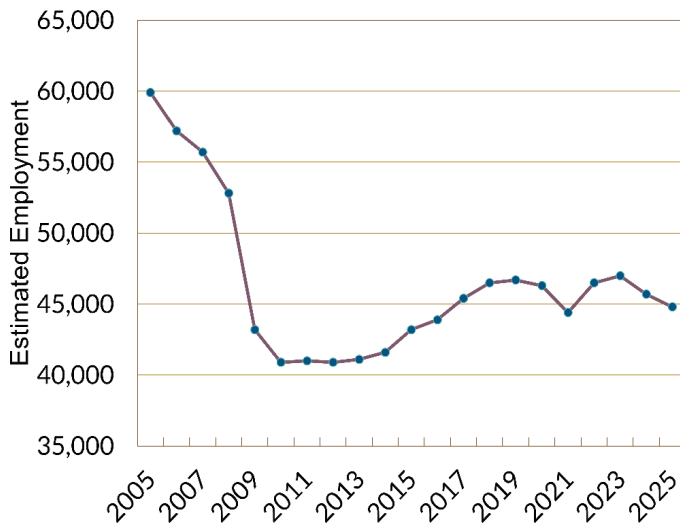
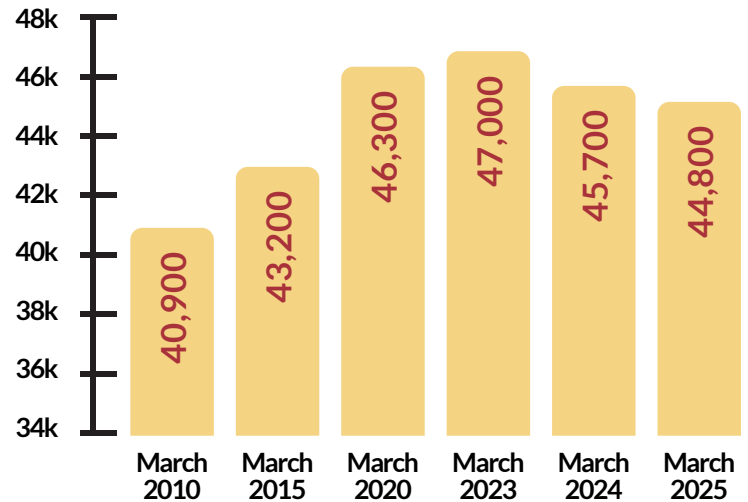


Figure 6. Hickory MSA Estimated Goods-Producing Employment Totals, March 2010-March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.



Current Employment Statistics further breaks Hickory MSA goods-producing employment down into five categories: mining, logging, and construction; furniture and other related products manufacturing; other durable goods manufacturing; textile mills; and other non-durable goods manufacturing. Hickory MSA employment changes by goods-producing industry from March 2020 to March 2025 are displayed in Table 3. All goods-producing industry sectors except three subcategories lost employment between March 2020 and March 2025. The mining, logging and construction industry has added 1,200 positions since March 2020 to 6,000 jobs, while other non-durable goods manufacturing has added 1,600 jobs over the past five years.

Table 3. Hickory MSA Goods-Producing Employment, March 2020 – March 2025*

Industry	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Mining, Logging & Construction	4,800	5,200	6,000	400	8.3%	800	15.4%
Manufacturing	41,500	41,800	38,800	300	0.7%	-3,000	-7.2%
Durable Goods Manufacturing	26,800	26,700	23,100	-100	-0.4%	-3,600	-13.5%
Furniture and Related Products	14,400	14,000	12,200	-400	-2.8%	-1,800	-12.9%
Other Durable Products	12,400	12,700	10,900	300	2.4%	-1,800	-14.2%
Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing	14,700	15,100	15,700	400	2.7%	600	4.0%
Textile Mills	2,900	2,400	2,300	-500	-17.2%	-100	-4.2%
Other Non-Durable Goods	11,800	12,700	13,400	900	7.6%	700	5.5%
Goods-Producing Employment	46,300	47,000	44,800	700	1.5%	-2,200	-4.7%

*Durable Goods are products that do not quickly wear out and are not consumed in one use. Durable goods usually last for three or more years. Examples include cars, furniture, and refrigerators. Non-durable goods, on the other hand, either are consumed in one use, or have a lifespan of fewer than three years. Examples include cleaning supplies, food products, paper products and textiles. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

Durable goods are manufacturing products that do not quickly wear out (last three or more years) and are not consumed in one use. Examples include parts for cars, cables, computers, and appliances. The “other durable goods” category in the CES estimates shown in Table 3 on page 3 refers to goods-producing manufacturing other than furniture manufacturing. After gaining 300 workers between March 2020 and March 2023, non-furniture durable goods employment had the largest percentage decline (14.2%) of any Hickory MSA industry between March 2023 and March 2025 (Figure 7). (CES data set does not break down further which specific non-furniture durable goods manufacturing sector or sectors were responsible for the job losses.) In contrast, the Hickory MSA’s mining, logging, and construction goods-producing sector saw a 15.4% employment gain over the past two years (Figure 8). In fact, only “education” had a higher percentage job growth over the past two years (16.7%) than the mining, logging and construction sector.

Figure 7. Hickory MSA Industries with Biggest Percentage Job Losses March 2023-2025

**Does not include Administrative and Waste Services.*

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025

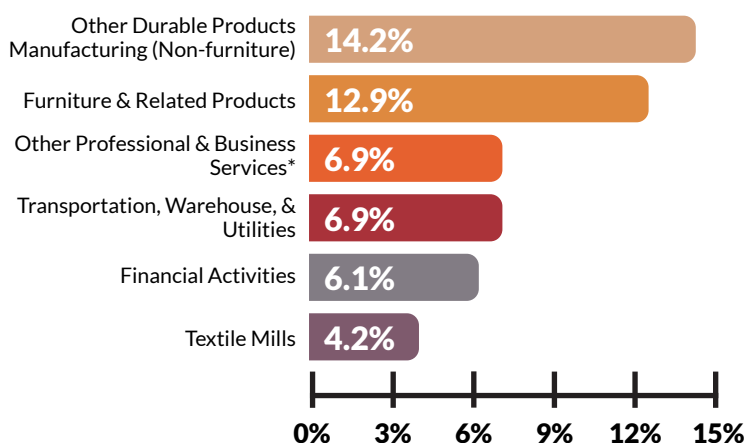
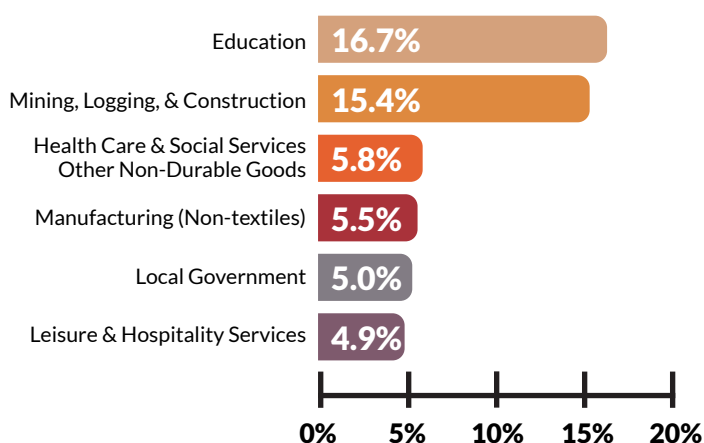


Figure 8. Hickory MSA Industries with Biggest Percentage Job Gains March 2023-2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025



From March 2020 to March 2023, the Hickory MSA lost only 2.8% of its furniture manufacturing labor force, as the number of jobs decreased from 14,400 to 14,000. Over the past two years, the region’s furniture industry lost another 1,800 jobs due to plant closures and a failure to find workers to work in the industry. In total, the furniture industry has experienced a 12.9% decrease in employment over the past two years, the second most of any goods-producing sector and the second most among all Hickory MSA sectors. Despite recent losses, the reopening of some furniture operations in the region should cause furniture employment to rebound over the next couple of years.

Non-durable goods last less than three years or are consumed in one use. Examples include food, paper products, and cleaning supplies. Textile employment in the region decreased from 2,900 in March 2020 to 2,300 in March 2025. The number of Hickory MSA jobs in “other (non-textiles) non-durable goods manufacturing”, however, has grown from 11,800 workers in March 2020 to 13,400 workers in March 2025. Over the past two years, other non-durable goods manufacturing employment has grown 5.5%.

Hickory MSA Service-Providing Employment Trends

Hickory MSA service-producing jobs provide help and assistance to local residents or tourists, as opposed to goods-producing jobs, such as the furniture and textile manufacturing. Service-providing jobs include many fields such as education, finance, government, health care, retail sales and warehousing. In March 2005, Hickory MSA service-providing sector employment equaled 103,000 workers. Between March 2005 and March 2010, the region’s service-providing sector fell slightly to 101,600 jobs due to the 2008 economic recession.

Estimates displayed in Figure 10 , page 5 reveal significant service-producing employment growth during the 2010s. From March 2010 to March 2020, total employment in the Hickory MSA service sector increased 7.6% to 109,100. Service sector jobs that were lost during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 were quickly recovered as employment grew to 111,900 by March 2023. After showing no net growth from March 2023 to March 2024, the Hickory MSA’s service-producing industry gained 1,200 jobs to 113,100 as of March 2025. The March 2025 service-producing sector employment total is the highest ever recorded in the region.

Figure 9. Hickory MSA Estimated Service-Providing Employment Trends, March 2005-March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

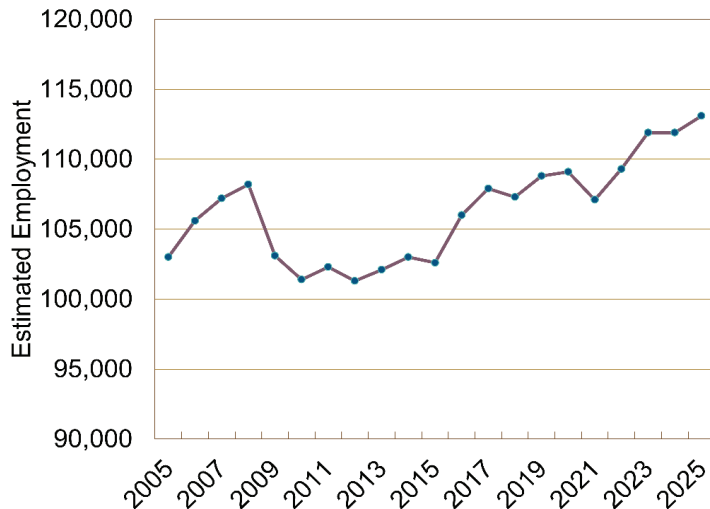
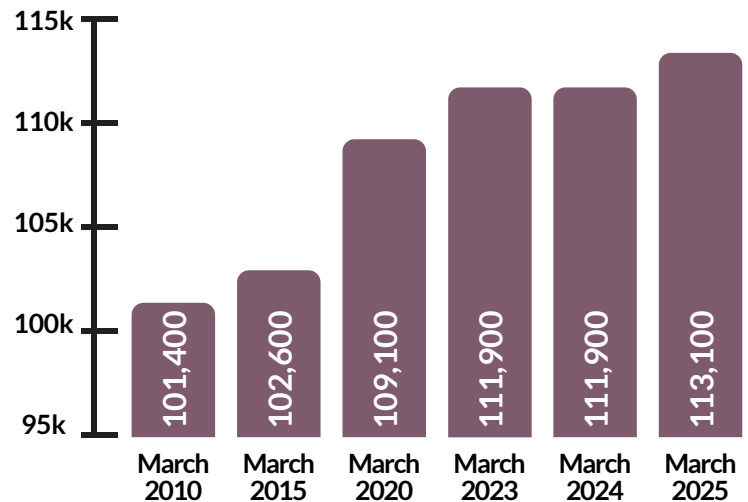


Figure 10. Hickory MSA Estimated Service-Providing Employment Totals, March 2010-March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.



The Current Employment Survey separates Hickory MSA service-producing employment into 14 subcategories: wholesale trade; retail trade; transportation, warehousing, and utilities; information; financial services; administrative and waste management; other professional and business services; education (private sector); health care; leisure and hospitality services; other services (private sector); federal government; state government; and local government. Hickory MSA employment changes by service-producing industry from March 2020 to March 2025 are displayed in Table 4 on page 6.

Both wholesale and retail trade employment experienced post pandemic job growth between March 2020 and March 2023. Wholesale trade employment increased 13.4% from 2020 to 2023 to 7,600 workers while retail trade added 600 positions. Since March 2023, retail trade employment has returned to pre-pandemic levels (17,100 jobs). No net change has occurred in Hickory MSA wholesale trade employment over the past two years.

Transportation, warehouse, and utilities employment in the region surged between March 2020 and March 2023. During the three-year period, more than 1,700 jobs were added for a total growth rate of 30.9%. Since March 2023, the transportation, warehouse, and utilities industry has lost employment, perhaps due to related decreases in furniture manufacturing. The number of jobs in the transportation, warehouse, and utilities industries dropped from 7,200 in March 2023 to 6,700 in March 2025.

The information sector includes establishments in the publishing, sound and broadcasting industries (both traditional and internet based), telecommunications industries, web search portals, data processing, and information services. From March 2020 to March 2023, a net of 200 jobs were added in the Hickory MSA's "information" industry. The number of information jobs in the region has remained stable over the past 24 months (1,200 positions), indicating that the region's current economic situation is having little impact on the information sector.

The number of jobs in the region's financial activities sector has remained relatively stable over the past five years. One hundred (100) jobs were gained in financial activities from March 2020 to March 2023. The number of Hickory MSA jobs in financial activities slipped from 3,300 in March 2023 to 3,100 in March 2025. Included in the "administrative and waste management" service sector are jobs from temporary job agencies, which are lower paying positions with limited benefits. During the pandemic recovery, the number of administrative services jobs grew from 7,100 in March 2020 to 7,800 in March 2023. Over the past couple of years, a net loss of 200 jobs in administrative services jobs has occurred. It is possible that some of the part-time temporary agency jobs have turned into higher paying full-time employment opportunities.

Other professional and business services include accounting/bookkeeping, architecture/engineering, legal services, and management and technical services. Professional and business service jobs tend to be higher paying service positions. Unfortunately, the Hickory MSA has been losing some of these jobs over the past five years. A minimal decline of 100 workers happened between March 2020 and March 2023. Since March 2023, however, other professional and business services employment has decreased 6.9% (400 workers) to 5,400 jobs. Hopefully, this trend will be reversed over the next five years.

The number of jobs in the education sector (private sector education jobs only) has steadily increased since 2020. From March 2020 to March 2023, education employment grew by 200 workers. Another 200 jobs were added between March 2023 and March 2025. The 16.7% increase in education employment over the past two years was the largest percentage gain of any Hickory MSA industry (Figure 8, page 4).

Table 4. Hickory MSA Service-Producing Employment, March 2020-March 2025 *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.*

Industry	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	29,300	32,500	31,400	3,200	10.9%	-1,100	-3.4%
Wholesale Trade	6,700	7,600	7,600	900	13.4%	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	17,100	17,700	17,100	600	3.5%	-600	-3.4%
Transportation, Warehouse & Utilities	5,500	7,200	6,700	1,700	30.9%	-500	-6.9%
Information	1,000	1,200	1,200	200	20.0%	0	0.0%
Financial Activities	3,200	3,300	3,100	100	3.1%	-200	-6.1%
Professional & Business Services	13,000	13,600	13,000	600	4.6%	-600	-4.4%
Administrative & Waste Management	7,100	7,800	7,600	700	9.9%	-200	-2.6%
Other Professional & Business Services	5,900	5,800	5,400	-100	-1.7%	-400	-6.9%
Education & Health Services	19,600	18,500	19,700	-1,100	-5.6%	1,200	6.5%
Education	1,000	1,200	1,400	200	20.0%	200	16.7%
Health Care & Social Services	18,600	17,300	18,300	-1,300	-7.0%	1,000	5.8%
Leisure & Hospitality Services	13,900	14,200	14,900	300	2.2%	700	4.9%
Other Services	5,000	5,400	5,500	400	8.0%	100	1.9%
Government	24,100	23,200	24,300	-900	-3.7%	1,100	4.7%
Federal Government	700	600	600	-100	-14.3%	0	0.0%
State Government	7,300	6,700	7,000	-600	-8.2%	300	4.5%
Local Government	16,100	15,900	16,700	-200	-1.2%	800	5.0%
Service-Providing Employment	109,100	111,900	113,100	2,800	2.6%	1,200	1.1%

Some might have believed that the “Health Care and Social Services” sector would benefit from the pandemic. The reality is that the sector has suffered significant losses during and after the pandemic, as many health care services, such as outpatient elective surgeries and dental checkups, were deemed “nonessential.” Between March 2020 and March 2023, the Hickory MSA experienced a 7.0% loss in health care and social service employment. Fortunately, as of March 2025 the health care and social service industry has regained 1,000 of the 1,300 positions that were lost during the pandemic.

The service-producing employment group “leisure and hospitality services” includes several subsector categories including accommodations, restaurants, museums, event centers and other tourist attractions. At the height of the pandemic, leisure and hospitality services employment decreased by 40%. By March 2023, the region had fully recovered from the pandemic related job losses. In fact, job growth in leisure and hospitality services has accelerated over the past couple of years. More than 700 leisure and hospitality jobs have been gained in the Hickory MSA from March 2023 to March 2025.

Industry sectors in the “other services” category include churches, nonprofit organizations, and close contact personal care services. Despite many industries in the other services sector being particularly hard hit by the impacts of Covid-19 at the start of the pandemic, total employment in other services was 400 higher in March 2023 than in March 2020. Over the past two years, a net gain of 100 workers took place in the other services sector.

The Current Employment Survey divides the “government” sector into federal, state, and local government employment. Federal government employment has hovered between 600 and 700 employees over the past five years. The number of jobs in State Government fell from 7,300 in March 2020 to 6,700 in March 2023 before recovering to 7,000 positions in March 2025. Local governments cut 1.2% of their workforce from March 2020 to March 2023. Since March 2023, local government employment has grown 5.0% from 15,900 in March 2023 to 16,700 in March 2025.

Summary

The Hickory MSA has gone through several economic downturns since 2005 including economic recessions and the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite these events, the Hickory MSA economy has been resilient in adding jobs since 2010. Total employment in the region has grown from 142,300 in March 2010 to 157,900 in March 2025. Hickory MSA employment, after losing 1,300 jobs between March 2023 and March 2024, has since added 300 positions from March 2024 to March 2025.

Hickory MSA goods-producing employment, which includes mining, construction, and manufacturing, declined from 59,900 in March 2005 to 40,900 in March 2010 due to economic recession. The region had gained 6,100 jobs from March 2010 to March 2023, mostly in food, furniture, and plastics manufacturing. The Hickory MSA has lost 2,200 jobs since March 2023 due to some furniture plant closings and difficulties finding new workers to replace retiring manufacturing industry employees. Hickory MSA service-providing employment has been growing steadily since March 2010. Service employment has grown from 101,400 in March 2010 to 113,100 in March 2025. Around 1,200 service-providing positions have been added over the past year (March 2024 to March 2025). The biggest service sector increases since March 2023 have occurred in health care and social services, local government, and leisure and hospitality services.

CES Comparisons with other North Carolina MSAs

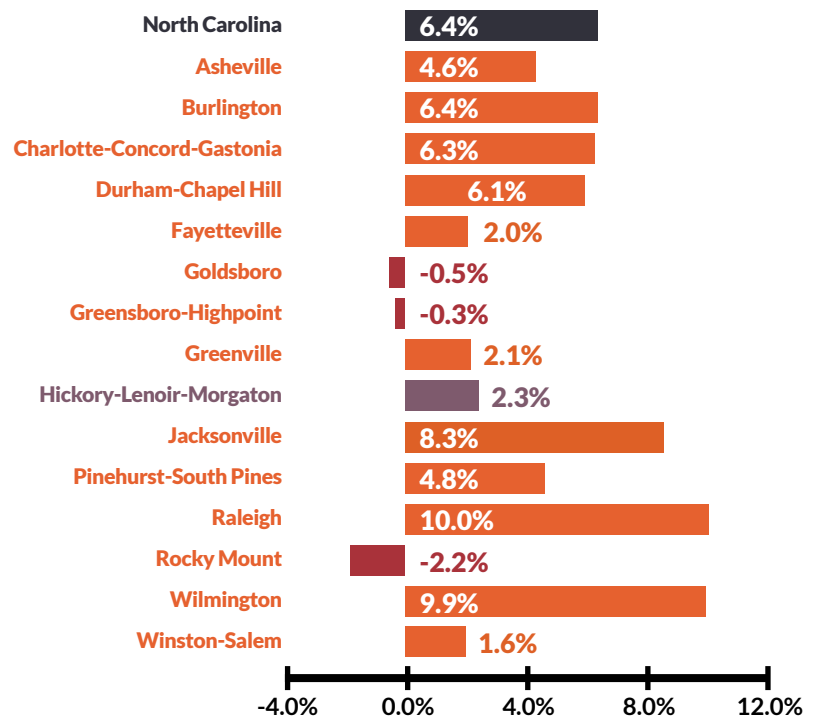
It is important to understand how the economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic has affected employment trends across other metro areas in North Carolina. This EIN Article compares employment percentage changes in the Hickory MSA with other North Carolina metropolitan areas from March 2020 to March 2023 (Covid recovery period) and March 2023 to March 2025 (post Covid economy). Between March 2020 and March 2023, the Hickory MSA had a 2.3% increase in employment (Figure 11). This means that Hickory MSA employment was higher in March 2023 than at the start of the pandemic. Twelve (12) of the 15 North Carolina MSAs had more jobs in March 2023 than at the start of the pandemic (March 2020). Total employment in North Carolina was 6.4% higher in March 2023 than in March 2020.

In total, North Carolina gained nearly 296,000 jobs between March 2020 and March 2023 (Table 5, page 8). More than 26% of the State's total job growth occurred in the Charlotte MSA. The Charlotte Metro (North Carolina portion only) added 79,300 jobs between March 2020 and March 2023. An increase of 65,100 jobs occurred in the Raleigh MSA, while total employment grew by 19,700 workers in the Durham MSA. Job losses took place in the Greensboro (-1,200), Rocky Mount (-1,200), and Goldsboro (-200) MSAs.

North Carolina added more than 155,200 jobs between March 2023 and March 2025. The Pinehurst-Southern Pines MSA had the greatest percentage job gain from March 2023 to March 2025 (5.4%) followed by the Raleigh MSA with 5.0% job growth (Figure 12, page 8). These percentage increases occurred due to goods- and service-providing job increases. The Charlotte, Durham, Goldsboro, and Wilmington MSAs experienced between 3% and 5% employment increases over the past two years.

Overall, the analysis of employment changes across North Carolina Metro areas between March 2023 and March 2025 revealed that 14 of 15 MSAs saw employment increases over the past two years. The Hickory MSA was the only metro area in the State to lose employment between March 2023 and March 2025. Statewide percentage job growth between March 2023 and March

Figure 11. Percentage Change in NC MSA Employment, March 2020-2023



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

Table 5. CES Employment Estimates for NC MSAs, March 2020-March 2025*

NC MSAs	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Asheville	178,900	187,100	188,900	8,200	4.6%	1,800	1.0%
Burlington	64,300	68,400	70,300	4,100	6.4%	1,900	2.8%
Charlotte	1,264,500	1,343,800	1,392,500	79,300	6.3%	48,700	3.6%
Durham	324,100	343,800	356,100	19,700	6.1%	12,300	3.6%
Fayetteville	132,300	134,900	135,100	2,600	2.0%	200	0.1%
Goldsboro	41,600	41,400	43,000	-200	-0.5%	1,600	3.9%
Greensboro	363,700	362,500	367,000	-1,200	-0.3%	4,500	1.2%
Greenville	79,900	81,600	83,600	1,700	2.1%	2,000	2.5%
Hickory	155,400	158,900	157,900	3,500	2.3%	-1,000	-0.6%
Jacksonville	50,400	54,600	55,700	4,200	8.3%	1,100	2.0%
Pinehurst	37,300	39,100	41,200	1,800	4.8%	2,100	5.4%
Raleigh	653,100	718,200	754,300	65,100	10.0%	36,100	5.0%
Rocky Mount	55,800	54,600	55,200	-1,200	-2.2%	600	1.1%
Wilmington	167,900	184,500	192,200	16,600	9.9%	7,700	4.2%
Winston-Salem	272,200	276,600	282,600	4,400	1.6%	6,000	2.2%
North Carolina Totals	4,605,100	4,900,600	5,055,800	295,500	6.4%	155,200	3.2%

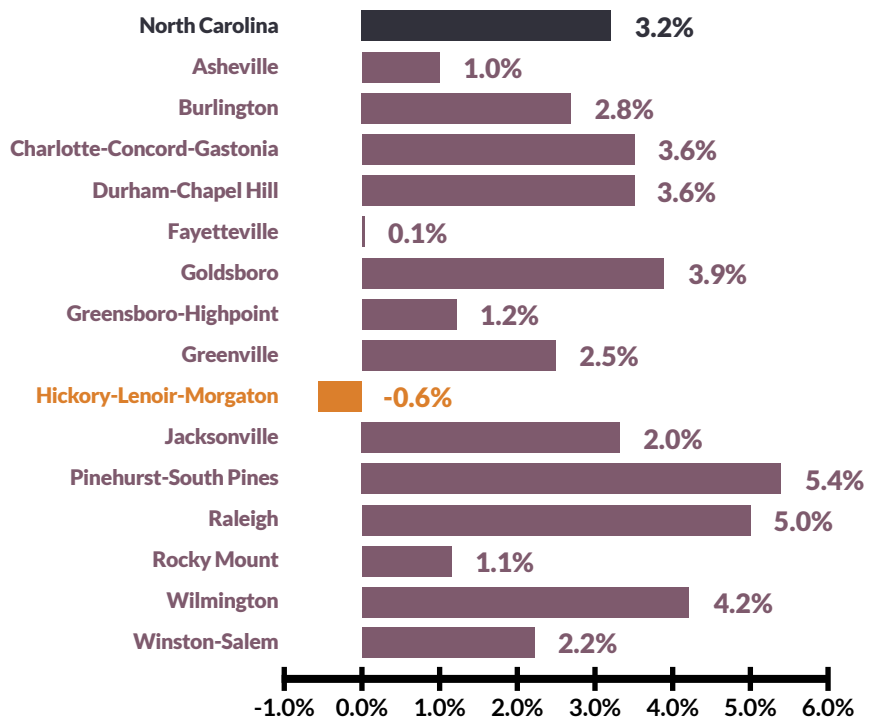
*Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Charlotte MSA data includes only the North Carolina portion of the MSA. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

2025 was 3.2%. Nearly 55% of all employment increases in North Carolina came from the Charlotte and Raleigh MSAs. The Charlotte MSA added 48,700 workers from March 2023 to March 2025, while the Raleigh MSA gained 36,100 jobs. Durham was the only other MSA in North Carolina to add more than 10,000 jobs between March 2023 and March 2025.

March 2020 to March 2025 North Carolina MSA goods-producing employment trends are revealed in table 6, page 9. North Carolina totals show a 3.4% goods-producing job increase from March 2020 to March 2023. The statewide goods-producing percentage job growth was higher than the Hickory MSA, which gained just 1.5% between March 2020 and March 2023. The Wilmington MSA has the highest percentage increase in goods-producing employment from March 2020 to March 2023 (14.4%) due to increased construction activity. The Raleigh MSA had the second highest percentage growth (12.8%), followed by the Jacksonville (5.6%) and Rocky Mount (5.5%) MSAs. The Raleigh MSA had the biggest numerical increase in goods-producing employment (9,400), followed by the Charlotte (8,300) and Wilmington (2,800) MSAs.

The biggest employment losses from March 2020 to 2023 occurred in the Greensboro MSA (-2,200).

Figure 12. Percentage Change in NC MSA Employment, March 2023-2025 Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.



Since March 2023, the State only added a net of 5,900 goods-producing jobs. Results seen in Figure 13, page 9 show that the percentage of goods-producing job decreases/increases varied widely across North Carolina MSAs. The largest percentage goods-producing job loss was in the Hickory MSA, which saw a greater than 4% decline in goods-producing employment between

Table 6. Goods-Producing Employment Estimates for NC MSAs, March 2020-March 2025*

NC MSAs	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Asheville	28,200	29,400	28,800	1,200	4.3%	-600	-2.0%
Burlington	12,100	11,900	12,100	-200	-1.7%	200	1.7%
Charlotte	180,500	188,800	189,000	8,300	4.6%	200	0.1%
Durham	40,200	39,600	39,500	-600	-1.5%	-100	-0.3%
Fayetteville	13,600	14,100	13,600	500	3.7%	-500	-3.5%
Goldsboro	7,200	7,400	8,100	200	2.8%	700	9.5%
Greensboro	68,800	66,600	67,000	-2,200	-3.2%	400	0.6%
Greenville	10,000	10,500	10,800	500	5.0%	300	2.9%
Hickory	46,300	47,000	44,800	700	1.5%	-2,200	-4.7%
Jacksonville	3,600	3,800	4,000	200	5.6%	200	5.3%
Pinehurst	3,600	3,500	3,700	-100	-2.8%	200	5.7%
Raleigh	73,600	83,000	88,000	9,400	12.8%	5,000	6.0%
Rocky Mount	12,800	13,500	13,800	700	5.5%	300	2.2%
Wilmington	19,500	22,300	23,100	2,800	14.4%	800	3.6%
Winston-Salem	44,900	46,700	46,400	1,800	4.0%	-300	-0.6%
North Carolina Totals	710,800	735,000	740,900	24,200	3.4%	5,900	0.8%

*Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Charlotte MSA data includes only the North Carolina portion of the MSA. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

March 2023 and March 2025 due to furniture and textile industry losses. Fayetteville had the second highest percentage loss (-3.5%), followed by the Asheville MSA (-2.0% losses due to Hurricane Helene). In terms of numbers, the Hickory MSA lost the most workers between March 2020 to March 2023 (-2,200), followed by the Asheville (-600) and the Fayetteville (-500) MSAs.

Ten (10) of the 15 MSAs in North Carolina experienced an increase of goods-producing jobs between March 2023 and March 2025. The highest good-producing percentage job increase was in the Goldsboro MSA (9.5%) due to manufacturing growth. Employment growth of greater than 5% also occurred in the Jacksonville, Pinehurst, and Raleigh MSAs due to new construction activity. The Raleigh MSA had the largest numerical increase in goods-producing workers (5,000), followed by the Wilmington (800) and Goldsboro (700) MSAs.

North Carolina MSA service-producing employment trends from March 2020 to March 2025 are revealed in Table 7, page 10. North Carolina totals show a significant 271,300-job increase in service-providing employment from March 2020 to March 2023, as the State recovered from Covid-19 pandemic. The Hickory MSA had a lower percentage service-producing job gain (2.6%) than the State (7.0%) between March 2020 and March 2023. The biggest percentage increase in service-providing employment from March 2020 to March 2023 happened in the Raleigh and Wilmington MSAs, which gained 9.6% and 9.3% respectively. This result is due to job growth related to tourism and restaurants (Raleigh and Wilmington), as well professional and business services and government (Raleigh only).

Figure 13. Percentage Gain in NC MSA Goods-Producing Employment, March 2023 to March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

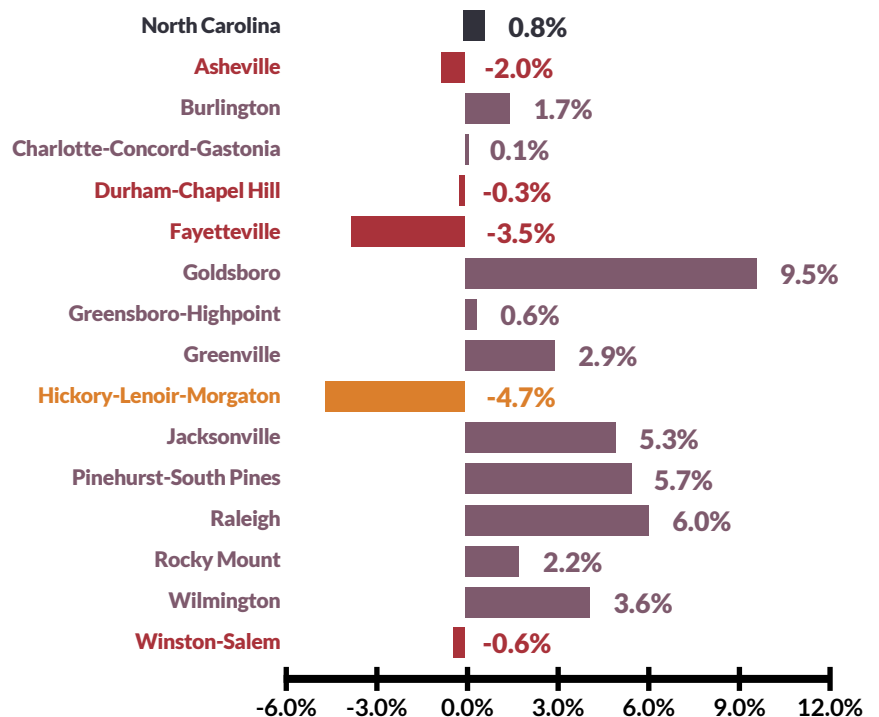


Table 7. Service-Providing Employment Estimates for NC MSAs, March 2020-March 2025*

NC MSAs	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Asheville	150,700	157,700	160,100	7,000	4.6%	2,400	1.5%
Burlington	52,200	56,500	58,200	4,300	8.2%	1,700	3.0%
Charlotte	1,084,000	1,155,000	1,203,500	71,000	6.5%	48,500	4.2%
Durham	283,900	304,200	316,600	20,300	7.2%	12,400	4.1%
Fayetteville	118,700	120,800	121,500	2,100	1.8%	700	0.6%
Goldsboro	34,400	34,000	34,900	-400	-1.2%	900	2.6%
Greensboro	294,900	295,900	300,000	1,000	0.3%	4,100	1.4%
Greenville	69,900	71,100	72,800	1,200	1.7%	1,700	2.4%
Hickory	109,100	111,900	113,100	2,800	2.6%	1,200	1.1%
Jacksonville	46,800	50,800	51,700	4,000	8.5%	900	1.8%
Pinehurst	33,700	35,600	37,500	1,900	5.6%	1,900	5.3%
Raleigh	579,500	635,200	666,300	55,700	9.6%	31,100	4.9%
Rocky Mount	43,000	41,100	41,400	-1,900	-4.4%	300	0.7%
Wilmington	148,400	162,200	169,100	13,800	9.3%	6,900	4.3%
Winston-Salem	227,300	229,900	236,200	2,600	1.1%	6,300	2.7%
North Carolina Totals	3,894,300	4,165,600	4,314,900	271,300	7.0%	149,300	3.6%

*Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Charlotte MSA data includes only the North Carolina portion of the MSA. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

Similar to the pattern seen with goods-producing employment, North Carolina Metro areas varied widely with the percentage growth of service-providing jobs from March 2023 to March 2025 (Figure 14). The Pinehurst (5.3%) and Raleigh (4.9%) MSAs had the largest percentage increases because of gains in several service sectors including professional and business services and leisure and hospitality. Four NC MSAs (Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh, and Wilmington) experienced between 4% and 5% service employment growth from March 2023 to March 2025.

The Hickory MSA tallied a 1.1% increase in service-providing jobs (1,200 positions) from March 2023 to March 2025. The Hickory Metro was one of four MSAs in the State that saw 1% to 2% service-providing employment growth over the past two years. Note that the Asheville MSA had a net service-providing job gain of only 1.5% since March 2023. This is due to service-providing employment decreases that have occurred because of Hurricane Helene.

Leisure and hospitality includes several service-providing sectors including accommodations, restaurants, museums, event centers and other tourist attractions. Results displayed in Table 8, page 11 indicate that leisure and hospitality services have experienced a significant recovery since the Covid-19 pandemic. Statewide the industry added a net of 17,200 jobs between March 2020 and March 2023. Eleven (11) of the 15 NC MSAs tallied the same or more leisure hospitality employment in March 2023 than in March 2020, meaning that they recovered all of the job losses that occurred during the pandemic.

Figure 14. Percentage Gain in NC MSA Service-Providing Employment, March 2023 to March 2025

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

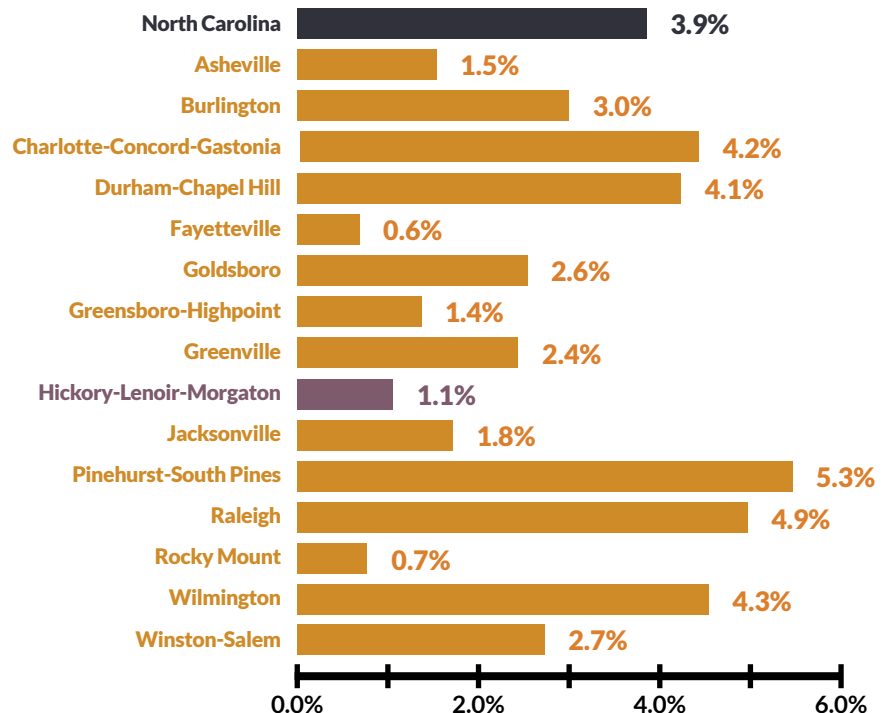


Table 8. Leisure and Hospitality Services Employment Estimates for NC MSAs, March 2020-March 2025*

NC MSAs	March 2020	March 2023	March 2025	Change March 2020-2023	% Change March 2020-2023	Change March 2023-2025	% Change March 2023-2025
Asheville	26,300	26,100	24,100	-200	-0.8%	-2,000	-7.7%
Burlington	7,900	8,100	8,100	200	2.5%	0	0.0%
Charlotte	140,600	143,600	150,500	3,000	2.1%	6,900	4.8%
Durham	27,400	27,400	27,100	0	0.0%	-300	-1.1%
Fayetteville	16,400	16,500	15,700	100	0.6%	-800	-4.8%
Greensboro	36,300	36,600	36,000	300	0.8%	-600	-1.6%
Greenville	9,300	9,300	9,200	0	0.0%	-100	-1.1%
Hickory	13,900	14,200	14,900	300	2.2%	700	4.9%
Pinehurst	6,500	7,000	7,400	500	7.7%	400	5.7%
Raleigh	71,600	74,800	77,800	3,200	4.5%	3,000	4.0%
Rocky Mount	5,300	5,200	5,000	-100	-1.9%	-200	-3.8%
Wilmington	25,600	28,000	29,600	2,400	9.4%	1,600	5.7%
Winston-Salem	28,800	29,200	30,200	400	1.4%	1,000	3.4%
North Carolina Totals	495,200	512,400	529,700	17,200	3.5%	17,300	3.4%

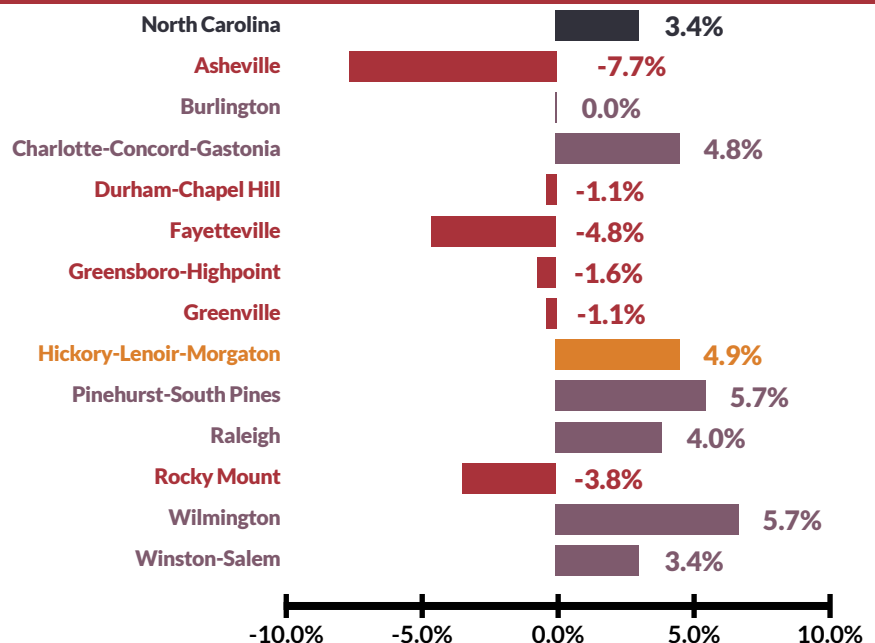
*Employment numbers shown are not seasonally adjusted. Leisure and Hospitality Services employment data was not available for the Goldsboro and Jacksonville MSAs. Charlotte MSA data includes only the North Carolina portion of the MSA. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

Between March 2023 and March 2025, North Carolina leisure and hospitality employment grew 3.4% to 529,700 (Figure 15). The Pinehurst and Wilmington MSAs had the highest percentage growth in leisure and hospitality jobs from March 2023 to March 2025 (5.7%). The Hickory MSA came in third with a 4.9% increase. The Charlotte MSA added 6,900 leisure and hospitality jobs since March 2023, followed by the Raleigh MSA with 3,000 and the Wilmington MSA with 1,600.

Data in Table 8 and Figure 15 clearly show the impacts that Hurricane Helene had on the Asheville Metro area. As of March 2025, the Asheville MSA has 2,000 fewer jobs than in March 2023. The 7.7% net loss in leisure and hospitality employment was the largest among the State's metro areas. It will likely take some time for Asheville to recover from the Hurricane Helene related jobs losses.

Summary

Comparisons with other NC MSAs reveal that the Hickory MSA was the only metro area in North Carolina to have fewer jobs in March 2025 than in March 2023 due to job losses in furniture manufacturing. Many MSAs across the State have seen substantial job growth (mostly in service-providing industries) including the Burlington, Charlotte, Durham, Jacksonville, Raleigh, and Wilmington MSAs. Results of the analysis also indicate that Asheville MSA continues to be impacted by the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Figure 15. Percentage Change in NC MSA Leisure and Hospitality Employment, March 2023 to March 2025


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program, 2025.

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