

Civilian Labor Force

The Hickory MSA's July 2022 unemployment rate equaled 3.6%. The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate was 3.4% as of July 2023 (Figure 1). Between July 2022 and July 2023, the estimated number of employed persons increased from 170,103 to 170,772 (669), while the civilian labor force grew from 176,516 to 176,797 (281). In July 2023, the Hickory MSA was tied for fifth lowest (tenth highest) unemployment rate among North Carolina MSAs (Table 1). July 2023 unemployment rates by county were Alexander 3.1%, Burke 3.5%, Caldwell 3.5%, and Catawba 3.4%.

Figure 1. MSA Unemployment, July 2022 - July 2023
Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2023.

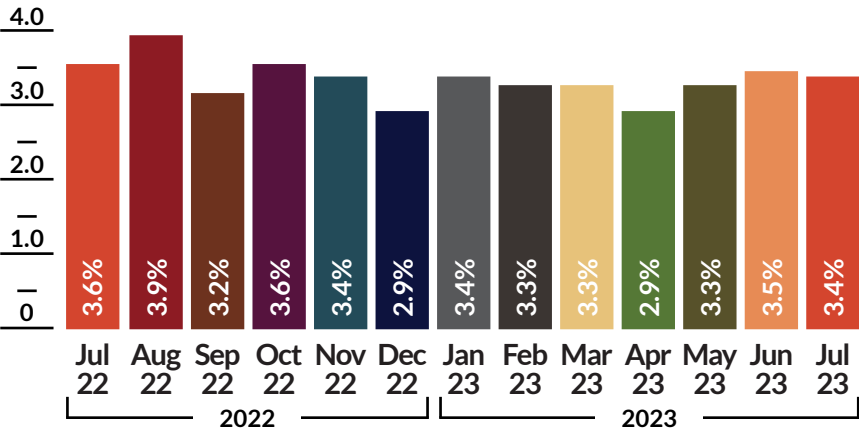


Table 1. MSA Unemployment Rate, July 2023

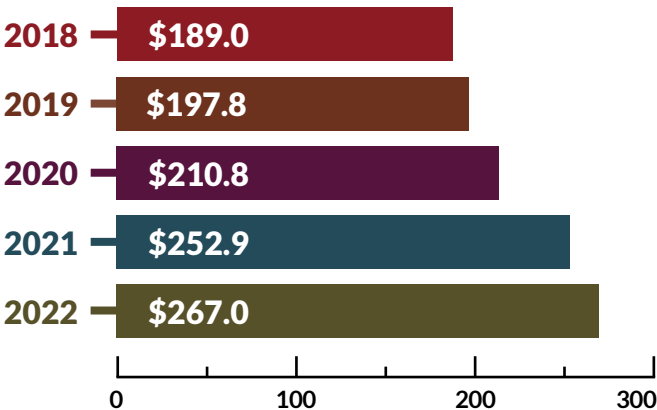
Asheville	2.9%
Durham-Chapel Hill	3.2%
Raleigh	3.2%
Wilmington	3.3%
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	3.4%
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton	3.4%
New Bern	3.5%
Winston-Salem	3.5%
Burlington	3.8%
Goldsboro	3.9%
Greensboro-High Point	4.1%
Jacksonville	4.3%
Greenville	4.4%
Fayetteville	5.0%
Rocky Mount	5.2%

Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2023.

Gross Collections

North Carolina gross collections include money from registration fees, penalties, interest, and sales and use taxes (county sales taxes are excluded). Hickory MSA State gross tax collections totaled \$189.0 million in 2018 (Figure 2). As economic conditions continued to improve, gross collections in the region grew to \$197.8 million in 2019. In 2020, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hickory MSA gross collections rose another 6.6% to \$252.9 million. As of 2022, Hickory MSA gross collections equaled \$267 million.

Figure 2. MSA Gross Collections (\$ Millions), 2018-2022 Source: NC Department of Revenue, 2023.



Gross collections increased in all four Hickory MSA counties between 2020 and 2022. (Table 2). In Catawba County, State gross tax collections exceeded \$162 million in 2022. From 2020 to 2022, gross tax collections grew by more than \$3.4 million in Alexander County, \$12.3 million in Burke County, and \$10.7 million in Caldwell County.

Table 2. Gross Tax Collections Source: NC Department of Revenue, 2023.

County	2020	2021	2022
Alexander	\$12,800,898	\$15,069,594	\$16,221,885
Burke	\$40,743,824	\$49,634,976	\$52,997,762
Caldwell	\$34,326,616	\$40,817,589	\$45,048,649
Catawba	\$122,957,235	\$147,386,454	\$162,723,935

EIN Spotlight | Hickory MSA Job Flow Trends

The “OntheMap” application (www.onthemap.ces.census.gov), provided through a partnership between the US Census Bureau and the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Partnership States, 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 work flows. This EIN Spotlight will focus on commuting patterns through 2020 (the most recent data available-released in April 2023) 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 2020 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.

Table 3 and Table 4 (located on page 3) begin the analysis of Hickory MSA job flow patterns. Table 3 displays the number of jobs (job count) in the Hickory Metro in which 1) the job is in the same Hickory MSA County as the worker, 2) the job is 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 2020, Hickory MSA residents worked a total of 152,852 jobs, or 9,324 more jobs than 2010. The 2020 total job number was 5,379 lower than in 2019 due to COVID-19 related job losses. Most of the employment losses between 2019 and 2020 (-3,769 or 70.1%) occurred where the job was in the same county as the worker’s residence. Only 8.7% (or -469) of the decrease were from jobs located outside the Hickory MSA, where the worker lived inside the Hickory MSA. Results in Table 3 show a lower number of jobs where the worker resides in the same county as the job (80,744) in 2020 than in 2010 (83,273). Despite COVID-19 impacts, the number of Hickory MSA employees where the worker resides in a Hickory MSA County, but the job is located outside of the Hickory MSA was still much higher in 2020 (41,554) than in 2010 (32,382). As of 2020 (just like in 2019), one-in-five jobs (20.0%) worked by Hickory MSA residents are 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*), 2010-2020 *Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.*

Job/Resident Location	2010 Job Count	% of Jobs	2019 Job Count	% of Jobs	2020 Job Count	% of Jobs	Change in Jobs 2019-20	Change in % of Jobs 2019-20
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located in same county as worker’s residence	83,273	58.0%	84,513	53.4%	80,744	52.8%	-3,769	-0.6%
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located in other Hickory MSA County**	27,873	19.4%	31,695	20.0%	30,554	20.0%	-1,141	0.0%
Reside in Hickory MSA County, job located outside of Hickory MSA***	32,382	22.6%	42,023	26.6%	41,554	27.2%	-469	0.6%
Total Job Count of Hickory MSA residents	143,528	100.0%	158,231	100.0%	152,852	100.0%	-5,379	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.

The percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in which the job is in the same county as the worker’s residence dropped from 64.3% in 2005 to 52.8% in 2020 (Figure 3, on page 3), which indicates that many workers have increased the number of miles they are willing to commute over the past 15 years. As the percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in the same county in which they live have decreased, the percentage of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents outside of the region has been steadily growing (Figure 4, on page 3). In 2020, more than one-quarter (27.2%) of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents were located outside the region. In comparison, just 16.0% of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents in 2005 were located 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.

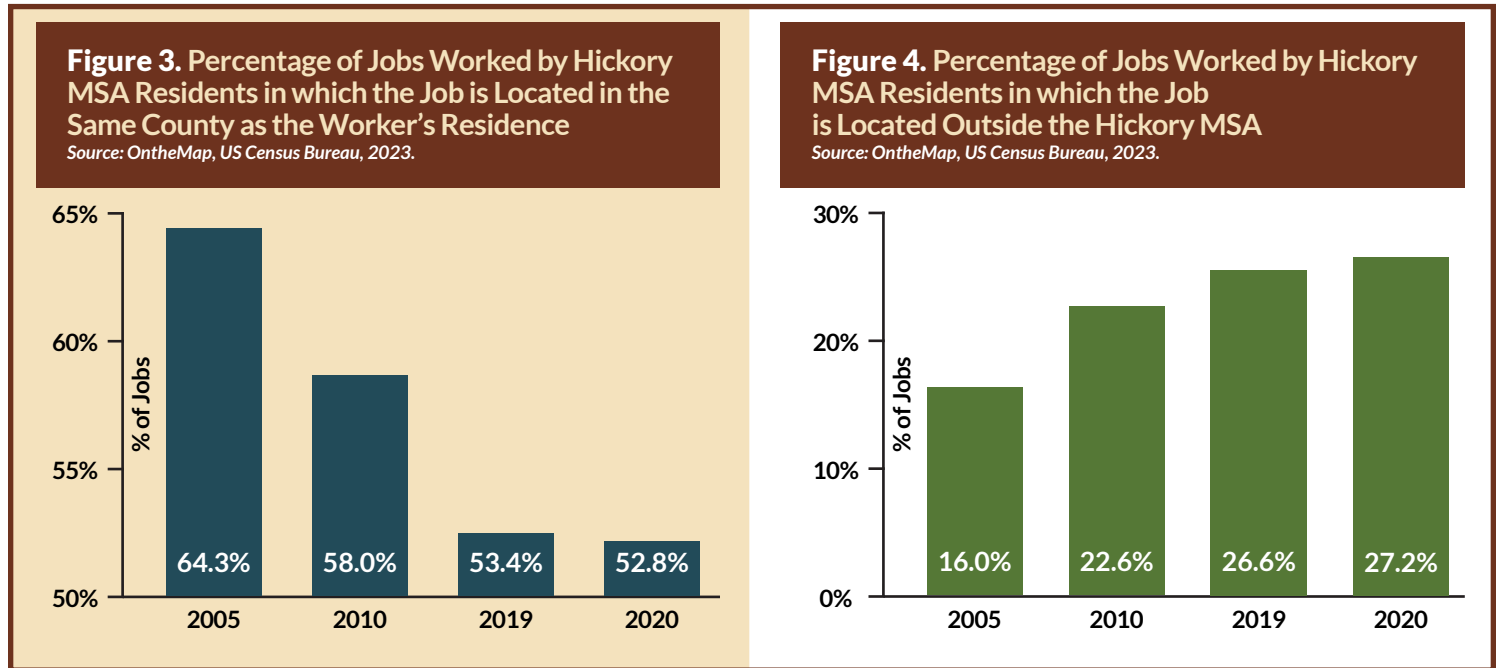


Table 4 reveals the number of Hickory MSA jobs in which 1) the worker lives in the same Hickory MSA County that the job is in, 2) the worker lives in a different Hickory MSA County than the job is in and 3) the worker resides outside of the Hickory MSA. The number of jobs in the Hickory MSA increased by 15,341 between 2010 and 2019, but fell by 6,470 to 145,035 jobs in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Table 4. Hickory MSA Job-County to Resident-County Work Flows (All Jobs*), 2010-2020 Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

Job/Resident Location	2010 Job Count	% of Jobs	2019 Job Count	% of Jobs	2020 Job Count	% of Jobs	Change in Jobs 2019-20	Change in % of Jobs 2019-20
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides in same county as job	83,273	61.1%	84,513	55.8%	80,744	55.6%	-3,769	-0.2%
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides in other Hickory MSA County**	27,873	20.5%	31,695	20.9%	30,554	21.1%	-1,141	0.2%
Job in Hickory MSA County, worker resides outside of the Hickory MSA***	25,018	18.4%	35,297	23.3%	33,737	23.3%	-1,560	0.0%
Total Number of Jobs in Hickory MSA	136,164	100.0%	151,505	100.0%	145,035	100.0%	-6,470	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.

More than 55% of all Hickory MSA jobs were positions where the worker lived in the same county that the job is located. In 2020, about 23.3% of Hickory MSA jobs were worked by residents that live outside the region compared to just 18.4% in 2010.

Data from the OntheMap application indicates the region had 145,035 jobs in 2020 with 152,852 jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents, for a net outflow of 7,817 jobs. Back 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 data 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. Hickory MSA Net outflow was 1,091 more in 2020 than during 2019 (6,726 net outflow).

Results seen in Table 5 show that all four Hickory MSA counties had greater job inflows (occurs when a job is in the County, but the worker resides in a different County) in 2020 (even with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic effecting the 2020 data) than in 2010. In Alexander County, job inflows more than doubled between 2010 and 2020 to 4,954. Total job inflows in Burke County rose from 8,240 in 2010 to 10,056 in 2020. Caldwell County job inflows equaled 8,279 in 2020 compared to 7,608 in 2010. Catawba County job inflows grew from 34,708 in 2010 to 41,002 in 2020. All four counties in the Hickory MSA had greater job inflows from both other Hickory MSA Counties and counties outside the Hickory MSA in 2020 than in 2010.

Table 5. Hickory MSA Job Inflows by County, 2010-2020 Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

County	2010 JOB COUNT				2020 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	5,874	16,444	15,790	42,636
Job located in County, worker resides in other Hickory MSA County	1,872	4,856	5,243	15,902	2,915	5,273	5,256	16,913
Job located in County, worker resides outside the Hickory MSA	463	3,384	2,365	18,806	2,039	4,783	3,023	24,089
Total Jobs in County	8,457	25,991	25,107	76,609	10,828	26,500	24,069	83,638
Total Job inflows (+)	2,334	8,240	7,608	34,708	4,954	10,056	8,279	41,002

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 2020 (Table 6). Catawba County experienced the largest job outflow increase (4,843), from 21,736 in 2010 to 26,579 in 2020. Job outflows in Caldwell County grew by 3,552 workers between 2010 (14,680) and 2020 (18,232). Burke County job outflows rose from 14,640 to 17,778 in 2020. Job outflows in Alexander County exceeded 9,500 in 2020.

Table 6. Hickory MSA Job Outflows by County, 2010-2020 Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

County	2010 JOB COUNT				2020 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	5,874	16,444	15,790	42,636
Job located in other Hickory MSA County, worker resides in County	5,251	7,948	8,722	5,952	5,071	8,629	10,055	6,602
Job located outside the Hickory MSA, worker resides in County	3,948	6,692	5,958	15,784	4,448	9,149	8,177	19,977
Total Jobs worked by County residents	15,321	32,391	32,179	63,637	15,393	34,222	34,022	69,215
Total job outflows (-)	-9,199	-14,640	-14,680	-21,736	-9,519	-17,778	-18,232	-26,579

Among the Hickory MSA Counties, Alexander has the highest percentage of residents taking jobs in other counties (Figure 5, page 5). As of 2020, 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 employment in other counties (Figure 6, page 5). More than half of Burke County residents that worked in 2019 and 2020 were employed in other counties.

Net job flows for Hickory MSA counties between 2010 and 2020 are displayed in Table 7, page 5. Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties had net job outflows in 2020, meaning more county residents took jobs in other counties than in-county jobs worked by out of county residents. Catawba is a net job inflow County. Between 2010 and 2020, net job inflows in Catawba County grew from 12,972 to 14,423. Net job outflows in Caldwell County increased by more than 3,552 positions from 2010 to 2020. Growth in net job outflows (1,372) occurred in Burke County from 2010 to 2020, while net outflows have fallen by more than 2,300 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, 2023.*

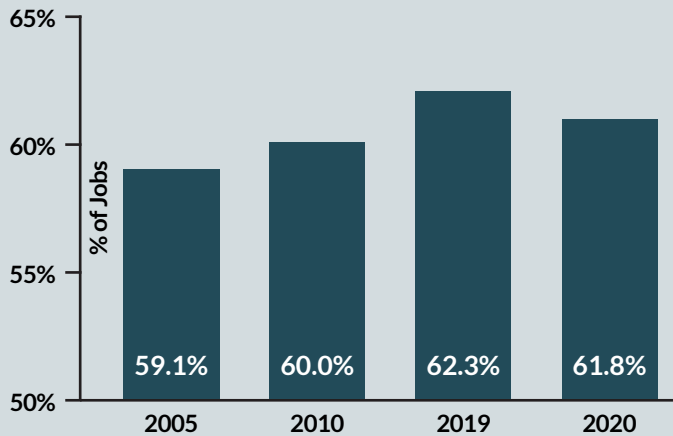


Figure 6. Percentage of Burke County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties *Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.*

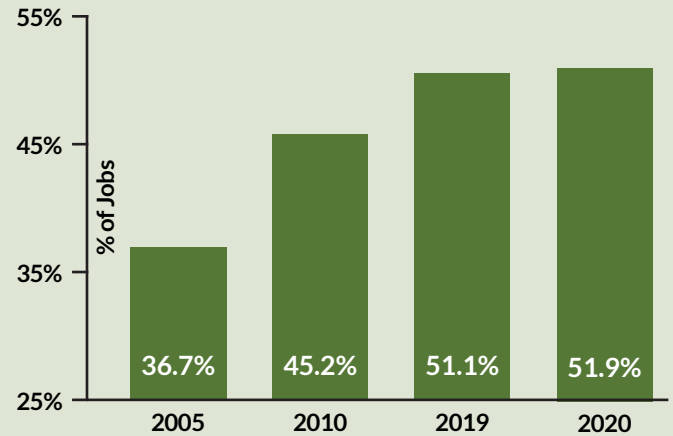


Figure 7. Percentage of Caldwell County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties *Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.*

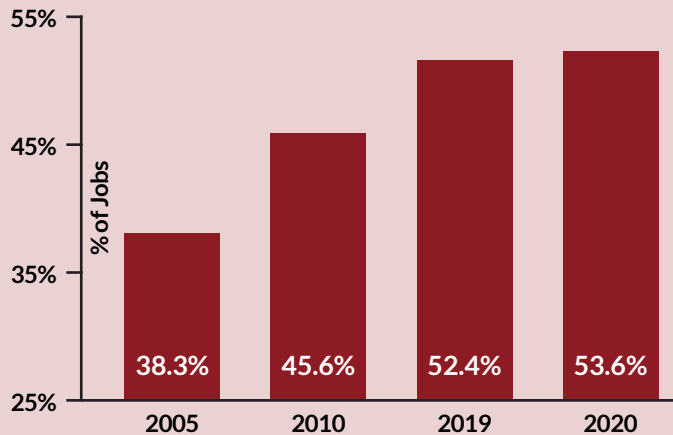


Figure 8. Percentage of Catawba County Employed Residents that have Jobs in Other Counties *Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.*

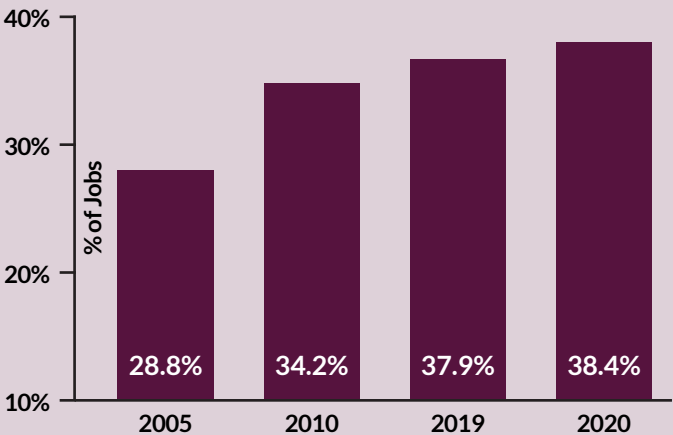


Table 7. Hickory MSA County Level Job Flows (All Jobs*), 2010-2020 *Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.*

County	2010 Job Inflows (+)	2010 Job Outflows (-)	2010 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	2020 Job Inflows (+)	2020 Job Outflows (-)	2020 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	Chg. 2010-20 Job Inflows	Chg. 2010-20 Job Outflows	Chg. 2010-20 Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)
Alexander	2,334	-9,199	-6,865	4,954	-9,519	-4,565	2,620	320	2,300
Burke	8,240	-14,640	-6,400	10,056	-17,778	-7,772	1,816	3,138	-1,372
Caldwell	7,608	-14,680	-7,072	8,279	-18,232	-9,953	671	3,552	-2,881
Catawba	34,708	-21,736	12,972	41,002	-26,579	14,423	6,294	4,483	1,451

*Includes primary and secondary jobs. Workers can have only a primary job, or have a primary job plus secondary job(s).

The next section of the EIN Spotlight analyzes job flow changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The map (Figure 9) below shows 2019 job flows among Hickory MSA counties and counties that border the region. The map (Figure 10) on page 7 displays 2020 job flows among Hickory MSA counties and counties that border the region. The thicker the arrows on the maps, the stronger the job inflow or outflow tie between those two counties.

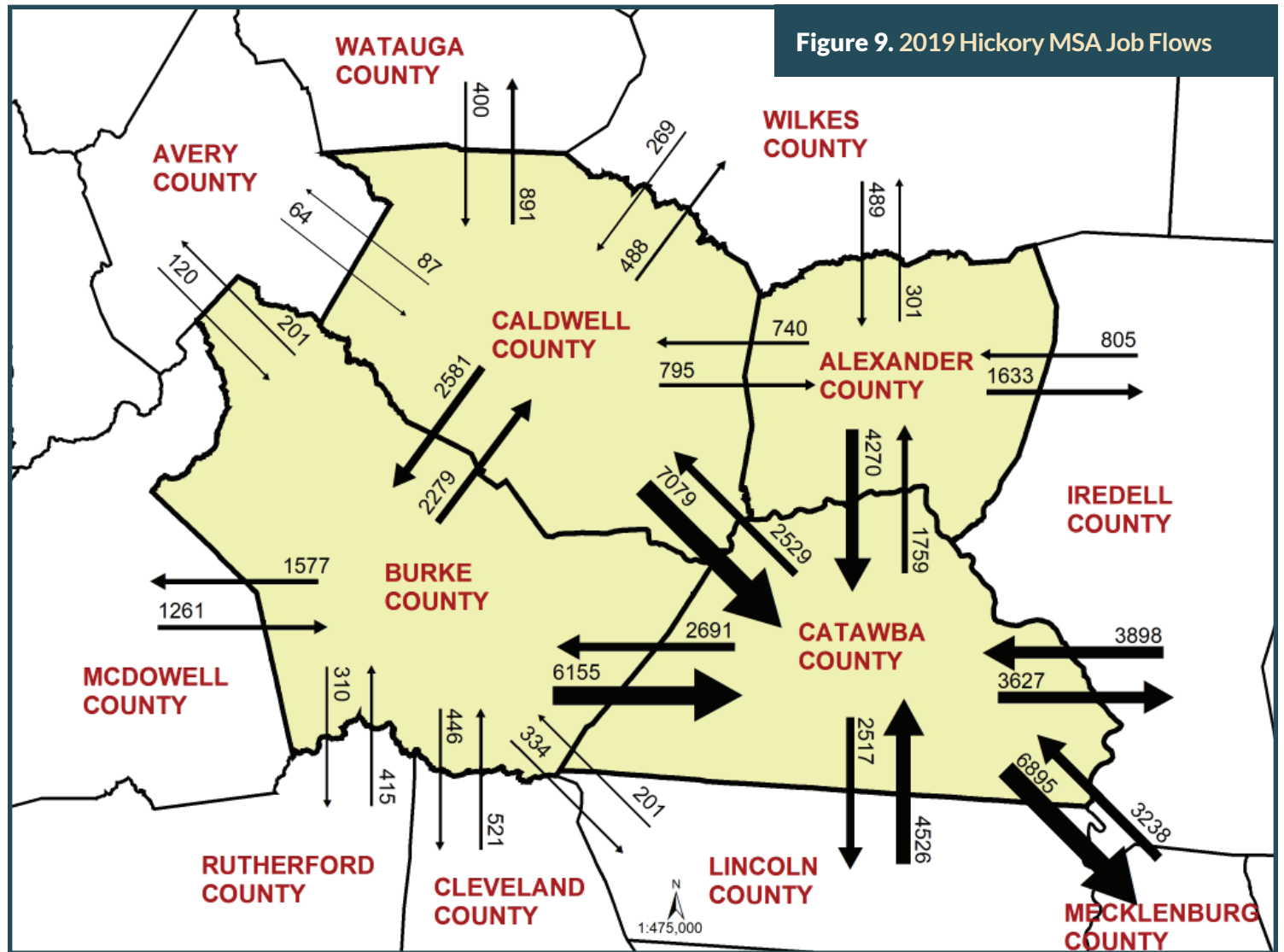


Figure 9. 2019 Hickory MSA Job Flows

Table 8. Alexander County Job Flows, 2019 to 2020

Residence County	JOB INFLOWS				Job is Located in	JOB OUTFLOWS			
	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs		2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	1,759	15.8%	1,692	15.6%	Catawba	4,270	26.5%	4,120	26.8%
Iredell	805	7.3%	790	7.3%	Iredell	1,633	10.1%	1,646	10.7%
Caldwell	795	7.2%	750	6.9%	Mecklenburg	863	5.4%	795	5.2%
Wilkes	489	4.4%	538	5.0%	Caldwell	740	4.6%	647	4.2%
Burke	450	4.1%	473	4.4%	Burke	367	2.3%	304	2.0%
Mecklenburg	148	1.3%	157	1.4%	Buncombe	344	2.1%	294	1.9%
Buncombe	122	1.1%	129	1.2%	Wilkes	301	1.9%	280	1.8%
Gaston	135	1.2%	116	1.1%	Forsyth	192	1.2%	176	1.1%
Others	333	3.0%	309	2.9%	Others	1,281	8.0%	1,257	8.2%

Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

The most job inflows to **Alexander County** originate from Catawba County. Due to the pandemic, Catawba to Alexander job inflows dropped slightly from 1,759 in 2019 to 1,692 in 2020 (Table 8). Over 15% of persons who worked in Alexander County during 2020 were Catawba County residents. In 2020, 7.3% of persons who work in Alexander were Iredell County residents, while 6.9% were Caldwell County residents. Residents traveling to work in Catawba and Iredell Counties dominate Alexander County's job outflows. More than 25% of working persons who live in Alexander County were employed in Catawba County in 2020, although job outflows to Catawba County fell by 150 workers between 2019 and 2020.

Alexander also maintains a strong job outflow bond with Iredell, as more than 10% of working residents hold jobs in Iredell County.

Burke County had more job inflows from Catawba (2,489 or 9.4% of all jobs) in 2020 than any other county (Table 9). Catawba, Caldwell, Buncombe, Cleveland, Mecklenburg, and Gaston Counties had less job inflows to Burke County in 2020 than in 2019. Except for Catawba, Caldwell, and McDowell Counties, all other counties that border Burke (Avery, Cleveland, Lincoln, and Rutherford) had job inflow rates to the County of less than 2.0% each.

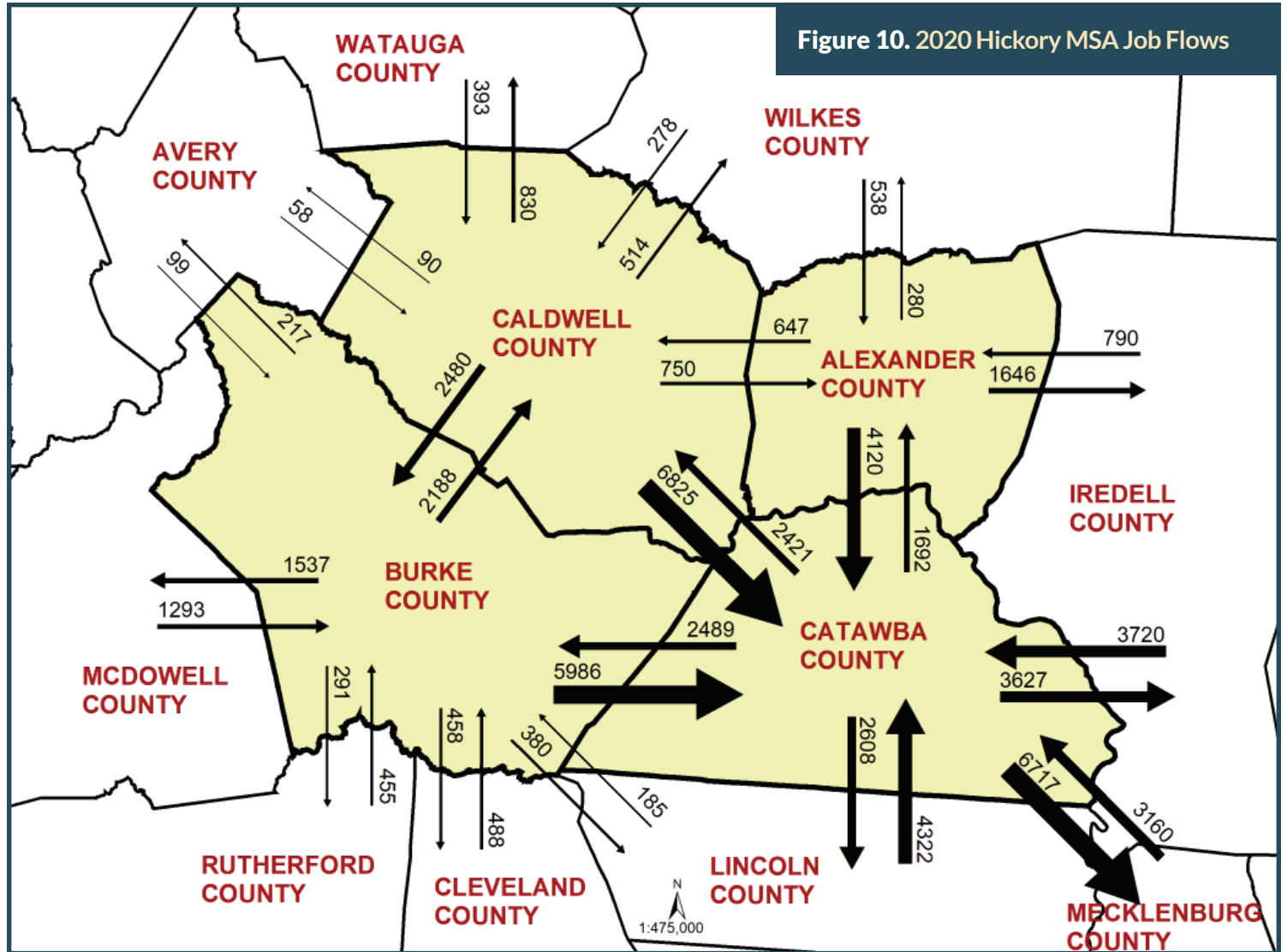


Figure 10. 2020 Hickory MSA Job Flows

Table 9. Burke County Job Flows, 2019 to 2020

JOB INFLOWS					JOB OUTFLOWS				
Residence County	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs	Job is Located in	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	2,691	9.7%	2,489	9.4%	Catawba	6,155	17.4%	5,968	17.4%
Caldwell	2,581	9.3%	2,480	9.4%	Caldwell	2,279	6.4%	2,188	6.4%
McDowell	1,261	4.5%	1,293	4.9%	Mecklenburg	1,946	5.5%	1,873	5.5%
Buncombe	516	1.9%	494	1.9%	McDowell	1,577	4.4%	1,537	4.5%
Cleveland	521	1.9%	488	1.8%	Buncombe	817	2.3%	760	2.2%
Rutherford	415	1.5%	455	1.7%	Iredell	708	2.0%	698	2.0%
Mecklenburg	563	2.0%	433	1.6%	Alexander	450	1.3%	473	1.4%
Gaston	425	1.5%	379	1.4%	Gaston	437	1.2%	459	1.3%
Others	1,075	3.9%	1,545	5.8%	Others	620	4.1%	1,949	5.6%

Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

During 2020, 17.4% of Burke County working residents traveled to Catawba for employment. The 5,968-job outflow to Catawba County from Burke County in 2020 is lower than in 2019 (6,155) due to pandemic related job losses. The number of job outflows to Caldwell also declined between 2019 (2,279) and 2020 (2,188). About 5.5% of Burke County residents traveled to Mecklenburg County for work in 2020, while 4.5% were employed in McDowell County.

In 2020, **Caldwell County** had the highest number of job inflows from Catawba County (2,421) followed by Burke (2,188) and Alexander (647) (Table 10). Due to pandemic related impacts, all the top eight job inflow counties (Catawba, Burke, Alexander, Mecklenburg, Watauga, Cleveland, Iredell, and Gaston Counties) had less job inflows to Caldwell in 2020 compared to 2019. The number of job inflows from Catawba County to Caldwell County was 108 less in 2020 than in 2019. Job inflows from Burke to Caldwell fell by 91 workers between 2019 and 2020.

About one out of five (20.1%) Caldwell County residents work in Catawba County. The number of job outflows from Caldwell to Catawba County decreased from 7,079 in 2019 to 6,825 in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. About 7.3% of Caldwell County working residents (2,480) are employed in Burke County, while more than 5% (1,817) have jobs in Mecklenburg County.

Table 10. Caldwell County Job Flows, 2019 to 2020

JOB INFLOWS					JOB OUTFLOWS				
Residence County	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs	Job is Located in	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs
Catawba	2,529	9.9%	2,421	10.1%	Catawba	7,079	20.0%	6,825	20.1%
Burke	2,279	8.9%	2,188	9.1%	Burke	2,581	7.3%	2,480	7.3%
Alexander	740	2.9%	647	2.7%	Mecklenburg	1,731	4.9%	1,817	5.3%
Mecklenburg	606	2.4%	572	2.4%	Iredell	891	2.5%	831	2.4%
Watauga	400	1.6%	393	1.6%	Watauga	891	2.5%	830	2.4%
Cleveland	425	1.7%	383	1.6%	Alexander	795	2.2%	750	2.2%
Iredell	376	1.5%	343	1.4%	Buncombe	739	2.1%	708	2.1%
Gaston	343	1.3%	338	1.4%	Wilkes	488	1.4%	514	1.5%
Others	973	3.8%	994	4.1%	Others	3,345	9.5%	3,477	10.2%

Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

Table 11. Catawba County Job Flows, 2019 to 2020

JOB INFLOWS					JOB OUTFLOWS				
Residence County	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs	Job is Located in	2019 Jobs	% of Jobs	2020 Jobs	% of Jobs
Caldwell	7,079	8.1%	6,825	8.2%	Mecklenburg	6,895	9.7%	6,717	9.7%
Burke	6,155	7.1%	5,968	7.1%	Iredell	3,627	5.1%	3,627	5.2%
Lincoln	4,526	5.2%	4,322	5.2%	Lincoln	2,517	3.5%	2,608	3.8%
Alexander	4,270	4.9%	4,120	4.9%	Burke	2,691	3.8%	2,489	3.6%
Iredell	3,898	4.5%	3,720	4.4%	Caldwell	2,529	3.5%	2,421	3.5%
Mecklenburg	3,238	3.7%	3,160	3.8%	Alexander	1,759	2.5%	1,692	2.4%
Gaston	2,508	2.9%	2,660	3.2%	Gaston	1,287	1.8%	1,213	1.8%
Cleveland	1,121	1.4%	1,218	1.5%	Forsyth	948	1.3%	879	1.3%
Others	10,075	11.6%	9,009	10.8%	Others	4,835	6.7%	4,933	7.1%

Source: OntheMap, US Census Bureau, 2023.

In 2020, Caldwell County had the most job inflows with Catawba County (6,825) followed by Burke (5,968), Lincoln (4,322), and Alexander (4,120). Catawba County 2020 job inflows of more than 3,000 each occurred with Iredell and Mecklenburg Counties. Results in Table 11 also show that all of Catawba County's neighboring counties, except Cleveland and Gaston, had fewer job inflows to Catawba in 2020 than in 2019 due to the pandemic. The biggest decrease was in the number of job inflows from Caldwell County, which fell from 7,079 in 2019 to 6,825 in 2020.

Catawba had more job outflows to Mecklenburg County. About 9.7%, or nearly one in ten Catawba County residents with a job, are employed in Mecklenburg County. Job outflows from Catawba to Mecklenburg County, after growing from 5,046 in 2010 to 6,895 in 2019, decreased to 6,717 in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This decrease should only be temporary as the completion of the NC 16 Bypass in Catawba and Lincoln Counties has made it easier to commute to the Charlotte area. In 2020, the job outflow from Catawba to Mecklenburg County (6,717) was a little less than the job inflow from Caldwell to Catawba County (6,825). Job outflows from Catawba County to Iredell County were unchanged between 2019 and 2020 (3,627).

Summary

Data from the US Census Bureau's OntheMap application reveal that the Hickory MSA has more job outflows than job inflows. In 2020, the region had 145,305 jobs, while the number of jobs worked by Hickory MSA residents equaled 152,852. The results yield a net job outflow of 7,547. In comparison, the Hickory MSA had a net job inflow of 1,305 in 2005 and a net job outflow of 7,361 in 2010 and 6,726 in 2019 (before the COVID-19 pandemic). The percentage of Hickory MSA employees that live and work in the same county declined from 64.3% in 2005 to 52.8% in 2020. This trend is due in part to residential growth in southeastern Catawba County (residents in southeastern Catawba County often have jobs located in Iredell, Lincoln, or Mecklenburg Counties), as well as changes in 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 41,000 workers from surrounding counties. Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties have more job outflows than job inflows. Greater 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 revealed the negative impacts that the pandemic had on commuting patterns in the region, with declines in workflows between most counties located both inside and outside the Hickory MSA. Without knowing the full impact of telecommuting on the data, it is likely that commuting patterns will return, or exceed pre-pandemic levels once the US Census Bureau releases the 2021 and 2022 OntheMap commuting data.

Hickory MSA Migration Patterns Based on IRS Returns

The 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) included a question asking if the individual had moved to a different residence during the past 12 months. ACS results indicated that about 8.7% of residents (31,571) moved to a different house between 2020 and 2021 (Table 12). Approximately 3.8% of 2021 residents remained in the same county, but have changed homes in the past year. Another 17,674 (4.9%) moved in from another county, with 9,904 (2.7%) within North Carolina and 7,770 persons (2.1%) from a different state.

While Table 12 provides basic migration information, it lacks several important details. 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 recently left the Hickory MSA are currently residing.

One way to attempt 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. An analysis of “tax exemptions” data can serve as an estimate of the number of persons involved in the migration. This EIN article will examine migration patterns into and out of the region between 2018 and 2021 based on IRS returns for each Hickory MSA County. Some caution must be used in interpreting the results, however, 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, page 10. In terms of total net migration, IRS data reveals a regional net in-migration of 2,892 tax returns (assumed households) and 6,388 exemptions (assumed population) between 2018 and 2021. The number of tax returns from households that migrated to the Hickory MSA from 2018 to 2021 totaled 18,562 with 34,602 exemptions, while the number of returns from households that migrated out of the Hickory MSA equaled 15,670 with 28,214 exemptions.

Hickory MSA net-migration trends between 2018 and 2021 by national region are shown in Figure 11 on page 11. The largest percentage of net in-migration (31.3% of returns and 35.8% of exemptions) occurred between other North Carolina Counties and the Hickory MSA, with a gain of 904 returns with 2,290 exemptions. Lincoln County had net in-migration to the Hickory MSA of 192 returns and 462 exemptions, while Mecklenburg County’s net in-migration equaled 191 returns and 543 exemptions. McDowell County tallied a net in-migration of 157 returns/330 exemptions, while Buncombe County’s net in-migration totaled 106 returns/221 exemptions.

The analysis of IRS records revealed that 23.2% of the net in-migration to the Hickory MSA from 2018 to 2021, in terms of exemptions (1,485), came from the Northeastern United States. The Hickory MSA also had a substantial in-migration (528 returns with 1,045 exemptions) with other Southern States such as South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Western States net in-migration, in terms of exemptions (1,071), slightly exceeded net in-migration from the Southeast over the last three years of available data.

Table 12. Residence One Year Ago of Hickory MSA Population, 2021

Group	Population	% of Pop.
Population 1-year & over	363,706	100.0
Same house	331,574	91.2
Different house in the US	31,571	8.7
Same county	13,897	3.8
Different county	17,674	4.9
Same state	9,904	2.7
Different state	7,770	2.1
Abroad	561	0.2
Others	973	3.8%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, US Census Bureau.

Table 13. Hickory MSA Migration Flow from IRS Returns, 2018-2021 *Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2023.*

Migration Flow (From/To) Area	Migration Into the Hickory MSA		Migration Out of the Hickory MSA		Net Hickory MSA In (+) or Out (-) Migration	
	# of Returns	# of Exemptions	# of Returns	# of Exemptions	# of Returns	# of Exemptions
Total-United States	18,562	34,602	15,670	28,214	2,892	6,388
Same State	10,321	19,133	9,417	16,843	904	2,290
Avery County	65	124	30	60	35	64
Brunswick County	20	40	89	167	-69	-127
Buncombe County	420	708	314	487	106	221
Cabarrus County	167	302	132	239	35	63
Cleveland County	211	425	223	455	-12	-30
Forsyth County	146	257	166	276	-20	-19
Gaston County	563	1,037	488	862	75	175
Guilford County	138	224	149	258	-11	-34
Iredell County	1,412	2,690	1,323	2,592	89	98
Lincoln County	1,480	3,062	1,288	2,600	192	462
McDowell County	544	1,037	387	707	157	330
Mecklenburg County	1,296	2,207	1,105	1,664	191	543
New Hanover	23	32	28	44	-5	-12
Rowan County	102	209	92	162	10	47
Rutherford County	65	124	78	143	-13	-19
Wake County	290	490	325	498	-35	-8
Wilkes County	282	469	214	378	68	91
Watauga County	263	513	258	518	5	-5
Other Flows - Same State	2,834	5,183	2,728	4,743	106	440
Different State	8,241	15,469	6,185	11,245	2,056	4,224
Northeast	1,433	2,583	651	1,098	782	1,485
Midwest	1,045	2,026	753	1,403	292	623
South	4,535	8,468	4,007	7,423	528	1,045
West	1,228	2,392	774	1,321	454	1,071

The largest net out-migrations away from the Hickory MSA among North Carolina Counties came from Brunswick (between Wilmington and Myrtle Beach-69 returns/127 exemptions). Data in Table 13 also shows small net-out migrations between the Hickory MSA and Cleveland, Forsyth (Winston-Salem area), Guilford (Greensboro area), New Hanover (Wilmington area), Rutherford and Wake (Raleigh Area) Counties. Although not seen in the chart, it should be noted that from 2018 to 2021 a net out-migration of 89 returns/163 exceptions occurred between the Hickory MSA and Horry County, South Carolina (Myrtle Beach area).

Table 14, on page 11, displays IRS returns net migration flows for each of the four Hickory MSA counties. Alexander County had a net in-migration of 349 returns and 676 exemptions between 2018 and 2021. From 2018 to 2021, **Alexander County** tallied a net in-migration from other Hickory MSA Counties of 65 returns and 148 exemptions. As for the other North Carolina Counties, Alexander experienced a net in-migration of 81 returns and 149 exemptions. IRS results reveal a net in-migration of 163 exemptions from the Northeast and 139 exemptions from the Western US.

From 2018 to 2021, data for **Burke County** indicated a net in-migration of 584 returns/1,128 exemptions. The analysis revealed a net in-migration of 122 returns and 322 exemptions from Southern States and 130 returns and 244 exemptions from the Northeast. Burke did have a net out-migration of 187 returns/520 exemptions to other Hickory MSA counties, mostly Catawba County (115 returns/350 exemptions). For the rest of the State, however, Burke saw a net in-migration of 362 returns and 766 exemptions.

Table 14. Hickory MSA Net Migration Flows from IRS Returns, 2018-2021 Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2023.

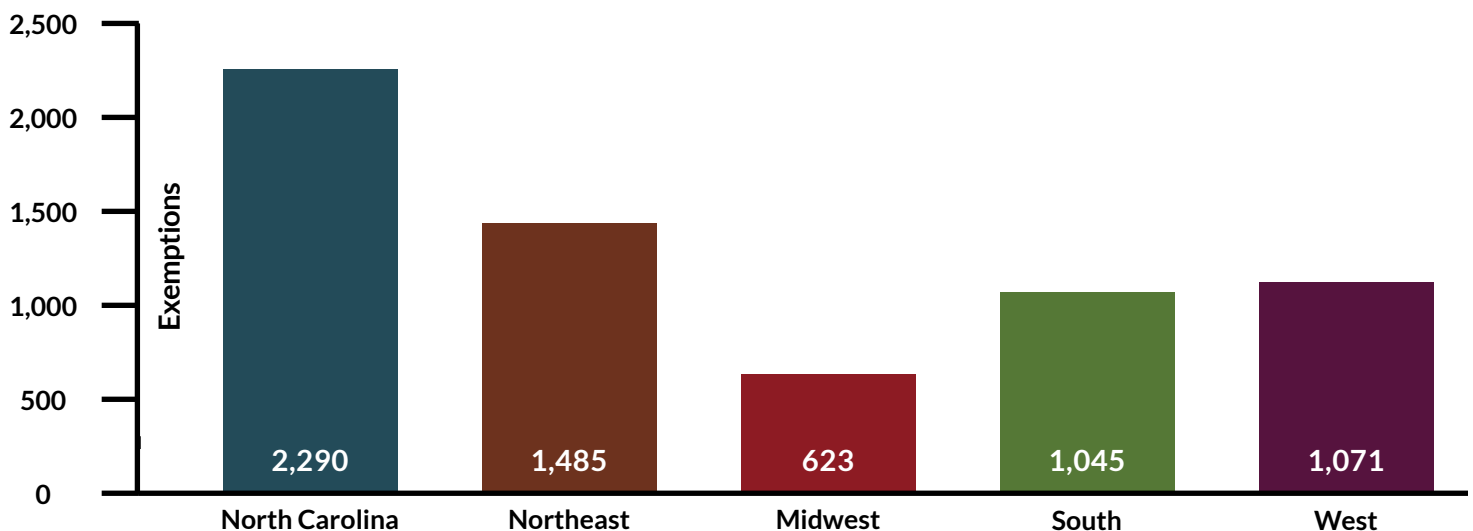
Migration Flow (From/To) Area	Alexander		Burke		Caldwell		Catawba	
	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions	Returns	Exemptions
US Only	349	676	584	1,128	472	1,054	1,487	3,530
Same State	146	297	175	246	149	506	434	1,241
Other Hickory MSA Counties	65	148	-187	-520	75	215	47	157
Other Flows - Same State	81	149	362	766	74	291	387	1,084
Different State	203	379	409	882	323	548	1,121	2,415
Northeast	92	163	130	244	100	167	460	911
Midwest	28	67	39	61	42	118	183	377
South	15	10	122	322	141	167	250	546
West	68	139	118	255	40	96	228	581

Caldwell County had a net in-migration of 472 returns and 1,054 exemptions based on the past three years of available data. IRS returns showed a net in-migration of 141 returns/167 exemptions between Caldwell and the Southeast as well as a net in-migration of 100 returns/167 exemptions between Caldwell and the Northeast. Caldwell gained a net of 149 returns and 506 exemptions from households moving to the County from other NC Counties. Most of the gains came from Burke, Catawba, and Buncombe Counties.

Catawba County saw net gain of 1,487 returns and 3,530 exemptions between 2018 and 2021. Catawba experienced a net gain of only 47 returns/157 exemptions from other Hickory MSA counties, but saw a net gain of 387 returns/1,084 exemptions from other NC 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. More than two-thirds of net migration to Catawba County from 2018 to 2021 came from other states. Catawba County had a net in-migration of 460 returns/911 exemptions from the Northeast and 250 returns/546 exemptions from the Southeast. Catawba also had significant net in-migration from the Midwest (183 returns/377 exemptions) and West (228 returns/581 exemptions).

Figure 11. Hickory MSA Net Migration (based on Number of IRS Tax Exemptions) by State/US Region, 2018-2021

Source: Internal Revenue Service, 2023.



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