

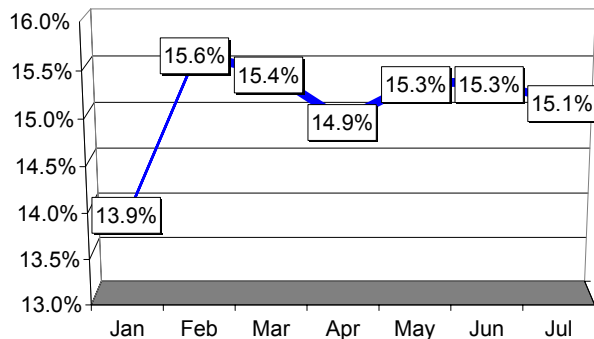
Economic Indicators Newsletter

Reporting Economic Trends in the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

Civilian Labor Force

After peaking at 15.6% in February 2009, the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA's unemployment rate currently stands at 15.1% (Figure 1). While the 15.1% unemployment rate is still extremely high, there was a bit of encouraging news between the June and July employment report from North Carolina Employment Security Commission. For the first time since October 2008, the estimated number of employed persons increased between June (146,024) and July (147,003). The Hickory MSA is currently the only Metro area in North Carolina with an unemployment rate over 15% (Table 1). Hickory MSA County unemployment rates for July were Alexander 14.9%, Burke 15.0%, Caldwell 15.6% and Catawba 14.9%.

Figure 1.
MSA Unemployment, Jan. 2009 – Jul. 2009



Source: NC Employment Security Commission, 2009.

Table 1.
MSA Unemployment Rate, July 2009

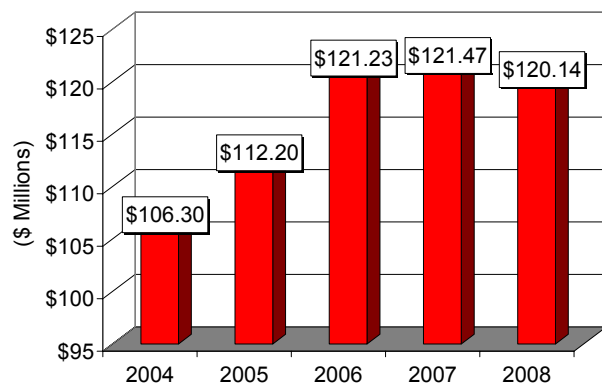
Durham	8.3%
Jacksonville	8.8%
Asheville	9.0%
Raleigh-Cary	9.1%
Fayetteville	9.5%
Goldsboro	9.8%
Wilmington	10.2%
Winston-Salem	10.3%
Greenville	10.9%
Greensboro-High Point	11.9%
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord	12.4%
Burlington	12.6%
Rocky Mount	14.1%
Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir	15.1%

Source: NC Employment Security Commission, 2009.

Gross Collections

North Carolina gross collection figures include money from registration fees, penalties, interest and sales and use taxes (county sales taxes are excluded). State gross collections for the Hickory MSA increased from \$106 million in 2003 to \$120 million in 2008 (Figure 2). Gross collections in the Hickory Metro fell 1.1% from \$121.47 million in 2007 to \$120.14 million in 2008, despite an increase in the state sales tax collection rate from 4.25% to 4.5% on most items in October 2008.

Figure 2.
MSA Gross Collections (\$ Millions), 2004-2008



Source: NC Department of Revenue, 2009.

Table 2 displays gross collections for the four Hickory MSA counties from 2006 to 2008. Burke and Caldwell counties gained gross collections between 2007 and 2008 while Alexander and Catawba gross collections suffered declines. The data would seem to indicate that Burke and Caldwell were able to capture some state gross collections from Catawba County.

Table 2.
Gross Tax Collections

Counties	2006	2007	2008
Alexander	\$5,258,379	\$4,838,403	\$4,672,417
Burke	\$19,236,022	\$18,684,962	\$19,520,023
Caldwell	\$18,950,467	\$18,324,966	\$19,407,899
Catawba	\$77,785,106	\$79,618,223	\$76,541,625

Source: NC Department of Revenue, 2009.



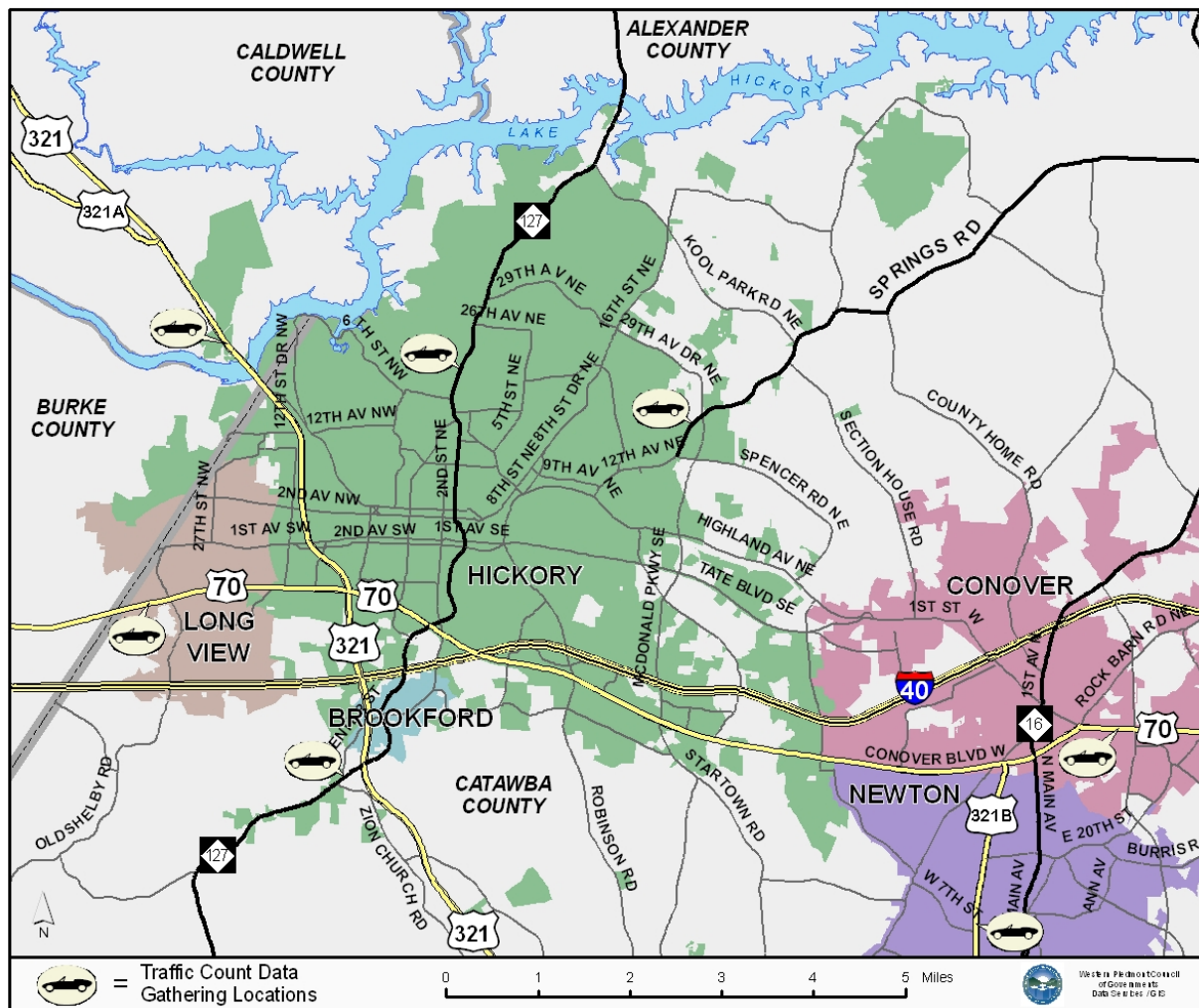
“EIN Spotlight”

Hickory Area Vehicle Occupancy Rates

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments has been collecting information on morning commuting patterns into the Hickory area since 1984. For 25 years data has been collected each July at seven locations in the Hickory area: US Highway 321 North at the Catawba River Bridge; US Highway 321 Business South in Newton; NC Highway 127 North in Viewmont; NC Highway 127 South in Mountain View; US Highway 70 West in Long View; US Highway 70 East in Conover and Springs Road in Northeast Hickory (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Hickory Area Morning Traffic Count Data Gathering Locations



Data is collected on the number of vehicles (passenger cars, buses, trucks, police cars) and occupants in passenger cars passing through each of the seven locations between 6:30 and 8:30 A.M. Vehicle occupancy rates for each location are calculated by dividing the number of occupants by the total number of passenger vehicles. The oldest data set compiled by WPCOG staff, the vehicle occupancy data allows transportation planners to study long-term traffic trends into the Hickory area. The data tabulated in July 2009 also gives current insight into how economic conditions have impacted commuting into the City.

Fewer than 10,000 vehicles passed by the seven counting locations surrounding Hickory in 1984 (Table 3, page 3). In 2009 a total of 11,071 cars were observed for a 10.8% increase. While the overall vehicle trend yields some useful information, a closer look at the data reveals some interesting traffic trends that have occurred over the past 25 years. The analysis shows, for example, that the majority of the commuting growth in the Hickory area took place between 1984 and 1994 with an increase from 9,992 to 12,775 vehicles.



Hickory Area Vehicle Occupancy Rates

Table 3.
Morning Commute Total Vehicles, 1984-2009

Location	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	Chg. 04-09	% Chg. 04-09	Chg. 84-09	% Chg. 84-09
US 321 N	2,235	3,007	2,992	3,854	3,542	3,419	-123	-3.5	1,184	53.0
US 321 S	1,180	1,323	1,327	1,780	1,792	1,206	-586	-32.7	26	2.2
NC 127 N	1,566	1,686	2,106	2,394	2,213	1,973	-240	-10.8	407	26.0
NC 127 S	1,703	2,215	2,425	2,135	2,207	1,912	-295	-13.4	209	12.3
US 70 W	790	928	905	1,000	957	574	-383	-40.0	-216	-27.3
US 70 E	440	425	494	499	1,146	511	-635	-55.4	71	16.1
Springs Rd	2,078	2,470	2,526	2,163	2,008	1,476	-532	-26.5	-602	-29.0
Totals	9,992	12,054	12,775	13,824	13,865	11,071	-2,794	-20.2	1,079	10.8

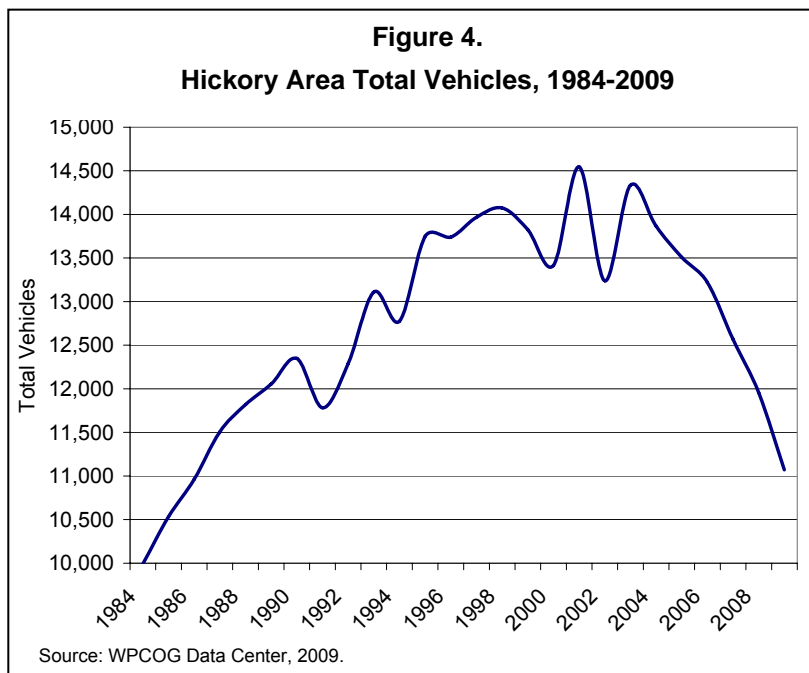
Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2009.

Good economic conditions and increased employment in the mid to late 1990s caused the total vehicle count to rise to 13,824. Between 1999 and 2004, however, little commuting growth occurred for several reasons. The new US Highway 321 diverted some traffic from US Highway 321 Business. This contributed to no net growth in traffic at US 321 Business. A new short cut in front of the Springs Road location helped to cause a 5% drop in vehicles. The commuting numbers were also impacted by job losses the region suffered after 2000.

From 2004 to 2009 the number of vehicles fell from 13,865 to 11,071 (Figure 4). The 11,071 cars in 2009 was the fewest number of cars counted at the seven locations since 1986 (10,962). All seven traffic count locations had fewer vehicles in 2009 than in 2004 (Table 3). The largest losses by percentage occurred at the locations along US Highway 70 (55.4% decrease at US 70 East and a 40.0% drop at US 70 West). A total of 586 fewer vehicles were noted at US 321 Business South in Newton. Traffic at NC 127 North fell from 2,213 in 2004 to 1,973 in 2009. The number of vehicles counted at NC 127 South in Mountain View declined 13.4% between 2004 and 2009 to 1,912. Only a 3.5% decrease in traffic occurred at US 321 North at the Catawba River Bridge. This data indicates the continued strength of Caldwell County commuters into the Hickory area.

There are several reasons behind the traffic volume decline at the seven counting locations. The new McDonald Parkway has diverted some traffic away from the counting location on Springs Road. Road construction at the railroad tracks near Lenior-Rhyne University could also be affecting the Springs Road numbers. It also possible that more workers are driving into Hickory after 8:30 A.M. Higher gasoline prices may be reducing the number of vehicle trips. The current economic recession and the job losses in the Hickory area have also lowered the amount of commuting into the City. This seems to be especially true for the two US Highway 70 locations, which traditionally have had more manufacturing-related commuting than the other traffic count locations.

Trends for total occupants in vehicles counted between 6:30 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. in the Hickory area are shown in Table 4 and Figure 5 on page 4. Between 1984 and 1999 the number of occupants grew from 12,335 to 15,317 for a 24.2% increase. The data correspond with job growth that occurred in the Hickory area in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.





Hickory Area Vehicle Occupancy Rates

Table 4.
Morning Commute Total Occupants, 1984-2009

Location	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	Chg. 04-09	% Chg. 04-09	Chg. 84-09	% Chg. 84-09
US 321 N	2,794	3,533	3,503	4,177	3,677	3,601	-76	-2.1	807	28.9
US 321 S	1,534	1,588	1,565	1,964	1,776	1,329	-447	-25.2	-205	-13.4
NC 127 N	1,879	1,973	2,370	2,692	2,379	2,196	-183	-7.7	317	16.9
NC 127 S	2,129	2,614	2,425	2,391	2,393	2,035	-358	-15.0	-94	-4.4
US 70 W	964	1,141	1,019	1,123	1,007	609	-398	-39.5	-355	-36.8
US 70 E	541	501	599	533	1,213	531	-682	-56.2	-10	-1.8
Springs Rd	2,494	2,841	2,896	2,438	2,240	1,630	-610	-27.2	-864	-34.6
Totals	12,335	14,191	14,377	15,317	14,685	11,931	-2,754	-18.8	-404	-3.3

Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2009.

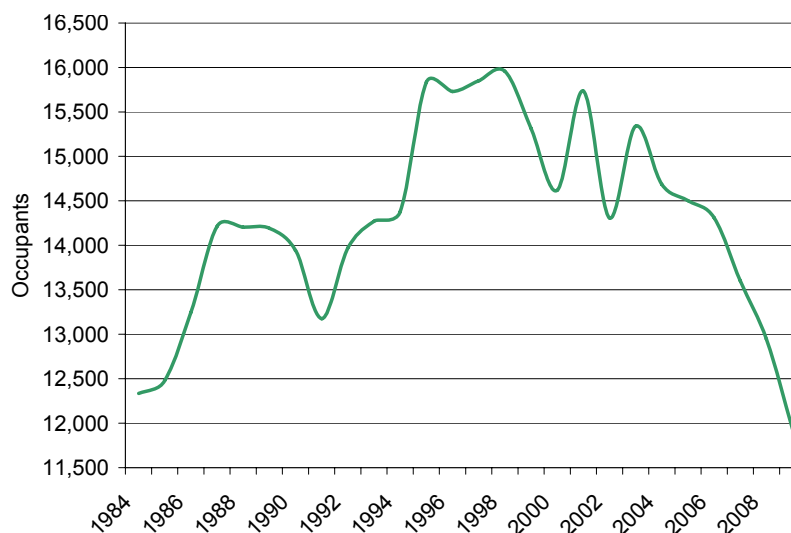
Additions to the Hickory road network, such the new US Highway 321 and McDonald Parkway, as well as the region's economic situation contributed to a decrease in the number of occupants over the past decade. Between 1999 and 2009 the number of total occupants fell from 15,317 to 11,931 (Figure 5). Since 2004 the number of occupants has fallen 18.8%. The 11,931 occupants tallied in 2009 is also the fewest number tabulated since data collection began in 1984.

The two counting sites which have experienced the biggest decline in the number of occupants over the past five years are the Springs Road and US Highway 70 East locations. The number of persons counted at these sites has fallen

by more than 600 since 2004. The fewest occupant losses occurred at the NC Highway 127 North and US 321 North locations. The number of occupants decreased by only 7.7% at the NC 127 North site and just 2.1% at US 321 North.

Changes in Vehicle Occupancy Rate (VOR) in the Hickory area are shown in Table 5. The Vehicle Occupancy Rate measures the amount of carpooling taking place within the Hickory area. It is calculated by dividing the number of residential vehicles by the number of occupants. The closer the VOR is to one (1.00), the less carpooling is taking place.

Figure 5.
Hickory Area Total Vehicle Occupants, 1984-2009



Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2009.

Table 5.
Vehicle Occupancy Rates, 1984-2009

Location	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	Chg. 04-09	% Chg. 04-09	Chg. 84-09	% Chg. 84-09
US 321 N	1.25	1.18	1.20	1.16	1.11	1.11	0.00	0.0	-0.14	-11.9
US 321 S	1.30	1.20	1.32	1.19	1.12	1.18	0.06	5.4	-0.12	-10.0
NC 127 N	1.20	1.17	1.15	1.14	1.10	1.12	0.02	1.8	-0.08	-6.8
NC 127 S	1.25	1.18	1.19	1.16	1.11	1.10	-0.01	-0.9	-0.15	-12.7
US 70 W	1.22	1.23	1.19	1.16	1.10	1.11	0.01	0.9	-0.11	-8.9
US 70 E	1.23	1.18	1.36	1.18	1.19	1.13	-0.06	-5.0	-0.10	-8.5
Springs Rd	1.20	1.15	1.18	1.16	1.15	1.13	-0.02	-1.7	-0.07	-6.1
Totals	1.24	1.18	1.23	1.16	1.13	1.13	0.00	0.0	-0.11	-9.3

Source: WPCOG Data Center, 2009.

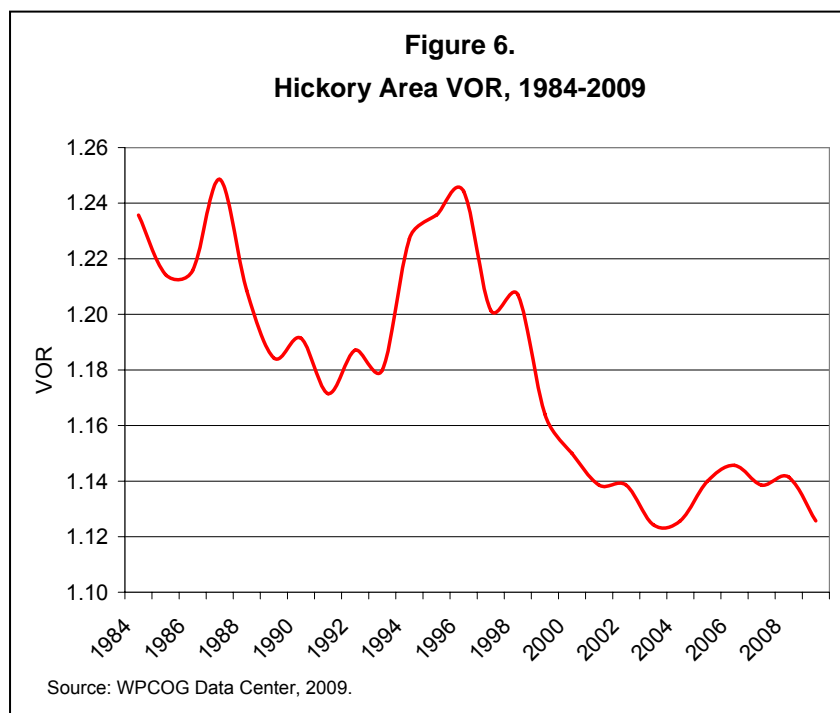


Hickory Area Vehicle Occupancy Rates

VOR in the Hickory area was 1.24 persons per vehicle in 1984 (Figure 6). Vehicle Occupancy Rates by location varied from 1.20 persons per vehicle at Springs Road and NC 127 North to as high as 1.30 at US 321 Business South. A closer look at data in Figure 6 shows a steady decline in VOR between 1984 (1.24) and 2004 (1.13). The 9.3% decline in carpooling may have been caused by a number of factors including more families owning more than one vehicle as well as manufacturing jobs losses, which typically have more carpooling workers than service sector employment.

Little net overall change has occurred in VOR since 2004. This trend is interesting, particularly considering the rise in gasoline prices over the past couple of years.

While the overall VOR has not changed significantly since 2004, some of the counting sites have experienced an increase in VOR while others have no net change and others declined. At US 321 Business South, for instance, the VOR has risen 5.4% since 1984 to 1.18 persons per vehicle. No net Vehicle Occupancy Rate change occurred at US 321 North. Meanwhile the VOR at US Highway 70 east has fallen 5.0% to 1.13.



Summary

In July 2009 WPCOG staff collected data on the number of vehicles and occupants at seven locations in the Hickory area for the 25th year. Results for 2009 show that the number of vehicles tallied was the lowest recorded since 1986 while the number of occupants was lowest ever recorded. There are several reasons for these results: new road projects including McDonald Parkway and US 321 have impacted traffic counts at some locations. Working hours vary more in 2009 than 1984 so fewer people may be making the "morning commute." Finally economic conditions and job losses have lowered the counts as well.

The Hickory area's Vehicle Occupancy Rate (VOR) has declined 9.3% since 1984 to 1.13 persons per vehicle. The data also reveal that higher gasoline prices in 2007 and 2008 had little overall effect on the VOR. The decline in carpooling may be due a number of factors including an increase in the number of vehicles per household and a change to service sector employment which tends to have less carpooling than manufacturing employment.

Hickory MSA Tourism Trends

The Hickory MSA tourism industry is an important part of the regional economy. According to the Catawba County Tourism Impact Study completed in 2006, about 10% of all retail dollars spent in the Catawba County is from tourists. Besides retail sales and tax revenue, tourism also provides employment for several thousand persons in the Hickory Metro area. In August 2009, the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development and the United States Travel Association released new data on the impact of tourism in 2008 on the State's 100 counties. This EIN article will examine tourism's economic influence in the Hickory MSA and see how economic conditions in 2008 impacted the tourism industry in the region.

Hickory MSA tourism expenditures have grown from \$297.4 million in 2000 to \$352.7 million in 2008. The 18.6% growth in tourism dollars is below the rate of inflation between 2000 and 2008 (25.3%). Catawba County, which has the 16th highest tourism expenditures in 2008 among North Carolina counties, saw its tourism expenditures grow \$27.8 million to \$212.0 million in 2008. Burke's tourism expenditures increased \$16.1 million from 2000 to 2008 while Caldwell's gained \$7.3 million and Alexander's rose \$4.0 million. Alexander's and Burke County's tourism expenditures grew faster than the rate of inflation (between 2000 and 2008) while Caldwell's and Catawba's increased slower than the rate of inflation.

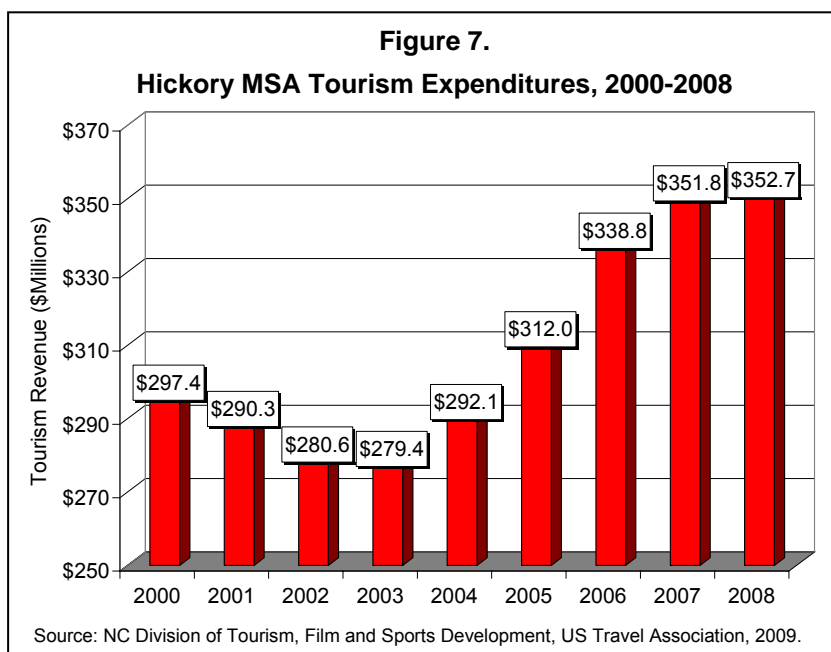


Table 6.
Hickory MSA Tourism Generated Revenues (\$Millions), 2000-2008

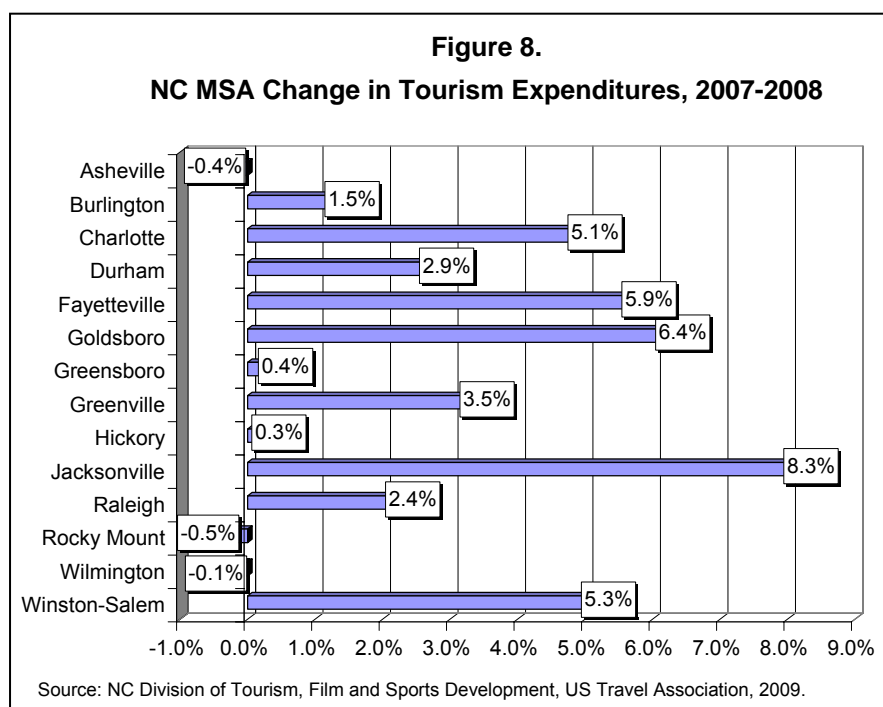
Location	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Chg. 07-08	% Chg. 07-08	Chg. 00-08	% Chg. 00-08
Alexander	\$13.4	\$12.8	\$14.0	\$16.3	\$16.8	\$17.4	\$0.6	3.5%	\$4.0	29.7%
Burke	\$57.9	\$59.7	\$62.1	\$71.1	\$73.2	\$74.0	\$0.8	1.1%	\$16.1	27.8%
Caldwell	\$41.9	\$38.2	\$38.0	\$43.6	\$46.6	\$49.2	\$2.7	5.7%	\$7.3	17.5%
Catawba	\$184.2	\$169.9	\$178.0	\$207.8	\$215.2	\$212.0	-\$3.1	-1.5%	\$27.8	15.1%
Totals	\$297.4	\$280.6	\$292.1	\$338.8	\$351.8	\$352.7	\$0.9	0.3%	\$55.2	18.6%

Source: North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, United States Travel Association, 2009.

Eleven of 14 North Carolina MSA's (including the Hickory MSA) saw an increase in tourism expenditures between 2007 and 2008 (Figure 8). The Jacksonville MSA had the highest tourism expenditure percentage growth (8.3%) of all NC MSAs due to coastal and military-related tourism. The Charlotte, Fayetteville, Goldsboro and Winston-Salem MSAs experienced 5.1% to 6.4% gains in tourism expenditures in 2008 than in 2007. The Charlotte MSA had the largest dollar increase (\$206.5 million) of any MSA.

Three North Carolina MSAs had a small drop in tourism expenditures between 2007 and 2008. Total tourism expenditures fell 0.5% in the Rocky Mount MSA, 0.4% in the Asheville MSA and 0.1% in the Wilmington MSA.

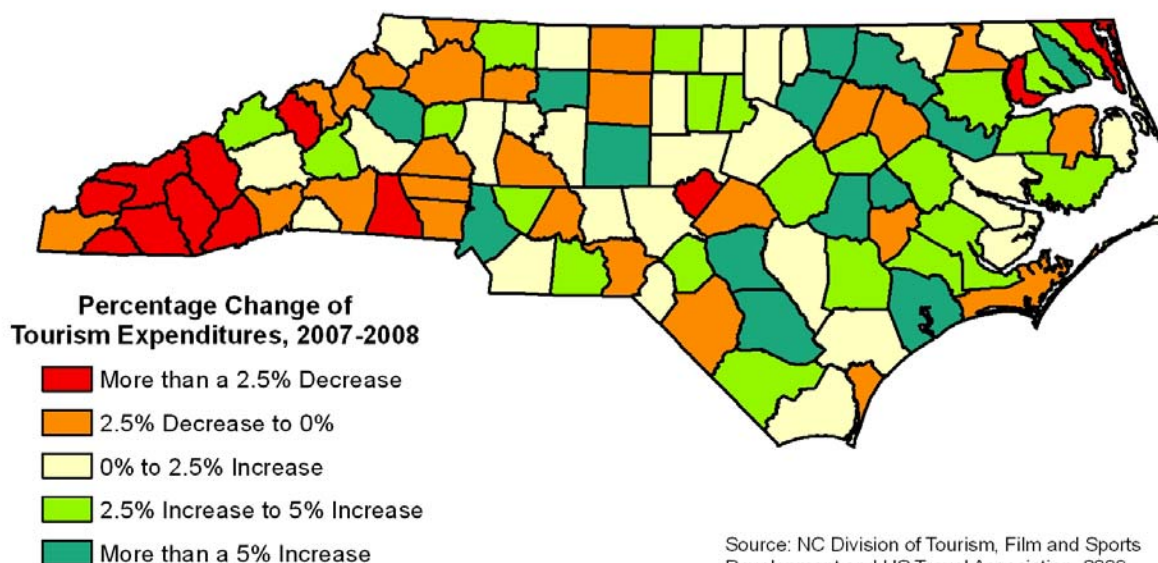
The Asheville and Wilmington results are particularly interesting since these MSAs rely more heavily on tourism related activities than other metro areas in the State.



Between 2007 and 2008 tourism expenditures increased in the three of the four Hickory MSA counties. Caldwell County's tourism expenditures grew from \$46.6 million in 2007 to \$49.2 million in 2008. The 5.7% increase in Caldwell was the eighth highest among North Carolina's 100 counties (Figure 9). The data results show increased tourism trip destinations to Caldwell County and additional tourist trips stopping in Caldwell before traveling to surrounding counties.

Figure 9.

Percentage Change of Tourism Expenditures, 2007-2008



Source: NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development and US Travel Association, 2009.

The NC Division of Tourism and the US Travel Association estimate the number of tourism industry jobs in each County. Hickory MSA tourism industry employment trends from 2000 to 2008 are shown in Table 7. The data shows that the number of tourism-related jobs has fallen from 3,940 in 2000 to 3,410 in 2008. While there is no question that the loss of tourism jobs in the region since 2000 has been significant, by percentage the tourism industry employment losses (13.5%) is less than the total percentage of job losses in the region since 2000 (18.8%). Tourism industry employment fell 1.7% between 2007 and 2008.

Table 7.
Hickory MSA Tourism Industry Employment, 2000-2008

Location	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Chg. 07-08	% Chg. 07-08	Chg. 00-08	% Chg. 00-08
Alexander	130	120	120	120	120	120	0	0.0%	-10	-7.7%
Burke	690	690	660	670	650	650	0	0.0%	-40	-5.8%
Caldwell	450	400	370	370	370	390	20	5.4%	-60	-13.3%
Catawba	2,670	2,390	2,300	2,370	2,330	2,250	-80	-3.4%	-420	-15.7%
Totals	3,940	3,600	3,450	3,530	3,470	3,410	-60	-1.7%	-530	-13.5%

Source: North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, United States Travel Association, 2009.

Tourism employment changes over the past eight years vary significantly by County. Alexander County tourism employment has remained nearly unchanged. In Burke County tourism employment has decreased by only 5.8% since 2000. Caldwell County tourism employment has fallen by 13.3% since 2000. Tourism employment in Caldwell County, however, increased by 5.4% to 390 workers in 2008. Results from the NC Division of Tourism and US Travel Association indicate that Catawba County's tourism employment has been the hardest hit of the Hickory MSA counties. Tourism employment has declined from 2,670 in 2000 to 2,250 in 2008. Between 2007 and 2008 tourism industry employment dropped by another 80 workers or 3.4%.

The Hickory MSA tourism industry brings in millions of dollars of payroll to the region every year (Table 8, page 8). In 2008 tourism payroll in the region equaled \$62.65 million. Total tourism payroll has struggled to grow since 2000 due to the loss of tourism jobs. Between 2007 and 2008, however, tourism payrolls

increased 1.5%. Tourism payrolls by County in 2008 ranged from \$2.61 million in Alexander County to \$40.79 million in Catawba County. Over the past eight years tourism payroll have grown in Alexander and Burke Counties, but has declined in Caldwell and Catawba Counties. Tourism payrolls in Caldwell County did grow by 7.2% between 2007 and 2008 to \$7.75 million.

Table 8.
Hickory MSA Tourism Industry Payrolls (\$Millions), 2000-2008

Location	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Chg. 07-08	% Chg. 07-08	Chg. 00-08	% Chg. 00-08
Alexander	\$2.40	\$2.27	\$2.34	\$2.49	\$2.48	\$2.61	\$0.13	5.2%	\$0.21	8.8%
Burke	\$10.76	\$10.98	\$10.79	\$11.29	\$11.22	\$11.50	\$0.28	2.5%	\$0.74	6.9%
Caldwell	\$7.89	\$7.11	\$6.69	\$7.02	\$7.23	\$7.75	\$0.52	7.2%	-\$0.14	-1.8%
Catawba	\$42.88	\$38.66	\$38.26	\$40.80	\$40.82	\$40.79	-\$0.03	-0.1%	-\$2.09	-4.9%
Totals	\$63.93	\$59.02	\$58.08	\$61.60	\$61.75	\$62.65	\$0.90	1.5%	-\$1.28	-2.0%

Source: North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, United States Travel Association, 2009.

Besides creating employment opportunities for the region, the Hickory MSA tourism industry also produces million of dollars of state and local tax revenues through accommodations, entertainment, recreation, restaurants and other tourism-related retail sales such as furniture shopping (Table 9). Local and state tourism revenues for the Hickory MSA exceeded \$30 million in 2008 (Figure 10). Since 2000 tourism revenue in the region has increased 11.1%. Tourism revenue grew 1.4% between 2007 and 2008.

Table 9.
Hickory MSA Tourism Industry State and Local Tax Revenues (\$Millions), 2000-2008

Location	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Chg. 07-08	% Chg. 07-08	Chg. 00-08	% Chg. 00-08
Alexander	\$1.39	\$1.32	\$1.43	\$1.61	\$1.62	\$1.69	\$0.07	4.3%	\$0.30	21.6%
Burke	\$5.21	\$5.34	\$5.51	\$6.13	\$6.11	\$6.24	\$0.13	2.1%	\$1.03	19.8%
Caldwell	\$3.82	\$3.46	\$3.42	\$3.80	\$3.93	\$4.21	\$0.28	7.1%	\$0.39	10.2%
Catawba	\$16.79	\$15.35	\$15.95	\$18.70	\$18.15	\$18.08	-\$0.07	-0.4%	\$1.29	7.7%
Totals	\$27.21	\$25.47	\$26.31	\$30.24	\$29.81	\$30.22	\$0.41	1.4%	\$3.01	11.1%

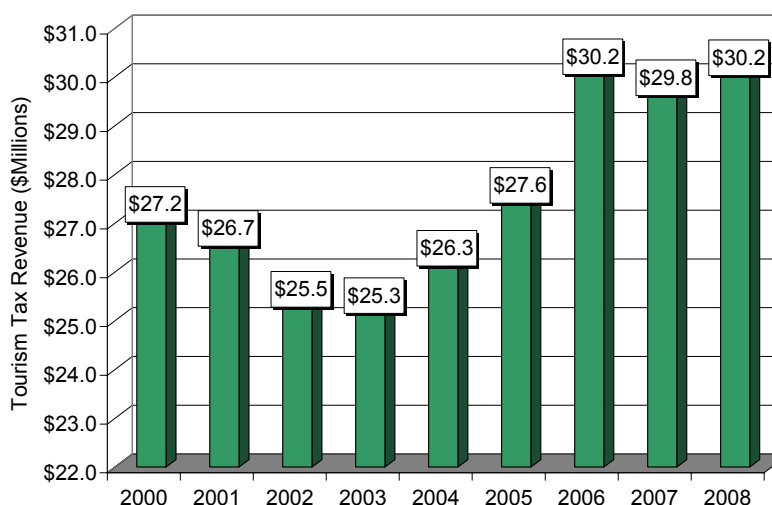
Source: North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, United States Travel Association, 2009.

About 60% of Hickory MSA tourism tax revenue is generated in Catawba County. Catawba County also had the biggest dollar increase (\$1.29 million) in tourism tax revenue between 2000 and 2008. In terms of percentage, however, Alexander (21.6%), Burke (19.8%) and Caldwell (10.2%) had greater increases than Catawba (7.7%). Caldwell County's tourism revenue increased 7.1% between 2007 and 2008 to \$4.21 million. Alexander and Burke had small tourism tax revenue gains in 2008 while Catawba had a small (\$0.07 million) revenue loss.

Summary

Tourists visiting the Hickory MSA spent \$352.7 million in 2008. Tourism expenditures in the region increased slightly between 2007 and 2008 despite weakening economic conditions. The NC Division of Tourism estimates that the Hickory MSA tourism industry currently employs 3,410 workers with an annual payroll of more than \$62 million. More than \$30 million in state and local tax revenue was collected from tourism related sales in 2008. Caldwell County had the most significant increase in tourism in 2008 with growth in both tourism expenditures and tourism related employment.

Figure 10.
Hickory MSA Tourism Industry State and Local Tax Revenue, 2000-2008



Source: NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, US Travel Association, 2009.

Hickory Metro Health Insurance Coverage

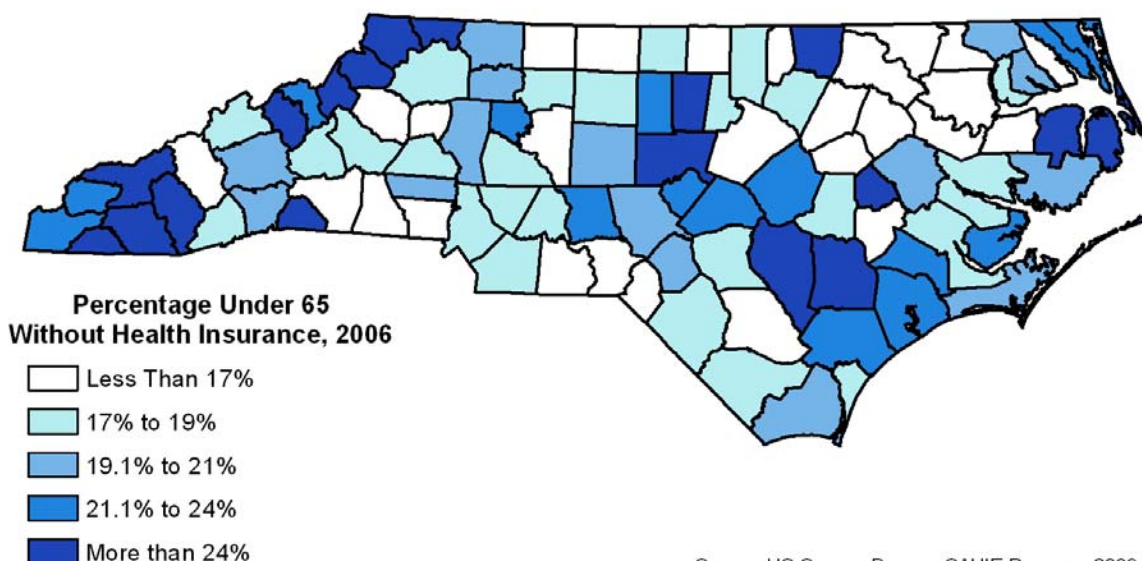
In 2008 the US Census Bureau through its Current Population Survey reported that out of 301.5 million people in the United States, 255.1 million (84.6%) of Americans had some type of health insurance coverage. This means that approximately 46.3 million (15.4%) Americans did not have health insurance in 2008. Of the 9.3 million persons living in North Carolina, 7.8 million (84.6%) had health insurance (or 1.4 million did not have health insurance).

While national and state data on health insurance coverage has been available for several years, it has been difficult to obtain any data at a metro or a county level. In August 2009 the US Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) program released 2006 county level data. SAHIE models health insurance coverage by combining survey data with population estimates and administrative records. The data set estimates the number of persons under 65 that have or do not have health insurance (the model assumes are persons over 65 are at least partially insured by Medicare). A separate data set shows the number persons with incomes at 200% or less of poverty level (defined in 2006 for a family of four with two children as \$20,444, so 200% of the poverty level would be \$40,888) with or without health insurance. While the data is not quite as current as the state or national estimates, it does give a picture of the percentage of persons covered by health insurance at a local level.

Figure 11 shows the percentage of uninsured persons under 65 by North Carolina county. The map shows that in 2006 the Hickory Metro counties had some of the lowest percentages of uninsured population in the State. The percentage of uninsured equaled 16.4% in Alexander County, 17.2% in Burke County, 15.2% in Caldwell County and 17.3% in Catawba County. The highest levels of uninsured were located in the mountains and in several counties in far eastern North Carolina. Edgecombe County (Rocky Mount/Tarboro area) had the lowest percentage of uninsured (12.5%) while Tyrrell County had the highest percentage of uninsured (30.1%). It would appear from the map that in general counties with younger populations or lower income households had higher rates of uninsured population.

Figure 11.

Percentage of Population Under 65 Without Health Insurance, 2006



Source: US Census Bureau, SAHIE Program, 2009.

Hickory MSA health insurance status results for all people younger than 65 is displayed in Table 10. The US Census Bureau model estimates that in 2006, 256,878 persons or 83.3% of the population under 65 has some form of health insurance. The percentage of persons in the Hickory MSA with health insurance was higher than the State average (82.1%) in 2006. A total of 51,620 persons, or 16.7% of the region's residents under 65, did not have health insurance during 2006.

Table 10.
Hickory MSA Health Insurance Status for Population Under 65, 2006

County	Population under 65	Number Insured	Percent Insured	Number Uninsured	Percent Uninsured	Margin of Error
Alexander	30,961	25,873	83.6	5,088	16.4	2.7% (+/-)
Burke	74,232	61,477	82.8	12,755	17.2	2.5% (+/-)
Caldwell	67,931	57,617	84.8	10,314	15.2	2.7% (+/-)
Catawba	135,374	111,911	82.7	23,463	17.3	2.5% (+/-)
Hickory MSA	308,498	256,878	83.3	51,620	16.7	2.6% (+/-)
County	Men under 65	Men Insured	Percent Insured	Men Uninsured	Percent Uninsured	Margin of Error
Alexander	15,667	12,884	82.2	2,783	17.8	4.3% (+/-)
Burke	37,400	30,357	81.2	7,043	18.8	4.0% (+/-)
Caldwell	33,947	28,280	83.3	5,667	16.7	4.3% (+/-)
Catawba	68,353	56,098	82.1	12,256	17.9	3.9% (+/-)
Hickory MSA	155,367	127,619	82.1	27,749	17.9	4.1% (+/-)
County	Women under 65	Women Insured	Percent Insured	Women Uninsured	Percent Uninsured	Margin of Error
Alexander	15,294	12,989	84.9	2,305	15.1	3.6% (+/-)
Burke	36,832	31,120	84.5	5,712	15.5	3.5% (+/-)
Caldwell	33,984	29,338	86.3	4,646	13.7	3.7% (+/-)
Catawba	67,021	55,813	83.3	11,208	16.7	3.5% (+/-)
Hickory MSA	153,131	129,260	84.4	23,871	15.6	3.6% (+/-)

Source: US Census Bureau SAHIE Program, 2009.

Health insurance coverage estimates are based on data from the following sources: The Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS); demographic population estimates; aggregated federal tax returns; participation records for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp program; County Business Patterns; Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) participation records and Census 2000 results.

Data in Table 10 also reveal that a slightly higher percentage of women under 65 are insured compared to men in the Hickory Metro. About 84.4% of women under 65 had some form of health insurance while 82.1% of men had health insurance. It should be noted that the 2.3% difference between men and women health insurance rates is within the margin of error of the Census Bureau's model results.

Only slight variations in the percentage of persons insured were observed within the Hickory MSA counties. Caldwell County had the highest percentage of persons under 65 insured at 84.8%, while Catawba had the lowest number insured at 82.7%. The percentage insured in Alexander County equaled 83.6%, while 82.8% of residents under 65 in Burke County had health insurance. The 2.1% difference between Catawba and Caldwell Counties is inside the model's margin of error for the region (2.6% +/-).

Health coverage status for children (persons under 19) in the Hickory MSA is shown in Table 11. Model results indicate that 77,903 of the region's children have health insurance while 10,206 did not. The Hickory MSA's 88.4% children insurance rate is substantially higher than the overall percentage of population under 65 that are insured (83.8%).

Table 11.
Hickory MSA Health Insurance Status for Population Under 19, 2006

County	Population under 19	Number Insured	Percent Insured	Number Uninsured	Percent Uninsured	Margin of Error
Alexander	8,707	7,755	89.1	951	10.9	3.9% (+/-)
Burke	20,860	18,553	88.9	2,307	11.1	3.8% (+/-)
Caldwell	19,020	17,182	90.3	1,839	9.7	3.7% (+/-)
Catawba	39,522	34,413	87.1	5,109	12.9	4.0% (+/-)
Hickory MSA	88,109	77,903	88.4	10,206	11.6	3.9% (+/-)

Source: US Census Bureau SAHIE Program, 2009.

SAHIE model results show that all Hickory MSA counties had a lower percentage of uninsured children than the State average (13.1%). More than 90% of children in Caldwell County had some type of health insurance in 2006. About 89% of children in Alexander and Burke had health insurance. A slightly higher percentage of children in Catawba County did not have health insurance compared to other Hickory MSA Counties.

Besides providing data on health insurance status by age group and gender, the US Census Bureau SAHIE program also provides information on health insurance coverage for individuals with incomes 200% or less of the poverty level (a threshold used for health programs administered by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention). The model shows that 96,082 persons in the Hickory MSA are under 65 and are in households that earn 200% of poverty or less in income (Table 12). Of those individuals 69,265 have some type of health insurance. A total of 26,787 persons, however, lack health care coverage. Only 22.3% of persons 200% or below poverty level lacked coverage in Caldwell County. More than 31% of persons 200% or below poverty level did not have health insurance in Catawba County.

**Table 12.
Hickory MSA Health Insurance Status for Population Under 65
and 200% or Less of Poverty Level, 2006**

County	Population under 65 200% or Below Poverty Level	Number Insured	Percent Insured	Number Uninsured	Percent Uninsured	Margin of Error
Alexander	9,345	6,667	71.3	2,678	28.7	4.9 (+/-)
Burke	25,670	18,652	72.7	7,018	27.3	4.3 (+/-)
Caldwell	22,263	17,309	77.7	4,954	22.3	4.4 (+/-)
Catawba	38,804	26,667	68.7	12,137	31.3	4.5 (+/-)
Hickory MSA	96,082	69,295	72.1	26,787	27.9	4.5 (+/-)

Source: US Census Bureau SAHIE Program, 2009.

Summary

Results from the Census Bureau's SAHIE program show that a higher percentage of persons in the Hickory MSA under 65 have some type of health insurance coverage in 2006 compared to the North Carolina average (82.1%), but a lower percentage have health insurance than the 2006 United States average (84.2%). The data also shows that a slightly higher percentage of women have coverage compared to men; and children under 19 are more likely to have coverage than persons 19 to 64. More than one in four persons with incomes 200% or below of the poverty level in the Hickory MSA do not have health insurance.

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