



Wilkes County, NC

Department of Commerce, NC



NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
LABOR & ECONOMIC
ANALYSIS

4327 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

Contents

Report Parameters	1
Economy Overview	2
Unemployment by Demographics	4
Historic & Projected Trends	8
Population Characteristics	12
Inbound and Outbound Migration	14
Industry Characteristics	16
Business Characteristics	21
Workforce Characteristics	23
Educational Pipeline	29
In-Demand Skills	30

Report Parameters

1 County

37193 Wilkes County, NC

Class of Worker

QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed

The information in this report pertains to the chosen geographical area.

Economy Overview

65,784

Population (2024)

Population **decreased by 2,512** over the last 5 years and is projected to **decrease by 1,653** over the next 5 years.

22,150

Total Regional Employment

Jobs **decreased by 2,309** over the last 5 years and are projected to **decrease by 4** over the next 5 years.

\$50.4K

Median Household Income (2023)

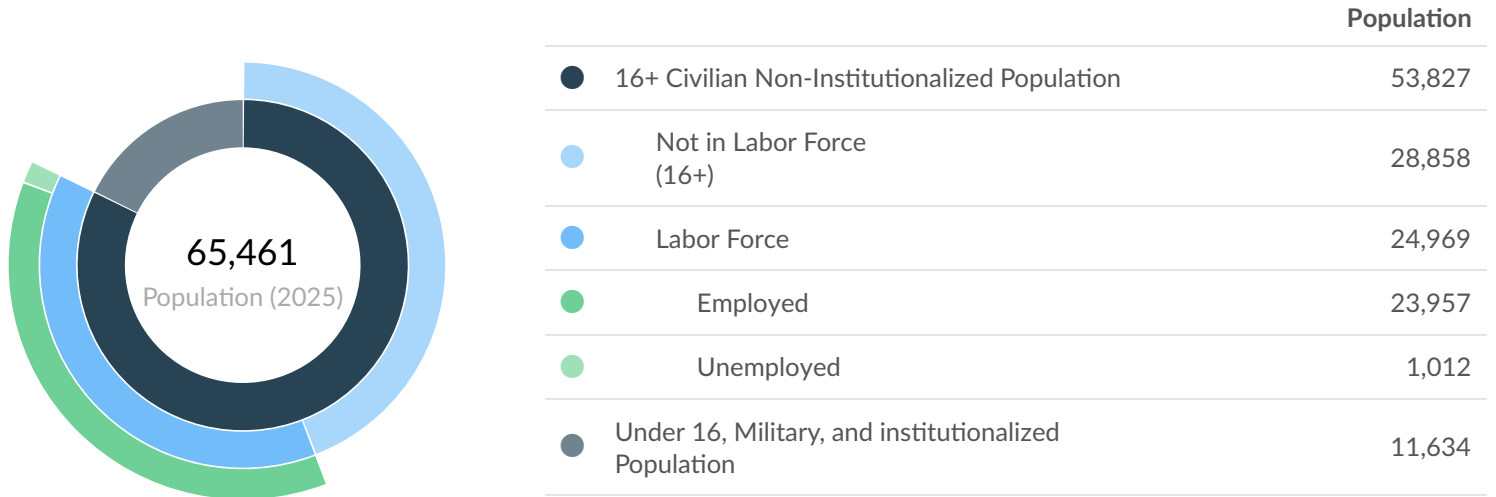
Median household income is **\$28.1K below** the national median household income of \$78.5K.

Takeaways

- As of 2024 the region's population **declined by 3.7%** since 2019, falling by 2,512. Population is expected to **decrease by 2.5%** between 2024 and 2029, losing 1,653.
- From 2019 to 2024, jobs **declined by 9.4%** in Wilkes County, NC from 24,459 to **22,150**. This change **fell short of the national growth rate of 4.3% by 13.7%**. As the number of jobs declined, the **labor force participation rate decreased from 52.3% to 47.7% between 2019 and 2024**.
- Concerning educational attainment, **11.8% of Wilkes County, NC residents possess a Bachelor's Degree** (9.7% below the national average), and **12.1% hold an Associate's Degree** (3.2% above the national average).
- The top three industries in 2024 are Animal Slaughtering and Processing, Restaurants and Other Eating Places, and Education and Hospitals (Local Government).

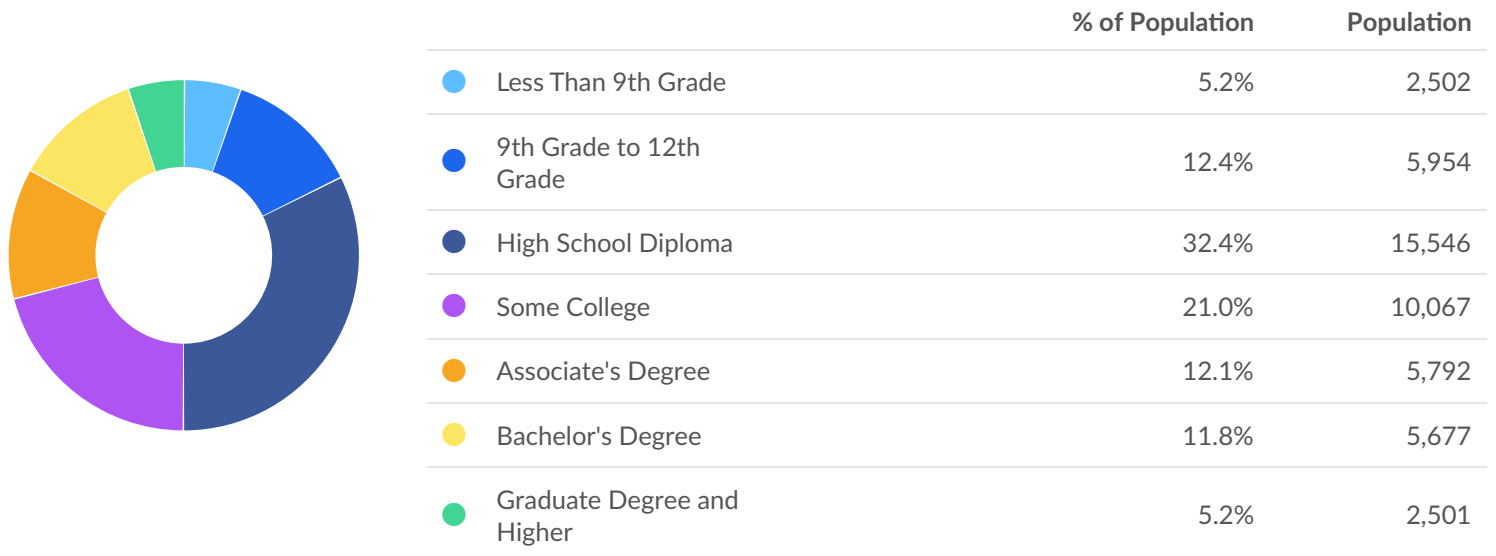
	Population (2025)	Labor Force (Jul 2025)	Jobs (2024)	Cost of Living	GRP	Imports	Exports
Region	65,461	24,969	22,150	94.5	\$2.68B	\$4.23B	\$3.15B
State	11,045,605	5,327,200	5,568,764	95.5	\$811.52B	\$603.55B	\$732.31B

Jul 2025 Labor Force Breakdown



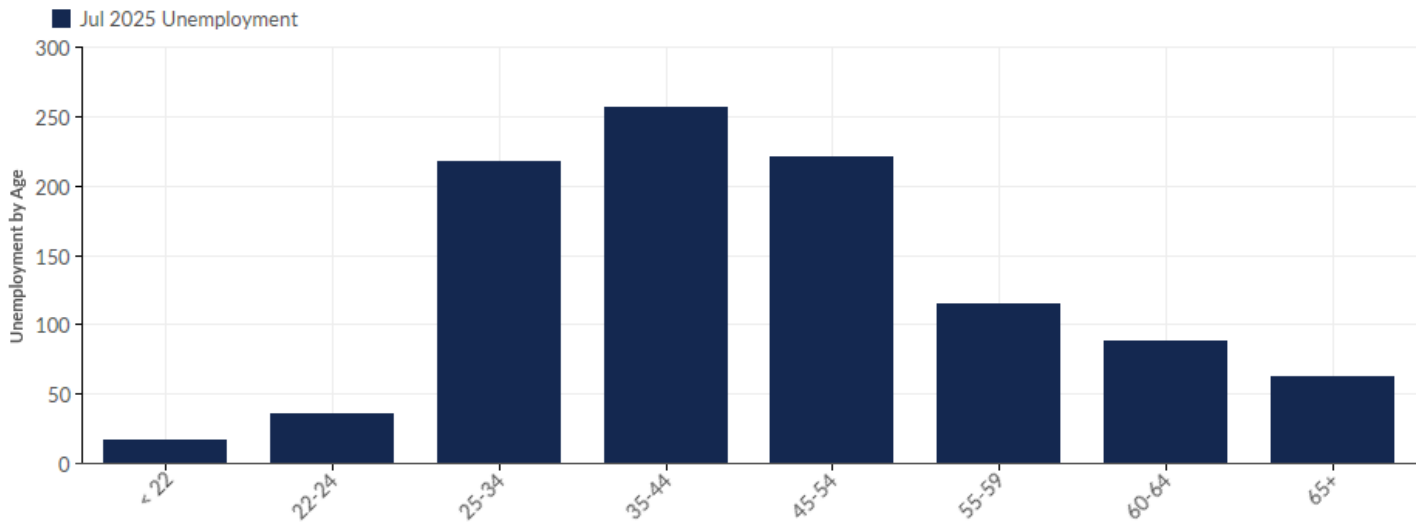
Educational Attainment

Concerning educational attainment, **11.8% of Wilkes County, NC residents possess a Bachelor's Degree** (9.7% below the national average), and **12.1% hold an Associate's Degree** (3.2% above the national average).



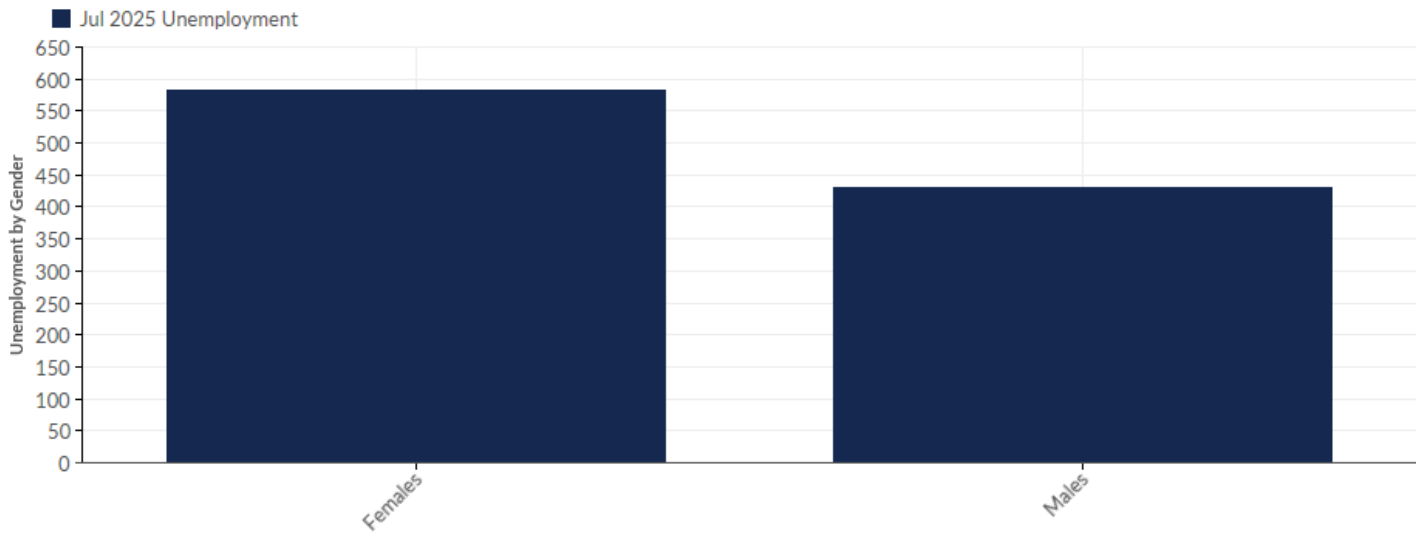
Unemployment by Demographics

Unemployment by Age



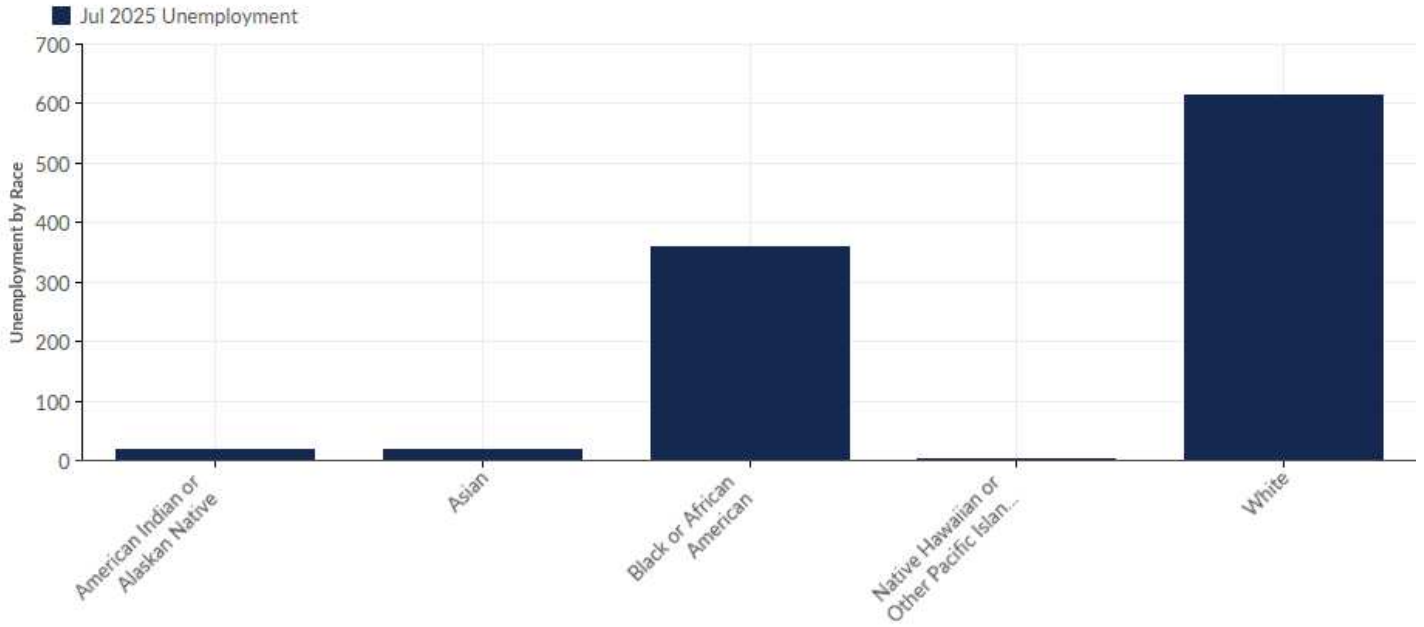
Age	Unemployment (Jul 2025)	% of Unemployed
< 22	17	1.68%
22-24	36	3.56%
25-34	218	21.54%
35-44	256	25.30%
45-54	221	21.84%
55-59	114	11.26%
60-64	88	8.70%
65+	63	6.23%
Total	1,012	100.00%

Unemployment by Gender



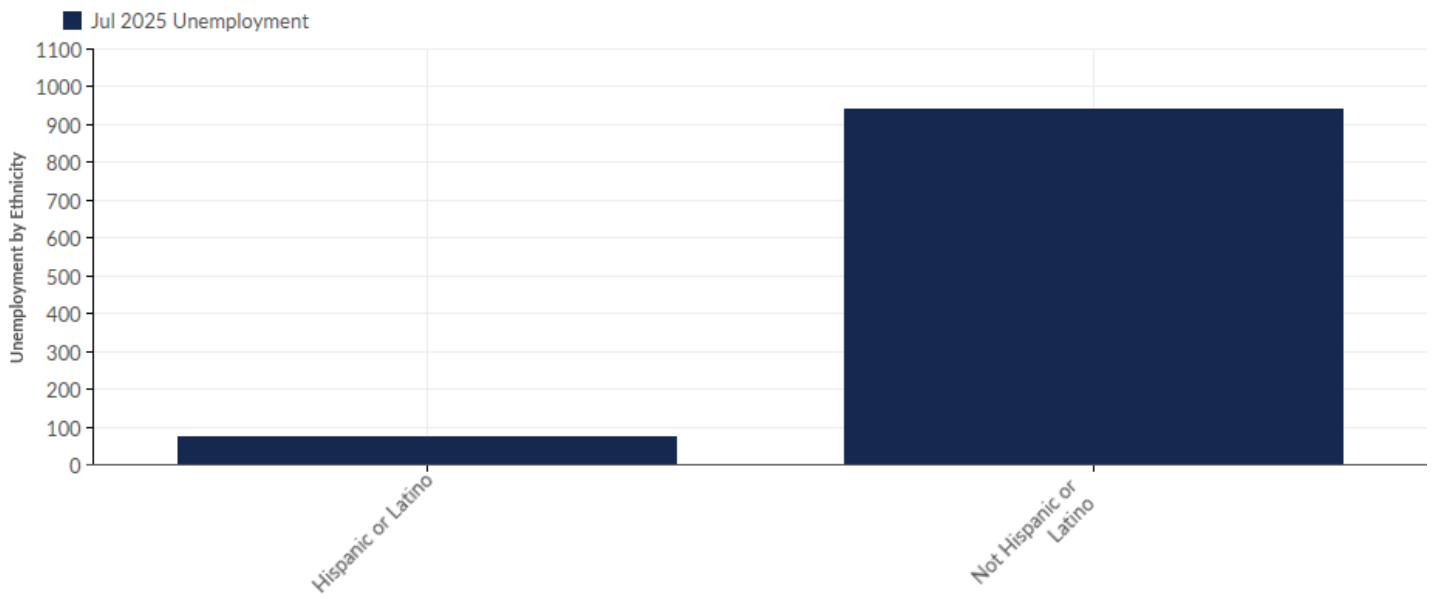
Gender	Unemployment (Jul 2025)	% of Unemployed
Females	582	57.51%
Males	430	42.49%
Total	1,012	100.00%

Unemployment by Race



Race	Unemployment (Jul 2025)	% of Unemployed
American Indian or Alaskan Native	17	1.68%
Asian	18	1.78%
Black or African American	359	35.47%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0.30%
White	614	60.67%
Total	1,012	100.00%

Unemployment by Ethnicity

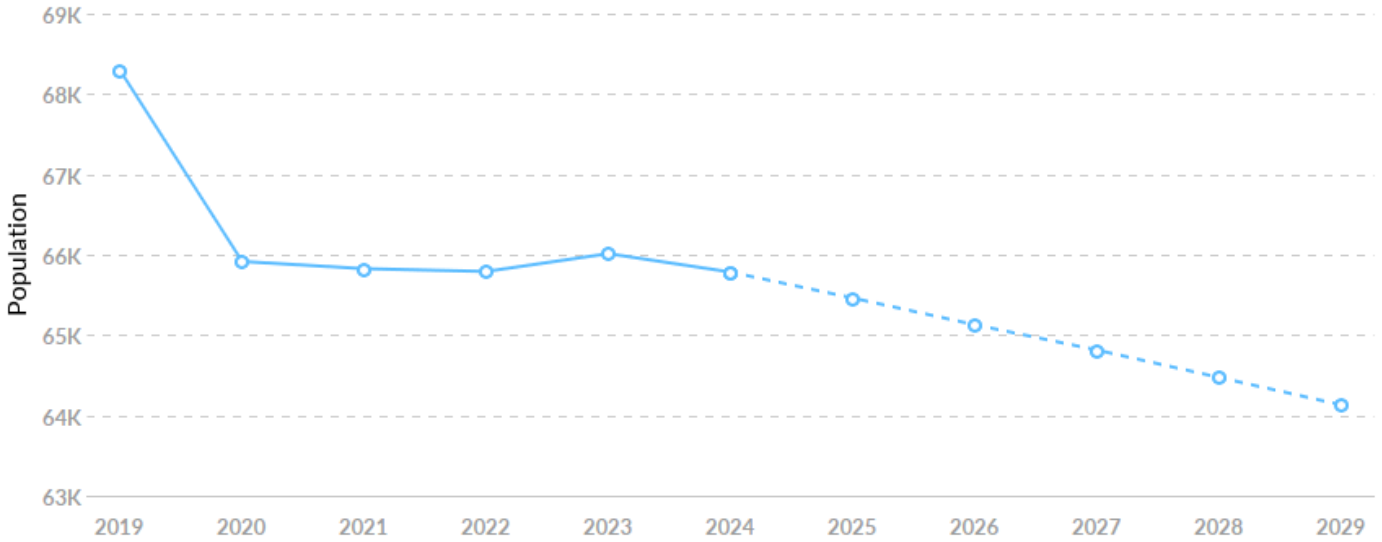


Ethnicity	Unemployment (Jul 2025)	% of Unemployed
Hispanic or Latino	72	7.11%
Not Hispanic or Latino	940	92.89%
Total	1,012	100.00%

Historic & Projected Trends

Population Trends

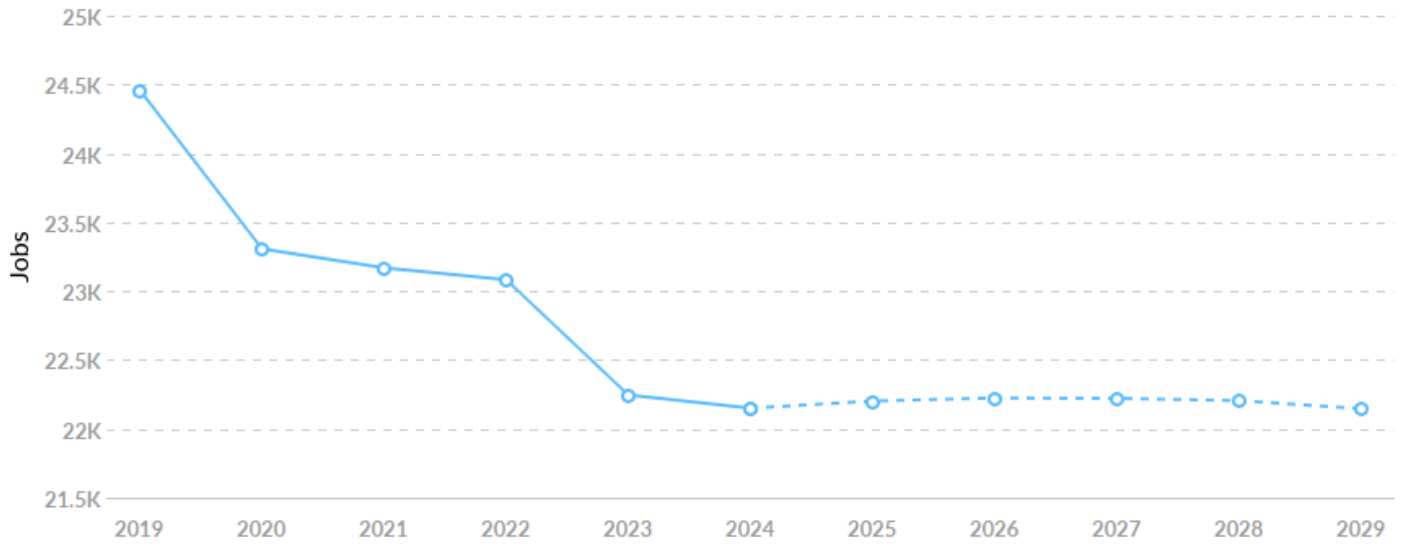
As of 2024 the region's population **declined by 3.7%** since 2019, falling by 2,512. Population is expected to **decrease by 2.5%** between 2024 and 2029, losing 1,653.



Timeframe	Population
2019	68,296
2020	65,916
2021	65,826
2022	65,791
2023	66,013
2024	65,784
2025	65,461
2026	65,128
2027	64,813
2028	64,472
2029	64,130

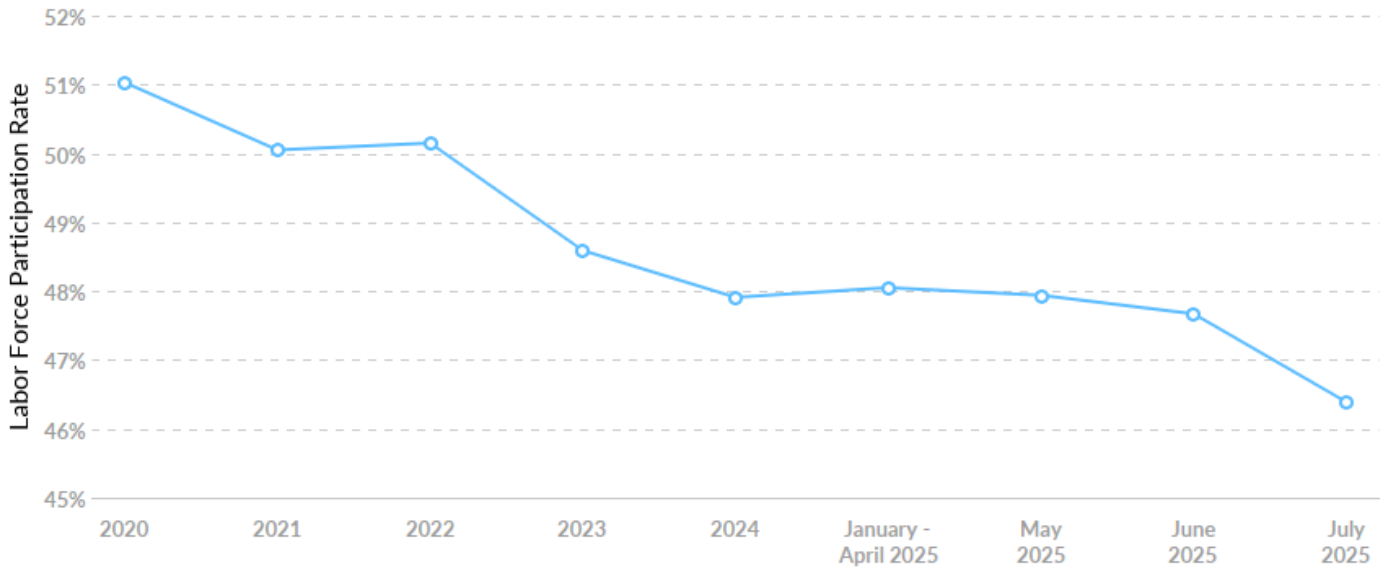
Job Trends

From 2019 to 2024, jobs declined by 9.4% in Wilkes County, NC from 24,459 to 22,150. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 4.3% by 13.7%.



Timeframe	Jobs
2019	24,459
2020	23,307
2021	23,169
2022	23,083
2023	22,246
2024	22,150
2025	22,202
2026	22,224
2027	22,221
2028	22,205
2029	22,146

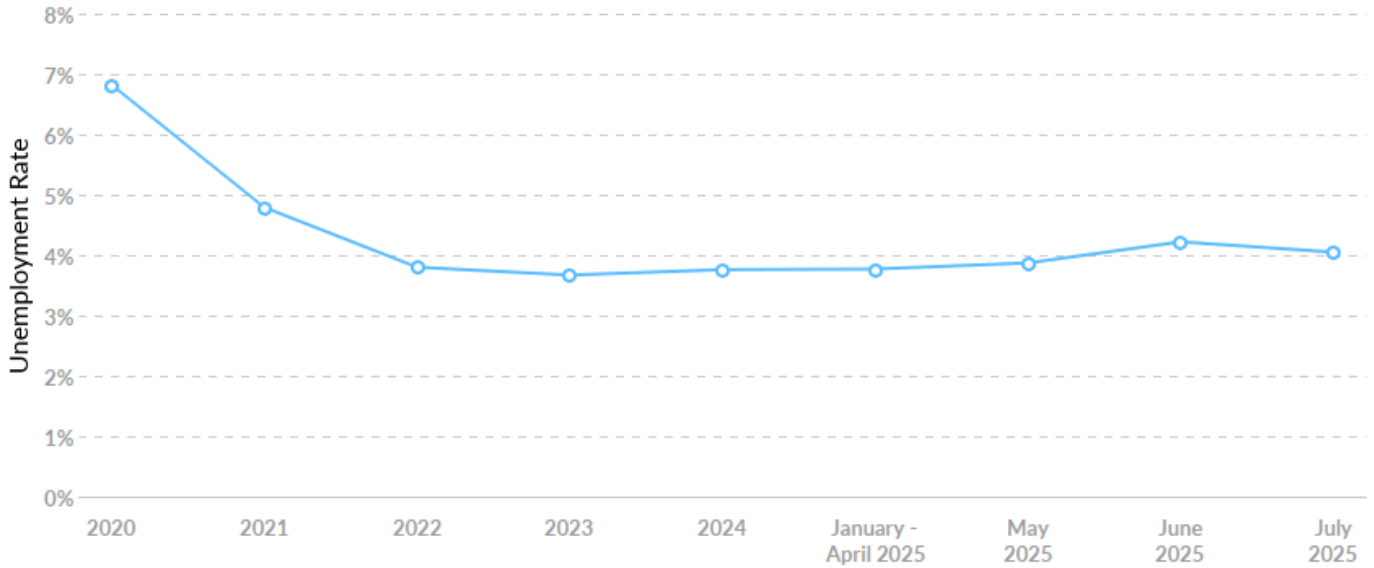
Labor Force Participation Rate Trends



Timeframe	Labor Force Participation Rate
2020	51.03%
2021	50.05%
2022	50.15%
2023	48.59%
2024	47.91%
January - April 2025	48.05%
May 2025	47.94%
June 2025	47.67%
July 2025	46.39%

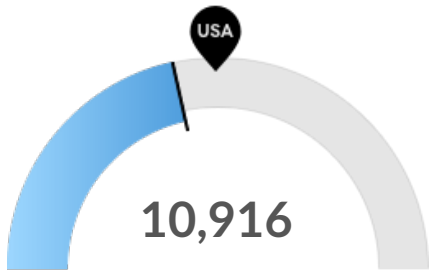
Unemployment Rate Trends

Wilkes County, NC had a July 2025 unemployment rate of 4.05%, **decreasing from 6.82%** 5 years before.



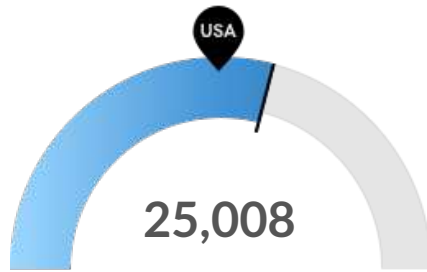
Timeframe	Unemployment Rate
2020	6.82%
2021	4.79%
2022	3.80%
2023	3.67%
2024	3.76%
January - April 2025	3.77%
May 2025	3.87%
June 2025	4.22%
July 2025	4.05%

Population Characteristics



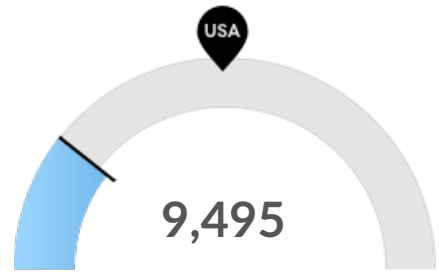
Millennials

Wilkes County, NC has 10,916 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 13,413.



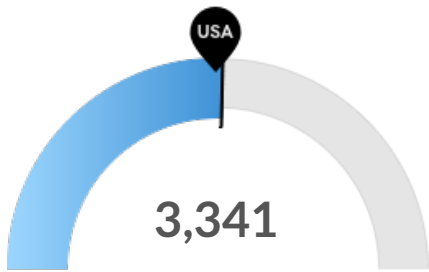
Retiring Soon

Retirement risk is high in Wilkes County, NC. The national average for an area this size is 19,928 people 55 or older, while there are 25,008 here.



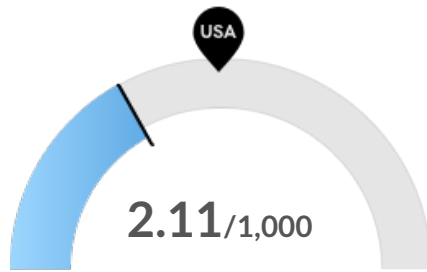
Racial Diversity

Racial diversity is low in Wilkes County, NC. The national average for an area this size is 27,492 racially diverse people, while there are 9,495 here.



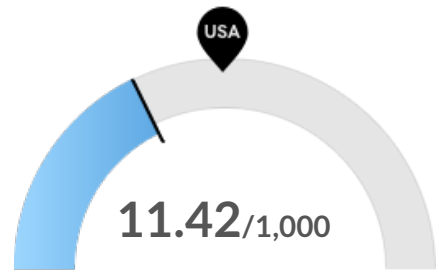
Veterans

Wilkes County, NC has 3,341 veterans. The national average for an area this size is 3,266.



Violent Crime

Wilkes County, NC has 2.11 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 3.54 per 1,000 people.

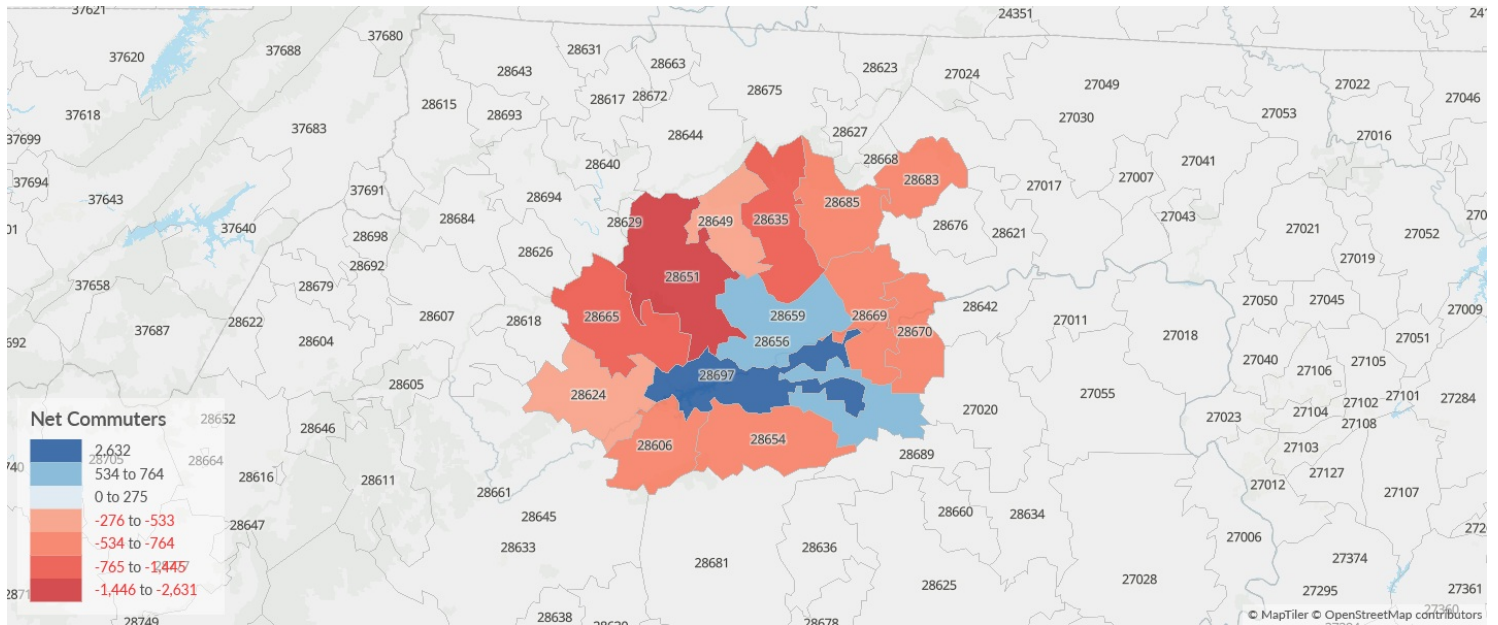


Property Crime

Wilkes County, NC has 11.42 property crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 18.02 per 1,000 people.

Place of Work vs Place of Residence

Understanding where talent in Wilkes County, NC currently works compared to where talent lives can help you optimize site decisions.



Where Talent Works

ZIP	Name	2024 Employment
28659	North Wilkesboro, NC (...)	9,684
28697	Wilkesboro, NC (in Wilk...	7,778
28651	Millers Creek, NC (in W...	1,019
28654	Moravian Falls, NC (in W...	584
28670	Ronda, NC (in Wilkes co...	581

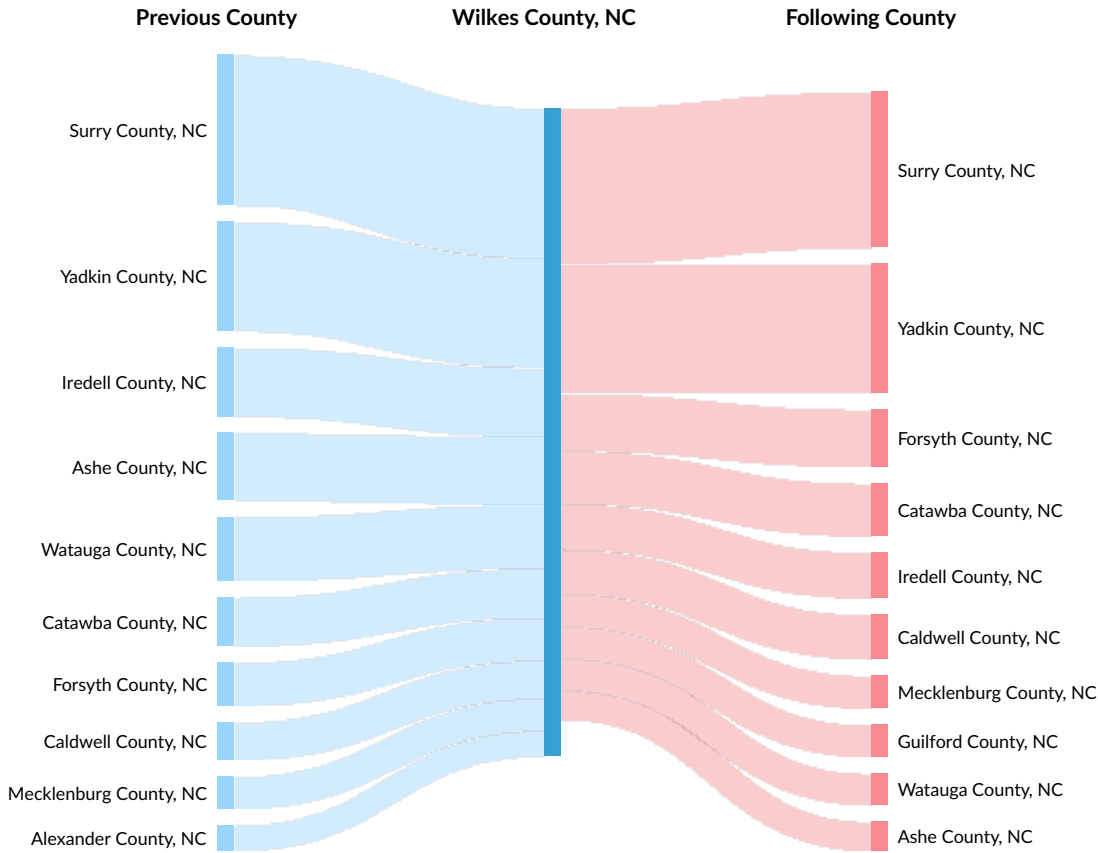
Where Talent Lives

ZIP	Name	2024 Workers
28659	North Wilkesboro, NC (...)	9,120
28697	Wilkesboro, NC (in Wilk...	5,146
28651	Millers Creek, NC (in W...	2,465
28635	Hays, NC (in Wilkes cou...	1,474
28669	Roaring River, NC (in W...	1,233

Inbound and Outbound Migration

The table below analyzes past and current residents of Wilkes County, NC. The left column shows residents of other counties migrating to Wilkes County, NC. The right column shows residents migrating from Wilkes County, NC to other counties.

As of 2022, 208 people have migrated from Surry County, NC to Wilkes County, NC. In the same year, 216 people left Wilkes County, NC migrating to Surry County, NC. The total Net Migration for Wilkes County, NC in 2022 was 278.



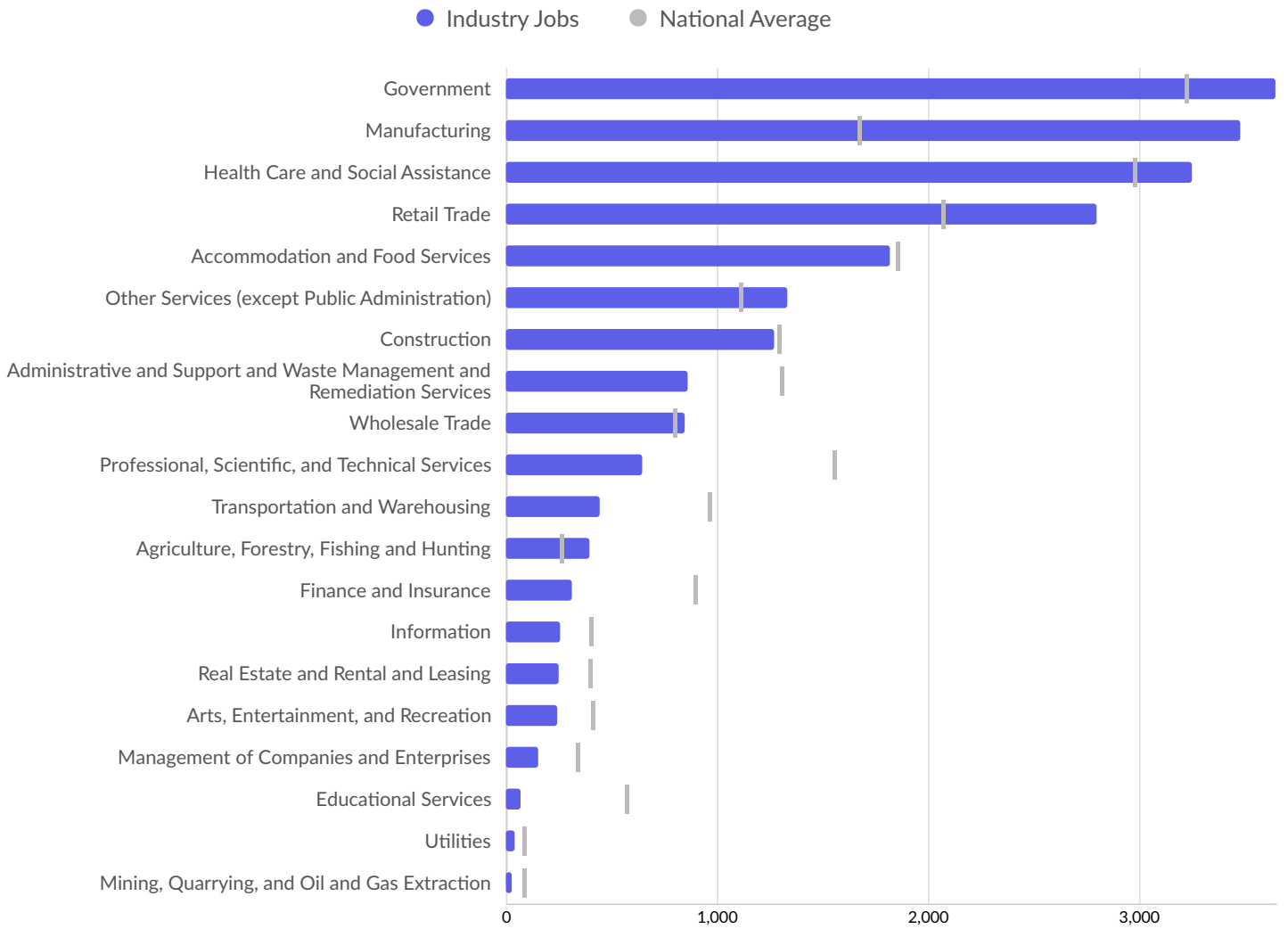
Top Previous Counties	Migrations
Surry County, NC	208
Yadkin County, NC	152
Iredell County, NC	96
Ashe County, NC	94
Watauga County, NC	89
Catawba County, NC	68

Top Previous Counties	Migrations
Forsyth County, NC	60
Caldwell County, NC	53
Mecklenburg County, NC	45
Alexander County, NC	36
Wake County, NC	34
Guilford County, NC	30
Gaston County, NC	17
Cumberland County, NC	14
Cabarrus County, NC	14

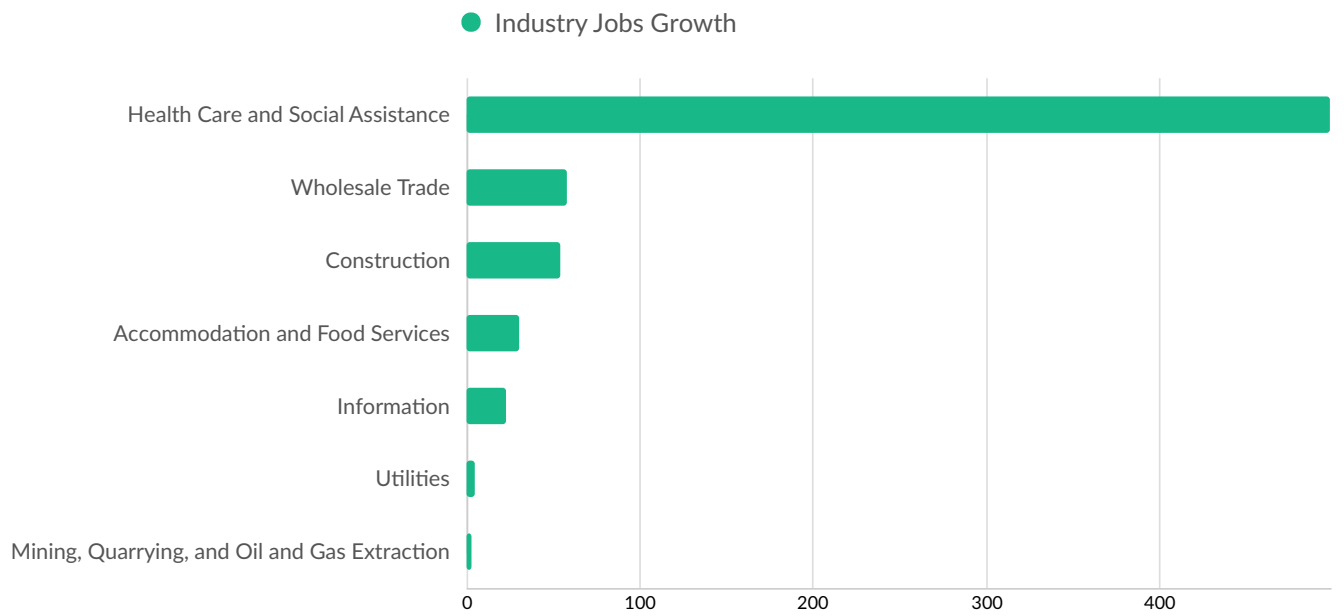
Top Following Counties	Migrations
Surry County, NC	216
Yadkin County, NC	180
Forsyth County, NC	80
Catawba County, NC	73
Iredell County, NC	63
Caldwell County, NC	62
Mecklenburg County, NC	45
Guilford County, NC	45
Watauga County, NC	44
Ashe County, NC	41
New Hanover County, NC	29
Johnston County, NC	23
Carteret County, NC	20
Alexander County, NC	20
Manatee County, FL	19

Industry Characteristics

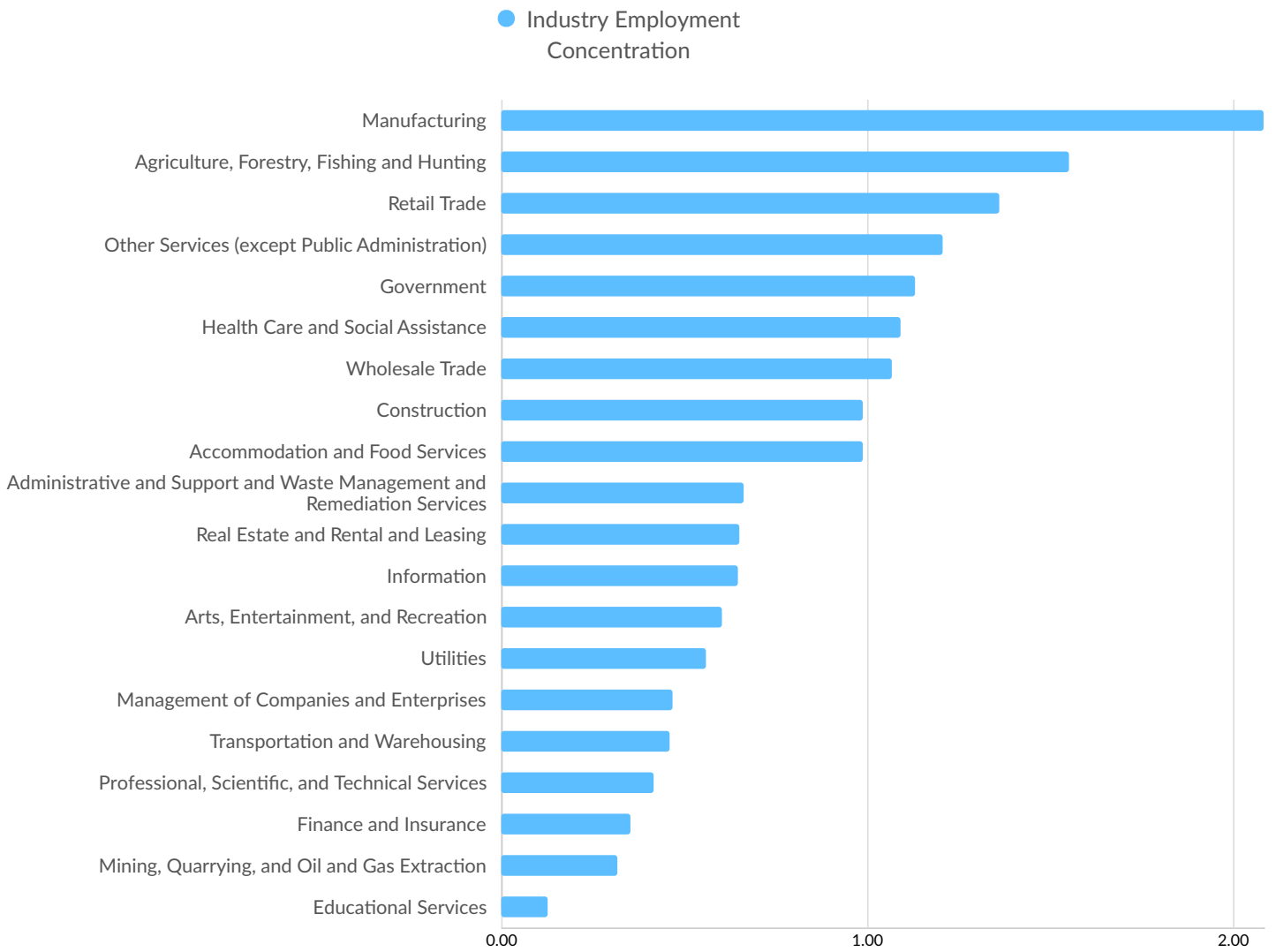
Largest Industries



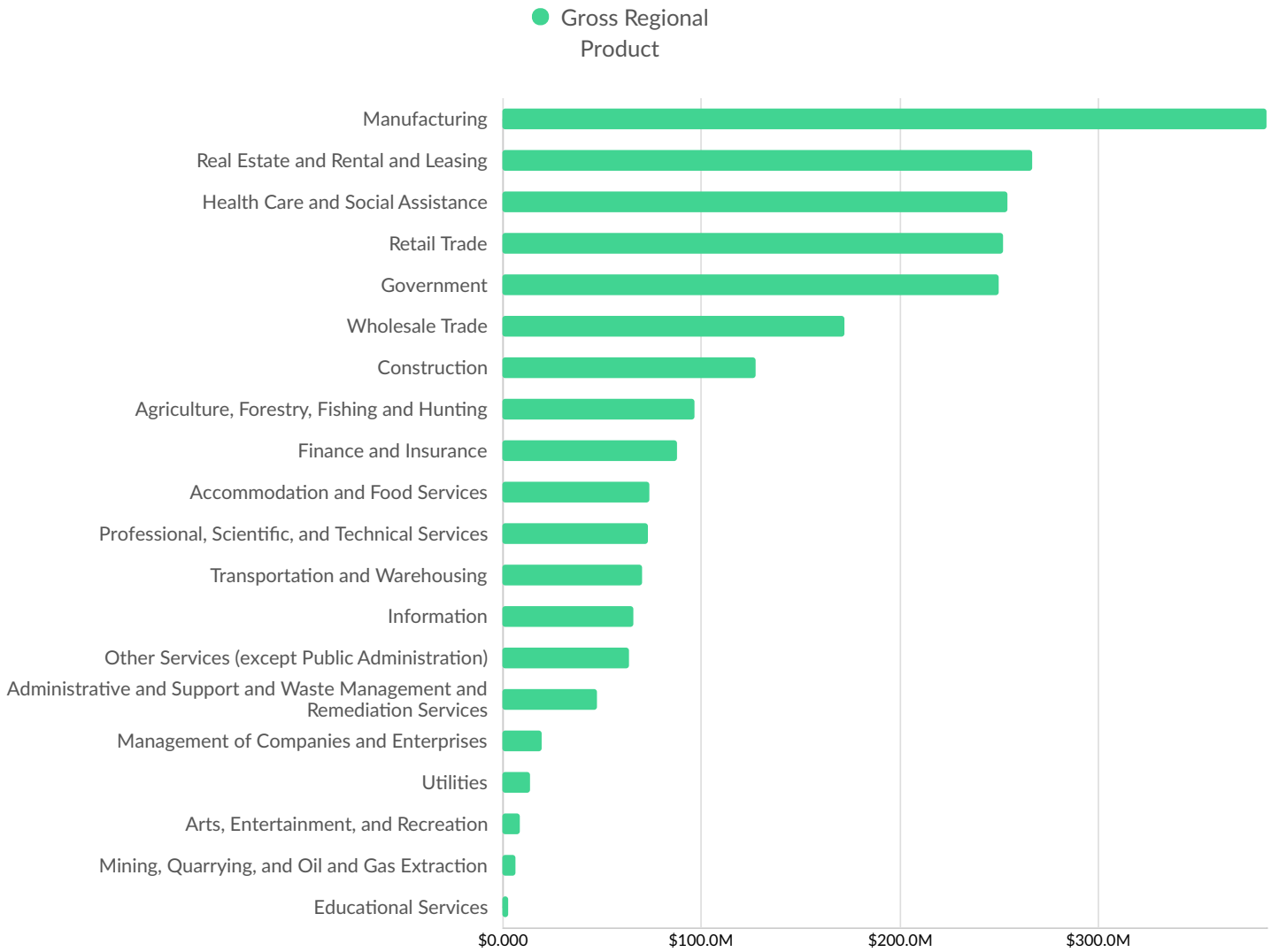
Top Growing Industries



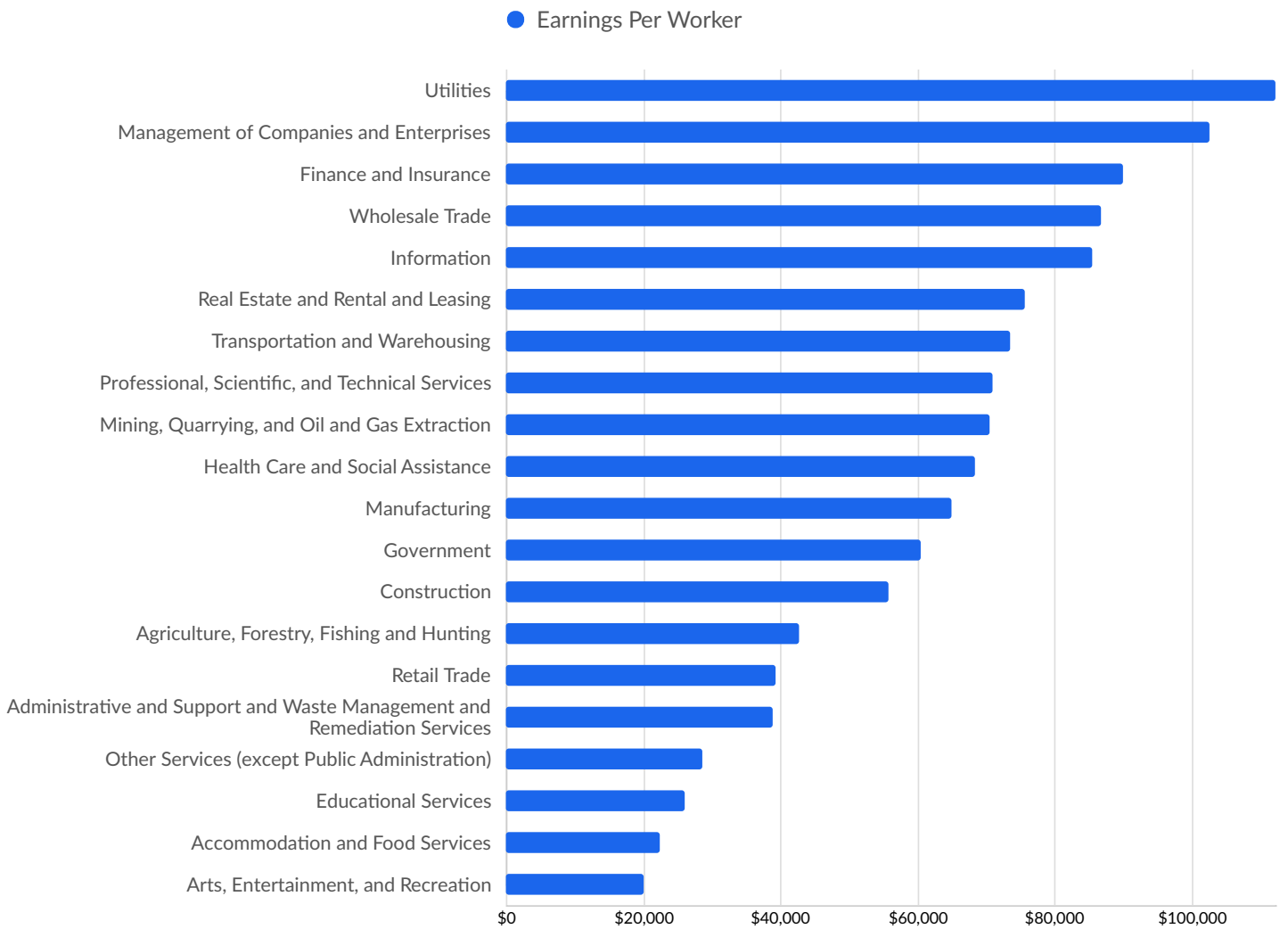
Top Industry Employment Concentration



Top Industry GRP























Top Industry Earnings



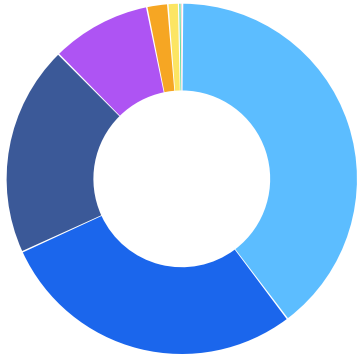
Business Characteristics

5,112 Companies Employ Your Workers

Online profiles for your workers mention 5,112 companies as employers, with the top 10 appearing below. In the last 12 months, 545 companies in Wilkes County, NC posted job postings, with the top 10 appearing below.

Top Companies	Profiles	Top Companies Posting	Unique Postings
Lowe's	1,169 	Atrium Health	232 
Wilkes Community College	321 	Tyson Foods	168 
Tyson Foods	315 	Samaritan's Purse International ...	133 
Wilkes County Schools	243 	Lowe's	98 
Atrium Health	121 	Wilkes County Schools	76 
Samaritan's Purse International ...	101 	Wilkes Community College	62 
Wilkes Regional Medical Center	92 	Food Lion	59 
Ecmd	78 	Walmart	53 
Carolina West Wireless	66 	Dollar General	47 
Walmart	59 	BAYADA Home Health Care	42 

Business Size

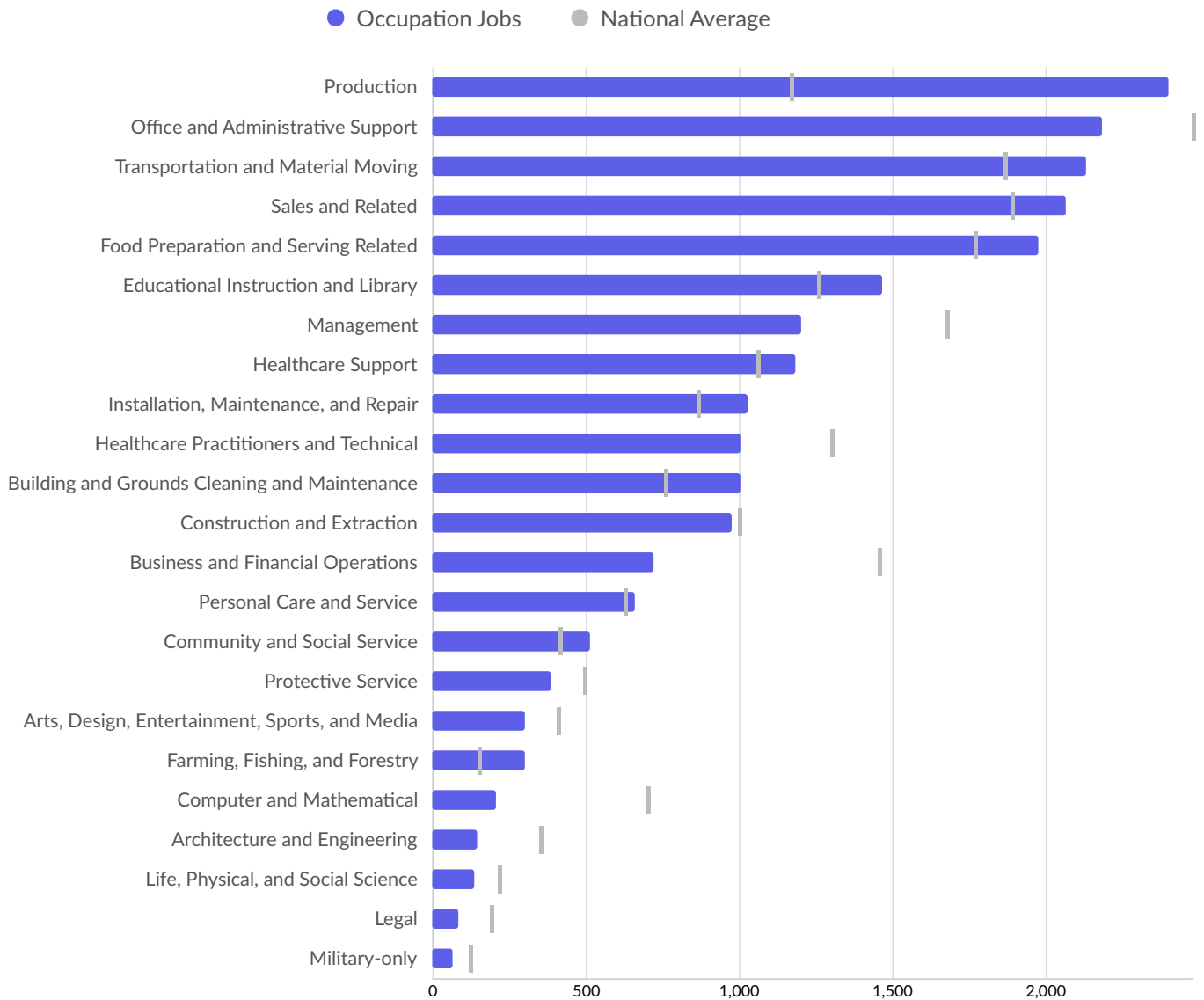


	Percentage	Business Count
● 1 to 4 employees	39.6%	1,004
● 5 to 9 employees	28.5%	721
● 10 to 19 employees	19.4%	492
● 20 to 49 employees	9.2%	233
● 50 to 99 employees	1.9%	49
● 100 to 249 employees	1.0%	25
● 250 to 499 employees	0.2%	6
● 500+ employees	0.1%	3

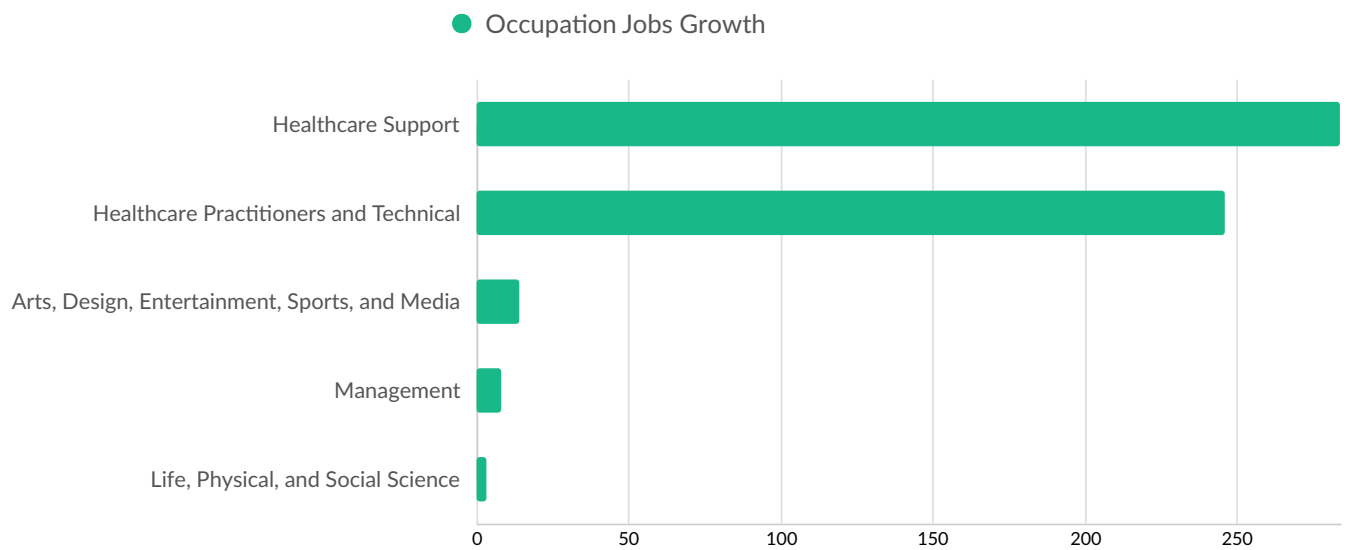
*Business Data by DatabaseUSA.com is third-party data provided by Lightcast to its customers as a convenience, and Lightcast does not endorse or warrant its accuracy or consistency with other published Lightcast data. In most cases, the Business Count will not match total companies with profiles on the summary tab.

Workforce Characteristics

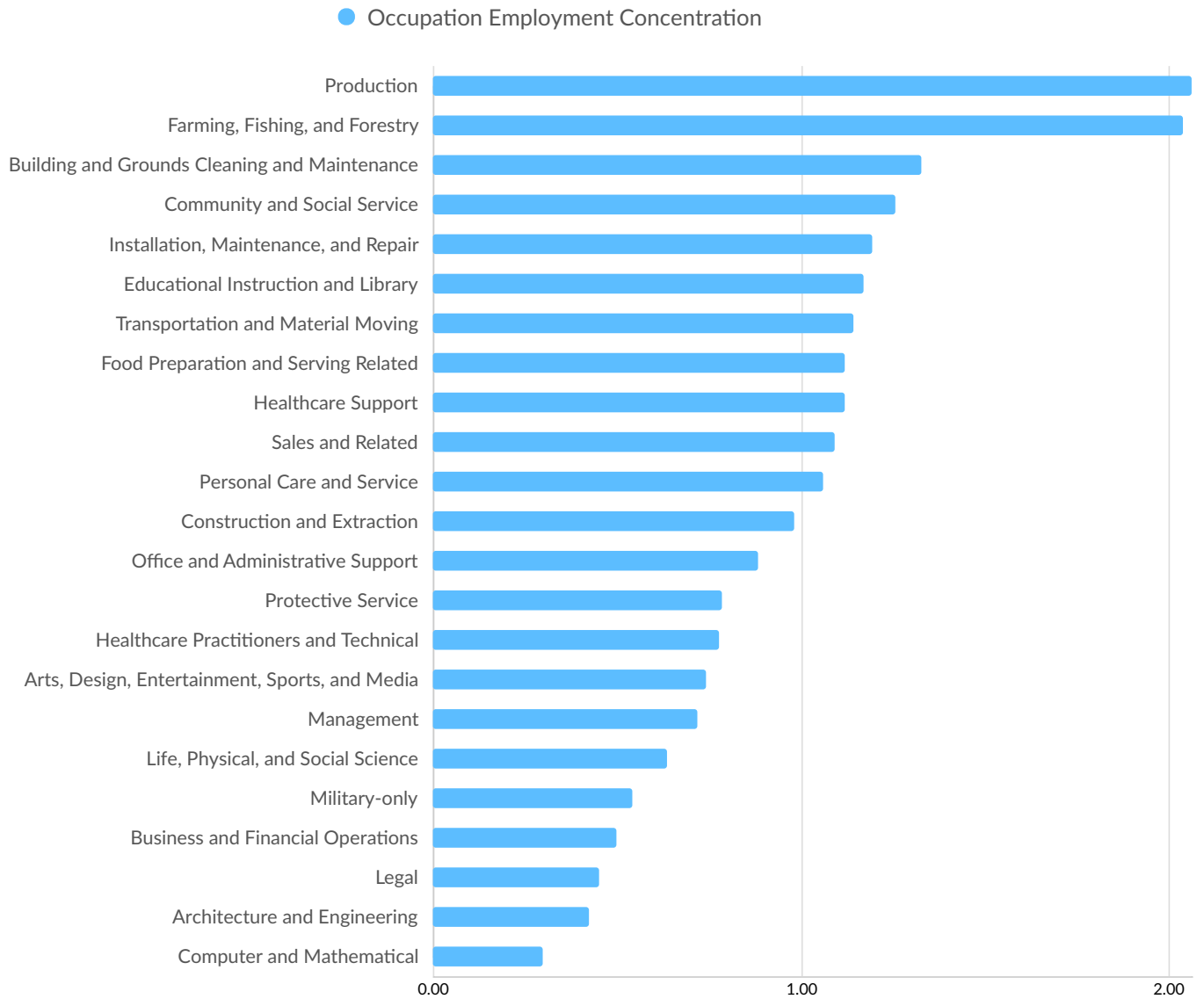
Largest Occupations



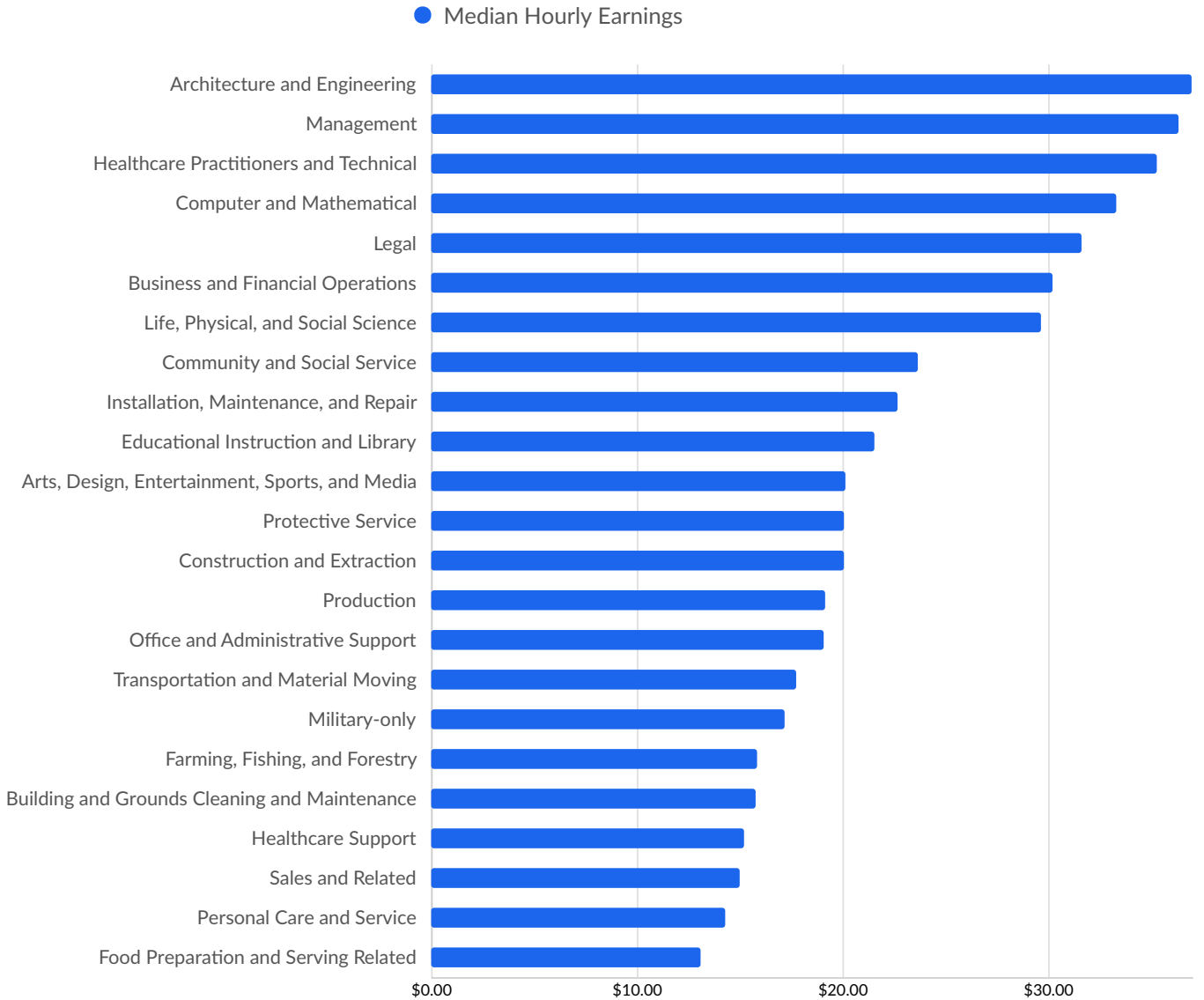
Top Growing Occupations



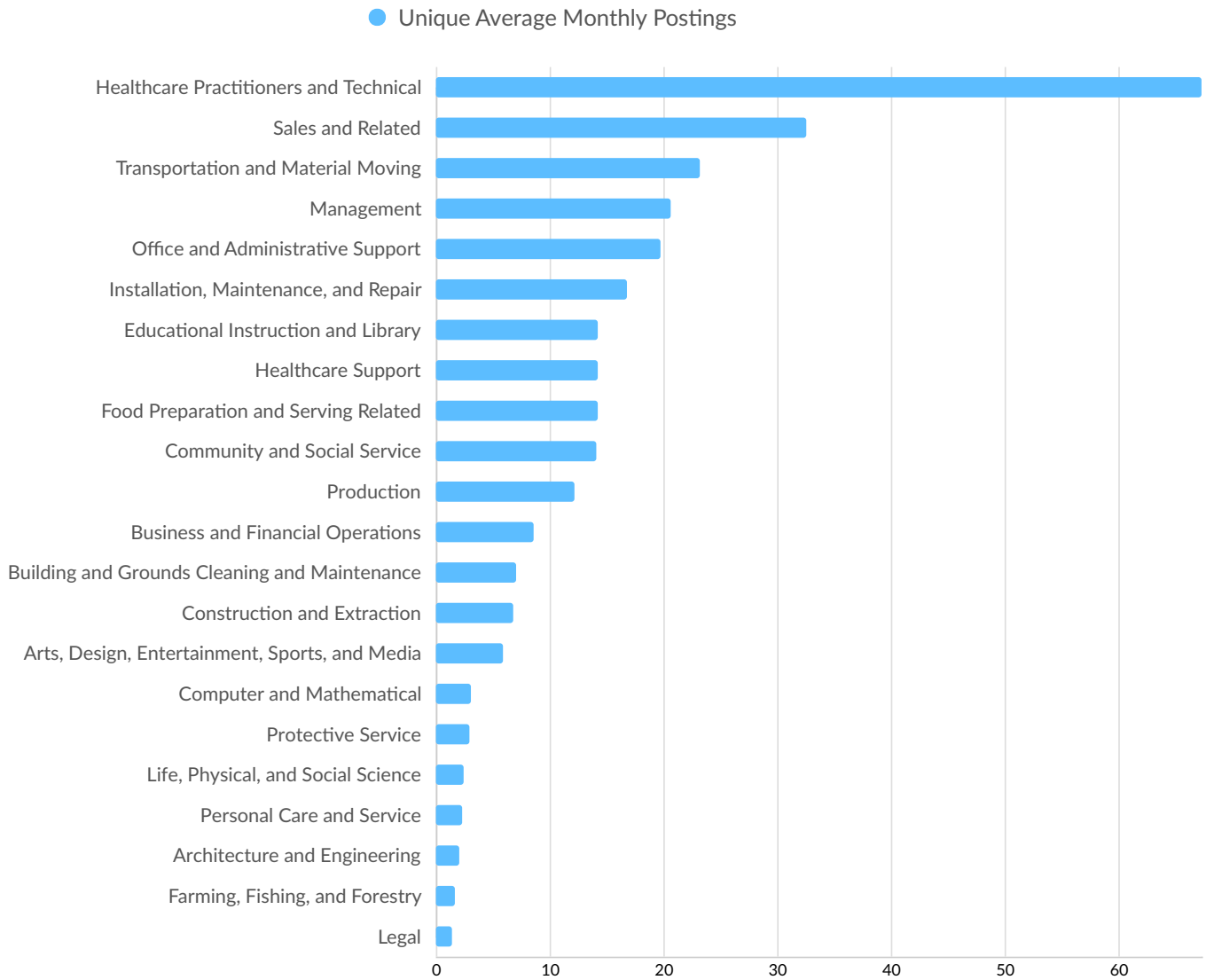
Top Occupation Employment Concentration



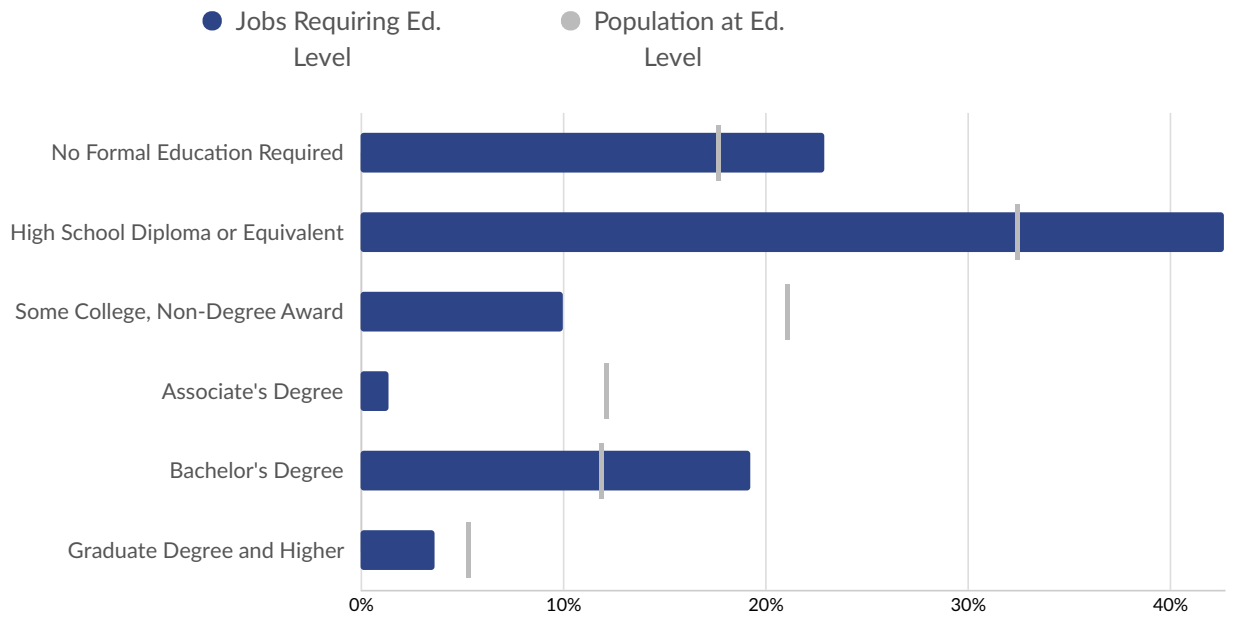
Top Occupation Earnings



Top Posted Occupations

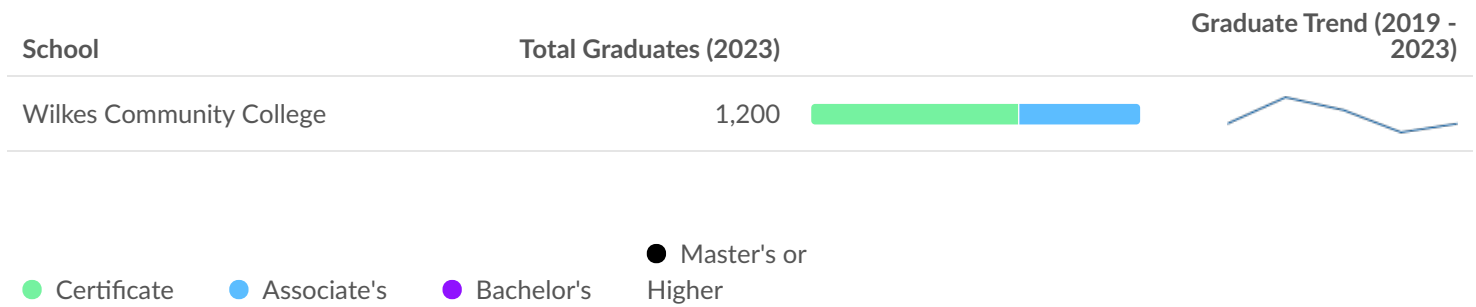


Underemployment



Educational Pipeline

In 2023, there were 1,200 graduates in Wilkes County, NC. This pipeline has remained stable (neither grown nor shrunk) over the last 5 years. The highest share of these graduates come from "Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies" (Associate's), "Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician" (Certificate), and "Business Administration and Management, General" (Certificate).



In-Demand Skills

