

North Carolina Economy Report 2024 4th Quarter

Highlights:

DMJPS is pleased to provide the 2024 fourth quarter economic update across North Carolina's fifteen metro areas. Overall, the state's economic indicators point to continued growth in payroll employment and average wages, as well as sustained low unemployment and increasing taxable sales.

However, these trends were not uniform across all metros. The effects of Hurricane Helene in late September 2024 has begun to emerge in the data and reflects disruption in some areas. The data collected in this fourth quarter report spans from October 1 until December 31, 2024.

- In the fourth quarter of 2024, North Carolina's employment averaged 5,064,100 jobs for an increase of 47,100 new jobs year-over-year.
- Employment growth in the fourth quarter was led by the Goldsboro metro with a 2.8 percent increase compared to the previous year.
- By major industry, fourth quarter employment gains were led by Education and Health Services with an estimated 24,000 new jobs year-over-year, followed by Government with 23,500 new jobs.
- North Carolina's average unemployment rate averaged 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter, translating to roughly 189,100 unemployed individuals, an increase in the number of unemployed compared to the previous year.
- Among the state's fifteen metros, Asheville recorded the highest unemployment rate in the fourth quarter at 6.6 percent, reflecting the impact of Hurricane Helene.
- Although approximately seven percent below the national average, North Carolina's fourth quarter average hourly wage edged up to \$33.10 for a 4.3 percent increase from the previous year.
- *Special feature, Age Dependency Ratio:* In North Carolina, the age dependency ratio was 64.2 in 2023, suggesting that for every 100 working-age individuals, there were 64.2 individuals in dependent age groups. Naturally, there are exceptions to this broad

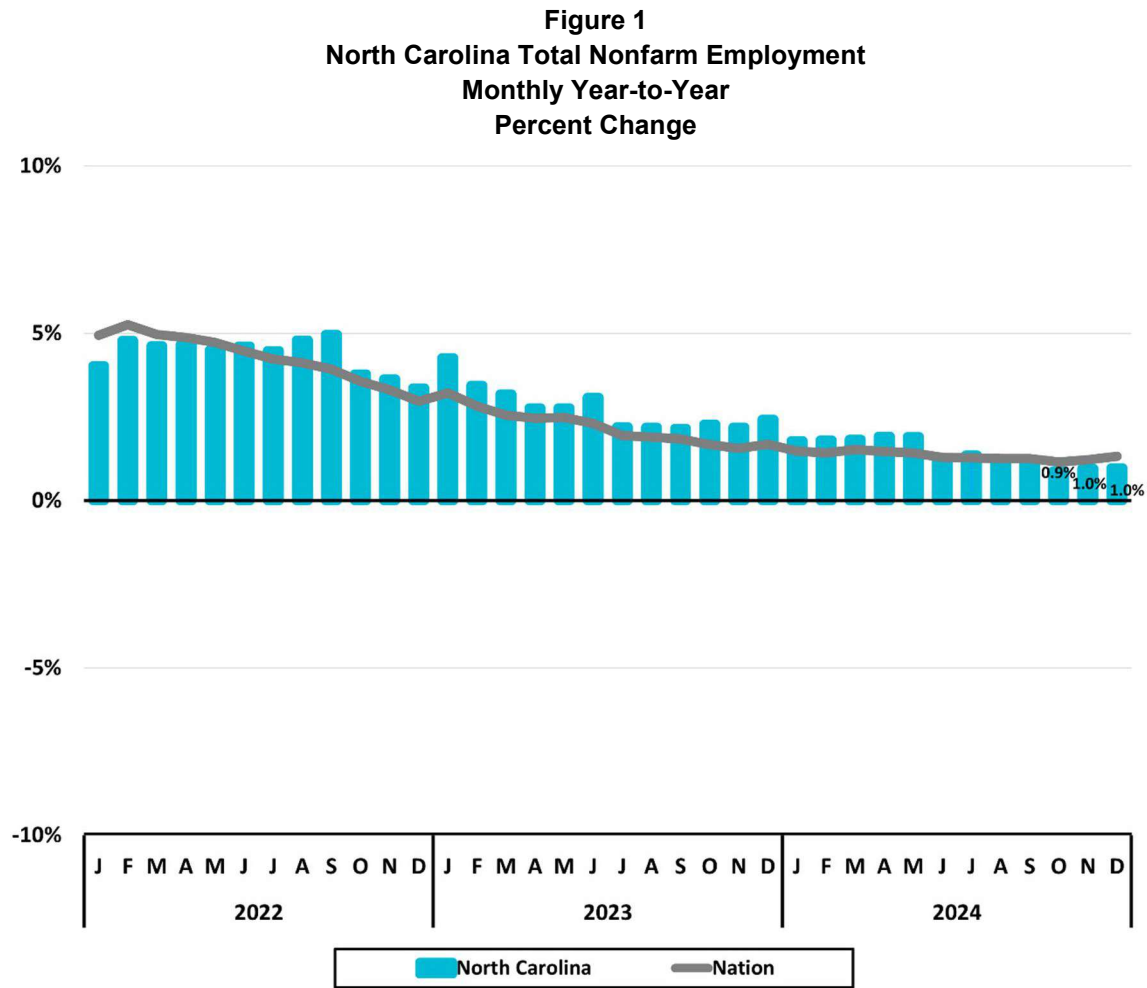
measure, but it remains a valuable indicator of the balance between working-age population and those who may rely on them economically.

Note on Metro Area Delineations:

This report reflects metropolitan statistical area delineations as they stood in the fourth quarter of 2024, prior to the incorporation of updated boundaries issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Not all data sources have fully integrated OMB’s updated delineations. The data presented here was collected prior to March 21, 2025. North Carolina metros affected by delineation changes will be incorporated in future reports.

**Detailed Analysis:
Employment**

North Carolina’s *employment* averaged 5,064,100 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2024, marking a new all-time quarterly high and continuing an upward trend seen in earlier quarters. However, the year-over-year increase of 0.9 percent lagged the national average of 1.2 percent (Figure 1).



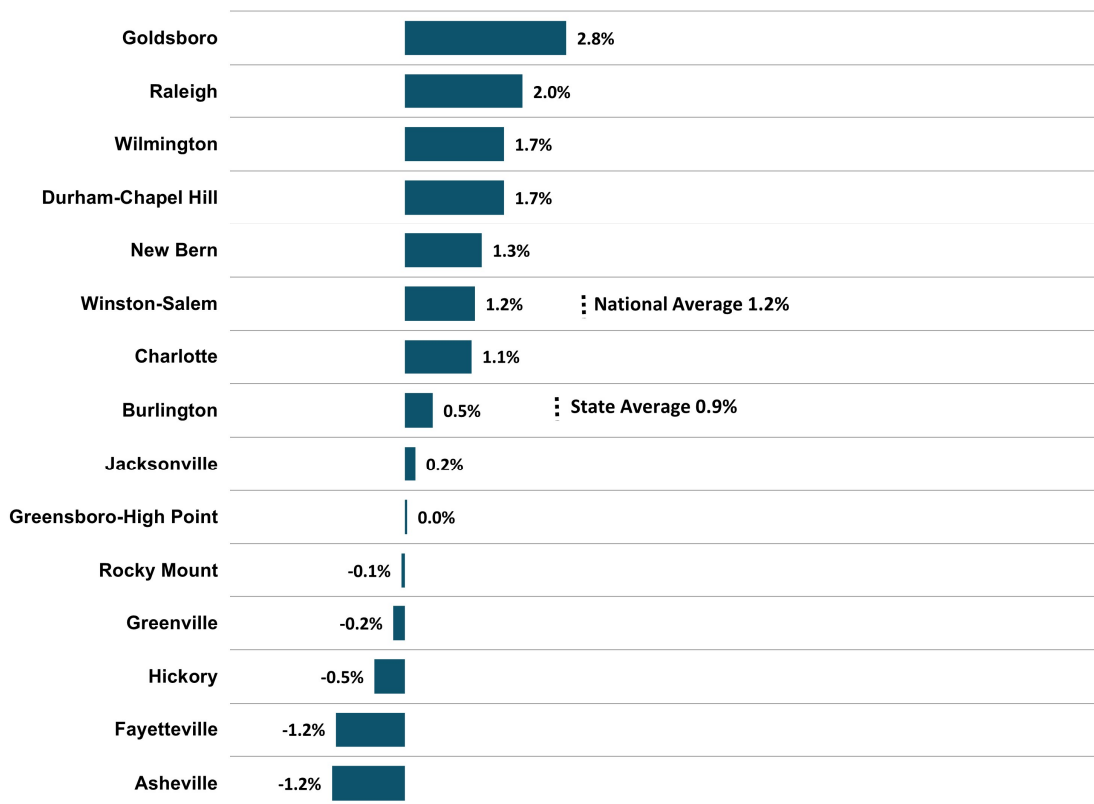
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, All Employees, Total Nonfarm, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Nine of the state's 15 metros experienced *employment* growth in the fourth quarter of 2024 when compared to the same period the previous year (Figure 2). Goldsboro was the state's fastest-growing metro with a 2.8 percent increase in employment. Seven metros exceeded the state's overall growth rate of 0.9 percent while five outpaced both the state and national growth rates.

The Asheville metro experienced notable impacts from Hurricane Helene, which made landfall on September 27, 2024. Fourth-quarter employment declined 1.2 percent year-over-year, reflecting early signs of strain in a region still contending with storm-related disruptions.

Fayetteville also saw a 1.2 percent decline in employment compared to the previous year while Rocky Mount, Greenville, and Hickory metros each reported more modest declines of less than one percent and Greensboro-High Point held steady.

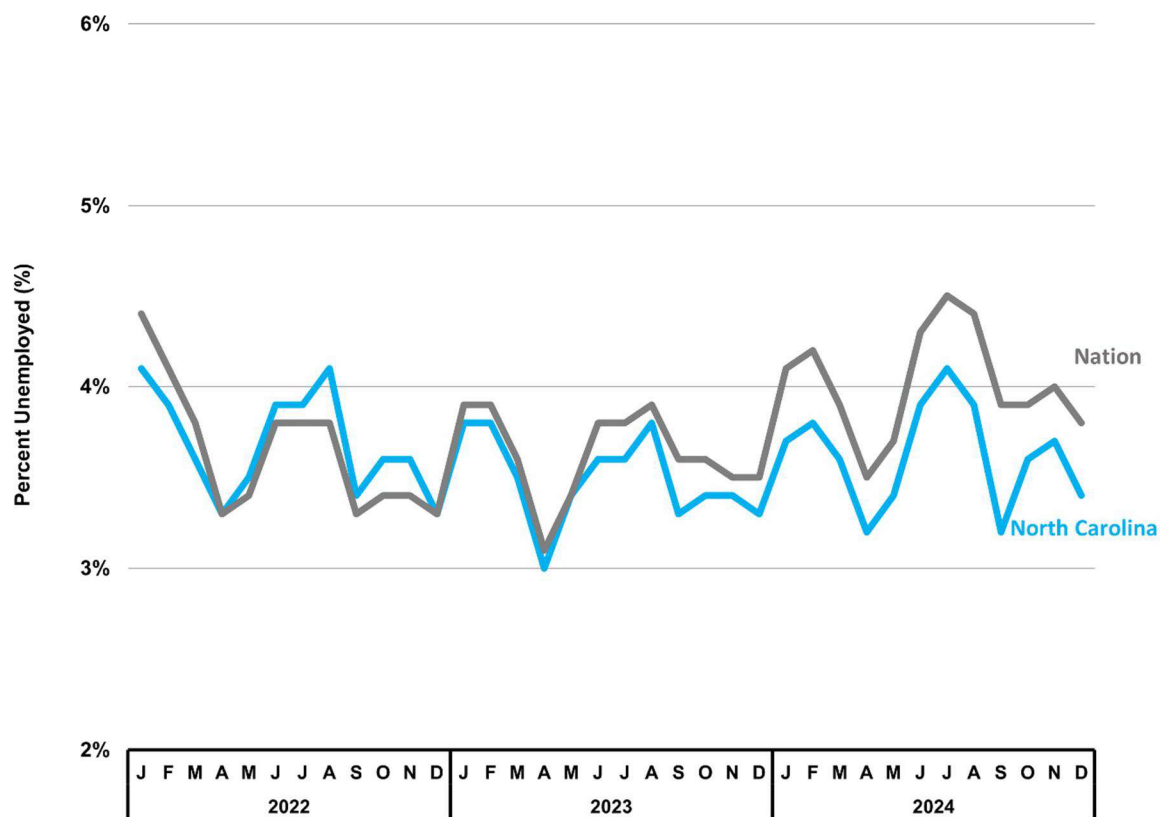
Figure 2
2024 4Q Average
North Carolina Metros
Employment One-Year Percent Change



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, All Employees: Total Nonfarm by Metro, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

North Carolina's *unemployment rate* averaged 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024, somewhat lower than the national rate of 3.9 percent (Figure 3). This marked the eighth consecutive quarter when the state's average unemployment rate was lower than the national average. The unemployment rate represented roughly 189,100 people in North Carolina that were unemployed and available to work. Compared to the previous year, the number of unemployed was up 6.1 percent.

Figure 3
North Carolina
Unemployment Rate (%)

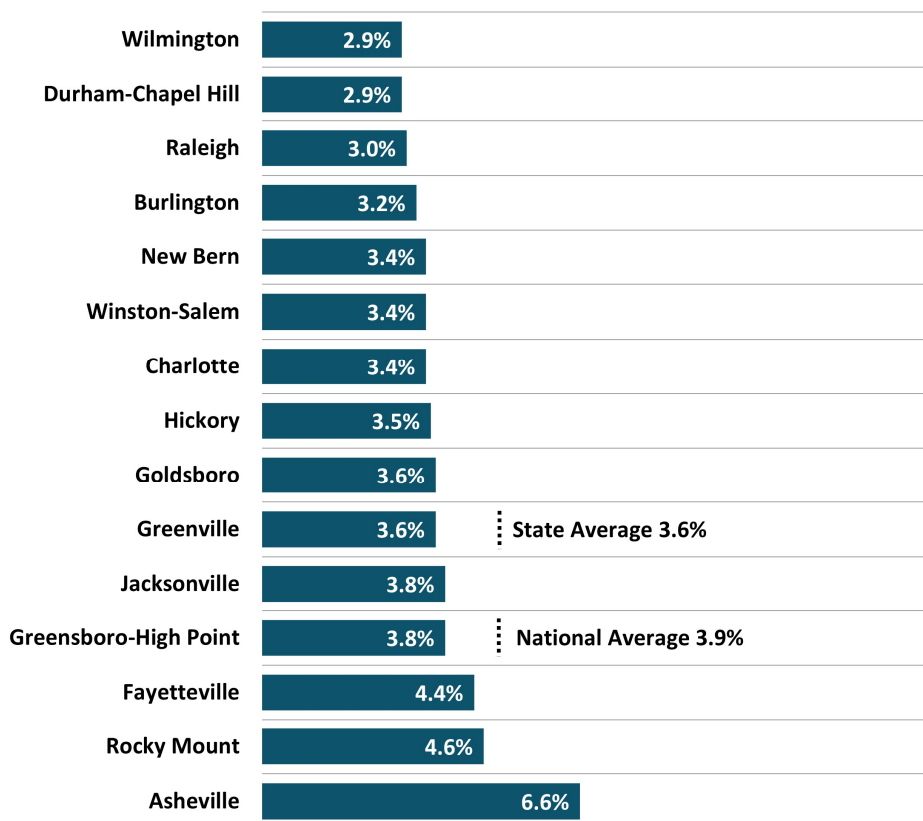


Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; NC Department of Commerce

Among North Carolina's fifteen metros, the Asheville metro recorded the highest fourth quarter average unemployment rate in 2024 at 6.6 percent, reflecting the impacts of Hurricane Helene on the labor force (Figure 4). Wilmington and Durham-Chapel Hill reported

the lowest rates, each at 2.9 percent while twelve metros fell below the national average of 3.9 percent. Only Fayetteville, Rocky Mount, and Asheville metros experienced unemployment rates that exceeded the national rate and were the only state metros with unemployment rates above four percent.

Figure 4
North Carolina Metros
Unemployment Rate (%)
2024 4Q Average



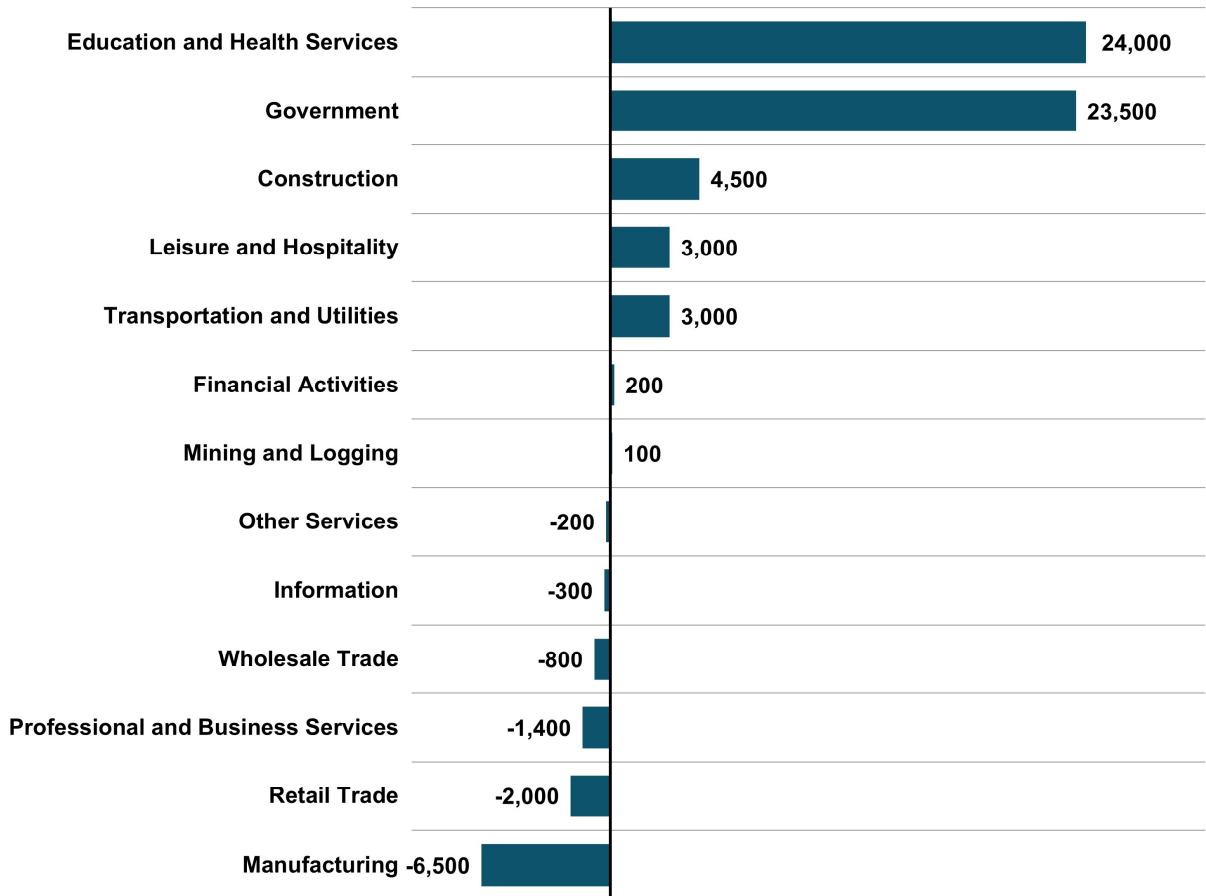
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate by Metro, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

North Carolina added approximately 47,100 new jobs in the fourth quarter of 2024 compared to the same period the previous year (Figure 5). While still indicative of growth, this marked the smallest quarterly gain since the first quarter of 2021.

Job growth was led by Education and Health Services, which added 24,000 new jobs, followed by Government (+23,500) and Construction (+4,500).

Six of the state's 13 major industries experienced year-over-year declines with Manufacturing reporting the largest loss of 6,500 jobs.

Figure 5
North Carolina – 2024 4Q
Major Industry Employment
One-Year Change



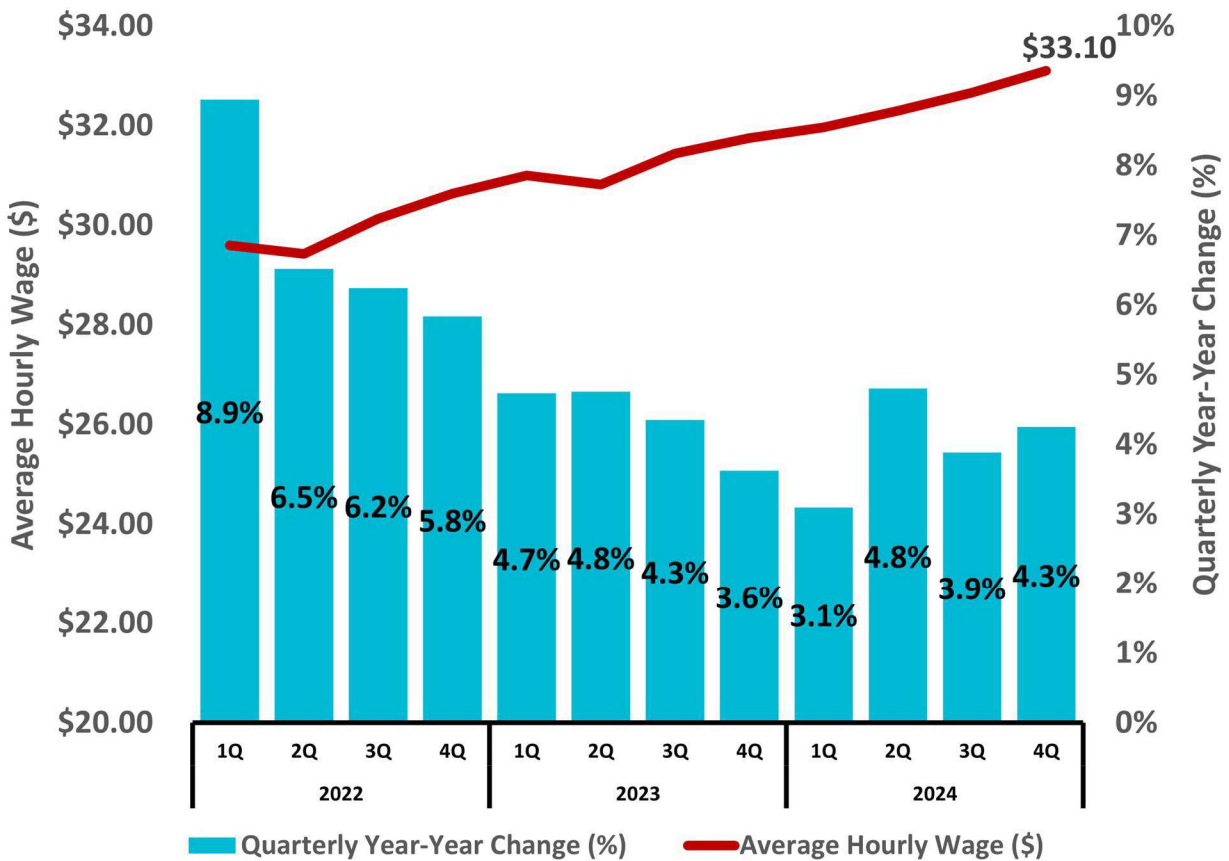
Totals rounded to nearest 100.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, All Employees by Major Industry in North Carolina, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Wages

Private industry *average hourly wages* in North Carolina continued to climb, surpassing previous high points, and reaching \$33.10 in the fourth quarter of 2024 (Figure 6). This represented a 4.3 percent increase over the prior year and a clear acceleration from the third quarter's year-over-year growth of 3.9 percent.

Figure 6
North Carolina
Average Hourly Wages
Private Industry

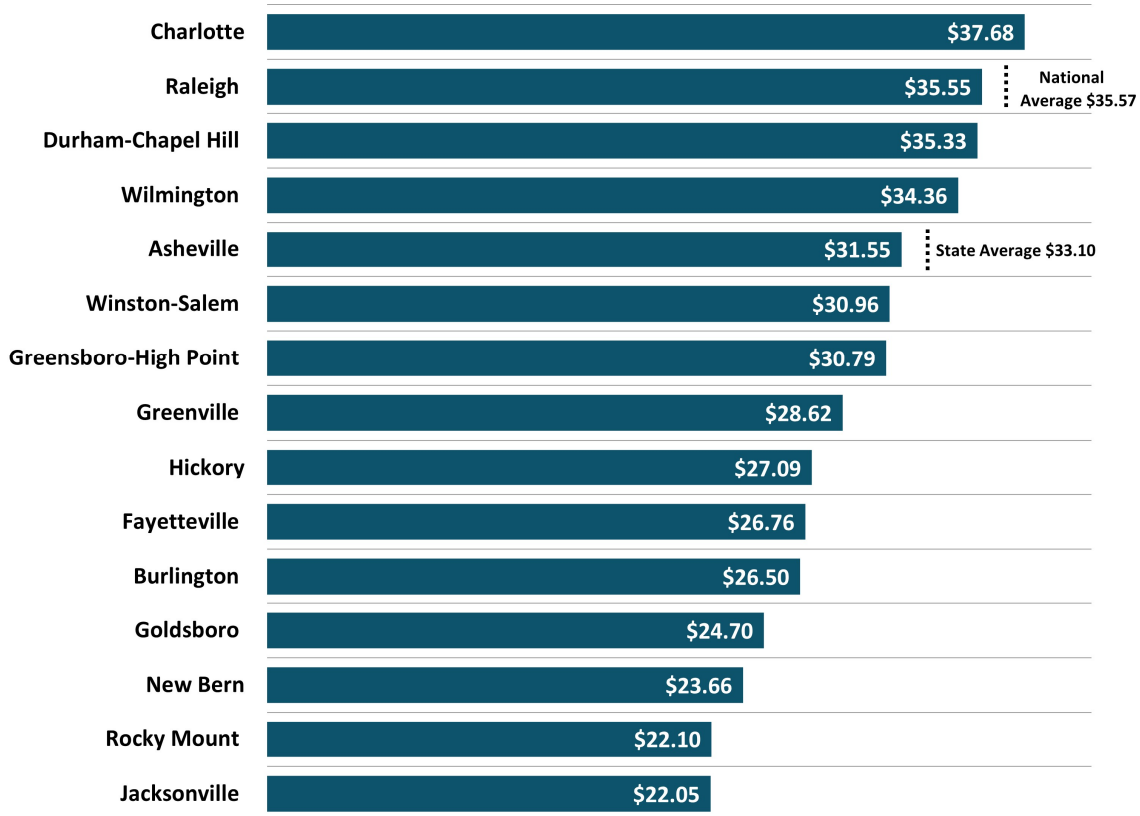


Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Average Hourly Earnings of All Employees: Total Private in North Carolina

Charlotte led North Carolina’s fifteen metro areas with an average hourly wage of \$37.68 in the fourth quarter of 2024 — making it the only metro to surpass the national average of \$35.57 during the period (Figure 7). The Raleigh metro followed closely at \$35.55, with Durham-Chapel Hill just behind at \$35.33.

Four metros exceeded the state’s overall average of \$33.10. In addition to Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham-Chapel Hill, the Wilmington metro (\$34.36) and the Asheville metro (\$31.55) rounded out the top five highest average wages among North Carolina’s metros in the fourth quarter.

Figure 7
North Carolina Metros – 2024 4Q
Average Hourly Wages
Private Industry



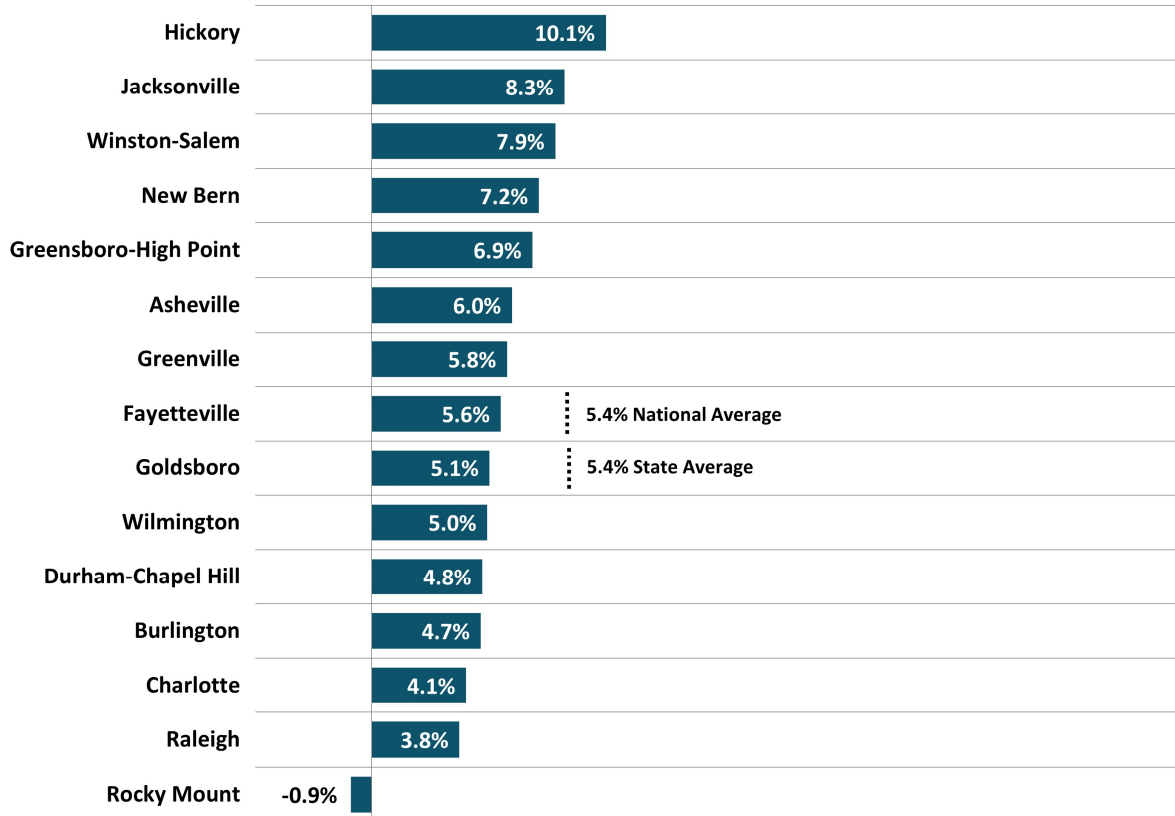
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, *Average Hourly Earnings of All Employees: Total Private by Metro*, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Housing

North Carolina's annual *house price appreciation rate* was 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024, matching the national rate for the same period (Figure 8). Among the state's metros, Hickory led with a 10.1 percent increase, while Rocky Mount metro was the only metro to

see a decline (-0.9 percent). Eight of the state's fifteen metros exceeded both the state and national rates.

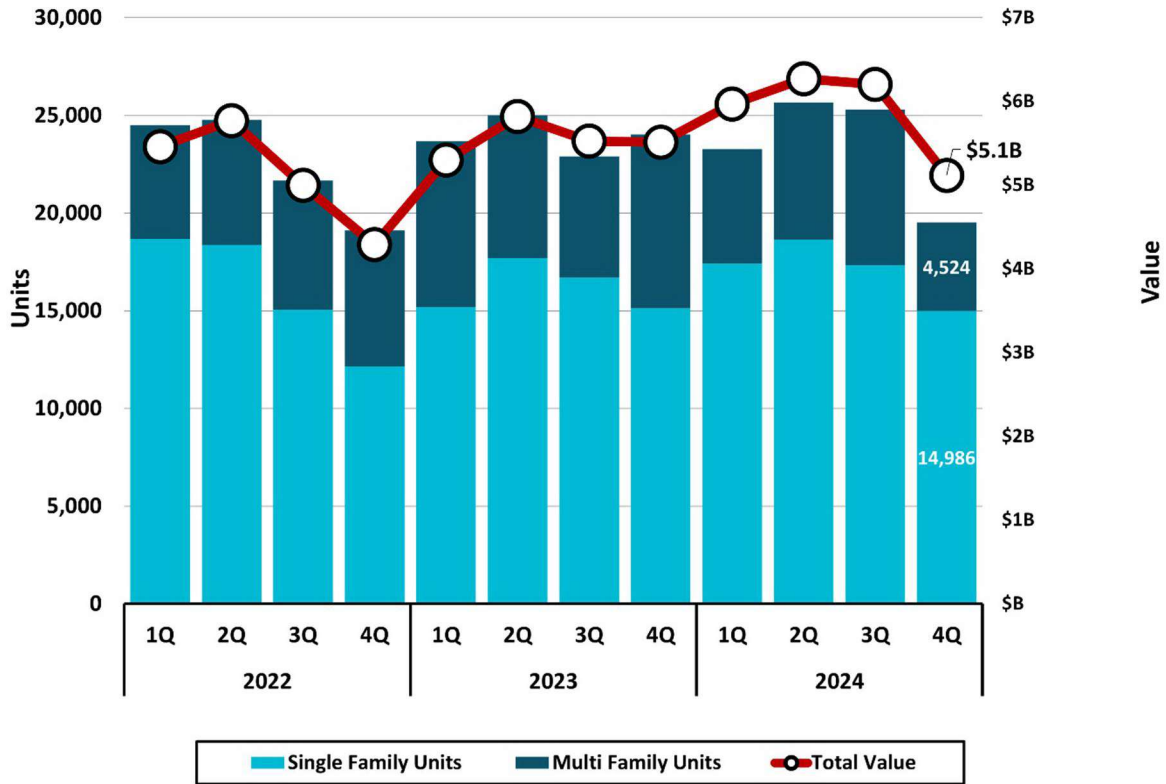
Figure 8
North Carolina Metros
Annual Appreciation Rate (%)
2024 4Q



Source: US Federal Housing Finance Agency, All-Transactions House Price Index, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Permit activity for new *residential building* in North Carolina totaled approximately 19,510 units in the fourth quarter of 2024 with a value of \$5,116,881,000 (Figure 9). This represented a decrease of 18.8 percent in the number of units permitted compared to the previous year while total value experienced a decrease of 7.2 percent. Multi-family units accounted for 4,524 permits in the fourth quarter, or 23.2 percent of units permitted.

Figure 9
North Carolina
Estimated Residential Building Permits Activity*



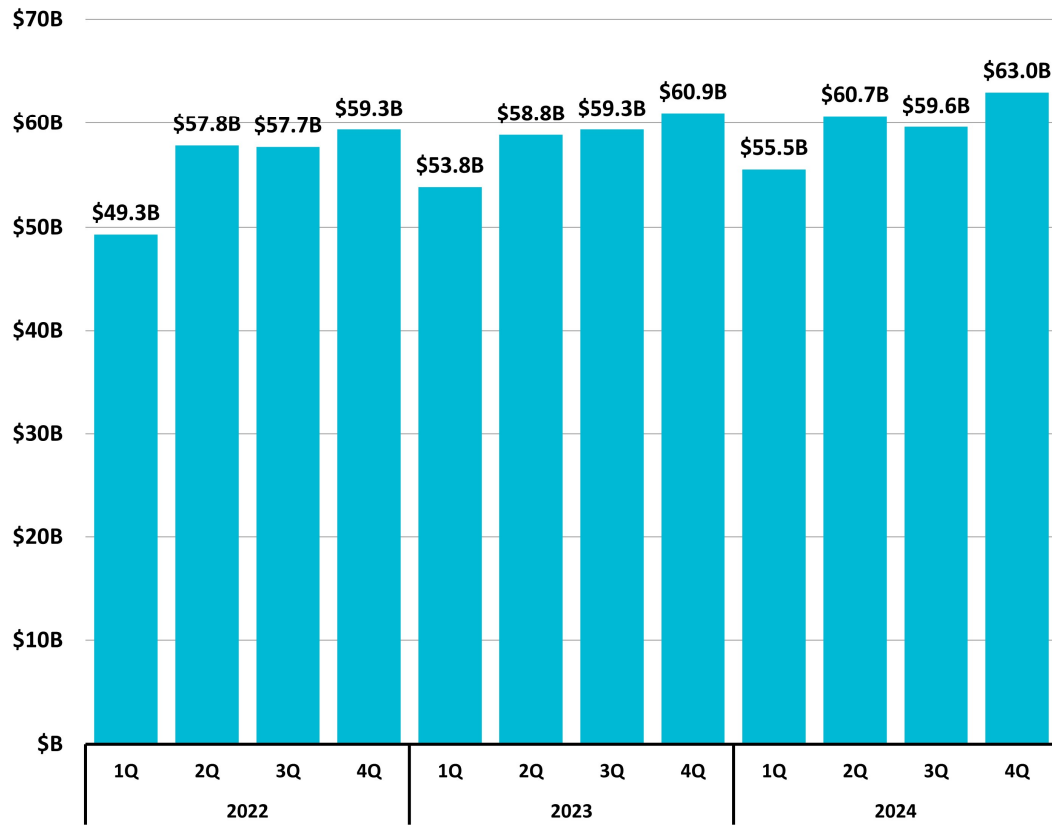
*Based on a survey of permitting agencies. The Census Bureau provides estimates for any missing agency data, which typically amounts to less than 20% of the total permits.

Source: US Census Bureau

Retail Sales

Taxable retail sales in North Carolina totaled \$62,976,195,219 (\$63 billion) in the fourth quarter of 2024, ending the year with a new high point (Figure 10). The year-over-year growth rate of 3.3 percent was the largest percentage increase since the first quarter of 2023 (Figure 11).

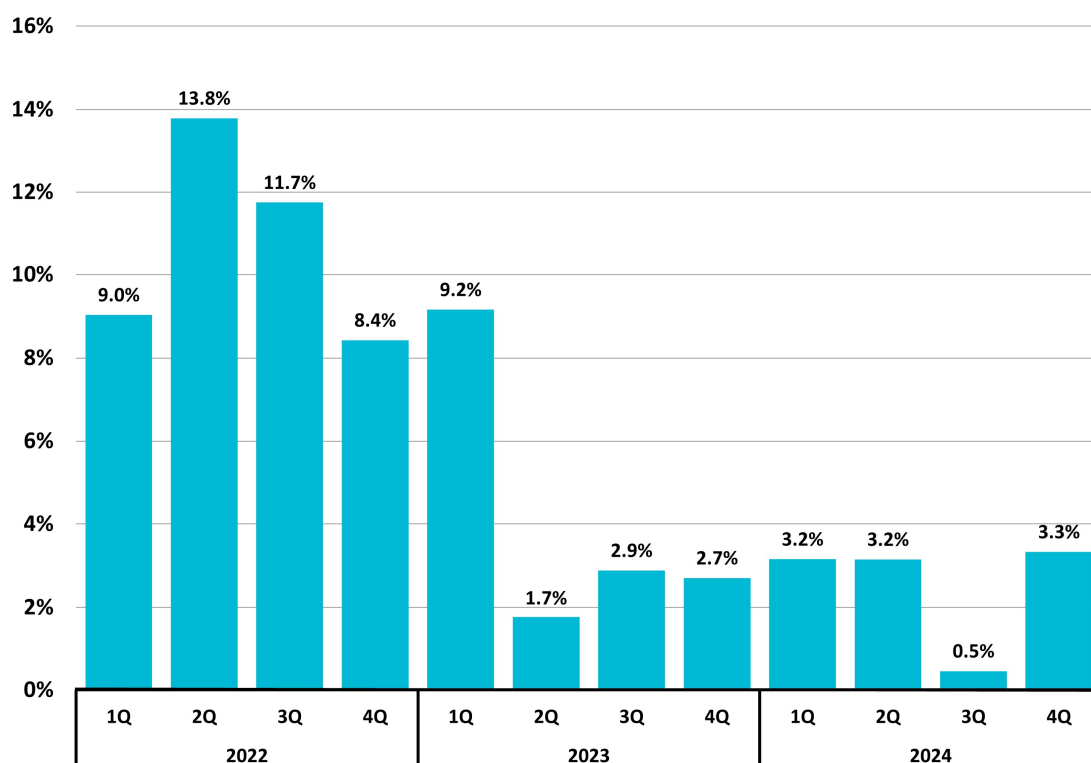
Figure 10
North Carolina
Total Taxable Retail Sales



Includes collections of penalties, interest, and sales & use tax; and may reflect activity from prior periods.

Source: NC Department of Revenue

Figure 11
North Carolina
Total Taxable Retail Sales
Quarterly Year-to-Year Change (%)



Includes collections of penalties, interest, and sales & use tax; and may reflect activity from prior periods.

Source: NC Department of Revenue

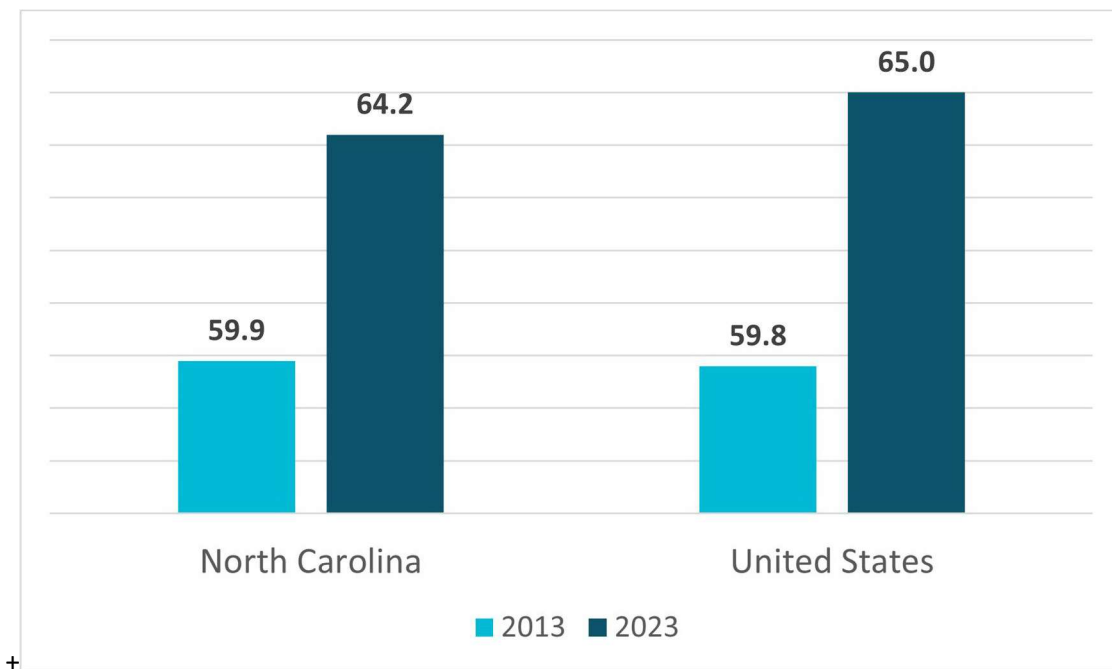
Special Feature: Age Dependency Ratio

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the age dependency ratio compares the number of people under age 18 and age 65 and older to the working-age population (ages 18 to 64 in this measure). The Census Bureau notes that a lower ratio means there are fewer individuals in dependent age groups relative to the working-age population, while a higher ratio indicates greater potential dependency on those of working age.

This is a broad measure and there are exceptions; however, it is a useful metric for assessing the balance between working-age individuals and those who may have some level of economic dependency.

In North Carolina, the age dependency ratio was 64.2 in 2023, meaning that for every 100 working-age individuals, there were 64.2 dependents (Figure 12). This was up from 59.9 a decade earlier. The state's dependency ratio was just below the national ratio of 65.0 in 2023.

Figure 12
North Carolina
Age Dependency Ratio



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates

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End note: Data in this report reflects a point in time, March 2025, and may be subject to periodic adjustment.